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Medals were on display during the event

Much to talk about for tea party visitors

Community spirit sees tea party reign supreme

A wartime-themed tea party received the Royal seal of approval – despite the absence of its hoped for very special guest.

The Queen gave her apologies for not attending the event, organised by the 1st Ponteland Girls Brigade and to which she was invited.

Group members wrote to ask if she would like to visit the celebration, held on Saturday November 9 at Ponteland Methodist Church.

In reply, an adviser said she had other Weekend of Remembrance obligations but passed on her best wishes.

They said she was impressed by the brigade's work in laying on the event for Armed Forces veterans and the community.

In all, over 200 people attended to enjoy

tea, cakes and scones, as well as entertainment including songs from the past.

Fiona Thomson, 30, 1st Ponteland Girls Brigade team leader, said: "We do fairly often write to the Queen to ask if she will visit.

"On this occasion the reply came that she could not make it due to Remembrance Day obligations but wishing us well anyway.

"The event was a great success. What started out small-scale grew legs and got bigger and bigger. Around 200 people were here at the height of the day.

"This was a fantastic way for the girls to show great community spirit and to remember all that the veterans did.

"There were some very touching stories, including from one Armed Forces veteran who told of his wartime imprisonment.

"His words left a deep mark on our members, with one of the girls saying she would never forget them."

The event was funded with a £500 grant from Ponteland Town Council's new Poppy Project, which encourages young people to help their community.

The brigade's five 14-18-year-old members were tasked with its organisation as a way of helping them master money before heading to university.

However, members from across all its age ranges, which run from five to 18, took part.

Although refreshments were served free of charge, £450 was raised from a raffle and tombola for the Treats for Troops charity.

The 1st Ponteland Girls Brigade thanked the town council for the funding.

Cover shot and p3 pics by Barry Pells.

Candidates go head-to-head in bid for election success

The constituency may be true blue, but Hexham's Conservative candidate Guy Opperman faces challenge at this month's general election – but no threat from the Brexit Party.

Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party are fielding candidates in a seat won by Mr Opperman in 2017 with a crushing majority of 9,236.

His campaign has been boosted by Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage's

decision not to field candidates in seats held by Tory MPs.

On Thursday, December 12, Mr Opperman will bid for a fourth successive term, having become Hexham's MP in 2010 and also retaining the seat in 2015.

In the 2017 election, he polled 24,996 votes for a 54.1 per cent share of the local vote - with turnout standing at 46,224, or 75.7 per cent of the electorate - for the Conservatives.

His main challenger was Labour's Stephen Powers, who won 15,760 votes for a 34 per cent share of the vote.

Although Mr Opperman increased his vote by 1.4 per cent, Mr Powers boosted Labour by 9.2 per cent.

Liberal Democrat Fiona Hall was third with 3,285 votes, or a 7.1 per cent electorate vote, with Green Party candidate Wesley Foot winning 1,253 votes, or 2.7 per cent.

The UK Independence Party's Stuart Miles was fifth and last with 930 votes, or a two per cent share of the electorate.

Here we look at the Hexham constituency's four candidates:

Guy Opperman, Conservative

Guy Opperman, 54, a former barrister who was called to the Bar in 1989, has been Hexham's MP since 2010.

In September 2012 he was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Immigration Minister, in the Home Office.

He then became an Assistant Whip and was promoted to Government Whip and Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury in July 2016.

After the 2017 general election, he was appointed as Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion at the Department for Work and Pensions.

Now on the campaign trail, Guy said: "First and foremost, we need to get Brexit done and end the gridlock at Westminster.

"My commitment to voters is that, if re-elected, I will vote for us to leave the EU with the deal negotiated by the PM.

"Locally I have campaigned tirelessly alongside local councillors and communities to protect our precious green belt.

"When there was the prospect of an avalanche of 2,000 new houses on the outskirts of Ponteland many of us joined forces to oppose this totally inappropriate over-development.

"I am also incredibly proud of the investment we are seeing in our schools. The £45m Ponteland school and leisure complex, which will open next year, will be a fantastic new facility for our area."



Guy Opperman, Conservative

Penny Grennan, Labour

Penny Grennan learnt her political values at the knee of her father, who left school at 13, worked in a chemical factory and became a town councillor at 21.

Through him, she says she learned "the crucial importance of education and equality of opportunity".

She says she has spent most of her adult life working to redress the balance between those with choices and those without.

She has done this by working in marginalised communities in the North-East and with the long term unemployed, BAME, refugees, the homeless, young offenders, truants and adults returning to education.

And she has also worked in Trade Union education and adult learning and helped communities to find their voice through setting up local newspapers.

Penny said: "I am appalled at the terrible impact almost 10 years of austerity have had on our communities and in every area of our public services across our region.

"Record numbers are using foodbanks, a total failure to build affordable housing, our NHS stretched beyond its limits, massive reductions in education spending.

"I am committed to fairness for all, to representing the best interests of everyone in this constituency, and to ensuring we tackle the climate emergency with the urgency it requires."



Penny Grennan, Labour

Stephen Howse, Liberal Democrats

Stephen Howse, 31, was born in Newcastle and has lived in the North East most of his life.

A former Manchester University politics student, he works in research for an organisation which campaigns to get more women and girls into STEM subjects, and his professional background includes campaigning, media and policy work.



Stephen Howse, Liberal Democrats

He is standing as MP because he believes people in the constituency deserve to have a Liberal Democrat representative who reflects their views, including on Brexit.

If elected, Stephen plans to work with MPs from across the House of Commons to stop Brexit, believing people in the Hexham constituency are broadly liberal in their social and economic outlook, having voted to remain in the 2016 referendum.

He admits Brexit is the immediate issue of concern but believes in the longer term there is much to do if Britain is to build a brighter future.

