

Produced by volunteers for the people of Sedgefield, Bradbury & Mordon, and published by Sedgefield Development Trust: Company No: 4312745 Charity No: 1100906



Sedgefield NEWS

April 2008

Cameras at the ready

... for the Sedgefield News Front Page PhotoSearch

Send us the best photo you take this month - and remember, it's got to look good in greyscale - that's black & white in old money!

Next month we will give over our front page to the best in 2 categories - people and places. Depending on the number of entries, we may split them by age group, so let us know your age if you are 18 or under.

Jpeg files to snews@sedgefieldweb.co.uk and prints to 58 Front Street, Sedgefield, TS21 2AQ by 15th April at the latest, please. Happy snapping!

Springs on their heels?

As the nights get lighter most people have a spring in their step and this certainly applies to runners. The combination of more daylight and better weather (mind you, snow is falling as I type this!) is great news for those who like to get out for a run. As the dark nights fall behind, the ease of getting out to run a mile or two must have some correlation to the reduction in layers required to be worn to keep out the cold winds! Of course, for the Sedgefield Harriers, running is always a pleasure - it just becomes that bit more enjoyable when spring arrives. This is the time for enjoying life.

Springtime also heralds a full calendar of varied, tempting events. Entry forms have long been sent in for such delights as the North Tyneside 10k, The Tees Forrest 5k series, The Tees Barrage 10k and the Pier-to-Pier Run and the Hartlepool Marina 5 mile run.

Some Harriers have really been racking up the winter training miles. Rosie Sims, Ian Blakemore and Nick Burchall will represent the club at the prestigious **London Marathon**, and runners are also aiming their efforts at the Redcar Half Marathon and the Windermere Marathon.

Races can be an exciting spectacle and if you would like to show your support there's a local opportunity on St. Georges Day, Wednesday 23rd April, when the Harriers will be hosting the **Neptune Relays** - a four stage relay event over a 1.7 mile course around the lakes of Hardwick Park. There are Senior Men's, Women's and Junior Teams from the Harriers as well as teams from invited local clubs. Independent teams who wish to pit themselves against the club runners are also welcome.

Sedgefield Harriers offer lots of different training opportunities for runners of all levels. For details of this and the Harriers' latest results turn to Chris Lines Sports Update on page 6.

Upset over loss of easy access buses

People have expressed dismay that buses coming through Sedgefield are very rarely wheelchair and pushchair 'friendly'. Enquiries have been made at Arriva and it seems that the easy access buses have been re-deployed to urban areas, where, the company says, they get more use. However, Arriva has agreed to listen to representations from users and take them into account, so it is important that concerned individuals do contact them. Unless a demand is demonstrated it seems unlikely that the more convenient buses will return to our routes until legislation forces the issue - and this isn't due to happen for a couple of years yet.

The address is:

Arriva
Yoden Way, Peterlee,
County Durham, SR8 1BP
Tel: 0191 586 7409

A chance to shape future local services

As the region gears up for Local Government reform, Sedgefield Council has commissioned a series of Community Appraisals, which have started already with informal 'walkabouts' with community representatives in each ward. The idea is to find out how localities are affected over a whole range of services, including transport, health, education, safety and economic opportunities; then to identify where more support is needed.

Community specialists RPS, working with local agencies including CAVOS, have won the commission to undertake the work. Walkabouts will be followed up by a meeting to which community groups will be invited.

If you or your group would like to participate, please contact Rob Shipway on 07917 555 586.



Bring me Sunshine - on 6 foot stalks!

The Annual Sunflower Competition will start again soon. Sunflower seeds will shortly be supplied to Hardwick and Rectory Row Schools. Children who attend schools outside Sedgefield can take part in this competition to grow the tallest sunflower by obtaining seeds and information from Sedgefield Town Council Office. Tel. 621273

The Bookworm

"The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak

Every so often, I read a book that I feel is going to remain in my memory for the rest of my life – "The Book Thief" is one of these. I really hated getting to the end. It tells the tale of Liesel, a young German girl who at the start of the tale, with the Second World war having just begun, is left by her mother with foster parents she has never met – her mother, an opponent of the government, then walks off to almost certain death leaving Liesel unhappy and confused. The title of the book comes from the fact that Liesel, who is fascinated by books, acquires certain books (that do not belong to her) at key times in her childhood. These provide a real support to her as she battles to cope with being a child in Hitler's Germany. In fact, a major theme is that of the power of words to change the world. It is a story also of a German community and how they coped with the war, particularly when the Jews are rounded up and the bombs begin to fall.

Beautifully written and engaging, this book manages, despite its gloomy subject matter, to remain humorous and life-affirming. There are plenty of tragedies but also descriptions of the fun children in particular could still have in wartime; everything is so believable. I predict that we shall hear a lot more of this young author.

