

Community Newsletter

Welcome to our newsletter. We hope you will enjoy reading it and looking back on the various events that have taken place in Willington since May. ***We have been very busy!***



Coronation

We celebrated the coronation of King Charles III with a Flag Raising Ceremony on 6th May 2023 at the flagpoles on the George Burdon McKean Memorial site.

We also celebrated with a picnic on the green on the 7th May 2023. There were lots of crafts and activities for the children to get involved with.

Unfortunately, due to the inclement weather, we all ended up in the Town Council office watching the magician who was rather good! We gave out prizes for the best children and adult fancy-dress costumes and best dressed teddy bear.

The local Primary Schools and Parkside Academy were involved and children drew some wonderful portraits of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

Sunnybrow Primary School

- 1st - Jake A
- 2nd - Hope M
- 3rd - Gracie M

Highly Commended -
Evie-Grace B

Willington Primary School

- 1st - Lindsay P
- 2nd - Luke E
- 3rd - Emily T

Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School

- 1st - Rosie F
- 2nd - Niamh W
- 3rd - Jessica A

St Stephens Church of England Primary School

- 1st - Georgia B
- 2nd - Phoebe R

Parkside Academy

- 1st - John S

It was very hard to pick as all entries showed a lot of effort had been put into each piece. Well done to all who took part.

Pictures of the winning entries were put on display in the Town Council office window.



Family Fun Day – July 2023

What a fantastic day this was and enjoyed by lots of families.

The day involved giant inflatable play installations, Mega Adult Bouncy Castle, Assault Course, Wipeout Challenge, Balance Run, Bungee Run, Teacups and Saucers, Play Bus, Cave Pod, Donkeys, Marquee, competitions, tombola and more.

All the rides and activities were free of charge and the children could have as many turns as they wanted. We had wonderful weather, and many families enjoyed a picnic together on the Town Green.



Hyem Fest – July 2023

The event was in collaboration between Northern Heartlands, AAP, DCC and GWTC.

Who would have thought a 30-foot turtle would visit Willington?! A group of time detectives worked with our local schools finding out about the history of Willington.

Community workshops were organised to create props for the parade which was well attended.

The opening parade was amazing, a real sense of not only celebrating the past but looking forwards to the future. Sadly, the weather was not kind to us with torrential rain. As a result, the fiery finale was not able to happen.





Away Days

Two very successful Away Days were organised for 2023. Residents visited South Shields on 5th August 2023 and had a lovely time.

We were able to take two coaches as we received funding of £450 from County Councillors Fraser Tinsley and Olwyn Gunn to provide one disability access coach. This allowed people with mobility issues to come along.

Our second away day was to Beamish on 2nd September 2023. There was a Dig for Victory event going on during the visit and residents were able to visit the 1940's Farm to discover life on the Home Front during the Second World War.

Everyone who attended really enjoyed themselves.



Summer Fun

Three activity days were organised for children during the summer holidays with thanks from the Fun & Food Team following a successful funding application.

The themes were, Seeds and Beaks, which included planting lettuce and radish seeds and repotting tomato plants and making bird houses, Superheroes in the Making where children were able to make crowns, tiaras and shields and Animals About Town where children enjoyed a picnic with a magic show and some farmyard petting animals.

The children all had a great time and enjoyed making the various crafts over the three days. Packed lunches were provided for all children who attended.



Autumnus Mabon Feast

This event saw Willington's first musical festival. The festival began with a parade led by Newton Aycliffe Pipe Band.

The parade consisted of witches, pumpkins, the green man, wicker man, and motorbikes. We were entertained by The House Devils, Daniel Docherty, and Rockin' 70's who were all spectacular.

There were competitions for the best dressed witches in adult and children's classes. There was also a scarecrow competition.



Halloween



A Halloween disco and magic show took place at the Willington WMC on 26th October 2023.

The children enjoyed dancing and the 'spooky' food that was provided. The children and some adults dressed in amazing costumes, and it was very difficult to choose the winners.

Fancy Dress Winners

1st – Freya H

2nd – Isaac M

3rd – Alisha C & Amber B

Children also came to the council offices to enjoy a Pumpkin Carving Session on 30th October 2023.

There were some fantastic 'spooktacular' pumpkin designs.

Pumpkin Carving Winners

1st – Alfie F

2nd – Mia T

3rd – Chloe A

Mayors Choice – Jayce P



Remembrance

Get Crafty is a group who meet in the Town Council office on a Monday between 10am and 12pm where they join in with crafts or sometimes, they bring their own.

