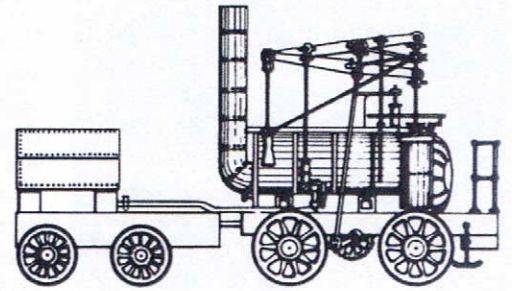


# THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Spring 2016

No. 120

## Those Floods

Nobody is likely to dispute the fact that Wylam got off lightly compared with so many places, some not so very far away, during the floods and gales of early December 2015 and the weeks that followed.

However, we did not escape entirely the effects of the persistent rain and the high levels in the River Tyne, believed to be the highest since 1771 and certainly the highest in living memory.

The accompanying pictures show the river in spate at Wylam Bridge, where a section of fencing was washed away, and something of the flooding of the Nature Reserve and path, a little further to the west. Here, fences were damaged, silt and debris deposited almost everywhere. The riverside footpath below the old spoil heap (just west of the Playing Field) was also completely washed away.

The Parish Council is currently working on plans to repair some of the damage, although the particular section of footpath referred to is probably lost for ever. We are currently in touch with the County Council about that.

Just west of Hagg Bank since the flood, the new footbridge across the end of the pond there has been under several feet of water, effectively closing that pleasant walking route for the foreseeable future.

On the south side of the river, Network Rail have had to get contractors back to deal with a further landslip next to the large area they repaired only a few months ago, fearing that another serious landslip could occur like the one at Farnley, which caused closure of that section of line for a month or so.

Perhaps we should take solace from the fact that flooding of areas such as Wylam Parish Council's Nature Reserve, must presumably ease the risk further downstream, if only slightly.



Although not entirely linked, the Parish Council remains very concerned about the riverside footpath running east from the end of Stephenson Terrace. Investigations, involving several agencies, have been on-going for about two years and no clear-cut solution has been found, chiefly because the serious subsidence of the path has not stopped and the exact cause remains uncertain. Unfortunately, although the County Council has improved the barriers to that path for safety reasons, there are still some people who insist they know better and force their way past.



## Village Litter Pick

Yes, it's that time of year again and we hope that this issue will be distributed in time to encourage many of you to help out.

**On Saturday 19 March the Parish Council invites you to assemble from 10.00am at the Country Park Car Park.**

You can come alone or as a group and, as usual, each volunteer can nominate a village organisation to receive a small donation – as long as that organisation has a bank account.

Children are always welcome but must be supervised at all times by an adult. Suitable old clothing and strong footwear or "wellies" are essential and we will require everyone taking part to observe basic health & safety advice, which will be provided.

You will be asked to clean up within a specific area of the village but we try to accommodate personal preferences where possible. Work usually finishes by lunchtime, but if you can only spare an hour or so, please come.

Thank you, in anticipation of your help.

## Books - Could you help the housebound?

There are a number of people in Wylam and the immediate vicinity who can no longer visit the Library independently. Would you like to join the Home Library Service to deliver books to friends and neighbours who find themselves in this situation?

If so, please contact Wylam Library on 852174 for further information. The Library is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2.00 to 5.00pm and 5.30 to 7.30pm, and on Saturdays between 9.00am and 12 noon.



## Wylam Post Office

### - a Clarification

We try hard to ensure that information that appears in these columns is accurate and unambiguous. It is therefore of concern to hear that, in spite of a detailed explanation in our previous issue, stories are apparently circulating in the village suggesting that Doug Bergstrand, owner of the Spar shop has, by some action or decision of his, been responsible for the closure of the present Post Office and the transfer of the associated business to the Spar.

We know that Steve Loveday, our current sub-Postmaster, will be the first to confirm that this is not the case. Both Steve and the Parish Council, the latter as owners of the property but not the business, remain extremely annoyed about the way in which Post Office Ltd has misled both parties over the past two years and applied such pressure on Steve Loveday that he has had no choice but to accept closure and the transfer of the Post Office business elsewhere.

