

February 2014

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Notice board

14 March: Annual General Meeting at Bailiffgate museum, from 7:30. Alan Beith will give a talk and present the Civic Society Awards.

Members who have been pre-occupied with other matters are reminded to change any standing orders to reflect the 2014 membership subscription, and and to return their Gift Aid form.

Once again, we are delighted to bid a warm welcome to more new members.



Notice of Annual General Meeting

All members are encouraged to attend our AGM at 7:30pm on Friday 14th March. This is our opportunity to review the year past; elect the committee and set the agenda for the year ahead.

In addition to the formal agenda, we are honoured that the Rt Hon

Sir Alan Beith will present the Civic Society Awards. As our local MP for more than 40 years, with a wide range of responsibilities, and interests that include parliamentary and constitutional affairs, architectural and artistic heritage, we can all look forward to a memorable evening .

Alnwick War Memorial

Through 2014 there will be events commemorating the outbreak of the First World War. After the armistice most communities honoured the dead with an enduring reminder for future generations of the sacrifices that had been made.

Before settling on the design that we all recognise, the Alnwick War Memorial Committee rejected a number of alternatives, including a new garden suburb with cottages for disabled soldiers and sailors; a public hall with rest room for soldiers and sailors; a new wing or endowment fund for Alnwick Infirmary; and a recreation ground with bandstand.

By the end of 1919 the committee had also rejected the idea of 3-foot high figures, and agreed on an ornamental lamp holder with three corner piers, each supporting a life-sized bronze figure, in mourning, with a reversed rifle.

Plaques and incipations now commemorate 189 casualties from the 1914-18 war, 76 from the 1939-45 war, one from the Korean War, and one from Northern Ireland.

The original memorial cost around £2,600 (equivalent to about £125,000 today) which was

raised by public subscription. The design was by Hicks and Charlesworth of Newcastle. The figures were modelled by Roger Hedley (of Ralph Hedley, Newcastle) and cast by J. W. Singer & Co. in Somerset. The contractors were Messrs. Green & Son of Warkworth.

The memorial was unveiled on 11 November 1922. Shops closed, and proceedings began with a procession from the market place, led by a guard of honour from Northumberland Fusiliers.



“St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church”

The re-opening of the Bailiffgate Museum is an opportunity to celebrate the building in which it is housed.

The building is described in the listing by English Heritage as:

"1856, by John Green. Three gabled bays, centre wider and projecting. Early English style. Three stages, centre over basement. Ashlar with ground floor string, labels to openings (with head stops on left), and string to coped gables. Centre with angle buttresses, terminating in stunted pinnacles. Central doorway with recessed trefoil lights in spandrels of pointed arch; printed arch side door to left, large square door to Presbytery on right. Lancet triplet in centre with lights surmounted by trefoil in centre. Star and blind lancets in centre gable. Blind lancets in side gables. Fleur de lys pinnacles to side gables. Interior: top lit, gallery at south end".

Also listed are the Piers and railings:

"Five ashlar piers with saddleback tops. Plain cast iron railings with cross heads."

Inspired Alnwick (<http://tinyurl.com/okn6n2z>) explains that the story of worship on this site goes back to the late 1750s, when the Society of Jesuits furnished a room for religious services. A larger chapel was opened in 1796, then replaced by the present building in 1836. The building became redundant when the congregation transferred to the former Anglican church of St Paul in 1982. Some fittings can now be seen in St Paul's.

Sixty years after it was built, George Skelly wrote: Catholics were very strong in the north of England, a fact which is fully corroborated by the different risings that occurred in 1715 and 1745, in the cause of the Stuarts. The cruel and barbarous treatment to which they were subjected in particular reigns, had the effect of reducing their numbers, and at no time was their cause in a more hopeless condition than during the greater part of last century.

From the Durham records we gather that among the leading member, of this body in 1677, were Robert Brandling of Alnwick Abbey, Esquire, John Smythworth; alias Smarfit, Alnwick, gentleman, Mary, wife of James Rutherford, yeoman, Anne wife of Henry Facy, Robert Anderson, yeoman. Whilst residing in the immediate neighbourhood were Robert Clavering of Callaly Castle, esquire, Robert Beadnell of Lemmington Hall, gentleman, Robert Hartridge, gentleman, Robert Trumble and his wife, Abberwick, Ralph Weddell of Bolton, yeoman, Henry Ogle, Harup, gentleman, Robert Milne of Edlington, yeoman, Robert Smers of Broome Park, yeoman.

