

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Schools to start phased
reopening from June 1

Couple reveal ambitious
plans for first micropub

Conservationists celebrate
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Families celebrate VE Day 75 in style

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Couple set out ambitious plans for Ponteland's first micropub

**The couple behind
Ponteland's first micropub
have set out their ambitious
plans for the venue.**

Commercial vehicle sales executive Mick Barnes and wife Angie, who works for a nationwide supermarket chain, are investing £15,000 to transform a former interior design studio into the village's latest watering hole.

They had originally hoped to open The Pont Tap on West Road in late April to coincide with Ponteland Beer Festival at the rugby club. But the couple were forced to postpone due to the Covid-19 lockdown, and now hope to launch on Saturday August 1.

It is a welcome return to Ponteland for Mick and Angie, from Bedlington, who both worked behind the bar at the nearby Ponteland Social Club in Merton Way in the early 1990s.

Father-of-three Mick, 54, said: "We have

worked in pubs and other customer facing roles since we were young and it has been a long held dream to work for ourselves. We just felt now is the time, with the kids having grown up.

"Micropubs are all about the location. We have looked at other venues in places like Whitley Bay but there was something about that double fronted building, its presence on the main street. And Ponteland has always been a favourite for going out and socialising – we love the village. It's somewhere we would like to live once the pub is established."

Known to shun all forms of electronic entertainment, micropubs have massively grown in popularity in recent years, with more than 500 now open across the UK.

The Pont Tap will boast a range of hand-pull cask ales and back wall craft ales sourced from local breweries, alongside Cruzcampo lager, a German wheat beer, cider, various gins and speciality wines.

Once any social distancing restrictions are lifted, The Pont Tap will comfortably accommodate 35 keen drinkers not wanting a town centre wine bar or large pub chain experience.

Mick, who also has a two-year-old granddaughter, said there had been very positive feedback to news of the plans from the community: "Our new Facebook page already has 780 likes and there have been a lot of positive comments, with many saying they have been crying out for somewhere like this in the village.

"We don't want this to be a city centre wine bar, we want it to be somewhere where people can socialise in a nice, relaxed atmosphere.

"It was massively disappointing to delay the launch, but the landlords have been fantastic. They have allowed us to put everything on hold and we are now set to sign the lease on June 1st and the target date for opening is August 1st. We can't wait."

Ambitious plans: Mick and Angie Barnes.
Photo by Barry Pells.



Neighbours celebrate VE Day 75 with tea and cakes in the street

Neighbours celebrated the 75th anniversary of VE Day in style with street parties across Ponteland, while respecting social distancing.

Jess Eyre-Tanner, a teacher at Hexham Middle School, epitomised the community spirit, arranging a street party in Whinfell, Darras Hall with husband Giles, a regional radio executive, and children Gigi, 13, Mina, nine, and Raife, three.

She said: "We recently moved into Whinfell and thought it would be nice to mark the momentous occasion with our neighbours, and great way to get to know them - especially during this time where we are all isolated from each other and need a bit of cheering.

"I sent an invite to as many houses I could on the street, asked for people to bring their own drink and food to the front garden or driveway and to make a toast at 3pm. It was so lovely to see so many neighbours out. One of them had a speaker with music from the era. And at 3pm we all had a sing-a-long to 'We'll Meet Again'. You could feel the street being uplifted."

Entertainer Adam Potts of CBBC's Danny and Mick, who runs Cirque Du Hilarious with dad Clive, is used to putting on a show! He dressed up for the occasion with wife Amy and their son George, three, as they celebrated with neighbours in Errington Road, Darras Hall.

Readers sent in their photos of the day and here is a selection of the best ones. Thanks to all who sent in pics!

Cover shot: Danny, Amy and George Potts of Errington Road, Darras Hall



Giles and Jess Eyre-Tanner of Whinfell, Darras Hall, with children Raife, Mina and Gigi



Caroline Pryer, Headteacher of Ponteland Community Middle School, and her husband David in Cheviot View, Ponteland



Margaret and David Morgan of Whinfell, Darras Hall



Champagne and clotted cream in Whinfell, Darras Hall



Tea and cakes in Regency Way - sent in by Mary Quigley

Reader recalls childhood wartime memories

Reader Sheila Cowey, 82, of Linden Way, Darras Hall, recalls early childhood memories of World War Two in York, where she was brought up.

