

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



New leisure centre
planned for Ponteland

.....
Young leaders receive awards
from Bishop for community work

.....
Players sought for new
5-a-side league

**Battle lines drawn
for Birney Hill
public inquiry**

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Photos by Trevor Walker

Young leaders receive awards from Bishop for community work

Young leaders from Richard Coates Middle School have received awards from The Acting Bishop of Newcastle Frank White for community work.

The 120 Year 5 pupils each received the Archbishop of York Youth Trust Young Leaders' Award after working on a series of community initiatives including charity fundraising and production of artwork for the recent WWI exhibition at the Memorial Hall.

The school signed up to the project to encourage leadership skills and community participation among its students, launching ICE (Inspire, Create and Enquire) sessions last September as part of the new curriculum.

Pupils across all year groups have engaged in activities including the Shakespeare Schools Festival, charity and community work, first aid, leadership awards, eco projects, team building, philosophy and debating.

The Year 5 students led the school harvest festival, donating items to The Peoples Kitchen – a food bank providing hot meals for homeless people in Newcastle. A Children in Need fair with a range of Pudsey themed stalls raised £362, and there were also donations to a shoebox appeal for charity Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child.

Members of the gardening club have also been keeping the school gardens tidy, and the whole of Year 5 have taken part in the 'Mini Pots of Care' scheme – planting daffodil bulbs and taking them home to raise funds for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

The awards ceremony at St Mary's Church was led by Bishop Frank and The Mayor of Ponteland Carl Rawlings, who also talked to the children about community and helping others.



New leisure centre planned for Ponteland

Ponteland could get a new leisure centre under capital spending plans proposed by Northumberland County Council.

The budget plans list £20m for new leisure centres in Morpeth and Ponteland and a £20m schools reorganisation for Hexham and Ponteland between 2015 and 2018 which could bring multi-million pound refurbishments.

Altogether, more than £350m of capital investment is outlined, including £19.3m for the relocation of County Hall from Morpeth to Ashington and £10m to help reinstate passenger services on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne rail line.

However, the Labour Administration is also proposing cuts to revenue budgets of £44m up to 2017. And there would be a 1.99 per cent increase in council tax in each of the next two years.

It says £26m of savings would come from efficiencies, such as smarter use of information technology and reviews of council assets and library and tourism services, while £8.47m would

be from income generation, £2.9m from service cuts, and £6.3m from controlling inflation.

Leader of Northumberland County Council, Grant Davey said: "Setting a budget in the current financial climate poses a real challenge and I feel we've put forward the most deliverable one in the region.

"We're planning ambitious investment in the future of this county across a range of areas. This is part of our long term economic plan which will boost employment, economic opportunities and support frontline services across Northumberland, regardless of geography."

The budget plans have been approved by the council's policy board, but need to be ratified by the full council in February.

Details can be found at: northumberland.gov.uk/budget



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Players sought for 5-a-side league on new pitch

Football players are being sought for a new adult 5-a-side league being launched in Ponteland next month.

Games will be played on the new £450,000 all-weather pitch at Ponteland Middle School, which is currently being laid.

The league will be run by Wearside-based small sided football provider Soccer6s, managed by former professional footballer Bob Oates.

Bob said: "The pitch is the very latest 4G and will be a superb surface to play on. We intend starting off with Monday and Tuesday night floodlit leagues, where the format will be one game per week lasting approximately 30 minutes and the match fees will be £21 per team per week.

"Qualified referees will be used - if there are any local referees who are interested in getting involved please contact us - and winning teams will win superb individual trophies."

The 5-a-side league is being launched at the end of February and teams with players aged 16+ are invited to register on the website Soccer6s.com on a first come, first served basis.

For more information call 07710 173918.



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GRANTS

Dalton Village Hall

The Council awarded an annual grant of £1,000 to Dalton Village Hall which would assist with upkeep and maintenance.

Legacare

Councillors approved a grant of £250 to Legacare, a charity established to provide free legal services to people suffering with life threatening or terminal illness.

Firework display – New Year's Eve

A grant of £250 towards the cost of a firework display on New Year's Eve funded by local businesses was approved following an application from the proprietor of the Diamond Inn.

PROJECTS REPORT

The Council delegated the choice of paint colour for the skate park ramps to the Clerk and noted the need to carry out urgent tree works on trees identified in the recently completed survey of trees outside of the park.

