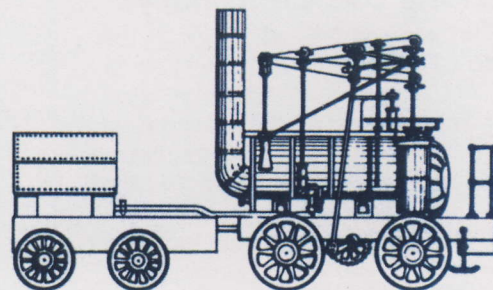


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Spring 2014

No. 112

Ovingham Bridge Closure

We have previously advised readers that the Ovingham Bridge is to be closed to allow major refurbishment. The expected closure date and duration has recently been amended and the bridge is now expected to be closed for up to 12 months from a date in May.

Although we assume this will lead to a quieter time along the Wylam to Ovingham road, it is predictable that more cross-river traffic will be using the Wylam bridge and travelling through the centre of the village.

Residents of Wylam Wood Road have expressed concern that this will also lead to greater use of that road, although the County Council has assured the Parish Council that this will definitely not be part of any diversionary route.

There appears to be no alternative and, although the Parish Council will closely monitor the effect, it seems we will have to live with this inconvenience, as other local communities did when Wylam Bridge was closed in 2007, albeit for a much shorter period.



Village Litter Pick Please help if you can

As has been our practice for many years, the Parish Council is organising another opportunity for local folk to assist with a village litter-pick and clean-up. This year the day to look forward to is Saturday 15 March.

Come along to the Country Park Car Park (behind the War Memorial) at 10.00am or soon after, either as an individual or group. Basic equipment for the task will be provided but old clothes and strong footwear or "wellies" are recommended.

Advice about health and safety and where we would like you to "pick" will be given to those taking part. Children are welcome but must be supervised by an adult at all times.

As usual, for each volunteer, the Parish Council will make a small donation to any village organisation that you wish to nominate, as long as that organisation has a bank account.

If you can spare an hour or two your help will be much appreciated.

Parish Council Budget 2014-15

Wylam Parish Council has now set its budget for the 2014-15 financial year and has advised the County Council of the Precept it requires. In other words, this is the proportion of your Council Tax that comes to the Parish Council.

You will no doubt be pleased to know that no increase on the 2013-14 level is to be requested and that this is the third consecutive year that it has been held at this level.

The overall Precept remains at £36,500.

Although this is good news it does not, of course, mean that our Council Tax will not rise at all. At a recent Parish Council meeting, County Councillor Paul Kelly confirmed that, in the light of a need to save millions of pounds from the County Council's budget and following a series of public consultations, the County Council had finally agreed an overall increase of 1.98%.

Police Warning but also a Reassurance

In the last issue of the "Globe" we passed on a police warning about the risk to property, particularly in garages, sheds and outbuildings.

Incidents in Wylam within recent weeks only go to reinforce the importance of this warning, alongside advice to take all possible measures to protect these vulnerable areas.

Since April 2013, to date, house burglaries in East Tynedale have fallen by 23%, but burglaries from "other than dwellings" have risen by 45%. Local police are currently deploying officers on horses and soon hope to re-introduce bicycle patrols, concentrating on local stretches of the waggonway in the knowledge that this is a frequently used entry and escape route for criminals.

At the same time, recent press reports have suggested that policing in our area will be greatly reduced by the planned closure of Prudhoe and other nearby Police Stations. We have been assured that these closures are only because the buildings are no longer fit for purpose and that they will not go ahead anyway until alternative accommodation is found. Local police numbers and policing, we are told, will remain unchanged.

First World War Marking the Centenary

In the spring of 1915, in the Flanders Fields region around Ypres in Belgium, a period of warm weather began to warm up the countryside after a cold winter and farmers began to plough their fields close to the front lines. New life began to grow and one of the plants that appeared in clusters, on and around the battle zones, was the red field or Corn Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*).

The seeds from this plant can lie dormant in the ground for a long time but their delicate, vibrant red flowers inspired John McCrae to write "In Flanders Fields". Inspired by this poem, an American lady, Moina Michael, vowed always to wear a red 'Flanders Poppy' as a sign of remembrance and in 1918 she herself wrote the poem, "We Shall Keep the Faith". With others, she worked tirelessly to ensure that the poppy emblem was adopted in the United States as the national memorial symbol, and it was later adopted by many other countries. In the autumn of 1921 it became the emblem of the British Legion.