As a church, their books seem to date only as far back as 1770, but in all probability they may have held services in private houses at a much earlier period. In 1770, they appear to have worshipped in a thatched house adjoining the Plough Inn, in Bondgate Without. In the early part of this century they removed to Bailiffgate where they had a building in a yard on the north side of the street converted into a place of worship, and this state of things continued till about 1836.

In that year the present church was opened for divine worship. The style of architecture adopted is that of the decorated period, but as the building is wedged in on either sides by dwelling houses, it is not seen to its best advantage. So in order to counteract this drawback, the architect has concentrated the whole of his skill on the south facade, and in this has been eminently successful. In describing the building, we may say that its chief characteristics are centred in the plain, yet bold and imposing doorways, which are rendered still more effective by means of the chastefully pointed windows which are so arranged as to transmit into the interior the greatest amount of light. In order to give still greater effect to the exterior, a massive pendant has been erected in the centre, and which is rendered still more conspicuous by means of a huge cross that surmounts it. At each of the angles were four high pinnacles, but unfortunately a few years ago one of these was blown down, which necessitated the taking down of the others.

The church was built during the incumbency of the Reverend John Fishwick, from designs furnished by Mr John Green, architect, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. This church up to 1855 belonged to the Society of Jesuits, and previous to the above date was worked by priests of that order. In 1854 the church was first registered for marriages.

The Museum kept most of the fabric intact: the organ was restored, and original features such as the oak roof with gargoyles, the arch above the site of the altar, and stained glass windows on the front facade can still be seen. A lift was installed to improve access and the first floor gallery extended to provide display and working area.

Recent work includes a complete reinterpretation of the museum's collection to appeal to a wider range of audiences. While there have been no permanent changes to the building there has been an increase in the reception area to make the museum more welcoming to visitors. The first floor layout has been reconfigured with the construction of a series of 'rooms' which showcase the collection, covering themes such as early human settlement, development of the town, including public health, railways, schools and printing. The two latter themes involve the construction of a Victorian classroom and Davison's printing shop. The coal mining exhibit on the ground floor, and elsewhere, have been made more 'real' by the use of specially constructed life size models.



News in Brief

Civic Voice is exploring a project to tell the story of the civic movement. The first civic society was set up in the 1840s. Currently there are over a thousand local societies with over 250,000 individual members. More details at - <http://tinyurl.com/pnup67w>.

Civic Voice are also developing a Civic Manifesto in preparation for the 2015 general election. It will focus on seven themes: The Planning System; Priorities for Growth; Town & City Centres; Design Quality; Heritage; The Public Realm; Civic Pride & Civic Action. More details at -

<http://tinyurl.com/qegdcv4>.

The County Council faces a budget reduction for 2014-18 of £130 million. This is higher than originally expected, but Northumberland is less affected than other councils in the region as changes in the funding model tend to have a bigger impact on more deprived areas. County budget proposals for 2014-15 aim

to deliver savings of £32.5m, and show £312,000 savings in Development Services: £238,000 from a review of staffing structure and associated non-staffing budgets; and £74,000 more income through trading in specialised services (planning, conservation, and ecology). This represents economies of around 3% in planning - slightly below the average for the whole organisation.

Work continues on developing the Heritage and Culture section of the Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood plan. By examining the different issues according to territory the team are able to develop specific policies for the overall parish; suburbs / urban fringe; town centre and conservation area, and for Denwick Village.

We are grateful to have been awarded a grant of £250 by the Town Council. Along with an increase in the number of members during 2013, higher subscriptions

from 2014, and claiming gift aid this helps to put our finances on a sound footing, so we can continue to champion the qualities of our town.

Thanks to the generosity of Northumbrian Water we are able to develop a brief guide to the Pants of Alnwick, which we hope to publish in time for the tourist season. A sub-group is also working with Bailiffgate Museum on a Pants Exhibition scheduled for September. Any members interested in helping prepare the exhibition are invited to get in touch.

The British Library recently put over a million scanned images on-line, including many of Alnwick.

They can be searched here -

<http://tinyurl.com/psohyh4>

We continue to be concerned about inappropriate minor alterations in the conservation area (See Page 5). Members are sometimes asked about the permissions needed for an alteration. They may find it useful to refer questions to this guidance published by English Heritage -

<http://tinyurl.com/ow62rxp>.

