

# pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district

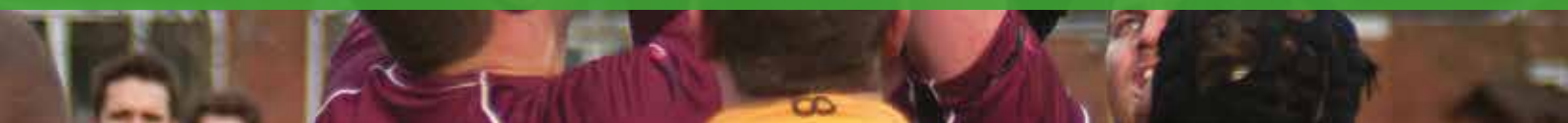


Darras Hall mum's band  
set to hit the big time

Burglaries and  
thefts on the rise

Parents win reprieve  
for children's centre

## Unbeaten Pont RFC win league in style





# STRETTLÉ

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Produced by Cian creative pr





# Commonwealth champion makes a splash

**Young swimmers at a Ponteland club were quick to dive in when they heard they'd be sharing their pool with a Commonwealth gold medallist.**

Chris Cook, who has represented Great Britain more than 30 times, is a double Commonwealth Champion, Commonwealth and British Record Holder, and Olympic Finalist.

So it was a real stroke of luck when coaches at Ponteland Community Swim Club managed to secure him for an extra special coaching session on March 15th. The 35-year-old, who hails from South Shields, retired in 2009 and now works with swimming clubs across the UK.

Chris started with a motivational talk and showed a video of his Commonwealth win, before joining the young swimmers in the pool in their various squads.

Coach Helen Mason said: "We were delighted that Chris was able to come to Ponteland to see and spend some time with our swimmers. It is inspiring to see such talent in our local pool. Chris is totally down to earth and has great skills and knowledge to share."

Anyone interested in joining the club should email Helen at [hmason@activenorthumberland.org.uk](mailto:hmason@activenorthumberland.org.uk).

Coaches Helen and Peter Mason are pictured with Chris Cook and the Dolphin Squad. Photos by Trevor Walker.





# Garden centre top of the tree again



Martin Cowell, Jane Cowell, Jacqui Taylor, Suzy Grimwood and Dylan Cairns

**A family-owned garden centre that grew out of the porch of a sub post-office nearly 40 years ago has been named the best in the UK for a fourth time.**

The prestigious 'Garden Centre of the Year' award was given to Cowell's Garden Centre by The Garden Centre Association in recognition of excellence in the 'display, quality, range of plants and customer service in a garden centre nationwide'.

The nationally acclaimed business's roots go back to green-fingered grandad Tommy Cowell, who would spend hours in his Walbottle allotment in the 1940s and 50s growing vegetables and fruit for all the family.

He passed his passion for gardening on to son Alan, who with wife Mavis ran Kenton Bank Foot sub post office from 1971 to 1978. As well as posting parcels and picking up pensions, customers were offered a fantastic array of plants, fresh vegetables, fruit and flowers from the Cowell's garden.

Very soon, more people were visiting the Post Office for plants and gardening advice than were posting parcels and the Cowell's garden was becoming so jam-packed with plants that Alan needed more room.

He managed to acquire a few acres of land nearby at Wooslington and started up a market garden, while still running the Post Office. By this time the family was also running a fruit and vegetable shop locally, so was effectively running three businesses.

It soon became apparent that the market garden business at Wooslington was taking off in a big way, due mainly to the quality and variety of the plants and produce, as well as the horticultural knowledge and enthusiasm of the family.

Nearly four decades on, and Cowells Garden Centre is still situated on the same nine acres of land in Wooslington where it was founded by Alan Cowell in 1978.

Alan's son and daughter, Martin and Jane, who now run the business under the watchful eye of their father, remember working in the market garden aged around five and eight. Martin said: "We would either be standing in the freezing cold, opening and closing doors for customers, or working in the potato fields, still cold – but at least we were moving!"

Cowell's remains a real family affair, with the involvement of the next generation too - Jane's children Lewis and Jessica also both help out in the business.

The garden centre now sees tens of thousands of customers through its doors every year and boasts one of the largest varieties of plants in the region, with 50 different varieties of sweet peas. Staff grow between 60,000 to 70,000 colourful perennials, alpinas and bedding plants for sale – along with a large range of garden products, garden furniture and giftware.

Alan added: "To win this national award against hundreds of other competitors across the UK for a fourth time is outstanding and we are all delighted and very, very proud."

