

# pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



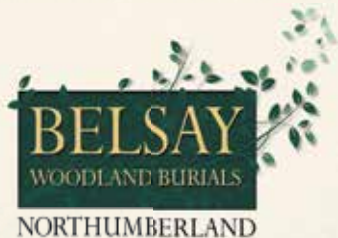
Weekly mobile banking  
service launched

Police patrols stepped up  
for Bonfire Night

Council accused of putting  
care home sector at risk

## Cyclists welcome new route to city boundary





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# Pont Rep returns to the stage after two years

*By Lesley Eltringham*

**Ponteland Rep returned to the stage after two years as they followed the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City.**

The players were accompanied at Ponteland Memorial Hall by Preppies Youth Theatre in a very successful production of *The Wizard of Oz*.

The Society was honoured with a visit from Peter Oliver and Michael Avery from the National Operatic and Dramatic Association (NODA) who have given an excellent review.

We had three superb Dorothys: Bryony, Rose and Grace (understudy) who all gave splendid portrayals of the character and plaintive renditions of the famous song 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' in separate performances.

Her friends on the journey to Oz, who started as the farmhands in Kansas, were Jack Stuart and Riley Chivers as the Scarecrow, Sarah Blythe as the Tin Man and Matthew Hunter as the Cowardly Lion. They all had the audience laughing and clapping.

Our witches Claire Long and Amber Covington gave equally malevolent performances to animated boos from the audience! Jules Stevenson Warrender, in contrast, portrayed a beautiful, kindly Glinda, the good witch and also Aunt Em in two performances.

Other roles were all played with equal skill and versatility - Caroline Reynolds, new to the Rep, as caring Aunty Em, Jason Long as Uncle Henry and the amusing Guard and Adam Shaw as Professor Marvel and the booming Oz.

The Preppies Youth Theatre supported with many roles and were very entertaining. Lucy and Will were great as mini Oz, with many lines to learn and Rowan and Leo had no lines as Nikko the witch's monkey, but their gibberish was excellent!

The production was directed by Hayley Grant, with Musical Director Amy Baker and a very hardworking production team.

All in all, a very successful production for the Rep after two years' absence due to Covid and the audiences seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves!





# Plans for new cycle route to city boundary unveiled

Cyclists have welcomed the announcement of a new dedicated route linking Ponteland to the city boundary, allowing access to the Metro system.

Northumberland County Council has agreed the £866,000 project which will create a cycle route from Callerton Lane along the existing bridleway to Rotary Way, then on to the A696 at Dobbies roundabout to Prestwick Road End roundabout.

The works, funded via a grant of £816,000 from the Transforming Cities Fund and £50,000 from NCC, are scheduled to start in December.

Additional cycle routes are also planned for Blyth and Ashington, with a total spend of £5.35m, with all three designed to create stronger and greener links between towns for work, education and leisure purposes.

Coun John Riddle, chairman of the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board, said: "This is fantastic news and a real step forward towards more active and sustainable transport in our county.

"Infrastructure is one of the barriers to residents using more active means of travel and I'm so pleased we can start to make progress on these safer and more efficient routes.

"It is hoped that these new urban routes will not only enhance our area for visitors but will make sustainable transport more

accessible for short 'every day' journeys for our residents who live and work in the county and will support our aim to be carbon neutral by 2030."

Lawrence Connelly, a Ponteland member of Cycling UK's Tyneside and Northumberland branch, welcomed the new investment. He said: "Cycling UK welcomes any expenditure to improve the cycling infrastructure and make cycling safer for everyone, especially children, and this is a step in the right direction. Cyclists would also appreciate some expenditure on the maintenance of the existing cycle paths in Tyneside and Northumberland, especially where the cycle path surface has broken up and become dangerous and where bushes and vegetation have overgrown the path restricting its access and use."

The cycle route plans will be on show at a public consultation event being held at Merton Hall on Monday November 14 from 10am to 3pm, where staff from NCC's Strategic Transport team will be available to answer questions on the scheme.

Cover shot: Coun John Riddle with John Doherty, Lawrence Connelly and Tony Samson from Cycling UK's Tyneside and Northumberland branch. Photo by Barry Pells.

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# County council accused of putting care home sector at risk

Senior officers at Northumberland County Council have been accused of waging a campaign of “bullying, suppression and aggression” against care home providers in the area.

Care North East, which represents over 12,000 care beds in the region and several homes in the county, claims that the actions of the council in recent years have brought the industry to the brink of collapse.

