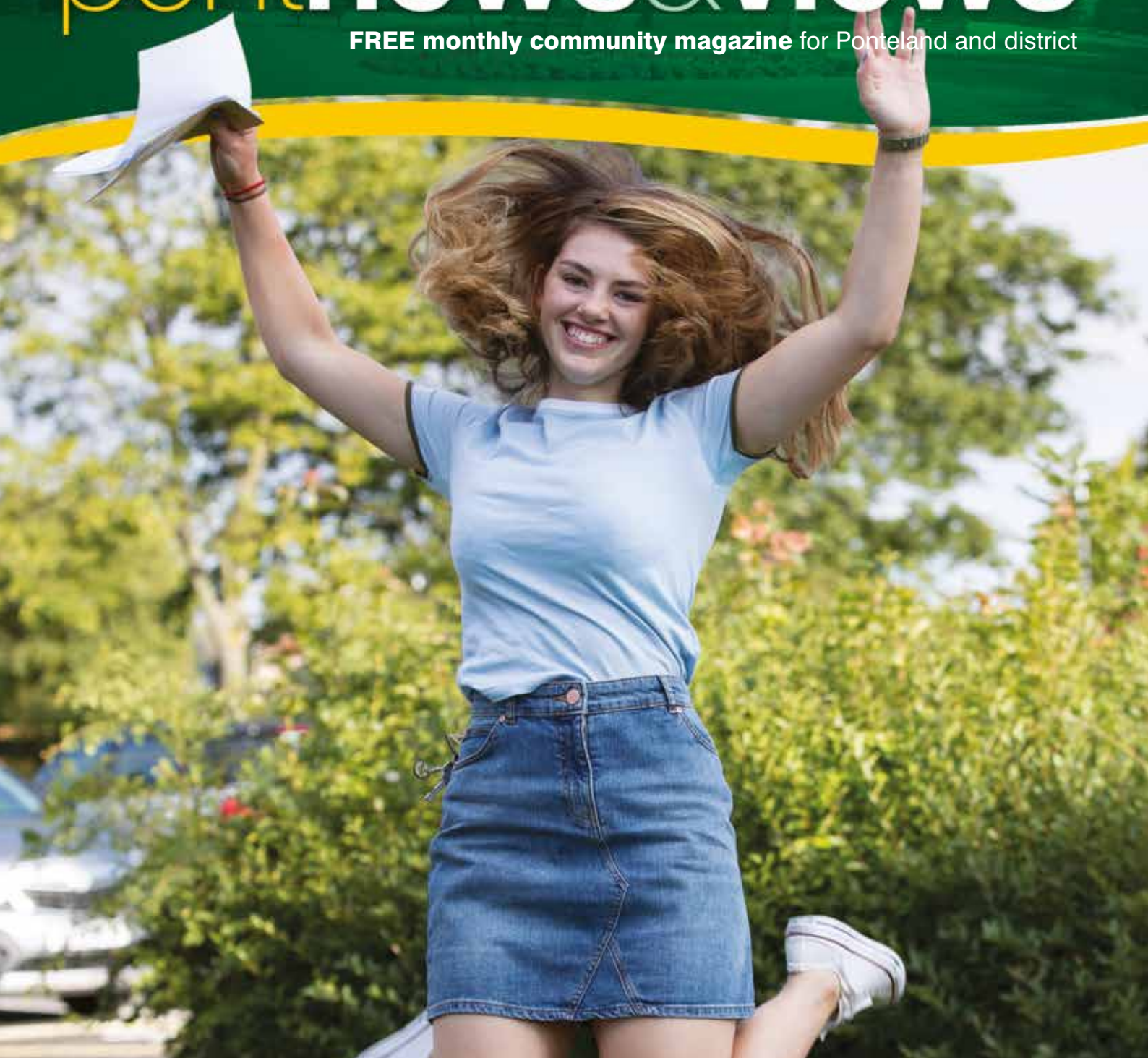


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Artist Ginty Bewick, right, with Ponteland Mayor Alan Varley

Brush strokes help paintings light up council offices

A popular pensioner painter has put Ponteland forever in the frame through a generous donation of works of local life.

William Bewick, 91 – known as Ginty Bewick – has given several interpretations of town times to Ponteland Town Council.

Mayor Alan Varley welcomed Mr Bewick, who signs his pictures 'Ginty', his nickname from childhood, to the council's offices in Meadowfield Court.

Four of the retired chartered consulting engineer's paintings now hang in the meeting room, and at least three others will soon find a home.

The meeting room works were painted between 1999 and 2004 and highlight changes to stretches of Ponteland's main street.

Mr Bewick was inspired to donate his works after being impressed by the advice and help he was given around a recent planning issue close to his home in Callerton Lane, which he shares with his wife Anne.

