

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Councillors approve police
HQ housing scheme

Artist Alan celebrates
30 years at the easel

Date set for Birney Hill
public inquiry

George all tied up with charity appeal



STRETTLÉ

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Oxalis massoniana, shown by Tim Lever, Aberconwy nursery.



Saxifraga fortunei 'Rubrifolia' shown by Tom Green, Rowlands Gill.



Alan Newton and Mala Janes.



Gentiana sino-ornata, exhibitor not known.



Alpine show attracts growers from England, Wales and Scotland

By Alan Furness, Joint Show Secretary

Exhibitors travelled from across England, Wales and Scotland to compete at the Alpine Garden Society's autumn show in Ponteland.

Warmth and sunshine in July followed by September's prolonged and pleasant 'Indian summer' helped to produce a large number of very high quality exhibits at this, the last national alpine show of the year.

The 45 exhibitors from as far afield as Bedford, Carmarthen and Stirling staged 450 plants covering the whole spectrum from the world's high mountains and woodlands at the Memorial Hall on Saturday October 11th.

Of the flowering plants it was cyclamen, gentians and crocus, and among the many foliage plants it was those from New Zealand, especially the *Celmisias* with their silver and golden foliage and spectacular white daisy flowers in the summer months, which took pride of place.

The major trophy of the show, the Ponteland Bowl, was won by Don Peace from Yarm, whose many winning entries included several stunning pots of cyclamen and crocus, particularly cyclamen *hederifolium*, crocus *tournefortii* and crocus *banaticus*, all of which are excellent late summer and autumn garden plants.

Local butcher and grower of a huge number of high quality plants, Alan Newton, was rather frustratingly beaten to the trophy by Don by one first place.

The most meritorious award of the show, the Farrer Medal for the best plant in the show, went to Rannveig and Bob Wallis from Carmarthen with an extremely floriferous, 20-year-old plant of *Cyclamen graecum* ssp. *anatolicum*; a species that demands levels of warmth and sunshine that are difficult to provide in Scotland and the cooler northern counties of England.

For many visitors and exhibitors the exhibit that attracted most attention was the educational display titled 'The Plant Hunters' created by Mala Janes. Mala, who is Chairman of the North-East England Alpine group that meets in Ponteland and who has recently created a new alpine and woodland garden in Darras Hall, was given the highest award (and one rarely given to an individual) available - a large gold award.

The display, which covered boards across the whole width of the show hall, detailed, using maps, photographs and text, the activities of over 40 of the most significant plant hunters, past and present, who have introduced to horticulture the huge range of mountain and woodland plants that we now enjoy and take for granted in our gardens today.

Councillors approve police HQ housing scheme

Councillors have approved plans to redevelop the Northumbria Police HQ site with a 260-home scheme – despite a late objection from another developer.

Members of Northumberland County Council's west area planning committee gave the development the green light at their meeting at Prospect House, Hexham, on October 15th.

They had been recommended to approve the plans by officers at their September meeting but postponed the decision pending a site visit, after being threatened with a judicial review by the Lugano Property Group whose application for a 280-home development in Birney Hill is the subject of a planning inquiry.

Lugano claimed the Northumbria Police application was "flawed in many respects", alleging inappropriate development of the Green Belt, insufficient sewerage capacity and an existing access road already operating beyond capacity.

Up to 263 homes are set to be built on previously developed land on the 30-acre site, with only the offices of the Chief Officer Team and the Northern Communications Centre where all 999 and 101 calls are handled remaining, following a decision by the former Police Authority to relocate most services.

The development will include a mixture of 3, 4 and 5 bed semi-detached and detached homes. The existing police HQ access off North Road will be retained and listed buildings on the site

and existing trees and hedgerows along the site's boundaries maintained.

Unveiling the scheme to the public in a roadshow held in February at Merton Hall, Northumbria Police said the scheme would avoid using greenfield land and reduce the pressure to release other undeveloped land in Ponteland.

There were objections from five residents, and Ponteland Town Council said improvements would be required to the existing road infrastructure and the provision of medical facilities and schools.

Conditional outline planning permission was granted subject to a number of conditions and the completion of a Section 106 planning obligation to secure the following:

- Financial contribution of £150,000 towards traffic management
- Financial contribution of £300,000 towards public transport improvements over a five year period
- Financial contribution of £240,000 towards highway infrastructure
- Provision of 20% affordable housing on the site
- Public access to, and usage of, the grounds of the whole site including open grassed areas and wooded areas
- Preparation, approval and implementation of a nature conservation management plan.

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ANNUAL AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2013-14

Councillors were informed that the Annual Return had been received from the external auditor with no issues raised.

PONTELAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE MODIFICATION

The Council approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Agreement dated October 2014 and delegated authority to the Clerk to sign the Memorandum and also arrange for the Chairman of Ponteland Community Partnership to sign this document. The Council also ratified the membership of 12 as set out within the report.

