

pontnews&views

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Kitty celebrates 105th birthday

County council urged to
shelve plans to relocate library

Normandy veteran receives
Legion d'Honneur

Community in uproar over joint campus plan

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Ponteland remembers its heroes

Ponteland residents of all ages braved the wet weather to once again pay tribute to local service personnel who have died in battle over the last century.

The annual Remembrance Sunday service was held at the Memorial Hall following a parade from the leisure centre.

Those in attendance included representatives of the Armed Forces,

veterans, army and RAF cadets, Ponteland's churches, fire and police services, local community groups, Ponteland councillors, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland Bryony Gibson and members of the public.

Ponteland Mayor Carl Rawlings, who laid a wreath on behalf of the town council, said: "I don't think the damp weather put people off because there was a big attendance for the service at the war memorial.

"The service was once again excellently conducted by Rev Peter Barham and the number of wreaths laid was the largest I can remember for the Ponteland Remembrance services that I have attended."

Following the service, attendees gathered to enjoy refreshments in the Memorial Hall.

Photos by Pat Walker



New crackdown will see fines for illegal school run parking



PC Lee Davison, Ponteland Rural
Neighbourhood Beat Manager

During October there have been 22 crimes recorded for Ponteland and outlying area:

- Two burglaries to outbuildings - equipment and lead stolen (Belsay Hall)
- Burglary to garage - pedal cycle stolen (Woodside)
- Burglary to outbuilding - quad stolen (East Heddon)
- Two thefts from motor vehicle - diesel siphoned (Whalton)
- Theft of banner (Rotary Way)
- Damage to motor vehicle (North Road)
- Damage to cricket nets (Leisure Centre)
- Damage to lock (Mootlaw Quarry)
- Damage to window (Kirkley Hall)
- Damage to gate (Twizell)
- Assault (Eastern Way)
- Assault Police Officer (Callerton Lane)
- Three shoplifting (Co-op, Darras Hall)
- Communications offence
- Fraud (Whalton)
- Harassment (Collingwood Crescent)
- Public Order offence (Kirkley Drive)

A man has been arrested and charged for the Belsay Hall and linked offences, and

a woman has been arrested and issued with a caution for the assault on the police officer.

Telephone fraudsters

There have been a number of recent reports of spam emails and unsolicited phone calls where people have been asked to disclose personal information or provide money or bank details. You can take some simple measures to protect yourself. Your bank or the police will never phone to ask for your four digit card pin, your online banking password, to transfer money to a new account for fraud reasons, or send a courier to your home to collect your bank card. Remember fraudsters may already have basic information about you in their possession. Do not click or open unfamiliar links in emails or on websites. Make sure you install and use up-to-date anti-virus software. Regularly change passwords. For more advice visit: actionfraud.police.uk

Parking enforcement

There are regular complaints received about road safety outside schools, including speeding and inconsiderate parking. In

response the county council is introducing a parking enforcement vehicle to monitor school keep clear restrictions. Illegally parked vehicles will be issued with a Penalty Charge Notice.

Operation PawPaw

In October 45 vehicles were stopped and checked in the Stamfordham Road and Callerton Lane areas in a joint police operation with HMRC, DVSA and NCC and two warnings were issued to motorists for minor light defects and seven vehicles were found to be using red diesel unlawfully and fines were issued to the owners.

Police surgeries

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A new chapter for family-run estate agents

Well-established, Ponteland-based, Dobsons Estate Agents is extending its reach by opening a second office in Westerhope, and taking on new staff.

Dobsons Estate Agents opened its first office at Number One Broadway in Darras Hall, Ponteland, in 2002 and has since established a firm stronghold in one of the North East's most sought-after postcodes, thanks to its extensive knowledge of the area and personal, 24-7 service.

The firm was established by mother-of-four, Lynn Dobson, who followed in her father's entrepreneurial footsteps. Fred Dobson was the founder of the Ponteland-based Dobsons Sweets, which grew to be one of the largest family-owned confectionery manufacturers in the UK.

Although Lynn is still involved in the estate agency, she has now handed over the day-to-day running of the company to her daughter, Helen Nicholson. Her other daughter, Mary-Kate Mallon, is also employed within the company.

Helen is a business graduate from De Montfort University and also obtained a masters in Marketing from Northumbria University, before joining the family business.

As its company director, Helen is currently spearheading the growth plans

for Dobsons Estate Agents in order to extend the company's reach in the North East. The first phase was completed recently with the opening of a new office on Downend Road in Hillheads Estate, Westerhope which will provide residential sales and lettings in and around the area.

Helen said: "For me it was a natural progression to become part of the family business. I've seen mum put her heart-and-soul into building a strong brand and successful business and I'm very excited to be leading on the next chapter in our journey.

"We have been looking at expanding for a long time but, being a proud family-run business that goes above and beyond for our clients, we knew it was something that couldn't be rushed.

"We identified a prime location in Westerhope and with the property market beginning to pick up, we felt that now was the right time to move forward.

"We have a very experienced and knowledgeable team at Dobsons Estate Agents and everyone is fully committed to making the Westerhope office as successful and as well-known as our Darras Hall office."

Lynn Dobson added: "When I established the business, I had a clear vision to offer an exceptional level of service to our clients and I'm glad to see that Helen has embraced this ethos and is carrying it on as our brand expands."

The firm has also boosted its team with the appointment of a new apprentice, Abigail Charleton. And as expansion plans continue, they will be looking to build the team at Dobsons Estate Agents further with a range of new positions.

Dobsons Estate Agents offers sales and lettings services from its offices at One Broadway, Ponteland, and Downend Road in Hillheads Estate, Westerhope.

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Grand old lady of the Manor celebrates 105th birthday

For someone who was a sickly child, Kitty Stredder hasn't half done well!

For the Ponteland centenarian has just celebrated her 105th birthday.

Her remarkable achievement was marked by special birthday cards from the Queen and actor David Suchet, a former pupil of her late husband James, and a surprise visit and bouquet of flowers from the Mayor Carl Rawlings as she enjoyed her big day with family and friends at Ponteland Manor.

