

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Government gives green light to
£46m schools and leisure complex

Medburn villagers celebrate as
second housing scheme refused

400-home scheme for Clickemin
called in by the Government

Wet weather doesn't dampen spirits at Easter egg hunt



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Wet weather doesn't dampen spirits at Easter treasure trail

Wet weather wasn't enough to dampen the spirits of these keen young Easter egg hunters at the Town Council's annual Easter treasure trail.

More than 30 families attended, with parent and grandparents braving the rain with the children at Ponteland Park.

The Council funded prizes of vouchers for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for two age groups – three to six and seven to 12, and each participant received a small chocolate egg kindly donated by Waitrose.

Soft drinks were available for children and vouchers for coffee were gratefully taken up by many parents and redeemed at the firm's neighbouring store.

Cover shot: Louie Benson, aged three, of Ponteland.
Photos by The Image Farm.





Protect your home from burglars using DNA kits

By PC Darren Fisher



There have been 41 crimes recorded during the period from to March 13th to April 7th for Ponteland and the surrounding area:

- Rape of female 16 – one
- Sexual assault male under 13 – one
- Indecent photograph – one
- Harassment/restraining order – one
- Harassment without fear – three
- Stalking – one
- Coercive/control – one
- Malicious communications – two
- Cruelty/neglect child – one
- Threats to kill – two
- Assault Sec 47 – four
- Common assault – six
- Theft shoplifting – four
- Burglary other than dwelling – one
- Theft other – three
- Theft from motor vehicle – one

- Fraud by false representation – one
- Public Order Sec 4 – two
- Public Order – one
- Damage other – one
- Damage to motor vehicle – two
- Damage other than dwelling – one.

Forensic DNA is now protecting homes in your area

Ponteland Neighbourhood Team has undertaken a recent initiative to address the recent spate of house burglaries. We have provided residents with SelectaDNA Kits in order to protect their property.

SelectaDNA is a cutting edge way of protecting your property from theft. Each bottle contains a unique DNA code and thousands of tiny microdots, that once applied to your property, identifies it as yours.

Advanced Forensic Marking, it is a proven deterrent against theft and burglary because criminals fear the power of our DNA technology. By discretely marking your items with the solution, then registering your kit on the database and displaying the warning stickers on your property, you will make your home less of a target to thieves.

We have a limited number of kits available; please contact PC Ingrid Clayton at 109@northumbria.pnn.police.uk or visit the website selectadna.co.uk.

I am moving to the South East Northumberland Neighbourhood Team - it has been a pleasure working within Ponteland and the surrounding area.

Email: easttynedale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk
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Guy Opperman, your local Member of Parliament, holds regular surgeries across the constituency. If you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss an issue of concern to you, please get in touch with Guy using the details below.

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t: 01670 789161

w: GuyOpperman.co.uk

e: TeamOppy@gmail.com

f: [fb.com/GuyOppermanMP](https://www.facebook.com/GuyOppermanMP)



GuyOpperman.co.uk

NATIONAL CROQUET DAY AT BELSAY HALL

Novices are being invited to have a go at croquet at Belsay Hall and Gardens as part of a national celebration of the sport.

The National Trust venue is marking National Croquet Day on Sunday May 13th from 11am to 4pm with the local club encouraging new members.

Croquet can be played by people of all ages and the basic skills required are just the ability to hit a ball with a mallet on a reasonably flat grass surface.

Visit belsaycroquet.org or email belsaycroquet@gmail.com or contact Chairman David Millener on (0191) 236 5374 to discuss visiting the club on National Croquet Day.



Government gives green light to £46m schools and leisure complex

A £46m schools and leisure complex for Ponteland has been given the green light by the Secretary of State.

Northumberland County Council had been awaiting the rubberstamping of the scheme by the Government since January and last month conceded it may not be complete in time for the start of the 2019/20 academic year as planned.

Fallback plans were being put in place for temporary classrooms on the existing high school site to accommodate the first intake of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils in September 2019 under the three to two tier restructure. It is unclear at this stage whether these will still be required now building works can start.

The county council's strategic planning committee agreed that it was 'minded to approve' the scheme at its meeting in January. In line with normal protocol for a major proposal of this type,

the decision was referred to the National Planning Casework Unit for a ruling from the Secretary of State.

The letter confirmed the scheme was not being called in for decision by the Secretary of State, meaning it had Government approval, arrived at County Hall on April 19th.

As well as a 420 place primary school and a 1600 place secondary school, the new complex will boast a 25m swimming pool and learner pool, fitness suite, Clip n Climb, soft play, a recreation room and public café.

Other 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.