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# Beers, bangers and bands at weekend festival

**More than 100 different beers and ciders, novelty sausages and three top bands are among the attractions at the second Ponteland Beer Festival.**

The event, first held last year, is again being held under canvas behind the main rugby pitch at the sports centre during the last weekend of April - albeit in a larger marquee to accommodate the anticipated demand.

Event Organiser Andy Maidwell said: "The objective of the festival is to provide an event for the whole of Ponteland, and something which will be a regular addition to the social calendar for the village and its residents.

"The support we have had from local sponsors has been absolutely superb and has enabled us to double the number of beers that will be on sale compared to 2014; the aim being to have in excess of 75 beers as well as 25 different ciders."



Revellers enjoy the beer at last year's inaugural festival

This year there will also be a prosecco bar selling quality wines and bubbly, while Fentimans will provide a soft drinks option.

The food offer includes novelty sausages - with a Ponteland RFC banger and the legendary 'Raging Norris' available throughout the weekend - as well as a hog roast on the Friday evening and steak burgers on the Saturday.

Music comes from legendary Newcastle R & B band 'The Junco Partners' performing on the Friday evening, followed on the Saturday by a double bill featuring local musicians 'The Pete Rea Band' from

Ponteland and 'The Richard Kain Band' returning for a second year.

Meanwhile sporting action sees two rugby matches on the Saturday afternoon, featuring two of Ponteland's thriving junior sides against local opposition, with Ponteland Cricket Club first XI playing Lanchester on the adjoining cricket pitch.

The festival opens on Friday April 24th at 6pm, reopening on Saturday 25th at noon and running through until 11pm. It is open to the public on both days, although sponsors, players both past and present and club members are expected to dominate the opening night.

Pricing for advance tickets has been held at last year's pricing at £10, which includes admission with a commemorative glass and programme and three drink tokens. If there are any tickets left by the weekend, entry on the day will cost £12.50.

Advance tickets can be purchased online at [www.pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk](http://www.pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk) or at the reception desk at Ponteland Sports Centre.



**FRIDAY 24th APRIL**  
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**SATURDAY 25th APRIL**  
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# Burglaries and thefts on the rise

By PC Rob Anderson  
Ponteland Neighbourhood Beat Manager



**In the period between February 17th and March 16th we have had 23 crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.**

These break down to the following offences:

- Three thefts from shops
- Two possession of cannabis
- Two assaults
- Three thefts
- Five burglary other than dwellings
- Four burglary dwellings
- One damage to property
- Two damages to motor vehicles
- One theft from a motor vehicle.

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

Unfortunately we have seen a rise in burglaries in the Ponteland area within the last month both to houses and other properties. We have also seen five thefts

of lead from the roofs of public buildings since the New Year too.

Can I ask you to be vigilant and contact the police if you see anyone or anything suspicious. No matter how insignificant you may think what you've seen is, it may help to put a puzzle together and assist us to discover who is committing crime in the area.

For those of you who aren't aware the police station on Bell Villas, Ponteland, has now closed and the Police Neighbourhood Team has been relocated to Ponteland Fire Station on Callerton Lane. We will still be patrolling the area and nothing will change.

I would also like to apologise to anyone who made their way to my surgeries on the February 21st and found I wasn't there. This was beyond my control and down to operational duties.

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 April 11th 9.30am - 10.30am Merton Hall, Ponteland
- PC Lee Davison April 18th 11.30am - 12.30pm at Belsay Village shop
- PC Rob Anderson May 2nd 10am - 11am Waitrose, Ponteland
- PC Rob Anderson May 2nd 11.30am - 12.30pm Co-op, Broadway

Engagement days for the Ponteland area are as follows:

- April 15th 10am-12noon Merton Way, Ponteland
- April 15th 1pm – 3pm Broadway, Ponteland
- April 29th 1pm – 3pm Belsay

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



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# Squirrel survey support sought

By Harry King (aged 14)  
Ponteland Red Squirrels volunteer

**A group battling to save Ponteland's threatened red squirrel population is seeking help with a two week survey on the rodents' movements.**

Residents are being asked to report any sightings of red or grey squirrels between April 19th and May 3rd to Ponteland Red Squirrels to help the organisation assess the current threat posed by the greys who carry a pox deadly to reds.

Other ways to help include ensuring the reds have enough food to eat in the cold weather. Nuts and seeds like hazelnuts, sunflower seeds, beech (cob) nuts, pine nuts, sweet chestnuts and walnuts are all suitable.

Unsalted peanuts are another favourite, but should be not be given in isolation. Some squirrels also like oats, but don't usually like maize (sweetcorn).

Our website at [pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk](http://pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk) provides information on what you can place in your gardens for them to eat and where to site the food and obtain feeders.

Sightings of red or grey squirrels can be reported by email at [info@pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk](mailto:info@pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk) by text to 07878 061880 or via the website.

