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*Photos by Trevor Walker*

# Ponteland remembers

By Muriel Sobo

**The sun shone out of a clear blue sky on the hundreds of Ponteland residents gathered at the village war memorial for the annual Service of Remembrance.**

We are all more aware of the sacrifice of our Armed Forces today engaged on active service overseas and of the millions who died worldwide in the hideous conflicts which began in 1914. Our freedoms and democracy are built on their sacrifice.

The short service was led by the Reverend Peter Barham, assisted by Father Seamus O'Kane.

Bryony Gibson, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County, laid a wreath on behalf of the Queen, followed by Peter Cowey, Mayor of Ponteland, then our MP Guy Opperman.

Dozens more wreaths were laid on behalf of the Armed Forces, and the many village organisations including the Rotary Club, Lions, Memorial Hall, Senior Gentleman's Club, Tennis and Bowling Clubs, Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Girl Guides Brownies and Boys' Brigade.

Members of Northumbria Army Cadet Force's Ponteland Detachment marched proudly with their impressive new standard (pictured above) which was mainly funded by a Town Council grant.



# Council faces residents to defend plans to “delete” part of village Green Belt



Residents are shown proposals at the Ponteland consultation event.  
Photo by Trevor Walker.

**Hundreds of residents attended a consultation event where controversial plans to “delete” parts of Ponteland’s Green Belt were presented by county council planners.**

The event, held at the Memorial Hall on Thursday November 21st, included an afternoon exhibition, with planning officers present, followed by an evening discussion session.

The roadshow was part of a nine week consultation running until January 2nd on the county council’s new long term planning blueprint, which includes proposals to delete areas of Ponteland’s Green Belt to enable new housing.

The council claims 24,000 new homes need to be built across the county over the next two decades to accommodate a projected 10 per cent population increase, with 1,500 in the west.

The figures are hotly disputed by Hexham MP Guy Opperman, who said: “The official population growth estimates in our area are around 4%. The county council has laid out enough housing, much of it in the Green Belt, for three times that level. It is absolutely absurd.

“The county council is going round in circles. They say we need more houses in the Green Belt because we will have such high population growth. Yet they say that population growth will be created by building more houses. It’s a nonsense argument of ever decreasing circles.

“The council’s leadership has persistently justified the need for building on Green Belt land because they want to inflate population growth in areas like Corbridge and Ponteland. The council’s population predictions are total pie in the sky.”

Slamming the population projections as ‘fanciful’, Ponteland South county councillor Peter Jackson added: “The council’s housing targets have a lot to answer for. These local plans must be firmly based on the need for housing within the authority. Instead we have a draft plan based on the unrealistic ambitions of the Labour administration.”

Labour councillor and business chair of the county council Scott Dickinson hit back at the claims and said the proposed housing development would see £330m invested in the county over the next decade.

“The MP for Hexham and Tory group leader seem to be out of step with their own government, which is encouraging even greater development of the Green Belt. Our plans protect 91% of the existing Green Belt.

“We feel our plan is well evidenced and the information we have gathered shows that Northumberland simply needs more homes for working families to be economically viable.

“Labour’s proposed housing figures and Green Belt releases have been informed by detailed evidence base work and what we’re suggesting are very modest revisions to the Green Belt where exceptional circumstances apply.”

The council said it will be publishing a comprehensive response in spring 2014 to all comments made during the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultations. Residents can contact the authority at [PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningStrategy@northumberland.gov.uk) or on 0845 600 6400 with any questions about the consultation arrangements or the Core Strategy planning process.

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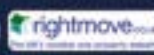
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## GRANTS

The Council approved a grant of £6,200 to Ponteland Memorial Hall towards running costs and annual maintenance. A grant of £100 to the North East War Memorials Project to assist with the development of the website was also agreed. It was noted that Ponteland had 13 war memorials listed on the site which could be viewed at [www.newmp.org.uk](http://www.newmp.org.uk)

## PROJECTS REPORT

### River bank repairs

It was noted that this work is now largely complete.

### Skate park

Work is progressing on the skate park installation. The Council considered a report relating to the surfacing of the safety zone. It was possible to surface the 2m safety zone area with various materials in accordance with British Standards. It was felt that a tarmac surface was preferable and various quotations had been received and it was agreed to accept the quotation from RHD Construction.

### War memorial

Quotes have been sought for works to improve the War Memorial area at the Memorial Hall. Repairs to the wall and steps to the front walkway and to the Memorial had been included within the specification and three quotes had been obtained. The Council agreed to accept the lowest quote from Falcon Contracts Limited.

### Website

Work is ongoing on the new website which should be available for preview by the end of November. Councillors had been asked to submit a profile for inclusion on the website.

## REPORT RE LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

The Council considered a report relating to the localisation of council tax benefit. The new arrangements which came into

effect from April this year mean that households in receipt of housing benefit are also to be excluded from the council tax base. The Government is paying a compensatory grant to the county council, however had decided that unlike this year, the grant would not be passed on to parish and town councils in Northumberland. The Council agreed to record strong disapproval of this decision by the county council and to lobby the local county councillors and the MP to support this protest. It was felt that support should also be sought from adjacent local authorities such as Morpeth, Hexham and Prudhoe.

## NCC CORE STRATEGY

Copies of the Core Strategy document have been received from the County Council and would be distributed to Councillors. It was noted that the consultation ends on January 2nd 2014. Councillors were asked to examine the document and list their suggested response to the questions for discussion at a meeting to be held in December.

## ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Working Party met on October 14th. The Council approved the contract to clean off the timber edging of the footpaths in the Park, to be met from the park maintenance budget and carried out on an annual basis. It was also agreed to let the contract to construct the path to the wild meadow.

## HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Working Party met on October 16th and its following recommendations were approved by the Council. The installation of a trial section of artificial grass at an area on Callerton Lane, subject to the contractor having a street works card to work on the highway. The Town

Council would be solely responsible for its upkeep and maintenance if installed and if the installation failed then the Town Council would be responsible for reinstating of the verge to its original state. The location of the trial area was from the barrier outside the Callerton Lane play area to the entrance to the car park on Callerton Lane. The Council also agreed to the removal of the milepost located close to the Waggon for restoration and reinstallation. It was noted that the restoration to the milepost at Elm Road had been carried out to an excellent standard. The Council thanked Mr Ian Davison of the Milestone Society for all of his assistance with the project. The Council had been consulted under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act for a modification order to amend the Definitive Map and Statement for the public rights of way. The proposal aimed to formalise a historical and well used footpath north of Avondale Road and correctly record a bridleway at the 'The Crescent'. The Council supported the proposals included within the consultation.

## MAYOR'S REPORT

### Office opening – Christmas and New Year

The Council agreed that the Town Council offices would be closed from 12.30pm on Monday December 23rd and would reopen at 9.30am on Thursday January 2nd.

### Volunteering

The Deputy Mayor would be preparing a report on volunteering for consideration by the Council in December. This would seek to try and encourage volunteers to assist the many worthwhile local organisations in Ponteland, some of which struggled for voluntary assistance.

### It's Your Neighbourhood Awards

The Mayor and Councillor Butcher attended the above

awards held at the Memorial Hall on 23 October. The Mayor presented the awards and three Ponteland organisations received an 'outstanding' award - the Friends of Ponteland Park, Ponteland Bowling and Tennis Club and Athol House.

### Pont Group Charity Concert

The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Adam Shanley and Robin Ramsay had attended this concert held on October 26th at the Memorial Hall. It had been an enjoyable evening and it was understood the event had raised over £4,000 for charity.

## REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Coun Greenwell reported on her attendance at a meeting of the Richard Coates Foundation. She had also attended a consultation event organised by ISOS on a proposed development at Rowan Drive.

### Ponteland Fairtrade Working Party

Coun Noble reported on a meeting she had had with Steve Helm of Fairtrade which had been most useful and informative. Mr Helm had passed on the renewal certificate for Ponteland as a Fairtrade town and Coun Noble was delighted to pass this onto the Council to be displayed in the Council offices. The Council is fully supportive of the Fairtrade concept and includes the logo on its letterhead.



*This report is based on the minutes of the Ponteland Town Council meeting held on November 13th.*





# Turn on your lights and turn off the burglars

By PC Rob Anderson – Ponteland Community Beat Manager



Total Policing

**In the period between October 15th and November 14th we have had eight crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.**

These break down to the following offences:

- One damage to a motor vehicle
- One harassment
- Two burglary other than dwelling
- One assault
- One theft by employee
- Two thefts.

Enquiries are ongoing in relation to the crimes and arrests were made for the assault and harassment offences.

Don't forget the advice we've been passing out for the last few months regarding security of your property in the lead up to the holiday season. We cannot stress enough how important it is to take care and make sure you leave lights on when not at home. Lock your doors and

windows and if you see anyone acting suspiciously please contact us.

On another note I have been asked by Ashley Brown, the Youth Services Leader for the Ponteland area, to make you aware of some of the activities taking place in December on Tuesday evenings for the juniors aged nine to 13 at the Youth Centre, Ponteland High School:

December 3rd - Christmas Cooking Session – make brownies, cookies and cupcakes

December 10th - Christmas Crafts – card making, decorations and costumes

December 17th - Fancy Dress Christmas Disco – best costume wins a prize.

If you would like some crime prevention advice please contact PC 613 Davison or myself, PC 395 Anderson, on 101.

Local police surgeries will be held on the following dates:

- CSO Paul Cotterill 7th December 9.30am - 10.30am Merton Hall, Ponteland
- PC Lee Davison 14th December 11.30am - 12.30pm at Belsay village shop
- PC Rob Anderson 28th December 10am - 11am Waitrose, Ponteland
- PC Rob Anderson 28th December 11.30am - 12.30pm Co-op, Broadway

We also have Engagement Days at these venues and dates:

- 4th December 10am – 12noon Merton Way/1pm – 3pm Broadway
- 9th December 1pm – 3pm Stamfordham/Belsay.

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# Developer confident of appeal success after 280-home Green Belt scheme thrown out

**A developer refused permission to build 280 new homes on Ponteland's Green Belt has attacked the decision as "flawed" and said it is confident of winning a planning appeal.**

Newcastle-based Lugano Developments said the £96m scheme for the 82 hectare site at Birney Hill would have created 900 jobs and included 70 "affordable" homes, a farm shop and café, 650m<sup>2</sup> of office floorspace and 18 hectares of publicly accessible open space, with 39 hectares retained in agricultural use and managed as part of a Community Trust by a farm manager.

But Northumberland County Council's west area planning committee unanimously rejected the planning application, citing six reasons:

- inappropriate and inefficient development in the Green Belt
- demonstrable harm to the landscape character of the open countryside
- insufficient information provided on the archaeological potential of the site
- potential for surface water creating flood risk elsewhere
- impact of aircraft noise on future residents and potential impact of development on Newcastle Airport's Instrument Landing System
- impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings.

