

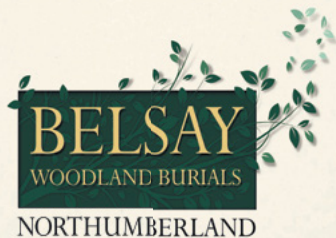
pontnews&views

FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district



Tributes to respected
and loved former Mayor
.....
Affordable homes
scheme turned down
.....
MP steps in over
bridleway row

Young and old remember the fallen



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Three striking shots win photo competition

By Mike Sadler, Ponteland Photographic Society

These three striking shots snapped up the winning places in Ponteland Photographic Society's latest competition.

Michael Ghahari's powerful street photography image 'John' was chosen as the winner by judge Peter Downs LRPS from Morpeth.

In second place was Gillian Weedy's colourful photo 'Mystic Meg', while the superb wildlife image 'Red Kite' by Phil Robson was third.

If you're interested in photography do come along to one of our Monday evening meetings at Merton Hall with no obligation to join. For full details of the programme please visit our website at pontelandphotographicsociety.co.uk.



Drink drivers and illegal scooter riders being targeted

By PC Cameron Makepeace, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

I was very saddened to hear of the sudden death of Town Councillor and former Mayor Alan Varley. I would like to express my condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

In my time at Ponteland Alan was extremely supportive and it is clear from everyone I have spoken to how much he contributed to the local community. He will be sorely missed.

It was great to see so many of you attend the Remembrance Day Parade on such a glorious sunny day. I was honoured to lay a wreath on behalf of Northumbria Police and see the community come together to remember those who fought for our country.

As we enter December, I'd like to take the opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hope you all have a safe and enjoyable festive period. We will be increasing patrols as part of our annual drink drive campaign and I urge anyone considering getting behind the wheel whilst under the influence to consider the consequences.

Over the last month I have received concerning reports from residents around the use of electric scooters in Ponteland.

I would like to remind those who own an electric scooter that these are classed as motor vehicles and therefore require a licence, insurance and road tax.

Personally owned e-scooters are for use on private land only, unlike rental e-scooters that can be ridden on any public highway and pavement as the rental company insures riders with a provisional or full driver's licence. Anyone caught riding these illegally will have them seized under the Road Traffic Act.

Over the Halloween and Bonfire Night period there were several youths committing anti-social behaviour in the area of Ponteland Park and Merton Way involving the use of fireworks. This behaviour was completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

I am working alongside partners to identify those responsible and they will be dealt with robustly. Anyone with information should contact me in confidence or make an online report through the Northumbria Police website.

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

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"In order that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

Tributes paid to former Mayor after sudden death

People throughout Ponteland were stunned and saddened by the sudden death of one of the village's most popular and well-known residents, Alan Varley.

Alan, who had been a Town Councillor for more than nine years and who was a former Mayor of Ponteland, died suddenly on October 31, aged 73.

Always a jovial, friendly man, Alan was often seen walking in his trademark shorts, whatever the weather, with the family dog, Lucy.

Born in Lancaster in 1950, Alan and his wife Linda moved to Ponteland in 1985 after coming to the North-East from Kent in 1977. Alan and Linda settled easily into the area, raising their children Joanne and Jonathan in Ponteland and later having three grandchildren.

Alan, who worked for the Home Office as Chief Immigration Officer at Newcastle Airport until his retirement in 2015, joined many clubs and organisations and soon became known and admired as a keen sportsman, particularly enjoying cricket, rugby and golf.

He was chairman of Ponteland Cricket Club for 11 years until 2005 and coached junior rugby at Newcastle Gosforth Rugby Club.

Alan was also a keen gardener and walker and he and Linda enjoyed many walking holidays with family and friends, as well as international travel.

He became a Town Councillor for the Ponteland West ward in April 2014, moving to the East ward in 2021 and was Mayor from 2017-2021, helping to guide the Town Council through the dark days of the Covid pandemic.

Town councillors held a minute's silence as a mark of respect and to remember their popular colleague at the start of the November full council meeting.

