CONSETT MAGAZINE

Issue 109 | Dec 2021



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Blink and it's nearly 2022!!,

Hello wonderful people of Consett. we hope you're keeping warm this December?

The Consett Corona Photo Project is drawing to a close, but in a final installment we're honouring those that have appeared in the series over the past year. People like Father Bagnall, Lynne from the Corona Vulnerable People and Volunteers Group, Tracey from the vaccination team at Queens Road Surgery, Julie from Tank Girl Training, Graham from The Scotch Arms, Natalie from Brockwell Court, Phoebe, Joseph and not forgetting the four photographers that have brought us this insightful project: Debbie, Chris, George, and Steve. See the great pictures on pages 4 and 5.

Our regular entertainment writer, Lorraine Weightman asks "Why are we predisposed to giving presents?" on page 6.

The Christmas Panto at the Empire is back! find out more and book your tickets on page 9.

Pages 10 and 11 are dedicated to nature and the work that has been undertaken around Consett to preserve and protect the environment.

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If you'd like to see your photograph, illustration, or art on the front cover - go ahead and give us a call on 01207 438 292 or email us on editor@consettmagazine.com.

We wish you a merry December and a Happy New Year!
Barry Kirkham, Marco Elsy and everyone who makes the Consett Magazine possible every month.

Thank you!

* Also check out consettmagazine.com and Consett Magazine on Facebook/Instagram for even more local content updated on a daily basis. And remember to please support our awesome advertisers, they make this magazine possible each and every month - without them we'd be unable to print, distribute, and maintain our online platforms.

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SCAN ME

The Front Cover

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

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Lynne, Corona Vulnerable People and Volunteers Group. Representing all the volunteers from various groups who have worked hard and supported the community throughout the pandemic.



Father Bagnall, St Patricks Church. Representing Church leaders from all denominations and faiths, who despite their Churches and buildings being closed have continued to offer support to everyone, not just to their own congregation throughout this period.



Natalie, Brockwell Court Care Home Manager. Representing the Care Industry who have worked tirelessly under extreme pressure, supporting, and caring for some of the most vulnerable sections of the community.



Tracey, Vaccination team at Queens Road Surgery. Representing the NHS, both Hospital and G.P. services as well as other health professionals. The vaccination program has been one of the greatest successes and offers a successful end game to the virus.

Consett Corona Photo Project - Dec 2021

The photo project was started in March 2020 at the start of the first national lockdown. George Ledger, a retired police officer and photographer, began to document the impact of the coronavirus on Consett and its communities. We will end our posts within this magazine with a selection of the people we have captured, all proudly standing next to their photographs at one of exhibitions.



Julie, Tank Girl Training, Representing Sports and Hobbies which have been very important to both our physical and mental health during the Lockdowns and reopening of society.



Phoebe and Joseph, Christmas Day. Representing children and the public at large who have endured the most. Despite missing School, friends and family, missing out on Birthdays and having to open their Christmas presents on relatives' doorsteps, they can still smile.



Graham, Licensee of The Scotch Arms. Representing all businesses who have been affected by loss of trade at various times in the last two years. They have provided normality and something to look forward to, as we emerged from the Lockdowns and Tier systems.



The Photographers, Debbie, Chris, George, and Steve. We have had the privilege to photograph and document how the pandemic has affected our communities. We will continue to exhibit the photographs and show them to as many groups in our area as possible.

Thank you to everyone who has allowed us to photograph them and all those who have looked at our photographs and attended our exhibitions.
There will be new exhibitions in the coming months so please keep an eye on our Facebook page

facebook.com/ConsettCoronaPhotoProject - or contact: consettcoronaphoto@gmail.com

Give A Little Bit - By Lorraine Weightman

So, what Christmas gift do we buy for those people who insist they don't want anything, and we know have everything they need.

Those hours of racking our brains, flicking through catalogues for novelty items, browsing online for something perfect to jump out at us - until after hours of searching - we take the 'well that will have to do' approach.

Some would say it's just the thought that counts, and I would tend to agree, but it's doesn't always solve the issue. It's no wonder there are long queues at the exchange and refund counters from Boxing Day onwards.

So why are we so predisposed to giving gifts?