A drop in event was held for parents on Wednesday April 25th at Ponteland Leisure Centre, where the project team answered questions and discussed concerns.

Coun Wayne Daley, deputy leader and cabinet member for children's services, said: "Ensuring there are top quality learning environments

for our young people is key to us, and this exciting development will provide modern facilities for students for years into the future."

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Stunning surgery expansion meets patient demand for flexible appointments

Patients will soon benefit from more flexible appointment times and additional services after Ponteland dental practice Higgins & Winter expanded into neighbouring premises.

Over the past few months, building works have been ongoing on a knock through to the former Rowlands Accountants offices next door. And, as these sneak preview pictures show, the result is stunning new patient facilities.



Ready for patients...the new dental surgery

The extension has created a third dental surgery, a new scanning suite, patient consulting room and additional office space and staff facilities on the first floor. These are in addition to the existing two surgeries, imaging suite and dedicated sterilisation room. There will also be increased on-site car parking.

The expanded facilities will meet increased patient demand for both dental and cosmetic services, creating additional popular appointment times including late evenings.

Dental Nurse Paige Winter is taking on a new role as Treatment Coordinator, meaning patients undergoing complex dental procedures and facial aesthetics will now have a dedicated nurse guiding them through their treatment.

Dentists Kevin Higgins and Richard Winter took the opportunity to expand following the relocation of Rowlands Accountants to Seaton Burn.

Richard said: "This expansion will enable us to offer an enhanced, personalised patient experience. The new facilities are stunning and we look forward to

welcoming both existing and new patients to see them soon."

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 enables you to view 3D scans onscreen with your dentist immediately. It offers fast and accurate delivery of personalised Invisalign® treatment plans and allows for precise fit of crowns, bridges and implants.



State of the art equipment...the Itero Element® scanner

* See next month's Pont News for details of an Invisalign open evening being held in June where the new facilities will be on show.

Higgins & Winter
Dental Practice

(01661) 872979
higginsandwinter.co.uk
info@higginsandwinter.co.uk

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Library homes scheme on schedule for October completion

A 25-home development being built on the site of the former Ponteland Library is on schedule for completion by the end of October.

Hemingway Court will bring much-needed entry-level housing to the centre of Ponteland - including four one-bedroom properties which will be sold at a discounted rate and only to purchasers who live in the immediate vicinity.

It features one and two-bedroom apartments and penthouses built in two individual blocks over three storeys and linked at first and second floor level with a contemporary glazed bridge.

Surgo Construction was appointed by Ascent Homes for the 59-week project, beginning with the demolition of the old library and preparation of the site for development.

Construction Director Jeff Charlton said everything is going to plan: "The foundations are in and now we are making good progress with the block work, so it should all start to take shape swiftly thereafter.

"This is a sensitive site with a number of restrictions in terms of access and egress. The assisted living development Henderson Court backs on to the site and there are retail facilities opposite together with a lot of pedestrian and vehicular

traffic, particularly at peak times.

"As a result, we have to use smaller delivery vehicles and ensure deliveries are made between 9.30am to 2.30pm, keeping any disruption to roads and facilities to a minimum and undertaking any operations likely to create dirt or noise to times when they will cause least disturbance.

"In spite of these challenges and the recent bad weather, I am delighted to report that our first housing development for Ascent Homes is going smoothly and is on schedule."

Ascent Homes said the development has been designed to blend seamlessly with its surroundings, using carefully selected materials in keeping with the form and style of nearby dwellings.

It will also benefit from carefully considered landscaped areas with the introduction of new trees fronting the Thornhill Road elevation of the site to provide high quality amenity space.

Pictured on site (l to r) are: Development Director Duncan Bowman and Head of Sales and Marketing Claire Scott, both of Ascent Homes, with Jeff Charlton of Surgo Construction.



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Minister orders county council to speed up Local Plan process

A threat of Government intervention over the long awaited Local Plan for Northumberland has been lifted – for now.

But the county council has been warned by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid to speed up the delivery of the blueprint for future development – or he will “use the full range of powers” he has to put the plan in place.

Facing pressure over the need for hundreds of thousands of new homes to be built across the country, last November Mr Javid named and shamed 15 local authorities – including Northumberland County Council – which he felt had not made enough progress with their Local Plans and outlined the possibility of Government intervention.

He gave them until the end of January to explain why they had not produced a Local Plan – 13 years after the act which required local authorities to do so.

Last summer the newly elected Conservative administration withdrew the previous Core Strategy, citing serious public concerns and a lack of confidence it would ever have been approved.

One of the key issues was the level of new housing proposed, including on the Green Belt. The Core Strategy had proposed 24,320 new homes for the county by 2031 plus an additional 2,000 houses at Dissington Garden Village near Ponteland.

