



The Parish of

St Mary the Virgin Wickham



Carole Dixon

May 2013



## **Table of Contents**

### **The Parish of St. Mary the Virgin Wickham**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Wickham Demographic Information</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Churches in Wickham</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Areas of Wickham</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Shopping, Commercial Businesses and Local Services</b>	<b>Page 13</b>
<b>Provision for Elderly Care</b>	<b>Page 15</b>
<b>Schools</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>Recreational Opportunities and Meeting Places</b>	<b>Page 19</b>
<b>The Church as a focal point in the Community</b>	<b>Page 22</b>
<b>Social Problems and Community Issues</b>	<b>Page 23</b>
<b>Conclusion for the Role of the APA in Wickham</b>	<b>Page 23</b>



## The Parish of St Mary The Virgin Whickham

### Location

The Parish of St Mary the Virgin Whickham is located almost equidistant (about 4 miles) from the City of Newcastle and the large town of Gateshead. It stands south of the River Tyne and comes under the auspices of Gateshead council. Historically it was part of County Durham. Whickham forms part of the Parliamentary Constituency of Blaydon. The Parish boundary stretches across 3 Council Wards: Whickham South and Sunnyside, Dunston Hill and Whickham East, and Whickham North. Our neighbouring parishes are Swalwell Holy Trinity (to the North); Dunston St Nicholas (to the North and East); Burnopfield St James and Rowlands Gill St Barnabas (to the West); Hillside Lobley Hill All Saints (to the East) and Hillside Marley Hill St Cuthbert (to the South). A map of the Parish boundary is at Appendix 1.



### History

A recorded settlement in Whickham dates back to 1183 when a survey of the lands owned by the Bishop of Durham (captured in the Boldon Book) identified a population of around 120 people living in the village (then called Quaykham – the name means the hamlet of the quick growing hedge) with 35 tenants paying rent to the Bishop. However, there is evidence of life in the area many centuries earlier – prehistoric bones and tools have been discovered and a Roman fort lies buried under local farmland. Until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century the village was dominated by two industries: agriculture and coal mining. Farming has been an important part of Whickham life since before the Boldon Book which provides our earliest view of village life. It records two rows of houses either side of the village green on which the tenants kept their animals. One row of houses (the North Row) roughly follows the route of the current main street whilst the South Row probably stood on the rising ground that is today Chase Park (an area of playing fields and parkland). We are fortunate today still to have a remnant of that village green due to the generosity of Ralph Carr-Ellison of Dunston Hill who was persuaded in 1852 by his brother the then Rector, Rev. H. B. Carr to purchase it and bequeath it for use by the villagers – thereby stopping any further development or erosion of this green area in the centre of the village. The original tenants farmed crops on the surrounding land and much of the



same land is still valuable farming land today – providing green and pleasant entrances to the village along the main roads of Whickham Highway and Fellside Road.

From the 14<sup>th</sup> century mining became the industry which dominated Whickham's development – the first reported activity being in 1346 when the Bishop of Durham granted the lease for a coal pit in Whickham. So successful was the development of mining in the area that it is reported that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the combined manors of Gateshead and Whickham produced more coal per annum than any other area of equivalent size. Mining continued to be an important local industry until the 1950s. The advent of coal mining spawned many other related areas of employment; for example the development of wagon ways and railways to the local docks and rivers, and the opening of an Ironworks fuelled by local coal. However, mining brought its tensions with the farming community - with pressure for agricultural land to be mined for coal or to be "cut through" by the development of transport links. Perhaps we, today, can relate to those tensions as it's only a few years ago since the village was campaigning against the opening of an open cast mine near Fellside Road - with concerns around the potential effect on the landscape and the volume of heavy lorries. Coal mining has left an indelible mark on the shape of the village today – miners houses built in the 1920s for the opening of the Watergate Colliery still exist in the Broom Lane area as private residential housing and we can still see the splendour of the coal owner's large mansions at Gibside, Axwell Hall and Dunston Hill. The parish records provide a poignant reminder to the tragedy associated with coal mining with many a death being recorded as "killed in a pit accident".

Whickham remained a reasonably small village until the 1950s and 60s when the traditional industries of agriculture and mining declined. From the 1960s many new estates were built as the village became a desirable commuter location - primarily for the businesses and industries around Newcastle but also farther afield as it became more normal to travel significant distances to work. It's interesting, and perhaps a testament to its community spirit, that Whickham residents still refer to it being "the village" although with its developments it is now technically a small town.

Because of its location [reasonably near to the Scottish border] Whickham has seen its fair share of conflict. It would have suffered many raids by border reivers, but its position at the crest of a hill surrounded by thick hawthorn hedges would have given a basis for protection. Its location near the crossing point of the Tyne at Newburn meant that English and Scottish armies passed through "en route" to battle. For example in 1346 King David II of Scotland is thought to have passed through Whickham before being defeated at Neville's Cross near Durham. Whickham also saw action during the English Civil War with the King's troops stationed nearby before a battle at Newburn in 1640. Oliver Cromwell himself is believed to have stayed in Whickham (at Dockendale Hall) in 1648 and parish records show that he installed Cuthbert Stote in St Mary's Parish Church from 1650 to 1660 (although records show him not as a rector but as an "intruder").

