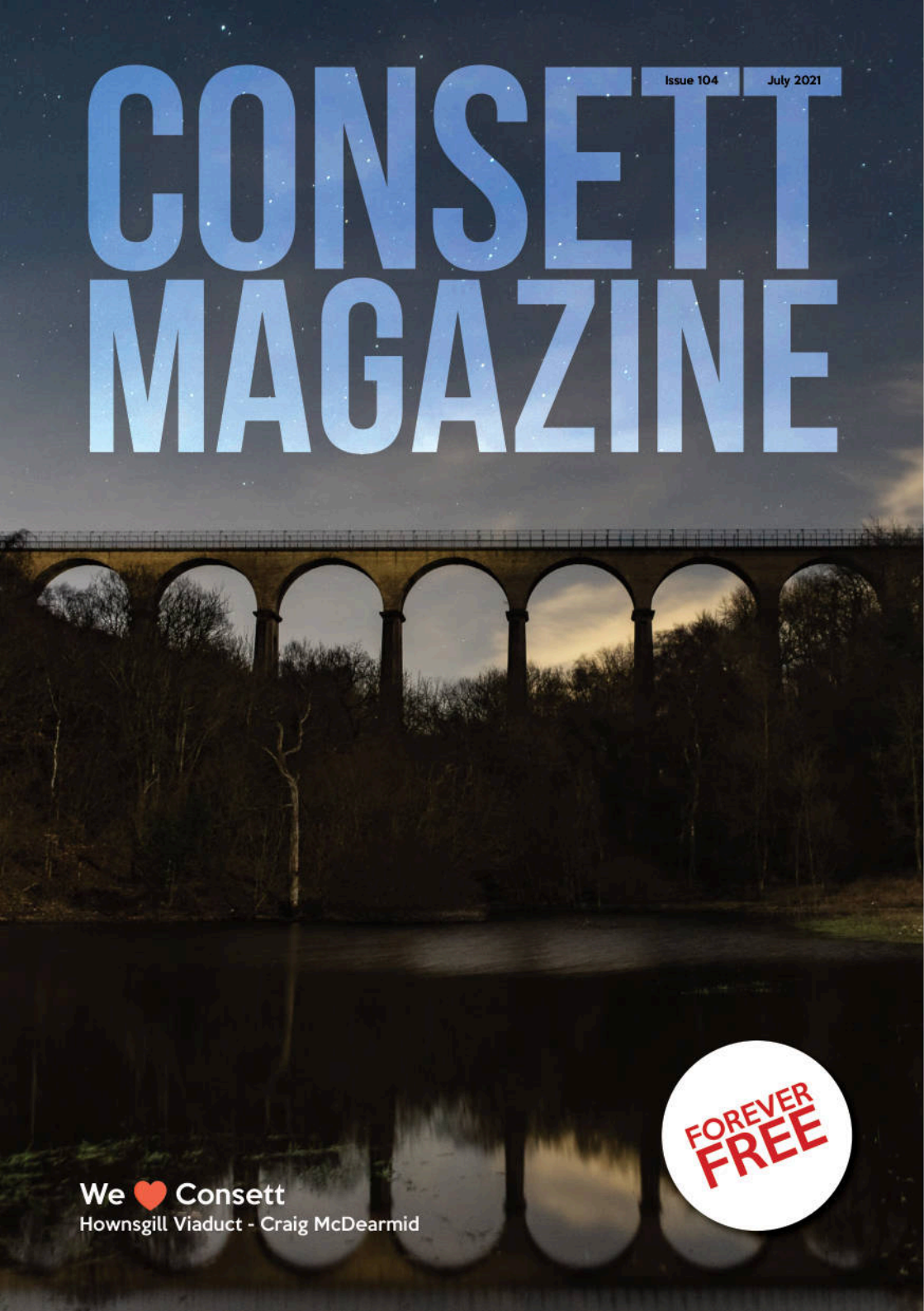
CONSETT MAGAZINE

Issue 104 July 2021



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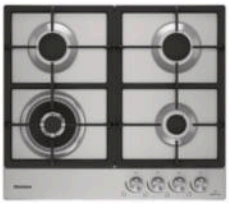

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Dear Consett Magazine readers,

Hello and welcome to the one hundred and fourth issue of the Consett Magazine. Can you believe it's already July? This month, like every month we've got a packed issue with stories from a range of local businesses and individuals. Check out consettmagazine.com for more wonderful local content.

