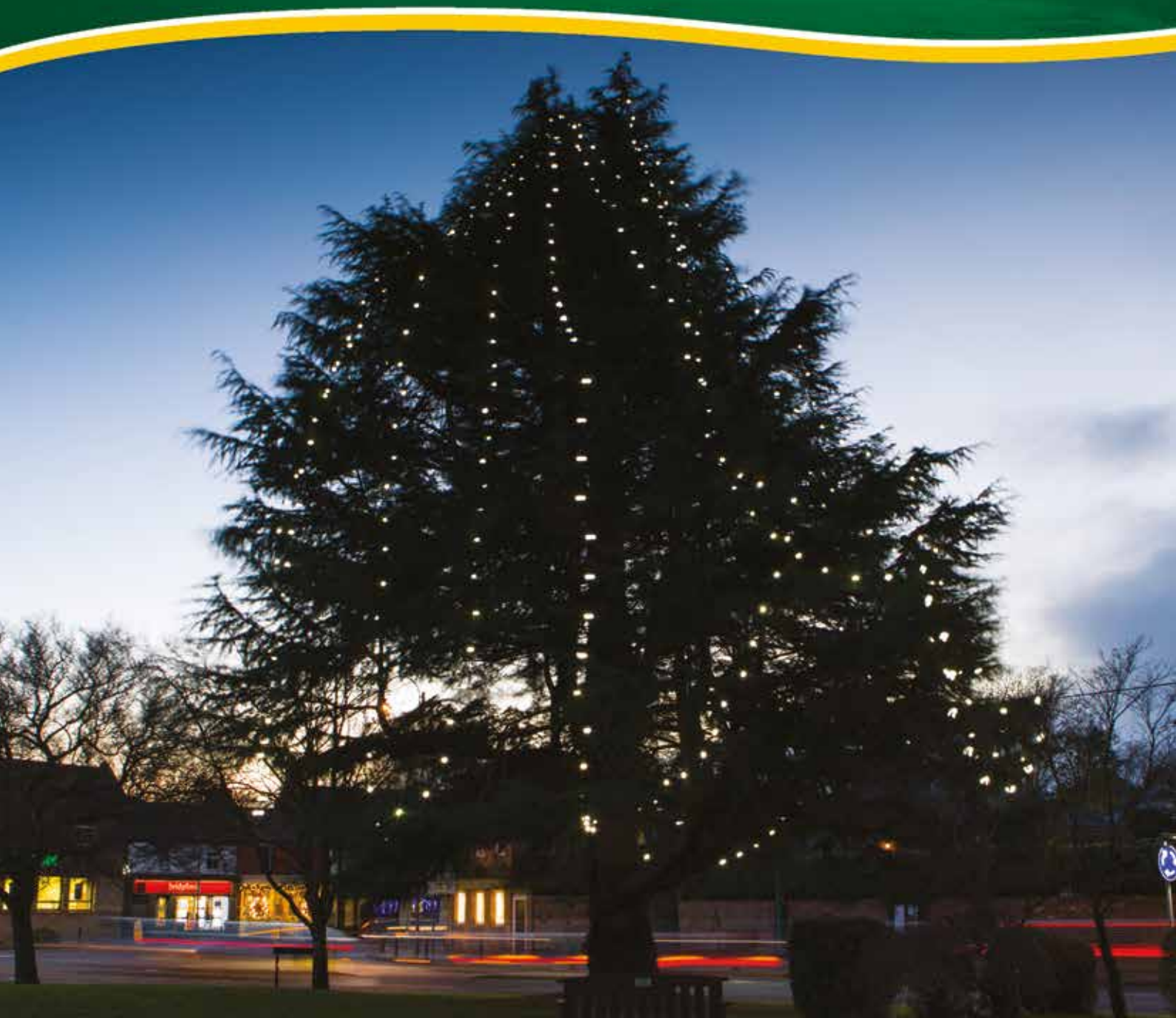


pontnews&views

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Parents show support for
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Reduction in youth disorder as
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Airport wins national award
after £20m investment

Neighbourhood Plan gives community more control over future development

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Pont Rep performers wow audiences

By Lesley Eltringham

Pont Rep performers enjoyed well deserved praise from enthusiastic audiences at the society's pre-Christmas production *The King and I*.