Carl Rawlings, who was Mayor of Ponteland when Alan was first elected, said: "Alan was a man with firm views, as seen when he campaigned to protect the green belt. He combined a measured judgment of events with a friendly disposition to fellow councillors.

"Alan often looked for humour in situations. He had a big smile and an engaging laugh. He was a familiar sight in Ponteland, walking with his beloved dog

Lucy and would often stop for a chat with passers-by.

"Alan contributed a lot to life in Ponteland and the area is poorer for his passing."

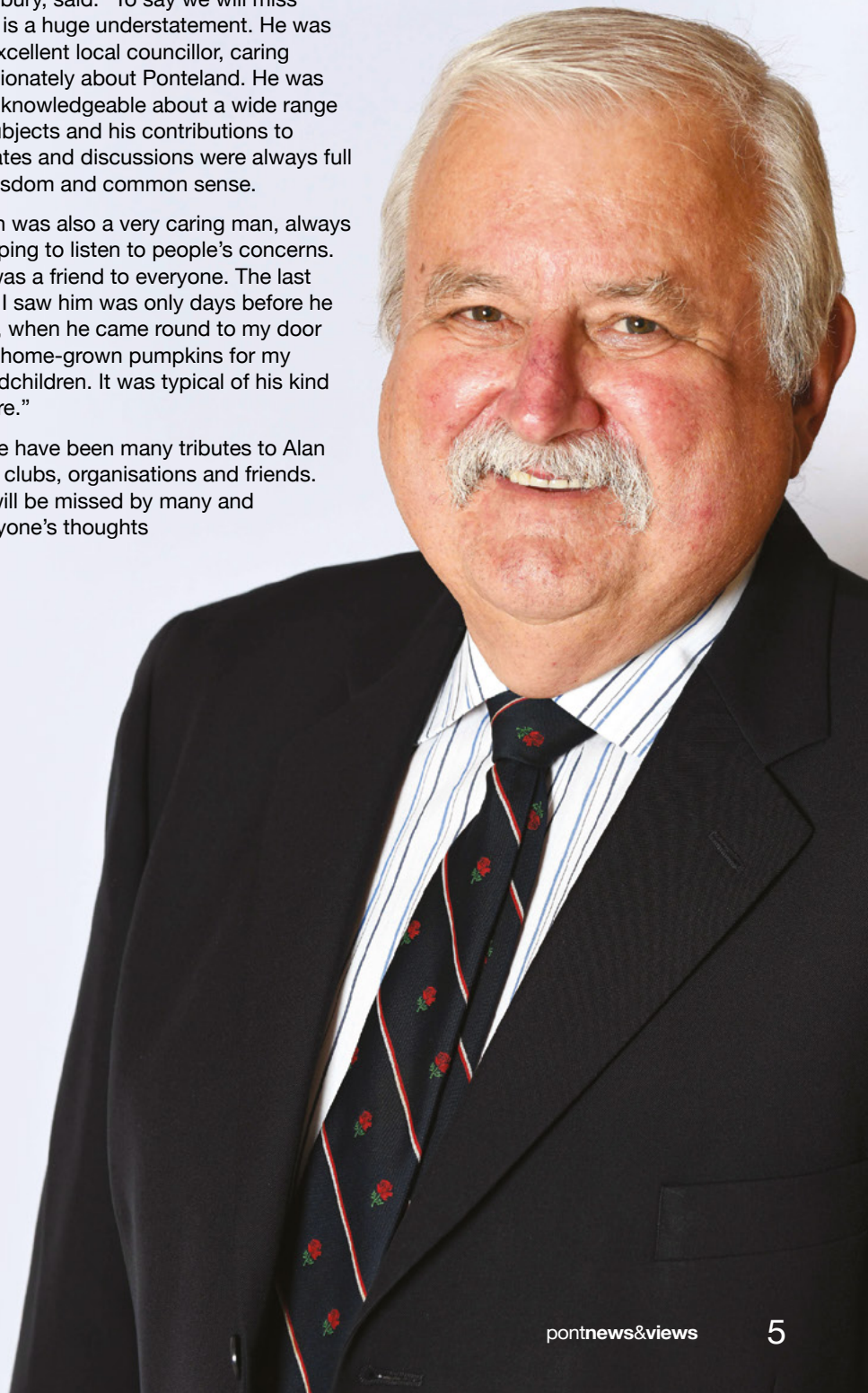
Ponteland's current Mayor, Coun Karen Overbury, said: "To say we will miss Alan is a huge understatement. He was an excellent local councillor, caring passionately about Ponteland. He was very knowledgeable about a wide range of subjects and his contributions to debates and discussions were always full of wisdom and common sense.

