

# Alnmouth

## Northumberland Extensive Urban Survey



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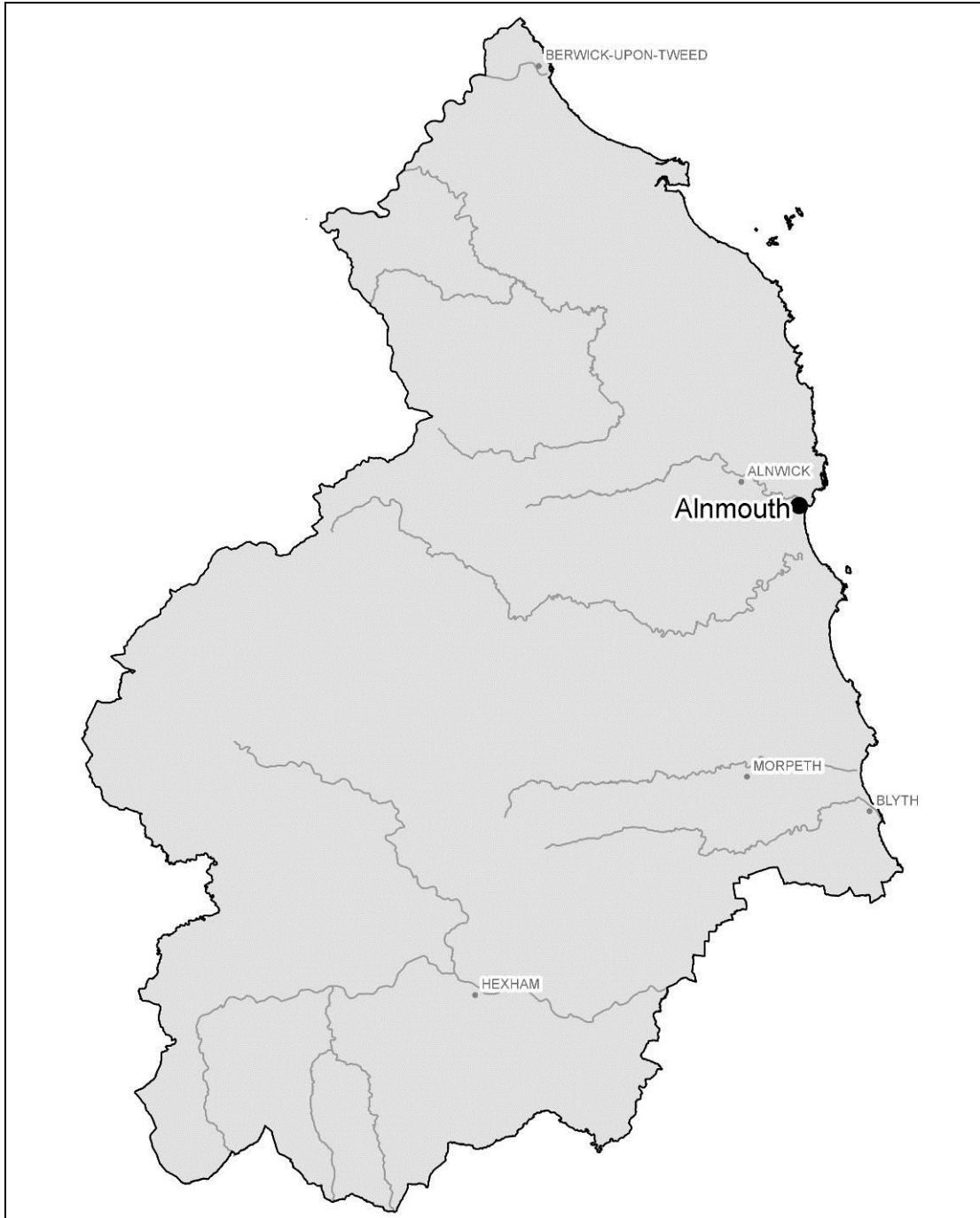


Figure 1: Location

## PART ONE: THE STORY OF ALNMOUTH

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project Background

Towns and villages have been the focus of settlement in this country for many hundreds of years. Beneath our workplaces, beneath our houses and gardens, streets and shops - beneath our feet - there lie archaeological remains which can tell us how these settlements were once arranged and how people went about their lives. Awareness and appreciation of this resource will enhance our sense of place and identity and help us understand how the past has directly shaped our present and how we may use it to shape our future. To ensure that evidence for our urban past is not needlessly lost during development local and national government have put in place a range of statutory designations and policies to make sure that valuable remains are protected, preserved and understood.

In 1992, English Heritage published a national policy to help planners and developers deal with urban archaeology and any issues that might arise during the planning process (*Managing the Urban Archaeological Resource*). This led to the Extensive Urban Survey programme, where funds were made available to individual planning authorities to prepare material to explain how archaeology fits into the planning process and how issues raised can be best resolved. Alnmouth is one of 20 towns in Northumberland to have been reviewed and a report prepared. This is divided into three parts:

**Part 1** summarises the development of Alnmouth using documentary, cartographic and archaeological sources.

**Part 2** assesses the detailed archaeological potential of the town of Alnmouth and how development could, potentially, impact on significant archaeological resources.

**Part 3** looks at the national and local planning process with regard to archaeology and is designed to give the planner, developer and general public the framework within which development in an historic town will normally proceed.

The present survey (fig 2) encompasses the historic core of the town of Alnmouth and its boundary is coincident with that of Alnmouth Conservation Area. Material within this report includes information available on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record (HER) at the time this report was updated. Information on the HER is constantly being updated and should be used as the primary source for historical and archaeological information.

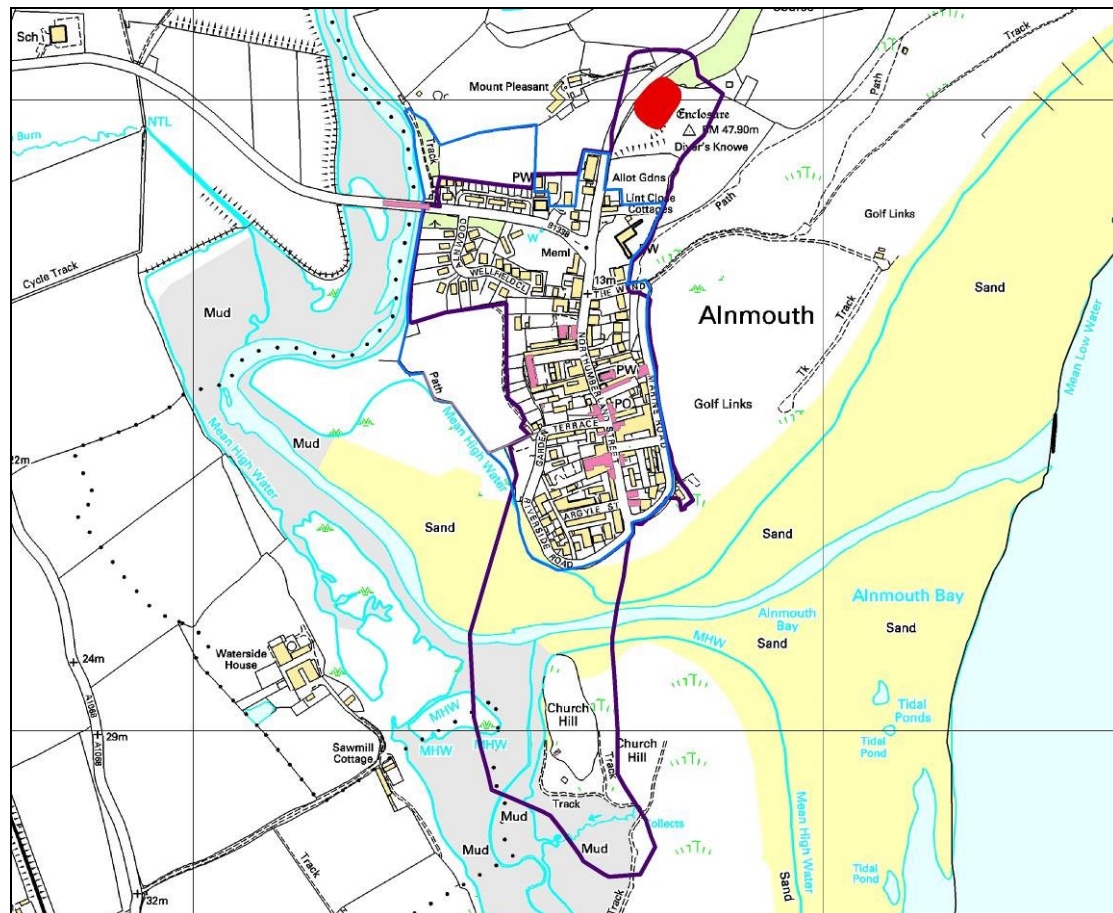


Figure 2: Study Area (purple), conservation area (blue), scheduled monuments (red), listed buildings (pink).

## 1.2 Location, Topography and Geology

The town of Alnmouth, on the North Sea coast at the mouth of the River Aln, 31 miles south of Berwick-upon-Tweed and 29 miles to the north of Newcastle (NU 243099), lies along a spur of land between the estuary of the Aln and the North Sea at the very southern end of low hills which run down the coast (fig 1). It is a town picturesque both from a distance (the view of Alnmouth when travelling on the East Coast Rail line is exceptional) and in detail. Buildings within the town are varied, Riverside Road, along the sea front and estuary, is lined with substantial Victorian villas, reflecting Alnmouth's success as a fashionable coastal resort, whilst a number of solid stone buildings in the town have more workmanlike aspects, starting their lives as granaries during Alnmouth's heyday as a grain port in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Others again, such as Nether Lodge, are more flamboyant, with towers raised high above roof level, or with the brightly painted seaside frontages of Lovaine Terrace. The town is approached by two roads, one from Hipsburn to the west which dips into the valley of the Aln and crosses the river over the mid nineteenth-century stone-arched Duchess' Bridge, and an older route from the north which runs along the coastal ridge and down into Northumberland Street which terminates at the mouth of the Aln with fine views in all directions, overlooking the steep Church Hill beyond.

Northumberland Street is the spine of Alnmouth, and along with a number of side roads running at right angles from it, reflects the historic layout of the town which was planted as a Borough by William de Vesci, Baron of Alnwick, in the mid 12th century. The eastern edge of the town, formed by Marine Road, is in origin, the medieval back lane of properties to the east of Northumberland Street, with properties to the west of Northumberland Street terminating on a more fragmented boundary above the estuary strand.

The local superficial geology is predominantly boulder clay which overlies solid geology of Carboniferous limestone. This latter forms the backbone of the hilly, rolling landscape which runs down the North Sea coast as far south as Alnmouth. The estuary of the Aln is historically prone to change. The most notable alteration to the course of the river in historic times occurred during a great storm on Christmas day 1806 when it broke through to the North Sea in an area of low fields to the south of the town and north of Church Hill. The shape of the estuary has fluctuated ever since. The coastal margins of the town, particularly on the south side, are also shifting as wind-blown sand creates and destroys high dunes beyond a fine, broad beach. Both wind and sea are significant threats to archaeological remains in the area.

