

The Berwick Civic Society

is a Registered Charity
(No. 508953)

Website:
www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Office Bearers 2021 - 2022

Chairman Ian Dods
Vice-Chairman TBA
Hon. Treasurer Michael Gallico
Hon. Secretary Anne Humphrey
Membership Secretary ... Bob Humphrey

Executive Committee

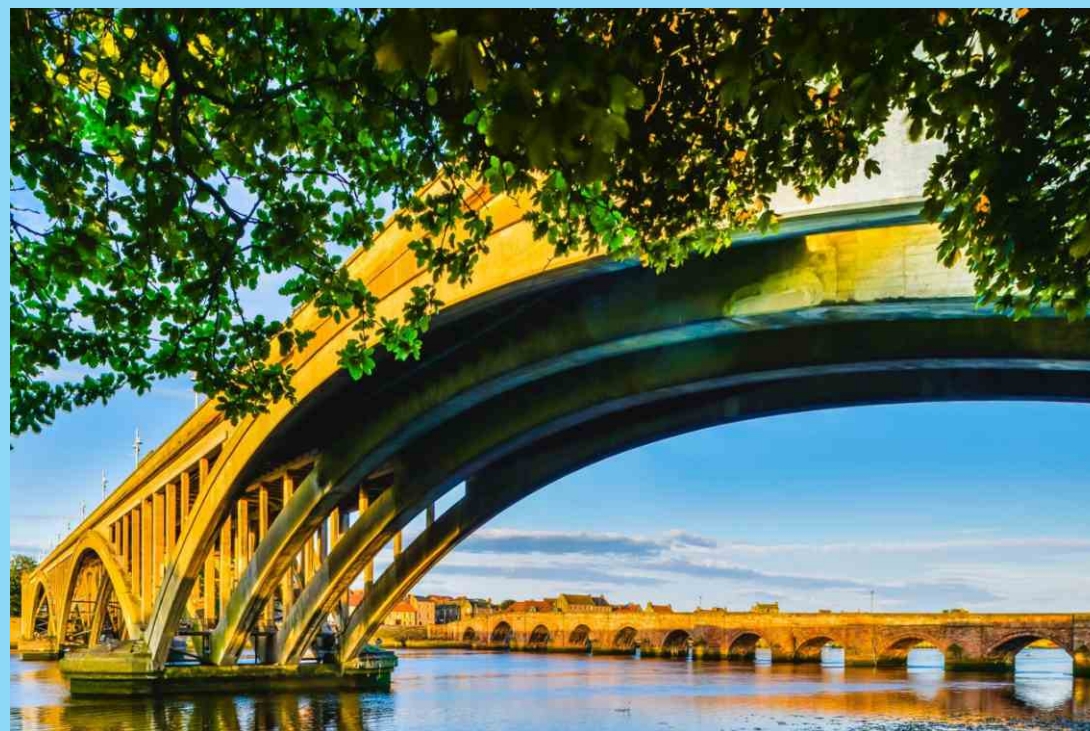
Cheryl Bee
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Brian Gowthorpe
(Chairman, Planning and Development Committee)
Georgina Hill

Please feel free to email any Officer of the Society using:

contact@berwickcivicsociety.org.uk

Membership application can be made from the website
using the 'Join Us' link.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED
CIVIC SOCIETY



Summer NEWSLETTER

2021

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CIVIC SOCIETY NEWS

Hello members,

July 19th is approaching when we hope that the Society can get back to normal with all our activities and meetings.

Firstly, we must wish that the new Berwick-upon-Tweed Civic Party has a successful and enjoyable year. The new Mayor is Cllr Alan Bowlas with Mayoress Mrs Jo Bowlas, the Sheriff is the Rev Canon Alan Hughes with Sheriff's Lady Mrs Susan Hughes. All are members of the Civic Society.

During the lockdown Berwick has not stood still - developments on projects have gone ahead and many visitors are enjoying what the town has to offer.

