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Welcome

Thanks for picking up the October edition of the free Consett Magazine.

As always, we've got some wonderful local stories for you to feast your eyes on this month; both in the magazine you have in your hand now and online at consettmagazine.com (we're proud to tell you, last month the website received 178,996 hits).

So, if you've not visited us online yet, now might be a good time to have a look and see what all the fuss is about!

Brian Harrison, your favourite local historian explores a near disaster in Shotley Bridge (See page 4-5).

Lorraine Weightman is a believer with her "I believe in angels"
(See pages 10-11.)

This and much more in the FREE Consett Magazine.

Once again, thanks for reading this month's edition, please recycle this magazine after you're finished reading it by passing it onto a friend or family member. And do mention Consett Magazine when reaching out to any of our advertisers, they are the lifeblood of the magazine, without them this free publication could simply not exist.

So, thanks to everyone who advertises and contributes to the magazine each month.

If you'd like to get involved with Consett Magazine, share a story, or simply give us some news you'd like to shout about, then please contact us using the contact details on the bottom right of this page.

Warmest regards,
Barry Kirkham, Marco Elsy, and everyone who makes this magazine a success (you know who you are!)
PS- Book your space online or in print, just call us on 01207 438292 or email sales@consettmagazine.com to request our media kit (covering online, print, and digital marketing options).

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The Front Cover

Thanks to Bazza Davison.
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NARROWLY AVERTED DISASTER AT SHOTLEY BRIDGE

By Brian Harrison

Saturday 25th August 1883 started as any summer holiday in August did, the weather was bright and cheerful and was the perfect day for the hosting of the Shotley Bridge Horticultural Societies Annual Exhibition. It had been a major success having being held at the Spa grounds since 1849 and now into its 34th consecutive year. It was said to have been one of the biggest and best of its kind throughout the whole Country. The exhibits ranged from the most exotic of fruits, vegetables, flora and fauna as well as having major prizes and great entertainment.

The morning saw a major influx of people from all over the North East who had made the journey to Shotley Bridge on the special trains that had been laid on especially for the event and running throughout the day. The previous years had saw crowds reach well over 50,000 across the day and it seemed that this year was to be no exception. The morning and early afternoon events had gone off without a hitch. However, outside the gates crowds of day travellers had started to arrive from the train station, waiting on the reduced admission charge after 4pm. The crowds stretch as far as the eye could see, a dense moving mass bent on getting into the ground. When a carriage appeared and the gate opened to allow it access the crowd surged forward to the howls and cries of woman and children caught up in the wave of bodies.

Sergeant Cruickshank and his staff of policemen appeared from the other side of the gate to try and quell the rush, but they were initially crushed into the wall by the crowd. Bruised and battered with his officers trying to hold back the onslaught, Cruickshank climbed the gate and earnestly begged the crowd that "if they had a spark of manliness left in them, or if they wished to avoid a repetition of the Sunderland Catastrophe" not to rush heedlessly on, or he would be forced to lock the gates and close down the event.

The Sunderland Catastrophe occurred 16th June 1883, just one month prior, in which over 1000 children rushing to get toys from a cabaret performer at the Victoria Hall, Sunderland were crushed when they came up against a closed door. The stampede and inevitable crush lead to 200 children being crushed to death and many others injured. A tragedy which shook the entire Country, even Queen Victoria openly enquiring on the event.

Cruickshanks words seemed to have the desired effect on the holiday-seekers and the crowd settled down and slowly passed through the gate in a much more orderly fashion. The crush of people took two hours to finally clear and in the end, apart from some minor crushing and some bruised nerves, no reports of any personal injuries were received.



Spa Grounds, Shotley Bridge.

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VICTORIA HALL CALAMITY.

LINES

ON THE

DREADFUL CALAMITY

Which occured in the Victoria Hall, Sunderland, on Saturday, June 16th, 1883, when about 200 Children were crushed and sufficated, Hundreds having narrow escapes.

TUNE—The Mistletoe Bough.

How many sweet children both happy and gay,
On Saturday last did hasten away.
Bent on amusement, themselves to enjoy,
And eager likewise to receive a small toy.
Little thinking alas—as they went on their way.
They would return not with life on that fatal day.

