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FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district

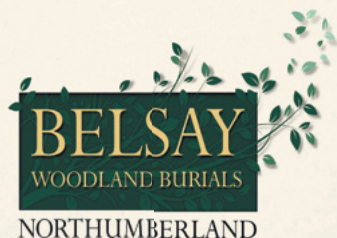


Community pays tribute to
Queen's 70-year reign

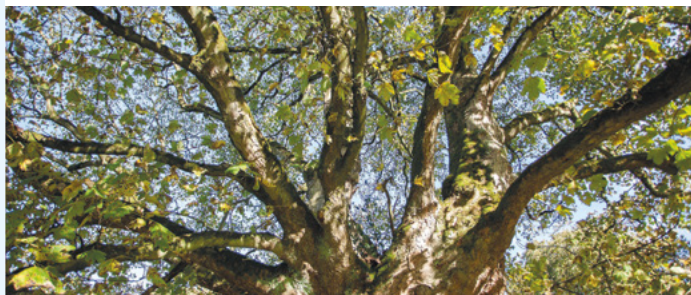
Planners deal blow to £1m
sports clubhouse plan

County council to take 'urgent'
action over £4.8m overspend

School's PE provision meets Government's gold standard



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Thousands enjoy fun in the sun at Kirkley dog festival

Dogs of all shapes and sizes, ages and breeds enjoyed some fun in the sun at a huge canine gathering at Kirkley Hall.

Thousands turned out over the weekend of September 3 to 4 for the North East Dog Festival to shop, play and take part in a wide range of have-a-go activities.

The trainers and clubs running everything from agility to barrel racing, scentventure to canicross, worked non-stop with some seeing more than 200 dogs per day go through their individual areas.

The giant dock diving pool proved a huge success, with dogs flying through the air to splash into the giant 100,000 litre pool. Other attractions included a duck herding display and Walworth Castle Birds of Prey.

The event also provided space for three charity dog shows - Roo's Journey, Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter and GSP Rescue Services hosted classes ranging from most handsome dog to best fancy dress. The three shows across the two days raised thousands of pounds.

Rachael Kendall, General Manager at Newcastle Dog & Cat Shelter, said: "We were busy, which was fantastic, not only for raising funds but also making the general public aware of us and what we do. Some of the dogs that we have rehomed in the past came to visit us with their families which was amazing."

Festival Director Rebecca Ashworth added: "We knew it would be hard to top last year, but our team managed it. There were more traders, more have-a-go activities, more dog show classes, more displays - pretty much more of everything. Visitor numbers were up and the support and feedback has been brilliant."



Photos by Ben Heward Images.





Ponteland remembers our beloved Queen

Just three months after the Ponteland community gathered for a four-day celebration of the Platinum Jubilee, the sad death of Queen Elizabeth II aged 96 was met with sombre tributes.



For our younger residents, special assemblies were held in all of the Pele Trust's schools to remember Her Majesty's long reign.

Children at Darras Hall Primary School created displays from messages of gratitude and illustrations they had drawn, while older pupils wrote letters and cards of condolence to the Queen's grandchildren.

Formal books of condolence were opened at the Town Council offices, the library and at St Mary's Church, where the flag was lowered to half-mast on the evening of September 8 shortly after the announcement of Her Majesty's death and again prior to the State Funeral.

Floral tributes were left on Coates Green, while local businesses including Dobson's estate agents on Broadway, Darras Hall, created window displays.

For the first time in 70 years, the church bells at St. Mary's were rung fully muffled for an hour on September 8 (this only happens following the death of a monarch) and the tenor tolled 96 times at noon the following day.

On Saturday September 10 the muffles were removed and at noon the bells were rung open in celebration of the King's accession, before being remuffled until after the State Funeral.

Pupils at Ponteland Primary School must have been among the last people in the country to receive a letter from the Queen, as headteacher Lynn Blain explained.

"When we returned to school (after the summer break) we were delighted to receive a letter from the Queen's Lady In Waiting, thanking us for our letters and cards that we sent to the Queen in May.

"It is a very special letter as it must be one of the last ones that she had posted. Following the sad news of the death of the Queen, we are so pleased that we all wrote to her and we are going to frame her letter to us along with the commemorative card we received.

"We came together in a special assembly to pay our respects to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, whose dedication to duty and a life of service has been simply remarkable. We watched her short film with Paddington which really made us smile. We think that Paddington summed up our feelings very well when he said 'Happy Jubilee ma'am...and thank you for everything'."



Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman also paid tribute. He said: "Her Majesty was our beloved Queen. Her service to our country was steadfast, dutiful and compassionate."

"On the occasion of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 the poet Philip Larkin, who spent much of his time in Northumberland, wrote of her reign: 'In times when nothing stood, but worsened or grew strange, there was one constant good, she did not change.'"

"Her Majesty and Prince Philip visited Ponteland to open the (former) Police headquarters, which is fondly remembered by residents."

"The tributes from my colleagues across the House of Commons have shown her powerful ability to bring us together. The Queen touched so many and that was reflected in the powerful tributes by my colleagues. From the lovely anecdotes from former prime ministers to Sir Keir Starmer's powerful tribute that 'she lived among us', the speeches showed the best of the House of Commons."

"The Queen was the best of us and a constant in a changing world. The shock to our country will be profound, as all our lives have evolved with hers. My thoughts and prayers are with her family. They mourn their mother, and grandmother, as her country mourns her too."

