

pontnews&views

FREE monthly magazine for Ponteland and district

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***Your views on the
village revamp plans***

***Police appeal over
Darras arson attacks***

***Pont restaurant
plan rejected***

Eco kids living the good life

***School holds open day
before demolition***

Say farewell to first school at open day

Appeal for memorabilia

By Muriel Sobo

Ponteland village school, which opened in August 1914, will close at the end of this term and the buildings will be pulled down.

Local residents and interested people are invited in for a last look around this iconic building which has stood in the centre of the village for nearly 93 years.

The date is **Tuesday 13 March** and there will be tours arranged at 10am, 2pm and 4pm.

If you wish to go at either 10am or 2pm please contact the secretary Mrs Grant on (01661) 822103,



Closing soon – Ponteland First School

as the school will be in session and they need to know the numbers.

An exhibition of photographs and memorabilia is being put together but more items are needed. Photos, school reports, scrapbooks, etc will be very welcome. There is not a lot of time, so please look in your attics, sort out the albums and contact the school.

Pupils and staff move to their new £6m building next door at the start of the summer term.

Housing plan for 'the original' Darras Hall thrown out

Plans to build four homes on land housing the original Darras Hall have been rejected.

The application for the rear garden of 53 Edge Hill was recommended for refusal by Borough Council planning officers.

Their report says: "To locate four dwellings at the rear of this plot would be an unacceptable form of backland development that would detract from the amenity that nearby residents currently enjoy."

Seven neighbour objections were lodged, with comments including the number of trees which would have to be felled, the historic significance of the site, evidence of bats, red squirrels and nesting sparrow hawks and the loss of privacy to neighbouring homes.

Councillors rejected the scheme unanimously at their meeting last Tuesday night.

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Eco kids live the good life

Youngsters create vegetable patch and compost heap

Children at a Ponteland school will be living the good life in a bid to do their bit for the environment.

For the youngsters at Ponteland Middle School are to create a vegetable patch, complete with its own compost heap.

Last year *Pont News & Views* told how the school was setting the green example after asking for extra blue bins from Castle Morpeth Borough Council to cope with all the recycling pupils and staff were doing.

But now the children are taking their eco campaign a step further. They have carried out a carbon blueprint, which revealed pupils and staff were using 772kg of CO2 a day commuting to and from school and 691kg of CO2 in

energy use. A large wall chart details all the findings.

And as well as trying to reduce the harmful emissions they generate by walking to school more often and taking measures such as using energy efficient light bulbs, they are also undertaking some carbon offsetting.

They have gone back to the Council, which donated a composting bin, and they also plan to plant some trees in the spring as part of a new wildlife area. The compost they produce will be used on the new vegetable patch.

Adam Barker, 13, is on the eco team. He said: "We are all going to try and do our bit, walking to school more often, ensuring we turn off monitors

and unwanted lights. We're thinking about creating a wildlife zone down in the meadow and we've got new recycling bins in every classroom."

The children's efforts have already led to two awards – bronze and silver from the Eco-Schools organisation. They are hoping for a gold, and will also be entering the One NorthEast/Design Council *Designs of the time 2007* awards.

School governor Coun Irene Brumwell said: "I feel the children are once again sending out a positive message with their excellent attitude towards the environment. It's really marvellous what they are doing."





Morpeth Market Survey



Q1 DO USE THE MARKET?

Yes

No (go to Q3)

Q2 IF YES, HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE IT?

every week (go to Q4)

once or twice a month (go to Q4)

a few times per year (go to Q4)

less often (go to Q4)

don't know (go to Q4)

Q3 IF NO, WHY DO YOU NOT USE THE MARKET?

It's not big enough
(end of survey – thank you)

Wednesday is unsuitable for me
(end of survey – thank you)

The location is not convenient for me
(end of survey – thank you)

It doesn't sell the things I want to buy
(end of survey – thank you)

It's too expensive
(end of survey – thank you)

I don't like the quality of the goods
(end of survey – thank you)

Other (please write in)

Q4 WHAT DO YOU USUALLY BUY FROM THE MARKET?

