

CommunityTalk

IN RENNINGTON, ROCK & STAMFORD SPRING 2025



Parish Council Elections

On 1 May up to 10 parish councillors will be elected to Rennington Parish Council. Would you be willing to be one of them?

Being a parish councillor doesn't have to be a burden. We meet some eight times per year with meetings usually held in Rennington Village Hall on a Thursday evening starting at 7pm. Nowadays meetings usually last about an hour. We often have some interesting debates - and all for the benefit of the community. So why not join in - and contribute?

Our most common topics are planning matters, highways issues, managing open spaces and being a voice for our community. It's true to say that the Parish Council has limited powers - but we are able to negotiate with, and influence, those organisations that make the final decisions.

If you're interested in joining the Parish Council, please request a nomination form from the Electoral Office at Northumberland County Council and check if you meet the eligibility criteria - mainly that you're on the electoral register and have lived/worked in the parish for at least one year. And you'll need to submit a completed set of nomination papers to the Returning Officer by 4pm Wednesday 2nd April 2025. If there are 10 or fewer nominations all will be automatically elected. Otherwise there'll be an election for Parish Councillors as well as County Councillors on 1 May.

If you have any questions or need any help - please give me a call.

Stephen Baggott

New Website for the Parish

The Parish Council is finalising the development of a new much improved website. Integral to the design of the new site is its inclusivity - bringing together the work of the Parish Council, Rennington Village Hall as well as our two Churches. We're currently finalising the content with all the parties involved and planning also to provide hyper-links to a number of other websites that will be of value to you.

Our goal is to enhance communications - making it far easier for you to navigate, raise issues or express your opinions as well as obtain relevant, up-to-date information.

When we launch the new website on 31 March we anticipate that some further modifications and/or developments may be necessary. But that's no reason for us to delay. Our new web address is rennington-pc.gov.uk

Finally what this project has demonstrated is the willingness of each organisation in the parish to get involved and work collaboratively. Hopefully - when the new website is launched - it will also help foster an even greater sense of community across our parish.

Woodpeckers

UK has three resident species: Great Spotted, Lesser Spotted and Green.

Great Spotted are most common in the North East being regular visitors to gardens, particularly if feeders are filled with peanuts. They are roughly the size of a blackbird, although slimmer. They have striking black and white plumage, with a white neck and chest, the lower part of the abdomen and rump is scarlet. They have a distinctive bouncing flight but spend most of their time clinging to the side of a tree branch or trunk – usually the side you can't see! In Spring they drum on tree bark – repetitive bursts of rhythmical low pitched tapping lasting a couple of seconds at a time. Female birds have an all-black crown, males have a horizontal scarlet bar below the crown at the back of their head and juveniles a red crown. They feed on insects, seeds and nuts and are predatory at nests, drilling holes in nest boxes or trees to catch fledglings. They nest in holes in trees.



Lesser Spotted are smaller, much less common and very rare in Northumberland.



Green are bigger than Great Spotted. They are found in Northumberland but not usually in gardens. They feed on ants mainly on the ground but perch in trees. They have greenish plumage with a yellow rump, paler head, black 'moustache' and a red crown. They don't drum but 'Yaffle' making a very striking call which sounds like a prolonged cackling laugh.

Tim Walls

Look for the Light



Spring is at last starting to spring, and let's hope nature works her magic and lifts our spirits. 2025 has got off to what feels like a chaotic and troubling start. Many people have told me they feel disoriented and upset by what is going on, particularly on the global political stage and in the relentless horror of wars at every turn. At times like these, it's hard not to feel fractious and at odds with ourselves and with the people or groups we are involved in. One of the ways we might react is by falling into a tendency to polarise everything: it's right or wrong, good or bad, black or white. In times of turmoil, we crave certainty.

The fixed and definite poles exist to create the space in between. I wonder if we need to pay more attention to how we inhabit that generous middle ground. I don't mean sitting on the fence and having no opinion. Nor do I mean leaving it to others to make things better. It's a shared responsibility to watch and listen for signs of hope and life in our interactions with each other, and to gently and kindly draw attention to them. It's about listening well and allowing for good disagreement. It's about trying to see things from someone else's perspective.

Remember, it's only in the darkest of skies that we can see the light of the stars.

Rev Alison

Village Hall Update

Many of you will have heard that our Chair, Laurence Dent, has had a significant health problem recently. He has decided that he can't continue as a member of the Village Hall Committee at present but hopes to return to some involvement as and when his health improves. In the meantime, Bruce Minty is acting as Chair until this year's AGM, The Committee want to thank Laurence for everything he has done for the Hall and we're sure everyone would want to join us in wishing him a speedy recovery.

The Committee members are particularly eager to receive suggestions from the community about additional activities that would increase the utilisation of the Hall. Ideas regarding new activities or user

groups and suggestions about social events would be particularly welcomed. If anybody has experience in running social events, such as a race night or a regular film night during the winter months, please don't hesitate to get in touch. If you're willing to assist in any way, please contact Bruce Minty or any member of the Village Hall Committee in person; alternatively email renningtonvillagehall@gmail.com.





Dog Walking Field

Our thanks to Northumberland Estates for making a field available for dog walking. It's already proving to be a big success! But that's hardly surprising because it's a great secure area, a good size (4.5 acres), and 'dog-proof' with 5-foot high deer netting.

