

"WALK THE LINE"

Guided walks follow in the footsteps of railway pioneers – *see page 2*

WYLAM ON WHEELS

This year's event was a great success. Can you help organise in 2024? - see page 3

RIVER WATER SAMPLING

Results of the river water samples taken by the Clean Tyne Group – **see page 5**

COMMUNITY FLOOD GROUP

Our flood wardens were out and about during recent downpours – *see page 6*

NEW OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Wylam First School's new outdoor classroom is open! – **see page 7**

STATION CAR PARK

Northern Rail introduce parking charges at Wylam Station – *see page 8*



COVER PHOTO: The Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights), above the River Tyne viewed from Points Bridge on November 5th 2023 - credit: Paul Jones

THE NORTHERN LIGHTS SHINE BRIGHT ABOVE WYLAM

There were lights in the sky above Wylam on November 5th this year, but not the usual firework displays.

The Aurora Borealis, more commonly known as "The Northern Lights", like its southern counterpart, the Aurora Australis, is a visual phenomenon caused by the solar wind (particles coming from the

sun) interacting with the Earth's atmosphere. It is channelled to the polar regions by the Earth's magnetic field, with activity centering on the Arctic Circle at latitude 66° N. As such, it is more commonly seen in countries such as Norway, Iceland and Canada. Northumberland's latitude is much futher south, at 55°N.

Particularly intense solar winds on November 5th resulted in sightings much further south than usual, and those Wylam residents hardy enough to brave the near freezing conditions that night were treated to a wonderful display for a couple of hours before the cloud cover blocked them from view.

WALK THE LINE - GEORGE STEPHENSON'S BIRTHPLACE

Wylam Parish Council and the National Trust have worked together to create "Walk the Line – Wylam and George Stephenson's Birthplace", a monthly guided walking tour around the village to learn about the famous railwaymen who once called it home. Each walk follows in their footsteps and includes a visit to Wylam Railway Museum to learn more about their lives.

Displays at the Museum also tell the stories of three important railway lines in the area: the pre-steam wooden waggonway (which enabled coal to be transported from Wylam to staithes further down the Tyne), the Newcastle to Carlisle Railway (on which the current Wylam station is one of the oldest stations in the world still in use) and the North Wylam line (which closed in 1968 and now forms a cycleway and footpath).

The Museum also has displays focussing on the importance of Wylam in railway history. But why was the small village of Wylam at the very centre of railway history, and what was it about this place which inspired those young men?

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, industry across the U.K. was expanding rapidly, leading to an increased demand nationwide for coal.Interestgrewintryingtofindways to use steam power to move goods from one place to another. In 1804, Wylam colliery owner Christopher Blackett ordered a locomotive from Richard Trevithick, an inventor and mining engineer from Cornwall,



George Stephenson's Cottage

who had developed the world's first working steam locomotive. This commission ultimately failed, but it launched a series of revolutionary experiments in railway technology in and around Wylam, making our village a centre for pioneering work in railway engineering. Led by Blackett's manager William Hedley, enginewright Jonathan Forster and blacksmith Timothy Hackworth, attempts were made to build a new locomotive.

The trio were eventually successful in 1813, creating the now legendary *Puffing Billy*, the first commercial 'adhesion' steam locomotive which was used to haul coal to Lemington at the (then) impressive speed of 5mph. *Puffing Billy* was followed a couple of years later by the equally famous *Wylam Dilly*.

The displays at Wylam Railway Museum feature twelfth-scale working models of both *Puffing Billy* and *Wylam Dilly*. The original engines still exist and can be found at the Science Museum in London (*Puffing Billy*) and The National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh (*Wylam Dilly*).

As part of the guided walks, visitors can step inside the birthplace of Wylam's most famous son, George Stephenson. The whole Stephenson family lived in one cramped room of the cottage and horse-drawn waggons would have passed by, right outside the window, which must surely have had an influence on the young George who would go on to become world-famous as a railway engineer.

Nine guided walks took place in 2023. Each walk was fully booked, though there were some no-shows. Nonetheless, encouraged by the overall success of this year's walks, the National Trust and Wylam Parish Council plan to repeat them in 2024 with a modest charge to encourage people to honour their bookings.