Last June Council Leader Peter Jackson, pictured, challenged the figures and said the Council wanted ‘to review the need to build on acres of green belt land’. A new five year housing land supply report published by the authority gave an ‘objectively assessed need’ figure of



18,880 dwellings for the period 2011-31 – much lower than that previously proposed.

At current timescales, a draft Local Plan will be consulted on this summer, and a formal version, taking into account any necessary changes, published in winter 2018. The Plan will be submitted to Government for examination by summer 2019 and, following examination, will be adopted by summer 2020.

However Sajid Javid has asked the process is accelerated. He wrote to NCC saying: “I remain concerned that the draft Northumberland Local Plan will not be... adopted until summer 2020.

“I understand that the Planning Advisory Service has offered helpful advice about streamlining the evidence base and accelerating the

Plan preparation programme by up to three months. I would, therefore ask you to revise your...timetable to reflect this advice.

“...Provided that your Council continues to meet the revised timetable, I do not consider that intervention at this stage would accelerate plan making and therefore, have decided not to take any further action at the present time.

“I will continue to monitor your progress closely and any further significant delays will cause me to have considerable doubt as to whether your Council is doing everything that is necessary in connection with the preparation of its Local Plan. I will not hesitate to consider how to use the full range of powers Parliament has given me to ensure that a Plan is in place.”

Coun Jackson responded: “The people of Northumberland made it clear they had little confidence in the previous approach and I’m pleased that Sajid Javid has recognised our commitment to producing a sound and deliverable Local Plan and the progress we have already made.

“We have measures in place to ensure that plan production is prioritised and well resourced, and note the Secretary of State’s comments about streamlining the evidence base and accelerating the Plan preparation programme by up to three months.

“We welcome the offer of further support from the Planning Advisory Service to ensure we meet these revised timescales.”

Plans for 400-home development called in by the Government

Controversial plans for a 400-home development on green belt land at West Clickemin Farm in Ponteland have been called in by the Government, to the anger of developers.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced the scheme will be determined by the Secretary of State in a letter to developer Banks Property and other interested parties on April 19th.

This means there is likely to be a public inquiry presided over by an independent planning inspector, similar to the one held over the Birney Hill housing scheme in 2015.

Northumberland County Council's Strategic Planning Committee said it was 'minded to approve' the planning application in March last year but it had to be referred to the National Planning Casework Unit due to the size of the scheme and its location on green belt land.

However, given the major shift in policy

on green belt development since the election of the new Conservative administration last May, the county council may no longer support the scheme when it comes to the public inquiry itself.

The 21-hectare site is located to the west of the A696 at Cheviot View and north of the B6545 Rotary Way.

Banks Property said it would include 50 two-bedroom properties, 232 three-bed, 86 four-bed and 32 five-bed, with 15% expected to match the 'affordable housing' criterion. The application said approximately 60 dwellings would be built per year from 2018/19 to 2023/24 and 40 in 2024/25.

Justin Hancock, principal development planner at Banks Property, described the call-in decision as "very disappointing" and contrary to the principles of localism: "We do not believe that the case for taking it out of local hands has been justified.

"There are also significant linkages between our scheme and the school and leisure centre project which has not been called in by the Secretary of

State, including a financial contribution of £5.5m. The political decision to call-in the housing is silent on how the funding gap will be resolved. In addition the new pupils which would live in the houses were part of the need and justification for the school building project.

"The decision to hold a public inquiry will unnecessarily delay both the building of much-needed new homes and the delivery of the substantial community benefits associated with the scheme, and it will also once again place considerable extra demands on the public purse at a time when public finances remain under significant pressure.

"...We continue to believe that this project should be allowed to move forward as planned."

Lesley Noble, from Ponteland Green Belt Group, reacted positively to the announcement: "We feel that this is a positive decision. We will continue to work with the Ponteland groups to ensure that we are fully represented at the inquiry."

Details of the dates and venue of the public inquiry are to follow.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Controversy over the removal of a children's playpark in this month's letters...

Disappointed at relocation of children's play area

It is with disappointment that I note the relocation of the children's play area on Callerton Lane in regards of potential redevelopment of the area.

Surely it is possible for the current site to be maintained and incorporated into the proposed development?

This site and a play area in the local authority housing maintained area of Twizell Place are the only remaining venues following the removal of an adventurous play area in Ponteland Park near the Millennium Bridge.

Also the adventure playground, which included 'witches hat toys' and an adventure playground that was replaced by a car park at the leisure centre when the current swimming pool was built after residents raised the million pounds cash to fund this.

No wonder our undervalued local youth feature in the police anti-social reports!