He said: "I thought they would look better in the office and would be displayed better for the public, councillors and Ponteland Town Council staff to look at."

Mr Bewick, who has painted as a hobby throughout his life, was thanked for his donation by Coun Varley.



Simple solutions to help beat rural buildings' crime

By PC Lee Davison, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer



In the past four weeks, garages and outbuildings in outlying rural areas have suffered several thefts and burglaries, with power tools and gardening equipment taken.

Stolen items are then sold on or disposed of via online selling sites, local car boot sales or directly to trade.

Simple crime prevention measures which can reduce the risk of property being targeted, and assist in the recovery of stolen property, include:

- Using storage facilities which reflect the value of the property they contain
- Using British Standard locks and high security closed shackle padlocks, and locking outbuildings when not in use
- Keeping outside lighting on a dawn to dusk circuit, and using building or perimeter alarms, where possible
- Planting prickly plants or a hedge, such as firethorn, climbing rose or hawthorn, around garden perimeters can be a powerful deterrent
- Putting gravel on paths and driveways can act as an alert to people coming towards a property
- Marking belongings with a postcode or other easily recognisable mark, including an overt or infra-red covert marking system
- Ensuring doors, buildings and vehicles are secured to stop unknown unlawful access while the owner is working

Other crime prevention measures include installing CCTV for surveillance in places which cannot be seen from a main house, and registering property with national register immobilise.com

Householders should also not leave tools, gardening equipment or debris lying close to their property, as they can be stolen or used to force entry.

Anyone identifying their property as being sold online should record the details, take a photo of the advert, make a note of any addresses or contact numbers – and inform police rather than

visiting an address in person.

People should remain vigilant of suspicious activity and report any concerns at the time to allow an appropriate police response.

Misuse of rights of way and bridleways

Complaints have been received about inconsiderate driving and other behaviour on local rights of way and dog walking routes.

Vehicles have been reported driving without consideration and at excess speed on minor roads and tracks when accessing rights of way.

In addition, off road motorcycles have been reported on bridleways, causing nuisance and endangering legitimate users.

Any motorcyclist found to be committing a traffic offence could be seized and the rider prosecuted.

Dog walkers using rights of way are also asked to show consideration for residents living nearby.

If driving to the location and using minor roads, they should be aware that there may be other users, including dog walkers and horses in the area.

And they must ensure dogs are kept under control and all waste is disposed of appropriately.

Anti-speed volunteers

Community Speedwatch Volunteers are continuing their work of providing a visible deterrent to speeding motorists.

Their efforts mean warning letters can be sent to offending drivers, in addition to follow up visits, to raise awareness and educate about the impact of speeding.

So far, volunteers have recorded 77 vehicles speeding in the area over the past month.

One visit has been conducted and 69 warning letters issued to registered keepers of vehicles.

Television triumph

Readers who tuned into the recent BBC series, Our Cops in the North, may have recognised some local officers.

Neither me nor Special Constable Jon Gray, who took part, would consider ourselves media stars.

However, being approached by a production company wishing to see officers at work in the area, was an excellent opportunity.

It has allowed the public to gain an insight into the various aspects of the work we are involved in.

And it also highlighted the excellent relationship officers have with the rural community and the support we provide in tackling local issues.

A 'thank you' must go to the volunteers and other people featured in a programme which has helped raise awareness of issues impacting rural communities.

The first three episodes are available via BBC iPlayer, with a further three episodes scheduled for the autumn.

Messaging service

NP Alerts is a free messaging service by Northumbria Police for the communities it serves.

By signing up to NP Alerts, residents can decide how they are kept informed about issues that matter most.

Registering is free and, once done, the messages people want to receive can be chosen via email, text or voice message.

Sign-up is at <https://member.everbridge.net/index/307455233884271#/signup>

Contact a member of East Tynedale Neighbourhood Team: prudhoe.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk



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Website launches with the wedding wow factor

Lovebirds looking to tie the knot in Ponteland can prepare for their big day with the expert help of a new wedding website which covers the town and beyond.

Local venues Horton Grange Country House Hotel, pictured, and Kirkley Hall are among the 70 listed as being the perfect places for couples to say 'I do'.

They take pride of place on the My Northumberland Wedding site, launched by the county council-operated Northumberland Registration Service.

Others in close proximity include The Parlour and Shotton Grange, both at Blagdon, West Thirston's The Northumberland Arms, High House Farm Brewery and Matten Hall, both Matten, and Whalton Manor, at Whalton.

Northumberland County Council describes the website as being dynamic and exciting - and of great use to couples trying to find their dream venue and intent on personalising their ceremony.

