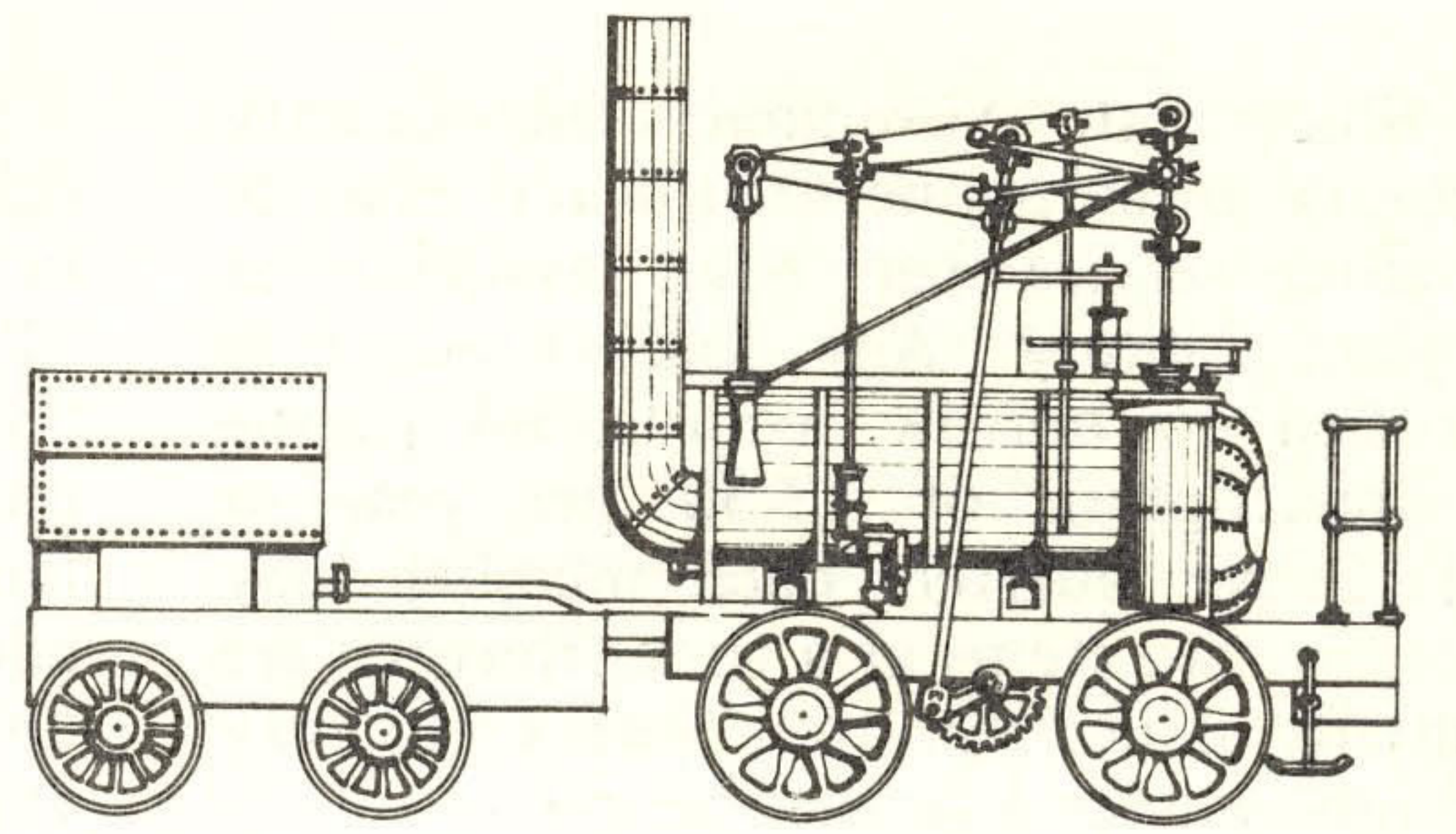


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Winter 1978/79

Quarterly

Number 23

The right to Vote—How things have changed in 100 years

The opportunity to vote in four different elections in a single year won't occur very often, so 1979 is special in that respect. Elections for the Parish and District Councils will be held on 3rd May; those for the European Parliament in June, and a General Election to elect M.P.'s for the U.K. Parliament must be held before November.

Although we now take for granted the right of every adult, to vote at parliamentary and local elections, and to do so by secret ballot—until early this century this right was linked to ownership or occupation of property rather than to each individual's right. This meant that only a small proportion of the population was allowed to vote.