Local couple Brian and Deborah Barry starred as the King and Anna with new additions Zoe Buckthorp playing Tuptim, Matthew Johnson as the King's son Crown Prince Chulalongkorn, and Sharon Gauld who joined us as Lady Thiang.

The show was directed by Carole Davies, with Kyle Richardson our considerably talented and experienced musical director.

Many people contributed to a super production - too many to be named - but our Preppies Youth Theatre stole the show at times!

Audiences left giving glowing reviews: 'Absolutely brilliant show! We had a wonderful night last night, definitely worth braving the weather' and 'I was there last night and it really is an excellent show, all sorts of emotions going on, great acting and the singing and music is superb'.

The society greatly appreciates the audiences from Ponteland and further afield who gave their support and applause for community amateur theatre.

Our Spring production (March 21st – 24th) will be 'Four Weddings and an Elvis', a comedy by American playwright Nancy Frick.

Photos by John Eltringham





Shoppers enjoy seasonal songs at Christmas Market

Shoppers enjoyed seasonal songs at Ponteland Rotary Club's third annual Christmas Market.

More than 50 stallholders had their goods and wares on display, from Christmas cards to warm winter hats, along with fresh bakery products and the traditional mulled wine.

The event was staged in a marquee in Merton Way, with stallholders also housed in Merton Hall and Ponteland CIU Club.

Santa made an appearance for the little ones, with further entertainment provided by Ponteland Community Wind Band and singer Pete Brown.

Ponteland Rotary President Suzanne Marshall said: "We are really quite proud of producing yet another community event for the people of Ponteland and the surrounding area. There was a lovely atmosphere on the day.

"The Christmas Market is a nice build-up to the Christmas celebrations. Big hits were the top raffle prizes of a £70 INTU voucher and a wonderful Waitrose hamper."

Photos by The Image Farm

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Dentists Kevin Higgins and Richard Winter

Sixth anniversary celebrated with announcement of expansion plans

Ponteland dental practice Higgins & Winter is to expand into neighbouring premises to create a third surgery.

Work is about to start on a knock through to the former Rowlands Accountants offices next door, which will also see a new scanning suite, patient consulting room and additional office space and staff facilities on the first floor.

The announcement coincides with the sixth anniversary of the takeover of the Bell Villas dental practice from John Hallam by dentists Kevin Higgins and Richard Winter in late 2011.

The initial building works created two state-of-the art surgeries, an imaging suite, dedicated sterilisation room and a larger open plan waiting room accessed from a new front entrance.

But Kevin and Richard saw the opportunity, following the takeover of Rowlands and the accountancy practice's subsequent relocation to Seaton Burn, to further expand to meet growing patient demand for both dental and cosmetic services.

Permission for the change of use was granted at the end of November by Northumberland County Council.

Richard said: "This expansion will enable us to offer an enhanced, personalised patient experience. Patients undergoing complex dental procedures and facial

aesthetics will now have a dedicated treatment coordinator guiding them through their treatment."

As well as the expansion plans, the practice is also investing heavily in the very latest technology. A new addition is the Itero Element® scanner which shows your smile transformation without the need for dental impressions being taken.

Kevin added: "With the additional capacity afforded by a third surgery we will also be able to offer more services and more flexible appointment times."

The practice will operate as normal during the building works next door, which are due to be completed in the Spring.

Higgins & Winter
Dental Practice

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higginsandwinter.co.uk
info@higginsandwinter.co.uk

Higgins & Winter Dental Practice, 17 Bell Villas, Ponteland, NE20 9BD



Reduction in youth disorder as extra CCTV installed



By PC Darren Fisher and PC Ingrid Clayton

There have been 37 crimes recorded during the period from November 12th to December 10th for Ponteland and the surrounding area:

- Theft of pedal cycle – one
- Section 47 assault – two
- Theft (other) – one
- Malicious communications – one
- Affray – one
- Damage to motor vehicle – one
- Public Order Section 5 – three
- Theft shoplifting – ten
- Damage (other) – two
- Fraud by false representation – one
- Burglary other than dwelling – four
- Possession of cannabis – one
- Causing harassment without fear – one
- Harassment Breach of Restraining Order – one
- Damage other than dwelling – one
- Damage to dwelling – one
- Pass counterfeit currency – two
- Possession of an offensive weapon – one
- Coercive control – one
- Threats to damage – one.

