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FREE monthly community magazine for Ponteland and district

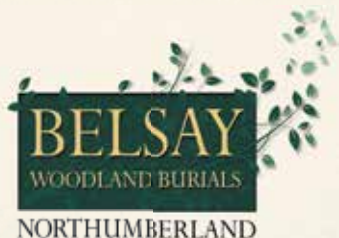


Police appeal after robbery
and burglary

New bus service to airport
and Kingston Park launched

National award bid for "fascinating"
archaeological project

Mamma Mia! Huge crowds watch historic race



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Inclusive event attracts 120 competitors and huge crowds

By Steve Roberts

Huge crowds came out to support the traditional New Year's Day Ponteland Wheelbarrow Race.

The 2024 event saw for the first time an Inclusive Race which was incorporated into the ladies' event, giving young adults with learning and physical disabilities the opportunity to compete in the historic event.

They were all partnered by members of the gym and local fitness centre, The Barn, which is headed up by Jo Shallcross.

In total there were 120 participants in the four races which started, as always, at 12noon outside The Blackbird Inn.

Although conditions were dry and sunny, there was a significant breeze which affected times, particularly on the first half of the course. This was borne out by James Leiper and Robert Holt's winning time in the Open Race of 6mins 49secs being some 29 seconds slower than their winning 2023 time.

The Ladies' Race was won by first time entrants Lucy Hinds and Abigail Ellam (who stepped in for her mum Helena who was unable to race).

The Inclusive Race was won by Thomas Fretwell, who was partnered by Sarah McDougle, and the Junior Race was won by sisters Millie and Cate Johnson.

The wheelbarrows are sponsored by local businesses and individuals and these funds, together with entry fees, programme sales and bucket collections, are split equally between St Oswald's Hospice and Tynedale Hospice at Home.

Anyone wishing to sponsor a wheelbarrow for the 2025 Wheelbarrow Race should contact Andy Lawson at andrew@andrew-lawson.co.uk or 07989 355557.

Photos by Colin Morgan – leisurepics.co.uk



Danny Adams took a break from playing the title role at Newcastle Theatre Royal's panto Pinocchio to take part (he's in the barrow).





Witnesses sought to robbery and burglary

By PC Cameron Makepeace, Ponteland Neighbourhood Policing Team

I am sure the community will be understandably concerned following media coverage of two high profile incidents in Ponteland.

We received a report of a robbery at Waitrose on the morning of Wednesday January 3. Officers attended after a man transporting money from the premises was approached by two unknown males who took a box containing a quantity of cash from him and fled the scene. Understandably the victim was left shaken but thankfully uninjured.

I would like to reassure you all this is an isolated incident and enquiries are ongoing to identify those responsible. Anyone who may be able to offer information is asked to contact police through 101 or online quoting log NP-20240103-0127.

On Saturday January 13 shortly before 7.30pm we received a call from a concerned homeowner reporting three

men inside their home on Runnymede Road. Police were deployed to the scene immediately; however those involved had fled the scene. Enquiries remain ongoing and anyone with information is asked to contact police through 101 or online quoting log NP-20240113-0835.

At this time we do not believe these incidents are connected.

We have seen some great results in relation to shoplifters in the area recently. Following reports from local supermarkets, we have conducted patrols which have led to the arrest of two prolific offenders, one of whom received a custodial sentence.

I am aware of the impact this type of crime has on local businesses as well as

customers of these businesses and I am determined to continue this work and reduce the impact their offending has on the local community.

I'd like to thank those of you who have applied to become a Community Speedwatch volunteer, following my appeal in January's edition. It is fantastic to see so many people looking to get involved and make a difference in the community. The volunteer team will be in touch to progress the applications and I look forward to working with those of you who are successful soon.

