

# pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Police warning to  
criminal cyclists

Village's first weekend  
beer festival

Estate Committee  
re-elected after 'lively' AGM

## Puffin pair pic lands competition win

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Produced by Cian creative pr





In third place: Helen Bradley's image 'Ram's Horns'.

## Puffin pair pic wins photo society competition

*By Mike Sadler*

**As Ponteland Photographic Society nears the end of its very successful current season's programme - with membership numbers again at record levels - a recent set-subject competition attracted some super entries.**

The theme was 'pairs' and judge George Ledger voted Bill Norfolk's well captured photograph of puffins entitled 'Landing Pair' in first place.

Runner-up was Veronica Congleton with her photograph of marauding gulls entitled 'Mine Mine Mine'. In third place was Helen Bradley with 'Ram's Horns'.

This friendly club always welcomes new members. We offer an interesting and varied programme, with a mixture of excellent outside speakers and plenty of opportunities to show some of your own photographs.

The new season starts early in September (Merton Hall at 7.30pm on Monday evenings) and runs until April, so if you enjoy taking photographs why not come along. In the meantime, please check out our website at [www.pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk](http://www.pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk)



Runner up: Veronica Congleton's photograph of marauding gulls entitled 'Mine Mine Mine'.



Cover shot: Bill Norfolk's winning photograph of a pair of puffins landing.

# Fond farewells for two remarkable ladies

**MURIEL SOBO** pays tribute to two remarkable ladies who were well known in the parish and have recently died.

**Margie Davies, a long-time resident of Darras Hall, has died peacefully at home aged 94 years.**

Brought up in Benwell in the West End of Newcastle, she came to Ponteland with her husband Norman in 1964.

Originally Methodists, Margie joined the Christian Scientist Church, now in Gosforth. She was a faithful member of this church and her many friends and activities were centred on it.

Her husband, Norman, died in 2004 and Margie remained in the family home. But how many of us knew about her wartime life as a young girl?

She briefly recounted this time: "I was working for the GPO in a reserved occupation as a telephonist in Newcastle GPO telephone exchange at Carlol Square. In 1942 10% of us were released to join HM Forces.

"About 12 of us joined the ATS Signal Corps and our initial training of three weeks was at Trowbridge in Wiltshire and later we were sent to Y Wing of the Signals Corps at Sidi Bishr near Cairo. We sailed from



Liverpool and joined with other ships in convoy going halfway across the Atlantic before rounding the tip of Africa and landing in Durban for half a day. It took 3 months to reach Cairo.

"Our work was to intercept every morse message sent by the Germans and pass them on to central command. Later we were sent a communication from Churchill congratulating us on the work we had done as it had helped substantially in the

planning of the successful push through Italy.

"There was hardly a woman in our group who had not had a loved one killed, missing or captured so this message gave us all considerable heart. When the war in Europe was finished we returned to Sevenoaks and I was training in Japanese morse, which has 76 symbols, to go to India. However I met Norman again, a childhood friend, who had been a POW for three years and five weeks later we got married."

How many of us could imagine mild-mannered, petite Margie as one of the cogs in the war machine all those years ago? She belonged to a remarkable generation which is fast fading. Eventually she was awarded the Freedom of Bletchley Park and two war medals!

Margie and Norman had a daughter Carol, who also lives on Darras Hall, and a son. She leaves four grandchildren and six great grandchildren. A fun-loving, vivacious lady, she will be missed by all who knew her.

Margie and a Geordie friend in wartime Cairo.

**Eleanor Findlay lived through almost 100 years of farming between South East Farm Milbourne and South Carter Moor at Kirkley.**

She died recently aged 98 years.

Eleanor was one of five children born at South East Farm. Her father Henry Davison had fought in the Boer War. She went to Higham Dykes school, just across the fields, and next to college in Gosforth.

She would cycle to Ponteland, leave her bike at Stobert's shop and then catch a bus to Gosforth. Her teaching career started as a pupil teacher at Coates School in Ponteland, followed by spells at Capheaton and Whalton during the war. She boarded during the week cycling home for weekends.

She met and married Ted Findlay in 1944



and moved to Kirkley where her two daughters were born and she helped in the running of the family farm, South Carter Moor.

Eleanor nursed her husband until his death in 1985 and then took up a new hobby

of lace making until her failing eyesight prevented her from continuing. She took great interest in the lives of her four grandchildren and latterly those of her six great-grandchildren, of whom she was immensely proud.

An active member of the community, she was a founder member of the Kirkley Women's Institute, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, where she enjoyed the companionship and monthly meetings.

Eleanor was a lifelong worshipper at Holy Saviour, Milbourne and attended weekly until the last week of her life.

A celebration of her life took place at Holy Saviour Church where her family were overwhelmed by the extremely large number of family and friends who attended. A much loved gentle lady!

Eleanor cuts the 50th anniversary cake for Kirkley WI





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## PROJECTS REPORT

### Skate park

Councillors were informed that on March 22nd the installer was intending to rectify the issues raised by the safety inspection. Bench seating has been ordered and various landscaping works are being carried out.

### Park path lighting project

Requests for quotes for the above project have been sent out to various companies and a further examination of the use of solar lighting is also being carried out.

### War Memorial

This work has been completed.

