

November 2024



"The best preserved and probably the earliest Carmelite friary in England"

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For your diary:

Alnwick Mechanics' Institute: 200th anniversary

19th Nov: Mechanics' Institute, Percy Street. Doors open at 6:30p.m., with an opportunity to explore the building, followed by talk & discussion at 7:30 with Dr. Martyn Walker. Martyn Walker has written extensively on Mechanics' Institutes and his work on the history of adult education has been widely published. What can be learned today from the experience of those who founded and ran these Institutes?



Reminder about bank details

As we approach the end of another year we thank members for their continuing support and hope that you will continue to feel we put your contributions to good use. Before your annual subscription is due, could you please check that any Standing Order is based on our current bank details. See the membership page of our web site for more details.



Wagonway Road

Wagonway Road takes its name from the wagonway that was constructed in 1809 to bring coal from Shilbottle Colliery to the edge of town. The line of the road is ancient. A lane already existed in 1624 which connected with the Great North Road then continued to Shilbottle. Today's Wagonway Road follows the same line as that ancient footpath until it reaches St James Roundabout.

Since the beginning of the 19th century Wagonway Road has been shaped by successive waves of development. Various facilities located at the edge of town were later surrounded by housing and absorbed into the built-up area. The road was never planned with sufficient capacity to meet the demand generated by all these developments.

Once the Alnwick Poor Law Union was formed in 1836 the parish Workhouse on Green Batt was too small and Alnwick Union Workhouse was built on the edge of town in 1841. A century later it became an old people's home, then offices and is now residential. Alnwick Railway Station first opened in 1850. By then the wagonway which gave its name to the road had been in operation for more than 40 years, but was no longer needed. It closed.

By the end of the 19th century the town was spreading along Wagonway Road, and beyond Swansfield Park Road to capitalise on land with easy access to the new railway.

- "Bye-law" terraced houses were built around Duke Street, and Bridge Street between 1881 and 1899 to address a shortage of decent housing for working people.
- Swansfield Park Road was proposed in 1892, and by 1897 it was being parcelled for house building.
- The North-Eastern Railway built 20 cottages for railwaymen in 1898 on Seaview Terrace.

Meanwhile more facilities were needed at the edge of town:

- The Auction Mart was constructed in 1880 (the site was redeveloped in the 1980's).
- Alnwick Fever Hospital needed a location that was a good distance from affluent residential areas, and was built in 1888, on land that would later be used for Lindisfarne School.
- The Alnwick Union built a pair of semi-detached houses in 1913 as cottage homes for 12 boys and 12 girls.

Between the wars "Homes fit for heroes" spread further from the town centre. With larger gardens on bigger plots, they reached Greensfield Avenue by the start of the second world war.

- St George's Crescent and the York Crescent / York Road area were completed between 1921 and 1926.
- Wagonway Road Co-op dates from 1924, for Amble Cooperative Society.
- Alnwick County Secondary School (later Lindisfarne Middle School) opened in 1939. It closed in 2017, and a Community Campus opened in 2023 on the site.
- Greensfield Avenue was built between 1939 and 1953. During, and immediately after the war ended there was a temporary hostel at the eastern end that housed agricultural workers.

Once the Cornhill branch closed in 1953 housing developments could occupy more land between the former trackbed and Wagonway Road:

- After the war 50 temporary prefabricated bungalows were constructed on Augur Terrace. These were replaced by Cornhill Estate in the 1970s.
- In 1975 Alnwick District Council was authorised to build 13 houses and 52 flats south of St James Estate. This became Cawledge View.

The A1 bypassed Alnwick in 1971, and the section from Willowburn to Denwick was upgraded to dual carriageway in 2003. By the time St James estate was planned in the 1970s, there were already sports fields at St James.

From St James roundabout the route of the old wagonway can still be followed via the path that runs along the boundary of the Rugby Club to Taylor Drive. By now it has diverged from the main road down Willowburn Avenue. This was designed as a "Southern Link Road" to connect with the new Alnwick bypass. Construction in 1984 was associated with a number of other developments:

- Pharmaceutical Research Centre (originally for Sterling Winthrop, now Quotient Sciences): 1980.
- Greensfield industrial development: 1987 and Greensfield Park offices: 1991.
- Willowburn Retail Park: 1993 and Willowburn Leisure Centre: 1997.
- Car dealership (Tustain Motors): 2007.
- Duchess Community High School: 2016
- New Willowburn retail development: 2017

Today Wagonway Road is a mixed residential area. It is not the primary corridor between the town centre and the south, but it provides important connections for residents between the town and a range of facilities including the Lindisfarne Community Centre, Willowburn Leisure Centre, the Duchess's Community High School, out of town retail and employment sites on both sides of the A1.

The question now is whether it's going to be possible to maintain, or even improve, the quality of life for residents along Wagonway Road while retaining vital local travel connections. We will be particularly interested to see the conclusion of a feasibility study that is exploring a possible active travel alternative route along the former Cornhill trackbed, linking Willowburn Retail Park and the town centre.



In 1949 Wagonway Road extends as far as Greensfield Avenue (bottom left) but not beyond the Hostel for Agricultural Workers (bottom, centre). There are new prefabs alongside the Cornhill branch line, where Cornhill Estate now stands. The Fever Hospital is among trees, beside Lindisfarne School.

Hulne Priory

Historic England describe Hulne Priory as: "The best preserved and probably the earliest Carmelite friary in England"

Carmelite Friars originated in the late 12th century when Europeans settled on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land to live as hermits. By the 1230's life in the Holy Land had become unsettled and they began returning to Europe, reaching England in 1242 in the company of knights coming home from the Crusades. They established a priory at Aylesford in Kent and another at Hulne with William de Vescy and his son John.

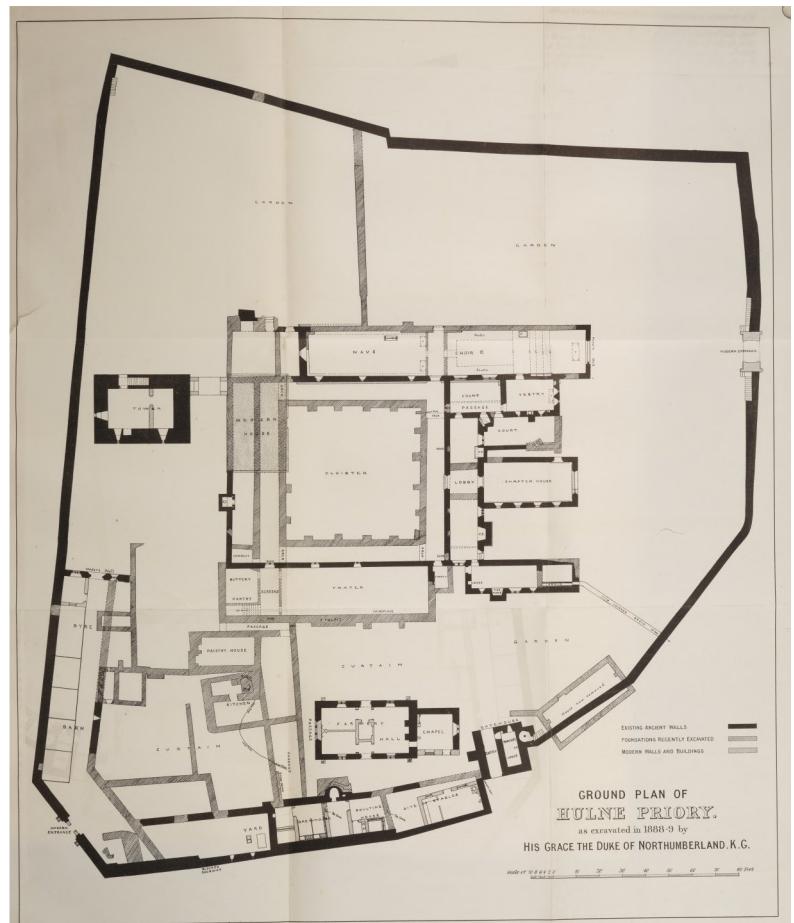
The secluded location at Hulne reflected a desire for a remote location suitable for a hermit life and the landscape is said to have similarities to their previous home on Mount Carmel. But it wasn't long before the rules of the order were changed to align with a role more suited to their new life in Europe. Over time the Carmelites would establish more than 50 houses across England and Scotland. Most preferred sites in towns where they could attract and support educated men who were capable of teaching and preaching.

