

# pontnews&views

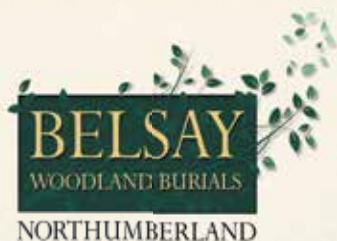
FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Spring completion for  
Darras Hall gigabit broadband  
.....  
Micropub entered into  
CAMRA's beer bible  
.....  
Tributes paid to former  
Fleet Street photographer

## Big turnout for return of Remembrance Service and Parade





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Mayor of Ponteland Christine Greenwell with Rev Jona Sewell. Photo by Barry Pells.

# Church hosts 'Exhibition of Hope'

*By Ann Cooper*

**For two wonderful days Ponteland Methodist Church hosted a colourful exhibition of creative arts inspired by lockdown memories and future hopes.**

The exhibition, played to the backdrop of a silent film paying tribute to the NHS and other frontline workers, was opened on Saturday November 6th by the Mayor of Ponteland Christine Greenwell.

Coun Greenwell spoke of the fantastic way the community had pulled together to support one another through Covid isolation, with many acts of kindness.

The Minister of Ponteland Methodist Church, Rev Jona Sewell, said despite tough times hope is shining through, as depicted in the many glorious exhibits.

They included pre-school children's 3D depiction of heaven using a masked teddy in a swing which floated through hanging fluffy clouds trailing colourful streamers gently brushing passing heads, before arrival at a fabulous handprint sun proclaiming 'We're walking on sunshine'.

All five Ponteland schools took part, with high quality writing and drawings on many themes including the NHS. Richard Coates Primary School sent in two short videos which moved everyone to tears - one showing children in lockdown singing together on Zoom.

Adult exhibits included paintings and poems, flower displays, wood turning and knitting, all done in lockdown with meaningful messages.

The Methodist Church organisers would like to thank all 47 local groups and the many individuals who contributed in so many ways to this fantastic community event.

# Darras Hall gigabit broadband installation on track for completion next Spring

## Ongoing work to instal a fully funded gigabit broadband network across Darras Hall is on track for completion next Spring.

FACTO completed the pre-design survey stage in mid-November, which will enable the initial design of the network to begin.

The next phase is 'rod and roping' – clearing of blockages such as collapsed ducts and the replacement of damaged ducting. This process sees rods pushed through blockages and a rope left behind to attach a fibre to which is pulled through the duct.

The fibre planning team will also finalise

final cabinet locations from the final predesign surveys, dividing the estate into six areas for the build.

Once the works are completed in Spring 2022, both residential and business properties will have long awaited access to full fibre broadband which promises a "massive" increase in bandwidth.

Everyone registering now will be entitled to free connection to the new network, with the costs for unlimited full fibre connection starting from £24.99 per month for 100Mbps to £44.99 for 1000Mbps.

The latest update on the works coincides with the publication of a survey of nearly 300 UK estate agents, conducted by Omdia for telecoms equipment maker

Huawei, which found a fast internet connection is now one of the most important factors for homebuyers.

Speeds of more than 300Mbps are being sought by 34% of buyers - and, according to 33% of the estate agents, can add £5,000 to the sale price of a home - while 23% want 1000Mbps.

Asked to name what the single most important factor is for homebuyers, 23% said the size of the property, while 20% said broadband quality.

For more information on the full fibre broadband installation or to sign up for the scheme, visit [factco.co.uk/project/darras-hall](https://factco.co.uk/project/darras-hall).

## PONTELAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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# Tributes paid to photojournalist Tom Stoddart

An award-winning Ponteland photojournalist who captured the fall of the Berlin Wall, the September 11 attacks and the Beirut and Sarajevo conflicts has died of cancer, aged 68.

Tributes have been pouring in for Tom Stoddart, who spent over four decades as one of Fleet Street's finest photographers in an illustrious career which started back in 1970 at the Berwick Advertiser.

Before turning freelance he worked for the Daily Mail, Daily Express and Sunday Times as well as charities and NGOs including Medecins Sans Frontieres, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Care International and Sightsavers.