#positivelocalnews

This month's front cover is a fantastic snapshot of the Hownsgill Viaduct taken by local astronomer Craig McDearmid.

The Consett Corona Photo Project brings us another 8 fantastic photos on pages 4 and 5. If you'd like to contribute to the project you can visit their Facebook page at /consettcoronaphotoproject

Jennifer Hartburn makes her debut in the magazine on page 6. From sales assistant to property mogul, Jennifer explains how she came to own one of the most iconic businesses in the area.

We have a great contribution from Phil, part of the History of the Steelworks Group, who remembers his time at the steelworks on page 7.

It's a sad farewell to local butchers Forsters on pages 9 and 10 after nearly 8 decades of supplying fresh meat to the people of Consett.

Chris Gage is back with some excellent advice, this time the top 5 accessories for your motorhome on page 11.

Alnwick is this month's "Places to Go" on Page 12, followed by local school of motoring, Optimus Drive and their appeal for driving instructors and the importance of booking a driving test in advance.

And last but not least, another newcomer in the magazine, Blakey's Cafe owner Francis tells his story on page 15.

If you've made it this far down the page then you're probably aware that Consett Magazine is an independently ran publication. Started by local entrepreneur Barry Kirkham to bridge the gap between the billionaire owned and ran newspapers and the long forgotten local magazine format. We hope you have a wonderful July! - Marco Elsy and everyone that makes the Consett Magazine possible.

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SCAN ME

The Front Cover

The front cover this month is by Craig McDearmid
Send any drawings or photographs to:
editor@consettmagazine.com

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Consett Corona Photo Project - July 2021

The intention is to host an exhibition or series of exhibitions in the area once restrictions are relaxed and it is safe to do so. Prior to this we will publish selected images on our FB page - https://www.facebook.com/ConsettCoronaPhotoProject



1. The care being delivered in Brockwell Court can, at times, be challenging and requires the staff team to be highly skilled. During the pandemic, the demands upon staff have been increased because residents have been unable to have physical contact with their loved ones. Staff have had to step up into this role and provide new ways to maintain family contacts via the use of technology, as well as providing residents with additional social stimulation. The staff team have not only provided care for the residents but have provided a wide range of activities to keep the residents engaged and entertained. - (Image: George Ledger)



3. Millions of children in England have gone back to school today after more than two months studying at home in the latest lockdown in England. Pupils and Staff in Tanfield School will take Lateral Flow Covid tests twice a week and face masks will be worn in classrooms. Prime Minister Boris Johnson described the return as an important first step towards a "sense of normality". We are sure pupils will have mixed emotions, a little nervous but really pleased to meet up with friends and Teachers again. - (Image: Debbie Todd)



2. On Monday 23rd March 2020 all Dental appointments and routine non-urgent appointments were stopped due to Coronavirus. However emergency treatment still had to proceed and following Government advice, Shotely Bridge Dental Care like most practices remained open but subject to stringent restrictions and measures. These measures were important to reassure both patients and staff that the practice was clean and safe. Some were obvious like the dental team wearing different protective equipment to that worn previously and patients having their temperature taken and having to sanitise their hands on entering and exiting the practice. Others less obvious but just as important such as Socially distanced waiting areas, cleaning of door handles and pens etc between patients, and Card only payments. It is impossible to say when these measures will be relaxed but because of them Dentists have been able to provide emergency treatment to many people throughout the pandemic. (Image: George Ledger)



4. Community pharmacists are some of the most accessible healthcare practitioners, which was certainly the case during the pandemic as they continued to provide direct patient care despite restrictions imposed by the government due to the pandemic. Station Road Pharmacy, Consett like other Community pharmacists have reduced the burden on the healthcare system by diverting the influx of patients away from hospitals through triaging and screening patients. They have played various roles in supporting the healthcare system during COVID-19: delivering medications to patients, educating patients on telehealth services, assessing patients for renewal of chronic medications, performing consultations on minor ailments, clarifying misconceptions about COVID-19 treatments, and in a lot of areas contributing to COVID-19 screening and vaccinations. - (Image: George Ledger)

