

Rothbury road towards Otterburn. Play **AUDIO 4**.

Turn right and head along the ridge towards Gallows Hill. Once through the first gate there is a scatter of boulders near the wall on Gallows Hill, ideal for a rest and refreshments. Look over the wall towards Otterburn ranges in the distance and play **AUDIO 5**.

Continue along the ridge, descending to a gate and beyond to cross a road. Continue on the bridleway to a stile into a plantation of native trees on the right. Play **AUDIO 6**.

Follow the path through the plantation to an open field. Turn right with the Haining building on your left and follow the track from the Haining all the way to join the Elsdon road back into the village. Cross the village green, turn right and head up behind the church towards the Pele tower until you arrive at a wooden seat in front of what was Dorothy's cafe. Play **AUDIO 7**.

Return to car park.

You will hear the voices of the following people who shared their memories and stories for the **OUT OF TOWN MUSEUM** project.



Extracts from Bob Keith's diary who grew up in Elsdon in the 1930s and '40s.



John Murray farmed at Cartington. He explains the importance of sheep being hefted to the land and the impact of foot-and-mouth.



Peter Dawson describes how his grandmother Lil and her friend Elsie travelled to the local dances.



Jill Stevenson grew up in Holystone Grange and recalls an exciting visit to the Otterburn ranges as a young girl.



Andrew Miller worked for the Forestry Commission and reflects on its impact on the landscape and ecology of the area.



Margaret Beech fondly remembers her cousin Dorothy and the tribute paid to her by the many cyclists who visited her cafe in Elsdon.



## OUT OF TOWN MUSEUM

### Walk In Their Shoes Around Elsdon



A gentle walk through farmland and over moorland with fine views of Elsdon village and surrounding hills and featuring grizzly murder mysteries and plenty of local history.

An Elsdon childhood, the wrong trees and a tribute to a local character.

Time	4 - 4.5hrs
Distance	5.05 miles
Difficulty	Easy
Ascent	100m
Terrain	Track, metalled road and grass paths

Two short steepish ascents. Strong footwear recommended. Park at car park or next to the village green NY938934.

Leave no litter.

Take only photographs and memories.

Please respect this ancient landscape and leave the stones as you find them. To protect wildlife and farm animals, please keep your dog on a lead at all times. Thank you.



Select the audio at the numbered locations

- 1 Bob Keith - Growing up in Elsdon
- 2 Bob Keith - On the Farm
- 3 John Murray - Hefted to the Land
- 4 Peter Dawson - A Bicycle Made For Two
- 5 Jill Stevenson - A Ride on the Range
- 6 Andrew Miller - A Depleted Landscape
- 7 Margaret Beech - Dorothy's Cafe

Park at main car park beside Village Hall where there are toilets. Play **AUDIO 1**.

Return to the car park and go through gate to the right of Crown Farm. Follow the metalled road to a second gate with a cattle grid. Play **AUDIO 2**.

Continue on road past Landshot Farm on your left and descend to large modern barn on right. Play **AUDIO 3**.

Descend on the road for 500 yards and turn to cross Whiskershiel Burn on a narrow footbridge. Go through a gate and cross field keeping a stone wall on your left. Go through the gate and cross the middle of the field to arrive at a gate. Once

through the gate, bear slight left heading just towards the right of East Todholes farm buildings to arrive at a metalled road. Turn right and continue

Tod is a scottish word for a fox and it is likely East and West Todholes Farms derive their name as places where foxes lived.

up a short steep stretch to a road junction. Read Winter's Gibbet story.

In 1791 there lived here an old woman named Margaret Crozier, who kept a small shop for the drapery and other goods. Believing her to be rich, one William Winter, a desperate character, but recently returned from transportation, at the instigation, and with the assistance of two female faws (vendors of crockery and tinwork) named Jane and Eleanor Clark, who in their wanderings had experienced the kindness of Margaret Crozier, broke into the lonely Pele on the night of 29th August 1791, and cruelly murdered the poor old woman, loading the ass they had brought with her goods. The day before they had rested and dined in a sheep fold on Whiskershiel Common, which overlooked the Raw, and it was from a description given of them by a shepherd boy, who had seen them and taken particular notice of the number and character of the nails in Winter's shoes, and also the peculiar gully, or butcher's knife with which he divided the food that brought them to justice.

*Taken from a 'Comprehensive Guide to the County of Northumberland', by William Weaver Tomlinson, London, 1889.*

William Winter, together with Jane and Eleanor Clark were hung for the murder at the Westgate of Newcastle on the 10th of August, 1792. Winter's body was taken to Steng Cross, near the site of the murder; his rotting corpse hung here in chains for many years before the structure was dismantled.

Turn right onto Elsdon road and descend (with care) to the track to 'Redshaw' leaving on the left as the road turns right. Cross the cattle grid and continue just beyond the barn on the right to take a wide track on the left, ascending to a stile to the right of Hillhead Cottage. Look back towards Elsdon and

thousands of Sitka Spruce we were planting were probably the wrong thing to be doing.

