

# pontnews&views

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Plans for £4m retirement  
scheme revealed

Thieves peddling  
expensive bikes

Building society branch  
closes for refurb

## Little treasures enjoy Easter egg hunt

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Tilly Peacock from Ponteland



Coun Christine Caisley with Jenson Falconer from Prestwick

## Sun shines on Easter treasure trail

**More than 50 children and parents enjoyed the sunshine at the Town Council's annual Easter treasure trail in Ponteland Park.**

The Council funded prizes of vouchers for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places for two age groups – up 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: Joseph, three, Hannah, six, and Kaiya Hume, five, from Stamfordham. Pics by Paul Norris.



Coun Christine Caisley, Coun Sufi Ahmed, volunteer Julie Harris, Coun Sue Johnson and volunteer David Fox



Oscar and Elodie Renn from Darras Hall

# Thieves peddling expensive bikes



By PC Lee Davison, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer



**There have been reports over the last month of burglaries to premises and outbuildings, notably in the outlying Medburn and Stamfordham areas where a number of high value pedal cycles have been stolen.**

There have also been reports of thefts of domestic heating oil and also a theft of quad in the rural areas. With this type of acquisitive crime it is likely that a vehicle would be used to enable the transportation of stolen property and persons. Please be vigilant and report suspicious vehicles or activity.

## Bike theft

Bikes are one of the most commonly stolen items. Failing to secure them makes them an easy target for thieves. Consider the following tips to secure your bike:

### Get a strong lock

A heavy-duty bike lock can make a thief's job more difficult.

### Make your mark

Marking your bike with a unique code ensures that Police will be able to trace your bike back if it is stolen and recovered.

### Insure it

Check whether your home contents insurance covers your bike. Make sure it covers you for thefts outside the home too. If your bike is particularly valuable you may need to insure it separately.

### Out and about

When leaving your cycle in a public area, lock wheels and the

frame of your bike to a cycle stand or other immovable object. Use designated parking areas where possible. Don't park in the same place every day. If bike thieves are stealing to order they are more likely to target you if they know where you will be.

### At home

More than half of bikes are stolen from home. Reduce the chances of this happening by storing your bike in a locked shed or garage or place inside the home and secure it to an immovable object. Always keep it out of view. Do not leave it unattended when getting ready to leave the house. It only takes an opportunist thief seconds to grab it and go.

## Farmwatch Scheme

Farmers and members of the rural community can join the Northumbria Police Farmwatch scheme. This is a network designed to alert residents to any criminal or suspicious activity, share crime prevention advice and make appeals for information.

By signing up to the scheme, you will be kept informed of crime in your area, receive a monthly news bulletin, crime prevention advice and appeals for information about suspicious people or vehicles. Visit the Northumbria Police website to find out more about the scheme and links to crime prevention advice.

## Community Speedwatch

Community Speedwatch Volunteers have been out and about on four occasions over the past month, providing a visible deterrent to speeding motorists. They recorded 72 vehicles speeding, resulting in 56 warning letters sent to registered keepers of vehicles.

Contact a member of East Tynedale Neighbourhood Team:  
[prudhoe.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk](mailto:prudhoe.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk)



## Music in the Park

Sunday June 30th from 2pm to 5pm at Ponteland Park. FREE musical entertainment from Rendezvous Jazz Band, North Tyneside Steel Band, Ponteland Community Band, The Ringtones and Pete Brown. Bring a picnic and deckchairs and enjoy a fantastic afternoon of outdoor entertainment with your friends and family. In the event of bad weather the event will be cancelled.



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An architect's drawing of how the new Athol Court building could look – the western elevation of the proposed building, facing Callerton Lane.

## Plans for £4m retirement scheme revealed

**Plans for a £4m retirement housing scheme to replace Athol House in Ponteland have been submitted for planning approval.**

Housing association Karbon Homes has revealed designs by award winning architects JDDK for “high quality new retirement living accommodation for older residents”.