The controversial plans generated a vociferous opposition campaign, with 4,310 letters of objection to the county council and dozens of 'Ponteland Says No To Green Belt Development' signs adorning the main road into the village.

A site visit by planning officers and committee members in October attracted 250 placard wielding campaigners, while an estimated 550 residents attended a packed two-and-a-half hour public



Residents at the packed public meeting in October. Photo by Trevor Walker.

meeting held at the High School.

Objectors also included Ponteland Town Council, the Environment Agency, Newcastle Airport and Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman, who said: "This has been a victory for our local campaign, backed by over 4,000 local objections, over the money men and big developers. Lugano have blown it, with the rejection of Birney Hill and none of their sites included in the council's draft housing plan; they have played a £25m gamble and lost."

Lugano's development director Richard Robson responded: "Our position is clear. We will be pursuing an appeal against the council's decision which we believe to be flawed in many respects.

"There is an acute shortage of housing; the council has acknowledged the need for Green Belt release; the authority does not have a five year supply of housing land. Our scheme is of high quality and low density and was formulated in direct response to feedback from the local community.

"It offered over £13m in direct contributions to local infrastructure and priorities as well as considerable job

creation and a significant proportion of affordable homes. Mr Opperman has unfortunately not sought to recognise any of these facts and also seems to disregard the priorities of his own party; namely the need to stimulate the economy and promote house building.

"While it is regrettable that our proposals have not been supported at this stage, we are confident of success at appeal."

Coun Allan Hepple, policy board member responsible for housing, planning and regeneration at Northumberland County Council, rejected Lugano's claim that the decision was 'flawed'. He said: "The planning application was refused for six reasons. While four of these reasons related to technical matters which may potentially be overcome in due course, the other two reasons were based on fundamental planning principles, and therefore provided a sound basis on which to refuse the application."

Campaigner Alma Dunigan of the Ponteland Green Belt Group, who spoke against the application at the planning meeting said supporters were "delighted" with the decision but ready for an appeal.





# Everything yule need

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# Your letters

The Editor  
Pont News & Views



## Mixed views on Darras Hall Estate Committee's problems in this month's letters...

### Estate committee volunteers deserve praise

**I read with interest and ultimately frustration the article in the November issue regarding the alleged 'crisis' at the Estates Committee and was particularly drawn to the adverse comments made by some of our neighbours.**

Not all 'development' is to our own individual liking but nevertheless there is a demand for more and larger properties. Thankfully we have the benefit of an Estates Committee which is made up of volunteers who receive no reward whatsoever and exercise their elected pastoral responsibility as a committee to protect us and the estate.

All the monies collected pay for the expenses we incur as residents of Darras Hall and are accounted for in the annual accounts which any of us can inspect at the Estates Office, where the staff are always receptive and helpful.

The Committee's volunteers offer up their time willingly for no benefit or reward whatsoever, and have thankfully done so on our behalf for many years, and as a result continue to make this estate one of the most desirable areas in the North-East to live in.

The recent Chairman's newsletter clarified the situation regarding the application for the development of the corner site at Runnymede Road and Fox Covert Lane and, while accepting that it was not to everyone's liking, said it fully complied with Darras Hall bye-laws.

The professionalism, integrity and transparency of the Committee and their officers has been maintained throughout the 27-plus years we have lived on Darras Hall. They take professional advice when deemed necessary, hence the recent legal fees, and approach any contentious issues cautiously having regard to all issues.

Darras Hall is a wonderful residential housing estate blessed with lots of charm, colour and character. I would like to pay tribute to those committee members past and indeed present who have selflessly

contributed in trying to keep it that way.

**Peter Edwards**  
*Longmeadows, Darras Hall*

### Time a professional management company managed estate

**I am writing in response to the article on Darras Hall Estate Committee (issue 98 Nov 13) 'Estate Committee denies crisis as five resign'.**

Whilst I appreciate the role of the Darras Hall Estate Committee and the work the members undertake to protect and maintain the rural green nature of the estate - which is a widely admired place to live by both those who reside here and outside the area - the Chairman Michael Dainty and the Vice Chairman John Scott can no longer dismiss the concerns of the owners of the estate whom they are supposed to be representing.

In particular I have real concerns over the legal costs to date of £63,700 incurred over the legal battle with Lugano Group Ltd. There is clearly no accountability of these costs to the owners. I would like to ask who authorised the costs incurred to date and how the Committee plan on recovering the costs.

I am only too aware that it will be ourselves, the owners on the estate, who are asked to foot the cost over a period of time through the annual rent charge. I suggest the existing committee members provide a clear explanation of what we will be expected to pay and over what time period, what it is for, how it has happened and what is being put in place to stop anything like this happening again.

I have already requested this information from the committee on 28th August and not received any reply to date.

I also have other concerns regarding the work and services that the existing committee members can undertake following five resignations representing nearly half of the members leaving. Mr Scott claims that the committee can continue to function but what expertise is left in the remaining members in post, I am doubtful.

Is it not time that at the region's most exclusive housing estate with 2,570 households and an estate valuation of over £1,280m is managed by a professional management company reporting directly to the Darras Hall Estate Committee, who in turn are accountable to the owners and residents of the estate whom they are representing?

**Gaye Templeton**  
*Darras Road, Darras Hall*

### Estate Committee 'not fit for purpose'

**I moved to my present address only a couple of years ago, most probably for the same reasons as most.**

Recently I have been horrified with the news coverage we have received in The Journal, Evening Chronicle, Darras Hall Estates Newsletter and finally the November edition of Pont News & Views. Just what is going on?

