

May 2021



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As Covid restrictions ease we are all hoping normal life can start to resume. The next major opportunity for Civic Society members to get together will be for an Autumn *"Any Questions"* discussion. We will announce details in our August newsletter.

Meanwhile, we continue doing what we can to keep members in touch and we hope we can count on your support :

- On May 19<sup>th</sup> Phil Huntley will give an online talk on Alnwick's Burns.
- We invite your suggestions for other online talks.
- On Sept 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> we need members who can volunteer to help with a variety of activities on Heritage Open Days.

Details of these are on the back page. There are further opportunities to help with litter picks, heritage walks, tree protection, problem reporting, planning scrutiny, etc. Where would you like to get more involved?



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Please check that your subscription is up to date (see back page)

# Annual General Meeting

*Our AGM was held 17<sup>th</sup> March. Because of lockdown we had to cancel the 2020 AGM, and put interim arrangements in place so that the work of the society could continue.*

We began by reviewing minutes from 2019 and 2020. Both were accepted as a true record with no matters arising.

## Chair's Report

Sadly we lost our former chair, David Lovie, in July, and our president, Philip Deakin, in October. David had contributed his extensive knowledge and experience of heritage and conservation; and had led the society's Heritage Heroes project. Philip had been a driving force behind the founding of the society over 40 years ago. There have been other changes on the committee during the year, and 2020 is not a year that any of us will want to repeat. However, two new members: Ian Hall and Mary Carter joined the committee bringing good, new ideas.

We continue to monitor planning applications, and comment where necessary. We tracked progress in preparing a new local plan for Northumberland, and we followed the proposed changes to the planning system nationally. Covid has had a variety of effects: accelerating change on the high street, forcing the council to introduce temporary measures, and delaying publication of updated guidance. Overall we see a growing role for the society, but do not yet feel we are making the impact that we would wish.

We have made good progress with identifying examples of heritage assets at risk in the town; and we facilitated discussions on some of the most critical issues. We have also started work on a major new project with the Historic Towns Trust to prepare a historic map of Alnwick and Alnmouth. Northumberland does not have a Local Heritage List, but we think it should - so we started an exercise to identify local buildings of note. In future we hope this will help us to contribute to development of a Local List for Northumberland.

As usual Civic Society members have helped to keep Alnwick clean and tidy. Friends of Column Field continue to clear litter on one of Alnwick's most prominent landmarks; members distributed bags for dog poo during the first lock-down; participated in the Town Council litter pick; and we also pick litter as individuals. As well as litter, we are concerned about the clutter of fixtures that disfigure the conservation area. The quality of our townscape helps attract the visitors who will underpin Alnwick's economic recovery. So we have been pressing for more effective reporting of these issues, modelling our approach on the "Eyes and Ears" initiative that has proved successful elsewhere. A small sub-group of members can advise on how different issues should be reported, and we track them so we can follow-up and identify hot-spots. It's too early to judge whether this is going to have the desired result, but we are hopeful. We also formed "Team Tree" at the start of 2020, to provide a focus for our activities around Tree Protection. We needed to develop our own capability in this area, and wanted to strengthen our links with like-minded community groups.

It has not been easy to maintain contact with members and the wider community over the last year. In place of public

meetings, we had two successful online discussions. The newsletter continues to be well received and the Northumberland Gazette has published a series of articles covering different aspects of our work. We also maintained our activity on social media.

The Society was active in the Alnwick Partnership and was represented on groups covering environment, sustainable travel, the town centre and retail and heritage.

The chair thanked other members of the committee for their efforts over the year.

## Treasurer's Report

Gill Parker had circulated a financial statement for the year, which had been checked by Elizabeth Jones. Income amounted to £1,038.50, with membership subscriptions of £485.50 and donations of £472.00. The society had benefited from Gift Aid totalling £81.00.

Expenditure over the year was £403.48. The largest items had been printing (£190.98) and the subscription to Civic Voice (£97.50). At the end of the year the balance of the current account was £2,295.38, and the balance of the deposit account was £1,273.71. There had been no changes to the Treasurer's account, which was originally opened for the SAHH project. The balance stood at £118.18. This account would be activated again for the historic town map.

The number of members had changed little over the year, and stood at 62, of which almost half were individuals, 14 joint members, and the remainder made up of local businesses and honorary members.

## President, Election of Officers and Committee

The death of Philip Deakin had left the society without a president. Peter Ennor had been invited, and had agreed, to take over the position.

Pete Reed, Gill Parker and Sue Smith were willing to stand again for the posts of Chair, Treasurer and Honorary Secretary respectively. There being no other nominations for the posts, all three were re-elected.

Ian Hall and Mary Carter, who had been co-opted during the year, were willing to stand again as members of the Executive Committee. There were no other nominations and both were re-elected.

## Other Business

No other business was raised and the AGM formally closed at 7.50pm

## Informal Discussion

Following the AGM, we had an informal discussion on future activities. We hoped that indoor gatherings would be practical in the autumn, with an 'Any Questions' discussion likely to be the first. It should be possible to resume guided walks for small groups before then, and meanwhile an online open mic evening may be a good way to introduce members. We also discussed initiatives to address dog fouling, and agreed that we needed to discuss the future of Column Field.

# 25 years ago: A controversial development on the edge of town

Twenty-five years ago the biggest planning issue that faced the town was an application by Safeway to build a new store on Willowburn Lane.

Civic Society documents from the time tell how the District Council had granted outline planning permission in 1993 for a retail development at Willowburn. Safeway bought the land, expecting that they would be allowed to build a new store. After they submitted their plans it emerged that the Government Department for the North-East felt that the way the District Council had granted outline permission was flawed. The Secretary of State was inclined to block any such retail development.

