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True blue as Conservatives hold Hexham constituency

Planning go-ahead for new college partnership

Snow patrols to counter winter weather woes

Special anniversary of school's founding is celebrated

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No time like the present as school marks tercentenary

Pupils and staff at Ponteland's oldest school have marked the 300th anniversary of the death of its founder by celebrating its past and looking to its future.

They took part in a special church service to remember Tyneside shipwright Richard Coates, whose financial legacy in 1719 led to the founding of the school which carries his name around eight years later.

And they also laid flowers on his grave at St Mary's Church and unveiled a commemorative plaque in the sensory garden directly behind the site of the first school building.

While today the location houses the Sanderson Young estate agent, in the early 18th century it was home to around 15 boys and girls from poor families who were given an education, thanks to Richard's legacy.

After his death his wife Barbara, who was from Ponteland, carried out his wishes and ensured the school was built and its pupils furnished with clothing and facilities to support their learning through an education trust which also still exists.

Heather Cape, Richard Coates CE School's headteacher, said: "I doubt if Richard would have dreamed that, 300 years later, there would still be a school in Ponteland bearing his name.

"It was the first school for the poor in Ponteland at a time when only the wealthy educated their children. I think he would be proud that we are still a unique school and one that is high-performing. The school has always moved with the times.

"There have been changes over the years, including moving from being a middle school to purely a primary school last summer which saw the age range of the children change.

"What was important was that the school remained. We want to make sure the school carries on for another 300 years."

Shortly before his death at the age of 46, Richard ensured provision was made in his will to set up a trust to pay for the schooling of poor children in the town, with funding coming from rents on properties he owned in Newcastle.

Opened in around in 1727, the school expanded to have two floors in its first location so that boys and girls could be taught separately.

It later moved to what is now Ponteland's Coates Green, then to Thornhill Road as a comprehensive school, before changing to a middle school and now a primary.

The commemorative plaque was created by the children and Northumberland artist Simon Terry.

Cover shot and P3 pics by Paul Norris

www.pontelandtowncouncil.co.uk



Rev Paul Allinson unveils new plaque with pupils Lily, nine, and Dante, eight



Headteacher Heather Cape addresses pupils and guests



Laying flowers are Isla, nine, and Dante, eight

Specialist learning centre agreed for Kirkley Hall

New tailored support for special needs and disabled students has been pledged for Ponteland after planning permission was granted for a state-of-the-art facility.

Bosses at Northumberland College say they now plan to press ahead with the centre at their Kirkley Hall campus which will be aimed at learners aged 16 to 24.

Students with specialist educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will benefit from adaptable classrooms with access to specialist computer software and technology, and a sensory experience learning room.

The facility will also have a low sensory quiet room, independent living skills kitchen, sensory garden, accessible toilets, wet room and employability hub.

It is part of a multi-million pound investment programme at the Ponteland site which also includes plans for an equine centre with an indoor arena, a specialist animal management centre and residential accommodation.

Planning permission comes less than a year after the college merged with Sunderland College to create Education Partnership North East, one of the largest college groups in the country.

Northumberland College principal Nigel Harrett said: "With our new facilities, those with special educational needs and disabilities will be individually supported through a revised and innovative curriculum, with tailored support, to achieve their ambitions and develop the skills to work inclusively at the college and in the wider community."



Northumberland College's Kirkley Hall campus

"Students will benefit from our purpose-built SEND centre, which will cater for their needs whilst promoting inclusion in a wider college environment and a career-focused enrichment programme in land-based vocations."

"This is an exciting development for all of our current students with special needs and disabilities, as well as prospective students across Northumberland, their parents, carers and wider support network."

Cath McEvoy-Carr, executive director of adult social care and children's services at Northumberland County Council, said: "We are very pleased to see this project progressing at Northumberland College."

"It will provide great new learning opportunities in Northumberland for young people with special educational needs and disabilities."



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MP retains seat amid emphatic Tory election win

Conservative MP Guy Opperman has called for Brexit to get done, after he retained his Hexham seat with a resounding victory in December's general election.

Already a true blue constituency, he increased his share of the vote by 0.4 per cent to 54.5 per cent to secure a 10,549 vote majority and a fourth successive term.

The Liberal Democrats and Green Party also upped their vote count, all at the expense of Labour, whose candidate Penny Grennan saw a 2.5 per cent vote slide, to 31.6 per cent, or 14,603 votes.

