

# pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Developer confirms Birney  
Hill planning appeal

Darras Hall Estates Committee  
chairman steps down

Diamond couple renew vows  
60 years on

## Bonny bairn Amelia wins Easter bonnet parade

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# Diamond couple renew vows to mark 60th wedding anniversary

## A Ponteland couple have renewed their wedding vows to mark their diamond anniversary.

James Cuthbert Scott, 82, and his wife Norma, 79, arranged the ceremony, attended by friends and family, which was held at St Mary's Church and was followed by a reception at Close House near Heddon.

James, better known as Jim, was born in Stakeford in Northumberland and moved to Ponteland when he was 18 months old. He started an apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner aged 14 at the builders Hendersons by the Blackbird Inn and also played for Ponteland United.

In 1949, aged 18, he was called up for National Service and was stationed with the RAF in Chippenham, Wiltshire.

Norma was brought up in Choppington, near Stakeford, and was good friends with one of Jim's cousins. The couple met in 1950 at another cousin's 21st birthday party and wrote to each other as Jim continued his RAF service and Norma worked at Woolworths in Morpeth.

After he was demobbed in 1951 the couple continued courting and the following year Jim popped the question. They married at St Paul's Church, Choppington, on March 20th 1954 and honeymooned in Edinburgh.

Sons Ian and Keith followed in 1957 and 1961 and Norma remembers fondly happy

family holidays, both caravanning and going abroad. Jim later worked at HR Atkinsons in the village before setting up family business Scott Bros with his brother in 1971. As the boys grew up Norma took a job at Ponteland sorting office, where she worked for ten years.

Norma, who thanked Rev Peter Barham for the service, said: "We can't believe we are having our diamond wedding anniversary. Sixty years is a short time when you have each other."

Jim and Norma renewing their vows at St Mary's Church and cutting the cake at their wedding day in 1954. Photos by Keith Robertson.

# Developer confirms appeal to be lodged after 280-home Green Belt scheme rejected

## A developer refused permission to build 280 new homes on Ponteland's Green Belt has confirmed it is to submit an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

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, 650m2 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 last October 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 over 4,300 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.

Objectors also included Ponteland Town Council, the Environment Agency, Newcastle Airport and Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman.

Last October Lugano described the planning decision as "flawed in many respects" but the county council said it was based on both technical issues and fundamental planning principles which "provided a sound basis on which to refuse the application".

Lugano had until May 1 to lodge an appeal and Development Director Richard Robson told Pont News: "I can confirm that our appeal is in preparation and will be submitted before the end of this month. We will be addressing all of the refusal reasons; however some may be agreed as 'common ground' in advance of the inquiry itself. For example the authority has already confirmed that we have suitably addressed their concerns on drainage and hence that is no longer in contention."

## ADVERTISING FEATURE

# All invited to Greenbelt Group AGM

**In summer 2012 Ponteland residents were hit by proposals from two developers to build substantial numbers of houses on the Green Belt.**

Lugano wanted to build 280 houses on the southern boundary of Darras Hall and Banks proposed up to 500 houses behind Ridgely Drive and Cheviot View.

These unwanted proposals stimulated activists and concerned residents to organise opposition and the Ponteland Greenbelt Group was formed.

Ponteland is a unique, well-defined settlement and an aspirational place to live for many who work on Tyneside, and we have a stake in looking after this special environment. The Green Belt was formed to prevent creeping urbanisation and we do not want it trashed by developers who want to make a big profit.

Members of the group prepared detailed and comprehensive objections and both the planners and the councillors at County Hall voted to refuse Lugano's plans in October 2013. They have until the end of April to appeal. Banks have not yet submitted plans.

Committee members give their time and talents freely but there are costs for printing, advertising, legal advice etc, and we depend on supporters for financial help and their commitment to the cause.

The Greenbelt Group looks forward to our first AGM, where residents will be given an update on events and the opportunity to put your questions to group members.