The Civic Society was concerned about the impact that such a large retail development would have on trade in the centre of Alnwick and the effects on traffic along the approach roads. They felt the proposed development was much larger than anyone had envisaged in 1993. Nobody knew what all this would mean for the existing Safeway store in the

centre of Alnwick (now Morrisons), but suspicions were growing that the new store was designed to handle a much wider range than just food and drink.

By the end of 1995 the Civic Society was urging the District Council to take legal advice. By mid-1996 they saw grave risks to Alnwick's high street, and were arguing that the Safeway application should be refused, even if this meant the District Council faced financial penalties.

Everything was going to depend on the findings of a public inquiry, which would be held over four days in 1997.

With the District Council in an awkward position, who will step forward to defend Alnwick's high street? Will the Secretary of State over-rule the outline planning permission, and refuse to let the development proceed? How will Safeway react? Will the financial penalties bankrupt Alnwick District Council? Can Alnwick's independent retailers fight off a multi-national competitor?

All will be revealed in the next exciting episode.

## The Dispensary

In November 1995, the Civic Society news-sheet published the following article by Dr. John Johnson

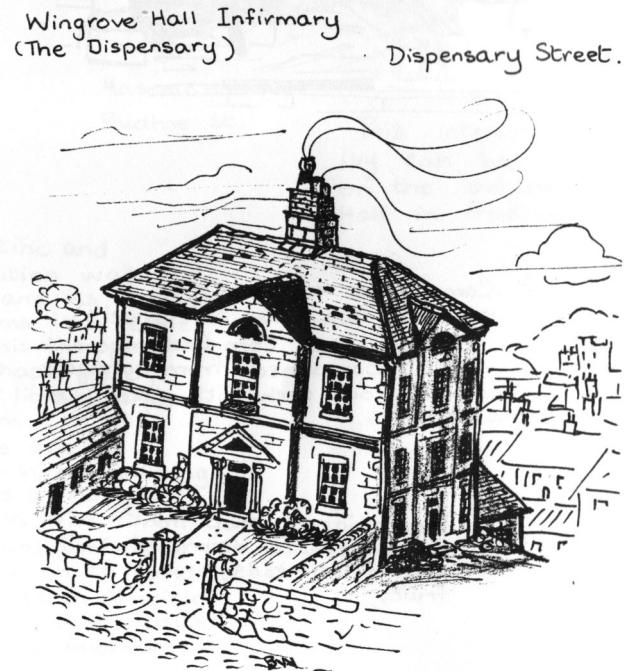
Nine days before the battle of Waterloo, in June 1815, Wm. Burrell Esq and John Lambert, a local banker, called a public meeting in the Town Hall to agree on the establishment of a Dispensary to administer advice and medicine to the poor, to promote vaccination against smallpox and to provide the greater application of surgery. Donations in the first year amounted to £2,081 and a suitable house was found in Fenkle Street. In 1816, 258 patients were treated and it was realised that larger premises were needed.

In 1819 Wingrove Hall was bought from Wm Bolton, a brewer, for £900. It was situated on the "backway" (now Dispensary Street) opposite the present bowling green, a healthy and convenient location. The building was Georgian in style faced in local ashlar stone. The ground floor housed a dispensing room and a committee room, behind which were rooms for the resident House Surgeon, the Matron and the kitchen. Surgical, medical and fever wards were on the first floor.

The staff included two Honorary Physicians and two Surgeons, a resident House Surgeon, the Matron and nurses, and various domestic servants. Governors, who each paid a yearly subscription of one guinea, provided the finance in return for the right to recommend one patient for admission or treatment at any one time. Surrounding parishes also subscribed to obtain the same privileges. An executive committee of fifteen governors was elected annually.

The job of the House Surgeon was to care for the in-patients and to consult in the Dispensary - freely - to the poor; should any of them be ill at home, the Houseman was to make a home visit. This was ideal training for a young doctor before moving on to work in a medical practice.

On 23 September 1849 a single case of cholera was diagnosed, followed by twelve more in the next 24 hours. All trade and social life came to a stop. Tar barrels blazed in the streets, all lanes were cleared and white-washed and houses were fumigated. By the time the last case occurred, on 23



October, 136 people had died; most of them were from houses in Clayport Street. The Dispensary was used throughout the epidemic only for cholera cases. Afterwards, the house was disinfected and re-opened under the new name of Alnwick Infirmary. It earned the tribute by G. Tate in his 1868 History of Alnwick that: "no institution has been of more benefit to the poor of the town than Alnwick Infirmary".

The Infirmary continued in use despite being deemed "inadequate" in about 1890, and it took another twenty years before it was moved to new premises next to the Column Field. Wingrove Hall returned to domestic use until, eventually, its foundations were affected by nearby excavations and the fine old Georgian house was pulled down.

*The Society is indebted to G Tate's History of Alnwick for much of the detail of this article, and to Mrs Barbara Woodhouse for her drawing of the Old Infirmary building.*

# Planning matters

The variation to plans for Lilidorei at Alnwick Garden is causing concern. Neighbours have objected to the scale of the development, and the Gardens Trust have grave doubts about damage to one of England's most important landscapes. Statutory Consultees have been almost unanimous: the applicant has provided insufficient information. Highways England requested a delay until more information becomes available, Historic England and Alnwick Town Council both found insufficient detail to assess the impact. We objected on the basis that there needs to be more clarity about the impact of the proposed changes on the local landscape. We are particularly concerned about views of the development from the north and from the Pastures. The new site plan indicates major changes including some new buildings of substantial size and some buildings and structures relocated, but without detailed drawings of the individual buildings and structures and no visualisations to show how they would fit in to the recontoured landscape. We also believe that car parking needs to be reconsidered in the light of expected changes to visitor numbers: particularly the impact on the local highway network, vehicles backing up Denwick Lane, and the impact on local businesses of more garden visitors parking in the town centre.