The remote location at Hulne helped to preserve remains that are now more complete than any other Carmelite House in England. But the location was not without threats. Relics from the border conflicts between England and Scotland include a defensive curtain wall added at some point in the 15th century and a pele tower added by Sir Henry Percy in 1488, at a cost of £27 19s 8d.

In 1536 Thomas Cromwell established the Court of Augmentations to gain control over the property of the Church for Henry VIII. They ruled that the Priory, its gardens, pasture and mills had a rental value of £16 11s 2d.

The priory was dissolved in 1539. The church was destroyed but the site was not extensively robbed for stone, and parts were converted into a house. By 1570 Hulne Park was 'well replenished with fallow deer' and the buildings were being used as a hunting lodge. Again this helped to preserve the remains.

By the mid-18th century the site was home to a menagerie (which included gold and silver pheasants) and a keeper. The original infirmary was converted to a house. Around 1777-80



the Duke built a Gothick garden house. It is unclear who was the architect. It is often ascribed to Robert Adam or Lancelot Brown, but sometimes to John Bell of Durham, a pupil of James Paine, who had previously worked at Alnwick.

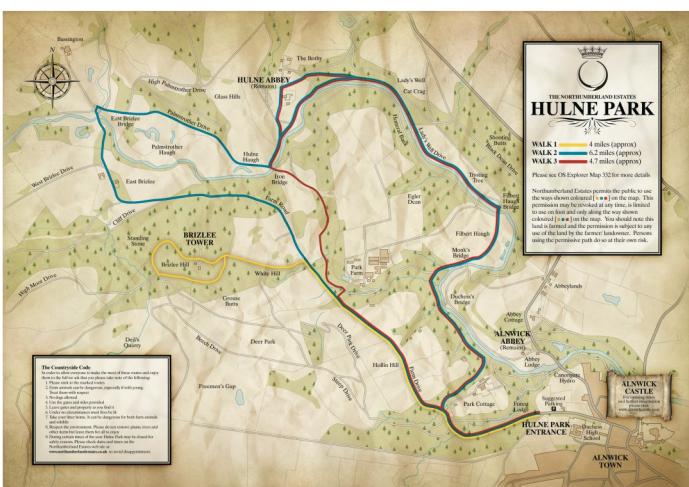
In 1991, Hulne Priory was used as the location of Maid Marian's home for Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, starring Kevin Costner as Robin Hood, Morgan Freeman as Azeem, Christian Slater as Will Scarlett, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio as Marian, and Alan Rickman as the Sheriff of Nottingham.

What remains is the best preserved, if not the earliest, Carmelite friary in England; a unique survival of a Carmelite Infirmary; and a well-preserved 15th century defensive perimeter wall.

Recent conservation work began in 2013, paused in 2015 then resumed in 2021. The focus has been on the boundary wall to ensure public safety and preserve the monument for future generations. So far, work has included consolidation and conservation of sandstone walls and wall heads; repointing joints, removal of unsuitable mortar and repointing; localised repairs to stonework where movement has occurred; and the removal of algae, vegetation, and tree saplings.

The next priority is to address loose stonework on the southwest gateway that appears to have been caused by deep rooted ivy growth and missing mortar. A structural survey has been carried out and Northumberland Estates are currently working with ecologists and a contractor to agree an appropriate methodology.

The public is admitted to Hulne Park, and the ruins of Hulne Priory can be explored but there are no facilities for visitors, and access is restricted to pedestrians only. The priory is reached on a walk of almost 5 miles from the Forest Lodge entrance on Ratten Row.



Download map of walks: <https://tinyurl.com/3nrxcnwu>

Annual report of Alnwick's last Medical Officer of Health in 1972

To the Chairman and Members of the Alnwick Urban District Council. As this will be the final report to you, and in 1974 medical officers of health will end a long association with local government, it seems appropriate and of interest to recollect the changes which have taken place over the years. When one does look back one is left with an impression of how fast time passes and change takes place and yet also how slowly.

The oldest available report by a medical officer of health in this area is that for Alnwick in 1902.

No doubt it was representative of the circumstances existing in North Northumberland at that time. All those who are seventy-years-old, and there are many, were born into the conditions depicted in the report and they either experienced them or, as was the habit then, were protected from them in what is now referred to as the "golden" Edwardian era. Public health was very much involved with drains and infectious disease.

There were lodging houses for tramps and overcrowding - how often does one see a tramp, let alone a female tramp, in Northumberland in 1972? There was the belief that infectious diseases were largely spread from blocked drains as much as by personal contact. Scavenging had just been undertaken by the local authority and there was a recent Act to control people's conditions of work.

In the centre of the town there were stables, byres and middens with liquid manure seeping into houses. The open offal cart wended its way through unpaved streets. Drinking water was often coloured and had to be turned off on many nights. Water-borne sewage had only settling tanks for treatment while in the rural areas especially earth closets were the rule and not the exception. There was an infectious disease hospital with uncovered access to toilets, inadequate hot water supply and no means of disinfection. Presumably the female tramp with smallpox was admitted there.

The Medical Officer of Health was a local government official with responsibility for public health. Some were appointed before the role became mandatory in 1872. In the 19th century the MOH was mainly concerned with sanitation. In the early 20th century their role expanded to cover services such as maternity care, school health, access to sanatoria, hospitals and rehabilitation services. Some say that when the NHS was formed there was too much emphasis on hospitals and not enough on prevention. The role of the MOH declined, and was abolished in 1974 (50 years ago).

There is an unconscious humour in the report. The opening address of "Gentlemen" could not envisage women members serving on the Council.

There is the suggestion that the Councillors would be more relieved to be spared the cost of a smallpox outbreak than they would be to escape an epidemic.

