

Community Newsletter

Welcome to our newsletter. We hope you enjoy looking back at some of the events from 2025 and look forward to events already planned for 2026



Community Hub

Over the last year, with thanks to funding of £75k from UKSPF, we have been able to transform the council building from the roof down. A new roof, extra insulation and damp proof work will future proof the building. A bright new kitchen was created downstairs, and the meeting room was transformed into a Community Hub with comfortable chairs, small tables and storage units.

The Hub is being used for a Craft Club, various groups from Wellbeing and it hosts a regular coffee morning in support of Chyrelle Addams Support Trust every month. Residents are welcome to call in for a tea or coffee during office hours. The upstairs rooms now host the council meeting room, a small meeting room and a digital hub.

If anyone wishes to use the Hub for a meeting, please contact the Town Clerk.

Brancepeth Colliery Pit Disaster Memorial 13 April 2025



We commemorated 129 years since the explosion of Brancepeth A Pit. A service was held on Dante's Heap attended by residents and accompanied by Aycliffe and Brancepeth Brass Band. During the service white roses were placed at the bottom of the Beacon.

Each rose had a label tied to it with the name and age of a miner who was killed. A purple ribbon around the rose reminded us of the pit ponies who were also killed. A descendant of one of the miners, who was killed in the disaster, was able to lay a rose on behalf of the family.

VE Day 8 May 2025

In May, we commemorated the 80th Anniversary of VE Day. We held a short service at the George Burdon McKean Memorial site and were joined by children from our local schools. During the Service, each school brought a large poppy petal, with every pupils name written on them to create a Poppy of Peace. This is now displayed in the Council office. After the service, refreshments were served in the Hub.



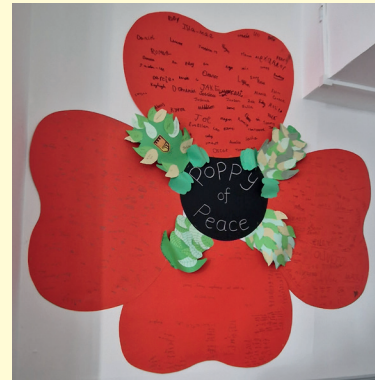
We held a competition for local children on the theme of 'Victory'. The winners were;

1st Prize Lorna E, Year 8
Parkside Academy

2nd Prize Eva H, Year 3, Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School

3rd Prize Sam B, Year 5, Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School

4th Prize Charlotte L, Year 6, Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School



Durham Miners Gala 12 July 2025

A coach was provided free of charge to take residents into Durham on the morning of the Durham Miners Gala.

Town Mayor, Councillor Dorothy Hales and Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Angela Smith were photographed with Willington's Banner prior to parading it, supported by Thompsons Solicitors.

Next year is the 130th Anniversary of the Brancepeth Colliery 'A' Pit Disaster and we hope residents will join us at the Gala and parade behind the banner.



Meet your Town Councillors



Councillor Margaret Elgie



Councillor Charles Hales



Town Mayor -
Councillor Dorothy Hales



Councillor Stephen Jackson



Councillor Karen Logan



Councillor Pauline Savage



Deputy Town Mayor
Councillor Angela Smith



Councillor Judith Guthrie



Councillor Michelle Hall



Councillor Lynn Jackson



Little Brass Bash 16 July 2025

It was a glorious, sunny evening and residents came together to enjoy the music of the various bands.

We were entertained by New York Brass Band, John Birk's Orchestra, Diddy Sweg and Das Brass.

GWTC funded afternoon tea boxes, which were provided by the Quarry Tea House and packed lunches and goody bags were given to the children.

We are looking forward to Little Brass Bash 2026.

Bond Care Summer Fare 26 July 2025

Town Mayor, Councillor Dorothy Hales and Consort, Councillor Charles Hales attended the Bond Care Summer Fare where they were invited to judge the Dog Competition.

This year's winner was a dog called George.

Thank you to everyone who supported this event.



VJ Day 15 August 2025

To commemorate the official end to the Second World War, a short service was held at the George Burdon McKean Memorial Site. In attendance were Town Mayor Councillor Dorothy Hales, Consort Councillor Charles Hales, Councillor Angela Smith, Town Clerk Emma McCann, and residents. Father Kevin Tromans led the Service.