Construction is well under way on the new leisure centre and hospital. Major investment (£40 million) has been agreed for the much needed new school building programme and a design competition will be launched soon for the new Maltings - investment achieved through the Borderlands Growth Initiative.

Action plans are being drawn up in relation to the long term sustainability of the Barracks and the important

work of major improvement to the High Street, particularly Marygate.

Significant improvements continue to be made at the Berwick Port with the first cruise ship to the town expected on July 21st, the second on July 22nd with others booked for later in the Summer.

It is expected that tourism will continue to grow here, as with much of Northumberland, and the post-Covid landscape presents many opportunities for towns such as ours. The property market here is currently extremely buoyant.

It is also expected that soon a land train will be weaving around the town - connecting Berwick, Tweedmouth and Spittal!

The Civic Society has also been quite active despite the Covid restrictions. The Planning and Development committee, under the excellent chairmanship of Brian Gowthorpe, has been responding to many planning applications - some of them quite controversial.

We have managed to have two Zoom meetings - reports are included in this Newsletter.

Our school awards were presented

recently after a break to Longridge Towers School, Berwick Academy and to a third new organisation, Engage, a highly regarded, alternative education provider.

We hope to have The Main Guard open later in the Summer in August and September. Our AGM will take place on 26th of July and an information sheet and nomination form is enclosed.

After two years as Chairman Ian Dods has retired from the position. Thanks is due to him for the work he did for the Society. Also Michael Gallico has indicated that he wishes to retire as the Hon. Treasurer after the AGM but he will remain on the Executive Committee.

Michael has been an outstanding Treasurer for five years and we are very grateful to him for all he has accomplished for the Society and to him and Alison for hosting the Christmas Party in 2018 in their home.

In addition to our reports, Michael Cullen and Sandra Gann have written interesting and amusing pieces.

Best wishes to all our members - have an enjoyable Summer and we hope to see many of you soon.

HON. SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2021

When I took on the role of Honorary Secretary never in my wildest dreams did I think that we would be hit by a pandemic! Although the Civic Society went quiet and we were unable to open the Main Guard, the Executive Committee have been working behind the scenes.

When the idea of Zoom meetings was mooted, the Committee were determined to make this happen. Zoreen was at our helm obtaining Speakers on our behalf and we are extremely grateful to her for all her hard work. I had the simple job of emailing those on the email list and I have enjoyed corresponding with some of you. It was pleasing to know how well received the talks were and made it all worthwhile.

Zoom enables some of our co-workers within the Alnwick Civic Society to join our meetings and it has forged stronger links which can only be good for our two towns. Hopefully, it will strengthen our voices to be heard and listened to at Northumberland County Council.

The Civic Society's email account is back and running once again. If you do email, it will be directed to the relevant person on the Executive Committee.

If you are not on the email list and wish to be, please let me know.

As we come into the Summer months, may we once again be able to meet in person and enjoy one another's company.
Till we meet again.

Anne Humphrey

HON. TREASURER'S REPORT FOR 2021

The Society ended the year in good shape financially considering the circumstances, with assets of £33,229 including £30,970 in the bank accounts, an increase of £8,949 during the year (after adjustments for creditors and debtors). Our income was only £1693 (subscriptions £1373, bank interest £149, meetings £156, publications £15) whilst our outgoings were £2385 (donations £756, administration £816 (of which insurance is £370), meetings £117 and Main Guard £688 [water and electricity standing charges were £194 alone]). So one might have expected a deficit of £692, before we lost the income from sales of publications and donations at the Main Guard (£2221 in 2019), meetings and party.

So how was this financial turnaround achieved? The Main Guard is assessed for business rates of ca £2400 p.a. but until March 2020 we received a 100% rebate for charitable use. I had to re-apply for this rebate for 2020 onwards and it was judged that the Society does not do enough outreach and education. The rebate was reduced to 80%, after some to-and-fro increased to 90%, so the £688 for Main Guard costs includes

£238 paid in 2020.

