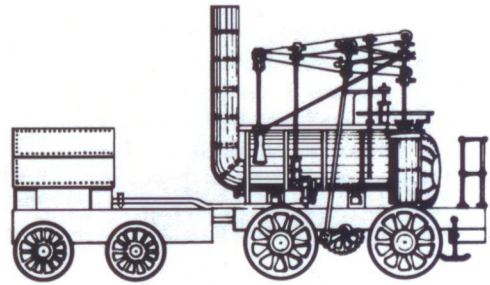


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Autumn, 2005

Number 78

Low river levels add to problems for fish

The level of the river at Wylam is often a talking point and rarely more so than this year, which has seen variation between one of the highest levels ever seen to a low level recently. Once again, the low river level has been coupled with reports of dead and dying fish, chiefly downstream from Wylam Bridge.

On 2 September, an Environment Agency spokesman confirmed that 99 dead fish had been recovered from the river since 14 July, comprising 92 salmon, 5 sea trout and 2 fish that were too decomposed to identify. The first reported deaths were in the pool at Wylam but most fish have been found a little further downstream. The Agency recognises that many more fish die that are neither reported nor recovered and their estimation is that total deaths by early September are probably in the region of 200 to 250.

To non-anglers, this number of dead fish may seem a horrendous total but, although any deaths are to be regretted, it represents a very small proportion of the migrating fish. In June, for example, the electronic counting system at Riding Mill recorded 2229 fish passing upstream and a further 5750 in July. (The August figure was still not confirmed but estimated to be in the region of 4000.)

Although the low river levels are often said to be the cause of the problem, the Environment Agency suggest that the reasons are far more complicated. Silts and mud in the lower parts of the estuary remove very high levels of dissolved oxygen from the water, which during small (neap) tides and in hot weather, can

impair the health of and sometimes kill migrating fish. The effect of these factors is then seen, particularly at Wylam, which lies at the upper reach of tidal influence.

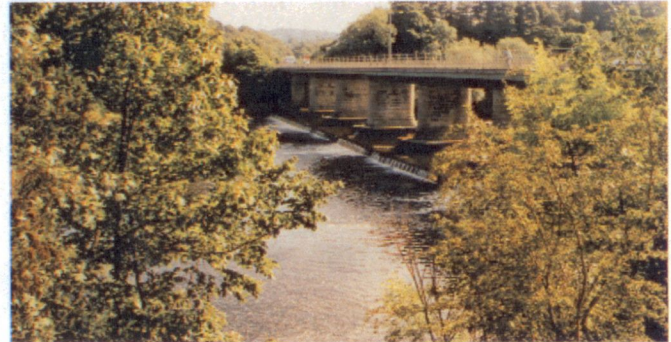
We have probably all heard the widely held view that the release of more water from Kielder Reservoir would resolve the problem. The Environment Agency spokesman, with whom we discussed these issues, accepts that more water can help but argues that this does little to influence water temperature and therefore water quality in the lower reaches of the river. The release of large quantities of cooler water can also risk wiping out many of the smaller fish species that prevail in the upper parts of the North Tyne, and so any release has to be very carefully managed.

Having said all this, the Tyne apparently remains the best salmon river in England and Wales, having improved out of all proportion since the 1970s when water quality was so poor that virtually no fish made the journey upstream.

To aid the fish population, the Environment Agency currently breeds and releases some 300,000 fish each year from their hatchery at Kielder.

The Environment Agency would welcome reports from members of the public about dead or distressed fish, so that they can be removed quickly and in order to monitor the situation. Please telephone their free "hotline" 0800 80 70 60 which is available 24 hours per day.

Finally, how long do you think it takes for water, released from Kielder, to reach Wylam? (Answer at the foot of the back page.)



What a difference a season makes. The same river view in early January this year compared to September, when fish came under threat.

