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Our first responsibility is to look after each other. Our normal activities have been suspended until further notice and none of us is going to enjoy a period of isolation. So in the short-term we will be making an extra effort to stay in touch with members and the wider community.

As a campaigning organisation we acknowledge that our area of interest is not going to be a Government priority for the foreseeable future. But once this is all over we intend to continue making waves. So we have put things in place to ensure the work of the society can continue, and we will be trying to move forward on some key actions. If you have time on your hands and would like to help please let us know.

Above all, take care and stay safe.



Annual General Meeting

Unfortunately it was necessary to postpone our AGM to reduce social contact during the Corona-19 epidemic. The executive committee subsequently took a number of decisions to ensure that the society can continue to operate effectively. Meetings of the committee will be held online until we are able to meet again in person.

Treasurers Report

Gill Parker reported that income of £651 and expenditure of £501 on the society's general accounts during 2019 meant that income had exceeded expenditure by £150. The separate treasurer's account used mainly for SAHH distribution had shown expenditure of £201.60. At the end of 2019 the balance across the Current, Deposit and Treasurer's Account totalled £3,051.05.

At the end of 2019 the society had a membership of 65.

Our thanks to John Jones, for his independent oversight of the books.

Chair's report

David Lovie was unable to deliver the review of 2019, but passed on his thanks to all of the Committee for their hard work and commitment to the Civic Society. David was acting chair for the bulk of 2019. He took over from Peter Ennor, and this review is a tribute to the contribution both made to taking the society forward. It highlights three aspects of our work:

Firstly the effort that goes on - through the year - to better the town, conserve its special character, and press for higher standards in new developments. This is a good place to start because it represents the bulk of the effort, and much goes unrecognised.

Members of the Society have participated with others in initiatives to clean up litter and to repaint street furniture. We have removed obsolete notices, and reported problems with signage. Gill Parker and Trish Jones were recognised in 2019 with a Community Award for their sustained efforts to maintain Column Field.

In 2019 we have commented on dozens of planning applications. To pick out a few - we were pleased with the inspectors' decision on Willowburn, but disappointed with their decision on Windy Edge. We welcomed the initial rejection of development on Stoney Hills, but of course that has unfortunately been overturned. Some controversial proposals, such as the Duke's School, are still undecided. We believe conservation and planning enforcement are under-resourced, and we don't believe

that the system is delivering the promise on localism. We don't always get the outcome we would like. But that doesn't mean we have no impact, and it's not an excuse for giving up. One way to tell that we are influencing the debate is that others have started to use language and

phrases that we introduced. Look out, particularly, for comments on retrospective applications that have started to follow us in describing these as being "disrespectful" to the people of Alnwick.

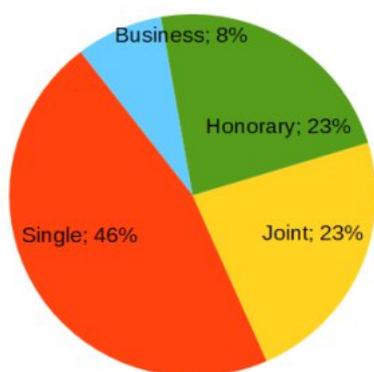
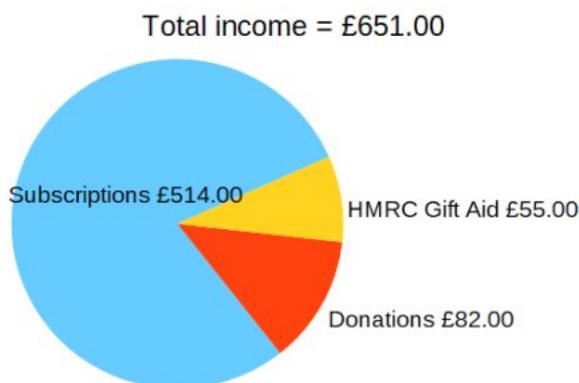
Secondly, it's important to acknowledge the progress we have made in working with other bodies in the town. At last year's AGM Bill Batey reminded us of some of the ways that the society has worked with different forms of Local Government

over his career. As well as the Town Council the Society has long-standing relationships with bodies such as Alnwick in Bloom, the former Town Team, Sustainable Travel Advisory Group, and others. It's worth recalling some of the ways that these partnerships have helped our cause in 2019.

- Following Peter Ennor's report to the Town Council on the history of the Cobbles we were invited to participate in discussions on the way forward
- We were asked by the Town Team to carry out an initial Clutter Survey that we hope will help to frame an improvement plan for the Town Centre
- Our work on the Sustainable Travel Advisory Group is helping to inform thinking on the Cycling infrastructure, Safer travel to school, and Public Transport
- By partnering with Friends of the Earth and the Duchess Community High School for the Any Questions event in November we helped to further the debate around heritage in a changing climate, broaden involvement in the issues, and spawn further initiatives.

Underlying these achievements there has also been the concern that little progress is being made on the Community Actions in the Neighbourhood Plan - and growing frustration that efforts by different bodies were fragmenting. In response, throughout 2019, David Lovie worked closely with the Town Council and with other bodies in the town to help establish the new Alnwick Partnership. It's a tribute to his efforts that the Society is now one of the few bodies in the town with a seat on the Partnership. We are well placed to help shape developments in 2020.

And **thirdly** we can applaud our own achievements in celebrating our heritage and our fine town. We learned about the wider history of the region with a summer outing and talk by Jessica Turner on the Bowl Hole Ossuary and the court of King Oswald at Bamburgh. We led several guided walks round Alnwick: most memorably for groups of local youngsters and their French exchange students. We increased our profile with the local press and gained positive coverage for our Christmas Shop Competition. Our Heritage Heroes project gained national recognition from the Association



AGM (continued)

for Heritage Interpretation (as runner-up in the Community Project Award) and we were invited to present the project in support of fundraising for the Hindmarsh Hall in Alnmouth. Our Newsletter continues to be well-received, thanks to a wider range of contributors over the last year. In 2019 we revamped our web site and increased our activity on social media, but this is an area where progress last year already pales into insignificance compared to what is happening in 2020.