The organisation says it has been trying to engage with NCC to maintain high quality care services for Northumberland’s ageing population, but has faced an uphill battle to get the local authority to work with providers.

In letters to the council, CNE has alleged a failure “to enter into genuine and meaningful engagement with the care home sector” and reluctance to recognise the evidence provided “to maintain stability in the care home market in Northumberland”.

It alleges named officers have engaged in “direct or indirect bullying, oppressive actions or the threat of oppressive actions to care providers who do not share their view”.

CNE says the challenges created by the council have already led to a number of operators either closing or leaving the area.

Keith Gray, chair of Care North East, said: “We have a very serious complaint...on what we consider to be misfeasance in public office at Northumberland County Council. We believe their actions are reckless and we have very serious concerns about their approach to the care home sector in Northumberland.”

An NCC spokesperson said: “Northumberland County Council places an extremely high value on the wonderful work care workers and care providers do to support some of our most vulnerable residents across the county.

“We have been in correspondence with Care North East for over 20 months to address the issues raised and are reviewing their latest communication with us. We have previously communicated with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, who confirmed that they found no fault in the proposed management of this case. At this stage it would not be appropriate to comment further.”

**New Chief Executive announced: p11.**

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# Patrols stepped up in run up to Bonfire Night

By PC Graeme Harbottle, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

**As the dark nights set in and the winter months approach, I wanted to inform readers what I'll be up to and where I will be.**

In my many years of policing I am fully aware that this time of year can cause the public worries and concerns in and around October 31 at Halloween and November 5 on Bonfire Night.

My intention will be to be out and about patrolling areas where issues have arisen in past years and reports have been made to police of persons dressed in Halloween masks and costumes intimidating the general public.

I have dealt with many similar incidents in the past and in the majority of cases no harm is intended, however I am aware

how such actions can upset and frighten people. I will speak with anyone causing issues and action will be taken with any persistent individuals.

At this time of year I have a patrol plan and strategy for our area dedicated to looking for any potential areas, locations and sites for illegal bonfires. I look at prioritising land in and next to rural farmland areas that may be away from residential areas. Illegal bonfires are normally built in these areas leading up to November 5 in the hope they go undetected.

I will continue to work alongside the local council, and we will act in the swift removal of any dumped commercial and residential waste items that may or could be used as material to construct a bonfire.



With regards to the offence of 'fly tipping', if any person is seen illegally dumping items, I will take severe action against them as this is an offence that blights rural areas and it can be very costly to remove by the local council.

I would like to encourage any reader to report any early signs of a potential site for an illegal bonfire to myself, local council or Crimestoppers.

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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# New Principal outlines vision for Kirkley Hall's future

Education provision at Kirkley Hall is going to be taken to “a new level” with new courses in animal, agriculture and engineering, the new Principal has announced.

Gary Potts took over his role as Principal at Northumberland College at the beginning of October with the pledge of an ambitious new era for the further education provider as part of the Education Partnership North East group.

One of his first priorities is to meet local school leaders, business bosses and community leaders in order to understand their training needs now and for the future.

He said: “The key for us in Ashington is delivering our new state-of-the-art campus in the town centre. We’re delighted to be working with the Department of Education, Advance Northumberland, Ashington Town Board and other partners on our plans for the Wansbeck Business Park site, and we can’t wait to get started.

“The new campus will deliver the buildings, environment and facilities we need to give our students the education they deserve.

“The same can be said of our Kirkley Hall

campus where the recently announced T Level Capital Fund grant will take our provision there to a new level and enable us to offer students new T Level subjects, including new courses in animal, agriculture and engineering.

“I also look forward to working with partners and stakeholders on plans for our Berwick campus.”

Originally from Easington, Gary left school at 16 wanting to be a police officer, but found a five-year apprenticeship as a toolmaker and designer instead. He moved into stock control and then operations management for another company before starting in the further education (FE) sector as a professional tutor at Darlington College.

Gary ended his 17 years at Darlington as Assistant Principal, before moving to Education Training Collective, a college group in Tees Valley, as Group Vice Principal for Business, Innovation and Partnerships.



## ADVERTISING FEATURE

### How a detailed financial plan can ease those money worries

By David Lamb CFP™ MCSI

**With inflation at its highest level in 40 years, how can you formulate an action plan to manage the resulting cost of living crisis?**

The first thing to do is not to panic! The second thing is to complete a detailed and accurate budget analysis to help you plan how much you can spend each month and identify areas for savings.

