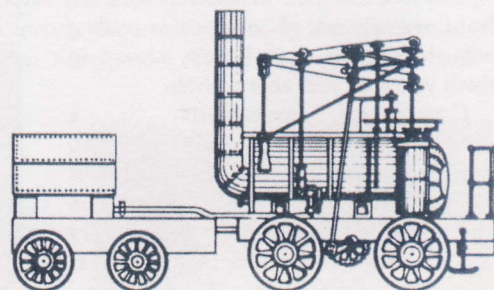


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Spring 2015

No. 116

What Now for this Speed Limit?



Talk to people in the village and you soon realise there are mixed views about the effectiveness of the 20mph advisory speed limit along much of the main route through Wylam, introduced about seven months ago.

The Parish Council has analysed the results of the County Council's official vehicle count and speed measurements, taken over a period in October 2014, and these are not encouraging.

Ingham Terrace

The average speed at Ingham Terrace, close to the southern end of the limit, was approximately 26mph entering the village and 27mph leaving it, which is much the same as the 26mph average recorded closer to the centre of the village several years ago.

Holeyn Hall Road

On Holeyn Hall Road the average speed coming into the village was approximately 37mph and 35mph northbound. In other words, average speeds well exceeded the 30mph mandatory limit for that location and a significant number of vehicles were recorded here at between 40 and 50mph.

Ovingham Road

On Ovingham Road, average speeds were very similar for both directions at about 31mph, although again, closer to the mandatory limit than 20mph.

Overall, only a very small percentage of vehicles were travelling at 20mph or less.

Wylam Parish Council has brought this data to the attention of Northumbria Police and, as a result, speed checks against the mandatory 30mph limit have been made on both Holeyn Hall Road and Station Road in recent weeks.

It is also appropriate to report, though rather worrying, that informal comments by the police are to the effect that most people they stop for speeding on Holeyn Hall Road are Wylam residents.

..... and the signs

A wish to see the 20mph limit made mandatory has been expressed by a number of people. However, this possibility is itself not straightforward. Firstly the signs in Wylam would have to be upgraded significantly, with additional signs on Bluebell Lane (where there are none at present), there would be a need for new signs on all roads feeding into the system, for cancellation signs where 20mph reverts to 30mph and repeater signs on a number of lampposts.

The police nationally believe that 20mph zones should be "self-enforcing" by means of road design features and traffic calming measures, which Northumberland County Council currently don't favour on through roads, such as the road through Wylam. Northumbria Police state that in England at present, the Police do not enforce 20mph zones. Locally, the Police say they might stop a vehicle for excessive speed in a 20mph area, but they would currently only do so if it is exceeding 30mph by a speed that would normally lead to prosecution.

Now, as if this is not complicated enough, recently published Government figures show an increase in the number of injuries on roads with a 20mph restriction, with serious injuries up 29% and minor injuries up 19% in just one year and with numbers in both categories up every year since 2009 compared with a fall in injuries on 30mph restricted roads over the same period. The reason is unclear but suggestions are, firstly; that because 20mph is an unfamiliar limit for drivers, they are more likely to be looking at

their speedometer than the road ahead and, secondly; pedestrians tend to become complacent and take less care when crossing the road.

We are sure the arguments will run and run! However, if you are concerned and interested in assisting the police in deterring speeding drivers, have a look at the article "Community Speedwatch", which you will find elsewhere in this issue.

Annual Village Litter Pick - please help



Wylam Parish Council has once again organised another opportunity for people to assist with a litter-pick and general clean-up around the village, and we hope you will consider helping.

The event will take place on **Saturday 21 March, commencing at 10.00am from the Country Park Car Park** (behind the War Memorial).

The number of volunteers last year was rather disappointing, although most areas of the village were eventually covered.

Come as an individual or group. Children are welcome but must be supervised by an adult at all times. Advice about health and safety and where we would like you to "pick" will be given to those taking part. Basic equipment for the task will be provided but old clothes and strong footwear or "wellies" are recommended.

As in the past, 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 do please come along at 10.00am or soon afterwards. Your help will be very much appreciated.

Community Speedwatch

Our lead article in this issue is all about the speed of vehicles travelling through Wylam, and here's a way in which you may feel able to help.

Community Speedwatch is a Northumbria Police initiative to improve road safety. After a process of vetting and training and under the supervision of police officers, volunteers carry out high visibility speed checks at approved sites within their local community, operating the normal police speed detection equipment.