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

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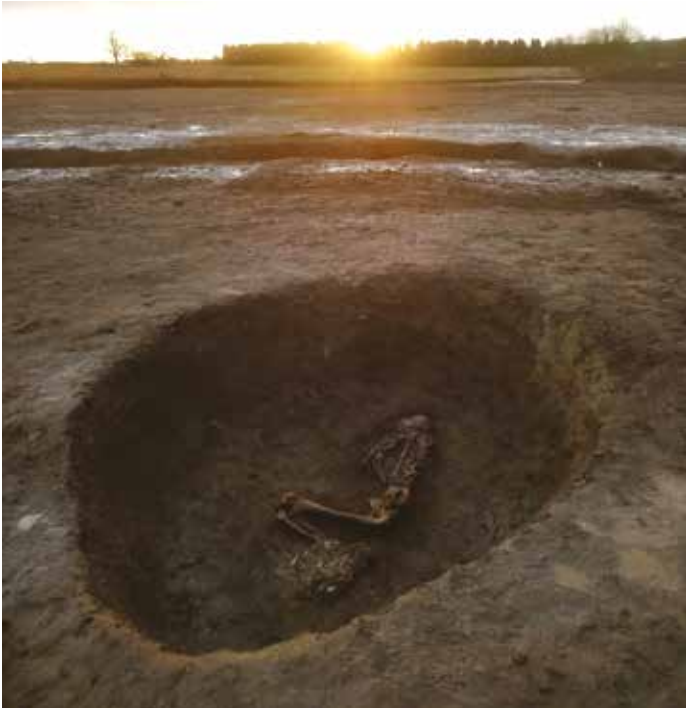
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Excavations on the site of Ponteland Leisure Centre revealed an early Bronze Age ring-ditch associated with six burials. The primary inhumation was the grave of a female adolescent, shown here.



Overlooking the remains of the early Neolithic structure identified on the site, as well as the early Bronze Age ring-ditch (the primary grave can be seen in its centre).

Archaeological finds lead to national award nomination for Ponteland project

An archaeological investigation carried out during the building of the Ponteland schools and leisure complex is among the nominees for a national accolade.

Archaeological Research Services Ltd has been nominated for the Current Archaeology Awards 2024 in the 'Rescue Project of the Year' category for 'Ponteland's prehistoric past: tracing life and death on the edge of the Northumberland Coastal Plain'.

The company carried out the excavations a few years ago ahead of the new buildings being constructed on behalf of Kier Group plc, one of the organisations that worked with Northumberland County Council on the £43m learning and leisure scheme.

They revealed a rare Early Neolithic post-built structure and an Early Bronze Age ring ditch monument associated with four

burials over a 300-year period, two having cremated human remains placed over their feet. One was accompanied by a copper alloy dagger and another by a food vessel.

Detailed studies of the findings identified that two of the individuals, both females, were from thousands of years ago and appeared to have been killed by blows to the head.

The finds, which suggest that neighbourly disputes and tensions may have been more common than previously thought, are of national importance.

Archaeological Research Services Ltd managing director Clive Waddington said: "It's amazing to be shortlisted for the Current Archaeology Rescue Project of the Year for the fascinating discoveries we made in advance of the new schools and leisure facilities in Ponteland.


"It was great to find evidence of the earliest farming in the region nearly 6,000 years ago through to the remains of people of eastern European ancestry who brought metal working and new cult activities to Britain around 2,400BC.

"Even for archaeologists, finding human burials – including one with a bronze dagger at his waist – of our early ancestors is rare and informative.

"And to top it off with Iron Age and Romano-British farming activity, this excavation unearthed thousands of years of unrecorded history in the area."

Current Archaeology is the world's biggest magazine dedicated solely to British archaeology. People can vote for the Ponteland project online, one of eight nominations, at archaeology.co.uk/vote

Photos: Archaeological Research Services Ltd.



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New bus service links Ponteland to airport, Kingston Park and Morpeth

A new bus service linking Ponteland to Newcastle Airport, Kingston Park and Morpeth is being launched at the end of January.

On route to Morpeth, the 777 service will stop at Kirkley Hall, with buses from Morpeth stopping at the airport and Kingston Park shopping centre.

The first weekday bus to Newcastle Airport and Kingston Park shopping centre stops at Ashbrooke Drive at 4.38am and Thornhill Road at 4.42am. The next bus follows two hours later and is every two hours from 7pm, but runs hourly during the day.

The last bus to Newcastle Airport and Kingston Park shopping centre leaves Ashbrooke Drive at 11.08pm and Thornhill Road at 11.12pm.

The first weekday bus to Morpeth via Kirkley Hall stops at Thornhill Road at 5.25am and Ashbrooke Drive at 5.28am. The next bus follows two hours later and then runs hourly during the day, reverting to every two hours after 8pm.

