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FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



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drink driving purge

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up on dog fouling

Support for bereaved as
new service launches

Sun shines as Ponteland remembers

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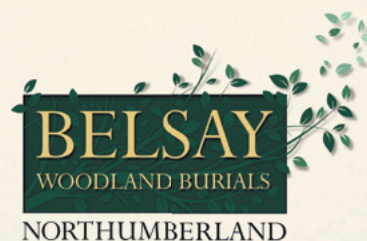
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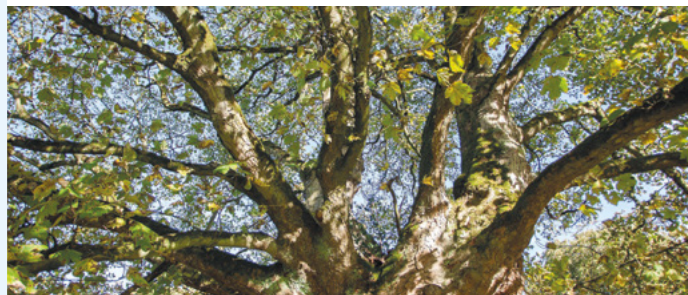
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Produced by Cian creative pr



Sun shines on Remembrance Sunday

There was no raining on Ponteland's parade as the sun shone on the annual Remembrance Sunday service.

Following the traditional parade from the leisure centre, a two-minute silence was observed at the War Memorial outside Ponteland Memorial Hall at 11am on November 13.

Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland 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.

The names of the Ponteland war dead from the two World Wars were read out by Ponteland High School students Matthew Dobson and Ojas Rajkumar.

After the parade, light refreshments were enjoyed courtesy of the team at the Memorial Hall.

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



Newcastle Eagles launches junior basketball club in Ponteland

The most successful team in the British Basketball League's history has launched a new junior club in Ponteland.

Called the Ponteland Panthers, the new club will be the Newcastle Eagles Foundation's 13th club.

Based at Ponteland Community Primary School, it is being headed up by experienced community coach Chris Applewhite, who has been responsible for the impressive development and growth of the Gosforth Goliaths.

Working in partnership with Ponteland schools, this new club will tap into the growth the sport is seeing across the region, after the foundation surpassed a record membership of almost 2,000 young players across its existing 12 clubs last season.

Eagles Community Foundation Development Manager Ian MacLeod said: "We are constantly working to increase the range and available

access of our programme. Ponteland is an area that we have been very keen to have club provision in and it will be an excellent addition to the foundation's programme."

Chris, also the foundation's junior development officer, launched training sessions at the school at the beginning of November.

Thursdays welcome Ponteland's Under 10s, 12s and 16s, and then on Fridays its Under 14s as well as a dedicated hour of girls only coaching for Under 12 and Under 14 age groups.

Club memberships and weekly coaching is available on the Eagles membership platform known as 'The Nest' at nest.newcastle-eagles.com and players can be signed up to one free taster session now.



Tools with a Mission

A big thank you to all who donated items for the 'Tools with a Mission' (TWAM) collection at St Mary's Parish Church on Saturday October 22. We had a huge response ranging from building and carpentry tools, to knitting and sewing machines and materials, to computer equipment. TWAM is a Christian charity that refurbishes unwanted usable tools and takes them out to developing countries to support skills training and small businesses. All much appreciated.

PONTELAND COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

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"She has loved being in your class. We have seen how much she has grown in the last year, in all aspects."

It's a small world!

Two Ponteland students who'd never met each other found they were both attending a rural Japanese university 5,750 miles away!

When Daisy Pope heard there was another University of Leeds undergraduate also on a year's placement in Kyushu she got in touch and the pair arranged to meet.

But after Joseph Yeung turned up and they got chatting, it turned out he lived just five minutes' walk away back in her hometown.

Daisy, 22, explained: "Located just outside of the city of Fukuoka, Kyushu University is one of the top-rated universities in Japan. Surrounded by mountains and rice fields and temples and beaches, I felt like I had stepped out of reality and into a fairytale.