One of the benefits of living in Darras Hall is the Trust Deed, which does protect our lifestyle even if it was written over 100 years ago. Do we realise what would happen if we did not have such a legally binding document; instead of 2,500 houses it could rise to 5,000 with no byelaw restrictions, developers running riot and permanent traffic chaos on the estate's roads.

When new owners purchase their homes they know the restrictions they must abide by; if they have no intention of complying and just want to make a fast buck go and live elsewhere.

I am glad we have the protection of the Trust Deed but unfortunately I do not believe that the existing committee is fit for purpose. Why have we lost some committee members who were willing to stand up for their principles - are these not the very people who should be reinstated for the future of this estate?

**Mr G Hood**  
*Western Way, Darras Hall*



## More waste bins would leave irresponsible dog owners no excuse

**When I moved to Darras Hall I did so for the beautiful nature of the area; walking through the estate was always a pleasure.**

Unfortunately nowadays I find myself increasingly having to pick my way through a tapestry of strategically placed and often cunningly concealed dog waste.

As a responsible dog owner myself I struggle to understand the mentality of people who make the conscious, and often expensive, decision to buy a pet and then make the equally conscious decision to allow it to redesign their local footpaths with rectal graffiti.

One very small mitigating factor may well be the lack of waste bins on the estate; whilst it's every dog owner's duty to clean up, it would be nice not to have to swing a bag of the stuff for miles before either getting home or finding a bin.

Perhaps the council could consider adding a few more bins around the place and remove the last defence for the ignorant owners out there?

**Steve Eglon**

*Western Way, Darras Hall*

## Thank you for objecting to Old Mill site development

**Could we express our thanks to everyone who contacted Northumberland County Council with their comments regarding the proposed development to the Old Mill site on West Road by Galliford Try.**

There were over 40 letters of objection sent in, and we now await what the planning officers will say. The application will be heard by an county council planning committee in due course, when there will be the opportunity to voice our concerns publicly.

This is a unique site, and demands sympathetic development to reduce the effects on local residents and wildlife. Despite the developers holding a public meeting about their proposals, they seem to have given little cognisance to the opinions expressed by the majority of the public who responded.

We hope that the county councillors on the planning committee can be persuaded to visit the site to see for themselves what problems there are with such a development.

With opposition to the published plans by so many members of the public, as well as such diverse groups as the Town Council, Civic Society, Friends of Ponteland Park and the Scouts, it is to be hoped that such weight of opinion will carry some force, and persuade the developers to amend their application to something that is more acceptable.

Thank you once again.

**David and Carole Butler**  
*Ladywell Way, Ponteland*

## Forget the tourists – what about the locals?

**We have a lovely new road by The Blackbird up to Jackson Avenue then, stop, no further.**

Why did they not carry on along North Road, turn left into Thornhill Road where the road has more holes than a golf course and back round to the shops at Merton Way, as all the road along Thornhill is disgusting.

Another great bit of newly laid road is by Northumberlandia – I wonder why? It's a Northumberland hotspot. Shame about us taxpayers who have to suffer dangerous roads to our houses, damaging our cars on a daily basis.

But a nice trip to Northumberlandia will calm us all down on the smooth new road!

**Jane Haddon**  
*Thornhill Road, Ponteland*

## Let's take on parking firms sending unenforceable invoices

**I wonder if any other residents have received an invoice from a company called UK Parking Patrol Office?**

I did – for 'Dropping Off/Picking Up in a Restricted Area' at Newcastle Airport and I was outraged, to say the least.

Remember that this is an invoice from a private company. It's not a fine or a penalty - private companies can't do that. It's an invoice for "agreeing" to pay £100 for stopping for a few seconds that you apparently agreed to by reading a sign you can't read unless you stop and read it.

Does that sound crazy - well it is, and it's not legally binding.

I've just appealed to the independent POPLA body (Parking on Private Land Appeals) and had my appeal upheld. This means that the parking company has to cancel the invoice. You know the best part - it costs the parking company £33 for everyone that appeals to POPLA, and it costs the BPA - the front for the parking companies - £100. It costs you nothing and with the correct wording you can win every appeal.

I would like to set up a local parking forum to save the residents money that they should not have to pay. Anyone interested?

**Chris Moore**

*Avondale Road, Darras Hall*

**Letters on all issues are welcomed by Pont News & Views but the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.**

The Editor reserves the right to amend any submitted letters for legal or other reasons. All letters submitted should include the writer's name and address and not exceed 150 words.

**January issue deadlines:** The January issue will be delivered on Monday December 23rd and Tuesday December 24th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday December 9th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the January issue.

## CONCERT RAISES MORE THAN £4,000 FOR CHILDREN'S CHARITY

**The newly launched Pont Charity Group raised more than £4,000 at a concert in aid of Children NE.**

The Pont Charity Group event held at Ponteland Memorial Hall featured The Grainger Singers, and was attended by MP Guy Opperman, Mayor Peter Cowey and Deputy Mayor Carl Rawlings who all helped draw the raffle.

Dr. Hazel Jones-Lee, a trustee of Children NE, gave a brief talk, thanking The Grainger Singers, the audience and all supporters, and Pont Charity Group, followed by a resume of the charity's work.

About £700 was raised with the concert and in-house raffle, and donations, bringing the overall total in excess of £4,000, which has created something of a problem for Pont Charity Group, exceeding the level for small charities!