### **Whickham Demographical Information**

Whickham has a population of approx 15,000 – (clearly the actual number is constantly flexing). Across the 3 Whickham Council Wards there are slightly more women than men (51% - 49%) but this is unsurprising given the greater life expectancy of women. There is little by way of ethnic mix and the population is generally an ageing one (as with most of the country as lifestyles become better and people have a higher life expectancy).

#### *Vulnerability*

Within Gateshead the population of Whickham (in general) is an area of low vulnerability for health and well-being issues. The latest Public Health Report for Gateshead uses 5 standard conditions for judging vulnerability (homelessness, asylum seeking, domestic abuse, offending behaviour and worklessness) and



ranks the risk across the 22 Council Ward areas. For the 3 wards that form the Whickham St Mary’s parish, Whickham South and Sunnyside was viewed as least vulnerable within the whole of Gateshead; Whickham North only marginally more vulnerable; and Dunston Hill and Whickham East about average.

Resources are scarce at present and this sort of data assists Local Authorities and Government bodies to target areas of need. The result being that there are no specific interventions targeted at the population of Whickham, although they do, of course, still participate in wider measures such as anti-smoking campaigns; fighting obesity and diabetes; flu pandemic vaccinations etc. In fact, the local Whickham Medical Practice provides excellent support on all the matters and more.

### Lifestyle

There are a number of more specific indicators that (on first glance) suggest that residents in Whickham have a relatively good lifestyle and are more “comfortable financially” than is the norm throughout Gateshead. The table below highlights in blue figures that support this view and highlights in red those that indicate something different. There are only 3 occasions where the results indicate lifestyle issues worse than the whole of Gateshead and these are all in the Whickham North Ward. It could be that this is caused by areas of Dunston being included in the Ward but the data doesn’t allow that level of analysis.

	Gateshead	Whickham South	Whickham North	Whickham East
Life Expectancy - Male	77.9	78.7	80.2	81.9
Life Expectancy - Female	82	83.3	82.5	82.9
Owner Occupier	65.0%	89.3%	72.0%	84.7%
Private Landlord	5.4%	2.7%	5.0%	3.5%
L.A. Housing	22.8%	6.4%	16.8%	9.9%
Social Landlord	6.0%	1.5%	5.6%	1.8%
Car Ownership	57%	80%	63%	70%
Travel to Work By				
Public Transport	23%	15%	18%	18%
Unemployment	4.8%	2.5%	4.9%	3.5%
Smokers	26%	16%	23%	18%
Binge Drinking Adults	33%	33%	36%	33%
Healthy Eating Adults	29%	31%	28%	37%
Obese Adults	17%	13%	13%	15%
Limiting Long Term Illnesses	24%	18%	24%	19%

We need to be careful not to read too much into the above figures – they provide some information but not the whole story. Whickham is a desirable and relatively expensive place to live and that causes some issues. There is no indication as to how many people are struggling financially to maintain a particular lifestyle, how many people are concerned about their jobs in these difficult financial times, how many are suffering with stress/depression, or how many have other “happiness” issues. As an aside, as a result of house prices it is often difficult for children of Whickham families to continue to live in the village once leaving home.



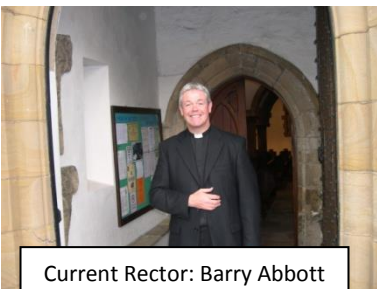
## Churches in Whickham

### St Mary the Virgin Whickham Church of England

There has been a church building in Whickham (in the area that St Mary's now stands) since Norman times, with the oldest part of the current building (the Chancel Arch) dating back to the early part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, the first formal reference is 1200 AD when it is reported that Reginald Vicar of Quykhams was a witness to an agreement between a man called Baldwin and Gerard son of Geve. The Church (not surprisingly) is the oldest building in Whickham and is a Grade 1 listed building. The West tower, much of the aisles and the original porch were developed during the 14th century. The porch was destroyed in the "Great Storm" of November 1703 and rebuilt from the original stone. The sundial above the porch entrance dates back to 1651. The majority of north side of the church dates from restorations of 1819 by John Dobson and 1860-62 by Anthony Salvin. The Anthony Salvin restoration was as a result of the Great Fire in 1841 and resulted significant restoration activity and the Church being considerably widened. The church records give us an insight into developments and changes – a good example being an interesting entry in the Churchwarden's Book for 1715: "Paid to Peter Shield for building up ye window under ye clock... 2/6d." The churchyard contains monuments to some interesting people, perhaps most notably to Harry Clasper, a Victorian oarsman, boat builder and very well know personality of his time , and to William Shield, Master of the King's Music and composer of the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne'.



