

Newsletter



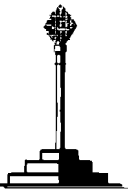
High Hobberlaw: Bridleway

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For your diary:

- 1st April – 11th May:** Alnwick through the lens exhibition, Bailiffgate Museum. We are rightly proud of the legacy that previous generations have left to us. Are we equally proud of the legacy that we leave for future generations? A collaboration with Alnwick Camera Club to capture the condition of Alnwick in the 50th year of Alnwick Civic Society.
- 14th May:** Spanner in the works? How to ensure that the planning system helps to protect the best of Alnwick, without being seen as putting a spanner in the works. A panel discussion with representatives from three National Amenity Societies (See page 6).
- 14th June:** Summer outing to Felton. To include a visit to Felton Park.
- 12th Sept:** “My first year as your MP”, with David Smith MP.
- 12th - 21st Sept** Heritage Open Days.
- 28th Oct:** M. R. G. Conzen's study of Alnwick: the lasting legacy. With Dr Michael Barke. A joint meeting with Alnwick Local History Society.
- November:** Any Questions - a civilised discussion of topical local issues.



Annual General Meeting: Review of 2024

Twenty members attended the AGM on Wednesday 12th

Minutes of 2024 Annual General Meeting were accepted as a true record and there were no matters arising

Chair's report

The Society was founded in 1974 and the chair reviewed a variety of activities in our 50th anniversary year to commemorate the work of members, celebrated what still makes Alnwick special, and strengthened the foundations for our work to continue in future.

In addition to helping with the refresh of the Neighbourhood Plan, members had reviewed 178 planning applications and responded to 25. Welcome developments included work on the Borderline Greenway and refurbishment of the Cemetery Lodge. The most controversial was the new Garden Centre. Common issues include removal of historic features without justification, ill-considered choice of materials in the Conservation Area and inappropriate shopfront design.

The programme of events had included talks on Alnwick's Shrovetide Football; Neighbourhood Planning; the Northumberland Coast National Landscape; the Housing Challenge and the future of Alnwick High Street. We commemorated the 200th anniversary of Alnwick Mechanics' Institute, held an enjoyable Social Evening at Barter Books; a tour of Northumberland Archives; and a memorable Evening with John Grundy. Heritage Open Day was well supported, with record numbers visiting St Mary's Chantry House on Walkergate, General Lambert's House on Narrowgate and other venues around town. We supported both the visit of 200 cyclists to Alnwick by the UK Tandem Club's National Rally and the Christmas Tree Festival at St Michael's Church.

Heritage is a great way for young people to discover links between their surroundings and the wider world, so it was gratifying and enjoyable to work with St Michael's (now Harry Hotspur) Primary School; the Duchess's Community High School, and to explore Alnwick's built heritage with French Exchange Students and their hosts.

General Lambert's House and Bondgate Tower both remain on Historic England's list of Heritage at Risk, and the best we can say for now is that the assessment of their condition has got no worse. We continue to monitor other vulnerable heritage across the town, tracking some 80 issues with the Town Council. Some have been resolved, but a similar number added, so the list gets no shorter. Nevertheless, coverage is more complete and we are better placed to progress the more urgent issues.

During 2024 we reviewed our policies to stay in line with new recommendations from the Charity Commission. We like to think that our relationships are in good order with heritage organisations and other local stakeholders, with the wider Civic Movement and with elected members and officers in Alnwick Town Council and Northumberland County Council. So we look forward confidently to the year ahead with the support of the committee, trustees, members and friends of the society.

Treasurer's Report

Financially the Society remains in good health. The treasurer's financial statement showed that assets at 31st

December 2024 amounted to £6,204.13. For 2024 the committee determined that the society was in a financial position where it should support an increase in activities and commitments, for example by continuing to utilize the ring-fenced Heritage Awareness Fund for projects such as Heritage Open Day and a Woodhorn Archive visit. Overall, this meant that expenses for the year exceeded revenue by £1,394.78 leaving, in the committee's view, a more appropriate carry forward figure.

The society continues to work towards rationalizing its banking arrangements to provide improved online banking facilities. As most members now pay their subs into the online account it should be possible to run down and close the old branch account in the foreseeable future.

This year we welcomed 14 new members to the Society and continued the work to ensure our existing membership database was up to date. Overall, membership went up a little from 106 to 115 individuals in total, with members' subs providing a significant proportion of our annual income (£786.50 out of a total of £1,561.37).

Election of trustees

Our president, Peter Ennor explained that each year, the constitution requires that at least one of the four trustees stands down, though they can be re-elected. Tim Smith offered to stand down and to be re-elected. This was agreed by the members present, so the four trustees continue in post: Gill Parker, Sue Smith (Honorary Secretary), Tim Smith (Treasurer) and Pete Reed (Chair).

Other Business

There followed a discussion on when it might be appropriate to review subscription levels with a view to increasing income, and such a review might take place when the bank accounts had been rationalised.

A question was asked from the floor about what was happening to General Lambert's House. Pete Reed understood that the owners were planning to go ahead with their original proposals. More information might be forthcoming when discussions about Heritage Open Days commenced.

The AGM business was followed by a talk by Jean Humphrys of Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery about plans for the future.

Bailiffgate Museum

Jean explained that grant aid had enabled feasibility studies and surveys to be carried out into the possible relocation of the museum into the Northumberland Hall, a historic building in the centre of the town. Planning permission had been secured but the condition of the building was a major issue. It had suffered internal and external damage from the weather and a huge amount of work was required before the move could proceed.

If the relocation did go ahead, it would increase significantly the amount of display space available to the museum to share the history of the town with residents and visitors. It could accommodate both national and local exhibitions. Space for community activities would be provided as well as more space for volunteers, admin and archives. It would help to put the museum at the heart of the community.

