

## **MINISTERS REPORT FOR 2023**

In Robert Warren's book called "The Healthy Churches' Handbook" he established seven 'marks' of a healthy church. These are summarized as:

- Energized by faith
  - Outward-looking focus
  - Seeks to find out what God wants
  - Faces the cost of change and growth
  - Operates as a community
  - Makes room for all
  - Does a few things and does them well
- \* from "The Healthy Churches' Handbook" by Robert Warren published by Church House Publishing

As we look back in these reports at all the activity in the church over the past year, I hope you, like me, will see that St George's is indeed a healthy church. We are indebted to all those who have organised and led events, served in various roles (noticed and unnoticed), helped out where needed, and above all been a welcoming face to those who have joined us for the first time.

Along with all the groups that regularly meet and the coffee mornings held on a regular basis, a number of new initiatives took place last year - such as the Thinking Day service with the Guides Association, Fortnightly Prayer Meetings, Holiday Club (x2), Carols in the Car Park, Christian Aid Toy Sale, Junior Church Barbecue and more. The installation of the two screens in the church at Easter has made a valuable contribution in worship and it is hoped we can this year improve the sound in the church as well as adding WIFI in the building.

As we continue to grow and welcome new friends into our groups and our worship, please continue to encourage each other as we grow in our faith together. It is true that we are all getting older (!) and inevitably those who have been doing things are now struggling to do as much. We rely on people coming forward and supporting each other so that we can continue the valuable work that we see in the reports that are attached. We do more than 'a few things' but we do them well and my prayer is that with God's help we continue to thrive as a healthy church.

***Julian***

### **Cradle Roll Report**

In 2023 we only had one baptism; Esme Eve Brown aged 9 years old. Esme's three older brothers had all been baptised and Esme decided she wanted to be the same. This baptism was particularly special as it took place on the morning of Christmas Eve. Her mum Sarah is expecting another baby quite soon so perhaps we may have another baptism from that family. We do know of one baptism definitely happening in May of this year so hopefully next year I may be able to report on more than baptism.

No matter how many or how few baptisms we have, each one is precious in the sight of God and to us as a congregation and Church family.

***Sue Rutherford  
Cradle Roll Secretary***

## **Junior Church Annual Report**

The questions they ask are getting harder to answer - our Junior Church Children are growing into Young People before our very eyes. As I write this report we are much the same in numbers regularly attending, but we must now include Brian, and although he is not ready to join with us - he plays round our table and we are a very happy little group. We meet mostly in the Drysdale Room which is easier to heat in the cold weather and have had quite a busy year when you look back through the months.

Our first activity in Church was Mothers Day - the children filled lavender bags and on the actual Sunday they were passed out to all the ladies - each child had a little card with words about the day which they read out quite happily - Noah was not able to be present but I delivered a bag for his Mum together with his words and understand he performed at home so it was mission accomplished.

The Coronation of King Charles was our next event. It was a big milestone for us all and it was decided that Junior Church Children would receive a little gift as a memory of the occasion. A small commemorative coin with a little card from St. Georges Church with the name and age of each child at the time of the coronation was presented by Julian as a keepsake of the event. There was to be a celebration party in the church hall and so we prepared strawberries and together with a donation of home made tiny meringues we stood as a welcoming party with trays and offered all attending our little extra treat.

Janet kindly went out on a secret mission for us and returned with photographs of St. Andrews Church at Monkseaton where Louise was going to take up the ministry. The children made a card with pictures of our two churches and greetings were sent from our children to theirs.

Summer approached and Julian came up with a wonderful idea of a BBQ in the church grounds, It was really an excellent event - all junior church children and helpers were welcomed. Julian provided the BBQ and cooked the food - there were bubbles in the sky, music in the air and much laughter was heard all round the church garden.

On our last Sunday before holiday time Julie once more led our little group complete with fishing nets and buckets down to the river where the children caught masses of tiny fish and then toasted marshmallows over a little tinfoil bbq before letting the fish escape once more into the river.

Christmas was in our thoughts as Autumn came and went. It was the turn of St. Georges to put together a Nativity and as usual we invited our Methodist Friends to come and join in the fun. This year it was "The Nativity News" where the children of today interviewed all the main characters from long ago. We needed some "extras" who came forward willingly and we were very grateful- the children certainly had fun and it seemed to be a good success.

As I write this I wonder how much longer this particular group of children will need Junior Church guidance - they listen to the stories - they take part in activities but I am very aware of the fact that they are now young people almost ready to make their own minds up about many things.

I would like to thank all my helpers - they are indeed the very best and we all agree that these children make a dull day happy, - they question everything ....and often make us laugh out loud - they drive us to distraction and they are just wonderful.