PONTELAND ROTARY CLUB – PLANTING OF YEW TREE

Ponteland Rotary Club was planting a yew tree and placing a stone in the park to commemorate its 50th anniversary in a ceremony to be held on October 21st. The Council agreed to include an item in a time capsule beneath the stone.

WAR REMEMBRANCE WORKING PARTY

The Working Party met on two occasions in September and October and would meet weekly until the exhibition being held at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Saturday November 8th and Sunday November 9th. On the Saturday the opening hours would be between 10-4pm and on the Sunday the exhibition would be open following the Remembrance Day service until 4pm. Light refreshments would be offered to all attendees.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed recommendations from the Working Party which met on September 15th including the extension of the hedging on the drive leading to the Peel House apartments to the front wall.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Council approved the following recommendations from the Highways Working Party which met on September 12th: the installation of 'Cyclists Dismount' signs in Merton Way; seek prices and necessary permissions to paint the visible areas of the Darras Road bridge in the current colour; a recommendation to NCC to install lining indicating two way traffic at the junction close to Dobsons estate agents at Broadway.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Coun Dodd confirmed that the County Council had made a decision to move their offices to Ashington and this had recently been reported in the local press and on news programmes.

REPORTS BY TOWN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

Coun Noble presented a report of a meeting of Ponteland Community Trust held on September 8th which had considered funding streams, project lists and arrangements for a public meeting with volunteer groups on October 9th at St. Mary's Hall.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on October 8th.

War remembrance exhibition

The Town Council is holding an exhibition of War Remembrance from 10am to 4pm on Saturday November 8th and 12noon until 4pm on Sunday November 9th at the Memorial Hall.

Members of the public who attend the Remembrance Day service on the Sunday are invited to come into the hall and visit the exhibition, where light refreshments will be available.

An Act of Remembrance will be held at the Memorial Hall, Ponteland on Sunday, 9th November starting at 10.55am. At 11am, two minutes' silence will be observed at the War Memorial, after which wreaths will be laid.

The first wreaths will be laid by Civic Leaders, including the Deputy Lieutenant and the Mayor of Ponteland Town Council, representatives of HM Forces and the Royal British Legion. Wreaths may then be laid by any other organisation or individual who wishes to do so. Whilst the wreaths are being laid the names of the fallen will be read out.

Representatives of Ponteland Clergy will take the service. Those wishing to parade will assemble at the Leisure Centre, Ponteland, at 10.30am. The Parade Marshal will be the Officer Commanding 733 Squadron Air Training Corps, and the parade will depart at 10.45am, to arrive at the Memorial Hall by 10.50am. After the service, the parade will march back to the Leisure Centre. Those who do not wish to march back can go straight into the Memorial Hall if they wish to do so.

WINTER WARMER

ARE YOU READY FOR WINTER?

People in Ponteland are invited to a morning of information on health and well-being. Join us for soup, tea or coffee and find out about what is on offer in the area.

Saturday, 22nd November, 2014
9.00 am - 12.30 pm
St Mary's Church Hall
Thornhill Road
Ponteland NE20 9PZ

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 Adapt on 01434-600599.

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Don't buy goods from unlicensed peddlers

By PC Rob Anderson
Ponteland Community Beat Manager



In the period between September 15th and October 14th we have had ten crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.

These break down to the following offences:

- Two thefts from shops
- One theft of pedal cycle
- One theft from motor vehicle
- Two assaults
- Three thefts
- One damage to property.

Enquiries are ongoing in relation to the outstanding offences.

Following last month's information about scrap dealers visiting the Ponteland area I would like to bring your attention to another group of visitors who regularly come into the locality.

For some time we have received calls about nuisance door-to-door sellers from outside of the town trying to sell their goods around Ponteland. It would be fair to say most of these sellers are from the Cleveland area and

when speaking to householders they show a card which they carry explaining what they are doing.

While these sellers are not unofficial they are also not peddlers and so they shouldn't be selling door to door. In order for them to be peddlers they should have a peddler's certificate which they should show before offering any goods for sale.

If they can't show a certificate then please don't buy anything from them as we would like to discourage them from attending Ponteland on every occasion. If you feel they are abusive then call the police.

Please remember to alter the timer switches in your house as the nights start to draw in or leave a light on if you are going out.

Please keep your dog under control as we have had several complaints about dogs being off their leads and owners not supervising them correctly.

If you would like some crime prevention advice please contact PC 613 Davison or

myself, PC 395 Anderson, on 101.

Local police surgeries will be held on the following dates:

- CSO Paul Cotterill 9.30am - 10.30am
November 15th - Merton Hall, Ponteland
- PC Rob Anderson 10am - 11am
November 28th - Waitrose, Ponteland
- PC Rob Anderson 11.30am - 12.30pm
November 28th - Co-op, Broadway
- PC Lee Davison 11.30am - 12.30pm
November 29th - Belsay village shop.

