



Photograph by Jess Caithness, photography student at DCHS, from the exhibition "Alnwick Old Town in a changing climate"

Inside

The story of public housing in Alnwick.....	2
Alnwick Old Town in a Changing Climate.....	5
Alnwick's Cobbles: members' views.....	6
Planning matters.....	7
Roadblocks.....	8
News in brief.....	10
Quiz: reflections.....	11
About Alnwick Civic Society.....	12
Who's Who?.....	12
Diary dates.....	12

It's a pleasure to welcome even more new members to the society than we expected; and a delight to see some getting involved in our work. We look forward to getting to know you better.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on March 18th, at 7:00 p.m. in the St James Centre, Pottergate. As well as celebrating the achievements of the last year and looking forward to a busy year in 2020, Ian Hall will speak on a little-known relic of WW-II: "*Heiferlaw Zero Station: what? and why?*"

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



The story of public housing in Alnwick (Part-3, 1939 onwards)

Immediately before the start of the second world war the housing priority had been slum clearance. Some progress had been made with this when war intervened, but even before four million homes were destroyed or damaged the stock of housing was inadequate and in poor condition – both nationally and in Alnwick.

The emphasis since 1924 had been on providing sufficient affordable housing for those on relatively low incomes, but the aim nationally was now to meet the “general needs” of a wider range of society. This required a radical approach and as they prepared for post-war reconstruction the government anticipated that their efforts to address housing shortages would be hampered by a lack of skilled manpower and a shortage of materials. Just as they had been in the aftermath of the first world war. Scarcities drive costs up, and this would increase the pressure on public finances.

Immediately after the first world war housing standards had been influenced by the Tudor Walters Committee. Similarly, towards the end of the Second World War, the Dudley Committee was asked to “make recommendations as to the design, planning, layout, standards of construction and equipment of dwellings”. They reviewed the Tudor Walters guidance, recognized that lifestyles had continued to change, and identified some of the mistakes that had been made. There were many of these: the development of large estates; separation of private and municipal housing; insufficient provision of amenities such as churches, schools, shops, and open spaces; location of residential estates too far from employment; and insufficient variety in the types of dwelling provided. However, these problems were most pressing in the large cities that had suffered considerable bomb damage. The Dudley recommendations had less impact on towns like Alnwick, which faced different issues.

The map on Page 8 was published shortly after the war, but surveyed just before. It shows how pre-war estates had extended the boundary of the town, while leaving space for further development within the boundary. Some of that space had been created by demolition of sub-standard housing. Alnwick did not suffer bomb damage, but the medical officer was reporting “an acute shortage of houses” in 1944, then in 1945 “considerable progress with the preparation of schemes for Post War Housing”.

A New Towns Act of 1946 allowed the government to designate new towns around major conurbations, but this did not directly affect Alnwick. More significantly, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 established a new system



of planning permissions that gave local authorities wide-ranging powers over development, and introduced extensive grants to help local authorities carry out major redevelopments. The Northumberland Local Plan currently anticipates that the number of houses needed in Alnwick will increase by an average of 48 houses per year for the next twenty years. So it is remarkable that Alnwick's housing stock increased by about 250 over the five years that immediately followed the war: a rate of building that has not been matched since.

In the post-war period the only notable privately-funded development was the scheme to build the six Duke's Memorial Cottages near the foot of Pottergate. These were dedicated to the memory of Henry George Alan, the ninth Duke of Northumberland, who had been killed in action in Flanders in 1940; and to other sons of Alnwick who lost their lives in the war. However, these were an exception. Behind the Duke's Memorial Cottages were eight more cottages built by the council at the same time, and between the end of the war and 1949, 94% of new houses in Alnwick were built for the council.

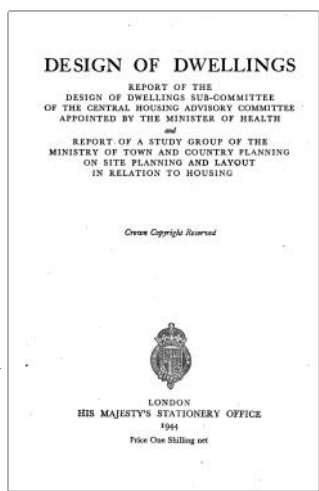
- 50 prefabs in Augur Terrace (1946)
- 150 houses in Lower Barresdale (1947)
- 28 units at Ravensmede (1948)
- 8 older peoples cottages, at Bow Burn Cottages (1948)

In the 1950s new house building in Alnwick continued to include significant developments by the council. However, the private sector was now starting to play a more important role. Developments by Alnwick council in the 1950s produced 80% of new houses with 216 homes (nationally councils were building about two-thirds of new houses in the 1950s):

- 42 houses at Alwynside (1952)
- 68 houses at Windsor Gardens (1953)
- 42 houses in Greensfield Avenue (1953)
- 64 houses at St James (1956)

Other public bodies and private development in the 1950s accounted for the remaining 20%, with 53 homes:

- 11 Firemen's Houses by the County Council (1952)
- 22 houses on Blakelaw Road West (1953)
- 2 Police Houses by the County Council (1953)
- 4 houses on Prudhoe Street (1953)
- 14 houses on Blakelaw Road East (1955)

