



CORBRIDGE MATTERS

June 2023 Issue 71

www.corbridge.ukpc.net

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Council Notes

The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III has taken place and a new era is truly upon us.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to look at the Parish Council's plans to improve the Market Place and provide us with comments and observations. The exhibition held at the Parish Hall was well attended and we received well over 100 written contributions. The input from local people was invaluable and we will collate the responses and publish a summary in a forthcoming issue of Corbridge Matters.



At its April meeting the Parish Council agreed to raise the price of its Cemetery Fees. Management of the Cemetery is an important responsibility for the Parish Council and we have made recent repairs and plan further improvements. We decided to hold the increase in the standard charge for a plot to Corbridge residents to 5% - significantly below inflation. However, the price to non-residents has been increased by 20%. Our thinking on this is two-fold. First, the prices charged at Corbridge are well below that of neighbouring cemeteries such as Hexham. Secondly, space in the cemetery is finite and adapting pricing in this way should extend the span of its availability to local people in the years to come.

The planned improvements to Corchester Field are coming together. The new football posts have been assembled and a pitch will be marked out shortly towards the centre of the field. The goals are smaller and the playing area will be more compact than the previous full-size adult pitch. However, we hope it will suffice for informal recreation - especially for the younger footballers and families who

so often use it. A cycle rack has also been installed on the concrete base towards the western entrance. The eagle-eyed among you may have noticed a new mound at the western section close to the pavilion. Inside the mound are some Roman stones used for drainage purposes in ancient times which English Heritage has carefully buried. It is intended that an information panel will be erected to explain their history and significance. We hope that refurbishment work to the pavilion will start soon. I have asked the ground maintenance contractors to leave a buffer zone at the edges of the field to enable a wildflower meadow to emerge. Seeds are currently being sourced. This will reduce the cost of cutting, make the space more colourful and interesting and be of some value for bees and other pollinators. I hope that by the Autumn all of the key ingredients will finally be in place to make Corchester Field a truly exceptional public space, making a greater contribution to our lives.

It's been a rather cold Spring. Let's hope the weather improves and we can enjoy another good Summer in the months ahead.

William Clouston
(Corbridge Parish Council Chairman)

As I write this, we have completed the purchase of three semi-detached community houses and I hope that by the time this edition is delivered they will have been advertised on Northumberland Homefinder. The fittings are being installed and some minor snagging issues dealt with. It is now no longer possible for Parish Councils to acquire community houses in this way without becoming a 'Registered Social Landlord' which is too onerous for just a few houses. Corbridge Parish Council may be one of the only community councils in England to have bought homes like this and Northumberland County Council is lobbying the government for this to become a recognised route to building more much needed social housing to rent.



Many houses in the north of the village have fast fibre broadband thanks to the government broadband voucher scheme and the considerable efforts of resident Michael Office coordinating this. Those I have spoken to are very happy with the considerable increases in speed but there are still many areas in and around Corbridge where broadband speeds are only adequate, or worse. Rest assured, I am doing all I can to press OpenReach and WeFibre for confirmation of their rollout plans. Both have gone a bit quiet of late.

The County Council is proposing a 20mph zone in the centre of the village taking in Front Street, Market Place, Watling Street, Main Street, Hill Street and St Helen's Street which in my view - and that of the Parish Council's - is too limited and will create confusion as we already have 20mph on St Helen's Lane and it needs to be one contiguous area. It also does not address speeding on Newcastle Road, Stagshaw Road or Aydon Road. Discussions continue.

The Corbridge Community Partnership is now running the former Methodist Church building on Princes Street as a Community Hub, including a new Heritage Centre, with the aim of making the Hub a permanent facility. They have already put a lot of work into it and I'd urge everybody to get along and see the heritage displays in one part of the building put together by David Waugh and David Crompton. We're very lucky to live in a place with such a fascinating history and to have people recording it

Enjoy your summer and let's hope for some better weather - double digit temperatures and just a little sunshine would be a welcome start. As ever please contact me on 07779 983742 or nick.oliver24@outlook.com if I can help.

Nick Oliver
(Corbridge County Councillor)

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**Corbridge Parish Council next meets at 7pm on
Wednesdays June 21 and July 26 in the Parish
Hall, St Helen's Street, Corbridge.**

Clerk of the Council:

**Mrs Mandy Senior
07950 297634**

Here Comes The Fun

CORBRIDGE
NORTHUMBERLAND

A MIDSUMMER'S EVENING

MARKET PLACE STALLS
STREET FOOD
LIVE MUSIC & DANCE
LATE NIGHT SHOPPING
& MORE!

Thursday June 22nd from 4pm

A Midsummer's Evening in Corbridge 2023 takes place from 4pm onwards on Thursday June 22 with Market Place stalls, street food, live music and dance, late night shopping and more. While the Eco Festival inside St Andrew's Church (see Notice Board pages) will be open until 8:30pm that night. Entertainment highlights of this year's Corbridge Midsummer - aimed to be larger than last year's post-pandemic event - include Hexham Morris and The Cherry Pickers band plus other music attractions. With Middle Street closed for the event. A free park and ride service will be running from and to free parking at Tynedale Park / Rugby Club.

