

pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Darras Hall to get fully
funded gigabit broadband

£2.7m flood defence
scheme completed

Dog festival attracts
8,000 to Kirkley Hall

Massive turnout as Duck Races return

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Festival gets the tails wagging

More than 8,000 dog lovers descended on Kirkley Hall for a weekend event that really got the tails wagging.

Dogs of all shapes and sizes, ages and breeds enjoyed have-a-go activities from gundog scurries to hoopers, flyball to parkour.

The North East Dog Festival also had three charity dog shows, including classes which were judged by Channel 5's Yorkshire Vet, Peter Wright. Some classes saw in excess of 50 entries, meaning lots of money raised for their individual causes.

The display ring welcomed Alan Bradley from the Lake District Sheepdog Experience and also the Walworth Castle Birds

of Prey whilst the demonstration ring welcomed Festival newcomers Scentventure, rally and whippet racing.

The two day event was sponsored by Durham Animal Feeds and led by festival directors Dawn Oliver Doyle and Rebecca Ashworth Earle.

Describing this year's festival, held on September 4-5, as 'one of the biggest and best we've ever run', Rebecca said: "It was fantastic to see visitors leaving with rosettes, prizes and bags and bags of shopping with many food traders selling out on the Sunday. This event is a real team effort and we are extremely grateful to those who have supported us this year."

Photos by Ben Heward Images



Darras Hall to get fully funded gigabit broadband



A Darras Hall FttC broadband cabinet

A fully funded gigabit broadband network is being installed across Darras Hall which promises a “massive” increase in bandwidth.

Homeowners on the estate and neighbouring Callerton Lane and Dunsgreen are being urged to contact provider FACTCO to register interest in the scheme, which is being part-funded via the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Rural Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme.

Installation and routers will be free, and 12 month contracts start at £24.99 per month for 100Mbps, up to £44.99 per month for a 1,000Mbps service.

The announcement follows a vociferous campaign by local resident Simon Tappin, supported by Ponteland MP Guy Opperman.

The Darras Hall Community Fibre Scheme group was launched to lobby for a much needed upgrade to the estate's telecommunications network provided by Openreach, which still uses copper telephone lines dating back to the 1960s.

Until now there had been no plans to update the last mile copper broadband cable service - known as Fibre to the Cabinet (FttC) or Superfast Broadband service - meaning many homes in Darras Hall would have continued to suffer from poor and inconsistent mobile broadband.

Simon, a Technical Services Director from Lynwood Close, Darras Hall, said: “After a three year campaign by the Darras Hall Community Fibre Scheme and local residents, we are very pleased to be working with FACTCO who are self-funding the proposed broadband network rollout.

“As many have found during the pandemic, good Internet connectivity is a necessity utility for modern day working and living. We welcome FACTCO's investment and commitment in replacing our legacy and outdated broadband infrastructure.

“We believe FACTCO's proposed network buildout will provide residents with a huge uplift in available bandwidth today and in the future. Hopefully this now means Darras Hall will no longer be a broadband black hole.”

Mr Opperman, who had lobbied Digital Minister Matt Warman for the estate's inclusion in the £5bn nationwide gigabit programme, said: “Following a brilliant local campaign by Simon and all members of the Darras Hall Community Fibre Scheme I am delighted that progress has been made and Darras Hall is being connected to full fibre.

“I would encourage all residents in Darras Hall to sign up for the scheme, which will improve the longstanding issues with connectivity in the area.”

Local residents can register their interest for the scheme at factco.co.uk/project/darras-hall

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Opposition growing to affordable housing scheme

Opposition to a planned 65-home development on green belt land at the southern tip of Darras Hall has been growing as the applicants await a decision by county council planners.

During the official public consultation period 89 public comments were received, with only two supportive of the planning application by Esh Living for the 2.3-hectare site near the junction of Western Way and Stamfordham Road.

The builder is partnering housing association Karbon Homes and architect IDPartnership in the scheme, which they say would provide a wide range of housing including affordable family homes, starter homes and bungalows.

The proposed development, described as a '100% affordable housing scheme', includes ten two bedroom bungalows, 24 three bedroom homes, seven two bedroom homes and 24 two bedroom apartments suitable for retirement living.