VANDALISM

The Council discussed recent acts of vandalism carried out at the skate park and in the park. Incidents included graffiti at the skate park and damage to the Waitrose Bridge. The Council noted the additional cost to residents and extra work for both staff and contractors. Various measures were discussed in an attempt to combat this type of behaviour, including working closely with the police, schools and youth worker and also regular attendance at the Local Multi Agency Problem Solving meetings. Every act of vandalism was reported to the police by staff or councillors and the public are also encouraged to report any incidents they witnessed. It was also suggested that contact should be made with similar authorities to glean information as to how they dealt with these problems.

REQUEST FROM PONTELAND ROTARY CLUB FOR USE OF THE PARK FOR THE DUCK RACE

The Council agreed to a request from Ponteland Rotary Club for the use of the Park on Sunday September 6th 2015 for the Duck Race and also approved the provision of toilets and the cutting back of vegetation.

PONTELAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP REPORT

The Council considered a report from Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group requesting endorsement of their decisions

in relation to issues they had with the Final Draft Core Strategy re housing numbers and deletion of the green belt. The Steering Group made several decisions at a meeting held on November 18th which included not supporting the Final Draft Core Strategy in its current form. The Steering Group wishes to continue to work with Northumberland County Council to find a way forward through co-operation and honest dialogue. A meeting with NCC officers to explain the methodology behind the creation of the housing numbers for Ponteland had been very useful. The Town Council agreed to endorse the Steering Group's decision to restart the process of cooperation with NCC by discussion and working together to achieve a better deal for Ponteland. It was noted that the Core Strategy consultation formally started on December 12th and would end on February 11th. There are two consultation events to be held in Ponteland on January 14th at the leisure centre and 31st at the Memorial Hall. The Town Council will be meeting in January to discuss its response to the Core Strategy.

LETTER FROM NCC - PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2015-16 AND 2016-17

The Town Council agreed to formulate a response to the County Council's eight week consultation on their budget proposals for the next two years, pointing out the lack of investment planned for Ponteland as part of NCC's Capital Programme proposals. The consultation runs until January 23rd and further information is available at budget@northumberland.gov.uk

MEETING RE FLOOD RESILIENCE PLANS

The Mayor and two councillors met with flooding adviser Lynn Dunleavy about the possibility of compiling a flood resilience plan for Ponteland - work which had already been carried out in various locations across the county. A report of the meeting was presented and it was agreed that another meeting will be held in 2015 including personnel from the Environment Agency and NCC to discuss the issue in more detail. Ms Dunleavy had agreed to provide further details of the current Flood Wardens in Ponteland and it was suggested that the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan website was accessed to examine the flooding section.

ATTENDANCE AT LOCAL MULTI AGENCY PROBLEM SOLVING MEETINGS

The Council agreed to set up a rota for councillors to attend the above meetings in Ponteland on a bimonthly basis to provide

the Council with an opportunity to raise any matters of concern such as vandalism etc.

OFFICE CLOSURE

It was noted that the Town Council offices would be closed from 12.30pm on Tuesday December 23rd and would reopen on Monday January 5th at 9.30am.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Highways Working Party met on November 14th and the Council agreed its recommendation for the early replacement of three static VAS signs to the speed indicator display signs like the one located on Cheviot View. This would be funded from the Council's asset replacement fund earlier than planned and also from contingencies. The Working Party had also considered a letter from NCC regarding the proposed introduction of short stay parking bays in Merton Way and Thornhill Road car parks. The Council approved the recommendation to submit a request asking that No Overnight Parking be added to the proposal.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

The Cemetery Committee had met on November 24th and the Council agreed in principle with its recommendation to increase fees for the Cemetery by an average of 3% for 2015-16 following a period of two years with no increase. A list of proposed fees and charges would be submitted to the January meeting for consideration with the budget for 2015-16.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor's Diary

A list of events and meetings attended by the Mayor during November was circulated to the Council.

Meeting with Caroline Pryer

The Mayor also reported on a meeting held with Dr Caroline Pryer in her capacity as Deputy Lieutenant regarding the Honours system - see article on page 7. Dr Pryer also reported that work on the Multi Use Games Area was going well and it may be open in February.

Letter from Arch

A letter had been received from Arch regarding the regeneration of Merton Way. Some preparatory work had been carried out and some work on the possible commercial opportunities was about to be undertaken.