"Alan was also a very caring man, always stopping to listen to people's concerns. He was a friend to everyone. The last time I saw him was only days before he died, when he came round to my door with home-grown pumpkins for my grandchildren. It was typical of his kind nature."

There have been many tributes to Alan from clubs, organisations and friends. He will be missed by many and everyone's thoughts

are with Linda, Jonathan, Joanne and their families.

A Celebration of Life was held to remember Alan's life in a packed St Mary's Parish Church on November 17.





Affordable homes plan for green belt rejected

Controversial plans for 65 new homes on green belt land on the edge of Darras Hall have been rejected by county council planning chiefs.

The Esh Group development of ‘affordable’ homes, proposed for a site off Western Way, comprised 23 three-bed, 37 two-bed, and five one-bed properties, some of which would be bungalows.

Launching the plans in 2021, housing association Karbon Homes, architect IDPartnership and builder Esh Living said their aim was to offer local people the chance to get on the home ownership ladder through Rent to Buy and Shared Ownership.

The target market included young first time buyers and older people who wanted to downsize and continue to live independently.

But the vision was not shared by the local community, with only two representations being received in support compared to 90 objections including one lodged by Ponteland Town Council.

Concerns included increased congestion on Western Way and Stamfordham Road, no immediate access to shops and facilities, local schools and GP practices already being stretched to capacity, inappropriate loss of green belt land and a high density design not in keeping with the semi-rural location.

A 33-page report by NCC Planning Officer Richard Laughton, which recommended refusal, said: “The proposals represent an unacceptable and unjustified form of development within designated open countryside land. The proposed residential development represents inappropriate development in the green belt that would, by definition, be harmful to the green belt.”

Esh’s land and partnerships director Laura Devaney told the Northumberland Gazette she was “disappointed” at the decision. She said: “We submitted the planning application in 2021 on the basis that the development would help alleviate a shortage of affordable homes in the area, which was identified through a housing needs survey and public consultation as part of the planning process.

“The property tenures that the scheme would have delivered included shared ownership and discounted market sale in order to help local people get onto the property ladder in difficult economic times.

“We also received supportive feedback during the consultation process from local residents that expressed a wish to downsize from larger accommodation and remain in the area close to family.

“It is disappointing to learn of the decision.”

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MP seeks restoration of wildlife corridor after council works

MP Guy Opperman has waded into the row about a £1.3m scheme to create a cycle and pedestrian route from Ponteland to Callerton.

An update on the Northumberland County Council project, funded by the Department for Transport, in last month's Pont News sparked anger on the local social media pages.

Much of the comment concerned the loss of bulbs, flowers and trees planted by volunteers in an earlier revamp of the bridleway from Callerton Lane to Rotary Way five years ago.

Mr Opperman visited the route on November 9 after receiving several complaints from local residents concerned about the impact of the works on the wildlife corridor.

He said: "I have been to inspect the cycle route and the ongoing works. I have also met with Coun Lyle Darwin and Alma Dunigan. Lyle and I are utterly committed to ensuring the replanting of the surrounding areas is in a good or even better standard than when the building works started.

"We are speaking to NCC officers to ensure this will happen and that we have a sufficient budget to restore Rotary Way and the surrounding areas after the works are finished."

Alma Dunigan, former Chairman of Ponteland Community Partnership which led the two year restoration of the former

railway line during 2017-18, said: "As the former chairman of the Partnership, naturally I am devastated at what NCC has done with no regard to all the past local effort, especially at Rotary Way. I am pleased with our positive meeting exploring some options which can be investigated over the coming months."

An NCC spokesperson said: "Works to the Ponteland to Callerton Walking and Cycling route continue to gather pace after initially encountering some tricky conditions, both with the storms and the sheer volume of overgrown vegetation to deal with.

