



# introduction

DUNS

The Duns Town Trail has been set up by Scottish Borders Council and Scottish Borders Tourist Board. The aim is to welcome the visitor to Duns and provide an added dimension to local history and a flavour of the town's development.

The name 'Duns' may derive from the Gaelic Dun meaning fort (or hill top) which has been pluralised in an English form with the addition of the letter 's'. It may also come from the Anglo-Saxon for a low hill with a flat summit. The town of Duns lies within the former County of Berwickshire, only 17km (10 miles) from the National Border.

***The Trail is approximately 5.5km (3 miles) long and should take about two hours to complete. Those with less time to spare may wish to reduce this by referring to the Trail map in the centre pages.***

In order to guide you, plaques are sited along the route at specific points of interest, and information relating to them can be found within this leaflet. As some of the sites along the Trail are private houses, we would ask you to respect the owners' privacy.

We hope you will enjoy walking around the Town Trail and trust that you will have a pleasant stay in Duns.

An electronic version of this booklet is available on Scottish Borders Council's website [www.scotborders.gov.uk](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk)



 **Scottish  
Borders  
COUNCIL**

# historical background

Many armies have passed through Duns, either on their way to or from England. Around 24 June 1315, one year after the Scots' victory at Bannockburn, news was sent to King Edward II of England that King Robert I "The Bruce" was in the "Park of Duns" which must have caused him some concern. On 20 July 1333, Sir Archibald Douglasmustered an army at Duns Park before marching to Berwick in an attempt to raise an English siege. The army marched from Duns to be defeated by the English army on Halidon Hill.



North side of Market Square

Henry Percy, the 1st Earl of Northumberland, invaded Scotland in 1377 and seemingly met little opposition. Upon reaching Duns, he relaxed his vigilance. The townspeople saw that the English were off their guard. The Scots made "a kind of rattle, made of dried skins distended round ribs of wood that were bended into a semi-circular form and fixed at the end of long poles". When shaken, they produced a horrendous racket that frightened the English horses, causing them to bolt. The Earl's men fled and were subsequently routed by local people. It may be from this episode that the town takes its design for the Burgh Arms and motto "Duns Dings A".

The English razed Duns to the ground in 1544, 1545 and 1558. The first two burnings were part of the Earl of Hertford's brutal rampage across the Borders during the 'Rough Wooing'. Hertford was carrying out the orders of King Henry VIII who wanted

Queen Mary to marry his son, Prince Edward, but his efforts proved unsuccessful.

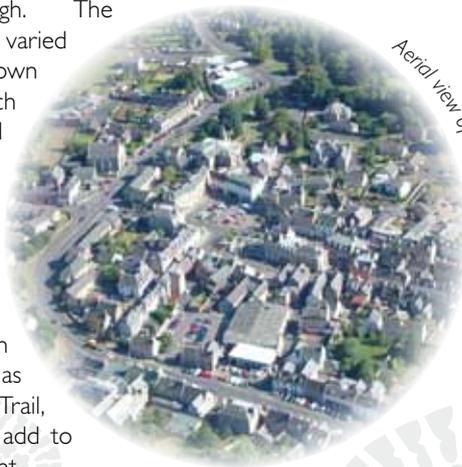
In 1639 and 1640, Covenanting Armies under General Leslie were encamped on Duns Law although the defences they built were not used. In 1650, after the Battle of Dunbar, Cromwell placed a garrison in Duns.

With relative peace in Scotland during the 18th century, the population of the town doubled. The industrial revolution at the end of the 18th century did not bring a great deal of industry to Duns as it did in so many other border towns. This was due to the fact that Duns is not built on a river and so water powered machinery could not be utilised. Consequently, there are no large mill buildings in the town. In the 19th century, Duns expanded, a change that is reflected in the number of buildings from this time.

In 1949, the Burgh Council instituted the week long Duns Festival, held during the first week in July. Each year, a mounted procession is led by a young man and young lady titled

the Reiver and the Reiver's Lass. A visit is made to Duns Common to ensure that no unauthorised encroachment has been made. This is similar to festivals that occur in other border towns during the months of June to August.

Today, Duns is a fine example of an old Scottish Burgh. The architecture is varied and the town retains much of its original dignity and charm. There are of course many buildings that are not mentioned in the text but as you walk the Trail, they too will add to your enjoyment.