There is a retrospective application for installation of replacement windows at the former Bethel Chapel near the top of St Michael's Lane. This slightly quirky, but rather handsome building is not listed, but lies within the conservation area. It occupies a prominent position at a focal point between St Michael's Lane and Green Batt. It can be seen from a good distance.

We did not find this case straightforward. Our debate explored a number of concerns:

- The regulations regarding developments in a Conservation Area are complex. They can appear inconsistent, and even, at times, irrational.
- Action on climate change rightly has an increasingly important place in public discourse, national and local policy - but the true implications for building conservation are not widely discussed and little understood.

• In this case, the owners failed to obtain the required permissions, but they did not opt for a cheap solution, and may have been poorly advised.

• The appearance of the Alnwick Conservation Area is important to our members, the community and visitors, but it is also home to a vibrant community. We do not want to find that over-zealous regulation has priced it out of reach.

• By citing precedents in the neighbourhood the application itself reinforces our concerns that each ill-judged decision encourages others to follow suit. Within close proximity of this building there are some developments of a high standard, that have significantly improved the streetscape, and others of poor quality that have undermined the value of neighbouring investment.

In this case we concluded that the Society must object, on the basis that these replacement windows have a negative effect on the character and distinctiveness of the Alnwick Conservation Area. They do not match the quality of the town's historic townscape in terms of design, materials, detailing or finish. As such, they are contrary to policy HD7 of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. We objected in particular to the use of a non-traditional material - uPVC. Timber should have been the material of choice. We also noted that the window frames are wider than the originals.

The Town Council has also objected, on the basis that any such replacements or repairs should be done like for like: replacement windows should be wooden and in the same style as the originals.

We feel that the character of the conservation area is constantly being eroded by similar small incremental changes, and collectively such changes significantly reduce the quality of the historic environment. We hope Northumberland's Conservation Team and Enforcement Team will be able to find a proportionate way forward in this particular case, but for the Civic Society (and we believe for Conservation Officers and Alnwick Town Council) this case raises wider issues. It is further evidence that we should all be doing more to ensure that owners are well-informed about their responsibilities, and

have easier access to trustworthy advice on energy efficiency measures - including potential improvements and their respective benefits, and comparative costs.



At 38 Bondgate Within (formerly Dorothy Perkins) advertisement consent has been granted for a hanging sign, with a "Trespass" company name and logo. The Conservation officer believes that *"the proposals are in keeping with the restrained form of this modern retail block and the character or appearance of the conservation area would be unaffected by the proposed signage"*. Alnwick Town Council did not object, and we also concluded that there was no basis for an objection.

Consent is being sought for removal of an internal wall between kitchen and lounge at 3 Grosvenor Terrace. This is a listed building in the conservation area, but the proposals do not affect the external appearance. We saw no reason to object, and neither did the Town Council.

19 Upper Howick Street is a listed building in the conservation area, with several inappropriate 1970 replacement windows. So we were pleased to see proposals to remove these and replace them with more suitable timber-framed sash windows. The Town Council has not objected, and neither did we.

Recent applications relating to trees include: crown reductions at 7 Northumberland Street and 1 Argyle Place, discharge of conditions at Hillcrest Nursing Home, and selective pruning at 10, Percy Terrace. We saw no reason to comment on any of these.

We saw no reason to object to a change of use from retail shop to micro pub at 20 Narrowgate (formerly the Linen Cupboard). The building is listed, and the opportunity to carry out essential maintenance is welcome. We saw no need to comment on the proposed resiting of a boiler and routing of new flue at 17 Bailiffgate, or on a change of use at 26 Fenkle Street (was Sage Wealth Management) to a tattoo studio.

# Civic Voice responds to two consultations

*Civic Voice – the national charity for the civic movement with 75,000 members – has recently submitted two consultation responses. In the first they urge the Government to think harder about the plans it has to allow developers to change buildings on our high streets without requiring full planning permission. In the second they respond to the Government's National Model Design Code and National Planning Policy Framework consultation. We reproduce the press releases here, and urge members to view the full responses on the Civic Voice website here: <http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/>*

## Supporting housing delivery and public service infrastructure

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice, said: "Civic Voice strongly objects to the proposal in principle because of the harm that it could do to our high streets, town and city centres; the creation of poor-quality homes; and the loss of historic character of our conservation areas. We accept that our high streets, town and city centres are currently facing acute challenges and they will need to adjust and, in some cases, contract in response to changes in shopping and leisure habits. However, Civic Voice believes this needs to be done in a planned and curated way by local communities through their local planning policies, not by allowing the market to decide in a random and potentially counterproductive manner".

The proposals introduced in the consultation 'Planning Reform – Supporting housing delivery and public services infrastructure' would allow the change of use from any use to residential use without the need for a full planning application.

Harvey continued by saying: "The danger with deregulation is that it can often lead to unscrupulous developers/ landowners exploiting loopholes, as we have seen with previous widening of PDR, which the Government's own commissioned report concluded that permitted development rights create "worse-quality residential environments. We are also extremely concerned that unlike some of the recent changes to permitted development, this consultation proposes that the new right would apply in conservation areas. We cannot support this policy and believe the 'protected status' that is being offered to conservation areas in the Planning White Paper is meaningless, if the suggestions in this consultation goes ahead."

## National Model Design Code and National Planning Policy Framework

Civic Voice – the national charity for the civic movement with 76,000 members – has responded to the Government's National Model Design Code and National Planning Policy Framework consultation.

