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## For your diary:

**25<sup>th</sup> February: An introduction to war memorials - their history, variety and recurring themes.** An online talk by Dr Sam Bunning from War Memorials Trust. 7:30 p.m. eMail [contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk) for joining instructions.

**18<sup>th</sup> March: Annual General Meeting** followed by a talk on **The role of an archaeologist in Local Government**, with Nick Best: Assistant County Archaeologist at Northumberland County Council. St. James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.

*At the Annual General Meeting we review the year past, and prepare for the year ahead. For members who would like to get more involved in the work of the society this is an ideal time to step forward. If you would like to know more about the opportunities available please get in touch with a member of the committee.*

**16<sup>th</sup> April: Memories of Dickson, Archer, and Thorp** with Sue Wood, Head of Archives at Northumberland Archives. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.



# Review of 2025

The society could not function without the time and contributions that members generously give to our work. A thriving membership brings a broad perspective on what matters to the people of Alnwick and credibility in our dealings with the authorities. So it has been encouraging to welcome ten new members in 2025, and heartening when members are actively involved with the work of the society. The Charity Commission reports that financial resilience is one of the key risks facing the voluntary sector at present. It's well-known that individuals' time and resources are more precious than ever, and volunteering nationally is declining. So it's gratifying to begin this review by reporting that our finances are sound, our member numbers are healthy, and our relationships with partner organisations are in good order.

Over the last twelve months our Planning Advisory Group reviewed 192 planning applications across Alnwick and Denwick. That's 8% more activity than in the previous year. The most significant was the revised plan for the former Duke's School which was decided in October. Other decisions of note included plans for resurfacing the Cobbles on Market Street, demolition of Park Cottage, launch of Alno Lounge at the former Barclays Bank and plans for the new Banking Hub on Paikes Street. We made a formal response on twenty developments. On ten we drew the attention of decision makers to an issue that we felt affected the special character of Alnwick or was important to the local community. In one case we expressed support for a proposal that made a positive contribution and we raised objections on nine proposals that did not comply with policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, Northumberland Local Plan or national planning policies. Once again the recurring issues were shopfronts that did not comply with the Alnwick Shopfront Design Guide and failures to make a case for replacement of historic windows. On the whole, Conservation Officers, ourselves, and the Town Council are taking a consistent approach to these applications and there are signs of some improvement in compliance when it comes to window replacement. Progress on the standard of shopfront design is less encouraging.

The Society has continued to contribute to the refresh of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, taking a lead on Heritage and Design. That work will largely be completed in early 2026 with submission of the draft plan to NCC. They will then arrange a final consultation, independent examination and referendum. Feedback from statutory

consultees and public consultations helped to refine aspects of the plan relating to heritage, without uncovering anything particularly controversial. However, some of the design proposals generated a considerable amount of comment. At the time of writing that feedback is being factored into the draft that will shortly be submitted to NCC.

Our programme for 2025 included talks on the Alnwick Soup Kitchen and developments at Bailiffgate Museum. We worked with the Alnwick and District Camera Club to deliver the "Alnwick Through the Lens" exhibition. A joint meeting with the Alnwick Local History Society looked at the legacy of Conzen's study of Alnwick in the 1960s. David Smith MP spoke about his first year representing our constituency at Westminster. We held two panel discussions: "A spanner in the works?" considered the interaction between planning and conservation, and our "Any Questions?" evening looked at different experiences of projects to bring new life to historic buildings. Our summer outing was to Felton. For Heritage Open Days a willing band of volunteers helped to open a dozen different locations across Alnwick. Despite disappointing weather the festival attracted at least as many visitors as the previous year. We participated in the Christmas Tree Festival at St Michael's Church and led Heritage Walks for exchange students, neighbouring History Societies and Story Fest. A fresh approach to Social Media has raised our profile and is generating interest across the wider town, and our quarterly newsletter continues to be well-received by a growing number of members and friends of the society.

Members of the society continue to work with Alnwick in Bloom to maintain the quality of Column Field and are becoming more active in litter picking. With the Town Council we have agreed to prioritize half a dozen vulnerable heritage issues, including General Lambert's House and Bondgate Tower (both of which remain on Historic England's list of Heritage at Risk). There's no easy solution to such complex challenges, but we have seen limited progress. We made better progress with more straightforward cases, several of which have now been resolved. Overall, the number of issues that we are tracking has come down from over 80 to fewer than 50.

A successful year across a wide range of activities is the result of considerable commitment by members, your committee, trustees, and friends of the society. Thanks are due to all for that support.

## Do you know where to find your nearest defibrillator?

Cardiac arrest is when the heart suddenly stops beating effectively. The lack of blood flow to the brain and other organs causes a person to collapse and lose consciousness. Basic life support (resuscitation) must be started immediately to improve the chance of survival and reduce brain damage.

In an emergency we are advised to dial 999 immediately. The Call Handler will direct us to the nearest defibrillator, using data from the national defibrillator network. They will provide a code to unlock the cabinet.

There is also a DefibFinder web site, designed to help us all familiarise ourselves with the locations of our nearby defibrillators.

DefibFinder is funded and managed by the British Heart Foundation. After entering your location it will show where to find the nearest defibrillators, and provide further details on availability and access.

<https://www.defibfinder.uk/>



# How would you spend a visitor levy?

The government is giving Mayors of Strategic Authorities the power to raise a visitor levy (also known as a tourist tax) on overnight accommodation. The consultation on the design of the levy will come to an end on February 18<sup>th</sup>. It seeks views on the scope, implementation and administration of these new powers.

Details of the plans and the consultation can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/3kb96e3p>

The visitor economy is important to Alnwick so we can expect a keen interest in how a visitor levy will be implemented.

Would you spend more to promote Alnwick's visitor economy? Or encourage a more varied range of employment opportunities for our young people? Should the money be concentrated in tourism hot-spots: to mitigate the impact of large visitor numbers on the community, heritage and the natural environment? Or should residents bear these costs? Would a levy make a bigger impact by encouraging visitors to discover parts of our region that are less well-known than Alnwick? Perhaps most importantly: who should decide?

Maybe we can learn from the experience of others. At least 41 countries now have some form of tourism tax and the University of Bangor has looked at how these work in practice.

## Examples from elsewhere

### England

Local business groups can agree to collect levies within a Business Improvement District. Blackpool Tourism BID was launched in 2001 with a levy based on rateable value. Great Yarmouth BID was launched in 2006. Manchester and Liverpool both introduced a tourism-based BID in 2023. In Manchester the formula is based on the numbers of room-nights and average occupancy. Liverpool base the levy on rateable value.

