

HILL TALK

A Village Partnership and Parish Council joint publication

December 2012
Issue 4



'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers'



NATURE DIARY

You may well have seen me walking round Crowtrees LNR with a pair of binoculars, a long-lensed camera and oh yes, the dogs. I love this place as I enjoy watching its wildlife. Birds are my main interest and altogether I have seen over 70 species in and around the Reserve. Some it is true have been "one-offs" but many are regulars that I see time and again.



Of course, so far as birds are concerned, seasons play a part in what you will see. A swallow will only be seen in the summer and a fieldfare in the winter but many are here all year round. I have written a feature for Bowburn Interchange for some time now. I have been asked if I can do a feature for Quarrington Hill as well and I am delighted to do so. It will mostly feature birds but I will also cover other wildlife as and when I see it.

So what is in the Reserve at the moment? The ponds are of course a prominent feature in the Reserve. They have been quite quiet this year but there is still life there. The past few winters I have found a small secretive bird there on a regular basis, the jack snipe. Usually staying put until

I have also now found the jack snipe's larger cousin, the snipe at the ponds. Two birds have been there this month. Apart from size, the main feature of the Snipe is its very long bill.

Another bird you can often see on the ponds is the moorhen. A small black bird with white trims on its flanks and tail feathers and a red bill, this is a regular sight swimming in a bobbing fashion. Its larger cousin, the coot, has been missing for much of this year. But hopefully more birds will visit during the winter, even if only for a short time.

I look forward to making this a regular feature with updates as to what is in and around the Reserve.

COMMUNITY CENTRE.....PROGRESS REPORT

At the beginning of November, the installation of the new community centre kitchen was finally completed and initial comments have been extremely favourable. There is now more space to move around and also more storage space, including a separate fridge and freezer. The first test was the night of the fireworks display and the new facilities coped very well in meeting the demand for hotdogs and refreshments. We are extremely grateful for the many hours of hard work put in by two members who undertook the tiling and painting and thereby provided the finishing touches to the new kitchen. We are also appreciative of the East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership which provided the funding.

Durham County Council has given the management committee a copy of the proposed new lease and also business plan which they require to be completed. Work has started on addressing these issues.

At the same time, work has started on drawing up a scheme for further improvements to the community centre. This includes modifications to the former football changing rooms and facilities out the back. On one side there will be a large storage room, and on the other, a room which could be used for meetings and small group activities. There will be improvements to the building insulation and upgrading of the lighting to a more energy efficient system. Finally, the main hall will be re-decorated and new curtains fitted. We will have to apply to outside funders for the means for all this to be achieved, but are optimistic.

SCHOOL BANNER

Recently the children at Cassop Primary School have enjoyed designing and creating a new centenary banner. The Quarrington Hill Banner group started with some stories from the past which inspired the children with their designs. The children then worked with a local artist to design and create a new banner which merges the old with the new. There are scenes from the mining industry and the 1912 football team in black and white whilst a colourful street party from the present day forms the centre piece.

All the children enjoyed having the opportunity to work alongside such inspirational professionals and they are looking forward to seeing the finished article in school.

A very big 'Thank you' to the Quarrington Hill Banner group!

CAROL SERVICE

Tuesday 18th December at 7.30pm
in the Community Centre

Everyone welcome
Homemade mince pies and mulled wine
available afterwards

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Saturday 15th December 3.00pm to 5.00pm
in the Community Centre

YOUTH CLUB

Mondays 4.00pm - 5.30pm
in the Community Centre

POLICE REPORT

Over the recent period it has been identified through our village PACT meetings, which are very well attended, that we have had problems within Crowtrees Nature Reserve with anti-social behaviour. The Neighbourhood Police team have showed an increased presence within the area and the problem seems to have improved greatly. The other issue which has been brought to our attention is the fact that residents have reported vehicles travelling at excess speed along the Front street heading towards Cassop. This has been addressed by the neighbourhood team running several speed watch operations as well as the Police Road Policing Unit providing a presence which has led to several tickets and warning being issued. I would also like to take this opportunity to remind residents that the next PACT meeting will be held on the 8th January 2013.

