

August 2019

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## Summer outing to Bamburgh



## Notice board

In November we have special plans for our Any Questions topical debate. Further details will be announced shortly.

Schools in Northumberland closed in July. Do you know someone who is continuing their studies elsewhere, or who will return to school on 2<sup>nd</sup> September? We have introduced a new membership category for students. See the web site for details, or contact our treasurer Gill Parker (details on back page).

Thanks to everyone who has helped to put this issue together. The next newsletter will be published in November. We welcome ideas and contributions.

What is your experience of improved pedestrian access in Narrowgate? Please let us, and your elected representatives, know.

*Our summer outing on 10<sup>th</sup> July this year was to the Bowl Hole Ossuary, in the crypt of St Aidan's Church, at Bamburgh.*

We heard about the excavation of a 7th century burial ground by the Bamburgh Research Project, and the scientific analysis carried out by Durham University. Then the creation of a modern ossuary in the crypt of St Aidan's Church, to provide a fitting final resting place for more than 100 members of the court of St Oswald, King of Northumbria.

Members will be familiar with the story of how Oswald established his court at Bamburgh after he had unified Bernicia and Deira to create the kingdom of Northumbria. And that he brought monks from Iona to spread Christianity across his kingdom.

The interwoven stories of Oswald, Aidan, and Cuthbert, Lindisfarne and Durham are widely known, and have continued to inspire generations since.



Yet it is still difficult for us to fully appreciate the impact that these 7th century people of Bamburgh made on history. So it was a privilege for us to have an early insight into the work that is under way to interpret the story.

Our thanks to Jessica Turner for making this a memorable and fascinating visit. Members who missed the outing can learn more of the Bamburgh Research Project, and may be interested to know that they are looking for volunteers.

<http://bamburghresearchproject.co.uk/>



# The story of public housing in Alnwick (Part-I, to 1914)

When we think of Alnwick's built heritage we inevitably emphasise the Medieval, Georgian and Victorian heritage that dominates the conservation area. But development beyond the conservation area has almost all been residential. Since the end of the 20th century Alnwick's suburbs have been dominated by private housing, but public housing schemes have been shaping Alnwick's wider townscape for longer, and in some ways they have had greater impact..

Alnwick and Canongate Board of Health was formed in 1850 following the Cholera outbreak. It was replaced by a new Urban District Council in 1894. Over the second half of the 19th century these bodies introduced new water and sewage systems, improved the slaughter houses, provided an isolation hospital for cases of infectious disease, licensed lodging houses, removed piggeries and other nuisances from the town centre, improved the quality of lighting, roads and pavements; and enforced higher standards for new houses. The Urban District Council quickly earned a reputation for better day-to-day administration, but momentum seems to have slowed as the 19th century drew to a close. Alnwick was not seeing the improvements in public health that were being achieved elsewhere, and attention was starting to focus on the poor quality of housing.

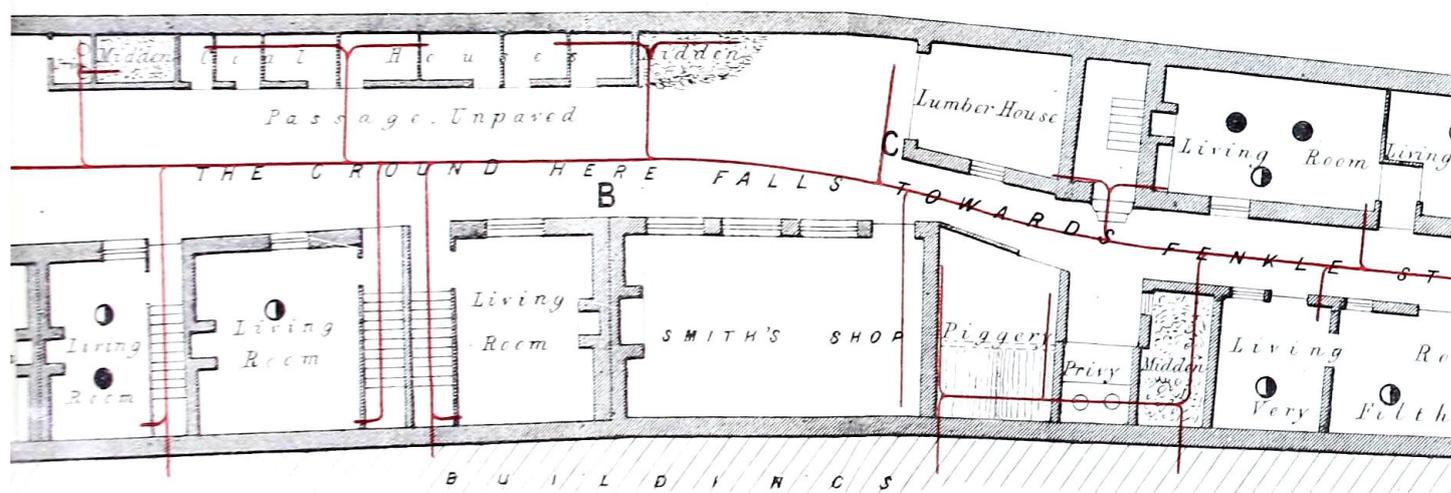
The death rate is an important measure of public health. In Alnwick it was higher than the national average. It improved in 1894, but worsened in 1895, and it is obvious (even in the formal language of the time) that the Medical Officer, Dr Easton, was concerned. His annual report for that year noted the new fire engine, and progress on tenders to upgrade the sewers. He acknowledged plans to improve the recreation ground ("*Physical exercise, if moderately indulged in, is undoubtedly conducive to health, and need not seriously divert attention from more profitable employment...*"), and "*efforts made to provide suitable places of rest for the weak and weary, whose wanderings in the open*

*air must otherwise be confined within too restricted limits*" (this related to introducing seats at convenient distances from the town). More significantly, Dr Easton begins to comment on the slow progress in improving housing for the working poor.

