

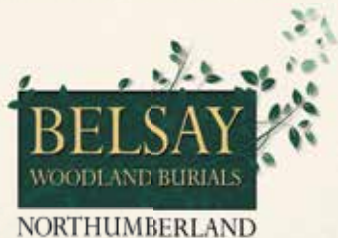
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D-day looms for
Kirkwhelpington quarry plan
.....
Work starts on cycling and
walking route phase two
.....
Oxford graduate to fight
hometown Hexham for Labour

**Darren wins first gold medal
at European Championships
...as Charlotte gets
England Golf call-up**



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Hat-trick of awards for wonderful production

Ponteland Repertory Society is celebrating a hat-trick of industry awards for its production of The Wizard of Oz last September at the Memorial Hall.

Together with its Preppies Youth Theatre, the society also picked up seven further nominations at the North-East region of the National Operatic and Dramatic Association Awards held at the Grand Hotel Gosforth Park.

Three of the Rep's young actors - Bryony Wilkinson, Jack Stuart and Matthew Hunter - were recognised for their individual performances and the society also won overall Youth Production for the area.

Director Hayley Grant said: "It's fantastic for both the Rep and Preppies to be recognised in this way. We were just so pleased to finally be able to stage the show after so many false starts during Covid.

"Winning an award is just the icing on the cake and really great for the whole cast and crew who worked so hard over such a long period of time. We are so grateful to our loyal Ponteland audiences who came back to see us.

"As a charity we really couldn't put on a show without them - this year we even 'crowd sourced' the plants for our onstage garden thanks to Ponteland residents!"

The Rep has increased the variety, frequency and venues of its theatrical offerings to Ponteland and the surrounding areas. Since the production of Wizard, the society has staged Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, a theatrical choir performance in St Mary's Church and an 18+ Improvised Comedy night.

Chairman Jason Long added: "The Rep has been at the heart of Ponteland community events for over 100 years. It's great that we can evolve to put on a wide range of events to suit all ages and tastes and provide a fabulous, cost effective night out at the theatre in these difficult times.

"We're a friendly and inclusive society - we have recently been fortunate enough to attract several new members to the society, but we are always looking for more - onstage or backstage.

"You can get in touch with us through our website, Facebook page or Instagram account. Hopefully we will continue to grow and serve Ponteland and the Tyne Valley for another 100 years!"

The society is currently hard at work rehearsing for its annual musical - a pantomime take on Disney's Beauty & the Beast at Ponteland Memorial Hall from Friday November 17 to Sunday November 19. Tickets can be purchased at pontelandrep.co.uk.



Pictured at the awards ceremony are Jack Stuart, Bryony Wilkinson and Matthew Hunter.



Keep your homes and vehicles secure as dark nights draw in

By PC Cameron Makepeace, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

October has been a busy month for me getting out and about in Ponteland and the surrounding areas.

It has been great speaking to residents, local and county councillors hearing the issues that are affecting you and discussing how I can help.

I'd like to introduce you all to a new member of your local Neighbourhood Policing Team. PC Faye Parker has joined me from a Response Policing Team in Sunderland and we will be working together to make Ponteland a safe and welcoming place for everyone.

As the dark nights approach and the winter weather begins to set in, I want to emphasise how important it is to do everything we can to prevent opportunities for criminal behaviour. Across the force we are seeing incidents where residents have left their vehicles unsecured allowing criminals to take the opportunity to steal items without any warning.

Whilst this type of crime is low in our area, I urge you all to ensure your vehicles are kept secure at all times and not to leave valuable or personal items on show. It is equally important to keep your keys in a safe place at home and secure your property; whilst the numbers are low in our area, car keys have been stolen from inside insecure properties.

As many of you will have seen on the news, shoplifting crimes have substantially increased over the last year. I have seen first hand how this type of crime can affect businesses, their staff and their customers and want to assure you all that the prevention and detection of shoplifting is a top priority for me.