Cllr Nick Oliver, cabinet member for corporate services, said: "Planning a wedding is a really exciting time for any couple, but it can also be a stressful time with many decisions to make.

"Our new website means that people will now only need to go to one place to get all the information they need to plan and book their perfect wedding in our stunning county.

"There are some absolutely incredible wedding venues and



fantastic local businesses involved in the wedding trade, which contribute in making a Northumberland wedding a truly unique and memorable occasion."

Over 2,000 ceremonies a year take place in Northumberland, which also has a number of register offices and council-owned venues.

Venues include historic Morpeth Town Hall, the recently refurbished Hexham House, which also offers couples the option of five star overnight accommodation, and Northumberland Hall, in Alnwick.

More information is at mynorthumberlandwedding.co.uk

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Lifestyle financial planning must come before investment decisions

By David Lamb, Lamb and Associates

This is how the financial services industry usually works. Insurance companies produce investment and protection products and investment houses create funds. They have become so good at selling their products, via their own sales force or independent financial advisers, they have brainwashed financial advisers and the public into thinking that financial planning is all about selling products.

Images of happy people, new cars and holidays are used to tempt us into buying a multitude of products investing in an abundance of funds that we probably don't want or even need, hence the many mis-selling scandals such as pensions, endowments, PPI.

But the financial services industry does not want you to spend your money and would also prefer you not to repay your loans early. The more money you spend, the less the financial services provider makes, so they try and persuade you to invest your money in the latest fund they say will make massive returns.

There are currently over 2,000 unit trusts on sale in the UK, ranging from basic managed funds to specialist technology funds - all with an annual management charge for the provider.

Traditionally much of the training for financial advisers has been provided by the product providers, which could explain some of the poor advice given over the last 30 years.

A couple of years ago I attended a free seminar where product providers were presenting. The various 'exhibitors' (the product providers) were giving away glossy product brochures, pens, writing pads and sweets in branded plastic bags - what can only be described as propaganda. I have never been to a similar seminar since.

For the public to have confidence in financial planning and advice, the link between the investment industry and the actual advice needs to be broken. Financial planners should not accept free seminars, handouts, and promotional gifts and advisers should find relevant impartial training and fund it themselves.

I believe lifestyle financial planning should come before any discussions about products or funds. The conversation should be about what you want to do with your life with the resources that you have available. The answer to this fundamental question may lead to the recommendation of a product, if appropriate. This product should just be a tool to help achieve your financial planning objective; it should not be a tool to line the financial services industry's pockets.

All clients should be able to trust that their adviser will provide them with reliable advice to help them achieve their desired lifestyle without the fear of running out of money, whatever happens. They shouldn't need to worry about being sold products or funds that they don't really need.

Housing plan falters after policy change

Campaigners are celebrating the survival of green belt at Ponteland after plans for a fourth major housing scheme on protected land were scrapped.

They say the immediate threat of development between Callerton Lane and Willow Way has vanished after housing group Hellens withdrew proposals for 178 homes.

It comes just weeks after Newcastle developer Lugano dropped its similarly controversial application for 2,000 homes on the 2,523-acres Dissington Estate, to the west of Ponteland.

In June last year, developer Banks Property scrapped a 400-home scheme at West Clickemin Farm, a 52-acre site between the A696 at Cheviot View and B6545 Rotary Way.

And in July 2015 a second Lugano proposal, for 280 homes at Birney Hill, near Ponteland, failed after it was rejected by the Labour-run Northumberland County Council (NCC) and on appeal by Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark.

Hellens refused to comment on its planning change, but NCC leader Peter Jackson and the Willow Way, Willow Place and Callerton Court Residents Group welcomed its U-turn.

Coun Jackson said: "I know how much people in Ponteland value their green

belt and I am pleased that Hellens have realised that there is now no chance of them building on green belt now that we have fundamentally reviewed the Northumberland Local Plan.

"From Lugano at Birney Hill and Dissington, then Banks at Clickemin and now Hellens at Callerton Lane, I have been campaigning to protect the local green belt for years.


"There is not and never has been evidence that there is a need to build on our valued green belt and I and my fellow county councillors will continue to defend it.

"With the support of local residents we have fought off the developers. It is essential as it forms such an important part of the character of the area."

Retired tax inspector David Weissand, 68, co-founder of the residents' group, described Hellens' decision as "great news" – but warned vigilance was needed in case of future planning threats.

Mr Weissand, of Willow Way, said: "This is the last of the major planning applications in the green belt in Ponteland to have been withdrawn and is something for many of us to celebrate.

"The immediate threat to the field has gone. Hopefully,



A visual showing where the proposed housing would have been built between Callerton Lane and Willow Way courtesy of Hellens Group.