The development will provide 34 apartments, with 28 two-bed apartments and six one-bed apartments, compared to the 35 smaller homes in the old building dating from 1980 which the firm said did not meet modern standards - or residents' aspirations. There will be 20 parking spaces.

The architects were asked to provide a development which meets local housing needs and is also in keeping with the development ‘grain’ of the village, since the site sits just outside the Ponteland conservation area.

Zoey Hawthorne, assistant director of development

delivery for Karbon Homes, said: “We’ve tried to put forward a development which meets the needs of the local community for high quality, affordable housing for older people.

“We have taken on board comments from the local community and made some adjustments to our original proposals to reflect their views. The building is intended to sit comfortably in this location, retaining mature trees around the site, and not being sited too close to neighbouring properties.”

The proposed new development has been designed to occupy a similar footprint to the existing building, but elevated slightly above the current ground floor level to ensure flood safety, given the proximity of the River Pont, and moved slightly further from neighbouring properties to ensure no loss of privacy.

Karbon Homes said all Athol House residents were informed of the redevelopment plans in March 2018 and offered extensive support to ensure they were rehoused satisfactorily,

and were appropriately compensated for the disruption of moving house.

The plans have been

submitted to Northumberland County Council. Karbon has the support of Homes England in funding the costs of the project, if approved.

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Coun Veronica Jones with Alma Dunigan, Chairman of Ponteland Community Partnership and MP Guy Opperman.

## MP joins bridleway celebration

MP Guy Opperman joined volunteers for a celebration of the completion of a project to revamp a Ponteland wildlife corridor.

The final stage in the refurbishment of the bridleway from Callerton Lane to the Airport was the installation of step counts at five points along the two mile route, funded by the Community Foundation's 'Out & About' scheme.

The two-mile long former railway track was built in 1901 and ceased operation in the 1960s. It needed significant reinstatement work as the track had narrowed significantly over time with waterlogged potholes and overgrown vegetation which had drastically reduced accessibility.

Work during the past four years has included litter picks and pruning days, planting of new trees and wildflowers, design of interpretation panels, and reinstatement of hardcore.

The step counts are an aid to general health and part of a health recovery programme which links into Northumberland County Council and NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2020.



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# Six of the best for beer festival



*By Ron Clarke*

**The sixth Ponteland Beer Festival has been hailed as the best ever – with record crowds, added fairground attractions, a huge range of food and drink and great music.**

More than 3,000 people enjoyed 150 beers, lagers and ciders, a wine, prosecco and gin bar, street food and music ranging from choirs, and marching bands to soul, motown, rock and roll and country and western.

The music included the Baghdaddies and Live Wire on the Friday night, followed over the weekend by country and western artists The Heavenly Thrillbillies, the Duke Street Band, Kaino & The Godfathers and headliners Hip Hop Hooray.

Organiser Andy Maidwell said: "From the fantastic feedback we have received there is no doubt it was a great success. I would like to thank everyone who came along, all our sponsors and the dedicated volunteers who ensured the festival ran so well

"We had more than 3,000 people over the three days and the Saturday was sold out well in advance. We added a fairground for the traditional family day on the final day and this created a wonderful atmosphere and it was really good to see so many families come along and enjoy themselves.

"Plans are already underway for next year and the message once again is book early make sure you don't miss out on what is now a popular community fixture."

The festival was held in two giant solid floored and heated marquees at Ponteland Rugby Club. The family day music on the Sunday was provided by Ponteland's own Community Band and Rock Choir, together with a performance from the REME Pipe Band and local band the Pretty Weeds playing everything from Blondie and the Beatles to Fleetwood Mac and T Rex.

An extensive range of street food was provided by Legend of Toro Travelling Kitchen and Angel Street Food.

Visit [pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk](http://pontelandbeerfestival.co.uk)

[www.pontelandtowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.pontelandtowncouncil.co.uk)



The Heavenly Thrillbillies



Organiser Andy Maidwell with ex club captain Steve Bell



Jake Harris, George Ashby, Patrick Holliday and Cameron Crane, all of Ponteland, with barman Nigel Davison.

# Your letters

The Editor  
Pont News & Views



A thank you to a mystery litter picker in this month's letters...