Gillian Armstrong
Kirkley Drive, Ponteland

Play area and skate park must not be thrown away

The play area at Callerton Lane has proved for some time to be a major attraction for young children, as many parents - and grandparents - can confirm.

This was the result of hard work by many spearheaded by the Community Partnership and today represents a £100K investment. It beggars belief that even in a temporary situation it is suggested "six of the smaller items could be moved to a smaller area" as in April's Pont News. All equipment must be involved in a temporary move.

The skate park, although supported by many youngsters, has only achieved moderate usage. However the asset of over £60k cannot be tossed aside in such a cavalier manner. A

replacement of a similar value asset catering for the youngsters must be provided.

County Council Leader Peter Jackson and Town Council Mayor Alan Varley must explain in detail what is to be provided for replacement of the play equipment and skate park.

Robin Ramsay MBE
The Rise, Darras Hall

* Town Council explains reasons for skate park closure: p14

'Mole-gate' continues...

In reply to Chris Wright's very valid rebuttal of my tongue-in-cheek mole letter I'd like to make another suggestion which pacifies Mr Wright and also solves Michael Anderson's pothole issue.

Perhaps we could employ a mole whisperer who could train the park moles to relocate to Runnymede Road every evening and use their undeniable talents to fix the potholes, leaving the park looking rugged but molehill-less.

This should please Mr Wright as it involves no "mole-icide" although I concede it may upset the "mole exploitation" crowd.

Steve Eglon
Western Way, Darras Hall

Concern over river in verse

As pretty as a picture, that's how it used to be
A picnic by the river in jolly company
The years have passed so quickly and things are not the same
Weeds have choked the river and that is such a shame
Litter floats and clogs its flow
How did this happen? I don't know
More wild flowers would be a welcome sight
Perhaps some kind and helpful soul could put this right
And once again our River Pont will be the village focal point

Joan McGowan
Rowan Drive, Ponteland

May issue deadlines: Delivery of the May issue will start on Friday April 27th and be completed by Thursday May 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Thursday April 12th. 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 May issue.

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



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What's on...

Ponteland Civic Society

Ian Warburton will speak on 'The CPRE Campaign to Protect Rural England' at our meeting at the CIU Club, Merton Way, at 7.30pm on Monday April 30th. Visitors welcome, charge £2.

Ponteland Means Business

Ponteland Means Business meets at the Diamond Inn from 8am to 9.30am on Tuesday May 1st. Contact Brian Russell at brian.russell@profitabilitygroup.co.uk or on (01661) 872004.

Kirkley WI

Our guest speaker at Kirkley Hall on Wednesday May 2nd at 7pm Hilary Fielding will talk on 'English Embroidery 900AD to present day'. Guests welcome. Visit kirkleywi.wordpress.com

Ponteland Village WI

Our annual meeting will be on Tuesday May 8th at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall and we'll be holding a baking competition - First Time Recipes. Visit pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or our Facebook page 'Ponteland Village WI'.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

Our demonstrator on Wednesday May 9th at 2pm at Ponteland Memorial Hall will be Valerie Guest from Darlington with 'Lazy Days of Summer'. Cost for non-members £7. All welcome.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

Speaker Peter Middleton will bring along a very talkative raven and a barn owl at 7pm on Wednesday May 9th at Kirkley Hall. Cost to members £4 (non-members £5). All welcome.

Ponteland Lions Club

Our business meeting will be held on Wednesday May 9th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall and our social meeting will be on May 23rd. Our Charity Fund bookstall will be at Waitrose on Saturday May 26th from 9am to 4pm. Visitors always welcome. Contact us on 0845 8339918.

Ponteland Methodist Church

The annual Plant Sale will be held in the Church Hall on Saturday May 12th at 10am. As well as plants there will be other stalls, bacon sandwiches and hot refreshments. All proceeds go towards

our Care n Share Fund which supports 10 local charities. Come and enjoy a pleasant morning with us.

National Croquet Day at Belsay Hall

Have a go at croquet at your local club at Belsay Hall and Gardens on National Croquet Day, Sunday May 13th from 11am to 4pm. Croquet can be played by people of all ages and the basic skills required are just the ability to hit a ball with a mallet on a reasonably flat grass surface. A great way to make friends and meet new people. Visit belsaycroquet.org or email belsaycroquet@gmail.com or contact Chairman David Millener on (0191) 236 5374 to discuss visiting the club on National Croquet Day.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Prof. John Derry will talk on 'Marie Antoinette' on Monday May 14th at 2.30pm in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall. We also have our AGM.