Here in Wylam we are planning to grow over 500 of these poppies on Charlie's Corner, in an area against the west wall after the bulbs have finished flowering. Sowing began in late January and continued during February. The seedlings will be pricked off this month so that established 'plugs' will be ready to plant in late April.

It is intended to have an event in late August or early September, when the poppies are in flower, to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War. More details will be available.

If you would like to be involved in this project, please contact Tom Martin 01661 852025

Slow Progress on Traffic Calming Scheme

After an optimistic start to the proposal to introduce a 20 mph Road Safety Zone through the centre of the village before the end of last year, the scheme has run into some delays. These have been largely attributed by the County Council to problems in the supply of the electronic speed indicator signs and the manufacture in the Council's Sign Shop of the more conventional metal '20 mph' speed limit signs. However, our County Councillor, Paul Kelly, is pressing the powers that be at County Hall to chase up the order and to give it priority. We hope this will mean the scheme will be implemented in the near future.

Leaders Needed, Urgently!

Did you know that 2014 marks a special year in Girl-Guiding? Brownies are 100 years old, and that's a lot of history, a lot of girls and, most importantly, a lot of really good fun!

There are lots of girls who want to be part of this great adventure of Rainbows, Brownies and Guides but leaders are needed to make this possible. Here in Wylam we currently only have Brownies and they are also struggling to find leaders, whereas all these groups once flourished in the village. Wouldn't it be great to make that happen again?

It's not all about form filling and endless bureaucracy, although high standards in child safety are essential. It's about helping girls to discover who they are, the world around them, to grow in confidence and to grow in their community. Many of the experiences these girls receive look good on CVs as well!

Do you have a couple of hours a week free, during which you could help to run a Rainbow, Brownie or Guide Unit? Perhaps your working life doesn't allow for regular commitments but you could maybe help with accounts, keep contact details up-to-date, or possibly you're a whiz with crafts or with building a bonfire!! The list is endless.

Even if you're just a little interested, not quite ready to jump in with both feet but would like to find out more, why don't you do one of the following:-

Have a look at the website www.girlguiding.org.uk and go to the tab marked "Get Involved" (you can even leave your details under "Register Interest".) Or, you can contact Carolyn Dowdens, who is the Divisional Commissioner, at carolyn@dowdens.co.uk

All enquiries and offers of help will be greatly appreciated.

Come to the Play

Our immensely talented Wylam Amateur Dramatic Society are offering us another treat on Thursday 1 to Saturday 3 May, in the Institute, with performances of John Dighton's farce, "The Happiest Days of Your Life", at 7.30pm each evening.

This play, since made into a very successful film starring Margaret Rutherford and Alastair Sim, tells the story of pupils and teachers of St Swithin's Girl's School, relocated to alternative accommodation when their own school is a casualty of wartime bombing. Thanks to a bureaucratic mix-up, they wind up sharing the quarters of a boy's school. Fun is guaranteed!

Alan Reece Plaque

Most people will remember that about twenty months ago the Parish Council was able to buy Wylam Post Office building and save the business from closure. This was thanks entirely to the early intervention of the late Dr Alan Reece and subsequent generous donation to the Council from the Reece Foundation. In recognition of the Foundation's generosity the Parish Council has, with the approval of the Foundation, decided to place a plaque in the Post Office. This has been ordered and will be installed in the near future. A representation of the wording is shown below.



Don't Miss the Vote

You will probably be aware that elections to the European Parliament will be held on 22 May this year and there will be a General Election next year.

We have been asked to remind people that you have to be registered to vote if you wish to take part in these elections.

To make sure that you are registered, along with any other eligible family members, you can do so by going to <http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/default.aspx>

Grass Cutting

As another grass cutting season gets closer, many people will probably be wondering what sort of job the County Council will make of their part in this, recalling that, not for the first time, there were many complaints last year.

You may therefore be interested to know that, acknowledging the deficiencies, the County Council has reduced its invoice to the Parish Council for the 2013 season by almost half.

Village Pub Wins Two Awards

The most prestigious awards for pubs are made by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). We are therefore pleased to congratulate the Boathouse, Wylam, which has been voted South West Northumberland CAMRA Pub of the Year 2014 and CAMRA Northumberland Cider Pub of the Year 2014.

Footpath News

Several months ago an unsuccessful bid was made by the Playing Field Association to obtain a grant to enable improvements to be made to the footpath/track leading down from the middle of Woodcroft Road to the Playing Field gate, close to what is known locally as the "Bumbler Box" bridge.

