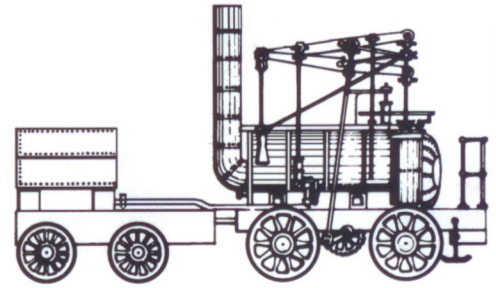


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Spring, 2007

Number 84

Plans for a Safer Bridge

The Parish Council has recently been advised that Northumberland County Council is intending to carry out a major safety improvement scheme to Wylam Bridge at a cost of approximately £800,000.

Since the terrible accident on the bridge, just over a year ago, the Parish Council has been pressing the County Council to conclude their study and make a decision about which option they would choose aimed at preventing a similar accident in the future. In November, senior Highways staff described to the Parish Council a number of alternatives that were under consideration and answered questions from Councillors and several members of the public who attended that meeting.

The scheme that has now been chosen involves widening the bridge on the up-stream side by approximately 0.5 metre and strengthening the edge of the bridge deck on both sides to enable stronger barriers to be installed in place of the existing balustrade. Details of the design are still to be finalised but County staff have promised to keep the Parish Council informed. The work has already been agreed as part of the County Council's Scheme for major road improvements in the coming year and is expected to be given final approval soon. Following this, the intention is to carry out the work during the later part of this spring or early summer. One certainty is that while the work is being carried out there will be significant disruption to traffic crossing the bridge and the County Council are considering issuing an advisory notice to all local households. Notices will also be erected either side of the bridge long before the work begins to advise drivers of the impending delays.

The planned changes will mean that the character of the old bridge will be changed for ever and we know that, for many people, this will be a matter of considerable regret. However, the overriding view of the Parish Council is that safety is paramount and we trust that this view will have widespread local support.

Support Cancer Research

The Wylam Branch of Cancer Research UK is holding a Spring Fair on Saturday 31 March from 10.00am in the Institute. There will be a wide range of stalls including an Easter egg tombola, cake & produce, 'white elephant', bathroom and plants. Contributions for any of these will be appreciated but, above all, please come and give your support.



Wylam Bridge - soon to undergo major changes

And that other safety scheme

Issue 81 of the Wylam Globe, (Summer 2006), included details of a scheme for the centre of the village aimed at improving the safety of pedestrians, which will also enhance the appearance of that area. We understand that estimates for the work are now in the hands of the County Council and that work is expected to commence very soon.

The Parish Council was concerned that a leaflet circulated in the village a couple of months ago may have been misleading. The leaflet contained a suggestion that a further phase or phases were under consideration in addition to the agreed scheme. We would like to confirm that whilst some of the ideas suggested, including a weight restriction on the bridge and electronic speed warning signs, would be welcomed locally, these were all discussed at length between the Parish and County Council in 2005/6 when the scheme for the village centre was under consideration but were eliminated from the list of possibilities.

Wylam Rockets

Wylam Rockets was formed in 2003 and now enters three football teams in the Tynedale Mini-Soccer League. Mini-soccer is a 7-a-side game, played on a smaller pitch and with smaller goals. It's an excellent introduction to football. Girls and boys in years 3, 4 and 5 can play in the under 8, under 9 or under 10 teams. Next year the club will be running an under 7s team for children in School Year 2. There are matches on most Saturday mornings throughout the season and training, with qualified coaches, every Wednesday night. Those who are interested can contact Mike Dib-Fuller on 853131.



Harry Beswick-Roberts demonstrates ball control for the Wylam Rockets under 9 team

Threat to Country Park

Northumberland County Councillors have been wrestling with the budget for the coming year and are looking to save several millions of pounds. Not for the first time, the Countryside Service, which is responsible for all the Country Parks in the County including Tyne Riverside which runs from Low Prudhoe through our own village, is under a very serious threat of financial cuts, with savings of £70,000 being sought. By the time you read this it is expected that a decision will have been taken. The Council are being recommended to close the Visitor Centre at the Low Prudhoe hub of the Park and to dispense with the full-time Countryside Officer who operates from there.