### **1.3 Documentary and Secondary Sources**

Research on the archaeology and history of the town began with a review of information held in the county's Historic Environment Record (HER). For Alnmouth, this was mostly restricted to antiquarian accounts and discoveries and standing building descriptions. Published information on the development of Alnmouth is also fairly limited. The development of the town is described within volume II of *A History of Northumberland* (Bateson 1895) and is mentioned in Tomlinson's *Comprehensive Guide to Northumberland* (1888) and in other county directories. A useful summary of the development of the town is included in Hicke's (undated) *The history and development of Lesbury and Alnmouth*. The most comprehensive review of the development of the town, however, is provided by Gladys Bettess in *Alnmouth, A Retrogressive Archaeological Study of its Landscape, Economic and Social History* (an MLitt Thesis for the University of Newcastle in 1994).

### **1.4 Cartographic Sources**

Alnmouth is well served for historic maps, a sequence beginning in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with Mayson's survey and continuing up to modern Ordnance Surveys. A number of the maps and plans were prepared for the Gallon Estate which held the manorial rights to the town. Others are for the Northumberland Estate.



## **1.5 Archaeological Evidence**

No archaeological excavations have been carried out within the urban core of Alnmouth. Geophysical investigations were conducted at Norton's Granary, Church Hill, Brick Kiln Close and Nightfold Field by Bradford University in 1993 but few substantive results were obtained. An excavation at Nightfold (Beacon Hill) in the area of the possible prehistoric enclosure (see below) was carried out by Norman Foster in 1969 and Bettess fieldwalked the same area in 1994. Archaeological events adjacent to Alnmouth are listed in Appendix 2.

## **1.6 Protected Sites**

There is one scheduled monument in the vicinity of the study area. This is the remains of the putative prehistoric enclosure (SAM Northumberland 31; HER 5700). There are 31 listed buildings in the town, all grade II and therefore protected by the local authority (see Appendix 1). The centre of the town is also designated as a conservation area, the extent of which is shown on figure 2.

## **2 PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN (figure 3)**

### **2.1 The Early Prehistoric Period**

Six pieces of worked flint (HER 5712) including one core, two microliths and three other pieces, characteristic of the technology of the Mesolithic period (10,000 BC to 4,000 BC) have been recovered from the raised beach at Alnmouth. The topography of the coastline during the Mesolithic period is uncertain, but the tool users will have been moving within a rich environment for hunters and gatherers who could exploit the presence of fish (including the salmon run up the Aln), waterfowl, land mammals, seals and a varied terrestrial and maritime flora in a climate moderated over the year by the sea. A major Mesolithic base camp site at Howick a few miles to the north was exploiting a similar landscape. There is no specific evidence for succeeding Neolithic (4,000 BC to 2,500 BC) occupation in the area but it will certainly have been populated over the period when farming and with it a more sedentary lifestyle was introduced to the coastal lowlands.

Evidence of Bronze Age (2200 BC to 700 BC) activity along the coast near to Alnmouth is mainly for burials. Cist burials have been found at Low Hauxley, High Buston and Howick. More locally, a bronze spear-head was found in the bed of the River Aln during the construction of a footbridge (Bateson 1895, 467).

### **2.2 Earthwork Enclosure**

Earthworks immediately to the north of the town on Alnmouth Common, in an area historically known as the Nightfold, Beacon or Watch Hill and now within Alnmouth golf course (see fig 3) are assumed to be of prehistoric date and scheduled as such (HER 5700, SAM

Northumberland 31), although there is no secure chronological context for the site a late prehistoric, Iron Age date has been suggested. The earthworks consist of an irregular, now discontinuous, enclosure bank, the same enclosure represented on a map of 1744 by James Robertson and on MacLauchlan's 1867 plan of Alnmouth. There have been a number of modern encroachments on the banks, not least the bunkers and greens of the golf course. Smaller, circular earthworks are still visible within the enclosure and a resistivity survey in 1993, carried out by Bradford University, indicated further annular features below ground. Field walking over the site in 1994 recovered a number of worked flints although their association with the earthworks is uncertain and excavation carried out in 1969 failed to find any evidence for early occupation.

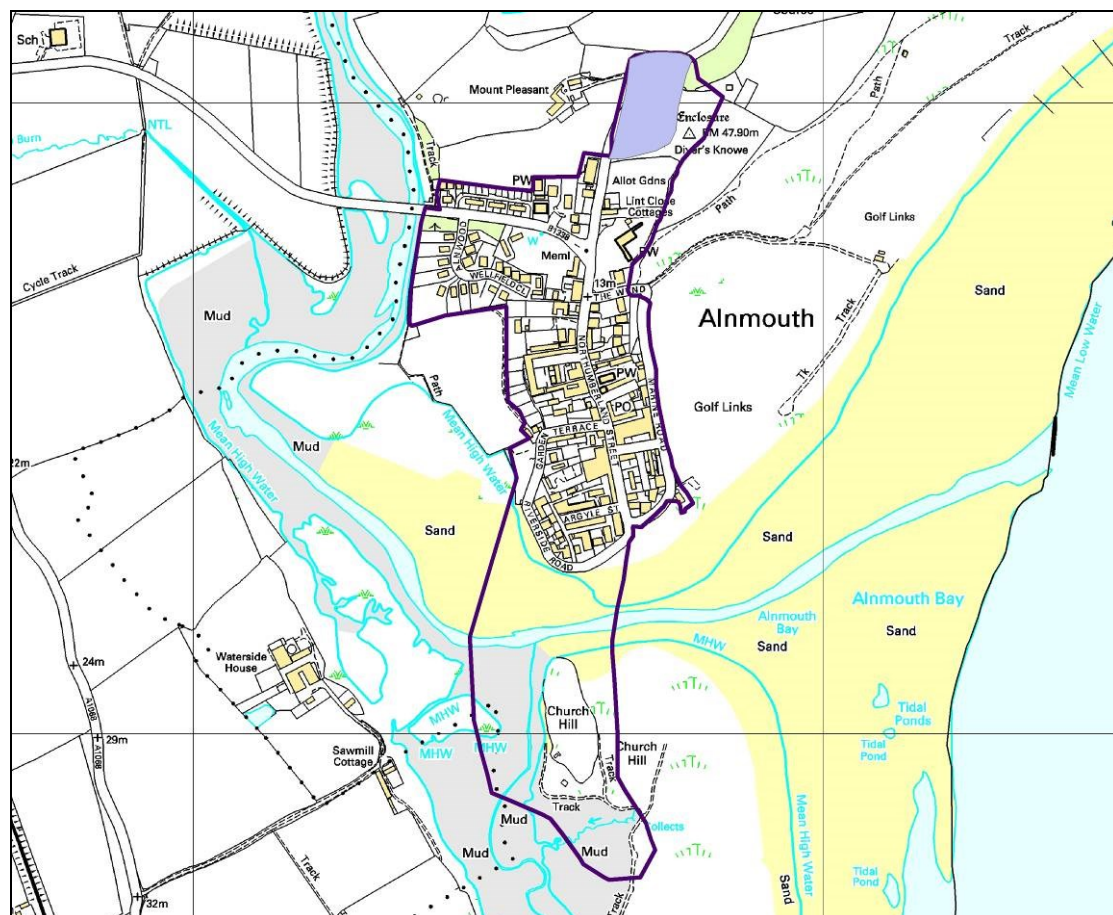


Figure 3: Prehistoric Period.

### 2.3 The Romano-British Period

The River Aln can probably be equated with *Alauna Flumen* on Ptolemy's map projection of Britain, prepared around AD 150. Although a safe harbour would have been important to the Romans both for campaigns and as a trading facility, there is no archaeological evidence for either military or civilian occupation at the mouth of the Aln during this period.

### **3 EARLY-MEDIEVAL (figure 4)**

#### **3.1 The Synod of Twyford**

Bede says that Cuthbert was elected Bishop at a synod of the Church held around 684 at a place in the North East of England called Twyford (the place of two fords). That Alnmouth fits the locale and has two fords has led to the conjecture that Twyford was the predecessor of Alnmouth.

#### **3.2 Early-Medieval**

Although other documentary sources have been used to reinforce the idea of pre-Conquest occupation at Alnmouth, they are generally ambiguous. For instance, a deed relating to the foundation of the town in 1152 notes that it would not be necessary to build a church for the inhabitants since one already existed, an assertion, of course, which does not necessitate that any church on the site was of pre-Conquest date. The only physical evidence for an early-medieval ecclesiastical presence at Alnmouth is two pieces of a decorated stone cross-shaft of the late 9<sup>th</sup> or early 10<sup>th</sup> century (HER 5705) found on Church Hill in 1789 by the incumbent of the parish, the Reverend Brand. Geophysical investigation of the area around the later medieval church by Bradford University in 1993 did not produce any indication of adjacent buried remains which may represent an earlier church, although this is certainly not definitive evidence for their absence.