***Barbara Pringle.***

### **Worship on Wednesday - WOW**

I am thinking of adding another W to the title of our Wednesday service. WWOW - Wonderful Worship on Wednesdays because it is true. These half hour services are real gems of worship and are valued so much by our regular attendees and occasional visitors.

Our regular number of people attending is anywhere from six to twelve people. Not all our regulars are from St George's Sunday congregation, we do have one lady who attends another Church every Sunday and another who only comes to Wednesday services. It is obvious that these services are really meeting a need. There is a real family feeling among our regular attendees which is quite inspiring.

My thanks to everyone involved:

Thanks to the Welcomers and tea and coffee makers, especially Christine Hawkins, Morag Stead, Christine Richardson and Margaret Brock.

Thanks to Revd Julian Sanders, Carol Dixon, Margery Tate, Margaret Brock, Revd Suzanne Hamnett and Andrew Hamnett for taking services which are so well received.

Thanks again to Andrew for playing piano and to Pat Hills who comes to our aid on the occasions when Andrew cannot be with us.

Thanks to all those loyal people who come along on as many Wednesdays as they can. WOW needs all of the above.

If you haven't been to a WOW service you will be made very welcome if you'd like to join us.

***Sue Rutherford***

### **CHURCH SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2023**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 the Annual Return to the URC head office and Northern Synod showed our membership to be 107. During 2023 six of our members died. These were Joan Hyde, Tom Mullens, Mary Souza, Chris Rowlands, Pat Bristow and Ted Le Grice. Our minister also led the funerals of Noreen Peel, Joan Trotter and Jack Henderson.

During the year there was one baptism, namely Esme Eve Brown.

Louise Sanders is no longer on our Member's list as she has taken on her new role as Minister of St Andrew's church, Whitley Bay. We wish her every success.

We were delighted to welcome one new member in 2023, namely Christine Oliver.

The average number attending each week is 65 plus 6 children. We also have 8 regular attenders who are not church members.

Junior Church has 6 children who attend regularly, 1 in the 0-4 category and 5 in the 11-17 category.

There are 106 children and young people across all age groups in the uniformed organisations, comprising Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers.

We are also strengthening our affiliation with the air cadets through their participation and attendance at the Community Carol Service and The Air Cadet Service. Over 40 of them attended this year.

The number of serving Elders is currently 9 with 2 new Elders to be appointed in 2024.

***Morag Stead***  
***Church Secretary***

### **Annual Report of the Managers for 2023**

The year began with the managers looking at how they might replace Neil, who had finally decided to step down as Property Manager. It is difficult to overstate how much we owe to him; he has been instrumental in maintaining the both church and, until recently, the manse, and we have not succeeded in finding any single person prepared to take on the onerous job that Neil has vacated. The decision has now been taken that, *pro tem.*, we will divide the duties of the post between the current managers as equitably as we can, but it is also important that all church members recognize that several of us are on a relatively steep

learning curve! In the interim, Neil is still available to give us guidance and help: we are all very grateful for this!

Another issue, which the Treasurer will wish to discuss in more detail, but which has implications for the whole church, is the ending of the SENEA agreement and the return of St George's to its previously customary position within the Northern Synod. In particular, since it relates to an issue with management of church property, the maintenance of the manse now becomes our responsibility again.

A major initiative this year has been the decision to completely revamp the church's risk register and safety policies. We are immensely indebted to Ken Anderson for taking on this mammoth task and his (possibly incommensurate) reward has been an invitation to join the managers' team. Whilst responsibility for Health and Safety issues rests with the Minister and Elders, the managers have to play a major role in actioning any changes necessary. Ken has been particularly helpful in ensuring that all the innumerable inspections and reports needed in a large and complex building, are firmly attached to individuals named. Following a careful tour of the building, Ken has also prepared a church risk register which is now available for inspection. We are also grateful that Gordon Slack has agreed to look after the electrical issues in the church; he is also now a much-valued member of the management team, in addition to Ken, and safety, risk and electrical issues are now a standard part of the managers' agenda at our meetings.

Amongst the property related issues this last year (many of which grew out of the Quinquennial report) we have seen: the continuing programme of replacement of fluorescent tubes in the church with LED lighting; the replacement of the mains supply to the outside crib with a 12V supply (for which we are grateful to Allen Oakes and some of the managers); the lighting system for the church clock; a new notice board for the church; the painting of the rainwater goods and railings; the replacement of the photocopier, the operation of which is subtly different from its familiar predecessor(!); the new audio-visual system (for which we are grateful for the Synod Trust's contribution); a new litter bin to counteract the disappearance of the old one into which food remnants used to be thrown; a list of those responsible for the safety of the lift and its inspections; the change in key code for admission to the church; the replacement of the blinds in the upper hall; a new monitor to allow the organist to participate more fully in those services using audio-visual equipment; the pruning of the cherry tree; and the repair of the malfunctioning dishwasher in the downstairs kitchen. This is not an exhaustive list, but it may give an indication of the scale of the managers' responsibility.

