

November 2019



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Our annual "Any Questions" topical debate will be held in the Dining Hall of the Duchess Community High School, on Wed 20th November at 6:00 p.m. The theme is "*Alnwick Old Town in a Changing Climate*".

We are looking for new members, and we need your help. You can support our recruitment activity by telling your family, friends and neighbours about our work, and encouraging them to consider joining.

Thanks to everyone who has helped to put together and distribute this issue. The next is planned for February 2020. Members' suggestions and contributions are always welcome.



The story of public housing in Alnwick (Part-2, 1919-39)

A century has passed since the Housing Act of 1919 placed a duty on each local authority to prepare a housing scheme for the working classes. So 2019 is seen as marking 100 years of Council Housing. Alnwick Urban District Council commissioned two-thirds of all new houses built in the town between the end of the First World War, and the start of the Second World War. Those 420 houses left a lasting mark on the structure of the town. They are home to one in ten of today's households, and their design and layout marked a significant departure from earlier housing.

Convention tells us that following the First world War, David Lloyd George promised "homes fit for heroes". It was actually headline writers who shortened the words he used, on the day after the armistice: "Habitations fit for the heroes who have won the war".

Despite being hampered by limited finance, a lack of skilled manpower and a shortage of materials local authorities across the UK built a total of 1.1 million homes between the end of the First World War and the start of the Second World War.

Before the First World War terraced housing for the working classes was mostly privately rented and built to comply with the Public Health Act of 1875. These are known as "byelaw terraces". The act defined the quality of building, not its design, but a common pattern emerged. Nationally, about 15% of today's housing stock is still based on the way the 1875 act was interpreted. In a smaller "byelaw terrace" house the ground floor contains a front living room and back dining room with a staircase between. There were two bedrooms upstairs and each house had a private yard with a privy. Whole streets were built as a single terrace. It was cheaper to build adjoining chimneys, so the layout of each house normally alternated. This also meant that rear extensions could share a wall and there was less loss of light to the back room. Larger variations added a scullery at the back, a third bedroom above the scullery, and a staircase on the party wall. Higher status versions might have cellars, rooms in the roof space, a wider frontage, a small front garden and a bay window.

At the start of the 20th century fewer than 100,000 new houses were being built each year. This was not enough to satisfy demand and the shortage of affordable housing was well-known. Before the war ended Sir John Tudor



Walters was asked to consider provision of dwellings for the working classes. His committee set out the ambition to "profoundly influence the general standard of housing in this country and to encourage the building of houses of such quality that they would remain above the acceptable minimum standards for at least sixty years". They estimated that the shortfall was about 500,000 decent homes.

"The problem submitted to us in regard to methods of construction, supply of materials, organisation of labour, and economy and despatch in carrying out such a programme, is a very comprehensive and difficult one".

The Housing, Town Planning Act of 1919 (known as the Addison Act) took up the Tudor Walters challenge of providing 500,000 new homes within three years. It placed a duty on each local authority to consider housing needs in their area and to prepare and carry out a housing scheme for the working classes. Long terraces with rear projections had reduced air flow and light at the back of the houses. So Tudor Walters mandated a very different layout. This was based on short terraces, wider frontages, attached gardens and a living room that caught sunlight even in winter. Cul de sacs were seen as a cheap method of providing access to services and preventing through traffic.



Tudor Walters suggested three basic plans:

- Type: 1. Living room with range where most of the cooking would be done, scullery with copper to heat the water, a bath and a gas cooker for occasional use.
- Type: 2. A separate bathroom, cooking done in the scullery and the living room fire suitable only for occasional cooking.
- Type: 3. A separate upstairs bathroom, cooking done exclusively in the scullery. Meals would be eaten in the living room.

Opposite is the Tudor Walters design for Type-1. It contains a living-room with cooking-range; scullery with copper, sink and gas cooker, or small grate suitable for drying clothes; a bath downstairs (water for the bath could be heated in the copper, while the bath itself may be used in washing). A water closet on the ground floor (sometimes accessible from outside). A well-ventilated larder, coal store and three bedrooms.

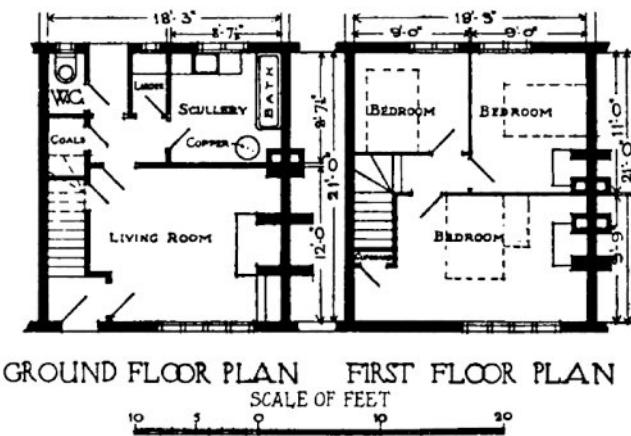
Public Housing (continued)

At this time Alnwick Urban District Council owned 72 houses in King Street and Lisburn Street. Whenever there was vacancy they were receiving over 100 applicants. There were at least 126 houses in the town that were known to be unfit in relation to dampness, dilapidation or congestion. These were not condemned because it was thought impossible to provide tenants with anything better. The council believed that 150 more homes were needed in the town, and they prepared a scheme of 118 houses. This would become St George's Crescent. However, the Housing Commissioner would only allow the Council to proceed with 36. The rest of the scheme was placed on hold. Meanwhile, six army huts were converted into houses.

