

## 27. The “Toll House”



The stone building with the pyramidal slate roof located immediately at the west end of the bridge over the River Pont is generally referred to as the “Toll House.” It was, in fact, at one time the adjacent butcher’s slaughter house. The original Toll House, located behind the slaughter house, was demolished in circa. 1906 and replaced by Lambton’s Bank, later Lloyds Bank. [1] The view below is taken from the former Coates Institute at the junction with North Road, and shows the one-time butcher’s house and shop. One of the



widows of the former slaughter house has been made into a door whilst a full-height stone wall now links the former butcher’s shop with the end wall of the house. The house itself has been subdivided for a number of different

enterprises in the past, but the left-hand side now gives entrance to a restaurant whilst the right-hand side is occupied by a design business.



A postcard postmarked 1904 and taken from virtually the same viewpoint is shown above; The old slaughter house may be seen behind a recently-installed telegraph pole but the butcher's shop and house are obscured by the real Toll House which was still standing in the road at that time.



In 1902 the butcher was Matthew Charlton Berkley, and the photograph above shows his wife Margaret at the door of the house with their five children. [2] The entrance to the shop was through the lower door to the left. The premises continued as a butcher's business right through to the 1970s, the last proprietor being a Mr. Gaskin. Although various changes have been made to the ground-floor frontage of the premises and the roof tiles have been

replaced by slates, the basic house has remained in appearance very much as it was in 1902. Internally, however, it may have completely changed.

The butcher's slaughter house has within the past decades been extended to turn it into a viable location for a hairdresser's business, and during this time has assumed the name of the "Toll House". The original Toll House came into being to service horse-drawn public transport through Ponteland between Newcastle and the Borders. Operating under the Turnpike Act of 1830, it was not demolished until 1906. The collection of tolls had already ceased in 1878 but this apparently led to a sharp deterioration in the state of the roads – ascribed at the time to the "popularity of the new-fangled railways." [3]

The "Toll House" today is all that is left of a village butcher's business up to about 1970, but the continued use of the name preserves the link with the essential transport services passing to, and through, Ponteland long before the days of railways, the bicycle and the motor car.

[1] "Ponteland; One Thousand Years of History". ISBN 0 9510381 0 9  
Leslie Almond & Ponteland Local History Society. 1984. pp. 20 & 21.

[2] "Images of England; Ponteland." Pub. 1999. ISBN 0 7524 1806 8  
John Turner. Tempus. p. 72.

[3] "Ponteland; One Thousand Years of History". ISBN 0 9510381 0 9  
Leslie Almond & Ponteland Local History Society. 1984. p.43.