All went well till the Fay's Entertainment were o're.
When with happy hearts they made for the door,
They hurried down the stairs, grasping for breath,
Not knowing they were entering the valley of death,
On, on, they came, hurrying fast,
The door was closed, not a soul could get past.

On the stairs they lay, struggling in vain,
The scene was heartrending, as they cried out with pain,
No one could help them, no one could save,
No one to rescue from the cold, cold grave,
Until too late, came the helping hand,
When innocent souls were in that far off land.

Many poor parents are nigh dead with fright,
On beholding the terrible ghastly sight,
The scene was the worst that this countrys yet known
Men of experience on all sides do own,
None can forget it, wherever they be,
It is such a dreadful Calamity.

No pen can write, no tongue can tell,
Of the frightful Calamity on which I dwell,
Mothers were fainting, strong men were crying,
As they looked for their own 'midst the dead and the dying,
Only to find them amongst the slain,
Ne're to call Father or Mother again.

Heaven can see what the eye can't conceive,
Looks down and console's the poor bereaved,
The lost ones are happy, they are out of all pain.
Tho' lost to dear parents on this earth again,
They are clear from sin, and so they will rest
In that brigth land above along with the blest.

Written and Comp sed by

HORACE STANLEY.

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NEW SERVICES

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We are pleased to announce that as of 1st September 2018 we will be offering Civil Legal Aid services in our Consett, Chester le Street and Darlington offices.

The introduction of these Legal Aid Contract mean that for these new offices, we can now offer Legal Aid to those requiring assistance in family law matters. This ranges from child care proceedings where the Local Authority are involved with children, public law outline (PLO), assistance in obtaining non-molestation order and child protection issues.

We are delighted to announce that DMA Law's family solicitor, Marc Hewitt, will be joining us here in Consett, as well as our Chester le Street and Darlington branch. Marc is hoping to assist the local community with any family law issues they may have.

Marc can be contacted on our usual number of 01207 590285.

NEW PREMISES

We are also happy to announce that building works has now commenced on our new office premises at 2 Middle Street, Consett. Over the coming weeks the property that was known as Semi-Chem will become the DMA Law Consett branch.

The works are expected to be completed in December 2018.

We look forward to helping as many people, in Consett and the wider community as we can in the months and years to come.

In the meantime we can be located at Offices 15-16 Consett Innovation Centre, Genesis Way, Consett and of course we can be reached on our usual number of 01207 590285.

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FISH PASS AT SHOTLEY GROVE SET TO IMPROVE FISH POPULATIONS

A project to improve fish populations on the River Derwent is set to begin this month (October).
A rockpool fish pass will be built at Shotley Grove weir to provide a route for fish to move past the 2.5m structure, opening up more than 12km of previously inaccessible river.

A range of species such as lamprey, eels, grayling, brown trout, sea trout and salmon have not been able to freely move up and down the River Derwent at Shotley Grove since the weir was built 300 years ago to a power a mill. The Tyne Rivers Trust project is the final piece in the jigsaw for enabling fish movement on the River Derwent following fish passes at Derwenthaugh and Lintzford which have already proved a success with a greater diversity and density of fish species now found upstream of those sites
.
Jack Bloomer, Project Manager at Tyne Rivers Trust says: "Every year, fish move through our river systems to colonise new areas, exploit different resources and spawn but obstructions like this two and a half metre high weir make it impossible for this to happen.

"The construction of fish passes downstream at Derwenthaugh and Lintzford, mean that Shotley Grove Weir is the last remaining major obstruction to fish on the River Derwent.

"This work ensures that all fish populations within the River Derwent will be connected to one another, increasing the gene pool. It will also give access to Horsleyhope Burn and Burnhope Burn, which are two major tributaries upstream of the weir, providing even greater benefits. In time, this will improve the density and diversity of fish populations in the River Derwent and the Tyne system as a whole."

The project is being led by Tyne Rivers Trust in partnership with Durham County Council and is funded by the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation through the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

Tyne Rivers Trust and the Environment Agency will be holding two events for people interested in the project to find out more. The first will be at St Cuthberts Church Hall on 21 August between 3pm and 7pm and the second next to the weir where the work will take place on 28 August between 11 and 3pm.
The Trust is working to keep local groups up-to-date including Derwent Angling Association who support the work. Alan Farbridge, Secretary of Derwent Angling Association says: "Any work to improve habitat is good news for the river and the wide variety of species that live in it."