Volunteers do not have the authority to stop vehicles. Instead, people caught speeding receive a letter telling them that their vehicle has been caught speeding, where and when this occurred and the speed. They are informed that although no action will be taken this time, if they are caught speeding again, they may incur one or more of various penalties.

This scheme has been operating in number of local communities, including Stocksfield and Ponteland, and further recruitment is soon to be opened up and could include Wylam if volunteers come forward.

Although the Parish Council plays no part in this scheme, we do have leaflets giving more details for anyone interested or wishing to know how to apply. Alternatively you can visit www.northumbria.police.uk

You should be aware that speedwatch volunteers only operate in designated 30mph areas.

Christmas Lights



The Parish Council was delighted by the positive reaction of so many people to the new Christmas lights on the trees around the Institute garden.

We were only sorry that a fault developed which meant that some of the original lights had to be disconnected and the lights could only be on for restricted hours.

We soon realised that the original lights, in use for a number of years, looked rather shabby by comparison. The Parish Council is currently planning to enhance the lights together with making changes to the power supply, which it is hoped will overcome these problems next Christmas.

Slow Speed of High Speed Broadband



Oh yes, it's here in Wylam but not necessarily where you are!

To update the information we were given for the previous issue of the "Wylam Globe", we are now advised that the Dene Estate area of the village should have had access to "super-fast" fibre broadband since mid-February. However, it appears that other parts of the village will have to wait for the installation and connection of at least two more of the green cabinets which have been springing up around the village. This will then extend coverage to most of Wylam but information from *iNorthumberland* suggests that this might not be until September or December this year. We are also advised that, unlike previous upgrades where users were connected automatically, this system requires you to contact your Internet Service Provider to request the upgrade and for an engineer to visit the property.

If you wish to check availability at your address or to register to receive notification when that becomes possible, we suggest you go to the website, www.inorthumberland.org.uk and follow the link to "My Area" and then to "Availability Checker".

Parish Council Budget 2015-16

Wylam Parish Council has set its Budget for 2015-16 and agreed that a precept of £37,000 is required through Council Tax. This is a modest rise of £500 above the previous figure, and is equivalent to approximately 60p more for the year from each household.

The Parish Council is now fortunate to have rental income from Wylam Post Office and this is being used in 2015/16 to off-set some general expenditure which, for example, enables the appearance of the village to be improved by the employment of a Handyman, a role first set up in 1999 and currently carried out so well by Matthew Hadden.

The condition and safety of trees around the village that are the responsibility of the Parish Council are carefully monitored. The need that arises for essential and sometimes urgent work on various trees is an important function and an inevitable cost to the Council.

A very significant cost continues to be the maintenance of the Cemetery at Ovingham, which we share with Ovingham, Ovington and Horsley Parish Councils.

Although the Parish Council makes ad hoc grants to support many local organisations, annual grants to Wylam Institute and the Wylam Playing Fields Association are widely recognised as an important contribution to maintaining these valuable assets to the village.

You will probably be well aware that Northumberland County Council is having to make large savings from its Budget for 2015-16, as it has for several years, and this is bound to impact on the level of local services it provides throughout the county. One of the services currently under review with Town and Parish Councils is the provision of public toilets, which you can read a little more about elsewhere in this issue.

Steady Progress!

As well as the 20 mph limit through Wylam, since 9 January a temporary



20mph limit has been imposed on Wylam Wood Road, from Station Road through to Eastwood Road, Prudhoe. This is a somewhat belated response to local concerns about the significantly increased use of this unofficial diversionary route following the closure of Ovingham Bridge in June last year and the manner in which many drivers have been using this narrow road. This will remain in force until the bridge reopens. Although it is still hoped that reopening will be by the end of June, we understand that the contractors have experienced various delays and it now appears that reopening on time will depend as much as anything on the way in which the contractors react, if opening is delayed, to the likelihood of severe penalty clauses within their contract.

Wylam Hills Farm Site - an Update

In early February, the Parish Council was advised that the application by Gentoo Homes Ltd to build 38 houses on the site of the former Wylam Hills Farm had been refused by Northumberland County Council.

Although the development of this site was supported in principle by Wylam Parish Council and many local residents, the Parish Council (and a few residents) did register concern about several aspects of the application as it stood.