Delays were not confined to Alnwick. National funding was cut back and only 213,800 homes were completed under the provisions of the 1919 act (less than half the ambition). Different approaches were tried before a new Housing Act in 1924 re-introduced subsidies for public housing. Previously the policy had been comprehensive, with an emphasis on quality ("homes fit for heroes"). Now the policy aims were more specific: to create employment in a depressed construction industry and to provide homes that low-income families could afford. This meant that houses had to be let at lower rents, which had an effect on the way schemes were designed. Density increased, schemes tended to be built further from town centres and work-places. Standards fell: in 1919 a typical new three-bedroom house covered 1,000 square feet, but by the 1930s this had fallen to 620 square feet.

In Alnwick there were two significant waves of housing development by the council between the wars. Schemes from the 1930s are built to a higher density than those in the 1920s, but both were based on Tudor Walter designs and layouts.

- The first wave was mostly completed between 1921 and 1926. Two schemes both lay to the south of the centre: St George's Crescent and the York Crescent / York Road area. By 1926 these provided almost all of the 150 new homes that had been planned by the council in 1919 (although there were still 150 families on the housing waiting list). At the same time there were adjoining private developments on Lindisfarne Road, Augur Terrace and York Road (image, right).



- A second wave of council building between 1935 and 1937 provided 273 houses to the west of the town (image above). Clayport Gardens, Cedar Grove / Beech Grove and St. Thomas's Crescent were all developed at this time. A few police houses were added by the County Council off Prudhoe Street. Private housing was mainly being built to the south and east of the town: on Greensfield Avenue, West Acres and the Dunterns.

Throughout the 1920s the priority had been to address the housing shortage. Limited resources meant that the highest standards urged by Tudor Walters had been compromised to a degree. Nevertheless, between 1919 and 1933, over half a million council homes had been built. Now the policy emphasis shifted to slum clearance. So the Housing Act of 1930 encouraged councils to demolish poor quality housing and replace with new build. It provided powers to acquire and demolish privately owned properties. The 1935 Housing Act went further, and required every local authority to submit a programme of building and demolition aimed at eliminating slums from their area.



In the 1920's Alnwick Urban District council had already acquired some of the worst slum housing, and started clearance. However, they knew that more needed to be done. In 1925 the Medical Officer reported that only 14 families had been re-housed, while another 15 families were still living in the worst area off Clayport, and across the town 43 houses had been identified as unfit.

A number of new clearance areas were declared in 1935 and by 1937 the Medical Officer was reporting progress

Public Housing (continued)

with slum clearance and overcrowding. There were still 51 houses with reportable defects: but it wasn't felt necessary to issue any formal notices requiring these defects to be remedied. Tenants from the new clearance areas had been rehoused, demolition was proceeding and schemes for re-development were in hand. One way that the council dealt with over-crowding was to give priority to rehousing the largest families: "Fifteen new houses have been tenanted with exceptionally large families".

Then progress was interrupted by the Second World War. The authorities had other priorities and between 1939 and 1945 reports on housing by the Medical Officer to the Council tended to be brief: "During the year there has been

no progress of note and there is an acute shortage of houses in the district." However, as the war drew to a close, the Medical officer reported "Considerable progress has been made with the preparation of schemes for Post War Housing". But that marks the start of the next phase of our story.

Scheme	Houses	Date
St George's Crescent	94	1922-4
York Crescent / York Road	51	1926-30
Clayport Gardens	85	1935
Cedar Grove / Beech Grove	116	1937
St Thomas's Crescent	72	1937
Police Houses	7	1938

Planning matters

The application to allow a mix of uses at the former Fire Station has been approved. Our objection was reported in the Northumberland Gazette.

Northumberland Estates are consulting on proposals for a Premier Inn on Willowburn Trading Estate. The development is not yet the subject of a planning application, so more specific comments would be premature. However, it looks promising, and would resolve a contentious issue about use of this site.

BT propose to remove several telephone boxes in the town. Such removals involve no harm to the streetscape. We had some questions about the loss of telephone services for people without phones and for use in emergency situations, but felt satisfied that councillors had enquired about the level of use, found it to be very low, and agreed not to object to removal - other than at Alnmouth station.

Listed building consent has been sought for stonework repairs and the insertion of French windows in the west elevation at 1, Prudhoe Street. We examined details and saw no reason to object.

Temporary sales cabins, flags and signs have been placed on Denwick Lane for the Windy Edge Housing Development. We regret that the work started before approval was granted.

At 39-41 Fenkle Street (former Dickinson's furniture shop) a change of use has been proposed to seven holiday flats and two retail units. Permission was previously granted but had lapsed. We saw no reason to object.

At Greensfield the developers are seeking to discharge conditions relating to drainage. We have nothing to add. We also agreed that no representation was required for the proposed construction of a single storey dwelling on land East of Hope House Cottages, Hope House Lane. Nor need we comment on proposals to fell or cut back trees at Hillcrest Nursing Home, and a conifer on Walkergate.

We continue to keep a close watch on developments at Narrowgate House. Listed Building Consent has been sought for emergency repairs to the rear wall.



We have not been alone in our concerns at the apparent lack of progress on the balcony of the White Swan. We welcomed reports in the local press saying that the owners expect work to begin soon.

Last year we submitted detailed comments on the Northumberland Local Plan (see ACS Newsletter, Nov 2018). The plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in May and has now reached the stage where it is examined by an independent planning inspector. The first round of hearings were held in October and the next round will be held in early 2020. Any member of the public is entitled to attend and members of the Civic Society who are interested may wish to get in touch.