We will be stepping up patrols in and around the shopping areas in Ponteland and any local business owners can contact me to discuss any issues they are having.

With Halloween and Bonfire Night as well as the dark winter nights approaching, I know there are increasing concerns around anti-social behaviour in the area. I am asking all parents of young people who may be out with friends in Ponteland to remind them how their behaviour can impact other people in the area.

Over the last few months, I have been out and about on patrol actively engaging with young people. They usually don't want to cause any harm or damage and simply don't realise that by congregating in a group they can often cause distress to others.

The majority of young people I speak to are a credit to their parents and I will continue to work with them. However, anyone found to be committing anti-social or criminal behaviour will be dealt with. Anyone with information or concerns please report incidents through 101, online or, in an emergency, 999.

My next surgery is on Thursday November 30 at the Darras Hall Estate Committee building between 10am and 1pm for anyone who would like to talk to their local Neighbourhood Policing Team face to face.

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



PC Faye Parker and PC Cameron Makepeace

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Charlotte gets England call-up

Ponteland's Charlotte Naughton has been named in England Golf's Girls' squad for the 2023/24 season after an excellent year.

The 15-year-old won the North of England U16 Girls at Pannal Golf Club in Harrogate in August, a few weeks after coming joint sixth at the English Girls U16 Open Championship in Shropshire.

Charlotte also represented England U16s in matches against Spain and Switzerland earlier this year and was selected to represent England Golf in the international match against the Irish U16 Team on October 7-8.

She travelled to Carton House Golf Club, Dublin, with the England team, winning her three games as the England U16s won all three sessions to complete a 15-9 win.

Along with her five U18 teammates in the England Golf Girls' squad, the Ponteland High School student will enjoy access to world-class coaches, sports psychologists and nutritionists and top-class facilities at the National Golf Centre at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, and Quinta do Lago, Portugal.

Charlotte, who is coached by Longhirst Hall Golf Club-based Paul Fiddes, trains every day with lessons at Longhirst and practices at Close House and Matfen Hall.

Her interest in the sport was sparked by attending her brother and sister's golf lessons at Matfen, where she started playing aged six.

Charlotte's talent was soon apparent – her lengthy medals haul includes County Schools Champion, County Junior Champion, Junior and Ladies' Club Champion at Heworth Golf Club, two time Northumberland Ladies' county champion, English Schools Golf Association National U16 Girls' Champion and English Girls' U14 Open Champion 2022.

Her best competitive round of golf was -4 during the North of England Championships and she has scored a hole in one at Matfen!

Charlotte, who lives just outside Stamfordham and is a member of Ponteland Golf Club, said: "I'm very excited and honoured to be selected for the national team. It is a fantastic opportunity to further my golfing career. I love representing England and I am looking forward to travelling to other European places next season."



The England Golf U16s team at Carton House Golf Club, Dublin.



Another trophy for Charlotte



Selected for England U18s



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Decision day set for quarry plan

A decision on revised plans for a major new quarry development which could result in dozens of HGV journeys a day through the centre of Ponteland is set to be made by county councillors in early December.

Last summer objectors launched a campaign against the proposal for the extraction of four million tonnes of dolerite from a 28-hectare site half a mile south-west of Kirkwhelpington by North East Concrete Ltd.

Named Northside after a local farm, it is currently used for cattle and sheep grazing and is also home to bats, skylarks, meadow pipits, linnets, brown hares and hedgehogs. Mitigation measures would include checking habitats before their removal to ensure no species are present.

Dolerite - also known as whinstone - is a hard stone that is used widely as a crushed aggregate in the construction industry, including as a key part of the production of concrete.

In May the company, which supplies a range of concrete, asphalt and aggregates and services to the construction, commercial and domestic

customer sectors, amended its original planning application.

This included a reduction in the tonnage of mineral proposed for extraction from four million to three million tonnes and the volume of infill material needing to be brought into the site by 30% from 1.3m cubic metres to 900,000 cubic metres. The working area has also been reduced from 24.7 hectares to 19 hectares and the duration from 25 to 20 years.

