



With thanks to Carl Watson

Inside

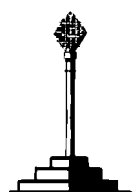
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For your diary:

15th November: Presentation of Civic Society Awards followed by our annual "Any Questions" discussion at St. James Centre, Pottergate. 7:30 p.m.

Our thanks to all who took the time to prepare nominations for this year's Civic Society Awards. As well as a mix of restoration and renovation projects, the initiatives that you have nominated cover a wide variety of Cultural, Social, Educational, Health and Environmental Activities.

Following presentation of the awards, a distinguished panel has agreed to lead our annual discussion of topical local issues. The range of award nominations is a tribute to the spirit and strength of the Alnwick community, and with a refresh of the Neighbourhood Plan under way the theme of our discussion this year will be "*The role of the community in shaping the future of Alnwick*".



Second and holiday homes

Second and holiday homes promise economic benefits, but a high proportion of properties with no permanent resident can undermine a community. Nobody would claim that Alnwick faces a problem on the scale of some coastal parishes. But if we want both a healthy visitor economy and a strong community we need to consider some implications and proceed with care.

Background

North Northumberland has long been a popular location for second and holiday homes. Buyers are attracted by the rural environment and coastline. The pandemic increased interest in accessible locations like Alnwick, where second and holiday homes could be used more frequently, for longer periods, and combined with commuting.

Holiday accommodation brings a wide range of economic benefits. Around 9% of jobs in Alnwick are directly associated with accommodation and food services, but the visitor economy has wider reach: investment in buildings; income for owners; employment in day-to-day management, cleaning and laundry services as well the economic stimulus from more general visitor spend. The appeal of North Northumberland as a destination relies, in part, on an attractive choice of accommodation.

On the other hand, high numbers of second and holiday homes cause concern. In Beadnell, for example, fewer than half of domestic properties now have a permanent occupant. There are similar issues in some upland areas. A decline in permanent occupation can have a number of adverse impacts on a community:

- Reduced demand for local facilities and schools mean that smaller settlements begin to lose their sense of identity.
- Some services may only be viable at certain times of the year. Others may struggle to meet seasonal peaks in demand.
- A fast-changing industry makes it difficult for the authorities to plan and deliver services such as waste management and fire safety.
- Demand for holiday accommodation means that smaller properties can become unaffordable for the local population.
- Some neighbourhoods and communities experience disturbance, noise, and anti-social behaviour.
- Innovation impacts traditional accommodation such as hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation.

Responses elsewhere

There have been attempts to limit holiday accommodation elsewhere, but there is little evidence on how well different approaches have worked. Nevertheless, other experiences can give us some idea of what we might expect in future.

Government policies at a national level have tended to use the planning, property and taxation systems to influence behaviour in relation to second and holiday homes. Wales has introduced a cap on the number of second and holiday homes, a statutory licensing scheme for holiday lets, and powers for local authorities to charge increased council tax premiums (and increase other taxes on second homes). The Scottish Government requires all local councils to establish a licensing scheme for short-term lets.

Similar suggestions for England include mechanisms to limit short-term and holiday lets in tourist hotspots, tightening of rules relating to

business rates for short-term rentals, consultations on approaches to planning permissions, introducing a register of short-term lets, and amending permitted development rights; the possibility of increasing the surcharge and council tax premiums for second homes.

More local approaches have tended to rely on the planning system, but these mainly apply to new developments, and have little influence over a change of use. In rural areas they have been linked with measures to encourage development of affordable housing for permanent residents. For example, the proportion of vacant homes in Northumberland National Park currently stands at 20% of the housing stock. Their policy only allows new housing to be used for a principal residence. Similarly, the Northumberland Local plan uses Rural Exception Sites to enable development of affordable housing for residents in areas where new build wouldn't otherwise be accepted. In parishes where 20% of household spaces have no permanent residents, new build will only be allowed for occupation as a principal residence. The Alnmouth Neighbourhood Plan only has one policy: to ensure that any new housing is used as a principal residence.

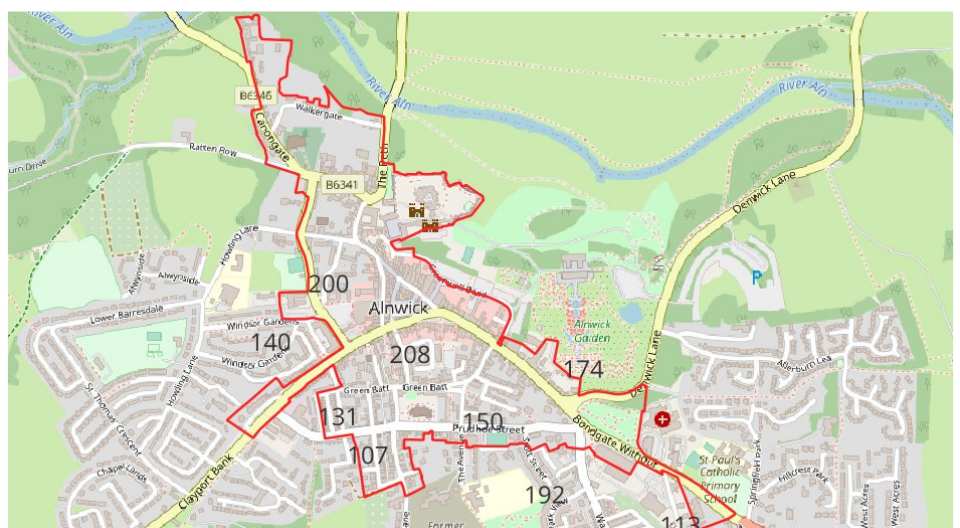
The situation in Alnwick

Detailed statistics are not available on the proportion of the housing stock in Alnwick that is used for visitor accommodation, and the picture is complicated by the definitions of various different types of second home and holiday accommodation. However, we can gain some idea from various indicators:

- The Valuation Office Agency puts the number of domestic properties in Alnwick at 4,210.
- At the 2023 census there were 4001 households in Alnwick with at least one resident.
- The number of active AirBNB listings within Alnwick has been estimated at 98 and the two largest Holiday Cottage providers each currently lists around 40 properties in Alnwick.
- A Technical Paper on Second and Holiday Homes developed in 2018 for the Northumberland Local Plan estimated the number of second homes in Alnwick as below 5% and the number of Holiday Homes at 63.
- We estimate that there are approximately 1,400 dwellings in and around the Alnwick Conservation Area (see map below).

