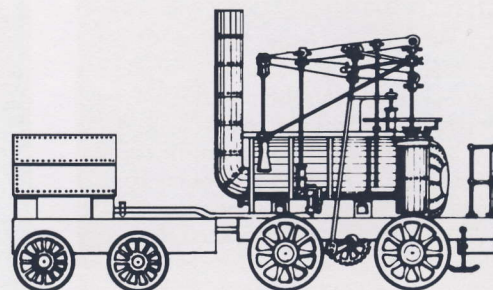


# THE WYLAM GLOBE

Newsletter of Wylam Parish Council



Winter, 2008

Number 91

*Wylam Parish Council wishes our readers a Happy Christmas and New Year*

## Road Works

There cannot be many roads in the village that haven't been dug up at some time during the past twelve months or so, what with replacement work on the water mains and then gas mains around the Dene Estate. Another piece of recent work has been the resurfacing of a large part of Holeyn Hall Road and the associated footway and, as this photograph shows, it involved the use of a massive road planing machine. We had been told to expect that this work would be carried out in February 2009 but the possibility of the money being diverted for urgent road repairs at Morpeth in the wake of the floods there resulted in the work being brought forward. So, perhaps we should be grateful for small mercies although a late decision by the County Council to change the planned diversion for light traffic away from Blue Bell Lane did nothing to ease the confusion when the road had to be closed for a time!

Parish Councillors are often asked about minor repairs to roads and pavements and it is perhaps worth reminding everyone that, although we try to pass on appropriate requests of this nature to the County Council, it is possible for members of the public to report faults themselves by telephoning 0808 100 8910.

Every year, usually in July or August, the Parish Council compiles a detailed assessment of every road and pavement in the village, identifying and prioritising any faults. This year, for example, we reported 93 separate fault locations of which we classed 36 as priorities. Of course the County Council Highways staff

do not always agree with our assessment, often citing lack of money as the reason for lack of action, but our local Highways Inspector has generally been very supportive of our efforts and does try to see that the most urgent faults are attended to promptly. Since we submitted our report this year for example, more than a third of the priority faults have been attended to.



*Road-planing operations on Holeyn Hall Road*

## Join the Celebration

We are very grateful that, once again, Tom and Lois Martin from the Riverside Nurseries have very generously provided a Christmas tree at Charlie's Corner, a gift which has made such a wonderful contribution to Christmas in Wylam in the past couple of years.

Not only that, but Tom and the Wylam Business Forum have also arranged another celebration around the Christmas tree which will take place on Friday 19 December. Santa will set off across the bridge at 9.30am and meet up with children from Wylam First School

around the tree at 9.45am. With the assistance of Rev Maureen Lloyd and Rev David Cant the children will then lead the carol singing before everyone is invited to process to the Methodist Church Hall for refreshments and where a raffle will be drawn. Tickets for the raffle will be on sale throughout Wylam from late November and all proceeds will go to local charities and organisations.

It is hoped that as many as possible will come along to help make this a happy village event. Wrap up warm and be of good voice!





## Falcon Centre Improvements on the Way

In our last issue Melanie Dunnet described the Pre-School Playgroup's urgent plans to refurbish part of the Falcon Centre, mainly to bring the facilities there to a standard that would satisfy current Environmental Health requirements and enable the Playgroup to continue.

Shortly after we published this story things came to a dramatic head when Inspectors condemned that part of the building, at least for this type of children's activity.

Since then things have moved at a rapid pace and you may like to know what is happening.

Firstly, the County Council confirmed its plans to re-wire the entire building, install a fire alarm system, remove a small area of potentially dangerous asbestos and carry out a number of additional repairs, chiefly to sections of the floor.

Some urgent thinking followed and, thanks largely to County Councillor Paul Kelly, who agreed to dedicate money from his Councillor's Allowance for local projects to the scheme, plans were quickly drawn up to create an entirely new kitchen area towards the rear of the premises,

install a disabled toilet and progress the related refurbishment that the Playgroup had envisaged.

