

May 2015

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Notice board

Saturday June 27th will be our summer trip. In the morning we will be shown around the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle. This is the largest independent library outside London, housing over 150,000 books, in a Grade II* listed building dating from 1825. After lunch we will have a tour of the recently refurbished medieval Black Gate and the Castle. Places are limited so please reserve yours with Gill Parker by 7th June.

1st June: Planning Advisory Panel at the Grange - please contact Peter Ennor if you are able to participate.

We are preparing a second 2015 Civic Society Trip later in the summer, and will be able to reveal details shortly.



Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held on Thursday 19 March 2015 at St James Centre.

After the chairman's report (see page 2) Gill Parker presented a financial statement for the year to 31st December 2014. Outgoings totalled £1,312.75, with the main items of expenditure being the pants project, the newsletter and subscription to Civic Voice. Income exceeded expenditure and amounted to £1,448.48. The most significant sources of income were subscriptions, a grant from the Town Council and Gift Aid. The balance of the current account at 31st December 2014 was £1,152.54 and the balance of the deposit account was £1,267.29.

Peter Ennor, Gill Parker and Sue Smith were willing to stand again for Chairman, Treasurer and Honorary Secretary respectively. There were no other nominations so Peter, Gill and Sue were re-elected, and became ex-officio members of the Executive Committee. Elizabeth Jones, Trish Jones, Brian Lamb, David Lovie, Peter Reed and Caroline Stewart were also willing to serve on the committee and were re-elected. There were no other nominations but the chair could co-opt others during the year. Anyone with experience of planning was particularly welcome to get in touch.

After the formal business David Lovie interviewed Elaine Grey, about her work as conservation officer with Northumberland County Council.

The main topic of their discussion was the question that they began and ended with: "What must we all do together so that Alnwick Conserva-

tion Area is no longer officially 'at Risk'?"

However, their discussion ranged more widely: beginning with how Elaine was first drawn to work in conservation; and covering her experiences and achievements in different parts of the UK. Elaine gave her perspective on a variety of matters including the policy framework for conservation, working arrangements in the conservation team, the implications of the Conservation Area At Risk designation and the challenges of enforcing planning law in the County.

Members will have come away with a better understanding of the context, and an insight into some of the challenges that face professionals who work in this area.

We learned that it was levels of occupancy, lack of maintenance, and the quality of the townscape that caused Alnwick Conservation Area to be considered at risk in 2014. Over the last year there has been progress on some of the issues, but others remain a concern.

As David and Elaine talked it became clear that members of the society and professionals who work in conservation share the same concerns; that both have a keen interest in pressing for these concerns to be addressed; and that both will have an important role to play in the future of the conservation area.

It is obvious from what we heard that we can, and must, work effectively alongside the professionals. Our thanks go to Elaine: both for her contribution to the meeting, and for her continuing efforts on behalf of conservation in Northumberland.

Chair's Review of the Year

Peter Ennor began his report on a sad note: reporting the deaths of members Ray Farnsworth and Bill Robinson during the year. Bill had been Chairman of the Society from 2005 until 2009 when ill health forced him to resign.

The Society continued to be heavily involved in development of the Neighbourhood Plan. David Lovie had devoted many hours as topic lead on Heritage and Culture. Detailed comments had also been made on the Northumberland Core Strategy which was now at the draft plan stage.

Representations based on the draft plan had been made on a planning application for new housing at Greensfield. The arguments, however, had cut little ice with the County Council. Another major application considered during the year had been the new high school. The Society had been reluctant to oppose plans for the much needed school, but when the Highways' Agency raised concerns about the traffic implications, the proposals were given a closer look. The transport plan was found to be seriously lacking and concerns were raised. The County Council in early December 2014 had promised participation in a working group to consider alternative routes to school but to date nothing more had been heard.

Many other planning applications had been considered and commented upon but Peter felt that the Society's voice was not being heard because it was no longer a statutory consultee. He felt that the proposed reorganisation of the planning committees in Northumberland would lead to decisions being taken by a more remote and less understanding group of councillors from across the County.

Attempts were being made to involve all society members in discussions about planning applications. The first planning advisory group meeting was held in January 2015 and another would be held on 30th March.

At the Any Questions event, numbers had been down on previous years, but a lively and enjoyable discussion had taken place. An excellent presentation of old photographs by John and Sheila Moreels had been even more poorly attended. Meetings cost money, and holding them for small numbers was poor use of limited funds. Holding planning advisory group meetings in the afternoon was a response to low attendance at evening meetings and an attempt to encourage more participation. Thoughts and ideas on the matter would be welcome.