Three members of the existing group are standing down, creating three vacancies. Anyone wishing to be nominated for one of these vacancies should contact us via the website: [www.pontelandgreenbelt.co.uk](http://www.pontelandgreenbelt.co.uk)

Ponteland residents have been very supportive and we need all the help you can give in many different ways.

**All supporters and interested persons are invited to the AGM at 7.30pm on Friday 16 May at Ponteland Memorial Hall.**



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## ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF LOCAL ELECTORS

The Council meeting was preceded by the Annual Town Meeting of Local Electors, where the Mayor Peter Cowey presented his annual report for 2013-14. He also took great pleasure in presenting the Meritorious Service Award to David Cobb, treasurer of Ponteland Memorial Hall. David has been treasurer for 14 years and he has made a real difference to the upkeep and running of the hall. Presenting David with an engraved silver photograph frame, the Mayor said: "It is people like David who contribute the time and effort for no reward that makes Ponteland the desirable place it is to live in."

## GRANT APPLICATION

The Council agreed a £200 grant towards running costs following an application from the Great North Air Ambulance Service.

## PROJECTS REPORT

### Skate park

The installer carried out some works to rectify various faults on March 23 but there are still some areas that require attention and this is being followed up.

## WWI CENTENARY EXHIBITION

The Council agreed to set up a working party comprising Councillors Butcher, Greenwell, Noble, Rawlings and Shanley to organise an exhibition of war memorabilia at the Memorial Hall in the week prior to Remembrance Day to commemorate the 100th anniversary of WWI.

## BROADWAY POST OFFICE CHANGES

The Council received a letter from the Post Office regarding proposed changes to the Darras Hall branch, which included

extending opening hours and removing services including international parcels, Transcash bill payments, sale of premium bonds and on demand travel insurance. These services will still be available at the Ponteland branch. The Broadway branch will also be closed for three days in May whilst the works are being carried out.

## WISH LIST 2014-15

The Council considered various wish list items for inclusion within the 2014-15 budget and agreed the following projects would be carried out:

- Paint Darras Road bridge (contribution towards the cost)
- Replace some cracked paving at Broadway
- Provide an extra speed display unit at Cheviot View
- Replace some missing/damaged road signs
- Provide a further notice board at Merton Hall
- Carry out some extra grass cuts
- Provide some further three tier planters in the village
- Replace a seat and bin at Paddock Hill
- Provide a litter bin in front of the CIU Club
- Replace some of the fence on West Road
- Make a contribution towards the PCP playing field project.

## HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Working Party had met on March 19th and discussed the issue of car parking at Merton Way following a NCC survey and consultation paper. The Council agreed to recommend long term and overnight parking by businesses should be limited to the lorry park area.

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Coun Dodd reported that the Administration at County Hall had promised to deal with all potholes by the end of June and that the West Area Committee would be meeting in Merton Hall in Ponteland in June and this would be advertised on notice boards and the website.



## MILEAGE SIGN REFURBISHED

The old mileage sign by The Waggon Inn on the A696 has been refurbished by the Town Council.

There are now plans to repair the sign at the entrance to Meadowfield Industrial Estate, which will require it to be raised to suit the footpath level following pavement repairs.

## NEW COUNCILLOR FOR WEST WARD

A new councillor has been elected to Ponteland Town Council after a by election forced by the resignation of West Ward member Sarah Lewis.

Conservative Alan Varley was elected with 401 votes (72%) on a turnout of 30%, beating Independent David Butler (155 votes). The election was held on April 10th. All 12 serving Town Councillors represent the Conservative Party.

*This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on April 9th.*



# Guard your PIN numbers



By PC Rob Anderson – Ponteland Community Beat Manager

**In the period between March 16th and April 14th we have had nine crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.**

These break down to the following offences:

- One dog bite
- Two thefts from the person
- Two thefts from motor vehicles
- Two thefts from shops
- One theft of fuel
- One assault.

Enquiries are ongoing in relation to the crimes and the assault offence and dog bite offence have been detected.