Both the birth and infant mortality rates were high and 21 infants out of 174 live births died before they were one year old. Only two out of every five people lived until they were sixty. There were 16 deaths from tuberculosis and these occurred in people aged as young as 25 years.

A public mortuary was needed, both because dead bodies presumably unclaimed were found lying in the streets and because there was no alternative but to keep decomposing deceased relatives in overcrowded bedrooms.

Many houses had standpipes for water and gullies for slops. Yards and streets were largely unpaved. The milk supply, a common source of infection, was untreated and badly stored.

In the midst of these conditions it was only possible to find one house which was unfit for habitation. One wonders what it was like.

In 1972 lodging houses and infectious diseases hospitals were no longer local necessities; housing had improved almost beyond recognition; there was a mortuary in Alnwick; slaughterhouses, food hygiene and milk production were controlled by legislation; there was good refuse collection and disposal; there was control of conditions of work; in general currently acceptable standards for living conditions were no longer comparable with 1902.

If those involved with environmental conditions in 1902 were to have returned seventy years later they could have been excused for thinking that, in the lifetime of the babies born in their year, most of what they had set out to do had been achieved.

Ian G.F. Fraser M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.

Extracts from the Report of the Medical Officer of Health in Alnwick for 1902

• The weather during the year 1902 has been throughout cold and wet, and favourable to the development of pulmonary disease and rheumatism. The absence of warm weather has lessened the prevalence of diarrhoea so common in the summer time...

• It is a matter of congratulation that the town has not had to cope with an epidemic of Smallpox, and its accompanying expenses.

• Since the Council has taken the scavenging into its own hands there has been a marked improvement in the cleanliness of the town. This must have a beneficial effect upon the Public Health. It is, however, very difficult to deal with some districts, as places that are cleaned in the morning become as bad as ever before night owing to the careless and filthy habits of certain portions of the community.

• The careless method of disposal of slops in some of the crowded parts of the town has given rise to many nuisances in the past, due to the absorption of putrescible matter into the soil surrounding the sinks, and its subsequent decomposition in warm weather.

• A great number of the yards and lanes are at present either unpaved or at best only paved with cobble stones. In some of these there are dwelling houses mixed up with stables, cowsheds and their

attendant middens; the consequence being that the rain and liquid manure penetrate into the soil and foundations of the houses, and render them damp and unhealthy.

• The house accommodation for the Working Classes still leaves much to be desired. The erection of workmen's dwellings behind Clayport is slowly progressing, and it is to be hoped will be finished during the coming season. Many more houses are required in the town before overcrowding can be thoroughly dealt with.

• A house in the Angel Inn Yard has been condemned as unfit for habitation, and also a room in the Crown Inn Yard. Both have been closed.

• The widening of the footpath on Bondgate Hill, and the taking of a cart track hardly come under the heading of sanitary improvements, though undoubtedly of great benefit to the town.

• The number of boys who hang about the slaughter houses are a great annoyance to the tenants, to say nothing of the bad effect such sights must have upon them.

• The attention of the Council is specially directed to the Dairies and Cowsheds. In many cases cows are kept in unsuitable places, the air-space required being in nearly every case insufficient, and the provision for the storage of milk are of a most meagre description.

• The Infectious Hospital requires certain alterations and improvements in view of the climate in which we live. The present open way from the wards to the Nurses' room and W.C.s should be closed in, provision made for an adequate supply of hot water, and an efficient disinfecting apparatus provided.

• Perhaps I might here mention the need there is in Alnwick of a properly constructed Public Mortuary, not only for the disposal of any dead body that may be found and await a Coroner's Inquest, but also for the reception of the dead before interment. There are many families living in one or two rooms among whom the practice of keeping a dead body in the house for a considerable time before burial is the rule and not the exception. I may point out that there is a certain danger to Public Health in retaining a corpse in a crowded house until putrefaction commences. This danger becomes more apparent when the death happens to have taken place from an infectious disease. I am quite aware of the prejudices, and opposition, there would be to the removal of the dead from the home to the mortuary on the part of the very class of people who would benefit most by such an establishment, but still I consider it my duty in the interest of public health to mention the need there is for some provision of this kind.

Skills needed for traditional buildings

Historic England have been looking at the skills needed for the repair, maintenance and retrofit of traditional buildings.

Around 20% of homes and around a third of non-domestic premises were built before 1919. So traditional buildings represent a substantial proportion of our building stock, and make an important contribution to the character of the places where we live.

Retaining the existing building stock is much less carbon intensive than building new. So traditional buildings can make a vital contribution to climate action. The pressing need for energy efficiency retrofit is expected to be an important driver of future demand for skills, with estimates of 105,000 more workers needed to retrofit traditional buildings if the UK is to meet its net zero targets.

Maintaining, restoring, and retrofitting traditional buildings requires specific skills and materials. And there has been longstanding concern about the availability of the skills.

The current demand for work on traditional buildings is worth around £28 billion a year in England, but evidence of the backlog of maintenance and repair work suggests that there is a much larger potential demand in both domestic and commercial sectors.

More than half of work on traditional buildings relies on traditional materials and specialist techniques. Without these, the amount of inappropriate and potentially damaging work is well-recognised (but not well-quantified).

In the North-East 26% of contract-



ors report that their employees lack the skills they need for the work that is available. Nationally, a similar proportion report difficulty recruiting workers with the skills they need. Younger employees are most likely to lack heritage skills and carpentry and joinery skills are particularly hard to recruit. Almost half of contractors say that it is getting harder to recruit, and nearly a fifth report turning down work due to skills shortages.

Overall, the picture painted by this report is of:

- a well-established, confident contractor base responding to current market demand for work on traditional buildings, with many charging a premium for doing so (particularly in the North-East);
- supply of traditional skills that is already failing to meet the underlying need;
- some major drivers behind an increase in demand for work on traditional buildings in the years to come;
- reliance on informal training and experience, coupled (in some parts of the country - but not particularly in the North-East) with inadequate formal training. Along with other barriers to recruitment, skills succession is a concern;
- a lack of capacity, and in some cases appetite, among both contractors and training providers, to grow employment and training to meet future demand growth; and
- limited appetite among the existing contractor base to undertake retrofit of traditional buildings, in spite of strong policy and social drivers for work of this nature.

The industry is relying on older workers for traditional skills. There is little to suggest that training provision is able to sustain the current supply of skills, let alone satisfy the growth in demand that is expected. Without intervention, the supply of skilled workers, able to maintain traditional buildings will diminish. And so will the ability to pass down skills and knowledge to the next generation.

See <https://tinyurl.com/mr38fspr>

Battle of Alnwick (1174)

On a misty July morning eight hundred and fifty years ago, King William I of Scotland, was taken prisoner besieging Alnwick Castle

The Earldom of Northumberland had passed to William from his father Henry, youngest son of King David I of Scotland, but during the reign of William's elder brother, Malcolm IV, the title was taken by King Henry II of England.

Determined to regain this hereditary title, William unsuccessfully invaded Northumberland in 1173 - finding the defences at Newcastle and Prudhoe too strong. He tried again in 1174 with a larger army, which included a contingent of Flemish mercenaries. After another failed attempt to take Prudhoe Castle, William and his army moved north to besiege Alnwick Castle.

