

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Three men reported in illegal
door-to-door sales crackdown

Best ever GCSE results at
Ponteland High School

Bluebell wood to be created
in Sally's memory

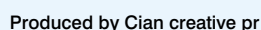
Juliette wins place at US beauty pageant

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Kirkley hosts national tandem rally

More than 250 tandem riders from as far afield as Germany and Holland attended a national rally at Kirkley Hall.

Last month's event was the first time The Tandem Club's UK National Rally has been held in Northumberland since 1990, when it was hosted by Corbridge.

The week-long rally included daily rides of up to 70 miles, a treasure hunt, and evening entertainment including a last night ceilidh and hog roast. Members stayed in a makeshift campsite on a field in the grounds in tents, caravans and campervans.

Publicity officer Peter Weeks said: "Northumberland really is an excellent area for cycling. We found the roads empty and drivers generally considerate to cyclists and tandems. The rides went out in different directions each day and always had some suggested destinations and stops to provide interest for those who like to mix tandeming with sightseeing. We enjoyed an excellent rally."

The Tandem Club was formed in the UK in 1971 to provide unobtainable spare parts and technical advice on maintenance, and now boasts a worldwide membership of more than 5,000 enthusiasts.

Photos by The Image Farm.





Three men reported for illegal door-to-door sales



PC Lee Davison, Ponteland Rural
Neighbourhood Beat Manager

There were 27 crimes reported for the Ponteland and surrounding area in July. These break down to the following offences:

- Two burglary to dwelling (Darras Hall). No items stolen.
- One burglary other than dwelling (Darras Hall). Pedal cycles and gardening equipment stolen.
- Seven thefts (Darras Hall, Ponteland and Belsay). Personal belongings taken from bags when left unattended.
- Two theft from motor vehicle (Ponteland and Darras Hall). Work tools and equipment stolen.
- One make off without payment (Ponteland).
- Two damage to buildings (Ponteland).
- One arson (Callerton play park).
- Two shoplifting (Sainsburys).
- Two assaults.
- Three sexual offences.
- One public order offence.
- One communications offence.
- One breach of non-molestation order.
- One fraud.

Following last month's article can I thank those residents who contacted police about door to door sellers. As a result of prompt reporting, three men were stopped on separate occasions in the area, items were seized from them and they have been reported for summons. Products that are taken from the sellers are either disclaimed at roadside or forfeited at court and are then donated charity.

Telephone/internet scams

Residents are reminded to be alert to unwanted telephone calls or emails from dubious companies or persons. Recent scams have involved a male purporting to be from the Metropolitan Police stating they have prevented or intercepted unauthorised

access to your bank account and then ask for your bank details to confirm. Police will not ask for any financial or banking details over the phone.

Others will claim to be contacting on behalf of internet security, utility companies or financial organisations. Put very simply they are after your cash or access to it. Please do not disclose any personal or financial details and do not be tempted to click on a link in an email if dubious of the origin.

Reports of online fraud can be made to your internet service provider. Fraudulent calls can be reported to Action Fraud 0300 1232040. Consider signing up to a call barring service to prevent such calls.

Community Speedwatch

Community Speedwatch continues to gather momentum in the Ponteland area. There will be a further recruitment of CSW volunteers in September.

Volunteers are given training and the equipment to allow them to go out as a visible deterrent to motorists speeding in the area. Motorists found to be exceeding the speed limit will receive a warning letter. Should a motorist receive a third warning letter or the speed recorded is at a grossly excessive speed, then officers will visit the driver at home and outline future consequences to their driving.

If you would like to know more or become involved then take a look at the volunteering section of the Northumbria Police website or contact me on 101.

CSW volunteers monitored approximately 450 vehicles in the Ponteland area throughout July, with 46 motorists found to be exceeding speed limit receiving warning letters or spoken to by officers at the roadside. One motorist has also received a home visit.

The next police surgery will take place on Saturday September 10th from 10am to 11am at Merton Hall, Ponteland, with SC Jon Gray.

Contact the Ponteland Neighbourhood Team

Tel. 101 ext 69569

Email easttyndale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk



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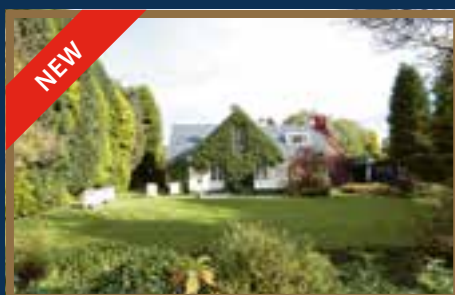
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Best ever GCSE results at Ponteland High School

Ponteland High's A* students have achieved record GCSE results for the school and improved A level scores.