Towards the end of 2019 we welcomed a significant number of new members to the society – including a number of student members. That's good news. The average age of a Civic Society member is a year younger than it was in 2018. More importantly, new members are bringing new ideas, and new energy. We have greater capacity to continue our work in 2020. Larger membership numbers mean we speak with more authority, and earn credibility with other bodies in the town. But those are potential benefits that we hope to cover in next year's review.

Finally, on behalf of David, we record thanks to committee members in 2019: Gill Parker – an extraordinary speaker finder, who also keeps track of the money as treasurer, Sue Smith for organising the work of the committee as secretary, Mary McIlroy Hipwell for leading our responses to planning applications, Peter Ennor, Elizabeth Jones and John Hipwell for bringing their breadth of experience, and wise counsel.

And, on behalf of colleagues on the committee, we thank David Lovie for leading us through another successful year. We are pleased that he will remain on the committee

Coronavirus and the Civic Society

Our first responsibility is to look after each other: especially those who fall ill, have to self-isolate, are in vulnerable groups, or need to look after loved ones. We have therefore given some thought to how the society might support the wider community during the current emergency. There are already several mutual support initiatives under way in Alnwick. Local organisers know that they can call on the resources of the Civic Society where they see a need. However, at present we believe that the best approach is for individual members to offer support wherever they can. If you are able and willing to support those beyond your immediate family and neighbours then in Alnwick we encourage you to email the mutual support group led by Alnwick Town Council, and others: Covid-19 Mutual Aid on covida.alnwick@gmail.com

As a campaigning organisation we must acknowledge that our area of

interest is not going to be a Government priority for the foreseeable future. So we need to strike a balance between continuing with business as usual, and acknowledging that this far from a normal situation.

We all must comply with guidance on social distancing so our normal activities have been suspended until further notice. Nevertheless we have put things in place to ensure the work of the society can continue and for now we have three priorities:

- Until things return to normal we will have a particularly important role in scrutinizing planning activity and ensuring that democratic oversight of the planning system continues.
- None of us are looking forward to a long period of isolation so while restrictions are in place we will make an extra effort to stay in touch with members and the wider community

in 2020 to share the challenge of building on the foundations that he and Peter Ennor have put in place.

Election of officers

Nominations were received for Mary McIlroy Hipwell, and Peter Reed who agreed to act together as joint chair for 2020. Gill Parker was nominated as Treasurer, and Sue Smith as secretary, and both agreed to serve for another year.

Committee members

David Lovie agreed to remain on the committee in 2020. Elizabeth Jones and John Hipwell both stood down as committee members. They will be missed, and we thank them for their contribution to the society over the years. The committee agreed to co-opt two new committee members. Peter Burns has been raising our profile on social media and has agreed to build on this and help us to engage more effectively with the wider community. Unfortunately we missed Ian Hall's talk at the AGM, but he has been contributing to the newsletter, and has agreed to help the society develop a local list of assets that need protection. We see this as a core activity that will be needed to underpin our efforts to progress the Neighbourhood Plan.

Heiferlaw Zero-Station

There was considerable interest in Ian Hall's promised talk on Heiferlaw Zero Station, so we will be re-arranging this at a future date.



through all the communication channels that remain open.

- We had an ambitious programme of work planned for 2020 but it will not be practical to move everything forward. Instead we have identified a few areas where progress can be made by members who find they have more time on their hands than expected.

This situation will not last forever. In the short-term we will be staying in contact, maintaining the profile of the society, and making progress on some key actions. Once this is all over we intend to continue making waves.

If you would like to help please let us know.

Above all, take care and stay safe.

Our survey on traditional windows found a range of views

We found:

- Agreement that the appearance of traditional windows should be maintained
- Agreement that climate change is a consideration but different views on what that means
- Reservations about the Historic England position on repair vs. replacement
- Support for objecting selectively to proposed window replacements

Our sample was small, but knowledgeable. All respondents were members of the Civic Society, most live in Alnwick, feel that they are well-informed about the issues, and know how to access help and advice. A significant minority said they had studied the issues, and one had professional expertise. 75% have organized work on their own windows.

A major threat

Some disagree strongly, but two out of three agree that "The loss of traditional windows from our older buildings poses one of the major threats to our heritage".

Those who disagree give different reasons:

- "Climate change is a greater threat than anything. Old buildings are a huge source of heat loss through windows. uPVC is very similar nowadays"
- "If you cannot tell they have been replaced there is no loss"

Almost every respondent agreed that, in Alnwick, traditional windows contribute to the character of the town, inappropriate windows affect the appearance of individual buildings, and loss of traditional windows poses a threat to the conservation area.

Respondents feel most strongly about the effect of inappropriate windows on individual buildings. While they believe ease of maintenance and improved energy efficiency will add value to an historic building in the conserva-

tion area, they expect retention of original features to have the biggest effect on value.

Repair or replace?

Most would prefer that historic windows are repaired rather than replaced, and feel that they are often replaced unnecessarily. However, few agree with Historic England that historic windows are irreplaceable. It's possible that people interpret the term "historic" differently - but there also seems to be widespread acceptance of well-matched replacements.

Climate change

Respondents tend to agree that the thermal performance of traditional windows can be improved without replacement, but they also feel that climate change justifies a change of approach to conservation.

- "The importance of keeping valued buildings in viable use may well make careful replacement of windows acceptable"

Views differ, though, on how climate change / energy efficiency will affect decision-taking.