His priorities include improving what he calls Northumberland's "flagging" public transport, including the bus service to Ponteland and considering the options for a rail service to the town.

Stephen is also keen to improve training and education options for working-age adults so everyone is able to take new job opportunities as they are created.

Nick Morphett, Green Party

Nick Morphett, 43, is a veterinary surgeon, environmental campaigner and care worker campaigning on social and environmental issues. From Acomb, he splits his time between wildlife veterinary work, conservation volunteering and caring for people with learning disabilities.



Nick Morphett, Green Party

He insists the Green Party has a "bold vision for a better future", a message he says he is honoured to deliver to Hexham's constituents.

Nick said: "All our policies are geared towards improving people's lives while simultaneously benefiting the environment – it's the ultimate 'win-win' situation. One example would be 'rewilding' the uplands, something that I'm particularly passionate about.

"By encouraging trees to grow, we can combat climate breakdown and the wildlife crisis while also creating new jobs and opportunities for recreation, as well as preventing flooding downstream."

He describes Brexit as "a mess", adding: "The overly simplistic in/out referendum was a mistake, and the only way to solve the problem now is to hold a second referendum where we get to choose between a specific deal and remaining in the UK.

"The Green Party is strong on the economy too – our Green New Deal will create a 'just transition' to a cleaner, greener world that makes us all healthier and spiritually, as well as materially wealthier."

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Daytime offences continue as nights darken



By PC Lee Davison, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer

Opportunist crimes continue to be reported in both residential and rural areas, including a small number of burglaries during daylight hours, with electrical items and jewellery targeted.

Power tools and equipment are also attractive to thieves, with motor vehicles and building sites targeted. Police advice is for residents and businesses to remain vigilant, including being watchful of unknown or unfamiliar vehicles.

Cold call and online fraud

Residents continue to report concerns of cold calls, spam emails and online fraud activity. Fraud is wrongful or criminal deception intended to cause financial loss or cause another person to have some sort of personal loss. Anyone can be a victim of fraud; however, elderly residents are more vulnerable to this type of activity.

Fraud comes in many forms – and people can take simple steps to protect themselves from becoming a victim, including:

- Not giving any personal information - name, address, bank details, email or phone number - without being sure the person requesting it is credible or from a credible organisation.
- Never sending information via email or in answer to an email. Banks and other financial institutions will not send an email asking for information. This will be a phishing email where fraudsters email to see who responds in an attempt to steal an identity.
- Shredding paperwork such as receipts or bank statements so no-one can copy or use the information contained.
- Taking action if bills, invoices, or receipts for things which haven't been bought or ordered are received. This could indicate that identity fraud has taken place.

Anyone who needs advice about fraud should call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 to discuss their situation with a specialist fraud adviser.

Drink and drug driving

With the festive season fast approaching it is worth raising awareness of the impact of drink and drug driving. Driving or operating a vehicle while impaired by alcohol or drugs, including recreational drugs and those prescribed by a doctor, to a level that makes you incapable of driving safely poses a danger.

Any amount of alcohol can impair judgement and ability to drive safely by creating a feeling of over-confidence which makes judging distance and speed more difficult and slows reaction time considerably, putting at risk lives including pedestrians. Processing information also takes a lot longer

than usual, with instructions to muscles from the brain delayed, slowing reaction times.

Anyone caught and convicted faces a driving ban, large fine or a prison sentence.

Officers have the powers to ask a driver to give a roadside breath test if:

- They have been involved in an accident, or are suspected of having been drinking alcohol
- They have committed a traffic offence while driving a vehicle, regardless of whether or not the police reasonably suspects they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs

Anyone who refuses to take the breath test, or who fails to provide it, can be arrested.

Drink or drug driving can lead to a criminal record, heavy fine, loss of licence and an increase in insurance premiums, with some insurers refusing to insure. There may also be issues with travelling to certain countries, and endorsements can be carried on the driving licence for a number of years.

Remember – always consider the morning after the night before when drinking, and don't risk driving for many hours afterwards. The only thing that gets rid of alcohol is time not showers, a cooked breakfast or coffee.

For further information visit drinkaware.co.uk and morning-after.org.uk

Community Speedwatch

Community Speedwatch volunteers continue to deploy when the weather and light conditions allow them to do so safely. Over past four weeks 42 vehicles have been recorded speeding, resulting in 38 warning letters sent to registered keepers of vehicles.

Neighbourhood Team Update

Residents may now be aware that local Neighbourhood Officers have moved out of their base in Ponteland Fire Station. The team continue to have a presence in the area, utilising an office base in Communications Centre – the old police HQ – while building works progress. I am also pleased to welcome PC Phil Oliver to the team.

The East Tynedale Neighbourhood Team can be contacted by emailing easttynedale.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk. The public can provide information in relation to crime confidentially to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via Crimestoppers website.

Phone firm signals intent by winning mast planning bid

Ponteland is on the cusp of a new digital communications age after a plan to install a towering 5G-enabled phone mast on green belt was approved.

Planners gave the go-ahead for Reading-based Mobile Broadband Network Limited (MBNL) to erect the 20m-high structure off the A696, near Newcastle Airport.

MBNL, a joint venture between mobile networks Three and EE, will position the tower at the site of an existing 15m-tall mast which it will replace.

The company claims the scheme will bring advanced 5G coverage, as well as improved 3G and 4G, to the airport, its hotels and the surrounding area.

But its proposal did not pass without controversy, with three official objections lodged and several town councillors expressing concern.

Opposition from the public included fears around the safety of mobile technology and worries of extensive felling of trees to facilitate uninterrupted transmission.

However, Northumberland County Council's (NCC) Castle Morpeth Local Area Planning Committee granted approval after being told by its own officers there were no grounds for refusal.

In a report, planning technician and case officer Adam Ali dismissed concerns around health from possible radiation exposure, based on existing national guidelines.