Alison Hodgson

If you have enjoyed a good read lately and feel that others might enjoy reading the book, please send your review/recommendation to snews@sedgefieldweb.co.uk or drop us a line at 58 Front Street, Sedgefield TS21 2AQ

Wildlife group goes Batty!

February saw an excellent talk by Hartlepool ecologist Ian Bond. Ian told the group all about bats, the variety of shape and form, feeding habits and habitats they are found in. He went on to explain the fact that they don't fly into people's hair and explained how good navigators they are using echolocation.

He had even brought a CD in with sounds that bats produce, converted into ones we can hear, and a bat detector which people use to help them survey. The highlight of the night was an opportunity to meet an injured pipistrelle bat which he was looking after - he was feeding it meal worms.

Ian reminded us at the end of the evening, that all species of bats are protected by law in the UK.

Steve Ashton



Festival triumph for Sedgefield brother & sister

Tim and Ciaran Jasper, pictured above, walked off with an awful lot of the available silver-ware from this year's Darlington Music Festival. Entering seven classes, they managed to bring home a prize for every one; in total, 5 Firsts, 1 Second & 1 Third. Entries were in classes as varied as vocal solo & duet, woodwind (saxophone & recorder) strings (cello) and composition. The musical pair certainly made it a proud day for the family.

Help Sedgefield to bloom again

Northumbria in Bloom judges make their spring visit to Sedgefield on the morning of Wednesday 9th April. Sedgefield in Bloom volunteers are again appealing to local people to help our community to gain marks in this prestigious competition by making sure that Sedgefield looks at its very best on the day.

Businesses and publicans can also help by making sure that their floral displays look colourful and that there is no litter to be seen around their premises.

The Bloom volunteers also intend to do a clean up of the village a few days before the judges' visit.

Anyone who can help with litter-picking, etc. around the village, please meet in the car park of Ceddesfeld Hall at 10am on Saturday 5th April. Please bring protective gloves, etc.

Bring out your 'bling' for school funds

The Friends of St. William's R.C. Primary School in Trimdon Village are running a jewellery recycling collection to help boost school funds. We would love you to have a sort out of your jewellery box and donate any unwanted items towards this appeal.

Gold, silver, watches, odd earrings, costume jewellery, even damaged, broken and incomplete items will be gratefully received. By recycling the jewellery we in turn receive cash to help purchase those important extra items for our children's school.

Please can you send donations to Sedgefield post office, the school office or via school pupils by May 1st. Also look out for the Friends of St. William's stall at the Medieval Fair. Thank you very much for your support.

Double honours for Sedgefield Community College

Sedgefield Community College is delighted to let you know that at a celebratory dinner in London we were honoured by the prestigious Specialist Schools and Academies Trust in two categories. We were named as the **most improved Specialist School or Academy in the North East Region and the most improved Specialist Sports College in England and Wales.**

This is an excellent reward for all the students, parents, staff and friends of the college who have worked so hard to improve results at GCSE from within the 30% range to almost 80%.

As head teacher I am immensely proud of the college. We are not complacent and our intention is to continue to improve the college for the benefit of the young people in our community.

Lynne Ackland

Sad days for Hardwick School

Roy Needham

For years his name was synonymous with that of Hardwick Primary School, and Mr Needham was a man devoted to education. He was a benign figure in the school, with his humane and enlightened philosophy of teaching. Nevertheless he was capable of keeping a quiet discipline as well as at times demonstrating a quirky sense of humour.

He remained in touch with the school after retirement as a member of the Board of Governors.

Outside school, and even long after retirement, although he had many other interests, he was always willing to talk about schooling. He was also genuinely interested in the lives of the children he had taught in years gone by. Parents of those children who benefited from his patient teaching and kind leadership, will long remember him with affection.

Councillor Jim Wayman

Councillor Wayman was Chairman of the Board of Governors at Hardwick School and will be very much missed by the school community. Much has been written in other publications about Jim; Sedgefield News and the Development Trust will just add that he was a valued friend for whose support we are grateful.

Lesley Waites

Hardwick Primary School has also lost one of its most ardent supporters. Lesley Waites, who was a dinner lady at the school for ten years, has sadly died from lung cancer, aged only 56. Lesley did a lot of fund-raising for the school, one of her ventures involving abseiling off St Edmund's clock tower. She was also well known in the village as an Avon lady and a dressmaker. She was an energetic and bubbly person and a hard worker who will be much missed by her husband Rob and daughter Corina as well as by all her friends at the school and in the village.

Editor's note

I'm prompted by the above items to say that, whilst we don't run a 'Notices' column, we would encourage readers to share their memories of those they will miss.

Contact us at snews@sedgefieldweb.co.uk or write to Sedgefield News, 58 Front Street, Sedgefield TS21 2AQ

DIDO trip to York Members please note ...