Anti-social behaviour update

There has been a reduction in the number of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour over the past month.

There has been ongoing multi agency work, with partners from Northumberland County Council, Ponteland Town Council, Youth Services, Ponteland Community High School and member of the local community meeting regularly.

On November 28th an environmental assessment was undertaken of the park, play area and Merton Way to identify areas that could be improved, for example the cutting back of branches to open up any dark areas.

A further meeting was held on December 4th at Ponteland Leisure Centre where Youth Services provided a comprehensive update of their engagement with young people over three weekends in November.

Overall the young people just wanted to be outside and meet with their friends. The majority, when offered options, were disinterested in having any type of formal provision.

It has been identified that Merton Way shops is an area where young people congregated in large groups, predominately as a meeting place and to buy food from local businesses.

Northumberland County Council has installed a temporary CCTV camera to run alongside the existing CCTV system to obtain evidence for any reported incidents of disorder or criminality.

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

We would like to wish all the residents a happy and safe Christmas and all the very best for the New Year.

If you have any information regarding the above or any other incidents, please email easttyndale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk or call us on 101.

PONTELAND RAMBLERS

The Ramblers Association has a local group based in Ponteland. We organise group walks in Northumberland and North Durham on alternate Sundays and two Wednesdays a month.

Sunday walks are between seven and nine miles and always involve a stop for a picnic lunch. Wednesday walks are usually five to seven miles and sometimes offer the option of a pub lunch after the walk. For more information visit ramblers.org.uk/ponteland or contact Steve Edwards on (01661) 886310.

NEW OFFICE HOURS AT MEMORIAL HALL

With effect from Monday January 8th, the public opening hours for the office at Ponteland Memorial Hall will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 2pm to 4pm.

Recycle your Christmas Tree

6th & 7th January 2018

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Turf cutting ceremony marks start of school build

Pupils, staff and councillors joined building contractors at an official event to mark the start of building work on the new Darras Hall Primary School.

Galliford Try has been appointed as the official contractor for the £5.8m project, which will see a two-form entry primary school building created to replace the school's existing building.

The new school building, which will be completed in time for the start of the new academic year in September 2018, follows the decision by Northumberland County Council to reorganise schools in the area to a two tier primary and secondary system of education.

Coun Wayne Daley, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services at NCC, said: "Today marks the start of building work on a school build for Darras Hall Primary School.

"We want every child in Northumberland to have the best possible educational opportunities and this investment will help to provide the best possible learning environment."

Cliff Wheatley, Managing Director of Galliford Try North East and Yorkshire, added: "We look forward to working with Northumberland County Council to provide the high-quality new buildings that local children deserve."

Pictured (l-r) are Councillors Richard Dodd, Veronica Jones, Peter Jackson and Wayne Daley with children from Darras Hall Primary School.

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Neighbourhood Plan is legally adopted

Decisions on planning applications in Ponteland Parish will now have to meet policies in the Neighbourhood Plan following its legal adoption.

The plan was 'made' (the legal terminology) by Northumberland County Council at its Cabinet meeting on November 23rd, meaning it is now part of the statutory development plan.

Planning decisions must now be made in accordance with the policies in the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The adoption follows the Neighbourhood Plan referendum in September where all residents of the parish who were registered to vote were able to have their say.

Overall, 2,730 people voted, a turnout of 29.5%. With only 101 people voting 'no', there was a majority 'yes' vote of

96.3% in favour of making the Neighbourhood Plan.

The plan was prepared by Ponteland Town Council through its Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, with support from Northumberland County Council's planning officers.

The Town Council engaged with the community through extensive communication, consultation and engagement between 2012 and 2017 to produce the plan, which addresses issues local people have identified as important in the area.

