



# PCS Newsletter

Ponteland Civic Society

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[pontcivic@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pontcivic@hotmail.co.uk)

[www.pontcivicsociety.pontelandonline.co.uk](http://www.pontcivicsociety.pontelandonline.co.uk)

## Seasonal greetings

I don't know what kind of Christmas you have had but I doubt that you will be looking back at 2020 with any great affection, but let us press on in the hope of better to come.

The pandemic has meant that there has been much emphasis placed upon safe, locally based, activities and prominent amongst these is the simple act of going for a walk in the fresh air.

To encourage you in this direction we intend over the next few months to include some **Walk Guides** which will subsequently, be published in book form to provide visitors and residents, both young and old, with an appreciation of the rich heritage and unique setting of Ponteland and Darras Hall. None of these walks will be difficult though some may be muddy in places. They all start from Merton Way, where there is a public convenience. You will need to ensure that you park in a **red parking bay** if you plan to stay for more than three hours.

Some of the walks are taken from **Ponteland Parish Walks** by Muriel Sobo, published by Ponteland Town Council in 2004. Route descriptions have been updated by an architect member of the Society to provide more in the way of historical background and architectural detail.

Also on the subject of heritage, we have been alerted to the activities of the **Glanton Heritage Group** who have been busying themselves delving into the history of this small Northumberland village, set within the foothills of the Cheviots with a population of only about 200. We set out our initial findings.

Work by the Environment Agency to limit the risk of flooding in Ponteland Village has continued and we have been in discussion with them about some of our concerns,

We believe that poetry has the ability to uplift the soul so we have included a poem to get you started.

Lastly we have concluded that we all need a little comforting to help us on our journey towards vaccination and have been looking at possible options in this regard.

The Editor

[jhagueview@gmail.com](mailto:jhagueview@gmail.com)



# The Heritage of Glanton

A village with hidden mysteries



With Northumberland being England's least densely populated county,-we only accommodate about 63 people per square kilometre whereas in Greater London some 2500 souls crowd on to a similar sized patch of land,- it is not surprising then that one is forever discovering places that we had not come across before.

**Glanton** is a case in point and equally surprising is what one tends to discover once you start to delve.

**Glanton** has apparently renovated its red phone box. Not any old phone box but one of those iconic cast iron jobs designed by none other than Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. A commission he apparently obtained by winning a national competition in 1924.

Quite why he bothered to enter is something of a mystery, given that some

twenty years before he had won an earlier competition to design a rather more grandiose structure, namely the Anglican Cathedral for the City of Liverpool, the largest religious structure in the UK.

Sir Giles departed this life long before the building came to be completed some 74 years later in 1978.

Anyway it appears that a member of the **Glanton Heritage Group** was passing the phone box when he spotted a note from BT to say that they were planning to remove it. He very quickly alerted the Parish Council who were able to negotiate a smart deal with BT to purchase the box for the princely sum of £1. A quick clean up and a splash of paint and the box re-emerged safe and sound in all its former glory, although without the actual phone.

This small village, nestling in the foothills of the Cheviots, has a population of around 200 and it seems to have been a place to which many came but too few stayed.

The Romans came over and constructed one of their very straight roads skirting the Village, running from the mouth of the Tweed down to Hadrian's wall, to permit the transport of food and fodder from their ships down to the legions building Emperor Hadrian's unique legacy. (what did you do in the war Daddy ? Well I built a bit of a wall !)

However, the Germanic nomads who wandered in after the Romans had gone home, were unused to, and indeed apparently mistrusted straight lines. Refusing to make use of the carriageway they named it The Devils Causeway, the route to Hell, and it was gradually subsumed beneath a layer of weeds and worm casts, but is apparently still there if you are brave enough to dig deep.

No-one bothered to build any proper roads in Northumberland after that for the next 300 years or so and the rough tracks that did emerge became ever more difficult to navigate. In 1648 it took a coach 6 days to get from Newcastle to Edinburgh. An advertisement in the Newcastle Courant in January 1728 bemoans the loss of baggage between Ainwick and Felton, with a note to say, "whoever brings them to Mrs Smith, Post Mistress at Morpeth, shall have a guinea reward , and no questions asked."