Please remember to cover your PIN number when using your bank cards at a cash machine or to buy items in a shop.

Thieves will seize any opportunity to steal money so please be aware of who is standing behind you in a queue at the supermarket or speed bank and remember to put your hand over the keypad while entering your PIN number.

If your cards are stolen and the thief has seen you enter your number into a machine it makes it very easy for them to take money from your account. Always keep your cards in a safe place and only bring them out when you intend to use them.

If you would like some crime prevention advice please contact PC613 Davison or myself, PC395 Anderson, on 101.

Local police surgeries will be held on the following dates:

- PC Lee Davison 3rd May - 11.30am to 12.30pm at Belsay village shop

- PC Rob Anderson 18th May - 10am to 11am Waitrose, Ponteland
- PC Rob Anderson 18th May - 11.30am to 12.30pm Co-op, Broadway
- CSO Paul Cotterill 24th May - 9.30am to 10.30am Merton Hall, Ponteland

We also have engagement days at these venues and dates:

- Stamfordham/Belsay/Matfen - 14th May from 1pm to 3pm
- Merton Way, Ponteland - 28th May from 10am to 12noon
- Broadway, Ponteland - 28th May from 1pm to 3pm.

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

## TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE: LANGTON COURT, DARRAS HALL

A section of Langton Court in Darras Hall is to be closed to traffic for five weeks while a water main is replaced.

Langton Court will be closed from its junction with Darras Road heading in a northerly direction for a length of 135 metres from May 12th until June 20th but access will be maintained for residents via Runnymede Road. The closure has been requested by Northumbrian Water.

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# Your letters

The Editor  
Pont News & Views



**Darras Hall Estates Committee is under fire in this month's letters...**

## Former Estates Committee member saddened by treatment at AGM

**It was with interest that I read your article on the Darras Hall Estates Committee AGM in last month's PN&V.**

As a former member of the Plans Sub Committee, and the first to resign, I was saddened to have to sit through the 'presentation' relating to the Runnymede Road planning application given to the residents.

The nature in which the facts were set out resulted in the implication that blame for the expenditure of £63,740 lay firmly with the members of the Plans Sub Committee.

However, I have no wish at this stage to re-apportion blame to any party involved in the application as it was an extremely complex set of circumstances for any committee to deal with and I believe we did so to the best of our abilities.

What saddens me is that having served on the committee for many years and particularly throughout that difficult time, I was neither given the opportunity to contribute to the 'presentation' or the courtesy of an advanced sight of it.

During my time on the committee I believe I was regarded as a valued member who carried out my duties in a professional manner. Yet, when it came to 'last year's crisis' a balanced report with contributions from all the people involved was not presented.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, surely this is not how democratically elected representatives of a community should be treated.

I have lived on the estate for over 30 years and was invited to join the committee in 2007. I was pleased to contribute to the administration of the Trust Deed as I greatly value the estate's unique qualities and want to see them maintained.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those new members for standing up for election and wish them all the best. After all, they too have the interests of the residents and the trust deed to protect.

**Sheenah Coyne**  
*Greenacres, Darras Hall*

## Estates Committee AGM was shambolic and an utter disgrace

**I noted the article on the Darras Hall Estates Committee AGM in the last edition of Pont News. As an attendee of this event I did not recognise this account of it. To sum up, it was shambolic and an utter disgrace.**

The existing committee should have stood aside, leaving the 14 nominees to take on the challenge.

The Chairman's November Newsletter led us to believe that owners would have a full explanation of the Lugano application at the AGM on the 19th March but what we received was far from satisfactory.

It was apparent that the Plans Committee were being blamed for the expenditure, yet I heard from the floor that members had requested prior legal advice which was denied by the Chairman.

The resigned members of this group were not even given the courtesy to explain. That is what I wanted to listen to, did they resign on a point of principle, or even for professional reasons, and who's looking after plans now?

