

A

# PCS Newsletter

Ponteland Civic Society      2021 03





## Snowbound – lockdown

After the frantic race to completion, a shiny new building complex lies dormant the pain of waiting comforted by a snow-down blanket.



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## Greetings,

A faltering spring is shaking off the Winter cold and the birds are starting to busy, busy, as we find ourselves entering a second year of pandemic woe. However, it appears that many have found solace in the company of their pets. There has been a burgeoning demand for small furry animals and one lady has claimed to have obtained much comfort from the introduction of two guinea pigs into her kitchen. Apparently, they squeak noisily every time they hear her opening the fridge, I assume that they are not actually housed in the fridge.

Another tells us that "it is hard to feel cross with the world, when you have a sleeping puppy on your chest". Well personally, I tend to prefer pyjamas but maybe its worth a try.

Perhaps the most impressive example of this, 'animal based' approach, is the guy in Aberdeen whose wife bought him a cow for Christmas. Looking out the window on yuletide morn he spied a young heifer with a large purple bow draped around her neck, munching away at his back lawn. He says he has found it to be a very friendly animal and as this particular breed of Highland cattle can live for thirty years or more, he will have someone to help him with the gardening when he retires.

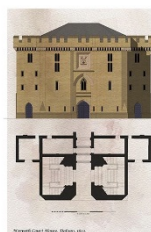
I hope my wife doesn't get any silly ideas from all this. I don't want to wake up on my birthday and find a camel in the bed, ribbon or no ribbon.

In todays Newsletter, prompted by the completion of the new Schools/Leisure complex, we have taken a look back at secondary education in Ponteland, Will and Jim have mapped out another local walk to keep you on the move, particularly important now that we have been advised that more than half of the population of UK are over weight. Quite a lot to read this time Geoff.

There is news of a **very large** factory to go up on the former power station site at Blyth and there have been some early entries for the 2021 Limerick Competition. We are looking forward to more, and we are still waiting for those interesting articles and works of poetry that we know you are all busy working on. We look forward to those too.

The Editor

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Cover picture, Spring meadows at Capheaton



The Chantry, Morpeth

## Education

### *Those were the days*

**The completion of the new School/Leisure complex in Ponteland, prompts a look back at the development of secondary education for the children of Ponteland over the years**

In the nineteen sixties passing the Eleven Plus examination ensured a place at a Grammar School but, there being no such establishment in the Village, children were taken each day, by bus, to Morpeth, the girls to Morpeth Girls School and the boys to the nearby Edward VI School.

Straight away we are scurrying back down the centuries, Edward reigned for some sixteen years from 1537, so we are talking about a school that was up and running at least 500 years ago. In fact the charter granted by the then King was a re-foundation of a school that had been in existence since 1310 when

records show that a man called Adam Rosse was appointed as Master. He was said to be an exceptionally eminent scholar having studied at Cordova, the southern Spanish City being a recognised centre of learning at that time.

**As you cross over the bridge into Morpeth the buildings on the immediate left, on the corner of Bridge Street, occupy the site where the Chapel of All Saints once stood. Known today as The Chantry it is currently the home of the Bagpipe Museum and the Information Centre.**

The school was housed in part of the original Chapel complex. The Chaplain was also the Schoolmaster and 'Keeper of the Bridge'.

The original bridge piers support what is now but a footbridge at the end of Chantry Place.



Both Chapel and Bridge would have been newly built when King Henry 1<sup>st</sup>, loaded down with spoils of war that included the Stone of Scone, stopped off in Morpeth in 1296, on his way South.

Prime minister John Major did the decent thing and gave the stone back in 1996, some 700 years later.