"Yet despite being in this magical place, classes had not yet started and I knew no one. I decided to contact the other person from the University of Leeds who was also placed at Kyushu. We had never met before, but we were put in touch through the university.

"With a few messages sent back and forth, we decided to meet up and explore the local area together. That is how I met Joseph. On our first encounter we took a long stroll to the beach nearby. Walking through rice fields and quaint Japanese villages, we could not possibly be further from home.

"I asked Joseph where he was from and when he said 'near Newcastle' I was instantly taken aback. But when I asked 'whereabouts' and he replied 'do you know Ponteland?' I think I actually stopped dead in my tracks.

"Here we were, two strangers who had just met that day thousands of miles from home and by some freak chance were both from the same small town. We could barely believe it. We actually only live around five minutes away from each other at our homes in Ponteland."

Daisy, a former Ponteland High School student, is in her third year at Leeds where she is reading International Relations. She decided to take a year out to study abroad, having always wanted to travel, and chose Japan thinking it would be a very different experience.

Joseph, 19, whose family moved to Ponteland from Blakelaw two years ago, could have been placed at a number of Japanese universities which are partnered with Leeds - as a compulsory part of his Japanese and Asian Studies course. So his placement at Kyushu University was completely random.

Finding her new friend in the Land of the Rising Sun has been 'a great support' for Daisy, whose older brother Charlie tragically drowned in a Manchester canal in March 2018 aged 19 while a student in the city.

She said: "I am so grateful to call Joseph a good friend of mine and a great support if I am ever missing home. We hang out regularly and support each other in our daily lives as we navigate our way through Japan."

When the pair have completed their studies back in the UK Joseph plans on pursuing a career in teaching, having already worked as a tutor in Newcastle for some time, while Daisy hopes to work in the media.



Daisy (middle) with friends Erii, 20, from Japan and Greta, 20, from Italy.



Daisy is pictured with friends Joseph (middle) and Sam at the opening ceremony for Kyushu University.

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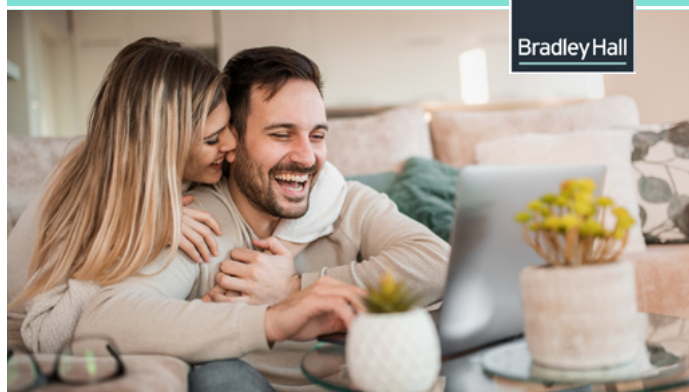
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Patrols to be stepped up for Christmas drink driving campaign



By PC Graeme Harbottle, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

The Neighbourhood Policing Team would like to wish all readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2023.

I still get asked if I get the Christmas period off work or work fewer shifts like many others at this time of year. However, I always reply that me and the team still work our normal full shifts regardless of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the entire New Year period.

As we all hopefully enjoy this time of year I wanted to update and raise awareness of the impact of drink and drug driving.

Over the festive period our local town and village licensed premises will hopefully be busy with customers enjoying Christmas parties, socialising with friends and family and catching up with people they may

not have seen all year whilst enjoying an alcoholic drink.

As a neighbourhood policing team, we will be increasing our patrols as part of Northumbria Police's annual Christmas drink driving campaign. We will complete roadside vehicle stops with drivers who have been seen to drive away from licensed premises if they are suspected of driving whilst under the influence.

The team also remain in contact with licensed premises staff to encourage them to contact police should they have any concerns about a customer who has consumed alcohol and is likely to drive away from the premises, to prevent any issues should they drive or attempt to drive.