Q5 HOW SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE LOCATION OF THE MARKET?

Very satisfied (go to Q7)

Quite satisfied (go to Q7)

Neither satisfied or dissatisfied (go to Q7)

Quite dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Q6 WHY ARE YOU DISSATISFIED WITH THE LOCATION?

Q7 HOW DO YOU USUALLY TRAVEL TO THE MARKET?

on foot

by car

by bus

by bicycle

by another method

Q8 WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THE MARKET BEING HELD ON A WEDNESDAY?

Q9 DO YOU THINK ANOTHER DAY WOULD BE MORE SUITABLE? PLEASE GIVE DETAILS

Q10 HOW SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE CURRENT RANGE OF STALLS AND PRODUCTS AVAILABLE?

very satisfied (go to Q12)

quite satisfied (go to Q12)

neither satisfied or dissatisfied (go to Q12)

quite dissatisfied

very dissatisfied

Q11 WHY ARE YOU DISSATISFIED WITH THE RANGE OF PRODUCTS AND STALLS AVAILABLE? PLEASE GIVE DETAILS

Q12 WHAT KIND OF STALLS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ON THE MARKET? PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

crafts fresh products

confectionary organic foods

music clothing / footwear

bags and accessories charity stall

hot / fast food furniture

antiques

specialist products e.g. cheese, preserves

other (please write in)

Q13 PLEASE WRITE ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU HAVE ON THE MARKET BELOW:

Please send your completed survey to Joanne Luther, CMBC, Longhirst Hall, Northumberland, NE61 3LR or fill it in online at www.castlemorpeth.gov.uk

Lions' charity night raises £1,250 for Cancer Research

Joint Presidents Jim Robertson and John Harvey with Carol Bennett of Cancer Research UK

By Muriel Sobo

Ponteland Lions Club not only had a great night out at their 25th Charter Night held last year at Dissington Hall, but also raised £1,250 for charity.

Joint President John Harvey chose Cancer Research, which runs a laboratory at Newcastle University. Their fund raiser Carol Bennett came to the Lions' meeting to receive the cheque and she gave a short talk about their work.

The Lions recently entertained 170 over-60s in the Memorial Hall. The pensioners were delighted by the song and dance routines of the Balliol Opera group, then they were served home-made teas by Lions and friends, followed by 'eyes down' for a Bingo session.

Raffle prizes, donated by local businesses, were distributed to round off a very enjoyable afternoon.



Kirkley Hall

Kirkley Hall is set in picturesque tranquil grounds with four main function rooms available for hire for any type of corporate or social event including weddings, conferences, and private functions.

Forthcoming Events

~ Carvery Sunday Lunches ~

3 Course meal, coffee and mints,
£12.95 per person.

25th February, 11th March

~ Mothering Sunday Lunch ~

3 Course meal, coffee and mints,
£15.95 per person.
to include a special Mother's day treat.

18th March

~ Sunday Tea Dances ~

Tickets are £5 per person
to include Tea and Biscuits.

4th March, 1st April – 3pm to 6pm

~ Wedding Fair ~

Come along to our wedding fair where a wide range of wedding service and product providers will help you make those important decisions.

25th March – 12pm to 4pm

Booking is essential for the above events For more information or to make a reservation please contact our Operations Team on: Tel: 01670 841235 Email: hg.kirkley@northland.ac.uk

Latest NEWS from Ponteland Parish Council



This report is based on the minutes from the Parish Council meeting on January 18.

PLANNING

Report on recent planning decisions

The Chairman reported: 9 Runnymede Road – Demolition and erection of new dwelling - **Refused**

Castle Morpeth Borough Council – Local Development Framework – Local Development Scheme – New Revision

It was reported that a new revision to the Local Development Scheme had been made relating to the Green Belt. Consultation on the Core Strategy – Preferred Options document would be out for consultation from 17 February to 30 March 2007.

APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS

Dalton Village Hall

A grant of £650 was awarded to Dalton Village Hall.

Castle Morpeth Citizen's Advice Bureau

A request for a grant towards the costs of providing the above service had been received. The organisation had requested £3,000 but the Parish Council had limited funds available from the Grants budget this year. A grant of £1,500 was awarded to the Bureau and the Parish Council will examine giving a further grant at the end of this financial year.

BUDGET 2007/08

The draft budget for 2007/08 had been circulated to Councillors. It was agreed to increase the sum included for the annual grant to the Memorial Hall to £5,150 and to specify the sum to be allocated to the Castle Morpeth Citizens Advice Bureau and the remainder to be utilised for grants to voluntary organisations and charities. The Budget was approved unanimously and the Parish Council will precept the sum of £155,541 on Castle Morpeth Borough Council for the year 2007/08.

ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY

Broadway Shopping Centre – Refurbishment of buildings

If there was no progress on this matter to write again to the agents.

Sites for New Waste Bins/Dog Waste Bins

Install one new waste bin near the seat on Merton Way and discuss other options with a site plan indicating where existing bins were.

Replacement of Milbourne Millennium Oak Tree

Coun Butler agreed to contact Milbourne Church Council on the possibility of planting a new Oak tree and surround within the Church grounds, as the original site was unsuitable for a replacement tree.

Informal meeting with Northumbria Police

It was reported that the meeting would be held on Monday 19 February at 9.30am in the Parish Office. Councillors were asked to submit items for discussion.

CASTLE MORPETH BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT

Update on recent Regeneration meeting

A meeting of the Steering Group had been held on 8 January and discussion had been held as to how to proceed. Members had been pleased with the turnout at the meeting in December although disappointed at the lack of younger people in attendance. It was reported that a questionnaire was to be circulated with the January edition of Pont News and Views. It would also be available on the websites and in the library. The schools would also be involved in this process. It was hoped to include a report on the result of this consultation in the April edition of Pont News and Views.

Car Parking Order – Ponteland

It was reported that the Borough Council proposed to make a car parking order for the three Borough car parks in Ponteland including the lorry park. This had to be the subject of consultation with

Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Police.

Government White Paper – Building Stronger Communities

It was reported that the Borough Council had, along with the other five districts in Northumberland, endorsed a proposal for two unitary authorities in Northumberland in response to the above-mentioned document.

Large scale voluntary transfer

It was reported that the majority of tenants had voted in favour of transfer to a private landlord.

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Outline proposals for single unitary council for Northumberland

Information relating to the above proposal had been circulated.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON RECENT EVENTS

Opening of Park Paths Event – 19.12.06

The Mayor and Mayoress of the Borough Council had carried out the opening of the paths. The Mayor had kindly agreed to donate a seat for the Park and the thanks of the Parish Council would be conveyed to Coun Proudlock.

Chairman's Christmas Event – 19.12.06

The event had been well attended and the venue had proved to be most successful.

Christmas Lights

There had been an excellent display of Christmas Lights last year and it was agreed that a letter be sent to the County Council thanking their staff for the way in which the lights had been displayed.

Ponteland Police Station

It was reported that the local police station would shortly close to the public, with the transfer of the counter staff to elsewhere in the force. The station would still be used as a base for officers in Ponteland and a telephone would be placed outside for use by the public.

Rotary Club – Duck Race 2007

In response to a request from the Rotary Club it was agreed that they could use the park for the annual duck race on Sunday September 2 from 1.30pm to 4.30pm.

