

1. The Diamond Inn.

The Diamond Inn occupies a commanding position at the eastern end of the river bridge and next to the former smithy dating from 1822 and Grade II Listed. Whilst the hostelrys *The Seven Stars* and *The Blackbird* have both been formally Listed as Grade II, The Diamond Inn has – rather inexplicably – never been Listed at all. It has, however, been particularly important to the social life of Ponteland for nearly 200 years; it occupies a central position next to the river bridge and facing a stretch of the River Pont. But perhaps most importantly, it has always occupied a central role in the life of the ordinary people of Ponteland and has apparently never been closed except for building improvement work.



The Diamond Inn was built circa. 1830; originally as a two-storey building of red-brick construction using common bond brickwork surmounted by a pantiled roof; the windows were all originally Georgian sash windows. It is likely that the bricks were made locally – in the 19th Century there were several brickyards within reach, including one mile north of the village off the A696 [1] and another to the west of the A696 south of Belsay where the remains of a triple kiln can be seen. A further storey having four gables to the frontage was added to the Diamond in stages between 1900 and 1912, as illustrated in the second photograph [2]. The new second floor was 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 around the 1950s. It should be noted



how, in the early 1900s, the river at this point was evidently much wider and also somewhat shallower than today (except, that is, for serious flooding at intervals).

Occasional gatherings of many carriages and carts would also appear

to have taken place – probably on annual “Hiring Days” for the farming community, when prospective hirers and workers gathered at a local venue, on what was a holiday, to settle the next year’s agreements. According to *Almond* the actual move was usually made at May Term – the 12th of the month – when it was hoped that there would be no rain since that could be a disaster for families moving all their goods and chattels on open carts. [3] Other sources refer to May the 11th or 12th being known as “Flitting Friday” [4].



The photograph shown above dates from circa. 1910 and could well be a Hiring Day gathering. It is reported that Hiring Days were annually held in most Market Towns, including Newcastle and Morpeth, where “the practice ceased about 1970.” [3]

[1] "Ponteland; One Thousand Years of History". ISBN 0 9510381 0 9
Leslie Almond & Ponteland Local History Society. 1984. p. 53

[2] "Images of England; Ponteland." 1999. ISBN 0 7524 1806 8
John Turner. Tempus. p. 11.

[3] "Ponteland through the 20th Century" ISBN 0 9510381 1 7
Leslie Almond & Ponteland Local History Society. 1992. p.21.

[4] "Upper Coquetdale" 1903; {republished by Frank Graham 1974:
ISBN 0 85983 046 2} David "Dippie" Dixon. p. 207.