More than a third of students achieved an A or A* in GCSE Maths and more than a quarter an A or A* in GCSE English, and more than three-quarters achieving an A*-C in both core subjects.

The results showed:

- 15% of students achieved 9 or more A*-A grades
- 30% achieved 5 or more A*-A grades
- 51% achieved 5 or more A*-B grades
- 35% achieved the English Baccalaureate suite of qualifications, well above the national average
- 81% achieved A*-C in English Language/Literature
- 86% achieved A*-C in maths.

There were many success stories for the school's A level students too, with Joe Burrin and Andy MacGowan both achieving three A* grades, Katie Thirlwell receiving two A*s and an A, and Elliott Barker, Megan Daniels, Molly Hall and Olivia Taylor receiving an A* and two As. Lauren Davies, Daniel Elsander, Sasha Hodges and Ellen

Stephenson all scored three A grades.

Overall, there was a rise in the average points per entry score:

- 23% of all grades were A*-A
- 49% of all grades were A*-B
- 76% of all grades were A*-C
- 99% overall pass rate.

Many of the school leavers are heading off to university, with others starting Foundation Degrees, high level apprenticeships or entering the workplace.

Andy MacGowan has been rewarded for his straight A* performance with a place at Oxford reading Engineering, while Joe Burrin is studying Maths at Bath University. Megan Daniels is studying Liberal Arts at Durham, Elliot Barker is studying Economics at St Andrews and Olivia Turner is taking Medicine at Queens, Belfast.

Headteacher Kieran McGrane said: "These results are incredibly pleasing and truly reflect the hard work and effort on the part of our brilliant students and committed staff. It is great to see such a large proportion of our students achieving the very highest grades at a time when exam standards are becoming ever tougher.

"In the current climate these are outstanding outcomes and I am very proud of our staff and students."



A* students Molly Hall and Elliot Barker

Former Pont schoolgirl LJ Ross releases latest novel

A former Ponteland schoolgirl turned international bestselling author has released her latest thriller.

LJ Ross launched the fourth in the DCI Ryan series – Angel – at the Angel of the North, Gateshead. The first, Holy Island, shot to the top of the Amazon charts upon release while follow-up publications Sycamore Gap and Heavenfield are still regularly in the top ten.

Louise, who writes under the pseudonym LJ as a thank you to her husband James for his unstinting support, is a former Darras Hall First School pupil.

She gave up a lucrative career as a regulatory lawyer in the city to become an author, and a chance comment to her husband during a train journey along the East Coast to Edinburgh led to her writing Holy Island.

LJ's first three books were mainly based in Northumberland, with grisly murders taking place in Holy Island and on Hadrian's Wall, while DCI Ryan's latest outing is heavily set on Tyneside.





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Family of Mr. Roberts, June 2016 ”

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Bluebell wood to be created in Sally's memory

The husband of Sally Allan is appealing for public support to create a bluebell wood in Ponteland Park in her memory.

Gordon Allan has obtained permission from the Town Council to plant 10,000 bulbs in an area adjacent to the path that runs up from the footbridge over the Pont to Fox Covert Lane, about 50 yards from Tony's Corner, to be named Sally's Walk.

The father-of-three, who also has the backing of The Friends of Ponteland Park, is urging volunteers to help him plant the 7,000 bluebells and 3,000 snowdrops and crocuses at a planting day later this month.

Gordon explained: "The plan is to plant a small bluebell wood to bring a lovely touch of spring colour to the park. Sally loved bluebells and the pair of us would seek them out every spring. The 10,000 bulbs should provide an eye-catching display in 2018 and beyond about the time of her birthday.

"Having purchased the bulbs I have perhaps rather

recklessly agreed with the Council that I can plant all the bulbs. In order to make this possible I am asking for support from friends, family and the community to plant the bulbs. In return the council have agreed to prepare the site.

"Planting will take place on Saturday September 17th from 10am and go on until all 10,000 bulbs are planted! If people have a bulb planting dipper please bring it along, but don't worry there will be a large number on site for you to use. Please also bring any gloves or pads to support your knees.

"We will have a tent on site to provide free refreshments - tea, coffee, herbal tea, biscuits etc."

The shock disappearance of Sally Allan in the early hours of Boxing Day 2015 sparked national headlines and a huge search operation.

But sadly it was to end in tragedy when, after seven weeks, the 59-year-old's body was found in the River Tyne near Jarrow. It is believed she walked ten miles to enter the river by the Swing Bridge on Newcastle Quayside early on Boxing Day morning.