On other matters, the church has continued to have a good programme of events, including concerts, coffee mornings and talks. Our thanks go to Gillian Irvine, Sarah Cleverley and many others who help at these events; anyone arriving at a coffee morning will have been amazed at the attendance and enthusiasm, particularly for those events where sales of goods are taking place. Housekeeping continues under the watchful eyes of Sarah, Joan and Mary; one matter on which the managers spent some time this last year was the new safety issues with regard to food hygiene; these do make it very difficult for us to offer the kinds of meal-based entertainments that we offered in the past. Sarah also looks after stewarding, and we would encourage anyone who wants to be a little more involved in the church and to get to know more people, to volunteer for this. Andy Cleverley has had his first full year as lettings manager developing the church's business in this area; we have not fully recovered from the lockdowns, and it is clear that many organisations are also struggling to recover their previous membership. Outreach by the church in the form of the website and Facebook seems to be going well: average hit rates for the website are now about 150 per week, which suggests that we are reaching out to quite a sizeable audience.

**Andrew Hamnett**  
**Clerk to the Managers**

## **Church Lettings in 2023**

Total Lettings income for 2023 was £4184.00, including uninvoiced amounts from Lay Preachers £25, Ceilidh Band £50, Guides Christingle £50.

This is down by £800 on last year, which can be accounted for by the Dance Academy, CAST, who paid us £715, and Northumberland CC Music Dept who paid rent of £180 before the teacher went on maternity leave.

In summer 2023 our best customer, the Cobwebs Orchestra, moved to KEVI for zero rent. Income from this source was £750 in 2023.

We have a new group, a choir, called Alnwick Allstars, run by Linnea Tormajer and Dave Coulson who run choirs in Alnwick and the Borders. They meet in the sanctuary on Thursdays.

Excluding the Cobwebs, our clients were Ronke's Exercise Class, Lisa's Zumba Class and the Lateral Art shop. Morpeth Panto Society did 4 weeks of workshops in the summer. A trainee Yoga instructor is giving classes in the Drysdale Room once a week as part of her qualification work.

***Andy Cleverley***  
***Lettings Officer***

## **St.George's Church Orchestra Report 2024**

Our St George's Church Orchestra, SGURC, possibly better described as the Elastic Band, has had another busy year. In the past twelve months we have played every month for Sunday Worship apart from August.

We meet an hour before the start of the service to practice the hymns and music for playing both beforehand and afterwards along with Ken Irvine or Andrew Hamnett on piano. Our players can number between 6 and 12 on average; we can have 5 string players 3 violins, a viola, and cello. Wood wind can consist of recorder, 2 flutes, 2 clarinets, alto saxophone and bassoon. Brass can include trombone and tuba players.

A band provided music along with Andrew on piano for World Day of Prayer held in St.George's in March 2023 and in 2024 we will be playing at St. Robert's. In December 6 of us played for the Church Social again with Andrew on piano. It is always fun to join with the Junior church in their Nativity Service held either here at St.George's or at Morpeth Methodist Church. In addition Shirley Forster recruits players for special services in Bavington and a Christmas Carol service in Hauxley all of which are enjoyed and appreciated by those involved.

During the summer holiday period Shirley organised a number of Playalong sessions in the Horsley room using arrangements of music gathered over the years with parts provided suitable for a wide variety of instruments. We are fortunate to have so many players who come to join us from our friends in Cobweb Orchestra, Society of Recorder Players, and from other churches including St. Robert's. We welcome new players with an ability to read music to join our friendly band. Please contact me if you are interested.

***Christine Oakes*** ***SGURC Music Coordinator***

## **SOCIAL CONVENOR'S REPORT 2023**

2023 has been an excellent year for events which reach out and into the local community. There has been renewed support following two difficult years and fund raising for both charities and our church has been most gratifying. Things are

changing and this includes the sad fact that there are no longer regular Lunchtime Concerts and details of an occasional 'one off' will in future be detailed in this report and not, as in the past, have a dedicated section.

All organisations work extremely hard to provide activities not only for our members and friends but also for the community at large. We are indebted to all those people who continue to organise and support these events.

I am enclosing in this report those activities that I have been particularly involved in. The efforts of many others will be mentioned in other sections of this Annual Report. The amounts shown as raised are approximate as on many occasions donations were received after the event.