At each of the General Elections held during the eighteenth century, there were fewer than ten people entitled to vote in Wylam, and several of these were not local residents but qualified because they owned property in the village. In the General Election of 1852, there were sixteen electors in Wylam—half of whom were non-residents, and of these thirteen actually voted. The total population was then over 1,000.

Electoral reforms introduced in 1867 extended the right to vote to occupiers of property of rateable value of £12 or upwards. This reform was primarily to benefit town householders, but also slightly increased the numbers in rural villages. The list of Wylam voters for 1871 contained twenty-three names, nine registered as ownership voters—of whom three were resident in Wylam, i.e. Captain E. A. Blackett of Oakwood, Lt. Col. M. C. Woods of Holeyn Hall and Dr. J. I. Atkinson of West House, and fourteen as occupiers of property of £12+ R.V. These included G. C. Atkinson and E. R. Bryant who respectively rented Wylam Hall and Wylam Cottage from the Blacketts, R. Marshall of Bradley Mill, J. Richardson tenant farmer at Wylam Wood Farm, R. Dunn who leased one of the local collieries, G. Lampier who manufactured lead shot at Shot Pit, and the tenants of the five local inns, The Boathouse, The Bird, The Black Bull, The Fox and Hounds and The Three Tuns.

Until 1872 voting was in public, and

each voter appeared before the returning officer, who recorded his votes in a poll-book. After each election the poll-books were published and the names of all the electors and the candidates they voted for can therefore be seen, for parliamentary elections held prior to 1872 when the secret ballot was introduced.

W. E. Gladstone's Parliamentary Reform Act of 1884 extended to rural areas the vote given to townsmen seventeen years earlier, and substantially increased the number of Wylam residents eligible to vote—from 27 in 1884 to 146 in 1886 (seven qualify as owners, 137 as occupiers and two as lodgers).

Major electoral reforms were intro-

duced in 1918 giving all men over 21 and women over 30 the vote, and by 1928 this was extended to all women over 21. This legislation was far reaching and based the franchise on individual rights rather than on property qualifications.

The growth in the population of the village and the extension of the franchise has resulted in a progressive increase in the local electorate and on the new 1979 register are 1623 electors, entitled to vote in the four elections to be held this year. This is about 65% of the present total population of the village, and contrasts dramatically with only 3% of the population who could vote in Wylam in 1881—less than a century ago.



The weather early in the New Year gave children of all ages an opportunity to enjoy themselves sledding on the newly contoured slopes in Engine Dene.

New bungalows to be built this year

The District Council are hoping to be able to start work this year on building old people's bungalows on the land next to the Falcon Centre, and fronting the Dene.

It had originally been suggested that these might be dual-purpose bungalows for either the elderly or for young couples but the District Council have now decided that they should be for the elderly.

The Parish Council have been given an opportunity to comment on the design

of the scheme produced by the District Council architectural staff.

It is intended to build a group of bungalows in an L shape fronting Hedley Road and facing The Dene. An access to serve the rear of the bungalows and the Falcon Centre, with a turning and parking area, is also to be provided.

When completed these bungalows will provide additional accommodation for elderly residents and perhaps enable some occupying family houses to transfer to more suitable and compact bungalows.

Record and Cassette service now available

Since 1st November, the County Library gramophone record and cassette lending service has been available at Wylam Library. Any local resident is entitled to borrow records, on paying a subscription of £3.50 per year or £1.15 per quarter. Each member may borrow two items at a time. Records are initially issued for four weeks but may be renewed for a further period.

An initial collection of 286 records and 205 cassettes has been provided in the local library, and this is representative of all musical tastes, but through the use of the printed catalogue (copies of which are available at the library) borrowers may request any item in the extensive stock held by the County library.

S.T.E.P. in the Spring

The very wet weather in December prevented the youngsters employed under Job Creation from completing the levelling of the final part of the Engine Dene, before the scheme finished at the end of 1978. Arrangements will be made in the spring for this area to be levelled and seeded.

The work carried out by the team of youngsters has greatly improved what was a most untidy area, and the newly contoured slopes were much appreciated by children sledging at New Year.

Various other schemes in the village (which were detailed in our last issue) are to be carried out under the Government's Special Temporary Employment Programme (S.T.E.P.) and will start in the spring.

Concert rearranged

The Musical Evening by Percy Lovell and Singers promised for 19th January, had to be rearranged, and will now be held at 8 p.m. on Friday 27th April, at St. Oswin's. At least the weather on 27th April can't be any worse than that which we had on 19th January!