This report is based on the minutes of the Ponteland Town Council meeting held on Wednesday December 10th.



Raise the alarm if you see anything suspicious



By PC Rob Anderson
Ponteland Community Beat Manager

In the period between November 13th and December 13th we have had 17 crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.

These break down to the following offences:

- Two thefts
- Two assaults
- Two burglary dwellings
- Seven burglary other than dwellings
- Two damages to property
- One damage to a motor vehicle
- One theft from a dwelling.

Enquiries are ongoing in relation to these offences, with arrests having been made.

There is no official Neighbourhood Watch programme run by the police as in previous years as the Home Office prefer the use of www.ourwatch.org.uk, the home website of Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network (England & Wales).

If you are interested in setting up a neighbourhood watch scheme in your street then please have a look at the website and if you need any help then feel free to contact me.

Alternatively, can I request your diligence when you're out and about in the Ponteland area. If you see something suspicious please contact us and tell us about what you've seen. It may

seem nothing at the time but it all helps putting the puzzle together.

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. Ensure all your doors and windows are secure and do the same for any outbuildings you may have. If you have an alarm make sure it's set.

A house which has lights on and is alarmed is less likely to be targeted than a house in darkness. If you're going away for any length of time please let your neighbours know and give a spare key to someone you trust.

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

Local police surgeries will be held on the following dates:

- PC Lee Davison
January 3rd 11.30am - 12.30pm at Belsay village shop
 - PC Rob Anderson
January 17th 10am - 11am Waitrose, Ponteland
January 17th 11.30am - 12.30pm Co-op, Broadway
 - CSO Paul Cotterill
January 24th 9.30am - 10.30am Merton Hall, Ponteland
- Please come along and have a chat to get to know us.

Help me get more Honours nominations for women

By Caroline Pryer, Deputy Lieutenant

When we look at the statistics for the number of successful nominations for Northumberland we are close to the bottom of the honours league tables; certainly fewer women are nominated in Northumberland than men.

The Lord Lieutenant (the Duchess of Northumberland) is keen that more nominations are made and hopefully are successful. It could be suggested that those interested form a little working party gathering evidence and writing letters of support for their nominee.

If you are interested in making a nomination and would like to know more, please contact me via Ponteland Town Council by email at enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk or by calling (01661) 825092.

The Council can supply a pro forma for interested parties to help them write strong supportive letters.



Battle lines drawn for Birney Hill public inquiry

Birney Hill, site of the proposed 280-home development

The fate of this rural outlook at the south of Darras Hall hangs on the outcome of a Government planning inquiry starting later this month. On one side will be the housing developer promising a £96m scheme creating 900 jobs; on the other is the county council and local residents who claim the Green Belt site is not suitable for it. Chris Jennings reports.

When Newcastle-based Lugano Developments announced plans for a 280-home scheme at Birney Hill and the Banks Group revealed plans for another 500 homes at Clickemin Farm, North-East of the A696 at Cheviot View, a vociferous campaign was launched to protect the Green Belt land being targeted.

A planning application for the Banks proposals is still awaited, but after Northumberland County Council rejected the plans by Lugano in October 2013 the developer attacked the decision as “flawed in many respects” and said it was “confident of success at appeal”.

Lugano said its plans for the 82 hectare site would include 70 “affordable” homes, a farm shop and café, and 650m² of office floorspace, whilst 39.2 hectares would be retained in agricultural use and

managed as part of a community trust by a farm manager, with a further 17.9 hectares of publicly accessible open space.

But the 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.

Recommending refusal, Principal Planning Officer Mark Ketley said: “...the development of 280 houses on currently open and undeveloped farmland would result in significant and demonstrable harm to the landscape of the countryside and openness of the Green Belt”.

He added that the scheme “would represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt”, would be “inefficient use of valuable Green Belt land with a development that would average less than 3.5 dwellings per hectare”, and would lead to “significant urbanisation of the site and demonstrable harm to



Residents at the packed public meeting in October 2013

the landscape character of the open countryside".

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

MP Guy Opperman spoke out against the plans in Parliament, and objections also came from Ponteland Town Council, the Environment Agency and Newcastle Airport. Issues raised included the scheme contravening Green Belt policy and being unsustainable due to the risk of flooding and potential problems with existing infrastructure.

A site visit by planning officers and committee members attracted 250 placard wielding campaigners, while an estimated 550 residents attended a packed two-and-a-half hour public meeting held at the High School. There were also 487 letters of support received during the formal consultation process.