### **December 2022. Mid Northumberland Concert (monies received in 2023)**

Ticket sales were shared 50/50 with the Chorus.

£233-90

### **2023 Events and monies raised for church funds**

<b>January</b> £625-15	Managers Coffee Morning + 100Club.	
<b>February</b> £228-00	Lunchtime Concert by KEVI musicians (50/50 split)	
<b>February</b> fee only	New Tyneside Orchestra Charity Concert for Ukrainian Sunflower Sisters. (£537-00 raised)	Church hire
<b>March</b> fee only	Iona Brown and David Murray Charity Concert for Henry Dancer Days Cancer Charity (£904-78 raised)	Church hire
<b>May</b> £2,458-00	Plant Sale overseen by Mary Kelly.	
<b>July</b> £695-00	Strawberry Tea with the Grainger Singers.	
<b>October</b> £297-40	Charity Card Sale.	Refreshments and church card sales.
<b>October</b> £397-00	Werca's Folk Concert.	

During 2023 hand made cards raised over £333-00 and sale of jigsaws and books amounted to £157-40

***Gillian Irvine***

### **St. George's Knitter Natter Coffee Group report 2023**

Our group started in 2016 and we are still enjoying our weekly meetings, the talent and generosity in the group is amazing, someone always knows how to do a special stitch or different craft and is prepared to share their knowledge.

During the year we have supported lots of charities: At Christmas we made lap quilts for residents in care homes without family support. The staff gave us a list of Christian names so that we could wrap them and write a Christmas card. We dressed dolls to pass on to the Lions. Then for fun we made Christmas tree decorations and needlework pictures for the Church

Christmas Coffee morning, Also our usual flight of angels. We made a whole field of Poppies for Remembrance and rabbits and chicks for Easter.

We have made lots of items for the premature baby units, particularly cardigans ,hats, blankets, octopuses, and hearts (2 matching, one for mum to take and one to leave in the cot).

We knitted Balaclavas, Beanie hats, scarves and fingerless gloves for Ukraine. We have knitted children's hats which got to their new owners via schools, also children's jumpers and snuggly blankets for needy children via social services. At one meeting last month there were 16 of us whose ages added up to 1297 years, is it the knitting or the nattering keeps us young . All are welcome.

***Joan Cooper, Coordinator***

### **Co-ordinator's report for St George's Church Coffee Club 2023**

We meet in the church hall which has proved to be a successful venue. Our current membership number is 30 and we are always pleased to welcome guests to our meetings.

In February Bob Young gave a fascinating illustrated talk about John Smails and Sons from its start in the 1890's to its closure on Easter Sunday 2016. His aunt, Miss Isobel Smail, was remembered by many in the audience for her position near the entrance and her photographic memory of the shop's stock!

In March Geoff Hughes gave an entertaining talk entitled "Beautiful Northumbria". We were taken on a journey from Berwick to Marsden with photographs and monologues on the way. It made us appreciate the beautiful county we live in.

In April Susan Richardson gave a talk about the Japanese Memorial. Her father had been a Japanese prisoner of war. The British government gave POW's the opportunity to return to their place of imprisonment. Initially her father did not want to go back but did return to the village where he had worked in the mines and discovered that there was a shrine to the POW's. Susan and her father made further pilgrimages to Japan.

In May we had a Coronation Tea in the hall with a Faith Tea before our Summer break. Wednesdays' Knit and Natter group joined us, and we had a very pleasant afternoon with a quiz, raffle and a delicious tea.

Meetings resumed in September and Harry and Kath Gilbert gave an audio-visual presentation of there 2017 trip to Chile and Easter Island with Kath's commentary and Andean Flute music. The talk was entitled "A Shoestring called Chile" which referred to the shape of Chile.

In October Helen and Gem Soady gave the club six audio-visual presentations including Autumn around Northumbria and Fun at the Fair. There was no dialogue just very good pictures and accompanying music. In November Gill Monaghan came and gave us a talk about the local charity "Barnabus Safe and Sound". Gill described the different activities the charity is involved in. As well as a donation for the charity Gill left with a large number of "treats" for the young people.

Our Christmas Coffee morning in conjunction with St George's Flower Committee was held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> December. This was well attended and £1243.40 was raised. Thanks to everyone involved in this fund raising event. At our recent AGM it was agreed to give £1400 to church funds and £200 to the Food Bank.

A big thank you to everyone who has supported our events and meetings.  
A huge thank you to Linda Glascott, our treasurer and Vivien Bennett, Judith Crosby and Patricia Gatherum, the group leaders who organise the speakers and meetings.

