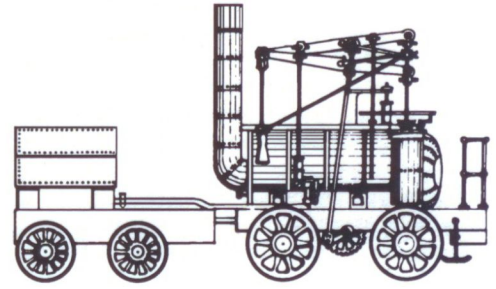


THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Spring, 2008

Number 88

Changes Ahead - Will they really make a difference?

Many of you will be well aware from recent press reports that changes are in the pipeline for the way our Local Government operates in Northumberland with the introduction of a "unitary authority" from 1 April 2009. Simultaneously Tynedale Council and the other District Councils will cease to exist from this date.

However, our first involvement in this process as electors will come much sooner because on Thursday 1 May this year elections are to be held for the 67 Councillors who will make up the new unitary authority for Northumberland. This is the same number as the current County Council but, when they take up their office they will be responsible for all of the services we currently receive from both County and District. They will also serve on the appropriate committee of what are now being called Area Communities, ours being West Northumberland which will be little bigger than the present Tynedale.

Parish and Town Councils will continue within the new structure but will also become part of local groupings called Belonging Communities, with each Community having a Forum through which we are promised a greater say in local decision making. Our Belonging Community will be East Tynedale, comprising the twelve parishes of Broomley and Stocksfield, Bywell, Corbridge, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Hedley, Horsley, Matfen, Ovingham, Ovington, Sandhoe, Shotley Low Quarter and Wylam.

Your Parish Council welcomes the possibility of having a more direct say in local government decision making but, so far, nobody appears to be able to say exactly how this will be achieved. We are still very much in the dark about what powers or responsibilities Belonging Communities will have and what the relationship will be between the Belonging and Area Communities. All the emphasis so far has been on "form" but little or nothing has been said about "function". Some sources have suggested that a budget might be devolved to each Belonging Community but, once again, we have been given no confirmation of that.

In East Tynedale we do have some experience of a forum of local councils because for several years Wylam Parish Council has been a member of the East Tynedale and West Castle Morpeth Parish Councils Forum and there is a possibility that this group might become the core of a our new Belonging Community Forum.

We regret that we have been unable to give many answers in this short article but hope that it may have helped to explain a little about some of the changes we can expect. We do know that from now on things are likely to emerge rapidly. Frankly they will have to if Local Government re-organisation in Northumberland is to be effective from 2009.

Work on Water Mains

There will be very few of us who have not experienced some disruption, either outside our own home or on the road through the village during the on-going work to replace many of the water mains and to re-connect each property. This is all part of a massive capital investment by Northumbrian Water and work is not expected to be finished in Wylam until the end of May.

Most areas have been completed but at the time of writing we understand that Holeyn Hall Road, Church Road, Ovingham Road and Wylam Hall are the main areas remaining. Some of the work has required trenching but a lot has been done either by continuous drilling, a technique that pulls a new pipe through in sections after a tunnel is drilled through the soil, or by "pipe-bursting", in which an existing water main is smashed open by a device that is drawn through to widen the space for a larger pipe to then be drawn in.

The whole Wylam system then has to be connected to a 30 inch main beside Holeyn Hall Road.

Some delays have been experienced when uncharted services have been located that have had to be by-passed and, throughout the work, the safety and hygiene of our water supply has had to be carefully protected.

A number of comments have been made to the Parish Council about the state of several grassed areas around the village that have been damaged by the work and we have been assured that these will be made good later in the Spring.



Changes to Recycling

Over the last few months we have received statements within general circulars from both County and District Councils about what parts of our domestic waste can be recycled. These changed the guidelines we had previously been given and members of Wylam Parish Council and several other local people expressed a level of concern bordering on annoyance that some of our past efforts to maximise recycling had been overturned.

We wrote to both County and District Councils to express these concerns and the replies we received suggest that paper and card account for over 85% of material placed in recycling bins and it is therefore essential that the quality of this material does not become contaminated by small items such as yoghurt pots, margarine cartons, food trays and foil or by items contaminated by food residues. Loads of waste paper that are found to be contaminated are rejected by paper mills and have to be disposed of to landfill.