Last November Pont News carried a two-page interview in which Tom looked back at some of the events and assignments he had covered in more than 60 countries for national and international publications such as Time, Newsweek and Stern.

His most iconic images included a young



Tom pictured at his exhibition at Side Gallery last November.

Princess Diana stalling her Austin Metro outside her Earls Court flat in 1980, the Berlin Wall crashing down in 1989, the Lockerbie bombing and Balkans war.

Tom, of Langton Court, Darras Hall, also photographed Royal weddings and Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and David Cameron.

In 2019 he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the UK Picture Editors' Guild.

Tom's 50th anniversary the following year was marked with a book 'Extraordinary Women: Images of Courage, Endurance and Defiance' and exhibition at Side Gallery in Newcastle supported by Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie, who Tom had worked for on her foundation projects in Asia.

His death was announced on Tom's Twitter page, which said: "It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of Tom after a brave fight against cancer. He felt blessed that he had found true happiness with Ailsa.

"Tom touched the lives of so many as a brilliant, compassionate, courageous photographer whose legacy of work will continue to open the eyes for generations. He gave voice to those who did not have one and shone a light where there had been darkness."

The full Pont News feature on Tom's career can be found at: [ponteland-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/82/2020/10/PNV-Nov-20-issue-182.pdf](http://ponteland-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/82/2020/10/PNV-Nov-20-issue-182.pdf)

## ADVERTISING FEATURE

## Ponteland garage named Regional Auto Centre Of The Year



**National garage chain Servicesure has crowned Ponteland based garage Meadowfield Auto Centre the Regional Autocentre of the Year in its annual awards.**

The Northumberland based business beat stiff competition from across the North & East Midlands, in the fourth annual Servicesure Autocentre of the Year Awards.

The event took place on 14 October 2021 at Coombe Abbey in Coventry, bringing together nominees for this year's awards, event sponsors and representatives from the Servicesure Network.

Servicesure is owned and operated by leading motor factor The Parts Alliance, with all member garages adhering to strict levels of quality and service.

Owner & Ponteland native Stephen (aged 34) said: "We are extremely proud to be nominated & win this award. Since starting the business in 2016 we have worked hard to provide the highest possible standards of service to our community & winning this award shows we are doing just that. I have an exceptional team of truly dedicated staff without which winning this award would have been impossible."

Stephen first visited the garage whilst on work experience at Ponteland Community High School, later starting as an apprentice and gaining the valuable experience he used to transform the business into the award winning garage it is today.

Head of ServiceSure garage services Paul Dineen said: "Meadowfield Auto Centre are a professional and

passionate team who are committed to providing a transparent, friendly and trustworthy experience for their customers. This is a business that sets a shining example not just to our Servicesure network, but to independent garages across the UK."



**servicesure**  
AUTOCENTRES

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# Micro pub listed in national beer 'bible'

**Ponteland's newest watering hole has been included in the national beer bible just 15 months after opening.**

The Pont Tap was named in The Campaign for Real Ale's (CAMRA) Good Beer Guide 2022, published on November 12th, the public house equivalent of the Michelin Guide.

The micro pub in West Road was opened in August 2020 by Mick and Angie Barnes, after a four month delay due to lockdown restrictions.

Mick, 56, said "We're so pleased to have made it into the Guide, especially as we've effectively only been operating for a year.

"It was difficult during lockdown but we carried on with takeouts and deliveries and our customers kept us going. To be included in the real ale 'bible' is fantastic."

Inclusion in the guide is dependent

on CAMRA members' votes as Paul Hillhouse who chairs CAMRA's Tyneside and Northumberland branch explained: "We ask our members to score the beers they try against a national system.

"The scores are collated and the highest scoring pubs are included in the Guide. The Pont Tap was amongst the top forty highest scoring pubs in Northumberland. It's a great little pub."

The Good Beer Guide has been published for 50 years and features 4,500 of the UK's best pubs, bars and breweries chosen by local CAMRA members as having the best cask beers.