Speaking after the refusal decision, Lugano's development director Richard Robson said: "There is an acute shortage of housing; the council has acknowledged the need for Green Belt release; the authority does not have a five year supply of housing land. Our scheme is of high quality and low density and was formulated in direct response to feedback from the local community.

"It offered over £13m in direct contributions to local infrastructure and priorities as well as considerable job creation and a significant proportion of affordable homes."

But Coun Allan Hepple, policy board member responsible for housing, planning and regeneration at Northumberland County Council said: "This planning application was refused for six reasons. While four of these reasons related to technical matters, three of which still

stand but could potentially be overcome in due course, the other two reasons were based on fundamental planning principles, and therefore provided a sound basis on which to refuse the application."

Ponteland Green Belt Group will be fighting the plans and the campaign group has hired a legal representative for the hearing, which is expected to last up to three weeks.

Vice-chairman Tony Noble said: "Ponteland Green Belt Group, as representatives of our local community, have applied and have been granted Rule 6 status in the forthcoming appeal. This ensures that we are considered to be a main party within this process.

"We are legally represented in the appeal; local residents will be involved in providing evidence to the Inspector.

"The Green Belt group was formed over two years ago in response to concerns from the community to any proposed large scale housing development on precious Green Belt land; this type of development will change the special and unique characteristics of our community.

"We have been consistent since our formation, objecting to planning applications on Green Belt in Ponteland and the surrounding area."

Inquiry open to the public

The inquiry, which is being held at Newcastle Falcons Rugby Club, Kingston Park, opens at 10am on Tuesday January 13th. Members of the public can attend and, at the inspector's discretion, express their views. The final decision will be made by the Secretary of State following a recommendation by the presiding inspector.

Drop-in events to outline plans to release Green Belt land

Two drop-in events are being held in January by Northumberland County Council to consult on a 15-year planning blueprint which earmarks the release of more than 280 acres of Green Belt land surrounding Ponteland for development.

The Council's core strategy proposes the release for development of 202 acres by 2031 and a further 79 acres after that date.

This includes 17 acres for housing (up to 640 homes), 138 acres for education, playing fields, leisure and open space, and 47 acres of previously developed land (the current site of leisure centre, education and fire station) for mixed use.

The land owned by developer Lugano at Birney Hill is not included.

The draft core strategy is subject to a three month consultation process which started on December 12th. The drop in events are being held on Wednesday January 14th from 1pm to 7.30pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre and on Saturday January 31st from 10am to 3pm at Ponteland Memorial Hall.

But it has already been met with a hostile reaction from campaigners against Green Belt development.

MP Guy Opperman said: "This is an attack on the very character of Ponteland and Darras Hall...The amount of the land they want to strip out from the Green Belt is enough for 5,000 new houses. It is a terrifying prospect."

Coun Allan Hepple, NCC's Policy Board Member for Planning, Housing and Regeneration, responded: "We have identified that there is a need to release Green Belt land in some places where the current boundary prevents the sustainable growth of the settlement.

"Of the land proposed to be released from the Green Belt around Ponteland over the plan period to 2031, 56 hectares of the 82 hectares, so almost 70%, is identified for education, playing fields, leisure and open space. We need to be clear and reassure residents this will not include housing.

"The draft local plan, which has had input from the community, will be discussed in detail by councillors in the coming weeks. Following this all communities in Northumberland will have the opportunity to comment on the plan during a period of public consultation."

For more information on the proposals, visit northumberland.gov.uk/corestrategy

Residents' groups oppose planning blueprint: p18

Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Annoyance at vandal attacks and appreciation for Merton Hall for its day trips in this month's letters...

Disappointment at acts of vandalism

It is disappointing that there have been some acts of vandalism in Ponteland in recent weeks.

Damage has been caused in the play areas, skate park and Ponteland Park. Examples include graffiti, damage to fence rails and trees and upturning litter bins.

Vandalism annoys residents and it costs us all money. The Town Council repairs damage as soon as possible but the process takes time and money. Repairs are funded by public money and it is money that could be used for better purposes.

The Town Council urges residents to please report any acts of vandalism to the police on 101.

Thank you for your support.

Carl Rawlings

Mayor, Ponteland Town Council

Thank you for Merton Hall's day trips

I've been asked to write a few lines again to thank Ann McDougal and Johnnie for one more year giving us some very nice day trips.

