



Clara Vale NEWS

SPRING 2022



Clara Vale presents

A Way Home

The fight for a place to belong

By Christina Castling

1951. A third of County Durham's villages are classed as 'D', no longer worthy of investment. Expected to die quietly they refuse to go without a fight. Rooted in the true stories and memories of those who called those D villages home, a countywide fight lasting over 25 years becomes a 12-month journey at Bet's kitchen table as her family grapple with identity, loss and belonging. With humour, tenderness and not a small amount of grit, the play speaks of fighting to be heard when no one's listening and of finding a place to belong.

We are delighted, to be one of only 17 venues including Gala Theatre, Durham and Live Theatre, Newcastle, to be hosting the show.

Back in September 2019 we welcomed writer Christina Castling and Producer Carole Wears to the village hall to tell us more about the project. Christina researched and wrote the piece over almost four years; talking to people who went through those dark times, collecting anecdotes and documents with the challenge of condensing a long and troubled period of this region's history into a family drama which takes place over the course of one year in the lives of one family.

Friday 10th June 7pm is definitely a date for your diaries. Ticket sales information will be available soon.

Tickets available from:
www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-way-home-tickets-325684680647
or call 07543 281301

*From 1951 the Durham County Development Plan classified villages as A, B, C or D. If your village was classified as D, including Clara Vale, there would be no more investment, property would be acquired and demolished, the population would be rehoused in New Towns. The policy officially ended in 1977 with no more than 3 villages having been lost entirely. The people had spoken.

**Rachel Kirkman
Carole Wears, Producer**

Village Hall News

It's goodbye to Steve and Cate

Steve and Cate Hilton are moving away from the village after many years in Clara. A big thank you to Steve for being our Treasurer for several years and for all the tireless work he has done for the Hall, the community orchard and for the cricket ground. A big thank you too to Cate, a former CVVHA Chair who has devoted endless hours to Hall activities from Lunch Club and coffee mornings to the Christmas Fair, and Open Gardens. The Village won't be the same without Cate's wonderful soups, cakes, and lunches. We wish them all the best for the future.

Welcome Chloe

A very warm welcome to Chloe McCloskey who succeeds Steve as CVVHA Treasurer. Chloe was already a Trustee and as an accountant by profession is ideally suited to take over the Treasurer's post.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held on Wednesday 22 June at 7pm; keep this date in your diary and come along for a brief presentation on what we have been doing and what we have planned. It is also an opportunity to put your ideas forward and shape the future development of the Hall. Refreshments including a glass of wine will be available.

Update: inside the hall

If you have been in the hall, you will have noticed a few improvements. We have recently installed acoustic panels in all the publicly used rooms which makes hearing a lot easier as the sound reverberation is greatly reduced. We have also repainted the doors with damaged paintwork and tidied up the decoration in the kitchen over the sink next to the replacement boiler. Funds permitting, we hope to embark on a systematic plan of work on the building exterior to ensure that we are keeping it properly maintained.

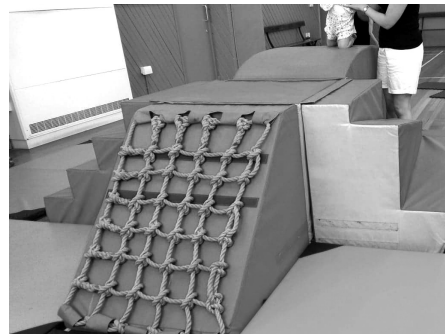
Clothing recycling coming soon!



Support Dragonfly Cancer Trust and the planet with our brand new recycling container in the village hall grounds. Recycle any unwanted clothing by placing bags inside the container and all donated items will either be resold or recycled ensuring no unnecessary waste goes to landfill. All donations will help to raise funds for Dragonfly Cancer Trust, supporting young palliative cancer patients and helping them to make each moment matter with their family.

www.dragonflycancertrust.org

Toddlers



Clara Vale Toddlers runs on a Thursday Morning 9.30-11.30, over lockdown we have have been open, closed, open, closed and we are delighted to now be open with some fantastic help from Rachel, Olwen, Rose and Veronika.