"Crucially though, most of what has been taken up is planned to go back, no trees have been removed and the vegetation either side of the route is expected to take on its natural course of regrowth. The entire track has been grass seeded either side and new plants have gone in close to the school. The team has also been working closely with the Town Council to agree a new position for a bench and information board.

"This scheme is part of several successful bids from central government to install active travel improvements throughout Northumberland, aiming to increase walking and cycling volumes, creating a connected network, as well as a healthier and greener environment for everyone to enjoy."

ADVERTISING FEATURE

How proper financial planning can be truly life-changing



Last month's column focused on value for money and how there is a lot more to financial planning than investment returns. When it's done right, it can be truly life-changing – as the client case studies we will share over the next few columns will demonstrate.

Our first is Bob and Maureen. Recently retired, they were relieved when our comprehensive, stress tested financial plan showed they were never going to run out of money.

We then explained to them that there were actually some serious challenges of being what we call a 'got too much' client. Tax being one of them.

Surely they've already paid enough tax when they were working and running their business; now we pointed out that inheritance tax would probably be their biggest tax bill ever. We reminded them that it's no use being the richest man or woman in the graveyard.

We asked Bob and Maureen how much they wanted to leave behind and Bob said that he didn't want to pay any inheritance tax, which at the

time meant leaving no more than £650,000.

A further calculation showed that they could do this and also easily spend an extra £30,000 each year, in today's terms, for the next ten years.

That was the good news. But in the initial factfinding we do with all new clients, when we ask them to score themselves against ten key life satisfaction areas, Bob and Maureen came out low on fun, recreation and fulfilment.

We had already identified low spending on holidays but further discussions uncovered Maureen had a fear of flying which was becoming a real problem.

So we sent Bob details of a flying

phobia course at Newcastle Airport and, three months after Maureen completed it, we received a surprise postcard of an orangutan. They were in Borneo! Now seasoned globetrotters, they send us a lovely hamper every Christmas in gratitude.

Photos of the orangutan take pride of place on our clients' 'bucket list' wall in our office - along with pictures of campervans, the Northern Lights and other wonderful reminders from clients of how we are changing their lives for the better.

Next month – how we helped a widow leave a lasting legacy for her beloved husband.

Model your financial future with our free online tool at lambfinancial.co.uk.

Hundreds remember the sacrifices of war

On a bright Sunday morning, in an autumn of heavy rainfall and storms, Ponteland remembered the sacrifices of the two World Wars and other conflicts.

Record numbers took part in the parade and hundreds of people lined the route from Ponteland Leisure Centre to the Memorial Hall, where the Service of Remembrance was held.

Representatives of the Armed Forces, Boys' and Girls' Brigades, Scouts, Guides, Police, the Fire Service and many other local organisations took part in the parade, on Sunday November 12.

The service was taken by the Rev Capt Paul Allinson, vicar of St Mary's Parish Church, and the Rev Jona Sewell, of Ponteland Methodist Church. A two-minute silence was observed at 11am, after a bugler played the Last Post.

While more than 30 wreaths were laid, the names of the 64 men listed on Ponteland's War Memorial were read out by Emilia Sant and James Garrad, year 12 students from Ponteland High School who also laid a wreath on behalf of the school.

One of Northumberland's Deputy Lord Lieutenants, Meenu Malhotra, who lives in Darras Hall, laid the first wreath, followed by the Mayor of Ponteland, Coun Karen Overbury, on behalf of the Town Council, which organises the parade. Town Councillor Katrina Woodrow laid a wreath on behalf of the area's MP, Guy Opperman.

After the service, the parade marched



back to the Leisure Centre and refreshments were provided in the Memorial Hall for all who attended.

Coun Overbury said: "Ponteland should be proud that so many people come together every year to pay their respects. Our parade seems to be getting larger each year."

Mr Malhotra added: "It was a privilege and an honour to attend the parade. It is important to remember the sacrifices of wartime and Ponteland's parade is always well-attended. This year there were more people than ever parading and lining the streets."

Photos by Paul Norris.