The Parish Council also plans to set up a working group to guide the future of the Railway Museum, and to help plan celebrations for the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, for which George Stephenson surveyed the route and designed locomotives. We may also need new volunteers to run the guided walks.

If interested, please contact:

colinwylamparishcouncil@gmail.com

CLOCK CHIME UPDATE

In the previous issue of the Wylam Globe, we reported that the clock in the tower of St. Oswin's church was to be repaired, with a new electric motor being provided through Parish Council funding.

The new motor, driving the main action of the clock, was successfully installed, and the clock has been keeping time again since late Summer.

For a time, the sound of the quarter chimes and hour strikes rang out again across the village. Unfortunately this was short-lived - the motor which drives the quarter chimes began to cut out due to overheating. By carrying out some

maintenance on the motor it was possible to make it run again, but it appears that the motor is at the end of its life, and unlikely to function reliably for much longer.

An order has, therefore, been placed with the Cumbria Clock Company to replace the two motors which drive the quarter chimes and the hour strikes. Funding has been secured, and the work will be carried out as soon as it can be fitted into the contractor's schedule.

Until then, the sound of the clock chimes and hour strikes may be intermittent, but the time shown on the external dials of the clock will be accurate.



Part of the clock mechanism at St Oswin's Church

WYLAM ON WHEELS 2023 - ANOTHER GREAT SUCCESS

JOHN HANLEY



Refreshments and entertainment were provided for returning cyclists in the Jubilee Field

The Wylam on Wheels cycling event returned for a second year on Sunday 17th September and, like last year's event, was a great success.

This year, three road routes were available as well as an off-road route along the Waggonway, and over 200 cyclists took part. The event was intended to cater to all cycling abilities and to be inclusive as possible.

The 100km road route was extremely challenging and catered for the most experienced cyclists. Weather conditions on the day were poor in the most exposed sections of the course and participants had to demonstrate their endurance skills!

The 60km and 25km routes attracted a wide range of ages and abilities, including children as young as nine!



George and his mum Jenny took part

The Waggonway route catered for families with young children as well as disabled participants. A local charity, Smile Through Sport, provided adapted bikes which were very well received. A big thanks also to Newburn Leisure Centre again for the loan of their adapted bikes

too. Cycling Without Age provided their amazing trikes which can carry passengers.

On the road routes, feed stations manned by local volunteers provided welcome refreshments. When cyclists arrived back on the Playing Field they were treated to a delicious afternoon tea, with entertainment provided by by local musicians Hannah Stanton and the Wild Women of Wylam, who created a fantastic atmosphere.



Live music was provided by the Wild Women of Wylam

£5,522 was raised from the participation fees and by selling extra afternoon teas to non-cyclists. The costs of running the event were covered by our sponsors, Wylam Parish Council and, particularly, the Spar who provided significant sponsorship again this year. The money raised from the event will be used to support the upkeep of the Jubilee Playing Field in Wylam.

Many thanks to everyone who helped with the planning and delivery of the event. Members of the local cycling group, The Wylam Sprockets, planned the routes and publicity. Dozens of local volunteers contributed to the marshalling, baking and serving of refreshments.

So many people contributed to make the event such a success. Members of Wylam Community Playing Fields Association were up at the crack of dawn to get the field ready for the day. Gillian Thomson and Frances Slowie organised the Waggonway event and Wylam Guides provided wonderful signage along the Waggonway.



Wylam Guides made signage for the Waggonway event

Thanks also to Adrian Dalton and Mike Dibb-Fuller (who spent hours putting up the signage and organising the marshals), to David Grainger (who designed and revised the routes when there was a last minute road closure) and to Sarah Grainger and her team of volunteers.

We must make a special shout-out to the members of Wylam Womens Institute who produced another fantastic afternoon tea which was consumed with relish by the hungry cyclists.

Thanks also to the Fox & Hounds for allowing us access to their beer garden.

Wylam on Wheels is now well established in the village and regional cycling calendars with lots of volunteer support, but we need a small organising committee to step in for next year. Please come forward if you can help. You don't need to be a cyclist!