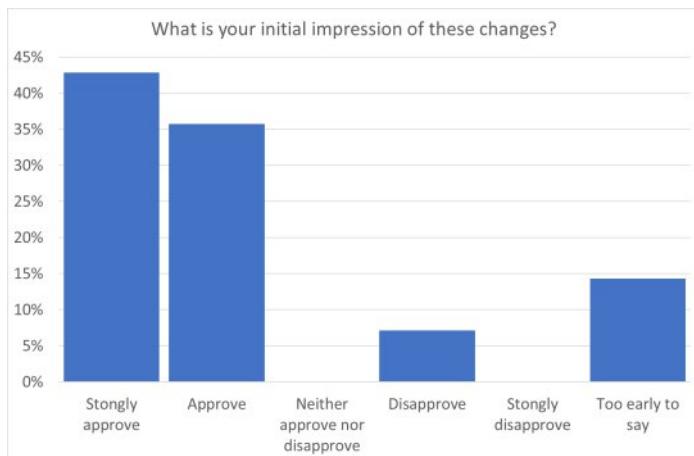
There has been an application for construction of a temporary car park and access track to serve the existing golf club house during a redevelopment project. The temporary car park would last two years, but there is also a outstanding appeal for development in this area. We have commented as follows:

1. This application is premature. The application for the development is still under appeal.
2. The use of the bridleway for access to the car parking would radically change the character of the path.
3. The application site is outside the settlement boundary proposed by the local plan.
4. The setting of a listed building would be adversely affected.

Narrowgate Trial: initial reaction

The society has campaigned for a more pedestrian-friendly approach in the centre of Alnwick, but views about the trial pedestrianisation of Narrowgate differ among members - just as they do across the town.

We carried out an online survey during the first month of the Narrowgate Pedestrianisation Trial. The sample size was small, and we cannot assume that it represents wider public opinion. However, most respondents were members of the Civic Society and we believe they were relatively well-informed about the nature of the trial and the issues. We know that decision takers are keen to take all views into account, so we hope the survey offers some useful insights.



At that stage, respondents were broadly supportive. 80% approved, 7% disapproved and 14% felt it was too early to say. Opinion did not shift greatly as a result of seeing the early days of the trial in operation. 71% felt that things were turning out much as they expected. Of the remainder, those who said it had turned out better than they expected slightly outnumbered those who said it had turned out worse.

The strongest criticisms related to the seating and signage. Almost all agreed that the initial signage should have placed greater emphasis on the benefits for pedestrians, and less on traffic restrictions. (86% agreed it was too negative (50% strongly). All agreed that the temporary plastic "lego" seating was unsuitable for a conservation area (57% strongly).

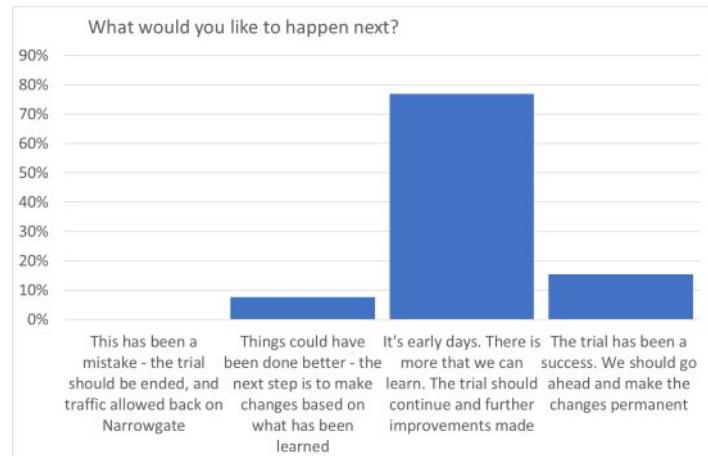
Respondents were more concerned about the traffic implications than they are about the impact on trade. A significant minority (28%) expect things to be worse for pedestrians on Fenkle street (29% feel it is too early to say), and 14% expect things to be worse elsewhere in town (50% feel it is too early to say). This suggests that people expect the impact on Fenkle Street to be understood earlier than the wider impact on the town.

This was a survey of the perceptions of members of the public: not the direct experience of traders. However, traders may find that while their customers were keeping an open mind, few expect trade on Narrowgate to be damaged by pedestrianisation (36% said it was too early to say for Narrowgate, and 43% felt that it was too early to judge the impact elsewhere in town).

A few respondents were keen for more extensive pedestrianisation, but most were hesitant about extending the scope, even when they were broadly supportive of this initiative.

Most, but not all, respondents were satisfied with the consultation that had taken place. Around one in six felt that there was not enough consultation, or that public opinion was not taken into account, but the majority (71%) were not critical of either of these aspects of the consultation process.

Nobody felt that the pedestrianisation on Narrowgate should be stopped immediately. A small minority felt that there was no need to continue the trial, but most felt that it should continue, with 77% agreeing that *"It's early days. There is more that we can learn. The trial should continue and further improvements made"*.



In brief:

- A trial pedestrianisation of Narrowgate is seen as a good move. We found no pressure to bring pedestrianisation in Narrowgate to an end.
- Respondents identified the immediate priorities as the design of the seating and the tone of the signage.
- Concerns over the impact on traffic on Fenkle Street and elsewhere will need to be understood and addressed before final conclusions are drawn.
- While some are keen on further pedestrianisation, more support will need to be generated before there is public backing for pedestrianisation over a wider area.
- This is a debate on which people will not readily shift their views. We found similar results in this survey to tests of pre-trial opinion. Some respondents say that they encounter a variety of opinions, but most believe that others feel broadly the same way as they do themselves.

On controversial issues it is vital that decision takers can take the whole spectrum of opinion into account. We hope that members have made their views known on this trial in Narrowgate - whether or not they agree with the changes.

