

The Berwick Civic Society

is a Registered Charity (No. 508953)

Website: www.berwickcivicsociety.org.uk

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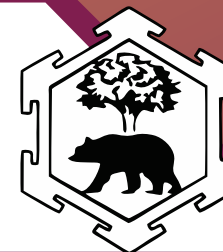
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BERWICK-UPON-TWEED
CIVIC SOCIETY



AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

2024



Berwick War Memorial © Bob Humphrey

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Cover Photo: Spittal Beach © Tommy McLeod



It's love that makes this season
A special time of joy,

The love and gentle mercy of a tiny infant boy.
And may His gifts be granted most abundantly to you,
Throughout this happy season and in the future too.

With Seasons Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year
Berwick Civic Society Executive Committee



EDITORIAL

Inundated as we currently are by relentless news of the American election results alongside the desperate news from Valencia and the Middle East, not to mention dire warnings about the state of our own nation, it's a great relief to read in this issue such positive news from the BCS team and members. Even Bob's financial report portrays not so much a black hole as a pale grey thinning patch. There's so often a strong contrast between the national news (as portrayed through the media filter) and what's actually happening in local communities. Here, generosity, good humour, willingness to volunteer, and a serious interest in local history and current developments are, thank goodness, very much in evidence, so that the Society continues in various ways to make a very beneficial contribution to Berwick life.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We are very grateful to and congratulate Zoreen, Lady Hill on her term of office as Chair of Berwick Civic Society, hard shoes to step into!

We have had a very busy time since the AGM in April, which seems such a long time ago. I have many people to thank for all their work and contributions to the Society.

We were delighted to present three awards: to Berwick High School, Engage and Longridge Towers, and a donation to The Grove Special School.



We had a lovely weekend being part of the Berwick Bridge 400 and we had over 1000 visitors to the Main Guard. We even had the Morris Dancers outside, with members of the public joining in. On the Sunday, some of our Stewards helped roll the cannons up to the Walls and they certainly went off with a bang. We were fortunate that we had lots of Stewards and they went out of their way to welcome everyone.

The Heritage Open Days gave us another busy week and the weekend was even busier; yet again our Stewards stepped up to the plate.

The joint meeting with the History Society was very well attended with over 80 people and the decision to switch the location to The Guild Hall was certainly the right one. I thank Martha Andrews, Chair of the History Society, and their members on a good talk.

[illegible]

This year we have been having a long hard look at our finances as we have been running at a loss for quite a while. This of course cannot continue and we will have to make changes. Members of the Executive have been donating not only their time, but also many items and not taking expenses. This year we will not be producing a Christmas card; I know this will be a disappointment to some members.

Sandra Gann, Vice Chair, who stepped in so gallantly whilst I was ill. **The Events and Promotions Committee**, led by Zoreen Hill, who work so tirelessly to bring us interesting talks, and to the members who donate food to these meetings. They are now planning the Christmas Party.

The Planning and Development Committee led by Brian Gowthorpe. It has a host of knowledge and expertise. The work it does on behalf of the Civic Society is tremendous and they have forged valuable links with various other organisations, including the two Councils.

As we enter the Christmas period, I wish you and your family a blessed and peaceful Christmas, with hope for the New Year.

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HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

Those of you who were at the 2024 AGM may well recognise some of what follows!

The Society's finances remain relatively healthy, and we do everything that we can to keep our costs as low as we possibly can. Our 2023 accounts show that we actually made a small profit of just over £200. Which sounds good and much better than the £3,000 loss that I projected this time last year. However, within that profit are:

- A donation of £500 to the Historic Map project
- A bequest of £1,200
- A credit of approx £900 to our electricity account by Scottish Power to correct their incorrect billing from 2021-22.

If we take all of these out of the picture then our true position for 2023 looks more like a loss of around £2,400. We are fortunate in that we have sufficient funds to be able to carry this for the foreseeable future though.

I did send out copies of the 2023 accounts prior to the AGM, but if anyone didn't receive these, I'll be happy to send a copy on to you, and to answer any queries you might have.

