

CAN NEWS EXTRA – Autumn 2011

This Autumn issue of CAN news is focusing on energy, fuel and climate change and a number of articles were unable to be included due to lack of space.

Contents

Northumberland Volunteers Party
Royal Garden Party Report – Volunteers
Royal Garden Party Report - Councillor
Palace Green Arts & Crafts Week
The Queen Opens Alnwick Youth Hostel
Women's Voice
Would you Credit it?

Northumberland Volunteers Party

Sue Ashmore (CAN Trustee) attended the Northumberland Volunteers Party at Alnwick Castle hosted by the Duchess of Northumberland. Five thousand volunteers from groups as diverse as Community Action Northumberland, Business and Professional Women, the RNLI and the Samaritans were entertained by pipers, singers and musicians and fed courtesy of Greggs. Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip walked amongst the crowd alongside the Duke and Duchess and Alan Shearer - the Deputy Lieutenant, (and Dumbledore from Harry Potter fame which of course was filmed in Alnwick Castle).

The day began with a tremendous downpour and the crowd stood about for an hour waiting for the royals to appear. But then of course as the Queen's car drew into the castle grounds the sun shone.

Margaret Trotman and Sue Ashmore at the Volunteers Party



Royal Garden Party Report - Volunteers

Bell View (Belford) Volunteers, husband and wife team Pat and Dennis Cromarty (pictured) attended the Queen's Garden Party on 29th June at Buckingham Palace due to an allocation of places to The Lord Lieutenant's Office of Northumberland and the cooperation of Community Action Northumberland, and were chosen based upon the outstanding contributions they have made to the community of Belford in a voluntary capacity.



For several weeks there was a flurry of activity as they made travel plans and organised new outfits and on the day, Pat and Dennis excitedly queued outside the palace before disappearing through those famous gates for the long awaited garden party, meeting up with other volunteers. Not only did they have the opportunity to take a good stroll around the magnificent gardens and lake but they saw several members of the Royal family as well.

Pat and Dennis said "It was a wonderful experience, something we never expected we would ever have the pleasure of. It was an experience we will keep with us forever!"

They both thoroughly deserved their day out and both had a wonderful time. Resource Centre manager Paul Harrison went on to say "I wish we could have sent all our Volunteers to have tea with the Queen, as they all truly deserve recognition for the time they give selflessly to our Charity!"

Royal Garden Party Report - Councillor

Councillor John McCormack – Ashington Town Council

I was one of two representatives from the parish/town councils in Northumberland who won the raffle to attend this year's royal garden party at Buckingham Palace on 19th July. As a lifelong Republican, this caused me great angst. However, I was persuaded by colleagues and, more importantly, by my mother, who was to accompany me, that I should take up the invitation to represent Ashington.

We travelled down the day before, giving us some free time on the morning and we decided to visit the British Library. Whilst viewing the Lindisfarne Gospels, a representative of the library asked if he could assist in any way. I suggested that the greatest assistance that could be given would be to transfer the Gospels back to the North East from whence they came. I went on to explain that, as Chair of the Regional Assembly, I had led the negotiations for their return during the Millennium, but thought it was now time for a permanent return back to the region. It was clear that this person was confused as to whether I was being serious or flippant: Clearly someone unable to understand northern humour.

Later that day, we left for the Palace with umbrellas aloft and dressed in our "Sunday best". On our arrival, we were directed to stand in a queue snaking round the side, way past the Palace grounds. Our time there was not wasted as we were constantly amused and amazed at many of the outfits on parade. Male outfits varied from my own off-the-peg Dewhirst's sale bargain, to the full top hat and tails and senior ranked dress uniforms with full regalia. The women's outfits, however, were much more varied and I can only assume that there cannot be one bird of paradise left with any feathers as most of them seemed to be on display at the garden party, a progressively less spectacular display owing to the unrelenting deluge of rain.

