

November 2014

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## Notice board

Nostalgic views of the North: 11th Nov, Bailiffgate Museum at 7:30. John Moreels, MBE on the work of the Photo Memories Organisation to save and share over 150,000 images of the North of England.

Individual and Family Subscriptions are due in January. Now is a good time to check that your standing order is in place, and up-to-date.

Annual General Meeting: will be in March. Details in the February newsletter.



## Any Questions?

*Our panel this year included two topic leads from the Neighbourhood Plan: Martin Murphy for Transport, and Philip Angier for the Town Centre; along with local businessman Richard Sayer, and Daniel Watkin, who is responsible for the guides at Alnwick Castle. They grappled expertly with a range of local issues: agreed on some, differed on others, and were both supported, and challenged by lively contributions from the audience.*

First we discussed how the results of the Scottish Referendum would affect Alnwick. Panellists applauded high levels of democratic engagement, and saw signs that some of this could be reflected locally in the response to the neighbourhood plan. They could see the benefits of a better balance of resources allocated to different parts of the UK. They were less optimistic that Alnwick would benefit from any devolution of power within England: because most ideas that are being floated concern the needs of cities. Not all of us realised that many of our overseas visitors reach Alnwick on a trip to Scotland: a border might discourage them.

Consensus eluded us on the benefits of dualling the A1. Many would welcome easier journeys, and politicians are under pressure to support dualling. However, there was some doubt whether the promise of improved time and safety justifies the cost. Either way, even the perception that we are inaccessible can influence decisions that affect our economy.

Has free parking worked? We usually end up agreeing that parking is a problem, but find it harder to pin down exactly what the problem is.

There was agreement that things have improved, but still scope for tuning.

Most (if not all) thought cycling should be encouraged, despite concerns about safety for both cyclists and pedestrians. So proposals to use disused railway lines as cycle routes were welcomed.

It was inevitable that the subject of housing would come up. The talking point was whether the town needs more high quality housing, or more affordable homes. The consensus was that Alnwick needs both, but in the current market, a supply of affordable homes will probably rely more on intervention.

Finally we turned to a recent description of Alnwick: "a pretty town, but the people are a bit rough". Apparently this is a view that has been around for 300 years. We would prefer to be seen as friendly, and we like to think that is more accurate.

## Alnwick at risk

English Heritage has identified Alnwick as a Conservation Area at Risk. They describe the present condition as "poor" and "deteriorating". We are now one of 27 Conservation Areas in the North-East which is classified this way, and one of three added this year.

This was unexpected, but confirms what we have been saying. Above all it is an opportunity to highlight issues and press for action. We hope that members will draw this to the attention of others. If they share our concerns then please make them aware of our work, and how they can get involved.

# Neighbourhood Plan Consultation: our response in brief

*The draft Neighbourhood Plan for Alnwick and Denwick covers wide scope, and demonstrates investment of considerable effort from the team. It needs to reflect the views of the whole community, and warrants serious consideration. The Civic Society has been involved throughout the process, most heavily in the development of the section on Heritage and Culture, which was led by David Lovie. In our formal response from the society, we have attempted to reflect the views of members, with an emphasis on those areas which we believe will be of most concern.*

Overall we support the protection of the town's heritage by strong policies; the contribution of new development to a sense of place, local distinctiveness and high standards of design; a thriving and vibrant town centre.



## Housing

We support the development of previously developed land as a target and the need to respect the character and scale of a development's surroundings. In that light we believe the plan should refer to the use of middle and high school sites.

Will this deliver the affordable homes we need?

We support policy requirements that ensure new development integrates with the town, and takes account of the unique historic character of the area and its special landscape setting.

Based on recent experience we do not believe that the proposed target for affordable homes will prove to be achievable.

## Economy and employment

A more balanced assessment of the constraints and opportunities offered by a historic town centre would be more constructive, and more in keeping with the approach elsewhere in the plan.

Why so negative about opportunities in the centre?

To help showcase the town we would like to see an initiative to maintain high standards of design on major approaches.

