

PENCAITLAND: A VILLAGE STATEMENT

Prepared by Alastair Guild,
of the Rural Design Group,
after consultation with the people of the village,
and with assistance from Neil Adams, architect

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TREVELYAN HALL

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Caption for photograph right

The Mercat Cross junction, Wester Pencaitland, just over the bridge connecting Easter and Wester Pencaitland. The cottages (left and right) were listed category C in 1991. Dating from the early 1880s, they were commissioned by Arthur Trevelyan of Tyneholm, a major local benefactor, and in whose memory the Temperance Hall was built. A view (inset) looking north towards the Hall from the telephone box.

INTRODUCTION

There is a range of potential benefits to involving local communities at an early stage in the development of local plans and strategies. This report is presented in that spirit.

The impact that poorly designed and poorly-integrated developments can have on the character and social cohesion of Scotland's villages, towns and the countryside itself is being increasingly recognised. A common and understandable reaction on the part of a local community when faced with the prospect of development is to feel threatened, especially when it is seen as being 'thrust' upon them and little opportunity is left to influence its final form. Hostility and resentment build up, which benefits no one. The planning process is made increasingly adversarial with constructive outcomes made more difficult to achieve.

The most recent development of housing in Pencaitland, at Limekilns at the east end of the village which attracts some strong comments



On the other hand, new developments, if well-designed, integrated and seen by local communities as meeting their needs may well be viewed as assets and might even be welcomed by the local community. And the community, when asked for its views may suggest improvements to a village (such as some well directed landscaping or changes or additions to services such as public transport



links) which can act as catalysts for other, more significant quality-of-life improvements.

The need for planning to become more positive and 'proactive' in shaping the way that communities develop is recognised



by a Draft Planning Advice Note entitled Better Design for Communities, recently published by the Scottish Executive. It recognises the need "to raise standards of development in town and country." People in local communities should be assisted to draw up outline design principles for their areas. "These 'principles for places' can be tailor-made by local communities for the areas they know best. They will work alongside the plans that councils and agencies prepare to guide new development."

The contribution that local communities can make to shaping their communities and in turn in making the whole planning process more positive has been recognised for some time in England and Wales. Local communities have been encouraged and assisted since the 1990s to draw up Village Design Statements—a vision for their villages. The Countryside Agency through its Vital Villages programme has since broadened this involvement. This aims to "help small rural communities to take stock of their village; to identify what they need to revitalise it; to ensure local people have a voice in their future; and to provide support to enable each village to make its own decisions and to implement some of the improvements needed locally."

This report on the village of Pencaitland in East Lothian seeks to lay out this broader framework for the future of the village.



VILLAGE PARTICIPATION IN SCOTLAND

The writer of this report is a member of the Rural Design Group. The RDG, which meets under the umbrella of Ruralscotland (the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland), was set up in 1998 to promote a more positive approach to both planning and design in rural Scotland.

With funding from the Russell Trust, it supported the preparation of the first Village Design Statement in Scotland for the village of Tarland in Aberdeenshire. The statement was prepared by Edinburgh architect Neil Adams after close consultation and co-operation with local interests and published in 2002. It looked at a range of issues, including not just the shape and form of Tarland and issues related to housing but also opportunities and the desire for small business and tourism-related developments and new community facilities.

The local planning authority has since adopted this statement as supplementary planning guidance.

This means that any applicants for planning approval in or adjacent to Tarland would be expected to have prepared proposals in



alignment with such guidance.

WHY PENCAITLAND?

Pencaitland recommended itself, in particular, since it struck the writer that:

Its boundaries and setting in the East Lothian countryside remain quite well defined. It retains much of its East Lothian rural character, evident in individual buildings throughout the village and in its layout and street pattern.

There are buildings and sites within the village which are currently vacant or which offer potential for redevelopment. It was thought that the people of Pencaitland might have their own views about how these might be developed in ways which would maximise benefit to the community and enhance village character and feel.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Following two initial reconnaissance visits to Pencaitland, and an informal discussion with the then Chairman of the Community Council, a meeting was sought with, and a presentation given to Pencaitland Community Council at the end of February 2004 by the writer of this report and Neil Adams, his mentor for this exercise. The relative



novelty of this type of exercise for Scotland naturally prompted a number of questions from those at the meeting – for example, what was the purpose, who was behind it and who was paying for it, what would be involved and how would the results be used.