The varying economics of recycling have also brought changes. There is currently a very limited market in the UK for the recycling of mixed plastics, which means that such loads have been shipped overseas, raising obvious concerns about the true environmental benefits.

Large pieces of card directed to recycling can block conveyors which carry the mix of materials through the sorting process. Conveyors have jammed and had to be freed by hand, requiring the plant to be shut down for safety reasons until cleared.

Wylam Parish Council has suggested to Tynedale Council that new information stickers on the wheelie-bin lids would help to get the message about the changes across and we understand that this is something they will be doing. By 2009 a new facility is to be built in Tees Valley which will incinerate certain types of waste to produce energy for the national grid. This will take large cardboard and any plastic waste which cannot now easily be recycled and it is expected that this facility will greatly improve the range of materials that we will be able to put in our recycling bins. So, for now, please conform to the new instructions by avoiding large pieces of card and restricting the plastic items to bottles – juice, milk, shampoo, household cleaner, fabric softener and washing-up liquid. Aerosols can now be included along with all cans, but not foil.

Some Waste Recovery Centres can now take "Tetrapaks" for recycling. These are the paper-based juice and milk cartons with a lining of aluminium and plastic. At the present time, the nearest Centre to us with this facility is at the Oaklands Car Park in Prudhoe but do remember that, along with other materials that go in our own wheelie bins, glass bottles can be taken to the

Wylam Country Park Car Park and the main recovery site at West Wylam can take a massive range of materials in addition to general household and garden waste, including electrical appliances, other metals, wood, building rubble, motor oil, car batteries, empty LPG bottles, books, CDs, and clean reusable clothing. Tesco and Asda stores provide containers for clean plastic bags for recycling. Further information can be obtained from the County and District Councils and websites such as www.recycle-more.co.uk

A New Parish Councillor

Following selection interviews held in January, we are delighted to welcome Tom Martin who has been co-opted to the Parish Council to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Rosene Railton.

As a well known proprietor with his wife Lois of Wylam Nurseries, Tom can be contacted at Riverside Bungalow or by telephone on 854062. You may wish to add this as an amendment to your Village Information Card.

Annual Litter Pick

We invite all Wylam people who have an interest in keeping the village tidy to come along at 10.00am on Saturday 15 March to help with the Annual Village Litter Pick. The Country Park Car Park is the start point. Please come suitably dressed with old clothes, strong shoes or boots and gloves if possible. We hope to be able to provide some additional items for your protection and we are trying this year to raise everyone's awareness about the health and safety issues. This is partly why we always state that children should be closely supervised by adults.

As usual, a small donation will be paid to village organisations that are nominated by volunteers, as long as that organisation operates a bank account.



An Ancient Art - A New Skill

Barbara Sutton writes:-

"Have you ever wondered what it would be like to ring church bells? The ringers at St Oswin's Church in Wylam invite you to come and see - and even try your hand! They meet at the church at 7.45pm on most Monday evenings.

The benefits of this ancient art were highlighted in two recent articles by Dr James Le Fanu in which he points out the anecdotal evidence indicating that the action of pulling the rope strengthens the back muscles. Stretching of the spine also helps to reduce pressure on any trapped nerves while forearms are also strengthened, relieving the symptoms of "Repetitive Strain Injury". However, if you decide to try your hand you will need to concentrate - a factor thought to explain why so many ringers in their eighties are managing to combat cognitive decline.

Bell ringers come in all shapes and sizes. There is no upper age limit but teenagers who are interested will need their parent/guardian to come and see what is involved before they start ringing.

Come and try, and if you do catch the ringing bug (yes, it can be quite addictive), you will be joining a nationwide network that will welcome you and support you in your efforts.

Take the first step at St Oswin's and see what a fascinating and enjoyable activity bell ringing is. We look forward to meeting you".



Barbara Sutton, Kevin Webster and Frank Phillips on three of the church bells.