### Scotland

Inverness Loch Ness BID was the UK's first tourism BID in 2014. Moray Speyside BID was initiated in 2020 but recently closed. Tweed Valley Tourism BID was launched in 2024.

The Scottish Parliament passed the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Act in 2024, giving local authorities the power to introduce a Visitor Levy. In July Edinburgh will introduce a 5% levy on the first five days of paid overnight accommodation. In April 2027 Aberdeen is planning a 7% visitor levy to fund improvements to the city's visitor experience and support economic growth. Argyll and Bute have put plans for a 5% levy on hold following a public consultation which showed limited support and concern about the impact on the region's economy. Highland Council are awaiting further guidance.

### Wales

In April 2027 Welsh councils will be able to introduce a Visitor Levy, with rates of £1.30 per person per night for hotels and self-catering and 75p per person per night for campsites and hostels. Cardiff is expected to move first.

Almost all levies are on overnight stays. Levies on day visitors are rare. Different levels of government are involved in both collection and sharing of revenue. There is almost always a link between revenue collected and investment in tourism, but the strength of that link varies. Funding covers a wide spectrum of activity. Spending on Destination Marketing, Events, Tourism Infrastructure and Environment have a role in most cases. Public Transport, Social Housing, Workforce Training and Scientific Research are sometimes funded, but less often.

Some funds are given as grants, some transferred to appropriate bodies, and some spent directly by government. Central Government, Local Government and the tourism industry are normally at the heart of decision making, but other sections of civil society are less likely to be involved. In most cases there are formal audit procedures, but these are generally limited to scrutiny of spending. Assessment of the impact of funded projects is rare.

Alnwick lies at the heart of Northumberland's visitor economy and these issues will interest anyone with a stake in the outcome of this consultation. The Bangor research is worth a look: <https://tinyurl.com/3yzbr5nt>

### Europe

The European Tourism Association has identified 150 destinations in Europe that have introduced a visitor tax.

In France, the "Taxe de Séjour" was introduced in 1910. Rates range from €0.20 to €4.80 per person, per night. Regions and Departements can impose an additional levy. In Paris, for example, the total ranges from €0.65 to €15.60

In Germany the tourist tax varies from city to city. In Berlin the standard rate is 7.5% of the accommodation price

Similarly in Italy, the "imposta di soggiorno" varies according to city, the standard of accommodation and season. Rates vary from under €2.00 per night to €10.00 per night in Rome and Venice.

There is a visitor levy in the most popular parts of Spain. Barcelona, for example, charges €6.00 - €11.00 a night.

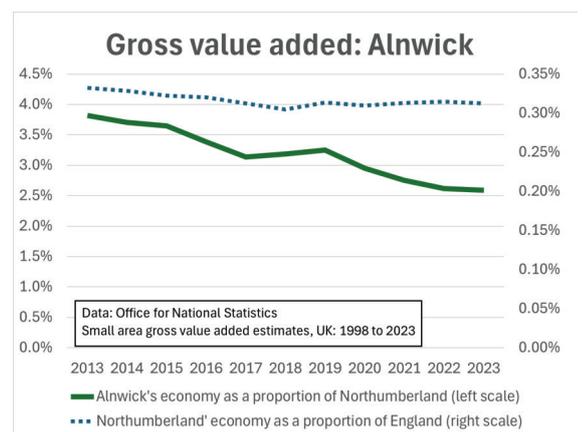
## What's up? Not Alnwick's economy!

Alnwick's economy barely grew in the decade from 2013 to 2023 according to figures published recently by the Office for National Statistics.

ONS estimates of Gross Value Added measure economic output by calculating the difference between the value of goods and services produced and the cost of production. It's an indicator of economic performance.

From the ONS data we can compare how the Alnwick economy has performed. <https://tinyurl.com/4xujse4w>

The ONS estimates that England's economic output grew by 56% between 2013 and 2023 while economic output in Northumberland grew by almost 50%. Northumberland maintained its position at about 10% of the North-East economy but slid from 0.33% to 0.31% of England's economy. Over the same period the added value of Alnwick's economy barely changed. In 2013 Alnwick represented almost 4% of Northumberland's economy. A decade later it represents 2.6%.

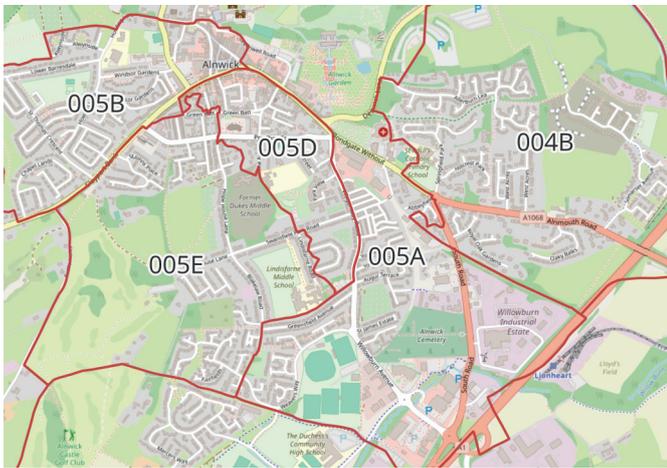


# Deprivation in Alnwick

In October the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published updated Indices of Deprivation in England. It was reported that Jaywick (near Clacton-on-Sea in Essex) is the most deprived neighbourhood in England and Harpenden (near St. Albans) is the least deprived. How does Alnwick compare?

Our charitable purpose obliges us to promote high standards of planning. The overarching objective of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan includes “improving quality of life for all”. If the purpose of planning is to serve the long-term public interest then these indices of deprivation deserve our consideration.

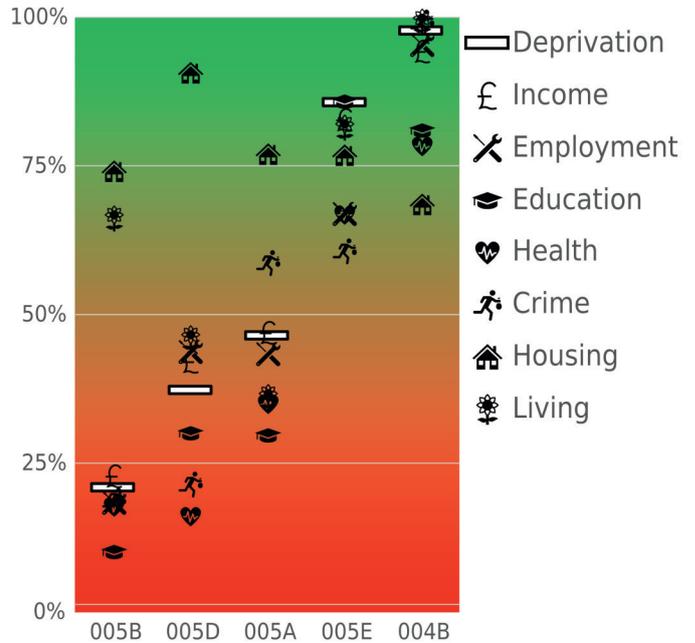
The Indices cover seven different domains, summarised in an overall “Index of Multiple Deprivation”. They offer a perspective on how quality of life varies across different Alnwick neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood is home to around 1,500 residents or 650 households. The new estates to the south of town are not included here. They fall into a more diverse statistical area and we suspect that much of the underlying data pre-dates their construction.