He added: "Mobile phone use is a global practice that continues to intensify and, as a consequence of that, supporting apparatus is essential in that growth.

"On that basis, the proposal has been assessed on design grounds and whilst the overall massing of the replacement monopole is greater, it is considered to be acceptable in accordance with design related policies of the development plan.

"While it is accepted that the proposed telecommunications pole would be 5m greater in height than the existing pole, when viewed in context with the surrounding area and the trees partially screening the site, the increased massing and size of the monopole is not considered to be to a degree that would be overly impacting or visually intrusive."

The monopole will support six antenna apertures, three 600mm dishes and one 300m dish, which will be relocated from the existing structure.

There will also be eight electronics cabinets installed at ground level, and ancillary works carried out, all within a new secure compound.

In September, NCC agreed to extend a 28-day public consultation by a day at the request of Ponteland Town Council so that it could better inform residents of the scheme.

The current installation sits adjacent to mature tree cover, which partly screens it and covers all ground-based equipment.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Why do most people see a financial adviser?

By David Lamb, Lamb and Associates

In my experience, most people do not wake up one morning and think 'Oh, I really need to see a financial adviser'.

They may have concerns about the returns they are getting from their money or worried that their pension will be enough for when they retire.

Unfortunately this means that often reluctantly they will, after much humming and hawing, make an appointment with a financial adviser, worried about what they are going to be sold and how much is it going to cost.

And being sold something, that they really did not understand or value is, sadly, very common.

But be honest, how many people are really interested in ISAs, pensions, unit

trusts, UK equity, European, Far East, Emerging Markets or Japanese Small Companies funds?

Deep down, what most people really, really want, is to maintain, or improve their LIFESTYLE, and the main purpose of their money is to support this.

The products, often the main focus of financial advisers (where they traditionally get paid) are just tools to maximise tax efficiency or provide (potentially) better returns, depending upon the risk they want to take.

Sadly, most financial advisers don't understand this and see it as an opportunity to sell.

If you think you need to work with a financial planner, make sure that they are interested in getting to know you,

your lifestyle and understand your aims and objectives and your lifestyle, before they even get to know about your money.

If they just want to talk about your money, show them where the door is.

As it is Christmas soon, we thought we'd give away 12 copies of the book 'Enough? How much money you need for the rest of your life?' by Paul Armson (£12.99 from Amazon). One for each day of Christmas!

If you would like to grab a copy, please telephone or email the office. This is on a first-come, first-served basis.

January will be an exciting time for us. I'm looking forward to writing that article for the next edition!

Happy Christmas.

Duchess on hand to honour charity champ Bruce

Sustained and selfless service to the community has landed grandfather Bruce Grant with one of Britain's most illustrious medals.

Bruce, from Darras Hall, has been awarded the British Empire Medal for his work with the Pont Charity Group (PCG), which he formed in 2010 and through which he helped to raise around £100,000 for good causes.

The largest donations were made to the Great North Air Ambulance, Children North East, service personnel charity, SSAFA, the Children's Heart Unit Fund, in Newcastle, and Tynedale Hospice.

Friends say he acted mainly on his own initiative, displaying hard work throughout and showing massive commitment to the cause during the four years the PCG operated, to 2017.

The dad-of-two, who is widowed and aged in his early 90s, was presented with his medal, given in the Queen's

Birthday Honours, by the Duchess of Northumberland on Monday, November 4.

Friend Andy Anderson said: "Bruce initiated fundraising events and spent many hours outside in all weathers raising money, selling raffle tickets and cajoling people to help him support a large number of charities.

"Bruce's imagination and persuasive powers were at the root of the success. He was keen to engage young adults in the hope that he might persuade them to join, or affiliate with, the charity.

"One example was when he approached students for ideas on what might entice a younger audience to his events.

"A young woman suggested a charity fashion show, which quickly led to Bruce approaching department store John Lewis to successfully persuade them to be part of the fundraising effort and to sponsor the show.

"There are a number of similar examples of Bruce's success in raising funds.



Bruce Grant has been honoured for his fundraising

"Bruce has given a significant amount of his time to fundraising and is an unsung hero in his local community. His dedication and commitment are fully deserving of recognition."

Created in 1922, the British Empire Medal is awarded for meritorious civil or military service.



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Richard Winter, left, and Mike Russell



Richard Winter at the Barcelona event

Dentist's brush with success in triathlon triumph

Ponteland dad-of-three Richard Winter has achieved his crowning glory – by completing one of the world's toughest athletic challenges.

When it came to the crunch, he overcame 11 hours and 27 minutes of swimming, running and cycling to finish the gruelling one-day Barcelona Ironman event.

Richard, 47, of Darras Hall, a partner in the Higgins and Winter dental practice, in Bell Villas, took to the water for a 2.4-mile swimming race in the Mediterranean Sea.

He then scrambled for his bike and cycled 112 miles in the countryside around the Spanish city - and finished by running a 26-mile marathon.

But he did not triumph alone in a quest for which he admits he has been building up to through a decade of less strenuous triathlon events.

Around 3,500 other athletes took part, including friend and neighbour Mike Russell, 50, his regular training partner.

In fact, Mike came out on top, completing the three-stage course in under 11 hours.

Richard was inspired to finish by the memory of family friend, Ponteland mum-of-three Alison Guadagno, who had battled a brain tumour but died in June.

During the run, he wore an Incredibles costume, the animated film character which Alison and her pals dressed as to raise cancer research funds after her diagnosis.

He said: "I drew inspiration from Ali, and the response I got in my outfit from fellow competitors and spectators was incredible.

"The toughest part of the event was at about the 16 or 17-mile point of the marathon, it's where you feel you can't go on. It was then that I drew strength from Ali.

"I had to withdraw from event last year because of injury, and this year's turned out to be the most gruelling I've taken part in

by a long shot, but I feel ecstatic to have completed it.