It would be extracted up to a depth of 22m (72ft) and the site infilled with both existing rock or soil removed from the site and imported soils, stone, clays, rubble and non-recyclable aggregates, before reclamation of the land.

The site, allocated for the extraction of crushed rock aggregates in the Northumberland Local Plan to meet the county's mineral needs to 2036, would operate from 7am to 6pm weekdays and 7am to 1pm on Saturdays, but not on Sundays or bank holidays.

The original planning application envisaged that on average 46 loaded HGVs would serve the site each working day from the A696, equating to 92 two-way movements in a day or eight an hour with an average load capacity of

25 tonnes.

There have been 40 submissions of support and 160 objections lodged, with more than 30 from Ponteland residents. They include Paul Mitchell, of North Road, who said "the road will become a 'death trap' to elderly people and to children walking to and from school".

Simon Tate, of Woodside, Darras Hall, agreed, writing: "the lorries will pose significant danger, especially to the school children who walk daily through the village to the schools".

Ponteland Town Council is also objecting, raising concerns regarding the volume of traffic movements, the proposed routes and the environmental impact, while Kirkwhelpington Parish Council said it was "dismayed" it had not been consulted about the amended plans.

A spokesperson for Northumberland County Council said the planning application had been scheduled for consideration at the December 5 meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee. The plans can be viewed on the county council's planning portal with the reference 22/01909/CCMEIA.

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Final phase of new cycling and walking route underway

Work on the final phase of a £1.3m cycling and walking route connecting Ponteland with Callerton is set to start.

Northumberland County Council Cabinet members have agreed to accept a further £500,000 of Transport North East funding to complete the scheme, which will connect the town to the city boundary - giving access to Callerton Parkway Metro station for onward journeys.

The first phase - between Callerton Lane to Rotary Way - was recently completed and the second phase from Rotary Way to Prestwick Road roundabout is due to start at the end of October and be completed next Spring.

Coun Wojciech Ploszaj, Cabinet Member responsible for the Council's Cycling and Walking Strategy, said: "The route will improve sustainable travel options for residents, workers, learners and visitors, not just between Ponteland and Callerton Parkway, but provide further

connectivity within the region."

The new cycling and walking route, one of several underway in the county, links in with the Council's Big Northumberland Gear Change campaign, which encourages people to adopt more sustainable ways of moving around the county by walking, cycling and using public transport more often.

Cllr Ploszaj added: "This project aims not only to provide more sustainable transport options for residents and visitors and reduce the amount of short car journeys in and around Ponteland but also to help reduce local congestion, improve air quality and enhance people's health and wellbeing."

The £1.37m scheme is being delivered through the Transforming Cities Fund, with investment provided by the Department for Transport (DfT).



Coun John Riddle, chairman of the Northumberland Cycling and Walking Board, with John Doherty, Lawrence Connelly and Tony Samson from Cycling UK's Tyneside and Northumberland branch pictured at the launch of the project last October. Photo by Barry Pells.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

How much are your investments really making?



One of my major issues with the investment industry is its high charges.

They are often difficult to understand and are frequently hidden - or ignored - due to 'good' returns. Just because your money is 'growing', doesn't mean you're getting value for money.

Charges often include a product fee - charged by the company who provides you with the investment vehicle, a fund charge - made by the fund manager, and an advice fee - payable to your adviser.

These can be as high as 2% but are often around 1.8%. We aim to get our clients' charges to as close to 1% as possible - and sometimes slightly lower.

Remember, the higher the charges the less you have invested. The less you have invested, the less there is to grow. Most importantly, when somebody claims that their charges are high because they give better value for money or provide superior

performance, remember that while charges are guaranteed, returns are not.

Here is an interesting exercise for you. Ask your adviser for your fund's annual returns over the last five years (or Google search your fund's fact sheets). Calculate the average growth over those five years, then take off the total annual charges. What is your growth after charges?