**Sarah Cleverley Co-ordinator January 2024**

## **Tuesday and Thursday Badminton Report for 2023**

Tuesday and Thursday morning Badminton has continued during 2023. The sessions run from 10:00am to 12:00 noon officially, but can be shorter depending on numbers present. At present we have 9 - 10 regular members. We work on the following principles:

- a. Having enjoyment playing together
- b. Getting and keeping fit
- c. Having pleasant social contact

Annual membership costs £10 and each session costs £2.50. The money mainly goes to the Church to help defray expenses such as heating and lighting, but can also be used to purchase equipment e.g. Shuttles when needed.

We would welcome more players, whatever experience or ability. You can play at any or all of the sessions, including the Wednesday morning session run by Sarah Cleverley. All members come when they can and are always welcome. I send out an email once a week requesting members to indicate whether they can play or not on either the Tuesday and/or Thursday. The responses I get allow me to determine whether a session goes ahead or is cancelled due to lack of support.

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in joining us, please contact either myself or Sarah Cleverley. My contact details are:

**Allen Oakes,**  
**Email: [allen@oakesa.co.uk](mailto:allen@oakesa.co.uk) (preferred contact system)**  
**Telephone: 01670-518608 (answer phone available)**

## **Wednesday Morning Badminton Club**

The club now has eleven members with numbers varying each week from 5 to 9 players. So that players are not sitting out for too long we play a shorter game to 15 points rather than 21.

We commence at 9.30 and play until about 11 then usually go to a local coffee shop for refreshments. The cost per session was increased to £2.50 in September but the yearly subscription remains at £5, or £10 if you play on Tuesday and Thursday as well. The money collected on Wednesday is combined with the Tuesday and Thursday groups and this all goes to the church. In 2023 the combined groups gave £1724 to church funds.

New members are always welcome and even if you have never played badminton before or it is a number of years since you last played come and join us at 9.30am on a Wednesday morning in the church hall and afterwards for coffee.

**Sarah Cleverley (January 2024)**

## **St George's URC Country Dance Club and SGURC - St George's United Reformed Church Ceilidh Band Annual report 2023**

**Country Dance Club Dancers meet from 7.30 to 9.30 on the second Saturday of the month in the upstairs hall.**

Usually between 12 and 30 dancers come along to dance, and chat, and listen to the live band 'SGURC' - all of us paying £2.00 to take part .. a cheap night out .. Although you do have to bring your own refreshments! .. Some folk come to every meeting but many people can only make it occasionally and they are welcome too. The money all goes to St Georges. From Feb 23 to Feb 24 we have donated close to £500 which we hope covers our heating and lighting!



We also raised £93 for Christian Aid at the May Country dance, and held a special Morpeth Churches together Ceilidh for Christian aid in October which raised £500+. We recently had a trip out to Forest Hall to play for a special ceilidh for 'Walking with asylum seeker support' Wallsend, and were overjoyed that this raised £930!!!

**Who are the dancers:** only a very few are St George's members, which we are a bit sad about. We would love you to come and join in. Many are people who visit St George's to take part in other groups and some are from other Morpeth churches, or Morpeth residents. However we attract people from as far away as Newcastle and Durham. Most of us are the 'active retired' brigade, We dance with enthusiasm but we don't whirl around doing baskets like the teenagers! We would welcome more dancers. If you enjoy going for a walk, or take part in gentle sport or keep fit, you will be able to join in the dances easily. You do not need to bring a partner, we all dance with each other. We still miss Jared so much, but 4 of us have stepped into his 'Caller' shoes so there is a wide variety of dances.

**Who is the band:** a few St George's folk, a few friends who also come along to play for the church orchestra, and a few friends who belong to other musical groups. We welcome all abilities. and instruments. Adult beginners are encouraged and supported by more skilled players. All sorts of instruments have been included from descant recorder to trombone, fiddles to saxophone. Players come along when they are free -some every meeting, some very occasionally. We practice for an hour together before each dance. It is not a big commitment and lots of fun. Ceilidh band players join with church orchestra players to make up groups to play for special events like the World Day of Prayer service, and special services -midsummer at Bavington, and carols at Low Hauxley Methodist chapel. We do not play for big events... that's for commercial bands... but we are happy to play for small fundraisers in little halls and have a couple of bookings coming up. See us in action on our face book page- search for '**Morpeth Country Dance Club**' And ask to be added to our email list. We remind people of each meeting a few days before. Our Next dates are April 13<sup>th</sup>, May 11<sup>th</sup>, June 8<sup>th</sup>, July 13<sup>th</sup>

**Interested? Do let me know. Shirley Forster text 07749525269  
shirlsgurc@gmail.com**

### **Table Tennis Report**

Each Saturday morning, when we are able, 8-12 of us meet to play Table Tennis. Our skills and stamina levels vary, but that does not matter. From it's inception we have made it inclusive, welcoming everyone.