On eventually making it to the Palace gates, we produced our tickets and passports and entered the actual Palace grounds. We walked in front of the Palace to a central entrance where I have to concede the feeling of importance grew, as tourists peered through the railings pointing at guests as they walked along. In fact I am sure I heard some Japanese tourists say "Look, there goes the Mayor of Ashington"! We finally reached the gardens where we were herded into line to wait for the appearance of the Royal Party. All the time the rain persisted and the crowd became a sea of umbrellas. Right on cue, the Queen appeared as the sole member of "the Royal Party" surrounded by several female Maids in Waiting and a line of top hat and tailed attendants who I can only assume were security guards, from their general demeanour and attitude.

On the Queen's appearance, we were surrounded by cries of: "Is that her?" – "Yes, I think it is" - "Yes, I'm sure it is" - "What's she wearing?" – "I think it's a green hat" – "No, no, it's blue." This speculation continued for some time until the Queen herself was close enough for everyone to see the outfit and marvel at how wonderful she was as she talked to pre-appointed individuals who had been singled out in advance for this special treat. Once this parade was over, everyone made for the marquees. This developed into somewhat of a scrum as people were keen to get inside for their goodies but less keen to leave the marquee because of the rain. I decided however that as there were tables and chairs provided outside, a little rain wasn't going to put me off and I sat with my mother under the umbrella while the rain diluted the tea and soaked the cakes and cucumber sandwiches. I was determined, despite the weather to get the full experience of sitting at a table and sipping tea in the garden of Buckingham Palace.

We eventually decided that we desperately needed to leave in order to change into a dry set of clothes before going to see a West End show. It took a while for the irony to hit home when I reflected on the fact that, as a republican, in one day I had been to see the **Queen** at Buckingham Palace, then watched the Lion **King** where I sat in the **Royal** Circle. However, all in all, despite the rain, it was a very interesting visit, and my mother, as a lifelong Royalist, has never stopped talking about it since.

Palace Green Arts and Crafts Week

The Arts and Crafts week proved to be a great success (despite 3 days of rain, it even rained inside the building as well as outside). The workman only finished the drains on Wednesday so we had the new toilet back after that! The PGPT raised £1279 with more due in from the Fun fest. So over £3000 has been raised from events this year. The comments book is a delight to read and makes all the effort and hard work worthwhile!

Can we just say a huge thank you for everybody's help, support and input with the week and some of you coming at very short notice. There are so many people to thank with all the specific aspects of support that were given in the months running up to the event and over the week. We couldn't have done it without you.

A full summary of support will be circulated in due course but we didn't want to delay our thanks.



The Queen Opens Alnwick Youth Hostel

Alnwick Youth Hostel was officially opened on 22 June by Her Majesty the Queen. She was accompanied by The Duke of Edinburgh and the Duchess of Northumberland in her role as Lord Lieutenant.

The arrival of the Royal Party was announced in true Alnwick style by the Town Crier, John Stevens who had written a special cry for the occasion reflecting back on his youth hostelling days. The Queen was greeted outside the youth hostel by Carys Thomas, Chair of the Alnwick Community Development Trust, Geoff Watson, Trust Manager and Deputy Mayor of Alnwick, and Sir Alan Beith MP. Six year old Jack Plumley was given the honour of presenting Her Majesty with a posy of flowers and Andrew Harper played the Northumbrian pipes.

Inside The Queen met several members of the team responsible for getting the project off the ground including newly appointed manger and deputy manager Andrew Clarkson and Nick Hutchinson as well as local school children. Her Majesty also unveiled a plaque to mark the occasion.

Once the town's Court House, the youth hostel building dates back to 1856. Now operating as an independent youth hostel and part of the YHA enterprise scheme, this top of the range hostel provides high quality budget accomodation for up to 57 guests, in 15 en-suite bedrooms. On site are full catering and self catering options plus a classroom/meeting room available for daily hire, a games room and a quiet lounge/library.