We are oversubscribed for the day out to York on April 7th. If anyone who has put their name forward but knows they will not actually be able to attend, would they kindly let us know as soon as possible.

Call Gloria on 01740622447 or Linda on 01740620857 to let us know if you cannot make it.

In the event of there being too many people wanting to go on the trip, and to be fair to everyone, we will use past attendance of members to select names.

Could guests who have already put their names forward please bear with us. We will let you know the availability much nearer the day.

A Band is Born

Musicians from CeddesFolk and Lirica have joined forces to form a new band. The plan is to work up a lively and entertaining set of tunes to play (to anyone who wants to listen!) as well as to provide instrumental accompaniment for some of Lirica's and Sedgefield Lyrics Youth Choir's performances.

It's early days yet for performing, but the as yet un-named band is enjoying getting to know each other's styles as well as lots of new music. They are looking forward to a launch later this year.

101 Gigs in April

- 03 The Clarendon, Redcar
- 04 The Crown, Brotton
- 05 Leamington Labour Club
Gateshead
- 06 Normanby Hotel
- 10 Easy Street, Whitley Bay
- 11 Dr. Browns, Middlesbrough
- 12 O'Grady's, Redcar

Sunday 13th April

The Black Lion, Sedgefield

- 19 The Turbinia, Newton Aycliffe
- 24 The Vic, Saltburn
- 26 Washington Fc
- 30 The Quaker, Darlington

ADVANCE NOTICE
Sedgefield Methodist Church
Spring Musical Concert
Saturday 10th MAY at 7 pm
Featuring LIRICA,
Sedgefield Lyrics Youth Choir,
Sedgefield Handbell Ringers &
other supporting acts.



Sedgefield Village Neighbourhood & Crime Watch Panel

We had hoped that when you read this the Parish Hall would be back in use & we would have been able to hold our first Panel meeting of 2008. Unfortunately at the time of writing this article it seems that the opportunity to hold the April (8th) meeting is not that secure; so we have decided to err on the side of caution (Neighbourhood Watchers are a cautious lot anyway) & postpone our Panel meeting, which will now be held on Tuesday 10th of June (in the Fletcher room).

A reminder for members that if there are any issues you feel are not being attended to because of the lack of Panel meeting, you only have to contact a member of the Executive, Secretary or Chairman - please do so.

A date for residents' diaries - not just for Neighbourhood Watch members - is **Monday 28th April**, when Sedgefield (Borough wide) **Police Consultative Group Meeting** will take place in **Ceddesfeld Hall** at 7pm.

At this meeting the Senior Officer for Sedgefield Area and several senior officers with (hopefully) a representative from our local beat team will be present. They will report on activities and issues from all constituent areas within the Sedgefield Area giving feedback on the previous meeting (Sept. 2007) and will certainly take questions and address concerns from representatives and members of the public present. These are open meetings and Police Officers present are very willing and keen to engage with local residents; that is why the venue changes for each meeting (there are two meetings per year). If you have any issues or questions for Durham / Sedgefield Police this is definitely your opportunity to express your views.

Tapes for the Partially Sighted Many thanks to Mrs. Needham who very kindly responded to last month's appeal for spare tapes / unwanted tape recording & playing equipment, your kindness and consideration for others is greatly appreciated. Each month we record the current issue of Sedgefield News onto cassette (tape) & issue this to the partially sighted in the village. So if you have any surplus tapes/ unwanted cassette players don't throw them out let N/H/Watch put them to good use - give our Chairman Ken Saiger a call on **01740 621896** & he will be happy to make arrangements to collect if necessary.

Once Again - Relevant Telephone Numbers: *(Remember if you don't contact them, the Police/Community Force don't know a problem exists)*

Community Warden Tim Spearey at Sedgefield: **623654**
or via Chilton Control Room ring: **01388 721351**

Local Police: 0845 6060365 to report any concerns, seek advice or pass on information to the Police. *(it may be prudent to keep a note of details of any conversation & obtain an incident no.)*

Crime Prevention Officer Neil Langthorne 01325 742714
Community Liaison Officer - Melanie Elliot 01325 742755
for advice or assistance

More of Your Letters

The last two copies of Sedgefield News contained letters informing us that drivers were still using the junction of the A689/Stockton Road - "no entry" - to turn right into Sedgefield. I can confirm that it is still happening!

A few weeks ago my son & I were returning from Stockton via A177 at about 11-45am. We negotiated the roundabout onto the A689 and were starting to move left onto the slip road when we saw a VW 4x4 turn right through the "no entry" junction, juggle left onto A689 (facing oncoming traffic), then right onto the slip road immediately in front of us.

I would add that there was no danger of us colliding; my son was driving and was in complete control. However, he flashed his lights at the vehicle. I noted the details; time, reg. no, make and colour.

