

house with double bay windows, was formerly the Rose and Crown public house. The village grew after 1838 when the colliery was sunk (closing in 1967) and at its height in the later nineteenth century there were 17 pubs in the village and on surrounding roads – six just along this side of the green.

### 3 Crusty Loaf (Nos 17A-19A)

These house and shops, including The Crusty Loaf, once formed a single farmhouse that stretched along the edge of the village green. They are typical of the houses that once lined the whole green. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century building later became a public house, then was subdivided in the Victorian period into smaller houses, new shop fronts were added, new bays added to Nos 17A and 18, but still retaining the core of the old farmhouse.

### 4 Old Fleece House (No. 20B)

Along with its neighbours, left and right, (Nos 20, 20A and 21), this house was once a single, steeply-pitched 17th century thatched farmhouse. It was extended to the rear in the eighteenth century and its first floor was raised with new roof over the deeper building c.1810-20. The new staircase being lit by a circular window, almost certainly built by the same Barnard Castle builder who erected houses in Galgate. The house was later subdivided, with the central and left houses forming a public house, the Golden Fleece, then Fleece, for much of the last two hundred years.

### 5 Betting Shop (No. 30)

The earliest shop front in the village, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a bow-windowed Regency front with fine ashlar stone work above.

### 6 No. 1 Station Road

On the corner of Front Street with Millbank/Station Road, first a house, later the village post-office, then a cafe and now a house again. The front doorway, on Millbank Road, bears the keystone initial and date of the probable builders - Cuthbert and Eleanor How, 1741.

Now walk across Millbank, into East Green and down to the farthest end to reach...

### 7 East Oakley Farm, (No. 26 East Green)

A fine mid-17th century farmhouse, once the home of John and Katherine Kay, who carved their initials over the parlour fireplace in 1651, when the house was called 'Harles house'. John Kay was a resident of some standing - a reeve - responsible, amongst other duties, for the compilation of the village's Hearth Tax returns in the 1660s and 70s.

Return to main green by the south side of East Green.

### 8 Fish Hall (Nos 33-34 East Green)

An 18th century house, once a lunatic asylum, home in 1817 of Jonathan Martin, incarcerated for threatening the Bishop of Durham with a pistol. Martin was later released and in 1829 set fire to York Minster.

### 9 The Old Hall

The right half of this fine 17th century house was built c. 1623-8, as part of a fairly typical County Durham farmhouse, like many others that may have lined the green. In 1670-1, it was raised in height, doubled in size (left half) and given a splendid central porch by a wealthy owner who knew how to impress. Whether it was old or new money we know not, but his newly acquired status probably emboldened him to annexe part of the village green, as the Edens had done opposite, at the Manor House. Inside is a handsome oak staircase and many arched stone fireplaces. Restored from dereliction in the early 1970s by John and Elaine Niven.

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#### WEST AUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL

This is one of a series of free guides being 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

## THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF WEST AUCKLAND

A short guided walk  
around the village green



*The Manor House*

**WEST AUCKLAND PARISH COUNCIL  
VILLAGE GUIDE No. 3**



## The Village

West Auckland was a fully established village by 1183, laid out on a flat, low lying plain between the River Gaunless and Oakley Beck. It was a planned village, established by the Bishop of Durham, the landowner of much of the county at the time.

Like many other such planned villages it had a central, roughly rectangular green, laid out east-west, surrounded by farms and cottages. West Auckland has one of the longest and largest greens in the county (Tudhoe's is the longest). The principal building around the green would in many villages have been the church, but St Helen's church was already established in the neighbouring, and slightly earlier, village of St Helen Auckland.

After the church, the most important building in the mediaeval village was the Manor House, and in West Auckland it is the finest building. We shall start our tour of the village there, and move clockwise, travelling first down the north side of the main green, into East Green, then looking at the buildings on the south side.

## 1 The Manor House

During the reign of Henry VI the manor was in the hands of the Daltons, but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century it passed via the Huttons to the Edens and became their principal seat until they moved to Windlestone Hall in the 1830s, the later home of the Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden.

West Auckland Manor House has generated many myths over the years. It does not incorporate a twelfth century tower, nor was there a thirteenth century monastery built behind the main hall. Henry VIII did *not* stay there and replan the house to his initial 'H' and did *not* plant the (originally) eight trees that stand in front of the Hall, on the village green. Regrettably there is *no* tunnel connecting the Manor House to the Old Hall, still less one linking the building to Durham Cathedral!

So what is known? Firstly, the existing H-plan building is largely late medieval in date, probably early 16<sup>th</sup> century, though its thick walls may indicate even earlier fabric survives. Its H-plan was a common plan form for prestigious houses in the medieval and Tudor periods – a central hall range with two cross wings, one for private apartments, one for kitchen and other service rooms. The arch-headed mullioned windows date from this period. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century a central door was installed in the main hall and the main staircase



positioned in a high tower behind the hall. These staircase towers, often mistaken in the North East for early fortified towers, may have once risen to the roof to give access to 'the leads', a popular vantage point enjoyed by both hosts and their guests.



Plasterwork in the Manor House dating from around 1600.

In the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century some of the rooms at the Manor House were embellished with decorative plasterwork ceilings, work undertaken by peripatetic plasterers, some of whom have been traced by their use of specific moulds, moving from Yorkshire into Scotland in the early years of the century.

Also in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a small block was added to the East Wing to serve as a closet for the bedroom above. In the private apartments, special attention was given to the ground floor chamber in the west wing where lavish woodwork of the 'Cosin school' (Bishop Cosin of Durham, c. 1660-1672) was installed. This was moved to Windlestone in 1829 and later moved to the Bowes Museum c. 1960. In the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, the main change brought about in the appearance of the Manor House was the introduction of timber sash windows, set in stone architraves.

## 2 Former Rose and Crown (No. 12)

Move along the north side of the green past the terrace of four houses, to the start of a longer terrace of older, taller houses. The first of these, an eighteenth-century