Of course that was only the beginning! The electrical contractors said they would be unable to progress the re-wiring unless the building was emptied and so the Playgroup and Toddler Group decamped to St Oswin's Church Hall and the Parish Council had to make urgent arrangements for the Railway Museum to be emptied by a specialist removal and storage company. It was fortunately conceded that the library books and shelves could stay, as long as they were all adequately covered, although it has of course meant that the library has had to close for the duration of the work.

We had hoped that a mobile library would serve the village during the closure but you may remember that Morpeth library was completely destroyed by the flooding in early September, a week or two prior to the Wylam developments, and this resulted not only in the loss of the whole Morpeth library but the Library Service distribution warehouse and one of the mobile library vehicles. In these circumstances we have had to accept the loss of alternative cover by mobiles.

The Parish Council is taking the opportunity to have the Museum re-decorated, as this would have been extremely difficult at any other time.

At the time of writing we are hopeful that the library will re-open on 23rd December but we cannot be certain that some delay will not creep in.

We hope that the Playgroup, Museum and Youth Club will be back to normal during January but estimates for the work in the Playgroup area have come in above expectations and so the committee is still having to chase funds to enable that part of the scheme to be completed. A delay until after Christmas now appears to be almost inevitable. Volunteers are invited to assist with the final redecoration of the Playgroup area - watch out for posters advising dates!

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## Play Areas

In addition to the children's play area on the Jubilee Field, which is managed by Wylam Playing Field Association, there are two other play areas in Wylam, one just off Hedley Road and the other at Hagg Bank. Since Milecastle Housing accepted responsibility for the Hedley Road site Wylam Parish Council has only been responsible for the area at Hagg Bank. Having said that, the Parish Council has been pressing Milecastle Housing for a long time to carry out repairs at Hedley Road, which have at last been completed with the painting of the apparatus.

We regret that at Hagg Bank the swings became broken and had to be taken out of use but the Parish Council are looking at ways of replacing this equipment and perhaps improving the site as a whole. Unfortunately, replacing like for like is not an option, as safety standards for this type of equipment have changed and, for example, it is no longer acceptable to have a swing with seats to suit differently aged children on the same frame.

We are currently looking for possible sources of grants to enable the Parish Council to achieve more with the money already available for this type of work. We apologise that, in the meantime, this facility is not all it might be.

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## Those Floods!

Saturday 6 September will be remembered by many in the village (and of course further afield) as "the day of the floods" and when the village became virtually cut off for a time. Unless you were in a large vehicle, the lower part of Holeyn Hall Road was flooded to a depth that made passage virtually impossible, a landslide between Hagg Bank and West Wylam led to the closure of that road and deep water once again blocked the road to Crawcrook, just south of Wylam.

On the north side of the village several residents on Holeyn Hall Road had water in their houses, much of which came from the Oakwood Burn which burst its banks and no doubt some in other parts of the village were affected to a greater or lesser extent.

The Holeyn Hall Road folk are very grateful to the many neighbours and people from elsewhere in the village who came to the rescue with a range of improvised dams and diversions to the water that did much to minimise the damage. Representatives of the Environment Agency have assessed what happened in this area and have pledged to take action to reduce the risk of this type of thing occurring again, although it has to be said that similar events have been experienced previously and promises have not always resulted in action!



The road just south of Hagg Bank became dangerous with a risk of the road subsiding towards the steep Dene to the west. At the time of writing the County Council are planning to make boreholes to assess the underlying ground conditions and decide the best long-term solution. At best they are hoping to re-open the road with one lane, using traffic priority signs, but even this is unlikely to be until early in the New Year.

Finally, Gateshead Council has improved the drainage at the low point on the road to Crawcrook and we can only hope that this will prove to be effective.

