

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Kidney op teenager off to
World Transplant Games

MP gets whip role after
record vote increase

Ponteland remembers
VE Day 70 years on

All the fun of the fair at Kirkley

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If you would like to submit an article, feature or advertise contact: T. (0191) 3408422 E. pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk W. Westray, 16 Sunnyside Lane, Cleadon Village, SR6 7XB.

Produced by Cian creative pr



All the fun of the fair at Kirkley Hall

Families enjoyed a fun day out at Kirkley Hall's new countryside festival.

The Northumberland College campus opened to the public for the day, offering a variety of stalls and land based displays including horse riding, tree climbing and dog agility.

Visitors were also able to access the Zoological Gardens, and teaching staff were available to offer careers advice and information on a wide variety of full and part-time courses.

For more information on events at Kirkley Hall visit: kirkleyhallzoo.co.uk

Photos by Trevor Walker





MP given whip's role after record vote increase



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Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman has been rewarded with a new role as a Government whip after securing the second highest increase in the Conservative vote in the country at the general election.

His majority more than doubled from 5,788 in 2010 to 12,031 – the largest since 1992 – with the Conservative vote for the Hexham constituency increased from 43.3% to 52.7%. This is the first time a majority of the vote has been achieved since the 1992 election.

Mr Opperman's success came at the expense of other candidates, with the Liberal Democrats' former Northumberland County Council leader Jeff Reid losing 23% of their support to poll under 7% and UKIP and the Green Party also in single figures, while Labour received

its lowest percentage of votes since 1987 with 24.9%.

And he has now been appointed an Assistant Government Whip, helping the Prime Minister maintain party discipline with a very small majority in the House of Commons.

The MP said: "It is an enormous privilege to have been re-elected by the people of Ponteland and Darras Hall to represent them once again as their Conservative Member of Parliament.

"I could not have achieved such an incredible result if it was not for my fantastic team of volunteers from across Ponteland. It is testament to all our efforts that we secured the second highest increase in the Conservative vote across the entire country."

FULL RESULT:

Guy Opperman (Con) 22,834
Liam Carr (Lab) 10,803
David Nicholson (UKIP) 4,302
Jeff Reid (Lib Dem) 2,961
Lee Williscroft-Ferris (Green) 2,445



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Mum's lifesaving kidney donation leads to Games call-up for Ryan

A Ponteland teenager whose mum donated him a kidney in a lifesaving operation has been called up to the World Transplant Games in Argentina this summer.

Ryan Dobinson was born with kidney dysplasia, a debilitating condition caused by malformation during foetal development, which meant a childhood with regular hospital visits and a strict diet and medication regime.

But aged 15 his kidneys failed, and with a tissue match ratio of 1:20,000 his chances of receiving a kidney from the Organ Donor Register were slim. Fortunately his mum Gill was found in tests to be a 97% kidney match. However, they had a blood incompatibility which would cause instant rejection.

Doctors at Newcastle's RVI therefore undertook a pioneering procedure whereby Ryan had to have all of Gill's antibodies stripped from his system and his blood effectively 'washed' with plasma exchange and a high dosage of steroids prior to the transplant.

Ryan initially struggled after the operation as he was diagnosed with post operative diabetes and the huge amount of steroids he was given to prevent rejection caused him to grow very quickly.

But taking part in his first transplant games in Belfast in 2011 eight months after his operation, he met other children and young adults going through the same experience which gave him a huge boost.

He has since competed in the Transplant Games in Sheffield in 2013 and at last year's event in Bolton he qualified for Team GB at this summer's World Transplant Games in South America with a 31m javelin throw. He has also competed in archery, discuss, long jump and ball throw.

Ryan trains weekly at King Edward VI School in Morpeth with Sport England coach Hemant Desai, where he is already throwing beyond the javelin world record which stands at 37m.

As part of Team GB, Ryan is also taking part in four designated training days in Coventry with the rest of the team, where he is being given additional coaching from Transplant Sport.



The Transplant Games is coming to Newcastle/Gateshead on July 30th - August 2nd and Ryan will be competing here before he leaves for Argentina on August 20th.

Looking back to Ryan's illness, Gill, an employer engagement officer at Barnardo's, said she did not hesitate to agree to the kidney operation: "The last year before the transplant Ryan's health deteriorated drastically, with him just managing to maintain going to High School.