Welcome to new tenant

Miss I. Goalen, the new tenant of Stephenson's Cottage moved into the cottage shortly before Christmas, following completion of the renovations and re-decoration of the interior. We wish her well in her new and historic home.

Bus service changes

The alterations to the 684, 685 Newcastle-Carlisle and 686, 687 Newcastle-Hexham bus services, referred to in the last issue were introduced on 7th January and a leaflet giving full details of the new timetable is available on request at the library, the Post Office or from Mrs. Gillis, Clerk to the Parish Council.

As well as offering all types of musical recordings, parents will be interested in the books for children on tape—"Paddington Bear", "Winnie the Pooh", "Stories from Jackanory" etc. These have proved popular, particularly for use on long car journeys. Books on tape for adults include Dick Francis reading his own novels, James Heriot reading his experiences as a vet, famous trials related by Edgar Lustgarten, poetry and language courses.

The records are displayed in browser boxes so that all those in main categories such as choral music, opera or piano music will be found together. Suggestions from borrowers for future additions to the stock will be welcomed.

Plea to Parents

Would parents of children who will be five years old between 1st September 1979 and 31st August 1980 and would like them to attend Wylam First School please contact the school by telephone (Tel.: 2771) or letter, as soon as possible, giving details of the name and date of birth of their child and home address.

DIARY OF LOCAL EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Friday 23rd Institute Dance
Tuesday 27th "Origins of Northumberland Place Names"—Talk. 8 p.m.,
Institute

MARCH

Saturday 3rd St. Oswin's Mother's Union Jumble Sale
Wednesday 21st St. Oswin's Mother's Union Coffee Morning
Friday 23rd Playing Fields Association Dance

Dance the night away

Feel like an evening out, but don't want to go far? Then why not go to the Institute Annual Dance on Friday 23rd February from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Even if you can't dance it should be a good opportunity to enjoy yourself.

Tickets from Mrs. Edna Beattie, 24 Woodvale Gardens or any committee member.

Thanks for your help

Mrs. Joyce Brown writes,

"Licensees in Wylam have recently been kind enough to allow collecting boxes for the Gurkha Welfare Trust to be displayed on their premises and the collection resulted in a total of more than £20, with an amazing £17.50 in the box at the Fox and Hounds.

On behalf of the Gurkha Welfare Trust may I thank the residents of Wylam for their kindness and generosity in giving this money to help Gurkha Ex-Servicemen and their families who face difficult futures when they return to Nepal. The Brigade of Gurkhas runs its own Welfare Scheme providing limited medical and financial aid and all money raised goes direct to this Fund."

Victims of the axe

Several people have expressed dismay at the felling of some of the old trees overhanging Bull's Bank on the Ovingham road.

Unfortunately these trees had reached the age when they were potentially dangerous, and the County Surveyor considered that on the grounds of safety they had to be felled. It is probable that some of the trees dated from about the time that the Ovingham road was first built by John Blackett of Wylam Hall, in the mid eighteenth century, and it is particularly sad that they had to be cut down.

There are however several trees just outside the highway boundary fence, and within the grounds of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips' house and hopefully these will remain, and perhaps be strengthened by new planting in due course.

Incidentally the origin of the name "Bull's Bank" for this short hill on the approach into the village, seems to be in some doubt—we assume that it originates from the fact that a Mrs. Bull lived at Wylam Lodge in the 1880's shortly after the house (now owned by the Phillips) was built.

More trees planted

The elm tree on Jackson Road which was suffering from Dutch Elm disease, was felled early in January.

At the same time as the diseased elm was felled, more young trees and bushes were planted to replace it.

No one walked there!

The village's reputation for "good attendance" at public meetings took a knock on 30th November, when not a single member of the public turned up to a meeting arranged to consider whether any additional footpaths in the parish might be claimed as public rights of way in the County's Review of the Definitive Footpath Map.

In mitigation, the weather was particularly unpleasant that night and two people had apologised for being unable to attend. However the most probable reason for the "nil" attendance was that there are only one or two footpaths in the village which are not at present shown as public rights of way, but are claimed to be so—and the Parish Council is already aware of these and will be submitting details to the County Council National Park and Countryside Department who are undertaking this review.

Footbridge damaged

Those who enjoy walking the footpath from Holey Hall Road across the fields to Horsley, are asked to take care when crossing the timber footbridge over Howdene Burn, near Burn Cottage.