The 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in England are considered to be “highly deprived”. The North-East is the region with the highest proportion of highly deprived neighbourhoods with 21% in this category. However, no neighbourhood in Alnwick is considered to be highly deprived. On the contrary, neighbourhoods to the east of Alnwick are among the least deprived in England and those to the south are in the least deprived quartile. On the other hand, neighbourhoods to the west of Alnwick are in the most deprived quartile and those in the centre and east of the centre are in the most deprived half.

Over the last ten years overall deprivation rankings haven’t changed greatly in Alnwick, but there is growing disparity. Neighbourhoods with relatively low levels of deprivation have tended to improve in the rankings, while neighbourhoods with relatively high levels of deprivation have worsened.

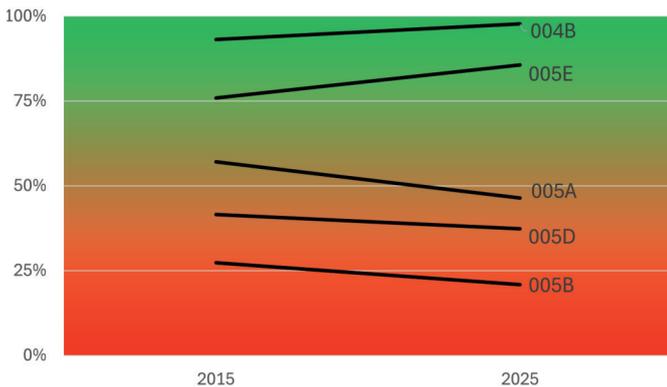
The Index of Multiple Deprivation is the combination of seven domains: • Income (22.5%) • Employment (22.5%) • Education, Skills & Training (13.5%) • Health & Disability (13.5%) • Crime (9.3%) • Barriers to Housing & Services (9.3%) • Living Environment (9.3%)



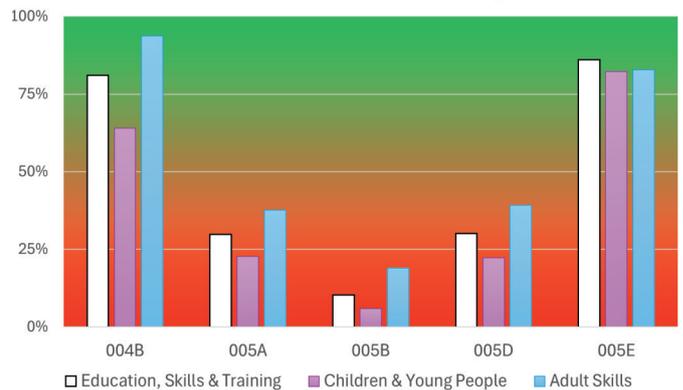
The Income Deprivation Domain measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. The definition includes both those that are out-of-work and those that are in work but have low earnings.

The Employment Deprivation Domain measures the proportion of the working-age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market. This includes people who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness or disability, or caring responsibilities. Over the last ten years in Alnwick the Employment rankings have improved. Income rankings have improved in the less deprived areas, but not in more deprived areas.

Multiple deprivation

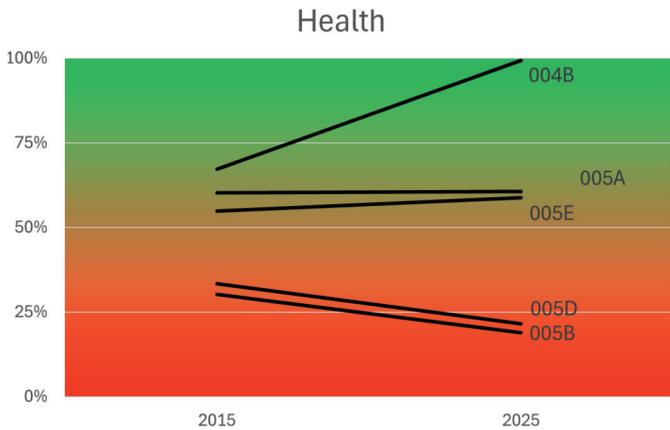


Education, Skills & Training



# Deprivation in Alnwick, continued

The Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain measures a lack of attainment and skills. The indicators fall into two sub-domains: one relating to children and young people and one relating to adults. Alnwick neighbourhoods with the greatest deprivation in education, skills and training show the same issues across adults as well as children and young people, but almost always with a greater level of deprivation among children and young people. Areas to the west of Alnwick are among the 6% most deprived areas in England in terms of Education and skills levels among children and young people



The Health Deprivation and Disability Domain measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. The domain measures morbidity, disability and premature mortality but not aspects of behaviour or environment that may be predictive of future health deprivation. Health rankings have improved in the less deprived neighbourhood and worsened in more deprived neighbourhoods.

The Crime Domain measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level. Over the last ten years the rankings on crime have worsened in Alnwick – particularly in more deprived neighbourhoods.

The Barriers to Housing and Services Domain measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. The indicators fall into two sub-domains: ‘geographical barriers’, which relate to the physical proximity of local services, and ‘wider barriers’ which includes issues such as affordability.

