



# PCS Newsletter

Ponteland Civic Society

2021.04



# *just waiting*



*Percy Bysshe Shelley*



*Scatter as from an unextinguish'd  
hearth*

*Ashes and sparks, my words among  
mankind*

*Be through my lips to unawakened  
earth*

*The trumpet of thy prophecy !*

*O Wind*

*If Winter comes, can Spring be far  
behind ?*







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

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

## Greetings,

A couple of weeks ago I received a renewal notice from the Company that had been providing me with insurance on my car for some years. I had made no claims during that time and because of the Covid lock downs that had been applied throughout the year, like a lot of people, I had not run up that many miles. I had assumed that I might well be in line for a reduction in my premium.

I was then, somewhat taken aback to find that, rather than reducing my premium, the insurer had felt it necessary to increase the amount I was required to pay. More than a little annoyed by this turn of events I decided to seek alternative options by going to one of the price comparison sites.

To my astonishment I was immediately presented with some thirty to forty quotations ranging from around £250 up to nearly £800. I selected one at the lower end of the market, from a company that I had vaguely heard of, and went for that.

This of course meant that I was required to telephone my previous insurer to let them know that I was not coming back. I was straight way offered all sorts of discounts that could be applied in my particular case and which would do much to reduce the required payment. Given my unblemished record it seemed surprising that such reductions had not been on offer somewhat earlier. I bid them goodbye.

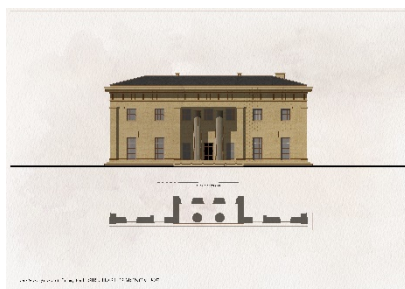
At one time, to say that you worked in insurance carried a degree of kudos, it was a respected profession. Nowadays, they seem to adopt the techniques beloved of the market traders who used to conduct 'Dutch auctions' on the Newcastle quayside on Sunday mornings, maybe they still do, it's a while since I was down.

In this issue we have been looking at shops, we have another local walk for you to tread, and there are updates with regard to Britishvolt, and of course we have a poetic contribution as well as yet another comfort to ease your way.

The Editor

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

Cover, Damson burst, Ponteland



## Shops and shopping

### *Times they are a changin' ?*



Merton Way shopping parade, Maybe the art of window dressing is set for a renaissance ?

**No doubt about it, a lot of shops have had a pretty bad time during the last twelve months.**

We, on the other hand, have mostly swapped our supermarket trolleys for a computer screen, with our typed orders materialising on our doorsteps a few days later. It remains to be seen just how many will want to return to those cramped aisles, trying to find the things we want to buy amongst the serried racks of things we mostly don't.

**The pandemic has probably inflicted the biggest shock to retail activity since the advent of the big supermarkets wiped out the smaller grocery stores.**

A change that came to be reflected along Ponteland Main Street. On the north side the grocers, Stephensons, was subsequently replaced by a landscaped garden,

and this seems to have prompted their neighbour, Ponteland Motors, to move across the road to where Waitrose now stands and ultimately led to the arrival of the grey concrete box that came to house Barclays Bank. One of the most inappropriately designed structures ever to gain entry to a village conservation area.







11 Main Street, Ponteland

April 2021

On the south side the grocer, Fine-Fare was housed next door to the Seven Stars in what is now the betting shop, but by far the most dramatic change to occur along this frontage was the demolition of the single storey structure that housed Lloyds Bank and stood in front of their existing premises. Another case of the picturesque being sacrificed upon the altar of traffic management. Most of the other businesses have been relatively long term with the possible exception of those that came to occupy number eleven.

Until recently this unit was the Post Box Café, about to be replaced by another café due to open in May. Prior to that there had been a series of ladies fashion boutiques, it was for a while occupied by something called Blockbuster Video and some even remember it as a bakers run by a John Scott and his daughter. However, for many it will always be Maynards, the sweet shop.

A local stream, the Ouseburn, serves to link this small shop with the mighty Tyne.

Rising in nearby Callerton, it makes its way around Woolsington, skirts both the City and Gosforth golf courses, meanders through Jesmond Dene to join the Tyne a mile down river from Tyne Bridge, passing what was once Maynard's Toffee Factory.

