

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Councillors to redetermine
2,000-home garden village plan

Middle School announces
expansion plans

Delight at Britain in Bloom
award

Ponteland on parade as community remembers war dead



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Community gathers to remember war dead

BBC TV presenter Carol Malia and Hexham MP Guy Opperman joined the community of Ponteland for the annual Remembrance Sunday parade and service.

The Look North news anchor attended in her capacity as Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, representing the Queen.

Ponteland Mayor Alan Varley, accompanied by other councillors, laid a wreath on behalf of the Town Council at the War Memorial service following the parade from the leisure centre.

Others in attendance included representatives of the Armed Forces, veterans, Army and RAF cadets, as well as Ponteland Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Brownies, Guides, the Boys' Brigade and Northumbria Police.

Other community organisations represented included Ponteland Civic Society, U3A, Rotary, Memorial Hall, Friends of the Park, Lions and Darras Hall Estate Committee.

The service was led by the Reverend Captain Paul Allinson and Reverend Christine Brown from St Mary's Church, and was followed by refreshments in the Memorial Hall.

Photos by The Image Farm



Relief for Medburn villagers as plans for housing development refused

Villagers in Medburn have expressed delight after the latest in a string of planning applications for new housing was refused by councillors against their own officers' advice.

Last month Pont News reported on complaints by people living in the hamlet about various housing schemes causing chaos on their doorsteps.

Previous planning approvals had included 50 new dwellings by Miller Homes on a 4.4-hectare site just north of The Avenue last year and a new 62-home scheme by Bellway Homes on a 6.6-hectare plot of land adjacent to the opposite side of The Avenue in October. Work has not yet started on either scheme.

Instead it has been the work on numerous approved smaller housing developments dotted along the end of The Avenue which has led to the narrow unadopted private road doubling as a service road for the various housebuilders' wagons and other vehicles.

Residents claim they are having difficulty accessing their homes due to the additional vehicles using the road and are complaining about excessive mud and damage to verges.

Planning policy appears to have been influenced by two appeals against refusal of planning permission by Northumberland County Council for two developments – of 14 homes and five homes – which were upheld by a planning inspector in 2012.

Since then a number of housing schemes have been approved and one end of The Avenue has several building sites ongoing as our aerial photograph showed in the November issue.

But on November 13th members of the county council's Castle Morpeth Local Area Committee turned down an outline application for 16 dwellings on land to the north of The Avenue. Officers had recommended approval, citing the previous appeal decisions.

Ponteland Town Council had once again objected to the planning application, along with seven residents. Concerns raised included the negative impact on highway safety and on residential amenity.

Reasons given for refusal were related to problems caused by increased traffic on a substandard road, over-development of a site appropriate only for infill development, not achieving sensitive development in keeping with low density surroundings, and not being a sustainable location for new housing development due to lack of services/facilities and extremely limited access to public transport.

Mother-of-one Stefanie Fletcher, who lives on The Avenue, welcomed the decision: "Residents are delighted that councillors are taking into consideration the severe adverse impact that development on The Avenue has had.

"It has been a huge fight for residents over the years and material objections have continually been ignored - we are delighted that this appears to be a move in the right direction and we will continue to fight applications which go against local and national planning policy."

County council appoints new Chief Executive



Northumberland County Council's new Chief Executive has been confirmed as Daljit Lally OBE.

Daljit, who was made the interim Chief Executive in May following the departure of the previous Chief Executive Steven Mason of Darras Hall, was confirmed in her new role at a meeting of full council on November 1st.

She had previously been Deputy Chief Executive and was appointed to the £190,000 Head of Paid Service post following a formal interview and selection process.

Council Leader Peter Jackson said: "We're delighted to confirm Daljit as Chief Executive. She brings with her a wealth of skills, experience and an in-depth knowledge of the council and our vision to take Northumberland forward over the next few years."

Recruitment drive for retained firefighters for Ponteland

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service is recruiting on-call firefighters for its retained fire station in Ponteland.

The role provides great opportunities to learn new skills ranging from first aid training to acquiring a large goods vehicle licence. It is also a way to earn money as well as attaining a real sense of achievement in providing an invaluable service to your local community.

Becoming an on-call firefighter allows room to combine this role with another job. What we ask is that you will attend the station for two hours per week for training and respond to call-outs when available.

Retained firefighters must live or work no further than five minutes travel time from Ponteland fire station and must be able to give the level of availability required.

If you have the flexibility and commitment that Northumberland Fire & Rescue is looking for and would like more information or an application form visit northumberland.gov.uk/fire and search for firefighter recruitment or email fire.recruitment@northumberland.gov.uk or contact the HR Department on (01670) 621123 during office hours.

Alternatively you can drop in to Ponteland Fire Station in Callerton Lane on a Monday evening between 7pm and 9pm.