Perhaps Dr Easton was affected by having to report 195 deaths, compared to 108 the previous year. Maybe he was moved by a particularly sharp increase in the number of children who died (60 who died in 1895 were aged under 5 years old, and 33 were in the first year of their life). Whatever the reason, his concern in 1895 is clear. The following year he starts to express frustration with the council. "*Zealous efforts have accordingly been put forth to interest you*". "*...progress of a preliminary character only...*" "*...the time cannot be distant, when the mind under less restraint can more impartially deal with it on its merits, and I hope that when it arrives, there will be an increase of unanimity in your understanding of what is needed*" ... "*hindrances to private enterprise which make intervention by the Board desirable if not absolutely imperative*".

Others felt the need to intervene. The North Eastern Railway started to build houses for their employees, and the Duke set up a housing association. But the District Council still procrastinated, so the County Council stepped in. Their Medical Officer of Health, Dr Hembrough, drew attention to unsuitable housing in Alnwick. However, the District council objected to his report, and ordered Dr Easton to carry out a review. By now Dr Easton seems to have earned growing support in the town, and he naturally concurred with Dr Hembrough. But still Alnwick District Council took no action. At that point the Local Government Board got involved, and Dr George Seaton Buchanan arrived from London. Buchanan was still in his twenties. He had been appointed medical inspector of the Local Government Board at an unusually early age (perhaps it helped that his father held the post previ-

## GROUND PLAN.



Note The room in which a fatal case of Cholera occurred is distinguished  
Cases of Cholera which did not prove fatal are shown thus.....  
These marked "Living Rooms" are let off in single room tenements.  
The Red lines indicate the manner in which Life Drains may be laid  
to suit the actual position of the present water closets & sinks, as all

# Public Housing (continued)

ously and reported on Alnwick in 1867). Buchanan went on to make his own name in public health, by setting up international agreements to prevent the spread of smallpox, typhus, cholera, plague and yellow fever. However, in 1898 he was concerned with sanitary conditions in Alnwick.

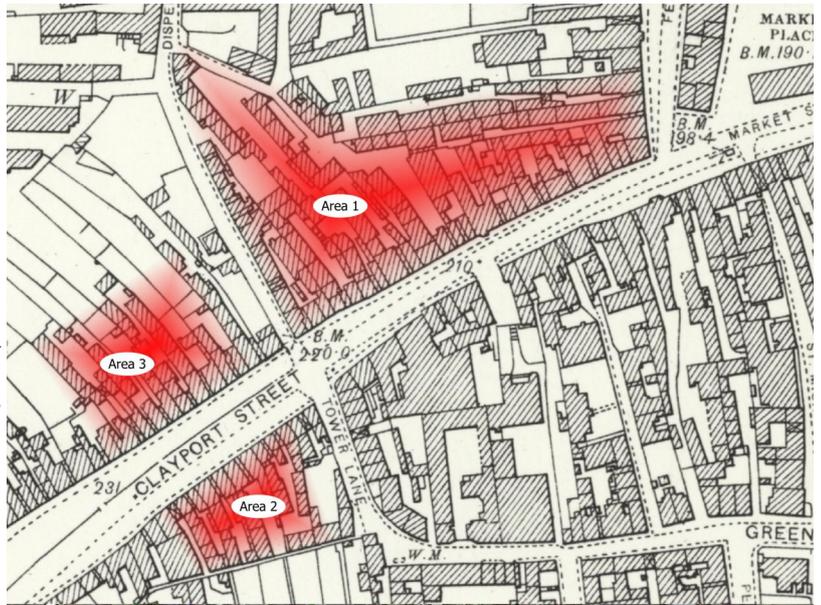
*"A large proportion of the dwellings of the town, principally those occupied by the poorer classes, are to be found huddled on small areas at the back of the main thoroughfares. This close aggregation of dwellings, which has long been a characteristic feature of Alnwick, must in part be attributed to the enclosure of the town in former centuries by walls; to a greater extent, however, it is the outcome of later conditions"*

*"The commonest example is where a property at first consisted of a single dwelling in a row abutting on the main street having at the back a long strip of garden or yard, the width of which is no greater than the breadth of the house to which it belongs. Buildings have subsequently been packed on this strip of back yard and access to the "court" so formed is had by a narrow "entry" driven through the ground floor of the house in the main street"*

*"Going through into a court of this kind one finds a passage some four or six feet wide, extending the length of the property, sometimes terminating blindly, sometimes leading by a second entry, at its far end, into a neighbouring street or court. Along one side of the passage is a high wall which forms the back of the structures in the adjoining property; along the other side is a row of buildings, most of them two story dwelling houses, others, stables, or cowsheds"*

Buchanan reported that sometimes the interior was kept tidily, but more often these tenements were poorly ventilated, dilapidated, dark, dirty, and damp. They were drained by open gullies, and where horses and cows were kept the dung accumulated before it was carried out to the street in barrows.