## Ponteland Golf Club

**"One of Northumberland's finest! Excellent catering & bar facilities."**

Golf North East, 2008

Both playing & social memberships are currently being offered at Ponteland Golf Club. Membership categories start from the age of 10 and there is a range of payment options currently available for both ladies and gentlemen. There is currently no waiting list for ANY category. The club is actively looking to recruit young adults and has recently introduced intermediate membership categories. For information contact:

Secretary Greg Waugh at:  
**secretary@thepontelandgolfclub.co.uk**  
**Tel: 01661 822689**

**Joining fee suspended**

# What's on...

## Early Advent service - St Mary's Church

On Sunday December 1st at 6.30pm an Advent sequence of words and music sung by the choir will be beautiful service to start our preparations for Christmas. For a full list of Christmas church services see page 13.

## Ponteland Floral Art Club

Our next meeting is on Tuesday December 3rd at 7.30pm at Ponteland Memorial Hall where we have a demonstration by Ian Buxton of Nottingham (N), title 'Making Merry' + Christmas Stall.

## Ponteland Wildlife Group

The December meeting of the Ponteland Wildlife Group is on Tuesday December 3rd and has George Proud as the speaker. A retired surgeon with an interest in the history, uses and photography of wild flowers, George will give a talk entitled 'Wildflowers - Mythology, Folklore & Photography'. The venue is St. Mary's Church Hall in the village, the time 7.30pm and the price £2 including refreshments. The Speaker at our meeting in January is Dave Stebbings who will give

an illustrated talk entitled 'Butterfly Migration - Travelling Light'. This will be on Tuesday January 7th, same place, time and entry fee.

## Ponteland U3A

Our monthly meeting on Wednesday December 4th is a Christmas celebration with entertainment and a faith tea. We meet at 2pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Visitors are welcome. No charge. Interested in joining U3A activities? Visit our website at [www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland) or ring (01661) 822225. Our January meeting will be on Wednesday January 8th.

## Merton Hall trip

A festive trip is planned for December 5th to Gilsland Spa Hotel. The day includes lunch and entertainment and is ever popular, contact Merton Hall on 01661 872917 for further details. Come and join in the Merton Hall Brunch and Bingo every second Thursday from 12noon till 3pm. Keep fit and flexible with chair based exercise every Monday, 11am till 11.45am. No need to book, just come and join in for £1.50. Don't forget, Merton Hall is a great place to meet up with friends, read the papers and have a cuppa for 30p and the second cup is free (Monday to

Saturday morning). And finally, thank you Mrs Newton and Mr Calvert for your donation in response to our appeal for a portable CD player. Your generosity is much appreciated.

## County Council surgeries

Your local Northumberland County Councillors Richard Dodd, Peter Jackson, Veronica Jones and Eileen Armstrong are available to meet constituents on the first Saturday of every month from 10am-11am at Waitrose supermarket, Ponteland and Broadway, Darras Hall. Their next surgery is on Saturday December 7th.

## Ponteland Methodist Church Christmas Fayre

The Annual Christmas Fayre will be held on Saturday December 7th with doors opening at 10am. Entry is free. There will be stalls of produce, preserves and ginger wine, cakes, Christmas and other plants, new presents, cards, jewellery, books CDs and DVDs. There will be competitions for children and adults and a raffle. The kitchen staff are getting geared up to cook fresh bacon butties, warm mince pies tea, coffee and soft drinks.

## Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday December 9th is Dr Richard Madely whose talk is entitled 'A Passage in India'. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of every month in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 2.30pm. Membership is open to gentlemen aged over 55. The annual subscription is £10. For further details contact Donald Lloyd at [donaldlloyd@sky.com](mailto:donaldlloyd@sky.com) or on (01661) 872661.

## North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

Our meeting on Monday 9th December is the Annual General Meeting followed by an informal social gathering. There will be a seed exchange and an opportunity to buy seeds from plants grown by the members. The meeting will be taking place in St Marys Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. The doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting. Details from [t.teal@btinternet.com](mailto:t.teal@btinternet.com) or by calling (0191) 413 2574.

## Darras Hall WI Christmas meeting

Darras Hall WI invite you to their Christmas Meeting, to be held on Thursday December 12th at 2pm in the URC Hall. Sandra Dickinson will be making floral arrangements with the theme 'Christmas Flowers'. The competition is a 'Small Christmas Arrangement'. Tea, coffee and homemade mince pies and

shortbread will be served after the display. Visitors are most welcome.

## Ponteland Methodist Church Christmas Concert

This year the Christmas Concert will be given by the Belmont Ladies Choir from Durham on Saturday December 14th commencing at 7pm. Refreshments will be served after the concert. Tickets costing £7 each can be booked with Syd Cowan on (01661) 824459 and paid for at the door.

## Annual Rotary Carol Concert

The annual Rotary Carol Concert with the Bedlington Salvation Army is being held at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Thursday December 19th at 7pm for 7.30pm.

## Ponteland Photographic Society

Ponteland Photographic Society meets on Monday evenings at 7.30pm in Merton Hall. Anyone interested in photography is always very welcome to join this friendly group; we offer a varied and interesting programme so why not come and see what we have to offer without any obligation to join. Our website is [pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk](http://pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk)

## RNLI Ponteland Ladies Luncheon Club

The Ponteland RNLI Ladies Luncheon Club is looking to attract new members. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month in the Memorial Hall at 12noon for 12.30pm where we enjoy a two course lunch together with a guest speaker. Why not give us a try? If you are interested please contact the Secretary Janet Musson on (01661) 824880.