Kitty (née Price) was born on November 10th 1910 in Falstone, where her father Gus was the vicar, but two years later moved to Pembrokeshire where she spent WWI. She remembers well Armistice Day, when she climbed up the church tower and saw all the naval ships in Milford Haven decked out in flags and bunting.

Moving again to Hertfordshire, Kitty was sent to boarding school in Bexhill, Kent, where the sea air was supposed to do her good – and clearly did!

She started, but never finished, nursing

training and having a taste for adventure, she secured a job as a school matron in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1935 and travelled out alone by train and boat.

James Stredder was teaching at the same school and after a whirlwind courtship they became engaged. They returned to England in 1937 and married in 1938 - a marriage that was to last until 1991 when James died.

Various teaching jobs took the couple to Edinburgh, Ramsgate and Tonbridge where James became a housemaster and Kitty managed a team of staff including cooks and matrons. In 1957, James was appointed Headmaster of Wellington School, Somerset, where they spent 17 very happy years and where the Poirot actor was a pupil.

Kitty was a great support to James and considered her job to be looking after staff wives and their families and to represent the school in the town. She always says: 'He did the gown while I did the town!'

This included WVS Meals on Wheels, being on the local hospital management committee and treasurer of the local baby

clinic. In between she played a mean hand of bridge! Retiring in 1972, Kitty and James moved to Pembrokeshire, then Sussex, and finally to Hertfordshire.

In 1945, Kitty had a daughter, Diana, and now has two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. In 2009, Diana and her husband Peter moved up to Northumberland to be near their daughter Vanessa, of Ingoe, and Kitty came too, back to where she started all those years ago.

Diana, of Humshaugh, said: "Asked recently what she has done in her life, she said it had been a very ordinary life when in fact to most people it sounds pretty extraordinary! Her interest in others, her generous and loving personality and her Christian faith has never failed her and she has made many friends throughout her life.

"She says she has no idea what the secret is for such longevity but those that know her think it is the fact that she has such a positive attitude to life and can always see good in everything and everybody."



Community in uproar over joint campus plan

Opposition appears to be growing to Northumberland County Council plans to develop a 70-hectare green belt site for a new combined education and leisure campus and hundreds of new homes.

The authority has increased the allocation for housing in Ponteland for the period 2011 to 2031 in its revised Northumberland Local Plan Pre Submission Core Strategy and the accompanying Ponteland Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by over 40 per cent to 900 new homes, including 126 which have already been built.

An estimated 400 units are planned for the sites of the current Ponteland middle and high schools, leisure centre and fire station, which will be relocated to a new 2600-pupil community campus as part of the development of the area bordered by Callerton Lane, Mayfair Gardens, Fairney Edge, Cheviot View and Rotary Way in Ponteland.

The others will be built on the former police headquarters site (310 homes) and on a new area of land allocated between Callerton Lane and Willow Way (180 homes). A five hectare site just off the airport roundabout will also be safeguarded for relocation of Meadowfield industrial estate.

The authority's Core Strategy drop-in event at the Memorial Hall on Saturday November 7th, where the plans for the future development of the town were on show to generate feedback, attracted 718 attendees. The council conceded that most were opposed, with only a minority in favour.

NCC said that aside from the co-location of the new schools, other key issues raised and comments made included:

- residents' previous views had not been listened to
- there had been no consultation on the change in status of Ponteland from 'service centre' to 'main town'
- there was no justification for the loss of green belt and the number of new homes proposed for the town
- concern that the current infrastructure cannot cope with the existing level of development.

There were some people who did support the proposals for Ponteland as they considered there was a need for new development, but the council conceded these were “in the minority”. The feedback forms both submitted at and following the event are currently being analysed.

NCC had 19 planning officers and three schools and leisure officers at the event, as well as chief executive Steve Mason, director of planning and economy Geoff Paul, councillors Andrew Tebbutt and Paul Kelly from the Local Development Framework Cabinet Advisory Group and four technical advisers. It has emerged that Karen Ledger, who was head of planning and housing, has now taken early retirement from the council.

Ponteland Green Belt Group manned a stand at the entrance to the Memorial Hall to gather support for its opposition to the green belt development plans and advise members of the public on the kinds of questions and issues which could be raised.

Governing body slams school relocation plans

Further opposition has come from the governing body of Darras Hall First School, set to be relocated to the new joint first, middle and high school building in 2019, which has issued a scathing indictment on the handling of that proposal to date.

In a letter to NCC chief executive Steve Mason, Chair of Governors Dr Andy Large claimed governors had “not been given any educational rationale for the relocation of (the) school”.

The governing body claimed the move “will do irreparable damage to the community” and “will cause very significant and increased infrastructure and traffic difficulties for the schools”.

The letter continued: “Governors recognise the extremely strong opposition to the relocation project as it currently stands from within the school and wider local communities...significant concerns remain and Governors feel the relocation project has been badly managed, with poor communication to the Governing Body and a lack of transparency around the overall Local Plan.”

NCC was accused of “merely attempting to ‘cash in’ on our large site to realise their assets through providing a site for executive housing” and told “the scheme doesn’t appear fully thought through...and in our view represents poor use of a one and only opportunity to use the Green Belt land”.

The letter further accuses NCC of issuing a press release in advance of the public consultation which implied the school governing body’s approval of the plans, nullifying their assurances to parents that no decisions had been made on the relocation.

The county council stressed that its priority was providing the best quality educational and leisure facilities and said it had carried out extensive consultation with both the schools and wider community. Selling the current school sites was the only way it could fund new facilities, the authority said.

Coun Scott Dickinson, business chair at Northumberland County Council, said: “The council’s priority is ensuring that our young people have the best possible education. The proposal is to provide a brand new state of the art combined schools and leisure facility for the benefit of people in Ponteland.

“We have been working with the schools since May on this proposal and they have been directly involved in coming up with the design ideas; which include completely separate areas, including separate play areas, for each of the schools.

