

# CORBRIDGE MATTERS

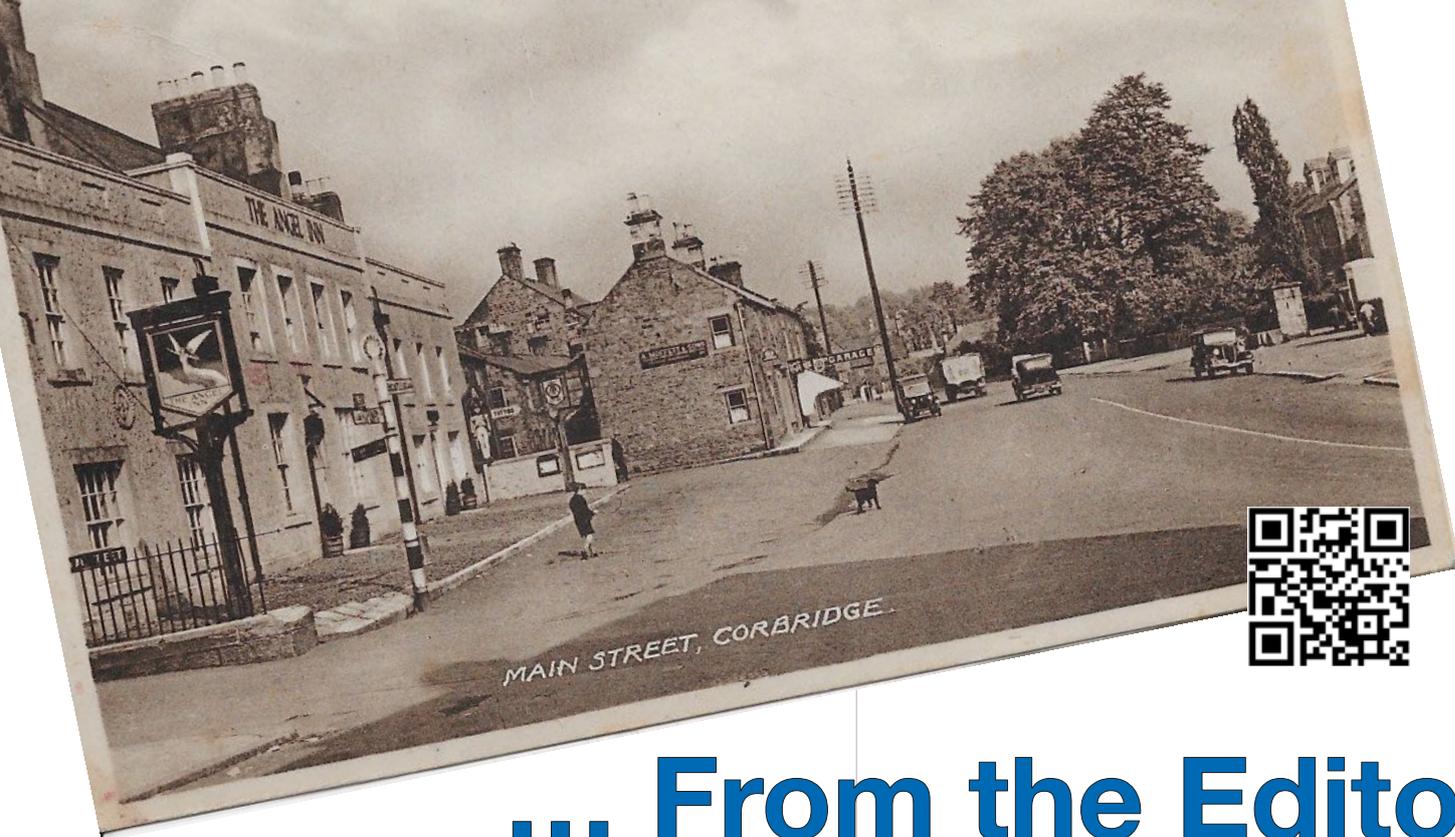


April 2025 Issue 82

[www.corbridge-pc.gov.uk](http://www.corbridge-pc.gov.uk)

::: DESIGN : © 2025 PETER RODGER : 07550011001 ::: PRINT : ROBSONPRINT : 01434 602975 ::: EDITOR & PHOTOGRAPHY : IAN WYLIE :::





## ... From the Editor

You may be wondering what has happened to the council columns that usually occupy this page. Electoral law dictates they cannot be featured in the run up to the Parish Council and County Council elections on Thursday May 1st.

Seven days after those local elections the nation will be marking VE Day 80 on May 8th. The 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day near the end of World War Two. The fighting continued in East Asia until the Japanese surrender marked by Victory Over Japan Day on August 15th 1945.

Local historian David Waugh, with the help of others, has amassed a large amount of historical material relating to Corbridge. Much of which can be seen at the Corbridge Heritage Centre in Princes Street. Including some fascinating images and several hundred vintage postcards.