We became in the UK expert at converting very poor land into modern productive forestry. But of course that was we now know at the expense of things like peatland habitats, the problems with water coming off with all these plough lines taking the water very quickly off the hillside where we see more of these sort of flash floods that can be quite harmful further down and we get flooding in Rothbury now. All partly as a result of this work that was done in the 50s, 60s and early 70s.

So now government policy changes there's lots of work going on locally, take the exotic Sitka Spruce off and maybe plant or allow regeneration of native woodland as well. Really significant changes just in my lifetime in terms of what we think about the right thing to do for forestry.

Maybe if you are new into the area you would look at it and think isn't this wonderful, but it's a slightly depleted landscape than the one I grew up in.

### ⑦ Margaret Beech

So one of the places that I went back to was Elsdon because we had a cousin there and she had a little wooden bungalow in Elsdon with her mother Annabella. They ran a tea room really, in the cottage for cyclists. So, on a Saturday and a Sunday, all of these cyclists would arrive. Dorothy would scour the Chronicle on a Friday night to see which clubs were coming up and there would be twenty-five, thirty cyclists in a club and they would all descend on this three-roomed cottage and bring their sandwiches and have numerous cups of tea. And as far as I know that was their main income. And Dorothy was probably between 15 and 20 years older than me. But we always got on well and from a very young age I started to go up and stay for a couple of nights, probably from about seven years old I would say.

So I had wonderful times up there. Dorothy and I loved to walk and we'd go and pick raspberries in the plantation up behind the cottage. We just used to pick all sorts of things, foraging I suppose you'd call

it now. And we had a laugh, we used to always laugh together. She was quite a character, she taught me to sew, to knit, to crochet, taught me wild flowers. So along with her and me mother and father who were obviously well into nature as well, I had a quite a real love of nature and always have done. So that came from the three of them I suppose really.

And when Dorothy died, the cyclists that used to come to hers for tea, they all wanted to do something in her memory because she was very loved by them, her and her mother. And there was hundreds of cyclists came on that day, hundreds and that was really nice that they wanted to remember her really. And they did a memorial service and they raised enough money to have a seat put in front of the cottage which is still there and they had a cup made for a race that was going to be, a cycle race that would be up Billsmoor which is a big hill that goes down towards Rothbury.

And still, you know when Peter and I had the cottage after that, there was a lady and gentleman came up to the front gate, then I was in the garden doing some gardening. "We actually met each other here" and he said "do you own this now?". I said yes I did and we talked about Dorothy and they used to be cyclists and he said, "Our eyes met over the room", which was the lounge, which was used as the cafe, and he said, "Our eyes met from one bench and table to another one and that's how we met each other." Then they'd got married and they'd moved to Australia.

So they'd come over to see family for their last visit to the UK. So that was lovely that they had that time in the cottage to and that probably happened with a lot of people that they went up there and met each other really.

### ① Bob Keith

Elsdon was a wonderful place for children to grow up. We had a school, a shop, Susie Easton's next to the Crown, a garage at Low Mot, Vic Familton. A blacksmith, a saddler, who used to repair our leather football and a butchers, George Ashford who lived at Pinfold Cottage.

On good days during the summer we would often go swimming. We had two favourite haunts. One was the Mill Linns where we would swim in the pool below the middle waterfall, the other was Anderson's pool located below Tod'les (Todholes) on one of the water courses that feeds into the Elsdon Burn.

The main thing I remember about Anderson's pool was not the swimming but having to keep a sharp lookout for ants. We were bitten on a number of occasions. The burn was sometimes dammed below the gardens of Crawford Crescent and rafts would be built. The Castle plantation was also a favourite playground where we fashioned bows and arrows out of hazel.

### ② Bob Keith

My uncle Thomas owned the Crown Farm in Elsdon. I would often help him out and we used to know the name of all the fields. Middlecroft, Stoneycroft etc. In August each year I would help Uncle Thomas and the farm and the farm workers with the haymaking. The grass would be cut with a reaper pulled by one of our horses, left to dry then turned so it could air.

After that we used a rake to pull the grass into little heaps that we called kyles. A sweeper would then be used to create the larger heaps of hay called pikes. I always enjoyed taking the hay bogie out to the fields, winding on the pikes and taking them back to the stackyard. I can still hear the sound of the ratchet on the roller as the pikes were slowly pulled onto the roller.

At the end of the day the horses were led down to the burn downstream from the bridge where they would spend ages drinking gallons of water before being taken to the stable. All in all it was a very labour intensive process which could take many

days depending on the weather. It was also hard and thirsty work and when working in the fields we would always look forward to the arrival of the maid. She would bring a basket covered with a towel, underneath would be a batch of freshly made scones and a can of tea.