Lib Dem candidate Stephen Howse won 4,672 votes, or 10.1 per cent of the electorate – up three per cent – and the Green Party's Nick Morphett secured 1,723 votes for a 3.7 per cent share of the spoils, a one per cent increase.

Mr Opperman, a former barrister who became Hexham's MP in 2010 and retained the seat in 2015 and 2017, won 25,152 votes, up from 24,996 two years ago.

Turnout stood at 75.3 per cent, down 0.5 per cent on 2017, with around 46,000 of Hexham's 61,324 registered voters making it to polling stations.

Within minutes of his win, Mr Opperman told Pont News & Views: "It is an honour and privilege to have received such a vote of confidence from voters in Tynedale and Ponteland and to be re-elected as Member of Parliament for Hexham, with an increased majority.

"With a majority Conservative government we can now end the gridlock at Westminster, get Brexit done and begin to rebuild trust in politics."

On the campaign trail, he had told prospective voters that his priorities at a national level were finalising Brexit and that he preferred to leave the EU with the deal already negotiated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Locally, he pledged to continue to work to protect green belt land in his constituency from inappropriate over-development, and he praised recent investment in education.

On a night of political upheaval nationally, the Conservatives under Mr Johnson won a resounding majority of 365 seats, with Labour's tally crumbling from 262 to 203.

On the campaign trail, Ms Grennan told voters she was committed to fairness for all, represented the best interests of her would-be constituents and vowed to help tackle the so-called climate emergency.

Mr Howse said he believed Hexham's constituents supported the Lib Dem's stance on cancelling Brexit, pledged to improve Northumberland's public transport system and boost training and education options.

Mr Morphett, who lost his £500 election deposit after failing to win the legally required five per cent share of the vote, put forward what he called a "bold vision for a better future" to improve people's lives and protect the environment.



Guy Opperman has retained the Hexham seat for the Conservatives

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Meet Ponteland's new neighbourhood officer



By PC Phil Oliver, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer

I am the newly appointed member of the Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team. I will be working alongside long-standing team members PC Lee Davison and Special Constable Jon Gray, and other newly appointed team members PCSO Laura McCann and PCSO Cameron Hall.

Our mission is to work with the local community to identify and reduce crime, disorder and other issues, and to find long-term solutions, while providing a visible, uniformed presence, aimed at reassuring the local community and reducing the fear of crime. I am keen to build close ties with the people who live and work in and around Ponteland and would like to be contacted with any policing issues.

Old car warning

A new crime trend has emerged in recent weeks, with older models of Range Rovers being subject to thefts or damage. And a small number of burglaries and thefts have been reported during daylight and at night, with electrical items and jewellery targeted. Power tools and equipment have also proved attractive to thieves, with some motor vehicles and building sites hit. I would urge residents to remain vigilant and

to be alert to suspects and vehicles in the area and to keep property secure and out of sight, where possible.

Parking Issues

Issues concerning the parking of cars have been raised with the team over recent weeks, specifically in Callerton Lane, near Ponteland High School and Ponteland Middle School, at the start and end of the school day. Police and Civil Enforcement Officers, from Northumberland County Council, will be making regular patrols in the area at relevant times. Anyone parked on single or double-yellow markings may be subject to a Parking Charge Notice from the council, and those parked in an obstructive or dangerous manner may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice by the police. Places motorists should not park include:

- near entrances to school car parks
- anywhere that prevents access for the emergency services, specifically in the vicinity of the fire station on Callerton Lane
- at or near a bus stop
- opposite or within 10m of a junction, except in an authorised parking space
- opposite a traffic island, or if this would cause an obstruction, another parked vehicle
- where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles
- in front of an entrance to a property
- on a bend.

Drink and drug driving

While the Christmas and New Year celebrations may have come and gone, it is still worth raising awareness of the impact of drink and drug driving. Any amount of alcohol can impair judgement and reaction times, endangering the lives of other drivers and pedestrians. Anyone caught and convicted faces a driving ban and large fine, and even a prison sentence. Drink or drug driving can lead to a criminal record, an increase in insurance premiums – and some insurers will not insure anyone convicted – and there may be issues with travelling to certain countries. Remember – drivers should always consider the morning after the night before when drinking.