"My dismay at this back-of-the-envelope planning policy, imposed from on high over the reasoned objections of local councils... will not come as news to my noble friend. I wish that whatever Government comes... will listen to advice from those with local experience and understanding in some policy areas". So said (the aptly named) Lord True, on Permitted Development Rights in the House of Lords on 9th Jan.



Auriga Club Debate

On the 28th November, members of the Civic Society joined the Auriga Club for a lively discussion at the Rugby Club, under the skillful chairmanship of Brian Lamb.

During the evening we touched on a wide variety of topics: from the role of the Duke, to the challenges facing our pubs.

Views differed most markedly on the merits (or otherwise) of plastic windows in the conservation area. On the other hand (and to some surprise) we discovered widespread agreement with the position that the Civic Society takes on parking in the marketplace.

More generally, we found a good understanding of what the Civic Society stands for. While views

sometimes differ, there was also widespread agreement that ours ought to be voiced.

There was common ground, too, on the delicate question of how Alnwick in 2013 compares to Alnwick in 1963. Not everyone can look back quite that far, but all agreed that much has changed in Alnwick over the decades; that some of those changes have been for the good, while others have not. Balancing the different pro's and con's is a different matter for each individual. And that is the point where we all agreed we should leave things.

Our thanks to Brian, and members of the Auriga club for their warm hospitality, and a most enjoyable evening.

Recent History of Green Batt Gardens

In the spring of 1964 Green Batt Gardens came under the umbrella of Alnwick District Council, rented from Northumberland Estates, to be maintained as a garden and open space. It was known then merely as 'Land adjacent to St. Paul's Parish Hall'.

Since then the names The Garden of Tranquility, The Peace Garden, The Rose Garden, St Paul's Garden have been tagged to this parcel of land. Now it is simply Green Batt Gardens.



In May 2008, after many years through which the garden slid into disuse by local families as less socially minded minorities began to take over the space.

Alnwick in Bloom, an independent group of volunteers, approached Northumberland Estates prompted by a local resident's dismay at the deterioration she saw. Alnwick in Bloom was looking for permission to make changes to the Estates land. Small but essential improvements.

Northumberland Estates was prompt and positive in its response in repairing the crumbling walls and replacing the long gone seats with benches. AiB also went ahead with an assessment of the trees still growing from ADC's initial planting. Some were dangerous and ADC, after the correct conservation area permission had been granted, felled them completing the job speedily and spotlessly. Also ADC, at AiB's request, levelled and seeded over the exhausted rose beds.

The next task was to replace the absent entrance gate. AiB felt that a smaller facsimile of St Pauls old Sunday School Gate on Prudoe Street would

fit the bill and, again with permits in place, Gordon Wilson was commissioned to make and fit the new iron gate in March 2009.

All very well and good but all gardens need maintenance and Green Batt Gardens is no different. Churches Together, which had had meetings in Percy Street Hall, had noticed and become concerned about the garden's plight and stepped in with a schedule of March to October monthly clean ups and these still continue. Led by David Archer, the Baptist Minister, 'The Friends of Green Batt Gardens', some eight to nine volunteers, go in on the last Saturday morning of each month in season, to tidy, weed and titivate the plants. Even the mowing schedule has been modified on the Friends suggestion, and now Alnwick in Bloom fund fortnightly grass cutting so the turf has a polish which lifts the whole atmosphere of the open space.

An armillary to celebrate George Biddell Airy, 7th Astronomer Royal and born in Alnwick, is planned to be installed in the centre of the lawn. Alnwick in Bloom has started again, chasing its feasibility and the likelihood in obtaining the appropriate licenses from all the relevant authorities not to mention funding.

Nothing changes but the families are back.



Viewpoint: Wave your placard

Our response to the Consultation on Preferred Options for Housing, Employment and Green Belt on page 6 was prepared after much discussion. It should be clear that we are quite concerned about how the proposed quantity of additional housing is being handled, and very concerned about how it could damage the character of the town. We feel strongly that the whole community deserves a voice, but fear that the issues are not yet properly understood.

As we see it, the Civic Society has a responsibility to help raise awareness and inform public debate.

We have already discussed some ideas about how we should go about this. Over the coming weeks we will be putting more detail on our plans. This is



an ideal time for any member with a particular interest in these matters to get involved. If you have ideas on what the Society should be doing, would like to be more involved yourself, or know others who share our concerns, then wave your placard now.