Scouts and Cubs pay tribute to the fallen

Scouts and Cubs from Ponteland played a special role this November in helping to remember the sacrifices of the two World Wars.

Every year in the days before November 11, Ponteland town councillors lay wreaths on the three Commonwealth war graves in St Mary's Church graveyard.

More than 1.7m men and women from

Commonwealth countries who died in the two World Wars are commemorated around the world by the War Graves Commission, many in large cemeteries and on war memorials.

There are three war graves in Ponteland and this year 1st Ponteland Scouts and Cubs were invited to lay the wreaths with Ponteland Mayor Coun Karen Overbury.

Scouts Thomas Porter, 10, and Isabella Morrell, 11, lay one of the wreaths in St Mary's graveyard.





Ponteland Christmas Tree Collection

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A tribute in wool

The Pele Tower, in Ponteland, was at the heart of a new Remembrance tribute created this year by Ponteland Town Council – and many local residents.

Hundreds of woollen poppies were knitted and crocheted by people throughout the area and at the beginning of November they were attached to a large panel which was erected in the gateway of the ancient monument, guarded by two metal "Silent Soldiers".

The new display complemented the six giant Remembrance poppies which had been in storage since last year.

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GUY OPPERMAN MP

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Your letters

Flooding frustration and continued anger at the
bridleway revamp in this month's letters...

The Editor
Pont News & Views



Flooding council with complaints fails to resolve blocked drains

**I write to raise the problem of blocked drains in
and around Ponteland.**

This is a problem that has been around for several years and does not appear to have been addressed appropriately.

The drain at the bottom of my drive reliably blocks every year, causing the road junction and my drive to flood. This causes potential danger to cars and damage to my property.

The county council's preferred method of reporting such issues is by accessing the Fix My Street website. However, there are numerous multiple reports of local blocked drains that never appear to have any meaningful action taken.

Indeed, examples can be found where the council has closed the case without the drains in question ever being cleared.

In my case four reports to Fix My Street were made over four months with no action taken. Eventually, after involving my local councillor and making a formal complaint to NCC, the drain in question was eventually cleared.

However, multiple drains in Ponteland remain blocked and have been so for many months despite multiple futile reports to Fix My Street.

It appears that there is no proactive drain clearing in the Ponteland area or much notice taken of reports to Fix My Street. It may be that, as in my case, affected households need to formalise the process by involving their local councillor and invoking the county council's official complaints process.

The alternative, it would appear, is to allow the neglect to continue to flood roads and damage our properties.

Ross Shepherd
North Road, Ponteland

Please justify the spend, disruption and impact of bridleway revamp

**It's great to see the huge development which has
caused untold disruption at Rotary Way is only just
beginning. Hurrah I hear you all cheer.**

Apparently a second phase is planned to link up to Callerton, presumably to give the badgers and foxes a decent walkway.

I'm sure brains considerably better than mine can justify the enormous spend, disruption and environmental impact, and it would be lovely to hear from them.

I'd urge them to take a look at the state of the local roads, the potholes, blocked drains and overgrown footpaths and then explain why they feel the need to pander to the odd cyclist (who pay no road tax) at the expense of actual road users.

I look forward to hearing from the powers that be, and the backlash from the lycra warriors.

Steve Eglon
Western Way, Darras Hall

Extra seating at Main Street bus stop welcome

**I have just enjoyed reading the October edition of
Pont News and I agree that it is good to have the
bus stop on Main Street refurbished, with
additional seating.**

The extra seating is welcome. The bus service between Ponteland and Newcastle is so unreliable. When the daily service is every 30 minutes, the seats are welcome when – all too frequently – the scheduled bus does not arrive.

JB Hardy
Ryehaugh, Ponteland

Thank you for helping me after fall

**A mega thank you to the kindly folk who got me to
my feet following a heavy tumble on the crossing
close to Waitrose.**

They also rescued bits of broken specs, took me to a seat outside the store and summoned staff to bring first aid.

I am forever in your debt.

Gillian Myles
Bowman Drive, Hexham

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.

January issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the January issue is Friday December 8. Door to door distribution will be from Tuesday January 2 to Monday January 8. 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.

What's on...

