

BRANCEPETH parish

newsletter



FEBRUARY 2026

Also online at www.stbrandon.org.uk/newsletter

SOUP AND SANDWICH LUNCH

Sunday 15th February 2026

from 12.30- 2pm in St Brandons Church

in aid of the Church

All welcome

Contact - Diane Coles (diane.coles@icloud.com)
07754958341 or

list in Church for signing up to event



Brancepeth Leisure and Allotment Gardeners' Club

The AGM of the BLAG Group will take place on Sunday 15th February at 4.30pm in the committee room of the Village Hall. Agendas and minutes of the previous meeting are being distributed to members.

If you are not a member and would like to discuss

possibilities please contact either Sue Morgan (0191 3781172) or Richard Hobbs (richardxhobbs@gmail.com)

At present we have two people on our waiting list. Plots are allocated at the AGM in order of time on the list and individual preference. Anyone interested in adding their name to the list is welcome to apply.

Sue Morgan (Chair)

Parochial Church Council

Priest in Charge	currently in vacancy
Associate Minister	Rev'd. Alison Hobbs (0191 3789670) alison@brancepethcastle.org.uk
Church Wardens:	Mike Higton (0191 5974675) Carol Beeby (07592 975002)
Secretary	Colin Waterman (07713637128) colinwaterman069@gmail.com
Treasurer	Vickie Jackson (0191 3783581) treasr@stbrandon.org.uk
Deanery Synod	Jane Stout (0191 3860618) Peter Bailey (0781772896)
Other members:-	
Janette Foxe (07587 225 200) Kenneth Howe (07710098705, 0191 3840589)	
Alison Moore (0191 373 5674), Catrin Morgan (0191 4476520) Hannah Pokhylko (07392958934)	
Lay Reader	Geoff Moore (07854 696664)
Prayer Team	Alison Hobbs (01913789670), Alison Moore (0191 373 5674).
Sunday School	Martin Peacock (07503242074)
Messy Church	Carol Beeby (07592 975002)
Organist	Peter Downey
Village Choir	Martyn Jones (0191 3789297)
Sacristans	Carol Beeby (0191 3847431), Valeria Dietz, Pat Sharples.
Safeguarding Officer	Geoff Moore (07854 696664)
Church Hire coordinator	Janette Foxe events@stbrandon.org.uk .
Electoral Roll Officer	Jean Hodgson (jean.hodgson33@gmail.com)
Flower Guild	Lynne Hastie (0191 3781871)
Churchyard	Edward Staines (0191 3902304 or 07729855076)
Youth Club	Geoff Moore (07854 696664) Martin Peacock (07503242074)
Worship Team	Carol Beeby, Janette Foxe, Hester Higton, Rev'd Alison Hobbs, Alison Moore, Geoff Moore, Martin Peacock.
AdminTeam	Carol Beeby, Janette Foxe, Sue Morgan, Gillian Smellie.
PMC Team:	Alison Hobbs (ex officio), Alison Moore, James Morgan, Sue Morgan, Jane Stout, Colin Waterman.
Fabric:	Mike Higton (chair), James Morgan, Rev'd Alison Hobbs, Tom Hobbs, Steve Hodgson, Edward Staines, George Rae.
Website	www.stbrandon.org.uk

Newsletter entries no later than February 18th please.

Please send to Sue Morgan – sueatpeppermires@gmail.com

If you would prefer to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter, please contact Hester Higton on hesterhigton@phonecoop.coop.

Alison Hobbs writes:

It's a hard life being a film star – not! But it has been – and continues to be – full of new perspectives and unexpected comments. I'm referring to the currently running series on Channel 4 More, *'Saving Country Houses'*, in which Brancepeth Castle features as one of nine 'houses'. Presenter, Penelope Keith is passionate about what owners actually **do** in the current climate to keep these historic buildings running. I was keen for us to take part as I wanted to celebrate exactly that.

The first episode went out on 13th January, perhaps you are one of those who watched? If so, did you notice how we were introduced to the audience? Not as the latest heir to an ancestral home but an extended/extensive family that incorporates a raft of others who call this 'home' whether or not they live here. The film crew realised we are best described as 'community' because each time they came to film, more new faces arrived to participate, obliging them to limit the number of people featured and avoid complete confusion!