Gordon is pictured with Sally in happier times



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Your letters

The Editor
Don't News & Views



The County Council's plans for new leisure facilities come under fire in this month's letters...

Leisure proposals a 'significant downgrading of existing provision'

It is difficult to understand the County Council's approach to the sport and leisure consultation. Both the Council's preferred site and proposed shared facilities are being imposed on Ponteland residents.

Residents' alternative suggestions have been totally ignored throughout the numerous stages of the minimal consultation. This consultation period is only three weeks and coincides with the school holidays, and does not provide Ponteland residents with an appropriate opportunity to make an informed response.

The existing facilities serving the village include a leisure centre with sports hall, changing rooms, gymnasias, squash courts, a cricket pavilion with bar, and a dance studio. Adjoining this is a 20-metre four-lane swimming pool, with ancillary pools for infants and for disabled persons.

There is full size league soccer pitch for Ponteland United FC, and pitches for Ponteland Rugby Club, together with the Ponteland Cricket Club ground, are conveniently grouped around the leisure centre. Players use the changing rooms and other facilities within the building.

While it is accepted that the leisure centre, built in 1974, is in need of some level of improvement, the same does not apply to the pool - not built until 1991. It is an attractively designed modern facility, well capable of another 25 years of useful life.

To attempt to incorporate all these various elements within a new school complex on a shared use basis would result in a significant downgrading of existing provision.

No information is given as to the split of time of use between public and schools, and whether all existing daytime classes and sessions for the general public will continue to be held in the day as at present.

We consider that the interests of the local community are best served by expanding the existing sports and leisure facilities

where they are, retaining the existing swimming pool and upgrading the leisure centre on its present site.

We are opposed to the incorporation of this wide range of local community sports and leisure facilities within a building complex whose prime function has to be the education of children.

Peter Cowey,
Chairman, Ponteland Community Trust

Leisure plans would have "devastating effect" on local sports clubs

Your August edition invited views with regard to future sport and leisure provision in the village.

Ponteland currently enjoys a wide ranging spread of sporting activity. We have Ponteland United FC, an FA Charter Standard community soccer club with the first team playing in Division 1 of the Northern Alliance League and 30 or more junior sides.

Ponteland Rugby FC is a similarly active local organisation, a Rugby Union Club with three senior fifteens playing in the Northern Division, five junior teams, a girl team and six minis for the under 11s. They have three full size rugby pitches on the existing sports field.

Beyond the soccer and rugby pitches, the cricket ground with its imposing pavilion is home to Ponteland Cricket Club, with the first eleven playing in the Northumberland and Durham Senior League and five senior and four junior sides.

The layout plan indicates that, rather than rebuilding on the school land, they are proposing that the village sports facilities that these various clubs currently enjoy be swept away, along with the leisure centre, the pool and the children's play area, with the cleared land utilised to accommodate a new school.

Cricket is to be given a narrow strip of grass between a couple of football pitches while the other sports clubs would be required to share the new school playing field. The school land is to be sold off for

housing development.

Such sweeping proposals would have a devastating effect on the provision of sport in Ponteland in both the short and longer term.

If there has to be a new school there is sufficient space for it to be located on the existing school land, thereby leaving the village sports facilities relatively undisturbed.

John Hague
High View, Ponteland

Sketchy plans a terrible waste of public money

Were you away on holiday at the beginning of August? Then you almost certainly missed the opportunity to 'have your say' on the County Council's latest proposals to demolish the present pool and leisure centre!

The new plan is to reprovide these, together with library facilities, within a new site for primary and secondary schools. There will be so-called 'shared access' for the general public, via a new entrance on Callerton Lane.

As one of maybe only a few persons who managed to scrutinize the rather sketchy draft plans on view at the Leisure Centre until August 11, I noted the existing leisure centre car park and children's playground and skate park will all disappear while the bridleway/cycle route towards Rotary Way will be diverted.

None of these issues appears to have been addressed, or adequate replacements for the loss of these assets considered. Yet the County Council appears to be presenting this overall scheme as a "fait accompli".

I agree absolutely with John Hague's opinion in last month's issue that the demolition of our present very attractive swimming pool is a terrible waste of public money, but want to highlight some of the other benefits, currently enjoyed by Ponteland residents, that are also under threat, if this scheme goes ahead.