### **4 MEDIEVAL (figure 4)**

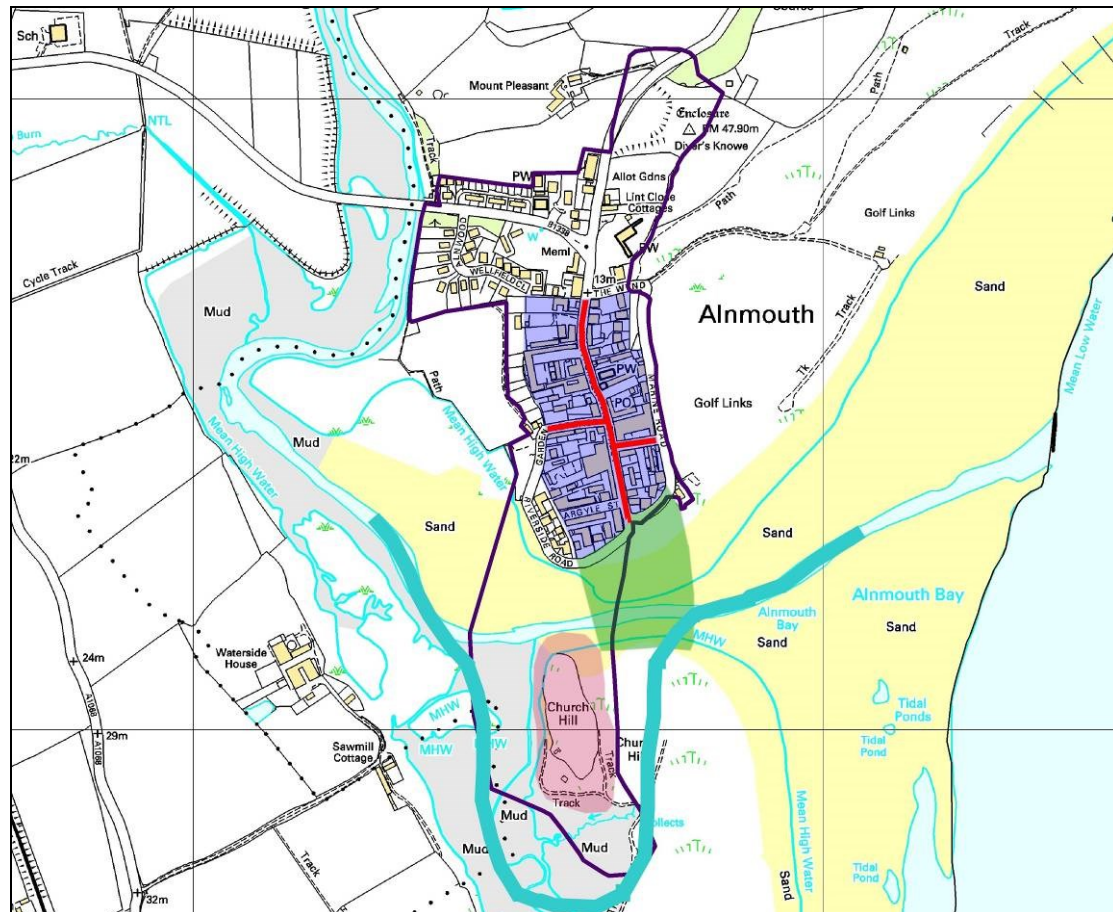
#### **4.1 The New Town**

A 12<sup>th</sup> century deed granted William de Vesci the right to hold a court and rebuild a new town on land at the angle or corner of the lordship of Lesbury. The 296 acres of land used was taken out of Lesbury Common and comprised, in addition to the area for the town, cliff-top grassland and beach. The site of the new town was presumably chosen because of its position on a navigable river and its suitability as a harbour.

#### **4.2 The Church of St Waleric**

A medieval church, dedicated to St Waleric (a corruption of St Valery) formerly lay on Church Hill to the south of Alnmouth. The last ruins of the structure fell in the great storm of 1806. Although a number of historic drawings of the church exist it is impossible to use them to precisely locate the building. Ordnance Survey maps do mark the site of a church but, unfortunately, in different locations on the hill. However, at the highest point of Castle Hill the remnants of a masonry wall run north-south. It is associated with adjacent rubble and mortar and some tumbled dressed stone lies at the bottom of the hill below.

Documentary records for the church are not numerous. It was mentioned in 1305 when Peter de Dunstan was accused of stealing a chalice and the vestments from it. Alnwick Abbey and the inhabitants of Alnmouth shared the cost of maintaining three priests and a clerk at the Chapel of St Waleric. Drawings from 1771 show a roofless structure consisting of a nave and aisles at least three bays in length, a transept, a chancel and a small porch. The architecture appears to have Romanesque and Gothic components with a porch which looks like a 17th century addition.



*Figure 4: Early Medieval and Medieval Period: church and churchyard area (pink), tenements (blue), streets (red), possible market and port area (green), and former river course (blue-green).*

### 4.3 Medieval Tenements

Most existing property boundaries in Alnmouth are old and can be seen on post-medieval maps of Alnmouth by Mayson (1614) and Norton (1624). Both show long narrow plots running at right angles from either flank of Northumberland Street. It is likely that many follow the lines of burgage plots laid out in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Mayson's and Norton's maps of Alnmouth, and Robertson's and Stephenson's maps of 1744 and 1779, respectively, all show properties but are not sufficiently accurate to compare with

the modern Ordnance Survey base. Thomas Wilkins' map of Alnmouth in 1791, however, shows individual burgage plots which match very well with the Ordnance Survey base.

Lack of uniformity in plot size at Alnmouth might suggest that properties were not all laid out at one time to a set plan, although plots will also have been both subdivided and amalgamated since their original allocation. Standing buildings on these plots may well incorporate the foundations, even perhaps upstanding fabric, of earlier buildings. Buried remains of early buildings and activities are also possible within the backland areas of the properties.

#### **4.4 Medieval Structures**

There is no evidence for upstanding medieval buildings in the town although it is possible that medieval fabric survives in some structures.

#### **4.5 Market, Port and Economic Development of the Town**

Alnmouth was a busy centre in medieval times. A pre 1178 charter granted William de Vesci a market at St Waleric's (Beresford 1967 citing Surtees Soc. Cvii, 1911). In 1207, Eustace de Vesci obtained a charter from King John for a port and a (mainly fish) market at Alnmouth, the latter to be held every Wednesday. The site of Alnmouth market is not known with certainty; possibly on land to the south of the village, now lost to the sea; on common land; or along the main street (Bettess 1993). Since the focus of the market was mainly fish, it may well have been located close to the point at which boats unloaded their catch, and presumably to the south of the town and west of Church Hill.

As well as fishing, the town was also well positioned for foreign trade. This would have been a significant contribution to the economy of the settlement. Richard de Emeldon, who owned several burgage plots in Alnmouth, developed the harbour. That it was known as a port of call is shown by a request in 1316 from the crown for the bailiff of Alnmouth to find a vessel suitably equipped for a military expedition to Gascony. The harbour would almost certainly have occupied a sheltered position to the west of Church Hill. There is no evidence for any stone structures or walls associated with this facility. It is likely, in fact, that there would only have been mooring posts and possibly wooden jetties, many ships and boats would simply have beached on accessible intertidal sand flats.

As for the general economy of the town, in 1256 the settlement was separately represented before the Justices of the Assize by its own jury of 12; cases heard reveal that tanning, stone-exporting and wine-importing were undertaken in Alnmouth (Surtees Soc. Lxxxviii, 1890). And in 1296, a list of Alnmouth inhabitants assessed for taxes names 28 people who were liable. However, without any defences, Alnmouth was severely damaged by the Scots in a raid of 1336, subsequent to which only one person was assessed as liable for taxes (Subsidy Rolls 1336).

Despite the destruction of 1336, trade through Alnmouth increased after the Percy family developed Alnwick as their principal seat. The “free-port” of Alnmouth was annexed to Alnwick Castle in 1452 at a time when most householders in Alnmouth were engaged in fishing. By 1498 the fortunes of Alnmouth had revived and there were once again a large number of burgesses. In 1529, to develop trade, the burgesses of Alnwick entered into an agreement with the Earl of Northumberland in which they would make a weir or haven at the port if the Earl provided the wood for the purpose. The harbour was thus refurbished and trade continued, but it was already apparent that the uncertain course of the river was causing difficulties.

#### **4.6 Medieval Roads**

A main street with back lanes and a limited number of side streets appears to have been the pattern laid out for the medieval new town. This layout has remained largely intact to the present. The main street, now called Northumberland Street, was unnamed on early maps and called Archibald Place on the First Edition Ordnance Survey.

The back lane providing access to the rear of the plots on the east side of the main road is now called Marine Road. To the west, the rears of the medieval property boundaries remain, whilst the back lane here survives only fragmentarily.

Of the routes to Alnmouth, one wound its way past marshy ground at the horseshoe bend in the river; another, a path, crossed the salt marshes; and the last ran to the south, crossing the river by one of the two fords. The Low Ford led to Warkworth and the High Ford to Lesbury and Alnwick (Bettess 1994). In 1753-4 the road north from Alnmouth became a Turnpike.

Both Low Ford and High Ford may be of ancient origin. The River Aln marks the boundary of the ecclesiastical division between Lindisfarne and Hexham. The exact position of the fording points may have altered as the course of the river has fluctuated.

#### **4.7 Medieval Agriculture**

Curving, broad ridge and furrow to the south of the River Aln is evidence for open field farming dating to the medieval period.

## 5 POST-MEDIEVAL AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY (figure 5)

### 5.1 Port, Economic Development and Industries

The later 16<sup>th</sup> and the early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were times of economic depression for Alnmouth: In 1594 the Earl of Northumberland wrote that the burgesses were all non-residents and that the town was 'dispeopled'. A survey of 1614 suggested some improvement, but still describes the town as 'in great ruin and decay'.

In 1567, 20 of the 60 householders in Alnmouth were fishermen, reflecting just how significant was the industry to the town (Bateson 1895, 481). After the Dissolution of the monasteries, the rights of fishing at Alnmouth were passed to the Crown, who put it in the hands of trustees, latterly the Duke of Northumberland.

Over the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the port became busy. Wallis, writing in 1769, noted that "*The principal export is corn kept in large granaries, the largest perhaps in the county. They import Norway timber and goods from London, Holland and other places. A new ship of nearly 300 tons was built and launched at this port in 1765, supposed to have been the first ever built at it.*" James Robertson's 1744 map of Edward Gallon's Estate shows two large named granaries, one to the south of the town, just beyond the River Aln (remains of this, Mr Norton's granary, have been found buried under sand dunes (Bettess 1994), and another to the west of the main street within the town itself.

Early 18<sup>th</sup> century court records show that a number of mariners were fined for dumping ballast in the harbour, a practice which exacerbated navigational difficulties created by the natural silting of the estuary.

Thomas Wilkins' map dated 1791 marks two areas immediately adjacent to the burgage plots to the west of the main road as North Brick Kiln Close and South Brick Kiln Close (previously known as Middle and West Croft) indicating that bricks had been made in the area. An aerial photograph of North Brick Kiln Close shows a feature that may have been a kiln, although a magnetometer survey carried out in the 1990s over the area (Bettess 1994) provided no significant responses.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Commons are described as all the hills and plain ground lying about the town and fields are shown lying between the church and the town on Norton's map of 1614. While no large-scale enclosures took place until 1688 (see below), in 1614, some of the burgesses were involved in a dispute with George Whitehead about Common Land that he had enclosed. Whitehead threatened to take the matter to the court of Star Chamber and ruin the burgesses, and they were forced to back down. In 1688, William Brown of Ewart, a

principal freeholder in Alnmouth, enclosed part of the Common. Other freeholders continued their right of common over the remaining unenclosed part.