# New lady golfers invited to Sunday morning taster sessions

By Avril Cole  
Captain of the Ladies Section

**The Ladies' Section at Ponteland Golf Club is hoping to introduce ladies with no experience of the game by having taster sessions at the club on Sunday mornings throughout April and May.**

Ladies with previous golfing experience who have lost contact with the game will also be welcome but the sessions are aimed at the beginner.

The participants would spend one hour each week receiving lessons from the Club Professional together with a few of the lady members. When they feel confident enough they would then be taken on the course to play several holes.

The programme is being set up to find new members for the section and to introduce them to the game of golf. They will be shown the facilities of the club house. Further into the sessions, golf etiquette and the rules of golf will be discussed to enable them to better understand the game.

Why not join other ladies and try the challenge of golf? Enjoy the outdoors and fresh air, playing with likeminded people. If Sunday is not convenient please let us know and we will try and find a day and time more suitable.

Have you moved to the area and are looking for a club to join? Do you wish to take up golf again? The Club has a varied social calendar throughout the year. Contact the Club (details below).

All equipment for the sessions will be available. The ladies of Ponteland Golf Club will make you most welcome. These sessions are free, so come along and give golf a try.

Contact Nigel or Alan and book yourself onto our programme. Tel (01661) 822689 Ext 2 or 3.



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## Ponteland Golf Club Ladies' Section

### Taster Golf @ Ponteland Golf Club

Ladies - would you like to try the game of golf?  
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Free professional help and guidance.  
All equipment supplied.

Contact club secretary to book your place.

**Tel: 01661 822689 Ext 2 or 3**

**LADIES' TASTER DAY**





Jen Davies of Darras Hall (far left) in a Scarlet Street publicity shot

# Darras Hall mum's 'Barberpop' band set for the big time

**A Darras Hall mum is set for the big time after her band was signed up by a top London management company.**

Jen Davies set up 'Barberpop' band Scarlet Street three years ago and their unique blend of Barbershop harmony and pop has been attracting a fast growing fan base ever since.

They have already supported headline acts including Joe McElderry, Mark Knopfler, Ruby Turner, Olly Murs and Heather Small and played live to tens of thousands of people at festivals including Manchester Pride.

But a chance meeting after they performed at the South Shields Christmas lights switch on four months ago with Joe's managers from Celeb Agents has landed the girls their big break.

For Jen and her fellow bandmates Rachel Cook and sisters Cherie and Marina Gears have just signed with the management company, which also represents former 'Blue' frontman Anthony Costa, star stylist Nicky Clarke, psychic medium Colin Fry and Sky Sports presenter Chris Kamara.

Jen, who is married to dentist Tim and became a mum to Jack six months ago, said: "We are so excited. They are so well connected. This is going to be our biggest year yet.

"There are lots of public gigs including summer festivals planned as well as private performances like one we have in Kuwait in a

few weeks. We don't even know who that is for – it's top secret so we are all very intrigued."

Scarlet Street took their name from a 1945 film starring Edward G Robinson and Joan Bennett which tells the tale of a young woman persuaded to con a middle aged man out of money by her fiancé.

The group reimagine modern tunes and popular classics in a barbershop style and also perform accompanying a big band.

To see their videos visit their Youtube channel at: [youtube.com/user/ScarletStreetUK](https://www.youtube.com/user/ScarletStreetUK)

## Part-time contractor (gardener)

**Ponteland Town Council is looking to appoint a part-time contractor (gardener) for between 15 to 20 hours per week to assist in keeping the natural park in good order.**

Detailed requirements and the application procedure can be obtained from the Clerk via email at [enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk) or by phone on 01661 825092 or by writing to PTC offices, Unit 1 Meadowfield Court, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Ponteland, NE20 9SD.

The deadline for applications is April 27th 2015.

# Your letters

The Editor  
Dont News & Views



**A developer's claim that opposition to green belt development has been exaggerated provokes an angry response in this month's letters...**

## Lugano's 'overstated' opposition claims are absolute rubbish

**The letter in last month's Pont News & Views from Richard Robson of Lugano stating that opposition to the Birney Hill development is "overstated" was, quite frankly, absolute rubbish.**

Having been a resident of Ponteland for 30 years, I have never known an issue unite the vast majority of residents in opposition as this proposed development has.

Ponteland town councillors have been inundated with requests for information on this proposed development from concerned residents.

Mr Robson implies that the Birney Hill public inquiry was not well attended. That inquiry took place on weekdays over a three week period at a time when the majority of residents were working.