We meet from 10-12 and within that time we have quite a lengthy tea/coffee break!  
Our weekly subscriptions are donated to Church Funds.  
We are a friendly, happy group and if you would like to join us just come along.

**Christine Richardson**

### **BOWLING AT ST GEORGE'S IN 2023**

Carpet Bowls takes place at St George's every Wednesday afternoon in the Hall between 2.00 and 4.00 from early September until the end of April.

We currently have 28 members with an average attendance of 17 people per week who come for gentle bowling and good fellowship. We gained 4 new members during the year. By increasing our subscriptions and reducing our historic bank balance, the Club has been able to donate £1000 to St George's at the end of 2023.

We are very sad to report the death of Ted LeGrice in 2023. Ted was always a keen and skilful bowler. He supported the Club both in the relaxed afternoon bowls sessions as well as in

matches against other clubs before lockdown. He also played outdoor bowls and at the indoor arena at West Denton. Ted is greatly missed and our thoughts go out to his 3 sons and their families.

If you are interested in playing, please contact **Andy Cleverley, tel. 01670 515257**

### **St George's Community Players**

From March 2023 to writing this report the Community Players continue to present plays that bring enjoyment to their audiences.

In June last year we performed a Murder Mystery play for our patrons, it was written by our own Eileen Clark who has written many plays performed by the group over the years. Unfortunately, in keeping with the pattern of last year, this production was also affected by illness in the cast.

Millie Jones, a new member last year, had to drop out of the role she had due to family health issues. It was very difficult to find someone available to fill the role, I was directing, I took on Millie's' role. Getting closer to the date of performance another cast member, Josh Beasley, had to withdraw due to ill health, one of the other cast members twisted the arm of his friends to take the part. Many thanks go to Graham Bullough for coming to our rescue. Because he joined us so close to the performance we decided to make this a performed reading which meant the actors had their scripts with them.

These evenings are free to patrons and are always very popular. Anyone who would like to know more about becoming a patron please come and have a chat with me.

In July last year an open evening organised by Joann Evans was successful in attracting two new members to the group. One of them became the lead character in our November production of Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit. This was a success however as it is a three act play and it was longer than we would usually produce. We are going to stick to two act plays in future.

Our presentation this March is to be three of Alan Bennett's Talking Heads monologues. This is being directed by Lena Crawford who is also our Vice-Chairman. Lena is also taking in one of the monologues. The three are A Lady of Letters, A Chip in the Sugar and Bed among the Lentils. These are being performed 'in the round' which is very helpful in as much that it means we don't need to build a set.

This brings me to an appeal, we do need people who are good with hammer and nails, drills and in general have good woodworking skills. We need folk who would like to have a bash at set building; we do have knowledgeable people who are ready to pass on their skills. If anyone would like to be involved, please contact me.

St George's Community Players are still alive and acting.

***Sue Rutherford  
Chairman.***

### **4<sup>th</sup> Morpeth Guides 2023**

What a busy year we had in 2023, where do we start?

It was lovely to welcome new girls to join us at the start of the year. Some of the girls joining us were our Rainbows who had been to Brownies and now moved up to Guides.

We started the year off with a trip to Pegswood Fire Station where we talked about our safety in our home. We had a tour of the station where we were allowed to try on equipment and sit in the fire engines. The girls had a great time.

We celebrated Chinese New Year, the year of the Rabbit. The girls designed some ink drawings and wrote their names using the Chinese alphabet. We even decorated our church notice board. Of course, we had made some yummy spring rolls and ate them with a few different dips to try.

We celebrated World Thinking Day in Church. The girls were very lucky to be visited by the High Sheriff. He was super excited to see the girls and hear all about what they have been up to and what they do in Guides. They were inquisitive about what he did and how you became a High Sheriff. He even asked for a selfie to put on his High Sheriff social media pages.

Over the next few months, we were busy carrying out badges, UMA's and Skill Builders. We made recycled mini golf courses, built inside bivvies. Learning all about children who are different to ourselves, this allowed us to use our senses in games.

We were very unlucky with the weather for the Bivvy. It rained and rained and rained. We were all set to brave the weather and then it was cancelled due to it being unsafe in the trees and the wind. The bad weather continued whilst we celebrated 50 years of Northumberland Girlguiding Wallington hall.

Following the Big Help Out and the visit to the cinema, some of the girls joined us for a camp at Causey Park with the Scouts, this was a very hot weekend. The girls took part in many on site activities and at nighttime they joined the silent disco. The weekend went fast and they were so busy all the time.