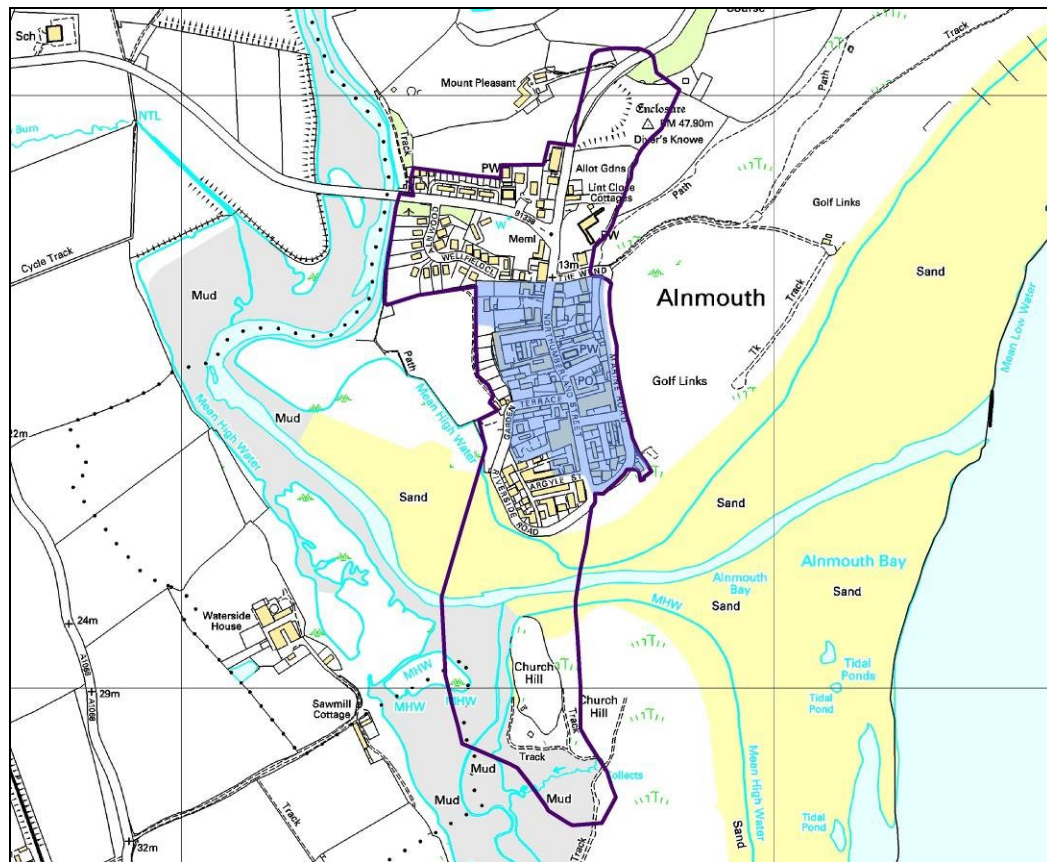


Figure 5: Post-Medieval

## 5.2 Harbour Wall (HER 5740)

A wall along Middle Croft and Constables Close has been thought to be an 18<sup>th</sup> century harbour wall. This is probably unlikely, because it projects above ground level on both estuary and landward sides making the movement of goods problematic. A more likely suggestion (Betters 1994) is that the wall was erected as a flood defence.

## 5.3 Decay of the Church

At the time of the Dissolution the priest at St Waleric's was Roger Spence, a canon of Alnmouth Abbey. There were no funds for another incumbent and so it was served by a stipendiary priest. In 1578 Roger Spence became the vicar. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it appears the church had very little income and fell into disrepair. In 1607, for instance, the lead was sold from the church roof to pay for repairs to the building (Bateson 1895, 491) By the early eighteenth century the church was in ruins, its roofing entirely gone and no services had been held there except the burying of the dead for years.



A number of drawings of the picturesque ruins of the church were made in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Vilet, for the Duke of Northumberland (Duke of Northumberland Archives) shows the church as it was in 1771, without a roof and in ruins. Grose's *Antiquities* also illustrates the church with an engraving by Sparrow dated 1783 Lady Emily Percy's Book also has a drawing of the ruined church dated 1804. Two years later, the last remaining parts of the church blew down in the storms of Christmas Day 1806. A few fallen gravestones of eighteenth-century date lie on the hill obscured by undergrowth.

#### **5.4 Defensive Sites**

The area of high ground above the town, close to the prehistoric settlement, was used as a lookout point, or beacon (HER 5699) during the long period of Anglo/Scottish Border warfare.

#### **5.5 Communications**

Low Ford, a metalled causeway with kerb stones was found close to the fording point marked on the first edition Ordnance Survey (HER 5728). A similarly positioned fording point is marked on Wilkin's 1791 map and the tithe map of 1844. Another causeway, probably High Ford, also in the form of a metalled surface with kerbstones, was found at a point similar to that mapped in 1791 by Wilkins and shown on the 1844 tithe map. The eastern end of the causeway was beneath oyster beds shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey. The ford was no longer used at this time, having been superseded by a bridge built further to the north (HER 5733).

#### **5.6 Buildings**

The majority of buildings in the town today are 18th century with 19th century additions, however there is a small number of 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings. Nos 1-4 Victoria Place (HER 5750) is a row of late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages, and No.14 Northumberland Street (HER 5753) is a 17th century building with its gable end facing on to the street and jointed upper crucks. These buildings are a rare survival in Northumberland.

## **6 NINETEENTH-CENTURY (figure 12)**

### **6.1 The Isolation of Church Hill**

In 1806, the combination of a violent storm and a high tide caused the Aln to break through its banks on the north side of Church Hill and form a new channel. Over time, sand dunes swept across the area and blocked off the old river course entirely. The tithe map of 1843 shows the river running through its new course and the oxbow of the old. Church Hill was now isolated from Alnmouth.

## 6.2 New Building

The mid to late 19th century saw considerable new building in Alnmouth. Following the sale of the Gallon estate at auction in 1843, spacious villas were constructed along the new Grosvenor Place for wealthier inhabitants and visitors to the town. In plots to the south of this, numbers of buildings were constructed during the later part of the century. The Ordnance Survey second edition shows some infilling in the area behind the street frontage to the west of the main street and terraced housing along the new Argyle Street on the southern edge of the town. An early use of cast-concrete construction is found in the picturesque row of villas at Lovaine Terrace (HER5741), constructed between 1872-8.

Granary buildings were also converted to other uses over the century. The first was in Prospect Place (HER5764) (Bettess 1994). Others were demolished, as happened when new cottages (now Victoria Cottages) were built around 1853 to house coastguards (HER5750).

Alnmouth's heyday as seaside resort was in late Victorian times following the establishment of a rail link to the town. On the second edition Ordnance Survey of 1897, a holiday camp is shown with camping accommodation and a garden tea room, the flooring of which remains. Twenty seven beach huts are shown on the map and the foundations of two can still be found in the dunes (Bettess 1994).

## 6.3 Railway and Roads

The Morpeth to Chathill section of the Newcastle to Berwick railway opened in 1847. This was followed in 1850 by the Alnwick to Bilton branch line. The name Bilton Junction was soon changed to Alnmouth Station to encourage the tourist trade (Bettess 1994); Alnmouth was already a well-known name. A new direct road and bridge (HER 5733) over the Aln were built to link directly with the railway station around 1857. Initially, the bridge had stone piers with a timber roadway. The latter was replaced with stone arches and roadway in 1864, paid for largely by the Duchess of Northumberland, Lady Eleanor. Naturally, it was renamed the Duchess' Bridge.

## 6.4 Mortuary Chapel and Curate's Concrete House

A wall (HER 5731) was built around the base of Church Hill to stop erosion. A mortuary chapel (HER 5445), built by public subscription, was constructed close to this wall in 1870. It has a Norman style doorway and, now weathered, looks convincingly early (Pevsner 1992, 130). The roof of the chapel was deliberately removed by the National Trust in recent times to deter squatters. A demolished structure a little to the south of the mortuary chapel, which looks like the remains of a World War II pillbox, is in fact a concrete house, built for the curate of Alnmouth church in the second half of the nineteenth century, presumably at the same time as the houses of concrete construction along Lovaine Terrace.

## 6.5 New Places of Worship

The Northumberland Estate was instrumental in facilitating both conformist and nonconformist worship in the town. In 1859, the Duke donated one of the old Gallon Estate granaries for use as a temporary chapel. And a new church (HER 5744) dedicated to St John the Baptist, built by public subscription, was sited on a vacant plot of land given by the Duke opposite The Red Lion Inn on Northumberland Street.

In 1830 a Methodist chapel was built in Chapel Lane, and used until 1892 when a new one was built on land given by the Duke of Northumberland. The original chapel continued to be used as a Methodist meeting place.

## 6.6 Port and Economic Development

Kelly's *Directory* of 1858 lists 12 herring boats at Alnmouth. By 1863 the number had dwindled to eight. The import of grain through the port also declined over the century, especially with the advent of the railway. The import of timber and other goods from Sweden, Norway and America remained significant. Slate was also imported from Holland and Scotland (with which, much of the town is roofed). In 1896 a ship called the *Joanna* rolled over in the shallow channel and discharged a load of timber. After this, it proved impossible to insure freight into the port and all maritime trade ceased.

Goods imported through the port also facilitated the wider economy of the town. A saw mill, described as 'extensive' in Kelly's *Directory* of 1858, utilised imported timber. In 1891 it was the largest employer in the town; 27 men worked in it as cabinet makers, wood turners and sawyers. A timber and slate yard is also recorded in Kelly's *Directory* of 1858 and wheat was also processed in the town; a steam mill was constructed in 1837 and when surveyed in 1843 it included a grain mill, kiln, a circular saw mill, bakehouse, bread baker's shop and a granary on four floors (NRO Bell MS ZHE 6/4).

The first edition Ordnance Survey marks five oyster beds in the meander of the river Aln to the west of the town. In the 1990s, two of the beds remained intact, three fragmentarily.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map also shows a gas works and a gasometer at the southern end of the town. These were damaged during an air raid in World War II and demolished soon after.

## 6.7 Guano Trade

Although guano was certainly traded through the port, just how extensive this business was remains uncertain.

## **6.8 Coastal Defences**

The first edition Ordnance Survey shows a Practice Battery to the north of the town (HER 5776). This was built by the Duke of Northumberland in 1861 during general anxiety over invasion by the French during the reign of Napoleon III. The battery was strengthened in World War II with the addition of a concrete superstructure.

## **PART TWO: ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF ALNMOUTH**

### **7 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

This section deals with the possibility of discovering archaeological remains in Alnmouth in the course of development and the potential these remains could have for the understanding of the past of the town and the country as a whole. To be meaningful, any archaeological input in Alnmouth should be weighed against the value of the likely returns. The most useful way of assessing this value is for it to be set against locally and nationally agreed research agendas which will allow relevant work to be planned and delivered to best value. Developer-funded archaeological work within Northumberland will always refer to national and local research frameworks.

Historic towns represent one of the most complex and important forms of archaeological evidence, some having been occupied over two millennia (English Heritage 1992, 13). As well as information about the overall development of urban settlement and its planning, towns can also provide information on defence, ecclesiastical organisation, crafts, commerce, industry and the environment as well as about the individual occupants of a town and how they lived and died. As more work is carried out in our urban centres because of archaeological intervention in the planning process, more information is being accumulated. It is important that this information is made accessible to the public and is synthesized, enabling archaeologists to produce, amongst other things, models of changing urban form and spatial analysis of fluctuating zones of activity within towns and their suburbs. This will help to create a national picture of urban settlement change and Alnmouth, with its well-preserved street pattern and importance as a port, will have an important role to play.

This assessment has suggested that medieval remains will lie at least intermittently along Northumberland Street and into the properties flanking this street

#### **7.1 Prehistoric Potential**

A number of Mesolithic flint tools and flakes have been recovered from an area of raised beach near to the town. Targeting the location of similar remains or occupation deposits around Alnmouth is problematic and yet very important because the North Sea coastal margin is of high potential for the discovery of prehistoric remains of all periods. This is of special importance for the Mesolithic period when semi-permanent foci seem to have been established in these resource rich areas as has been shown by the recent discovery of the encampment at Howick, Northumberland and by a similar site along the east coast at Dunbar in Lothian, Scotland. An enclosure lies immediately to the north of the town and, although presumed to be late prehistoric, this is by no means a secure assumption; other enclosures of known later prehistoric date do lie along the coast in some numbers.