For example, average growth over five years of 4% less charges of 1.5% means growth after charges of 2.5%.

Unfortunately though, this isn't your real growth; you then need to deduct the effects of inflation.

We are currently assuming inflation over the longer term to be 3.25%, but you can make your own assumptions by using data from the Office for National Statistics available at ons.gov.uk.

Deduct this from your growth.

Continuing our example, growth after charges is 2.5% less inflation of 3.25% = -0.75%.

What are your net returns? Is this value for money? Who is making the most from your money? Who is taking the risk - the product provider, the fund manager or adviser? Whose money is being invested?

Of course, as I've explained in earlier articles, there is a lot more to financial planning than investment returns. Are you really getting value for money from the fees you pay?

Self-assess your progress in your financial planning, for free, at: lambfinancial.co.uk/scoremy-financial-planning.

Next month I will look at some of my favourite client case studies.

Local Oxford University graduate chosen to fight Hexham seat for Labour

A Hexham born and bred Oxford University graduate has been selected by the Labour Party to challenge sitting MP Guy Opperman at the next general election.

Joe Morris was chosen ahead of former Tyne Valley parish councillor James Bryan and aims to become the first ever Labour MP for the Hexham constituency, which has been held by the Conservatives for the last 100 years.

Mr Opperman, who was first elected in 2010, has already been confirmed as the Conservative candidate for the next election, set to take place next year. In 2019 he secured a healthy majority of 10,549 with a 54.5% vote share, with his nearest rival - Labour's Penny Grennan - in second place with 31.6%.

The seat has never been won by Labour since its creation in 1885 and is regarded as a safe Tory seat. The party has held the constituency continuously since 1923, bar the years between 1943 and 1951 when it was held by former Tory-turned Speaker of the House of Commons, Douglas Clifton Brown.

The constituency includes the Ponteland East, Ponteland North, Ponteland South, Ponteland West and Stamfordham wards.

Mr Morris was educated in the Hexham schools system before attending Oxford University, and has since worked for UK Steel and in consultancy in campaigns and public affairs.



Speaking after his selection, he said: "It is the honour of my life to be selected to stand in my home seat of Hexham. I grew up here, I went to school here and it's where I call home.

"As someone who went to Sele First School, Hexham Middle and Queen Elizabeth High School, I will put Hexham, Northumberland and the people of our region first.

"I will fight for high skilled, well-paid jobs in emerging green industries, for an NHS fit for the future and the improvement of our local public services. Between now and the general election, I will be spending every possible second listening to the people of Hexham and what they want from their next MP."


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Veteran athlete picks up first gold for England

Veteran athlete Darren Towart has hurdled his way to a gold medal for England at the European Masters Championship in Italy.

The super fit 46-year-old IT installer was on the top of the podium for the first time after crossing the line in the 400m hurdles at the Stadia Pescara in 60.29 seconds.

He also collected a silver in the 4x400m mixed relay and bronze in the 110m hurdles, to add to the silver medal in the 4x 200m relay and bronze in the 60m hurdles he won at the European Masters Indoors in Braga, Portugal, in February last year.

The father-of-two had previously taken silver in the 4x 200m relay at the World Indoors in Poland and a bronze medal in the 400m hurdles at the European Masters in Venice – both in 2019.

Not bad for a former professional rugby player who was once a 20-stone winger for sides including Gateshead Thunder and Doncaster Dragons.

After retiring from the rugby field, Darren said he became very unfit and following a divorce took up athletics after taking his children Harley and Olivia to train in Tynedale.

He said: "I was overweight and asked if I could join in. I got the bug for it and just



Cover shot: Barry Pells. Above: Darren on the podium with Raynald Vaucher (Sui) and Maurizio Pelloni (Ita).

really enjoyed it. I started to make new friends and just wanted to stay young for the kids."