E-mail us at: wylamplayingfield@gmail.com



Marshalls directed cyclists throughout the route

JUBILEE PLAYING FIELD WINTER UPDATES

Winter is a busy time for us while we focus on fundraising with the ever popular Jumble Sale, the Burns Night Ceilidh and a Music Quiz to enjoy before the light nights are back.

It's also time to start planning for the Summer Fair and we'll be booking entertainment, caterers and stall holders.

We continue to develop and maintain the Jubilee Field and its facilities with the money we raise. One project we completed this summer was the installation of electric shutters on the pavilion which have completely transformed the kitchen into a light, airy space. It was so much nicer making all those sandwiches for Wylam on Wheels with a lovely view of the cyclists. We are grateful to the Northumberland County Council Community Chest Fund for their contribution. Our next project will be to install new doors.

We also urgently need to find a solution to the damaged tractor shed, but we're really struggling to resource this from within our tiny committee. Could anybody spare some time for this one-off project? We want to look at the overall costs and benefits of

owning and maintaining buildings, machinery and equipment for grass cutting versus using external contractors and also develop a specification for a replacement shed.

If you have some skills which could help us please contact:

wylamplayingfield@gmail.com *

or on Facebook:

f wylamjubileefield

And lastly, a huge thank you to the Wylam on Wheels team. What a brilliant day it was! There is so much enthusiasm for this event now that we would love to make it a permanent fixture. But we need a new organising team to take it forward. Again, if you can help us, please get in touch.

Here are the important 2024 dates for your diaries:

Jumble Sale – **Sat 13th Jan** Burns Night Ceilidh – **Fri 26th Jan** Music Quiz – **Fri 1st Mar** Summer Fair – **Sat 22nd Jun**

* for more information and advance ticket sales contact us via our email address. Both the Ceilidh and the Music Quiz sold out within a week last year! You can also contact us to join the mailing list.



New electric shutters are in place at the pavilion

"FIX MY STREET"

You can now report any problems with streets in Northumberland direct to the County Council via their website. This offers a fast and accurate way to report issues such as pot holes, fly tipping, broken paving slabs, damaged road signs, street lamp failure, dog fouling and many more. Please visit:

https://fix.northumberland.gov.uk

You can also download an app, "Fix My Street" to your phone which makes for ease of reporting problems when you are on the move.

Northumberland County Council (NCC) will investigate the problem and, if you have ticked the appropriate box, send you alerts relating to it.

As with the website, you can report anything through the app from potholes, blocked drains and faulty street lighting to fly tipping, un-emptied bins and bus stop issues.

If you consider the problem to be dangerous or an emergency, you should immediately call NCC on:

0345 6006 400

ROAD SAFETY IN WYLAM

The Parish Council's Road Safety Working Group met in November. It noted the priorities for action in 2024-25 as submitted to Northumberland County Council (NCC) in August as part of the Local Transport Plan process. Informal feedback from highway engineers at a recent meeting was that all three priorities submitted were under discussion internally at NCC.

The three priorities are:

- Speed limit reduction and traffic calming measures along Wylam Wood Road
- Speed control measures at, and in the vicinity of, the shops on Main Road
- Improving pedestrian safety in the vicinity of the Fox and Hounds

We will keep up the pressure to get full responses to our submissions, and also monitor ongoing issues raised with NCC, notably the speed of traffic on Holeyn Hall Road and on the B6528 at its junction with Holeyn Hall



Speed limit changes on Wylam Wood Rd. have been proposed as part of the LTP

Road at the top of the hill.

Please get in touch with our Clerk (details on **page 8**) for more information or to raise issues relating to road safety with us.

There will be a consultation by the Parish Council on road safety issues in 2024 as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, so look out for news on this in the new year.

GREEN MATTERS WITH WOOD

Any
handy sustainable
hints to share? Contact
Lynne Wood on 01661
852714

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY IN WYLAM

Climate change can have a devastating effect on the lives of children and car emissions, in particular, may cause serious health problems and even be fatal.

