



# Westhoughton Community Network

**Meeting: Wednesday, 13th September 2023 (7:00pm)**

at Cornerstone Church

## Minutes

### 1. Present

Groups represented (15) | Individuals in attendance (17) | Apologies (7)

### 2. Welcome/Apologies

Chairing the meeting, Chris Buckley welcomed those present, thanking our hosts for use of the room and in particular Colin Gradwell (Cornerstone ADS). It is our 4<sup>th</sup> visit to this venue; last time being November 2019 as Westhoughton Methodist Church prior to the merger with Westhoughton United Reformed Church (The Bethel) to form Cornerstone Church as a Local Ecumenical Partnership (5/6/22). There was a quick review of the [May](#) meeting minutes. Apologies were noted. GM Police, invited to give a community update, were unable to attend; and the Regeneration Officer at Bolton Council unable to attend ahead of a formal presentation to Ward Members on the next steps for the Town Centre Regeneration – whilst progress on the Market Street paving is going well and is on schedule, there has been no Steering Group activity nor project updates since the May Local Election. Those in attendance briefly introduced themselves to the room.

### 3. Westhoughton Poppy Appeal 2023

Newcomer Lindsay Pollard was introduced and spoke about her and husband Marcus' roles in this important annual fundraising and remembrance event. A Royal British Legion (RBL) initiative, until 2021 it was Westhoughton Rotary (George Davis) who ran proceedings in Westhoughton with support from the Town Clerk (Christine Morris). The Darren Deedy Foundation did it in 2022, but new management was needed this year, and having seen the WCN update from May's WCN meeting [[M42](#)], Lindsay and Marcus, already running the Leigh RAF Association for veterans, volunteered to take on this year's Poppy Appeal meeting with RBL officials and undergoing checks and training. There has been a steep learning curve and more involved than first anticipated, but they are enjoying it and are very grateful for all the support received so far.

They expect there to be more weekend collections this year at local stores (8 days, Aldi - Westhoughton and Cutacre - and Sainsbury's) from 27<sup>th</sup> October with the Remembrance Sunday Civic Events taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> November (a new Town Clerk being in place will help). Volunteers are needed to man the collection points – two hour slots with two people at the RBL stall; Ann Benn having done it previously commenting how fulfilling it was and just how generous the public were – card reader devices helped.

Lindsay wants to make sure that groups that want to lay a wreath get their orders in – a normal wreath costs £25 (with logo £27.50. However if not already set up previously it may not be possible this year). Deadline is 31<sup>st</sup> October. Other wreath options available. Lindsay will take the order and deliver ahead of their presentation at the cenotaph on the Sunday.

At the meeting a number of volunteer collectors signed up and wreath orders were made. The Chair thanked Lindsay for the presentation and - with Marcus - for taking on the Westhoughton Poppy Appeal and all it entails. Enquiries via [Facebook](#) / 07706 038081 / [westhoughtonpoppyappeal@gmail.com](mailto:westhoughtonpoppyappeal@gmail.com).



## 4. Westhoughton Local History Group Exhibition – ‘The Wingates Band Story’

With David Kaye busy putting together more exhibits, the Chair with the help of Val Chadwick (WLHG) and Andy Mooney (WB) gave an update on the Heritage Open Day (HOD) Week Exhibition celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [Wingates Brass Band](#). An incredible amount of work goes into researching, preparing and realising these events; this is the latest in a long line of WLHG endeavours to bring local history to life and showcase the rich and diverse history of the town and its people.

The Chair and Andy Mooney talked about the launch event at the Carnegie Hall on Saturday (9/9/23) which had introductions by David Kaye, a message from Cllr. Deirdre McGeown (Town Mayor), [Jim Berry](#) performing poems and songs as well as talking touchingly about the connection to Wingates Band of both his family and the Houghton Weavers. A quintet from the brass band performed some familiar tunes - sounding great and enjoyed by the band itself. The exhibition set up in the library was full of interesting exhibits, historical records, rare artefacts, photos and stories. The role of honour and story of his one-time temperance and fife band as it developed and improved is quite incredible - almost Aesopian... 13 National Championship titles including a *Double Double* (banding's two titles in consecutive years), international tours and renown, 100 years of recording and broadcasting, ranked still in the all-time Top 10 of banding... *The exhibition will run until 31<sup>st</sup> October at the Library and is well worth a visit.*

The HODs would continue with further special events on Thursday (14/9) and Saturday (16/9) comprising of presentations about the band from David Kaye, author of the 2013 anthology '[From Bible Class to World Class](#)', and entertainment from Jim Berry and local folk artist and songwriter [Corrie Shelley](#).