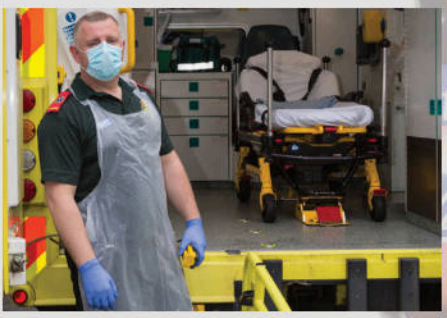
The Consett Corona Photo Project started in March 2020 and has continued to document the effects of Covid-19 upon the people, volunteer groups and businesses in the Consett area. All images have been photographed within the Government guidelines. If you wish to be part of the project or have suggestions, please contact us at: consettcoronaphoto@gmail.com



5. Covid-19 could force 1 in 10 charities to close within a year, according to some research. With 8 out of 10 charities predicting the pandemic will negatively impact their ability to deliver objectives over the next 12 months. One of our local charities is Willowburn Hospice based at Maiden Law near Lanchester. It opened in 1989 but has expanded over the years and in 2018 moved into its new building, which includes a new six-bed hospice and Day Services. Each of the six en-suite bedrooms are well-equipped, each room has its own private balcony, and the portable beds can be moved to the balcony upon request. Patients also have access to a large luxurious spa bathroom equipped with a hydrotherapy bath, television and music, everything you might need for a relaxing soak in the bath. Despite all the financial issues Willowburn has remained open throughout the crisis delivering the specialist supportive, palliative and end of life care they are renowned for. (Image: George Ledger)



7. The pandemic has seen Sandra's job change significantly. The Cardiology nurse specialist is based in the community and visits patients with heart related conditions. She is also studying higher education at Teeside University. During the first lockdown she was drafted back into the hospitals where she had previously worked. More recently she has been working with a team of community nurses to deliver the vaccine to the vulnerable who are shielding. This is mainly within their homes or at nursing homes. The keen motorcyclist has been completing her education at home/ online alongside these new changes to her career and is almost finished and ready for anything that life throws at her. (Image: Debbie Todd)



6. North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (NEAS) covers 3,200 square miles across the North East region. It employs more than 2,600 staff and serves a population of 2.7 million people by handling all NHS111 and 999 calls for the region, operating patient transport and ambulance response services, delivering training for communities and commercial audiences and providing medical support cover at events. Staff from both our area's stations at Consett and Stanley, have worked continuously through the whole pandemic providing both normal emergency care plus the additional work created by Covid-19, together with covering for staff absences caused by the virus. (Image: George Ledger)



8. The Covid-19 Vaccination program is a big success and a real game changer in the fight against Coronavirus. It is the biggest vaccination programme in the UK's history, and began on the 8th of December 2020 when Margaret Keenan was vaccinated at University Hospital, Coventry. In England, COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered from 206 hospital hubs and 1,200 local vaccination service sites, including Queens Road Surgery at Shotley Bridge. A further 50 vaccination centres are in large-scale venues, such as football stadiums. We owe a great debt of thanks to everyone involved in this excellent Vaccination Program. (Image: George Ledger)

HARRINGTON BROWN

Your Local Property Expert

Where it all Started

Harrington Brown was established as an independent Estate Agency in 2001 by Margaret Burton who had over 15yrs of experience working for corporate agents.

With new development planned in Shotley Bridge she decided it was the right time to take the plunge and open her own agency and it proved to be a good decision!

In 2011 Jennifer joined the small team bringing with her a successful background in Sales & Marketing and a passion for property having renovated her first property at the age of 23. "When I put my first property on the market I hoped it would sell within 3 months but It sold in 5 days when it went to sealed bids, "I still remember getting the call at work that Friday afternoon - you would have thought I'd won the lottery!!" Jennifer said that's when she caught the property bug!

Jumping forward a decade, Jennifer had left Harrington Brown to start a family (2 daughters), renovated and rented out a local property, bought and renovated her forever home with husband Lee, and in between completed two Diplomas, Soft Furnishing and Interior Design, as well as a part time course in Upholstery.