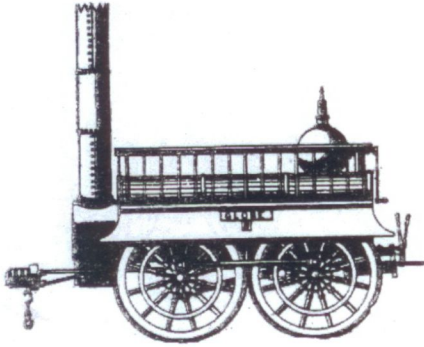
The End of an Era

It was mentioned in the last "Wylam Globe" that it was the last to be edited by Philip Brooks. The first "Globe" was published in July 1973 and it is difficult to adequately express our gratitude to Philip for such a long and valuable contribution to this community. The publication has been the principal communication between the Parish Council and Wylam folk since its inception and has received many accolades from within and beyond the village for both its content and presentation. Philip will, of course, be continuing to serve the village in the many other ways in which he has for so long but, for this service, we offer him our heartfelt thanks for a job well done.

"What now?" This has been the dilemma facing the Parish Council since Philip announced his intention to stand down. For

the time being, an interim editorial group has been formed from other members of the Parish Council and it will hopefully be "business as usual". However, whilst it is justifiably a time to reflect on the success of the past, we also wish to look to the future. Your own comments and suggestions would be appreciated. It is hoped that we can achieve four regular publication dates each year and, provisionally, we are aiming for late September, December, early March and early June. The Parish Council intend to retain editorial control but we would welcome appropriate suggestions and contributions from other village organisations or individuals. Please do not hesitate to let either Diana Carney (Council Clerk) or any Parish Councillor know what you would like to see.

A Title Story



Timothy Hackworth's 'Globe'

One consequence of the change in editorship of the "Wylam Globe" has been the temptation to open the archive file containing editions going back to the original, dated July 1973. The now familiar title was used then, although people were asked to offer alternative suggestions. It was explained that "The Globe" was the title of a famous newspaper in the 19th century for which J.F.B. Blackett, who became M.P. for Newcastle and was a member of the family who were the Squires of Wylam for some 300 years from 1679, was a frequent and distinguished contributor. Surprisingly, by the time of the second edition, it had come to light that "Globe" was also a name given to an engine designed by Timothy Hackworth for the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1830 and built by Robert Stephenson and Co. With that sort of provenance there was no going back and the name has been a fixture ever since! When the third edition went to press in April 1974, a line-drawing of Hackworth's engine "Globe" had become part of the title strip and this remained in use until 1978 when it was replaced by the current drawing of the Wylam locomotive "Puffing Billy", specially drawn for the Parish Council by Martin Orchard.

Please Tell Us

We realise that there will be some people in Wylam who have a visual impairment who find it difficult, if not impossible, to read this publication. We are currently investi-gating the possibility of producing an audio (tape) version. If you, or someone you know, would appreciate a copy in this format, please contact the Parish Council Clerk (852498) or any Parish Councillor as soon as possible.

Connie - Wylam's Living History

There must be very few people, now in their eighties, who have lived in Wylam all their lives. One of these is Connie Smith of Falcon Terrace and any who know Connie will be aware of her vivid memory and great enthusiasm for the past (and present!)

Most of us who have known people like Connie over the years have probably thought "we must get her/him to write it down", but then done nothing about it. However, over the last few months, Lynne Petrie has been doing just that, talking to Connie about Wylam in the past and building up an amazing picture of some of the places and people of Connie's experience.

In due course it is hoped that this record will provide an invaluable archive collection for the village and we expect to be able to report soon about how the project has progressed and in what form the material is to be presented. Thank you Lynne for taking this initiative.

Is This a First?

Cat Richardson, whom only the naïve would try to deny is Wylam's youngest Parish Councillor, was married in August to Steven Findlay. We take this opportunity to congratulate Cat and Steve and to wish them a long and very happy marriage together.

Now, can anyone remember when (if ever before) a serving member of the Parish Council has married? That could be taxing, even to Connie Smith!

Another First?

Catherine and Ken John of Ovingham Road celebrated what was certainly a record for them and probably for St Oswin's Church when, in August, four granddaughters were simultaneously received in Thanksgiving and Baptism. The babies were Eleanor Margaret and Lucy Catherine, twin daughters of Amanda and Peter John, Jessica Heather, daughter of Helen and Edward John and Rose Lilian, daughter of Helen and Mark Randall. From no grandchildren to four in the space of five months had even Ken almost lost for words!

