

Hay Lodge

A walk in the park

with Peeblesshire Archaeological Society



Image: aerial view looking west
over the Tweed Bridge in 1947

An introduction to:

The Archaeology & History of Hay Lodge Park, Peebles and its environs

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Peeblesshire Archaeological Society 2019





Image courtesy of Tweeddale Museum

Aerial view in 1968 following the clearance of the site of the Tweedside Mills

EXPLORING HIDDEN HISTORY...

Peebles offers a host of delightful short walks surrounded by the beautiful Borders scenery but how often have we enjoyed a leisurely stroll in a pleasant environment without giving much thought to the history of our surroundings?

One very popular local walk is the circuit from the Tweed Bridge along the riverside by the Swimming Pool and on through Hay Lodge Park, before crossing the footbridge to return along the opposite bank. Yet, as they make their way around the Park, local residents and visitors alike may be unaware of the area's hidden history...

In fact, people have been active along this short stretch of the Tweed for thousands of years.

To the first prehistoric hunters and fishers who camped by its waters around 10,000 years ago, the river and its banks would have been a fruitful source of food; in historical times, it has been forded and bridged and harnessed for industry; it has been a place to defend in wartime and against floods; and in more modern times, it has become a place for sport and leisure activities.

This short guide complements and expands upon our self-guided trail leaflet, by providing the visitor with further details of the main points of archaeological and historical interest in the park and its immediate surroundings. Suggestions for further reading will be found on the next page.



Further reading

Brown J L & Lawson, I C *History of Peebles 1850-1990*. Edinburgh, 1990

Buchan, J W & Paton, H A *history of Peeblesshire*, 3 volumes, Glasgow 1927

Gourlay R and Turner, A *Historic Peebles: the archaeological implications of development*. Glasgow 1977 (= Scottish Burgh Survey series)

Marshall, P *Peebles Railways*, Usk, Monmouth 2005

Murray, H & Ewart, G 'Two early medieval timber buildings from Castle Hill, Peebles', *Proceedings Society Antiquaries Scotland*, 110 (1980), 519-27

RCAHMS 1967 *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Peeblesshire: an inventory of the ancient monuments*, 2 volumes. Edinburgh 1967

Robb, R B & Stevenson E R *Glimpses of Old Peebles*. Peebles 1990

Strang C A *Borders and Berwick an illustrated architectural guide to the Scottish Borders and Tweed Valley*. Edinburgh 1994 (= RIAS / Landmark Trust Series)

HAY LODGE PARK

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Illustration: Alan Duncan

ACCESSIBILITY

Details of the suggested route are given in the text and reference can also be made to the map on pages 2–3, which gives a bird’s eye view of the area. Even with occasional stops at the points of interest, the full walk should be comfortably managed in about one hour. There are surfaced paths for the most part, but at their western limit, the paths give way to riverside trails: please note these can be muddy and uneven and require more care.

Currently, there are parts of the route which are not suitable for wheelchair users but with some adjustments it is possible to access most of the points of interest.

Alternative route for wheelchair users:

From Neidpath Road, Hay Lodge House (3) can be viewed by following the access road to the Day Hospital round to the right of the Health Centre. Hay Lodge Park itself can be reached via the main entrance, following the path to the left so as to begin at the Ice House (4). At the west end of the park, the Fotheringham Bridge (7) should be crossed and the remainder of the route followed from there.