Friend Liam Collins, of Tynedale Harriers, took him to his first World Masters Championships in 2015 in Lyon where he had a life-changing experience: "I saw Charles Eugster doing all the events and was amazed. I went to talk to him and found out he was 93! That changed everything, my whole concept of life."

The Masters Championships were launched in 1978 and are open to competitors aged over 35. Darren, from Ponteland, added: "Anyone can do it but the standard is so high. If you want to go

for medals you need to put the training in. It's not like sports day!"

He faces stiff competition from his girlfriend Annette Quaid, from Kinsale, Ireland, who returned from Pescara with three gold medals in the 400m, 4x 400m mixed relay and 4x 400m relay.

But Darren, coached by Richard Kilty, is determined to repeat his success in the World Masters Championships in Gothenburg, Sweden, next August and will be training hard throughout the winter and spring indoors at Ponteland Leisure Centre and on the track at Hexham's Wentworth Leisure Centre.



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Your letters

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Anger at a £1.3m revamp of the Callerton Lane to Airport bridleway in this month's letters...

Horror at 'mindless devastation' of bridleway

So many residents of our local community are angry at the destruction to our bridleway crossing at Rotary Way and how little meaningful consultation has taken place.

I am writing this letter to express my horror at the mindless devastation to our environment.

Pre-Covid, through Ponteland Community Partnership (PCP), the community spent hundreds of hours volunteering - planting trees, bulbs, wildflowers and seeds along the bridleway from Callerton Lane to the Airport, focusing at the crossing of Rotary Way.

This took over five years of events where PCP raised well over £25,000 to fulfil these tasks and to install four information pedestals of the history of the railway and local area.

It is the cavalier way in which the community were denied the opportunity to respond to a meaningful consultation only set up for a Monday 10am to 3pm, giving residents little opportunity to attend during normal working hours, digest and form an opinion going forward.

It appears we have Northumberland County Council to thank for this through their Local Transport Plan Programme (LTPP) 2022-2023. My view as the former chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is NCC has disregarded this as a wildlife corridor.

The Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan has three policies covering any work to change/alter or upgrade the Bridleway: PNP 14 Wildlife Corridor; PNP 15 Local Green Spaces and PNP 30 Active Travel Routes. The proposed pegasus crossing is completely out of character.

Bearing in mind the destruction of the original crossing of the bridleway at Rotary Way, the residents' voluntary efforts of the past and not forgetting this is part of the wildlife corridor - NCC's normal reinstatement will not be good enough.

Native trees, bulbs and wildflowers need to be reinstated into both sides of the crossing area at NCC's expense - out of the LTPP fund. NCC - let's have that meaningful conversation!

Alma Dunigan

Runnymede Road, Darras Hall

Please explain the logic behind £1m bridleway upgrade

Could someone please explain the logic of spending over £1m on upgrading the bridleway?

Because, for me, it seems to be making our local environment worse rather than better and in any case the money could be better spent locally.

Presumably a study was done before the work was commissioned? It would be enlightening to know how many people and horses use the route each day at present and what the estimate is for the future. From this, one could get some idea of the cost of each extra journey, although that doesn't allow for ongoing maintenance or increased lighting costs.

Then of course there is the environmental impact, grubbing out the established trees and hedgerows which were planted when Rotary Way was built and the subsequent effect on wildlife, or the light pollution.

As a Ponteland cyclist, my top local priority would be to upgrade a part of National Cycle Route 10 which runs from the Diamond Inn towards Dinnington. There is a section of about 800 yards which is almost impassable on a road bike but could be levelled and surfaced with aggregate for a fraction of the cost of the airport route.

This improvement would also have some effect in reducing the cycle traffic on Berwick Hill Road, one of our most dangerous local roads. Using the remaining funds to repair local potholes, which are dangerous to cyclists and motorists alike, would be a popular and sensible solution.

The cynic in me thinks that the airport path may be a small part of a larger plan which is being kept hidden from Ponteland residents for now. I hope I am wrong.

