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## For your diary:

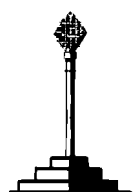
**May 11<sup>th</sup>** - Mick Grant. History of Theatre in Alnwick. St. James Centre, Pottergate, at 7:30 p.m.

**June 8<sup>th</sup>** - Presentation by NCC Built Heritage and Design Officer on window replacement in traditional buildings.

*Many owners of our traditional buildings rightly wish to reduce their Carbon Emissions but can feel frustrated by current planning policies. There is a balance to be reached between carbon expenditure, energy efficiency and protecting the significance of our historic buildings. Officers from Northumberland County Council's Environment and Design Team will provide a short presentation on the significance of historic windows, the importance of taking a 'whole house' approach and how these issues are dealt with through legislation and policy. This will be followed by a discussion around the thinking behind current policies. Have they got the balance right?*

The discussion will begin at 7:30 p.m. Online. If you would like to participate e-mail [contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk) to request joining instructions.

**July 13<sup>th</sup>** - Jessica Turner. Following in the Footsteps of St Aidan. St. James Centre, Pottergate, at 7:30 p.m.



# Annual General Meeting

*Fifteen members attended our Annual General Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021, reviewed a busy year, re-appointed trustees, and enjoyed an enthusiastic presentation by Jane Coltman about Alnwick past and present.*

Of all the achievements summarised in the Chair's report, the Historical Town Map had been the most visible, but the profile of the society had also been raised through involvement in Heritage Open Days. Other achievements were less visible, but included facilitating discussions between the relevant authorities about the condition of Bondgate Tower, and continuing involvement by members in keeping the town clean and attractive through litter picking, the work of Friends of Column Field, the Tree Team and the Eyes and Ears initiative. The society was represented on several of the town council's advisory groups, including the new Heritage Advisory Group, and had been invited to join the Alnwick Borderlands Place Programme, the body charged with overseeing Borderlands investment in Alnwick.

Publication of the Alnwick Shop Front Design Guide had been a big step forward. Planning applications continued to be monitored and comments submitted where appropriate. Significant developments had included a new hotel in Bailiffgate, the Lilidorei play village at the Alnwick Garden and housing development at Windy Edge. Within the society, a new advisory group had been set up to gather different perspectives from members on planning applications.

Technology had allowed the society's events programme to continue despite the pandemic, but apart from the map launch, the only face to face event had been the annual Any Questions evening.

The society had become a registered charity. This will allow more ambitious activities, with less risk and easier project funding.

The Treasurer's Report showed most financial activity related to funding earmarked for the Historic Town Map project. Outside significant activity related to Heritage Open Day the ordinary expenditure included £628.25 for printing the newsletter.



Subscription income came from 31 single members, 20 joint members and 5 business members. After consolidating the society's deposit account and ordinary account, the year-end balance stood at £2,726.88.

Under the new constitution, all five of the initial trustees stood down. Ian Hall did not wish to continue, but Peter Reed, Sue Smith, Gillian Parker and Mary Carter were willing, and by agreement of those present, were re-appointed as trustees, with Pete, Gill and Sue taking on the posts of Chair, Treasurer and Honorary Secretary respectively.

Following the formal business of the AGM, professional photographer Jane Coltman gave an enthusiastic presentation about Alnwick past and present including use of photographs she had taken and historic images from her own collection.

Whilst her old pictures were of great interest, it was probably Jane's own photographs which impressed most and portrayed the unique character of the town. Some of her photographs covered events that had taken place in recent times such as the Shrove Tuesday football match, parades and a royal visit. Alnwick was viewed in a range of different light and weather conditions including night-time shots, sunrises and other moody atmospheres. She concluded with two audio visual presentation, the subjects of which were the Aln Valley Railway and the Remembrance Day Parade.





# The Historical Map Project - the next phase

*You'll recall that the Historical Maps of Alnwick and Alnmouth was published towards the end of 2021. The map has been well received. Copies have been sold at some local events, and it is also available in a number of local outlets. This time next year we will be able to report on the sales figures for 2022.*

*Getting the map published was not, of course, the end of the project. As well as being a useful end in itself, it was hoped that it might also engage people in the history of the town; the more that people feel attached to the town's heritage, the more they are likely to get involved in its protection!*

*At the moment, this engagement phase is focussed in two main areas: working within schools and developing a web based re-source.*

## Working With Schools

The first tangible achievement has been the creation of a wall sized version of the Alnwick map which has been installed in one of the halls at the Duchess's Community High School. Roughly two metres square, it provides a great focus for future map-related events. The map itself was made by local business Glendale Graphics.



Pictured: Rosie Bush (D.C.H.S.), Mary Carter, Jason Gallagher (Glendale Graphics) and Ian Hall

We are now in discussions with both the DCHS and St Michael's C of E Aided Primary School to use the map within their curricula. We have already provided both schools with copies of the map, and are now working towards some heritage-based workshops.

By the time the newsletter is out we should have held five sessions at St Michael's, examining Medieval Alnwick, Victorian Alnwick and Alnwick during the Great War. It is hoped that work within the Primary school will be supported by students from DCHS. We will report on progress in the next newsletter.

The DCHS are interested in using the map for understanding town development within their A level Geography syllabus. We are planning sessions with them in June. Again, we'll report on this later.

It is hoped that, if successful, we might do more sessions in future years. Would you be interested in getting involved in this project? No experience necessary, just an enthusiasm for heritage.

If you want to find out more, or are interested in becoming involved, get in touch with Mary Carter at [cartermjr835@verizon.net](mailto:cartermjr835@verizon.net).

## Heritage Website

For most of the period when we were developing the map, we were unable to meet face-to-face and used the internet to share information. Space limitations meant that we were not able to put everything we had gathered onto the map itself. The team felt strongly we should preserve this information, and establish a means of engaging with the broader community and expanding heritage information.