### 7.1.1 *Research Agenda*

- What was the topography of the Alnmouth area over the prehistoric period?
- How did this change through time and could topographic modelling help predict areas of greatest potential for the survival of archaeology of the prehistoric period?
- How best would limited targeted investigation confirm the chronology of the scheduled earthwork to the north of Alnmouth?

## 7.2 **Early Medieval Potential**

Although Alnmouth may have been a significant religious, and possibly secular, site in the early-medieval period, the only physical evidence is pieces of a tenth century stone cross-shaft, possibly a grave marker, recovered from Church Hill. Church Hill is owned by the National Trust and is at very low risk from development so it is unlikely that the issue of early-medieval occupation in this context will be soon resolved. If there were ecclesiastical occupation at Alnmouth over this period, there may also have been secular occupation, possibly in the area of the later town, although no evidence for such a settlement has as yet been located.

### 7.2.2 *Research Agenda*

- What archaeological evidence is there for early-medieval occupation at Alnmouth? Where was it located and what was its extent?
- What was the topography of the area over the early-medieval period?

## 7.3 **Medieval Potential**

The basic layout of Alnmouth dates to its foundation in the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries as a burgh town and a port. The medieval street pattern has survived with modern additions and there is a high potential for earlier surfaces to survive below ground. Medieval and post-medieval property divisions between burgh plots are still respected by many modern boundaries, and there is a high potential that earlier evidence will survive below ground, although this may be truncated by later development. The street pattern and the surviving burgh plots is one of the reasons that this town has been designated as a Conservation Area, therefore the local planning authority are likely to wish to preserve it by ensuring that future developments respect the original boundaries. Evidence from the medieval burgh plots is likely to relate to medieval domestic occupation. Within a plot there may be shops, industrial premises, craft workshops and areas for the dumping or burial of rubbish.

The exact location and nature of the medieval harbour is unknown but elements of it, including remains of vessels, may survive. As the river course in the estuary is prone to change, remains may be buried below a considerable depth of sand and mud or be at risk from erosion. Any deposits are likely to be waterlogged. The potential for recovering evidence of the

medieval market place is low. The survival of waterlogged deposits is rare and requires additional resources to excavate, conserve and analyse the artefacts. Where appropriate, specialist sampling may be required in addition to other archaeological work. The rarity of such survival means that these sites can provide important information not obtainable elsewhere. Waterlogged deposits can be affected by development beyond the area of interest. It is important to ensure that any adjacent developments such as coastal defences or dredging do not change the hydrological relationship of archaeological remains and thus result in their indirect destruction.

There is also high potential for very significant below-ground survival of the medieval and post-medieval church on Church Hill along with an associated medieval cemetery. Some of this cemetery will have been lost to coastal erosion prior to the construction of the 19th century defensive wall, but much may still exist.

#### 7.3.1 *Research Agenda*

- Is there any evidence for overall planning and standardisation of the layout of burgage plots?
- What economic and industrial activities were taking place throughout the town and how did they alter through time?
- To what extent does medieval fabric survive in standing buildings in Alnmouth?
- Where was the medieval harbour located?
- Where is the medieval cemetery on Church Hill?

#### **7.4 Post-Medieval Potential**

Evidence for early post-medieval buildings and boundary divisions are likely to survive. Repeated modifications to the form and use of the buildings have been made, but this adaptation in itself is important to record and requirements to do so will be made through the planning process. Although the majority of buildings surviving within the town today are 18th century with 19th century additions, some 17th century buildings do exist. These are a rare survival in Northumberland and will be afforded protection through the planning process. These 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings afford an opportunity to examine a period of social and architectural transformation and the partial acceptance of Georgian principles of architecture. Most research into 17th century buildings in Northumberland has concentrated on rural vernacular architecture or large, high status houses in Newcastle city, but these rare survivals provide an opportunity to obtain information about middle status 17th century town houses and their occupants.

#### 7.4.1 *Research Agenda:*

- To what extent do 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings survive in Alnmouth and how have they been modified?
- To what extent can the study of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in Alnmouth shed light on a period of social and architectural transformation in the town with the at least partial acceptance of Georgian principles of polite architecture?

### **7.5 Nineteenth Century Potential**

The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw considerable change in Alnmouth. The impact of the 1806 storm on the economic and social well being of the town is of particular interest. The port had been in decline before 1806, but the final shift in the route of the river will have hindered trade, at least for a time. Fishing continued to be important, but the guano industry and sawmills were now cut off from the town and shipbuilding was no longer possible. The introduction of the railway offered a new form of transport, which further reduced the usefulness of the port.

#### 7.5.1 *Research Agenda:*

- Did the alteration in the course of the River Aln at Alnmouth affect the economy of the town?
- How did the introduction of the railway affect the economy of the town?



## PART THREE: ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

### 8 THE EXISTING FRAMEWORK

The protection and management of archaeological remains in England is achieved through a combination of statutory and policy based measures. For what are considered to be the most important sites, those of national significance, statutory protections are conferred. For many other sites, those which are considered to be of regional or local significance, protection is provided through planning legislation and policy guidance. An indication of best practice for the protection and management of all archaeological sites is provided by Planning Policy Statement 5 issued by the Government.

**8.1 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS5)** was published in 2010 and replaces Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15). PPS5 is supported by a companion *Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide* endorsed by Communities and Local Government, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and English Heritage. The practice guide contains general and specific advice on the application of the PPS.

PPS5 recognises a heritage asset as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. It recognises that heritage assets are a non-renewable resource which should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations. It indicates that planning decisions should be made based on the nature, extent and level of significance investigated to a degree proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset (para 7). It establishes the principle that nationally important heritage assets and their settings, whether scheduled or not, should be preserved except in exceptional circumstances (HE9 and 10).

Policies HE6 and 8 require that local planning authorities should ensure that sufficient information on the significance of any heritage assets accompanies all applications with assessment being carried out by appropriate experts. In the case of archaeological assets, this may require desk-based assessment and where an assessment is insufficient to properly assess the situation, field evaluation may be required. Assessment and evaluation should be proportionate to the importance of the known or potential asset and no more than is required to understand the impact of the proposal on the significance of the asset. *Where assessment and evaluation is required this needs to be undertaken prior to the submission of an application and included within the required Design and Access Statement (HE6 and 8)*. Pre-application discussion with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) is recommended (HE8), in

particular Northumberland Conservation, who provide planning advice to the local authority on heritage issues.

Where the loss of part or all of the asset is *justified*, LPAs should require the developer to record and advance an understanding of the heritage asset before it is lost. Such actions can be secured by condition. The extent of mitigation requirements should be proportionate to the significance of the asset (HE12). These procedures are examined in more detail in section 8.7 and 8.8 below.

## **8.2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

The most important sites in the country are protected under the terms of section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979). For any works carried out on or in the vicinity of these sites consent must be granted by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), who take advice on these matters from English Heritage (EH). Scheduling is in many ways unsuited to widespread application in urban areas. It is not designed to protect extensive areas, but rather protects well-defined and easily identifiable monuments. Nor does it adapt well to protecting archaeological remains where the precise nature of the deposits is not known. It is therefore necessary to protect many urban archaeological remains through the planning process and if necessary by controlling or reducing sub-surface interference through an Article 4 direction under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988.

## **8.3 Listed Buildings**

This is a statutory designation, the equivalent of scheduling for a building. Listed buildings can be altered, but only after due consideration to the nature of the building and its historic context. There is currently a range of listing grades: grades I and II\* are protected directly by English Heritage, grade II by local authorities.

## **8.4 Conservation Areas**

Conservation Areas are designated by the local planning authority under the terms of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Archaeological Areas) Act 1990. Conservation Areas are put in place in parts of towns which are considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are more than 50 Conservation Areas in Northumberland of which Alnmouth is one.

## **8.5 Archaeological Sites Without Statutory Designation**

Protection and management of the majority of archaeological sites in England, ie those which are not protected by statutory means, is carried out by local authorities. Measures for the protection of both known sites and measures to deal with the discovery of as yet unknown sites, are set out as policies within the statutory development plan and include specific

requirements as well as reference to nationally agreed planning policy guidelines and statutory obligations.

## 8.6 Development Plan Policies

Responsibility for the protection and management of archaeological sites and the historic environment falls upon the Local Planning Authority (LPA). To assist the LPA in preserving the built and natural environment, the statutory development plan contains a comprehensive set of planning policies. For Alnmouth, the statutory development plan comprises the *Alnmouth District Local Development Framework Core Strategy*, and the saved policies of the *Alnmouth District Wide Local Plan*. The Regional Spatial Strategy was revoked in July 2010.

The relevant policy within the *Alnmouth District Local Development Framework Core Strategy* is:

### **POLICY S15 - Protecting the built and historic environment**

*The district council will conserve and enhance a strong sense of place by conserving the district's built and historic environment, in particular its listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments, conservation areas and the distinctive characters of Alnmouth, Amble, Rothbury and the villages.*

*All development involving built and historic assets or their settings will be required to preserve, and where appropriate, enhance the asset for the future.*

The saved policy of the *Alnmouth District Wide Local Plan* relating to the protection and management of archaeological sites and the historic environment is:

### **Policy BE2 Regional and local archaeological significance**

*Planning permission will not be granted for development detrimental to sites of regional or local archaeological importance, unless there is an overriding need for the development and no alternative location for the development can be found. Where the impact of the development is not clear, the developer will be required to provide an archaeological assessment or evaluation as appropriate. Before the development of sites of archaeological interest is permitted, the developer will be required to submit for approval a statement of investigation and proposals to secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work before development commences.*

These objectives are implemented through the planning system and through protective legislation.

## 8.7 Pre-Application Discussion

Early consultation with Northumberland Conservation on planning proposals is of enormous importance and is highlighted in PPS5. Where assessment and evaluation are required, this needs to be undertaken prior to the submission of an application and included within the required Design and Access Statement in line with PPS5 policies HE6 and 8.

Northumberland Conservation can provide an initial appraisal of whether known or potential heritage assets of significance are likely to be affected by a proposed development and can give advice on the steps that may need to be taken at each stage of the process.

#### *8.7.1 Desk-Based Assessment*

Information on the likely impact a proposed development will have on the remains can be estimated from existing records (including this report), historical accounts and reports of archaeological work in the vicinity, in conjunction with a number of sources which suggest the nature of deposits on the site, such as bore-hole logs and cellar surveys. This is presented in a standard format, known as a Desk-Based Assessment, prepared by an archaeological consultant on behalf of the applicant, to a specification drawn up by, or in agreement with, Northumberland Conservation, which can assist by providing a list of organisations which do work of this sort (see Policy BE2, above).

