

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



MP tells of grief after newborn twin sons' death

Anger after errors with new car park charges

WWII pilot who survived crash landing celebrates centenary

Takeover and makeover as jobs saved at nursery

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Produced by Cian creative pr



Seven jobs saved as nursery reopens after takeover

A Ponteland nursery has reopened and seven jobs saved after a successful takeover.

Park House Nursery at Pont Park closed in April after 25 years, with the loss of around a dozen jobs, after the owners decided to retire.

But Izzie Wright, whose parents Tim and Alison already run six nurseries in Lincolnshire employing more than 100 staff, heard about the closure and decided to make enquiries about the potential for reopening under a new name and management.

After successful negotiations the lease started on June 1st. Five weeks and £50,000 later, Park Farm Day Nursery opened after a refurbishment programme led by Izzie's partner Alf.

It has included a repaint of the entire premises, replacement of all flooring and creation of new spaces including an office, staff room and dining room.

Seven of the staff from Park House have been re-employed - five practitioners, a manager and a cook, and there are plans to expand the team as new children arrive.

Izzie, mum to three year old Alfred, said: "The setting is beautiful, with views across open countryside and regular trips to the nursery boundary to visit the cows and sheep.

"There is already a lovely outdoor garden but we have created an additional stimulating outdoor area in what was the redundant courtyard. It has been paved for bikes, trikes and patio games and a bark area for climbing frames, mud kitchen, climbing tyres and pirate ships.

"We have created an outdoor area specifically for babies, laid with soft astroturf for lots of opportunities for floor play and sensory stimulation. We have two barns and plan to create a play barn filled with hay bales to climb on, zip wires, ladders and planks, and to have chickens, rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters in the other."

Park Farm Day Nursery is offering extending open hours from 7am - 7pm from September to accommodate the shift patterns of NHS staff and airport and emergency service workers. With a capacity of 52 children aged from six weeks to five years, it is open 51 weeks of the year and offers two, three and four year old funding sessions.

For more information visit park-farm-day-nursery-ponteland.ueniweb.com or find the nursery on Facebook at facebook.com/Park-Farm-Day-Nursery



Craftsman Alan Mee
with the framed mosaic

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A mosaic commemorating the tercentenary of a Ponteland school can now be seen in its full glory after the intervention of a local craftsman.

For Alan Mee has created this stunning wooden framework for the artwork marking the 300 years of Coates School, which has been fitted to the original building.

Friend Geoff Taylor said: "A couple of days ago we met him there by chance and I took his photo with it. Alan is a craftsman and the frame is wonderful - it is the whole thing, the legs to the ground and the gravel base too."

Tyneside shipwright Richard Coates' financial legacy in 1719 led to the founding of the school which carries his name.

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.

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.

Opened in around 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.

Today the building is home to the Sanderson Young estate agency, bearing the commemorative artwork created by pupils and Northumberland artist Simon Terry.

MP tells of grief after loss of twins

Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman has told of his grief and sadness after the loss of his twin boys within hours of their birth.

The Pensions Minister, who married Flora in June 2017, said their son Teddy died soon after his birth on June 20th and his brother Rafe, born 48 hours later, died on June 23rd in Flora's arms.

In a series of poignant tweets, the MP wrote: "Sadly, just over a week ago we lost our twin boys. Teddy came and went from this world quickly and quietly. He passed peacefully. Our younger twin, Rafe, was not born until Tuesday 23rd, but died later that day in Neonatal ICU.

"Baby loss, and coping with grief, is very hard. Nothing we could do. Just a horrible tragedy. We emerged from hospital a week ago shell shocked.

"We have taken some time out to recover. I am back at work part time, but bear with me. We will come through this, but will always miss our boys.

"The loss of our younger twin Rafe was particularly acute. He lived and died within a long day. But we treasure our time with him in Neonatal ICU. We were able to tell him

of all our hopes and dreams for him, and our family; but he could not make it and died in Flora's arms."

Referring to the Buddhist concept of life and death being like a wave, Mr Opperman – Hexham MP since 2010 - added: "The Wave quote is a good description of this awful process, and an acceptance of life passing. You never regret trying to have children.

"Sometimes baby loss happens. We will never forget our boys. They will be with us always. Just sadly only in their spirit and their memory."

Tributes poured in from MPs on all sides of the House of Commons after the couple's tweets about the tragedy. Former Cabinet minister David Lidington said: "Guy, you and Flora are in my thoughts and prayers. My heartfelt and unreserved sympathy for you both."