At the time the population of Alnwick was 6,746. Of those, Buchanan estimated that about 900 people lived in

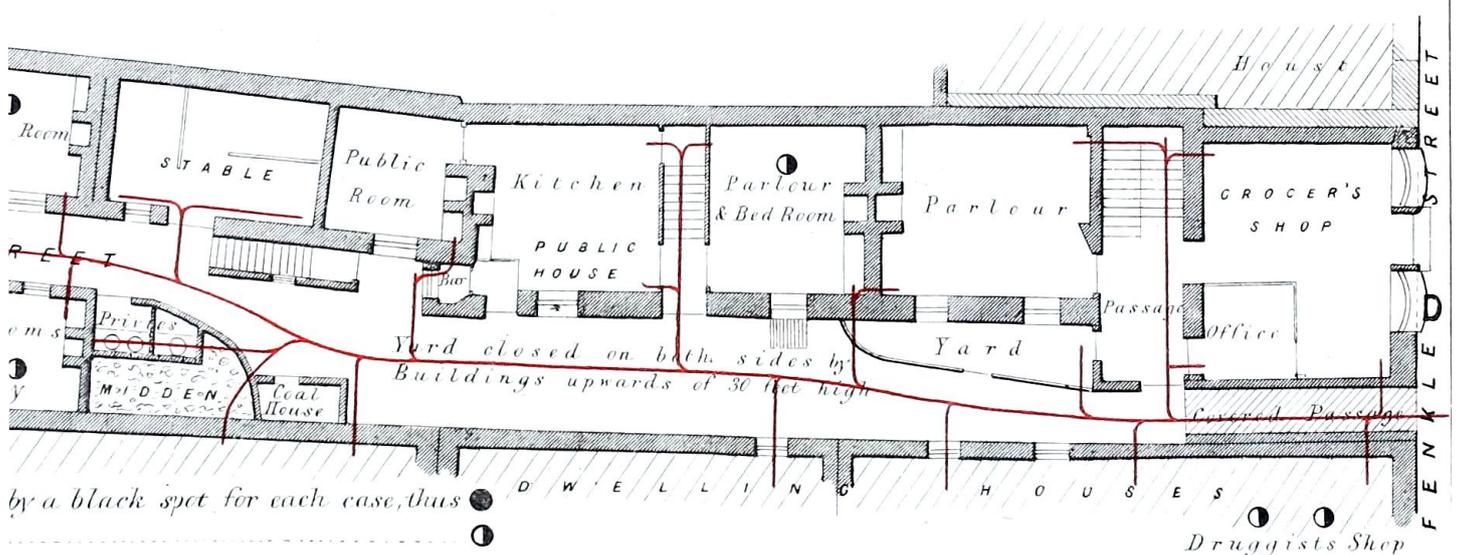


300 single rooms (i.e. three to a room); and about 1,400 lived in 333 two-room tenements (i.e. two to a room). While reporting unsanitary housing across the town, Buchanan identified three areas at the foot of Clayport as being particularly unsanitary (see map above). In 1897 these three areas together housed around 875 people: mostly living three or four to a room. Area 1 includes Union Court. This had been used by Rawlinson almost 50 years earlier to illustrate the problem of overcrowding in his 1850 report on the Cholera Outbreak (see plan, below). It's roughly where the bus station stands today.

In the circumstances it's hard to disagree with Buchanan's conclusion:

*The sanitary shortcomings of Alnwick call for action on the part of the District Council more vigorous and more sustained than heretofore. Above all, it would seem essential that they should no longer delay to apply adequate remedy to the principal evil, namely the unwholesome housing of the working class population.*

**Continued on Page 4**



*id, but the branches shown may be modified so to suit those proposed to be introduced.*

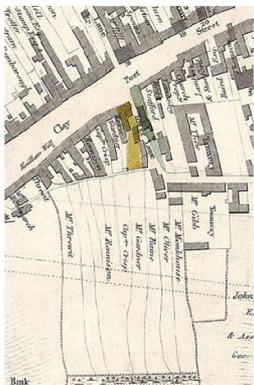
## Public Housing (continued)

Some had suggested that the worst tenements could be improved, but Buchanan rejected that as impractical. Some had suggested improving ventilation and light by removing individual buildings, but there seems to have been a consensus that this would perpetuate the problem, rather than solve it. The preferred solution was to demolish the courts, and build alternative accommodation.

Buchanan anticipated objections: rehousing would require more land, and considerable investment; the poor may not be able to afford the higher cost of better housing. But he argued that the council should take a long-term view of the costs; that offering better conditions for those who could afford higher rents would relieve pressure on others; and that failing to address the problem would attract the wrong kind of people to Alnwick.

Buchanan's report seems to have concentrated minds. By 1899 Dr Easton was able to report progress:

- The Duke had set up a housing association in 1897, and made land and funding available to build thirty-one houses along Wagonway Road. By 1899 these were complete, "fully occupied, and accounted pleasant and satisfactory".
- The North-Eastern Railway were preparing to build 20 cottages for railwaymen on Seaview Terrace (now between York Crescent and Augur Terrace).
- The Urban District Council had picked Area-2, as their first priority, and plans had been drawn up for what became King Street.



Significantly, this meant that agreement had been reached with multiple landowners (see 1832 map, left). This didn't just allow King Street to be built - it also meant that Lisburn Street could now be extended, to link the station and Clayport.

By 1905, 34 houses (62 homes) had been completed on King Street. But the momentum was not maintained. As the first world war approached there had been little

further progress. By 1910 the King Street development had been completed, with an extension into Lisburn Street, and this had opened up a connection from the station to Clayport. Augur Flats were developed by the Duke in 1912. There had been further small developments near the gasworks and on Sawmill Estate.

