



# PCS Newsletter

Ponteland Civic Society

2021-02



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

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

## New Year greetings (belated)

The New Year rather sneaked in, the Government, if that's the right word, having instructed us not to pay too much attention to it, and so most people went to bed early.

However, the year 2021, clearly miffed at this lack of attention, came up trumps with, not one, not two, but three antivirus vaccines. A new dawn glimmers faintly in the dim distance.

Nevertheless, the onset of the Corona19 virus has inevitably led to the cancellation of the talks we had intended to put on during the current financial year. Under normal circumstances, remember those ? we would now be trying to put together a programme of talks to kick off in the Autumn, but at the moment it is impossible to predict when, or if, the virus will be brought under control, or the longer term effect it will have on the willingness, or otherwise, of people to attend indoor gatherings of any kind. We suspect that it might well have a significant impact on the size of audience we would be able to attract, certainly in the short term, and we would be unlikely to be able to cover the cost involved.

So, at the moment we are not planning to organise any further talks, but the situation will be kept under review and we will let you know, if and when there is any change.

In this issue we have returned again to Glanton, to hear more about the activities of their busy Heritage Group and the connection the place has with 'The Last Days of Hitler'.

Will Moses, and his dog Jim, have continued their dedicated perambulations around our Village walkways to map out another trek for you to take on, and we have been looking at the latest proposals being put forward by the Government, aimed at easing the acute crisis in housing.

Lastly we have been able to provide spiritual uplift with Caledonian verse and yet another item of culinary comfort to help you through 2021.

The Editor

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



# The Heritage of Glanton – Mark 2

## Cometh the Baron



Clearly inspired by their success in rescuing and renovating the classic red telephone box at the top end of the village High Street, the Glanton Heritage Group have turned their attention to a whole range of projects, with perhaps the most ambitious being the scheme to renovate the traditional signposts that once graced road junctions in the area.

It has proved to be a difficult task.

Initially they had the 'fingers' reproduced in glass reinforced plastic (GRP) with moulds taken from existing signs. These were fixed in place at two locations. In one case they were damaged, they think by vandals, whereas the second was in a very exposed location and fell foul of high winds.

So it was decided to try to construct the required replacements, like the originals, in cast iron. Using the failed GRP fingers as patterns, cast iron replicas were produced by a foundry in Hexham. The original posts

were uprooted, grit blasted and repainted in traditional black and white.

Two other posts in the village are to be renovated, again in cast iron with patterns being made in part by members of the Heritage Group themselves. The Hexham foundry is no longer available and so the work has gone to a specialist in Cumbria. The County Council Highways department have helped with the required excavations and costs have been covered to a large extent by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

A truly splendid effort

Another, very different project undertaken by this energetic group has been the publication of a book entitled "The Singing Hinnies," hinnies being the Northumbrian name for girdle cakes, whatever they are,

as well as a term of endearment for young children

The faded hand typed manuscript, was discovered in a cardboard box hidden away in a local attic and passed to the Heritage Group. They took on what their Chairman, Mike Mason, has described as a monumental task, undertaken by a small 'kitchen table' group who worked for three years putting it all together.

It was apparently written in 1975 by a Joyce Robertson, the last surviving member of the family whose lives are the subject of the book.

William Robertson was a local doctor and he and his wife Elizabeth had nine children.

It is a story that relates to the development of modern medicine and provides an intimate picture of this family's history. The manuscript was digitised and subsequently published with assistance from both the Bailiffgate Museum in Alnwick and again the National Heritage Lottery fund.

Needless to say the Heritage Group has no intention of resting on their laurels with apparently a further eight projects waiting patiently in the pipeline.



'The Singing Hinnies' by Joyce Robertson £10 from [info@glantonheritagegroup.org.uk](mailto:info@glantonheritagegroup.org.uk)

there in 1914, the son of Bertie Trevor Roper, again a doctor, and his wife Kathleen.