John Bunting

Sandringham Way, Darras Hall

Please restore our much loved wildlife corridor

I wish to express my deep concern at what appears to be the destruction of the old railway line in Ponteland and associated lack of consultation.

I have very fond memories of riding my horse along the line between Middle Drive and Callerton. I also enjoyed walking my sister's labrador along the line, admiring the trees, wildflowers and abundant wildlife.

I was delighted to help preserve the path for future generations as part of Ponteland Community Partnership with the planting of trees, shrubs, bulbs and wildflowers. I learnt a lot about the history of the site from the illustrative boards and enjoyed working with young people in our planting events.

I am wondering quite how we have arrived at the situation today; path closed, tarmac, bulldozed trees and shrubs, trampled flowers, boards disappeared, wildlife corridor damaged.

I would like to urge the County Council to make amends and restore our much loved track and wildlife corridor.

Heather Thomas

Eland Edge, Ponteland

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.

November issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the November issue is Monday October 16. Door to door distribution will be from Monday October 30 to Friday November 3. 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.

What's on...

Ponteland u3a

Meetings and talks at St Mary's Parish Centre are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 2pm. Our next two talks are November 1 – '16 Squadron Army/Aviation Co-operation WWI' by Colin Buxton and December 6 – 'Songs & Stories of Christmas' by Geoff Hughes (followed by faith tea). We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join by calling 01661 824953.

Ageing Well

A free event to help people to stay healthy, well, warm and safe this winter is being held in Merton Hall on Friday November 3 from 9.30am to 12noon. The informal get-together, with free coffee, will give older people access to free advice on a range of topics from Northumberland County Council's Ageing Well team.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

Our next talk at St Mary's Parish Centre is John Lumby 'Alaska and Pribilof Islands' on Tuesday November 7 at 7.30pm. Entry fee of £2 includes refreshments.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

Our November meeting is at Ponteland CIU on Wednesday November 8. The title of the demonstration is 'Jingle all the Way' delivered by area demonstrator John Thexton. Visitors welcome £7. Refreshments are available in the bar.

Plant Heritage North East Group

At our meeting on Saturday November 11 at 2.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre we have a talk by Fiona Inches, Glass House Manager at Edinburgh Botanical Gardens, entitled 'History, Renovation and Planting Plans in the Victorian Palm House'. Raffle and refreshments follow. Visitors welcome £5 entry. Contact pat.skews@btinternet.com.

REMEMBRANCE DAY PARADE AND SERVICE

All groups and individuals are invited to join the annual Remembrance Day parade in Ponteland on Sunday November 12. The parade leaves the Leisure Centre at 10.40am in time to arrive at the War Memorial on Darras Road for the 11am two

minutes' silence and a Service of Remembrance. The parade will return to the Leisure Centre and everyone is invited to enjoy free refreshments in the Memorial Hall after the service.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday November 13 at 2.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre we have Barry Mead talking on 'Prehistoric Orkney'.

Ponteland WI

Our next monthly meeting is being held on Tuesday November 14 at 2pm in Merton Hall when John Griffith will be telling us the history of the Lockhart's Coffee and Temperance Cafe in Newcastle. This month's competition is for a souvenir key ring. Our lunch dates are Monday November 6 and Monday December 4, both at Plants Plus at 12.30pm. Visitors are invited to join us for both the Merton Hall meeting and for the lunch dates.

Ponteland Village WI

The Shoe Lady, Susan Howard, will be talking at our meeting in St Mary's Parish Centre at 7.30pm on Tuesday November 14. Subgroups include our Book Club, Walking, Dining Out and Walking with Dogs. Due to number of members, we can no longer allow visitors but we have a waiting list. For more information, email pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com. Look for Ponteland Village WI on Facebook.

Ponteland Local History Society

Dr Christine Seal will give a talk 'Tyndale and the Home Front 1914-1915' at St Mary's Parish Centre at 7.30pm on Thursday November 16. Visitors welcome £2.