While he and a small part of his army began the siege, the remaining army ravaged the surrounding countryside, Warkworth being particularly badly affected. The church of St Lawrence was set on fire, killing the priests and the many residents who had sought refuge inside.

Ranulf de Glanvill, who presumably had been informed of the intended siege, set off from Newcastle with a troop of English knights. They reached Alnwick soon after dawn on a foggy 13th July 1174 and came upon William's poorly protected camp on the edge of Alnwick Moor about a quarter of a mile from the castle. The English knights charged, taking the Scots by surprise. William's horse was killed beneath him, and he was captured.



After being held at Newcastle, William was moved to Falaise in Normandy. In the meantime, Henry II sent an army to occupy several Scottish castles, including Roxburgh, Jedburgh and Berwick.

In December 1174, in order to obtain his freedom, William was forced to sign The Treaty of Falaise, which, among other things made him swear an oath of allegiance to Henry II and agree to the castles taken by Henry, being garrisoned by English soldiers.

The Treaty of Falaise lasted fifteen years until, at the beginning of the reign of King Richard I, the castles were restored to William.

William was to become known as William the Lion. This referred to his standard - a red lion rampant on a yellow background, which became the Royal Standard of Scotland and today is incorporated on the Royal Coat of Arms of The United Kingdom.

A monument marking the spot where William was thought to have been captured, was erected in the 18th century in Ratten Row, just outside the entrance to Hulne Park, this was replaced in the 19th century by the present Grade II listed monument, which George Tate describes as being "entirely devoid of taste".



Original Monument
(from Davison)

The care and use of shutters

Timber has been used to cover window openings and keep out the weather for centuries, but windows only became glazed in the 16th century and the introduction of sash and case windows in the late 17th century had to wait for further advances in technology.

Shutters are used to control the amount of light entering a room, help to prevent draughts and reduce external noise levels. They protect furniture and fabrics from bright sunlight, provide privacy and heightened security. Shutters can reduce heat loss through a window by up to 50%. Original features add to the appeal of a room, and the heritage value of a building.

Our thanks to the Georgian Group for giving us permission to share this guidance on shutters. It has been extracted from their Guide #14 (Curtains and Blinds).

Historical Development

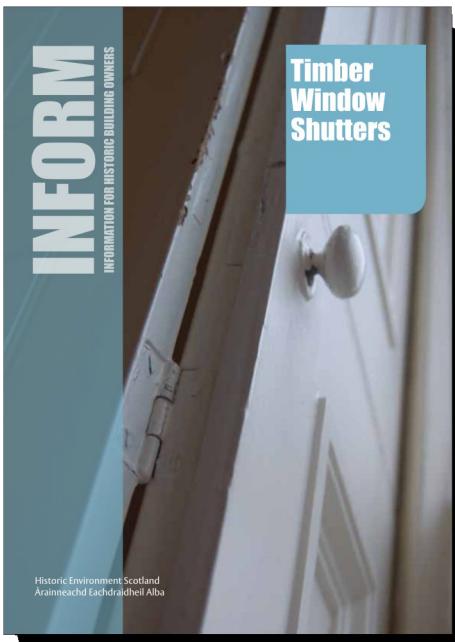
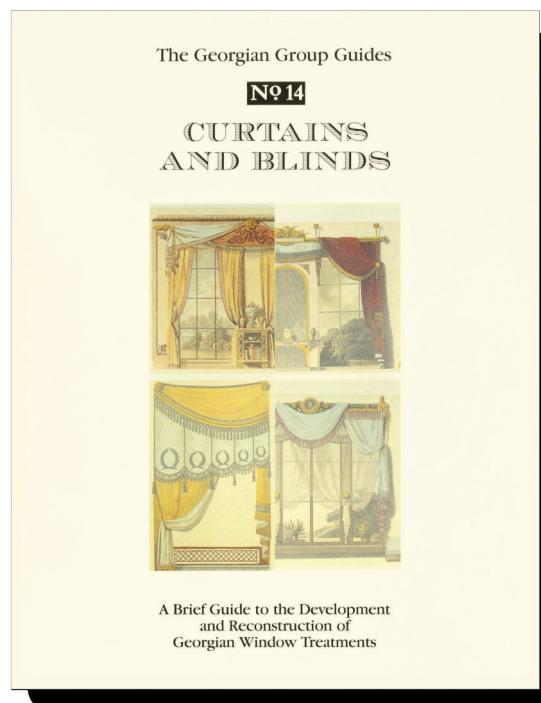
During the Georgian period, sash windows were usually fitted with interior shutters. These fittings were used not only to keep out direct light, but also to retain heat and to provide added security. Many houses still possess workable shutters inside their shutter boxes; it is always worth checking this before you embark on complicated draughtproofing or secondary glazing.

Georgian homes frequently had external window shutters, too. Most, though have now been dismantled, and only their fixtures survive as a record. Their disappearance should not, incidentally, serve as an excuse to install plastic or wooden 'French-style' shutters of any description.

Maintenance and repair

If your house has its original shutters, it is important that they be kept in working order, and used as often as possible. Window shutters are the most effective way of prolonging the life of a room's furnishings.

Wooden shutters are often susceptible to dry rot. To prevent this, ensure that the



Historic Environment Scotland have produced an "Inform" booklet that provides information on the history of timber window shutters and highlights the benefits of their retention and reuse. It describes methods of construction and considers options for bringing them back into use, reinstatement, care, repair and maintenance.

Historic Environment Scotland Inform Guide on Timber Wooden Shutters: <https://tinyurl.com/ymjpt779>

Georgian Group Guides : <https://georgiangroup.org.uk/advice-leaflets/>

mouldings and flashings on the outside of the window are doing their job properly, and that water is not being admitted into the wooden members of the sash. Regular operation of the shutters — and regular opening of the windows themselves — also helps to encourage a free flow of air, which can help prevent decay.

If your shutters are infected by dry rot, ask an experienced local joiner to replace the affected area with pre-treated timber. Surrounding members should also be provided with anti-fungal plugs. Remember, though, that once the source of the water penetration has been dealt with, there should be no recurrence of the problem; similarly, if the basic problem is ignored, no amount of chemical treatment or wood substitution will help eradicate the infection in the long term.

Window shutters were never left unpainted during the Georgian or Victorian periods. The fashion for exposing internal woodwork derives more from late 19th century Arts and Crafts theories, and from the postwar fashion for stripped Scandinavian pine and 'honest' materials, than from genuine Georgian practice.

The idea of stripping the paintwork from old pine shutters in order to reveal the inferior, knotty grain of the wood below would undoubtedly horrify Georgian designers.

If you are painting or repainting the shutters, a useful rule of thumb is to chose the same colour as the window surround — which in most cases will be white. Remember, too, that the bright bleached whites which are so commonly used for historic properties today are very much a 20th century innovation. Georgian designers and decorators always used creamier, off-white matt oil paints, which tended to yellow with age, for most of the internal woodwork. The harsh glare of modern bright white paints is inappropriate for such old surfaces.