But what has proved, to date, more difficult to find are photos of wartime Corbridge between 1939 and 1945. There are a number of postcards with general images from that time. But nothing to show any traces of specific civil and military scenes in the village during that period. Searches of archives at institutions such as the Imperial War Museum and Northumberland Archives have also drawn a blank. Thankfully Corbridge did not suffer any bombing and might generally be regarded as being “out of the way” during the war. Yet it did witness some significant activity.

You can see some of David’s research into ‘Corbridge During World War Two’ on pages six and seven of this edition. Much of it informed by the memories of former village butcher George Hall, now aged 96. I’ve listened to George talking of that time on countless occasions. Including the measures introduced at our bridge over the Tyne aimed at preventing the enemy crossing in the event of an invasion.

The image on this page is of a postcard posted in 1947. It shows a young John Bishop and the now demolished properties to the east of The Angel Inn owned then by A. Moffett (a plumber) and Mrs Rewcastle (a baker who also ran a cafe).

David Waugh will be giving a talk on Corbridge During World War Two at 7pm on Tuesday May 6th at the Corbridge Community Hub in Princes Street. Tickets are £7 on the door. There will also be a free VE Day 80 celebration at the Parish Hall from 1pm to 4pm on Saturday May 3rd with tea, cake and music. While Caporetto, which presents the destruction of war through a set of nine broken and fractured bells, will be installed inside St Andrew’s Church between May 8th and 22nd.

And if you happen to have any relevant Corbridge Second World War photos, maybe hidden away in the loft, please get in touch via the contact form on the Historic Corbridge website at: <https://corbridgehistory.com> or scan the QR code on this page.

**Ian Wylie**  
**Editor**

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Cover photo: St George’s Day - April 23rd

**Corbridge Parish Council next meets at 7pm on Wednesday  
April 23 in the Parish Hall, St Helen’s Street, Corbridge.  
Clerk of the Council: Mrs Mandy Senior 07950 297634  
[clerk@corbridge-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@corbridge-pc.gov.uk)**



Corbridge Parish Council handyman Andrew Cunningham has won plaudits for his work around the village. His capacity to carry out tasks having been enhanced by the recent purchase of a Piaggio Ape - a classic Italian vehicle which has its own fanbase around the world.

"I do a little bit of everything," explains Andrew. "I try to keep the village tidy. I cut grass, paint the benches, pick up litter, sweep the streets and just generally have a good old chit-chat with everybody. The Piaggio Ape allows me to carry my tools around along with other things I need every day. Together with paint, brushes and all sorts of other things."

# The Italian Job





**Under 11:**  
1st Harriet Baker



**11 to 16:**  
1st Bethan Charman



**Adult:**  
1st Adrienne Rowley

# The Great Corbridge Bake Off 2025

## Under 11:

- 1st Harriet Baker
- 2nd Rosie-May Iley
- 3rd Nancy Pelly

## 11 to 16:

- 1st Bethan Charman
- 2nd Matilda Osborne
- 3rd Billy McClintock

## Adult:

- 1st Adrienne Rowley
- 2nd Fiona Douglas
- 3rd Jane Donnelly

The theme of this year's Bake Off - held on Valentine's Day - was 'All You Need Is Love' and the entries did not disappoint. All winners for taking part. But there also had to be some judging by a panel led by BBC Look North's Carol Malia who rated the cakes on taste, texture and looks. With thanks to the Corbridge Larder for donating the prizes.

All of the other entries were highly commended.



11 to 16:  
2nd Matilda Osborne



11 to 16:  
3rd Billy McClintock



Adult:  
2nd Fiona Douglas



Adult:  
3rd Jane Donnelly

# Corbridge During World War Two

Corbridge was a garrison town during World War Two. As it had been almost 2000 years before in the Roman period. As we look ahead to the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day on May 8th, here is a snapshot of Corbridge between 1939 and 1945.

Children were evacuated to Corbridge from Walker and Wallsend - two of the poorest, overcrowded areas of Tyneside at risk of bombing aimed at shipbuilding on the Tyne. The children arrived (former village butcher George Hall, born in 1928, thinks over 150 of them) with their government issued gas masks and having been told to bring with them a change of clothes, nightclothes, plimsolls or slippers, a warm coat and toiletries. Items some could not afford.

About one third of Corbridge families took evacuees with many taking in two hoping to make settling in easier. Likewise several wealthy Tyneside firms and entrepreneurs relocated into large properties mainly in Main Street while numerous essential wartime services made use of properties in the centre of the village.