I would like to thank Jim Waugh for once again examining our accounts; it is very much appreciated.

Bob Humphrey, Hon Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

2024 has seen us continuing to attract new members, with 7 joining since the previous newsletter. Thank you to each of those new members for joining; I hope that you are all enjoying the talks and also that you will be visiting the Main Guard exhibition over the summer. Thanks too to all of you who have been members for longer. We currently have 186 members plus five other organisations which is a very healthy number.

Sadly, two of our members have died recently; Audrey Conway and John Johnston. Our condolences go out to their families and friends.

I know that I have said this before, but it remains true: it is our members who make the Society what it is. We are exceedingly grateful to everyone who helps out in some way; committee members, Main Guard stewards, contributors to newsletters, helping with talks: the Remembrance Service, the list goes on. So if you think there is something you would like to do to help, please let me or indeed any Exec member know. It's all about spreading the load.

Annual subscriptions are due by 1st January 2025. The vast majority of you have renewed, but there are still a small number outstanding. If you are one of these you should be getting emails from me about this directly. Subs remain the same as in 2022, namely £12 for a joint membership or £8 for a single. As I said at the AGM I will be looking at the level of subs for 2025 over the coming months as I'm aware that they haven't changed for some years.

As email is the quickest and most effective way for us to contact you, it is really helpful if we have your email address. For the majority of you we do have them, and you'll know that we have it because you'll be getting notifications coming through. There are some of you that don't though, and indeed there are a few where the address we have is bouncing back to us. If you're not seeing the notifications then if you could let me have your correct email address that would be very helpful.

Bob Humphrey, Membership Secretary

MAIN GUARD REPORT

Reports from the Treasurer show the increases in number of visitors to 9,736 (up 17%), donations to £1,002 (up 51%), and sales to £866 (up 54 %) this summer. We feel this has been partly due to the change of hours: 12 midday – 4 pm, as we noted a considerable number of visitors coming along in the first two or three hours.



Lord Lieutenant's speech © B Humphrey

We were delighted to take part this summer in The Bridge 400 and Heritage Open Days Weekend which proved great successes and our thanks go to the Stewards who agreed to volunteer those very busy weekends.

We are indebted to Anne and Bob Humphrey and Martha Andrews for their time spent dismantling the exhibition and arranging

for the return of items borrowed or storage. We even had visitors requesting to look around whilst they were in the process of dismantling – but they showed their appreciation with a donation.

Martha recruited some new Stewards, at least two of whom are committed to ongoing volunteering. We do require more Stewards and have agreed that they do not need to be members of the Civic Society.

We agreed to try and organise next year's rota so that each Co-ordinator has a two-week period rather than a month. We have had offers of help with this role for certain times of the summer depending on family circumstances and if anyone would like to volunteer, please contact us.

We were pleased to have had a successful 'thank you' party for the Stewards and other contributors who all contributed to the success of the Main Guard Exhibition this summer. Without our Stewards there would be no Exhibition and we are very grateful to them for giving of their precious time.

The cost of running the Main Guard is something we are very mindful of and we have endeavoured to reduce costs where possible. Our thanks go to those who have contributed to this year's exhibition without any cost to the Society, and to the members who have donated stationery, sweets, dog treats, etc.

Our thanks must go to Martha Andrews, Sandra Gann, and Bob and Anne Humphrey for putting the exhibition together. We are also indebted to Berwick Museum, the Kings Own Scottish Borderers Museum and individuals who have loaned items, all free of charge. This has meant that we were able to keep the cost of the exhibition to a bare minimum.

Exhibition 2025: this will be about HMS Berwick and work has already begun, but we are always open to offers of help.

CIVIC SOCIETY REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

The Service took place on Friday 8th November 2024 on the Portico, at the Main Guard. It was decided that this would be better as the steps in the garden were unsafe and the grass was sodden.

The Service was conducted by Rev. Lyn Phillips and the following participants: Piper – Andrew Smith, Exhortation – Major Lance Thornton, Trumpets – Bailey Cooper and his music teacher, May. We are very grateful to them for agreeing to participate. Bailey Cooper was the winner of our award to Longridge Towers this year.