We also have engagement days at these venues and dates:

- 1pm to 3pm November 18th
- Stamfordham/Belsay/Matfen
- 10am to 12noon November 26th
- Merton Way, Ponteland
- 1pm to 3pm November 26th
- Broadway, Ponteland.

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

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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 November 1st.

The Bridge

The Bridge is a relaxed, informal church service where everyone is welcome. We meet most Sundays in Ponteland Methodist Church Hall at 9.45am. We use contemporary music, visual media, personal stories and short talks to help us discover how the Christian faith is relevant to our lives today. We are family friendly with activities for kids up to year 6. Services in November: 2nd, 16th and 23rd. For more info email or phone (01661) 822057.

Ponteland Wildlife Group of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust

On Tuesday November 4th Derek Teasdale will give an illustrated talk entitled 'The Geology of Ponteland'. Derek, a well-known lecturer at Newcastle, will examine the fascinating story of the evolution of the geology and landscape of the village, and its surrounding landscape, from the humid carboniferous coal swamps to frigid ice-strewn glacial lakes. All are welcome to attend the meeting, which starts at 7.30pm at St. Mary's Church Hall. Cost £2 including refreshments.

Ponteland U3A

Our speaker on Wednesday November 5th is Kim Bibby-Wilson and her presentation is on 'The Northumbrian Pipes'. We meet in St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road at 2pm. Visitors welcome. No charge. For details of all our activities visit our website at www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or ring the membership secretary on (01661) 822225.

Kirkley WI

Kirkley WI usually meets on the first Wednesday of every month in the

Oak Room, Kirkley Hall, at 7pm. The meeting on November 5th is to be held at the URC, Darras Hall, at 7.30pm, due to a clash of events at Kirkley Hall. The speakers are H East and H Graham with a talk entitled 'Will ye buy ma fresh fish'. New members and visitors very welcome.

United Reformed Church Christmas Fayre

Broadway, Darras Hall on Saturday November 8th from 10.30am - 2pm. Cakes, bric-a-brac, Christmas gifts and decorations, cards, bottle tombola, books, cds, toiletries, children's toys, pantry shelf, lunches, teas.

Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers have organised walks on the following dates in November: Sunday 9th from Burnhope and Sunday 23rd from Scots Gap. There will also be Wednesday walks on the 12th and 26th - details still to be finalised. People who are not Ramblers members are welcome to join us as guests for a few walks. For more information contact Steve Edwards on (01661) 886310.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday November 10th is David Archer whose talk is entitled 'Venture into the interior'. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of every month in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 2.30pm. Contact Secretary Brian Edlin on (01661) 820198.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

Our guest speaker on Monday November 10th is Sidney Clarke who will be talking about European Primulas. Sidney started work in horticulture before becoming a professional photographer in 1970. He joined the staff of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, in 1986 as Principal Photographer and retired in 2003. After studying British Orchids for 15 years his current project includes European Primulas and Androsaces in the wild. Our meetings take place in St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland, and start at 7.30pm.

Visitors welcome. Details from Terry Teal at t.teal@btinternet.com or (0191) 4132574.

Merton Hall's Christmas event

On Tuesday November 11th come and see our fashion show with a photographer and models from Skyline Studios. Have your Xmas photograph taken and buy your Xmas gifts. Doors open at 7pm. Tickets costing £2 each include a welcome drink are available from Taylors Pharmacy, Fashion Sense Newburn, from Caroline on 07590 080007 call into Merton Hall Friday mornings from 9.30am - 11.30am. Don't forget our regular coffee mornings and bingo and brunch twice monthly on the second and fourth Thursday.

Ponteland Village WI

Tuesday November 11th at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall. Colour Analyst Julie Bullen will be talking to us about what colour works for us, for different skin tones, hair colour and times of the year. She will be available to arrange one-to-one appointments.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

At our meeting on Wednesday November 12th at Ponteland Memorial Hall Lee Berrill of Northampton will demonstrate his 'Christmas Delights'. Tea/coffee and refreshments. £7 visitors. All welcome.

Winter speakers at Kirkley Hall

Friends of Kirkley Hall, near Ponteland are holding a talk to which members of the public are invited. On Wednesday November 12th the local representative for The Woodland Trust Peter Dodd, together with his wife, will speak about the work of The Woodland Trust and recent progress. The Woodland Trust aims to protect ancient woods, restore the ones that are damaged and fight for those under threat. This is done by inspiring people up and down the country to visit woods, plant trees and enjoy the many benefits that woodlands have to offer. This talk is illustrated and will start at 2pm so that students on relevant courses at Kirkley Hall will also have the opportunity to attend. To find out more about the talks, which cost

£5 for non members, or book a place, please ring Brenda Parke on (01661) 853489.