Labour MP Jess Phillips added: "Guy there is nothing to say that could show the magnitude of sorrow I hope you can feel us all across the House feeling for you and your family. Much love."

Flora has launched a fundraising campaign for research into Preterm premature rupture of the membranes (PPROM), a complication in which the amniotic sac surrounding the baby breaks before week 37 of pregnancy.

She wrote on the Justgiving page: "This will hopefully prevent other families experiencing the same pain. We are so grateful for the care we received from the NHS and we want to ensure that the learnings from our experience are as widely

accessible as possible. We intend this fund to be used for research into identifying and preventing PPROM.

"We are very grateful to Sands and the bereavement team at our hospitals for their sensitive and thoughtful care we received. We will always be considering ways that we can help extend their expertise and compassion to more families in need."

More than £28,000 has already been raised and donations can be left at [justgiving.com/crowdfunding/teddy-and-rafe](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/teddy-and-rafe)



Guy and Flora Opperman



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Speeding drivers and anti-social youths warned



By PC Phil Oliver, Ponteland Neighbourhood Officer

Drugs

Officers have been conducting regular patrols in Darras Hall following reports made by residents of suspicious vehicles in the area. On one such patrol, we conducted a search of a vehicle parked late at night on Old Station Court and found cannabis inside. This was seized and the driver was given a warning. We will continue to patrol the area both in uniform and in plain clothes to deter such behaviour. Residents are asked to continue to be vigilant and report any suspicious activity to police.

Anti-social behaviour

Your local policing team has been conducting regular patrols in recent weeks in order to tackle anti-social behaviour by youths in the area of the schools on Callerton Lane, the nursery site on Callerton Lane and in the wooded area between Limestone Lane and Richmond Way. These patrols will continue for some time and police will deal robustly with any individuals identified as causing regular issues. I would ask parents and guardians to be wary regarding the whereabouts of their children, especially on weekends and in the evenings.

Speeding

We have received numerous reports of speeding, particularly on Cheviot View, North Road and on Berwick Hill Road. We are asking motorists, specifically those on motorcycles, to be wary of their speed. Police will be continuing to conduct Speedwatch patrols in the coming weeks and will take robust action in regards to any motorists not adhering to speed limits or committing other traffic offences.

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.



PC Phil Oliver conducting a Speedwatch patrol on Cheviot View, Ponteland

Any other issues, you can contact report an incident or provide information via the force website at 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.

Flower Show cancelled

Organisers of Ponteland Parish Flower Show have announced that this year's event has been cancelled.

It follows the Party in the Park in June and Duck Races in September, which

have also been called off due to restrictions on large gatherings. Like the Duck Races, there are also plans to run elements of the Flower Show virtually.

Treasurer Victoria James said: "Unfortunately we have had to take the decision to cancel the show this year, but are looking into going virtual."

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More than 30 firms benefit from Town Council emergency fund

More than 30 Ponteland businesses have benefited from an emergency fund which provided urgent support to local firms affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

The Town Council initiative was designed to complement the range of support available from the Government, Northumberland County Council and other organisations.

It provided eligible applicants with non-repayable grants of up to £500 within ten days to cover the additional costs of making their businesses Covid-19 health and safety compliant.

The one off capital grant fund was aimed at sole traders and independent companies, helping them to build business resilience and safeguard jobs as well as purchasing protective equipment.



Town Councillor Adam Shanley (pictured), who proposed the fund, said: "The Town Council is really proud to support local businesses in Ponteland through what are unquestionably very worrying and uncertain times.

"This fund was specifically aimed at helping businesses build a resilience to Covid-19, to help them with the additional costs of things such as the purchase of PPE, protective screening, hand sanitisers and also to provide the

public with some level of reassurance when visiting businesses.

"I was delighted when the Council committed this budget to give businesses that much needed shot in the arm and get footfall back to Ponteland in as safe a manner as possible. A number of our much loved independents reached out to us for help and we are really pleased to show solidarity with, and support for, our businesses in this way."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

An investment tip which really adds up

By David Lamb, Lamb Financial

This tip is (almost) guaranteed to help many people get a better return on their investments!

'Too good to be true!' I hear the sceptical voices cry. So what is this fantastic investment? An HP 10bII+ Financial Calculator (£28 from Amazon).

