

pontnews&views

FREE monthly magazine for Ponteland and district

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Botswana geese line up top prize

OAP bag snatch appeal
**Candidates named for
new council election**
Last post for Lola



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If there is an issue you are concerned about please do not hesitate to contact me. I hold constituency surgeries in Ponteland and can also be contacted through my Westminster or Constituency offices. Alternatively you can keep up to date with my latest news and send me a message by logging on to www.peteratkinson.com.



WORKING FOR YOU www.peteratkinson.com



Claire's whistling geese WIN

As regular readers will know, we are always keen to use eye-catching photography in Pont News. Many thanks to Helen Olive for her stunning red kite image used in the March issue.

This month we feature another talented photographer – this time Claire Corbett from Ponteland Photographic Society.

New member Claire won the club's recent annual competition with her photograph 'Whistling Geese', used as this month's cover shot.

There was an excellent display of photographs by members at the Young at Heart event at the Leisure Centre last month. Local students, pictured above, kindly helped set up the display, which consisted of

examples of audio-visual work and a selection of prints from the competition.

New members, young and old, will be very welcome when the society resumes its Monday evening meetings in Merton Hall this October.

In the meantime please ring Mike Sadler on (01661) 823519 or Gary Smith on (0191) 2170038 if you would like more information about how the club can help your enjoyment of photography.

Goodbye **Lola!**

By Muriel Sobó

Pontland's postmistress, who has reigned at her counter for 20 years, has said her emotional farewells and a sincere thank you to all her loyal customers and to her staff at the Post Office.

Lola Bennett has worked for the Post Office since 1973 when she started as an assistant at Benwell and after spells at a number of POs, she was appointed to the Pontland Office in 1987.

She knows everyone in the village and it is with very mixed emotions that she gives up full-time work.

She will miss the camaraderie and support of her staff, Norma and Lesley; the fund-raising for PADAC when they all dressed up as doctors and nurses; but not the time when the safe timer was wrongly set after the clocks changed and they could not get at the cash for an hour after opening!

Peter, Lola's husband, is not in robust health and she is looking forward to the birth of another grandchild so there will still be lots to do.

A postmaster has already been appointed and he started work on April 14.




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News in Brief

Court rules licence hearing as 'unfair'

The licensing hearing for a new Ponteland restaurant is to be heard again in June after magistrates ruled that objectors were unfairly treated at the first one. The court directed Castle Morpeth Council's Licensing Sub-Committee to give residents more time to make their points after they were given just eight minutes in total to give their views in September last year, compared to 40 minutes for the applicant. At that hearing the Sub-Committee agreed to provide a licence to Ristorante Fratelli, part of the development at the former Bell Villas filling station, despite 77 letters of objection from residents in nearby streets Cecil Court, Mayfair Gardens and Bell Villas. One resident appealed the decision at South East Northumberland Law Courts. Magistrates decided that the appearance of fairness was not present at the hearing and ordered that the objectors and applicants must be allowed the same maximum amount of time to address the Sub-Committee at the new one.

North East England Group of the Alpine Garden Society

The last Group meeting of our season is on 12th May. We have two local and most entertaining speakers in the form of Alan Newton demonstrating how to grow in young peat and John Richards, Professor of Botany at Newcastle University showing us how he grows Petiolarid primulas. Our meeting take place in St Mary's Hall, Thornhill Road. The doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. The charge to visitors is £2 per meeting but we will not charge for your first visit.

Spring litter pick Saturday 26 April

Volunteers are asked to meet at 10am in the Memorial Hall Car Park. Litter pickers and bags will be provided. Refreshments available.

Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club

At the next meeting of the Ponteland Senior Gentlemen's Club at the Memorial Hall Ponteland on Monday 12th May 2pm for 2.30pm the speaker will be Prof. John Derry and his subject will be "Hindenberg and Ludendorf".

Ponteland United Reformed Church jumble & bric-a-brac sale

To be held in the Church Hall, Broadway, Darras Hall on Saturday 3rd May at 10am in aid of Church Funds.