3 Views of St Mary's Whickham



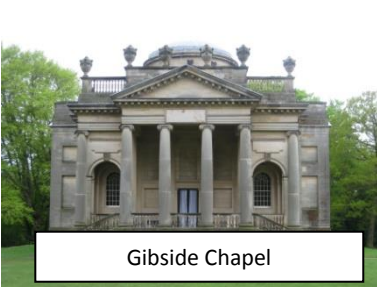
Current Rector: Barry Abbott



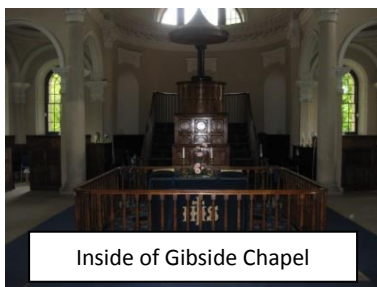
Monument to William Shield



Monument to Harry Clasper



Gibside Chapel



Inside of Gibside Chapel



The Original Church School



St Mary's has consistently been at the centre of the local community. We have already mentioned the Rector, Rev. H. B. Carr being responsible for purchasing the Village Green for the community; but perhaps equally as important was the founding of Whickham Parochial School in 1714 by Dr. Robert Thomlinson who was Rector of Whickham for 36 years. This school was funded initially from a legacy of £100 in the will of Mrs. Blakiston of Gibside Hall, who wished to provide education for poor children in the parish. Dr. Thomlinson increased the endowment by using the income from two galleries built in the church (later removed after "the Great Fire of 1841) allowing the school to provide education for approximately 100 children of which 36 were free places. The school was situated only about 100 yards from the church (the original school house built in 1742 still exists) and had an excellent reputation with many children travelling a number of miles to attend. The school still thrives today but has an affluent catchment area as opposed to the original principles of education for the poor. It has an equally strong reputation and great links with the church but has been relocated about 1.5 miles away on the Broadway – a relatively newly developed area of the village.

Today, St Mary's continues to be at the heart of village life. It has 242 members on its Electoral Roll (which has just been updated in April 2013) with 45 of those living outside the village but wishing to attend or remain connected to the church – interestingly 35 of these live in neighbouring parishes but chose to worship at St Marys. There are also regular attendees who for various reasons are not on the Electoral Roll. The congregation numbers are fairly stable but, as with the general population, the profile is "an ageing one".

The current Rector is the Rev. Barry Abbott who is supported by the Parochial Church Council for matters of management, finance and policy. He has a clergy team of 3 readers and 2 Authorised Pastoral Assistants. He also receives support from a member of the clergy who has retired to the village.

It's a very busy church with 3 services on a Sunday and a range of services throughout the week to try and meet all needs – e.g. on the third Sunday of each month evensong is replaced by a "lighter" service held at 3pm and aimed primarily at families. A typical week would see services as follows:

Sunday	8.00am Holy Communion	[average attendance 35]
	9.30am Sung Eucharist	[average attendance 90 - 100]
	6.30pm Evensong (3 at 3 on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday)	[average attendance 25 - 30]
Tuesday	7.00pm Holy Communion	[average attendance 10]
Wednesday	10am Holy Communion	[average attendance 15 - 20]
Saturday	10am Holy Communion	[average attendance 25]

The church has an active programme for children. It has a crèche and a Sunday School (Jesus AND Me or "JAM" club) incorporated into the 9.30 Sunday service and there is a special "Play and Praise" session for children every alternative Thursday morning with average attendance by 15 children and 15 adults. There is a children's area within the church with toys and books for young children to make use of during the service. The Rector is extremely diligent at forging links with all the schools in the parish – being very visible personally at each – and the church holds a special leavers service for children leaving the Parochial School before they embark on Secondary education. At that service they are each presented with an inscribed bible. There are also links to Scouts and Guides with parade services being held regularly throughout the year.

The church hosts a significant number of baptisms, weddings and funerals and tries to use these to connect with and support the families beyond the immediate event. In 2012 there were 63 baptisms, 24 weddings



and 55 funerals. Following each baptism the family are specially invited to the next Mothering Sunday service; wedding couples are provided with a bible and are made to feel welcome in the church (we see a number starting to attend the 9.30 service on a Sunday); and following a funeral the family is specifically invited to attend the next All Souls service. Individuals within the church take on roles such as Baptismal Ministers and Bereavement Visitors – keeping the Church engaged with those who need support.

The Rector of Whickham also has responsibility for Gibside Chapel on the historic Gibside Estate which is within the Parish boundaries. This chaplaincy is a specific Bishop's appointment. The Gibside estate has been looked after by the National Trust since 1965 and the chapel is becoming increasingly popular as a wedding venue. Services are run on the first Sunday of each month which an average attendance of 25. More details of Gibside are at Appendix 2.

The church continues to grow – in 2012 there were 3 adults and 13 young people confirmed

### Methodist Churches

As with many mining villages and agricultural communities, Whickham has a strong Methodist tradition. John Wesley visited the village twice (1742 and 1752) and the village had two Methodist chapels. On his first visit Wesley seemed less than impressed with the people of Whickham writing “so dead, senseless, unaffected a congregation I scarce have seen, except at Whickham” [taken from History and Guide to Whickham by Alan Brazendale]. The West End Wesleyan Chapel was the first to be built in 1869. By 1980 the building was too small for the congregation and the new Fellside Methodist Church was built on Ancaster Road the Church is thriving with over 130 members and strong community links. The second Methodist Chapel to be built was The Spoor Memorial Methodist Chapel on the Front Street in the heart of “the old village. It was built in 1871 to commemorate Joseph Spoor, a keelman (from a well know Whickham family) who became a travelling Methodist preacher.