## Mystery litter picker deserves a reward

**Could I please use the Pont News to pass on my thanks to the tremendous efforts of a woman from Ponteland who has taken it upon herself to litter pick along the main airport road at weekends?**

This major entrance to Newcastle has been left in a shocking state by the lack of cleaning teams from any of our councils, highways agencies or the airport itself.

I've pulled over to thank the lady but didn't get her name.

This mystery woman has done a sterling job and needs to be applauded. We need more people like her.

Wouldn't it be nice if the above mentioned organisations could identify her and present her with a huge bouquet for her efforts?

**Darren Taylor**

*Pembroke Drive, Darras Hall*

**July issue deadlines:** Delivery of the July issue will start on Thursday June 27th and be completed by Wednesday July 3rd. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Thursday June 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 July 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 Leisure Learning (U3A)**

At our meeting at 2pm on Wednesday June 5th in St Mary's Parish Centre our speaker will be Dr Aron Mazel and his title 'Rock/Cave Painting'. Visitors are always welcome – no charge. Visit [u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland](http://u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland) or call (01661) 822225.

## **Party in the Park**

This year's Party in the Park will be in Ponteland Park on Sunday June 9th from 1pm. Admission £1 (children under five free). Entertainment will include Ponteland Community Band, the Jill Errington Dancing Group, Ponteland Rock Choir, Darras Hall Primary School Ensemble, a funfair, Punch & Judy, climbing wall, and bouncy castle.

## **Ponteland Senior**

### **Gentlemen's Club**

Gordon Henderson will speak on 'The Roman Military' at our meeting on Monday June 10th at 2.30pm in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall. Visit: [pontelandsgc.co.uk](http://pontelandsgc.co.uk)

## **Ponteland Village WI**

Enjoy a girls' evening with a difference at our friendly, modern WI. This year we have welcomed lots of new members and there's room for more. So come along and give us a try - laughs, new friends and cake guaranteed! We will be holding a games evening at our meeting on Tuesday June 11th at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre. We meet on the second Tuesday of each month (except for August). Email [pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com](mailto:pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com) or find us on Facebook 'Ponteland Village WI'.

## **Ponteland Archers**

Affiliated to Archery GB and the DNAA, we shoot from Ponteland Leisure Centre and recently celebrated the club's 50th anniversary. We are looking for new members or people who just want to try their hands at archery. We have a beginners' session on June 11th. Visit [pontelandarchers.org](http://pontelandarchers.org) for full details and registration.

## **Callerton Garden and Flower Club**

On Wednesday June 12th at 2pm Wendy Smith from Durham will demonstrate her theme 'A Bit of This and a Bit of That' at our meeting to be held in the Memorial Hall lounge. Visitors always welcome (£7).

## **Friends of Kirkley Hall**

At 7pm on Wednesday June 12th at Kirkley Hall keen diver Ben Burville will reveal the mysterious underwater world off the Northumberland coast. No booking necessary. Charge £3 for non-members and £2 for members. Contact [friendsofkirkleyhall@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofkirkleyhall@gmail.com) or 07551 974955 or visit [friendsofkirkleyhall@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsofkirkleyhall@yahoo.com)

## **Ponteland Lions Club**

Our monthly business meeting will be in Merton Hall on Wednesday June 12th at 7.30pm with a social event later in the month. Come along and find out about Lions. Our charity fund bookstall will be at Waitrose on Saturday June 29th from 9am to 4pm. This will be an everything at half price sale for one day only. We collect spectacles for recycling to the Third World. Contact us on 0845 8339913 or visit our website.

## **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 June 19th (enter via back door). Visit: [pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk](http://pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk)

## **Embroiderers Guild**

### **Ponteland Branch**

On Monday June 24th from 2pm to 4pm at the Memorial Hall, Darras Road, Anne Hefford is running a mini workshop – 3D vegetable plot, part 2. All welcome, £4. Contact: Penny Ford at [penelopeford636@btinternet.com](mailto:penelopeford636@btinternet.com) or (01670) 788278.