Young Trevor was packed off to board at Belhaven Hill School on the coast near North Berwick, and later went on to Charterhouse and subsequently to Christ Church Oxford where having become bored with his Classics course he switched to History.

During the Second World War he served in the Secret Intelligence Service and undertook the decrypting of German radio messages, thereby demonstrating the critical importance of this work, which was subsequently centred at Bletchley Park and played a significant role in the country's war effort.

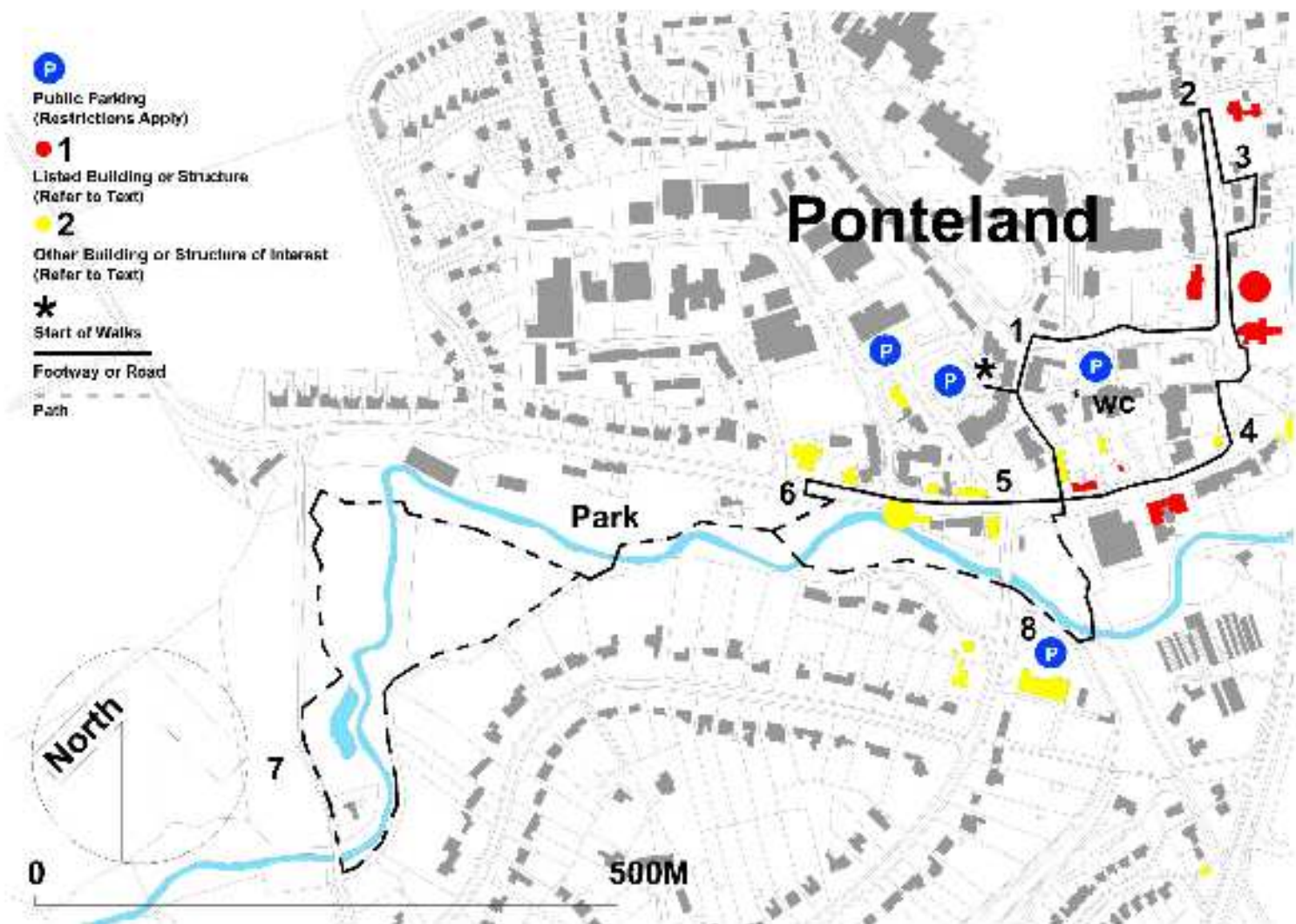
In 1945 he was despatched to Berlin to investigate the circumstances of Adolph Hitler's death, the aim being to rebut Soviet propaganda that claimed he was still alive and living in the West. He interviewed officials who had been present in Hitler's bunker at the time of his death and he also had access to various investigations carried out by American and Canadian intelligence. He drafted a report which subsequently formed the basis of his book '**The Death of Hitler**', a publication which resulted in Roper receiving death threats himself, from the Stern Gang who accused him of letting ordinary Germans off the hook.