Anthony Rodda, of Rivermede, Ponteland, was one of the two respondents in favour. He wrote: "Brilliant idea. We definitely need more new affordable homes for local people. This will be no burden on the local infrastructure - it's 65 small houses on the edge of a huge development.

"Hardly going to add to the traffic volumes at all. They'll probably be low(er) income families who probably won't have five Range Rovers each and they're on the edge of the estate with a choice of entry/exit roads. We need more developments such as this otherwise Ponteland will turn into an old people's home."

Lindsay Bailey, of Middlebrook, Darras Hall, was also supportive. She wrote: "In Ponteland we have need for exactly the type of development being proposed. Those brought up in this area need affordable housing, as do older people who have lived here all their lives and need to downsize.

"The plans look well thought out and Karbon Homes are a well respected

social housing provider. Whilst I am disappointed that this is being proposed on a green belt site, we should not deny the need remains. A community that does not support all needs is no community at all."

John Hague, objecting on behalf of Ponteland Civic Society, wrote: "The proposals presented with this application are unimaginative and rather dated. A computer generated layout of unattractive looking dwellings... There is a need to create a more diverse range of residential accommodation in Ponteland but this remote 'green belt' site is not the right place for it."

Darras Hall Estate Committee also submitted an objection, on the basis it is located in the green belt outside the settlement boundary, would be heavily reliant on car use due to an inadequate local bus service, and is a typical suburban house builder development which is out of character with the garden village/rural nature of the estate.

A decision on the outline planning application is expected soon.

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Pouring rain fails to dampen Rep Society's spirits

By Lesley Eltringham

Ponteland Repertory Society's first live performance after Covid restrictions were relaxed was truly ambitious: an outdoor production of excerpts from Shakespeare's plays in Phil and Ruth Browell's beautiful gardens in Bolam.

Rehearsals done, lines learned, the stage built, the tickets sold...and then it rained. No, it poured! Never daunted, the performance was moved indoors to the adjoining St Andrew's Church and as always the Rep cast and crew kept calm and carried on.

The many wonderful performances included Lizzie Browell's beautiful soprano voice soaring through the old church as she performed pieces from Titus Andronicus, As You Like it and Richard III.

Our Preppies with Carole Davies and Leo Emmerson provided comedy as The Mechanicals from A Midsummer Night's Dream, while the tragedies featured included Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Hamlet and a trio of Cleopatras.



Grateful thanks must be given to everyone who gave their time and energy to making this production such a success. We are now looking forward to our winter show The Wizard of Oz at the High School in January. Look out for more details on our website pontelandrep.co.uk.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Who will look after your money if you can't?

By David Lamb

Most of us do not want to do think about our loved ones or ourselves losing mental capacity and many people think 'it won't happen to us, we're fine'. But what would happen to our finances if this were to happen?

Effectively the Court (of Protection) comes along and puts a padlock on that person's finances, and they and their family lose control of their money; cheques can't be written, money can't be transferred and bills cannot be paid. A deputy is appointed and so starts a long and expensive process.

The key to that padlock is a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA), but you can only buy that key when you have mental capacity. Once that is lost it is too late.

When you set up a Property and Financial Affairs LPA you can decide immediately what duties your

nominated attorneys can help you with now, or only when you are no longer able to make decisions for yourself.

The following link is to BBC Money Box programme broadcast on 23 February 2021 that you should listen to: bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000sh8v or use your camera on your mobile phone to access via the QR code below:



When establishing a Property and Financial Affairs LPA, it would be prudent to consider a Health and Welfare LPA at the same time.

These focus on the personal aspects which affect your health and wellbeing, such as the treatments you have, where you are taken care of and if you need to be looked after in a nursing or care home. The Health and Welfare LPA can only be used when you no longer can make your own decisions.

I strongly recommend that you consider establishing Lasting Powers of Attorney whilst you still can before it's too late. You never know what is around the corner.

You can make your own LPA by going to www.gov.uk/power-of-attorney, by approaching a local solicitor or contacting us for assistance.



Remember: red squirrels have no road sense

By Sally Hardy, Ponteland Red Squirrels



We are appealing to all drivers in the Ponteland area to keep to the speed limit and also keep a lookout for our red squirrels crossing the roads.

Unfortunately, red squirrels have no road sense and will happily hop along a verge or pavement and onto the roads with no thought for cars.

