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For your diary:

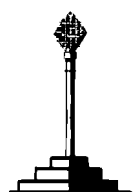
Feb 7th 7:30 p.m.: Online talk by Archie Jenkins (Secretary of the Shrovetide Football Committee) on the history of Alnwick's Shrovetide Football. If you would like to attend please email contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk so we can send your joining instructions.

Feb 13th around 2:00: Shrovetide Football, Alnwick Pastures, preceded by procession from Castle Barbican (see page 2)

Feb 16-18th: Alnwick Storyfest 2024 (full details of programme and venues at www.alnwickstoryfest.com)

March Public Consultation on the refresh of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan. (see page 8, and watch out for further details)

Mar 13th 7:30 p.m. : St James Centre, Pottergate. Civic Society AGM: your opportunity to review progress in 2023, help set priorities for the next 12 months and shape the future of the society. The formal business meeting will be followed by **The Lay-person's guide to Neighbourhood Planning** by Alnwick Town Clerk, Peter Hateley.



Shrovetide Football

John Lamb Luckley was born in Alnwick in 1822 to George and Elizabeth Luckley. He was deaf, almost mute and was orphaned early in life. He was raised by an unsympathetic relative and apprenticed to a cabinet maker, but mainly educated himself by taking advantage of resources at the Mechanics' Institute. He published a number of poems and articles. This dates from 1856 and is taken from "Wanderings in Northumberland", a series of his pieces that was published in the Newcastle Journal.

It was a little after noon when I entered the field, too late to see the beginning of the ceremony; the giving out of the ball from the barbican of the castle by the Duke's bailiff, F. Holland, Esq. The Duke's piper playing the "*Campbells are Coming*" "*Cheer, boys, Cheer*" &c., but they had not begun the kicking. A great concourse of people stood round the Union Jack,

"The flag that braved a thousand years, The battle and the breeze"

So numerous that I thought the whole male population of Alnwick had turned out. They were divided into two clusters, like the dumb bell nebula. In the centre of one stood Capt. Tom Vernon, like Saul among the people, marshalling his bachelor corps; under a spreading ash – still leafless – stood the sturdy Capt. Tom Forster, stout and strong, and around him a goodly array of Benedicts. The ball was speedily set a-moving, and then began a most determined contest for the victory, the crowd struggling for the ball like bees for sugar. There was many a tumble and many a holiday suit bespattered, but no injury. Several times the ball was carried into the centre of the river, followed by the enthusiastic kickers, crashing through the ice up to the neck, in a manner that reminded me of the celebrated flight of Eliza and her child in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

One of the youths who dashed in after the ball was named George Cockburn, son of the respectable brewer of that name; and an adventure which occurred about eighty years ago at the same place is well worth mentioning.

Some boys had got upon the river when the ice was weakly frozen, immediately opposite the Castle. Under one of them, a cobbler's son, fourteen years of age, the ice gave way, and he hung by his arms nearly in the middle of the river. No one durst venture near him, and an hour elapsed before proper ropes could be procured and stretched across the river. The boy was then extremely benumbed, his hold of the cord gave way, and he had nearly sunk beneath the hole, and durst not again touch the rope. The boy's father was withheld from precipitating himself upon the ice, but his brother, a good swimmer, stripped off part of his clothes, and the ice being broken from the side with poles, he attempted to reach his brother, but was incapable of making any impression on the ice, and was dragged out nearly insensible. The boy's cries were now rapidly failing, and it was evident he would soon sink, when the son of a neighbouring miller, celebrated for agility and strength, was attracted by curiosity to the spot. He eyed the scene for a moment, then, casting off part of his clothes, he dashed into the hole where the ice had been broken, and reaching the edge he raised both his arms over the ice, and with rapid ambidexter blows beat it down, and swam in through the aperture. The crowd viewed him with silent wonder, until he was seen to reach the boy, and seizing one arm to raise him out of the water, when a spontaneous and universal shout of triumph broke from the gazing crowd, he returned through the ice holding the boy with one hand and guiding himself with the other. While shaking the water off, he observed them to gather round with idle curiosity, instead of carrying the boy away. He uttered an indignant exclamation, knocked down some half dozen of the bye-standers in his way, flung the boy across his shoulder, ran off to his father's house, at a short distance, and had him stripped and put to bed. The name of this spirited young man was George Cockburn.



Alnwick Shrove Tuesday football match, probably 1906
(Bailliffgate Collections)

The mill is now all away. It stood on Barbary's Bank, near the watering place, or "Chains," but it is likely enough that the present Cockburns are descended from the youth, and they too are agile and strong,

***"The ancient spirit is not dead
Old times, thought I, are breathing there."***

Once when the ball got into water six feet deep, with a muddy bottom, a well known supporter of Sir George Grey at the last election, known by the soubriquet of Tiddly Wink (I know not if he has any other name) stripped and went in through ice and mud. Such a man, under favourable circumstances, would have been hailed a hero. The struggle for the honour of victory lasted from a little after one o'clock till sunset, with the exception of a few minutes for refreshments; and such was the spirit on both the married and unmarried side that only one hale was gained – and that by the married (who would have thought it ?) It was won by H. Hutchinson, servant to William Forster, Esq. president of the games. The ball was then thrown up, to be the property of whoever could carry it off. It was kicked into the river, and William Scott, plasterer, swam in, and carried it off through Barneyside. It was approaching darkness when the sport was discontinued, and the players went to get more refreshments, which were liberally supplied at the sole expense of the noble head of the House of Percy, whose readiness to support any manly amusements among the bold peasantry, their country's pride, is of a piece with his general benevolence. The scene was quite indescribable and would require a Hogarth or a Leech to do it justice.

Besides the players there were a number of ladies fair, apparently much enjoying the fun. I do hope his Grace next year will give a ball to be kicked for by the married and unmarried ladies of Alnwick – the winner if single to receive a small "tocher" – if married, a rosewood cradle. Judging by their performances at dancings, I doubt not they would beat the lords of the creation. I have an intense liking for these good old fashioned customs, so much superior to the new fangled ways spending time. I never miss an opportunity of joining in the sports, which recall many a glad hour of childhood when we were so happy without knowing it.