The latter has had a somewhat chequered history, built originally as a cattle sanatorium and slaughter house, to deal with animals imported from abroad that had to be held in quarantine before they could be sold. The development of refrigeration eventually made this facility unnecessary and after a long period, when it was used simply for storage, it was taken over by a John Vose, a confectioner from Liverpool.

**In 1898 John sold the business to Tom Maynard, a London sweet manufacturer who along with his partner Charles Riley gradually expanded the operation, ending up with a chain of 56 sweet shops throughout the North East, which, of course, included number eleven Main Street.**

Ref. A Little History, by Silvie Fisch





Competition entry, by GRADONARCHITECTURE for housebuilders Yuills

Jim Hague Graphics 2011

**The factory closed down in 1950 and in 1998 all the shops were sold.**

Badly damaged by fire in 1993 the premises lay derelict for a number of years, In 2009 a tidal barrage was installed at the mouth of the burn to achieve a more constant water level and In 2011 the City Council held a design and build competition, targeted at the renovation of the valley and a number of schemes were submitted.

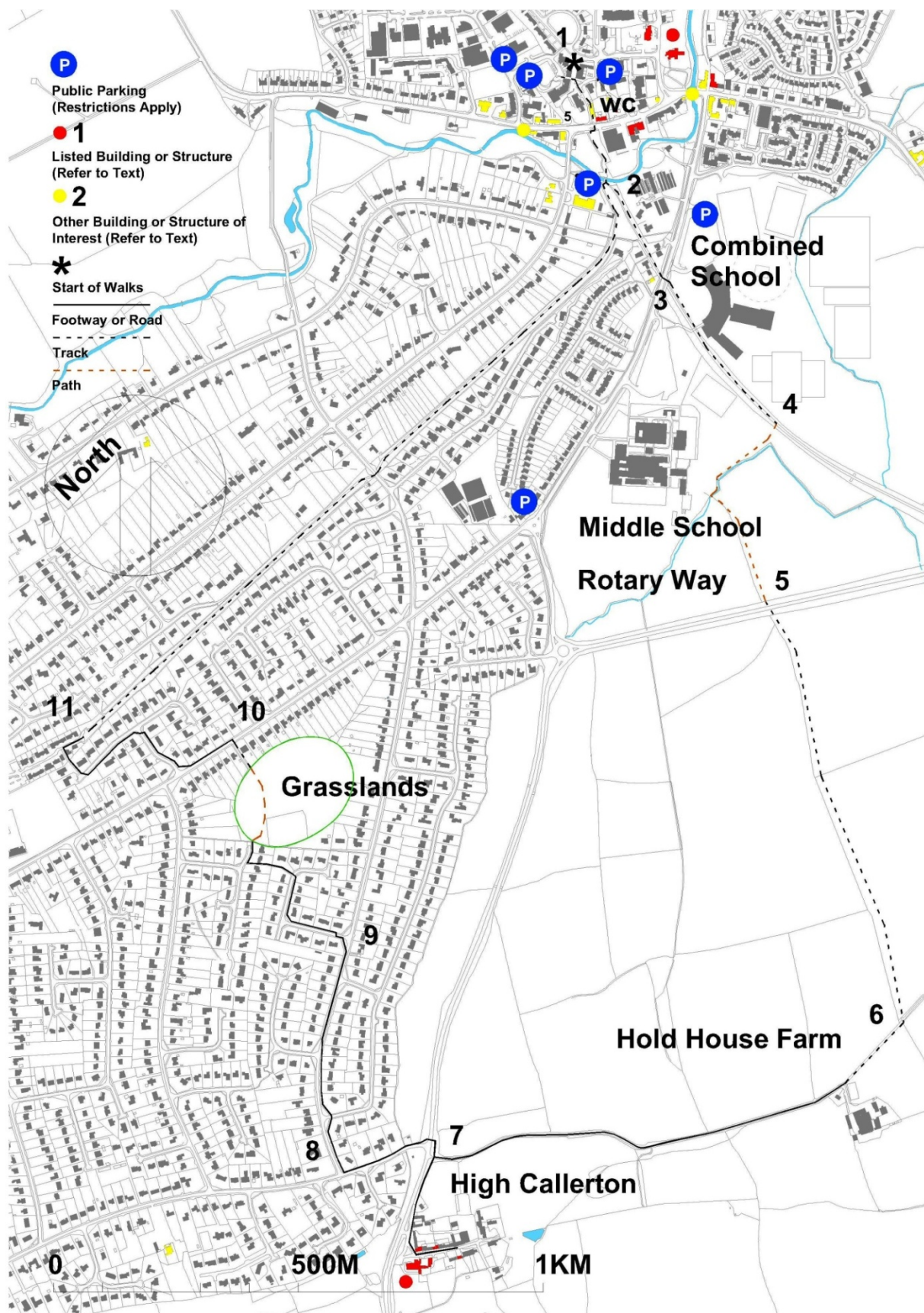


A proposal by XCITEARCHITECTURE was subsequently given the go ahead and is now about 60% complete. The picture shows the lower reaches of the Ouseburn in March 2021, with the renovated Toffee Factory on the left



## Walk 4\_High Callerton and the Darras Hall Grasslands

This walk visits the isolated hamlet of High Callerton and the little known Darras Hall Grasslands. It is a varied walk taking in farmland, two sections of the old railway track and some of the quieter parts of the Darras Hall Estate. About 4.7 miles (7.6km), the start is as walk 3, 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
- 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
- 3 Take care crossing the road to continue on 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
- 5 Take care crossing Rotary Way which has a 60mph speed limit then pass over a stile at a finger post into another field to follow a clear track climbing towards Hold House Farm