Ian Harvey, Executive Director of Civic Voice, said: "Whilst we warmly welcome the National Model Design Code and its aims for good community engagement within the local design code/guide process, we are more concerned with

the wider reforms to community participation in the planning system. We know that civic societies add value to the planning process. Civic societies still remain the best route into the planning process for serious community involvement and engagement – and that role needs to be recognised somewhere".

The key issues are:

- We are concerned that the delivery of high quality design will be undermined by the widening of permitted development rights preventing a planned approach to our town and city centres and by limited local authority resource, capacity and skills
- Community engagement doesn't have to be world class, it just needs to be meaningful. We fear the NMDC will be undermined by the PWP proposals for reformed community engagement in planning

• We welcome earlier engagement, but communities must still be given the right to consider and respond to individual planning applications. Until an LA adopts a local guide/code, the local community must be able to continue to make representation on all individual planning applications.

• Other design tools, in addition to design codes, are available and beneficial, but Government seems fixated on codes.

Ian finished by saying: "Our aim must now be to respond to the consultation, but to then prioritize thinking ahead of the Planning Bill in the Autumn. The planning system as we know it is changing, we must make the case and show the role that civic societies and community groups can play in a modern planning system".

# Lost pub crawl

As lockdown eases, many of us have been looking forward to the re-opening of pubs. So it seems timely to look at some of Alnwick's historic pubs that will never re-open.

## An Elizabethan Tavern?

Nothing remains of Alnwick's early inns and taverns, but some say that 9-13 Fenkle Street was the site of an Elizabethan tavern, called the Griffin before it was rebuilt and renamed the Nag's Head. Parts of the building may go back to Elizabethan times, or even earlier, but the lower two stories of the bay window and the mounting block are probably 18th century, and the top story of the bay dates from extensions and improvements by F. R. Wilson in 1885. Before this it had been described as being "*homely and hoary*". Wilson's changes included widening the arch to allow vehicles to pass through. There was a theatre in the yard behind, later used as a billiard hall. This was removed when the supermarket now occupied by Morrisons was built.

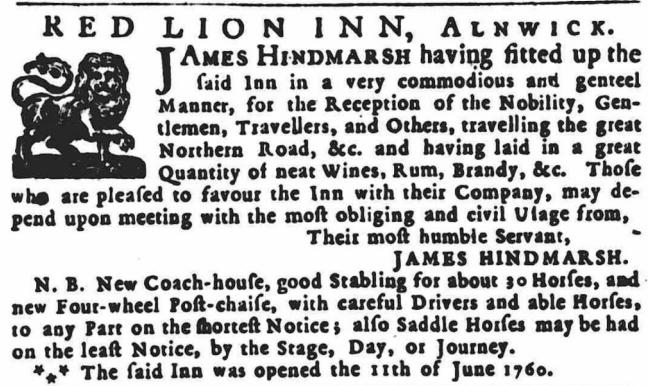
*Many a trusty liege in doublet and trunk hose, with his dame riding behind him on a pillion, alighted at the mounting-block placed near its entrance, many a string of weary pack-horses threaded their way through the narrow passage through the building to the commodious stabling in the rear, all content to find the sufficient accommodation it afforded in those old days.*

Alnwick Mercury, 1885

## Coaching era

Some well-known Alnwick pubs, such as the Olde Cross on Narrowgate and the Plough on Bondgate Without occupy buildings, or parts of buildings, with a history that pre-dates their more recent use as a pub. However, pubs in Alnwick with the longest continuous history tend to date from the 18th century, when Alnwick had become an important stop on the Great North Road, and later on several turnpikes. The Queen's Head on Market Street has a fair claim to be the pub in Alnwick with the longest continuous history.

The principal coaching inns serving the Great North Road and Mail Coaches from London to Edinburgh were the Black Swan on Narrowgate, and the White Swan on Bondgate Within. Other old coaching inns, such as the Angel and the Star on Fenkle Street served more local traffic. Neither of these has survived.



## Beer Act

### William IV

The building at 15 Clayport (Alnwick Flame) is on the site of a pub called William IV. If you rate a monarch's popularity according to the number of pubs that bear their name then William IV (who reigned for seven years) was second only to Queen Victoria (who reigned for sixty-four years). The reason is simple: William IV signed the Beer Act of 1830. Because of the Beer Act a lot of new pubs opened during William's reign. This pub was renamed the Freemen's arms, but it doesn't seem to have continued trading into the 1860s. It was rebuilt, and renamed Albion House.

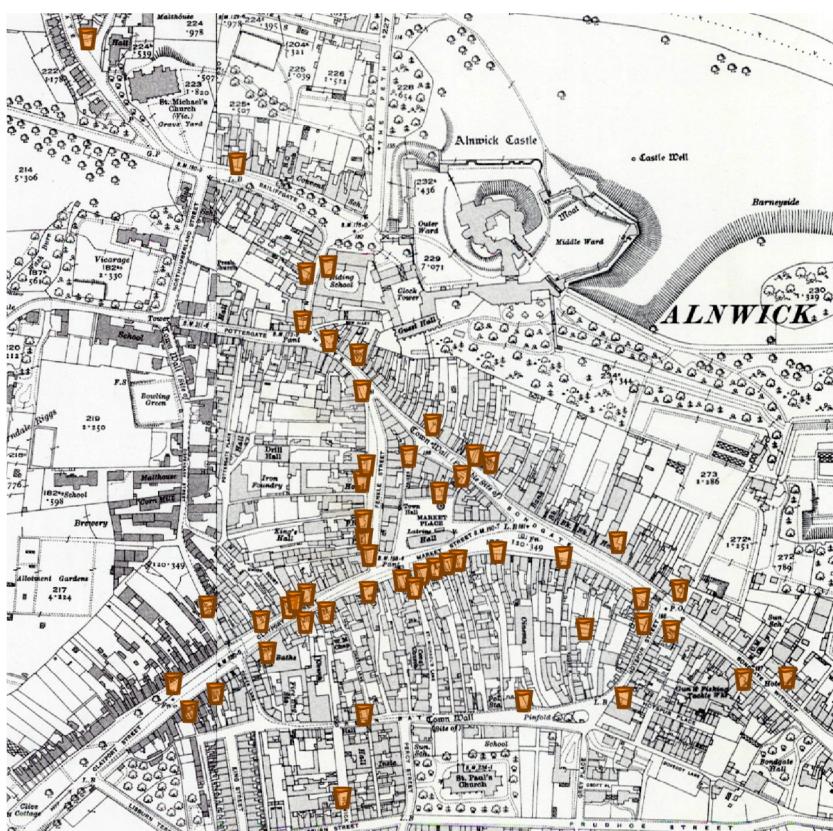
Early records are incomplete, so it's impossible to get a reliable count of the number of pubs that the people of Alnwick frequented in the early 19th century. But once records become more reliable, they show clearly that the number of establishments serving beer increased rapidly following the Beer Act of 1830.