Olwen is doing some amazing cuppas on Thursday mornings so if you have pre-schoolers please pop along, we would love to see you and please spread the word to your friends and family who would be very welcome.

Helen Haran

WE'RE HIRING!

Cleaner vacancy holiday cover

Cleaner needed for 2 weeks in June (4th to 19th) initially to cover holiday leave for our regular cleaners. More shifts may be offered if desired. Set shifts during the week and weekends, minimum pay £9.50 per hour.

**If you can help please contact
Gill Hale, 8 East View,
email: g.hale168@btinternet.com**

Village events: hall and grounds

Now that covid restrictions have been lifted we have seen upsurge in hall bookings, so much so that that getting some community events in the diary is now imperative whilst there is space available.

We have provisionally booked in some dates for the larger events that we used to enjoy before covid. If enough volunteers come forward, we hope to start with

**Open Gardens, 25-26 June
Village Jumble Sale, 17 September**

Coffee on a Friday morning and bring your own bottle on a Friday evening! Recently, some of us have enjoyed a coffee after Pilates class on a Friday morning in our sunny kitchen, we would like to extend this offer to the wider community to give people a chance to meet up or browse the book and seed libraries; all are welcome. In addition, several people have asked about opening the meeting room and kitchen on a Friday evening for a bring your own pop-up pub, 'beer or brew night' just to give villagers a chance to relax over a drink (bring your own bottle),

play cards or a board game, or maybe some music. These will be informal events, although a little help to clean up after (and experience our wonderful new dishwasher) will be needed.

We will still be continuing with the monthly breakfasts, lunch clubs and pizza events when we can. If you can help with any of these or have an idea for a village event you would like to help run just in get in touch with Gill or Rachel. We are reliant on Volunteers to come forward to enable these and other village events to go ahead at the end.



Rewilding Clara

After a glorious 31 years, the village bade farewell to Cate and Steve Hilton from South View. The Hiltons leave many legacies (not to mention stories!) in their wake. One such legacy, which shall continue long after their departure, is a small rewilding initiative which the Hiltons began as a family project during lockdown.

Under the guidance and supervision of their daughter Ellie and son-in-law Jamie, Cate and Steve began a process of both passive and assisted rewilding to an area of 0.52 acres at the top of the hill above the playground (beyond the horses field). By reintroducing native species of wild flowers, grasses and trees, along with various bird and bat boxes, the area is already providing homes and food for a range of wild birds, creatures and insects.

One of the main aims of the rewilding project was to create a habitat for skylarks whose numbers have been rapidly declining due to ongoing habitat loss. The close proximity to The Black Ashy hill (which the Cheeseboroughs have also been rewilding) offers the potential of connecting these two sites and expanding the existing skylark nesting grounds from The Black Ashy to the village. You may have already heard the skylarks' distinctive 'rising' song throughout Clara this spring.

The rewilding project has now passed on to the stewardship of Alison and Claire. Alison and Claire have already done a lot of work to support and extend the project by planting native hedgerows running from the rewilding area, down through

and around the horse field. These hedgerows, a mixture of native trees and shrubs, will help to create networks and corridors for wildlife between the rewilded area, the village hall, and other existing hedgerows and areas around the village popular with birds, insects, and hedgehogs. The species planted so far include; rowan (*Sorbus Aucuparia*), elder (*Sambucus Nigra*), blackthorn (*Prunus Spinosa*), crab apple (*Malus Sylvestris*), hazel (*Corylus Avellana*), and dog rose (*Rosa Canina*).

The benefits of planting hedgerows are numerous; from creating additional habitat, food and shelter for wildlife (including birds, foraging bats, harvest mice, and hedgehogs); and reducing the impacts of drought and flooding (by reducing water runoff and retaining water in healthy root structures/soils); to offering areas of color, beauty, and interest. In addition, these specific species offer some benefits to rarer wildlife. For instance, blackthorn is a vital species for the black hairstreak butterfly who depend on the plant for hibernation over winter and food for their caterpillars in spring, whilst rowan berries are a favored autumn food for birds including visiting waxwings, redwings and other thrushes (not to mention blackbirds)

It is the hope that everyone in the village (from the smallest insects to the largest humans) will benefit from the project as it continues to grow and evolve in the coming years.