Community Speedwatch

Scheme volunteers continue to deploy when the weather and light conditions allow them to do so safely. Over the past four weeks, 46 vehicles have been recorded speeding, resulting in 40 warning letters being sent to registered keepers of vehicles.

Contact us

Residents may be aware that the policing team has moved from their former base in Ponteland Fire Station. The team continues to have a presence in the area, utilising an office base at the Police Training and Communications Centre, the old Northumbria Police HQ site. We expect to move into the new leisure and schools complex on Callerton Lane once it is completed.

You can contact a member of Neighbourhood Policing Team via northernprudhoenptmailbox@northumbria.pnn.police.uk. And information in relation to crime can be given confidentially to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via the Crimestoppers website.

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Matthew lands top award for Brigade endeavours

A Ponteland teenager has reached the pinnacle of progression with the Boys' Brigade by being awarded its highest honour.

Matthew Hudson, 18, of Darras Hall, celebrated gaining the Queen's Badge by inviting his first BB leader, Maureen Hodson, to make the presentation.

The Oxford University ancient and modern history student met up with Maureen for the ceremony on Sunday, December 8, as part of Ponteland Boys and Girls Brigades' Christmas carol service at Ponteland Methodist Church.

Those attaining the award must have participated in skills-based training, taken a role of responsibility, provided voluntary service or support to others outside the group and developed physical, expedition or other skills.

Matthew joined the BB's Anchor section aged five and progressed through to the Senior section before leaving for Oxford.

He said: "From day one, you were encouraged to stretch yourself and not be afraid to try something new. Gaining the award was all about the journey –



Matthew Hudson with his Queen's Badge and certificate

some of the things experienced through the Boys' Brigade prepare you so well for life.

"Teamwork, taking leadership, learning new skills, public speaking, getting involved with your local community, 'having a go' and not least of all just having fun.

"But best of all was the feeling of always being so welcomed and supported by the brilliant volunteers who run the Boys' and Girls' Brigades.

"They see the potential in all the brigade

members and look to develop this through a whole range of activities and experiences."

Leslie Dodd, 1st Ponteland Boys' Brigade Captain, said: "It is with immense pride that we were able to present Matthew with his Queen's Badge.

"Matthew deserves this award for all the hard work and effort he has put into being a part of 1st Ponteland for so long."

His honour comes as the 1st Ponteland BB - established over 50 years ago - makes an appeal for new members to counter a slide in membership, falling from over 40 boys to 18.

The group is open to five-to-18 year-olds and is split into four sections which meet on Tuesday nights during term time at Ponteland Methodist Church.

Anchors, aged five to eight, meet at from 5.45pm to 6.45pm, Juniors, aged eight to 11, from 7pm to 8.15pm, Company, aged 11 to 15, from 7pm to 8.30pm, and Seniors, aged 15 to 18, from 7pm to 8.30pm.

Full information is at www.1stpontbb.org

ADVERTISING FEATURE

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By David Lamb, Lamb and Associates

How do you know if you have a good financial adviser? What should you look for? Using over 30 years of experience, I will tell you what works best.

Qualifications? Don't worry too much about these. When you fly, you probably don't give much thought to the pilot's qualifications and you're putting your life into their hands! Look for specialist qualifications only if you need help in a specialised area, but establish the adviser's fiduciary status.

What is important is how you pay for advice and who the adviser is representing. It doesn't matter how qualified the adviser is, if you are not certain exactly how much you are paying for advice, don't proceed. The adviser should be paid based on how much time they spend working with

you, not how much you invest.

So questions you must ask: who does the adviser represent; do they represent you and are paid by you, or do they represent an investment company to sell their products?

Good rapport with your adviser is important but this alone will not help you achieve your desired lifestyle. Ultimately, a good client/adviser relationship comes down to the '3Cs': clarity; commitment and chemistry.

Clarity: the client must be clear what they want to achieve. They may feel they need a pension or a better return on their investments. A good financial planner will help a client see the bigger picture and what they need to focus on to achieve their desired lifestyle.

Commitment: a financial planner should be committed to helping their clients achieve and maintain their desired lifestyle. Clients should also have this commitment because, if not, they are unlikely to achieve their objectives and will have wasted their money.

Chemistry: financial planning can require sharing very personal information. You need to feel completely at ease with your planner in what are often very long-term relationships. I have worked with some of my clients for over 25 years and I am pleased that some of these are now quite close friends.

