

Alnwick Civic Society Newsletter

November 2017

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Notice board

November 3rd is the planned launch date for our booklet celebrating *Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes* at Bailiffgate Museum. Please let us know if you would like to request a copy, and if you can help with the launch, promotion and distribution of the booklet we would love to hear from you.

Christmas is coming. Our local independent shops offer a good choice of gifts, but there's no better time to consider offering membership of the Civic Society as a present for family members and friends. A year's membership for either an individual or household costs little more than a pair of socks, and much less than an iPhone-8.

Contact membership secretary, Gill Parker, or other members of the committee, for more details.



Any questions?

October 11th was our Annual Any Questions session, and the panel were all members of the Society. In their own right, and through family connections, Cliff Pettit, William Stafford, Mary McIlroy Hipwell, and Charles Westendarp represent the entire history of the society: from founder member Cliff Pettit, to Charles Westendarp, who joined after moving to Alnwick more recently.

The panel's varied experience of Alnwick meant that the discussion drew on memories of Alnwick when it was built almost entirely in stone and lit by gas; where buses were the principal form of transport, and there were garages in the centre of town. Other memories have proved enduring: the experience of exiting a narrow alley into a wide open space, and approaching the town when the Christmas Lights are lit.

While the evening's discussion touched on the past, the debate concentrated on the future, and the issues of today.

A larger audience than usual engaged enthusiastically in the discussion: particularly when we covered problems of anti-social behaviour. Recent grants to Gallery Youth, and initiatives to hand out food and warm drinks were welcomed. However there were differing views on the question of whether a more punitive approach would help, and concerns that cuts in public services mean that not enough is being done to address the underlying causes.

Everyone acknowledged the current difficulties with behaviour in the marketplace and Chapel Lane. However, we are inclined to muddle different issues. Unless we are careful we risk blaming bored youths for different problems associated with drugs and vandalism.

We failed to reach consensus on whether the situation has deteriorated over the longer term. The figures suggest not, but personal experiences differ. At least we know that nobody is throwing bricks at gas lights these days.

In a similar vein, there are some doubts about their impact on wildlife, but the new street lights were generally welcomed, for their efficiency, and better illumination. At present installation of the new lights has stalled, because of the problems faced by the sub-contractor, but it is expected to resume shortly. Whether the lights on the Tenantry Column will return is another matter.

Maintaining the vitality of the town centre, finding suitable locations for housing, encouraging younger people to stay and live in Alnwick, generating a wider range of employment opportunities, and providing a choice of affordable housing: these are issues that we return to in these sessions year after year. To a large extent they mirror the concerns that led to the foundation of the society over forty years ago. The founders saw their role, not only as objectors, but as positive instigators of new proposals.

Who are the villains?

Which leads nicely to the final topic.

We are about to publish *Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes*, a celebration of the conservation area, and those who have helped to ensure that we continue to enjoy the special character of Alnwick.

So we ended with a discussion of who to blame as "Alnwick's Heritage Villains" – those who pose the greatest threat to the character of the town.

Several possibilities were suggested, including a banking system that benefits from housing shortages, and provides poor support to small business; insufficient competition in local land and commercial property markets; and the gradual erosion of the quality of the centre with inappropriate shop fronts, and street clutter (see last page). But perhaps most telling was the thought that we, the people of Alnwick, can be the villains too: when we are too closed in our thinking, or fail to promote a positive vision for the future of the town.

A fresh look at an un-loved building (NESCo House)

When it opened on June 5th 1939, NESCo House was described as "a most pleasing addition to business premises in the town", that "embraces the most up-to-date architectural features in its design, yet is thoroughly in keeping with its surroundings".

In 1925, the North Eastern Electric Supply Company (NESCo) had chosen Wagonway Road, in Alnwick for the location of their second branch. By the time they moved to Bondgate they had over 7,000 customers around Alnwick, and needed more space to accommodate staff, and demonstrate an expanding range of domestic appliances.

At the time this was one of 26 NESCo showrooms across the region. Their distribution network was extending beyond the major urban areas, the number of connections was increasing, and the use of electricity for light, heat and power was growing.

NESCo House was designed by L. J. Couves and Partners, who had also designed Grade-II listed Carliol House (the NESCo headquarters in Newcastle); and the ground-breaking Art Deco Dex Garage in Newcastle (which many feel should have been listed, but never was).

In 1939 NESCo House provided a showroom across the front of the ground floor. Customers could examine electric cookers, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, boilers and water heaters. There was a demonstration theatre, with free demonstrations every morning and afternoon, of electric cookery, refrigeration, and laundry work. Lectures on cookery and housecraft were free. Above the showroom were offices for the staff, and behind the building were gardens, stores and a garage.