By contrast, the summer outing to the Farne Islands had attracted 43 members and guests plus several dolphins. A wonderful evening had been had. Other activities during the year had included an exhibition at Bailiffgate Museum on the Panto of Alnwick. Peter Reed had been the prime mover assisted by Brian Lamb. Members had helped with two town clean ups. Gill Parker and Trish Jones were also helping to maintain the area around the Tenantry Column in a tidy condition on behalf of the Society. Their work had been recognised by Northumberland in Bloom.

The Society's newsletter had become the main means of keeping in contact with members. Publication of the newsletter on the website had resulted in the chairman being invited to participate in a discussion on Lionheart Radio and took the opportunity to promote the society.

Sadly, there had been little interest from the press despite all efforts. Attempts would continue to raise awareness of current issues, including threats from ill-considered development.

A bid to gain Gift Aid relief had been successful, and nearly £40 had been reclaimed. It was hoped that more members would sign up for the current year.

Peter concluded by thanking the Treasurer, Gill Parker, and other executive committee members for contributing their time and energy to supporting the society. It was a team effort.



Twenty years ago: Survey of Lanes

In 1995 the Civic Society made a study of the public lanes that link Green Batt to the centre of the town.

At the time this was a major effort, and contributed to a Conservation Partnership between Alnwick District Council, Northumberland County Council and English Heritage.

The survey summarised the history of each lane, recorded its state at the time, and suggested improvements. The society wanted to draw attention to the importance of the lanes, and the need to make them attractive and safe, in a manner compatible with best conservation practice.

They made a number of suggestions for improvement, praised recent work on Three Tuns Lane and Dodd's Lane, regretted less sympathetic work on St Michael's Lane and aspired to a radical approach for Corn Exchange and Pickwick Lane. Twenty years of progress is shown here.

We plan to publish extracts of the survey in future newsletters: as an insight into the story of the lanes, a celebration of what has been achieved, and a reminder of what remains to be done.

Meanwhile we have recreated the full Survey of Lanes from 1995 in digital form. If any member would like to receive a copy, then please get in touch.



"Welcome to Alnwick: a thriving historic market town"

Out and About: Alnwick Moor

This year the world celebrates the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta. It was a complementary document, the Carta de Foresta of 1217, which re-established rights of access to royal forests. This later charter set in train a series of events which influenced much of the landscape around Alnwick. So it is fitting, this year, to explore the story of Aydon Forest and Alnwick Moor.

We now think of a forest as being dense woodland, but in the 13th century a forest was an area set aside for hunting by the king. Royal Forests covered large areas of moorland, fields and villages. In Northumberland forest law applied across areas south of Rothbury, between the Coquet and the Aln, and north of the Aln. In Royal Forests, to protect both animals of the chase (venison), and their habitat (vert), ordinary people lost the right to collect fuel, forage for food, or graze animals, and the aristocracy could only hunt smaller animals and birds. The Carta de Foresta re-established rights that had been eroded following the Norman Conquest, and obliged the King to "disaforest", or roll-back the boundaries of Royal Forests. The scheme for disaforestation of Northumberland was drawn up in 1281. After disaforestation, powerful landowners set aside parks to contain deer, and provide a suitable landscape for hunting. Hulne Park, and Cawledge Park were emparked in the 13th century. By the 16th century Hulne Park was surrounded by 20 miles of wall, and stocked with 879 deer. Cawledge Park held 586 deer, and was six miles in circumference but it was only partly enclosed by a bank and fence, which was in decay. By then, deer parks were falling into disuse. Both Cawledge Park and Hulne Park were disparked after the restoration of Charles II in 1660, and subdivided for agricultural use. A century later Hulne Park would be re-developed as a picturesque pleasure ground.

In 1290 William de Vesci (died 1297) seems to have given land to the Knights Templar, and granted the burgesses of Alnwick "all the privileges which they were wont to have and to use in the times of my ancestors". This didn't expressly allow the people of Alnwick to work mines and quarries, dig clay, to enclose and cultivate the land, take water, or to rent out grazing rights. However, they did, and until the 18th century nobody tried to prevent them.

Inclosure on Alnwick Moor began at the end of the 17th century. The first farm was inclosed in 1698, a dike was constructed, which divided the inner and outer moor, and plots inclosed on the inner moor. More farms were inclosed over coming years. Pipes were laid to convey water to pants in the town from around 1750. Coal had already been mined in the Abbey Grounds, and the town was mining coal in 1589, and extensively from 1658. Limestone and sandstone were quarried, and clay was dug for bricks.