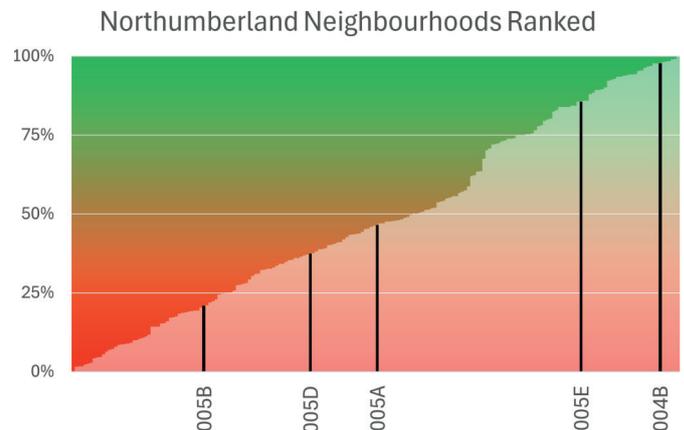
Over the last ten years rankings on barriers to housing and services have improved in Alnwick. Where there are barriers they tend to be geographical. So the issues that rank highly in Alnwick are travel time to destinations such as retail, education,

health, employment and leisure / entertainment destinations by walking, cycling and public transport. Outside Alnwick the more weighty barriers are affordability, overcrowding, and homelessness.

Deprivation in the Living Environment measures the quality of the local environment. These indicators fall into two sub-domains. The ‘indoors’ living environment measures the quality of the home environment; while the ‘outdoors’ living environment measures quality outside the home. In Alnwick air quality, traffic and noise pollution do not rank highly. Where there is deprivation in the living environment it is related to housing in poor condition, energy performance and lack of private outdoor space.

Considering different Alnwick neighbourhoods:

- Eastern Alnwick (Allerburn Lea / Windy Edge) ranks among the least deprived parts of the country on almost all indices. On access to housing and services it is close to the top quartile.
- In the south of Alnwick the Meadow Riggs / Fairfields area ranks in the top half on all indices, and the top quartile on income, education and living environment.
- The centre of Alnwick falls into the upper half on barriers to housing and services but in the lower half on most other indices.
- West Alnwick (Chapel Lands and Barresdale) ranks fairly well on living environment and barriers to housing and services but not well on other indices. Levels of education and skills among children and young people should be of concern.

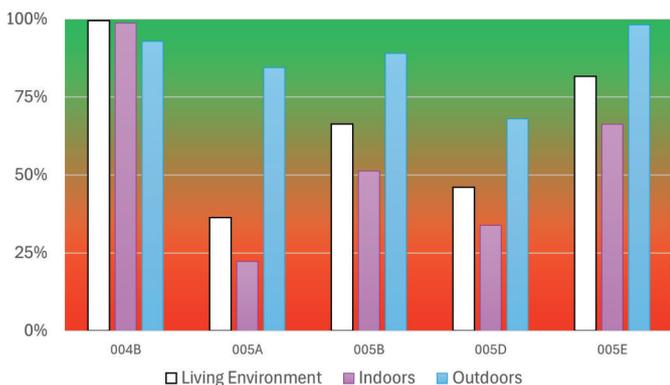


Policymakers use these indices to target resources, plan service delivery, and measure the impact of different initiatives.

Nobody who compares deprivation across Northumberland will conclude that Alnwick should be a top priority. There are forty or so neighbourhoods in Northumberland that are more deprived than anywhere in Alnwick, and a couple of dozen that are considered highly deprived by national standards. Nevertheless, there are aspects of deprivation here that deserve attention. In parts of Alnwick the level of education and skills among young people rank among the poorest in England. In terms of health, education, employment and housing there is growing disparity between different parts of the community. These are matters that should surely concern anyone who wants to see improvement in the quality of life for all.

Find more here - <https://deprivation.communities.gov.uk/>

## Living Environment



## Heritage at risk

On 5th November Historic England published their 2025 report on *Heritage at risk*. The register identifies sites most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. Across England 129 entries were removed from the register last year. 138 were added. The register currently holds 4,891 entries.

Loyal readers will be familiar with two long-standing entries: Bondgate Tower, and General Lambert's House at 31 and 33, Narrowgate. Heiferlaw defended settlement in Denwick is a Scheduled Monument at risk.

Across Northumberland there are 133 entries. Two Registered Parks, Four Conservation Areas, 17 Listed Buildings and 110 Scheduled Monuments. The Northumberland conservation areas at risk are Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blyth Central, Spittal, and Tweedmouth. The Scheduled parks are at Seaton Delaval and Tillmouth Park in Duddo / Cornhill-on-Tweed. On the other hand, two Northumberland entries have been removed: St Cuthbert's Church in Haydon Bridge and part of Hadrian's Wall and vallum, near North Brunton.

Historic England applies stringent criteria for inclusion on the register and these vary according to the type of site. The register covers Buildings and structures, Places of worship, Archaeology, Registered parks and gardens, Registered battlefields, Protected wreck sites and Conservation Areas. But it cannot capture all the heritage that is at risk. So in Alnwick we maintain our own register of vulnerable heritage, and track examples that are of concern to the Town Council and the Civic Society.

Like Historic England our criteria for inclusion on the local list of vulnerable heritage take into account the condition of the structure. Unlike Historic England we consider any building or structure – not only those that have been listed at

Grade-1 or Grade-2\*. Like Historic England we cannot prioritise everything. As well as cases where the fabric is at risk we take most interest in issues that impair the quality of the Town Centre.

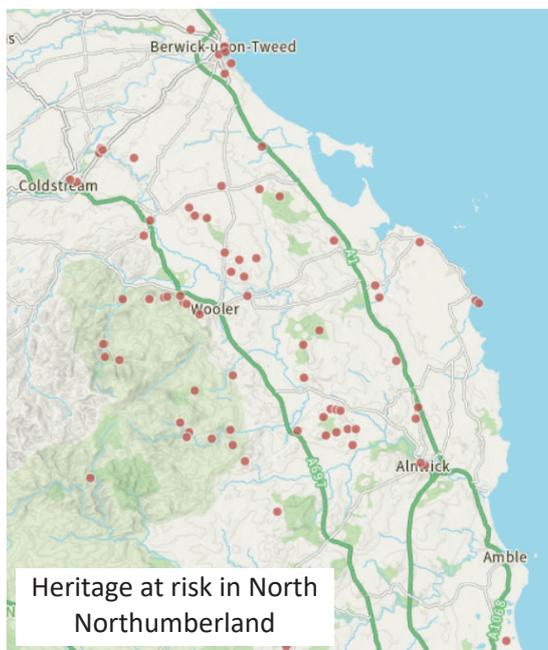
We currently have fewer than fifty concerns on our Alnwick register. That's a significant improvement over the previous high, which reached more than eighty. Our experience is that we make most progress by focussing efforts. At present we have six priority cases. These are all complex situations, which we know will take time to resolve. For each we have developed an action plan, which is reviewed quarterly. None has been resolved, yet, and some are long-standing. However, there has been some progress in recent months.

