

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Work starts on £42m schools and leisure scheme

... as parents launch campaign to save top performing school

1,400 new homes for Callerton Park

Stone unveiled to commemorate WWI airfield

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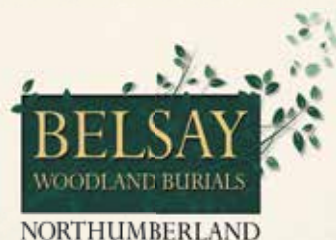


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Audience far from grumpy at Pont Rep's annual panto

By Lesley Eltringham

Performers new and old took to the stage for Pont Rep's annual panto – Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

A number of new members were welcomed to join the Society. Hayley Olsen played a mean Evil Queen, while her understudy and Lady in Waiting Jules Stevenson Warrender, a local mum making her debut, played a superb Queen in the matinee having never acted before.

Philip Browell returned to the Rep after a long break but proved to be a superb Dame, ably assisted by Ruth Browell as one of the female comic duo. Kieren Wadforth joined us for the first time as the Prince's Aide.

Regular actors are too numerous to mention but were as accomplished as ever, as were the super kids of the Preppies Youth Theatre.

The Rep will be back with the famous play 'The Crucible' in the Spring.





Work starts on £42m schools and leisure scheme

Construction work has started on Ponteland's new £42m combined schools and leisure scheme.

Two new schools and a leisure centre will be incorporated into one of the biggest education and recreation schemes ever established in the county.

Northumberland County Council is funding the scheme, which is being built by Kier Construction.

A new Ponteland secondary school and new Ponteland primary school will be established there - along with leisure and cultural facilities and sports pitches.

State of the art facilities will be included in the two brand new school buildings and leisure provision will include a swimming pool, fitness suite, community facilities, badminton courts, Clip N Climb, soft play, outdoor sports fields, a full size 3G pitch and a library.

The council also plans to build a new fire station close-by, replacing one which will be displaced by the scheme.

Coun Peter Jackson, Leader of Northumberland County Council, said: "I am absolutely delighted that work is underway in earnest on this landmark development and very much look

forward to watching its progress.

"It will provide both first-class learning environments for students for years into the future and an amazing leisure centre which will give access to high quality sport and leisure facilities and support improvements to health and wellbeing for the whole community."

Brian McQuade, managing director of Kier Construction Scotland & North-East England, said: "We are delighted to be starting construction works on this exciting new development in Ponteland. Working collaboratively with Northumberland County Council, this new learning and leisure space will provide state-of-the art facilities for the community to enjoy for years to come.

"Throughout the duration of the project we will be working with local suppliers, engaging with local residents and providing updates on the development and offering training opportunities to local people as we look to showcase our interesting, diverse and rewarding industry."

After completion of the new buildings, the existing Ponteland leisure centre will be demolished and sports pitches established there.

The new schools are part of a reorganisation of the Ponteland Partnership, which is seeing a £52m investment in schools, including the new Darras Hall Primary School which opened in September.

Work is also underway to expand the accommodation on the existing high school site, to ensure that temporary accommodation can be provided to allow additional secondary pupils to start in September 2019.

The new development is scheduled for completion by September 2020.

Cover shot: Coun Peter Jackson, leader, and Coun Wayne Daley, deputy leader and cabinet member for children's services (left to right at front), cutting the first turf at the Ponteland Schools development with students and headteachers from Ponteland First and Ponteland High Schools, county councillors and representatives of Active Northumberland, Kier, and other partners in the scheme.



Winter Event - Now on!

Cookery Demonstration (Newcastle) - Saturday 26th January - 10am to 4pm
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Berwick-Upon-Tweed, TD15 1RP

Parents launch campaign to save top performing school

Parents of children at a Ponteland school recently named one of the best performing in the country have launched a campaign to save it from closure.

Ponteland Community Middle School was recently ranked 25th in the Sunday Times Schools Guide 2019 top 500 English state primary schools list. Despite this, the campaigners claim, the Ofsted 'outstanding' rated school faces a fresh threat of closure.