Darras Hall WI

Our November meeting sees the welcome return of Phil Curtis. This time his talk will be on 'Life in the 70s'. If you can remember the Clangers, spacehoppers, flares and Aqua Manda perfume then this is the talk for you. All visitors welcome at 2pm on Thursday November 13th in the URC Church, Broadway, Darras Hall.

Embroiderers' Guild Ponteland Branch

Our Christmas Workshop is being held at 2pm on Monday November 24th (no December meeting). Our first meeting in 2015 on January 26th is entitled 'Unfinished Treasures' - bring your oldest unfinished project for help and advice or to stitch and maybe complete. Meetings are held in the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, Ponteland on the fourth Monday of the month from 2pm - 4pm. Non Members per visit £4. Contact ne_ponteland@btinternet.com or (01661) 881395 for more information.

Ponteland Civic Society

At the next meeting of Ponteland Civic Society on Monday 27th November, 7.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall there will be a talk by Mike Greatbatch on the former 'Big Houses of Benwell', explaining the business and social activities of their owners. The project has been researched by the Newcastle Community Heritage Project. As usual the talk will be followed by tea and biscuits and the opportunity to chat. Visitors are made most welcome, for whom there is a nominal charge of £2.

Pasadena Roof Orchestra performance

Date for the diary: The Pasadena Roof Orchestra is performing on Sunday March 22nd 2015 at Newcastle Falcons Gold North Suite in support of CHUF. For more information contact Ponteland Charity Group on (01661) 823606.



Spice up your Christmas at Haveli

With less than two months to go until Christmas, everyone's getting in the mood for some rockin' around the Christmas tree and has started planning their special festivities.

Haveli entices you to celebrate this Christmas with an Indian twist. Our team has crafted special Christmas dishes that will be served to you and your guests in an elegant yet festive setting.

Guests are invited to choose from either our Curry Classics or the Signature Christmas Menus from only £23 per person for four courses. Your taste-buds will be tantalised by freshly ground Indian spices and locally sourced produce.

Haveli's envious selection of cocktails, aperitifs, wines, beers and soft drinks ensure that every guest will be spoilt for choice. If that wasn't enough, you'll be tempted by our specially crafted Christmas cocktail that will ease you into your festive evening.

For more intimate gatherings, Haveli also offers a 14 seat private dining room where guests receive personal attention from their own dedicated wait staff.

We've also thought of those who love Christmas the most and offer a children's menu for all Christmas bookings. Our special Naan'zas and pastas will please those with gentler palates but still satisfy their appetites.

We will take care of the entire Christmas party including food, drinks and a fantastically festive setting. All you need to do is get your friends and family together, book a table and enjoy your special Christmas party but with an Indian twist.

To book a table please ring us on 01661 872727 or visit the restaurant. OPENING TIMES: Monday – Saturday 5pm – 11pm; Sunday closed. Haveli, 3-5 Broadway, Darras Hall, Ponteland NE20 9PW E: atul@haveli.net



 [Haveli.net](https://www.haveli.net)

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Concern about new housing, overgrown hedges, speeding drivers and a wandering raccoon in this month's letters...

Infrastructure upgrade needed before housing scheme gets go ahead

Reference the proposed development of the police headquarters site in Ponteland and the pending site visit by Northumberland county councillors prior to final decision making.

As a former member of Ponteland Town Council, I have been consistent with my objections to any further developments in Ponteland until the antiquated infrastructure is given some necessary and serious attention to upgrading.

This concerns our medical facilities, school buildings, sewerage and drainage systems and of course, our woefully inadequate road system!

It is not just a Green Belt development issue; it is all developments. I have lived in Ponteland for 26 years. I have seen nine major developments, witnessed flooding, teachers operating in buildings unfit for the 21st century, our roads in gridlock twice daily for nine months of the year and have difficulty in seeing a doctor when I need to do so. I can only assume that our sewage continues to flow in the antiquated network.

Dare I suggest with just five residents opposing the proposal for 263 houses, a pretty apathetic response from the vast majority to a huge issue for us all.

Alan Mee
North Road
Ponteland

Poorly maintained hedges pose a threat to pedestrians

There have been a few mentions in Pont News regarding untidy hedges and probably some of the offenders see this purely as an aesthetic comment. But how many realise the serious dangers?

We often walk down Middle Drive but outside some houses we cannot walk side by side due to hedges overlapping the

pavement. Today we met schoolchildren head on returning home busily chatting after a hard day's work, heads down. Due to there only being room for one person able to use the footpath, the children stepped out into the very busy road. This is not on.

Do these offenders ever walk on the footpath outside their homes and realise the dangers they are causing? One of these days they will have a child's injury on their hands or, if they do not trim their hedges back, even worse.