Fellside Methodist Church



Spoor Methodist Church

The Rev. Liz Kent is currently the Minister at Fellside and Rev. Paul Saunders at Spoor Methodist

### Whickham Community Church

In 1982 an evangelical church was opened in the old West End Chapel building. It was a member of the Salt and Light family of churches and described itself as “a charismatic church with an emphasis on 'family', outreach and the teaching and application of God's Word”. The church building has since closed and the congregation now worship out of the area.

### Catholic Church

Whickham does not have a particularly strong/long history of Catholicism. During the Reformation of the 16th century Catholicism in Whickham had been all but extinguished, though two men were hanged on the village green for their part in the 1569 rebellion by the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland and there





are references to Whickham "papists" in the Durham Court records. More recently some of the mines in and around Whickham were owned by Catholics. However, it was 1948 before a Catholic church was built in Whickham, when the Church purchased the Dockendale Hall Estate and St Mary's RC Church Dockendale came into existence. The original church was in a converted farm building prior to a new purpose built church being completed in 1970. St Mary's Catholic Primary School is a church aided school for around 210 pupils and is sited in Duckpool Lane alongside the church. St Mary's Dockendale operates in partnership with two other local parishes: Immaculate Heart, Lobley Hill and St Phillip Neri, Dunston.



St Mary's Dockendale Church



St Mary's RC Primary School

Father Jeffery Dodds is currently the Priest at St Mary's Dockendale.



## Areas of Whickham

The parish of Whickham can be split roughly into 5 areas each with their own history, profile and issues. Having said that, they are not completely discrete with features and issues often overlapping, but the split into areas provides a useful tool for further analysis of the parish. The areas are: Old/Original Whickham Village; Watergate; The Lakes; Grange and Fellside and I shall tackle them in that order as it roughly reflects their development timeline.

### *Old/Original Whickham Village*

The heart of the old village area runs either side of Front Street and in the triangle formed with Whaggs Lane and Broom Lane. That area follows much of the shape of the original Quykham settlement and has always been at the heart of village life. It houses the great majority of the shopping facilities and other commercial businesses although there are some service businesses – (plumbing/electrical etc) conducted from private dwellings throughout this and other areas. It is the location of the main Community Halls (Whickham Community Centre and St Mary’s Centre), the Health Centre, the main dentist practices, accountants and solicitors. St. Mary’s Parish Church and Spoor Memorial Church are also located in this area. It is also the site of the Council Offices which were the fulcrum of Whickham’s local government until 1974 when Whickham Parish Council ceased to exist. Just in front of the Council Offices is the War Memorial erected in 1922 (with 64 World War 1 names on it and 37 relating to World War 2) and sadly recently updated to commemorate the life of a local man killed in Afghanistan. It is the main recreational area of the village, with the historic Chase Park (a King George V Playing Field), the Football and Cricket clubs all being located here – as well as most night time entertainment locations (public houses and restaurants).



The War Memorial



Lang Jack’s Monument



The Council Offices

At the junction of Front Street and Church Chare is a column erected in 1854 to commemorate a well known local character: John English known as Lang Jack. He was a stonemason who came to the area to work on the construction of the Chain Bridge – and he was renowned for his height and feats of strength. Until a few months ago the local pub next to the column was named after him.

Despite it being a commercial and recreational centre, perhaps of all the areas, the old village has the most diverse array of residential accommodation. To give a flavour, there are some very expensive and exclusive houses in (amongst other streets) Whickham Park and the area between Whaggs Lane and Broom Lane; some really historic houses around the Church Green and the Front Street (e.g. Park Cottage and the School House); an area that was originally Council Housing (Allwork Terrace and the area behind it and to the North of Front Street); apartments above the shopping precinct, 3 sizeable blocks of elderly accommodation (of different types) and some small areas of new estates (behind Front Street to the North and East).

St Mary’s has 60 of its electoral roll members residing in this area



### ***Watergate***

The Watergate area is primarily a housing estate built around 1923 to house miners working at the then newly to be opened Watergate Colliery. The mine was owned by Priestmans who built 146 houses to encourage miners to transfer from their other collieries at Chester Moor and Waldrige Fell. At its height the colliery employed 920 men before closing in 1964 since when the grounds of the colliery have been transformed into a very pleasant country park. The original estate has been expanded by the building of council housing with some bungalows dedicated to the elderly. There are also some Aged Miners Cottages. The majority of the houses are now owner/occupied and over the years the owners have done much to improve the properties by way of improvements/extensions. Washingwell Primary School is situated in the area and the majority of primary school children from the area attend that school. It is a close knit community with the houses built around greens that provide a pleasant outlook and somewhere on which the children can play. Perhaps here more than anywhere else in Whickham we would see groups of children playing traditional games in groups. Originally there was a community centre on the estate but this was demolished in the 1990s. There is only one shop (a newsagent and general dealers) and a gymnasium in the Watergate area. Transport links are good as the estate is alongside the main Sunnyside to Whickham road.