PCMS fought off plans to close it under an education reorganisation approved by Northumberland County Council in 2016, which ditched the previous three tier system of first, middle and high schools in favour of a two tier primary/secondary model.

It avoided closure by securing academy status, independent of local authority control. This effectively created a hybrid system where parents could choose to either stick with the three tier system or alternatively send their children to one of the new primary schools, and on to the new secondary school aged 11.

But it soon became clear PCMS faced a significant challenge to survive outside the new two tier group of schools in the Ponteland Partnership, after the high school said it could not guarantee a place at Year 9 for pupils who stayed on

at the middle school beyond Year 6.

The 615-pupil school responded by applying to the Department for Education to extend its roll by three years to 16. But this was rejected, leaving parents who want their children to attend the middle school with the dilemma that if they do, they could be forced to attend high schools outside Ponteland from Year 9.

If, as a result, insufficient numbers of parents send their children to PCMS, it is unlikely to remain financially viable and will have to close.

Furious parents have attacked Conservative politicians including MP Guy Opperman and county council leader Peter Jackson who they say had previously campaigned to save the school but were now allowing it to close by stealth.

A change.org petition has been launched by the school's parents' forum calling on the Department for Education, NCC and the MP to work together to find a practical solution for the long-term survival of the school and to secure an

educational pathway for its pupils. It had generated more than 2,000 signatures as we went to print.

Headteacher Caroline Pryer said: "Trustees have met regularly with the parents' campaign group and understand their passion, commitment and integrity. The parents are keen to maintain choice, outstanding provision and an educational pathway inclusive of PCMS in the community."

A spokesperson for Northumberland County Council added: "The new Ponteland High School would not be organisationally, financially or educationally viable if it had to retain 150 empty desks and the associated classrooms in each of Years 7 and 8 for pupils who might join in Year 9.

"The cost of keeping empty classrooms mothballed would have a devastating impact on the budget of the school and the rights of the hundreds of children already in the school to have a full teaching workforce to support their education."

See Your letters on p10-11.

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1,400 new homes for Callerton Park

City councillors have approved plans for 1,400 new homes on green belt land south east of Darras Hall.

The two planning applications given the green light are the first two phases of a controversial masterplan proposing 3,000 new homes, two primary schools, a sports hub and retail centre for Callerton Park, agreed in October 2016.

There are four areas earmarked for development: Upper Callerton west of the A696 opposite Woosington; West Middle and East Middle Callerton off the B6324 Stamfordham Road; and Lower Callerton bordering West Walbottle off the A69.

The first phase of the development (West Middle Callerton) will involve a mix of 505 three, four and five-bedroomed properties being built by Miller Homes and Story Homes.

The area being developed comprises 83 acres of agricultural land bounded by Whorlton Lane and Stamfordham Road, south east of Callerton village. Five acres

have been set aside for a new primary school.

A separate planning application was also approved for a second phase at the Lower Callerton section of the site, between the B6323 Ponteland Road and North Walbottle Road just north of the A69, shown above.

The 178-acre area allocated for development by Bellway Homes, also currently agricultural land, will include 900 homes, a retail area, and a new footbridge over the A69.

To help the surrounding area cope with the demands of a huge influx of new residents, the developer has agreed to give £3.7m to nearby primary schools, £1m to improve vital road junctions, £292,000 to local healthcare services, £886,500 to a new sports hub development at Bullocksteads, and £816,876 towards a subsidised bus service.

The full masterplan also includes the building of a link road between Middle and Upper Callerton and the development of a sports hub on



Newcastle City Council owned green belt land behind St John's Estate to the west of Westerhope, between the two sites, to include playing pitches, a pavilion and parking.

The scheme, part of the authority's ambition plan to build 21,000 homes in the city over the next two decades to cater for population growth, was the subject of a vociferous campaign from local residents first featured in the January 2012 issue of Pont News.

The Newcastle West Green Belt Protection Campaign was supported by Pontland's MP Guy Opperman, Woosington Parish Council and Callerton villagers.