A Right Royal Corbridge Weekend





The bunting was up in Corbridge along with some regal shop window displays for the long Coronation weekend celebrating the crowning of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Events included a Parish Hall Tea Party (see Pg 18 & 19) and The Great Corbridge Coronation Bake Off (see Pg 7 & 11). There was also a Civic Service of Thanksgiving at St Andrew's Church followed by a toast to the King and Queen and a bring and share lunch. Plus a Coronation Bank Holiday Monday Family Afternoon event at the cricket club. With thanks to Alan Robinson and his team for organising the bunting and putting it in place.

“A brilliant legacy from all of us...”

Over 100 people attended the recent public meeting held by the Corbridge Community Partnership to launch its plans for the Corbridge Community Hub in Princes Street. They included guest of honour, former village butcher George Hall, who was introduced as “Mr Corbridge” and given a warm round of applause. With the CCP set to become a registered charity, it has already begun a number of activities in the former Methodist Church building with the main aim of providing services to benefit the Corbridge community. While the new Heritage Centre located in one part of the Hub is now open from 10am to 2pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, staffed by a friendly team of local volunteers. Here is just a snapshot of some of the quotes from what was a hugely positive night:

CCP chair Maurice Hodgson: “George Hall is very supportive of what we are trying to do and we are delighted to see him here. He has been a big help in providing some of the information in our new Corbridge Heritage Centre. We are also really delighted with the attendance.

“The Methodist Circuit has been very helpful and supportive in what we are trying to do. We have had discussions with the Parish Council and our county councillor along with other interested parties as to what we might want to try and do in here. They have given us their support and are very much behind what we are trying to do and see no conflict with other interests such as the Parish Hall. We plan to do different things. It’s not just going to be a place to hire. It will be a base for community services. That will be the big difference.”

CCP Secretary David Crompton: “It has been a privilege to be involved with this. And it’s been unbelievable how quickly things have moved forward. We started with the complete support of the Methodist Church Circuit to initially do minor updates of the building. We’ve put new LED lighting into the hall, the vestry, the kitchen and the Heritage Centre. We’ve decorated both the hall and the vestry and updated the window blinds. Our next task is new flooring in the hall.

“It is an amazing building. This church area itself can seat 125 people. We’ve also got the hall which can be used for everything from meetings to activities. The vestry that can be used as a confidential room or as an office. And then the Heritage Centre which sits inside what was called the ‘New Room’ at the side. We wanted to offer services, starting with some well-being activities. We met up with Tynedale Hospice at Home and they are going to deliver some of their services from this building. Our aim is to offer community services. We want to make the hub a focal point for residents. We want people to become partners and Friends of the

Hub. The vision is not about hiring a room but about finding out what we can do to benefit residents to have a better life and be a part of the community. That’s what a Community Hub is all about.

“The Methodist Church could not have been more supportive. From next January the CCP must be able to operate and finance the day to day running of the Hub. Our intention is to sign a long term lease with the aim of purchasing the building at some time in the future. Ideally in 2025. There will be a need to raise funds. We are applying for a grant from the Community Ownership Fund, a government grant which is for up to 50 per cent of the capital required to purchase buildings for the community. There are also smaller grants available. However there will be a need for the community to financially support the project. And this will most likely eventually be donations via a Crowdfunding scheme.

“If we were to purchase the building and refit it, this would be a brilliant legacy from all of us as an asset for our future generations. The more people we have as Friends of the Hub, the stronger we will be, the more resources we will have and the more we will be able to give back to our great community.”

Marie Beard, Methodist Minister: “I was married in this building, my daughter was baptised in this building. It’s very dear to my heart. However, the church is not the building. It’s the people. And the church wanted to see this building utilised for the whole of the community. That was a very clear message that came through to me. People keep saying to me (about the church closure in April last year), ‘Are you sad?’ Well, yes, of course I am sad a little bit but actually I’m much more excited to see what we can do through this building to continue serving the community as it has done for 157 years. I think it’s a fantastic opportunity for us as a community, as businesses, as church, to utilise these bricks and mortar, these stones, for the good of the community. So don’t ask me if I’m sad. Because I’m not. I’m too excited to be sad.”

Angela Watt, Locality Coordinator for the County Council: “My job is to connect people and different organisations. So I’m really excited to be here at the beginning of this. What a turnout. Absolutely amazing for Corbridge. To see so many people coming to the first meeting. It shows that the interest is there in the community. You are obviously really passionate to find out from the Corbridge Community Partnership what is going to happen in this building. This is a legacy for years to come of what you can do if you’ve got the passion and the dreams to drive it forward. You can all be a very big part of that.”



Fit For A King

The Great Corbridge Coronation Bake Off produced entries of high quality, not least from the younger bakers taking part. It all made for a difficult job for the panel of judges, led by BBC Look North's Carol Malia. The cakes marked on a combination of presentation, texture and taste. With the subsequent cake sale raising a total of £600 for The Charlotte Straker Project and Corbridge Youth Initiative. Lana Rosie's Paddington was the winner in the adult category. Rose Versey's Orb (see Pg 11) won the 11 to 16 section. Oliver and Nancy Pelly's King Charles cake was first among the Under 11s. With Charlotte Straker head cook Debbie's Coronation fruit cake the winner in the Professional category. All entries that did not win or were placed were highly commended. With, in reality, everyone who took part a winner. Scan the smartphone QR code for a full gallery of photos.