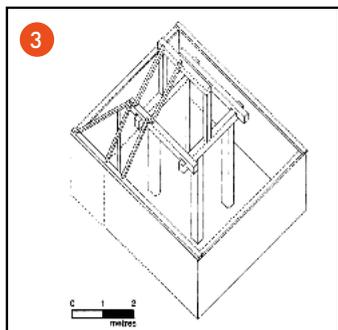
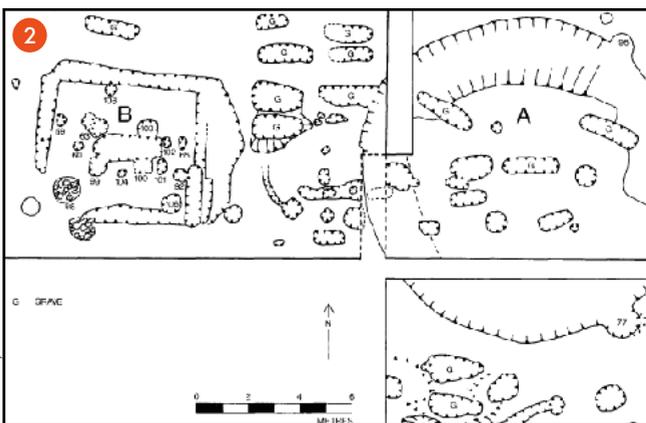
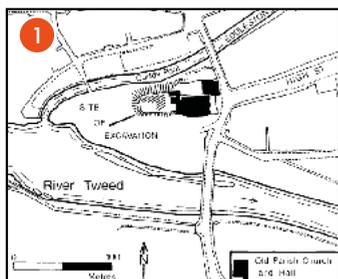
After visiting the Tweed Bridge (11), the opportunity can then be taken to end by viewing Castle Hill and its surrounds (1) and Greenside observation post (2).

A good starting point is the Old Parish Church. This handsome building, built between 1885 and 1887, stands on the site of our first piece of hidden history...



Sherds of 13th/14th century Medieval pottery, found in gardens near the site of Peebles Castle and donated to the National Museum in 1961. They include part of the tubular spout of a jug.

© T Cowie



© Murray & Ewart 1980

- 1 Location of Peebles Castle Hill on promontory between the Tweed and the Eddleston Water
- 2 Plan of buildings A & B revealed in excavation
- 3 Reconstruction of building B

1. CASTLE HILL, PEEBLES & ITS SURROUNDS

Site of Peebles Castle

Peebles Old Parish Church occupies the neck of a steep-sided promontory formed where the Eddleston Water meets the Tweed. The church stands on what was once the site of a royal castle, constructed during the reign of King David 1 of Scotland (1124–1153) and in use until sometime in the 14th century. Standing at the head of the High Street of the medieval burgh, the castle occupied a strategic position guarding what would then have been a wooden bridge over the Tweed.

Although no visible structural remains survive, excavations in 1977 revealed the remains of two wooden buildings under what is now the Church Centre (to the rear of the church itself). It is possible these were part of a chapel thought to have been associated with the castle. The chapel appears to have been replaced when the first church was built here in 1782.

From the steps of the church set off in the direction of the Tweed Bridge. Just beyond the Bridge Inn, turn right down the steep lane towards the Swimming Pool. From here, the commanding position of the Castle Hill becomes more readily apparent.

Opened in 1983, the Swimming Pool is now a popular leisure facility and a familiar landmark in the town. You would scarcely guess that it stands on the site of what was once a hive of local industrial activity...