Aerial view of Duns

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### MERCAT CROSS

Start the Town Trail by the Mercat Cross in the Market Square. For a Scottish town or village, the Mercat Cross was a symbol of its trading status.<sup>1</sup> Around it, public markets and fairs were held and proclamations made. Another function played by the cross was as a site of punishment; public humiliation being common practice before the 19th century.



Mercat Cross

Duns' Mercat Cross is located in a prominent position on the south side of Market Square but when it was first erected in 1792 it was on the north side. The markets of Duns were held weekly on a Wednesday. The cross was taken down c.1820 to make way for

Town House (now demolished)

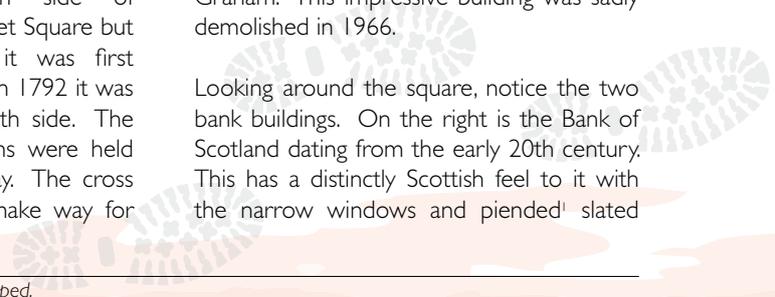


the Town House. The cross was re-erected in the Public Park in 1897, where it remained until 1994 when it was returned to Market Square as part of an improvement scheme for the area.

Looking into the Market Square you face the site of the Town House. This building, also known as the Market House was built c.1816 by notable architect James Gillespie Graham. This impressive building was sadly demolished in 1966.

Looking around the square, notice the two bank buildings. On the right is the Bank of Scotland dating from the early 20th century. This has a distinctly Scottish feel to it with the narrow windows and piended<sup>1</sup> slated

<sup>1</sup> Piended - (pronounced 'peended')hipped.





## KING'S ENTRY AND PARLIAMENT SQUARE

The alley to the right of the property was once known as King's Entry in honour of the visit of King James VI in 1602. The current house is from the late 19th century and has a crowstep gable facing Castle Street. The area to the left of the building, which is now the

roadway, was known as Parliament Square. This may have been to commemorate the Union of the Parliaments of England and Scotland in 1707.

**Walk back down the hill to the Market Square and turn right. Note the Working Men's Institute on your right.**

## WORKING MEN'S INSTITUTE

This building was built in 1877 and displays

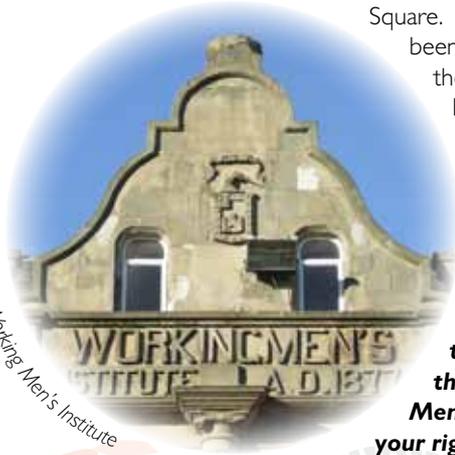
a Dutch gable pediment<sup>4</sup> and unusual stone columns. These start at the first floor level and have a 16th century appearance. The building proudly proclaims its name and date of construction on a parapet at the head of the columns. On the Dutch gable you will see a crested shield and banner carved in stone.

Opposite the Working Men's Institute you will see a three storey block with a clock on the gable. This is the Tolbooth House.

## TOLBOOTH HOUSE

The building you see here dates from the early 19th century and occupies the site of an earlier Town House of a local family: Cockburn. The Rotary Club presented the clock in 1976 and there is a plaque to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Duns being granted its Burgh of Barony status by James IV in 1490.

The stone that can be seen on the corner is a rubbing stone to stop horse drawn carriages from colliding with the building. In a Scottish town, the tolbooth was where market traders paid levies to sell their goods and where those who fell foul of the law were imprisoned.



Working Men's Institute

<sup>4</sup> Pediment - a corniced gable.