Choose your financial adviser carefully; it may be one of the best investments you ever make.

Snow wardens set to take to the streets



Mayor of Ponteland Coun Alan Varley

Ponteland residents are being asked to show true grit in the face of the worst of the winter's weather – by going out on snow patrol.

Council chiefs are requesting they band together to keep pathways safe and free of ice and snow until the springtime thaw.

They have launched their Snow Warden Scheme in which individuals and groups can sign up to help to keep areas off the beaten track freeze free.

Town councillors have previously praised householders who help neighbours at difficult times - and are now encouraging them to make their support more official and targeted.

They have a programme in place to carry out path clearance in priority areas, such as shopping areas and at the medical centre.

But they admit the cost and practicalities of gritting areas other than footpaths in key location is prohibitive – and have called on residents to help.

Coun Alan Varley, Mayor of Ponteland,

said: "By carrying out snow warden duties, residents will be helping to keep their community safer during the worst of the winter weather.

"Every winter we hear inspiring reports of neighbours helping each other, which is especially important for older people.

"This is just a more formal way to carry out the good work and will help to ensure that areas are not forgotten."

He added: "I urge people to step forward to become volunteer Snow Wardens to help to keep the village moving. Hopefully, the days when their services will be needed will be very few."

Northumberland County Council provides Snow Wardens with a special kit which includes a snow shovel, grit, thermal hat with head torch, a pair of thermal gloves and a hi-vis vest.

It also has a Winter Services programme which includes staff and a fleet of gritting vehicles being ready to hit the streets.

More details can be found at northumberland.gov.uk/snowwardens



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Householders warned to steer clear of fly-tippers

Ponteland residents are being urged to show good will towards the environment when disposing waste left over from the Christmas holiday season - or face possible prosecution.

Dave Foy, the town's environmental enforcement officer, has warned it is their responsibility to ensure anyone they employ to dispose of unwanted goods or waste must be operating bona fide.

Under a legal duty of care, the occupier of a domestic property must check their waste carrier is registered with the Environment Agency and proof of registration should be sought.

They should also refuse any unexpected offers to have rubbish removed, ask how any agreed waste will be disposed of – and seek evidence – and be given a proper invoice, waste transfer note or receipt.

To ensure they comply with requirements, paperwork given should include a description of the waste being removed and the waste carrier's contact details, and the registration number of any vehicle used should be noted.

Dave, 55, a former policeman, has been patrolling Ponteland's streets and parks for two days per week since April.

While preferring to engage and educate,



Environmental enforcement officer Dave Foy

he has vowed to take firm action when required and is currently investigating illegal fly tips from September and October and a case of fly posting.

He said: "Few householders know of the duty of care that exists when it comes to the removal of rubbish, maybe as little as one-in-100 knows their legal responsibilities.

"If a householder engages someone to remove their rubbish, there are checks they must do to show they have taken all possible steps to ensure items are disposed of properly.

"I much prefer to go out and engage with people and to educate them on their responsibilities, to meet them and speak to them.

"At this time of year, when old products may have been replaced by new and there is lots of rubbish to dispose of from Christmas, it is important that people remain responsible towards the environment.



Recent fly tipping in Ponteland

"Generally, people in Ponteland do seem to have a good grasp on how waste should be disposed of, which is a good thing. After all, ignorance of the law is no defence."

Employed by Northumberland County Council, Dave's remit also includes watching out for dog foulers, litter louts and people who graffiti.

He also has a wider power to address anti-social behaviour by issuing community protection warnings and notices.

Enforcement action can lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice of £80 for littering and £100 for dog fouling - or further prosecution for repeat offenders.

People found fly-tipping can face a Fixed Penalty Notice of £400 or up to £50,000, or 12 months' imprisonment if convicted

Issues can be reported at northumberland.gov.uk/SelfService/Report.aspx

Brothers bear grim conditions for GB event

Teenage brothers Jack and Joseph Anderson have proved themselves two of a kind – by enjoying athletics success for Great Britain.

The Ponteland High School pupils competed in different age groups at the four-day 2019 Biathlon World Championships in Florida, US, where they came up against tough competition and scorching heat.

Organisers described conditions as "brutal" with temperatures hitting around 32 degrees with humidity hovering between 97% and 99%.

It meant the weather greatly favoured athletes from African and Asian nations, but there were still stand-out displays from Europeans.

