

CRAMLINGTON u3a

LOCAL HISTORY

UPDATE

ANNIE'S PLAYGROUND

The latest News

A sincere thank you to Paul Ezhilchelvan, County & Town Councillor for Cramlington South East, for his positive response to adopting 'Annie's Playground' for the newly remodelled children's playground in Alexandra Park. He has confirmed that he has tabled it as an agenda item in the next council meeting in order to authorise the naming of the playground and is confident of its passing!! In anticipation then thank you to Cramlington Town Council.

However, this initiative has a stellar cast of contributors to get us to this point including:

Barry Stewart our very own 'local' local historian whose book 'Cramlington its Past and its People' featured the photograph that first inspired this initiative and who generously agreed that we could use this image of Annie to promote the naming of the playground. He, in turn, led us to:

Brian Green, Annie's nephew and a resident of Cramlington, who enthusiastically agreed for us to adopt Annie's name.

Grateful thanks also to our own genius u3a genealogist, Irene Blackburn, who gave guidance on follow up research on Annie and her family.

Last, but not least, thanks to ALL the members of our own u3a Cramlington Local History Group. Your interest in the history of Cramlington and beyond sparked the initial idea of 'Annie's Playground' and your unstinting support in 'the time of Covid' enabled this idea to reach – we hope - a successful conclusion.

With the adoption of 'Annie's Playground' Annie lives again. If you want to know more of her story read on.....



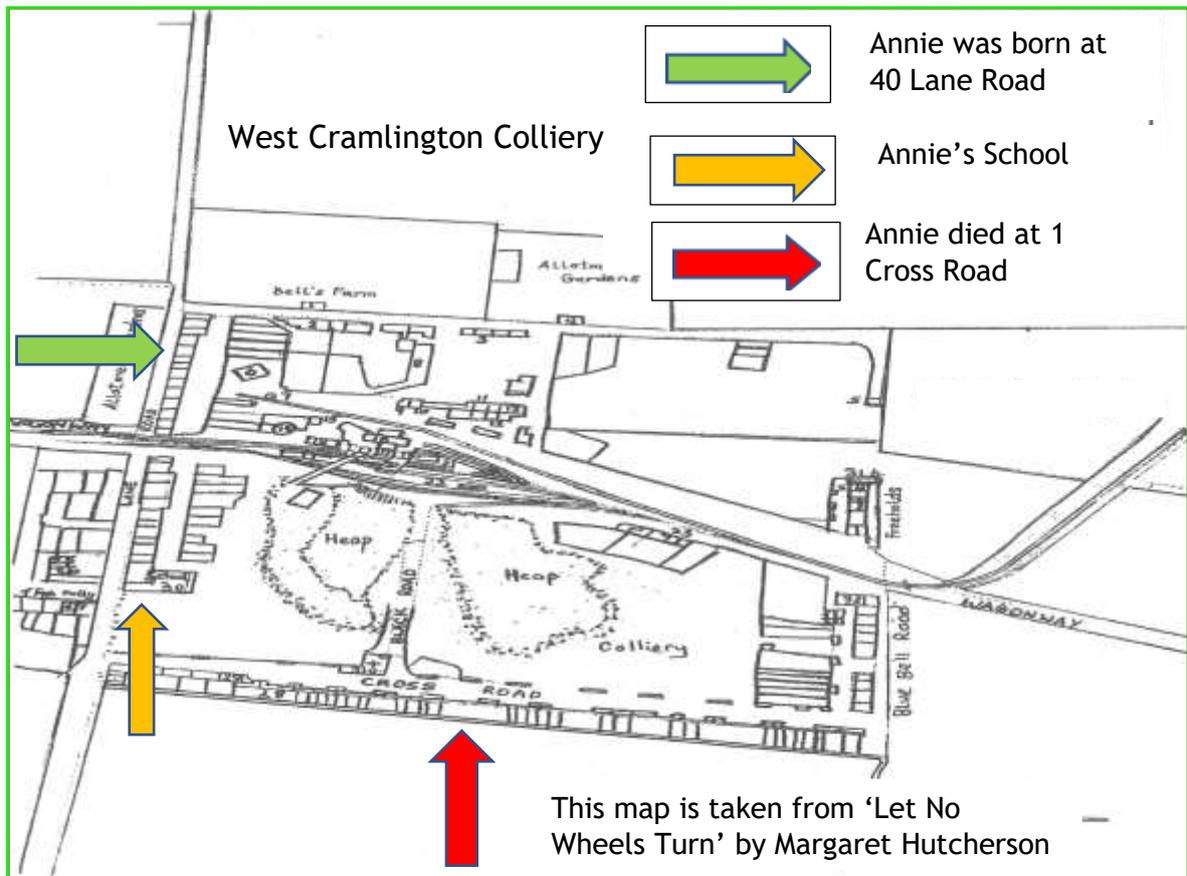
Annie Green

West Cramlington Colliery
1935

Taken from Cramlington its
Past and its People'

Donated by Annie's brother
Dennis Green

ANNIE'S STORY Annie lived her life within the boundaries of what we now call Alexandra Park but was then West Cramlington Colliery.