The planned layout for the Lower Callerton scheme by Bellway Homes.

Christmas market attracts hundreds of festive shoppers

Hundreds of shoppers hunting for festive gifts enjoyed a feast of entertainment at Ponteland Rotary Club's Christmas market.

This is the fourth year the event, which is growing in popularity, has been run – this time in conjunction with North East patient care charity Daft as a Brush.

The venue was moved from Merton Way/Merton Hall where it was held last year to the nearby Memorial Hall, which could accommodate the 60+ stall holders.

Carols and other festive music were provided by Ponteland Rock Choir, singer Pete Brown and Ponteland Community Wind Band. Other attractions included Santa's Grotto and

games and activities for children.

Northumberland housebuilder Ascent Homes, leading the development of 25 one and two-bedroom apartments at Hemingway Court on the former library site on Thornhill Road, donated a Christmas tree for the event.

Thanking Ascent Homes for the kind gesture, Rotary Club committee member Alan Hall said the event was a huge success with shoppers queuing up from before it opened until traders were packing up.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Parents voice support for under threat school in this month's letters....

We need to support campaign to save top performing school

We are privileged to have one of the very best schools in the country on our doorstep.

Ponteland Community Middle School has just been rated 25th nationally at Key Stage 2 SATS and the best large school (more than 100 pupils sitting the exam) in the country, as reported by the Sunday Times.

That means at Key Stage 2 SATS it finished ahead of the region's leading independent school, Newcastle's Royal Grammar School, where you would pay up to £13,000 a year when here in Ponteland we get that for free!

It has excellent Special Educational Needs provision and a rare Platinum Sports Mark with teams in national and even world finals. It is twice Ofsted 'outstanding' rated and a teaching school.

Yet, incredibly, PCMS' future is under threat due to circumstances outside its control.

It suddenly and unexpectedly found itself scheduled for closure under the 2016 two tier education consultation. It was only saved by an Academy Order applied for on the advice of the Department for Education after the consultation started.

However PCMS was then told that once Ponteland High School became a secondary school its children would have no guarantee of a local pathway once they left PCMS. This currently means that if parents leave their children at PCMS after September 2019 they will risk losing their place in the local educational system.

PCMS has proposed various solutions but no resolution has yet been found and parents need to make decisions on place offers this coming March. That we have arrived here represents a clear

failure of oversight and governance by the local authority and the Department of Education in my opinion.

Given that they, and the local MP, all voice support and a desire to see PCMS flourish they now need to match words with swift and decisive action to resolve matters.

Given the gift of one of the best schools in the country you might have thought we could manage to work together to incorporate it rather than see it isolated and under imminent threat. Innovative solutions should be found that will enable all our schools to work co-operatively together for all they serve and for all our schools to thrive.

PCMS is a fantastic resource which we are privileged to have serving our community. Can any of us honestly say we want to see one of the best schools in the country closed on our doorstep?

If we want to save this school we need to make clear to decision makers and schools that we expect them to work together to find a resolution. We can do this through the campaign petition on change.org, emails and letters.

Gavin Bullick
Eastern Way
Darras Hall

Jewel in the crown abandoned

I am writing to inform you that I am considering my resignation from the Conservative Party.

The reason being the complete lack of interest in the fate of Ponteland Academy, a leading school shown this week in the Sunday Times as placed 25th in the country for outstanding achievement in education.

Under Northumberland County Council's education policy for the future they see no place for this excellent establishment in their education plans.

It is frustrating to note that the proposed schools and leisure centre complex costing £42m without any provision to house the Academy.

Peter Jackson, leader of Northumberland County Council and Guy Opperman, our MP, have shown little enthusiasm to promote this centre of excellence in Ponteland. My understanding from parents I have spoken to is that there will be a resulting reduction of Conservative votes in future local elections.

I know many parents are hostile to the decision of the Local Education Authority to reduce the prospect of this school continuing in its plans for education in the Ponteland area. When we have an asset such as Ponteland Academy, it seems a disaster to let it be in jeopardy.