"God save the King."

Northumberland County Council has launched a public consultation to decide on a fitting permanent memorial. Council leader Glen Sanderson said: "As we mourn the loss of Her Majesty the Queen, it gives us time to reflect on and remember how inspirational she has been during her years of reign."

"We have already seen many of our residents sign books of condolence and lay flowers. Having guided our country through many challenges and many celebrations across her 70 years it only seems fitting for us to be able to forever remember her in the county she often visited, our county, Northumberland."

"For that reason, we would like to create a permanent memorial in memory of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, here in Northumberland. In the coming weeks we will engage with our residents to ensure this memorial is a place for all; a place where our residents and visitors can go to remember our great monarch."

Residents can have their say and let the council know their ideas by taking part in a short online consultation at nland.cc/Memorial which is open until Wednesday October 19.



Photos of the Ponteland tributes by Barry Pells. Photos of the Queen and the State Funeral from the Royal Family website.



An honour and a privilege to serve at Her Majesty's funeral



By PC Graeme Harbottle, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

I would like to take this opportunity as a Police Officer who has served for 17 years with Northumbria Police to convey my deepest condolences to the Royal Family at what must have been an extremely difficult time for them over the past few weeks.

Known for her sense of duty, HM Queen Elizabeth dedicated her life to selfless public service, a sentiment and philosophy that resonates so very closely with the behaviours demonstrated across Northumbria Police on a daily basis.

I travelled to London where I performed policing duties to help ensure the safety of the many thousands of people who attended the capital city from many parts

of the United Kingdom and beyond. It was both an honour and privilege and something I will remember for the rest of my policing career.

I have also taken time when out and about on patrol to speak with the local community when they have been laying flowers and leaving cards outside St Mary's Church. This has been an excellent opportunity for our local community to pay their respects.

As the six-week school holidays have now ended I have been keen on re-establishing links with the local schools in our area. Throughout my time in the role of neighbourhood police officer I have always been willing to find time to visit any school to speak with pupils and staff, especially at this time of year with the new school year beginning.

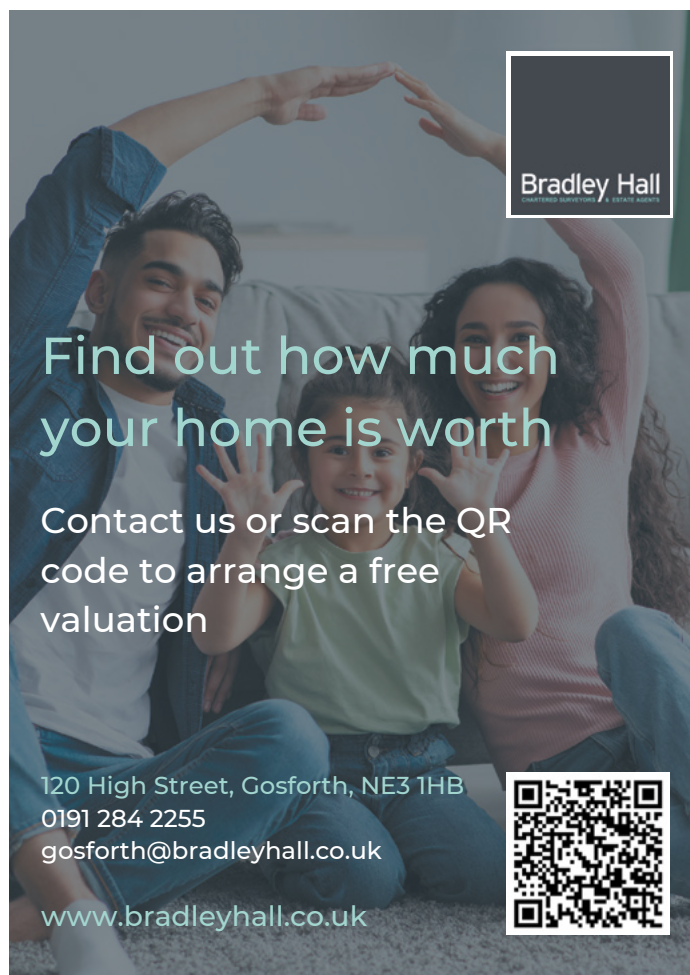
I believe it is important for schools who teach children of any age to have a good working relationship with their local police

officer. If any reader works in any school or education facility in our area and wants me to make contact and pay them a visit, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me through the force website.

I would also like to say a big thank you and well done to the Ponteland Rotary Club for the great success on their Duck Race event that took place back on Sunday September 4. I was in the park all day and it was a pleasure to speak with the Rotary Club members, the wonderful staff from the 'Daft as a Brush' charity as well as everyone else who attended.

I do hope the charity had a successful day and that this annual event goes from strength to strength in 2023.

Readers can contact me through Northumbria Police's local neighbourhood policing team mailbox at the following address: easttynedale.npt@northumbria.police.uk.



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School's PE provision meets the gold standard

PE and sport provision at Darras Hall Primary School has met the Government's gold standard after the award of a coveted accolade.

The school has secured the School Games Mark Platinum Award, after demonstrating it excels in engaging pupils in sporting activity, including competitions and links with local clubs.

Children at DHPS compete in a wide range of sports including hockey, cricket, cross country, boys' and girls' football, gymnastics, athletics, basketball, golf, rugby, netball, tennis, table tennis, rounders, dance and badminton throughout the Morpeth and Ponteland areas.