How many second and holiday homes?

If we take the total number of domestic properties in Alnwick as being 4,200 and the number of households as being around



Second and holiday homes (continued)

4,000, then the difference gives an indication of the number of properties without permanent residents. That would suggest there are 200 domestic properties in Alnwick used as holiday accommodation.

If we assume some overlaps and gaps in other indicators then a figure of 200 seems broadly consistent: at least as an order of magnitude. It puts the proportion of domestic properties used as holiday accommodation across Alnwick just under 5%.

If we go further, and assume that most of the holiday accommodation is located close to the town centre, then around one in seven domestic properties in and around the Conservation Area is used as Holiday Accommodation: close to 14%. Again, that looks broadly consistent with the locations shown for holiday accommodation listings.

Some question the accuracy of these figures. However we can be confident that the proportion of holiday accommodation across the whole of Alnwick falls well below levels that causes concern in some nearby parishes, but it's reasonable to assume that there are smaller areas near the town centre where the proportion must be approaching the 20% trigger.

Constructing a balanced response

Nobody is going to seek a general restriction on holiday accommodation in Alnwick. A healthy visitor economy is vital to the town and the wider area. Tourism provides employment, both directly and indirectly. Investment in second and holiday homes helps to sustain our built heritage. Supporting and promoting tourism is crucial to economic development across North Northumberland.

At the same time, the concerns about some of the side-effects of a growing visitor economy are real, and have to be considered. A proportionate response will not attempt to defy market forces, but seek to balance benefits and drawbacks.

We can see three areas where a considered response might contribute to better outcomes.

Firstly, there is no case that second and holiday homes are undermining the fabric of the Alnwick community as a whole, but it is not unreasonable to question the impact on certain areas of the town. If we examine the issues that concern other communities then few have a major effect on Alnwick. We hear no concerns about visitors impacting the demand for schools, doctors, or other public services. There are concerns about how seasonal visitors influence town-centre retail, but short-term lets do not seem to be undermining traditional accommodation such as hotels and bed and breakfast. There are concerns over demand for on-street parking in some residential areas, but we are not aware of concerns about design or delivery of other public services. Visitors are rarely blamed for noise, disturbance or anti-social behaviour. However, it's possible that there are some parts of the town where a falling number of permanent residents is changing the character of the neighbourhood. To help sustain the vitality of communities, the policy in Northumberland is to apply a permanent res-

idency restriction in parishes where 20% or more of household spaces have no permanent residents. Parishes in Northumberland where that threshold is exceeded have an average population of less than 400. Alnwick has a population of around 8,000. In principle we might consider smaller areas of Alnwick. The Howick Street Suburb for example has a population of 247 (about twice that of Holy Island), the population around Bridge Street is a bit smaller. However, there will be practical difficulties. It will not be straightforward to identify areas where there is a coherent community; to demonstrate a degree of pressure that justifies action; and to obtain robust measures of the number of households and holiday homes. Furthermore, in their current form these policies work best for new build. They would have limited impact in parts of Alnwick where most new holiday accommodation can be expected to arise from change of use. A more constructive approach, where residents feel that their neighbourhood is being undermined, might be to encourage initiatives and support groups of residents that want build stronger communities - by signposting sources of funding; networking and mentoring, etc.

Secondly, while costs of housing seem to have settled to some extent, there are concerns over the affordability of entry-level homes in Alnwick. The cost of housing has an impact on economic development as well as quality of life. Holiday homes tend to be relatively small and around 1,700 Alnwick households currently live in one or two bedroom accommodation. When people see 200 homes being used by visitors rather than local people then they will inevitably conclude that demand for holiday accommodation has in-

creased competition for some types of property and hence driven prices up.

However, it seems unlikely that discouraging investment in holiday accommodation will result in more affordable homes. And we want to improve the condition of our built heritage, and find sustainable use for historic buildings as well as extending housing choice.

So there is an over-riding need

to encourage investment that will benefit to the town. The instruments available to policy-makers are notoriously blunt. So instead of trying to discourage investment in holiday homes, it would surely be better in principle and more positive in practice to encourage investments that will make the town centre a more attractive option for permanent residents.

Finally, Alnwick is not unique. The visitor economy is changing, and with more urgent pressures in other holiday hot-spots we should expect national policy to change as well. Accommodating visitors is an increasingly important aspect of life in Alnwick, but visitors still don't dominate the town to the extent that we can see elsewhere. If we want policies to be applied in a way that suits our local situation then we will need to understand these developments, and encourage informed discussion of how best to manage the impact on the whole community.

Young people's engagements with heritage

Historic England has been considering how best to support organisations that encourage young people to engage with heritage. They have been looking for evidence of what works, how young people benefit, and the potential to make a bigger impact.

Anyone who takes community engagement seriously will have spent time considering how best to involve young people. When we look around at those who get involved in heritage activities, it's pretty obvious that the groups which are over-represented tend to be older, white, retired, well-educated, and based in more prosperous areas. Young people tend to be under-represented. Arts-related activities, on the other hand, have earned a reputation as an effective way to help young people express themselves.

We know from experience that funding bodies look for initiatives that will attract young people with different backgrounds, that promise to help with aspects of personal development, social inclusion or wellbeing. Heritage groups can point to evidence that they can deliver benefits like those. However, the evidence tends to be anecdotal, and some feel that it is inclined to romanticise the contributions of young people. It would not be unreasonable for a funding body to question whether such benefits are best delivered through engagement with heritage or whether they might be better funding participation in arts, sports, or other cultural activities. Similarly, policy-makers will expect to see robust evidence that heritage groups are able to contribute to their wider concerns. However, there is relatively little to date that shows the relationship between heritage engagement, mental health, inequality, levelling up, etc.

These are important matters for Historic England, so they commissioned research into the benefits that young people gain from getting involved with heritage, and the contribution that this makes to the wider policy agenda. The study was carried out by the University of Wolverhampton Institute for Community Research & Development.

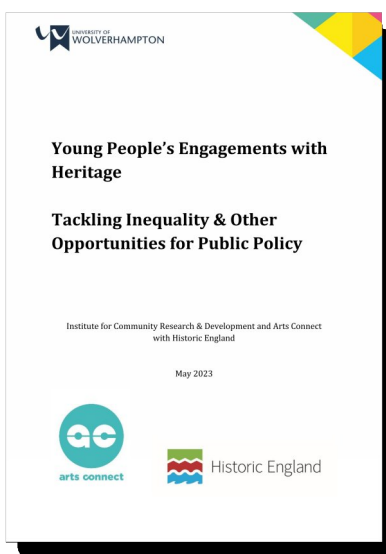
What they found is encouraging. There is evidence that participation in heritage can contribute to the personal development of young people. Heritage engagement can be aligned with some wider policy ambitions. Heritage can be used to confront social exclusion, and it can help to promote social mobility.