*Pre-application consultation with Northumberland Conservation is vital as desk-based assessment may not be necessary in many instances but where required, it will need to be submitted with the planning application.*

#### *8.7.2 Field Evaluation*

Where an assessment is insufficient to properly assess the impact of a proposed development on known or potential heritage assets, field evaluation may be required. The requirements of this stage will also be determined by Northumberland Conservation. It may require a range of survey and analytical techniques including limited excavation. An evaluation is designed to provide sufficient information about the extent, character and preservation of archaeological remains to judge what planning decision would be appropriate and, if necessary, what mitigation measures should be adopted (see Policy BE2, above).

*Pre-application consultation with Northumberland Conservation is vital as evaluation may not be necessary in some instances but where required, it will need to be submitted with the planning application.*

### **8.8 Archaeological Planning Conditions**

The Planning Authority can make the appropriate decision (in the context of the Policies set out in the statutory development plan) on whether or not to give consent to the scheme, based the information provided by the Historic Environment Record and assessment and evaluation reports, where necessary. If it is considered that an application can be consented, steps may be required to mitigate its impact on the archaeological remains. This can sometimes be achieved by simply designing the scheme to avoid disturbance, for example by the use of building techniques that ensure minimal ground disturbance. If planning permission is given and archaeological remains will be unavoidably destroyed, the developer may be required to

ensure that these remains are archaeologically investigated, analysed and published. In this situation, the requirements for further work will normally be attached to the Planning Consent as conditions, such as the standard Northumberland Conservation condition detailed below:

*A programme of archaeological work is required in accordance with the brief provided by Northumberland Conservation (NC ref X dated X). The archaeological scheme shall comprise three stages of work. Each stage shall be completed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before it can be discharged:*

*a) No development or archaeological mitigation shall commence on site until a written scheme of investigation based on the brief has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.*

*b) The archaeological recording scheme required by the brief must be completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.*

*c) The programme of analysis, reporting, publication and archiving if required by the brief must be completed in accordance with the approved written scheme of investigation.*

#### **8.8.1 Written Scheme of Investigation**

This is a detailed document which sets out the extent and the nature of archaeological work required, including any necessary analyses and research, finds collection, conservation and deposition policies as well as likely publication requirements. This document is usually prepared by the contracting archaeologist, who will undertake the work, to a brief prepared by Northumberland Conservation.

#### **8.8.2 The Range of Archaeological Fieldwork**

The range of archaeological requirements set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation will vary. Many sites in historic urban areas will require full excavation. Frequently, though, the small-scale of disturbance associated with a development, or the low probability that archaeological remains will have once existed or survived on the site, will mean that a less intensive level of observation and recording is required. This may take the form of a Watching Brief; this is the timetabled presence of a suitably qualified archaeologist at the point when ground work on a site is underway. Any archaeological deposits encountered will be quickly recorded and any finds collected, without undue disruption to the construction work. Again, Northumberland Conservation will provide the brief for the Watching Brief and the contracting archaeologist will provide a detailed Written Scheme of Investigation which complies with the brief.

#### **8.8.3 Building Recording**

Where historic standing buildings form a component of the archaeological resource affected by development, there may be a need to undertake building recording in advance of demolition or renovation. This requirement may apply to listed and unlisted buildings and will be dependent on the historical interest of the building; outwardly unprepossessing structures may contain important information about past communities and industries and will merit recording by qualified archaeologists or building historians to an agreed specification.

## 8.9 Unexpected Discoveries

Developers may wish to incorporate the potential for unexpected discoveries into their risk-management strategies. The PPS5 Practice Guide (paragraph 141) provides advice on the rare instances where, as a result of implementing a consent, a new asset is discovered or the significance of an existing asset is increased in a way that could not reasonably have been foreseen at the time of the application. It advises the local planning authority to work with the developer to seek a solution that protects the significance of the new discovery, so far as is practical, within the existing scheme. The extent of modifications will be dependant on the importance of the discovery and new evidence may require a local planning authority to consider reviewing its decision. Discoveries of treasure or human remains will need to be reported in accordance with the relevant legislation. English Heritage wishes to be informed if the discoveries are likely to merit designation.

The National Heritage Protection Commissions Programme Guidance on PPS5 Assistance Cases released in July 2010 indicates that English Heritage recognises that the best-planned and informed schemes can occasionally result in entirely unexpected discoveries of national significance, and therefore it may be possible to apply for funding as a last resort to ensure that a suitable record is made prior to destruction or loss of significance. English Heritage will only consider financial assistance towards the investigation, analysis or dissemination of such nationally significant discoveries if:

- The discovery is genuinely unexpected and could not have been predicted
- The asset discovered is of national significance
- The planning process set out in PPS5 has been followed
- Every effort can be demonstrated to have been made to accommodate unexpected discoveries within the available resources by prioritising the most important elements of the asset(s) being investigated

The request for funding must come from the appropriate local government heritage officer with responsibility for the case and not directly from the contractors or consultants conducting the investigation. Funding will be provided via the National Heritage Protection Commissions Programme (replacing the Historic Environment Enabling Programme in April 2011). English Heritage must be consulted at the earliest possible juncture so that they have an opportunity to shape the response to the unexpected discoveries. English Heritage will not consider retrospective applications to cover costs already incurred when they have not been consulted on or agreed to the response and its cost implications. The first point of contact should be the North-East English Heritage offices at Bessie Surtees House, 41-44 Sandhill, Newcastle upon Tyne (0191 269 1200).

### 8.9.1 *How is National Archaeological Importance Defined?*

A number of assumptions will be made when determining whether archaeological remains are nationally important or not. These have been set out by English Heritage (1992, 47):

- i)* the further back in time the origins of the form the greater the interest to archaeology;
- ii)* the fewer the number of examples believed to exist the greater the interest that attaches to those places as representatives of their form;
- iii)* the greater the variation that can be perceived within any defined form the higher the archaeological interest in terms of opportunities to explore spatial and temporal variation in respect of social, economic, political, religious, and symbolic matters; and
- iv)* the more representative of the life and times of the periods during which defined forms were current the greater the archaeological interest in terms of providing insights into past lifestyles.

These assumptions are not intended to apply to all of the town at all times. Nor will all of these assumptions be appropriate to all nationally important archaeological sites within the urban area. Instead they are used to help create a value judgement on particular archaeological remains and whether they may be nationally important or not. A number of discrimination criteria will also be applied to archaeological remains discovered during the course of development. These will relate more specifically to the remains uncovered and will include their state of survival, their potential to provide archaeological evidence, previous archaeological or historical documentation on site, their group value, diversity, and amenity value. These criteria have been developed by the Secretary of State to determine whether archaeological remains are nationally important or not.

In Alnmouth, the majority of sites considered to be of archaeological interest are medieval and 19th century in date. All listed buildings in Alnmouth are listed Grade II; these are of special interest and warrant every effort made to preserve them. Listed buildings in Alnmouth are shown on Figure 2.

## 9 SOURCES

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- Whitaker: A Descriptive list of the Maps of Northumberland 1576 - 1900

### Documentary Sources (Northumberland Record Office)

- Drawings of Alnmouth Church by J. Vilet 1771 in Grose's *Antiquities* 1783.
- Lady Emily Percy's book shows a drawing of the old church.



**APPENDIX 1: LISTED BUILDINGS****Grade II**

- Ruined chapel on west side of Church Hill (HER5445)
- The Duchess' Bridge, over River Aln (HER5733)
- Well opposite Alnmouth Methodist Church (HER5739)
- Old harbour wall, Garden Terrace (west end off) 20/15 (HER5740)
- Nos 1-8 consecutive, Lovaine Terrace 20/16 (HER5741)
- Marine House Private Hotel, Marine Road 20/17 (HER5742)
- Pant on north side of junction with The Wynd, Northumberland Street (east side) 20/18 (HER5743)
- Church of St John the Baptist, Northumberland Street (east side) 20/19 (HER5744)
- No 55 (Seabank) Northumberland Street (east side) 20/20 (HER5745)
- No 56 (The Galleon) Northumberland Street (east side) 20/21 (HER5746)
- No 57 (The Aln) Northumberland Street (east side) 20/22 (HER5747)
- No 60 (Driftwood Lodge) Northumberland Street 20/23 (HER5748)
- The Hindmarsh Hall, Northumberland Street (east side) 20/24 (HER5749)
- Voctoria Place (Nos 1-4 consecutive) and attached wall to north-west 20/25 (HER5750)
- Nos 7 and 7A Northumberland Street (west side) 20/26 (HER5751)
- The Schooner Hotel, Northumberland Street (west side) 20/27 (HER5752)
- No 14 Northumberland Street (west side) 20/28 (HER5753)
- The Old Watch Tower and attached walls, in grounds of The Grange, Northumberland Street (west side, off) 20/29 (HER5754)
- No 17 (Aln House) Northumberland Street (west side) 20/30 (HER5755)
- No 18 (Seafield) Northumberland Street (west side) 20/31 (HER5756)
- No 30 (Barndale House) and No 31 (Barndale Cottage) Northumberland Street (west side) 20/32 (HER5757)
- The Hall, Northumberland Street (west side) 20/33 (HER5758)
- Attached wall to south-west of The Hall, Northumberland Street (west side) 20/34 (HER5759)
- Sundial to west of The Hall, Northumberland Street (west side) 20/35 (HER5760)
- Front wall and gateway to The Hall and Hallsteads, Northumberland Street (west side) 20/36 (HER5761)
- Pant adjacent to Driftwood Lodge, Peases' Lane (south side) 20/37 (HER5762)
- K6 telephone kiosk, Northumberland Street 1399-0/20/10000 (HER5763)
- Nos 6, 7 and 8 (including 52 Northumberland Street) with attached wall, Prospect Place (north side) 20/38 (HER5764)

## **APPENDIX 2: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVENTS**

Material within this report includes information available on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record (HER) at the time this report was updated. Information on the HER is constantly being updated and should be used as the primary source for archaeological investigations in this area.