Rock: A Centre for English Art (by Bev Joicey)

Hardly a well-known fact but 20th Century English art owes something to the quiet village of Rock, the small village just up the road from Alnwick. It was here that Lady Helen Sutherland, rented the house and brought together as guests some of the most influential British artists of the Thirties to exhibit and talk about their work.

Here painters such as Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, David Jones, Alfred Wallis and Christopher Wood were brought together.

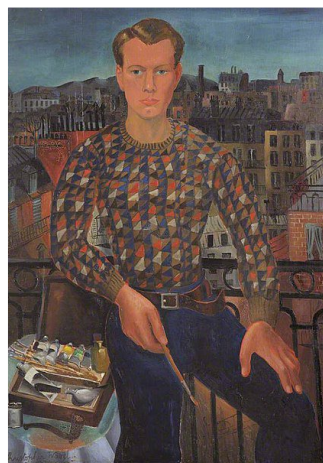
It was their work that was hung on the walls of this somewhat austere and rather bleak looking building but, over time, such work pointed the way much English and, most possibly Western Art, was to develop. All the artists she invited recognised the simple quality to be found in just that which surrounded them. Their choice of subject matter, their subdued use of colour, and their quiet interpretation of



Ben and Winifred Nicholson

what they looked at captured a very English quality. And such work implied the direction much art was likely to flow in the second half of the 20th Century. They had all observed the experience of the Great War. Some, such as the painter and writer David Jones, had lived through that war first hand, observing the destruction and chaos that new technology had brought to the battlefields of Europe – of which some pre-war artists had originally applauded.

Petite but tough, Helen Sutherland was the only surviving child of Sir Thomas Sutherland, founder of HSBC as both her older brothers had died - one in the Boer War and the other in the Great War. Brought up in Hampshire where she was introduced to the traditional life prescribed for 19th century Victorian ladies. But, after school in Barnet and then The Assumption of Our Lady in Paris, and marrying an aspiring politician, she never committed herself to an anticipated life of 'balls, dancing, and Society gatherings'. Instead, after an early divorce, she filled her life with 'art... supporting artists and writers....filling her rural (life) with their artworks' and, most important, meeting people. It was people she liked more than just their production.



Christopher Wood

When reaching early forties, a productive relationship with friends led her to 'Modern Art'. Initially she visited the small London Galleries, buying work by artists such as Seurat, Courbet and Derain, and British work by Paul Nash, Cedric

Morris and Duncan Grant but, as a later friend spotted, she came to enjoy just meeting and talking with the artists. An early picture she bought was a Seurat, which she described as 'a tiny picture but so lovely, simple and full of significance...' adding, 'such loveliness in the shadows and the air and spirit over it all.' And she came to give her artist friends her complete attention. She would always seek out the meaning of the work – change though it may. But, as Oliver Kilbourn, one of the Ashington painters wrote. 'She didn't like pictures that had a lot of colour...she liked pictures that were more or less greyish,'



Barbara Hepworth

She was an early supporter of the Pitman's Group and they accepted her invitation to visit, cycling the 25 miles up to Rock to spend time with her. Later, she organised the Group to visit London to see The Royal Academy, National Gallery, the Tate and Hampton court. 'We have soldiered for a while in a goodly land....and have companioned with people of our own mind and our souls wax strong within us.' Arthur Whinnom, Secretary of the Ashington Miners' Group, who become a lifelong friend to her.

Sutherland had described her home as having a 'rather Abbess-like feeling in this Abbey-like house of Rock'. But it was a 'decadent, comfortable Regency era manor house'. Her homes were described as 'havens' – spotless places with 'a Winifred Nicholson landscape, a vase by William Staite Murray, Ben Nicholsons at every turn, and David Joneses by the dozen. She gave Jones a room that overlooked the Church opposite which he painted. She also commissioned Ben 'to design an offertory box, Barbara Hepworth an alter cloth' and, from Leslie Martin, a new rectory. However, there were house rules - no muddy boots and she was always first to read the daily Times. Food was good, (though 'only one slice of ginger cake' was allowed at tea) and 'T.S.Eliot commented on the quality of her white currant jam'.



David Jones

The work she applauded, the simple, straight forward quality she identified never left her. 'Looking back on her life she reflected that (her) friendships with artists and poets had been a miracle'. As she said she became 'a king of family life given from above'.

And there it all is – just up the road in Rock, but no Mister Mills, her chauffeur and the Rolls Royce to take you there. You have to make your own way.

Farmsteads and landscapes

A few years ago Historic England published detailed statements on traditional farmsteads and farm buildings for each of England's National Character Areas. They were developed to show how the character of farm buildings relates to the surrounding landscape. Some of that background may enhance enjoyment of the two National Character Areas that surround Alnwick.

This is just a summary. See <https://tinyurl.com/323f4xbf> for the full detail and the other National Character Areas.

North Northumberland Coastal Plain

The North Northumberland Coastal Plain fringes the North Sea between Berwick-Upon-Tweed and Amble. Just 4% is urban area and only 3% is woodland. 24% of the land falls within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Extensive settlement in the Romano-British and prehistoric period was followed by contraction then reorganisation from the 12th century. Cross-border conflict left a legacy of fortified buildings and castles.

The area has been dominated by arable cultivation since the medieval period. By the 19th century it was important for fattening of sheep and cattle that had been reared in the uplands. Their manure, the application of lime and crop rotation helped improve productivity. Improvements to the road network and the development of coastal ports enabled grain export. Coastal towns and villages developed around fishing, trade in agricultural produce, lime and coal. Quarries and collieries are scattered across the area.

From the 1840s the railway opened new markets and supplies of materials such as Welsh slate. It also stimulated the development of ports and seaside resorts. When the price of wheat fell in the 1870s there was increased emphasis on production of milk and beef.

Large estates dominate Northumberland and have influenced the landscape from the medieval period. A first phase of enclosure in the 16th to 18th centuries was followed by a second phase in the late 18th and 19th centuries. .