The research team made a number of recommendations that will interest practitioners, policymakers and funding bodies. And those of us who wonder how to encourage young people to engage with heritage will find plenty of food for thought.

But no easy answers.

- Young people will be attracted to explore aspects of their heritage that they consider important: so they need to have a voice.
- The most effective work does not just focus on young people, but also on their families, neighbours and others.
- Heritage bodies ought to be collecting more robust evidence on outcomes achieved and lessons learned.
- Partnerships are going to be vital for those who want to contribute to a broader policy agenda.

The full report: <https://tinyurl.com/49t6bflkf>



Stopping the rot

Each year Historic England publishes its Heritage at Risk Register. We haven't seen the 2023 report yet, but it may have been published by the time you read this. If it follows the pattern of recent years it will include two examples in Alnwick, and one in Denwick.

• General Lambert's House: Historic England has funded structural underpinning; re-roofing and high-level masonry, but external joinery and masonry is in poor condition, the building is vacant and seems to be deteriorating.

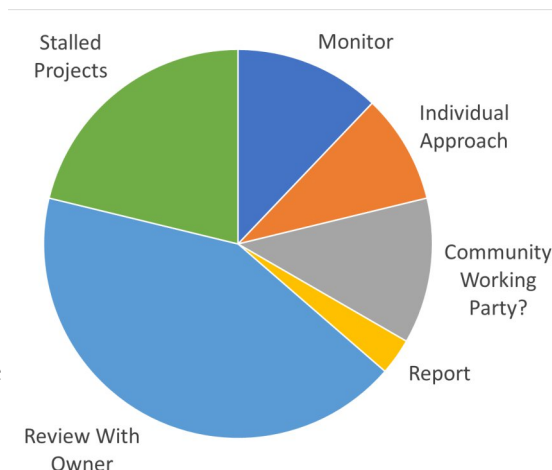
• Bondgate Tower: damage caused by impacts from high-sided vehicles. Further impact could cause a serious collapse. A risk reduction plan has been developed and is being implemented.

• Heiferlaw defended settlement: forestry is causing problems for this Iron Age settlement which incorporates the remains of a Second World War zero station.

We want to see these removed from the register of Heritage at Risk, but we also want to try and ensure that no more heritage needs to be added.

What can be done?

Historic England is principally interested in Grade I and II* listed buildings, places of worship and scheduled monuments at risk. Northumberland County Council has responsibilities that cover any heritage asset, including heritage that is Grade-II listed and heritage that is not listed, but significant to local people. These assets also need to be protected if they are going to be enjoyed by future generations.



It is in the interests of owners to maintain their property, but they are under no obligation to do so. Northumberland County Council has some enforcement powers, but enforcement isn't always the solution. If the authorities aren't aware of a vulnerable building they can do nothing.

NCC are prepared to work with partners, and the Civic Society is now helping the Town Council to track vulnerable heritage in Alnwick and take appropriate action. With more help we could do more. Are you able to help?

Banks: who needs them?

Alnwick can boast some interesting examples that illustrate how the design of banks has evolved over the last two hundred years.

Early banks were few in number and housed discretely. Until the early 19th century banking in Alnwick was handled by agents, operating from domestic addresses on Narrowgate and Fenkle Street. Then in the 1830's special banking buildings were designed and constructed. Alnwick has two examples from that era: the former Northumberland and Durham District Bank at 27, Fenkle Street and the former Alnwick Savings Bank at the corner of Narrowgate and Fenkle Street. Both were designed to make an impression, but in different ways.

The Country Bankers Act of 1826 relaxed the rules for starting a joint-stock bank. The aim was to improve liquidity, and it worked. A wave of new banks was formed in the 1830's, of which the Northumberland and Durham District Bank was one. They chose a classical style for their Alnwick Branch that signalled reliability and security. The architects, John and Benjamin Green, are better known for their work on the Theatre Royal, Grey's Monument, and Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle, and for the Penshaw Monument. But in Alnwick they were also responsible for St Mary's Church (now Bailiffgate Museum), the Union Workhouse on Wagonway Road and farm buildings in Hulne Park.

Investing in the new Joint Stock banks proved very lucrative for shareholders but their liability was not limited. Investors were personally responsible for any losses. So when the Northumberland and Durham District Bank failed in 1857 it had a devastating effect across the region and left lasting evidence in Alnwick that institutions with dodgy business models are inclined to commission impressive buildings.

The Alnwick Savings Bank, by contrast, had been operating for 25 years from a house in Narrowgate when it commissioned a new building on the corner of Narrowgate and Fenkle Street. They chose a local architect, William Smith, and a style loosely based on Elizabethan Gothic. This is a very early, if not the earliest, example of a style that would become a popular choice for savings banks in the 1840's. Savings banks were philanthropic, non-profit making institutions. Gothic styles would be familiar to the public in churches, educational establishments, etc. By choosing gothic over a classical style they were setting themselves apart from commercial banks and signalling their ideological differences while still suggesting reliability and longevity. When the building proved too small the bank moved to larger, but more modest premises: first in St Michael's Lane then on Bondgate Within. Perhaps it now seemed more important to demonstrate thrift.

After various financial reforms in the 1840's banking institutions became more stable. Board members wanted to demonstrate good taste as well as financial responsibility. So offices and the rear of the building were utilitarian, but public areas were designed to impress: a striking front elevation (often influenced by the Italian Renaissance), a grand entrance and a large banking hall. Staff

living accommodation on the upper floors helped to reassure customers about the level of security and made good use of a valuable site on the high street.

The row of banks on Bondgate Within date from this era: The former Barclays is an early 18th century house with a front extension added in 1883. Lloyds dates from 1910, and is by noted local architect, George Reavell. The building now occupied by Halifax at 26, Bondgate Within was designed around 1914 for the North Eastern Banking Company by renowned Newcastle architect William Henry Knowles.

After the 1920's the rate of bank building slowed everywhere, but by then the preferred architecture had been simplified to a style based on classical principles that became widespread enough for Osbert Lancaster to satirise it as "Banker's Georgian".