We followed the vehicle into the village and it turned right at Black Lion, then right onto Whitehouse Drive. We stopped at Police Station and there was someone on the premises, so we made a statement to the police and we are waiting to hear if they have identified the vehicle and driver.

We are prepared to go to court if necessary. I would urge anyone else witnessing similar lawbreaking to note details and report it. This is the only way anything can be done.

David Hillerby

PC Todd's report

This month I would like to highlight the mindless damage done to 3 large windows at the Town Council offices. These had recently been replaced at great cost after being damaged last year.

The person responsible used an emergency hammer similar to those found on buses. Not content with hitting the reinforced glass once, a certain amount of experimentation seems to have gone on, by using differing amounts of force on various locations, providing slightly different results. I would like to meet this person to exchange ideas! If anyone knows who it was, please let me know.

Other crimes reported include theft of a white van from Spring Lane, damage to a garden bench in Hasledon Grove, theft of metal panel from North End and damage to vehicles in Boynston Grove and Beech Oval.

*Until next time,
Keith*

No incidents requiring further action by members were reported at the recent **Pub Watch** meeting held at the Dun Cow.

A Cautionary Tip

Community Warden Tim Spearey is now starting work early in the morning, so early dog walkers really ought to remember to pick up after their pets. If Tim or his colleague see you letting a dog foul without cleaning up after it, they'll be landing a £50 fine on you!

Concessionary travel

The new bus pass scheme for people aged 60 and over comes into force on April 1st. From this date, pass holders are entitled to free travel on **local** buses across the whole of England.

In other parts of the country there will be the usual time restrictions around rush hours, but locally you can travel at any time, as long as you board the bus within County Durham.

If you are already a bus pass holder you should receive your new pass in the post, along with full details of the scheme. Otherwise you can find out more from leaflets available from the Library. People with a disability which makes independent travel impossible will still be able to get a free travel pass to enable a carer to travel with them.

Jottings from

Sedgefield Residents' Forum March meeting

Just when we thought we could take the proposed Holiday Park off the agenda for a little while, we are informed that the appeal process has started so we are going to need everyone to repeat their amazing response to show their objections to the proposed Holiday Park. The working group on this issue will be meeting again asap to progress issues and will keep everyone informed as much as possible – we will put news updates on the notice board outside the library and of course in Sedgefield News.

All letters of objection previously submitted to the Planning meeting will be forwarded to the Planning Inspector. See below for further information. We hope to work in partnership with the Town Council in presenting the community's case and have asked them to fund some professional support and guidance.

Having mentioned the public notice board earlier – we wonder how many people saw the notice announcing the vacancy on the Town Council (as a result of the sad death of Cllr. Jim Wayman) – it would seem that not many of us did! So we have missed the opportunity of saying we wanted an election for the vacancy and we would question whether people know they could stand to be a Town Councillor. As a result the Town Council have co-opted a new Councillor. However, Cllr Wayman's position on the Borough Council will go to election on May 1st when we are being asked to also vote for councillors for the new unitary structure. The Forum hopes to hold an evening session to enable residents to meet and question prospective councillors on April 22nd – this proved very helpful before the last elections. Watch the notice board for information.

As you probably know Bolams won their appeal and are now able to develop the animal waste incinerator. We don't know when this will happen (they have 3 years) but a code of conduct for the incinerators use has to be established before it is operated and we have requested that the Forum be given a copy when it is established. We will then give information to residents as to what to do should they experience any problems.

There have been some very positive moves to solve the problems of noise disturbance by Hardwick Hall to residents in the village. An agreement has been reached between objecting residents and the management at Hardwick Hall resulting in some very tight operating conditions on the Hall with regard to outside entertainment. Quarterly meetings will be held involving Hardwick Hall, Residents, SBC environment Dept and Sedgefield Town Council in an effort to avoid any disturbance to our community. One final point which seems to be becoming an escalating problem in the village is the state of footpaths (injuries have resulted).

Why not come along to a Forum meeting if you have any views on village issues. The meetings are informal and take place on the 1st Monday of each month; next meeting April 7th in Ceddesfeld Hall (until Parish Hall reopens). Minutes etc available from Town Council, Library or village web sites.

Holiday Park Appeal

Anyone wishing to reinforce a previous objection to the development or anyone who wants to submit an objection must send it **in triplicate** by 7th April 2008 to:

The Planning Inspectorate,
Room 3/18A,
Temple Quay House, 2 The Square,
Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN

(Quote reference: APP/M1330/A/08/2067181/NWF)

Check for updates on the Town Council Notice board

Veterans Group Romans Weekend

Go to Rectory Row School Playing Fields on 26th & 27th April between 10am to 4pm to watch The Celts take on the soldiers of the invading Roman Legions. You can discover how the Roman Pottery found in our area was made as well as learn how clothes were made and dyed 2000 years ago. You can also see the ancient weapons on display and take part in Roman Army drill.

