

The Newsletter of St.Giles', Newcastle, with St.Thomas', Butterson.

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Parish News

February 2021

**Our buildings
may be closed
but the Church
of God is always
open!**



Lent

**St.Giles Church
Pumpkin growing
Competition**

**February
Diary Dates**

**Mothers
Union**

**Newcastle
News**

**Penkull
Cottage Homes**

Clergy:

Rector: Revd Josh Penduck (01782) 620322
revpenduck@gmail.com

Revd Peter Nisbeck

Revd Ann Taylor

Revd Jean Walker

Wardens: St.Giles'

Mrs. Gillian Elkes

Mr. Dennis Brammer

St.Thomas'

For any enquiries, please contact
our Parish Administrator.

Parish Administrator: Mrs. P. Richards

Email: office.stgilesnewcastle@gmail.com or phone: 07592 035386

Rev'd Ann Taylor writes.....



February, and Lent begins, it was Lent last year that saw us first coming face to face with The Virus and life stopped being normal. As someone said, probably the longest Lent ever. We can all look back to a simpler world, where we could never, ever have dreamed we would be where we are today. Holidays booked, cancelled, rebooked, cancelled. Christmas without our loved ones, special birthdays, anniversaries spent away from family and friends. Fears for family and friends and loss, which has hurt and caused great sadness, and here we are again unable to worship as we would or to have the freedoms that we have so valued. But the vaccine is here at last and I rejoice when I hear that friends have received this life saving vaccine some of which is being manufactured at Cobra on Keele Science Park. A great plus for the area, give thanks for that. Again we ask the medical staff and the NHS to bring us relief and to bring us freedom. I know I am immensely grateful to all those who have put themselves on the line just to be there for other people. Just as I am grateful to all those who have been keeping in touch with me and with others. St Giles and St Thomas should be family, caring together and praying for each other.

This month of February the church sees the end of Christmas, 2nd February is Candlemas, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the last of the 40 days of Christmas. Then St Valentines on 14th, (chocolates very welcome, Ian). Followed by Ash Wednesday on 17th and the beginning of the 40 days of Lent.

In Ministry Team we discussed themes for preaching during Lent as we looked towards the Cross, the phrase Ruptured Relationships was used, may be I thought this has been a terrible legacy of the virus that there are Ruptured Relationships, not

only between us and God, but also between us and friends and colleagues, how the pandemic has divided us one from another, we haven't been able to be face to face with each other.

One thing I am hoping to do over this Lent is to spend my time trying to contact as many of my family and friends as I can and to be aware of any of my ruptured relationships that have happened over this past very difficult year doing my best to repair and restore and to share the love and affection that the pandemic has cruelly broken down. We are called to try and repair our relationship with God, to see the cross of Christ not as an end, a division, but rather as a sign of the depth of love God always has for us even when we break our relationship with him and turn away and forget him. With God it is never too late. With our vaccines we can start again, let us see our life with Jesus as a spiritual vaccine, help us to be ready to start again sharing our faith and love for him.

Let us try to use this Lent to look out into our world, to grow our friendships and our love for each other, let us see what the new world will bring and put our trust in Jesus to lead us into our new future.

A Thought for the Month

I really don't mind getting older,
but my body is taking it badly.



Visit our website:-

<http://www.stgilesnewcastle.org.uk/>

for links to -

Parish News (on-line edition)

Youtube (Service videos)

Facebook

Facebook Families page

For those with no internet access, a number of printed copies of **Parish News** are available. Please contact our Parish Administrator.

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Church Matters

●ST GILES and ST THOMAS are both CLOSED at present. Due to the new lockdown and for the safety of the congregation and the ministry team, we are continuing our weekly worship only online at 10.30am every Sunday on St Giles Newcastle You Tube channel.

From the Editor -

Michael Pitstow

As I write this, (end of January), the broadcasters are telling us that the Covid virus infection rate has dropped slightly, but we must keep to the lockdown rules to get it down further, which means, sadly, our Churches will have to stay shut for some weeks to come.

During February, our Church hall should have been echoing to the shouts of "Beetle!" and we would have our fill of pancakes at our Shrove Tuesday event, but not this year.

We would also be holding special Services to mark the other special days leading up to Lent and then a course of meetings to give us a richer understanding of the importance of Lent - but not this year.

