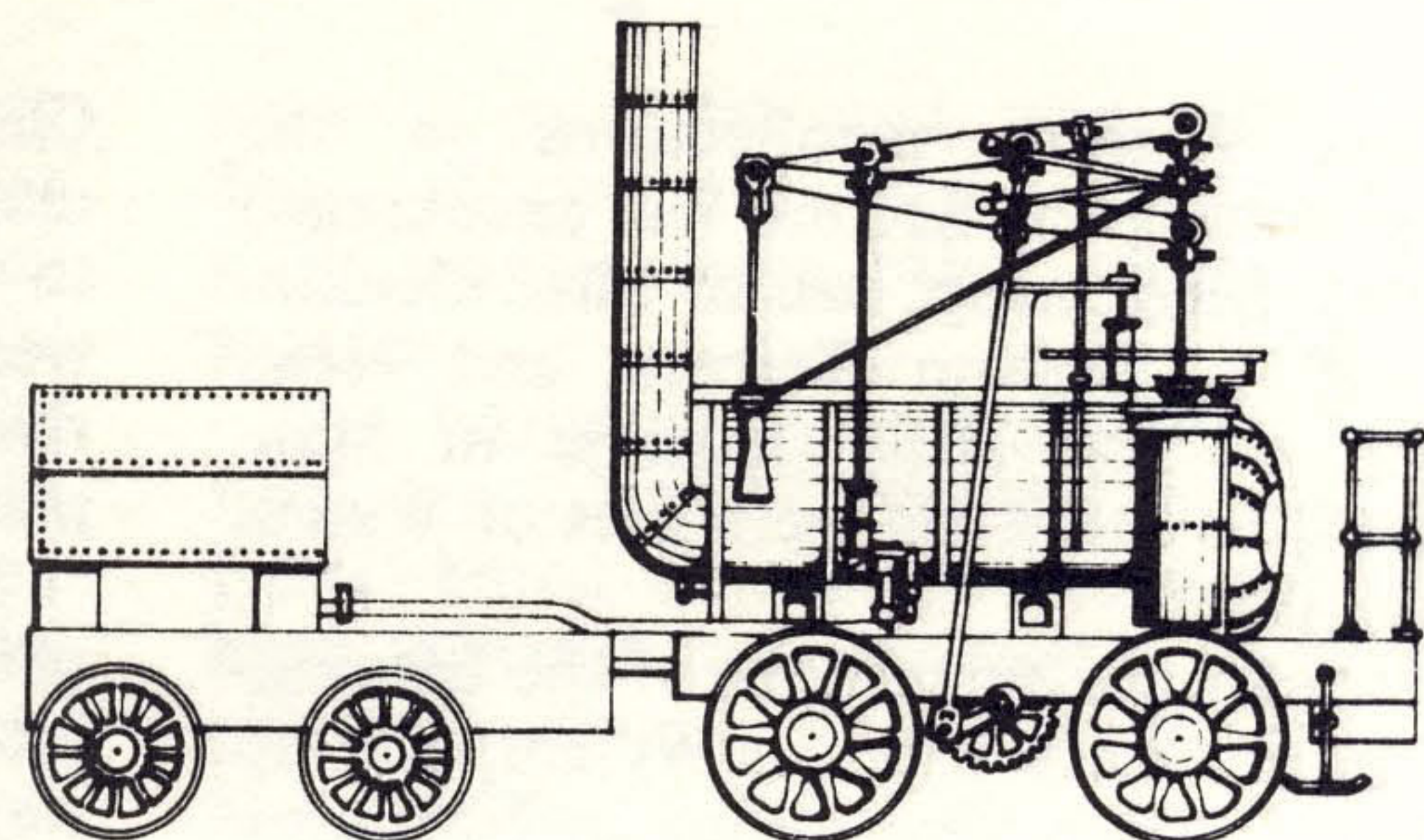


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Autumn 1979

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Public to be consulted on local road schemes

In the last issue, we drew attention to the problems which had resulted in the start of work to reopen the road between Wylam and Ovingham, being delayed until next spring at the earliest.

Closure of the Wylam-Ovingham road has provoked a mixed reaction from residents—some saying it is a serious inconvenience, and others saying that it is a blessing in disguise. Because of these varying reactions, and the fact that a start on work has in any event had to be postponed, the County Highways Committee have decided to take the opportunity provided by these delays, to carry out a public consultation exercise—inviting local comment on whether the road should be reopened. So please, let the Parish Council have your views—in writing.