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.

Rotary Ponteland's Christmas Market

Join us at Ponteland Memorial Hall on Sunday December 3 from 11am to 3pm, where there will be a range of craft stalls, festive foods and Christmas gifts on offer and Santa's Grotto. Entry by donation £1.

Ponteland Wildlife Group

Our next talk is Gill Thompson on 'Waders in the Northumberland National Park' on Tuesday December 5. On Tuesday January 2 George Dodds will give a talk on 'College Valley Estates: The Cheviot Jewel'. Both start at 7.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre. Admission £2 including refreshments. Open to all.

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 will be: December 6 – Songs & Stories of Christmas with faith tea by Geoff Hughes and January 3 – The Japanese Experience: Culture and Lifestyle by Denise Howe. We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join Ponteland u3a by calling the membership secretary on 01661 824953.

Plant Heritage North East Group

On December 9 in St. Mary's Parish Centre at 2.30pm our meeting is a talk 'Developments in the Garden at Belsay Hall' presented by Deborah Crombie, Head Gardener at the Hall. Visitors welcome £5, refreshments and raffle. Contact pat.skews@btinternet.com for further information.

Rotary Ponteland's Charity Christmas Disco

Join us at The Diamond Inn on Saturday December 9 from 7pm with karaoke at 9pm. Entry £5 donation with all funds to Children North East.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday December 11 at 2.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre we have our Christmas event 'The Imagine Five' plus seasonal refreshments.

Ponteland WI

Our next monthly meeting is being held on Tuesday December 12 at 2pm in Merton Hall. This will be our Christmas party with seasonal refreshments and in house entertainment. Our next lunch dates will be Monday December 4 and Monday January 8, both at Plants Plus meeting at 12.30pm.

Ponteland Village WI

A Christmas celebration with a difference, including a ceilidh is promised at our meeting in St Mary's Parish Centre at 7.30pm on Tuesday December 12. 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.

Callerton Garden & Flower Club

On Wednesday December 13 our meeting will be held at Ponteland CIU Club at 2pm when Sandra Dickinson will be demonstrating a 'Winter Wonderland'. All visitors are welcome, fee £7. Refreshments are available in the bar.

Ponteland Local History Society

On Thursday December 14 members of The Clarsach Society will entertain 'Northumbrian Harps: Music and History'. The meeting will commence at 7.30pm in St. Mary's Parish Centre, Thornhill Road. Quiz, Raffle, Mince pies. Visitors £6.

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

There will be no meeting in December. The next meeting will be on January 22.

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.

Ponteland Social Group

Come to our fantastic social group – a great chance for older people who live in the area to get together and enjoy friendship, a whole host of great activities, crafts, music or even just have a nice cuppa. You can find us every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12noon at St Mary's Parish Centre. Call 01670 784800 or email friends@ageuk-northumberland.org.uk.

Honest rawness is priceless

By Revd. Captain Paul Allinson, Vicar of Ponteland

The story of the Visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus, with its bright star and splendid gifts, is integral to the celebrations of the Christmas season, rounding off 'The Twelve Days'.

Who were these Wise Men? Were there three? The Bible account doesn't exactly say that, but there are three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Later tradition gave them names Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, while paintings sometimes show them as being of different races and colours of skin, a reminder that the Gospel is for all nations.

In popular culture they became kings, but scriptures call them Magi and some early Christian images show them in Persian dress, implying that they are pagan priests.

The Epiphany story is usually approached as a celebration, rejoicing in the birth and the finding of the Christ child. It is a great celebration, but the story of the Wise Men is also about brokenness - positive changes of heart, giving things up, personal sacrifices and very destructive events.

Firstly, there is the baby Jesus, born in a stable, a humble and messy start for a King Messiah. Social status and its attendant pride had been broken; from the moment of his birth, Christ embraced vulnerability.

Secondly, if we think of the wise men as kings, then their pride was humbled. Kings do not pay homage to another unless they have been militarily conquered. Yet here we see them entering on bended knee. If the Wise Men were pagan priests, then they had certainly gone out of their comfort zone and were prepared to risk their traditions and their reputation for a greater light. They opened their gifts, and in so doing, showed something of their own hearts. They opened themselves to the Christ in vulnerability.