### Memorial Hall – remarking of car park

The Council agreed a contribution of £200 towards the remarking of the car park at the Memorial Hall, which is used extensively by park users, after consideration of a report.

## GRANT APPLICATION

The Council approved a grant of £5,500 following an application from Ponteland Youth Service for funds towards the cost of providing youth activities in Ponteland in 2014-15. The application included detail of staffing levels that would be available for the sum earmarked by the Town Council and regular updates on the activities undertaken would be provided.

## REQUEST FOR USE OF PONTELAND PARK FOR A CIRCUS

A request by a small family run circus to use Ponteland Park in August to put on four performances over three days was declined. The circus, which only had human acts and required a space equivalent to the size of half a football pitch,

would have needed to reside in the park during their stay. Councillors were not against such a circus taking place in Ponteland but felt that the park was not a suitable location due to possible damage to the park, access issues and impact on nearby residents. The Clerk was asked to send details of another suggested location to the company outside of Ponteland.

## FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2014-15

An increase of £1 across all three banding charges for the allotments at Prestwick was agreed for 2014-15. The fees and charges for Prestwick Cemetery for the next year will continue to be set by Northumberland County Council, who provide the service via a Service Level Agreement.

## ROTARY CLUB OF PONTELAND – 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The Town Council approved a request from Rotary to plant a yew tree alongside a large stone with a plaque on land by the Memorial Hall in honour of their 50th anniversary celebration this year. A meeting had been held with the President of Rotary to view suitable sites and a photograph of the preferred site was included within the report.

## HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

A letter is to be sent to the headteachers of both the middle and high schools asking if parents could be respectfully reminded of the Highway Code, following a complaint from a resident of Callerton Court

about school traffic parking on grass verges which was discussed at the Working Party meeting on February 19th.

## ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed various recommendations from the Working Party's meeting on February 17th. They included the replacement of the Springer type toddler equipment at Callerton and Twizell play areas and new surfacing underneath the equipment and the toddler swings at Callerton. Members also approved proposals for the treatment of the lower planters at Merton Way, which will be filled with red gravel on top of a weed suppressing membrane, with a suitable tree planted in the middle.

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillors were sent details of the consultation being carried out by the County Council on post-16 transport. Comments were required by May 19th and councillors were asked to submit their views as soon as possible. Coun Dodd said he was making some progress

in relation to the car parking issues at the back of Merton shopping centre and on Meadowfield Industrial Estate. A meeting would be held on site at 8.30am on March 18th to demonstrate the scale of the problems to NCC officers. He also reported that work was due to start on the paving outside of Merton Way shops to rectify the damage caused to the pavement area by delivery vehicles.

## PUBLIC TOILETS – THORNHILL ROAD

The Council considered a report on the public toilets at Thornhill Road. As the result of a recent site inspection it was recommended that the male toilets should be closed and the disabled toilet used for males and disabled users. This will involve a change to the lock system on the disabled toilet, provision of new signs and fitting of locks to the existing male toilets. The Council agreed this proposal for a trial period of three months.

*This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on March 12th.*



## Ponteland Golf Club

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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](mailto:secretary@thepontelandgolfclub.co.uk)

**Tel: 01661 822689**

**Joining fee suspended**



# Please be considerate with your cycling

By PC Rob Anderson – Ponteland Community Beat Manager



## In the period between February 16th and March 16th we have had three crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.

These break down to the following offences:

- one attempted burglary other than dwelling
- one common assault
- one theft from a shop.

Enquiries are ongoing in relation to the crimes and the assault offence has been detected.

Several complaints have been received about the cyclists who come to the Ponteland area on weekends. If you are a cyclist or know someone who visits the area please remember yourself or remind those you know about being considerate whilst cycling in the area.

Cyclists are still covered by road traffic law, including contravening red traffic lights and riding on the footpath. One such complaint was in reference to cyclists on the paved area of Merton Way after one almost collided with an elderly pedestrian.

Another complaint referred to cyclists urinating behind the recycling bins in the car park to the rear of the shops. Anyone found committing these offences will be dealt with.

On another note, Northumberland Youth Service is running an Easter programme for the school holidays. Please go to [www.northumberlandlife.org/youthservice](http://www.northumberlandlife.org/youthservice) to check out the details.

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:

- SC Jon Gray 12th April 10am - 11am Waitrose, Ponteland
- SC Jon Gray 19th April 9.30am - 10.30am Merton Hall, Ponteland
- CSO Emily Benson-Muir 26th April 11.30am - 12.30pm Co-op, Broadway
- PC Lee Davison 3rd May 11.30am - 12.30pm at Belsay village shop

We also have Engagement Days at these venues and dates:

- 9th April 1pm to 3pm - Stamfordham/ Belsay/Matfen
- 23rd April 10am to 12noon - Merton Way, Ponteland
- 23rd April 1pm to 3pm - Broadway, Ponteland

Please come along and have a chat to get to know us.

## PONTELAND POLICEMAN COMPLETES ENDURANCE CHALLENGE

A Ponteland man pushed through the pain as he completed a major one-day physical challenge to support a good cause.

After getting up at 3.30am, Keith Harbottle cycled 50 miles to the start line of a 34-mile ultramarathon in north Northumberland, part of the Endurancelife Coastal Trail series. He successfully did the run and then got back on his bike to return.