After a discussion around these points, the response of those present to the idea seemed generally favourable. The then secretary of the community council sent a formal letter of support to the writer.

A number of further visits were made by the



copy of a map of the area dating from the early 20th century was ordered from the National Map Library in Edinburgh. East Lothian Council supplied a copy of its most recent map of the area. Post-It notes were made available on the day for participants to write comments on and stick on the map.

In addition, the writer prepared a slide presentation from approximately 40 photographs taken on walks around Pencaitland. This was intended simply as a chronicle of the village as seen by an outsider



writer over the next few months to familiarise himself with and get a greater feel for Pencaitland. These included a visit to the village's primary school when a discussion was held with some of the older children about the village, its character and the features of Pencaitland which are important to them.

A meeting was also held with Ian Glen, the officer responsible for the Pencaitland area in the East Lothian Council planning office in Haddington.

Arrangements were made to hire Trevelyan Hall for the last Saturday of May 2004 for the wider consultation with the people of the village. An A4 notice was printed about the meeting and its purpose and inviting people along. This was distributed and displayed in various places around the village.

A questionnaire was drawn up for the meeting itself. To facilitate the simplest possible analysis of the responses it was decided to structure the questionnaire around Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).

Copies of maps of Pencaitland were also obtained to display in the hall on the day. A

(the writer), touching on a variety of aspects such as Pencaitland's setting, the range of building types and uses. This would run continuously throughout the Saturday on a lap top computer borrowed from RuralScotland. The slide show was timed so that each slide was on screen for about 3 seconds. The presentation ran for approximately five minutes in total and then return to the opening slide.

RESPONSES STRENGTHS

A number of the responses commented on the scale of the village and its recognisable boundaries. This gives Pencaitland variously an identifiable character, a village feel, a sense of community and peace and quiet. At the same time, the coast, hills and the city [Edinburgh] are not far away. Its setting is important, with references to aspects such as the open countryside that surrounds the approaches to the village, the river [Tyne] that runs through the village, woodland walks and walks along the disused railway line and along the river, the avenue of trees on the road from New Winton (sadly some of these trees are missing and are not being replaced) and beech hedge planting at the west end

of the village. Several mentions are made of the importance of woodland and green amenity areas within Pencaitland itself – many very beautiful mature trees, large growing estate trees (although these are ageing and replanting has been neglected). It is noted that “the developers of ‘The Green’ estate were thoughtful enough to incorporate a community space rather than just build houses [whereas] Vinefields/Limekilns is all housing and parking spaces.”

Pencaitland has many areas of great character, including a variety of stone buildings and some lovely roofs. Walls, cottages, monuments, landmarks (such as the schoolboy on top of Belfry Cottage) and estate buildings are among the features mentioned. Several mentions are made of the church’s importance and of its associated buildings.

The main street has maintained its character and early 20th century feel – with the exception of the petrol forecourt!

Broadband has reached Pencaitland. The mobile library service is appreciated, as is Andrew Johnstone’s fruit and veg van, Granny’s shop and the Spar are both very useful for immediate purchases. The Spar

Former Miner’s Welfare Institute (bottom left)
Former school now used as studio by BBC (top left)
Grannys shop (top right)
School Lollypop Man (bottom right)

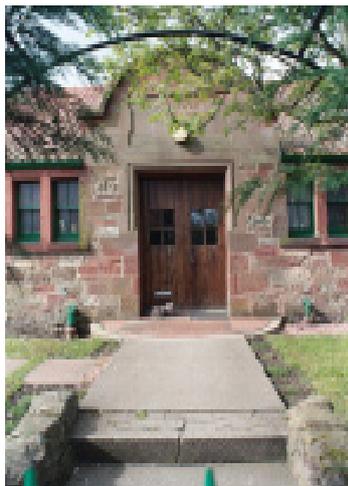


runs a dry-cleaning service. Small holdings (Boggs Holdings) provide a plentiful supply of fruit/veg/eggs/plants and flowers for local (and wider) consumption.