Middle Drive is not the only road where there is an accident waiting to happen. So through Pont News I make a plea to residents to think carefully. It is not alright just to have room for one person but room enough to allow people to pass each other safely. If your hedge is causing a danger then please do something.

Peter Sutcliffe
Middle Drive
Darras Hall

Join my campaign to disband Estates Committee

Readers will be aware of my thoughts on the efficacy of the Darras Hall Estates Committee, not high to say the least.

Again the committee has failed in its duty regarding advertising material displayed in residents' gardens; despite the Town Council twice advising the committee of the breach of the byelaws nothing has been done to remove the offending signage.

Again I ask: what use are the committee and what do they actually do with our money, apart from paying for their own preservation?

I think the time is now that we, the residents, say to the committee 'enough is enough' and that the committee be disbanded. After all, they don't stop bad building or development or provide us with anything to preserve the integrity of the estate - which is what the original byelaws were designed for.

I would welcome all residents to voice their opinion on this via Pont News and if support is sufficient then we can look to taking steps to remove this quango.

John Worth
Errington Road
Darras Hall

Speeding drivers are killing our red squirrels

As a resident of Edgehill, we have many red squirrels this year running around the garden and climbing in the trees.

Last week we had a red squirrel run over outside the house. Today we have been watching three reds playing, and then shortly after, one of them ran under a car.

Could people please be aware that there are red squirrels in the area and slow down? The speed limit is 30mph but people are driving up to about 50mph along the street, which is ridiculous.

Julia Drummond
Edgehill
Darras Hall

Anyone lost a pet raccoon?

My wife and I were walking along the main street last Friday evening around 8.30pm in the vicinity of Bell Villas.

To my utter surprise a raccoon emerged from one the gardens, calmly brushed passed the two of us along the footpath and then sharply disappeared into the garden of the adjacent house.

At first I could not believe my eyes but it was unmistakably a raccoon, immediately recognisable by its bushy black and white ringed tail. I'd be interested to know if anyone else is aware of the presence of such an alien animal in the village.

K. Gilhespy
Church Flatt
Ponteland

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.

December issue deadlines: Delivery of the December issue will start on Thursday November 27th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday November 10th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the December issue.



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Overwhelming support for Neighbourhood Plan vision

There has been overwhelming support from the local community to the 'visions and objectives' drawn up by Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Group for future development of the parish.

The Group, which is comprised of a team of local residents working on behalf of the Town Council, is developing a Neighbourhood Plan which, if supported in a referendum, will determine local planning policy in conjunction with the countywide Core Strategy currently being formulated.

Residents attending a four day consultation event held at the Memorial Hall at the end of September were asked to consider the Group's vision statement and a series of objectives:

Objective	Percentage in support
Vision Statement	93%
Conservation & Heritage	89%
Natural Environment	93%
Housing & Affordable Housing	88%
Retail, Business & Employment	87%
Transportation & Highways	87%
Drainage & Potential Flooding	92%
Healthcare, Care of Elderly	90%
Education & Youth Activities	69%

Why develop a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood planning will allow us to determine our future instead of people being told what to do. The Government thinks local communities should have an opportunity to influence the future. By working with the support of our Local Authority, our Neighbourhood Plan will be in line with National Planning Policy. To further strengthen our role developers will have to respond to the Neighbourhood Plan and consult with the local community.

What will the plan give us?

The plan will cover a period of 16 years. It allows communities to exert more control over where development takes place, can influence the type and quality of that development, and ensures that any change meets local objectives.

What could we expect without a Neighbourhood Plan?

To live with continued inappropriate development pressure and uncertainty and be forced into a reactive approach, responding to each planning application as it is made.

What can we expect from Northumberland County Council?

The next version of the Draft Core Strategy is expected to go out for consultation by the end of the year.

What happens next?

Now the community has endorsed the 'Visions & Objectives' the steering group will review all the comments, develop draft planning policies and prepare a draft Neighbourhood Plan for consultation.

For more information visit:

www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk

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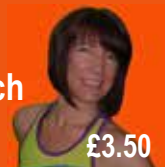


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Ponteland United Reformed Church

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50th anniversary celebration at Merton Hall

Users of one of Ponteland's most popular community venues celebrated its 50th anniversary with a special buffet lunch.

Merton Hall was built by Castle Ward Rural District Council on land owned by Merton College for the benefit of senior citizens and opened in 1964. A similar facility was built at Brunswick Village.

The 1960s was a time of great change in Ponteland, with the council also buying farmland to build council houses and further private housing development following. The site of the old railway was used for the industrial estate and Merton Way shopping centre, club, clinic, library and sports centre were also built and school provision increased.

Fifty years on and Merton Hall is as popular as ever, used for a wide variety of activities. Under its new constitution it is now open to all ages, and more accessible with full disabled access and baby change facilities.