Ponteland and Darras Hall are lucky enough to have a thriving population of red squirrels. However, over the past few months there have been 10 reds run over and killed on the roads - nine in Darras and one in Ponteland.

The most recent was a lactating female run over on Middle Drive, leaving her babies without a mother. Our only hope is that they will be fostered by another female, as red squirrels do share dreys.

We are appealing to residents and visitors to the area to drive mindfully to help our reds survive.

Have you got some spare time? Would you like to help our reds? Would you like to play an active role in our group? Please contact us for info at pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk or by calling or texting Donna 07751 822038, Drew 07799 900713 or Sally 07878 061880. Also find us on Facebook (Ponteland and District Red Squirrels).

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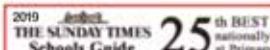
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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Two very differing views on green belt development in this month's postbag...

Will the Housing Secretary's departure change green belt policy?

I wonder if the very relevant and reasonable points made by Malcolm Thompson in his letters about building on the green belt will now fall on 'deaf ears'?

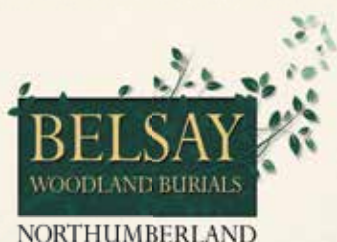
Now that Robert Jenrick has been replaced by Michael Gove, will Gove feel unconstrained by Jenrick's prior assurances relating to the green belt?

Am I being too sceptical in thinking that Jenrick's soothing words were to pave the way for general election votes.

And, having been replaced (after a 'decent' interval), his replacement will tell us that the green belt is not sacrosanct after all and that the push for new housebuilding is more in line with government policy?

Doug Shield

Western Way, Darras Hall



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We should welcome well planned housing schemes

People need homes, and we should count ourselves fortunate to reside in this green and pleasant Ponteland.

How sad then that, whenever a modest housing development is proposed, especially one that threatens to be "affordable", the community unites in its reluctance to share our good fortune.

Some objectors cite green belt restrictions, yet the average Darras garden displays infinitely more biodiversity than the girdle of chemically sprayed, agro-industrial monoculture encircling us.

Others complain of the lack of public transport, but the remedy for this is surely better bus services rather than denying homes to people who need them.

Let's welcome well planned, environmentally sound developments, and the people that come with them.

Bob Turner

Lynwood Close, Darras Hall

November issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the November issue is Monday October 18th. Door to door distribution will be from Monday November 1st to Friday November 5th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the November issue. Please visit ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views for online issues and all updates.



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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...

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

A small club founded on friendship which always welcomes new members and visitors. Meetings which are held monthly consist of members spending some social time together, talks, occasional meals in local restaurants and gentle fundraising events for charities are also held. The next meeting will be held at 2pm on Monday October 4th in the Bishop Merton Room, St Mary's Parish Hall. For anyone who may like to join us and for further information please contact 07568 743653.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

Ponteland Wildlife Group talks have now resumed by Zoom. For information please visit pontelandwildlife.wixsite.com. Talks are on the first Tuesday evening each month at 7.30pm: Tuesday October 5th - Chris Wright, Owls and the Aurora; Tuesday November 2nd - cancelled; Tuesday December 7th - Chris Metherell, Flora of Northumberland.

Ponteland u3a

Meetings and talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm. Our next two talks will be: Wednesday October 6th - Bobby Thompson The Little Waster by Ben Haddon and Wednesday November 3rd - The Half Shilling Curate 1914-18 - Durham Light Infantry by Ms Sarah Reay. We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join Ponteland u3a; please call the membership secretary on 01661 824953.

Wilde Farm Outdoor Market

Wilde Farm's Outdoor Market will be held at Dobbies Ponteland from 10am to 2pm on Sunday October 10th and Sunday October 24th. Go through the main building entrance and turn left into the outdoor plant area for all the usual gazebos packed with local produce, gifts and crafts. Visit: wildefarm.co.uk.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our next meeting, which will be the first in Ponteland Memorial Hall for many months, will take place on Monday October 11th at 2.30pm, when Kath and Harry Gilbert will entertain us with a talk entitled 'Foreign Devils on the Silk Road'. We look forward to meeting our members in person after a very long gap, and will welcome visitors. Enquiries to pontelandsgc@gmail.com.