Embroiderers Guild Ponteland Branch

On Monday May 21st we have Hares: Magic and Mystery – a talk by Helen Cowans of Wooler from 2pm to 4pm at the Memorial Hall. All welcome - cost £4. Contact Secretary Penny Ford at penelopeford636@btinternet.com or (01670) 788278.

Ponteland Community Partnership

Come to observe a meeting and share your ideas, concerns and expectations for improving the quality of life in our community. All welcome. We next meet for our AGM at Ponteland Town Council offices at 7pm on Wednesday May 23rd. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk or shirley@reevehill.plus.com

Ponteland Leisure Learning - U3A

Philip Caine talks on 'Barrow to Bagdad and Back' on Wednesday June 6th at 2pm at Mary's Church Hall. Visitors welcome, no charge. Visit u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland or call (01661) 824953.

Party in the Park

This popular annual event will be held in Ponteland Park on Sunday June 10th from 1.30pm and will be opened by MP Guy Opperman.

Admission charge £1 (under 5s free). Entertainment includes Ponteland Community Band, the Jill Errington Dancing Group, Richard Coates Middle School Orchestra and Choir, The Rock Choir, fun fair, pony rides, Punch & Judy, climbing wall, archery, bouncy castle and a host of local organisations, charities and small businesses.

Ponteland Ramblers

The Ponteland group of the Ramblers Association organises 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.

Ponteland Village Bridge Club

We would like to welcome you to join us at our friendly club for Duplicate Bridge. During the evening we play about 20 boards and can organise a partner if you need one. Every Friday at 7pm at Merton Hall. Contact Pete Ford on peteford24@hotmail.com or on 07739 208 308.

Ponteland Bowling Club

Our qualified coaches are holding FREE introductory sessions for anyone, all ages, looking for a new sport or hobby. All equipment is provided. Sessions are available on the following Saturdays: May 5th, 12th, 19th and June 2nd from 10.30am - 12noon and Friday May 25th from 6pm - 7.30pm. Ponteland Bowling Club is situated on Darras Road between the Memorial Hall and the tennis club. Visit pontelandbowlingclub.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.

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.

Hundreds of families expected for annual party in the park

Hundreds of families are once again expected to enjoy an afternoon of entertainment in the park at one of the biggest events in Ponteland's social calendar.

This year's Party in the Park will be held on Sunday June 10th from 1.30pm and will be opened by MP Guy Opperman.

The crowds will be entertained by Ponteland Community Band, the Jill Errington Dancing Group, Richard Coates Middle School Orchestra and Choir, and the Rock Choir.

Other attractions will include a fun fair, pony rides, Punch & Judy, a climbing wall, archery and a bouncy castle, alongside food and refreshments and various stalls promoting local organisations, charities and small businesses.

The event is, as usual, organised by the Christian Churches Together in Ponteland - St Mary's, St Mathew's Catholic Church, Ponteland Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church.

The objective of Party in the Park is to create a social gathering for families and children in Ponteland and to support local charities, and last year more than 2,000 people attended.

The admission charge at the gates will be £1 (children under 5 free).

Children enjoy the Punch & Judy show at last year's event.



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GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Town Council approved a grant of £350 to the Holy Saviour Church at Milbourne for help towards their ground maintenance costs. A grant application had been received from the Parent Teacher Association of Richard Coates School for a grant towards the cost of producing a book covering the history of the school. The Council recommended that an approach be made to the Richard Coates Educational Foundation in the first instance and, if this was unsuccessful, members would re-consider the application.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

The Council considered an update report on the introduction of GDPR on May 25th 2018. Various policies have been produced which will be included on the Town Council's website, and training for staff and councillors is ongoing. Further information is awaited on the appointment of a Data Protection Officer, which is mandatory for parish and town councils. It is unclear whether the appointment can be made from within the organisation or whether the position will have to be filled externally. A further update report will be submitted to the May meeting.

DATE OF MAY TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

It was agreed that the May Town Council meeting would be held on Wednesday May 16th instead of May 9th as scheduled.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

The Council agreed a recommendation from the Working Party, which had met on March 19th, to produce designs for the back wall of the sensory garden. Once the panels have been designed, there are funds in the budget to produce the panels. The cost will be met from the project development fund.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

Coun Dodd reported that the County Council is still awaiting the final go ahead from the National Planning Casework Unit in respect of the school and leisure complex. The problems of parking on Meadowfield Industrial Estate were highlighted. There were articulated lorries parking on the estate pavements in the evening which is destroying the footpath surfaces. Coun Dodd also referred to a recent planning application for Medburn that had been refused.