The bridge is in need of some repair, and its condition has been reported to the County Council's National Park and Countryside Department with a request that the repairs be carried out for the Spring.

It's a 2p rate again

For four of the last five years the parish rate has remained consistently at the same level of 2p in the pound and this will be the amount levied in 1979/80.

Playgroup moves house

The Pre-School Playgroup who previously met in the Parish Church Hall, have recently moved to the Falcon Centre, where playgroup sessions will now be held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Further information can be obtained from Mrs. Ann Stone, 22 Falcon Terrace or Mrs. Ingrid Phillips, 53 Woodcroft Road.

Storage space provided

One of the faults in the design of the Wylam First School when it was built four years ago was the failure to provide adequate storage space. The School Managers have regularly requested the County Education Authority to provide a separate building suitable for storing equipment to relieve the pressure on space within the school.

At their last meeting the Managers were informed that it was now hoped to provide a small timber building for this purpose, during the year.

All the Winners

Prize winners in the Wylam School Parent Teacher Association Christmas Draw were as follows:—

- 1st Prize: R. E. Soley, 6 Dene Road, Wylam.
- 2nd Prize: Mr. Gillies, Wylam Post Office.
- 3rd Prize: Mrs. Anderson, 3 West View, Wylam.
- 4th Prize: Mr. Pitt, County Hall, Newcastle.
- 5th Prize: R. Japes, Holey Hall Road, Wylam.
- 6th Prize: A. Stephenson, Water Company, Horsley.
- 7th Prize: A. Gibson, Bellway Limited.
- 8th Prize: Miss Johnson, 9 Ingham Terrace, Wylam.
- 9th Prize: Mrs. Gibson, Simonside First School, Westerhope.
- 10th Prize: D. A. Leeds, Norwich Union Insurance Group, Newcastle
- 11th Prize: Mrs. Deacon, 6 Parsons Road, Wylam.

Another successful Community Week

"One of the best Community Week's for several years" was a comment frequently heard after last November's Community Week had ended.

As well as being a financial success (nearly £1,200 was raised at the various events and by donations) it was clearly enjoyed by everyone who participated.

The behind-the-scenes problems about where the bonfire should be sited were resolved satisfactorily—and there is no doubt that the Jubilee Field is the best position for it, and provided that the burnt remains are cleared promptly and the area re-seeded, the problems for those using the Playing Field should be kept to a minimum.

Of all the Community Week events the one which relies more than any other on local talent is the Community Concert and last year's seems to have been universally acclaimed as one of the best

ever. Congratulations to everyone involved in all Community Week events—your efforts were much appreciated by the Institute Committee and the whole village.

For those who would like to know how the money was raised, the details are as follows:—

Jumble Sale £245; Bonfire and Barbeque £216; Pop Night £22; Coffee Morning and Exhibition £95; Photographic Evening £23; Concert (two nights) £98; Whist Drive and Raffle £123; Coffee Morning and sale of Horticultural Society produce £107; Dance £82; Donations etc. £173.

One encouraging feature is that the leading article in the last "Globe" seems to have prompted more people to join the Institute Community Association—but more are still needed. Contact Dr. Swindale or Mrs. Beattie for details.

Wylam Station Staff — Victorian Style



One of the fascinating new illustrations being included in the book "Where Railways were born" which should be published in March. It shows staff at Wylam Station in about 1890. The stationmaster, Mr. Thomas Wright is the bearded gentleman in the back row, but who are the others? (Kindly lent by Mr. Wilson of Holey Hall Road).

Bradley Mill and farm to rent at £60 in 1857

Although it has never been within the Parish of Wylam nor in the County of Northumberland, Bradley Mill and Mill House are traditionally regarded as part of Wylam.

Last year's auction of the Mill House and its adjoining field, which extends up to the back of the Station, attracted a lot of interest and it is encouraging that it has been acquired by a couple who were already Wylam residents, Ces and Margaret Vallalley, formerly of Stephenson Terrace.

As far as we are aware no one has researched into the early history of Bradley Mill, but it is probable that a watermill has existed there for several centuries. It formed part of the Bradley estates, which came into the ownership of the Liddell family of Ravensworth through marriage. Sir Thomas Henry Liddell, who was one of the owners of Killingworth Colliery, and encouraged

George Stephenson's experiments, became Baron Ravensworth in 1821.

Shortly after his death in 1855 his son sold the Bradley Hall estate, including Wylam Wood Farm, and Bradley Mill and Farm, to Mr. John Walker of Seaton Burn House for £40,000.