They also benefit from specialist teachers and coaches, with links to a number of local sporting clubs.

Highlights last year included individual and team success for Key Stage 2 pupils at South Shields and in Ovingham in cross country events and the Year 5

Eagles basketball competition - the semi-finals and finals of which were played at the Newcastle Vertu Motors Arena.

Headteacher Victoria Parr said: "Our PE staff and NUFC coaches have worked throughout the year to provide children with a packed calendar of sporting events and experiences which focus on inclusion and participation in addition to sporting excellence."

The School Games Mark is a Government-led awards scheme launched in 2012 to reward schools for their commitment to the development of competition across their school and into the community. Participating in this process allows schools to evaluate their PE provision and assists them in developing an action plan for future progress. The Platinum Award is the highest standard.



Photos by Barry Pells

ADVERTISING FEATURE

How a detailed financial plan can ease those money worries

By David Lamb CFP™ MCSI

When people complete our ScoreMy questionnaire for the first time, the most common low score is not worrying about money.

Financial stress can take a huge toll on your emotional and physical health and your relationships and the overall quality of your life, leading to insomnia, weight gain and depression. It's not worth it; there are more important things in life than money! A detailed financial plan can help remove this anxiety.

Detailed data analysis, including understanding your income, expenditure, assets and liabilities can help identify the cause for concern. This process will also include - you've guessed it - cash flow projections. Once the issues have been identified, a financial plan can be developed to address these issues.

Plans could include a spending plan to ensure you do not exceed your budget or create some spare money to increase savings and how

to repay debt more quickly (the word 'mortgage' contains the French word for death so get rid of it as quick as possible!)

Also planning for retirement so you can stop doing the things you don't want to do and start doing the things you do want to do. All without the fear of running out of money.

There is no point in creating a plan if it is not implemented. A well-structured financial plan will include simple actions, steps to help you achieve your objects. Circumstances can change, so it is essential that your plan is reviewed on a regular basis and adjustments made when required.

Professional advice can be invaluable in helping to overcome money worries. In extreme cases the following websites may be helpful:

- nationaldebtadvice.org.uk
- nhs.uk/mental-health/advice-for-life-situations-and-events/how-to-cope-with-financial-worries

In my experience, the causes of money worries are rarely unique and in most cases a financial planner will be able to draw on their experience to help create a well-structured financial plan to help you exorcise those money worries.

A word of warning: if you meet a financial adviser and they want to know about your money without getting to know you first, they are probably more interested in your money than you - and are best avoided.

If you do not know how much is enough, you do not have a financial plan. Build your own cashflow model at lambfinancial.co.uk



New headteacher appointed at primary school

Ponteland Community Primary School has announced the appointment of a new headteacher.

Carl Johnson, who has taught at the school since 2011, has replaced the long-serving former head Dr Caroline Pryer.

Mr Johnson, pictured, said: "I am extremely privileged to have been chosen to build upon the immense success the school has already achieved under the leadership of Dr Pryer.

"Having joined the school in 2011, I understand the magic that being part of Ponteland Community Primary School has instilled in its alumni and families. I am dedicated to ensuring that the school continues to be somewhere that children are proud to attend.

"I am very much aware of the responsibility that my staff and I have in ensuring that the highest standard of teaching and learning is achieved. I am proud to work with a hugely committed team of staff and children.

"I am also pleased to be supported

by two of the most dedicated deputy headteachers any new headteacher could dream of working with. Together with the unwavering support of the school team, we are extremely excited about the journey ahead. The needs of our children and families are always at the centre of decision making within a school.

"I strongly believe in providing the children with exciting, creative and meaningful learning experiences, which build their enthusiasm for learning and help them to grow and develop. PCPS will continue to be a place where it is 'Cool to Learn'.

"I am also passionate about building a whole school community which thrives on mutual respect and values positive relationships. We at PCPS understand the importance of strong triangulation between school, children and parents. I know how vital working in partnership with parents is for our children to make the most of every opportunity at school."



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We are a specialist teaching, learning and wellbeing school with outstanding facilities. PCPS is proud to provide excellent opportunities for children and families.

In the most recent school league tables of 2019, PCMS was ranked in the top 1% of all primary and middle schools in England and number 1 in Northumberland.

Limited places still available for 2022/2023 from Nursery (age 2) through to Year 6. Children living in local catchment have a geographical pathway to Ponteland High.

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"We are absolutely delighted with our child's progress."



County council to take ‘urgent action’ over £4.8m overspend

County councillors have agreed to take “urgent action” after a report projected a £4.8m overspend on this year’s budget.

A combination of factors including pay rises for staff and increased fuel and utility costs are being blamed for the shortfall, which would take the authority’s total budget spend to £387.5m.

Northumberland County Council’s interim executive director of finance Jan Willis, in a report to the Cabinet which met on September 13, said: “The Council needs to take urgent action in order to contain the overspend.”

Her report detailed a £12.5m increase in the pay bill, a £2.3m rise in school transport costs, and utility costs going up by £3.5m in the current financial year.

Measures being taken include inviting applications from staff for voluntary redundancy and the suspension of the normal budget approval process,

with all expenditure authorised by executive directors.

A vacancy panel is also being set up to recommend to the executive team any proposed recruitment, and a review of in-year fees and charges undertaken by the executive team is to be reported to the Cabinet for decision.