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



ANNUAL TOWN MEETING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORS

The Town Council meeting was preceded by the Annual Town Meeting, which 19 residents and Town Councillors attended. The Mayor presented his annual report for 2017-18 and he was also delighted to present the Meritorious Service award to Lucinda Porter for her many years of work with the Guides. Lucinda had worked for 46 years with the Guides and the Mayor referred to her many achievements and milestones of her involvement with the organisation. The Mayor presented a gift to Lucinda in appreciation for all that she had done for the Guiding movement over many years.

Closure of the Callerton Lane skate park

The Town Council took the decision recently not to replace the skate park when Northumberland County Council informed the Town Council that it required the land back as part of the new school and leisure complex.

The play area will be replaced in a different location and a temporary area will be situated further up Callerton Lane while development is ongoing.

The Council did not take this decision lightly however, the facility has been the subject of vandalism and anti-social behaviour for some time and it was felt that this was the only sensible course of action in view of the continuing problems in this area.

There has been further recent damage to the running surface, a bin has been burned out and part of the wooden fence has been destroyed. In view of this further damage the Council has decided to close the skate park and anyone using it will do so at their own risk until it can be removed.

Medburn villagers celebrate as second housing scheme refused

Villagers in Medburn have expressed delight after councillors refused a second planning application for new housing against their own officers' advice.

After several years of approvals for housing developments ranging from individual homes to estates of 50 homes or more in the hamlet, last November county councillors turned down an outline application for 16 dwellings on land to the north of The Avenue.

Members of Northumberland County Council's Castle Morpeth Local Area Committee went against the advice of their officers, stung by losing two earlier appeals against refusal of planning permission for two developments of 14 homes and five homes in 2012.

And the committee has now unanimously rejected a further outline planning application for two 2.5 storey executive homes on land north of Dyke House, off The Avenue. Officers had again recommended approval, citing the previous lost planning appeals.

Pont News has been reporting over the past year 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 in 2016 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 last October.

But 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.

One end of The Avenue has several building sites ongoing and 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.

Ponteland Town Council had once again objected to the latest planning application, along with mother-of-two Stephanie Fletcher, who lives on

The Avenue. The council said adding yet more new homes would have an overwhelming and adverse impact on the settlement. Town councillor Katrina Woodrow spoke against the application at the planning meeting on April 9th along with committee members.

Ponteland ward councillor Richard Dodd described The Avenue as being "like a bombsite" while Council Leader Peter Jackson told the committee: "The Avenue has not been adopted and it's just total, total chaos. Unless the developers in Medburn come to us and solve this issue, I think we should just refuse anything along there."

Ms Fletcher said after the meeting: "I'm delighted the councillors are starting to support us and really see the effects of all this building work. Our residential amenity has been severely affected by the volume of permissions and I'm yearning for the day I don't have five wagons an hour hurtling past my house."

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Doctors Trish Davis and Rachel Somerville Roberts have launched a new aesthetic skin treatment clinic in Darras Hall.

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Ponteland Community High School Report

Abbie wins gymnastics bronze medal

Year 9 student Abbie Bolam won a bronze medal at the Teamgym British Championships at Sports Central, Northumbria University.

She performed brilliantly for her team, City of Newcastle Gymnastics Academy, at the event on April 14th.

But there was no time for Abbie to sit back and relax as she was competing again the following

weekend to try and secure a place on the GB squad for the European selection in Portugal this October.

Headteacher Kieran McGrane said: "To achieve this level of excellence takes years of dedication, intensive training and a lot of talent. It is great to see how well Abbie is doing in her chosen sport whilst at the same time maintaining excellent standards within school. We wish her all the best for the next competition."



Abbie Bolam (right).

Adam flies flag for region at WWI pilgrimage in France

Sixth former Adam Owens will be flying the flag for the region at a huge WWI pilgrimage in France this summer.

Adam, a Cadet Sergeant in 2510 Air Cadets (West Denton), will be carrying the Northumbria County Youth Standard at GP90 - the Great Pilgrimage taking place in August in France and ending at the Menin Gate.

More than 5,000 people will take part in the recreation of the great pilgrimage which took place

in 1928 to mark the 10th anniversary of the end of the Great War.

Adam won the North East Regional Youth Standard Bearers competition in March and represented the northern region in the national competition in April.

The Royal British Legion Newcastle West Branch, which Adam belongs to, is looking for new members. You do not have to be a veteran to join and the branch meets on the third Sunday of the month in Benwell Hill Cricket Club opposite West Road Crematorium at 11.30am. For more information contact County Youth Officer Debbie Owens on 07954 598 883.



Adam is pictured with the County Youth Standard which was dedicated at a church service. Photo by Ian Fraser.



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How you can help hedgehogs

By Carole Catchpole,
Northumbrian Hedgehog Rescue Trust

This is the time of year when hedgehogs begin to emerge from their long winter's sleep.