Footbridge connecting to Chantry Lane

**The original Charter granted to the School by Edward VI was discovered in the Tower of London amongst papers belonging to Lord Widdrington, who was found guilty for his part in the 1715 Jacobite rebellion and his estates confiscated by the Crown. He was saved from execution through the entreaties of Lord Carlisle. Both men had been together at Morpeth Grammar School.**

**As the saying goes 'its not what you know its who you know.'**

The Charter handed land and property to the School, the idea being that the rents obtained from these various holdings would be collected by the Town Bailiffs and utilised to run the School. It took in land and farms at such strange places as,

*Ponte island, Mylebourne, Callerton and Darrishall.*

Needless to say it was an arrangement that inevitably led to considerable dispute between the Bailiffs and the tenants. The most infamous wrangle related to four farms at Netherwitton,



Netherwitton Hall, home to the Thorntons

tenanted by the Thornton family, which is said to have taken 150 years to resolve.

The merchant Roger Thornton, who died in 1429, was described by the antiquary, Leyland, as,

*"the richest merchant that ever was dwelling in Newcastle."*

No references as to the work of the Morpeth school during the period from 1300 to 1550 have been found but education throughout the country at that time was very much controlled by the Church and records from other schools covering the same period provide a reasonable indication of the general scheme of things.

School began at six in the morning during the Summer, at seven in the Winter, and carried on until five in the afternoon.

There were very few books and very little written work so learning was mostly by rote. There were no organised games as we know them, but archery was usually practised on Thursday afternoons. Henry the eighth issued an ordnance requiring all boys older than seven to be trained in archery.

Bows had to be made from Yew and these trees were planted in churchyards in order to prevent cattle from eating the berries which were poisonous to these animals.



## Wor Jim

As we venture into a second year, much confined by Corona 19, many people are claiming that it is their pets that have helped them through and here is a fella who has helped to map out those rustic routes that you are all busy jogging round to try to reduce your stress levels while you wait for the pubs to open again.

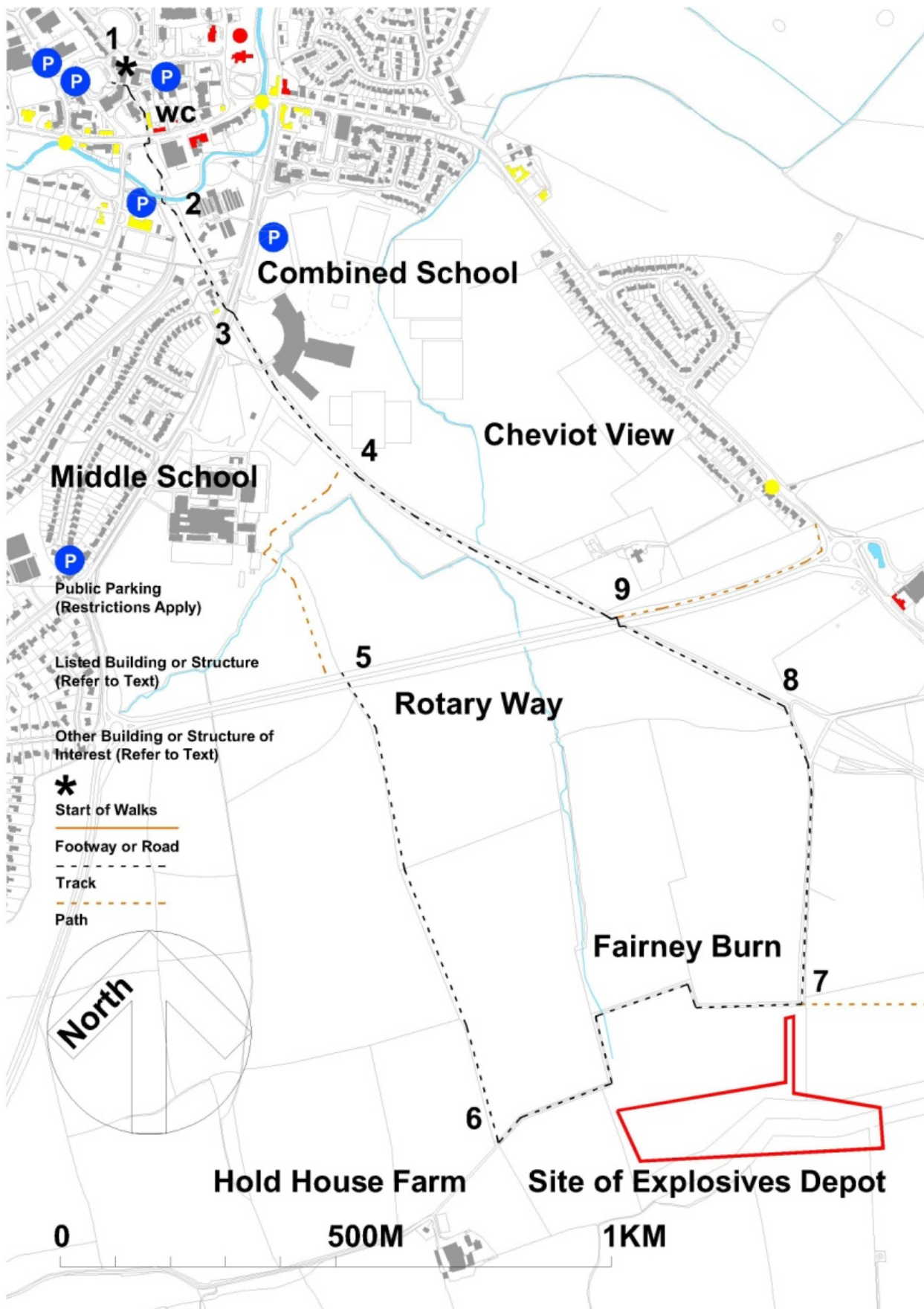
Jim journeyed up to the North East from the **Freedom of Spirit Trust**, based at Bingley in North Yorkshire, a charity run by Barbara Sykes who specialises in the rescue and rehabilitation of Border Collies, who often have a pretty hard life. He came to Barbara from a farmstead in Ayrshire where he was kept as a pet rather than a working dog.