An NCC spokesperson said: “Along with councils throughout the country we are dealing with some significant financial issues brought about by a range of external factors. The cost of many of the things the council needs to deliver its services – from building materials to energy – has increased significantly and we need to respond to those pressures.

“As a responsible council we have a legal duty to set a balanced budget and ensure sound financial management.

“That is why we carry out rigorous budget monitoring throughout the year and are taking action now to mitigate against further overspend.

“We are carefully looking at budgets in every service to see where savings could be made, while continuing to minimise the impact on residents. It’s also about the council working differently to try and develop year on year savings.

“Voluntary redundancy rounds are reasonably common and have been held annually in a number of recent years. We are currently going through this process.”

*Chief Executive’s departure sparks executive management restructure:
page 19*

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Your letters

Darras Hall residents remain poles apart on broadband installation in this month's letters...

The 'pole police' can't have their cake and eat it

I feel I must write in response to Trevor Hughes' myopic letter (Sept issue 204) about the use of telegraph poles to provide next generation internet to Darras Hall.

Whilst I understand the sentiment in his telegraph pole rant, it really does point to all that is bad in the estate.

As a desirable neighbourhood, Darras Hall needs to have access to next generation facilities and we are being hamstrung by old world thinking. People need to make their minds up, don't cut down trees, don't put up poles, don't dig up roads etc.

I was taught as a child that you can't have your cake and eat it, yet this is exactly what Trevor and the pole police want. Perhaps he can liaise with Factco and explain to them how to provide broadband to the home without either going overground or underground (which can't be done because of blocked ducts).

The only solution appears to be to provide it wirelessly, but that would require high speed broadband!

Charles Darwin would be turning in his grave.

Steve Eglon
Western Way, Darras Hall

Do estate residents want hundreds of new telegraph poles?

Since my letter of last month about the imposition of poles by Factco they have made their intentions clearer.

A recent update on their website stated they will carry their broadband on poles, not underground, in streets throughout the Darras Hall estate. The reason proffered for this was the ducts under roads and pavements have blockages or are already at capacity.

The website says they will be installing poles in a number of roads in the estate. They include Ladyrigg where all houses were constructed in the mid/late 70s and have modern ducting facilities. The update also indicated that the reviews at Wentworth Court, Oaklands and Meadow Court have been completed.

At Meadow Court we have been informed that poles will be installed if the service is taken up by enough to make it economically feasible, otherwise the road will be excluded from the scheme.

Representations have been made to the Darras Hall Estate Committee (DHEC) by around 100 residents mainly from Wentworth Court, Oaklands and Meadow Court who were formally 'threatened' with installation of poles.

Most members of the committee are stated as having either an environmental or estate conservation view to serving. The installation of several hundred 40ft telegraph poles would appear to be at significant variance to those objectives!

Northumberland County Council controls the pavements where these poles will be situated. Contact has also been made with county councillors but despite a promise to 'look into this' no feedback has been received.

This estate is in great danger of having imposed on it a method of broadband delivery that is profit driven and would sit well in the 1950s but could well be seen as somewhat outdated today.

Given the environmental impact one must have thought that a greater dialogue between the residents, Factco and DHEC and the county authorities would be appropriate. As it is the residents are faced with an unsightly installation that will downgrade the quality and environment of the estate with a potential impact on the value of properties.

Do residents wish to do anything about the coming of poles? For my part I have shown my opposition to the Factco policy by formally withdrawing my interest in the scheme I will leave readers to come to their own conclusions.

Trevor Hughes
Meadow Court, Darras Hall

Very impressed with mobile vet

Having a problem with our semi feral cat getting to the vet, I happened to see the advert in the Pont News for a mobile doorstep vet.

I rang and made an appointment, they turned up at the time agreed and were so professional I was very impressed.

We were allowed to stay with the cat in their mobile surgery; it was far more professional than I expected.

If your pet is upset by going to the vets please give these a try, I'm sure you won't be disappointed.

Rod and June King
North Road, Ponteland

November issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the November issue is Monday October 17. Door to door distribution will be from Monday October 31 to Friday November 4. 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.

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 Photographic Society

Our second meeting this season is on Monday October 3 from 7.30pm until 9pm at Merton Hall, when award-winning landscape photographer David Stout presents images from his recent tour of the Far East. Visit: pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk

Ponteland u3a

Our next two talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are on Wednesday October 5 at 2pm – Talk by a Local Author by Jane Ions and on Wednesday November 2 at 2pm – Wartime Special Operations Executive by Mel Wall. Contact: 01661 824953.

Ponteland Local History Society

The History Society Archive Desk in the Ponteland Library will be open from 1.30pm to 3.30pm on Friday October 7 and subsequently open during those hours each first Friday of the month. Anthony Atkinson will give a talk entitled 'Thomas Berwick - Northumberland's greatest artist and naturalist' at 7.30pm on Thursday October 20 at St. Mary's Parish Centre. Visitors welcome - £2.

Plant Heritage North-East Group

The North-East group of charity Plant Heritage, which supports the conservation of garden plants, meets at Ponteland Memorial Hall on the second Saturday of the month at 2.30pm, when there is an illustrated talk followed by tea, biscuits, a raffle and plant sales. On Saturday October 8 the talk will be 'Linnel Farm Bulbs'. Visitors welcome - £5 to include raffle.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday October 10 at 2.30pm John Martin will give a talk entitled 'An Expat's Experience of Nigeria' at our new venue St Mary's Parish Centre.