Ponteland Village WI

Our lively group has returned to face-to-face meetings, on the second Tuesday of the month, with social-distancing in place. Until further notice, we will not be allowing visitors and members are asked to bring their own refreshments. The sub-groups such as the Walking Group, Dining Out, Cycling for Softies and Book Club are continuing. The next meeting will be on Tuesday October 12th when the talk will be on cyber protection. For more about us, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

The next meeting will be at 2pm on Wednesday October 13th at Ponteland Memorial Hall. Our speaker will be plantsman Howard Leslie who will give an illustrated talk as well as have plants for sale. Visitors welcome (£7).

Ponteland Rotary jazz concert

Maureen Hall and Rendezvous Jazz Band are entertaining at Ponteland Memorial Hall from 7pm on Saturday October 16th. Tables will be set to make it comfortable and safe and you can enjoy your own snacks and nibbles. There will be a cash bar and raffle with valuable prizes. The car parking charge is £1 per vehicle. For tickets costing £16 contact Stewart Blair on 01661 822367. For more information visit rotaryponteland.org.uk

Ponteland Local History Society

A virtual Tour of Hexham Abbey by Mary Illingworth on Thursday October 21st at 7.30pm at Ponteland Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. Visitors welcome - £2.

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers will be meeting on Monday October 25th from 2pm to 4pm in the new leisure centre in Ponteland for a talk on 'fabric and fashion'. All welcome, there will be a small entry fee. Please contact me for further details - Penny Ford, Secretary, at penelopeford636@btinternet.com.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday worship 10am and 6.30pm - all welcome. Monday 'Open Door' café. Tuesday Women's Fellowship and Boys Brigade. Thursday Toddlers, Men's Forum, Women's Focus. Saturday walking group. Various Bible study and House groups. Pilates. Zumba. Room hire. Contact anncooperx@gmail.com or call 01661 824347.

Ponteland Ladies' Choir

Ponteland Ladies Choir has restarted face to face rehearsals at our new venue Ponteland Community Primary School (next to the original high school) on a Monday evening from 7.30pm to 9.15pm (term time only). For further info please email pontelandladieschoir@gmail.com or contact Linda on 07771 536914 or Susan on 07710 418780.

Creative writing classes

Suitable for both beginners and more experienced writers, these classes will inspire and encourage you to write poetry, short fiction and memoir and to share and develop your writing through stimulating workshop sessions in a friendly and supportive group. We meet on Wednesday mornings in members' homes/gardens in and around Ponteland (or on Zoom depending on current Covid regulations). Email claire@claire276.plus.com for more information or to arrange a free taster session.

Rotary Ponteland

Rotarians in Ponteland are holding their meetings via Zoom every two weeks on a Tuesday morning. The group organises many local events raising much needed funds for local charities. For more information visit rotaryponteland.org.uk or email info@rotaryponteland.org.uk.

Ponteland Health Walks

Ponteland Health Walks meet every Tuesday at 10.30am outside Ponteland Leisure Centre. The free walks take 60 to 90 minutes on local footpaths. A good opportunity to walk safely, improve fitness and make new friends. Assistance dogs only please. Contact Gordon Allan on 07936 135469 for more information or just turn up, no notice required.



Sea Cadets Stevan Song and Noah Jones.



Massive turnout as Duck Races raise £3,000 for children's charity

One of Ponteland's favourite events returned after falling victim to Covid restrictions last year – and organisers said it was one of the best ever.

The Duck Races attracted the crowds to Ponteland Park on Sunday September 5th to see the ducks set free to float down the River Pont in a series of eight races. There were also 'Design a Boat' and 'Spot the Duck' competitions for children to take part in.

Other attractions included a number of craft stalls and charities in the 'market area', the Army Cadets climbing wall, ponies from Prestwick Stables and traditional children's rides.

Lead organiser for Rotary Ponteland John Cooper said: "We were blessed with fine weather and a massive turnout from the local community. It was great to see so many families and young children enjoying themselves in our wonderful park.



"Thanks to all of our helpers on the day, especially Northumbria Army Cadets and the 1st Ponteland Scouts. We would also like to thank our main race sponsors, business supporters and members of the public who helped us raise approximately £3,000 for Children North East."