Election candidates announced

Candidates for the May election for Northumberland's new unitary authority have been announced.

PONTELAND EAST

Mel Armstrong Con
David Cogan Lib Dem
John Potts Lab
Donald Williams Ind

PONTELAND NORTH

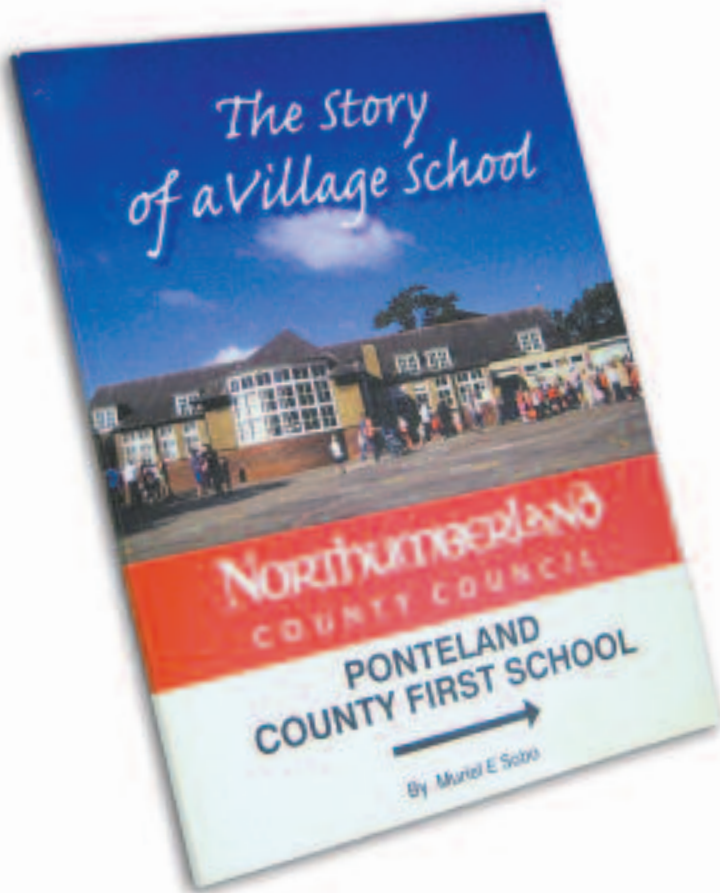
Peter Charleton Lib Dem
Richard Dodd Con
Mike Dungworth Lab
Jan Ostrowski UKIP

PONTELAND SOUTH WITH HEDDON

Andy Avery Lab
Peter Jackson Con
Chris Matthews Lib Dem

PONTELAND WEST

Veronica Jones Con
Paul Naughton Lib Dem
Michael Roe Lab
Peter Snowdon Green



School's 93-year history charted in new book

The fascinating 93-year history of Ponteland First School is charted in an excellent new book by village author Muriel Sobo.

Called *The Story of a Village School*, it offers a pictorial history with images going back to the 1920s, accompanied by a chronological account of the school's development from its opening in 1914 to the move to the new site last year.

Various past students are featured, along with teachers and headteachers.

Funding for the book came from the school's Parent Teacher Association, the Parish Council,

Castle Morpeth Borough Council and sponsors Paul Elliott (greengrocer), Ken Wilson (Snaith's), Ponteland Lions Club and Ponteland Rotary Club.

Proceeds will go to the PTA for student enrichment at the school's new building, opened last April on the neighbouring Coates site.

Copies are available from the First School, the Parish Office or by post by contacting Muriel Sobo on (01661) 871969. Cost is £6 or £7 by post.

Latest NEWS from Ponteland Parish Council



This report is based on the minutes of the Parish Council meeting on March 12

FORMER PARISH COUNCILLOR LINDLEY DEWHIRST

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Parish Council stood for a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Lindley Dewhirst who had sadly died recently.