Cancer Research UK (Wylam Branch)

Viv Smith tells us that the committee of this organisation is looking for some new members. She writes, "We organise two fund raising events per year – the Spring Fayre and one other, usually in the Autumn. We meet 3 times a year to plan and organise the events. So, if you could spare a few hours a couple of times a year to help this very worthwhile cause, please contact the secretary Pat Harrison (853113) or speak to someone at the Fayre on 15 March.

In addition, for the past four years a number of women and girls from Wylam have entered the "Race for Life" and have raised thousands of pounds in sponsorship for Cancer Research. This year the race will take place on Sunday 13 July. The race can be taken at any pace and if you would like to join us, registration has now opened at www.raceforlife.org

Wylam Institute Computers

The free drop-in session on Wednesday mornings at the Wylam Institute computer suite are under threat due to a lack of volunteers who take turns to provide help at these informal sessions. If you are an experienced computer user and would like to use your skills to help others for a couple of hours a month, then please contact Viv Smith (853713)



Community Week is Coming Again

Following the very successful event in November 2006 the Wylam Institute Committee are keeping to their promise to hold another Community Week after two years, which is of course this year. The event is planned to run from Saturday 1 November until Sunday 8 November. The Annual Christmas Charity Card and Craft Sale will get things underway on 1 November and a Bridge Drive is already planned for the Monday afternoon. More details will follow nearer the time but we are all asked to make a note of the dates and to do our best to support the various activities.

Nature Notes

Peter Clarke writes:

Many Wylam Residents participated in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, which took place on the weekend of January 26 and 27. It was expected that some 400,000 people (not all from Wylam!) would spend an hour watching and counting the birds in their garden or local park, and keep a record of the highest number of each species seen at any one time. Counts of 14 and 15 of some species here in Wylam have been reported to the RSPB, and the national results will provide a snapshot of winter bird populations and will enable an eye to be kept on how they are faring. It is thought that the goldfinch, one of our loveliest garden birds with its red face patches and yellow wing flashes will make it into the top ten. One Wylam resident recently reported 25 at one time in her garden.

Wylam also seems to be a hot-spot for bullfinches. A recent walk from the Country Park car park to Stephenson's cottage produced a count of at least 20. Red kites were seen three at a time and at least one dipper was seen working the gravelly shallows of the river.

Blue tits are already active around some boxes, and other species are now busily nesting.

Many wildflower species are already beginning to emerge, with plentiful drifts of snowdrops, especially on the riverside, with winter aconites in gardens also heralding spring. Daffodils in abundance are also delighting us around the parish at this time of year.



Got Pass - Will Travel!

Residents of Wylam who currently find the Concessionary Travel (CT) Pass issued by Tynedale Council of marginal benefit as it only allows free bus travel within Tynedale, will find the new National CT pass much more useful.

From 1 April free National Concessionary Local Bus Travel will be available to over 60s and the eligible disabled.

Although "National" only means England (because Scotland and Wales have their own arrangements), the new pass will be accepted everywhere on local bus services with similar off-peak time restrictions to those that apply to the present pass. They will be accepted on bus services all over England including London and, more locally on bus services throughout Tyne and Wear.

If you have not already done so you will have to apply for the new pass, even if you are an existing CT pass-holder and, if you are approaching 60 or are over that age but have yet to request a pass, you should contact Tynedale Council on 01434 652121 or through the Council website, www.tynedale.gov, for an application form.

The Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority (Nexus) has also agreed to allow holders of the new National CT pass issued in Northumberland and Durham to buy the Nexus Metro Gold Card annual pass for £25. This compares to £12 for Tyne and Wear residents. This will allow free travel on the Metro rail network which extends from Newcastle Airport through Newcastle and Gateshead to Whitley Bay and Sunderland and the Shields Ferry. The Gold Card can be purchased at the Nexus Travel Shops at the Metrocentre, Central Station, Haymarket or Monument stations. For further information you can also go to www.nexus.org.uk or telephone 0191 203 3333.

Parish Council Dates

Members of the public are welcome at any meeting of the full Parish Council and a time is provided near the start of every agenda for "Questions from Members of the Public". The next dates are:

Monday, 7th April

7.00 p.m. in the Institute

Monday, 19th May (AGM)

7.00 p.m. in the Institute

Wednesday, 14th May

Annual Village Meeting will take place in Wylam Institute at 7.30 p.m. This is the meeting at which the Parish Council will report on a range of issues and respond to questions and concerns raised by the residents of Wylam. Why not make a note of the date and come along?