My mother and I returned from Egypt in February 1939, leaving my father to continue his service in the Army in North Africa and Palestine.

We returned to my mother's home in York and eventually settled in a flat opposite my grandparents' home. I will always remember the house because when war was declared grandma put a Union Jack out of an upstairs window and it was there until the war was over. We were upstairs over two shops - a greengrocers and a butchers.

We were there when the Blitz started in York. The railway station was a prime target and because of that the German near misses hit and badly damaged the Guild Hall as well as the buildings next door. My aunt and uncle had a boatyard on the river about 200yds away and they lost all their windows.

My grandma had some relatives fairly



Sheila with her parents in Shepton Mallett where her father had recently been posted.

close by and one evening when there were 11 people in the house it took a direct hit. Grandma's nephew Cyril was buried under the rubble for four days and was the only survivor. He lost his wife and twins, whom I used to play with from time to time.

One night I particularly remember: the siren went off and mum hauled me out of bed and into my siren suit. I thought 'Oh goody, we are going across the road to grandma's where there is usually a hot drink and a biscuit' - raid nights only.

Mum put me into my pushchair and dashed out into the road. An ARP chap yelled at her to get back under cover, which she duly did. Suddenly there was a roar and a plane came flying down the centre of Hull Road firing left, right and centre! After it flew off, with a sign of relief we then continued across the road only to find mum's slipper in the middle of the road. On examination found it to be riddled with bullets.

Other evenings during the Blitz my mother would accompany grandma (who had served in WWI and who was then in the Home Guard) on Fire Watching duties. I didn't really understand very much about that but just sat with grandma listening to tales of India (where she and grandpa had lived when he was in the Army prior to WWI) and learning all the music hall songs of yesteryear and, of course, the WWII songs that everyone sang.

Don't be complacent about Covid-19

By PC Phil Oliver, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Update

The East Tynedale Neighbourhood Policing Team has continued its efforts to engage, explain and encourage people to follow the Government restrictions and guidelines.

Although these guidelines have been revised, the Covid-19 crisis has not yet passed us by and it is envisaged that it will continue to greatly impact all our lives for the foreseeable future.

We urge residents to avoid becoming complacent, but to show the attitude and behaviour the overwhelming majority have done so already in the face of this health crisis. Residents are urged to continue to limit contact with others and to follow social distancing guidelines as much as possible.

We have no desire to use the formal powers made available to police but it is right that we're able to enforce against those who disregard these measures, and we have taken such action when required.

These are unprecedented times and we ask that you continue to work with us and the other emergency services. I am proud of the character the people of



Ponteland have shown so far, and I have every faith that if we continue to show such a response to this disease, we can overcome this crisis.

Community engagements

Due to the current Covid-19 outbreak, there will be no scheduled community engagements until further notice.

Contact the team

At present, the public enquiry desk at the team's base within the Spetchells Centre on Front Street, Prudhoe is

closed; the nearest currently open enquiry desks are at Hexham or Bedlington Police Stations. However, please do not hesitate to contact the team in relation to any community issues via northernprudhoeptmailbox@northumbria.pnn.police.uk.

Any other issues, you can contact report an incident or provide information via the force website northumbria.police.uk or call 999 or 101 as usual.

You can provide information in relation to crime confidentially to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or via the Crimestoppers website.

Essential road improvement schemes getting underway

Work is restarting on a number of roadworks schemes in and around Ponteland as part of a £28m countywide investment over the next year.

The works will include resurfacing, surface dressing and micro-surfacing the county's 3,000 miles of highway and pavements.

The surface dressing programme is carried out on more rural roads and the micro-surfacing in more residential locations - giving a smoother and hard wearing top surface.

In both cases road patching is now commencing in readiness for the main treatment programmes which will start in

the next few weeks.

The locations include:

- Darras Road, Darras Hall (June 10-13)
- Eastern Way, Darras Hall (June 14)
- C347 Limestone Lane, Ponteland
- B6342 Matfen village north
- C224/C211 Kirkheaton to B6309 junction
- C343 Stamfordham to Fenwick
- B6524 Gubean to Whalton

Coun Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services, said: "It's vital our roads and paths are kept in a good state of repair and some of this work is best done when the weather is warmer.