Geophysical investigations at Norton's Granary, Church Hill, Brick Kiln Close and Nightfold Field by Bradford University 1993 (see Bettess 1994)

Excavation at Nightfold by Norman Foster 1969 (see Bettess 1994)

Fieldwalking by Bettess (see Bettess 1994)

Event No 396

*An Archaeological and Historic Study relating to proposed housing development at The Red Lion Public House premises, Alnmouth, Northumberland, by Reavell and Cahill, 2001*

## APPENDIX 3: MAPS

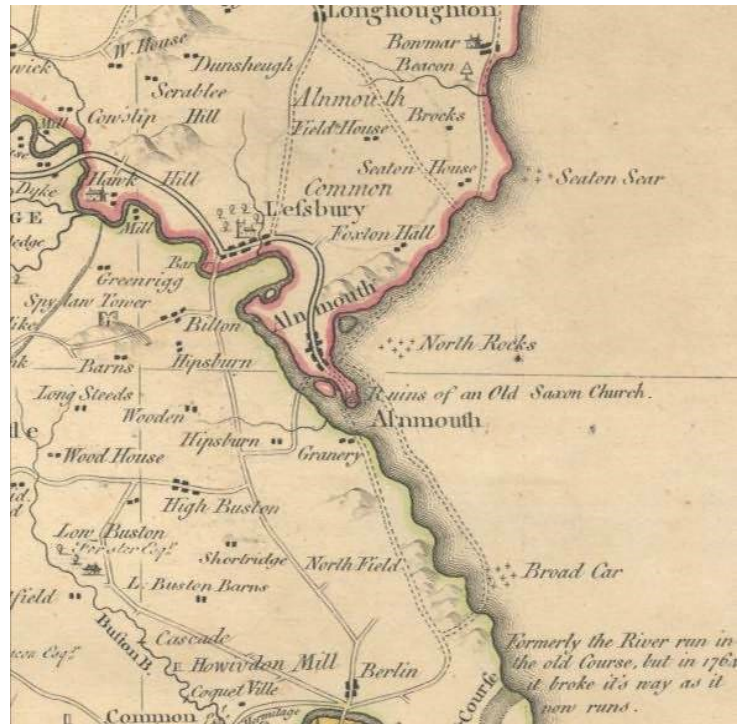


Figure 6: Armstrong's map 1769 ZBK sheet 6



Figure 7: Wilkin's Alnmouth Survey 1794 ZAN MSM 15  
(with permission of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle)



Figure 8: Tithe Award Enlargement 1843 DT 10 M  
(with the permission Diocese of Newcastle)

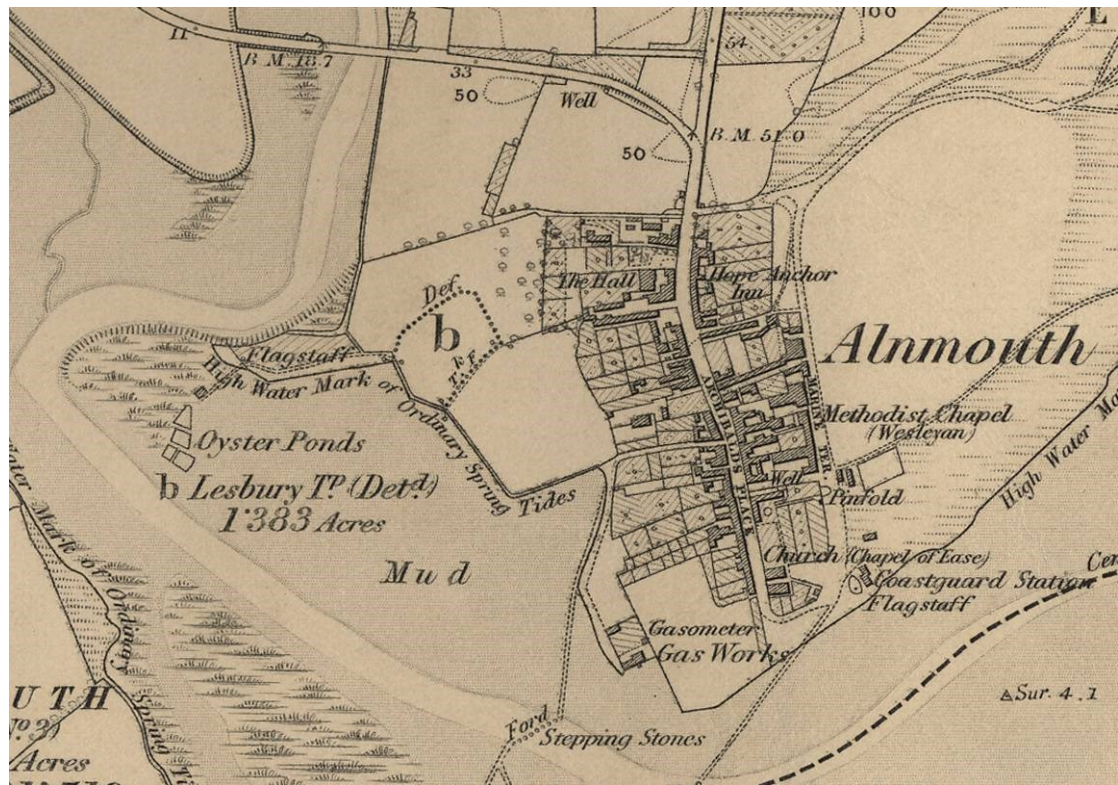


Figure 9: First Edition OS 25-inch Sheet 39 (1860)



Figure 10: Second Edition OS 25-inch Sheet 39.3 (c.1897)

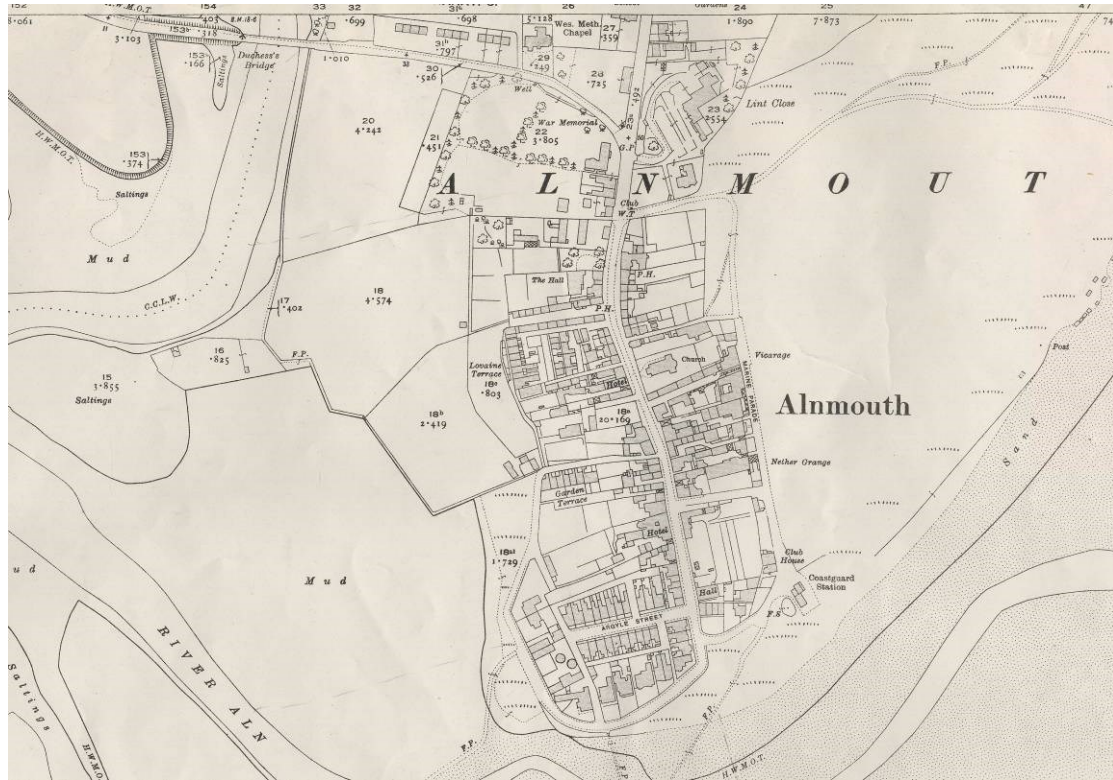


Figure 11: Third Edition OS 25-inch Sheet 35.12 (c.1920)



## APPENDIX 4: STRATEGIC SUMMARY

### ALNMOUTH STRATEGIC SUMMARY

#### A4.1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Alnmouth appears to have been a focus of activity since the prehistoric period. The Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) combined documentary and cartographic evidence as only a few limited archaeological investigations have been undertaken on the periphery of the town and none in the settlement's historic core.

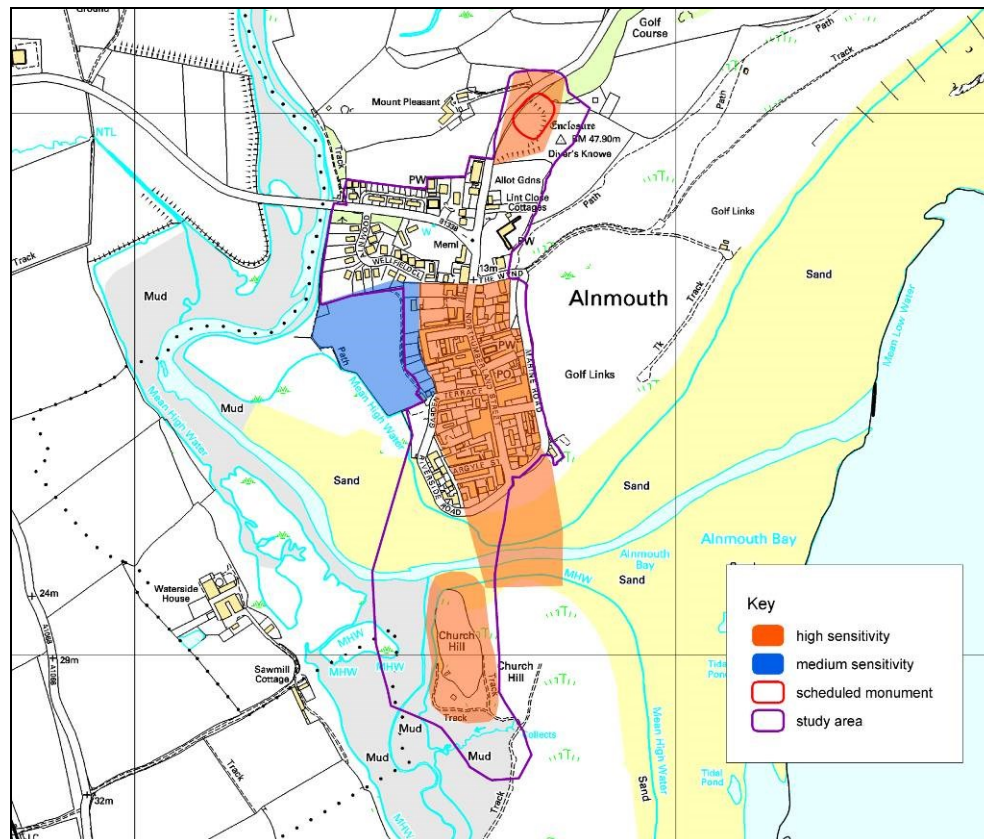


Figure 12: Alnmouth areas of archaeological sensitivity

#### Prehistoric

- Prehistoric activity in this area includes stray Mesolithic flints along the coastline and Bronze Age cist burials along the coast but away from the historic core of the town.
- An earthwork enclosure of potential Iron Age date is located on Alnmouth Common to the north of the town and has been scheduled. It has been subject to excavation, geophysical survey and field walking but the nature and date of this site remains uncertain.

#### Early Medieval

- Bede states that Cuthbert was elected Bishop at a synod at Twyfors (place of two fords). The description fits Alnmouth but this has yet to be established by archaeological investigations.
- Two pieces of cross shaft of late 9<sup>th</sup> to early 10<sup>th</sup> century date were uncovered on Church Hill to the south of Alnmouth in 1789. Recent geophysical survey on the site identified the later medieval church but no definite evidence of an earlier church.