The 2022 guide, costing £15.99, is available from book shops or direct from CAMRA.



Paul Hillhouse (left) with Mick Barnes at The Pont Tap

## ADVERTISING FEATURE

# If you don't know how much is enough, you don't have a financial plan

*By David Lamb CFP™ MCSI*

**Do you know how much is enough to support your lifestyle, without the fear of running out of money?**

This is one of the most important questions financial planning will help answer.

We see many people working longer than they need to because they do not know how much is enough.

I don't think working past retirement age is a bad thing (and research suggests it is a good thing) but many people continue to work when they don't want to, thinking they have to get as much money as possible before retiring.

But when can they stop doing the things they don't want to do and start doing the things they do want to do?

Have you ever seen a gravestone with

the epitaph 'He wished he'd spent more time at work?' No, me neither.

Knowing how much is enough will help you answer the most common planning questions, such as:

- When you can retire
- How much you need in pensions to retire comfortably
- How much you need to save
- Whether you need to downsize your home for financial reasons and not just an easier life (less housework!)
- How much risk you need to take with your investments
- How much extra you can spend in retirement
- How much money you can gift to your family
- Whether luxuries are affordable.

By analysing your assets,

liabilities, income, expenditure and understanding your desired lifestyle - and by doing financial planning based around a cashflow model - it is possible to calculate the answer to the essential question.

If you do not know how much is enough, you do not have a financial plan.

We have a limited number of books called 'Enough? How much money do you need for the rest of your life?' by international lifestyle financial planning guru Paul Armson. If you would like a free copy (on a first come, first served basis) please contact us at [laura.fairley@lambfinancial.co.uk](mailto:laura.fairley@lambfinancial.co.uk)

You can build your own cash flow model, for free, at [lambfinancial.co.uk](http://lambfinancial.co.uk)

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# Large turnout as Remembrance Service and Parade returns

**After the 2020 cancellation due to Covid, Ponteland's Remembrance Service and Parade was the best attended for many years.**

Following the parade from the leisure centre, a two-minute silence was observed at the War Memorial outside Ponteland Memorial Hall at 11am.

Deputy Lord Lieutenant Meenu Malhotra laid the first wreath, followed by the Mayor of Ponteland Christine Greenwell

at the Act of Remembrance conducted by representatives of the Ponteland clergy.

Ponteland High School students Lizzy McGrane and Will Richards, who also laid a wreath on behalf of the school at the War Memorial, read the names of the 64 men from Ponteland killed in the First and Second World Wars.

Members of the Ponteland Health Walks group also visited the three large Remembrance poppies made of small knitted and crocheted poppies and toured St Mary's Church Cemetery

to pay their respects at the three Commonwealth War Graves on Tuesday November 16.

Coun Greenwell said: "I was delighted to see the parade back this year, bigger than for many years. I was particularly pleased to see the large number of young people marching proudly and the number of people paying tribute to the many who made the ultimate sacrifice to give us all the freedoms we enjoy today."

Cover shot and other Remembrance service and parade photos by Paul Norris.

# Your letters

Last month's announcement of the planned Lloyds Bank branch closure and more concern about the condition of the River Pont in this month's letters...

## Why does prosperous Ponteland treat the River Pont with such disdain?

**I share the concern expressed by Jean McGowan in your November issue about the state of the River Pont at the heart of the village, at the very point where it should be putting on a bit of a show.**

The Environment Agency's stated purpose is to "protect and enhance the environment" and they have a particular responsibility for our rivers.

I asked them if they would have a go at improving the appearance of this stretch of the Pont. They told me that their remit only required them to cut things back a bit once or maybe twice a year and that, if works were required to actually improve the appearance of the river and its banks, then that was the responsibility of the landowners.

I was not sure who the landowners were but the former local authority Castle Morpeth Borough Council maintained the river and its banks to a very high standard, enabling it to make an attractive contribution to the village scene.

Folk would come and picnic on its grassy slopes and artists set up their easels to record the picture postcard view. I assumed that with the demise of the Borough Council, it was now the job of the Town Council to restore this section of the river to its former glory. They declined. They told me that they might be able to tidy things up a bit alongside the green in front of Saint Mary's but that was about as far as they were prepared to go.