“We have been carrying out consultation with local residents as part of the core strategy and we will continue to involve the schools in the process. Following earlier feedback from the schools about the impact on traffic and access to the site, studies are already taking place.



“We have carried out extensive genuine consultation with the schools and local community in helping us to reach this stage and really welcome people’s views. Once this stage of consultation is over we will review the proposal based on feedback. Unfortunately this is only opportunity available to us to provide these new schools; releasing land they are currently built on to fund these exciting new facilities.”

Parents at Darras Hall First School have formed an action group to protest against the relocation plans and held a demonstration on Broadway on Wednesday November 18th.

In a statement issued by the group, mother-of-three Clare Lamplugh said: “I want my children to attend a school they can walk to safely and one that has strong roots within the local community where the children are nurtured and feel safe. We have this now and we don’t want to lose it. I think moving the school will rip the heart out of our local community.”

Parent Gavin Warrender added: “We are outraged by the council’s proposal...we love the school and want it to stay where it is so our children can continue to walk to school. Many of us feel so strongly we want to have our voices heard together as a group so we are campaigning fiercely to raise awareness of the proposals and the need to complain.”

The governing bodies at Ponteland High School and Ponteland Middle School did not wish to comment on the community campus plans.

The formal consultation period for the Northumberland Local Plan Pre Submission Core Strategy ran from October 11 to November 25.

This was the final opportunity for people to comment on the core strategy before it is submitted to a planning inspector for independent examination. Following this consultation the core strategy is scheduled to be submitted to the Government in March 2016 for examination, with adoption expected in autumn 2016. For more information visit: northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Plan.aspx

Visuals of the new community campus from Northumberland County Council. Parent demo photos by Trevor Walker.

Final resting place of Ponteland 'lost boy' found during Battlefields visit



Max Fawcus with RSM 'Reg' Perrin preparing for the last post ceremony at the Menin Gate



Ellis and Max locate the memorial of Samuel Battensby, Northumberland Fusiliers, of Collingwood Cottage, Ponteland, at Tynecot Memorial - another victim of Passchendaele 1917.

The final resting place of one of Ponteland Cottage Home's 'lost boys' was located during an awe inspiring visit by a local teacher and two pupils to the WWI battlefields.

As detailed in local author Muriel Sobo's book 'We will remember them', there are 16 Ponteland men who died in the 1914-18 Great War who are not commemorated on either the Memorial Hall obelisk or in St Mary's Church.

Their names are: Richard Simpson; Charles Burford; George Holmes; Philip McMasters; Christopher Stephen; Ernest Venus; Michael Ellison; Andrew Little; William Johnson; Ralph Johnson; William Ferguson; George Wilson; Henry Craven; Arthur Paterson; Charles Moor and Henry Moor.

The men had been residents at the residential cottage home, on the site of Bellway's new residential development Jameson Fields, which housed up to 300 children who often came from underprivileged backgrounds. Known locally as the 'Homers', the children attended Coates Endowed School and Ponteland Sunday School.

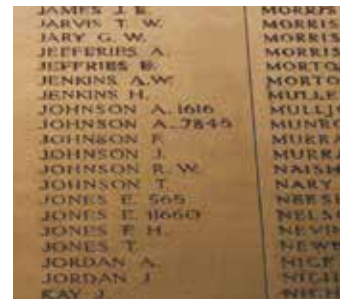
And during their visit to the battlefields of Belgium and Northern France, Andy Oglethorpe, Head of History at Ponteland Middle School, and Year 7 pupils Max Fawcus and Ellis Good resolved to try and locate the resting place of any of the Cottage Home boys.

But with more than 300 British cemeteries and memorials in the Western Front area alone, locating even one of the boys in a three day visit was challenging.

Andy, Max and Ellis attended the daily Last Post remembrance service at the Menin Gate memorial in Ypres,

where Max was chosen from the tour party of over 30 schools to present a wreath with British Army escort Regimental Sergeant Major 'Reg' Perrin of the Duke of Wellington regiment.

The huge memorial has the names of over 54,000 men of the British Imperial Army who died in the horrific battles of the Ypres salient and who were listed as missing in action.



RW Johnson of the Durham Light Infantry - a former Ponteland Cottage home boy.

They were delighted to locate here the name of former Cottage boy RW Johnson of the Durham Light Infantry, who died during the infamous Passchendaele offensive on June 12th 1917, and reflected on an inscription on the Menin Gate: "He is not missing. He is Here."

They also found the memorial of Samuel Battensby, Northumberland Fusiliers, of Collingwood Cottage, Ponteland - another victim of Passchendaele - at Tynecot Memorial.

Andy said: "As part of the Legacy 110 project, the middle school is challenged to present its story to a minimum of 110 people. The idea of this is if each participating school presents to over 110 people it will equal the total of the 850,000 men lost in the Great War. So if you are interested in our story and want to learn more about what we saw on our visit we would be happy to come to you and deliver our presentation."

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County council urged to shelve plans to relocate library

Users of Ponteland library are urging Northumberland County Council to shelve controversial plans to relocate its services to the town's leisure centre next year.

The council says it wants to close the library as part of its plan to make £44m of savings between 2015 and 2017 in response to central Government spending cuts.

It has pointed to successfully co-located and integrated library services elsewhere in Corbridge, Prudhoe, Wooler, Amble, Haltwhistle, Cramlington, Ashington, Seaton Valley and Blyth, and said there are also plans for joint library services in Alnwick, Berwick, Bedlington and Hexham.

Once the works have been carried out at the centre, there will be a single reception for library and leisure services. It is proposed to accommodate the books, public access computers and library advice service within the existing creche area, as well as utilising additional space in the foyer and corridor areas.

Plans are also being considered to include a creche service within the overall design, along with much-needed improvements to the toilet facilities.

The authority said relocation will allow the library service to benefit from using the wider leisure centre building, enabling extended opening times as a result of new staffing arrangements and the introduction of improved self-service terminals.

Ponteland library is currently open 39.5 hours a week over five days and at the new site users will be able to access resources seven days a week.