Some researchers believe that gifting has existed since the start of human civilisation, and that cavemen gave away unusual shaped rocks and stones or animals teeth as keepsakes. This helped to strengthen their social connection and also show their appreciation of others.

Today, we find, as social structures have evolved, the gifts are more extravagant and sophisticated, yet it's believed that behind every ideal gift lie emotional, social and psychological streams.

I suspect the word gift can be interpreted in many ways; as all gifts don't need to be bought or be expensive. Something homemade, a good deed or action can mean the world to someone, and be valued as a very special present.

I remember, as a child, watching my family painstakingly write out numerous letters to place inside Christmas cards to send to our cousins and aunties and uncles.

And watching, as my Auntie Rose - from September onwards - filled up the bottom of her wardrobe with toiletries, including Imperial Leather soap, Brut aftershaves, bath cubes and numerous pairs of assorted socks - because they never came in wrong - to send to our family in London.



I recalled some of the relatives she was buying for, but didn't know the more distant who I hadn't met, but she knew all their names and wouldn't leave anyone out. All carefully wrapped in brown paper and labelled we took the parcels to the Post Office in Victoria Road in Consett, waiting patiently as they were weighed, sorted and stamped. On our return, over a cup of tea and a slice of her homemade apple pie with sugar on the top, she explained that even though we didn't see them often, our southern family would be pleased to know we were thinking about them, however small the present.

I do however recall the gift giving wasn't reciprocated as I didn't see her receive any parcels in return. But no matter, she did it every year for as long as I can remember.

So it seems that giving is not all about receiving something back.

I could never get away with the smell of Imperial Leather or the way it frittered away to a label on the soap dish, so I was happy to see it all go.
And I'm sure we have all received a gift we didn't like or appreciate or tried on occasion to impress with our present giving.

I remember one year my husband being enamoured by Billy Bass the singing fish with it's rendition of 'Take Me to River', so he bought it for the family to enjoy, which to be fair we did for a few days over Christmas, but by the new year, Billy was relocated to the back of the bathroom cupboard with his batteries removed!

Another year I decided to make Christmas iced red and green biscuits which I threaded with colourful ribbon to hang on the Christmas Tree, while filling and wrapping boxes to give away. What I didn't count on was a greedy Labrador who managed to devour the lot while we were out shopping!

So Christmas can not always be what we want it or expect it to be; so perhaps we can with accept it as it is, and be content with just giving a little bit of ourselves away.

Give a little bit
Give a little bit of your love to me
Give a little bit
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So send a smile and show you care

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Christmas panto sails back to Empire Theatre



Swashbuckling swordfights, hidden treasure, and an adventure on the high seas await audiences who are going to a County Durham theatre's Christmas panto this year.

Empire Consett will be bringing back its popular family Christmas show this month, with an exciting production of Treasure Island.

With its opening night on 27 November, the pantomime follows Benjamin Gunn as he winds up in an adventure involving a band of grizzly pirates and his grandfather's ancient map, which points the way to treasure hidden on an island ruled by a king and his daughter.

This year's show has been produced and directed by Leah Bell, who is celebrating her tenth year working with the Empire on its Christmas panto and will be playing Benjamin's aunt, Gertrude Gunn.

She will be joined on stage by a dynamic cast including Gareth Arthurs as Benjamin Gunn, Dave McCarthy as Captain Jack, Bethan Amber as Peaches Peadbody the Pirate Queen, Andy Tate as King Koo-Koo, Gabrielle Smith as the king's daughter Mona, and Jason Jones, Kas O Neil and Dzed as pirates Slick Slack Silver, Shifty Shark, and Sneaky Snake.

With pirate swordfights, tropical rainstorms, and a mysterious underwater kingdom, Treasure Island is full of adventure and laughter for families to enjoy.
Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships, said: "We are really excited to be able to bring back our panto at Consett Empire, and particularly this year as this will be the first time our Christmas show will perform on the new stage following the theatre's refurbishment.

"For the last decade Leah has directed and produced a fabulous show year after year, and I'm sure this one will be just as dazzling, funny, and entertaining. We have a lot of talented writers and producers in our region, and it's because of this talent that our county is bidding for UK City of Culture 2025. We want to use this opportunity to demonstrate County Durham's strong culture and create more opportunities for our artists, writers and creators."