This path is a registered footpath but has, for as long as most of us can remember, had a very rough and somewhat hazardous surface.

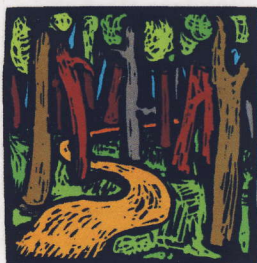
The Parish Council has now taken this up with the County Council and although no promises have been made, there is a possibility that the surface might be improved, not across its entire width but sufficient to make access easier for people on foot and particularly those with children in pushchairs and for people in wheelchairs.

The engineering solution to this problem is not straightforward, especially as we are hoping to include the Woodcroft Road path where it crosses this track. If the project is to succeed it will almost certainly require funds from several sources, which is bound to take time. Things are at a very early stage anyway. So, please don't expect anything soon!

We can also confirm that the County Council's Footpath Officer has not forgotten or abandoned the project to repair and reopen the riverside footpath east from the end of Stephenson Terrace. This path was closed in the interests of safety when severe subsidence was thought to have created too great a risk to users.

Efforts to determine exactly why the path has dropped as much as it has have all failed to provide a clear answer and we have to accept that to spend what will almost inevitably be a considerable sum on a repair, only for it to continue to collapse, would be a serious waste of limited resources.

At a recent meeting with the Footpaths Officer, representatives of the Parish Council were convinced that he is very aware of the impact the loss of this path is having on both local people and visitors to Wylam.



Calling our Young Musical Talent



On Saturday 28 June, on the evening of the 2014 Wylam Summer Fair, there's to be another "Wired 4 Sound" Music Event. Each year this event starts with a young band showcase. If you know a band, or if you are in a band and would like to perform on the night, you are invited to contact Charlie Wainwright by email at cswainwright@hotmail.co.uk with a description of your band and its music and with a download/link to a couple of your songs. If enough bands come forward, there may be a "battle of the bands" a couple of weeks before the event to decide who performs on the night.

Hagg Bank Rail Bridge

One of the few downsides of living in the delightful Wylam hamlet of Hagg Bank, is that to access the site by vehicle means crossing the bridge over the railway, which has a 7.5tonne weight limit.



You might think this is not a bad thing, keeping heavy vehicles away, but if you want a tanker to deliver your central heating fuel, to mention just one possibility, this can be inconvenient and add considerably to the cost.

The County Council, through County Councillor Paul Kelly, is currently trying to find a resolution. Network Rail are apparently reluctant to grant exemptions for this type of vehicle to cross the bridge. The access road from the west through the Country Park is not a public highway and is gated, although use of this has, to date, not been totally ruled out. The most likely possibility would be to have a community scheme, delivering oil by a longer than usual hose across the bridge, to a suitable storage site on the north side.

We wait with interest, to see if a solution can be found.

"Our People, Our Places"

This is the title of an Annual Residents' Festival, organised by Northumberland County Council in partnership with leading visitor attractions across the county. The Festival will be held on Saturday and Sunday, 29 and 30 March, when many castles, gardens, stately homes and museums will be opening their doors free of charge or at discounted rates for residents of Northumberland.

This year the Festival is set to be the biggest ever with the following venues taking part:- Alnwick Garden, Bamburgh Castle, Blyth Battery, Chillingham Castle, Craggside, Corbridge Roman Town, Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum, Heatherslaw Corn Mill, Hexham Abbey, Housesteads Roman Fort, Kielder Water and Forest Park, Newbiggin Maritime Centre, Paxton House Gallery and Country Park, Seaton Delaval Hall, Wallington, Warkworth Castle, White House Farm Centre and Woodhorn Museum.

Residents will need special vouchers to take advantage of these attractions. These can be obtained from local libraries, County Council Offices, Tourist Information Centres and sports centres. They can also be downloaded from Northumberland County Council's website residentsfestival.northumberland.gov.uk Cut-out vouchers will also be placed in adverts in the local press.

Access Track at Allotments

We are very hopeful that the long-overdue work by Northumbrian Water to resolve the flooding problems at the allotments is proving successful.

However, as this picture shows, the track along the north side of the main allotment area, which also gives access to the Nature Reserve, has become extremely muddy and very difficult to use.



The Parish Council is very aware of the inconvenience this has been causing but, as with so many things, a solution is not always easy to achieve.