He was recommended for a Knighthood in 1979 by the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and took on the grand title of, **Lord Dacre, Baron of Glanton**

## Glanton and

### *"The last days of Hitler"*

Besides being the busy headquarters of the Glanton Heritage Group, it transpires that Glanton was also the home of the historian, Hugh-Trevor Roper who was born



## Heritage Walk 2 - Village Trail and Ponteland Park

### Introduction

This short "figure of eight" walk of a little over 1 mile (1.9km) around the village centre can be extended by a 0.8 mile (1.3km) to include the whole of Ponteland Park and is ideal for winter weather when the other walks can be very muddy. Although the surroundings may be familiar, the narrative draws attention to some of the more unusual buildings and other features which are seen along the way

- 1 From Merton Way cross Thornhill Road, turn right and head towards North Road passing the Grade II\* Listed Blackbird Inn on your left. Turn left up North Road and go past the front of the Blackbird Inn and a handsome stone built terrace to reach Grange Road. Opposite is the mid 19th C. Italian style Grade II Listed Eland Lodge which marks the boundary of the Conservation Area
- 2 Cross the road and return towards the village until reaching a narrow path beside two pairs of brick built semi-detached houses, go down this path. Here are



*Eland Lodge*

The Cloggs, another two pairs of semi-detached houses and one small detached dwelling, built in the 1930's, with gardens extending down to the River Pont. This is known as "tandem" development and is not unique in Ponteland. There is a similar arrangement of bungalows and houses at the south end of Cheviot View



*The Cloggs*

The path extends to a pleasant riverside walk but we turn right and pass in front of the Cloggs to return to North Road

- 3 Turn left and head towards the village through St Mary's Church cemetery where there are many interesting tombstones and exit at Coates Green. Turn right here and take great care crossing North Road opposite the Grade II Listed Old Rectory. This former Rectory, now a private house was built in the late 18th C. for Merton College, Oxford who were the lay rectors of Ponteland



*The Old Rectory*



*c.1875 Coates School and Church before the clock was lowered and the tower strengthened with a buttress (Photograph supplied by Ponteland Local History Society)*

The gate piers and garden wall are also listed. Proceed to the corner. The former Coates School was relocated in the building which is now occupied by Sanderson Young, there is a small public garden behind here, one of the many informal green spaces in Ponteland

- 4 Head north west on this side of Main Street past the Grade II Listed Seven Stars (opposite), a coaching Inn built before 1800 with the adjoining three storey properties. One was a temperance hotel early in the 20th C. There was a brewery attached at the rear of the Stars which served the other pubs in the village

Continue north west past the Pele Tower, there is an information board here, and on to the Grade II Listed Neasham House or "the Doctor's House" which was built in the early 1800s. At some point it was called the Temple Hotel and it may once have been a farmhouse and hind's cottage with its arched link. The mix of uses and the variety of shop fronts enliven the conservation area while the more modern buildings have made some attempt to enliven the street frontage and respect the adjacent buildings



*Neasham House and the Village Centre*



*"College Row"*

Continue past the pedestrian crossing at the park entrance to Merton Cottages (or "College Row"). At first sight these appear to consist of a pair of semi-detached houses, but in fact there are four houses which may have been variously subdivided in the past and with different entrance arrangements from those now to be seen. These dwellings are part of the long historical connection between Merton College and Ponteland