Joy Mooney on behalf of Wingates Band wanted to formally express their sincere thanks to David Kaye and Westhoughton Local History Group for their incredible effort in putting together the WB150 Exhibition and their ongoing support of the band. The band extended an open invitation to hear them practicing at the Band Hall on Saturday (16/9 – 2-4pm).

## Cultural Westhoughton...

## 5. Cornerstone ADS – Two Short Comedy Plays

Colin Gradwell told us of the latest performances from the Wigan Road amateur dramatic group. This weekend (15 & 16/9) sees the whole ensemble take to the stage with two one-act comedy plays: 'Friday Night Radio Play' and 'Right On Cue'. £7 with a pie and peas supper included. A fun evening in a welcoming setting. After which, preparations will begin for the February panto (Cinderella). The group rehearses on a Monday evening for those interested in getting involved (on stage or backstage).

## 6. Bethel Crowd – ‘Bombs and Blackberries’

The more youth-oriented Bethel Crowd take their latest show to St. James CoE High School in Farnworth for performances this weekend (15 & 16/9) with a Saturday matinee added. The show comprises of the one-act wartime evacuee drama 'Bombs and Blackberries' written by Gruffalo author, Julia Donaldson, and a second half of wartime songs and dance routines. Tickets are just £6. With the drama group still having to perform away from Westhoughton ticket sales do suffer, so they are hoping for good support. It is a drama group that brings through and gives an opportunity to younger performers with some seasoned actors encouraging and helping them along.

Ahead is the February Panto, Rapunzel, being performed (23 & 24/2) – [ticketsource.co.uk/bethelcrowd](https://ticketsource.co.uk/bethelcrowd).



## 7. Robert Shaw / 'Book of Quint' event

Having been approached in late May about a new book that develops the story of a pre-Jaws Quint, as the birthplace of said actor Robert Shaw, the wheels were set in motion to hold an event here in Westhoughton at the eponymously named Wetherspoon's.

New York-based writer, Ryan Dacko, following visits to Martha's Vineyard ('Amity') and a film studio tour, had got the Jaws bug and began to create a backstory for this larger than life character charting his journey from the sinking of the USS Indianapolis having "delivered the bomb" to becoming the single-minded Amity shark-hunter. Ryan has created a popular podcast - [Jaws OB](#) - for fans of the movie and with the Benchley estate's blessing wrote and crowd-funded an initial publication of 'The Book of Quint'.

The idea was to introduce and launch the book to fans at the event in Westhoughton, and on 1<sup>st</sup> July, with the support of Westhoughton Community Network and Wetherspoon's, and with Ryan Dacko as well as fans from across the country in attendance, a 'meet-up' took place both introducing the new novel and celebrating Robert Shaw. The event had talks, readings, context and background, community contributions, a Q&A session; books were gifted to the local community including the Library (now available). There was also a tour of Shaw sites in Westhoughton. The event was a great [success](#) and was covered in [Episode 64](#) of Ryan's podcast; it will feature in the next Wetherspoon's in-house magazine.

At the event was Amberley Publishing and we are pleased to say a publishing deal has now been signed, with a marketing campaign being planned and [publication](#) in November. There are high hopes that this book (part of a trilogy) will go on to be an accepted part of the 'Jaws Universe'. Screenplays are being developed and tentative talks have been taking place with Universal Studios about the possibility of a movie version.

Elsewhere, a comedic exploration of the behind-the-scenes drama that took place during the filming of Jaws - [The Shark is Broken](#) - written by and starring Ian Shaw, and based on his father's experience of the troubled making of the movie, has progressed from Brighton to the West End and now to Broadway.

With 2025 being the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jaws, we are looking at putting on an event in Westhoughton around the movie, book and Robert Shaw, the actor and author.

*There was a short break for refreshments and networking*

## 8. Information Share

**Friends of Westhoughton Station** (Brian Leyden). At the moment Sunday morning volunteers are cutting back foliage, trimming, pruning and generally tidying up. They have been given some daffodils to plant – part of a Spring 2024 flower display initiative (Town Council). The bridge works are causing some disruption – and confusion (mis-named road). The station has many bespoke displays and sadly one such display, a wire Howfen bull's head, has 'disappeared' much to the annoyance of the group. Help sought from Network Rail (CCTV) and appeals to find it put out via [Facebook](#). Electrification work ongoing along the line and will likely impact working and accessible areas for the group.