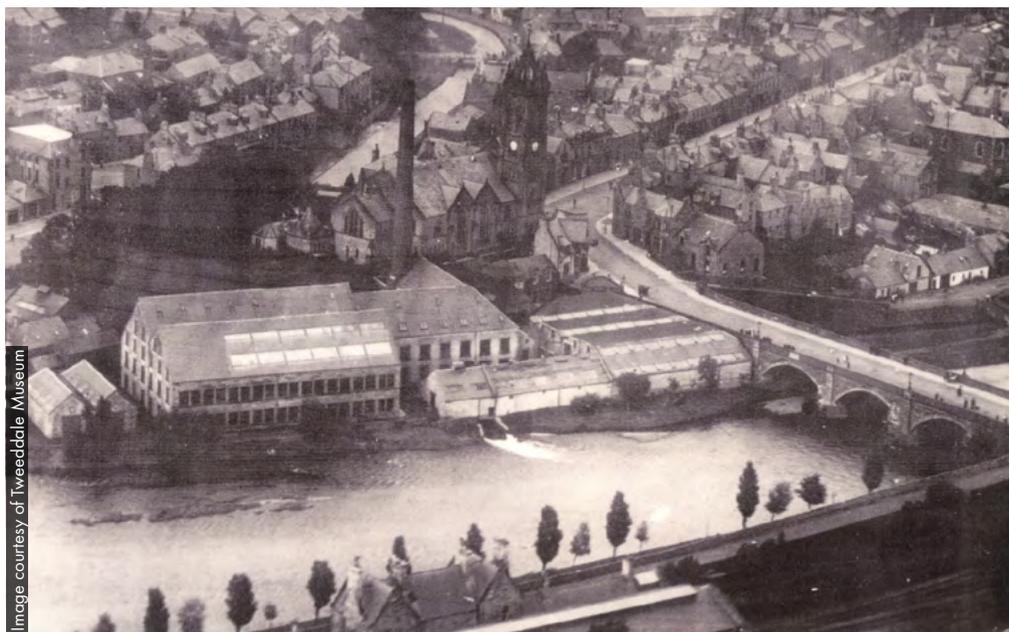


Image courtesy of Tweeddale Museum

View across Tweed to Tweed Mill and the Parish Church, with the Caledonian Railway Station just visible in the foreground, probably taken in the 1920s or 1930s.

Tweedside Mills

The earliest reference to a corn mill in Peebles is during the reign of Alexander II in the 13th century. Its location is uncertain but there was certainly a corn mill somewhere to the west of Tweed Bridge by 1461. It was known as the Rood Mill – so called because the tenant had to pay 2 merks each year to uphold the service of the Rood altar in St Andrews Kirk. There was still a corn mill on the site in 1780.

By the mid-19th century, the council was keen to attract manufacturing industry to the town, and in 1856 a large woollen mill – Tweedside Mills - was built on what is now the site of the Swimming Baths. The Mill burnt down in spectacular fashion in 1965, the smoke and flames of the highly combustible material being visible from ten miles away.

Walking on beyond the swimming pool and bearing towards the footbridge over the Eddleston Water (known locally as the Cuddy) takes us past the site of another important piece of Peebles' industrial past...

Gasworks

Gas was introduced to the town around 1828 and for the remainder of the century the gasworks were located broadly in the area occupied by the car park. Nowadays, not even a sniff of it remains!

The council took over the manufacture of gas in 1898, and in 1905 the gasworks moved to a site at Eshiels, 1½ miles east of the town (where the original building now forms part of the Scottish Borders Council waste disposal and recycling complex).

After crossing the Cuddy by the footbridge – and perhaps pausing to feed the ducks – follow the riverside footpath. After about 50m, you will need to stop and use your powers of observation!

2. GREENSIDE: WORLD WAR 2 STRUCTURE

Behind the wall sitting amongst the trees, there is a small brick and concrete building, with a door in one side and vent holes in two of the others.

The building was originally recorded as either an air-raid shelter or ammunition store, but it is now thought to be an observation post. The two slits are sited respectively on the Tweed Bridge and the site of the former Caledonian Railway Station over on the opposite bank of the Tweed.



Greenside observation post

Continue along the footpath by the Tweed, up the steps, and around to the left into the grounds of Hay Lodge House (Please note that in view of the steps, wheelchair users currently need to make a significant detour at this point in order to re-join the route at Hay Lodge).



Extract from John Wood's map of Peebles of 1823. According to Wood, the ancient Royal Burgh of Peebles was 'delightfully situated on the northern bank of the River Tweed, over which is an ancient stone bridge of five arches'. Peebles had 2,705 inhabitants in 1821. At the time the town's main source of revenue was from stocking manufacturing and weaving. Hay Lodge House is just visible at the left edge.

3. HAY LODGE HOUSE: 18TH CENTURY HOUSE AND ESTATE BUILDINGS

Built in 1771, this fine Georgian house was built by Captain Adam Hay of Soonhope, MP for Perthshire and a descendant of the Hay family, former owners of Neidpath Castle. Additions were made to the house in the early 19th century. The house has three storeys, with its entrance to the west side. The original drawing room had some particularly fine details.

In 1983, Hay Lodge Hospital was built in the former grounds of the house, and the house itself now provides staff accommodation.



An aerial view of Hay Lodge House in 1968

Making your way from the Health Centre/ Hospital grounds into the Park itself, you will arrive at a structure built into the grass bank overlooking the lower river terrace.