NOTICE BOARD

2023 diary dates

St Andrew's Church

Parish Communion at 10am Sundays.

Evening Prayer at 6pm Sundays.

Holy Communion at 10am every Wednesday.

Messy Church at 3pm on Sunday June 11.

RIVER service at 4pm on Sunday June 25.

Friday June 16 12:30pm to 1:15pm: Lunchtime Organ and Vocal recital with J and M Duo.

Corbridge Methodists

Thursday June 8 at 10am: Service at St Andrew's Church.

Thursday June 22 at 10am: Service at St Andrew's Church.

Tynedale Christian Ministries

Welcome to our Christian Church at Corbridge Parish Hall.

Each Sunday 10:30 Coffee followed by 11:00 Service Ring 633532

Weekly House Groups

Follow us on Facebook – Tynedale Christian Ministries

Saturday / Sunday June 10 / 11

Corbridge Steam Rally at Tynedale Park.

Saturday June 10

Charlotte Straker Fete in the grounds of Charlotte Straker House.

Thursday June 15 to Sunday June 18

Tynedale Beer & Cider Festival at Tynedale Park.

Thursday June 22

A Midsummer's Evening In Corbridge.

Thursday July 27 to Sunday July 30

Corbridge Chamber Music Festival.

Sunday August 20

Northumberland Classic & Performance Vehicle Show.

Sunday August 27

Corbridge Family Fun Day at Corbridge Cricket Club.

Saturday September 2

Corbridge Village Show at the Parish Hall.

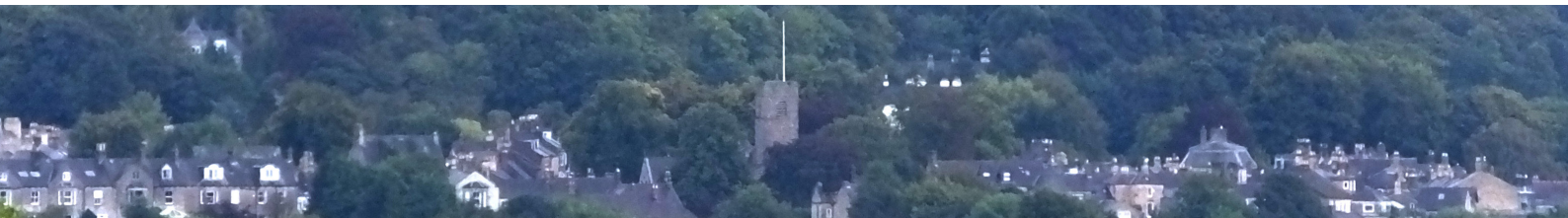
Friday December 1 to Tuesday December 5

St Andrew's Church Christmas Tree Festival.

Monday December 4

Christmas In Corbridge.

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



Corbridge Steam Rally: Corbridge Steam Rally: At Tynedale Park / Rugby Club on Saturday and Sunday June 10 and 11. Fairground, bar, food, steamers, tractors, cars, bikes, commercials, displays and much more. Scan the smartphone QR code for full details.



Charlotte Straker Fete: From 2pm on Saturday June 10 in the grounds of Charlotte Straker House. The event will be opened by bestselling local author LJ Ross. See the poster for more information.

Tynedale Beer & Cider Festival: At Tynedale Park / Rugby Club between Thursday June 15 and Sunday June 18 inclusive. Scan the smartphone QR code for full details.

Corbridge Heritage Centre is open between 10am and 2pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Located at the Corbridge Community Hub (former Methodist Church building) in Princes Street. (See image on pg 9). Walk down the alley to the left of the building and enter via the green door on the left at the end of that lane. A friendly team of local volunteers staff the centre and would be delighted to see you. Admission is free.

Charlotte Straker
Care according to need

SUMMER FETE

at Charlotte Straker House
**SATURDAY, 10 JUNE
2PM TO 4PM**

**Lots of different charity stalls incl:
Books, Crafty Women, Cakes and Toys,
Raffle and Tombola, Children's Corner,
Ice cream | Teas | coffees**

The Fete will be opened
at 2pm by best selling
author LJ Ross!

Registered charity no 1021086
FR REGULATED BY THE FUNDRAISING REGULATOR



CORBRIDGE
CHAMBER MUSIC
FESTIVAL

27–30 JULY 2023

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

27–30 JULY 2023

THURSDAY 27 JULY

CONCERT 1 | 7pm

Mozart Clarinet Quintet in A, K.581
Ravel Chansons Madécasses
Interval
Schubert Shepherd on the Rock, D.965
Farrenc Nonet, Op.38

FRIDAY 28 JULY

CONCERT 2 | 6pm

Weber Flute Trio in G minor, Op.63
Ravel La flûte enchantée and other songs
Lilli Boulanger Song selection
Interval
Ravel Piano Trio
Cole Porter / George Gershwin / Jerome Kern
American Songbook Selection

CONCERT 3 –
BACH AND BEYOND | 9.30pm

A concert celebrating the genius of J.S.Bach, interspersed with eclectic works for solo performer by Anna Meredith, Oliver Knussen and Luciano Berio. Performed in an informal setting with café-style seating and refreshments.