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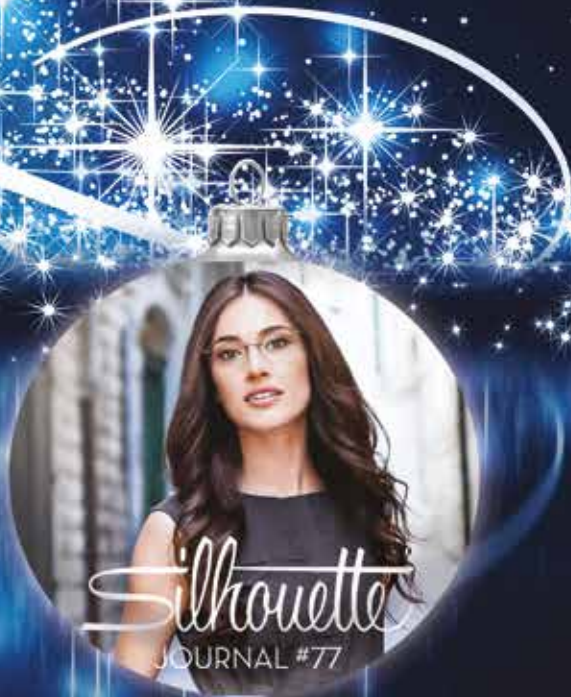
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Seven youths given dispersal notices in anti-social behaviour crackdown

By PC Darren Fisher and PC Ingrid Clayton



There have been 53 crimes recorded during the period from October 15th to November 11th for Ponteland and the surrounding area:

- Theft of motor vehicle - one
- Theft from motor vehicle - three
- Section 47 assault - four
- Theft (other) - six
- Malicious communications - one
- Affray - one
- Common assault - two
- Damage to motor vehicle - five
- Public Order Section 5 - seven
- Theft shoplifting - seven
- Damage (other) - one
- Criminal damage - two
- Section 4 Public Order - three
- Fraud by false representation - one
- Sexual assault - one
- Burglary dwelling - one
- Burglary other than dwelling - two
- Drugs offences - two
- Arson - one
- Harassment without fear - one
- Damage other than dwelling - one.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Section 35 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 is a power to disperse people causing Harassment, Alarm or Distress. It enables police officers to require a person who has committed or is likely to commit anti-social behaviour to leave a specified area and not return for up to 48 hours. Over the weekend of Friday November 3rd our colleagues from the Neighbourhood Support Team issued seven youths with a dispersal notice. One of the youths returned a short time later and was subsequently arrested. Another youth was arrested for being drunk and disorderly. Both youths will be dealt with by the Youth Offending Team. On Tuesday November 7th a public meeting was held at Ponteland Leisure Centre to discuss the issues of anti-social behaviour within Ponteland. May I take this opportunity to thank all those that attended and contributed to a very positive meeting. If there are any issues that you want to speak to either myself or Ingrid about then please get in contact and we will endeavour to assist. During the weekend of the November 10th again myself and colleagues from the Neighbourhood Support Team were out on foot

patrol engaging with the youths. Colleagues from Youth Services were also located in Merton Way and at the entrance to the park. Information obtained will be used to discuss youth provision in the area. The Neighbourhood Support Team is developing good communication links with Ponteland Community High School who are assisting us. I am encouraged to report that since the incidents on November 3rd there have not been any reports of disorder.

Crime prevention advice

As a way of a reminder please can you make sure that you do not leave valuables on show within your vehicles and that you check that your vehicles are suitable secured overnight.

Contact us

If you have any information regarding the above or any other incidents, please email easttynedale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk or call us on 101. For further information regarding events, local news, crime prevention advice and our Neighbourhood Priorities in the East Tynedale area, please visit our website at northumbria.police.uk

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Councillors to look again at Dissington Garden Village planning application

Councillors are being asked to look again at plans for a 2,000-home garden village on Dissington Estate.

Northumberland County Council said it was 'minded to approve' the huge scheme earlier this year before the local elections, and it was set to be sent to the Government's National Planning Casework Unit (NPCU) for a decision on whether it would be called in by the Secretary of State.

But the new Conservative administration withdrew the Core Strategy in July, questioning both its housing projections and whether proposed green belt development could be justified.

The council has now announced it is to start work on a new Local Plan to set planning policies for the next 20 years which "will afford protection of the green belt", and as a result the Dissington Garden Village planning application is being sent back to councillors for redetermination.

A spokesperson said: "The council is required to re-consider an application in cases where a significant policy change has the potential to affect an existing 'minded to approve' resolution from committee but where the final decision has not yet been issued. This will be the case with the Dissington Garden Village application."

Another major planning application awaiting decision is the 400-home scheme proposed by The Banks Group for Clickemin Farm behind Cheviot View. The council said it was also 'minded to approve' this application in March.

It remains with the NPCU for a decision several months on, which The Banks Group believe is due to the NPCU awaiting the council determining the new full planning application for the £46m schools and leisure development (see p9) at the other side of the green belt site bordered by the A696, Rotary Way and Callerton Lane.

The Core Strategy had proposed 24,320 new homes for the county by 2031 plus an additional 2,000 houses at Dissington Garden Village.

However, in June Council Leader Peter Jackson said new statistics from the Government 'suggests...that the requirement for housing in our county may very well not be as high as has been proposed previously'. He added that the council wanted to use this information 'to review the need to build on acres of green belt land'.

The new Local Plan will determine the number of houses required, but the authority has published a new report to demonstrate a five year housing land supply which gives an objectively assessed need figure of 18,880 dwellings for the period 2011-31 - significantly lower than that proposed in the previous Core Strategy.

The council said the new Local Plan will include far more detailed planning policies than would have been provided in the now withdrawn Core Strategy and will follow a comprehensive review and update of its evidence.

The plan will be submitted to Government for examination by

Summer 2019 and, following examination, will be adopted by Summer 2020, with periods of public consultation throughout the process starting in Spring 2018.

However, in a speech in Bristol on November 16th Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid threatened 15 councils including Northumberland with direct intervention. He has given them until the end of January to put forward any exceptional circumstances to justify their failure to produce a Local Plan.

Coun Jackson responded to the warning: "Be in no doubt that the new administration...is determined to pull out all the stops to ensure a sound process which will be delivered as quickly as possible. I look forward to working positively with the Government to that end."