What has been created is a heritage website with the domain name [www.alnwickheritage.org](http://www.alnwickheritage.org). This is very much a 'work in progress' but already we have a team of enthusiasts who are tidying up the website and developing new content. But the project needs more help. Many questions remain. While we know about the pants, how did the water supply develop in the town? And the drains too. A lot has been written about gas, but what about electricity? Healthcare; beyond the main buildings we know about, how did it operate in the town? The Postal service, the Fire Brigade, Police. There are many stories which are currently untold.

So, what does the project need? Here are some of the opportunities to get involved:

- Add to the website: Do you have any personal projects that could be added to the website? Or do you know someone who has? Are you interested in researching some of the gaps? You could recount stories that you know, which can be recorded by others, or you could record your own stories and research.
- Editing: We need some editors who can work on existing content – some of the stories have material from a variety of sources which need work to make them more understandable.
- Images are needed to make the pages more interesting. Do you have any that could be used? Would you be interested in adding these to the website?
- Learn to use WordPress. The website is based on WordPress – and we are not making the most of this system. Do you have some experience? Or do you want to learn?
- Use Google Maps: The maps on the website are based around Google Maps, but these need developing. Again, do you have experience? Or do you want to learn?

You might take on just one role or a number of roles. You don't need to be a 'historian' – just someone interested in the town's heritage.

If you want to find out more, get in touch with Ian Hall at [ianhall25@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ianhall25@hotmail.co.uk).



# Exploring the role of Civic Societies in the planning system

An independent report has tried to understand the role that Civic Societies play in the planning system. The report is titled "Civic Societies and the Planning Process". It was launched in February, and drew on a survey sent to members of Civic Voice.

## Engagement with planning

Engaging with the planning system is only part of what Civic Societies do, but it's a big part. More than half say they spend 40-80% of their time on planning.

Some Civic Societies are involved in very resource-intensive activities (such as legal action, land purchase and the design of development) but all prepare written comments on planning applications.

Apart from their planning activity, almost all Civic Societies are active in heritage and conservation. Other common concerns are good design, promoting a vibrant high street / town centre and protecting community facilities.

Civic Societies are also engaging with sustainability and biodiversity, regeneration and education on the built environment. Transport, on the other hand, attracts less attention.

## Approaches to development

Most Civic Societies have a sub-committee which scrutinises planning applications, and decides whether or not to engage. The decision is based on their own charter, but they are influenced by feedback from the community, their members, and the media. The most common reasons for engaging are:

- The scale and location of a development
- Any impact on a Conservation Area or Listed Building

They might also take into account:

- Impact on the natural environment: open space, green fields, Green Belts and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Consistency with plans and policies.
- Changes of use (e.g. office to dwellings, Victorian houses to multiple occupancy)
- Impact on traffic generation

"This report shows that against a backdrop of declining civic engagement in wider society, the civic movement is still playing a vital role in the planning system. When the system seems to be pre-occupied with housing delivery, economic growth and development viability, civic societies continue to be an independent voice for communities across England."

Joan Humble, Chair of Civic Voice

Some societies only consider domestic alterations if their attention is drawn to a specific problem. Others routinely look at any which affect the front elevation or use non-traditional methods.

## Planning policy

Almost all Civic Societies get involved with their local plan, but they are selective about what they are prepared to do. For example:

- Making representations when invited through consultation
- Considering any significant development that is of immediate concern
- Helping to disseminate information, organise events

## Should Civic Societies have a Statutory Role?

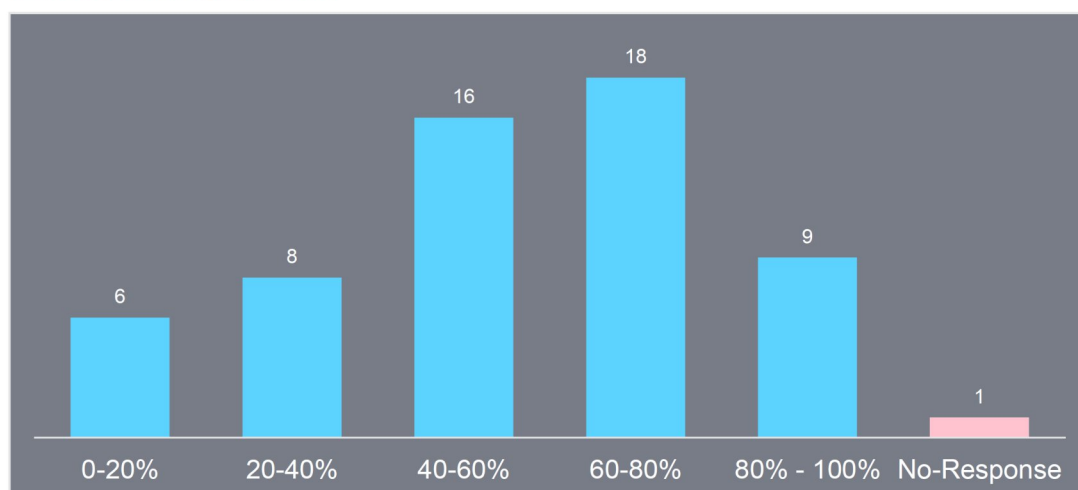
Some societies would like to see a statutory role in developing plans, but not in development decisions. Some would like to see the reverse. Others argue that Civic Societies would find it difficult to fulfil a statutory role because of their voluntary nature, and limited resources.