The Northumbria Police officer is hoping that his efforts will raise a good total for the Alan Shearer Foundation which funds a specialist residential and social facility for people with complex disabilities and acute sensory impairments.

For more information about his 2014 efforts and a link to make a donation, visit his events blog at <http://alanshearerfoundation.org.uk/blog>

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# Festival brings new social event we can all drink to

**Ponteland's busy social calendar is about to add a new annual event we can all drink to.**

The inaugural Ponteland Beer Festival is taking place over the weekend of Friday April 25th and Saturday April 26th in a marquee between the rugby and cricket pitches at Ponteland Leisure Centre.

The event is being organised by Ponteland Rugby Club with the aim of establishing an annual addition to the Ponteland social calendar.

There will be over 40 beers which are all now sponsored, as well as a cider bar and lager, wine and soft drinks on sale. There will also be food in the form of eight differently flavoured sausages, giving the festival a 'beers and bangers' theme.

Live music is being provided over both days, with the first pints pulled on the Friday night at 6pm until 11pm, and starting again on Saturday at 12noon through to 11pm.

There will be a rugby match on the Saturday afternoon and the day also marks the start of the cricket season at Ponteland, meaning even more sporting entertainment for attendees.

Tickets are now on sale via [www.pontelandrfc.co.uk](http://www.pontelandrfc.co.uk) or can be bought in advance at the Leisure Centre, for £10 per person which includes entry to the marquee, a free commemorative glass and 3 beer tokens.

There are strict limits as to attendance and tickets are being sold on a first come, first served basis so it is advisable to purchase

before the day. The opening night is a sponsors' evening together with players, ex players and friends of Ponteland Rugby Club, with the doors open for everybody throughout the Saturday.

Event organiser Andy Maidwell said the response for sponsorship from the business community has been exceptional, particularly through Ponteland Business Network.

## WORST FUNDED SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY IS ONE OF THE BEST PERFORMING

**A Ponteland school which was recently named one of the best performing in the country by Ofsted receives the worst funding per pupil, it has been revealed.**

Department for Education figures have shown Ponteland Middle School receives just £3,000 per pupil, compared to £14,000 for each child at the highest funded in the country, Woolston Community High School in Warrington, Cheshire.

It has also had £140,000 diverted from its local authority funding to support smaller schools across the county, forcing staff, parents and governors to fundraise for much needed sports facilities.

Headteacher Dr Caroline Pryer said: "Even though we're the worst funded middle school in the country we are still using our energy to improve the school's facilities and provide an all-weather pitch."



## PONTELAND BEER FESTIVAL

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# Your letters

Praise for volunteers in this month's letters...

## Ron's riverside work should be acknowledged

I wonder how many people in the village have noticed that the river is running freely, rubbish gathering around the bridge supports is regularly removed and grass seed has been laid?

Most importantly the large substantial 'island' which formed in the river, adjacent to the Diamond last summer allowing only a trickle of water to move around it, has gone.

All of this has not happened by magic, nor by the efforts and concern of the council or the Environment Agency. We have one man and his wheelbarrow to thank. Ron Dunn has worked tirelessly all winter to keep the river running freely in this flood-prone village.

Last year Ron and his friend Mary Short won a Britain in Bloom award for their work around Athol House. His project since then has been to look after the Pont – a huge undertaking.

Maybe his work should be acknowledged and he could officially become a volunteer, which is all he asks.

**Margaret Richardson**  
Fairney Edge, Ponteland

## Unused petrol lawn mower needed

You may have all seen Ron Dunn working away day after day clearing the riverbanks at the River Pont near the Diamond.

Ron is an unpaid volunteer who decided as a project he would like to clear and smarten this area up. Now to help him achieve this he would love a petrol lawnmower. Do you have an unused one you need to find a good home for? If so please ring (01661) 821488.

**Christine Greenwell**  
Booking Clerk, Merton Hall

## Good response to volunteering article

There was a good response to the article in February's magazine about volunteering in Ponteland.

I would like to thank those who have already responded to the call for volunteers. If you would like to become a volunteer in Ponteland or if you wish to register your voluntary organisation on the website of Ponteland Town Council, please email enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk or telephone the Town Council on (01661) 825092.

**Coun Carl Rawlings**  
Deputy Mayor, Ponteland Town Council



## Second tree removed from Pele Tower

As reported in last month's issue, the beech tree has had to be removed from beside the Pele Tower for safety reasons as it had become infected.

A second tree has also been removed from the Pele Tower. This was the birch tree donated by the previous Lord Ridley and planted by him in 2002 to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

There were concerns about it not thriving well in its previous position beside the wall adjacent to the Pele Tower, as well as some concern about its effect on the wall. Unlike the beech tree it has not been felled but instead has been relocated to the park. Hopefully with plenty of TLC it should prosper in its new locality.

The Council will be looking carefully at suitable replacements to make sure we get the right type, in the right location and at the right time. This is important to avoid any future tree becoming diseased and that no damage is done to any archaeological remains lurking in the area and even more so to avoid damage to the Pele Tower.

Another tree that is soon to grace the park is a yew to be planted near to the Memorial Hall. This is to be donated by Ponteland Rotary Club to mark their 50th anniversary.

**Coun Robin Ramsay**  
Ponteland Town Council

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**May issue deadlines:** Delivery of the May issue will take place the week beginning Monday April 28th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Friday April 14th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the May issue.