The shops were closed, a general holiday being kept, and the footballing has formed the staple of conversation in Alnwick and the neighbourhood for some weeks past. The ball

***"O these are voices of the past
Links of a broken chain,
Wings that can bear me back in times
Which cannot come again,
Yet God that I should lose
The echoes that remain.***

"Tocher" is an archaic Scottish term for a dowry

Civic Society view on shopfronts

Alnwick boasts one of Britain's finest high streets. Its special character reflects the story of the town, and the generations who have shaped it. Alnwick people are proud of their town, and hold strong views about the way it is changing.

Alnwick Civic Society was founded to protect our heritage, and we are known to take a keen interest in new developments. Our own logo is based on the Market Cross. So it's natural that people will ask our views when they feel that a part of our town centre is starting to look as though the designers never visited Alnwick, know nothing of our history and care little for their neighbours. They feel that Alnwick deserves better, and are asking what can be done.

Some claim that we have to make a choice. Do we want to protect the special character of Alnwick's high street? Or is it more important to attract new businesses, offer more choice to shoppers, create jobs and grow the local economy? We don't believe that Alnwick will accept that thinking. People value Alnwick's special character, and they value a vibrant high street. The two go hand in hand. A high street that is cherished appeals to business because it attracts shoppers. And a town can aspire to high standards when the high street prospers.

Across the town we see examples of thriving independent businesses that respect local character and are achieving commercial success. The Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide sets out a way for others to do the same.

Some new developments have to obtain approval from the council. A good Shopfront Design Guide (like Alnwick's) helps developers to navigate a complex system and lays out the criteria that will be used to assess their proposals. Developers can see how their designs will be assessed, and a new business can avoid expensive mistakes.

There are other situations where the council does not need to give their approval. Sometimes a developer is free to set their own design criteria. On the whole Alnwick's high street is evidence that most developers, retailers, and property owners will work in tandem with their neighbours. They value what is special about Alnwick, want to protect our heritage and will respect the investments made by others. A good design guide (like Alnwick's) helps a responsible developer to prepare designs that respond to local character.

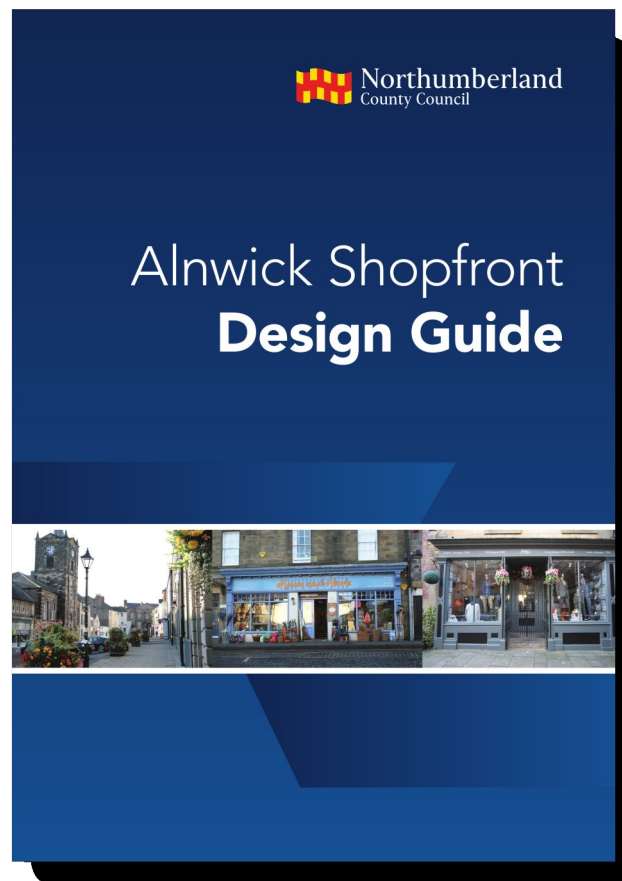
The Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide can be found on the NCC web site at: <https://tinyurl.com/3uskw5e7>

Shrovetide Football (continued)

was anciently kicked through the streets of the town, but afterwards removed to the pasture, the Duke giving the freemen £10 to enjoy themselves. These gentry made a bad use of the money, as they do of everything else, and the supplies were consequently stopped. I hope no misconduct on the part of the inhabitants will cause this manly recreation to be discontinued, and that future generations will annually meet in a spirit that will justify the generosity of the Noble Lord of the Manor.

(and so do we) With thanks to Mick Grant at Bailiffgate Museum and Lawrence Havis, who researched the story of John Lamb Luckley's life.

Newsletter



These are challenging times on the high street, but old photographs show that retailing in Alnwick has always been competitive. Every generation has wanted to attract the attention of customers. Perhaps it's inevitable that some will test the

boundaries of what is allowed, and a few will over-reach. The outcry when that happens shows that people care about their town. Their pride is something to celebrate and in the long-run it's that pride in our town that will protect what people find important.

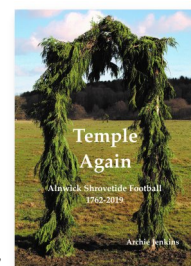
Meanwhile, we urge readers to spread the word about the Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide and encourage positive examples of responsible and well-considered investment on the high-street. We all benefit from the efforts of responsible businesses. Let's not be shy about letting them know that we appreciate the contribution they make to the quality of life in Alnwick.

Helpful tips:

See <https://alnwickhales.co.uk/>

The 2024 match will be held on Tues 13th February, starting around 2:00 p.m. and lasting about two hours. Crowds gather at the Castle Barbican, where the ball is thrown from the parapet to start proceedings. A procession then follows the Duke's piper over the Lion Bridge to the Pastures.

"Temple Again" by Archie Jenkins tells the story of the tradition. Copies will be available on the day for £8.00. The society has been offered a limited number that our members can reserve beforehand. Let us know if you are interested.



We've been looking into commercial waste bins

Businesses cannot operate without producing waste. In an ideal world every high street business would have sufficient space on-site to store their waste bins without blocking exits or compromising fire regulations. They would have access at the rear, and collections that were frequent enough to avoid waste building-up.



But we do not live in an ideal world, and nor do others. We sometimes receive comments from members about commercial waste bins in Alnwick. We know that Town Councillors are aware that they can be an eyesore and already discuss issues with businesses in the town centre. So we thought it might be useful to look at what different Civic Societies have been doing, the issues encountered elsewhere, approaches that others have taken and whether there was anything we could learn.