In every cloud there is a silver lining which in our case came in August last year when all payers of business rates were invited to apply to Northumberland County Council for a Covid-19 Relief Grant. I applied, noting our shortfall in income, and was surprised (to say the least) when NCC awarded the minimum £10,000 grant, which is a 4100% return on the £238 paid in rates. I could have spent a long time at Kelso Races and achieved a worse return! The Executive Committee has applied this in two ways: to offset the deficit in 2020-2022 (as we do not expect much Main Guard income, if any, this year at least) and to create a specific fund for publications and events. The Society has already contributed to the cost of Spittal Improvement Trust's two "Secret Spittal" books.

During the year the Society signed a new three-year licence to occupy the Main Guard, which includes the right to use the Magazine and the New Tower (with English Heritage's permission) for events such as Heritage Open Days. We shall have to spend some of our 'recovery' fund on redecoration.

One change for 2021 onwards has been to put the accounts on to a cash basis, without year-end creditors and debtors which have confused me and our 'auditors' every year since 2016. On which note, five years of keeping any society's books is long enough and I have let the Executive Committee know that I wish to stand down as Honorary Treasurer this Summer – volunteer welcome!

Michael Gallico

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2021

Membership numbers have remained steady during last year and so far this year which, given the various constraints put upon all of us by Covid-19, is very pleasing. Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership for 2021 and to those who are new members of the society too.

One thing that we have all learned is how important and valuable electronic communication is. We have held a small number of events online using Zoom, and also several of our sub-committee meetings. In order to let everyone know about future events it is really helpful for us to have your current email address. Many of you have already done this, but for those who haven't please let me know your email address

and I'll update our records. You can also check the address we currently hold for you, together with your other information, online at <https://membermojo.co.uk/berwickcs>. If there is anything incorrect please let me know. My email address is bobhumphrey01@aol.com.

I would also like to remind members that we have a vacancy for the role of Treasurer. If you are interested in taking on this role please let us know, either before the forthcoming AGM, or on the day in person. This is a very important role for us as it is for any organisation, so we are keen to fill the role as soon as we can.

Bob Humphrey
Membership Secretary.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Civic Society has reviewed about 35 planning applications so far this year and has commented on the majority of these. Wherever possible we try to be supportive; towns need to change and adapt to have an economic future but sometimes proposals are unsuitable or need further work. Several applications related to replacing windows or installing secondary glazing. One emerging theme is that more residents wish to provide private charging points and parking for electric car charging. This requirement is likely to increase following the government's announcement that sales of new petrol and diesel cars will be prohibited after 2030.

In the largest application so far this year GM Craig Developments proposes 6 new houses and 24 flats at Spittal Quay, on the site of the former Tarmac aggregates business. An earlier 2019 proposal was rejected as being too dense and of an unsuitable design; the revised proposals are much improved and broadly supported by Historic

England. The Civic Society supported the revised proposals, which are in a contemporary style but reflect traditional local forms and materials.

The Civic Society aims to promote the vitality of the town centre and has long been concerned at the stubborn levels of vacant shops and upper parts, particularly on Marygate. To this end we are working with a new organisation, Better Berwick, which aims to harness public, private and voluntary sectors to increase investment; it will try to address longstanding problems and help Berwick to make the most of its assets including its exceptional built heritage. Wherever possible the developing strategies will use ideas and information from earlier studies and reports. One idea under discussion is the potential benefit of a 3-D digital model or digital "twin" of the town centre that could be a key repository of data and resources; it would also be an important visualisation tool for planning applications.

Brian Gowthorpe

EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS

It has been extremely difficult to run our events and hold meetings but we did manage to hold two Zoom talks.

The Planning Inspectorate has identified a number of areas that require further work; in the meantime, in August 2020, the government published its White Paper on proposed changes to the planning system. NCC and the Civic Society have each submitted comments in response to the public consultation. During the interview Rob talked about the White Paper, particularly its focus on zoning, design codes and the underlying intent to build more houses. As might be expected, the main thrust relates to building more houses for private sale. The proposals do not envisage any change of policy that would significantly increase the supply of housing at subsidised rents.