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.



# What's on...

## Ponteland U3A

Our monthly visiting speaker on Wednesday April 2nd is Duncan Hutt. His subject is 'Wildlife of the Turks and Caicos islands'. We meet at 2pm in St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road. Visitors are always welcome. No charge for coming. For details of our group activities, visit our website at [www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland)

## 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 April 5th.

## Ponteland W.I.

Our speaker on Tuesday April 8th will be Mr R Stephenson. His talk is 'The Friendly Invasion', an interesting account of American music 1900 - 1960. The competition will be a limerick. So get composing! Meetings are held in the Memorial Hall at 7pm. We also have our annual coffee morning on Saturday April 12th. There will be cakes and preserves, books, plants, and unwanted treasures and, of course, coffee and scones. So do come along.

## Darras Hall W.I.

Darras Hall W.I. welcome visitors to their April meeting at 2pm on Thursday April 10th in the URC Hall, Broadway. There will be a talk by Sue Johnson entitled 'the Cullercoats Fisher Girls', based on the life of her grandmother Maggie Jefferson. Born in the late 1860s, Maggie was one of the last Fisher Girls, selling fish from her creel daily until well into her 80s.

## Friends of Ponteland Park AGM

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at St Mary's Church Hall (please note the venue), on Thursday April 10th at 7pm. This will be followed with a talk by David Goodchild, who judges for Northumbria in Bloom, on 'Northumbria in Bloom, Communities growing together'. All welcome.

## Ponteland Business Network

Ponteland Business Network's next meeting is being held on Friday April 11th at the Diamond Inn from 7.45am to 10am. See article on page 14.

## Mad Hatters Tea Party

A Mad Hatter's Tea Party is being held on Saturday April 12th from 2pm to 4pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland, in aid of Pink Lily's Support. The charity was set up by District Nursing Sister Jan Smith and Cluster Coordinator Viv Connelly following personal involvement with breast cancer and oesophageal cancer. Everyone attending has been asked to make/wear a 'mad' hat and prizes are to be presented by the Vicar of St Mary's. A delicious homemade afternoon tea will be served. Admission is by ticket only and these are now sold out. There will also be a raffle, secret 'mad' tombola and cake stall. The event has been supported by many local businesses.

## April events at Merton Hall

Come to Merton Hall meet up with friends, read the papers and have a cuppa for only 30p, with a free refill (Monday to Saturday morning). Keep fit and flexible with chair based exercise, every Monday from 11am till 11.45am. All are welcome to Merton Hall on Thursday April 10th for brunch from 12noon followed by a fun game of bingo from 1.15pm (finishing around 2.15pm). Merton Hall outing to Heighly Gate is planned for April

15th. Contact the hall for details and book your place.

## Easter Services at St Mary's Church

Palm Sunday, April 13th - our 10am service starts at Richard Coates School. We will walk to St Mary's with Jazz the donkey, remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday, April 17th - a Service of Choral Communion at 7pm remembers the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. Good Friday, April 18th - we have a quiet and reflective Morning Service at 10.30am, then join the other Ponteland Churches on Coates Green to Raise the Cross at 11.15am. Easter Sunday, April 20th - Festal Communion at 10am, with a Baptism and Renewal of our Baptism Vows. Holy Communion at Holy Saviour, Milbourne, at 11.15am.

## Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday April 14th is David Pye MCSP SRP Grad. Dip. Phys. whose talk is entitled 'Those I have rubbed'. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of every month in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 2.30pm.

## North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

On Monday April 14th we are delighted to welcome our guest speaker Anne Wright on her subject 'Making your own Daffodils and Snowdrops'. The talk will include a detailed look at the propagation and breeding of Narcissi and Galanthus, with lots of practical information about how to grow from seed and pollination. Our meetings take place in St. Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. The doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting. Details from Terry Teal at [t.teal@btinternet.com](mailto:t.teal@btinternet.com) or (0191) 4132574.

## Ponteland Floral Art Club

Tuesday April 15th at 7.30pm, Ponteland Memorial Hall. Demo by Irene Parker of Hexham (A). Title: 'All Shapes and Sizes'.

## Ponteland Beer Festival

Choose from 30 beers and 10 ciders at Ponteland's inaugural beer festival, being held at Ponteland Leisure Centre from 6pm to 11pm on Friday April 25th and from 12noon to 11pm on Saturday April 26th. See article and advert on page 8.

## Ponteland Civic Society

The next Ponteland Civic Society meeting will be at 7.30pm on Monday April 28th at St Mary's Church Hall. The speaker will be Greg Finch, who is involved with Friends of the North Pennines, and will be speaking on 'The Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project' - a two year Heritage Lottery funded project. Visitors are most welcome, for whom there is a nominal charge of £2.

## Ponteland Bowling Club 'taster' sessions

On each of the five Saturdays in May Ponteland Bowling Club in Darras Road, next to the Memorial Hall, will be hosting free 'taster' mornings. Sessions are from 10.30am until 12noon. Why not come along and give bowling a try, everyone welcome and no age limit. The club currently has membership vacancies for females and males of all ages and no joining fee. See our website for more club information at [www.pontelandbowlingclub.co.uk](http://www.pontelandbowlingclub.co.uk)

## The Military Wives Choir

The Military Wives Choir directed by Ruth Sladden and supporting the SSAFA are performing at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Saturday May 17th from 7pm. Tickets costing £10 (U16 £5) are available from Mackley & Steven, Main Street, and a bar will be available.