Johnnie, who drives for Bell's, looks after us all – walking sticks, crutches, walkers – nothing is too much trouble.

Our last – and best – day out was to Gilsland Spa Hotel for Christmas lunch, a full day of entertainment which everyone enjoyed.

Thank you both from us all.

M Hopkinson

*Thornhill Road
Ponteland*

Thanks for flag day support

Ponteland Lions Club held a 'flag day' at Broadway on Saturday December 6th in aid of the club's charity fund.

We raised £198.47. Everything we collected will go to good causes. We would like to thank residents for their kind support. It is appreciated.

Frank Harrington

Ponteland Lions Club

Volunteer distributors needed to deliver church cards

Churches Together in Ponteland thank everyone who helped deliver the 4600 Christmas cards to homes in Ponteland and Darras Hall.

We are always needing new helpers to deliver the cards at Christmas and Easter.

If you would like to help or know more please telephone (01661) 825139 or the Parish Office (01661) 824470 between 9am and 12noon.

Rosemary Rhodes

Churches Together in Ponteland

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

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.



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NEW YEAR START FOR £25M STREET LIGHTING REPLACEMENT PROJECT

A £25m project to modernise all street lighting lamps throughout Northumberland is to start in the new year.

Up to 16,000 street lighting columns will be replaced and all street lighting lamps will be fitted with new eco-friendly and fully controlled LED lantern units with the capability to vary the lighting levels, while maintaining public safety. This will significantly reduce light pollution, slash energy and maintenance costs and cut carbon emissions.

Northumberland County Council has secured funding on an 'Invest to Save' basis, with funding repaid over 25 years from the anticipated annual budget savings of £200,000.

What's on...

Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers have organised walks on Sunday January 4th from Derwentcote and Sunday January 18th from Mitford. There will also be Wednesday walks on January 14th and 28th; 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 U3A

On Wednesday January 7th our speaker is Bill Saunders and his subject 'Tyneside in Print'. We meet in St Mary's church hall on the first Wednesday in the month at 2pm. Visitors are welcome. No charge. Interested in our activities? Come to a monthly meeting or 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. New members and visitors very welcome.

The Bridge

The Bridge is a relaxed, informal church service where everyone is welcome. We meet most Sundays at 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 January: 11th; 18th; 25th. For more info email us at thebridge.ponteland@gmail.com or phone (01661) 822057.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday January 12th is Brian Burnie whose talk is entitled 'War Baby to Daft as a Brush'. 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 first meeting in 2015 will be held on Monday January 12th. We are delighted to welcome our guest speaker Don Peace whose talk is 'In a Cleveland Alpine House'. Don has been an AGS exhibitor since 1989 and AGS judge since the mid-90s and his particular interests are androsaces, petiolarid primulas, ferns and Alpine bulbs. 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 or (0191) 413 2574.

Ponteland WI

Our meetings are held in the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 7pm on the second Tuesday of the month. New members and visitors are encouraged.

Ponteland Village WI

On Tuesday 13th January we welcome Simon Zabrocki who will talk to us about diet and exercise; we are not expecting to do a work out but please wear comfortable clothes. We are a recently formed WI with warm, friendly and welcoming members. We meet on the 2nd Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. New members and visitors are welcome for a girly night with a difference, for more information please contact us via email: pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or on our Facebook page 'PontelandVillageWI'.

Two talks for the New Year at Kirkley Hall

The Friends of Kirkley Hall, the charity that supports students at Northumberland College's Kirkley Hall campus, is inviting members of the public to two talks at the beginning of 2015. The first, on January 21st, is Carl McClean talking about the Wallsend Parks Project. Carl will chart the development of the Wallsend Parks Heritage Lottery funded and Big Lottery funded £7m 'Parks for People' regeneration project which was led by North Tyneside Council. This talk will start at 2pm. The February talk is by Hannah Bayman, who will illustrate her

talk about her work at the BBC Weather Centre in Newcastle. The weather is a great talking point with everyone and this talk should prove to be extremely popular, so early booking is essential. It will start at 7pm Wednesday February 11th. Entry for each event costs £5pp and booking is essential. Contact the Chair of The Friends of Kirkley Hall, Brenda Parke, on (01661) 853489 or Jean Fellows-Prynne on (01661) 823423.



