

Open gate wanted so old folk can watch bowling

A call has been made for a back gate to be left open during evenings at The Bowles Museum to enable local residents to go into the grounds and watch bowls being played.

At the moment the rear entrance is closed so anyone wishing to watch or play has to make a long trip round to go in the front way.

"That is a pity because a lot of people, especially the elderly, would like to walk in and sit watching the bowling," Coun. Ken Coates told Teesdale recreation and tourism sub-committee on Wednesday.

"You can't expect them to go all the way round to get in the main gate, so this pleasure of watching the bowlers in action is denied them. We should request access at the rear on summer evenings."

The committee agreed to help in £247 a year towards maintenance costs, to which contributions are also being made by the town council, bowling club and county council.

Mr Eric Fell, chief executive, said that as the council was now to contribute to the costs he felt it should have some say over access, and he had suggested that there should be a rear entrance left open for pedestrians for part of the evenings.

It was explained that maintenance costs for the green were expected to be about £1,330 a year. Previously the county paid these along with other maintenance costs for the whole museum grounds.

A jolly man happy to play a variety of roles—on stage as well as in real life

Anyone who knows the Rev. Alan Clayton would not be too surprised if they heard he had been seen in action lately as a schoolmaster or a guest house waiter.

They would probably imagine he was playing these parts on stage, just as he has performed in a number of other guises in the last few years, all in the name of creating fun.

Those who have seen the cheerful Rector of Barningham treading the boards in amateur shows would not be taken aback either if they saw him acting as a Methodist minister.

But the unusual fact is that he played these roles for real—minister, teacher and guest house helper—in a colourful life that changed course several times before he settled with his wife Betty and family in Teesdale.

Some parishioners were disappointed not to see him and Betty in 'Sinned the Sailor', the latest offering from Newsham Amateur Theatrical Society in the village hall, as they were in the previous three pantomimes.

The couple loved putting on comical costumes, gaudy makeup, flowing wigs and false noses and being in front of the lights and delivering lines which had audiences in stitches—so why were they not in this production?

Snowdrops admired on sunny ramble

It was a bright morning as a large group of Barnard Castle Ramblers set off on a Sunday walk. They went to the river via gas work bank and headed for the woods.

They climbed to the footpath around the edge of Wood House Farm, then continued to West Holme where there was a pause to admire snowdrops. They turned towards East Holme before using field paths towards High Park Wall. Before reaching the farm they used the footpath through Crag Wood to High House. It was then

"We wanted to be but just couldn't get along to rehearsals at the right time because of other work, so we had to be left out," explained the rector. "But maybe we'll be back in the next one."

He was appointed to a circuit near Stockport in 1959 after being ordained in the Methodist denomination, and had a busy few years in charge of six churches.

"I was under quite a lot of strain running from one church to the next, and one evening I collapsed with a burst ulcer and ended up in hospital," he recalled, still sounding jovial despite his painful memories.

Even as he lay in a ward there was hardly any easing of the strain as colleagues and church members visited him, and seemed more interested in when he would get back to work than in how he was feeling.

But there was sympathy and understanding from a Church of England priest. "He was the only visitor who asked if he could pray for me," said Mr Clayton. "I was grateful for that."

Not very long after that, following intense thought, he joined the Church of England himself. But in recalling that difficult period of personal decision making, he said he could not understand the problem some churchgoers have over Christian unity.

"Some people like pop music,

others prefer opera," he smiled. "Just as both are important elements of music which appeal in different ways, so each person should find the form of religion which suits them best."

"It is right for us all to accept each other as fellow Christians and to worship with each other."

After his change he was ordained in the Anglican Church in 1963 and was appointed curate in Walsley, followed by spells in Bridlington and Batley. Then in 1971 he was appointed to Richmond School, where he taught biology for 14 years.

He and Betty, who were married in 1959, lived in Swaledale House in Reeth, which had been known previously as The Old Temperance, a guest house and restaurant. They reverted to that former name, as most local people still called it that anyway.

Betty started running the business, and Alan became her willing waiter and general assistant during evenings and weekends. Ramblers, cyclists and other visitors who called were mainly teachers and clerics.

One weekend there were fears that chickens would fly around in a real rough house when a lot of young fellows in leathers and studs turned up, but they were as polite as anyone could wish.

But perhaps the favourite visitors were some of the cast and film crew involved in making All Creatures Great and Small. Fascinating stories were told by some of them, including actor Colin Blakely.