## Looking for Funds?

Community Action Northumberland in conjunction with the Community Foundation is encouraging all local community organisations to apply for a "Grassroots Grant". This fund has been developed in response to the diverse needs of community groups and can help to finance a wide range of projects including the purchase of equipment, hosting an event or community activity and even staff or training costs.

For more information, visit the Community Foundation website [www.communityfoundation.org.uk/](http://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/) home



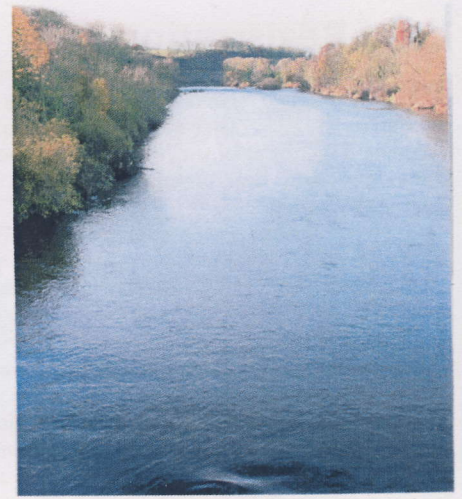
## A Smaller Parish?

Not we believe a devious plot by the Boundaries Commission but you may have noticed that a bit of Wylam has been lost, probably for ever.

For as long as many of us can remember, a little island with a few shrubs growing on it, just upstream from Wylam Bridge, had served as a good indicator of the level of water in the river. Then suddenly, on the weekend of 6/7 September, when the river was in spate, it vanished! Several people have commented that they have been saddened by the loss. These photos hopefully prove the case for anyone in doubt.



Now you see it . . . .



Now you don't . . . .

## Village Plan

How many of you can still put your hands on a copy of the Wylam Village Plan Report, shown below, which was published in 2003 and given to all households in Wylam? \*

Publication following a detailed analysis of facts and opinions within the village, mostly obtained through a questionnaire which nearly 70% of households kindly completed.

The intention expressed at the time was to review the Plan after four or five years and the Parish Council are currently at an early stage of starting on that process.

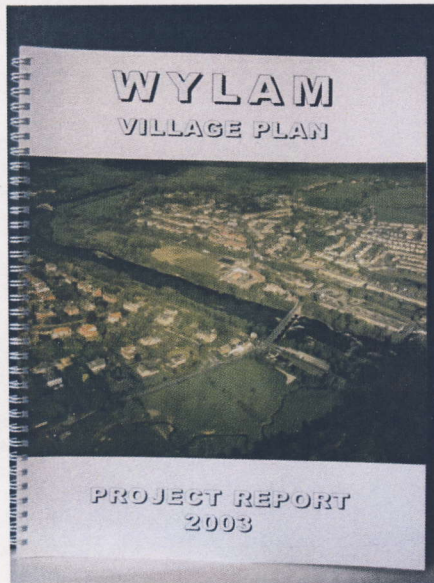
Five years ago we received a significant grant from the Countryside Agency but this time we may have to cover the cost ourselves. Nevertheless we will endeavour to plan our project carefully to maximise our resources and, as we did last time, will be seeking an active involvement from members of the community.

In the last issue of the "Wylam Globe" we published a proposed new remit for a re-established Environment Working Group, one of several things that had originally come out of the Village Plan but which had been suspended a year or two ago. We asked for comments and expressions of interest but sadly received just one!

We have therefore decided that the Parish Council will itself continue the process, which has never actually stopped, of trying to support and enhance our local environment wherever the need or opportunity is identified. We hope that a new questionnaire would enable us to obtain a clearer picture of what today's residents of Wylam really wish to see, and this will almost certainly be one focus of the questions.

It is expected to take a few months before we can get this process really underway but if you would like to help or get involve we would be pleased to hear from you. Please contact the Parish Council Office.