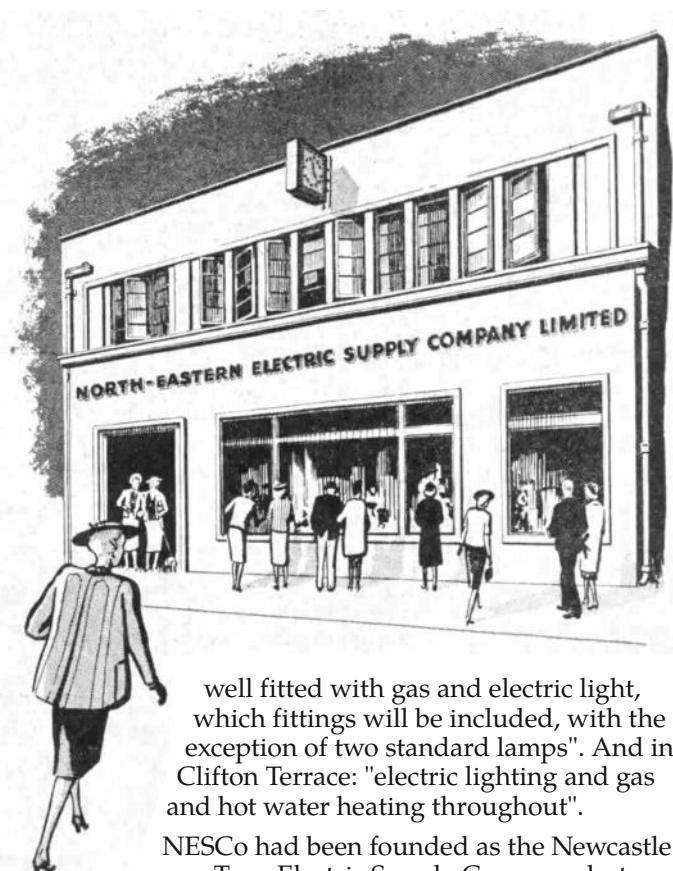
As early as 1882 the Swan Company had suggested electric street lighting for Alnwick, but the council rejected the proposal, on the basis that the technology needed to be more widely tested. These were the early days of electric lighting. Swan's incandescent electric lights were first installed by Armstrong at Cragside in 1880. Trials of Swan's electrical lighting apparatus were carried out at Alnwick Castle in 1881, and 100 lamps, driven by a hydro-electric plant, were installed at the castle by the Duke in 1889.

In 1901 the Northern Counties Electricity Supply Company applied to supply Alnwick, and the following year they were busy digging up footpaths to lay cables, then celebrating the first successful installations. It was unfamiliar technology, and in 1909 readers of the Alnwick Mercury were advised "don't let any strong light, like that of electricity, shine directly into the eye".

Over the following years it became increasingly common for houses to be advertised as having electric lighting installed. Typically, from 1912, in Stott Street: "The house is



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well fitted with gas and electric light, which fittings will be included, with the exception of two standard lamps". And in Clifton Terrace: "electric lighting and gas and hot water heating throughout".

NESCo had been founded as the Newcastle upon Tyne Electric Supply Company, but was renamed as it expanded to supply the region. It absorbed the Northern Counties Electricity Supply Company in 1916, and went on to supply much of North East England, until nationalisation under the 1947 Electricity Act.

By the 1930s electricity was being installed in Alnwick's new council houses, and tenants in older council houses (who still relied on gas lighting) were petitioning for a conversion.

Should gas or electric street lighting be preferred? The debate rumbled on for more than thirty years. The challenge for the Lighting Committee was to balance the capital cost of a change, against the different running costs, and other benefits of the competing systems. The issue was complicated by accusations that influential people in the town had a financial interest in the local gas company.

A number of demonstrations of different street lighting systems were carried out in the 1930s, and electric street lighting began to be introduced - starting with the main roads, and new estates. It wasn't until 1950 that a decision was taken to convert all street lighting in the town to electricity, and the last six gas street lamps (in Denwick Lane) were finally switched off in 1972.

Today, in NESCo house, we find a charity shop with a restaurant above. Some view the building as a blot on the high street, but it is well-built in stone; unassuming; and appropriate in scale. Few, though, would now describe it as "thoroughly in keeping with its surroundings". Like the Post Office building on Fenkle Street (1940) and the Police Station on Prudhoe Street (1932) it reflects a different era, and different tastes. Nevertheless, the coming of electricity changed the lives of people in Alnwick. If we can't celebrate NESCo House for the architecture or the heritage value, at least we can acknowledge that it symbolises an important stage in the development of the town.