The fact that Post Office Ltd initiated a period of public consultation when they had already offered the business to the Spar, has only served to rub salt into the wound.

At the time of writing, a date for the transfer is still uncertain but likely to be within the next few weeks.

Steve Loveday intends to continue retail trading from "The Old Post Office" building and is currently exploring what products he will sell.

## How About a Cycle Ride?

Tyne Valley Cycling Club is a non-competitive road cycling club with an emphasis on enjoyment above all else. Jayne Stanton, Secretary, writes: "Our members are friendly, helpful men and women who will make you very welcome if you would like to join us on a Club run to see what it's like, whatever your level of experience as a cyclist. We have members whose ages range from 14 to 80 and we never leave anyone behind.

Impromptu Club runs start from the Country Park Car Park (near Wylam War Memorial) on Wednesdays and Fridays, departing at 0930 winter and summer alike. Sunday runs start at 0930 (GMT) and 0900 (BST).

There's usually a group which rides about 40 miles at 10-12mph and another which goes further at maybe 12-14mph."

For further details, contact Jayne Stanton on 854382, or you can go to the Club's website <http://www.tynevalleycycling.com>

## Wylam Winter Tales 2016

What a week it was! The inaugural Winter Tales Festival at the end of January/early February, aimed to bring folk together around the Arts and to celebrate creativity and community at the darkest time of year. Across 12 different events and 5 venues, a total of 748 people came through the doors. There were 5 sell-out shows, 44 volunteers taking part (aged 11 to 84 years) and 17 different artists gave their time, skill and energy to entertain and inspire. Wylam First and Ovingham Middle Schools also hosted workshops with a story-teller and poet respectively, and an after-school programme of craft events was held at Wylam Library.

Throughout the week the Festival Café, staffed by volunteers, served a range of drinks and other goodies from "Traidcraft", the Fair Trade organisation, which helped to contribute to the atmosphere at all the events.

Gareth Davies-Jones and Simon Hackett, organisers of the Festival, say that: "In a week full of highlights our best moments were seeing so many people experience something new through the Arts, including some who have since told us they now feel inspired to go and be creative themselves. We're so grateful to the village for coming out to support the programme and for the help and enthusiasm of our volunteers – without you it simply wouldn't have happened. In particular we are so thankful for the help and support of Wylam Institute, Wylam Parish Council, Wylam Churches, Steve and Kirsty at Wylam Post Office and Claire and Steve at French's Café

The next Festival is already in the planning for Friday 27 January to Friday 3 February 2017 and we're excited about what will be involved. In the meantime enjoy some memories of this year's events at our website gallery pages":- [www.wylamwintertales.org.uk/gallery](http://www.wylamwintertales.org.uk/gallery)



## A Changing Landscape



The open aspect may not last for long but there's no doubt that demolition of the buildings at Wylam Hills Farm has provided views that will not have been seen within our lifetime.

This picture, taken during the later stages of clearance, includes the massive concrete crushing machine, in use recently. The crushed material is being used for in-filling the very old former mine-workings on the site.

You may remember that the farm house, which is a listed building, is to be retained along with the old stone stable, visible here, which is to be converted into a house.

We are advised by the developer, Gentoo Homes, that building of the new houses is due to begin at the end of March or soon after and that the whole scheme will take about 15 months to complete.

We know that certain aspects of this development are not welcomed by some local residents and that several objections raised by the Parish Council were not met to our satisfaction. However, we accept that some compromise is almost inevitable. Part of the hedge on the east side of the Holey Hall Road, which fronts the site of the planned affordable houses, has to be removed to provide access to the site, but fewer trees there will now be removed than originally specified. The developers also wanted to reduce the height of the hedge in front of these houses but have been persuaded to leave it at its present height, at least until the views of the new residents are known. The overhead power cables in that vicinity are to be re-located underground.

## The Saga of Ovingham Bridge



It was unfortunate that the message on this new plaque, including "reopened December 2015", was so short-lived!

For anyone needing a reminder, Ovingham bridge closed to traffic in March 2014 for refurbishment work. Although traffic from south of the Tyne heading for Newcastle was officially diverted along the A695 a significant flow, particularly in the morning and evening peaks, came through Wylam via Wylam Wood Road and Station Road.