Does Mr Robson not recall the Birney Hill consultation which took place one evening in Ponteland High School? Mr Robson writes of 'standing room only' at a Morpeth inquiry. Well at that evening consultation at Ponteland High School, all standing room was taken and there was an overflow of residents standing in a room outside the main hall.

Add to that the fact that when it became known by local residents that Ponteland Town Council was meeting to discuss the Birney Hill development, a very large group of protesters gathered outside the council offices. The protest gathering was so large it attracted TV crews and reporters. Also, on the day of the site visit to Birney Hill by Northumberland county councillors, protesters again gathered in large numbers to show their objection.

On the matter Mr Robson raises about letters of objection to the development, he seems to imply that objecting residents signed whatever was put in front of them, without considering the issues involved.

This implication is, I feel, an insult to the intelligence and integrity of those particular residents of Ponteland. The facts are plain for all to see. Objections to the Birney Hill Development Scheme outnumbered support for the scheme by ten to one!

I could go on. However, I suspect that Mr Robson really does know that his 'overstated' comment is rubbish and if he doesn't, then he should. I do respect the fact that to say anything other than 'overstated' would not help Mr Robson's cause.

Finally - and here I cannot disagree - Mr Robson says that it is unreasonable to criticise a developer for proposing a scheme in the absence of any new development plan. I assume that this is a reference by him to the failings of Northumberland County Council. The severe inadequacies of NCC are well known.

Having said that, however, can I close by paying tribute to NCC planning officer Mark Ketley who, in my opinion and the opinion of others I have spoken to, did a fine job in trying to defend our green belt at the Birney Hill inquiry.

**Malcolm Thompson**  
Western Way  
Darras Hall

## Dismay at closure of park access to supermarket

**I am dismayed to hear that Ponteland Town Council is obtaining quotes to block up the access between Ponteland park and Waitrose supermarket.**

The reason being given is that the route has become muddy due to use by Ponteland residents and that if the route is surfaced it might encourage people to park in the Memorial Hall car park and walk to Waitrose.

This is a popular route for many people who have walked through the park and who wish to shop at Waitrose and there is no logic to spending money on blocking up the route when the logical thing to do is to spend money on laying a proper footpath.

Ponteland Town Council has a good record of spending money on providing new footpaths where needed in the park and also upgrading existing paths, so why should this be any different?

If the access is blocked up I will continue to use the route by climbing the low wall that borders the supermarket but there are many people who just can't do this. They are the ones that will find it most inconvenient and

difficult to walk the extra distance required if the access is blocked.

These are the people that Ponteland Town Council should be considering when looking at this problem.

The reason the access is muddy is due to overuse. This popular route requires surfacing - a simple solution that would help residents.

We need to be encouraging those residents that walk - not inconvenience them as this scheme undoubtedly will.

**David Gambles**  
Woodside  
Ponteland

## Why has greenery by Fairney Burn been removed?

**I live in a road backing on to Ponteland rugby pitch and playing fields.**

The margin between our gardens and the pitch, and all the land up the side of Fairney Burn used to be left to grasses, wild flowers and general shrubbery. In other words, perfect natural habitat for wildlife. It was trimmed in autumn to keep things in check.

Over this winter much of this greenery has been removed, and now the whole area has been trimmed drastically. The affected terrain is quite extensive, but birds, frogs, hedgerows, butterflies and millions of insects have nowhere to feed and hide here.

We are all encouraged to grow plants friendly to wildlife and I believe farmers are paid to leave swathes of land around their fields for this purpose. Even motorways and railways now have verges where wild plants are left to thrive.

The area immediately behind the gardens could be trimmed during the summer to avoid weeds spilling into residents' gardens, but beyond that alongside the burn and among the trees could this just be given an annual cut?

This would retain some of the precious habitat for wildlife which we all appreciate.

**M Richardson**  
Fairney Edge  
Ponteland



# What's on...

## Ponteland U3A

Our speaker at the monthly meeting on Wednesday April 1st is John Moreels, whose topic is 'Nostalgic Views of the North Part 2'. We meet in St Mary's Church Hall at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month. Visitors are welcome. No charge. Visit [u3asites.org.uk/ponteland](http://u3asites.org.uk/ponteland) or contact (01661) 822225. Our next meeting will be on May 6th.

## Line dancing

We meet every Wednesday at 7pm in St Mary's Church Hall. We have lots of laughs, friendship and exercise to music. The cost is £20 for ten sessions. Dancing is at Beginner and Intermediate level. New dancers are always welcome, free taster session offered. Contact Rosemary Gray on (01661) 822493.

## Audio Book Group

The group is for people who have visual impairment or face barriers in reading printed books. It is an opportunity to share books, listen to different authors or old favourites, and hear other people's views. Each month members take home an audio book, then return to the next meeting for an informal and relaxed discussion lead by the group leader. We meet at Ponteland Library on the first Monday of each month from 10.30am-12noon. Membership is free. Contact Ros.Markham@northumberland.gov.uk or (01661) 823594.