Despite working in what can be a frustrating sector, Rob retains an lively enthusiasm for town planning, which he came to after some years as an environmental activist. He acknowledges that Northumberland's coastal communities have their challenges, which have been increased by the pandemic; nevertheless he is extremely positive about Berwick; he believes that Berwick could perhaps learn some lessons from Whitby to capitalise on its built and natural assets.

Brian Gowthorpe

There was a talk on April 28th for the Berwick Civic Society “Cheviot Volcanoes; What were they like? Would you have survived?”.

The talk began by looking for the evidence that the Cheviot Hills were volcanoes. We looked at the geology map and could see a vast area of lavas with granite in the middle. We looked at the types of lavas and realised that they are the type which erupt violently. We then explored the plate tectonic causes of the volcanic activity, some 400 million years ago, when the plates were south of the equator.

Next, by looking at the VEIs (Volcanic Explosivity Indices) of recent and well-documented past eruptions, we concluded that the eruptions on Cheviot were amongst the largest occurring on Earth. We decided that the chances of surviving the eruptions in Berwick were not good. Fortunately, there were only primitive plants on the land at the time but the fish in the sea would have heard the explosions.

Elizabeth Devon

Hopefully we can soon start to arrange future events.

A highlight will be the combined meeting with the History Society on the 13th of October when the speaker will be the former Archbishop of York, The Right Reverend and Right Honourable the Lord Sentamu PC. The title of his talk is: “Why Conundrum?” Further details to follow.

Zoreen Hill

THE MAIN GUARD

Once we get The Main Guard tidied up and we get advice on any future Covid restrictions, the plan is to have the panels of Jim Herbert's Guild and Governors exhibition in the Officers' Room and the permanent History of the Garrison Town exhibition in the Soldiers' Room.

We have still to work out days and timings of opening. Our regular stewards will be contacted but should anyone be willing to steward please contact Zoreen Hill on: (01289) 306196 or email zoreenladyhill@yahoo.co.uk



THE AUTUMN FESTIVALS

Despite Covid, Berwick is holding some very interesting events.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2021

This year, Berwick Heritage Open Days (HODS) will take place between 10th and 19th September and will be a blended event – a mixture of online and “in person” events in the town. Obviously our “in person” events will depend on the government regulations in force at the time. We are still not sure what will be allowed but we’re planning anyway and here’s a taster of events so far:

Our website (www.berwickhods.org.uk) will have some new “How well do you know Berwick” quizzes, some new histories of buildings in “Berwick Through Time”, and a chance to see films of our guided walks. There will also be some live history themed online talks and the return of Berwick Heritage Question Time.

We are hoping that we will be able to open some buildings over the weekend of 17th to 19th September. Wallace Green Church, Berwick Visitor Centre and hopefully the Main Guard will be open. We’re also planning an exhibition in the Guildhall over the

weekend and are researching Bridge Street to run some events there. The national theme this year is “Edible England” and so if anyone has any ideas relating to that theme, let us know.

This year is a particularly important one for the Berwick event as it will be the 30th anniversary of us taking part in Open Doors which was the forerunner of HODS. We were the first town in England to take part and the Civic Society were the organisers.

If anyone would like to help us leading up to the event or volunteering over the weekend (17 – 19th September) please get in touch (berwickarchives@northumberland.gov.uk).

Linda Bankier, Chair of Berwick HODS Steering Group.

Dates of the other Festivals

Food Festival - 4th - 5th September

Film Festival - 9th - 12th September

Literary Festival - 14th - 17th October

TIN TABERNACLES IN NORTH NORTHUMBERLAND

During Heritage Open Days I walked around Spittal and was interested to see that the Callerton Kitchens plot at the end of Main Street was once the site of an iron church or ‘tin tabernacle’ as they are known. It made me wonder how many other examples of tin tabernacles there are in North Northumberland?