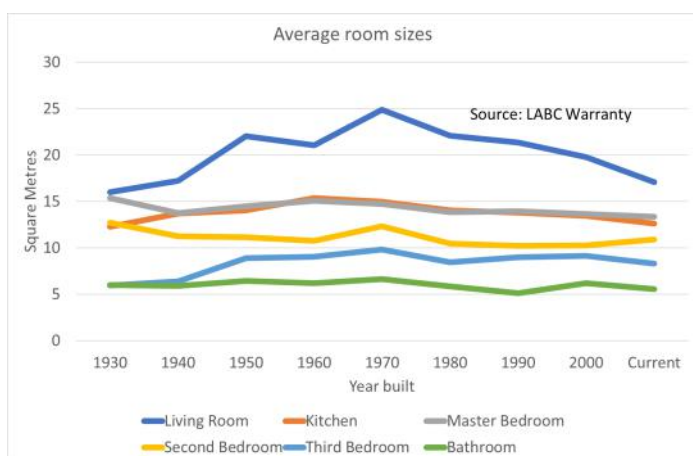


Public Housing (continued)

It's difficult to know exactly what the size of the Alnwick's housing stock was at this time, because the relevant statistics aren't consistent (estimates of the number of households in Alnwick produced by different agencies during the 1950s differed by about 10%). However, we know that almost 270 new houses were built in Alnwick during the 1950s, and we can be confident that the housing stock only increased by about 100. Expectations were rising, substandard houses were being demolished or abandoned to other uses, and trends that began in the 1950s, accelerated in the 1960s.

The rising expectations were reflected at national level by an influential report on housing produced by the Parker Morris Committee in 1961. This concluded that the quality of social housing needed to improve, and made a number of recommendations based on the space needed for a more informal lifestyle, families spending more time at home, and expanding ownership of consumer goods. The Parker Morris Standards were reflected in the Ministry of Housing's design bulletin "Space in the Home" and from 1969 until 1980 they were mandatory for all new council housing (in practice they had already been adopted by many councils, including Alnwick). Although Parker Morris standards were not mandatory for private housing they were still influential. It is notable that the average size of a new house in Britain peaked in the 1970s and has since been shrinking. On average today's houses are roughly the same size as those built immediately before and after the war; and about 20% smaller than those built in the decade following publication of the Parker Morris Report.

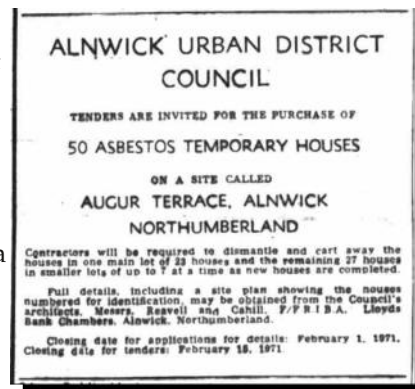
In Alnwick by the start of the 1960s the building of significant numbers of new council houses had relieved some of the pressure for more housing. The council now owned 1,020 houses in Alnwick. This represented 40% of a total stock of 2,450, and compared to 25% of the housing stock nationally being council-owned.



At this time, government intervention to improve the housing stock was not limited to council housing. The council was also able to pay half the cost of improvements to a privately owned house. In the early 1960s this provided an average grant of £221 to install up to five "standard amenities" (a bath or shower, a wash hand basin, hot water supply, a water closet, or a food

store). The scheme was not widely taken up in Alnwick, and when it was used, it was mainly by owner-occupiers. Landlords were less keen to take advantage of a scheme that primarily benefited their tenants.

There was also work under way in the early 1960s to replace sub-standard housing in two designated redevelopment areas: one on Clayport and one off Green Batt. Progress here was hindered by the slow pace of negotiations with owners and tenants. Five years earlier there had been 240 houses considered unfit in Alnwick, but only 49 had been demolished. The number of substandard houses that needed redevelopment was a constantly moving target as expectations rose, and poorly maintained property deteriorated. The authorities anticipated that another ten years would be needed to deal with the remainder, meaning that slums would only be eliminated in the early 1970s.



Alnwick's housing stock only increased by about 50 during the 1960s. In the early years of the decade the medical officer was showing some frustration at the slow pace of change. At the time it was thought that the population of the town was increasing. The county had anticipated that the rural population would decline, and as a market town, Alnwick was designated as a Main Growth Point for creating new jobs. Nationally, life expectancy was increasing, and there was a growing number of young families. The medical officer raised his estimate of the town's population by almost 400 in 1968. But the 1971 Census later revealed that the number of people living in Alnwick had not increased. The population of the town in 1971 was 7,220: lower than the 1961 census figure of 7,550. There had been a population drift away from surrounding rural areas, but wherever country people were drifting to, it wasn't into Alnwick. Life expectancy hadn't changed much, but the report "Alnwick: Cause for concern" identified a more serious issue: people were leaving Alnwick at the age when they would normally expect to start a family.

However, there was progress with new house building by the middle of the decade. In the end, more than 300 new houses were built during the 1960s. Meanwhile, more than 100 substandard houses were demolished and dozens more ceased to be used for housing.

By the early 1970s the town had been grappling with slum clearance for more than a century. It was back in 1867 that Dr George Seaton Buchanan, medical inspector of the Local Government Board, had highlighted three particularly bad areas of poor housing near the foot of Clayport. With schemes on the north side of Clayport in 1965, and then at Westgate House on the south side in

Public Housing (continued)

1966 they had managed to replace Buchanan's Area-3 and Area-2 with modern housing, but it had taken almost a hundred years. In the case of Westgate House, they could boast that the five two-bedroom maisonettes, three three-bedroom maisonettes, twenty-five one bedroom flats and four bed sitting rooms were built to the Parker Morris standards.