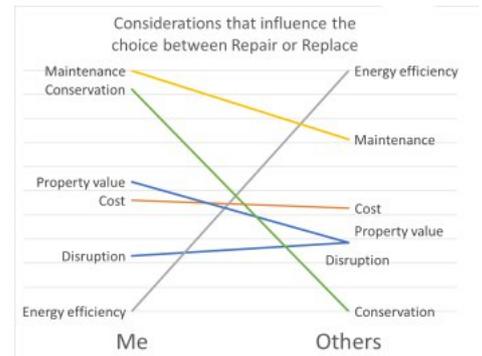
- "There is an inherent paradox of councils stopping you having uPVC windows and saying that Climate Change is an emergency"

We asked what considerations would affect the choice between repair and replacement of traditional sash windows. Respondents ranked maintenance and conservation as the most important considerations for them, and energy efficiency as the least.

- "Cannot be specific BUT rotten, poor old windows look worse than high quality replacements"
- "As we get older, the idea of spending all summer repainting wooden windows (been there, done that) is just not on.."
- "Neglected rotten traditional windows can be worse than modern material thermally efficient traditional design replacement. Inappropriate replacement designs are worse".

However, this is in sharp contrast to how they believe others rank these - with energy efficiency as the most important, and conservation principles as least important.

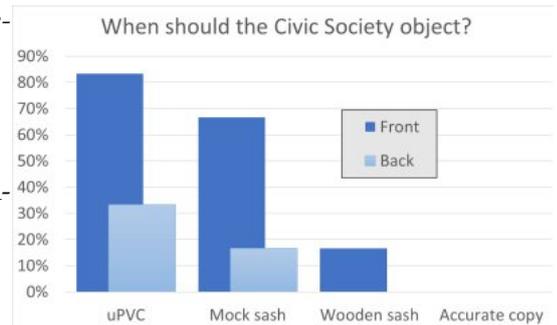
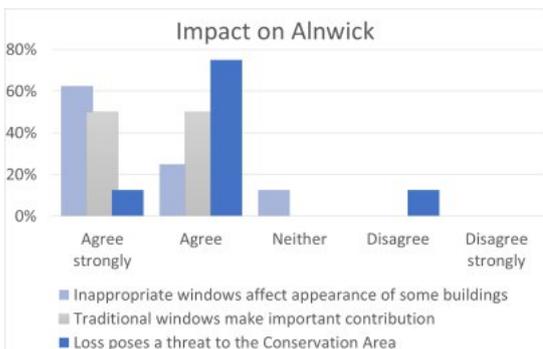
When to object?



Historic England recommends that historic windows should be repaired if possible. If they are beyond repair they might be replaced with accurate copies. We asked respondents to consider several different cases, and judge when they thought the Civic Society should object. Most would object to poor copies on a listed building in the conservation area, but they had little issue with accurate copies. Few would object where replacements were not visible from the street – even if the replacements were in uPVC.

- "Windows at the back may be visible in important ways from the public realm, in which case they should affect ACS decision whether to object in the same way as windows at the front"
- "Object where inappropriate window designs are being replaced with inappropriate window designs. It's an opportunity to improve and reinstate the original styles"
- "It depends how good a clone in UPVC is installed. Ours are fine, in our view".

This suggests that the consensus among members is shifting. Should we be challenging that shift, or should we be adapting to it? And who is to assess the accuracy of a replacement?



Putting Northumberland on the map

In the Civic Society we make a lot of use of maps, both historic and modern. They provide a picture of how our town looked at specific times and show how things have changed. In Britain, we are fortunate in having the Ordnance Survey, probably the finest mapping agency in the world. The OS has been creating and updating the maps of Britain for over 200 years, with its military roots maintained in the 'ordnance' title. Today, most of the OS's work is done from the air by aeroplane. But it was not always so. In the past there were teams of surveyors walking the landscape, measuring and recording. And the tell-tale signs of their work are still there to be seen if we take the time to look.

In making maps, the surveyors are generally doing two separate things; horizontally they fix the location of places in relation to each other; and vertically they measure the relative height, or elevation, of these same places.

The location of a place is done by a process called triangulation, where the landscape is divided up into a series of triangles. One side of the very first triangle is measured very accurately, a very difficult and time-consuming job. From then onwards it is a matter of trigonometry to determine all the other distances. Britain was first 'triangulated' between 1784 and 1853.

The difficulties of the process shouldn't be underestimated. The theodolites that were used were massive, weighing up to 200 pounds and the surveyors often had to spend many weeks at one spot in order to get accurate readings.

The triangulation process was repeated in the 20th century, starting in 1935, with a break for the war. For this retriangulation, each major survey point was marked using a concrete 'trig point', or triangulation pillar. We can see many of these in the landscape today. The pillar we see is just the tip of a much more massive structure which exists below ground. At the base there is a primary location point which is fixed to the bedrock. This can be many feet below ground level. The pillar is built above this, but unconnected to the lower point, with the intention being that even if the pillar was totally destroyed, the location could still be retrieved. On the top of the pillar there is a three-armed



metal 'spider' (left) which was used to support and locate the theodolite.

On the side of each triangulation station there is a Flush Bracket Bench Mark (FBBM). This is part of the system for determining the relative heights of locations, a

process called levelling. Levelling was first done nationally during the 19th century, a process known as the First Geodetic Levelling. We can still see signs of this early levelling in the stone-cut bench marks on various buildings and other structures around our town. Many of these have a central metal 'bolt' which provided more accurate positioning for the surveyor (right).

The process was repeated, more accurately, in the 20th century in the Second and Third Geodetic Levelling. For this, a new point of zero height was defined as the Mean Sea Level at Newlyn, in Cornwall. Called the Ordnance Datum Newlyn (ODN), it forms the basis of all height measurement in Great Britain. From the ODN a network of about 200 Fundamental Bench Marks was established, with each having its elevation measured to a very high degree of accuracy. In Northumberland there are three



of these Fundamental Bench Marks, at Hexham, Longhorsley and Belford. They are still maintained as part of the national levelling system and can all be visited. The one at Belford (left) is on the side road to Swinhoe Farm, just to the north of Belford, sitting inside a set of railings. Its height is marked as 236.88 feet above Newlyn. As with the trig points, what we can see above the surface is only a small part – there is a bigger structure below ground which goes

down to the underlying rock.

