

## 29. Ponteland Bridge



The present bridge over the River Pont dates from 1925 and replaced a much earlier structure built in stone and having just two arches. The original carriageway was, however, quite narrow and, although it may have served previous generations quite adequately, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the increase in traffic combined with the arrival of the motor car made the old bridge increasingly obsolete.



There was also the recurrent problem of flooding, which was exacerbated by the restriction on the water flow due to the narrowness of the two arches. The adjacent photograph, in which water can be seen virtually at the top of the arches, dates from the flood of 1903. It was one of many photographs taken by the Reverend David Langton

who served as the Vicar from 1895 until his retirement in 1934.

The photograph was evidently taken from the first floor of the Coates Institute, and it is possible to see a significant gap between the right-hand wall of the bridge abutment and the small building behind the telegraph pole. It is thought that this gap may have led to an earlier ford across the river. The small building with the pyramidal roof is nowadays often referred to as The “Toll House” but in fact it was the adjacent butcher’s slaughter house. [1] The Toll

House was actually the single-storey building on the extreme right of the picture, but it was demolished three years after the 1903 flood to be replaced by the Lambton's Bank building, which was later taken over by Lloyds Bank. This, in its turn, was demolished in the late 1950s and a new Lloyds Bank built on its present site a little to the south. These measures virtually doubled the width of carriageway at this point, and the new parapet wall became virtually continuous with the north wall of the old slaughterhouse.



The 1925 bridge has two narrow piers between which and the abutments the carriageway is supported on horizontal beams. This design provides a much increased passage through which flood waters may flow, so reducing the water level upstream of the bridge (but not entirely eliminating the flooding problem *per se*). The parapet wall contains turned stone columns on both sides of the bridge, so giving a sense of lightness to the whole structure.

The view at this point from Callerton Lane, looking northwards, presents a charming scene with the Diamond Inn at the end of the vista so formed. This view has been much photographed and painted over the years and is an iconic view of the centre of Ponteland which is familiar to all the residents – and, indeed, to many others as well.

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