Residents Chris Lott, and Bev and John Cornwall at the Hellens development site

Northumberland County Council's current opposition to building on the green belt will deter others.

"It should make building on green belt less likely although the new government has been making noises about relaxing the rules, so we still need to be vigilant."

Hellens' decision follows NCC's shift away from often looking favourably on green belt development after it became a Conservative-led authority in 2017.

The firm had wanted to build 60 apartments for over 50s within a two storey complex, 50 three and four bed houses for downsizers, 50 family homes, 17 bungalows and Dutch bungalows, and ten plots for self builds.

In 2017, the then Labour controlled NCC supported Banks Property's proposals, which were referred to the National Planning Casework Unit due to the size of the scheme and its location.

Banks Property scrapped the scheme after the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government announced a public inquiry.

The company claimed the decision was politically motivated, but the campaigning Green Belt Group and MP Guy Opperman described it as "great news for Ponteland residents".

And in January, Lugano dropped its application to transform Dissington Estate into Dissington Garden Village following after the Tory council's planning policy change.

Almost two years earlier, it had also been handed a minded-to-approve resolution, indicating its plans were being looked on favourably.

Washington-based Hellens did not wish to comment.

NCC confirmed Hellens wished to withdraw its planning application.

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Estate Committee urged to change bye-laws to prevent Darras Hall turning into suburbia in this month's letters.

Action needed to protect estate's rural charm

At the AGM of the Darras Hall Estate Committee last March, the Chairman announced one of the most important issues that the committee would be considering was that of the big "B" that alludes to front boundaries.

I and my wife and my young family moved to Darras Hall in 1957. I had become disenchanted with the semi-detached suburbia of North Gosforth and felt the rural environment of Darras Hall Estate had much to offer. This was emphasised by the estate bye-laws describing the estate as 'rural'.

In those days, there was little street lighting and footpaths. In fact, house numbering was not introduced until late 1957, the owners being obliged to give their homes just a name - very rural!

The estate, pre -World War One, adopted five-acre lots (not plots) when the major estate roads were laid in 1911 and a simple stained wooden post and rail fence ran along behind a verge on each side of the estate roads. However, by the 1970s, development along each estate road had created large areas of back land, with the result that developers/builders were encouraged to develop cul-de-sacs and through roads including the necessary services.

Your average housing builder does not 'do' rural, only suburbia and, as a result, they were allowed to build brick boundary walls in

matching bricks to their new dwellings. Unfortunately this caught on and now the major estate roads are a proliferation of front boundary walls running the full width of the boundary. This, of course, is emphasised by gate piers and wing walls which are of course necessary for safe vehicular access.

As a result, the 'rural roadscape' is being lost to a visual hotchpotch of boundary brick walls of different colours, some cement rendered and colour washed, along with close boarded fences (vertical and horizontal), brick piers with decorative metal infill panels and various types of stone copings, a number of which do not even conform in height with the bye-laws.

I would therefore ask the committee to amend the bye-laws with regard to the above by requiring all gate posts and wing walls be constructed preferably in second-hand weathered stone or rustic faced pre-cast stone walling. The remainder of the front boundary should be of a hedge unless a retaining wall is necessary faced in stone to reduce a sloping site.

If this action is not taken, I believe, as a long retired architect, the individual rural charm of the estate roads will slowly ebb away along with a degree of diminishing property values.

Harry Earp
Crossfell, Darras Hall

October issue deadlines: Delivery of the October issue will start on Monday September 30th and be completed by Friday October 4th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday September 16th. 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 October 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...

Wildlife Group Get-together

The Ponteland Wildlife Group starts its new season on Tuesday September 3rd when Tim Mason will give a talk titled 'Birdwatching in Eastern Europe, Norway to Bulgaria' at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. On Tuesday October 1st, Liz Clark will talk about 'Small, Spiky and Seriously Endangered, Hedgehogs in Northumberland' at 7.30pm at the same venue. Admission is £2 and includes refreshments.

Kirkley Women's Institute

Kirkley WI resumes its meetings at Kirkley Hall at 7pm on the first Wednesday of each month, starting on September 4th with a talk on foot care by staff from Newcastle Sports Injury Clinic. Check <https://kirkleywi.wordpress.com> for more information or email kirkleywi@hotmail.com.

North East Dog Festival

Over 130 exhibitors and the East Anglian Staffordshire Bull Terrier Display Team will be at the North East Dog Festival, which starts at 9.30am on Saturday September 7th at Kirkley Hall, Ponteland. Entry is £10 per person. Under 16s, dogs and parking is free. More information at northeastdogfestival.com or emailing info@northeastdogfestival.com

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Cliff Pettit will speak on 'Tales of a Country Solicitor' on Monday September 9th at 2.30pm in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. Visit pontelandsgc.co.uk

Whistling Sheep Ceilidh Band

The band meets on alternate Mondays after school at Ponteland High School, with its first session at 3.30pm on Monday September 9th. Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 are welcome along with those from Year 9 who already play. Information is at whistlingsheep.co.uk The band is available to play at events.