"I was more worried about his health than my own and didn't really stop to consider the implications of this on me; you just do it for your children."

Ryan, who lives with mum Gill and older brother Andrew, 24, at the family home in Elmwood Drive and works at the local Sainsbury's supermarket, added: "I feel really grateful to my mum for giving me her kidney; it has given me a new lease of life.

"There are people that I know who have not been as lucky as me to get a transplant, so I feel very special. To be

involved in Transplant Sport has changed my life and to have the opportunity to represent Team GB is a huge honour for me."

Ponteland Mayor Carl Rawlings has donated £250 from his allowance and said: "I think Ryan's story is inspirational and he is an achiever with a great desire to represent his country. Representing Team GB is an honour for Ryan, his family and for Ponteland and as Ryan has to raise a large amount of funds, it is a pleasure to make a small donation from the Mayor's Allowance towards Ryan's participation in the World Transplant Games in Argentina. Good luck and best wishes to Ryan."

Ponteland restaurant Fratelli is hosting a charity event with a special menu on Tuesday June 9th to help Ryan raise the £2,500 he needs to cover his travel and accommodation expenses for Argentina. To find out more contact Gill on 07939 227475. Donations can also be made at justgiving.com/Ryan-Dobinson/

Lifesaver: Ryan Dobinson with mum Gill Childs.
Photo courtesy of ncjMedia Ltd.



Speeding drivers warned

By PC Rob Anderson
Ponteland Neighbourhood Beat Manager



In the period between April 13th and May 14th we have had nine crimes recorded for the Ponteland area.

These break down to the following offences:

- One make off without payment
- Two thefts from motor vehicles
- One theft of a motor vehicle
- One damage to property
- Two thefts of property
- One theft from a shop
- One assault.

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

The damage to property relates to a row of plant pots on a low wall outside The Badger public house which were damaged between the hours of midnight and 5am on Sunday April 25th. If you have any information regarding this could you please contact the police.

I have been asked by the shop owners on Merton Way to point out the parking restrictions on Thornhill Road and the two car parks either side of the shops. These restrictions have been imposed by Northumberland County Council and they enforce them regularly. Please check the time you leave your vehicle and make sure you park within the bays.

Within the last few months we have had several road traffic collisions at the junction of Darras Road and Western Way. The road safety of this area is being looked at to see if it can be made safer for drivers and pedestrians.

Community Speedwatch volunteers are helping to tackle speeding in Ponteland and surrounding areas. Launched early in 2014, the volunteers have been monitoring the speed of motorists on roads in the area.

Community Speedwatch sees members of the local community volunteer to monitor the speed on roads where concerns have been raised. Anyone caught driving above the limit is sent a letter warning them they have been caught - those who are persistently caught speeding will be visited by a police officer.

Over the past three months, volunteers have spent 10 hours monitoring 1,300 vehicles in Ponteland and the surrounding area. Of these, 125 motorists were found to be driving above the speed limit and received a warning letter.

For more information about Community Speedwatch visit the 'Working for Us' section of the Northumbria Police website at www.northumbria.police.uk

If you would like some crime prevention advice, please contact PC 613 Davison or myself, PC 395 Anderson, on 01.

Local police surgeries will be held on the following dates:

- PC Rob Anderson June 6th 10am - 11am Waitrose, Ponteland
- PC Rob Anderson June 6th 11.30am - 12.30pm Co-op, Broadway

- SC Jon Gray June 13th 9.30am - 10.30am Merton Hall, Ponteland
- PC Lee Davison June 27th 11.30am - 12.30pm at Belsay village shop

Engagement days for the Ponteland area are as follows:

- Belsay June 17th 6pm - 8pm
- Merton Way, Ponteland June 24th 10am - 12noon
- Broadway, Ponteland June 24th 1pm - 3pm.

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

Ponteland Greenbelt Group AGM

Supporters are invited to attend the AGM on Wednesday June 24th from 6.30pm to 7.30pm in the side lounge at the Memorial Hall.

If you are interested in becoming more involved and wish to join the committee, please contact us via the website for a nomination form at www.pontelandgreenbelt.co.uk



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Children enjoy Punch & Judy at last year's event. Photo by Trevor Walker.



PSG win the cup!

Ponteland Saint Germain U13s players are celebrating after winning the 2015 Central Youth Division Cup.