Jack competed in his first year at under-19 boys' level and, despite being on the road

back to full fitness from injury, gave a very credible performance to finish 11th in the final of the run-swim-run challenge.

Competing at under-17 level, Joseph also had a highly successful championship, again in his first year at this level.

He finished the championships with the individual bronze medal and the gold medal for the under-17 boys' team, who were crowned age group world champions.

The event, which also included the Triathlon World Championships, saw over 420 athletes from 33 countries compete.

A spokesman for Pentathlon GB, the national governing body for the modern pentathlon in Great Britain, said: "Despite the wide-ranging competition, the GB team had yet another successful event. The team can be proud of their efforts."



Joseph Anderson, left, and brother Jack

Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



An appeal for protection for people and animals from speeding motorists in this month's postbag...

Not even hedgehogs are safe from vehicles

I agree wholeheartedly with J Malcolm Thompson (Police Crackdown on Speeding Motorists Required, PN&V Dec 2019).

I have recently had to drive around Darras Hall at night. The cars are driven well over the speed limit and I was constantly aware of their headlights as they came up closely behind. I too think that there should be police or electronic monitoring.

I volunteer at the Northumbrian Hedgehog Rescue Trust where wounded hedgehogs are frequently brought in from this area. I would add that each time this happens there is a comment from someone about the fast driving in Ponteland.

We are all being asked at present to care for wildlife. Can I remind everyone to drive carefully and be aware that during darkness there may be hedgehogs or other animals on the roads.

Christine Harris
Dunsgreen, Ponteland

February issue deadlines: Delivery of the February issue will start on Thursday January 30th and be completed by Wednesday February 5th. The deadline for all copy and adverts is Thursday January 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 February issue.

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

Checkmate for school pals in national chess challenge

Young chess players from Ponteland proved themselves rookies with heart when they competed in the regional round of a national chess competition.

A team from Ponteland High School took part in the National Schools Under 19 Chess Championships, which is open to schools with students in years 7 to 13.

The team - Jake Horn, Jack Young, Shay Rees, Lewis Allen, Matthew Dakers and Harley Rowe-Maguire - came up against a strong field.

It comprised two teams from St Mary's Catholic School, Newcastle, two from Marden High School, North Tyneside and one from Thorp Academy, Gateshead.

Ponteland High School won the first round but lost the second, and

then missed out in the third and final round decider and the chance to progress to the regional final in January.

Tim Wall, a chess trainer and Master, was on hand to explain the tournament rules and how to operate the clock in a competition held at St Mary's.

Harley said: "It was an enthralling experience. Both St Mary's teams were certainly intimidatingly skilled, although they retained modesty and amicability throughout.

"The anticipation turned to extreme focus and the chess games began. We were paired with a player of the same skill-rank on the other team.

"We were paired with a strong team, but unfortunately missed out by a very small margin. Every player tried their best and we are already training for the next tournament."

Hall opens its doors

Ponteland Memorial Hall is holding an open coffee morning this month as part of the national annual Village Halls Week.

Organisers say all are welcome to an event which takes place from 10am to noon on Wednesday, January 22.

Highlights will include a display featuring all of the hall's users and their representatives, with visitors able to find out what goes on at the venue and the rooms available for hire.

"The hall has nearly 70,000 visitors a year with half being under the age of 18. The range of activities is many and varied, so come along and find out for yourself."

Village Halls Week, which runs from Monday, January 20, to Sunday, January 26, is a celebration of rural community spaces and the people who keep them open.

What's on...

Ponteland Wildlife Group

On Tuesday January 7th, Jamie Dines will talk about 'British Divers Marine Mammal Rescue on the North East Coast' at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. £2 admission includes refreshments.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

The club's AGM starts at 2pm on Wednesday January 8th in the downstairs lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road. It is followed by an illustrated talk by Alan Furness, titled 'Favourite Alpines'. Visitors welcome at £7.

Ponteland Leisure Learning (U3A)

At 2pm on Wednesday January 8th, Doug Collender will speak on 'The Way We Were' at St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road. Visitors are welcome, free of charge. The group's AGM is on Wednesday February 5th. Further information at www.u3asites.org.uk/ponteland or (01661) 824953.

Ponteland Lions Club

The first business meeting of 2020 is at 7.30pm on Wednesday January 8th in Merton Hall, Merton Road. Monthly charity fund bookstalls restart on Saturday January 25th at Waitrose in Ponteland, from 9am to 4pm. Information on 0845 833 9913.