The aim of the Beer Act was to address a long-term decline in sales of beer, and to discourage consumption of gin and other spirits. By simplifying regulation, making it easier to obtain a licence, and reducing taxation the government hoped to encourage competition, and make beer cheaper. At a time of high unemployment and social

## The Angel

The earliest records relating to the Angel Inn date from 1727. The innkeeper, Margaret Grey, organised cock fighting on the days when the Alnwick Races were held. Prizes in the 19th century could be as high as £100, but by 1815 the cock pit was no longer in use. The inn lay behind the main house, with access from the alley. In 1776 it was advertised as consisting of two large dining rooms, fifteen other fine rooms, two exceeding good cellars, a convenient brew-house, and brewing utensils, stabling for above thirty horses, a chaise-house, a garden, and other conveniences." In 1827 this was one of four Coaching Inns in Alnwick. The "Wonder" left for Newcastle at 8:00 am, passed through Felton and Morpeth, and arrived in Newgate Street at 3:00 pm. As an example of crowding in the area, by 1869 the inn consisted of a parlour, bar, kitchen, scullery, sitting room, two bedrooms and three attics, with stabling consisting of 11 stalls, and a loose box. Below there were two cellars occupied by different people. Behind was a brewery, with a store cellar, another stable with four stalls, two more single room dwellings, with closets, a third stable with three stalls, a fourth stable with two stalls. The brewery equipment included coppers, coolers, mash tubs, etc. The inn survived until 1900 when the licence was merged with the neighbouring Robin Hood Inn, which became the Market Tavern.

# Lost pub crawl continued



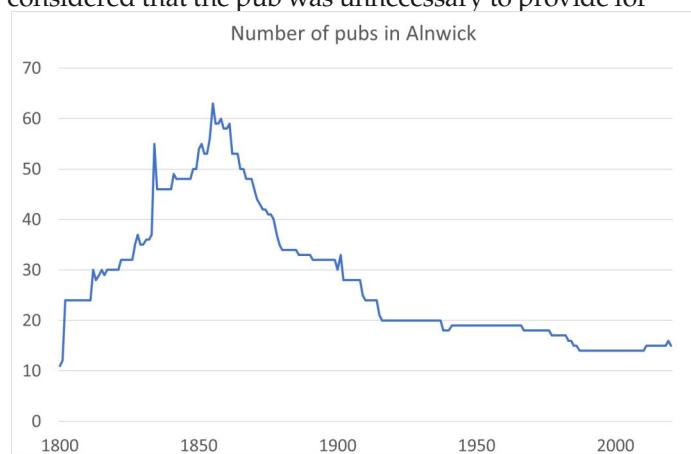
unrest it's possible that the government also thought that promising abundant beer at lower prices would prove popular. They succeeded - the price of a pint dropped by about 20%.

Many of the Beer Houses in Alnwick were short-lived, but the size of the population and the level of prosperity were both increasing. The number of Alnwick pubs continued to rise until the mid-1860s. It peaked a few years after the arrival of the railway, at about 60 licensed establishments.

The George on Bondgate Within, and the John Bull on Howick Street are among the few pubs that survive from this era.

## Changing tastes

After 1860 the population changed little in size, but housing conditions improved, and alternative forms of leisure became available. The 1904 Licensing Act introduced a national scheme to reduce the number of pubs. Magistrates could refuse to renew a pub's licence if it was considered that the pub was unnecessary to provide for



the needs of the public. Compensation would be paid both to the owner of the premises and to the licensee. In Alnwick there were around 30 pubs in 1904, or roughly one for every 250 people. By the end of the first world war the number in Alnwick had fallen even more rapidly than the national rate of decline. These have gone, but left their names on Alnwick Lanes:

- The Pickwick in Roxburgh Place closed around 1890
- The Angel was combined with the Robin Hood to become the Market Tavern around 1899
- The White Hart was absorbed into the Queen's Head by 1914

For the next 50 years the number of pubs in Alnwick remained fairly stable - until the 1960s when the trade needed to adapt again - to demographic and social changes and the arrival of television.

## Tailor's Arms

In 1908 the magistrate's decided not to renew the licence for the Tailor's Arms on Clayport. Here are some extracts from the news report:

*Supt. Bolton said that one could get into the back of this house without going through the passage way from the front of the house, and there was a lot of tenemented property at the back, occupied by poor tenants, who caused no end of trouble to the police. There was a very dark room in the rear of the house.*

*Out of 213 persons convicted for drunkenness in Alnwick, last year, 70 were from the Clayport district; the population was small, the proportion of drunkenness being far greater than any other part, in comparison.*

*The home was very much frequented by women living in yards adjoining, who could get into this house unperceived better than they could get into others.*

*...witness said he would not say the women he saw drinking 'there were of a low class. He did not think, all the same, that such women would go to other houses in the middle of the day where there were not the same facilities to "pop in" unobserved.*

*After some consideration in private the Bench said they had decided to refuse to renew this.*

The building was demolished before Westgate House was built.