The use of iron for buildings was at its height at the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Nowadays they may be seen as just iron relics – unattractive and unused and barely recognisable from the buildings they once were. In the 19th century they satisfied many of the needs of a changing society reflecting social aspirations of the Victorians who were eager to ensure that provision was made for village halls, schools, hospitals, meeting rooms and easily erected homes for workers. They were seen as modern and quite characterful, often being painted in bright colours. They were easily transported overseas in kit form and there was a big trade with the colonies to meet the need of expanding populations from settlers or fortune seekers in the Gold Rush. Even Harrods advertised a self-build kit that could be sent overseas.

The Victorians placed much emphasis on the moral importance of church going.

At the beginning of the 19th century there were about 10,000 parish churches in England. By the 1870s the population had more than doubled and 3,204 new churches were constructed and nearly a thousand completely rebuilt. During this time there was a vibrant and often competitive religious culture with many varieties of belief and disagreements within the protestant and particularly Presbyterian communities, which led to the need for new alternatives places to worship within small communities.

The most well known tin tabernacle that I know is the parish church at Low Newton-by-the-sea. It was built in the 19th century and was purchased in kit form. It is constructed from corrugated iron sheeting but features pretty stained glass windows. Initially it was used as a mission room but went on to be consecrated about 1903. It is in active use both as a place of worship and as a village hall and meeting room.



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The village hall in Ellingham is a small tin clad building in constant use but I do not know for how much longer as the community is hoping to raise funds for a new village hall.



photo@Graham Robson (cc-by-sa/2.0)

Two other former tin tabernacles I found recorded in North Northumberland but both are now privately owned and not accessible to the public. Goswick 'tin tabernacle' was erected in the 1920s and used as a meeting room and chapel. At the time of the Goswick rail crash in 1947 twenty-eight people were killed and many of the bodies were initially taken to the chapel.

In the village of Branxton near Flodden a tin chapel was erected by the Primitive Methodists. The origins are not known but in 1940 statistical returns show it was still open and seated 120. Since that time it has been used as a joiner's shop and is now hidden in shrubbery in a private householder's garden.

How many others have you seen?

SYG Oct/20

REFERENCES:

Corrugated Iron Buildings Nick Thomson Shire :Library
Tin Tabernacles & Other corrugated iron buildings in Scotland James Carron Amenta
Why So Many Churches? Gairloch & District Heritage Society
Church Photos Geograph

Sandra Gann

THE RAILWAY RIOTS OF 1847

In the Summer of 1847, the Newcastle-Tweedbank line was completed, after some delay in bridging the River Aln. That seemed to George Stephenson reason for celebration and he organised a twenty-coach train to carry 1,600 of his workers on a day excursion. That September, railway workers were in the news for a rather different reason.

Kelso had been quick off the mark with its bill for a line to Berwick. By the Summer of 1847 it had passed through Parliament and with a sizeable workforce, which included many Irish workers, construction was under way.

One Saturday evening about 140 of them were waiting outside the window of a room in Mr Forster's Public House which the contractor, Mr. Morris, was using as a pay office. During harvest pay of 3/- a day was anticipated but when only 2/9d was offered the mood turned ugly. Men tore out the window, grabbed the cash box containing £150 and smashed the windows

of Mr. Morris' nearby office. His offer of 5/- if they kept the peace produced a temporary quiet but the mood again turned violent with assaults on passers-by.

Some of these took refuge in a nearby field and responded with volleys of stones. One of these found a target, striking the right temple of a man who collapsed grasping a four-inch open clasp knife. PC Trotter tried to take him to gaol for his own protection but he insisted on being taken to a beer house in Walkergate. A surgeon was called but the man was not thought to be in any danger. About ten o'clock a group of rioters emerged from The Waggon brandishing the inn's fire irons and continued scuffling with locals.

Around midnight the police were called to a fresh and, as it turned out, unrelated riot. This concerned a raid on a house in Chapel Street where many railway labourers lived. Chief Police Officer Proudfoot appeared on the scene but was immediately felled by being

struck on the back of the head with a sharp object - one of many assaults this able officer endured - and incapacitated for a number of days. This raid was followed by an even more ferocious attack on a property in Wallace Green where more railway workers lived. Some inmates were dragged from their beds, a few escaped detection by hiding underneath them, while others took to the roof 'and escaped in a state approaching nudity'. A female had her bed covered by a window shutter and a pile of dirt. Furniture was broken, fires started, some forty windows broken, and the house left a near wreck.