The last bus to Morpeth via Kirkley Hall leaves Thornhill Road at 11.55pm and Ashbrooke Drive at 11.58pm.



The new service, which will operate seven days per week from Sunday January 28, has been launched by Arriva in partnership with Northumberland County Council.

Kim Cain, Arriva North East commercial director said: "We are delighted to be serving Newcastle International Airport better than we have before. We're proud to connect communities and we know our customers in Morpeth and Kingston Park would like to be able to travel to and from the airport in a way that's safe, reliable and sustainable.

"We look forward to working with the airport and with Northumberland County Council and to making a success of the 777 service."

Graeme Mason, chief sustainability and communications officer at Newcastle International Airport, also welcomed the new service, saying it would provide more sustainable travel options to and from the airport and create more employment opportunities for the region's workforce.

The full timetable can be found at bit.ly/48re24G.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

How you can be time rich and still not worry about money



Being cash rich on paper but time poor is not a great lifestyle combination. This was the position our clients Les and Diane were in when they first came to us for advice.

The couple owned and lived in a guest house in Cumbria and contacted Lamb Financial because they were concerned about how little growth they seemed to have on their pensions.

Les was suspicious about the financial services industry and was only persuaded to call us on the recommendation of a friend.

Cashflow projections from our initial fact find showed that if they worked to State Pension age they would never run out of money.

But Les and Diane scored themselves low on our Lifestyle Wheel for 'time' as well as 'fun and recreation' because they worked seven days each week for 48 weeks of the year.

We explored what they could do to get more 'fun' time but there just weren't the margins in the business to employ more staff or take more time off.

We concluded that the only thing they could do was to sell the business and buy a new home. The big question was: were the savings/income from interest payments plus their pensions enough to enable them to stop work now?

Using our cashflow modelling software we calculated they could sell the business, buy a home for themselves and work part-time stress-free, perhaps in a local supermarket for a few hours a week until retirement, have five days per week to themselves – and still have enough for the lifestyle they wanted.

They are now time rich and don't need to worry about money!

This is why I love lifestyle financial planning - it can genuinely change people's lives. We developed the Lifestyle Wheel to help clients self-assess their own lifestyles, without me having to try being a counsellor.


It is simple, effective, helps me understand what my client needs to do to improve their lifestyle and gives me the information to build into their financial plan. Try it yourself at lambfinancial.co.uk.

Next month: find out how you can secure your place at an invitation-only seminar where we'll reveal five things the financial services industry doesn't want you to know.

The Barnado's fundraising volunteers pictured at their last function.



**GUY OPPERMAN
MP**



**Working hard for
Tynedale and Ponteland**
Any problems or issues? Get in touch
guy.opperman@parliament.uk

Group says cheers after 32 years of fundraising

A group which has raised more than £130,000 over the past three decades for Barnado's has held its last coffee morning.

Elizabeth MacFarlane launched the fundraising initiative in 1991, whilst working part-time for the children's charity in schools and universities.

She said: "I was asked if I could start up a fundraising group in Ponteland. I phoned 13 friends to see if they were interested. They all knew me but not necessarily each other. Twelve responded positively and our first coffee morning raised £350.

"Over the 32 years since we have raised over £132,000. The events have varied from coffee mornings to speaker lunches, fashion shows, Chinese evenings, dances, concerts, bring & buy and raffles.

"We still have four original members in our group and we decided to hold our last Christmas coffee morning in December.

"I would like to thank everyone in this amazing group and our loyal, generous supporters over these incredible 32 years. You made a difference and an impact."



Jane, pictured (centre) with her award, Town Councillors Alan Hall and Christine Caisley, MP Guy Opperman and other volunteers.

Environmental campaigner launches monthly litter picks

An environmental campaigner is launching a monthly litter picking group in February.

Jane Hodson-Hamilton, a committee member with countryside charity Campaign to Protect Rural England, will lead the first 'Ponteland Anti-Litter Squad' event on Sunday February 18.

Volunteers will be gathering in the car park on Callerton Lane beside the children's play park and Henry's Hut to litterpick there and along the bridleway from 12noon to 1.30pm.

Jane has been organising regular litter picks for some time but is now going to hold them on a monthly basis.