Will Scott grabbed both goals in the 2-0 victory over Kingston Park to secure the first silverware of a successful season for PSG, which has also seen the team challenging for the title in the top division of the Pinpoint League.

Ponteland United Head of Foundation coach Adrian Gray has managed the team since the players started at U7s, and is assisted by Mark Shepherd. Sponsored by Newcastle Airport, the team includes talented boys from Ponteland, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear and Durham – one is currently on trial at NUFC.

Adrian said: "It's been an excellent season - the boys have been superb and certainly deserved the trophy."

Families invited to Party in the Park

Families are once again invited to enjoy one of Ponteland's biggest annual events – the Party in the Park – which takes place on Sunday June 7th.

It will be opened by the Rev Hubert Jicha III from Maryland, USA at 1.30pm, and entertainment includes Darras Hall First School, Ponteland Community Band and the Jill Errington Dance School.

The event is as usual organised by the Christian Churches together in Ponteland: St Mary's; St Matthews Catholic Church; Ponteland Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

The objective is to create a social gathering for the families and children of Ponteland and to support local charities. In recent years these have included Scouts and Brownies, Boys Brigade and Leonard Cheshire Disability.

Admission costs £1 (children under 5 free).



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Vandals trash pub's floral display



Mindless vandals trashed a horticultural display at a popular Ponteland pub just days after it was completed by one of its regulars.

Former paratrooper Ken Witherall, from Brunswick Green, has also worked as a part-time gardener at the Badger for the past few years and came up with the idea to put floral pots along the perimeter wall by the main road.

But some time during the night of Friday April 24th they were all thrown off the wall and left smashed on the ground, to the anger and disbelief of the pub's landlords and locals.

Manageress Joanna Drummond, who has run the pub with husband Peter for 15 years, said: "Ken is a dad, grandad, ex-para, friend of the Badger and friend to everyone. He is 71 years old and spent all his own time making improvements for everyone to view. And some mindless individuals smashed all his hard work. We were all so upset about it."

The plants have been replaced at a cost of hundreds of pounds and anyone with information should contact Northumbria Police on 101 ext-69191 quoting reference 356250415.

Landlord Peter Drummond with the broken pots and a message for the vandals responsible. Photo courtesy of ncjMedia Ltd.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



It isn't just builders causing parking problems, according to one resident writing to this month's letters page...

Not just builders causing parking problems

How I empathise with Sundus Hallam and the concern over inconsiderate parking on the estate.

But the problem isn't simply down to contractors, but thoughtless residents too. At the other end of Runnymede Road, a large white van can be found outside a home on the main road causing inconvenience every day. I've seen countless near misses caused by this.

The end of Moor Lane often looks like a car park, with a line of cars dangerously blocking the give way sign.

What I find frustrating is that almost every home has a large driveway, so why the need to park on the highway?

I would also like to know why builders who live on Darras Hall think they can park their business vehicles outside their homes. Imagine if we all adopted this selfish approach?

One of the nice aspects of the estate is its lack of yellow lines but, unless people start

parking properly, maybe we should start asking if yellow lines might be the solution?

Dan Keen
Middle Drive
Darras Hall

Volunteers sought to help plan Memorial Hall centenary improvements

Ponteland Memorial Hall and the associated war memorial were funded by public subscription to commemorate those local men who had fought and, in many cases, died in the Great War 1914-1918.

The hall opened its doors to the community in January 1922.

Prior to the centenary celebrations in seven years' time, the hall committee is looking to undertake a programme of improvements and development that will raise the standard of the building to a level that will give the local community confidence that it will last well into its second century.

If this is to happen, the committee needs a number of active new members who will lead a programme of fundraising and building improvement. Volunteers with experience and/or knowledge in either or both of these areas would be particularly welcome. Otherwise, enthusiasm and a willingness to get involved and see the project through are essential requirements.

The committee is also seeking a new Honorary Treasurer who would be a key member of the centenary project group. This role requires a commitment of 2-4 hours per week. Some accountancy/book-keeping experience is desirable but not essential as guidance can be given.

Volunteers who would like to make an important contribution to their local community should contact the hall by email infpmh@yahoo.co.uk or telephone (01661) 822603 or by calling in to the hall during office hours Mon 2pm-4pm, Tues 10am-12noon, and Fri 2pm-4pm.