But the announcement of the proposed library closure has been met with dismay by users.

Local author Muriel Sobo, of Beech Court, Darras Hall, said: "This absurd location within the sports centre is not fit for purpose. It would considerably reduce the offering of books and other library services. How could anyone work or read in such an environment?"

"The library is an essential service well used by Ponteland people which we do not want moved. The dynamics of the community, built up over the generations, will be destroyed if it is moved."

The plans have also come under attack from Ponteland county councillor Peter Jackson, who said there is concern among the largely elderly population that the new location will be more difficult to get to on foot. He also questioned having a library next door to a noisy sports hall and swimming pool, and said it is already difficult to park at the leisure centre.

Coun Val Tyler, cabinet member for arts, leisure and culture, said: "The new developments in Ponteland will enable us to protect a highly-valued library service while integrating services in a way that makes them more accessible, more efficient to manage and sustainable, and which delivers value for money."

"Unfortunately, we have to make savings across all services because of central government cutbacks and this means changes to the way we deliver services, including library services."

See Your letters: p12



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Planned relocations of Ponteland library and schools are under attack in this month's letters...

Absurd new location for library is not fit for purpose

Northumberland County Council intends to move our library very soon to an area beside the swimming pool in the sports centre.

Yes, you read that correctly! Plans are afoot to put it in the foyer, the corridor and the crèche while they sort out further plans for the cut and paste job they want to do in Ponteland and move our schools and facilities from their present locations to sites off Rotary Way by 2019.

This is a hasty decision. It was not trailed in the Local Plan released to the press recently but in a separate press release on November 4th.

This absurd location within the sports centre is not fit for purpose. It is contrary to Policy 49 of the Core Strategy of the Northumberland Local Plan which states 'there should be strong resistance to the loss of community services and facilities unless an appropriate alternative is provided'.

What costings have been done for the necessary alteration of the premises and improved access? It would considerably reduce the offering of books and other library services.

What security would be in place to prevent 'disappearance' of books in such an open public space? Cars are needed to access the location and parking is already stretched. How could anyone work or read in such an environment?

Keep our library in place and serve the needs of Ponteland people who can easily reach this facility in the village centre. It is an essential service well used by Ponteland people which we do not want moved. The dynamics of the community, built up over the generations, will be destroyed if it is moved. Does the county council care?

Contact Nigel Walsh by email: nwalsh@activenorthumberland.org.uk or write to him at Northumberland County Council, Morpeth, NE61 2EF with your name and address to make your views known.

Muriel Sobo
Beech Court, Darras Hall

We'd be better off sticking with present buildings

I went along to the 'drop in' held in the Memorial Hall on November 7th. The County Council has apparently decided that three of our local schools need to be replaced and proposals for the new buildings were to be on view.

In the event I was more than a little shocked to discover that the proposal was for all three to be housed within a single building. Children between the age of three and 18 all turning up at the same front door.

Darras Hall First School and Ponteland Middle School had each been reconfigured as a line of classrooms set either side of a corridor that branched off a longer corridor that gave access to the High School accommodation.

This is not an attractive nor indeed a workable combination and is scant reward for organisations whose efforts have resulted in them being judged to be 'outstanding' by the Ofsted school inspectors.

Children need to be able to identify, and be proud of 'their school' and hardworking teachers deserve to have any success that has derived from their efforts to be ascribed to their particular establishment.

This design had all the charm of a Russian barracks and was reminiscent of the discredited secondary moderns that were put up before the war and subsequently replaced by the more enlightened approach to school design that evolved in the fifties. What is proposed here is very much a backward step.

To make matters worse all three schools were to be banished to the eastern extremity of the village. The prospect of over 2,000 children all turning up at Dobbies roundabout at the height of the morning rush hour does not strike me as being a workable combination.

If this is all that can be achieved given current constraints then better to stay with what we've got. They don't look to be in too bad a condition.

John Hague
High View, Darras Hall

Is car parking not important to county council planners?

As regards the Core Strategy and the planned huge increase in housing for Ponteland, I have been wondering just where the many hundreds of additional cars that this housing will generate will be able to park when visiting the village centre.

Ponteland centre is already overcrowded I personally cannot see where additional parking facilities can be created. However I am not a town planning officer.

Therefore I visited the NCC Core Strategy Pre-Submission Draft Consultation Event which took place in Ponteland on November 7th and I put my question re-additional car parking facilities in Ponteland to a very pleasant lady representing NCC named Jo-Anne Garrick.

She told me that the matter of additional parking in Ponteland had not yet been addressed and was still being looked at. I was surprised at her answer but chose not to shoot the messenger and quietly left.

On leaving the consultation event I thought to myself that it is surely incomprehensible for any organisation to invite members of the public along to an event to give their final comments on that organisation's proposals, at a time when that organisation itself is not aware of what its own proposals actually are.

Of course the answer may be that whilst I consider parking in Ponteland centre to be an important issue, town planning officers do not.

Malcolm Thompson
Western Way, Darras Hall

Thanks to ladies for help after car breakdown

I would like to thank two ladies who came to help when my car broke down at Cowells Garden Centre in Woolsington.

They phoned the RAC who arrived and got our car booked into AK Motors to replace the clutch and also took my wife and me home. As I had no time to thank them properly hopefully they will be able to read this letter to know they were really appreciated for their kindness.

Ron Smith
Twizell Place, Ponteland

January issue deadlines: Delivery of the January issue will start on Monday January 4th and be completed by Friday January 8th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Thursday December 10th. 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 January 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.

What's on...

Ponteland Wildlife Group

We have invited Tom Cawallender, a well known birder and co-author of The Northumberland Bird Atlas, to take us on a light-hearted travelogue of the countries he has visited birding since he retired 4½ years ago. We meet in St Mary's Church Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday December 1st.

Ponteland Floral Art Club

The next meeting of Ponteland Floral Art Club will take place at 7.30pm on Tuesday December 1st at Ponteland Memorial Hall. The demonstrator is Jan Faulkener from Great Ayton. Jan is an innovative demonstrator, and her title this evening is 'It's Christmas Time'. Guests are most welcome and the cost is £7.

