

Gathering Goes Online 2021

Saturday 10th April sees the 2021 online Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering, the first ever virtual festival of Northumbrian heritage and family events. After a year without a physical Gathering, a day of pre-recorded and live events aims to keep the tradition going, with concerts, storytelling, craft, drama, presentations, have-a-go sessions, and even a barn dance for couples at home!

Following the sad announcement of the loss of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, the organisers issued this statement: “We pay our respects at this time of the sad loss of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and express our profoundest condolences to Her Majesty the Queen, the Royal Family, the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth. We trust that we shall not offend by deciding to allow the online Gathering to continue as scheduled tomorrow. At the time of the earlier loss of Her Majesty Elizabeth The Queen Mother shortly before the events of the 2002 Gathering, we arranged for the Morpeth Gadgy to pay tribute from the platform at the Town Hall, recalling that Her Majesty was the sort of person who would have wished the show to go on.” To mark the Duke’s passing, on Gathering Saturday at 12 noon the Morpeth Clock Tower Bellringers are arranging the tolling of a bell from the town’s iconic building overlooking the Market Place, coinciding with the launch of the Gathering’s online virtual tour of the Clock Tower.

The morning starts with family tales from Jim Grant and a virtual art exhibition, and then the Gathering’s figurehead, Morpeth Gadgy, Alex Swailes MBE, in his full regalia, delivers the traditional Northumbrian welcome. While Covid prevents families from joining a physical procession the Gathering pageant will appear in archive scenes from earlier years. Youngsters are invited to join in with dragon masks and puppets using the ingenious instructions already online in a video by The White Lantern Company. A dragon features in Hazelsong Theatre’s new show, which uses music, drama and puppetry to tell the traditional local legend The Ballad of the Laidley Worm of Spindleston Heugh.

Three concerts showcase a wealth of Gathering favourites, including fiddler Stewart Hardy, the legendary Johnny Handle, entertainer Bob Bolam, songwriter Graham Bell, dialect poet Eileen Beers and storyteller Taffy Thomas. Among other performers are rising stars multi-talented Mossy Christian, past visitors Tonbande from Germany singing in Northumbrian, and the amazing Canadian family Glowan who wowed the Town Hall audience with their music and step-dancing at the Gathering’s last live concert, in February 2020.

Finally, Pat Dunn, the Ashington-born actress known for her many TV and stage roles will round off the evening as “Elsie”, her show postponed from last April. Elsie is a sweet little old lady with a secret...

While all events are free to view, audiences are asked to consider donating towards performers via their websites. The organisers would also especially welcome direct donations towards the considerable costs of producing the festival and enabling it to continue into the future, via [gofundme.com/f/morpeth-northumbrian-gathering](https://www.gofundme.com/f/morpeth-northumbrian-gathering)