As individuals, however, we can can take small steps to lessen these harmful effects. Here are some suggestions:

- Turn off your ignition when waiting at the level crossing
- Adhere to 20mph limits in the village
- Change to an electric car
- Car share for your journey to work
- Cycle, walk or take public transport where possible



Switching off your ignition whilst waiting at the level crossing is a way to help to improve air quality

CLEAN TYNE GROUP: RESULTS OF RIVER SAMPLING

JENNIFER POWER

Since our article in the Summer Globe, volunteers from Wylam Clean Tyne Group have been out in all weathers sampling river water. We have been looking for levels of the gut bacteria *Escherichia coli*, or *E.coli* for short, which typically comes from human or cow faeces. Finding traces of *E.coli* can help to identify sewage pollution in the river.

The volunteers were led by local biologist, Dr Mike Dibb-Fuller who advised on the best times and places to take samples. We were fortunate to have funding from a charity, Woodleigh Impact, which enabled us to have 36 samples analysed in an independent, accredited lab.



Chris Brogan samples the River Tyne at Points Bridge

We took samples on six occasions during the Summer and Autumn at six different locations on the Tyne between Bywell and Wylam Bridge. Three spots were chosen because they are downstream of the Combined Sewer Overflows on this stretch of river. When it rains heavily,

the overflows open, discharging a mix of raw sewage and storm water into the river. We were able to compare *E.coli* levels in samples taken during dry weather with those taken after heavy rainfall, when sewer outflows are more likely.



A sewer overflow emptying into the River Tyne

RESULTS

The Environment Agency classifies water quality as "good" if the E.coli level is below 900 cfu/100mls [cfu = coliform forming units]. Our results showed that in dry weather, the water quality was good or excellent around Wylam. But after heavy local rain, the water quality was horrendous. One sample found *E.coli* levels thirteen times higher than they should be, greatly surpassing the safety levels set by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs (DEFRA) for bathing water quality. In other words, the river was awash with sewage after rainfall.

We had very good attendance at a public meeting at Wylam Institute on November 7th at which Mike presented the results. He showed that the exceptionally high levels of *E.coli* were best explained by raw sewage running out of the Combined Sewer Outflows on rainy days. The unpleasant findings from our results were shared locally through the Hexham Courant and even via Tweets from Feargal Sharkey.

Groups from Hexham and Haltwhistle have approached us, intending to start their own Citizen Science sampling of the Tyne. This is great news, as the more evidence of river pollution that can be gathered, the more Northumbrian Water will be under pressure to upgrade sewage systems. We are also involved with Wylam Parish Council and Prudhoe Town Council to ensure that River



A public meeting took place at Wylam Institute

Health is included in their Village and Town Plans.

You can follow Wylam Clean Tyne Group on Facebook and Instagram at Clean Tyne Wylam or please get in touch:

drstephenwestgarth@gmail.com

AN UPDATE FROM WYLAM COMMUNITY FLOOD GROUP

Wylam's Community Flood Group now boasts nine Volunteer Flood Wardens.

We are the Environment Agency's eyes on the ground. During recent heavy rainfall, we were out and about – some of us in our special blue high-viz jackets – monitoring and reporting blocked drains and flooded areas.

Our activity begins when the Environment Agency sends a Flood Advisory Message, meaning that flooding is possible, to the Lead Warden, who then alerts all Volunteer Wardens. Those available will then check and monitor vulnerable areas, river and burn levels and report blocked drains. We also have a list of Emergency contact telephone numbers.

As we are a Community Flood Group, we include Crawcrook Lane at its junction with Sled Lane in our monitoring, even though this area is technically in Gateshead. As you will know, and the photo below shows, this area becomes almost impassable during heavy rain, as the Bradley Burn overflows and turns the lower end of Sled Lane into a river. During recent flooding, we were in touch with Gateshead Council to report the problem. We also reported a number of blocked drains using the Fix My



A flood warden monitors the situation on Crawcrook Lane Street App (see article on **page 4**).

The Community Flood Group is keen to liaise with any residents who feel especially vulnerable – please let us know via Wylam Parish Council if you feel you need extra support and



Our flood wardens check drains around Wylam during heavy rain and report any blockages

advice.

Colin Hall, the Environment Agency Community Engagement Officer for Northumberland can provide further information on creating a Personal Flood Plan and advice on which flood protection products to install.

