

Health watchdog's work is explained

A lot of information about the Community Health Council, the public watchdog on all medical matters, was given to members of Cockfield Parish Council by Linda Allen, its Teesdale officer.

She explained how it works independently to look after the interests of patients.

Questions were asked about fund holding and non-fund holding doctors. She promised to find out more information on this subject.

Other questions were asked about the time it takes ambulances to arrive in Teesdale, the waiting lists for consultants and distances involved in seeing them, waiting time in hospitals and the cancellation of appointments.

It was an interesting discussion and Linda was thanked for her assistance.

Garden party to help research

Members of Barnard Castle branch of the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council for Research are holding a garden party at Barningham Park on Sunday 8th June from 2.30pm.

The gardens will be open to walk around by permission of Sir Anthony and Lady Milbank. There will be various stalls, with music provided by the Teesdale Brass Ensemble. Teas will be served in the village hall, where the whole event will be held if the weather is bad. Admission is £1; children under 12 free.

Councillor resigns

Mr Alan Cox has resigned from Cockfield Parish Council because of pressure of other commitments.

A poor turnout

Members of Bowes Parish Council were disappointed with the turnout at the annual meeting in the village hall. Only five members of the public attended.

School hopes to build own swim pool and sports hall

Following our report last week about Teesdale School's bid for technology status, there is news that Staindrop Comprehensive School wants to become a community college.

If it is successful the aim will be to build a swimming pool and sports hall which can be used by the pupils in school hours and the rest of the public at other times.

Mr Barry Hutchinson, who is head teacher at the moment pending the arrival of a new head in the autumn, told the Mercury that inquiries have been started into the possibility of gaining a lottery grant.

"There is a great need for some sporting amenities that can be used by our pupils," he said. "A sports hall and swimming pool would be a major step forward for the school."

It would also be greatly welcomed by the community of this area, which has no sporting facilities at all. People have to go to either Barnard Castle or Bishop Auckland for a swim and it is about time they had some amenities nearer at hand.

If the project does go ahead, the school will include a number of other facilities that can be used by pupils and will be an asset to the local residents.

Mr Hutchinson said costings have not yet been completed, but he realises that if a lottery grant is given the school itself will have to raise a large sum of money.

"We will have to face that if we want to create new facilities," he went on. "I am sure we will work hard and will also be given a lot of support."

He said he chose to speak about it at the moment after reading last week's Mercury, as he felt some people might believe that only Teesdale School has plans for the future.

The proposals have been welcomed by residents of the Staindrop area, as well as by the parents of the pupils, who come from a widespread area of the vale.

But one worry that will be certain to crop up is the impact another swimming pool would have on the Teesdale Sports Centre.

While a Staindrop pool

would be handy for residents of that village, and for people from villages like Cockfield and Evenwood, it could well have a serious impact on takings at the sports centre.

Manager Gordon Hall and his staff at the centre are currently trying to find ways of attracting more users to boost the takings, creating more surplus to go to Teesdale Council.

£500 given to help buy field

A full village hall at Winston gave an enthusiastic go ahead to the parish council's idea of buying a field and wood below the church as an amenity to celebrate the millennium.

An anonymous donation of £500 has since been received towards its purchase.

Coun Joe Porter, chairman, outlined the proposal. After comments and a vote a committee was formed to oversee the purchase of the land.

It was suggested there might be more worthy causes in the village. However, it was generally felt that the field and the views from it, mentioned in Robert Surtees' History of Durham, were assets to the village and worth preserving.

Lots of attractions at village carnival

Mickleton Carnival will give its traditional welcome to Teesdale residents and visitors on Saturday 7th June. The fun begins at 2pm with a fancy dress parade through the village led by the queen and her attendants along with Barnard Castle Youth Band.

Durham County Coun Alan Scott will judge at 2.30pm and formally open the festivities. The field next to the village hall will have many attractions including cross country races, sports, bouncy castle, tug o' war, tombola, cakes, white elephant stall, coconut shy, skittles, quoits and a ducking stool. An attraction this year is a six wheeled army recovery crane whose remote controlled crane-jib will attract everyone aged from 9-90.

Home made teas will be on sale in the village hall along with an exhibition by Shildon Model Railway Club. Profits are for regional and local charities.