Maintenance of these tracks had to be undertaken by the local parish, a burden they found increasingly difficult to cope with and eventually some kind of commercial solution had to be found. This led to the introduction of road tolls, levied by groups of local farmers and landowners with the permission of Parliament.

To try to ensure that everyone paid up, gates fitted with an array of pointed sticks or pikes, that could be swung out to block

the highway way, hence the term 'turnpikes', came to be erected alongside each toll house.

Glanton lay on one of the main north-south turnpike routes and the road running west from the red phone box still bears the name, Turnpike Lane.

The opportunity to take money off anyone who happened to pass through your parish clearly became very popular and by 1836 turnpike roads covered roughly 20% of the total network

This in turn generated a high level of dissatisfaction amongst the populace and riots attacking the system started to break out.

Local farmer John Moffat, living just west of Glanton, on riding into Alnwick declined to provide a toll at the request of the toll master's daughter, Alice Patterson who was manning the booth. When he went to return home the redoubtable Alice closed the gate to prevent his departure.

John duly got off his horse and set about demolishing the gate and railings. In order to avoid any further damage to her father's structures, Alice opened the gate and John and his brothers went home to tea.

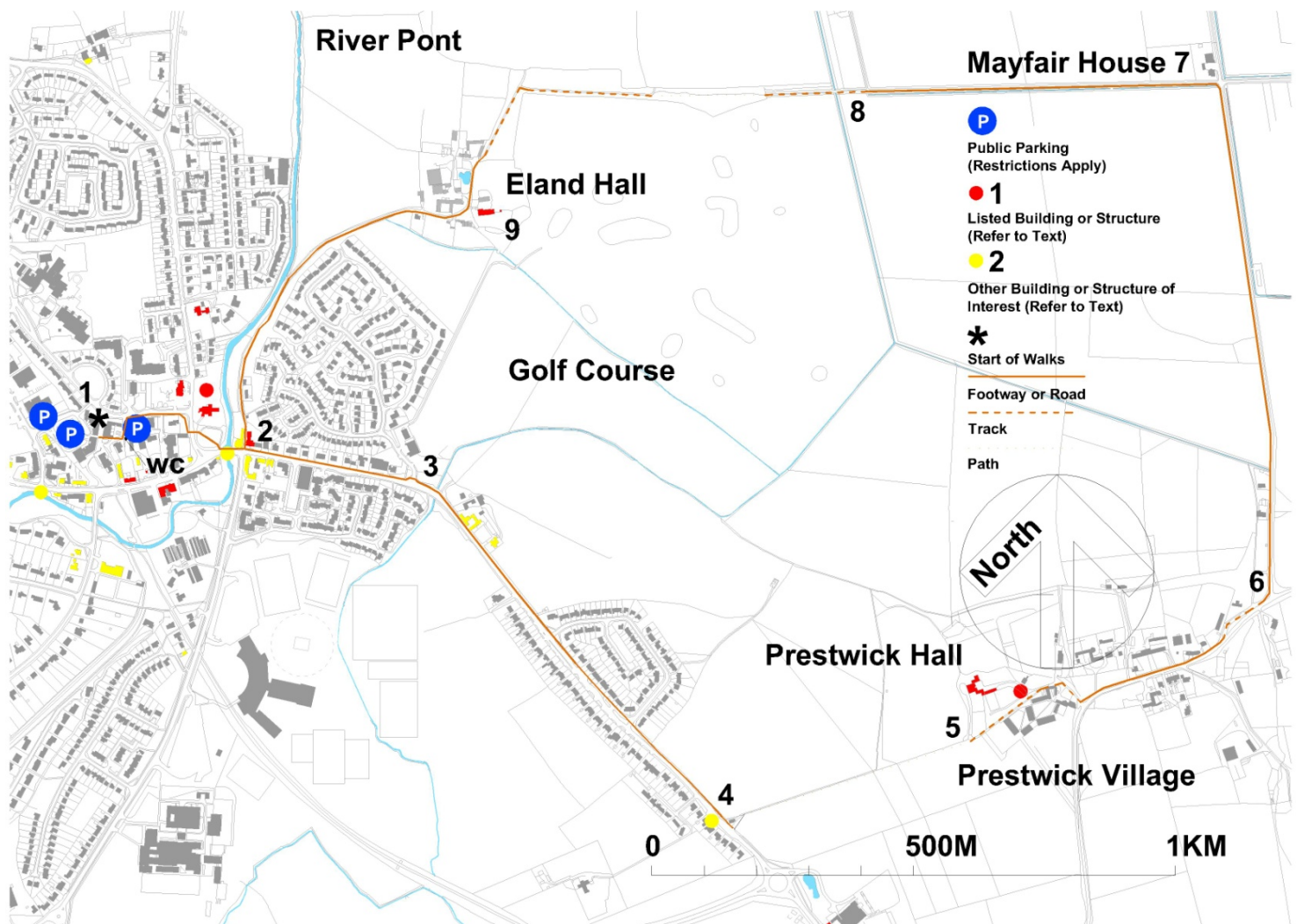
The ability of the turnpikes to collect cash from passing road users waned somewhat once the railway arrived.

