

# pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



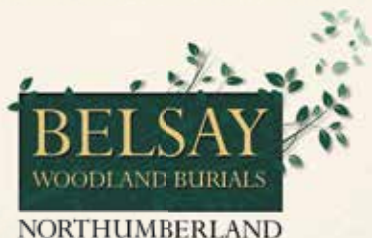
Middle school concedes  
defeat in three tier battle

Nursery doubles in size  
after move

Lifesaving device installed  
at church

## Barrowload of cash raised for local hospices





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## Wheelbarrow Race raises £2,800 for hospices

More than £2,800 has been raised for two Tyneside hospices in Ponteland's New Year's Day Wheelbarrow Race.

The traditional event, thought to date back to the early 14th Century, is run every New Year's Day at noon with a one mile circular course from the Blackbird Inn.

This year saw an excellent response, with 69 entrants and one of the fastest times in recent events - Mark Turnbull and Julian Goodhall finishing the men's race in 6 min 35 sec. Becky Frankel and Kay Myerscough won the ladies' race in 9 min 1 sec, with Drew Slater and Amy Gedde winning the junior event.

The Wheelbarrow Race is organised by Ponteland 41 Club and Ponteland Rugby Club, and supported by the Blackbird Inn. The £2818.78 raised will be divided equally between St Oswald's Hospice and Tynedale Hospice.

Cover shot and p3 pics by Nick Clark Imaging.





# Comments sought on county planning blueprint

A planning document that will shape the future development of Northumberland for the next generation is the subject of a public consultation launched this week.

Members of the public will be invited to comment on the 'soundness' of the Northumberland Local Plan, approved for the formal and statutory stage of consultation by the county council.

The 'publication draft' of the plan was considered by the county council, and councillors agreed to its publication for final public scrutiny before submission to Government.

The plan sets out strategic planning policies and planning principles for the county, the general scale and distribution of new development, and the detail of where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located up to 2036 and beyond.

The authority says the NLP promotes sustainable growth in the economy as well as expansion of choice in the housing market, but not at the expense of green belt and the special environmental character of the county.

NCC said the new plan will ensure that all communities are supported by adequate services, facilities and infrastructure

including housing, education, transport, health, social care, sport and recreation.

Overall housing numbers have been much reduced from the previous core strategy withdrawn in 2017, with 17,700 proposed over the plan period as opposed to 24,000 previously, and there will be no new housing allocations in the green belt.

Coun John Riddle, cabinet member for planning and housing, said: "We are committed to ensuring that everyone with an interest in this plan has the opportunity to have their say and help shape the future of the county. This final phase of public engagement will provide an opportunity for people to review the final details and tell us about its soundness."

The six week representation period runs from January 30th until March 13th, with 23 public drop-in events. They include one at Ponteland Memorial Hall from 2pm to 7pm on Tuesday February 26th.

The plan will also be available in local libraries and comments can be made online or in writing to the council's planning policy team. In May 2019 it will be submitted to the Government for examination by a Local Plan Inspector.

To find out more visit [northumberland.gov.uk/localplan](http://northumberland.gov.uk/localplan)



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# School concedes defeat in battle to retain three tier status

Leaders at a Ponteland school have conceded defeat in their battle to retain the choice of three tier education for local children.

Ponteland Community Middle School has launched a consultation on plans to convert to a primary school in September 2020, falling in line with all other schools in the area which officially join a new two tier system this September.

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 the 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.

PCMS, recently ranked 25th in the Sunday Times Schools Guide 2019 top 500 English state primary schools list, 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.

Headteacher Caroline Pryer said: "We have been told by Lord Agnew that we have to fit in with the two tier system. Even though 94% of respondents in 2016 said they wanted to keep the three tier system it is now incumbent on trustees to follow Lord Agnew's direction."

A meeting attended by staff, trustees, 40 parents and representatives from other schools was held at PCMS as part of the six week consultation, which runs until January 30th. Feedback indicated stakeholders are in favour of PCMS converting to a 2-11 primary school as they do not want it to close.

Mrs Pryer added: "The DfE has said that empty/single school academies are not viable and so we must join a multi-academy trust. Attempts have failed in looking for a local solution so confidential conversations are taking place with alternative MATs. Trustees are working closely with the DfE to secure a solution."