"However, we take the safety of the public, our employees and contractors very seriously, and will ensure that guidance on social distancing is observed during all of our construction works.

"All of our staff have been briefed on the new working arrangements and have been provided with the correct equipment and welfare facilities for the duties that will be carried out. This will enable them to work in a way that's safe for everyone.

"We'd also ask drivers to take extra care and follow the speed limit signs on the recently surface dressed roads until essential road sweeping has taken place to remove loose road chippings."

Full details of the works can be found [here](#).



Work set to resume on multi-million pound investment at Kirkley Hall

Work is set to resume on a multi-million pound investment programme at Kirkley Hall after the Covid-19 lockdown halted building works.

A bespoke equine centre including an indoor arena, a specialist animal management centre and modern residential accommodation are being built at the campus.

Students aged 16 to 24 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.

Education Partnership North East, which runs the Kirkley Hall campus following the merger between Sunderland College and Northumberland College, has appointed a number of regional contractors for the construction project.

EHL UK Building Maintenance and Facility Services, which operates from a head office in Newton Aycliffe, will work on general maintenance works across the campus and refurbishment of the reception area, the science block and Kirkley Hall Zoo.

Glenfield Energy Solutions Ltd, based in Newburn, will carry out mechanical and electrical works, East Boldon-based Group Tegula will be involved in roof works, and Bedlington-based RBB Group will be involved in demolition and works to bridge, walls and cattle sheds on the 190-acre estate.

Triple Shield Property Maintenance Ltd from Cramlington will be involved in the new animal management centre, while MJ Phoenix, which is also working at the college's Ashington campus, will transform the accommodation block at Kirkley Hall.

Newcastle-based ENGIE has started work on extending the Kielder Building to create the new resources for SEND students.

Nigel Harrett, Principal of Northumberland College, said: "We are delighted to be working with local contractors on our ambitious investment project at Northumberland College.

"Building work was suspended for a period of time, however, we are pleased that government advice now allows the development to continue with appropriate safety measures in place."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Download our FREE guide on Government financial support during Covid-19

By David Lamb, Lamb Financial

During this very challenging time, I hope you are staying safe. The rapidly developing news of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and how it is impacting on our families, friends and businesses is a huge concern for us all.

Understandably, people are also worried about the general economic outlook and to their financial planning.

We have created a FREE comprehensive guide to provide information about what financial support is available to help individuals and businesses through the Covid-19 outbreak and how to look after your well-being. This can be downloaded at lambfinancial.co.uk/blog

The Government created new legal powers in the Covid-19 Bill, enabling it to offer whatever further financial support it thinks necessary to support businesses. On March 17th Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced

an unprecedented package of Government-backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses, making available an initial £330bn of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of the country's GDP.

This was on top of £30bn of additional support for public services, individuals and businesses experiencing financial difficulties because of Covid-19 announced in the Budget, including a new £5bn COVID-19 Response Fund to provide any extra resources needed by the NHS and other public services to tackle the virus.

When we consider lifestyle as part of the financial planning process, we need to include health, relationships, time personal fulfilment, career, fun and recreation, and financial independence, not just the money.

So in the guide we also look at how to work more effectively from home (we have found this very easy and I'm

saving a fortune in petrol!) and keep fit and healthy during a period of self-isolation or lockdown, which is vital for our physical and mental well-being.

If you have any queries or we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.





Super sewers: pictured (l-r) are Val Turner, Gabby Winn, Suzanne McCormack, Jo Harris and Julie Marvin. Photo by Barry Pells.

Kind-hearted volunteers lead sterling community effort to help needy during crisis

From collecting and delivering food parcels and toiletry bags for the needy to making scrubs bags for NHS staff, kind hearted volunteers across Ponteland have excelled themselves during the Covid-19 crisis. Chris Jennings spoke to two of the co-ordinators behind the sterling community effort.

Dr Ela Akay, a consultant neurologist at the RVI in Newcastle, is joint organiser of mutual aid group Ponteland Community. Set up in March, the aim was to help vulnerable Ponteland residents during the lockdown.