Alnwick's Cobbles: An Historical Perspective

Using the term loosely, "cobbles" have formed a major part of the floorscape of Alnwick for at least two centuries and most likely for very much longer. An Engraving in Davison (1822) by James Kerr of the Market Place and Bondgate Hill beyond clearly shows some form of cobbles or setts in the former and less clearly the steep slope of the latter, stretching from the highway at a constant angle to the doorways of properties on the south side of Bondgate Within. Davison appears to confirm their use: "*The streets are in general tolerably well paved; but in some parts they present a ruggedness of surface prejudicial to the cleanliness and general appearance of the town, and incompatible with the ease and convenience of passengers.*"

Cobbles are naturally occurring generally rounded stone

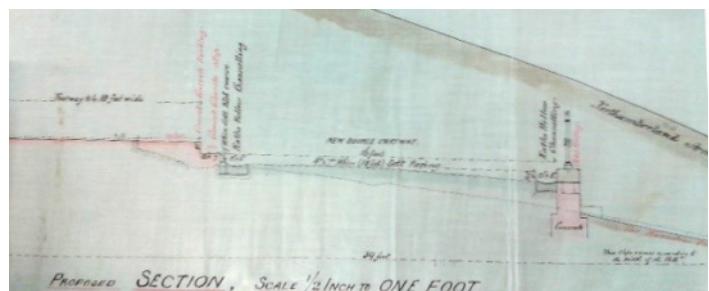
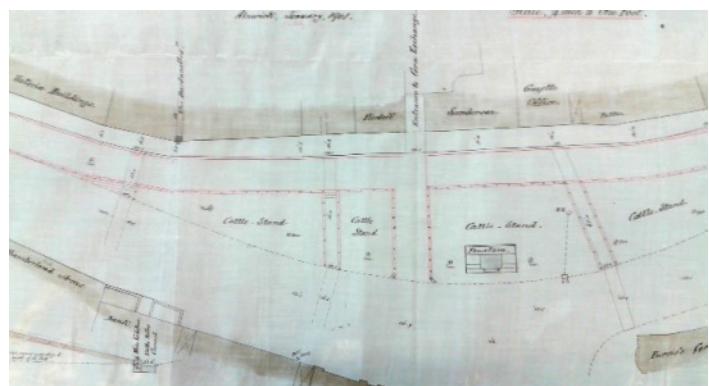
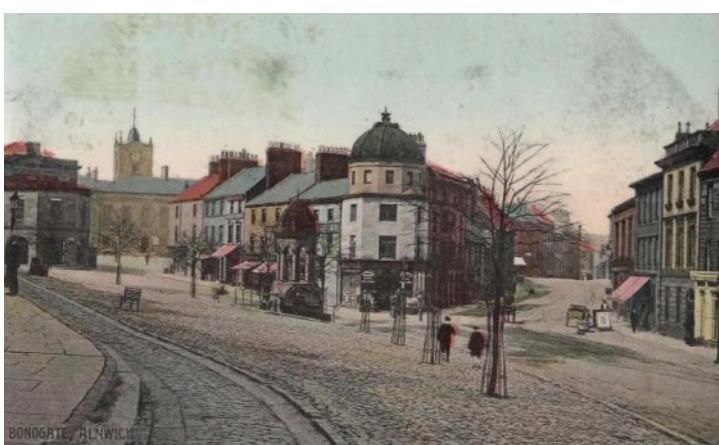
Setts have been worked into a regular shape.

Nineteenth century reporters such as Tate(1864-8) and Percy Forster (1831, in Middlemas 2011) had nothing significant to report on the cobbles, but by 1887, the surveyor to the Alnwick and Canongate Local Board of Health, Geoffrey Wilson, had produced a plan to alter the layout of Bondgate Hill. This came to nothing but he reported again to the successor to the Board of Health, the Alnwick Urban District Council, in January 1901, with a slightly updated scheme.

Both plans involved steps from the footpath down to the Carriage Road, which would have been a single width at the Bondgate Tower end, widening to two-way in the centre section. A low kerb, topped by a fence or wall, would have separated the carriageway from the lower part of the cobbles throughout its length, broken by several crossing points, aligned mostly to the lanes.

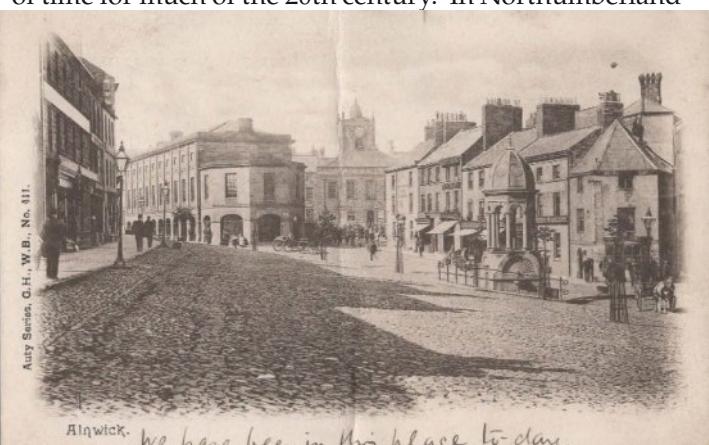
Two postcards, posted in 1904 and 1906 respectively, illustrate the eventual layout. Postcards are notorious for being sold long after the scene depicted had been altered but the postmarks do provide a latest date by which they had been produced.

Both show Robertson's Fountain (1890) and they illustrate the addition of the fourth floor and dome on what is now Bailey's Corner. More importantly, they illustrate that most of the "cobbled" area consisted of a mixture of



random cobbles and setts, which were only altered in the vicinity of the new Carriage Road. This was ideal for horses and carts, reducing the risk of the cart tipping over as it was unloaded on the slope and even providing easier access to the platform of the cart from the widened pavement. Some crossing points for pedestrians may also be discerned, their presence confirmed in effect by Wilson's plans.