## **Medieval Church**

- The medieval church of St. Waleric was located on Church Hill. It was first mentioned in 1305.

## **Settlement**

- Much of the current town layout may reflect the medieval layout with long narrow plots running back on either side of Northumberland Street with a limited number of side streets and back lanes
- The variation in plot size may indicate that the plots were not laid out at the same time to a set plan or may simply indicate subsequent land division and amalgamation
- Standing buildings could have earlier medieval foundations
- A charter for a market was granted pre-1178, while a charter for a port and (mainly) fish market was obtained in 1207. The location of the market is not known. It could have been located along the Main Street, on common land or on land to the south of the village now lost to the sea. As the focus of the market would most likely have been fish, it makes sense that it should be located closer to the port, presumably south of the town and west of Church Hill
- The town was also well positioned for foreign trade and the harbour is most likely to have occupied a sheltered position to the west of Church Hill. There is no evidence of stone structures or walls but it is likely that the harbour may only have comprised mooring posts and possibly wooden jetties. It is also possible that many of the boats could simply have beached on the intertidal sand flats
- Evidence from cases heard before the Justices of the Assizes in 1256 indicate that tanning, stone-exporting and wine-importing was taking place in Alnmouth.
- Without any defences, Alnmouth was attacked and severely damaged by the Scottish in 1336. Despite this destruction, trade through Alnmouth increased after it became the principle seat of the Percy Family.
- In 1529 the burgesses of Alnmouth entered into an agreement with the Earl of Northumberland that they would construct a wider haven at the port if the Earl provided the wood for construction. The refurbished harbour enabled trade to continue.
- There were at least three presumed medieval routes running into Alnmouth, one ran past the marshy ground on the horseshoe bend in the river, one across the marshes and another running to the south and crossing the river by one of two fords. Low Ford led to Warkworth and High Ford led to Lesbury and Alnwick. As the river has moved over time, the fords are also likely to have moved.

## **Post-Medieval Church**

- The church fell into disrepair in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The roof had fallen in by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the remainder of the church fell down in the great storm of 1806.
- The 1806 storm and a high tide caused the River Aln to break its banks to the north of Church Hill forming a new channel. The accumulation of sand dunes in this area led to the old river course being entirely blocked off isolating the hill from Alnmouth.

## **Settlement**

- Alnmouth fell into an economic depression in the later 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries with references to the settlement being 'dispeopled' in 1594.
- The port became in demand again in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the fortunes of the town improved. Many of buildings in the town today are 18<sup>th</sup> century in date with 19<sup>th</sup> century additions. A few examples of 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings do survive at 1-4 Victoria Place and 14 Northumberland Street and are very rare examples in Northumberland.
- Documentary sources refer to large granaries built to house corn, the town's largest export. Historic maps indicate that there were two large granaries to the south of the town beyond the River Aln and the west of the Main Street within the town. The North-East Regional Research Framework identifies Alnmouth as an important grain port until 1806 (Petts et al 2006, 101), although grain mills, bake houses and granaries were recorded in Alnmouth after that date.
- Historic maps also indicate two areas immediately adjacent to the burgage plots to the west of the Main Street called 'North Brick Kiln Close' and 'South Brick Kiln Close' which may indicate brick manufacture in that area. While a kiln-like structure was visible on

aerial photographs in the area of North Brick Kiln Close, a geophysical survey undertaken here in the 1990s failed to get the type of response indicative of a kiln.

- Two metalled causeways with kerbs have been revealed close to known 19<sup>th</sup> century fording points and it is likely these features represent the post-medieval Low and High Fords.
- The arrival of the railway to Alnmouth in 1850 and the construction of a bridge and new direct road from the station to the town in 1857 led to Alnmouth being firmly established as a seaside resort. There was considerable new building in the town in the mid-to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The row of 19<sup>th</sup> century villas at Lovaine Terrace and the Curates House at Chapel Hill are of particular interest because they represent early examples of the use of cast-concrete in house construction.
- Several granaries were converted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century including the old Gallon Estate granaries which were used as a temporary chapel in 1859 and Prospect House. Other granaries were demolished to make way for houses.
- 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings include the church of St John the Baptist, the Methodist church and the mortuary chapel near the concrete Curate's House.
- While fishing waned again in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the importation of timber led to the construction of among other things a saw mill and a timber and slate yard with associated activity. Guano was almost certainly traded through the port but the nature and extent of this trade is yet to be established.
- A practice battery was constructed to the north of the town in 1861 in response to the presumed threat of French invasion. The battery was strengthened in World War II with the addition of a concrete superstructure.

#### **A4.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AGENDA**

As part of the planning process, it is important to establish the significance of surviving remains, in order to provide an appropriate and informed response for planning applications with the potential to impact on archaeological remains.

As stated in Part Two of the EUS, the most effective way of assessing the significance of archaeological remains is by comparing them with agreed national, regional and local research agendas and frameworks, particularly the North East Regional Research Framework (Petts et al, 2006). These research agendas are discussed in detail in the EUS and are summarised below.

##### **Prehistoric**

- The topography of the area in the prehistoric period and how it has changed in order to establish if topographic modelling would help to predict the areas of greatest prehistoric potential.

##### **Early Medieval**

- The nature, extent and location of the early medieval settlement and chapel.
- The topography of the area in this period.

##### **Medieval**

- the nature, extent and development of the medieval settlement.
- evidence for overall planning and standardisation of the layout of the burgage plots.
- the range of industrial and economic activity in the town and any variation or shift in the focus of activity over time.
- The location of the medieval harbour.
- The location of the medieval church and cemetery at Church Hill.
- The presence of medieval structural remains in later houses.

##### **Post-Medieval**

- The extent to which 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings survive and have been remodelled.
- The nature and range of industrial and harbour related activity surviving.
- The impact of the alteration of the course of the river on the town's economy.
- The impact of the railway on the town's economy.

### **A4.3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS**

The Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) has identified the areas of greatest archaeological sensitivity and potential in Alnmouth as summarised in the previous two sections. The attached plan further condenses the information into areas of high and medium archaeological sensitivity.

As stated in the EUS report, the protection and management of archaeological remains in England is achieved through a combination of statutory protection and protection through planning legislation and policy guidance. This framework is summarised in Part Three of the EUS.

There is a strong potential that archaeological work will be required by the Local Planning Authority on planning applications submitted within the areas highlighted as being of high and medium archaeological sensitivity. Areas outside the EUS area may also be of archaeological sensitivity, particularly remains associated prehistoric activity and the golf course to the east. It is recommended that developers contact the Assistant County Archaeologist at Northumberland Conservation at the earliest opportunity to establish if sites are of archaeological sensitivity and will require archaeological work as detailed below.

The nature and extent of archaeological work required as part of the planning process will depend on the location of the development in relation to the most archaeologically sensitive areas, the size of the development and the level of previous disturbance on the site. This could comprise one or more of the following:

#### **Pre-application work**

1. PPS5 indicates that, where assessment and/or evaluation are required on a site, the results of this work will need to be submitted in support of the planning application, and therefore will need to be completed prior to the submission of the application
2. The EUS is used as an aid in the decision making process and helps to highlight large or particularly archaeologically sensitive sites which may require further, site specific, assessment or evaluation. In order to locate trial trenches or test pits most effectively, the commissioned archaeological contractor will need to provide a detailed project design for the agreement of Northumberland Conservation prior to work commencing. The project design will need to include:
  - i. A summary of all known archaeological remains and investigations in the surrounding area
  - ii. Historic maps of the specific site indicating earlier site layouts and the location of structures and features
  - iii. Any geotechnical, test pit data or records indicating the build-up of deposits and/or modern truncation of the site
3. The subsequent evaluation will need to work to the parameters agreed in the project design. Where undated features and deposits are revealed environmental sampling, analysis and radio carbon dating is likely to be required. The results of the fieldwork and any necessary post-excavation analysis or assessment will need to be provided in a report submitted with the planning application to enable an appropriate decision to be made.
4. It is important to have a good understanding of the nature and significance of historic buildings, any surviving features, fixtures and fittings or potential re-use of earlier buildings or material prior to the building's alteration or demolition. Dependant on the specific building and the nature of the proposed works, an application may require historic building assessment to be submitted with the planning application. This will enable a decision to be made on the appropriateness of the scheme and the nature and extent of any mitigation requirements required.

#### **Post-determination mitigation**

1. The formulation of an appropriate mitigation strategy will be required and this will be based on the results of the evaluation. The majority of these options can be dealt with as a condition of planning permission comprising one or more of the following:

- i. Preservation *in situ* of important archaeological remains revealed during evaluation. This could have an impact on the viability of the scheme and whether planning permission should be granted
  - ii. Full excavation prior to construction work commencing for significant remains that do not necessarily warrant preservation *in situ*. This will also require post-excavation assessment, full analysis, publication of the results and long-term storage of the archive at the appropriate museum
  - iii. Strip and record prior to construction work commencing for a high density of less significant archaeological remains. The level of post-excavation work will depend on the significance of the archaeology revealed. Significant remains will require post-excavation assessment, full analysis and publication of the results. Archaeology of lesser significance may simply require an appropriate level of analysis and reporting. Long-term storage of the archive at the appropriate museum will be required
  - iv. Watching brief during construction work for a low density of less significant archaeological remains. An appropriate level of analysis, reporting and long-term storage of the archive at the appropriate museum will be required
  - v. No further work in areas where no archaeological remains are found
2. Small-scale development such as small extensions within the area of high archaeological sensitivity may not require pre-application evaluation and in some instances can be dealt with by an archaeological watching brief during construction. Given the high sensitivity of this area, the level of archaeological work required will very much depend on the nature, extent and depth of groundworks and the level of any previous disturbance on the site. An appropriate level of analysis, reporting and long-term storage of the archive at the appropriate museum will be required
  3. The need for historic building recording is assessed on the significance of the building, its surviving fixtures and fittings, the potential re-use of earlier building fabric and the nature and extent of the proposed works. Sufficient information will be needed to assess the significance of the building either from existing records or the production of an historic building assessment prior to the determination of the application. An appropriate level of building recording will be identified in response to all these factors, adhering to English Heritage Guidelines.

***NB*** *The nature and extent of archaeological work is gauged for each individual site. It is therefore recommended that prospective developers contact the Assistant County Archaeologist at Northumberland Conservation at the earliest opportunity before the application is submitted to discuss the potential requirements on development sites in Alnmouth and the surrounding area.*

This document and plan have been produced based on the available evidence at the time that the EUS was produced. Our knowledge of the archaeology is continually being updated and as such this information should only be used as a broad indication of the archaeologically sensitive areas. In some instances development outside the highlighted areas may be required.

#### **Further Guidance**

Any further guidance or queries should be directed to:

Assistant County Archaeologist  
Northumberland Conservation  
Development & Delivery  
Planning Economy & Housing  
Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
NE61 2EF

Tel: 01670 620305

e-mail: [archaeology@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:archaeology@northumberland.gov.uk)