In 1969 the council reported to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on what remained to be done about substandard housing in Alnwick. They had scheduled 63 more houses for demolition over the period 1970-73. This included a small number of unfit houses in Dodd's Lane and in Hotspur Street. However, the majority of houses that needed to go were the fifty prefabricated bungalows on Augur Terrace that had been constructed immediately after the war. They were now almost twenty-five years old, compared to an original life expectancy of just ten years.

The major council developments in the 1960s were:

- St Michael's Square, 19 units (1963)
- St Paul's Garth, 8 units (1963)
- Clayport North West side, 31 units (1965)
- Westgate House, 37 units (1966)

The large private developments in the 1960s were:

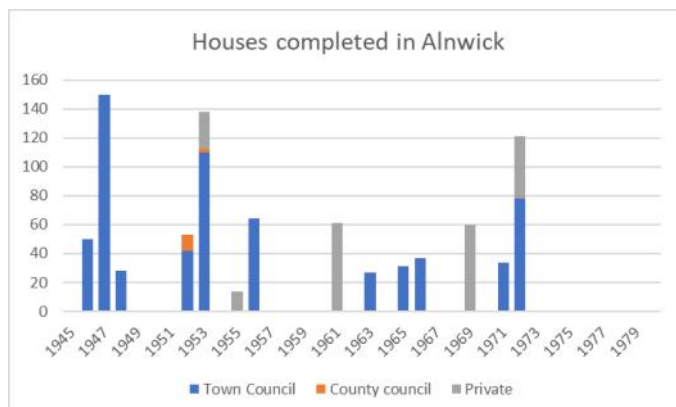
- Oaky Balks, 61 houses (1961)
- Chapel Lands, 60 houses (1969)

By the time Alnwick entered the 1970s the number of houses had increased, but households were getting smaller. There were fewer people living in the town, and they were living in better conditions.

The significant works carried out by the council in the 1970s included 78 houses on Cornhill Estate to replace the Augur Terrace prefabs built after the war. There were also developments of 12 flats at Lisburn Court and 22 dwellings at the top of Pottergate.

As interest rates rose it was getting increasingly expensive for local authorities to borrow. General Improvement Areas were introduced to channel subsidies towards improvement of existing housing instead of new building. In Alnwick this funded refurbishment of 70 pre-war council houses on St. Thomas' Crescent, 58 on St. George's Crescent, and 100 in Barresdale and Howling Lane. Improvement grants were also still available to private owners, and 179 discretionary grants had been awarded. However, there was continuing disappointment (and some surprise) at the low number of applications – even though the average grant had increased to £936, and could cover up to 75% of the cost.

In 1973 the report "Alnwick: Cause for Concern" noted that Alnwick had a high proportion of council housing (45% vs. 32% in Hexham). Progress had been made, but standards of maintenance were disappointing, and there was a problem with over-crowding. For example, across the county 4.2% of the population were living at a density of more than 1½ people per room. In Alnwick the proportion was 5.8%. In other words, about 400 people in Alnwick were living in the highest density category.



The report called for more council houses: to address the waiting list, improve living conditions and enable employers to attract and house workers. It also saw a need for private housing to increase social mobility and satisfy a demand from commuters who worked in Morpeth and elsewhere.

Council developments in the 1970s:

- Lisburn Court, 12 units (1971)
- Pottergate, 22 units (1971)
- Cornhill Estate, 78 units (1972)

Private developments in the 1970s

- Meadow Riggs (1972)
- St James Estate (1975)
- The Maltings (1978)

We began this story of Alnwick's housing with the shock that people felt in the 1850s when they realized the poor condition of Alnwick's worst housing. As we draw our account to a close, the authorities had been working for 125 years to improve standards. With hindsight we might wonder at the length of time it took. However, 125 years can also be used as a measure of the scale of the task that they had taken on. On that interpretation we can better understand the pride they felt in what had been achieved. As the medical officer reported in 1972:

"If those involved with environmental conditions in 1902 were to have returned seventy years later they could have been excused for thinking that, in the lifetime of the babies born in their year, most of what they had set out to do had been achieved".

In a previous chapter we remarked that pre-war council housing schemes had a lasting impact on the structure of the town. Larger post-war council housing schemes continued to stretch the town to the North West and South East, but smaller schemes mainly filled gaps inside the existing built-up area.

Since 1972 the private sector has undertaken almost all residential building, and there have been no major local authority housing developments in Alnwick.

Responsibility for council housing transferred from Alnwick Urban District Council to Northumberland County Council in 2009, but ownership of the stock was already changing: right to buy had been introduced in 1979, and housing associations were now taking a lead in delivering social housing. So this is a good place to end our story.

Alnwick Old Town in a Changing Climate

Our annual Any Questions debate took a different form this year, as a partnership between Alnwick Civic Society, Friends of the Earth, and the Duchess's Community High School. The theme of "Alnwick Old Town in a Changing Climate" attracted a large audience, and revealed some strongly-held views. A well-informed panel took on some challenging questions from the audience. But these complex issues were never going to resolve into one simple conclusion. The real value of the evening lay in airing the issues, and exploring some options.

The panel consisted of: Gordon Castle (one of the two Northumberland County Councillors for Alnwick), Peter Edge (an Alnwick Town Councillor), Martin Swinbank (widely engaged in the subject, but on this occasion representing Alnwick Area Friends of the Earth), Tim Miller-Fay (the lead officer for Northumberland County Council's Climate Emergency Group) and Daisy Carnegie (year 10 Student at DCHS, and a Climate Change activist).