In the event, although the implemented changes were less ambitious than Wilson had proposed, they stood the test of time for much of the 20th century. In Northumberland



Cobbles: Continued

County Council's ground-breaking 1968 Town Centre Study Environmental Report, the council recognises the significance of the cobbles. A plan shows that they were more extensive then, covering both sides of Bondgate Within throughout most of its length, as well as Fenkle Street and Market Street. In capital letters the report states "THIS REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT ABSOLUTELY NO FURTHER ENCROACHMENT OF TARMAC ON TO COBBLES SHOULD BE TOLERATED. THERE IS INTRINSIC IN THE SLOPES OF ALNWICK A READYMADE FLOORSCAPE QUALITY WHICH WOULD TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF DESIGN ABILITY AND FINANCE TO RE-CREATE. IT MUST BE PRESERVED AS A MATURE BASIS TO EVENTUAL FLOORSCAPE EXERCISES."



The Report then devotes a whole page to illustrate the quality of the floorscape. This shows that both setts and cobbles were in use at the time, with varied alignments obviating any sense of monotony.

In the late 1980s, the whole of the Bondgate Hill cobbles apart from the Carriage Road and a strip abutting the highway were relaid with round whinstone cobbles as a part of a Youth Training Scheme project. The work done then has not stood the test of time, largely because of deterioration of the material used to bind the cobbles in place. Various attempts have been made since to "repair" the cobbles, with limited success.

Also, in the intervening period, the population of Alnwick has aged, with increasing negative effects on many individuals' mobility.

Today's requirements - do you agree?

- 1) Parking cannot be eliminated so the surface needs to be robust enough to withstand wear and tear of cars manoeuvring – historically almost all was cobbles, but this is no longer practical over the full extent.
- 2) Today higher standards are expected for mobility so a smoother surface is needed for pedestrians where appropriate, however, the steepness of the slope means pedestrian full mobility is impractical over the whole extent.
- 3) Nothing other than natural stone will preserve the historic context and retain the appearance at this prominent location in the townscape. Use of grey granite will be consistent with the treatment of the marketplace. Use of dark whinstone will be consistent with the wagon way. Historically the cobbles have used a mix of colours. Whichever option proves practical, it is important to retain natural stone, and match dark colours for footpath chippings, wagon way and existing setts.
- 4) Painted road markings do not work on stone surfaces – reference experience in the marketplace.
- 5) We must expect a phased implementation – for management of costs and available budget.
- 6) In light of climate change it is worth noting that the bottom of Market Street is already highlighted by the Environment Agency as a flood risk area, so it is worth exploring the value of reducing the extent of any impervious surfaces. Setts are more likely to hold together than cobbles without a strong binding material.
- 7) Reinstatement of original trees or suitable would enhance streetscape, drainage and contribute to zero-carbon targets.

Principles of design - do you agree?

- Wherever the surface is used by traffic the Cobbles should be replaced by rectangular natural stone setts to maintain essential character, while improving resilience to today's use. Cobbles might be retained in areas where traffic is not allowed (e.g. around planters), where safety can be improved by discouraging pedestrian access, or where drainage can be improved.
- All existing setts, and the wagon way should be retained and repaired where necessary.
- Four pedestrian ways should be established on the ground and in law, in order to enforce parking, and steer pedestrians towards safe crossings. Consideration should be given to extending these across Bondgate / Market Street as traffic calming features. Where the existing surface of chippings can be reused or repaired to meet today's expectations for pedestrian mobility then they should be reused or repaired. Outlines should be marked by different level or colour of natural rectangular setts.
- Cobbles or different colours of sett should be used where it is appropriate to mark different parking zones or pedestrian routes.
- Because the whole area is divided by pedestrian footways, there are a number of sections inherent in the layout that could be used as sub-divisions when considering phasing of the work.
- At present we are only concerned with Bondgate Hill, but the principles established here might be used elsewhere in future – for example on Fenkle Street or in reinstating road surfaces elsewhere in the town.

Public Utilities Street Works: a view from Ernie Gordon

Starting as an apprentice Stone Mason/Bricklayer and ending his career as Local Government Director, Ernie Gordon spent his working life in Civil Engineering, Building Construction and Maintenance, Local Government Works and Services. Alongside experience in the private sector, Saudi Arabia, and National Service in Malaya, he worked for Morpeth Borough Council, Braintree Urban District, Leicester City Council, Broxtowe District Council and Northumberland County Council. He now lives in Alnwick. He fears that, over his career, our structural heritage has been left vulnerable by the changes in the way that Public Utilities Street Works are handled.

Alnwick is built predominantly of stone, with two distinct types of construction: (a) dressed / coursed or bonded with block stone quoins and

walling and (b) dressed quoin stone corners with random rubble infill.

Type (a) is the more substantial form of construction whereas type (b) is more prone to damage, especially when old limestone mortar becomes perished with age and prone to crumble. This weakening of the structure results in serious damage, especially when disturbed. I have seen a number of cases where I fear that works to repair essential underground utility services (Sewers and Storm Water drainage, Gas, Water Mains, Electricity, BT cables etc) may have caused damage to adjacent buildings. One possible example locally is the defective stone balcony fronting the White Swan Hotel.

Most of Alnwick sits atop ancient, shallow, rock strata which stretches from the top of Alnwick Moor to the west and slopes down to the River Aln. This rock shelf sits on a bed of sand, often termed as quick, running or moving sand. Builders in the region and skilled technical officers in the former Town and County Councils were aware of this peculiar, but quite natural, phenomenon and treated all ground works, building development etc, with EXTREME caution.