Ponteland WI

Visitors are welcome to come along to our next meeting at 2pm on Tuesday October 11 in Merton Hall where Barry Mead will give a presentation on Cresswell Pele Tower. There will also be a competition entitled 'Autumn Leaves', which should garner some interesting entries.

Ponteland Village WI

Members will enjoy a cocktail workshop at their meeting on Tuesday October 11 at 7.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre. Our subgroups including Walking Group, Dining Out, Walking for Softies, Dog Walking and Book Club. If you would like to give us a try, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com. Look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

Our next meeting will be held at 2pm at Ponteland CIU Club on Wednesday October 12, when area demonstrator Heather Curry will give a flower demonstration entitled 'Time for Tea'. Visitors welcome – entry £7.

Gatherings for Christian Meditation

Our group meets in St Mary's Church for meditation 2pm to 3pm on the second Wednesday of each month. Our next dates are October 12, November 9 and December 14. An open invitation to join us as we explore together some of the rich inheritance of this Christian tradition which reaches back to the early church. No previous experience of meditation needed – all welcome.

Collection of unwanted tools

Between 10am and 3pm on Saturday October 22 there will be a collection at St Mary's Church for 'Tools with a Mission', a Christian charity that refurbishes unwanted usable tools and sends them to the developing world. We will also accept PCs, laptops and tablets running a minimum of Microsoft Windows 7, knitting and sewing machines, lengths of fabric, haberdashery, knitting needles and Bibles in modern English. For a full list visit twam.uk/donatetools

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

On Monday October 24 from 2.15pm to 4.15pm at The Hive Bar, Ponteland Leisure Centre, we have a workshop entitled 'Portuguese Whitework' with Sue Espiner. You can become a member or come to a meeting as a visitor for £5. Contact Penny Ford at pontelandfriendlystitchers@mail.com.

Ponteland Wildlife Talks

Our next talks, being held at St Mary's Parish Centre, are at 7.30pm on Tuesday November 1 - Peter Matthewson, creator of the wildlife site 'The Clark's Bog Story' near Morpeth, and at 7.30pm on Tuesday December 6 - Steve Lowe, of the Northumberland Rivers Trust 'Issues with Northumberland's rivers including the Pont'. Entry fee of £2 includes refreshments.

Autumn concert

Ponteland Methodist Church is hosting an autumn concert by Kathy Anderson and friends on November 19 at 7pm. Tickets costing £5 are available from the church or pay on the door. Refreshments served after the concert. Come and enjoy a musical variety of songs and instruments. All welcome.

Merton Hall library and coffee morning

Merton Hall's coffee morning and free library is now open on Fridays from 9.30am to 11.30am. New or nearly new book donations would be appreciated - they can be dropped off on Friday mornings.

Ponteland Ladies Choir

We meet on Mondays, term time, at 7.30pm at Ponteland Community Primary School, Callerton Lane. We sing a wide variety of music. Please contact Susan on 07710 418780 for more details. New members welcome - no auditions required.

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 in and around Ponteland. Email claire@claire276.plus.com for more information or to arrange a free taster session.

Rotary Ponteland

We meet at the Britannia Hotel each Tuesday, alternating lunchtime and evenings. Visit rotaryponteland.org.uk.

Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday worship 10am and 6.30pm - all welcome. Monday 1pm to 4pm 'Open Door' café. Tuesday Boys Brigade with a Girls' Association. Thursday Toddlers, Men's Forum, Women Together. Saturday walking groups. Various Bible study and House groups. Prayer and Fairtrade groups. Pilates, Zumba, dance. Room hire. Contact anncooperx@gmail.com or call 01661 824347.

Inner Wheel Club of Ponteland

Part of a women's voluntary organisation we are a small club founded on friendship. Meetings held on the first Monday of the month at St Mary's Parish Centre at 2pm include members spending social time together and talks, and occasional meals in a local restaurant and small fundraising events for charities are also held. New members and visitors are always welcome - contact 07568 743653.

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 Ukulele Band

We are a friendly group of mixed ability ukulele players and meet every Tuesday at the CIU Club from 1pm to 3pm. New members welcome.

High flying GCSE students look forward to uninterrupted sixth form experience

High performing GCSE students are looking forward to a more stable time in sixth form after a hugely disrupted two years due to the pandemic.

More than a quarter of Ponteland High School's outgoing Year 11s (26%) achieved five or more of the highest grades 7-9 (previously A*-A). They included Isla Cardno, who got a full set of 9s.

Lauren Campbell, Rebecca Green, Jamie Ho, Myles Paparesti, Charlie Walker and Conor Wallace achieved all 8s and 9s, with 18 colleagues being awarded all 7, 8 and 9 grades.

Stefan McElwee, headteacher of Ponteland High School, said: "Despite the challenges and adversity faced by our Year 11 students over the past two years they have achieved fantastic GCSE results.

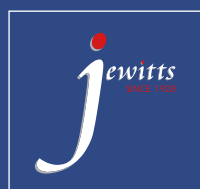
"They have experienced significant disruption to their studies yet have shown resilience and determination to achieve their best, despite the national challenges of the pandemic.

"All of our students should be extremely proud of themselves; they have shown a strength of character and work ethic to be proud of. I look forward to celebrating their results with them and I am extremely proud of their many achievements.

"We will now look forward to welcoming many of them back into our Sixth Form. I am confident they will benefit from a more stable period of education and they can look forward to further successes at A Level and beyond."

