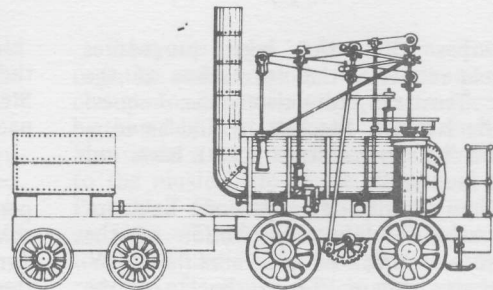


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



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Sir Charles Parsons Anniversary Marked

A few months ago it was realised that not only was 1981 the 200th anniversary of the birth of George Stephenson, but it is also the 50th anniversary of the death of another famous engineer who had close links with Wylam—Sir Charles Parsons, inventor of the first practical steam turbine generator.

Sir Charles who lived for many years at Holeyn Hall, died on 11th February 1931 and to mark this anniversary locally the Parish Council approached N.E.I. Parsons of Heaton—the successor to the original Company founded by Sir Charles more than 90 years ago.

N.E.I. kindly agreed to provide a replica of a plaque portraying Sir Charles—the original of which hangs in the main entrance to the Heaton Works, and it was agreed with the County Librarian that this could be displayed in the library/museum within the Falcon Centre.

This plaque was unveiled at a pleasant and informal ceremony on the evening of 11th February, attended by members of the Parsons family—including the Earl of Rosse and Mr. Norman Parsons, (respectively a great great nephew and great nephew of Sir Charles), together with local residents who knew Sir Charles when he lived at Holeyn Hall, or who have worked for the Parsons Companies.

During the evening Mr. Norman Parsons whose mother was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Cookson who lived at Oakwood House at the same time that Sir Charles lived at Holeyn Hall, gave a most interesting illustrated talk on the life and work of his great uncle.

As far as can be established, Sir Charles was negotiating in 1892 for the purchase of Holeyn Hall from the family of the previous owner, Lt. Col. M. C. Woods. In his biography of Sir Charles published in 1933, Rollo Appleyard states that the family probably went into residence at Holeyn Hall before the end of 1894, for on December 19th 1894, Parsons was arranging with the Wylam Bridge Company for pass tickets over the bridge for "the Hon. C. A. Parsons, Mrs. Parsons, Miss Rachel Par-

sons, Master Algernon Parsons and eleven servants". There can't be many houses in Wylam which employ eleven servants today!

Both children had been born at Elvaston Hall, Ryton (now demolished) where Parsons lived for some ten years before moving to Wylam.

The First World War brought tragedy to Parsons, as it did to many others, for his only son Algernon was killed in action in 1918. His name is among those listed on our village War Memorial. During the war, Holeyn Hall was used as a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers (see photograph).



Holeyn Hall in use as a Convalescent Hospital during the 1914-18 war.

Photograph lent by Misses Waller.

Coincidentally the previous owner of Elvaston Hall was Walter James whose father, Edward James, had built Holeyn Hall in 1851/2.

Parsons made a number of additions to Holeyn Hall, including the construction of a workshop in the grounds, where he undertook a variety of experiments. In April 1901 plans were approved for the three cottages at Holeyn Hall cross-roads, built for staff working at the Hall. Three years later plans were passed for a laundry to be erected on the west wide of the road leading down to Wylam (now converted into the attractive house owned by Mr. and Mrs. Barrett).

Although continuing to own the Hall until his death, Sir Charles spent much of his time on another estate he owned at Ray, near Kirkwhelpington. Both he and Lady Parsons are buried in the parish churchyard at Kirkwhelpington.

Mr. J. M. S. Coates of Elmfield has kindly donated a reproduction of a portrait of Sir Charles Parsons, which is now displayed in the library/museum, in association with the plaque.

For anyone interested in reading about the life of Parsons, and his work, there is a copy of Appleyard's biography in the village library.