A week after this freakish double-act in which railway workers were both villains and victims, and which sorely taxed and perplexed the authorities, the cause of the second phase of rioting was not entirely clear. It was thought though to be a case of a former tenant of these properties feuding with the man in possession. The Magistrates were kept busy for weeks with claims of damage.

They would have been aware too of the fate of the fallen rioter who turned out to be Patrick Cavanagh,

aged about forty. He seemed to have recovered in the beer house, sat up and ate his meals, then returned to his Tweedmouth lodgings where he shortly after collapsed and died.

Michael Cullen

ANECDOTES

In 1864 Lord Home recalled how, 'My uncle, who took the 70 lb salmon, had a dog celebrated for catching these fish'. The Earl of Tankerville though found its activities a nuisance and took legal action against it. In court it was judged that the dog had no legal standing and as a result it won the case.

On retirement from his role as lifeboat secretary, Dr. Fraser recalled an incident during the Great War when he failed to pass a man as fit for military service.

"Why?" asked the man.

"Because you haven't got any teeth."

"Well, I'm not going to be fighting the Germans with my teeth!"
was the aggrieved retort.

Thomas Elliott, who operated the Spittal ferry for half a century with his boat, Susan, got into the habit of telling people how much Spittal had calmed down since his young days when 'you could go out any night of the week and get three or four black eyes'.

Mayor Philip Spowart, walking up Hide Hill in the late 1930's was stopped by a passer-by and informed that he was dead.

"You must be," the man insisted, "it was in the paper".

"Well, I'm very sorry to have to disappoint you," the mayor replied.

Episodes involving drink often featured in the papers. In October, 1837, a Berwick publican undertook a bet that he could drink a bottle of whisky during the Town Hall's midnight chimes. This he achieved. George Skelly, butcher, though perished after a bet to drink a bottle of whisky in four gulps.

Michael Cullen

THE SCHOOL AWARDS

On 21st of June, we presented the first of the Awards at Berwick Academy. Zoreen Hill presented the award on behalf of the Civic Society. She was greeted by Headteacher, Mrs Tracy Hush and Mr Alisdair Kesson.

The recipient was Bille Jo Eldessoukay who has made a great contribution to the community in many different ways. This has included baking cakes for emergency service personnel during the “clap for carers” initiative and with a friend she spent three days cleaning up the promenade shelter at Spittal following a spate of vandalism. They also undertook a number of beach cleans.



Billie Jo has created artwork for the various projects as a member of the Community Crew and she is a member of the Community Food Garden at Castlegate. She is creating word searches and other puzzles for three local residential homes and for two other organisations who work with adults with learning and physical disabilities. Billie Jo has also represented Berwick Youth Project in a national project with the Women of the World Foundation.



On 23rd of June, Zoreen Hill, Georgina Hill and Anne Humphrey presented the Award at Engage. We were welcomed by Jackie Brothwood of Engage and the recipient was James Young, who has made outstanding progress both academically and otherwise.

Longridge Towers School have had a strict “no visitor policy” through Covid so the Award was presented “in house” on 30th of June which was the last day of term. Katie Blackwood of the Upper Sixth received the Award. She has been doing excellent work volunteering with her local Covid vaccination centre.



IN MEMORIAM

Very sadly in January, Marion Hankinson died suddenly. Marian was a long-standing member of the Society and at one time served on the E&P Committee. She was also a regular steward in The Main Guard. A very popular and charming person, she will be much missed. Great sympathy goes to her husband, David and all the family.

There was great sadness at the death of HRH Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh in April. As a mark of respect, a flag was flown at half-mast outside The Main Guard (as pictured on page 9). This was performed, as with all our Remembrance Services, by Paul Marshall.

