



# PCS Newsletter

Ponteland Civic Society

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## Greetings

Herewith the second edition of our expanded Newsletter. Sadly we continue to live in a Corona dominated world which at the time of writing appears to be getting worse rather than better. That vaccine can't come soon enough.

In this issue we have been looking at the extensive work currently being undertaken by the Environment Agency to strengthen the Village flood defences, works that are likely to continue for some time.

The aim is to strengthen the protection that we already enjoy rather than reduce the overall level of risk. Apparently that can't be achieved without raising the road bridge and there are no plans for that to happen at the moment.

We have also been looking back at the long and varied history of the Cottage Homes, built at the beginning of the last Century to provide accommodation for destitute children, on a site to the north of the Village that subsequently became the headquarters for Northumbria Police.

There could not be a more marked contrast between their original role and the one being implemented at the present time. That these buildings have stood for so long and yet remain capable of withstanding significant reconstruction is a tribute to the quality of the original build.

We have noted the comments emanating from the National Auditor on the provision of bus services. Comments that reflect our own experience in this regard.

We stand ready to receive your letters together with those interesting articles that we know you must be planning to write..

Last but not least we have taken time to remember the 64 men and boys who left Ponteland to go to fight in two ugly wars and never came home.

Letters, and those articles you are planning, need to be sent to  
The Editor at, [hagueview@talktalk.net](mailto:hagueview@talktalk.net)



## Diamond in the jungle

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**Works to improve Ponteland's flood defences are proceeding apace with steel piling being rammed in to strengthen the existing banks.**

This activity extends along the southern bank of the river between the Memorial Hall footbridge and the pumping station alongside Callerton Lane and in their earlier description of the scheme the Environment Agency indicated that the piles were to be encased in concrete.

That this might result in the removal of the grass banking remains a matter of some concern. In some instances removal would cause significant damage to the

landscaped scene and we have approached EH seeking clarification on this.

It would not be the first time that so-called flood defence works have badly damaged the Village environment.

Originally the Pont was fully exposed to Callerton Lane and shallow flooding of the highway occurred about every 10 years or so. To stop this happening an ugly stone wall was built cutting the Lane off from the river. It was ineffective, the lane still flooded.

Hitherto the river view with the Diamond Inn in the background had been very much the Village trademark, with families coming to picnic on its mossy slopes while Dad popped across the road to the pub.

Artists came and set up their easels to record the picture postcard view while passing riders watered their horses.

All of this was lost with the arrival of the black wall





**A great deal of work has been done since then to prevent flooding, the channel has been cleared to improve flow and a large pumping station built. It would be marvellous if these improvements together with the current activity were to allow the black wall to go and the iconic view of the Village restored to its former glory**

One other thing to say about what is going on at the moment is that while the work is taking place to the west of the pumping

station the length of river going the other way through to the bridge is being badly neglected.

**From some angles one can barely pick out the Diamond Inn through the burgeoning undergrowth.**



*after one hundred and seventeen years,*  
**A new role for Ponteland's Cottage Homes**

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The Cottage Homes built on a 70 acre site to the north of the Village have entered yet another phase in their somewhat chequered career. Erected in 1903 by the Newcastle Poor Law Guardians to provide a home for destitute children, they consisted of 14 semi-detached cottages, together capable of housing up to 300 boys and girls.

A small school was also built to educate the younger children but the older ones had to walk the three miles to and from the Village to attend the Junior School on North Road. They had to make a similar effort to get to church on Sunday morning and again in the afternoon to attend Sunday School. Some recall making the same journey to go to performances given by Ponteland Rep in the Memorial Hall, 40 to 50 children stumbling up and down North Road in the dark.

Once they reached the age of 15 the children were expected to leave and try to find a job. One lad recalls his elder brother leaving to become a slaughterman's assistant. The record provides no clue as to his specific duties nor if he was enjoying his changed circumstances.

**The Cottages closed in 1959 and in 1964 the site came to be occupied by the Northumberland College, established by the County Council to assist in the training of school teachers.**

New buildings were erected behind the Cottages to house lecture rooms, gynaecology, squash courts, and laboratories together with a splendid assembly hall. The latter became very much a centre for joint activities involving not only the staff and students but also Ponteland residents

These combined operations included the College Choral Society who performed regularly and with other choirs from the wider region coming to sing in concert from time to time.

Other entertainments included a well remembered production of the musical "Oh what a lovely war."

The College provided Ponteland with something it had lacked, an attractive social focus.