St Mary's has 7 of its electoral roll members residing in this area

### ***The Lakes***

The Lakes Estate was the first major extension to the old village. It is situated to the North East of the old village, was built in the 1950s and derives its name from the fact that a number of the streets are named after Lakes in the Lake District (e.g. Grasmere and Coniston). It is all private residential housing (mainly owner occupied) with very few diverse areas (i.e. most of the houses are pretty similar). It has easy access to the centre of Whickham, although as it is built on a slope there can be access problems in bad weather. As with many estates built in the 1950s parking is a bit of an issue as clearly the number of cars per household is a lot more now than was originally envisaged. There are no shops in the area but St Mary's Roman Catholic Church and the associated school are on the boundary of this area.

St Mary's has 16 of its electoral roll members residing in this area

### ***Grange***

The building of the Grange Estate in the 1960s saw a real expansion in residential housing in Whickham and many would argue that it was this development that transformed Whickham from a village to a small town – at least if size is a factor. The houses are generally very similar throughout the estate – 2, 3 and 4 bedroom family homes with a few divided into flats. There is no purpose built elderly facilities on the estate. The estate extended the roads of the original Whickham village and was carefully designed around many of the original features (trees and alleyways etc). The majority of houses are owner occupied, although letting is becoming increasingly popular – as people struggle to sell houses or wish to retain a base in the village whilst working away for a time. Because of the relatively young age of the houses there has been little by way of major redevelopment – most development tending to be property extension. Grange is the location of Whickham Academy, the Parochial School, Clover Hill School and Gibside School (for children with special needs). Fellside Methodist Church lies on the edge of the estate. There are 2 public Houses and a few shops on the estate: 2 smallish supermarkets, a newsagent/post office, a chemist and a hairdresser. There are excellent bus links to the village centre, the Metro Centre, Gateshead and Newcastle.

St Mary's has 79 of its electoral roll members residing in this area



## **Fellside**

This has a very similar profile to Grange but the houses were built a little later (mainly 1980s and 90s) and the estate is completely residential. The estate is to the west of Fellside Road and (from some areas) has attractive views of the Derwent Valley and the Gibside Estate. It is built on a hillside so is quite difficult to access in bad weather. There are no shopping facilities on the estate, and some areas are perhaps the most distant from the village centre with difficult access on foot because of the steepness of the slopes. However, there is a good bus service to the village and beyond and the local schools are in walking distance for the children. In the Fellside area there is a fairly large complex of private sheltered accommodation for the elderly owned by Two Castles Housing association. There are two main residential buildings and a number of individual bungalows. The complex also includes a number of communal areas.

St Mary's has 35 of its electoral roll members residing in this area



A view of Watergate



A view of Grange Estate



A view of Fellside Park



A view of Lakes Estate



A view of the Old Village



### Shopping, Commercial Businesses and Local Services.

For a small town Whicham has quite an array of shops and services. In the main the quality is good and local people could potential have all their day to day needs met by local tradesmen and service providers. The table below shows the range and locations.

Type of Business/Facility	Total	Village	Watergate	Lakes	Grange	Fellside
Hotel	1	1				
Public House	5	3			2	
Post Office	2	1			1	
Supermarkets	4	2			2	
Newsagents/Gen Dealer	4	2	1		1	
Butchers	2	2				
Bakers	2	2				
Craft and Gift Shops	4	4				
Chemists	3	2			1	
Green Grocer	1	1				
Food Take Away	7	7				
Estate Agent	7	7				
Florists	1	1				
Jewellers	1	1				
Banks	2	2				
Building Societies	1	1				
Solicitors	2	2				
Accountants/Financial	1	1				
Restaurants/Cafes	8	8				
Opticians	1	1				
Cleaners	1	1				
Homeware	1	1				
Barbers	3	3				
Hairdressers	8	7			1	
Bookmakers	2	2				
Charity Shops	3	3				
Health and Beauty	5	5				
Chiropodists	1	1				
Cleaners	1	1				
Electrical Shop	1	1				
Pet Shop	1	1				
Funeral Director	1	1				
Dentists	2	2				
Dental Technicians	1	1				
Veterinary Surgeries	3	2		1		
Gymnasiums	2	1	1			
Haberdasher	1	1				
Bridal Shop	1	1				
Driving School	1	1				
Architect	1	1				
Builder	1	1				



Welding	1	1				
Kitchen Fitter	1	1				
Design	1	1				
Plumber/Heating Services	1	1				
Doctors	1	1				
Libraries	1	1				
Petrol Station	1	1				
Total	107	96	2	1	8	0



Various Views of Whickham Front Street and Shops  
(travelling West to East)



## Provision for Elderly Care

Whickham has a number of residential options for the elderly.

*The Manor House* opened in 2010, is situated in Whickham village at the top of Swalwell Bank and provides accommodation for 74 residents aged 65 and over. The Manor House “provides a high standard of person centred residential care”. It is run by Hadrian Healthcare group and provides a range of different residential and care options. Elderly residential care is provided in the Grange and Derwent Suites, nursing and respite care in the Fellside Suite, and dementia care in the Chesters accommodation. The Manor House has a range of excellent facilities including a residents shop, library, bar and cinema room.