"I need a rest for next year, but I'd like to take part in it again the year after."

Richard and Mike were joined at the finishing line by wives Rona and Andrea and their three children.

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Former Ponteland Town Council councillor and chairman of the planning committee speaks out in this month's letters...

Local planning policy is questioned

After attending a recent planning meeting at the town council's offices, I came away thinking, 'what does it take to get the town council to listen to local voices?'

Despite the fact that the committee was presented with several valid, material planning considerations, and had an unprecedented number of comments - more than 50 - from residents objecting to this particular application, they seemed unable to grasp the nub of the arguments and merely made a comment about construction traffic and health and safety.

This attitude seems at odds with statements made on the council's website that 'Town Councillors are unpaid volunteers and they all have the interests of Ponteland at heart' and 'our Planning Committee examines each application seriously, only making objections with material planning considerations'.

I came away feeling very disappointed and frustrated, and thought, 'why do we bother?'

David Butler

Ladywell Way, Ponteland

**Response from Councillor Alan Varley,
Mayor of Ponteland Town Council:**

"Ponteland Town Council is merely a statutory consultee to Northumberland County Council, who as the planning authority makes all decisions on planning applications.

All planning committees have national and local guidelines and members in Ponteland take their duties and responsibilities seriously, regularly raising appropriate objections or concerns on planning applications.

It is disappointing to note Mr Butler's suggestion that planning committee members are not doing their job properly.

Mr Butler, a former member of Ponteland Town Council, served on the planning committee and is well aware of the rules under which members operate and the grounds on which they can raise concerns or objections.

The committee spent a good deal of time discussing the application to which Mr Butler refers and, while anxious to raise residents' concerns with the county council, members could find no grounds on which to object to plans to build a dwelling in Ladywell Way.

NB. The Ladywell Way application was approved by Committee at NCC on November 11.

Police crackdown on speeding motorists required

In the November issue of Pont News & Views, our Ponteland Police Neighbourhood Officer, when referring to our community vehicle speed watch volunteers, said that it was worth noting that there had been recent deployments when volunteers had not recorded any speeding vehicles.

I took this comment (although in fairness he did not say this), to imply that the speed watch scheme is having a positive effect. It most certainly is but in my opinion and the opinion of many others I know, the scheme is only effective when the speed watch volunteers are active.

They are always clearly visible from a good distance away and motorists adjust their speed accordingly. In one position the volunteers use, they are clearly visible from as much as about 300 yards away.

I frequently travel around Ponteland roads, mainly Darras Hall, and the number of speeding vehicles is alarming. In the hours of darkness, speeds are often frightening. There is a point on Darras Hall where vehicle speeds are flashed by a monitor and I regularly see vehicles travelling close to twice the legal limit that do not slow down.

Sadly, vehicle speeding is not being reduced in the area and with all due respect to our volunteers, I feel that proper policing and punishment is the only way forward

J Malcolm Thompson

Western Way, Ponteland

Congratulations to young girl footballers

As a lover of soccer, I feel that I really have to congratulate the schoolgirl footballers from Ponteland Middle School for being chosen to represent England in the Danone Nations Cup.

Well done for putting up such a stout performance at the finals in the RCDE stadium out in Barcelona against the might of France and the USA, and being awarded the Fair Play Trophy, having been judged the nicest team in the tournament.

A truly splendid effort by the students of this small Northumberland school.

This, of course, is not the only sphere in which the school has excelled, which makes it doubly sad that both the county council and central government appear to be intent on squeezing it out of existence, scant reward.

John Hague

High View, Ponteland

January issue deadlines: Delivery of the January issue will start on Monday January 6th and be completed by Friday January 10th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday December 9th. 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 January 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 Wildlife Group

On Tuesday, December 3rd, Professor John Richards will talk about 'Flowers of the Dolomites' at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road, priced £2 which includes refreshments.

Ponteland Leisure Learning - U3A

At its meeting at 2pm on Wednesday December 4th in the Parish Centre, Thornhill Road, a talk with songs will be given by Old English Folk with the title 'The King's Shilling', followed by the U3A Choir and Faith Tea. On Wednesday January 8th Doug Collender will present the film 'The Way We Were'. Visitors no charge. Information is at u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or (01661) 824 953.

Christmas indoor market

On Sunday December 8th, from 11am to 4pm, a festive market of 25 local traders, selling beautiful hand-made gifts and products, takes place at Merton Hall, Merton Road, Ponteland. More details at CH Event on Facebook and at chevent.co.uk.

Ponteland Village WI

To end a very successful year, in which the group welcomed many new members, an evening looking at Christmas flowers will be held on Tuesday December 10th in St Marys Church Hall, Ponteland. Bring a £1 Secret Santa. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. Find it on Facebook or email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

The club's next meeting, at 2pm on Wednesday December 11th in the downstairs lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, will hear Irene Parker, from Hexham, talk about 'Let's be merry' floral arrangements. Visitors are welcome, with entry at £7.

Mental Health Talk

Dr Lily Lamb and Gordon Allan, in conjunction with the Sally Allan Fund, will give a presentation on mental health awareness, from 12.30pm to 1.30pm on Wednesday December 11th at Ponteland Medical Group, Ponteland Primary Care Centre, Meadowfield. All residents welcome.

Christmas Carol Concert

A concert, organised by Ponteland Rotary Club, takes place at 7.30pm on Thursday December 12th at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. It will feature traditional carols performed by talented musicians and singers, Bible readings and short prayers. Entry is £2 with accompanied children free.