Concerns elsewhere typically centre on:

- The location of commercial waste bins, particularly when they obstruct pavements
- Frequent and regular emptying / collection: overflowing contents, and a fear of attracting vermin
- The visual appearance of commercial waste bins, particularly where this has an effect on a Conservation Area.

Location, location, location

Authorities normally expect businesses to dispose of their waste responsibly and only put bins out on collection days. But some businesses have little option other than storing bins on the pavement. This seems to be reluctantly accepted as a last resort where there is no rear access and insufficient space within the premises. Why is it tolerated at all? Because the alternative is worse. Secure commercial bins on the pavement are preferable to piles of waste that is loosely bagged.

When a footway is obstructed the highway authority is responsible for dealing with the issue, but most would only expect to get involved for a persistent problem. They expect each business to deal with any of their bins that have been temporarily displaced, or have not been returned to the proper location after collection.

Frequency of collection

A business that generates a large volume of waste will need their bins to be emptied more frequently than a business that generates a smaller volume. Bins that are emptied more frequently can be smaller and are less likely to overflow.

In some high-profile heritage destinations a daily collection has resulted in very few bins being visible on the streets, but when these collections are carried out overnight they can generate complaints from residents about noise.

It is normal for the same area to be served by several different commercial waste collection providers and that is the case in Alnwick. There have been suggestions that (in theory) the frequency of collection could be increased and costs saved by reducing the number of providers. However, we found no examples of this being done in practice. More realistically, it seems common for special collections to be scheduled following a predictable peak of activity such as a public event or a festival.

Aesthetics

Perhaps some people find them attractive, but most regard commercial waste bins as unsightly so it is unfortunate that they are often concentrated in highly visible locations, where they detract from the appearance of a town. Where bin stores (or compounds) are installed they generally seem to be welcomed as an improvement. Any doubts tend to relate to detailed considerations such as placing and design of the bin store, rather than the general principle of installing them. Location tends to be an issue where they are positioned close to a prominent or listed building. And there are sometimes concerns that appearance will deteriorate over time, or that they may attract vandalism, graffiti and even arson. There doesn't seem to be much consultation before introducing a bin store. If there was then it may result in more questions about the choice of location, risk assessments and whether alternative designs have been considered.

What can a member of the Civic Society do?

Most of the action taken by others seems to be in response to waste issues after they have been encountered, rather than in anticipation. Where problems occur in Alnwick the NCC reporting system is the first port of call. It can be used to report a wide variety of related issues including pavement obstruction, accumulation of rubbish, litter and fly tipping.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/SelfService/Report.aspx>

When it comes to considerations around appearance and choice of bin locations we already scrutinize planning applications and flag up potential concerns. One side-effect of recent changes to the planning system is that there are fewer opportunities to draw attention to the impact of a change of use, but where permission is still required the society will continue to draw attention to the need for appropriate storage and collection of waste. All members are welcome to help with this kind of preventive scrutiny by joining our Planning Advisory Panel.

Campaigners elsewhere have discouraged poor practice by naming and shaming: highlighting issues by posting content on Social Media, or even the mainstream press. In contrast, the authorities tend to concentrate on encouraging good practice. Northumberland County Council, for example, provides guidance on waste and recycling for business. Every business has statutory responsibilities for management of waste, but waste management is not just about legal compliance. It also helps to reduce pollution, conserve natural resources, mitigate climate change and enhance the reputation of the business. There are costs associated with every stage in the life of waste material, so effective commercial waste management can benefit the bottom line.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Waste/Business.aspx>

Is enough being done to encourage a more rigorous approach to waste management? Or should the emphasis shift to eliminating waste - so these issues needn't arise in the first place? Or both?

Let us know what you think.



ELIMINATE
Avoid producing waste in the first place



REDUCE
Minimise the amount of waste you do produce



RE-USE
Use items as many times as possible



RECYCLE
Recycle what you can only after you have re-used it



DISPOSE
Dispose of what's left in your bin in a responsible way

New Infirmary, Alnwick (from *The Hospital*, March 6, 1909)

This building, opened by the Duke of Northumberland on Nov. 4, 1908, replaces the building which was erected in 1819 as a dispensary, and in 1849 changed into an infirmary. It was at first proposed to make extensive alterations in the old building, but on the advice of Mr. Leeson, of Messrs. Oliver and Leeson, architects, of Newcastle, the committee wisely decided to erect a new building rather than spend money in altering the old one.

Having obtained through the good offices of the Duke of Northumberland a suitable site on favourable terms, the committee advertised for plans, and, on the nomination of the President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, appointed Mr. Frank Caws, F.R.I.B.A., of Sunderland, to act as assessor. The result was that, out of 20 designs submitted, the plans by Mr. J. Wightman Douglas and Messrs. Boyd and Groves were placed first, and the work was entrusted to those gentlemen. The plans, which we publish to-day, show a very ingeniously worked out scheme on a site that would appear to be somewhat cramped.

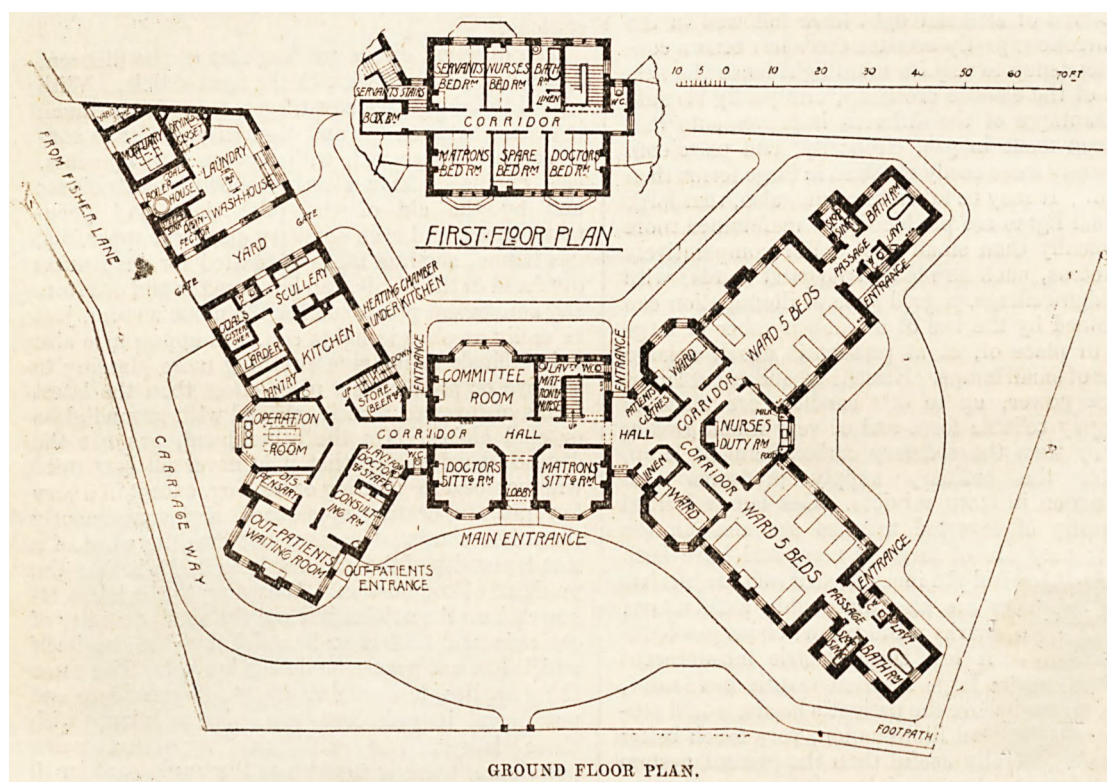
The outline of the building takes, roughly, the form of the letter X, the four arms being one story in height, while the centre block is two stories. The points of the compass are unfortunately omitted from the plan, but we infer from the description in the local press that a line drawn through the centre of the operation-room along the corridor and through the centre of the nurses' duty room would lie approximately north and south. Thus the wards receive a maximum of sunlight.