The absence of these 'events' is very sad but in this edition you can read all about the special days in February and other items that I hope you will find interesting.

The Church buildings may be closed, but the life of our parish through its members goes on. Please remember to watch our regular on-line YouTube Services, read our FaceBook page and make sure you get your regular edition of *Parish News*, either on-line or a printed copy.

* * * *



St.Giles Church Pumpkin growing Competition

For further details, please contact:-

Gillian Elks (01782) 711833

Julia Nisbeck (01782) 662379

Or email: david.elks@hotmail.co.uk

We are proposing to have a pumpkin growing competition for St.Giles Church funds over the summer months, with a grand weigh-in sometime in October. We have 30 giant pumpkin seeds which will be planted in early April and once ready these plants can be purchased for a suggested donation of £2.00, more if you would like. Nurturing instructions will be provided and if you look on the Mr Fothergills website for giant pumpkins you will see that they can grow up to 35 pounds in weight. There will be a prize for the largest pumpkin and hopefully we can sell off pieces of the pumpkin.

A short history of Social Care in Penkhull Cottage Homes

Dr Richard Talbot MBE

Without doubt many people reading this will have heard of Penkhull Cottage Homes off Newcastle Lane, Penkhull. In fact, probably many may have lived there, or their parents, grandparents, relatives, or friends. No matter who they are would have strong memories of their experiences – some good some bad.

I had almost completed my book The Royal Manor of Penkhull but over a couple of months I received calls from people recently moving into the old homes houses in what is now St. Christopher's Avenue asking was there any information they could obtain on its history. The answer was no – it was considered that it had become a taboo subject, and yet, I thought that if something is not done now whilst there remain people alive who can share their stories – its very existence would have been lost in a few more years. So, I challenged myself to research the subject and include this in my book.

I used the media to ask former inmate children to make contact and was delighted that quite a number did and to my surprise apart from their memories many had kept precious old black and white snaps that I was free to use.

The idea of 'cottage homes' came out of the fact that society began to think that the treatment of children who accompanied their parents into workhouses as well as those should not be subject to the same rules as adults but rather be accommodated outside of institutions in large homes with an appointed 'mother' frequently a spinster, who would take care of them. It was also the idea that they should attend local schools and places of religious worship and where possible have a more normal life than previously. From then on, once babies born into workhouse life and weened, they were removed from the mother and placed in the care of the cottage home.

Penkhull Cottage Homes were opened on Friday, 19th December 1901. New boots, shoes, and clothes were purchased for the children ready for the grand opening. In January 1902, there were 144 children and by 1925, 240 living at Penkhull Homes. Visiting was only allowed on the first Saturday of the month, between the hours of 3pm. and 5pm. The sending of children to be placed into care was simple and was adopted by the Board of Guardians under the 1899 Act. Hundreds of children



were taken into Penkhull Cottage Homes each year on this basis as orphans, or from parents that were either incapable of looking after their children, or because of abject poverty, unemployment, family breakdowns, death, or in many cases the parents just did not care. For example, for one month, in 1911, 63 children were deserted by their parents, just left at the door of the receiving officer, no questions asked.

But what was the general perception of the children in care. Interesting, but it's a certain fact that I, like most of my age were told that if we didn't behave we would be sent to Penkhull Cottage Homes – why – because it was assumed that all the children there were naughty. I learnt that was not the case but in reality, I now feel they were all victim of the time. But what was life really like – space does not allow here. Many orphaned children were sent to Canada or Australia to work on the land, never to be heard of again. Boys were frequently sent away to working boys' farms such as Wallingford Farm Training Colony or similar institutions, firstly to learn discipline and then a trade. Local schools were used, mostly Penkhull as the nearest but also Cross Street, Harpfields, Springfields and Stoke boys. The logbooks of these schools make horrendous reading, many children sent were illiterate, absenteeism was out of control, children misbehaved. Sadly, some teachers treated cottage home children far worse than other children especially where corporal punishment was concerned.

The centre of activities was the Muster Hall where entertainment was put on for the children and parties and where various groups came to offer their services. It was in the Muster Hall that children had to line up once a month for a short back and sides by local barber Frank Wedgwood who was employed for the day. Frequently children were invited to the pantomimes at the Theatre Royal, local visiting circuses, weekly swimming lessons at Hanley baths and visits to Hanley Park and even to

Continued on the next page...