The girl ended the summer term with a sunny trip to the beach, we had a sandcastle competition and played games. It was a lovely way to end such a busy term. Some of the girls even did their promise on the beach.

To end the term we had a County Summer Camp at Swarland Vyner Park. This had a 70's theme. We had crafts, tie dying, games, fancy dress party, food and nature walks. This was an amazing way to start the summer holidays.

We started the Autumn term with many Skills Builders and UMA's part of the Guiding programme. We learnt about scientific experiments and we even made our own butter. We enjoyed this with freshly baked bread. We also carried out some first aid involving CPR and what to do in an emergency.

We joined the Rainbows for their early start to Flamingo land and their beautiful day at Cragside as they were just getting ready for Christmas.

We took a vote as it was parliament week. This was an interesting week to allow girls to debate and see other people's opinions. We took part in Remembrance parade. The girls demonstrated lots of respect during the parade, representing Girlguiding by carrying our flags on parade and taking part in the 2 minutes silence.

Just before the craziness starts for Christmas, we managed to squeeze in a Pudsey Children in Need disco. The mad rush of Christmas was upon us, the girls planned their Christmas market stalls and refreshments that took place after our Christingle in the church. The girls' stalls were amazing. We had cakes and cookies, games, pin the nose on the reindeer, homemade crafts, tombola and raffle.

We ended our very, very busy year with a visit to the Odeon to sit, relax and enjoy Wish . Roll on 2024! And many more adventures.

**Liz Kelly**

### **Morpeth Rangers 2023**

The girls started the year with a visit to Pegswood Fire Station alongside the Guides. They also met the Northumberland High Sheriff. There were many questions on both sides as well as a selfie for his social media pages.

World Thinking Day was extra special for the Rangers. Two of our Rangers represented us at York Minster at North East England Region World Thinking Day celebration, they made the colour party for one of the flags and our leader Megan carried another flag. The Rangers also assisted Julian with the service telling stories and explaining all about world thinking day. We were very proud of them for leading the service and thinking of our sisters around the world.

Over the next few months, we were busy completing badges and parts of the Girlguiding programme. We made recycled mini golf courses, built inside bivvies. We even managed to fit in a movie night, ice skating, some pamper sessions and cooking. The girls explored a variety of international woman and made posters for their notice board explaining what they had done and why they think they inspire them. The notice board looked amazing.

Chips were the call of the day, the girls got kitted out and went litter picking around the river and through the alley ways in Morpeth. After all their hard work they received chips as a reward for all their hard work.

The Rangers got an invite to the local WI. They were asked to deliver a presentation all about Rangers and what they do and their experiences. They worked hard over a few weeks to produce this which included songs and a craft.

The girls ended summer term with a beach visit, they loved time to relax and chill on the beach as school was nearly finished and exams were a distant memory. They had a game of rounders and games. They enjoyed a picnic and even helped the rainbows make their sandcastles. Don't know who was having more fun.

During the Autumn term the girls completed a lot of the programme which involved foods, experiments, talking and working together. The girls looked into some first aid, we carried out CPR and some bandages and slings. We squeezed in a lovely sweet treat of fudge making.

Wow, what a busy year we have had, bring on new adventures next year.

**Liz Kelly**

### **4<sup>th</sup> Morpeth Rainbows 2023**

It was lovely to welcome new girls to join us at the start of the year. We started with decorating hearts for the local coop. The girls were excited as they could go and see their heart in their window. We took part in the Great British Bird Watch making bird feeders to encourage birds into their gardens. We loved counting birds and seeing them eat our food we made.

The celebrations began with Chinese New Year, the year of the Rabbit. The girls made paper globe rabbits and we tried some new Chinese food.

We focused on the part of the Guiding programme called Know myself; this allowed us to explore lots of different things about ourselves and got to know the other girls better. We played games, sang songs and had lots of discussions.

World Thinking Day was celebrated by holding a church service in St George's Church. The Rangers told us stories as we celebrated and thought about our sisters all around the world - fellow Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Rangers and volunteer leaders & helpers.

The Girls made lots of daffodils on St David's Day. We made lots and placed some on our notice board and the Church loved the girls' artwork. It was bright and beautiful. We had a whole night dedicated to International women's day. We looked closely at Emily Davison and who she was and what she did. We went to visit her statue in the flower park and we made some rubbings from her statue.

The Rainbows got kitted out in hi-vis jackets, gloves and litter pickers. We headed out around the river. The girls were shocked about how much rubbish there was just lying around and even in front of a bin. As we collected rubbish the girls talked about encouraging people to put it in the bin and save the animals.

