

DENHOLM TREK



Leyden's Monument



Denholm Parish Church

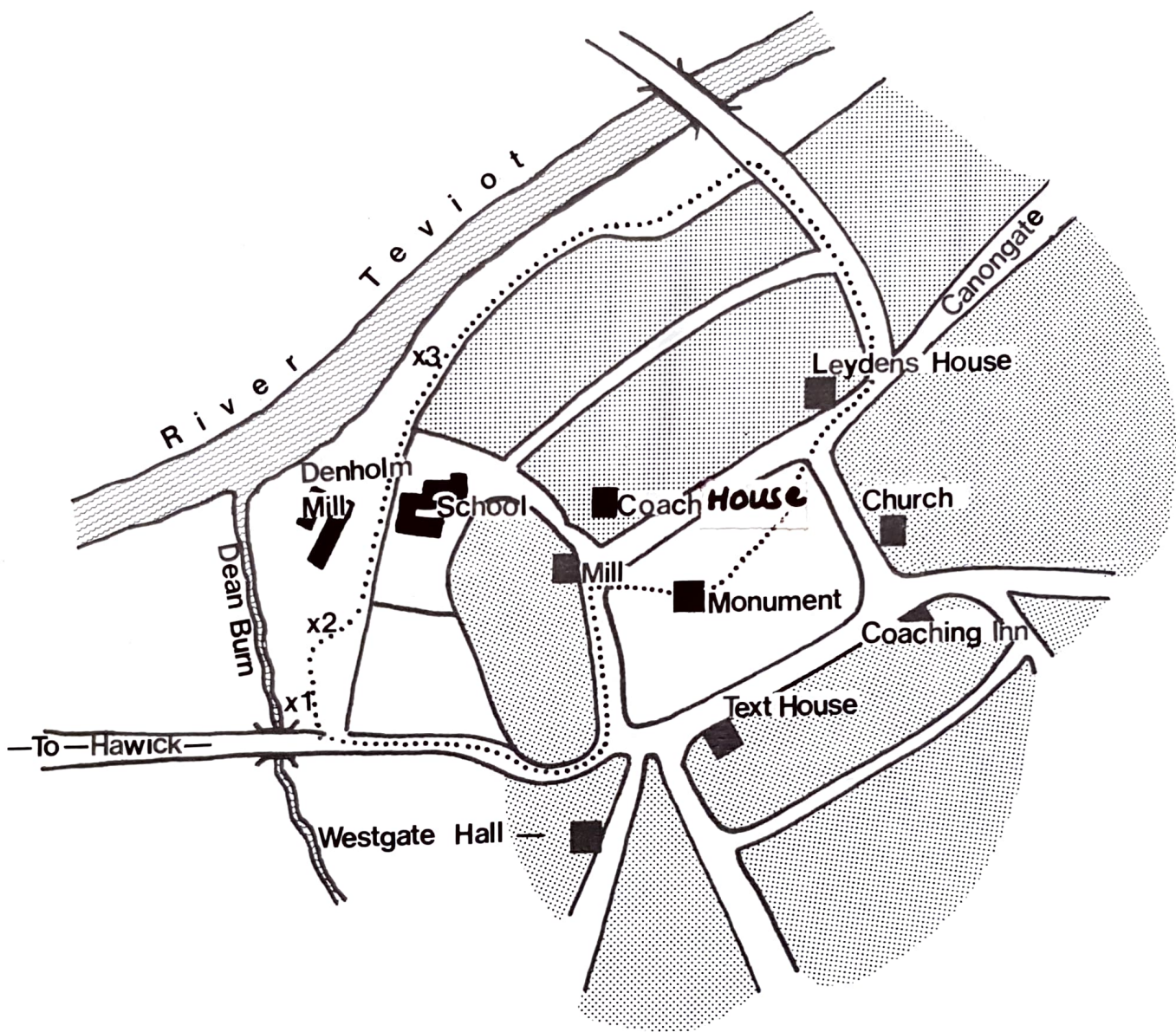
DENHOLM TREK

Introduction

This 'trek' has been devised by the staff and pupils of the Primary School to point out any interesting features on a walk around Denholm. These notes have been compiled largely by going out, making observations and interviewing various knowledgeable people, to whom we offer our thanks. We have checked the information as far as we can but we apologise for any inaccuracies which may still exist. The pupils are engaged in maintaining the path and steps along the Right of Way. We wish to thank Mr. Galloway, who owns the land across which the Right of Way travels, for giving us permission to form the trek. We also wish to thank the Denholm and District Community Council who have supported us in this project.