When he is not exploring the locale he tends to concentrate on chasing mice, rabbits, hares, deer and even birds. Indoors his main preoccupation is with the collection and concealment of discarded footwear. He is mostly uninterested in sheep.



## Walk 3\_Hold House Farm and the Old Railway Line

This is a bracing walk to the source of the Fairney Burn and the site of the former ICI explosives depot, with spectacular views back over the Pont valley and a return along the old railway track. About 2.8 miles (4.5km), it can be muddy in places after wet weather



- 1 Walk through the Merton Way shopping mall south towards Ponteland Park, passing Merton Hall on your left. Cross the A696 Main Street and go through the Park. The embankment leading to the old railway bridge can be seen on the 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 following the removal of the old railway bridge over the Main Road and the re-landscaping of the area



*Railway Crossing Keeper's Cottage*

- 2 Follow the footway with the River Pont on the left to the Park entrance on Callerton Lane. Immediately to the right of the Park entrance is the former Railway Crossing Keeper's Cottage**

The Gosforth and Ponteland Light Railway began trading in 1905 along a track which passed over a level crossing in Callerton Lane before reaching Ponteland Station. The branch

remained in use for goods and eventually closed in the 1960's. It is not generally known that the train carrying King George V and Queen Mary on visits to the North-East or Scotland was often parked overnight at Ponteland since this was a quiet and remote location with no problems of security

- 3 Take care crossing the road to continue on the old railway track**

This bridleway between Callerton Lane and Newcastle International Airport has become a wildlife corridor due to the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan which was "Made" in 2017. Since then the Community Partnership has organised and delivered a series of projects, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers with litter picking, hand pruning, footpath reinstatement, and wild flowers and bulb planting along this route. Continue along the old railway track passing the new Combined School buildings on your left



*the old railway track*

- 4 Turn right at the entrance to the Middle School and follow the fenced footpath alongside a line of trees with a small stream on your left. At the tennis courts turn left following a narrow path with the tennis courts on your right to reach a bridge over the stream. Cross the bridge, bear slight right and follow a clear path across the field to Rotary Way. The isolated Hold House Farm buildings are visible on the horizon**