## Collaboration with other groups

Civic societies already collaborate at local, regional and national level, but mostly at a local level. Examples include:

- Groups that share an interest in heritage (Conservation Area Advisory Committees; refurbishing historic buildings; organising Heritage Open Days)
- Neighbouring Civic Societies (to share information and ideas, generate a stronger voice, work across a wider geographical area, co-ordination and mutual support)
- The Local authority or Town Council (helping to prepare conservation guidance, Supplementary Planning Documents, Neighbourhood Plans, etc.)

## What proportion of your society's work would you say is about working with the formal planning system?



This is our summary of some key points.

The full report is available at: <https://www.henley.ac.uk/news/2022/civic-societies-and-the-planning-process>

## ...the role of Civic Societies in the planning system (continued)

- Campaigning groups (saving and regenerating community facilities; opposing development; protecting open spaces; removing litter)

- Formal stakeholder partnerships (typically with Local Authority: regeneration, traffic issues)

- Protection, improvement and management of open spaces, green spaces and trees

- Work related to climate change and sustainability (including guidance on best practice for retrofitting)

- Promoting local business, gaining intelligence on new development, raising awareness of the importance of heritage and tourism and promoting town centre vitality

- Cycling and walking groups

- Wildlife Trust (protecting biodiversity and open spaces)

At regional level there is a focus on landscape and countryside protection: working with the Campaign to Protect Rural England; promoting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; developing understanding of the landscape around a particular urban area.

Collaborations at national level are generally with organisations sharing similar aims.

- Umbrella Organisations such as Civic Voice: for knowledge transfer

- English Heritage / National Trust / Historic England: identifying and protecting heritage assets

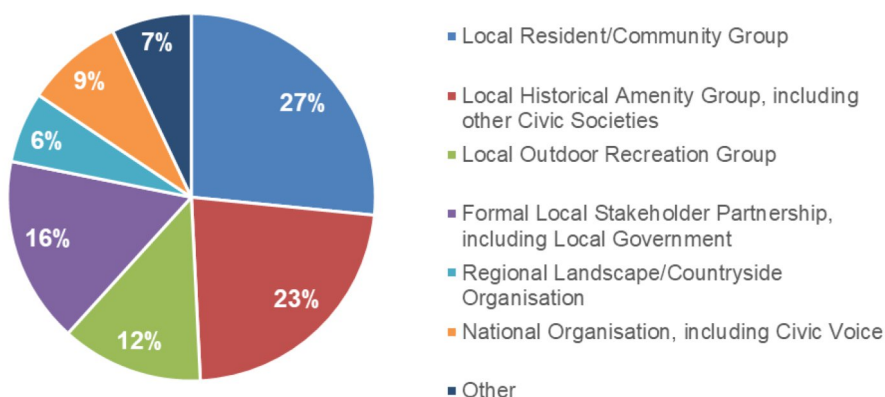
- Friends of the Earth: exploring common interests in climate change mitigation / adaptation and sustainable transport

Other collaborations that don't easily fall into one of these categories include: local history projects with a schools; working with an arts society on public art; informal groups looking at opportunities to improve placemaking; Community Land Trust; protecting a pub with CAMRA; working with groups that campaign to support the less well off in areas such as housing, transport and sustainability.

### Community engagement

Most survey respondents found it difficult to involve the community in sustained long-term civic society positions. Local and Neighbourhood Plans require a lot of time and effort to get involved, communities struggle to engage with more abstract policy development and can better understand and engage effectively with tangible development proposals, where the direct impact can be readily understood.

### Can you tell us about other groups or organisations that you have worked with in the last three years



### Membership

The need to increase membership and recruit more committee members was of widespread concern. Specifics included an ageing membership; a decline in civic pride; people feeling that it is difficult to make a difference, and people who are short of time to get involved. Suggestions included:

- A stronger presence on social media
- Showing evidence of how planning decisions have been affected
- Using newsletters and local press to keep members engaged during the pandemic
- Using different types of event to raise visibility
- Community forums
- Liaising with other community groups, the council and universities.

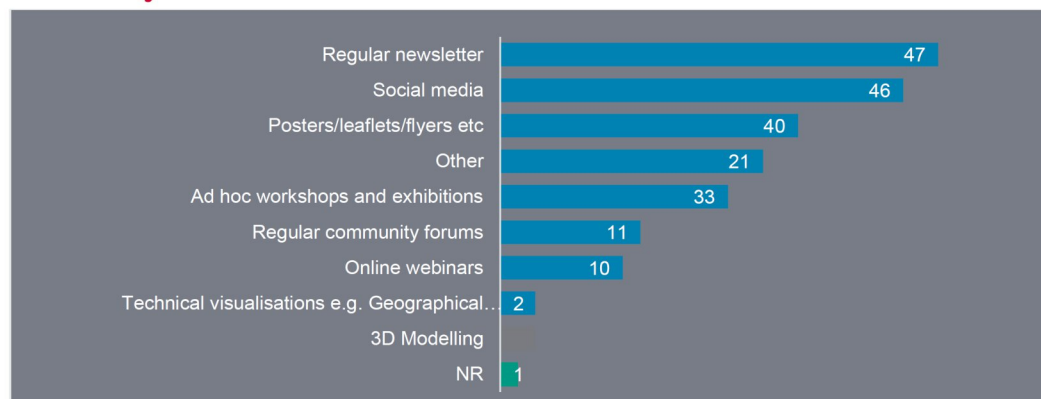
### What do you think?

Could we do more to influence the future of Alnwick?

Where should we be trying harder to make a difference?

How can we engage more effectively with others?

### Which of the methods below do you use to engage with members of your local community?





## Cliff Pettit and Bill Hugonin

*In March the town said farewell to two well-known and highly-respected figures who were both long-standing members of the Civic Society.*

### Cliff Pettit

Cliff Pettit was born at Green Batt House, in 1925 and attended the Borough School before gaining a place at the Duke's Grammar School. During WW-II his distinguished military service included Operation Blockbuster in Holland and Germany as a platoon commander with the Cameronian regiment. He was involved in the liberation of Sandbostel concentration camp when he was only 19, and selected to personally escort Field-Marshal Kesselring to the war trials.