Large farmsteads typically date from the late 18th century. Estates were being reorganised. Production of livestock was increasing, and this required new buildings, typically arranged around a courtyard. The area's agricultural buildings from the late 18th and 19th century are of national significance and a testament to early mechanisation, agricultural improvement, the growing importance of stock and milk production. Earlier phases of building from the 12th to 13th centuries were swept away, leaving earthworks, abandoned settlements,

and evidence of earlier cultivation (medieval ridge and furrow, and earlier cord rig)

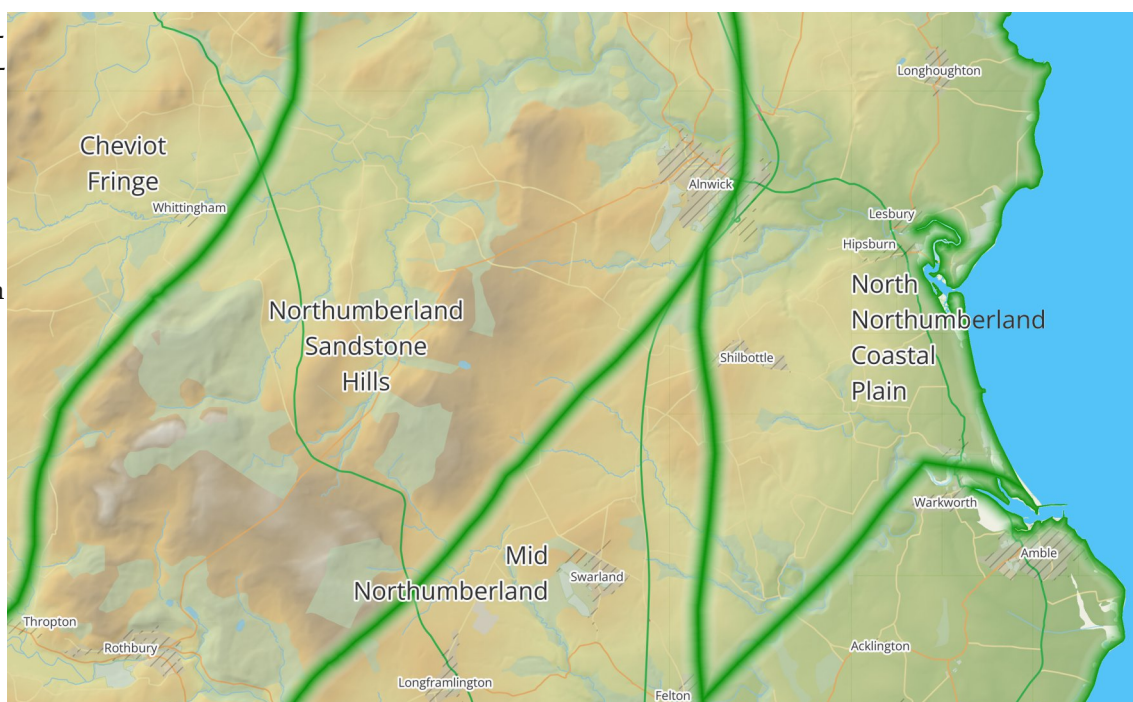
Northumberland Sandstone Hills

The Northumberland Sandstone Hills extend in a wide, north-south arc across the county, separating the vales of the Cheviot Fringe from the Northumberland coastal plain. A plateau landscape, covered mainly by moorland and improved pasture, this area also includes a range of other landscape features. Less than 1% is urban and almost 15% is forested. 15% lies in the Northumberland National Park.

The area was dominated by arable cultivation in the 12th to 14th centuries, and then mixed farming with an emphasis on rearing and fattening of cattle and sheep for meat and wool.

Peel towers mostly date from the 13th to 15th century, though some are later. Defensible bastles, where the lower floor was used to house animals and the upper floor for domestic use, were built in the late 16th and 17th centuries. The Union of the Crowns in 1603 paved the way for more settled border conditions, including an increase in the droving trade in cattle from Scotland and improvements in pasture and arable production. However, Bastles continued to be built into the 17th century, as the threat from border reivers continued. Land continued to be farmed in common with tenants' holdings intermixed in strip fields into the 18th century. From the late 18th century, an increase in arable, especially wheat, was sustained by the application of lime and farmyard manure, the folding of sheep in the fields and crop rotations using turnips, which were well suited to the deep fertile soils of the area. This was accompanied by rationalisation and enlargement of farm holdings. From the 1870s the growing of wheat declined, there was more emphasis on cattle and milk, while industrial wealth helped to sustain large estates with extensive parkland.

Some field boundaries remain from earlier piecemeal enclosure. However, farmsteads mostly relate to regular enclosure by dry stone walls in the later 18th to 19th centuries. They are very large in a national context, and built around one or more yards for cattle, and associated with housing for workers and



Farmsteads and landscapes: continued....

often a grievance (manager). Many estates were in the forefront of agricultural improvement. For example, architects David Stephenson and John Green designed new farmsteads for the Duke of Northumberland between 1805 and 1833.

Coal mining developed across the sandstone moorlands in the 18th and 19th centuries.

In this area there is exceptionally high survival of traditional farmsteads, mostly built or rebuilt in the 19th century and including many built to an industrial scale, within a landscape which retains visible evidence of land use and settlement from the prehistoric period. The transformation of such an extensive landscape is highly significant in a national context.

Today

Changing agricultural practice means that traditional farm buildings are becoming redundant at an accelerating pace. These Historic England reports suggest that in Northumberland's Sandstone Hills more than average are showing signs of disrepair (11.1%, compared to a national average of 7.5%).

Nationally 32% of listed farm buildings are being converted to



Park Farm, Hulne Park by John and Benjamin Green (1832)

Photo: Historic England

non-agricultural use. On the Northumberland Coast these Historic England reports showed a lower proportion (16.7%). In the Northumberland Sandstone Hills the sample was too small to be meaningful. However, both of those estimates are now more than a decade old. Much has changed in the last ten years. In view of the national significance of built heritage in both of these areas it would be interesting to know what proportion has been converted today.