Katherine Guellard
Meadow Court, Ponteland

October issue deadlines: Delivery of the October issue will start on Wednesday September 28th and be completed by Monday October 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Wednesday September 14th. 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 October 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

Photographic Society

The Society meets at 7.30pm on Monday September 5th in the large room at Merton Hall. Speakers and workshops end just after 9pm and we then break for coffee/tea and informal discussion, so there is plenty of time for problem solving and an exchange of news and ideas. Everyone is welcome. See pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk

Ponteland Wildlife Group

The next meeting of Ponteland Wildlife Group will be held in St Mary's Church hall on Tuesday September 6th at 7.30pm when Janet Dean will give an illustrated talk on the wildlife of Ethiopia. Janet has explored lakes in the Great Rift Valley and its northern escarpment and travelled in the Bali mountains and the Sanetti plateau. At 7.30pm on October 4th Richard Poppleton will talk about trees in Northumberland, so why not come along, listen and learn and increase your enjoyment when you walk amongst the trees in Northumberland's beautiful countryside. Both talks are open to all comers. The £2 entrance charge includes a buffet supper after the talk.

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

We meet the first Tuesday of each month. Speakers, cup of tea and sometimes an outing etc. Any lady interested should contact Eleanor Carr on (01661) 871768 for further information.

Ponteland U3A

Our speaker at the monthly meeting on Wednesday September 7th is Barbara Birley and her subject 'Vindolanda update'. 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

In a change to the programme we welcome Geoff Lisle as guest speaker to our September meeting. Geoff will give a talk with the title 'Hospital Radio – 65 years of Radio Tyneside'. The meeting will be held at Kirkley Hall at 7pm on Wednesday September 7th. Guests and visitors always very welcome.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

Friends of Kirkley Hall invite members of the public to their AGM at 7pm on Wednesday September 7th when the speaker will be David Stebbings, Conservation Officer for the charity butterfly conservation. His illustrated talk will cover the status of butterflies in the North East and the problems facing them today. Free places can be booked by ringing (01661) 598052.

Ponteland Methodist Church

The Bridge is a relaxed church service which welcomes everyone. We meet most Sundays in Ponteland Methodist Church Hall at 4pm for tea, coffee, catch up, music and a short talk with separate activities for children. Dates in September: 11th, 18th (followed by a meal), 25th. For more info e-mail: bridge.ponteland@gmail.com or find us on Facebook as The Bridge at Ponteland Methodist Church. A Sunday Club starts on September 11th for kids in Reception to Y8. Have fun, make friends, learn about Jesus and the Bible - 4pm Sundays. For more info contact rchudson@btinternet.com

Ponteland Parish Flower Show

The 39th Annual Show will be held in Ponteland Memorial Hall on Saturday September 10th. Judging commences at 11am.

Darras Hall WI

Darras Hall WI's next meeting will be held at the URC, Broadway, at 2pm on Monday September 12th when Anthony Atkinson will give a talk on Thomas Bewick, the famous artist and engraver who lived at Cherryburn near Mickley in Northumberland. The competition will be for a memento of Newcastle. Visitors are most welcome.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

At our meeting at 2.30pm on Monday September 12th in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, we have Norman Kirtlan and his subject 'Life of a forensic artist'.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

On Monday September 12th we are delighted to welcome Norma Pagdin, a member of the Cleveland Group, to talk to us about 'Flora Helvetica'. Our meetings take place in St. Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. The doors open at 7pm for 7.30pm start. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting. Details from Terry Teal at t.teal@btinternet.com or (0191) 4132574.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

We meet every second Wednesday of the month in the Memorial Hall, Ponteland at 2pm. On Wednesday September 14th Sean Murray (AD) of Ashington will be demonstrating. His theme is 'Hortus Expositus'. Visitors are very welcome - £5 admission charge.

Ponteland Local History Society

Thursday 15 September: 'Wallington Past and Present' by Lloyd Langley & David Weissand. Meetings are held at 7.30pm

in St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. Visitors are welcomed at a special price of £2 per person.

Ponteland Floral Art Club

The next meeting of Ponteland Floral Art Club will be held on September 20th at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall. Nigel Whyles of Telford's demonstration is entitled 'Shaken but not stirred 007'. Fee £10 for non-members.

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. We next meet at Ponteland Town Council offices at 7pm on Wednesday September 21st. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk or shirley@reevehill.plus.com

Embroiderers Guild Ponteland

Monday September 26th AGM followed by Exploring Stitches - Blanket Stitch from 2pm - 4pm at the Memorial Hall, Darras Road. Non-members £4. For further information contact ponteland.eg@btinternet.com

Ponteland Civic Society

The first meeting of the season for Ponteland Civic Society will be on Monday September 26th, 7.30pm at St Mary's Church Hall. Freda Thompson will talk about 'Mr Grainger's Market' – how with help from John Dobson he built the market which opened in 1835. All most welcome. There is a nominal charge of £2 for non-members.