# Litter: The bar has been raised. Let's help to keep it there

Events of the last twelve months have caused increased public concern about all forms of litter. This is not just the case in Alnwick. It's the same elsewhere, but the response of the Alnwick community has been remarkable. The town looks more tidy than ever. This is a good time to recognise all the effort, and celebrate the impact of the Alnwick Litter Picking Group in particular. It is also an opportunity to look forward. The litter-pickers have set a higher standard. We must now help ensure that it is maintained.

- Lockdown made the litter problem worse.
- Lockdown resulted in greater public awareness of litter.
- Lockdown made it harder for the authorities to deal with litter.

## The challenge

We are more aware of litter because more of us have been out and about during lockdown. More outside activity has also resulted in more litter. For example, recent problems on the edge of town have been blamed on young people wanting to party away from adult supervision. Visitors are accused of behaviour that would not be regarded as acceptable around here. But not all litter is dropped by thoughtless youngsters, or ignorant visitors. Some is wind-blown from construction sites. Some is thrown from vehicles. Anyone who goes litter picking will discover rubbish that has been left lying around, untouched, for years. So we are not going to be swayed by those who want to blame a single group, those who think it's only a problem for the Council, or those who promote a simple solution. We see multiple causes and we share the Council's view that behaviour will only be changed over time, by a combination of Education, Engagement, Encouragement and Enforcement.

## Lessons learned

This was not a normal year, and there are limits to what we can learn by looking back. The Environmental Enforcement team was not at full strength until the end of 2020 and their normal activities were impacted by Covid Restrictions. They could not carry out their usual educational visits to schools, and they faced a backlog in the courts. Their enforcement activity continued, but not at the usual level. But looking forward that means there are reasons to be optimistic. Environmental Enforcement is now back up to its full strength. They have the resources to do more and the Covid restrictions are easing. The team was making good progress before Covid. We can expect a range of activities to resume: patrolling for littering and dog fouling; offering advice and loan of equipment to community groups; increased enforcement; visits to schools; advice on disposal of household waste; resuming the Green Dog Walker scheme; highlighting problematic areas; and informing residents of the penalties that can be incurred.

We have a new Town Council with members who have shown keen interest in these issues. They know that community groups and individuals are prepared to 'do their bit', and they will understand how thoughtless interventions by official bodies can quickly discourage volunteers.

## What should Civic Society members do?

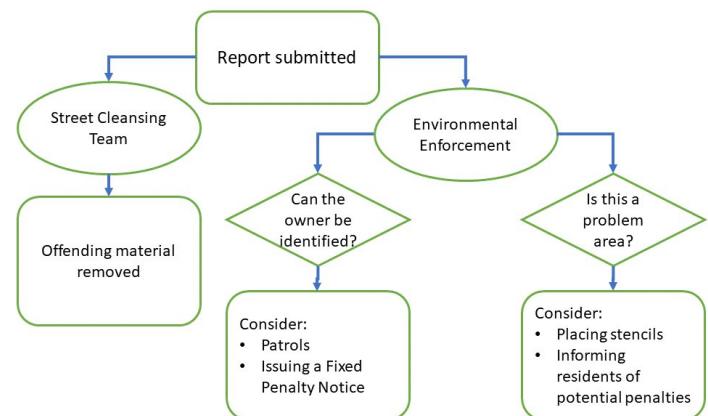
Firstly, as individual members of the community, we can continue to pick litter. Members of the Civic Society have long helped clear litter on Column Field, supported litter picks organised by the Town Council, and collected litter as individuals. The Alnwick Litter Picking Group is generating real momentum behind these varied community initiatives. The authorities will never be able to clear all the litter in Alnwick, but they are well placed to encourage and support. We encourage all members to actively participate.

Secondly, we urge members to use the NCC web site to report dog fouling and fly tipping. Neither form is easy to find, but there are links below. Once found, it is easy to submit a report, and the response is usually rapid and effective. More than that: reporting helps officers to identify hot-spots. The data they collect helps frame the way that enforcement is handled. Each report makes the point that the community thinks these issues are important, and need to be addressed. Please urge friends and neighbours to do the same. We would like the council to improve their reporting systems, but we think they will - if we use them. Meanwhile, if you are uncertain how to submit a report then we have members who can help - just ask.

Thirdly, members can try to influence policy. Others might demand simplistic solutions to the litter problem, but all the evidence says that a lasting solution depends on changing behaviour. That will be neither easy nor quick. Councillors listen to the views of the community. So we hope members will avoid the temptation to join those pressing for a quick fix. Crude solutions will not have a lasting effect. Some will just shunt the issue elsewhere. Others encourage perpetrators to avoid getting caught, not change their behaviour. We will be pressing for a comprehensive approach that tackles all four aspects of the problem: Education, Engagement, Encouragement and Enforcement.

We hope you agree, but we want to know what you think. Litter isn't the only issue we will face over the coming months. Debate keeps these issues on the agenda, and that's important too.

## What happens when you report dog fouling?



## Report dog fouling:

[https://online.northumberland.gov.uk/citizenportal/form.aspx?form=dog\\_fouling](https://online.northumberland.gov.uk/citizenportal/form.aspx?form=dog_fouling)

## Report fly-tipping:

<https://online.northumberland.gov.uk/citizenportal/form.aspx?form=587>

# News in Brief

Members will have noticed that work is under way to repair the tower and install new bells at St Michael's Church.