Kirkley WI

Kirkley WI begin their festive celebrations by having a Christmas meal on Wednesday December 2nd at Horton Grange Country House Hotel, meeting at 12noon. Meetings will resume at Kirkley Hall on Wednesday January 6th at 7pm. Guests and new members are always welcome.

Ponteland U3A

At the monthly meeting on Wednesday December 2nd there will be entertainment, poetry and a Christmas quiz. 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 u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or ring the membership secretary on (01661) 822225. Our first meeting of 2016 will be on January 6th.

Ponteland Methodist Church

The annual Christmas Fayre is on Saturday December 5th from 10am until 12.30pm. There will be a variety of stalls including preserves, plants, cakes, tombolas and a raffle, as well as fresh made 'bacon butties', mince pies and cakes. The Christmas concert is on Saturday December 12th at 7pm when we welcome back the Prudhoe Gleemen. Light seasonal refreshments will be served after the concert. Tickets costing £7 can be reserved with Gaye Templeton on (01661) 825648 or Syd Cowan on (01661) 824459 and paid for at the door.

Ponteland Rotary Christmas market

Ponteland Rotary Club's first Christmas market is being held on Saturday December 5th at Ponteland High School from 12noon to 5pm. Indoor and outdoor attractions

include a parade of stalls, stands and displays selling Christmas cards, stationery, books, hand-made toys, beauty products, jewellery, scarfs, dog gifts, prints and balloons. Hot food and refreshments will be available and Santa will be in his grotto with his helpers.

Light up a Life service

Tynedale Hospice at Home's Light up a Life service will take place from 4pm to 5pm on Sunday December 6th at St Mary's Church and it is open to all. During the services we sing a number of carols, there are some special readings and then candles are lit in memory of loved ones. Following the service there are light refreshments. Visit tynedalehospice.com for more information.

Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers have organised walks on the following dates in December: Sunday 6th from Bolam and Sunday 20th from Stamfordham. There will also be Wednesday walks on the 9th and 16th. 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 Business Network

Ponteland Business Network's next two business breakfast meetings will be at the usual venue, the Diamond Inn, from 7.45am to 9.45am on Friday December 11th and Friday January 15th. All local businesspeople who live or work within the NE20 and NE18 postcodes are welcome to join. The £10 cost includes a bacon butty or croissant and tea/coffee. For more information contact Brian Russell at pbn@profitabilitygroup.co.uk

Plant Heritage NE

Bide-a-Wee Garden and Nursery: a talk by Mark Robson at Ponteland Memorial Hall and Xmas craft sales on Saturday December 12th at 2.30pm. Entry £2; free to Plant Heritage members. For details visit plantheritagene.org

Family Christmas Praise Party

A family Christmas service offering a festive, fun look at the reason behind the season at 4pm on Sunday December 13th at Ponteland Methodist Church Hall. All are welcome and entry is free.

Memory Café

Based at Ponteland United Reformed Church on Broadway, Darras Hall, the Memory Café is a monthly initiative supported by local people who are working towards Ponteland becoming more understanding of dementia. Anyone who lives with memory

problems or dementia is welcome, together with family members or friends. Tea, coffee and snacks are available. The next event is Monday December 14th from 10.30am to 12noon. Supported by Ponteland Churches Together and Diagonal Alternatives.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker on Monday December 14th is John Gill whose talk is entitled 'On Northern Nigeria'. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of every month in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 2.30pm.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

The North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society will be holding its AGM and Christmas party at St Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road, on Monday December 14th at 7.30pm. Buffet provided. Visitors welcome. The charge to non-group members is £2. Details from Terry Teal at t.teal@btinternet.com or (0191) 4132574.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

A slide presentation about the work of the Great Air Ambulance Service is the topic at The Friends of Kirkley Hall talk at 2pm on Wednesday January 13th in the main building at Kirkley Hall, near Ponteland. The cost to non-members is £5 and a place can be booked by ringing Brenda Parke on (01661) 853489.

Ponteland Embroiderers' Guild

Monday January 25th - design and planning for Capability Brown Festival 2016. Meetings are held in the Memorial Hall, Darras Road on the fourth Monday of each month from 2pm to 4pm. There is no meeting in December. Visitor charge £4. Contact ponteland.eg@btinternet.com or (01661) 881395.

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 Ladies' Choir

Are you interested in joining a friendly group of singers with a young, enthusiastic conductor? We meet at Ponteland Methodist Church

on Mondays from 7.15pm to 9pm in term time. No audition needed. Contact Brenda on (01661) 821704 or Rosie on (01661) 871663.

Rotary Club of Ponteland

Rotary Club of Ponteland meet every Tuesday at Ponteland Golf Club. The meetings alternate between lunch times (1st & 3rd Tuesdays) and evenings (2nd & 4th Tuesdays). New people of all age groups and both ladies and gentlemen are very welcome. If you would like more details please contact Alan Hall at alanhalleef@msn.com or on (01661) 860284.

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.

Wednesday evening bridge at Merton Hall

If you enjoy relaxed games of bridge, you will be welcome at Merton Hall each Wednesday from 7pm to 9pm until next Easter. You do not need to bring a partner. Why not come along to try us out? We play Acol and Chicago scoring.

Ponteland Village Bridge Club

Would you like a friendly game of bridge? Ponteland Village Bridge Club meet every Friday evening in Merton Hall at 7pm. We play 20 boards of relaxed duplicate bridge. If you don't have a partner you can still come along, please telephone Pete Ford our Chairman on 07739 208308 and if possible he will fix you up with a partner.

Pont Badminton Club

Pont Badminton Club meets every Friday evening between 8.30pm and 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.

