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FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Headteacher's fury at
school closure plan

Village to celebrate the
Queen's 90th birthday

Beer festival returns
for third year

Students take to the catwalk for Teenage Cancer Trust



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Produced by Cian creative pr

Annabel Atkinson



Cameron Bates



Stylish students strut their stuff at fashion show

Stylist students and staff strutted their stuff on the catwalk at a glitzy charity fashion show at Newcastle's Biscuit Factory.

The event, organised by Ponteland High School and Ponteland Charity Trust, was supported by John Lewis, which supplied clothing from four key collections from Ted Baker, Karen Millen, Whistles and Damsel in a Dress, and school suppliers who agreed to act as sponsors.

Smooth Radio DJ Steve Colman compered, with entertainment from jazz musicians Head of Music Phil Noble and students David Johnson and Brent March, and caricaturist Paul Slattery.

Prizes donated included a chef for the day experience for two at Michelin starred restaurant House of Tides, two tickets to Ronan Keating at the City Hall with overnight stay at the Hilton Newcastle, and a helicopter flight for three.

More than £3,500 has already been raised for the Teenage Cancer Trust by proceeds from the night and an ongoing prize raffle. To make a donation visit [justgiving.com/PontHigh](https://www.justgiving.com/PontHigh) or contact Claire Hancock on (01661) 864426 for raffle tickets.

Cover shot of Gurveen Kular by Trevor Walker

PE teacher Chris Doig



Phoebe Turnbull





Irresponsible dog owners and unruly youths in the spotlight



PC Lee Davison, Ponteland Rural
Neighbourhood Beat Manager

There have been 29 crimes reported for Ponteland and surrounding area in February.

These break down to the following offences:

- Three burglary to dwelling
- One burglary to industrial premises
- Three thefts from motor vehicles
- One theft of motor vehicle
- Five thefts
- Five shoplifting
- One damage to motor vehicle
- One arson
- One aggravated vehicle taking
- Three assaults
- One communications offence
- One harassment offence
- Two public order offences
- One fraud offence.

There has been an increase in recent reports of dogs out of control and worrying livestock, which has resulted in death or serious injury to some farm animals.

Not only is this unpleasant to witness, there is also a financial cost to the farmer in accepting loss of dead stock, costly vet bills or recovery cost for dead animals. Can I please remind you of the importance of keeping dogs on a lead when walking near livestock.

Owners can be prosecuted if their pets are let off their leads in a farmer's field or enclosed space. Farmers are also within their rights to shoot and kill dogs if they are deemed to be causing distress to flocks.

By ensuring your dogs are kept under control when sheep or other livestock are present, you can significantly reduce the chances of any of the animals involved coming to harm.

There are also recurring reports of youth related anti-social behaviour in the area of Callerton Lane play park and Ponteland leisure centre. Police attention and patrols will continue to be directed here.

Any youths found to be involved in anti-social behaviour can expect warning letters and further incidents may lead to police intervention measures.

There are also a number of reports of nuisance motorcycles in the area of Mootlaw Quarry and also on a number of 'green' lanes locally. A number of riders have been spoken to and warned. Please continue to let us know of this type of activity.

Community Speedwatch volunteers monitored more than 700 vehicles in the Ponteland, Belsay and Whalton areas in February and 79 motorists have been sent warning letters regarding excess speed.

Contact the Ponteland Neighbourhood Team:

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Email:
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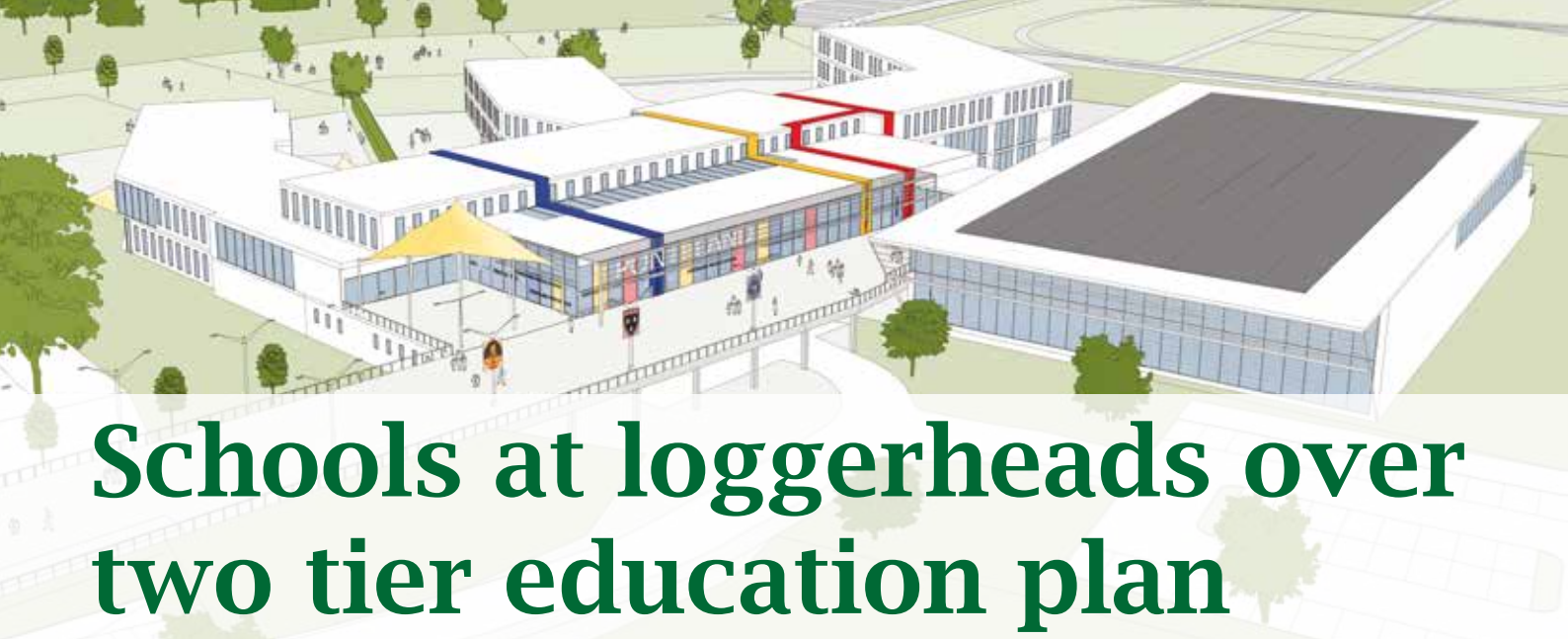
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Schools at loggerheads over two tier education plan

A furious war of words has broken out between Ponteland headteachers after six local first schools hatched a joint plan which would see a top performing middle school close.