## SHERIFF COURT

Built c.1855, in a Jacobean style, is the imposing Sheriff Court. The roof with fish-scale slating is worth noting. Beside the entrance you can see a plaque which was presented in 1941 by Polish servicemen stationed in the County of Berwickshire. To the



Sheriff Court

right is a modern extension constructed in 1964 which houses the local office of Scottish Borders Council. To the left of the court is the police station, built in 1895 as the County Police Office.

Opposite the Sheriff Court is Boston House. This was the birthplace of the preacher Thomas Boston who lived from 1676 to 1732 and was the son of a Covenanted

Boston House



minister. His father had been imprisoned for his beliefs and these experiences influenced Thomas in his writing and preaching. These helped prepare the way for a split in the Church of Scotland in the mid-19th century and the formation of the Free Church, a period known as the 'Disruption'. The Free Church in Duns and its school were named in his honour.

**Continue past the Council Offices and turn left up Castle Street.**

On the right hand side of the road stands the barn of the original manse which was demolished in 1993; its fine gatepiers still stand. A new manse now stands close to the site.

**Continue up the hill to no.1 Teindhillgreen.**

## EWE & LAMB

No.1

Teindhillgreen was once a public house called the Ewe & Lamb and it was in this area that the town's sheep market was held. This is a two storey house constructed of whinstone with sandstone dressings and dating from the early 19th century. Notice the fire insurance plaque below the pediment. Before a municipal fire service was set up, private companies would fight fires only if a building displayed the appropriate fire insurance plaque. This indicated that the owner had paid the insurance firm his dues and was therefore covered from risk.

Also worthy of note is the blank window with a trompe l'oeil<sup>6</sup> blind and the massive



Barn of the original manse

brick chimney stack above the central bay. Blank windows were used to keep the symmetrical appearance of the building and generally indicate the presence of fireplaces or flues in the wall.

Bear right into Teindhillgreen (called 'Back o' the Manse in the 1800s) which

leads to the edge of the town and on towards Preston. Many years ago, the ministers of the parish, in addition to receiving a cash salary, also benefited from a tenth share of the agricultural produce from the parish. The produce was stacked for the minister in a 'Tithe or Teind Barn'. It was from this type



Ewe & Lamb

<sup>6</sup> trompe l'oeil - from French, to trick the eye.

<sup>7</sup> There are only two surviving examples of this type of building in Scotland, one of which can be found at Foulden, east of Duns.

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of building that the street derives its name. There are many fine villas along this street. Further along stands Christ Church.

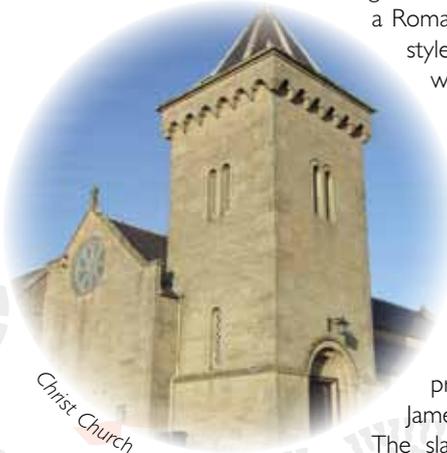
**CHRIST CHURCH**

Mr Hay of Duns Castle erected this Scottish Episcopal Church in 1857 to a design based upon

a Romanesque style church which he

had seen on the banks of the Rhine whilst on a sketching holiday. As well as being an amateur artist and architect, Mr Hay was the patron of the famous professional architect James Gillespie Graham.

The slated roof has bands of fish scale slates, the windows and door have simple round-headed arches. The interior continues the Romanesque



Christ Church

70 Castle Street



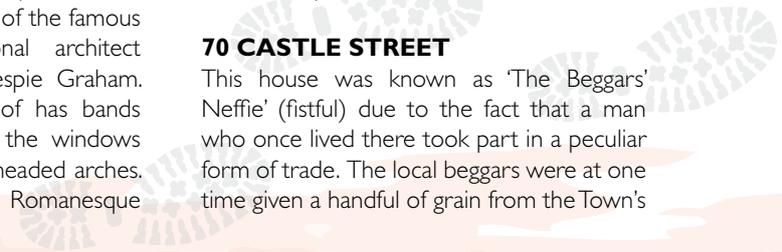
theme and has some fine decoration although glazing has now enclosed the choir loft.