Entrance: Adult £3 Child £1

The next full meeting of the Veterans group will be on May 15th, the venue to be confirmed in the next issue. Meanwhile they will get together for a drink and a chat in lieu of the April meeting. See Diary page for details.

In recent weeks, there have been a few references in the media about the 'family of sport' needing to look after its own. The Arsenal striker Eduardo suffered a horrible compound fracture of his leg and faces an arduous road to recovery. His team mates will play an important role during that process. Meanwhile, Gazza's demons returned (they probably never went away) and the football world similarly pledged to help him deal with his problems. I hope that effective action follows the fine words.

Long road to recovery for Sedgefield rugby player

Closer to home, I have been made aware of the story of Jack Smith. Jack, from Sedgefield, is a promising young rugby union player, who stars for Billingham RUFC Under 17s. On Sunday 27th January, during a game against Darlington, Jack sustained a neck fracture. Following surgery at North Tees Hospital, Jack was transferred to the spinal injuries unit at James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough, and from there was moved to the rehabilitation ward.

Jack has a long, tough road ahead of him, but all reports suggest that he is a determined young man, and he has quickly made great progress. He is up and about in an electric wheelchair (although still learning how to drive it properly, so watch out!) and has already made a visit to Billingham RUFC to watch his team play a match.

Jack's family, friends and the club are giving him huge support as he continues his recovery and are keeping the world updated on how he's doing, via www.billinghamrugby.co.uk. Keep up the great work Jack.

Sedgefield Youth FC

A very brief update from Sedgefield Youth FC. Although they haven't recorded any victories during February, they did manage a 2-2 draw against Eaglescliffe in a friendly. There are only a couple of games left this season, but on 20th April, Sedgefield Youth FC are hosting a tournament on their home pitch at the Community College. The first match will kick off at 10.30am and all support will be very welcome. As ever, thanks to Ryan Towler for the update.

Sedgefield Harriers Training

The club now offers the following comprehensive variety of training sessions to suit all runners.

Monday 7.30pm. Beginners and returnees session which is mainly attended by women runners.

Also Monday 7.30pm - a circuits fitness session at the Community College.

Wednesday 6.30pm - an 'efforts' session for regular runners

Wednesday 7.30pm - a training run of about 4 miles.

Friday 6.30pm - a training run of about 5 miles for regular runners.

Sunday 8.30am - a long steady run of 8 miles plus.

Harriers Results

On Saturday 8th March, Harriers were represented by four runners at the Dentdale 14. Gary Hetherington ran superbly to finish 1st in the men's vet40 category and 5th overall in a top quality field. Harriers also had two women in the top 20. The ever-improving Gail Bell was 12th in a field of 131 (151/467 overall) and Rosie Sims was 18th (169/467). Meanwhile Ean Parsons finished 62/130 in the vet40 category (169/467 overall). These were excellent performances by all four Harriers in atrocious weather conditions. In fact, performances by the Harriers are improving in many events, which must be down to the quality training and mutual support at the club.

More details about the Harriers or their races from Ean Parsons. Email ean2005@hotmail.co.uk or phone 07771 828568.

That's all for this month. As ever, send any sports news to me on chrisjlines@aol.com.

EASTER HOLIDAY FOOTBALL COURSES

Monday to Friday 7th - 11th April at the Community College from 10am to 3pm

Courses for girls and boys aged 5 to 14 years.

Cost £45 (£43 for a Junior Magpie) with 50% discount for every extra family member.

Contact Community@nufc.co.uk

Sedgefield Farmers' Market report

Everyone who attended the March market agreed it had been a great success. The weather always plays an important role in proceedings and did not let anyone down, in fact it was Spring-like at the start. Organiser Nigel Davison of Ing's Nurseries would like to thank customers, new and old, for their excellent support on Sunday and their contribution to one of the best markets yet!

Customers met new stallholders such as micro brewer Keith Thomas of the Darwin Brewery, and old favourites such as David and Anne Mellanby with their wide range of locally grown vegetables. Also at the market customers have the chance to purchase farm-reared pork and bacon, fresh free range farm eggs and free-range poultry, organic beef and lamb, a wide range of fish and shellfish, garden plants, honey, organic soups, game (which has inspired a recipe in Sedgefield News this month), cakes, pies, cheese and preserves. There was even a new stall offering a luxury range of skin-care products.

Sedgefield Farmers' Market is a unique event on the local calendar; it's always very enjoyable with lots of room for children to play and for pushchairs and wheelchairs; old and young are well catered for on the lovely village green.

Do come along if you have not yet visited the Farmers' Market. It is always on the 2nd Sunday of the month - 13th April next time. A warm welcome awaits!