David Cobb
Treasurer
Ponteland Memorial Hall

July issue deadlines: Delivery of the July issue will start on Monday June 29th and be completed by Friday July 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Friday June 12th. If you are aware of any missed properties please contact the editor at 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 July 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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What's on...

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 to 12noon. Membership is free. Contact Ros.Markham@northumberland.gov.uk or (01661) 823594.

Ponteland U3A

Our speaker at the monthly meeting on Wednesday June 3rd is Freda Thompson. Her topic is 'Sons of the Desert'. We meet in St Mary's Church Hall at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month. Visitors are welcome. No charge. Interested in our activities? Come to a monthly meeting, visit our website at www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or ring the membership secretary on (01661) 822225. Our July meeting will be on July 1st.

Kirkley WI

Kirkley WI members are intrigued by the title of Barry Mead's forthcoming, talk 'There is more to a needle than meets the eye'. Their curiosity will be satisfied when he visits on Wednesday June 3rd at 7pm. The monthly competition is opportunity for more nimble fingered members to bring along a piece of embroidery to be judged by the speaker. New members and guests are always very welcome to come to meetings usually held at 7pm on the first Wednesday of the month in the Oak Room at Kirkley Hall.

Party in the Park

This year's event will be on Sunday June 7th at 1.30pm and will be opened by Hubert Jicha III from Maryland, USA. Entertainment includes Ponteland Community Band and the Jill Errington Dance School. Admission £1 (children under 5 free). See article on p8.

Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers have organised walks on the following dates in June: Sunday 7th from Powburn, and Sunday 21st from Rothbury. There will also be Wednesday walks on the 10th and 24th. 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 Village WI

On Tuesday June 9th we are welcoming Doreen Blevins and Brenda Houlison to give a talk on the Alnwick Poison Garden. We are a warm and friendly WI and welcome new members and visitors for a girly night with a difference. We meet on the second Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. For more information please contact us via email: pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or on our Facebook page 'PontelandVillageWI'.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

Meeting on Wednesday June 10th in Ponteland Memorial Hall at 2pm. Demonstrator Pam Greenhill AD 'Seasonal Splendour'. Tea/coffee/ cake. Visitors welcome cost £5.

Talks at Kirkley Hall

Friends of Kirkley Hall would welcome members of the public to two talks taking place in the Grade II listed building at Kirkley Hall. Joanne Newbury, Learning Manager of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Washington, will be talking on June 10th about the work involved in saving the wetlands. On July 15th Kay Cooke will talk about Diston Physic Garden, its heritage, key players, pioneering research and ambitions. Both talks start at 7pm and a charge of £5 is made to non-members.

The Bridge at Ponteland Methodist Church

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 are meeting at Ponteland Methodist Church hall on Sunday June 14th at 9.45am, Sunday June 21st at 9.45am and Sunday June 28th at 9.45am. Check out our stall at Party in the Park on June 7th. For more info email us at thebridge.ponteland@gmail.com or phone 01661 822057. Find us on Facebook as 'The Bridge at Ponteland Methodist Church'.

Ponteland Embroiderers' Guild

A full day workshop is being held on Monday June 22nd. For further information contact the Secretary. Meetings are held in the Memorial Hall, Darras Road on the fourth Monday of each month from 2pm to 4pm (on Bank Holidays the meeting is held the previous Monday). Membership of the Branch and

the Embroiderers' Guild to open to all, from the leisure stitcher to the talented professional and keen student, everyone whatever their level of experience is welcome at meetings and workshops. Visitor fee (£4). Contact eg_ne_ponteland@btinternet.com or (01661) 881395.

Music in the Park

The popular free annual event returns to Ponteland Park on Sunday June 28th from 2.30pm to 5.30pm. BBC weather presenter Paul Mooney is once again opening the event, with music from Rendezvous Jazz Band, North Tyneside Steel Band, Ponteland Community Band, The Ringtones and Gaynor Marie. See advert on page 13.

Bird spotting walk

The Ponteland branch of Northumberland Wildlife Trust is organising a 'bird spotting walk' on July 3 at Watergate Park and woods off the A692 near Sunnyside. Don't worry about how to get there. Meet at the Memorial Hall car park at 10am and fill up cars. The walk will be led by well-known birder John Almond and should last for about an hour. Numbers limited to 20, either members or friends, so please send names to Rita Pearce on (01661) 825816. Non-members pay the usual £2.