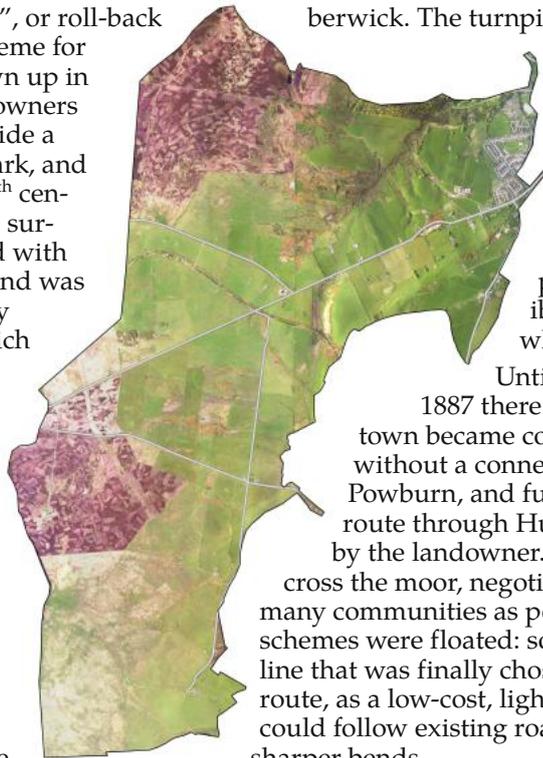
In 1756 the Earl and Countess asserted their rights as landowners, and brought a lawsuit against the town. Agreement was reached in 1762, which attempted to clarify the rights of the different parties, while allowing established practices to continue. Nevertheless, disputes continued. Around 1762 the Freemen were carrying out their annual ride of the boundary, when they got lost in the mist. It is said that the Duke's agent saw the mistake and appropriated 50 acres.

In 1854 the valuer for the Enclosure Acts made an award for the enclosure of Alnwick Moor. The parish secured eight acres as a place of exercise and recreation, 237 acres were awarded to the Duke in compensation for rent due, and 54 acres was awarded to the freemen, to cover legal expenses. Once this was settled, improvement proceeded. The cost of draining farmland fell significantly after drainage tiles were exempted from tax in 1826, and new extrusion technology brought prices down by 70% after 1845. In 1855 the Inclosure Commissioners authorised a loan of £5,000 for fencing, draining, clearing and levelling of the Moor; Thomas Rickaby collected the first potatoes, having prepared the ground the previous year, and the Alnwick Mercury reported that over 100 allotments were, "waving with corn, or blooming with potatoes in full flower".

The Hexham to Alemouth turnpike was built after 1752, with a toll booth near the junction with the road to Aberwick. The turnpike trust managed the road until 1872, when the Board of Health took over responsibility for the section to Lemmington Bank. Other roads across the moor have had a more chequered history. Ancient routes were blocked by walls, destroyed by quarrying or ploughed up. Disputes arose over who was responsible for maintenance, and even whether a road existed at all.

Until the Cornhill branch opened in 1887 there were no rail links to the west. The town became concerned that trade would suffer without a connection between Alnwick, Glanton, Powburn, and further north. The straightforward route through Hulne Park would never be accepted by the landowner. Any alternative would have to cross the moor, negotiate hilly country, and connect as many communities as possible to generate traffic. Various schemes were floated: some following similar routes to the line that was finally chosen, others taking a more direct route, as a low-cost, light "agricultural" railway, which could follow existing roads, negotiate steeper climbs and sharper bends.

In this area sandstone predominates. It is of varying quality, but any decent stone would be used for building when the cost of transport was an important consideration. As a result, local sandstone was normally quarried on a small scale, for use nearby, and sometimes just for a single building. There is an outbreak of Whinstone just outside the moor, which has been used in the immediate vicinity for field walls and some buildings, but in general it is too difficult to work for a building stone. It is, though, outstanding as a stone for roads, and was quarried and used for that purpose. Coal lies under much of Alnwick Moor, and limestone at the eastern edge. Coal seams near to the surface are relatively poor quality, but better, deeper seams were also mined. Hobberlaw Colliery was operating in the 1860's to supply the neighbouring lime kilns. But in the 19th century better quality coal was more easily sourced from elsewhere. The last colliery on the moor operated in the 1870's, at a time when coal prices were exceptionally high, because of soaring demand from industry nationally, and accidents and industrial action locally. Although transport costs were low, the cost of extraction was too high to be economic, and it closed in 1880 when prices fell back to normal.