With a large number of existing branches, and the rise of automated banking services, there has been little need to expand the stock of specialist banking premises since the war. The number of bank branches is falling, and has been for many years. The reasons are many: mergers; cost cutting; competition from new entrants; new technologies such as internet banking, debit and credit cards, and mobile apps. The number of bank and building society branches in the UK fell by about 34% between 2012 and 2021. In 1990 cash was used for 80% of all payments, but it is now used for fewer than one in six.

There are many other ways to access cash and banking services but bank closures are still controversial. For some, the loss of banks is inconvenient, but for others it presents a serious challenge. There are real barriers for those with poor access to digital technology, or in situations where cards and digital payments aren't acceptable. Some find that handling cash helps them budget. Some rely on a carer for their shopping, and can only keep track and settle with cash. Digital payments make it hard to control compulsive behaviour like problem gambling so debt charities often advise people to cut up their cards, and only use cash. Those on low incomes are more likely to be disadvantaged, less likely have access to digital infrastructure and more likely to face financial difficulty.

There was a time when people felt that banking services ought to be carried out in some of the most impressive buildings on the high street. But that was a century ago, or more. Banks no longer need grand architecture, ornate decoration, high ceilings and spacious halls to reassure their customers.

We still depend on the various services that banks offer, and these ought to be available to the whole community. And if we

want a vibrant high street then these elegant buildings will need to find a new long-term purpose. However, these are two separate issues, and we are unlikely to find a solution to either if we conflate the two.

Imagine you had to find a new owner for an impressive building on the high street with grand architecture, ornate decoration, high ceilings, and spacious halls? Would you expect to sell it to a bank?

Restaurant? Wine Bar?
Office? Retail? Art gallery?
Community centre? Event
Venue? Housing? Museum?



Improvement of cottages

Concerns over the availability of suitable housing are nothing new. Alnwick's experience of cholera in 1849 drew national attention to the poor quality of local housing, and led to a number of initiatives to provide more affordable housing for working people in town. But initiatives were already under way to improve the standard of housing in rural areas.

"A dingy and barbarous Cottage may suit a dark and barbarous age ; but in the present days of improved knowledge, a wider diffusion of domestic comfort, something a little beyond bare walls and perforated earth floors, and patched windows , may reasonably be looked for at the hands of those who can afford the indulgence".

A public Meeting, held at the White Swan on the 22nd of October 1841 agreed to form a Society for encouraging the improvement of cottages in North Northumberland. This would be done by inviting landowners and their agents to report on the various improvements they were making to cottages and cottage gardens.

"Make an Englishman's home commodious and comfortable, give him in the first place room to stow his goods, a chimney through which the smoke can find its way, a roof ordinarily impervious to the weather, and a garden to cultivate, and he will seek, and (unless the subject of some particular perversity) will find, in the bosom of his family a rest from the toils of his daily labors".

The society felt it was unhealthy for a whole family to live and sleep in a single room, so they encouraged designs with two rooms. However they recognized that some families liked to have two rooms on a single floor, while others preferred one above the other. Over subsequent years they reported on various designs. This, on Cottages in Craster, is taken from their 1847 reports.

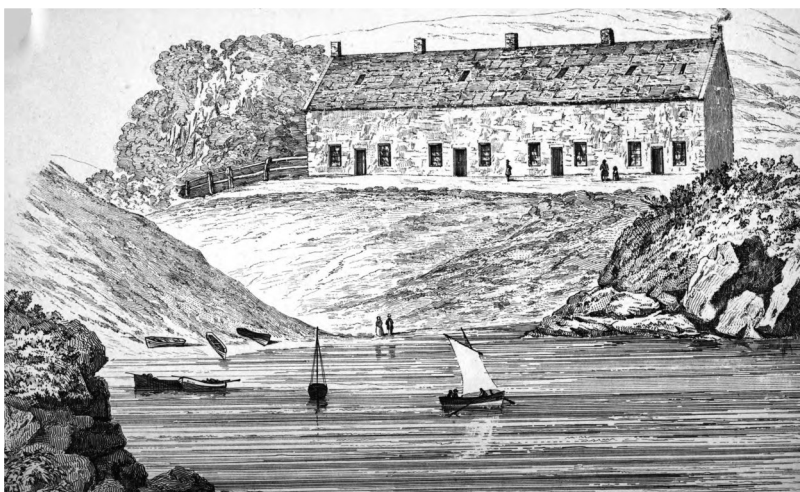
"It has been occasionally asserted that the call for improved dwellings among the labouring classes has not proceeded from the labourers themselves, that they are indifferent upon the subject, and that it is useless to agitate on their behalf whilst they continue apathetic in the cause. We are happy

to be able to furnish a striking refutation of the assertion that they are indifferent as to house accommodation.

In the fishing village of Craster, 5 miles N. E. of Alnwick, application was made by fishermen for a lease of land on which to build a row of roomy and commodious cottages. The request was granted, and the result is shewn in the accompanying sketch.

A close and confined cottage, consisting of a single room, abominable as it is in the case of Agricultural labourers, is yet more odious in the case of the fisherman, whose tackle, proverbial as it is for its disagreeable odour, has to be stowed away at home; this instance of voluntary exertion to sweeten and improve their dwellings is creditable alike to the fishermen themselves and to the landlord who lent a favourable ear to their application.

The cottages were built at an expense of about £60 each consisting of two rooms of unequal size, divided by a passage which leads from the front to the back door. The larger apartment is 14ft by 15ft 2inches, has a terrace floor, and is fitted up with an oven and boiler. The opposite room has a boarded floor and is 11ft 9in by 15ft 2in, each room is lighted by one large window. There is a loft over the whole, to which light is admitted by a small window looking to the back of the house, and a sky-light in the roof.



A generous helping?

Soup kitchens became widespread in the nineteenth century, and Philip Carstairs has submitted a fascinating thesis on how they evolved for his PhD at the University of Leicester.

The Alnwick Soup Kitchen is covered in some detail. It was normal for soup kitchens to move between temporary premises and in Alnwick they started at the Castle kitchens, but later used the Town Hall kitchen, Mr and Miss Johnson's china shop in Narrowgate (now Ruby Tuesday), Bailiffgate Square, the Working Men's Club, St Andrew's Mission Hall and premises on Green Batt (which we suspect was the Correction House and is now the Youth Hostel).