SATURDAY 29 JULY

ADAM WALKER
FLUTE MASTERCLASS | 10am

Star flautist Adam Walker works with young players from the North-East, now studying at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Oxford University.

CONCERT 4 | 3pm

Mozart Oboe Quartet in F, K.370
Schubert Introduction and Variations on 'Trockene Blumen', D.802
Interval
Coleman Rubispheres
Marschner Piano Trio No.1 in A minor, Op.29

CONCERT 5 | 7pm

Schumann Piano Trio No.2 in F, Op.80
Casken Lust of Roots
Interval
Beethoven Septet in Eb, Op.20

SUNDAY 30 JULY

CONCERT 6 | 3pm

Brahms Hungarian Dances
Sarah Jenkins New Work for clarinet and piano trio (world premiere)
Dohnanyi Sextet in C, Op.37

CONCERT 7 | 7pm

Paquito de Rivera Cape Cod Files
Coleridge Taylor Nonet in F minor, Op.2
Interval
Schubert String Quintet in C, D.956

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

GOULD PIANO TRIO
LUCY GOULD violin
RICHARD LESTER cello
BENJAMIN FRITH piano
ROBERT PLANE clarinet

WITH GUESTS

KATHARINE DAIN soprano
EMILY NEBEL violin
MICHAEL GUREVICH viola
KATE GOULD cello
ROBERTO CARRILLO-GARCIA double bass
ADAM WALKER flute
CHRIS VETTRAINO oboe
FLO PLANE bassoon
JOHAN STONE horn
HEIDI ROLFE piano

TICKETS WWW.CORBRIDGEFESTIVAL.CO.UK

Corbridge Chamber Music Festival is a registered charity, No. 1171185

Eco Festival

St Andrew's Church

Thursday 22nd (9.30am - 8.30pm)
& Friday 23rd June (9.30am - 2pm)

Exploring how our
community protects
the environment

Imagining what we
can do in the future

Displays

Activities for all
ages

Panel Discussion on
responding to the
Climate Crisis

Live Music

Refreshments

To find out more or get involved contact
The Rev'd Sam Lohead:
sloheadcorbridge@btinternet.com

Keep an eye on our church website for
more details:
www.corbridgechurch.org.uk

TYNEDALE BEER & CIDER FESTIVAL THUR 15 TO SUN 18 JUNE 2023



diary

Corbridge Parish Hall June 2023

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	10:30 - 15:30 KSA Painters	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	09:30 - 11:30 Corbridge Badminton		10:00 - 14:30 Tynedale Christian Ministries
	13:00 - 16:00 Corbridge Bridge Club - Chicago		19:30 - 21:30 Piper Badminton	17:00 - 19:00 Karate		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
13:00 - 16:00 Corbridge WI	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	10:30 - 15:30 KSA Painters	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	09:30 - 11:30 Corbridge Badminton	09:00 - 18:00 Private Booking	10:00 - 14:30 Tynedale Christian Ministries
19:00 - 22:00 Corbridge Bridge Club	13:00 - 16:00 Corbridge Bridge Club - Chicago	16:00 - 20:45 Corbridge School of Ballet	19:30 - 21:30 Piper Badminton	17:00 - 19:00 Karate		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
16:00 - 17:30 Zumba Kids	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	10:30 - 15:30 KSA Painters	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	09:30 - 11:30 Corbridge Badminton		10:00 - 14:30 Tynedale Christian Ministries
19:00 - 22:00 Corbridge Bridge Club	13:00 - 16:00 Corbridge Bridge Club - Chicago	16:00 - 20:45 Corbridge School of Ballet	12:45 - 14:00 Guide Dog Puppy Class	17:00 - 19:00 Karate	19:30 - 16:00 Indoor Market	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
16:00 - 17:30 Zumba Kids	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	10:30 - 15:30 KSA Painters	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	09:30 - 11:30 Corbridge Badminton		10:00 - 14:30 Tynedale Christian Ministries
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26	27	28	29	30	1	2
16:00 - 17:30 Zumba Kids	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	10:30 - 15:30 KSA Painters	09:00 - 10:00 Zumba Class	09:30 - 11:30 Corbridge Badminton		
19:00 - 22:00 Corbridge Bridge Club	13:00 - 16:00 Corbridge Bridge Club - Chicago	16:00 - 20:45 Corbridge School of Ballet	19:30 - 21:30 Piper Badminton	17:00 - 19:00 Karate		

Be Our Guest

Disney
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
JR

Corbridge Middle School

27th, 28th, 29th
& 30th June
Adults £7.00
Under 15s £5.00
Doors open 6:30pm

Come and join us for a
Tale as Old as Time

Tickets available from Eventbrite

Corbridge Middle School

The children at the Middle School have been working hard over the last few months to bring a summer musical spectacular to Corbridge: Disney's Beauty And The Beast Jr. Over 70 children from Years 5 to 7 are involved in bringing this story to life.

Head Teacher Adele Brown said, "The children have been working relentlessly over the last few months and have demonstrated such creativity and resilience. We are immensely proud of them and cannot wait for curtain up."

It has been a real team effort with staff across the school volunteering to help with rehearsals, backstage, props and set design. "We are so very excited to showcase all of our hard work and would love for members of our local community to come and join us and support the children in their wonderful achievements."