Alnwick Soup Kitchen: the recipe

For readers who would like to recreate the soup offered by Alnwick Soup Kitchen in the 19th century, Dr Philip Carstairs has kindly interpreted the ingredients from the Minute Book held by Bailiffgate Museum and provided some guidance on how to proceed.

Please let us know how it goes.

For 120 gallons of soup:

- 100 gallons of water
- 9½ stone of beef
- 1 stone of flour
- 4 stone barley
- 1 stone whole peas
- 6 oz pepper
- 2 pecks onions (20 lbs)
- 1 bushel turnips (55 lbs)

- 2 stone carrots
- Leeks or parsnips as they can be got (assumed to be 1 stone of each)
- a little thyme or marjoram
- 2 stone potatoes
- 1 stone salt

Use any cheap beef. The recipes rarely tell you what to do but standard practice was to simmer / slow cook the beef for about 4 hours and soak the peas and barley then add everything and simmer for another 4 hours (sometimes the peas and barley are put in a muslin bag until they are cooked to mush to avoid them sticking or boiling over). It needs constant stirring or the peas will catch.

This works out as 562 calories per quart (a little below the soup kitchen average). However, in 1902 the Alnwick Kitchen accidentally used 20% more beef, which apparently was much appreciated!



Vulnerable heritage: nominate your priorities for the coming year

It is now two years since we began monitoring Alnwick's most vulnerable heritage. The number of outstanding issues has come down from a peak of more than eighty, to just over sixty. We have gained a better understanding of the issues that owners face. Responsible owners have been setting a good example to their neighbours. When new issues arise they are dealt with more quickly. There is a stronger support network in place and the County Council is more involved.

So we have been making progress, but there is plenty still to do. Two proposals are being considered for the coming year:

- **Using the Neighbourhood Plan to formalise the way that Alnwick's vulnerable heritage is handled.** This will help the Town Council to allocate the necessary resources. It will mean that when developments address vulnerable heritage, this can be treated as a consideration in planning decisions. Many issues are resolved quickly once owners are aware of the

concern and a formal process will help achieve visibility by ensuring that outstanding issues are regularly reviewed.

- **Agreeing a shortlist of priorities.** The most complex issues take time to resolve and it is difficult to maintain momentum when resources are spread thinly. With coordinated action on the highest priorities it should be possible to achieve tangible progress on the most urgent issues.

We think that such a shortlist should include examples where there is a risk of heritage being lost forever unless action is taken, and prioritise examples where a notable building is in such poor condition that it harms the character of the town centre. We already have six examples in mind, but we would rather present a collective view. So we are inviting members to share their own shortlist of six critical issues. Simply email contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk with your ranked list.

National Amenity Societies

The National Amenity Societies are voluntary heritage organisations, dedicated to preserving and promoting understanding of our historic environment. They focus on protecting buildings and structures of archaeological, historical, architectural, and artistic interest. Each takes a particular interest in a different aspect of the historic environment and the specialised knowledge of their volunteers and professional staff is recognised in various aspects of the planning system.

In addition to their role in the planning system, each of the National Amenity Societies can boast an active membership that contributes to their charitable aims through a mix of events, lectures, conferences, publications and field trips. They also provide advice on heritage assets to Local Planning Authorities, owners, developers, architects, local groups, etc.

The role of six Amenity Societies in the planning system is covered by the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act:

- Historic Buildings & Places
(formerly the Ancient Monuments Society)
- The Council for British Archaeology
- The Georgian Group
- The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
- The Victorian Society
- The Twentieth Century Society

The government is currently consulting on the role of statutory consultees in the planning system. They want to promote growth and unblock building; focus on heritage, safety and environmental protection. However, at present there are two other organisations with a statutory role in the planning system under different legislation:

- The Gardens Trust (formerly the Garden History Society)
- The Theatres Trust.

The six Amenity Societies must be consulted on planning applications that involve demolition or partial demolition of a listed building. However, applications for total demolition of a listed building are rare. In practice most notifications involve alterations and extensions with an element of demolition. This inevitably raises questions about when the National Amenity

Societies need to be informed. Some planning authorities are said to notify every application for Listed Building Consent (however minor the works); while others never forward any applications. Guidance produced by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) suggests there is a lack of clarity about which alterations should be reported and difficulties in assessing the nature of the works at an early stage in the process: particularly where the building has a complex history.

Amenity Societies must be consulted, and their expert advice considered, but their advice is not binding. The planning authority has the final decision-making power. However, they face legal and reputational risks if they do not give appropriate weight to specialist advice. IHBC has found evidence from Judicial Review and Ombudsman cases to suggest that sometimes the views of conservation specialists and National Amenity Societies are not given sufficient weight.

The Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies brings the national societies together. They meet regularly and members work closely with other organisations in the same field including public-sector bodies (such as Historic England), and organisations representing professional memberships and property owners.

There is a database of National Amenity Society casework here: <https://casework.jcnas.org.uk/>

Examples of some of their recent interventions in Alnwick include:

- The Theatres Trust supported the grant of advertisement consent for digital signage at Alnwick Playhouse
- The Gardens Trust raised concerns over the impact of the Lillidorei Play Village on the historic landscape around Alnwick Castle
- In a non-statutory role, the Georgian Society raised concerns over demolition of Park Cottage in Hulne Park (not listed).
- The Georgian Society expressed concern over the loss of windows at Barndale School

Historic Buildings and Places <https://hbap.org.uk/>

Concerned with listed building cases of all periods, but does not advise or comment on works to scheduled ancient monuments or archaeology

Council for British Archaeology <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/>

Campaign for archaeology above and below ground. Concerned with archaeological evidence likely to be contained within the fabric or site.