Creative writing group

Led by a qualified tutor, this class will inspire and encourage you to write poetry and stories through stimulating workshop sessions in a friendly and supportive group. New or experienced writers welcome. We meet on Wednesday mornings at 9.30am in members' homes around Ponteland. If you are interested contact Claire at claire@claire276.plus.com or on 01434 605276.

Beading group

Are you looking for a new hobby or want to improve on your skills why not join our beading group? This friendly group welcomes beginners as well as intermediate beaders. Therefore we will work with two programmes according to your previous experience. We meet at Merton Hall, Ponteland on Tuesdays from 7pm to 9pm. For further information or to book a place contact Marijke Shrivastava at mshrivastava@blueyonder.co.uk or on (0191) 2847266. Booking is essential.

Ageing Well Winter Warmer

The Ageing Well Winter Warmer event is being held on Friday October 14th at Merton Hall from 9.30am to 12noon. More details in the October issue.



GRANTS

The Council approved a grant of £150 for Community Action Northumberland, and of £5,500 for youth services in Ponteland. Councillors have asked for a meeting with the County Council to discuss the planned youth activities for Ponteland in more detail.

HIGHWAYS WORKING PARTY

A recommendation by the Highways Working Party, which met on July 15th, to submit a request to the County Council for a Traffic Regulation Order to prevent all overnight parking in the public car parks in Ponteland was approved. The Council also agreed the Local Transport Plan submission for 2017-18 to be sent to NCC. The top three priorities were: raised bus stops along the A696 and main bus routes; new footpaths including kerbing where required at Eastern Way, The Rise, Errington Way, Marian Way and Western Way; and installation of hoop bike bollards at the top of Merton Way to improve pedestrian safety.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed a recommendation by the Working Party which had met on July 18th to supply two seats and a

bin for an area identified at the Eland Estate. It was likely that these would be moved from the library site when it closed. The installation of a modified lighting system at the Pele Tower that was also able to change the colour of the lighting was also approved.

PONTELAND LIBRARY

The Town Council had written to NCC seeking clarification regarding the moving of the library from its current site to the Leisure Centre. A response had been received that confirmed the library would be moving in mid-September. There was no information available as yet regarding the use of the site once the library had moved.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Coun Dodd stated that there was little to report from the County Council during August. The Town Council had recently written to NCC with queries regarding the recent consultation on the Proposed Major Modifications to the Core Strategy. The response confirmed that NCC wanted to work with the Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group regarding their proposals for education, leisure, community facilities and housing. The letter also confirmed that

there would be a further consultation exercise in the Autumn regarding a Supplementary Planning Document for Ponteland.

MAYOR'S DIARY

A list of events attended by the Mayor in July and August together with a list of forthcoming events had been circulated. The Mayor referred to the opening of the National Tandem Rally at Kirkley Hall on Saturday 6 August and stated that he was pleased to have been involved in this Event, which attracted cyclists from all over the country and Europe. (See article on p3.)

DOG FOULING

In an attempt to deal with the problem of dog fouling mentioned in a recent edition of PNV, the Town Council has acquired some dog waste bags. These are available from the office free of charge for a pack of 20. This is a trial being carried out by the Town Council to see if this helps to reduce the problem of dog fouling in the area.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on August 10th.

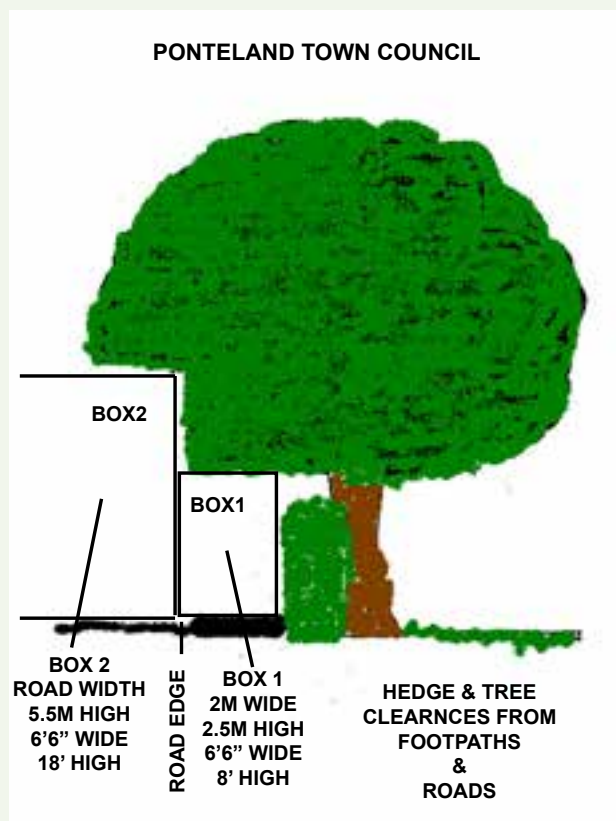
Please maintain your trees and hedges

Ponteland Town Council would again remind residents to cut their hedges and trees back to the profile as shown on the sketch.