Ponteland was divided into 14 smaller geographic zones, each with a lead volunteer to co-ordinate the local volunteers and help people in need. The results have been impressive. So far, the group has:

- Delivered 1,100 toiletry bags to Macmillan Cancer Support, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and the palliative care teams at the RVI and Alnwick Hospital.
- Collected 10,000 food items via its 'Our Street Can' campaign. People were asked to sign up on a street by street basis and there are 46 donation points. Food is being distributed to Ponteland residents needing emergency support, Blyth Community Food and Rotary, Ashington Real

Deal and Food Bank, CELL, Morpeth Stobhill Links and Full Food Circle, Bedlington and Choppington Parish Councils.

- Made 500 shopping deliveries to people in and around Ponteland who are self-isolating/shielding via a shop and delivery service supported by Waitrose.
- Collected 400 essential toiletry items for Bedlington Women's Refuge.
- Helped 250 people (100 via the shopping scheme and 250 with additional support).

Plans for further programmes of support are also in the pipeline, as Dr Akay explained: "We are currently setting up a bereavement befriending scheme to complement the more formal



Ashington Town Council assisting with the distribution of food and toiletries donated by the people of Ponteland

services that are available through the NHS/hospices.

"We are about to put a call out for volunteers who are interested and are going to run a training programme for them. Initially it will be a telephone support service but once lockdown regulations are eased we hope to set up physical groups with different interests e.g. knitting, tea and cake, and other shared activities for people to come together for support. Anyone interested can contact us at our email hello@ponteland.co."

The group has also set up a blog to update people on activities, in addition to the Facebook page, which can be found on the website at ponteland.co/blog.

Dr Akay added: "We have been really humbled by the people who

have volunteered and supported our campaigns and I think it really is amazing seeing how a community can build and make a positive impact around us."

Super sewers

Another mammoth effort has come from a group of volunteers who responded to an appeal from the Darras Hall and Ponteland Facebook group to make scrubs bags for NHS and care staff.

From her garden shed in Woodside, Darras Hall, Jo Harris has co-ordinated a team of sewers who have made 3,000 scrubs bags in just seven weeks. The ladies hail from a wide area also including Woolsington, Rowlands Gill, Dalton and Brunton Park.

The bags have been distributed to the RVI, Freeman Hospital, North Tyneside General Hospital and the QE Hospital in

Gateshead, as well as to GP practices, care homes and to district nurses.

Fabric has been donated by First for Fabrics in Benton, with Morrison's West Denton branch providing fitted sheets and other material coming from old duvet covers and pillow cases donated by local residents.

More volunteer sewers are being sought and can respond via the group's Facebook page (Darras Hall and Ponteland Scrubs Bags) or by calling Jo on 07887 533443.

Jo and two friends from the group are also making material face masks. Made of fabric, with elasticated ties, a slot for a filter and metal inserts around the nasal area, they are available for a minimum £5 donation plus postage and packing.

Funds are going to LIVERrNORTH, which is taking orders for and distributing the masks. More than 200 have been made already, raising over £1,000 for the charity. To order yours email info@livernorth.org.uk

Jo, who was previously manager of the Evening Chronicle's Sunshine Fund and is now a carer for her husband Chris following his liver transplant five years ago, said: "I just want to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped, including all the sewers and distributors. It has been an amazing effort."

Guy Opperman MP | Member of Parliament for Hexham

The Hexham office is physically closed due to the outbreak of Coronavirus, but I, and my small team of staff, are working remotely to provide advice, and support individuals, businesses, and local people who are affected. Help will be provided by email and telephone. If you have any issues or concerns, please get in touch using the details below, but check the Coronavirus website below first if you can.

Guy Opperman.

Get in touch with Guy:

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☎ 01434 239 205 (LEAVE A MESSAGE WITH YOUR CONTACT DETAILS)

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Other important contact details:

If you have coronavirus symptoms, self-isolate immediately.

For medical advice, always visit NHS.UK/coronavirus.

If you can't get online, call 111. Only in an emergency call 999.

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views

Claims construction workers are flouting one way restrictions on Callerton Lane in this month's letters...



Is there one rule for construction workers and another for everyone else?