Excursions

Connection to the railway network in 1850 enabled the people of Alnwick to explore different places, while Alnwick became a popular destination for excursions from elsewhere. Two examples follow.

Alnwick agreed a general holiday on 1st August 1859, "for the purposes of relaxation, and of allowing all persons, whatever their employment, the means of enjoying an excursion, or any other recreation they might chose". Shops, banks, offices, and places of business were closed for the day. The railway company offered cheap tickets, and various trips were organised, to suit different tastes.

"By five o'clock in the morning the whole town seemed to be on the qui vive, a very unusual occurrence with them, who are not particularly distinguished by their early hours of rising, and shortly after that hour continuous streams of people seemed to be pouring along the different streets, but all apparently converging at one point, and that point the railway station".

On the day, between 400 and 500 people from Alnwick took a short ride to the Lesbury and Alnmouth Horticultural Exhibition, and about 1,500 people ventured further afield. In total around a quarter of the town was away for the day. Popular destinations included the factories on the Tyne, the docks at Sunderland, shipyards, and "works" at Tynemouth*. Others visited Newcastle (for the architecture - or so they said), or Durham (for the Cathedral).

"Altogether the day was spent in such a manner as to awaken the power of thought, to impart a variety of novel and healthy ideas, form food for instruction and reflection, and furnish topics for interesting conversation for many a long day to come. The whole party returned safely, arriving about half-past-ten at night, without casualty or misadventure to mar the gratification of the excursion".

Similarly, the North Eastern Railway regularly offered excursions to Alnwick from industrial areas. Comment in the local newspaper suggests that "Sunderland excursionists" were regarded with mixed feelings in the town, but this extract from the Shields Daily Gazette and Shipping Telegraph (August 26th 1889) gives a sense of the experience that visitors to Alnwick were enjoying in the 19th century. At the time, the Farmers' Folly myth could have been circulating for 70 years.

I had the good fortune to be invited by some of the officials who had the arrangements connected with the annual excursion of Mr Black's workmen in hand to accompany the men to Alnwick on Saturday.

By the liberality of the firm each man and lad engaged at the well-known South Shields foundry was provided with a free return ticket, and they could obtain for their friends tickets also on very reasonable terms on application to the committee. The popularity of the trip may be estimated from the fact that about 650 took advantage of it; these including a goodly number of the workmen's wives, and not a few of the younger members of their families.

Starting so shortly after seven o'clock may doubts were expressed on the journey as to whether the rain which threatened would keep away; but happily, the forebodings to which the heavy masses of cloud ominously gathering over the coast line had given rise to, were not fulfilled. The weather after that was of the most charming description.

We reached the historic town about half-past nine, and to those of us who had seen it for the first time there was much to interest. Just outside the handsome little station our attention was drawn to a tall column on the right, which was known as the "Farmer's Folly". The story connected with the monument is that on one occasion the Duke of Northumberland, who owns the acres for miles around about here, handed back the occupants of his farms a goodly portion

of their annual rental. Not to be outdone in generosity they resolved to build a monument in honour of the Duke with the rent that had been returned them. They carried out their purpose but it is said the Duke was far from pleased with it, and informed them if they could find money to spend in such a manner they could afford to pay the full amount of rent, and he should henceforth demand it. Thus the monument, which in the list of views is described as the Tenantry Column, is popularly known as the Farmer's Folly.

The strongly-built stone archways, which stand at the entrance to the principal street, and which give the name of Bondgate, Pottergate, and other "gates" to these thoroughfares are a conspicuous feature of the little town, and strongly remind one of past centuries when modern means of warfare were undreamt of. The castle, close past which the main street runs without any intervening avenue, is a picture which fills the mind at once with battles and sieges in the days spoken of above.

Permission had been obtained for the party to go through the park, and scores availed themselves of the privilege. A stroll along the well-kept roads, and through the shady avenues was a treat not to be despised. On a hill side browsed a herd of deer, their long antlers giving them a very picturesque appearance. They scampered off on two or three of the party making towards them, stopping now and again to stare at the excursionists whose curiosity they had excited. Passing down a steep glade by the side of which trickled a small burn, the squirrels could be seen leaping about among the branches of the trees, and a startled rabbit would occasionally be observed running for friendly shelter.

The woods, fresh after the rains, were delightful, conveying to the senses in their wild luxuriance and fragrant smell, a delicious enjoyment that people from districts almost treeless can thoroughly appreciate.