Photos by Trevor Walker



New Care Advice Service launched



A new care advice service is to be offered by home care specialist Diagonal Alternatives

The Diagonal Alternatives team will be at Merton Hall on the second Thursday of every month.

We will be delighted to meet you, have a coffee, and discuss any aspect of home care, and how we may be able to assist you or your family.

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Ponteland Community High School Report

George has smart idea for mental health awareness campaign

Sixth form student George Hunter has come up with a smart idea for raising awareness and funds for three mental health charities.

The 16-year-old has challenged himself to wear a different tie every single day of the current school year, with all ties supplied donated to MIND's Gosforth branch once worn.

George, of Whinfell Road, Darras Hall, has launched a website where he is keeping an online tie diary, logging his thoughts and posting a photo of his new tie each day.

He has already secured celebrity support from North East sporting heroes Alan Shearer, Steve Harper and Glenn McCrory. The ex-Newcastle United players and former IBF World Cruiserweight Champion have all donated signed ties, which will be auctioned with proceeds going to YoungMinds and the Surrey-based Mary Frances Trust.

George, who describes himself on the website as 'just an ordinary lad who wants to get people talking about mental health', said his inspiration for the campaign was personal experience of mental health problems and depression within his own family.

Along with his mum Gillian, George has set up a charitable fund under the umbrella of the Mary Frances Trust to launch a befriending scheme offering friendship to people isolated by their mental illness, and respite to their families and carers.

Headteacher Kieran McGrane said: "George is an amazing young man with a real drive to help those less fortunate than himself. What he has done to initiate his Tie Diary is quite remarkable and we are only too happy, as a school, to support him."

Cover shot: All tied up – George with some of the donated ties. Picture by the Hexham Courant.



• If you would like to donate a tie to George, visit www.mytiediary.co.uk or email cgr.mum@me.com or call (01661) 823078 to arrange collection.

Successful summer for show jumper Charlotte

Over the summer holidays Charlotte Ash has continued her winning streak in high level show jumping.

She has competed in a number of major competitions, with the highlights being The Scope Festival National Finals shown on Sky Sports 2 on September 16th. Charlotte has also won The 148 National Dungenlun Championships, showing a fantastic level of maturity and consistency in her performances.

Charlotte is pictured competing at the European championships at Millstreet, Ireland at the end of July.

Headteacher Kieran McGrane said: "Charlotte is proving to be a consistent performer at the highest level, which is amazing given her age. She also remains incredibly modest about her achievements. We are all very proud of her."



Battlefields visit brings home suffering of WWI soldiers

Sixth form students Jess Lee and Tom Swatridge and Head of History Dave Bartlett joined a North East schools delegation on a three day tour of the battlefields.



The Government funded First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme started at the Flanders Field Museum in Ypres.

A visit to Tyne Cot, the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the world, truly brought home the scale of suffering during World War One to Tom, who said: "The cemetery truly conveyed the scale of the loss of life and brought home how a lost generation of men died on the battlefields."

The highly moving Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate provided a suitable opportunity to pay respect to the fallen.

Mr Bartlett, Jess and Tom all created 'New Generation' pottery figures which will form part of a land art installation in West Flanders. There will be 600,000 figures created over the next four years, with each one meant to represent one of the lives lost in Belgium in the First World War.

Mr Bartlett said: "Whilst I expected the Battlefields trip to be a learning experience about death, it has in fact been one about life. The cemeteries, ceremonies, memorials and medals are all highly significant, but what is truly important is remembering the men behind the medals and the extraordinary lives that they led."

Artist Alan celebrates 30 years at the easel

He started out by drawing a £40 a week Government allowance designed to help the unemployed start up their own business. And this month internationally renowned Alan Reed is celebrating 30 years as a professional artist. Chris Jennings reports.

In October 1984 the country was in the midst of a national crisis with the hugely divisive miners' strike and the highest unemployment levels in history. Alan was one of many young men without a job.

But the 22-year-old hit the headlines as he took the plunge to go self employed as a full time artist through the Enterprise Allowance Scheme. The initiative, which gave a guaranteed weekly income of £40 to unemployed people who set up their own business, funded over 350,000 individuals including artist Tracy Emin and the founders of Viz magazine.

Alan, who has a studio and gallery in Cheviot View, Ponteland, said: "I remember the build up to going self employed very vividly. I recall that I'd been working on a one year contract at the Hancock Museum painting the backdrop for a huge display called Abel's Ark.

"When the contract ended I was unemployed for several months so I decided to work towards an exhibition of some new paintings to be exhibited in an art gallery in Rothbury. The local press picked up on the story. I'd managed to save a £1,000 to put in a new business account which meant I qualified to receive the £40 a week for a year. This was a massive help in getting started.