Along lines between Fundamental Points, more levelling was carried out. The 19th century stone cut benchmarks were replaced with a more robust metal mark - the FBBM which, as well as being on the side of the triangulation pillars, can be found around our towns, passed by every day, but generally unnoticed.



Each is uniquely identified and provides a stable position for measuring levels around the locality, the surveyor using the step at the top of the arrow as his level point, with the holes above being used to properly locate his staff. There are two FBBMs within Alnwick. One in the Market place by Chisholms (left), and the other on the Willowburn Bridge.

With maps now being updated by aerial photography and satellite images, the old network of triangulation pillars and benchmarks has fallen into disuse and most elements are no longer maintained. But they endure and provide a fascinating, though much overlooked, glimpse into what were massive surveying exercises. As you find one of these hidden pieces of history, give a thought to the many surveyors who worked, often for decades, on this long-forgotten national project.

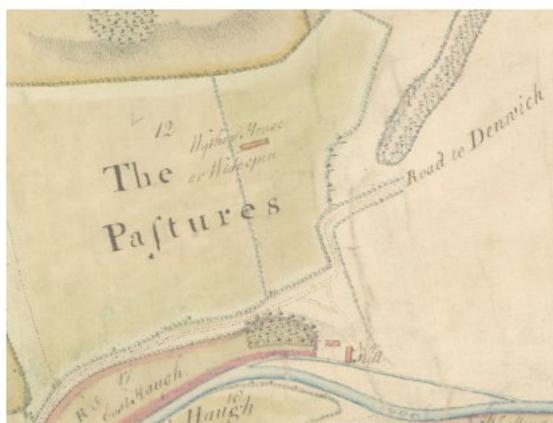
Works at Denwick Upper Weir

Travelling along Denwick lane it's apparent that work is under way just above Denwick Bridge. This is part of an initiative by Northumberland Rivers Trust to improve fish and eel passage at five sites on the River Aln in conjunction with Northumberland Estates. Next to Denwick Bridge an existing fish pass is being replaced, and a resting pool and a new eel pass are being added. The work is necessary under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act and the Eel Regulations because the weir forms a barrier to migrating species, the existing passes do not work for all species in all conditions, and they are prone to blockages.



The history behind these weirs and fish passes goes back at least 250 years. Perhaps before 1750, when the 1st Duke of Northumberland started to alter his castle grounds (helped by his head gardener, Thomas Call, and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown).

North of the river they removed field boundaries, and carefully positioned clumps of trees, to create a naturalistic parkland in the fashionable style. At first the Duke also wanted an artificial lake. They engaged canal builder, James Brindley to advise. Brindley made his reputation by building canals to transport coal to Manchester for the Duke of Bridgewater.



To create an expanse of water for the Duke, Brindley advised introducing a series of cascades to alter and slow the flow of the river. From the castle this would look much like a lake. From the other side of the river they could create a ride, from which the newly restored castle and the surrounding landscape would be reflected in the river.

It isn't certain when this work was carried out, but the cascades seem to have been constructed in the late 1750's. They were damaged in the Great Flood of 1771 then rebuilt in 1772 as the weirs we see today. Any earlier structures would have been destroyed by the great flood. So it's reasonable to assume that the fish pass that is now being replaced was originally added at the same time as the weir (i.e. about 1772).

The fish pass next to Denwick Bridge lies at the upper end of an ancient stone channel that runs under Denwick Lane, and then along the north bank before rejoining the river further downstream. The channel predates the fish pass, and archaeologists have speculated that it is a repurposed mill leat, which could have medieval origins. The current works only affect the top end of this

channel. The image below shows the channel just before it disappears under the road. It was taken from a position roughly where the mill appears on the 1760 map (north of the channel, west of the road).

Denwick New Mill (also known as Wythope Mill or Gothic Mill) was constructed in this area, following the great flood of 1770. It was described by Tate:

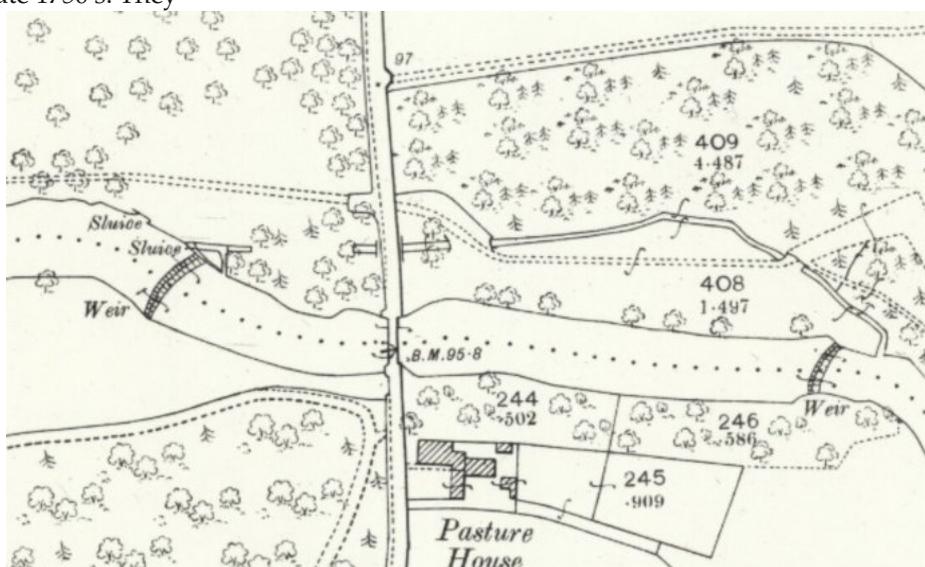


"The Wythope Mill at this time was rebuilt, on an enlarged scale, in an imitative Gothic style. It was a picturesque object, seen from Denwick Bridge; and its removal in 1839 was regretted by many who had often lingered on the bridge listening to the clack, and enjoying one of the finest views of the castle and of the vale of the Aln".