NEW PARISH COUNCILLOR

George Shotton has resigned from Coxhoe Parish Council due to ill health. At the October meeting of the Parish Council, Ron Carr was co-opted onto the Parish Council to represent Quarrington Hill. Ron, who moved into the village a year ago, previously lived in Coxhoe for twenty years.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WARDEN SERVICES

At a recent PACT (Police and Communities Together) meeting, residents expressed concern over the amount of litter and dog poo left in parts of the village and the apparent lack of sightings in the village of the neighbourhood warden services. These problems are being taken up with the appropriate personnel. However, it is the responsibility of residents to report any such incidents if they are of concern. The telephone number is 0191 527 5047. Dog owners can be liable for a £80 fine if they do not clean up after their dogs. Everyone should want a clean and tidy village, and this can only be achieved if residents play their part. Ideally, these problems should not arise, but if they do, residents should report them when they arise in order to get an improvement in the service being provided.

All residents are welcome at PACT meetings and they are an opportunity for residents to raise concerns about police and neighbourhood issues. The next one is scheduled for 8th January 2013 at 6.30pm in the community centre; meetings usually last about half an hour.

VILLAGE PARTNERSHIP

The responses by residents to Coxhoe Parish Council's Parish Plan 2 questionnaire highlighted the lack of environmental improvements throughout the village and also the need for improved play equipment for younger children in the area behind the community centre. We are pleased to announce that both projects are being progressed.

Environmental Improvements. Comments have been made that compared to Cassop, Q'hill is unattractive. Our aim is not to be as good as Cassop, but to be better. Two meetings have been held with Durham County Council representatives on drawing up an overall environmental improvement scheme for the village. They are working on drawing up three possible schemes, which when finalised will be available for residents' comments in the community centre one Saturday morning next year. The project will have a theme going through the village and priority will be given to developing a focal point on the green areas opposite the community centre.

Playpark. Details of equipment have been received from four suppliers, since when two have merged. The project is being held back because of a DCC assessment of outside play areas which should be completed early next year. There will be consultation with residents before any decision is taken on the final scheme.

Both these projects will require funding from third parties for their completion to be achieved, and this will take some time.

Membership. We would like to have more residents on the management committee; there will be an annual general meeting early in 2013 when a new committee will be elected. This will be an opportunity for residents to become more involved in developing future schemes for the village. Anyone interested please contact Keith Pounder on 377 3611.

THE BUSES

As mentioned in the previous edition of Hill Talk, 28th October saw no fewer than over 2,000 changes to bus time tables throughout the county. In the case of our village it was good-bye Arriva and welcome Scarlet Band. However, the changeover did not go as smoothly as hoped for, with users experiencing several teething problems. Hopefully, these problems are being solved and the service is settling down. On the positive side it appears that the drivers are more customer orientated and the lower fares are most welcome.

A negative at the moment, is that there is no Sunday service. However, it is **hoped** shortly to have a Sunday service from Cassop, through Quarrington Hill, Kelloe, Coxhoe, Bowburn and Durham, going on to the University Hospital and the Arnison Centre. This service will be funded by Coxhoe, Cassop cum Quarrington and Kelloe Parish Councils and also by County Councillors Dennis Morgan, Maria Plews, Mac Williams and Jan Blakey. It will be imperative that this service is used, as long term funding cannot be guaranteed if the service is not used. The service number will be 59.

BLOOMING Q'HILL

Quarrington Hill residents have been successful in this year's Durham in Bloom competition organised by Durham County Council as part of the city's entry into the Northumbria in Bloom competition.

The category for the Best Front Garden (as seen from the road or path) was won by Joe Robinson. Enid and Clive Lawson were winners in the Best Allotment or Kitchen Garden category.

Congratulations to them.

VOLUNTEER DAY 16 NOVEMBER 2012

Our local Countryside Ranger John Olley arranged with Deb Meynell of the Foundation Group for young volunteers to come to plant some hedging trees on 16 November.