We believe that proposals to prevent change of use of existing industrial sites are over-restrictive.

To facilitate employment of young people we would welcome a skills centre initiative which encouraged perpetuation of Alnwick's fine tradition of high quality craft and light manufacturing skills, alongside new technologies.

## Town Centre and Retail

We have long advocated a more radical approach than the one proposed to preserve a vibrant town centre, and address shoppers' desire for more variety, and retailers' concerns over footfall, etc. Options which fully exploit the social and community roles of the centre will need to be considered alongside improved pedestrian access, wider commercial use, promoting incubation units, and improving the quality of the streetscape.

Doesn't the centre need a more radical approach?

## Community Facilities

The policy aims to protect existing community buildings, but the imperative is to protect the facilities which these provide. Consideration should be given to the benefits of re-locating facilities: for example, to achieve a more even spread of sports and adult education facilities across the town, and a more central location for the library.

Why not move community facilities closer to the community?

## Transport

We believe the transport policy ought to be grounded in analysis of the transport needs of different types of user. The existing approach emphasises movement within the plan area, to the detriment of the needs of other groups, such as those living at the margins of the catchment area, and visitors. It should distinguish more clearly between the different needs of different types of user: for example addressing the conflicting parking needs of Alnwick residents, those in the catchment area and visitors; recreational walking vs. pedestrian movement within the centre, or cycling by commuters vs. recreational cycling.

What future for a transport plan that doesn't begin with the needs of transport users?

The impact of significant developments such as relocation of the high school needs more consideration, and illustrates the urgency of establishing dedicated cycle routes.

Insufficient attention is paid to the threats facing public transport, and the options which are available to help protect services.

In the centre we have long advocated the use of design measures rather than further regulation to reduce vehicle speeds, and allow pedestrians to move around more freely.

## Environment

National guidelines allow introduction of sustainable infrastructure such as solar panels, on the basis of good design, no material harm to a heritage asset or its setting, and a balance of economic, social and environmental benefit.

Is uncontrolled development acceptable?

The proposed local policy would allow any such development without caveats, would not control damage to individual assets, or erosion of the townscape. We cannot support it.

We have specific concerns related to green space and the landscape setting of Alnwick. These are partially, but not entirely addressed in relation to the future for the Duke's School, the hay meadow west of the Dunterns, the south bank of the Aln adjoining Windy edge, and the Recreation Ground. Rather than a piecemeal approach, some of these need to be considered as part of a more comprehensive assessment of the wider area.

More details on the plan web site:

[www.alnwick-and-denwick-plan.org.uk](http://www.alnwick-and-denwick-plan.org.uk)





# News in Brief

## War Memorial

The Grants for War Memorials scheme (funded by English Heritage and The Wolfson Foundation) has contributed £7,165 towards essential repairs and restoration work on Alnwick War Memorial. Along with £2,393 from the Town Council, this has funded work on stonework and bronze which will maintain the memorial for future generations, and, no doubt, be welcomed by this generation.

## Pants Challenge

To coincide with the Pants Exhibition at Bailiffgate, we challenged teams to build a modern pant. As our president, and former Technical Director at Northumbrian Water Philip Deakin was ideally placed to recognise the merits of both entries, and prizes were awarded to Peter Hutchinson, and Philp Angier of Percy Pacers.



Also pictured is Bellman John Stevens, who had won the Loyal Company of Town Criers British Championship a few days earlier.

## Alnwick from above

The web site "Britain from Above" shows aerial photographs taken by Aerofilms between 1919 and 1953. They have recently added more images of Alnwick, and now show a dozen of the town and castle taken between 1932 and 1947. There are more from the surrounding area.

[www.britainfromabove.org.uk](http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk)



<http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/image/EAW006071> © copyright English Heritage

## Community Assets

The Localism Act of 2011 allows communities and parish councils to nominate buildings or land as an Asset of Community Value if they further the well-being of the community. If one of these assets comes onto the market, the community will be given six months to develop a bid. In essence, any sale of an asset that the community cares about is paused to give the community an opportunity to acquire it.

Individuals cannot nominate such assets: only an eligible community group.