Wylam Hills Farm Site

One of the most frequent matters raised with Parish Councillors during the last two or three years has been about the future of the Wylam Hills Farm site, which is currently owned by a Guernsey-based Trust. Unfortunately, at the time of writing we are unable to report any specific progress. We understand that the site is still intended for sale to a developer but, of course, any future development will require planning permission and no such permission has so far been formally sought from the District Council.

The Parish Council has been increasingly concerned about the deteriorating appearance of the farm site and the resulting impression it gives to visitors and others entering the village. There is also some evidence that the buildings have been used for "fly-tipping" and these concerns have been brought to the attention of the owners. Although rocks have been placed at the entrances in an attempt to prevent illegal access, no response has been given by the Trustees to more general questions about the appearance and safety of the site or their longer-term plans.

A Successful Fair

The Wylam Playing Field Association was blessed with a lovely day on 25 June for this year's Summer Fair, which also marked the 25th Anniversary of the "Summer Fair Run". The latter event attracted a wide range of competitors of all ages, including some remarkably fit "veterans" who had taken part in the very first run. The bookstall almost equalled the record takings of the previous year and the whole event attracted a good attendance. Above all, everyone appeared to have a good "fun day", which is what it's all about, and the final profit is expected to be close to £3000. Thank you to the members of the committee, to everyone else who helped and to all who gave their support by simply coming along on the day, always the main thing to ensure success.

New York, New York!

Members of the Wylam Discussion Group are planning a five days (3 nights) visit to New York in early December 2006. The trip is open to anyone interested, not just Group members. The cost is expected to be approximately £650 if a group of 15 can be found. If you would like to register an interest (without any commitment at this stage) or if you have any questions, please telephone 852577.

That Traffic Study!

Regular readers or followers of Parish Council affairs will remember that Northumberland County Council had promised to carry out a Traffic Study in Wylam in an attempt to address a range of issues relating chiefly to traffic movement, parking and pedestrian safety. Consultants were appointed to conduct the Study last year but there were considerable delays and, when the Report was finally published, it proved to be very disappointing. However, the Parish Council were also invited to put forward suggestions and this list is currently being explored with officers of the County Council. We had been assured that the County Budget for the current year included a sum of money to enable a start to be made on some improvement measures but, even as this report was being drafted, we have been informed that this sum was removed from the budget after it was first drafted. This is clearly disturbing news and the Parish Council will do all it can to see that the money is restored to the budget at the earliest opportunity.

As part of the investigation process, you may have noticed that a vehicle counting device was placed on Main Road for several weeks*. A count of pedestrian movements across the road in the area of the shops has also been carried out and we have been promised that, in spite of the financial set-back, a further vehicle count will be undertaken in the near future, which will also record the speed of vehicles.

It is hoped that by the time the next edition of "The Globe" is published there will be more, and perhaps better, news about possible action.

(* You may be interested to know that during a sample week at the beginning of August, the vehicle count recorded an average of 4641 vehicles along Main Road every 24 hours. Of these, 97% were cars and light vans, 2% were Heavy Goods Vehicles and 1% were motorcycles.)

No Calming!

Earlier this summer, residents of the Dene Estate and adjoining areas were invited to express their views to the County Council about a range of possible traffic calming measures on the estate roads. We understand that 39% of those who returned the questionnaire were against any such measures. As a result, although this implies that a majority favoured a scheme, County officials consider there is insufficient support to proceed to the next stage of consultation and therefore no measures will be introduced.

Wylam in Bloom

Whatever you think about the natural beauty of Wylam, this summer has surely been an exceptional year for combined efforts to enhance that beauty. Hanging baskets from Tynedale Council (distributed and mostly maintained by the Parish Council), contributions from Tom and Joe's Riverside Nursery, members of the Wylam Gardeners' Society, local businesses and, most importantly, private individuals, have all added up to a good show. Thank you to everyone who has played a part.