© R Egleston

4. HAY LODGE: ICE HOUSE

On wealthy 18th & 19th century estates before the days of refrigerators, perishable foods were often stored in underground buildings known as ice houses.

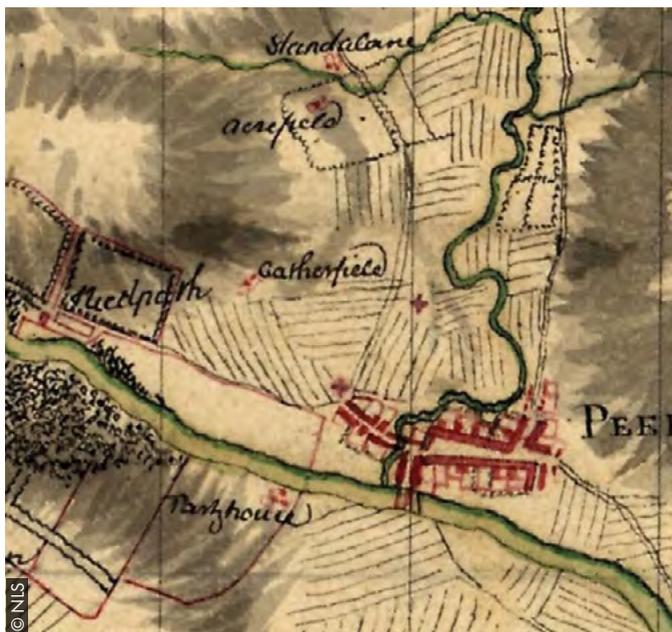
During the winter, the deep stone-lined chamber within this structure would have been packed with ice surrounded by insulation such as straw, in order to provide Hay Lodge House with cold storage for much of the year.

Ice would have been chipped out in blocks from frozen rivers or lochs and often brought substantial distances in

lead-lined cases. Meat, fish and other perishables would be stored, while the ice could also be used for medical purposes to calm the fevered brow!

The period from about the 16th to the 19th centuries is often known as the 'Little Ice Age' – characterised by harder, colder winters (many people will be familiar with Sir Henry Raeburn's famous painting of the 'skating minister' on Duddingston Loch, Edinburgh).

Continue following the path by the Tweed. A fine row of 'coppiced' alder trees line the bank of the river here.



Detail from the Roy Map (1747–1755) of the area around Peebles

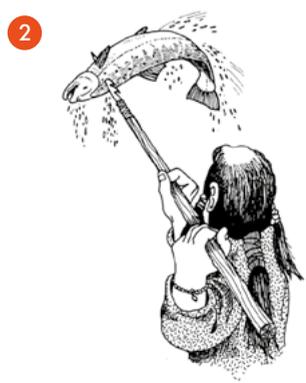
Hay Lodge Park

The Park itself is named after Hay Lodge or Hay's Lodge, the Georgian house built by Captain Hay of Soonhope.

Tradition has it that the forces of Prince Charles Edward Stuart encamped in a field west of Hay Lodge in 1745, whilst en route to England. Whether or not there is any basis for this, General Roy's Military Survey which was undertaken after the Jacobite rising usefully shows the extent of the town at this time.

Fermtouns and cultivation patterns are only roughly noted, but Peebles itself is carefully depicted as are estate policies. Peebles High Street was built in the 16th century on the land between Tweed and Eddleston Water, with the 'old town' situated chiefly on the opposite bank of the Eddleston Water.

If we continue to follow the path parallel to the Tweed, passing the Fotheringham Bridge on our left, we reach the western edge of the maintained public park. Here, the formal tarmac paths give way to rougher tracks and trails, which can become muddy and require more care.