Trust Manager, Geoff Watson said "Building the youth hostel from its sorry state up to 4-star accommodation has been a huge task but one that the Trust sees as fitting perfectly into our brief to enhance and improve Alnwick for residents and visitors alike. Now the youth hostel is open we look forward to working with local suppliers and businesses wherever possible to turn it into a thriving local business which brings people to the town."

Since the opening of the Alnwick Youth Hostel, Alnwick Community Development Trust has gone into administration with the loss of a number of jobs. The Youth Hostel continues to operate as normal.

www.alnwickyouthhostel.co.uk

Women's Voices

Alnwick Road Show gathered to identify women's needs at a local level. Discussion focused on what Northumbrian women saw as the key issues for them, what they saw as the inequalities for women and between women and what changes they would like to see. They also shared food, fun and laughter.

Christine Nicholls whose CAN patch covers north Northumberland listened to women voice their opinions and used her vast local knowledge to contribute to the debate. Hilarie Tucknott and Sue Ashmore, both trustees of CAN and members of BPW will feed back the results to the steering committee with the aim of producing a guide book on how to campaign for the changes that have been identified.



And what did north Northumbrian women see as the major issue? That would be isolation. A feeling of separation was mentioned by most contributors and this linked particularly with transport difficulties which linked on to difficulties in accessing health care, with an appointment at Wansbeck Hospital possibly meaning losing a day's work. The cost of bus tickets can be prohibitive and even with a car, costs and the paucity of mobile phone coverage and broadband access can make isolation a real problem for women.

Isolation is also felt by those who are in a minority group. In a town it is easier to be black, disabled, gay or an asylum seeker. Those who need particular care from the community they live in feel particularly isolated by being the only person with their needs in their area.

And what was the main suggestion? Parish councillors may be surprised - this is for women to work closely with them to overcome the problems of isolation. Although councillors are perceived as too white, too old, too male and too posh –young women are keen to get involved.

North East Women's Network will hold a further three road shows across the North East-so it will be interesting to see the feelings of what women in Teesside, Tyneside and Wearside. The resulting tool kit on how to bring about change will reflect what women really want.

Would you Credit it?

We all know times are hard. Everything seems to cost more and more these days and family budgets are stretched to the limit. So wouldn't it be great to find a way to save regularly and get a loan when you needed it, without paying eye-watering interest rates? Well look no further than Northumberland Credit Union!

A credit union is a group of people who club together to save on a regular basis. The cash builds up into a pot, which is then used to lend money to individual members when they need it.

The Northumberland Credit Union (NCUL) started in 2006 through the amalgamation of Morpeth Credit Union and Prudhoe Savings & Study Group and now has over 400 members. Anyone from a toddler to a senior citizen can join our credit union, as long as they live or work in Northumberland.

Members can save as little as little or as much as they want whenever they like, although most people save either weekly or monthly via a standing order or payroll deduction. You don't need a bank account to join though, as there are currently seven paying-in-points collecting cash in places like Seahouses, Morpeth, Hexham, Allendale and Prudhoe. We're hoping to set one up soon in Haltwhistle.

We all need cash in an emergency from time to time, and if you have saved on a regular basis, you can get a loan from the union. The first one would be up to £100, plus whatever amount you have saved and the interest rate is just 1% per month (12.7% APR).

Your loan repayment is fully insured, so if anything happens to you, no-one will be left with the debt. There's no penalty for early repayment either, unlike most other lenders on the High Street. So far this year, NCUL has lent over £67,000 to its members.

To find out more about NCUL or how to join, visit www.ncul.co.uk, email welcome@ncul.co.uk, ring the office on 01670 503666 or write to NCUL at 37 Shields Road, Stobhill, Morpeth, NE61 2SA.

As a community-based organisation, NCUL depends on volunteers for its success. If you can spare a couple of hours every six weeks or so, we'd love to hear from you, especially if you live in the Haltwhistle area.