Kirkley WI

The group meets at 7pm on the first Wednesday of each month at Kirkley Hall, with its next meeting being on Wednesday January 8th when a domino drive is planned. Guests are always welcome, and further information is by emailing kirkleywi@hotmail.com

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

New visitors are welcome to a club which promotes friendship and service, and members, aged 55 and over, are drawn from all walks of life. Its next meeting is on Monday January 13th at 2.30pm in the lounge of Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, when John Moreels MBE will talk on 'Nostalgic views of the north'. Visit pontelandsgc.co.uk

Ponteland Village WI

A warm welcome is promised to people joining the group for evenings of interest, friendship and cake, with its next meeting on Tuesday January 14th featuring a talk on 'Funny Bones and Wisdom Teeth'. Its sub-groups include monthly dining out, a walking group and a book club. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. Information is on Facebook or by emailing pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com

Ponteland WI

At 7pm on Tuesday January 14th, in Merton Hall, Merton Road, the group will be given a talk and slideshow by John Gray, titled 'Gorillas'. Visitors are welcome.

Ponteland Community Partnership

Come to observe a meeting and share your ideas, concerns and expectations for improving the quality of life in the community. All welcome. The next meeting is at 7pm on Wednesday January 15th in our new venue - Bishop Merton Room, St Mary's Parish Hall, Thornhill Road. Visit: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

Ponteland Local History Society

At 7.30pm on Thursday January 16th, Michael Scott will give a talk entitled 'Prudhoe Castle and the Umfravilles' at St Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. Visitors welcome at £2.

Embroiderers Guild Ponteland

From 2pm to 4pm on Monday January 27th at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, members and visitors are invited to bring along unfinished items. All welcome at £4. Membership of the branch and the Embroiderers Guild is open to all, whatever their level of experience. Penny Ford has information on (01670) 788278 or email penelopeford636@btinternet.com.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

At 2pm on Wednesday February 12th at Kirkley Hall, David Richards will talk about 'Litter and fly tipping - the scourge of our time'. At the same time on Wednesday March 11th, 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 nonmembers. 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 meets on alternate Mondays after school at Ponteland High School, is available to play at events. Information at whistlingsheep.btck.co.uk

St Mary's Parish Centre

The Thornhill Road venue is available to hire for functions, parties and other social occasions. Enquiries to (01661) 824470 or office@pontelandstmary.co.uk.

Ponteland Ramblers

The Ponteland group of the Ramblers Association organises walks in Northumberland and North Durham on alternate Sundays and two Wednesdays each month. Sunday walks are between seven and nine mile. Wednesday walks are usually five to seven miles. For more information visit ramblers.org.uk/ponteland or contact Steve Edwards on (01661) 886310.

Ponteland Ladies' Choir

This friendly group of singers with a young enthusiastic conductor meets at Ponteland United Reformed Church, The Broadway, Darras Hall, on Mondays from 7pm to 9pm in term time, and no audition is needed. Ex-choir members are asked to return music they may have retained, either by contacting Nina on (0191) 6709055 or Chris on (01661) 852130, or by calling into the church between 7pm and 9pm on Mondays or to a choir member.

Ponteland Writers

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

Tuesday Bridge Club

New members are invited to join a club which runs each week until the end of April. The club has moved to Merton Hall, Merton Road, Ponteland. Information from Sandy on 07935 237732.

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.

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.

Ponteland Floral Art Club

The club meets on the third Tuesday each month at 7.30pm in Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday services are held at 10am and 6.30pm, with children's activities during the 10am service. The 'Open Door' café is on Mondays from 1pm to 4pm serving soup, home-bakes and drinks. A toddlers' 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 and prayer meetings. Contact Ann Cooper (01661) 824347 or anncooperx@gmail.com

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 07818 271287 or Ruth on (01661) 881654.

Players court attention by keeping it simple

Ponteland badminton players without a club are causing quite a racket – by swelling their numbers to well over 100 with no fuss at all.

Over the past decade, they have gathered for informal though structured sessions at the town's leisure centre six times a week.

And they have done so without ever formally forming a club or playing under any particular banner.

Organiser Phil Hall, a self-employed sports coach from Ponteland, reckons the open and fluid nature of the set-up has strong appeal for those who like to take to the court at their own time and pace.