## Pant outside Westgate House

*The finial has been replaced on the pant outside Westgate House.*

Various names have been used for this pant on Clayport. Historic England call it "Pant Outside Westgate House", but Tate calls it "Clayport High Pant, formerly Kidland's Well". He dates it from 1755, when Kidland's well was converted to a pant. This means that

this is probably the oldest surviving pant in Alnwick.

The pant is in the form of a large, squat pillar in local sandstone. The round finial on top appears in old pictures, and is mentioned in the listing entry, but has been missing for some time. Thanks to the Freemen of Alnwick it was not lost, and is now back in place.



A new Medical Officer was now in place. He was able to report some improvements, but he still agonised over condemning houses that he judged unfit for habitation, when no alternative accommodation was available. He knew that the effect would be to turn people into the street, or to cause worse overcrowding elsewhere. The following from his 1912 report is fairly typical:

*"it is obviously impossible to close houses unfit for habitation without providing for those living in the condemned area. There are many houses in Alnwick which fail to comply with modern requirements; many are back to back, require through ventilation, have no damp course, are too dark and have too small an air space".*

By then some of the worst properties had been condemned and removed, but no wholesale demolition had taken place. It proved too difficult for the authorities to build sufficient decent accommodation to rehouse people at an affordable price. After removing some buildings from the courts the ventilation and light must have improved in others. But fears that this approach would perpetuate the problem seem to have been well-founded.

Between 1850 and 1914 the built-up area of Alnwick increased by about 90 acres. Most was for new houses. Public housing accounted for half of the new homes, but only 10% of the new residential area. Private housing developments, such as Stott Street and Swansfield Park Road were being built to a lower density. But they didn't greatly increase the size of the town. The biggest expansion was due to the amount of farmland taken to construct large villas along Alnmouth Road. These accounted for almost half of the growth in the built-up area of Alnwick before 1914.

The authorities had not solved the problem of insanitary housing by the time the First World War broke out. But they had begun. The flats and houses that were being built for working families over a century ago are still with us today. They frame the townscape at the north end of Wagonway Road, and at the west end of Lisburn Street. Today's road layout was influenced by the decision to build along the line of the Wagonway, and to open a connection between the station and Clayport along Prudhoe Street and Lisburn Street. Buchanan had a good point in 1897 when he urged the council to take a long-term view.

In the next issue we will look at how things progressed between the wars.

# Planning matters

Members of Alnwick in Bloom have raised concerns about the lack of protection for trees in the town. We agree that this is an issue of concern, and we hope there will be scope to combine resources and take this issue forward.

At Willowburn Avenue approval has now been given for a 'tenant listing board' at the entrance to Sainsburys, Argos, Homebase, and Pets@Home, and for installation of a 'development to let' board at the new retail development site.

Permission has been sought for an amendment to the temporary access road from Denwick Lane to the new housing development at Windy Edge. The amendment would allow traffic to the sewage works, the bike track and Lough Farm to use the road. We are concerned about access to the bike track, particularly safety issues at the bottom of Fisher Lane.

At Bondgate Hall it is proposed to reduce the crown of four trees. We have objected. These trees are visually very important in the context of the townscape, and there is nothing wrong with them. We have urged the Council to retain them as they are, and ask for a report from the NCC tree officer before making a decision.

At the former Alnwick Fire Station, on South Road an application has been submitted to confirm the existing use of various parts of the former fire station. This site was earmarked in the Neighbourhood plan for future housing, and while this is not imminent, we have concerns that at this stage granting permission for storage and distribution would allow potentially unwelcome development in the future. We have objected on that basis. Neighbours have also raised concerns over access.

Approval has been given for change use of the former antiques shop next to Barter Books into an ice cream parlour.

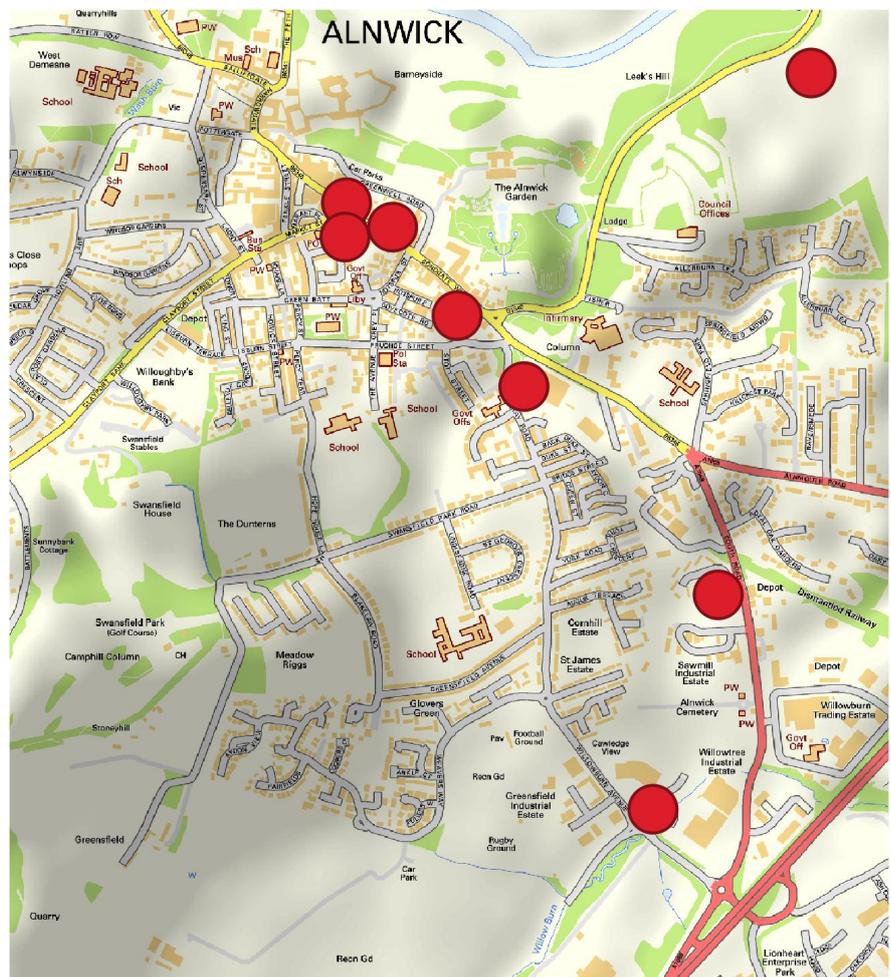
Listed building consent has been obtained for repair of the balcony at the White Swan.