Before taking questions from the audience the panel provided some background on the policy objectives, local initiatives, and campaigning activity. Then, as the discussion moved forward, some of the challenges began to emerge.

There was a widespread feeling that awareness was improving, but nobody on the panel felt that simple acceptance of climate change was enough. The widespread implications for farming and food supply, housing, transport, heritage, and tourism mean that we need to create a greater sense of urgency, and wider public engagement.

We discussed a variety of actions that might be taken to mitigate risk, or (where necessary) adapt to inevitable consequences of climate change. The National Planning Policy Framework imposes some limits on what local authorities can do (particularly in shaping commercial developments). However, pressure can be applied, and there are areas where changes are happening now. Examples include local action to mitigate flood risk; re-assessing the economics over the lifetime of affordable housing and exploring the feasibility of alternatives for heating homes. The project to upgrade street lighting has not always gone smoothly, but is now almost complete.

There was no shortage of further ideas. The discussion ranged across vehicle charging points, relevance of apprenticeships, codes of practice for transport providers, use of plastics and recycling in general, allotments, tree planting, consumption of meat, solar panels, and adaptation of historic buildings.

Some of the challenges at a local level are to understand how limited resources are best used to make the greatest impact on emissions, and how to benchmark outcomes.

National government will also need to get a stronger grip on some key issues. They have been faced with a number of critical reports and there is a growing will to do better: more will be needed.

At an individual level we can also make a difference. We will have to accept some compromises, but we know that some of the actions we can take to reduce emissions will also save money, and provide health benefits.

We left with much food for thought. Our first thanks go to 120 audience members who participated in the debate: energetically, and with some passion. Thanks to the Duchess's Community High School for hosting the event, providing refreshments and helping with promotion; to

members of Friends of the Earth for helping with organisation and promotion, and for the support they gave to the chair. Special thanks to Rosie Bush, the Culture and Community Coordinator at the Duchess's Community High School, to David Lovie for taking on the difficult role of chair, and to panel members: Gordon Castle, Peter Edge, Martin Swinbank, Tim Miller-Fay and Daisy Carnegie.

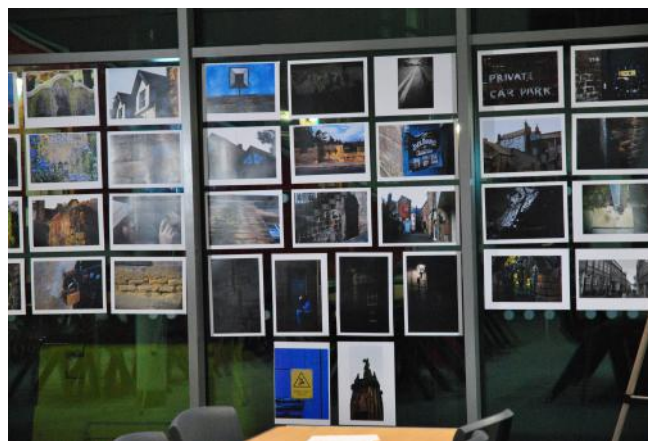
We hear that since this event, others are looking at how this format of discussion can be repeated elsewhere. No doubt more needs to be done to raise awareness of the impact of climate change, but one key lesson from the evening was that we have reached a point where many people are ready to move beyond simple awareness,

and are now seeking deeper understanding. The more the whole community engages with these complex issues, the better we will all understand the implications. We are all going to rely on decisions that are better informed.



Alongside the debate, teacher Richard Hay and year 12 students organised an impressive exhibition on the theme of Alnwick Old Town in a changing climate. The students operated as a Photography collective rather than individuals, with the project contextualised as a real world research brief. They set out to find questions rather than answers, and to challenge assumptions about what they might find.

"We were struck by their thoughtful choice of subjects".



Photographs in this article by Chris Dropchinski, a year 13 student.

Alnwick's Cobbles: Members' views

David Lovie met with representatives from the Town Council and officers from the County Council on 12th December to discuss repair of the Cobbles. Officers confirmed that some funding is available, and more will become available in future. They will now consider the options for repair and in doing so would look at materials, parking, design and the historic context. We have provided them with a summary of views submitted by Civic Society members, including the following key points.

There is acceptance that parking on the cobbles will continue, but not necessarily over the full extent. Although parking causes some frustration more than 80% of members agreed that it could not be eliminated, and half of those agreed strongly. Only one disagreed, but others are reserving judgment. Almost everyone therefore concludes that the surface needs to be sufficiently robust.

- Many flats have been added nearby with little or no parking provision. Many need a quick central parking for limited times.
- If we are to retain parking, could this just be to the strip adjacent to the road? This would increase the area available to pedestrians without overly reducing the capacity of parking.
- ...the cavalier attitude of some drivers who ignore the parking requirements is unacceptable.

Views differ on whether cobbles can withstand the wear and tear of cars manouvering. Most (60%) do not think cobbles are robust enough, so do not think they will be practical over the full extent. However, 40% either disagree, or feel uncertain. There is a significant number who believe that cobbles would be robust enough, if properly laid. This view is partly based on historical precedent, and partly on examples elsewhere, so it goes further than a misunderstanding of the terminology (setts vs. cobbles). The choice of surface may need to be justified.

- We saw them relaying the whinstone cobbles in the 80s. The cobbles were originally laid vertically, giving a much tighter and more robust surface (which modern vehicles would not damage - as can be seen elsewhere, e.g. Edinburgh). We saw the YTS scheme relaying the cobbles flat - this was much easier to do, and required only a third of the stones, but leaving an inferior and more fragile surface. resulting in truckloads of surplus cobbles being transported away (probably to landfill??). Too late to change now, but perhaps consideration could be given to relaying the whinstones properly in some limited locations, as a genuine heritage restoration project?