The controversial proposal was unveiled at a meeting of the Ponteland Partnership to the stunned headteachers of Ponteland Middle School and Richard Coates Middle School.

Dr Caroline Pryer, head of Ponteland Middle, said when she arrived at the meeting of headteachers on March 7th she expected a routine discussion on the existing partnership.

Instead she was shocked to receive a report from Director of Education Andy Johnson proposing an immediate public consultation on scrapping the three tier system in favour of a two tier primary and secondary model, meaning the closure of her school.

This would mean adding years 5 and 6 to the six first school rolls to create 3-11 primary schools and years 7 and 8 to the high school to create an 11-18 secondary school, with Ponteland Middle School closing and Richard Coates Middle School becoming a 3-11 primary school.

The proposed changes would be phased in between 2017 and 2019, when Ponteland Middle School would close and Ponteland First School would relocate to a new building on a shared site with Ponteland High School.

The preferred location for the new school is the current leisure centre site, with significant opposition killing off an earlier county council proposal to build a combined three tier campus on green belt land off Rotary Way. This also means a reprieve for Darras Hall First School, which was to relocate to the new campus.

The six first schools – Belsay, Whalton, Heddon on the Wall, Darras Hall, Ponteland and Stamfordham – had submitted written requests to Northumberland County Council on February 26th asking for a formal consultation on extending their age range to include years 5 and 6. Ponteland High School was then informed about the plans in advance of the meeting by NCC on February 29th. But it is alleged both middle schools were not.

Dr Pryer said the proposal 'defied logic': "The parents, the teachers, governors, and pupils of Ponteland Middle School are absolutely amazed and devastated by this news.

"We not only have one of the best records in the region with 610 pupils and a waiting list of 45 children already for September's new Y5 intake, but we are also a teaching school where trainee teachers learn their jobs. It has been said that we were 'the jewel in Northumberland's crown' and we fear that political considerations are influencing this decision.

"It almost defies logic to close a school which is doing so well."

Heather Cape, head of Richard Coates Middle School, said the three tier system avoided problems associated with transfer at the vulnerable age of 11, with first schools creating a nurturing environment appropriate to the needs of young children, middle schools offering more specialist teaching and access to specialist teaching spaces for children aged 8+, and high schools providing a more adult climate and ethos appropriate to the delivery of the 14-19 curriculum.

She added: "I too was totally shocked by the proposal and unaware that the first school head teachers were requesting this."

Ponteland county councillors also expressed their concerns at a meeting of the county council's cabinet on March 16th, which agreed a formal consultation to run from March 17th to May 11th. Councillors Richard Dodd and Veronica Jones said the consultation appeared rushed and without alternative options.

The county council said alternative options could be put forward as part of the consultation, which will include consideration of: pupil transition; staff; admissions arrangements; home to school transport and travel and car use implications; special educational and additional needs; the implications for sport and recreation; and catchment areas.

Coun Robert Arckless, cabinet member for children's services, said: "These proposals were brought to us by the six first schools in the Ponteland Partnership, supported by Ponteland High School. The two middle schools have also said they would like an open consultation.

"As a council, we don't have a policy on whether schools operate a two-tier or a three-tier system but we do have to make sure that if schools wish to restructure then any future building work reflects that."

Above: A visual of the now shelved plan for a combined three tier campus on green belt land off Rotary Way.

How to take part in the consultation

The consultation is open until midnight on May 11th. A response form can be completed online at northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Schools/Consultations.aspx

There are also consultation events being held on Saturday April 23rd from 10am to 3pm at Ponteland High School and on Thursday April 28th from 3pm to 7pm at Ponteland Memorial Hall.

What the schools say...

PONTELAND FIRST SCHOOL

On Friday February 26th all 6 first schools in the Ponteland Partnership asked for consultation to extend their age range to incorporate Years 5 and 6.

In light of the consultation request, at the meeting on March 7th, all Head Teachers were presented with the proposed model at the same time.

First schools have been careful to consider what would be best for every child in every community within the Ponteland Partnership as we face the challenge of delivering the higher expectations of the revised National Curriculum. We want to secure the best possible outcomes for all of the children as they go through our schools in the partnership from age 3 to 18.

There are sound educational reasons to change, including reducing the number of transition points from school to school, ensuring continuity of the curriculum and continuity of assessment, keeping accountability for progress across the primary phase clearly in one school and ensuring that we attract the best teachers into our partnership of schools by offering the opportunity to teach across the full primary phase in one school.

The benefits of a primary/secondary model have been recognised already in many parts of the country that have moved from a 3 tier to a 2 tier system. It is interesting to note that in no part of the country are there proposals to move from a 2 tier to a 3 tier structure.

All schools face financial challenges and this proposed change would help to secure the schools in our rural communities for example by increasing pupil numbers.

All schools in the Ponteland Partnership, whether a first, middle or high school, are rated either good or outstanding. We are fully confident that the high standard of education that pupils now receive will be continued or improved in the proposed revised structure.

We recognise that proposed changes can bring anxiety, however we believe that fears will be allayed during the consultation period when parents will have the opportunity to understand reasons for and understand the benefits of the proposed change.

PONTELAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Northumberland County Council Cabinet Report, issued on March 7th, threatens the future of one of the region's top performing schools.

Ponteland Middle School, judged 'Outstanding' in Ofsted Reports of 2008 and again in 2013, is threatened with closure in 2019. The existing six first schools and the other middle school in Ponteland, Richard Coates C of E VA Middle School, are earmarked to become primary schools.