Niall Cook, Fisheries Technical Officer at the Environment Agency, said: "The River Derwent going from an industrialised river system to a haven for fish and wildlife to flourish is a real success story. Just last year our surveys revealed young salmon as far upstream as Shotley Bridge for the first time in 300 years. Following work by the Environment Agency and its partner organisations to tackle obstructions downstream, this new fish pass is the final link in the chain to allow free passage for a range of fish species and help create a thriving river system for the community to enjoy."

Cllr Ossie Johnson, the council's Cabinet member for tourism, culture, leisure and rural issues, says: "This is a fantastic example of how organisations can work together to secure funding and delivery of projects. This is the last remaining barrier on the River Derwent and construction of the pass will allow salmon and sea trout to migrate up river to lay their eggs. It is a significant investment in the riverine habitat of the County and will enhance ecology and improve angling for local clubs."

Work on the fish pass is expected to take around 6 weeks. The main path next to the river will be closed during this time but alternative paths along the route will still be open.

Image caption: Jack Bloomer, Project manager for Tyne Rivers Trust at Shotley Grove weir where the fish pass will be built.

For further information and interviews please contact Kirsty McNaught at Tyne Rivers Trust on 01434 636900 / 07855 720343 or k.mcnaught @tyneriverstrust.org

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I BELIEVE IN ANGELS

Almost everyone has an angel story to tell, and sources tell us that angels are mentioned 108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New. They cross cultures and religions and also feature in mythology. So who are these celestial beings and why are we so enamoured with them? The name in English is derived from the Latin word 'angelus' which literally means messenger and angels are often depicted as androgynous intermediaries between heaven and earth.
We are told that they do have a hierarchy and the angels closest to humans are ninth on the list!



October 2nd is the feast of the guardian angels and many girls born on this day are christened Angela.

As a child I was taught that we are all given guardian angels at birth who stay with for us for the whole of our lives. I remember loving the idea that I was protected and I delighted in speculating what my special angel looked like. I received a guardian angel prayer card when I made my first holy communion, depicting a huge angel standing behind two children, shielding them from imminent danger; yet I imagined my angel to be much smaller and with only half the wing span so she could get closer to me.

Believing I was safeguarded at all times brought a feeling of contentment, which meant at the age of seven I could quite happily go out on my scooter, cross roads wearing my second hand roller skates, ride down Berry Edge Road on home made pram-wheeled bogies, call on my friends in Consett and run around on the top of the slag heaps at Crookhall without worrying.



In fact after watching 'It's a Wonderful Life' at home one Christmas I was happy to think of Clarence Odbody, who was sent to earth to save George Bailey - played by my favourite actor James Stewart - as a shining example of what a guardian angel could be. This film has stayed in my heart ever since.

In Saint Patrick's church in Consett there was a kneeling angel statue in the crib at Christmas time who nodded a thank you when you put money in the box it was holding. I remember loving this as a child and emptying my Mother's purse at Mass on Sunday, just to witness that affectionate bow.

I have always been comforted by the concept of angels and the inspiration they give to many people in time of need, and I know that others find comfort there too.

Many years ago one of our friends moved to Durham City to live, and instead of our usual Consett Saturday night out at Botto's we were invited to meet up with her in Durham and explore the hostelries there; followed by a quick dance in the nightclub Klute. Of course once we were in there and the music got hold of us we forgot all about the time and missed the last bus home.





Standing close to the bus station in the dark deserted streets of Durham we reviewed our options. We had no money left - I'd even used up my emergency fiver that I always kept in my right boot - and in those days Uber's and contactless debit cards didn't exist. So our only option was to walk home, which was a daunting prospect. The cold night air wrapped itself around us as we looked at each other in despair, each trying to be brave for the other one.



Close to the Bridge Hotel as we were about to embark on our long walk, we stopped as we heard a vehicle slowing down behind us and the door of an empty 52 seater coach swung open. The driver asked where we were going and on our reply invited us to hop aboard as he said he was going our way. We sat in the front seat relieved and thankful as he turned up the heater, and we offered him the few coins of bus fare we had left. He laughed and said it was his pleasure. We chatted away for the whole journey until he dropped us off safe and sound outside the door at home, and with our 'thank you's' ringing in his ears, he was gone!