It is also intended to arrange an exhibition as part of the public consultations taking place on the problems of replacing Ovingham Bridge either in its existing position or at another point between Ovingham and Wylam and on possible routes for a Prudhoe by-pass. Both of these schemes could have an impact on Wylam and all Wylam residents who have an interest in the future of their own house, as well as the environment of the village in general should make a special effort to visit these exhibitions, and make their views known both to the County and Parish Councils.

This exhibition will probably be held in late autumn or in the spring. The date will be publicised locally.

The closure of the Ovingham road has meant that additional traffic is using the back road to Prudhoe via Hagg Bank,

or alternatively using the Wylam-Horsley-Ovingham route.

Residents on Wylam Wood Road have expressed concern at the potential hazards on that route, and the Parish Council has brought this problem to the

attention of the County Surveyor.

To improve the Horsley-Ovingham road the County Council are constructing two passing-places on the narrow stretch of this road, near the entrance to Ovingham village.



A fine summer scene with cricket on the Jubilee Field. Sadly many of the trees in the background may die soon from Dutch Elm disease, now spreading rapidly.

Plaques to local railway pioneers unveiled

The unveiling of the commemorative plaques to mark the bicentenaries of the births of local railway pioneers William Hedley and Benjamin Thompson took place successfully on Sunday September 9th and the occasion was well covered by the local press.

It had been hoped to have one of William Hedley's great-great-grandchildren to unveil the Hedley plaque, but unfortunately this did not prove possible, and after some further difficulties in fixing a suitable date for the unveiling ceremonies they were eventually timed to coincide with a visit to Wylam by members of the Newcomen Society (a nationally known society who study the history of engineering) and the Institutions of Mechanical and Civil Engineers. Their visit to Tyneside was primarily to mark the 150th anniversary

of the construction of the famous locomotive "The Rocket" at Stephenson's works in Forth Street, Newcastle, but they asked to visit Wylam in view of the important associations which the village has with railway history.

They inspected the former railway bridge at Hagg Bank, visited Stephenson's Cottage, and saw what progress is being made developing the small museum in the Falcon Centre.

At the end of the morning visit the two plaques were unveiled—the one on the Station by Dr. John Coiley, Keeper of the National Railway Museum at York, and that on No. 2 Rose Cottages, (on the site of the house where William Hedley lived) by Mr. David Tew, President-elect of the Newcomen Society. (A photograph of this event will be included in the next issue).

New bus shelter

Work is now in progress on building the new bus shelter and rebuilding the boundary wall at Charlie's Corner.

Along the frontage to Church Road, the wall is being set back to allow a footpath to be constructed—making it safer for pedestrians.

A schoolboy's memories of Wylam in wartime

Miss Foster's recollections of the village during the Second War encouraged Stanley Blenkinsop, son of Mrs. Blenkinsop of 2, Ingham Terrace, and News Editor of the Daily Express in Manchester, to recall his memories of Wylam in wartime.

At least six generations of the Blenkinsop family have lived in Wylam, and up to twenty five generations in Northumberland. They have links with J. Blenkinsop, one of the early locomotive pioneers, who introduced the rack-rail locomotive.

Stanley admits that his recollections of events that took place in the village between 1939 and 1945 are clearer and more vivid than many that have occurred in much more recent times.

"To a schoolboy like myself, wartime Wylam seemed a fortress—especially in the earlier part of 1939-45.

During the invasion threats of summer 1940, Wylam Bridge was prepared for demolition to help halt any German advance in the North East. Army engineers almost cut through the bridge at both ends and arrangements were made to place explosive charges there.

In order to stop invaders crossing the Tyne, thick coils of barbed wire up to six feet in height were strung along both banks of the river for hundreds of yards.

There were trenches, sandbagged strongpoints and concrete "pillboxes" in the grounds of River House on the north bank; the north end of the bridge; in the garden of the Boat House Inn and Elm Bank House; and at the bottom of Elm Bank Road, and in the station goods yard.

Soldiers were based in the buildings now used by Wylam Garage; Wylam Institute and the Church Hall.

Among regiments in the village were the Royal Scots whose kilted pipe band used to practise in Jubilee Park to the delight of local people.

For a time a Bofors anti-aircraft gun was sited on top of Coldwell Hill, South Wylam.

I well remember the Local Defence Volunteers—later to become the Home Guard—drilling with broomsticks (in the absence of rifles) in Jubilee Park in 1940.

Later—armed with modern weapons—the Home Guard were to take over village defence from the Army. (Incidentally, the two brick built sheds just beneath the wooded slopes of Castle Hill in the field behind the Station were erected for the Home Guard as ammunition and weapons stores).