It is quite likely that the build-up of mud and wood chippings, the latter having been thought at one time to be a solution, will first have to be removed. Some form of hardcore will then be required, but this is not as straightforward as you may think, because access requires vehicles to cross the "Bumbler Box" bridge, a former railway bridge with a weight restriction similar to that at Hagg Bank (which you can read about elsewhere in this issue).

We also feel that additional drainage may be required if the track is to be maintained in a reasonable condition, and so the Parish Council is currently seeking technical advice about the best way forward.

Annual Village Meeting

Although members of the public are welcome at any Parish Council Meeting, when an opportunity is provided at the start of the meeting for questions to be put to the Parish Council, once each year a special meeting is held when local residents can hear reports from the Parish Council and others who contribute much to our community life.

The Parish Council usually also invites a visiting speaker to address this meeting and, although not confirmed as we go to press, we are hoping that someone from the County Council's Countryside Department will be with us this year. Do make a note of the date and try to come along; Wylam Institute, 7.30pm on Wednesday 16 April. We hope to see you there.

Befriending Service

The Royal Voluntary Service (formerly known as the WRVS) is now able to offer help to those predominantly older people who are feeling isolated or otherwise lonely within the community.

When friends and family live too far away to make regular contact, the RVS can provide a little bit of company and friendly social contact at home through their 'Befriending Service'.

This may be on a face-to-face basis or on the telephone, helping to reduce feelings of loneliness and increasing motivation and self-confidence.

A regular chat with a volunteer can, for example, provide a vital link into the community for those feeling socially isolated because of restricted mobility or because they are unable to access public transport. Older people are particularly encouraged to try to keep active.

If you would like more details, either to become a volunteer or to arrange help, for yourself, a friend or relation, you can contact the local RVS office on 01668 260 248 or 0845 266 8906. Alternatively, find out more at: www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

"Jump for Joy"

A reminder that the ever-popular "Jump for Joy", otherwise known as the "Teddy Bear Parachute Jumps", will be held in the grounds and hall of St Oswin's Church on Saturday 7 June from mid-day.

Please note particularly that the event is on a Saturday this year.

There will be lots of fun things for all ages, and food too! Make a note in your diary.

"New Lamps for Old"

A new lighting system has recently been installed in the Munro Hall at Wylam Institute. For some time there had been problems providing the right level of lighting required by all the different groups that use the hall. The new system should greatly improve things for everyone.

Thanks go to all those involved for their help and advice, particularly to David Petrie, who sourced the system and oversaw the work.

Forthcoming Events

The following events will take place in Wylam Institute, unless indicated otherwise.

Wed 12 March

Men at Home in Methodist Church Centre, 10.15 for 10.30am, "Tyneside in the 1830s – an exciting decade", John Charlton

Sat 16 March

Annual Village Litter Pick, 10.00am from "Old Station" Car Park

Sat 22 March

Cancer Research Spring Fair Film Club, "Sunshine on Leith", 7.30pm

Sat 29 March

Friends of Wylam Bazaar

Wed 9 April

Men at Home in Methodist Church Centre, 10.15 for 10.30am, "Schubert", Alan Fearon

Mon 14 April

Parish Council Meeting 7.00pm

Wed 16 April

Parish Council Annual Village Meeting, 7.30pm

Fri 25 April

Playing Fields Association, Salsa Night

Sat 26 April

Film Club, "Blue Jasmine", 7.30pm

Thurs 1 to Sat 3 May

Wylam Amateur Dramatic Society Production, "The Happiest Days of Your Life", 7.30pm

Sat 10 May

Wylam First School Jumble Sale, 2.00 to 4.00pm

Mon 12 May

Wylam Institute AGM, 6.30pm

Parish Council, Annual Meeting 7.00pm

Sat 17 May

Gardener's Coffee Morning

Film Club, "Philomena", 7.30pm

Sat 7 June

"Jump for Joy", St Oswin's hall and grounds from 12 noon

Mon 9 June

Parish Council Meeting 7.00pm

Sat 21 June

Wylam First School Ball

Mon 23 June

Blood Donor Session, 1.30 to 7.30pm

Sat 28 June

Wylam Summer Fair

Sat 5 July

Wylam Amateur Dramatic Society Dinner Theatre

Please note: In addition to the above events, Coffee Mornings in aid of Wylam Institute are held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month, 10.30am to 12 noon, and "Friends of Wylam" Coffee Mornings are fortnightly on Tuesday mornings from 10.00am

Deadline for material for the next "Wylam Globe" Monday 12 May

Correspondence relating to this Newsletter should be addressed to:

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