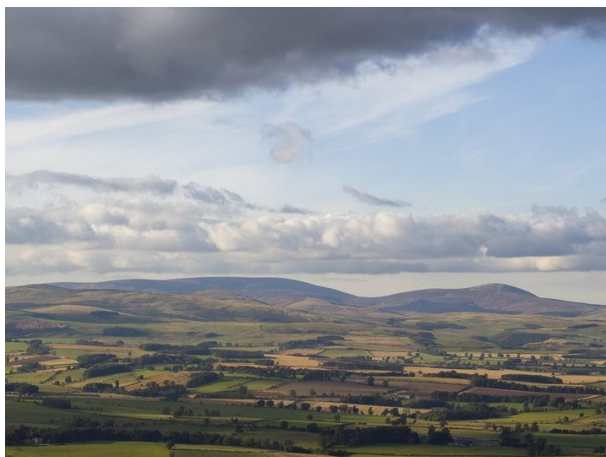




Path to Hold House

- 5 Take care crossing Rotary Way which has a 60mph speed limit then pass over a stile at a finger post into another field bearing slightly left to follow a clear track climbing towards Hold House Farm
- 6 Reaching the end of the track at a four way finger post turn left and begin to descend. To the right is Black Callerton Hill which conceals Newcastle International Airport from view and to the left is an open view across the Pont Valley to the Simonside Hills. On a clear day the plateau of The Cheviot and the conical mound of Hedgehope to its right can also be seen

The triangular area in the foreground separates the lower part of Darras Hall from the rear of Cheviot View. At the apex the new Combined Schools building sits rather better in the in the trees then the stark white Middle School



The Cheviot and hedgehope (from Simonside)



Information board on the old railway line

buildings to the left, while the remainder of the Village is hidden in the valley beyond

Apart from the sight and sounds of planes landing and taking off it is hard to believe the airport is less than 2km away and the edge of Newcastle at Newbiggin just over 3km away (but coming closer at the time of writing).

At a line of cranked fence posts the track turns left. From 1951 until 1990 the area beyond this was used as an explosives depot by ICI. Storage was in soil-covered bunkers on the low lying ground and the railway remained open for the trains carrying explosives. ICI's Nobel division transported explosives from its factory at Ardeer, Ayrshire to its depot from 1953 until the 1970's. The explosives were distributed from the Callerton depot, with offices at Street Houses, to mines all over the North East of England. The source of the Fairney burn is in here

The path goes right, right again and left

- 7 Descend towards Rotary Way and the edge of the Village, the manicured mound of Ponteland Golf Course, Dobbies Garden Centre and the Badger Country Inn are ahead. It is possible to go straight on here across a field to reach the former opencast workings at Prestwick, returning along the old railway line to rejoin the route at 8



Old photographs at The Badger

It is only beyond here that the airport buildings and the traffic on the A696 Woolsington By-pass can be seen

Built in the late 18th century the Grade II Listed Badger Inn has served a number of purposes before welcoming the locals of the hamlet of Street Houses. Originally a gentleman's residence the building was later split into three houses, which were occupied through the years by a succession of farmers, yeomen and a cattle dealer, before eventually becoming The Badger. The themed interior was provided with a large number of framed pictures, and no less than 26 of these comprised historic photographs of Ponteland. A booklet published by Ponteland Civic Society lists them and provides some background to the scenes illustrated

- 8 Take a left fork in the track, then turn left onto the old railway track and follow this back to towards your starting point, once again taking great care crossing Rotary Way**

The highway verges or "green approaches" to Ponteland are an important characteristic that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the village and are protected through the Neighbourhood Plan. The great majority of the land surrounding Ponteland and Darras Hall is actively farmed (rather than being turned into 'pony paddocks' for example) so that the landscape has a distinctly rural



Rotary Way

character. Tomlinson describes Ponteland as "a pretty rural village on the river Pont from which it derives its name. Fine trees line both sides of the turnpike road near the village, thus making the entrance to it very picturesque." This is as true today as when his "Guide to Northumberland" was first published in 1888