Altogether over 1,000 assets have now been registered, of which around a third are pubs, and a tenth are parks. Others include libraries, community halls, sports grounds, theatres and museums. In Northumberland, there are twelve community assets on the register: half nominated by the relevant parish council, and half by various community groups. They include six pubs, three libraries, a park, woodland and a social club.

## Litter Pick

Alongside our regular work on Column Field, the Civic Society joined other community groups for the town centre litter pick on 28th Sept. We were pleased to find things fairly clear in Greenwell Road Car Park itself, but astonished at the range of bottles, wrappers, and shopping trolleys that we discovered in the borders. We'll be back in the spring, so please let us know if you would like to join the fun.



## ADNP discussed

On 18th September there was a well-attended discussion evening as part of the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan. After a welcome by Mayor Bill Grisdale, an outline of progress by Peter Biggers, and an introduction to the consultation stage by Sue Patience, we broke into discussions on individual elements. Several themes emerged from discussions on Heritage and Culture:

- The need to raise awareness of our heritage among residents and visitors.
- The need to link investment in development with resources for conservation.
- Concern that without a successful retail environment the heritage in the centre of town will suffer from lack of investment.
- Consensus on the need to protect the historic core: but mixed views on the im-

portance of gateways and landscape.

- A sense that protection of the Denwick landscape is seen as important, but the quality of the village is not seen as being under threat.
- Concern over the gradual erosion in quality of assets within the conservation area, but little enthusiasm for further protection.



## Footpaths

In 1869 the Board of Health assessed the eighteen footways that it was responsible for maintaining, and nine that were in the care of others. Most of these footways still exist, and we thought their story might be of interest to members. We have started to collect material. This is work in progress, and we welcome help, so please get in touch if you would like to contribute.

See <http://tinyurl.com/p92g9ja>



## Civic Voice

The national charity for the civic movement in England (of which ACS was a founding member) recently held fringe events at both the Labour and Conservative Party Conferences. They hosted discussions titled "How can we give communities a greater say in the planning system?". A topical issue, of local interest, but not one that came up in our own "Any Questions?".

## Bow Alley

Welcome back.

## Pants of Alnwick

The exhibition on the Pants of Alnwick is now over, and seems to have been well received. Our favourite comment from a visitor has to be "The best exhibition I've ever seen on this subject". Our thanks to all who helped put this together.



# Market District

Our second perspective on the quarters of Alnwick considers Market District. Centred on the Market Place, but covering more of the historic core, this quarter also includes Market Street, and parts of Fenkle Street, Bondgate Within, Clayport; and lanes and walls which once divided medieval burgage plots.

This quarter has the highest density of listed buildings in Alnwick. It enjoys all the features that attract visitors: historic character, retail diversity, and special events. But these tend to be fragmented across different zones, divided by traffic. Easier pedestrian movement would be welcome, but this challenge is not new. Even more than others, this part of town has long been shaped by the tension between its role as a commercial hub, and as a junction on the road network.

## Market Place

Markets were already held in 1287, when Edward I granted a charter for one on a Saturday. There was a sheep and cattle market here until the 1820s, a corn market, butcher market, fish market, and a poultry, egg and butter market. Later in the 19th century market capacity was increased by a Corn Exchange (1862) and Auction Mart (1880) closer to the station. The triangular centre was shaped by routes that by the 18th Century had become the Great North Road and turnpike to Hexham.

Buildings had encroached on the green from the reign of Elizabeth I, but in 1822 Davison could still describe *"a spacious square"*. *"On the west side of it is the Town hall, on the south side the Shambles, and in the north-east corner a neat market cross"*.

An earlier market house and shambles had been demolished in 1701, and replaced by a new market building. This, in turn, was demolished in 1763, and replaced by an arcaded structure. This, in turn, was demolished in 1826, and replaced by the present Northumberland Hall / Assembly Rooms. Tate didn't think much of it. *"...originally a noble square, but is now darkened by a large modern building"*. The Alnwick Mercury in 1862 said *"so unsightly in form and design, so innocent of anything like architectural effect that they may be considered to be well entitled to the name by which they have been comically dubbed: the 'one big stane'"*. It seems ironic that a building so unloved has survived longer than its predecessors.