Colin can be contacted at:

colin.hall@environment-agency.gov.uk

You can also sign up to the EA's Flood Warning Service at:

www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS ANNUAL CONFERENCE



The meeting took place at County hall in Morpeth on 5th October 2023

The Parish Council Clerk, Tracey Wood, and Chair, Diana Carney attended this conference, organised by the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, which took place at County Hall on 5th October 2023.

Prior to the main event, councillors and clerks were able to browse the large number of stalls hosted by Northumberland County Council (NCC) officers, including Highways and Road Safety, Planning, Electoral Services, Environment, Cycling Initiatives and Communities Together. The opportunity to speak to NCC staff face-to-face was very much appreciated and some useful contacts and information were secured.

In addition to the stalls, there were two workshops. A speaker from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) outlined the support available to Town and Parish Councils and highlighted the Local Council Award Scheme and NALC's Civility and Respect Pledge, both of which Wylam Parish Council intends

to explore in the coming year. The second workshop showcased the Fix My Street App (see the article on **page 4**).

During the formal conference session, Nick Johnston, Senior Project Manager for Climate Change, spoke about NCC's initiatives to combat the current Climate Emergency. This was followed by a presentation from Paul Jones, Director of Local Services on highway projects throughout the County, including restoration of the Union Chain Bridge over the River Tweed. This is a Historic Civil Engineering Site, as is our own Points Bridge at Hagg Bank.

Glen Sanderson, Leader of the County Council, had opened the Conference looking towards a future vision for Northumberland. At its conclusion, he opened the floor to questions, asking what NCC could do better to support local councils. The consensus among delegates was that the Conference had been very worthwhile and that it should be held twice a year rather than just annually.

LEST WE FORGET

DOUG HAMILTON



Wylam's War Memorial was unveiled in 1923

The Remembrance Sunday ceremony this November marked 100 years since the War Memorial in Wylam was first unveiled in 1923. It may surprise some to know, however, that the ceremony hasn't taken place each and every year since then.

On Sunday 11th November 1984, a commemorative service took place at the War Memorial in Wylam. This was the first time such a memorial had taken place in Wylam in more than ten years.

Shortly after their arrival in the village in 1983, the Vicar of St. Oswin's Church, Rev. David Wood, and the Methodist minister, Rev. Malcolm Adams, expressed a wish that such a service should take place each year, to reflect the community's acknowledgment of the sacrifices made by local men and women during the two World Wars.

This wish was supported by the Parish Council, who were responsible for maintaining the Memorial.

The War Memorial itself was unveiled in 1923 by C.W.J. Blackett, costing £700, which was raised by public subscription. In 2017 Historic determined that England Memorial should be designated a Grade II listed structure.

The War Memorial carries the names of 42 people from the Wylam area who died in the 1914-18 war. with a further two names recorded at the Falcon Centre. 44 deaths is a huge number for a small community.

A further 11 names of those who

died in the 1939-45 Second World War also appear on the War Memorial.

On each Remembrance Sunday since 1984 the access roads through the village have been closed and the noise of traffic stilled. A cross leads the way, followed by flags, marching soldiers, Wylam's uniformed youth organisations and the worshippers from the church service. These services are held alternatively at St. Oswin's and the Methodist Church. Other villagers, young and old, join as they all walk slowly and solemnly down to the Memorial, with one intent - "We will remember them".

JOIN OUR LITTER PICKS IN 2024

Our organised litter picks will resume in 2024. Please join us to help keep Wylam looking its very best.

We meet in the old station car park and divide into groups to collect as much litter and detritus as we can. All equipment, including gloves and litter pickers will be provided.

Our annual village litter pick will take place on Sat 16th March 2024. Other dates will be publicised on our Facebook page:



Wylam Parish Council

WYLAM FIRST SCHOOL'S NEW **OUTDOOR CLASSROOM**



Pupils enjoy the new wooden outdoor classroom

Pupils at Wylam First School were greeted with a new and exciting space to learn and relax when they returned to school in September.

Wylam First School PTA held a host of events to help raise money to fund the creation of an outdoor classroom. The PTA were given an extra helping hand by Wylam Parish Council who donated £5,000 to the project.

The wooden structure which can accommodate a whole class of pupils is set overlooking the beautiful Tyne Valley and Wylam Community Orchard.