The ward block is compact and well arranged; the nurses' duty-room separates the two large wards, and is equally conveniently placed for them and for the two separation wards with one bed each. The sanitary offices are adequate and properly cut off from the wards, and a door from each lobby into the open air affords access for patients to the garden, while at the same time it is a convenient mode of access for workmen to the sanitary offices for the purpose of repairs.

The centre block contains, on the ground floor, sitting-rooms for medical officer and matron, committee room, and lavatory and w.c. for matron and nurses. The upper floor contains bedrooms for staff and servants.

In the northern wings are placed the out-patient waiting-hall, consulting-room with lavatory and w.c. for medical staff, dispensary, operation-room, and the kitchen offices. The position of the operation-room close to the out-patient department and the doctors' lavatory on one hand, and the kitchen offices on the other, is not a satisfactory arrangement; and the fact that a patient after operation has to be taken, on the way back to the ward, along a passage in which there are three doors to the external air certainly presents some element of danger. It would have been better if the operation-room had been placed nearer to the wards, and if some means had been taken to prevent contamination from the out-patient department. The position of the two staff w.c.'s inside the building is also unsatisfactory. In a small building such as this it is just as essential that the sanitary offices for the staff should be cut off as it is in the case of the ward offices. The kitchen offices are well arranged and compact, but here again it would have been better if the entrance to the w.c. had been outside. The laundry, disinfection house and mortuary form a separate building, and are well contrived. The arrangement for treating infected linen is unusually well thought out. The exterior elevations are simply but effectively treated, and appropriately express the character of the building. The only detail open to criticism is the way in which the Tipper sashes are cut up by bars. Sash bars are out of place in a hospital, in that they provide so many unnecessary angles for dust; and from the architectural standpoint it is a mistake to divide up part of a window only.

(Joint Architects: J. Wightman Douglas, Alnwick and Newcastle-on-Tyne; Boyd and Groves, Newcastle-on-Tyne.)



The Ecclesiastical Exemption

Churches and chapels are among our most important landmarks. For congregations they are a place of worship and a base for the mission of the church. But they are also important to the whole community, regardless of religious affiliation. They are part of the story of our town, our neighbours and our families. They occupy prominent positions in our towns and landscape. They contain some of the finest design, workmanship and decoration of their period. Churchyards are part of our natural environment with ecological value. Church buildings are not lifeless monuments. They play a part in the life of our community and are appreciated by diverse groups.

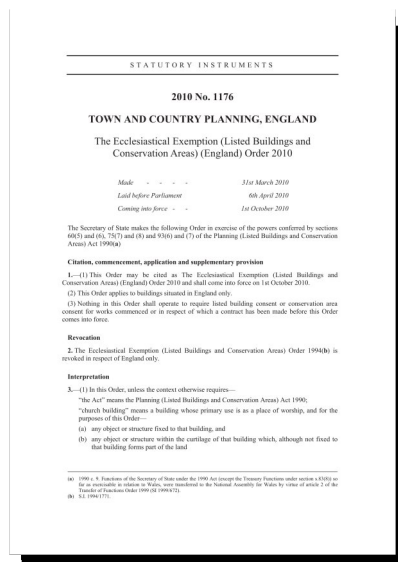
To remain viable and sustain their purpose churches must adapt: balancing worship, mission, community, care and conservation with changing needs. This is recognised in the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) England Order of 2010, which exempts five religious groups from certain planning laws: as long as they operate their own system of heritage protection and maintain the same standards as the local government planning authority.

There are nearly 15,000 listed places of worship in England. Many (including all in Alnwick) are in a Conservation Area. At present the five “Exempt Denominations” are all Christian:

- Church of England
- Roman Catholic Church
- Methodist Church
- Baptist Union of Great Britain
- United Reformed Church.

These five groups are exempt from:

- Listed building consent: for the place of worship itself, and monuments, etc. within the curtilage
- Conservation area consent
- Building preservation notices; Compulsory acquisition of buildings in need of repair and Urgent works notices.



They are not exempt from:

- Planning permission
- Dangerous structure notices
- Advertising consent
- Building regulations
- Other secular legislation (such as Health & Safety).

“Ecclesiastical purposes” is not defined in the act, but in practice exemption covers buildings which are used for worship, parish halls, school rooms, lychgates and boundary walls. It applies to all works which would otherwise require listed building consent.

There is no exemption for total demolition (demolition would mean that the asset could no longer be considered as being in ecclesiastical use). There are special procedures when a Church of England church is closed for regular public worship, but for other denominations exemption ceases and normal local authority control will apply after the final service.