PLANNING

Report on recent planning decisions:

33 West Road – rejected.

APPLICATION FOR GRANT – AGE CONCERN NORTHUMBERLAND

An application had been received from the above organisation to support its work throughout Northumberland, including Ponteland. A £250 grant was approved.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Site visit to Oxbow lake

It was agreed to appoint the Northumberland Wildlife Trust Ltd to prepare a management plan for the lake, and carry out weed clearance at the appropriate time in the sum of £1,000 (approx) from the Park Budget.

Moles in the Park

It was agreed to discuss the options with the "Friends" and seek advice from the Pest Control Officer prior to making any decision to treat the moles. Advise the resident of Pont Croft.

Vacant shop premises in Merton Way

It was agreed to write to the owners reminding them of their duty of care to ensure the property is safe, as there were concerns that it was not always so.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACES ORDER – CONSULTATION FROM CASTLE MORPETH BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Borough Council proposes to make Orders designating Morpeth and Ponteland for the purpose of restricting alcohol consumption. A map was included in the document. The Police would be able to confiscate alcohol from under-age drinkers and will also have powers to ban any offenders from the area for 48 hours.

Resolved: the Borough Council be advised that the Council welcomes

the proposal and trusts the Police will use the power to provide greater protection to the public.

PARK ENTRANCES DESIGN – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council had received a presentation and report from the Landscape Architect prior to the meeting.

Resolved: the design would now be released for general consultation, ie through *Pont News & Views*, the Library. Copies would also be issued to other local organisations.

DEVOLVED RESPONSIBILITIES

In preparation for the new single Unitary Authority, the Chairman, Councillor McKay, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had been looking at the services the Parish Council could provide, ie grass cutting, litter picking, graffiti removal, management of public toilets, weed control, minor maintenance of highways. The potential to carry out services locally by local contractors, and with a "rapid

response" attitude should appeal to residents.

Currently, the group were gathering information, but the programme depended on whether or not funding would be released from the new Authority to parish councils to carry out these additional functions, as this was crucial to the future of the proposal for devolved responsibilities.

Resolved: the Group continue to investigate the potential for increased local service provision and report back to the Council.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

The Council had kept its Council Tax charges to 1% for 2008/09.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON RECENT EVENTS

The Chairman had met with John Gray (Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership) re CCTV. The Council had been offered £1,000 towards the running costs of its CCTV system.

News in Brief

Tennis club seeks new members

Ponteland Lawn Tennis Club is one of the top tennis venues in Northumberland and would welcome new members. All standards and ages are welcome including complete beginners. The Tennis Club is located behind the Memorial Hall on Darras Road. We have artificial grass courts available for play from 9am to 10pm, 365 days a year. Tennis balls are provided in the Clubhouse and floodlight tokens are available from committee members. Ponteland

Middle School courts are available for play, incorporated in club membership. We incorporate club play, team play and junior club play. Tournaments are held annually. Coaching is provided by our resident coach Nick Clark. If you would like to become part of our family friendly club, please contact our Membership Secretary Christine Fair, tel (01661) 825776 or call at the clubhouse during play and pick up a Membership Application.

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New parish clerk announced

By Coun Robin Ramsay
Chairman Ponteland Parish Council

As previously reported, the Clerk to the Parish Council – Judith Oliver is retiring as from the end of April.

Judith has served us well for 13 years. Her hard work over the last 13 years has been much appreciated and is reflected in the many improvements that the council have been able to make to its services and to the environment.

Her sound advice and counselling have made the Chairman's task that much easier. All in all it is a difficult act to follow.

However we are pleased to welcome a worthy successor in Kath Mavin, our Deputy Clerk who has been with us for five years.



Newly appointed Clerk Kath Mavin (seated) with outgoing Clerk Judith Oliver and Chairman Coun Robin Ramsay.

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9.30am to 12.30pm

Pride in Ponteland

Ponteland Parish Council is a Quality Council serving 10,000 residents who want to make everyone feel "Pride in Ponteland". The Council is changing its designation to a Town Council from 1 May 2008. The Council is seeking to appoint an Assistant Clerk to support the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the Council. We are also seeking someone who has experience of dealing with the public and can provide an excellent 'front of house' service.