The Georgian Group <https://georgiangroup.org.uk/>

Founded in 1937, campaigns for the preservation of historic building fabric and fittings and designed landscapes dating from between 1700 and 1837.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

<https://www.spab.org.uk/>

The oldest conservation organisation in the UK, founded in 1877 by William Morris and others. Concerned with pre-1720 buildings, repair methods, craft techniques, sustainability and good new design.

The Victorian Society <https://www.victoriansociety.org.uk/>

Founded in 1958, by John Betjeman, Nikolaus Pevsner, and

others. Concerned with buildings of all kinds containing fabric and fittings, from 1837 to 1914. This includes the Edwardian era up to the first World War.

The Twentieth Century Society <https://c20society.org.uk/>

Founded 1979, in response to growing interest in C20th architecture. Concerned with listed buildings of all kinds containing fabric and fittings, from 1914 up to 30 years ago (and in exceptional cases 10 years ago).

The Gardens Trust <https://thegardenstrust.org/>

Formed in July 2015 following the merger of the Garden History Society and the Association of Gardens Trusts. A statutory consultee in relation to planning proposals affecting historic designed landscapes included on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

The Theatres Trust <https://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/>

Established by the Theatres Trust Act (1976) to promote the protection of theatres and provide statutory planning advice on theatre buildings and use. Planning authorities are required to consult and seek the advice of the Trust on any application involving a theatre, whether a heritage asset or not.

News in Brief

Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement in England, and Rob Hattersley has been appointed



as its new Chief Executive Officer. Rob is an experienced charity CEO, with a background in teaching, and was a committee member on Hereford Civic Society for several years.

The Civic Voice web site is also evolving: <https://civicvoice.org.uk/>

The work of architects generally precedes construction, so regular surveys by the Royal Institute of British Architects can provide useful pointers to the trends we might expect in future.

Construction experienced a decline in 2024, but architects started to anticipate an improvement towards the end of the year and the most recent RIBA survey reports the first increase in work for several months. That includes practices in the North of England, which also expect growing workloads but have seen a slight softening of confidence since the start of 2025.

The outlooks for Private Housing and Commercial work have both improved, and these are currently the sectors showing most positive expectations. Reports of workloads for the Public Sector and the Community Sector are not so positive, but have at least improved.

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

It is well-known that our 15th century Bondgate Tower is on Historic England's "Buildings at Risk" register because of damage caused by vehicle strikes. These require costly repairs and



the resulting disruption has an impact on the town centre economy and quality of life for neighbours. So in 2021 the Civic Society facilitated a series of meetings with key stakeholders (Alnwick Town Council, Historic England, Northumberland Estates and NCC Highways) to consider what might be done to reduce the risks. A traffic study was commissioned to assess the situation and propose measures to prevent further vehicle strikes. By the start of 2023 the study had set out the issues and potential options.

The Bondgate Tower Traffic Management Study can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/3es6avxi>

Some of the recommended signage has recently been implemented.

In recent years Historic England have organised a number of online talks that are aimed at heritage professionals, but covering topics that are of wider interest. Recent examples in the Historic Environment Management series include webinars on Wellbeing and Heritage; Heritage Works for Housing and Building Preservation Notices. Under Decarbonisation of Heating there is a range of material on Heat Pumps in Historic Buildings. The full catalogue can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/4c4b6t5u>

Heritage led regeneration aims to use the unique and distinctive history and character of local places as a catalyst to revitalise communities and the local economy. Historic England has experience of supporting heritage-led regeneration programmes and they have published a Heritage Led Regeneration Toolkit to provide inspiration and advice, and to share the lessons learnt. See <https://tinyurl.com/4hy6ybva>

Historic Environment Scotland has introduced a new web site to help users to search millions of items in their various collections through a single portal.

See <https://www.trove.scot/>

Sustrans have created a Children's Walking and Cycling Index to help understand the behaviours, barriers and attitudes affecting how children walk, wheel and cycle in the UK. They say that children are often overlooked by decision-makers in transport except on journeys to and from school. This leaves



out the role that travel plays in their day-to-day lives, supporting development of their independence, socialisation skills, overall mental health and wellbeing, and reducing the family workload. They are calling for children's needs to be prioritised when councils are planning transport improvements in their area. They hope that by listening to young people, decision-makers can change how they approach children's journeys and make walking, wheeling and cycling a more attractive, and everyday way for children to travel. Transport design that is inclusive for children is safer and more accessible for everyone, giving people a real choice about how they make short journeys in their area.

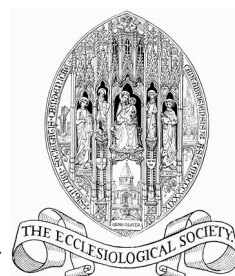
See <https://tinyurl.com/yx5wuthv>

The City of Edinburgh is developing guidance about buildings that are listed or in the Conservation Area. They want to help owners understand what is required for different types of developments. To ensure the content is clear, helpful, and balanced they are carrying out a consultation and working with the University of Edinburgh on a parallel project called "Giving Voices to Historic Property Owners". The whole approach is more ambitious than we could conceive for Alnwick, but surely a step or two in that direction would be useful.

See <https://tinyurl.com/36euf9ra>

The Ecclesiological Society's new web-site contains much of interest to anyone who loves to visit churches, and learn about their history and their architecture.

See <https://www.ecclsoc.org.uk/>.



The Ecclesiological Society

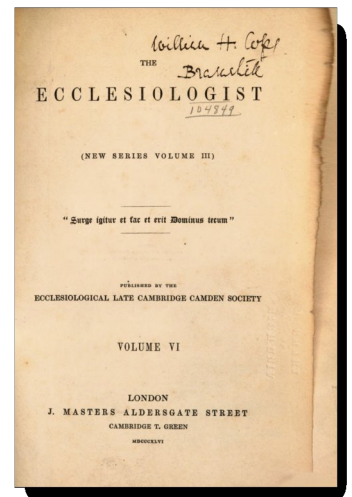
The Cambridge Camden Society was founded in 1839 to promote the study of Gothic Architecture and advocate a return to a medieval style of church architecture in England. In 1845 the society moved to London and was renamed the Ecclesiological Society.