Richard Robson, Chairman of Lugano Property Group behind the garden village scheme, welcomed Mr Javid's speech - in which he reiterated his support for garden villages to tackle the national housing crisis - adding: "We continue to work with the council on fulfilling the criteria that was set following the original decision to support Dissington Garden Village in March."

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Middle school academy launches expansion plans to rival high school

With building works underway on the new Darras Hall Primary School and a full planning application lodged for the new £46m schools/leisure complex, the competing Ponteland Academy has now announced its own expansion plans. Chris Jennings reports.

After an emotive campaign last year by parents against the move from three tier to two tier which would have seen the former Ponteland Community Middle School close, its governing body earned a reprieve after successfully applying to the Department for Education to become an academy independent of local authority control on September 1st.

But other schools in the Ponteland Partnership have gone ahead with the education restructure, creating new primary schools in Belsay, Darras Hall, Heddon on the Wall, Ponteland, Stamfordham and Whalton.

Six of these schools are now joining forces in a new Multi Academy Trust (MAT): Belsay Primary School; Darras Hall Primary School; Ponteland High School; Ponteland Primary School; Heddon on the Wall St. Andrews Primary School; and Richard Coates CE School.

This would appear to potentially leave Ponteland Community Middle School somewhat isolated as a nine to 13 middle school surrounded by a two tier system with three to 11 primary schools and an 11 to 18 secondary school.

Parents preferring three tier education will, however, retain the choice to send their children to PCMS from a primary school at Year 5.

But last month the headteacher of Ponteland Community High School warned parents in this publication that children who went to PCMS risked having no place at the new secondary school aged 13 as the high school would have to infill its Year 7 intake with pupils from outside Ponteland to take the place of those who went to the middle school academy.

It appeared dozens of pupils who attended PCMS could have been forced to travel to Prudhoe, Kenton or Walbottle for secondary education after Year 8.

Now the Board of Ponteland Academy, which runs PCMS, has announced it is planning to extend its intake to include Years 9, 10 and 11, and potentially opening a lower school up to Year 4 "in subsequent years", rivalling the neighbouring two tier schools.

Announcing the launch of a formal consultation, headteacher Dr Caroline Pryer said: "Ponteland Academy Board of Trustees is consulting on proposals to change the Academy's age range from 9-13 to 9-16 and the related admission arrangements which will come into effect for students who will be starting Year 9 in September 2019.

"This is based on the parent demand and that the new Academy is situated in a cross border (boundary) area of population growth where secondary schools are good or outstanding.

"It is unlikely to have a negative impact on the education standards at the academy or at other local schools or colleges, as it focuses on providing parental choice and educational continuity."

The proposed admission number of each year group would be 150 children, with additional pupils accommodated in 15 new build classrooms and specialist facilities. If approved, the change would mean Academy students could remain for entry to Year 9 in 2019 and then Year 10 and 11.

Dr Pryer added: "There are four existing temporary classrooms requiring a permanent build. The Academy has land on which to build and preliminary plans have been drawn in preparation for a full business case submission for significant change."

The six week consultation runs from November 13th to January 8th and includes a public and stakeholder consultation event from 6pm to 8pm on Monday December 4th in the school hall.

All comments should be sent by email to admin@ponteland.academy no later than 12noon on Monday January 8th. Responses will be collated and presented to the Board of Trustees for a decision and parents will receive notification on the outcome of the consultation in January.

Six schools to join together in Multi Academy Trust

Meanwhile, in mid-September the six schools in the proposed Multi Academy Trust had submitted online applications to the Department for Education under the working title of Northumberland Academy Trust. They received confirmation on October 16th that all schools had been granted Academy Orders.

The schools are now working towards a conversion date after March 1st 2018. They say key milestones have included:

- Confirming the five Members who act as the 'guardians of the Trust'
- Confirming the nine Directors of the Trust Board who are responsible for the strategic overview of the Trust:
 - All Directors have been recruited on the basis of their skills
 - Six of the Directors have been recruited from existing school governing bodies



Ponteland Community Middle School

Admission Consultation Event

Monday 4 December 2017 6.00 - 7.30 pm

The Academy is holding a public stakeholder consultation event in the School Hall. Everyone is invited to attend to hear more about the proposals and to ask questions. Please contact the school office should you require further information.

Email: admin@ponteland.academy

- Three Directors have been recruited externally in order to bring a fresh perspective to the work of the MAT ensuring that it is not too insular in its thinking
- Confirming Muckle LLP as the legal team to support the schools as they progress to conversion. They will liaise closely with Northumberland County Council on a variety of issues including site boundaries and transfer agreements.

In what has been seen as a sign of confidence in the new MAT by the Regional Schools Commissioner, the schools were told on November 9th that they will be paired with an experienced

MAT from another part of the country offering peer-to-peer support in its first 18 months.

Kieran McGrane, head of Ponteland Community High School, said: "We believe the offer of this support reflects the fact that we have the potential to be a high performing and influential MAT within our region."

Next steps include finalising internal leadership structures and making the necessary appointments as well as agreeing a permanent name for the Academy Trust, as Northumberland was just a working title.

Full planning application lodged for new £46m schools and leisure complex

A full planning application has been lodged for a £46m complex for the new Ponteland primary and high schools and leisure facilities.

This application follows a recently withdrawn scheme for education and leisure facilities on the site which was approved by committee under the former Labour administration but then referred to the Government's National Planning Casework Unit (NPCU).