In January 1857 Walker leased "the farm and corn mill called Bradley Mill" to Robert Marshall at a rental of £60 per year and he continued as miller and tenant of the mill until the early 1890's.

The next tenant, Thomas Gibson, was primarily a farmer and it is doubtful if the mill was used for grinding corn after the turn of the century. When it was demolished in 1931, the stone was salvaged and used in building the bungalow "Gracot" on the main road in Wylam. At least it was put to good use!

(An early photograph of Bradley Mill appeared in a previous issue of the Globe.—Editor).

The bicentenary of local pioneers

1979 is the 200th anniversary of the births of three local railway pioneers.

The most famous of this trio born in 1779 is William Hedley, who as colliery manager at Wylam Colliery carried out historic experiments into locomotive design in the village, and subsequently designed and built the unique locomotives of which two famous examples "Puffing Billy" and "Wylam Dilly" are now preserved.

Although not born in the North East, Benjamin Thompson spent much of his adult life on Tyneside. He surveyed the route for the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway, and to coincide with the opening of the railway built Wylam Ironworks, and was largely responsible for

the construction of Wylam Bridge in 1836. He lived for several years in Wylam Hall, while he had business interests locally.

The third local pioneer born in 1779 was James Stephenson, George's elder brother. Although apparently never having great ambitions, James helped his brother in various ways. He was the first to drive George's Killingworth locomotive "Blucher" in 1815, and at the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825 was co-driver of "Locomotion."

The Parish Council is considering possible ways of marking these bicentenaries, and particularly that of William Hedley, during the year.

Bus shelter wanted?

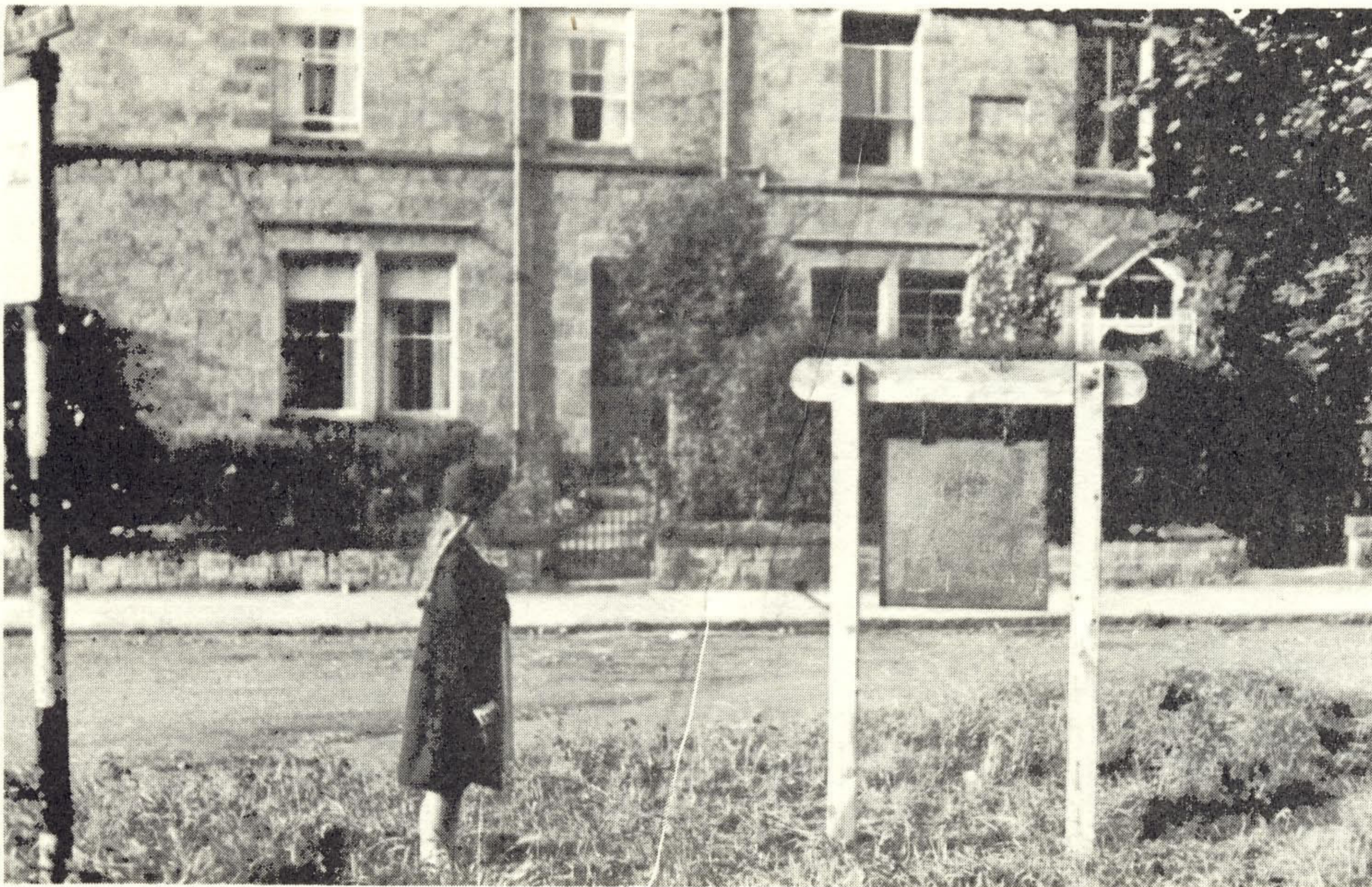
The Parish Council have been asked by several residents who use the local bus services to provide a bus shelter at Charlie's Corner.