Hannah Bayman

Embroiderers' Guild Ponteland Branch

On Monday January 26th 'Unfinished Treasures' - bring your sewing kit and oldest unfinished project. With a little help you may be able to have a completed treasure. Memorial Hall, Darras Road, Ponteland, on the fourth Monday of the month from 2pm - 4pm. Non-Guild members £4 (inc tea/coffee). Contact eg_ne_ponteland@btinternet.com or (01661) 881395 for more information.

Belsay Carpet Bowls

Belsay Carpet Bowls meets in the Sir Stephen Middleton Memorial Hall at 6.45pm on Mondays and if anyone would like to join our very friendly club we would be pleased to see them. Telephone Aileen on 07803 542078 for further details.

Searchlight

We are a group of Christians from the local churches who meet regularly to learn more about faith, and how it can help us live in today's world. Meeting on Thursday evenings in St. Mary's Church Hall from 7.30pm, until 9pm, we

enjoy fellowship and friendship in an informal atmosphere. For more information, contact David Butler on (01661) 823664.

Ponteland Creative Arts Group

We are a small and friendly support group for those affected by mental illness, their carers and family members. We meet in the Memorial Hall every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month from 1.30pm to 3.30pm to enjoy creative activities, try new things, socialise, share support and build confidence. For further information please contact Emma or Sarah on 07507 453144 or email pontelandartsgroup@rethink.org or just come along to the next session.

Ponteland Photographic Society

Ponteland Photographic Society meets on Monday evenings at 7.30pm in Merton Hall. Come and see what we have to offer without any obligation to join, and do visit pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk.

Pont Badminton Club

Pont Badminton Club meets every Friday evening between 8.30pm to 10pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Adults of all ages will be assured of a warm welcome. Just come along or contact 07986 388822 for more information.

Pasadena Roof Orchestra performance

Date for the diary: The Pasadena Roof Orchestra is performing on Sunday March 22nd at Newcastle Falcons Gold North Suite in support of CHUF. For more information contact Ponteland Charity Group on (01661) 823606 or see our advert on page 16.

Ponteland Beer Festival

Date for the diary: The second annual Ponteland Beer Festival will be held at the Sports Centre on Friday April 24th and Saturday April 25th. Details on ticket sales to follow.



Ponteland Community High School Report

Sage hosts schools' Christmas concert

By Ellen Forsyth, Year 13



On Wednesday December 10th, the Sage Gateshead decked its halls in preparation for the Learning Alliance Christmas Concert.

Joyful and triumphant were the students of Ponteland High School who took part in the festive showcase, which featured a sled-load of talented acts.

Three schools were involved; George Stephenson High School in Killingworth, Park View School in Chester-le-Street and Ponteland High School who last year entered into a Learning Alliance designed to enrich student's experiences throughout their time in school.

This partnership not only allowed for the concert to take place, but also for collaborations between the orchestras and choirs of

Park View School and Ponteland to a glorious outcome.

On that starry night, performances included those from the jazz band, choir, orchestra, soloists and the rhythm section as well as a premiere of Disco Inferno's Platform Divas from this year's school production allowed for a rather eclectic mix of styles to be represented, constantly keeping the audience on their toes.

To pull this feat off, an effort exceeding that of Santa's elves on Christmas Eve had to be put in by students and staff alike. Slaving for hours over the instruments and battling through winter colds to provide merriment to all who could be there on the night.

For the amazing dedication demonstrated by all, we would like to give a huge "thank you!" and, fingers crossed, next year will be just as magical!

Catherine steers herself to success

Year 9 student Catherine Woods competed in the Northumberland School Games Rowing Championships on Friday December 5th at Cambois Rowing Club.

She performed brilliantly, finishing 2nd in her year group category. Catherine now qualifies to represent Northumberland at the Regional Finals in January.

Mr Atkinson, Head of PE, said: "Catherine is a wonderful young lady with a steely determination to do well. We are very proud of her achievements."

School donates 50 Christmas hampers to needy children

On Friday November 28th Beryl Ashworth, a social worker in Newcastle, collected about 50 wonderful Christmas hampers as a donation from Ponteland High School.

Five return car journeys were needed to transport the parcels from school to the distribution centre, as well as some heavy lifting to get each one to the dining hall.

Each tutor group put a hamper together with contents including food, sweets, crackers, toys and small gifts.