## **Music in the Park**

Sunday June 30th from 2pm to 5pm at Ponteland Park. FREE musical entertainment from Rendezvous Jazz

Band, North Tyneside Steel Band, Ponteland Community Band, The Ringtones and Pete Brown. Bring a picnic and deckchairs and enjoy a fantastic afternoon of outdoor entertainment with your friends and family. In the event of bad weather the event will be cancelled.

## **Walking for health**

Free weekly health walks every Tuesday at 10.30am at Ponteland Leisure Centre. All welcome. Assistance dogs only. Contact Gordon Allan on 07936 135469 for more information.

## **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 Ukulele Band**

We are a friendly group of mixed ability ukulele players. We meet Tuesdays at the CIU club from 1pm to 3pm. New members welcome.

## **Line dancing**

We meet on Wednesdays at 6.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Ponteland. We have lots of laughs, friendship and exercise to music. Cost £20 for ten sessions. Dancing is at beginner and intermediate level. New dancers always welcome. Free taster session offered. Contact Rosemary Gray on (01661) 822493.

## **RAF Air Cadets**

733 Sqn Air Training Corps is open to boys and girls between the ages of 12 to 17 years. The Squadron's activities include flying, gliding, shooting, first aid, cadet camps home and abroad and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The Squadron meets Mondays and Fridays, 7pm to 9.30pm at the Squadron HQ, Army Reserve Centre, Kingston Park. For further information contact Flt Lt G Smith RAFAC, Officer Commanding at [733@aircadets.org](mailto:733@aircadets.org) or (0191) 2862691 Monday and Friday evenings

# Latest news from Ponteland Town Council

## New council housing proposed and pothole league toppers: Northumberland County Council update

County councillor Richard Dodd reported that NCC planned to build 1,000 new council owned homes over the next three years as part of a new housing strategy. He also told councillors that NCC had topped a national list for repairing potholes (the authority filled nearly 70,000 potholes in 2018). Coun Dodd then reported that the temporary play area opened on Callerton Lane at Easter was being well used, and that the construction of the school and leisure complex was ahead of schedule and on budget. Coun Veronica Jones stated that she had attended an event at the bridle path held on May 4th (see article on p8). The final stage of this project was the installation of way markers at each of the educational pedestals along the bridle path route. She also referred to the 'Great Northumberland' and 'Discover our lands' initiatives being promoted by the County Council and urged people to get involved.

## Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor

Coun Alan Varley was re-elected as Mayor and Coun Christine Greenwell was re-elected to the position of Deputy Mayor for 2019-20.

## Appointment of councillors

The Council approved the appointment of councillors to committees and working parties and representation on various outside bodies.

## Dates of Town Council meetings approved

The Town Council approved the dates of its meetings for 2019-20 which will be held on the second Wednesday of each month, starting at 6.45pm with public question time.

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

# Fourth lifesaving device installed by Lions



*By Andy Anderson, Secretary Ponteland Lions Club*

## A Ponteland charity has installed a potentially lifesaving device at the health centre in Darras Hall.

The defibrillator fitted to the outside wall of the venue is the fourth device installed by Ponteland Lions Club, with the others at Merton Way, the Memorial Hall and the Methodist Church in Ponteland

Funding was provided by Co-op Food and Ponteland Town Council.

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. It is hoped to run a short education session for local businesses so they are aware of how to use it.

The Lions Club recently raised more than £700 for the Great North Air Ambulance Service with a meal at Rialto's restaurant, with an additional £200 raised each month by a book stall at Waitrose.

If you are interested in helping the Lions raise more money for the local causes please contact us on 0845 833 9913.

# World Transplant Games: Newcastle/Gateshead August 17th – 24th

The Newcastle/Gateshead Initiative was successful in a bid to host the World Transplant Games in our region, and from August 17th to 24th they will welcome up to 3,000 participants from countries as far afield as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

The Games hope to raise awareness of organ donation and transplantation, emphasising the benefits of exercise post-transplant and celebrating a second chance of life.