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.

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

Ponteland Methodist Church Tuesdays 11am-11.45am
St John's Church, Kingston Park Tuesdays 2pm-2.45pm
Ponteland United Reformed Church Thursdays 9.30am-10.15am

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ELECTION OF MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR

Councillor Carl Rawlings and Councillor Mrs Joyce Butcher were both re-elected unanimously as Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively for 2015-16.

VE DAY – MAY 8TH

The Deputy Mayor referred to the service that had been held on Friday May 8th to commemorate the 70th anniversary of VE Day, which had been very well organised by Reverend Peter Barham. The Council agreed to give a donation to the church of £150 in appreciation of their assistance with the VE Day commemoration. See article on p14.

GRANT APPLICATION – COMMUNITY ACTION NORTHUMBERLAND

The Town Council approved a grant of £150 following the annual application from Community Action Northumberland in view of the excellent work the organisation carried out on behalf of village halls in the county.

APPOINTMENT OF PARK CONTRACTOR

The Council agreed to delegate the appointment of the new contractor for the Park to the Clerk in consultation with Councillors Mrs Butcher and Ramsay who would be part of the interview panel for this post.

FLOOD RESILIENCE PLANNING

Members of the Town Council have held two meetings with a consultant regarding flood resilience planning, one including an officer from Northumberland County Council's Flooding and Coastal Erosion Risk Management team. The Town Council agreed for a further meeting to be held with the consultant with a view to her working with the Town Council to develop a flood resilience plan for Ponteland. A Working Party will be set up to carry out this development work.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Highways Working Party met on April 10th and informed the Council that the permanent speed indicator signs agreed for the A696 and Western Way should be installed within the next two weeks.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Working Party had met on April 27th and the Council agreed the following recommendations:

- approve the revised quotation received for refurbishment of the public toilets on Thornhill Road and to monitor the situation relating to the toilet roof.
- carry out some further works to supplement the work already carried out on Coates Green to open up the view of the commemorative oak from the Main Street.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Councillor Dodd reported on various changes taking place at Northumberland County Council in relation to the committee process. The number of scrutiny committees is increasing from four to six, the number of area committees is increasing and the new central committee would cover Ponteland, Prudhoe and Morpeth. As previously reported there were changes to the planning process and the committee structure for planning would also be changing, with more applications dealt with under officer delegation. The planning committees for Ponteland would be held at Morpeth. The Town Council agreed it would need to keep a watching brief on the planning system and how this affected their own Planning Committee in terms of frequency of meetings etc.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor's Diary

A list of events and meetings attended by the Mayor during April was circulated to the Council. The Mayor also reported on an email received from the family of Ryan Dobinson, a young man who was hoping to represent Great Britain at the World Transplant Games to be held in Argentina in August. Ryan had been successful in gaining medals at four UK annual games and also gold medals competing in Australia at the Federation Transplant Games in Melbourne. The Mayor had agreed to give a donation of £250 to Ryan and the Council wished him every success at the games. See article on p6.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on May 13th

STREET LIGHTING SUGGESTIONS WANTED

Residents are again 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 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 or by telephone (01661) 825092 or by post to Unit 1 Meadowfield Court, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Ponteland, NE20 9SD.

VOLUNTEER LITTER PICKERS SOUGHT

By Mayor Carl Rawlings

There are about a dozen residents of Ponteland who pick up litter in their street as volunteers and the Town Council thanks them on behalf of the community.

Litter annoys people, harms animals and blights our environment. In recent years, Ponteland has won gold medals in the Northumbria in Bloom awards and we want to keep winning but litter could harm our future prospects. So, we are campaigning to reduce litter and are seeking more volunteer litter pickers.

Northumberland County Council (NCC) is making progress on litter collection and littering is attracting more fixed penalty notices. It is launching a campaign entitled 'Love Northumberland Hate Litter' that aims to reduce the amount of litter dropped as well as increasing the amount picked up. The Town Council supports the campaign and the aim is to increase awareness in the community, schools and businesses of the need to reduce litter.

Volunteers report that picking litter is good for the environment, it's fresh air and exercise, and the neighbours will like you for it!