**Much of this was lost when the College closed and in 1982 the buildings were taken over by Northumbria Police to set up their headquarters.**

The Police did make some attempt to maintain the musical tradition by arranging concerts by the Police band every now and then but the level of security required on a Police site was such that the strong links with the Village that had existed before slowly declined.

**The loss of a modern well equipped performance hall was a significant blow.**

The Police sold off most of the site in 2018, pocketed the £21 million and drove off.

Given that there were two publically funded organisations involved in this and that the County Council had built most of the buildings that the Police came to occupy, it is more than disappointing that none of the £21 million appears to have found its way into local authority coffers. **£5 million could have been set aside to improve community facilities in Ponteland generally and help to establish a fund to eventually replace the outdated Memorial Hall.**

**The failure to allocate any of this cash to the local community has to be felt yet more acutely now that we know that the housebuilder has not been required to provide anything in the way of community facilities as part of the new development, no creche, no kindergarten, no scout hut, no tennis courts etc. etc., on a development of some of 260, mostly family size, dwellings.**

**The old school which had architectural merit and could have provided a centre for some of these activities has been summarily demolished.**

The Cottages remained largely unchanged throughout these previous occupations being used mainly as offices.



Back in 1986 they had been identified by

**Historic England** as a first class example of



an enlightened approach to the care of deprived children that had emerged at the start of the twentieth century and two blocks together with the workshops were given the protection of Grade 2 listing. It is not known to what extent this has influenced the reconstruction of these blocks in order to convert them to single dwellings.

The Cottages are set out on a shallow curve looking out across the central green and there is a critical relationship between the two elements which has to be sustained, the one enhances the other.

**This relationship is compromised at the moment by a timber boarded pallisade fence which partly obscures the**

**properties. However, it is understood that this is but a temporary installation which is to be taken down once the works are complete, thus allowing these 'arts and crafts' elevations to once more beam out across the greensward.**



**Improving local bus services**

# National Audit Office report

**The National Audit Office, the Country's financial watchdog has put out a report on the future of our bus services.**

It tells us that over the last 10 years the number of bus journeys has fallen by as much as 10% and that the onset of the Corona virus has created further uncertainty as to our future travel habits, but they say, bus travel will continue to be essential for many .

They stress that good quality bus services help sustain the local economy, ease road congestion, reduce greenhouse gases and better connect communities.

**Apparently last year the Government announced that it was to develop a National bus strategy and £5 billion was allocated to promote bus travel, walking and cycling.**

However, over the ten-year period bus company income has fallen by 11% while fares have gone up by almost 18% and local authorities have reduced spending on transport by as much as 40%. Little wonder then that services have worsened. The Auditor reaches a sobering conclusion, -

**"Despite the Department of Transport's long stated aim to increase bus services passenger numbers have fallen. The Department has funded some valuable enhancements to bus services, but these do not constitute a systematic improvement.**

**The department's future bus strategy should match the funding provided to its objectives and enable local authorities & operators to work together."**

*We live in hope*



*Because of the continuing presence of the Corona virus it has not been possible to hold the usual procession to lay wreaths of poppies at the War Memorial, Never-the-less it is important that we take time to remember those men and boys who went away from Ponteland to fight in two ugly wars and never came home  
Their sacrifice helped preserve the life and freedoms that we currently enjoy,*

*We owe them the deepest dept of gratitude*

*They were, 1914-1918*

George Baldwin David Barnes Sam Battensby Stan Bone Walter Brighton Tom Brown Will  
Caughey John Crozier George Emms Tom Gibson Will Glass Andrew Graham John Graham  
James Hall Maurice Hill Geoff Hutchinson Charles Ions Norman Kane John Kettley Edwin Lant  
Tom Lant Andrew McCreath Robert Moffit Will Mortimer Edmund Mortimer Tom Ord John Pollard  
George Railton Charles Richardson Ridley Robinson Henry Smith James Stobert Will Thompson  
Charles Wallis Tom Weightman Tom Wilde John Wilkinson James Wilson James Young  
Richard Youngman

*And, 1939 – 1945*

Herbert Atkinson Mathew Atkinson Sam Baillie Robert Davis John Eckford Robert Egdell  
Alan Glover John Greenwood Sam Johnstone Gerald Kinnear James Lapping Douglas Mauchlen  
Stephen McDonough Lesley Morley John Mortimer Gordon Moscrop Robert Ord David Potts  
John Stell Will Stevenson Stan Vart Stan Walker Tom Wilde

A great deal more about these men and what happened to them is to be found in a well researched  
book by Muriel Sobo entitled "We will remember them" published by the Parish Council in 2005

and also in " Images of Ponteland" by John Turner, published by Tempus 1999