Organisations can now list events online on the new Town Council website's events calendar at: [www.ponteland-tc.gov.uk/events-calendar](http://www.ponteland-tc.gov.uk/events-calendar)




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# Ponteland Community High School Report

## Sixth formers celebrate World Book Day with first school pupils

By Jess Rae

**Literature is often viewed as the one constant in an ever changing world. It is almost always used as a brief instance of escape or as inspiration and motivation within our own lives.**

As C.S Lewis once said: "In great literature, I become a thousand different men but still remain myself."

And this is exactly what the young students of Ponteland's first schools have been discovering and exploring for themselves.

On Thursday March 6th schools across the UK took part in the 17th annual World Book Day. Organized by UNESCO, World Book Day is a worldwide celebration of literature where 'children of all ages will come together to appreciate reading. Very loudly and very happily'.

In Ponteland, 16 sixth form students from PCHS joined forces with staff at Ponteland First School and Darras Hall First School to share their favourite stories from their childhoods; timeless classics which remain with us from an early age and are passed through the generations.

Alongside enthusiastic readings from the sixth form students and creative activities inspired by their stories, pupils were asked to



dress up as their favourite characters, transforming them into anyone they wanted to be, just for a day.

And of course pupils and parents went all out, coming up with some of the most creative costumes which would put even Lady Gaga to shame!

Hopefully, World Book Day and the PCHS students' passion for literature has inspired a whole new generation of novelists, poets and playwrights.

## Ponteland scores Lord Glenamara prize success again

**Ponteland High School is celebrating a third success in the prestigious Lord Glenamara prize with a runners-up certificate for student Catherine Hunter.**

The award, which recognises academic performance, civic contribution and a demonstrated interest in public service, was established last year in memory of Lord Glenamara, formerly Ted Short, who was MP for Newcastle Central from 1951 until his retirement in 1976.

As a former teacher, he always had an interest in education and among his many roles served as Secretary of State for Education.

This year's award was presented at the London School of Economics by the current Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove. In recognition of the cross

party support that this award attracts, the presentation was also attended by former Secretaries of State David Blunkett, Estelle Morris (now Baroness Morris of Yardley) and Lord Beecham (former leader of Newcastle City Council).

After the formal presentation, Catherine and her family were delighted to be able to talk to all participants and presenters. They also enjoyed a guided tour of the LSE.

Nominations for this prize were invited from the 100+ secondary schools in the North East from Northumberland to Durham.

Catherine was selected for this prize as, in addition to her excellent academic achievements, she has contributed significantly to the care and well-being of others in an active and informed way.

These include being an active member of the St John's Ambulance and, since 2011, acting as a volunteer ward helper at a



local hospice. Catherine helps to provide palliative care for the adult inpatients and now mentors new volunteers in this important role.

Last year, in the inaugural award, two fellow students Bryony Clear Hill and Jonathan Lakey also gained runners-up status.

Catherine receives her award from Education Secretary Michael Gove

## Ponteland's under-14s win rugby county cup

Ponteland High School's under-14s have won the county cup after a 14-0 victory over Dame Allan's. A fantastic advert for the game of rugby, played throughout with the right spirit by two very good teams, who are a credit to their schools.



# Have you 'herd' about our coffee shop?

**A Ponteland pharmacist is diversifying after purchasing Northumberland's most unusual coffee shop.**

But Jessica Taylor insists that adding the day visitor market to dispensing wasn't a decision taken on the hoof.

The 26-year-old, who runs Taylors Pharmacy in Brewery Lane, has taken over Goats on the Roof, a unique tourism attraction which mixes rare breeds with refreshments.

The coffee shop, located by Fontburn Reservoir on the B6342 road from Wallington to Rothbury, really does what it says on the tin – it has a herd of Bagot goats who graze on its living roof of sedum.

The venue, which boasts a children's play area and offers a range of food supplied by Rothbury Bakery, is reopening for the summer season on Good Friday (April 18) and during Easter weekend visiting children will also be able to feed the lambs.

It will then be open every weekend until October and is being managed by Jill Johnson, who works weekdays at Jessica's pharmacy as a checking technician.



Jessica explained how she came to be running a chemists and a coffee shop: "Me and my fiancé Anthony have bought Fontburn Farm and the shop actually came with the land. Jill was interested in running it, so we will be reopening for the summer season on Easter weekend.

"It's a really unusual visitor attraction in a lovely location overlooking Fontburn Reservoir, and with the play area and the animals is great for the children. We are hoping for a busy summer."

Goats on the Roof first opened in 2010 with funding from the Rural Development Programme for England and former regional development agency One North East. Its inspiration was a similar project in the Canadian province British Columbia.

The coffee shop will be open from 10am to 4.30pm from Good Friday until Easter Monday and then every weekend until October. For more information call 01669 621739.

Jessica (left), Jill and Anthony feed the animals at Goats on the Roof. Photos by Trevor Walker.