This year the trees and hedges have grown exuberantly and hard pruning will be required to keep footpaths clear for pedestrians and roads clear for double decker buses as well as high sided vehicles.

As can be seen from the attached photo, many verges, paths and roads are obstructed and it is house owners responsibility to cut their hedges and trees back to the profile as shown. Please do help the community and do your bit.

The Town Council would also like to thank those residents who regularly cut the grass outside their properties. It helps the council and really does smarten up the appearance of the community.





Young cricketers win County Cup

Ponteland Under 13 Cricket team is celebrating after winning the Northumberland County Cup.

It is the first silverware the U13s have won since 2005 when they gained promotion to the Premier League by winning Division 1.

The competition, run as part of the NatWest Under 13 National Club Championship, saw the team beat Cramlington CC, Ashington CC, Corbridge CC and Tynemouth CC en route to the final held at Ponteland Leisure Centre.

In the final Ponteland batted first and in their allocated 20 overs scored 96-7, restricting opponents South Northumberland CC to 85 in reply and securing an 11-run victory.

The cup was presented by Chris Catnach, League Secretary for the Northumberland Junior Cricket League.

Coaches Mike Storer and Steve Nicholson are pictured with the Ponteland CC U13s.



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Minister in 1,200 mile pilgrimage to Rome

By Muriel Sobo

If you did a demanding job for 26 years and then had a three month sabbatical what would you do? Climb Everest, explore canals in a narrow boat, swan around on the Riviera – almost too much choice!

Tim Thorpe, the Methodist minister in Ponteland, was faced with this decision. So he chose to walk over 1,200 miles across Europe on the Via Francigena or Pilgrims Way from Canterbury Cathedral to Rome!

And he even found a friend to walk with him and share the agony and ecstasy. Tim knew Chris from 40 years ago when he was his best man so the plan incubated for about six months and came to fruition over May, June and into July.

Tim loves walking but found the journeys which start and end in the same place just a bit boring. He relished the unknown of how or when they would eat or sleep and the unpredictability of weather and venues for a night's rest.



It was a pilgrimage with a destination. But it was no soft option. They crossed France from Calais to Lake Geneva in Switzerland and then the Alps over the Saint Bernard Pass into Italy, through Tuscany and the Italian Lakes to Rome.

Yes, of course they got blisters, but you deal with those. However Chris had to take a couple of days out in France since his feet were badly affected by the very wet conditions while Tim continued

on his own. That was a low point for him and he did think of turning back. It didn't happen and they went on to average around 20 miles a day.

Strangers could be angels! One evening in France they reached a village at 8 o'clock but there was no campsite to pitch their tent, just three dodgy hotels. They sat on the pavement in despair when a guy appeared from over the road, invited them in for a meal, gave them a bed for the night and sent them on their way next morning. He had done the pilgrimage and spoke good English!

Weather was unpredictable and at times extreme. In France in May they walked through torrential rain and their feet suffered; walking over the Alps they experienced deep snow and by the time they reached Italy they were starting at 4.30 in the morning when the temperature was already 24 centigrade and reaching up to 40 during the day.

Tim is back in the pulpit for another two years before he retires. He managed to lose 20 pounds and looks very fit but what an adventure! We are just in awe of his achievement.

The Reverend Tim Thorpe on the left and his friend Chris at Canterbury Cathedral at the start of the Via Francigena.



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Kirkley Hall Garden Show

Sunday 25th September,
10am-4pm

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Juliette to compete at international beauty pageant

A Ponteland schoolgirl will compete in an international beauty pageant in the US next summer after winning her first UK title.

Juliette Taylor won the Junior Teen category at the Royal UK Miss pageant in Blackpool, beating 40 other girls to the title and securing her place at the Royal International Miss pageant in Orlando, Florida, next July.

The 14-year-old, a pupil at Ponteland High School, has raised well over £4,000 this year through charity work – community volunteering is a key element in the pageant – with both the Christie Charity and Together for Short Lives receiving more than £2,000.