This previous application had ties to a proposed 400-home development by Banks Property at neighbouring Clickemin Farm (currently sat with the NPCU), but the new application makes clear the new scheme "is no longer informed by these proposals".

The new schools and leisure facilities will be built on a site which includes the existing leisure centre, to be demolished, alongside a large expanse of sports and playing fields. Directly north of the site are residential properties along Mayfair Gardens.

Architects say the scheme will boast "bold and intelligent design" to create a single building with three different identities to accommodate a new primary school, high school and leisure facilities for the shared use of students and the wider community.

The high school will be located centrally to enjoy access to new all-weather sport facilities, a sheltered external dining area, rich

habitat areas and themed art gardens, table tennis areas, group seating and study terraces.

The primary school will be located towards the southern end of the main site with views to the east.

A 'community street' area accessible to all will have a 90m long glazed internal double height area containing a public café, public library and art gallery, as well as Clip n Climb and soft play.

'The Crescent' will provide access to the various sport, leisure, performance, exhibition, events spaces, and secure visitor entrance into both the primary and high schools. Users of the leisure facilities will find a 25m swimming pool and learner pool, fitness suite, Clip n Climb, soft play, a recreation room and public café.

Facilities within the schools that the community could have access to include the sports hall, secondary school hall and primary school hall, post 16 social and study, lecture theatre and media, music and drama area.

Supporting documentation for the plans states: "The application is with regards to the colocation of the existing leisure facilities within a new purpose built facility incorporating a 420 place primary school, a 1600 place secondary school, improved sport facilities and landscaping.

"In doing so, the proposal is considered to create a 'once in a lifetime opportunity' for



A visual of the new combined primary and high school and leisure facility.

shared leisure and learning centre as a community hub within Ponteland. Fundamentally, a building is proposed (as) a whole but will maintain three separate identities."

The design and access statement continues: "The proposed scheme creates circa 20,000sqm of new accommodation. This includes approximately 2,500sqm of dedicated primary school accommodation, 10,500sqm of dedicated secondary accommodation and 7,000sqm of shared leisure, schools and community provision.

"The pool hall and associated changing is designed for up to 150 users, whilst the fitness suite can accommodate 100 fitness stations. Both represent a significant - and much needed - uplift from the current provision. Eight team changing rooms, designed to the relevant standards, are provided for outdoor sports alongside dedicated officials changing.

"The building is organised into three clear and distinct elements: the crescent, primary and secondary blocks. Each block is unique in its scale, appearance and use whilst being identifiably part of a larger holistic building. The crescent block, as the name suggests, is a curved element which the other two blocks 'plug' into."

There will be 450 standard parking spaces, 13 car drop off bays, eight coach bays, three midi coach bays, three minibus bays and 23 disabled parking bays.

The planning application is expected to go to committee for decision early in the new year, and the school development is planned to be complete in time for the start of the new term in September 2019 with the leisure elements complete early in 2020.

To view the planning application and make comments visit northumberland.gov.uk/planning and enter 17/03729/CCD in the search box.

Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Anger at plans to fell 150 mature trees and over damage in a supermarket car park in this month's letters...

Plans to fell trees and hedgerows for school/leisure scheme will radically alter village character

Having seen from the planning application that the Hawthorn hedge that has satisfactorily enclosed the Darras Hall primary schools for the past 50 years was to be retained despite redevelopment taking place, I was somewhat taken aback to see a significant stretch ripped out as soon as the contractor turned up on site.

But as a well-known politician once said: "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

The latest planning application for the leisure centre site includes a drawing submitted by the contractor and labelled 'Logistics Plan'. On this drawing, lines of trees and hedgerows that are enclosed by a red line are designated as "vegetation to be removed".

They include:

- The 300 yard length of mature tree and hedgerow planting running along the leisure centre side of Callerton Lane between Mayfair Gardens and the fire station.
- The bank of trees, mostly conifers, bordering the bridleway by the children's play area and extending eastward for about 200 yards before turning left along the line of the field boundary.
- The trees partially enclosing the cricket ground.
- The line of trees and hedgerow separating the leisure centre car park from the Ponteland FC ground.
- The area of woodland between the fire station and the middle school, together with the trees within the bus park.

All in all the felling of some 150 mature trees, together with the associated hedgerows, that would have the effect of radically altering the character of the Callerton Lane approach into Ponteland, and by the same token the character of the village itself.

This splendid spread of landscaping is a significant community asset, one that has taken well over 50 years to reach this level of maturity. It helps make the place what it is. It cannot be simply bulldozed aside.

If this is the best this particular contractor can come up with, then the county council needs to find a new partner.

John Hague
High View, Darras Hall

Hit and run driver left full time carer without transport

On Thursday October 5th I went shopping at Waitrose and parked centrally in a bay, with no cars on either side.

On my return at about 11.45am I found my blue Honda Accord had been hit by another car with the result that there were deep score marks on the bumper which had also been displaced and a special part of the bumper had disappeared.

This is now the fourth time I have returned to car parks to find damage to my car and the offenders have disappeared without trace.

Unfortunately, Waitrose do not have CCTV of their car park but the following day I returned and the helpful duty manager completed a written report of the damage. I also spent the rest of the day visiting three body repair firms to find out who could carry out the repair, including finding a replacement of the special part of the bumper.

I am a full-time carer of my disabled wife and could well do without the stress this event has caused me.

I hope the person who caused the damage will see this letter and reflect on their actions which, apart from the cost of just under £250, I have lost the use of my car for three days while repairs are carried out and have had to postpone an important medical appointment because of being without a car.