Athletes of all ages will benefit from the facilities available in the North East including Gateshead International Stadium for track

and field events, Close House Golf Resort, Sport Central at Northumbria University and Sunderland Aquatic Centre.

These venues will showcase our region along with the excellent hospital facilities to the world. Our local team, known as Team GB, is made up of many regional teams from around the UK and they will therefore be up against not only the best in the UK but also in the world.

- A fundraising coffee morning is being held at Ponteland United Reformed Church, Broadway, Darras Hall, on Saturday July 6th at 10.30am and all monies raised will go to The Newcastle Adults Transplant Team. Your support will be very much appreciated. Includes a cake stall and raffle. Tickets £2 or pay at the door.

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Children enjoy an ice cream at last year's event. Photo by Barry Pells.

# Families invited to annual party in the park

Families are being invited to enjoy an afternoon of entertainment in the park next weekend.

Party in the Park, one of the biggest events in the parish's social calendar, will be held in Ponteland Park on Sunday June 9th from the earlier start time of 1pm.

The crowds will be entertained by Ponteland Community Band, the Jill Errington Dancing Group, Ponteland Rock Choir and Darras Hall Primary School Ensemble.

Other attractions will include a fun fair, Punch & Judy, a climbing wall, 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).



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## More than 50 people join first weekly health walk

More than 50 people turned out for Ponteland's first weekly health walk.

The new initiative was launched on May 7th with a two mile walk from the leisure centre through Ponteland Park and back via the bridleway.

The free walks are held every Tuesday starting at 10.30am at the leisure centre, last up to 90 minutes, and are aimed at people who want gentle exercise and enjoy being outdoors. Assistance dogs only.

The group would still like a few more volunteer leaders and anyone interested should contact West Northumberland Health Walks Co-ordinator Lorraine Oliver at loliver@activenorthumberland.org.uk or local walks leader Gordon Allan on 07936 135469 for more information.



Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Combined Authority Mayor

## First ever North of Tyne mayor elected

**The first ever North of Tyne Mayor has been elected.**

Voters from Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside chose Labour and Co-operative party member Jamie Driscoll ahead of Conservative Party candidate Charlie Hoult.

He began work as North of Tyne Mayor on Tuesday May 7th, leading the North of Tyne Combined Authority's ambitious plans to create 10,000 jobs over the term of the deal, adding over £1bn in goods and services and leveraging over £2bn of private sector investment.

It has also meant the transfer of power and investment from central Government to Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland.

Mr Driscoll thanked his campaign team following his victory in his acceptance speech as he promised to deliver on the portfolio he campaigned on over the last six months.

He said he would deliver on housing, a people's bank and addressing the 'climate emergency' among his priorities as he prepares to begin his five years in office, and pledged to work with elected members of all parties, extending 'a hand of friendship to all members from the Tyne to the Tweed'.

Following a second preference count, Mr Driscoll received 76,862 votes, with second-placed Mr Hoult receiving 60,089. The total number of verified votes was 185,695 with a turnout of 32.3%.

## Major Keith retires from poppy post

*By Coun Karen Overbury*

**Most of us buy a poppy every November and we wear it proudly. But how many spare a thought for the behind-the-scenes organisation of the Poppy Appeal?**

For the past 25 years, Major Keith Hotchkiss has been a familiar face on the streets of Ponteland, selling poppies and chatting to buyers.

Keith and his wife Ann, who live in Heddon, have organised the appeal in Ponteland and surrounding areas over all those years, but they have now stepped down after celebrating their silver poppy anniversary.

Keith said he was called up in 1958 and did two years National Service. He was in the Royal Artillery, Tyneside Scottish, then spent 21 years in the TA.

The people of Ponteland and the Royal British Legion owe Keith and Ann a big thank you for their dedicated work and they will be greatly missed.

Rachel Hardwick, the Legion's Community Fundraiser, said: "Last year's (Ponteland) appeal raised more than £17,000 of vital funds for work of The Royal British Legion. Last year we spent £49.3m on services and support to improve the lives of the Armed Forces community in the UK and in 28 countries worldwide.