Your Parish Council believes this to be a short-sighted action which will inevitably lead to deterioration in the maintenance of the natural environment of the Park and the loss of a key channel of communication with the public, particularly children.

The Parish Council has written to the County Council to express this view and was represented at a meeting where the matter was discussed. At present we are not too hopeful, but have not given up. If the cuts are agreed, Liz Walters, the present Countryside Officer with whom the Parish Council has established a constructive working relationship, will be offered a vacancy elsewhere in the service.

Cleaner Loos?

Since mid-January the public toilets in Wylam (and other villages in Tynedale) are being cleaned on a daily basis by a new mobile cleaning unit, complete with steam-cleaning equipment. If you have any comments or criticisms about how the new system is working, please notify Tynedale Council Environmental Services Dept, which has introduced the new operation to improve the standard of cleaning.

Honey Bees in Wylam

George Batey writes....

When we moved into Wylam 31 years ago there were five or six beekeepers in the area. Now, as far as I know, there are only two, one on each side of the river.

I enjoyed the hobby for over 40 years but had to give up active beekeeping two years ago when the not-so-active limbs protested! However, I still enjoy beekeeping by acting as a mentor to a beginner.

Wylam is an ideal place to keep bees - lots of gardens, trees and wild flowers and, most years, some fields of oilseed rape which the bees love. The only difficulty is finding a site where the public will not be bothered. With a little perseverance and discussion with farmers this can generally be arranged.

Why keep bees? From the responsible citizen's point of view honey bees are worth some £120 million to commercial fruit growers (DEFRA figures) because of their pollination activities without which, apples, plums, strawberries etc would be difficult to come by. As for wild flowers, the seeds of which many birds depend on, these would largely disappear. "Silent Spring" could become a reality.

A vast amount of honey is imported (some 12,500 tonnes per annum). More beekeepers would mean less imports - and the economists among you can explain the importance of that!

For the beekeeper, the cost of setting up is likely to be between £200 and £300 but, after a year or two, the hobby pays for itself and local honey is readily sold in the area.

What hobby can be so absorbing, interesting, even fascinating and yet cost virtually nothing? Friendship and mutual support between beekeepers is another valuable bonus. It's true, honey bees do have stings but the problem can be reduced to a minimum by careful techniques.

If any reader would like to discuss beekeeping, or find out how to join a beekeeping association, or visit our local Newcastle and District Association Apiary at Gibside (under supervision) please phone me on 852778.



Freshly made honey straight from George's hives

How About Opening Your Garden?

Wylam Housing Group (fundraising for Shelter Northeast) is looking for some new gardens or allotments for this year's "Garden Walk" on Sunday 24 June. "We always have a wonderful day", say the organisers, "even when it rained last year and, after all the stress of trying to pull your garden round you can lean back and feel smug and delighted about how good it looks".

If you are willing to help or would like more information, please contact either Dorothy Eavis on 852188 or Wendy Wright on 852721.

Litter Pick Time Again!

We are hoping that, once again, Wylam people will respond and come out in droves to assist with the **Annual Village Litter Pick**, to be held on **Saturday 17 March, starting at 10.00am from the Countryside Park Car Park.**

Please come suitably dressed with strong shoes or boots and old clothes. Gloves and bags will be provided.

We are always delighted to see anyone on these occasions, young and old, but we do ask that young children should be accompanied by an adult and supervised at all times. As is the usual practice, a small sum will be paid to organisations in the village that are nominated by our volunteers. So, why not come and join in the fun and make our village look that much nicer as Spring comes along?

News of 684 Bus Turns Sour Again

As we prepare to go to press it has come to light that Arriva has applied to de-register the current 684 bus service with effect from 18 March. They claim that although they pick up passengers once they get to Crawcrook, very few people are using more than a couple of peak hour journeys from the villages at this end of the route.

The only better news is that Northumberland County Council are trying to find another operator to restore what would almost certainly be a reduced service on the north side, via Heddon. A spokesman for Arriva has explained that they would be prepared to take this route on for a six month trial, but not for 12 months, which the County Council consider to be the minimum necessary to restore passenger numbers and confidence.

A County Council spokesman has expressed confidence that a service of some kind will emerge, hopefully immediately after Arriva withdraw, but there are no guarantees at present.