Ponteland Lions Club

The club's next business meeting is on Wednesday December 13th at 7.30pm in Merton Hall, Merton Road. There is no social meeting or charity fund bookstall in

December. Information on activities is on 0845 833 9913.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

At 2pm on Wednesday February 12 at Kirkley Hall, David Richards will talk about 'Litter and fly tipping - the scourge of our time'. At the same time on Wednesday March 11, Liz Clark, of Northumbrian Hedgehog Sanctuary, will tell how the animals are nursed back to health and released to safe areas. Entry is £2 for members and £3 non-members. Information on is 07470 708 535, friendsofkirkleyhall@gmail.com and friendsofkirkleyhall.org

Whistling Sheep Ceilidh Band

The band's fundraiser ceilidh, in aid of mountain rescue, is on Friday March 6th at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, with families welcome, food included and a bar available. The band, which is available to play at events, meets on alternate Mondays after school at Ponteland High School. Information is at whistlingssheep.btck.co.uk.

Ponteland Community Partnership

There is no meeting in December. We have a new venue for next year - Bishop Merton Room, St Mary's Parish Hall, Thornhill Road. We will meet there monthly at 7pm, with the initial dates January 15th, February 19th, March 18th, April 15th and May 20th.

Ponteland Photographic Society

Members, from beginners upwards, meet in Merton Hall at 7.30pm each Monday to enjoy a varied programme which includes visiting speakers who expand knowledge and expertise. The society endeavours to be inclusive and welcoming. Visit PontelandPhotographicSociety.co.uk

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

This group meets the first Tuesday of each month, with speakers, cups of tea and occasional days out. Any lady interested should contact Eleanor Carr on (01661) 871768.

Ponteland Methodist Church Carpet Bowls Club

This friendly club meets on Mondays from 1.30pm to 3.30pm and Fridays from 7.30pm to 9.30pm. Experience not necessary. For further info contact Barbara on (01661) 824652.

Line Dancing

Dancers meet every Wednesday at 6.30pm in St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road, offering laughs, friendship and exercise to music, at £20 for 10 sessions. Dancing is at beginner and intermediate level and new dancers are welcome. A free taster session is offered. Contact Rosemary Gray (01661) 822493.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday services are held at 10am with children's activities and at 6.30pm. The 'Open Door' café is on Mondays from 1pm to 4pm serving soup, home-bakes & drinks. Toddler club is on Thursdays at 9.30am. A warm welcome is given to all activities, including walking groups, carpet bowls, Girls and Boys Brigade, fellowship groups, prayer meeting. Contact Ann Cooper at anncooperx@gmail.com or on (01661) 824347.

Walking For Health

A free weekly short health walk takes place every Tuesday, starting at 10.30am at Ponteland Leisure Centre. All welcome. Assistance dogs only. Contact Gordon Allan on 07936 135469 for more information.

Ponteland Village Bridge Club

Players of Duplicate Bridge meet every Friday at 7pm at Merton Hall, Merton Road, with about 20 boards tackled. Partners can be found, if needed. Contact Pete Ford on peteford24@hotmail.com or 07739 208308.

Creative Writing Group

Led by a qualified tutor, this class aims to inspire and encourage the writing of poetry and stories through stimulating workshop sessions in a friendly and supportive group. New or experienced writers welcome. It meets on Wednesday mornings at 9.30am in members' homes around Ponteland. Contact Claire at claire@claire276.plus.com or on (01434) 605276.

Scottish Country Dancing

Dalton Scottish Country Dancing Class and Bullocksteads SCD Club meets at 7.30pm on Tuesdays in Dalton Village Hall. Come along and enjoy friendly social dancing. All ages and new dancers welcome. A social dance is held each month to live accordion music. Contact Mike on 0781 8271287 or Ruth on (01661) 881654.

Ponteland Floral Art Club

The club meets on the third Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. There will also be a jewellery stall with items suitable for Christmas gifts.

Pont Badminton Club

Enthusiasts meet every Friday evening between 7.30pm and 9pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre, with adults of all ages assured a warm welcome. Turn up, or call 07986 388822 for more information.

Ponteland Ukulele Band

This is a friendly group of mixed ability ukulele players who meet on Tuesdays at the town's CIU, Merton Road, from 1pm to 3pm. New members welcome.

Bridge Club

New members are welcome to join a bridge club which meets every Tuesday until the end of April. Contact Mary Oldfield (01661) 821769.

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN PONTELAND

The Ponteland Churches wish you a peaceful and happy Christmas 2019

Song develops theme

By Revd. Captain Paul Allinson, Vicar of Ponteland

One of the most popular and well-known images associated with Christmas is that of the Madonna and Child. It is an image that encapsulates a moment in time, one of deepest care, reflection, protection and tender love.

It is a universal image that celebrates not just the first Nativity, as Mary and her newborn son share their first moments together in the Bethlehem stable, illuminated by a star and watched over by Joseph, shepherds and the Angelic Host, but a moment that echoes every human encounter between a parent and a vulnerable child held in their loving embrace.

Perhaps you, like I, have wondered what Mary was thinking as she looked upon her son that first Christmas night? The song 'Mary Did You Know' helpfully develops this theme in a profound way:

Mary, did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?

That this child that you delivered, will soon deliver you?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy has walked where Angels trod,

When you kiss your little baby you've kissed the face of God?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb.



This sleeping child you're holding is the great I Am.

While every child is a miraculous gift, this image of the Madonna and Child, so familiar to us, is unique.

This child is the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with Us. I believe that even if Mary didn't fully comprehend the divine miracle which she cradled in her arms – God made flesh before her very eyes and his incomprehensible significance to all humanity – she loved him unconditionally, forever and without limit.

Equally, she knew that he loved her as her son and Saviour unconditionally, forever and without limit. That was all he needed; she needed and all we need in order to discover the true meaning and joy of Christmas.

Christmas joy and peace to you all.

