

# HILL TALK

A Village Partnership and Parish Council Joint Publication

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Issue 8



## COMMUNITY CENTRE

It is nearly two years since Durham County Council announced that it would only be providing limited funding to some community buildings. At that time our community centre was number 23 out of 36 buildings in which DCC said that they would continue to invest. As residents will be aware from previous editions of Hill Talk, DCC wants the management committee to take over full responsibility for the community centre on behalf of the community. The means of achieving this will be an asset transfer of the building to the management committee. For nearly two years discussions have taken place between the management committee and DCC. DCC requires the management committee to produce a 5 year business plan for the community centre and also adopt several policies to ensure that the management committee can be deemed competent to manage the centre. It has also been necessary to change the Community Association, which is a registered charity, to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The final stages of the process have now been reached, and negotiations have commenced on a new full repair and insuring lease. It is hoped that completion will take place by Easter.

Residents should be aware that without the management committee agreeing to the asset transfer, the community centre would have probably had to close. The management committee are very grateful for the support which the centre and its activities receive from residents, and this will be even more necessary in the future.

Mention has also been made in previous editions of Hill Talk of the management committee's plans to improve the facilities of the community centre, and making it meet the 21 century needs of users. The management committee are pleased to inform residents that the plans have been finalised and a builder chosen after a tendering process. An application to fund the improvements has been made, and the funder will make a decision during March. Hopefully, the application will be successful and the work will take place during the summer. Unfortunately, the community centre will have to close for 3-4 weeks whilst the work takes place.

Separately, new double glazing windows will be fitted in the next few weeks.

## QUARRINGTON HILL VILLAGE PARTNERSHIP THE EARLY YEARS

Ten years ago Coxhoe Parish Council decided to undertake a Community Appraisal and Parish Plan for Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill, which became the Parish Action Plan for the period 2004-2010. The Plan was a genuine attempt by the Parish Council to inspire the community to develop in the way that residents requested through community consultation. The Parish Council organised meetings with residents to ascertain how they would like the village to develop, identify key facilities and services, setting out problems that needed to be tackled, and demonstrating how the village's distinctive character and features could be preserved. **There was a need to establish a residents' group or community partnership in the village to provide residents invaluable input into all aspects of village life, and more importantly, only they can access the voluntary funding which is not available to councils.** The residents who were involved in the meetings then became a formal group, and Quarrington Hill Village Partnership was founded.

One of its first jobs was to distribute and then collect the Parish Plan questionnaires from households; the response rate was an astonishing 57%. In the early days and months the members of the management committee were on a steep learning curve in trying to respond to the aspirations and ambitions of residents.

After much hard work by everyone involved, progress was achieved. This included the founding of the Quarrington Hill Village News, planting of flower beds in the centre of the village, forming a youth club, initiating an annual Christmas party for the children, involvement with introducing traffic calming features to the village, and providing a children's playpark at the top end of the football pitch.

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### AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIP

The It's Up 2 U Participatory Budgeting event held in Sedgefield at the end of November resulted in success for the two funding applications from our village. The community centre was awarded funding for new double glazing for the windows, and the youth club was awarded funding for its activities for this year. Thanks are due to all the residents who travelled to Sedgefield and voted for these projects, which ensured that the funding was achieved. Following the Forum voting at Sedgefield, the Board has adopted the following priorities for 2014-15:-

Activities for Children and Young People  
Health and wellbeing merged with Older People  
Crime and Community Safety will run alongside both task groups

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## NATURE DIARY Richard Cowen

The House Sparrow is of course a familiar bird with all of us. Or at least, it should be. This bird, once present in practically all gardens throughout the UK, has now disappeared from many parts of the country. So drastic has been its reduction in numbers that it has been “red listed” by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and studies have been undertaken to try to find out why numbers have crashed so dramatically.