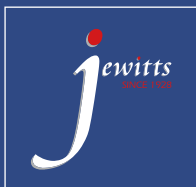
I would like to reiterate that if you are caught and convicted, you could face a driving ban, large fine and a prison sentence. Drink or drug driving could

lead to a criminal record and an increase in your insurance premiums. Remember – you should always consider the morning after the night before when drinking.

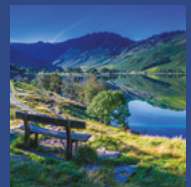
I would also like to give readers an update on local issues in Ponteland that occurred over the Halloween and Bonfire Night period. Police did receive reports of anti-social behaviour in and around the area of the Merton Way shops.

The behaviour by a number of youths was highly unacceptable and I have identified the main persons involved and they will be dealt with for not only public order offences, but also offences committed under the Fireworks Act.

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



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Council accused of 'giving up' on dog fouling

Environmental chiefs have been accused of giving up on tackling dog fouling after it was revealed only 11 fines had been issued in the whole of Northumberland in the past year.

The County Council talks tough, threatening court action and penalties of up to £1,000 for irresponsible owners. But in reality less than one £100 fixed penalty notice per month has been dished out, despite the potentially serious health hazard the offence can pose.

The authority's website says: "We don't tolerate dog fouling in Northumberland. If you own a dog and it makes a mess, you clean it up. Failing to pick up after your pet is antisocial, dirty and spreads diseases like toxocarosis, which is of risk to children and can cause blindness. Yet it continues to be a problem, and one we take very seriously.

"If you're found to have not cleaned up your dog's mess, you will be issued with a fixed penalty notice (FPN) of £100. If payment is not received within 14 days

you will be prosecuted. Offenders face a court appearance, with a maximum penalty of £1,000."

Officials were challenged at the November County Council meeting by Berwick Independent Councillor Georgina Hill, who asked how many FPNs had been issued for breaches of Public Spaces Protection Orders (previously called Dog Control Orders) in the past 12 months.

On hearing there had only been 11, she said: "Do you accept that residents will say that is extremely low...would you blame residents for thinking this authority, as with many others, has given up trying to solve this problem?"

Coun John Riddle, cabinet member for local services, responded: "We certainly have not given up and I would refute the fact that we are complacent. The public

protection environmental enforcement team undertake regular patrols of hotspot areas, focusing on those areas with high numbers of complaints."

Cabinet colleague Coun Colin Horncastle, cabinet member for community services, urged members of the public to report issues to the Council. He said: "Northumberland is a vast county and dog fouling is a problem all over.

"What I can say is we have such a small team, and it would really help if we had some local knowledge. There is nothing wrong with helping the warden - that would be a massive help to our wardens and we would see a lot more action if the public help."

- Do you think dog fouling is a problem in Ponteland? Write to *Your letters* at pontnews@cian-pr.co.uk.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Should I be worried if my investments are losing money?

By David Lamb CFP™ MCSI

English philosopher and statesman Sir Francis Bacon famously once said 'Money is like manure, of very little use except it be spread'.

And how you 'spread' the risk of your investment portfolio is crucial if it is to be of future use.

Historically, stock market investments provide good longer-term returns but as most people are aware investing in shares does have its risks.

To reduce these risks, measured by volatility, investment portfolios will not just put money into the stock market but will consider other assets such as cash, fixed interest securities (bonds) and property, depending upon the target level of risk of the portfolio.

The lower the risk, the more will be invested in cash and fixed interest securities. The higher the risk, the greater the weighting in equities.

Another aim of investing in a range of asset classes is to achieve negative

correlation between these investments. When one asset class falls out of favour, another will attract investments (the money must go somewhere).

As an analogy, if you invest in ice cream in the summer you will achieve negative correlation with this by investing in Wellington boots in the winter.

If the equity market falls, often investors will expect money to flow out of the stock market and into fixed interest securities because they are usually lower risk and returns would normally be expected to be higher than putting the money in the bank.

But we live in strange times! In almost 100 years, there have only been three years when both the US stock market and US bonds asset classes have provided negative returns – the last

more than 50 years ago. So while the current market turmoil is extremely rare it is not unique.