Newsletter corrections and clarifications

Alert readers will have noticed several spelling mistakes and at least one factual error in the November 2013 edition of the Newsletter.

We will leave readers to find spelling mistakes, but take this opportunity to correct the factual error.

Alnwick Playhouse dates from the end of 1925, not 1926 as stated. We are pleased to put this right.

It is slightly puzzling when people apologise before pointing out our errors. If anyone ought to apologise, it should be us. However, we are always keen to hear about mistakes. Of course we would rather not make them in the first place, but we do, and when we do we like to know.

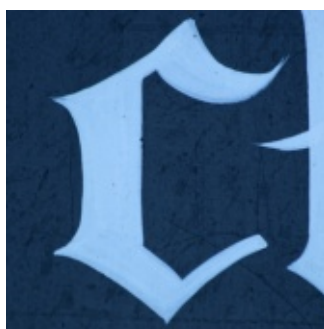
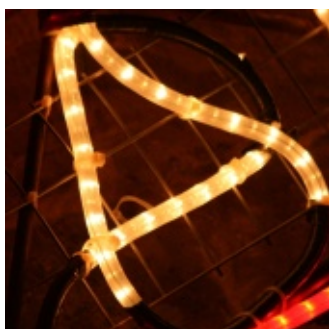
Correcting our mistakes confirms that the newsletter is read, and it shows that readers care about the content.

The newsletter is supposed to raise awareness of issues that concern members; support the work, and raise the profile of the society. So accuracy is important, but we also want to know whether readers find the content of interest.

A number of people contribute to each edition, and it is beginning to look as though corrections could also become a regular feature. So we have two requests for 2014. Firstly, please continue to point out mistakes. Secondly, please continue to help us find material which will appeal to a variety of readers.

Picture quiz

Seven letters spell success for those who can identify where they come from. Some are easier than others, but all were found in the conservation area. The answers are on the back page.



Response to Consultation on Preferred Options for Housing, Employment and Green Belt

Q1: Comments on Introduction

- Eight weeks (that included the Christmas season) is insufficient time for our local community to assess the full impact of the proposals.
- There is insufficient information for interested parties to challenge underlying assumptions behind the housing and employment demand forecasts for Alnwick.
- ACS shares the concerns of the ADNP Steering Group with a Core Strategy identifying small sites for development, particularly where a Neighbourhood Plan is in the course of preparation.

Q5: Comments on Spatial Portrait

- The inclusion of Alnwick in the North Northumberland Delivery Area is logical in terms of the town's positioning within the County and ACS supports the identification of Alnwick as a main town along with Berwick within this area which together are the key locations for sustainable development and services.
- Description of Alnwick (2.41) does not fully reflect its unique environmental and heritage qualities as the only Ducal town in the region. The castle does not dominate the town generally but it, its riverside setting and the tight spaces of the Peth/Bailiffgate do make the northern approaches into Alnwick into one of the most astonishing urban arrivals into any country town in England. Also, unlike most of the other country towns in Northumberland, much of Alnwick is visible to the many travellers on its sweeping by-pass. So, its quality needs to be protected and it needs to be positively composed as an entity in its landscape setting.

Q7 & 8: Comments on Economy of Northumberland

- ACS supports the ADNP Steering Group in welcoming the aim to plan positively for growth and to diversify the economy. Growing the labour force is essential to balance the ageing of Northumberland's population, and provide the economic conditions to enable this, through provision of increased housing, high quality and suitable employment sites and new and improved infrastructure remains important.

Q9: Comments on population projections

- ACS supports the ADNP Steering Group in recognising the problems identified from the low level of population growth in Northumberland and the increasing skew towards a population dominated by the elderly and the danger of insufficient housing resulting in an inadequate labour resource. However, we too are concerned that the aspiration of seeking a balanced development and population stability across the county, whilst desirable as an objective, is not realistic using the pretty blunt instruments of development allocations for housing and employment land.
- In the key issues we are also concerned that new development should 'not impact on the character' of Main Towns and Service Centres, like Alnwick, just as well as on smaller settlements outside of them.

Q10: Comments on the impact of housing

- Insufficient time for local community and interested parties to challenge assumptions in the housing demand forecast.
- Fails to recognise the level of uncertainty in the forecast of housing demand, and lacks contingency planning for alternative future scenarios.