**Return to Castle Street and turn right to go uphill towards Duns Castle.**

At one time there were several private schools in Duns, one of which can be found at no. 47 Castle Street. This is a simple looking building in which the ground floor is some distance above the street level. The buildings of Castle Street date from the early 19th century but could incorporate earlier fabric.

**70 CASTLE STREET**

This house was known as 'The Beggars' Neffie' (fistful) due to the fact that a man who once lived there took part in a peculiar form of trade. The local beggars were at one time given a handful of grain from the Town's





entrances to Duns Castle. A full height gothic arch links the round towers, which have a square plan at ground level. The castellated parapets give a defensive feel to this building. There has been a castle here from at least the 1320s although the present building is an early 19th century Gothic remodelling of a 15th century tower house. Views

to the castle can be gained from the path to Duns Law. Please note that Duns Castle and its grounds are private property.

Taking the path to your right will lead you to the Nature Reserve and details of this walk can be found in a leaflet entitled 'Walks Around Duns'.

Return now back through the North Lodge gate and walk down Castle Street. At the

junction of Teindhillgreen and Castle Street, turn right into the street with the unusual name of Clouds.

## CLOUDS

Two fanciful origins for the name of this street name may come from McLeod, the name of a former resident in the area or possibly from its high position. However, it was once called Spinning Yard Head and it was here that a material known as "Clud" was made. This material was mentioned by Robert Burns in one of his letters where he notes that he bought a length of "Dunse Clud" and he hopes that "twill wear well". Most of the buildings on this street date from the early 19th century. Two houses on the street worthy of mention are nos. 1 and 3 which face south and are concealed from the street by a high wall. No. 1 has a former gig house attached, the 19th century equivalent of a garage.

No. 3 is older and is said to have been built in 1743 when it was called Rosebank. The house was originally approached along a driveway leading from Newtown Street, roughly where there is a gap in the buildings beside the Police



Former Gig House at No. 1



# town map



- - - - - Town Trail
- - - - - Extended

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### 43 NEWTOWN STREET

This was built in 1843 in the Jacobean style as the Boston Free Church School and has a number of decorative panels.

Although Boston died in 1732, his local influence was so strong that at the time of the Disruption in

the mid-19th

century, the local Free

Church and its school were named in his honour: As you can see,

the former schoolhouse is richly ornamented with carved stone plaques. Above the

central window on the

attic floor is a carved scroll bearing the inscription "Boston Free Church School" and at the first floor, above the



43 Newtown Street



Former British Linen Co Bank

right hand door, is a burning bush and the title "School of Industry – Feed My Lambs". The panels above the doors are scallop shaped.

To the left on Newtown Street is the former British Linen Co Bank building (no.

24). It was built in 1845 by William Waddell, with a Georgian extension to the rear.

Half way along Newtown Street is no. 29 with its simple and elegant doorpiece. This house was built around 1741 although it was re-fronted and extended in the early 19th century. There is a barn and a stable to the rear of the building. In 1780, the house belonged to the quartermaster for the 4th Regiment of Horse.

Retrace your steps and continue along Newtown Street. As you walk, look up towards roof level on your right and see the crowstep gables from nos. 34 to 40. This end of Newtown Street saw traders buying and selling horses in the 19th century.

At the end on the right is a 19th century villa which houses a local museum; the Jim Clark Room.

### JIM CLARK ROOM

Jim Clark was born in 1936 at Kilmany in Fife where his parents were sheep farmers and lived most of his life in Berwickshire after his parents moved to a farm in the area. He was a charismatic figure who started motor racing in 1956 and made his World Championship debut in 1960 for Lotus, recording his first win the following year. He became World Motor Racing Champion in 1963 and again in 1965, a year in which he also won the Indianapolis 500 race in America. He was granted the Freedom of the Burgh of Duns in 1965, the highest honour the town can bestow on a person. He died tragically during a Formula 2 race at Hockenheim in Germany in April 1968.

Such was his world-wide appeal that a corner was named in his memory at that circuit. The museum is open from Easter until the end of October and visited by large numbers of motor racing enthusiasts from all over the world. There is also a Jim Clark Trail available which covers many of the sites associated with the life and career of Jim Clark. He is buried in Chirnside Churchyard, 12 kilometres (7 miles) to the east.