The news has come as a complete surprise to Ponteland Middle School Head Teacher, Dr Caroline Pryer, as she explained: "I attended a meeting on Monday (March 7th) at 10.15am with other Head Teachers, expecting to discuss the working of the existing Ponteland Partnership of schools. Instead, however, I was presented with a virtual 'fait accompli' by the Director of Education, Andy Johnson, about what was to happen with a press release already issued and on the council website.

"The parents, the teachers, governors, and pupils of Ponteland Middle School are absolutely amazed and devastated by this news. We not only have one of the best records in the region with 610 pupils and a waiting list of 45 children already for September's new Y5 intake, but we are also a teaching school where trainee teachers learn their jobs. It has been said that we were 'the jewel in Northumberland's crown' and we fear that political considerations are influencing this decision.

"On March 17th we enter into a period of consultation where we engage all stakeholders. Our governors would like to reassure parents that the school is considering alternative options to keep our twice outstanding exemplar school at the forefront of the children's education in Ponteland.

"As teachers we have pledged our consistent commitment to serve our community, pupils and parents with the very best education possible. We have given school to school support to many other schools and now is the time to ask for support ourselves! We know that we shall maintain the exemplary provision of an innovative, strong, educational solution - it almost defies logic to close a school which is doing so well."

PONTELAND COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

We are fortunate to work in a partnership of very good schools with wonderful students and supportive parents.

As school leaders we all want to do the very best for our students although we may disagree on how to achieve this; the current consultation is a prime example of this, therefore we need to look at the educational arguments for and against the proposed plan rather than descend into an emotional debate.

Ponteland High School governors are obviously at an early stage in considering the proposals and will take time to arrive at an informed position.

As a group of schools we have spent the last 6 months discussing the future organisation of the partnership in light of the national challenges we face in terms of securing the best outcomes for young people, operating with reduced funding, recruiting and retaining the best staff and responding to the government plans around Academies.

As a high school we are accountable for the outcomes at the end of year 11 following five years of secondary aged schooling however we only have control over three years of that teaching as years 7 & 8 take place within middle schools.

One of the key benefits of 11-18 provision is that you have control over the full five years ensuring that students are taught by subject specialists, with expertise and experience of GCSE and A level; you can plan curriculum continuity across the full secondary phase; ensure that assessment systems are aligned, as well as being able to quality assure the whole period of schooling.

Additionally, it means that students have been in school for a few years before they are faced with making GCSE choices unlike the present system whereby they make them in the January of Year 9, only a term after arriving at the high school.

It is worth noting that the national accountability (and funding) framework is based on a primary-secondary model of school organisation. The accountability framework is focused on student progress and attainment therefore a key question is whether our students would benefit from being in one school for years 7-11; as a secondary practitioner I would say that there are clear arguments in favour of this model.

Librarian Denise off to start a new chapter

A Ponteland librarian is off to start a new chapter in her life after retiring to live near her family in the south.

Denise Strachan, who has worked for Ponteland Library as a library assistant for 15 years, is reluctantly retiring and moving to High Wycombe to be nearer her children and granddaughter.

Colleague Julie Ennis said: "Denise is the life and soul of the library and she will be sadly missed. She is known to many customers as 'the lady with the pink hair' and 'Princess Sparkle' to the many children (and adults) who look forward to seeing her dressed as an elf or fairy at Christmas and even a white rabbit at Easter."

A celebratory buffet was held at the library, which is due to relocate soon to the leisure centre.



About to start a new chapter: librarian Denise Strachan. Photo by Pat Walker.



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Beer festival returns for third year

Ponteland Beer Festival returns for a third year in April and organisers say it is set to be bigger and better than ever with demand expected to be at an all-time high.

Anyone going to the two day event on Friday April 22nd and Saturday April 23rd is advised to purchase their tickets in advance, as it looks as though it will be a sell-out.

This year there are 150 beers, lagers and ciders, a Prosecco and wine bar, live music and top quality food all on offer.

Organiser of the Ponteland Rugby Club festival, Andy Maidwell, said: "Once again we are hugely indebted to all our sponsors, businesses and friends in the community, as well as former players, for making this happen.

"We have wonderful support and it is an opportunity for everyone to get together for a great weekend and celebrate the club's burgeoning success both on and off the field.

"We have added an extra marquee to the event to sit alongside the main arena

and ensure there is plenty of space for people to feel comfortable, have a few drinks, listen to good music and enjoy a wholesome Texas style barbecue provided by the legendary Longhorns Barbecue Smoke House.

"We have already sold lots of tickets and at the rate they are being purchased, we expect to reach capacity for the two days before the weekend in April. So the message is get online quick and don't miss out."

The festival kicks-off at 6pm on the Friday night with the Dunston Silverband, followed by the Richard Kain Band.

Music on the second day, which coincides with Ponteland's last home game of the season against Consett, comes from Ponteland Community Wind Band, North Star and the headline band for the Saturday evening are the very popular 'Proper Boys'.



Revellers at last year's packed event



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



An open letter to county council development partner Arch about Ponteland library and an attack on NCC's priorities in this month's letters...

Can we work together to save Ponteland library?

For some time now you have been aware that Ponteland Community Trust has been actively pursuing the establishment of a community hub based at Ponteland library for the benefit of residents and local businesses.

PCT has made great headway since we expressed our interest to you and your team but are confused regarding slightly conflicting statements in Pont News & Views and seek clarification from Arch.

No doubt you are aware, as stated in Pont News & Views, that Ponteland Town Council has informed Northumberland County Council about the concerns of local residents regarding the proposed move of the library.

Indeed, the stated preference to develop the library as a central hub rather than relocate actually supports all our endeavours. PCT also has the support of all other local resident organisations and business groups on this.

Pont News & Views further states that "NCC has agreed to examine the case for a community hub type building on the current site with their preferred developer."

PCT assumes that Arch are involved regarding "the preferred developer" and reiterate our desire to be involved, particularly as a supportive partner and/or joint venture.

PCT has been very active since our last meeting. Our board consists of forward thinking local residents who appreciate the need for reliable funding streams to ensure the long term viability of such a project.