Annie was born on 20th June 1923 at 40 Lane Road West Cramlington Colliery.

She was the daughter of Elizabeth Green, formerly Wilson, and William Henry Green. William Green's occupation at this time was recorded as 'Shipyard Labourer' which, considering they lived in a colliery might seem unusual however the port of Blyth was only 4 miles away and at the time was recorded as the 4th coal-shipping port in the kingdom. Labourers were employed on a day-to-day basis and it was a very precarious living. A bigger mystery perhaps is how he came to be living in West Cramlington - almost all the houses were owned by the Coal Company and tenure was only as secure as their employees' jobs. However, it wasn't unusual for families to share and it may be that as long as one member of the family worked at the colliery, they could rent the property.

William Muckle in his memoir 'No Regrets' describes West Cramlington as a village that from one end to the other was about 500 yards. It was bounded by rows of terraced miners' cottages in Lane Row, Cross Road and Bluebell Road. Within this area were further dwellings called the Barracks and Railway Cottages. Between the two coal heaps lay Black Road. In addition, the community had two Methodist Chapels, a pub called the Blue Bell Inn, a school, a Mechanics Institute and shops selling essential goods. A wagonway ran alongside the village to join the London -Edinburgh mainline at West Cramlington Junction and continued eastward pass the Bay Horse Inn on to Seghill and eventually to the River Tyne.

In the years that followed Annie's birth the family experienced a number of changes. Alongside her brother George another brother followed in 1929 – Dennis.

The family moved from Lane Road to Cross Road and her father changed his occupation and began working in the coalmine. The Green family were also going to find themselves subject to an epidemic that was to have very personal consequences for them.

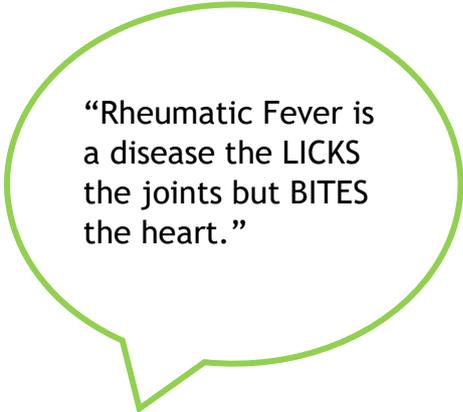
Rheumatic fever is due to a common organism, a streptococci, found in the throat but kept at bay by the normal body defences. If infected, antibiotics can usually effect a cure. But in the 1930's many, many children suffered rheumatic fever and the main treatment was bed rest and aspirin with the emphasis on-reducing the fever. Patients suffered swelling of the main joints as well as affecting other parts, including the valves of the heart. For the first part of the 20th century rheumatic fever seemed to be on the decline. Its sudden upsurge particularly during 1934-36 is still a matter of speculation. There are a number of factors that contribute to Rheumatic fever including:

Family history – some people carry a gene or genes that make them more susceptible.

Type of strep bacteria – certain strains of strep bacteria are more likely to contribute to the fever than others.

Environmental factors - A greater risk of rheumatic fever is associated with overcrowding, poor sanitation and other conditions that can easily result in the rapid transmission or multiple exposures to strep bacteria.

Those most susceptible to the fever are aged between 5-15years old and research has shown that girls particularly are likely to experience its most fatal consequences with 60% succumbing to heart failure brought on by the inflammation and scarring of heart valves if left untreated. Nowadays a simple course of antibiotics can prevent severe illness.



“Rheumatic Fever is a disease the LICKS the joints but BITES the heart.”

The last document that provides a record of Annie is her death certificate.

It records that she died on 11th January 1936 at 1 Cross Road West Cramlington. Her death was registered as heart failure brought about by rheumatic fever.

It also records that her father William was present at her death. She was 12 years old.

It seems only fitting then, that this short life spent amongst the coal heaps of West Cramlington should be memorialised amongst the green spaces that now makes up Alexandra Park.