The procedure for the election of a new committee was equally biased. It appeared to be pre-rehearsed by the existing seven members, who each read an election statement from their own scripts. In contrast, the remaining 14 nominees had only a couple of minutes to prepare an address to the audience – surely that's not a level playing field?

It was an AGM to remember for all the wrong reasons.

I thank those new members for standing up for election and wish them all the best. After all, they have the interests of the residents and the Trust Deed to protect. The Darras Hall Estate is unique and I'd like to think that with the residents' support they will help to keep it that way. We will see in the coming months.

**Sheila Trafford**  
*Runnymede Road, Darras Hall*

## Estates Committee has let us all down big time

**You published my letter in May 2013 regarding the utter uselessness of the Darras Hall Estates Committee. Well it's that time of year again when we are invited by the Darras Hall Estates Committee to contribute to their coffers and again I find myself asking 'Why do they want my money?'**

After all they don't do what they are supposed to, that is maintain the integrity of the estate as per the ancient and out of date by-laws. Since my letter was published at this time last year nothing has changed...or has it?

The Estates Committee, that august band of do-gooders, have let us all down big time, they have failed to uphold the by-laws by collapsing to the property developers, so having breached their covenant what right do they have to ask for money, they are a spent and useless force and should be disbanded

Of course they will argue otherwise, but what else have they to do?

Yet again I ask why do they need to spend such large sums on staff and admin costs? They don't do anything. The residents of Darras Hall should ask themselves: 'why am I paying this money?'

**John Worth**  
*Errington Road, Darras Hall*

## Councillors get credit for rejecting Mill House flats plan

**All credit to those County Councillors who, yet again, threw out the proposal for a five-storey block of flats right on the very banks of the River Pont at the old Mill House site.**

The developer, apparently encouraged by the Council, seems determined to foist this oversized, modernist and quite inappropriate structure on us all. Wildlife corridor, car parking, flooding – all dismissed. What has happened to 'Localism?'

**Philip Ham**  
*Chairman, Ponteland Civic Society*



## Questions (and answers) on Pele Tower tree felling

Reference is made to your recent article on the tree currently being axed outside Peel House.

This has been the subject of many objections from Peel House residents, who firmly believe this tree is, in fact healthy. This was confirmed by several gardening/tree experts.

It was deemed unhealthy by one on Castle Morpeth staff, who has not confirmed his expertise in this matter - only an opinion. This tree is (was) in a conservation area, and should not have been cut down. I would be interested to hear Councillor Robin Ramsay's comments on this.

**Ross Pairman**  
Peel House, Ponteland

## Tree was rotten to the core and in danger of sudden collapse

The disease on the tree was notified to Ponteland Town Council by the tree officer from Northumberland County Council and removal requested.



The tree officer is a qualified arborist to degree standard and a professional member of the Arboriculture Association.

Further advice was sought from our own advisor and confirmation as to the disease was obtained from a university based mycologist. All the tree surgeons who we sought quotes from also confirmed this diagnosis.

The disease - Meripilus Giganteus - attacks the roots and can cause sudden collapse. In these circumstances, due to danger to the public including residents of Peel House and our liability for such an uninsured event, there was no option but to fell the tree.

The tree was felled after the appropriate discussions with the relevant authority for such matters in a conversation area.

I trust that this fuller explanation than that given in the March issue of PNV which was already notified to the residents of Peel Tower will enable all to understand the reasons for felling the tree which is now complete.

**Coun Robin Ramsay MBE**  
Ponteland Town Council

## Losing candidate thanks supporters

As the Independent candidate at the recent Ponteland West Ward Town Council by-election, could I thank all those 155 people who cast their vote for me.

Although it was not sufficient to give me the victory, I do appreciate your support, and would like to say that, even though I will not be on the Council, I will continue to fight all planning applications for inappropriate development within the village.


**David Butler**  
Ladywell Way, Ponteland

## Thanks to Good Samaritan after bike fall

A big thank you to the kind young cyclist that rescued me when I fell off my bicycle on Western Way on Sunday 6th April.