Treasure Island will be shown at Consett Empire from 27 November to 31 December. A British Sign Language performance will be held on 29 December at 3pm, and a relaxed performance will be shown at 11am the same day.

Tickets for the opening night on 27 November are all priced at £10, and the following performances will be at £17 or £15 concession, and family tickets are £56. School and group discounts are also available.

To book tickets, call the box office on 03000 262 400 or visit: www.empireconsett.co.uk





Local Tree Planting Event To – 'Go Green With The Queen'!

A SPECIAL TREE planting ceremony took place at the Haystax Farm Experience Centre to commemorate Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The event is an important part in the 'Queen's Green Canopy' (QGC) initiative, which invites people and organisations across the United Kingdom to 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee'. This prestigious occasion, was held on the 8th November 2021, and saw Mrs Sue Snowdon, H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of County Durham planting the first of seventy sponsored trees to mark the 70th year of the Queen's service to her country. This wonderful 'green' tribute will mark the region's start to the special platinum jubilee celebrations for the Queen and was arranged by directors Craig Pratt and Sarah Warrier of CMYK – a leading Business Technology provider, which also kindly sponsored the trees.



Lorna and Ian Adamson at Haystax Inclusive Farm Experience near Knitsley, Consett, are delighted that their farm is taking part in the Queen's Green Canopy programme. Haystax will be open to all but has been designed specifically for families who have a family member with special needs to allow them to access facilities such as animal therapy opportunities, sensory and quiet rooms, outdoor classroom sessions, outdoor play activities – to name only a few of the exciting things in store.

Mrs Snowdon was delighted to hear about Lorna and Ian's plans and arranged a visit to speak to the team and understand the aims of the project. Following this visit Mrs Snowdon, was eager to take part in Haystax's plans of creating a woodland tribute to honour the Queen's seventieth year on the throne.

Working alongside Lorna, Ian and the CMYK Group are the inspirational learners from Learning for Life – a specialist educational and social care provider for young individuals with special educational needs in our area. Anne Timothy, a Trustee at Learning for Life, said, "We are delighted and excited to be such a special part of the Platinum Plantation at Haystax. This is a most wonderful and prestigious opportunity for our learners and staff to be involved in such a special and historic event. We are all looking forward to an experience to remember!"

The tree planting ceremony took place at: Haystax, Woodland Farm, Knitsley, Consett, on the 8th November 2021.

For further information, please contact: Marie Matthewson on (01207) 509936 or Lorna Adamson on 07790 756178.

New Heritage Signs Signal Continued Community Investment



Representatives from Project Genesis Trust have officially marked the installation of new signage which was erected along 4.5 miles of Consett's Heritage Trail to encourage more local people to use public open spaces during the lockdown period.

The £435,000 investment, made directly by the Trust to the local community, has, over the last 18 months, encouraged individuals of all ages from young people and families to retired walking groups, to take full advantage of the woodland trails at a time when for many, their mental health and wellbeing were being impacted.

The signs, the first of which was installed opposite the Café in the Park, detail the route of the trail, places of interest and its link to other local footpaths and national cycle routes such as the C2C which runs through Consett. It is hoped that residents, as well as new visitors to the area and event organisers, will continue to use the trails and woodlands which have proved extremely popular.

Local MP for North West Durham, Richard Holden, was present at a recent race event to mark the donation made.