Our next category covers serious, but less complex cases. We currently focus on ten, and here we have been achieving some success. Progress has typically been made once the owner has been identified, and made aware of the concern. Each time a case is resolved we move on to another so this category gets no smaller.

Finally, there are a couple of dozen cases where we maintain a watching brief but no immediate action is required. In most cases we have been able to establish that the owners are aware, and have taken responsibility. We simply keep an eye on things until the issue has been resolved. We

also maintain a short list of relatively minor concerns, that can wait until more troubling issues have been resolved.

This process is being formalised in the refresh of the Neighbourhood Plan. Meanwhile we hope members will report any concerns they have about Alnwick's heritage, and that any members who take a particular interest in these matters will help to keep track and follow-up issues as they evolve.



## Playhouse 100

*Alnwick Playhouse opened on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1925 and continues to play an important role in the life of Alnwick today. Playhouse 100 celebrates the centenary with a history of theatre in Alnwick that runs from early use of haylofts, halls and tents to today's community hub.*

The building has a chequered history. A derelict militia depot on Bondgate Without was sold to Frederick Willcox in 1921. He recognised the opportunity presented by growing interest in cinema. Opposition to Sunday opening was overcome, sound introduced in 1929 and the enterprise thrived in the golden age of cinema.

After audiences declined the Playhouse had to close in 1979 but the building was

purchased by Northumberland Theatre Company in 1984 then revived by enthusiasts led by Bill Hugonin. In 2018 ownership transferred to Northumberland County Council. After refurbishment it opened as a community hub in 2021.

Copies of **Playhouse 100** are on sale in the theatre and proceeds support the "Schools go free" initiative. Through each section we learn of Alnwick's other theatres, touring companies, Children's Matinees, Pantomime and more.

We can't resist describing this as a gripping drama that will have audiences on the edge of their seats.



# News in Brief

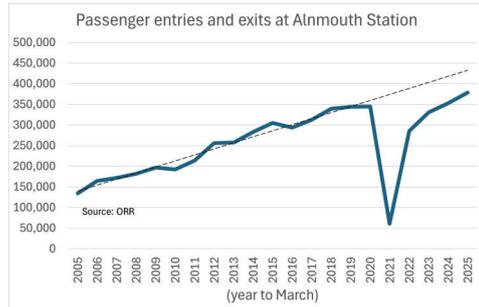
The National Library of Scotland continues to expand their online library of historic maps. Recent additions include a map of Northumberland surveyed in 1827 and 1828 by John and Christopher Greenwood.

See: <https://tinyurl.com/4c4arpu4>



Each year the Office of Rail and Road reports on the number of passengers at every station in Great Britain. At Alnmouth there were 378,954 passenger entries and exits in the year to March 2025. That's a 7% increase over the previous year and almost three times the volume of traffic twenty years earlier. A year earlier, in 2024, the total number of passenger entries and exits at Alnmouth passed the level that it was before Covid. National figures have now reached the same milestone. Passenger traffic at Alnmouth continues to increase and is now 10% higher than before Covid. However, the trajectory has not fully recovered. Passenger numbers at Alnmouth remain 4 - 5 years behind the long-term trend.

See: <https://tinyurl.com/4x75a7y9>



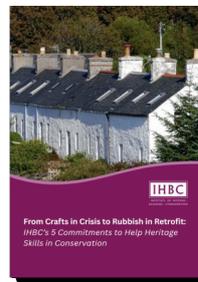
The Gardens Trust is the national charity dedicated to ensuring our heritage of historic designed landscapes can continue to contribute to the quality of life of existing and future generations. To celebrate its tenth anniversary the trust has published a report that aims to raise awareness of the role and potential of historic parks and designed landscapes to address key issues of today and tomorrow. They argue that our historic parks

and other designed landscapes were created for enjoyment, recreation and well-being. They continue to serve different communities, while also having an important role in climate change adaptation and nature recovery. This rich, diverse and valuable collection of parks, and gardens must be well-conserved so that they can continue to be available for the discovery and enjoyment of everyone.



See <https://tinyurl.com/4674xkun>

The Institute for Historic Building Conservation is the professional body for building conservation practitioners and historic environment experts. Their recent report on 'Heritage Skills in Conservation' reveals a landscape that is fragmented and side-lined. Lessons are ignored, opportunities missed, and money wasted. The report draws attention to the debacle of the government's Energy Company Obligation scheme (see page 9). It describes traditional & craft skills as barely recognised outside their own areas. Calls for better regulation of trade skills are passed over. Professional conservation practitioner numbers are tiny. In response the IHBC makes five ambitious commitments to: Advocate, Educate, Investigate, Celebrate and Integrate.



See: <https://tinyurl.com/2y2u44tj>

The Alnwick Guardian and County Advertiser was founded in 1885 as a 'thorough Liberal paper'. It cost one penny, appeared every Saturday and carried news from surrounding towns and villages. In 1924 it was incorporated into the Alnwick Mercury, which is now the Northumberland Gazette. The British Newspaper

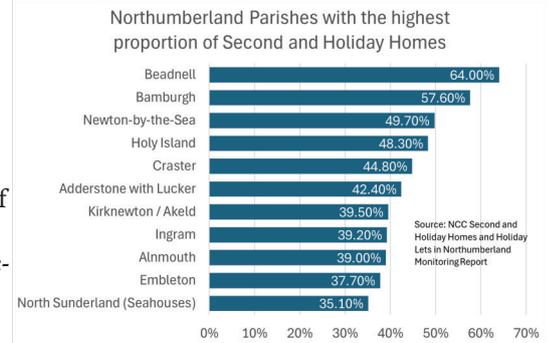


Archive holds copies from 1886 to 1923. So far they have digitised issues from 1886-1895, 1898-1916, and 1918-1923. They can be found online at:



<https://tinyurl.com/hauhknt2>

The Northumberland Local Plan places restrictions on new housing in parts of the county where more than 20% of households have no permanent resident. Northumberland County Council monitor the situation and their most recent report indicates that there are now about thirty parishes in Northumberland that exceed this threshold, and more that are close, or where the threshold is exceeded in parts of the parish.



These estimates use data from the Office of National Statistics on household occupancy. However, other figures on Council Tax and Business Rates suggest that occupancy data under-states the actual number of holiday homes.

Unsurprisingly, the highest numbers of second homes are recorded in Northumberland's coastal parishes and in the main towns (including Alnwick). Compared to a coastal parish, the proportion of second homes in a town is relatively low. However, we know that the housing stock in Alnwick Conservation Area is under particular pressure: a concern that the review of Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to address.