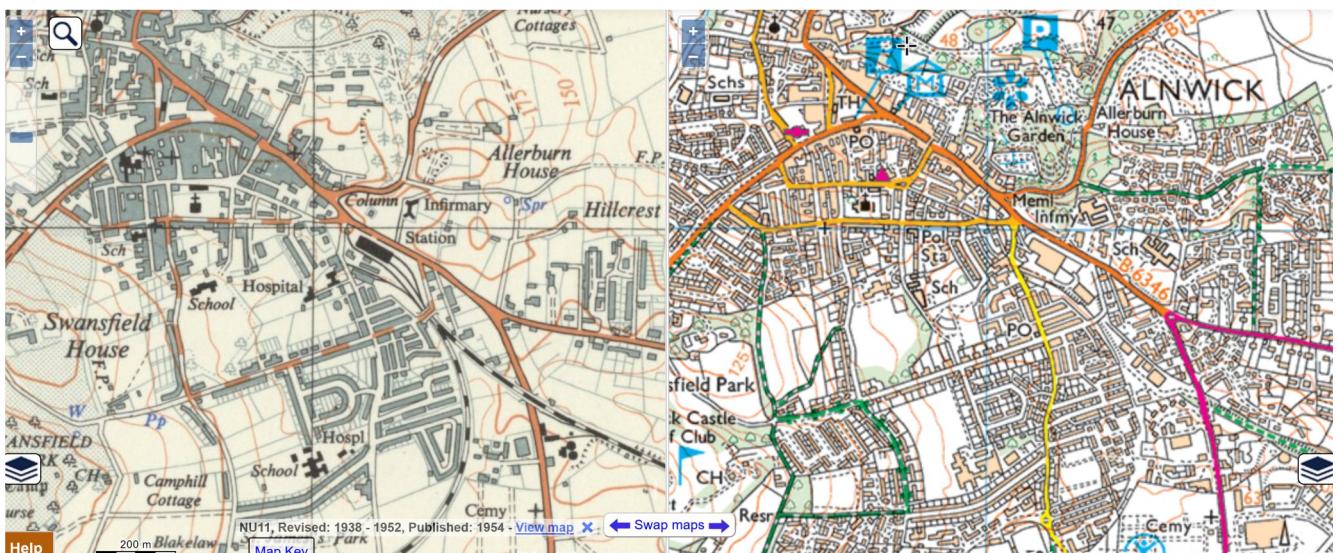
The Ecclesiastical Exemption is well-established. It reduces pressure on the planning system and maintains an appropriate level of protection for some of our finest historic assets. It's important that the system works well because places of worship have to adapt if they are going to survive and fulfil their intended purpose.

The main concern with operating parallel systems is that changes could be approved without an exempt organisation having to properly consider the wider impact on the town. The procedures of an exempt organisation need not be as visible as those of the local planning authority. So we may have to rely on members and contacts to keep the society informed and ensure that significant proposals will not be missed. More generally, healthy relationships across various different interest groups will help to ensure that the whole community is able to engage. In practice, Alnwick's community spirit should ensure that there's little risk of problems arising with Ecclesiastical Exemption.

Baby boomers: How has Alnwick changed over your lifetime?

Thanks to the National Library of Scotland we can compare a modern Ordnance Survey map with the equivalent from 1954.

<https://tinyurl.com/bdh72x64>



News in Brief

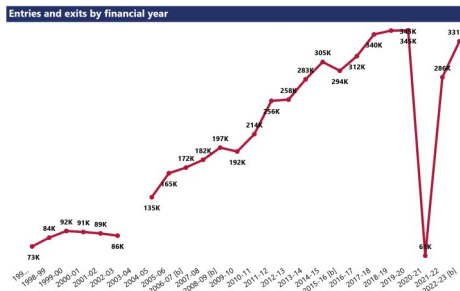
In December the government launched a consultation on changes to building regulations that are designed to reduce the carbon emitted by new buildings while delivering the new homes that communities need. It presents options that aim to balance running costs, comfort and build costs. The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Michael Gove) believes these new standards will play an important role in reaching net zero by delivering buildings that have high fabric standards, use low-carbon heating and are ‘zero-carbon ready’ (i.e. no further work will be needed for them to have zero carbon emissions once the electricity grid has fully decarbonised).

Housing minister Baroness Penn claims that the proposals could slash carbon emissions from new residences by 75%. Supporters have described them as a significant improvement from existing laws. However, not everyone agrees. Simon McWhirter, deputy chief executive at the UK Green Building Council said “the government has opted for the least ambitious option that would deliver homes from 2025 at a lower standard than many already built today”.

This is a detailed technical consultation that will mainly interest those closely involved with the construction industry. However, the issues concern us all, not just developers, builders, architects, local authorities, trade and professional bodies. So we would be interested to hear what members think. The consultation will last to 6 March 2024. More details can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/4mvhwz2>

Our "Eyes and Ears" initiative has been tracking Townscape issues now for three years. At the end of 2023 two-thirds of the issues reported by members had been fixed. With some twenty entries still remaining there is still work to be done, but we have noticed improvements

since NCC introduced their new Fix-MyStreet reporting system. Thanks to all who have contributed to reporting and progressing these issues.



The Office of Rail Regulation publish annual estimates of the number of entries/exits and interchanges at each station in Great Britain. This chart shows how the level of activity at Alnmouth has risen over the last 25 years. Rail usage in the north-east recovered well following the easing of pandemic restrictions. It looks as though at Alnmouth the recovery is almost complete. More details at: <https://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/statistics/usage/estimates-of-station-usage>

Five Northumberland structures were added to the National Heritage List for England last year. Two are in Craster. Robson’s Smokehouse is thought to have been constructed in 1856, although parts are from an earlier building. James William Robson came to Craster to work for one of several fish curing businesses then bought this yard in 1906. His son established a business that remains in the same family. In the 19th century herring was a staple food. Fishing and fish processing was a major industry and there were herring yards in almost every town and village along the north east coast. Fresh fish was sold locally, while smoked fish was transported elsewhere. The industry declined in the 1920s and 1930s and although this type of building was common once, it is now rare.

Chain Home Low Radar Station (pictured below) is a short distance north of Craster. It was built in 1941 to detect surface shipping and protect Britain’s coast. The site was normally operated by one Non-Commissioned Officer and 12 Other Ranks in three watches, with two cooks and nine guards. Until 1944 they reported shipping movements and aerial attacks to the Commander Fixed Defences, Tyne. After that the buildings housed Italian Prisoners of War until 1947. By 1964 the site had been largely cleared leaving only the operational and generator building.