- Properly laid and maintained cobbles can cope with the weight and passage of motor vehicles (e.g. Kelso town centre).

There is broad agreement that higher standards are now expected for mobility, and a recognition that offering safe mobility across the full extent of the cobbles will be a challenge. Views are divided on what this means for the surface treatment. The majority believe the surface needs to be smoother, a few disagree, and some reserve judgement. The majority would accept an approach that offered better mobility over part, but not all, of the cobbled area.

However, not all agree, and it will be necessary to take account of some strongly-held views, based on personal experience.

- I have spent the last year walking with the aid of two sticks and so can say that the cobbles area is most unfriendly nay dangerous.



- As a person with reduced mobility, I daren't walk down the slope of Bondgate, it's too sloping. But the Market Place is worse with its many loose cobbles and big gaps.
- I find the cobbles difficult and uncomfortable to walk on. I know someone who broke her ankle after slipping and have seen people fall. I think that the cobbles are a real hazard and that public safety should be paramount.
- We need to preserve the appearance but make them safe.
- Pedestrian walkways laid with setts should be provided at regular intervals.
- Because of mobility problems I now avoid the cobbled area. Reluctantly, it has become a 'dead' area of town for me. Too many falls!

There is broad consensus that the appearance of the cobbles should be preserved, and that natural stone should be used, but respondents feel more strongly about the principle of preserving appearance than about the specific material. Almost all (90%) agreed that appearance should be preserved, but the proportion who felt that only natural stone was acceptable was just 66% of respondents.

- Trees and cobbles are the essence of Alnwick centre.
- Local people should have chance to see samples of various materials laid on a small part of the cobbles and comment on them as part of the process of choosing which to use and in what ways

Respondents will expect further public consultation so that their views can be aired. No strong feelings were expressed about maintaining consistency with treatment in the marketplace, but there was a degree of support for use of dark granite to match the existing wagonway, and approaches that used different colours to mark out zones and routes gain some support.

Respondents all supported the reinstatement of trees, but there was less support for reducing the extent of impervious surfaces. We cannot say whether these preferences reflect informed views on how the effects of climate change are best mitigated, a lack of clarity about what would be involved, or whether they are primarily driven by aesthetic considerations.

- Large grated areas surrounding the trees would allow for drainage and help keep the trees healthy.

Planning matters

Extensive roof repairs are required at the Duchess High School Annex in Bailiffgate. The application is a useful reminder of the importance of maintaining older buildings. As the work is clearly needed we saw no reason to comment.

We did not comment on proposals for new signage at McDonald's on Cawledge Business Park; or Turnbull's Northumberland Food Hall on Taylor Drive. However, it was encouraging to see that advertisement consent has been refused for two Product banners on the North East Press (Northumberland Gazette) building at 32 Bondgate Without, because the proposed signage would have a significant detrimental impact upon the visual amenity of the street scene within this part of the Alnwick Conservation Area and upon the setting of nearby listed buildings (contrary to a number of provisions of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, Core Strategy, Local Plan and the NPPF).

Alnwick Town Council and Building Conservation both objected to the size, scale and material of the banners, which *"altered the building into one large advertisement hoarding"* and *"harms the setting of several designated heritage assets, including some of the highest national significance"*.

On a similar theme we have been encouraged by support from both county and town councils for increased emphasis on shopfront design within the conservation area. We hope to report progress in the next newsletter.

On Willowburn Trading Estate Northumberland Estates have submitted proposals for the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of a 3-storey hotel including a bar/restaurant and parking. While we had already welcomed this idea in principle, we agreed that the design of the building was unacceptably brutal, and submitted the following objections:

1. The statement by the applicants that there is an *"excess of employment land within the area"*. The Neighbourhood Plan explicitly protects employment land. Alnwick is growing fast and we need to protect employment land so that we can be a sustainable community in the future.
2. The brutal and hideous architecture. The building is massive and blocky and looks like an office block. It is unfriendly. A typical Premier Inn as illustrated in the proposal has a roof and is broken up to look less massive. This site is at the entrance to Alnwick and may be visible from the A1. It is important to create a good visual impression of Alnwick.
3. The cladding does not appear to be specified as wood. We expect applicants to use sustainable building materials.
4. We should like more clarity on the proposed use of the other half of the site so that the quality of the access proposals can be properly assessed.



We have registered our support for the replacement of upvc windows at 6A Hotspur Place.



Proposals have been submitted to convert Ravensmount to eight luxury apartments. This building earned an entry in **The Arts and Crafts Movement in the North-East of England** by Barrie & Wendy Armstrong. *"Ravensmount, Alnmouth Road is a late nineteenth century stone-built*

house with black and white detailing and a later large black and white extension which stands impressively overlooking the valley. It has been a care home since 1960 but has retained its art nouveau stained glass in its staircase windows and other smaller windows downstairs. The glass is reminiscent in style of those at the UR church in Wooler with luscious looking stylized peach-bearing branches". We would like to know whether the stained glass will be preserved.

Natural England (a government body) has informed our planning authority that they consider Alnwick to be within the zone of influence of the coastal area. Any potential increase in the population of Alnwick may result in extra visitors to the coast. They have therefore commented on the Ravensmount application that this will cause harm to the coast and the Council must order an Assessment, and the assessment must list the measures to help the environment in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This is the result of a ruling by the European Court of Justice.