This year we have experienced inflation hitting a 40-year high, governments reversing monetary policy, the ongoing pandemic, the supply chain problems caused by the COVID lockdown in China and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It is likely that we will continue to suffer this economic pain for some time, but eventually we will come out the other side and things will improve.

In the meantime don't panic and if you have any concerns about your investment portfolio please do not hesitate to contact us at enquiries@lambfinancial.co.uk or by calling 01661 860438. Hopefully, we can provide some reassurance.



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Racers hope to raise barrowloads for charity

Racers will once again take to the streets of Ponteland on New Year's Day to raise barrowloads of cash for charity.

The historic Wheelbarrow Race, a local tradition believed to go back several centuries, will once again start and finish at The Blackbird Inn.

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 member Steve Roberts at sjroberts69@gmail.com or 07785 242157.



Photo from last year's race by Colin Morgan - leisurepics.co.uk

Property specialist wins award at estate agent 'Oscars'

Good customer reviews have led to a coveted award at the estate agent 'Oscars' for local property specialist Goodfellows.

The Ponteland-based agency received the Best in County award at the prestigious ESTAS Customer Service Awards 2022, held at Grosvenor House in London and hosted by TV property presenter Phil Spencer.

Estate and letting agents were recognised in counties and regions around the UK, with results calculated from more than 200,000 customer review ratings.

Chris Goodfellow, Managing Director of Goodfellows, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to be recognised in this year's ESTAS. It means so much to us as we know it's our customers who have judged our performance."

"We take our levels of customer service very seriously because we know clients have a choice. We have always been very proud of the personal service and this proves we are delivering what we promise."

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New bereavement café being launched in Ponteland

People seeking support after losing a loved one are being invited to a new bereavement café being launched in December in Ponteland.

Tynedale Hospice at Home is offering the new drop-in facility with the aim of bringing together and supporting those in the community who have experienced the loss of someone close to them.

The charity, which provides end of life nursing care in the home, a hospital transport service and pre and post bereavement support to children, adults and families across Tynedale, Ponteland and West Northumberland, costs over £1.5m per year to run.

Last year it added adult group support to its services with the launch of bereavement cafés and its latest in Ponteland will be held on the first and third Wednesday each month from 10am to 12noon at Merton Hall.

The first will be held on Wednesday December 7

at Merton Hall, followed by December 21 and January 4.

Sylvia Ritson, Deputy Head of Care (Family Support) at Tynedale Hospice at Home, said: "Our bereavement cafés can be a lifeline for many during a very difficult and vulnerable time.

"Many people have experienced loneliness and isolation during the pandemic but, when you're grieving, those feelings can be overwhelming. Our café is a warm, friendly and safe place to share stories, find comfort and learn from each other."

The café will operate on a drop-in basis and will offer a safe and comforting space for people to come together, regardless of how recent or how long ago their bereavement was.

There is no obligation to talk; it could simply be an opportunity to meet others and share a cup of tea or coffee in the company of others who understand. Trained members of the Family Support team from Tynedale Hospice at Home will be on hand to welcome people and make sure they feel comfortable.



Sylvia, pictured, added: "We are looking forward to inviting people in Ponteland to come along and share their stories in a comforting, friendly environment where a warm welcome will be guaranteed to anyone grieving the death of a loved one."

The bereavement cafés are free of charge but donations to the charity for refreshments are welcomed.

For more information, visit tynedalehospice.com or call Tynedale Hospice at Home's Family Support Team on 01434 600 384.



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Your letters

Concern about county council finances in this month's letters...

The Editor
Pont News & Views



I hope essential services aren't cut to fund new management structure

I read on page 9 of October's edition of Pont News & Views a report by the executive director of finance that Northumberland County Council was facing a projected overspend of £4.8m.

The £12.5m increase in the pay bill was identified as one of the contributing factors of this overspend.

On page 19 of the same issue was a report about the council agreeing to a new executive management structure with an expected cost of £1.4m.