Still Waiting

Hopes that the legal procedures associated with the formation of the new Trust to administer the bequest of the late Mr. Blackett, would be completed by the end of 1980 have not been realised.

The Charity Commission has not yet approved the constitution of the Trust, which will be known as the C.J.W. Blackett Village Trust. Each of the four Parish Councils has appointed a trustee—Mr. Brooks from Wylam, Dr. Jarvis from Horsley, Mr. Morrell from Ovington and Mr. Stobbs from Ovingham.

All the Trustees are anxious to make progress in putting the money to good use to benefit the aged-poor of the four parishes as soon as the approval of the Charity Commission is received. In the meantime the Trustees would welcome ideas from local residents on how they think the money could best be used.



Sir Charles A. Parsons – 1854-1931
From a painting by Sir William Orphen

Good Friends of Wylam

The Friends of Wylam have recently registered as a charity, and at their first Annual General Meeting, John Stephenson was elected Chairman, Brian Barker, Treasurer, and Mrs. Judith Furness, Secretary in place of Mrs. Peggy Pattinson who has relinquished the job after ten years of generous service.

As well as organising outings and an excellent Christmas Party each year for retired residents, the Friends also organise Meals on Wheels locally. Nine hundred and forty meals were distributed last year, slightly fewer than in previous years.

Almost £600 was raised through the Jumble Sale last year, and this is the main source of income for the Friends.

Members of the Friends of Wylam Committee and their helpers contribute much time and effort—and not a little money—to ensure that the events and activities they organise are enjoyed by those who participate and the whole village owes them a debt of gratitude.

Stephenson Celebrations—Good

It is now less than three months to the actual 200th anniversary of George Stephenson's birth on 9th June, and the pace of activity is beginning to quicken.

Events locally are being spread over a period of several months, with the main celebrations being concentrated in early June, but with others planned later in the summer, and during the early autumn.

The first local event planned for the bicentenary—the Folk Concert organised by Alan Hurford and John and Sandra Bowden, on 5th March was a sell-out.

Various artists with local connections took part, including champion Northumbrian pipers Anthony and Carole Robb; Denis and Jennifer Ogle, Bridget Wilson and Madeleine Smith on pipes and whistles. Phil Ransen from Hagg Bank brought along the Sandgate Band. Our thanks to all who helped to make the concert a success, and especially to Alan and John who put in a lot of work organising it and selling tickets.

The highlights of the celebrations will take place on the weekend of 6 and 7 June with the Stephenson Carnival, and on 9 June with special events at Stephenson's Cottage and the opening of the museum in the Falcon Centre.

CARNIVAL

Members of the Wylam and District Round Table are in the midst of planning overall arrangements for the Carnival. A wide range of special attractions is being booked, many of which will have a "railway" flavour.

Efforts are being made to bring all the surviving locomotives associated with George Stephenson, to the village for this very special anniversary. These locomotives, which include the Killingworth locomotive "Billy", the Hetton Colliery engine and Locomotion No. 1, will be coming from several different museums and some have never appeared together before. The three replicas of the locomotives which competed in the famous Rainhill Trials, "The Rocket", "Novelty" and "Sans Pareil", have also been promised for the display.

There is still some uncertainty as to whether it will be possible to use Mr. Dawson's field (behind Stephenson's Cottage) for staging the Carnival, but if this cannot be achieved, it will take place either in the Jubilee Field or on another field in the village.

The Round Table will shortly be approaching local organisations, inviting them to help with arrangements, and to have their own stalls and sideshows at the Carnival.

Numerous volunteers will be needed to run the Carnival, and anyone willing to assist, is requested to contact local members of the Round Table.

MUSEUM

It is intended to have the museum in the Falcon Centre opened on the weekend of 6 and 7 June, but with an official opening two days later on the actual bicentenary.

It is hoped to have the museum opened for two hours on Saturday and Sunday afternoons during the summer and volunteers will be needed who would be willing to supervise in the museum, on perhaps one or two of these afternoons on a rota basis. Any offers please?