Alison Church



CONSERVATION GROUP NEWS

Since the last newsletter the weather has kept us busy! As you probably noticed, a number of large trees came down in the last storm. Many were uprooted, leaving large holes where the roots had been. Fences were wrecked, the path was blocked and the Woodland hide was undermined, but escaped damage by the skin of its teeth. Having recently re-roofed the hide we were very relieved!

It was a major clearing-up job but thanks to a good turnout of helpers we manage to clear the paths in just a few hours. Many thanks to everybody who helped. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the hide will be back in use and perhaps the fence will have been replaced.

If you would like to help look after the reserve contact Don on 07709820907

Wild Birds

We are continuing to keep the bird feeding stations supplied with food. This time of the year can be quite a challenge for birds. Most natural food from last year has been used up. Insects and other bugs will be the main food for the next few months but there won't be a lot of them about until the weather warms up. So please keep feeding the birds in your garden until at least the end of May.

Thank you to everyone who kindly made a donation to the Group to "Feed the Birds", so far we have collected over £300. This will go a long way to providing winter and spring feeding for the birds. Many thanks again. If you would still wish to contribute bank details are: Clara Vale Conservation Group

Lloyds Bank, Sort Code: 30-19-54. A/C No. 01477367 or leave your donation in the post box at 8 West View.

Thank you to Sarah and Jake for printing and distributing the envelopes.

Spring is here and one of the first migrant birds to arrive in the reserve is the chiffchaff, an unassuming LBJ (Little

Brown Job, as birders like to call them). This year they arrived and started singing on March 11th, a bit earlier than usual. Its song, if you can call it that, is a repetitive "chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff". Not the most melodious but it's a sign of spring and it has flown 3000 miles from Senegal to do it. Not bad for a bird weighing only 8gms!

Sand martins are usually the next to arrive. You'll see them along the river and flying over the village. Then willow warblers (the spitting image of a chiffchaff but with a better song). April and May is the peak time for migration when swallows, house martins, swifts and other warblers arrive and the dawn chorus is at its best.

If you want to buy a key for the hides (and for all the hides in Gateshead) contact Gordon on 4138287. Keys cost £5.

Wild meadows

The Reserve is special for all sorts of reasons but particularly for the number of wild flowers that grow here: over 200 species! It is an example of what is known as species-rich, neutral grassland. This type of grassland or meadow was once common throughout the country but has all but disappeared due to intensive farming practises. The charity Plantlife reminds us, *"It took around 6,000 years to create the species-rich grassland for which the UK is globally famous. Yet in less than a century we have lost 97%. And counting..."* The nature reserve is a fragment of the last 3%.

But wild flowers are starting to appear! At this time of the year yellow is the predominant colour with marsh marigolds, also called kingcups, around the ponds, lesser celandines under the chestnut trees and coltsfoot on open ground. But in the next few months the Reserve will become full of colour as one of the best examples of a flower-rich meadow in the Borough.

Spring community orchard hair cut!



Over the course of two weekends a fantastic bunch of orchardeers met up to prune the orchard apple and fruit trees, and to enjoy some cake and a chat. We managed to prune nearly all of the trees in the orchard, some needing more of a haircut than others. It was great to see so many people out enjoying and working on our community orchard in the spring sunshine. Let's hope for a good harvest this year. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the success and fun of the days.

Mike McFarlane, orchard organiser 07557 780 175

Thank you

Finally, a 'thank you' to dog owners for keeping their dogs on leads through the Reserve. This is particularly important during spring and summer as many of the birds, like the chiffchaff and yellowhammers nest on, or very close to, the ground. And cat owners, if you could put a bell on your cat, it could give the adult birds a chance to escape so they can fly back next year and try to breed again. **CVCG**



Children's Nature Club Coming Soon

Our wonderful Clara Vale nature reserve is a peaceful place to enjoy throughout the seasons. It is a wonderful resource for our community, especially for children.