Family Fun Day 16 August 2025



What a fantastic day we had!

There were lots of activities for all ages provided free of charge. Adults and children had a great time on the bouncy castles and enjoying eating the free ice cream, candy floss and popcorn.

William Clark Shows, various food vendors and various stall holders joined us for the day.

Thank you to everyone who came and supported the event, to councillors, volunteers, and the Town Clerk for helping to manage this successful event.

Thank you to local businesses who contributed to the raffle, this was very generous and really appreciated.

Thank you to Point North, Believe Housing and Durham County Councillors Cathy Hunt and Emma Hunt for their contributions towards the event, also to William Clark for his generous donation.

Grateful thanks to The Fun Experts, Beacon Traffic Management, County Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Service, Durham County Council Neighbourhood Wardens - South, Long Ears Donkey Centre - Home of Blackberry Donkeys, Cave Pod, Jungle Play Bus, William Clark Shows, St John Ambulance, Ipee Loo Hire, Complete Security, and all stallholders, for their contributions to the day.

Eco Fair 6 September 2025

GWTC were invited to take part in the Eco Fair held at Willington Open Door Methodist Church. Councillors D Hales, C Hales, A Smith, P Savage, S Jackson and L Jackson attended the event.



They took along display boards to showcase the advantages of allotmenting. A range of fresh produce, harvested the previous day from an allotment was also displayed, showing the range and diversity of crops that can be grown throughout the year. It was a great opportunity to meet other participants at the event and to share good practices.

We look forward to attending this event next year.

Northumbria In Bloom 17 September 2025



Councillors D Hales, C Hales, A Smith and P Savage attended the Northumbria In Bloom awards ceremony following a visit from the judges in Spring and Summer 2025.

We were absolutely thrilled and extremely proud that we achieved GOLD in the small town category!

However, that is not all, at the end of the ceremony there were a range of special awards to be presented. We were awarded the Best Overall Spring Display from the Northumbria In Bloom region which is absolutely fantastic.

We would like to thank Councillor Savage, Chair of Greater Willington Environmental Group for her hard work and vision for Willington, Councillor S Jackson for his oversight of the hanging basket display, town councillors who offer support, members of the Environmental Group for their time and hard work, local businesses who supported the hanging basket displays, to Kathleen who regularly waters and looks after the Sunnybrow planter and to all our residents who take a pride in their community, your efforts are greatly appreciated and help the Greater Willington Parish to bloom.

Oakenshaw Memorial

12 October 2025

Town Mayor, Councillor Dorothy Hales and Consort, Councillor Charles Hales were invited to attend the unveiling of the memorial by Oakenshaw Community Association.



The memorial is unusual as it encompasses a memorial to the men killed during the war and also to the miners who lost their lives working in the mine.

Halloween Disco 22 October 2025



The Halloween Disco was held at Willington WMC. The disco was provided by Geoff at The Disco Co and funded by GWTC. Willington WMC provided all children with a hot dog.

There was a Children's Fancy Dress competition and the winners were;

1st Starla R – Little Witch

2nd Billy-Joe F – Jack Skellington

3rd Theo T – Werewolf

The Halloween Disco 2026 has been booked in. Please save Friday 30 October 2026 in your diary. This will be held at Willington WMC at 1.30pm till 3.30pm.

Remembrance Sunday 9 November 2025

We held our annual service at the War Memorial. Residents joined in the procession from St Stephen's Church, led by Aycliffe and Brancepeth Brass Band. Our traditional service began at 3pm and included the laying of wreaths and prayers from Father Kevin Tromans.



It was a wonderful turnout from our residents including the Deputy Lord-Lieutenant Major Chris Lawton MBE DL, former Town Mayor, Ken Henfrey and lots of young people. Thank you for supporting this event.

'We will never forget the sacrifices made by so many people'.

Armistice Day 11 November 2025

This is usually held at the George Burdon McKean Memorial Site but due to the inclement weather, we met for a short service at the Town Council Hub.

Our local Primary Schools read In Flanders Field and The Ode. Parkside Academy, The Grange and all four Primary Schools made poppies and 'planted' them in the office. These will be added to the large Poppy of Peace on the wall in reception at the Town Council Hub.

The service was led by The Venerable Shirley T Griffiths and concluded with prayers.