This will calculate compound interest and therefore the effect of charges on your investment returns. Product provider illustrations will also show these but, due to the length of the documents, in my experience not many people read them. I also think that the impact has more effect if you calculate them yourself.

Our research suggests that many advisers charge 3% of the investment for initial advice and 1% ongoing* and, when added to product and fund

charges, the annual cost can often total 2.3% or more. What is the effect of these charges compared to a time costed fee of (for example) £1,000 and total annual charges of 1.3%?

Let's assume an investment (pension or unit trust) of £100,000 over 20 years and an average annual growth rate of 5%.

The higher charges would provide a final value of £165,264, whereas the alternative would be £204,743. That is almost 24% more!

The figures look even more depressing if you then take inflation into account, assuming this averages 2.5% (the Financial Conduct Authority's recommended assumption). The first option would provide £100,954, the lower charged option £125,675.

Who is making the most money from your money?

'Ah!', but the investment industry exclaims: 'You get what you pay for and we'll get you better returns – we can beat 5% and we provide good value for money.' But will they?

Always remember that while charges are guaranteed, performance is not, and who is to judge what is value for money - the adviser or the client?

And if you think these returns are bad, consider a deposit account paying 1.5% over the same period. After inflation, the £100,000 would be worth £81,790 in current values!

In my next article, I'll look at investment returns and the myths the investment industry creates.

* New Model Adviser



Ponteland Community High School named the best in Northumberland

Staff and students are celebrating after Ponteland Community High School was named the best in Northumberland.

The Real Schools Guide ranks all of the country's state secondary schools, basing its scores on exam results as well as teacher-pupil ratios, absence rates, and the progress students make.

PCHS, which is rated 'Good' by Ofsted, announced its conversion into an academy in 2019. It is due to move to a new £42m school and leisure complex on the site of the former leisure centre this autumn.

Head Kieran McGrane said:

"At Ponteland High School we are very clear about our driving aims, which are that we want our students to be happy, feel safe and secure, and achieve exceptionally well; the key for us is that it is in this precise order.

"We place emphasis on the quality of relationships between staff and students as we feel this is central to ensuring students feel happy, and safe and secure in school.

"To that end, we are fortunate to have a highly committed and talented staff body; we recruit and retain great people, both teaching staff and professional support staff.

"Finally, we focus on the basics each and every day; this includes being polite, friendly and well behaved; treating others with respect at all times and committing to using our unique talents and gifts to do our best – this is equally applicable to staff as it is to students."

The top five schools in Northumberland, as rated by the Real Schools Guide are:

- 1 Ponteland High School
- 2 King Edward VI Academy, Morpeth
- 3 Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham
- 4 Cramlington Learning Village
- 5 Prudhoe Community High School.



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Car parking fines wrongly issued at Memorial Hall

Motorists were wrongly issued with fines within weeks of a new car park charging regime being introduced at the Memorial Hall.

A number of users of the car park who had registered with the good2go website were incorrectly given penalty notices between June 17th and 23rd.

Hall trustees have pledged that all will be rescinded and apologised for the error.

Chairman Robin Ramsay said: "It has come to our attention that a number of charge notices have been issued to car park users who had already registered with good2go. Following discussions with ParkingEye, they are now in the process of rescinding these notices.

"It is understood that this fault has now been rectified and for all who have registered with good2 park please do not pay the charge for the period 17th June to 23rd June.



"The Memorial Hall Trustees apologise for the concern and inconvenience these incorrect charges have caused."

The debacle has caused quite a stir on social media. Carrie Fuller wrote on the Darras Hall Facebook group: "The Parking Eye said I had been there ten minutes longer than my hour ticket stated. I've appealed it as it took me ten minutes to sort the kids out and get a ticket. What a joke!"

Michelle Smith Vigurs added: "Don't use the car park - system has fined so many honest people."

And Paul Jones wrote: "Some people including myself had two fines in one week. I appealed...and Parking Eye sent a letter confirming cancelled fines. I... won't use the car park again as I have no confidence in the system. Appears many are doing the same which is a shame."

Anyone who has been wrongly given a ticket and not yet been notified it has been withdrawn should notify the Hall at info@pontelandmemorialhall.com giving their name, reference number, car plate number and the date of the alleged offence which are shown on the notice.

A copy or original notice should also be delivered to Mr Ramsay at 11a The Rise, Darras Hall, if possible.