There are related policy changes afoot on council tax, planning, regulation and registration. We don't yet know what the overall effect of these will be. But meanwhile, NCC monitoring suggests there has been a recent increase in second homes (after that number remained steady for a decade). Meanwhile the number of holiday lets in Northumberland has more than doubled in the last decade.

## Reavell and Cahill (the practice)

*Reavell and Cahill was a family architectural practice, based in Alnwick, with a history of work across the north-east from the late 19th century to 2005.*

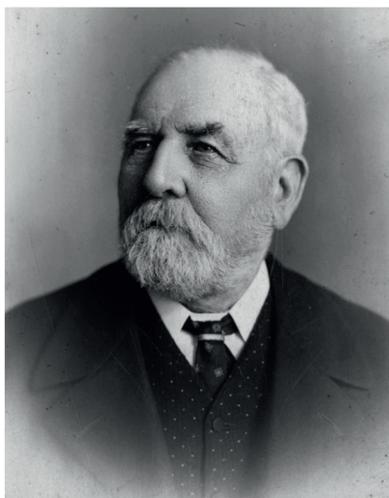
George Reavell Senior came to Alnwick in 1870 and served as the Duke's Clerk of Works and Architect until 1899. His son, George Reavell Junior, set up his own practice in 1886 after being articled to his father. Later he was joined by his daughter, Mary Proctor Reavell. After Mary married Thomas Joseph Cahill the practice became Reavell, Cahill and Cahill. On George's Death the name reverted to Reavell and Cahill and it continued under that name until 2005 with Ray Connell as the principal architect.

George Reavell (1833 - 1915) was born in Guilden Morden, Cambridgeshire. He came to Alnwick in 1870 from the Earl of Hardwicke's estate at Wimpole Park to take on the role of Clerk of works and Architect at Alnwick Castle.

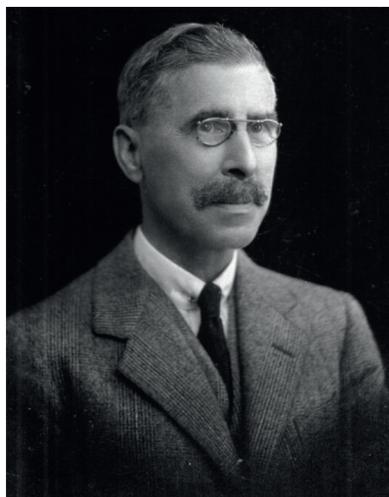
He remained in the Duke's service until 1899. During that time he supervised considerable work on Alnwick Castle, including the installation of electricity.

He was involved with the construction of several village schools and additions to Alnwick's National and Duke's School. He was also involved with repairs to St Paul's Church, supervised the widening of Hotspur Street and Tower Lane, and construction of the Baths, Wash-houses and Working Men's Club on Clayport (1876).

George Reavell Junior (1865 - 1947) was educated at Alnwick Grammar School and began his architectural career in 1880, articled to his father. He set up his own practice in 1886. In 1916 he became a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and was awarded an OBE in 1919 in recognition of his services during World War One. From 1914 - 1923 Reavell worked with William Arthur Tebbs to design war memorials, including those at Rothbury (1923) and Seahouses (1923). From 1932 George Reavell worked with his daughter, Mary Proctor Reavell. After Mary married architect T. J. Cahill the practice became Reavell, Cahill and Cahill and operated under that name until George died in 1947.



George Reavell Snr.



George Reavell Jr.

George Reavell's work in Alnwick includes Robertson's Pant (1890), St James Parish Hall (1904) and Lloyds Bank (1909). Outside Alnwick he designed the Ravensworth Fountain at Whittingham (1905) and a Memorial Fountain in Branxton (1910). His work for Lloyds Bank also included the Gateshead branch (1914).

George was commander of 2/7<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Northumberland Fusiliers during WWI. He was president of the Northern Architectural Association and a leading figure in the Alnwick Boy Scouts and Freemasons.

Mary Proctor Reavell (1902 - 1990) was known familiarly as Molly, and professionally under her married name of Mary Proctor Cahill. She followed her father into the profession in 1935 after studying at Durham University School of Architecture. By 1938 she was architect to Alnwick Urban District Council. During the war she was a Civil Defence Ambulance Driver. Mary became a Fellow of the RIBA in 1946. Her work included hotels, houses and cottages for agricultural workers. At Swarland in the 1930s she laid out a Settlement for the Fountains Abbey Settlers Society where unemployed men from Tyneside were able to build homes for themselves and their families. She later worked with Lord Beveridge on the board of Newton Aycliffe new town.