After the war Cliff qualified as a solicitor and advised several notable clients, including the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. He was clerk to the magistrates for more than 25 years, and involved in the compulsory purchase of land and property for development of social housing.

Among his many contributions to the life of the town Cliff was a founding member of Alnwick Civic Society, and the founding Chairman of Alnwick and District Round Table. He was an accomplished player of football, squash and cricket.

Cliff became a recognised expert in military history and was consulted frequently by institutions such as the Imperial War Museum. In the 1990s he presented two series for ITV on the Somme and Gallipoli conflicts, and recently appeared with Chris Tarrant, talking about the Alnwick Camp. Cliff last entertained members of the Civic Society in 2018 with a memorable account of life in Alnwick in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Our thoughts are with the family: sons John and Michael, daughter Hilary, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

### Bill Hugonin

Bill retired as Head Agent with Northumberland Estates in 1990 following a career that began there in 1959. He was generous with his support of many different organisations across the town, including Saint Michael's Church and Alnwick Music Society. However, he was best known for his idea of converting a derelict cinema into The Playhouse, and becoming a driving force behind the project. He was determined to see the Playhouse as a thriving cultural centre appealing to all sections and ages. Without his resolve this hub of the town would not exist.

Bill's wife, Daphne, died in 2010. Our thoughts are with his family: children James, Serena, Camilla and grandchildren.

## Narrowgate developments

*Both 28 and 30, Narrowgate have been empty since Capella and Bari Tea moved out. Both have late C19<sup>th</sup> shop fronts, but the buildings are older. The rainwater pipes on #28 are dated 1790, and Historic England date the front of #30 as early C19<sup>th</sup>.*

Before it was home to Bari Tea #28 specialised in plumbing, then fashion. Some members will remember Accent, Paris Match and the Jersey Shop. Before the first world war Kate Douglas offered dainty blouses, inexpensive frocks and smart gowns. In the 1880s a dress-maker from Newcastle would visit to deliver classes in the latest styles and techniques. It was also home to George Turner, a Boot and Shoe maker in 1834. When Thomas Harrison, a plumber, lived here in 1830 he invited clients to inspect his self-acting water closet, with *"movements so complete that it thoroughly cleanses and purifies itself instantly after use, without the least personal interference"*. Thomas came from a long line of glaziers and plumbers which had worked on St Michael's church windows since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sadly, in 1847, Thomas became one of many small investors who faced heavy liabilities when the North of England Joint Stock

Bank failed. Distressed at losing everything, he took his own life at the age of 60. The business was taken over by another plumber, G. W. Tate.

At different times in the 1990s #30 was home to "Second Time Around" and a diner-style cafe that was popular among students at the Duchess's High School.

We think it was here that George Snowdon set up as a gun-maker in 1832. He had trained with Alnwick gunmaker George Davison, and later worked with his widow, Mary. The Davisons are still remembered as fine gunmakers, as well as being the grandparents of suffragette Emily Wilding Davison. More than 40 years before the Hardy brothers set up in Paikes Lane Snowdon was hoping to meet the various needs of sportsmen. That included taxidermy – *"all kinds of birds preserved in the best manner and cases made if required"*. George remained through most of the 1860s. By then, customers could also come here, on a Friday, to buy artificial teeth from a visiting Newcastle dentist.

After Snowdon left, in 1869, Daniel Gianni moved into #30 to sell watches, jewelry, silverware, cutlery, etc. After Daniel died, his wife and brother continued the business, until he lost interest. On her own, Mrs Gianni placed more emphasis on fancy goods.

By 1914 #30 was being used by both John Mcfarlane, seedsman and Robert Neville, fruiterer. In 1929 it was still housing a fruiterer: Miss Kemp.

*These buildings are an important part of Alnwick's heritage, and we look forward to learning more about plans for their future. Meanwhile if you can fill any gaps in the story of their past we would love to hear from you.*

Images from the Civic Society  
1996 Street Survey





Historic England has a new Aerial Photo explorer, with more than 400,000 digitised images drawn from aerial photographs preserved in the Historic England Archive.

This, from 1946 shows post-war housing developments in Alnwick. The explorer can be found here -

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/aerial-photos/>

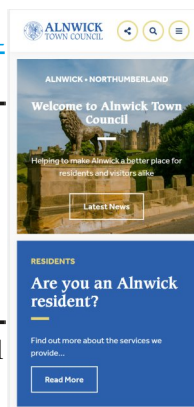


Northumberland County Council formally adopted the Northumberland Local Plan on 31 March 2022. The adoption follows the Inspectors' Examination, which concluded that the plan is sound providing that a number of modifications were made. The adopted version includes all the modifications recommended by the Inspectors.

The adopted Local Plan can be viewed on the Council's website, together with

supporting documents : [www.northumberland.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/localplan).

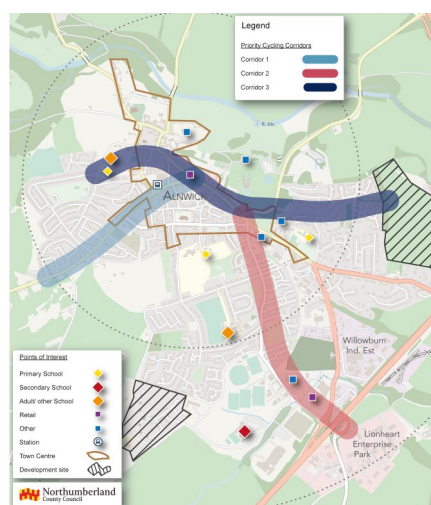
Have you used the new Town Council Web Site? Did you find the information that you needed? What do you think?