We encourage members to take a look. Philip has uncovered information on Alnwick that will be new to many and because he examines the changing nature of charity across five counties he is able to paint a detailed picture of how our local story follows wider changes in the relationship between the poor and those who were better off.

At one point almost one in three people in Alnwick used the soup kitchen. Should we see this as a generous charitable

response in times of need? Or were soup kitchens contributing to the problems that they sought to alleviate?

Find "A generous helping?" here: <https://tinyurl.com/3n4dvc6j>

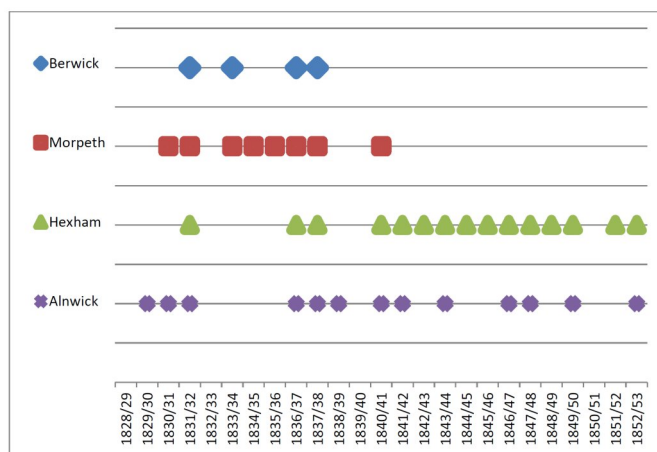


Figure 4.5. Northumberland town soup kitchen openings 1828/29-1852/3.

News in Brief



THE Lindisfarne Legacy EXHIBITION

Between 1842 and 1980 eleven vicars of Eglington were also Archdeacons of Lindisfarne. Discover their story at the Lindisfarne Legacy exhibition in the Ogle Chapel of St Maurice at Eglington. The exhibition is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily and is free.

Why was our school the way it was? "England's Schools" by Historic England covers the history and architecture of buildings where we spent much of our formative years. It's interesting, topical and free.

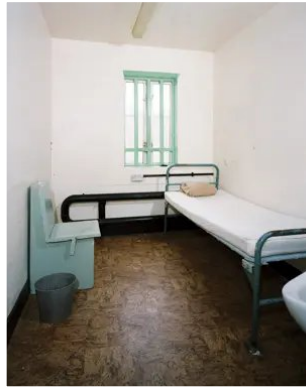
See: <https://tinyurl.com/yeyujx4v> Or for the story of Education in Alnwick see our May & Aug 2022 newsletters. <https://alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk/about/publications/newsletters/>

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport recently announced a national blue plaques scheme to celebrate people who made an important and positive contribution to human welfare or happiness across England. The scheme will be developed and led by Historic England, who have been recruiting a national blue plaques panel. We hear from Civic Voice that some Civic Societies are concerned that a national scheme like this

may undermine efforts by local volunteers and communities. It has been a while since Alnwick Civic Society discussed Blue Plaques, so if this is something that you would like to get involved with please let us know.

Alnwick is currently represented by two councillors on Northumberland County Council. It is the only two-councillor division in Northumberland. The Local Government Boundary Commission has recommended that in future Alnwick should be represented by two single-councillor divisions: Alnwick Castle and Alnwick Hotspur with some adjustment of the boundaries. The full report is here: <https://tinyurl.com/bdcszadm>

In 1999 the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England published a history of prison architecture called "Behind bars: The Hidden Architecture of England's Prisons". That was followed by "English Prisons: An Architectural History" in 2002. Photographs were commissioned for the project, including some of HMP Acklington and HMYOI Castington. If you know anyone who might be interested in how HMP Northumberland looked more than 25 years ago you might point them towards: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5dazdz> and <https://tinyurl.com/3xut4y98>



Congratulations to all involved with Alnwick in Bloom who achieved nine Gold Awards this year including 'Best Town'. Other Gold Awards went to Swansfield Park School, the John Bull, The Cookie Jar, Bullfield Community Orchard, St. Paul's Court, St. James's Allotments, Alnwick Garden and George Turner of Swansfield Park Rd.

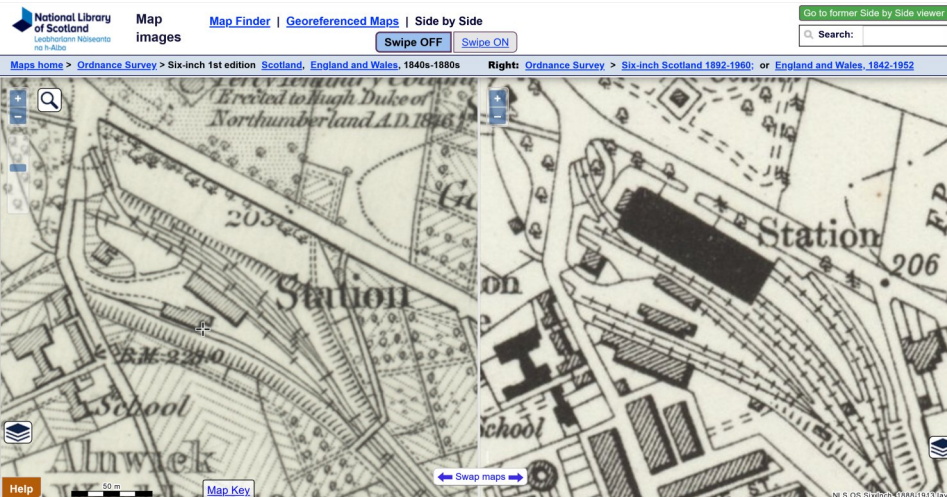


The area around the Long stay car park on the former Duchess's High School Site off Howling Lane has long been recognized as one of Alnwick's litter black spots, and we recorded a request for a litter bin to be placed there in July 2021. The Car Park now has not just one, but two (evidence above). It's just what we've all bin waiting for.



The first Ordnance Survey six-inch maps date from the 1840s and show a wide range of man-made and natural features. A new capability from the National Library of Scotland allows us to explore how Alnwick developed between the 1860s and the 1890s by comparing the first and second editions of these maps. They show, for example, how Canongate changed after the Gas Works moved to South Road. We can compare Alnwick Station before and after construction of the Cornhill Branch. And see how new housing spread along Wagonway Road and Alnmouth Road.

<https://tinyurl.com/4udr77jc> (and left).



Northumberland Local Plan: Landscape

The Northumberland Local Plan (alongside the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan) contains the planning policies used to assess and guide future development. The complete document can appear daunting, but we find it more accessible in manageable chunks. Here we have extracted some of the thinking on landscape.