Retrospective permission has been sought for a fascia sign and repainting of the shopfront that has already been completed at 21 Market Street (City Barbers). We have objected, on the basis that the applicant should have applied

for permission before they carried out the work, and that this shows a cynical and disrespectful attitude towards the community.



We have submitted an objection to the retrospective application for a plastic fascia sign and projecting signs for the new Card Factory shop at 32 Bondgate Within, and commented on the colours used for Yorkshire Trading Co. as they do not comply with the Council guidance as to colours and materials in the conservation area. Although we have heard a number of complaints about the design of these new shop fronts at a prominent location in the conservation area we presented the only formal objection, and the application was approved. We continue to see a number of cases where work is carried out on new shopfronts before approval has been obtained, or even before an application has been submitted. We do not believe that we are alone in feeling that this shows a lack of respect for the people of Alnwick, and for fellow traders. However, without more voices being raised we are not optimistic that the practice will cease.



# Out and about in the Aln Valley: the walk



Members may want to celebrate the progress of the Aln Valley Railway with an outing to the surrounding countryside. Our thanks to Paul Wright of the Ramblers' Association, who has suggested this route. The full walk is just over 7 miles long, and adventurous in parts. However, an AVR halt at Greenrigg / Edenhill Bridge (7), the figure-of-eight format, and regular bus service to and from Lesbury mean there are plenty of options for those who don't want to undertake the whole walk in one go. In places you will need to use your initiative, so we advise taking a detailed map, with public rights of way clearly marked.

1. Start outside the car park of the Aln Valley Railway. Follow the track to East Cawledge Farm. Just before the farm, take the path that appears on your right, signposted Bilton Banks. This leads into Cawledge Wood. At the bottom of the wide slope turn right to find the footbridge, cross the burn then climb the opposite bank heading to the right.
2. Look for a smaller path that leads to a gate into a field.
3. The path continues through the field until it gets to the South-west edge where it turns, runs parallel to the field boundary and reaches a stile at the southern corner.
4. Cross the stile and go down hill until you meet the stream. You will have to wend your way through gaps in the furze. The stream is the boundary of the field/wood and is usually very shallow. Cross the stream and bear right, through a wicket gate and then uphill though scattered trees till you reach open land. Continue in a South-east-by-south direction for 800m before coming to a main fence line. There is a gate, go through it and turn sharp left. Around here we found that the route of the public footpath was more clear on the map than on the ground - follow it carefully.
5. Cross this field and come to another gate which is the start of a lane.

6. Follow the lane until you reach the road.

7. Turn left on the road, and continue to the railway bridge. To shorten the walk, follow the railway back to the start. Otherwise continue straight ahead to the stepping stones.

8. After crossing the stepping stones follow the ancient lane, then the farm track and field boundaries, heading east until you approach the river, then the viaduct. The footpath under the viaduct was marked, but not passable when we tried it. There is an obvious alternative along the edge of the field to the A1068 (Alnwick - Alnmouth Road)

9. Follow the Alnmouth Road to Lesbury. There is a footpath for most, but not all, of the way - so take care.

10. The footpath enters the field just south of the new Lesbury road bridge. Although maps show a public footpath closely following the river, this was not passable at the time we tried. However, there is a clear path up and over the hill. Beyond that, the path follows the south bank of the river to Bilton Mill.

11. Beyond Bilton Mill, head south on the marked Permissive Footpath to reach the railway line. Follow this across Cawledge Viaduct back towards Lionheart Station.

12. Shortly before you reach the station, a track diverges from the railway line. This will take you back to the starting point.

Alnwick Ramblers organise regular walks. Their Sunday walks are usually around 7 or 8 miles long, and almost always start at 10.am.