Tate traces the names of the lanes. *"Paikes Street, a short narrow street leads from the market to Bondgate. In the Court Rolls it is called Peikes Hole in 1645, and Paikes Hoole in 1683 and 1709, hohl in Germann being a narrow passage or gorge. Pye's or Hunter's lane in 1770, and subsequently, Edgell's – names from the principal occupants – is another narrow lane from the Market to Bondgate"*.

## Bondgate Within

We cover the bulk of Bondgate next time, but the section in Market District includes some of our oldest buildings, alongside some of the least interesting architecture in the centre. It is tempting to view the modern developments as an awful warning of what can go wrong, but while they add nothing to the character of the town, they are home to a number of major chains, and experience some of the highest pedestrian footfall: presumably attracted by location rather than architecture.

## Market Street

The market place itself is largely hidden from Market Street, but originally both were part of the same space, and they are still closely related. Historic townscape, independent retailers, and special events all draw visitors; and Market Street is well-placed to benefit. It provides fine views of spaces, details, and textures which make up the character of the centre. In 1862 the Alnwick Mercury reported: *"the market place is approached by a wide street, one side of which is very considerably above the level of*

*the other, the difference in the level being smoothed down into a wide sloping hill-side, badly paved with irregularly laid pebbles"*. Pedestrians have waited more than 150 years for a better surface. They can surely be persuaded to wait a little longer so the cobbles will provide the same texture in tomorrow's townscape as they did yesterday, and do today.

## Burgage Plots

The area behind Market Street developed from burgage plots running back to the town boundary. These have been divided and re-combined, but medieval boundaries can still be traced. The fine row of fronts on the street mainly date from rebuilding in the 18th and 19th centuries, though some contain remnants of earlier buildings.

Subsequently the plots have been densely filled, often with new institutions demanded by changing society: chapels, correction house, courthouse, savings bank, etc. Some of these, at the outer end, were accessed via Green Batt. Others by forming the intriguing lanes between plots.

## Clayport & Fenkle Street (south)

Today Market District is home to a third of the pubs in Alnwick. Once it was home to two-thirds. In the mid-19th century a large number clustered around the Fenkle Street, Market Street and Clayport, area. These included the Angel, Nag's Head, Robin Hood, an un-named Beer House, Mason's Arms, Anchor Inn, Prince of Wales, Brewer's Arms, Tailor's Arms, William IV, Blue Bell, Three Tuns, Green Dragon, White Hart, and Grey's Inn.

Tate often heard Clayport pronounced *"Claypeth"*. Noting that a peth is a steep slope, he speculated: *"Claypeth probably was the name till the erection of the tower, when with the genteel it was changed to Clayport, while ordinary people still preserved its old designation"*. Perhaps.

Back in 1822, Davison wrote: *"Clayport, which is the entrance into the town from the west, is now a most excellent street, in consequence of the clumsy old gate having been removed a few years ago"*. *"Clumsy old"* buildings have also been removed from Clayport in our own time, creating opportunities to improve this entrance to the town. Some of the results are welcome, others not. We can only wonder what Davison would think.

## Listed buildings

### Market Place

Market Cross, Northumberland Hall, Town Hall, Lunch Box, 1 Paikes St, Caffee Dolcella, Pringles, 10

### Bondgate Within

(North side): 46,48,50 & 52, 54, 56,58 & 60; (South side): The George, 67 & 67a, 69-75

### Market St

(South side): 3&5 (inc. 49&51 Bondgate Within), 7&9, 11, 13&15, 17&19, 21&23, Queen's Head, 9&31,33&35,37; (North Side): 4&6, 8,10,12

### Burgage Plots

St Michael's Lane: Former Savings Bank, Former Sion Meeting House, 14&16, 22 &

24, wall at rear of 22; Green Batt: 12 & 14, 20 & 22, 34, and former Correction House Yard, Former Workhouse; Chapel Lane: 2-6, Methodist Church and wall, Sheraton Church, Gates, Railings, etc.; Dodd's Lane: The Cross House, Terrace of 4 houses, Terrace on East Side, Burgage Walls