Glanton found itself on the North Eastern line that ran from Alnwick up to the Scottish border at Coldstream, well almost. Like the Romans the rail line, with its splendid station, was set some way to the East and the same thing happened with the A697.

So what was it with Glanton. Was it simply a continuation of that fear of straight lines, or was it something rather more sinister?

Who lives in that phone box ?





## Ponteland Heritage Walk 1 - Prestwick Hall, Eland Hall and More

### Introduction

This is a lovely walk through the rural surroundings to the east and north of the Village, around 3.9 miles (6.3km) on good paths with a section on a quiet minor road. It is best done in the winter months when there are clear views through the trees. The numbered stage instructions are marked on the map

- 1 From Merton Way exit onto Thornhill road, turn right and head towards North Road passing the Grade II\* Listed Blackbird Inn on your left. In 1597 the Lord of the Manor, Mark Errington restored the castle and built a manor house onto the side but after about 200 years it was vacated again eventually becoming licensed premises with the first victualler recorded in 1828. Unfortunately the rear is spoiled by poor quality extensions and a lack of enclosure for the refuse and other products of a public house and the large car park to the side detracts. This has been visually improved with the introduction of a large tent, erected during the Covid 19 restrictions, which draws the eye



*St Mary's Church and Cemetery*

Take care crossing North Road and pause in Coates Green in front of the Grade I Listed St Mary's Church. This forms a significant focal point to the village complete with a "millennium" sculpture, erected in 2003, which depicts an "ordinary" teacher with village children, a reference to the former Coates School on the site. The Church cemetery contains many interesting tombstones



2 Cross Ponteland Bridge to the Diamond Inn. The present Ponteland Bridge was built in 1926 to replace a 15th century bridge which was at an angle to the road. At the bridge is the incorrectly named "Toll House". This building was originally a butcher's slaughter house with the curved corner giving access to riverside grazing. The real Toll House was located behind the slaughter house and demolished circa. 1906 to be replaced by Lambton's Bank, later Lloyds Bank as can be seen in the picture below

Unlike the other two public houses in the village, the Diamond Inn is not listed, perhaps on account of the many alterations which have taken place over the years. It was originally constructed c1830 as a two-storey building of red brick construction using common bond brickwork with a pantiled roof and Georgian sash windows. It is likely that the bricks were made locally as in the 19th Century there were several brickyards nearby. A further storey having four gables to the frontage was added to the stages between 1900 and 1912, faced in a timber-framed style and slates were used for the raised roof and gables instead of the former tiles. Bay windows were inserted to the Ground and First Floor front elevation during the 1950s



*Ponteland Bridge and the Diamond Inn (1904 Postcard)*



*Bell Villas*

Continue eastwards past the 19th century development of the ten Bell Villas which run down the left hand side. These originally simple traditional buildings form an attractive avenue into the historic heart of Ponteland. They were built between 1822 and 1841 on land leased to individuals from Matthew Bell who lived at Woolsington Hall on the north side of Ponteland Road. The first of these, now a Chinese restaurant, was originally a smithy with a house attached and a date over the door 1822. A Co-op store was built next to the second villa in about 1920, now a wine bar and in the 1980s the space between the smithy and the Co-op was filled with a commercial building