The problem is that these Assessments are very expensive. They cover biodiversity, protected species, habitats, woodland, protected landscapes, soil, access and recreation, rights of way, and environmental enhancement. The costs of having to provide an assessment fall on the applicant for planning permission.

People may well be put off from applying for planning permission in Alnwick unless they are very rich. This leaves Alnwick in the power of big businesses without challenge, and unduly restricts opportunities. We think this is grossly unfair.



No application seems to have been submitted for the disabled access ramp at the Playhouse. While we saw no issues with the design, it is not good practice for the County Council to by-pass the planning process, setting a poor example to others.

The next phase of the Northumberland Local Plan public examination will be concerned with policies to do with natural resources such as minerals, waste and renewable energy. These matters are important and of interest, but we are not the principal body to be concerned, so we declined an invitation to be represented.

Roadblocks

With thanks to Ian Hall, author of Relics of War: A Guide to the 20th Military Remains in the Northumberland Landscape

At what point does our past become history? And which parts of our history do we see as heritage? The Second World War is a case in point. Today, WW2 is history and we understand how pivotal this conflict was, for better and for worse, in shaping the world we live in today, but how good are we at preserving remains from this period?

Northumberland's landscape contains many reminders of "the war", but until recently, these remains have been seen as eyesores. It is only, perhaps, because so much use was made of thick concrete that so many have survived. While most people are familiar with the wartime concrete blocks which line the county's coast, many are unaware of the relics that survive within our towns.

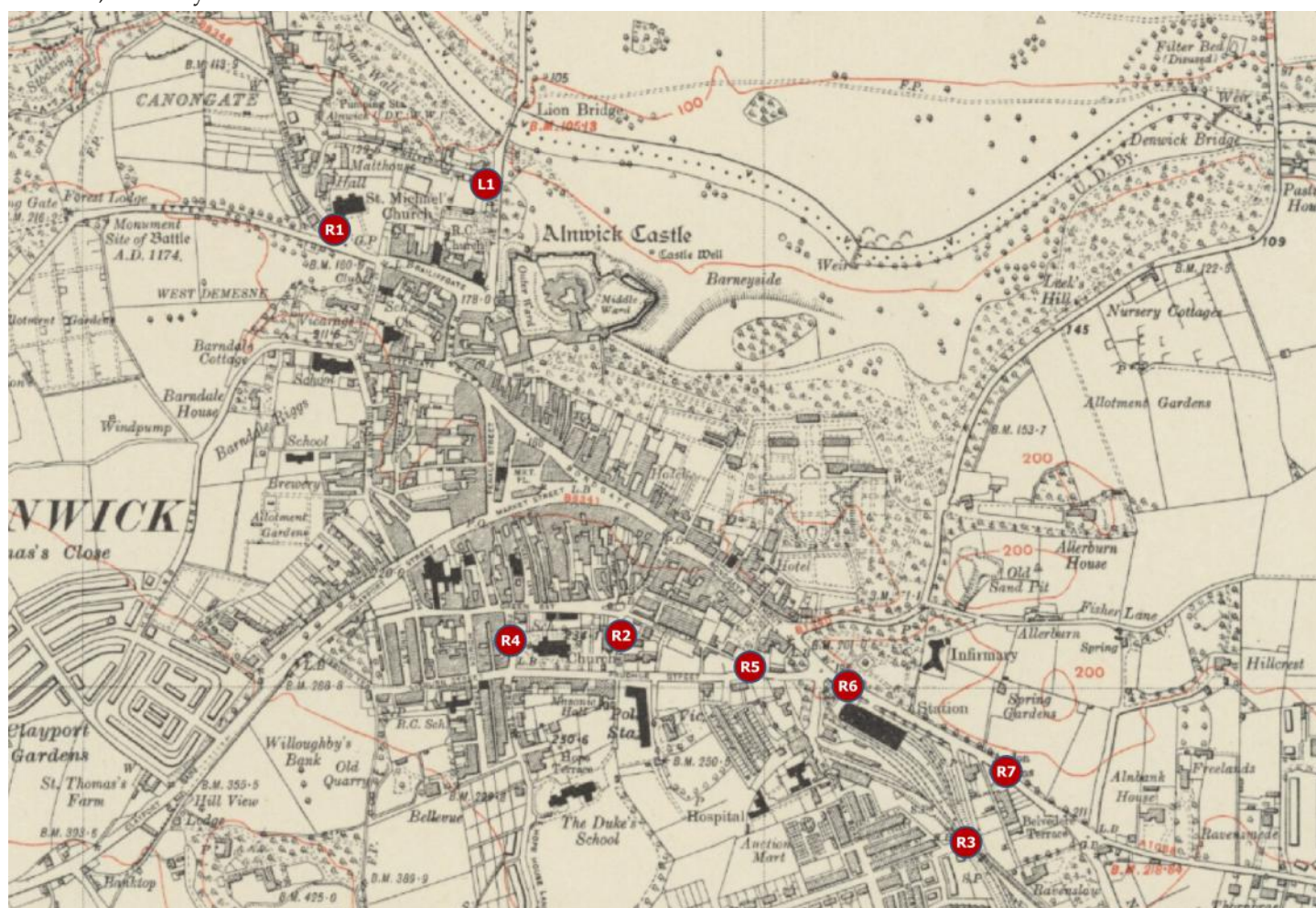
In the summer of 1940, Britain stood alone, facing a Europe dominated by the forces of Nazi Germany. The prospect of invasion was real, so a massive construction programme was started to create the necessary defences to repulse this threat. Coastal defences and lines of inland pillboxes were constructed. At the same time, towns were encircled with defences, the aim of which was to control the main road connections so restricting the movement of any invading force.