Joan Crawford



*"There must be an easier way,
Buttercup old dear!"*

Cooking - not cheating!

Partridge Risotto for 4

You'll need

2 plump partridges (oven ready)
50g butter

1 onion, peeled and chopped fine
300g Arborio rice
100ml dry white wine

1 litre hot chicken stock
1 tbsp garlic infused olive oil
50g grated Pecorino or Parmesan
Large handful each of wild rocket
and baby spinach leaves

And here's how

Remove breasts from partridges
& set aside

Skin leg joints, slice meat from
bone and chop small

Melt half the butter in heavy based
pan. Add onion and leg meat, cook
gently 5 mins, stirring occasionally
until onion has softened

Pour in wine and boil rapidly until
almost evaporated.

Stir in rice until grains are all
coated in the juices.

Add a ladle of stock and simmer
until absorbed. Continue a ladleful
at a time until rice is tender but
still with some bite - about 20
minutes. Heat garlic oil in heavy
based frying pan and fry partridge
breasts 2-3 minutes each side until
they are browned and cooked
through.

Slice breasts on a board.

Stir remaining butter and grated
cheese into risotto and stir in the
spinach and most of the rocket.
Season with salt and pepper, top
with the sliced breast meat and
serve garnished with wild rocket
and Pecorino shavings.

**The choice of recipe was
inspired by one of the stalls
at the Farmers' Market.
If you're similarly inspired,
please send your recipe to
Sedgefield News . See page 12
for contact details.**

A mouse at one end a cow at the udder!

7

Most dairy farms these days have a computer: mouse, keyboard, wires, usual box of tricks, bovine data on the screen, like litres per day, how much '0137' weighed this morning and when she's due to calve. Most farmers enter the data themselves but, if you follow the data stream on one farm not far from Sedgefield, you'll find the computer in the office collecting data by itself and milking the cows in the shed next door into the bargain! At Stephen and Sharon Brown's Hopper House Farm, along past the racecourse, that 'box of tricks' is connected to two robotic milkers which have been milking their 150 pedigree cows for the last two years.

Robotic milking machines are not the humanoid creations of a newspaper cartoon. Each robot consists of two tall red boxes a couple of metres apart, a silvery metal sheet between them forming one side of a stall where the cow stands. One of the boxes is like a bank machine, screen and keyboard in the middle. The other box tests and collects the milk in a big glass jar, diverting any that needs keeping separate. A lumbering red arm hangs from the metal sheet outside the stall and reaches underneath to the cow's udder. A flickering red laser, like the scanner on a shop till, spots the right place and the robot automatically washes the cow's udder then puts the four cups on the teats. Just like that!

The cow stands in a stall alongside the robot, and is held loosely by tubular gates. A collar round her neck tells the computer who she is and the robot trickles her food ration into a trough to attract her into the stall. If the computer decides she's a greedy-guts and has just come in for the food, the robot just sends her on her way. One cow had 60 goes in one day apparently, and should only have been in half a dozen or so times!

You might have been in one of the groups who have visited Hopper House and been impressed by these machines. Having spent 11 years milking cows myself, most of it twice a day, every day, amongst the clicks, clatters, buzz and hurly burly of a milking parlour, I found this new experience very strange. The air driving the robot huffed and puffed, the laser sensors flickered and the brushes which wash the teats jerked about a bit. Strangely, however, the thing then reminded me of a newborn calf trying to feed. It reached underneath and nuzzled, didn't find the teats first time, felt about then soon enough worked out what to do. I gather that, occasionally, like any machine, it really can't work out what to do, so it lets the cow out and rings up Stephen's mobile phone! I was very impressed!

The cows themselves decide when it is time to be milked, even coming back from the fields on their own in the summer. While I watched, a few obviously felt the time was right so they queued patiently to go into the robots while the rest went placidly about their business; some lying in their cubicles, watching the world go by as they chewed their cud, others helping themselves to a bit of silage, one coming to sniff at me and see if I was worth eating, as they do.

When milking's done the robot takes off the teat cups, lets the cow out and washes up by itself. Meanwhile the milk is automatically filtered, cooled and stored in a refrigerated tank until the lorry collects it. The driver simply connects a pipe and pumps out all the milk to take it to the dairy for pasteurisation, bottling and delivery to the shops. A press of a button and even the tank washes itself.

Does it mean that Farmers Brown have an easy life? No, someone still has to prepare food for the cows, mend a broken pipe, get the vet to look at a cow with a problem, change the tractor engine oil, look at the computer to remind themselves when 0137 is due to calve and all the other 1001 jobs there are with a lot of cows; even cut their toenails! A long time ago, I had to milk cows on Christmas day. Can the Browns have a rest that day and just listen for the phone? Not if 0137 decides to calve! Nor would I fancy a phonecall from the robot at 3am on Boxing Day to tell me 'Curly Top' had decided to take a nap in the milking stall? But would I have liked one of these robots if they'd been invented when I kept cows? On the whole, my answer has to be yes.