To this extent PCT recognises that perhaps any library improvement building project might require an element of residential provision in order to ensure a more than adequate income to support a library and community hub, say, occupying the ground floor. The hub could encompass all the requirements of council representation, small businesses, housing association, commercial businesses, meeting rooms, CAB etc.

We now have a major firm of Newcastle accountants advising us on funding plus two major firms of architects experienced in building hubs such as Spetchells Centre in Prudhoe, on which our model is based.

Consequently, we would very much appreciate your clarification of the situation and seek a meeting to discuss how we can work together in arriving at a satisfactory development of the site, the design, logistics and funding.

We would appreciate an early response and a meeting to answer our queries please.

Ponteland Community Trust Board

Forget the new County Hall, what about fixing our roads?

It's a well documented line that the county council does not have the funds to even check the deplorable condition of the road surfaces in the Ponteland area, never mind actually repair them.

We are led to believe there is more sense in spending £40m on a new ivory tower headquarters than wasting it on infrastructure for the paying public.

Darras Hall Estate residential properties alone, about 2,500+, must contribute 'only' about £5m in council tax, what should they expect for that?

I would suggest that applications be invited for entries in the 2016 Ponteland Pothole in Bloom Competition to be held this summer. Entrants would register their chosen pothole with the council and they would then be provided with compost. The said pothole to be filled with the compost and summer bedding plants of your choice planted.

The end result would be that you would have something to look at from your window instead of waiting in vain for the 'pothole man' and it would ease the conscience of the council and leave them to concentrate on the more important tasks such as choosing new carpets and curtains for the 'tower'.

A first prize of a one day slalom driving course held in the Ponteland area could be awarded to the most imaginative display, according to a public vote. As if any of us need the practice with the state of our local roads. We've been practising for years!

Finally, should council decision makers be banned from watching reality cooking programmes? If they were, they might not come up with any more half-baked schemes like moving the library to the leisure centre (damp books) or moving the schools onto a combined leisure centre school site which nobody wants, with everyone heading for the Dobbies roundabout sole access point at school times. That should be fun!

Mr P Vacheun
Edge Hill, Darras Hall

May issue deadlines: Delivery of the May issue will start on Thursday April 28th and be completed by Tuesday May 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Tuesday April 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 May issue.

Letters on all issues are welcomed by Pont News & Views but the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher. The Editor reserves the right to amend any submitted letters for legal or other reasons. All letters submitted should include the writer's name and address.

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What's on...

Ponteland Wildlife Group

At our last meeting of our season at St Mary's church hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday April 5th Brian Harle will be discovering for us the wild flowers of The Borders.

Ponteland U3A

Our speaker at the monthly meeting on Wednesday April 6th is Christine Squires and her topic is 'Dogs for Good (disability support)'. We meet in St Mary's Church Hall at 2pm on the first Wednesday of the month. Visitors are welcome. See u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or ring (01661) 822225.

Kirkley WI

Guest speaker David Waters will talk about Northumberland Mountain Rescue Service at our meeting at Kirkley Hall on Wednesday April 6th at 7pm. Visitors welcome.

Ponteland Business Network

Ponteland Business Network's next business breakfast meeting is at the Diamond Inn from 7.45am to 9.45am on Friday April 8th. 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. Contact: Brian Russell at bpn@profitabilitygroup.co.uk

Plant Heritage

North East Group

We meet in the Memorial Hall at 2.30pm on Saturday April 9th for a talk on 'Judging for the RHS' by writer and broadcaster Martin Fish. All are welcome.

Ponteland WI

We have a coffee morning from 10am-12noon on Saturday April 9th in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall. Our monthly meeting is 7pm-9.30pm on Tuesday April 12th (same venue) when our speaker is Averil Oakey with a floral demonstration. Visitors welcome.

Memory Café

Monday April 11th 10.30am to 12noon at Ponteland URC, Broadway, Darras Hall. Anyone who lives with memory problems or dementia is welcome, together with family members or friends. Each month there are activities to stimulate memory and recognition, and a short focus on practical help. Tea, coffee and snacks are available in a relaxed setting, where you will also find a listening ear and resources to help.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our speaker at 2.30pm on Monday April 11th is Prof Alfredo Moscardini whose talk is entitled 'Integration of Italians into the North-East' in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

On Monday April 11th our guest speaker is Alan Oatway, a member of the North Lancashire group, talking about 'Patagonia: Peaks, Plants and People'. Our meetings take place in St. Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. The doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start. Visitor charge £2. Contact: Terry Teal at t.teal@btinternet.com or (0191) 4132574.

Ponteland Village WI

On Tuesday April 12th at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall Ethne Brown's talk is entitled 'Puppy to Guide Dog'. Contact: pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or Facebook page 'PontelandVillageWI'.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

Award-winning wildlife photographer and author Will Nicholls is guest speaker at the Friends of Kirkley Hall meeting on April 13th at 7pm at Kirkley Hall. Will, who specialises in working with red squirrels both photographically and in conservation, will illustrate his talk with images of British wildlife. See his website at willnicholls.co.uk. Price: £5 for non-members.

Beginners Running with Ponteland Runners

Ponteland Runners is a local community based England Athletics affiliated running club staffed by local volunteer run leaders. We are hosting a new set of beginners run sessions for 10 weeks from Wednesday April 13th. Would you like to get into running? Would you like to complete a 5km park run? Ponteland Runners can help whatever your goal. We are running a 10 week programme of beginners sessions. Don't worry about your standard of running, just come along and try. Wednesday April 13th at 7pm, Ponteland Leisure Centre. For more information contact Beginners@pontelandrunners.org.uk or visit pontelandrunners.org.uk/beginners

Ponteland Community Partnership

Come to a meeting and share your ideas, concerns and expectations for improving the quality of life in our community. All welcome. Our next meeting is at Ponteland Town Council offices at 7pm on Wednesday April 20th. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk or shirleyahill@o2.co.uk

Ponteland Local History Society

Our AGM on Thursday April 21st at 7.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road, will be followed by 'The railway paintings of John Wilson Carmichael' by the Rev. Peter Barham.