In April, trustees issued a desperate plea for donations, describing the venue's financial situation as "precarious". They said that with the lockdown forcing closure, all usual income from user groups ceased and after nearly 100 years the hall's continued existence was under real threat.

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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Praise from one correspondent and cutting remarks from another in this month's letters...

Grasslands article very much welcomed

I applaud the coverage in your July 2020 issue given to the area known as the Grasslands under the heading 'Project captures history of hidden gem'.

Your readers may be interested in the most significant milestone of the management of this land by its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In the early 1980s this area was known as the recreation ground and contained a football pitch.

I recall as a member of Darras Hall Estate Committee, possibly in 1982, volunteering to erect a replacement goal post which had been purchased by the committee.

A contentious issue then arose. DHEC resolved to consider the sale of some or all of the land, with the proceeds of the sale used to finance the Committee's running costs and reduce or eliminate the rent charges.

At this time the recreation ground was not the only large area of this type of grassland in Darras Hall. An undeveloped area between Collingwood Crescent and Eastern Way, which was reserved for educational use, was no longer required and was sold off for housing, generating substantial income for the owner.

This probably seeded the idea that the estate committee should consider a similar approach to the recreation ground, which received strong opposition - particularly from adjacent owners.

The predecessor of Natural England expressed an interest in the special environmental quality of this area and in 1984 designated it an SSSI. They also recommended a management plan that would replicate the animal grazing of years gone by.

A recreation ground sub-committee was formed which I was invited to chair. Information was gathered and many problems and representations were received. The issue was reported back to the main committee and, much to my relief, the issue of the sale of the land was dropped.

It would appear from your photograph that this asset remains largely as intended in 1984, and remains for the mutual enjoyment of all Darras Hall owners who have an equal entitlement to share the value of this environmental treasure.

Darras Hall residents geographically remote from the grassland may not know of its existence or the significance of its SSSI designation, and the publicity you have given to the area is very much to be welcomed.

Geoffrey S Creighton
Western Way, Darras Hall

Cutless wonders and pathetic parkers causing pavement problem

It seems that lockdown has been so severe for some home owners that they haven't even been able to visit the front of their own property.

If they had, then perhaps they would realise that some of their frontages are so overgrown that the pavement is only passable by unicyclists or tightrope walkers.

Even those who are maintaining their hedges seem to struggle to understand that they should be cutting back to their boundary and not 4ft onto the pavement.

Even if social distancing wasn't upon us, people in wheelchairs, pushing pushchairs etc really shouldn't have to play chicken on the roads with cars to circumnavigate your house!

To make it worse, considerate drivers are also parking their cars and vans well onto the pavement to be nice to other motorists, but in doing so are forcing those of us who actually use the pavements to use the roads. Perhaps they think we all have giant spacehoppers or pogo sticks to leap over their cars?

Come on Darras, either get out and get cutting or pay someone to do it and use the road (or your massive drives) for parking.

Perhaps the Darras Hall Estate Committee should be upping people's rent to cover the extra land that these cutless wonders and pathetic parkers are stealing?

Steve Egton
Western Way, Darras Hall

September issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the September issue is Friday August 14th. Door to door distribution will be from Friday August 28th to Friday September 4th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the September 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.

What's on...

Ponteland U3A

Due to the current situation we cannot meet on the first Wednesday of the month at St Mary's Parish Centre until it is safe to do so. However, thanks to Zoom we are able to give our monthly talks. It is the intention to give the first talk at 2pm on Wednesday July 1st.

For more information please visit u3asites.org.uk/Ponteland or contact (01661) 824953.

These talks are available for members and non-members alike. Apologies to those members who do not have internet access but we can only hope that the situation changes before too long. In the meantime keep safe and well.

Ponteland Senior Gentleman's Club

The activities of the club are at present still suspended, but we are hoping to resume in October with a Zoom online meeting, and then hold meetings in the Memorial Hall in November and December. The programme we hope to offer is as follows:

Monday 5th October 2.30pm - A Zoom meeting for all members.

Monday 9th November 2.30pm - Annual General Meeting in the Hall with Speaker Prof John Derry.

Monday 7th December 2.30pm - Social meeting with singing group Imagine Five and refreshments.

We will not be able to hold meetings in the Hall unless it is clear that it is safe to do so, bearing in mind the age of most of our members.