This year, following two years of Centre and Teacher Assessed grades, students sat public exams in GCSEs or equivalent courses. Grades were awarded by exam boards at a midpoint between the last public exams in 2019 and the Teacher Assessed Grades of 2021.

The GCSE successes follow superb A level results, with 26 students achieving a clean sweep of A* and A grades, described by the school as "a phenomenal achievement" given the circumstances.



COACH TOURS 2022/23

Christmas day trips

19th November
Whitby Christmas Markets

25th November
Bamburgh Castle, the Christmas Kingdom & Kelso

1st December
Country Living Christmas Fair in Harrogate

Remaining tours 2022

7th - 10th October (4 days - limited availability)
Scotland & the Cairngorms

16th - 22nd October (7 days - fully booked)
Killarney & The Ring of Kerry

11th - 14th November (4 days - limited availability)
Fizz & Fayre in Harrogate

19th - 21st November (3 days - limited availability)
Thursford Christmas Spectacular

2nd - 5th December (4 days)
Winter Escape to the Scottish Borders



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New brochure available soon.

Tours 2023

3rd - 6th February (4 days)
Country & Western weekend in Caernarfan

10th - 13th March (4 days)
North Yorkshire Coast weekend

12th - 14th May (3 days)
Stratford-upon-Avon & The Malvern Flower Show

22nd - 26th May (5 days)
Bath, Weston-super-Mare & The Cheddar Gorge

24th June - 3rd July (10 days)
The Mighty Rhine & Switzerland River Cruise

21st - 23rd July (3 days)
Tatton Park & RHS Bridgewater

31st July - 4th August (5 days)
Isle of Bute, Isle of Arran & Loch Lomond

13th - 18th August (6 days)
Bournemouth & The New Forest

22nd - 23rd August (2 days)
The Edinburgh Tattoo

13th - 19th September (7 days)
Isle of Wight Delights

1st - 6th October (6 days)
The Delights of Donegal & The Wild Atlantic Way

20th - 23rd October (4 days)
Enchanted Forest & Pitlochry

10th - 12th November (3 days)
Christmas at Chatsworth House

21st - 23rd November (3 days)
Thursford Christmas Spectacular

15th - 19th December (5 days)
Holly & Mistletoe festive break Llandudno

21st - 23rd December (3 days)
Christmas Carols at the Royal Albert Hall

Come and have a cup of tea with us and meet the team, see our coaches and pick up a copy of our new brochure at our open day on Tuesday October 25 at Humshaugh Village Hall from 10am to 1pm.

'Fantastic day' raises £3,000 for children's charity

Large crowds turned out again this year for the annual duck races organised by Rotary Ponteland.

This year's highlights included a market area with craft and food stalls, children's rides and classic cars.

Organisers reported a "tremendous response" from local businesses to sponsor the races and enter boats in the Business Boat Races, raising around £3,000 for the Great North Children's Hospital Foundation - the principal charity beneficiary for this year's event.

Emma McQuitty, Fundraising Co-ordinator for the Newcastle Hospitals Charity, said: "It was a fantastic day, it was so lovely to see so many people having a lovely time with friends and family."

Janet Cusworth, President of Rotary Ponteland, added: "It is always such a wonderful day; to see the enjoyment on the faces of the children, parents and grandparents makes it all worthwhile. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of the event this year."

Photos by Barry Pells.



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Officer's sick leave night out leads to 60 years of marriage

Injuries sustained in an engine room fire led to a whirlwind romance for merchant seaman Jack Stewart and schoolteacher Jonquil Rayson.

The couple met in November 1961 at the famous Oxford Galleries dance hall in Newcastle while Jack, from Washington, was on sick leave.

They were engaged just weeks later in January 1962 and Jack returned to sea while Jonquil, from Gateshead, made arrangements for their wedding on October 13 as their new home was being built in Great Lumley, Chester-le-Street.

After Jack obtained his Chief Engineer's Certificate at South Shields Marine School, they moved to Bermuda in 1964 as his ship ran between New York and Bermuda every week. Jonquil continued as a schoolteacher, working in Bermuda until their return to the UK the following year.

Daughter Giselle arrived in November 1966 and Jack left the merchant navy to pursue a career in the NHS, primarily as an engineer and later in a management role.

Outside work he became an accomplished local football referee and the couple enjoyed many years on family caravanning holidays, mainly in France and Spain.

Family milestones also included the birth of grandchildren Alea and Toby, and Giselle being awarded an OBE in 2016 for services to the computer games industry in the North-East.

Jack, 87, and Jonquil, 83, of Old Station Court, Darras Hall, will be celebrating their platinum wedding anniversary at a party on Saturday October 15 with friends and family at Giselle's home in Middle Drive.



Jack and Jonquil are pictured with daughter Giselle when she received her OBE in 2016 and at their wedding in 1962.



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Richard Walker with his Silver Wolf award at the presentation event. Photo by Paul Norris.

Scout leader awarded top accolade after 35 years' service

A Scout leader who has served for 35 years has received the association's highest accolade.

Richard Walker is the first member of Ponteland Scout Group in its 104-year history to receive a Silver Wolf, awarded by the Chief Scout Bear Grylls in recognition of his incredible service to Scouting.

The Silver Wolf is presented by The Scout Association 'for services of the most exceptional character', with only about 30 Silver Wolf Awards handed out across the UK in any year as an unrestricted gift of the Chief Scout.