## Ponteland Wildlife Group of the Northumberland Wildlife Trust

On Tuesday April 7th in the last meeting before the summer break, we are pleased to welcome Dr Ben Burville who will present an illustrated talk entitled 'Magic Beneath the Waves'. Ben will give an insight into the wonderful marine life of

Northumberland and draw on his experiences filming wildlife for the BBC and ITV. All are welcome to attend the meeting at St Mary's Church Hall starting at 7.30pm. Cost £2 including refreshments.

## Kirkley WI

On Wednesday April 8th we will be delighted to welcome speaker Iain Robson whose talk will focus on 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. Iain will be asked to judge the 'best coastal photograph' competition following his talk. The meeting will be held in the library area, across the courtyard, opposite the main entrance, as the Kirkley Hall Oak Room is unavailable on this occasion. New members and guests always welcome.

## Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers have organised walks on the following dates in April: Sunday 12th from Bolam, and Sunday 26th from Stonehaugh to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Pennine Way. There will also be Wednesday walks on the 8th and 22nd. People who are not Ramblers members are welcome to join us as guests for a few walks. Contact Steve Edwards on (01661) 886310.

## The Bridge

The Bridge is a different kind of church service. We are relaxed, family friendly and focus on how the Christian faith is relevant to our lives. Everyone is welcome at our services, whether you are a Christian or just asking questions. We meet on Sundays in Ponteland Methodist church hall. Dates for April: 12th at 4pm, 19th at 9.45am, 26th at 9.45am. Contact [thebridge.ponteland@gmail.com](mailto:thebridge.ponteland@gmail.com) or phone (01661) 822057.

## Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday April 13th is Dr R Hefford whose talk is entitled 'Some Chemistry at Roman Vindolanda'. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of every month in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 2.30pm.

## North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

On Monday April 13th we are delighted to welcome our guest speaker John Richards whose talk will cover 'Alpines in the Southern French Alps'. John is an outstanding field botanist, an experienced judge and exhibitor. He also writes the Northumberland Gardeners Diary on the AGS website. Our meetings take place in St. Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland, at 7.30pm. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting. Details from Terry Teal at [t.teal@btinternet.com](mailto:t.teal@btinternet.com) or (0191) 4132574.

## Events at St Mary's Church

The Vicar's Railway Films - archive film of the narrow gauge railways of North Wales. Saturday April 18th at 3pm and 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Admission free.

## Rotary Club Am/Am Golf Competition

The traditional St George's Day Golf Competition and Dinner and the popular fundraising Am/Am Golf Competition, both organised by the Rotary Club of Ponteland, will be held at Ponteland Golf Club on Tuesday April 21st and Tuesday May 12th. All proceeds to Rotary charities.

## Ponteland Floral Art Club

The next meeting of Ponteland Floral Art Club is on Tuesday April 21st. The meeting is in Ponteland Memorial Hall, and begins at 7.30pm. The guest demonstrator is Diane Fair of Chester. Diane is a well known national demonstrator, and the subject is 'Tis a Gift'.

## General election hustings

Churches Together are organising a General Election hustings with all the candidates, at the United Reformed Church on Friday April 24th at 7.30pm.

## Ponteland Beer Festival

The second annual Ponteland Beer Festival will be held at the Sports Centre on Friday April 24th and Saturday April 25th. See advert on page 6. Tickets can be purchased online at [pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk](http://pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk)

## Embroiderers' Guild Ponteland Branch

We meet on Monday April 27th at 2pm at Ponteland Memorial Hall for 'Exploring Stitches' - Applique. Branch Workshop. Meetings are held in the Memorial Hall, Darras Road on the 4th Monday of each month, 2pm to 4pm. Membership is open to all. Visitor fee £4. For further information [eg\\_ne\\_ponteland@btinternet.com](mailto:eg_ne_ponteland@btinternet.com) or (01661) 881395.

## Ponteland Civic Society

The next meeting of Ponteland Civic Society is at St Mary's Church Hall on Monday April 27th at 7.30pm when historian and archaeologist Barry Mead will explain in his talk entitled 'Bedlington Remembered' why Bedlington is world famous! Followed by tea and biscuits and an opportunity for discussion. Do come along and join us. Guests are most welcome, for whom there is a nominal charge of £2.

**Details of Easter church services on p18.**

**May issue deadlines:** Delivery of the May issue will start on Wednesday April 29th and be completed by Monday May 4th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday April 13th.