It comprises 32 planning policies which have been developed to address spatial planning and land use issues identified by the local community; including

the built and natural environment, the local economy, housing, flooding and transport.

Coun John Riddle, cabinet member for planning at Northumberland County Council said: "The planning policy framework in Northumberland is being strengthened by the adoption of neighbourhood plans like this one.

"This is the fourth plan to be made and there are around 20 others in various stages of preparation across the county. The council is pleased to provide significant support to local groups in preparation of their plans."

Coun Alan Varley, Mayor of Ponteland, added: "Ponteland Town Council is

delighted that the plan has been 'made' and wishes to express their sincere thanks to the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group members who put in so much time and effort on the Council's behalf.

"Thanks must also go to the planning officers at the county council, who were there to offer support and guidance when needed."

The Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan and accompanying documents can be viewed on the county council's website at northumberland.gov.uk/ourplan, at County Hall, Morpeth, and in the library at Ponteland Leisure Centre.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



**A call for improved public transport
in this month's letters...**

Real time bus displays great news but how about real time buses?

**It was great to see in the Pont News that the county council
had announced real time bus displays as part of planned
new housing at the former police HQ.**

However, surely a more useful investment would be for a
decent bus serving Ponteland and the houses springing
up nearby.

While Darras Hall may have a regular service between 9am
and 4pm, outside of these times the service is erratic to say
the least.

Earlier this year Stagecoach cut one of the early morning buses
without any fanfare. There are now just three buses before
9am. Evenings aren't much better.

Isn't it time we had a fast and frequent bus service at peak
times and how about a shuttle service to the Metro so that at
least we can be properly connected?

The county council can't keep allowing more homes to be built
without offering a proper transport policy.

Darren Taylor
Pembroke Drive, Darras Hall

February issue deadlines: Delivery of the February issue will start on
Monday January 29th and be completed by Friday February 2nd. The
deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday January 15th. If you are aware of
any missed properties please contact the editor at pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk
or call (0191) 5191306. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for
advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in
the February 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
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writer's name and address.

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Christmas hampers at Ponteland High School

**Ponteland High
School students
excelled themselves
yet again with
their tremendously
generous Christmas
hampers.**

Students from each tutor
group in the school provided
food and presents for each
hamper before decorating
them in a festive theme.

The hampers were collected
by Northumberland County
Council and Newcastle
City Council and will
be shared with families
in the Northumberland
and Newcastle area.
Everyone involved in the
distribution of the hampers
were very appreciative



and overwhelmed by the
students' generosity.

Headteacher Kieran McGrane
said: "A lot of work had gone
into the hampers and it is
brilliant that the students and
staff are showing practical
kindness towards people less
fortunate than themselves."

What's on...

Ponteland Wildlife Group

Alan Hewitt will talk about 'African Wildlife Photography' on Tuesday January 2nd at 7.30pm in St Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road. Our following meeting on Tuesday February 6th is our AGM and Cathleen Thomas will give an update on work and status of our red squirrels. Admission for both meetings costs £2 including refreshments. Open to all.

Ponteland U3A

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month in St. Mary's Church Hall at 2pm. On January 3rd Doug Collender will talk on 'Film as a Time Capsule' and on February 7th we have our AGM followed by entertainment and a faith tea. Visitors are always welcome; there is no charge. Visit u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland or call (01661) 824953.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

At our meeting at 2.30pm on Monday January 8th in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, John Johnson will talk about the Gateshead Millennium Bridge.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

On Monday January 8th at 7.30pm at Ponteland Social Club in Merton Way we are delighted to welcome local gardener Heather Russell with her talk entitled 'Curiouser and Curiouser'. Heather's Garden Cottage Bolam has a huge range of plants. Paramount is the propagation of these plants; this is where Heather comes in. A topic of interest to everyone who likes plants. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting. Email neegroup@agsgroups.org or visit alpinegardensociety.net/groups/North-East-England or find us on Facebook.

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 January 9th. Contact Brian Russell at brian.russell@profitabilitygroup.co.uk or on (01661) 872004.