I had broken my arm and he helped me up, waited patiently whilst I recovered sufficiently and then slowly walked me and my bike to my neighbour in Meadowvale. He said he was local but disappeared. Who are you?

**Kay Watson**  
Meadowvale, Darras Hall



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**June issue deadlines:** Delivery of the June issue will start on Thursday May 29th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday May 12th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the June 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...

## 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 May 3rd.

## Ponteland U3A

Our monthly speaker on Wednesday May 7th is Ray Stephenson and his subject is 'Real recordings of World Wars 1 & 2'. We meet at 2pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Visitors welcome. No charge. Interested in joining our activities? Visit our website at [www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland) or ring 01661-822225.

## Friends of Kirkley Hall Auction

An Auction will take place on Thursday May 8th in St Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland. As well as the usual sale room items there will be many unusual items to bid for such as a pencil drawing of your own home or the chance to name an animal at Kirkley Hall Zoo. Organised by Friends of Kirkley Hall the doors open at 6.30 pm when a light finger buffet and a glass of wine will be served. There will be the opportunity to view the items for sale before the Auction starts at prompt 7.30pm. Tickets are £6 and can be obtained from Jean Fellows-Pryne on (01661) 823423.

## Step into Spring: Saturday May 10th

People in Ponteland are being invited to a morning aimed at those over 55 to find out what's going on in the area and who's doing it. 'Step into Spring' is on Saturday 10th May between 9.30am and 12.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall. Refreshments are available and there will be opportunities to try out activities or just to find out more about what is on offer locally, including support services. The event is being organised

by Ageing Well in Ponteland together with Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, and is supported by local organisations. See article on page 14.

## Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday May 12th – also our AGM – is Prof John Derry, whose talk is entitled 'Hollywood's English Gentleman'. 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

The North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society will be holding a 'Show and tell' display at the meeting on Monday May 12th. This is an opportunity to bring your best or interesting plants to the meeting and for you or others to say what they are and how they are grown. Our meetings take place in St Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road. The doors open 7pm for a 7.30 pm 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.

## Group launched for visually impaired

A new, small friendly group for vision impaired people in the Ponteland area has been launched. The next monthly meeting of Socialeyes Ponteland, which is part of Northumberland County Blind Association, is being held on Thursday May 15th and all are welcome to come along and meet others socially. For more information contact Moira on (01661) 824245.

## Charity Zumbathon

A charity Zumbathon is being held on Saturday May 17th from 10am to 12noon at the Memorial Hall with Lindsey Thomson-Heley and Danny McDougall. Tickets including free gift and raffle are £5 with all proceeds

going to Macmillan Cancer Support. Tickets can be purchased from Lindsey or Danny or by contacting Helen Richardson on (01661) 871748.

## The Military Wives Choir: Saturday May 17th

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 (£16 £5) are available from Mackley & Steven, Main Street, and a bar will be available. See advert on page 15.

## Ponteland Community Partnership AGM

The 2014 Annual General Meeting of Ponteland Community Partnership will be held on Wednesday May 21st at 7pm in Merton Hall, Ponteland. Nominations for membership of the Executive Council for the annual posts of Chairman and the Chairmen of the Regeneration, Transport, Environment, Neighbourhood Development Plan and Youth sub-Groups, and for the posts of Hon Secretary and Hon Treasurer (up to three years) should be submitted in writing no later than Wednesday May 7th to: Mrs Shirley Hill, Hon Secretary, Ponteland Community Partnership, 90 Runnymede Road, Ponteland, NE20 9HH.

## Feelgood fitness class

Fabulous 50+ are having a feelgood fitness class on Saturday May 24th from 10am to 11am at Merton Way social club with Janet Walton to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support. Tickets are £4 and available from Helen Richardson on (01661) 871748. This event and the Charity Zumbathon are to help Helen raise £600 for an event she is doing in July - cycling the Grand Depart of the Tour de France to fundraise for Macmillan.