The show runs for four nights from Tuesday June 27 to Friday June 30 inclusive. Scan the smartphone QR code on the poster for more information and details of how to buy tickets or search for 'Corbridge Middle School' on the Eventbrite website.

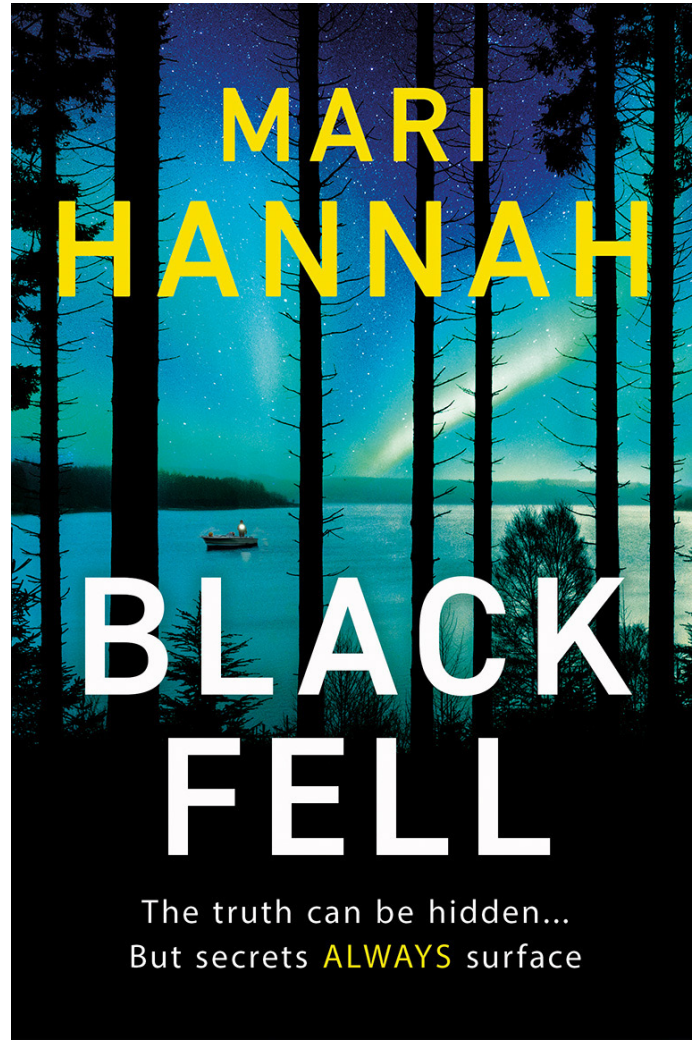
Rising To The Occasion

The judges at The Great Corbridge Coronation Bake Off were very impressed with the entries from the young Middle School bakers. (See also Pg 7). Rose Versey's Orb, centre won the 11 to 16 section. Second was Jacob Natrass, left and third Jacques Davies, right. The standard was so high that all of the other entries from the school were awarded highly commended certificates.



Interview

Mari Hannah talks to Ian Wylie about her life in crime.



“I don’t have a dark heart. I have a vivid imagination,” insists award-winning Corbridge writer Mari Hannah, best-selling author of 14 books to date. “But my books do have heart which readers love in crime fiction. I get emails saying I made them cry. Job done. Every author wants their audience to feel emotions, dark and light.”

There has been plenty of blood, sweat...and tears along the way in her eight Kate Daniels’ novels (with a ninth now written), two Ryan and O’Neil books and four Stone & Oliver stories, the latest of which - Black Fell - is published on June 22, taking us from Kielder to Iceland.

But Mari’s crime writing adventures might never have happened had it not been for a painful twist of fate that ended one career and eventually began another.

Mari was born in Westminster to parents Marie, from south London, and Liverpool-born Gordon. Her father was a Drum Major in the Coldstream Guards - the leader of the military band. He took part in many of the Queen’s Birthday Parades, also known as Trooping The Colour, the family going with him wherever he was posted. “We lived all over the place: Germany twice. Lydd in Kent, Oswestry in Shropshire and Windsor in Berkshire. As a child I was embarrassed by the fact my dad walked the band up the hill to Windsor Castle every day and then back down again, like The Grand Old Duke of York.

“Changing schools so often was difficult because they all followed different curriculums back then. It wasn’t good for my education and as soon as I could

leave school I did. Around my 15th birthday, with no qualifications. On the positive side, I had to learn to make friends very quickly. And I did.”

It was around that time that her father’s last posting took him to Fenham Barracks, which is no longer there, a stone’s throw from St James’ Park. “We lived in an Army hiring in Slatyford for a while. When my dad came out of the Army my parents decided to go south with his civilian job, mum finding work at British Nuclear Fuels. By then I was 18 and happy here. They would have had to drag me kicking and screaming from the North East, so I stayed.”

Was there ever any question of Mari following in her father’s marching steps? “Oh, he wouldn’t have it. He said, ‘No daughter of mine’s going to join the Army.’ I had various jobs after leaving school. I worked for the Post Office as a telephonist but couldn’t understand the Geordie twang. People would ring up and ask for a number in Prudda. And I’d look for ‘Prudda’ and of course, I couldn’t find it, so that didn’t last long,” she laughs. Various jobs followed: training to be a hairdresser, working for Newcastle City Council, at

stockbrokers Wise Speke on Pilgrim Street and later Proctor & Gamble as a sales forecaster. "So I've been around a bit."