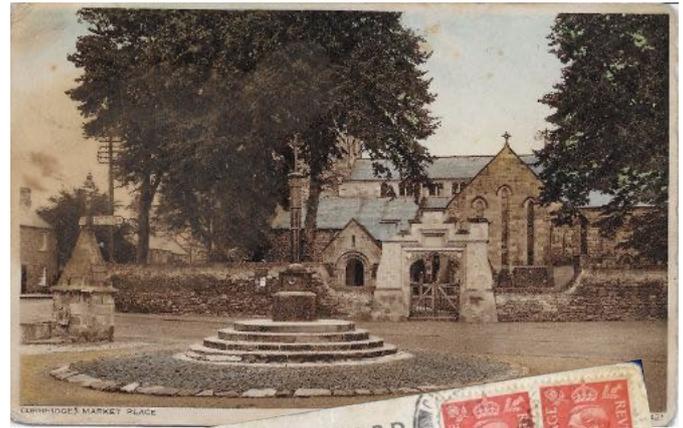
Although some children drifted back to Tyneside over the war years, George Hall reckons about half remained until 1945. When even then several evacuees stayed in the village with their adopted families to enjoy a superior quality of life and some eventually married Corbridgeans.

The images on this spread are of two postcards sent during World War Two to a member of the Women's Royal Naval Service who was then serving in Northern Ireland. You can find the originals in the Corbridge Heritage Centre.

## David Waugh

*Corbridge During World War Two: A Talk by David Waugh will take place at 7pm on Tuesday May 6th at the Corbridge Community Hub in Princes Street. Admission on the door: £7.*

*VE Day 80: Celebration Tea Party: With music and cake. At Corbridge Parish Hall from 1pm To 4pm on Saturday May 3rd. All welcome.*



## Present day use / location

## World War Two Use

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Appletree Lane                 | National School used by local children in mornings and evacuees, with their teachers, in the afternoons.                                                                                                                     |
| Colwyn House 23 Princes Street | Auxiliary Fire Station                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Bishop's Garage                | Base for army lorries                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Low Hall                       | North East Electricity Board moved into here                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Springfield Mews               | Base for ambulances                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Howden Dene                    | a) Rifle Range b) accommodation for 10 luckier soldiers                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Byethorne                      | Offices for Common Brothers Tyneside ship builders                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Newstead                       | Used by Readhead Shipbuilders                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Bridge and Plantation          | Two large boulders (like those still found on some Northumberland beaches) on north side of the bridge narrowing the road to prevent access by enemy tanks. Plus trenches on the Plantation to stop them crossing the river. |
| The Orchard in The Stanners    | HQ for local Home Guard                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Lauder Grange                  | Dispensed petrol for businesses                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Watsonia                       | Army Detention Centre                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Corbridge Tandoori             | Temporary Rating office                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Gresham House                  | Red Cross Hospital                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Church wall along Hill Street  | Large water tank to deal with incendiary bombs. None were actually dropped on Corbridge. The nearest bomb to land was at Nafferton Farm which today is five miles to the east of the centre of Corbridge along the A69.      |
| Woodburn House (Opticians)     | Sergeants' Mess                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Il Piccolo                     | Upstairs a canteen and reading room for soldiers.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Social Club                    | Drill Hall                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| St Helen's Street.             | Bantham Springs worked secretly making parts for Spitfires.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Orchard Terrace                | Food by Mrs Dixon. First Sunday lunch ever seen by some of the evacuee children from Tyneside                                                                                                                                |
| Deadridge                      | Golf hut and course                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Stagshaw House                 | Maternity home                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

# NOTICE BOARD

## St Andrew's Church

**Sunday April 6 at 10am:** Parish Communion  
**Sunday April 6 at 4pm:** Simply Worship  
**Palm Sunday April 13:** Procession and Parish Communion  
**Palm Sunday April 13 at 6pm:** Choral Evensong  
**Good Friday April 18 at 11am:** Messy Church  
**Good Friday April 18 at 2pm:** Ecumenical Worship  
**Easter Day April 20 at 5:30am:** Service of Light and Dawn Communion  
**Easter Day at 10am:** Family Easter Communion  
**Easter Day at 4pm:** Simply Worship  
**Sunday April 27 at 4pm:** RIVER

## St Andrew's Church 1350th Anniversary Events

**Friday April 25 at Noon:** Marc Bryant (St Andrew's organist) Organ Recital  
**Tuesday April 29 at 7pm:** 'Early Medieval Northumbria with a Corbridge slant. A talk by Dr David Petts  
**Friday May 2 at Noon:** Michael Haynes (Hexham Abbey organist) Organ Recital  
**Thursday May 8 to Thursday May 22:** Caporetto: A sculpted installation of bells by Keith Roberts  
**Friday May 9 at Noon:** Ian Roberts (Newcastle Cathedral organist) Organ Recital  
**Friday May 16 at Noon:** Phil Mills (Morpeth organist) Organ Recital  
**Wednesday May 21:** 'A Blacksmith's Family.' A talk by Douglas Knott  
**Friday May 23 at Noon:** Kris Thomsett (Newcastle Cathedral organist) Organ Recital

## Corbridge Methodists

**Thursday April 10 at 10am:** Service at St Andrew's Church  
**Maundy Thursday April 17 at 10am:** Service at St Andrew's Church

## Tynedale Christian Ministries

Welcome to our Christian Church at Corbridge Parish Hall.