Neil Buchanan
Willow Way, Darras Hall

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January issue deadlines: Delivery of the January issue will start on Thursday January 4th and be completed by Tuesday January 9th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Friday December 8th. If you are aware of any missed properties please contact the editor at pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk or call (0191) 3408422. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the January issue.

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



An ideal
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gift



Timeless and elegant fragrances for your home

Favourite walks, decadent perfumes and much loved zesty fruits are the inspiration behind a fresh range of glamorous candles and reed diffusers from a newly launched Ponteland business.

teelangó is the brainchild of Susan Turney, who wants to share her lifelong love for scented candles with homeowners looking for that extra wow.

Susan said: "Growing up surrounded by candles and a multitude of different room scents I was inspired to make my own distinct version. Throughout the process the focus has always been to make the best candle possible - from the beautiful fragrances and the textured packaging to the elegant logo etched in silver foil.

"I have put my heart into every detail so you can experience a little piece of luxury right at home."

teelangó has launched with three fragrances that burst with modern scents:



Fig & Lily...

reminds us of a walk in the woods



Oud & Rose...

reminds us of the perfume that stays after a hug from a loved one.



Tuberose & Orange...

reminds us of a French breakfast, on a sunny day, surrounded by flowers and drinking orange juice (and also eating pastries!)

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To find out more about tealangó or to order online with **FREE** delivery visit **teelango.co.uk** or come and meet us at **Darras Hall Primary School's Christmas Fair** on **Friday December 1st** from 4pm until 6pm

What's on...

Ponteland Rotary Club Christmas Market

This year's Christmas market is being held at Merton Way on Saturday December 2nd from 11am to 3pm. Crafts, gifts, mulled wine, great and Santa! All profits to Ponteland Rotary Clubs' chosen charities.

Ponteland Photographic Society

Ponteland Photographic Society meets at 7.30pm on Monday December 4th, 11th and 18th at Merton Hall. New members welcome. See pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk

Ponteland Means Business

Ponteland Means Business meets at the Diamond Inn from 8am to 9.30am on the first Tuesday of each month. Next meeting December 5th. Contact Brian Russell at brian.russell@profitabilitygroup.co.uk or on (01661) 872004.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

Dr Chris Redfern will talk about 'Tracking Arctic Terns' on Tuesday December 5th at 7.30pm in St Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road. Admission £2 includes refreshments. Open to all.

Ponteland U3A

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month in St. Mary's Church Hall at 2pm. On December 6th Trevor Taylor will entertain us with 'Comedy Songs and Monologues' followed by the choir, carols and our faith tea. Visitors are always welcome; there is no charge. Visit u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland or call (01661) 824953.

Kirkley WI

Kirkley WI meets at Kirkley Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7pm. On December 7th at 12.30pm we are having our Christmas lunch at Ponteland Golf Club. Visit kirkleywi.wordpress.com

Ponteland Methodist Church Annual Christmas Fayre

Free event at Ponteland Methodist Church on Saturday December 9th from 10am to 12noon. Featuring carols by the U3A Choir, stalls of preserves, candles, plants, cakes and tombola raffle.

Baroque Christmas by Candlelight

Royal Northern Sinfonia present Baroque Christmas by Candlelight at St Mary the Virgin, Ponteland, on Saturday December 9th at 7.30pm. Get into the Christmas spirit with a selection of seasonal instrumental favourites, including 'Winter' from Vivaldi's Four Seasons. Tickets: £15 adults; £5 under-18s £5 from sagegateshead.com or by calling (0191) 443 4661.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

At our meeting at 2.30pm on Monday December 11th in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Mike Pratt will talk about Northumberland Wildlife Trust, followed by an informal seasonal tea with snacks.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

On Monday December 11th we will be holding our AGM and social evening at Ponteland Social Club (CIU), Merton Way, Ponteland, NE20 9PX at 7.30pm. Visitors £2. Contact neegroup@agsgroups.org or visit alpinegardensociety.net/groups/North-East-England or find us on Facebook.

Ponteland WI

Ponteland WI meets in the lounge of the Memorial Hall on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7pm. Our speaker on December 12th is Alex Swailes MBE and his subject is 'My Northumberland'. We will also be celebrating the festive season with our Christmas party. Visitors are most welcome.

Ponteland Village WI

On Tuesday December 12th we are having a Christmas themed quiz followed by mulled wine and mince pies. We meet on the second Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Contact via email at pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or our Facebook page 'PontelandVillageWI'.

Ponteland Lions Club

Our next meeting is on Wednesday December 13th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall. Visitors welcome to come along find out how Lions serve the community. We are holding a flag

day collection during the morning of Saturday December 2nd and a small charity book stall in Merton Way at the Rotary Club's Christmas Market. We resume our charity book stall at Waitrose on Saturday January 27th.

Ponteland Local History Society

Our Christmas Social is being held at St. Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road, Ponteland, at 7.30pm on Thursday December 14th. Membership is open to all with annual subscription £6 (single) £10 (couple). Visitors £2.

Scottish Country Dancing

Bullocksteads Scottish Country Dance Club meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month from September to April at Dalton Village Hall from 7.30pm to 10pm. Live music. Cost £5 per session. Pooled supper. A friendly social class. All welcome, no need to have a partner. Have fun, exercise and make new friends. Contact Ruth on (01661) 881654 or just turn up.

Ponteland writers

A friendly group with mixed writing ability and experience. We meet every Wednesday at Post Box coffee shop from 7pm to 9pm. New members welcome.

