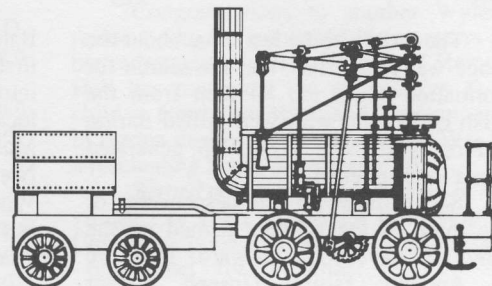


# THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Autumn 2001

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## Abseilers publicise problems with bell-tower

Not everyone takes the Parish Church Magazine or sees the Hexham Courant so may not have seen this photograph and article about Alison Malcolm and Jane Schrier's night on St. Oswin's tower and the morning after!

The story told by Alison Malcolm appeared in the Parish Magazine in August. The official reason for the event - not mentioned in Alison's article - is explained at the end.

"Not the normal girlie night out! No music, no dancing and only one bottle of wine (honest). When the idea first came to mind, after the Wylam Women's Discussion Group visit to the bell tower last summer, it never occurred to me it would ever happen. When we realised this spring how much was going to be required to put the bells right, the idea then became a reality. Would the vicar let us sleep on the tower? That was the first question after Jane eagerly agreed to accompany me in the venture. The abseil idea actually came from the vicar. We had thought of it, but didn't think he'd go for it. It was mentioned casually and within 24hrs I had Les Hewitt agreeing to set it up.

At 8.30 p.m. on the 3rd August, with a team of volunteers, we relayed the required kit up the various ladders, through hatches and onto the roof. Thank you Bob, Alan and Michael. I think they thought we were there for a week. Groundsheets, sleeping bags, bivvy bags and two small pillows - not to mention the books, torches, picnic and aforesaid bottle of wine. Well, we had to fill in the time somehow. We could hardly go for a walk.

The weather was kind to us. The forecast said it would be a cold night, but we were prepared. Our main concern was thunder and lightning. Sleeping next to the lightning conductor was a little alarming. We took photos as the sun set, said goodbye to the visitors. It was so peaceful, particularly for Jane who found a night without the noise of children utter luxury. How many people could feel ecstatic at sleeping the night 70 feet up on a lead roof measuring approximately 12 feet square? But Jane was. As the evening became cooler, we climbed into our sleeping bags. Out came the torches, chocolate, the crossword and wine. Confession time now, yes, we did have mobile phones.

The excuse was the phone call coming in the morning from Radio Newcastle, but I did take the opportunity to text message my children in Aberdeen and Leamington Spa to say goodnight from the bell tower. Jane

phoned her children to say goodnight and then gleefully settled back to continue with the crossword. Sleep came to Jane around midnight. I was disturbed by two things. I kept hearing knocking noises just as I was about to nod off. I looked over the top to check no one was knocking the door below but it was too dark to see anything. Eventually the penny dropped - the knocking noise was the clock mechanism

and we were spurred into action as "God Save the Queen" was played on the radio at 7.00 a.m. for the Queen Mother's birthday. Yes, we did stand to attention. Well, as I said before there isn't much to do on top of a bell tower.

Les and Bob arrived about 8.15 a.m. and various spectators appeared around 8.50 a.m. As promised Anne Leauchers, from Radio Newcastle, telephoned at 8.50 a.m.



*Alison Malcolm and Jane Schrier smiling nervously(?) for "Courant" photographer Dave Hewitson on the top of St. Oswin's Church tower, before descending during their fund raising escapade. Perhaps they can now train as steeplejacks (or Jills?) for when the stonework on the tower needs repointing?*

Photo courtesy of Hexham Courant

going off every 15 minutes. We had turned the chimes off, but had forgotten that the mechanism still runs. The other disturbance was Jane's bivvy bag. It was like sleeping next to a large packet of potato crisps. Every time she moved, the bag rustled.