The next day we spent ages asking around, scouring the yellow pages and the phone book to find the name of the coach firm in order to write a thank you letter and reimburse the driver for his kindness, but no one had heard of it and we couldn't find an address or number anywhere.

It didn't exist!

I believe in angels.



Poetry Night in Consett

Derwent Valley Literary Festival in partnership with Steve Urwin are staging a Poetry Night in Consett on Tuesday 13th November. It begins at 7pm in Consett Park Bowls Club with a £2.00 pay on the door entry fee. A bar and refreshments will be available.

Five local poets - their names are listed below - who you may have heard of before will read and perform their work so be prepared for an entertaining and enjoyable evening. After the success of the festival in the summer where local authors and poets presented and read from their novels and books, the organisers realised that there is a real local interest in the spoken word and performance poetry; consequently they coordinated this follow up event. Hopefully it will flourish and grow to become a regular feature of the Consett area. Steve Urwin hosts and organises a 'Poetry Jam' in Waddington Street in Durham where on the first Thursday of each month he introduces three guest poets to perform their work. In addition the floor is open to anyone who has penned something they wish to share. So you may wish to give this a try as well if you feel you have a poem inside you. Steve also prepares and delivers creative writing workshops for those who desire to develop their writing skills.

Come along in November and meet Steve Urwin along with Jenni Pascoe, Lorraine Weightman, Harry Gallagher and Frederick Lewis. You will be pleasantly surprised!







Places to Go: North Berwick

North Berwick is a small town in East Lothian, Scotland, not to be confused with Berwick upon Tweed which is in England. The latter is on the East Coast Main Line from London to Edinburgh. North Berwick is on a spur off the main line, and the local trains serve five stations whilst the main line trains pass through. As a result, to get to North Berwick, passengers from the north east go fast into Edinburgh and come back out on the same route on the local stopping train. I did this journey on 29th August, staying at the Marine Hotel, and visiting the Sea Bird Centre and Tantallon Castle, but missed out on a visit to the NB Distillery making gin fairly close to the Castle, which I only found out about when I was back at the hotel. Shame!

I arrived by train and walked to the hotel along the road, but came back – minus my luggage, of course – along the edge of the golf course towards the beach. I tried some seafood chowder from a little shack on the harbour which was delicious, and they even took my contactless card which saved me from having to find a bank for some cash. The Sea Bird Centre is in the harbour between the two beaches, and the shop and café were open to all, but admission is charged for an interesting exhibition about the life of the gannets and puffins and other sea birds which inhabit this stretch of coast. There were also boat trips available to go out to the Bass Rock, covered in guano, a polite word for birds**t, and the other islands in the Firth of Forth, and I considered trip later in the afternoon. But, as the forecast was fine for my trip, I had not brought any wet weather gear. I thought the boat trip was a bit risky, and plumped instead for the bus trip three miles along the coast to the mystically named Tantallon Castle.

Tantallon, built in the mid 14th Century is in the care of Historic Scotland, so my English Heritage life membership purchased in 1988 proved its worth again. The bus service 120 to Dunbar operated by a local firm called Eve's runs every two hours, but the 1 ¼ hours the bus takes to go to Dunbar and back is ideal timing to see the Castle, built by the 1st Earl of Douglas to consolidate his power base in the area. It stood proud and strong until 1651 when an attack by Oliver Cromwell during his invasion of Scotland reduced it to a ruin. It was never repaired or inhabited again. This highly romantic coastal ruin is one where you can climb up two staircases right to the top and walk around, whilst underneath there are proper dungeons too.