Artist's impressions of:

- 1 Mesolithic campsite
- 2 Fishing

5. RIVERBANK WALK: FINDS OF MESOLITHIC FLINT AND CHERT TOOLS

Around 14,000 years ago the last major ice age ended, and glacial ice would have begun to melt to form what was to become the valley of the Tweed. Initially, ice and glacial debris would have plugged what was to become the Neidpath Gorge and a lake would have formed upstream. Only when the gorge finally became clear of this debris, would the Tweed have resumed its present course. As the climate improved, the area

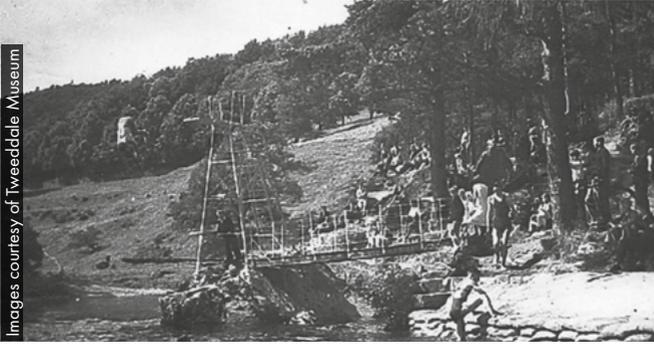
would slowly have been recolonised by plants, animals and people.

Small groups of nomadic hunter-gatherer-fishers would have been attracted by the increasingly abundant resources. In various places along the river bank, we have found evidence of their presence in the form of considerable numbers of humanly worked flakes of flint and chert, including the distinctive tiny stone tools known as microliths.



Worked chert and flint from a Mesolithic site near Manor Bridge. Similar knapping debris has been found along the riverbank between Hay Lodge Park and Neidpath Castle - evidence of the presence of hunters and gatherers around 10,000 years ago

Following the paths for a few metres further brings us to the top of a rise by the riverbank and the spot known locally as 'the Dookits'.



Two views of the 'The Dookits' – a popular al fresco swimming pool in the earlier part of the 20th century. Situated just west of the Park itself, traces of the footings of the diving platforms can still be seen on the rock outcrops today

6. OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL

Here we have the remains of diving platforms and the revetting of the river bank that made the 'Dookits' a popular al fresco swimming pool, in the early part of the 20th century.

It is strange to think that only a few metres from what amount to the archaeological remains of relatively recent leisure activities, we have found vestiges of the everyday lives of the earliest peoples to

live in the Peebles area thousands of years ago. Perhaps on warm summer days around 10,000 years ago, the children of those early hunters and gatherers also enjoyed yelling and leaping off the rocks into the waters of the Tweed...

Sadly, changes in the river's flow pattern have now rendered this particular spot unsafe for swimming.

We now retrace our steps back into the Park and head for the fine footbridge across the Tweed.



7. FOTHERINGHAM BRIDGE

This footbridge was gifted to the Burgh by J. S. Fotheringham, a baker who left Peebles in 1904 for South Africa. He made his fortune there, eventually becoming mayor of Johannesburg.

The bridge was opened in 1953, being constructed just downstream from a ford, giving access to Hay Lodge Park from the south side of the river.

The fording of the Tweed is one of the highlights of the March Riding which forms a key part of the town's annual Beltane Festival held in June.

After crossing the Fotheringham Bridge we turn left to follow the southern bank of the Tweed. Look out for the point at which the Edderston Burn meets the riverbank. It does something rather strange for a stream – instead of flowing straight into the Tweed, it does a right-angled turn and heads well east of where it would naturally be expected to join the river. For an explanation we have to turn to the history of the management of the river...



8. THE CAULD: AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS!

The present cauld (or weir) spans the River Tweed immediately below the entry of the Eddleston Water or Cuddy on the opposite bank.

When the cauld on the Tweed fell into disrepair in 1726 it was abandoned, and the water required for the corn mill was taken from the Cuddy. This was a less than satisfactory solution and in 1829 another weir was built on the Tweed. However, it was built too high, which

resulted in flooding upstream...and a long-running dispute between local landowners.

To remedy the situation, flood prevention measures were installed on the south side by constructing and raising the river embankment and diverting the Edderston Burn. This explains its sharp right-hand turn and why it only enters the Tweed below the cauld.

Approaching the Tweed Bridge, we pass a small housing estate on our right. As the footpath widens slightly look out for a wall with some unusual openings in it...