We hope you enjoy your trek round Denholm and do please tell us, at the school, if you see anything else of interest.

A.K. MAULE
Headteacher



POST ONE - Beneath the road bridge flows the Dean Burn, a narrow, fast-flowing stream which rises on Ruberslaw. When it is in spate between September and January, salmon and sea trout will run up to spawn.

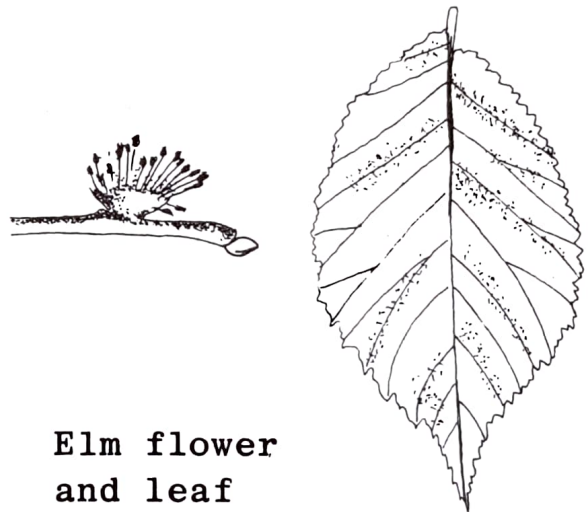
The fish found in the burn all year round are brown trout, eels and minnows. These feed mainly on insect larvae found in the water. These include the larvae of mayfly, storefly, caddisfly. Water beetles and water crickets are found living under or around stones in the Dean Burn.

Directly beneath the bridge is a water gate. This is designed to stop cattle straying but it also catches branches, leaves etc. floating downstream.

As you leave the burn and walk up the steps, you will see many trees, shrubs and wild flowers. These include hawthorn, blackthorn and the elm. In spring the elm flowers can be seen well before the leaves start to grow. This is to help wind pollination of the flowers.

Much of the ground is covered with ground ivy and nettles although other plants such as Lesser Celandine, Germander, Speedwell, Red Dead Nettle, Forget-me-not and Common Speedwell are also to be found.

Birds which may commonly be seen and heard include the House Sparrow, Willow Warbler, Robin, Chaffinch, Pied Wagtail and Wood Pigeon.



Elm flower
and leaf

POST TWO - At the top of the steps there is a spectacular view of the Teviot Valley from Ruberslaw to the Minto Hills.

The local rock is basically Old Red Sandstone (Devonian) which is a sedimentary rock laid down about 350 million years ago when the area was the bed of a shallow sub-tropical sea. At a later date in the Carboniferous Period, volcanic activity took place, the results of which are Ruberslaw and the Minto Hills.

Millions of years of erosion by rivers and a series of ice ages has left the landscape as can be seen today. The very much harder igneous basalts of Ruberslaw and Minto Hills have been left standing above the softer sandstone.

The last ice age ended about 10,000 years ago leaving the valley with a layer of boulder clay. An example of this boulder clay can be seen as an exposure by the old suspension bridge where the river has eroded the banks.

Since the ice melted much of the bolder clay has been eroded by the River Teviot and this has led to the formation of steep river terraces on either side of the valley. You are standing on top of the south one now.

The river meanders between these terraces and is subject to occasional flooding forming the flat flood plain. Silt is deposited during these floods and has made the flood plain very fertile. Because of this, intensive farming is practised. Levees have now been built to prevent the river flooding the plain. These are earth banks running parallel to the river and have been planted with hawthorn shrubs, the roots of which prevent the earth banks being washed away.