## Annabel finds formula for exam success

A talented Ponteland student who achieved one of the highest marks in the country in a science exam has been rewarded for her efforts at a London awards ceremony.

Annabel Cardno, who excelled in the recent Salters Advanced Chemistry examination, received a cheque for £150 and a

certificate at the Salters' Institute Annual Awards Ceremony at Salters' Hall.

The annual event recognises outstanding achievements in science education by students and technicians and those working in the chemical industry. Her proud parents attended the ceremony with Ponteland High School's Deputy Headteacher Jim Balkwill.

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# New church bells ring in the New Year

*By Julie and Stephen Bell*

The New Year was rung in by a full set of bells at St. Mary's Ponteland after the installation of two trebles to complete the octave.

Early last year a group from the church travelled to Taylor's Bell Foundry in Loughborough to see the new treble bells cast.

They have been added to the existing six bells installed in 2001, the result of a very successful Millennium project whose ringing has become part of village life.

The two new bells, complete with their wheels and clappers, were delivered to the church in November where they were displayed and then blessed by the Rev. Paul Allinson.

The full octave was ready for ringing in early December just in time for the Advent and Christmas services and to welcome 2019.



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# Your letters

The Editor  
Pont News & Views



An attack on tree felling in this month's letters...

## Ponteland 'being overrun by environmental vandals'

**I have complained before about failure on the part of Northumberland County Council to protect and sustain Ponteland's trees.**

Now:

- 150 trees are being felled in and around the Callerton Lane sports field
- trees on the former library site (protected we thought by a preservation order) chopped down
- trees in the car park behind Merton Way shops – uprooted
- trees and hedgerow enclosing Darras Hall Primary – ripped out.

And, to cap it all, the county council has come forward with a planning application (see application no. 18/04202/CCD), quietly slipped in over Christmas, which involves the demolition of the existing fire station and its replacement.

This time designed to resemble a small industrial unit, bright red steel panels, grey zinc shed cladding, slapped down bang in the middle of the small copse that screens the high school buildings at the northern end of the school playing field, resulting in a further loss of some 30 trees.

It feels as if my place of abode is being overrun by environmental vandals. People who place no value whatever on a noble oak or a line of hawthorn. If this all goes through, the county council will have removed some 200 trees from a relatively small area of land in less than six months.

A significant and damaging level of environmental loss.

**John Hague**  
*High View, Darras Hall*

## "Staggering" loss of tree cover in Darras Hall

**How I agree with the letter from John Hague ('It's planning policy that needs uprooting not the trees' January issue 160).**

The loss of tree cover in Darras Hall in recent years has been staggering and it seems to be happening without anyone seemingly noticing or caring.

The authorities allow large, mature trees to be felled and - sometimes - replaced with tiny saplings. I can provide numerous examples of cases where these saplings have been allowed to die as so we lose yet more valuable tree cover.

It's easy for each home to lose a large tree from its garden and no one thinking it important but can you imagine how much the landscape would change.

I'm at a loss as to why our various councils and committees which oversee the planning applications allow so many trees to vanish. Communal areas are also being stripped of mature trees as they are felled and not replaced.

When are we going to start planting trees and give far more thought to what we allow to be felled? The sound of buzz saws will drift across the estate in the next few months. Watch the skyline change.

**Darren Taylor**  
*Pembroke Drive, Darras Hall*

## Christmas church service much better this year

**A year ago today I wrote to express my disappointment at the Christmas Eve church service at St Mary's Church.**

A year on and what a tremendous difference in every single way I can think of... thank you!

Plenty of hymns for families to sing together; a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. Time spent allowing us all to take something from and enjoy the service.

Delighted with the positive difference - the whole family have come away with smiles on our faces today and now even more ready for Santa. Well done and thank you to all involved in today.

**Dale Wighton**  
*Beech Court, Darras Hall*

## More disabled spaces needed at Merton Way

**Sometimes I give a lift to people with mobility problems who want to visit Merton Hall or the CIU.**

It is always impossible to park nearby, or even drop off and accompany the less able to the door of the hall. Obviously the drivers who have blocked the area do not realise the predicament of others.

I have noticed a small disused area adjacent to the side of the fish and chip shop which is quite an eyesore. I do not know who owns this space but I wonder if the owner would be willing to lend (or donate) it for perhaps two blue badge parking spaces? It would improve the look of this outdated area and may even increase the footfall for the shops.