Now under new management

## Northumberland's most unusual coffee shop is reopening on Good Friday, April 18th



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# Ponteland celebrates Fairtrade Fortnight

By Steve Helm

**Ponteland showed its mettle as a Fairtrade Town during Fairtrade Fortnight (February 24th – March 9th) with a series of popular events to raise awareness of Fairtrade issues, sell Fairtrade products and raise money for a Fairtrade development charity.**

Local children took part in a Fairtrade Town Treasure Trail around 14 local businesses, shops and community organisations, who displayed a Fairtrade product for the children to find.

Fairtrade 'Big Brews' and coffee mornings at all four Ponteland churches raised over £1,200 for the charity Traidcraft Exchange, which helps farmers and producers with advice and resources to get Fairtrade status for their products and assists them to link together with other producers to form co-operatives so they have greater bargaining power.

At each event, including a Fairtrade coffee morning at Merton Hall, a Traidcraft stall sold a wide range of Fairtrade products from chocolate and biscuits to crafts and hand made cards.

During the two weeks the value of products sold from the stalls exceeded £600. Every item sold helps a poor farmer or producer in a developing country to lift themselves out of poverty with dignity.

This year during Fairtrade fortnight the national theme was 'Make Bananas Fair'. Hundreds of people at Ponteland events signed a petition asking the government to investigate the supermarket price war which has halved the price of bananas in the last 10 years during which time, the costs to banana producers have doubled. This has left banana farmers and workers struggling to survive.

Ponteland became a Fairtrade Town in February 2012 and its Fairtrade status was renewed in February 2013 for two more years. Campaigning continues to get more retailers, caterers, employer and community organisations in the area to use Fairtrade products especially tea and coffee to start with.

# Would you like to promote your company at Ponteland Business Network?

By Peter Sutcliffe

**Our March speaker was Richard Myers from Transmit Start-ups – Government Start up Loans; an initiative aimed at supporting new start ups and helping them to succeed.**

We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting on Friday April 11th from 7.45am to 10am at the Diamond Inn. Feel free to come along at any time during the event; you will be made very welcome with a small contribution to catering and funds for local businesses to do work for the group.

The main speaker is David Lamb on 'How Full Is Your Bucket.' David will highlight the key phases that everyone will pass through as their progress in life and the different priorities that come with each segment of the journey.

If you would like to promote your local business or an idea at a future meeting, please let us know by contacting Brian Russell, Russell and Co Chartered Accountants, at PBN@profitabilitygroup.co.uk or on (01661) 872004. Meetings are held on the second Friday of the month from 7.45am at The Diamond.

## CHARITY SWIMARATHON RAISES £3,500 FOR LOCAL CAUSES

By John Harvey, Ponteland Lions Club

**A Swimathon by sponsored swimmers from local schools, the Girls and Boys Brigades, Guides and Air Cadets has raised £3,500 for charity.**

The main beneficiary was Children North East, with other donations going to Ponteland Middle School and other local organisations.

A cheque was presented to Christine Ball, Chair Children North East, by Ponteland Lions Club President Anke Jackson and Fundraising Chairman John Harvey.

## MOTHERS' UNION RETURNS TO PONTELAND AFTER NEARLY 50 YEARS

**A new group for Ponteland was launched on Monday February 24th when the Mothers' Union returned to Ponteland after an absence of almost 50 years.**

The M.U. as it is affectionately known, is a worldwide Christian organisation with more than four million members in 83 countries who are not all mothers or even women! Its aim and purpose is to support marriage and family life and to reach out within communities at home and abroad to people who are isolated or in need of help.

We campaign to ensure protection for children, we promote gender equality, women's education and speak out on issues such as domestic abuse, this and much more. If you are interested in further information please contact Sylvia on (01661) 822105.

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Partner Kevin Higgins meets patients at an open evening held at the Ponteland practice

# Dental practice passes inspection with flying colours

**Ponteland dental practice Higgins & Winter has been given a clean bill of health in a routine inspection by a Government regulator.**

The report was published by the Care Quality Commission following an official inspection required by all dental practices nationally. They found the practice met all six standards set by the inspection regime.

They are: respecting and involving people who use services; care and welfare of people who use services; safeguarding people who use services from abuse; cleanliness and infection control; supporting workers; and complaints.

The report said: "We found people were very complimentary about the staff, their treatment and the service overall. One person said 'The staff are absolutely lovely; you couldn't ask for a better service.' We saw the following comments in patient satisfaction surveys 'everything and

everyone top notch' and 'everyone is professional and helpful'."

The inspector found patients were given appropriate information and support regarding their care or treatment, were treated in well presented, clean and hygienic premises and were cared for and treated by a qualified, well trained and supported staff team.

The practice was praised for the use of wall mounted monitors in each surgery where X-ray images could be shown to patients as the dentist talked through problems and remedies, ensuring they were making fully informed choices and decisions.

The report continued: "We overheard friendly, reassuring and supportive interactions between staff and people who attended the practice during our visit. One of the staff said 'We know people very well, it is a close knit community with family links and other social networks, it helps make for a good atmosphere and we feel we are approachable'.

"One person said 'I cannot speak highly enough, everything is thoroughly discussed in a relaxed and confidential manner. The control is given to me to decide how I wish to proceed. Written information is sent out and I can make these decisions in my own time.'"

Another patient told the inspector: 'It is very good here; the staff are excellent and the dentists are very supportive.'

Partner Richard Winter was delighted with the CQC report. He said: "We pride ourselves on providing the very best advice and treatment to our patients in first class surroundings and the whole team is delighted this has been recognised by the inspector."