Last year she received a Community Champion Award from MP Guy Opperman for her dedication to the local environment. Receiving the accolade, she said: "The amount of litter all around us is shocking. It is so harmful to our wildlife as well as spoiling the environment for everyone.

"There is never an excuse for littering but until perpetrators begin to appreciate the consequences of their actions through a programme of education and enforcement then all our precious places and spaces will continue to suffer."

Everyone is welcome to join the 'squad' at any of the events, which will be held on the third Sunday of each month throughout this year. Locations and times will be shared on our What's On page.

Time for residents to cast their vote

Residents are being asked to decide who should fill the vacancy on Ponteland Town Council.

The East Ward by-election is being held following the sudden death of Alan Varley, who was well-known in the area and was a Ponteland councillor for more than nine years.

The by-election is for East Ward residents only and is being held on

Thursday February 8. The candidates are Michael Patrick Clarke, representing the Labour Party, and Rosie Hanlon, representing the Conservative Party. Both live in Ponteland.

New legislation was introduced nationally last year aimed at reducing voter fraud, meaning anyone voting in person will have to produce photo ID such as a passport or photo driving licence.

People registered to vote who don't

have photo identity can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate either online or telephone 0800 328 0280. The deadline for this is January 31. Unfortunately, this deadline may have passed for some voters reading this, but the system will be in operation at all forthcoming elections.

Ponteland has four wards – North, South, West and East – with each ward having three Town Councillors. Town Council elections in all four wards will be held in May 2025.

Your letters

Calls for a new recreation ground, road repairs and consistent planning decisions in the February postbag.

New recreation ground needed

When I was a lad, I was the only one on our street to own a proper full size leather football.

I used to go along to the local recreation ground, I had the choice of two, and start practising kick-ups. This activity would soon attract other young boys and before long we were able to put down our coats and get a full scale 11-a-side game underway.

It was a similar tale when it came to cricket. I was blessed with a splendid set of full-size cricket stumps and a decent bat and ball. I would take myself off to the recreation ground, set up the stumps and an impromptu test match was very soon underway.

Similarly, I used to take my children to Ponteland's recreation ground to engage in this kind of informal sporting activity.

I am not able to do that anymore. Ponteland's recreation ground was swallowed up by the new schools, with the associated playing fields fenced off from the general public. Casual recreational activity for young people is no longer catered for.

So, I very much agree with what Stephen Warner was saying in your last issue about the lack of facilities available for young people in Ponteland. The lost recreation ground needs to be replaced.

In addition to the kind of casual activity I describe, it would provide a location for many of the other facilities that are required. I could go along and practise my kick-ups; at least I could if I could remember what I did with that ball.

John Hague

High View, Ponteland

I've got nothing against cyclists – just the £1.3m being spent on them

Oh dear, my previous letter appears to have agitated the two-wheeled warriors.

Unfortunately, they appear to misread my letter and instantly revert to the defensive "poor persecuted cyclist" nonsense. Let's try and explain things nice and simply for them.

My letter wasn't suggesting that cyclists should be flogged in public, it was suggesting that the massive spend on a white elephant project could be better used to enhance existing cycle ways (which I like to call roads).

For £1.3m I'm sure the road surfaces could be made much less dangerous for all road users whether they be cars or bikes. I didn't express any opinion on cyclists, so to be chastised for doing so is lycra persecution complex! The title of the letter was a bit of a clue 'Please justify the spend, disruption and impact of the bridleway revamp' - not a word about pedal pushers.

To pick out a couple of points from the angry lycrists.

Mr Hamilton states: "It is not pedal cycles that create long traffic queues on Ponteland's roads." I assume he missed an 'always' from that sentence because the number of times I've been stuck behind a gaggle of cyclists herding up a road and completely filling the lane is considerable. We are asked to give them 1.5m clearance, which I always try and do, but where are we supposed to drive - in a hedge?

Mr Crisp quite rightly corrects my ignorance on road tax for which I humbly apologise and will flog myself suitably later. My point was that the money going to pay for the road repairs comes from all of our pockets and should be sufficient to keep the roads usable by all road users, which includes cyclists.

He says that I try to justify my dislike for people getting around on a different mode of transport, which is utter nonsense. Cycling is a great hobby for those who like it, it's just that some of them are a little touchy and read things that aren't written proving that the 'lycra warrior' tag is not a lazy stereotype - they are alive and replying to letters in Pont News!