The idea of constructing a bus shelter here has been considered before, but for various reasons nothing has happened.

No decision has yet been made on whether to provide a shelter here—or on the type of shelter.

If you have any strong views either for or against a shelter here, please write to the Parish Clerk, Mrs. Gillis at 27 Dene Road, so that the Parish Council know your views. Those of you who use the buses and feel that a bus shelter is needed at Charlie's Corner—now's the time to write.

Does this picture bring back memories?



You'd have to be nearly 40 to remember the peculiar object shown in the photograph above, which graced the War Memorial green during the period of the Second World War.

This was the village's air raid warning gong—to warn of possible attack by enemy aircraft. Hardly a sophisticated piece of equipment, but presumably it was effective.

Although we're not offering prizes for identification we will offer a prize of a copy of the album of photographs "Northumberland Yesteryear" to whoever writes the most interesting recollections of Wylam during the Second World War.

Your memories might recall the Italian and German P.O.W.'s and the huts they occupied near the Church, or the children billeted in the village, or the strengthening of the bridge to carry tanks, or incidents associated with the air-raid gong—or many other events.

Why not put them down on paper and send them to Mrs. Gillis, the Clerk to the Parish Council, 27 Dene Road as soon as you can? If you like, and with your permission, we'll include some of

them in future issues of the Globe.

Editor's Note: This photograph has been kindly lent by Mrs. N. Robinson of North Shields—who is the small girl in the picture. It was taken in 1944. Mrs. Robinson recalls that their family were bombed out in North Shields and evacuated to the Hermitage, Ovingham.

The right decision

As requested by the Parish Council and local residents the County Council have decided not to proceed at this stage with the provision of a car park in the vicinity of Hagg Bank to serve the new extension to the riverside Country Park between Hagg Bank and Ovingham Bridge.

The need for additional parking facilities will be re-examined after the Country Park has been in use for several years.

The County Council have also agreed to introduce traffic regulations which will restrict vehicles using the road leading past Hagg Bank Cottages to the former Hagg Farm.

Quite Convenient!

After many years of waiting, 1979 looks like being the year when Wylam gets its first public convenience. The District Council have now agreed to build a toilet block at the entrance to the Jubilee Field, backing against the new wall recently constructed at the end of the hard tennis court/play area.

The Parish Council have requested that the general design and fittings used should, as far as is possible be both vandalproof (some hope!) and require minimal maintenance. The design for the block will include separate provision for disabled persons, with a ramped access.

Tynedale hope to let a contract for construction to begin in the spring so it should be completed during the summer.

New editions out soon

The revised and extended edition of "Wylam's Railway Pioneers" should be available in late February/March and will be published under the title "Where Railways were Born". Another very successful local publication—the footpaths guide "Country Walks in East Tynedale" is now almost out of print. The demand for this continues to be such that the joint Parishes have agreed to produce a reprint in the spring.

A helping hand

The Parish Council have recently made grants to the Youth Club, and to the School Parent Teacher Association. The Youth Club requested help to improve their furnishings at the Falcon Centre, and the P.T.A. have raised funds to purchase a cine projector, for use in showing films at the school.

Correspondence relating to this Newsletter should be addressed to Mrs. M. Gillis, The Clerk of the Parish Council, 27 Dene Road, Wylam. (Tel.: 2503).
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