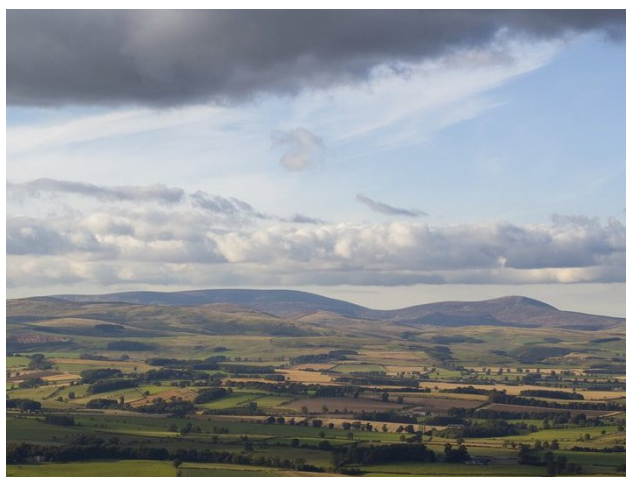
For more detailed descriptions of these sections see Walk 3

- 6 Reaching the end of the track at a four way finger post turn right and follow the track towards the farm buildings. Pass through the gap to the side of the farm gate and continue on the farm access road to Callerton Lane

High Callerton can be seen ahead with Brough Hill to your left. To the right there are extensive views towards Simonside and on a clear day the rounded top of The Cheivot and the conical shape of Hedgehope can be seen beyond



*High Callerton*



*The Cheivot & Hedgehope*

- 7 Turn left and follow the grass verge at the side of the road to go past the end of a low stone wall and into High Callerton. Return to the farm access road and take care crossing Callerton Lane onto Edgehill and continue to Eastern Way



It seems the settlement of High Callerton grew up around a range of manor halls and farm buildings. In 1264 High Callerton was part of the Barony of Mitford held by Roger Bertram but handed over to Sir William de Valence following the failed Second War of the Barons



*Callerton House*



*Newton Cottage & Home Farm*

There are a number of buildings set on either side of a narrow lane with grass verges. Most of these are of stone with slate roofs. Callerton Hall, The Gateway, Oriel House, Coach House and the garden walls generally are all listed and form an attractive group of buildings, some dating from early in the eighteenth century, but with substantial remodelling in 1882 by R. Norman Shaw. The remaining listed buildings are Callerton House and Newton Cottage, both of which also date from the early eighteenth century, but probably the most interesting house in the hamlet is Rebellion House

The name comes from the tradition that Oliver Cromwell stayed in the house. It is the oldest building in the village and is a typical 16th century Bastle House remodelled, in the 17th century and with further alterations in the 20th century. It is constructed of walls one metre thick for protection, originally housing cattle on the ground floor, with owner and family on the upper floor where there is a huge fireplace and a splayed gun loop