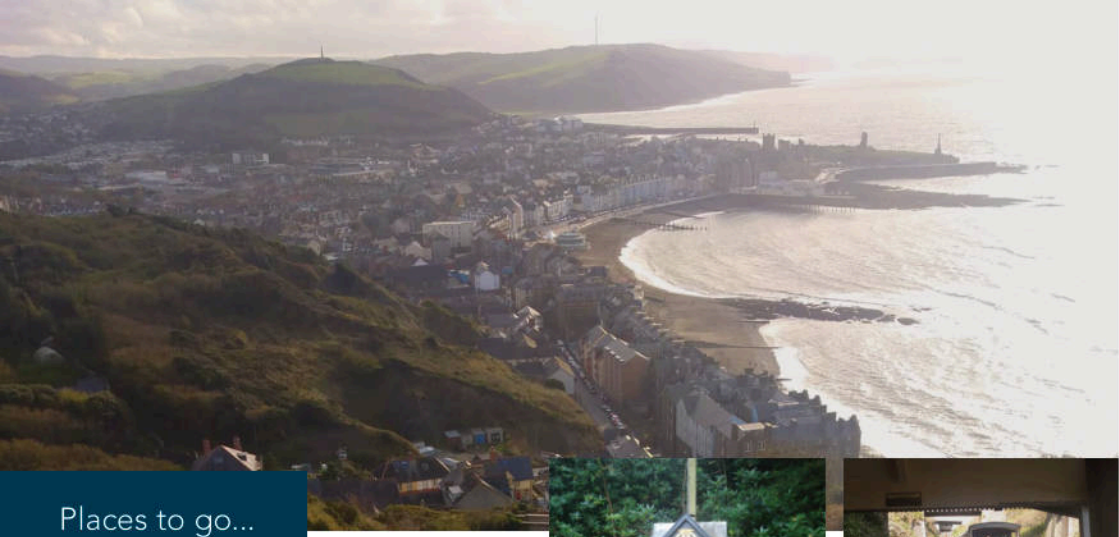
John O Connor of the Project Genesis Trust, commented, "The new trail maps and marker signposts were installed at a time when they were most needed and we're delighted to be able to acknowledge their installation, albeit a little later than planned. This is another example of the importance we place on investing directly in our community, and the comments we have received about the signs have been very positive indeed.

"The Heritage Trail attracts and is used by a great many people, not just locally but by many from outside of the area. We hope the new signs will be used by different generations for years to come."

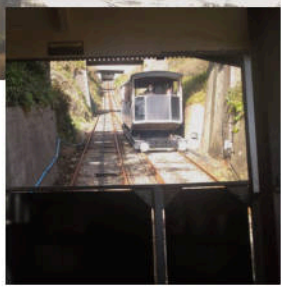
Richard Holden MP, added, "It's great to see local work being done to celebrate Consett heritage, not just looking at the past but also looking forward. This trail and signage will help people get out and about, and rediscover their area after the Covid pandemic."

Other recent community investments made by Project Genesis Trust include the Visit Consett website and the purchase of the former St John's Ambulance Station to establish a Heritage Centre.

Photo: Mike Clark (left) and John O'Connor (right) of Project Genesis Trust with Richard Holden MP (centre) next to new signage on the Consett Heritage Trail.







Places to go...

Aberystwyth

Aberystwyth is the biggest town in mid-Wales and I had not stayed there since 1979 when I applied to the University there and went for interview. The University is the major employer in the town, and the town population of 13,000 is expanded by a further 8,000 when the students are in residence, filling up many of the former boarding houses and hotels on the sea front. As in 1979 I arrived by train, but this time there was an efficient bus substitution between Shrewsbury and Welshpool with rail the rest of the way. Although my itinerary had changed, I still arrived at Aberystwyth at the scheduled time of 1723 and found the Llwynygog guest house without difficulty.

I was there for a memorial service of Edgar Jones, who died at the age of 99 last year, and whose memorial service was held on the day that he would have been 100. A Durham graduate, he wrote for a magazine I edit for many years. After the memorial, and associated refreshments, I found a bus back into town, although I had uncharacteristically taken a taxi to the church because I could not make head nor tail of the bus routes. If ever a town needed to have a decent bus map showing local routes, and have a PlusBus scheme for people arriving and departing by train, it is this one. Weird routeings, and unfamiliar place names made it difficult to get about, even though the bus station is right adjacent to the handsome former Great Western Railway station. Buses were plentiful but virtually empty. Only the students seem to use them, hardly surprising because you would need a degree to work out how they operate.

The town itself, though, is a gem, with lots of wonderful Victorian and Edwardian buildings, dating from when the railway first arrived in 1864. Of the hotels on the front, the Glengower on the north parade stood out as excellent, and I enjoyed an evening meal there, and the restaurant on the pier offered good views and excellent cuisine too. At the end of Marine Terrace is Constitution Hill with a funicular railway (pictured) which goes up to a small entertainment centre and café on the top. The camera obscura was unfortunately not working when I arrived, the mechanism having been broken, giving a very blurred image. The exhibition was worth seeing, and I returned down the funicular well informed about Aberystwyth's past.