She has spent the summer helping at various charity events including WE CARE (helping street dogs in Sri Lanka), CHUF and Tiny Lives.

Juliette's sponsors include Park House Nursery - where she used to go as a baby and she now helps out in the holidays, dressing up as various characters including Princess

Anna, Rapunzel and Jessie from Toy-Story, NO1 Gym, Elite Acoustic Solutions, Solutions Recruitment, Kickz Dance wear, Eleven boutique in Cramlington and Cool Check.

She said: "When my name was announced as the Junior Teen category winner, I was so happy I cried. I was really overwhelmed that I had won a national title. I've never been to the USA before, so I'm very excited about taking part in the Royal International Miss pageant next year."

Mum Jill added: "I am immensely proud of what Juliette has achieved in a short space of time. She has a lot of support from friends and family and is a determined young lady who deserves to do well. Next term she will play Sandy in the school production of Grease as well as continuing with her pageant work and starting her GCSEs."

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Pont United return to Premier League after four year absence

Pontland United FC has been promoted to the Northern Football Alliance League Premier Division after a four year absence.

A highly successful first season with new manager, former player Liam McIvor, saw the team then lift the Clayton Charity Cup, the NFA Stelrad Minor Cup and the Northern Alliance Bay Plastics George Dobbins League Cup – all for the first time in the club's history.

The team spent the season chasing Shilbottle WC and Newcastle University in the First Division and finished in 3rd

outside the first two automatic promotion places, but Shilbottle resigned from the league due to players leaving and Pontland were instead promoted.

The pre-season has started well, with the club retaining the Clayton Charity Cup and defeating fellow Premier Division team Shankhouse 4 – 2 in their last pre-season friendly.

The club will again consist of some 35 teams from Under 7s through to the adults, including five girls' teams. If anyone is interested in joining the club as a player, coach or voluntary helper please contact Club Secretary Alan Birkinshaw at pontlandunited@hotmail.co.uk or on 07774 523762.

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Bad experience with Varifocals?



Varifocals continue to be developed to better and more comfortable standards for everyone.

In this 21st Century with growing understanding of how the human body works and what we need to live longer, it is acknowledged that today more and more of us are living as much as 20 years longer than our parents. But our eyes struggle with this longevity and most of us will start to experience deterioration in our ability to focus on objects near and far at around the age of 40.

One common symptom of this ageing process is a realisation that our arms are no longer long enough for us to focus on a newspaper, magazine or book. A visit to the Optician a decade or two ago would result in a prescription for heavy and unglaumorous spectacles with obvious banding between the prescription for near and far distance.

More recently, with innovation in lens manufacture the lucky ones emerged from their opticians with varifocal lenses that were light and stylish, with no real sign that anything other than single vision lenses had been fitted, but for some the soft focus areas of the lens created a feeling of 'swimming through vision' which was difficult to cope with.

We are frequently advised that *"I have tried varifocals but I just can't get used to them"*. As the visual solution that will restore as near to "natural" vision as possible, this is disappointing to hear.

We feel that a large percentage of these "non-tolerances" can be avoided by accurate measurement of the positioning of the lenses and using a superior quality varifocal.

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2. The accuracy of the measurements taken to position the varifocal lenses in the frame precisely in front of your pupils.

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Flower show this weekend

This weekend sees one of Ponteland's major annual events - the parish flower show.

The 39th Annual Ponteland Parish Flower Show will be held in Ponteland Memorial Hall on Saturday September 10th.

There are 133 classes covering flowers, vegetables, fruit, children, cookery, handicrafts, art, wine, and photography.



The schedule can also be accessed electronically at pontelandflowershow.co.uk and paper schedules with entry forms are available in Ponteland Library and various other locations in Ponteland, also in Heddon-on-the-Wall, Belsay and Dinnington. Children's entries are free.

Staging of entries can commence on Friday September 9th from 7pm until 9pm and on Saturday September 10th from 8am until 10.30am. Judging commences at 11am.

Any queries – please contact Syd Cowan at syd.cowan@btinternet.com or on (01661) 824459.



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Tournament marks rugby club's 50th anniversary

Ponteland Rugby Club continued its 50th anniversary celebrations with a round robin 15-a-side tournament.

Teams from Blyth, Gosforth and Novocastrians joined hosts Ponteland for the tries plus conversions only event, held on August 21st, playing for a cup, shield and bowl. Gosforth were declared winners.

Ponteland's Callum Chick was also there, fresh from being part of the Rugby World Championship winning England under-20s team, having scored a try in the final.