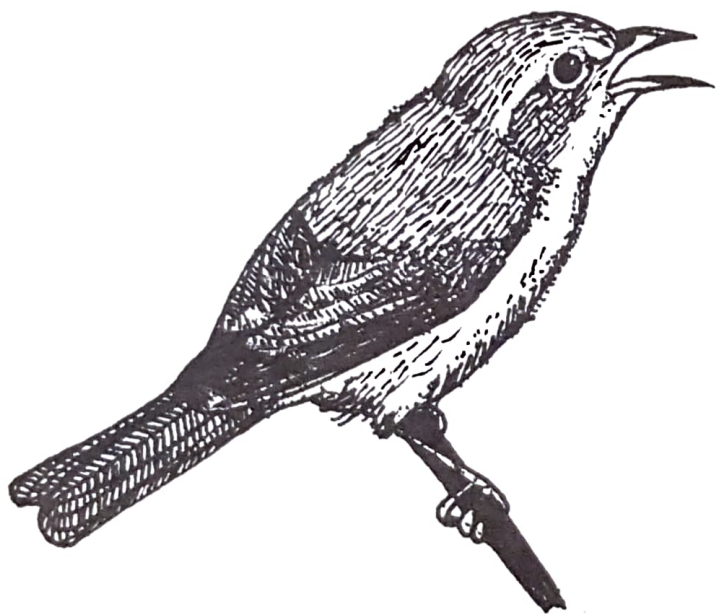
Land utilisation on the river terraces merges from arable and mixed farming to rough grazing and forestry on the hill slopes.

From this viewpoint many specific features can be seen. A shingle bank has been formed where material carried by the fast flowing Dean Burn has been deposited where it meets the slower-flowing Teviot.

About 400 metres upstream can be seen the line of the old cauld built to supply water to Denholm Mill, the stone building at the right hand end of the farm below you. This cauld diverted water into a mill lade where a water wheel was turned. The lade has now been filled in but its route is followed by a line of hawthorn bushes on the left-hand bank of the Teviot.

As you proceed from the viewpoint along the path behind the school, you will see many different shrubs and wild flowers. Common amongst the shrubs are Hawthorn, Holly and Blackthorn and plants such as Bluebell, Common Dog Violet, Garlic Mustard, Common Chickweed, Buttercup, Daisy and Wild Strawberry.

A point of interest here is that all the holly trees are males. They do not produce the red berries which are only to be found on female trees.



Willow Warbler

Birds found are Robin, Blackbird, thrush, Wren and, in the summer, Willow Warbler, Swallow and Sandmartin.

Lichens can be found on top of many of the fence posts. These will only grow in very clean air and where the rain water is pure. Frequently the lichen will not grow beneath a Zinc wire fence as the metal contaminates the rain water running down the post making unsuitable for lichen growth.

Following the path down to the banks of the river, you will notice sand which has been deposited during floods. Willow trees and other 'water plants', such as Marsh Marigold and Chickweed can be seen here. Flowers, e.g. Cow Parsely, Speedwell, Forget-me-nots, Buttercups and Daisies can be seen growing in the field as you walk towards the road bridge.



The Road Bridge

POST THREE - You will notice the two towers of the old suspension bridge which was taken down when the road bridge was erected. The old structure now spans the River Ken in Westmoreland. At one time the people of Denholm had no bridge over the Teviot and used the ford further downstream. You will notice that the tower on this side of the river does not stand at the water's edge. This is because the river has changed course and is gradually moving across the plain.

The road bridge was built in 1864 with stone from local quarries. The stone is both white and red sandstone. It can be noted again that, because of the river's changing course, the arch on this side of the river no longer has the Teviot flowing under it. If you look closely at the stone you will see drain holes. Some of these holes contain the nests of pigeons and starlings. Marks seen on the stones were probably made by cranes during construction.

Turning right out of the field and following the road, we enter the village. On the left is the Cannongate and this was the old road to Jedburgh. It is thought that the site of the East Castle was here. At the bottom left is a track going to the Old Ford, the original crossing place of the Teviot. The first house on the right of the Cannongate was an old stocking mill.