The British Library has recently suffered a serious cyber-attack but if you are looking for images of Alnwick that have been scanned from their books they are still available here: <http://tinyurl.com/bdh3jtcd>

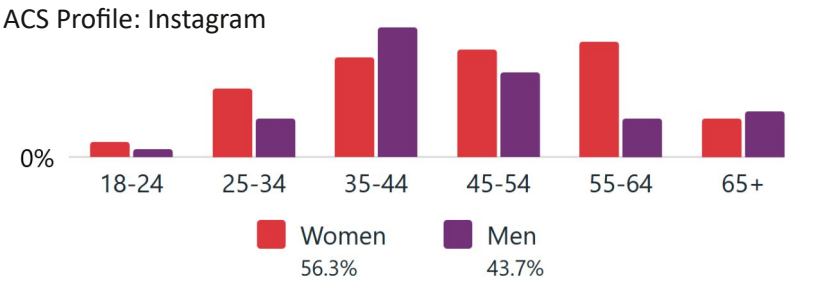


Our audience on Instagram is small but growing. It’s more local than our audience on Twitter (X), and younger than our audience on Facebook (see age profile below). <https://www.instagram.com/alnwickcivicsociety/>

In 2024 we would like to reach even more widely. Please get in touch if you can add sparkle to our presence across social media.

Have you noted our new bank details?

There are a number of reasons why we have changed our bank account, but one of the most important benefits is that it will make it easier for our members to pay their annual subscription. If you do this by standing order you will need to let your bank know our new details. If you pay annually it will now be easier to do this online. You will find the new details on the Membership page of our web site.



Civic Society Awards

In March Alnwick Civic Society invited the people of Alnwick to suggest projects and initiatives that have made a difference to our town over the last few years. The community rose to the challenge and nominated an impressive variety of projects. Once nominations closed an assessment panel selected twenty, representing a broad mix of activities that make a difference to life in Alnwick, as well as a number of examples of the high quality restoration & renovation work that is the traditional focus of most Civic Societies.

The awards and certificates were presented by Kevin Trickett, the Chair of Wakefield Civic Society at a well-attended ceremony at St James Church on Wednesday November 15th.

Following presentation of the awards Ian Brown of CPRE Northumberland, Reverend 'Mitch' Mitchell, Jean Humphrys and Louise Dawson from Bailiffgate Museum joined Kevin for a lively discussion of their experiences and the role the community plays in shaping the future of Alnwick.

Awards for an outstanding contribution were presented to:

- Alnwick Library and Playhouse for the renovation and restoration
- Alnwick Youth Hostel for the restoration and Cycle Hub
- Jim Crowther for development of bell-ringing at St Michael's Church
- Suzy Walker and the StoryFest Team for Alnwick StoryFest
- The team of students and staff at Duchess's Community High School for tree planting.

Certificates were presented to recognize the contributions of:

- Aln Valley Railway for Aln Valley Cycle Track
- Alnwick in Bloom for improving the visual ambience of the town
- Andrew Carr for pressure cleaning of pavements in the Marketplace, Passages and Paved Areas
- Barry Grieveson and his group of litter pickers
- Beth Gascoigne-Owens as the inspiration behind community initiatives
- Drop-in Centre at Alnwick Gardens for activities of Elderberries
- Gallery Youth for the Freerider bike track
- Glebelands Lodge for stonework improving the appearance of the property
- Sandra Baker, Audrey Bowes and Peter Mannion for stonework of the wall opposite Alnwick Police Station
- Hazel Roden and Alnwick Community Growers for allotment based activities and projects
- Historic Property Restoration for stonework at Croft Cottage
- Mark Jones for transforming the building and the business at the Dirty Bottles



- Mick Grant for volunteering in the Collections and Archives Section of Bailiffgate Museum
- Pat Ashton on behalf of Alnwick U3A for support and cultural activities
- Paul Foster for stonework at 1 Prudhoe Street, 6 Lisburn Street and Hope House Garden Wall.

Two projects were commended for impressive work that is under way, which the panel look forward to recognising once it is complete. The new architectural lighting system on the Percy Tenantry Column is just the first phase of a larger programme; and the ongoing work to display and interpret historic graffiti at St Michael's is of national significance.

Finally, as we celebrated the achievements of everyone concerned we also felt there were lessons to be drawn.

• Firstly, that Alnwick deserves better from our planning system. On the whole, we have found that officers working within the system do good work under considerable pressure. Nevertheless, those who want to do the right thing for our built heritage too often find the system obstructive. And too often those who don't care for our heritage seem to find it too easy to run rings round the regulations.

• Secondly, a word about our local trades. We are lucky to have access to the skills and experience of people who understand the local vernacular and do some remarkable work of the highest quality. These awards have recognised several examples of stonework: important when it plays such a large role in forming the character of our town. But in future perhaps we can hope to find more opportunities to recognize similar levels of skill across a wider variety of trades.

Meanwhile, congratulations to all of those recognised, and thanks to everyone involved: the organising committee, assessment panel, nominees, and all who submitted nominations.

Neighbourhood plan: Options Consultation

The next consultation on the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan will be held in March.

Each of the working groups will introduce the different options that they are considering so that the whole community has a chance to comment before work starts on preparing a draft plan.

You can expect to see specific proposals in each of the topic areas: Housing, Economy, Retail & Town Centre, Community Facilities, Transport, Environment, Heritage & Design.

Please watch out for the announcement, prepare to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different options and encourage others to do the same. See also "The lay-person's guide..." talk that will follow our AGM.



Bishop William Alnwick (Bishop of Norwich & Lincoln, Died 5th December 1449)

The following is taken, with the author's permission, from an article which began life as a paper delivered to the Monumental Brass Society's conference in Norwich in 2015. We are indebted to the author, Dr Rosemary Hayes for her generosity.

Of unknown parentage, William Alnwick was probably born in our town of Alnwick. His first benefice was Goldsborough, North Yorkshire followed by Hollingbourne in Kent. He obtained a doctorate in civil law at Cambridge University and by 1420 he had entered Henry V's service in France, becoming the King's secretary and confessor, offices he held until Henry's death. To this royal service he owed his promotion to the archdeaconry of Salisbury in 1420 and prebends in York (1421) and Bayeux (1422). William was with the King when he died in France in August 1422, and accompanied the body on its journey back to England.