Annual Village Meeting

The Annual Village Meeting (formerly Annual Parish Meeting) is the occasion each year when all residents of Wylam are invited to come along to hear about the activities of the Parish Council over the past year, ask questions and raise any relevant issues. Normally in May, this year the meeting has to be a little earlier because of the pending elections and will take place at Wylam Institute at 7.30pm on Wednesday 18 April. At the time of writing we hope to also welcome a guest speaker to give a brief talk about waste management and recycling. Do try to come along.

House Histories

Denis Peel tells us that he is approached, several times each year through the Local History Society, by people enquiring about relatives or ancestors who used to live in Wylam. They frequently quote house names, many of which have been changed over the years. Denis gives the example of the top house in Elm Bank Road, which was previously called "Rio Vista" by the first owners because the wife was Spanish. Later this house was divided into two, one of which is now known as "The Sheiling". In Wylam Wood Road, a house called "Frankley" was later renamed "Lindores" by the late Jimmy Gilchrist, who hailed from this village in Fife and lived in the house before moving to Elm Bank Road.

Denis invites any residents who live in houses with names to let him know the origin of their house name and also any previous names that the house may have had. He may be contacted by email at gdspeel@btinternet.com or telephone on 853278.

Library Secure for now, at a Price!

When the result of the Libraries Review was announced in December, we knew that the apparent "reprieve" for Wylam Library was coupled with a requirement that Wylam Parish Council and other user groups, make "appropriate" financial contributions towards the maintenance of the Falcon Centre.

In the light of recent experience we were not particularly surprised that we had heard nothing by mid-January about the charge to the Parish Council for the Railway Museum, even though we had been told that charges would apply from 1 February. The response we received to our enquiries revealed that the proposed charge was to be £1200 per annum ("discounted" from £2000), almost two and a half times the guide figure that we were quoted in October 2006. At the time of writing we are still awaiting a response to a request for an explanation and have no clear idea of how other groups are likely to be affected. Ultimately we believe that this level of charge on our community is justified if it enables the Library and Railway Museum to be retained.

Meanwhile, thank you to everyone who has recently joined the library in order to help keep it open. You can still help if you have yet to join - get in there and start borrowing!

Playing Field News

In spite of the accompanying photograph showing piles of left-over jumble, the Jumble Sale and 20th Burn's Night Supper and Ceilidh in January were both very successful, raising over £2200 between them. These results have encouraged the Playing Field Association committee to give the go-ahead to their consultants, who have now submitted a planning application to Tynedale Council for an extension to the pavilion.

Someone has recently queried why it is that the PFA needs to raise money for a "Council-run playing field" and we have been asked to make the position clear to any of our readers who may be wondering the same thing.

Although Wylam Parish Council (not Tynedale Council) does contribute to the annual running costs, the Playing Field Association is a registered charity which depends on volunteers to manage and to a great extent maintain the facilities.

Were the Parish Council to run the playing field it would almost inevitably lead to a significant additional annual burden, currently estimated at some £7000, falling on Wylam Council Tax payers. Charitable status would also be lost, which would remove eligibility for various sports grants and the Lottery Fund which have been used for development projects in the past. Wylam Summer Fair, which currently raises a very useful proportion of overall funds, would also be unlikely to continue. Of course, the present set-up does require the help of many volunteers and new faces are constantly needed. If you are willing to play a part, please contact either Jennifer Power (Chair of the Association) on 853824 or Tony Mitcham (Secretary) on 852128.



Playing Field Chairman, Jennifer Power with some of the left-overs from the Jumble Sale

Dates for Your Diary

The following dates may be of interest and worthy of our attention:-

Sat 17 March at 10.00am

Village Litter Pick - help invited (see earlier note)

Sat 17 March at 7.30pm

Film Club, "An Inconvenient Truth" (a highly acclaimed story about climate change)

Sat 31 March

Spring Fair 10.00am in the Institute for Cancer Research UK (see earlier note)

Wed 4 April at noon

Nominations close for District and Parish Council elections (see earlier note)

Wed 18 April at 7.30pm

Annual Village Meeting (see earlier note)

Sat 21 April at 7.30pm

Film Club, "The Joy Luck Club" (Chinese children living in America reflect on their former lives)

Thurs 3 May

Polling Day for local elections

Friday 18 May

Closing date for material for the next issue of "Wylam Globe" (publication in June)

Sat 19 May at 7.30pm

Film Club, "Little Miss Sunshine" (a recent BAFTA award film taking a satirical look at child beauty contests in America).