The children who constituted a portion of our party where in a state of ecstasy, and the secluded place echoed with the exclamation every fresh discovery elicited. We lunched at a rustic bench within a few feet of the brawling stream which makes its way along the bottom of the park, and where it is crossed by a light and neatly constructed footbridge. Eventually we found an exit, which gives access to the Canongate.

A programme of sports, for which a large number of prizes had been subscribed by tradesmen and others in the neighbourhood of High Shields, had been arranged to come off in the recreation ground at the high side of the park. The proceedings, which were much enhanced by the band of the St. Bede Chemical Works, which was kindly permitted by Mr Thomas Larkin to accompany the excursion, commenced at one o'clock. There could be no mistaking the fact that every person present relished the fun that was going forward. [Detail of sports results omitted]

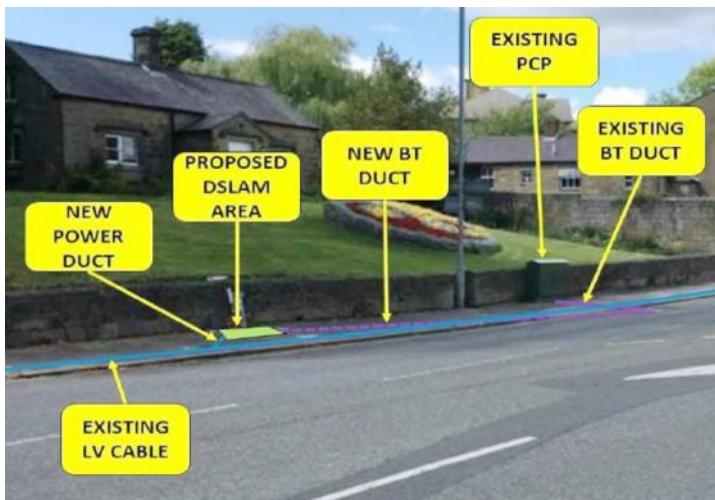
The sports occupied the time until near about the hour for returning. In the interval the refreshment houses of the little town were crowded, and so great was the crush that the waiters, in at least one instance, were so bewildered that some of the customers got all tea and no bread, and others got all bread and no tea. Eventually, by friendly exchanges, all got a share, and matters were amicably settled by the proprietor expressing his regret, and voluntarily making a reduction in the bill in order to balance the inconvenience.

Though hilarious there was not the slightest ill-behaviour among the excursionists during their stay in the town, and the return journey was completed without a single unhappy incident.

* Work on Tynemouth Pier had begun in 1854. It was expected to take seven years, but was plagued by problems. It wasn't until 56 years later, in 1910, that a solid pier could formally be opened north of the Tyne.

Planning matters

In August, British Telecom submitted a proposal to install a high speed broadband cabinet outside Column Cottage. We objected on a number of grounds.



The box was to be sited in front of one of Alnwick's iconic buildings: seen, admired and photographed by many visitors to the town. This is a highly sensitive area, which also includes the Percy Tenantry Column, the War Memorial, the classic former railway station, and the whole of Bondgate Without. The grouping gives first-time visitors to Alnwick a very positive and lasting impression of the town.

This would be significantly larger than the existing box, and protrude well above the wall of the cottage. It would present a safety risk to pedestrians, on a narrow pavement beside a busy road.

We did not wish to delay the provision of high-speed broadband to a significant sector of Alnwick, but all the signs were that BT was ignoring policies in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and had failed to consider more suitable alternatives. We urged the County Council to reject this application and invite Openreach to come up with something better.

Little did anyone realise that BT had already identified a much more suitable location, on the other side of Wagonway Road, where they have proceeded to install a smaller green box.

Why would BT identify a perfectly acceptable location for a discrete broadband box, then apply to place a larger one in a different, and totally inappropriate location that was bound to provoke controversy?

The BT group has 110,000 employees and an annual turnover of £24 billion. It's one of the world's leading communications services companies, with a mission to use the power of communications to make a better world. We find it hard to believe they are capable of making such an elementary mistake. We have been told that we underestimate the power of Alnwick Civic Society to influence events. We would like to think so, but we fear not. This is the last broadband box to be installed in Alnwick. We can't help thinking that a more plausible explanation of all this is that someone in BT has a sense of humour.