Courtesy of Tweeddale Museum

- 1 The Caledonian Railway Station c 1880
- 2 View north across Tweed showing the cauld, Tweedside Mills, and Caledonian Railway Station in foreground
- 3 Loopholed wall, Dukehaugh



© HES



© T Cowie

9. LOOPHOLED WALL: WORLD WAR 2 DEFENCES OR AN EARLIER RELIC OF THE RAILWAY AGE?

On your right hand side, a series of five holes can be seen, set down low in the stone wall. These are supported, both above and below, by sections of railway line. These were formerly recorded as part of the defence measures put in place during World War 2. However – and less romantically - local knowledge seems

to indicate that these ‘loopholes’ were simply part of the drainage facilities for the Caledonian Railway Station, which was previously located behind the wall. There are similar holes further upstream, suggesting that they might have been for drainage at times when the river was in flood.

If we go up the steps and on to Tweed Bridge, a right turn will take us toward Caledonian Road. About 100metres on the right we come to an authentic relic of Peebles in wartime.



© Imperial War Museum (H 30181)

Home Guard soldiers operating a spigot mortar during training in 1943.

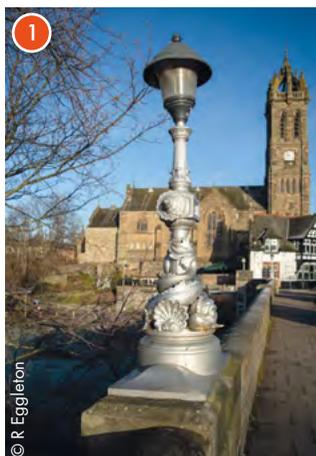
10. TWEED BRIDGE DEFENCES: MOUNTING FOR WORLD WAR 2 SPIGOT MORTAR

Set behind a small retaining wall among trees and undergrowth, is the mounting for a WW2 spigot mortar. The 'archaeological' remains consist of a circular concrete mounting with a stainless steel pin in the centre.

This would obviously have been part of the defences of Tweed Bridge. The bridge was also protected by a road block.

Retracing our steps, we should head back across the Tweed, crossing the road to the east side of the Bridge. Please take care crossing the street!

Before you reach the High Street, go down Port Brae and turn right at the bottom onto the path which takes you past the 'Wishing Well' and under Tweed Bridge. The path passes under the first arch, but the sequence of building can be seen much more clearly by viewing the underside of the second arch.



- 1 Tweed Bridge: following the widening of 1900, eight dolphin lamp standards were added as a decorative feature on the parapets of the bridge.
- 2 Underneath the arches: Jack Boughey explains the story of Tweed Bridge during a Peeblesshire Archaeological Society guided walk.

11. TWEED BRIDGE: MEDIEVAL & LATER BRIDGES

We can imagine the strategic importance of Peebles in the 12th century, with its timber bridge defended by a royal castle. Until the 18th century, Peebles was the only bridge crossing of the Tweed above Kelso.

The earliest surviving portions of the bridge probably date from the 15th century, and the architectural character of the oldest part of the bridge is suggestive of late medieval work. This would tie up with references in the burgh records to bridge building between 1465 and 1470.

The original bridge was only 8ft wide, and this section can be clearly seen from underneath. It had 5 segmental arches, with the foundations resting on oak logs. It may have had safety recesses over the piers. It was said to be “inconveniently narrow, admitting only one carriage at a time”.

Burgh records for the 17th and 18th centuries show that constant repairs were

carried out on the bridge. You can see evidence of these works at the base of the west cutwater where there is a re-used stone inscribed ‘Roughly [Rep]aird July 11 1767’. A record of workmanship that does not exactly inspire confidence!

During the 19th century the bridge was widened on both sides, as you can again see from below; in 1834 it was expanded to 21ft, and then widened again in 1897-1900 (to 40ft) to cope with increased traffic and building development on the S side of the river.

Masons’ marks can be found in abundance all over the Tweed Bridge structure but the bridge’s earlier builders are largely anonymous figures. The master mason on the earliest stone bridge may have been John of Peebles, who worked on the bridge over the Tay at Perth from 1440–1465.

This concludes our ‘Walk in the Park’, bringing us back almost to the starting point.

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society hope you have enjoyed your stroll, and that you have enjoyed sharing a little of the hidden history which this booklet has revealed!



© HES (Aerofilms Collection)

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