The Haughs and Other Things

You know it's a surprising thing that we keep coming across residents who do not know that our parish has its own nature reserve and still others who do not know where it is.

If you have never visited it, go all the way down Chapel Lane and across Woodcroft Road, on over the "bumbler box" bridge and bear right, avoiding the steep track down to the old railway line. Still bearing right, follow your nose along the footpath and you will come to a five-bar gate. Negotiating this will take you into the nature reserve and you can walk all the way round it on the footpath. You will visit the "Points" Bridge, with good views up and down the river, with water birds in attendance. There is a choice of three paths by the riverside and you will arrive at a clear track on your left to bring you back to the gate. Wear strong footwear, and enjoy your one-hour walk. Do keep coming back to notice the changing seasons. We welcome visitors with dogs that are under control and who clear up their own dog's mess!

The Meadow

The tract of land at the Hagg Bank end of the reserve has been mown again and a number of people (about six) have helped to rake off the risings. Far from complete, the work has uncovered enough space to make it quite likely that we shall see a bigger variety of plant life and attendant dragonflies, butterflies and other life next year.

The Interpretation panels

Progress on these has been rather slower than we wished, mainly because of various people's holidays, but the drafts are now in sight and will soon be put into manufacture. Watch this space!

The Birds

A small group of devoted birders continue to send in reports, which remain quite extensive and are always an interesting read. If you would like a copy of the bird list, ring Peter Clarke at home (852297) and he will make sure you get one.

The Flowers

You will be amazed at the number of flowering plants identified this season. Again, if you would like a copy of the list, ring Peter. Better still, why not join the group collecting the data? It is quite important work, even if amateur, and it needs to be kept going.

Invertebrates

Help! We desperately need someone to help us collect insects and other invertebrates to complete our surveys. Equipment and guides are all available, so if you fancy working on butterflies, spiders, night-flying moths and so on, now is your big chance. Don't be backward in coming forward!

Trees Around the Parish

It will be well known by now that the Parish Council has for some years pursued a policy of planting a few trees each autumn around the parish. In addition, residents have been encouraged to plant trees to mark an event such as a birth, a marriage, a death or an anniversary. Those who know about this normally consider it to be a very pleasant policy, and long may it continue. Another matter has arisen lately and that is that we often lose trees from parts of the parish and we should really plant replacements wherever possible. If you can identify locations for this practice, do get in touch with Peter Clarke in his capacity as Tree Warden or with the Parish Council office. A number of people, some very young and some not so young, have started simple tree projects such as photographing and recording notable trees, or planting a young tree and recording its progress at each birthday - a long-term piece of work this!

More Bulbs - but Where?

Last season, the Parish Council invited suggestions for planting bulbs around the village. Unfortunately, our supplier had only a limited supply available and so the project had to be restricted. Let us try again this year.

In addition to his role as a Parish Councillor, Peter Clarke also serves as Tree Warden and Manager of the Wylam Haughs Local Nature Reserve.

Welcome to Wylam

We are delighted to welcome Lynn Johnston as Head Teacher at Wylam First School from the beginning of this term.

Lynn has lived in the Tyne Valley for some 25 years and comes to Wylam after experience of teaching in Newcastle and Allendale and latterly as Head Teacher at West Woodburn. She has also spent some time as a Consultant for the Local Education Authority, for whom husband Alan currently works in the new Continuing Professional Development College.

Lynn and Alan have two sons and a daughter. Their eldest son is a relatively new graduate, now working in Manchester where their daughter is also at University. Their younger son is still of First School age (and presumably helps to keep mum's feet firmly on the ground!)

Lynn is looking forward to getting to know Wylam better and, of course, the children, families and everyone else connected with the school. Her wish is



Lynn Johnston, Head Teacher at Wylam First School - it was the first day of term, but we trust she will always retain the smile!

that children will find the school to be a "fun place to learn" but, at the same time, she is very much aware of the importance of maintaining standards. She expresses the hope that children will enjoy their learning experience at Wylam First School.

We wish Lynn and her team of staff both happiness and success as they embark on another new era for the school.