- Because the proposed level of housing development proposed for Alnwick represents a significant risk to the character of the town and its setting in the landscape, any continuation in a southerly direction should be contingent on having appropriate protections in place for the character of the historic core, key entrances into the town and continuity with the quality of the surrounding landscape.

Q13: Comments on employment land supply

- ACS supports the additional allocation of 5 hectares of land for B-class uses, giving an overall supply of B-class and mixed employment land of nearly 13 hectares available for the period of the plan.
- While easy access would normally be necessary for employment land, such land does not need to be visible from the A1 road and should be reasonably screened. Additional employment land to the west of the A1 and south of Hog's Head PH would only serve to elongate the town southwards – which is not desirable.

Q14: Comments on housing provision

- This section fails to acknowledge that a number of sites in the SHLAA are already being developed, or have recently been proposed for non-housing use. No consideration should be given to the use of potential housing land for retail, commercial or mixed use until the Core Strategy and ADNP are complete
- It also fails to acknowledge that the level of mitigation required for a number of sites in the SHLAA may result in them either not being made available for housing, or that they may prove non-viable for developers. Contingency plans may be needed to ensure that a shortage of affordable housing would not impact economic growth if these sites prove non-viable.
- Also fails to recognise that the proposed number of additional housing units is higher than the figure considered in the Neighbourhood plan, and associated ADNP public consultation.
- Even without being challenged, any forecast of future demand is subject to a degree of uncertainty, and over a period of 20 years the degree of uncertainty is high. It is in the nature of planning for future demand that any forecast could become self-fulfilling. Should it be too high, this could result in unnecessary damage to townscape, landscape, and loss of amenity - even if the anticipated housing demand does not materialise
- Our view is that the community will start to recognise negative impacts on the town with growth of an additional 500 houses and above. The SHLAA sees no scope for expansion beyond the figure of 1,000. Because of uncertainty, it is best that any such figure should not be too tightly adhered to anyway. If demand exceeds the county forecast then the consequences could further jeopardise economic growth, availability of affordable housing, quality of housing stock, as well as the townscape, landscape character of the town, quality of life, etc.
- Insufficient rationale is given in the consultation document to explain why Alnwick is expected to absorb such a large proportion of the County, or the Northern Area growth over the next 20 years.
- Because demand forecasts are uncertain, and space finite,

Planning matters

We saw a total of 111 planning applications in Alnwick during 2013: a slight increase over the 98 that we saw in 2012, but the long-term trend is quite flat. On average there were just over 9 applications a month: February was busy with 18, and there was a slight rise in June / July but otherwise the monthly numbers were fairly steady through the year.

The application to build a care home on the former bus depot site in Lisburn Terrace has been refused on the grounds that the scale of the building was inappropriate to its setting, accommodation was contrary to county policy for older people, and it would result in pressure on medical services. This is a welcome decision, but an appeal is possible.

An outline application has been submitted for major housing development on Greensfield Avenue. This reinforces our wider concern that such premature applications prejudice public debate about the scale and location of future housing in Alnwick. An application for the erection of 50+ apartments for the elderly at Weavers Way has also been submitted.

We raised concerns about the proposed Aldi and Majestic stores on South Road: firstly on the basis that we would prefer to see this site put to residential use in order to reduce unwelcome pressure for further residential developments; and

secondly on the proposed layout: we believe landscaping to contain the site is important, given its elevated position.

A retrospective planning application for rendering work in Dovecote Lane has (rightly, in our view) been refused.

We objected to proposed signage on Percy Street Hall, which we view as inappropriate for a residential part of the conservation area. We had hoped that planners would wish to conserve the unspoilt character of this late Georgian and Victorian suburb. Unfortunately it seems not, as the application was approved.

The Society has submitted a detailed response to the Consultation on the Preferred Options for Housing, Employment and Green Belt (see left and below). This has been slightly edited here (for space reasons), but the full document and our full response can be found on the county web site - <http://tinyurl.com/qzy5ulf>. Most importantly, we fear that a substantial increase in housing provision could represent a significant risk to the character of the town. We are now considering how best to engage with the wider community on this issue.



Consultation Response (continued)

more radical alternatives may need to be considered to address housing needs from outside the urban boundary.