**George Formby Society** (Dennis Lee). Dennis thanked WCN for incorporating the group into the network all those years ago enabling them to get involved with the community. The society meets once a month to celebrate George Formby and his ukulele music; players gather to perform his songs and hone their playing skills. They have been in Westhoughton for some 20 years, originally at The Red Lion; they have recently moved to Cornerstone Church for their last Wednesday of the month meetings, happy with the room they are settling in. The group gets involved with the regular conventions at Blackpool, and



# Westhoughton Community Network

sometimes do little local gigs to entertain people who like George Formby music. They enjoy getting together, have fun and welcome new players and fans. Next gathering Wed, 27<sup>th</sup> Sept from 7:30pm.

There was a short digression talking about The Royal Albert Hall in London where both the George Formby Society (Dennis) and Wingates Band (Andy) have played. (Cultural Westhoughton!)

**Westhoughton Local History Group** (Val Chadwick). At the cenotaph end of Market Street there are two houses of note, listed in 1986, Sunny Bank and South View (associated with Peter Ditchfield – Gardens across named after him) and WLHG have just added a blue plaque with a QR code (a first for them) linked to information online. The houses are featured on the new Christmas card which is now available (60p), artwork by local artist Bill Usher. The group has many local publications available; it meets at the library on the third Thursday (10:30pm), usually with a speaker.

**Friends of Daisy Hill Station** (Jack Speight). Generally keeping the station tidy and some planting (once a month). Some plant tubs did not fare well in the dry spell; one needs replacing. Access to water an issue. Some problems with graffiti on the bridge. There was some disruption as work finally undertaken to improve/fix poor drainage around the bridge/Leigh Road. We remembered [Bill Greenhalgh](#) (d. 2017) of Westhoughton Methodist ADS whose memorial bench at the station celebrates an epic rail journey from China to Daisy Hill!

**Friends of Eatock Lodge** (Chris Buckley). Local Nature Reserve saw two surviving 2023 cygnets (of five) ringed this week by NW Swan Survey, meaning that sightings can be reported when they are chased off by the resident parents (it is their third brood). They have become a popular attraction and stimulate interest in nature. One of our cygnets (4DUD) last reported in St. Helens, heading west. A few events undertaken this summer – nature walks, pond-dipping and some conservation tasks. Regular litter picks. The odd isolated anti-social act to deal with. Still waiting on a new ‘Parks Manager’ to appear.

**Hope Church** (Mark Taylor). They’ve been in Westhoughton some 10 years and are very happy here, moving from The Hope Centre to The Hub post-Covid. They meet every Sunday from 10:30am. The Church likes to give back to the community: at Easter they do an Easter egg give-away; they did a free summer Funday and Christmas sees the family carol service (17/12) which is always popular.

**Rotary Club of Westhoughton** (Steve Harrington). In October the club celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Serving the local community successes include: in 1954, Westhoughton’s first Christmas Tree; the Santa Sleigh (touring for some 40 years) and raising money given out to local charities at Presentation Evenings; Spring OAP Parties and the Youth Speaks competition involving local schools. Their 2023 birthday party or ‘Charter Night’ will be on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October. Tickets with meal and entertainment from popular local cover band ‘Young Once’ are £30. On Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December there is the ‘Christmas Carols’ evening (a local primary school performs). Tickets are £25 including a meal. Both events are at Brookfield Hall and are open to all. The club has recently made a £1,000 donation to Bolton Hospice to help it keep going. If you’ve got a story or memory get in touch via [Social Media](#) or email [75years@westhoughton-rotary.org](mailto:75years@westhoughton-rotary.org).

**Westhoughton Allotments and Gardening Society** (Jack Speight). They will be planting Town Council donated daffodils. Monthly third Thursday meetings (7pm) at the John Holt Centre with a speaker; last time involved the Washacre Ash Grove Allotments group and helping them make the most of the resource; next time (21/9) the topic is ‘Running a Community Garden’ with Steven Anderson from the ‘Gordon Street Gardeners’ project in Wigan.



# Westhoughton Community Network

**Wingates Band** (Andy Mooney). They have a big 150<sup>th</sup> Celebration Concert at Bolton Parish Church (St. Peter's) on Saturday 4/11 (7:30pm), with a special guest soloist, Peter Moore, a former band member and winner of BBC Young Musician aged just 12 who now plays for the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO). The band play a Christmas Concert at St. John's (Wingates) Church on Tuesday 12/12 (8pm) and will perform at a Christmas Carol Service at St Vincent's Church, Over Hulton on Monday 18/12 (6pm). Before that they take part in the Bolsover Festival of Brass Entertainment Contest in Shirebrook, Derbyshire (1/10/23). Over Christmas a quintet will be out and about adding to the festive spirit – watch out for them at Asda at Middlebrook and Gee Tees in Westhoughton. New MD Andrea Price is settling in bringing a new approach that hopefully will see [Wingates Band](#) rise up the brass band league table; the distinction made about the more technical performances of competition and more familiar tunes of normal concerts.