Not all hedgehogs will have hibernated but those which have will be extremely weak from living off their brown fat for such a long period during hibernation and will take a while to build up their reserves again.

What can we do to help? Putting out food and water for them will help enormously and conserve what little energy they have initially.

A mixed selection of food is best which can include kitten biscuits, crushed peanuts (they can choke on whole ones) a few mealworms or, better still, calci worms, or moist cat food (see our website for details of preventing all the local cats from enjoying your hospitality too!)

The other very important thing we can do to help is take care on the roads when driving at night. In the 1950s there were approximately 30m and we're now down to less than 1m.

Check our website hedgehogs-northumbria.org and please help these amazing animals before it's too late.

Walkers invited to step out at Kirkharle for hospice

Keen walkers are being invited to step out to raise funds for a Newcastle hospice.

On Sunday May 13th the Yellow Ribbon Walk is being held at Kirkharle Courtyard, just off the A696 north of Ponteland near Capheaton.

There is a choice of three routes through the lovely countryside that once inspired landscape designer Capability Brown - a 5km guided, circular walk along the old coach road and farm tracks, a shorter 1.5km section and an easy 1km lakeside path with a nature trail.

Funds are being raised for a new, self-contained family unit at the Marie Curie hospice allowing terminally ill patients to be cared for by hospice staff with their families around them. The target is £60,000.

Walkers at the Kirkharle event, which starts at 2pm, are being asked to pay £10 for adults, £5 for six to 16-year-olds and £20 for families of four, and invite sponsorship.

For further details visit gofundme.com or email rsvpfriendsmariecurie@gmail.com or call Jenny Pearson, Chair of the Friends of Marie Curie Newcastle, on 01830 540395.

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Memorial Hall seeks new volunteers

By Robin Ramsay MBE, Chairman Ponteland Memorial Hall

As many may be aware David Cobb has stood down as Chairman of the Memorial Hall Trust.

He has provided stalwart service to the hall for 20 years and deserves a big thank you from the community for all his efforts. We are delighted that he is staying on as a trustee for the immediate future, especially myself as the new chairman.

The hall relies on hardworking trustees to ensure that it can function successfully as a sustainable and valuable community asset. Volunteers for new trustees are urgently required.

We are also looking for a treasurer as the current holder John Seager has indicated that he will be resigning at the end of 2018. The treasurer is an essential part of the hall management.

Professional qualifications are not necessary but an ability to handle monies and maintain sound records will be required. We do have advice readily available from our accountants who handle the staff payroll. John will also be able to help and guide his successor in the details of the position.

This year we have had significant grants that have enabled us to bring several parts of the building up to required standards and modern expectations. Such grants are essential to our sustainability. These have enabled us to refurbish our two lounges.

The major source of income comes from the hiring of our several rooms; the main hall for 300 people, lounge for 120 people, upper lounge for 90 people and a small rear room for up to 20 people. The caretaker sets these up to suit your requirements.



There is a bar, a well equipped kitchen, tablecloths, cutlery etc, free Wi-Fi and a free car park. More use of these rooms, whether it be for meetings or functions, will make a major contribution to our future. Details of availability and costs can be found at pontelandmemorialhall.com.

Please remember that this hall arose from a community vision for a fitting memorial to those who gave their lives in the First World War and was created by the community for all to use as a lasting tribute.

This year is most appropriate - 100 years from the end of WWI - to make sure that the fulfilment of that vision can continue for the next 100 years and more. Use it or lose it!

Anyone interesting in volunteering on the committee can contact me on info@pontelandmemorialhall.com or on (01661) 822603.

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18-04

Tributes paid to Flower Show stalwarts

By Syd Cowan

Tributes have been paid to two of the key figures in the Ponteland Parish Flower Show committee, who have died just months before the event's 40th anniversary.

The show committee stood in silence at its AGM to honour the recent deaths of the Founder Show President Dr Jack White and former treasurer and schedule editor Dr David Morris.

The annual show at the Memorial Hall was instigated by Dr White and his wife Barbara over the winter of 1977/78, with the first show held on the second Saturday in September 1978. The 40th show was held last September.

Dr White was honoured to be elected President of the show – the position he held for the rest of his life. Dr Morris joined the committee many years ago and took on the jobs of treasurer and co-ordinator of the show schedule. The show committee are very sorry to lose both of them.

At the AGM Syd Cowan retired as Chairman after 26 years in the post. The officers elected for 2018 are: Chairman – David Goodchild; Secretary – Les Dinning; and Treasurer – Victoria James. Syd, the retiring Vice Chairman John Turner and retiring treasurer Rachel Wood were all thanked for their contributions to the continuing success of the show.