Opposite the Museum is the Berwickshire Campus of Borders College. This was the Berwickshire High School, built in 1896 and used as such until the opening of a new school in 1958 on the outskirts of the town.

**Head downhill past the college to the junction of New Road and Langtongate. If you wish, you can continue onto New Road (see**

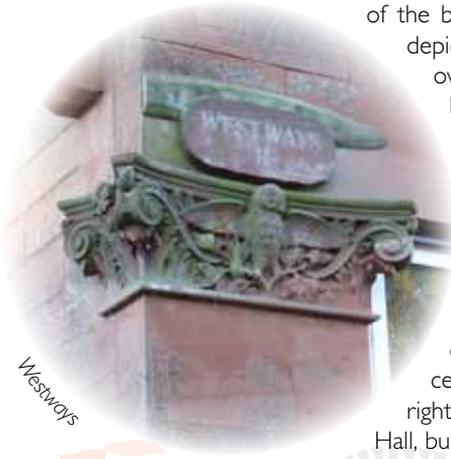


Jim Clark Room

Tudor Villas

**extended walk section at end of main Trail).**

At the junction is a private house "Westways". This building dates from the early 20th century and was formerly a shop with flat above. Note the fine carvings on the front of the building, depicting an owl, lion's head and cherubs.



Westways



100 metres from the junction, on the left and set back from the road, is a pair of mid-19th century semi-detached Tudor villas, formerly known as Union Cottages. As you can see, the window panes are wider than they are tall. This type of window is called a lying pane window.

Langtongate is one of the oldest streets in the town, although the buildings have changed over the centuries. On the right is the Volunteer Hall, built in the later 19th century as a Drill Hall.

Next door is no. 14 Langtongate. This is a late 18th century building. Note the scroll skewputs<sup>8</sup> and tin fire insurance plate between the first floor windows, which signified that the owner had paid their dues to the Caledonian Insurance Company.

Opposite the junction of Willis Wynd is no. 47 South Street. This building was erected in 1714 and was formerly one of the town's breweries.

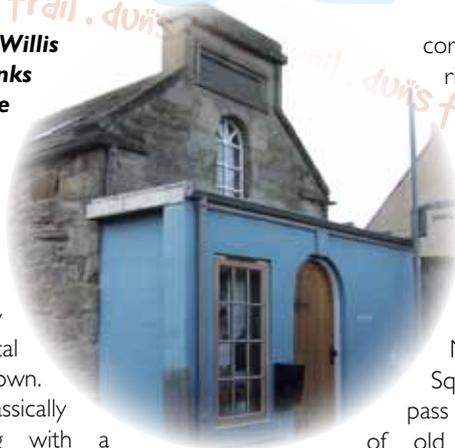
<sup>8</sup> Skewput - angled stones to support the weight of skews.

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Willis Wynd Chapel

**Turn left up Willis Wynd, which links Langtongate with Newtown Street.**

Part of the way up is Willis Wynd Chapel, one of many former ecclesiastical buildings in the town. This small, classically designed building with a later vestibule to the front was built c.1825.



cornice above it. The door on the right is far simpler in detailing. As you can see, the architects introduced crowsteps to the gables, a traditional Scottish detail.

As you head along South Street towards Market Square you pass a mixture of old buildings with ornate doorways and more modern buildings.



Former Post Office

**Retrace your steps back down the hill to Langtongate and turn left.**

**FORMER POST OFFICE**

Now the Royal Mail Sorting Office and Never Neverland Nursery, this building was designed c.1900. The two gabled outer bays are joined at eaves level by a chunky balustraded parapet. The door to the left has a simple moulding around its edge with a

Where Langtongate opens out, on your left on the corner, is the Former Dunlop Hotel.

**FORMER DUNLOP HOTEL**

The Dunlop Trust built this in the late 19th century as a temperance hotel. John Dunlop, who died in 1868, fought all his life against alcohol, had set up the Trust. One of his

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ideas was the Scottish Band of Hope, which tried to educate children against the 'evil of drink'. The elevation that faces Market Square has the words **DUNLOP TRUST** carved on a stone in the centre at eaves level.



Former Dunlop Hotel

Opposite the Dunlop Hotel is a lane, signposted Public Park. Follow this lane past the bowling green (which was once the town's bleaching green). The lane is called Blinkbonnie, meaning a pleasant place.