A diversion is in progress at the moment on Callerton Lane while works are progressing for the new Ponteland High School.

I have been delivering food for my elderly relative every night as my family member is one of the vulnerable people, which means an extra two miles a night.

Does the diversion not refer to the workers on site? Tonight two vans - one large red van and one white van - turned right towards Ponteland, meaning they were driving against the traffic.

I was met on a second night with a learner on a scooter which

came out of the high school construction site towards me. There is going to be an accident before long - it's very dangerous.

Is this a case of one law for local people and another for employees of the construction site?

Lynne Hendry
Rothley Close, Ponteland

Roddy Graham, Project Leader for Kier Construction, said: "If any road users and/or residents witness behaviour of this type, we would appreciate immediate notification, especially if they can provide a good description and registration (even partial) of the vehicle.

"If we can clearly identify the culprit we can, and will, deal with the issue, which is likely to include permanent exclusion from the site. Not only does this bar the individual from working on any Kier site for a six month period, but it also affects their company's ability to tender future work with us.

"We take all issues seriously, and are particularly disturbed to learn the nature of this report. The contact details for the senior site management team are published with the newsletter (see back page), so it would be appreciated if behaviour like this is reported immediately in order that we can act upon it at the time.

"We also ask that all road users adhere to the one way system as, on several occasions, we have also met cyclists travelling the wrong way through the roadworks. All in all, this requires adherence from all parties to prevent any serious incidents."

Contacts for Kier: Email. ksne.ponteland@kier.co.uk
Tel. Roddy Graham (Project Leader) 07849 098786/Andy Todhunter (Operations Lead) 07773 243081

July issue deadlines: The June issue is once again online only due to the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown. At the time of publication we were unable to confirm whether the July issue will revert to door-to-door distribution. We are offering half price advertising for all online only issues. The deadline for all copy and adverts for the July issue is Monday June 15th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the July issue. Please visit ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views for online issues and all updates.

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.

Phased reopening of schools starts June 1

Schools in Ponteland and surrounding villages will start to reopen to certain year groups from Monday (June 1st) as the gradual relaxation of the Covid-19 lockdown kicks in.

Ponteland Community Middle School will open to Year 6 pupils on June 1st and the five primary schools in the Pele Trust will welcome Reception and Year 1 pupils on June 8th.

Belsay School, Darras Hall Primary School, Heddon St Andrews Primary, Ponteland Primary School and Richard Coates CE Primary School will then open their nurseries on June 15th and allow Year 6 pupils from June 22nd.

Ponteland High School will open on June 15th in line with the most recent DfE advice, allowing up to a quarter of Y10 and Y12 students on any given day ensuring classes of no more than 15.

Given the need to maintain social distancing, schools have faced major

challenges in reopening safely.

Following a deep clean, Ponteland Community Middle School has set up eight classrooms, each for ten Year 6 and key worker children working two metres apart. Staff have been in for two training days to prepare for reopening, creating new timetables and staggered entrance, break, lunch and exit times.

Hygiene packs with soap, sanitiser, tissues, bin liners, cloths, gloves and spray disinfectant have also been put together for every learning area with e-bug hygiene reminders and 'keep your distance' cartoons.

Headteacher Caroline Pryer said: "Safety is the key word - for children, parents, staff and their families."

A letter to parents of children attending Pele Trust primary schools said: "Our return has been phased to ensure we can manage our sites safely and support children to adjust to their new routines (however) the decision to send your child back for the remainder of the summer term remains with you. I can confirm no

action will be taken against any parent who decides to wait until September. We trust you to make the right decision based on your own particular circumstances."

Thanking parents for the support they have been providing as 'surrogate' teachers during the lockdown in a letter, Ponteland High School headteacher Kieran McGrane described the initial proposed date of reopening - June 1st - as "a bit of a surprise".

Referring to the ongoing controversy, he added: "There has been a lot of debate in the last week or so about schools reopening, with the unions and government seemingly at odds with one another."

The high school will be 'zoned' to keep groups apart but ensure easy access to toilet and hand washing facilities, and break and lunch times will be staggered. The end of year mock GCSE exams for Y10 students have been postponed, and they will instead study a mix of core subjects and options days. Y12 students will focus on one subject per day.