<https://tinyurl.com/yywylsrb>



# Out and about in the Aln Valley: Built Heritage

## East Cawledge Park

Originally part of Cawledge Deer Park, then known as "Grumble's" after an early tenant. Tate was struck by the geology. From the report of the Rural Sanitary Authority, 1874: *Just outside the boundary of the Urban Sanitary Authority, south-eastwards, lies this onstead, consisting of good farm house, with good farm buildings, and two isolated rows of cottages. The whole of these have been renovated or renewed since the committee of Guardians reported against their bad condition a few years ago. The cottage interiors are particularly roomy and good, though the absence of a third room has necessitated in one case the conversion of a pantry into a bedroom, the width of which is barely sufficient for the bed from wall to wall. The offices to one set are a short distance backwards. At the other set a privy and pigsty are placed against the wall of a living room. All have sinks and drainage. A pump at the farm house supplied the cattle &c. and a tiny "well in the wood" some distance off, at the bottom of a dell under a densely thick wood or plantation is the source of drinking water, which is pronounced by all to be excellent, although I was informed that it is "a sair pull in clarty weather". I was in seasonable time to prevent this well from being fouled, as the overflow ditch from it was choked with weeds. The steep footpath leading to this well is covered with dry ashes, and the well is carefully attended to by a woodman who resides in one of the cottages.*

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## Bilton Banks

There was a coal mine in Cawledge in 1622, and coal was mined in Shilbottle from 1728 until 1981. Most shafts were centred on Colliery Farm, to the West of here, but the Long Dyke Pit (here) was sunk in the 1860s, and worked until 1925. A tramway carried tubs to a siding at Alnwick gas works, with rail connecting to Newcastle and later to Amble for shipping. The coal company built 29 houses at Bilton Banks following a critical report by the sanitary inspector in 1874. Longdyke Colliery was abandoned in August 1925 but the village remained. Although condemned in 1937 the houses were not all demolished until the 1950s.

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## Greenrigs, The Kennels

From the report of the Rural Sanitary Authority, 1873: *Northwards, towards the River Aln, below Spylaw, is a group of new buildings erected for the huntsman, the horses, the helper and the hounds of Major Browne. The huntsman's cottage is not stoothed\*, and as it occupies an exposed position, the bedroom walls are damp, and his children suffer from bronchitis. The water supply is limited. There is a tank made on the side of Spylaw to gather water for this establishment. Pipes conduct the water to the cottages, the W.C.s the stables and kennels. Water is then brought in casks from the Aln for the horses and hounds. This plan is in operation at the present time. The Aln also receives the valuable drainage of this hunting establishment.*

(\*stoothed = rendered)

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## Old Hawkhill

From the report of the Rural Sanitary Authority, 1874: *This is an old farm house in the occupation of a shepherd and his family of seven, situated on the brow of the east bank of the river Aln close to the stepping stones from Greenrig Kennels. More towards Hawkhill stands a long red-tiled unspotted building with small fold-yards in front at one end, used for hovels, lambing houses, &c.. The house is slated but spouted only in the front, and is extremely damp in the west room. There is a hen-house against the east gable but it is disused at present. On the east side stand an ash-pit, privy and coalhouse in a row, the last being against the house wall. Good water is obtained from an iron pump and trough in the field a few yards north of the lambing house.*

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## Lesbury Mill

The new bridge is just north of the former Lesbury Mill. There was a corn mill recorded around here in the 13th century, and it remained in use until the 1920s. It was demolished in 1964 following a fire. Today a reduced section of the east wall stands as a reminder. To the west are signs of the original mill race.

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## Lesbury Railway Viaduct

The 18 arch viaduct just north west of Lesbury carries the East Coast main line over the River Aln. It was built in 1848 / 1849 by Robert Stephenson for the York, Newcastle and Berwick Railway, and replaced a wooden trestle structure, in use from 1847. The viaduct is Grade II listed.



## Bilton Mill

The first record of Bilton Flint Mill was in 1786. It became a corn mill some time after 1828. From The angler's complete guide to the rivers and lakes of England, 1853: *The finest parts [of the River Aln] for salmon, in the spring of the year, are those long stretches of deep water near to the Flint and Lesbury Mills. The bed of the river here is exceedingly favourable for this fish being partly of gravel with a great number of large stones interspersed. Here they lie in perfect safety.* For current fishing arrangements see: <https://www.alnangling.co.uk/>

From the report of the Rural Sanitary Authority, 1873: *This large mill and other buildings also goes by the name of "Flint Mill", and stands on a peninsula formed by a very sharp bend in the river Aln, about half a mile below old Hawkhill. The miller's house is a tall two-storied building, with a pretty garden in front, a good distance across the green from the mill and farm buildings. There are six in family here. The house is well spouted and pretty comfortable, but rather damp on the east side, against which is a small wash-house with a privy next it, with another at the back of that facing rearwards, forming the east boundary of a small yard in which stand the rain-water barrels and sink for slops. Outside the yard is an ash-pit and two duck-houses in a block with a hen-house above each. The pit under the two privies is covered in, and though built twenty-three years ago has not been emptied since. They are uncomfortably situated as to drinking water here. Water for washing &c is obtained from the rain barrels or from the river, but drinking water is usually got from a small trough down the bank of the river just before the house is reached. This, however, is quite dry at present, and they have to get it from a place just across the river where it is often disturbed by rain or other cause. There is plenty of water in the large plantation called Bilton Wood, which stands above Bilton Mill to the south, and a good supply could easily be afforded to this place. There is a stagnant pool of green slush in a corner of the farm buildings on the side nearest the house.*

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## Cawledge Viaduct

The most significant structure on the Aln branch crosses Cawledge burn in seven arches at a height of 53 feet. It was designed by Robert Stephenson, and took two years to build (1848-50)

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# Shop front survey

*It is twenty-five years since the District Council asked the Civic Society to develop a Design Guide for Shop Fronts. Most independent shops in Alnwick still have a traditional shop front, retain the classical design of a stone-faced building, and maintain the regularity of the medieval burgh plots. Those characteristics set the standard for our original guide.*

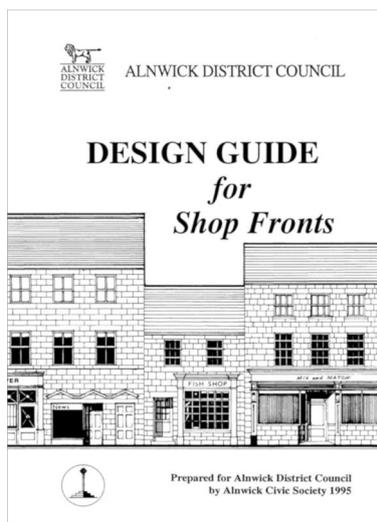
We have carried out a survey, to revisit the principles set out in the original guide.