Women's Institute Meeting

A tasty talk is on the menu when Darras Hall WI meets on Monday September 9th at 2pm at Merton Hall, Merton Road, to discuss the subject 'Vale of Mowbray Pork Pies', led by Deborah Dryden. Entry is £1 and includes refreshments.

Ponteland Village WI

A new season of events starts on Tuesday September 10th, with topics including a demonstration on mosaics. Meetings continue on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, formerly the church hall, Ponteland. The group can be found on Facebook, with information also available by emailing pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com

Ponteland Women's Institute

The group meets in Merton Hall, Merton Road, at 7pm on the second Tuesday of each, next is on September 10th. At the meeting, Tom Martin will talk about autumn planting. All welcome.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

The club next meets at 2pm on Wednesday September 11th in the lounge at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. The meeting will feature a demonstration by John Thexton, whose theme is 'Bring Me Sunshine'. Visitors welcome – and club subscriptions are due.

Ponteland Lions Club

The Ponteland Lions Club will meet on Wednesday September 11th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall, Merton Road. Visitors are welcome. Contact 0845 8339913 for more information.

Annual Flower Show

The 42nd Ponteland Parish Flower Show is on Saturday September 14th at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. Classes include flower, fruit, vegetables, best cookery, handicrafts, wine and spirits, and photography, with some for children. Entry forms can be downloaded at pontelandflowershow.co.uk.

Choir to Perform.

Voices of Hope, winner of the BBC's National Choir of the Year 2016 competition, will sing at St Mary's Church, Thornhill Road, Ponteland, at 7.30pm on Saturday September 14th. Tickets, priced £10 which includes light refreshments, are on sale from the Parish Centre Office or by calling (01661) 824470.

Flood risk

Residents can find out more about the Ponteland Flood Alleviation Scheme at a drop-in event from 2pm to 7pm on Wednesday September 18th in the downstairs lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. Environment Agency officers will answer questions, give scheme updates and listen to feedback. Feedback can also be given at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/north-east/ponteland-flood-alleviation-scheme-information>.

Ponteland Community Partnership

All are welcome to observe a meeting and share ideas, concerns and expectations for improving the quality of life in the community. The next meeting is at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at 7pm on Wednesday September 18th with entry via the building's back door. Visit pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Ponteland Local History Society

The next meeting of the Ponteland Local History Society, at 7.30pm on Thursday September 19th at The Parish Centre, Thornhill Road, will start with a short AGM followed by a talk titled 'Stones and Bones: Recent Discoveries Around Druridge Bay' by Barry Mead. All welcome at £2.

Embroiderers Guild

On Monday September 23rd the Embroiderers Guild holds its AGM and an 'anything goes auction' from 2pm to 4pm in Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, at £4 per person. Membership of the branch and the Embroiderers Guild is open to all, whatever their experience. Information is from branch secretary Penny Ford on (01670) 788278 or by emailing penelopeford636@btinternet.com

Ponteland Methodist Church

Services on Sundays are held at 10am, which include children's activities, and at 6.30pm. An open door drop-in café, with drinks, scones and cakes, is from 2pm to 5pm on Mondays, and a Thursday toddlers club is held. Church members enjoy fellowship meetings, walking groups, carpet bowls, prayer and fairtrade groups, and host the Girls Brigade and the Boys Brigade. More information is from Ann on (01661) 824347 or anncooperx@gmail.com

Ponteland Ladies Choir

The choir meets from 7pm on Mondays at Ponteland United Reformed Church in The Broadway, Darras Hall. Contacts are Nina on (0191) 6709055 and at nlhirst@live.co.uk or Chris on (01661) 852130.

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.

Ponteland Writers

This is 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 meets on the third Tuesday in the month, from September to 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.

Hopes fulfilled as leading choir confirms concert coup

One of the UK's best-known choirs is coming to Ponteland this month to perform in a homecoming concert described as a bookings' coup by organisers.

Voices of Hope, winner of the BBC's National Choir of the Year competition in 2016, will sing at St Mary's Church, in Thornhill Road, on Saturday, September 14.

Choir leaders say a number of its stars reside in or close to the town and are thrilled to be performing on home turf.

Simon Davies-Fidler, Music Director of Voices of Hope, said: "Several choir members live in and around Ponteland, so we are looking forward to performing at the beautiful St Mary's Church.

"We are looking forward to performing music which we have prepared for our summer tour in Germany for our friends back home in the North East."