Ponteland Beer Festival 2016

Choose from over 150 beers, lagers and ciders, a wine bar and soft drinks, and food supplied by Longhorns Barbecue Smokehouse, with live music throughout the weekend. Friday April 22nd from 6pm to 11pm and Saturday April 23rd from 12noon to 11pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre rugby pitch. Tickets can be purchased in advance at pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk or at Ponteland Leisure Centre for £10, saving £2.50 on the gate prices. See article and ad on p7.

North East Music Festival

Grand Opening by High Sheriff of Northumberland Mrs Lucy Carroll at the Gosforth Park Suite, Newcastle Racecourse, on Friday April 22nd with drinks reception at 7.15pm. Featuring Anna Reay and her band. Tickets costing £20 from JG Windows on (0191) 2321356 or online via Eventbrite. The Grand Finale follows at 7.30pm on Saturday April 23rd at St Nicholas Cathedral, Newcastle, with Trelawnyd Male Voice Choir and Dishforth Military Wives Choir. Tickets from £12 from Blackwells Bookshop on (0191) or 2326421 or online via Eventbrite. Both concerts in aid of the Great North Air Ambulance and other regional charities.

Ponteland Embroiderers Guild

On Monday April 25th our tutor and speaker is Joanna O'Neill, West Woodburn. Morning: felt workshop. Numbers are limited so booking is essential. 2pm: Rich Stitch: How I got From There to Here. We meet at the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, and you can join us for a meeting as a visitor - fee £4. Contact: ponteland.eg@btinternet.com or (01661) 881395.

Ponteland Civic Society

Our next meeting is on Monday April 25th in St Mary's Church Hall at 7.30pm where Christine Ruskin will speak on the reasons for 'The Disappearing Farms of Weardale'. This will be followed by tea and biscuits and an opportunity for discussion. Visitors are most welcome, for whom there is a nominal charge of £2.

Friends of Ponteland Park

Our AGM will be held on Tuesday April 26th at 7pm at Merton Hall and will be followed by a talk by Marian Foster of BBC Radio Newcastle on 'Gardening on the Radio'. Light refreshments will be served afterwards. Visitors welcome.

The Bridge @ Ponteland Methodist Church

The Bridge is a different way of doing church. We are relaxed, friendly and relevant to life today. We meet at 4pm in the church hall on most Sundays. Dates in April: 3rd; 10th; 17th; 24th. Everyone is welcome whether you are a Christian or just wondering. Kids activities provided. For more info call us on (01661) 822057, email thebridge.ponteland@gmail.com or find us on Facebook.



GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Council approved annual grants to the Friends of Ponteland Park (£1,000), Darras Hall Estate Committee (£600), and the Youth Service (£5,500) who will be asked to provide quarterly updates on the programme.

QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

The Council received a further update on the various actions taken since the last meeting and the events that had been planned and members were pleased to note the various activities planned in and around Ponteland. A suggestion had been made to hold a firework display after the lighting of the Beacon on April 21st which would be dependent on permission to use the land at the back of Rialto for setting off the fireworks. It was also agreed to try and get surrounding businesses involved. A service is being held at St Mary's Church on Sunday May 22nd and it was agreed to host the refreshments at St. Mary's church hall. The possibility of having a band to play at some point during the event will also be examined. A further suggestion was made to involve children in the celebration of the birthday and the possibility of holding a treasure hunt in the park will also be investigated.

PONTELAND LIBRARY

Councillors were informed that discussions are still ongoing with the County Council regarding Ponteland Library and the proposed relocation of

the service to the Leisure Centre. It is hoped that a community hub could be created on the site of the existing library site. Ponteland Community Trust is also keen for this to happen and a group of interested residents had also met County Council officers.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

The Council approved two recommendations proposed by the Working Party which met on February 12th. The damaged Vehicle Activated Sign on Darras Hall will be replaced with a new Speed Indicator Sign funded by the Asset Replacement Fund, once it had been confirmed that Darras Hall Estate Committee would reimburse the Town Council with an annual contribution to cover the costs. The clerk is to send an official request to the County Council to install SLOW road markings near the entrance of the former Police HQ site in an attempt to slow traffic down approaching the junction.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council approved recommendations from the Working Party which had met on February 15th relating to the memorial seat policy and the letter of agreement to be signed by donors. It was also agreed that the charge for the second ten years would only be applied when the seat required replacement, otherwise a nominal maintenance charge would be requested. The Council also

approved the contract to thin the copse in Ponteland Park by 25 per cent.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

The Council approved new fees and charges for 2016-17 recommended by the committee at its meeting held on February 25th.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Coun Dodd reported that a recent meeting of the NCC Planning Committee had approved a new road system for Ashington at a cost of around £7m. The move of County Hall to Ashington continued to be a subject of debate. Coun Dodd also reported that he was continuing to try to deal with the problems with the car park at the back of the Merton Way shops, being particularly concerned at inconsiderate parking which he continued to report to the County Council. Coun Jones reported that there would be increased charges for the disposal of garden Waste at the household waste facility but that ISOS would not be charging its residents for the garden maintenance as originally envisaged. It was reported that NCC would be employing contractors to carry out cutting of grass verges in more rural areas.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on March 9th.

Council acted properly in County Hall move, say auditors

A £40m relocation of Northumberland County Council's headquarters from Morpeth to Ashington is to go ahead after an independent audit of the plans rejected opposition claims the authority had acted improperly.

NCC claims the new smaller HQ will save £630,000 each year - or £16m over the next 25 years.

The council's auditors Ernst and Young investigated claims the move would not represent value for money, that key elements had not been properly costed out, and that the contract award would not be subject to a full and open tender process.

The audit report confirmed the council had acted properly, the scheme provided value for money and that the economic benefit to the North East from the move had actually been

underestimated to the tune of £4m.

The review looked closely at 11 specific concerns raised by opposition councillors and provided a response on each point. These include addressing opposition claims of "unjustified" repair costs and the lack of a structural survey.

The review also dismissed allegations the contract would take place "behind closed doors" as the auditors had received confirmation from officers that the contract for the building would go through the full OJEU process.

