

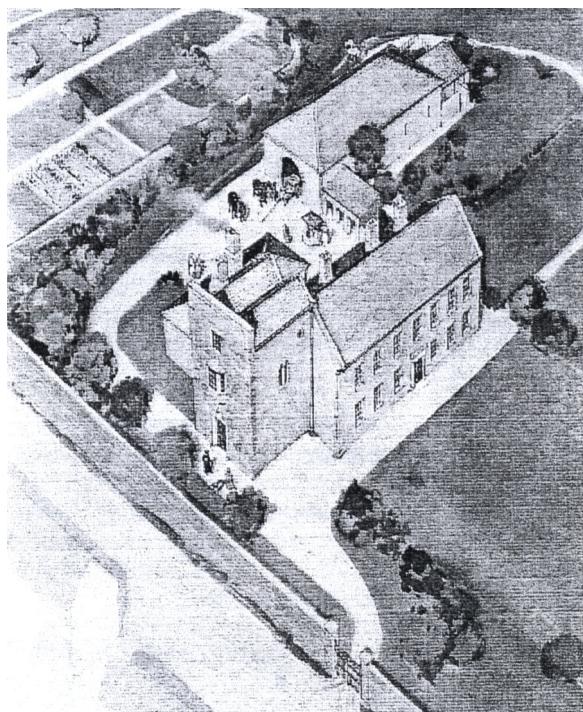
26. The “Verger’s Cottage”



The building known as The Verger’s Cottage was originally the stable block of the 18th Century Vicarage, of which the major part was demolished in 1865

following the building of a new Vicarage a few yards away to the north. The sketch reproduced on the left shows the arrangement of the buildings before demolition, and is taken from an interpretive watercolour based on drawings made by the architect of the new Vicarage. [1] The rebuilt frontage of the 1865 building now forms part of the façade of “Pele House”, a block of modern flats on the same site.

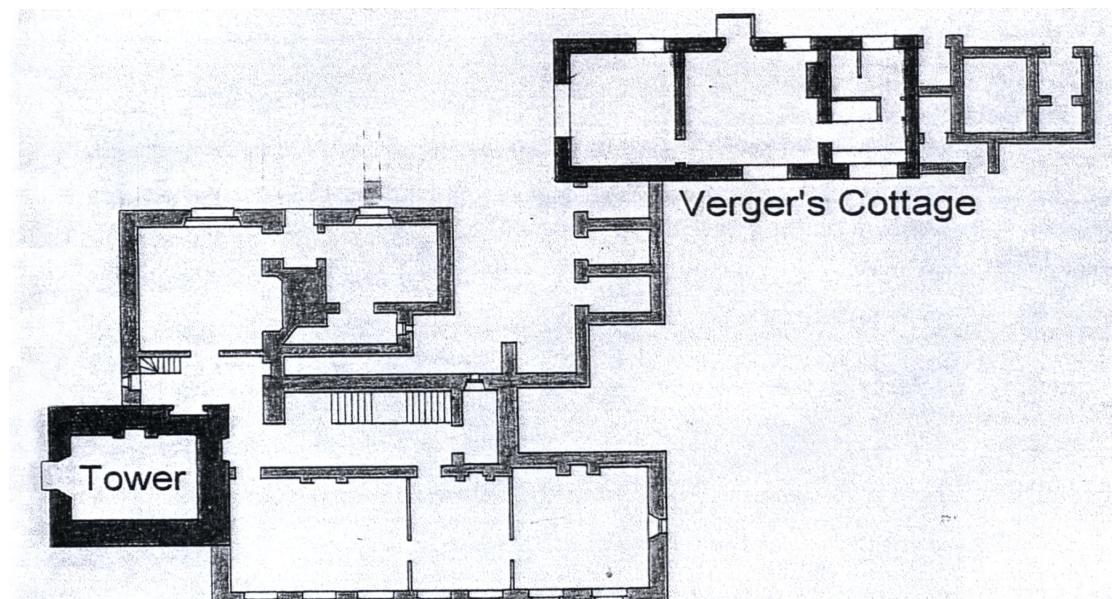
The “Pele Tower” which had formed the entrance porch to the 18th Century Vicarage, was not demolished but retained as the Tack Room for the stables, which were still needed at that time. Then, in 1954, the 1865 Vicarage,



block were conveyed to the Castle Ward Rural District Council for the sum of £5,700. The beneficiaries of this transaction were the Incumbent, the Reverend John Cheshire, the Church Commissioners, and the Warden and Scholars of Merton College, Oxford. Merton College had held property in Ponteland, received tithes, and had the living in their gift since 1265 following

the confiscation of these rights from Peter de Montford after he had been unwisely involved with a failed rebellion against King Henry III.

The plan below shows the ground floor layout of the 18th Century Vicarage; the parts still standing are shown in black. [2]



Castle Ward Rural District Council was dissolved in 1974 and succeeded by Castle Morpeth Borough Council, following which the 1865 Vicarage was sold to Bellway Homes (North East Division) Ltd. who added further office accommodation to the rear of the building. The so-called “Verger’s Cottage” was leased to Ponteland Parish Council who used it as their offices.

However, by 2007 it had become clear that the accommodation in the Verger’s Cottage was becoming quite inadequate for the Parish (later, Town) Council, and they leased office premises in Unit 1 on the Ponteland Industrial Estate. The Verger’s Cottage was put up for sale and eventually bought by a local private individual. Since then no viable use for the building has been found and very little basic maintenance appears to have been carried out. The condition of the property has deteriorated and it has been the victim of vandalism.

In common with the Pele Tower – which was declared a Scheduled Ancient Monument in January 2000 just prior to locally-led restoration work being started – the Verger’s Cottage represents a tangible survival of the Vicar’s residence going back to the 1300s, although no surviving masonry is dated earlier than the 1500s. In 2009 an application by the Ponteland Civic Society for formal Listing of the Verger’s Cottage under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 was declined.

[1] “Pont Island News” 2005. Various Authors. Published by Ponteland Local History Society. ISSN 1468-1390. p.5.

[2] ibid. p. 6.