Just walk up the official public footpath virtually opposite the triangle on Church Road, go through the wicket gate and immediately turn right instead of following the footpath as you would normally do across the field to Stamford Cottages. Next to the only gate into the field is a sign politely asking dog walkers to take their litter home. It's certainly for everyone's benefit that all dog waste is picked up and properly disposed of - either at home or in one of the waste bins around Rennington.

And importantly Alex (our local gamekeeper) has kindly offered to cut the grass over the summer months. While he's working with machinery, the field will be closed and a sign will be clearly posted on the access gate.

Did You Know...

You'll have seen the green sheds at Rock Midstead and may have wondered what goes on there. They originated ten years ago to diversify Rock Estate from a traditional farming enterprise to one that includes commercial businesses, both agriculture and non-agriculture related. If you walk the Farm Trail you will be familiar with the stacks of logs alongside the avenue, which are chipped using Heizohack chippers, and distributed by Woody fuels to create biomass for commercial and domestic power. You may also have seen potatoes being harvested around the fields, which are stored by Greenseed International, who are one of the foremost producers of seed potatoes in the UK. Also at Midstead is the famous Rocking Horse Café which has expanded in recent years to include a shop and regular social events.

At Rock Moor, some existing sheds

have been converted into storage units for local businesses and individuals, including a fabrication and a roofing business. In Rock Village, some buildings have been converted into commercial rental properties for Alwick Gin, Fine & Country Estate Agents and for the Occupational Therapy Consultancy. The Old Village Hall, on the village street, remains vacant following the departure last autumn of the Alwick Model Railway Club. The Hall requires redevelopment work to make it fit to occupy and we are on the lookout for suitable tenants!

Businesses in Rock employ numerous people - ranging from lorry drivers to chippers, distillers and Occupational Therapists. Providing a home to a diverse range of businesses helps secure the sustainability of the Estate at a time when farming is more volatile than ever.

Fred Bosanquet



Premises Licence for the Village Hall

We now possess a premises licence that allows the sale of alcohol at events held in Rennington Village Hall. In future, event organisers will be able to sell alcohol under this licence instead of having to apply for a separate one-off individual licence. To cover our costs, there's a small additional charge, which is less than the cost of applying for an individual event licence.



Garden Talk

A Community Orchard

The Wylam Community Orchard project, initiated in 2010, commenced with the planting of 1.6 acres of fruit trees at Wylam First School. In 2012, the project expanded to include the establishment of a wildflower meadow and the installation of bird and bat boxes. Today, the orchard boasts over 90 fruit trees, including a diverse range of apple, cherry, damson, and plum varieties. These trees produce both dessert and cooking apples, as well as a variety of rare and commercial apple types.



The project's membership has grown to approximately 50 individuals, many of whom actively participate in regular maintenance days to ensure the orchard and wildflower meadow remain in pristine condition. These tasks encompass activities such as constructing dead hedges, sowing wildflower seeds, mowing and raking grass to maintain soil degradation, pruning fruit trees, harvesting the fruit, and conducting biodiversity surveys. These surveys have revealed a remarkable increase in biodiversity, with the number of wildflower species rising from 8 in 2012 to 119 in 2023. Notably, the Northumberland Bat Society's NE bat recorder documented the presence of 8 bats, including a breeding colony of soprano pipistrelles.

Wylam's success may inspire our participation in similar community activities - perhaps such as Northumbria in Bloom or even the establishment of our own community orchard.

Stop Press...



SAT 22nd MARCH 10am - 12noon

We are looking for volunteers please in RENNINGTON, ROCK & STAMFORD
Volunteers to meet at their own Parish Council Notice Boards.

We will have SOUP and a ROLL available for volunteers afterwards at THE HORSESHOES INN.

Parish Council Tax

Last year, to deal with the unexpectedly high inflation rate that we all suffered, the Parish Council had to increase the amount residents paid. This year (2025/26), the amount residents will pay for the work of the Parish Council will NOT be increased.

In setting the precept for this coming year - which starts in April 2025 - parish councillors have been mindful that everyone in the community is still being faced with increased pressure on their budgets.

The second homes premium raised through Council Tax has certainly helped but so too has our ongoing focus on costs. This has allowed us to invest in a much improved Parish website, meet the ongoing costs of the neighbourhood development plan and continue the maintenance of the communal areas.

A little bit of good news!

Stephen Baggott

Whats On

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| 22 March | 10 - 12 noon Volunteers for Great British Spring Clean
Please meet up at the Parish Council noticeboards in Rennington, Rock & Stamford. Then soup and a bun in the Horseshoes |
| 4 April | 8pm Quiz Night in support of local registered charities, Horseshoes (food service until 7pm) |
| 14 April | 6.30pm Rennington Village Hall AGM, RVH |
| 23 April | 6.30pm Carl Tuer: The Challenges of Modern Farming, Rock Church |
| 2 May | 8pm Quiz Night in support of local registered charities, Horseshoes (food service until 7pm) |
| 22 May | 6.30pm Lalage Bosanquet: Rock Hall School, Rock Church |
| 6 June | 8pm Quiz Night in support of local registered charities, Horseshoes (food service until 7pm) |
| 22 June | 1 - 4pm Table Top Sale, Rock Church. Free entry. |
| 26 June | 6.30pm Tony Dunn: Fitness for the Older Years, Rock Church
Entrance for all Rock Church talks - £5 donation (including a glass of wine!) |

Next issue:

Summer 25; please submit content no later than 30 May 2025

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