Out and About: Exploring Alnwick Moor

This walk of about 4 miles takes about two hours. It starts at the top of Lisburn Street. It covers part of the Inner Moor with views over the Outer Moor, and the former deer parks: Cawledge Park and Hulne Park. It follows ancient boundaries, and old transport routes, across different stages in agricultural development, and reminders of mineral resources extracted from the moor. Take OS Explorer #332 to identify distant features. The path is not too difficult to follow, but parts may be muddy.

A The footpath from the top of Lisburn Street to Hope House is signed to Swansfield Park, and known locally as Summer Seats. As it climbs, it passes (left) one of many small abandoned quarries in the area. As it levels, it borders Swansfield Park (right), probably owned by the Knights Templar in 1291, then the Knights of St John of Jerusalem until dissolution in 1540. This was the seat of Henry Collingwood Selby, who commissioned the Camphill Column and built Swansfield House, to a design by John Dobson in 1823. The house was demolished in 1975.

B Beyond Camphill Cottage, we follow an ancient boundary. In the oldest description of Alnwick Moor it appears as "and from thence going southward along the same dike which goeth about Robert Greene's land until you come to the wall or palle of Grenesfield". This would become the parish boundary. Before we turn right, up the bridgeway, Greensfield Farm is ahead. The bridgeway crosses the golf course.

C Ahead is Greensfield Quarry, which was a source of local Whinstone. Through the gate, turn right, up a narrow lane, to Rugley Road, then left towards Intake Farm.

D In 1862 this cottage was shown on maps as a public house, called the Skinner's Arms.

E Intake Farm was inclosed on 1710. The area had earlier been called Cadmacrooke, but the name was changed in reference to land "taken-in" by clearing common land on the moor. It was described in 1774 as "commodiously and pleasantly situated within one mile of the town and containing 42 acres or thereabouts". In 1856 as "nearly all drained", and in 1859 as "all drained".

F Turn right along the bridgeway, opposite Intake Farm. This follows an ancient boundary, called Hobberlaw Dike, which marked the edge of the moor. "and so up the dike westwards to Heberlaw to the corner of the house third from thence along the dike to Rugley loning end". In the 17th and early 18th century Hobberlaw Edge (right), was a race course. Around 1790 a large limestone grotto was discovered near here. The roof was "beautifully studded with sparkling stalactites", which visitors took to decorate their mantelpieces. After a fall of rock, it was forgotten for 50 years, then rediscovered in 1842.

G Hobberlaw had two lime kilns in 1777. Lime neutralises acid, and improves soil structure and drainage in heavy clay. Draw kilns like these are loaded from above with alternating layers of limestone and coal. The charge holes can be seen from the top of the kilns. As it burns, lime drops through a grate. Further layers of stone and fuel are added, in a continuous process. Kilns were built near to sources of limestone and coal, and away from houses because of the fumes. These kilns just supplied the local area. Elsewhere, larger kilns supplied a coastal trade. Hobberlaw sold lime until 1882 - local kilns were superseded by larger units when railways made it viable to transport lime longer distances.

H The Old Lime Road was used to collect lime from Hobberlaw by communities to the north and west.

I In 1755 Hobberlaw belonged to Robert Smart, an eccentric mathematician, physicist, and mechanic who created these regular square fields. He fathered five sons and at least five daughters, but still found time to build a church organ (which worked), design a threshing machine, and build a flying machine (which didn't work).

J The Cornhill Branch was authorised in 1882, built between 1884 and 1887, and this section closed in 1953.

K Turn back to follow the Freeman Hill Footway. In 1869 the Board of Health found "the footway extend-

ing from the Hobberlaw dike corner to the Half-Crown Well is much injured by carts passing along it - the cart-road which formerly passed along the side of it having been ploughed up and the land brought under cultivation". By 1868, there were 284 allotments on the moor. The sub-division of the Inner Moor is clear here, and the path runs diagonally across a number of fences which separated individual plots. The stiles show the line of the path, but there are diversions through gates, particularly where the route crosses the Old Lime Road.

L Hobberlaw Colliery was operating in the 1860's and supplied the lime kilns over the hill.

M In 1868 there were 16 houses on these moor allotments. This ruined cottage was built between the 1860s and 1890s.

N Reigham Quarry is one of many which provided sandstone.