English Heritage have commented in detail on proposals to install double glazing on Bondgate Hall. In summary they point out that the grade II* listed Bondgate Hall is a fine example of Regency villa built in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Returning it to residential use, and improving the comfort of the house by upgrading the existing windows is an opportunity to enhance the significance of the building. However, windows are an integral part of the original design and an important part of the building's significance. Good conservation practice is to maintain or repair existing windows where possible. If not, then they should be replaced on a like-for-like basis so their appearance is retained. In this case, at some point, some of the sash windows have been replaced with casements that are a poor imitation of the originals. Any replacements have the potential to impact the character and appearance of the building and so need to be carefully considered. Where the casement windows need replacement it would be preferable to replace them with true sliding sash windows matching the originals. It would be a shame to miss this opportunity to reverse some less sympathetic alterations that have taken place in the past.

We agree with the comments from English Heritage. We, too, would like to see Bondgate Hall successfully returned to domestic use, with its appearance enhanced. We hope that the owners will follow the advice of English Heritage and Conservation Officers.

We have no objection in principle to the associated proposal to widen the rear gates on to Prudhoe Street, provided this is done sensitively. However, both proposals lack detail, and we note that the applicant has submitted no details of the new gates which would be required.

The latest example of shop signage being changed without permission is at Penn Gallery (9A Narrowgate and 26 Fenkle Street). While not objecting to this application and the proposed fascia lettering, we were concerned to see that the name of the business was displayed for several weeks before the application had been determined.

We have objected to the application for the Queen's Head, where the use of thin, shiny black plastic materials for the fascia, "historial board" is not consistent with Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan policy. Materials were not specified anywhere in the application or supporting documents. This is a listed building but these materials are modern and not in keeping with its history and character. They are not robust. The lettering is not in keeping with the traditional style "Portland" lanterns over each door. Taken together the signage, LED floodlights and these lanterns present a mixed message. We regret very much that the applicant has proceeded with the changes before seeking either Advertisement Consent or Listed Building Consent. We do not believe that this is an oversight by a public company or its agents, who must be dealing with such applications on a weekly basis, or thereabouts. In such circumstances we believe that retrospective permission should be granted only if the case for proceeding is compelling.



Continued opposite...

Planning matters, continued...

Advertisement consent has been sought for new signage at 4, Narowgate for Thomson Holidays. This includes an internally illuminated fascia, an internally illuminated projecting sign, and a swinging sign on the footway. We have objected to all three components of the application.

Renewal of this shop front should be an ideal opportunity to remedy past oversights which have allowed the installation of a standard "shopping precinct" type, slab-like fascia with one which concurs with local policy on shop front design and more in keeping with the conservation area. Instead, the applicant proposes more of the same but now backlit, and an internally lit hanging sign, both of which are contrary to policies in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood plan.

At this location the footway is just wide enough to accommodate two way pedestrian traffic, wheelchairs and pushchairs included, but the adjacent two way highway is barely wide enough to accommodate two way vehicular traffic, forcing vehicles close to the pavement edge. Any obstruction which forces pedestrians towards the highway should be avoided at all costs. So we have objected to the proposed positioning of a swinging sign on the footway. If in the future Narrowgate at this point were to be fully pedestrianised, we would have no objection to such a sign.

A proposal to display two external internally illuminated company signs at Stonelea on South Road has received an objection from Alnwick Town Council, with a supporting objection from the Society. The Town Council response points out that the proposed sign is on the grass verge and is not in keeping with the surroundings, the support was installed before planning permission had been granted, and suggests that the sign will be a swinging type which does not comply with guidelines issued by Northumberland County Council. Existing B&B signs on South Road are set back, none of them are illuminated and all are in materials

in keeping with their surroundings. The Alnwick & Denwick Neighbourhood Plan contains four relevant policies which need to be complied with.

Note that this above list includes several examples of planning applications where work has gone ahead while the application is still under consideration. This includes two examples of public companies based elsewhere choosing to ride roughshod over the planning process and local planning policies. We might add the start of conversion of the former convent in Bailiffgate into a bed & breakfast hotel. A steady flow of contraventions will become a flood once people realise they can get away with it. Councillors and county council officers need to ensure that planning applications are dealt with democratically and in accordance with policies which have been arrived at by local people in the Neighbourhood Plan. Individuals can make mistakes, so there needs to be a process for granting retrospective permission in cases of genuine oversight. But applicants should be made to understand that there will be consequences if work is started without permission, even if officer discussions suggested that permission is likely to be forthcoming. Otherwise, the planning process will quickly become irrelevant and those who are supposed to be enforcing it will become a laughing stock.

A reserved matters application has been submitted in relation to the planning permission granted for ten new dwellings Alnwick Golf Club. We examined the proposals, and plans for dealing with existing trees. As outline permission has already been given, we saw no reason to object.