Sam Edgoose

Do YOU have something you would like us all to ruminate upon? Sedgefield News is YOUR paper so don't hesitate to get in touch if you have a tale to tell.

March Events Diary

A FREE service to non-commercial organisations

Sedgefield Gardening Club

Tuesday 1st April

7.30pm at Ceddesfeld Hall

Richard Barnes -

Plants from the Ends of the Earth

Sedgefield WI

Wednesday 2nd April

7.15pm - Methodist Church Hall

(Please note change of venue)

"Beekeeping and Honey"

Mr Ashman

Members competition -

A hand decorated egg

Visitors welcome £1.50

CeddesFolk Traditional

Acoustic Session

Ceddesfeld Hall from 8pm

Wednesday 2nd April

Join our line up of fiddles, whistles, squeezeboxes, guitars, ukuleles ...

Sedgefield Show

Thursday 3rd April

Draw & business meeting

Nag's Head 8pm

Everyone welcome

Bingo at Ceddesfeld Hall

Saturday 5th & 26th April

Doors open 7pm Eyes down 7.45

Cash Prizes. Bar open

Days In Days Out (DIDO)

Monday 7th April

Trip to York

See page 3 for special notice

Local History Society

7.45pm at Ceddesfeld Hall

Monday 7th April

Gary Waine on

Mary Ann Cotton

All welcome

Residents' Forum

Monday 7th April

in Ceddesfeld Hall at 7.30pm

Sedgefield Mags

Monday 7th April

8pm in the Nag's Head

'Sedgefield Mags' run a bus to all Newcastle United home games

Sedgefield Civic Trust

Thursday 10th April

7pm at 28 White House Drive

Everyone welcome

Sedgefield Cricket Club

Live Music Night

Saturday 12th April at 8pm

Main Guest: Prelude.

Also featuring

the John Wrightson Band,

Alan Murray & Hannah English

Admission £8 including Buffet

Telephone 621347

NB The Cricket Club is available for hire for private parties, normally free of charge. To book, call Jane on 629616

Sedgefield Farmers' Market

Sunday 13th April

on the Village Green

Ferryhill, Sedgefield &

District Flower Club

Tuesday 15th April

The Methodist Church at 7.30pm

"World in One City"

Demonstration by Don Billington

North West Area Demonstrator

All Welcome

Sedgefield Village

Veterans Group

Thursday 17th April

Informal Meeting at 7.30pm in

Ceddesfeld Hall bar to celebrate

becoming a section of the SCA.

Next full meeting May 2nd

Family History Group

(branch of Cleveland FHS)

Monday 21st April

7:45pm in Ceddesfeld Hall

Andrew Everett on

Vincent Raven, 1854-1934;

last chief mechanical engineer of

the north eastern railway

New members are always welcome

Sedgefield

Development Trust

Extraordinary General Meeting

Monday 21st April

7.15 pm at No 58 Front Street,

Sedgefield

Sedgefield Wildlife Group

Thursday 24th April

at 7.45pm

Swinhoe Room, Ceddesfeld Hall

AGM, Faith Supper & Quiz

More details from

Steve Ashton 620559

All Welcome

Mobile Movies

No film in April.

Next film May 2nd

Friends of St Edmunds

Monday 28th April

7.30pm in Parish Hall

Precursor to our

July Flower Festival -

"Spring Splendour"

Demonstration of floral art by

Chelsea Gold medal winner

Mildred Stafford

Tickets including refreshments

£7 from 01740 620783

Arrangements will be raffled at the end of the evening

April @ Sedgefield Library

Space Crafts

Tuesdays 8th & 15th

& Thursday 17th April

Magic Marvin

Friday 11th April

all children's holiday sessions start at 10am & require £1 advance booking fee

Tickle Time

Monday 28th 2.15-3pm

Junior Reading Group

restarts Monday 21st from 5-6 pm

Rhyme Time

Wednesdays 2nd & 30th, 10-11am

Toy Library

Wednesdays 9th & 23rd, 10-11am

Book Circle

Wednesday 16th at 2pm

Round Table

1st, 3rd & 5th Thursdays

Sporting, social and charitable events - new members welcome

Contact Rob on 629079

Ladies' Circle

2nd & 4th Thursdays

Sporting, social and charitable events - new members welcome

Contact Viv on 629079

Country Market

will re-open after Parish Hall refurbishment.

Mother & Toddler Group

Methodist Church

Mondays from 1.15 - 2.45 pm

Term time only. Call 620572

Sedgefield Playgroup

Methodist Church Hall

Vacancies for children aged 2+

Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs 9.15-11.45

St Edmund's Church

Weddings and Baptisms can be arranged in church on Thursdays at 6.30pm.