Ponteland WI

Our next meeting will be at 7pm on Tuesday January 9th in the lounge of

Ponteland Memorial Hall. Our speaker is Antonia Freeman with a talk and demonstration on kinesiology, essential oils and nutrition. Visitors are welcome.

Ponteland Village WI

On Tuesday January 9th at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall we are holding a Burns Night supper and activities evening. Please let us know if you are coming as we will be serving food. We are a warm and friendly WI and welcome new members and visitors for a girly night with a difference. We meet on the second Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Contact us via email at pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or our Facebook page 'PontelandVillageWI'.

Kirkley WI

Our next meeting will be held on Wednesday January 10th at 7pm (a change from our usual meeting day - the first Wed of the month). Members look forward to an evening of fun and games. Guests always welcome. Find out more at kirkleywi.wordpress.com

Ponteland Lions Club

Our monthly business meeting will be at 7.30pm on Wednesday January 10th in Merton Hall and we have a social meeting on Wed January 24th. Our charity fund bookstall will be at Waitrose on Saturday Jan 27th from 9am to 4pm. We collect spectacles for recycling to the Third World. Please bring them to the bookstall.

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 January 17th. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk or shirley@reevehill.plus.com

Railway films at St Mary's Church Hall

Railway and Archive Films on a holiday theme will be shown on Saturday February 3rd at 3pm and 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall. Admission free.

Ponteland Photographic Society

Ponteland Photographic Society

meets at 7.30pm on Monday January 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th at Merton Hall. New members welcome. See pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk

Rotary Club of Ponteland

Rotary Club of Ponteland meet every Tuesday at Ponteland Golf Club. The meetings alternate between lunch times (1st and 3rd Tuesdays) and evenings (2nd and 4th Tuesdays). New people members are very welcome. Contact Alan Hall at alanhalleef@msn.com or on (01661) 860284.

Audio Book Group

The group is for people who have visual impairment or face barriers in reading printed books. Each month members take home an audio book, then return to the next meeting for an informal and relaxed discussion lead by the group leader. We meet at Ponteland Library in Ponteland Leisure Centre on the first Monday of each month from 10.30am-12noon. Membership is free. Contact Michelle Watson at mwatson@activenorthumberland.org.uk or (01670) 622562.

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.

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.

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.



All switched on for the festive season

Ponteland and Darras Hall were all switched on for Christmas with a new display of lights for the festive season.

The Town Council has invested in LED lights for the Pele Tower, Cheviot View and Broadway which can remain on trees for several years, saving on costs.

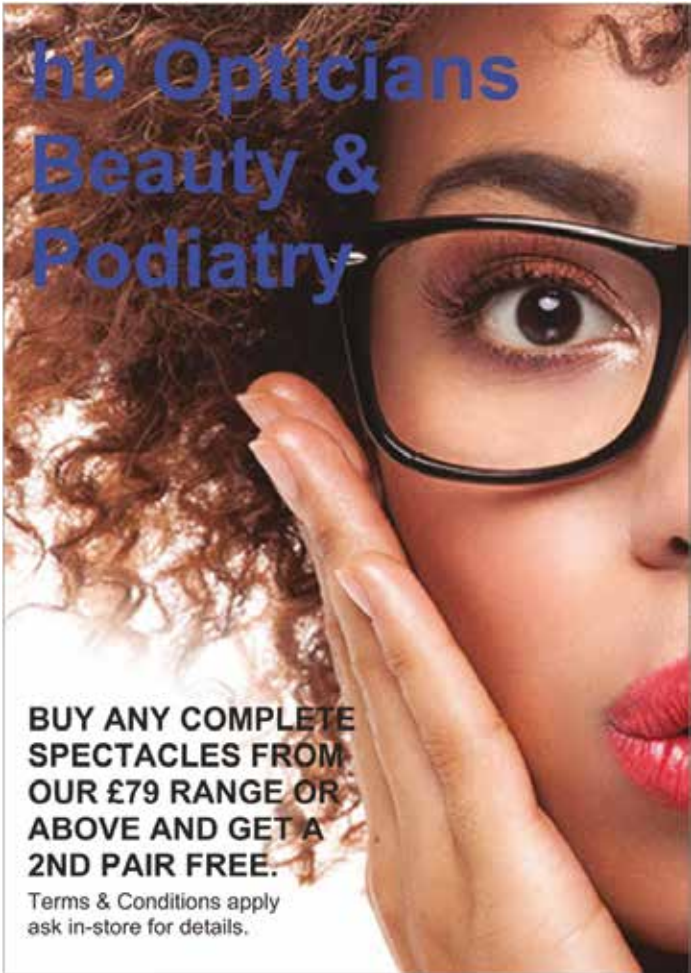
There were additional lighting displays on Coates Green and the junction of Darras Road and Main Street.