Nor do I understand the policy on road resurfacing where the better parts of a road have been covered with new tarmac and the worst have been left for the future.

This has happened on Middle Drive from Callerton Lane, on Callerton Lane from Middle Drive to Rotary Way, and on Eastern Way from Edge Hill. Parts of Eastern Way, either side of Middle Drive, are a disgrace even after multiple visits to fill potholes which seems to be mainly a waste of money.

**Pat Pearcey (Mrs)**  
*Willow Place, Darras Hall*

## Town Council deserves praise for WWI airfield commemoration

**The Town Council is to be complimented on the excellent location chosen for the airfield plaque.**

If anyone is interested a detailed plan is available on the website of the airfield conservation society at [abct.org.uk](http://abct.org.uk) but in 'Googling' the area it requires more imagination than I have to see the airfield!

I wonder if the Council could as part of their efforts for Ponteland in Bloom plant some flowers around the plaque?

**Robin Ramsay MBE**  
*The Rise, Darras Hall*

**March issue deadlines:** Delivery of the March issue will start on Wednesday February 27th and be completed by Tuesday March 5th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Wednesday February 13th. If you are aware of any missed properties please contact the editor at [pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk](mailto: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 March issue.

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



# What's on...

## Ponteland Leisure Learning (U3A)

Our AGM will be held at 2pm on Wednesday February 6th at St. Mary's Parish Centre followed by entertainment and a faith tea. The speaker at our meeting on March 5th will be Peter Stemmer on 'The Town Crier of Darlington'. Visitors always welcome - no charge. Visit [u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland](http://u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland) or call (01661) 824953.

## Kirkley WI

Our guest speaker at our meeting at 7pm on Wednesday February 6th at Kirkley Hall will be The Revd. Canon Christine Brown, who will talk about Florence Nightingale. Guests and visitors always welcome. Check out our website for more information at [kirkleywi.wordpress.com](http://kirkleywi.wordpress.com)

## Darras Hall WI

At our meeting at 2pm on Monday February 11th in Merton Hall we are holding a members' meeting, with a competition for 'something homemade' - winners to be chosen by members and visitors. Visitors pay £1 to include tea and biscuits.

## North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

At our meeting at 7.30pm on Monday February 11th at Ponteland Social Club (CIU), Merton Way, Lee Schofield will talk on the work of the AGS and the RSPB in the conservation of the Mardale Mountain Meadow Project. Lee is manager of this project, working to restore that restore the native alpine plants to the fells around Haweswater, many of which are remnants of the flora from the last ice age. Charge to visitors £2. Contact: [neegroup@agsgroups.org](mailto:neegroup@agsgroups.org) or visit [alpinegardensociety.net/groups/North-East-England](http://alpinegardensociety.net/groups/North-East-England) or [facebook.com/groups/AGSNEE](https://facebook.com/groups/AGSNEE).

## Ponteland WI

Our speaker in the lounge of the Memorial Hall at 7pm on February 12th is Richard Stevenson, who will give us a talk and slide show on 'The great fire of Gateshead and Newcastle'. Visitors welcome.

## Ponteland Village WI

Our meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday February 12th at St. Mary's Parish Centre will include a talk by The Hedgehog Lady, Moira Simpson. Our friendly group also has dining out, walking, book and theatre/film groups, so come along and give us a try. Find us on Facebook: Ponteland Village WI.

## Callerton Garden & Flower Club

Marion Hinchley will be our demonstrator at our meeting at 2pm on Wednesday February 13th in the lounge at Ponteland Memorial Hall. Visitors very welcome (£7).

## Friends of Kirkley Hall

Steven Sykes, Animal Resource Centre Manager at Kirkley Hall Zoo, is the speaker at our meeting at 2pm on Wednesday February 13th at Kirkley Hall. Cost £3 for non-members. Contact [friendsofkirkleyhall@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofkirkleyhall@gmail.com) and 07551 974955.

## Ponteland Lions Club

We meet on Wednesday February 13th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall for our monthly business meeting and have a social meeting later in the month. Visitors are welcome. Our charity fund book stall will be at Waitrose on Saturday February 23rd from 9am to 4pm where we also collect spectacles for recycling to the third world. Contact us on 0845 833 9913 or visit our website.