Some of the original traditional farm buildings were converted into dwellings in the 1970's and 1980's. These changes have involved alteration, demolition and extension of existing structures. The result is the current built form of the settlement



*Home Farm (The Grange & The Granary)*



*Rebellion House (c. Phil Thirkell)*

**8 Turn Right and follow Eastern Way past Queensway (on the left), Willow Way (on the right) until you reach Hawthorn Way**



The Estate came into being in 1907 following the purchase at auction of three farms, Little Callerton, Darras Hall Farm and Callerton Moor Farm, in total 1,014 acres. The area was well known as poor wet farmland with heavy clay subsoil positioned on the north facing slope of Callerton Fell and into the valley of the River Pont. In 1910, a group of local landowners and businessmen created the concept of a residential estate. Joseph W Wakinshaw, one of the founders of the Trust Deed, had a vision for the potential development of the "railway" and introduction of the "motor vehicle" to allow families to reside away from the city boundaries into greener locations

The Trust Deed is still in place to ensure the rural ambience of the Estate is maintained. Any changes or development of a property, including sheds, fencing and the entrance from the road must have the consent of the Estate Committee

Most applications for covenant consent to the Committee are now for replacement dwellings, modifications and limited infilling. Large houses have replaced small dwellings, which may well have become in need of significant repair or updating but some are built on smaller plots of land where the scale and massing overpowers the street scene. Many of the front boundaries have had the soft landscaping and hedgerows removed and replaced with a solid wall and high gates. The character of the Estate is slowly being eroded by such insensitive development



*Eastern Way*



*The Grasslands*

- 9 Turn Left here and follow the road round to the right, when it bends to the right again take the narrow footpath to your left and follow this to Woodlands. Turn right and enter the Grasslands through a kissing gate. Bear right and then follow the worn grass curving slightly left to leave the grasslands through another kissing gate**

Darras Hall Grasslands was first identified in the Darras Hall Trust Deed 1910 as a specific area uniquely positioned in an isolated spot to be used for recreational purposes and has been left relatively undisturbed since. It is one of the few remaining areas of old lowland grassland in the county and contains some locally uncommon plant species. It was designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1984

- 10 Cross Callerton Lane and turn left, then turn right into Crossfell and follow the road round to the left. At the end turn right and take the short footpath link to the old railway line**

- 11 Follow the old railway line back to your starting point crossing Eastern Way**



## Dogs of the North

### *The Berwick Ranger*



This is Beardsley, a rescue dog from the Berwick Animal Rescue Kennels, at the Ramparts Business Park.

The Charity seeks to find homes, not just for dogs but for a whole range of other animals including cats, rabbits, parrots and even snakes.

Beardsley is a Lercher, an English cross breed that has been in the country for hundreds of years, from a time when the poor were forbidden by law to own greyhounds. They have speed, hunting ability and a kind nature. Their original purpose was to put meat on the table for the common man.

They need to run.

This fella has had a rough time having been confined in a cold shed on an allotment and initially had a deep distrust of human beings.

These days he lives happily with Julie up at Seahouses where he makes full use of the extensive beaches to indulge in his favourite pastime, running like the wind.

So, you ask, why the name?

Well, it stems from an occasion when Julie, having purchased a set of garden chairs from a local superstore, was having difficulty getting them all into her car.

A man in the next vehicle came to her aid and soon had the furniture neatly tucked away. That man turned out to be Newcastle footballer Peter Beardsley, he who broke the transfer record, he who played 59 times for England and scored 61 goals for Newcastle FC.

The dog bears his name, as a celebration of that momentous meeting.



## *Current position sparks controversy*



The beach at Cambois

March 2021

A planning application for the scheme to build a very large battery producing factory on the site of the former Blyth Power Station has landed on the planners desk at County Hall, all 154 pages of it.

The site lies between the Northumberland Spine Road, the A189, and the old rail line running down the eastern site boundary. The village of East Sleekburn lies to the south while Cambois itself skirts the northern and eastern perimeter.

It is an area of marked contrasts. The sandy beach backs on to two rows of terrace housing where residents are clearly intent on celebrating their seaside location with gaily painted house fronts and decent views of the sea at first floor.

To the north, the Primary School together with the small church, are set within a large area of green space and beyond that the gaunt silhouette of the former Cambois colliery looms large.