We welcomed back and remembered the good work done by Linda James whose **Yarn Bombing** events of 2015 and 2016 were a great success bringing colour, creativity and entertainment to the town centre – helped by having a community network in place. With Linda was Elaine Kerfoot whose volunteering with **Howfen Litter Pickers** is making a big difference in keeping on top of the town's litter problem. The green bin bags which we see around came of the **Green Umbrella** initiative with Bolton Council ('Love Bolton Hate Litter') providing equipment and bags - Friends of Eatock Lodge being one of the founder members. It is good to see people from around the community doing their bit.

David Chadwick gave some Council updates: there is to be a meeting with elected Members to discuss what will be happening to Westhoughton Town Hall; the proposal to enlarge windows on the façade has been dropped. With Market Street re-paving nearing completion, David addressed online criticism of how it had been laid; workers have to deal with uneven surfaces, gradients and drainage and a technique for doing so is with diagonal cuts - this is normal procedure; litter bins are now being put back in place. The railway bridgeworks on Church Street (Network Rail) is progressing well with day and night-time working to minimise disruption - target completion date is 8<sup>th</sup> October. Network Rail was praised for dealing with issues arising from the Hindley bridgeworks contractor going bust, working quickly to get new contractor Murphy in to complete the works and get traffic moving again as and where it should easing the impact on Westhoughton. The lift at Daisy Hill Station will be installed as it has been budgeted for and programmed, we can expect it to be in place and making life easier for rail passengers mid-2024. The poor drainage issue there, mentioned earlier, has received attention from councillors and hopefully the solution and recent works will solve a long-standing problem.

The new part-time Town Clerk, Pauline Rowley, has been in place since August, which will improve the function and communications with [Westhoughton Town Council](#), which has struggled since the departure in 2021 of Christine Morris, who had conscientiously served the town for 34 years – recognised with a Civic Award in 2022. Town Clerk contact: [townclerk@westhoughtontc.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@westhoughtontc.gov.uk) (new) | 01942 819802.

## 9. Any Other Business

- Following a recent conference Trevor Benn brought to our attention an initiative by the **Royal Statistical Society** to help community projects with statistical support and analysis. This could help small charitable enterprises with decision making, planning and fundraising. Any costs for the service would be covered by the National Lottery. Details via their website.
- **Bolton Cycle Centre** as part of a [Bolton Station Community Partnership](#) initiative has been offering Sustrans-funded free bicycle check-ups by 'Dr. Bike' at local railway stations; they also do frequent Guided Bike Rides to encourage 'Active Travel'.



# Westhoughton Community Network

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## 10. Next Meeting

Westhoughton Community Network will next meet at:

**The Hub at Westhoughton on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.**

Meeting finished at 8:50pm

[WesthoughtonCommunityNetwork.co.uk](http://WesthoughtonCommunityNetwork.co.uk)

[facebook.com/westhoughton.net](https://facebook.com/westhoughton.net)

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### Attendance & apologies

Organisations represented (15)

- Cornerstone ADS ■ Friends of Daisy Hill Station ■ Friends of Eatock Lodge ■ Friends of Westhoughton Station
- George Formby Society ■ HEART ■ Hope Church ■ Howfen Litter-pickers ■ Rotary Club of Westhoughton
- Westhoughton Allotments and Gardens Society ■ Westhoughton Local History Group
- Westhoughton Poppy Appeal ■ Wingates Band
- ~ Book of Quint (Robert Shaw) ~ Westhoughton Town Council

Individuals in attendance (17)

- Trevor Benn (FoEL) ■ David Chadwick (WTC/HEART) ■ Val Chadwick (WLHG) ■
- Colin Gradwell (CADS) HOST ■ Garry Hampson (GFS) ■ Steve Harrington (RCW) ■ Linda James (YBF)
- Elaine Kerfoot (HLP) ■ Dennis Lee (GFS) ■ Brian Leyden (FWS) ■ Joy Mooney (WB) ■ Andy Mooney (WB)
- Lindsay Pollard (WPA) ■ Jack Speight (FDHS/WAGS) ■ Mark Taylor (HOPE) ■ Ann Benn (FoEL) SECRETARY
- Chris Buckley (WCN) CHAIR

Apologies (7)

- PC Joseph Barker (Greater Manchester Police) ■ David Kaye (Lostock Cricket Club)
- Phil Lamb (Bolton Council - Regeneration) ■ Susan Missin (Harold Daniels Legacy Fund)
- Peter Schofield (Bethel Crowd) ■ Jason Taylor (Bethel Crowd) ■ Gill Williams (Daisy Hill in Bloom)