Mari attended Middlesbrough Poly - now Teesside University – sponsored by the Home Office to become a probation officer. "Mo, my partner, was a Detective Sergeant in Northumbria Police when we met. She adored every minute of her 30 years before she retired from the force as a Detective Inspector. I really wanted to join the police as well but I was divorced, a single parent with two young boys to look after and there was no way I could manage the shift work.

"As a student, I learned law, psychology and sociology. We were also given practical placements. I did one at what was then the male adult prison at Acklington and another with a family service unit. That was an eye-opener because the families they dealt with were the most disadvantaged."



As a fully-fledged probation officer, Mari was in and out of court with various cases, liaising with police, social services, education and other organisations. "A lot of my work was writing court reports which was the first formal writing I'd ever done. Sometimes they had to be done quickly, over a lunchtime break, so I learned to be concise, to be careful about what I put in and what I left out. Writing up the life of an offender in two or three pages sounds easy. It's not. But when I began writing fiction, I realised that report writing was a transferable skill. Like books, reports need research, a beginning, middle and end that makes sense to a reader."

Including her training period, Mari was a probation officer for around 15 years in various departments: A field team, two prisons and a community service team. "It was there where I was assaulted in 1994. One day I went to work thinking I'd be going home in exactly the same condition as I arrived. That day I had to tell someone I was taking them back to court because he wasn't complying with his order. He went off it, shutting a fire door on my arm as I was seeing him out of the building. I was off work for about two years, in and out of plaster. Eventually they found that I had a really serious problem. I needed a wrist reconstruction. All of which meant I couldn't sit in court and take notes because I couldn't write. And then they said I could

retire on a medical pension. But I was far too young. And I didn't want to be a victim. I didn't want this person to spoil the rest of my life.

"So I thought, 'What on earth will I do?' The thing I knew most about was crime. I knew the world. A lot of my friends were police. And, of course, working with offenders, their voices were in my head. I know how they speak, think and feel. Part of my job, and the bit I'd loved, was analysing why they had behaved the way they had, trying to show them the right path. Although some, you could safely say, were never going to listen. Everyone at the, then, Castington Young Offenders Institution where I worked for three years, for example, was serving a sentence of between six years and life. These were kids inside for robberies, arson, rape, child abuse and murder. It was very intense work.

"All of those experiences ground me as a writer. I feel it still. I remember things that happened. I've never used a real case on which to base a book but I've definitely used my experiences of working with criminals, in and out of prison. Sometimes it can be a bit scary. Probation officers don't go around in pairs. They are alone in people's homes and you never know what you're going to find when you get there. They might be drunk, high on drugs or just in a bad temper. Every day was different. But writing is all about observation. You soak up all of that experience and give it back in the books.

"People have said to me, 'Are you really happy then that you got assaulted?' Well, no. I'd rather it hadn't happened. But it gave me a new start. My injury still affects me but it spun my life off in a different direction and I love what I'm doing now."

At first Mari began typing as a form of physiotherapy to try and get her fingers moving properly. "Lots of things changed. I didn't drive for a long time. I used to play golf and ride a motorcycle but I don't do that anymore." Over time, Mari began writing screenplays. The first two eventually saw the light of day, adapted into her first two books in the Kate Daniels' series: *The Murder Wall* and *Settled Blood*, both published in 2012. She signed with an agent and was offered a major publishing deal with Pan Macmillan. Even so, as a debut author, she was terrified of what was to come.

"My very first book *The Murder Wall* was launched at the Hexham Book Festival. New Writing North organized the launch and founder Claire Malcolm said she would interview me. She asked me for a few readings. I said, 'Oh no, I'm not going to read in public.' A ridiculous statement now I think back on it. Claire looked at me and said, 'What? Mari, you're an author. You can't not read in public.' I told her I really wasn't happy to read extracts of my book, so she got a local actress to read them out on stage. She was amazing. And then I thought, 'I could do that.' At the time I really was scared. I could hardly speak. I dried up completely. It was pure fear. A few years later Claire sent me a note about another debut author who was also terrified and asked me to talk to her. One of the things I've always tried to do is help writers coming up behind me.

Continued overleaf

“Being a professional author has given me a lot of confidence. I only wanted to write one book and have it published. And here we are now editing book 15. I may have been like a scared rabbit caught in the headlights when I started but public speaking doesn't faze me now. That's down to Mo, my partner. She asked me, 'Why are you so scared? You've stood up in court in front of judges and given them your opinion. All you're doing is telling people about this wonderful book you've written. How can that be scary?' And she was right.”



Fellow crime writer Peter James says: “Mari Hannah writes with a sharp eye and a dark heart.” And while we now know she may not actually have a dark heart, Mari certainly has a sharp eye and well-honed observation skills. Along with knowing the importance of a sense of place. “All of my work is inspired by setting, the area where I live.”

Her books are also renowned for their authenticity. “Mo is my first reader and she will always tell me if I've got something wrong. She'll say, 'This part isn't quite right. It wouldn't happen like that.' I know this is fiction but we want it to be based in fact. Although these days I don't put as much police procedure in my books as I first did.”