Cover shot: Cassia Luscombe, aged five. Photos by Barry Pells.

New Rotarians sought

Rotary Ponteland has started a recruitment drive to attract new members to its relaunched Satellite Club.

Both individuals and local businesses with a variety of different vocations and interests who live or work in Ponteland and are interested in the future of the local community are being invited to join.

Rotary Ponteland organises a number of local fundraising events such as the Duck Race and Christmas Market as well as community litterpicks, the popular 'hunt' events for children in Ponteland Park and social events for members and friends.

A newly formed environmental group is championing the cause to improve the environment in Ponteland and the surrounding area, and there are plans

to launch 'Rotakids' in a local primary school to encourage young children to learn how they can help improve their environment and support the local community.

To find out more, join one of the club's meetings on the second Monday of each month or contact John Cooper at info@rotaryponteland.org.uk or 07503 011703.

£2.7m flood scheme is complete

More than 250 homes and businesses in Ponteland are better protected from flooding now Environment Agency work on a £2.7m flood scheme has been completed.

Work to better protect the town started in August 2020 and included replacing the existing flood defences on the south bank of the River Pont with one continuous sheet piled flood wall.

The wall has been built to complement the existing local environment, with a stone effect and complementary colouring, and was created with climate change at the forefront of the design with allowances in the foundations for the walls to be raised in future if needed.

Not only are homes and businesses better protected from flooding, but the town has also benefited from environmental enhancements, with a reprofiling of the river bank to create a natural sloped terrace which has been planted with native river corridor plants, boosting local biodiversity.

More than 250 trees have been planted to not only replace those lost during construction but to enhance the local environment, including many in a meadow at Ponteland Community Primary School, as well as some adjacent to the river.



Kirsty Harwood, Environment Agency Project Manager for the Ponteland flood scheme, said:

"We know there is a long history of flooding in Ponteland and although we can never eradicate the risk entirely, now this project is complete we hope it provides reassurance for local residents that they are better protected now and into the future."

Pictured (l-r) are: Leila Huntington, Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Risk Manager; MP Guy Opperman; Andy Judson, BAM Nuttall (scheme construction company); Lynsey Gray, Arup (scheme designers); Kevin Bulman, BAM Nuttall; Kirsty Harwood, Environment Agency Project Manager.



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Former minister launches book about life on the West Bank

A book written by a former Ponteland minister about life in the West Bank is the subject of a launch event hosted by the Methodist Church later this month.

Rev John Howard has served as a Human Rights observer with the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine Israel and also as a Mission Partner for the Methodist Church in Jerusalem. Living in Bethlehem, he saw how difficult life is in the West Bank.

In his book, John tells stories of the present and the past, explains how we got to where we are today and asserts that there are still good reasons for hope.

He will give a presentation outlining his experiences and his ideas on why he believes that a solution to the situation is possible.

All are welcome to the book launch at 7pm on Friday October 22nd.

Hope in Israel Palestine - Stories of Hope; Prospects for Peace is available on Kindle (£7.22) or in print (£12 including P&P) directly by email from John: john_d_howard@hotmail.com

Get your barrows at the ready



The organisers of an historic annual Ponteland sporting event have confirmed it is to return in the New Year after this year's cancellation due to Covid.

The Wheelbarrow Race will once again start and finish at The Blackbird Inn on January 1st and all proceeds will go to St Oswald's Hospice and Tynedale Hospice at Home.

The event is being organised by Ponteland 41 Club with the support of Ponteland Rugby Club and other volunteers. For more information contact 41 Club Chairman Philip Peacock at franphil9@gmail.com or 07973 184 811.

Competitors in the 2020 race. Photo by Colin Morgan Photography.

Counselling service is here to help

A charity is inviting people affected by Covid and other traumatic experiences to get in touch to access much needed support.



Sycamore Counselling Service see clients face to face, on Zoom and over the phone and covers areas such as anxiety, depression, bereavement and stress.

The Hexham-based organisation offers a donations-based service in the hope that excellent counselling will be available to all.

For more information or to make an initial appointment visit sycamorecounselling.com or their Facebook page @sycamorecounsellingservicehexham or call 07939 49 30 30.

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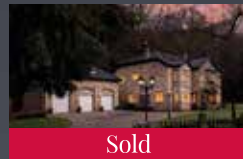
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