Most communities lucky enough to have a decent river running through their town or village go to considerable lengths to enhance their asset and maximise the contribution it makes to the environmental quality, character and image of the place.

I fail to understand why Ponteland, a relatively prosperous community, chooses to treat the River Pont with such apparent disdain. The Duck Race does not normally get this far but perhaps Rotary might fancy some energetic dredging?

**John Hague**

*High View, Darras Hall*

## Can't banks share premises?

**Regarding MP Guy Opperman's comments in the November issue of Pont News, I too am not pleased at the proposed closure of the Ponteland branch of Lloyds Bank.**

I understand there are problems with the public's use of banking facilities but the requirements of their customers should be paramount.

Surely it is possible, for instance, to occupy one office for the use of Lloyds Bank, Halifax or the Bank of Scotland for example with one/two members of staff working between individual counters?

In banking, be it personal or business, face-to-face contact is very important; there is nothing worse than only being able to discuss your problem with an answering machine.

Also the loss of another ATM is to be regretted. Yes, there is other branches of Lloyds, e.g. Newburn, which is on a steep corner where parking is minimal. In Gosforth customers have to park in the 2/3 storey car park behind the shops. Neither of these is user friendly, more especially if you are elderly or disabled.

Internet banking is very useful but, when push comes to shove, give me a human being every time.

**Sheila Gillions Cowey**

*Linden Way, Darras Hall*

## Could schools and choirs lead Remembrance Sunday singing?

**It was lovely to attend the service at the war memorial today and see so many people, young and old.**

The singing of the hymn and the national anthem was very poor, however, and I suggest the local choirs and schools could maybe get together and lead the singing in the future?

**Kate Ross**

*Eland Edge, Ponteland*

## Why repair bridge after road resurfacing?

**I would be interested to learn the logic behind resurfacing most of Fox Covert Lane and then working on the bridge.**

(Fox Covert Lane to be closed for three months, Pont News & Views issue 194, November)

**Peter Watson**

*Meadowvale, Ponteland*

**January issue deadlines:** The deadline for all copy and adverts for the January issue is Thursday December 9th. Door to door distribution will be from Tuesday January 4th to Monday January 10th. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the January issue. Please visit [ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views](http://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

Meetings and talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm. On December 1st we have a quiz and singing plus faith tea and on January 5th a talk 'On the shoulders of giants - the progress of modern plastic surgery' by Mrs Sarah Pape. We welcome new membership enquiries - please call the membership secretary on 01661 824953.

## Christmas Market - Ponteland Memorial Hall

The Rotary Ponteland Christmas Market is being held at the Ponteland Memorial Hall from 11am to 3pm on Sunday December 5th. There will be a Santa's Grotto and a wide variety of craft stalls selling festive food and gifts. Hot food will also be available from food outlets in the car park.

## Ponteland Wildlife Group

Ponteland Wildlife Group talks have now resumed by Zoom. For information please visit [pontelandwildlife.wixsite.com](http://pontelandwildlife.wixsite.com). Talks are on the first Tuesday evening each month at 7.30pm. On December 7th we have Chris Metherell - 'Flora of Northumberland'.

## Callerton Garden & Flower Club

At our next meeting on Wednesday December 8th at 2pm in the Memorial Hall a number of our club members will demonstrate their skills by creating floral arrangements based on the theme of Christmas, carols and seasonal songs. Visitors are very welcome (£7).

## Meditation sessions

Do you need a quiet time in a busy season? This time of year can be frantic; sometimes it is good to pause. In St Mary's Church during December there will be sessions of up to 45 minutes giving an introduction to meditation in the Christian tradition in the calm of this special space. All are welcome to come along at one or more of our gatherings: Wednesday December 8th, 15th and 22nd at 2pm and Wednesday December 15th at 7pm. St Mary's is also open every day between 9am and 4pm to drop by for a quiet moment.

## Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

Our Christmas event will take place on

Monday December 13th in the Memorial Hall at 2.30pm. Seasonal refreshments will be laid on and musical entertainment will be provided by The Imagine Five.

## Ponteland Village WI

Members are looking forward to their Christmas meeting on Tuesday December 14th, although social distancing will continue to be in place. Until further notice we will not be allowing visitors. The sub-groups such as the Walking Group, Dining Out, Cycling for Softies and Book Club are continuing. Contact: [pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com](mailto:pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com) or find us on Facebook.

## Carol Concert - Ponteland Methodist Church

The annual Rotary Ponteland Carol Concert will be held in Ponteland Methodist Church on Thursday December 16th commencing at 7pm. The Bedlington Salvation Army Band will provide the music and light refreshments will be available after the concert in the Methodist Church Hall. Tickets priced at £3 per person will be available on the door, from Rotary Club members or by email to [info@rotaryponteland.org.uk](mailto:info@rotaryponteland.org.uk)

## Wilde Farm Christmas Market

Wilde Farm's Christmas Market will be held at Dobbies Ponteland from 10.30am to 4.30pm on Sunday December 19th. 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](http://wildefarm.co.uk).

## Ponteland Ramblers

Ponteland Ramblers is a friendly group of local ramblers who organise walks in Northumberland or North Durham of usually about 8-9 miles on alternate Sundays and shorter walks on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month. Visitors are welcome to join us for a few walks, without any obligation to join formally. For details of forthcoming walks, please visit our website [ramblers.org.uk/ponteland](http://ramblers.org.uk/ponteland)

## Merton Hall Ponteland

Merton Hall is serving free tea and coffee from 9.30am to 11.30am on Friday mornings during December. Please call in for a cuppa and a chat, wearing a mask when entering the hall and using the hand sanitizer. Merton Hall is also welcoming back group members and hall users.

## Dalton Carpet Bowls Club

At Dalton Village Hall every Monday between 7pm and 9pm. Come and give it a try in a friendly atmosphere - new members always welcome. Contact 07593 700332.

## 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.

## 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](mailto: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 information please email [pontelandladieschoir@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:claire@claire276.plus.com) for more information or to arrange a free taster session.

## Rotary Ponteland

Rotarians in Ponteland meet at the Golf Club, alternating lunchtime and evenings each Tuesday. The group organises many local events raising much needed funds for local charities. For more information visit [rotaryponteland.org.uk](http://rotaryponteland.org.uk) or email [info@rotaryponteland.org.uk](mailto:info@rotaryponteland.org.uk).

# I wish it could be Christmas everyday

By Revd. Captain Paul Allinson, Vicar of Ponteland

**I wonder how many times this year you've been serenaded by Wizzard's yuletide anthem I wish it could be Christmas everyday?**

Whether you love it, or hate it, for the past 48 years it's been the backing track for Christmas shopping and festive parties. But what might it mean if it really were Christmas every day?

Christmas is a challenging time for many people, not least given the fallout of the Covid pandemic. Those who are lonely, bereaved, homeless or trapped by poverty can really struggle in the bleak mid-winter.

We sing of the Lord Jesus' birth, year in, year out. This is no one-hit wonder. Our carols pre-date the pop songs. The glory and majesty of God entering the world is never tiresome. Christ, once born in time, is continually born in us, every day, every moment, through the same Holy Spirit who overshadowed Mary. We, too, are to shine with the glory of the Lord.

There's a sense in which it's right that every disciple should want it to be Christmas every day. But what does this mean? Without restricting anyone's love of turkey, or fondness for pulling

crackers, this is about deeper truths, those lasting longer than a tin of chocolates or dish of nuts. Here are four Christmas gifts for everyday which flow from our celebration of Christ's birth.

First of all, we can marvel at the faithfulness of God's plan for our world. A child is born for us, a son given to us. Because God loves the world so much, he refuses to abandon us to ourselves, to sin, or to death. We are each part of God's plan. There is a purpose, a calling, some definite service, to which we are each invited.