What do you think?



Pictured is the piece of land at the top of the river bank between the bridge and Stephenson Terrace. Work started some time ago by the Parish Council with the assistance of Simon Brough to clear the area of fly-tipped material, was completed by the contractors after they used it to store materials for work on the bridge. It has been suggested that the opportunity should be taken to make something of this potentially pleasant and sunny spot by improving its appearance and discouraging further dumping of rubbish by landscaping it and perhaps providing a seat. Ideas and comments on this proposal would be welcome.

Those Complaints!

One of the most frequent complaints to the Parish Council relates to overgrown hedges and trees that obstruct or overhang the footpath from people's gardens. We don't like to keep reminding everyone but we all do have a responsibility to prevent this, in fact it's an offence to allow it to happen. Please imagine you are 6 feet tall and/or with a child in a pushchair, preferably on a wet day when branches hang lower - and then walk past your own property!

The other common complaint is about dog fouling. Things appeared to improve for a time but we have noticed an increase recently of instances where dog owners appear to assume that if the dog mess is not actually on a paved or tarmac path it doesn't matter. The Parish Council tries to make "dog-waste" bags available at the library and several of the shops but the special dispenser in the Country Park Car Park has been abused by someone who takes all the bags as soon as it is filled and so this has been suspended for the time being. However, the responsibility is with the dog owner, not the Parish Council. Please be thoughtful of others. Permitting your dog to foul any public area, whether grass or hard surface, is an offence!

Christmas Lights and more

The Parish Council were pleased that the new Christmas lights, on a tree in the Institute garden, appeared to meet with widespread approval. Unfortunately one section of the lights was damaged by a passing high vehicle although we were able to make a temporary repair. Blachere Illuminations, the manufacturers of the lights, have very generously provided a replacement section free of charge and the Parish Council are currently trying to arrange for the lights, which are of a type designed to be left in-situ, to be raised or moved slightly and the trees trimmed back.

We are also very grateful to Carillion (the main contractor for the work on Wylam Bridge) who created a permanent location for a Christmas tree at Charlie's Corner and to Wylam Nurseries for the very kind gift of a large and beautiful decorated tree to place there.

Thanks must also go to Tom Martin and the newly formed Wylam Business Forum, for arranging the welcome celebration around the tree just before Christmas, along with Santa, the children of Wylam First School and the village clergy, who together created a very appropriate and moving occasion which many said they hoped would become a regular event.

We're On the Box!

Not long after several Wylam people were seen in two "Songs of Praise" from Hexham Abbey (with a third programme to follow at Easter), some may have seen Tony Mitcham's picture (shown here) on "News 24" of a tree down over the railway during the February gales, an incident also shown on the BBC national news.

Not only these but a few weeks ago a television film company were recording dramatic scenes for an episode of "Wire in the Blood" starring Robson Green, on the old Hagg Bank railway bridge. So far as we know there were no opportunities for local talent to be included but watch out for the scenes, which include a "body" being thrown into the river!



Forthcoming Events

Sat. 8 March

"Riff Raff" (our local AC/DC Tribute Band) in the Institute, 7.30pm in aid of Institute funds.

Sat. 15 March

Spring Fayre in the Institute in aid of Cancer Research, 10.00am to 12 noon.

Sat. 12 April

Film Club. "Butterfly's Tongue". Institute 7.30pm

Sat. 19 April

Wine and Wisdom Evening in the Institute, in aid of The Marie Curie Hospice, Elswick.

Mon. 21 April

Blood Donor session in the Institute

Mon. 12 May

Wylam Institute Community Association AGM in the Institute

Fri. 16 May

'Songs from the Musicals' by Northern Voices, for Institute funds, 7.30 p.m. Institute.

Sat. 17 May

Film Club, 'Half Nelson', Institute, 7.30 p.m.

Sat. 28 June

Wylam Summer Fair and Bookstall

Deadline for the next "Wylam Globe" is 9 May 2008

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