### ③ John Murray

Every hill or high ground in the country whether you're up Coquet or here has a flock of sheep on it and that flock of sheep on there's been there for hundreds of years. Because what they call hefted, at night because of predators they used to go out on top of the hills and in the morning used to come to the bottom.

So daughter followed mother, mother followed grandmother and so on. So you always kept the replacements on the hills to replace this heft. When a farm is sold or a farm is rented out to someone else the sheep are tied to the farm. So you have to buy those sheep and those sheep stay on the farm. For hundreds and hundreds of years.

They're mainly the Cheviots or the Blackface or the Swaledales. Those sheep in the hills are bred pure right, so they use pure rams, breed their own replacements. Foot-and-mouth was in the area in 1966 of course that meant that these hefted flocks had to be slaughtered.

We had a hill with sheep on it which we lost the whole lot and we bought in sheep from similar type of farms hoping they would go but it took five or six years for them to get used with us, in fact it never worked 'til they were bred on the farm. Probably now they're not a true hefted flock even now 'cause they've lost it all. So it was quite serious.

### ④ Peter Dawson

I remember asking me Granny one night, what she did when she was young. And she said, well like you I used to gan to dances. Well I said here? Like the Jubilee Hall? Aye, went there, but the farthest we ever went was Otterburn. Otterburn? But I says that's a lang way. Fowerteen mile there 'n fowerteen mile back? Elsie an' me, used to gan to the dance.

But I says why did you gan there? Well it was a change. But how did you get there? We walked, we took a bike. You walked but took the bike? Aye. But there was two o' you. Aye. Wi' one bike? Aye.

Well how'd you manage? Well you'd sometimes walk together and then I would get on the bike an' bike for mebbes a mile up the road, stop, leave the bike, carry on walking. Elsie would come along, pick the bike up, get on the bike, pass me say another mile up the road all the way to Otterburn and all the way back. That's what you had to dee.

There was one Saturday morning we wor comin' back 'cause the dance was always on the Friday night. We just got to the bottom end of Thropton. Where Billy Marsden lived. Billy was comin' oot the door. Billy was the postman and he had a horse and cart. So I says to Elsie, this is grand Elsie, we'll get a lift doon with Billy. 'Cause Billy was a relation o' me granny's. So he gets doon and looks up. Oh hello Lil, where you been? We've been to the dance. Where you gannin' noo? Oh we're just gan all the way back hyem. Oh he says, you got the bike. I'll tell ye what I'll dee. I'll make it easy for you, I'll put the bike on the cart.

I looked at Elsie and Elsie looked at me and thought grand we're gonna get a lift. Aye he put the bike on the cart and turned roond and said, and I'll just drop it off at the top of the Model for you. And away he went. And we are standing there and the horse and cart and him's gannin' up the bank oot o' Thropton for tae gan tae Rothbury. We had to walk the last two mile. Later I discovered that he could carry the bike but he couldn't carry passengers.

### ⑤ Jill Stevenson

There was gates at the drive with a ball on the top and we used to sit on the top when the army went past, tanks used to come and the lorries, and one of the lorries lost a camouflage. Mike and I were delighted. Aaah! We had a camouflage. So we told Dad that we had this camouflage had fallen off.

So he'd rung the camp to say look one of your boys have lost some camouflage my kids would like to give

it you back. So this Major Leach had said, yes, he'd be delighted to see us etc, etc. So he came, collected us in a jeep, collected the camouflage and off we went, for a morning on the range up above Elsdon.

I heard him on the radio saying that there was a young lady on the range, it was unheard of, but I was camouflaged with a hat, all my curls and things. I didn't have a bust in those days so I looked like a little boy and I was a tomboy anyway. So they had to watch their language. So we saw them firing and then we went to see where they were firing to. Well it was a road bit zig-zaggy. The steering went on the jeep. They lost the steering.

Well we were quite used to this sort of thing happening when we were shooting, jeeps and things and getting ferried and having to jump out of a jeep as it went too far that way you jumped out, or too far that way you just jumped out and let it tip. They were ex-army, American, and you just rolled them up and put them right again.

So we weren't phased but I remember him being absolutely terrified in case anything happened to these two children. But he was a nice bloke and we had a good day. First woman on the range, first female.

### ⑥ Andrew Miller

Probably most families in the valley had somebody that worked for the Forestry Commission because we were still at the height of the expansion of the modern forestry plantations. Probably I think at the time I was planting about 1500 Sitka Spruce a day in places like Uswayford, at the top of the Coquet there, all on new ground, beautiful open moorland that had been ploughed and taken in for forestry. I then spent the rest of my career trying to find a way to take those all away again. I loved it of course at the time and enjoyed doing the practical work and working with all the other local guys. But of course at the same time, as time moved on I began to learn more about conservation, my passion and how actually many of these things were probably the wrong thing or the wrong tree in the wrong place and so all these