Ponteland Runners

Interested in running, whether or not you currently do? Your local England Athletics affiliated running club welcomes runners of all abilities from 12 years of age upwards to its friendly, inclusive sessions which take place several times a week. Find us on Facebook, at pontelandrunners.org.uk or contact us at secretary@pontelandrunners.org.uk



GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Council approved the following grants: Tynedale Hospice at Home - £250; Ponteland Memorial Hall - £6,300 towards annual running costs; Ponteland Beer Festival - £250; The Diamond Inn for New Years Eve Firework display - £250.

PROJECTS REPORT

Skate Park/play area

A sign showing the new winter opening hours at the skate park and play area on Callerton Lane has been erected.

QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The Council has agreed to incorporate a red, white and blue theme for floral displays next year to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday. It is hoped that the beacon will be lit on the evening of April 21st and other suggestions include erection of bunting, involvement of the schools and other youth groups, a civic service at St Mary's and a firework display. Councillors were asked to submit their suggestions to Coun Ramsay, who has agreed to co-ordinate the events.

PROPOSED PARKING RESTRICTION ON THORNHILL ROAD

The County Council is consulting on proposed parking restrictions on Thornhill Road due to concerns raised on road safety during school drop off and pick up times. The proposal involves a "no waiting" restriction (single yellow lines) during the periods of 8.15am to 9.15am and 3pm to 4pm Monday to Friday and a "no waiting at any time" parking restriction. The aim is to improve road safety by removing obstructions and improving visibility during peak times. Comments are required by December 3rd. The Town Council welcomed the proposals, which members hoped would be adopted.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed the following recommendations from the Working Party, which had met on October 19th: design brief for the sensory garden proposal; minor works at the toilets including improved signage and pressure washing the side wall; additional directional signage fixed to a lamp post in Merton Way subject to the agreement of the county council.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Coun Dodd reported that a decision would be made on December 2nd on the relocation of County Hall to Ashington. He also referred to plans to move Ponteland library to the Leisure Centre by April 2016. As residents are against this proposal he suggested setting up a Working Party of County and Town Councillors to discuss alternative proposals including a multi use building on the site. Coun Dodd said he had reported the misuse of the car park at the back of Merton Way to the Parking Services Manager. He also referred to the large turnout at the recent Core Strategy drop in session held at the Memorial Hall.

MAYOR'S DIARY

105th birthday celebration

The Mayor stated that he had been delighted to attend the 105th birthday celebration for Kitty Stredder and he had presented her with a card and flowers from the Town Council. The Mayor and Coun Ramsay had also attended a concert at the Memorial Hall on October 31st and he was delighted to report that Ponteland Charity Group had raised £4,000 for Tynedale Hospice at Home.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on November 11th


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Normandy veteran receives Legion d'Honneur from French Government

By Muriel Sobo

Normandy veteran John Gillespie has been invested with the Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur by the French Government at a ceremony at Durham Cathedral.

This honour has been awarded to all surviving members of the British Armed Forces who took part in the Normandy Landings and marked the 70th anniversary of June 6th 1944.

John landed on Gold Beach, Arromanche, on June 18th 1944, which also happened to be his first wedding anniversary!

John was born in 1920 and educated in Scotland, qualifying as a civil engineer at Glasgow University at the same time as his future wife, Ellen, was qualifying as a doctor. He was in a protected occupation when war started, building munition factories, but in 1942 he decided to join the Royal Engineers and trained for PLUTO (Pipe Lines Under The Ocean) – highly skilled and demanding work.



They sailed for France in June 1944 and built huge storage tanks on the beach, connected to networks of pipes, under extreme conditions, with only camouflage nets as protection. They were confined to the beachhead for about a month before

penetrating further south to Boulogne, laying pipelines which eventually pumped a million gallons of petrol a day from Liverpool to cross the Rhine at Emmerich.

They reached Germany in early May 1945 and were close to Belsen when VE Day was declared on May 8th.

John and Ellen and their four children later settled in Glasgow with the Clyde Navigation Trust, and moved to Ponteland in 1958 when John took a job with the Port of Tyne Authority. When he retired in 1983, John had been MD for 10 years. He was awarded an OBE in 1979.

The citation for the award of the Legion d'Honneur states: 'We owe our freedom and security to your dedication because you were ready to risk your life.' John feels this sentiment very personally since his younger brother, Bert, was killed flying Lancaster bombers.

John, who remains active, still writes a daily diary and is a member of Rotary. At the age of 95 he shows no sign of slowing up!

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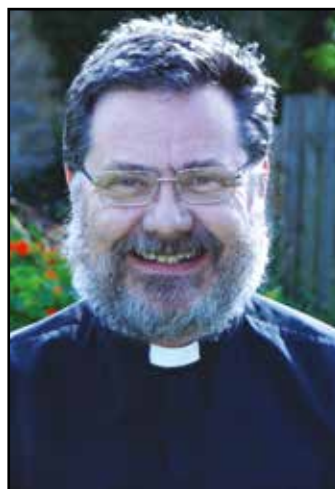
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Christmas message

from the Reverend Peter Barham,
Vicar of Ponteland

On Wednesday November 11th I led the children of Richard Coates School in an Act of Remembrance – and they concentrated so well you could have heard a pin drop as we kept silence together.



That evening the skies were lit by fireworks for Diwali – thank you for a wonderful display. Two nights later we had “Children in Need” on one TV channel, and the events in Paris on the other. Who knows what will have happened in the days before this Christmas message is published.

It feels as if we will face Christmas in a very dark and dangerous world. Most of us are afraid – even though we know that Ponteland is remarkably safe, we fear for our children who live in London.

I don't know many people from the Muslim community, but my youngsters have a wide circle of friends, from a more multi-cultural world. They are frightened and angry at the hatred their friends are having to cope with.

I have compassion when I see the horrendous pictures of refugees fleeing across this world – and yet, what can I do? What should I do? I am frightened by the numbers, I am frightened by people who are different, I am frightened that I am not in control.

I am well aware that religion is a cause of hatred – men and women will do dreadful things in the name of their God. I am fed up of pointing out that non-religious men and women are also capable of doing dreadful things.

I am fed up of trying to justify the belief that faith is also a force for good. It feels a struggle to bring communities together, to get people talking, to believe humanity is best when it works and loves together.