### Clayport

(North Side): 2&4; (South Side): St Michael's Pant, Old Post Office, 7&9, 19, 23, 25/25a,

### Fenkle St

(East side): 2, 6 and rear elevation; (West Side): 3, 7 (Market Tavern), 9-13 (Nag's Head), 15-19



## Books on Alnwick

When we asked readers to recommend their favourite books on Alnwick we thought it might inspire others with ideas for Christmas presents. In that sense these results are unlikely to be of much help, but the exercise casts some light on how Alnwick has been recorded.

Efforts to digitise the world's libraries mean that we can tell roughly how often "Alnwick" has been mentioned in print over the last 300 years. With a growing volume of printed material at the start of the 20th century, "Alnwick" was mentioned most often in the 1900's. However, measured as a proportion of everything printed, interest could be said to have peaked in the 1860's. This coincided with the publication of Tate's history. An earlier spike coincided with the publication of Davison's history. Both of these dates saw a flurry of publications on local and natural history, gazetteers, directories, atlases and guides for travellers. Davison and Tate were not alone in responding to public demand. Similarly, local guidebooks, and interest in agricultural history and early urban development drove references to Alnwick in the 1960's.

However, bursts of activity cannot disguise a general decline in the number of times "Alnwick" has been mentioned in print over the last century. It is also noticeable that, for more than a century, our town was increasingly referred to in the past tense. This, at least, seems to be changing. At the end of the 20th century we find the phrase "Alnwick was" used twice as often as "Alnwick is". Now these are equally common.

So much for the long view. For anyone compiling a list of Christmas presents now there is a more limited choice.

*As They Really Were: The Citizens of Alnwick 1831* by Keith Middlemas is the only suggestion we heard that is still in print. Written by a historian with roots in Alnwick, this book is illustrated with 19th century sketches by Percy Foster, of his Alnwick neighbours. The result covers a short period of time, with a perspective that places local history in the context of wider developments.

Of the others, the earliest, and most difficult to find, can be viewed online (free). For those who prefer to handle a real book, the alternatives are Alnwick Library, or a second-hand bookshop (and for the most rare examples, deep pockets).

*A Descriptive and Historical View of Alnwick* by Thomas Davison: published in 1822, and re-issued in 1826 and 1829 reflects the priorities of its time, with an emphasis on the medieval and the influence of the Percy family.

## Picture quiz

Branding consultants advise that consistent signage is vital for any organisation that wants to establish a strong identity in the minds of the public. Others revel in the quirky variety of signage that has been passed down from previous generations. We maintain that consistency and variety both have their

History of the Borough, Castle and Barony of Alnwick by George Tate was published in two volumes. Subscriptions opened in 1862, and publication was from 1865 to 1869. More scholarly than Davison, it remains the definitive history almost 150 years after publication.

*Alnwick, Northumberland: a study in town-plan analysis* by M.R.G. Conzen was written in 1960, and revised in 1969, when Conzen was a professor at Newcastle. He pioneered the study of how settlements are formed and transformed, and this is the most well-known of his precise analytical studies. Detailed, and fascinating, but not light reading.

*Alnwick: A short history and guide*, published by Frank Graham is perhaps most kindly described as drawing heavily on 19th century histories.

*Alnwick in Old Picture Postcards*, by Marjorie and Philip Deakin. First published in 1984, but regrettably no longer in print.

*Zig-Zag: Alnwick* by Barbara Woodhouse was published in two volumes, with the first issued in 1990. A variety of local landmarks briefly described, and charmingly illustrated.

## Peace Column

This year we have remembered the Great War of 1914-18. We cannot end 2014 without noting that it also marks the 200th anniversary of the 1814 Treaty of Paris, which established peace between France and the United Kingdom, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. It also reinstated the monarchy in France.