Penknull Cottage Homes continued....

Trentham. For the Coronation of King George V, it was agreed a change from the strict diet at the home for two days and the sum of £2 was granted to buy prizes for a sports afternoon. V.E. day was celebrated by a proper street party. Tables and chairs were placed down the avenue, each 'home' having their own table as a family. Food was somehow found in abundance even though rationing was in operation. In 1911 the homes had its own Boys Brigade group and by the 1920s they joined Penknull Scout Group.

From the early age of five years, children in each home were expected to play their part in the running of the home. Mother's job was not to clean, scrub, wash and tidy every day, that was up to the children. It was considered that the discipline for children, as in most homes, was that each child should have some responsibility for its upkeep. Older boys and girls were expected to feed the younger children and teach them how to use knives and forks. When a little older they would take the first steps of laying the breakfast table, then getting ready for the evening meal which was a little more complicated. Breakfast consisted mainly of porridge, not only was it made the previous evening by the older children but also served by them in the morning, then before school, all would have to be cleared away and dishes washed.

Annual holiday came early in June 1911 as a number of boys were invited to a summer camp at Skegness. In March 1923, it was decided to fund-raise for a children's summer outing to Rhyl, probably with the free use of a school room or church hall taking with them hand-made straw mattresses and groceries. Other holidays were to Llandudno on the same basis and for one trip was after the war - an old arm camp outside Southport where they



An outing to Llandudno

occupied former bunkbeds in detached barracks. Later, individual 'homes' booked their own boarding house in Blackpool. The children received just 2d a week pocket money and tried to save from that for the holiday.

For most children, their experience at Penknull was good, giving order and some form of stability to their lives where previously there was none or little at the best. Upon reflection many former children now consider themselves even luckier than many children outside with regard to clothes, food, comforts, holidays and general care. Sadly, some children, for whatever reason, were damaged upon arrival; others became unfortunate victims of a system of institutional care.

Continued on the next page...



Cottage Homes Family c1915

◆ If perhaps you or someone you know experienced life in the Homes this book *The Royal Manor of Penknull* would be the perfect gift for Christmas and the only account of life in the homes ever written. Once sold out the book will not be reprinted but will become a collector's item. Its hard back A4 size and available at a reduced price of only £20 including postage in the UK. There are only around 100 left. If interested either message or email me on richard.talbot88@btinternet.com and I will send full details of payment and delivery etc.

Penknull Cottage Homes continued....



Cottage Homes Family Tea Party

Unfortunately, there are no records of punishment that have survived, but it is doubtful if much was entered in them anyhow. Some children in care were, according to the evidence from interviews were well treated. Others reported that certain mothers made their wards' a 'living hell', but no one dared to speak out for fear of even worse things happening to them. Some of the boys were beaten and yet the Superintendent did nothing about it. As a punishment, children were made to stand in a corner, have their legs or bottom smacked with the back of a wooden hairbrush. It was apparent that some foster mothers went far beyond any reasonable approach to punishment. One person interviewed was sent to bed all Christmas day for just a silly thing. Missed all the meals, the visit from Santa and lay there all day crying as she listened to the other children playing.

Boys who became troublesome, were made to stand on a chair in the cold hallway for hours. There were restrictions on playtime and weekly sweet allowance, and lastly, sent to bed early. Some children when interviewed said their mothers were sadistic with the punishments they inflicted. It was terrible some days to learn just how cruel some of the mothers could be hidden behind closed doors many of which were almost like prison officers.

On holiday at Southport one mother would not allow the boys in her care to wear casual clothes and play around in the fields or the beach like the other children. Even when visiting the town, they had to be dressed up to the hilt and marched in a row.

One thing that most agreed with was that there was never any expression of love, compassion, real care or concern given by mothers. Even when ill in bed there was never any kindness shown, just pure hatred. On occasions children had the mopping up bucket placed over their heads and told to stand in the hall no matter the age. Woe-betide-them if they spoke after lights out, as children were threatened a belting

with mother's leather strap. Punishment came in all forms, from the back of a wooden hairbrush on the back of the hand or even worse across your knuckles.