Other incremental changes, have eroded the suburban character of the Villas, most of the original houses have been enlarged and altered, additional houses have been built in the gardens and some have changed to commercial uses. The last two Villas, Belville House, and the former nursery have been substantially altered and extended

3 At Clickemin bridge is one of the few views out of the Village, looking towards Callerton Common. The old railway line cuts across this space and is a strong linear historic feature on the horizon



*Looking towards the old railway line at Clickemin Bridge*



*Clickemin Farmhouse once splendidly isolated*



Carry on past the group of converted farm buildings to Clickemin Farmhouse, once splendidly isolated, it now has a recently built "twin". Beyond this is a wedge of farmland which separates The south east edge of Ponteland from Cheviot View and Darras Hall, together with the farm buildings, this is a living link to Ponteland's agricultural past

Continue south eastwards through a mixture of mid 20th century dwellings. These differ in design but all are constructed of red brick and render with red tiled roofs and chimneys. They are set back from the road frontage behind a grass verge and with a couple of exceptions retain the original low walls and hedgerows. This creates a rural approach to the village. Once derided, a key aim for the United Kingdom's post-War planning system was to halt such "Ribbon Development" but now in many places the pleasing suburban character is being recognised by designation as a Conservation Area

- 4 Just after a small bungalow, built to suggest a gatehouse to Prestwick Hall, at a finger post turn left through a "kissing gate". Opposite here is one of three milestones in the Civil Parish of Ponteland which date from the time when the A696 was a turnpike road and mileages were required to be marked at regular intervals. The "milestones were fabricated in cast iron by Smith



*Restored milestone*

Patterson & Co Ltd of Blaydon, and all have been restored by the Town Council and returned to their original locations. Follow the path across the field (usually grazed by sheep so keep dogs on lead), through a line of trees and on to Prestwick Hall which can be seen through the hedge to the left and head towards Prestwick Park. The trees were planted by the occupants of the Hall to screen the line of a proposed bypass to the east of the village although construction of the road in the foreseeable future now seems unlikely

Grade II\* listed Prestwick Hall, built around 1815, was designed by John Dobson early in his career. It is a square plan Greek Revival style two storey villa with a service wing to the rear and more recent single storey extensions to the south side. The garden walls, of stone to the south and brick in English garden wall bond to the east are also listed. The high brick wall was heated and has ornamental chimneys. The farm buildings here were converted and redeveloped into offices in 2005. The distinctive rooflines are said to have been designed to be eye-catching when viewed from the air



*Prestwick Hall and Prestwick Park*



- 5 Pass through another kissing gate and follow a path between the stone garden wall and office buildings to join the Hall drive and look back here to see the brick garden wall. Pass through a steel gate and continue across a grassed area at the left side of the road through Prestwick Village, eventually joining a footway, follow this past a vehicle pull off until you reach a minor road on the left



*Chimney detail*

There were mine workings south of Prestwick and indeed there was an aerial trolley way linking the Robert Pit at Dinnington to railway sidings where the Pit Cottages are, near the Airport. However the origins of the Village are in agriculture. There were a number of farms to the East of the Hall, clustered around this bend in the Dinnington Road, most of the farm buildings remain but have been converted to private residences

- 6 Turn left onto the minor road and follow this for almost 1km to Mayfair House. To the right is Prestwick Carr, once a thousand acres of water filled depressions left after the last ice age, it was drained in the 19th century, now a large portion of the wet grassland is managed by the Northumberland Wildlife Trust



*Prestwick Village*



*Prestwick Carr*

- 7 At Mayfair House turn left again and continue to follow the road towards Prestwick Mill Farm. To the right, across paddocks, can be seen Kirk Hill and Berwick Hill. A Ministry of Defence rifle range in this area is used by private shooting clubs, so you may hear gunfire!
- 8 Go straight on here, following a path over a timber bridge and through a gate with Ponteland Golf Club on your left and on to a track which turns to the left after about 250m towards Eland Hall and Farms. The track becomes a minor road, passing a duck pond and turns right after. At this corner bear left to go straight on down a narrow path at the side of a cottage and pass through a gate to see Eland Hall

Grade II Listed Eland Hall was mainly built in the early 18th century although there may have been an earlier core. The seven bay front was altered in the early 19th century

- 9 Return to the road and continue back to the Diamond Inn. The River Pont and the large housing development around Jackson Avenue are on the right and there are flood defences on the left with the later development of Eland View behind. In the same way as these large housing developments are well hidden away, the river meanders mostly unseen through the Village



*Eland Hall*



*The River Pont*



# Tales from the river bank



The Environment Agency have completed their pile driving and are proceeding to clear earthworks to allow the steel piles to be encased in concrete. A less satisfactory solution in visual terms than the retention of the banking itself, but they insist that they need to have access to the wall face for future maintenance inspections.