Pantomime 15 November 2025



This year's Pantomime was Sleeping Beauty. Oh yes it was!

It was held at Willington WMC. M&M Theatrical Productions were fantastic and everyone had a great time.

Thank you to Durham County Councillors Cathy Hunt and Emma Hunt for their funding contribution towards

this event. Also, to Willington WMC for their donation. All children received a selection box at the end of the show.

Next Years Pantomime is already booked in for Saturday 14th November 2026. Please save the date.

Civic Carol Service 27 November 2025

This year the service was held at Our Lady & St Thomas Roman Catholic Church and was led by Father Jim Angus. Town Mayor, Councillor Dorothy Hales, welcomed everyone before the service. We were delighted that the Chairman of DCC, Councillor Robbie Rodiss and Deputy Lord-Lieutenant Major Chris Lawton MBE DL were able to join us for the service.



Four students from Parkside Academy read lessons and Councillor Charles Hales read the fifth lesson. Our Lady & St Thomas Catholic Primary School provided a choir and performed Away In A Manger. They also used Makaton signing to accompany the carol.

Thank you to everyone who attended the service, Aycliffe and Brancepeth Brass Band accompanied the carols at the Church and around the Christmas Tree. This led to the lights being switched on by William, who used his magic finger to trigger the light display!

Following the service and switch on, everyone was invited to the Community Hub for refreshments.

Use of the Hub

Other events that have been held in the Hub this year have been;

'Cuppa with a Coppa and a Councillor' 'PACT' 'Neighbourhood Wardens'

These sessions are advertised on our Facebook page and our website. These sessions allow residents to bring any issues of concern and hopefully come to a resolution on how to resolve each one.

Looking forward to 2026

We will be commemorating 130th anniversary of Brancepeth 'A' Pit Disaster in April. We would like to hear from any family who are descendants of the miners that were killed in the disaster.

Please contact the Town Clerk via email at emma@gwtc.co.uk or by calling the office on 01388 417725.

We would also welcome young people who would like to lay a flower at the floor of the beacon to leave their contact details with the Town Clerk who will be in touch prior to the Service. Thank you.



Future Events

- Brancepeth Colliery Pit Disaster (130th Anniversary) – Monday 13 April 2026
- Durham Miners Gala – Saturday 11 July 2026 (TBC)
- Little Brass Bash – July 2026 (TBC)
- Family Fun Day – August 2026 (TBC)
- Halloween Disco – Friday 30 October 2026
- Remembrance Sunday – Sunday 8 November 2026
- Armistice Day – Wednesday 11 November 2026
- Pantomime – Saturday 14 November 2026
- Civic Carol Service and Christmas Lights Switch On – Thursday 26 November 2026

Commemorating Coal and Community

Members of St Stephen's Church are currently working with other organisations in Willington to plan a series of events around the anniversary of the closure of the pit in Willington in 1967. More information will be given next year.

Volunteers

Some of our residents and councillors have been working with Durham Community Action to complete a Volunteer Passport. They were presented with their certificates on Wednesday 3 December 2025.



Town Clerk

Emma McCann, a familiar face in the town, was appointed the new Town Clerk from 1st April 2025. Emma joined the Council in September 2010. Her skills, dedication and knowledge are valued by the council.

Christmas Services

Our Lady & St Thomas Roman Catholic Church

- Wednesday 24 December 2025
Christmas Eve Vigil Mass 5pm
- Thursday 25 December 2025
Christmas Morning Mass 10.30 am

St Stephen's Church, Willington

- Wednesday 24th December 2025
Christmas Eve Crib Service 5pm
Midnight Mass 11pm

Willington Open Door Methodist Church

- Sunday 21 December 2025
Carol Service 10.30am
- Thursday 25 December 2025
Christmas Day Service 9.30am
- Sunday 28 December 2025
Service 10.30am

Office Closure

The Town Council will close at 12pm on Friday 19 December 2025 and will reopen at 9am on Monday 5th January 2026.

From January 2026, the office opening hours will be as follows;
Monday to Thursday 9am – 3pm Friday 9am – 12pm

*On behalf of Town Mayor,
Councillor Dorothy Hales,
Consort Councillor Charles Hales,
Councillors and Staff we wish
everyone a joyful and blessed
Christmas and a Peaceful and
Prosperous New Year.*