In Alnwick this treaty is marked by the Peace Column, otherwise known as Camphill Column, erected, on the site of an Iron Age hill fort, by Henry Collingwood Selby of Swansfield house.

It is said that the layout of the surrounding trees may represent the position of ships at the battle of Trafalgar.



# Alnwick in Bloom

Alnwick in Bloom? Alnwick Bloomers? Part of the Pants Project? Not at all, much as we admire the recent exhibition of one of the town's more discrete assets.

Alnwick in Bloom, an independent body run by volunteers, is here to hone the broad sweep of horticultural maintenance by our town and county council.

We tackle the litter and cut back the overgrown borders at the bus station, address the Column Field grass beds which are being refurbished, deadhead key flower plantings, encourage Barter Books and Column Cottage in their goals of excellence; we've engendered new work in Gardeners House (next to the Playhouse on the corner), in Greenwell Road and in Green Batt Garden. These are a few of the current projects and all requiring agreement and cooperation with our many partners.

We count the Civic Society as one of these; it clears the area inside the railings around Tenantry Column, on a weekly basis, of all those bottles, cigarette lighters and doggie bags etc lobbed over the irresistible fence. The Civic Society is regarded as sufficiently responsible as it 'deals with monuments'.

And of course we're always on the alert to keep the town 'kempt' because the devil's in the detail.

We run four annual local competitions, The School Painting Competition which attracts hundreds of entries, the Sunflower Challenge for the younger gardener, the Shop Window Competition and the ever popular and hard fought Garden Competition.

In order that we don't slack, at our request the town is inspected and appraised twice a year by Northumbria in Bloom judges. These are fair men and women, all trained to the same RHS standards as are met in the Chelsea Flower Show and, dauntingly, with the same expectations. They cover a region from Berwick to Redcar and across to Cumbria.

Each visit is preceded with a month's preparation of bringing the town up to a very high spec on the day (and they also let it be known that at least one will return for an unannounced and solo inspection shortly after). The appraisal routes can and do last a day and are there to demonstrate the town's attractiveness to residents and visitors.

We include our entries for the "special awards" of NiB, in these tours. We nominate parks, religious establishments, conservation areas, business parks, the leisure centre etc. and the judges inspect them as well on their way around.

So.....

This year Alnwick Town has been awarded a gold (third year running) and for the special awards .... nine golds, two silver-gilts, two silvers and three bronzes.

And I haven't even started on the 'It's your Neighbourhood' entries for Northumbria in Bloom, a new initiative by the RHS for which we crafted 23 entries (and a two day tour). This is aimed at smaller volunteer-led groups who are greening up their local communal environment. But we have no results for that yet!

We are looking for extra members to help lend a hand in our very successful team - it's hugely satisfying to see new as well as established projects bloom and grow. Membership's free. Our meetings are lively and we encourage everyone to highlight their local green gripes.

To join in please ring or email Elizabeth Jones on 01665 604970 / [elizabeth@qtq.org](mailto:elizabeth@qtq.org)



## Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

*The County Council has updated their assessment of potential land for housing. This considers 65 potential sites within our area. We commented on fourteen. This is a summary.*

**Land West of Barresdale, and Land West of Chapel Lands** should be considered as part of a comprehensive examination of potential development along the western fringe of town.

**Land West of the Kennels, and Land North West of St Michael's Church** lie on an important approach, and any proposals ought to enhance both the approach, and the distinctive character of Canongate

The meadowland **South East of St John's First School** (above the Dunterns) has high amenity value and forms part of the landscape setting of Alnwick. It should be classified as unsuitable for housing.

Upper parts of **Land East of Allerburn Lea** form part of the setting of Alnwick, and impact views of the Capability Brown landscape. Development should be restricted to the lower parts, and respect ADNP proposals for the area.

**Land East of Weavers Way** would form part of any future

cycleway/greenway and should be classified as unsuitable.

Any proposals for **Allerburn House**: must secure a sustainable future for the building.