Air crews from fighter squadrons based at Ouston, near Harlow Hill, were billeted in many Wylam homes. In addition to men of the R.A.F., there were airmen from Canada, Australia, and Free France. Local families also took in girls from the Women's Auxiliary Air Force—now the W.R.A.F.—who were based at Ouston.

At the end of the war Italian soldiers captured in the Western Desert were kept in wooden huts near the Parish

Church. Some of them had been basket makers back home in Italy and they were to run a flourishing "business" in Wylam weaving baskets from willows cut at the riverside. My mother still carries hers made nearly 40 years ago!

Many of the Italians (who had huge patches of brightly coloured cloth sewn into their uniforms to show who they were) were freed on parole each day to work on local farms. In the evenings they were also allowed out of captivity—though banned from the six local pubs (the present four plus the Bird Inn, next door to the Ship Inn, and the Stephenson's Arms then at the end of Falcon Terrace);



The unveiling of the village War Memorial. An appropriate photograph with which to illustrate this article, due to appear shortly before Remembrance Sunday.

Charles Atkinson (after whom Charlie's Corner is named) stands on the left. Immediately behind him is Sir Charles Parsons (in hat).

Can anyone identify the others in the photograph?

But the Italians—the "Eyeties" as we boys called them—were allowed to visit the nearest cinema in Crawcrook. One night I was in a group of youngsters who were asked by some Italian P.O.W.s where the "ceenimar" was. We pointed in the opposite direction to Crawcrook—to Horsley, and off they set to walk it. We thought it was part of the war effort to obstruct the enemy! I often wonder how far they got before they discovered our hoax! Perhaps they even reached the Roman Wall which their forefathers built!

Other wartime memories include: the ringing of the church bells to mark the victory at El Alamein in October 1942. They had been silent since May 1940 because the Government had then decided they should only be sounded as an invasion warning.

It was an exciting day, too, when the Army brought in Bren gun carriers—small tanks—to tow away a huge tree which had been blown down by gales and was blocking the main road through the village.

I remember, too, the model Bavarian-style castle six feet tall made by German prisoners who took over the wooden huts used by the Italians near the Church.

After the Germans moved away, the castle was bought from the War Department by a South Wylam family. A mobile crane was brought in to lift the castle from its foundations. The lift began—but suddenly there was a loud crack and the castle shattered into thousands of pieces!"

Editor's Note

Thank you very much Stanley for these detailed and interesting recollections. The 'Eyeties' would certainly have a long walk to the nearest 'ceenimar' today! As any good news editor should—he has also drawn attention to an error in issue 23, concerning the photograph

which purported to show the air-raid gong on the War Memorial green.

He states that the village's air raid warning system was a siren at West Wylam which could be clearly heard here.

Our photograph showed a device used to warn of poison gas. It was a large square of wood covered with special paint. In the event of the Germans dropping bombs containing poison gas, the paint would have changed colour. So much for the gong!

He also points out that during the war the memorial was surrounded by a stone wall topped by metal railings and surrounded by stone slabs and gravel, and the green area was only laid out after the war. The "gong" was in fact sited on the grass adjacent to the bridge-end.

Our turn for the band?

Although the District Council have been holding band concerts in the towns and larger villages in the district during recent summers, none has yet been held in Wylam. The Parish Council have therefore asked Tynedale if one could be arranged in the village next summer.

Charities card sale

In recent years local groups representing national charities have come together to hold a joint coffee morning and card sale at Christmas; this year the sale is being held on Saturday November 17th at 10 a.m. in the Institute.

If you are interested in joining in this year to sell your charity's cards or Christmas gifts please contact Jane Tomlin (Wylam 3688); otherwise just come along and enjoy doing some Christmas shopping in peace, away from the hurly-burly of the town!

Please use the car park

To try and ensure that anglers and visitors to the riverside in the vicinity of Stephenson Terrace use the free car park in the old North Wylam station yard—and do not obstruct residents by parking along the Terrace, new directional signs have been erected.

A good example

Projects where young people raise funds for the elderly are often reported—but Wylam can boast an instance of the reverse occurring.

Residents of Blakett Court and Cottages now collect old newspapers and magazines on behalf of The Boys Brigade. Mrs. Hibbert of Blakett Court or Mrs. Evelyn Wilson (Tel. 2131) would be pleased to hear from anyone willing to save their old newspapers for The Boys Brigade. Why not help a good cause—at no cost to yourself? Congratulations to our "senior citizens" for the effort they are making to help the B.B.