After an impromptu conversation with Margaret about retirement and future plans, Jennifer and her husband thought it was the perfect timing to get back into the business. "I had always planned to go back to work doing something for myself once both girls were at school, but when the opportunity came up I thought it's now or never, and thankfully the staff were more than happy to stay with me, so made the decision even easier!"

With a background in Sales & Marketing and Customer Care, Jennifers aim is to offer the very highest level of service in the Sales & Letting market and her focus is on customer experience and satisfaction. Jennifer has continued to study and complete her Level 3 Diploma in Estate Agency and attended refresher training in compliance to keep up to date with all the current legislation.



Jennifer Hartburn

Selling or Buying a home is one of the most important decisions you make, Harrington Brown is here to guide you through the process step by step and make it as stress free as possible for you.

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Phil Brown - My Steelworks Story

My name is Philip Brown , my parents were William & Jean Brown . I was born in the Richard Murray Maternity Hospital in Blackhill on Coronation Day , 2nd June 1953.
My father at that time worked in Newcastle , so we lived in Winlaton Mill , Blaydon

My sister Joyce was born in 1956 at the Richard Murray Hospital. In 1959 we moved to Blackhill and lived in St . Mary's Crescent, this brought us closer to other family.
I attended Benfieldside schools , from Infants , Juniors and Secondary Modern school. My final year at the school was 1968 – 69.

After sitting our CSE exams we started to look at what type work we wanted to do on leaving. The schools jobs advice office at Benfield Hall didn't have much to offer in the way of jobs. A few of us applied for apprenticeships with the local electricity company NEEB and the GPO telecoms section but we had no success.

So thoughts turned towards the steel works.

At this moment in time the old "addidge" to get a job there was , It wasn't what you knew to get a job there , it was who you knew !! Once again, a few of us applied for jobs as Junior Operatives (J I S O's). We hit lucky and got the jobs , so in June 1969 I left the school. After the two day induction course I started in the Billet Mill (SBBM),

I had to work the 3 shift system — 6/2 , 2/10 , 10/6.

The job I had to do was paint the customers number on the billets after they had come off the hot banks and cooled down , also the billet ends were painted different colours. The billets were of different sizes , about 2 -4 inch square and 15 – 20 feet long. After the hot banks the billets were lifted off in batches and put down in the bay to be inspected for faults. The faults could be scaling or piping, these faults were deseamed out using oxygen blow torches.

Out of each batch samples had to be taken for quality checks, so a piece of billet about 6 inches long was burnt off and sent to the TRD department for testing, these samples were called crop ends.

One shift I was painting the billet ends with green paint, when I picked up the gallon paint tin it seemed heavy , an old hand asked me why I was struggling, he said it was a special lead paint and that's why it was heavy. It was only later on that I discovered 2 crop ends in the bottom of the tin — the joke was on me !!!

Another lesson I learned was when I was sent to the General Stores to get some supplies. The bay foreman gave me a Materials Issue Ticket (M I T) I had to get a gallon of white spirit , 3 half gallon paint pots , 1 dozen leather gloves , 1 dozen large paint brushes and 1 dozen small paint brushes (sash tools) I went to the stores to get the supplies, when I returned to the mill there was nobody there, it was tea break. So I put the supplies down in the bay and went for a cuppa. When break time was over I went back to the bay only to find everything had disappeared !! The bay foreman wasn't to pleased and told me that you don't leave anything new lying around.

When the summer shut-down came along, I had to work it. The job I was given with a few other lads was to work under the hot banks, we had to clean up all the scale , dirt , pieces of billet and any other debris.

It was a back breaking job and the foreman wanted to see the brickwork floor when we had finished. The next job in the second week was to go round painting the gantries and walkways.

In August 1969 I applied for an apprenticeship at the steelworks , I took the exam and managed to get an interview. After the interview I was offered an apprenticeship as a Fitter & Turner , which I accepted. I worked as a Junior Opp. Until September 1969, then I started my apprenticeship at the Training Centre.