The new structure will consist of a Chief Executive/Head of Paid Services, which will be supported by five new departments for: Place and Regeneration; Transformation and Resources; Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing; Children, Young People & Education; and Public Health, Inequalities & Stronger Communities.

Each department will have its own Executive Director. I am sure that some Pont News readers, like me, are of an age when they can remember when the County Council's main concern was with highways and transport, social services, education and environmental services and all those other essential services which were important to the residents of the county, and which made Northumberland one of the best places in the country to live.

Hopefully this £1.4m is new money and other essential department budgets are not going to be cut to provide the funds.

David Nicholson (Snr)
Guidepost Cottages, Belsay

If it's not broken, why change it?

I wish to reply to Steve Egton's letter (November issue 206 - The 'pole police' can't have their cake and eat it).

I think that he makes many assumptions. Has he done a proper study of Ponteland residents to seek their views?

What about those in the community who do not use broadband? How many people are satisfied with their present broadband facility?

Plus, he never mentions that there is a cost involved to residents choosing to "upgrade".

Jill Gregory
Beech Court, Darras Hall

We need to separate fact and opinion in broadband pole debate

I write in response to letters in November's edition from Martin Wighton and Steve Egton re Factco.

I've sympathy with Martin and the Oaklands residents, as I've undertaken my own research to find all but two households in Oaklands were against the poles being erected on their street. A picturesque garden village doesn't necessarily mean broadband is essential for everyone.

In response to Steve, who wants to give facts as opposed to what he says are Trevor Hughes' opinion-based facts, Steve then writes about the wooden posts: "They look one heck of a lot better than the metal lampposts which went in with no whinging several years ago." Is that not an opinion?

The 'fact' with Factco is they have put these poles up during a consultation period where they had already agreed to wait to put poles up in Meadow Court and Oaklands. Personal "opinion" for me is Factco have proved already they cannot be trusted by showing no respect to residents with what they have done.

Finally for Steve, other broadband options are available other than constant promotion of Factco. Laying fibre cable is extremely simple! I do this for a job! A two inch wide cut is all that is needed in the pavement this is what is done in MANY other areas around the country. Indeed in New York, USA, this is done as poles are illegal there!

Ian Clarke
Darras Road, Darras Hall

January issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the January issue is Thursday December 8. Door to door distribution will be from Tuesday January 3 to Monday January 9. 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 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 Methodist Church Christmas Fayre

Ponteland Methodist Church's Christmas Fayre is being held at 10am on Saturday December 3. Cakes, gifts, plants, books, toys and tombola stalls. Festive refreshments will be served. We would love to see you.

Rotary Ponteland Christmas Market

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

Ponteland Photographic Society

Our December meetings, held from 7.30pm until 9pm at Merton Hall, are: Monday December 5 - Open PDI Competition, the annual Projected Digital Images competition judged by Glen Lawson from Gateshead Camera Club; December 19 - Christmas Party, our last meeting before the Xmas break. Visit: pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk

Ponteland u3a

Our next talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are at 2pm on Wednesday December 7 - Ponteland Ukulele Band and Poetry with Faith Tea and on Wednesday January 4 - Seven Bridges, Crossing the Tyne Gorge by J Michael Taylor. Contact: 01661 824953.

Plant Heritage North-East Group

The North-East group of charity Plant Heritage, which supports the conservation of garden plants, will have a talk entitled 'A new national collection of Erodium' at Ponteland Club and Institute from 2.30pm on Saturday December 10 followed by tea, biscuits, a raffle and plant sales.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday December 12 at 2.30pm we have our Musical Christmas Event with Malcolm Armstrong & The Imagine Five at St Mary's Parish Centre.

Ponteland Village WI

'A Celebration of Christmas' will be the theme of our meeting on Tuesday December 13 at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Ponteland. The evening will include carols from Ponteland Ladies Choir. Our subgroups include 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.

Friends of Kirkley Hall

We have our Christmas Meal and Talk on Wednesday December 14 at the Banqueting Suite, Kirkley Hall. The buffet lunch, costing £17.50, will start at 12noon and will be followed by tea/coffee and professional storyteller Malcolm Green, who will present 'Frosty Tales'. Kirkley Hall has agreed members can bring their own alcohol/beverages. Visit: 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 date is 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.