## Party in the Park: Sunday June 8th

A date for your diary – it's Party in the Park again on Sunday June 8th from 1.30pm. Admission will be £1 whilst children under five will be free. This year the event will be opened by our local MP Guy Opperman and entertainment will include

Whistling Sheep, Coates Middle School, Ponteland Community Band, Ponteland Repertory, Jill Errington Dance School and Birds of Prey. The event is organised by the Christian Churches together in Ponteland, St. Mary's, St. Mathews Catholic Church, Ponteland Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. The objective is to create a social gathering for the families and children of Ponteland and to support local charities.

## Ponteland Ramblers

Britain's walking charity The Ramblers Association has a local group based in Ponteland which organises walks on alternate Sundays and two Wednesdays a month, generally in South Northumberland/North Durham area but sometimes further afield. Sunday walks are between seven and 10 miles, Wednesdays are usually shorter with an optional pub lunch afterwards. People who are not members of The Ramblers are welcome to join us for a few walks as guests. For further information contact Steve Edwards on (01661) 886310.

## 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)

## Ponteland Methodist Church - by the traffic lights

Events include: Sunday 9.45am 'The Bridge' – modern worship; Sunday services 10am and 6.30pm followed by refreshments; Monday 'Open door' drop-in café 2pm - 4pm – drinks, scones, cakes and friendship. We also have house groups and fellowship meetings, walking and art groups, carpet bowls, prayer and Fairtrade groups, Messy Church, Girls Brigade and Boys Brigade and much more! Contact Ann on (01661) 824347.

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)

If you would love to try Zumba but think it may be too energetic for you why not try Zumba Gold. Lower impact, easy to follow Zumba rhythms whatever your level of fitness.

**Ponteland Methodist Church Tuesdays 11am-11.45am**  
**St John's Church, Kingston Park Tuesdays 2pm-2.45pm**  
**Ponteland United Reformed Church Thursdays 9.30am-10-15am**

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# Ponteland Community High School Report

## Ponteland hosts first schools parliamentary debate contest...and wins!

By Jess Rea

### Ponteland High School hosted the first ever Northumberland Schools Parliamentary Debating Competition... and won!

Sponsored by one of Northumberland's largest employers Egger, the competition saw eight students from Ponteland High School, Hexham's Queen Elizabeth High School, Prudhoe High School and Haydon Bridge High School debating the issue of lowering the voting age to 16, watched by an audience of students, parents, local councillors and other guests.

With local MP Guy Opperman spearheading the judges' panel and joined by Conservative North East MEP candidate Ben Houchen, the debates were conducted with strict parliamentary rules and proved to be of outstanding quality.

While all schools tackled the debate head-on and produced outstanding arguments from both perspectives, Harriet Barrett and Matthew Ross from Ponteland High School

prevailed as overall winners at the end of the night and received a first prize trophy designed and made by Egger.

An impressed Mr Opperman said afterwards: "I am delighted with the first ever Northumberland Schools Debating Competition. I think the quality of the skills shown by our individual students was outstanding. They spoke beautifully, eloquently and the interventions were outstandingly clever but also inventive. We should be very proud of all four high schools."

All students involved recognized the amazing opportunities the competition presented them with.

Harriet said: "I really wanted to be involved because it's a great opportunity to have debating experience with other schools."

Matthew agreed, adding: "I think that being able to argue your case in debating is a really important skill."

All in all, the first Northumberland Schools Debating Competition proved to be a resounding success and is set to become an annual event.



Harriet Barrett makes her point. Photos by Trevor Walker.



## Bonny bairns parade their Easter bonnets

### Bonny bairn Amelia Barry was pride of the parade at an Easter bonnet competition at Ponteland Private Nursery.

Amelia, two, of Ponteland, was the winner picked by judge Jan Metcalfe of Jan's Kitchen, with a first prize of a a Gruffalo Easter egg and a bottle of champagne for her mam who helped make the bonnet. Runner-up Anoushka Sinha, also two, of Darras Hall, won an Easter

egg and sweets and third placed Philippa Varley, aged 21 months, of Woosington, received an Easter egg. All three also received a certificate.