*Millfield House* is a care home with nursing facilities for 36 residents aged over 55. It provides nursing care and dementia care. Millfield House is in Whickham village on the edge of Chase Park and shares its grounds and some facilities with Chase Park Neuro Centre which opened 2007 and has grown to provide specialist nursing care, contains a health club and rehabilitation suite for people with acquired brain injury long term neurological conditions etc. It has now expanded its age group to include young adults and has a yearly all inclusive music festival in Chase Park.

*Kestrel Mews* is a block of 20 bungalows built in 1997 and owned and maintained by Anchor Housing to provide rented “sheltered” accommodation for people aged 55 and over. The houses are linked to a community alarm – with some being specifically converted for wheelchair usage.

*Rectory Hall* is a sheltered accommodation complex of 30 one bed-roomed flats and bungalows built in 1967 and owned by the Gateshead Housing Company. It is located in the old village area just a few minutes’ walk from the Front Street and all key services (doctors, dentists etc). It caters for residents over 60 years old and is linked to a community alarm service. The complex has communal lounge/guest facilities and regular communal activities are arranged by the non-resident staff.

*Castle Close* and *Tindale Drive* are areas of sheltered accommodation on Fellside Park both managed by the Two Castles Housing Association. They are for people aged 60 and over and are described as “housing with support”, having resident management staff and a community alarm service. Access to the village is not that easy on foot (about a mile away) but there are good public transport links. Castle Close is a complex of 72 flats and one and two bed-roomed bungalows built in 1980 and include some mobility and wheelchair standard properties. Tindale Drive has 38 flats. They both have communal lounge and garden areas, laundry facilities and guest facilities.

*Chase Court* is a complex of 40 privately owned one and two bedroomed flats built in 2000 and managed by Peverel Retirement. The flats all have a community alarm system and at least one of the owners must be over 60 to be entitled to purchase a flat. The complex is very well located, being next to the Whickham Cottage Medical Centre, across the road from Chase Park and just a few yards from the Front Street and all major facilities. There are guest facilities and pleasant garden areas.

In addition to elderly accommodation, day care centres are held at St Mary’s and Fellside Methodists each week – run by bands of willing volunteers. These centres both make use of the Whickham Community Bus which was bought and maintained by funds raised by the local community. The bus is available for hire by other organisation involved in “care activities” and is driven by volunteers. The bus is available for hire by other organisations involved in “care activities” and is driven by volunteers. The bus is a great example of the community identifying a specific need and targeting fund raising to “make a difference”.



The Manor House



Castle Close



Chase Court



Tindale Drive



Kestrel Mews



Rectory Hall



Millfield House



Chase Park Neuro Centre



Whickham Community Bus





## Schools

There is one secondary school in Whickham and seven primary schools. They are all of good reputation with many having “outstanding” Ofsted reports - therefore anyone living in the parish has access to good education for their children. Interestingly four of the primary school’s are on Grange Estate but are spread out so that the catchment areas include children from other areas of Whickham and beyond (e.g. many children from Sunnyside attend Clover Hill School). The presence of excellent schools in Whickham is no doubt a major factor in young families finding the area attractive with the resultant effect of increased house prices driven by market forces. With the exception of St Mary’s Dockendale the Rector leads Assemblies at all the schools and is involved in and invited to appropriate RE explorations. All the Primary Schools (again with the exception of St Mary’s Dockendale held their Christmas Carole Service in St Mary’s and 3 returned at Easter.



**Whickham Academy** educates 1600 pupils and has the largest sixth form in Gateshead. It has long had an excellent local reputation and the last Ofsted report was very favourable with many areas being assessed as outstanding (no area below good). St Mary’s has good links with the school – an example being the hiring of the school band on regular occasions for fund raising events. St Mary’s donates an annual prize for Religious Education to the school. The Rector is one of seven members of “The Company of the Academy”.



**Whickham Parochial C of E Primary School** is a primary school in the Grange area of Whickham. As explained in the section about St Mary's it is the school that was founded by the church in 1714 originally being located adjacent to the church but moving to its present location in 1971. It is a Voluntary Controlled school for 210 children with the Rector of St Mary's being one of the Governors. Links to the church are fundamental to the school's ethos with opportunities always being sought to maintain and extend that close relationship. Recent initiatives include the confirmation of pupils at a service in school. Ofsted's latest assessment found the school to be an outstanding school. Of the 7 areas noted for strengths one was the Christian ethos of the school which promotes strong pastoral support for pupils and a second was the strong links with the church community which are used to enhance school life. Fun and Faith, a weekly after school club, was set up by members of St Mary's

**Front Street primary School** is an above average size (according to Ofsted) primary school in the heart of Whickham Village. It has 425 children on its school roll. Ofsted's latest report (December 2012) assessed the school as a "good school" with outstanding emphasis on safety and pupil behaviour. A nursery is on site at this school.

**Clover Hill School** is located on Grange Estate and accommodates children from the south of Whickham and surrounding areas. The latest Ofsted report described the school as "outstanding" for the 203 children enrolled.