In the middle of the 19th century the society's efforts to recapture the splendour of the Middle Ages had considerable influence on church design. Its journal, *The Ecclesiologist*, was published between 1841 and 1868. Contributors had strong views, and were not afraid to speak their minds. The *Ecclesiologist* combined scholarly articles with trenchant criticism.

After the original society declined, a successor was founded. Still with a focus on church history and historic church architecture the new society adopted the same name. However, the emphasis now was on learning and debate. That successor society still exists and continues to work for enthusiasts with an interest in church history and church architecture. It no longer prescribes rules for church architecture or indulges in forthright criticism. We are grateful for their help with this article.

The reviews below are taken from the 19th century *Ecclesiologist* journal. Links can be found on the new Ecclesiological Society website at <https://www.ecclsoc.org.uk/>

Note: The terms "Middle-pointed" and "Second-pointed" refer to the "Decorated" style of English Gothic Architecture that dates from the late 13th – late 14th centuries. In the 19th century the Ecclesiologist took the view that the chancel was sacred and should be reserved for the clergy and choir. It could be furnished with choir stalls, but pews in the chancel for lay people, even those of high rank, were considered inappropriate.



Review of St Paul's Church, October 1846

This church, now nearly finished, is a fine spacious structure, of Middle-Pointed character, erected and endowed by the Duke of Northumberland; Mr. Salvin being the architect. The plan comprises a lofty nave with aisles and clerestory, a chancel with aisles, a western tower, a north porch, and a sacristy on the south side of the chancel. The roof of the nave has a good high pitch, but as well as those of the aisles, is slated, which impairs the effect, besides which, there are no parapets, a great defect in a church of so grand a scale. The tower also, though lofty, is very plain and poor, having a battlement without spire or pinnacles. The belfry windows are double and long. The west door has a plain triangular canopy with finial, and above it is a two-light Middle-Pointed window. This tower is of far better dimensions than the generality of modern steeples, but we regret that it has not been finished by a spire. The north porch is large; its outer door has fine mouldings and clustered shafts, and is set between two niches. On each side of the porch is a window of a single light. The windows of the aisles of the nave are of two lights, having good tracery of varied character: those of the clerestory are also of two lights, with flattened arches, for which there is authority in this style. The aisles of the chancel are lower than those of the nave, and their side windows have two trefoil-headed lights within a containing arch. The east windows of the aisles are like those in the aisles of

the nave. The east window of the chancel has very fine flowing tracery, and is of five lights and considerable size. The general effect of the interior is very good. The roof is plain but of great elevation. On each side is an arcade of five very lofty well-shaped arches, the piers clustered of eight shafts alternately circular and octagonal, and the capitals with good mouldings. The chancel and tower arches are similar, and over the former is a small rose window. The chancel has an arcade of two arches on each side, lower than those of the nave, but similar in character. Between the aisles of the nave and those of the chancel are arches of nearly triangular form, which, though not without authority, are not very elegant. The chancel will be laid entirely with encaustic tiles, and is to contain stalls for (we are sorry to say) the Duke of Northumberland's family. The nave is fitted with open benches of oak, the standards of which have flat tops, but rising rather too high. They are however solid, and well worked. The chancel extends a little eastward of the aisles, and the timbers of its roof rest on good corbel-heads. The altar is of oak, having three open trefoil-headed arches in front. The font has an octagonal bowl, with wavy tracery, and a band of ball-flowers. It is placed near the west end of the nave. There will be no gallery, except one within the tower for the organ. The nave is to have a wood pavement, which appears to us objectionable. There are crosses on the two east gables. On the whole we must pronounce this church to be really a fine one, notwithstanding the defects mentioned.

Review of Alnwick Castle, February 1860

The renovations at Alnwick Castle, now nearly completed, will soon allow of a decision of the question of taste and fitness involved in this magnificent, but (as we believe) mistaken undertaking. The object of the Duke of Northumberland has been to make the exterior of the castle accurately Middle-Pointed, while the interior is wholly of the most gorgeous Italian Renaissance. One curious thing is

stated by the eulogists of the latter style; and that is, that the windows of the Middle-Pointed age were found to admit quite light and air enough for modern requirements. In the chapel, the Pointed vaulting appears to have been retained or restored; but the internal fittings are said to be of mosaic work, like that of the older Roman basilicas. In this union there need not necessarily be any of the incongruity which, we are persuaded, must exist between the outside and inside of the rest of this princely structure.

Denwick Quarry

Some of the highest quality of stone in this area came from Denwick Quarry which was operational from 1611 (according to Tate) to around 1930. Durham Mining Museum suggests that coal has also been extracted here.