The village’s sense of community is maintained variously by the church (with a thriving congregation) and the community functions and activities held in the adjoining Carriage House (including weekly coffee afternoons) and Trevelyan Hall, local shops, the primary school as a focal point for getting to know others, the Spring Fair and annual fireworks display run by the PTA, junior football, the Bowling Club, a number of social clubs for all ages, ranging from playgroup, Brownies and Beavers through to an active day centre for the elderly. There is a lecture society, evening fitness classes and various other groups. There is also an active Community Council.

It is a friendly village and crime is low. Incomers and natives on balance mix well. There is no obvious polarization between rich and poor. Another, slightly different perspective is that “although there is no overall sense of community, the various sections of the village have formed their own communities which work well and where people get on with one another.”

There are several factors which make Pencaitland a good place to bring up a young



family in particular, including the playing field and playground at the east end of the village, a good playgroup which meets in the Trevelyan Hall, the quality of the primary school and a good mix of housing from 2-bed cottages to 5-bed detached.



end, isolated and cut off”, and “the red brick houses are quite out of keeping.”

There is “no obvious centre or heart to the single village of Pencaitland, partly because historically there have been two distinct areas in the both the east and the west.

The initial feeling from the development in the eastern area from The Green down to Limekilns seems to be that they have exacerbated the sense of division between east and west.”

There is a perception of Pencaitland as “a dormitory village, suffering from a population whose main activities (work, friends, and social lives) are centred elsewhere.”

There is no centre for employment which would keep people within the village during the day.

At the same time, [for those who rely on public transport] there are inadequate transport links to both Haddington and Edinburgh. There are a lack of facilities for teenagers, and no real means of accessing facilities elsewhere.

A number of gaps in the availability of services generally are identified. These include: the absence of a pub providing meals, particularly for families; sporting/leisure and youth facilities; somewhere for people to meet in the evenings (other than the pub and the Carriage House) cultural provision (apart from the church); a GP surgery; public toilets in the

WEAKNESSES

There are some parts of Pencaitland which are seen as detracting from the village amenity and character - in particular, the area around the petrol station, the Spar shop and the nursing home offices. These are variously described as “eyesore sites”, as “suffering from poor design and incremental expansion of tarmac”, as having “a semi-industrial look – signs everywhere, no greenery” and “quite out of keeping for so prominent a position”

The former Old Smiddy pub and the area around it also attracts criticism – “very unsightly and not a positive welcome to the village”, a “dismal and decaying site”, “we need something to happen here!” “It is a shame the Old Smiddy is shut as the village could do with a decent restaurant/teashop plus it used to have some great events.”

The Maltings is considered to be another “eyesore” and “completely out of scale”.

There is criticism also for the most recent developments of housing at Old Farm Court and at the east end of the village – reference the latter, it “feels, at least from the west

The Old Smiddy (top left and right)
The school house with vacant site (bottom)



centre of the village.

A number of road safety issues are raised. These are concentrated around the bridge connecting East and West Pencaitland and are principally to do with the speed of traffic and the narrowness of the pavement at this point with safety implications for pedestrians and cyclists in particular. A path network on the southern side of the principal road through the village linking east and west is of "variable standard" and, it would appear, not much used. The junction around the War Memorial at the east end of the village is also of concern, again to do with traffic speeds. One suggestion is for a mini-roundabout at this point.



The area around and including the petrol station is identified for a number of possible uses. These include a small exhibition space/museum dedicated to the history of the village and the surrounding area; a shop selling local produce, gifts and coffees/teas; a small area of off-road car parking masked by trees, with a children's play area, a high quality public realm space and public toilets.

A development plan, it is suggested, would be a useful starting point. The emphasis should be on designs which are in keeping with the

The nursing home's offices, petrol station with Trevelyan Hall in the background (below right)



Another issue highlighted is that of litter – around the shops, on routes from school, in the woods and in the river. The present "urban" model of clearing litter in Pencaitland, (concentrating on roads and footpaths) is seen as inadequate given that much of the litter is to be found on roadside verges, parks and woodland areas. Vandalism is perceived to be a growing problem, particularly among bored teenagers.

OPPORTUNITIES

A range of possible initiatives and improvements are put forward, these correspond largely with the Weaknesses identified above. They include:

A number of sites which are identified and suggestions made for improvements/redevelopment - the area around and including the petrol station, Spar shop and Nursing Home HQ; land adjoining the former school; and the Old Smiddy and adjoining land.

stone buildings and rural character of the village and which incorporate landscaping.