Richard, a resident of Darras Hall since 1987 and now retired, was a Scout Leader for ten to 14-year-olds from 1987 to 2006 and then became an Explorer Scout Leader for 14 to 18-year-olds. Currently he is the Duke of Edinburgh award coordinator for the Castle Morpeth District and trains the Gold Award group for their expedition.

He said: "I have been involved in Scouting since I was a boy and have been fortunate to be able to continue to enjoy Scouting as an adult. The award was a great surprise and I feel very honoured."

Many families in Ponteland will know Richard for this support in training their children. He is currently the leader of the Young Leader section, helps to develop the leadership skills for the Explorers who volunteer to help with the younger sections and works with other adult leaders to help them gain the skills to take young people camping.

1st Ponteland Scout Group President Michael Taylor MBE said: "Richard and his wife Jackie have provided Scouting of the highest quality for numerous generations of our Ponteland community. I am delighted that the Chief Scout has awarded The Silver Wolf to Richard in recognition of his outstanding service."

The Castle Morpeth District Scouts awards evening was held at the Diamond Inn and attended by Ponteland Mayor Christine Greenwell, Morpeth Mayor Alison Byard, Northumberland

County Scouts Commissioner Peter Thorp, 1st Ponteland Scout Group President Michael Taylor MBE and Neil Fraser, Castle Morpeth District Scouts Commissioner.

Ponteland Scouts is recruiting for new adult volunteers. Find out more at pontelandscouts.uk

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New environmental group launches with tree planting project

A newly formed environmental group is to launch a ten-year action plan with its first tree planting project.

Ponteland Action Group for the Environment (PAGE) will lead 'Pontenviroland' - the plan drawn up by Rotary Ponteland which has a series of objectives to improve the local environment.

They include:

- General tree planting - local schools have been contacted regarding the Woodland Trust's offer of free trees for schools. Ponteland residents and locally based companies will also be encouraged to plant trees in their land and gardens and to not remove trees unnecessarily.
- Rewilding Ponteland and its surrounds - encouraging industrial and domestic garden areas to have a 'Wild Corner' where wild plants, animals, birds and insects can thrive.
- Local wildlife - supporting efforts to maintain local wildlife including the Red Squirrel support group, the provision of nest boxes, the creation of 'Hedgehog Pathways' and 'Hedgehog Homes' in wild corners.
- School liaison - working with and supporting local schools on environmental projects and activities and potentially setting up a 'Rotakids Group' at a local primary school to focus on environmental projects.
- Plastic and litter - examining what can be done both to reduce the amount of plastic used and hold a programme of litter removal in Rotary Way and other key local sites.

Links have been established with Ponteland Town Council, Northumberland County Council, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Ponteland Red Squirrels and PAGE is striving to forge partnerships with other groups.

Alan Hall, from PAGE, said: "Amongst some of our early initiatives, we are actively pursuing a programme of tree planting. This includes inviting residents of Ponteland to plant a new tree in their own gardens if space and garden layout will allow for this.

"We are also currently working with the County Council and the Town Council to try to secure further tree planting in the Ponteland and Darras Hall areas.

"However, one early success which has been agreed is with Darras Hall Estate Committee to plant two new trees at the entrance to the Old Station Court just behind the United Reformed Church.

"Residents are invited to have a look at the PAGE Facebook page which may give them ideas on what they can do about things such as rewilding some of their garden. Find us on Facebook at PontelandActionGroupForTheEnvironment."

To find out more about 'Pontenviroland' contact Rotarian Peter Lowry at info@rotaryponteland.org.uk.

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Anya Southerland and Lissie Atkinson, both aged 10, of Ponteland Girl Guides (left) and artist Hazel Douglas (below)



Rain fails to dampen spirits as Flower Show returns

Heavy rain failed to dampen spirits as Ponteland Flower Show returned after two virtual events for its 45th year.

From fruit and veg, flowers and heathers to cookery, handicrafts, woodcraft, painting, wines and photography - and children's classes - there was something for everyone.

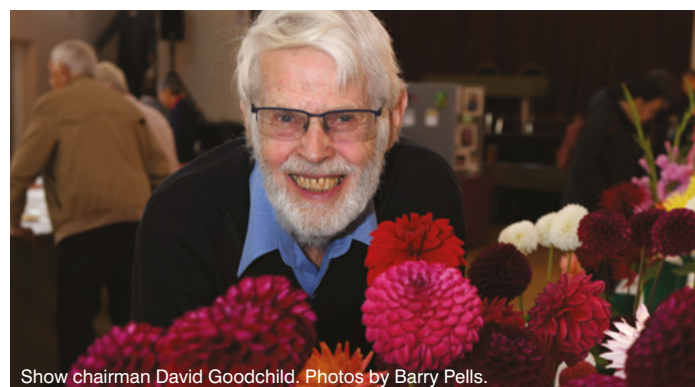
Changes to this year's event included opening up entries to exhibitors from outside Ponteland and removing entry fees and prize money. But prize certificates and bragging rights remained!

Entry fee to the Memorial Hall on Saturday September 10 was donation only, with all money raised used to keep the show running.

Show treasurer Victoria James said: "The committee is very grateful to all those who supported the show and for all the generous donations, special thanks to the guides for providing refreshments.