Added to the problem of running sand are the many separate streams of underground water which flow off the Moor to reach the river. It is these running streams which produce the sand on a perpetual basis. Hence the need for constant monitoring of the situation with regard to ground works and building development in the region. An example is St Michael's Pant, in Market Street. This familiar feature of the town is a prime example of the underground running water problem except this water comes down off the Moor and flows below ground down in a line with Clayport Street and Clayport Bank. This is only one of the many underground streams known to be in the same region and can be clearly identified to-day.

"Along come the repair / resurfacing gangs with their huge, mechanical, vibratory monsters to compact the asphalt / bituminous surfacing material.

Severe surface vibrations are then directed downwards thus striking the rock shelf below then deflected outward and upwards, right up to the tallest chimney stacks and pots and the very stability of the structure, which may have stood solid for centuries, is weakened to the state of possible collapse when the stone rubble and limestone mortar is shaken loose".

"Pile Driving is the worst of all operations in any built up area where the resulting damage below ground is not immediately evident. Thus the resulting problems do not materialise until, sometimes, years later and too late for any legal redress and/or compensation to be considered by the victims".

Back in 1951 the Public Utilities Street Works Act was drawn up to help the Highway Authorities better control road works by the major Utilities, and others. All utilities work was supervised by the local authority from the first day of application when the permit is issued, through to the completion of the backfill and temporary surface. The council's Highways Inspectors supervised the work on a rechargeable basis from start to finish. It was the job of the Highways Authority to undertake the responsibility for the final restoration work again, on a rechargeable basis, hence the system of control was straightforward, supported by a rigid legal specification for material and method of restoration as it was used all over the UK.

Compaction of the trench or road opening was completed in maximum 6 inch (150mm) layers up to road surface level and compacted by means of 'hand rammers' weighing about 15 lbs as deadweight compaction thus preventing any damage by vibration to adjacent properties and existing utility services.

This PUSW Act 1951 served the nation well, but it was repealed and replaced in 1992. This took away the overall responsibility from the local authority leaving the Public Utilities and their contractors the freedom to do as they wished to a large extent.

For example, in the 1960's, more modern, mechanical methods of trench compaction were being introduced, i.e. vibratory compactors and rollers. This is when damage to adjacent properties went through the roof. I feel proud, all those years ago to have been one of the engineers who recognised the scale and cost of damage that could be caused by vibratory compaction, and put an immediate stop to the practice in my then own area of responsibility with Leicester City Corporation.

Equally, back fill material was strictly controlled by way of British Standard Specification and strict supervision. But with the re-organisation of local government in 1974 some local authorities allowed the Public Utilities to carry out full restoration of the work. Vibratory compaction became

the recognised norm. The problem was further compounded when lean concrete, rather than a weak mix, was used to backfill the trench thus eliminating compaction altogether. This method simply formed a solid buffer thus increasing the shock waves tenfold.

We seem to have lost a tested and proven method for supervision and reinstatement of street works, and we should worry that the resulting damage to adjacent buildings and underground services is being underestimated.

Flood chronology

Warnings from history or reassurance that extreme weather is nothing new?

The Environment Agency provides a map of flood risks across the country:

<https://tinyurl.com/y622yszw>

This extract for part of Alnwick shows the flood risk from surface water. For a historical perspective, David Archer has compiled chronologies of historical flood events from newspaper archives and other sources, dating from the 1700s. Those for Alnwick are summarised below. His full list is at:

<https://tinyurl.com/y4z7bcwh>



22/9/1744: Rain began at 6 am at Alnwick and neighbourhood and continued with such violence that

before 12 o'clock the rivers and rivulets were greatly increased and several persons drowned in attempting to ford them – one at Alnwick and 4 in the Coquet. Newcastle Journal.

12/7/1828: Early on 12 there was a violent thunderstorm. The river Coquet overflowed its banks The storm was also severe at Alnwick where a new stone wall was thrown down. Newcastle Courant 19 July.

1/8/1854: At Alnwick several houses and shops were flooded in spite of the fact that a new sewerage system had been laid. The White Hart Inn was flooded. Newcastle journal 5 Aug.

24/7/1858: Alnwick: A burn running a few inches deep under a stone bridge increased so much in volume with a few minutes that the stone bridge was carried away and 20 to 30 feet of a strong wall along with it. A horse drawing a cart had to have its traces cut; the cart was washed away but the horse was saved. The wall enclosing the Duke of Northumberland's park was broken down at 5 places. Another strong bridge was carried away with some blocks over a ton carried for some distance. The water ploughed up the grounds and tore up the flags. Houses and shops were flooded to a considerable depth. The bridge on the North-Eastern Railway was carried away. Storm lasted from 11.00 pm to between 1.00 and 2.00 am. Water rushed from the hills surrounding Alnwick carrying sand and earth, choking drains and damaging the roads. The water was a yard deep on the pavement on the northern side of Bondgate and cellars and apartments were flooded. 20 yards of wall was knocked over instantly by the flood in a courtyard down the back of Alnwick Castle. The water had run down Rotten Row from the moor and gathered at the back of the Gas Works, throwing down a stone wall and carrying stones down the street like a stream and breaking up the pavement. The Moor Burn through Hulne Park broke down walls, swept away a bridge entirely.

9/6/1860: Alnwick: Thunderstorm accompanied by hail. The streets were flooded. The storm was very localised but seems to have been more severe to the west of the town where the soil was carried off young corn and turnips destroyed: Alnwick Mercury 2 July.