Mari claims not to be a brave person. “I do have doubts all of the time.” But don't you need courage to cast aside that self-doubt and keep writing on the next blank page? “I think that's true. I've definitely got the determination and commitment required. But after every book I've written I think, 'Can I do this again?' I've got loads of ideas, so many that I won't have time to write them if I live to be a hundred. But yes, when you hit a brick wall you have to push through. With every book - and I think most writers will tell you this - you think you've got a great idea and then halfway through you decide it's the worst idea you've ever had.

That's why I plan. Some writers will just sit down and write and take it wherever it goes. I need the skeleton of the story and to know the ending before I start. I never get to the point where I think I don't know where to go next because I flesh it out before I start.”

Mari has a 'Murder Wall' in the office of her Corbridge home. As seen in countless TV detective shows with Post-it notes, pins, photos and information of various kinds. In this case to aid story plotting rather than figuring out who the killer is. She knows that before the typing starts. In silence. No background music for her. “I need quiet. I also try to keep off social media until I'm finished work. I'm quite disciplined. When I'm writing I don't look at Twitter.”

Mari and Mo moved to Corbridge in 1996. Living near the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle they waited until Mari's second son went to Northumbria University. He decided he wanted to live in a student flat. “We said that was fine. Mo's dad already lived in Corbridge, so we decided to move here. We loved the village but never thought we could afford to live here.

“There are so many things that make Corbridge the special place it is. Including the history and the look of it. Although it has grown in the last 27 years since we've been here. I hope it doesn't grow anymore because that would take away what makes it special. I love all of the independent shops and the fact we've got everything we need here. I try as much as I can to use local shops rather than go off to the supermarket. I like the people, the Midsummer and Christmas events. It's got a great community feel. We enjoy living here.

“I love Forum Books. Owner Helen Stanton's journey and mine started at practically the same point. I was being published just as Helen arrived to take over what was the bookshop then. We help each other. If I do events and they need a bookseller, I get her on board. Likewise, Helen tells me that I'm one of her bestselling authors, so it's win-win – and we're great friends now.”

Forum has organised an eve of publication launch for Black Fell at High House Barn, near Matfen, at 7pm for 7:30pm on Wednesday June 21 where Mari will be interviewed by ITV's Ian Payne, a long time friend, (pictured left with Mari), about the latest story involving detectives David Stone and Frankie Oliver. While both Mari and Vera author Ann Cleeves will be in conversation with TV presenter Chris Jackson at a Chrysalis Club Tynedale 'Summer Tyne Crime' event at Hexham Mart on the evening of Thursday July 6.

The Black Fell in question is the one on which Kielder Observatory is located. Under some of the darkest skies in Europe surrounded by a huge, dense forest of 150 million trees. At the centre is Kielder Water, the largest man-made lake in Northern Europe. With homes, farms and a school abandoned and demolished when the Kielder Valley was flooded. Although certain stories and myths persist about what is still beneath the water. “I love Kielder. It's such a calming place. Unless you happen to be there at night, on your own, which I have been during the research for the book.

“I wanted Stone & Oliver separated in this book. I absolutely adore Iceland, which I’ve visited several times, so I decided I would take them there, before one then has to come back to deal with enquiries in the UK. The book opens with a group of Icelandic students illegally camping on the shores of Kielder Water. They drag a barrel out of the water, break it open and find skeletal remains inside. Because the bones are so old, and because the students couldn’t possibly have been involved in that death, they are sent on their way. Then Frankie Oliver gets a call to say, ‘There’s another body. This one has skin.’

Fry’s production company Sprout Pictures which has now linked up with Los Angeles-based production firm Atlantic Nomad. “There’s been a little hiccup because we did find a screenwriter and then when the time came to go she wasn’t in a position to do it. So we’ve had to look around for a new one but that’s absolutely fine. It’s all going in the right direction. While in other good news, a TV production company is in the process of drawing up a contract for Stone & Oliver.”

Mari left Pan Macmillan for Orion after the 2016 publication of Gallows Drop in the Kate Daniels’ series and the 2017 Ryan & O’Neill book The Death Messenger. “I hadn’t fallen out with anyone. I loved the people there. But a lot of my favourite writers were with Orion and I just wanted to have a greater coverage and thought I’d be best served going there.”

For various reasons that meant Kate Daniels’ fans had to wait until 2020 for Without A Trace to discover what happened next. The story in the later book resuming just hours after the end of the one published four years before. A real ‘Cliff Hannah’ as one inspired reviewer wrote. Without A Trace subsequently won Capital Crime’s Crime Book of the Year award. One of five major awards for Mari’s work...so far.

But behind those awards readers rarely glimpse the long hard slog and daily sacrifice that is the reality for successful and prolific authors. At times it can be a lonely occupation. Contrasting with the buzz of literary festivals and book launches. “It’s hard work for you and your partner. Mo is an amazing support. And she talks to everybody at events. When I’m sitting signing books she’s out there chatting with readers and everybody knows her.

“That support also goes beyond Mo. It’s your family. One of my sons lives in Oxfordshire. We don’t get down to see him as often as I’d like. He understands that but I do sometimes feel guilty. We also have family here in the village. There’s lots of parts of me readers rarely get a glimpse of... you don’t want to ignore your family but they give me space when I’m working. I’m very lucky to have them.”