Identifying us as community gave me the confidence that they were seeing and tracking what is at the heart of how we work, how we manage at all. There is something intangible that attracts people to this building (or like marmite, can do the opposite) and creates a warmth and loyalty that never ceases to amaze and humble me. Thank you, if you are amongst that number. Thank you, if you are among the many in the village who support the activities in so many ways, who regard the castle with pride and affection.

Communities and community spirit are increasingly important as society slides ever more towards the virtual and isolation. They represent sharing and belonging, and we all benefit from this.

NEW YEAR CHEESE AND CHAT raised £363.00 which is more than twice last year's donations. It is shared equally between the Children's Society, and Ripple Effect (which used to be known as 'Send a Cow', resourcing and skilling African farmers), each has received £181.50.

Thank you to all who came, and for the lively conversations – the room was buzzing!

Alison Hobbs

BRANCEPETH ARCHIVE AND HISTORY GROUP

FRIDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2026

IN THE VILLAGE HALL,

7.15 FOR PROMPT 7.30 START.

Alan Townsend will be giving an illustrated talk on

"The Quaker dominance over the Stockton & Darlington Railway and their mines and villages in County Durham"

We are looking forward to welcoming Alan Townsend who has been very much involved in the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the recent 200 year celebrations and the Hopetown site.

He lived in the former mine manager's house for Brancepeth Colliery in Willington for 50 years so is very well acquainted with this area and the local mines. The history of the involvement of the Quaker families in the development of the railway is a fascinating one.

All welcome to come along. Admission charge - to help cover costs

Members £2.00, non-members £5. - includes light refreshments.

For more information, ring 0191 378 0974

BRANCEPETH ARCHIVE AND HISTORY GROUP

SPEAKERS AND EVENTS 2026.

Annual General Meeting date to be confirmed

Friday February 20th Alan Townsend

"The Quaker dominance over the Stockton & Darlington Railway and their mines and villages in County Durham"

May and/or June Tour(s) of the Pitmen's Parliament at Redhills in Durham.

£5.00 per person. Dates to be confirmed

Friday June 12th Margaret Hedley

"Women of the Durham Coalfield" - a general talk about the lives of women in the Victorian Durham Coalfield.

Friday September 18th David Hughes

"Sir George Cayley" - a pioneer of aeronautical engineering, sometimes referred to as "the father of aviation".

(Come prepared to make paper planes - should be a fun evening!)

Friday November 20th

Richard Pears

Title to be confirmed.

An event is also being planned to mark the 500th anniversary of the arrival in England of William Tyndale's Bible – the first printed Bible written in English.

We also hope to have some evenings with members of the group giving short presentations on aspects of local history.

Updates will be circulated to members and supporters and will be in the Newsletter.

Men's Social

Village Hall

7pm

Friday 6th February

& Friday 6th March

Fish Supper

Pay as you eat and drink

£3 admission for hall hire.

Domino and Snooker games

Contact David Jackson

07711 648752

'Garden Club Save the Dates'

The garden club confirmed events for 2026 are as follows, more to come, and everyone is welcome, members and non-members alike:

28 March Spring show

3 July walkabout at Stockley Farm

5 Sept Autumn show

Save the dates and look out for more details and exciting events to follow!

If you would welcome a short time of Christian worship with friends and neighbours, we would love to see you.

You are invited to join us for a small and friendly 'home Eucharist service' in the Castle Chapel.

Wednesday 11th* & 25th Feb 2026 at 12:00
Wednesday 11th & 25th March 2026 at 12:00



**Rev Deborah will be taking the service on 11th February so please check the venue for that week.*

For more information, please email alison@brancepethcastle.org.uk

Rev Alison, St Brandon's Church

Prayer Space February 2026

The hardest weather can occur in February according to statistics.

Pray for those most affected:

- Those in poor, inadequate housing and the homeless.
- Those obliged to travel or work outdoors notwithstanding, and the fearful of venturing out.

