

Pass the Stars pub and the Safeway supermarket and at the bus stop is a footpath sign. Turn left here into The Park and pause on the plank bridge over the Pont. There was a railway bridge at this place and by looking up and down the footpath the old embankment can be made out which carried the railway tracks. We are next to the Memorial Hall car park at this point. Turn right after crossing the bridge and walk alongside the river Pont and under a road bridge.



Bridleway off Eastern Way

There are more earth mounds built in the mid 1990s as part of the Ponteland flood defences. On the left there is both a mound and a stone wall

to prevent flooding into the houses of Riverside which were very vulnerable to any water overflowing the river banks. Further into the park is a bright painted building which is the Scout Hut and behind that a much enlarged old stone building which was a water mill where corn was ground. The millrace came off the Pont much higher up and rejoined the Pont in the Park. It is a bit overgrown but still easily discerned. The path crosses the Pont twice and then there is a choice of route. The level path exits to Fox Covert Lane over the Millennium Bridge. There are a number of exits onto Fox Covert Lane and it's worth exploring the woodland and finding the ox-bow pond. You might disturb a heron or see a red squirrel.



Red Squirrel

The park is home to a great variety of wildlife and a little patience and quiet will be well rewarded. The red squirrels are found here, on Darras Hall estate and on the golf course. Northumberland is one of the last habitats for the reds in England but there have been sightings in the county of grey squirrels.

There are many of the common birds as well as the kingfisher, tree creeper, nuthatch and jay all of which have been seen in the woods here.



Dipper about to feed young

A pair of dippers nested in the river bank in 2003 and successfully hatched another brood in 2004. The ox-bow pond has a hide with easy access from Fox Covert Lane.



The Hide next to the Ox-bow pond

Walk left along Fox Covert Lane to the junction with Runnymede Road, cross over into Eastern Way, cross Darras Road and about 50 yards ahead on the left the bridleway can be joined which soon returns you to the Memorial Hall and the village.

## Walk 1

# The Village and The Park

(about 1 mile)



The popular Diamond Inn

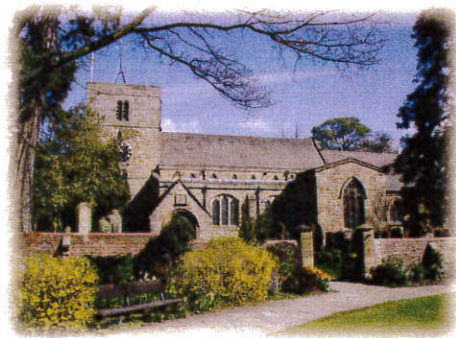
**START** on the bridge over the river Pont on the A696 from Newcastle to Scotland.

The Diamond Inn probably dates from the early 1800s. The Smithy next to the inn is dated on the door lintel, 1822. It was in use up till the 1950s but is now a popular restaurant.

The Methodist Chapel on the corner opposite was opened in 1908 and replaced an older smaller chapel.

The Toll House, on another corner of the bridge, housed the gatekeeper who collected the tolls on a previous bridge, carrying the turnpike road to Scotland used by mail coaches and local carriers.

Looking upstream from the bridge there is a prominent bank on the left topped by a stone wall. This is part of the village flood defences, built in the mid 1990s, because of regular flooding when the river over-flowed its banks and the Chapel and nearby residences were flooded. The 2000 flood broke through the banks in different places and caused serious flooding. There is a long history of flooding in and around Ponteland and there are many photographs of a major flood in 1900.



St Mary's Parish Church

The Parish Church of St Mary is set back behind the Green. There has been a close link between Merton College, Oxford, and Ponteland since the thirteenth century. The College owned land, collected tithes, and until the middle of last century they appointed the vicars. Parts of the present church are Norman and there is evidence of a previous Saxon church.

The stone building on the corner by the roundabout, now home to an estate agent, is the original site of The Coates Institute. The foundation of this school was in the 1719 Will of one Richard Coates. He left money to found a school, pay the master and clothe and teach 15 poor children.

There was a later Coates School in front of the church which was demolished in 1968 and a new one was built on Thornhill Road. A statue named 'The Teaching' by David Edwick, and showing a teacher embracing children, was placed on the Green on the site of the former Coates School to commemorate the millennium.

Opposite the church is The Blackbird Inn. There was originally a castle on this site but after its destruction by the Scots it was rebuilt as a Manor House by the Errington family who were owners for 200 years. It was licensed as the Blackbird in the nineteenth century and in 1935 the firm of Robert Deuchar, wine and spirit merchants, bought and restored it. An ancient tower and a Tudor fireplace were found during the restoration.

Walk back towards the village centre passing the Coates Institute. Turn right, pass Barclays Bank and see a large derelict stone structure, The Vicar's Pele Tower.

Pele towers were defensive buildings common up to the sixteenth century as protection against border raids. The ground floor was for animals and the upper storeys were residential. The old stable block is now the Parish Office. The original vicarage was attached to the Pele Tower but demolished in the 1860s. There was conservation and restoration of the Tower in 2002.

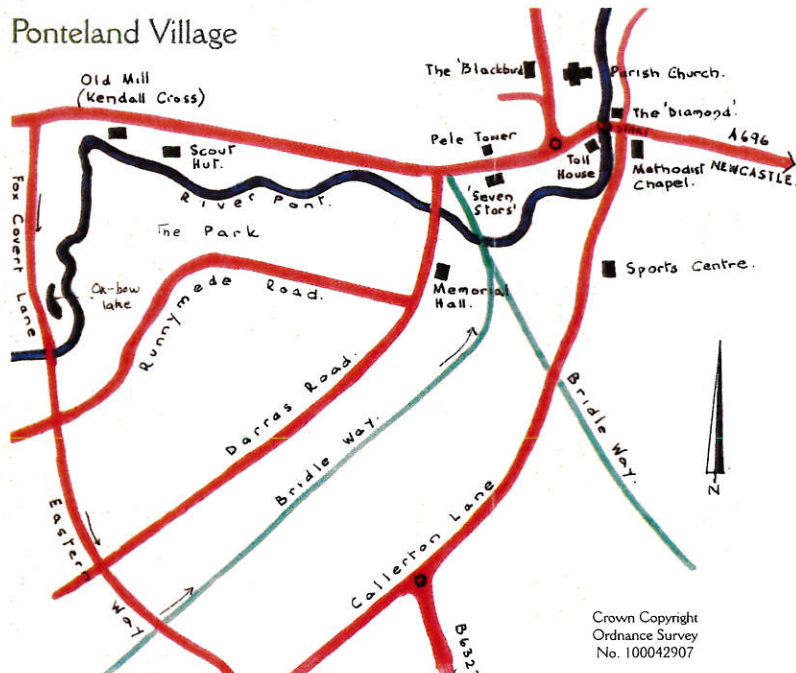
Opposite the Pele Tower is another village pub, The Seven Stars, or Stars. This was shown on a map of 1802 and was supplied by a brewery situated behind the inn. There was frequent flooding in the 1850s causing the inn to be closed several times.

In 1927 it was leased to and later bought by the firm of James Deuchar, youngest brother of the already mentioned Robert.

There were four brothers who came from Scotland and they were prominent in the hotel and brewing trades of the north east as well as substantial land owners in the north of the county.

Their pubs and breweries were eventually bought out by Scottish and Newcastle.

## Ponteland Village



Crown Copyright  
Ordnance Survey  
No. 100042907