- In light of the inevitable pressures that will result from the proposed additional 1,000 housing units, uncertainty about the level of future demand and doubts about the availability of suitable land, we urge the County Council to reconsider this allocation and to consider alternatives.

Q21: Comments on Green Belt

- Although Alnwick does not have the benefit of a Green Belt, it does, uniquely amongst Northumbrian country towns, have some environmental protection along its whole north-western and north-eastern boundaries from a designated Historic Park and Garden which includes Hulne Park and the landscape east to Denwick village. However, this designation provides less protection from outward development at the urban fringes of the town than a Green Belt does.

- As the town has no protection at all along its other boundaries, it has developed 'ragged edges' where town and countryside meet in uncoordinated visual confusion. Better and comprehensive protection of some kind would assist in the Society's aims of composing the town better in its landscape setting. Although Alnwick's development pressure comes from within as expansion out into the coun-

tryside rather than from without as in other protected Green Belted towns, it does satisfy a number of the criteria for the establishment of a Green Belt which in Alnwick's situation would enable an even coordination of development along all of its boundaries and not just the northern section.

Q37: Comments on approach for Alnwick

- A Core Strategy that identifies sites for housing and employment undermines the whole Neighbourhood Planning process. Although the Neighbourhood Plan has to deliver in accordance with the Core Strategy housing and employment figures, it should not be compromised by this Strategy already deciding where these uses could go.

- Already, through the ADNP Steering Group, the Society is particularly concerned at the Strategy determining a location for up to 500 houses to the south of the town. Although it may finally be accepted that some housing should go here, other sites closer to the town centre should be looked at first, as well as possible peripheral sites on the eastern side of the town, to produce a viable and quality programme of housing development. The identification of this preferred approach in the Strategy is depriving the ADNP of the valuable small scale analysis of sites in the best interests of the community which is the essential strength of Neighbourhood Planning.

Diary dates

Civic Society...

14 March, 7:30pm Annual General Meeting, and presentation of Civic Society Awards by Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith MP. Location Bailiffgate Museum.

...and more

The refurbished Bailiffgate Museum will reopen to the public on 15th February, with a special Open Day on Friday 14th February (1pm to 4pm) in advance of the reopening, and an official launch on Tuesday 11th with His Grace, the Duke of Northumberland, who is also President of the Museum.

The first exhibition is Shots from the Heart. A celebration of Alnwick in photographs submitted by local photographers. Mid February to end of March 2014.

Woodhorn: from Feb 15th "Street Life Instantaneous" an exhibition of historic photographs of Newcastle Upon Tyne.

About Alnwick Civic Society

Alnwick Civic Society was formed in 1974, following the defeat of proposals to re-develop the town centre with a modern shopping area. Since then it has sought to influence development proposals, especially in the town centre and conservation area, to ensure they protect and enhance our heritage.

The society has been involved in a number of successful high profile campaigns. It continues to pursue its objectives by providing a voice for members; through dialogue with planning and conservation professionals, and like-minded organisations; by offering advice, scrutinising and commenting on development proposals; and by recognising excellence, organising public meetings, developing guided trails, and a variety of other activities.

In response to recent changes to the planning system the society is heavily involved in development of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and works with local partners to influence policy at a county level. It seeks to influence national policy in co-operation with other bodies within the civic movement, and was a founding member of Civic Voice.

All who share our aims can support the work of the society: by joining as an individual, family or business member; by participating in activities, sharing ideas, raising areas of concern and pointing out examples of good practice. Or simply by demonstrating pride in our town, and spreading the word about the value of our work.



Who's Who?

President: Philip Deakin

Chair: Peter Ennor (peter.ennor@btinternet.com)

Treasurer and Membership: Gill Parker

Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith

Other Executive Committee members:

Michael Apted

Elizabeth Jones

Trish Jones

Brian Lamb

David Lovie (davidlovie307@btinternet.com)

Peter Reed / Newsletter (peter.reed@aligre.co.uk)

Caroline Stewart

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Twitter: [@AlnwickCivicSoc](https://twitter.com/AlnwickCivicSoc)

Facebook: [AlnwickCivicSociety](https://www.facebook.com/AlnwickCivicSociety)

Quiz answers

A) Christmas Lights on Bondgate Tower

L) Playhouse

N) Northumberland Gazette

W) White Swan

I) Information Centre

N) Northumberland Hall

C) Methodist Church, Chapel Lane

K) Barter Books