Relief when the bridge reopened on 3 December 2015, about 6 months later than forecast, was soon dispelled. On the 5/6 December, unprecedented flood levels, with heavy debris carried down in the flood water, displaced parts of the scaffolding, moving it slightly downstream where it impacted with the footbridge. This created additional loading on the supports, making the footbridge unsafe. The footbridge was closed and pedestrians transferred to the main bridge which, although considered unsafe for cars until checks could be carried out, was deemed safe for the lesser load of pedestrians. In mid-February the footbridge was reopened although the main bridge remained closed to both vehicles and pedestrians. The situation as this issue goes to press is:-

**The footbridge is deemed safe and has reopened, the displaced scaffolding having been removed. The road bridge continues to be closed to all traffic including pedestrians as damaged scaffolding needs to be removed and the foundations checked for damage. This work can only take place when river levels are low.**

It will be some months before all the work to remove scaffolding and inspection of the foundations of the bridges can be carried out, remedial work undertaken and the bridge opened for traffic again.

Further updates can be viewed on the website:-

[Northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Roads/Bridges](http://Northumberland.gov.uk/Highways/Roads/Bridges)

## New Seats

Wylam Parish Council is investing in two new seats, which it is hoped will be welcomed. One of these will be installed within the play area at Hagg Bank, perhaps making it more enjoyable for those watching over children there.



The second, illustrated here, and technically described as a "perching seat", is to be installed within the bus shelter at Charlie's Corner. We hope that this will be particularly appreciated by those conserving their strength to tackle a shopping trip to town!

## Annual Village Meeting



Although every monthly meeting of Wylam Parish Council is open to members of the public and each agenda includes a time at the start for those who wish to put questions to the Council, the 1972 Local Government Act requires we hold an additional meeting each year between 1 March and 1 June.

This year, that meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 18 May. The Institute may not be available this time, but please make a note of the date and look out for details on posters nearer the time.

On these occasions our usual practice is to invite a visiting speaker to talk about a matter of local interest and for the Chairperson to present a report of the year's activity.

In addition, we normally hear a report about Wylam Institute, the Playing Fields Association and the Tyne Valley Rail Users Group. It is also our practice to invite our Neighbourhood Police Officer to attend, to comment on local issues and answer questions.

At the time of writing we are awaiting confirmation about an invited speaker.

If nothing else it's a chance to take part in or listen to a more open discussion about local matters. This can be a great help to those who represent you on the Parish Council, so do come along if you can.

## Congratulations



A few months ago the Parish Council nominated Denis Peel for a "Love Northumberland Award" in recognition of his dedication and hard work to control a number of invasive weed species around the village, particularly along the riverside.

We were delighted that the nomination was successful, and Denis received the award from the Duchess of Northumberland at a ceremony at Alnwick Castle.

We show here the two contrasting images of Denis, in case anyone fails to recognise him out of his overalls!



## Parish Council Budget 2016-17

Wylam Parish Council has set its Budget for 2016-17 and agree that a precept of £38,000 is required through Council Tax. This is a modest increase of £1,000 above the current figure and is equivalent to approximately £1.20 more for the year for each household

## Street Lighting to Change

Northumberland County Council has embarked upon a three year, £25 million investment programme to replace street lighting throughout the county.

Nearly 17,000 lamp posts and 29,000 lights will be replaced and all fitted with new Lighting Emitting Diode (LED) lights. These lights are said to be 60% more energy efficient and require 60% less maintenance. The anticipated saving of £300,000 per year is expected to repay the investment over 25 years.

The programme started in the Ashington area a year ago and is expected to reach Wylam in the late summer/early autumn 2017.

The LED lights will be brighter and whiter than most existing lights but they are designed to create less light pollution, providing more directional light to roads and footpaths. Another feature, which will be applied in appropriate locations, is that the technology allows them to be dimmed, from midnight to 6.00am for example, or even switched off at these times.

There is a possibility for some local variation. Lamp posts might, for example, be painted a different colour or have a more decorative lantern in areas of special interest. The downside is that the additional cost of such variations will have to be met by the local Parish Council and, at present, these costs are not known.

In due course, Wylam Parish Council will be giving consideration to the impact of this scheme within Wylam, and local residents will be given an opportunity at that time to express their views.