Is Dick Turpin dead - or has he just changed his outfit?

On Saturday 24/02/08 at 12 pm I finished my 5 hour shift in a local pub, which had been very busy due to the rugby match involving England and France, and began to drive home to Trimdon.

The road was completely empty and having already worked a 37 hour week I was desperate to climb into bed. I drove past the bend just before you get to the Willow-Dene Care home and observed two police men standing outside their car, which was parked in the gateway of a field with a speed camera on their roof. I slowed down but, as they do, they then climbed into their car followed me for a little way, then turned on their blue lights. I pulled in and an officer with a very arrogant attitude asked me if I knew what the speed limit was. I explained that I thought it was 40, which indeed it is, and he then asked me to get out of the car. I was taken into the police car and shown my speed on the reader which was 53mph. The box did not show my registration number or any information which connected that speed to my car. I was breathalysed, cautioned, fined £60 and had three points put on my licence. The police officers checked the condition of my car, the tread on my tyres and ran my details through the system to make sure I was taxed and insured. As a law abiding citizen these were all fine. Some may say I was speeding and for that I hold my hands up and admit yes I was but a simple caution would have been all it took to make me think about my speed. There was no need for the arrogance or the humiliation tactics; these have only resulted in me feeling hostile towards our men in blue. For all the crime that was committed on the night in question mine was very minor and if that is the only crime I commit in my life then I'll die happy.

So my question is: is it just money making exercise? The police did not

Your Letters

stop me because my driving was erratic and they thought I may be drunk. They purposely went out to target a stretch of road which most people would drive over 40mph and sat there to make money. The horse and the mask had gone but the similarities are up there with Dick Turpin. Yours indignantly!

Angela

That Litter letter...

Congratulations to the reader who wrote about the problem of lunch break litter from Sedgefield Community College pupils. When we moved to Sedgefield 20 years ago, there was a similar problem. Discipline was slack, and the school children roamed at will throughout the village at lunchtime, leaving a swathe of destruction and rubbish behind them.

When Ms Ackland arrived, it was like a breath of fresh air - there was some semblance of order, and fewer lunchtime visits from the pupils. It is such a shame that the school standards appear to be slipping, as the school has made good progress as far as the pupils are concerned. Grades have risen steadily, resulting in more demand for places. If there were less places, with fewer children in the school, teachers would be able to concentrate on teaching. We have a child just about to enter KS4 at Sedgefield, and our other children have all done well in their GCSE's, going on to higher and further education. When we have had problems with our children, and have approached the school for help, we have had fantastic support.

Our only complaint is lack of discipline, and that is not the school's fault. Discipline was banned by the government years ago, with the result that children have no respect for their elders. Someone needs to take the bull by the horns, and challenge the government as to the rights of the teachers to be able to teach those who want to learn, and the rights of those children who want to be taught. However, I do believe that

it is naive to believe that children will do as they are told out of sight of the teachers. I wonder what happened to in loco parentis? We have all been children, and have all done stupid things and I know that if we could have got away with all that present-day pupils choose to do, we would have. However, it is not just the fault of the school.

If the shopkeepers such as Theakston's, the fish and chip shop, Bell's and Peter's followed the Co-op's example, and banned the children from entering their premises at lunchtime, there would be nowhere for them to go! Perhaps we could pay a visit to the Middle Ages and bring back the stocks - that might concentrate minds a little!

Name and address supplied.

On the other hand...

I am an angry Year 10 pupil at Sedgefield comp, replying to the letter on Lunch Break Litter. Sometimes pupils who leave the school for dinner do leave litter, there is no denying it but what about the people who come out of work for lunch? They are also responsible. Many pupils who go out of school for dinner are not year 11 (I'm one of them) but we are not all 'pasty/pie, bread bun eating, coke swilling, smoking litter bugs' so how dare the writer say that!

I agree with one thing, that the head mistress needs to wake up and smell the coffee because one way she might have half a chance of stopping some of us coming out of the college is to decrease the price of the food and increase the standard!

When I eat at school all I have is a plain baguette because I do not like the filling - it's disgusting and that is not a proper dinner. All I'm trying to say is cut us some god damn slack because at the end of the day all we want is a decent bloody dinner that will fill us.

Name & address supplied

Another reader's letter appears on page 4

Copy for the May edition of Sedgefield News should be sent by April 15th please, to 58 Front Street, Sedgefield TS21 2AQ: phone 629011: email snews@sedgefieldweb.co.uk

Views expressed in Sedgefield News are not necessarily those of the publisher: we strive to be impartial & independent. We reserve the right to edit contributions & will not publish letters of unknown authorship. Please include contact details in correspondence.



the community-based regeneration network