Council leader Grant Davey welcomed the audit report findings, saying: "I hope we can now draw a line under this issue and move forward together for the benefit of everyone in Northumberland."

The full report can be accessed at: http://committeedocs.northumberland.gov.uk/MeetingDocs/20720_M4176.pdf

Series of celebrations to mark the Queen's 90th birthday

The Queen's 90th birthday will be marked with a series of celebrations in Ponteland over the next three months.

Her Majesty's actual birthday – Thursday April 21st – will see a beacon lit at 7.30pm and a fireworks display on Coates Green, where a memorial seat will also be installed by the Town Council.

The Mayor Carl Rawlings and Deputy Mayor Joyce Butcher will be visiting nursing and care homes in Ponteland on the day to meet residents sharing their birthday with the Queen, and for the planting of a tree at Henderson Court at 2pm.

Ponteland Middle School is organising school activities, with a podcast or video of the celebrations to go on the school website. Bunting will be flown and flowers will follow the blue, white and red theme being adopted for Ponteland in Bloom.

Other events include:

- Ponteland Charity Group concert on April 8th at the URC on Broadway
- Ponteland WI is marking the birthday at its annual coffee morning on April 9th at the Memorial Hall 10am to 12noon
- Ponteland Bowling Club is providing the Queen Elizabeth II Cup for competition on the opening day on April 16th
- A service is being held at St Mary's Church at 3pm on Sunday May 22nd with refreshments afterwards at St. Mary's church hall
- Party in the Park on June 12th will also include events to mark the Queen's birthday
- Music In The Park on June 29th will contain suitable music to mark the occasion
- Ponteland Methodist Church is to hold an event on July 9th.

The fireworks display on Coates Green which marked the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012.



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Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan

Do you support our vision for the future of Ponteland?

A ten point plan for the future development of Ponteland is the subject of a new public consultation taking place over the next six weeks.

All households have received a questionnaire with this issue of Pont News asking for your views on a new vision and ten revised objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan – the product of three years of research and consultation by Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Group.

The Revised Vision, Objectives & Options consultation, which follows the Ponteland Housing Needs Survey which ran in February and March and generated more than 1,250 responses, runs from April 1st to May 15th.

Before we produce our full draft Neighbourhood Plan for Ponteland, we have to show we have consulted with the community over the last three years on what issues you felt were most important, and we have translated those into a Vision for Ponteland for the next 20 years, and a set of 10 objectives.

The objectives can be achieved through a combination of planning policies and community projects. The planning policies have to be land-use planning

policies and must comply with stringent regulations, to be tested by an appointed Examiner. Where we cannot have a land-use planning policy, we have proposed community projects (see article on p22) to take forward issues raised by the local community.

The questionnaire asks for your views on:

The vision statement

“Ponteland will maintain its identity as a sustainable, thriving community, accessible to people of all ages. A gateway to Northumberland, which values its rural setting, rich heritage, natural environment and open spaces. It will remain visually distinct and separate from the Newcastle/Tyneside conurbation, meeting the needs of the local population, without compromising this distinction. The special identities of Darras Hall, the historic core of Ponteland village and the small settlements in the Parish will be maintained and enhanced for future generations, making the Parish of Ponteland a desirable place to live, work and visit.”

The ten objectives

Objective 1: [Built/Historic Environment]

To ensure that new development contributes positively to the unique historic and natural characteristics of the parish of Ponteland.

Objective 2: [Natural Environment]

To plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks for biodiversity, green infrastructure and recreation in Ponteland and to protect the landscape setting of Ponteland.

Objective 3: [Housing]

The Neighbourhood Plan will provide a positive policy framework for new housing that meets the defined needs of residents in the Plan area. It will ensure that new housing developments are carefully planned, designed and integrated into the settlement of Ponteland, to ensure they contribute to the special character of Ponteland as well as contributing to the local infrastructure and community facility needs.

Objective 4: [Business and Employment]

To identify and encourage employment opportunities for sustainable economic growth, leisure, and tourism across the Parish.

Objective 5: [Retail]

To enhance, diversify and improve the range of shops and services in Ponteland.

Objective 6: [Transport]

To make Ponteland and the rest of the Parish a safer place for all users of the transport network, especially pedestrians, cyclists and children, by seeking to reduce traffic congestion, make it easier for people to walk to school, shops and public transport, whilst ensuring adequate car parking is provided to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses.

Objective 7: [Flooding]

To reduce the causes and impacts of flooding in Ponteland.

Objective 8: [Older People]

Ensure that the neighbourhood plan provides for the ageing population in and around Ponteland.

Objective 9: [Health Care and Leisure]

Ensure that the people of Ponteland of all ages have easy access to health care and leisure facilities.

Objective 10: [Education and Young People]

To ensure that our schools are well-planned to meet the needs of our current and projected pupil population and to ensure that there is sufficient provision of recreational space and facilities for young people in Ponteland.

Drop in sessions

Drop in sessions will be available to view the details and meet with the steering group members at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Thursday April 21st from 6pm to 8pm and Friday April 22nd from 10am to 12noon, 2pm to 4pm and 6pm to 8pm, and Saturday April 23rd from 10am to 2pm.

How can I get involved?

Complete the consultation questionnaire which has been delivered with this issue of Pont News & Views and return with the Freepost envelope supplied or complete at pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk

The next steps

We will process the results and start work on a full draft plan for Ponteland to be submitted to Northumberland County Council. This will be subject to a six week consultation and scrutiny by an independent examiner. If passed it will go to a full referendum and if more than 50% of voters support it, the plan will be adopted and become part of Local Development Plan for the area.

For more information visit: pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk

Leo lands Conti call-up

One of Ponteland Rep's promising young actors has landed his biggest role yet – he's won a place at London's Italia Conti Academy of Dramatic Arts.

Leo Emmerson, who performed the lead role of Toad last month in the society's production of *Wind in the Willows*, joins the acclaimed academy in September.

Publicity secretary Lesley Eltringham congratulated Leo: "We will miss him but he is such a talented young actor that we wish him all success in a no doubt glittering career in acting."