It is also worth retaining any original closing mechanisms that remain. Not only do flimsy modern brass catches look inappropriate on heavy Georgian shutters; putting original or reproduction iron bars back also helps create a good security barrier. During the Georgian era some shutters were even equipped with bells — the ancestor of the burglar alarm.

News in Brief

Reuse, refurbishment, and regular maintenance are important in extending the life of historic buildings, and thereby capitalising on embodied carbon. “*The greenest building is the one that already exists*”. To support developers who reuse built heritage, Historic England have published “**Heritage Works for Housing**”. In the context of pressure to provide more homes, the report draws on new research and evidence from across the country to examine the process of developing historic buildings. See <https://tinyurl.com/4j8fz4z>

Alison Tymon will be speaking on “George Tate: From draper’s apprentice to eminent geologist and historian” at a Northumberland Archives online talk, at 7:00 p.m. on 12th

Dec. George Tate spent all his life in Alnwick. He was the son of a stonemason, apprenticed to the drapery trade, became Alnwick’s Postmaster and held several significant posts in the town. His wide interests included the Mechanics’ Institute, archaeology and local history. Alison has a particular interest in George’s geological field work. There is no charge - book though Eventbrite at <https://tinyurl.com/bdej5m59>

Historic Environment Scotland has paused its Buildings at Risk Register after finding insufficient evidence to demonstrate a significant impact in bringing buildings back into use. The pause will allow them to consider long-term options for the future of the register.

Meanwhile in England the 2024 register has not yet been published, but it is interesting that the review in Scotland judged the English system to be more effective and attributed this to decentralisation of responsibility to regional offices, and close working relationships with local authority partners.

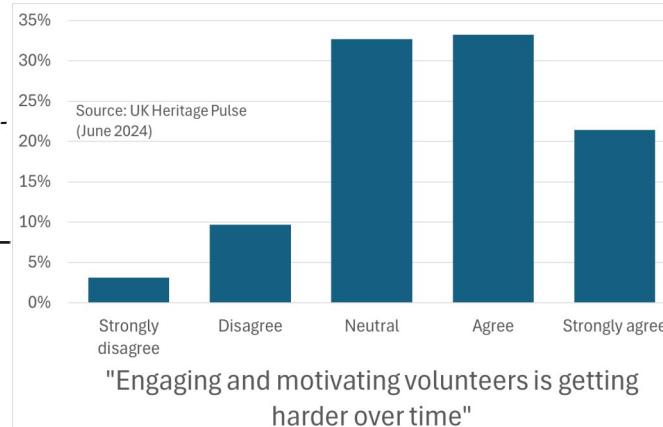
See <https://tinyurl.com/58v7avpn>

UK Heritage Pulse is a collaborative project, designed to inform policy across the heritage sector. They regularly poll a panel of Heritage Organisations. More than 80% rely on volunteers. Recently the panel were asked how they feel about engaging and motivating volunteers. We value the support of our growing number of members but, like the Heritage Pulse panel, feel that it is getting harder to engage volunteers. This echoes similar results a year earlier, when the same panel reported that they were finding reten-

tion easier than recruitment, and facing difficulties in recruiting from a range of ages and backgrounds.

Heritage Pulse is run by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.

See: <https://heritagepulse.insights-alliance.com/>



The Campaign for National Parks has been assessing how well National Parks support nature’s recovery. They believe that all the National Park Management Plans should include relevant baseline information on the state of habitats, species, water quality, etc. at the start of the Plan period. Northumberland, among others, is criticised for including no such baseline. However Northumberland is commended for their range of targets relating to habitat restoration (and a helpful map indicating where these will be focused). See

<https://www.cnp.org.uk/health-check-report/>

Civic Voice have responded to the recent consultation on changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Key points from Civic Voice’s response include:

• **Housing Affordability:** Civic Voice emphasises that simply increasing housing targets will not automatically result in more homes being built or lower house prices. Without targeted reforms, the private sector may continue to prioritise high-end developments, leaving the urgent need for affordable and social housing unmet. Civic Voice calls for stronger public sector involvement and funding, empowering local authorities and housing associations to meet community needs.

• **Community Involvement:** Civic Voice urges the Government to strengthen Statements of Community Involvement, ensuring

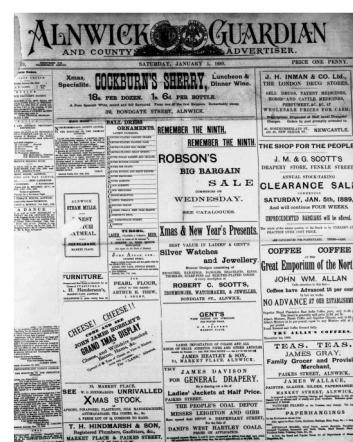
that local communities have a meaningful role in shaping major planning decisions. Public engagement

must be an ongoing process at every stage of development to rebuild trust and ensure local voices are not just heard, but acted upon.

• **Strategic Planning:** Civic Voice supports enhanced strategic planning at sub-regional levels, potentially overseen by combined authorities, to address complex housing and infrastructure issues. Local housing markets should be assessed by regional bodies, with findings used to guide public investment programmes.

Net Zero and VAT Reform: Civic Voice highlights the urgent need for planning policy to support the Government’s net zero ambitions. Building new homes must go hand in hand with sustainability goals, ensuring developments are energy-efficient and contribute to carbon reduction targets. To this end, Civic Voice calls for reform to the VAT system to incentivise retrofitting and refurbishment of existing homes. Lowering VAT on these projects would encourage greener building practices, support the transition to net zero, and reduce carbon emissions, helping to make homes more energy efficient.

Congratulations to Alnwick in Bloom for another outstanding result this year: including Best Overall Entry and Gold in the Best Town category.



The Alnwick Guardian and County Advertiser was established in 1885 and incorporated into the Northumberland Gazette in 1924. That became the Alnwick and County Gazette and Guardian, the Alnwick Gazette, and then the Northumberland Gazette in 1947. The British Newspaper archive recently started to digitise their holdings of the Alnwick Guardian. So far the years 1889, 1910 and 1911 are available. <https://tinyurl.com/y453jpwm>

Cooper Hill and two Gold Lock Rings

Cooper Hill is the name for the group of small hills, forming the amphitheatre around the Alnwick War Memorial and its road junction.

The name is old, being given on the Norton map of Alnwick in 1624. (right). On the Wilkin map of 1774, the name 'Cooper Hills' can be discerned on the hill to the north of the current Denwick Road, (the ancient Fisher's Lane), and also on the central hill occupied by the Percy Tenantry Column.

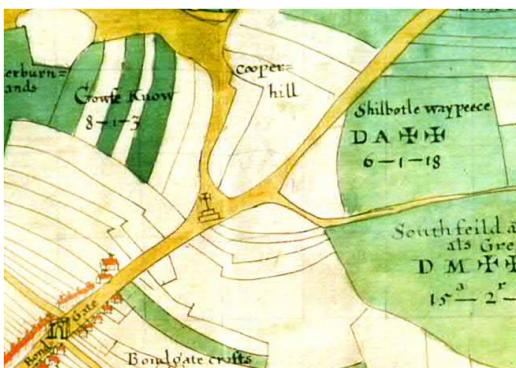
The name 'Cooper' in 1624 is the oldest variant, whereas Wilkin uses 'Coopers', and Tate in his history calls it 'Cooper's Hill'. This is almost certainly named after an individual called Cooper, who likely owned this land in 1624, or before. It is unlikely to be connected to barrels. The name 'Cooper Hill' exists elsewhere in England, always from the surname Cooper.