On the 16th December 1422 William Alnwick joined the council established to rule during Henry VI's minority, holding the important post of Keeper of the Privy Seal, a position he would keep for ten years. As well as participating in the day-to-day administration of England, he served on several embassies to treat with Scotland. He continued to collect benefices, becoming warden of St James's Hospital, Westminster, canon of St Paul's Cathedral and dean of St Martin's-le-Grand.

William was appointed Bishop of Norwich in 1426, a position he held until 1436 when he was transferred to Lincoln.

In May 1431 Bishop William joined Henry VI on his coronation tour of France. He attended Jeanne d'Arc's abjuration in Rouen and the King's coronation in Paris. He became the young King's confessor in about 1433 and assisted Henry in founding both Eton College and King's College, Cambridge.

No matter how important his contribution to royal government, records show that Alnwick is best remembered as a bishop. Even during his greatest periods of political involvement, he was clearly conscientious and spent much time in his dioceses.

William Alnwick died suddenly in London on 5th December 1449. At his request he was buried at the west end of the nave of Lincoln Cathedral. His burial there is now commemorated by a nineteenth century brass inlay, the original having been destroyed by Lord Manchester's troops in 1644.

William's original epitaph described him as a 'builder of costly edifices'. Most of this evidence survives in the buildings themselves in the form of heraldic carvings of William Alnwick's arms - Argent a cross moline sable - or their depiction in painted glass.

In his lifetime, Alnwick participated in the foundation of several chantries, most often with educational associations. The educational chantry perhaps closest to

William's heart was at his presumed birthplace here in Alnwick. On 6th July 1448 a licence was granted for Henry, Earl of Northumberland; William, bishop of Lincoln; Sir Henry Percy; Lord Poynings and John Lematon to found a chantry of two chaplains to celebrate daily at the altar of Our Lady within the chapel of St Michael's Alnwick. One of these chaplains was to teach grammar to poor boys without payment.

Alnwick further demonstrated his affection for his place of origin by leaving bequests in his will to the walls of Alnwick (£10), Hulne Carmelite Priory and Alnwick Abbey, a Premonstratensian house. To St Michael's he left, besides £10 for its repair, "*my third missal in value, an antiphoner, a purple suit of vestments of mine of cloth of gold with golden lions interwoven ... and a chalice*". Although George Tate, the town's 19th century historian, recognised the bishop's importance and recorded the bequests (see panel below), he attributed mid-15th century building in the church to monies raised thanks to a charter issued by Henry VI from Bamburgh Castle on 9th April 1464, shortly before the fall of Alnwick to Yorkist forces. Dr Hayes feels that it is most improbable that such building work was funded by a grant that Henry VI was in no position to support and that it seems much more likely it was related to the foundation of the chantry.

Dr Hayes believes that the connection with the chantry would seem to be confirmed by the existence in the church's chancel of fifteenth century angels holding not only the locket and crescent of the Percy family but also the cross moline of Bishop William Alnwick. George Tate, and those following him, identified these arms as those of Bishop Bek of Durham who had died more than a century before the work was commenced. Dr Hayes states that "*it is surely more likely that these arms were placed by one of the town's most eminent sons, in the chantry he had recently founded there, or, possibly, by those wishing to commemorate him in his birthplace*".

Similar angels holding shields with the cross moline appear on buildings within William Alnwick's dioceses of Norwich and Lincoln.

Perhaps it is time to re-think this part of our history and also consider if we in Alnwick have forgotten Bishop William's generosity to his home town.



Possible portrait of William at Lyddington Palace, one of the residences of the Bishop of Lincoln. His arms are shown around the portrait.



Bishop Alnwick's arms with an appeal to pray for him. Above the west entrance of Norwich Cathedral.

From George Tate's history of Alnwick:

"£10 towards walling the town and £10 towards the fabric of the church of Alnwick. He bequeathed to the church, for the priests officiating, coloured vestment of cloth, having lions of gold interwoven, one chasuble dalmatic and tunic, three albs and three copes and one chalice. To Alnwick Abbey he bequeathed for the high altar one pair of small vessels of silver, with flowers enamelled on the base and with a pipe in the side of one of them and also one hundred shillings; to Holn Abbey he gave forty shillings."



Angel on the pillar in the south chancel aisle of St Michael's.

Planning Matters

Two applications have been made to replace totem advertisements at the Willoburn Roundabout. We objected to one on the basis that it included contact details and faced a busy A1 exit slip-road. In our view this represents a safety risk but neither the Town Council nor NCC Highways had alerted planners to potential risks, and the sign was approved.

We also objected to installation of a sign next to the A1 on land South West Of The Hogs Head Inn. In our view the sign would have an adverse effect on the landscape, contrary to Neighbourhood Plan Policy HD1 (Protecting Landscape Setting). National Highways required that the sign was amended, but once this was done they did not object on safety grounds. However, they did remark on the accumulation of signage at this location and we think that consideration of the landscape impact should also take account of such accumulation.

We considered commenting on an application for a holiday let on Swansfield Park Road but could see no grounds on which an objection could be made. Neighbours and the Town Council made a number of representations relating to the change of use and parking provision. These were not regarded as reasons for refusal, and the application has since been approved, with some conditions.

There has been an application to change the external finish of a new unit at the retail park on Taylor Drive. We did not see this as a major issue, but we were disappointed that a change from natural stone to black brick potentially set a trend for further decline in standards and we had intended to comment to that

effect. However, the proposal was approved before we were able to submit our response. Officers considered that the proposed changes would not have any significant impact upon the overall scale, design and layout of the scheme, and that the proposed changes would not have any greater impact on the neighbouring properties than originally approved. They considered the proposal acceptable.

Applications relating to the former Railway Terminus involve replacement of the main building roof, alterations to east elevation, removal of some internal (later addition) blockwork walls and repairs to extension roof. This has historic significance, and stands in a prominent location on one of the main approaches to the town centre. The structure is known to be in need of renovation, and should be capable of contributing more productively to the town's economy and more positively to the surrounding townscape. We felt that this appears to be a sensitive like-for-like renovation and will be welcomed.