Alnwick is well-placed to encourage active travel. There is pressure from residents to reduce traffic levels because of the impact on their quality of life. Visitors comment on how cars dominate the Conservation Area. Parts of the road network are operating close to capacity and approaching the point where there is a risk that they will constrain economic growth.

The size of the town suits walking, but the condition of footpaths and pavements varies. The cycling infrastructure is fragmented.

The recent consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure



Plan will inform long-term development, and we will report on results when they are published. Meanwhile, we see a number of footpath improvements across town. We will always want more, but it's also important that we recognise what is being achieved, acknowledge the effort that is being made and encourage everyone involved. Every improvement makes a difference. So while we keep up the pressure, let's also welcome the progress that is being made.



These are also challenging times for public transport. Less than 24 hours before this picture was taken, the bus stop flag was smashed by vandals. The Town Council reacted quickly, and got it fixed at impressive speed.

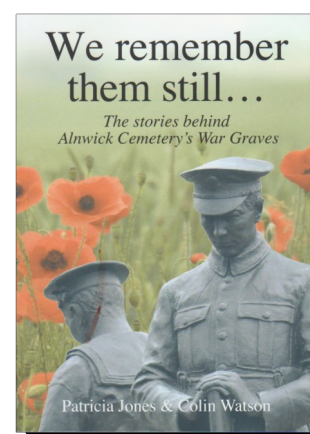


## We remember them still...

There are 300,000 war graves in parish church yards and cemeteries across the United Kingdom, and Alnwick Cemetery contains an unusually large number.

In "We remember them still..." Patricia Jones and Colin Watson have researched and recorded the lives of all thirty-six official war graves in Alnwick Cemetery and another fifteen casualties who were not buried here, but are named on gravestones in the cemetery.

These stories are a moving tribute to those who lost their lives in two world wars, and a fascinating insight into the different paths that brought each to a final rest in Alnwick. The book is also a poignant reminder of how conflict affects the lives and families of those involved. So it is particularly fitting that proceeds from the sale will benefit families in Ukraine who are suffering the impact of the current conflict. Copies can be obtained from Bailiffgate Museum or the Lions Bookshop.





# As good as the nation got (Part-1)

## A brief history of secondary education in Alnwick, by Gordon Castle

### Introduction

I suspect relatively few people will recognise Alnwick as having been at the forefront of educational progress and development in our nation. But it certainly was. Going back centuries, educational establishments were usually primitive and rudimentary and only the wealthiest families could afford to have their children educated by specialists, usually recruited from the clergy. Such education was essential in a feudal land where the power of inheritance meant that children born into heritage were not necessarily bright enough to rule or administer without careful training from their earliest years. To the ruling class behaviour was all important – every child could be taught to behave well, however limited their intellect, probably the basis of modern manners and etiquette. It was King George III who gave voice to the gradual movement of teaching the masses by declaring shortly before his jubilee in 1809 that every child in the land should be able to read the bible. But naturally, teachers taught according to precepts where behaviour and discipline was still supreme and could override education as a primary aim in schools. In Victorian times, such was the power and complexity of social etiquette that the further up the class structure one went, the more embracing it was, often terrifying foreign visitors of all ranks to the world's then pre-eminent nation. But as the industrial revolution gathered pace, we needed more than just labourers, we needed a well-educated population.

### Background

I recall researching this topic to give a presentation in 2003 to the Civic Society in the Duke's School Hall with Brian Lamb, who had then retired as Dep Head of the Duchess's School. These were pre social media days and the Civic Society did not have a newsletter of this present quality. Brian and I had been at school together in the same class of every non-catholic school in Alnwick, including Borough School, South School (now Swansfield Park), National School, Lindisfarne Secondary Modern and finally the Duke's Grammar School. So, what we might have lacked in scholarship we claimed to have in pedigree! Brian covered the earliest days of Alnwick schools, of which there were many, far too many to include here.

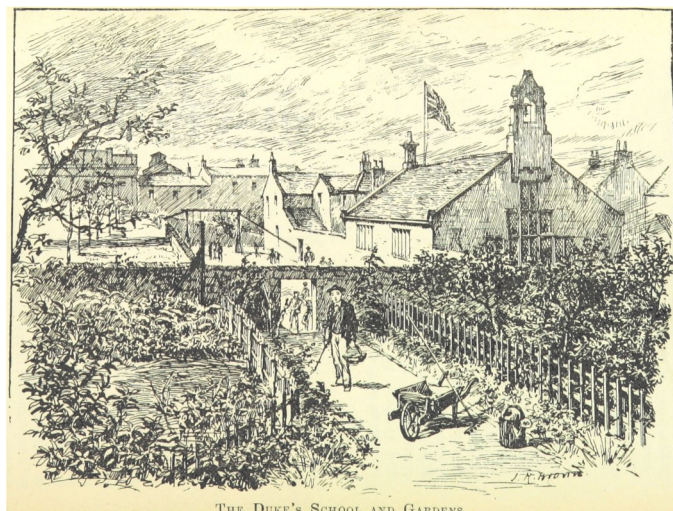
In 1790 the old grammar school moved into one building with the English School in Pottergate where it was run by the Freeman and provided the main secondary education in Alnwick for boys. However, in 1808 the Freeman also opened a girl's school specifically for their daughters, the same year that the Duchess's School opened, and we can see from there the beginnings of an educational rivalry between Freeman and Duke/Duchess that grew in intensity, perhaps providing a stimulus of competition like that encouraged between schools today (though curiously not amongst their pupils!). The development of education in our town has hardly been a seamless flow, rather the chaotic and haphazard accretion of well-intentioned schemes, ending, not for the first time, in a gigantic tussle between Freeman and the Duke that ended as they usually did!