Building of the railway started in Aug. 1848, and work proceeded quickly. The Alnmouth to Alnwick branch line opened on the 5th Aug. 1850. As trenching took place through the southern Cooper Hill, in the final approach of the branch line, workmen disturbed some archaeological remains. Archaeology was not a major concern in those times. The find may well have been un-recorded, apart from the discovery of gold objects: two golden near circular (penannular) ornaments. Word of the find spread, and interest was generated in collecting the various artefacts. The stories of the discovery are vague, often confused, and recorded many years after 1850. The following account are taken from the accounts of Dr. E. Charlton (1859) and George Tate (1866).

'About ten years ago, during the excavations for the branch line to Alnwick, some navigators observed a glittering object among the soil they were casting up. We have obtained most imperfect accounts of what they really found. Some have said that a grave was opened, and that it contained urns: others that a metal spear or sword handle was discovered, to which the gold was attached. At all events a scramble immediately took place for the prize, in which (some say) the urn was broken; but the confused accounts that have been given



Wilkin map 1774. The site was then occupied by the Pin Fold (circle). The name 'Coopers Hill' in pencil can be made out to the north of Fisher's Lane/ Denwick Road, and 'Coopers Hill' can also be seen on the middle Tenantry Column hill, under the proper name Mr. John Tate. No name is given on the southern hill, passing south into the Cross Flatts (older Shilbottle Way Piece).



Norton 1624. (Note North is to the left)

Cooper = Hill (= is used when the name is split on 2 lines by Norton) is the small, middle hill now occupied by the Tenantry Column. Note the cross where the War Memorial now stands, with Fisher's Lane, now Denwick Road going to the NE. The northern hill here leads up to 'Gowse Knowe' (Goose Knowe). The Alnmouth / Great North Road goes to the East. Waggon Way road, going south was then called Shilbottle Way.

me are not to be relied upon. The gold in question consists of thin plates of various shapes, and of a piece of gold wire...

'These plates of gold were much crushed when they came into our possession; possibly they had been detached with violence from the object they ornamented'. Charlton 1859.

'Unfortunately, these very rare and valuable relics were broken by the workmen and sold to an ironmonger; but Dr. Charlton of Newcastle, bought the fragments and placed them in the Museum of the Newcastle Antiquarian Society.' Tate 1866.

In 1938, Herbert Maryon re-investigated the golden objects, and concluded that the descriptions of both ornaments given by Dr. Charlton and George Tate were not particularly accurate, and that the gold plates as they existed were so folded and deformed as to be beyond analysis - '... they were nothing more than a handful of scraps.'

Maryon was given permission to un-

fold the gold plates, a painstaking jig-saw puzzle due to the very thin and fragile nature of the gold foil. He was then able to reconstruct the shape of the two objects. There was enough gold to form two near circular rings. Maryon reported on only one of these rings, the one with conspicuous gold embossed circle designs.

He concluded that the object was circular, but not with enough gold to make a full circle. Triangular in cross section, it must be hollow, forming a shape like two truncated cones fitted together into one structure. His reconstructed ornament

is shown here. The ring is some 1½ inches (40mm) in diameter, and ½ inch (13 mm) thick in the middle. The ring is decorated with eight circular patterns of eleven concentric rings, around a central boss.

Such ornaments are today called Lock- Rings. They were likely used as hair decoration, with a lock of hair passing through the slot, to be held in place by the gold ring. They are usually found in pairs, but of different decorations, suggesting they were used on different sides of the head, or back and side, and hence unlikely to be ear ornaments. In 1851, only a handful of such items had been found, mostly in Ireland, and a few in Anglesey. But in a comprehensive study of lock-rings in 1969, George Eogan reported on twenty from Ireland; twenty from Central and Southern Scotland and North Wales and North England; eight from Southern England; and twelve from North-West. France.



Ranking England's Parliamentary Constituencies

David Smith, our new MP for North Northumberland currently holds 24th position in our ranking of English Constituencies ordered by the number of listed buildings they contain.

North Northumberland contains more listed buildings than the constituency of any other Labour MP except Rachel Blake (City of London), and Joe Morris (Hexham). There are twice as many listed buildings in North Northumberland as there are in Kier Starmer's constituency (Holborn & St. Pancras) and 12 times as many as there are in Wigan (the constituency of Lisa Nandy, Secretary of State responsible for Culture Media and Sport). Julia Lopez, the equivalent Shadow Secretary of State has only 79 in Hornchurch & Upminster. That's even fewer than the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Leeds West and Pudsey (187).

David is already ahead of James Cleverly but needs to find 14 more listed buildings to overtake Joe Morris in Hexham and 65 more to overtake Rishi Sunak in Richmond and Northallerton.

# Constituency	MP	Party	Listed	MP	MP
1 North Cotswolds	Geoffrey Clifton-Brown	Conservative	4,481	Geoffrey	Clifton-Brown
2 Central Devon	Mel Stride	Conservative	4,322	Mel	Stride
3 West Dorset	Edward Morelo	Liberal Democrat	4,134	Edward	Morelo
4 Cities of London & Westminster	Rachel Blake	Labour/Co-operative	4,000	Rachel	Blake
5 North Herefordshire	Ellie Chowns	Green	3,963	Ellie	Chowns
6 Waveney Valley	Adrian Ramsay	Green	3,933	Adrian	Ramsay
7 South Cotswolds	Roz Savage	Liberal Democrat	3,745	Roz	Savage
8 South Shropshire	Stuart Anderson	Conservative	3,656	Stuart	Anderson
9 North Cornwall	Ben Maguire	Liberal Democrat	3,410	Ben	Maguire
10 Weald of Kent	Katie Lam	Conservative	3,386	Katie	Lam
11 Arundel and South Downs	Andrew Griffith	Conservative	3,278	Andrew	Griffith
12 North West Essex	Kemi Badenoch	Conservative	3,260	Kemi	Badenoch
13 Glastonbury and Somerton	Sarah Dyke	Liberal Democrat	3,079	Sarah	Dyke
14 South Suffolk	James Cartlidge	Conservative	3,005	James	Cartlidge
15 Rutland and Stamford	Alicia Kearns	Conservative	2,892	Alicia	Kearns
16 Skipton and Ripon	Julian Smith	Conservative	2,887	Julian	Smith
17 St Ives	Andrew George	Liberal Democrat	2,811	Andrew	George
18 Torridge and Tavistock	Geoffrey Cox	Conservative	2,783	Geoffrey	Cox
19 Richmond and Northallerton	Rishi Sunak	Conservative	2,760	Rishi	Sunak
20 Westmorland and Lonsdale	Tim Farron	Liberal Democrat	2,752	Tim	Farron
21 Thirsk and Malton	Kevin Hollinrake	Conservative	2,735	Kevin	Hollinrake
22 Bath	Wera Hobhouse	Liberal Democrat	2,711	Wera	Hobhouse
23 Hexham	Joe Morris	Labour	2,709	Joe	Morris
24 North Northumberland	David Smith	Labour	2,696	David	Smith
25 Braintree	James Cleverly	Conservative	2,687	James	Cleverly

Mechanics' Institute: 200th anniversary

The 1820's were a turbulent time in Britain. The economy was recovering from the depression which followed the end of the Revolutionary Wars in 1815, but there were plenty of other reasons for disquiet. Ideas of equality, fostered by the French Revolution, underlay agitation for political reform. Discrimination against the Roman Catholic population, felt most keenly in Ireland but widespread throughout the nation, fostered civil and social unrest. The Industrial Revolution fostered the spread of technology and innovation throughout industry and agriculture. Redundancy and unemployment were thus constant threats to a growing, and largely illiterate, population.