## Ponteland Community Partnership

Come to observe a meeting and share your ideas for improving the quality of life in our community. All welcome. Our next meeting at the Memorial Hall is at 7pm on Wednesday February 20th (access by rear door). Contact: [pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk](http://pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk)

## Ponteland Local History Society

Anthony Atkinson will give his talk 'Earl Grey and the Great Reform Act 1832' at 7.30pm on Thursday February 21st at St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. Visitors welcome: £2. Find us on Facebook.

## Ponteland Embroiderers' Guild

At our meeting at 2pm on Monday February 25th at the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, we have a talk by Ailish Henderson 'Stories to Stitch'. All welcome, cost £4. Contact: Secretary Penny Ford at [penelopeford636@btinternet.com](mailto:penelopeford636@btinternet.com) or (01670) 788278

## World Day of Prayer Service

The World Day of Prayer Service is to be held in St Mary the Virgin Church, Ponteland, on Friday March 1st at 2.15pm. Everyone is most welcome and tea will be served in St Mary's Parish Centre afterwards. We look forward very much to seeing you there.

## Ponteland Memorial Hall fundraising event

We are holding a fundraising evening on

Monday March 4th at Fratellis. Price for a three course meal is £20 and tickets are available from the secretary's office – email [info@pontelandmemorialhall.com](mailto:info@pontelandmemorialhall.com) or tel (01661) 822603.

## Ponteland Wildlife Group

Janet Simkin will give a talk on Northumbrian Whin Grassland at 7.30pm on Tuesday March 5th in St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. Admission £2 including refreshments. Open to all.

## Royal Northern Sinfonia: Gran Partita

A concert at St Mary the Virgin, Ponteland, on Saturday May 11th at 7.30pm. A showcase for RNS' complete wind section plus guests, directed by Steven Hudson (oboe), focusing on Mozart's much-loved Gran Partita, famously featured in the Oscar-winning blockbuster Amadeus. Programme also includes pieces by Debussy, Strauss, and more. Standard tickets £15, Under 18s £5 available at [sagegateshead.com/event/rns-spring-chamber-tour](http://sagegateshead.com/event/rns-spring-chamber-tour) or via the ticket office on (0191) 443 4661.

## Ponteland Ukulele Band

We are a friendly group of mixed ability ukulele player and meet Tuesdays at Ponteland CIU club from 1pm until 3pm. New members welcome.

## 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 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](mailto:peteford24@hotmail.com) or on 07739 208308.

# Lifesaving device installed at Ponteland Methodist Church

*By Andy Anderson, Secretary,  
Ponteland Lions Club*

**A potentially lifesaving defibrillator has been installed at Ponteland Methodist Church.**

The device has been funded by Ponteland Lions, supported by a contribution from the Co-op on Broadway, Darras Hall, and Ponteland Town Council which funded its installation.

Staff at beauty salon Behind the Scenes will monitor the defibrillator to ensure it is always in working order.

Anyone needing to use the defibrillator should phone 999 and they will provide the code to unlock the cabinet. No training is required to use the defibrillator as it tells the user what to do. A short training session is being planned for local businesses so they are aware of how to use it.

The Lions Club are planning to install similar devices at the Memorial Hall and on Broadway. If you are interested in helping the Lions raise the money for the other defibrillators please contact us on 0845 833 9913.

Rev Jona Sewell pictured with the President of Ponteland Lions Geoff Lisle and the new defibrillator cabinet on the wall of Ponteland Methodist Church.



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# Latest news from Ponteland Town Council

## Council to take a break from Northumbria in Bloom competition

After unprecedented success over many years, the Town Council has decided to take a break from the Northumbria in Bloom competition. Ponteland has entered NiB for 14 years, winning seven consecutive gold medals up to last year. But as part of the recent budget deliberations, councillors decided against entry this year to consider improvements to the local environment. These include plans to carry out work to the rockery on Main Street, a prominent feature in the centre of Ponteland. The Council agreed to continue with the planting of displays and beds to the same standard, to ensure Ponteland looks as colourful and attractive as usual. The town will continue to be invited to enter Northumbria in Bloom in future years and will consider entering again then.

## Consultation re the future direction of the Ponteland Community Middle School (PCMS)

The Council considered the consultation document that had been issued by Ponteland Middle school on the future direction of the school. The consultation proposed changes to the age range and admission arrangements for the PCMS from the current 9-13 middle school age range to become a primary school including nursery provision for ages 2 – 11. The Council had also had a presentation from some parents of the Campaign Group working on behalf of the Middle school prior to the meeting. The Council considered the proposals outlined in the consultation document and agreed to write to the Regional Schools Commission requesting that they work with the school and fully consider their proposals.