The youngsters planted a number of trees next to the bus shelter at the entrance to Quarrington Hill by the King's Wood. The trees are native ones and will provide an additional haven for wildlife in the future. In addition, they planted a young oak to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee year. Work progressed so well that John had to find more work for the youngsters – clearing the paths and steps of vegetation.

Coffee and ham and peas pudding butties were the youngsters' reward, who said they were keen to get involved in further projects in the County.

FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR

A fine autumn evening on 5th November saw a bigger and even better fireworks display with bigger bangs and a more colourful display than in previous years. Once again there was a substantial increase in the numbers attending, thanks partly to Durham County Council moving their display from Aykley Heads to Beamish Museum; as this will be a permanent move, we look forward to a further increased attendance again next year. The evening was the first test of the new kitchen which passed with flying colours; more hotdogs, broth and refreshments were consumed than in previous years and it is difficult now to see how the ladies in the kitchen would have coped in its predecessor. Judging from the comments on Facebook the next day, everyone had thoroughly enjoyed the display.

Special thanks are due to those who had to work on the evening, especially the team setting off the fireworks and the ladies working in the kitchen. The management committee would like to thank Edward Plant and his son-in-law Lee for their kind donations towards the cost of the fireworks, and finally the residents for their continual support for this event.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

The annual Remembrance Day service took place at the war memorial in the community centre grounds on 9th November. At a well attended service, the children from Cassop School laid crosses in memory of those from the village who gave their lives whilst serving our country.

Among those laying wreaths were the Mayor of Durham, Councillor John Wilkinson and County Councillor Dennis Morgan. County Councillors Maria Plews and Mac Williams were also in attendance. The service was conducted by Father John of Christ the King Church in Bowburn.

Once again the service was organised by Clive Lawson.

AAP UPDATE

The Forum meeting of the East Durham Rural Corridor AAP was held on 7th November 2012 at Trimdon Station Community Centre. As always the event was open to all people who live in, work in or represent the AAP area. The event was attended by 50 people including Board Members and staff, some of which were new to the AAP and have subsequently signed up as Forum Members.

Attendees at the event were asked to vote on their top three priorities from a list of eight provided from previous consultation and suggestions from Forum Members. Voting took place using a clear and open process and attendees ranked the eight priority choices as follows:

Activities for Children and Young People (20 votes) Employment and Job Prospects (19 votes) Education and Training (7 votes) Transport, Traffic Management and Highways (11 votes) Crime and Community Safety (2 votes) Environmental Issues (10 votes) Health and Wellbeing (11 votes) Community Aspiration (22 votes)

The Board will now meet at a Special meeting on 5th December 2012 to discuss the priorities for the next financial year and associated Area Budget allocation. We're always looking for new Members to join the Forum and if you'd like to become involved please contact Jane Bellis on 03000 261129/ jane.bellis@durham.gov.uk.



Delivering Quality Services to
Coxhoe & Quarrington Hill

Coxhoe Parish Council – Information Point

This issue of Hill Talk ties in with a change in the seasons and the completion of our second Parish Plan which reflects all the work in recent months with the communities in Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill to ensure we have a plan that will direct and influence the work of the Parish Council and its partners in the coming months and years. The Christmas lights on the new tree in front of the Community Centre have just been switched on and the Parish Council given the time of the year is looking at ways of working with Durham County Council in relation to winter maintenance, more details below:-

Clearing snow and gritting paths - can you help

The Parish Council is exploring ways of working in partnership with Durham County Council to improve the level of snow clearing and gritting in Quarrington Hill. The way the partnership would work is that Durham County Council provides the salt, necessary equipment and training, with the Parish Council co-ordinating volunteers in Quarrington Hill who will give a little of their time when required. As the Parish Council does not have a workforce that can be deployed there is a need for local volunteers, therefore if you are interested please contact the Parish Clerk on 07988 283287, or at clerk@coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Disclaimer: - The information in this newsletter is correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of going to print. Quarrington Hill Village partnership accepts no responsibility for any error, omission, subsequent changes and complaints arising from items printed in this newsletter. The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the Village partnership or the Parish Council