Northumberland's landscape is rightly considered a jewel in its crown. It has huge variety and great drama: moors and forests; rolling farmland, country estates, parkland and wooded valleys; spectacular coastline. In the more densely populated, south east mining restoration led to some relatively featureless agricultural land, but recent projects included more sensitive restoration.

Around Alnwick we are mainly concerned with three Landscapes. Each is associated in the Local Plan with a guiding principle:

- **Lower Aln: (Manage)** This landscape is generally well maintained, and the approach should encourage ongoing custodianship, and to manage pressures for expansion of Alnwick. New development should be guided to less sensitive locations, while maintenance should focus on the existing habitats such as riparian woodlands, hedgerows and flood plain meadows.
- **Hulne Park: (Protect)** This area is a registered garden and designed landscape. The aim must therefore be conservation. Change within this landscape should be carefully managed. Given the nature of the land ownership, large-scale change would appear unlikely.
- **Alnwick Moor: (Manage)** Landscape has been affected by a number of influences: a lack of landscape and field boundary management, unsympathetic coniferous plantations, and development associated with the edge of Alnwick. Future management of this moorland and marginal agricultural land could be more directed towards environmental conservation and landscape improvement.

The Council recognises tranquility as a distinctive characteristic of Northumberland's countryside. While the County contains the Northumberland National Park, and the North Pennines and Northumberland Coast AONBs, much of the County outside of these designated areas is also tranquil in nature, and is characterised by its open countryside, small villages and hamlets. The Council seeks to ensure that the quiet enjoyment of the landscape is maintained by avoiding urbanising effects in these areas.

A key feature of tranquility that can be experienced across much of the Northumberland, is that of dark skies. In the open countryside, away from the larger settlements and the more urban areas, starry nights can often be experienced, and are increasingly a draw for tourists. Seeking a reversal of the trend for increased night time brightness can help to maintain quality of life and strengthen the economy.

Northumberland National Park, along with Kielder Water and Forest Park has been designated as Northumberland International Dark Sky Park. At 1,481 square kilometres it is Europe's largest area of protected night sky, and the fourth largest in the world.

There are three nationally important designated landscapes in Northumberland. The National Park is a separate planning authority with its own policies. It has a management plan, as well as its own Local Plan, natural environment vision and landscape guidance policy documents.

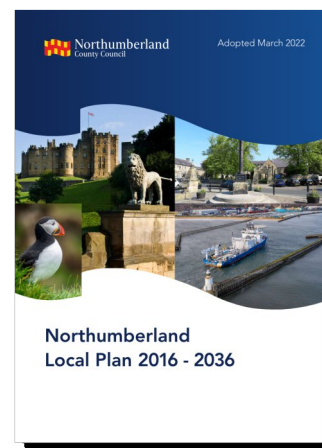
There are two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: the Northumberland Coast and North Pennines. Within these great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and natural beauty. Applications for major developments should be refused where they would adversely impact on these special qualities, except in exceptional circumstances.

To assist in the conservation and enhancement of AONBs partnerships have been formed between local authorities, statutory agencies, voluntary or community organisations and interest groups and local people. The partnerships prepare a Management Plan for each area and prepare guidance documents. The Management Plans inform the policy of Councils towards the AONBs, including defining and explaining the special qualities of each AONB.

The Northumberland Coast AONB comprises a narrow strip of coast between Spittal and the Coquet Estuary. It is known for sweeping sandy beaches, rolling dunes, rocky headlands and isolated islands, and contains numerous nationally and internationally important designated sites. The landscape contains scattered settlements, imposing castles and extensive sea and inland views. Visitor numbers, in particular, place considerable pressure on the AONB's special qualities. Without careful management conflict could easily result, threatening the unique environment and possibly the functioning of the coastal economy and communities. An important issue is the proliferation of second and holiday homes.

Approximately a third of the North Pennines AONB is within Northumberland, the remainder in Durham, Cumbria, and North Yorkshire. The landscape has a highly distinctive open character, which can be considered relatively remote, tranquil and free from large scale visual intrusion. This sense of wildness gives the area much of its character. There is not a high level of development pressure. Indeed it is important to sustain the local population, while recognising that even a single development which is out of scale or character with the area can have a widespread impact due to the open character of much of the AONB.

For more see the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment documents at <https://tinyurl.com/yemhse2d>



Mr Robertson's sideboard

Practical drawings of really useful pieces of every-day furniture of good design are even more difficult to obtain than the articles themselves, as the latter, of course, may be had at most of the leading firms of Art-furniture makers; but the high prices usually charged for them prevent people of ordinary means from purchasing them.

Illustrations, however, such as we refer to, are not often met with, because those makers who have gone to some considerable expense, perhaps, in obtaining their designs are naturally averse to their publication, lest inferior makers should plagiarise the design, and fill second-rate shops with distorted and badly worked copies at prices for which the original and properly-made article could not be produced.

We think, however, that the class of people likely to purchase a soundly-constructed and well designed piece of furniture, are not likely to be induced to buy articles produced by "slop" makers in the way referred to, because the difference of quality in every way is at once evident to persons of even very ordinary judgment and ideas of taste.

The sideboard which we illustrate today is made by Messrs. Robertson

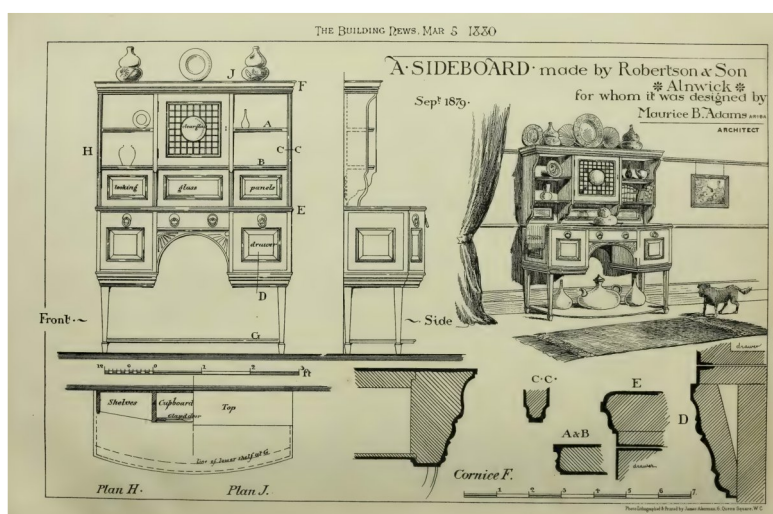
and Son, of Narrowgate, Alnwick, and the idea of the design is that the upper portion should be capable of being used as a separate piece of furniture in the form of an overmantel, leaving the lower half complete in itself. This sideboard is intended to compete both in size and price with the class of furniture for which the Tottenham-court-road has become famous. Three good drawers are provided, the centre one being intended for the table-cloth, the side drawers being fitted, the one for plate, the other for wine. The shelves of the upper portion, like the one below, are for ornamental pottery, or plates, or books, as the case may be.