PONTELAND PARISH COUNCIL CONTACTS

ADDRESS: The Verger's Cottage, Main Street, Ponteland, NE20 9NR

TEL: (01661) 825092

Email: pontelandpc@btconnect.com

Web: www.pontelandparishcouncil.org.uk

Clerk to the Council: Judith Oliver

Deputy Clerk: Kathleen Mavin

Councillors:

WARD	NAME	ADDRESS	TEL NO
NORTH	David Butler	8 Ladywell Way, Ponteland, NE20 9TB	823664
	Archibold Stafford Cave	17 Kirkley Drive, Ponteland, NE20 9QP	823368
	Edward 'Peter' Charleton	26 Beechwood Place, Ponteland, NE20 9QR	823503
EAST	Sheila Elizabeth Jill Campbell	44 Ridgely Drive, Ponteland, NE20 9BL	822201
	Thomas 'Alan' Chilton	Field House, Prestwick, Ponteland, NE20 9TX	825456
	Christopher John Matthew	57 Ridgely Drive, Ponteland, NE20 9BJ	872580
SOUTH	Irene Brumwell	13 Greenacres, Ponteland, NE20 9RT	823304
	Vera Lonsdale	18 Darras Mews, Ponteland, NE20 9LR	821629
	Robin Guy Ramsay	11a The Rise, Ponteland, NE20 9LJ	821877
WEST	Joyce Butcher	16 Meadowvale, Ponteland, NE20 9NF	871148
	John Gilbert Colvin	34 Beech Court, Ponteland, NE20 9NE	824938
	Francis Andrew Harrington	"Twizell House," Twizell, Kirkley, NE20 0AL	01670 775433



Planners reject “ridiculous” restaurant plan

Councillors have unanimously rejected plans for a new restaurant planned for former offices above Ponteland’s Barclays Bank.

Developers UGC Holdings had been offering an unusual extra course, with a valet service for diners, with cars taken away and parked in local public car parks, including those at the Memorial Hall, Merton Way and Thornhill Road.

Their planning application to Castle Morpeth Council said 10 jobs would be created, with the premises extended to both sides, rear and a third storey, to house a 260 sq m dining area and 43 sq m bar area. Eight parking spaces would be available at the Seven Stars pub opposite, with five behind the bank.

But officers said the proposed extensions were ‘inappropriate for this location in terms of scale, massing and design in relation to the existing building, the character of the streetscape and the Conservation Area as a whole including important buildings, most notably the nearby

scheduled monument the Pele Tower’.

Objections came from the Parish Council, the County Council’s listed buildings officer, highways department and the conservation officer and an urban design consultant, along with 16 neighbours.

Coun Peter Charleton told the planning meeting: “I find this the most ridiculous plan we have ever had to consider.”

Committee chairman Coun Frank Harrington added: “I’ve been horrified by this application.”

News in brief...

Ponteland United Reformed Church

SALE. Nearly new clothes, linen, books, hardware, bric-a-brac. Friday March 9, 10am-4pm, Sat March 10, 10am-11.30am. Friday only – home made cakes. Tea and coffee on sale. Admission 20p. The Broadway, Darras Hall.

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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.

The debate over the future of Merton Way and the emerging development at Bell Villas lead this month's topics.

Few would dispute that the Merton Way shopping centre is in need of refurbishment.

However, the photograph on the cover of the January issue, purporting to show how run-down, even derelict it is, is a complete misrepresentation.

Since Ponteland is a village, not a town, some shops close on a Saturday afternoon. Those that do open all day are deliberately excluded from view. Other businesses in the photograph are due to open, but not until 5.30pm.

None of this is mentioned. The most prominent item in the cover shot, occupying one eighth of the picture area, is a "for sale" notice. The second view, taken from the other end of the shopping centre, again deliberately omits the shops that are open but does include this one boarded-up shop (not "shops" as stated below the photograph).

My point is that these tendentious images are of a piece with the whole presentation of the proposed redevelopment of the village centre.

Those working on the proposals have produced a well-promoted creation which has an apparently gathering momentum of its own, but which fails to reflect both reality and, more particularly, the wishes of the great majority of those who live in and around Ponteland.

This hubris was glaringly exposed at the December meeting where the proposals, effectively presented as a fait accompli, were met with strong opposition from concerned residents, some having qualifications in architecture and development.

Fortunately on this occasion, councillors and planners were left in no doubt as to the strength of public feeling about the proposals and did leave with the points you list in red on your centre page spread, issues which have been incorporated to a greater or lesser extent in the survey.