Issues raised by the Parish Council related primarily to the following:-

The density of the proposed housing; the limited garage and parking space to be provided; the danger posed by the location of the proposed access to Holeyn Hall Road; the safety of pedestrians (particularly children) crossing the road from the main part of the site; the flood risk to the development on the east side of the road; the assumed adequacy of the existing sewage system and the lack of clarity about what is known as Section 106 (compensatory payment for local play space or related facilities).

Most of these concerns are reflected in the reasons given for refusal, together with the impact on the existing farm house, which is a Grade II Listed Building, and the inadequacy of some of the technical reports submitted as part of the application, including those on ecology and flood risk.

Although this application has been turned down, we are reasonably certain that a modified application will be presented in due course and so, as often applies, it's probably a case of "watch this space"!

Cricket Club Seeks Help

Wylam Cricket Club is looking for more people to become Vice Presidents of the club, which costs £30 per annum. This greatly helps the club to cover the ever-increasing running costs. In return, Vice Presidents are wined and dined at a Vice President's Day cricket match, held in July.

Alternatively, if anyone would like to join the group of Club Sponsors, the club would be delighted to hear from you. For further information or to offer support, please contact the Chairman, Pete Smith, on 01661 853713.



Allotment Track

We have previously mentioned that the Parish Council had been investigating ways to minimise the deep and occasionally impassable flooding and deep mud along the section of track which passes the north side of the allotments, towards the Nature Reserve.



As these pictures show, following the removal of the accumulation of mud and wood chippings, (the latter over the years proving to be a very short term solution), work to install a new drain to intercept flood water and a new hardcore surface has recently been completed by a contractor employed by the Parish Council.

We trust that the expense involved will prove of lasting benefit, not just to those accessing the allotments, but to everyone using that route as part of a pleasant and popular walk.

Wylam Institute News

Not for the first time, we are moved to comment on the truly wonderful resource that the Wylam Institute provides to this community. Many of us perhaps take it for granted, which is maybe a reflection of the confidence we have in those who manage the building and care for its maintenance, year in and year out.

However, the need for some fresh investment has arisen, some of which was unforeseen. Windows in the newer part, facing south over the garden, have been problematic for some time and have now been replaced, the floor of the hall requires professional sanding, re-sealing and marking out again for badminton and the high windows on the west side, mostly behind the stage, have been found to be in a dangerous state and need to be replaced before they drop out!

The total cost of this work is expected to be in excess of £10,000. The Parish Council has offered a contribution towards the cost and the Institute Committee is seeking grants from other sources, but we can all help simply by becoming members or renewing our existing membership. To this end, if this issue reaches you in time, why not make a point of calling in during the Institute Annual Coffee Morning, between 10.00am and 12 noon on Saturday 14 March, enjoy a cup of coffee and pay a subscription? Even if you read this after the event, if you are not already paying for your membership by Standing Order, get in touch by telephone (852498) or call in at the Institute Office between 9.30am and 12 noon on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday.

"Humble Boy"

This is the title of the forthcoming production by Wylam Drama Society, to be performed in the Institute on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 23rd, 24th and 25th April at 7.30pm. "Humble Boy" is by Charlotte Jones, an exciting new playwright who had a meteoric rise to success. She won the Critics' Circle Most Promising Playwright award in 1999. Her fourth stage play premièred at the National Theatre in 2001 and was awarded the Critics' Circle Best New Play Award, the People's Choice Best New Play Award and was nominated for an Olivier Award. It transferred to the West End and ran for nine months before opening at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York, being nominated there for a Drama Desk Award. Her plays have enjoyed productions all over the world, and she also writes extensively for TV, radio and film. "Humble Boy" is described as intriguing, touching and darkly comic.

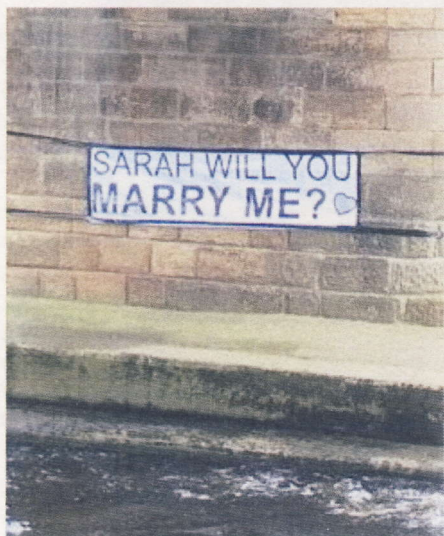
A New Bridge

Sorry, don't get your hopes up, this is not a road bridge, but we are nevertheless delighted that Country Park staff have recently replaced the long-submerged walkway which provided a crossing point just west of Hagg Bank, where one of the paths leading towards the "Spetchells" and beyond has, for a long time, required walkers to negotiate the corner of the pond there, either by paddling or to struggle over various pieces of uneven concrete, used as stepping stones.