The first snowdrops blossom, and aconites sprinkle sunshine yellow.

- Pray that the small signs of spring and recovery will bring hope and cheer.
- For farmers that growing conditions are good for crops and livestock.

Lent starts mid-way through February, and statistics have shown a big upsurge in bible sales.

- Pray for all denominations of church, world-wide and locally, to be reaching new Christians.
- For our Lent groups, preaching, and individual disciplines that we grow nearer to our Lord.

St Brandon's February 2026 – Services and readings

Sunday services are at 10:15am every week.

*If you are unable to join in person, you are welcome to join online for those services which are livestreamed (shown by * below), or to view the recording later, at <https://www.facebook.com/StBrandons>*

*Sun 1st Feb	Presentation of Christ in the temple	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Timothy Elliot	Hebrews 2:14-end
	Gospel	Judith Minto	Luke 2:22-40
	Psalm		24:[1-6], 7-end
Intercessions		Edward Staines	
Sun 8th Feb	2nd Sunday before Lent	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Linda Waterman	Genesis 1:1-2:3
	Gospel	Sue Morgan	Matthew 6:25-end
	Psalm		136:1-9. 23-end
Intercessions		James Morgan	
*Sun 15th Feb	Sunday next before Lent	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Janette Foxe	Exodus 24:12-end
	Gospel	Kenneth Howe	Matthew 17:1-9
	Psalm		2
Intercessions		Alison Hobbs	
Wed 18th Feb	Ash Wednesday (7.30pm)	Eucharist with imposition of ashes	
	First	Jean Hodgson	2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10
	Gospel	Helen Elliot	Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21
	Psalm		51.1-18
Intercessions		Martin Peacock	

Sun 22nd Feb	1st Sunday of Lent	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Colin Waterman	Romans 5:12-19
	Gospel	Alison Moore	Matthew 4:1-11
	Psalm		32
Intercessions		Richard Fenwick	
Sun 1 March	2nd Sunday of Lent	Parish Eucharist	
Readings	First	Gillian Smellie	Romans 4:1-5. 13-17
	Gospel	Edward Staines	John 3:1-17
	Psalm		121
Intercessions		Alison Moore	

Sidespersons

Feb 1st Pat Sharples & Steve Hodgson
Feb 8th Sue Morgan & Jean Hodgson
Feb 15th Josie Armstrong & Annette Johnson
Feb 22nd Diane & Gordon Cassap
Mar 1st Vera Melenets & Hanna Pokhylko

Church Cleaning

Feb – Team A

Alison Moore, Anne Elliott, Pat Sharples, Jane Stout

March – Team B

Sue Morgan, Hillary Moss, Annette Johnson, Diane Cassap

Flowers

Christine Dodd
Jean Hodgson
Diane Coles
1st Lent
2nd Lent

Coffee

Feb 1st Jeanette Metcalfe
Feb 8th Geraldine Jennings
Feb 15th Diane Coles
Feb 22nd Sue Morgan
Mar 1st Alison Moore

Tech Team

Peter

Geoff & Alison

Lent 2026 'Draw near'

Step aside and reflect during Lent

A time of quiet and talk, prayer and discussion, music and reading . . . with coffee or tea of course.

Wednesday afternoons: Feb 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25.

2 – 3.30 pm

Brancepeth Castle

Come to any or all – sessions are stand alone. No need to book.

Everyone is welcome.



Wednesday 18th February at 7.30pm

**A service in church to mark the first day of Lent
All welcome**

VESTRY REPORT: funerals, baptisms and weddings

5th November 2025, the funeral of Robert Waggott RIP

The interment of ashes in the Circle of Remembrance:

27th December 2025, Eric Miller RIP

Brancepeth Youth Club

February - March 2026

The Youth Club is an Open Club run by the Church, and all young people in the Village (and beyond, and their friends) are warmly welcome. The age range is from 11 to 17 years inclusive.

