

EXPLORING YOUR LOCAL HISTORY

# DENTON DENE AND OLD SCOTSWOOD

## A HERITAGE GUIDE



**St James' Heritage & Environment Group  
West End Heritage Guides**

# **Denton Dene and Old Scotswood**

## **A Heritage Guide**

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#### **Acknowledgments:**

Thanks to the Friends of Denton Dene and Mike Greatbatch whose 2011 Heritage and Habitat Guide to Denton Dene was the starting point for this heritage trail.

Images courtesy of: West Newcastle Picture History Collection and Newcastle Libraries and Information Service.

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## Denton Dene: an introduction

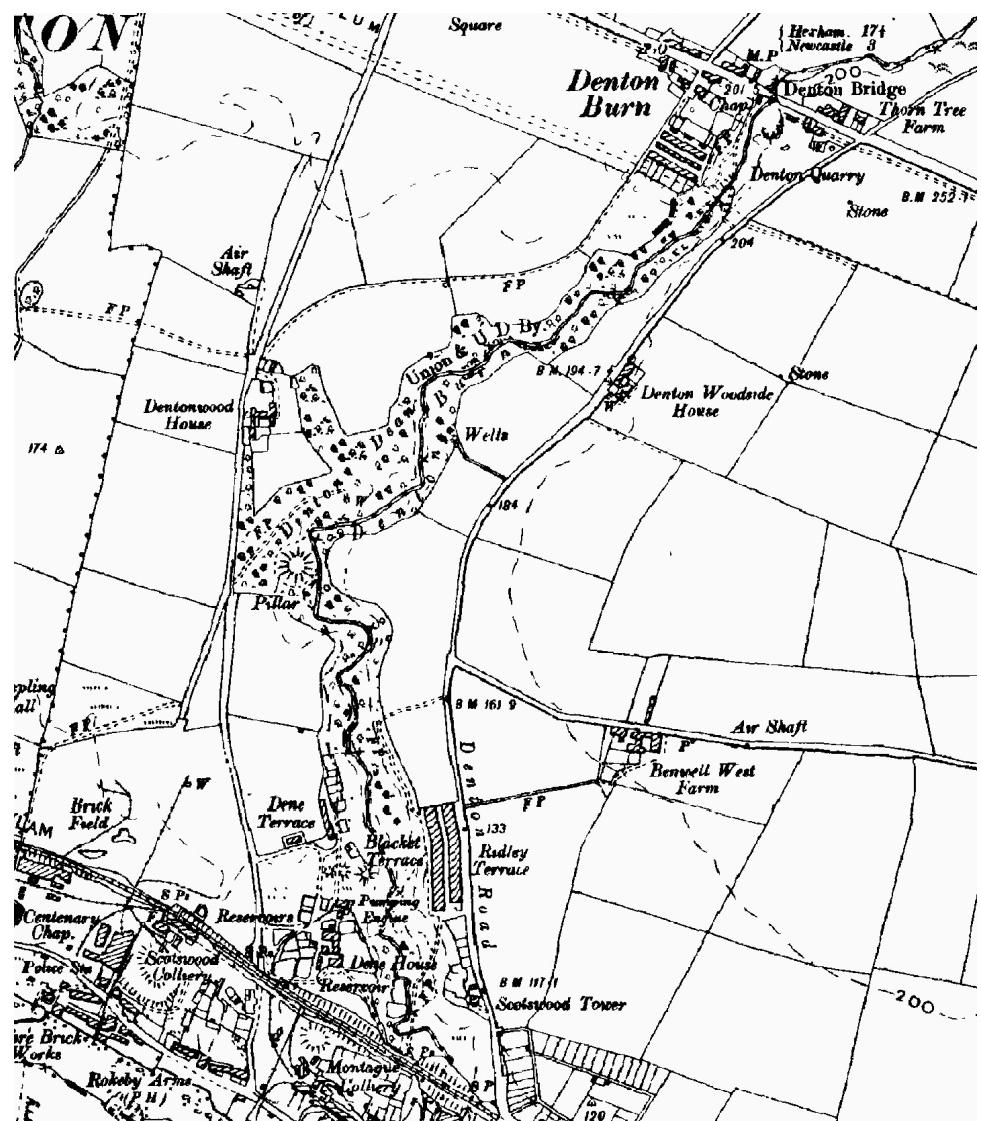
Denton Dene is an area of semi-natural woodland and open grassland. It is one of the oldest landscape features in this part of Newcastle. There are many different plants and wild flowers to enjoy, and it is a valuable habitat for birds and other wildlife. In recent years the woodland has been further enhanced through the creation of wildlife ponds.