7/8/1862: Alnwick: Thunderstorm; River Aln swollen to an unusual size submerging fields of corn and hay. A bridge at Bassington in Hulne Park was carried away. Near Alnmouth the water stood 3 feet deep in the hayfields. Mussels in the bed of the Aln were completely swept away. Alnwick Mercury 1 Sept

5/5/1876: On the Aln the river was higher than for many years and the lower part of Bogg Mill was flooded and Flint Mill was surrounded looking like an island. Morpeth Herald 6 May.

27/5/1878: Alnwick: Clayport St was deluged with water coming down from the Bank Top, sweeping along either side of the Shambles, collected its energies at the Fish Market, then rounding Purvis's Corner spread itself along houses and shops on the north side of Bondgate. Water from Fenkle St down Pottergate flowed into Narrowgate Street. Streets were almost impassable on foot. The storm seems to have been more severe on Alnwick Moor. A horse and other animals were killed by lightning. Alnwick Mercury 1 June.

29/7/1930: Alnwick: Gutter in Clayport swollen to size of small river flowing into Shambles and Purvis corner. It also flooded the basement of Midland Bank. Denwick lane was flooded. (Historic note: A generation ago there was regular flooding with heavy rains regularly flowing into Purvis' cellars and those of other people in the Market. The culvert from Bondgate Hill near the fountain to the other side of the street was enlarged. Since then this is the first flood in many years that flooding on the former scale has occurred). The main North Road in the heart of Alnwick was flooded from side to side. Water came up from the culvert grids near the Robinson fountain and tradesmen's goods floated in the street. The Midland bank had its basement flooded to a depth of 2 1/2 feet. Denwick Lane was flooded and the railway station was cut off by a sheet of water. Gazette Aug 2.

20/7/1998: Residents at Royal Oak Gardens in Alnwick were flooded. Waggonway road was under 1 foot of water.

28/6/2012: A massive torrent of water brought part of Alnwick town centre to a standstill. A number of shops were affected and forced to close. Some of the worse-hit areas in the town included the junction between Market Street and Bondgate Within (2 feet deep), leaving one Mini Cooper partly submerged by the water, while the bottom of Narrowgate by the iconic Hotspur statue was also flooded. Businesses did not escape the torrent either, with water going into places such as Oscars and some of the banks and building societies and the Tourist Information Centre at The Shambles where it was noted: "We didn't have time to react. The water was swirling and it came with such force, the door was forced open." The Greenwell Lane car park was also badly flooded, with many cars left trapped. Gazette 28 June.

See back page for information on reporting a flood

News in Brief

Congratulations to Alnwick in Bloom, who gained a Gold Award in the 2019 Northumbria in Bloom competition. Also to Gill Parker and Trish Jones, whose determined clearing of litter on Column field has been recognised (again) with a Community Award.



Were you inspired by the Tour of Britain passing through Alnwick? Are you looking for an excuse to get your bike out, and go for a ride? More than half of the UK population lives within a mile of the National Cycle Network. Sadly, Alnwick is in the other half, but the connections are getting better. So we hope members will take advantage of some of the finest cycling in the country, then contribute to the Sustrans development plans here:

<https://nationalcyclenetwork.commonplace.is/>

As reported in the last issue, "Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes" was shortlisted by the Association for Heritage Interpretation Awards for Volunteer and Community Projects. Competition was strong, and we were proud to be picked as runner-up to a worthy winner: the reconstruction of a Neolithic Longhouse at La Hougue Bie (Jersey).

<https://tinyurl.com/y59kpgqw>

The National Concessionary Travel Scheme entitles anyone with a pass to free off-peak travel on local bus services. We reckon that there are about 2,750 people in Alnwick who are entitled to a bus pass. We think that roughly 300 of those don't have a valid pass, and roughly 1,250 have a pass, but never use it. If we are right, then more than half of those entitled are not taking advantage. If you fall into one of these groups we hope you will give the scheme a try. It will cost you nothing, and using the bus is the best way to support sustainable travel and help ensure that services remain viable.

We are delighted that Alnwick Civic Society has been elected to the new Alnwick Partnership. We look forward to working closely with other members, just as we have in the past on Alnwick's Town Team.

In October the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the National Design Guide. This illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. Naturally Alnwick is featured.

Pottergate: *"Flats are used to turn the corner of this urban block. Stepped bay windows and a large chimney stack to create a positive and interesting facade treatment on a prominent corner".*



The design guide is for local authority planning officers, councillors, applicants and their design teams, people in local communities and their representatives. Find a copy here:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6hyflnz>

Rochdale Market obtained a charter in 1251, but after 768 years is "no longer financially viable" and expected to close. According to the National Association of British Market Authorities and the National Market Traders Federation there are 1,173 markets in the UK, 32,400 businesses trade there, and employ around 57,000. Trade bodies have found that markets in the North-East have not experienced the same level of decline as those in Yorkshire and the North-West. In 2018 they reported that larger authorities had invested, traders were adapting to change, remained optimistic about the future, and expected turnover to increase - despite a decline in footfall, occupancy, and profitability.

There have been regular street markets in Alnwick for more than 1,000 years. We hope they will continue. Not just

because they attract visitors and are part of our cultural heritage. But also for the wider role that

a market plays in the community. We only have space to suggest a few benefits here. Which are important to you?

- Employment opportunities for all including young, relatively unskilled, and under-capitalised. Compared to other small business women make up a high proportion of market traders
- Business incubation: entrepreneurial character, direct access to consumers for micro businesses
- Places of innovation, experiment and education, encourage risk-taking, respond rapidly to new trends
- Sustainability: local sourcing; viability and resilience of food supply; use sustainable forms of transport
- Affordability: increased choice - especially for the disadvantaged and those on low-income
- Footfall: social role, used by all sections of society, distinct atmosphere attract tourists, engage visitors in local life.