Steve Eglon

Western Way, Darras Hall

No political interest in the state of local roads

I fully agree with Steve Eglon's letter in the December issue about the state of local roads.

I have lived in Errington Road since 1970 and the top end, where it joins with The Rise, was completed by the builder RH Atkinson prior to the council adopting it around July 1971.

Since then, the county council has spent nothing on Errington Road in all those years, apart from filling in the potholes when the residents have complained.

I have read MP Guy Opperman's plans for Tynedale and Ponteland but he doesn't appear to be very much interested in the state of the roads in and around the village. I can't imagine too many residents in Ponteland getting over-excited about the dualling of the A696.

Eric Royle

Errington Road, Darras Hall

Double standards by council planners

I was amazed to read the article 'Affordable homes plan for green belt rejected' in the December issue about plans for 65 homes on the edge of Darras Hall.

The reasons given included no immediate access to shops, GP practices already stretched and not in keeping with the semi-rural location.

All these reasons were expressed by residents objecting to the extensive house building in Medburn, a hamlet which has grown from 50 to over 200 houses!

I wonder why the local planners looked more favourably on Darras Hall?

Margaret Chaytor

The Avenue, Medburn

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.

March issue deadlines: The deadline for all copy and adverts for the March issue is Monday February 12. Door to door distribution will be from Monday February 26 to Friday March 1. Businesses should be aware that all bookings for advertisements must be paid in full by the deadline to ensure placement in the March issue. Please visit ponteland-tc.gov.uk/pont-news-and-views for online issues and all updates.

What's on...

Ponteland Wildlife Group

John Hartshome will present 'Northumberland Peat Partnership' at 7.30pm on Tuesday February 6 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: February 7 – AGM, PC Brian Collins – Frauds and Scams and faith tea; March 6 – Life and Death in Rural Northumberland by Ken Charlton. We welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to join Ponteland u3a by calling the membership secretary on 01661 824953.

Plant Heritage NE Group

On Saturday February 10 at 2.30pm Advolly Richmond will present a talk on the 'Social History of Indoor Plants' via Zoom. To join the talk visit the Plant Heritage North East website at plantheritage.org.uk/local-groups/north-east. £5 fee for non-members. Contact: pat.skews@btinternet.com.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

On Monday February 12 at 2.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre we have John Martin speaking on 'China - an All-Consuming Dragon'.

Ponteland WI

Visitors are welcome to attend our meeting on Tuesday February 13 at 2pm at Merton Hall. Mrs Freda Thompson will be giving a talk entitled 'The Stephensons' about the famous North East engineering inventors. This month's competition is for a thimble. Our upcoming lunch dates are Monday February 5 and Monday March 4, both at Plants Plus at 12.30pm.

Ponteland Village WI

Our Resolution Meeting and get-together will be held on Tuesday February 13 at St Mary's Parish Centre at 7.30pm. 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. Contact: pontelandvillagewi@hotmail.com or find us on Facebook.

Callerton Garden and Flower Club

At our February meeting at Ponteland CIU Club Ponteland on Wednesday February 14 at 2pm our demonstrator is Christine Ogle with 'If you go down to the woods today'. Refreshments are available in the bar. Visitors always welcome, fee £7.

Ponteland Local History Society

'The Jarrow Crusade' will be the talk given by Amanda Hepburn on Thursday February 15 at 7.30pm at St Mary's Parish Centre. Visitors welcome, £2.

Ponteland Anti-Litter Squad

This new monthly litter picking group launches on Sunday February 18. Volunteers will be gathering in the car park on Callerton Lane beside the children's play park and Henry's Hut to litter pick there and along the bridleway from 12noon to 1.30pm. Future events will take place on the third Sunday each month throughout the year and all volunteers are welcome.

Ponteland Friendly Stitchers

Our next meeting will be on February 26 between 2pm and 4pm at St Mary's Parish Centre, when Joanna O'Neill will deliver workshop 'Felt Underneath'. Visitors are welcome - fee £5. Contact: emmadenham52@gmail.com.