The 2018 Ponteland Parish Flower Show, which marks the 40th anniversary of the event, will be held on Saturday September 8th in the Memorial Hall.

The schedule of classes to enter was discussed and gardeners are assured that all their favourite classes will remain.

Children's classes are revised every year with some new subjects introduced. For the home brewers, a beer and lager class will return.

The committee would welcome anyone interested in helping with the show (and you don't have to be an expert gardener) to contact me, Syd Cowan, on (01661) 824459 or at syd.cowan@btinternet.com and I will welcome you to the next committee meeting.



Entries at last year's show



An early show committee



Jack and Barbara White



Memorial Hall hosts four weddings... and an Elvis

By Lesley Eltringham, Ponteland Repertory Society

The Society's latest production – comedy 4 Weddings and an Elvis - went down really well with audiences.

Jackie Wighton, a drama teacher from Ponteland directed her first production for the Rep. and Carole Davies produced the show.

There were some brilliant new actors in the cast; husband and wife team Jess and Giles Eyre-Tanner made their debut on stage. Jess, local mum and teacher, set herself the task of taking to the stage to fulfil one of 40 challenges she has set herself for her 40th year.

Lauren Lyon, also a local mum, came back to acting after 10 years away and was thrilled to take the main role of Sandy, the wedding chapel proprietor. For Ponteland dad Dario Sancho, it was also his first attempt at drama and he took to it like a duck to water! He is a natural comedian.

Taking leading roles were some of our experienced Rep actors - Leo Emmerson as an amazing Elvis, Jason Long as a geeky Marvin and Carol Emerson as the glamorous actress Vanessa.

Jonny Woollett played a frightening convict, Fist, whilst Amber Covington turned herself into an equally scary ex-con. Jonny also played the role of Lou, an ageing Minister, confusing the audience as to whether it was the same actor!

John Eltringham, as the drunken Vicar, staggered on and off in a cameo role. The Chapel of Love Singers were Sarah Blythe and Zoe Buckthorpe.

We were delighted to hear lovely comments by members of the audience as they were leaving.

Our next production this coming Christmas is the pantomime 'Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs'. Ponteland Rep look forward to welcoming you once again to enjoy your local amateur theatre.

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TV personality to launch new walking route through Ponteland

By Alan Mitcham, Northumbria Ramblers

An 80-mile walking route which passes through Ponteland is being launched at the end of May by regional television personality John Grundy.

The Heritage Way is a Northumbria Ramblers initiative, supported by Northumberland and Durham county councils and the Tyne and Wear unitary authorities.

It is being formally opened at Causey Arch, near the County Durham/Gateshead border, on Thursday May 31st during the Ramblers Festival of Walking.

The route from North Shields to South Shields, which circles round the edges of the former Tyne and Wear with forays into Northumberland and Durham, is divided into nine sections – each walkable in a day.

Each section has a leaflet downloadable from the Heritage Way website at tynewearheritageway.org.uk featuring a map with walk instructions and heritage information which can be seen along the way.

The route takes in many of the places which powered the industrial revolution. Causey Arch was the first single-span stone-built bridge in the world. The Bowes railway is the world's only standard gauge rope-hauled railway. The single-span bridge at Hagg Bank was well ahead of its time. Souter Lighthouse was the first lighthouse powered by electricity.



Walkers on the Ponteland and Gosforth Light Railway route.

For much of its route The Heritage Way follows the old waggonways used to transport the coal which was the catalyst for all this industry.

It starts at North Shields, following the coast to Seaton Sluice. From there it goes inland via Holywell Dene to Weetslade Country Park, then past Big Waters to Dinnington and Prestwick Carr. Then it heads south through Ponteland to Newburn and along the River Tyne to Wylam, followed by Thornley Woods, Beamish, Washington Village then along the coast from Sunderland to South Shields.

A walk organised by Ponteland Ramblers is being held on Tuesday May 29th during the Ramblers Festival of Walking. This will follow section 3 of the Heritage Way from Burradon to Ponteland. The walk is 8½ miles long and starts from Burradon at 10.30am. Anyone who would like to join us would be most welcome. The contact is Steve Edwards (01661) 886310.

COUNCIL WELCOMES FURTHER POTHOLE FUNDING

Northumberland County Council is to spend over £3m tackling potholes and other storm damage over the winter.

The authority has been awarded £1.85m in government support as part of a £100m national funding package, on top of a £930,000 Pothole Action Fund grant from the Department for Transport and £420,000 from council coffers for road repairs.

The cash is funding increased road inspections, extra equipment and resources and a range of repairs.

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