

# Introduction

Wick is a royal burgh officially founded in 1589 and originally occupying the north side of the River Wick. Pulteneytown on the south side was conceived at the turn of the nineteenth century.



Thomas Telford (1757-1835)



Photo of Sir William Pulteney

Sir William Pulteney (1729-1809)

*The first Industrial Planned Town*

# THOMAS TELFORD



*A historic gem in Caithness*

# Pulteneytown in

# Wick

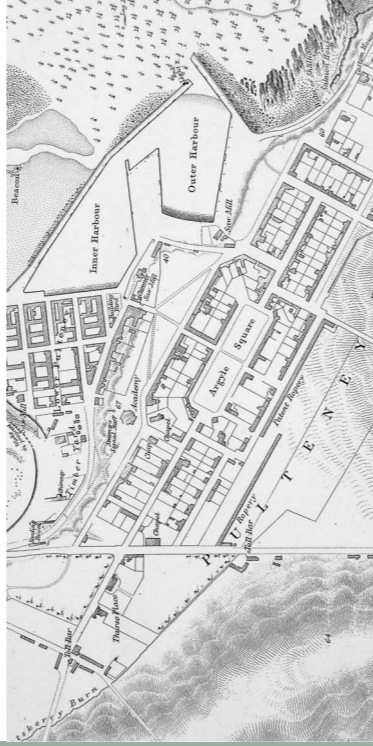
# History of Pulteneytown

In 1790 Thomas Telford was commissioned by the **BRITISH FISHERIES SOCIETY** to write a report of all the coastal harbours in the North of Scotland, and **WICK** was chosen as the most suitable bay to develop for the expanding Herring industry with the building of a new harbour, and a settlement for the Fishing community.

This settlement commenced in 1807 was intended for 1000 inhabitants, and included in the design were cooping yards, stores, houses and a water supply, in fact the first industrial planned town.

It was called **PULTENEYTOWN** in honour of Sir William Pulteney, MP and Chairman of the British Fisheries Society 1729 - 1809. He was the second son of Sir James Johnstone of Wester Hall, Eskdale in the Borders, and took the name of Pulteney when he married the wealthy heiress of the 4th Earl of Bath.

Pulteney's patronage and friendship as a fellow Borderer, gave Telford his start in life as a civil engineer working in Shropshire.



# Conservation Area

Telford's planned town incorporates two distinct areas, Lower and Upper Pulteneytown. Lower Pulteneytown consists of a grid pattern street plan with street front properties arranged around courtyards paved with Caithness Flagstone. Accessed through arched pends ,the courtyards were used for the curing of fish and also housed ancillary trades such as cooperages. Along the street front the buildings would house worker's residences and often contained commercial premises on the ground floor.

Upper Pulteneytown, lying on the higher ground overlooking the harbour was designed as a more prestigious residential area. Its focal point is Argyle Square surrounded by traditional stone and slate houses.

In recognition of the fact that Pulteneytown still retains many of its original buildings and is laid out according to Telford's design. It was designated as a conservation area (an area of special architectural or historic interest) in 1970 and was extended to its present boundary in 2001. The classical layout of the town plan is based on **BATH** and predates **EDINBURGH's** new town and is the only complete example of Telford's planning.

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# Wick

Thank you for your visit, and hope you enjoy your time in Wick. There are many places of interest to visit in Caithness, so tell your friends and come back soon.



Our walk starts from the Bridge beside Mackay's Hotel and will take in buildings of historical interest relating to the development of Pulteneytown in the 19th century and the subsequent regeneration that has taken place.

# The Telfour Walk

## F - ROUND HOUSE & HARBOUR GATES

## G - WICK HARBOUR

Works began on the harbour in 1807 and by 1811 the inner harbour was complete. Throughout the nineteenth century, as the herring trade grew, hundreds of boats operated from Wick Harbour and the quayside was crowded with people with gutting, curing and the storing of fish in barrels. Buildings of note here include the Old Fish Mart, the Lifeboat House, and the Pilot House overlooking the Harbour. Recently, pontoons have been installed in the inner harbour providing a new lease of life for the area. During the 1860s and 1870s Thomas Stevenson, engineer attempted to build a breakwater further out in the bay to the south. However the breakwater could not stand up to the power of the fierce waves and was destroyed. Remains can still be seen by carrying on this walk to the South Head along the coast.