The older mill that appears here on the 1760 estate plans is also called "New Mill" and the opposite bank of the river is labelled "New Mill Haugh". So the "Gothic" new mill replaced an earlier "new" mill in the same location. At one time that earlier mill must also have been regarded as "new". The implication being that it replaced an even earlier mill. Perhaps one day we will be able to trace the history even further back.

This summary draws on an interesting Archaeology Report that was submitted with the original planning application for Construction of five new fish and eel passes at weirs on the river Aln. (19/01807/FUL).

The Ordnance Survey map of 1897 (below) shows the weir, fish pass and channel



Planning matters

There is a proposal for development of seven dwellings in Denwick, with a bypass around the north of the village. We commented, to say that we have no objection to the development, but find the road layout could be improved. There will be a protected right turn into the cul de sac village when approaching from the A1 and Alnwick but this is immediately followed by an unprotected right turn into the much busier Ratcleugh/Longhoughton road. This is counter-intuitive and could create an accident risk as people leave the high speeds of the A1, village speed limits notwithstanding, attuned to the faster speeds. An agreement to provide protection at the latter turn should be a condition of any consent.

Approval has been given for construction of a hotel on Willowburn Trading Estate. We disagreed with a statement that there is an "excess of employment land within the area", objected to the design and use of non-sustainable building materials, and requested more clarity on the proposed use of the remainder of the site. The NPPF sets out that development should only be refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or severe impact on the road network, and highways viewed this development as acceptable. Planners acknowledged that this development doesn't reflect traditional industrial employment use, but it will enable a more flexible approach than before. The response to comments on the design was that this was influenced by historic buildings in the town centre (notably Northumberland Hall); incorporates more natural materials, and represents a positive improvement over the current utilitarian, industrial nature of the site. We won't comment on that, but will admit that the development adds to the overall quality of this abandoned industrial site. We don't think that is the low standard we should be applying for development on the outskirts of Alnwick.

In January we regretted that approval had not been sought for changes to the ramp and railings at the Playhouse. While we had no major issues with the design, we felt the authorities were setting a bad example to others. Having raised the issue in the appropriate quarters we were pleased to see that a retrospective application has now been submitted.

An application has been made for modifications at 24, Fenkle Street / 7, Narrowgate (the former Doc's Bar). The building is Grade-II listed, but its unremarkable appearance is reflected in the rather weak justification for the listing: "included for group value". This development makes no external impact, and little internal impact - so we decided not to comment. However, it caused us to look into the history of the building. This was an ironmongers in the 19th century (Hindmarsh, then Purvis, then Thomson & Wright). In 1930 it became the headquarters of the Public Assistance Committee for Northumberland North Area 2 (which covered Alnwick Urban District, Alnwick



Rural District, Amble, and Rothbury). The 22 members of the committee met here to examine applications for relief and decide the amounts to be given.

Perhaps this part of the history explains some of the internal features of the building. To qualify for dole, an applicant had to undergo the means test - an intrusive, and often insensitive, investigation into the family's income and savings. Initially this system of relief depended on funding from local ratepayers, but in the Great Depression national government started to play a more important role as the system was overwhelmed by rising unemployment. Millions were relying on local ratepayers, who were themselves under financial pressure. The Unemployment Act of 1934 introduced a central government Unemployment Assistance Board, then the National Assistance Act of 1948 founded the National Assistance Board, and national insurance contributions.



A decision on the Duke's school is imminent and plans have been amended. We have already commented on the scale and design of the elderly accommodation, parking spaces, road access and public use of the remaining green space. Our concerns are not addressed by the amendments.

Changes to the external appearance of the former Glendale Paints shop seem to have been carried out without planning consent. In view of the current economic difficulties, it was agreed that enforcement action would not be sought at the present time but could be sought in the future.

Despite the government's expressed commitment to localism the inspector permitted the residential development on Stoney Hills. This over-turned the decision by the planning committee, and local objections. We have drawn the attention of our MP to this inconsistency, and emphasised the importance of respecting the Neighbourhood Plan.

At Rainbow Day Nursery on Northumberland Street we would like to see replacement planting to compensate for removal of 16 conifers.

We saw no reason to comment on a proposal to construct a building for the storage and maintenance of railway carriages and wagons at Aln Valley Railway, a retrospective application for construction of a wooden shed on Walker-gate, or an application to remove a sycamore tree that is causing damage to a wall at Alnwick Youth Hostel, on Green Batt.

We noted an application to reconfigure units at the new retail park south of Greensfield Industrial Estate. We continue to be concerned about the effects of the new retail park on the viability of shops in the town centre, and fear that such reconfiguration will increase the risk of direct competition.

Alnwick Fever Hospital

The need to isolate those with a contagious disease has long been understood, and “pest houses” or “plague houses” date back to the 1400s. In response to the Great Plague of 1665 Charles-II stipulated that every parish must identify a house for isolation of those with the “pestilence”. Specialist isolation hospitals were introduced in London in the late 18th century, and elsewhere in the 19th century. However, most contagious diseases have always been treated at home.

Alnwick Dispensary was established in 1815, and had become an infirmary in 1849. Alnwick Union Workhouse was built on Wagonway Road in 1841, with a hospital at the eastern end of the site. It is well-known that Alnwick dealt with a serious outbreak of Cholera in 1849. We begin the story of Alnwick’s Fever Hospital a generation later, in the late 1860s. Back then some in Alnwick who caught a contagious disease might be treated on a charitable basis: in either the infirmary, or in the workhouse. Most would organise their own treatment and care at home.

At that time, in Alnwick, the idea of establishing a separate Fever Hospital was controversial. Some felt that the infirmary provided all the care necessary. Some were concerned that the resources needed to build and run a Fever Hospital would divert medical staff, and donations away from other causes. However, the greatest anxiety was that a Fever Hospital in Alnwick would attract infection into town. People feared that, during an epidemic, patients with contagious diseases would arrive in Alnwick from the surrounding countryside and become a burden on the town. The doctors and other medical staff who treated them would spread the infection to their other patients. Trade would suffer as people from surrounding areas stayed away to avoid the the risk of becoming infected themselves.