“It’s a twisty thriller but also different from the rest of the books in as much as it brings in the history of Northumberland. I also have a postcard from the Second World War that had been sitting in drawer. I thought, ‘I’m going to make something of this one day.’ And now that day has arrived. It’s finally in this book.

“I couldn’t get over to Iceland while I was writing Black Fell because we were in lockdown but Icelandic writer friends Lilya Sigurdardóttir and Yrsa Sigurdardóttir (no relation) were really lovely, helping me with the geography, the police ranking structure and so on.”

Mari is already well over halfway through writing the next Stone & Oliver book and is at the editing stage with that ninth Kate Daniels’ story. “You are always at three stages: Writing a book, editing and promoting the one before and planning the next.”

Kate Daniels has been in development with Stephen



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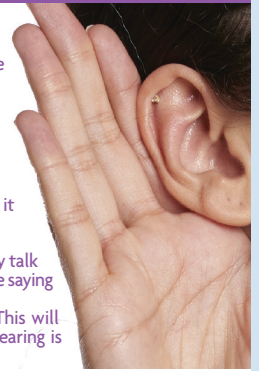
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Forum Books

Hello Readers

Ah, Summertime and the living - and reading - is easy!

Every month seems a perfect time for curling up with a good book and hopefully there'll be enough sun-filled days to spend in the garden, the beach or somewhere out of doors with a good read.

It's always a good season for paperbacks and a few of our favourites from last year are now front and centre - **Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow** by **Gabrielle Zevin** is a total treat of a read, **Lessons**, the latest **Ian McEwan**, **Jessica Andrews' Milkteeth** and **The Trio** by **Johanna Hedmann** are both the kind of novels best enjoyed with a chilled drink in the sun.

Newcastle base **Naomi Kelsey's The Burnings** tells of the Berwick witch trials. Inspired by the incredible true story that set 16th-century Scotland and Denmark alight - a most bewitching debut novel by a new star of historical fiction. **Alison Weir's** most ambitious Tudor novel yet - **Henry VIII: The Heart & The Crown** - reveals the captivating story of a man who was by turns brilliant, romantic and ruthless: the King who changed England forever. Alison will be at Gateshead Library for a special event on June 21st.

Bookshop favourite **Ben Aitken** is as entertaining as ever in **Here Comes the Fun**. Over a year he filled his calendar with a plethora of potentially pleasurable pursuits. He did things he'd never done before but reckoned could be fun (a pilgrimage in Spain, afternoon bingo); things whose fun-factor was less obvious and more down-to-earth (volunteering in a charity shop, sitting on a bench); and things he wasn't at all sure about but were fun according to other people (improv, wakeboarding, learning Welsh).

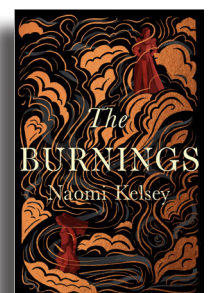
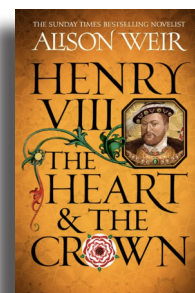
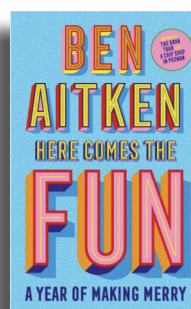
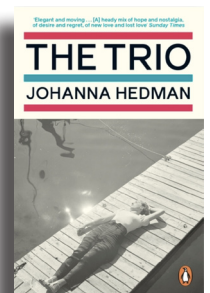
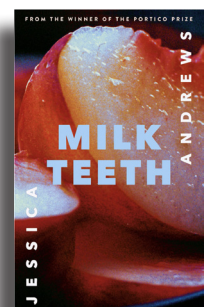
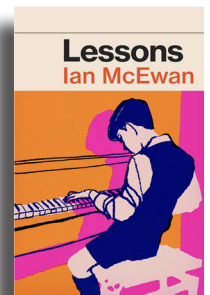
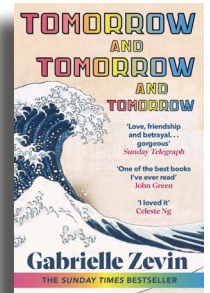
Although the results were mixed, the author's year of making merry left him feeling undoubtedly...better. Which invites the question: if fun is such a reliable mood-swinger, shouldn't we be having more of it? And next on his list is a trip to Corbridge to help us celebrate his new book and **Independent Bookshop Week** which starts on Saturday June 17. Dates and more authors are TBC as this goes to print but as ever we will have a week of, well, fun really as we share what we love best about books and reading.

And as well as a wonderful **Midsummer's Evening** on Thursday June 22, the week is made extra special with the latest cracking thriller **Black Fell** from Corbridge's own **Mari Hannah**. As you can read elsewhere in this issue we have a launch event with Mari at High House Barn on Wednesday June 21 with ITV's Ian Payne - we'd love to see you there!

Finally we'll be bringing back our Summer Book Camp for kids too - a weekly selection of our top picture books, middle grade and teen fiction.

Happy reading!

Helen



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