The Combined School

- 9 Return past the Combined school. Alternatively to extend the walk and join Walk 1 turn right at Rotary Way and follow the mown path (on either side of the road) to Cheviot View**

We do hope you are enjoying these walks, whether you are able to get out or are simply following them from memory. One such reminiscent Rambler is the eagle eyed Janet McCann who spotted an error in Walk 2 within hours of publication. The road bridge over the park footpath, of course, carries Darras Road, not Western Way and this has been corrected for future publication



Latin was the language employed by the Church and was consequently the principal language taught in schools. Following the arrival of William the Conqueror in 1066, French was added to the curriculum. In the case of Morpeth the study of Hebrew was also introduced, probably the result of an growing interest in translations of the Bible.

The boys of Morpeth would have been required to translate Latin into French and vice versa, despite the fact that their mother tongue was English. Conversations had to be held in Latin even in the playground.

There were clearly problems with discipline. The 1559 Statutes for Hexham Grammar School read as follows,

*“the boys shall use in or near the Schole, no weppons as dagger, sworde, staffe, cudgel or such like.*

*They shall use no buyinge, sellinge or defrauding of their fellows by any waies or meanes.*

*They shall haunt no ale houses or playinge at unlawful games as dice, cardes or such like.”*

They sound a rough lot in Hexham.



The Schoolmaster's House in Newgate Street, Now the Conservative Club

A new School to replace the properties at the Chantry and in Newgate street was built in 1859 and has been added to over the years, particularly in the 1970s when the Boys and Girls schools were combined to form a Comprehensive establishment.

In 2011 a further change, driven again by new policies emanating from central government, led to the School being taken out of direct local government control, to be re-established as a voluntary controlled Academy High School, part of the Three Rivers Learning Trust, responsible for three other schools in Morpeth.



The modern school building in Cottingwood Lane

A strong current in Blyth

## *A volt from the blue*



Blyth Harbour

**A newly established company called BRITISHVOLT, has publicised plans to build a new factory on the site of the former coal fired power station at Blyth, demolished in 1990**

The plan is to produce lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles.

Exit from the EU poses problems for British car makers in that, in order to avoid the imposition of tariffs, 50% of all components in a vehicle have to be manufactured in EU or UK.

The power station site is of the right size and has first class transport links by road, sea and rail, although the latter may need to be upgraded. This in turn could result in the restoration of the Ashington line for passenger traffic.

A planning application has been submitted to Northumberland County Council.

The scale of the project is quite mind boggling.

With a floor space of 250,000 square metres, that's about 50 football pitches, It is claimed that it will be the sixteenth largest building in the world, and that there is only one other battery producing facility larger than this, and that is the Tesla factory in Nevada USA .

The aim is to be able to produce 300,000 batteries per year by 2023.

At a cost of some 2.6 billion pounds it is the largest single investment ever to arrive in South East Northumberland, on a par with the Nissan development in Sunderland.

The plant will employ some 3000 workers and support many more in the wider economy. A significant change of fortune for Blyth



## Annual Report

The past year has been one to forget. The constraints placed on public assembly have limited our activities, particularly with regard to the holding of evening talks. We are not alone in this of course, many organisations have faced similar problems. It is difficult to predict how things are going to turn out but we think it unlikely that we will be able to resume evening meetings before the new year. We are however, intending to budget for the possibility of being able to arrange, say two talks, early next year.

We have been monitoring planning applications affecting our Parish with reference where applicable to the Neighbourhood Plan, and Northumberland generally, and will continue to do so, submitting our views to County Hall when this is felt to be necessary.

We continue to press Northumberland County Council to adopt a Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan for the Ponteland and High Callerton Conservation Areas and have prepared a draft Local List of heritage assets of local value. These are both formal community actions promoted in the Neighbourhood Plan

The Local Plan that has been prepared by the County Council is in the process of being examined by one of the Government's Planning Inspectors and we understand that she has proposed a number of amendments and we will be looking at those.

The restrictions placed on our activities have resulted in some reluctance on the part of members to renew their subscriptions and this has effected our finances. To be in a position to put on any talks during the financial year we need to maintain subscriptions at the present level i.e. £8 per member, £12 per couple.