That experience did, however, severely dent my faith that our elected representatives and the borough planning officers, left to themselves, would act with some sympathy for the open and pleasant character of the village centre or show any regard to the wishes of residents.

I have to say that my faith has not been restored by the unsympathetic shed-like structure being built right up against the pavement opposite the Bell Villas conservation area.

It is only now, after December's meeting, that there is to be a proper, documented and widely circulated survey of opinion. It is hoped that as many as possible, whatever their views, complete and submit it – and take a continuing and lively interest in subsequent discussions and proposals.

Brian L. Edlin

I suspect that I am not the only resident to be taken aback by the sight of the tin roofed shed that has elbowed its way to the front between the Police Station and Cecil Court, introducing a substantial retail operation slap bang in the middle of what, in recent years, had become a predominantly residential area.

It is difficult to envisage a building form that would be more incompatible with its surroundings than this structure. It fails to establish any kind of architectural relationship with either the Police building, the flats on the opposite boundary, or the traditional cottages on the other side of the road.

This is the second time that a former petrol filling station site within the village has been taken over by a supermarket. In the previous case, the building currently occupied by Somerfields, the advice of the Fine Arts Commission was sought in order to ensure that the building fitted satisfactorily into the village scene. All in all they did not do a bad job.

This time around I guess the worthy commissioners must have been out to lunch when the planners called.

**John Hague
High View, Ponteland**

I would like to endorse the views of Mr Philip Ham (January issue).

We must indeed be on our guard against our so called "elected" officials. It is not for them to assume anything, especially as in the views of Mr Walker, whose comments

on the missing 11,000 at the December meeting, must – because of their absence – be in the same mind as himself. What a load of tosh.

If everything in Mr Ham's letter is fact, then the undertones are very worrying indeed. Ponteland is a lovely village that needs a little TLC, not some grandiose £17m project that, if it ever does take place, will no doubt come in well over budget.

It is not only Ponteland as a village that is under threat; this sort of decimation is going on all over England.

Don't let Ponteland fall prey to the predators. Be proud of your village and enjoy it while you can, because if Option 4 is unleashed, Ponteland will cease to be a village. Remember, Kingston Park was once all fields.

A worried Ponteland resident

**What do you think?
Write to Pont News &
Views**



DEADLINE FOR MARCH MAGAZINE

All copy/adverts for the March magazine, being distributed the week beginning Monday, March 19, need to be in by **Monday March 5** to the email/home addresses on p2.

News in brief...

Ponteland Senior Gentleman's Club

Spring speakers are:

March 12 Mr Peter Lewis

Nobody loves a critic

April 16 Chf Const Michael Craik

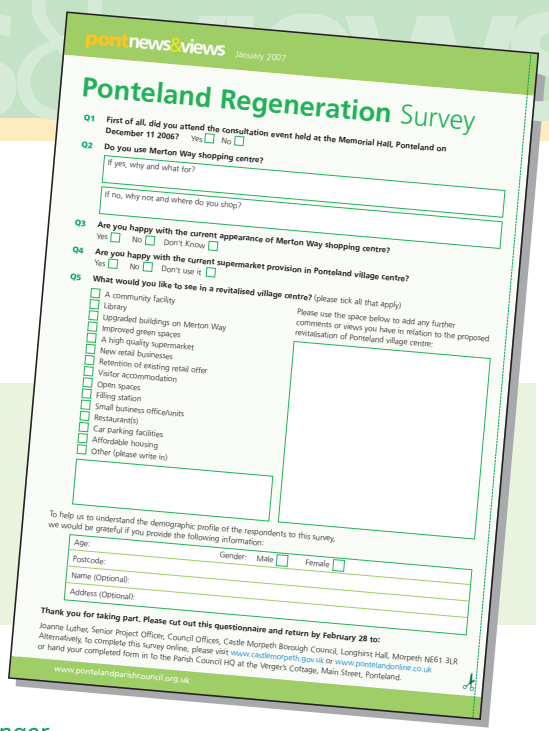
Police update

May 14 Prof John Derry

The Bavarian Corporal (Hitler)

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at the Memorial Hall, Ponteland, starting at 2.30pm. The annual subscription is £10. For more information contact Spenser Mullins on (01661) 820754.