A member of the group has created a spectacular poppy bike which was displayed on the Town Green. We have received lots of positive comments about the bike. The Poppy Net that is also on display in the Council offices has also been added to and strengthened.

Both pieces of work are amazing.

Remembrance Day

A short Service was arranged for Remembrance Day to commemorate the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month when World War One ended in 1918.

Deputy Town Mayor Councillor Angela Smith, Town Councillor Stephen Jackson and PCSO Katie Corner raised the Remembrance Day flags at the George Burdon McKean site. The Venerable Shirley T Griffiths read prayers and County Councillor Olwyn Gunn read her poem she penned for George Burdon McKean VC MC MM.

Wreaths were also laid at this time.

Remembrance Sunday

The usual service took place at the War Memorial in Low Willington and was led by The Venerable Shirley T Griffiths.

It was well attended with many residents and representatives paying their respects. Thank you to everyone who came along. It was great to see so many of you there.

Following the act of remembrance, a parade was formed, and people marched to a service at St Stephens Church.

DAFT

Durham Amateur Football Trust put on a display in the council offices to celebrate 50 years since Willington played in the FA cup.

It was lovely to see some of the players meet up and reminisce. Parkside boys and girls football team captains came along to the opening of the exhibition. Stars of the future meeting stars of past times.

The Town Council invited members of the public to view the exhibition the following week.



Retirement

The Town Council invited Father David Spokes and his wife Gillian to the Town Council office on Friday 9th June 2023 to say thank you for the support he has given to us and the community during his time at St Stephen's Church. We wished him well on his retirement and presented him with a gift.

A gift was also sent to Father Brian Murphy, formally of Our Lady and St Thomas RC Church following his retirement.

Willington Runners

Willington runners, Peter Clough(59) and Wayne Pearson(55) have certainly had a year to remember.



It all started back in January, when they travelled over to Cockermouth, to compete in the North Lakes Half Marathon. It was a worthwhile trip, as they both finished 1st in their age categories and in doing so, automatically qualified to represent their country.

They then both lined up in May, for England Masters v Wales Masters at the Chester Half Marathon, where Wayne finished 3rd and Peter 4th in their age category. It was Peter's second time representing England over the Half Marathon distance, having gained selection previously in 2021. Wayne then went on to gain selection for a second time, when running for England at a 5000m Road Race in August.

Well done to you both!



Pantomime

M & M Theatrical Productions brought Beauty and the Beast to Willington WMC.

Everyone really enjoyed the show, Oh yes they did! At the end of the show all children visited Santa, accompanied by his elf, in the grotto and were given a small gift. Thanks are extended to the WMC for their donation towards the pantomime.

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The pantomime has been booked for 2024!

Civic Carol Service

This year's Carol Service was held at Our Lady and St Thomas RC Church followed by the lighting of the Christmas tree and refreshments at the Town Council offices.

Pupils from Our Lady and St Thomas Catholic School formed a choir and sang Away In A Manger and Silent Night. They also signed part of each Carol. Two of their pupils also read lessons. Students from Parkside Academy also read lessons and a former pupil from St Johns School read a message about Christmas.

The Service and Prayers were led by Father Jim Angus who was recently installed as priest of Our Lady and St Thomas RC Church. It was lovely to see the Church full of residents. The Mayor of Shildon, Councillor Shirley Quinn and her consort Councillor Peter Quinn were also in attendance at the Service.



Northumbria in Bloom

Finally new for this year hanging baskets were placed around the front streets which looked amazing.

As a result of the continued work to improve the environment GWTC won Best Small Town in the Northumbria in Bloom awards. This is a fantastic achievement for our community!

There are also a lot of initiatives that have continued throughout the year. The environmental group have



continued planting bulbs extending the area towards Helmington Row and planted cyclamen under the Christmas tree. Many allotment holders continue to give surplus produce to the Open Door Church Food Bank.

Christmas Card Competition

The theme for the Christmas Card Competition was 'Christmas Tree' and we thank everyone who submitted an entry to show their artistic ability.

The winning card has been used as GWTC's official Christmas Card for 2023. Winning entries are displayed in the Council office window.

Winning entries are:

1st Henry Thomas B

2nd Barbara FH

3rd Amelia Weir



On behalf of GWTC councillors and staff, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and best wishes for 2024.

The Council offices will be closed from 3pm on 14th December 2023 and reopen at 9am on the 8th January 2024.

Councillor Dorothy Hales, Town Mayor.