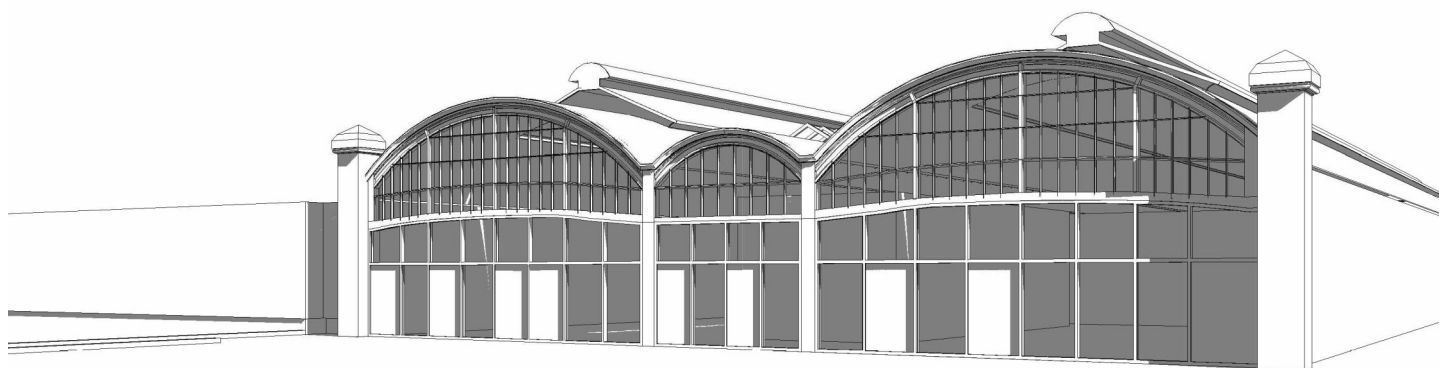
We objected to construction of an industrial storage unit on land East Of York Crescent South Road Industrial Estate. There are proposals under discussion for a potential walking and cycling route along the former Cornhill trackbed. This development abuts that route, but there is insufficient detail to determine whether or not it will prevent development of such a walking and cycling route in future. We felt that it should not be allowed to proceed until it can be determined that a walking and cycling route along the former trackbed will remain feasible.

The town council and neighbours had already objected when we



added our objection to construction of a lean-to timber and stone porch/orangery on the front of Gas Works Cottages on South Road. We feel that the proposed extension is out of scale with the existing property and would be a discordant feature on main approach to the town. The Neighbourhood plan requires developments on this route to reinforce the feeling of approach and improve the appearance of the entrances to the town. In this case the relevant policies are included in HD5 (size and scale of the extension, scale and design of the original property, and character of the street scene).

We also objected to installation of a Dormer window and balcony on a non-designated traditional terrace cottage in the Conservation Area on Armstrong Place. The design would be detrimental to the character of the conservation area and to the non-designated historic building. It would be too big and out of scale with the existing building and would incorporate non-traditional features (french doors and a juliet balcony) and materials (fibre cement panels). The Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and Northumberland Local Plan both include a number of design principles relating to local character; traditional materials; the prevailing form, scale and massing of the existing dwelling and its setting; and the character of the surrounding area.



Quiz: Our rich tradition of paving materials and methods

“The public realm that surrounds and enables access to our heritage ... has a material impact on the way in which any historic place will be perceived”.

*“Paving materials are the platform of the built environment” ...
“the surfaces on which people and traffic interact”*

Wise words from Historic England ‘**Streets for All: Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places**’

“General Principles: Relate ground surfaces to their surrounding streetscape context; Keep surfaces simple and whenever possible use natural materials; Retain the historic form of streets by maintaining kerb lines; Invest in quality and simplicity”.

Do you recognise these examples of paving from around Alnwick? You will find answers on the back page.



Diary dates

Feb 7th 7:30 p.m.: Online talk by Archie Jenkins on the history of Alnwick's Shrovetide Football. If you would like to attend please email contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk so we can send your joining instructions.

Feb 7th - Apr 21st: World's Worst Record Album Covers, Bailiffgate Museum.

Feb 13th from 2:00: Shrovetide Football, Castle Barbican then Alnwick Pastures (see page 2).

Feb 16-18th: Alnwick Storyfest 2024 (full details of programme and venues at www.alnwickstoryfest.com).

Feb 17th - May 6th: Open Exhibition representing art in Northumberland on the theme "Northumberland Now", Woodhorn Museum Workshop Galleries.

Feb 27th Alnwick Local History Society: Wooler in World War II with Alan Sture.

March: Public Consultation on the refresh of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan (see page 8).

Mar 13th 7:30 p.m.: St James Centre, Pottergate. Civic Society AGM: your opportunity to review progress in 2023, help shape the future of the society and set priorities for the next 12 months. The formal business meeting will be followed by a **Lay-person's guide to Neighbourhood Planning** by Alnwick Town Clerk, Peter Hateley.

March 26th: Alnwick Local History Society: History around New Moor House with Phil Huntley.

April 23rd: Alnwick Local History Society: The Voices of Stanington Sanatorium with Liz O'Donnell.

If you enjoyed our talk last year by Sue Wood on a House Through Time you may be interested in other events with Northumberland Archives:

**NORTHUMBERLAND
archives**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/northumberland-archives-30770439808>

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: 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/>

Extract of a letter from Alnwick in Northumberland, dated April 19.

7. "A very odd affair happened here about a fortnight ago. One Ripdeth, who lives at Newton by the sea, coming to this town to transact some business, and finding a dead child in a pond in the road, he brought it with him: the Coroner's Inquest sat on the body, and brought in their verdict, wilful murder by persons unknown. Two gentlemen of Alnwick caused the town immediately to be searched to find out its mother, but without success, so that it was entirely dropt. But the most strange part of the story is, that Ripdeth came to Alnwick last Wednesday, and related, that he could neither rest day nor night, for that the ghosts of the child and its mother constantly attended and buffeted him; and that the very night before he left home, they both together pulled him (tho' awake) upon the floor, and beat him severely, and also added, that if he could but once see the woman, he should know her among ten thousand. Upon this most of the women immediately were assembled, who passed before him one by one, many of whom he pronounced innocent, but the mother at last appearing, at first sight he cried aloud, "This is the murderer;" whereupon she was immediately committed to goal. Ripdeth is a sober judicious man."

A ghost story?

Aberdeen Journal,
9th May 1768

Quiz Answers

- A) Entrance to St Michael's Church
- B) Fenkle Street: junction with Stonewell Lane
- C) Gill's Lane (between Percy Street and Howick Street)
- D) Roxburgh Place Car Park (behind Corn Exchange)
- E) Cobbles on Market Street (the petrified kidneys)
- F) Column Field
- G) Alnwick Castle Barbican: drawbridge
- H) Marketplace