I am a retired chartered mechanical engineer and am totally behind children being given the opportunity to study at such a prestigious establishment.

Mr J Stewart
Deyncourt
Darras Hall

(letter to Hexham Conservative Association, Guy Opperman MP and Northumberland County Council Leader Peter Jackson, copied to Pont News)

It's planning policy that needs uprooting, not the trees

Scientists continue to warn us about the threat posed by global warming.

They reckon that we have about 20 years in which to mend our ways or else we are all doomed. Given the scale of the task, 20 years does not seem to me to be a very long time.

After all, it's only about half the time that I have lived in Ponteland and yet, strangely, we continue to behave as if it's now to do with us, something that is perhaps happening on some other planet.

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 legal or other reasons. All letters submitted should include the writer's name and address.

One of the things they tell us we must do, in order to limit heat gain and help reduce the level of poisonous gasses in the atmosphere, is to plant many more trees but, perversely, the County Council seems to be busily heading off in the opposite direction.

They are pressing ahead with a school/leisure development on Callerton Lane that will result in the loss of around 150 trees, a loss that could have been easily avoided by a more responsible approach to layout.

There is more than sufficient open land here to accommodate what is deemed to be required without the need to resort to the bulldozing of woodland.

Similarly, the trees on the former library site were protected by a County Council preservation order but again that has failed to save them from the chop.

The trees that went some way to soften the intrinsic ugliness of the car park behind the Merton Way shops have been uprooted and a similar fate has befallen a length of tree and hedgerow that defined the Middle Drive boundary of Darras Hall Primary School.

That building is now caged in by an open wire fence that affords passers-by with a less than attractive vista of parked

vehicles, bike sheds, refuse bins, and a clutter of unnecessary signs.

This comes as a bit of a surprise given that the planning application indicated that the perimeter trees and hedgerow that had served to enclose the school site for the past 50 years were to be retained. There was absolutely no need to remove this landscaping.

All this at the behest of an organisation charged with the protection and enhancement of our environment.

There has to be a greater appreciation of the need to preserve our trees, and we need to plant a lot more.

John Hague

High View, Darras Hall

Common sense approach from parking enforcement office would have been better

In reply to James Pearce - who kindly pointed out in last month's letters that I had no excuse forgetting to display the time of arrival along with my disabled wife's blue badge when I parked on a single yellow line while escorting her to the hairdressers.

I would like to assure him that because of my duty of care looking after my wife

24/7, which is very tiring, I naturally do forget some things.

If Mr Pearce had read my letter correctly he would see that I admitted my mistake. I later paid the fine.

My letter was merely warning people to be careful parking in that vicinity while construction work to the car park was being carried out which might save them from being issued with a ticket.

It has come to my attention that tickets were issued while people were delivering goods to the charity shop.

Mr Pearce states that 'Sherlock' the traffic warden, as he calls him, wouldn't know how long I had been parked because I didn't show the time of arrival.

I find that amazing because not only was 'Sherlock' patrolling the car park, when I arrived back to my car the engine cooling system was still on and I would wager he not only saw me park but would have observed me escorting my wife to the hairdressers.

Why didn't he just use common sense and point out that I had simply forgotten to display the time of arrival?

Bill Howd

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What's on...

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

At our meeting at 7.30pm on Monday January 7th at Ponteland Social Club (CIU), Merton Way, The David Boyd Lecture will be given by Rannveig Wallis on the maintenance of a bulb collection. Rannveig is a self confessed plantaholic and runs a bulb nursery at Porthyrhyd. We are very much looking forward to her talk and the opportunity to ask questions. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting. Contact us at neegroup@agsgroups.org or find us at alpinegardensociety.net/groups/North-East-England or facebook.com/groups/AGSNEE.

Ponteland WI

Our speaker at 7pm on Tuesday January 8th in the lounge of the Memorial Hall will be Rev. Jona Sewell who will give a talk and slide show on St Francis of Assisi. All visitors are welcome.