Dawn came at 5.00 a.m. I was awakened by a large 20-30 flock of rooks flying over the tower approximately three foot above our heads. Hitchcock's "The Birds" sprang to mind. They actually took the light away for a few seconds. My exclamation wakened Jane but she had missed most of the spectacle. Various birds came to visit but left hastily. We believe we had pinched their roosting place. The sunrise was beautiful. The day warmed up

Two very nervous abseilers took turns over a period of about eight minutes to talk to Anne. I did the chatty bit, while Jane gave the technical descriptions on how to ring bells. Well, there wasn't much point in asking me. One day perhaps.

Approximately 9.08 a.m. Les attached me to the abseiling rope and a safety rope and over I went. Dave Hewitson, the Courant photographer nervously crept to the edge of the tower to take the photo, then off I went. It was a wonderful experience. It was so good I had to go back and do it again. Well it was such a lot of effort to set up and only use twice! Jane's children appeared to be very pleased to see their mum safely back on earth.

...continued overleaf

## Research continuing into World War I heroes

The article in the last issue about the village war memorials, and the search for information about the 50 men from the Parish of Wylam who were killed during the First World War 1914-1918, generated quite a lot of interest.

So far, however, the descendants of only three of the soldiers named on the memorials have come forward. They are the Appleby family (Joseph Forster Appleby and Oswin G. Appleby), Mrs. Catherine Maple (whose uncle was William Wrightson) and Mrs. Dorothy Fairless (William Forster).

Information on the soldiers named on the memorials is gradually being collected from such sources as the Hexham Courant and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, but few, if any, details have yet been discovered about many of them.

Their deaths were spread throughout the four years of the war, but one particularly black day was 15th September, 1916, during the third phase of the terrible

Battle of the Somme, which was also the first day when British tanks were brought into action. On that day three of the fifty local men were killed. William Francis McKenna, a private in the 1/7 Northumberland Fusiliers, Alexander White, a private in the 1/4 Northumberland Fusiliers and John William Young, another private in the 1/4 Northumberland Fusiliers.

Two of these three soldiers were in the 1/4 Territorial Battalion which was largely recruited in Hexham and the Tyne Valley. It is possible that all three were killed in the same battle, but we do not yet have any background details about them, their families, or where they lived in the village.

If anyone has any more information about any of the 50 soldiers named on the memorials in the village, please contact Philip Brooks (853520) or Peter Clarke (852297). A full list of the names is displayed on the notice board in the library.



Another view of Alison Malcolm abseiling down the front of the church tower on 4th August. We hope she made good use of her journey and polished the weathervane, dusted the gargoyles and cleaned the face of the church clock on her way down!

Photo by Kevin Webster

## Abseilers continued . .

Would we do it again? Yes. What would we change? I'd take a woolly hat to keep the heat in. The rest of the preparations had been spot on."

The official reason for Alison and Jane's challenge was to raise money to help repair the church tower and strengthen the bell-supports.

Rev. David Cant explained that it is known that the church tower will need to be strengthened if bell-ringing is going to continue - but there have been differing views on how much work is necessary and what it may cost. An expert has therefore been commissioned to investigate the problem and advise on possible solutions and the likely cost.

When more information is available an appeal may be launched and local residents invited to make donations; so that will be a chance to find some other unusual ways of fund raising! Suggestions to David Cant please.

## Enjoy some drama

The Amateur Dramatic Society are presenting "The Noble Spaniard" by Somerset Maugham on Thursday, 22nd, Friday, 23rd and Saturday, 24th November. This is a hilarious farce set in Victorian Boulogne - cape and crinoline, wit and whiskers. A lively and entertaining production is promised which should be well worth seeing. Tickets are available from Wylam Tea Shop.

## Christmas Concert

Do come and join the Ovington and Tynedale Brass Band for a grand Christmas Concert on Friday, 14th December at 7.30 p.m. in the Institute. As well as listening to the band and singing carols, you can hear words of wit and wisdom and contributions from JEMMS Performance Company. Ticket price £4, concessions £3 includes a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie. Tickets from the Institute and the Tea Shop.

Come and get your Christmas off to a rousing start!

## Charity Card Sale

No need to rush out to buy all your Christmas Cards and gifts in Newcastle or at the Metro Centre. You can save time and petrol and support various charities by purchasing some of your cards and gifts at the Charity Christmas Card Craft and Gift Sale being held in the Institute on the morning of Saturday, 3rd November, 10.00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. There is always an excellent selection from a wide variety of national charities and local groups - something to suit all tastes and pockets.