We meet fortnightly in the Village Hall on Sundays at 6.00-7.30pm, The dates for this term are:

February 8, 22

March 8, 22

Leaders

Geoff Moore 07854 696664 durmoores@btinternet.com

Martin Peacock 07503 242074

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Budget and precept for 2026-27

The PC meeting in January confirmed that, following changes in the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme made by the DCC, plus our wish to maintain support for initiatives like Beautiful Brancepeth and the BCA, the local precept will be raised by 5.1%. While we were able to keep the rise to zero last year, there was a need to set a new budget this time, including an ongoing commitment to donate to the running of the Village Hall which is facing ever-increasing costs. Full details of the budget will be available on the PC website.

Village noticeboard

Our splendid noticeboard on Wolsingham Road is feeling rather neglected! Now that we've removed posters from the run-up to Christmas, there is space available for any organisation who wants to publicise forthcoming events. We can't guarantee that we can accommodate everything, but if you have an occasion (and/or an ongoing calendar of events) that you wish to promote then please provide an A4 poster to Nick Ellis at 24 Goodwell Lea and we'll endeavour to get them put up for you. Once we've located the key to the Village Hall noticeboard, we shall update that too!

State of the village

There are several things to report here:

First, although the improvements to the A690 in Meadowfield and Willington over the next few months are not scheduled to include Brancepeth, thanks to the efforts of County Co. Emma Hunt on our behalf the state of the road through our parish is now 'on the agenda' at DCC. We've got no dates for when any work may take place, but we hope to see some improvements in the road surface this year.

Second, something else that our Clerk has taken up with DCC is the growth of the trees around the streetlights next to the bus stops. Residents have reported that bus drivers often can't see them waiting due to the lights being obscured, so we anticipate some trimming soon.

Third, there are still reports about dog mess along Wolsingham Road. DCC say that they can come out to clean up and even patrol to look out for repeat offenders (the owners, not the dogs!) but only if people report incidents via the DCC website whenever they find accumulations of mess, or even see the perpetrators (the dogs in this case and not the owners!) in action.

Parish council membership

There remains a vacancy on the PC. If you are interested in contributing to your community, and want to get involved in some local decision making, please do not hesitate to contact our Clerk or have a chat with any of the current councillors or, indeed, pop down to the next PC meeting.

Date of next Parish Council meeting:

Our next meeting is scheduled to take place on **Monday 16th February 2026** at 7:30 pm in the Village Hall. Members of the public are very welcome to attend but it would be helpful if you could let our Clerk know in advance so we can manage seating: clerk@brancepeth-parish-council.org.uk

Thanks to our Carol Singers and their supporters

Many thanks to all who contributed towards the 2025 village carol-singing, whether by singing, opening your door, offering hospitality or making a donation - in some cases all four. Particular thanks to the bucket-holders, Paul, Emily, Isaac, John Luke, Margaret and Eli, for their energy and stamina: they must have covered nearly twice the ground the rest of us did, with all the running around. In all, we raised £645, so the Langley Moor Salvation Army and the Red Cross Disaster Fund will each receive £322.50.

We received this response from the British Red Cross:

‘Thank you so much for supporting our Disaster Fund with a gift of £322.50.

By donating to this vital fund, you’re supporting our immediate response when disaster strikes and our teams leap into action – whether that’s overseas or here in the UK. With you behind us, we can help people recover from crisis and prepare for whatever the future holds.’

And this from; Captain Ali Brooks – Corps Officer

The Salvation Army Langley Moor – Family Church Centre

‘I hope that you had a blessed Christmas. I just wanted to drop you a line to say thank you so much for the generous donation of £322.50 from Brancepeth Community Carol Singers. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned. Without donations from such as yourselves, we would be unable to help so many families at Christmas time. This year we assisted nearly 500 children and young people. Thank you once again for all your help.

God Bless.’

Book Club

On February 20th at 7.30 p.m. Dick and Audrey Dumbledon will host us at 19 St Monica Grove DH1 4AS when we will discuss, “What you are looking for is in the library”, by Michiko Aoyama.

Then, on Friday 27th March, we will meet at Sue Morgan’s home, Peppermires, at 7.30 p.m. The book is, “Persuasion”, by Jane Austen. If you have a suggestion for the April meeting, please bring it along.

All welcome, Val Gibbons.