Ponteland Village WI

Our meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday January 8th in St Mary's Parish Centre (formerly St Mary's Church Hall) will include a talk on yoga by Claire Austin of Yogabud. We also have a walking group, dining out group, book and film club and more. Contact us at pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or find us on Facebook Ponteland Village WI

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

Following our AGM at 2pm on Wednesday January 9th in the Memorial Hall lounge, David Peacock will give an illustrated talk on the "Hermitage Community Garden". Visitors very welcome (£7).

Kirkley WI

We are holding a Domino Drive at 7pm on Wednesday January 9th at Kirkley Hall. New members and guests are always very welcome. Visit kirkleywi.wordpress.com

Ponteland Lions Club

Our next business meeting will be in Merton Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday January 9th. Visitors welcome. Our charity fund book stall will be at Waitrose from 9am to 4pm on Saturday January 26th collecting spectacles for recycling to the third world.

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. Our next meeting at the Memorial Hall is at 7pm on Wednesday January 16th. Contact: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Ponteland Local History Society

John Sadler will talk on 'The Border Reivers' at our meeting at 7.30pm on Thursday January 17th at St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road, Ponteland. Visitors welcome £2.

Embroiderers Guild Ponteland Branch

Kate Slaughter will talk on 'A creative journey with colour and texture' at our meeting from 2pm to 4pm on Monday January 28th at the Memorial Hall. All welcome, £4. Contact: Penny Ford at penelopeford636@btinternet.com or (01670) 788278.

Ponteland Writers

We are a friendly group with mixed writing ability and experience and meet every Wednesday evening in the Ladies Lounge at Ponteland Golf Club from 7pm to 9pm. New members welcome.

Scottish Country Dancing

Bullocksteads Scottish Country Dance Club meet on the third Tuesday in the month (September – April) at Dalton Village Hall from 7.30pm to 10pm. Live music and pooled supper and all welcome. Cost £35 for eight sessions. For more information phone Ruth on (01661) 881654.

Bridge Club

We would like to welcome new members to our friendly bridge club which meets every Tuesday until the end of April. Contact Mary Oldfield (01661) 821769.

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 208308.

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.

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.

Line dancing

We meet every Wednesday at 6.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall, Ponteland. We have lots of laughs, friendship and exercise to music. The cost is £20 for ten sessions. Dancing is at beginner and intermediate level and new dancers are always welcome. Free taster session offered. Contact Rosemary Gray (01661) 822493.

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

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

Ponteland Floral Art Club

Ponteland Floral Art Club meets on the third Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in the Memorial Hall, Ponteland. There will also be a jewellery stall that evening with items suitable for Christmas gifts.

Pont Badminton Club

Pont Badminton Club meets every Friday evening between 7.30pm and 9pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Adults of all ages will be assured of a warm welcome. Just come along or contact 07986 388822 for more information.

Tributes paid to the last Mayor of Castle Morpeth

A former Ponteland councillor who was the last Mayor of Castle Morpeth has died, aged 84.

Devoted wife, mother and grandmother Irene Brumwell was originally from Bradford, but moved to live in Darras Hall in the early 1960s.

She was married for more than 55 years to Ralph, who she met when she was working as an airline ground receptionist and he was a pilot working from Leeds Bradford Airport.

Irene leaves Ralph, 98, and their daughters Jane and Lindsay and son Mark, grandchildren Matthew, Joseph, Olivia, William and Thomas, and sister Gillian.

She served on the governing body at Ponteland Middle School for 16 years from 1999, and was elected to serve as a parish councillor for the village's South Ward in 2003, sitting on the Environment Committee, Newcastle Airport Working Party, and the Northumbria in Bloom Committee.

As a borough councillor, Irene held positions including membership of the development control and licensing committees.

As principled as she was popular, Irene hit the headlines in 2007 when she resigned from the borough council's planning committee in protest at the approval of an application for three new homes in the large back garden of a dwelling in Edgehill.



Her controversial intervention didn't stop her being unanimously elected as Mayor the following year, however, after a year as Deputy Mayor – and she was the last to hold the ceremonial position before the abolition of the authority in March 2009. Irene resigned from the parish council later the same year.