The full report can be read at: [http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/reports/1-271728762\\_Dental\\_Surgery\\_INS1-733074505\\_Scheduled\\_20-11-2013.pdf](http://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/reports/1-271728762_Dental_Surgery_INS1-733074505_Scheduled_20-11-2013.pdf)

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**Web: [higginsandwinterdental.com](http://higginsandwinterdental.com)**

**Opening hours:** Mon 9am to 5.30pm - Tues/Wed/Thu 8am to 8pm - Fri 8am to 4.30pm. Also Sat 9am to 12noon by appointment only.  
Higgins & Winter Dental Practice, 17 Bell Villas, Ponteland, NE20 9BD

# MP reselected by party to fight general election

**Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman has been reselected by Hexham Conservative Association as their candidate for the next General Election.**

He was given the unanimous support of members to continue as their party's representative for the seat at a meeting of the Association's Executive Council.

Mr Opperman was first elected in 2010 with a majority of 5,788 to serve the Hexham constituency, which stretches from Haltwhistle to Ponteland.

The former barrister's reselection was welcomed by Ponteland East County Councillor Eileen Armstrong, who said: "If Northumberland is 300 miles from London, then it is a million miles away from Westminster. What really matters is having a local MP prepared to stand up and fight for our community, and really put local people first.

"We have got exactly that kind of local MP in Guy. He is an MP who doesn't just toe the party line. I know personally many residents will be putting party politics aside in 2015 to back Guy."

Speaking after his re-selection Mr Opperman said "It has been a real honour to serve as Hexham's local MP for the last four years - I hope I have tried to do things a little bit differently from the standard MP. I have tried my hardest to get stuck in, get my hands dirty and not be afraid to stand up for our community.

"I don't pretend to have all the answers. I am certainly far from the perfect politician. I don't always get it right. Sometimes I make the wrong call, and I know not everyone might agree with me on all the issues. My only hope is that people might agree I always work hard and stand up for our community."



## Monthly Monday morning audio book group launched at Ponteland Library

**Are you vision impaired or do you know someone who is? Are you interested in joining an audio book group in Ponteland Library?**

Come along to a monthly meeting to discuss an audio book. Membership is free. Hexham Book Festival and Northumberland Libraries are launching an Audio Book Group for vision impaired people on a Monday morning in Ponteland Library. We need to know that there is enough interest so please help us by passing on this information.

### How the group works

Group members take an audio book home and return it at the monthly meeting for an informal discussion led by the book group leader. Meetings usually last for an hour and a half. You do not have to suffer from a vision impairment to join the group; it aims to be inclusive and open up appreciation of books to people who may face barriers. If you are registered as vision impaired and live outside the urban area of Ponteland, we can help with transport.

If you are interested in joining the group, which is supported by The Ballinger Trust, The Hadrian Trust, The Joicey Trust, Hexham Book Festival and Northumberland County Council, please contact Susie Troup at [info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk](mailto:info@hexhambookfestival.co.uk) or by calling 07930 110830.

## New members sought to drive community projects

*By Brian Prickett*

*Chairman, Ponteland Community Partnership*

**We are pleased to announce that the new skate park is now available and will be formally opened in the very near future.**

Our next project is a small, all-weather football and basketball play pitch located on the High School site that would be available to school pupils and also the young people of Ponteland for informal games, outside school hours.

To pursue this and other objectives we are looking for new members to join Ponteland Community Partnership.

Please come along to our AGM on Wednesday May 21st at 7pm in the small meeting room in Merton Hall. You will be made very welcome.

We are seeking nominations for:

- Chairman – one year
- Hon Secretary – three years
- Hon Treasurer – three years
- Sub Group Chairmen for Regeneration, Environment, Transport, Youth, Neighbourhood Plan and members of the Management Committee (seven) – one year.



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# Would you like to join the Friends of Kirkley Hall?

By Enid Saint

**Northumberland College at Kirkley Hall is the agricultural college situated only three miles from Ponteland. It has a very active Friends of Kirkley Hall group of volunteers working hard to raise money to provide help for student development and to try to improve conditions on the estate which will benefit students, staff and members of the public.**

Friends of Kirkley Hall has 150 members and much of the money raised is from membership subscriptions and monthly talks that have recently included Climate Differences for Farming between New Zealand and Great Britain, Red Squirrels in Northern England, and Saint's Way (Walking from Whitby to St. Abbs).

Funds were also raised last year with a Gardeners Question event, Christmas social with musical entertainment and a much loved quiz, and a bric-a-brac stall at the annual Christmas Fayre held at Kirkley Hall.

The money raised by FOKH provides a student bursary, an annual student award, and donations towards student educational visits. Last year the animal care students visited South Africa and Swaziland, agricultural students went to The Royal Highland Show and aboriculture students to a UK roadshow on pests and diseases.

This year FOKH has contributed to the preparation of a new red squirrel walk in the grounds of Kirkley Hall

by providing funds for an information board and seat in the hide, given a trophy for best student at the new horse trial event at Kirkley Hall and donated additional equipment for the veterinary nursing course.

FOKH has an active propagation group that was formed 10 years ago. They are part of the Gardens and Woodlands Committee making decisions on maintenance and estate issues. They monitor the Fagus Collection and contribute to buying new stock (Prince Charles has a collection of Fagus trees as well).