The following morning, I took a ride on the Vale of Rheidol railway, which is the other major attraction of the town, nearly an hour's scenic journey up to Devils Bridge. The narrow-gauge locomotive operating the line waited for an hour at the terminus, allowing a visit to the waterfalls on the short walk (£2, for which I was grateful that the steep path was well maintained with plenty of handrails!). There is a longer walk with 675 steep steps taking 45-60 minutes, admission £4, round the nature trail and waterfalls, but you could not guarantee getting round in the time that the train waits at Devil's Bridge station. During these out-of-season hours, the train makes a morning trip at 1030 and an afternoon trip at 1400 – one hour up, one hour wait, one hour back. Incidentally, I took a picture of the AA box at Devil's Bridge for all those petrol-heads who are less enthusiastic about main line trains, narrow gauge and funiculars. Aberystwyth was good for two nights, but for longer I would have to investigate those buses for more places to visit further afield.

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Christmas Hazards

As the festive season approaches, there are some things to bear in mind if you have a pet, to ensure they're kept safe and well:

Some animals may be very interested in the cords of Christmas lights but chewing them can result in electrocution. Cover up the wires and turn them off at the plug when they're not in use.

Fallen Christmas tree needles can get lodged in paws and cause abscesses so make sure they are hoovered up every day, or even better choose a fake tree.

Dried fruit (like in your Christmas cake), chocolate (especially dark chocolate), mistletoe, poinsettia and alcohol can all be toxic and should not be left within reach of your pets.

Ribbons, wrapping and tinsel might look like attractive treats for your dog but can cause upset stomachs and intestinal blockages that may require surgery.

Your vet will have to provide you with a service over the festive period, whether that's at the practice itself, or with an out of hour's provider. Make sure you speak to your practice now to get the relevant contact details in case you do have an emergency outside their normal working hours.

www.princebishopvets.co.uk

Christmas Word Search

N	A	T	I	V	I	T	Y	S	C	E	N	E	E	Z	Y	I	X	P	C	N
C	H	N	E	U	L	E	B	D	Q	I	L	R	V	V	E	N	U	A	E	B
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CANDLE
CHRISTMAS TREE
FAKE SNOW
FIGURINES
GARLAND
HOLIDAY LINENS
LIGHTS
MINI TREE
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NATIVITY SCENE
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WREATH



Experience Enchanting Traditional Christmas Celebrations at Beamish Museum

Enjoy magical Christmas celebrations at Beamish, The Living Museum of the North this festive season.

During Christmas at Beamish, which runs from 27th November to 24th December 2021, visitors can enjoy truly traditional festivities at the museum, including an exciting Elf Trail, yuletide treats, fairground rides and enchanting Christmas celebrations through time.

From Georgian times right the way through to the 1950s, hop aboard one of Beamish's traditional trams or buses and be immersed in Christmas through time – the perfect way to count down to the big day!

Every day the museum is open during the festive season, visitors can wander through Elf Wood in Birch Wood and spy the mischievous elves in their houses.

Try the delicious yuletide treats in the sweet shop and bakery in The 1900s Town, and visit the homes of Ravensworth Terrace and admire the traditional festive decorations.

Be sure to buy that perfect present from the market stalls in the street – the museum has added a range of new Beamish-inspired products, including items especially for Christmas! Visit the Gift Shop on Beamish's website to see the fantastic festive range.

Have a go on the gallopers at The Fairground (small charge applies) and pop up to Pockerley to learn about a traditional Georgian Christmas, including 1820s celebratory food and drink.

Visit Francis Street in The 1900s Pit Village and discover how the miners and their families celebrated Christmas in Edwardian times, enjoy a warming hot chocolate, and don't forget to pay the pit ponies a festive visit!

Have a go at the Elf Trail and spot the naughty elves hiding around the museum. The trail will be available to download on Beamish's website.

Grotto tickets are £6 (0-16 years) and include a small traditional toy. Tickets for Father Christmas' Grotto are available to book online now (subject to availability).

For more information and to book visit

www.beamish.org.uk

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