Ponteland Village WI

Due to the Covid -19 virus, like groups and organisations throughout the UK, we have been unable to hold our monthly meetings. However our wonderful support network and friendships have meant that members have been in touch with one another and a monthly newsletter has been emailed to members. Some members have started to enjoy socially-distanced walks, the Cycling for Softies group has restarted and the book club is enjoying Zoom meetings. At the time of writing, we have no idea about when we'll be allowed to meet again, but for updates and information, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or find us on Facebook - Ponteland Village WI.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

The monthly talks at Kirkley Hall are still cancelled at the moment. We will regularly assess the situation and as soon as it's safe to do so, we will resume our schedule of speakers. We will let you have details via the press, website, posters etc when the situation improves. Please look out for our announcement. In the meanwhile we wish you well and please continue to take care. Friends of Kirkley Hall Committee

Ponteland Rotary

It will take more than this virus outbreak to stop Rotary Ponteland! Not to be beaten by the Government lockdown, Rotarians in Ponteland are holding their meetings online using Zoom technology. Incoming President John Muir said:

"Club members have adapted very quickly and online meetings take place every two weeks on a Tuesday morning. It means we can keep the wheels of Rotary still turning and try to work around all the social distancing measures."

Ponteland Methodist Church

Ponteland Methodist Church is closed until further notice, but widely acclaimed YouTube services are available each week. Just search on YouTube for 'Newcastle West Methodist Circuit'. The services are usually available from Saturday night and can be viewed anytime.

You can also read our monthly magazine Cornerstone on the church website at ponteland-methodist-church.org.uk. For more information contact anncooperx@gmail.com or to contact the minister, the Rev Jona Sewell, call (01661) 822057.

St Mary's Church

Due to Covid-19, all regular services at St. Mary's and Holy Saviour have ceased. From June 16th, St Mary's Church will be open on Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 1pm and Sunday 1pm to 3pm. All access to the building needs to be supervised. For national online Church of England services streamed every Sunday visit churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online

Ponteland Community Partnership

We continue to work for the benefit of the community but because of the Covid 19 distancing restrictions are having to hold virtual meetings via Zoom. We invite everyone to view our activities on our website where we hope they will find many facets of our work to interest them. Comments and ideas are always welcomed. Visit: pontelandcommunitypartnership.co.uk

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Regional Building Northern Project / Community Update



Welcome to the project and community update

Over the past month, we have made good progress with works on site. Output and resource levels have been maintained through this period and works are well advanced to all areas in preparation for the revised handover and completion of the building in early November 2020.

July has continued to see good advancement to all areas – internal and external – with finishing works progressing throughout. Both Primary and Secondary School teaching wings are in their final stages of completion and close-out, along with the shared spaces to the Crescent. The public areas to the Crescent have progressed well, with the finishing works advancing at a good pace. August will see the commencement of the installation of the specialist leisure offerings, such as the Clip 'n' Climb and Soft Play areas.

Works have progressed well within the Pool Hall with the completion of the backfill to the swimming pool tanks – main and learner pools – and the completion of the pool deck areas and Aqua Play slab. Once complete, the finishing works will be advanced to the Pool Hall ahead of the installation of the pool liners and height adjustable floor in September.

The external areas have advanced through the month, with works progressing well to the hard landscaping finishes between the teaching wings, as well as the Crescent Park to the front of the building facing on to Callerton Lane. Works have also progressed well to the northern section of the South Car Park.

The ongoing works to the Bridle Path have also made good progress, with the installation of the piers to support the pedestrian bridge installed, ready for the bridge lift in early August. This was originally set for mid-July however, works to energise the new substation for the building meant that this had to be reassessed.

Works have progressed for the formation of the new sports pitches with the earthworks now at an advanced stage. The works for the construction of the 3G sports pitch and the MUGA's will progress through August and September, in order that they are complete for the opening of the campus later in the year.

Through August, the external areas will continue to be progressed with the landscaping, completion of the bridge to the Primary School, and works to the South Car Park and the new Play Park adjacent to Callerton Lane, next to the end of the Bridleway.

Ponteland Schools & Leisure Development

Site Address:
Kier Construction
Callerton Lane
Ponteland
NE20 9EG

Site Contacts:
Roddy Graham
Project Leader
07849 098786



Andy Todhunter
Operations Lead
07773 243081



Kier Website:
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What works will progress in the next 4 weeks?