Your responses to the regeneration survey



Dozens of villagers have already completed the online survey asking for your views on the village centre regeneration plans, which can be found at www.castlemorpeth.gov.uk. Here are a few of the varied views put forward so far. The consultation is open until February 28.

'I'm delighted that the village centre will be renovated and have been impressed with the efforts local government have made to consult with local residents. This level of consultation should be advertised as a model of good local government. I do not see the need for a 'quality' supermarket given that we will have two (albeit smaller) convenience stores in the village soon. If the centre could be redeveloped in such a way that provides opportunities for small businesses to flourish - and sell locally sourced produce I think the goodwill of locals will be won and the long term viability businesses will be ensured.'

'A high quality supermarket would be welcome - what about Waitrose? Also a filling station is desperately needed near to village centre - somewhere near to Prestwick Road Ends would be ideal.'

'A large supermarket in the centre of Ponteland would be a complete disaster. The increased traffic of supplies and mess from the rubbish generated would be distressing for all residents. What we need is an improvement to the existing facilities. The owner should be forced into updating these buildings to fit into the village.'

'I would like to see an area with protection for wheelchair and pushchairs, a covered-in area away from bad weather. Maybe an area similar to Cramlington or Killingworth, but on a smaller scale.'

'I would prefer a facelift to the existing shopping centre to maintain a village feel and appearance.'

'Whatever the outcome you will never please all of the people all

of the time; there appears to be a great amount of apathy. You are right to assume these people are happy to go with the most radical decision; if they weren't they would soon shout up. I feel that whatever decision is made the existing retailers must be given first refusal of a new unit and also must have their rents capped to protect them.'

'The plan needs to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport to keep down the number of cars in the village.'

'We use the shops in Ponteland and will continue to do so. Replace them by all means, because they are awful to look at but it is the character, the people who work there, the friendliness that makes Ponteland shops, not the actual buildings themselves. A nice parade of shops, possibly with a stone frontage meandering down through the village - that is what is needed. Not some concrete and metal panel monstrosity.'

'Both Merton Way and the Broadway on Darras Hall should be knocked down and started again. A more village high street similar to Corbridge or Yarm should be created.'

'All that is required is a refurbishment programme as outlined in Option 1 which would need to include the Library.'

'Ponteland lacks variety in shops. You can't even buy a pair of shoes without having to travel to Kingstow Park or Cramlington. We need a variety of shops offering substantially more than what is on offer at present. More affordable housing needs to be built - either council/housing association owned or for 1st time buyers as it is virtually impossible for the younger generation to stay in the village they were

brought up in. More should be done to involve the younger generation in planning this regeneration - then they will be proud to have taken part and will look after whatever has been done for them - after all it is them and their future families that will hopefully continue to reside here in Ponteland.'

'I would very much regret the loss of the car park next to the church hall which is used by elderly and disabled residents to access the nearby facilities i.e.

church, church hall. The proposed new car park would be too far away to be a practical alternative. Yes, Merton Way needs to be revitalized but, sadly, it seems that the members of the steering group have already made up their minds about what provision is needed in Ponteland. I hope that the councillors involved will listen carefully to the views of those residents who elected them, or our village could lose a great deal of its character.'

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News in brief...

Merton Hall Recreation Centre

By Sheila Campbell, Chairman/Secretary

Merton Hall is for everyone. No membership is needed. It is warm and welcoming, open six mornings a week from 9.30am until 11.30am for coffee, tea and friendship at very modest prices, served by our volunteer ladies.

Daily newspapers are there for you to read. We are bursting with activities every day, including bridge, whist, art, photography, and history clubs. Tai Chi and the WI market are monthly. Citizen's Advice Bureau have a session on a Tuesday morning from 10am to 12noon and the Stroke Club also meet on Tuesdays.