Jo Slade, who manages the Bell Villas nursery, said: "All of our children were asked if they wanted to make a bonnet and we had 34 entries and took some lovely pictures."

Cover shot: winner Amelia Barry. Right: Amelia, Anoushka and Philippa. Photos by Keith Robertson







## Aquatics centre opened at Kirkley Hall

**A new aquatics centre has been opened at Kirkley Hall Zoological Gardens with a colourful array of fish and amphibians from around the world.**

The biggest development at the zoo since its opening three years ago sees new additions from as far afield as the vast coral reefs of Indonesia and brackish estuaries flowing from the Amazon.

The new attraction showcases all four water habitats – brackish, freshwater, marine and cold water – in illuminated aquariums, with interactive visitor information accessible via mobile devices. As well as a rainbow of colourful fish from exotic shores, amphibians include axolotls, caecilians and a range of frogs, newts, salamanders and toads.

Steven Sykes, Manager at the Zoological Gardens, said: “We are showcasing all four fish habitats to fully educate visitors on the differences. Establishing these different water habitats means students will get all rounded experience in all areas of fish keeping, and we have a great range of diversity in species.”

The attraction was officially opened by Gillian Hall of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership with the help of pupils aged between five and 14 from Percy Hedley School, and college students donning marine themed dress.

The Zoological Gardens is home to over 500 animals and 130 species and is a real learning environment where students study animal care qualifications. Northumberland College's 17th century estate spans more than 190 acres and is also home to Kirkley Hall Farm, a veterinary centre, 1,330m<sup>2</sup> of gardens and commercial greenhouses and an outdoor activity centre.

**For visitor information and opening times visit [www.kirkleyhallzoo.co.uk](http://www.kirkleyhallzoo.co.uk) or for information about college courses visit [www.northumberlandcollege.ac.uk/kirkley](http://www.northumberlandcollege.ac.uk/kirkley)**

*Photo by Trevor Walker*

## Estates Committee chairman steps down

**The chairman of Darras Hall Estates Committee has stepped down after 18 years in the role.**

Michael Dainty is, however, remaining as a member of the committee, which is back up to its full capacity of 15 following elections at the AGM held on March 19th and after the resignation of five members last year.

He is replaced by Acting Chairman David Gambles. Other positions are: Acting Vice-Chairman Andrew Mate; Land & Property Sub-Committee Chairman Andrew H S Pile; Treasurer Gloria Stensland; and Airport Representative John Scott. The remaining nine members are: Sharon Brewis; David Brown; Alistair Gilchrist; Sally Hardy; Shirley Hill; Len McClusky; Helen Nicholson; Ray Toft and Gilbert Wright.

Mr Gambles said: “Following the election at the recent AGM seven new members have joined the committee, bringing the total up to 15. The first meeting of the new committee took place on 7th April when plans were considered and other business was conducted.

“A number of initiatives are being considered, including how the committee can keep owners better informed and it was agreed that information on this subject would be gathered in time for the next committee meeting.

“One point that was raised is that such information is actually private and should only be given to owners, as it is currently done via the twice yearly newsletters. It is also why members of the press and public are not allowed to attend the AGM.”

*See Your letters: p8*

**2014**

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**Kirkley Hall, Ponteland NE20 0AQ**

## Step into Spring: Saturday May 10th

People in Ponteland are being invited to a morning aimed at those over 55 to find out what's going on in the area and who's doing it.

The event is being organised by Ageing Well in Ponteland together with Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, and is supported by local organisations. Ageing Well in Ponteland initially came together with the Ponteland Community Partnership and the Town Council to find the funding for the successful Hopper bus service which runs every Friday within the village.

'Step into Spring' is on Saturday May 10th between 9.30am and 12.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall. Refreshments are available and there will be opportunities to try out activities or just to find out more about what is on offer locally, including support services.

Ponteland Ageing Well Chairman Janet Boakes, said: "The event last year was very successful with over 100 people attending. Many of them found new activities to join, opportunities for volunteering or, for those that needed it, help and support."