"Those early years in business were also aided by a part time income from lecturing at Derwentside Technical College in Consett where I taught graphic design and illustration. Much has happened since then - it's incredible to think that I'm now celebrating my 30th anniversary in business. Where have the years gone? And where did the hair go?"

Corbridge-born Alan trained as an illustrator/graphic designer and in his early career worked on artist impressions of new building projects for architects. Today he specialises in landscapes, cityscapes and portraits - both in watercolours and oils.

He has had many successful exhibitions both in the UK and abroad, including those at the Mall Galleries in London, Malcolm Innes Gallery in Edinburgh, Italy, the USA and the Middle East. His private and corporate commissions have included cruise ships, royalty, Rolls Royce and the government of Oman.

Among Alan's many accolades was 'The Artist's Prize' in the Royal Watercolour Society Competition 2013 with his painting 'Jebel Akhdar, Oman', which was exhibited at the Bankside Gallery, London.

Alan has also just heard he is one of 50 artists shortlisted from 3,000 entries to the Artists and Illustrators Magazine competition 'Artist of the Year 2014' with his original watercolour 'Last Light, Ruwi, Oman' which will be shown in the Mall Galleries, London, from January 6th to 17th. The winner will be announced in November.

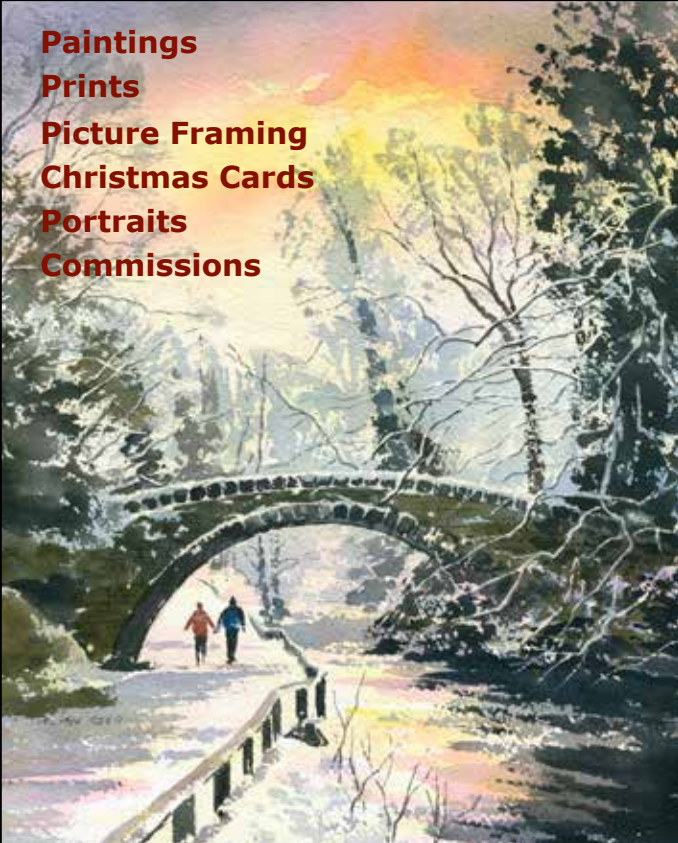
He is holding a number of exhibitions to celebrate his 30th anniversary. They include a 30th anniversary Christmas party at his studio and gallery on November 15th and portraits of city church members at The CastleGate, Newcastle (date TBC).

Alan also runs a six week course in watercolour painting each Friday from 10am - 3pm at his studio & gallery. Find out more at www.alanreed.com



Alan at work in his studio.

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Take a break and recuperate at the seaside with Helen McArdle Care



This summer Helen McArdle Care has opened Eastbourne House, a new purpose-built care home on the seafront at Whitley Bay offering residential care and short breaks for older people in the North East.

With beautiful coastal views and excellence in hospitality, Eastbourne House's Living Suites are the perfect place for a short break.

Each of the suites are fully furnished and decorated throughout to the highest standards and they have a double bedroom, bathroom, lounge and kitchenette. Each day you will have a choice of freshly prepared meals which will be delivered to your door or alternatively you can dine in our beautiful restaurant facilities.

There is also a full social activities programme to enjoy throughout your stay. The Living Suites at Eastbourne House also provide the opportunity for independent living, making them the ideal choice for couples.

Gillian Watson, Eastbourne House's Manager, has seen first-hand how much people have enjoyed breaks at the new home over the summer. She said: "The Living Suites are a wonderful feature of Eastbourne House, not only are they a great option for couples that would like to live together, but they are also perfect for people looking for short breaks for themselves or their friends and family. Following breaks this summer, returning visitors have already booked for Christmas breaks."

The new care home features ensuite bedrooms with showers, a landscaped courtyard garden with feature pavilion, a beauty salon, plasma screen televisions, dedicated chefs and activities co-ordinators, and 24 hour free Wi-Fi for all residents. The home has been beautifully decorated throughout and combines a mixture of social group living areas and spaces to enjoy peace and tranquility. As well as a courtyard garden on the ground floor, there is also outdoor door living space on the first floor.