Highlights of her year as Mayor included meeting Prince Charles and Camilla, when they made an unscheduled visit to see the flood damage at Morpeth.

Former colleagues expressed their sadness at her death. Peter Jackson, former leader of Castle Morpeth Borough Council and current county council leader, said: "Irene was a passionate advocate for the Ponteland community.

"I worked with her for a number of years as a colleague and a friend and I can say that she always thought of others and she always had the best interests of Ponteland at heart. I will miss her."

A funeral was held on Thursday December 20th at St Mary's Church, where Irene was an active parishioner.

Former parish and borough councillor Frank Harrington praised her support for the church, including membership of the choir, participation in fundraising and social events and bellringing. He added: "As a councillor Irene was very caring for people and communities and brought a human face to our work. This was appreciated when Morpeth flooded during her year as Mayor."

Mayor Brumwell donned her robes for the last time as she chaired the final meeting of the borough council. There, then Coun Harrington paid tribute to her attendance at more than 200 functions during her term of office, her fundraising for charities Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and Motor Neurone Disease, and support of Morpeth flooding victims.

Irene's final address as she closed the meeting was very poignant and is an appropriate way to end this tribute. She said: "I'm smiling, but I'm not smiling inside. I think it is a very sad night. It just leaves me to say thank you very much indeed for all of the help I have had. I hope that whatever you do and wherever you go, God be with you. Goodbye."

Irene Brumwell, the last Mayor of Castle Morpeth Borough Council, who has died.

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Latest news from Ponteland Town Council

Free IT training for older people planned

Free digital training for older residents is being planned for Ponteland. County councillor Veronica Jones reported that the recent Ageing Well event held at Merton Hall had been very well attended and had received a good evaluation result. One key message that came from the event was a desire for digital training from some of the older residents, and it is hoped that a free course can be arranged at the venue.

£7.7m pothole bonus but £25m of savings needed

An additional £7.7m has been awarded to Northumberland County Council to deal with road repairs including potholes. The extra allocation is part of a £420m fund announced in the Budget in October and a detailed programme of works is currently being developed which will include extra road patching programmes, drainage, surfacing and bridges schemes. But county councillor Richard Dodd reported that NCC had to find £25m of savings as NCC finalised its 2019-20 budget.

List of local services being drawn up

An asset mapping project is being launched to establish what services are being offered by parish and town councils, village halls, churches and other voluntary organisations

across Northumberland. Coun Jones reported that five NCC Locality Officers, working on an area-based approach, would be carrying out asset mapping for each area to see what is available. A package of information will then be put together that can be used by support planners, care providers and GPs.

Grant applications

The Town Council has awarded grants to the Great North Air Ambulance (£300), Tynedale Hospice at Home (£250), Ponteland Beer Festival (£250) and Sport Tynedale (£250).

Mayor's report

The Mayor reported on his diary engagements for November, December and January. He stated that he was pleased to have been involved in the numerous events over the weekend of Remembrance Sunday and thanked those responsible for organising the events. Coun Varley had also attended the dedication of the Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust plaque on December 1st (see p17). The stone, which had been sited on the grassed area in front of Merton Hall, was unveiled by local Air Cadets with a short service led by Reverend Captain Allinson.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on December 12th.



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Former Pont pupil publishes Swiss murder mystery

A Swiss-based skier who was brought up in Ponteland has had first fictional novel published.

Former Ponteland High School pupil Kathryn Adams grew up in the village in the 1970s but regularly comes 'home' to visit her family who still live here and to see her beloved Newcastle United play.

Kathryn learnt French at the High School and went on to study it at London University. After a career in the city she moved to Switzerland to ski and met her Swiss husband, who she has converted to supporting NUFC.