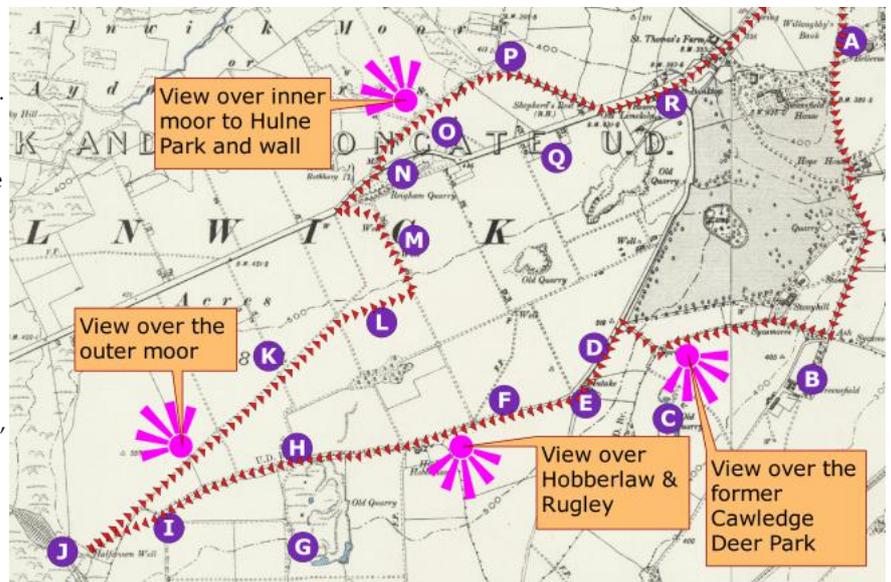
Reigham stone was robust, and regularly specified for flagstones. Until it was re-routed in 1870 the turnpike road ran over the back of the quarry. The old road remained as a footpath, the fence did not provide sufficient protection, and a least one person fell to their death.

O The brick and tile works lay to the east of the path, and clay was extracted to the west. The track of a wagonway between the two can still be seen. The works supplied bricks and drainage tiles from before 1828 until 1883. From 1878 this was also the site of the town Manure Depot, which collected ashes and refuse from houses, rakings and sweepings from the streets and markets, refuse and manure from the slaughter houses. It moved from South Road, where it had become a nuisance. This made it harder to take waste to the depot, but easier for buyers who were using the manure for agricultural improvement in the moor. At the time, Mr F. R. Wilson said that he had "always felt that the moor was the proper place for the reception of all the filth of the town".

P The herd looked after livestock on the moor. Herd's House was inclosed in 1705: and enjoyed by the herd as part of his salary till 1762, then let for £9. After the manure depot moved there were repeated complaints that the path here was in a poor state, heaped with manure, ashes and rubbish, and ankle-deep in mud.

Q Brankspeth's Howl was about a mile out of Alnwick. Tradition says that in the middle of the 17th century, when there was plague in Alnwick, people from town would stand on the ridge at Reigham and country people on the opposite hill. Their goods were laid out in the hollow between. They would have to "howl" their terms so that the market could continue without risk of contagion. However, this is not the source of the name. "Howl" means "hollow".

R Alnwick Moor Colliery was the last on the moor. In the early 1870's the price of coal locally rose from 4d to 13d per hundredweight. The shaft was difficult, and the cost of extracting this coal high, but transport costs were low. The colliery closed in 1874, re-appeared briefly in 1880, then became uneconomic when prices fell back to 6d per hundredweight.



News in Brief



While we welcomed the re-opening of Bow Alley last year, the quality of the pointing was, to put it mildly, rather disappointing. So we are pleased to report that this has now been re-worked in a more appropriate style.

The popular Town Trail Leaflet was originally published by the Alnwick Community Development Trust, with funding from Alnwick Town Council and Northumberland County Council. It describes forty of our most important historical and architectural places of interest, on a walk that starts and ends in the Market Place. Led by David Lovie, members are contributing to an updated leaflet, which will be published shortly.



The Society has long argued that the town deserves a new notice board on Northumberland Hall, and we are delighted to report that the Town Council has now installed one (pictured left).

We understand that there are now only three conservation officers covering the whole of Northumberland and that they rotate their area of responsibility every six months. The next change is due on 1st July and we are hoping to organise a walk around town with the new officer covering Alnwick so that we can look at areas of common concern together. Suggestions for our itinerary are welcome.