Thirdly, what of Bethlehem itself? Tragically, just after the Magi departed, Herod murdered the infants and the Holy Family fled. This left a broken place, a broken humanity, and many broken parents. Jesus was born into a world where evil operates all too readily, and the escaped infant would one day be taken to the Cross by such darkness. Let us not ignore the darker parts of biblical narratives or we coat the rest in sugar and tinsel.

Finally, what about us? We can all fail and lose our way, but sometimes people can go into very dark places, perhaps through bereavement, trauma, or some other cause of depression. The story of the Epiphany is relevant for anyone who feels like this, and at some point, we may all suffer in this way. Jesus is not high and mighty, far away, unmoved by the suffering of mere mortals. He lay in the straw and just as he knew a touch of love from strangers, so he can give a touch of love to the wounded spirit. He knows where we walk. If we are ashamed to be frail and depressed, he is not ashamed of us.

What can we give, for we have no gold, frankincense, or myrrh? We can only offer ourselves, even if weak, broken, feeling unloved. Yet, exposed, honest rawness is worth more than any gold or expensive incense and spices to the Christ. It is priceless.

Happy Christmas and a Joyful Epiphany to you all.



Christmas services

The Ponteland Churches wish you a Peaceful and Happy Christmas 2023

St Mary the Virgin, Ponteland

December 24	No morning services Family Nativity Service 3pm Family Nativity Service 5pm Churches Together Readings and Carols 7pm Midnight Mass 11.30pm
December 25	Festal Holy Communion 8am Festal Parish Eucharist 10am
December 27	No Holy Communion
December 31	Parish Eucharist 10am

Holy Saviour, Milbourne

December 17	Readings with Carols 11.15am
December 25	Festal Holy Communion 11.15am

Methodist Church, Ponteland

December 3	Bouncy Church (Christingle) 9.40am & 10.30am
December 17	Family Carol Service 4pm
December 24	Christmas Eve Worship 10am
December 25	Christmas Celebration 10am

Methodist Church, Milbourne

December 17	Carol Service 6.30pm
December 24	Christingle Service 4.30pm
December 31	Watchnight Service 11.30pm

St. Matthew's R.C., Ponteland

December 17	Parish Carol Service 5pm
December 24	Mass 10am
December 25	Christmas Day Mass 10am

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Two ways to help red squirrels this winter

If you are a lover of red squirrels, there are two ways you can help them this winter.

Local conservation charity Ponteland and District Red Squirrel Group is urging homeowners to give the popular rodents a helping hand by supplementary feeding.

Chair Sally Hardy said: "Our advice is that you place feeders very close to any dreys in the garden during winter and remember to check that feeders and the nuts in them aren't frozen.

"Also remember that a source of water is important too, so a little bowl of water in the garden can be a lifesaver for all wildlife. Again make sure it's not frozen solid on frosty mornings.

"It is a good idea to put fresh nuts out more often, as in very snowy, cold periods reds have sadly been found frozen to death in their dreys as they have not been able to feed."

The second way to help the reds is to support the charity's efforts by buying its 2024 calendar, which features 'delightful' pictures of red squirrels photographed in gardens in Ponteland chosen from hundreds of entries to the group's summer calendar competition.

The calendars, costing £8, will be on sale at the charity's stall at the Wilde Farm Christmas Farmers Market on Sunday December 17 at the Memorial Hall car park and can also be delivered locally. All profits go to supporting our red squirrels in the Ponteland area.

For more information on how to help support red squirrels in Ponteland, email pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk or visit the charity's Facebook page.



Mayor joins group's first anniversary celebrations

A group to help over-50s in and around Ponteland to make new friends and enjoy a busy social life is celebrating a successful first year.

Started in November last year with just three people, Ponteland Friendship Group now has more than 30 members and is growing fast.

As part of its anniversary celebrations, the group welcomed Ponteland Mayor Coun Karen Overbury to talk to members about her role and to answer questions.

The group, supported by Age UK Northumberland and the Community Foundation, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, meets every Wednesday from 10.30am to 12noon in St Mary's Parish Centre.