This only represents a fraction of life experienced recorded at Penknull Cottage Homes, the chapter in my book is over 20,000 words long with loads of photographs – a massive undertaking to research, interviews and compile. It's unique as the only record of life recorded at Penknull Cottage Homes and as such a masterclass of social interaction of the period.

February Diary Dates

14th Feb: Valentine's Day

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day -14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

Continued on the next page...

16th Feb: Shrove Tuesday:

Who's for pancakes?

by David Winter

Why do we have pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, as we call it today? And what is Shrove Tuesday? And why do thousands of people feel it rewarding to race along a street somewhere tossing pancakes from their frying pans as they go?

Well, the answer to the first question is that it is the day before Lent begins and for well over a thousand years that has meant it was the last chance to enjoy meat, fat and other tasty dishes until Easter Day. The 'Lent Fast' was widely and strictly observed. The food in the larder wouldn't keep for six weeks so it had to be eaten. With all these rich foods no wonder the French call it 'Fatty Tuesday' – Mardi Gras.

So, what have pancake races got to do with all this solemnity? 'Shrove' is an old word for 'forgiven' and in those days to prepare for the rigours of Lent people would want to confess and seek forgiveness – not quite what you want at a party. The answer is quite simply enjoying yourself while you can! So, on Shrove Tuesday this year let's have some fun and make it last as long as possible. The most convincing (and amusing) of the explanations of pancake races is of outwitting the Sexton who rang the curfew bell that marked the start of Lent. He was reluctant to do it while the race was unfinished. So, the revelry caused by dropped pancakes, postponed the inevitable. Since the Reformation it has not been so rigorously observed in Britain, but still people will resolve to 'give up something for Lent'. Six weeks is about right as a duration and Sunday has always been exempt but make the most of those pancakes. They may well not reappear until April 12th!

17th Feb: Ash Wednesday:

Mourning our sins

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes right back to the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses, and saw their evil ways as God saw them, they could do nothing but repent in sorrow. They mourned for the damage and

evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head, and even rending your clothes, was an outward sign of their heart-felt repentance and acknowledgement of sin. (See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the very early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time, and mourning their sins. But soon many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. They heeded Joel's call to 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-19). Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The collect for today goes back to the Prayer Book, and it stresses the penitential character of the day. It encourages us with the reminder of the readiness of God to forgive us and to renew us.

The Bible readings for today are often Joel 2:1-2, 12-18, Matthew 6: 1-6, 16 – 21 and Paul's moving catalogue of suffering, "as having nothing and yet possessing everything." (2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10)

The actual custom of 'ashing' was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Today, throughout the Church of England, receiving the mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional. Certainly, the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19)

The late medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today.

The Collect for Ash Wednesday:-

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Continued on the next page...



The season of Lent

The season of Lent begins on Wednesday, February 17th, 2021 — also known as Ash Wednesday. Lent ends three days before Easter Sunday on Thursday, April 1st, 2021. The week before Easter Sunday — called Holy Week. People mark it in various ways. Some see it as a time for spiritual self-examination.

Do you ever worry that your past failings mean that God will not accept you now? Some of us have done many things which we regret, things that have caused us, or others, great pain.

We've given our children short shrift, we've betrayed our marriage partners, we've been dishonest at work, we've been ruthlessly greedy and ambitious, no matter what the cost to anyone else. And now the memory of the wrong we've done lingers, and makes us ashamed. Our past failings make us very reluctant to turn to God. Why should He forgive the damage we have done?

If you think this way, then you have a big surprise waiting for you: God isn't like that. You haven't yet encountered His GRACE. God knows all about you, and most of all He knows you need His help. Jesus said that He came into the world to reach sinners, to help anyone who turns to Him in true repentance to find forgiveness, and a new start.

You can't do anything to turn yourself into a good person. But you don't have to. All that God asks of you is that you turn to Jesus in prayer, and say you are sorry, and ask Him to forgive you, and to put His Spirit within you. Then you find His GRACE — which means His loving-kindness, beginning in YOUR life. Just try it.

Today let God begin to set you free from the past!

All 'February' Items from the Parish Pump

With our Church building closed and the current regulations, we are unable to hold our meetings, but we hold each other in our hearts and prayers.