Ponteland Winter Ale Festival

New fundraising event at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Friday November 25 to Saturday November 26 from 4pm to 10pm. More than 30 beers, lagers and ciders. Bar by The Pont Tap with wine, gin and more, live music and street food by the Angel of Corbridge. Tickets £15 include four half pint tokens from www.ponteland.beer.

Annual Christmas Fayre

Ponteland Methodist Church, Boys Brigade and Care and Share team invite you to our annual Christmas Fayre on Saturday December 2 starting at 10am. Lots of stalls for adults and children. Tombola prizes and gifts at pocket money prices, so bring the children for a morning of fun. Festive refreshments will be served throughout the event.

Ponteland Photographic Society

We welcome anyone interested in photography to join us on Monday evenings at 7.30pm at Merton Hall. The season's programme runs right through until the end of March and can be viewed on the club website.

Creative writing classes

We have places available for new members, 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. Tasks are set weekly and feedback given by an experienced teacher and published poet. We meet on Wednesday mornings in Ponteland and Dinnington. Contact claire@claire276.plus.com or 01434 605276.

Ponteland Badminton

New players are welcome to join our sessions at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Adults play on Mondays from 8pm to 10pm, Tuesdays 1.30pm to 2.30pm (no strings) and 7.30pm to 8.30pm. Juniors play on Mondays from 4pm-5pm (term time), Thursdays from 5pm to 6pm (no strings) and Saturdays from 10am to 11.30am (Sept -July). Adults also play at Ponteland Community Primary School on Fridays from 10am to 11am. Contact: Phil Hall 078100 84153.

Kirkley Carvers

Join us to chip and chat at Whalton Village Hall, NE61 3XA, on Thursdays from 1pm to 3pm. Contact Bob on 0191 267 1930 for more information.

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. Due to the generosity of residents Merton Hall cannot accept any more books at this time. We are pleased to report the free library is now full.

Support available for people affected by the cost-of-living crisis

People in Ponteland affected by the cost-of-living crisis are being reminded of the daily support available from a dedicated response hub.

Set up at the start of Covid-19, the Northumberland Communities Together (NCT) team helps residents access services and advice to support them with rising costs, keeping warm and well, and their mental health and wellbeing.

NCT works with a wide network of community spaces which offer a warm welcome where residents can pop in, get a hot drink and have a chat. They include Merton Hall Recreation Centre, Ponteland Leisure Centre and Library, and Ponteland Methodist Church's Open Door drop in café.

The NCT response hub can be contacted by email at NCT@northumberland.gov.uk or on 01670 620015 from 9am to 6pm seven days per week. For urgent or immediate support, help or protection the emergency response line OneCall is manned 24/7, 365 days a year on 01670 536400.

Advice and information can also be found in a designated Cost of Living hub on the County Council website at beta.northumberland.gov.uk/support.

New website launched to help people achieve a healthy lifestyle

A new website has been launched to help Northumberland residents improve their lifestyle with free support to develop healthy habits.

The online facility livingwellnorthumberland.co.uk provides free help and advice to make realistic lifestyle changes tailored to individual needs.

It offers access to help, information and encouragement from the County Council's Health Trainers on areas including healthy food choices, weight management, increasing physical activity, drinking less alcohol and stopping smoking. The service can also be accessed by calling 01670 623840.

Ponteland West County Councillor Veronica Jones, Cabinet Member for Public Health, said: "A healthy lifestyle is important for everyone. Adopting new, healthier habits may protect you from serious health problems like obesity and diabetes. This new website highlights all of the free help and support that is available."



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Red squirrel conservation group awarded charity status

A long-standing campaign group which promotes the protection of Ponteland's colony of red squirrels is celebrating after securing charity status.

Ponteland and District Red Squirrel Group has been registered as a charitable incorporated organisation by The Charity Commission, giving the campaigners access to additional funding channels to provide vital resources and increased support.

Chair Sally Hardy said: "We are really excited that our application for charitable status has been accepted by the Charity Commission. Charity status will allow us to access further funding to help us to provide more resources and manpower to help our colony of reds to expand their range into the wider area.

