

Newsletter October 2020



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Chairman's message____

Dear Members,

Some 13 years ago (after a few years agitating with the County Council) I became the first chairman of the newly created Ponteland Civic Society, secure in the expectation that I would be able to pass the Office over to a successor in a few years time.

This didn't quite work out (as such things often don't) but long time Committee member John Hague has now offered to take up the cudgels and become Acting Chairman until such time as circumstances become more normal. The Committee has voted to support this proposal, made by me and seconded by Treasurer Audrey Murray, so it is now a done deal

I shall of course continue as an ordinary member of the Management Committee. I would like to thank all those who have served on the Committee in the past and you, our members who have been so supportive over the years. My best wishes to you all

Philip Ham

Programme of talks____

Further restriction on public assembly has led, sadly, to the cancellation of all the talks we had planned. for this year. We hope to be able to restore at least some of these at a later date

Similarly we have not found there to be much enthusiasm either from members or from those due to give talks, for us to attempt to provide them by other means, making use of one of the digital platforms currently available but this is something we might look at. We are more than disappointed at this turn of events but, no matter, we live to fight another day

Vote of thanks____

As you will have read elsewhere our Chairman Philip Ham has decided to 'move on'. Philip has held the Chair of the Society for the best part of 14 years since we were first established way back in 2007.

Like many people at the time he had become alarmed at a range of proposals, being put forward by the then Castle Morpeth District

Council together with the County that were going to seriously affect the village and its residents. They included a scheme to replace the parade of shops at Merton Way with a major supermarket, Tesco's was mentioned, there was a proposal to relocate the Village Library to the Richard Coates School up on Merton Way and there was a general failure to effectively protect established landscaping throughout the Parish.



As well as complaining to the authorities, Philip started writing letters to the newly established Pont News and soon found himself joined by others who held similar views. This initial nucleus expanded to set up the Society and the rest, as they say, is history.

We have to thank Philip for operating as Chairman of the Society over such an extended period and for his sterling efforts to try to sustain and protect the local environment.



We feel sure he will continue in similar vein but at least now there will be a bit more time for the croquet.



A green wall rises

The new complex hoves into view

A multi storeyed green walled structure is beginning to emerge from behind the trees on Callerton Lane.

Trees that are soon to be cleared to reveal this significant building in all its viridian splendour. It provides a curvaceous frontage to a wide range of uses that include two new schools, a Secondary with some 70 classrooms housed in an elongated three storey block, quite a contrast to the present High School building, a Primary school, a new swimming pool and sports hall shared between the schools and the public, a Library that will have similar joint use, a small theatre and a café.

Progress on site has, been affected by



the Corona virus with workers initially told to stay off site but the contractors Kier remain confident that they will be able to hand the building over before the Christmas break. Fingers crossed.

Northumberland and Newcastle Society

The latest edition of the Northumberland and Newcastle Society Journal includes obituaries to two well known North east architects, Ted Netts and Cyril Winskill MBE.

Ted Netts together with Arnold Waring set up their practice in Gosforth in 1957 and rapidly built a reputation as designers of housing development and public buildings. They designed Montague Court that overlooks the Town Moor, the hospital at Blyth and locally worked with Ponteland builder, Bob Atkinson to create the Mayfair Gardens development, one of the more satisfactory examples of residential development in the Village.



Bob is quoted as saying at the time that as this was probably going to be his last major project before retiring, he wanted to go out on a high and so had obtained the services of architects with a proven record in the housing field. If only every speculative house builder could adopt a similar approach.

Cyril Winskill was born over a pub in North Shields where his father was the publican. He practised as an architect on Tyneside for his entire working life.



During the sixties he was a partner in the Jesmond based practice of Napper Collerton Barnet and Winskill who at the time were very much involved with systemised building. The practice was responsible for the design of the Ponteland Pool

However, the emphasis of his work subsequently centred on building restoration and town planning and he became a member of the Urban Design Panel that masterminded the revival of the area in Newcastle now known as Grainger Town. He was awarded the MBE in 1983.

Morpeth station restored to its former glory_____

After some seven years of effort spearheaded by the greater Morpeth Development Trust the Victorian architectural qualities of this grade 2 listed building have been gloriously revealed.

September saw the official opening by Sir Peter Hendy, Chairman of Network Rail of this grand Victorian edifice designed in 1846 by the Northumberland born architect Benjamin Green for the Newcastle and Berwick Railway.

Ben, working with his engineer father designed a number of well known North east buildings including the Theatre Royal in Newcastle, the Greys Monument, the Holy Trinity church at Cambo and the Penshaw Monument, around which the worm was curled.

Project architect for the restoration scheme was John Curtis from Napper Architects. As the trains had to be kept running the contract presented particular difficulties. Scaffolding had to be erected and taken down in the dead of night, only then was it possible to isolate the power lines.



A new café has been installed, so once we get back to normal a cup of tea awaits.

More trees are lost

12 mature Sycamores being felled

Continuing progress on the Schools/ leisure project has resulted in a further loss of significant tree cover.

This time it has been the turn of the splendid line of Sycamore trees running between the Ponteland FC soccer pitch and the leisure Centre car park.

Trees that have taken some 50 years to reach maturity, cut down in a matter of minutes, their winged seeds to fly no more. The car park itself is soon to suffer a similar fate

All this to make room for the new school buildings at the opposite end of the pitch. Beyond that there is to be a new area of car parking which, it would appear, is to be shared between the two schools, the school buses, and the general public making use of the pool and leisure facilities, the Library and the café .



The existing car park performs a dual role in that as well as providing space for Leisure Centre users it serves to augment Village parking, being used by visitors to properties on Main Street that have little or no parking space of their own, and we have long campaigned for its retention.

Odd happenings

When the new administration took over at County Hall in 2015, the then Chief Executive Officer, Steve Mason, who had been in the job for the previous 15 years, appears to have

been advised that his approach to life did not quite coincide with that of the new broom and if he wished he could leave more or less immediately. He left.

The job was taken on by his then Deputy, Mrs Daljitt Lally OBE who also operates as Executive Director of System Leadership for NHS Foundation Trust. However problems seem to have arisen recently with Mrs Lally expressing concern at the way the Councils development division, was being managed and had felt that certain measures had to be taken to protect the Council.

Protect the Council from what we might ask?

At the same time several councillors have resigned from the Cabinet, including the member for Ponteland West, Veronica Jones and the Council leader has lost a vote of confidence and has himself resigned.

The September issue of the Council's publication, Northumberland News makes no mention whatsoever of this shenanigans and we are simply treated to the smiling face of Kelly Angus to whom the chalice has apparently been passed.

We vote these people into power; surely we are entitled to a proper explanation as to what this is all about and why certain councillors felt that they had no option but to resign.

Planning Matters

Application reference 20/01026/ful

Detached dwelling at Station Lodge Ponteland.

Application permitted 1 October 2020

Subscriptions 2020-21

Subscriptions were fixed when the Society kicked off in 2007. Costs have increased significantly since then and we were having to think about an increase. However, the cancellation of our programme of talks means that things can stay as they are for this year at least. i.e. £8 per member & £12 per couple.

Please make cheques out to Ponteland Civic Society and post them to our Membership Secretary Janet McCann at 3 Ridgely Drive NE20 9BJ.