Ahead of you is the 'Wee Green'. In its time this grassy area was used as an auction mart, gardens, grazing land and a playing field. At one time the Green was enclosed by a dyke. On the left side of the 'Wee Green' is the house called 'The Poplars'.

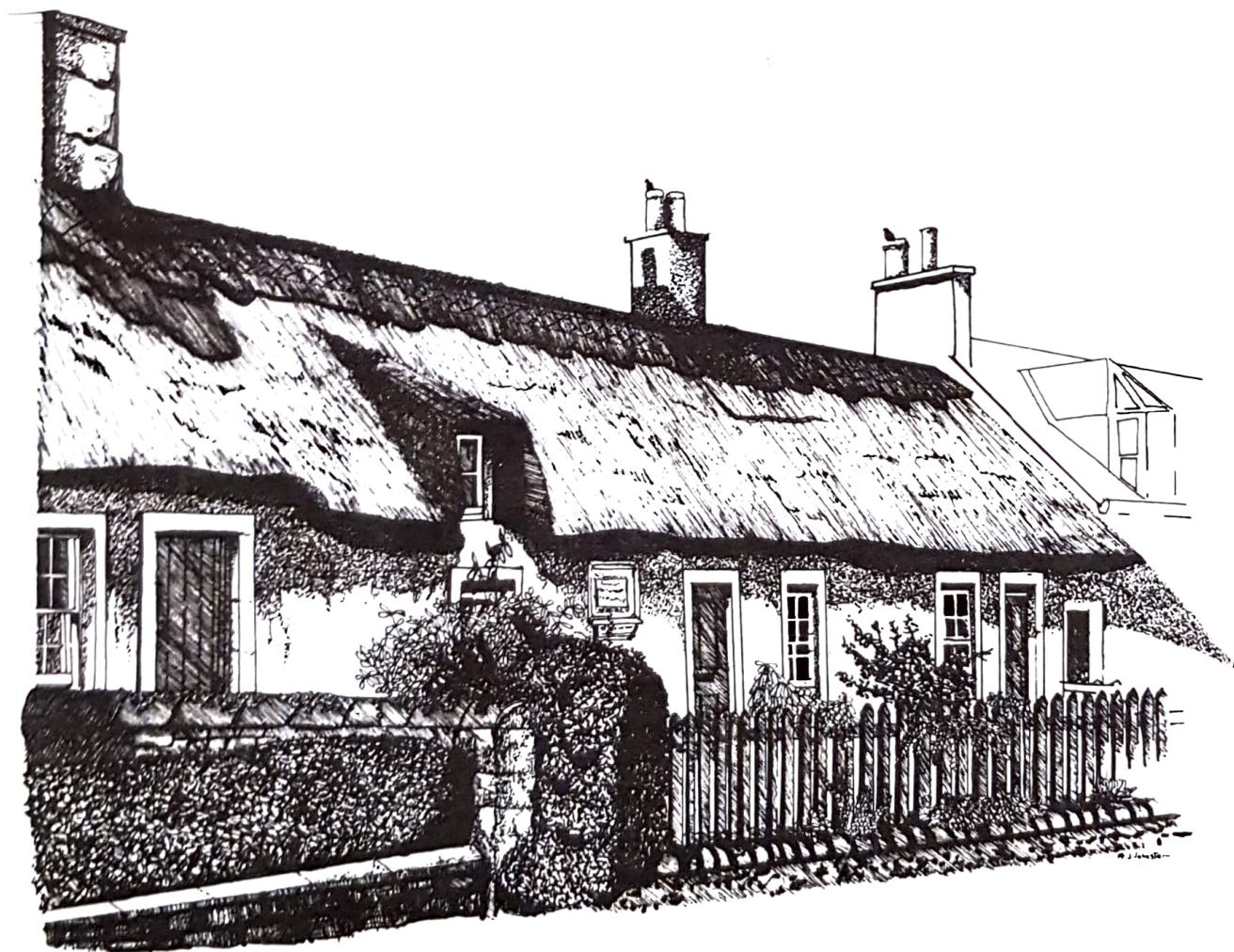
One gentleman who lived there had five sons and when each was born he planted a poplar tree. These stretched from his old 'yaird' to his new 'yaird'. The new 'yaird' was given to the villagers when the right to dig the peat at Ruberslaw was withdrawn. This land was eventually added to that owned by householders in the village with the result that there are still some very long gardens in Denholm.