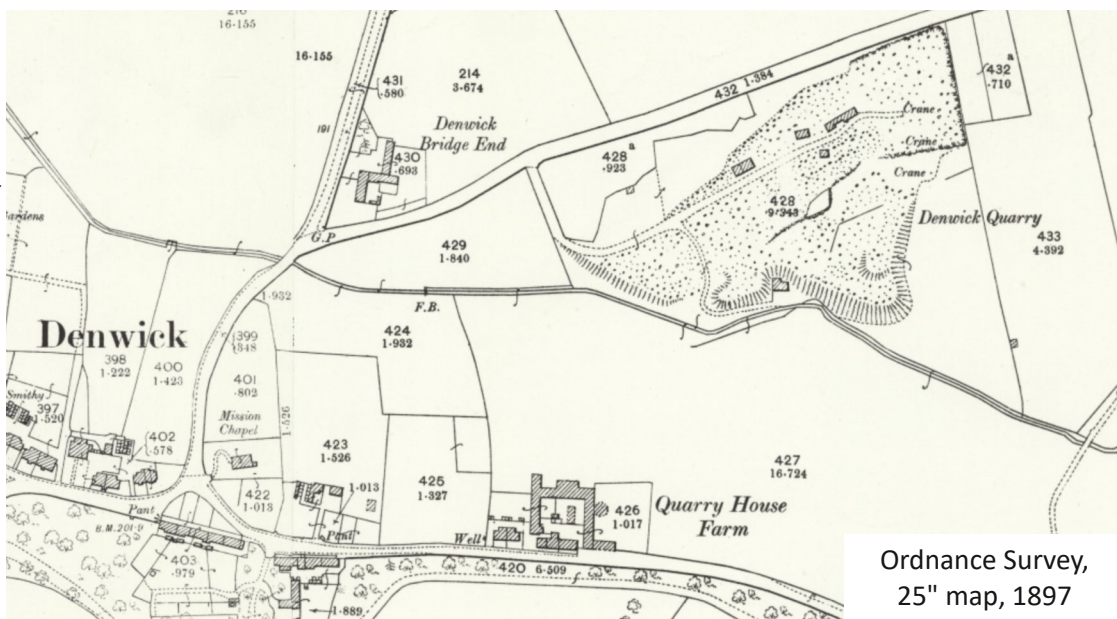
Denwick yielded medium grained sandstone, pale straw to light brown in colour. It was used for walling houses, flagstones, fire surrounds, monuments, millstones, tombs and headstones.

The photograph (bottom), from 1893, shows a dozen men, two horses and two cranes working the quarry.

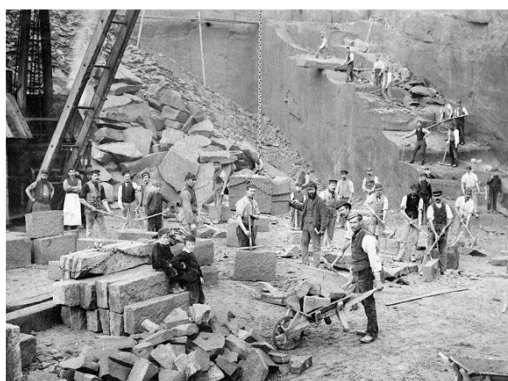
Much of Denwick village was built of stone from here, including a pant (1859), the school (1907), and village bridge (1924).

Denwick Stone was used widely in Alnwick. Examples include Denwick Bridge (1766), the Duke's Grammar School in Green Batt (1810), The White Swan (rebuilt in 1873), The Plough in Bondgate Without (refaced in 1904) and the Infirmary (1906).

Jack Cook, who worked as a stone mason for Alnwick Castle between 1930 and 1970, told Dennis Jackson that most of Canongate Street was built of Denwick Stone.



Ordnance Survey,
25" map, 1897



Denwick Quarry, probably late 19th century (Bailliffgate Collections)



Denwick Quarry (1910) with millstones and headstones in the foreground.

A newspaper article dated 21st October 1891 described the Robertson Fountain (in the town centre) as a monument in Italian Renaissance style which was designed by G Reavell and crafted by six masons from Green and Douglas of Amble for a cost of £234 6s. Two contrasting types of stone were used, namely Denwick sandstone and monumental red Peterhead granite.

Further afield Denwick stone was used for Lesbury school (1817), Shortridge Hall near Warkworth (1898), and Rothbury War Memorial (1920). There were alternative sources closer to Rothbury, but the carver, Thomas Muckle, preferred stone from Denwick. Historic England also records the war memorials at Denwick, Rennington and Eglingham as having used stone from Denwick.

In Newcastle, Denwick stone was able to compete with Springwell stone from Gateshead, and was used for part of the Hancock Museum, Dial House in Northumberland Street and Trinity House on the Quayside. In Sunderland, Denwick stone was used for the Post Office.

After the quarry closed the site was used for landfill.

With thanks to Dinah McIlroy and Neville Longstaff who directed us to work by Dennis Jackson on Alnwick's building stone. This article draws on his paper "Building stones of the district around Alnwick, Northumberland" published in Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria Vol 60 Part 3 pp 101-114

Planning Matters

At 3, Lisburn Street the chimney has been identified as being in a dangerous condition and permission has been granted for like-for-like repair. This is one of a matching pair, and the other, at 5 Lisburn Street has recently been repaired to a high standard. Built Heritage and Design had no objection provided the rebuilt chimney matches its partner, and we submitted a similar comment.

The Salvation Army in Hotspur Street has been granted permission to replace single glazed Crittall windows with uPVC double glazed windows, and to block one window. As the building is within the conservation area the Town Council asked that the front facing windows are wooden framed. We did not feel this was necessary. The application relates to minor works on an unlisted building so Built Heritage and Design officers chose not to comment.

17 Bondgate Without is the Butterworth Dentist Surgery. They have applied for Listed building consent to replace windows, remove and repoint gable end mortar and install a handrail. Although the application includes a comprehensive design statement we did not feel that it included a justification for replacement, rather than repair of the windows, and we objected on that basis. Built Heritage and Design had no objection to the pointing or handrail, but they also objected to window replacement on the basis that replacement caused less than substantial harm, and needed justification. The Town Council objected and expressed support for our comments and those of the Built Heritage and Design team.

Proposals for the Cobbles have now been published. They include: lifting, cleaning and relaying of historic cobble stones; resurfacing the existing hard standing across car park area; re-profil-

ing the cobbled car parking area; improvements to car parking arrangements and facilities on-site; rationalisation and improvement of infrastructure including signage, bollards, bench seating and street lighting; introduction of new landscape features including a rain garden, alongside retention and protection of existing mature features; introduction of new footway to Southern edge of Market Street/Bondgate Within and associated narrowing/resurfacing of carriageway at this point; repair works to two listed pants.

This is one of the most significant applications for the town centre in recent times. A considerable amount of work has gone into developing this proposal and that is reflected in a comprehensive set of documents and detailed responses from statutory consultees that recognise the historic importance of the area.