**Fellside Community Primary School** is also located on Grange Estate near the boundary with Fellside Road. According to Ofsted it is another "outstanding" school with "inspirational leadership and management". It has 210 children on the school role with another 52 pre-school nursery places (for age 3+).

**Washingwell Primary School** is located in the Watergate area in a lovely location overlooking the nature trails of Watergate Park. It has 178 children on the school roll and is described by Ofsted as a "satisfactory and improving school". A nursery is on site at this school.

**St Marys Roman Catholic Primary School** is located in Duckpool Lane and adjacent to The Roman Catholic Church on the edge of the Lakes area of Whickham. It is a church aided school with places for up to 210 children. Not surprisingly, it is the primary school of choice for most Catholic families in the parish and, again not surprisingly, the school's admissions policy places Catholicism as prime criteria for admission – although the school does admit children of other faith when places allow. Ofsted assessed the school as outstanding in its latest report

**Gibside School** is on the Grange Estate and caters for children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs. Ofsted described the school as "outstanding" with excellent teaching and management skills to address the particular needs of the children involved. There are currently 86 children on the school roll from the Gateshead area. A current Authorised Pastoral Assistant from St Mary's works at the school on a voluntary basis, giving an increased church presence in the school.



## Recreational Opportunities and Meeting Places

Whickham is quite fortunate with the range of recreational facilities and opportunities for activities that exist within the village (greatly enhanced if we venture a few miles into wider Gateshead and Newcastle).

*Chase Park* is the major outdoor recreational area. It is a large green open spaced area to the South of the Front Street with specific facilities for bowling and tennis and a children's play area. It also has large grassy areas for children to play football or other games. There are tree lined paths throughout the area making it an ideal place for dog walkers. It has an interesting old mill in the South Eastern corner of the park – there are no specific details of its history but records show a mill in the area dating back to 1567. The Park is a focal point for community activities – especially during the summer. In recent years we have seen scout fairs, Lions and Rotary Club events, Easter passion Plays and music Festivals all being held there. The land was formally a private estate (owned by Mr Wilkinson, a mineral water manufacturer) and was purchased in 1937 by Whickham Council for £7000 as a memorial King George V playing field. The people of Whickham value the Park and there is a "Friends of Chase Park" association dedicated to looking after its welfare for the people of the village. The "friends" have recently organised a campaign that has won £30,000 in a competition run by Flora and Tesco to upgrade play facilities.

*Whickham Community Centre* is located at the West end of Front Street and has been part of Whickham community activity for over 100 years. It first opened in 1910 as Axwell Park Colliery Institute before being taken over by Durham County Council in 1954. It is well used by people of the village (and surrounding areas) with throughput estimated at over 1000 people per week. The Community Centre has a Centre Manager (Kath Clark) supported by a Management Committee – the aim being to run the Centre to make it accessible and to the benefit of local people. It is a location for Local Authority "Night Classes". A full schedule of the varied clubs, groups and activities based at the Centre is at Appendix 3

*St Mary's Centre* is managed under the auspices of St Mary's Parochial Church Council (and features in the accounts for the PCC) but is in effect run for the whole community. It has a management team made up of PCC members, User representatives and co-opted individuals. The Centre was built in 1978 primarily by volunteers from St Marys (both through donations and labour) and a number of those individuals still take an active interest today. The Centre comprises of two building St Mary's Centre and Rectory Hall and like the Community Centre it offers a wide range of activities for all ages (based on user demand). It is estimated that over 24,000 people a year come through the centre. A weekly schedule of activities is at Appendix 4.

*Whickham Hermitage Community Garden* is a real success story in terms of local people taking action to save an historic site and turn it into a wonderful facility for the community. It is now a beautifully landscaped garden with coffee shop facilities 7 days per week with full disabled accessibility. The Hermitage was built in 1790 by Matthew Taylor a wealthy local brewery owner, and he laid out lavish gardens with a lake, boathouse, ornamental bridge, tennis court and two-storey watch tower. In the 1930s the Hermitage and garden came into the ownership of Durham County Council and became a home for elderly men, but over the years the garden fell into disrepair. Following the closure of the Hermitage the council had plans to convert the garden area into a car park until local people formed an action group to restore the garden to its former glory – enhanced with cafe facilities. It is located behind Whickham Community Centre and has close associations with the Centre. It is now a favourite meeting place for many people from the village.



Whickham Community Centre



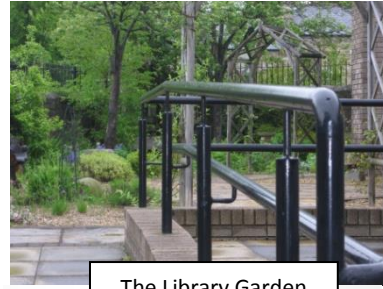
St Mary's Centre



Rectory Hall



Whickham Library



The Library Garden



Chase Park – New equipment



Whickham Golf Club



Whickham Cricket Club



Whickham Scout HQ



Whickham Guide HQ

*Sports Clubs.* There are thriving football, cricket and golf clubs in the village – all with good facilities. Chase Park, the schools and the Community Centres also provide opportunities for tennis, bowls badminton etc. Within a few miles of the village there is easy access to other sports such as rugby and squash.