Historic England have published the 2019 update to their Heritage at Risk Register. Locally there are no major changes - we still have several entries, with two in the town:

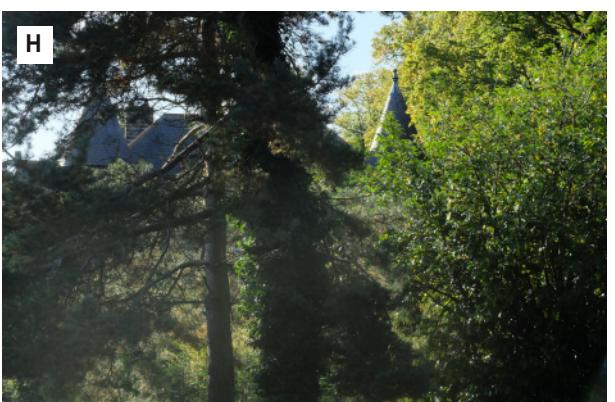
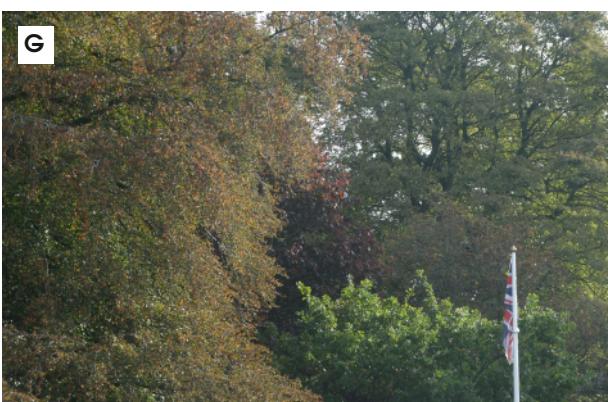
- General Lambert's House: Priority B – Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented. The building is vacant and deteriorating. A condition survey has been prepared and the owner has consent to convert the building to a new use. A grant has been offered for survey work and urgent repairs. A planning application is currently under way for urgent work to the rear wall.
- Bondgate Tower: Priority A – Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed. The main defects relate to damage from high-sided vehicles passing through the central portal. Further impact of a similar nature could cause a serious collapse.



Quiz: Trees

The usual rules apply: these can all be found in Alnwick, but they are not all in the Conservation Area. We hope you will be able to identify the locations, check your answers

against the list on the back page, and award yourself eight points for getting them all right. There are no prizes, just two bonus points for the winning conker.



Diary dates

Civic Society...

Our annual "Any Questions" topical debate will be held in the Dining Hall of the Duchess Community High School, on Wed 20th November at 6:00 p.m. The theme is "Alnwick Old Town in a Changing Climate".

...and more

Meetings of the Alnwick & District Local History Society are held in the Bailiffgate Museum and start at 7.30pm.

- 26th Nov: The Edlingham Vicarage Burglary – John Yearnshire
- 28th Jan: The White Canons of Alnwick: The Story of Alnwick Abbey – Peter Carter
- 25th Feb: Alnwick Moor – Phil Huntley.

Bailiffgate Museum: 29th Oct - 8th Dec "Watch the Birdie" Early images of Alnwick and its citizens at work & play

Morpeth Civic Society holds meetings in the Methodist Church, Howard Road, Morpeth, beginning at 7.30 p.m. They are very informal and anyone is free to attend, although contributions towards tea & coffee are welcome. Topics include some of county-wide interest:

- Wednesday 13th Nov: The History of Smails, Bob Young
- Wednesday 11th Dec: Christmas Quiz, Kevin Dunlop
- Wednesday 15th Jan: Our Precious Environment - Climate change 10 year plan and waste & recycling system with Coun. Glen Sanderson & Paul Jones, Director of Local Services, Northumberland County Council



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, and amid growing concerns about the future of our town. Since then, members have sought to influence developments, especially in the town centre and conservation area, to ensure that proposals protect and enhance our heritage.

The Society pursues its objectives through a variety of activities. We provide a voice for members through dialogue with planning and conservation professionals and like-minded organisations. We offer advice, scrutinise and comment on development proposals; recognise excellence; and organise public meetings. Members were heavily involved in development of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and we work with local partners to influence policy at a county level. We seek to influence national policy by co-operating with other bodies in the civic movement, and the Society 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, student, 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.



Founding Member

Reporting a flood

Who you need to contact depends on what is flooding.

- Contact Northumbrian Water regarding blocked sewers, or burst water mains.
- Contact Northumberland County Council regarding public drains, or to report a flooded road.
- Call the Environment Agency to report a blockage in a river (for example a fallen tree), collapsed or badly damaged river or canal banks, unusual changes in river flow, flooding from the sea or a main river (e.g. the Aln is a main river).
- Contact Northumberland County Council to report flooding from other rivers, brooks or streams, including groundwater flooding (Groundwater flooding is caused by water rising up through the ground).
- Floods caused by private drains are the responsibility of the property owner.

Environment Agency: incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60

Northumbrian Water: Call 0800 393084 to report urgent leaks

Northumberland County Council: Use 0345 600 6400 during office hours. Outside office hours your call will be answered by Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service and calls should be made only in an emergency.

Quiz Answers

- A) Hope House Lane, grounds of former Duke's School, opposite the Dunterns
- B) St Michael's Church
- C) Outside Barter Books
- D) Denwick Lane
- E) Bullfield Community Orchard
- F) Alnwick Cemetery
- G) Column Field
- H) Ravenslaw Gardens