The new bridge, shown here, restores a very pleasant path and opens up alternative opportunities for a circular route between Wylam and Low Prudhoe, although it still requires ascent or descent of nearly 70 steps - all good exercise!

The Answer Was "Yes"



We were going to ask if anyone knew whether Sarah said yes but, from a newspaper report as we go to press, we understand that she did. The enterprising man was apparently Dan, from Westerhope, who clearly went to considerable trouble, (and we ought to say risk), to fix this banner to one of the pillars underneath Wylam Bridge on Valentine's Day. We are delighted for the couple but hope, for safety reasons, that the practice doesn't catch on.

Public Toilets

You may have read in the press that Northumberland County Council is in the process of consulting every Town and Parish Council in the county where Public Toilets are currently provided, with a view to seeking agreement to transfer at least some of the cost of maintaining these facilities to the local Council.

Representatives of Wylam Parish Council met with an officer from the County at the end of January but, because further information on the current costs was still awaited, no decision was taken at the February meeting.

One obvious concern that your councillors have already expressed, is the fact that paying for even part of this cost is really a potential "double whammy", as we all already pay through our Council Tax for facilities of this kind and no offer of a rebate is under consideration.

There is no statutory requirement for the County Council to provide public toilets, although we are assured that closure of the Wylam facilities is not at present under consideration. We have always argued locally that the toilets on the corner of the Jubilee Field are of particular importance to visitors from outside Wylam, including walkers, cyclists and visitors to the many sporting activities nearby.

You can be assured that the Parish Council will do its utmost to ensure that the facility in Wylam is not jeopardised.

Forthcoming Events

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

Sat 14 March

Institute Annual Coffee Morning, 10.00am to 12 noon

Thurs 19 March

Gardeners' Soc. "The Development of the Bog Garden at Howick", Robert Jamieson, 7.30pm

Sat 21 March

Village Litter Pick, from 10.00am, Country Park Car Park (see article)

Sat 28 March

Cancer Research Spring Fair, 10.00am to 12 noon
Film Club, 7.30pm, "Saving Mr Banks"

Wed 8 April

Men at Home, "History of the Royal Northern Sinfonia", Alan Fearon, Methodist Centre, 10.30am

Sat 18 April

Film Club, 7.30pm, "Pride"

Thurs 24 to Sat 26 April

Drama Society, 7.30pm, "Humble Boy" (see article)

Sat 9 May

Wylam First School Jumble Sale, 2.00 to 4.00pm

Wed 13 May

Men at Home, "Energy", Prof. Ian Fells, Methodist Centre, 10.30am

Sat 16 May

Gardeners Spring Sale, 10.00am to 12 noon
Film Club, 7.30pm, "A Most Wanted Man".

Mon 18 May

Institute Annual General Meeting, 7.00pm

Mon 25 May

Blood Donor Session, 9.00am to 5.00pm

Sun 7 June

"Jump for Joy" at St Oswin's

Wed 10 June

Men at Home, "Hollywood's English Gentleman", John Derry, Methodist Centre, 10.30am

Some advance dates:-

Sat 4 July

Concert by Sage Gateshead Chamber Choir, St Oswin's Church, 7.00pm

Sat 18 July

Drama Society, Victorian Music Hall, 7.30pm

Sat 26 Sep

MacMillan Coffee Morning, 10.00am to 12 noon

Please note: In addition to the above events, Coffee Mornings in aid of Wylam Institute continue to be 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 11 May

Correspondence relating to this Newsletter should be addressed to:

Mrs. D. Carney,
The Clerk to the Parish Council
Wylam Institute, Church Road, Wylam
NE41 8AP
Tel: (01661) 852498
[e.mail: wylampc@btinternet.com](mailto:wylampc@btinternet.com)

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