Every group has representation on the management committee to ensure that we provide opportunities for everyone. Central to the village, have a cuppa while you meet your many friends and neighbours. Do come in – you will be made most welcome.

Ponteland Womens' Institute Fund Raising Coffee Morning

St Mary's Church Hall, Thornhill Road from 10am until 11.30am on March 17th. Coffee and scones; raffle; various stalls: cakes, bric-a-brac, books, plants. Please come and support us.

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Meadowfield Ind. Est.
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Arson attacks, a nasty assault and a good old fashioned police chase

Eventful month, but serious crime rates remain low

By PC Jon Gray,
Community Beat Officer, Ponteland

The number of crimes reported since the last publication have not shown any increase, compared with the same period of last year.

No house burglaries were reported. One shed was broken into on Darras Hall over a week night in February, with a lawnmower being stolen. Damage was caused to a car on Darras Hall on two occasions, with a car's locks being damaged in a car park behind Bell Villas early one weekday evening.

Hopefully the spate of shoplifting offences that took place over December has come to an end, due to improved security in the targeted stores and the interviewing of certain individuals from out of this area.

SERIOUS ASSAULT

One serious assault took place in the centre of Ponteland during the early hours of January 12, when a young man received nasty facial injuries, including a fractured cheekbone. If anyone has any information about this one, we would be grateful for it.

ARSON ATTACKS

The most publicised offences over this period were the two arsons on the western block of the Broadway shopping precinct. Most of the damage was caused to the Carousel premises, whilst the newsagents were lucky in that the damage was not too bad. The offences took place just before midnight on Monday January 22. Again, if any readers have any information about these two offences, it would be useful to us and, as always, will be handled as confidential.

Serious category offences like these two are few and far between in this immediate area. As much as we would desire it, (and try to achieve it), there can

never be a 100% level of security in this, or any other area. The chances of serious offences happening are low, but when they do, they understandably cause a lot of public concern.

This leads to a lot of speculation, "finger pointing" and a desire for someone or some people to blame. This is not to be confused with the desire to identify and prosecute the offenders, with the utmost urgency. Detectives from Morpeth CID, with help from others, are investigating these offences as a priority.

These offences have raised the fear of crime in Ponteland and Darras Hall. Anecdotally, seven years ago, during a daytime tour, by now, 10.30am, I would have not been surprised to have three or four crime reports to write up. Today, I have none - and none yesterday either.

By 12noon we would be thinking about where to go on Darras to make contact with the teams who were committing, on average, two house burglaries a day. We haven't had a house done since January 1. That in itself is one too many, and there is no let up in patrol/detective efforts to prevent and try to detect offences.

CRIME STILL

We are still an area where all categories of crime are low. Be aware that offences can, and will, happen. Report suspicious things - your calls will be followed up. The owners of Carousel are very positive in getting up and running again - we'll all be looking forward to the re-opening.

Finally, a number of people have asked about the incident that took place around 8pm on Friday January 26, around the A696 just up from West Farm.

The incident was reported in the Morpeth Herald, the quad ATV thieves who ran to the back of Police HQ. The incident was a good example of people reporting a vehicle which they thought was out of the ordinary.

It led to a contact being made with the vehicle, and a foot chase around the area at the back of HQ, which saw the athletic PC Lisle leap two fences, and then bound across the boggy field, with all the majestic grace of a marsh dwelling Red Lechwe antelope, but still get very muddy.

His sometime partner is still puzzled as to how he got over the first fence, let alone the

second, but still bounded or sort of bounded through the same bog, but with the style of something more akin to that of a bipedal hippopotamus and managed to get even muddier.

With the assistance of some police dogs, who were taking a weekend break in the luxurious kennels at the back of HQ, and who, entirely of their own initiatives, dashed into their outside runs, forming a barking piquet line, the position of the two offenders was quickly found.

As reported by the Herald, two men were subsequently charged under the theft act. Again, all kicked off by someone reporting something unusual.



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