The displays are erected by Northumberland County Council, assisted by Town Council contractors.

Photos by The Image Farm.



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Pupils perform to packed audiences in annual Christmas show

Pupils performed to packed audiences in an “outstanding” production of *Bugsy Malone* at Ponteland High School.

Students have been working tirelessly since auditions in June in preparation for the show, set in New York during the 1920s Prohibition, which ran over three nights.

Show director, English teacher Christine Heath, said: “*Bugsy Malone* is a massively popular show, particularly with young people, and there was a real buzz of excitement about this production around the school.”

Headteacher Kieran McGrane added: “The musical production is always a highlight of my year and this was no exception; *Bugsy Malone* raised the bar yet again. Everything about the show was outstanding.”

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PRESENTATION BY NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL YOUTH SERVICE

Two representatives from NCC's Youth Service attended to discuss recent engagement activity with young people following disorder problems. They had spoken to youths in various outdoor locations in Ponteland on three consecutive Friday evenings to see if they would prefer to participate in arranged weekend evening activities. The offer was declined with young people saying they already had sports through the week and just wanted to meet up with friends. Councillors told the Youth Service representatives incidents of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage were regularly reported to them. The issue is to be discussed with neighbouring town councils, police and the youth service to try and identify a way forward.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Council approved the following grant applications after consideration: £1,500 - Dalton Village Hall; £450 - Diamond Inn for the New Year's Eve firework display; £250 - 2018 Ponteland Beer Festival in 2018; £250 - Sport Tynedale.

PONTELAND NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Council agreed to terminate Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in accordance with the terms of reference following confirmation from the County Council that the Plan was now 'made' and had been brought into legal force. The Plan now forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the Ponteland Neighbourhood area which covers the civil parish of Ponteland. The Council formally thanked the chair and members of the steering group for their hard work and dedication over the last five years.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Councillor Richard Dodd reported that additional resources were being provided to speed up the Core Strategy process. He said plans for the proposed new combined schools and leisure complex are out for consultation and work has started on the new Darras Hall Primary School.

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

Volunteers wanted for next phase of bridleway revamp

*By Alma Dunigan,
Chair of Ponteland
Community Partnership*

Volunteers are once again being sought for the next stage of the revamp of the former railway line from Rotary Way towards the airport.

Work will restart, weather permitting, during January and February and help is needed with tree planting in the Spring.

Ponteland Community Partnership, which is coordinating the bridleway revamp project, has been successful in obtaining tremendous support from local volunteers and organisations. They include the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, the Local Environmental Action Fund, Ward Bros, and Northumberland County Council's Countryside Officer.

In November, 22 volunteers started work on the revamp of the old railway line. So far, this section has had the first litter pick and pruning back of trees and shrubs to allow the footpath to be widened to two metres - close to the original width of the old railway line.



This is a section not as well used by local residents and the plan is to bring it up to the same standard as the route from Callerton Lane which was revamped last year and is now a wildlife corridor.

The aim is to encourage residents and visitors to enjoy this rural setting with a more diverse usage than at present. It is hoped that by including information on the distance between pedestals, in steps, it will encourage its use as part of keeping fit or as part of a medical recovery programme for those who find they are in need of more exercise.

Volunteers are doing most of the manual work with Ward Bros donating manpower, equipment and materials to replace a fence and levelling and treating the surface to improve drainage in an area that is usually wet.