## Retirement

It would be remiss in this issue not to express the gratitude of Wylam Parish Council to Dr David Francis, who is due to retire from the position of Chief Officer of the Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC) at the end of March.

David has held this post alongside that of Director of Community Action Northumberland (CAN) for a long time. He has been an immense help to the Parish Council over the years, particularly in providing legal and more frequent general advice whenever requested.

We wish David a very happy retirement, knowing that he has contributed so much to the life of communities, both large and small, throughout Northumberland.

*Coming up soon . . . . your support is invited:-*

On **Saturday 19 March**, a Coffee Morning with stalls, refreshments and raffle will be held at The Institute, 10.00am to 12 noon, in aid of Cancer Research.

On **Thursday 28 April to Saturday 30 April**, Wylam Amateur Dramatic Society will be performing "Heatstroke", a hilarious farce by Eric Chapell. It's a "right mix up" in a villa in Spain – fast, furious and funny! 7.30pm each night.

On **Saturday 7 May**, there's to be a Concert at 7.00pm (in St Oswin's Church) by "Voices of Hope", led by Simon Fidler of The Sage, followed by a Dinner (in the Institute). Tickets are £20 (inclusive) from Hilary Broomfield (852533) or Stobo's shop. Proceeds for the Bobby Robson Foundation and British Heart Foundation.

On **Saturday 18 June** there's to be an "Antiques Evening" with Fred Wyrley-Birch at West Mews, in aid of St Oswin's Church. Tickets from The Institute Office or 852197.

## The Falcon Centre

Wylam Parish Council has, for a long time, been concerned about the lack of maintenance of the Falcon Centre by Northumberland County Council.

This building, the former village school which closed in 1974, houses the Library, Railway Museum and Playgroup, in addition to offering facilities for several other regular and occasional activities. The Parish Council's view is that, quite apart from the assumed logic of regular maintenance, the deteriorating outward appearance of the premises has added to the temptation to mistreat the premises. There have been several incidents of vandalism in recent years.

Following unsuccessful attempts to get these concerns addressed, the Parish Council wrote directly to the County Council's Chief Executive. The initial outcome has been the severe cutting back of the very overgrown shrubs at the front of the building. This has left it looking a little bare at present, but re-growth should soon mask this.

However, there is still much that ought to be done and the Chief Executive has promised discussions with Facilities Management staff to consider the on-going needs at this site.

At the very least we hope that external painting can be scheduled and a replacement of the sign indicating library opening hours, which deteriorated badly and was removed many years ago.

## Forthcoming Events

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

**Mon 14 Mar**

Parish Council, 7.00pm

**Sat 19 Mar**

Village Litter Pick. Country Park Car Park, 10.00am.

Cancer Research Coffee Morning 10.00am to noon. (see notes for both events)

Film Club, "Everest", 7.30pm

**Mon 11 April** Parish Council, 7.00pm

**Wed 13 April**

Men at Home, "Sir James Paget, Queen Victoria's Surgeon", Roger Francis, Methodist Centre, 10.30am

**Sat 23 April**

Film Club, "Le Passe" (The Past), 7.30pm

**Thurs 28 April**

Funding Fair, 12 noon to 5.00pm

**Thurs 28 to Sat 30 April**

Drama Society Production, 7.30pm (see notes)

**Sat 7 May**

Concert (St Oswin's) 7.00pm & Dinner (Institute) (see notes).

**Mon 9 May** Parish Council (AGM)

**Wed 11 May**

Men at Home, "The Romantic Symphony", Alan Fearon, Methodist Centre, 10.30am

**Mon 16 May** Institute AGM, 7.00pm

**Wed 18 May**

Annual Village Meeting, 7.30pm (see notes)

**Frid 20 May Wylam**

Playing Fields Association. Music Quiz. 7.30pm

**Sun 22 May**

"Jump for Joy", St Oswin's Church Hall and grounds

**Wed 8 June**

Men at Home, "Jellicoe of Scapa", John Derry, Methodist Centre, 10.30am

**Mon 13 June** Parish Council, 7.00pm.

**Sat 18 June**

Antiques Evening at West Mews in aid of St Oswin's Church (see notes)

**Deadline for material for the next "Wylam Globe" Monday 9 May 2016**

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