"It was lovely to see new exhibitors entering and old faces returning. Those regular exhibitors who are no longer with us were sadly missed. It was also lovely to see so many residents braving the weather to visit the show and the community coming together."

Anyone interested in joining the organising committee should contact info@pontelandflowershow.org.



Show chairman David Goodchild. Photos by Barry Pells.

The winners

Keith Bissett

Bob Woolley Award for most points in cut flowers

David Goodchild

Ponteland Parish Council Challenge Award for best exhibit in cut flower classes

Bryson Prudhoe

Memorial Hall Leek Club Award for best exhibit in leek classes

Mike Sadler

Ponteland Parish Council Challenge Award for best exhibit in vegetable classes

Keith Bissett

Dr Jack White Award for best exhibit in vegetable classes

David Goodchild

Stan Dytham Memorial Award for most points in vegetable classes

Lola Blanch

Rotary Club of Ponteland Award for best exhibit in children's classes

Lola Blanch

Mary Anderson Award for most points in children's classes

Marjorie Dodd

Stanley C Dytham Award for most points in cookery classes

Marjorie Dodd

Margaret Dodsworth Championship Award for best apple pie

Jennifer Hinchley

Women's Institute Award for best exhibit in handicrafts

Hazel Douglas

Women's Institute Award for most points in handicrafts

Christine Duffy

Barbara White Award for best exhibit in art

Gillian Weedy

T Geoffrey Willey Award for best exhibit in photography

MP launches campaign for mobile banking services

Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman has launched a campaign calling for better access to physical banking facilities following the latest branch closure in the town.

Mr Opperman met with representatives at Barclays to encourage them to roll out their mobile banking vans across Tynedale and Ponteland.

The vans provide banking services to people who prefer to use in-person banking facilities rather than online banking.

The MP has also written to the Chief Executives of Lloyds, NatWest and HSBC to ask them to rollout mobile and pop-up facilities to their customers too in Northumberland.

Lloyds closed its doors on its branch in Main Street in February, following the departure of Barclays, NatWest and HSBC in recent years. People seeking face to face banking transactions now have the choice of Newcastle Building



Guy Opperman MP is pictured with Geoff Watson and Susan Allan from Barclays Bank.

Society's branch on Broadway, Darras Hall, or the Post Office branches on Broadway or Merton Road.

Mr Opperman said: "Access to cash and in-person banking are vital services to residents who may not be able to access

online banking. I would encourage all banks with customers across Tynedale and Ponteland to rollout services that will benefit their customers.

"We must retain in-person banking facilities!"

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Planners deal blow to £1m community clubhouse appeal

Ambitious plans to develop a £1m community clubhouse on Callerton Lane have been dealt a blow by planning chiefs.

An application to vary a condition of the planning permission previously granted for the adjacent leisure centre development, to enable the felling of 15 trees to make way for the new sporting facility, has been refused.

Approval would have led to the submission of a planning application for the clubhouse scheme.

The application to remove the condition which protected all retained trees and hedgerows at the site attracted 48 objections regarding the loss of healthy trees, biodiversity impacts and visual character concerns.

There was one public representation in support, from a couple who live in Mayfair Gardens who said they had no objection to the trees being removed for the construction of a clubhouse for the rugby and football clubs.

It was delegated for officer decision and recommending refusal, Northumberland County Council Planning Officer Ryan



Soulsby said the proposed development failed to address potential impacts upon protected species and their habitats, as well as the biodiversity value of the application site.

He added: "The application fails to provide sufficient justification to warrant the removal of 15 trees from the application site whilst also failing to address potential impacts upon protected species and biodiversity.

"Furthermore, no biodiversity enhancements have been provided as part of the application. The application is therefore recommended for refusal."

Ponteland Rugby Club and Ponteland United FC launched a joint fundraising campaign earlier this year for the new facility, proposed to be located on land between the rugby and football pitches adjacent to the leisure centre and to include changing rooms, a social space and viewing balcony. It would be open on matchdays, for training sessions and club social events, as well as for wider community use.

The two clubs, who have set up a new joint company to manage the project, had pledged to replace any trees which needed to be felled.

£1.4m executive recruitment drive launched at County Hall

A £1.4m recruitment drive is underway to create a new senior management team at County Hall.

Northumberland County Council has agreed a new executive management structure which will see the creation of a number of new posts reporting to a new chief executive, who is expected to be unveiled on November 2.

The moves follow a turbulent period for the council which culminated in a £209,000 settlement with former chief executive Daljit Lally who left the authority on July 31.

An independent review by a team of experienced former local authority chief executives headed by Max Caller CBE concluded corporate governance at the council was "dysfunctional" with a "harmful" working environment in a "climate of fear and intimidation".

Mr Caller said "new seasoned local government professional leadership at the top of the organisation" was needed.

A report to the Staff and Appointments Committee which met on September 20 said interim chief executive Rick O'Farrell has been leading the restructure process to successfully implement a new senior officer structure.

He has been supported by external consultants from London-based executive search firm Penna, and there have been 40 interviews with Cabinet members, opposition leaders and senior staff in which eight different structures have been discussed.

The preferred model is for a Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service/Electoral Returning Officer, supported by five Executive Directors for: Place & Regeneration; Transformation & Resources; Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing; Children, Young People & Education; and Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities.

There will also be a Director of Governance/Legal Services and Monitoring Officer post, while the Chief Fire Officer role remains unchanged albeit with additional responsibilities.

The salary bands for all the new posts will be published on the county council website.

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