No planning application has yet been submitted for the proposed Willowburn Retail Park. There is still time to let the committee know your views on any merits, or any problems, that you anticipate with such a proposal.

Pavements to be swept

An extract from the 1822 Act for lighting, paving, cleansing, watching and otherwise improving the town of Alnwick. Does anyone know whether this Act has been repealed?

And be it further Enacted, That every Occupier of any House or Pavements to
Tenement within the limits of this Act shall scrape, sweep and clean, be fwept.
or cause to be scraped, swept and cleaned, the Footway and Footpave-
ments the whole length of the Front of their respective Houses or
Tenements, dead Walls, vacant pieces of Ground, and other Her-
editaments, and the Channels or Watercourses opposite the same
respectively, to the full extent of the said Footways and Footpave-
ments, before, behind, and on the side or sides of the same respec-
tively, previous to the hour of Nine in the Morning on every
Monday and Thursday in every week, and oftener on such other
days, and at such other times, if the said Commissioners shall
from time to time order and require the same; and shall also
cause the Dirt and Soil to arise from such sweeping and cleansing to
be collected and put together, (so as not to obstruct either the Carriage
or Footway, or the Channel or Watercourse aforesaid,) in order
that the same may be removed by the Scavenger, or other Person to
be employed for that purpose, upon pain of forfeiting any sum not
exceeding Five Shillings for every neglect therein.

News in Brief

The Institute of Fiscal Studies, Local Government Information Unit, and PwC have been looking at how views of local government finance vary across councils. They discuss some of the key challenges facing government: substantial budget cuts, combined with rising demands for key services; and difficulties in developing a funding regime that can command widespread support across councils when there are systematic differences in preferences over some issues.

Almost nine-in-ten respondents say that service quality was maintained or improved in 2016–17, despite cuts. They are less optimistic looking ahead though. Concerns are significantly higher among respondents from councils with responsibility for adult social care. The two service areas facing the greatest immediate financial pressures are adult social care (52% of respondents put this at the top) and housing / homelessness (22%). These areas also top councils' concerns for the longer term, but children's services, environment and waste, and roads, planning and the economy also feature on the list.

See <https://www.ifs.org.uk> for the full report

Meanwhile, a report by Historic England in partnership with the Association of Local Government

Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), has found that the number of historic advice specialists in local authorities has continued to fall over the previous 12 months, whilst the workload in terms of number of planning application decisions and Listed Building Consent decisions had grown.

The key findings of the report are that the number of full-time equivalent historic environment specialists providing advice to local authorities in England has fallen by 2% in the last 12 months; and by 36% since 2006.

Civic Voice (the national charity for the civic movement in England) has identified this as one of their hot topics. They are exploring the impact of a loss of conservation officers, and how civic societies are called upon to undertake appraisals and become the "civic watchdog" on conservation areas. For us, this is an important concern, and David Lovie had already raised the issue with Civic Voice on behalf of the society. Needless to say, we will be watching progress with interest.

In September we received an invitation to provide a guided tour of the town for a group of Durham University Geography Students. This fits well with the work we are doing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of conservation areas, and to recognise the contributions of *Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes*. We saw it as an opportunity to build on that work, with a group of young people. It turned out that we had missed the term "former", in "former Durham University Geography Students". As a result we spent a fascinating morning with a group who had met at Durham in 1959. They have stayed in touch since, despite dispersing over the subsequent years. Alnwick was the "cultural" element of their regular get-together this year. They chose a day when the town was busy with the Food and Beer Festival. We hope our guests gained a good impression of the town, while we enjoyed comparing the similarities between issues faced by different towns across the UK.

Members of the Society continue with the task of helping to keep Column Field clean. Unfortunately the new picnic table has been placed on loose red gravel, rather than a solid base. The gravel is getting displaced onto the surrounding grass and footpath, which adds to the work of keeping the field tidy.



Sadly, one of the four recumbent lions that surround the column has been damaged. These are not marble, as sometimes reported, but a ceramic material. We believe they are Coade Stone, a type of stoneware that was developed in the 18th century by a successful businesswoman, Eleanor Coade. If so, they would be manufactured in Coade's Artificial Stone Manufactory (where London's Festival Hall now stands). Production quality could vary, but when successful the results weathered exceptionally well. Hundreds of examples are still in place around the world. Although the original factory closed in 1833, the recipe has been re-created, and the material is in produc-

tion today. As well as creating new sculptures, the company has experience in restoring original 18th and 19th Century Coade Stone sculptures. Let's hope the lion can be properly repaired.



The Northumberland Tourism Business Barometer shows an increase in visits to tourist attractions this year, but a very slight fall in self-catering occupancy. Self-catering occupancy in June, though, was higher than last year.