I would be here for 1 year with day release for college. As a Junior Opp. I was getting paid about £16-20 per week, when I started my apprenticeship we got paid £5 per week. As an apprentice Fitter / Turner i had to start 12 weeks basic fitting, then 6 weeks electrical work, then 6 weeks plating welding work.

During this time we got safety talks and we were shown how to wear breathing apparatus. Then i was shown how to operate all the various machines , lathes, milling machines, surface grinders,bench drills, shaping machines. Then we had to make test pieces using the machines.

On day release we had to go to Consett Technical College , except for my year , we had to go to the colleges annex building which was in Medomsley (an old school building down from the Hat & Feather pub) This was a nice walk from Blackhill except in the winter time !!

After a year at the Training Centre we were let loose on the plant. I had been selected to work in the Oxygen Steel Plant but in 1970 the Steel Plant was deemed to be dangerous for new apprentices , so i had to go to the Billet Mill for 3 months training.

I hope this is ok for the first story, the next one will cover working in the various departments and coming out of my time in the Steel Plant.

Best Regards - Phil.

Story taken from https://historyofconsettsteelworks.com/

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Forsters Fond Farewell
By Lorraine Weightman

Forster Bros have been an integral part of Consett Life since 1945.

Three entrepreneurial brothers from Milkwell Burn in Hamsterley opened a business providing fresh meat, bread, pies, pastries and bakery products to feed the growing community. They ran vans from their Aunt's shop in Medomsley and delivered their delicious wares all around the area. With this success under their belt, Bill, Alf and George moved forward, developing their business further afield.

They moved to Consett and along with the butchers and bakery, they set up an electrical shop, all based in separate properties in Victoria Road Consett. They worked from a bakery in Blackhill - opposite what used to be Doran's - close to the Park Royal.

Alf, a baker himself, synergised alongside George Dance - who was previously a foreman at Hanson's bakery - and together they augmented the now famous bread recipe he brought with him.

George Forster oversaw the butchery department along with Bill who was an electrical engineer. It was obvious these brothers could turn their hands and heads to anything and with boundless energy they proceeded to expand their businesses.

The brothers married and raised families while still running their trades and investing in more.
They opened a shop in Stanley three doors up from The Royal and next door but one to Manfredi's; and around this time Bill tried his hand at farming, while Alf took on a bakery in Darlington.

With success after success they invested in a coal mine at Hedley on the Hill while buying up property in Consett itself, including the block where The Carlton used to be.

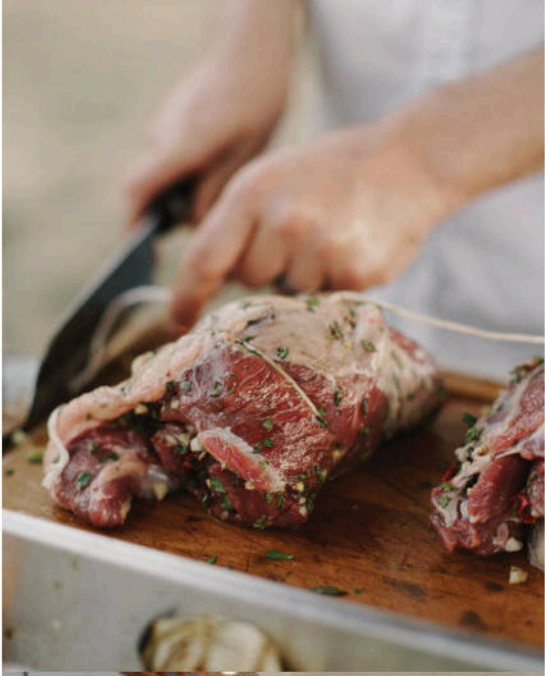
Later the whole family bought the Derwent Walk Public House which used to be a railway station.

They then invested in The Anchor at Whittonstall which was purchased as a country pub and the restaurant was built on, using the stone that came from Allendale cottages.

Relying on others to manage these ventures, they realised one can only be in one place at one time and concentrated their efforts on their local butchery, bakery and electrical businesses.

With their vans garaged in East Law and Ebchester, they began catering for weddings, funerals, and social events in church halls and community centres, happy to provide the complete package - not only a sumptuous buffet but the crockery, napkins and cutlery as well!

Continued on next page.