The Church of St. Andrew, Cambois

The rail line curves away to the west around the top of the site, allowing the road to move over and provide better access to the beach, up towards the estuary of the River Wansbeck.





Seaside views from Unity Terrace

March 2021

Not surprisingly the anticipated arrival of such a large development in close proximity to low rise housing is a major concern for many of the residents.

Roughly half the building will be some 26 metres high, that's about four times the height of the average two storey dwelling. The view from most dwellings will be adversely effected.

Similarly, a plant destined to employ some 3000 people is bound to give rise to increased traffic. Residents of Sleekburn already experience difficulty when attempting to feed on to the Spine Road at busy times and Highways England has suggested that the application be put on hold to allow time for a traffic study to assess the likely effect, not only on local traffic, but also on the junction with the A19 at the infamous Moor Lane roundabout.

The Environment Agency has asked for more information as to how the project will comply with something called the Water Framework Directive, something we have apparently signed up for, the aim being to get polluted rivers clean

again and ensure that they remain that way. Two water courses cross the site.



The former Cambois Colliery buildings

There is also mention of the fact that Blyth Port Installations were identified on German Luftwaffe reconnaissance maps as a prime target and the authorities say they are unable to rule out the possibility that there may be unexploded bombs within the area. Clearly this has serious implications for the bulldozer drivers.

**For Britishvolt the current is yet to flow.**



## Poet's Corner

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*Nightmare on Darras*

*by Amy Green*

*I dreamt I dwelt in Darras Hall  
Each hedgerow had become a wall  
Fronts once set with leafy sticks  
All close-ed up with facing bricks  
Landscaped fronts in every quarter  
Sacrificed to bricks and mortar*

*Space where folk will park their cars  
Imprisoned in with metal bars  
Bosky banks with ivy trailing  
All usurped by iron black railing  
Drives once framed with flowering shrubs  
All gated shut, like Wormwood Scrubs*

*Hedgerows white with hawthorn's petal  
Cast aside, replaced by metal  
Nature's creatures large or small  
Can make no nest within a wall  
So strange a dream I here review  
It cannot possibly be true, Can it ?*

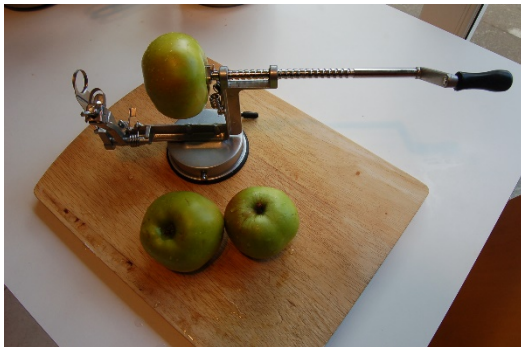
Once you have properly memorised the words we suggest that you come together in small groups and proceed around the Estate, engaged in the form of choral singing known as carousal, to the tune of Old King Cole.



## Comforts for 2021

### Number 4 *peeler*

### *The all purpose apple*



I may perhaps have made mention of this before but there is no doubt about it that, when it comes to culinary creations that require the inclusion of apples, it is vital to remove their outer casing, particularly if one is confronted by the redoubtable British Bramley. No matter how beguiling their rosy cheeks, those skins are tough.

As a consequence one has, normally, to resign oneself to the tedious process of peeling the fruit. Not as tedious perhaps as peeling potatoes, with their unattractive skin and their association with military service, but tedious nevertheless.

But all is not lost, science has come to our aid with the invention of the splendid hand operated peeler, slicer core removing device.

The apple selected for the chop is first impaled on the vicious three pronged spear at the dangerous end of the device, a deft turn of the handle rapidly rotates the screw and peels away the tough skin, while at the same time neatly slicing the fruit into usable slices leaving the core still stuck there on the triple impaler.

Hours of tedious work are eliminated, the Bramleys are well beaten and it won't be long now before the Apple Charlotte emerges steaming from the griddle.

Bliss indeed



This will be the last newsletter until September when we will resume publication until we are able to organise talks again  
We do hope you have enjoyed reading them so far

**Ponteland Civic Society**

**Established 2003**

Membership Secretary Janet McCann

3 Ridgely Drive Ponteland NE20 9JB

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