Rotary Ponteland Carol Concert

The annual Rotary Ponteland Carol Concert is 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 from late November.

Boxing Day at The Pont Tap

Local musician Joe Wallace is back at The Pont Tap on Boxing Day from 5pm until late after having his first ever gig in his hometown there in October. Come and enjoy songs from the last five decades.

Ponteland Wildlife Talks

Our next meeting is at St Mary's Parish Centre 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 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 or 07990 975490.

Friendship Group launched

Age UK Northumberland has launched a new weekly friendship group every Wednesday from 10am to 12pm at St Mary's Parish Centre. It's a great chance for older people living in the area to get together and enjoy a whole host of activities such as board games, arts and crafts, music, or just to have a nice cuppa and a chat. The group will not meet on December 28.

Estate Committee offering a free cuppa and warmth during December

During December the Darras Hall Estate Committee would like to extend an invitation to welcome residents to come along to the Estate Office and offer them a warm place to sit while enjoying a tea or coffee during the hours of 10am and 1pm and 2pm to 4pm from Monday to Wednesday.

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.

Gazing at the crib

By Revd. Captain Paul Allinson, Vicar of Ponteland

Christmas cribs - or manger scenes - are everywhere today. There is at least one in each of our churches in Ponteland. You may have one at home. There is always one set up at the vicarage.

There are dozens of such scenes on the fronts of Christmas cards, advent calendars and even in some public spaces. It's such a familiar scene: Mary and Joseph, the Christ child, the ox and the ass, maybe a shepherd or three and at least one angel.

In the crib, we discover what Christmas is all about. We see deep truth in this scene which is at once so simple and yet so profound. What we see is all the reality of what it means to be human, and the reality of those who, at Christmas, are away from home. Maybe homeless, or in prison, or hospital, or separated from loved ones because of war. We see the kindness of strangers: an inn-keeper lending his barn to some travellers. We see, in the animals, the natural world that it is our duty to care for. We see poverty: a baby who doesn't have a cot, or a room specially prepared.

All he has is the food trough of some animals who have lent him that space to take his first few moments of sleep. There is a down to earth reality in this scene. There is the best and the worst of us in it. A young family. An unmarried mother forced by government legislation to be on the road when they really should have been at home surrounded by familiar things at the time of giving birth. There is the kindness of strangers, hospitality and people being totally surprised by the scene that they encounter. On one level it is the story of humanity.

And yet what we also see is God. We see God Almighty, the Creator of Everything, the Author of the World, the King of the Universe, coming to meet his people. Not just coming to meet them, but coming to be with them, as one of them. To be with us, as one of us. And because life is fragile and some of it is marked with sadness, loneliness and poverty, that is how God begins his life too in the babe of Bethlehem, in a borrowed manger, in an unfamiliar place, in the dark, dependent on the kindness of strangers.

In one sense it is so familiar and in another it is so absolutely extraordinary. But it shows us how much God loves us. When I look at the Christmas crib, I see our human story in the story of the holy family. I see the story of our community, of our culture, of our nation, of our world in this mishmash of people and animals, refugees, the poorest, the richest, people who own their own inn and people who have to sleep on the floor of the barn. In the midst of it all is God who comes amongst us as a baby. Loving us enough to begin at the beginning with us. Trusting us not to drop him. Saying to us: "I would love to take the journey of my life with you. Would you like to take the journey with me?"

Happy Christmas!

Christmas services

St Mary's Parish Church

Christmas Eve

- 3pm Family Nativity Service
- 5pm Family Nativity Service
- 7PM CHURCHES TOGETHER READINGS AND CAROLS
- 11.30pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

- 8am Festal Holy Communion
- 10am Festal Parish Eucharist

Holy Saviour Milbourne

Sunday December 18

- 11.15am Readings and Carols

Christmas Day

- 11.15am Festal Holy Communion

NB. On Sunday January 1 there are no services at St Mary's or Holy Saviour. A united service will be held at Ponteland Methodist Church at 10am.