The Dene is also a place to remember the history of the local area. This heritage trail focuses on its history, pointing out key sites and some of the traces of the past that remain.

For many years the Dene marked the western border of Newcastle. After Scotswood was absorbed into Newcastle in 1904, the new city boundary followed the western edge of the Dene. Before then, it already formed the boundary between the parishes of Newburn to the west and St John's (one of the city's four parish churches) to the east. Even further back in history, this location marked another important boundary – that of the edge of the vast Roman Empire.

Although the map opposite shows the Dene as mainly surrounded by green fields as late as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this was not an isolated rural area. At the north end, Denton Burn village had grown upon either side of the West Road, with cottages, shops, and a chapel. To the south lay the village of Scotswood, clustered mainly along the riverside, with several small industrial enterprises such as paper and brick manufacture as well as coal mining. Across the south of the area ran the Newcastle-Carlisle railway line, opened in the 1830s. The Dene itself was once a site of industrial activity as sandstone was quarried there for more than a century.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Dene was surrounded by farmland on its east and west sides, but most of the land to the east had been covered by houses by the time of the Second World War, and the land to the west was developed not long afterwards.



## Denton Dene Heritage Trail

Start your walk at Denton Burn Library.

As you stand here, remember that the West Road here follows the line of Hadrian's Wall which guarded the Roman Empire for about

300 years from the second century AD. If you walk a short distance east of the library, you can still see a small section of the Wall. There is a plaque explaining that this was bought by the City of Newcastle in 1924 in order to preserve it as a historic monument.



Note the stone building beyond the Wall which is now a restaurant. This is the original farmhouse of Thorntree Farm, pictured here in 1916, one of several large farms that were in this area. It is now a Grade II listed building.



Take the path south from the library car park which crosses a grassed area. This used to be the site of Denton Quarry. The quarry was disused by the First World War but evidence of this activity can be seen in the sandstone outcrops on either side of the Dene. As you walk, look to your right to see if you can see the place depicted in the 1840s engraving on the opposite page. This shows part of the quarry with a section of the Roman Wall and a farm building above it.



At the end of the grassed area you come to Broadwood Road and a turning circle for buses.

Broadwood Road used to be called Stone Row. This picture dates from 1893.



Cross Broadwood Road and enter the next section of the Dene. There is an interpretation board next to the entrance. Continue down the path, reaching an area of woodland. Where the path forks next to the school grounds, take the left hand path down through woodland. There is further evidence of quarry workings here. Enjoy a stroll through this area of ancient woodland, dominated by oak, elm, sycamore and ash. Many of the trees date back over several centuries and are massive. This area is home to many interesting birds as well as a growing community of grey squirrels.

Just before you leave the woodland for the grassy area beyond, there is a path branching off to the right between two blocks of stone. This leads to a series of small ponds where you may find a variety of creatures such as frogs and newts.



You can walk around the ponds but beware of tree roots on the path and slippery surfaces on the wooden boardwalk. When the boardwalk ends, retrace your steps back to the main path.

After this detour to the ponds, the walk route continues by crossing the open grassy slopes of the southern part of the Dene. From there you can return to your starting point, or take the opportunity to see what remains of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Scotswood.

If you prefer a shorter walk, you can return to your starting point now by retracing your steps back through the woodland area.

To continue with the walk route, turn right when you reach the main path once more. Leaving the wooded area of the Dene, you come to a grassed area. On your left you can see the rear of the houses on Denton Road, and on the skyline straight ahead of you is a white-roofed building. The path curves around to the left to meet a junction where there are blue cycle path signs.

Turn right here, keeping on the main path – **not** the very small path which leads past an area of meadow which is full of flowers in the Spring and Summer.

A short distance further on you come to another junction. Take the wide path signposted “Cycleway 72”.

Follow this path round past a group of trees on your left. In front of you there is a grey fence enclosing the grounds of Newcastle Blue Star Football Club.

Continue along this path until it joins the Hadrian’s Way National Path (marked by a brown sign). Turn left along Hadrian’s Way. This takes you out of the Dene area onto Denton Road.