## Carpet bowls every Friday

Carpet bowls at 7.30pm every Friday at Ponteland Methodist Church. New members would be most welcome, why not come along and give it a try - it's a good way of helping the winter along. Contact is Mrs Barbara Hogg on (01661) 824652.

## Ponteland Runners

Do you run and would you like to run with others? Ponteland Runners is a very friendly club and welcomes all newcomers. We offer a variety of sessions throughout the week for social runners who like to run for fun and fitness through to competitive runners who train to improve their times. The cross country season has started and we welcome any runners who would like to participate in this series of races. For further information about the club and our sessions visit [www.pontelandrunners.org.uk](http://www.pontelandrunners.org.uk), find us on Facebook, contact [secretary@pontelandrunners.org.uk](mailto:secretary@pontelandrunners.org.uk) or call Sue Heppell on (01661) 821547.

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We have the choice of the Italian Christmas or the traditional Christmas lunch and dinner menus throughout the festive period.

This year we will be joined by Santa Claus, who will be giving out presents to all the children dining with us on Christmas Day, and we have a band playing on New Year's Eve and a midnight toast.

To book, call us on (01661) 872195, email us at [info@fratelliponteland.co.uk](mailto:info@fratelliponteland.co.uk), visit the website [www.fratelliponteland.co.uk](http://www.fratelliponteland.co.uk) or drop in to see us.

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We are open as normal with the exception of the following days: **24th december** 12 - 9.30pm, **25th december** 12 - 4.00pm, **26th december** 12 - 9.30pm, **31st december** normal menu till 12 - 7.00, set dinner menu 8 - 10.00pm. **1st January** 12 - 9.30pm



# Christmas message



From the Reverend Peter Barham, Vicar of Ponteland

By the door of St Mary's is a list of previous Vicars. It recently got damp and had an outbreak of mould - so we have had lots of jokes about 'mouldy Vicars'. It has now been cleaned.

The first name listed is Robert of Eland in 1154. He was not the first - the original church was built at least a couple of hundred years earlier.

At our Summer Festival when we celebrated the Lindisfarne Gospels we listened to the beginning of John's Gospel read in Anglo Saxon. "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out."

You can read the Anglo Saxon text on our church website at [pontelandstmary.co.uk](http://pontelandstmary.co.uk) - for me, listening to those words, it was a real link to our past.

The world is so very different now - but people still have good times and bad times, times of celebration and times of sadness, and people still need people and community. Sometimes we celebrate together, at other times hold each other in the darkness.

At Christmas 1913 no one could have foreseen the hell of the five years that were to come. In 2014 we will start our commemorations of the centenary of the First World War. A service is already in the diary for Sunday August 3rd, the anniversary of the outbreak of war. If you are related to any of those who fought in that conflict, please could you let me know? I would also love to know the source of the Union Jack and tin hat that are on the Memorial in St Mary's - any ideas?

The last few months have seen North Road rebuilt and the churchyard wall rebuilt. (I had a vision that they would knock stones out of the wall and we would watch the church tower collapse). Our thanks to Northumberland County Council for the excellent work they have done.

In the river there are men happily playing at being small boys - building dams and making mud pies! This should mean St Mary's (and the Diamond) do not get washed away.

All the churches in the village, working together, invite you to worship and celebrate this Christmas. God's love does not change. We try to show that love and, while we don't always succeed, we will continue - as generations have done before us - and generations will continue to do when I am simply a mouldy vicar on a list.

Happy Christmas.

## Churches Together in Ponteland

### United Reformed Church, Broadway, Darras Hall

Sunday December 22 – Carol Praise	10am
Christmas Eve – Christingle Family Service	3.30pm
Christmas Day – Family Service	10am
Sunday December 29 – Approaching New Year	10am

### St. Mary the Virgin, Ponteland

Sunday December 15 – Nativity Play	10am
Sunday December 15 – Carol Service	6.30pm
Sunday December 22 – Choral Communion	10am
Christmas Eve – Crib Service*	3pm and 4pm
Christmas Eve – Carol Service	7pm
Christmas Eve – Midnight Mass	11.30pm
Christmas Day – Holy Communion	8am
Christmas Day – Family Communion	10am

### Methodist Church, Ponteland

Sunday December 8 – BB and GB Carol Service	10am
Sunday December 22 – Carol Service	6.30pm
Christmas Eve – Midnight Communion	11.15pm
Christmas Day – Family Service	10am

### Methodist Church, Milbourn

Sunday December 22 – Carol Service	6.30pm
Christmas Eve – Communion	11.15pm
New Year's Eve – Watch Night Service	11.30pm

### St Matthew's R.C., Ponteland

Christmas Eve – Carols and Mass	5.30pm
Christmas Day – Mass	10.30am

### Holy Saviour, Milbourn

Sunday December 22 - Carol Service	11.15am
Christmas Day - Holy Communion	11.15am

### Waitrose, Ponteland

Saturday December 14 - Carols outside Waitrose	10am
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### Coates Green, Ponteland

Wednesday December 18 - Churches Together	
Carols on the Green (if wet in St Mary's)	7pm

Your opportunity to sing carols in the centre of the village, arranged by Churches Together in Ponteland. Refreshments served afterwards in St Mary's Church Hall.

### UNITED SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS EVE AT 7pm - ST. MARY'S PONTELAND

You are warmly invited to these services.

\* These two services are an hour earlier than in previous years.

## HAVE YOUR SAY ON LONG TERM PLANNING BLUEPRINT

Residents and businesses wanting to influence a long term planning blueprint for Ponteland are being urged to complete a questionnaire before next week's deadline.

The Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan survey addresses some of the key issues raised in Northumberland County Council's draft core strategy consultation.

The Plan, currently being developed by a team of local residents working on behalf of the Town Council, will, if approved in a referendum, enable the local community to decide its own vision for Ponteland going forward

and to influence future local planning policy in a way that currently is not permitted.

The PNP questionnaire, which was included in the November issue of Pont News, can also be downloaded at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk) and completed copies should be posted to Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Group, Ponteland Town Council, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Ponteland, Northumberland, NE20 9SD.

There are also collection boxes at drop off points including Ponteland health centre, Darras Hall Clinic and the Sainsbury and Waitrose supermarkets. The deadline is Friday December 6th.

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# Ponteland Community High School Report

**In a new feature for Pont News, budding journalists from the high school will provide a monthly report on success stories both inside and outside of the classroom.**

## Great trip to the land of the dragon

By Jess Rea

**A spectacular welcoming ceremony and a trip to one of the Seven Wonders of the World were among the highlights of an unforgettable visit to China by a group of Ponteland students.**

The 23 PCHS students spent 10 days travelling the country, visiting famous attractions such as the Great Wall and attracting the attention of a television news crew during their visit to Chengde No.2 High School.

The group were greeted by a spectacular welcoming ceremony of singing and dancing along with an exchange of gifts between both schools.

Our Chinese partner school is almost inconceivable in size, with 4,000 students in what is just one of numerous schools in the city. During peak exam season their school day spans from 7am until 10pm. The standard of their hosts' English, compared to any attempt at Chinese on the visitors' part, was exceptional.

Students were struck by the dedication and intense focus of their Chinese counterparts, as PCHS teacher and joint trip leader Amelia Richardson explained: "It's very central to their culture. Education gets you a better job, which gets you a better life."

Not only did the hosts welcome our students into their school, but also into their homes. All visiting pupils were paired with a Chinese family and invited to dine with them for one evening, showing an aspect of the true China which very few visitors get to experience.

The PCHS students and staff embraced the Chinese culture on every possible level, from eating every meal with traditional chopsticks to visiting Tiananmen Square and General Mao's Mausoleum. As a leader in the industrialization of Beijing, General Mao has become a central part of Chinese history and culture.



Student Robyn Lillico struggled to put into words how impressive she found the Great Wall of China: "To think, ah, I'm on the Great Wall... it's just something you never think will happen."

The students of Chengde left a lasting impression on the visitors' hearts - their time spent there was full of joy and laughs.

Summing up an amazing and unforgettable visit, Robyn added: "I'll never forget it. It truly was the trip of a lifetime."

## Skatepark will give teens much needed social space

By Jess Rea

**Teens today are subject to a barrage of criticism due to their so called 'anti-social' behaviour.**

Yet before now, Ponteland was notably lacking in any area dedicated specifically to a social space for teens. All this is set to change with the newest addition of a skate park.

Costing in excess of £30,000, the project has been led by Ponteland Community Partnership, and generously funded by The Community Chest, South East

Northumberland Recreation and Arts Centre, Banks Community Fund and all four Ponteland county councillors.

As the ramps take shape each day, their design become clearer and the excitement among young adults in the area grows.

On completion the park will boast an impressive mini spine ramp with twin height and a volcano, alongside two half pipes split by a connecting ridge and railed platforms at either end of the structure.

Construction is due to finish in December and the skatepark will be open to the public once a formal safety inspection has

been passed.

The skatepark project will provide teens with a space of their own to socialise and relax, enjoying a pastime ever growing in popularity. Hopefully, it will also take away from the stereotype attached to teens of hanging around with their hoods up and looking menacing, and be respected as a place for teens to go so they aren't forced to congregate on the streets any longer.

The project can only be seen as a positive step to building mutual respect between residents of all ages in Ponteland.

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## Fresh bid to turn home into dental surgery

Fresh plans to convert an early Victorian villa into a dental practice in a conservation area have been lodged after an initial application was rejected by council planners.

Onkar Dhanoya, of Osborne Dental Practice, has applied again for a change of use at 31 Bell Villas from a four bed detached home to a two surgery practice, with a new vehicular access and parking area.

The double fronted property, which has been in residential use since it was built around 1840, is located opposite the Sainsbury supermarket.

The initial plans sparked 37 objections from local residents, Ponteland Town Council and Ponteland Civic Society. An increase in traffic congestion, loss of trees and wildlife and permanent changes to the character of an original Ponteland property were among the concerns.

The Northumberland County Council planning department report which rejected the initial application said the building was considered a "heritage asset" because of its Victorian and Edwardian features. Removal of the frontage would detract from the character and appearance Ponteland's streetscape, while replacement of the garden area with nine car parking spaces would adversely affect the garden setting of the site, it said.

The new objection from John Hague of Ponteland Civic Society says: "While this second application shows some improvement on the first, in that one of the two points of vehicle access is to be closed off and the main southern façade of the dwelling itself is not to be materially altered, we nevertheless feel that we have to sustain our original objection given the considerable environmental damage that would result from this scheme.

"There would clearly be a significant loss of tree cover and the site line requirements at the car park entrance would be likely to result in the loss of some 50% of frontage planting, all of which would be seriously detrimental to the street scene and to the Conservation Area as a whole.

"This property needs to remain in residential use."