The Rep is holding an evening event 'Supper and Songs' on Saturday April 16th at 7pm at St Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland, featuring well-known Gateshead choir The Caprians and its own Youth Theatre Preppies.

The programme will include Tyneside and other folk songs, while the Preppies will be singing selections from *Oliver!* and *Wind in the Willows*.

Tickets are now on sale from Carole Davies on (01661) 871161 or Janet Walton on (01661) 823433 costing £10 for adults and £5 for under 16s, to include a buffet supper and welcome drink.

The Rep will be back in November with a seasonal pantomime and look forward welcoming you to an evening of laughter and fun!



Photo of Leo and Alice by Trevor Covington

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Public Health England boss praises county's services

Northumberland County Council's approach to public health has been described as 'exceptional' by the chief executive of Public Health England.

The praise comes as Duncan Selbie, chief executive of Public Health England, has been touring the country to meet local authorities to gain a more detailed understanding of the issues affecting local public health services.

He visited Northumberland to find out more about the public health work that is going on locally and to share best practice from other areas.

During his visit, he met a number of strategic health partners including David Evans, chief executive of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust; Daljit Lally, Deputy Chief Executive of Northumberland County Council; Julie Ross, chief officer, Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group; and Cynthia Atkin, chair of Healthwatch Northumberland; looking at strategy and partnership work.

Mr Selbie said: "Northumberland is well advanced in how it integrates health and social care, and its concerns for improving the health of people. There is a lot to be proud of and lots to do but the team here is exceptional and I'm delighted to have been able to spend some time here and to see what has been done and is still being done in Northumberland."

Northumberland County Council took over the provision of public health services from the NHS in 2013.




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Care home raises £322 for British Heart Foundation

Staff and residents at Ponteland Manor Care Home raised £322 for the British Heart Foundation with a variety of fundraising events.

They included a raffle, coffee morning, wear red to work day, and maintenance man Alan Musgrave having his legs waxed – all arranged by activity coordinators Emma Garside and Caiti Bayles. The cheque was presented to BHF Area Manager Dan McNally.

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Events to mark 300th birthday of Capability Brown at Kirkharle

The 300th birthday of visionary gardener Lancelot 'Capability' Brown is being celebrated with a series of events at his birthplace at Kirkharle.

He stayed there until he was 23, at first walking to and from school at Cambo village; then learning how to become a gardener on the Kirkharle estate before going on to become a celebrity landscape designer, dining with kings and princes.

For the next four months through to his actual birth date in August there will be picnics, walks, readings, tree plantings, concerts, a food fayre and a torchlight procession round Capability Brown's lake here at Kirkharle.

For a full list of events visit:
kirkharlecourtyard.co.uk

TV gardener Alan Titchmarsh with Kitty Anderson, owner of Kirkharle Courtyard





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Ponteland gymnast competing in China championships

Ponteland gymnast Michael Gill has travelled with the GB team to China to compete in the World Acrobatic Age Group Championships.

The 17-year-old is in a six-strong team aged 11 to 19 from Deerness Gymnastics Academy competing at the event in Putian City from March 23rd to 29th.

Michael will compete in the 13-19 age group with teammates Finn Gavin, 14, from Alnwick, Ryan Dury, 19 from Middlesbrough, and Nathan Brady, 17 from Durham. The four are current British Champions.

Michael (bottom) with teammates Nathan Brady, Ryan Dury and Finn Gavin.



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Beginners' cricket training sessions starting in early May

Training sessions for boys and girls of all ages who are interested in playing cricket are being launched in Ponteland at the start of the new season next month.

Ponteland Cricket Club is running beginner sessions for children aged 7 – 9 (school years 3 and 4) which will take place on Wednesday afternoons from 5pm to 6pm.

The club also run four junior cricket teams at the following age groups:

- Under 11 – (school years 5 and 6)
- Under 13 – (school years 7 and 8)
- Under 15 – (school years 9 and 10)
- Under 18 – (school years 11, 12 and 13)

Each team has regular weekly training sessions and matches organised against other local clubs.

Any budding cricketers who are interested in joining in should contact the club at andrewmorgan73@live.co.uk for further details



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Feedback sought on community projects list

Public feedback is being sought on a list of community projects drawn up by the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Group.

The group of volunteers, which has been working for three years on the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of the Town Council, has created the list of priorities identified in a series of consultations.

The projects cover a range of areas, including transport, the environment, health and facilities which cannot be addressed by planning policies alone, and local organisations would be encouraged to get involved and help deliver them. The list includes:

Environment

- To work with NCC to extend the Conservation Area boundary in Ponteland and to develop and adopt a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Ponteland
- To support the Red Squirrel group in Ponteland to maintain and improve the populations of red squirrel locally
- To liaise with landowners and other stakeholders to safeguard land needed as flood storage areas
- To work with Northumberland County Council (NCC) to get an Article 4 designation on parts of Ponteland where it is desirable to remove permitted development rights for front

boundary changes (for example in parts of Darras Hall where hedgerows are being lost)

- To work with NCC and local businesses to reduce the amount of 'A' boards on the streets

Transport and infrastructure

- Continue to work with NCC and press for a relief road for Ponteland
- Work closely with the Bus Users Group in Ponteland to improve the reliability of public transport in Ponteland, and seek to promote investment in real-time information at key bus-stops in Ponteland
- To work with local groups and NCC to identify key 'accessibility hot spots' where improvements could improve accessibility for those with mobility impairments
- To work with NCC to seek funding allocations for improvements to cycle infrastructure in Ponteland
- Work with NCC to implement a 20mph limit in some areas of Ponteland (particularly around the schools)
- Proposals under the Transport objective, to improve accessibility to public transport for the older person

Health

- To seek to secure additional GP services in Ponteland to meet the needs of local residents.
- To seek to work with service providers and others to secure better access to healthcare in Ponteland
- Seek to implement the Ageing Well in Northumberland Strategy

Facilities and events

- A Community Hub: To explore the viability of creating a 'community hub' at a central location in Ponteland. This could provide both facilities for the wider community including the youth
- Ideas such as a joint library/internet café/community space could be explored
- Community Toilet scheme to be developed in collaboration with local shops and community facilities
- Explore and promote activities with younger people and our "Youth Ambassador"

PNP Group is also consulting on a list of planning policies – see p14 and the enclosed questionnaire. To leave feedback visit: pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory afternoon just the ticket!