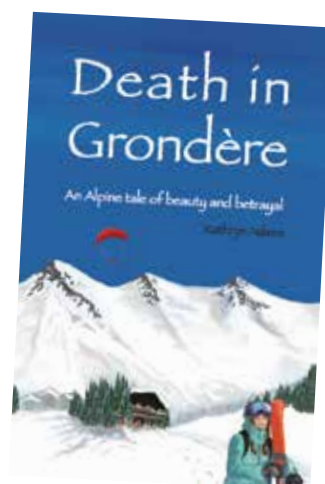
'Death in Grondère' is billed as a light holiday

read which should appeal equally to skiers and non-skiers, based in a Swiss ski resort with a 'tongue-in-cheek' murder mystery.

Kathryn said: "I have always worked with words, from Eurobond documentation to translation, copywriting and editing. For several years I also wrote The Grumpy Old Ski Bum column for Verbier Life magazine.

"My first full-length work was to edit my mother's childhood memories Tales from Holt Cottage, but 'Death in Grondère' is my first full-length work of fiction. A sequel is already in the pipeline!"

You can read more about Kathryn and the book at facebook.com/grondere/



Airport doubles cost of pick up and drop off

Newcastle International Airport has doubled the price of dropping off and picking up from its terminal.

From January drivers will be charged £2 for ten minutes parking in the Express Car Park and there will also be incremental price increases across the

other car parks.

However, the airport will continue to provide 15 minutes' free parking in the Medium Stay Car Park, which will be renamed Short Stay 2.

The review of pricing tariffs is part of a planned £4m upgrade of the airport's car parking facilities. The proposal includes a purpose-built 'Premium Meet & Greet'

car parking facility and a new 'Premium Fast Track' area, which will include wider bays and covered walkways to the terminal.

A new designated taxi waiting area will also be created as part of the project. The upgrades will be phased in over the next six months, with completion expected by summer 2019.

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Bake off raises nearly £900 for Children in Need

Pupils at Ponteland Primary School raised nearly £900 for Children in Need with a cake baking competition.

Children paid £1 to enter 'The Great Ponteland Bake Off' and their cakes were judged on taste and appearance, with prizes for the best bake in each year group and an overall first, second and third place.

The cakes were then sold at the end of the school day, with help from the school council to raise even more money. The leftover cakes were donated to regional charity North East Homeless.

Along with the proceeds from a spotty non-uniform day, the overall amount raised for Children in Need was £889.13.

Megan wins regional peace poster competition

Artistic students at two Ponteland schools have received book tokens for their efforts in this year's Lions 'Peace Poster' competition.

The top four entries from Richard Coates CE School and from Ponteland Community Middle School were presented with the vouchers by Ponteland Lions President Geoff Lisle at school assemblies.

The theme of this year's competition, sponsored by Lion's International, was 'Kindness Matters' and the winners were Megan Wilson, 13, of Richard Coates and Halima Hussain, 12, of PCMS.

Megan's poster, depicting a world sheltered by an umbrella of nations flags within a background of the universe, went on to win the Northern District earning her a deluxe master artist case and a glass trophy for the school.

Mr Lisle thanked art teachers Jo Baker and Kirsty Wickham from RMS and Adele Percival from PCMS, who inspired the pupils and helped with the judging along with local art enthusiasts.

Regional winner Megan Wilson is pictured with art teacher Jo Baker and Geoff Lisle.



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Stone unveiled to commemorate WWI airfield

A stone has been unveiled to commemorate an airfield which acted as a military night landing ground to protect the North East coastline during World War One.

Ponteland airfield, which operated between 1916 and 1919, was located just south of Limestone Lane.

It was used by various fighter types of No 36 Squadron, which protected the coastline between Newcastle and Whitby from Zeppelin attacks.

The stone was unveiled in a short ceremony and service led by the Vicar of Ponteland Revd Capt Paul Allinson, which the Mayor of Ponteland Alan Varley attended with other Town Councillors and local RAF Air Cadets.

Meeting called to launch new healthy walking programme

A meeting has been called to attract volunteers to help launch a new programme of healthy walks in Ponteland.

Dawn Barrett, Health and Fitness Manager at Ponteland Leisure Centre, and Active Northumberland's West Northumberland Health Walks Coordinator Loraine Oliver are working with local resident Gordon Allan to launch the weekly walks in April.