On Sunday 29th March Alnwick Town Council organised another town clean-up day in partnership with Northumberland County Council. Members of the society joined other local groups in various cleaning activities. The Society

also helps to maintain Column Field. Members, and others, also contribute to the quality of our streetscape through various community groups. We are encouraged to see that the condition of our streets seems to be improving as a result of these community efforts. Nevertheless, we all know that there are areas in the town where litter accumulates, and which let down the higher standards that are now being achieved elsewhere. Some of these problem areas are not readily accessible to volunteers because they lie on private property. We are collecting a list of problematic litter "black spots", and invite your nominations.

It is interesting to see from Civic Voice that The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed the "IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation" to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of people affected.

Public participation:

- is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

Out and About: Picture Quiz

Here are six pictures taken on popular walks that fall within striking distance of the centre of Alnwick. All are on public, or permissive footpaths.

How many of the walks can you identify? And for extra points, which of them is unsuitable for dogs?



Travel to work in Alnwick

Travel to and from work accounts for around a quarter of all journeys by road. We reckon that in Alnwick commuters account for about 4,500 car trips a day, and occupy about 2,000 parking spaces across town on a work day. But is there an alternative?

According to the 2011 census 8,116 people live in Alnwick, and 4,584 are in work. People need to get to and from work, but the capacity of our roads is limited and the number of parking spaces is finite. If the town is to prosper, then more will be travelling to work, and pressure on roads and parking will increase.

Based on census data, in Alnwick 321 people have no need to commute: they work from home. There are about 1,400 people who both live and work in Alnwick; about 2,250 who travel out of Alnwick to work, and about 2,800 who travel into Alnwick to work. About 250 Alnwick people work in a different place every day. Most of them drive, and it is difficult to see that they have much alternative.

- Of the 1,400 who live and normally work in Alnwick, more than half walk; hardly any cycle, or use public transport; and 40% drive less than 2km. How many of those could be encouraged to walk instead?
- There are 658 who travel drive less than 10km into Alnwick from nearby villages, and 610 who travel a similar distance in the opposite direction. More than 80% of these drive. Would it be feasible for some to cycle or use the bus?
- There are about 1,700 commuters who travel 10-40km from surrounding towns and villages into Alnwick, and about 1,200 who travel a similar distance in the opposite direction. More than 80% of these commuters drive. Could public transport offer an alternative for some?



• The number of people commuting more than 40km to work in Alnwick is relatively high at 450 or around 10%. We reckon about 270 come from Tyneside, and around 180 from more distant parts of Northumberland, or elsewhere in England and Scotland. Slightly smaller numbers are travelling a similar distance away from Alnwick to work. Two thirds of these drive. Could more be persuaded to use the train?

In total, this commuter traffic must account for about 4,500 car journeys through Alnwick on a working day, and occupy about 2,000 parking slots during the day.

Commuters must contribute to congestion at peak times, and affect access to parking for visitors and shoppers during the day. We already expect the relocation of the high school to increase traffic on the roads. Public transport currently takes about 260 people a day to work in or around Alnwick. If cuts in support for public transport force more to drive, then commuter traffic could increase by up to 6%. Economic development will presumably bring more jobs and more people travelling to work in Alnwick. Another 1,000 houses in Alnwick could mean more people commuting out for work. On the whole, this extra load will have to be absorbed by the existing road network.

If it becomes necessary to reduce commuter traffic in Alnwick, then what should the priorities be? How many of those 4,500 journeys and 2,000 parking slots could really be saved? And would the benefits justify the effort?

“Is Alnwick turning into a GHOST TOWN?”



EMPTY... Walter Wright vacated this Bondgate Without premises last week.

In 2006, under that headline, the Gazette reported that a spate of shop closures was fuelling fears that the town centre was in decline.

Are empty shops evidence of decline, or a symptom of a town in transition? Do new supermarkets drain trade from the

centre, or discourage Alnwick shoppers from travelling further afield?

Views differed in 2006, as they do now.



A business is operating inside the former Bondgate Interiors shop, on Bondgate Without, but no visible signs from the outside.



EMPTY... the Smithy Gallery in Narrowgate has been taken over.



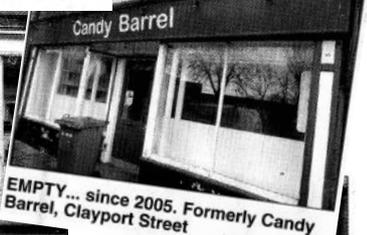
Empty... formerly Greggs in Bondgate Within. Vacated when the company merged with the Baker's Oven over the road.



