



Middleton St George Parish Council

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A meeting of the Middleton St. George Stockton and Darlington Bicentenary Organisation Group was held Thursday 9th May, 2024 in the WI Hall, Neasham Road, Middleton St. George.

1. Welcome

Alan Macnab welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to update the Group on progress which was being made to organise the events to celebrate the bicentenary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 2025 and to receive an update on the work of the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in the village.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Bainbridge, Patricia Lowe, Caitlin Barratt, Clare Throw, Alan Townsend, Sue Shaw and Councillor Colin Pease.

3. Minutes of the Organisation Group meeting held on the 28th February, 2024.

The minutes of the Organisation Group meeting on the 28th February, 2024 were presented and accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

4. Update on progress with the suggestions made at the meeting on the 28th February, 2024

a. The creation of a heritage trail in Middleton St. George with plaques, pictures and maps.

Alan Macnab reported that he was discussing with the MSG Heritage Group the heritage trail. Ross Chisholm reported that the Walk Booklet on the track from the A68 by pass to Oak Tree was being updated and work along the track could tie in with the Heritage Trail.

b. An exhibition of photographs of the railway in Middleton St. George in the Community Centre

Alan Macnab reported that one of the Trustees of the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway had a large number of photographs and was prepared to mount an exhibition. An approach had been made to the Community Centre for a date in 2025 when the exhibition could be held and a date was awaited and tied in with another event. Marion Ogle reported that a suitable date was being identified by the Community Centre.

c. A meet and eat event with a railway theme or a Victorian lunch which is part of the Community Centre programme of events

Marion Ogle reported that this was being discussed with the Community Centre and she would progress this.

d. The Community Centre Summer Fair in 2025 could have a Georgian theme with period costumes and games.

Marion Ogle reported that this was being discussed with the Community Centre and she would progress this.

e. A litter pick

No progress had been made with this suggestion to date.

f. Work on a railway song

The Group stated that there were good musicians in the village who could be approached to write and perform a railway song. It was suggested that an advertisement be issued to invite musicians and a competition be held with a prize. It was reported that St. George's Academy were working on a song.

g. A model railway exhibition

No progress had been made with this suggestion but an advertisement is prepared to identify and attract the person in the village who has the model railway and to ask if they would be prepared to mount an exhibition.

h. A talk by a national railway enthusiast

Alan Macnab reported that this suggestion was not possible because the fees charged by the national railway enthusiasts would be prohibitive. It was suggested that Robson Green be approached to see if he would be interested. Alan Macnab will progress this suggestion.

i. A railway related theme in 2025 by Middletons in Bloom with shops, businesses and residents encouraged to participate

Middletons in Bloom were considering this and investigating if planters with a railway related theme at the entrances to the village was feasible

j. Signs at the entrances to the village

Alan Macnab reported that the original plans for the signs at the entrances to the village which were designed by pupils of St. George's CE Academy no longer existed and a further competition should be held to design a new sign. However there may be a need for Darlington Borough Council to approve any signs which are erected at the entrances to the village. Ross Chisholm suggested that Stephen Wiper, the Borough Council's Creative Darlington to see if funding was available and if he can provide a designer. The Group suggested contact is made with a designer who lives in the village to see if they would design a sign. Alan Macnab to progress this with Stephen Wiper.

Reference was also made to a railway related model on the A68 roundabouts. Ross Chisholm reported that this could not be achieved because the speed limit on the A68 prevented a model being placed on the roundabout at Fighting Cocks because it would pose a danger to users of the road.

k. Bunting to decorate the village

This will be progressed nearer to 2025. It was suggested that bunting be erected around Dinsdale Station and in other parts of the village.

l. A BBQ.

Alan Macnab will progress this with the Cricket Club.

5. New Suggestions

The following new suggestions were made at the meeting:

- An updated History of Middleton St. George.
- A railway related display like a Scarecrow Trail.

- A treasure hunt.
- A tapestry with squares joined together.
- A leaflet to each property and business in the village giving the events.