## Successful cricketers

Wylam Cricket Club's 1st and 2nd XIs achieved an unprecedented double in the 2001 season by respectively becoming First and Second Division League Champions of the Dickinson Dees West Tyne Cricket League. The 1st XI were also beaten finalists in the First Division Knockout Cup. Captains Pete Smith (1st XI) and Graham Robinson (2nd XI) led teams picked from what was probably the strongest squad of players the club had had for many years. In fact, the 2nd XI were unbeaten in their League matches. Such success is good not only for the Club, but also for the village and the Club's sponsors, particularly the Fox & Hounds, the Wine Lodge, Comma Print, Wylam Garage and the Spar. We hope this is the start of a long run for the future.

## Future local events

There are a wide variety of events taking place in the village during November, December and January. Listed below are a selection - these are being held in the Institute, unless otherwise stated. We hope that local residents will support these activities.

### November

- 3rd Charity Card Sale - 10.00 a.m.
- 6th Friends of Wylam Coffee Morning - in aid of Institute Funds.
- 11th Remembrance Day Service and Parade to War Memorial - St. Oswin's Church, 10.00 a.m.
- 22nd Drama Production
- 24th "The Noble Spaniard"

### December

- 1st Institute Dance
- 7th Wylam First School P.T.A. - Christmas Fair, 6.00 p.m. at School
- 8th Christingle Service - St. Oswin's Church, 3.00 p.m. Make Christingles in Church Hall at 2.30 p.m. Tea in Institute following Service
- 12th Friends of Wylam - Christmas Lunch
- 14th Special Christmas Concert - in aid of Institute Funds
- 16th Village Carol Service, 6.30 p.m., Methodist Church
- 24th Blessing of the Crib, 6.00 p.m., St. Oswin's Church

### January

- 19th Playing Field Association Jumble Sale
- 26th Burns Night Ceilidh



## Delight at School fundraising success

Wylam First School's Rhyme, Rhythm and ROM Appeal continues to progress by leaps and bounds. The appeal, to help create a library, music and ICT space for the school, received a tremendous boost in early October with the news from Northumberland County Council that the school's application for matched funding from the Seed Challenge scheme had been successful. This means that the appeal target is only half the real cost of the project.

With the start of the autumn term, fundraising began again in earnest, with more innovative ideas from the PTA. In October a favours auction raised over £2,000. The exciting range of favours, kindly donated by individuals and businesses, included everything from works of art to a trip on a 900cc motorbike. Auctioneer Roddy Stobo added his own inimitable humour to the proceedings which made for a hilarious evening where no one left empty handed! And after the

success of last year's Christmas Carols CD, this year the children have been designing a unique range of Christmas cards for sale.

The appeal still needs £9,000 to reach its target. Appeal co-ordinator, Julian Bates, commented: "We are delighted to be in the home straight. It is too early to be complacent, but we are confident that work on the project will start next year. The Appeal Committee is conscious that parents and other village residents have already made a tremendous contribution and several major fund raising activities will now be focused outside the village".

However, if anyone who has not yet supported the appeal would like to do so, there is still time to make a donation. And if you think the business or organisation you work for might include the appeal in their charitable giving, the Appeal Committee would be delighted to hear from you. In either case please contact the Appeal Co-ordinator, Wylam First School, Bell Road, Wylam NE41 8HE.

## Looking back . . .

Congratulations to another Wylam resident who has published his memoirs in his retirement. Dr. Bill Brough of Holeyn Hall has recounted his experiences as a child in Northumberland and Durham, and in Burma during the Second World War in a fascinating book "To Reason Why".

Signed copies will be available in the village - or from the Forum Bookshop in Corbridge, price £10. Another idea for dad - or grandad - for Christmas?

## New Information Card

A new edition (the 14th) - and pale blue - of the Village Information Card is being delivered to all houses in Wylam with this newsletter. It replaces the previous edition (on green card) which should be destroyed. The Information Card is revised every two years and has always been much appreciated by residents - we hope that this new edition will be as useful as its predecessors!

We suggest that you keep it with the yellow A-Z Card which gives details of village shops and businesses.