"Keith and Ann have worked hard for 25 years and we will miss them very much. But we are now looking for



an individual or a group of people to step in to continue this vital yet rewarding work in the Ponteland area.

"The role involves delivering poppies to local shops, businesses and schools, co-ordinating the volunteers to collect in the local area, ordering wreaths, counting funds and completing necessary paperwork. Full training and ongoing support will be provided."

The Poppy Appeal is the legion's main way of collecting funds used to provide financial, social and emotional support to the serving and ex-service community and their families.

**For more information email Rachel Hardwick at [rhardwick@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:rhardwick@britishlegion.org.uk) or call her on 07823 416750.**



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## Ponteland care home bosses cycle 840 miles for charity

Three bosses of a UK social care firm stopped off at its Ponteland care home during an 840-mile charity bike ride.

CareUK's managing director Andrew Knight, marketing director Jacqui White and strategic programme director Tony Weedon cycled from their most southerly home The Potteries in Dorset to their furthest north home, Tor-Na-Dee in Aberdeen.

During their 15 day journey, the Ride800 team stopped at 26 of CareUK's 100+ homes across the country.

On May 11th they arrived at Ponteland Manor, where residents hosted a welcome

party and designed their own bike and accompanying dummy to compete to win a bicycle made for two.

Jacqui said: "We had a fantastic afternoon tea. The energy in the home was infectious and before we knew it, we were joining in with a very energetic sing-a-long, during which Andrew showed off his local knowledge and rattled out a few hearty choruses of Blaydon Races.

"The team had also prepared a fabulous cake for us, complete with a picture from our very first day in Poole."

The cycling challenge has raised more than £23,000 for the Care Workers Charity, Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Scotland.



## Councillors pay tribute at firefighter memorial day

Ponteland councillors paid tribute at a national memorial for firefighters who have lost their lives while trying to save others.

Sirens sounded as a minute's silence was observed at fire stations across the UK at midday on Saturday May 4th by on duty crews, remembering more than 2,300 colleagues lost in the line of duty.

The Firefighters Memorial Trust, supported by the Fire Brigades Union, wants Firefighters' Memorial Day to become a well-recognised day and released a video to promote it: [bit.ly/2UrVWgd](https://bit.ly/2UrVWgd)

Councillors Richard Dodd, Karen Overbury, Christine Caisley and Mayor Alan Varley mark Firefighters' Memorial Day with firefighters at Ponteland Fire Station. Photo by Keith Robertson.



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# Darras Hall building society closed for refurbishment

**A Darras Hall building society branch has closed for two months for a refurbishment.**

Newcastle Building Society is creating a modern, open plan design at its branch on Broadway as part of an ongoing, £6m investment programme across its entire branch network.

The society said the upgraded branch will provide customers with better access to services, information and advice, as well as improved meeting spaces to discuss all aspects of personal financial planning.

Refurbishment work had originally been due to start at the beginning of 2019, but after Barclays Bank

announced that it was going to close its Ponteland branch in January, NBS decided to postpone the work so local residents could retain access to financial services with minimum disruption during the change.

The branch closed on Friday May 17th and is expected to reopen around the middle of July, with a celebration event set to follow in August to mark its official reopening.

NBS is halfway through a programme of upgrading or relocating its entire 28 branch network, with work on refurbishing existing branches or creating new ones due to be completed by the end of the year.

Customer Director Stuart Miller said: "While we were keen to get on with this refurbishment, we felt it made



sense to hold it back at the start of the year to ensure people in Ponteland weren't put to too much sudden inconvenience.

"The feedback we've had from local customers suggests they thought we'd made the right decision, and we're excited to now be getting on with the job.

"The reaction we've had from customers in locations where we've already opened new branches or carried out

upgrades to existing offices has been really positive and we're looking forward to sharing the new facilities with customers in Ponteland.

"Our nearby West Denton and Gosforth branches are available to serve them while improvement work is ongoing, and while we are sorry for any inconvenience that the temporary closure of the branch might cause, we think they will like what they see when it reopens."



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