Note that there are several other footpaths leading off the main path, mainly going off to the left connecting to the urban area of Scotswood which lies to the east of the Dene and to facilities such as Excelsior Academy (the local high school), the Boys Club and the Sports Centre. You cannot get lost as any of these paths will take you out onto Denton Road.

The walk route ends when you arrive at Denton Road. From here you can choose your return journey.

#### *Return through the Dene*

You can now retrace your steps back through the Dene. If you fancy varying your route, there are several smaller paths passing through the Dene further west of the main path – but these have the disadvantage of taking you closer to the A1 motorway and are noisier.

#### *Complete a circular walk by turning up Denton Road*

You can walk north up Denton Road to your starting point on the West Road. On your right you pass the residential areas of Scotswood and Denton Burn, built between the wars on former farmland. On your left you pass a row of Aged Mineworkers Cottages, just north of the roundabout where Denton Road meets Whickham View.

*Explore the history of old Scotswood – turn the page*

## Memories of old Scotswood

Close to where you are standing you can see a large stone-built church with terraced housing beyond it. These are among the few visible remains of old Scotswood, but there was much more to the history of the area than what meets the eye. Use the images and information here, together with the location map on page 14, to help you to recreate a picture of Scotswood in the past.

### 1. St Margaret's Church

At the junction of Denton Road with Armstrong Road stands St Margaret's Church, which is still the Anglican Parish Church for this area. The church was opened in 1917 during the turmoil of the First World War. This sketch dates from 1925. The exterior of the building has changed little, but the interior has been significantly altered and the worship area now occupies only a small part of the building.

The War Memorial for the Scotswood area can be seen inside the grounds at the junction of the two roads. It was moved here in 1965 from a position further down Denton Road when the road was realigned to provide access to the new Scotswood Bridge.



Just east of the church on Armstrong Road stands the old Scotswood Library building and, next to it, there is a green space that used to house the Scotswood Baths and Washhouse.

### 2. Scotswood Village

Until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Scotswood was a small village of terraced housing and industries clustered in the south of the area near the river. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some newer terraces were built to the north of the original village, to the east of the church. Over time, these streets became known as Scotswood Village. This area was partially demolished in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as part of a major regeneration scheme, but some streets remain.



One of these is Whitfield Road, pictured here in 1908. A new housing development called The Rise is being built immediately to the east of the terraces.

### 3. Scotswood Tower

Before the 1930s the area you can see around you was mainly farmland, with a few scattered big houses. Just about where you are now standing as you leave the Dene to join Denton Road there used to be a large house called Scotswood Tower probably dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was demolished in 1984.



Further to the west of the Dene there was another big house called Dene House.

#### 4. Denton Road School

On the opposite side of Denton Road from the point where you leave the Dene is a large grassy area. This is the site of Denton Road School which stood at the junction of Denton Road and Armstrong Road (a long road which runs all the way east from here as far as St John's Cemetery in Elswick). Pictured here in 1910, the school had opened two years earlier. It was one of several schools built in the west end at this period to meet the need for universal education for the rapidly growing population. Denton Road School closed in the 1990s and the building was demolished in 2001.



#### 5. Old Scotswood Village

The original Scotswood village lay in the south of the area just above the river. Much of the early housing was of poor quality and had been demolished by the time of the Second World War. Little remains except memories.

This photograph shows Chapel Terrace around 1900.



#### 6. St Margaret's Iron Church

The St Margaret's Church you can see now replaced an earlier temporary "iron church" on Bridge Crescent, further down the banks in the middle of the old Scotswood Village. This photograph was taken about 1900.



#### 7. Adamsez

Industrial activity was concentrated along the riverbanks. There was a paper mill there from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, run by the Grace family. They were prime movers in the development of the first bridge over the Tyne at Scotswood. After the paper mill closed, the site was taken over by the sanitaryware factory of Adamsez, pictured here shortly before closure in 1975.



#### 8. Adamsez Drift Mine

Adamsez used clay from their own mine to manufacture sanitaryware and other products. The Scotswood Natural Community Garden occupies the site of the drift mine today.