5 Opposite here is a former bank building originally built for Barclays Bank and opened in 1904. Continue to James Stobert's house at 12 West Road where, in the late 1800's, he set up a shop in a front room selling groceries and provisions. Three generations of the family were local preachers, in the early 1900's they built a new shop and warehouse on the adjacent site at 10 West Road and now Ponteland's first micropub. Opposite is a funeral parlour which was for many years Snaith's butcher's shop. It has been sometimes identified as Ponteland's "West End Smithy" but historical documents would appear to locate the West End Smithy some 50 yards further east, closer to the village. Here also is one of the three "milestones" which have been fully restored by the Town Council



*James Stobert's House*



*Ladywell Cottage*

Continue again past Ladywell Cottage, a single-storey dwelling partially hidden behind a tall conifer. It was originally built prior to 1896 for the village police constable

6 Restrictions on Roman Catholicism began to be lifted after the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829. In the later 19th Century the priest used to travel to Ponteland from Cheeseburn to say Mass in a rented cottage to the west

of the village, and also in a cottage next to Neasham House. A significant change came when, in 1903, the first church dedicated to St. Matthew was opened in a wooden shed on the present site. Later, in 1947, the then chaplain, Father Doyle, ceased to be the resident Chaplain at Cheeseburn and moved permanently to Ponteland where he began straight away to plan for the new church, completed in 1950 and further extended in 1978. This pleasing modern facade facing the road symbolizes the long journey to re-establish a significant Catholic presence in Ponteland

A little further on is the entrance to The Lairage, this development on the old auction mart site, like much of the village growth, is concealed behind the historic plan form



*St Matthew's Church*

Cross the road and enter the Park descending on a wide path towards the river. Ponteland Park is informally laid out with woodland, grassland and riverside paths and home to an abundance of indigenous wildlife. Development of the Park began in 1958 when Ponteland Parish Council decided to use land by the river as a public space in preference to formal playing fields. Further pieces of land were added, the final section between the river and Fox Covert Lane being added in 1994 and created as a nature reserve. The final extent of the park is 18 acres, running in a linear fashion on both banks of the River Pont

- 7 To extend the walk to here turn right and then take the left fork across the river. A short length of the route is along a pedestrian refuge to the right of Fox Covert Lane and this clockwise direction will ensure you are facing the oncoming traffic. Enjoy the view across open countryside to the north west, there is nothing beyond here until the border with Scotland. Re-enter the park and return to the main walk passing a development of 18 flats, constructed in 2016 on the site of a former builders yard, originally a water mill

Otherwise turn left and cross the river following the path under the bridge carrying Western Way. Beyond the bridge to your right is the Ponteland War Memorial Hall which was erected by public subscription to commemorate the loss of many young men of Ponteland in the First World War. Those lost in the Second World War were added later

- 8 Turn left and cross the river again to pass alongside Waitrose. To your left is the embankment leading to the site of the old railway bridge. The railway branch line from South Gosforth was opened in 1905. It crossed Callerton Lane at a level crossing and continued by a bridge over Main Street into a station and goods yard where Merton Way exists today. A spur line was continued into the Darras Hall Estate in 1913 on its way to a colliery ten miles to the north-west but the colliery only lasted ten years. The branch was closed to passengers in 1929 and to goods in 1967. If you are feeling energetic climb the embankment to see a wood sculpture of an otter. It was donated by June Atkinson in memory of her late husband, Leonard and cut with a chainsaw from oak by Tommy Craggs of Consett

Cross Main Street and return to Merton Way passing Merton Hall on your right. Whilst Ponteland is fortunate in having a number of rooms and halls which are available for hire, Merton Hall is the one which is used practically every night of the week (and some afternoons) by one or other of the more than 40 local organisations in the Village. Every

morning it serves as a meeting-place for elderly people who can come in, read a newspaper, have a tea or coffee or simply watch the world go by. In this way the Hall provides a very important service for the community at large. It has fulfilled this role ever since it was built by the former Castle Ward Rural District Council in the early 1970's after the closure of the railway



*Ponteland Park*



*Otter Sculpture*



*Map Extract from 1948 showing route of Railway*

# Town Planning pile up

*Know your rights !*



You may not have noticed but the Government has recently extended your **Permitted Development Rights**.