The redevelopment of the Old Smiddy could include provision for community facilities such as an internet café, a village café/bar and a garden and play area.

With some improvements, Trevelyan Hall could become an arts centre for activities such as concerts, talks and clubs. The building could also incorporate a GP's surgery.

The Bowling Club and sports facilities could be improved to provide a multi-purpose community centre to accommodate village events. A radical option would be to replace all the built facilities including the existing but inadequate club houses in the area of the Bowling Club and the sports facilities with a single building. This could provide a day time public service with indoor as well as outdoor facilities.

A rural business park could be established to encourage economic activity during the day

and greater use of public facilities. This could, in particular, provide work places for local people, without a need to travel in to town.

A number of suggestions are made for improvements to the appearance and quality of the wider public realm. It is suggested, for example, that there could be more effective ways of spending funds currently allocated by the council to Pencaitland's hanging flower baskets (which are described as "low in impact", "not necessary for a village such as Pencaitland, giving the village a suburban appearance"). These resources could be re-directed to environmental improvement projects such as re-planting of hedgerows and field boundary trees on the approaches to the village. One suggestion is for a central park area by the bridge linking the woodland walks and the two principal communities [East and West]. Verges should be left to look as natural as possible, encouraging flowers such as Campion and Cow Parsley, and minimising the use of concrete curbs and painted lines.

Measures are needed to control and reduce the speed and volume of traffic in, through and around the village, to extend the footpath from the bridge linking West and East Pencaitland as far as Limekilns and also to move the traffic lights further east. The condition of the kerbstone opposite the Church is evidence of the number of vehicles failing to negotiate the road safely. The removal of a length of indifferent but protected wall would improve safety for pedestrians and motorists alike.

There are calls for more litter bins around the village, and more seats.

The village would benefit from a faster, more direct bus service to Edinburgh and a more

The old railway line, looking east towards the village. Now used by walkers, this could be made more of as a tourist attraction was one of the responses in the consultation. Also a problem with dog poo.



regular bus service to Haddington.

A monthly guided tour of, and information leaflet about Pencaitland could be made available to visitors to the village.

Walk routes surrounding the village could be improved and signposted [this is already in hand].

More could be done generally to tap into the range of skills and experience of people in the village in developing community initiatives. (It might be said that the greater the sense of community spirit, the more likely people are to volunteer their services to undertake initiatives which could help foster that greater sense of community.

A community web site is suggested as a possible mechanism for encouraging greater participation in issues affecting Pencaitland and in generating ideas for improvements and community-based initiatives.

For example, an alternative to Pencaitland's Gala Week [discontinued] could be encouraged to provide a focal point during the year for village festivities.

THREATS

One of the principal concerns is the impact that additional housing could have on the village's amenity and character. These concerns are generally qualified or more specific – for example, "development of the area adjoining the river"; "more building, especially along Lempockwells Road, beyond Lambert Court and in Tyneholm field"; "housing developments that end up linking villages such as New Winton or Tranent"; "more large scale housing allocations that are



peripheral to the village.”

There is a perception among some residents of Pencaitland already having become something of a “dormitory” village and of that trend continuing (further decline in local facilities such as shops, bus services, community activities and community spirit generally).



if well enough supported, by the people of Pencaitland. Patronising *them* and thus contributing to *their* success, is something the village people can do to indicate their support for the community. This will play its part in making the case for other activities, services and businesses – a sort of virtuous circle!

“The focus should be on strategic assessment of the village leading to ‘best fit’ location of small land releases [for housing]. This should be supported by development briefs and design guidance”.

There is some recognition that freezing Pencaitland exactly how it is at this moment in time is not a viable option. “20 years ago Pencaitland was a tidy little village with a thriving eating house, a popular Gala Day, three busy shops and an active Amenity Society. Of these, only two shops remain and one is struggling. An element of affordable housing and proper support of shopping and recreational facilities are essential.”

It is suggested that the way that people in Pencaitland now perceive development should itself be a source of concern for the future of the village: “.....that principally on account of the response to the new [housing] developments, no further developments will be allowed within the village, and that it will be the subject of a preservation policy rather than the conservation of economic activity. It is difficult to see how the conservation area policies assist the village as they seem to add an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.”