United Reformed Church, Broadway, Darras Hall

December 16th, 10am	Service
December 22nd, 10am	Family Service
December 25th, 10am	Christmas Day Service

St Mary the Virgin, Ponteland

December 24th, 3pm	Family Nativity with Carols
December 24th, 5pm	Family Nativity with Carols
December 24th, 7pm	Churches Together Lessons and Carols
December 24th, 11.30pm	Midnight Mass with Carols
December 25th, 8am	Christmas Holy Communion
December 25th, 10am	Christmas Eucharist with Carols

Holy Saviour, Milbourne

December 25th, 11.15am	Christmas Eucharist with Carols
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Methodist Church, Ponteland

December 8th, 10am	GB/BB Christmas Parade Service
December 22nd, 6.30pm	Carol Service
December 24th, 7pm	Carol Service at St Mary's
December 25th, 10.30am	Christmas Celebration

Methodist Church, Milbourne

December 22nd, 6.30pm	Carol Service
December 24th, 11.15pm	Christmas Eve Communion
December 31st, 11.30pm	Watch Night Service

St. Matthew's RC Church, Ponteland

December 25th, 10am	Mass
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December 14th, 10am-noon
Carol singing in the Broadway

December 18th, 6pm
Carols on the Green, St Mary's if wet

December 24th, 7pm
United Service at St Mary's

Ponteland Schools and Leisure

Kier Regional Building Scotland & North East



Dear Resident,

We have continued to progress well with our Phase 1 programme and have just completed week 53 of our programmed 85 weeks for the construction of the Schools, Leisure Centre and Community Crescent Hub. The new community Fire Station is receiving a few finishing touches and should be operational in the next few weeks.

During November we have continued to progress the external envelope to all areas and have made significant progress internal to both the Primary and Secondary Schools. This period has also allowed the management teams from both schools to visit the site to see how works have progressed over the past few months.

The torrential rain through November has been a challenge, but we are continuing to make progress and are endeavouring to minimise the muck being dragged off site. There have been a few days where this has been challenging and we can only apologise for any excess mud that has been seen on Callerton Lane however, we have been providing a road brush on a daily basis with a minimum of three visits to try to keep the road clear.

Overall, works are progressing well, and the Project is on track for hand-over in summer 2020.

What works you will see in the next 4 weeks?

- Continue to progress Brickwork to the Secondary School.
- Continue to progress M&E installations to the Secondary School.
- Continue to progress the internal fit-out to the Secondary School
- Complete Internal Partition Works to the Primary School.
- Continue to progress M&E installations to the Primary School.
- Commence the internal fit-out to the Primary School
- Continue to progress partition works to all Crescent areas.
- Continue to progress M&E installations to the Crescent areas.
- Progress curtain walling installations to the Crescent areas.
- Complete Pool Slab Construction to the North Crescent.
- Hand-over of new community Fire Station.
- Complete works to clean out of the pond behind the existing fire station.
- Works to commence for the external works to the Primary School.
- Complete the archaeological dig in the area of the new sports pitches.

Watch Points through November

- **Daily traffic movements in and out of the site**
- **HGV deliveries with concrete, cladding materials, M&E services materials, bricks, blocks, metal studs and drywall boards, and curtain walling materials**
- **Installation of cladding and curtain walling systems**
- **Crane operations**

CSR & Project Quick Facts

In works quite different to our normal construction operations, throughout the past month, we have had an archaeological team on site, investigating artefacts on the western side of the Fairney Burn. This area of the site had been identified as a possible area of archaeological interest, and as part of the contract works, required us to engage an archaeological team to complete a detailed investigation of the area. The work has been extremely time consuming however, it has unearthed some items of historical interest.

During the pre-construction stage of the project, a geophysical survey revealed evidence that suggested a small settlement dating back to the native Iron Age British population was present on site and may have been used during the Roman period. Due to the proximity to Hadrian's Wall, these farmsteads were identified as possible areas of historical importance. These small farmstead settlements were in use for hundreds of years but eventually fell out of use when Hadrian's Wall was built. No evidence of dwellings has been unearthed but items of pottery have been recovered from the ground, believed to be of Middle Iron Age, suggesting that the settlement may have been occupied between 400BC – 43AD. Of even greater interest was the discovery of two Bronze Age burials, which have been recovered and date back to 1,500 – 800BC, suggesting that humans were using the site for disposal of their dead for a millennium before the farmstead was constructed.



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



Roddy Graham
Project Leader
07849 098786
ksne.ponteland@kier.co.uk



Andy Todhunter
Operations Lead
07773 243081



Dozens getting set to compete in New Year wheelbarrow race

They are the runners and riders gearing up for a unique road-running contest that harks back to the Middle Ages.

Now dozens of competitors are setting the wheels in the motion for the annual Ponteland Wheelbarrow Race, which takes place on New Year's Day.

The contest sees them zoom around a mile-long route based on the Blackbird Inn in the heart of the town, including up North Road and into Thornhill Road.

Each team consists of two people who alternate in pushing or sitting in the barrow and last year, 69 entrants competed.

Duo Mark Turnbull and Julian Goodhall won in 6min 35secs, followed by Matthew Crooks and George Hunter, 12 seconds behind.

However, none could pip the current record to complete the course of just over six minutes.

Starting at noon, the race, organised by the Ponteland 41 Club with the help of Ponteland Rugby Club, has been run in snow, rain and sunshine - but it goes ahead whatever the weather.

A spokesman said: "All of Ponteland turns out to watch and wish each other a Happy New Year. Lots of people enter in fancy dress.

"The event aims to continue a local tradition, raise money for charity, and encourage the Ponteland community to come and meet each other at a local occasion."

The Mayor of Ponteland, Councillor Alan Varley, will take part in a parade down Thornhill Road. Last year's event raised £2,818 for St Oswald's Hospice and Tynedale Hospice.

Road danger concerns overruled as council's warning is rejected

Councillors in Ponteland have failed in their bid to stop a planning initiative close to a road they claim is an accident blackspot.