The bad weather didn't put the girls off, as we celebrated 50 years of Northumberland Girlguiding, with a picnic and promise renewal at Wallington hall. We were joined by Brownies, Guides, Rangers and Leaders for the day. Everyone was in high spirits and enjoyed their day despite the weather; some of the girls renewed or made their soggy promise.

As part of the Big Help Out, we had a litter pick followed by a Royal celebration of activities to celebrate coronation day. We made crafts, games and even had party cake.

Some of the girls joined us for a camp at Causey Park with the Scouts; this was a very hot weekend. The girls joined us for the day and took part in many on site activities. Lots of tired girls by the end of the day.

We had a Nepal night in preparation for a young leaders visit in the summer. We learnt about the country and where it is, songs, crafts and even some sweet treats.

The girls had an early start to see Ariel at the cinema. They were all super excited as this was one of their favourite Princesses.

We finished the summer term off with a lovely trip to Clark's bog. We did a nature trail and found out interesting facts about the animals. We found baby frogs and slugs on our walk. We then watched the swans and ducks being fed. Also, a trip to the beach, we had a sandcastle competition, played games and enjoyed a delicious picnic. It was a lovely way to end such a busy term.

We started the Autumn term with a water themed challenge as we carried out some fundraising for the RNLI. We made boats, played water games and learnt what the RNLI do. We went for a walk over the bridges in Morpeth. The girls took home the boats and filled with loose change, they were proud to raise money to help.

We had an early start to Flamingo land. The girls were very excited and talked and sang the whole way there about the ride they were going on. It was super busy, lots of queuing. Some of the girls got very wet but dried quickly when we went through the zoo to see the animals. They were tired and felt asleep on the way home.

As a whole unit we took a trip to Cragside, this was a beautiful day we had a walk around the house and the gardens, very peaceful. We took lots of pictures and they were just getting ready for Christmas.

We had a busy few weeks. We had our own talent show, singing, dancing, jokes, and stories. Halloween and Bonfire activities.

With Christmas just around the corner, we started with Remembrance night. The girls learnt all about what we have poppies and they decorated the notice board ready for poppy day. The girl helped to add to children in need fundraising by having a disco and dancing and singing their hearts out.

As Christmas began to get closer we were very busy with Christmas crafts and some yummy treats to eat. Some of the girls attended the Christingle service and were invited to guide's Christmas markets. We ended our very busy year with a visit to the Odeon to sit, relax and enjoy Wish.

What a year, how do we fit all this in. Roll on next year.

### **4th Morpeth Brownies report for 2023**

The theme for the beginning of this year was Express Myself. In addition to the skills builders and unit meeting activities linked to the theme, we helped the Brownies gain an interest badge for the theme. The more outgoing Brownies planned and rehearsed a performance for a talent show, the less outgoing completed 2 of the 3 parts painting badge and finished it at home. The Talent show was interesting with joke telling, dance and gymnastic displays.

We visited the observatory at the King Edward IV school, and the observatory leader gave a talk and led activities about the planets. Our Mother's day activity was making a pop up card. The Brownies favourite activities are the ones with an art and craft element, we have some very talented artists.

After Easter we began a new theme, Know Myself. In addition to theme activities we went litter picking as part of the volunteering suggested by King Charles III to celebrate his coronation. For Father's day the brownies painted glasses with some interesting designs.

Excitingly for the 4th Morpeth unit we celebrated our 100th birthday. The first meeting was on or around the 1st of August 1923 and the leader was Miss G A Wilkinson, possibly the daughter of the incumbent minister. Another leader in the 1940/50s was Mrs J.H.Johnson the wife of the then minister. According to the records I could find the church, at its different locations, has been the home of the Brownies since the unit was started for which we are grateful.

I would like to thank Mrs Joan Cooper who has been very helpful with providing information and items from her time in guiding. However, I would also appreciate any further information/history about guiding and the link with the church as I am trying to compile a file to leave for a future Brownie pack when they are celebrating another birthday. The girls helped with the design of a birthday badge which was then used to have embroidered badges made. They made invitations for a party held at the last meeting of the term. We invited previous leaders and Margery Tate as a representative from the church. Mrs Creswick, a leader from the early 1970's had her birthday on the same day as the party and was invited to cut the cake.

In the autumn term we continued with the Know myself theme activities in addition we took up the Girlguiding Can Do challenge. The Brownies decorated biscuits; unfortunately we did not have time for them to bake the biscuits as well. Money raised was donated to Children in need in partnership with Girlguiding. Some of the Brownies were able to take part in the Remembrance Day parade, the harvest festival and the toy service.

The term concluded with the Christingle which as ever was a lovely service and helped us remember the true meaning of Christmas.

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**Liz Kelly**