One prospect greeted with universal concern is that of any open cast mining being undertaken in the surrounding area.

SOME POSSIBILITIES

Pencaitland seems (to this “outsider”, at least) to be at something of a cross roads. This is no doubt stating the obvious, but the future of existing services, facilities and businesses in Pencaitland is largely in the hands of local people.

What already exists will survive and prosper

At the same time, there would seem to be a range of initiatives which could assist in enhancing the village fabric. The appearance, accessibility and general condition of a village’s physical fabric can have a bearing on the levels of social and community provision and economic activity, which can in turn affect the morale and sense of community and cohesion of its inhabitants.

The ideas and actions outlined below are listed in rough order of their achievability, from the short to medium and long term. It is believed that the ones nearer the top of the list are no less significant, since they could act as a catalyst for some of those further down the list.

THE PUBLIC REALM: Attention to features such as stone walls, hedges, verges and trees

A number of responses refer to various aspects of Pencaitland’s “soft” fabric and their importance for the character of the village. There is also mention of the potential of planting for screening of certain sites in the village and of the way that additional areas of open space might be arranged. Classes in dry stone dyking could be organised for East Lothian and people from Pencaitland be involved in the the repair and rebuilding of stone walls in and around the village. Individually the changes and improvements above might be considered quite small but such a programme could have a considerable impact. Enquiries could be made of Scottish Natural Heritage and East Lothian Council



about possible sources of grants.

TRAFFIC

Traffic, and in particular the speed of traffic at the War Memorial and through the village and across the bridge seems to be another issue impacting on use and enjoyment of the public realm, and on feelings of safety. The responses make a number of suggestions (see “opportunities” above) for ways in which the situation might be improved.

GENERATING MORE LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

East Lothian has an enormous variety of places of potential interest to tourists such as those staying in Edinburgh. Pencaitland



and the surrounding area has its share. It is suggested that many visitors might simply be unaware of this wealth of interest on Edinburgh’s doorstep. In particular, the writer of this report is not aware of any arrangement for visitors without independent means of transport wishing to spend a day touring East Lothian.

Enquiries could be made with a bus company such as First Group or Lothian Region about the possibility of buses running during summer months on a route round places of interest in East Lothian. People could get off and on as they wished, knowing that there would be another bus coming along, say in another hour.

It is believed that a resulting increase in visitor numbers could contribute to the viability of existing and new local businesses such as those mentioned below as well as somewhere serving lunches and possibly dinners, making use of locally available (East Lothian) ingredients. Talking to people running successful eateries in East Lothian could provide useful advice and ideas.



A number of information-related initiatives could be taken with potential benefits for both the local community and visitors: for example, an information leaflet about the village and sites of interest; marketing information promoting local businesses; a web site for and about the village.

There would be opportunities for young people from Pencaitland to get involved in such largely-computer based activities. These could be accommodated at least initially in part of a building such as Trevelyan Hall. STIR (Sustainable Technology Information & Research) network is a community-based business situated in Edinburgh. STIR operates a number of businesses with a combination of paid staff and volunteers, and with a Zero Waste ethos. For example, STIRgrafik provides graphic design and multimedia services targeted at the voluntary sector and small businesses. STIR would be interested in exploring links with, and offering advice to such a project in Pencaitland.

It is the writer’s view that some kind of development plan/design brief would be desirable for both the sites adjoining the Old School and the Old Smiddy and adjoining land. These are currently for sale. The preparation of these plans should include a period of community consultation.

There would seem to be a consensus that the area including and between Trevelyan Hall and the building housing the Nursing Home (including the petrol station and Spar shop in the middle) gives a haphazard (not to say out-of-character) appearance to this part of Pencaitland. The writer agrees with the suggestion that a development plan be prepared. As part of the consultation, villagers would be asked for their views on how the buildings are currently used and how they might be used and rationalised in the future. The development plan would also make suggestions about whether and where alternative locations for the nursing home HQ and petrol station could be found.