The sideboard itself can really be used as such, all the space being left clear for the spreading of a cloth for side dishes, and the bracketed sides to the shelving are carried well back for this purpose. The retail price of this sideboard in walnut or wainscot is £21, and in mahogany the price is £21 10s. The design is by Mr. Maurice B. Adams, A.R.I.B.A., of London.

(Building News and Engineering Journal, March 8, 1880).

Thomas Robertson (1805-1882) started his business around 1834. His showroom on Narrowgate is now used by G. M.

Athey Antiques. It was described in 1862: *"This is part of the great North road over which the mail coaches used to run. In its northward direction we see a newly-built shop, showroom, and dwelling-house of Mr. T. Robertson, cabinetmaker, upholsterer, auctioneer, &c, remarkable for two square fronts to the shop, having large sheets of plate-glass, and lintels of solid stone, about 10 feet long".* By then Robertson employed 28 men, 9 boys and 4 women. Ten years later he had 56 men, 15 boys and 7 women. In 1847, 1865 and 1867 he was undertaker for the funerals of the third, fourth and the fifth Duke of Northumberland. He designed the Borough School and the Corn Exchange. His sawmill at Waterside (opposite Alnmouth) processed imported timber. He had premises in London, and manufactured for other retailers. He died in 1882 at home (Thornhill, on Alnmouth Rd) and is buried in Alnmouth Cemetery.



King Charles III Coastal Path

The last stretch of King Charles III England Coast Path in Northumberland was officially opened in August. This section connects Bamburgh with the Scottish border and completes a continuous 245 mile section between Bridlington and the Scottish border. So far this is the longest completed section of a national trail that will eventually follow the entire coast of England.

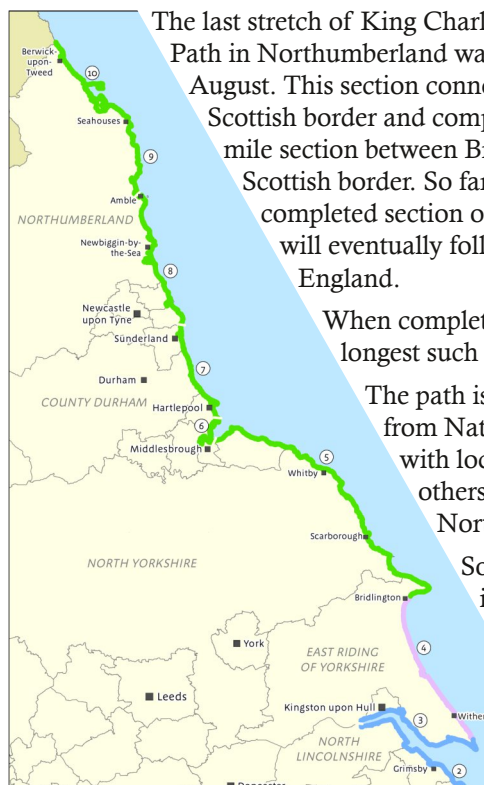
When completed it will be the world's longest such path, at 2,700 miles.

The path is being created by teams from Natural England working with local authorities and others. In Northumberland that includes Northumberland County Council, Northumberland Coast AONB and Historic England.

Sooner or later somebody is going to complete the whole path around England, but our international visitors already come to Northumberland for some of Europe's finest coastal walks.

Alnmouth is an ideal centre for completing the Northumberland section, and surely there's no better time to start planning than the long winter evenings.

There's more information at <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/>



Planning Matters



At Linhope House on South Street there has been an application to remove a portico in classical style, constructed of fibreglass and plywood and replace it with a similar structure in stone with lead covering. Conservation Officers were prepared to accept removal of the modern portico, but felt its replacement had to be justified. The history seems to be that a Victorian porch was removed before listing in 1977, leaving scars on the stonework which the classical portico hid from view. Officers concluded that although there is no evidence for a Georgian style portico, the proposal does not result in loss of historic fabric. On balance, they raised no objection and the application was approved.

At Glebelands (off Dovecote Lane) there are proposals for an major upgrade to a modern bungalow that will improve sustainability and energy performance. The applicant is hoping this will be seen as an exemplar for similar projects in future. So it is important that the standards established here can be maintained. In that context, the ambitions are worthy, and deserve support, but we had some reservations about the choice of materials. Although the bungalow is not very visible from the street it is in the Conservation Area. The town council objected to the choice of materials, but we preferred to wait for comments from the conservation officer.

4 & 6 Bailiffgate will be part of the new hotel, and the proposed treatment of the rear wall has been changed from stonework to render. The conservation officer agrees with the applicant that the wall is more dilapidated than predicted and the proposed approach is reasonable (subject to conditions). At 2-8 Bailiffgate proposals to add flagpoles over the entrance have been approved.

On White Hart Lane consent has been refused to replace existing wood frame sash windows with UPVC windows. The Conservation Officer, the Town Council and ourselves all objected, because no justification was presented for replacement. Even if there was a case that they could not be repaired then replacement with UPVC should not be acceptable. As in so many other cases, there has clearly been a misunderstanding of current policy. So it's disappointing that the officers' reports included clear explanations of the reasons for refusal, but the decision notice that was sent the the applicant didn't

Extensive changes are proposed at 1, Belvedere Terrace. These include: demolishing an existing garage, outbuilding and rear porch; replacing the rear porch with a glazed aluminium conservatory with roof extending over stairwell to basement; full internal refurbishment including minor layout alterations and new floors; and tanking to basement. A new garage and gates.

Refurbishment of this important heritage asset is welcome, but we asked if Conservation Officers could give guidance on the approach they recommend for use of non-traditional materials. Again, the town council has objected, but in this case the conservation officer saw no objection to powder coated aluminium for the replacement porch, provided it is in white or near white to match the white

fenestration elsewhere in the building. *"The current condition of the building suggests a considerable investment will be required to bring it to a structurally sound and comfortable condition. This is an instance where any small degree of harm is offset by the heritage gain"*.