At least 3 years of relevant administration and reception experience together with excellent IT skills and the ability to work as part of a small team are essential.

For an application form, send a SAE to Ponteland Parish Council, The Verger's Cottage, Main Street, Ponteland, NE20 9NR or download from www.pontelandonline.co.uk

Closing date: Noon Friday 2 May 2008

Your letters...



Letters on all issues are welcomed by Pont News & Views. The Editor reserves the right to amend any submitted letters published, for legal or other reasons. All letters submitted should include the writer's name and address.

I was saddened to read of Stuart Oliver's death in the March issue of *Pont News & Views*.

We served together for eight years on Ponteland Parish Council during my Chairmanship. Although of different political persuasions (although not poles apart), Stuart quite properly would not allow party politics to influence any decision that he arrived at.

He was an excellent and caring County and Parish Councillor who served his community with distinction.

Without wishing to be too effusive in his praise, he was a charismatic man with a marvellous sense of humour and well loved by everyone who he came in contact with. Who cannot forget Stuart hacking around the Parish on his trustee steed or that mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

I will miss Stuart Oliver and send my deepest sympathy to his wife Molly and family.

Bill Cuthbertson
2 Clovelly Place
Darras Hall

I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed by Mr Earp in the March issue of your magazine.

Clearly steps need to be taken to try to halt the sad decline into suburbia which is becoming ever more apparent within the once landscape dominated frontages of the Darras Hall Estate.

In this regard, the recent statement by the Estate Committee that they "will no longer look favourably upon the removal of existing vegetation or the erection of walls with intermittent pillars and railings" is much to be welcomed.

However, the failure to adequately encompass this resolve in the newly revised byelaws is a matter of serious concern and can only lead to confusion. It is something that needs to be resolved as quickly as possible.

Already parts of the Estate are starting to look more like the nastier bits of Whitley Bay.

John Hague
High View
Darras Hall

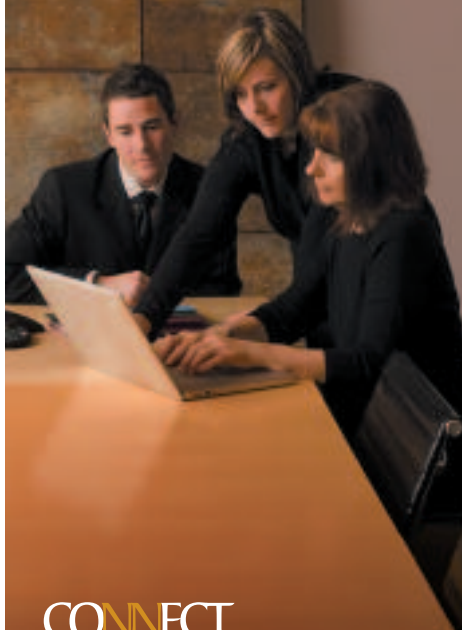
What do you think?



May deadlines

The May issue will be delivered the week beginning May 19. Deadline for all copy and adverts is Monday May 5.

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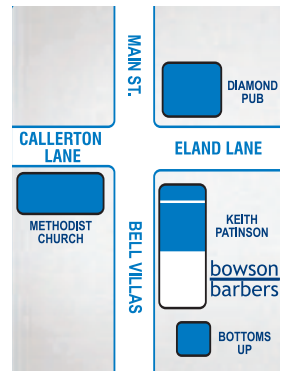
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OAP bag snatch appeal



Woman targeted in supermarket car park

By PC Jon Gray, Community Beat Officer, Ponteland

Since the last column, we've had 34 crimes reported in the area, that is from March 9 to April 10.

That is a slight increase in comparison to the same period of last year. Still, no house burglaries were reported, and vehicle crime has remained low.

The most concerning offence was the theft of a shoulder bag, that took place in the car park of the Somerfield store, Main Street, on March 26 around 6.15pm.

The victim was elderly and was about to reverse out of a parking bay when she was blocked in by the offenders' car. A man then opened the passenger door of her car and stole the bag from the footwell of the passenger seat. We haven't had one of these pre-planned type of offences here for some time. To this date, we haven't had any more reported - hopefully it was a one off. The only description of the vehicle was that it was a small red car.