EMPTY... the former barber's shop on Bondgate Without.



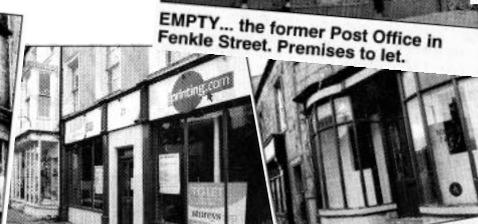
EMPTY... the sunbed shop on Narrowgate closed its doors last week.



EMPTY... since 2005. Formerly Candy Barrel, Clayport Street



EMPTY... formerly 1st Caffe Vesuvio, vacated September 2006, under new management, due to open soon.



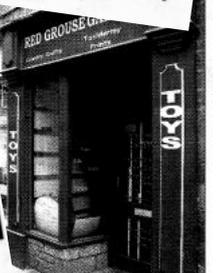
EMPTY... the former Post Office in Fenkle Street. Premises to let.



EMPTY... since 2005. Formerly a video games shop on Clayport Street.



EMPTY... formerly Kitson Windows, Bondgate Without. Recently sold.



EMPTY... windows at the Red Grouse Gallery

Planning Advisory Panel

On the 30th March a panel of members met to discuss current and recent planning applications, and other issues facing the town. This was the second time we have held such a meeting. This time it attracted more participants, and generated lively discussion.

The chair updated the panel on a number of recently approved Planning Applications (see below): a new ATM at HSBC Bank; masts and dishes on the Telephone Exchange, Fenkle Street; alterations and painted sign at The Olde Cross Public House (The Dirty Bottles) in Narrowgate; new external door at Sainsbury's Store, in Willowburn Avenue.

The panel then discussed Planning Applications that had not yet been determined: change of use to residential at Bondgate Hall, Bondgate Within; a retrospective application for change of use to a fitness centre at Lionheart Enterprise Park; Citizens Advice Bureau sign at Lloyds Bank Chambers, Bondgate Within; new retail unit for Pets@Home next to Willowburn Sports Centre.

After considering the various applications the panel then discussed some of the issues which were placing the Con-

servation Area at risk. Panel members were concerned at the deteriorating state of a number of individual buildings in the conservation area. Fears were also expressed that structural work appears to be under way on the Sion Chapel, without Listed Building consent. The society has raised this matter with the council enforcement team for further investigation.

Discussion also covered the changing character of the town centre, and the growing number of service trades, and charity shops. There were concerns over the number of vacant premises. Developments at Lionheart and Willowburn could draw trade away from the centre. Recent press comments made by the Duchess about Alnwick town centre were felt to be unnecessarily negative. It would be better for the town if she helped to create closer links between the town and Alnwick garden.

We think the format works. It brings a broader perspective and new insights to the discussion. We intend to continue organising advisory panels along similar lines. The next will be at the Grange on June 1st at 2:00 p.m. Please advise Peter Ennor if you are able to attend.

Planning matters

In terms of the volume of applications, the start of 2015 has seen a little more action than at the same period last year, but numbers were not unusual for the time of year.

Citizens Advice Bureau proposed placing a sign above the arch next to Lloyds Bank. The illustration in the application was highly misleading about the size and we objected on the basis that the sign was too large for the location; would cause lasting damage to the stonework of a listed building; and that the positioning may encourage clients to enter private properties at the rear of the courtyard. It would be preferable to re-use an existing wooden framework which once held nameplates for premises on the upper floor. The application has since been withdrawn.

An application from HSBC for replacement of an ATM was approved, despite our objections, and work has begun. The existing machine is set back and the window sill has been sympathetically stepped to accommodate it. The proposals bring the machine forward, beyond the sill. This will make a jarring visual impact at a pivotal point of the town centre and conservation area and impinge on the visual integrity of Bondgate Within. The machine will also cover the sill, removing a convenient place to rest bags, creating a repository for litter, and making it harder for customers to conduct transactions privately on a relatively narrow and busy section of pavement.

An application to replace and add communications masts on the telephone exchange was approved despite objections from the society and others.



An application has been submitted for the construction of a new retail unit to be used by Pets@Home, a national pet store behind the Willowburn Sports Centre.