**Each Sunday at 10.30am:** Coffee followed by 11.00 Service. Ring 01434 633532

**Weekly:** House Groups

## Diary Dates 2025

Saturday May 24: **Northumberland County Show**  
Saturday June 7 / Sunday June 8: **Corbridge Steam Rally**  
Thursday June 12 - Saturday June 14: **Tynedale Beer & Cider Festival**  
Thursday June 19: **A Midsummer's Evening In Corbridge**  
Thursday June 19 - Sunday June 22: **St Andrew's Church Flower Festival**  
Sunday June 22: **Corbridge Open Gardens**  
Thursday July 24 - Sunday July 27: **Corbridge Chamber Music Festival**  
Sunday August 17: **Northumberland Classic & Performance Motor Show**  
Saturday September 6: **Corbridge Village Show**  
Monday September 8 - Sunday September 14: **Heritage Week**  
Saturday Oct 11 / Sunday Oct 12: **St Andrew's 1350 Closing Weekend**  
Sunday November 9: **Remembrance Sunday**  
Friday Nov 28 - Tuesday Dec 2: **St Andrew's Christmas Tree Festival**

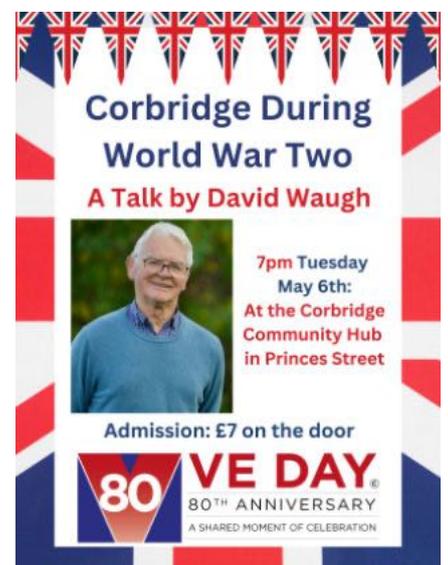
*All listings on this page and in the Parish Hall diary are subject to change.*

## Corbridge Film Nights

Sunday April 27: *The Angels' Share*. A 2012 bittersweet comedy directed by Ken Loach. At Corbridge Parish Hall. Doors open 7pm for a 7:30pm screening. £5 on the door (cash only).



**VE Day 80 Tea Party**  
1pm to 4pm on  
**Saturday May 3rd**  
**At Corbridge Parish Hall**  
With music and cake  
All welcome  
Just drop in during the afternoon ahead of the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day on May 8th  
Admission is free  
**80 VE DAY**  
80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION



**Corbridge During World War Two**  
**A Talk by David Waugh**  
  
7pm Tuesday  
May 6th:  
At the Corbridge Community Hub  
in Princes Street  
Admission: £7 on the door  
**80 VE DAY**  
80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION

## Corbridge Parish Hall: April 2025

| Mon                                                                 | Tue                                                                                                                                          | Wed                                                                | Thu                                                               | Fri                                                          | Sat                                                                     | Sun                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 31                                                                  | 1                                                                                                                                            | 2                                                                  | 3                                                                 | 4                                                            | 5                                                                       | 6                                                                                                             |
| 19:00 - 22:00<br>Corbridge Brid...                                  | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>11:00 - 12:00<br>Pilates with Val<br>13:00 - 16:00<br>Corbridge Brid...<br>19:00 - 21:00<br>Corbridge Car... | 10:30 - 15:30<br>KSA Painters<br>16:45 - 20:45<br>Corbridge Sch... | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class                                      | 09:30 - 11:30<br>Corbridge Bad...<br>17:00 - 19:00<br>Karate | 08:00 - 17:30<br>Private Booking<br>19:30 - 21:30<br>Tynedale Scotti... | 10:00 - 14:30<br>Tynedale Chris...<br>14:30 - 18:30<br>Private Booking                                        |
| 7                                                                   | 8                                                                                                                                            | 9                                                                  | 10                                                                | 11                                                           | 12                                                                      | 13                                                                                                            |
| 13:00 - 16:00<br>Corbridge WI<br>19:00 - 22:00<br>Corbridge Brid... | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>13:00 - 16:00<br>Corbridge Brid...<br>19:00 - 21:00<br>Corbridge Car...                                      | 10:30 - 15:30<br>KSA Painters<br>16:45 - 20:45<br>Corbridge Sch... | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>16:30 - 20:30<br>Corbridge Gar... | 09:30 - 11:30<br>Corbridge Bad...<br>17:00 - 19:00<br>Karate | 13:00 - 16:45<br>Private Booking                                        | 10:00 - 14:30<br>Tynedale Chris...<br>14:30 - 15:30<br>Private Booking                                        |
| 14                                                                  | 15                                                                                                                                           | 16                                                                 | 17                                                                | 18                                                           | 19                                                                      | 20                                                                                                            |
| 18:30 - 22:00<br>Corbridge Brid...                                  | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>13:00 - 16:00<br>Corbridge Brid...<br>19:00 - 21:00<br>Corbridge Car...                                      | 10:30 - 15:30<br>KSA Painters                                      | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>12:45 - 14:00<br>Guide Dog Pup... |                                                              |                                                                         | 10:00 - 14:30<br>Tynedale Chris...<br>14:30 - 15:30<br>Private Booking                                        |
| 21                                                                  | 22                                                                                                                                           | 23                                                                 | 24                                                                | 25                                                           | 26                                                                      | 27                                                                                                            |
|                                                                     | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>13:00 - 16:00<br>Corbridge Brid...<br>19:00 - 21:00<br>Corbridge Car...                                      | 10:30 - 15:30<br>KSA Painters                                      | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class                                      | 09:00 - 12:45<br>Private Booking<br>17:00 - 19:00<br>Karate  | 08:00 - 23:30<br>Private Booking                                        | 10:00 - 14:30<br>Tynedale Chris...<br>14:30 - 18:00<br>Private Booking<br>18:00 - 22:00<br>Corbridge Film ... |
| 28                                                                  | 29                                                                                                                                           | 30                                                                 | 1                                                                 | 2                                                            | 3                                                                       | 4                                                                                                             |
| 19:00 - 22:00<br>Corbridge Brid...                                  | 09:00 - 10:00<br>Zumba Class<br>13:00 - 16:00<br>Corbridge Brid...<br>19:00 - 21:00<br>Corbridge Car...                                      | 10:30 - 15:30<br>KSA Painters<br>16:45 - 20:45<br>Corbridge Sch... | 06:00 - 22:30<br>Polling Station                                  | 17:00 - 19:00<br>Karate                                      | 09:00 - 18:00<br>VE Day 80th An...                                      | 10:00 - 14:30<br>Tynedale Chris...<br>14:30 - 15:30<br>Private Booking                                        |