Methodist Church Milbourne

Sunday December 18

- 6.30pm Carol Service

Christmas Eve

- 11.15pm Christmas Eve Communion

New Year's Eve

- 11.30pm Watch Night Service

Methodist Church Ponteland

Thursday December 22

- 7pm Candlelight Carol Service 7pm

Christmas Day

- 10am Christmas Celebration

New Year's Day

- 10am United Service

St Matthew's RC Church

Sunday December 18

- 5pm Carol Service in Church Hall

Christmas Eve

- 4.30pm Vigil Mass (at St Mark's Westerhope)
- 6.30pm Vigil Mass

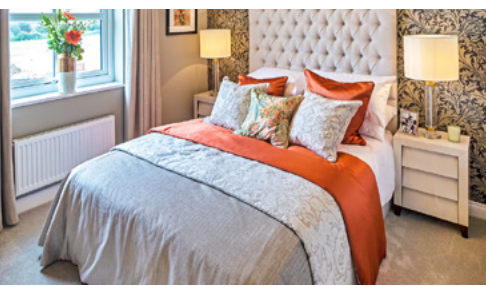
Christmas Day

- 12am Christmas Day Mass



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Santa's sleigh return kickstarts Rotary's Christmas fundraising

The return of Santa's Sleigh in early December will kickstart Rotary Ponteland's Christmas fundraising season.

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 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. Last year's donations raised £600 for Smile for Life.

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 is 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, postponed 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.

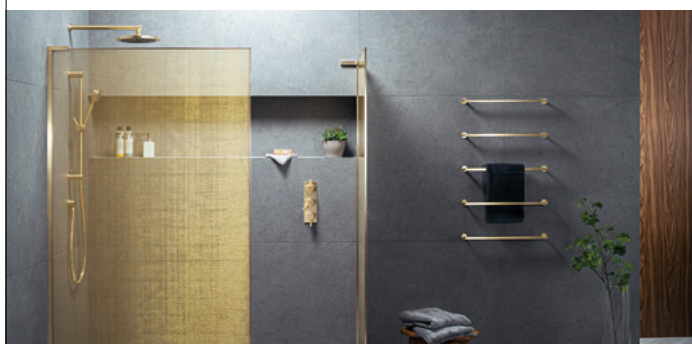
Tickets priced at £3 will be available from club members or via email at events@rotaryponteland.org.uk from late November.

For more details of all the events visit the Rotary Ponteland website rotaryponteland.org.uk or the club's Facebook page.

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Christmas in the community

As the festive season approaches, organisations and individuals everywhere are making plans and preparations. But this year is going to be very different for many people, due to the cost of living crisis.

Ponteland Town Council has decided that, for the second year, it will not be sending out Christmas cards and has decided not to hold its annual December "thank you" buffet for members of the community who have helped the area over the year.

Instead, the Mayor, Coun Christine Greenwell, has said that she will be giving grants to a range of children's, youth and other organisations from the Mayor's Fund.

She said: "The Covid pandemic has brought about a great many changes and Ponteland Town Council has not held its Mayor's Thank You buffet since 2019. Having had the long break, I feel we should not restart the occasion but instead donate directly to children's activity groups and food banks.

"We are all having to tighten our belts due to the crisis and many families are cutting back on extras, such as paying



for evening and weekend activities for children, especially when there is more than one child from a family involved.

"I will, therefore, not be sending Christmas cards or hosting a thank you to volunteers within the community and

we will donate to these organisations instead as our Christmas gift. But I want to thank the many people who have helped us – and, therefore, the community. Every single action makes a difference and adds to the many wonderful reasons for living in this area.

"Once again, I want to thank the people of Ponteland who have given so much to help to improve the lives of so many people. You know who you are and all you do is greatly appreciated."

Coun Greenwell (pictured) added: "I would like to acknowledge how hard our staff and contractors work and thank them all for all the hard work, help and advice given to us.

"I would also like to take this opportunity on behalf of Ponteland Town Council to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

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