### **DUNS PUBLIC PARK**

To your right at the edge of the Park is Boston Court sheltered housing, built on the site of the Boston Memorial Church. At the

Drumclog Bell



entrance you can find the Drumclog Bell. John Wilson and Son in Glasgow founded this bell in 1892. It was named in commemoration of the Battle of Drumclog on 1 June 1679 at Strathaven in Lanarkshire. At this battle, Graham of Claverhouse - Bonnie Dundee - was defeated whilst trying to disperse a large group of Covenanters. The bell was bequeathed to the Duns Boston Memorial Church in memory of a local merchant.

Return from Boston Court into the park, and on your right is a war memorial dedicated to 127 Polish soldiers who were stationed in Duns during the Second World War and who died during the liberation of Europe.





bear the Burgh Arms and the side gates, the arms of Sir William Miller of Manderston (to the left) and those of John Smyth dating from the 17th century (to the right). The land on which the park was created was part of the bog that formed a natural defence for the town.

The land was purchased in 1891 by Andrew Smith of Winchester who then gifted it to the town. Mr Smith also paid for the Mercat Cross to be re-erected in the park in 1897 after it had been dismantled in 1820 to make way for the Town House. Sir James Miller of Manderston levelled the entire area, landscaped it and presented the gates and railings to the town.



Annual panels on the gates

Barniken House Hotel



**After leaving the park, turn left and follow the road to Barniken House Hotel.**

### **BARNIKEN HOUSE HOTEL**

This is another mid-19th century villa which has been converted into a hotel.

Once more, you can see the panelled pilasters that can be found elsewhere in the town. The coach house to the north has been converted into houses. The area in front of the hotel was for centuries covered by a bog and the only way of crossing it was by way of a causeway. Throughout all the turbulent times in the Borders, the causeway was protected by a barniken (a fortified building). Bearing in mind just how often Duns was used as a muster and re-supply point for armies, the causeway and Barniken must have witnessed more than a few troop movements.

The hotel is set back from the junction of Murray Street and Station Road. This was where one of the town's tollhouses was situated. During the 18th century the road network was improved greatly in the Borders. This was due largely to the creation of Turnpike Trusts who undertook road improvements, the costs of which were recouped by the imposition of tolls. The Duns area was turnpiked in 1791-2 and there was great opposition to the seven tollbars, two of which were in the town itself. Almost as soon as the tolls had been erected, the town ones were destroyed by fire and soon after, two in the countryside were also destroyed. The tolls within the town do not appear to have been replaced.

**From Barniken House, walk through the car park, past the graveyard of Duns Parish Church. Turn left and head up Currie Street with the graveyard on your left hand side.**

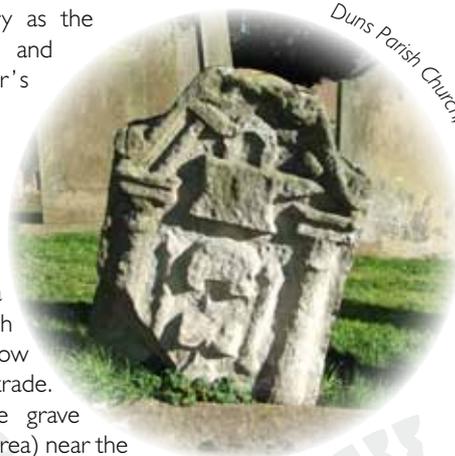
On the opposite side of the road is the former Duns South Church dating from 1851, now a carpet salesroom. Opposite

the church take the small lane that rises from Currie Street. This passes beside the church hall and into Church Square.

### DUNS PARISH CHURCH

Before reaching the church you pass close by the hall and the entrance to the graveyard. This building was built in the late 18th century as the Parish school and Schoolmaster's house.