*\* If you have moved to Wylam within the last few years and maybe never had a copy of the 2003 Village Plan Report, or if you would simply like a new copy, we do have some in the office and they are now available free of charge!*



2003 Village Plan Report

## North End of the Bridge

In the Spring issue of "Wylam Globe" we asked for people's views about the small area of land on the north east corner of Wylam Bridge, which had become overgrown and was even encouraging fly-tipping.

Those who replied, mostly nearby residents, were adamant that they didn't wish to see a seat placed there but the Parish Council arranged to have the area cleaned up and, with the co-operation of Wylam Angling Club, who own the river bank, erected a fence at the top of the steep bank which should make it safer for families using the area. Tynedale Council staff are now mowing the area and we will try to see that the pleasant view of the river from this spot is maintained. We are very grateful to Tom Martin for his practical help in getting the remaining rough vegetation cleared.

## 90 Years of Remembrance

Many people have commented that attendances on Remembrance Sunday appear to have increased in recent years and this year, possibly in recognition of the 90th Anniversary of the end of the First World War but no doubt also in the knowledge of on-going sacrifices in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, the trend continued. Some 240 people, including many from the young people's uniformed organisations, packed into the Methodist Church for a service led by the Minister, Rev Maureen Lloyd. Most people then processed to the Village War Memorial where they were joined by a large number of others for the traditional Act of Remembrance which included "The Last Post", played beautifully for us this year by Helen Walker.

We are always pleased to welcome representatives of 39 Regiment Royal Artillery, based locally at Albemarle, although the current deployment of some of the Regiment in both Iraq and Afghanistan and others on leave having just returned, meant that only a few soldiers were available to come to Wylam.

We were also delighted that, for the first time this year, a wreath was laid by a representative of Northumbria Police, who for many years have kindly held back traffic for the ceremony and who particularly expressed the wish to take part this year in what they have often commented is recognisable in Wylam as a truly community event.

**Deadline for material for the March "Wylam Globe" is Saturday 28 February**



## Land Registration

As residents of Wylam we must surely be pleased that a number of mostly "green" areas within the village are owned by the Parish Council. There are actually a dozen or so such areas, including large parts of the land close to the river, part of Engine Dene, the land between Jackson Road and The Dene and Charlie's Corner.

Most of these were either given to the Parish Council many years ago or have been acquired over the years but all during a period when public registration of the ownership of land was not required.

Several months ago, encouraged by staff of the Regional Office of the Land Registry at Durham, we have been gradually registering each of these areas.

It's sometimes been a frustratingly slow process, normally requiring the original deeds to confirm ownership. A few of the deeds don't include a clear plan of the area and only a fairly vague description, which has created some difficulties.

However, only a couple of locations currently remain to be registered and we feel that the effort will prove worthwhile, preventing any dispute about ownership and ensuring that they remain available for the enjoyment of future generations of Wylam residents.

## Blocked Road Gullies

One of the on-going concerns that the Parish Council has been challenging the County Council about for a long time is the issue of blocked drain gullies, many of which periodically lead to puddles and even flooding of several roads around the village.

The current arrangement is for the gullies to be cleaned out once each year and our "turn" appears to be in the early autumn.

In the past the County Council has acknowledge that this frequency can cause problems. They have only a few machines to cover the whole County and yes, you've guessed, they haven't the money to do better.

After the most recent visit by the machine several gullies remained totally blocked (and not always where cars had been parked) and so this specific argument is being taken further.

The Parish Council has also sought the views of neighbouring parishes, which all appear to have similar experiences and, perhaps as a result of this concerted approach, the County Council has now agreed to re-assess locations where gullies block up frequently or where the flooding risk is greater, with the possibility of more frequent cleaning. However, it is claimed that this will require a reduction in the cleaning of gullies that generally remain clear and we cannot help wondering how effective this overall policy might be.

No doubt this will continue to be an issue that will run for a long time! Perhaps the new Unitary Council will do better?