The tournament followed a fun day held in July, with stalls

and fairground rides, and the Cramlington Caribbean Crew and local vocalist Neil Black entertaining the crowds throughout the afternoon.

Wes Dixon, from PRC, said: "The day was an opportunity for the club to entertain not only the players and supporters from the other clubs, but also the sponsors who are so vital to the running and very survival of Ponteland Rugby Club."

As the new season is set to get underway, if anyone is interested in becoming involved with Ponteland Rugby Club, as a junior or senior player or just as a supporter, please contact Andy Lawson at andrew_lawson@btconnect.com or on 07989 355557.



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New underground cables to improve Ponteland's power supply

Work has started on a £1m investment in Ponteland's electricity supply network.

Northern Powergrid is installing 7.5km of 20,000 volt underground cables along a section of the A696 to improve reliability of supply – replacing the overhead power lines that currently deliver power to Ponteland.

The new 11,000 volt cable from the primary substation at Newcastle Airport, and a new 20,000 volt cable from another substation at Kingston Park, are being installed alongside fibre optic pilot cables for system communication and telemetry purposes.

The route from Cheviot View crosses the River Pont, following the road to the junction with Darras Road before turning left and going to the Ponteland South substation, which is located adjacent to the Waitrose store.

Alister Gregory, project engineer at Northern Powergrid, said: "We're significantly upgrading the power supply to ensure the network is less vulnerable to severe weather. The overhead power lines that currently supply Ponteland will remain in place and act as a back-up supply.

"As with any construction works there will be some disruption to traffic, but we're making every effort to minimise the impact. Where possible, our contractors are using trenchless technology to install ducts and cabling, with re-instatement work carried out as quickly as possible.

"We hope that residents and commuters will bear with us while we make this significant investment to ensure that Ponteland has a reliable, resilient and robust power supply for many years to come."

The improvement works are due to be completed by mid-March. The company has directly contacted residents who live along the A696 route. Courtesy boards will remain on site during all phases of the construction.

The planned works will not affect residents' power supplies, but anyone with a general inquiry about them can contact contractor Clancy Docwra's 24-hour helpline on 0800 6345944 or Northern Powergrid's customer care team at cus.serv@northernpowergrid.com or on 0800 2987769 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).


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Café wins national award for its tea

A Darras Hall café has won a national award for its house blend tea.

Bella & Frannie at the Broadway, which is owned by Lynsey and Mark Caizley, was selected for the Great Taste Award by 500 judges.

Lynsey said: "We opened Bella & Frannie's in November 2015 and wanted to develop our own range of high quality tea blends. We have received rave reviews from our customers so decided to enter our House Blend into the Great Taste Awards.

"Our tea was judged by 500 judges which included respected chefs and food writers, buyers from Harrods, Fortnum and Mason, Harvey Nicols and Waitrose so we are absolutely thrilled."

Established in 1994, Great Taste describes itself as the largest and most trusted accreditation scheme for fine food and drink. This year 10,000 products were blind-tasted by panels of specialists including top chefs, cookery writers, food critics, restaurateurs and fine food retailers.

The panel of judges included TV chef and author Valentine Warner, MasterChef judge and restaurant critic Charles Campion, fifth generation baker Tom Herbert from Hobbs House Bakery, Great British Bake Off winner Frances Quinn; food buyers from Harrods, Selfridges, Fortnum & Mason, Harvey Nichols and Waitrose and chefs including James Golding, chef director of THE PIG Hotels, and Kevin Gratton, chef director of HIX Restaurants.



Huge blades bring centre of Ponteland to a halt

By Muriel Sobo

The middle of Ponteland came to a complete halt one July day to allow the passage of three turbine blades on their way to be assembled as part of a 16 turbine wind farm on the Ray Estate near Kirkwhelpington.

I saw this once but it has been ongoing this summer as the blades are transported from Blyth and eventually up the A696 to their destination.

The Ray Estate belongs to Lord Devonport, the third of that name, originally created in the 20th century for political service. It was bought by Devonport in the 1950s. The previous owner was Sir Charles Parsons, the famous northeast inventor and industrialist who is buried in Kirkwhelpington churchyard beside his wife.

The size of these turbine blades is unbelievable; in the photograph the front of the carrier is on the bridge and the rear stretches past YOLO's!

There were at least six escort cars with flashing lights rushing about to control the traffic since it was all stopped to allow these giants to pass. In all, parts for 16 turbines passed through Ponteland to form another wind farm near Sweetthope Lough on the Ray estate of wild moorland and sheep farms; a beautiful part of our county, windswept and lonely!

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