We were delighted that the Lower School and teachers of Longridge Towers School were in attendance, along with several members of the Civic Society and members of the public.



Rev. Phillips conducted the service with great reverence and solemnity as the occasion deserved. The teachers from Longridge said that as the children were so close to the participants, they felt very much part of the service. There was also a comment that all the children were silent so they must have been listening!

We also want to thank those who helped in arranging the Soldiers Room, Portico and providing the refreshments. A special thank you must go to Sophie Hamilton for handing out the Orders of Service, for her beautiful cakes and for making sure that everyone had refreshments.

Anne Humphrey

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

After a flurry of applications between November 2023 and May 2024, the number of new applications has tailed off. Most applications were relatively minor and uncontroversial, particularly following the issue of new guidance by Historic England that encourages applications for climate change mitigation measures such as double glazing, solar panels and heat pumps. The guidance clarifies what is likely to be acceptable for Conservation Areas and listed buildings. Essentially heritage buildings should play their part, unless the proposed intervention harms the character of the building or its setting. Any proposed measures should be carefully designed to be as discreet as possible. For example, solar panels and heat pumps may be acceptable, but not if they are prominent and visible to passers-by.

The remaining item in this article discusses a planning application from earlier this year. The photograph shows the striking development of low energy contemporary homes being developed at the end of Spittal promenade by GM Craig, a local developer. The sloping site is elevated above the southern end of Spittal Promenade. It was previously occupied by a mid-20th Century development of holiday chalets of no architectural merit, demolished some years ago. The site lies beside the England Coast Path just outside but overlooked from the Spittal Conservation Area to the North. The site has permission for the development of four detached houses. The yellow excavator to the left of the photo shows the fourth house under construction. In 2023 the developer applied for permission to build two semi-detached houses in the area to the right of the picture, currently used as a site compound but shown as a landscaped area with



© B Gowthorpe

some public car parking on the approved layout plan. This application was refused. In February 2024 the developer submitted a revised application for a single detached house, similar to the others. The application included additional information and technical reports, supported by a reasoned case prepared by Ferguson Planning, a consultant. The Civic Society's Planning & Development Committee reviewed the application and, although opinions varied - some found the grey exteriors rather stark - we agreed to support it and submitted reasoned comments via the local planning authority's public access planning register. There are very few applications for contemporary architecture in the local area and developing the remaining part of the site might be preferable to an area of nondescript landscaping. The application was refused for various technical reasons relating to the Local Plan and the sensitive coastal location. The main reasons for refusal related to the loss of open space that would provide a buffer between the Spittal Conservation Area and the development.

Brian Gowthorpe, Chair, Planning & Development Committee

THE EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS UPDATE



On 24th May, the Main Guard Preview Party heralded a highly successful summer season. This year's exhibition on Berwick's three Bridges encompassed The Bridge 400 celebrations and in September, the annual Heritage Open Days. Around 65 attended this very lively party where the Guest of Honour was the newly elected Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, Dr Caroline Pryor.



Lord Lieutenant Caroline Pryor

We were also pleased to welcome the Mayor of Berwick, Councillor John and the Mayoress, Mrs Anne Robertson, The Sheriff, Mr Joe Lang and The Sheriff's Lady, Jackie Caines Lang.

In June, Jim Gibson was scheduled to speak on the **History of Pitcairn Island**. This proved extremely interesting with some surprising facts emerging. Unfortunately, Jim had lost his voice but Martha Andrews stepped in and read the talk, aided by Jim.

Then in July, Emeritus Professor David Saunders, an excellent speaker and Russian expert, paid us a second visit and his talk on **The Kremlin's Geordie Master Spy Rudolf Abel (1903 - 1971)** proved fascinating.

Also making a very welcome return to Berwick was **The Honorary Archivist of The Georgian Group, Gilbert O'Brien**. He gave a fascinating insight into the **History of The Group**. It took place on the 11th September and was part of the HODs programme.