In Alnwick, many of us are familiar with the loopholes in the cemetery wall, which would have provided some defence for the South Road entrance to the town. Other loopholes can be seen high in the wall of a building, overlooking the Lion Bridge, and also in a wall near the Abbey, protecting the road from Eglington. There were, however, other layers to the town's defences.



L1 – loophole near Lion Bridge

Roadblocks were built on all roads which led to the town centre. While most of these have disappeared, some traces remain. A common design of roadblock consisted of a series of sockets which were dug about four feet into the ground, normally fitted with wooden covers. In times of high risk, these covers were removed and lengths of steel – RSJs or railway track – inserted into the sockets, protruding about three feet above ground level, so creating a strong barrier. Usually consisting of three parallel, offset holes, these sockets have often proved resistant to subsequent decades of resurfacing.



Roadblocks (continued)



Roadblock – example of roadblock being built – but not in Alnwick!

South Road in 2007; one near the entrance to Barter Books, with another towards Belvedere Terrace. Others have been reported on the Denwick Bridge, and on Clayport Bank.

So back to the question of history and heritage. These faint relics of WW2 are certainly 'history', but should we consider them 'heritage'? Are they worth preserving? If the answer is yes, how might we best mark these sites?

As a final footnote, some parallel can perhaps be drawn with the long-demolished Clayport Tower. William Davison records, in 1822, that "*four small square stones with the initial 'T' are all that remain to point out its*

original situation and extent."

These markers themselves are now lost.



R1 – roadblock outside St Michael's church



R4 – roadblock on Percy Street

So where are these to be found? There is a clear roadblock outside St. Michael's church, with another on Percy Street, near the Mechanic's Institute. Other fainter ones can be seen on the north end of Bridge Street, on Grey Place, at the junction between Prudhoe Street and Dovecote Lane, and at the entrance to the tunnel next to Turnbull's the butchers.

There may well be others. Two were seen during the major road repairs which were carried out on



R6 – roadblock outside Barter Books – from 2007 – courtesy of Cliff Pettit



R3 – roadblock at end of Bridge Street



R5 – roadblock at end of Dovecote Lane



R7 – roadblock near Belvedere Terrace – from 2007 – courtesy of Cliff Pettit

News in Brief

Congratulations to all at Bailiffgate museum who were involved in raising the funds needed to upgrade their security systems in preparation for an important summer exhibition "Vikings Fact & Fiction". This will now go ahead in partnership with Jorvik Viking Centre in York. The successful appeal also means that in future Bailiffgate will be able to bring important items from national museums and galleries within our reach.

Over the three years that we have been running our Christmas Shop Window Competition the judging has become harder. More shops are dressing their windows, and the quality has progressed to include some intensively crafted scenarios. This year, after lengthy deliberation the judges chose Elemental in Fenkle Street and The Beehive in Narrowgate.



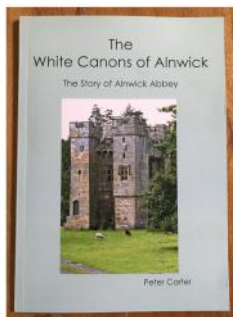
Awards were presented to Jemma Archbald and Cerys Williams of Elemental and Samantha Hobrough of The Beehive.



Elemental filled its long window space with a detailed representation of a room dressed for Christmas, but with an unexpected twist. A number of naughty (and a bit rude!) elves are creating mayhem. At the Beehive a wild outdoor scene is fitted into a narrow window, with a golden haired Snow Queen riding a swan towards the onlooker. The Judges also commended two other Christmas windows: the exquisite tresses of decorations at Emporium on Narrowgate and the silver landscape illuminated with sparkling electric blue lights at M.A. Tailoring in Bow Alley. We thank all the traders who have made such efforts to make the shop windows of Alnwick's centre

such a delight for our community and our visitors in Christmas 2019, and welcome the extra nativities which Christians Together in Alnwick have been encouraging and supplying, to add deeper meaning.

Nothing remains of Alnwick Abbey, other than an impressive gatehouse. Have you ever wondered about the buildings that were once there, and the people who lived in the abbey? Peter Carter did, and the results of his research have been published as "*The White Canons of Alnwick: the story of Alnwick Abbey*". We recommend it.



We are engaging with a number of other bodies in exploring options for tree planting and a wildlife corridor. There is widespread interest, and with the help of the Town Council a coordinated plan is being formulated.

Litter on Column Field at present is not too bad, but we have had no response from Northumberland Estates about the hole in the lion. We have now drawn the matter to the attention of the county council's conservation officer.

Congratulations to Robbie Moore, who was elected as MP for Keighley in December 2019. Robbie was one of two County Councillors for Alnwick and was on a number of committees, so several members have asked about the implications of his new role, and particularly about how this affects our rights to make representations during the planning process.

It would normally take a few months to organise a by-election, but luckily Alnwick Ward has two elected

members on the County Council. So in the interim the town's interests will continue to be represented by Gordon Castle.