The Local Environmental Action Fund

from Community Foundation is funding publicity, website development and three educational interpretation pedestals.

The community partnership is working with members of the Local History Society, Wildlife Group and Friends of Ponteland Park with research for the displays and the NCC Countryside Officer has contributed three perch benches, to be located close to the display pedestals.

One hundred trees are to be planted early in the new year and Friends of Ponteland Park will also be donating 100 wild flowers to be planted at the end of the project.

If you would like to help with the project visit pontelandcommunitypartnership.com for contact details.

Ponteland Mayor Alan Varley and BBC Radio presenter Marianne Foster celebrate completion of the first phase of the project at Callerton Lane.



£20m investment helps Newcastle Airport land national award

A £20m investment has helped Newcastle International Airport land a national award.

For it has been named 'Airport of the Year' at the North of England Transport Awards.

The airport was presented the title at a glittering ceremony in Leeds by BBC Breakfast presenter Steph McGovern, after beating tough competition from Doncaster Sheffield and Liverpool John Lennon airports.

Recent upgrades across the airport include a state-of-the-art radar system, gate area modernisation and new terminal flooring – all of which were key factors in securing the title.

Digital signage, free premium wifi, self-service bag drop and a new World Duty Free Express store have also been introduced in a bid to ensure the highest standards of passenger experience.

The North East's largest airport, which was also voted Britain's best airport for a second successive year in the summer, also saw the five millionth passenger pass through the terminal for the first time since 2008, with passenger figures set to be the highest in a decade as 2017 comes to a close.

The growth in passenger numbers has seen winter sun destinations in particular, such as the Canaries and Balearics, record their busiest 12 months on record.

Nick Jones, Chief Executive at Newcastle International Airport, said: "I'm delighted that Newcastle has been named 'Airport of the Year'. We've had a fantastic 2017, with multi-million pound investment in upgrades throughout the airport and more than five million passengers passing through the terminal for the first time in a decade - it's really been a year to remember."

The North of England Transport Awards was launched last year by the Transport Times in a bid to bring the industry together to celebrate its achievements in providing efficient, high quality transport services across the region and reward and encourage innovation and excellence.

Newcastle International has been shortlisted as 'Airport of

the Year' at both years' ceremonies. It supports 18,900 jobs, including 3,450 on site.

Pictured (l-r) are: BBC Presenter Steph McGovern; Kate Hall and Jennifer Rea from Newcastle International Airport; and Coun Judith Blake, Leader of Leeds City Council.

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Parents show support for middle school's expansion plans

Dozens of parents attended a meeting to hear plans to extend Ponteland Community Middle School to take in three additional year groups.

The proposals would see the school change from the traditional middle school intake of children aged nine to 13 to pupils aged nine to 16, up to GCSE exams, with the first Year 9 intake in September 2019.

There is also the potential for a lower school up to Year 4 to follow later.

The announcement of the launch of a consultation into the plans followed a warning by the headteacher of Ponteland High School that he could not guarantee places for pupils who did not enter at Year 7 under the new two tier system brought in by Northumberland County Council, but instead applied to join at Year 9 after leaving PCMS.

Kieran McGrane said the high school would have to fill its Year 7 intake with pupils from outside Ponteland to take the place of any who opted to join the surviving middle school, which became an independent academy after parents objected to the two tier restructure which would have seen it close.

This could mean dozens of children having to travel to secondary schools outside Ponteland, in Newcastle and Prudhoe.

PCMS, now run by the Board of Ponteland Academy, announced a six week consultation in November which included the stakeholder event at the school on December 4th.

Headteacher Dr Caroline Pryer said 50 people attended the meeting, where they were shown architect plans for building works to create additional accommodation including new classrooms.

Her presentation highlighted the school being positioned 111th for KS2 SATs in the Sunday Times list of the top 250 state schools, and comments in a recent parents' questionnaire.

A parent of a Year 5 pupil at PCMS, who asked not to be named, contacted Pont News to offer his support to the Academy's expansion plans.

The father said: "As consumers, voters and parents, we are constantly told we should have choice. In reality, most were happy with the choice of first schools, middle schools and high school we had. Hey ho - we now must deal with what we have. Given we are where we are, the solutions are pretty obvious.