Your Parish Council website  
has a new address  
<https://corbridge-pc.gov.uk>

and Parish Clerk, Mandy  
Senior also has a new  
email address [clerk@corbridge-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@corbridge-pc.gov.uk)

# Corbridge United

Corbridge United Junior Football Club's Corbridge Comets Under 14s team has a new main kit sponsor thanks to award-winning Grants Bakery in Market Place. A spokesman for Grants said: "The commitment to local causes exemplifies the positive role that small businesses can play in fostering community wellbeing." Pictured is Andrew Cotterell of Grants with team members. Corbridge United, based at Tynedale Park, offers access to football for youngsters aged between six and 17, creating a safe and enjoyable environment to develop skills and meet new friends.



**Tea and Chat**

A chance to meet new people

2pm to 4pm on the  
2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each  
month

All welcome - just turn up

At the Corbridge Community Hub  
in Princes Street

Organised by St Andrew's Church

**CORBRIDGE  
HERITAGE CENTRE**  
at the Community Hub on Princes Street

History of the village, its people, buildings, events, commercial activities plus 360 vintage postcards, reference books, Heritage Trail maps and more.

Open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays & Saturdays:

April to October: 11am to 3pm  
November to March 11am to 2pm

**FREE ADMISSION**

Go down the lane to the left of the building

# Corbridge Riverside Sports Club



Corbridge Riverside Sports Club held its traditional annual ceremony on February 1st to mark the start of the salmon fishing season on the Tyne. We began with an excellent breakfast at Corbridge Cricket Club followed by a walk down to the riverbank next to the bridge where our chairman recited a couple of fishing poems and we toasted the river and the salmon with a 'wee dram'. The club was formed in 1934 as a village club for swimming, rowing and fishing and by 1948 had become solely devoted to fishing. It is now one of the few remaining traditional village clubs on the Tyne and has thrived, growing to over 60 members. We have access to several miles of trout and salmon fishing on the south bank of the Tyne extending below and upstream of the bridge along with some local trout fishing. We pride ourselves on being a friendly local club, and hold various events during the year, culminating in our annual dinner and trophy presentation. We are always looking for new members from the village and from Riding Mill Parish. We are particularly keen to welcome juniors, ladies and beginners. If you are interested in joining, or would like more information please email us at [info@crscfishing.co.uk](mailto:info@crscfishing.co.uk)



*View of Beaufront Castle from the bridge at Corbridge*

# Corbridge Gardening Society



Our members' enthusiasm for a new season in the garden is increasing by the day. Their initial challenge will be to develop an interesting wide range of plants from the rare and unusual to everyday good 'doers' in preparation for the fund raising Annual Plant Sale to be held on Saturday May 17th in the Parish Hall. The sale will again be supported by Tynedale Horticultural Services with young vegetable plants.

We are a social friendly society with over 200 members and a wide range of gardening interests - growing plants, shrubs and flowers together with fruit and vegetables. This year we are expecting to run a Summer Show in late June to complement the Spring Show in April. These light hearted shows are held as an evening to socialise and an opportunity for our amateur members to illustrate grown examples from their gardens.