In the churchyard are many fine gravestones. Try to find the gravestone of a blacksmith, which is carved to show the tools of his trade. Notice the slate grave slab (rare in this area) near the entrance with the word 'Dunse' inscribed on it, this being the spelling used from the 1720s until 1882, when a public meeting agreed to revert to the ancient spelling. Robert Burns



Duns Parish Church, Churchyard

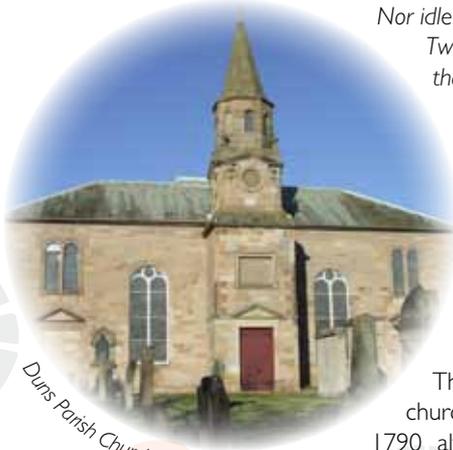
visited Duns in May 1787 and stayed with the Ainslie family. He attended the church and seeing Rachel Ainslie searching the bible for the passage to which the minister was referring, Burns wrote a note to her that said.

*"Fair Maid, you need not take the hint,*

*Nor idle texts pursue  
Twas guilty sinners  
that he meant  
Not angels, such as  
you."*

Rachel Ainslie is buried in the Ainslie family grave that can be found in the graveyard.

The ancient parish church was taken down in 1790 although some vestiges of the original building remained until they too were demolished in 1874. The church of 1790 was destroyed in a fire in 1879



Duns Parish Church



Colourful stained glass windows

and restored in 1880 forming the present building. Some elements of the 1790 church remain, for example, the tower upon which is an inscribed table detailing the history.

The interior has a fine black and terracotta tiled floor and there is a panelled gallery with boxed pews for the families of the local estates. On the gallery are the coats of arms of Manderston, Grueldykes, Duns Castle, Cockburn and Wedderburn. The south wall is dominated by an ornate organ with stencilled pipes and there are a number of colourful stained glass windows from 1880. Please note that it may not be possible to enter the church building.



The loch ('Hen Poo') was created in the 18th century when the castle grounds were landscaped. This area, a glacial drainage channel, now forms a nature reserve, which is frequented by many species of birds and other wildlife.

On the west side of Duns Law is a cairn, which is locally said to mark the site of the Old Town of Duns. It stands in an area known as the Bruntons (possibly from 'burnt town' however; except for the name, there is no evidence that the town was ever situated here. What is likely is that there was a small settlement around the base of the hill, more probably on the same side as the town is now.



Old Town Cairn

On the summit of Duns Law is the Covenanters' Stone where the supporters of General Sir Alexander Leslie knelt and took the oath of allegiance to the "Covenant for Religion Crown and Country". This is perhaps the most famous incident in the history of the town. In 1639, Leslie and his Covenanting Army of 12,000 men were encamped here during their successful struggle to resist King Charles I's attempt to impose the Church of England in place of the Scottish Church. Here they set up their standard in the struggle for Scotland's religious liberty. The last attack on Duns came on 8th August 1640, when the English garrison from Berwick made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Leslie's cannon.

The remains of the fortifications they built can be seen on the summit and this is a rare survivor of Civil War defence works. The other fortifications around the summit are from an Iron Age hill fort, dating from over 2,000 years ago and these were built to defend a small farming community.

The views from the top of the Law are stunning. A wide expanse of countryside can be seen, stretching to the sea as far as Holy Island, off the Northumberland coast. The Cheviot Hills lie to the south and the Lammermuir Hills to the north. A viewpoint cairn helps orientate this view for you. The cairn was erected by the local community with financial assistance from the European LEADER II programme.

**SOUTH LODGE AND HIGH SCHOOL**

Follow New Road towards the edge of town. Approximately 300m from the Jim Clark Room you will see the South Lodge, another entrance to Duns Castle Estate. The South Lodge, which dates from 1820, is locally known as Sally's Lodge after a former resident. During the Second World War there was a camp for 300 Polish soldiers established here.

Just past the South Lodge is the Berwickshire High School. J & F Johnston designed the main block in 1938 and they were also responsible for later additions. Although designed in the late 1930s, the school did not open until 1958. This was due to the shortage of materials both during and immediately after World War Two. This long low building has a large number of windows, which means that the classrooms are bright. The design is typical of the late 1930s and is a fine example of a streamlined modernist building. A new school is currently being constructed on the opposite side of the road.



**From here return to Langtongate to rejoin the main Town Trail.**