Under the supervision of Birtley Aris, the head of the Prudhoe High School Art Department, pupils are making good progress in producing a series of mural panels, depicting scenes from Wylam's railway history. These will be fixed to the walls in the entrance hall of the library and museum.

A group of youngsters from Prudhoe are also decorating those parts of the Falcon Centre used by the Youth Club and Playgroup. This work, together with improvements to be carried out in the entrance to the Falcon Centre, should ensure that the building is in a presentable condition for the summer.

The idea of creating a metal sculpture in the design of a locomotive for display on the outside wall of the museum is being examined with the help of the County Technical College at Ashington.

STEPHENSON'S COTTAGE

The National Trust has now got planning permission to replace the present collection of outbuildings at the rear of the Cottage, with a single new building which will incorporate a garage and store. It is intended to complete the work by the beginning of June.

The cottage will be regularly open to visitors on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons during the summer.

One feature which has already received a facelift for the bicentenary is the oak tree behind the cottage. Planted in 1881 to mark the Stephenson Centenary, the tree has not always received the attention it deserved during the last 100 years, which has resulted in decay and rot on several main branches. The Parish Council has employed an experienced tree surgeon to remove the dead, dying or damaged branches. Some further work is necessary to seal a wound on one of the main limbs. Hopefully when this is done, the life of the tree will be prolonged.

PLAYS, FILMS & TALKS

The Northumberland Theatre Company is planning to produce a play on the life and work of George Stephenson, suitable for schools, and this will be touring in October and November. The Company has been invited to put on a special public performance in the village during this period.

Progress—But Help Needed

Arrangements are also being made for a series of informal, illustrated talks on railways and railway history, to be held in the Institute during late September and October—probably on Wednesday evenings. Details will be announced later.

The possibility of showing a selection of early railway films locally is also being investigated.

FLORAL DISPLAYS AND STREET DECORATIONS

The District Council have kindly agreed to provide a specially designed carpet bed of flowers, to commemorate the bicentenary, and Mrs. Burns has very generously agreed to allow this to be set out in part of the front garden of Cherry Tree House, where it will be in a suitably prominent, yet protected position.

Decorative banners and bunting are being borrowed from the District Council, to decorate parts of the village. We hope also that the public houses and local shops, as well as householders will make a 'special' effort to make their premises attractive during the period at the beginning of June when the village will be "on show".

STEAM RAIL TRIPS

The Parish Council and the Round Table are discussing with British Rail and private steam locomotive owners the possibilities of organising a steam-hauled railway excursion on the weekend of the 6th or 7th June to bring visitors to the Carnival. The idea of having a steam locomotive running at the time of the bicentenary would be most appropriate. British Rail officials in the region are keen to ensure that BR assists in celebrating the 200th birthday of the "Father of Railways" and they are examining how they can help with practical arrangements for steam-hauled trains and in other ways. There are a lot of problems to overcome in operating such trips—but we hope that with enthusiasm, goodwill and support, these difficulties can be overcome.

STEPHENSON DESCENDANTS

Efforts at tracing present-day descendants of George Stephenson's relatives have not been entirely successful, but we have located a direct descendant of Stephenson's mother (Mabel Carr). He now lives in East Germany and hopes to be able to attend the celebrations in June. We also hope that other descendants will visit the village during the year.

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE SOUVENIRS

Demand for the two metal plaques/pictures depicting the popular Victorian engraving of Stephenson's Cottage which the Parish Council produced before Christmas, has been exceptional. Seventy-

five of the larger pictures were sold within a week. Further supplies will be available soon from Mrs. Gillis at 27 Dene Road.

Other specially designed local souvenirs have also been commissioned, including a special leather bookmark, key fobs, a coloured postcard, and coasters. The possibilities of obtaining commemorative beakers, T-shirts and tea towels are being investigated.