There were three bells in the tower. The smallest has been said to date from the 13th century, and the second from around 1400. The largest was recast in 1764. None could be rung, although one had been used as a curfew bell (until the safety of the bellringer was considered more important). All three have now been removed. The two medieval bells will be cleaned and displayed in the ringing room.

Six bells are being brought from St James church at Newton Hall (near Corbridge), where they have been replaced by a peal that is more suited to that tower. Four more bells have been cast for Alnwick, to make a ring of ten. The only other ring of ten bells in Northumberland is at Hexham Abbey. If all goes to plan the new bells will be rung for the first time on Saint Michael's day, September 29th.

Last year the Historic Towns Trust approached Alnwick Civic Society with regard to partnering in a project to create an Alnwick Historic Town Map. Thanks to generous donations from a number of local organisations, and a substantial individual contribution the initial development of the map is now fully funded, and we are able to consider a more ambitious approach. We are particularly keen to explore how we might use the map to engage more widely with the community, and particularly with schoolchildren.

We are currently considering the best way to approach this second phase, and will say more once we are in a position to better define that part of the project. Meanwhile, development of the map is progressing well, and we anticipate publication in September.

The Alnwick Partnership is an Advisory body for Alnwick Town Council and was established last year to connect the public, business and voluntary sectors in the town. We have waited a long time for a Heritage and Design Advisory Group to be established, but one is now in place. The priorities are to:

- Champion the heritage, design &

culture priorities, including Community Action Proposals, as laid out in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan.

- Help to inform the Town Council on policy and action priorities for the forthcoming ADNP review.
- Support NCC to deliver its heritage and design plans with input of local knowledge.
- Protect and enhance the special architectural and historical character of the area by developing systems and actions to secure a high quality in the design of all developments and changes in the conservation area.
- Continue to appraise planning applications and champion good design within the conservation area and listed buildings.

One of the first projects of the group will be to see what can be organised in Alnwick for Heritage Open Days on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September (you can help - see back page).

It was good to hear that (at long last) plans have been drawn up for renewal of the cobbles on Market Street. Northumberland County Council have presented their plans to town councillors, and we are told that there will next be a public consultation. This project has been a long time coming and the society has pressed for the view of members to be taken into account. We hope the consultation won't descend into a discussion of detailed arrangements for car parking. We think members will expect to see it take design considerations into account:

- Natural granite of a suitable colour to maintain the overall appearance.
- Replace cobbles with setts to provide a more robust surface for car parking and some improvement in pedestrian mobility across the whole area.
- Several stone pathways to ease pedestrian movement, and encourage use of safe crossing points on Bondgate Within.
- The wagonway and existing granite setts retained as historic features.

This newsletter is being prepared as lockdown restrictions begin to ease. We

are enjoying our increased freedom, but some of the novelty may have worn off by the time you read this.

We hope members are continuing to support local independent businesses.



In that context it was good to see the introduction of extra parking slots, ready for a busy summer, right in the centre of town, close to shops and cafés. Encouraging people to cycle into town is good for trade, good for traffic congestion, good for the climate, and good for health. It should take some pressure off busy car parks during the summer peak. What's not to like?



In response to growing interest we have begun to assemble a collection of information about Heritage Conservation and Climate Action. This already contains material relating to the Energy efficiency of historic buildings, Thermal upgrading of traditional windows, and Building Maintenance in a changing climate. It can be found on our web site at <https://alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk/climate-action/>

We welcome your ideas on other topics that you would like to see covered, and suggestions of material that we ought include.

# Buildings of note survey

We want to draw up a list of Alnwick's buildings of note, and we carried out a brief survey to inform our thinking. Our thanks to everyone who responded. The key findings were:

1. A worthy Building of Note will satisfy more than one of these criteria:

- Architectural interest.
- Historical association.
- Importance in people's lives.
- Townscape / Landscape value.

2. When a building is in poor condition people's judgement is affected in different ways. Special care needs to be taken to understand their views.

3. Cast the net widely: people consider a wide variety of different types of building to be of interest.

4. The selection panel should include a broad representation of different stakeholders. Consult the wider community.

5. Opinion favours more use of local listing alongside national listing.

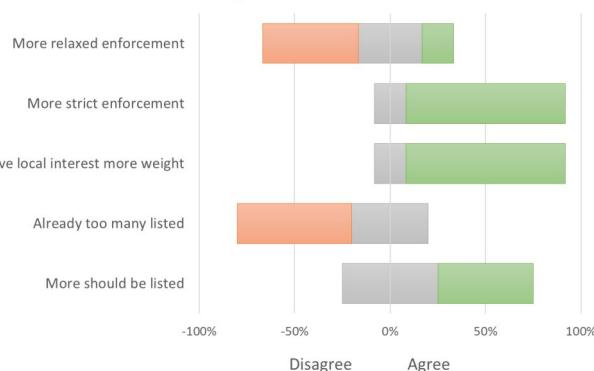
We discovered that respondents found it helpful to think about the issues in relation to some specific examples. We used examples that had already been suggested by Civic Society members.

Alnwick Playhouse was the most popular. The reasons were that the Playhouse is prominent in the townscape, and has played an important part in the lives of Alnwick people.