Most planning matters are decided by officers under delegated powers, but around 10%, including the most contentious, are decided by the Planning Committee. Members of the Planning Committee do not have unlimited discretion. Their role is quasi-judicial - to decide whether applications fall within the guidelines. They must avoid any conflict of interest or perception that they have predetermined an application. Inevitably, any councillor who has close links with the local community sometimes has to declare an interest and leave a decision to others on the committee. This has happened with our own councillors, but it does not affect our right to submit comments on any planning application, or make representations to councillors (including members of the Planning Committee). We also have experienced representatives on Alnwick Town Council. Their Planning Committee regularly submits comments on applications affecting the town. Although they have no statutory authority in planning matters, they are well-informed, and we know that their views are considered with care and carry weight at county level.

The Civic Society also takes an interest in applications that have an impact on the general character of Alnwick. We hope our comments are seen as representing the views of members and the wider community, rather than just a few individuals. So we leave it for neighbours to raise any concerns that do not affect the wider community. However, we are always happy to discuss the specific concerns of members, and will try to help with advice on the planning process and your rights.

Details of the planning process can be found on the NCC web site

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning.aspx>

The work of the Strategic Planning Committee is here:

<http://committee.northumberland.gov.uk/Committee.aspx?BodyID=204>

The North Northumberland Local Area Council:

<http://committee.northumberland.gov.uk/Committee.aspx?BodyID=218>

Alnwick Town Council Planning Committee

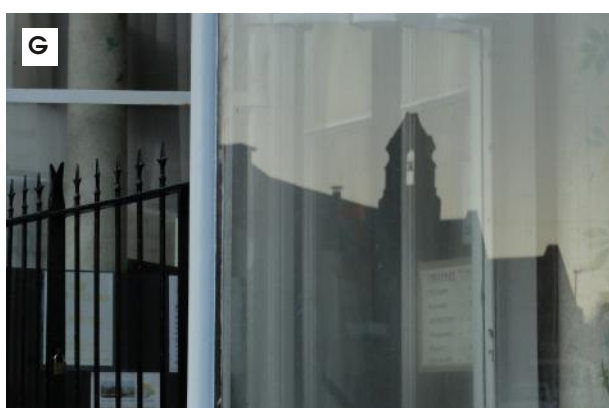
<https://alnwick-tc.gov.uk/committees/>.



Quiz: A time for reflection

Each of the eight images below shows a well-known Alnwick landmark reflected in a shop window. Easy points are earned by recognising the landmarks. The more challenging points are earned by naming the shops. All of the landmarks and shops are in the conservation area.

Twice the usual number of points are on offer, as well as the warm glow of satisfaction that comes from recognising more than your friends and family. We advise that you check your answers on the back page, reflect on how well you have done, then award yourself a suitable prize from one of Alnwick's excellent independent retailers.



Diary dates Civic Society...

Our **Annual General Meeting** will be held on March 18th, at 7:00 p.m. in the St James Centre, Pottergate. As well as celebrating the achievements of the last year and looking forward to a busy year in 2020, Ian Hall will speak on a little-known relic of WW-II: *"Heiferlaw Zero Station: what? and why?"*

...and more

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

- 25th February: Alnwick Moor – Phil Huntley
- 24th March: AGM & The Secrets of Coquet Island, Dr Paul Morrison
- 28th April: The Life of Rev John Hodgson: Northumbrian Antiquarian, Geoff Holder

Morpeth Civic Society holds meetings in the Methodist Church, Howard Road, Morpeth, at 7.30 p.m. Contributions towards tea & coffee are welcome.

- 12th February: The refurbishment of Morpeth Railway Station, David Lodge, Chief Executive, Greater Morpeth Development Trust
- 11th March: Regeneration in Northumberland, Coun. Richard Wearmouth, Northumberland County Council

Berwick Civic Society. Talks are held in the Parish Centre, starting at 7.30pm. Non-members are welcome to attend for £2

- 12th February: The Burrell Collection Paul East
- 11th March: An update on the Berwick Barracks Project, Sir Philip Mawer

Heaton History Group has a talk on 25th March at The Corner House, Heaton, about the Battle of Otterburn in 1388, and the part played by Harry Hotspur as he took on his Scottish rival, the Earl of Douglas. Details at <https://heatonhistorygroup.org/>

Felton Park Greenhouse will be open from 30th March to 13th April 2020 and then from 5th to 12th July.

Howick Hall Gardens and Tea Room will be open from 8th Feb, Wed – Sun 10.30am – 4pm.

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.



Who's Who?

President: Philip Deakin

Acting Chair: David Lovie (davidlovie307@btinternet.com)

Treasurer and Membership: Gill Parker

Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith

Other Executive Committee members:

- Peter Ennor
- John Hipwell
- Mary McIlroy Hipwell
- Elizabeth Jones
- Peter Reed / Newsletter (peter.reedhome@btinternet.com)

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Email: alnwickcivicsoc@gmail.com

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

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

Help needed

The society is engaged in a variety of different activities. If you would like to get more involved, or have particular interests, skills or expertise to contribute, then please let us know.

At each Annual General Meeting we invite nominations for the positions of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Committee Members. Nomination forms are available on request. Please return them to a member of the committee by Monday 9th March. If you would like to know more about these roles, please ask one of the committee members.



Quiz Answers

- Northumberland Hall reflected in the window of the Post Office.
- Town Hall Tower, reflected in the window of Notes of Northumberland on Fenkle Street.
- The old Savings Bank, reflected in the window of Capella on Narrowgate.
- Dome on Bailey's reflected in the window of Copperfields.
- Pottergate Tower reflected in the window of Bari Tea.
- White Swan reflected in the window of Bell & sons on Bondgate Within.
- Former Library reflected in the window of Wilson Taylor Picture Framers (Green Bat).
- St Michael's Pant reflected in the window of Turnbull's.