Even Alnwick, isolated on the northern fringe of England, on the edge of the coalfield which was powering industry and with few natural resources to exploit, was not immune. The parish was relatively small. Only about 6000 inhabitants, but already far from its rural roots, home to three times as many workers in trades, crafts and the professions as in agriculture. It was already what our current Northumberland Local Plan calls a "market town with significant rural hinterland".

It was an unlikely place for the development of a Mechanics' Institute. These were first proposed by Dr George Birkbeck in Glasgow in 1821, the aim to promote a knowledge of practical science amongst ordinary working people. By 1823 there were two branches, London and Liverpool, in England. In 1824 the first two were established in Northumberland: one in Newcastle, where George Stephenson was a prime mover, the second in Alnwick, inspired by the land agent of the Duke of Northumberland, by a clerk articled to a local solicitor and by a local schoolmaster. Branches in Hexham, Morpeth and Tynemouth followed the next year.

Alnwick's Institute was born at a public meeting on 18th November 1824. Largely inspired by the local professional classes, it, however, brought together all sectors of Alnwick Society. The local aristocracy provided figureheads: The Duke of Northumberland was its Patron and Earl Grey its President. Its primary beneficiaries were to be the skilled workers of the locality, who would benefit from a library ('books entirely confined to science'), classes organised for mutual in-

struction, and lectures. The Institute was to be revolutionary only in the sense that it would provide a practical education for those who might benefit from it. Its Constitution proscribed the discussion of politics, philosophy or religion. Even then, it recruited 90 members. Mechanics' Institutes are now seen by many as the precursor to adult and continuing education.

Initially, Alnwick's Institute struggled. By 1828 membership had dwindled to 16, when members had the foresight to elect as its Secretary George Tate, now known largely for his work on the history of Alnwick. Relaxing its hitherto strict limits, he re-kindled enthusiasm to such an extent that by 1831 the Institute was looking to build its own premises. In 1832 these were opened. The imposing building standing in Percy Street, still one of the last in the country to retain its original form, was the result. Membership grew so that in the 1840's almost 1 in 10 of the male population of Alnwick were members. As the century progressed, and particularly as the State became involved in education more generally and training in particular, the original aims of the movement changed and it assumed more of a social character. Alnwick Mechanics' Institute ceased to function at the beginning of the Second World War though the building, now administered by a Trust, remains dedicated to the use of Alnwick's inhabitants.

Join us, on Tuesday 19th November as Dr. Martyn Walker describes the contributions that Mechanics' Institutes have made to adult education, and how they laid the foundations of our further education system. Martyn is the author of the seminal work "The Development of the Mechanics' Institute Movement in Britain and Beyond".

Mechanics' Institute, Percy Street. Doors open at 6:30p.m., with an opportunity to explore the building, followed by talk and discussion at 7.30p.m.



Planning Matters

Northumberland County Council has applied for consent to replace windows and doors at Barndale House School. Between modern extensions sits an early 19th century house that is Grade-2 listed. Conservation Officers objected to the initial application on the basis that the Heritage Statement was inadequate and that replacement of original windows had not been justified. The applicant then submitted a revised Heritage Statement and a condition report on windows and doors. Again, Conservation Officers objected on the basis that the new Heritage Statement still did not meet the requirement and case for replacement of the original windows had still not been made. The Georgian Group also objected and suggested that the applicant should follow the advice they had been given. We felt that the positions taken by Conservation Officers and the Georgian Group were proportionate and reasonable. Rules should be applied consistently and Northumberland County Council has a responsibility to set a good example to others by following guidance on best practice and by complying with the relevant Legislation and Policies (including those in their own Local Plan). We also objected.

At 17-19B Clayport Street a retrospective application sought approval for the removal of the shopfront and signage and replacement with like for like fittings. We objected on the basis that the new shopfront failed to respect the character of the listed building and the works were contrary to planning policies. Alnwick Town Council raised similar concerns, and supported our comments. Conservation Officers commented that “*The unauthorised works and the design of the replacement shop frontage fail to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building*” and “*The loss of traditional joinery and unsympathetic design fails to preserve the character and appearance of Alnwick Conservation Area*”. Consent has been refused.

Next door, at 19A Clayport Street a retrospective listed building application sought approval for the replacement of the entrance door, windows and ventilation louvres. The works had been carried out between 2011 and 2016 without approval. Again, we objected on the basis that the works did not respect the character of the listed building and were contrary to planning policies. Alnwick

Town council raised similar concerns. The NCC Built Heritage and Design Team objected on the basis that the unauthorised work fails to preserve the special interest of the Grade II listed building or the character and appearance of Alnwick conservation area contrary to legislation and planning policies. The application has since been withdrawn, and a revised proposal submitted to replace the modern uPVC door and windows with timber in a more appropriate style. This is a positive step forward.

We considered a revised application at Mews Cottage, Park View for a change of use to a single dwelling. The Town Council had no objection. Neighbours have concerns over parking but Highways suggested conditions to address these. We felt we had nothing to add.

We considered an application for the demolition and rebuilding of a bungalow at 4 Glebelands, within the Conservation Area. This involves replacing a building with brick walls, a tile roof and uPVC windows with a new building with timber cladding and render walls, slate roof and Alu-clad timber frame windows. The footprint is similar but the height of the ridge will increase by almost a metre. The site adjoins Dovecote lane, but even with increased height we felt it would barely be visible above the wall. Access is restricted, and neighbours have concerns over disturbance during the build. Highways recommend a construction method statement. The Town Council have not objected, but ask that officers consider the concerns of neighbours. We felt this needed no more comment from the Society.



A listed building application has been submitted for refurbishment of Alnwick Cemetery Lodge. The lodge and attached gates date from 1856. They were designed by F R Wilson and built by Armstrong and Hudspeth. They are listed (Grade-2) along with the Cemetery

North and South Chapel.

The work involves relocation of a gas boiler and a new flue; new central heating and hot water system; dry lining external walls and insulation of sloping ceilings; a new electrical installation; and replacement of concrete floors with insulated floors. The original internal doors, staircase, handrails, newels and balusters will be retained. The kitchen fireplace will be exposed and original features recorded and retained. External repairs will be on a like-for-like basis.