"Creating wildlife corridors is essential to ensure a future healthy population. Our aim is to try to engage the community through a range of social and media channels including setting up a new Ponteland Red Squirrel website to promote red squirrel conservation in Ponteland.

"We rely on the fantastic support of our community, many of whom enjoy seeing reds in their gardens. Encouragingly we are now receiving reports from people in the area who are seeing red squirrels in their gardens for the first time in over 10 years! This makes everything our volunteers are doing worthwhile.

"Unfortunately, we do also need to be vigilant and report any grey squirrels as soon as possible as they carry squirrel pox virus which is harmless to greys but deadly to our reds."

Anyone wishing to join the group should text or call 07878 061880, email pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk or leave a message via their Facebook page.

Photo by Jane Hodson-Hamilton



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Charities collaborate to improve home hospice care

Two Northumberland charities which provide home hospice care are joining forces in a bid to improve access to healthcare across the county.

Hexham-based Tynedale Hospice at Home, which serves Ponteland, and Alnwick-headquartered HospiceCare North Northumberland, will share a CEO and Head of Care and benefit from operational efficiencies.

But they will remain separate entities for the purpose of funding and delivery of care services, which include patient transport, complementary therapy, palliative nursing care at home and pre and post bereavement support for adults and children.

Lucy Carroll, Chair of HospiceCare North Northumberland, said the move would “put us in a better position to support the NHS Northumberland Healthcare Trusts”.

John Harrison, Chair of Tynedale Hospice Care at Home, added that the collaboration would mean “more of the income we raise is able to go directly to front-end services”.

Rotarians gear up for busy fortnight of seasonal events

Rotarians are gearing up for a busy fortnight of Christmas activity and events for the whole family.

Santa’s Sleigh will once again take to the streets of Ponteland and Darras Hall over the evenings of Friday December 1 and Saturday December 2, offering young children an early chance to meet Santa.

Santa will also be present at Rotary Ponteland’s Christmas Market at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Sunday December 3, where there will be a range of craft stalls, festive foods and Christmas gifts on offer.

On Friday December 8, Members and Friends in fancy dress will be touring local pubs and clubs collecting money for charity, and there will be a Christmas Disco at The Diamond Inn on Main Street on Saturday December 9.

Finally, there will be a Carol Concert with Bedlington Salvation Army Band at Ponteland Methodist Church on Thursday December 14, with all proceeds going to the Salvation Army.

The main charity beneficiary of all the other events is Children North East, which provides life-changing services and support to babies, children and young families across the region.

Details can be found on the Rotary Ponteland website at rotaryponteland.org.uk.

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Speedy Matthew runner-up at regional championships



Matthew with his runners-up certificate

Speedy Matthew Snowball beat more than 100 runners to claim second place in a regional athletics meeting.

He was one of ten Year 5 pupils from Richard Coates CE Primary School to take part in the Northumberland Schools Athletic Association Primary Cross Country Championships, held at the Temple Park Centre in South Shields on October 10.

Year 1 Class Teacher Claire Huitson said: "All finished with fantastic times. Impressively, Matthew finished a fantastic second place out of over 100 children! What a superb achievement and a superb event for all."

Volunteers clean up litterbugs' rubbish

Twenty sacks of rubbish were collected by a team of community volunteers in Rotary Ponteland's biannual litter pick.

Three groups of Rotarians and friends tackled different areas on Sunday October 15, finding everything from hub caps to a discarded shopping trolley to a 26-inch TV set.

The morning team worked in the area along Callerton Lane, Throckley Road to Edgehill and Rotary Way, while the afternoon crew took on Newcastle Airport approach roads and footpaths, roadside verges from Ponteland Road to Prestwick Green and Prestwick village. The evening group concentrated on the centre of the village around Waitrose.

The event was once again supported by Ponteland Town Council who loaned the picking rods and bag rings to the 18 volunteers.

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