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*Saturday 25th January, 7pm for 7:30pm, £24.95pp*

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**Wedding Showcase**  
*Sunday 9th February, 12noon – 4pm, FREE entry*

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**January Blues**  
 Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th January  
 10am-4pm, half price zoo entry



## Swanning around at Bolam!

Our stunning cover shot was taken by keen amateur photographer Jessica Keating at Bolam Lake last month.

Jessica, 17, of Pont View, Ponteland, was out walking her Labrador Inca at 7am on October 16 when she spotted the swan and another great photo opportunity.

Talented Jessica, who is studying A levels in biology, geography and maths at Ponteland High School, first appeared in Pont News a year ago when she won the youth category of the Kennel Club Dog Photographer of the Year competition with a photo of Inca.

### ROTARY OPERA GALA CONCERT

Local bass Graeme Danby assembled his team for the 29th consecutive Annual Rotary Gala Concert in the Britannia Airport Hotel on Sunday October 20th.

Graeme, Valerie Reid (Mezzo Soprano), Sarah Fox (Soprano), Austin Gunn (Tenor), Anthony Kraus (Piano) and Special Guest Bradley Creswick (Violin) played to a full house.

The concert, sponsored by The Ballinger Trust, Benfield Motor Group, Cowells Garden Centre, Rialto Ristorante, Waitrose and the Britannia Hotel, raised over £2,500 for Rotary charities.

### PONTELAND BUSINESS NETWORK BREAKFAST CLUB

The next meeting of Ponteland Business Network's Breakfast Club is being held at the Diamond Inn on Friday December 13th.

The monthly meetings, held each second Friday, aim to give the business community of Ponteland a chance to meet one another, discuss issues and support one another's enterprises.

The meeting runs from 7.45am to 10am, and a £10 fee is payable. Anyone wishing to attend can register with organiser Brian Russell, of Russell and Co. Accountants, at [brian.russell@profitabilitygroup.co.uk](mailto:brian.russell@profitabilitygroup.co.uk) to book their place.

Ponteland Christmas Junior Programme 2013 (Ages 9–13)




Date	Activity
Tuesday 3rd December	Christmas Cooking Session Make Brownies, Cookies and Cupcakes!
Tuesday 10th December	Christmas Craft's - Card Making, decorations and costumes
Tuesday 17th December	Fancy Dress Christmas Disco The best costume wins a prize!

All activities are held at Ponteland Youth Centre, which can be found near the Car Park of Ponteland High School, behind Henry's Hut.  
 For more details please contact  
 ashley.brown  
[ashley.brown@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:ashley.brown@northumberland.gov.uk)



**All sessions are between 6–8pm and best of all they are FREE!**  
 We look forward to seeing you there.



# New Year's Day Wheelbarrow Race to raise funds for cancer charities

**The New Year will once again start in Ponteland with the traditional Wheelbarrow Race.**

The historic annual event is organised by the 41 Club - an extension of the Round Table movement - with support from Ponteland Rugby Club.

This year funds are being raised for The Bobby Robson Foundation and the 41 Club's National Charity, MacMillan Cancer Support.

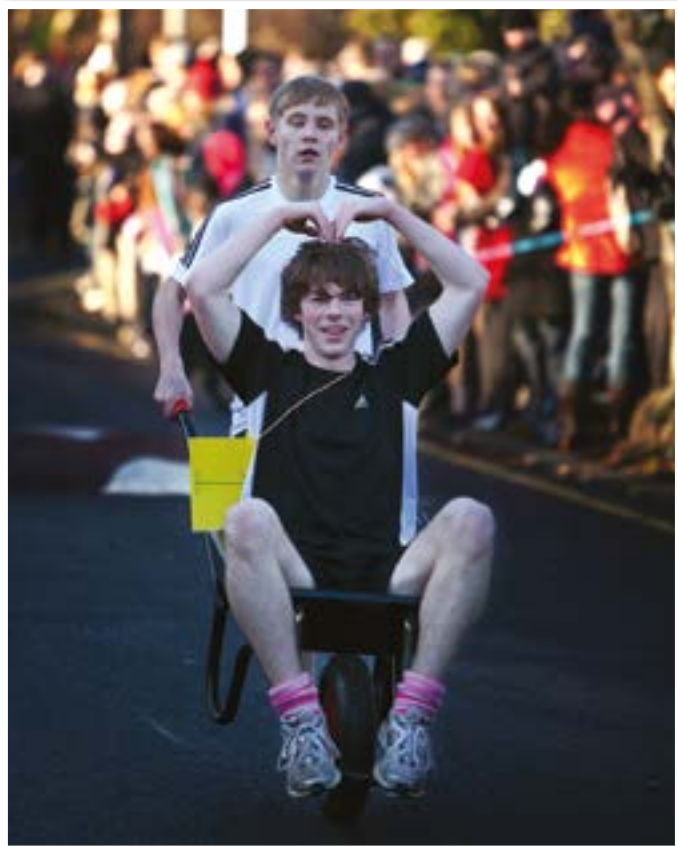
The race takes place at 12noon on New Year's Day over a mile-long course which starts and ends at the Blackbird Inn.

Hundreds of spectators came along to watch and last year more than £400 was collected on the day for good causes.

If any former Round Table member who has recently moved into the area, or who is presently resident and would like to rekindle the traditions of Round Table, please contact our Chairman David Penn by email to [williepenn@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:williepenn@hotmail.co.uk) or call 01670 775325.

Meetings are monthly on the first Monday, in convivial surroundings at The Highlander.

Dan Pybus and Oscar Redman win the 2013 race for the second year running.  
Photo by Nick Clark: [www.nickclarkimaging.com](http://www.nickclarkimaging.com)



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