Members are going for a two night break this year to Tatton Park Flower Show near Manchester and they go to Harrogate Flower Show every other year.

FOKH is a valued part of Northumberland College at Kirkley Hall and we would welcome anyone who would be interested in joining the group.

Future talks will include one on Exmoor Ponies and one on Northumberlandia. An auction is planned for May 8th which will take place in St. Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland. The Friends would be happy to collect any items you would like to donate for the auction or would welcome you to the sale itself when there will be a light supper and glass of wine for you to enjoy before the auction.

If you would like any more information about the monthly talks, the auction or how to become a member then you can contact Brenda Parke on (01661) 853489.

Photos by Jane Gordon Clark



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# Estate Committee re-elected after 'lively' AGM

## **Darras Hall Estate Committee hopes it has emerged from last year's crisis after a lively AGM saw its members re-elected.**

Last October there were claims DHEC was "disintegrating" after a huge split which saw nearly half the committee resign following a decision to allow a house builder to develop a six acre site on the corner of Runnymede Road and Fox Covert Lane.

The five-home development was granted planning permission subject to a Section 106 legal agreement by Northumberland County Council in 2012, but the Estate Committee initially refused to allow it under a planning policy preventing the subdivision of existing plots.

Last February developer Lugano Group threatened legal action against the Trustees and the Estate Committee saying it would seek damages of more than £19,000 a week, alleging bad faith on the part of the Plans Sub-Committee.

The Estate Committee sought legal advice

from a senior barrister familiar with the Trust Deed and incurred fees of £63,740. While rejecting the allegations of bad faith, members backed down in July and reversed the previous refusal to grant permission, leading to the plans committee resigning.

The five members who resigned issued a statement alleging "a lack of transparency", "a lack of accountability" and "lack of consultation" by the committee.

The AGM, which normally attracts around 70 owners, saw an estimated 200 owners packed into the Memorial Hall on March 19th demanding answers on the handling of the Runnymede Road planning application.

The seven existing members were re-elected, and seven new members elected, with one additional existing member not due for election - meaning the committee now has a full complement of 15 members.

Chairman Michael Dainty said: "The 104th Annual General Meeting of the Darras Hall Estates Committee proved to be a lively affair with a large turnout of owners.

"A number of owners expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the Estate Committee has handled an application for covenant consent made in respect of a plot of land on Runnymede Road.

"A presentation was given to the meeting by the Committee and a number of questions were taken from the floor. This was followed by an election of members to the Estate Committee for the forthcoming year.

"There were 21 nominations and following a vote the 14 available places were filled to include all the members of the previous committee, who had offered themselves for re-election, along with the new members."

The election of officers was due to take place at a committee meeting on March 31st.

Requests to both attend and report on the AGM and receive a full list of names of newly elected members were both refused by the Estate Committee.

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## Glorious display of crocuses

**This photo of crocuses taken in Ponteland Park near Waitrose was sent in by reader June Atkinson who described them as "a glorious sight!"**

Thanks to June, and we would welcome photos of local flora and fauna taken by other correspondents too. Please send your high resolution images to [pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk](mailto:pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk)



# Fashion show raises £1,000 for autism charity

**A charity fashion show held by Panache of Ponteland has raised more than £1,000 for the Toby Henderson Trust.**

It was a full house at Horton Grange Country House Hotel on the evening of Monday March 10th, where ladies enjoyed champagne and canapés on arrival followed by a fantastic meal and a spring themed fashion show.

The ladies saw a mix of casual wear, as well as dresses for the new season, and wedding and occasion wear, including some fantastic hats and fascinators. The proceeds were donated to local charity The Toby Henderson Trust, based near Morpeth, which offers support to families with autistic children.

Just over £1,000 was raised on the night, thanks to the generosity of everyone who attended, everybody who kindly donated raffle prizes, and to Horton Grange for keeping costs to a minimum, while still providing a delicious menu!

The models, all friends and customers of Panache, were also pampered by Ponteland Hair and Beauty, before the event.

Eileen Hulme and her daughter Louise have owned Panache for seven years, and in that time have helped to raise tens of thousands of pounds for charity through fashion shows and other events.

However, Eileen is retiring at the end of July and it will be the end of an era for her at the boutique. The shop is for sale and Eileen is hoping to find just the right person to take it over and carry on providing the ladies of Ponteland and beyond with fabulous fashions.

She said: "I will be very sad to retire, and will certainly miss the customers, many of whom have become good friends over the past seven years. I really hope to find a buyer for the shop, as it is so important in this day and age to keep our independent retailers, offering great service and products that you just can't find in the big chains."

## Easter services at St Mary's Church

### **Palm Sunday, April 13th**

Our 10am service starts at Richard Coates School. We will walk to St Mary's with Jazz the donkey, remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

### **Maundy Thursday, April 17th**

A Service of Choral Communion at 7pm remembers the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples.

### **Good Friday, April 18th**

We have a quiet and reflective Morning Service at 10.30am, then join the other Ponteland Churches on Coates Green to Raise the Cross at 11.15am.

### **Easter Sunday, April 20th**

Festal Communion at 10am, with a Baptism and Renewal of our Baptism Vows. Holy Communion at Holy Saviour, Milbourne, at 11.15am.



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