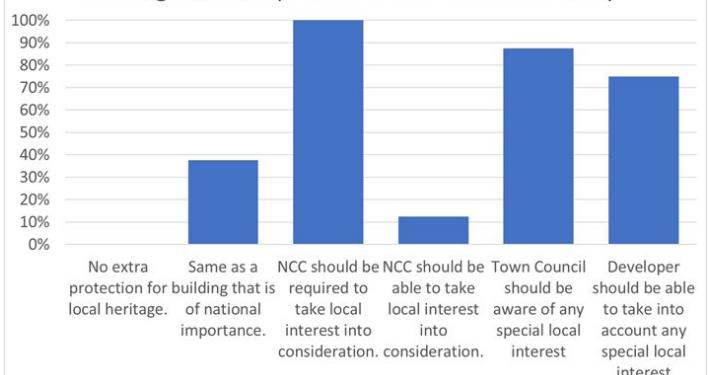
A worthy building of Note will need to satisfy more than one criterion. Respondents didn't use the same criteria for every building. Across a mix of buildings the things that were most important to people were architecture (design, decoration or craftsmanship); association with a person of note or an important event; the role the building has played in people's lives; and its place in the townscape or landscape.

Respondents didn't consider the building's condition as one of their most important cri-

Where do you stand on protection for buildings of local importance?



What kind of protection should there be for a building that is important to the local community?



teria, though they did consider the cost of preservation. Sometimes a building in poor condition might not be seen as worth protecting. On the other hand, poor condition can be seen as a reason why a building needs extra protection.

*"When you look through old photographs of Alnwick you do see some buildings gone that today we'd make a better effort to preserve".*

*"Consultation must be a fully-informed process including explanations of final decisions"*

*"I'd like to see occasional progress reports to interested members providing a short period during which to comment on particular aspects"*

We wanted to test whether the search for buildings of note should cast the net widely or focus on a few specific categories. Industrial Buildings were the only category that was commonly seen as needing more attention.

Places of Worship, Commemorative Structures, and Gardens already seem to be well represented, but we didn't find evidence to justify a tight focus on a few specific categories. On the contrary, respondents want the net to be spread widely.

Respondents favour broad representation for the selection panel, and a consultative approach. As well as representation from the Civic Society the panel should include other local heritage organisations, town and county councillors, and conservation professionals.

We wanted to explore how much weight the planning system should give to local interest. In general, respondents were in favour of giving more weight to different forms of protection, and also favoured more rigorous enforcement.

Respondents felt that the planning authority should be obliged to take local interest into account. However, they didn't feel that it should be given the same weight as national listing.

Most felt that Alnwick Town Council should take local interest into account when it makes representations on planning applications and similarly that developers should be able to take local interest into account when they are formulating their plans.

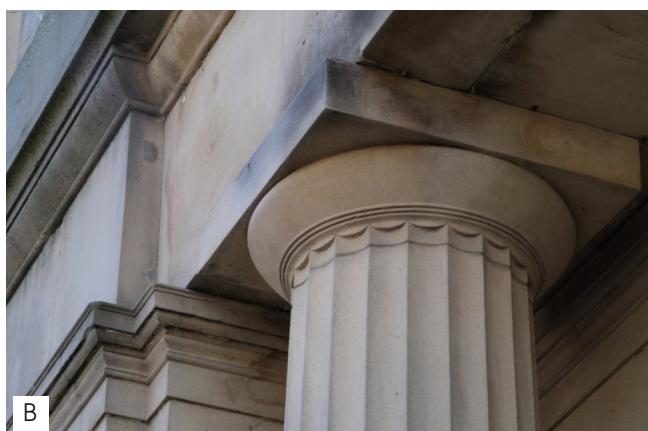
For inspiration see "**Buildings of Note: the places that are important to Alnwick**": <https://tinyurl.com/59jxp8uv>

# Quiz: Sandstone: Unity of colour and scale? Really?

*"Local buff sandstone, laid as coursed rubble or ashlar, is the main walling material, the unity of colour and scale contributing greatly to the special character of the town".*

So says the Alnwick Conservation Area Character Appraisal. And who are we to argue? Well these seven structures range in age from around 100 years to almost 600 years, and they all use natural sandstone. We think local stone does vary in colour and scale. The character of Alnwick has been shaped by the way that generations of architects and stonemasons have capitalised on those differences. Local building stone varies to such an extent that these different examples can all easily be recognised. Are we right? How many can you identify correctly?

To find out, check your answers on the back page.



## Diary dates

May 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 Phil Huntley will give a talk on "Lost burns of Alnwick" Once the source of water for drinking, industry, washing and sewage disposal. Six streams long enclosed but hopefully not forgotten.

These talk will be on Zoom. Please email [contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk) to request an invitation.

Heritage Open Days: 11-12<sup>th</sup> September. We hope to announce a variety of activities in the August Newsletter, and we will need volunteers who can help. Please put the dates in your diary, and get in touch if you would like to be involved.



Some say that the second plinth on Lion Bridge carries the statue of a unicorn that can only be seen by fully paid-up members of Alnwick Civic Society.

Is your subscription up-to-date?

If you think we may not have your current email address it would help if you could let us know.



A special thanks to all of Alnwick's volunteer litter pickers, who have made such a difference to the look of the town and the surrounding area.



## 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, we 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

### Who's Who?

**President:** Peter Ennor

**Chair:** Peter Reed

**Treasurer and Membership:** Gill Parker

**Honorary Secretary:** Sue Smith

**Other Executive Committee members:**

- Ian Hall
- Mary Carter
- Elizabeth Jones

**Web:** [www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

**Email:** [contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk)

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

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

**Instagram:** [alnwickcivicsociety](https://instagram.com/alnwickcivicsociety)

**Heritage at risk:** report your concerns here:

<https://alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk/heritage-at-risk/>

## Quiz Answers

A) Bondgate Tower

B) 27, Fenkle Street, former

Northumberland and Durham District Bank, Headquarters of the 1st Volunteer Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers and Council Offices

C) Robertson's Fountain, Market Street

D) The Olde Cross (Dirty Bottles), 32 Narrowgate

E) Barter Books (former Railway Station)

F) Former Savings Bank at 11, Narrowgate

G) Lloyds Bank, Bondgate Within