## Parish Council Office

To enable residents who have queries about local services to call at an office in the centre of the village, the Parish Council have made arrangements (with the Institute Committee) for the Clerk to the Parish Council, Karen Webster, to be available in the Institute, Church Road, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between 12.30 p.m. and 3.00 p.m. She can be reached on 852498 during these hours. At other times she can be contacted on 853619.

This arrangement will commence on Monday, 5th November, and be for a trial period of three months initially, to see how well it works.

## New lamp on dark path

In response to requests from residents over several years, the Parish Council has agreed to pay for an extra street lamp to be provided in the north-east corner of Engine Dene, which will help light the dark section of the footpath which runs from Algernon Terrace to Bluebell Close and the Dene Estate.

## Items in brief . . .

The 'missing' village sign from the top of Holeyn Hall Road has not been stolen, but deliberately removed for grit-blasting and re-enamelling.

It is reassuring that so many residents have missed seeing it - and have enquired about its health and safety! It should be back early in the New Year.

The Playing Field Pavilion was broken into and trashed on the night of 10th October.

If anyone has any information on who might have been involved please contact Prudhoe Police (Tel 832204) or use the Crimestoppers number (Tel 0800 555 111) anonymously and free of charge.

The Friends of Wylam Committee would like to thank everyone who supported their Autumn Bazaar - a total of more than £500 was raised which will be used to help fund future events.



With the departure of the dairy herd from Wylam Hills, this has been the first year that the fields behind Bluebell Close and Dene Road have been used for cereal crops. Here the barley has been harvested and the last of the straw is being baled.

## Family history help

Researching family history and discovering your ancestors is becoming increasingly popular, and involves not only looking through Parish Registers of births, marriages and burials, but also examining gravestones and memorials. The burial grounds for former Wylam residents are at Ovingham, since Wylam was part of the Parish of Ovingham until 1902, when it became a separate parish.

The old graveyard next to the Parish Church at Ovingham was still in use until 1879 when a new cemetery east of the village was opened, at a cost of £1500, with two mortuary chapels and a cottage for the superintendent.

Fortunately the inscriptions on the gravestones in the old churchyard at Ovingham were recorded as long ago as 1902; many of these stones have since suffered from erosion and are now illegible. However no one has yet tackled the task of recording the inscriptions on the gravestones in the "new" and present cemetery of 1879. Most of these stones are in reasonable condition, and several members of the Local History Society are hoping to record these as a useful project to help present and future family historians in their research.

## Christmas lunch for 60+'s

A Community Coffee morning will be held in the Institute on Tuesday, 6th November. The annual Christmas lunch will take place on Wednesday, 14th December in the Institute, and all Wylam residents who are 60 or over are cordially invited. It would be nice to see some more of the "newly-qualified" 60 year olds this year, as well as the more senior members!

Anyone who would like to come to the Christmas lunch please contact Ursula Barker (Tel 852621).

## Free poop-scoop bags

The importance of people taking poop scoop bags with them whenever they exercise dogs was well publicised recently during National Poop Scoop week, when free bags were made available at several local shops, at the library and the Institute.

In the interests of public health and safety, the Parish Council has purchased an additional supply of these poop-scoop bags which are available to dog-owners free of charge. It is every owner's duty to clear up after their dog. There are no excuses - fouling is wholly unacceptable.

# Cubs & Scouts could close without more support from adults

An urgent message from Ken John, Chairman of the village Cubs and Scouts.

After a difficult period some six years ago when the group ceased to operate, the revival of the cubs and scouts in the village has come about through the commitment of the current leadership and helpers. The role of the group in the development of young people involved, and in the life of the village, cannot be over-valued. The programme of activities is exciting and varied, and we won a millennium award recently for the purchase of new equipment.

We are, however, again facing serious problems. Firstly, the present leader of the cubs, Derek Smith (Akela in scouting language), will be standing down in six months time because of pressure of work.

He will continue to help as much as he can. Derek has led the cubs with total commitment and affection for a number of years and deserves our heartfelt thanks.

We need someone to come forward who is prepared to take out a warrant (that is to say, to undertake and complete the short but on-going training required) to assume the leadership. Indeed, we could do with a number of volunteers to take out warrants to spread the load. To illustrate the problem, Ovingham Cubs, with lower membership, has no less than six warranted leaders! We have only three!