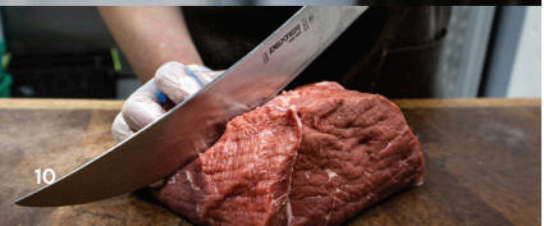












The three brothers brought their three successful and expanding businesses together in 1953 in a purpose built shop in Victoria Road, opposite St Patrick's Church and the old Post Office.

And here members of their growing families began learning the trade, while others moved in different directions. The family opened another shop in Leadgate in the early seventies providing the same good quality meat, baked goods, and bread.

Stephen and Billy - sons of Alf and Bill respectively - worked in the Consett and Leadgate shops along with Eric Jones - who is now the longest serving staff member - and Barry Musgrove.

Barry the baker who trained and learned his trade under George Dance has been producing the delicious bread and bakery products that we love and know so well for many years.

These four men who started working for the business in their teens have given, between them, almost 200 years of service to the people of Consett.

Yet they are not only noted for their delicious Forsters fare. Their clientele are always greeted and served in the delightful traditional way, empowered to buy as much or as little as they need while enjoying the jolly banter and customer service that Forsters are renowned for.

My childhood memories are of collecting the ordered bread, pies, ham, pease pudding and the joint for Sunday lunch on a Saturday with my Uncle Michael - and because he would only eat their bread - he always made sure the orders were in early in the week. My thoughts stray back to Christmas, viewing all the turkeys lined up in the huge window, and always being amazed that you just had to say who you were and they brought one out with your name on it!

And who can forget the Gingerbread Men which I was buying only last week for my granddaughters.
Those of you who have tasted the delicious home baked meat or ham and egg squares will agree they are like none other. I'm sure everyone who frequented this establishment could tell their own tale and list their favourites for your perusal.

The delicious recipes have remained consistent throughout, and none of us could imagine them not being there, But as the saying goes; 'All good things come to an end' The decision to retire was made with the closure of the Leadgate outlet on May 30th.

Two weeks later on June 12th 2021, Forsters butchers and bakers in Consett closed it's doors for the last time.

I would like to say a fond farewell to Forsters; you have been a part of my life for 65 years and I want to thank you for everything.

Consett will not be the same without you.

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The Top 5 Accessories For Your Motorhome

by Chris Gage, Motorhome & Caravan Broker

Standard specification of motorhomes varies widely, some are very comprehensively equipped, while others may need enhancements. Fitting new accessories to an older vehicle can be expensive and we have to judge what is worthwhile depending on our intended usage. Here, I'm going to share the top 5 fitted accessories that many buyers like to see, helping to improve their enjoyment and make the vehicle more desirable when they want to sell:

1) Awning sun canopy - a wind-out sun canopy offers almost instant shade and fits neatly to the side, or on the roof of a motorhome. It requires virtually no maintenance and additional annexes or panels can be added to it, giving much more undercover enclosed space. Almost a no-brainer for most buyers.

2) Bike rack - a 2, 3, or 4 bike rack means you can enjoy taking exercise whilst discovering the places you visit more intimately, without having to decamp and drive a short distance to the shops or places of interest. Its a great family activity too and many sites actively promote the enjoyment of cycling with information about local routes, many of them including traffic free paths.

3) Solar panel - a fitted solar panel charges the leisure battery, some can be switched to charge the engine battery as well. They are a boon if you like to camp more freely without electric hookup, and over the winter can trickle in enough charge to keep the battery from going completely flat and failing.

4) Refillable LPG bottles - these are becoming very popular for domestic gas supply, especially for motorhomers travelling abroad, as they negate the need to change bottle brands and regulators as you travel through various countries. Pumped LPG gas is a fraction of the cost of bottled gas too, so over time the installation will pay for itself.

5) Tracking system - these are very affordable now and essentially there are two types - a passive tracker which will reveal its location when a signal is sent to it (eg if a vehicle is reported stolen), or a proactive tracker which sends an alert to the subscribers mobile phone it an unauthorised vehicle movement is detected. Many owners have an alarm as well, although a proactive tracker is ideal when the motorhome is in storage at a remote location.