The Chamber of Trade and others have objected on the

basis that extensive development south of the town will undermine viability of the town centre. We share those concerns, and believe the applicant should undertake a retail impact study to quantify the perceived need and its effect on such businesses. In addition we objected that changes to parking arrangements will be hazardous: parking spaces that are currently used by longer vehicles be lost, and additional bays will force users to turn and reverse into the main access road the area, which is also a bus route. Changes to ground levels will affect the Cawledge Burn. The entrance and exit to and from the proposed service area would be hazardous, running almost parallel with the rear service road to the leisure centre and spilling on to what is already a 3-way junction. Drivers exiting the leisure centre car park especially will not be expecting two roads to arrive at the junction side by side.

We urge refusal of this application, but if it is allowed to go ahead against objections, then it will increase traffic on both main routes to and from the town centre. We therefore suggest that the developer should be asked to make a Section 106 contribution to providing an alternative, safer cycle and pedestrian route to the town centre using the course of the old railway line at the rear of the cemetery and northwards.

We decided not to object to a retrospective application for a change of use of an industrial unit on Lionheart to a fitness centre. However, we still feel that this sets a poor precedent for the future use of this industrial estate.

There has been an application to create a new car park for the Rugby Club on disused land south of St James Park Football Ground. This site lies across the trackbed of the Alnwick-Cornhill branch. We hope that in the long term this could be converted to a long-distance cycle path connecting Alnwick with Wooler and beyond. The access to the site crosses a right of way that is little-used today, but has the potential to carry pedestrian and cycle traffic to the new High School. We welcome this opportunity to secure existing public footpath rights, and to dedicate rights of way along this part of the old railway line for the benefit of future generations.



Diary dates

Civic Society...

Saturday 27th June: Summer Trip to Newcastle, with guided tours of the Literary and Philosophical Society Library, the refurbished Black Gate, and Castle. There will be a small admittance charge for the afternoon visits. Please contact Gill Parker before June 7th to reserve places and discuss any help needed with travel arrangements.

We are preparing a second trip later in the summer, and will let members know dates and other details as soon as possible.

The Planning Advisory Panel will next meet at the Grange on 1st June at 2:00 p.m. Please let Peter Ennor know if you are planning to participate.

...and more

Bailiffgate Museum Exhibitions: 19th May to 5th July. Local Connections. 1715 - The Rising in the North (Alnwick figures such as the Earl of Derwentwater and Thomas Forster took part in the attempt to overthrow the Protestant monarchs); plus Magna Carta (see a facsimile of Magna Carta in its 800th Anniversary year, and learn about connections between the De Vesci family and this world-famous document)

Laing Art Gallery: until 28th June: John Dobson & John Wilson Carmichael: An Artistic Partnership. The exhibition explores their work as individuals as well as their collaborative projects. It includes country house projects, Richard Grainger's redevelopment of Newcastle city centre, and early designs for Central Station.

Woodhorn: 15th July, historian Bill Lancaster explores the life of 19th century mining engineer Nicholas Wood, who revolutionised deep mining. Free, but advance booking recommended.

Craggside: Sir Joseph Wilson Swan Exhibition until 5th Aug



Quiz answers

- A) Pastures
- B) Summer Seats
- C) Duke's Footway (Hulne Park Wall)
- D) Cawledge Burn (The Callishes)
- E) Hulne Park (dogs not allowed)
- F) Peter's Mill

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. Since then it has sought to influence development proposals, especially in the town centre and conservation area, to ensure they protect and enhance our heritage.

The society has been involved in successful high profile campaigns. It continues to pursue its objectives and provide a voice for members: through dialogue with planning and conservation professionals, and like-minded organisations; by offering advice, scrutinising and commenting on development proposals; and by recognising excellence, organising public meetings, developing guided trails, and a variety of other activities.

In response to changes in the planning system the society has been heavily involved in development of the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan, and works with local partners to influence policy at a county level. It seeks to influence national policy in co-operation with other bodies within the civic movement, and 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 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: Philip Deakin

Chair: Peter Ennor (peter.ennor@gmail.com)

Treasurer and Membership: Gill Parker

Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith

Other Executive Committee members:

Elizabeth Jones

Trish Jones

Brian Lamb

David Lovie (davidlovie307@btinternet.com)

Peter Reed / Newsletter (peter.reed@aligre.co.uk)

Caroline Stewart

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

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

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

Election, 1847

THE POLLING DAYS.

THE polling commenced at 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning, August 10th, at the several Polling Districts in the Northern Division of the County, viz. Alnwick, Belford, Berwick, Elsdon, Morpeth, and Wooler. The polling was conducted with great spirit at the several polling places, and though the greatest excitement prevailed, the proceedings were marked by a total absence of acrimonious feeling or political excitement.