On Remembrance Sunday morning we lit the candle by the War Memorial, just inside the door of St Mary's church. As I walked up the path for the evening service I thought “who left a light on?”

One little candle illuminated the darkness, lit up the church. On Christmas morning I will read the lesson from John's Gospel: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.”

Churches Together in Ponteland

United Reformed Church, Broadway, Darras Hall

Sunday December 20th – Favourite Carols and Why	10am
Christmas Eve – Family Christingle Service	3.30pm
Christmas Day – Christmas Day Thanksgiving	10am
Sunday December 27th – Approaching New Year	10am

St. Mary the Virgin, Ponteland

Sunday December 20th – The Story of Christmas	10am
Christmas Eve – Family Carols	3pm and 4pm
Christmas Eve - Carol Service	7pm
Christmas Eve - Midnight Mass	11.30pm
Christmas Day - Holy Communion	8am
Christmas Day - Festal Communion	10am

Holy Saviour, Milbourne

Sunday December 20th – Carol Service	11.15am
Christmas Day – Holy Communion	11.15am

Methodist Church, Ponteland

Sunday December 6th – Carol and Parade Service	10am
Sunday December 13th – Bridge All Age Christmas Party	4pm
Sunday December 20th – Carol Service	6.30pm
Christmas Eve – Midnight Communion	11.15pm
Christmas Day – Christmas Day Service	10am

Methodist Church, Milbourne

Sunday December 20th – Carol Service	5.30pm
Christmas Eve – Communion	11.15pm
New Year's Eve – Watch Night Service	11.30pm

St Matthew's R.C., Ponteland

Christmas Eve – Carols and Mass	5pm
Christmas Day – Christmas Day Mass	10.30am

St Francis Xavier, Cheeseburn

Wednesday December 23rd – Readings and Carols	6.30pm
Christmas Day – Christmas Day Holy Mass	9.30pm
December 19th – Carol Singing for Christian Aid at Broadway Shops	10am-11.30am

UNITED SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS EVE AT 7pm - ST. MARY'S PONTELAND

You are warmly invited to these services.

Hoodie handover from Haveli

Junior coaches at Ponteland Rugby Club have received new hoodies and jackets in a sponsorship deal with local award-winning restaurant Haveli.

There are more than 50 coaches who help out with the junior and youth sections at the Durham and Northumberland Division 1 outfit, which recently linked up with the Diamond Inn to screen Rugby World Club matches.

The club, whose first XV won the Division Two championship in style last season, has plans well underway for its third annual beer festival next April. Staged in a large marquee next to the first team pitch, it will once again feature a large range of ales as well as live music and local food.

It has also been a successful year for the Darras Hall eatery. In September it became the only Indian restaurant in the North East to be 'recommended' in the Michelin Guide to Great Britain and Ireland 2016.

The official endorsement by Michelin inspectors was given to Haveli based on its smart and fashionable setting, professional and personable staff and food with influences from across India. The



recommendation also singled out Haveli's chef's signature curries as something to try.

Haveli's inclusion in the Michelin Guide came just weeks after it was shortlisted by MP Guy Opperman for the Tiffin Cup, a competition created by a group of MPs to celebrate quality South Asian food in Britain and raise money for charity.

Haveli owner Sunil Mehra said: "The rugby club has a number of community initiatives but its work with the juniors is of particular importance. The junior team members and coaches are ambassadors for Ponteland. They are proud to represent the club both on and off the pitch and we wanted to throw our support behind them as well.

It is all about the community and we are proud to be a part of it."

Ponteland Rugby Club President Tony Murphy added: "We are hugely appreciative of this very generous support from Haveli. It is marvellous that our highly enthusiastic and hard working coaches now have great kit to help them out in all weathers. There is a great community spirit in Ponteland and this is another wonderful example of everyone getting behind the club to help us get even more success on and off the pitch."

Ponteland Rugby Club President Tony Murphy with Haveli Manager Atul More (centre) and some members of the coaching team.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Get your winter flu jab

Let Taylor's Pharmacy help you in the fight against flu.

The flu vaccine is the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus that can cause unpleasant illness in children and severe illness and death among at-risk groups, including older people, pregnant women and those with an underlying medical health condition.

Studies have shown that the flu jab does work and will help prevent you getting the flu. It won't stop all flu viruses and the level of protection may vary between people, so it's not a 100% guarantee that you'll be flu-free, but if you do get flu after vaccination it's likely to be milder and shorter-lived than it would otherwise have been.

The flu vaccine is given free on the NHS to children aged six months to two years at risk of flu, adults aged over 18 at risk of flu, and everyone aged 65 and over.

Pharmacist Jessica Taylor is administering flu vaccines from mid-September until December, with a no appointment walk-in service four days per week.

- Avoid waiting at your GP surgery
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- Private service also available – cost £12
- No appointment needed Wednesday to Saturday – just walk in
- Appointments available Monday and Tuesday

It takes between two to three weeks for the flu jab to become fully effective, so the earlier you get your jab the better!

Long serving hall secretary to retire

After more than 16 years in post, Ponteland Memorial Hall Secretary Vicky Robson is to retire at the end of March.

Vicky is well known to all hall users and in addition to managing and invoicing all bookings, she has been proactive in organising a range of fundraising events for the hall such as domino drives, table top sales, and raffles.

Hall Chairman David Cobb said: "Ponteland Memorial Hall is a very busy community owned facility with around 700 bookings per year.

"We could not have achieved this level of use without Vicky's input and she will be greatly missed.

"The Hall Committee is very grateful for her outstanding contribution to the management of the hall and we all wish her well for a more relaxed retirement."

The Hall Secretary's contract is for seven hours per week, linked to office hours.

Anyone interested in applying for the post should email the hall at infopmh@yahoo.co.uk or telephone (01661) 822603 (answering service outside office opening hours) for a job description and details of pay and conditions.





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Arron mastering the art of performance

A talented young car salesman from Ponteland has been named Jaguar Apprentice of the Year after beating off competition from across the UK.