## 9. Vickers Scotswood works

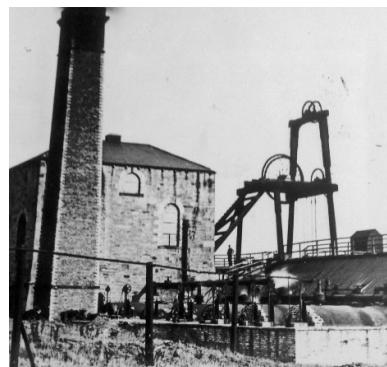
The most significant industrial enterprise in Scotswood was the armaments and engineering works opened in 1899 by Armstrong Whitworth (later Vickers), and closed less than hundred years later. This occupied a large site on the riverside east of the bridge, and was a major employer locally. The peak times for production and employment were during the two world wars.



This photograph shows women working at the Scotswood factory during the First World War. They were known as munitionettes.

## 10. Montagu Pit

To the west of the Dene and the village was the Low Montagu Pit (also known as the View Pit). It was on the site where B&Q are now. If you walk south down Denton Road, you will see on your left a recent memorial to the victims of the infamous disaster at this pit which killed 38 men and boys in 1925.



## 11. Scotswood Station

Until the 1960s the main Newcastle to Carlisle railway used to stop at Scotswood. The station, pictured below in 1950, was on the east side of the village. It was opened in 1839.

## 12. Railway Tunnel

In the 1870s an extension was added from Scotswood to connect the line with Newburn, Lemington and Wylam to the west. A tunnel was built under Denton

Road to accommodate this, following a route just above Whitfield Road. It is now bricked up, but the top of the stonework is visible from Whitfield Road, and a portion of the stonework at its west entrance can be seen from Denton Road (about 50 metres above the sculpture commemorating the Montagu Pit Disaster).



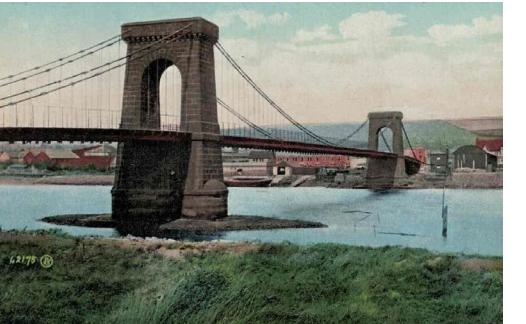
## 13. Benwell West Farm

Benwell West Farm housed Fergusons Dairy whose horse-drawn carts delivering milk were an everyday sight around the area. The farm was located just east of Denton Road at the west end of a lane. The road is still known as Ferguson's Lane today.



## 14. The Chain Bridge

The first bridge across the Tyne at Scotswood was opened in 1831. This was a suspension bridge, held up by chains hung from stone towers, soon acquiring the name of Chain Bridge. It was demolished in 1967.

