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conning and to hide errors at care home

account but prosecutors accepted she used more than £10,000 of the cash to pay off the deceased residents care fees.

Christopher Rose, prosecuting, said she used the rest of the money to pay off other residents debts which she had allowed to build up, and to buy shopping for the home.

Parkin, of Hurstwood Road, Sunderland, was arrested at home on Christmas Eve and went on to admit theft and fraud.

Judge John Evans sentenced her to a community order for two years with supervision and 160 hours of unpaid work.

The judge told her: "This is an unusual case of its kind.

"It is not suggested that you personally benefited, had that been the case, the position would be very different.

"It may be that you found yourself out of your depth."

Rachel Hedworth, defending, said Parkin had

put considerable amounts of her own money into the business in a bid to keep it running smoothly.

Miss Hedworth said: "She was expected to carry out the role of numerous other employees as well as manager.

"She was entirely over stretched and wished she had resigned years ago but was very fond of the residents at the home."

Miss Hedworth said the married mum of three was deeply ashamed of what she has done.



■ Bowland Lodge care home in Newcastle

Bridge shows signs of GNR

ENGINEERS have started attaching a huge Great North Run sign to the Tyne Bridge.

Commissioned by Nova, organisers of the run, the Bupa Great North Run sign - which was first put up last August - is made from aluminium and is powder-coated in blue.

At night it is lit up with white LED lights. As the work progresses, people in Newcastle are being encouraged to take "selfies" of themselves with the sign in the background, tweeting them to the organisers official @Great_Run Twitter account using the hashtag #bridgeselfie.

This year the run will see the one millionth finisher. The race will become the first major mass participation running event to reach the milestone - a landmark that is being celebrated with days of events, including a spectacular opening ceremony on the Tyne.

Woman's work finally done...after 202 miles

By Ruth Lognonne
Reporter
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AN EXERCISE instructor has become the first woman to complete a gruelling 202-mile charity challenge for the region's children's heart unit.

Helen Tones, from Gilesgate in Durham, joined nine men from the North East in Whitehaven, Cumbria, on Sunday morning to kick off the Seb4CHUF Coast to Coast four-day challenge.

Helen, a Durham Council exercise instructor, was delighted to dip her toes in the North Sea when she crossed the finishing line yesterday afternoon.

She has amassed £1,500 so far for the charity, which raises funds for the Children's Heart Unit at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital, after cycling, swimming and running her way across the country.

This was the fifth time the challenge had been attempted. It was devised by Children's Heart Unit



■ Helen Tones has completed a 202-mile challenge

Fund (CHUF) trustee Ivan Hollingsworth and his friend Andrew Roberts. Both have completed the previous four and also took part in this year's challenge.

Mum Helen, 39, said: "It was a tough challenge and for a millisecond after the first day I thought I could give up, but I willed myself to keep going and I'm glad I did.

"It felt unbelievable dipping my toes in the sea when I finished!

"I'd heard lots about the

past C2C challenges, but had never felt confident enough to be able to either complete the challenge or do the team and myself justice.

"But I changed my mind after taking part in a 200km duathlon earlier this year, which also raised funds for CHUF.

"I was running in front of Ivan and I heard him talking to somebody else about where the proceeds were spent.

"I've raised £1,500 so far but I don't want it to stop

there - every penny is vital." Ivan's own son, five-year-old Sebastian, is a beneficiary of the heart unit at the Freeman Hospital. When he was just days old, he underwent life-saving heart surgery.

Ivan added: "Without the Children's Heart Unit at the Freeman, Seb simply would not be with us.

"The best way I know to thank them is to continue to raise as much money as I possibly can so more babies and young children, and their families, from all over the UK, can be helped."

The final day saw seven nurses from the children's heart unit join the group at Monument, in Newcastle, for the last half marathon to Tynemouth.

Lesley Hamilton, from Consett, in County Durham, has worked at the unit for 17 years and can remember when Seb was treated on the ward.

She said: "Seeing Seb progress and seeing the charity go from strength to strength has been amazing to see over the years."

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