

AGENDA 15, Enc xiii) Ashington World War II Memorial Arboretum and Plaque Project

Summary of Project

Restoring planted trees in the grounds of Ashington Cricket Club that honour the lives lost during World War II.

Installing individual memorial plaques for each fallen soldier/person from Ashington, with each plaque placed next to a dedicated tree.

The project is specifically focused on memorialising those from Ashington who lost their lives during World War II, enhancing the arboretum (a botanical garden of trees) with memorial trees and plaques, serving as a living memorial.

Following World War II a tree was planted in the grounds of Ashington Cricket Club to recognise the life of everyone from the town who gave their life in the War from 1939-1945 (approximately 150 recognised at the time). Additionally, some trees, we believe, were also planted in Peoples Park and the grassed area where the Ashington Memorial Garden now stands.

Background

In the aftermath of World War II, trees were originally planted in the grounds of Ashington Cricket Club to honour those from Ashington who made the ultimate sacrifice during the war (approximately 150 individuals recognised at the time). However, over the years, some of these memorial trees have been lost.

In 2019-2020, at the request of local historian David Wise, Ashington Town Council partnered with Ashington Cricket Club to plant 70 new trees, aligning the number of trees with the 175 names listed on the Ashington War Memorial for World War II. This initiative received significant media attention, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the war's end. In developing the Ashington Memorial Garden project (AMG), in 2014/15, the Town Council worked with local historians, the RBL and Western Front Association in carrying out significant research for new plaques for the memorial for both WWI and WWII. Following this research, it was found a number of names weren't included after the wars as some families could not afford the cost to have their loved one included as well as others who should have been included. As part of work on the AMG project, this was rectified, and their names were added to the new plaques installed on the War Memorial (175 in total for WWII).

Project Overview

Ashington Cricket Club, in collaboration with Reiverdale Scout Group and the Royal British Legion, is now proposing to further enhance this living memorial by installing individual plaques commemorating each fallen hero next to their respective tree within the cricket grounds.

The key objectives of this project are:

- Survey and improve the condition of the existing memorial trees.
- Liaise with Northumberland County Council regarding future grounds maintenance.
- Conduct additional research with local heritage experts to ensure all names are accurately represented.
- Design and install personalised plaques for each individual, to be placed at the base of their tree.
- Actively involve the Reiverdale Scout Group in the research and plaque development process.

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2025 Significance

This project holds particular significance as 2025 will mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. By completing this initiative, Ashington will have a lasting, living tribute to honour the sacrifices made by its citizens during the war.

This project represents a profound opportunity for Ashington to create a permanent, meaningful memorial that will honour its fallen heroes for generations to come. The project would bring together various organisations, including the town council.

Proposal

There are many worthy reasons for the Town Council to play a full part in the project with officers playing a full part in the development of the project, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate to make this vision a reality.

Given Ashington Town Council's previous involvement in the memorial tree planting and the council's access to historical records, the Council is asked to consider and agree the following:

1. Allocation of staff resources to assist in project coordination, funding efforts, liaison with stakeholders, and overall project management.
2. Consideration of financial contribution, via NSO's to support tree maintenance, plaque production, and installation.
3. Provision of guidance and access to relevant historical records to ensure accuracy in the plaque inscriptions.