If you would like to volunteer in your street, please contact the Town Council and ask for a litter picking stick which is supplied free: email enquiries@ponteland-tc.gov.uk or tel (01661) 825092 or write to Ponteland Town Council, Unit 1 Meadowfield Court, Meadowfield Industrial Estate, Ponteland, NE20 9SD.

MUSIC IN THE PARK

Sunday 28 June - 2.30pm to 5.30pm
Ponteland Park

Opening by: **BBC weatherman**

Paul Mooney

Music from:

Rendezvous Jazz Band

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Ponteland Community Band

The Ringtones **Gaynor Marie**

Bring a picnic and enjoy a fantastic
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In the event of bad weather, the event will be cancelled.

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Ponteland remembers VE Day 70 years on

By Coun Robin Ramsay MBE

Villagers recalled their wartime experiences at a special church service to mark the 70th anniversary of VE Day.

Members of St Mary's Church congregation who were children or young adults on May 8th 1945 shared their recollections of the great day at the service.

They were joined by more than 100 children from Richard Coates Middle School who had produced an illustrated power point display with pictures of the end of war celebrations, with music from the school orchestra.

After the service, flowers were laid by Deputy Mayor Joyce Butcher and two pupils from Richard Coates at the foot of the oak tree on Coates Green which was planted in 1945 by pupils of Coates Endowed School.

That evening a small number of residents braved the heavy rain to witness the lighting of the beacon on the roof of the church at 9.32pm by Town Council contractors Iain Clough and Michael Champion.

On Saturday morning the commemoration continued with the church bells ringing for three hours, along with cathedrals and churches up and down the country.

A truly memorable event.

Photos by Trevor Walker



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Ponteland Community High School Report

Close shave for fundraising Lizzie

A work experience placement at Newcastle University's Institute for Ageing led to a close shave for a campaigning sixth former.

For Lizzie Kolenda was so moved by what she learned about dementia during her time at the institute's campus for ageing and vitality, she decided to part company with her beloved long locks to raise funds for research into the debilitating disease.

The 16-year-old, from Kirkheaton, was sponsored by friends and family to have her hair shaved off for Alzheimer's Research UK at an event she organised at Ponteland High School on May 8th.

Lizzie was shorn by hairdressers from Level 2 in Merton Way who had volunteered their services as dozens of friends looked on, some of whom had organised a bake sale and a henna stall to boost the coffers.

She said: "If I had to choose a favourite part of myself, it would be my hair. It's been curly, straight, wavy, long, short, very short, hazel, chestnut, mahogany, cherry, berry, electric pink, royal blue, turquoise, baby blue, sea green, tangerine orange, violet and bleach blonde!

"Those who know me, know I love my hair. It has always been the main statement of who I am, and I spent hours with products and new styles and hair dye. I wanted to make a statement to everyone how much Alzheimer's Research UK meant to me and



I wanted to make a sacrifice I guess, and the shock factor meant people would be more likely to donate.

"Some said I was being very brave, but really it is a small sacrifice when compared to all the good it will do."

Lizzie is about to complete her first year of her A-levels in biology, chemistry and physics and hopes to go on to study biomedical sciences at university.

So far more than £850 has been raised towards her £1,000 target and further donations can be made at: mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/lizziekolenda1

School gains Youth Sport Trust Silver Partner status

Ponteland High School is to become a Youth Sport Trust Silver Partner School in recognition of its commitment to PE and school sport.

As a partner it will receive additional training and development opportunities and can become involved in national education and sport initiatives.

Find out more about the Youth Sport Trust at www.youthsporttrust.org

George enjoys Beijing experience

Talented linguist George Hunter has enjoyed an all expenses trip to Beijing after winning the British Council Mandarin Speaking Competition.

The Year 12 student beat 11 other students in the national final, held at the British Museum in London, after delivering a dynamic two minute presentation and showing confidence in the question and answer session that followed.

On returning to school after the Easter trip, George said: "We stayed at the High School affiliated to Peking University in the Haidian district to the north of the city. It was brilliant to be allowed to stay in the on-campus accommodation and use their facilities.

"After being paired with one of the students at the school, we were given the opportunity to shadow them and participate in their classes. This was an interesting experience, however after



attending one of the Chinese lessons, I realised that I'm far from fluent!