Other offences have included an increase in scrap metal thefts, with the rural area being particularly vulnerable. A lot of the thefts have been of small amounts, easy to hide in the van amongst other low value scrap. Outside oil tanks have also been targeted in the rural area. If possible, it would be worth improving the locks on the tanks.

We also had a spate of people running away from taxis or, unluckily for them, trying to run away from taxis without paying the fare. Usually the offenders are young men, often in a group who have been drinking down town. May seem funny at the time, but the driver has to make a living and, like the ones that were detained recently, it can end in a free overnight stay at Bedlington, with the worry of a criminal caution or conviction to follow.

A number of shoplifting offences were reported, at Somerfield and at some of the

chemist shops in Ponteland, with drink (spirits) being the popular choice of loot, along with toiletries. A woman from Newcastle was detained recently and was remanded in custody whilst under investigation for some of these offences.

Violent offences have been very low - all the assaults that are currently being investigated over here have involved minor injury, and concern people who are known to each other.

Some readers will have made complaints about traffic recently. To keep you updated - on the more dangerous issue of people speeding in the restricted zones, the camera vans have been back and have caught people on Callerton Lane near the schools going over the 30mph limit. On the more nuisance side, the Highways dept. are still deciding on what type of restrictions should go down on Thornhill Road, beside the new first school. These matters are still being addressed. Readers will be aware that the Middle Drive entrance to Darras First School has been marked with the zig-zag keep off restrictions.

Youths hanging about - this was the last of the low marked 'red' areas that we had in the recent area wide survey. Nothing particularly new - I can remember youths used to hang around certain areas of the housing estates in the South and West of Sunderland. Still the same problem - boredom, time on their hands etc. And, as now, the vast majority behaving not too badly, mostly indulging in fooling around, perhaps being noisy, but their actions, on the whole, being pretty harmless.

There are more youth workers around now, there is more funding for youth facilities, especially in the less affluent areas. The new centre in Ponteland will be open shortly. The whole issue of younger people is very complex - there is no easy fix to the often

exaggerated problems associated with younger people in the more affluent areas (and other areas).

There is not time or space in this page to even attempt to scratch the surface. Concerning this area, the vast majority just require space to socialise in, areas where they can kick a football around and areas where they can cycle or skateboard without generating complaints.

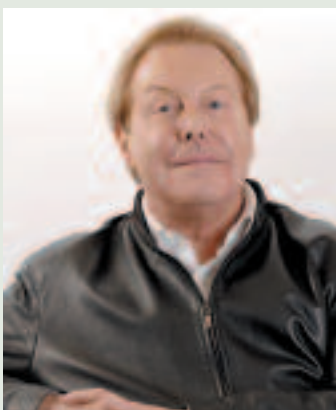
There are one or two in all generations who will go off and will stay off the rails, and will fall foul of the criminal justice system. Try and not perceive them as a threat. Yes, a pain in the rear end at times, but the attitude of some people in the area is to regard all people aged under 20 as a serious threat. They can hang around and socialise - we can't 'move them on', unless what they are doing is too boisterous and illegal.

No, we can't go back to the 'good old days', when the UK was covered in apple orchards (which I don't remember) which were always being raided by teenagers, only to be 'clipped around the ear' by the policeman (who presumably ate the apples as well).

I don't wish to cause offence to people, but I think this story swirls amongst the comfortable mists, through which 'Middle England' likes to view the past. One variation involved the storyteller, as a lad, taking a banana, but the rest about being assaulted by the policeman was the same - this was set in, I think, Dorset, which must have a banana crop once in a while.

Seriously, the younger people in this area with very few exceptions are not bad - they are not deserving of 'criminal' labels - most have interests and an idea of what they want to do in the future. Try not to be afraid of them.

TV's Better Homes star to give advice at Kirkley Hall



Homeowners in need of inspiration can join an internationally-renowned interior designer for expert advice and decorating tips at an event due to take place in the elegant surroundings of Kirkley Hall next month.