We look forward to seeing the work completed.

There was a proposal for change of use from agriculture to a dog walking field on land west of Somerset Avenue. This attracted a number of objections from neighbours who were concerned about loss of amenity. We commented that landscape and biodiversity also needs to be considered. and that the information provided is not very clear on these matters. Northumberland Wildlife Trust provided a more detailed comment relating to barn owls, arboricultural impact, and lighting. They suggested measures for habitat mitigation that include owl boxes, thickening and heightening of hedgerows, the addition of locally native species, including standard trees, to diversify, fill gaps, and/or increase the depth of the hedges, and a margin between the hedge and dog fencing to provide some habitat along the hedgerows.

The application now seems to have been withdrawn.

There is a Notification of Prior Approval of demolition for the terrace of cottages and outbuilding at Greensfield Farm. A previous application to demolish and rebuild was refused – partly on the basis that the proposal required demolition and thereby total loss of this row of cottages, which are considered a non-designated heritage asset. It was felt then that the proposed development failed to secure substantial public benefits to outweigh the loss.

We regret the loss of these cottages, and find it odd that the planning system is able to refuse demolition when there is a proposal for replacement, but cannot in a situation like this, where there is no associated proposal for replacement. But apparently that's how the system works, so we felt unable to offer any response that would be helpful.

We also considered applications for a new heating system at 8 Bondgate Court, the separation of Grove House into a single dwelling and a separate holiday cottage, maintenance work at 14, Walkergate and a revised proposal for French windows and doors at Loan End on Argyle Terrace. We did not feel that any of these raised issues of concern so did not comment.

Recent decisions of note include approval for the conversion of the Methodist Chapel to a dwelling, approval for the demolition of Park Cottage, and approval for demolition of part of the former Hardy factory on South Road.



Quiz: Bridges

Newcastle is famous for its bridges, and two of them are Grade-1 listed. One is the medieval bridge that crosses the Ouseburn. The other is Robert Stephenson's High-Level Bridge that has carried road and rail traffic across the Tyne since 1849.

In Alnwick we have Denwick Bridge of 1766, the Lion Bridge of 1775 and Canongate Bridge of 1821. All are Grade-1 listed. (oddly, until 2020 Canongate Bridge was listed twice, but one of those entries has now been removed).

So Alnwick currently has three Grade-1 bridges. Newcastle has two. And we win.

All of Alnwick's Grade-1 listed bridges are included here, along with five others. Your time has come to shine. How many of these do you recognise? And which are listed?

When times get rough, and friends just can't be found you might like to check your answers on the back page. It might ease your mind...



Diary dates

1st April – 11th May: Alnwick through the lens exhibition, Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery.

14th May: Panel discussion: Protecting what's special about Alnwick, or a spanner in the works? Panel discussion with three amenity societies. St James Church.

14th June: Summer outing to Felton. Including visit to Felton Park.

12th Sept: My first year as your MP, with David Smith MP.

12th - 21st Sept: Heritage Open Days.

28th Oct: The lasting legacy of M. R. G. Conzen's study of Alnwick with Dr Michael Barke. Joint meeting with Alnwick Local History Society.

November: Any Questions - civilised discussion of topical local issues.

And more...

1st May: Northumberland County Council election. This will be the first under Alnwick's new ward boundaries.

Book Talks at Alnwick Castle.

See Alnwick Castle website at <https://tinyurl.com/mpec99s4> for details and tickets. Or search for Alnwick Castle on Eventbrite.

10th May: art historian and presenter of BBC Four's Britain's Lost Masterpieces, Bendor Grosvenor, will be speaking about his new book. The Invention of British Art looks at the story of British art from prehistory up to the 19th century.

13th June: food historian and a regular on Radio 4's The Kitchen Table and You're Dead To Me, Annie Gray, will be speaking about her latest book, The Bookshop, The Draper, The Candlestick Maker: A History of the High Street.

9th July: bestselling historical novelist Alison Weir returns to Alnwick Castle to speak about The Cardinal: The Secret Life of Thomas Wolsey. The book tells the story of Wolsey's rise to power and tragic fall in the court of Henry VIII.

23rd September: historian and broadcaster Tracy Borman returns to Alnwick Castle to speak about The Stolen Crown: Treachery, Deceit and the Death of the Tudor Dynasty. The book explores the secret truth behind the end of the Tudor period.

Each talk will include a display of rarely seen items from the castle archive.

HospiceCare North Northumberland Open Gardens

15th June: Etal Manor, Etal

29th June: Lesbury Village

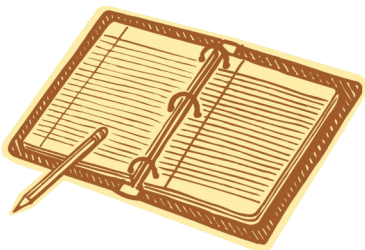
12th July: Longhoughton Village

2nd August: The Friary, Alnmouth

14th September: Adderstone House, Belford

5th October: Blagdon Hall

For full details and bookings see www.hospicecare-nn.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.



Who's Who?

President: Peter Ennor

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

Web: www.alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Email: contact@alnwickcivicsociety.org.uk

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

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

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

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

Substack: alnwickcivicsociety.substack.com

Charity registration number: 1197235

Heritage at risk: report your concerns here:

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



Quiz Answers

(H) Iron Bridge in Huline Park
(M) Manufactured by I. & T. Cookson of Newcastle in 1812, Grade II* listed

(D) Borderline Greenway, at Greensfield (2024)
(E) Footbridge in Cawledge Woods (Calishes), across Cawledge Burn
(F) Lion Bridge (1773 by either John or Robert Adam, Grade-I listed)

(A) Greenrigg Bridge on the Aln Valley Railway (1850)
(B) Canongate Bridge (1821, Grade-I listed)
(C) Denwick Bridge (1766 perhaps by Robert Mylne, Grade-I listed)