There was serious competition between some tutor groups to make their hamper as attractive and 'Christmassy' as possible. Notable contributions were two in the shape of a sleigh, one like a partially



opened parcel while another even had twinkling lights! The hampers are delivered to families, and other good causes, identified by Beryl and her team.

One of the recipients got in touch to say: "It's lovely to know that our colleagues and friends from our community are thinking about us and that your contribution will really make a difference to some of the most vulnerable and needy children in the city."



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Walkers enjoy canny day trip to Shields

By Muriel Sobo

Walkers from Ponteland Leisure Learning enjoyed a day trip to the seaside – along with the obligatory fish and chips!

The 14 walkers travelled by Metro to North Shields, walked to the Fish Quay and along to the Ferry, crossed to South Shields

and followed the river round to Little Haven and then up Ocean Road to lunch on award winning fish and chips at Colman's.

There is so much history - as far back as Roman times - stunning street sculptures and monuments, regeneration, parks and wonderful views. Add a sunny winter's day and then a ship, bigger than any of us had seen before, came into the Tyne and moved slowly past us!





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New community trust to hold first public meeting

The newly formed Ponteland Community Trust is holding its inaugural public meeting at Ponteland High School on Thursday February 26th at 7pm.

Everyone is invited to learn about the new trust, how it intends to help the community and discover what other Northumberland community trusts have achieved for the benefit of their community.

The meeting will also explore what can be done in Ponteland and how those wishing to help can become involved.

PCT received advice, support and guidance from Northumberland County Council in order to become correctly and professionally established.

The 12 members of the newly formed charity board will include two Ponteland councillors, two local business representatives, three local voluntary service sector representatives (which includes one representative from the Ponteland Community Partnership), two

professional specialists plus three other local and suitably experienced and skilled members.

As an independent charity, the trust will be able to apply for match funding and grants to support initiatives that perhaps the Council would not be able to pursue.

PCT has brought together locally qualified professionals with a wealth of experience in large project management, finance and business and has also managed to find an expert in obtaining match funding from the EU and other sources to help us.

Jazz concert to raise funds for children's heart unit



The Pasadena Roof Orchestra

Tunes that were sung by Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby and Al Bowlly, plus the great sounds of the early dance bands, such as Duke Ellington, Ray Noble and Ambrose to name a few!

PUTTIN ON THE RITZ

An unbeatable, authentic live Orchestra, playing pop music from the 1920's and 1930's. The unique sounds of The Pasadena Roof Orchestra

WARNING!
This show may make you forget the blues, and put a smile on your face!

Featuring Band Leader & vocalist
Duncan Galloway

NEWCASTLE FALCONS - GOLD NORTH SUITE
7.30pm SUNDAY 22ND MARCH 2015

DOORS OPEN - 6.30pm
BAR ~ RAFFLE

TICKET - £18 WHY NOT GET A TABLE FOR 8 - MORE FRIENDLY AND SUPPORT - THE CHILDREN'S HEART UNIT FUND. From: Geoff Steven, Opticians, 25 Main Street, Ponteland; Stait Photography, 4 Market Place, Morpeth.

Promoter: Pont Charity Group
Tel: 01661 823606

The music of the 1920s and 30s will be brought alive at a special concert being organised by Ponteland Charity Group.

The Pasadena Roof Orchestra, with its 11 classically trained musicians, will perform tunes from jazz legends including Duke Ellington and Ambrose and crooners Fred Astaire and Bing Crosby.

The orchestra has performed globally at venues including Carnegie Hall and The Royal Festival Hall and provided music for numerous well known films, since its launch back in 1969.

The mix of swing and hot dance music will include classics Putting on the Ritz and Home in Pasadena.

The concert is being held at Newcastle Falcons Gold North Suite at 7.30pm on Sunday March 22nd in support of the Newcastle-based Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF).

Tickets costing £18 are available from Geoff Steven Opticians, Main Street, Ponteland or from Ponteland Charity Group on (01661) 823606.



Double, double, toil and trouble!

By Kate Balmforth, Head of Year 6

Children from Richard Coates Middle School performed Shakespeare's Macbeth at the Northern Stage, Newcastle, in front of a live audience of over 400 people.

The talented group of Year 6 pupils had been working tirelessly for months to perfect their play, getting to grips with the complicated Shakespearean language.

Giving up their free time and persuading their parents to support them at home, the students also took part in a cast workshop with professional actors and directors giving them some tips.