Beading group

Come and learn to make your own beaded jewellery or make some Christmas presents. Beginners as well as intermediate beaders are welcome. We meet at Merton Hall, Ponteland NE20 9PX, on Tuesdays 7pm to 9pm. Booking is essential; contact Marijke Shrivastava at mshrivastava@blueyonder.co.uk or on (0191) 284 7266.

Ponteland Methodist Church Carpet Bowls Club

This friendly club meets on Mondays from 1.30pm to 3.30pm and Fridays from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. Experience not necessary. For further info contact Barbara on (01661) 824652.

Ponteland Ladies' Choir

Are you interested in joining a friendly group of singers with a young, enthusiastic conductor? We meet at Ponteland Methodist Church on Mondays from 7.15pm to 9pm in term time. No audition needed. Contact Brenda on (01661) 821704 or Rosie on (01661) 871663.

The best present ever



By Revd. Captain Paul Allinson, Vicar of Ponteland

I wonder if you have ever planned for a party or other special occasion?

There is a great deal of preparation involved. The selection of the perfect venue and the all important guest list of the great and the good.

Then you need to select the caterers, the entertainment, the photographer, the comfortable accommodation and of course the lovely gift.

All these things are vital ingredients for the perfect celebration, or are they?

It may then strike you as odd that at Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the King of Kings and the Son of God, we find that the venue was slightly less than 5 star!

The guests were unimportant shepherds and wandering wise men. There was little to eat and only cattle to entertain the Christ Child. No one to record the event officially and no comfort on a hard floor or a damp manger.

This is indeed surprising and yet it means that all, regardless of colour, creed or background are welcome guests at this celebration. This child is the gift that money cannot buy and is God's gift to us at Christmas.

Come and join the celebration this Christmas. May the God of Hope and Joy fill you with peace this Christmas.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN PONTELAND

The Ponteland Churches wish you a Peaceful and Happy Christmas 2017

St. Mary the Virgin, Ponteland

December 17th, 10am

All Age Service

December 17th, 6pm

9 Lessons and Carols

December 24th, 10am

Christmas Eve Communion

December 24th, 3pm

Carols around the Crib

December 24th, 4pm

Carols around the Crib

December 24th, 7pm

Carols by Candlelight

December 24th, 11.30pm

Midnight Mass

December 25th, 8am

Christmas Communion

December 25th, 10am

Christmas Communion

December 25th, 10.30am

Christmas Day Mass

Holy Saviour, Milbourne

December 17th, 11.15am

Carol Service

December 25th, 11.15am

Christmas Communion

Methodist Church, Ponteland

December 10th, 10am

GB/BB Carol Service

December 17th, 10am

Family Christmas Celebration

December 17th, 6.30pm

Candlelight Carol Service

December 24th, 10am

Christmas Eve service

December 24th, 6.30pm

Christmas Communion

December 25th, 10.30am

Christmas Day Service

Methodist Church, Milbourne

December 17th, 6.30pm

Carol Service

December 24th, 6pm

Communion Service

December 31st, 11.30pm

Watch Night Service

St. Matthew's RC Church, Ponteland

December 24th, 5pm

Carols and Mass

December 25th, 10.30am

Christmas Day Mass

St Francis Xavier, Cheeseburn

December 20th, 6.30pm

Readings and Carols

December 25th, 9.30am

Christmas Day Holy Mass

December 16th Carol Singing for Christian Aid at Broadway Shops 10.30am to 12noon

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Tributes paid to CARE village champion

By Muriel Sobo



The funeral took place of a familiar face in the community, Jenny Brown, on November 13th at St Mary's Church.

Jenny was well known in Ponteland from the mid-1970s, when she led the fundraising events which culminated in the building of CARE village, next to the police headquarters off North Road.

CARE village was a superb community venture for those with learning disabilities. The Browns, Ian an architect and Jenny a teacher, had two sons. William was the younger sibling born with Down's syndrome and would need care throughout his life.

William died in 2013 aged 50 years and his mother at that time was in the Manor care home suffering from dementia.

The CARE village was closed in 2013 and houses were built on the site.

St Mary's was filled with friends and a few relations. William's brother Christopher gave the eulogy and spoke about the family, while Jenny's sister Margaret read the lesson.

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Ponteland wins Britain in Bloom award

Having won gold awards six years' running in Northumbria in Bloom, Ponteland has gone one better - picking up a top Britain in Bloom accolade.

The Silver Gilt award in the small town category was presented to former councillor Joyce Butcher and Town Council gardening contractor Iain Clough at a ceremony in Llandudno.

This is the first time Ponteland has been invited to enter in the national competition, competing against Bothwell, Wareham and joint gold award winners Randalstown and Uppingham.

The Town Council thanks everyone involved in the preparations for the judges' visit, including contractors Iain Clough, Michael Champion, Jim Scott, Derek Sherlock and Calum Sherlock who worked so hard to make Ponteland look good for everyone.

Councillors and staff also want to express their appreciation to all the businesses who sponsored the competition, giving a great boost to the council's floral displays.

There were also many volunteers and town councillors who helped out during the months leading up to the competition and everyone who put so much work into their own displays. The Council is very grateful for this assistance.

A big thank you must go to former councillors Robin Ramsay and Joyce Butcher. Despite standing down from the Council in May, they volunteered to help with the competition and put in many hours of work. It all paid off and Ponteland should be very proud of the result.

Finally, the Council would also like to thank the Northumbria in Bloom Trustees for asking Ponteland to be the NiB entry this year in the small town category of Britain in Bloom. NiB's other entry Stanghow won gold in the best small village category and topped that group.