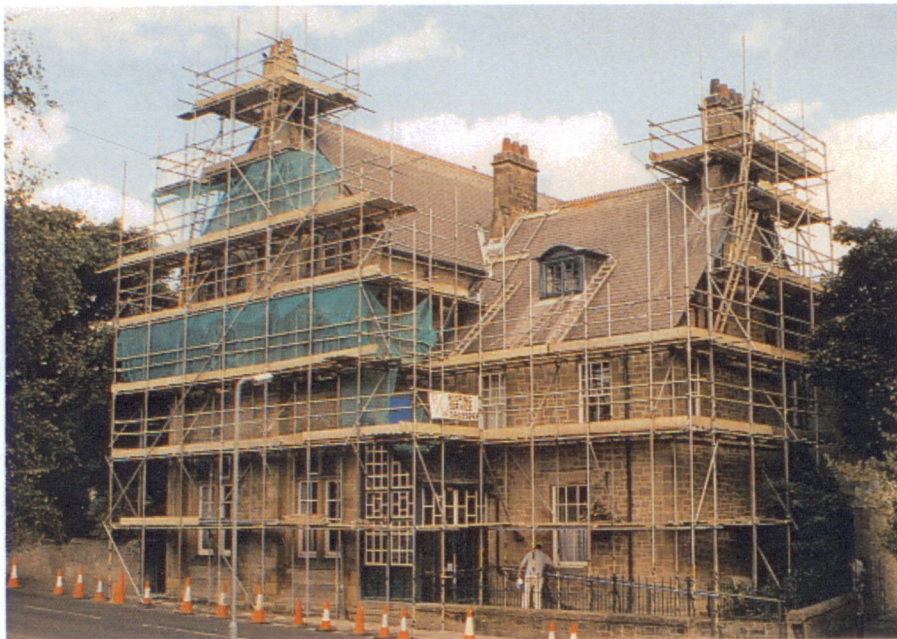
Institute Update

Sue Nicholson reports that the renovation work on Wylam Institute is reaching its conclusion and should be finished by the end of September. Her belief is that the "new" Institute will be a building the community will be proud of, with its future secured for many years.

Sue praises the village effort and community spirit that has made this possible and for which everyone who contributed should feel proud.

An interesting little curio has been brought to light by the renovation work.

When the lead flashing was replaced around one of the chimneys, the names of two people, presumably workers, were found to have been scratched into the lead when it was last replaced in 1918. The words "R S Pigg, Lyncroft" and "W Smith" and what appears to be "14 Algernon Terrace" can be seen. There are probably village residents who can trace their ancestry back to these gentlemen. Please let us know if you know the links!



Scaffolding moves to the west end of the Institute as work nears completion

Monthly Soup Lunches

If you are 70, or over, why not go along to the Methodist Church Centre at 12 o'clock on the first Wednesday of every month to enjoy a soup and pudding lunch?

The cost is a minimum donation of £1.50, which goes to The People's Kitchen in Newcastle. If you would like to join in, please contact June Pattinson (Tel: 852165).

Caretaker Still Needed

There is still a vacancy for an Institute Caretaker. The job involves opening and closing the building for user groups. The only responsibility is to keep the building secure and no other duties are involved. This is a 'job-share' and the incumbent would only be required to work alternate weeks. If you are interested, please contact Vera Mullen at the Institute on 852498.

Fancy a Job?

Tynedale Council are seeking to appoint a part-time Toilet Cleaner for the Public Conveniences in Wylam. Hours are 10½ per week (1½ hours per day 7 days per week). Hourly rate £5.64. Duties include opening the toilets at 7.00am and locking the facility at 7.00pm. For more information or informal discussion, please contact David Hunt, Service Manager (Cleaning) on (01434) 652459.

For Your Diary

Saturday, 5th November

Charity Card Sale, in the Institute.
10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Monday, 28th November

Annual General Meeting of Wylam Playing Field Association. 7.30 p.m. in the Institute

Answer to the question from the front page: It takes 24 hours and, if you think differently, don't tell the Parish Council, tell the Environment Agency!

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

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