The concert, in aid of the Guide Dogs for the Blind and Hearing Dogs charities, starts at 7.30pm.

June Atkinson, who has helped to organise the event, said: "The concert is in aid of two well-known charities. We have a coup in Voices of Hope. They have a huge reputation."



Voices of Hope has become nationally and internationally renowned since its founding in 2011 by Mr Davies-Fidler.

The choir, which regularly broadcasts on BBC Radio 3 and has performed on BBC 4, was in the North East last year to perform the Pankhurst Anthem, which celebrates 100 years of women's suffrage, at the Sage Gateshead.

Tickets for the Ponteland performance, which are priced at £10 and include light refreshments, are on sale from the Parish Centre Office or by calling (01661) 824470.

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Dear Resident,

We've just completed week 40 of our programmed 85 weeks for the construction of the Schools, Leisure Centre and Community Crescent Hub. As we approach the half way point, we continue to make good progress with all areas of the Project.

Progress has continued well through the period with only the final sections of the steel frame being completed to the North Crescent. Construction of the building envelope – roofing and cladding – has progressed well through August, despite the periods of torrential rain that we have experienced. Works to the new Fire Station have progressed with progress to the building envelope and internal areas.

The installation of the Steel Frame System (SFS) walls to the perimeter of the Secondary School was completed during August, with works now moving over to the Primary School. Window installation has progressed to the Secondary School and will complete during September. The installation of the cladding panels to the Primary School Hall is progressing and works will progressively move round the buildings. Roof was completed to the Secondary School and Primary School Hall, with completion of the Primary School roof and the Secondary School Hall programmed for September.

The roofs to the Secondary School and Primary School Hall were completed during August and progress has been made to the roofs to the Primary School, Secondary School Hall, Crescent low level areas and the Fire Station. The installation of the cladding follows on from the roofing works and is allowing us to release zones to progress the internal works.

The Mechanical & Electrical Works are now progressing on several fronts, including the Secondary School, main Plant Rooms, and the Fire Station. Internal partitions are progressing well to the Secondary School and will move on to the Primary School during September.

We are now entering our internal fit-out phase, with works progressing to the Secondary School and interior spaces to commence to the Primary School during September. This will continue for the remainder of the works, through to hand-over in summer 2020.

What works you will see in the next 4 weeks?

- Complete Roofing Works to the Primary School.
- Complete SFS Wall System and Windows to the Secondary School.
- Progress Window installation to the Primary School.
- Progress Brickwork to the Secondary School.
- Complete Floor Slab Construction to the North Crescent areas.
- Complete Building Envelope to the Fire Station.
- Progress External Works to the Fire Station
- Complete install of Precast Concrete components to the North Crescent.
- Complete lower level floor slab construction to the Primary School.
- Progress Roofing Works to the Primary School.
- Complete Roofing and Cladding Works to the Fire Station.

Watch Points through September

- Daily traffic movements in and out of the site
- HGV deliveries with concrete, structural steel sections, precast concrete, roofing and cladding materials, M&E services materials, bricks, blocks, metal studs and drywall boards
- Installation of roof system
- Installation of precast concrete components
- Crane operations

CSR & Project Quick Facts

Kier and Ponteland High School completed summer work experience training with 6 pupils to let them experience life in the various construction careers.

At the start of September we will complete our largest crane lift for the works with the installation of a 25m long truss within the Pool Hall.



If you have any concerns or queries regarding the works, please feel free to contact us:



Roddy Graham
Project Lead
07849 098786



Andy Todhunter
Operations Lead
07773 243081

kier.ponteland@kier.co.uk

Park praised for world-class green standards

A Northumberland park, sited just a stone's throw from Ponteland, has been recognised by the Green Flag Award Scheme as one of the best globally.

Bolam Lake Country Park is among nine in the county praised for its environmental standards, being well-maintained and having excellent visitor facilities.

Others are Ridley Park, at Blyth, Dr Pit Park, at Bedlington, Astley Park, at Seaton Delaval, Alexandra Park, at Cramlington, Carlisle Park, at Morpeth, Hexham Park, Castle Vale and Coronation Park, at Berwick, and Plessey Woods Country Park.

They are among a record-breaking 1,970 UK parks and green spaces which have received the prestigious Green Flag quality honour.

Councillor Glen Sanderson, cabinet member for environment and local services at Northumberland County Council, said: "Yet again all the parks we entered have achieved Green Flag Awards and that's a superb achievement.

"They highlight and recognise that residents and visitors are benefiting from green spaces of the very highest quality.

"These awards also celebrate the dedication of our staff and volunteers to maintaining and improving our parks and it's thanks to them we've retained these honours."

"We're never complacent though and have allocated nearly £1m capital funding for an improvement programme in our country parks.