The long-awaited application for the shops at the north side of the market place has now been published. This involves splitting one of the ground floor units into two commercial units and conversion of two apartments upstairs into one serviced accommodation unit. Although only one of the buildings is listed, they are both of heritage importance and they occupy a prominent position in the town centre. We welcomed the emphasis on repair rather than replacement of external features, and the proposed use is appropriate for the town centre. So providing the internal changes involve no significant loss of heritage, we felt the proposals deserved support. The response from the Town Council was similar, with an additional request relating to recycling and waste management.

The Conservation Officer identified a number of changes since listing that had not received consent and found that extensive stripping out and apparent neglect has resulted in some loss of heritage. However, without endorsing what has gone before, they accept these proposals as a practical way forward, subject to conditions designed to retain what remains of significance. Their detailed comments will be of interest to some readers.

We also reviewed, but made no comment on, a number of applications relating to trees in the Conservation Area and Discharge of Conditions relating to construction methods.



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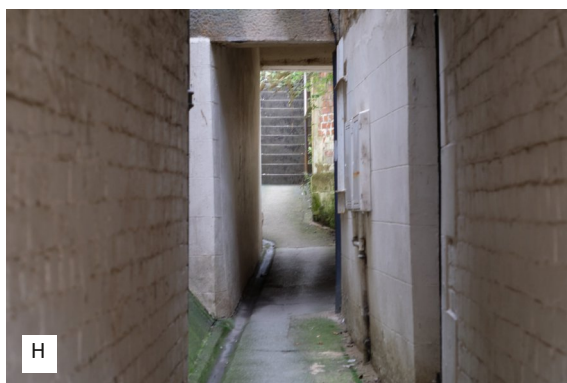
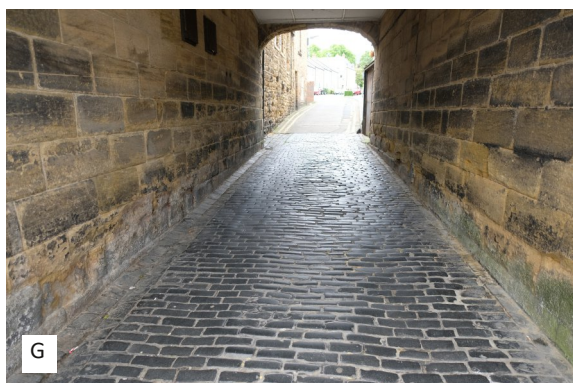
Quiz: Lanes

From the Alnwick Conservation Area Character Appraisal:

"The Norman town developed around the large triangular market place. The regular burgage plot frontages were approximately 30' wide, allowing a two-bay building to be constructed facing the street, and each plot backed on to a defensible boundary, probably a ditch and timber palisade, the course of which is still marked by the 'back road' of Hotspur Street, Green Batt, Tower Lane, Dispensary Street and Northumberland Street. The private ownership of the burgage

plots meant that the original road layout of the town survives relatively unchanged, and the plot widths still play an important part in setting the scale of the streetscape, while their length prompted the development, in the 18th century, of many narrow alleys which are an important part of the town's historic character".

Do you recognise these examples of Alnwick's historic lanes?



Diary dates

15th November: Presentation of Civic Society Awards, and “Any Questions”: our annual discussion of topical local issues. St James, Pottergate. 7:30 p.m.

Alnwick Local History Society programme of events:

<http://www.alnwicklhs.org.uk/programme-of-events/>

Notable anniversaries

5th Nov 1908: Opening of Alnwick Infirmary

9th Nov 1951: Streets Committee report that Fleece Pant had been demolished in a road accident

11th Nov 1922: War Memorial unveiled

16th Nov 1781: Birth of William Davison, printer

19th Nov 1863: St Michaels Church reopened following restorations by Salvin

26th Nov 1975: Approval granted to install ladies and gents toilets in Northumberland Hall

29th Nov 2002: Alnwick Town Council appears on the Internet for the first time

1st Dec 1895: St James church opened

2nd Dec 1931: Opening of a Branch Library on Green Batt

11th Dec 1856: Consecration of Alnwick Cemetery

11th Dec 1982: St Paul's dedicated for use by the Roman Catholic community

15th Dec 1832: Earl Grey (Whig) and Lord Ossulston (Tory) elected for new Northumberland Northern constituency in the first election after the Reform Act

21st Dec 1925: Alnwick Playhouse opens

22nd Dec 1539: Alnwick Abbey surrenders to Henry VIII

23rd Dec 1816: Alnwick Savings Bank founded

1st Jan 1985: Alnwick Castle Parks and Gardens listed

6th Jan 1463: end of the siege of Alnwick. Castle captured by the Yorkists

15th Jan 1959: Burnhope Transmitter enters service for launch of Tyne Tees Television. Alnwick lies in a fringe area where an “acceptable service may be subject to some interference from time to time”

16th Jan 1939: Electricity Pylon near Moor House is toppled by explosion attributed to IRA sympathisers.

31st Jan 1933: Alnwick Police Division, with Superintendent Spratt, march to their new building on Prudhoe Street.

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; Membership: Gill Parker; Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith; Treasurer: Tim Smith.

Committee members: Allan Mann, Colin Watson.

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Email: contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

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

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

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

Substack: alnwickcivicsociety.substack.com

Charity registration number: 1197235

Heritage at risk: report your concerns here:

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

Quiz Answers

A) Chapel Lane: early maps suggest that strips had been merged into larger grazing land before the Chapel was built in 1786

B) Corn Exchange Lane: The building of the Corn Exchange in 1862 included the construction of a monumental stairway.

C) Correction House Lane: also known as Kitty Lane, after the term for the Correction House built in 1807.

D) Grenwell Lane: The lane gave access to the Green Well, which once stood near where lane ends at the car park.

E) Dodd's Lane: Dodd's Lane and Three Tuns Lane were separated by a garden in the 19th century, then deteriorated into slums before restoration in the 1970s.

F) Stonewell Lane: The original Stone Well has been recreated in the wall of St Andrews Hall.

G) St Michael's Lane: originally known as Willow Walk the west side was redeveloped in the 19th century and the east side in the 20th.

H) Pickwick Lane: Named after the Pickwick Brewery, which once stood where Roxboro Place Car Park is now.