In addition to the Plant Sale and shows this year's programme includes planned coach visits to Raby Castle and Winston Gardens in June, Newby Hall for the Autumn Harrogate Flower Show in September and a self drive visit to Hartside Nursery Garden in May. The Summer four day holiday this year takes us to mid Wales for visits to RHS Bridgewater, Powys Castle, Glansevern, Erdigg and Dorothy Clive Garden returning via Tatton Park in Cheshire.

Our series of Zoom meeting continued through the winter with interesting speakers from across the country speaking on a variety of gardening related topics. Talks have been arranged through the Autumn, to be held on the second Thursday of the month.

Membership is open to all residents of Corbridge and surrounding areas with an annual subscription of £10. The subscription covers free access to all meetings, Zoom talks and shows. Preferential members rates are charged for the coach trips. New members are always welcome. For more details please scan the QR code for our website [corbridgegardeningssociety.com](http://corbridgegardeningssociety.com) or email [corbridgegardeningssociety@gmail.com](mailto:corbridgegardeningssociety@gmail.com)

## Corbridge Gardening Society

Founded 1887

### Saturday 17th May 2025

# ANNUAL PLANT SALE

**EVERYONE WELCOME**



At Corbridge Parish Hall, St Helens Street  
From 10.00am – 11.30am (or until plants run out)

**Cash Only      Admission Free**

Shrubs; Trees; Fruit; Herbaceous; Houseplants; Vegetable Plants; Misc.  
Plants from the rare and unusual to everyday tough plants and good doers.  
Supported by Tynedale Horticultural Services with young vegetable plants

Please bring your own bags, baskets or boxes to take your purchases home

Will members donating plants please bring them to the Parish Hall on Friday 16th May at 5.00 – 6.45pm. Plants should be in clean pots/containers labelled and with as much information as possible – Many Thanks.

To find out more go to [www.corbridgegardeningssociety.com](http://www.corbridgegardeningssociety.com)

# THE WALTONS OF CORBRIDGE - A FAMILY TALE

Fred Walton was seriously fed up. For decades he had toiled in an ironmongers shop, supporting the owner and more or less running the business. Now, after years of hard slog, a tricky new boss had taken over and, frankly, at the age of 54 Fred didn't want the hassle.

It was 1934 and times were hard. But Fred scraped together his savings, borrowed £50 from his brother Jack and opened a new hardware and ironmongers shop called J F Walton in Broadgate in Hexham. It was the beginning of the much loved family business now in Middle St, Corbridge, run by Fred's great grandson Alan Robinson and great granddaughter Kerry Mason. The family having just celebrated 90 years and four generations of trading in the Tyne Valley.

Alan and Kerry's mother Patsy Robinson is a matriarch with a pin-sharp memory spanning all of the generations who have been involved in the business. She was born in 1936 in her grandparent's pub, the Station Hotel, now called The Dyvels. When she was 17 she left school to work in the office of her grandfather's shop. Apart from a break to bring up the children, she spent her entire working life alongside her grandfather, father, husband, and children.

After she married Bob Robinson in 1960 he also joined the firm. He had been a trainee surveyor with the National Coal Board but even back then the writing was on the wall for collieries. Swapping the mining industry for retail seemed a wise move. Eventually he took over from George Walton, his father-in-law. He ran Waltons until 1999 when he handed the reins to Alan and Kerry.

Sitting in her room in Burn Brae Lodge up on Prospect Hill, Patsy gazes over the Tyne Valley, remembering rural customers who were the backbone of the business. She said, "Back then we mainly supplied farms and big country estates with everything they needed, from barbed wire and gin traps to a huge range of household goods. Everyone bottled fruit so we sold mountains of Kilner jars, wooden spoons, heavy Mason Cash mixing bowls and Pyrex dishes. You name it, we had it.

"Upstairs in the shop were all of the nuts, bolts, tools and creosote. It was total farm maintenance under one roof. A horse and cart did the deliveries.



Fred and George Walton Early 1950s



Alan and Bob Robinson

Everyone, including the kids, had a day off for haymaking, scything enough to keep Charlie the horse in food over winter.” Outside stood the nail shed, the paraffin shed, the netting shed and Charlie’s stable.

The founder, Fred Walton, was a presence in the shop until he was 93. Kerry remembers helping her great grandad up the stairs when she was little. She also recalls her dad lighting the original gas lights during power cuts in the 1970s. Kerry said, “In the very early days everyone had oil lamps and oil cookers and for years we kept all of the parts to repair them. We had weird and wonderful requests, like ‘Have you any self locating nipples or cocks?’ which were bits of oil lamps. People asked if we had any vices - plenty! And, ‘Can I get felt here?’ Only if you mean roofing felt.”

Kerry and Alan spent holidays and weekends in the shop from early childhood and eventually working there full time seemed a natural progression. Alan graduated in Business Studies and Kerry worked in an old people’s home. But by the time they were in their early 20s both were behind the counter and involved with making big decisions.