Behind the Poplars stood an old Cameronian chapel. The people worshipped there after leaving Peden's Pulpit which was on Ruberslaw. The chapel had three pulpits, and a large stove in the middle. The preacher, whose name was Mr. Ramsay, was a colporteur, a man who travels round the country preaching and selling religious books. The building, which ceased to be a chapel when Mr. Ramsay died, later became a smithy and then a private house.

On the right, opposite the wee green, is Oliver's garage, beside which is a small knitwear factory, called Hogarth's Mill. It now employs 30 workers.

As you walk along the road to the Green, you come to a thatched cottage. Dr. John Leyden, the scholar and poet of Teviotdale, was born here. He knew more than 40 foreign languages, including many Oriental ones. (The monument to his memory is illustrated on the front cover).

Inside the cottage there are some momentos to Leyden and these can be viewed on request to the lady who resides in the cottage. This beautiful building is easily noticed because it is the only thatched cottage remaining in Denholm. The plaque on the front of the cottage gives the year of Leyden's birth (1775) and his death in Batavia (1811).



Leyden's Cottage

Further along the road you come to the Green, in the middle of which is the monument to Dr. John Leyden which was erected shortly after his death. Before that a school stood in the middle of the Green.

The Green was very different in olden times from what it is today. All round the edge were heaps of sticks, turf-stacks, pig-houses, ash, dung and general filth. Indeed Denholm became notorious for its foul smell! Geese were also kept on the Green. The man responsible for enclosing the Green was Archibald Douglas. Dykes were built on three sides with railings on the side facing the Main Street.

Once there was a village cross on the Green. It was hollow and used as a cattle trough. Today only the base remains (inside the railings surrounding the Leyden monument).

To the left side of the Green is the Church which was built in 1844. The people of the village helped to build the church with their own hands because they could not afford to pay a builder to do all the work. The stones, which were dressed by the villagers, were taken from the River Teviot. Most of the things in the church are dedicated to the memory of the people of Denholm. The seats, pulpit and organ came from another church. Before 1844 the people of Denholm walked to Cavers Church, through the Dean which was then a pleasure garden with a tea pavilion.

Facing you is the Main Street. Five of the houses had attics joined together. The gentleman who owned the Poplars built these houses for his five sons. There is a tale that all the attics were joined together to help smugglers escape.

Also facing you is the Text House. It is the highest building on the street but originally was the same height as the others. It was built by a Mr. Haddon and the texts on the stone panels were inspired by similar texts from a house in Hawick.

Also along the Main Street are two public houses, the Cross Keys and the Fox and Hounds which were originally coaching houses. At the rear of the latter was a one-storey stocking mill. Some of the houses along Main Street were shops in days gone by, including the village's first post office.

On the other side of the Green, opposite the Main Street is a big arch, which was the original way down to the river. The people crossed the Teviot on stilts, each household having its own pair. The houses here are the Somerville buildings, built by money left by Euphemia Somerville. The rents from the property helped to support the village hall although the houses are now privately owned. Further along this road is the entrance to the present school.

Along the west side of the Green is a stocking mill which can just be seen from the road. To reach it one must walk up a path flanked by a dyke. The most striking feature of the three-storey building with its dovecote, is the number of little windows. A pulley, used for carrying the stockings to ground level, still hangs outside the building. The mill was built by Mr. W. Little.

On the south corner of the village is a 17th century building known as the Westgate Hall which was once the site of the West Castle. This was an old keep which was first owned and lived in by the Cranston family. It was rebuilt in 1663 by Sir Archibald Douglas. He and Rachel Skene had their coat of arms inscribed on the fireplace. This can still be seen today. At one time the top floor was a hall for the village. This was used from the First World War until 1960.

On the road to Hawick is an older building, now called Beechlands. It was once the Church manse but was sold when the road was widened.

Kirklands was considered as a suitable manse before a house near Leyden's Cottage was finally chosen.



A. J. JOHNSON

The Text House