Figures published by Northumberland County Council (on their Open Data site) show that the number of Holiday Lets in most of our neighbouring holiday centres has increased by around 10% over the last 12 months. The number of holiday lets in Alnmouth has increased by 13%, and the number of holiday lets in Alnwick has increased by 27% since this time last year. Taken together, these figures suggest that supply is keeping pace with increased demand.



A Civic Society has just been launched in Great Yarmouth. They aim to make the town a better place to live, protect its cultural and architectural heritage, promote a sense of civic pride, better signage, improved cleanliness and good development. We wish them well.

The new society's logo incorporates the town's crest: a lion's head with a fish tail. Their inaugural meeting was held on Tuesday, 19th Sept.

Alnwick Civic Society's inaugural meeting, attended by over 80 people, was held in the White Swan on 7th Oct 1974. The fascinating story of how this meeting came about features in *Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes*. But expect no spoilers here. You will need to get hold of the book after Nov 3rd.

Spreading the word

Could you help us to raise our profile on social media?

Our web site, and our accounts on Twitter and Facebook have been a bit dormant recently. This is the result of other pressures on time, rather than a shortage of material to share.

We think this is a shame. Social media is a good way for societies like ours to raise our profile and stay in touch with members and supporters. The approach is successfully used by others. We are missing an opportunity to spread the word about our work.

There is also a wealth of other material out there that would interest our members. Examples of local interest, such as Alnwick Memories on Facebook, are widely known and widely used.

Helping to raise our profile in this way doesn't require great technical expertise. By its nature it's a contribution to the work of the society that can be made at any time, from anywhere. If you have pride in our town, share our aims, and are committed to spreading the word about our work, then please get in touch. We can help to get you started, and we look forward to working with you.



Quiz: Forty years on...

In 1975, fifteen students at Kingston Polytechnic made a study of Alnwick, at the suggestion of the Civic Trust.

Before the by-pass had opened, a distributor road had been proposed, as part of a traffic management scheme, in an attempt to inject new life into the town. Even after the by-pass opened, the proposal remained on the table. The students took this view :

"The scheme would decimate the area of housing and private business lying to the south of Market Street by enlarging existing roads and providing peripheral car parks which would serve and effectively cut off the central core from the rest of the town. Tearing out the guts of Alnwick is self defeating. In fact such an enlarged traffic scheme would be foreign to the historic character which the plan purports to enhance, perhaps forgetting that essential of revitalization is to have something, apart from the town centre, left to revitalize".

To the right are their illustrations of five of the streets that would have been affected if the plans had gone ahead.

Can you name them?