Our combined meeting with The History Society was on the 16th October in the Guildhall and attracted a large audience. Colm O'Brien, of Newcastle University, gave a very instructive presentation on "**Bede and the Northumbrian Kings**".

Gwyneth Guthrie, the organiser of the Parish Centre and facilitator of the hiring of the hall, has retired. Great thanks are due to her for all the years that she has helped us in getting the hall arranged and obtaining the keys etc.

At the time of writing this report, we are looking forward to Brian Gowthorpe's talk on **William Morris and The Idea of Heritage** on the 13th November. Also the **Christmas party on the 14th of December**. This will be an "encore" of a very enjoyable party held last year in the lovely environment of the Tweedmouth Bowling Club with Dougie's superb catering. Martha Andrews has again collected some rare and unusual objects to be identified after dinner which proved very popular.

Details of the event and how to apply for tickets will be circulated to members. We hope to see many of you there.

Zoreen Hill

THE KREMLIN'S GEORDIE MASTER SPY: RUDOLF ABEL (1903-1971)

*10th July, by David Saunders,
Emeritus Prof of Russian History at Newcastle University*

Abel has attracted a good deal of attention in recent years because of the part he played in Steven Spielberg's film *Bridge of Spies* (2015). But the film deals only with his arrest in New York in 1957, his trial and imprisonment in the USA, and his exchange for the American U2 pilot Gary Powers on a bridge in Berlin in 1962, whereas this talk goes back to his birth in the Newcastle district of Benwell in 1903 and forwards to his death in Moscow in 1971.



Clara Street © D Saunders



Hampstead Road © D. Saunders



Leazes Park Road © D. Saunders

The spy's father, a Russian-born German called Heinrich Matthäus Fischer, became a revolutionary in St Petersburg at the end of 1880s. Because of his subversive activities he was obliged to flee Russia in 1901. A metalworker by trade, he chose to go to Newcastle upon Tyne because it was at the peak of its industrial might. He returned to Russia with his wife and two sons only 20 years later, after the communist takeover.

The future "Rudolf Abel" (Willie Fisher or Wilhelm August Fischer) was his younger son. The family lived in Benwell from 1901 to 1908, then in Cullercoats and Whitley Bay. The young Willie Fisher went to Whitley Bay and Monkseaton High School for Boys, now Marden Middle School.

His artistic talent helped him to get his first job as a draughtsman at Swan Hunter in 1918. His interest in radio telegraphy probably also began in his youth for Cullercoats acquired its first large radio mast in 1908.

Art and radio were to figure prominently in Abel-Fisher's spying career, which began in the Soviet Union in 1927 after he had received some more education and performed his military service. In 30 years as a Soviet agent, it is thought he served in China, but certainly in Norway, the UK, including the deception of frontline German soldiers during World War Two, and Canada and the USA from 1948 to 1957. His main function was probably as a coordinator and intermediary rather than as a frontline thief.

After he was exchanged for Gary Powers in 1962, his spymaster bosses permitted him to write short stories and used him to enthuse Soviet schoolchildren and introduce a Soviet film about spies. However, they never let him revert from the contrived name Abel to his real name and they denied him the ease in retirement that he would have welcomed. His origins became known in the West only after his death, when a Soviet defector published a Russian language book about him in Frankfurt in 1980.

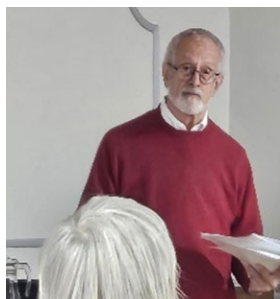
David began the process of verifying the defector's book by procuring a copy of Abel-Fisher's Newcastle birth certificate in 1984. He has been delving into the story of his life ever since.