## Accounts

Our financial position at the end of the financial year,

Cash in hand 1 February 2020	£476.18
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Subscriptions	£144.00
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Expenses

Envelopes and stamps	£34.95
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Poppy wreath	£20	£54.95
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Cash in Bank 31 January 2021	£565.23
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## Personnel

Personnel remain largely unchanged. Phil Ham ended his long stint as Chairman in October last year, the job taken on by John Hague, who continues in that role.

Similarly our long standing Secretary, Pat Cooper has stood down and Jill Gregory comes in as the new Society Secretary. We extend our thanks to them both. Audrey Murray continues as Society Treasurer, Janet McCann remains Membership Secretary, Jen Ham is Events Secretary and Will Moses operates as Minister of Walks.

All the above continue as members of the Management Committee together with Alma Prickett, Phil Ham and Mike Brown.

It is proposed that these various memberships remain as described subject to any member representations.

### *The 2021 Limerick Competition*

Entries are starting to come in for this years *Limerick Competition* and here we have one of the first to arrive from a Mrs. Glenys Wilkinson, who apparently has a little holiday home in the small French village of Beze.

*His worship the good Mayor of  
Beze*

*Spends much of his time up in  
trees*

*He can survey his realm*

*From a sturdy Dutch Elm*

*But has never yet caught the  
disease.*

Well done Glenys, I feel sure you are going to be in line for a prize with that effort.

The Wilkinson's two storey cottage is in a short terrace overlooking the river from which the village gets its name. She has sent us a sketch of the building drawn by her daughter who is studying Art and Fabrics at Dijon Polytechnic.



When they first moved in they found that the front door had been removed and after an extensive look round they eventually discovered the missing item at the local recycling station. This meant they had to get the Mayor's permission to take it away and this took several months and quite a lot of tree climbing.

Luckily Mr Wilkinson had been in the Home Guard and so was able to deal with all that, and they were able to get the door back on before the next Mistral, or the 'Beze breeze' as the Wilkinsons call it, arrived in town.

To facilitate what are, we gather, quite frequent visits to Beze, they have acquired a small camper van.



As you can see from the photo they have sent us, it is a rather unusual design in that it appears to face both ways. However, it would seem that they find this of some benefit as it does away with the need to have to turn round in those rather narrow French lanes. As Glenys says, "It means that as soon as we get there we are ready to come home."

I'm sure there's a lesson in there somewhere.



# Comforts for 2021

No. 3

## Apple Charlotte



There are two essential elements with regard to Apple Charlotte. There are the apples and then there is Charlotte, a lady prepared to lend her name to a pudding.

I did have a Great Aunt Charlotte who played the euphoneum but I don't think it was her, she was a more Rhubarb crumble kind of person. She had her own room at the side of Grandad's house but never appeared for meals, or for anything else for that matter. When visiting my Grandparents one was made aware of her presence from time to time by the low moaning noises that echoed down the passageway, but my Grandfather always said that that it was simply Aunt Charlotte playing her euphonium and I never had an opportunity to verify his claim.

It is said the name first emerged in 1796 as a corruption of the Olde English word *charlyt*, a kind of custard, and it is apparently quite popular in Russia where it is known as *charlotka salzaki* as it is traditionally eaten on a sledge.

The actress Charlotte Rampling refused to have anything to do with it, and at one point considered suing the pudding company. He father, was an Olympic athlete so he would never eat pudding. It is said that he was so broke after the war that he decided to sell off the Gold Medal he had won at the Berlin Olympic Games, in order to raise a bit of cash, but sadly discovered that it was not gold at all but painted steel. Hitler had fobbed them off with fakes.

Queen Charlotte, wife of George the Third, bore him 15 children and was said to be the Patron Saint of Apples so it may have been her fault. History does not record how she felt about the pudding

Ponteland Civic Society

Established 2003

Annual subscription 2020 – 21

Single £8 Couples £12

To

Membership Secretary Janey McCann

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