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Belsay farm to host national sheep industry showcase

Thousands of farmers from across the UK will descend on a Belsay farm next summer for the sheep industry's biggest biennial event.

JE Woodman & Son will host National Sheep Association North Sheep 2021, which will have hundreds of trade stands, a series of seminars, and dozens of demonstrations, at Bradford House Farm next June.

Noted livestock farmer Willie Woodman and his wife Christine and son Martin have a lowland flock of 450 ewes and grow wheat, barley, oilseed rape and beans at the 930-acre farm. A further 700 ewes and 270 cattle are located at their 1200-acre hill farm at Great Chesters. Mr Woodman described the announcement as "a huge honour and privilege".

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KUMON



Kate Allmark of Western Way, Darras Hall, with baby sister Lucy



Kane, Andrea and Rose Young of Middle Drive, Darras Hall

Lockdown family snaps raise £1,200 for NHS charities

A Ponteland photographer's doorstep family snaps during the Covid-19 pandemic have raised more than £1,200 for NHS charities.

Capturing lockdown life in a unique way, Deb Parker has visited 73 households and five businesses over the past two months photographing residents aged from 98 to just 11 days old.

Deb, who normally works at weddings and other special events with her business Imogen Kate Photography, has cycled an estimated 150 miles around Ponteland and Darras Hall taking pics from a safe distance either on the doorstep or in the garden.

She said: "I have raised more than £1,200, which I am amazed at. I have truly loved doing it and it has kept me sane in this weird time, but it's made me smile - doing not only what I love doing in the photography, but in meeting amazing families with different stories they have shared about how they are coping.

"People have said it has totally lifted their spirits having the photos taken and having such a keepsake. I'm hoping all my weddings and family shoots will be able to rebook soon and in the meantime I can do mini shoots for special offers while some restrictions are still in place.

"I am going to look at doing some kind of exhibition in the village to mark a year next March where the public can visit

and see my take on lockdown with these photos that have been captured, both of families and of what I've captured when out and about."

More photos can be seen here: imogenkate.co.uk/gallery/doorstep-lockdown-photos

So far £1,230 has been raised for NHS Charities Together and other donations can be made via the Justgiving page at justgiving.com/fundraising/imogenkatephotography

To book your photograph, contact Deb at hello@imogenkate.co.uk or via her website imogenkate.co.uk or Facebook page at facebook.com/imogenkatephotography



Mark Robson of Ponteland Hardware



Jill and Dave Errington of Beech Court, Darras Hall, with daughter Juliet



Butcher Alan Newton



Steve, Ellie, Rory, Joe, Fiona and Eve Nicholson of Dissington



Andrew and Clare Wright, of Runnymede Road, Darras Hall, with children Florence and Oliver



Andrea O'Kane, of Higham Dykes, with daughters Ruby, Fern and Ayva with dog Macey and puppy Bear



Dan and Gemma Appleby of Higham Dykes with children Chester and Hazel



Dick Donkin of Sandringham Way, Darras Hall

Former Pont High student joins Royal College of Music



A trombonist taught at Ponteland High School has secured a dream move to The Royal College of Music in London.

Simon Hirst joins RCM as Admissions Officer from Newcastle University, where as Graduate Ambassador for the School of Arts & Cultures he has been working in support of undergraduate student recruitment and admissions.

Simon will be working with registry colleagues focusing on business continuity for admissions, to stabilise RCM at this difficult time.

Key projects will include setting up a new admissions cycle, ensuring the new intake meets all offer conditions, responding to admissions queries, and making arrangements for the allocation of students to professors for next academic

year. He will also be helping to administer a new hardship fund to assist students, and on retention strategies.

Simon, who attended Ponteland High School from 2010 to 2015, is a Newcastle University music graduate with a keen interest in both classical and big band jazz music, having been chairman of New Tyneside Orchestra and musical director of Bold Big Band.

Phil Noble, Director of Music at Ponteland High School, said: "I am delighted for Simon securing his new job at the Royal College of Music. He is an enthusiastic and talented musician and I am convinced with Simon joining the Admissions office, the RCM will continue to grow from strength to strength."

"Well done Simon and good luck in your new role from everyone at Ponteland High School."