What we learned was that:

- People would like to retain traditional Victorian / Edwardian shopfront styles, in subdued colours.
- People recognise that there is a tension between their desire for a coherent historic townscape and the need for individual traders to stand out. Views do not greatly differ on which traditional shopfronts have successfully resolved this conflict, and which have not.
- There is little sympathy for corporate brands that make no attempt to respect local character.

We had survey responses from society members, other Alnwick residents and visitors. We asked them to select some recent shop front designs that they regard as good practice, some that represented bad practice, and some that they saw as a wasted opportunity to improve the town. Out of 30 responses, 53% were from ACS members, and 33% from non-members (the remainder did not say). 73% live in Alnwick, and 20% visit frequently (the remainder did not say). All saw the vitality of the town centre as being important to their quality of life, and judged that the appearance of the centre is important to its success. There was little difference between ratings given by ACS members and the wider public.

- Vintage & Antique, Trotters and Hair Lounge were the three shop fronts most widely regarded as examples of good practice. On these there was little dissent. We conclude that a Victorian / Edwardian style, in subdued colours is still the preferred approach.
- Comments recognise the commercial pressures for individual traders to stand out, and the tension between the need for traders to promote their presence, and the desire for a coherent historic townscape. Views differ on the degree to which Cats Protection, Specsavers, Alegate, Sher Khan and City Barbers have succeeded in achieving a good balance.
- Card Factory was the only example that nobody liked. There seems to be little sympathy for national chains that make no attempt to balance national branding and local character.



In almost every case the ranking of different shop fronts was the same among ACS members and non-members. The biggest differences were in the views on Alegate (which members liked more than non-members). Note that, at the time of the survey Alegate had not added the name sign (see photo - right - for how it appeared at the time of the survey). The final rankings are also shown opposite.

The Shop Front Design Guide emphasised the retention of Victorian / Edwardian designs. Twenty-five years later, Alegate is one recent example where the response to a different building type has adopted a more “Moderne” style. While views differ it is notable that this received support – particularly from ACS members. If the design guide is ever revisited it might be worth considering some suitable approaches for different building styles that can still enhance the wider townscape.

What we are doing :

- We are raising objections when developments are carried out without first obtaining planning permission. This is increasingly common, and (in our view) indicate a lack of consideration for view of the people of Alnwick, and for fellow traders.
- We will continue to press the county to adopt established design guidelines as a material consideration, and to take enforcement action when appropriate. We are considering how the current guidelines might be updated, and would welcome your views.
- Among owners and traders we will look for ways to raise awareness of planning law and appreciation of how design guidelines can help. Across the community we will try to raise awareness, and to encourage others to make their views known.
- We hope to establish links with other Civic Societies in Northumberland to share experiences and explore opportunities for collaboration. Hexham, in particular, has put a lot of effort into this area, and has a well-developed set of guidelines.

If this is a subject of concern to you, then please let us know how you can help.



# Shop front survey: continued

## 1. Vintage & Antique



## 2. Trotters



## 3. Hair Lounge



## 4. Alegate



## 5. Cats Protection



## 6. Specsavers



## 7. Sher Khan



## 8. City Barbers



## 9. Card Factory



## Selected comments

- Alwicks is a historic town. Shop fascia should reflect that. The fact that there IS a shop trading there is even more important.
- If empty, the shop should have displays in it to look attractive.
- More care should be taken in the design of the name boards, and the choice of colours used. Large plastic signs and lurid colours and designs can ruin an otherwise acceptable shop-front.
- Sometimes cleaning up and painting a shop front is a great improvement on what was there before, so it can affect the judgement. Specsavers for instance used their own logo, and the overall effect is clean, bright and professional, with plenty of window space. That appeals to me as it chimes with what I'm looking for in an optician. But a more quirky shop hopefully would look different and invite me in. On the other hand if I have to drive past somewhere two/three times without spotting it, as the micro brewery, that's not a great success.

• Too many of the newer shops do not appear to seek the correct planning permission before painting their shop fronts or installing their signage.

• I have used the third category for designs that have retained interesting features of the window and door frames and the banner over the main front but where use of colour has denied the onlooker what could have been made of them

• Seeking a balance between respecting heritage & living / working in C21st town. Luckily for us, heritage colours & design is very "in" right now.

It is very important that shops retain the character of the buildings and don't promote a brand. The high street will just be branded if these plastic neon signs take over. It needs to retain its character.

• I believe it is so important to retain a good variety of small independent shops in the town and that the shop fronts are sensitive to the historic surroundings.

# News in Brief

We were sorry to hear that Brian Brand had passed away. Brian was a long-standing and loyal member of the society, and our sympathies go to his family.

The Association for Heritage Interpretation Awards scheme recognises and rewards best practice in heritage interpretation across the UK and Ireland. These are the only awards to recognise excellence in all types and sizes of heritage interpretation.