"Ponteland Academy (the former middle school) wants to extend its age range to GCSE. Make it happen. Money is being found for every other school and parents have voted in large numbers to keep faith with this high achieving school, so let them have the funds to do it.

"As parents caught in the middle of all of this, we were left with few options as to where to have our children educated. This is a mess of your making (Northumberland County Council and the High School), not ours or the children's - we voted against it in huge numbers. Our children continue to get good grades.

"Does anyone really want to see them being bussed out of the village to add their statistical success to schools in another authority? There is a place for both an extended Ponteland Academy and the new High School. This creates both choice and capacity.

"Decision makers - do the right thing and sort this out for the benefit of the children and the people of Ponteland."

A planning application for a £46m combined primary and secondary school and leisure facility on the site of the current leisure centre is expected to be considered by county councillors early in the new year.

Meanwhile six schools in the Ponteland Partnership – Belsay Primary, Darras Hall Primary, Ponteland High, Ponteland Primary, Heddon on the Wall St Andrews Primary, and Richard Coates CE School – are joining forces in a new Multi Academy Trust.

To take part in the PCMS consultation email admin@ponteland.academy by 12noon on Monday January 8th.



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Pictured (l-r) are Richard Coates CE School winners Joe Willis (1st), Jasmyn Broadey (2nd), Chloe Dawes (4th) and Molly Dufton (3rd).

Poster boys and girls give message of peace

Poster boys and girls at two Ponteland schools gave a message of peace in an international art competition.

Ponteland Community Middle School and Richard Coates CE School both entered this year's Peace Poster contest, run by Lion's International, where the theme was "the future of peace".

The winners were Suzannah Shanks, 13, from PCMS and Joe Willis, 12, from RCS.

Suzannah described her poster as 'a world with no war, a world full of hope, everyone full of love, nobody full of hate, future

peace' and Joe's description was 'peace is often thought of as a war free world but can be expressed in different ways like art, beliefs and religion'.

Book token vouchers were presented to the top four entries in both schools' assemblies by Ponteland Lions President Geoff Lisle, with thanks to art teachers Adele Percival from PCMS and Kirsty Wickham from RCS who inspired the pupils and helped with the judging alongside local art enthusiasts.

Although winning the Northern District last year, sadly our winners didn't progress any further – there's always next year though!

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Pictured (l-r) are Mercan Senbaklavaci (4th), Suzannah Shanks (1st), Gabriella Turnbull (3rd) and Sophie King (2nd) with Ponteland Lions President Geoff Lisle and PCMS art teacher Adele Percival.

Fun day raises £7,700 for hospice who cared for Darras Hall dad

A family fun day to celebrate the life of a Ponteland father-of-two has raised more than £7,500 for a Newcastle hospice which cared for him.

Simi Ali held the event in memory of her husband Syed Asif Ali, who had been cared for at the Marie Curie Hospice.

Asif, who was a financial adviser, died last March of lung cancer aged 59, leaving Simi and their two children Eram, 25, and Shoaib, 20.

His birthday at the end of October was marked with a gathering of loved ones at St James' and St Basil's Church Hall in Fenham, where there were games, food stalls and entertainment for everyone to enjoy.

Younger supporters also got involved in the day, taking part in selling stall items, playing games and face painting to raise funds.

The event raised £7,700 for Marie Curie,



which will go towards offering care and support to patients and families living with a terminal illness.

Christine Carruthers, Marie Curie Community Fundraiser in the North East, said: "The atmosphere on the day was fantastic. Simi, her friends and family donated cakes, food, drinks, their time, money and general energy - all to support Marie Curie.

"To raise the amount of money they did from just one event is fantastic and something they should all be really

proud of. I cannot thank them enough for the fun day."

Simi, a professor of immunology at Newcastle University, said she was overwhelmed by the support and solidarity of friends and family who selflessly dedicated their time to raise funds for a very special cause.

She added: "Asif spent the last two weeks of his life at the Marie Curie Hospice. The staff there treated him with great care and dignity and provided us support at a very difficult time."

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