

Methodist Chapel under the arch on the N side of the village green and the Methodist Association Chapel in Chapel Street, have both been converted to houses or flats, while the later Primitive Methodist Chapel on Station Road became a workshop before being gutted by fire and demolished for new flats. The last Methodist Chapel in Millbank has recently become a private house.

There have also been many **public houses** in the village over the years but again most are long gone. Apart from The Manor House Hotel and The Working Men's Club, only **The Eden Arms** remains in the village; pub names from the past include the Rose and Crown, Fleece Hotel, Wheatsheaf, Greyhound and Jack-in-his-Glory. More recently the Prince of Wales, Queen's Head and Earl of Warwick all closed in the same year, 2012, to be converted into living accommodation.

**There** are two **Primary Schools** in the village: Copeland Road and Oakley Cross. Originally there was a County Mixed School at Millbank which became a Junior School in 1929 when Copeland Road was built as a Secondary Modern; Millbank was demolished in 1967, although the School House still exists; a Youth Club was built on the site; for **Secondary Education** children mainly travel to Bishop Auckland, Staindrop or Barnard Castle

The **Pant** is the stone structure opposite the Manor House Hotel which forms part of the village war memorial; a service is held there on the afternoon of Remembrance Sunday; the Pant was erected in 1848 and originally supplied water to the village but was no longer needed when Waskerley Reservoir opened in 1888

**Mary Ann Cotton** spent her final years in West Auckland, living at 13 Front Street, before being convicted of killing her stepson. She was hanged at Durham Prison in 1873 for this but it was widely believed that she had already committed several murders including many of her children and three of her four husbands. The ITV drama 'Dark Angel', broadcast towards the end of 2016 and starring Joanne Froggatt,

tells the gruesome story of Britain's first female serial killer

Unlikely as it may seem, the West Auckland football team really were the first **World Cup Winners**. The bronze **sculpture** in the middle of the Green, opposite the Working Men's Club is by Nigel Boonham and was erected in 2013. It thoughtfully depicts the connection between coal mining and football in the village. Probably by accident, West Auckland were invited to represent England at the first tournament of its kind in 1909. The amateur team, consisting mainly of miners, won the trophy and on being invited to defend their title in 1911, won again and were allowed to keep it. Sadly, the original trophy was stolen from the Working Men's Club in 1994 but a replica remains on display. The story was told in the 1980s film 'A Captain's Tale' starring Denis Waterman. The statue was unveiled in October 2013 by Sir John Hall, actor Tim Healy who appeared in the 1980s film and former professional footballer David Thomas whose grandfather captained the 1909 winning team. There is an information board near the statue or you can search for West Auckland World Cup Winners on Google. **West Auckland FC** currently play in the Ebac Northern League Division One; the ground is just off the A68 Darlington Road.

#### WEST AUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

This is one of a series of free guides written and produced by the Parish Council for the benefit of residents and visitors.

- 1 An Introduction to West Auckland
- 2 West Auckland: An Outline History
- 3 The Historic Buildings of West Auckland
- 4 West Auckland: Rural Walks

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## WEST AUCKLAND AN OUTLINE HISTORY

The short guide to the village's  
long and unusual history



*The First World Cup: The Sir Thomas Lipton Trophy*

WEST AUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

This leaflet is intended to give an outline history of West Auckland, highlighting points which may be of interest to visitors.

**The Village** was probably established by mid-late 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was a planned village established by the Bishop of Durham who owned most of the land in County Durham at that time. There were older villages around it; Copeland (W) and Lutterington (S) mentioned c. 1050 and St Helen's Auckland (E) founded only a few years before West.

West Auckland lay between the River Gaunless and Oakley Cross Beck and from an early date had a corn mill to serve the village. The Boldon Book, completed in 1183 on the orders of Bishop Hugh le Puiset, was a survey of the vast diocesan estates (a sort of local Domesday Book); it refers to West Auckland being occupied by 18 villeins or feudal tenants.

The **Village Green** is one of the longest and largest in County Durham and is characteristic of the Bishop's planned villages. Nearby, Staindrop (on the A688 to Barnard Castle) and Heighington (just off the A6072 to Darlington) have similar village greens, but Tudhoe near Spennymoor has the longest in the county. The A688 is the village by-pass but the A68 from Darlington crosses the village green on its way to Scotland. The **green**



*Eden Arms public house*

**seats** around the village were provided by the Parish Council; some are dedicated to the memory of people who have contributed to village life.

Unusually for such an old settlement, West Auckland has no **Parish Church**. The church for the village is at St Helen Auckland, only half a mile away to the east, on the road to Bishop Auckland. This is because St Helen's church and the small village attached to it, already existed before West Auckland was established. There is a village **cemetery** on Darlington Road, laid out in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The medieval manor house of the village is now **The Manor House Hotel** and was for a long time the family home of the Edens. Sir Anthony Eden, Prime Minister 1955-1957, was a member of this family. He was born in 1897 but by this time the family had moved to Windlestone Hall which is on the A689 between the villages of Coundon and Chilton.



*Copeland Road School*

The **Stockton and Darlington Railway**, opened in 1825, passed through the village. The railway was built to take coal from Phoenix Row colliery (just north of Etherley village, two miles away) to the port of Stockton-on-Tees. It crossed the road from West Auckland to St Helen's Auckland just east of the stone bridge over the River Gaunless; to the right the old track bed can still be seen alongside the site of the **Railway Station** (see adjoining Station House) which is now a private house; many of the old railway tracks, which criss-cross the area, can now be walked.

The sinking of **West Auckland Colliery** in 1838 led to the greatest growth of population in the village's history. The colliery stood just NW of the road and railway crossing between West and St Helen Auckland, where the houses of Northbridge Park now stand. In the early 1900s the Colliery employed over 600 men but closed in 1967. During the life of the colliery 52 men and boys, the youngest aged 11, died in pit accidents. The railway closed in 1962, a victim of the Beeching Report. South of the station. Lying on the eastern edge of the village, the track crossed the river on the **Gaunless Railway Bridge**, the original being the world's first iron railway bridge. It was dismantled in 1900 and is currently at the National Railway Museum at York. Its replacement was removed in 1962; only the stone abutments remain. Parts of the old railway line can still be walked. It is the vision of many councils and groups in the area to conserve what remains of this important railway and to establish a public path along the whole route from Stockton to Phoenix Row, by the bicentenary in 2025.

**Miners Seat.** Under the trees in front of the Manor House Hotel is the **Miners' Memorial Seat**. A recent addition to the village, the stone was donated by Mark Atkins, Director of Teesdale Architectural Stone at Barnard Castle, who wished to gift a large piece of stone to the village for a seat commemorating its history. Sadly, Mark died in 2016. It was designed and carved by Beatrice Searle, sculptor and stone mason.

Like so many Durham colliery villages, West Auckland saw the growth of Nonconformism. The old Wesleyan