- Complete internal finishes and snagging to the Primary School teaching wing.
- Complete internal finishes and snagging to the Secondary School teaching wing.
- Continue Live Testing and Commissioning to Primary and Secondary teaching wings.
- Complete M&E installations to Crescent areas.
- Progress internal finishes and snagging to Crescent areas
- Progress finishes works to the Pool Hall.
- Continue specialist Spa installation works.
- Complete works to the Bridleway.
- Complete construction of the South Car Park (northern section) and new Play Park.
- Continue construction of the external artificial and natural Sports Pitches.
- Continue to progress External Works and Soft Landscaping to all areas.



We value your feedback and comments or questions on this project, please email: ksne.ponteland@kier.co.uk



WWII pilot who survived crash landing celebrates 100th birthday

A former WWII pilot who recovered from being shot down by the Luftwaffe has celebrated his 100th birthday with his family.

Ralph Brumwell signed up as a volunteer reserve pilot in 1939, learning to fly at the aircraft training centre at Hamble, Hampshire. He went on to fly for RAF Bomber Command from Redhill and Brize Norton before joining 218 Sqn at Harwell, Oxfordshire.

In 1941, whilst flying a Wellington, Ralph was shot down by a Junkers 88 and crash landed near Marham, Norfolk. After recovering from the injuries sustained he transferred to light aircraft duties at Newmarket, later joining 75 New Zealand Sqn at Mepal near Ely.

Ralph was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for 30 successful sorties over Germany. After leaving the RAF, Ralph joined aerial photography company Hunting Aerosurveys in 1954 before starting his career as a passenger jet pilot at Leeds Bradford Airport.

It was here he met Bradfordian Irene, who was working as an airline ground receptionist. The couple were married for more than 55 years before the former Mayor of Castle Morpeth's death in December 2018 aged 84.

The couple, who had three children and five grandchildren, moved to Darras Hall in the early 1970s when Ralph transferred to Newcastle Airport. He retired from BA in 1980, aged 60.

He celebrated his 100th birthday on July 24th with family at home.

Eldest daughter Jane said: "Dad has lived a very happy life in Ponteland for the best part of 50 years and we thought it would be lovely to feature his 100th birthday in Pont News."

Ralph is pictured with son Mark and daughters Jane and Lindsay at The Petwood Hotel in Lincolnshire during a visit to the opening of the International Bomber Command Centre Memorial in January 2018, and as a young pilot.



Do you want help to clean up your street?

Members of Rotary Ponteland are offering to help local residents clean up their streets.

Following a recent successful litter pick on Rotary Way, the club is now planning to repeat the event each spring and autumn.

But local Rotarians also want to provide help and assistance to residents organising similar clean-up drives in their own neighbourhoods.

There are already a number of local residents who look after their own area and a group that covers the Main Street and shopping centre. But it is hoped that Rotary Ponteland teaming up with local residents will be able to cover a much wider area.

John Muir, President of the Club said: "We do not think Ponteland has a serious litter problem. However, we were surprised about the amount rubbish which we collected on Rotary Way.

"We are not asking Rotary members and residents to take on the task cleaning every public space in Ponteland but we

are willing to coordinate small resident teams if there is sufficient local interest."

Rotary Ponteland is working in conjunction with Ponteland Town Council which is willing to provide gloves, litterpick rods and other equipment to ensure that the work is carried out safely. The Club will also observe the rules concerning social distancing.

If you want to find out more about this initiative, please email the Rotary Club on RotaryPonteland@gmail.com or contact Alan Hall on 07740 866764.

Depending on the level of the response the local litter picks will be scheduled over the next few months.

Rotarians at a recent litter pick on Rotary Way



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Covid-19 group closes down after four months of volunteering

A group of volunteers set up to help people during the lockdown has announced it is winding down.

Ponteland Community Group said it was stopping all its Covid-19 support on Friday July 31st.

The group was set up at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown in March to assist local residents who needed a little extra support. Since then the group has worked with the Northumberland Community Response Team and local GP practices to help people in need.

Run entirely by local volunteers, during the past four months it has helped more than 170 local households, around 250 residents, enabling people who were required to self isolate or shield to stay safe and reduce their risk of infection.

Joint organiser Dr Ela Akay said: "More than 150 local residents across all age groups came forward to offer their services. The dedication, enthusiasm and hard work of the volunteers, enabled the Group to provide a wide range of services to local residents and the wider region.

"As well as providing day to day support the volunteers were there to help people who have been bereaved, taken ill or been discharged from hospital (none of which was due to Covid-19)."