**Alnwick Fire Station** should be classified as suitable for affordable housing.

**Tennis Courts, Prudhoe St** should not be used for housing, but nominated as an Asset of Community Value.

**Duke's Middle School**: the important listed building must be retained with substantial associated land. The remainder of the site should be retained as green space. It makes an important contribution to local amenities, and the character of the area. Proposals should be considered in conjunction with the park.

Any development in **Roxbro Place** would need to avoid impact on the roofscape of the conservation area.

**HM Revenue and Customs** (Bondgate Hall): any change to multi-occupancy would result in access difficulties.

**Duchess School Annex**: sympathetic design will be required to fit the character of the area, and this important approach.



# Planning matters

In the first nine months of last year the number of planning applications in Alnwick averaged 9 a month. This year it has averaged 7.5. It has only been over 10 in July - which is normally a relatively busy month. So things are a little more quiet than usual.

We have been tracking the volume of activity in Alnwick for some time, but we also examine individual applications in Denwick. While things may be quiet in Alnwick, much of the more significant activity currently falls outside - in parts of Denwick which adjoin Alnwick.

## High School Relocation

The application for relocation of the Duchess High School was submitted at the end of July, and a decision is due at the end of October. We felt the design was uninspiring. We also see that the Royal Institute of British Architects recently found that school designs have become 15% smaller, with smaller corridors, assembly halls and canteens. RIBA estimate that capital budgets for schools are now 20% below the level needed. As a result they anticipate escalating repair and maintenance costs, and lost opportunities to generate additional income.

It is generally recognised that good design improves pupil performance, but the track record across this sector is poor. In 2006 the defunct Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) found that the design quality of almost every school built between 2000 and 2005 was not good enough to transform children's education.

However, pressure for this new school has lasted long enough, and nobody would want to stand in the way at this stage. The young people of Alnwick deserve better conditions for learning. We want to see these delivered, and we know the

need is urgent. We can only hope that the high expectations of teachers and pupils will not be disappointed.

Meanwhile, the Highways Agency has raised concerns over the impact on traffic at the A1 junction, and requested a full traffic assessment. Their involvement could delay a decision until February 2015. The new traffic assessment has since been produced, and provides more detail on the changes in traffic patterns that we should expect. Our initial take is that the A1 junction could be the least of the problems. The analysis confirms that we were right to be concerned over congestion on Wagonway Road, the number of pupils who will no longer live with walking distance of their school, and the lack of adequate cycling provision. We are currently considering the best way to take our concerns forward. As always, we welcome the views of members on this, or any other planning issue.

## Caravans and Lodges in Ash Close

Despite our initial concerns, we discovered that the lie of the land and surrounding woodland provide surprisingly good screening for the proposed static caravans and lodges on land East of Lionheart Station, at the end of Ash Close. However, we remain concerned that access to the site via public transport, or by any sustainable alternative is extremely limited.

## Vodafone

We opted not to quibble over the corporate colours used in shopfront design for Vodafone on Market Street. It is not ideal, but nor is it as bad as we might have expected in the past.



# Ravenslaw

Tate describes Ravenslaw as land near the Railway station, held in 1676 by Richard Woodhouse, then James Huntley; in 1760 by Richard Grieve, and then his son George. In 1838 it was acquired by William Forster as part of a marriage settlement, and in Tate's day it was let as a nursery at £30 a year.

Violet Howey inherited the land, and in 1896 she offered it for sale in seven plots. John James Hardy bought the two plots nearest to Belvedere Terrace, and his brother William Hardy bought the next two. The brothers had founded Hardy's. Their intention seems to have been to build adjoining houses. They prepared outline plans for these, but never built them.

In 1899 John sold 4,095 sq yards of his plot to his neighbour, Major Leather, as a garden for the end of Belvedere Terrace; and he sold 423 sq. yards to his brother. John had only bought 4,305 sq. yards in the first place, so these two sales seem to have forced a fresh survey.

On his plot William built Ravenslaw House. The house does not appear in plans from 1899, but it does appear in 1904 plans. These were drawn up when William acquired a triangle of land behind his plot. This had been left on the north side of the railway when it cut through Aggars Flat. It included a pathway which ran along the boundary. William now owned all the land between the railway and the road. His neighbours were not pleased when he removed the path.