### The First Duke's School

Inspiration for the Duke's School arose from a non-conformist called Joseph Lancaster, who between 1798-1810 travelled the length and breadth of the country to advocate his then very progressive views on schooling via the monitor system. After a lecture in Alnwick he was summoned to the Ducal presence and to

his no small surprise was very well received and given assurances about plans for education in Alnwick that would meet with his approval. He afterwards wrote, *"How glorious it is to see the nobles of the land become patrons of education and friends of the poor."* True to the Duke's word the foundation stone was laid on 25 October 1810 and accompanied by much celebration, beer, ox roasting and the firing of guns by the Percy Militia. The school in Green Batt, originally named the Jubilee School, could accommodate up to 200 boys and opened 12 August 1811. The inscription on the north wall survives to this day, the building having turned from school-house to town library and is now residential flats. It is possible to suspect that the Duke may have been motivated as much by the Duchess's school opened by his wife as by philanthropy, but nevertheless it was a major contribution to the town, *".....200 boys to be educated under Mr Lancaster's plan at His Grace's sole expense"*. At that time only the wealthy could afford to educate their children, the poorer families having to rely on basic instruction at Sunday schools. These parents of the 179 boys registered on the opening day included, "Hacklers, labourers, nurses, bonnet makers, joiners, weavers, tailors, draymen, soldiers, nailors, shoemakers, masons, constables, washerwomen, drainers, quarrymen, brewers, auctioneers, gardeners, park workers, carters, horse breakers, bondagers, hinds, smiths, barbers, sweeps, hawkers, pitmen, parish clerks and innkeepers" (yes, innkeepers, God knows how they were among the poorer classes!). The most able pupils acted as monitors and initial writing was on fine sand, followed by slates and eventually books for more advanced pupils. I recall my Grandfather, who was a pupil there, still having the wood bound slate and slate pencil that he had used in the 1880s. In 1851 a new headmaster, Mr T Collinson, was appointed, the most famous of all the school's headmasters. Most unusually, and evidence of the thoroughness of the Duke's methods, Mr Collinson was selected only after the Duke had arranged for a government inspector to visit and report back on the schools of all the applicants for the post. Mr Collinson remained head for 47 years. Subsequent reports reflected substantial improvements, and instruction and discipline would be described as good, *"no expense is spared by the Duke to make this a model school"*. Nonetheless, up until the reforms of 1900 the best that a pupil could aspire to was a start on the ladder that might lead to the supervising classes.

Success was rewarded by merit cards, 40 being worth a red vest, 50 a pair of cord trousers and 60 a grey jacket. Other prizes like



THE DUKE'S SCHOOL AND GARDENS.



## Secondary education in Alnwick (continued)

pocket knives were awarded and at an 1886 reunion an old boy aged 86 produced a much prized pocket knife that had cost him 20 merit cards. Punishments were rather unusual and barely imaginable today. The belt was much in evidence and a cradle was raised that errant boys inside were required to rock, plus a round basket several feet high for worse offenders, together with clogs, wooden collars and regular floggings. Staff were carefully selected and decently paid and housed. In 1885, so great was Mr Collinson's reputation that the Fourth Duke dispensed with supervision by government inspectors. In 1874 a gymnasium was added and the same year the Northeast Railway built a branch line to Alnwick, with many boys subsequently employed by NER (including my own father who left school to be a telegrapher in 1924). By 1886 subjects taught included English Literature, history, mensuration, Algebra, Euclid, drawing, land surveying and book keeping. It was far more than an elementary school. Boys came from communities outside Alnwick like Acklington, Belford and Wooler and fees ranged from £10 down to £2.10 shillings, depending on the age of the boys, with several scholarships available allowing free admission. In 1883 a new classroom was added, hot water introduced, and new windows installed. When Mr Collinson retired in 1898 the school was clearly an outstanding educational establishment. There was room for 220 boys, 46 being 15 or over, and they were taught by 3 graduates, 2 certified teachers and one apprentice. Charging of fees was permitted in law under the elementary education act, *"In consideration of providing educational facilities of an exceptional character"*. By securing a Duke's Nomination, fees could be halved, and free admission was possible via Duke's Scholarships. A most unusual feature of the Duke's patronage was a system of awards to former pupils who obtained outstanding reports from subsequent employers during a period of 3 years after they had left the school. Other schools had begun to open in Alnwick and slowly the class of pupils attending the school began to change. Towards the end of the 19th Century the confused structure of education in Alnwick began to result in a serious contest of direction and ownership between the Alnwick Freeman and the Duke.

### Inspections and Standards

It was about power and control as most political struggles are. Alnwick was ruled by a Corporation of Burgers called the Four and Twenty, who were Freeman. The Duke had power, money, land and influence, but no overt political role. Good intentions lay on both sides and up till this point secondary education had progressed between both parties in relative harmony and occasional cooperation. The Freeman's schools were under review in 1850, though the difference between the 38 strong Grammar school and the 52 strong English school was that the Grammar school had a larger proportion of fee paying non-Freeman's children. On different sites there was a 40 strong girl's school and a preparatory school in Clayport, so the Freeman resolved to house all these institutions in one place. Somewhat ironically you might think, the Freeman were gifted land for this purpose by the Duke, whence was built the Borough school, opening in 1853 and to this day used for educational purposes on the same site behind the Old Brewery Car Park. I first attended this school as an infant in 1953 and still enjoy an occasional beer with the boy I sat next to on this first day at school and for 10 years at both National and Secondary Modern schools! Many Alnwick children either never leave their town or else, like me, eventually return. The first recorded inspection of the Borough School took place in 1857, but did not please