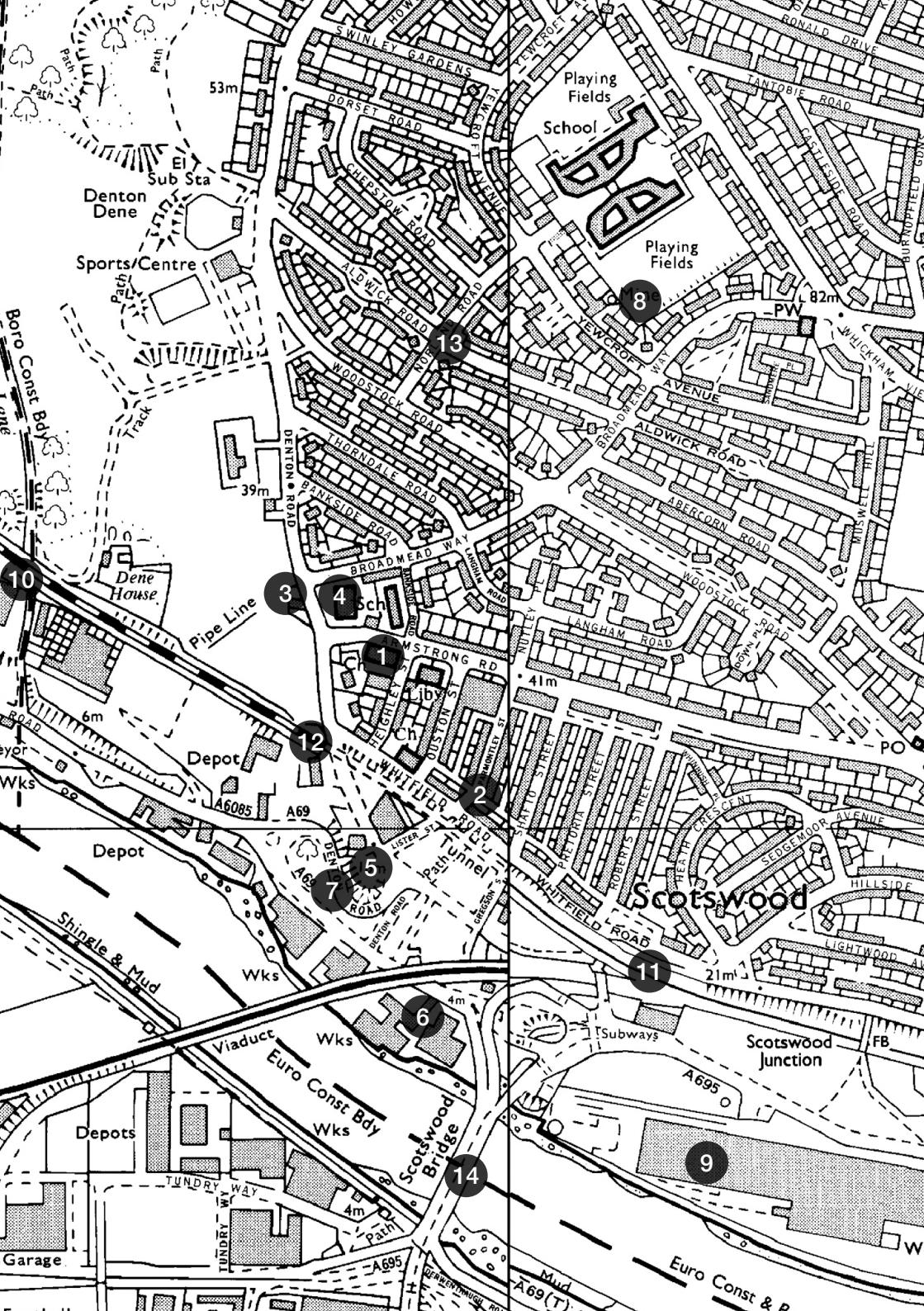


## Location Map

The locations of the places described in the previous pages are shown on the map on the opposite page, which is based on the 1938 Ordnance Survey map of the area.

### Key

1. St Margaret's Church
2. Whitfield Road, Scotswood Village
3. Scotswood Tower
4. Denton Road School
5. Chapel Terrace, Old Village
6. St Margaret's Iron Church
7. Adamsez factory
8. Adamsez drift mine
9. Vickers Scotswood
10. Montagu Pit
11. Scotswood Station
12. Railway tunnel
13. Benwell West Farm
14. Chain Bridge



## **A Message from The Friends of Denton Dene**

“The Friends of Denton Dene are delighted to support this heritage trail around the Dene which is a wonderful way to combine nature, history and healthy exercise for the benefit of all ages.”

### ***About the Friends***

The Friends of Denton Dene are a friendly and enthusiastic local group who are involved in maintaining this attractive historical green space. The group meets at the Scotswood Community Garden to discuss maintenance and plan activities in the Dene such as park runs, nature walks and litter picks.

The group welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining, contact Scotswood Community Garden on 0191 2750000 for further details.

# EXPLORING YOUR LOCAL HISTORY

## A HERITAGE GUIDE

This heritage guide is an introduction to the history of Denton Burn and Scotswood. It includes an illustrated walk trail through Denton Dene and its environs.

Until the end of the 19th century, Denton Burn and Scotswood were small villages – one clustered along the West Road and the other along the banks of the Tyne. They were connected by Denton Dene through which a burn ran south to the river. On either side of the Dene was farmland.

The following decades were to transform the area dramatically, bringing new industries and large-scale housing development until nearly all the land was built up and the former villages had become suburbs of Newcastle. However, the late 20th century brought further changes in the form of industrial decline and extensive housing clearance. Throughout all these changes, Denton Dene remained largely untouched, a valuable green space of mixed woodland and a haven for wildlife.

Join us to explore Denton Dene and the history of the area around it.

### St James' Heritage & Environment Group

St James' Heritage & Environment Group is an independent volunteer-run organisation and registered charity providing activities and resources for people of all ages to explore and celebrate the history of the west end of Newcastle.

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