Local WEA programme

Maurice Mowbray, the local branch secretary of the W.E.A., has provided the following details of classes being held in the village during the winter months.

The "Birds of Northumberland" and "Vegetation of Northumberland" classes will have already started by the time you receive this newsletter.

"A Caring Society? The Future of the Welfare State" is the title of a class taken by Tony Jeffs, which will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Monday evenings in the Institute, commencing on 7th January. This will run for ten meetings.

A new class, taken by Mrs. M. A. Gow on "Aspects of 18th and 19th Century Painting" will be held in the Institute on Thursdays at 7.30 p.m., and gives a comprehensive survey of paintings, both watercolour and oils, from Hogarth onwards, illustrated by slides and film strips.

These classes are open to anyone, and enrolments should be made at the first or second meeting.

If you require additional information about these classes please contact Maurice Mowbray at 49 Woodcroft Road (Tel. 2275).

New study of life in Wylam 100 years ago

Instead of having the usual programme of monthly meetings over the winter the Local History Society are proposing to do some work themselves by beginning some investigations into what the village was like 100 years ago. This will include studies of the people who lived here—their origins and occupations, the houses and buildings; the local industries; what the village school was like—and what entertainment was provided, and an examination of all aspects of village life.

Questions like this will be asked—and we hope—satisfactorily answered.

This proposed study of Wylam a century ago will be largely based on the information given in the local returns for the national census of 1871, which contains details about the residents,

Your Saturday coffee

Would you like to go out for a nice cup of coffee on Saturday mornings, meet your friends and catch up with local news?

Well, if so, you're the people the Methodists are catering for by providing coffee and biscuits (orange for the children) in the Chapel Schoolroom on most Saturdays between 10 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.

If you've walked (or even driven) in from the remoter parts of South Wylam, or Holeyn Hall—or even from the Dene Estate, you deserve to treat yourself to a cup of coffee occasionally!

A welcome sight again

Many people have commented on how much they have enjoyed seeing cricket being played on the Jubilee Field again this summer. So even if the local XI have not finished top of the league, their presence on the field has been a welcome sight and an additional "village attraction".

Village Diary

NOVEMBER

3rd to 10th—Community Week.

Thursday 15th—Housewives Discussion Group talk "Birds of Northumberland" at 19 Tynedale Close.

Saturday 17th—Cheese and Wine Party—Conservative Party.

Saturday 17th—Charity Coffee Morning and Christmas Card Sale. 10 a.m., Institute.

Tuesday 27th—Wylam History Group Meeting—8 p.m., Institute.

Thursday 29th—Housewives Discussion Group talk "Third World and Us" at 61 Dene Road.

DECEMBER

Wednesday 5th—Friends of Wylam Christmas Lunch.

Friday 7th—Shelter Ceilidh at Close House.

where they lived and what they did. The information from the census will be supplemented from other contemporary sources.

An introductory talk by Mr. George Patterson of the University of Durham Extra Mural Studies Department, who have initiated similar studies of several villages in County Durham, will be given at a meeting at 8.00 p.m. in the Institute on Tuesday 27th November.

Anyone interested in joining this Study Group is invited to come to this meeting. It is not restricted to present members of the Local History Society and anyone else willing to do some basic—but we hope interesting research work is welcome to join.

Remember the date—Tuesday, 27th November, 8.00 p.m. in the Institute.

A neglected verge

Anyone might be forgiven for thinking that the County Council were cultivating thistles on the verge between Wylam Hills Farm Cottages and Mr. Harper's bungalow on the Holeyn Hall road. When the footpath along this length of road was widened, and the boundary fence set back in the early 1970's the verge was never very satisfactorily levelled, and in recent years it has not been cut.

Following complaints about its neglected appearance the Parish Council have asked the County Surveyor if the level of this verge could be raised, the thistles (which are a nuisance to the farmer as well as gardeners) destroyed and the verge cut regularly in future.

Want a dramatic escape?

Wylam Amateur Dramatic Society are now looking for new members. If you have an interest in Acting, Play-reading, Scenery, Design or Construction, Wardrobe, Make-up, Stage Management, Lighting or just helping this active village Society, PLEASE DO COME ALONG.

A warm welcome is given to anyone from 16 - 160 (!) who wants to "escape" for one night a week. The Society meets on Mondays at 8 p.m. in the Institute.

For further details contact the Secretary—Lesley Smith, Wylam 3695.

New Notice Boards

Observant residents will have seen that new noticeboards have appeared at the entrance to the Jubilee Field.

The larger board, to the left of the entrance has been provided to display train and bus timetables and the Parish Notice Board is now repositioned to the right of the entrance. A reminder that the Parish Notice Boards are available for use by local organisations to publicise local events—but please remove your notices when the event is over.