An attractively designed commemorative philatelic cover is being produced which will bear the "Rocket" railway stamps, first issued last year. Arrangements are being made with the Post Office for these covers to be franked locally with a specially designed hand-stamp, commissioned by the Parish Council.

Details of the arrangements for ordering these covers, which are likely to become collector's items, will be announced in due course.

Anyone who has suggestions as to any other souvenirs which it might be worthwhile producing—please contact the Parish Clerk.

TAPESTRIES

A small firm, "Derwentside Tapestries" from Burnopfield has offered to produce a limited quantity of needle-point tapestry-making kits of Stephenson's Cottage. The size of the finished tapestry would be approx. 13 inches by 9 inches, and the selling price approx. £8.

However unless between 15 and 20 people are willing to place advance orders for this design the firm cannot justify producing this local tapestry.

Tapestry making is becoming increasingly popular, and anyone who is interested in ordering one should contact Maureen Gillis, the Clerk to the Parish Council, in the first instance so that we can assess the local demand.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Among special events being planned by local organisations is a tournament which Wylam Tennis Club is arranging with other tennis clubs in the Tyne Valley, for a new Stephenson Trophy. Congratulations to the Tennis Club on their initiative.

Discussions are being held with local schools to plan special projects and competitions in which pupils might take part.

Any ideas, suggestions, queries or offers of help in connection with the Bicentenary should be sent to Mrs. M. Gillis, the Parish Clerk, at 27 Dene Road. (Tel. 2503).

Didn't They Do Well

Congratulations to the local Boys' Brigade team who reached the semi-finals of the National Top of the Form Competition held at Wishaw last month.

Village Organists

Everyone who knew Vera Todd, organist and choir-mistress at the parish church for nineteen years, was saddened by her death at the end of December. She made a very significant contribution to the musical life of the village and the Parochial Church Council has set up a Vera Todd Memorial Scholarship to enable choir boys and girls to attend courses of training which are organised by the Royal School of Church Music in various centres in the North of England.

Any who wish to be associated with the setting up of the fund for this scholarship should send their contribution to the P.C.C. Treasurer, Austin Rubery, The Coach House, Wylam Hall.

The new organist and choir master at St. Oswin's is Mr. Paul Ritchie who lives at Stamfordham.

Lawrence Firth, who has been organist at the Methodist Church since he and his wife moved into the village after his retirement in 1966, recently celebrated 70 years as an organist. On behalf of church members, Revd. Glynn Lister presented Mr. Firth with a record of organ music, to mark this special anniversary.

Councillor Retiring

The next issue of the Globe will not appear until after the County Council elections, which are to be held on Thursday 7th May. However it is predicted that all three main political parties will be contesting the local seat.

Our present County Councillor, Christopher d'Ambrumenil, has indicated that he intends to retire due to pressure of work and other commitments, and will not be seeking re-election. He was first elected as the local County Councillor in 1971, and has been re-elected at each subsequent election. He has been a member of many of the main Committees of the County Council, and has been Chairman of the General Purposes Committee for several years.

He has always been willing to take action on issues brought to his attention by the Parish Council, and we thank him for the public work he has carried out on behalf of the village.

More Play Equipment

Several items of new play equipment have been purchased for the Jubilee Field including a slide for small children, and some new swings.

Recruits for Playgroup?

If you would like your child to attend Playgroup during the year September 1981/July 1982 would you please contact Julia Koerner, 14 Bluebell Close, (Tel. 3650) as this would help Playgroup to plan ahead.

Children are eligible to start at the beginning of the term in which they have their third birthday.

Name Recommended for the New Bungalows

Our request in the last issue for ideas on a suitable name for the group of new OAP bungalows being built on the Dene produced various suggestions. These included such names as Dene Cottages, Ironworks Row, Thompson Cottages (Benjamin Thompson established the Ironworks), Falcon Crescent, or named after a tree or flowers. One unusual suggestion from Michael Yelder was to call the group of nine bungalows "The Rocket" and using the nine letters, name each of the bungalows after a tree, e.g. Tulip, Holly, Elm, Rowan, etc. The idea of commemorating George Stephenson was also suggested but it was felt that with Stephenson's Cottage and Stephenson Terrace, using the name Stephenson again could cause confusion.