If you are aware of any missed properties please contact the editor at [pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk](mailto:pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk) or call (0191) 3408422. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the May issue.

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

The Editor reserves the right to amend any submitted letters for legal or other reasons. All letters submitted should include the writer's name and address.

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## PLANNING

The Chairman of the Town Council's Planning Committee, Coun Thompson reported on the discussions at a presentation she attended at County Hall on the review of planning in Northumberland. NCC's Scrutiny Committee and Policy Board adopted proposals set out in the review removing the trigger for parish and town councils objections to be heard by the Planning Committee. This now required the approval of the full county council meeting on April 1st. Town councillors expressed their disappointment that, despite an unprecedented response against the proposals being made by parish and town councils in the county, they were being implemented.

## GRANT APPLICATION – FRIENDS OF PONTELAND PARK

The Council approved a £1,000 grant for the Friends of Ponteland Park in recognition of the work they carried out in the park following a funding application.

## STREET CLUTTER REPORT

Ponteland Civic Society submitted a report on street clutter in Ponteland to the Town Council with a range of recommendations for consideration. Issues highlighted included business advertising 'A' boards, duplication of road signs and untidy areas. It was reported the county council was currently carrying out a review of 'A' boards. The Highways and Environment Working Parties were asked to consider the report and report back to the Town Council, which agreed to await the results of the NCC review on 'A' boards before considering any further action on that. The Clerk was asked to write to BT and NCC regarding the green utility box at the junction of Eastern Way and Darras Road to see if it could be moved as it was creating a traffic hazard.

## CEMETERY COMMITTEE

The Committee discussed at its meeting on February 9th various matters including the appointment of a landscape architect to draw up a landscaping proposal for the cemetery which, if agreed, would

be carried out in phases. Decoration or gardens on graves in contravention of the cemetery regulations was also discussed and the Clerk was asked to write to funeral directors asking them to reinforce this with clients who wished to use the facility.

## HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed the following recommendations from the Highways Working Party's meeting on February 13th: making all 10 vehicle activated signs permanent in the future, subject to funding information and a timetable being presented to a future meeting; requesting the removal of a grit bin at Merton Way shopping area being used as a litter receptacle.

## ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed a recommendation from the Working Party which met on February 16th to approve the lowest quotation for abutment works at bridge 2 in the park as a matter of urgency to be funded from contingencies. The Council also agreed to accept the gift of an otter sculpture for the park subject to obtaining the necessary approvals from third parties and agreeing a suitable location.

## PUBLIC TOILETS, THORNHILL ROAD

The Environment Working Party, having reviewed the various suggested layouts for the refurbishment of the public toilets on Thornhill Road, recommended a two toilet option for male and female use that would also be suitable for disabled users and would also include nappy changing facilities in each. Discussions had been held with the contractor who had submitted the lowest quote to establish a price for the works. Discussions are ongoing in respect of the roof and a structural engineer has been appointed to examine the roof and report on its condition. A further report on this item would be presented when available.

Councillors approved the suggested layout of two toilets and also confirmed the appointment of the contractor subject to suitable financial information being available.

## NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Coun Dodd reported on the budget that had been agreed by the County Council covering a two year period. He reported that the car park at the back of Merton Way had been resurfaced and marked out and stated that some funding would be spent on resurfacing Thornhill Road. Coun Dodd also reported on his attendance at the recent LMAPS meeting, which will be held bi-monthly at Hexham and Prudhoe from April.

## NEWCASTLE AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Coun Butcher presented a report regarding her attendance at the above meeting held on March 3rd, reporting that the Airport - which is celebrating its 80th anniversary on July 26th - had been voted top UK airport for 2014 in the Wanderlust magazine.

## MAYOR'S REPORT

### Mayor's Diary

A list of events and meetings attended by the Mayor during February was circulated. The Mayor referred to the meeting organised by the Community Trust that had been well organised and reported the volunteer lunch at Merton Hall had also been well organised and attended by over 40 volunteers.

### Review of subsidised public transport services

The Mayor referred to this review being carried out by the County Council and asked that councillors submit any comments to the Clerk by March 23rd so a response could be submitted to NCC by March 26th. The 74 and 79 services were both under review and comments had already been received from a resident who was concerned at the possible loss of the services.

*This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on March 11th.*





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# Ponteland Community High School Report

## Zhēn niú!

**Sixth former George Hunter is off on an all expenses trip to Beijing after winning the HSBC British Council Mandarin Speaking Competition.**

George won the regional heats last December, qualifying for the national final, held at the British Museum in London.

The Year 12 student delivered a dynamic two minute presentation and showed confidence in the question and answer session that followed, impressing judges with his natural and immediate responses to the translation task.