Heather McVicar, from Age UK, said: "It's always wonderful to see so many people chatting, laughing and enjoying themselves. Anyone and everyone is welcome to pop along to try us out.

"We have regular quizzes and activities – for example, we all tried silk painting recently. On the last Wednesday of the month, we hold a dance exercise class and we regularly go on trips and outings, from afternoon teas to fish and chips at Seahouses and a day at Beamish Open Air Museum."

Coun Overbury said: "I was delighted to be asked to visit the Friendship Group and to talk to members and it was a pleasure to help them to celebrate their first anniversary. I felt guilty disturbing the chat and the laughs!"

The group has three volunteers who help every week - Sue Leonard, Ross Lambert and Emma Denham – who welcome visitors and regulars.

Sue said: "The group is growing all the time and everyone is guaranteed a warm welcome."

For more information, pop in on a Wednesday, call 01670 784800, email friends@ageuk-northumberland.org.uk or visit ageuk.org.uk/Northumberland.



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Suzanne Mason
Home Manager

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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.

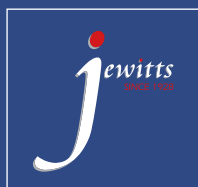
The event starts with the Noon Parade, with the Junior Race at 12.10pm, Ladies' Race at 12.20pm and the Open Race at 12.40pm. Presentations follow at 1.15pm.

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 on 07785 242157 or at sjroberts69@gmail.com.



Photo from the 2023 race by Colin Morgan



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8th to 9th August (2 days)
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11th to 15th August (5 days)
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22nd to 26th September (5 days)
Beautiful Pembrokeshire Coast & Tenby

11th to 14th October (4 days)
Isle of Bute & Trossachs

20th to 26th October (7 days)
Kilkenny, Waterford & The Wicklow Mountains

11th to 15th November (5 days)
T&T in the Cairngorms

22nd to 24th November (3 days)
Christmas at Blenheim Castle & Oxford

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For further information please contact us on **01434 681 325** or email helen.jewitt@jewittscoaches.co.uk. More details can also be found at jewittscoaches.co.uk. **2024 brochures available now.**

Advice for older residents at Winter Warmer event

Older residents received advice on keeping warm, safe and healthy through the winter months at an event at Merton Hall.

Representatives from 16 major charities and local organisations took part in the Ponteland Ageing Well Winter Warmer gathering, which more than 60 people attended.

The event on Friday November 3 was arranged by Nirmal Seghal, supported by other local volunteers including Ponteland High School students.

Nirmal Seghal is pictured with Dr Nigel Twelves and Practice Manager Nicola Rice from Ponteland Medical Group at the Winter Warmer event.





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Duck Racegoers raise £3,500 for children's charity

Rotary Ponteland presented a cheque for £3,500 to Children North East at Café Hope in Cowgate from the proceeds of the annual Duck Race held in September.

Pictured left to right are: Joanne King, Events and Community Officer at CNE; Mark Stoddart, Trustee Chair CNE; Peter Tincombe, President Rotary Ponteland; Janet Cusworth, Past-President Rotary Ponteland; and Vicky Williamson, Fundraiser CNE.

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Property specialist wins clutch of awards at estate agent 'Oscars'

Local property specialist Goodfellows has collected a clutch of awards at the UK estate agent 'Oscars'.

The Ponteland-based agency was named the Best Local Estate Agency Group – North East at the prestigious ESTAS Customer Service Awards 2023, held at Grosvenor House in London and hosted by TV property presenter Phil Spencer.

The manager of its Heaton and West Denton branches Jayne Holland also picked up The People Award and Women in Property Award while the Ponteland office received a Gold Award in the Best Estate Agent North East category.

Estate and letting agents were recognised in counties and regions around the UK, with results calculated from more than 300,000 customer review ratings.

Chris Goodfellow, Managing Director of Goodfellows, said: "To be named best local group in the whole of the North East, for our Ponteland branch to be named best in the North East and to see Jayne Holland, manager at our Heaton and West Denton branches, winning both the People's Award and Women in Property Award is an incredible achievement and is testament to hard work and the determination of our whole team."



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