A feature is players being able to come and go as they please and paying only when they play – thereby avoiding a more traditional club set-up.

Up to 40 people attend each hour-long session for friendly games played in-house and for coaching from Phil.

Those of better ability can progress to play for Walbottle Nomads, a club whose teams play full competitive matches.

Phil, who also coaches cricket and squash and works for Active Northumberland, said: "We are not a club as such. We are a community group that has grown over time.

"I know that people who want to play badminton sometimes worry about being good enough, so this no strings approach can help them to participate.

"Our sessions are open to all and there's no barrier to

coming along and enjoying the sport. It seems to have really worked.

"Nowadays, leisure choices are huge and people live very busy lives, so if they have time, there are badminton options on their doorstep.

"Lots of people play each week but I can easily put on more sessions if numbers grow even more.

"Badminton, the most popular racket sport in the UK is appealing, it's relatively cheap to play, specific kit isn't needed and equipment can be borrowed. It's not weather effected, is non-contact, social and good for health."

Among those taking part in Phil's sessions are around a dozen county juniors including 12-year-old Lucy Dodd, the national number three at under-14 level.

Adults meet from 11am to noon on Mondays, from 7pm to 8pm on Tuesdays, and 10.30am to 11.30am on Fridays.

Juniors' sessions are on Mondays, from 4pm to 5pm, Thursdays, from 5pm to 6pm, and from 10.30am to 11.30am on Saturdays.

All sessions are paid for on the day, priced at a maximum £3.50.

Further information is from Phil at fill.hall@btinternet.com and on 07810 084153.



Badminton players prepare for action



Sports coach Phil Hall

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Ponteland Schools and Leisure

Kier Regional Building Scotland & North East



Dear Resident,

Firstly, from all at Kier Construction, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! We hope that everyone has an enjoyable and safe festive period.

We have continued to progress well with our Phase 1 programme and have just completed week 57 of our programmed 85 weeks for the construction of the Schools, Leisure Centre and Community Crescent Hub. The new community Fire Station is complete and will be operational as soon as the fire service can move from their existing location.

During December we have continued to progress the external envelope to all areas and have made significant progress internal to both the Primary and Secondary Schools. The cladding is substantially complete to all areas and the curtain wall glazing system is progressing well throughout the Crescent areas.

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
- Continue to progress Brickwork to the Primary School.
- Continue to progress M&E installations to the Primary School.
- Continue to progress the internal fit-out to the Primary School
- Continue to progress external works to the Primary School.
- Continue to progress partition works to all Crescent areas.
- Continue to progress M&E installations to all Crescent areas.
- Continue to progress curtain walling installations to all Crescent areas.
- Complete Pool Slab Construction to the North Crescent.
- Progress installation of swimming pools to the Pool Hall.
- Progress installation of roof top mechanical equipment.
- Progress installation of walls and M&E services to the Spa and Gym areas.
- Operation of new Community Fire Station.
- Progress with the demolition of the existing Fire Station building.

The torrential rain through December has continued to challenge us, but we are continuing to make progress and continue to make efforts to minimise the muck being dragged off site. There have been a few days where the rainfall has been greater than we are all used to, even at this time of year, and we can only apologise for any excess mud that has been seen on Callerton Lane. We have continued to provide a road-brush on a daily basis with a minimum of three visits to try to keep the road clear, and will continue to do so, as necessary.

The site will be closed over the festive period, with operations stopping on Friday 20th December 2019, and the site re-opening for works on Monday 6th January 2020.

Watch Points through January

- **Daily traffic movements in and out of the site**
- **HGV deliveries with concrete, cladding materials, M&E services materials, metal studs and drywall boards, and curtain walling materials**
- **Installation of curtain walling systems**
- **Installation of Roof Top Mechanical Equipment**
- **Demolition operations to the existing Fire Station building.**

CSR & Project Quick Facts

The site participated in the *Metro Radio – Cash For Kids – Mission Christmas Toy Appeal*, and our CSR Coordinator – Claire Straughan – and our Site Administrator – Mandy Martin – delivered presents to the appeal base within Ponteland Leisure Centre on Friday 6th December 2019.

The Archaeology Dig mentioned in last month's newsletter has continued to unearth some great historical evidence of settlements in the area dating back to the Iron and Bronze Ages. Over the course of next year, the NCC Archaeologists in conjunction with the Site Archaeologists will be issuing their findings which will be of interest to all in Ponteland.