The project was thought up by children at the school. The School Council carried out research into possible options and it was decided that an outdoor space which could be used for learning, as well as a place for children to take time to relax and reflect, would be the most beneficial option. Members of the School Council officially opened the classroom during their Harvest Festival celebrations. It was dedicated to the memory of Tom Martin in recognition of the time he spent visiting the school and teaching them about the importance of wildlife and the local environment.

WYLAM BOUNDARY SIGN PLACEMENT

Visitors to Wylam are greeted by our three wonderful stove-enamelled signs on Station Road, Ovingham Road and Holeyn Hall Road.

The signs, which depict Puffing Billy, were originally manufactured and installed in 1981, then refurbished in 1994, when planters were added to two of the plinths.

They were produced as a set of four, and we have the fourth sign in storage - it was never installed.

If you have suggestions as to where we could place it - perhaps on the waggonway, or at the station please contact our Clerk, Tracey (details on page 8).



One of the signs on Station Road

OUR NEW PARISH COUNCILLOR



Lizzie Barker has joined Wylam Parish Council

At its ordinary meeting on Monday 9th October 2023, Parish Councillors voted to co-opt Lizzie Barker to Wylam Parish Council.

"I have lived in Wylam for the last 5 years and feel really lucky to be

ENTER OUR COVER PHOTO COMPETITION!

Why not enter the Wylam Globe cover photo competition?

Congratulations to **Paul Jones** who was the winner for this issue.



Photos should be:

- Taken in, or around, Wylam
- · Ideally landscape orientation
- JPEG or PSD format, with as high resolution as possible (300 ppi +)
- · Colour or black & white
- Your own work (no copyright images)
- Not manipulated (beyond minor retouch)
- Not containing identifiable persons

Please send entries to the Parish Council Clerk via email (see information to the right of this page)

Parish Councillors will choose a winning entry prior to publication of the next issue of The Wylam Globe. Note that there is no prize.

part of such a vibrant community in a really beautiful part of the world. I appreciate the abundance of natural assets we have locally including varied walking routes, Howdene and beaches on the Tyne. I have two young children who attend Wylam First School and Explorers, and as a family we are members of the Community Orchard.

I became interested in joining the Parish Council when I saw that they were planning to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for Wylam and felt that this could be something I could help with.

I am keen to use some of the ideas around asset-based community development that I have recently been applying in my role as a palliative care doctor in relation to Compassionate Communities and how these can be used to support people experiencing death, dying, loss and caregiving.

In my role as a Parish Councillor I would like to try and hear and then represent the diverse range of interests and priorities that people living in Wylam have."

We are delighted to have Lizzie join us, and feel sure that her skills and experience will bring great value to the team.

PARISH COUNCIL VACANCIES

We still have vacancies for two new members on Wylam Parish Council.

If, like Lizzie, you would like to get involved in helping your community by becoming a Parish Councillor, please contact our Clerk, Tracey Wood (details in adjoining column).

EXTENSION OF PSPO FOR WYLAM

Northumberland County Council has extended the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering Wylam village and riverside which was first put into effect in October 2020 for a period of 3 years.

The PSPO prohibits consumption of alcohol in public spaces, and was intended to combat the antisocial behaviour we experienced during the early days of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The PSPO has been extended for a further 3 years, from 21st October 2023 until 21st October 2026.

PARKING AT WYLAM STATION



New signage at Wylam Station Car Park

On 11th December 2023, Northern Rail introduced parking charges at Wylam Station. Northern Rail have advised that their intention is to ensure the car park is used primarily by rail users.

A daily parking charge of £1.00 will apply, with an option to pay £0.50 for a two hour stay. No machines will be installed, so payments must be made via the RingGo app. Failure to pay will result in a £50 penalty charge.

The Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership (TVRCP) and Wylam Parish Council intend to monitor the situation and understand the impact that the new charges may have on the village and rail users.

GET IN TOUCH!

We'd love to hear from you!

Please contact:

Tracey Wood

Clerk to the Parish Council



<u>clerkwylamparishcouncil@</u> gmail.com

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Designed and edited by:

Martyn Jones

Printed for Wylam Parish Council by:

Robson Print Hexham, NE46 3PU