Former councillor Joyce Butcher and gardening contractor Iain Clough receive the Britain in Bloom award from TV naturalist Iolo Williams, and photos of floral displays at Coates Green, Main Street and Broadway.





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Surprise party to mark Heather's 25 years at care home

A Gosforth grandmother said she was “flabbergasted” at a surprise party held to celebrate her 25 years working at a Ponteland care home.

Heather Smith has worked at Grange Lea Care Home on North Road since 1992 and says she has no plans to retire any time soon.

The family-run home has looked after nearly 900 older people since it was opened by Dan and Joyce Whaley 32 years ago, and currently has residents aged from 65 to 103.

Earlier this month a surprise afternoon tea party was held where colleagues and residents thanked the mother-of-three for her long service and presented her with a gift of champagne and flowers.

Dan paid tribute: “Heather has a great work ethic. She is a very nice and able carer who never lets me down. Heather works night duty

which is more responsible than the day and evening shifts, because of the obvious risks associated with it. We are very proud of her and her dedication to her job.”

Heather, 68, said the party was a lovely surprise: “I was absolutely flabbergasted! It is so nice to think they appreciate me for working as long – I have enjoyed every minute of it. It is a pleasure anyway.”

And the grandmother-of-four said she has no plans to retire: “I’m going to stay on as long as I can, as long as I feel fit and can do the job. I love being among the residents and staff - it’s a lovely home.”

Heather is pictured with the home’s oldest resident Jane Thomson, 103. Photo by The Image Farm.





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BRITAIN IN BLOOM AWARD 2017

The Council expressed delight at Ponteland receiving a Silver Gilt award in the small town category for Britain in Bloom 2017 at an awards ceremony held in Llandudno on October 27th. Thanks were given to everyone involved in the competition, including contractors Iain Clough, Michael Champion, Jim Scott and Derek and Calum Sherlock, the many sponsors and volunteers, NCC's Neighbourhood Services Team and former councillors Joyce Butcher and Robin Ramsay who had helped so much with the competition entry. Ponteland had also been successful in the Northumbria in Bloom competition, winning a Gold award in the same category. See article on p15.

FUNDING FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS

NCC Senior Policy Officer Neil Easton talked to the Council about funding from the proposed new development at the Police HQ by Bellway Homes for public transport improvements. A suggestion made was to fund some real time displays at bus stops at the new development but also at the two bus shelters on Main Street. These are digital displays in a metal casing showing the buses on their way to a bus stop using GPS tracking. These would be installed at no cost to the Town Council. Councillors were keen to know more about the proposals and Mr Easton agreed to attend a meeting of the Highways Working Party.



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WWI BEACONS OF LIGHT

The Council has agreed to take part in the 'Battle's Over' tribute on the evening of November 11th 2018 in commemoration and remembrance of the end of World War One and the many millions of people who were killed or came home wounded. A beacon will be lit at the top of St Mary's Church at 7pm – one of a chain of 1,000 WWI Beacons of Light being lit throughout the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and UK Overseas Territories a century after the guns fell silent. Informal discussions have already taken place with the Vicar of the Church.

FIRM PLANS ELECTRIC BIKE HIRE SERVICE FOR PONTELAND

The Council approved a recommendation from the Highways Working Party, which had met on October 13th, to provide a letter of agreement in principle to a company which provides electric bikes for hire. The firm, Chew Green, is keen to launch in Ponteland but this is dependent on a successful grant bid. Further details will be provided if this funding is received.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Council approved grants of £300 to the Great North Air Ambulance towards the cost of providing defibrillation pads and £150 to Community Action Northumberland in recognition of the excellent work they do for the many village and community halls in the county.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council approved two recommendations from the Environment Working Party which met on October 23rd. Councillors agreed to provide a stepping stone path over the desire line path that had been created from the church entrance diagonally across Coates Green, and to complete the re-pointing works to the paving at the sensory garden to reduce the need for weeding. The cost of £300 will be met from contingencies.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Coun Richard Dodd reported that the planning application for the new schools and leisure complex was out for public consultation and that it was intended to publish some information in Pont News at the end of the consultation period about the proposals. He said car parks across the county were being examined by NCC, with car parking in Ponteland becoming an issue for traders and users. The work on the car park at the back of Merton Way is likely to be carried out in the 2018 school summer holidays, although this would be brought forward if possible. Coun Veronica Jones expressed her concerns regarding the continuing level of development in Medburn and said she was trying to get a multi-discipline group together to examine what can be done. Some discussion had taken place with the Campaign for Rural England which would be followed up. She also referred to the recent Winter Warmer event held in Merton Hall as part of the Ageing Well initiative, which was thought to be the most successful to date.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on November 8th.

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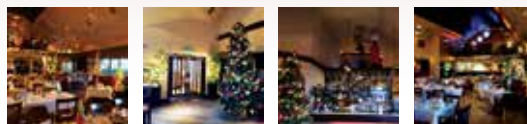
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Cheers!

Ponteland brewer
wins contract to
supply her own local

A Ponteland brewery boss has secured a contract with a national pub and restaurant chain to supply craft beer to its North-East venues - including her own local.

Julia Austin, MD of the Ouseburn-based Tyne Bank Brewery, beat local competition to win the tender to supply its award winning American Pale Ale 'Silver Dollar' to 18 outlets, including the Badger at Ponteland.

With a background in chemical engineering, Julia, of Eland Haugh, was inspired to start the company following a trip to the west coast of the USA, where the brewing scene was booming.