However, in this area, we have tended to buck the national trend. House Sparrow is still quite common in our gardens. A dominant male, with his grey crown and black bib, can be a surprisingly handsome little bird. The female is not so striking, streaky brown all over as she is. But how tragic would it be if this bird suddenly became as rare in this area as it is in so many others? How would we miss the chirps and the squabbling as they fight for food or the attention of a female?

Then of course there is its cousin, the slightly smaller Tree Sparrow. This is a farmland rather than garden bird and numbers have crashed in many parts of the country to an even greater extent than those of House Sparrows. But again in this area we have bucked the trend and Tree Sparrow can often be seen in our gardens with the House Sparrow, so long as we live in a rural area close to farmland. Quarrington Hill is lucky in this respect, although this bird will probably only come into gardens on the edge of the village.

Unless you have a very good eye, you probably will not notice the difference in size between the two birds. But Tree Sparrow is chestnut coloured on its crown and down the back of its neck. In addition, it has a prominent black spot on each cheek. Both sexes are the same in colour so you cannot separate them by eye.

Tree Sparrows may be smaller than House Sparrows but that does not mean they cannot fend for themselves. I have both species come to the feeders in my garden, frequently feeding together harmoniously. However, if there is an argument, I rarely see the Tree Sparrow back off first.

Sparrows (of either species) are not alone in suffering a significant decline in numbers. Much of nature is facing trouble at the moment and we do need to try to do more to help it. Putting out feeders for the birds, especially at this time as year, can help them considerably. Be it seed, fat balls or peanuts, birds will love them (as will squirrels if they are also in the area!). Usually, it will not be long before birds, and not just Sparrows, come to visit them. And it can give great pleasure watching them, seeing how they behave and how many species you may attract.

## **COMMUNITY CENTRE** The latter part of 2013 was a busy time for the community centre.

**Fireworks Display.** The evening of 5<sup>th</sup> November saw another noisy, colourful and spectacular display of fireworks. This was the fourth fireworks display which the management committee has organised, and each seems to have been more successful and better supported than the previous one. Hot dogs and steaming broth have now become part of the tradition of the evening. Unfortunately, not everyone can enjoy the display, and special thanks are due to the team letting off the fireworks, and also the ladies preparing the broth and hot dogs in the kitchen. The management committee would like to thank Edward Plant and Karen from the Half Moon for their kind donations towards the cost of the fireworks, the customers of the Half Moon for their contributions, and also for the contributions to the bucket collection by those attending.

**Remembrance Service.** Another well attended service took place on 11<sup>th</sup> November when the children from Cassop School laid crosses in memory of those who gave their lives whilst serving their country. Leading the laying of 8 wreathes was the deputy Mayor of Durham, County Councillor Jan Blakey. Clive Lawson again organised the service.

**Pantomime (Jack and the Beanstalk).** Oh yes it was..... hugely enjoyable, with wonderful interaction between the actors and both the children and the adults in the audience. As one member of the audience remarked, 'It was just like a pantomime should be.' This was probably the first pantomime to have been performed in the village? unless you know better?.

**Children's Christmas Party.** The children's party was another outstanding success, with the children enjoying the games and activities. Thanks are due to Santa who visited the community centre and gave a present to all the boys and girls. Special thanks are due to the management committee ladies for arranging all the food and refreshments. The management committee are very grateful to PJA Motors, Edward Plant and Scissorhands by Nicola for their kind donations towards the cost of the party.

**Carol Service.** A record number of residents attended the candlelight service. Members of Christ the King Church in Bowburn led the singing and everyone heartily joined in. Afterwards, homemade mince pies and ginger wine were provided.

**Christmas Dinner.** Those residents who attend the coffee mornings and bingo evenings enjoyed an excellent meal which was followed by a game of bingo.

## CHURCHYARD Billy Jones

The friends of St. Paul's churchyard, the countryside ranger and volunteers are helping with cutting grass and bushes and tidying up the churchyard, which will enable the many species of rare flowers, plants and wildlife to flourish in the future assisted by the Prime Time Lads working for Stanley Black and Decker, testing garden equipment.