Wednesday Coffee Morning

10:30–11:30am

Village Hall

	4th Feb.	Vivienne and Janiece
11th Feb.	Margot and Val	
18th Feb.	Rosemary and James	
25th Feb.	Martyn and Christine	

(Please contact Martyn or Christine - 0191 378 9297 –

If you need to swap your rota date. Thank you)

Dates for the Diary:-

Feb Mondays - Snooker, 7.30pm, Village Hall
Feb Mondays - Yoga, 7.30pm, Village Hall
Feb Monday - Knit and Natter, 2nd & 16th, Village Hall, 2-4pm.
Feb Tuesdays - Village Community Choir, 7.00pm -8.00pm, Village Hall
Feb Wednesdays - Art Group, 7.00 – 9.00pm, Village Hall
Feb Wednesdays - Tai Chi 9.30 -10.30, Village Hall
Feb Wednesdays - Coffee Mornings in the Village Hall, 10.30-11.30am
Feb Thursdays - Indoor Bowls, 10.00-12.00, Village Hall
Feb Thursdays - Badminton, 7.30pm, Village Hall
Feb Sundays - Capoeira Classes, 10.00 – 11.30am, Village Hall
Feb Sunday - Youth Club, 8th & 22nd, 6.00pm -8.00pm, Village Hall
1st Saturday each month - Archive Room in Castle open between 9.00am – 1.00pm

Jan	23rd	Fri	Garden Club Supper, Village Hall
Feb	6th	Fri	Men's Social, 7.00pm, Village Hall
Feb	15th	Sun	Soup & Sandwich Lunch, 12.30pm -2.00pm, Church
Feb	15th	Sun	Messy Church, 3.00pm -5.00pm, Church
Feb	16th	Mon	Parish Council, 7.30pm, Village Hall
Feb	20th	Fri	Book Club, 7.30pm, 19 St Monica Grove, DH1 4AS
Feb	20th	Fri	Archives & History Group, 7.15pm, Village Hall
Mar	6th	Fri	Men's Social, 7.00pm, Village Hall
Mar	27th	Fri	Book Club, 7.30pm, Peppermires Cottage
Mar	28th	Sat	Garden Club Spring Show, Village Hall
Mar	29th	Sun	Messy Church, 3.00pm -5.00pm, Church
June	20th	Sat	Brancepeth Village Open Gardens Event
July	3rd	Fri	Garden Club Walkabout, Stockley Grove
Sept	5th	Sat	Garden Club Autumn Show, Village Hall

Photos

Front cover – ©- Alison Moore. A photo of a jigsaw of the voyage of St Brendon, donated to Anna Brooker by a visitor to the church some years ago.

Inside front cover – ©- Diane Coles. Invitation to the Soup and Sandwich lunch in church and the Brancepeth Leisure and Allotment Gardeners' group AGM advert.

Inside back cover – ©- Sue Hope with her supporters after receiving her PhD.

© - Archive & History group, Item of the Month.

Back cover – ©– Carol Beeby. Adverts for children's February activities in church.

Newsletter entries no later than February 18th please.

Please send to Sue Morgan at sueatpeppermires@gmail.com

View newsletter on line at www.stbrandon.org.uk/newsletter

You can also join us on our Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/StBrandon>)

Brancepeth Community Association - Management Committee

Martyn Jones	<i>Chairman</i>	Val Gibbons	<i>Subscriptions</i>
	<i>Vice chairman</i>	Geraldine Jennings	<i>Garden Club</i>
Jo Dalton	<i>Secretary, Website & Bookings</i>	Jean Merrington	
		Josie Armstrong	<i>Social Secretary</i>
Val Gibbons	<i>Treasurer</i>		<i>Church Representative</i>