This modest building is an important part of Alnwick's heritage. We welcome these moves to secure a sustainable future for it, and will watch progress with interest.

An application from 2022 by Northumberland Estates to bypass Denwick has been withdrawn after National Highways recommended a further delay to allow outstanding issues to be addressed.

Boots have applied for a new fascia sign and illuminated hanging sign. We objected on the basis that external illumination does not comply with policies for a listed building in the Alnwick Conservation Area.

There is currently a planning restriction at 27 Bondgate Without that only allows it to be used for holiday accommodation. The restriction was imposed in 2017 to encourage tourism. We see no reason why the application to remove it should not be allowed now, but commented that the hard space at the front of the building is unsuitable for parking.

We commented on the proposal to demolish three cottages on land at Greensfield Farm, and construct three dwellings. Retrofitting existing buildings is a more effective way to reduce carbon emissions than demolition and rebuild. So the loss of historic buildings is regrettable in an environmental context as well as any heritage considerations.

In view of the increase in height, we urged the authorities to carefully consider the impact of the design and materials on the neighbouring listed buildings and the views from the south-east of the wider landscape.

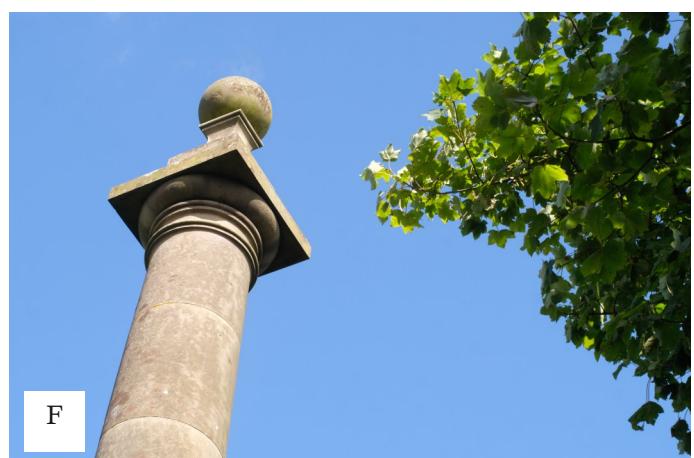
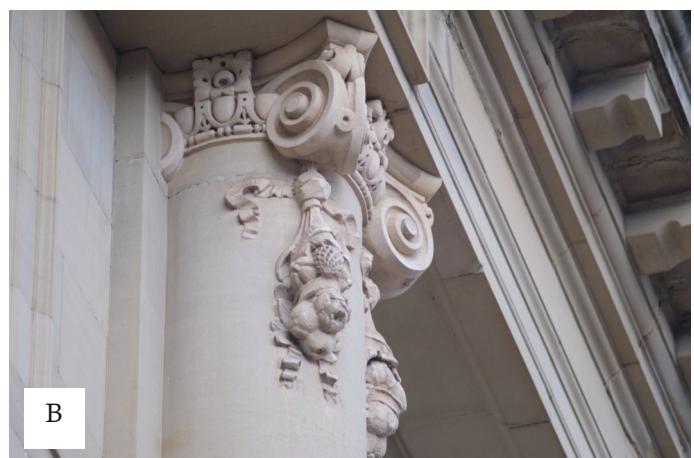


Quiz: seven pillars of wisdom

Our wise and knowledgeable readers will recognise different terms for the long vertical features of a structure that are designed to support the weight above. While it's possible to draw distinctions between a "Pillar" and a "Column", in practice the terms are usually interchangeable.

So whether you prefer to call these columns, or pillars, we are offering ten points and a warm glow of satisfaction to anyone who can name each of these seven examples name a famous Alnwick Column that is not included here identify the one example here that isn't listed identify the one example here that lies outside the Alnwick Conservation Area.

Check your answers on the back page.



Diary dates

19th Nov: Alnwick Mechanics' Institute:

200th anniversary

Mechanics' Institute in Percy Street. Doors open at 6:30p.m., with an opportunity to explore the building, followed by talk & discussion at 7:30 with Dr. Martyn Walker, author of "The Development of the Mechanics' Institute Movement in Britain and Beyond"



Alnwick Local History Society holds seven meetings a year, running from September through to April. The meetings are held at the Alnwick Cricket Club on Weavers Way (NE66 1BX), with a start time of 7.30pm. For the 2024/5 programme see <https://tinyurl.com/26ms4y5k> :

- 26th Nov 2024: For Better For Worse, Irregular Border Marriages – Linda Bankier
- 28th Jan 2025: The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle – Chris Hunwick

Northumberland Archives online talks are inspired by their archival collections. <https://tinyurl.com/df9bhcvy>

- 12th Dec: George Tate: From draper's apprentice to eminent geologist and historian

Christmas lights switch-on: Friday 22nd Nov 7:00 p.m. Marketplace.

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.



Founding Member



Who's Who?

President: Peter Ennor

Trustees: Chair: Peter Reed; Membership: Gill Parker; Honorary Secretary: Sue Smith; Treasurer: Tim Smith.

Committee members: Colin Watson.

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk **Email:**

contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk **Twitter:** [@AlnwickCivicSoc](https://twitter.com/AlnwickCivicSoc)

Facebook: [AlnwickCivicSociety](https://www.facebook.com/AlnwickCivicSociety) **Instagram:** [@alnwickcivicsociety](https://www.instagram.com/lnwickcivicsociety)

Substack: alnwickcivicsociety.substack.com

Charity registration number: 1197235

Heritage at risk: report your concerns here:

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

Quiz Answers

A) Robertson's Fountain dates from 1890 and was gifted to the town by Alderman Adam Robertson, a successful businessman, generous townsman and prominent freemason. He lived

across the road at "Fountain House", which is now the Hardy Store and Museum.

B) The former Lloyd's Bank building on Bondgate. Within dates from around 1910, by George Reavell. The style has been described as "Banker's Georgian".

C) The octagonal shaft of the Market Cross shows Manacles and Crescents (Percy Emblems) facing North, South, East and West.

D) 27, Fenkle Street was built for the Northumberland and Durham District Bank. The bank failed in 1857, at enormous cost to shareholders. The building was later used as a Drill Hall by the Northumberland Artillery Volunteers, then the Northumberland Fusiliers.

E) Thomas Singleton (1783–1842) was a lifelong friend of Hugh Percy who he met when they were schoolboys at Eton. Hugh Percy became third Duke of Northumberland and appointed Thomas Singleton as his Private

Secretary, Rector at Elsdon, and Archdeacon of Northumberland. Thomas died, unmarried, at Alnwick Castle in 1842 and is buried in St Michael's Churchyard. The broken column signifies a life cut short. (not listed)

F) Peace Column: erected by Henry Collingwood Selby in the grounds of his estate, Swansfield Park, to celebrate the Treaty of Paris (1814) which brought an end to the Napoleonic Wars. (outside Alnwick Conservation Area)

G) Alnwick War Memorial: Commemorates 189 from the First World War, 76 from the Second World War, One from the Korean War and One from Northern Ireland.

Those who expected to find the Percy Tenantry Column (Farmer's Folly) here will have been disappointed.