The churchyard, which is part of the silver award winning Crowtrees Heritage Nature Reserve, is looking much better and now brings pride and respect back to our village. Our MP, Dr. Roberta Blackman-Woods is delighted with this news and passes on her congratulations to all concerned for the hard work which they are putting in. She has also been in touch with the Parochial Church Council in Bowburn, who have confirmed that they are responsible for the maintenance of the churchyard, but can only do so to the extent of their available funding, which may not be to the standard which residents consider acceptable. The Parochial Church Council would welcome any additional funds that residents could provide to assist in their fund raising.

## KINGS WOOD COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

The group was established to lobby and liaise on behalf of residents in an effort to save Kings Wood nature reserve which was put up for sale last summer. As you will all know the number of residents who became involved and attended meetings both in the village and at the Parish Council has had a positive result. It is likely that the Parish Council will take ownership of the land on behalf of the village and when that happens, the action group will co-ordinate volunteers from the community to work with the Countryside Rangers and Parish Council and to assist in maintaining and developing the reserve.

In the meantime we are talking with other groups to explore how we can work alongside them in the village to enhance our community. Our meetings have been well attended in the village and we have collected a lot of ideas and identified a lot of enthusiasm to make Quarrington Hill a more attractive place to live. If you have any ideas or if you want to join in helping some of those ideas become reality then you will be warmly welcomed to join us no matter how much or how little you want to contribute. We will continue to drop leaflets, put up posters and meet with people to ensure we are collecting those ideas and wishes from across the village and then to ensure our work is a reflection of the whole village. Contact us on 3771315, e.mail [gardenercarole@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gardenercarole@yahoo.co.uk) or find us on facebook at Quarrington Hill Community.

Once the transfer of Kingsway to Coxhoe Parish Council is in hand, the Parish Council has assured residents that it will organise a meeting for residents in Quarrington Hill to discuss ongoing maintenance and improvement arrangements by the community.

<b>COMMUNITY CENTRE WEEKLY EVENTS</b>		
Mondays	4.30 - 6.00	Youth club
Tuesdays	10.30 -11.30	Coffee morning
	6.00 - 6.30	Metafit
Wednesdays	7.30 - 9.00	Bingo evening
Thursdays	6.00 - 6.30	Metafit
Fridays	4.30 - 6.00	7-11 year olds kids club

New faces will be most welcome at any of the above activities.

### **THE LICENSING ACT 2003**

Notice is hereby given that Quarrington Hill Community Association have applied to Durham County Council in respect of the premises known as

**QUARRINGTON HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, FRONT STREET, QUARRINGTON HILL, DURHAM. DH6 4QN**

for the grant of a Premises Licence to permit the following proposed licensable activities:-

The provision of regulated entertainment from 09:00 to 23:00 Monday to Sunday inclusive.

The full application can be inspected at the offices of the Licensing Authority, Annand House, John Street North, Meadowfield, Durham. DH7 8RS between Monday to Friday from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm by appointment. Telephone: 03000 265107.

A Responsible Authority or Other Party under the Licensing Act 2003 can make representations/objections to this application.

Representations must be made in writing to: **Durham County Council, PO Box 617, Durham. DH1 9HZ** by 10<sup>th</sup> March 2014. or e-mail to [licensing@durham.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@durham.gov.uk)

**It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence is £5,000.**

## **QUARRINGTON HILL VILLAGE PARTNERSHIP** Parish Plan 2

In 2011, it was again time for another Parish Plan. Also a new management committee took over the Village Partnership, and were involved together with residents and the Parish Council in drawing up the Parish Plan 2 questionnaire and collating the responses. These were then formulated into an Action Plan which was formally adopted by the Parish Council in 2013.

Priorities identified are:- ensuring the future of the community centre, up-dating the play park behind the community centre, activities for toddlers, 7-11 year olds and young people, highway safety, additional allotments, a regeneration and improvement scheme for the village greens, a car park for Crowtrees Nature Reserve, changing rooms for the footballers and some new housing for the village.