Children aged from six months to six years enjoyed a Charlie and the Chocolate Factory themed family arts and crafts session at St Mary's church hall.

The children had everything from Willy Wonka hats, to fizzy lifting drinks, sweetie inventions, playdoh ice cream, and even a chocolate river!

The room was decorated Willy Wonka style with golden tickets, oversized sweets and even eight foot candy canes, and the session ended with the children popping a flurry of bubbles just like Charlie and Grandpa Joe.

The session was run by ARTventurers, which holds weekly term time sessions for children aged 18 months plus every Thursday afternoon at 1.30pm in St Mary's church hall.

Classes follow a different theme each week, exploring various sensory play activities as well as different art and craft materials and techniques. For more information visit artventurers.co.uk



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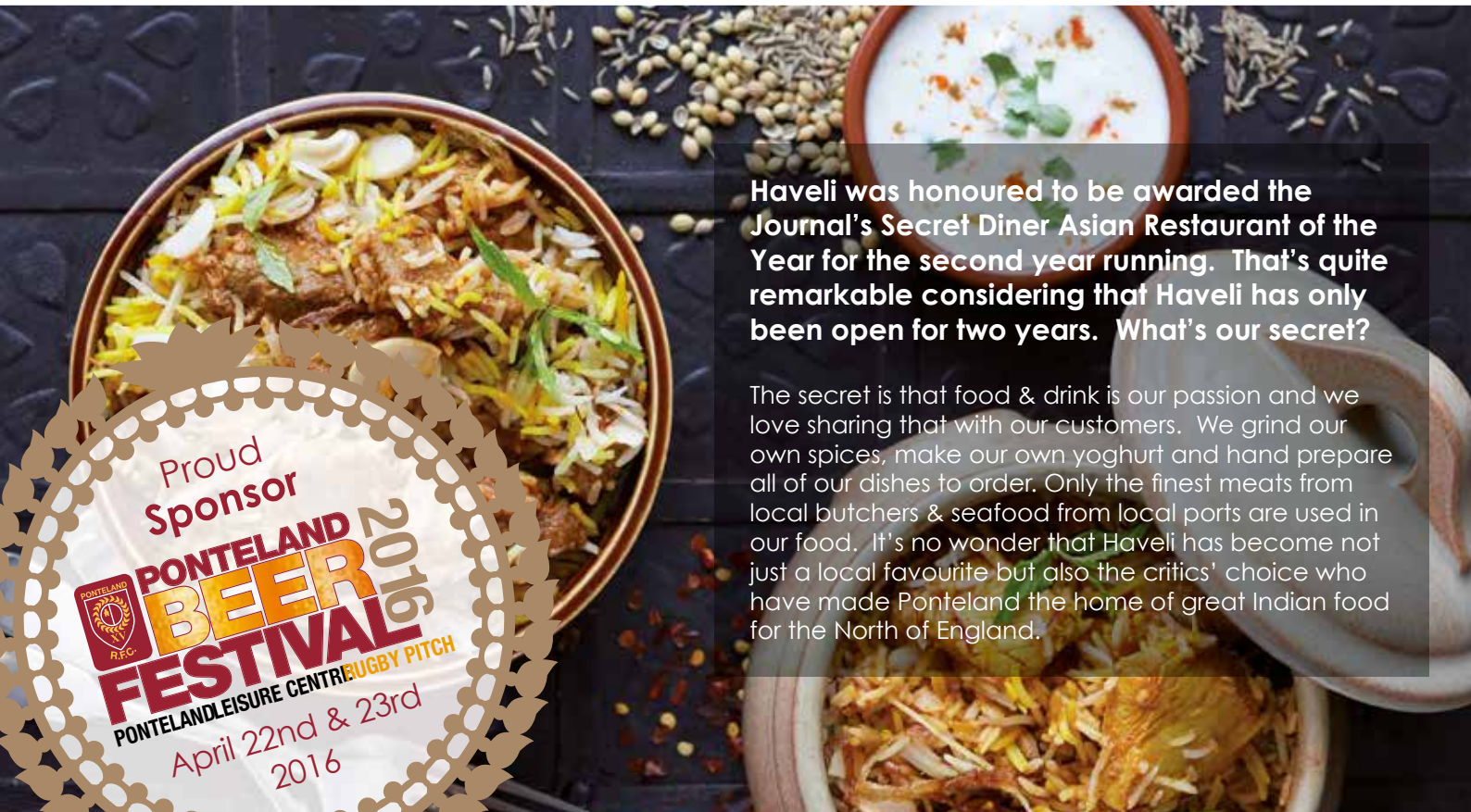
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TheJournal
Secret Diner Asian Restaurant of the Year



Haveli was honoured to be awarded the Journal's Secret Diner Asian Restaurant of the Year for the second year running. That's quite remarkable considering that Haveli has only been open for two years. What's our secret?

The secret is that food & drink is our passion and we love sharing that with our customers. We grind our own spices, make our own yoghurt and hand prepare all of our dishes to order. Only the finest meats from local butchers & seafood from local ports are used in our food. It's no wonder that Haveli has become not just a local favourite but also the critics' choice who have made Ponteland the home of great Indian food for the North of England.

Private Dining

Plan a gathering, party or event at Haveli and use our 14 seat private dining room where you & your guests will receive personal attention from their own dedicated waiting staff. The main dining room is also available for larger events

Outside Catering

Let us come to you. Our outside catering menu makes it easy to choose & deliver great Indian food at your event. Haveli is the perfect choice to cater for corporate events, parties and weddings

Takeaway Menu

Experience restaurant quality food in the comfort of your own home. **Now with free local delivery** for orders over £20

Happy Hours

Early Evening Special - 5 til 6pm
Late Supper Special - 9.30 til 11pm

2 Courses £14.95
3 Courses £17.95

Available 7 days a week

Open 7 days a week - 5pm til 11pm, 3-5 Broadway, Darras Hall, Ponteland, NE20 9PW
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