Refer to bank statements, investment statement, pay slips, credit card bills and recent utility bills. Look at your expenditure and identify where you can make savings.

The UK Parenting Forum shared some practical tips for looking after the all-important pennies, including:

- Shower at the gym, not waiting until you get home.
- Buy porridge in bulk instead of expensive children's cereals.
- Charge phones and battery

packs at work (with employers' permission).

- Paying for insurance monthly incurs interest. Consider paying for this on a 0% purchase credit card, then pay off monthly. Discipline is required.
- Cut dishwasher tablets in half.
- Use washing powder not liquid and use half the recommended amount unless the clothes are really dirty (powder is cheaper than liquid anyway). Don't bother with fabric conditioner.
- Check the price of fruit and veg price/kg. Often the smaller bags are cheaper and bagged fruit and veg is often cheaper than loose.
- Plan meals, and shop only once each week, but plan for eight days.

On day eight use up all the odd bits and pieces in the fridge. This will result in you shopping for 46 weeks of the year and gain six weeks' extra housekeeping money.

- Turn off electrical devices, instead of leaving them on stand-by. It has been estimated\* that the average UK household wastes £147 each year by having devices on stand-by.

\* Source: British Gas

All very helpful, but this will give you the biggest saving: most houses are heated between 18°C and 21°C. According to the energy supplier Utilita, just reducing the temperature by 1°C could save as much as £321 a year.

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# Bank launches weekly counter service at Memorial Hall

A campaign to bring banking facilities back to Ponteland has secured a partial victory after Barclays launched a new weekly counter service at the Memorial Hall.

Ponteland's MP Guy Opperman said he is 'delighted' that Barclays has listened to concerns over the lack of physical banking facilities in the town after the last of four banks to close its branch in recent years – Lloyds – pulled out in February.

The MP had started a campaign to ask for high street banks to retain a physical presence in communities following the closure of high street branches across his constituency.

He wrote to the CEOs of NatWest, Lloyds, HSBC and Barclays asking for them to consider providing more physical banking services to residents. Barclays responded by launching banking facilities at Ponteland Memorial Hall every Thursday from 9.30am to 3.30pm.

Mr Opperman, who attended a launch event for the new service alongside fellow campaigner Christine Caisley, said: "I am delighted that Barclays has listened to residents' concerns by providing these crucial banking facilities in Ponteland. Please come down to the Memorial Hall every Thursday from 9.30am to 3.30pm to support this new facility."



Guy Opperman MP with Christine Caisley and Barclays staff.

Barclays Customer Care Director Geoff Watson added: "We're delighted we will be able to operate from the Memorial Hall in Ponteland and they have made us feel very welcome.

"Customers will still have access to general advice and help with basic banking, such as transfers between accounts, change of address, opening of savings and ISA accounts, setting up mobile banking and amending direct debits and standing orders."

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# Your letters

**Darras Hall residents remain poles apart in this month's letters...**

## Storm proved wireless is the future

**It will be one year on November 26 since Northumberland suffered its most devastating storm in living memory.**

A number of Ponteland residents unlucky enough to be dependent on overhead power lines endured the misery of losing their electricity supply for more than a week. Yet our planning authorities now stand aside while an unsightly rash of poles and wires spreads unchecked across our neighbourhoods where none existed before!

Faster broadband may be progress for those who want it, but it certainly isn't progress to impose undesirable and outdated infrastructure on everyone else without any consultation.

We were more advanced decades ago when all new services were installed underground without the need for any unattractive utility poles. Wireless is the future, surely!

*Katherine Guellard, Meadow Court, Darras Hall*

## Can we trust Factco?

**As a resident of Oaklands I have read with interest your articles on fibre broadband and Factco and the personal views of Steve Eglon.**

Initially we received hand-delivered letters from Factco telling us about the telegraph poles. After the majority of residents on our street told the company about our concerns and objections they advised us that works on Oaklands, along with two other streets, would be stopped and reviewed.

Imagine our surprise and astonishment when on October 4 a lorry arrived with telegraph poles and digging commenced. Some residents managed to stop them digging outside their homes.

I asked politely for them to stop but they declined and now I have a telegraph pole outside my lounge window which causes great anxiety having to look at it all day.

From these experiences I ask, can residents, customers and potential customers trust a company that acts in this way? My experience so far is a definite no.