Mr Allan said: "Walking is good for your physical and mental health and it would be great to offer regular short weekly walks in and around our town. Ponteland Park, the old railway bridlepath and the footpath behind the golf course are ideal for all year round walks."

Volunteers are needed to help plan, lead and support the walks. They have half a day of training in the

classroom, followed by walks where they are shown how to lead and back mark.

Anyone wishing to volunteer, or to find out more about the walks, is invited to a meeting at 10am on Tuesday January 15th at Ponteland Leisure Centre.

Loraine said: "Our group walks are led by friendly, trained volunteers who are on hand to provide encouragement and support, and to make sure nobody gets left behind. "We want everyone to enjoy it too, so our walks are short and over easy terrain. They are open to everyone but are especially aimed at those who are least active."

For more information visit walkingforhealth.org.uk or contact Loraine at loliver@activenorthumberland.org.uk or on (01661) 622368.

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Ponteland Community High School Report

Students take their parents back to the 80s

Ponteland High School students took their parents back to the 80s with their latest musical production.

Set in the decade that brought us the Rubik's Cube, Max Headroom and The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, 'Back to the 80s' was performed in the style of movies such as Back To The Future, Ferris Bueller's Day Off, The Karate Kid and The Wedding Singer.

Students were rewarded for their hard work since June with packed audiences for the four performances, which Headteacher Kieran McGrane praised as "outstanding".



School awarded Champion status by National Citizen Service

Youth movement National Citizen Service has awarded 'Champion' status to Ponteland High School.

The award is in recognition of the school's commitment to the NCS programme, which is open to young people aged 16 and 17.

The two to four week programme takes place in school holidays and includes outdoor team-building exercises, a residential for participants to learn 'life skills', a community-based social action project, and an end of programme celebration event.



Young mathematicians score top 25% in regional challenge

Young mathematicians scored in the top 25 per cent when they took part in a regional competition.

Y13 students Katrina Sanders and Sam Dodgson and Y12 students Arya Shah and Christopher Mason formed a team to represent PCHS in the regional finals of the Senior Team Maths Challenge, organised by the United Kingdom Mathematics Trust.

Taking on the best mathematicians from 25 other schools across the region in three rounds of challenging mathematical problems at Northumbria University, they secured an excellent 5th place in the competition.

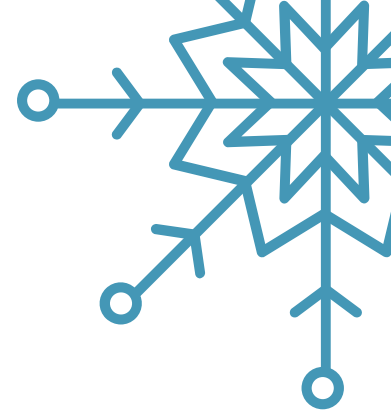
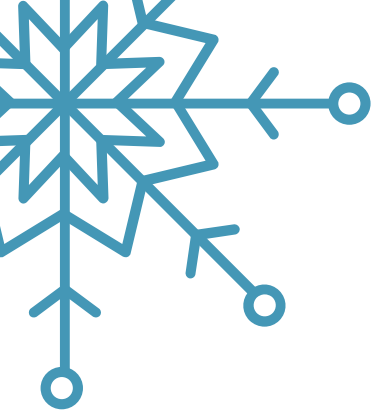
Un viaje increíble!

Thirty students and three teachers from Ponteland Community High School enjoyed an "amazing" four day trip to the south of Spain.

Highlights of the trip to Málaga included taking a cable car in Benalmádena to enjoy some of the best views in the Costa del Sol and an evening flamenco lesson.

Visits followed to the old town of Ronda up in the mountains, the glamorous coastal marina Puerto Banús and white-washed town of Mijas.

The final day was spent in Seville, where the Year 10 and Year 11 group saw Christopher Columbus' tomb in the Cathedral, climbed to the top of the Giralda tower and visited the bullring and the spectacular Alcazar Palace.



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