If you need help selling a motorhome, campervan or caravan in the North East, contact Chris Gage for a professional cash purchase or brokerage sale valuation on 07375 074407



Alnwick Plus Bus

The weather forecast was not very promising, with rain expected and precious few places to shelter in the last stages of lockdown. At Newcastle, I boarded the 0933 Cross Country train, next stop Alnmouth for Alnwick. I added a PlusBus ticket to my off peak day return to give unlimited bus travel through to Alnwick, Warkworth and Amble, and, had I wanted it, to Boulmer and Longhoughton too, all for just £3 extra on top of my rail fare.

The train arrived at Alnmouth on time 24 minutes later, a journey that the AA reckoned would take 46 minutes in a car. The welcoming coffee trailer was there and I walked up to station access road to await the Arriva bus X20 to Alnwick. There I explored the streets on market day, finding the Dirty Bottles pub at 32 Narrowgate now turned into a restaurant, but still with the 300 year old bottles in the window inviting a nasty end to anybody who touched them. I went to see the entrance to the Castle and noted that the Bailiffgate Museum was due to open on 22nd May.

My timed entry to Alnwick Garden was at 1155. I think in practice I could have been admitted much earlier (or later), because although the entrance area and café were busy, that was just people sheltering from the rain and the gardens themselves were very quiet. I was very kindly allowed to eat my own food in the seating area outside the café, and was enchanted by some tiny ducklings which passed through my legs with their mother duck keeping a watchful eye for any spare morsels.
The Alnwick Garden is not huge, and pleasant to walk around with an umbrella. The poison garden, which opened in 2005, was particularly interesting since every plant could kill you. The Grand Cascade was impressive, the Rose Garden fragrant and the Bamboo Labyrinth was quite disorientating. At the time of my visit in early May, the Taihaku Cherry Blossom trees were at their best, the largest collection in the world with 329 trees and both pathways and swings.

Mid-afternoon I took the bus down to Amble, and had a late lunch under canvas in a pub called the Wellwood Arms which had a particularly appealing attribute: it was open for hot food. I took a walk around the Marina and harbour which was interesting. Unfortunately the Marina Arms, which ceased being a pub a few years ago, and was turned into a vintage emporium, has now been demolished to make way for new housing. The old building was piled high awaiting removal.

The bus returned to Alnwick via Warkworth with its fine English Heritage castle. Once back in Alnwick around 1700 I holed up inside Barter Books which is based inside the former railway station, until closing time. Grand though it was, the short branch line closed in 1968 leaving the smaller station at Alnmouth to take the traffic. Barter Books opened in 1991, and is an Alnwick institution, and has a variety of seating options to enjoy reading a book, which I did until 1800. It was in 2000 that





they discovered the original "Keep Calm and Carry On" posters which had been prepared for use in 1939, but never actually distributed. A visit to a turf accountant filled the time before my bus back to Alnmouth for the 1946 train which is one of only two all stations trains south to Newcastle, in the company only of a cyclist who had ridden from Devon to Edinburgh who was staying overnight in Widdrington.

alexnelson@dunelm.org.uk
www.nationalrail.com

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If you do suspect your dog has been bitten by an adder, you should minimise their movement by carrying them (if possible), keep them warm and quiet, and get to the nearest vets as quickly as possible. If treated promptly, the prognosis is very good in the vast majority of cases.

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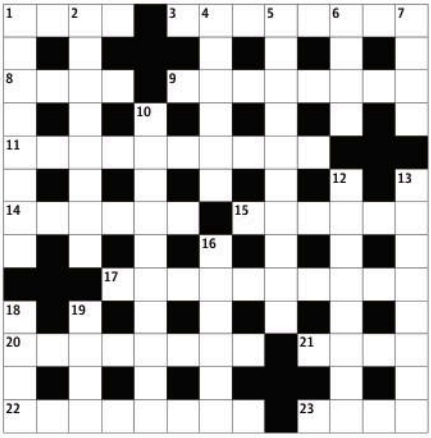
Puzzle Corner July 2021