"Over the past year we've spent around £325,000 on a range of



Chairman of the Friends of Bolam Lake Richard Cansdale, Coun Glen Sanderson, and green spaces and countryside manager Mike Jeffery outside the new bird hide at Bolam Lake

work at Druridge Bay, Plessey Woods and Bolam Lake Country Park to significantly enhance their appeal as great places to visit, and with further works planned to make them more accessible and significantly improve the visitor facilities."

International Green Flag Award scheme manager Paul Todd said: "It's fantastic that we have more Green Flag Awards in the UK than ever before, joined this year by 131 International winners.

"Each flag honours the thousands of staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to maintain the high standards demanded by the Green Flag Award.

"We congratulate each and every winner on their fantastic achievement."

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Students make the grade with exam success

Photos by John Millard

Ponteland High School students have proved themselves first-class by securing a string of exceptional A-level results.

They have been described as “tremendous ambassadors” for their school after their hard work over the past two years ensured almost a quarter of exams sat gained the high grade A*-A mark.

Of these, eight per cent achieved A* – with 69 per cent of all papers taken leading to A*-C grades or equivalent.

And in 17 subjects, including maths, further maths, English literature, biology, chemistry, physics, history, French, and Spanish, over a third of entries were graded A*-B.

Standout students included Sam Dodgson, who gained three A* and an A, Madeline Reynard, with three A* and a B, and Ellen Sparshott, who attained three A* grades.

Lauren Beales gained two A* and two As, Catherine Woods two A* and one A, Lucy Dodd two A*, one A and one B, and Catherine Walby two distinction*.

Headteacher Kieran McGrane said: “Once again our staff and students have performed very well to ensure that their academic outcomes reflect their hard work and effort over the last two years.

“I feel incredibly grateful that we have a very committed and talented group of staff who have worked closely with our students to support them in their studies.

“It is also testament to the strength across our curriculum offer that 17 individual subjects have achieved at least a third of their entries graded as A*-B.

“Results are, however, all about our students and they have applied themselves well and fully deserve their results.

“I trust that their individual results will now enable them to take their next steps whether that be university, apprenticeship, college or employment.”

The Callerton Road school's Year 13 cohort was made up of 116 students - 50



Katrina Sanders with her results



Students Liana Brown and David Johnson



The moment of truth for Ponteland High School students

boys, and 66 girls – who studied a wide range of Level 3 courses.

Ninety per cent of learners entered traditional A-level courses, making a total of 447 exam entries, with the remaining being for Applied General courses and Cambridge Technical (CTEC) qualifications.

The school is also celebrating strong GCSE results.

There were 21 students who gained the top Grade 9 in English compared to 11 last year with 31% of all English grades at 7-9 (27% in 2018)

In Maths 17 students gained Grade 9

compared to 15 last year and 25% of all Maths grades were 7-9 (the same as last year).

Nearly two-thirds of students are entered for the English Baccalaureate and 28% achieved the EBacc this year with strong passes in English and Maths to complement Grade 4 or better grades in the other subjects compared to 24% in 2018.

In addition, 26% received grades of 9-7 or equivalent, 57% received grades 9-5 or equivalent, 73% of all entries received grades of 9-4 or equivalent and 15 students gained five or more Grade 9s.



Natalie Edge receives her results - and a celebratory hug



All smiles for Niamh Flood, left, and Ellen Sparshott



Lauren Beales with her A-level exam results



High-flying learner Sam Dodgson with his parents



Students eagerly await their results papers

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New health initiative in Ponteland

Insight into cancer awareness will feature as the first in a planned series of initiatives aimed at improving people's health in Ponteland.

Experts at the Ponteland Medical Group and the practice Patient Participation Group hope their programme will grow to cover a range of wellbeing topics.

The first event will see Suzanne Doney, Northumberland Community Cancer Awareness Co-ordinator, talk about aspects of the disease on Wednesday, September 11.

In her role, she reaches into communities to deliver key messages around cancer awareness, such as main symptoms, advice on reducing risk and cancer screening programmes.

Doctor Lily Lamb, pictured, of Ponteland Medical Group, said: "Informing the community about issues that affect their health and those closest to them is important.

"Encouraging people to lead a healthier lifestyle, recognise symptoms and know

when to seek medical advice does improve health outcomes.

"To help the practice reach as many people as possible, it has decided to trial a series of events on a variety of health topics.

"These events will also give the practice an opportunity to meet and engage with members of the local community and this will give us a better understanding of the problems they face accessing healthcare services."

Gordon Allan, Chair of the Patient, Participation Group, added: "It is good to see the practice reaching out and engaging with the local community. I hope these events will be welcomed by patients.