William died at Ravenslaw in 1917. His son, Lawrence Robert Hardy, inherited the house and lived there until his death in 1958.

In 1958 the government needed to train a lot more teachers. The Minister of Education asked teacher training colleges to increase the number of students they could accommodate, and

Alnwick College of Education acquired Ravenslaw as student accommodation. This opened in 1959. It was staffed by a daily help, housekeeper, gardener / handyman and a "lecturer in charge" or warden, who was provided with a flat. The college prospectus would later describe Ravenslaw as "a large Edwardian house which stands in its own spacious grounds containing mature gardens trees and shrubs. The house is centrally heated, and completely self-contained with fully independent facilities in addition to spacious bedrooms and lounges". Along with Thornbrae and Alnbank the college would eventually run three such hostels, where "provision is made for the warmth and comfort of resident students".

For a time in the 1960's we understand that Ravenslaw was home to Ravenslaw Horticultural Centre: an extension of Kirkley Hall Agricultural College. Some of the surrounding trees are said to date from this period.

When the Teacher Training College closed in the mid-1970s, Ravenslaw was empty for a time, then became home to the Northumberland Theatre Company until they bought the Playhouse in 1984. The house was then converted to a care home by the Abbeyfield Society, and opened by Princess Anne in 1985. Ravenslaw Court was built in the grounds.

Sadly, while there has been no final decision on its future, the options seem to be limited for a property this size, now left without an appropriate setting. If Abbeyfield move on, then it may be too late to prevent the loss of the house. Alnwick boasts a number of other large buildings still standing in substantial grounds. The best legacy left for Ravenslaw could be to reinforce the lesson that once they lose their setting it can become even more difficult to secure a sustainable future for our most treasured buildings.

## Diary dates

### Civic Society...

Nostalgic views of the North: 11th Nov, Bailiffgate Museum at 7:30. John Moreels, on the work of Photo Memories to save and share over 150,000 images of the North of England. The meeting will be open to all, with a small entrance charge for non-members.

Next issues of Alnwick Civic Society Newsletter: February 2015.

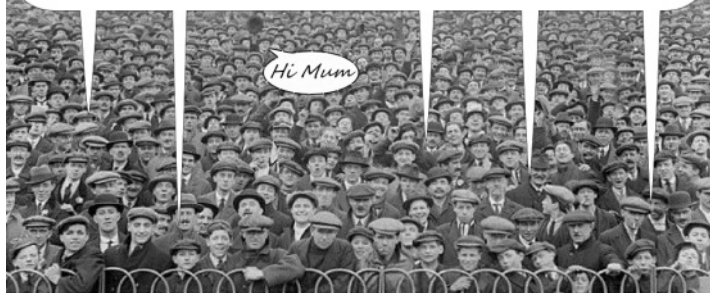
### ...and more

Bailiffgate Museum: 5th Nov - 1st Feb 2015, Write Print.. Bind... Looking back from our digital age at the writing and printing inventions and skills which transformed the world. Considering the legacy also of William Davison, the 19th century Alnwick publisher and printer.

Alnwick Christmas Lights Switch-On: 21st November



*We want a referendum on the  
Neighbourhood Plan.  
And we're not going to take our hats  
off until we get one.*



## Quiz answers

- A) St Michael's Lane, under archway
- B) Northumberland Hall, dedication plaque
- C) St. James Church Hall
- D) Percy Street, junction with Green Batt
- E) Tenantry column, dedication panel
- F) Lisburn Street, junction with Percy Street
- G) Belvedere Terrace
- H) Upper Howick Street, junction with Lisburn St.
- I) West Parade, on Wagonway Road

## 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 successful high profile campaigns. It continues to pursue its objectives and provide 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 changes in the planning system the society has been 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@gmail.com](mailto:peter.ennor@gmail.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](mailto:davidlovie307@btinternet.com))

Peter Reed / Newsletter ([peter.reed@aligre.co.uk](mailto:peter.reed@aligre.co.uk))

Caroline Stewart

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