In 1871 the Infirmary was both dispensing medication and treating infectious diseases. There was a recognition that having these two functions in one building was not ideal when people ought to be isolated. However, the combination reflected the original charitable purpose. Governors were divided on how best to proceed, and they rejected the proposal to establish a separate Fever Hospital by small majority on a vote of 22:17.

As time went on, various alternatives were considered. One way of isolating infection was to acquire a temporary “Iron Hospital”. Currogated iron structures, such as this, could be erected quickly, retained for long enough to deal with an epidemic, then removed when they were no longer necessary. That idea was rejected on the basis that it was impractical. The suppliers of such hospitals were in London – too far away.

The next important change was that the Public Health Act of 1875 allowed a local authority to establish a Fever Hospital. In 1877 the Rural Sanitary Authority suggested to the Alnwick Board of Health that they join forces to do this. They were rebuffed. In 1880 an independent

committee advised that Alnwick needed to make some provision for isolating contagious diseases, but found it impractical to introduce a fever ward within the existing infirmary. Nothing was done.

Then in 1885, there was an event that helped to shift opinion. A railway navvy working on the Alnwick / Cornhill branch at Edlingham was diagnosed with Scarlet Fever. There was nowhere to isolate him. No Fever Hospital had been established, and there was no fever ward in the Alnwick Infirmary. He had to be accomodated in Alnwick Workhouse – where he could not be isolated.



It was clear that failing to make provision would not keep infection away from Alnwick. Within 18 months a site for a fever hospital had been identified, in a field off the Wagonway. The Duke agreed to provide the land, and the necessary approvals were obtained from the Medical Officer of Health, Local Government Board and Government Inspector.

The site was reasonably accessible from the town, but not close to the housing that existed at the time. Nevertheless, over 100 inhabitants of Duke Street, East and West Parade signed a petition objecting to the location. The objectors lived close to an existing hospital at the workhouse, and an Auction Mart. They were a similar distance from the Gas Works. The petitioners were not influential – only half were ratepayers. Similar objections were clearly going to arise, whatever site was chosen. So in September 1886 it



Alnwick Fever Hospital (continued)

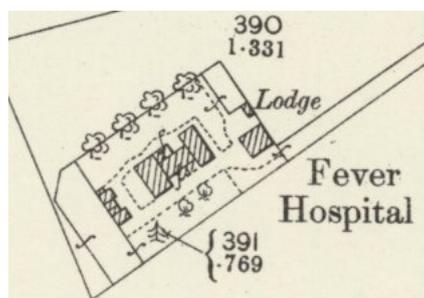
was decided to proceed. Plans were drawn up, and funding obtained in the form of a loan of £1,050. The Fever Hospital was ready to be occupied in 1888.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1897 (previous page) shows the fever hospital at some distance from Bridge Street, and other housing on Wagonway Road, but new development on Swansfield Park Road is already marked out, and would bring housing closer.

By 1938, when the Ordnance Survey updated the map (above), housing was starting to surround the fever hospital. Alnwick County Secondary School (later Lindisfarne Middle School) had been built alongside, and would open in 1939. Fears of contagion must have diminished.

This picture shows the Fever Hospital in 1932. St George's housing is to the left and Wagonway Road above. We know there were two wards, and half a dozen beds (including cots for children). The Ordnance Survey plans show the general layout. It included a lodge to help keep the contagious patients separated from the general public.

Nationally, the Local Government Board was developing standard model plans for isolation hospitals in different types of town. We know from these that rural isolation hospitals were typically small, and attractively laid out like detached villas. This was in contrast to those in larger conurbations which tended to have parallel rows of detached wards, described as "pavilions" and designed to allow free movement of air. Similar plans suggested by the Local Government Board show a small building for four patients, with central accommodation for nurses over two floors, and two single-storey wards, each with a large verandah. They include a detached laundry and mortuary.



Over time, facilities were improved, but the Fever Hospital seems to have provided enough capacity to meet the usual level of need. We don't have a complete record, but in a year when the

medical officer recorded that they wanted to isolate some patients they typically transferred between half-a-dozen and a dozen cases to the Fever Hospital. The highest number we have found was in 1925 when the hospital handled 22 patients.



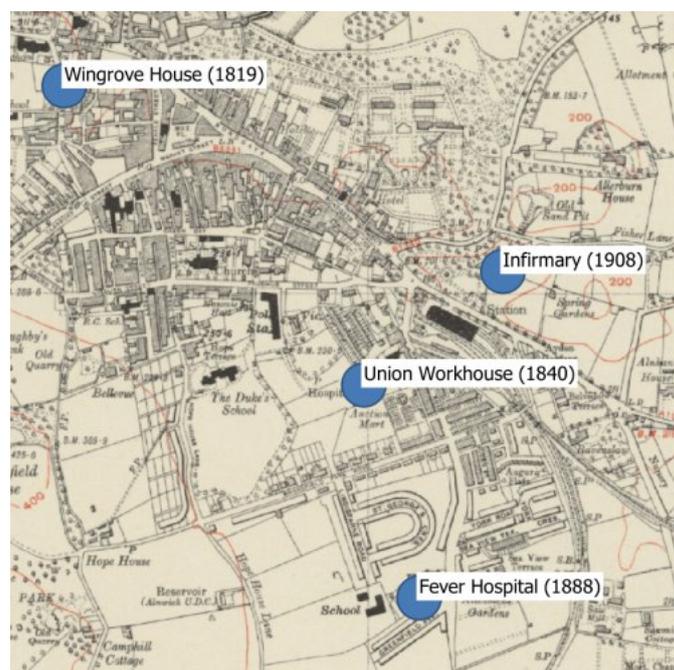
In some years the Medical officer records a small number of patients suffering from Tuberculosis or Smallpox being transferred elsewhere. The patients at the Fever Hospital were mostly suffering from Scarlet Fever (two-thirds) or Diphtheria (one-third). Exceptions included two children in 1899 who were simply "removed from a damp and otherwise insanitary room", one case of Puerperal Fever in 1937, and one of Vincent Angina (trench mouth) in 1943.