*Martin Wighton, Oaklands, Darras Hall*

## The majority want good broadband even if it means new poles

**I feel it's beholden on me to reply to Trevor Hughes letter(s) and put some actual facts forward as opposed to his 'opinion-based' facts.**

To get fibre to the home requires two things: delivery from the broadband cabinet supply to the street and delivery from the

street to the home. Ideally Factco would use existing street and home ducting for this as it's both aesthetically neutral and cost effective.

Having surveyed the estate they found many existing street ducts are at or near capacity or completely missing. That leaves three options: go overground using existing telegraph poles, dig up roads and drives to install ducts, or don't bother.

The cost and disruption of digging up roads and drives and the likely backlash pretty much rules out the second option. Which only leaves poles or nothing.

Telecoms companies have the legal right to install the necessary infrastructure without planning permission as they are granted permitted development.

Far from devaluing properties, good broadband is high on movers' wish lists and 2Mb ADSL no longer cuts it.

By the way, the poles are wooden and have been concealed where possible. They look one heck of a lot better than the metal lampposts which went in with no whinging several years ago.

*Steve Eglon, Western (Poled) Way, Darras Hall*

## Planners need to consider impact of clubhouse on local residents

**I was delighted to see in Pont News (October issue 205) that the planning authorities had refused the application to cut down trees at the leisure centre.**

I was shocked to then receive through the post a copy of a renewed application by the clubhouse supporters to cut down the same trees.

It is interesting that consideration is being given to wildlife and biodiversity but none has been given so far about the impact on local residents.

The proposed clubhouse is only yards from Mayfair Gardens, where the majority of householders are senior citizens. Athol House is being rebuilt, again in close proximity to the proposed site, where the residents will all be elderly.

We are told that it will be open for social functions and will have a viewing platform and social space. Has there been any consultation or discussion with residents about the need to control noise and traffic disturbance?

I realise that the football and rugby club supporters will now rally to support any application by their clubs. Those who have already expressed their concern about the cutting down of the trees will need to do this again.

*Judith Harrington, Fairney Edge, Ponteland*

**December issue deadlines:** The deadline for all copy and adverts for the December issue is Monday November 14. Door to door distribution will be from Monday November 28 to Friday December 2. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the December 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

Our next talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are at 2pm on Wednesday November 2 – Wartime Special Operations Executive by Mel Wall and at 2pm on Wednesday December 7 – Christmas Festivities with Faith Tea. Contact: 01661 824953.

## Ponteland Wildlife Talks

Our next meetings at St Mary's Parish Centre are at 7.30pm on Tuesday November 6 when Steve Lowe presents on 'Issues with Northumberland's rivers including the Pont' and at 7.30pm on Tuesday January 3 when Stephen Westerberg talks on 'Whinchats at RSB Geltsdale and where they go in winter'. Entry - £2 including refreshments.

## Ponteland Photographic Society

Our November meetings, held from 7.30pm until 9pm at Merton Hall, are: Monday November 7 - The Art of Judging with Veronica Congleton; Monday November 14 - Portraits and Drones with Michael Ghahari; Monday November 28 - Galapagos Tour with Param Sandhu TBC. Visit: [pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk](http://pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk)

## Ponteland Village WI

The Friends of LV50 Blyth, one of the oldest timber lightships in the UK, will be giving the talk at our meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday November 8 in St Mary's Parish Centre. Our subgroups include Walking Group, Dining Out, Walking for Softies, Dog Walking and Book Club. Contact: [pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com](mailto:pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com). Look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

## Kirkley WI

We look forward to an afternoon with Morag Pugh and Northumbrian Harps at our next meeting at 2pm on Wednesday November 9 in the Oak Room at Kirkley Hall. Guests and visitors are always welcome.

## Callerton Garden and Flower Club

National demonstrator David Ryland will be giving floral demonstration 'Fundamentally Festive' at 2pm on November 9 at the CIU Club, Merton Way. Visitors welcome, fee £7. This is our premiere meeting of the year, not to be missed.

## Friends of Kirkley Hall

At 2pm on November 9 at Kirkley Hall the Friends of Kirkley Hall will host speaker Susan Fulton, whose talk is entitled Canine Partners. Susan has a disability and will be showing how amazing dogs help to transform their owners' lives. Entry £2 for members and £3 for non-members. Complimentary tea/coffee is available before the talk. Visit: [friendsofkirkleyhall.org](http://friendsofkirkleyhall.org).

## 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 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.

## 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 November 12 Newcastle University Senior Lecturer Dr Gordon Port, who specialises in invertebrate feeding behaviour and ecology, will present a talk on slugs and snails.

## Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday November 14 at 2.30pm Anthony Atkinson will give a talk entitled 'Gertrude Bell – The Desert Queen' at St Mary's Parish Centre.

## Ponteland Local History Society

Geoff Hughes will give a talk entitled 'Wallington and the Trevellyans' at St Mary's Parish Centre at 7.30pm on Thursday November 17. Visitors welcome - £2. The History Society Archive will also be open for inspection at Ponteland Library on Friday November 4 between 1.30pm and 3.30pm.

## 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.

## Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

Our workshop at our next meeting in The Hive Bar, Ponteland Leisure Centre, from 2.15pm to 4.15pm on Monday November 28 is 'Christmas item with Sandra and Lindy'. Membership of the group is open to all or come to a meeting as a visitor for £5. Contact: Secretary Penny Ford at [pontelandfriendlystitchers@mail.com](mailto:pontelandfriendlystitchers@mail.com).

## Ponteland Methodist Church

Sunday worship 10am and 6.30pm. Monday: 1pm to 4pm 'Open Door' friendship café. Tuesday: Boys Brigade with Girls' Association. Thursday: Toddlers, Men's Forum, Women Together. Saturday: walking group and Coffee Shop Strollers plus room hire. On alternate Thursdays at 2pm (November 10 and 24) Women Together provides friendship, interesting talks and social activities. More information from Chris on 0191 271 2637. On Sunday November 6 from 9am we have Bouncy Church – a lovely breakfast, bouncy castle, crafts and all age short service from 9.40am. Contact: [isobel@familyhindle.net](mailto:isobel@familyhindle.net) or 07990 975490.

## 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.

## Council recommends appointment of new Chief Executive

Northumberland County Council has announced a recommended appointment for a new Chief Executive, subject to full council approval.

Dr Helen Paterson, who has been Chief Executive at Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council since 2017, was previously Executive Director of Children's Services and Strategic Director for Transformation in Sunderland. She joined Walsall after being Chief Executive at Wrexham County Borough Council for six years.

Council leader Glen Sanderson said: "Helen stood out as our first choice among a very strong field of candidates. She brings with her a wealth of skills, experience and an in-depth knowledge of local government and shares our vision to take Northumberland forward over the coming years."



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# Rotary Ponteland Christmas events set to raise funds for children's charity

Rotary Ponteland hopes to once again raise thousands of pounds for charity with its popular Christmas events.

Santa's Sleigh will return in early December for its annual tour, which last year raised £600 for Smile for Life. Santa Claus will tour Ponteland (including the new Bellway estate) and Darras Hall on his sleigh on the evenings of December 2 to 3 from 5pm to 7pm.

Residents will be able to meet Santa at advertised designated stopping points and will be able to track the progress of Santa Claus on his sleigh via a 'Sleigh tracker' app (which can be downloaded from Google Play) so everyone can see when Santa is getting near.

Santa Claus together with his band of helpers will be collecting cash donations each evening. Donations can also be made by texting SANTA to 70560 (£5), SNOWMAN to 70560 (£10) or ROBIN to 70560 (£20) - or via the Rotary Ponteland Facebook page.

The Rotary Ponteland Christmas Market has a new venue this year - Ponteland Community Primary School Sports Hub on December 4 from 11am to 3pm. There will be a Santa's Grotto and a wide variety of craft stalls selling festive gifts.

The main beneficiary from both events will be Newcastle-based charity Children's Cancer North, which provides support for children and their families and raises awareness of children's

cancer and invest in revolutionary research.

The annual Rotary Ponteland Carol Concert, cancelled last year due to Covid, is once again being held with the Bedlington Salvation Army Band at Ponteland Methodist Church on Thursday December 15 at 7pm.

Tickets priced at £3 will be available from club members or via email at [events@rotaryponteland.org.uk](mailto:events@rotaryponteland.org.uk) from late November.

For more details of all the events visit the Rotary Ponteland website [rotaryponteland.org.uk](http://rotaryponteland.org.uk) or the club's Facebook page.

## Can you help us with village hall history project?

People with historical connections or memories, photos or memorabilia of Stamfordham Village Hall are being invited to contact a group which is exploring its history.

If you can help, please email Tanya Merridew at [tanyamerridew@me.com](mailto:tanyamerridew@me.com).

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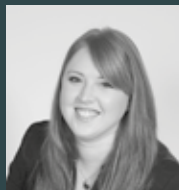
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