TV celebrity George Bond will be offering home makeover ideas in an exclusive talk on Thursday 1st May at the 17th Century Hall.

George, who has his own interior design company in Jesmond, is well-known to the general public through his many appearances on national television - including Granada Television's 'Better Homes' with Carol Vorderman and through his appearances at a number of trade events and exhibitions.

The event is part of an exciting new programme for the Spring and Summer at Kirkley Hall. Later

this summer Antiques Roadshow star Eric Knowles will also feature. Proceeds from the events benefit the development of the student facilities and activities at Northumberland College's campuses.

For further information or to book a place on George's inspiring talk, call the operations team at Kirkley Hall on (01670) 841235. Tickets cost £20pp including a light lunch.



New entrance for the Park

As part of the master plan for the Park, the Council is proposing a new entrance from Main Street into the Park.

A design brief was issued and various landscape designers were approached and Guy Rawlinson was appointed to prepare preliminary proposals.

The brief called for "a design to identify the Park's existence, be clearly visible to visitors and potential users. It should be welcoming, attract visitors' interest, reflect the entrance surroundings, and be expressive of the Park ambience. They should also provide a visual image that will reflect and enhance the pride of the community in their facility – the Park".

The picture shows the design that has been endorsed by the council for comments from the whole community. It will use high quality materials, carefully matched to the existing adjacent materials.

The existing bus shelter will be demolished and replaced with a timber shelter nearer to Darras Road. Fuller details are available for viewing in the Library and the Verger's cottage.

Going for gold

Although spring has just arrived, Ponteland Parish Council Environment Working Party have their sights and thoughts set very much on summer.

As readers will know, last year Ponteland won a Silver award in the Northumbria in Bloom competition. With the entry this year, we are determined to win a Gold Award.

The beautiful floral displays last year attracted lots of compliments from residents and visitors to Ponteland.

Coming through the village edged with its colourful and pretty hanging baskets, flowering tubs and flower beds, gave everyone a feel good factor about being in Ponteland.

The village park which looks better and better thanks to the hard work of the Friends of Ponteland Park added to the high marks awarded in the competition. However, we know that we can do even better and this year we intend to prove it.

The Environment Working Party is currently seeking sponsorship from local businesses in the village and at Broadway on Darras Hall, to assist with the provision and after care of the hanging baskets etc.

So far the businesses who have been approached have been very generous in their donations and it is hoped that those who are still to be seen will be equally generous. A hanging basket can be sponsored for as little as £40 and a barrier basket for £80.

All remaining businesses will be contacted in the next two weeks, but anyone wanting to make a donation can do so by contacting the Ponteland Parish Council Office, Verger's Cottage, Main Street, Ponteland, or by telephoning (01661) 825092.

The Parish Council would like to thank the following for the sponsorship already received:

Nicholson & Morgan, Sainsbury, Peter Harrison Business Equipment, Ponteland News, Armstrong Effluent Disposal, S Brooks – Coal Merchant, Carousel Gifts, Aubury Interior Design, Panache, Altered Images, Greenscene Garden Design, NCG Computers, Ponteland Patios, Hadrian Motorbikes.

Everyone can play their part in steering Ponteland towards winning a Gold award by helping to keep the village tidy and litter free.

News in Brief

Music in St. Mary's

On Saturday May 24th at 7.30pm in St Mary's Church there will be a concert by the Prince Bishops Brass Ensemble. This is a group of brass playing friends who met each other whilst playing at various locations around the North of England. The group are committed performers and strongly believe that live music should be exciting and entertaining. A concert by the Prince Bishops Brass takes you on a tour of all musical styles from Baroque to Big Band. Tickets are £6 and include refreshments. They are available from the Church Office on 824470 or from June Reed on 825899. Any proceeds will go to Air Ambulance North East.