Clare Robson reported that Middleton Hall Retirement Village had started holding events to mark the bicentenary with the National Railway Museum at Shildon.

6. Logistics of the Events

The Group emphasised that planning the events need to ensure that preparation work was thorough including how people who came to the village moved around and car parking.

7. Funding

Rodger Sansom reported that the Middleton One Row Trust was looking for organisations to give funds to for events and that he would help with fund raising. Rodger Sansom's offer was gratefully received.

8. Events Committee

The Group considered that the Events Committee which was formed at the meeting on the 28th February, 2024 should meet as soon as possible to co-ordinate the events in the village including those events organised by other groups in the village, to progress the suggested events, to bring the events together and to suggest how the events can be linked together. There would be a need for a Chair to be elected.

Ross Chisholm reported that when the events are firmed up with dates they should be reported to Nicci Halifax, the Stockton and Darlington Railway Bicentenary Events Co-ordinator.

The Group agreed that the Events Committee consisting of Sue, Shaw, Councillor Margaret Beadle of Middleton St. George Parish Council, Valerie Johnston of Middleton St. George History Group, Marion Ogle of Middleton St. George Community Association, Katharine Matthews of Middletons in Bloom, Claire Throw of St. George's CE Academy and Joan Hodgson of Middleton St. George Women's Institute will meet on **Tuesday 4th June, 2024 at 6.30 p.m. in the Parish Council Meeting Room.**

9. Route updates and sharing the Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway proposed plans in Middleton St. George

Ross Chisholm reported on the following activities of the Friends. Ross emphasised that they were doing what they can to implement proposals in Middleton St. George.

a. Fighting Cocks Station House Garage Mural

The mural was unveiled on the 27th April. The artist will paint the carriages onto the mural during this week and the mural will be complete. An information panel will be installed.

b. Landscaping Master Plan

The Master Plan proposed to engage a designer to come up with proposals for the 26 miles but the professional fees of the designer would be expensive but it might be better for a community effort with sponsorship to look after parts of the 26 miles in their area. Durham County Council will be carrying out consultations in each area which aimed to build on existing practices and not to override the existing practices and to look for practical suggestions.

Sponsorship was difficult at present but the Friends had secured £10,000 (Section 106 funding) for interpretation work from the builders of Maxgate Farm development which received planning permission recently which will be paid when the first house is built and occupied. This funding was ring fenced for Fighting Cocks.

Maz Holmes was thanked for her work on keeping the area including the banks opposite her property neat and tidy.

c. Waiting Shed Rebuild

A stonemason and bricklayer have been engaged to partially rebuild the Waiting Shed in phases. Coping stones will be placed on top and pavers will lay the floor and path. The dog bin will be removed. It is hoped that the work will be completed this year. Funding was secured for the work.

d. Middleton St. George Heritage Hub

Funding was sought for all projects connected with the Heritage Hub but this has been abandoned in favour of bids being made for individual projects.

Darlington Borough Council's Conservation Officer has started the approval survey for the Middleton St. George Heritage Hub which extends from the A66 by pass to the Oak Tree Junction. The boundaries have not yet been decided and there will be a report to the Borough Council to commence a 6 weeks public consultation exercise. Alan Macnab was asked to write to the Head of Policy Planning to ask that a public consultation exhibition or presentation takes place in the village and that the public consultation does not take place when residents are on holiday.

e. Volunteers

There are a small team of volunteers working at Fighting Cocks and there was always a need for volunteers to help.

f. Long term management of the Stockton and Darlington Railway

The long term management was uncertain at present. The three Councils (Durham County Council, Darlington Borough Council and Stockton on Tees Borough Council) and the Friends commissioned Tricolour Consultants to report on the long term maintenance and management of the whole 26 miles of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

The Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway may be given resources to manage the sites.

10. Any other business

No other business was raised.

11. Dates of next meetings

Events Committee. Tuesday 4th June, 2024 at 6.30 p.m. in the Parish Council Meeting Room.

Bicentenary Organising Group. Wednesday 17th July, 2024 at 6.30 p.m. at Middleton Hall Retirement Village.