George, who beat 11 other students from various private and grammar schools across the country, visits China at Easter with a member of the British Council.

He said: "It was an incredible experience which I will never forget. I met so many amazing people. I can't wait to enter another competition!"



You can see George's performance here:  
[dropbox.com/s/0ye82ezp1j9q0v8/Manadarin%20Speaking%20Competition.mp4?dl=0](https://dropbox.com/s/0ye82ezp1j9q0v8/Manadarin%20Speaking%20Competition.mp4?dl=0)

## Bea summoned to Parliament



**Year 12 student Bea Holliday spent a day in the House of Commons shadowing MP Guy Opperman as part of an event marking International Women's Day.**

Bea was taken on a tour of the Houses of Parliament and attended an afternoon reception with the Speaker of the House in his State Apartments where she met other students, MPs and business leaders.

## Students entertain younger pupils for World Book Day



**Students brought characters to life as they marked World Book Day reading and performing for younger children from Ponteland schools.**

Sixteen sixth formers went into Darras Hall First School and Ponteland First School to read to classes and direct fun book-based activities, while sixth form drama students performed in the High School for Belsay First School.

Richard Coates Middle School pupils also paid a visit, joining year 9s in the school library for a workshop on characterisation.

## Busy Bea organises charity event



**Aside from her Parliamentary duties, busy Bea Holliday also took time to organise and run a charity day for the British Heart Foundation.**

The school was bathed in a sea of red as every student donned a red outfit in support of the charity's 'Wear it. Beat it' day.

Activities included cake sales and a raffle, raising an amazing £1,800 for the charity.

Bea said: "I loved organising the event for the second time. It was brilliant to see the school come together as a community and support a charity very close to my heart."



# Parents win reprieve for children's centre

## Parents campaigning to save a threatened children's centre in Ponteland have won a reprieve.

Northumberland County Council has agreed to postpone the proposed closure of the Sure Start centre in Thornhill Road for 12 months while officers explore ways of providing children's services on a more commercial basis.

The centre, open Mondays to Thursdays, provides a range of services for hundreds of families with children aged under five including drop-in sessions and other activities for children and carers, as well as advice on health, childcare and early learning.

It also has close links with health visitors, midwives, nursery nurses, childminders, schools, day nurseries, speech and language therapists and others, and attracts families from as far afield as Belsay, Matfen and Stannington.

Based on the site of Ponteland First School, it is one of five the authority had earmarked for closure as part of a bid to make £44m in savings over the next two years due to Government austerity cuts. Proposals included providing services at alternative community venues.

Northumberland County Councillor, Robert Arkless, policy board member for children's services said: "In Ponteland there has been a greater level of community concern about ceasing to use the Sure Start building as a designated children's centre.

"After speaking with families, it has been agreed to defer changing the status of the building for up to 12 months to allow time to develop and establish new ways of delivering children's services in the community."

Parents held a demonstration at a council consultation event held at the centre as part of their campaign against closure. Mum-of-two and chairman of the centre's parent group, Maria Lunn, said: "We're thrilled that the council isn't going ahead with the closure and it is now looking into how it can make the building more of a community hub."



Photo by the Hexham Courant

## PARTNERSHIP SEEKS NEW CHAIRMAN

Due to the forthcoming retirement from office after eight years, Ponteland Community Partnership is looking for a new chairman to manage and coordinate its activities.

We meet ten times a year and cover such topics as regeneration, environment, transport, youth and the neighbourhood plan. If you feel that you can be of help, please come to our next meeting on Wednesday April 15th at 7pm in the small meeting room in Merton Hall.

The Chairman is formally elected for a period of 12 months at the Partnership's AGM in May each year. Alternatively, if you would like to join us in a committee member capacity, then you would be very welcome. For further information please contact our Hon Secretary Shirley Hill on (01661) 822540.

## PONT RFC WIN THE LEAGUE IN STYLE

Ponteland RFC have bounced back in style after last season's relegation, winning every single match to secure the Durham/Northumberland Division Two championship with four games to go.

The First XV secured promotion with a bonus point win against Wallsend on March 1st then won the league with an away win at South Tyneside College the following weekend before their runaway 143-7 victory at home to Hartlepool BBOB. They have three remaining matches to complete a superb season unbeaten.



Cover shot: Stu Weir in action at the Wallsend match. Photo by Keith Robertson.

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# Christmas comes twice for Pont pensioners

Christmas came twice for forty lucky pensioners who enjoyed turkey and all the trimmings at a special lunch at Merton Hall.

The annual event is laid on by Ponteland Rotary Club and this year young musicians from the high school performed for the diners.

Operations manager Christine Greenwell said: "It is something which the pensioners look forward to every year. It is a chance to meet up and chat as well as enjoying a lovely lunch."