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

Safety in numbers is dad's new year's wish

A Ponteland father whose student son died in a canal fall tragedy has issued a resolution for the New Year for others to follow: "Stay together, stay safe."

Nick Pope made the heartfelt plea as part of a wider winter message, aimed primarily at young people returning to university after the Christmas holidays who may fall foul of drinking too much upon rejoining friends.

In the run up to Christmas Mr Pope, whose son Charlie, 19, drowned in Manchester's Rochdale canal after going missing on a night out in March 2018, helped to launch the Don't Drink and Drown campaign.

It included a two-and-a-half-minute-long safety video which has now been viewed over 1,000 times on social media site YouTube.

Mr Pope is now urging young people who are away from home at university to heed the warning to always stay away from water – especially if they have been consuming alcohol.

The wastewater treatment company managing director said: "I don't want what happened to Charlie and to our family to happen to any other family.

"If I had him back, I'd say, 'don't be so daft'. That's what we often say, such a waste, such a waste. It could have been so different.

"If you're out on a night out, take care, stick together, look after each other."



Left to right, Daisy, Andria, Joe, Nick and Charlie Pope

Mr Pope's devotion to improving canal safety in Manchester, where Charlie was in the first year of an economics with philosophy degree at the city's university, has led to new protective barriers being installed.

Improved safety features include new barriers along a stretch of the Rochdale canal with fencing directing people to use a footbridge, and rescue equipment and lighting.

In September, following the success of that initiative, he called for better safety measures at other potential danger sites around the country.

Charlie's death sparked an independent review which found there had been 28 water-related deaths in Manchester city centre in the previous 11 years.

The video is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwE-lAwi-Dk



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OPENING TIMES: Monday 9am - 5.30pm, Tuesday 8am - 8pm, Wednesday 8am - 7pm, Thursday 8am - 8pm, Friday 8am - 4.30pm

Latest news from

Ponteland Town Council

Change of date

The town council agreed to change the date of its January meeting from Wednesday 8th to Wednesday 15th.

Environment Working Party

Councillors considered a recommendation relating to entry into Northumbria in Bloom in 2020. After some discussion, it was agreed not to enter the competition in 2020 but to organise two volunteer days to carry out a clean up of the area. Planting will be carried out to the same standard as previous years.

Northumberland County Council report

It was reported that some initial plans to install the permanent play area on Callerton Lane were being examined. Some layout drawings would be circulated to councillors once received for their input.

Mayor's report

The Mayor reported on his diary engagements for November, December and January.

.....
This report is based on the minutes of Ponteland Town Council's meeting on Wednesday December 11th.
.....

Drivers put on squirrel alert

Motorists are being urged to go slow on Ponteland's roads – to save endangered red squirrels from injury or death.

Volunteers at Ponteland Red Squirrels say two of the animals have been run over and killed in recent weeks.

Their plea comes soon after the group reported the town's red squirrel population was on the rise.

Around 45 have been counted in gardens and lanes in 2019, almost double that of the entire previous year.

But they are now calling on motorists to be especially watchful of the creatures after the double death accidents.

Sally Hardy, co-founder of Ponteland Red Squirrels, said: "Our red squirrel population is continuing to grow.

"We have recently received a report of four red squirrels in a garden at the same time. This is excellent news.

"However, two red squirrels have also been run over in Darras Hall within one week.

"We would like to urge residents to drive carefully around the estate and also keep a lookout for red squirrels on the pavements or verges.

"Unfortunately, our little reds have absolutely no road sense, so they are relying on drivers to be aware."

Residents can report sightings at pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk or call Sally on 07878 061880 or Brad Jewell on 07949 212144.

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This is a kitchen where function was as important as form. Starting with a blank canvas meant that everything could be designed to coordinate and the use of space could be carefully planned. The appliances, storage, sink and food preparation area are all perfectly placed so not only does the kitchen look great, but it's also an easy and pleasant place to cook.

Were the clients happy with the end result?

Very. The layout works perfectly for them. They wanted a timeless kitchen that would work as the heart of the home, but also be able to handle some serious cooking and entertaining. A beautiful bold island with statement colour and glazed storage units completed the design, balancing form and function perfectly.



www.callertonkitchens.co.uk