## Temporary play area to replace skate park

A new temporary play area is to be opened on Callerton Lane following the closure of the nearby skate park for the construction of the new school and leisure complex. The skate park will not be replaced due to persistent vandalism and misuse of the facility. Updates on the new playpark opening will appear on the Town Council's website and Facebook pages.

## Budget for 2019-20

The Town Council approved a budget for 2019-20, agreeing a precept of £414,591 to be requested from the County Council. This represented a 2% increase on a Band D property, in line with recent years. The Council agreed to fund several projects including extension of the swan neck lighting in the conservation area, a bus shelter at Broadway, a 'Ponteland Remembers' project involving young people, and the possibility of an arts festival next year. General reserves would be used if necessary to complete the projects.

## Local Plan consultation event

County councillor Richard Dodd reported that the Northumberland Local Plan had been agreed by the Full Council on January 9th. A six-week consultation of the 'Publication Draft' of the Plan is taking place between January 30th and March 13th, with drop in sessions in February and March. The Ponteland event is from 2pm to 7pm on Tuesday February 26th at the Memorial Hall. See article on page 4.

*This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on January 16th.*



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# Nursery doubles in size after move

**A nursery which celebrates its tenth anniversary this year is to double in size after moving to new premises.**

Ponteland Private Nursery was full at its former home at Fairney House, by Ponteland Golf Club, with all 50 spaces taken.

But proprietors Deborah and Mark Jackson saw an opportunity for expansion when the nearby Abbeyfield nursing home was put up for sale. Securing the premises, the couple have invested significantly in a major conversion and refurbishment programme.

The new nursery building, which can accept up to 100 children per day, opened on January 7th and has been widely praised by the parents of children who attend.

Deborah, who manages the nursery, said: "Our old setting at Fairney House was purpose-built for our nursery, however the outdoor space was never quite adequate - a garden for the children would have been great.

"The new building has received umpteen compliments via emails and phone calls. It is a beautiful building with such a wonderful calming feel. The space we now have allows our children to explore and learn freely.

"We have a wonderful outdoor play area which can be accessed from our playrooms, and an outdoor classroom

currently under construction which will allow the children to be outside in all weathers.

"Inside the building we have mood lighting and tranquil music playing in all areas, and the playrooms have been designed with the help of our older children."





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# These boots are made for walking... ...7,000 miles!

*By Dave Harrison*

**He's been through five pairs of boots in ten months and taken five million steps to walk 2,500 miles around the coast of Northumberland and Scotland.**

Brian Burnie, founder of the North-East cancer charity 'Daft as a Brush', is on an epic 7,000-mile challenge to bring free cancer patient transport across Great Britain and Ireland.

He started his mammoth trek on March 5th last year from the Baltic, Gateshead, hoping to raise awareness, promote and expand the Gosforth-based charity.

And now, with new wife Cheryl whom he married on route, Brian has stepped back in to England after completing the Northumberland and Scotland leg. They crossed the River Sark at Gretna cheered on by charity volunteers and supporters.

Brian said: "To see so many smiling faces cheering me over the border at Gretna was very emotional. Cheryl and I were met by dozens of volunteers and local people - it was very moving for us.

"I am delighted to have reached 2,500 miles but in a way, sad to leave Scotland behind. I've seen fantastic coastline and

met some truly unbelievable people; many with close associations with cancer. The response from Scotland has been absolutely incredible.

"But my walk must continue and I am looking forward to Cumbria and meeting with delegates from the Cumbria Infirmary to discuss the Daft as a Brush Service for their cancer patients."

Brian's walk around the coastline of Great Britain and Ireland has not been without difficulties. The 74 year old suffers from Parkinson's disease, making his challenge even more tiring. But he is determined to complete his three year mission.

Brian said: "The Newcastle based charity transports some 40,000 cancer patients each year, with a team of over 350 volunteers. Time and time again we hear how difficult and stressful it is for patients getting to and from hospital. It is my dream to create one million bespoke cancer patient journeys all over Great Britain and Ireland."

Brian and Cheryl have met with major cancer hospitals throughout Scotland - Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, Ninewells in Dundee, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Raigmore Inverness and the Beatson in Glasgow.