Need for improved visibility at Elm Bank

Poor visibility at the bottom of Elm Bank Road, at the junction with Station Road has been the source of complaints for many years, and the problem has become worse with the increasing speed and volume of traffic through the village.

Now that more families with young children are living in South Wylam parents have drawn attention to the dangers to children of having to cross from Elm Bank to the footpath on the opposite side of Station Road.

The Parish Council therefore arranged a meeting earlier in the summer with

officials of the County Highways Department, who agreed that it was desirable both to improve visibility at the junction by setting back the hedges on each corner, and also to provide a footpath from Elm Bank Road to the Boathouse Inn forecourt.

We hope that Dr. Rowbotham and Mr. Ranken, the two landowners involved will agree to the idea of improving this junction but when a scheme can be undertaken will depend on whether it receives any priority in the County Council's road improvements programme.

Bring your problems

It has been suggested that some residents might find an occasional "Parish Councillors Surgery" helpful—when they could discuss any problems concerning the village, with a member of the Parish Council.

The idea was discussed at a recent meeting of the Parish Council, and although some doubts were expressed, it was agreed to give the scheme a trial on a "once-a-month" basis.

The first surgery will be held in the Falcon Centre on Saturday 17th November between 10.30 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.

Subsequent surgeries will be at the same time on Saturday 8th December, Saturday 12th January and Saturday 9th February.

One or two Parish Councillors will attend on each of these dates.

If there is anything concerned with local authority or public services on which you would like advice—these "surgeries" will be your opportunities to discuss them. Where problems concern the District or County Council, the Parish Council will bring them to the attention of the village's representatives on those Councils.



Hardly big enough for Community Week activities today! This was the old Institute used until the 1890's when the present building was erected. It stood on Charlie's Corner and was demolished in the 1920's.

Community Week activities for everyone

Community Week this year will be held from 3rd to 10th November. Last year we devoted much of the front page of the "Globe" to publicising the importance of Community Week, and the role of the Institute in village life, and we drew attention to the problems which the Institute faced, and the need to raise money during Community Week.

Unfortunately 1979 has proved a more difficult year for the Institute than we might have predicted twelve months ago. Grants from the local authorities towards the maintenance and improvement of buildings like the Institute have had to be cut back; the Institute caretakers left; the wall and railings around the garden were damaged, and the garden has become overgrown; the schemes to have the interior of the premises decorated under the Job Creation scheme fell through.

Hopefully there will be fewer difficulties for the Institute Committee over the next year—but the problem of rapidly escalating costs will certainly be with us for some time, which makes it increasingly important for all local residents to support Community Week activities, and be generous in donating to Institute funds.

The Institute is a village amenity used by many individuals and organisations

and available to all. It does, however, require considerable maintenance and funds raised during the week will help to defray the coming year's costs.

The Institute Committee have once again produced an interesting and varied programme for the week which has something of interest for the whole family.

The exhibition which is held on Tuesday and is a regular feature of Community Week will this year take the theme of "The Year of the Child". Any work done by children—either today's children or adults who have kept some of their own or relatives earlier work—qualifies. Please bring exhibits along on the afternoon of Monday, 5th November.

The first event is at 2 p.m. on Saturday, 3rd, and there is something on every day (except Friday, 9th) up to the final get together on Saturday night, 10th November. Check the programme which will be delivered through your door for full details of all events and make a note of the dates in your diary.

Incidentally, please note that Dave Anderson, 86 Dene Road (Tel. 2463) has taken over the role of Secretary to the Institute Committee. Mrs. Edna Beattie will however continue to deal with bookings (Tel. 2311).

Warning to all parents

In recent weeks several children have been caught climbing on, and sliding down the roof of the main Falcon Centre (the library and youth club) building—not just the cycle shed roofs.

Apart from the damage this does to the roof of the building itself—it is an extremely dangerous game which is likely to result in a child being seriously injured in a fall.

Will all parents therefore warn their children not to do this—for their own safety.

Clearly the County Council as owners of the building cannot be responsible for any injuries to children, incurred in this dangerous activity—so be warned.

If you want somewhere to slide—or to climb there is equipment on the Jubilee Field and in the Hedley Road playground.

Institute Garden

Just for the record, following local complaints, the Parish Council offered to take over the Institute Garden and maintain it as a public open space, but the Institute Committee have recently indicated that they prefer to retain the garden themselves at the present time, and they will be making arrangements to ensure that it is regularly maintained in the future.

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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