Mary Proctor Cahill

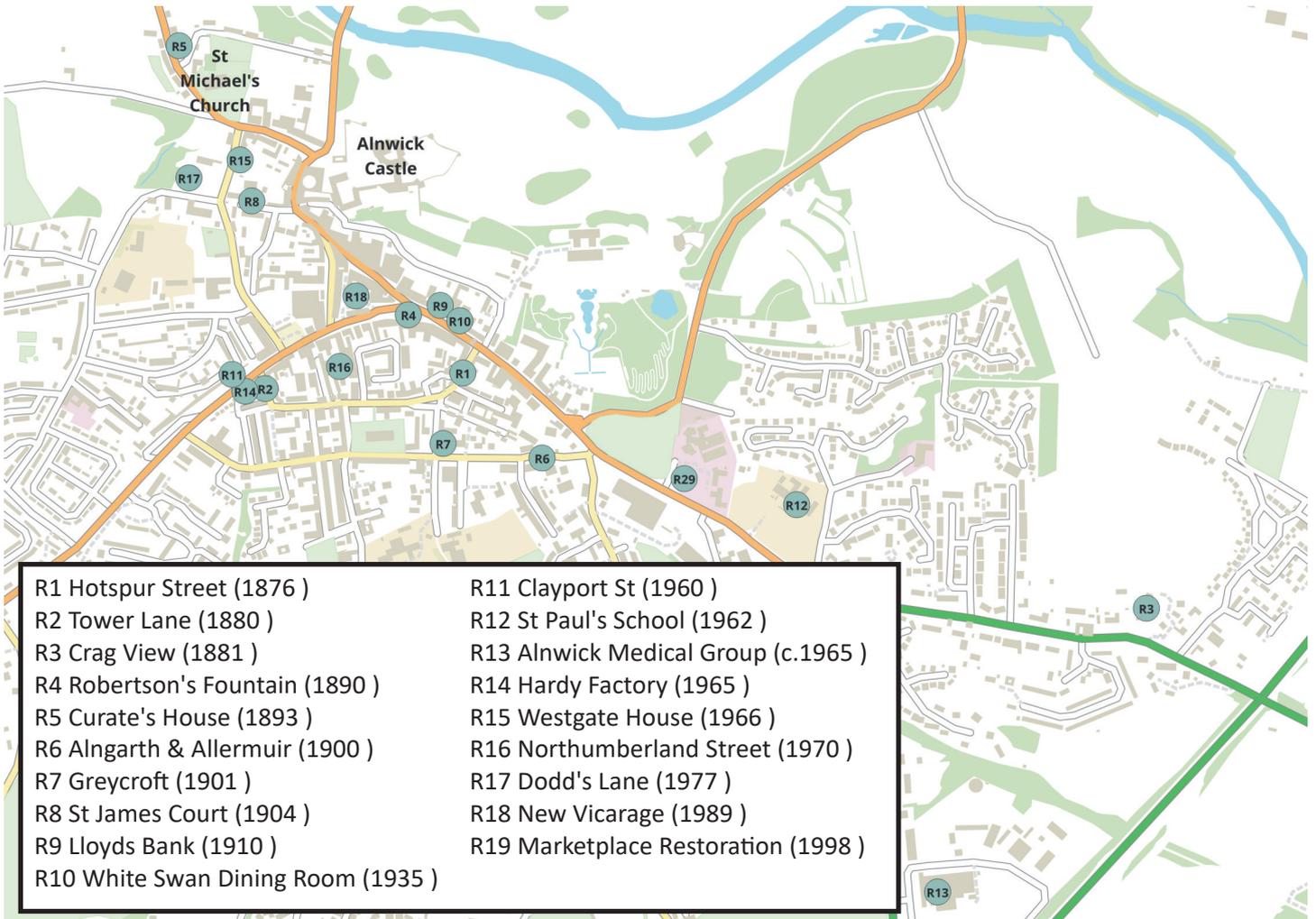
Thomas Joseph Cahill (1895 - 1952) and Mary Proctor Reavell were married in 1941, and Thomas joined the practice. As the architect for Alnwick Rural District Council Thomas worked on housing at Felton, Lesbury, Craster, and Embleton as well as the flats at Argyle Street in Alnmouth.

The practice was responsible for a wide variety of homes in Alnwick. These included Crag View (1881); the Curate's House (1893) and others in Canongate; Greycroft (1901), Alngarth and Allermuir (c. 1900) and others in Prudhoe St; Friar's Well Lodge in Hulne Park; Westgate House flats (1966) and the terrace opposite on Clayport; restoration of Dodd's Lane (1977) and a new vicarage for St Michael's Church (1989)

Other work by the practice in Alnwick includes the upper building at Alnwick Medical Group, the former Hardy Factory on South Road, and refurbishment of Alnwick Market-place.

*Records of the practice are held for posterity by Northumberland Archives.*

# Reavell and Cahill (the legacy)



## NAO report on energy efficiency failures

*Energy efficiency in the home is a key issue in a town (like Alnwick) that has a northern climate and a high proportion of older houses. We hear that a new government scheme to improve energy efficiency is in the pipeline. So it's timely to ask how previous schemes have fared. The National Audit Office blames failure on incompetent installers, weak oversight and inadequate monitoring.*

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme aimed to tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon emissions by requiring energy companies to fund the installation of energy efficiency measures, such as insulation, in homes. But poor installation work has resulted in an estimated 22,000 to 23,000 homes with external wall insulation fitted under the scheme (98% of the total) and 9,000 to 13,000 homes with internal insulation (29% of the total) having major issues that need fixing. A small percentage of these installations also pose immediate health and safety risks.

Possible explanations why so many installations have been carried out to such a poor standard include an under-skilled workforce, with work being subcontracted to individuals and firms who are not competent or certified; uncertainty over which standards apply to which jobs; and businesses 'cutting corners' when undertaking design and installation work.

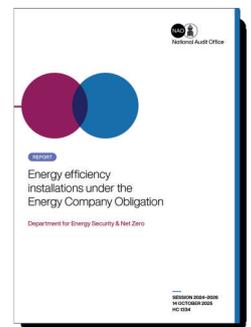
The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero implemented a new consumer protection system for the scheme in 2021, which included appointing TrustMark as its government-endorsed quality scheme. But this system failed to alert DESNZ

to significant issues with the quality of installations until October 2024, by which time the media had already reported on individual cases of bad mould in homes.

Reasons for the ECO scheme's shortcomings include: weak government oversight resulting in widespread issues with the ECO scheme not being identified sooner; an overly complex consumer protection system that ultimately failed due to unclear and fragmented roles, responsibilities and accountabilities among DESNZ, Ofgem and private sector certification bodies and scheme providers; TrustMark's funding arrangements limiting its ability to have analytical systems fully up and running until the latter half of 2024; and insufficient audit and monitoring, in part due to weaknesses that allowed installers to 'game' the system.

In addition to these issues, in November 2024 Ofgem estimated that businesses had falsified claims for ECO installations in between 5,600 and 16,500 homes, potentially claiming between £56 million and £165 million from the energy suppliers operating under the scheme.

DESNZ plans to apply the lessons learned from this experience to the design of its future schemes and its forthcoming Warm Homes Plan. See: <https://tinyurl.com/yvcbamhy>



# Planning Matters



A listed building application has been submitted at 27 Fenkle Street. We have no objection to the proposed change to residential use. Alnwick Town Council objected because the building is specifically identified in the Neighbourhood Plan as a protected community asset, still houses community groups and has received several grants on condition that it remained as a community asset.

Like Historic England and the NCC Built Heritage and Design Team, we would welcome a more detailed assessment of the building's significance in order for the impact of the proposals to be properly assessed. We were also concerned about the lack of proposals in the application for outdoor amenity space and parking for residents of the new homes. In addition, this large site at a key position in the Alnwick Conservation Area presents an opportunity for further development. Indicative proposals covering the whole site would ensure that such opportunities are not compromised. We believe that the applicant's Heritage Statement is correct in saying that it was originally built around 1840 for the Northumberland and Durham District Bank. We think that the architect was John Green (1787 - 1852), possibly in partnership with his son, Benjamin (1811 - 1858). For a time John was architect to the Duke of Northumberland. Their other work included Penshaw Monument, Newcastle's Theatre Royal, the Literary and Philosophical Society and Grey's Monument.

At the Police Station there is a proposal to install an emergency generator and fencing. This is a handsome building

within the conservation area, and we didn't think that that this development would be very attractive. However, we were unable to suggest any alternative arrangements so decided not to comment. The application has since been permitted.