## Community Week

*Sue Nicholson writes:-*

The first week in November proved to be a week of mixed fortunes for Community Week, although a total of approximately £1500 was raised for the Institute. We tried to provide something for everyone, but some of the events were unfortunately not well attended. One event had to be cancelled as it clashed with Bonfire Night celebrations and some of the others suffered because of conflicting parties which appeared to be spread over the whole week. Despite this, the Management Committee consider the week to have been a success and we are very grateful for the hard work put in by all who organised events and for the support of everyone who came along. However, we may need to rethink the timing of Community Week if it is to continue in future.

## Playgroup Fundraising

Our second page story refers to work in the Falcon Centre which includes an ambitious plan for the Playgroup area of that building. The need to raise money for this, together with high fixed costs and a relatively small intake of children this year means that fund raising is high on the Playgroup agenda.

The New Year will see collaboration with the Film Club, offering children the experience of the Saturday Matinee, probably enjoyed by their grandparents. The first offering is

"Wall-E" on 31 January, which follows the adventures of the last robot, abandoned on a dying earth. Details of subsequent films are included in the Forthcoming Events column.

Other events in the New Year will include a 50/60s disco on 7 February and a Birthday Party for everyone involved in the 40 years of Wylam Playgroup.

## Local Recycling

The Parish Council is planning to update and re-publish its "Green List" of local recycling initiatives. We are aware that many new and often creative ideas have sprung up, some within the village and others nearby. We are therefore asking residents for details of those who are collecting specific items or others in the vicinity who may want some of our waste. Please let us know.

In the meantime, the Parish Council is supporting several local initiatives. You may know that "tetrapaks" (the waxed containers used mainly for fruit juices) can now be recycled through the expanded site at West Wylam but, for those unable to easily get to this site, boxes will be placed in the Institute in which you will be able to place your FLATTENED tetrapaks, and these will be emptied on a regular basis. If this demonstrates a significant demand we may be able to make a case for our own tetrapak recycling facility.

For the first few weeks in January, there will also be Christmas card recycling boxes in the Institute in support of the 2009 Woodland Trust and "Recycle Now". Boxes will also be provided in TK Max, Marks & Spencer, WH Smith and Tesco. However, if you know of a more worthy local cause let us know and the cards will be taken there instead.

Finally, Wylam Nurseries are this year encouraging all of their Christmas tree customers to recycle their trees there. Trees may be left at the Nurseries between 5th and 12th January.

## Nature Notes

*Peter Clarke writes:-*

At least two delightful things have occurred in the last few weeks, both along the river bank towards Stephenson's Cottage. The first was a sighting of two kingfishers flitting above the bank and the second was an otter cavorting in the middle of the river opposite the cottage.

Some people have noticed that there are more coal tits about than long-tails. Do keep a lookout for this - it is an unusual ratio and worth noting.

You may also have realised that no grey squirrels have been seen, even where they were frequently visible before. Our intense interest must have driven them away, or they are hibernating!

Lastly, an appeal; a number of residents, with the very best intentions, have been putting food out in recent cold weather. Please do not do this. It attracts rats and mice rather more successfully than the more desirable species. Do carry on feeding, but on a table. It doesn't have to be a "proper" bird table; a board on a box does just as well. Thank you for your co-operation.

## Forthcoming Events

Film Club Programme (all at 7.30pm in the Institute)

**17 January** No Country for Old Men

**14 February** Away From Her

**21 March** All About My Mother

**25 April** Man On Wire

**16 May** Mama Mia

and, a new programme of Children's Matinees in conjunction with the Playgroup (all at 10.00am in the Institute)

**31 January** Wall-E

**28 February** Monsters Inc

**28 March** Shrek the Third

Other events (all in the Institute)

**10 January** - Playing Field Jumble Sale

**24 January** - Playing Field Burn's Night Ceilidh

**Thursdays 29 January to 19 February** - WI Soup Lunches

**7 February** 50/60s Disco organised by the Playgroup

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