Natural England will be offering support and advice to the charity trekker as he approaches the west coast of the Lake District, along with double-decker bus 'Bluebell', his mobile-home for the next two years. For now, Brian may have his feet up for a few days, but he said he won't be relaxing for too long.

"I've been walking every day for over three weeks, sometimes up to 20 miles a day. That's taken a toll on my feet. I have come back to Newcastle to see my podiatrist Shirley Stevenson in Gosforth. She's been looking after my feet from the very start."

Daft as a Brush offers staffed custom-made vehicles to transport outpatients undergoing chemotherapy and radiotherapy cancer treatment to and from hospital, free of charge. If required, a volunteer companion stays with the patient during their treatment.

The charity has seven volunteer drivers from Ponteland including John Pearce, who has been with the charity or for years as an ambulance driver, and has transported several patients from the parish.

You can follow Brian's walk at [bluebellbus.org.uk](http://bluebellbus.org.uk) and find out more about the charity at [daftasabrush.org.uk](http://daftasabrush.org.uk)

# Charity champ raises £21,000 for good causes

**A voluntary charity worker from Darras Hall raised £21,000 for good causes last year.**

Bruce Grant has thanked a number of businesses and individuals for aiding his fundraising efforts during 2018, including Maersk Shipping, Norwell Engineering, THISTLEdown (Glenlivet), Lloyds Bank (Hexham), Jordan Acoustics and the Duke of Northumberland.

The donations made were:

- £7,000 - Great North Air Ambulance
- £3,500 - Children North East
- £3,500 - Percy Hedley Foundation
- £1,750 - Peoples Kitchen
- £1,750 - West End Food Bank
- £1,750 - West End Refugee Service
- £1,750 - Benwell Cornerstone Project.

Mr Grant also thanked the following for their support: Co-op (Darras Hall); J. Bardgett (Ponteland); Stait Photos (Morpeth); T & G Allan (Morpeth); Andrew Coulson (Hexham); Lloyds Bank (Hexham); Carphone Warehouse (Kingston Park); John Lewis (Eldon Square).

## Secretary sought for community venue

**A secretary and trustees are being sought by a Ponteland community venue.**

Merton Hall is recruiting for the part-time role, which requires taking the minutes of meetings about four times per year and sending an annual return to the Charities Commission.

The hall is run by a team of volunteers and is also seeking more trustees. If you would like to do a little voluntary work in a friendly team, please email [mertonhall123@gmail.com](mailto:mertonhall123@gmail.com) or call in between 9.30am and 11.30am from Monday to Friday and leave your contact details.

## Excellent response to charity clothing appeal

**Members of the public are being thanked for their excellent response to an appeal for clothing donations from Merton Hall.**

The community hub, which is collecting for the Great North Air Ambulance Service, has now received 130 bags of clothes.

Anyone wanting to make a donation of clothes (no bric a brac please) can call in to Merton Hall between 9.30am and 11.30am from Monday to Friday and enjoy a free hot drink.

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# Inspectors praise 'inspirational' leadership at nursery

A Belsay nursery has been judged 'outstanding' in all areas in a recent Ofsted inspection.

Inspectors praised the 'inspirational manager' and 'very well-qualified staff' at Belsay Daycare, who 'provide remarkable opportunities for children to continue to enhance their already excellent imaginative skills'.

The report continued: "Staff use first-rate teaching methods that help children to build on their previous learning...Children behave extremely well and are exceptionally well mannered...They are very confident learners...Children



are provided with superb key skills needed for future learning and their eventual move on to school."

Inspectors also found children were 'extremely independent' and highlighted the 'excellent level of self-

esteem', as well as the use of the rural setting to create opportunities for adventure.

The strong relationship with parents at the 22-space nursery, which has close links to the adjoining Belsay School, was described as "superb".

Susie Lawson, whose son attends Belsay Daycare, said: "Parents and pupils at Belsay Daycare have always known it is a very special place to learn. The staff have a wonderful way of talking to the children, helping them to grow into independent, thoughtful learners.

"The staff and volunteers work incredibly hard, so I am so pleased they have received the recognition they deserve."

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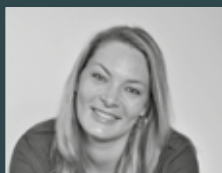
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