They allege approval for a scheme on green belt land south-west of Middle Coldcoats, at Milbourne, would put motorists in greater danger.

Ponteland Town Council (PTC) warned there had been three fatalities, five serious accidents and several minor shunts on the northbound A696 since 2014.

The stretch passes the site where Keith Franklin, of Milbourne Lodge, Ponteland, had applied for – and now won – approval to turn a private stable over to commercial breeding.

PTC's planning committee warned it was extremely concerned that slow moving vehicles pulling horse trailers and similar vehicles would make the road even more hazardous.

It claimed this would happen as drivers attempted to join the traffic flow where vehicles could be travelling at the national speed limit.

Northumberland County Council (NCC) was also called on by PTC to reject Mr

Franklin's bid for permission to change the use of the site..

Due to the objection coming from another local authority, NCC passed the application for consideration to the Castle Morpeth Local Area Planning Committee.

However, the planning committee was told development could only be refused on highways grounds if there was an unacceptable impact on safety, or the cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

A report reveals highways experts were consulted on Mr Franklin's plan and raised no objection after detailed information of accident data for the past five years was submitted.

The report stated information provided was "considered acceptable with the low levels of arrivals and departures unlikely to result in any detrimental impacts upon highways safety".

It added: "It is therefore considered that sufficient information has been provided to allow the local planning authority to conclude there would be no adverse impacts upon highways safety, in accordance with relevant local and national planning policy."

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Chemical thesis detective work proves elementary

A former research student is finally in his element – after being reunited with a copy of the PhD thesis he wrote almost 60 years ago and lost to fire.

The formula for success for Dr Oliver Ord, 84, was a secret mission launched by staff at Ponteland Manor care home, where he is a resident.

Through their Wishing Tree initiative, in which they try to make residents' wishes come true, they contacted Newcastle University's chemistry department where Dr Ord wrote his paper in 1960.

With the help of Dr David Fulton, a senior lecturer in organic chemistry, and the university's customer services, library, technical and research teams, the last remaining copy of the thesis was located.

The university's library then paid for a replica copy to be made, complete with authentic binding and sizing of the period.

Dr Ord was reunited with his work when he returned to the classroom to reminiscence with those who had given their time and resources to make his wish come true.

While at the university, he browsed archival materials and relived memories of his study years - and even spotted his signature on the attendance list for a 1958 lecture.

Paula Routledge, home manager at Ponteland Manor, said: "Residents are at the heart of everything we do here, and we always like to go the extra mile to grant their wishes.

"Dr Ord was overwhelmed to be in possession of his original PhD thesis once again, which he had spent years researching and writing, and which he thought he would never see again.

"I am really pleased that we were able to join forces with Newcastle University to make Oliver's wish become a reality."

Dr David Fulton added: "In this special and unique circumstance, we knew we had to help make this wish come true.

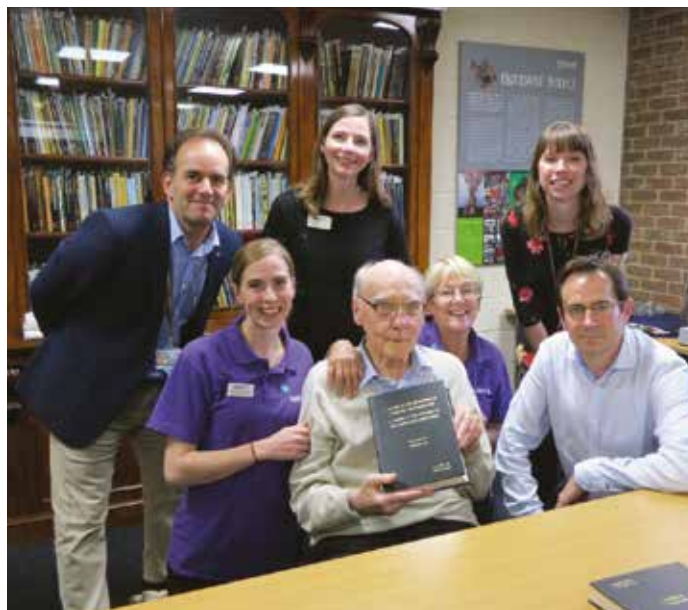
"Reuniting Dr Ord with his thesis was a wonderful, rewarding experience for us all, and shows the power of what can be achieved when helpful people come together.

"We are so pleased that Oliver has the result of his many years of hard work, with much-loved memories of Newcastle University, back in his hands once again."

After university, Dr Ord joined Unilever as a research scientist, before moving to its London head office, from where he travelled the world visiting the company's many production sites.

In 1976, he moved back to Newcastle to become chief science officer at Northumbrian Water, where he remained until his retirement.

Just before he moved to Ponteland Manor, his own copy of the thesis was accidentally destroyed when left alongside old documents earmarked for disposal.



Left to right, Peter Kelly (NU Advancement), Rebecca Jackson (Ponteland Manor), Julia Robinson (Liaison Librarian), Dr Oliver Ord, Jan Wallace (Ponteland Manor), Kimberley Hodkinson (Senior Archives Assistant), and David Fulton (Chemistry)

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Paws for thought as dogs blessed at church service

All creatures great and small were welcomed to a Ponteland church for a special blessing service – but only dog owners saw the light.

They turned up in numbers for the first Blessing of our Animals, held at St Mary's Church in Thornhill Road.

Their canines received a blessing from the Reverend Capt Paul Allinson in an event which is the first to be held at the church.

Churchgoer June Atkinson said owners of animals of all kinds were welcome to bring their pets along.

Despite only dog owners responding, she said the service had been a great success, attracting churchgoers and non-churchgoers alike.



Owners and their dogs gather after the blessing service

She added: "It was a very nice service. Each dog was blessed inside the church as it was brought by its owner.

"We thought that somebody might actually bring along a pony or horse but

that didn't happen.