www.brancepethcommunityassociation.co.uk

Tel: 0191 3783952

Parish Activities

Chairman B.C.A.	Martyn Jones, 32 Goodwell Lea (0191 3789297)
Secretary	Jo Dalton, 1 Rectory Cottages (07876 624626)
Treasurer	Val Gibbons, valmgibbons@gmail.com (0191 3784200)
Social Secretary	Josie Armstrong, jo.arm@me.com / 07882 233118
Membership	Val Gibbons, 3 The Forge (0191 3784200)
Hall Bookings	Jo Dalton, 1 Rectory Cottages (07876 624626)
Archives & History	Vivienne Lowe, 17 The Village (0191 3780974)
Art Group	Jeanette Metcalfe, (0191 3781646)
Badminton	Sue Morgan, (0191 3781172)
Brancepeth Allotment & Leisure Gardeners' Club	Sue Morgan, Richard Hobbs, Liz Burdess baacommittee3@gmail.com
Book Club	Val Gibbons (0191 3784200)
Drama	Martin Peacock (07503242074)
Flower Guild	Jessie Brown (0191 3782748)
Garden Club	Helen Todman (Chair) helentodman@googlemail.com or Secretary, Martin Welsh m.welsh@reflex-technical.com
Snooker Bookings	Jo Dalton, 1 Rectory Cottages (07876 624626)
Wednesday Coffee	Christine Jones (0191 3789297)
Yoga	Lynne Hastie (0191 3781871)
Youth Club	Geoff Moore (0191 3735674)

Parish Council

Thomas Hobbs, Chair: tom.rhobbs@hotmail.co.uk
Nick Ellis - Vice chair; n.t.ellis@durham.ac.uk
Philip Davison, philipdavison000@btinternet.com
Catherine Stevenson: catherine@jamsey.net
Julie Daneshyer: jh.daneshyer@hotmail.com
Martin Welsh: m.welsh@reflex-technical.com

Parish Clerk Kirsty Charlton clerk@brancepeth-parish-council.org.uk

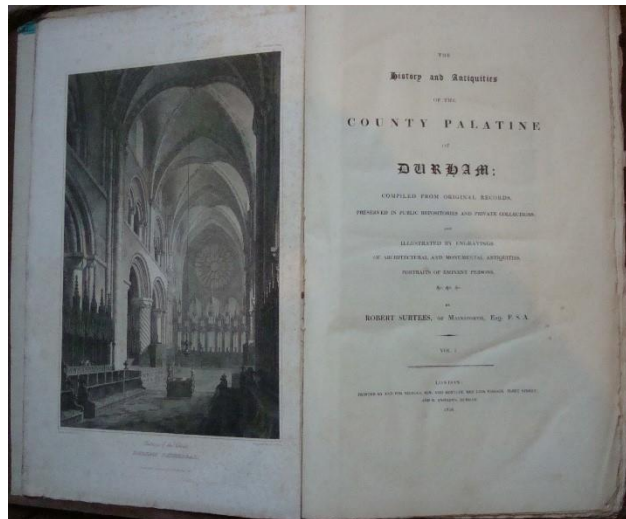
County Councillors: Cathy Hunt & Emma Hunt www.brancepeth-parish-counc

Congratulations to Rev'd Sue Hope having just received her PhD



Sue has been a regular supporter of the Parish in many guises for a number of years and also a much loved member of the Book Club. She has been a member of The Tertiary Order of the Holy Paraclete' for 40 years. The TOHP is attached to an Anglican Order at Whitby, known locally as 'The Whitby Sisters'. Her research is an in-depth study of the Order, its history, practices and charism. The title of her PhD is 'Living As Dispersed Community'.

From the Archive this month



Volume 1 of a complete set of 4 in the Archive, of the original first printing of "The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham", by Robert Surtees.

Published in 1816.

This is just one of the items which can be seen in the Archive Room in Brancepeth Castle. Open on the first Saturday in every month 9am-1pm



this month is on

SUNDAY 15th FEBRUARY

3 - 5 PM IN CHURCH

Come and join in the fun with

news**games**bible story**songs**tea

SAVE THE NEXT DATE: SUNDAY 29th MARCH 3 - 5 PM



COME AND JOIN THE FUN!

STORIES FROM THE BIBLE WITH CRAFT ACTIVITIES

ALL WELCOME!

**WE GET TOGETHER AFTER THE FIRST HYMN AND
REJOIN THE SERVICE FOR COMMUNION**

WE WILL BE MEETING EVERY WEEK UNTIL SUNDAY 29TH MARCH