Ponteland Lions Club

We are part of the biggest voluntary organisation in the world and hold our monthly bookstalls and have other fundraising events to support people in Ponteland and beyond. We meet on the second Wednesday in every month at Ponteland Methodist Church. Would you be interested? Come along at 7.30pm and see what we do. We also meet socially on the fourth Wednesday of the month at various restaurants and pubs. Contact Club President 2023/24 at phil@bivbowes.com.

World Day of Prayer Service

The annual World Day of Prayer Service will be held in St. Matthew's R.C. Church on Friday March 1 at 2pm. All are very welcome to attend and afternoon tea will follow!

Castle Wardens Lodge

The Castle Wardens Lodge meeting will be held at Falmouth House Masonic Hall, Throckley, on Friday March 1. Any man interested in joining should contact the Secretary Robin Ramsay on 01661 821877.

Ponteland Health Walks

Ponteland Health Walks meet every Tuesday at 10.30am outside Ponteland Leisure Centre. The free walks take 60 to 90 minutes on local footpaths. A good opportunity to walk safely, improve fitness and make new friends. Assistance dogs only please. Contact Gordon Allan on 07936 135469 for more information or just turn up, no notice required.

Ponteland 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.

Musical about Little Donkey composer coming to Ponteland

A new musical celebrating the life of the North East songwriter who found fame with his worldwide Christmas hit Little Donkey is being performed in Ponteland as part of a North-East tour.

Eric Boswell enjoyed great commercial success in the 1950s and 60s writing for stars including Matt Monro, Ricky Valance and Gracie Fields, who took Little Donkey to the top of the charts in 1959.

The popular Christmas tune was later a hit for many other artists around the world and became a regular fixture in school nativity plays and carol concerts.

A new musical about Boswell's life titled *The Donkey, The Whippet and the Giant Leek* will be performed by international opera stars Graeme Danby and Valerie Reid, who were personal friends of the composer in his later life.

The show features more than 20 of Boswell's hits and compositions including ballads and comic songs from his North East Songbook.

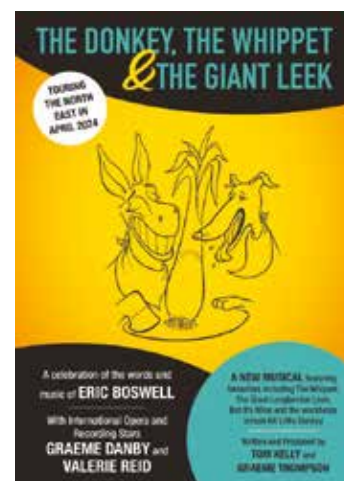
The production – written and devised by Tom Kelly and Graeme Thompson – charts Boswell's life and career from his early days in Millfield, Sunderland, to his final years in Humshaugh and Riding Mill, where he died in 2009 aged 88.

Songs including *The Whippet*, *The Ghost of St Mary's*, *Maybe This is Love*, *The Summer of Last Year* and *The Great Longbenton Leek* are featured in the new show.

Graeme said: "We got to know Eric towards the end of his life when we were recording his songs. I loved the fact he was writing these wonderful songs about life in this part of the country. He had a unique way of capturing the dialect, character and landscape of the North East – and his melodies are just gorgeous."

Valerie added: "We were privileged that he wrote a song for our wedding. Maybe 'This is Love' is about a Scottish lass meeting and marrying a Geordie lad – which is exactly our story. And we can't wait to perform it along with so many of Eric's other songs."

Venues for the tour include the Phoenix Theatre in Blyth, Queens Hall in Hexham, Alnwick Playhouse and the Customs House in South Shields. The show comes to Ponteland Methodist Church on April 13.



Paid and voluntary roles and new hobbies on offer at Over-50s Fair

More than 30 groups and organisations will be offering a range of paid and voluntary roles and new hobbies at an event being held in February.

The Over-50s Fair, being held on Thursday February 29 at Ponteland Memorial Hall, is being organised by MP Guy Opperman.

Local residents are encouraged to come along and speak to community groups and organisations who will be on hand to discuss volunteering opportunities, new hobbies, charity work and well-paid jobs.

The Hall will be open from 10am to 2pm.



WHEN?

Thursday,
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10AM - 2PM

WHERE?

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30+ COMMUNITY GROUPS ATTENDING

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Growing relationship bears first fruit



Pupils from the Year 6 Rotakids club are pictured with their harvest.