"It was good that the service was not only attended by people who come to church regularly, but by others who don't."



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Never forgotten – the wartime heroes who saved a nation

Ponteland's brave war dead, and those who fought and survived conflict, were remembered among emotional scenes on Remembrance Day last month.

On a bright and sunny Sunday morning, amid a November of record rainfall, the town remembered Britain's sacrifices from the two World Wars and other military campaigns.

The Duchess of Northumberland, the county's Lord Lieutenant, attended the annual parade which marched from the leisure centre to Ponteland War Memorial.

Representatives of the Armed Forces, Boys' and Girls' Brigades, scouts, guides, Northumbria Police, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service and other local organisations, were led by the Lord Lieutenant and Ponteland Mayor, Councillor Alan Varley.

The service was taken by the Reverend Captain Paul Allinson, vicar of St Mary's Parish Church, the Reverend Jona Sewell, of Ponteland Methodist Church, and Canon Christine Brown.

A two-minute silence was observed at 11am, after a bugler had played the Last Post.

While around 30 wreaths were being laid, the names of the 64 men listed on the war memorial were read out by Anna Bennett and Tom Storer, Year 12 students at Ponteland High School, who also laid a wreath on behalf of the school.

After the service, on Sunday, November 10, the parade marched back to the leisure centre, with refreshments provided in the Memorial Hall for all.

Coun Varley said: "We were honoured to have the Lord Lieutenant in attendance. The Duchess said she was very impressed by the number of people from Ponteland who marched to remember the war dead and the sacrifices made over many years.

"She said she was particularly impressed by the large number of children and young people who paraded and said that Ponteland should be very proud of them."

Earlier in the Weekend of Remembrance, wreaths were laid by Ponteland Town Council on the three Commonwealth War Graves in St Mary's Churchyard.

The annual parade is organised by the town council, which had stressed that all were invited to parade and that any organisation or individual could lay a wreath during the service.

Coun Varley added: "There have been reports this year of parades in some towns and cities being cancelled or stopped altogether.

"Ponteland should be proud that so many people come together every year to pay their respects. Far from stopping, our parade seems to be getting larger each year."

He said plans are already being made for next year's Remembrance Parade, which will be on Sunday, November 8.

Ponteland Poppy Project, set up earlier this year to encourage young people to help their community, has already received two applications and councillors say funding is available for more.

Ponteland Scouts and Ponteland Girls Brigade have received funding, and any group of two or more can apply for up to £250 for a project involving people aged 21 or under.

Councillors say they are concerned to ensure the wartime sacrifices of Ponteland will not be forgotten and the project, aimed at developing life skills in the young, is a way for residents to remember.

For more details, contact Ponteland Town Council at ponteland-tc.gov.uk or call 01661 825 092.

Latest news from Ponteland Town Council

New Year's Eve Fireworks display

Following a request from the proprietor of the Rialto restaurant, the council approved a grant of £500 towards the cost of holding a fireworks' display on New Year's Eve. Councillors requested that letters be sent out to all licensed premises and restaurants asking for their assistance by ensuring anyone going outside for the display had a plastic glass and asking if it would be possible to have additional security on duty.

Dalton Village Hall

The council approved a grant application of £1,500 for Dalton Village Hall.

Poppy project application

Following the launch of the council's Poppy Project earlier this year, an application had been received from the 1st Ponteland Scouts Group, which was seeking funds for a project relating to their conservation badges. This required some litter picking equipment including litter pickers and gloves. The council approved a grant application of £300 and asked if something could be printed on any hi-vis clothing giving recognition to the PTC Poppy Project.

Youth outreach work

Councillors reviewed an update report from NE Youth, which is providing outreach workers in Ponteland two nights per week.

Northumberland County Council report

Councillor Richard Dodd reported that there was a Local Transport Programme meeting being held on November 15 to discuss the schemes that had been submitted for 2020-21.

He hoped to get work completed on the Merton Way north car park and the resurfacing of the roads from his Members' Small Schemes Allowance this year. He stated a report had been produced relating to the readiness of NCC for winter weather, and he advised councillors that parents were being allowed to drop off their children at the Darras Hall Primary School drop off point.

Mayor's report

The Mayor provided details of his diary commitments for November and December.

He reported that the Remembrance event held on November 10 had been well organised, and he was pleased the Lord-Lieutenant had attended the event, and a letter of thanks had been sent to the Duchess of Northumberland.

He had also been delighted to attend a veterans' tea party on Saturday, November 9, which had been organised by Ponteland Girls Brigade, following receipt of a grant from the town council's Poppy Project fund.

The Mayor has also been very pleased to attend a 'Meet the Mayor' event held at Ponteland Primary School, at which he had answered questions from pupils about his role.

This report is based on the minutes of the Town Council meeting on November 13.

Countryside retreat gets expansion go-ahead

Council chiefs have approved their own application to extend a café at a visitor centre at a Northumberland beauty spot.

They have passed a scheme at Bolam Lake Country Park, near Belsay, which will see

an existing prefabricated portacabin grow in size.

However, Northumberland County Council did refer the proposal to its Local Area Council Planning Committee for decision.

Set within established woodland, the café will be extended by approximately 20sq m to the rear,

accommodating kitchen facilities.

No objections were submitted by either public or private body, or members of the public.

A report by the county council found the scheme would have no adverse impact on its surroundings, including woodland flora.

It stated no bat roost had ever been recorded in the visitor centre and the building is not thought to support features suitable for bat habitation.

And it recommended a timber screen be placed around the building to ensure the development is appropriate to its setting and context.

The report said the initiative met with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).



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

It added: "The extension to the visitor centre is a small portacabin building of appropriate scale.

"To ensure the impact of the proposal is appropriate a timber screen is proposed around the building which would ensure that the development is appropriate to the setting and context.

"As such, it is considered to comply with the aims of the NPPF."

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