Borough School

its headmaster, who resigned when the corporation concurred with the report. However, in 1862 something happened that might strike a chord with modern teachers and governors. The government introduced a system of payment by results that clearly did not suit independently maintained schools. Both the Borough School and the Duke's School removed themselves from the inspection system and thus also closed off eligibility for government grants. So despised was this government process that neither school ever again submitted to government inspection that century. As Tate records, *"The committee of education stooped to receive and act upon charges against the school and the managers by someone whose name they refused to mention.....The Four and Twenty refused further inspection"*. However, in 1868 a report was commissioned on all Alnwick schools for the Schools Inquiry Commission. The agent, Mr Hammond, pulled no punches. Of the Borough School he said, *"The Euclid was worthless and the algebra not much better"*. The Dukes School fared just as badly with observations such as, *"The master of the Duke's School does not understand the importance of adhering to the rule that a boy's work in examination should be strictly his own"*. His few words of encouragement he reserved for the Borough School, describing the knowledge it imparted as, *"Scanty and inaccurate, though it is not so entirely useless as at most private schools of the same grade"*. So who now thinks that controversial school assessments began with the late Chris Woodhouse? To replace the government inspectors the Duke appointed his own, and there were no half measures here. They were eminent men of their time and one, Mandell Creighton, was a great Oxford scholar who became Bishop of London.

At that time the Borough School's 140 children were the offspring of Brewers, watchmakers, butchers, farmers and other skilled tradesmen and merchants, residing usually within 2 miles of the school, ages ranging from 5 to 14 years. Most studied religious knowledge, but the Freeman had long maintained their distance from sectarianism and there was no real connection with any denomination, perhaps surprising given Alnwick's plethora of religious sects at that time. By 1898 the strength of the school had risen to 158 and the corporation had to raise money from Parliament to defray the annual costs. Children of Freeman were educated free of charge and the rest paid £6 per annum. The girl's school had little claim to offer anything like career opportunities, and at the time of an 1868 report it has not sent a girl to university in the preceding five years.

### The struggle for control

...To be continued in next issue.

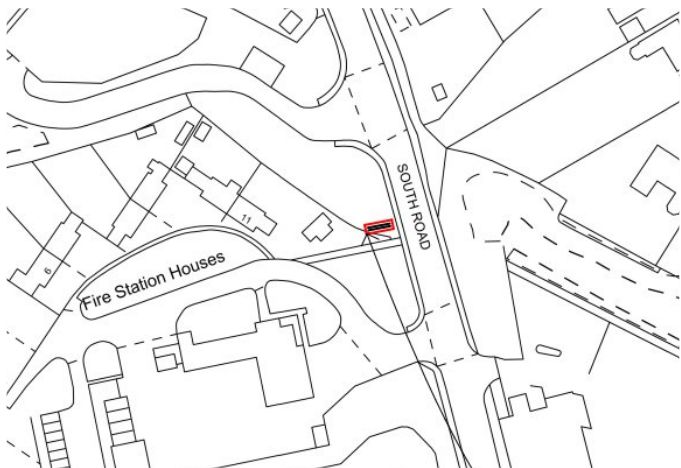
## Planning matters

At the former Duke's Middle School amendments are being sought to the approved plans, including replacement of some of the stone cladding on the proposed retirement living block with brick and render. This is a major development that will impact both the setting of a listed building and the surrounding urban landscape, but the plans lacked detailed information to assess the visual impact of the changes. We objected on the basis that no decision should be taken until there is sufficient information, including updated Design and Heritage statements.

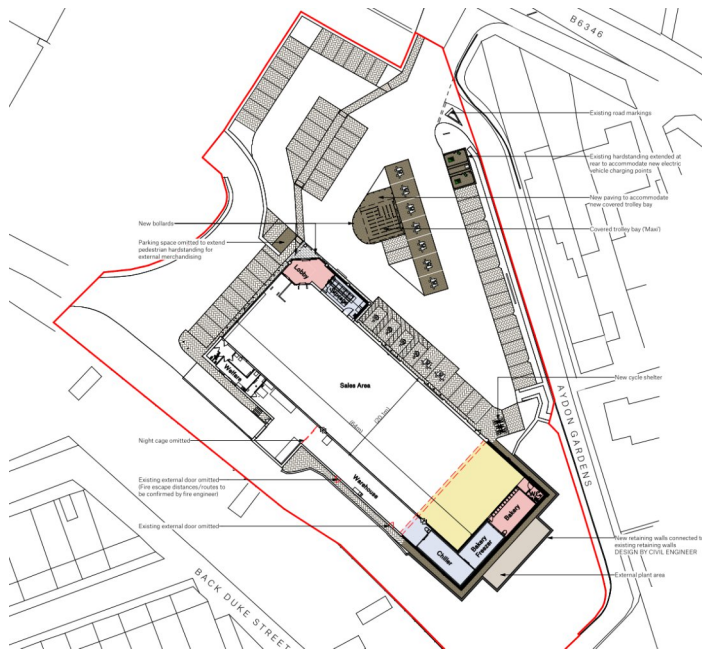
There have been two separate submissions for development at the Fleece Inn on Bondgate Without. Investment in this prominent Grade-2 listed pub is welcome, and it is reassuring that the Conservation Officers consider the Fleece to have aesthetic, historic, evidential and communal value, so they have carried out a detailed assessment.

On Sawmill Industrial Estate there is a proposal for supported living bungalows, behind Aldi. The development is something we feel should be supported, but it is adjacent to the route of the former Cornhill Branch Line and there is potential for this section of the former track-bed to be repurposed. As a walking and cycling route it could relieve congestion on Wagonway Road and offer a safe alternative route for active travel to and from the Duchess's Community High School. While this proposal does not appear to compromise such a development, we commented that consideration must be given to how this option can best be secured for the future.