Red squirrel conservationists celebrate birth of litter in Darras Hall

Conservationists are celebrating the successful birth of a red squirrel litter in Darras Hall.

Members of the Ponteland Red Squirrels group were delighted when they received photos earlier this Spring of a pregnant female red in a garden on the estate. Now they have seen photos of one of her kits, tentatively exploring its new surroundings.

Co-founder Sally Hardy said: "We hope to see more young reds dispersing into the Darras Hall area! But last year we had five red squirrels run over on Darras Hall estate, which is devastating for our population of reds."

"We ask people to please drive carefully around Darras Hall. If you stick to the speed limit you are more likely to be able to avoid a red squirrel crossing the road - and any other animal or person for that matter."

"As you may be aware, rats are quite bold in the area and many people use rat poison. We urge you to be very careful and only use a special rat poison box, which are widely available, to avoid poisoning our red squirrels or other wildlife and pets."

For advice about encouraging reds to your garden contact Ponteland Red Squirrels at:



- Phone/text: Donna 07751 822038; Drew 07799 900713; Sally 07878 061880
- Email: pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk
- Facebook (Ponteland and District Red Squirrels).

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PONTELAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Ponteland Schools and Leisure

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Dear Resident,

Over the past 4 weeks, we've seen a gradual return to some form of *new normal* for our work processes on site. Practices have certainly changed along with human behaviour, as we have continued with the implementation of changes to our operating procedures, highlighted by the steady increase of personnel back to the various workfaces. Despite seeing greater output and efficiencies in recent weeks we have, as a site and an industry, still experienced significant impact by the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. We hope that you and your families have remained safe through what has been a completely unprecedented period, and that we can look forward to getting back to some type of normal, whatever that may be, in the not too distant future.

As personnel have become more familiar with the revised work procedures, the familiarity of these methods is leading to an increase in production and has allowed us to reintroduce further personnel to progress the works. As a result, we have seen a good level of progress through the month as more specialist trades have returned to work and manufacturing facilities have re-opened. Overall, the workforce has been extremely supportive of the revised operating procedures to allow them to work – many have expressed their relief at being able to come to site and try to maintain a level of normality in their daily routine.

We have continued to make progress through May with final fix works to all areas of the Schools, including the teaching wings and support/shared spaces within the Crescent. We have also made good progress working through the internal Crescent areas with progress made to all the halls, shared areas, and public areas of the Leisure Centre. Works have also advanced to the Spa, Gym, Studios and all areas of the Pool Hall with the walls now standing for the learner and main pools. M&E services have progressed well to all areas with the main focus now being on the Crescent areas and Pool Hall.

We have continued our sequential close-out process to the teaching wings with the Client team, and this will continue through the remainder of the building through to the completion of the Project.

What works will progress in the next 4 weeks?

- Complete M&E installations to the Primary School.
- Progress Live Testing and Commissioning to the Primary School.
- Substantially Complete the internal finishes to the Primary School.
- Complete M&E installations to the Secondary School.
- Progress Live Testing and Commissioning to the Secondary School.
- Substantially Complete the internal finishes to the Secondary School.
- Complete colour-coat render panels to the Crescent.
- Continue to progress M&E installations to all Crescent areas.
- Complete final finishes to Curtain Walling installations to all areas.
- Continue pipework installation for the swimming pools to the Pool Hall.
- Continue installation of all services to the Pool Hall.
- Continue testing and commissioning of roof top mechanical equipment.
- Continue specialist Spa installation works.
- Continue works to the bridgeway, including the Primary School bridge.
- Continue construction of the Southern Car Park.
- Progress construction of the Sports Pitches to the east of the Fairney Burn.
- Continue to progress external works to all areas

It has come to light that as the roadworks have been progressing there have been a few instances of vehicles turning the wrong way out of site. All of our workers and contractors are asked to adhere to road restrictions and layouts. Can I please ask, that if you witness such behaviour, you try to get some/all of the vehicle registration along with a description of the vehicle and send this through to us immediately.

Watch Points through June

- **Daily traffic movements in and out of the site**
- **Progression of works to the Bridgeway.**
- **NCC Highways roadworks to Callerton Lane – Works by NCC Highways Direct.**



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



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