Second, we can take from Christmas the everyday truth that God often reveals himself in the simplicity of his presence. There was nothing grand about the birth of Christ in a stinking barn. In the most mundane circumstances, God is present, day in, day out. He is Emmanuel, God with us, in all our ups and downs, our successes and our failures.

When the shepherds were invited to witness Christ's birth, their initial reaction was terror. The glory of the Lord was overwhelming. But Christmas Good News began with an antidote to fear. 'Do not be afraid,' said the angel of the Lord. This is a third Christmas gift for every day. Whatever we face, we are never alone. Even in times of darkness and shadow,



the Lord is with us, we need not fear.

Finally, three Christmas words speak through all times and seasons: love, peace, and joy. To love others as we are loved by God in Christ. To be peacemakers in the large and little things of day to day. To make joy the hallmark of our existence.

These truths, these gifts, and more besides, are not just for Christmas. They're for life, for every day. None of us could cope if we repeated Christmas Day over and over again. We can do more than wish the truths of Christmas to be present every day. We can ask Christ to renew them in our hearts, so that daily, through him, they take flesh in our lives.

Happy Christmas!

## Christmas services

### The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Ponteland

#### Sunday December 19th

5pm and 7pm - Churches Together Service of Lessons & Carols

#### Christmas Eve

3pm, 5pm and 7pm - Family Nativity with Carols  
11.30pm - Midnight Mass with Carols

#### Christmas Day

8am - Christmas Holy Communion  
10am - Christmas Parish Eucharist with Carols

#### Boxing Day

10am - Parish Eucharist United Service

### Holy Saviour, Milbourne

#### Christmas Day

11.15am - Christmas Holy Communion with Carols

### Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday December 19th 6.30pm - Carol Service

Christmas Day 10am - Family Celebration

### Milbourne Methodist Church

Sunday December 19th 6.30pm - Carol Service

Christmas Eve 11.15pm - Communion Service

New Year's Eve 11.30pm - Watchnight Service

### St Matthew's RC Church

Christmas Day Mass - 10am



# MP supports campaign to save bank



## Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman is backing a campaign to save Ponteland's Lloyds Bank branch.

Town councillor Christine Caisley has launched a change.org petition calling on the bank to reverse the planned closure – one of 41 Lloyds as well as seven Halifax branches set to go.

The news follows the closure of the Barclays Bank branch across the road in January 2019, which itself followed the loss of the NatWest and HSBC outlets.

People seeking face to face banking transactions will have the choice of Newcastle Building Society's branch on Broadway, Darras Hall, or the Post Office branches on Broadway or Merton Road following the Lloyds Bank closure on February 8th.

Lloyds said a continuing decline in customer numbers had forced the nationwide closure plans.

Vim Maru, retail director for Lloyds Banking Group, said: "Like many other businesses, we've seen people using our branches less frequently in recent years, and this decline is continuing.

"Our branches remain a fundamental part of how we serve our customers but we need to ensure the size of our branch network reflects the number of customers wanting to use them."

Mr Opperman has previously supported successful pilots of banking hubs to ensure access to cash and banking facilities for elderly and vulnerable people, but Lloyds has not announced any local plans for such a hub.

The MP, also Pensions and Financial Inclusion Minister, said: "I was completely taken aback when I received news of Lloyds's unilateral decision to close their Ponteland branch.

"Lloyds is the last branch in the village, and I am extremely disappointed that they haven't been able to come up with an alternative option that would safeguard access to cash and retain physical banking in the community.

"I will continue to fight for access to branch banking facilities for our rural communities. Please support Christine's petition – we must save this branch!"

The change.org petition is calling on Lloyds Bank to "come up with a real practical solution that will give Ponteland residents and local businesses access to a physical banking presence".

Coun Caisley, a retired clinical nurse who is campaigning as a local resident and not in her capacity as a town councillor, said: "I have to do this as a concerned resident, who is shocked Lloyds are prepared to close this only remaining bank in Ponteland. Lloyds say 'By your side' in their advertisement slogan. That's a joke."