The volunteers' achievements included:

- 1,000 food deliveries to local households - 15,000 individual food items picked, packed and delivered by volunteers



Volunteer Meg Ellis making a delivery in April. Pic by Barry Pells

- 170 local households supported with food deliveries, errands, regular phone calls and many more small acts of kindness
- 46 emergency food deliveries to local residents, using food parcels of essential items donated by Waitrose
- 26 prescriptions delivered to patients on behalf of Ponteland and White GP practices
- Easter art competition for children judged by BBC children's presenter
- Website launched providing advice on Covid-19 and local information on physical and mental health, online delivery services, local businesses, homeschooling activities and events and activities
- 15,000 donated food items distributed to communities in SE Northumberland
- 1,200 donated toiletry bags given to local NHS hospitals, hospices and women's refuges
- 2,200 wash bags donated to the NHS, local care homes and charities
- 400 premature baby clothes and hearts knitted and donated to the RVI.

Dr Akay added: "Ponteland Community Group would like to thank all its enthusiastic, caring and dedicated volunteers. Without the volunteers, lockdown would have been an anxious and difficult time for so many people.

"A special thank you must go to the 14 volunteer zone leaders, the Waitrose picking and delivery teams and the people who acted as collection points and delivery drivers for our food and toiletry bag appeals. You have all been amazing.

"It has been inspiring to see the community coming

together to help people in need; all those individual and collective acts of kindness have made a difference. It has been greatly appreciated by all those that have received your help.

"The group would also like to thank everyone who donated to its appeals and the local businesses who supported them. We owe a special thanks to the staff and management at Waitrose Ponteland and the Hilton Doubletree Hotel, as without their support it would have been impossible to achieve everything."

If anyone needs support for non-medical reasons, they can contact the Northumberland Communities Together Response Hub on 01670 620015 between 9am and 6pm seven days a week. If the matter is urgent you should contact the County Council's 24-hour One Call service on 01670 536400.

U3A goes virtual to keep in touch

Ponteland's University of the Third Age (U3A) has gone virtual to keep in touch with members during the lockdown and meet social distancing rules.

The U3A has been maintaining communication via email and the phone, contacting members on a monthly basis enquiring after their well-being and asking if they need any assistance.

The committee has also launched monthly meetings via Zoom. On July 1st the first monthly talk took place online with 37 people watching and listening to Michael Metcalf giving his talk on his life in TV 'You couldn't make it up'.

Talks will continue via Zoom on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm until members are able to meet up at St Mary's Parish Centre once again.

Information on how to log in will be sent to members in advance of the talks.

Some of the study groups have also been meeting up in back gardens and other outdoor places whilst still conforming to social distancing guidelines.

The photography group members are contacting each other by email and Facebook, the German group is using Zoom, while the Chatter Craft group is functioning in the group leader's garden.

The Family History and Half a Good Read groups are also looking into the possibility of using Zoom, and the walking groups are exploring the

possibility of socially distant activities.

Other groups are suspended until further notice but are hoping to get active as soon as possible.

Ponteland U3A organises study groups so people who are semi-retired or retired can continue to learn. Members share their knowledge and experience with others in the study groups, running informal sessions covering a wide range of subjects and activities.

More information on the groups can be found at u3asites.org.uk/ponteland/groups.

Anyone interested in joining (at less than £1 per month) should contact the Membership Secretary on (01661) 824953.

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Flower bed planted to mark Ponteland WI's centenary