Here are two prayers from the Mothers Union to help us through these troubled times -

God of compassion, be with us in these times of uncertainty. Break into our lives, rekindle our hope and breathe love into our communities, that we might find new ways of supporting and upholding one another, bearing witness to your inclusive love of family, friend, neighbour, and stranger alike. May our love for those most vulnerable in our community become a beacon of hope for all. In faith, hope, and love, in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Rev Denise Liersch Uniting Church of Australia

Gracious God, whose loving kindness has no limits, teach us afresh the way of Christ. Where we have felt discouraged, renew us through signs of hope; where we have been tempted to give up, grant us strength and faith to face the day; where we have grown anxious about the future, give us courage to plant the seeds of tomorrow in acts of radical love today. Renew us by your Spirit and set us free to serve you so that the whole of creation may rejoice in your name. Amen.

Richard Andrew, Darlington Methodist District Chair



- ◆All those who have lost loved ones during the Covid outbreak.
- ◆All those working in surgeries and vaccination centres.
- ◆All those who are separated from their loved ones.
- ◆All those in hospital or care homes.
- ◆All those waiting for operations or treatment.
- ◆All those working in the Emergency Services.
- ◆All those making decisions in government.

Take-a-Break

Answers on page 10

Candlemas Wordsearch

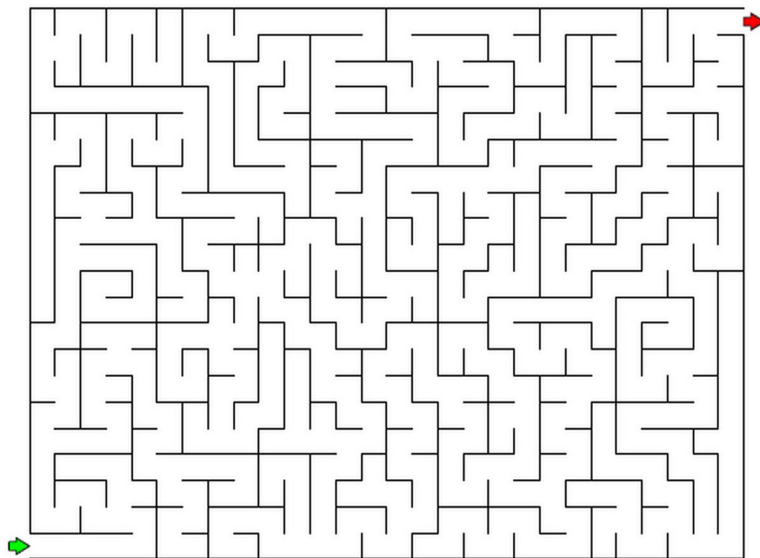
February opens with Candlemas – the naming of Jesus in the temple. Simeon and Anna praised God to see the promised Messiah, sent by a loving God to save his people. February also celebrates the love between a man and woman: Valentine cards and romance abound. 'Love' as in social compassion is also remembered: Fair Trade fortnight, Holocaust Memorial Day, World Leprosy Day, and National Nest Box Week.... Love is truly needed by everyone!

N N E S T B O X A R E C L
L F L A W E D D I N G T E
T O P M A T T H I A S T G
C O M E D A R T R I A F A
O G E L A H N O R L O C I
F Y T D R E M H O R B S R
F S P N L A C C T A E V R
E O O A N G O N N C G A A
E R V C E H I A I N L N M
L P E E C G N T I D N A I
O E R E H A S M N A N D N
V L T T S U A C O L O H A
E O Y D J N O E M I S A S

naming
Christ
Candlemas
Simeon
Anna
temple
love
Valentine
romance
Matthias
Fairtrade

Fortnight
coffee
bananas
chocolate
justice
poverty
nest box
marriage
wedding
Holocaust
leprosy

Start - AMAZING!



Smile-A-While



"..between you and me, it's the only way
I can remember my PIN number".



In this series, we are re-printing recipes which have been donated to St.Giles' by members of its congregation over the years. The following recipe is taken from the 'St. Giles' 1926 Jubilee Bazaar Souvenir Recipe Book'.

Ready for Shrove Tuesday - Scotch Pancakes

8 ozs flour
1 1/2 ozs sugar
1/2 teaspoonful carbonate of soda.
1/2 teaspoonful cream of tartar
1 egg
milk or buttermilk.