Eve's bus brought me back to town and I found out more about the famous Witch Trials of 1590-2, visited the shops, and noted how the fortunes of the town were revived when the railway arrived in 1850. Since that time there have been many regular commuters going into Edinburgh every day. The journey time now is 33 minutes. Traditionally there has been a ferry north to Anstruther in Fife, and a passenger boat still makes the trip infrequently. But I took myself to the spa in the Marine Hotel. I expected to head into town for dinner with my Tastecard which offers 50% off for single diners, but found my hotel offered the best Tastecard deal so headed back there for an excellent meal, and breakfast next morning.

nationalrail.com

visiteastlothian.org

macdonaldhotels.co.uk
/our-hotels/marine

By Alex Nelson

MEDOMSLEY AND THE GREAT WAR

By Leslie Rutherford

The lives which were lost in the 1914-18 War are recorded on War Memorials throughout the land. Our own area suffered many losses when men, taken from their peaceful homes to serve in lands in which they would never have set foot had it not been for their patriotism in volunteering, fell before a mechanism of war never before experienced. This article pays homage to men from the area of Medomsley who served in the Great War.

One made the ultimate sacrifice, and three served again in the Second World War. It also records the suffering of a civilian who was in the "wrong place at the wrong time".

Wilf Kay, of Allendale Cottages, volunteered to serve with the Northumberland Fusiliers, Tyneside Scottish. Aged 23, he was amongst the 19,000 killed on the Somme in the first day (600,000 soldiers were lost on the Somme, 1st July – November 1916). Kay is honoured on the great Memorial to the Fallen at Thiepval, but also, perhaps more poignantly, on the War Memorial in Medomsley Village, as one of 60 Medomsley men
At times of National Remembrance, it is easy to pass over others who served but were fortunate to return home. I mention local men who served with distinction but who went on to serve again in the 1939-45 War.

Field Marshall, The Right Honourable, The Lord Gort, VC, GCB, CBE, DSO & Two Bars, MVO, MC, was the owner of Hamsterley Hall and grew up in County Durham and the Isle of Wight. His family name was John Standish Surtees Prendergast Vereker, (6th Lord Gort). Gort was a regular army officer serving with the Grenadier Guards and, after fighting in the Battles of Mons in 1914, The Somme 1916, Passchendaele 1917, and Canal du Nord 1918, ended the war highly decorated for gallantry and with the fighting name of "Tiger Gort".

He led the British Expeditionary Force in the Second World War before the 1940 Dunkirk evacuation. After Gort's death, aged 59, in 1946, he was succeeded by his brother, Robert Gage Prendergast, who also served in both World Wars and was decorated for gallantry.

Lying in Medomsley churchyard is another gallant soldier, Colonel John Henry Curry. Curry was a Regular Army soldier who fought in both World Wars. In the Great War, he was an artillery officer with the Liverpool Regiment and, in the Second World War, he served as a Major with the Durham Light Infantry. He was privileged to share tea with the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, in the Western Desert. After the War he served for many years with the Territorial Army.

A final mention should be made of Wilf Kay's brother, Ned Kay. He was a miner who in 1914, with friends, went on holiday to Hamburg. When war was declared, Ned was escorted from his return ship and interned in Ruhleben Prison Camp. It was three and a half years before he returned, emaciated, to Medomsley.







Field Marshall - The Lord Gort



Colonel J. H Curry



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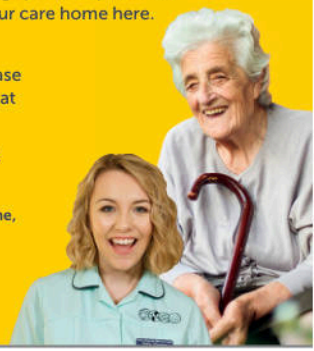
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Red Dust Festival - Pics By JP Davidson

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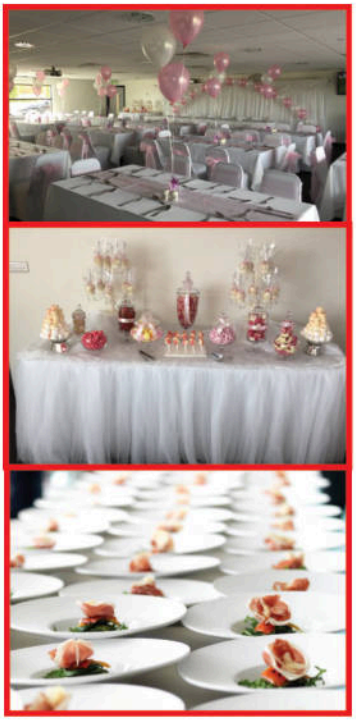
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