Across

1. Chilly (4)
3. Loud and grating (8)
8. Profit (4)
9. Mozart's first name (8)
11. At once (4,6)
14. Idle talk (6)
15. Patterned table linen (6)
17. Western (10)
20. Still (8)
21. Iris — paving slab (4)
22. Piffle (8)
23. Turn to liquid (4)

Down

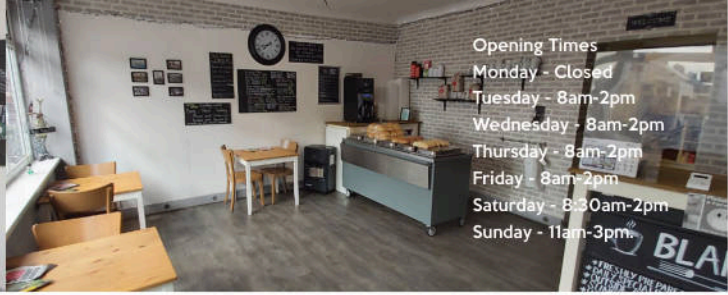
1. Ponder (8)
2. Attacked (4,4)
4. Causing difficulty — like a bed of roses? (6)
5. Besotted (10)
6. And others (abbr) (2,2)
7. West Africa country, capital Lomé (4)
10. Totally unrelenting (10)
12. Historic French prison (8)
13. Window in a roof (8)
16. Gracie or WC? (6)
18. Sought after celebrity
18. (showing great strength and courage?) (4)
19. Churchgoer's assent? (4)

Answers for June

L	A	N	C	E	C	O	R	P	O	R	A	L
■	V	■	H	■	U	■	U	■	A	■	C	■
V	I	S	A	■	S	E	M	I	T	O	N	E
■	E	■	I	■	H	■	B	■	M	■	E	■
E	M	A	N	C	I	P	A	T	E	■	■	■
■	O	■	■	■	O	■	■	■	A	■	A	■
T	R	O	J	A	N	■	J	U	L	E	P	S
■	E	■	U	■	■	■	U	■	■	■	P	■
■	■	■	P	O	L	E	S	A	P	A	R	T
■	V	■	I	■	A	■	T	■	O	■	O	■
P	A	R	T	I	S	A	N	■	W	R	A	P
■	I	■	E	■	T	■	O	■	E	■	C	■
U	N	T	R	U	S	T	W	O	R	T	H	Y

Answers for this puzzle will be published on the same page next month.





My name is Francis Blakey, owner of Blakey's cafe and Bistro.

BLAKEY'S
07454 741 459

I've always had an interest in cooking from a young age, working in catering for 18 years has allowed me to see all aspects of the industry.

Whilst having a conversation with my wife, Vicki, one night I said, "let's get our own place". After a few weeks of pestering her, we finally found our little shop. It was a big step leaving cheffing after so long, but I wanted to be able to be more active in my boys' lives and dreamt of having the 'family business'.

We opened our doors on the 30th October 2018, hitting the ground running. Don't get me wrong it's been hard work, having it ups and downs but we persevered and are still going strong. We've tried to cater our menu to everyone's needs and dietary requirements. I'm a massive believer that customers should get what they pay for, that's why our menu prices haven't gone up since we opened our doors, offering a good price for delicious homemade food. Every Christmas, since we opened, we have done a Community Lunch of three courses for the very reasonable price of £8.95 with free delivery.

On Christmas Day, after watching my boys open presents, I would nip to the shop to make bacon sarnies and deliver them to Shotley Bridge Hospital and our local fire station as a small thank you, for all their hard work. When the pandemic hit, it was a shock to all of us and unfortunately like everyone else we has to close our doors, which was very heart breaking, we tried to supply our customers the best we could with everyday essentials but we had to stop due to the increased risk. They were very understanding, and kept telling me "you should be at home with your family, don't worry about us". Our customers are our family, without them there would be no us!!

Gradually, we have reopened our doors and know we have a long way to go to return to normal. Since we reopened, we have become proud sponsors of Medomsley Cricket Club, which is ran by a great group of lads. I still firmly believe that it's now more than ever we need each other! - Sincerely, Mr Blakey.

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