

West Life

*The Newsletter of West Auckland Parish Council
No 51 – November 2020*

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

The following announcement was due to appear in Westlife much earlier in the year but it has not been practical to produce an edition until now. Neville still wants you all to read his message:

Julie and myself would like to take this opportunity to thank both the West Auckland and St Helens Auckland communities for their help and contributions, however large or small, in recent charity events held for ourselves.

Whilst being in London for Julie's operation we have been amazed by your generosity and the events that have taken place through this terrible time. It has made us so proud of our village and it has shown that we can pull together when needed.



Sadly, Julie died in August but the message of thanks still applies to everybody for their kindness and generosity at that time. Neville would also like to thank everybody who lined the route of the

cortege through the village to pay their respects on the day of Julie's funeral.

*Again, thanks to you all.
Neville and Julie Thompson.*

COVID-19



A huge vote of thanks to you all for everything that you have done to support neighbours, friends and even strangers during the awful times this year.

Special thanks to NHS workers and those who have continued to provide essential and emergency services during the lockdown and restrictions.

Thank you to the local shops which have remained open throughout to provide for us and to the shops/services which re-opened as soon as they were allowed.

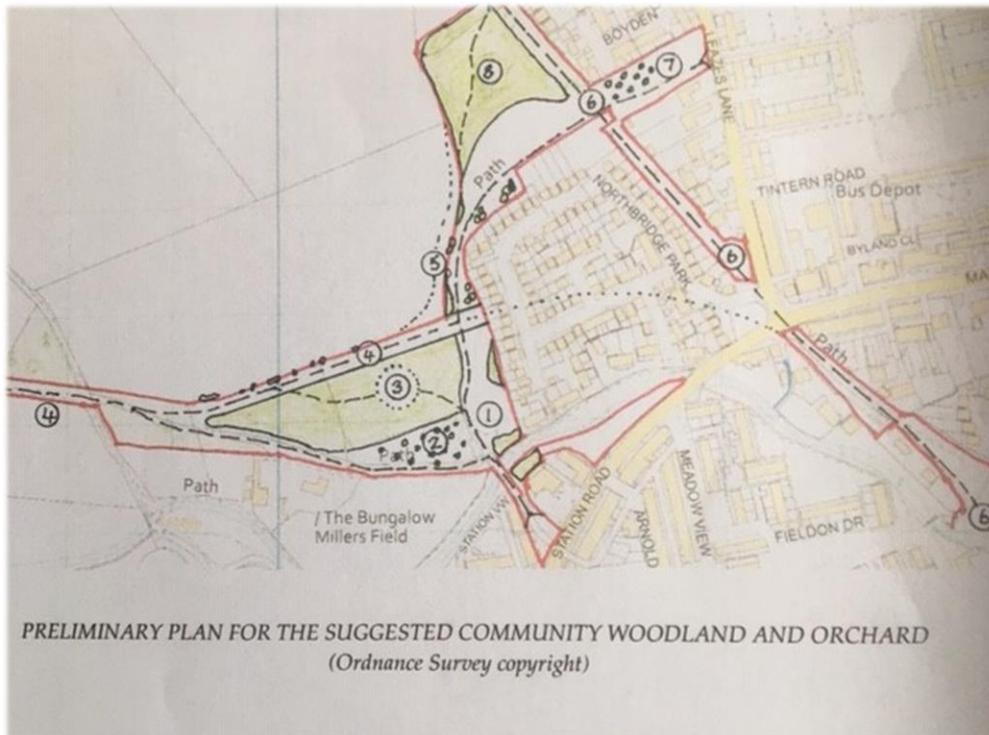
Thank you to everybody who came out to show our appreciation for key workers on the Thursday night applause and to Frank Hudson Transport for their support with a spectacular drive through the village on many of those nights.

Please continue to do all you can to support each other and follow the guidelines to keep yourselves and others safe so that we can eventually get through this. Whilst the trees should again be lit up in December to bring some cheer to the village, the annual carol singing around the Christmas tree followed by soup in the Well is unlikely to take place this year under the current restrictions.

A COMMUNITY WOODLAND AND ORCHARD FOR WEST AUCKLAND?

Would you be keen to see a new COMMUNITY WOODLAND planted in the village, on land between West Auckland and St Helen Auckland?

Would you also like to see a new COMMUNITY ORCHARD established beside it?



The above sketch plan has been produced for a community orchard and woodland to test the opinion of both the local authority Durham County Council (DCC) and residents. The woodland and orchard would be sited in the NE corner of the village, on DCC land north of Station Road and Northbridge Park – see plan below. They would adjoin the important Stockton and Darlington Railway line (S&DR) – 6 on the plan – and its early Haggerleases branch line (4) which would of course be fully protected. Early site meetings with DCC officers have been very encouraging. A preliminary landscape plan is being prepared by DCC with costings and likely grant sources identified.

The new woodland areas would extend the wildlife corridor that already runs beside the S&DR down from Etherley, right into the heart of the village, with two main areas (3 and 8). The southern of these two areas (3) is a redundant football pitch, unused for many years due to its boggy condition. The suggested orchard site (2) would be close to the River Gaunless just opposite Station View.

THE PLAN - The planting of the woodland would be a major task undertaken largely by DCC's contractors but working closely with local residents and schools who would also be involved in its subsequent management and use. The orchard would be more of a village affair: planted, managed and eventually harvested by local residents.