"Given time, they will also create opportunities where the practice and the community can work together to improve health outcome for local residents."

Residents are welcome to attend Suzanne's talk, which is from 12.30pm to 1.30pm at Ponteland Medical Group, Primary Care Centre, Meadowfield.



Dr Lily Lamb



Gordon Allan



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FLOOD RISK IN PONTELAND COMMUNITY DROP-IN EVENT

Wednesday 18 September, 2pm – 7pm
Ponteland Memorial Hall, Downstairs Lounge area

Everyone is welcome to our drop-in event to find out more about developments on the Ponteland Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS) being delivered by the Environment Agency.

Agency officers will be at the event to answer any questions you may have, to update you about the scheme and listen to your feedback.

You are also welcome to give us your feedback online.

You'll find information about the scheme and the opportunity to have your say at

[consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/north-east/
ponteland-flood-alleviation-scheme-information](http://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/north-east/ponteland-flood-alleviation-scheme-information)

The event is part of our ongoing commitment to providing the local community with information on how we are working to reduce flood risk in Ponteland.

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Picture postcards revive town's rich history

The past has come to life through a new booklet which highlights historic photographs of Ponteland.

It has been produced by Ponteland Civic Society, with the intention of informing residents and the wider public about the town and its surrounding rich heritage.

The images are derived mainly from postcards, and such has been the interest shown that a further publication is planned as a Ponteland Community Partnership project early next year.

Initial plans are for it to contain illustrations of local walks and descriptions of the history of Ponteland and the Darras Hall estate which can be seen on the routes.

The booklet, currently on display at The Badger pub, is available free of charge from a variety of outlets.

These include the library, the town council's office, Ponteland Memorial Hall, Merton Hall, Darras Hall Estate office, St Mary's church hall, U3A, Ponteland Golf Club, Ponteland Hardware, One Stop, and Iain Nicholson & Co Solicitors.

The heyday of the picture postcard dates from 1902 when the Post Office first permitted the use of a 'divided back' which meant the entire front could be used for a picture.




The availability of a fast and frequent postal service, before the universal availability of the telephone, meant postcards quickly became a popular means of communication.

The Ponteland Civic Society gives talks on subjects of local interest at 7.30pm on the last Monday of each month, between September and April, at Ponteland Social Club, Merton Way.

More information is at pontcivicsociety.pontelandonline.co.uk


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Performers get in the swing for surprise golf club show

Golfers were treated to a performance that was anything but par for the course when a repertoire company dazzled by taking to the stage at their club.

Members of Ponteland Golf Club enjoying a Senior Ladies Night found themselves spectators rather than players when Ponteland Repertory Society delivered a surprise clubhouse show.

They sang a variety of songs in telling the story of a difficult love affair, a performance that started when Philip Browell burst from the bar to sing *That's Amore*.

He was followed by Izzy Ions, who sang the dramatic tune *Stop In The Name of Love*, and Jules Stevenson Warrender, Lizzie Browell and Hayley Olsen chimed in with *Wash That Man Right Out of My Hair*.

Alex Easten gave a powerful rendition of *Somebody to Love*, joined by a backing group which included Hayley and Ruth Browell.

And Jonny Woollett joined proceedings by delivering comic moments and improvisation, involving the audience where possible.

Rep chairman, Jason Long, praised Jackie Wighton for coordinating the entertainment, and Brian Hamilton, Seniors Captain, and Martin Wighton, Seniors Vice Captain, for making the performers welcome.

He said: "One of the core aims of the Rep and Preppies Youth Theatre is to showcase talent. I am delighted we have another format to add to our repertoire."



Sainsbury's marks its 150th anniversary with series of town events

Supermarket giant Sainsbury's has committed to '150 days of community' action in Ponteland, a move that will see staff carry out volunteering activities over the coming months.

Part of a national project to celebrate the company's 150th anniversary, it has already led employees at the town's branch to take part in a morning litter pick.

Locally, the retailer has also started working with Ponteland Town Council on the scheme in a bid for maximum impact.

Store manager Ian Coates said: "We're really excited to be helping a local cause, and supporting Ponteland Town Council is a great way for our colleagues to come together and support the community."

"It's so important for us to give back to our local community, and what better time than our 150th year."

Research by Sainsbury's has revealed people who connect better with their community are more likely to be living well.

From this key insight, its stores have begun working to improve the way they connect with their local area, helping increase opportunities for residents to feel part of a greater community.

Ponteland Mayor, Alan Varley, said: "We were delighted to be approached by Sainsbury's to get involved with this project."

"The town council has provided equipment for the staff who have already carried out a major clean up of the centre of Ponteland."

"We are looking forward to working with them further and would like to thank Sainsbury's and the staff for their assistance."



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