Editor via David Saunders

THE GEORGIAN GROUP - SOME HISTORY, SOME FACTS AND SOME INTERESTING STORIES

Wednesday 11th September:

a presentation by Gilbert O'Brien, Honorary Archivist, the Georgian Group



Founded in 1937, The Georgian Group is the national charity for the preservation of Georgian buildings, parks, gardens and monuments. Its inception followed many turbulent years of struggle for recognition by the small group of campaigners led by three main characters each bringing their own prestige, personalities and foibles to bear on the eventual achievement of their goals gaining national, even international, recognition backed by statutory legislation. The people and their trials and tribulations were brought to life by Gilbert in this fascinating story.

The image of Georgian architecture is the classical well-proportioned country house but the Georgians also planned the beautiful terraces, crescents, squares and streets that sprung up across London initially and other cities such as Bath.

The Victorians did not find the architectural style and brick construction of the Georgian Period so pleasing. The Industrial Revolution resulted in demographic changes increasing urban population and the need for more housing. The death toll of the Great War meant that many sons of the Great Estates did not return to take over their ancestral homes. Changes in attitude to work following the War meant that the staff needed to run such estates were no longer available. The introduction of Death Duties and Taxes also had an effect on the prosperity of landowners who sought the opportunities for sales in the new climate.

There was no legislation in place to protect these buildings or land at this time. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was founded by William Morris in 1877 in response to the work of Victorian architects whose enthusiasm for harmful restoration caused irreparable damage; illustrated examples included buildings and terraces by John Soane, Robert Adam and John Nash. However, the Victorians did not regard Georgian architecture as ancient!

It was in this climate that the Georgian Group was founded in 1937 by Lord Derwent Robert Byron and Douglas Goldring, initially under the auspices of SPAB (hence being a Group rather than a Society). Early prominent members included Sir Nicholas Pevsner, Sir John Betjeman and Oliver Messel. Its prominence went 'viral' worldwide following a Georgian Ball held at Osterley Park owned by Lord Jersey. During the event Lady Jersey's diamond bracelet (worth £250 at that time) went missing and this led to extensive press coverage. The story ran for some time, always mentioning the Georgian Society in every article.

The work of the Georgian Group continued through the Second World War but it was only following the destruction caused during this period that legislation to protect historic buildings was introduced with the Town & Country Planning Act of 1947.



*Nicholas Hawksmoor's Barracks,
Berwick-upon-Tweed, built 1717–21*

Currently the Georgian Group is a Registered Amenity Society. It provides expert conservation advice and promotes an understanding and appreciation of Georgian architecture, landscape, design and craftsmanship. Through a network of Caseworkers, it has an objective to save Georgian buildings from destruction or disfigurement. It does this through a network of caseworkers in England and Wales.

Currently there are 2,500 casework files, 164 in Northumberland and 15 in Berwick-upon-Tweed! Douglas Goldring, writing in 1940, hoped that future generations would be grateful to the Georgian Group for rescuing a portion of their heritage, and indeed we are.

Sandra Gann

BEDE & THE NORTHUMBRIAN KINGS

A talk by Colm O'Brien, Wednesday 16th October

It is usual when reading history that we view events from our own 21st century perspective of norms and values. Colm O'Brien was successful in taking us back to Anglo-Saxon England to hear about Bede's attitudes to Kingship described in his various writings. Readings from Bede's work illustrated the points that Colm made in his lively presentation.

Bede the Venerable was an Anglo-Saxon monk, scholar, historian and theologian who lived from 673 - 735CE. At that time there was still a Roman influence in society and the tribes of Bernicia and Deira had been ruling the areas that became Northumbria.

By giving us pen pictures of several Anglo-Saxon Kings from Edwin to Oswiu we understood that Kings were initially brutal warlords. There was no succession through primogeniture. Following the death of a King, usually by war or murder, the position was open for contenders to prove their right through battle. Colm described the relevance of the graves and burial customs of the Kings. He described the archaeological remains at the sites of Yeavering and Maelmin give evidence of local Halls of Kings.

Once successful the King needed to be seen as a powerful ruler by the people. Therefore, Kings were peripatetic and needed many Halls to stay where they could lay on feasts of local produce, thus contributing to the local economy and be a visible presence in the community. The image of splendour and feasting Kings had a more serious socio-economic role.