Sun 3 June pm

Wylam & District Churches are holding another "Jump for Joy" (teddies and parachutes!) at St. Oswin's and also marking the 9th Anniversary of their Covenant together.

First School News

Emma Andrews writes:-

Wylam First School parents and friends are running Hadrian's Wall to raise money for the current "Space to think Project" at the school.

Parents are already in training for the 70 mile run, which takes place on Saturday 12 May from Bowness on Solway to Wylam School. Three runners are bravely tackling the whole 70 miles with others joining them in a relay between pick-up points. Parents, friends or indeed anyone else are all welcome to join in.

The "Space to think Project" was described in detail in the autumn 2006 issue of "Wylam Globe" but, briefly, involves the creation of a combination of architectural expertise and imaginative flair to provide an education and play centre with views across the valley towards George Stephenson's Cottage. If you would like to support the run, please get in touch with John Green on 853665. Alternatively, contact the school direct on 852771.

Please Act to Help Your Community

As we mentioned in our last issue, elections for the local District and Parish Councils are due to be held on Thursday 3 May. Wylam has two seats on Tynedale District Council and there are eight Parish Council seats, all of which will be "up for grabs".

We already know that Philip Brooks has publicly announced his intention not to seek re-election to the District Council and we are also aware that at least one Parish Councillor is not standing again. There may be others who have still to make their decision but, in any case, we do hope that many people will be prepared to put their names forward for one (or perhaps both) of these Councils.

If you are interested in standing for either the Parish or District Council you can contact the Election Services section of Tynedale Council (Direct Lines 01434 652215 or 652216) at any time from now to obtain the required papers, although the actual period for receipt of nominations is from 27 March until noon on 4 April. In addition, copies of Parish Council nomination papers will also be available soon from our own Parish Council Office.

Local views are essential if Local Government is to be effective and, whether Unitary Government for Northumberland becomes a reality or not, we are likely to see increasing channels through which the views of local people will be sought. The importance of Parish Councils is expected to increase rather than decrease. Do please consider seriously whether you can help by becoming involved.



GONE!

The trees at the Wylam Hills corner had to be trimmed back for safety reasons but the owners opted to fell them resulting in much improved visibility at a dangerous spot

Nature Notes

Peter Clarke writes:-

At the time of writing the signs of spring are becoming ever clearer and the most spectacular signs this year are the great drifts of snowdrops, suggesting that many other early spring flowers are just waiting to delight us. Daffodils are showing yellow, as is coltsfoot, an especially welcome sign for many people. Mysterious clusters of leaves will soon reveal flowers that we can identify more easily. It is fairly easy to spot "lords and ladies" plants at present, and this could be a good opportunity to impress on small children that they should never eat wild berries, since many are poisonous.

Hazel catkins are already hanging in profusion and streaming in the wind, with alder and willow catkins also becoming prominent. Trees of several other species have recently been planted in the Nature Reserve.

These include silver birch, wild cherry, crab apple, weeping willow, beech, rowan and some more hazel in the hope of encouraging red squirrels and other small mammals.

Birds are, of course, becoming much more numerous as migrants arrive. Many are surprisingly tame. Song thrushes sing about two metres from us as we walk, no doubt hoping to be fed, as do small groups of robins. The latter always visit rather cheekily whoever takes food to the feeding station, while many old friends such as blue, great and coal tits, greenfinches and siskins wait politely to one side. There have already been visits from nuthatch and bullfinch while a male great spotted woodpecker amuses us by apparently trying to dismantle the electricity distribution pole near to the feeding station.

Sadly, someone has been removing the hanging feeders in which we dispense peanuts and sunflower seeds at the feeding station. There used to be nine and we are now down to five! The police are on the trail - culprits beware!

Catch a Bargain!

The standard 330 litre black composting bins that many people in Wylam make good use of, normally cost almost £38. A number of these bins are currently available through a government-funded "Recycle Now Campaign" at the very low cost of £10, including delivery. If you wish to request a bin while stocks last, please order online at www.recyclenow.com or call 0845 077 0757.

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