It's so important for children to have opportunities to experience the natural environment and to learn about caring for it. Children who understand about the diversity of animal and plant life and how to care for the environment will grow up to be the conservationists of the future.

To encourage children's interest in the natural environment the conservation group is excited to announce we are launching a nature club. This will be for primary aged children. We will provide a wide range of activities including observation of wildlife,

identification of plants and animals, pond-dipping, natural art and craft projects, wordcraft and much more as the seasons change. Every child will be given their own nature journal to record what they see and hear.

The group will be run by volunteers from the conservation group but we would love other people to get involved. Whether you are an artist, a musician or a forest school practitioner etc. you might like to come along once in a while to offer an activity. We also want to provide volunteer opportunities to teenagers or students in the village who would like to be involved.

Children will need to be accompanied by a parent or carer. We hope adults will enjoy the sessions alongside their children.

The club will run from 2-4pm and dates from May to September are as follows:

**Saturday 7 May
Saturday 11 June
Saturday 9 July
Saturday 10 September**

Please contact Rose on 07934867548 for further information or to volunteer in some way.

WHAT'S ON IN THE VILLAGE HALL

April

Takeaway:
Tandoori Naan Hut
Thursday 28th 5-8pm

May

Village Hall
committee meeting
Wednesday 4th 7pm

Election Day
Thursday 5th polling station open
7am -10pm

Village Breakfast
with pop-up stalls
Saturday 7th 9-11.30am

Nature Club
Saturday 7th May 2-4pm

Clara Vale Conservation
Group AGM
Monday 9th 7pm

Takeaway: Parallel 7
Homemade vegan food
Thursday 26th 5-8pm

June

Village Hall
committee meeting
Wednesday 1st 7pm

Village Breakfast
with pop-up stalls
Saturday 4th 9-11.30am

Play 'A Way Home'
Friday 10th 7pm

Nature Club
Saturday 11th June 2-4pm

CVCG committee meeting
Monday 13th 8pm

Village Hall AGM
Wednesday 22nd 7pm

Open Gardens
Saturday 25th More information to follow

July

Nature Club Saturday 9th July
2-4pm

REGULARS

MONDAYS

Pilates 5.30-6.30pm
Clara Vale Voices 6.40-8.10pm

TUESDAYS

Akasha Yoga & Therapies,
Dru Yoga 9.30-11am

WEDNESDAYS

Dog Club 8-9pm

THURSDAYS

Toddlers 9.30-11.30am
Beginners Pilates 1.30-2.30pm
Iyengar Yoga 7-8.15pm

FRIDAYS

Barre 9.30-10.15am
Pilates 10.30-11.30am
Karate 6.30-8.30pm

(You can hire the hall for table tennis,
just get in touch!)

BOOKINGS

Book the spacious main hall for £8.50 per hour. Use of outdoor space at the Village Hall should be booked to ensure safety. Email bookings@claravale.org.uk or contact 07543 281 301. Thank you.

CLARA VALE VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE

Gill Hale, Chair,
8 East View, 0191 413 5435
William Coburn, Secretary
33 Bracken Way, Crawcrook
0191 4139761, 07960 016652
Chloe McCloskey, Treasurer
2 South View, 07772 186 507
Martin Church
4 Edington Gardens
John Kelly
20 South View, 0191 413 3247
Veronika Richter
14 Maryside Place, 0191 413 1186
Ben Thomas
1 Edington Cottages
Mary Hughes
15 East View
Helen Haran
13 North View, 0191 4131973
Val Murray, Safeguarding Officer
'Norbreck', Stannerford Road

KEYHOLDERS

Position Vacant
Clara Vale Village Hall & Business
Centre Manager
07543 281 301
bookings@claravale.org.uk
Gill Hale 0191 413 5435