The 'Lloyds Bank – stop the closure' petition can be found at: [chng.it/6rVqsVjm](https://chng.it/6rVqsVjm)

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# Welcome return for Rotary's Christmas events

Two festive Rotary Ponteland events are welcomed back this year, with the return of the Christmas market and carol concert.

The Rotary Christmas Market is being held at Ponteland Memorial Hall from 11am to 3pm on Sunday December 5th.

Attractions include a Santa's Grotto and a wide variety of craft stalls selling festive food and gifts. Hot food will also be available from food outlets in the car park.

The main beneficiary from the events is Smile for Life – North East, a charity based in Gosforth which has a vision to put a smile on the face of every disabled and disadvantaged youngster in the North-East and to empower these children and young people to achieve their potential to live a full and happy life. Visit [smileforlife.org.uk](http://smileforlife.org.uk)

The annual Rotary Ponteland Carol Concert will follow at Ponteland Methodist Church on Thursday December 16th, starting at 7pm.

Bedlington's Salvation Army Band will provide the music, and light refreshments will be available after the concert in the church hall. Tickets priced at £3 per person will be available on the door, from Rotary Club members or by email to [info@rotaryponteland.org.uk](mailto:info@rotaryponteland.org.uk)

All proceeds will be donated to support the work of the Bedlington Salvation Army.

For more details on both events visit the Rotary Ponteland Facebook page or website [rotaryponteland.org.uk](http://rotaryponteland.org.uk).



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

## Timings released for Wheelbarrow Race

The organisers of an historic annual Ponteland sporting event have confirmed timings for its return on New Year's Day.

After last year's enforced cancellation due to Covid-9, the Wheelbarrow Race will once again start and finish at The Blackbird Inn on January 1st.

The event starts with the Noon Parade, with the Junior Race at 12.10pm, Ladies' Race at 12.20pm and the Open Race at 12.40pm. Presentations follow at 1.15pm.

The event is being organised by Ponteland 41 Club with the support of Ponteland Rugby Club and other volunteers, and all proceeds will go to St Oswald's Hospice and Tynedale Hospice at Home.

For more information contact 41 Club Chairman Philip Peacock at [franphil9@gmail.com](mailto:franphil9@gmail.com) or 07973 184 811.

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## Great-grandmother fights off Covid to celebrate 100th birthday

**A great-grandmother fought off Covid to celebrate her 100th birthday at her Darras Hall family home.**

Plans for a party at Stannington Village Hall had to be cancelled as centenarian Terry Cusworth was forced into self-isolation, but family and friends instead joined her a week later in Middle Drive.

They included cousin Bryce Stewart, who flew 4,300 miles from British Columbia, Canada.

Terry, who was born in High Heaton, married Whitley Bay man James Cusworth (Jim) on March 31st 1946 at Holy Trinity Church in Jesmond.

Terry had worked at Port of Tyne until she was married and later as a secretary at the Philosophy department at Durham University and at St Mary's College in Fenham, while Jim was an Accountant who worked for The Coal Board and retired from Durham Chemicals as Chief Accountant in 1985. He died in 1998.

The couple lived initially in Jesmond, later moving to Durham and then to Gosforth before settling in Darras Hall in 1975. Terry now lives with son Bruce and his wife Janet, who have two children and grandson Alfie.

Bruce recalled happy family holidays when he was young in the 1960s camping in Europe, including a long trip in an Austin A30 when he sat in the back with his feet on the tent!

In retirement Terry was a member of the Inner Wheel and Ponteland Flower Club, enjoyed baking and has always been very keen on dogs - especially Schnauzers, having had a standard and a miniature.

Janet said: "Incredibly, Terry is the second generation of the family to reach 100 and has now followed in her mother's footsteps by reaching her centenary year.

"Unfortunately, birthday festivities had to be put on hold as Covid disrupted the plans, leaving Terry in isolation until the night before her birthday. However, a week later, friends and

loved ones gathered at the family home to celebrate the special occasion with a traditional afternoon tea, in which Terry played her full part and really enjoyed herself.

"Terry would like to say thank you to everyone for all her cards, gifts and lovely flowers – she will always remember their kindness and generosity."

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