Arron Bainbridge won the 'Jaguar Apprentice of the Year in Aftersales 2015' category.

The 20-year-old service apprentice is based at Stratstone Jaguar Newcastle on Stamfordham Road and has worked for the business for just a year.

After being shortlisted for the national final by completing an outstanding video of himself documenting what he does daily along with his aspirations, Arron passed the first stage.

Following this, he put together his vision on how to achieve 75% Jaguar retention for 20/20. This was then presented to senior directors for the Jaguar Apprentice Scheme as part of the on-site presentation.

Arron was then invited to Williams F1 Conference Centre, Williams Racing HQ in Oxfordshire where he was presented the award, competing against 40 others.

The former Ponteland High School student said: "I was overwhelmed with the result



and it's definitely something for me to be proud of. It was great to report the result back to everyone at Stratstone Jaguar Newcastle as they've helped me to develop my skills during the first year of my apprenticeship."

Proud mum Sarah added: "It's a big achievement as competition was strong and the award was national throughout Jaguar, Land Rover and BMW."



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Look out for our special winter events by following us on Facebook or ask inside!

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Special service to remember loved ones

A service is being held at St Mary's Church in Ponteland next weekend where people who have lost loved ones can light a candle in their memory.

The service is part of Tynedale Hospice at Home's Light up a Life campaign, which is taking place throughout December.

During this time the charity, which has a shop in Merton Road, invites people to make donations in memory of their loved ones and attend one of three services.

Senior Fundraiser Laura Elliott said: "During the services we

sing a number of carols, there are some special readings and then candles are lit in memory of loved ones. Following the service there are light refreshments."

The service at St Mary's is from 4pm to 5pm on Sunday December 6th and is open to all. Further details can be found at tynedalehospice.com

The charity has thanked Pont Charity Group, whose concert '4 Men and a Soprano' held on October 31st at the Memorial Hall in aid of the hospice raised £4,000.

Winning numbers from the raffle, drawn by Mayor Carl Rawlings, were: 2378; 1911; 1668; 2364; 0118; and 1297.

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£4m rural funding scheme opens its doors for business

A £4m scheme to boost jobs and growth for rural businesses and communities in Northumberland has been launched.

The Northumberland LEADER Programme is open for applications and will provide grants to small businesses, farmers, foresters and communities for projects that create jobs and grow the rural economy.

A total of 70% of the available funding will be used to support projects which create jobs and economic growth.

The remainder will be directed at projects and activities which demonstrate that they contribute to improving the rural economy in Northumberland.

LEADER is a European Union initiative supported by Northumberland County Council.

Further information on the new LEADER Programme in Northumberland is available from Ivan Hewitt at ivan.hewitt@northumberland.gov.uk or 01670 623927 or Gillian Cowell at gillian.cowell@northumberland.gov.uk or 01670 623885.

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MP launches Ponteland toy appeal for fifth year running

Ponteland MP Guy Opperman has launched his Christmas toy appeal for the fifth year running.

Mr Opperman and his North Northumberland counterpart Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP collect Christmas presents, which are then distributed by the Salvation Army to children who otherwise would not have received any gifts.

Mr Opperman said he was overwhelmed by the kind generosity of local people last year after he and Anne Marie handed over almost 500 new toys for North East children in poverty.

The MP said: "Last year's response to our appeal was truly amazing. Every single toy that is donated this year will make a huge difference to the Christmas Day of some of the poorest children living in our region."

One of the project volunteers, Ponteland councillor Eileen Armstrong, said: "All we are asking people to do, when buying for their own children or grandchildren this year, is buy one more gift for a child who wouldn't otherwise get anything. Last year, people were incredibly generous with their support, with presents arriving from the cuddly toy for a toddler to makeup bags for teenage girls, and from lego kits to footballs."

People can drop off toys at Merton Hall, Ponteland, between 9.30am-11.30am, until December 15th.

Coffee morning raises £546 for cancer charities

The Merton Hall Recreation Centre committee is thanking people who attended their recent coffee morning and made donations, raising £546 for cancer charities.

The funds raised at the event, held on Friday October 30th, have been equally divided between Macmillan Cancer Support and Breast Cancer Care.

Thanks go to those who donated raffle prizes and baked cakes, and all the volunteers including Jack, Max and Tom from the Boys Brigade and Yasmin from the High School who helped set up and dismantle the hall, served on tables and sold raffle tickets.

Also singled out for praise were the five artists from Ponteland Rep who entertained everyone with songs from the up and coming show Oliver!

ROTARY PLANS 32ND GALA CONCERT AFTER ANOTHER GLITTERING NIGHT

Ponteland Rotary Club is planning its 32nd gala concert after another glittering event at the Britannia Airport Hotel.

International opera star Graeme Danby compered the evening, introducing his wife and mezzo soprano Valerie Reid, South African soprano Fae Evelyn, tenor Austin Gunn, violinist Tristan Gurney, the Dodici Voce choir and Brent March, winner of the Rotary Young Musician of the Year. Proceeds from the concert, held on October 18th, will go to local charities.

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CLASSIC MENU - 19.95 per person

Start with our Chef's selection of popular Street Snacks including samosas, onion bhaji bites and Kolhapuri chillies. Followed by your choice of our Curry House Classics from a mildly spiced Korma to a fiery Vindaloo. Served with sides including Bombay Aloo, steamed Basmati rice and naan bread.



SIGNATURE MENU - 24.95 per person

Enjoy our Chef's selection of Signature starters including specialities from the tandoor like Prawn Ajwaini and Seekh Gilafi. This is followed by your choice from our Signature curries which include the ever popular Railway Lamb Curry made with slow braised Northumbrian lamb and our delicately spiced Goan King Prawns. Served with sides including Bombay Aloo, Dal Makhani, Basmati Pilau and a basket of assorted naans.



Both menus are served with poppadums and a selection of our delicious homemade chutneys.

The Classic and Signature Christmas menus are a treat for the tastebuds so don't delay and book today.



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