Alan Hall, President of Ponteland Rotary, added: "If you saw the smiles on their faces and you heard the buzz and chatter from this gathering of elderly citizens of Ponteland, then you know that this Pensioners' Christmas Lunch is both worthwhile and very much appreciated."



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*Sunday 10th May 2pm-5pm*  
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## Easter Zoo club

**Monday 6th - Friday 10th April 10am-4pm**

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# Churches together in Ponteland

The Ponteland Churches wish you a peaceful and joyous Easter.

## UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, BROADWAY

### March 29th

Palm Sunday Service 10am

### April 3rd

Good Friday Service 10am

### April 5th

Easter Sunday Communion 10am

## HOLY SAVIOUR, MILBOURNE

### March 29th

Palm Sunday, Holy Communion 11.15am

### April 5th

Easter Sunday, Holy Communion 11.15am

## ST MATTHEW'S R.C. PONTELAND

### April 2nd

Holy Thursday Mass 8pm

### April 3rd

Good Friday Passion 5pm

### April 4th

Holy Saturday Easter Vigil 5pm

### April 5th

Easter Sunday Mass 10.30am

## METHODIST CHURCH, MILBOURNE

### April 3rd

Good Friday, Evening Service 7pm

### April 5th

Easter Day, Holy Communion 6.30pm

## ST MARY THE VIRGIN, PONTELAND

### March 29th

Palm Sunday Holy Communion 8am

Procession 10am

Starts at Richard Coates School and proceeds down Thornhill Road to Church (if you can't manage the walk, come to Church at 10am)

### Monday March 30th to Saturday April 4th

Compline & Address (Compline is the late night service of the monasteries half an hour of peace and quiet).

### April 2nd

Maundy Thursday Choral Communion 7pm  
Then a Vigil until Compline 9pm

### April 3rd

Good Friday, Morning Service 10.30am

### April 5th

Easter Sunday Holy Communion 8am  
Festal Communion 10am  
Compline and Address 6.30pm

## METHODIST CHURCH, PONTELAND

### April 2nd

Maundy Thursday Upper Room Communion 7.30pm

### April 3rd

Good Friday Service 10am

### April 5th

Easter Sunday Sunrise Service at Bolam Lake 6am  
Holy Communion 10am  
Evening Service 6.30pm

## RAISING OF THE CROSS

GOOD FRIDAY – 11.15AM

VILLAGE GREEN, PONTELAND

Refreshments in the Methodist Hall after the service

## TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE: THE LAIRAGE

The Lairage in Ponteland will be closed to traffic from its junction with the A696 from 9am to 1pm on Sunday March 29th.

The closure has been announced by Northumberland County Council and any enquiries should be made to its contact centre on 0845 600 6400 using the reference 3294



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# Shark dive lawyer close to fundraising target

**A Ponteland solicitor who took the plunge for a dive with Europe's largest collection of sharks is close to his £1,000 fundraising target.**

Paul Clark, of Avondale Road, Darras Hall, spent half an hour in a diving tank alongside 27 sharks measuring up to 10 feet long at Cheshire's Blue Planet Aquarium at Ellesmere Port on February 21st.

The jaw-dropping challenge was taken on by the 49-year-old father-of-two in a bid to raise the funds for the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign – this year's chosen charity at John Humble Legal Services in Hexham, where Paul is practice manager.

He was nominated by his wife Sarah due to his long term desire to take up scuba diving and swim with whales.

Paul said: "Getting in with them is not the first thought that enters your mind when you see the size of some of these beasts; the biggest at 320kg and over 10ft long glided by the observation window as we took a pre-dive tour.

"Once inside I came within touching distance of this and several other sharks and stingrays but I didn't at any time feel as though we were in any danger.

"Not only did I have the experience of a lifetime, but hope to reach my target of £1,000 for the charity over the next few weeks. Thanks so much to those friends and clients and contacts who have donated so generously to this worthy cause."

Paul, who is working towards a Professional Association of Diving Instructors qualification, can be sponsored online at [justgiving.com/PA-Clark/](http://justgiving.com/PA-Clark/)



## STREET LIGHTING SUGGESTIONS WANTED

**Residents are being asked by the Town Council's Highways Working Party to suggest areas where new or additional street lighting is required.**

Suggestions will be passed on to Northumberland County Council, which is consulting on a three year phased countywide programme of replacing street lights with LEDs in order to achieve cost savings and energy efficiencies, although there is no guarantee that all requests would be acted on.

All suggestions should be sent to Ponteland Town Council via email to [enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk) or by telephone (01661) 825092 or by post to Unit 1 Meadowfield Court, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Ponteland, NE20 9SD



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