A growing relationship between a Ponteland school and local Rotarians has borne its first fruit.

For the first apples have been harvested from trees donated by Rotary Ponteland and planted in the school grounds at a 'Rotakids' meeting at Darras Hall Primary School.

In November a further 60 tree saplings and shrubs donated by the Woodland Trust and Rotary Ponteland, including a mixture of dog rose, hawthorn, hazel and rowan, were planted along the roadside at the Callerton Lane end of Rotary Way.



Make sure you're ready for phone network going digital

This summer telephone services which rely on the old landline system will be upgraded to digital services as part of a national switchover by the UK telecoms industry.

Devices which will be affected include:

- Home phones using a traditional landline
- Amplified phones (for people with hearing loss)
- Personal telecare products
- Fall and motion detectors
- Portable healthcare devices, eg ECG or oxygen monitors.

Your telephone provider will contact you in advance to give you a switchover date and advise what you need to do to ensure continuity of service.

If you – or someone you know – depends on their landline and/or uses a telecare device connected to a phone line such as a fall monitor, lifeline or personal alarm, you should contact the service provider to find out how the device will be affected.

Vulnerable users are entitled to a backup battery free of charge from their provider if they have critical services running like telecare/telehealth.

You should tell your telephone provider now if you have no broadband/internet or a mobile phone and therefore no other way to make emergency calls after the digital switchover. For more information visit openreach.com/upgrading-the-UK-to-digital-phone-lines/for-my-home-or-business or call your telephone provider.



Caring young artist back on the fundraising trail

A talented young artist who raised £1,000 in an exhibition last year to raise money for a friend's electric wheelchair appeal is back on the fundraising trail.

Jevindu Sanyuth Dissanayake was featured in Pont News and on the BBC after selling 15 of his own paintings at the exhibition last March at Ponteland's Café by Design to support the appeal for Freddie Tanner-Boyer.

Five-year-old Freddie, from Greenside in Gateshead, has spinal muscular atrophy and needed an electric wheelchair as he struggled outside with his manual chair. Family and friends launched a fundraising drive to enable the purchase of a Trekkinetic all-terrain chair and the appeal target was smashed with nearly £22,000 raised.

Now Jevindu is planning two more exhibitions to raise funds for Kalana Imanjith, 15, from Alawwa, Sri Lanka, who has acute myeloid leukaemia and needs a bone marrow transplant within weeks, and for the UK's first forest monastery.

The first – 'Chakra' – is being held at Dalton Village Hall on Saturday February 17 from 11.30am to 3.30pm. The Darras Hall Primary School pupil's artwork will be on sale, with some of the proceeds also funding new art materials for the prolific painter.

Children will also be able to try their own hand at painting at a kids' activity stall for £6 and other attractions will include a Sri Lankan savoury stall and free refreshments.

Jevindu, five, of Dinnington, is also planning another exhibition in March to raise funds for the Anukampa Bhikkuni project, which aims to establish the forest monastery in Oxford to enable full monastic ordination to women practising buddhism in the UK.

The Darras Hall Primary School pupil said: "I would like to raise money for the Anukampa Bhikkuni project this year to establish the first forest monastery in England so that women like my mummy could take full ordination in the future and have a safe established monastery to practice dhamma."

For more information about either exhibition contact jevindutoddlerartist@gmail.com.

Photo by Barry Pells.

Christmas activities raise £2,800 for needy children

Needy children will benefit from the hardworking Rotarians who had a hectic Christmas fundraising drive.

Rotary Ponteland presented a cheque for £2,800 to regional charity Children North-East after a series of events over the festive period.

Vice-President John Cooper said: "We would like to thank local businesses and members of the public of Ponteland for their generous

support to our Santa Sleigh runs, Christmas market, pub and club collection and charity disco held in December and look forward to your continuing support for our events in 2024."

If you would like to volunteer to help at future events, email info@rotaryponteland.org.uk.



Pictured left to right at the cheque presentation at the charity's Community Hub in Cowgate are: Children North East Fundraising Communications Officer Bethany Wilson; Rotary Ponteland President Peter Tincombe; Treasurer John Muir; Vice President John Cooper and Children North East Events and Community Officer Joanne King.



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