Method - Mix the dry ingredients together. Add an well beaten egg and sufficient milk to mix to a stiff smooth paste. Bake on a hot bakestone, using a desert spoon to measure. Each cake should be about 3 inches in diameter.

- Miss Webster, Whitfield Avenue.

From the 'First Friday Soup' book,
donated by Sue Daborn in 2018.

Courgette Soup

A wonderful creamy soup which can be
enjoyed hot or cold.

2 pints water
2 pounds courgettes
4 stock cubes
1-2 teaspoons curry powder/paste (to taste)
200 grams Philadelphia cream cheese.

Method - Roughly chop courgettes then cook in water until soft. Add stock cube and curry powder. Liquidise with the cream cheese.

Take-a-Break Answers

N N E S T B O X A R E C L
 L F L A W E D D I N G T E
 T O P M A T T H I A S T G
 C O M E D A R T R I A F A
 O G E L A H N O R L O C I
 F Y T D R E M H O R B S R
 F S P N L A C C T A E V R
 O O A N G O N N C G A A
 E R V C E H I A I N L N M
 L P E E C G N T I D N A I
 O E R E H A S M N A N D N
 V L T T S U A C O L O H A
 E O Y D J N O E M I S A S



Smile-A- While Extra

◆**Collection** - The church newsletter announced details of the church creche: 'Children are normally collected during the Offertory Hymn.'

◆**Correct?** - An R.E. exam asked the following question: 'What does a Bishop do?' Came one answer: 'Move diagonally across the board.'

◆**Remember** - A closed mouth gathers no foot.

MARCH's PARISH NEWS

Please email all items to
the Editor: -
pitstowm@aol.com

Closing date:
Tuesday, February 16th.

PLEASE NOTE:
Services and other
items in this issue may
be subject to change if
the Covid regulations
are changed.



Newcastle News

Castle House tel: 01782 717717

www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/news

Draft Budget Keeps Council Tax Rise Low

The majority of residents are set to pay less than nine pence more per week for a wide range of high quality services provided by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

New budget proposals for 2021/22 include revised Council Tax charges meaning that the Council's share of the annual bill would go up by £3.33 (six pence a week), £3.89 (seven pence) and £4.44 (nine pence) for the 69 per cent of people in the borough who live in Band A, B and C properties respectively. The draft budget, prepared in extraordinary circumstances, allows for another 10p per week for the average Band D home – owned by 12 per cent of residents – which equates to £5 over the 12 months. Changing Council Tax, which will raise £187,000, is among a number of measures the Council has identified to meet a £1.275m budget shortfall for 2021/22 caused mainly by lost income and additional spending as a result of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

◆**PROBLEM SUPPORT** - An emergency service helping people to cope with grief, trauma, isolation and loneliness during the pandemic is being extended thanks to bereaved families in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) has donated £10,000 to The Dove Service, based at the Dudson Centre in Hanley, which provides counselling and support to people from the age of four who are experiencing issues relating to bereavement, loss and life-changing illness. It's seeing a dramatic increase in the number of referrals and people struggling as a direct result of the pandemic. The money is being used to run two weekly online support groups as well as funding extra counselling capacity which is currently being delivered online or by telephone by trained professionals. (*The Dove Service* - 01782 683155).

◆**KEELE UNIVERSITY** has agreed to give a rent rebate to students who normally live in halls on campus but have been stuck at their family homes since early December. It means they won't be charged from January 4 up until the lockdown restrictions are lifted, which is set to be mid-February at the earliest. But members of the Keele University Rent Strike group say, while this is welcome, it doesn't go far enough. They also want a 50 per cent discount for students who have already returned to Keele as they are doing subjects classed as a priority by the Government. These include courses with a large practical element, such as health-related degrees, along with social work and teacher training.

◆**HIBERNATION** - Budget retailer Poundland has closed its Castle Walk store in Newcastle 'until further notice' due to the coronavirus lock down. The retail giant said 44 of its stores across the country will go 'into hibernation' so it can focus on bigger branches including the old High Street Woolworths store.

◆**TRAVEL** - Hays Travel, who took over the Thomas Cook shop in Newcastle have announced some branch closures, but the future of the Newcastle branch is unknown at present.

Item sources include the Newcastle Borough web-site.