After almost 40 years of working together has there ever been tension between the brother and sister team? Neither Alan nor Kerry can think of anything untoward. Kerry said, “Alan is so easy going, just like dad. We’ve always celebrated each other’s successes, or commiserated if something went wrong. We’ve just always got on really well.”

Alan agrees. “It was the same with dad.

Considering I was taking over the business we never fell out. He gave me my head and let me do things my way.”

By the 1980s demand for old fashioned tools and fuel like paraffin had declined and the family gradually reduced the stock in Hexham. But when a small hardware shop in Middle Street, Corbridge became available, Alan pounced. He and Kerry set up a new Waltons with their mum doing the books. They dropped ironmongery to concentrate on hardware and household goods. (Kerry shies away from terms like ‘lifestyle’ and ‘homeware’.)

Alan said, “The Hexham shop was rented, but I wanted to buy somewhere and premises in Corbridge came up for sale. I was only 22 and dad didn’t agree, but he let me go to the bank clutching my little business plan. They knew he would always support me, so they lent me the money. But Dad didn’t cross the threshold for at least six months. He was letting me do my own thing and



Alan and Kerry



Alan and Kerry

## THE WALTONS OF CORBRIDGE - A FAMILY TALE

Alan and Kerry



that meant working 12 hours a day, six days a week.”

They expanded, revamped, and turned it into a destination for visitors and residents alike. Half day closing every Thursday ended, and Sunday opening started. Corbridge Waltons - known to most shoppers today as the Corbridge Cookshop - thrived but the Hexham shop closed its doors for good in 1999.

“We move with the times, although we don’t do online sales and we ditched the website after it was hacked,” said Kerry. “We still have Mason Cash mixing bowls and Pyrex but the days when we sold nails by the pound, using a huge metal scoop to shovel them into paper bags, are over. Very occasionally people grumble that it’s not like it used to be. I say it’s not screws and bolts that pay wages. It’s candles and dishtowels. You wouldn’t believe how many wooden, bristle nail brushes we sell, and people love bottle brushes of all shapes and sizes.”

Eleven years ago, they bought Acanthus, the shop opposite Waltons. It is still part of the family business but run separately by Alan’s wife Annie. Alan said, “I owe Corbridge a lot. Our customers’ support has given us a really nice life. So although I’m not a committee person, I’m more than happy to put something back doing jobs round the village, like the Christmas lights or putting up bunting.”

Kerry and Alan are in their early 60s and sooner or later they will have to make decisions about the future. Despite J F Walton’s longevity, Kerry is uncertain whether a fifth generation will take over and wonders how much longer independent family businesses can continue. She and Alan each have two children, now in their 20s, and so far they haven’t shown much interest in joining the firm.

“There was no pressure on us to take over and we don’t put any pressure on our kids,” said Alan. “In fact, our younger brother David moved away and with a doctorate in psychology he’s doing something completely different. Succession isn’t an issue for us and, anyway, who knows what will happen to shops like ours in the future. When we started out no one dreamed of online internet shopping. We can’t predict anything. There’s no point worrying about it and we’ll enjoy it for as long as we can.”

**Sheilagh Matheson**

Bob and Patsy Robinson





**The Old Workshop**  
Peaceful and luxurious holiday  
hideaway in Corbridge  
sleeps 4 (+ infant)



*"A beautiful property in a green oasis ... Inside, it's beautifully fitted out. There's everything you need and all the appliances are of the highest standard. Each bedroom has a splendid en-suite and comes well equipped"*



Richard & Linda, Harrogate.



Contact: Sally on 07802 289732

[www.dockleafcottages.co.uk](http://www.dockleafcottages.co.uk)

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# Forum Books

*Hella Happy Readers*

This spring edition certainly has a freshness and brightness to it and at Forum Books we really are here for the shiny newness... **Service** by **Anna Hedworth** is a glorious new cook book that delivers a slice of restaurant life, taking us through the day in Anna's now iconic Cook House restaurant. The recipes again prove Anna's flair with flavour and commitment to seasonality - it is a joy to read and eat. We are serving up an event at The Biscuit Factory on Tuesday April 1st when Anna will be chatting to fellow chef and food writer Maunika Gowardhan.

**Sinclair McKay** will be joining me in Forum's Corbridge pulpit on Tuesday April 15th. His new book **Saint Petersburg** centres on the story of the '900 days and nights' Siege of Leningrad, 1941 to 1944. Unlike Paris or Prague, the Nazis weren't trying to take over. They wanted to wipe it off the map. According to some, this siege of 1.5 million people - including Putin's mother - was an attempted genocide. Based on first-hand and many unpublished accounts from figures from all walks of life - irascible authors, factory workers, bakers, furriers, dancers, sailors, grandparents, children - Sinclair reveals the central importance of St Petersburg over the centuries and tells the story of the city from the perspective of the people who lived there.