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Update from



**Ponteland
Community
Partnership**

Notice of AGM

The 2008 AGM of Ponteland Community Partnership will be held on Wednesday 21st May at 7pm at Ponteland Leisure Centre. Nominations for membership of the Executive Council and for the posts of Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary should be submitted in writing not later than Wednesday 7th May to Joanne Luther, Principal Regeneration and Partnerships Officer, Castle Morpeth Borough Council, Longhirst Hall, Morpeth, NE61 3LR.

Village centre regeneration – draft design brief

After the three drop-in events held in January, a public meeting was held in Ponteland Memorial Hall on 28th February to discuss the comments raised from the publication of the draft design brief. Over

60 people attended, and a presentation was given by the regeneration sub-group chairman Raymond Sproul. This was generally well received, with many valid questions asked, culminating in a round of applause at the end of the ensuing discussion. The draft design brief will now proceed to the next stage of seeking initial expressions of interest from suitable developers who wish to be included on the pre-qualification list for the project. It is intended that the complete design brief will be sent to chosen developers by the end of June, with proposals to be submitted by the end of September, and the selected designs put out to public consultation by the end of December.

Local government reorganisation

Since the original proposals for Characteristic and Belonging Community Boundaries appeared in the November

2007 issue of *Pont News & Views*, Northumberland County Council has seen fit to re-examine and amend these boundaries. Four options for Castle Morpeth have been put forward for limited consultation, and the county council's preferred option would see the three Characteristic Communities being North, West and South-East Northumberland, and the Ponteland Belonging Community encompassing Stamfordham, Capheaton, Belsay and Whalton. Options 1 and 2 show the Ponteland Belonging Community as that shown in November 2007, i.e. as the existing Parish boundary. Option 3 adds Stamfordham. The Community Partnership has decided to form a Local Government Reorganisation sub-group to monitor changes that could occur to our current PCP boundary, and would therefore welcome expressions of interest from Partnership members wishing to participate.

*Brian Prickett
Chairman
Ponteland Community Partnership*

Church hosts Russian ensemble

Ponteland United Reformed Church is hosting a professional ensemble of soloists from St Petersburg later this month.

Hermitage Ensemble are performing a variety of Russian Orthodox and traditional folk songs at the URC, Broadway, Darras Hall, at 7pm on Wednesday April 30.

Their global tour has also taken in Germany, Denmark, Australia, Switzerland and France. For more see their website at

<http://hermitage.seenworks.com>

Admission is by ticket only, costing £10 and available from church members or Raymond Tipping on (01661) 825015.

Hermitage Ensemble pictured at an earlier visit in 2006.



KIRKLEY HALL FORTHCOMING EVENTS MAY 2008



CREATE IDEAS FOR YOUR HOME

Thursday 1st May, 10am - 1pm
Join internationally-renowned interior designer George Bond for expert advice and ideas to decorate your home. www.georgebond.tv £20pp including a light lunch

PLANT A HANGING BASKET

Saturday 3rd May, 10.30am - 12.30pm
Enjoy a demonstration of planting up a hanging basket then have a try yourself. Bring your own hanging basket or purchase one on the day. (Plants included). £20pp, including tea and cake

SUNDAY TEA DANCE

Sunday 4th May - 3pm - 6pm
Ballroom dancing, tea and biscuits. All ages are welcome - come along and have some fun! £6pp

SIMPLE PROPAGATION

Thursday 8th May, 10.30am - 12.30pm
Learn simple propagation methods. A practical session - bring gloves and secateurs and wear practical clothing. £14.50pp, including tea and cake

YOGA AND MEDITATION

Saturday 10th May, 1pm - 4pm
An afternoon of yoga and relaxation with Susan Johnson, British Wheel of Yoga teacher. Bring yoga mat and blanket. £15pp including refreshments

CARVERY SUNDAY LUNCH

Sunday 11th and Sunday 25th May
Delicious three course carvery lunch with coffee and mints. £13.95pp

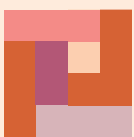
WATERCOLOUR CLASS WITH MATT FORSTER

Tuesday 13th May, 9.30am - 4pm
A demonstration of techniques and skills with well known North East artist Matt Forster. £25pp including a light lunch

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