An application for Listed Building Consent at 32 Narrowgate (the Dirty Bottles) seeks to replace existing bar servery counter and backfitting counter, replacement of existing timber framed sash windows with new timber framed double glazed sash window, repair of existing guttering, repair of roof tiles, felt and battens, replace fascia stone to eroded areas, reform existing mortar fillets and flaunch and general repairs to chimney stacks.

This is a lot of work to an important building but the proposals appear to be based on thorough surveys with repair rather than replacement preferred wherever possible. We did not feel a formal response was necessary, but viewed this as a good approach that should help to preserve the historic character of the building.

At 4 Grosvenor Terrace there is a proposal to demolish an existing workshop and construct a new garden studio. We had no issue with the principle of replacing the existing building but believe that amendments should be sought as the excessive height would be an obtrusive feature in the street scene and out of keeping with the original property. Neighbours are divided in their view of the proposed design, but Conservation Officers and the town council also recommended amendments. An amended design was later submitted which reduced the height of the eaves, changed materials from render to reclaimed

sandstone, reduced the amount of glazing and the height of the boundary fence. The Town Council had a number of objections to the revised design, but Conservation Officers were satisfied with the design and details provided, subject to some conditions.



Northumberland County Council has applied to replace timber doors and windows with double glazed white uPVC windows and white composite doors in the properties they own on St. Michaels Square. Although this building lies within the conservation area we did not feel strongly about the heritage impact of these proposals. However we did note that the applicant's claims regarding the durability and environmental impact of uPVC windows would be contested by Historic England.

We also commented that the building concerned is a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, brick-built, three storey building, but it is described in the Heritage Statement as a late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century two-storey stone-built residential dwelling. If the applicant stands by their assessment of significance, we suggested that they may wish to correct this description.

We objected to an application which would amend the of size of Story Homes advertisements for the second phase of development at Windy Edge. In our view the proposed signage would adversely affect the visual amenity of Denwick Lane. The proposals are excessive, out of character with the out of town location, and out of keeping with ADNP Policy HD4 which seeks to reinforce attractive entrances and routes into the town.

In 2025 our Planning Advisory Group considered a total of 192 planning applications across Alnwick and Denwick. The busiest month was when we received notice of 29 applications in May.

Month	Alnwick	Denwick
Jan	10	1
Feb	8	0
Mar	17	0
Apr	10	3
May	29	0
Jun	23	1
Jul	13	1
Aug	9	3
Sep	16	3
Oct	13	0
Nov	17	4
Dec	10	1

# Quiz: War Memorials of North Northumberland

War Memorials still resonate as a commemoration of those who lost their lives in conflict and a physical place to reflect on the impact of war on families and communities.

These examples all originally date from the years following the First World War, and can be found within about 20 miles of Alnwick. Three were designed by Hicks & Charlewood, a force in ecclesiastical architecture across in the north-east during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Two are by George Reavell and William Arthur Tebbs, before Reavell and Cahill became well-established as an Alnwick architectural practice. The others were made by Monumental Sculptors Thomas Watson and Sons, who were based on Dispensary Street in Alnwick.

How many of these can you locate? Bonus points for each of the designers that you can correctly identify.



## For your diary

**25<sup>th</sup> February: An introduction to war memorials - their history, variety and recurring themes.** An online talk by Dr Sam Bunning from War Memorials Trust. 7:30 p.m.

eMail [contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk) for joining instructions.

**18<sup>th</sup> March: Annual General Meeting** followed by a talk: **The role of an archaeologist in Local Government**, with Nick Best: Assistant County Archaeologist at Northumberland County Council. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.

**16<sup>th</sup> April: Memories of Dickson, Archer, and Thorp** with Sue Wood, Head of Archives at Northumberland Archives. St James's Church. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for 7:30 start.

## ...and more...

### 17<sup>th</sup> February: Shrovetide Football

The Ancient Game of Football will be played as heretofore on the NORTH DEMESNE on FEBRUARY 17 by kind permission of HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND LORD OF THE MANOR.

### Alnwick & District Local History Society

Meetings at Alnwick Cricket Club on Weavers Way at 7:30.

**24<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Searches for Churches on Lindisfarne; An Historical Re-Evaluation of the Early Medieval Monastery. John Woodhurst.

**24<sup>th</sup> March:** Tin Tabernacles; A Victorian story of Local tin churches. Speaker Sandra Gann (preceded by AGM, starting at 7:00).

**28<sup>th</sup> April:** The Story of Alnwick; From Inception to the Post War Period. Nick Lewis.

### Howick Hall Gardens

**7<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Snowdrop Festival (check dates).

### Alnwick Storyfest

**6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> March:** Alnwick Story Fest celebrates the power of stories to transform and light up our lives.

### Bailiffgate Museum

**5<sup>th</sup> March - 30<sup>th</sup> May:** Star Wars. May The Toys Be With You.

### Laing Art Gallery

**To 28<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Miniature Worlds: Little Landscapes from Thomas Bewick to Beatrix Potter. Explores the intricate beauty of small-scale landscapes across three centuries of British art (see below).

### Vanbrugh300

2026 is the tercentenary of Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726). His life and achievements will be celebrated across the UK, including events at Seaton Delaval Hall. See <https://www.vanbrugh300.co.uk>



## 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.

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

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

**Bluesky:** [@alnwickcivicsoc.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/alnwickcivicsoc.bsky.social)

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

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

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

**Substack:** [alnwickcivicsociety.substack.com](https://alnwickcivicsociety.substack.com)

**Charity registration number:** 1197235

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

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



"Denmill near Alnwick North" by William Beilby (1740 - 1819) shows Wythop Mill in 1774. It is on display as part of **Miniature Worlds** at Newcastle's Laing Art Gallery until Feb 28<sup>th</sup>.

## Quiz Answers

- A) Alnwick War Memorial, by Hicks and Charlewood, was unveiled in 1922.
- B) Bamburgh War Memorial, by Hicks and Charlewood, unveiled in 1921.
- C) Seahouses War Memorial, by Reavell & Tebbs, was unveiled in 1923.
- D) Rothbury War Memorial, by Reavell & Tebbs, was unveiled in 1923.
- E) Alnmouth War Memorial, by Hicks and Charlewood, was unveiled in 1921.
- F) Denwick War Memorial was constructed by Messrs Thomas Watson of Alnwick. Temple Wilson (Alnwick R.D. C. Surveyor and son of F. R. Wilson) has been credited with the design.
- G) Egingham War Memorial, by Messrs Thomas Watson of Alnwick, was sculpted by John E. Watson and unveiled in 1921