"As well as attending lessons, we visited the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, Temple of Heaven, Summer Palace, National Museum of China and many other historical and famous landmarks.

"I had an amazing time and met some very friendly, interesting people who I will keep in touch with. Participating in the competition is an experience I will never forget."

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Good turnout for Stepping into Spring event

Organisers of an event which showcased events and activities for the over-50s in Ponteland were pleased with the turnout.

Ageing Well in Ponteland's 'Stepping into Spring' event took place at St Mary's Church Hall on Saturday May 9th.

Exhibitors included Merton Hall, the Friends of Ponteland Park, the Rotary Club, Ramblers, Age UK, the Alzheimer's Society, the Churches of Ponteland, and Ponteland U3A, while visitors could also talk to health and wellbeing experts about hearing loss and have their blood pressure checked.

Students from Ponteland High School welcomed visitors with teas and coffees, and the Ponteland Hopper bus service was in operation providing free transport to and from the event.

Ageing Well thanked sponsors, the Rotary Club of Ponteland and Ponteland Lions for their support. Coun Veronica Jones, one of the organisers, said: "We were very pleased with the number of visitors who attended. It was a great opportunity for people to come along and see what is on offer in Ponteland."

School 'outstanding' in all areas: C of E inspection verdict

A Ponteland school is celebrating an outstanding inspection report from the Church of England.

Richard Coates C of E Middle School had a SIAMS inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) in March to evaluate its distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England Middle School.

It was graded "outstanding" in the newly published report in all four areas:

- How well does the school meet the needs of all learners, through its distinctive Christian character?
- What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?
- How effective is the Religious Education?
- How effective are the leadership and management of the school?

Headteacher Heather Cape said: "I am delighted that the SIAMS inspection has recognised the many outstanding features of Richard Coates C of E Middle School. The report reflects our distinctive ethos built upon Christian values and places the achievement of each child as a unique individual at the centre of all we do."



Twice as many beers and twice as many people at this year's beer festival.

Huge thirst for event to become annual fixture

Ponteland Beer Festival is set to return for a third year after more than 2,000 people attended the two day event at the end of April.

The attendance doubled the numbers last year, to the delight of organiser Andy Maidwell, who said: "We were delighted with such a huge turnout and it has rubber-stamped our plans to go ahead again next year.

"The rugby club is at the heart of the community and this is a festival for everyone. Once again we had great support from local businesses, particularly Ponteland Business Network, and a host of other sponsors as well as past and present players.

"This was hugely appreciated and certainly shows there is a thirst for the event to be an annual fixture."

There were 104 real ales on offer, along with 25 ciders, a range of lagers, a Prosecco bar as well as live music. The festival was held in a giant marquee behind the 1st XV pitch at the ground behind Ponteland Leisure Centre.

Ponteland RFC was last month promoted to the Durham and Northumberland Division One.


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Darras Hall couple navigate 70 years of marriage

A couple who met at a dance hall during World War Two and married the week after VE Day have just celebrated their platinum wedding anniversary.

Doug and Thelma Burns, of Stonehaugh Way, Darras Hall, met in their home city Leeds and married in St Michael and All Angels Church, Headingley, on May 16th 1945.

Civil servant Doug joined the RAF as a Navigator when war broke out in 1939, serving as a Flight Lieutenant.

The couple later relocated to Newcastle and Doug, 94, continued as a civil servant at DHSS Longbenton (overseas branch) while Thelma, 91, was a teacher at Cowgate Infant and Junior School in Fenham.

In 1981, Doug received the MBE from the Queen for his work on migrant workers as UK delegate to the EEC in Brussels.

The couple moved to Ponteland following their retirements in the early 1980s and since retiring they have travelled worldwide, visiting many countries. Closer to home, they have enjoyed membership of The National Trust, English Heritage, Northumberland Wildlife Trust and the Local History Society.

They have two daughters, retired teachers Denise, 64, and Michelle, 61, who both live in Northumberland, two granddaughters Helen and Louise, grandson Stephen and a great grandchild is due in September.

Following a visit from the Mayor Carl Rawlings with a beautiful bouquet and card from Ponteland Town Council, Doug and Thelma celebrated their milestone 70th wedding anniversary with a family meal at The Beresford Arms, Whalton.

They both agree that 'give and take' on both sides is the secret to a long and happy marriage!



Photo by Trevor Walker



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