The King also had a role in protecting his people from outsiders. Here Bede made reference to Saul protecting the Kingdom of Israel. Although Bede saw the King as a secular role, he described both Christ and Satan as kings, suggesting a morally neutral view of kingship. Later in the 7th century Oswiu, rather than being a brutal warlord, had taken the 'soft power' approach to kingship and used diplomacy and patronage to rule. He had accepted Christianity and he appointed churchmen as agents. Bede tells us that it was accepted that Christians could be kings but this did not detract from the basic secularity of kingship.

Little reference was made to the role of women at this time; however, Colm told us about two examples of the influence of women on their powerful husbands.

It was noted that if women did not marry there were opportunities to join one of the 'double houses' of a religious community.

Colm described Bede as a good story-teller, and also gave us a riveting story of the life and role of the Anglo-Saxon Kings through Bede's writings.

Sandra Gann

HODS 2024 REPORT

September saw the return of Heritage Open Days (HODs) to Berwick and once again the town was painted pink as the distinctive HODS bunting and banners took over. The 2024 programme was our biggest ever with over 90 free events for people to explore between 6th and 15th September. Now that we have added up our visitor numbers, we are pleased to announce that we had over 14,900 visitors, making the 2024 festival our most successful ever!

This year we were delighted to offer visitors our new HODS map in addition to our traditional booklet. The eye-catching map marked several suggested walking routes for visitors to explore some of our key sites, recommended local cafes for a pit-stop and of course featured our iconic mascot, Bari Bear.



Visitors inside The Main Guard © S Bankier

This great addition to the Festival was funded by Create Berwick and was the work of local graphic designer Anne Young who did a fantastic job designing this new essential guide to HODS.

Following on from our successful trial last year, we also scheduled more events, particularly guided walks, in our first weekend, including a walk around Tweedmouth Cemetery and a tour of Berwick Allotments. These proved very popular and gave the town a great buzz.

The momentum was kept going during the week in the build up to our main weekend of open sites with a series of talks and tours.

Although we are running out of new sites in Berwick to add to our programme – any suggestions welcome - we still somehow managed to find some new people and places to add in. Ben and Oliver at The Straw Yard did a fantastic job of hosting two of our mid-week talks in their great new venue and also a last-minute exhibition about Cockle Coves. Rob Smith led several very popular walking tours of Spittal, looking back at the area's popularity as a tourist resort as well as its industrial heritage and links to Scremerston's mining past. These, as well as the addition of Berwick Sailing



BSC enjoying its first HODs © S. Bankier

tours of their factory, explaining the printing process to visitors and looking back at the site's heritage as Black's Spade Mill. Berwick Rangers also participated for the first time and hosted three very well attended tours of their clubhouse and grounds, giving visitors an insight into the politics of football in a unique border town as well as a chance to feel like a player, visiting the changing rooms and walking onto the pitch.

We are very grateful to all venues, individuals and volunteers who participated in HODS 2024, as it would not be possible to create such a brilliant event without their support. Berwick does more than anywhere else in Northumberland and probably other similar-sized communities in the country. As an organising team we are having a well-earned break before planning for 2025 starts in January. We will be hard pressed to beat this year's successes but somehow we always find a way. So put 12th – 21st September 2025 in your diaries now and look out for more information next year!

Siobhan Bankier

Book Reviews

Our city, our county: an anthology

The Northumberland & Newcastle Society, having hit the respectable age of 100, decided to celebrate its history in a book which would also reflect current concerns and interests. The result is a well-illustrated compilation of personal views of Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland. In his Foreword, Matt Ridley remarks on the visitor appeal of our landscape, but adds "fabulous as the beaches and hills of our region are, they would be greatly less alluring without man-made embellishments: Bamburgh without a castle, the Whin Sill without the Roman wall, the Tyne without bridges would all be much the poorer". His point is borne out: we asked Society members



for contributions about buildings, features (such as public sculpture) and landscapes, and it's noticeable that buildings and other man-made structures form by far the greater proportion of entries.