Would you like to be involved in one or both of these proposals? Without local support, they may well not happen! If you are interested please contact Martin Roberts either by email martin.fleece@gmail.com or phone/text 07717 533577 or drop a note through his door at 20B Front Street on the village green.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDENS

According to the Autumn edition of DCC's **County News**: "thirteen new neighbourhood wardens have joined the council to help combat anti-social behaviour and environmental crime".

Four of the new team will focus solely on the issue of tackling fly tipping which will be no bad thing. Some of the new recruits will patrol the streets of Durham City whilst others will concentrate on towns and villages across the county. Hopefully, West Auckland will benefit from a share of the time allocated to these wardens: there have been some worrying incidents of anti-social behaviour in recent weeks.

SAMARITAN'S PURSE: OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD



The SHOEBOX appeal will take place, as near to normal as possible, again this year. Information leaflets and empty pre-printed boxes are available from The

Well on East Green. Full boxes can be dropped off at The Well during opening hours on November 11th, 12th and 13th.

The Well is currently open from 9.00am to 3.00pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week but operating under the current stricter government guidelines

The Food Bank is still in operation and has been throughout the COVID-19 situation: items for food parcels are always most welcome and the staff will soon be planning to make up Christmas hampers for those in need; if you are able to donate anything along the lines of tins of ham, Christmas pudding, Christmas cake, mince pies, boxes of biscuits, bars of chocolate/chocolates or savoury snacks, these also would be gratefully received.

WELCOME

A belated but nevertheless warm **Welcome to West Auckland** for some new residents:

- To those who have moved into the new houses built on the site of the former East Green Home.
- To the garage occupying what used to be the Old Mill – and what an excellent job has been done to tidy up the building and make it look attractive.
- To West Auckland Boxing Club who have taken over the old youth club building; they have refurbished it, equipped it and have been able to hold some training/fitness sessions already.

WEST AUCKLAND IN BLOOM

Local volunteers have been able to maintain the variety of tubs and planters around the village over the Summer and have provided many colourful displays to cheer us up during these dark times; two new beds have been introduced – one in Chapel Street and one outside the Spar car park; a miner with his coal tub has arrived on the green as a reminder of the village's mining heritage.

The Parish Council has purchased the two silhouette soldiers in front of the Pant to enhance the war memorial and a further large number of **spring bulbs** have been planted in and around the village to increase the display for next year.

More volunteers are always welcome to support improving the village. Anyone wishing to become involved could either contact the Parish Council or speak to any of the volunteers can regularly be seen planting, weeding and litter picking around the village.

PARISH COUNCIL VACANCY

A vacancy is about to be advertised for a co-opted Parish Councillor to replace Cllr Rachel Gargett-Gillens. The Parish Council wish to thank Cllr Gargett-Gillens for her contribution. Anyone interested in this voluntary position please contact Sharon, Clerk 01388 834360?

BACK IN TIME..A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF WEST AUCKLAND

This is the first of what is intended to be a series of articles in future editions of Westlife looking back at events in the past; hopefully these will interest newer residents as well as the older ones who might remember the highlighted event.

In the 1950s there was a significant network of railway lines in the area including West Auckland which had its own station. There was a level crossing near the stone river bridge taking the lines over the main West to St Helens road. However, the station closed to freight in 1958 and then to passengers in the summer of 1962 after the infamous 'Beeching cuts' which were imposed to make the railways more efficient and cost-effective by closing miles of lines and many stations throughout the country. Perhaps general usage was dwindling by then anyway but there was just time for one last big event – or departure from the station – before it closed. On Saturday March 24th 1962, West Auckland were drawn to play Crook in the semi-final of the FA Amateur Cup at Middlesbrough. A Crook Town supporter, 13 years old at the time, recalls boarding a Soccer Special at Howden-le-Wear and being amazed at the number of carriages all packed with people and the length of the train as he and his friends looked out of their open windows. Of course, local amateur football clubs were well supported in those days – especially in the latter rounds of the cup – and it is quite likely that an equally large train left West Auckland that day. The last big excursion to leave West Auckland station.

Sorry West Auckland fans but Crook won the cup tie 2-0 with Arnold Coates scoring the first after a goalmouth scramble and Don Sparks cutting in from the right wing to score the second with his left-footed shot squeezing in at the near post. These memories are from a Crook Town supporter: does anybody still living in West recall that day? Remembering that the formation in those days was always a goalkeeper, 2 full backs, 3 half backs and 5 forwards (ask someone over 60!) the teams were:

Crook Town: Snowball; Gardner, Clarke; Storey, Hetherington, Brown; Sparks, Garbutt, Coates, Peary, McMillan

West Auckland Town: Oliver; Summerson, Wakes; Mendum, Siddle, Carter; Briggs, Broomfield, Hopper, Skelton, Douglass

Interestingly, the Crook left back was Frank Clarke who went on to play at Newcastle United and later for Brian Clough's successful Nottingham Forest side.

Many thanks to John Phelan for his recollections of the day and to John Raw for suggesting the idea for this article.



The station building still exists as a private home and it is possible to walk along several of the old track beds in the area which have been converted into pathways.

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It's Your Village – Have Your Say

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Meetings held at Monteith Close Community Parish Room at 7.00 pm on the 2nd Monday of alternate months. Agendas and Zoom links will be available from the Notice Board or for more information visit our website:

<http://www.westaucklandparishcouncil.org.uk/>

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