Chairman again

Long-serving Coun Eddie Scott has been elected chairman of Startforth Parish Council for a further term, and Coun Mrs Ruth Bell has been re-elected vice chairman.

Disco for all

A junior disco will be held at Stainton Grove Community Centre this Friday 6-9.30pm. Admission is £1 with accompanying parents free. Refreshments will be on sale.

Mark Choules tells of life with Nato force in Bosnia

Gunner Mark Choules, 23, of Barnard Castle, is a member of 4th Regiment Royal Artillery which arrived in Bosnia in January for a six month tour and is based in the north. He is part of a crew deployed to the town of Brezicani with the Czech army as part of the NATO force.



Gunner Mark Choules

"It has been really interesting working with the Czechs," said Mark. "Most of my time is spent out on patrol with them and checking local sites. The majority of the locals are friendly. They smile and wave when we go past but we get hostile reaction in certain areas."

One of his lasting memories will be of the beautiful countryside. Driving through the mountain villages reminds him of Corsica, until he sees devastation. "It is particularly upsetting to drive through a village where they have destroyed one house completely and next door is untouched," he says.

The regiment has self-propelled AS90 howitzer guns, the British army's latest pieces of military hardware, which can fire three rounds over 30 kilometres in under 10 seconds.

The guns are a deterrent to war breaking out again.

Mark likes to keep fit. He goes running as he is a keen cross country athlete and plays a lot of hockey when he is in Germany. After leaving Teesdale School he studied at Bishop Auckland College before joining the army in 1995. He has served in Canada, Corsica and Germany. His parents Barry and Carol Choules live in Barnard Castle, and he will visit them in July.

Appraisal for hall

Members of Stainton Grove Community Association are busy producing a community appraisal questionnaire to be delivered to houses on their estate and in Stainton village during the next few weeks. The survey is to determine what further use residents would like to see made of the community centre.

Young adults are invited to join residential trip

Young people from Evenwood are being invited to take part in a Prince's Trust residential course in North Yorkshire next month.

Groundwork West Durham is looking for people from the village between 18 and 25 who are interested in joining others from around the country for a project from 7th-13th June.

They will be able to participate in a wide range of outdoor activities, including forest crafts, art workshops and other team initiatives such as first aid training. There will be numerous social events organised during the week.

Caroline Granthier of Groundwork West Durham told the Mercury it was an excellent opportunity for young people to improve their confidence as well as groupwork and personal skills. She said the experience could help improve their job prospects too.

Derek Foster seeks help for museum

Mr Derek Foster MP has had a meeting in the past week with the Minister of Arts Mark Fisher to press for more national recognition for The Bowes Museum.

Mr Foster has long maintained that the museum is one of the most important in the country and should be given more government support to secure its long term future.

He hopes to have another meeting with the minister in the next few weeks.

What's on in Teesdale Village Halls in June

Table listing various events and activities in village halls across Teesdale for the month of June. Includes events like Highland Show, Yorkshire Show, Rivedance, and various community clubs.

Antique and Collectors Fair at Ravensworth Village Hall. Sunday, 1st June. Home made refreshments. Tel: 01845 587 345

The Three Tuns Inn, Eggleston. Chinese Evening Friday, 30th May. Tel: 650289

Sunbed Hire from £30. Canopies & Double Helo Tubes. Free delivery. Tel: 01325 384143

The Moorcock Inn, Hill Top, Eggleston. 3 Course Sunday Lunch. Adults £6.00, Children £4.00. Tel: 01833 650395

Glaxo Sports & Social Club. Saturday, 31st May. Special Saturday Dance. Tel: 01833 637641

Walthworth Castle Hotel. Lunchtime Carvery. Tel: 01325 485470

Blacksmiths Arms, Mickleton. Saturday, 31st May. Tel: 01833 640605

Beavers Restaurant. Throughout April and May on Friday and Saturday Evenings only. 2 meals for the price of 1. Tel: 01833 637634

Hodgsons. Highland Show & Edinburgh Shopper. Tel: (0800) 654321

Magician. Children's Parties Contact: Philip Weeks. Tel: 01833 640333

Hamsterley Village Hall. Tel: 01388 488323

The George Hotel, Piercebridge. Tel: 01325 374576

Beavers Restaurant. 4 Market Place, Barnard Castle. Tel: 01833 637634

Copy for July should reach David Hutchinson by 20th June tel. 640331 or fax 640912