We have suggested that there is now an opportunity to extend the footpath, that skirts the river by the Memorial Hall car park, to continue alongside the river bank through to Callerton Lane. While they agree that this could happen, they do not see its installation as part of their remit, which is disappointing to say the least.

We have raised two other concerns. Firstly the unkempt state of the banks along the critical stretch of river either side of the road bridge. They tell us that the Environment Agency maintain embankments purely for flood prevention

and “do not provide grass cutting for amenity purposes.” No luck there then...

Our second concern relates to the wall that cuts the river off from Callerton lane. It is believed that this was installed to prevent the flooding of the lane, but it later transpired that this was caused, either by the overflowing of the Callerton Burn, or from surface water running down the Lane itself. Since then £630,000 has been spent on a sophisticated pumping station designed to deal with the problem and a mobile pump, that can shift 25 gallons per hour is apparently available at the fire station.

**So it would seem that the ugly wall may well be redundant and could be removed or at least lowered. If the banks could then be maintained in the way they used to be, this iconic view could be restored to its former glory**



## Poet's corner

### *The Listeners, by Walter de la Mare*

**This poem, once you have memorised the words, is best recited in a fairly loud voice, standing up on a chair.**

Is there anybody there said the traveller  
Knocking on the moonlit door  
And his horse in the silence champed the grass  
Of the forest's ferny floor  
And a bird flew up out of the turret  
Above the traveller's head  
And he smote upon the door a second time  
"Is there anybody there ?" he said  
But no one descended to the traveller  
No head at the leaf-fringed sill  
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes  
Where he stood perplexed and still  
But only a host of phantom listeners  
Who lived in the old house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight  
To that voice from the world of men  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the  
dark stair  
That goes down to the empty hall  
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken  
By the lonely traveller's call  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness  
Their silence answering his cry  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf  
'Neath the starred and leafy sky

For he suddenly smote on the door even  
Louder and lifted his head  
  
"Tell them I came and no one answered  
That I kept my word," he said  
Never the least stir made the listeners  
Though every word he spake  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still  
house  
From the one man left awake  
  
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup  
And the sound of iron on stone  
And how the silence surged softly backward  
When the plunging hooves were gone



# Comforts for 2021

## No 1.

### *Bread and butter pudding*



Apart from duvets few things provide a greater level of comfort than **Bread and Butter Pudding**.

Invented accidentally by Queen Victoria when she knocked a jug of custard into the bread bin and a nearby flunky, assuming it was the pudding course, proffered her a spoonful, at which she exclaimed "My goodness that has to be the best thing since sliced bread," and hurried upstairs to give Albert a mouthful.

He was similarly impressed and insisted that it be immediately placed on the Royal Prerogative where it has remained to this day. ---- and all this well before sliced bread had been properly invented.

It is a dish that is said to be very popular in Egypt where it is called Om Ali. Not to be confused with Bomb Alley which is in San Carlos.

San Carlos was, apparently, a rather severe Italian Cardinal who insisted on the priests wearing black and was very keen on the segregation of the sexes, at least in church.

The Cardinal is of course no longer with us and it is probably the relief that this generates that explains the level of jollity to be found at the Feast of San Carlos held each year in Ibiza.

Colourful dances are performed with rhythms beaten out with giant castanets made from juniper wood, together with a drum or tabor which is struck with a mysterious instrument called an Espali, and all accompanied by flute and fireworks, Sounds like a good do.

Now, where was I ? Ah yes, **Bread and Butter Pudding, it has few equals !**



Ponteland Civic Society – Established 2003

Annual subscription 2020-21   Single £8   Couples £12

To

Membership Secretary Janet McCann

3 Ridgely Drive Ponteland NE20 9BJ