Tyne Bank launched in June 2011 and soon won accolades for Silver Dollar, including the Sainsbury's Great British Beer Hunt in 2011, gold in the Small Brewers Association awards in 2014 and attaining 3 gold stars in the Great Taste Awards.

In 2016 Tyne Bank invested £320,000, including £213,320 sourced from crowdfunding, to relocate the brewhouse to an industrial styled warehouse with tap room. Here drinkers can enjoy a pint with a view of the brewhouse in action. Customers can also take tours and tastings sessions every weekend, whilst the events space hosts regular live music, beer festivals and private parties and events.

Julia, 47, said: "It is fantastic that Silver Dollar has now been recognised by such a respected pub operator, it is a great achievement that our flagship beer can now be enjoyed by a wider audience."

Peter and Joanna Drummond, of Cheviot View, manage The Badger – which has just reopened after a refurbishment – and are pleased to be able to offer a local product. Peter said: "We often get asked for a local beer recommendation so it is great to have Tyne Bank Silver Dollar on the taps."



Julia pictured with Peter Drummond at the Badger



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Universities, colleges and employers in high school visit

Ponteland High School played host to 30 universities and colleges from across the UK at its annual Higher and Further Education and Apprenticeship evening.

The HE and FE providers came from as far afield as Abertay in Dundee and Falmouth Creative College in Cornwall. Businesses including Virgin Money and Accenture, as well as the RAF and the Army, also offered advice to students and parents on their apprenticeship and career opportunities.

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Ponteland High's U14 netball team crowned county champions

Ponteland High School's U14 netball team has been crowned county champions after competing in the County Netball Tournament with teams from Ashington, Berwick, Bede, Cramlington, Duchess, Prudhoe and King Edward's at Blue Flames Sporting Club in North Tyneside. The team will now represent Northumberland at the regional tournament in January.

webuyanycar.com opens new branch in Ponteland

Nationwide car buying service webuyanycar.com has confirmed the opening of a new branch in Ponteland with the creation of two jobs. The branch, located in Airport Industrial Estate, launched on November 13th and is the first branch in the area. Headquartered in Manchester, the automotive firm has over 200 branches and employs over 500 members of staff.

2018 Friends of Kirkley Hall Calendar

The 2018 Friends of Kirkley Hall calendar includes stunning photographs by speakers from its 2017 programme including Northumberland National Park and Northumberland Wildlife Trust. Also featuring its 2018 speaker programme and key Kirkley Hall events, it is now on sale priced at £6 at Kirkley Hall reception and shop, The Gubeon Coffee Shop, Earsdon Plant Centre and the Blacksmiths coffee shop at the Milkhope Centre, Blagdon. You can also reserve by emailing friendsofkirkleyhall@yahoo.com or calling 07551 974955.

New Year's Day Wheelbarrow Race

Arrangements are under way for the annual Ponteland Wheelbarrow Race on New Year's Day. There will be the usual junior race, ladies' race and a men's race at 12noon starting at the Blackbird Inn. This year's charities are St Oswald's Hospice and Tynedale Hospice. For more information contact andrew.anderson@which.net



Strictly Starters Presents

Adult beginner's dance class starting at

7.00 p.m. on

Wednesday 10th January 2018 in

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This class will run for a 12 week term and is ideal for adults of all ages who want to have an enjoyable hour and a half learning to dance some basic Ballroom and Latin American routines.

Our aim is to make these sessions fun to attend as we give you the opportunity to laugh, learn and exercise both body and mind with like-minded people in a friendly and social environment.

Places will be strictly limited so if you are interested in coming along, or want any further details on the class, then please contact us now at strictlystarters@btinternet.com or call us on 07768 596380 to register

Memorial Hall upstairs lounge reopens after refurbishment

By David Cobb

The upstairs lounge at Ponteland Memorial Hall has recently reopened following an extensive refurbishment.

New ceiling, lighting, rewiring, carpet, vertical blinds and redecoration have all combined to produce a facility which should prove popular for existing and new users.

The room is currently regularly used by Castle Wardens and Ocianus Freemasons lodges, bridge clubs, yoga classes and Kumon maths and literacy classes.

The upstairs lounge benefits from an adjacent kitchen and unisex toilet, thus making it suitable for children's parties or other similar gatherings requiring a degree of privacy.

The works were undertaken following a generous grant of £10,000 from the Provincial Grand Lodge of Northumberland as part of the Tercentenary Celebrations of the United Grand Lodge of England. A total of £300,000 was distributed to local charities.

A further grant of £2,259 was received from the Co-op Community Fund and, when asked to quote for the new vertical blinds, Ponteland Blinds kindly gave the blinds as a donation to their local community.



Just over half of the Freemasons' grant remains unspent and this will be used to make much needed improvements to the downstairs lounge.

The finance for this work is not yet fully in place and any local company or individual who wishes to offer a contribution towards the improvement of a much used community owned facility should contact the hall office at infopmh@yahoo.co.uk or on (01661) 822603.



Popular Memorial Hall caretaker retires

Popular Memorial Hall caretaker Ron Whittington has retired after seven years in the post.

Ron and his wife Kathleen were well liked by hall users thanks to their outstanding organisational skills, enthusiasm, and willingness to assist users to obtain the best use of hall facilities for their activity.

Hall Chairman David Cobb said: "We are very sorry to lose Ron and Kathleen but wish them a long and active retirement. They will be a hard act to follow."

A presentation on behalf of hall users, friends, and committee members who had contributed towards a leaving gift was made to Ron and Kathleen to mark their retirement.

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