This is an ambitious programme which requires the participation of several partners including the Parish Council, Durham County Council (DCC), East Durham Rural Corridor Area Action Partnership, and our county councillors, Durham Community Action, the police, Quarrington Hill community centre and Quarrington Village Partnership.

Progress to date includes a 2 COOL 4 SCHOOL kids group for 7-11 year olds which has recently started, with over 20 children attending. The Parish Council is in the process of acquiring extra land for additional allotments and is keen to start making progress on improvements to the allotments as soon as is practicable.

Progress on the proposed play park improvements and the regeneration and improvement scheme has been frustratingly slow due to factors outside the control of the Village Partnership. As mentioned previously in Hill Talk, Durham County Council is undertaking an appraisal of outside play areas throughout the county and the final report is still awaited. Until this is completed, other issues involving land ownership and maintenance and liability responsibility cannot be resolved and which affect both schemes. Again, as mentioned in previous editions of Hill Talk there will be residents' consultation sessions on both proposed schemes in the community centre.

However, there has been some progress. A total of 20 trees have recently been planted at the main entrances to the village, and the brick bus shelter on Hawthorn Crescent will be replaced in the next few weeks by a modern one with re-enforced glass.

Since the Village Partnership started, everyone who has served on the management committee has done so as an unpaid volunteer to implement the Parish Plans. Members have and are giving up a considerable amount of their time and are putting in the hard work because they want to be involved in providing improvements to the village. Their time is valuable to them, and they are frustrated at the lack of progress, and rightly only want to attend meetings when decisions and progress can be made. Every project involves a scheme being drawn up and costed, obtaining approvals when relevant, undertaking residents' consultations when applicable, and most importantly, obtaining funding, which is currently particularly difficult to obtain. Anyone who requires further information please contact Keith Pounder on 377 3611 or by email at [keith.pounder@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:keith.pounder@hotmail.co.uk)

## WORLD WAR 1 COMMEMORATIONS

Durham County Council is organising a package of events over the next four years to commemorate World War 1 including:

4<sup>th</sup> August 2014- the centenary of the day Britain entered the war

1<sup>st</sup> July 2016- 100 years after the battle of the Somme

11<sup>th</sup> November 2018- the anniversary of the day the guns fell silent

The North East War Memorials Project is collating and updating an inventory of war memorials in the north east further information can be found at [www.newmp.org.uk](http://www.newmp.org.uk).

Within our village, Billy Jones is working on a scheme which will include a plaque with the names of the 43 soldiers from the village who died in the two world wars. It is hoped to obtain funding from The Heritage Lottery Fund for the project. Anyone who wishes to find out more about the project can contact Billy on 377 2740.

### REFLECTIONS Billy Jones-Historian

When out on a walk, about 60 yards from the churchyard bottom gate, stop and stand on the footpath where it dips, and look towards the bottom of Coxhoe. You will see two tall trees standing about 8 yards apart, then let your eyes trace to where the old Clarence Railway line came from Darlington to Coxhoe and passed between the two trees. There the Heugh Hall line joined the Clarence and continued passed Crowtrees Colliery to a transfer point in the valley. You can trace the Quarrington Hill incline from there to where you are standing, and where trucks of coal from valley collieries were hauled up with a steel rope attached to a steam standing engine based on Beacon Hill to be transferred to the Cassop line to go to Jackson's Landing in Hartlepool. Yes, you are standing on the tunnel where the trucks passed through from 1839 to 1850, a cheaper way to transport coal. A drawbridge was dropped to admit carriages and horse drawn carts and such to proceed to the Half Moon and Good Intent inns for a change of horses and refreshments.

### 2 COOL 4 SCHOOL kids group

This is the name of the new group for 7-11 year olds which meets in the community centre on Fridays from 4.30pm until 6.00pm. Parents are most welcome to attend and also to participate.

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