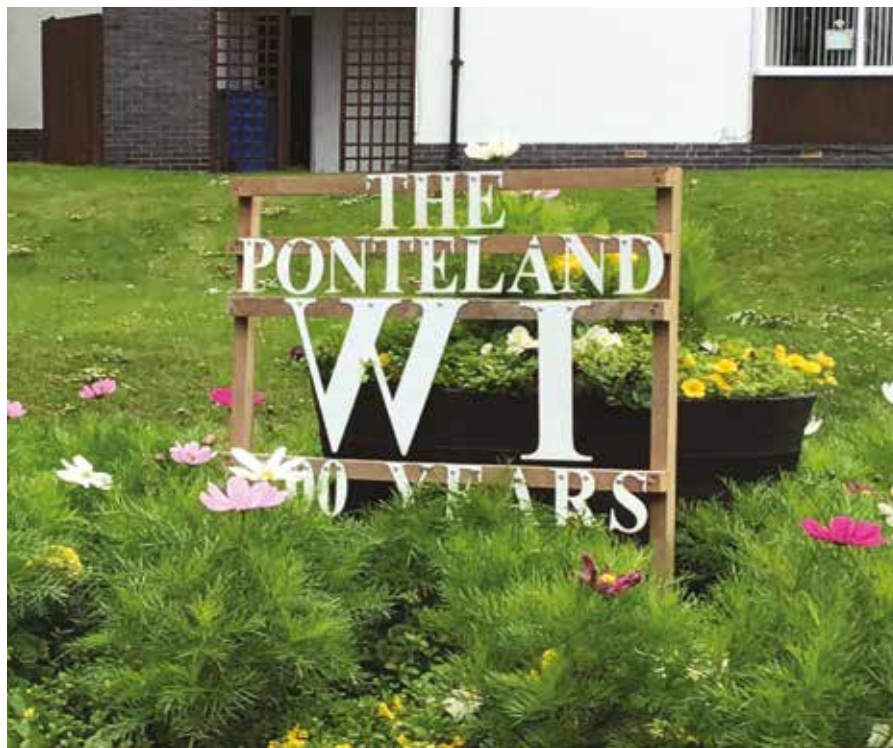
A raised flower bed has been planted by the Town Council to mark the centenary of Ponteland WI.

Members had planned to celebrate the anniversary on June 9th with a celebratory party. All the food, entertainment, decorations and venue had all been planned.

However, due to the Covid 19 crisis all plans have been put on hold and once members are able to have a meeting a new date will be arranged.

In 1920 one of the founder members who went on to become the Ponteland WI's first President was Mrs Langton, wife of Rev. F. W. Langton of St Mary's Church. At that time subscriptions were two shillings per year. Of course they have increased since!

The WI said it was very grateful to the Town Council for the raised bed, which uses the colours of the WI with signage.



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Charity champ writes final chapter on fundraising decade

Ponteland charity champ Bruce Grant is writing the final chapter on his decade of fundraising.

For the 93-year-old, a regular sight with his collection tin in Ponteland, Morpeth, Hexham, Kingston Park and Eldon Square in Newcastle, has written an autobiography on his eventful life on land, air and sea.

Called 'Flying by the seat of my pants', it describes childhood escapades during a rural upbringing in north-east Scotland, the highs and lows of a career in the Armed Services and industry, and the airborne charity stunt that led to a three month stint in Strangeways Prison!

The grandfather-of-five, of Old Station Court, Darras Hall, received a British Empire Medal in last year's Queen's Birthday Honours for his work with the Pont Charity Group and had been invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace in May. Sadly a combination of Covid-19 lockdown and ill health prevented that engagement.

Bruce, a former engineer, began fundraising in 2010 through church. During the past three years, he has

collected for Newcastle People's Kitchen, West End Food Bank, West End Refugee Service, Benwell Cornerstone Project, Children North East, Percy Hedley Foundation and the Great North Air Ambulance Service.

This year he has been collecting for the Royal Society for Blind Children and Tynedale Hospice at Home. He has raised over £100,000 for good causes – including more than £70,000 for seven North East charities in the last three years alone.

Bruce said: "Very recently I survived 'expected death' through a drug fed direct to my stomach. On recovery, it brought home that I should finalise outstanding charity work today, not tomorrow.

"The remaining charity work covers the sale of my book – outlining my life. It is not a professional book – it was produced due to a guest's request at one of my early charity concerts. As such it is just a collection of tales from boyhood, life at sea and in industry.

"In fairness it has produced a great deal of interest in an unusual life but I have no doubt many would prefer to read 'professional' finish books – not those of



a rank amateur who left school nearly 80 years ago using slates!"

Copies of the book can be purchased online (select GBP) at:

lulu.com/en/au/shop/bruce-grant/flying-by-the-seat-of-my-pants/paperback/product-1wk7y927.html

Alternatively email pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk with your order and contact details and we will pass them on to Bruce. Copies cost £10 including postage and packing and all proceeds will go to Bruce's final fundraising campaign.



Luxury kitchen and bathroom showroom opens in Ponteland

Home to some of the world's most exclusive kitchen and bathroom products, Stonebridge Interiors offer a full bespoke kitchen and bathroom design and installation service to customers across the North of England and Southern Scotland.

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The bathroom side is headed up by Armani-Roca, with other premium brands such as Matki, Kaldewei, Swadling Brassware and Silverdale Bathrooms.

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