In a sense, we are victims of our own success! We have 24 cubs, which is the maximum we can have with the present leadership situation, and a waiting list ex-

tending over a number of years. With more leaders, we could increase the numbers.

There is also a desperate need for more parents and others to come forward simply to help and support the leaders at the weekly meetings of both the cubs and the scouts. Our ambition is to be able to compile a rota of helpers (it would, however, be remiss of me not to thank those parents who do help for their invaluable commitment).

**The message is a stark one - SUPPORT THE GROUP OR LOSE IT!**

Please consider if you can help. If anyone is interested, do not hesitate to contact the leaders or myself. The telephone numbers are shown below. Even the most modest but regular help would be appreciated. Derek Smith 852578, Rob Patterson 853153, Ken John 853355.



*The variety of attractive hanging baskets and floral displays on buildings and in gardens around the village this year have been appreciated by many residents and visitors. Thanks to all who have provided and maintained them.*

## Country Park wagonway to be part of cycle route

Many residents will have seen in the press that Sustrans, a charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to cycle and walk more, has recently been successful in bidding for lottery funds to develop a Heritage Cycle Route, extending for almost 300 miles around Northumberland. The route between Tynemouth and Haltwhistle along the Tyne Valley will run through Wylam, along the old wagonway/railway track, which the County Council have designated a bridleway for horse-riders, cyclists and walkers.

Sustrans Community Development Officer met members of the Parish Council and walked the length of the track through the village from Stephenson's Cottage to Hagg Bank on a busy Sunday afternoon during the summer. The points of potential congestion and conflict between different users were pointed out, as were locations where widening or access controls were likely to be necessary, or more obvious warning signs required.

The Parish Council's main concern is the safety of all users of the wagonway and to minimise the risk of conflicts between different users and to ensure that the

increased use of the wagonway and country park does not cause serious problems within the village.

Sustrans will be working with the County Council Countryside Service to prepare a detailed scheme for the work considered necessary. The County Council is ultimately responsible for what is done - or not done - in the Country Park, but the Parish Council has asked that no action is taken to further publicise and increase the use of the route by cyclists and other users, until various safety and improvement measures between Hagg Bank and Stephenson's Cottage have been put in place. Overall levels of use may need to be controlled to avoid overcrowding. Regular monitoring of usage should allow for early action to avoid the risk of accidents and conflict.

## A tree in memory

Planting trees is a nice way to commemorate a friend, and friends of Iris Millward, who died in May, 2000 and was an active member of many local groups and an enthusiastic secretary of the Gardening Society, will be planting a tree in her memory in the centre of the village.

## Wylam to Wellington NZ

Many residents will be wishing a fond and sad farewell to David Morrison shortly, when he leaves Wylam to live with his daughter and son-in-law in Wellington, New Zealand. Always popular, his talents as an artist have been widely appreciated and his paintings have enhanced many exhibitions in the village. In a very generous farewell gesture he donated some £800 of the proceeds from an exhibition and sale of his paintings at the Methodist Church Centre last month to the Rehoboth Trust, a charity in Kwa Zulu Natal, where Glen and David Smith of Holeyn Cottage are currently working to help provide foster homes for abandoned children of HIV mothers. With entry charges and various donations, the total sent to the charity was £1100.

We thank David for his contribution to village life in Wylam and wish him the best of luck in New Zealand.

We hope that some of his artistic talents have passed to the pupils he has trained during his long stay in Wylam.

## Will you remember?

Remembrance Day this year is Sunday, 11th November. A special Service will be held in St. Oswin's Church at 10.00 a.m. followed by a commemoration at the War Memorial at 10.50 a.m. Poppy wreaths will be laid in memory of those former residents of Wylam who gave their lives in the service of their country. Everyone is invited to join one or both of these services. A cup of tea will be provided at the Methodist Church Centre afterwards.

Poppies will be sold and collections made on behalf of the Royal British Legion throughout the village in the weeks before Remembrance Day, and everyone is asked to support this worthy charity.

*Correspondence relating to this Newsletter should be addressed to  
Mrs. K. Webster, The Clerk to the Parish Council,  
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