After hours of rehearsing, the big day finally arrived. Pupils met at the Northern Stage ready for a final run through with the Shakespeare Schools Festival team before the evening performance.

At around 8pm on Sunday November 15th they finally took to the stage to show off their hard work. Although everyone was nervous, it certainly didn't show! Everyone involved really gave it their all and showed that working hard and never giving up can really pay off.

The crowd was amazed by their performance and professionalism and I'm sure we will see some of these young actors in years to come.

A huge well done and thank you to all those involved!



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Ton up: centenarian Jane Thomson with her daughter Anne

Centenary celebration for a true Northumbrian

By Muriel Sobo

A centenary celebration was held for a Ponteland lady who has lived all her life within 15 miles of where she was born at Newton.

Jane Thomson, born in 1914, went to live at East Trewick Farm near Belsay and later retired to Ponteland. She is now a resident at Grange Lea on the North Road.

She loves the area and has built up a wide circle of friends over the years. An excellent memory can recall events and anecdotes from her life. She can hold her visitors and carers attention with her stories of growing up at the beginning of the 20th century.

A long standing member of Ponteland United Reformed Church, where she made many friends, her excellent baking was much appreciated by many visitors and she naturally helped on the garden stall at many fundraising events.

She married Willie in 1947 and they had many happy years together at East Trewick Farm and Ponteland until he died in 1992. Jane loves her home and family, daughter Anne, son Jimmy and his wife Aileen, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

She has followed their lives and careers all over Britain and as far as North America and New Zealand.

Local groups reject county council planning blueprint

Two residents groups in Ponteland have rejected a county council planning blueprint which proposes the release of 280 acres of Green Belt land for development.

In September, Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held a community consultation event where residents endorsed its visions and objectives, supporting progression to the next stage of drafting planning policies and identifying projects for the future.

The group, comprised of seven volunteers and five councillors working on behalf of

Ponteland Town Council, said it was "very disappointed to see the content of the Final Draft of the Core Strategy" which it recommended the Town Council should not support.

PNPG said: "Although housing numbers have been reduced from the previous document it is difficult to understand the methodology behind the calculations and the amount of excessive Green Belt deletions to accommodate this."

The group added that it wants to maintain positive dialogue with Northumberland County Council in the coming months on the Core Strategy.

Meanwhile Ponteland Greenbelt Group, which is campaigning against Green Belt development, slammed the Draft Core Strategy document as "fundamentally flawed".

The group said: "The evidence base is simply not there to support deletion of Green Belt land in Ponteland. Proposed growth has been linked to sacrificing 200 acres of Green Belt with an additional 100 acres safeguarded for future development. In real terms this would give enough Green Belt deletion for 5,000 houses and an additional population of 11,000 - potential to double the existing population."



Photos by Trevor Walker

Surprise party for retiring Brownie leader Irene

Children held a surprise party to thank a Ponteland grandmother for more than 30 years of volunteering with the local Girlguides and Brownies.

Irene Halliday retired as a Rainbow and Brownie leader at the end of December after 32 years of weekly pack meetings.

But her involvement with the organisation goes back way further than 1982 – Irene was a Brownie herself, joining in 1959 aged seven while her family lived on an RAF camp in Germany.

She rejoined the organisation when her twin daughters were aged eight and then part of the Stamfordham pack and the Guider asked for mums to help thread needles one night. Within a few years Irene was Brown Owl at the 6th Ponteland Brownies.

Her duties have included arranging craft events during the summer holidays, children's entries for Ponteland Flower Show and carol singing evenings around the village.

Irene said: "I have had great fun and I have many happy memories of weekly meetings, numerous days out to all sorts

of places, pack holidays at Wallington, concerts, sleepovers, fundraising and county events.

"Guiding is such a worthwhile adventure for young girls and benefits them for the rest of their lives. What better reward can volunteering give than an unexpected hug from a child saying 'I love Rainbows' or 'I wish I could do Rainbows every night'."

The 1st/6th Ponteland Rainbows and 6th Ponteland Brownies weekly pack meetings are held at St Mary's Church Hall each Friday from 3.50pm to 6pm (Rainbows) and 6.15pm to 7.45pm (Brownies).

There are more than 20 eager girls already on the organisation's waiting lists and ladies able to spare a few hours each week to help keep Rainbows, Brownies and Guides or Rangers should phone Lesley Hughes on (01661) 824843.



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