This year they have shortlisted "Some Alnwick Heritage Heroes" in the Volunteer and Community Projects category.

Don't raise your hopes - the competition is strong, and we would be surprised to progress further, but we are honoured to have reached this stage.

Congratulations to Roger Daniel on being chosen as the new Town Crier.



Historic England have provided a nice way for us to explore Capability Brown landscapes from the air.

<https://tinyurl.com/y45j6yqs>

Unfortunately they don't offer flights: only a "virtual" exploration. However, the landscapes around Alnwick Castle are covered including Hulne Park. The example above shows Alnwick Garden.

In May Historic England announced the High Streets Heritage Action Zones programme; designed to secure lasting improvements to historic high streets. An organisation (typically the local authority) can apply for a grant of between £250,000 and £2m and use this to set up a partnership, champion the high street, change perceptions of heritage, deliver physical improvements and community activities. In addition to £44 million from government and Historic England there is also funding from the National Lottery Heritage

Fund to support a cultural programme to engage people in the life and history of their high streets, and from the Architectural Heritage Fund to support social enterprise organisations to take ownership of and bring buildings of local importance back into use. Total funding across these different pots is around £62million. So nationally dozens of high streets could benefit. However, as members may have seen in the local press, we were involved with officers from Alnwick Town Council and Northumberland County Council to discuss submitting an expression of interest for Alnwick. Sadly, the consensus was that any bid from Alnwick was unlikely to succeed. Blyth was selected to be put forward for Northumberland. Naturally, our immediate reaction was disappointment, but on reflection, the discussions also highlighted the importance of the Community Action Plans in the Neighbourhood Plan, and the importance of a coordinated approach. We are grateful that the Town Council led a considered approach, and made good use of the resources available. We appreciate being involved, and wish Blyth well.

Periodically, various schemes are proposed to reduce pressure on parking in the town centre. The County Council recently commissioned a study into the options and costs associated with introducing a seasonal Park and Ride facility. In brief, the consultants were unable to find a viable way forward.

- Only sites to the south of the town were considered suitable, and a new parking facility near the A1 would cost between £0.48m and £2.7m, depending on location
- 2 or 3 buses would be required for a usable service at a cost of £300 per bus per day
- Depending on different design options, between 30 and 116 people could be expected to use the service.

This reinforces our view that such a scheme is not viable in terms of cost, and it would not have a significant effect on parking.

Experience elsewhere demonstrates that Park and Ride schemes can only be successful where specific conditions are met.

There is now a widespread consensus that a Park and Ride scheme will not offer a practical way forward for Alnwick.

That's no bad thing if it means that we can all concentrate on more practical options.

The Town Council is in the process of developing a "Zero Carbon" strategy: de-carbonising the council, and engaging with the community and business to do likewise.

We have already been involved in discussions relating to transport emissions, and expect to return to the topic over the coming months. We hope members will share their thoughts, so that all views can be represented.



One of the reasons that we enjoy leading town walks is that each is an opportunity to view the familiar through fresh eyes. Recently we've been asked to lead several walks for ADCHS students from Year 12 (first year of sixth form) and for visiting French exchange students from Lagny and their hosts. We found these particularly refreshing, and it was a real privilege to view our town through the eyes of a new generation.





## Diary dates

### Civic Society...

Details of our Any Questions topical debate in November will be announced shortly.

### ...and more

Meetings of the Alnwick and District Local History Society are held in the Bailiffgate Museum and start at 7.30pm.

- 24<sup>th</sup> September 2019: Angels of the North, Notable Women of the North East – Moira Kilkenny.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019: Dickson, Archer, Thorpe – Sue Wood.
- 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019: The Edlingham Vicarage Burglary – John Yearnshire.

Bailiffgate Museum: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 2019. Hilton Dawson on the Newbiggin Genealogy Project. Newbiggin has carried out one of the most ambitious genealogy projects in the North East in recent years. See Bailiffgate Web site for booking details.

Bailiffgate Museum: 29<sup>th</sup> Oct - 8<sup>th</sup> Dec "Watch the Birdie" Very early images of Alnwick and its citizens at work and play

## 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, members 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:** Philip Deakin

**Acting Chair:** David Lovie ([davidlovie307@btinternet.com](mailto:davidlovie307@btinternet.com))

**Treasurer and Membership:** Gill Parker

**Honorary Secretary:** Sue Smith

**Other Executive Committee members:**

- Peter Ennor
- John Hipwell
- Mary McIlroy Hipwell
- Elizabeth Jones
- Peter Reed / Newsletter ([peter.reedhome@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.reedhome@btinternet.com))

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

**Email:** [alnwickcivicsoc@gmail.com](mailto:alnwickcivicsoc@gmail.com)

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

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



This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Moon Landings. But that was not the only significant event in 1969. On 26<sup>th</sup> September 1969 the Beatles released Abbey Road. It was their eleventh studio album, and the last one that they recorded together. Things might have been different if Alnwick had played a more prominent role in the history of 20th century popular music.

- ## Quiz Answers
- A) Stott Street (1904-1909)
  - B) King Street (1897-1905)
  - C) Duke Street & Bridge Street (1884-1907)
  - D) Sawmill Estate / Gas Works on South street (c1902)
  - E) Alnmouth Road: Summerhill to Oaklands (1874-1906)
  - F) Seaview terrace: between York Cres and Augur Terrace (1898)
  - G) Augur Flats (1912)
  - H) Swansfield Park road: eastern part (North side 1897-1903)