Many of you will remember our wonderful evening with **Charlie Porter** as he talked to Heather about Bloomsbury and the philosophy of fashion. So you'll be as thrilled as us to hear that he returns to Corbridge on Thursday May 15th with his debut novel **Nova Scotia House**. It's a story of loss and grief, sex and love, and refusing to relinquish dreams. Johnny Grant faces stark life decisions. Seeking answers, he looks back to his relationship with Jerry Field. When they met, nearly thirty years ago, Johnny was 19, Jerry was 45. They fell in love and made a life on their own terms in Jerry's flat: 1, Nova Scotia House. Nova Scotia House takes us to the heart of a relationship, a community and an era.

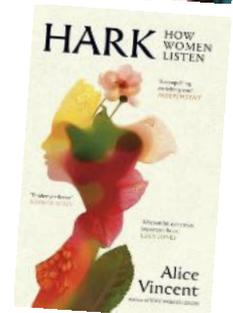
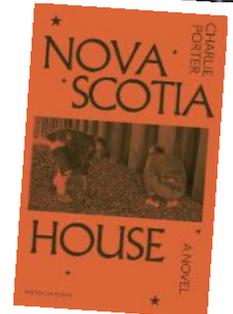
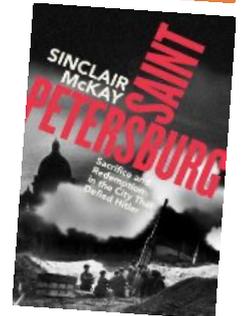
Then on Thursday May 29th we welcome Edinburgh's Makar **Michael Pedersen**. His poetry has made us giggle and sigh in equal measure. His debut novel **Muckle Flugga** is a heartfelt, hilarious and original life on a remote island is turned upside down by a stranger's arrival, testing bonds of family and tradition and leaving a young dreamer's future hanging in the balance. It's no ordinary existence on the rugged isle of Muckle Flugga. The elements run riot and the very rocks that shape the place begin to shift under their influence. The only human inhabitants are the lighthouse keeper, known as The Father, and his otherworldly son, Ouse. Them, and the occasional lodger to keep the wolf from the door. When one of those lodgers - Firth, a chaotic writer - arrives from Edinburgh, the limits of the world the keeper and his son cling to begin to crumble.

Fresh on the shelves are a few new favourites including **Alice Vincent's Hark**. We're told women are good at listening but we rarely examine what they're listening to, what their worlds sound like or how it feels to be expected to listen in a world of noise made by men. Like so many of us, Alice Vincent had become overwhelmed by the sensory overload punctuating our every moment. And then, a baby's heartbeat arrived. And the page turning romp of a crime novel **This Is Not A Game** by **Kelly Mullen**, pitched as Gilmore Girls meets Knives Out. Prepare to be hooked by this deliciously smart locked-room mystery featuring an irresistible grandmother and granddaughter sleuthing duo.

**Matt Goodfellow** tells the next chapter of young Nate's life as he's now in secondary school. In **The First Year** Nate's off to secondary school with his two best mates. But while he's making new friends and avoiding the fists of Turner, his old nemesis, and struggling to come to terms with a strict new teacher and a sense of isolation from his brothers, a sudden surprise appearance in Nate's life threatens to throw him completely off course. And The Beast - the anger he tries so hard to control - reappears. Will Nate find a way to keep himself and his family together?

Read on!

*Helen*



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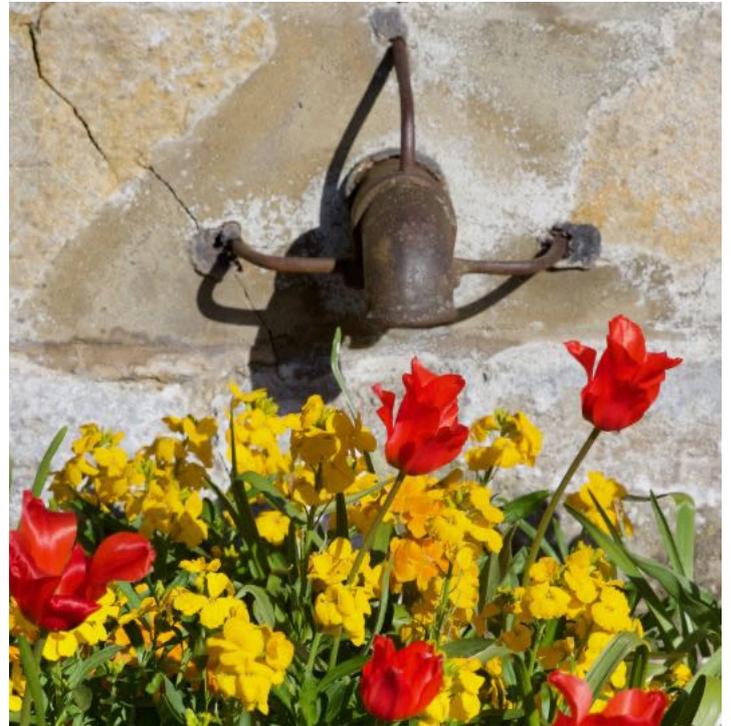
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