There are plenty of standard guide books already, so we hoped to direct readers away from the obvious much-travelled highway of architectural excellence, and onto the byways where less familiar treasures lie. Inevitably, many famous buildings are here, because people do have strong associations with them, and because it would be perverse to leave them out of a book representing our region. But most of all, we wanted contributors' stories, and they are a delight to read. They include contributions from BCS members Anne Humphrey and Sandra Gann, and Linda Bankier provides an excellent piece on Berwick Bridge, as its 400th birthday coincides with our modest 100th. The common theme is personal

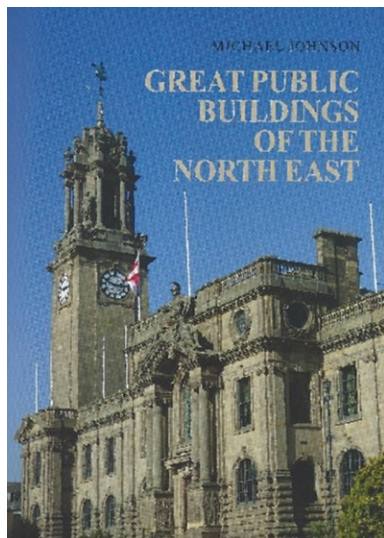
geography, our individual responses to the area in which we live, and the result is varied and illuminating, revealing the rich hinterland of personal and professional experience that supports our Society and enables it to contribute effectively on planning and conservation issues.

Our city, our county: an anthology. A celebration of the first 100 years of the Northumberland and Newcastle Society. The Society, 2024. ISBN 978-1-3999-9792-8. Hardback, 128 pages. £20. Order direct: from www.nandnsociety.org.uk or on 0191 281 6266.

Suzanne Stanley, Book Editor

Great public buildings of the North East: by Michael Johnson

At the mention of town halls, I picture those grand Victorian structures in the wool, textile and industrial towns, symbolising solidity, prosperity and dignity. And indeed, there are still plenty of them around. But Michael Johnson's book illustrates the great variety of civic buildings in the north-east, and does so by usefully treating them in chronological order. He starts with Vanbrugh's baroque Morpeth Town Hall in 1714, and ends with Chester-le-Street's civic centre built 1979-82. To contrast their interiors and exteriors is a revealing experience, illustrating not just vastly different building techniques, but also differences in architectural philosophy and attitudes to the public,



maybe best summed up as paternalistic vs egalitarian. Sadly, the Chester-le-Street building was demolished in 2014, while Morpeth's lives on.

Between these two lies a most fascinating range of architectural styles and designs, from the modest (Corbridge, 1887) to the mighty (South Shields, completed 1910), as we move from 'town halls' to 'civic centres' (though Darlington's 1960s Brutalist building has held onto the old name). Johnson refers to similarities between Darlington Town Hall and Newcastle's Modernist Civic Centre, but refers to the latter as "The greatest of all civic buildings in the North East . . . the administrative and ceremonial heart of the region's leading city". In his substantial entry on Berwick Town Hall, he refers to it as a "baroque gem", appropriate to "Northumberland's finest

Georgian country town". He adds (and I didn't know this) that "Berwick Borough Council considered demolishing the town hall after the Second World war, but this fine public building was saved by a campaign led by Sir Albert Richardson, President of the Royal Academy of Arts, who had great affection for Berwick". Thank goodness for Sir Albert! Imagine Marygate without its town hall.

The common factors in all civic buildings are offices and the council chamber, but outside that they vary considerably. As a result, many of the buildings featured no longer fulfil their original purpose. As administrative districts and functions have changed (we no longer have prison cells, Sunday schools or market halls in our civic centres for example), then offices have moved to other buildings, or new purpose-built administrative centres have emerged. Other uses have had to be found for the old buildings, many of which are listed.

This scholarly, highly readable and prolifically illustrated book is written by the Assistant Professor of Design History at Northumbria University, and though totally different in approach, nicely complements the Northumberland & Newcastle Society's recently published centenary celebration book (see separate review). I'd recommend buying both!

Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2024. Paperback. £15.99

Suzanne Stanley