*Whickham Library* is located on the Front Street and plays a large part in Village Life. It has recently been developed to have a sensory garden (developed by local people and school children) where people can sit in the warm weather. Whilst not very big it is conveniently located and well used. It has rooms that are used for toddler activities, facilities for people to use the internet and the staff run story time sessions for younger children. It's an excellent source of information for events in the local vicinity.

*Young People - Scouts/Guides* are well catered for in Whickham with groups at all levels. The village is fortunate to have purpose built "huts" for both organisations that give them an element of freedom and independence. Scouts and Guides are both affiliated to St Mary's Church with parade days being held at appropriate times during the year (often with the children taking part in the service). Apart from the



uniformed organisations there is not much by way of structured “youth activity” in the village. This can result in the usual problems of boredom

*Nightlife* – Wickham has a thriving “nightlife” at the weekends. The Front Street pubs are very popular with young people both as an attraction in their own right and as a meeting place prior to venturing into Newcastle. It does lead to a little noise and rowdiness but not often anything of a serious nature. There are a couple of Italian Restaurants, an Indian and a Chinese restaurant, which together with food on offer at most of the pubs makes the village an option for a meal out. The wider surrounding area is well stocked with good quality restaurants.



## **The Church as a focal point in the Community**

St Mary's remains at the heart of Whickham village life. It has a prominent location within the village and even non church goers recognise its history and its importance to the community. It has a strong outreach team and has links with many local organisations. The Church has a Parish Centre available for use by the whole community, and that houses many varied activities primarily attended by local people. The current Rector does much to enhance what are already strong links with schools and to engage with local businesses. A small example of St Mary's desire to involve the local community was the development of its traditional Carol Service into a 2012 Community Carol Service with representatives from local businesses and the local council. It was extremely well supported – as were other community services such as “The Christingle service” and a special service to “Bless the Crib”. We try to utilise the Church for non-religious events such as plays, concerts and charity fundraising events - designed to help us engage better with non regular church goers. St Mary's produces a Parish Magazine which for a small charge (60p per month) is available to anyone. Efforts are made to have regular days when the church is kept open to encourage the public to look around the church and engage with church members.

Just as the church tries to involve all the community, it is clear that community leaders see the church as a key part of village life. Local councillors have worked hard to reintroduce a Summer Village fair after many years without one and were keen that St Mary's held our own church fair on the same day with integrated plans. At Christmas much is made of the lighting of the village Christmas tree with involvement of councillors and school groups – organisers were keen that the Rector led much of the proceedings.

Specific campaigns are well supported by the local community. In recent times the church has led two major campaigns: All Under One Roof to renovate the Church Roof; and the most recent All In the Centre – a project to first win lottery funding (circa £48,000) and then develop St Mary's Centre and create a Sensory Garden using those funds. In both instances the whole village donated, attended and supported in order to achieve our goals.

On a more general basis St Mary's gets much ongoing support from “The Friends of St Mary's” – an organisation which was originally formed to help the “All Under One Roof” campaign but which has continued to provide funds for many things (most recently a new Sound System for the Church)

Remembrance Day Services are extremely well attended by all local organisations and the public and led by the Rector.

When tragedy struck with the death of a local man killed on active service in Afghanistan the whole village came together to recognise his sacrifice with around 1000 people attending his military funeral. The church supported the family throughout and has welcomed their involvement in subsequent Remembrance Day services.



## **Social Problems and Community Issues**

Whickham has very little by way of social behavioural problems. There is a strong community police presence around the village and the police seem to have a good working and cooperative relationship with business owners/pub landlords. The village is quite lively on weekend nights and there are inevitably some “incidents” around drunkenness and rowdy behaviour – but most of it can be dismissed as “high spirits”. Whilst the village is busy on some nights – most of those involved are from the local area and the atmosphere is generally a happy one (if somewhat loud at times). It never feels threatening – and even when noisy you feel that you can walk around the village in safety. There are the usual problems of “litter” and a few “drug problems” but overall these are quite minor issues. The Church has had a few problems with vandalism/theft (lead from the roof) and has an ongoing concern about youths loitering around the graveyard – but again only minor issues.

The Whickham community are very enthused with campaigns that affect the village. There was huge support to win money from Tesco and Flora to develop the children’s play facilities in Chase Park. Equally the village can be quite vocal about matters it is against: currently there is a campaign to stop the building of houses on the “green belt” on the approach to the village.

## **Conclusion for the APA role in Whickham**

Any analysis of the Whickham Parish would say that in general it is a busy parish but a pleasant place to live with no major specific issues around crime or social deprivation. However, that doesn’t mean that issues don’t exist – they do just on a possibly smaller and more individual scale but for those individuals involved the problem will feel enormous. As with any town there are people with busy lives, stressful jobs, problematic relationships, financial pressures, special needs, anxieties and depression and other mental health problems. Reliance on medication / alcohol and some child protection concerns- all or any of which might result in people needing support in some way. Of course, there are also people who need help and support just through life taking its toll – the sick, the housebound, the recently bereaved and many others – living in a relatively affluent environment doesn’t take away any of the individual hurt and pain that may be felt. My role as an APA in Whickham will be to reach out to those people as part of an APA team under the guidance and direction of the Rector.