The Medical Officer of Health occasionally complained about the facilities, but rarely about capacity. One example was in 1908, when the hospital was fully occupied dealing with Diphtheria. There had been no serious outbreak of Scarlet Fever for almost a decade, and the Medical Officer of Health was expecting one. If that happened he was not confident that he could isolate sufficient patients. After he wrote his report two patients were admitted for Diphtheria then developed symptoms of Scarlet Fever. They had to be

isolated in one ward, while the ordinary Diphtheria patients occupied the other. In effect the hospital was closed to further cases. All the subsequent Scarlet Fever patients had to be isolated at home.

The use of isolation hospitals declined in the 1940s as antibiotics were increasingly used to treat infectious diseases.

The last patient was admitted to Alnwick Fever Hospital in 1952. After that it was no longer needed. The site was transferred to the Education Board, and used for the extensions to Lindisfarne School in 1959. The Sports Hall now stands where the Fever Hospital once was.



News in Brief

Alnwick Town Council has set up a Covid-19 Mutual Aid group to co-ordinate help for those who are isolated. If you can volunteer, need support, or know someone who needs support the group can be contacted by email: covida.alnwick@gmail.com.

Delivering the diverse basket of projects identified in the Neighbourhood Plan has proved difficult since the plan was adopted in 2016. So the Town Council has established the Alnwick Partnership to:

- Link and engage interested groups from the public, business and voluntary sector to facilitate the delivery of projects at a local level.
- Establish links to the existing public sector hierarchy to access funding and legitimise project delivery.
- Provide sufficient financial support to initiate projects.
- Improve connectivity between projects and future proposals to ensure a more holistic approach is taken to the improvement of the town.

The Partnership acts as an overview group for five advisory groups:

- Sustainable Travel.

- Retail & Town Centre.
- Housing, Economy & Employment.
- Environment.
- Heritage & Design.

This is an important initiative and we are proud to be asked to participate.

Our attempts to improve attendance at our public meetings have been scuppered but we have made more progress on social media. We know this doesn't appeal to all, and our newsletter will continue. However social media help us to reach beyond our current membership to the wider Alnwick community and others in the Civic Movement. At a time when face-to-face contact is limited, they help us stay in regular contact. So you may want to look at what the society is doing on Facebook, Twitter and our web site. Join in any of the discussions: your contributions are very welcome.

It was good to hear that a new operator has been found for Alnwick Market. Members will want to thank the previous team for ensuring that the market has continued to play an important role in the life of the town and we hope all

will continue to support the market when it re-opens.



We asked our followers on social media about the reasons why they value a thriving local market. We are sure they see all the options as important, but as **most** important they chose (1) the contribution a local market makes to a sustainable local supply chain; and (2) the role that a local market plays in attracting footfall to the town centre. In joint third place were: • providing affordable choice, and • the opportunities that a local market provides for employment and business incubation.

Mary George has undertaken extensive research into how the 1849 cholera outbreak affected families in Alnwick. So it was particularly poignant when Covid-19 restrictions forced postponement of the ceremony at St Michael's church to dedicate this memorial to the 136 who died.



Coronavirus and the planning process

"It is essential for the proper operation of the planning system that local concerns are adequately ventilated. The most effective and suitable way that this can be done is through the local elected representatives, the councillors themselves". Report of the Committee on standards in public life, Lord Nolan, 1997

The planning system must balance private interests in development against the wider public interest. Opposing views are often strongly held by those involved. So decisions must be made openly, with no grounds for anyone to suggest that the process was improper. Councillors and officers have different roles:

- Officers are responsible to the council – they provide advice and carry out the work. Their reports summarise consultation responses and give their assessment of how a development satisfies the relevant policies. They make a recommendation and explain their reasoning.
- Councillors are responsible to their constituents. They all have a responsibility

to engage with the community and help constituents engage with the planning system. Those on the planning committee are expected to take account of all the arguments, and balance national and local policies.

A planning committee will often take a decision which is different from the officer recommendation. Sometimes this will alter the way that the impact of the development will be mitigated (Section 106 agreements, or "developer contributions"). Sometimes councillors and officers will weigh the considerations differently, and sometimes they will come to different conclusions on whether a policy has been complied with or not. This can change the outcome: from approval to refusal or vice versa.

Officers deal with straightforward planning applications through delegated authority. Last year Northumberland handled 93% of applications this way. It allows the planning committee to spend time on a smaller number of strategic or controversial applications.

Legislation currently requires members of the planning committee to be physically present at the relevant meeting. Suppose the council opted to maintain social distancing by holding these as virtual meetings during the current restrictions. In that case their decisions would have no legal authority. However, the Coronavirus Act received Royal Assent on Wednesday 25th March. It allows the Secretary of State to issue regulations which could enable virtual planning meetings.