The most popular idea, and the one which is being recommended to Tynedale

District Council, is to name the bungalows after Dr. Swindale in recognition of his work and the major contribution he has made to village life in Wylam during more than half-a-century.

We are sure that local residents will approve of this choice of name.

Oldest Resident Ever?

Mrs. Mary J. McBeath, probably the oldest resident ever to live in the village died on 22nd January 1981, at the age of 104. She was for some years the housekeeper to the late Mr. C. J. W. Blackett. When he died, and Brewery House became part of the Blackett Court development, she moved into one of the new flats.



The cottages at Holeyn Hall crossroads, built by Sir Charles Parsons in 1901/02 for some of the staff employed at the Hall.

Round Table says Thanks for Your Help

Wylam and District Round Table are pleased to announce the winners of their "Nativity" Painting Competition, which was held in conjunction with local primary schools immediately before Christmas.

The winners in the various age groups who all received prizes of Gift Vouchers were as follows—

Age 9—Hayley Dodd, Horsley Road, Ovingham.

Age 8—Ruth Jones, Tynedale Close, Wylam.

Age 7—Kathryn Good, Dene Garth, Ovingham.

Age 6—Nichola Whalley, Hackworth Gardens, Wylam.

Age 5—Andrew Jordan, Castle View, Ovingham.

Round Table would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those in local villages who have given support, firstly in the supply of clothing for the

Italian Earthquake Appeal, and secondly in the street collections associated with our "Santa Claus" float.

Over 100 tons of clothing were sent to Italy from the Northumberland area of Round Table, and, despite television and press reports to the contrary, our representatives in Italy have informed us that all clothing received has been put to good use and is greatly appreciated.

Our Santa Claus float was, as always, thoroughly enjoyed by local children, and thanks to the generosity of one and all, over £300 was raised in our collections.

The majority of this money was spent on Christmas food parcels which were distributed in the area,

Those who received these parcels have asked us to pass on their thanks to those whose donations made this distribution possible.

Bythorne Farm Appeal

The first public inquiry into a planning decision ever held in Wylam took place on 3rd February.

The appeal was by Gross Park Property Ltd. of Washington against the refusal by the County Council to permit the erection of 54 detached houses on land at Bythorne Farm, extending from the farm buildings to Stephenson's Cottage.

There was substantial public interest in the inquiry, and more than 60 people packed the Institute Hall.

The proposal involved building on almost 300 acres of land within the Green Belt, with a road constructed along the walkway from Stephenson's Cottage, through the car park and emerging near the War Memorial.

Opposition to the application came from the County Council, Tynedale District Council, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Parish Council and a large number of local residents.

After hearing the case for the appellant, and the opposition from the County Council and other authorities, the Inspector visited the site. He will make a report to the Secretary of State for the Environment whose decision on the appeal will be announced later in the year.

Book the Date Now

This year's Annual Parish Meeting—the public meeting at which the Parish Council reports on its activities for the past year and plans for the future, will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 29th April in the Institute. This is another opportunity for you to ask questions and make suggestions as to what might be done to improve the village.

Book the date now and remember the hall is usually packed—so come early to be sure of a seat on the front row.

An up to date report on progress with arrangements for the Stephenson celebrations will be given at this meeting.

Four Houses Allowed

The Secretary of State for the Environment has agreed to permit four houses to be built on what was Dr. Rowbotham's field at the corner of Elm Bank Road and Station Road. This decision accords with the view taken by the Parish Council that this development will be acceptable provided that a comprehensive scheme of treeplanting is carried out and that the houses are attractively designed and carefully positioned within the site.

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