Some of the activities and services which

could be incorporated into such redevelopments could include:

- A small community health facility
- small units with computer facilities for the servicing of local business and community needs (see above)
- an internet café for the use of both young people in the village and people generally wishing to contribute to the development and maintenance of a village web site
- an information point with a range of information about the village and the countryside round about
- a small tea room serving local baking and jams, for example, and small washroom/ toilet
- a small sales outlet for gift items made locally, such as pottery and whisky from the Glenkinchie distillery, as well as produce from farms and small holdings in the surrounding area. It is believed that this, in turn, might contribute to stimulating more local producers to add value to their produce.



a sustainable development project - able to draw on a wealth of experience in this field, for example STIR Network.

The key would be to develop a financially sustainable initiative linking environmental issues, local community and business development. The project would be implemented drawing on Kilcheran's experience elsewhere. It would initiate funding through partnerships with local government and local businesses.

In particular, Kilcheran could:

- initiate small scale fund raising to kick-start the project.
- develop funding partners working to agreed target.
- in consultation with the community develop a sustainable development plan and implement the plan based on STIR Network's principles and experience in other communities.

IN CONCLUSION

There are a number of issues facing most settlements within relatively easy commuting distance of a large conurbation such as Edinburgh, and Pencaitland is no exception. These places attract people to live there who may have been priced out of the property market in the city and/or who may be attracted by what is seen as a more rural, higher quality life style. They are increasingly accessible, not just for work but also for leisure activities such as shopping and public services located elsewhere.

Such factors are bound to bring changes to a village such as Pencaitland. As an outside observer, Pencaitland would seem to be at something of a cross-road. The purpose of this report, however, is not to pass judgement on such changes. It is more to ask the question: where indeed do the people of Pencaitland see their village going from here? This report has sought to suggest various ways in which Pencaitland might seek to consolidate and build on its reservoir of community spirit and cohesion, and to promote a range of further opportunities for local people.

It is strongly believed that given a careful choice of architect, some exciting, innovative and at the same time appropriate (for this setting) architectural solutions could be found which would be a real credit to the village. A well thought out scheme could provide inspiration for other villages and communities.

A POSSIBLE STRATEGY

Kilcheran is a consultancy based in East Lothian, with links to the STIR network (see above). One of its principal areas of activity is in the realisation of integrated development. Dr Fiona MacPherson of Kilcheran would be keen to be involved in the implementation of a plan for Pencaitland. Her view is that many of the aspects relating to the improvement of the village environmentally and socially could all stem from an inter-related cluster of sustainable development projects. These would integrate environmental awareness, environmental improvement, job creation, community development, eco-tourism and business integration.

Kilcheran could act as consultants to develop

As already stated, even quite small improvements and changes to the village could lead to greater ones - but only if they receive the patronage and support of the people of Pencaitland.



There are probably ways in which outside help in achieving some of these objectives could be explored and packaged. Of course, ultimately it is up to those who live in Pencaitland. But this could be an exciting time for the village.

FOOTNOTES:

PENCAITLAND'S PETROL STATION

It is recommended that consideration be given to redesigning the petrol station – whether or not it moves from its present location, though hopefully the present owner could be persuaded to relocate. One of the products of Norway's design forum (set up through that country's Architecture Policy) has been a new type of petrol station fit for rural locations. This design (which dispenses with much of the clutter and signage which dominates UK forecourts and uses natural materials such as wood and stone in its construction) has been adopted by most of the petrol companies in Norway.



PENCAITLAND

A VILLAGE CONSULTATION

THANK YOU FOR COMING ALONG TODAY. The idea is to find out what you value about Pencaitland and something about your hopes and aspirations for its future. A statement will be written taking into account all views. This will be presented to local planners and other interested parties. **It is hoped that decisions about Pencaitland will then be better informed by the needs of your community.**

Please feel free to use the space available for drawings as well as words and to ask for further sheets if required!

S**TRENGTHS:** What are the characteristics which you most Value and Cherish about Pencaitland..... e.g. trees, buildings, open spaces..... etc?

WEAKNESSES: What are the things that let the village down and damage that character....eg Shortage of community facilities, inadequate public transport, inappropriate development?

OPPORTUNITIES: What could be done to improve the village and where?

THREATS: What concerns you most might happen to detract from the village's character?

NORTH

TO HADDINGTON



TO TRANENT

WINTON HOUSE



WESTER PENCAITLAND

TO DALEITH



BRIDGE OVER TYNE WATER



EASTER PENCAITLAND