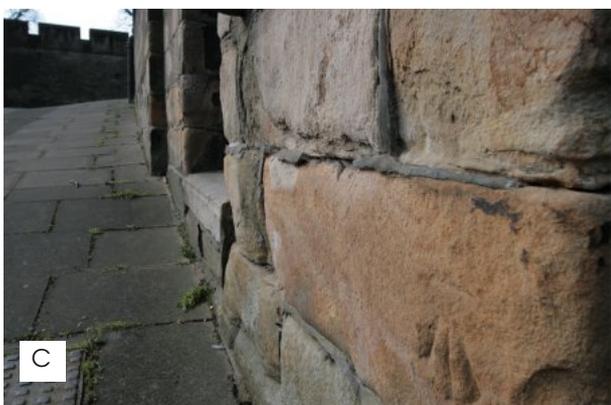
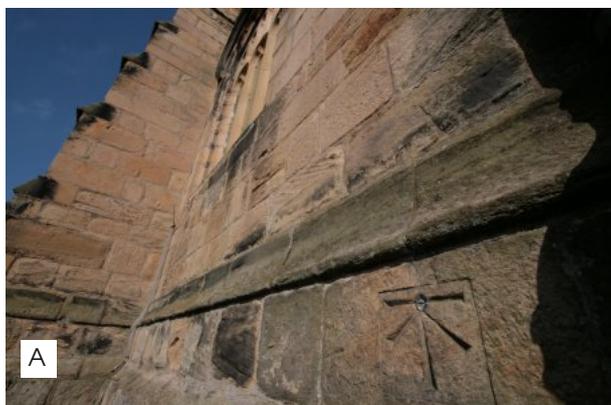
We understand that other councils are considering deferring planning decisions, or delegating all planning decisions to officers. We would not want to see that happen here. Feelings are running high on significant proposals such as the development of the Duke's School. So hopefully the Secretary of State will issue suitable regulations soon, that will permit planning committees in Northumberland to continue playing their part, and ensure that the wider public interest continues to be represented.

Quiz: A question of altitude

The Ordnance Survey introduced Bench Marks to record the height above sea level. The first was cut by 1831, but none has been cut since the 1990s. Now that satellites can measure altitude quickly and accurately the Ordnance Survey no longer need the whole network. However, around 190 Fundamental Bench Marks are still used to

correct satellite data. The nearest of these are at Hexham, Belford and Longhorsley. The other 500,000 (or so) Bench Marks are no longer maintained but can still be found across Britain (see page 5).

There are still a couple of hundred around Alnwick. Here are eight of them. Do you recognise these locations?



Diary dates

Our events are postponed until further notice. For updates please follow us on Twitter: [@AlnwickCivicSoc](https://twitter.com/AlnwickCivicSoc), Facebook: [AlnwickCivicSociety](https://www.facebook.com/AlnwickCivicSociety), Instagram: [alnwickcivicsociety](https://www.instagram.com/alnwickcivicsociety) or see our web site: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.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.



Are you looking for new places to exercise, away from others?

At the time of writing we are required to limit our day-to-day contact with others in order to reduce the spread of infection. That means we must stay at home, except for very limited purposes. We can only leave the house for four reasons, one of which is to exercise.

Anyone taking regular exercise and wanting to maintain social distance may want to reduce risk by exploring beyond the well-known paths. We have a right to use public rights of way: footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. On a footpath we can go on foot, and take a dog - providing it is kept under control. We may take a wheelchair, although often the surfaces are too soft or uneven to allow this. On a bridleway we have the same rights as on a footpath, but horses and bicycles can also be used. A byway open to all traffic can be used by anyone, including those in mechanically propelled vehicles. A restricted byway excludes the use of mechanically propelled vehicles.

On our web site we are suggesting some historic walks and paths. You can find public rights of way around Alnwick on the map published by Northumberland County Council.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/About/Maps/Public-rights-of-way.aspx>

Guidance on COVID-19 may have changed by the time you read this. Please check the current situation before setting out.

Who's Who?

President: Philip Deakin

Joint Chairs: Mary McIlroy Hipwell and Peter Reed

Treasurer and Membership: Gill Parker

Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith

Other Executive Committee members:

- Peter Burns
- Peter Ennor
- Ian Hall
- David Lovie

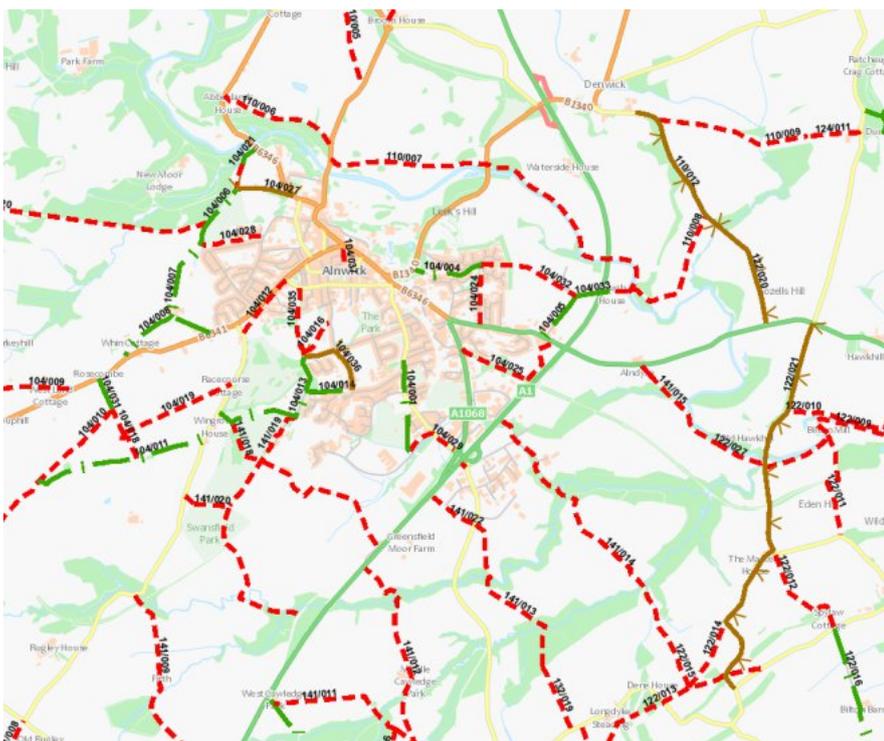
Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Email: alnwickcivicsoc@gmail.com

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

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



Quiz Answers

- A) St Michael's Church Tower
- B) Junction of Lisburn Street and Percy Terrace
- C) Junction of Bailiffgate and the Peth
- D) St Michael's Pant / Market Street
- E) Northumberland Hall and Market Place
- F) Former Savings Bank / Clock Shop at foot of Fenkle Street
- G) Town Hall and passage to Market Place
- H) Pottergate Tower and St James