Ageing Well is about involving older people in their community and helping to keep them active, connected and well. The countywide programme, initiated and led by Ponteland councillor Veronica Jones, has been recognised nationally.

The Ponteland Hopper bus will be available on the day free of charge to take residents to the event and back home again. Ring Adapt on 01434 600599 to book a place. For further information contact Janet Boakes on 07768 467334 or Veronica Jones on 07850 705339.



**STEP INTO SPRING**

**Are you over 55 and live in Ponteland?**

**Come and find out what's going on and is available to you**

**Saturday 10th May 2014  
9.30am - 12.30pm**

**JOIN US FOR COFFEE!**

**St Mary's Church Hall  
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The Ponteland Hopper bus is available to take you to and from the event free of charge. For more information, or to book a seat on the bus, please telephone 01434 600599

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Northumberland County Council

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### CARE CHARITY OPENS SHOP IN PONTELAND

A Northumberland charity which provides palliative care services to people with life limiting illnesses is opening a shop in Ponteland to help raise funds.

Hexham-based Tynedale Hospice at Home offers nursing care, transport for treatment and bereavement services to an area covering Ponteland, Scots Gap and Kielder to Haltwhistle. Last year nearly a quarter of the care it delivered was to Ponteland patients.

The new charity shop, which will occupy the former Nichol's Bakery on Merton Road, will sell donated clothes, books and bric-a-brac to generate income and also have a small tea room where residents can meet staff and learn about the organisation.

Tynedale Hospice at Home, now in its 20th year, wants to recruit volunteers to help run and staff the shop. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact volunteer coordinator Alison Hands by emailing [alison@tynedalehospice.com](mailto:alison@tynedalehospice.com) or by calling 01434 600388.

### AIRPORT ANNOUNCES £14M DEPARTURE LOUNGE DEVELOPMENT

Newcastle International Airport has announced a major development of its departure lounge, with a total investment of over £14m.

The scheme will see the entire departure lounge layout transformed over the next year, with new shops, restaurants, cafes and bar areas with curved walkways, seating areas and streamlined shop fronts.

Work is expected to be completed by May 2015.



**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*



## Concert remembers the Ponteland men who died in WWI

**The Pont Charity Group is dedicating The Military Wives Choir Concert on May 17th to the memory of the 40 local men who fell in The Great War.**

Uncovering their stories proved to be a daunting task for Muriel Sobo, the author of 'We Will Remember Them' when she did just that in 2005. She found that the men were attached to many different regiments, the largest number being in The Northumberland Fusiliers.

The youngest men to die were George Railton of Byker and Thomas Wilde of Dinnington, who were 18; there are also two 19 year olds - Henry Walls, one of the first plot holders on Darras Hall, and Thomas Weightman of Prestwick, who is buried in St Mary's Churchyard.

John Wilkinson of Ponteland was the first to die in October 1914 at Ypres, two months after the war started. The last to die in action was Robert Moffitt of Dissington who died on 29th October 1918, 13 days before the armistice.

The brothers Edmund and William Mortimer of Milbourne were killed within two months of each other in 1915. Brothers Edwin & Thomas Lant, sons of John Lant who built the Ponteland Railway, died in the Somme area. There are two employees of Barclays bank, Andrew McCreath of Ponteland, holder of the Albert Medal, who died in Egypt, and Geoffrey Hutchinson of Dinnington, who died at Amiens. It is a fitting tribute to them that the staff of Barclays Bank have given generously in time and money to support the concert.

We hope to see the Memorial Hall full to enable us to make a large donation to SSAFA, who support our forces and their families today, by remembering those who gave their lives yesterday. You will certainly enjoy a wonderful evening of songs, old and new, from The Dishforth Military Wives Choir and in addition be able to stretch your own vocal chords.



**Military Wives Choir**  
Director Ruth Sladden Presenter Robert Parker  
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**Memorial Hall at 7.00**

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