It is possible that you were blissfully unaware that they were in need of extension but there you go, good things do happen. Rest assured that it is nothing to do with your gym attendance record, no, it is simply a list of alterations and extensions to your dwelling that can be undertaken without having to bother about obtaining boring old planning permission.

It is yet another clever idea thought up by the Ministry of Housing designed apparently to help solve the crisis in housing.

It follows the previous year's amendment which said that planning permission was no longer required to convert redundant office blocks to residential use.

Lucky tenants who obtained accommodation as a result of this move were clearly grateful, but most said that it would have been nice to have a window

in the kitchen and somewhere to park the cooker.

Now comes this latest flash of inspiration from GOV.UK. You no longer need to obtain planning permission to add one or two storeys on the top of your existing house.

The minister, Robert Henrick MP, is quoted as saying that.

**“This change will give homeowners the freedom to grow their homes as their family grows, will support the use of ‘brownfield’ land, make better use of our towns and cities and create jobs for small builders.”**

So, you have been warned, if you wake up one morning to find that your neighbour is looking down on you, it has nothing to do with your gym attendance record, he is simply exercising an extension to his **Permitted Development Rights !**

One is put in mind of John McEnroe's anguished cry “You can't be serious !”

## Poet's Corner

---

### *The Laírd of Killiecrankie*

*by Glen Bracken*

*The laird of Killiecrankie  
Was afa tall and lanky  
He wore his kilt at a jaunty tilt  
And used a tartan hanky*

*Ai the Laírd of Killiecrankie  
Was afa posh und swanky  
Descended doon from the Dukes of Troon  
Tho his mother wor a yankie*

*Ai the Laírd of Killiecrankie  
Would brook ne hanky panky  
If ye stole a fleece he'd get the Police  
To lock ye in the clanky*

*Ai but the Laírd of Killiecrankie  
Is lookin rather manky  
He cussed and swore, went off to war  
And got run over by a tanky*

Once you have memorised the words and mastered the required Glaswegian accent, this epic, is best recited into a strong wind, clad in a warm kilt and with your Tam o' Shanter set at a suitably jaunty angle.

## Comforts for 2021

### No 2.



## Rice pudding

People around the world have been tucking into rice pudding for thousands of years but in recent times, within the UK at least, it has perhaps been rather forgotten, -but not anymore.

The lock-down has prompted a revival of interest in this humble pud. It is after all classic comfort food, generating a hankering after the past, to ones childhood, that safe warm feeling, the race to claim the best part, the skin.

The clink of bottles in a dusky dawn, the clop of hoof on pavement, the nostril snort as the beast shakes up his nosebag.

In fact ,I am told that there are now two restaurants in New York serving little else but rice pudding, one called ' Rice to Riches' and the other, in Greenwich Village operating under the name, 'Ye Olde Rice Cream Shoppe'.

The earliest recipes for rice pudding date from Tudor times when rice had to be imported from Asia along the Silk Road and was expensive, its use confined to the rich and wealthy. However, just in case you have forgotten how to prepare this noble dish I append what could well be the original instructions.

*Take ryse and waishe hen clene*

*And do hen in earthen pot*

*With gode broth, let them seep wel*

*Afterward take almaund mylke*

*And colour it wip safroun*

*An salt an messe forth*

*--Samuel Pegge 1390*

OK, off you go on then, messe forth!

**Ponteland Civic Society    Established 2003**

Annual subscription 2020-21   Single £8, Couples £12

Membership Secretary Janet McCann

3 Ridgely Drive Ponteland NE20 9JB