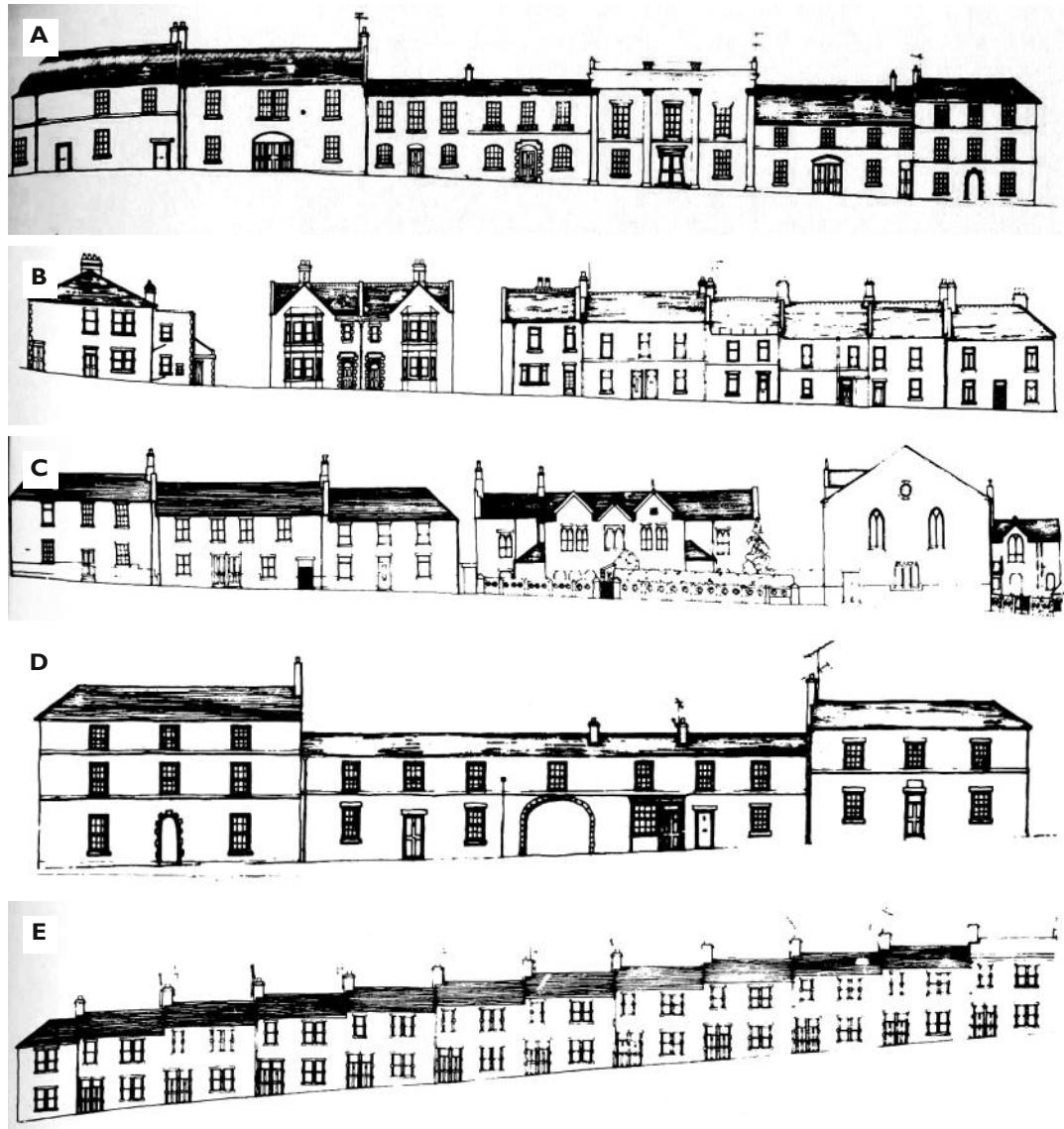
Historic Street Furniture

Alnwick's renowned Museum of Historic Street Furniture has acquired another exhibit.

Not only that, but someone has proudly wrapped in it yellow and black striped tape to ensure that it attracts attention.

Our thanks to Susan Bell for pointing out this excellent piece of heritage conservation.

We can now sleep easy, safe in the knowledge that this fine example of a rusty 20th century parking ticket machine has been rescued from destruction, and will be preserved for future generations to enjoy.



Diary dates

Civic Society...

November 3rd is the launch date for our booklet celebrating *Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes* at Bailiffgate Museum. We will start to distribute copies following the event, so if you would like to request a copy, or can help with distribution, please get in touch.

...and more

November 1st, Bailiffgate Museum, "Alnwick then and now". Unlocking memories of some of the town's familiar buildings.

Friday 17th November. Alnwick Christmas Lights, switch on. Marketplace, 6:00 p.m.

Saturday 18th November. Parade of Light, a magical live music, light and movement spectacular will make its way from The Alnwick Garden and through the town.

28th November 2017, The Bedlington Iron and Engine Works. Alnwick & District Local History Society. Bailiffgate Museum, 7.30 p.m.

23rd January 2018, Historical Oddities – Those Curious Places Around Northumberland. Alnwick & District Local History Society. Bailiffgate Museum, 7.30 p.m.

In the spirit of some of the 1859 excursionists from Alnwick (page-3) members might be tempted to re-visit the engineering landmarks of Tyneside. The Institution of Civil Engineers has published leaflets on the Civil Engineering landmarks of the Newcastle and Gateshead Quayside, as well as Great North Civil Engineers, Historical engineering works in North East England, Bridges of the River Wear, and Border Bridges. Their Robert Stephenson Trail includes the railway viaduct over the A1 at Lesbury. Search: www.ice.org.uk



About Alnwick Civic Society

Alnwick Civic Society was formed in the 1970s, 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)

Treasurer and Membership: Gill Parker

Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith

Other Executive Committee members:

John Hipwell

Mary McIlroy Hipwell

Elizabeth Jones

David Lovie (davidlovie307@btinternet.com)

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

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

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

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



We wonder how many visitors walk straight past one of the iconic townscape views of Alnwick, looking for refreshments, and little realising that there's a cafe hidden behind the street clutter?

A) West side of Percy Street, including the Mechanics' Institute

B) North side of Lisburn Street, from King Street to Howick Street

C) West side of Chapel Lane, from Green Batt to the Wesleyan Chapel

D) South side of Green Batt, from Percy Street to Howick Street

E) East side of King Street from the foot to Lisburn street