We objected to proposals for a pair of illuminated digital advertisement displays on South Road because the proposal will compromise road safety and has a damaging effect on the visual amenity and character of a major approach to the town. The Town Council raised similar issues. NCC Highways have described the safety concerns as so significant that no reasonable action is likely to address them. They say that the proposed location and frequency of interchangeable images located in close proximity to a signalised pedestrian crossing, cycle lanes and adjacent road junction would have the potential to cause distraction to drivers and cyclists to the detriment of highway safety. Furthermore, the sign is partially located within the adopted highway, which is not acceptable.



Such large, illuminated advertisement displays are inappropriate in a town which depends on the maintenance of its attractive character and environment for development of the visitor economy. Approval would undermine the Neighbourhood Plan, and set a precedent by implying that similar illuminated signs are considered to be keeping with local character.



Lidl are well placed on South Road to benefit from customers who can access by foot or cycle from residential areas across the south of the town centre. We think they already do well from customers who live within walking distance. They are proposing to expand retail space while reducing car parking. We objected. A proposal that seeks to expand retail space while reducing car park spaces appears inconsistent, so careful scrutiny of the Transport Statement is necessary. If the expectation is that customers can be encouraged to switch from private cars to active travel then the proposed cycle shelter is inadequate and investment in the local cycle infrastructure will need to be a priority. Let's hope it's not too late to consider a more constructive approach.

At 3 Howick Street there is a proposal to form a self-contained annex with no provision for an increase in demand for on-street parking on Howick Street. The neighbourhood already suffers considerable pressure on parking, and if proposals go ahead to restrict parking on adjoining streets then the situation will worsen. We objected.

On Taylor Drive there is an application for a retail development including a garden centre, with associated access, parking and landscaping. There are precedents on related developments that used S106 agreements to mitigate demand on the road network and sustain town centre retail. We commented, expressing the hope that the opportunity will be grasped in this case to explore using similar agreements to develop active and sustainable travel links between the Retail Park and town centre.



## Quiz: Gateposts

Our last quiz looked at windows. The joke would be to too corny if we followed Windows with Gates. So instead we've gone with Gateposts: *the vertical structure on which a gate is suspended, or against which a gate closes.*

Examples from the 19th century survive in large numbers, so such structures only benefit from national protection if they are relatively early, associated with a listed building or registered landscape, or show outstanding quality of materials or workmanship. You may know of a gatepost in Alnwick that is all that remains to tell an important part of our story. There are some. It's not enough to justify national protection, but we'd still be interested to hear more.

Meanwhile, can you say where each of these gateposts can be found? Would you like to guess which are listed?





## Diary dates

**May 11<sup>th</sup>** - Mick Grant. History of Theatre in Alnwick. St. James Centre, Pottergate, at 7:30 p.m.

**June 8<sup>th</sup>** Presentation by NCC Built Heritage and Design Officer on window replacement in traditional buildings.

**July 13<sup>th</sup>** - Jessica Turner. Following in the Footsteps of St Aidan. St. James Centre, Pottergate, at 7:30 p.m.

**September 14<sup>th</sup>** - Paul Henery. Wildlife Protection Police Officer and Wild Life Artist. St. James Centre, Pottergate, at 7:30 p.m.

**September 17<sup>th</sup>** Heritage Open Day (details to be announced)

**November:** Any Questions 2022 (details to be announced).

## Some notable anniversaries

15<sup>th</sup> May 1809: first coals carried along wagonway from Shilbottle Colliery to Alnwick.

20<sup>th</sup> May 1364: birth of Harry Hotspur (1364-1403).

1<sup>st</sup> Jun 1434: licence granted for Alnwick Town Wall

7<sup>th</sup> Jun 1871: death of George Tate (1805-1871).

1<sup>st</sup> July 1816: foundation stone laid for Percy Tenantry Column

5<sup>th</sup> July 1847: last Mail Coach from Newcastle to Edinburgh

6<sup>th</sup> July 1939: Ernest Charles Wallcousins delivers selection of poster designs to the Home Publicity Committee, including 'Keep calm and carry on'.

19<sup>th</sup> Jul 1748: John Wesley makes his first visit to Alnwick "*All were moved a little, but none very much*".

31<sup>st</sup> July 1845: Newcastle & Berwick Railway authorised to build line between Gateshead and Berwick including a branch from Alnmouth to Alnwick.

## 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.



## Who's Who?

**President:** Peter Ennor

**Trustees:** **Chair:** Peter Reed; **Treasurer and Membership:** Gill Parker; **Honorary Secretary:** Sue Smith; Mary Carter

**Other Executive Committee members:** Elizabeth Jones; Colin Watson; Lorna Gilroy.

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

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

**Twitter:** @AlnwickCivicSoc

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

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

**Charity registration number:** 1197235

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

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

## Quiz Answers

A. Swansfield Park: southern entrance to the former Swansfield House, which was built in 1790's for H. C. Selby, to a design by John Dobson. House demolished in 1975. Gatepost can be found on Hope House Lane, near Hope House and the Summer Seats Footpath

B. Ravenslaw House: was built in 1896 for William Hardy (one of the brothers, who established the fishing tackle company). The house and grounds later became a horticultural centre then housing

C. Alnwick Cemetery: Gates Designed by F R Wilson and built by Armstrong and Hudspeth in 1856. Listed Grade-2

D. Piers and railings to former Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary (now Bailiffgate Museum) date from 1856, by John Green. Listed Grade-2

E. Wesleyan Chapel: Stone wall attached to Methodist Church. Base dates from 1786, upper section added by F R Wilson in 1886. Listed Grade-2

F. Gates to St Michael's Churchyard. Date from the mid-19th century. Listed Grade-2

G. Gate piers and gates to the Parish Church of St Paul date from around 1846. Listed Grade-2



Bonus gatepost

Allerburn House by F. R. Wilson, 1862