## H - HARBOUR TERRACE

Linking Lower to Upper Pulteneytown, Harbour Terrace also housed Mrs Sutherland's Temperance Hotel, the former lodgings of Robert Louis Stevenson, the famous author of Treasure Island. He stayed for 6 weeks in 1868 at No 10, Harbour Terrace whilst working with his father Thomas Stevenson as a trainee engineer on the ill fated breakwater. At the top of this street is Pulteneytown Post office which was set up to cater for the trade of the harbour at that time and still now in daily use.

## I - BREADALBANE CRESCENT

The houses on this street built in the period 1860 – 1865 are distinctly different to others in Pulteneytown and were created as grand homes for the wealthier merchants. They are set back from the street with front gardens and decorative iron railings. The houses on the opposite side of the street have a different address, Breadalbane Terrace.

## J - ARGYLE SQUARE

Argyle Square was the focal point of Telford's plan for Upper Pulteneytown. Originally an open green for drying fishing nets and clothes. The trees only being planted in the square in the early 20th c with Pulteneytown Church to the left opened in 1842.

## K - ASSEMBLY ROOMS

Built as Pulteneytown Academy School in 1838, but now used as the main performance venue in the town. Opposite is St Joachims Church, which was built in 1836 on a site given by the grateful people of Wick to Father Lovi for his work during the cholera epidemic in 1832. Close by are 3 other churches, 2 Free and 1 Baptist and the area is sometimes called Holy Corner.

## L - CARNEGIE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The library in Sinclair terrace was built between 1895-1898. The foundation stone was laid on the 27th March 1897 by Mr Hew Morrison, Chief Librarian of Public Libraries, Edinburgh. Carnegies Motto LET THERE BE LIGHT is carved above the entrance door.

## A - EBENEZER STREET

Recorded in the Guinness Book of Records as the smallest street in the world, being 2.06m long or 6ft9inches across and constructed in 1883.

**TELFORD'S BRIDGE** built in 1807 by George Burn (Constructor also of new harbour and Mill Lade the water scheme for Pulteneytown). The modern version of the bridge was constructed in 1875 by Murdoch Paterson.

## B - MACKAYS HOTEL

In the 19th c Mackay's was a Temperance Hotel and was built by Mr Alexander Sinclair in 1883. The Wick and Pulteneytown Abstinence Society was founded in 1840 by Mr Benjamin Kennedy, and this did much pioneer Temperance work here in the town. The hotel stands at the junction of 5 roads (A curious similarity is the 5 hand way mentioned in Treasure Island and R.L. Stevenson may have conceived the idea from here).

## C - RIVER AREA

Prior to Telford's modifications, this area formed part of the River Wick and the buildings and streets here are built on reclaimed sand banks. Many of the streets in this area are named after key members of the British Fisheries Society

**TELFORD STREET** after Thomas Telford **BURN STREET** George Burn, Architect/ builder.

**WILLIAMSON STREET** James Williamson Agent for BFS in Wick. **SALTOUN STREET** Gilbert Saltoun Secretary to BFS in London. The streets in Upper Pulteneytown being named after the Commissioners and Shareholders of the British Fisheries Society.

## D - TELFORD STREET

This street was named after Thomas Telford, the great civil engineer who designed and laid out Pulteneytown. In 2004, flagstones were inscribed with words and sayings in the Caithnessian dialect and punched copper works were installed on the buildings of the street as part of the regeneration of the area.

## E - BANK ROW

A street full of History. The grass bank here is the original river bank. The street is also the home of the Wick Heritage Museum. At the end of the street is the Memorial Gardens in remembrance of the first civilian bombing in World War II. The Black Stairs further along were made famous by the Midlands artist L.S. Lowry who painted this in 1936 and also one of Bank Row, Examples of engraved flagstones on the pavements commemorate these paintings and also businesses related to the herring industry.



Continue down the Cliff past the John O Groat Journal Offices, once the original premises of the British Fisheries. In 1829, Peter Reid set up work there as a bookseller, and later as a publisher with the first printing press at the end of 1831. This takes you back to Mackays Hotel and completes your Telford Tour.