For further information about Eastbourne House or to book a Christmas break, please call: 0191 252 7295. Eastbourne House, Eastbourne Gardens, Whitley Bay. www.helenmcardlecare.co.uk

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Wife's warm tribute to popular Darras Hall motor company owner

Well known Darras Hall motor company boss Kevin Nichol died in July aged just 51 after a 15-month illness. His widow Dawn paid this warm tribute.

Kevin was born in Ponteland and attended Ponteland High School as a young lad.

From an early age he showed a keen interest in motorbikes and although didn't get the chance to use them very often, owned some classic motorbikes, amongst them Nortons, Royal Enfield as well as the more traditional Kawasaki 1300.

He also had a keen interest in Scottish music and owned three accordions - a far cry from the Whitesnake and Deep Purple albums he loved listening to.

Kevin was a very ambitious person, always thriving and wanting to do better; he was a great achiever. He started off as an apprentice with what was Peters & Tomkins on the Broadway, before moving into the vehicle sales department after it became Priory Motor Group. It was here we first met, going on to marry in April 2000.

Kevin worked at a number of dealerships trying his hand at prestige motors, but his ambition was to return to his old roots in Darras Hall.

His started off his own business by renting a pitch on the Tyneside Autoparc, later realising his dream when he took over the former Priory premises. He launched Triple Eight Motor Co with vehicle sales before later expanding to add the vehicle repairs and servicing department, carefully employing a key team of staff.

Kevin worked long hours, often working seven days a week in order to achieve his goal to make the business a success. But he also made sure he had time for us to go to Mallorca together as often as we could to enjoy his other interest - his beloved boat 'Slinky Chic'.

Tragically in April 2013, days before his 50th birthday, Kevin was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease, a devastating debilitating illness.

Despite the horrendous effects this had, he was determined to carry on with life as positively as he possibly could, never losing his sense of humour, wit and fantastic smile for which he was renowned by everyone who knew him, both on a personal and business level.

With my care, support and love, aided by staff at Tynedale



Raising a glass: Kevin celebrates taking delivery of his beloved boat Slinky Chic in Mallorca.

Hospice At Home and his local GP and matron, Kevin stayed at home, sadly passing away on July 12th.

Kevin will be an inspiration to everyone that knew him during the very traumatic, heartbreaking 15 months he had following his diagnosis. He will be very sadly missed by me, his family, friends, staff, customers and everyone else that met him.

I am now running the business with the support of the staff in honour of a very brave, strong, loving person, tragically losing his fight for life much too early.

DATE SET FOR BIRNEY HILL PUBLIC INQUIRY

The date has been set for the public inquiry into the hugely controversial plans for a 280-home development on Ponteland's Green Belt.

The hearing into the £96m scheme proposed by Newcastle-based Lugano Property Group for Birney Hill is scheduled to start on January 13th and run for around three weeks. The venue is the Newcastle Falcons ground at Kingston Park.

Lugano said the scheme would create 900 jobs and included 70 "affordable" homes, a farm shop and café, 650m2 of office floorspace and 18 hectares of publicly accessible open space.

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Sky's the limit for new media studio

By Jess Rea

Photography and film have been brought together at a pioneering image and media studio which will offer everything from family portraits to video production.

Photographer and filmmaker Paul Stephenson and photographer Trevor Walker have transformed space in a former steel mill in Newburn into a comfortable, relaxed environment to create Skyline Studios, with its rooftop terrace offering stunning views over the Tyne's industrial riverside.

Caroline Thompson, who is running an ethical model agency, and photographer and office manager Patricia Walker have joined them.

Skyline offers luxury lifestyle and commercial photographic and film services including portraits, portfolios, events, weddings and commissions.

While they have invested in all the latest technology, including a state-of-the-art drone for taking aerial shots, their values are definitely old school – setting them apart from many 'indentikit' photography and modelling agencies.

Paul said: "I love the ethics behind the studio. For us, it's all about providing a top class service and taking great pride in our work."

Caroline added: "I'm old school and I like old school morals. It's all about finding people and giving them the confidence for something they never thought they could do. If someone is nervous or anxious



Skyline Studios' Paul Stephenson and Trevor Walker

I'm prepared to go with them to a job and talk them through it. It's all about self confidence."

Skyline will at the fundraising fashion show at Merton Hall, Ponteland, on November 11th offering pop up studio photography. There will also be the opportunity to get that Christmas shopping started with gifts from Taylors Pharmacy, Scentsy Fragrances, Fashion Sense, and Stella and Dot.

The team is also inviting models seeking work to get in touch. Email info@skylinestudiosnewcastle.co.uk or call Patricia on (0191) 2678067.

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