On Sundays the part-time waiter exchanged his striped apron for a grey suit and dog collar. He walked up the road to Reeth Parish Church, where he was a non-stipendiary priest assisting the then vicar, the Rev. Wilfred Case.

The family stayed at Reeth until Mr Clayton was appointed to Barnham in 1984, with charge too of the parishes of Hutton Magna, Wycliffe and Scargill.

He has always been keen to involve children as much as possible in church work, and a good number of those in his present parishes have been delighted to respond.



The Rev. Alan Clayton

There is a weekly junior church session in Barnham Village Hall, rather like a Sunday school, and once a month the boys and girls take a service in the church, leading the hymns and prayers.

"You see a small boy of about six years old announcing part of the service and it's quite something," said the rector, who is pleased to see 40 or 50 people at these gatherings.

He encouraged the appointment of nine girls as servers at Barnham—a total down to five at the moment as some have left for jobs. There are two boy servers at Hutton Magna, and a boy and a girl server at Wycliffe.

"People like to see youngsters involved, and we hope the children will keep their sense of involvement with the church wherever they may go as they grow up," he said.

He has started a regular family service at Orvington Village Hall, would like to form junior churches in Wycliffe and Hutton Magna and only wishes there was a village hall that could be used at Hutton Magna.

He and Betty have two sons and two daughters. Nigel, who is 26, works in a Harrogate winchshop. Philip, who is 24, plays solo trombone in the Queen's Lancashire Regiment Band. Valerie, 18, is doing a course on TV graphics at a college in Sussex. And Evelyn, who is 18, is doing A levels.

DOG NUISANCE CAN BE ENDED OVERNIGHT— BUT ONLY BY THE OWNERS

There is not the remotest chance that Teesdale Council will persuade the government to bring back dog licences, with or without a high annual price tag.

The request for this to be done must be aimed at drawing attention to the health problem once more rather than at changing minds in Whitehall.

But if it shames even a few of the area's dog owners into thinking again, and stopping their pets from fouling pavements and public places, it will be of great value.

At a time when so much national attention is being given to food poisoning, with many commonly-used items now under suspicion, it is right that extra efforts should be made to deal with the dog dirt menace.

Judging by the amount that can be seen on footpaths, playgrounds and greens around Teesdale every

MERCURY COMMENT

day, it must be a serious danger to health, almost certainly more so than all types of food put together.

Councillors debated the dog nuisance on Wednesday for almost an hour, giving more time to it than to any other topic.

That may seem rather out of proportion, but it is not when judged against the anger and concern the subject generates around the district, especially among families with young children.

If the same level of nuisance was being caused by a company, or by an organised group of people engaged in some sort of pastime, official action would soon be taken to have it stopped.

But the only real action possible here is by the dog owners themselves. They could solve most of the problem overnight simply by acting more responsibly.

If the council debate and request for dog licences to be restored to families with young children, their way, the time will have been well spent.

PEEPS INTO THE PAST

5 years ago Stephen Chrystal, 11, of 2 Bede Kirk, Barnard Castle, won the Denis Hinchcliffe cup for the best fish caught with bait by a junior member of Barnard Castle Angling Club. He landed a 1 lb 5 oz rainbow trout in the Tees.

Teesdale's first Y.T.S. headquarters were opened in Jan Bedford as co-ordinator. The 35 teenagers were paid £25 a week.

Two landscape artists from Teesdale were featured in an exhibition at the unique LYC Gallery run by a Chinaman, Li Yuan Chu, at Brampton. A selection of drawings and etchings by Alan Tinley and paintings by Bernard Fairclough were shown.

The 1st Evenwood Cub team which won Barnard Castle district six-sided football trophy was Stephen Vickers, Graeme Knight, Chris Stokes, John Sanderson, Paul Maughan and Darren Addison.

15 years ago Michael and Eileen Raw, of Starforth Grange, set off for a new life in the Outer Hebrides. Michael was appointed a public health inspector for a widespread area in Harris, North and South Uist, Benbecula and Barra.

A Barnard Castle team which beat Green Dragon 5-0 in the League Cup. J. Cadmore, A. Jenkins, C. Hughes, F. Ashmore, J. Tipton, R. Beyer, M. P. Watson, J. Gatenby, G. Quinn, D. Stoddart, P. Barrowdale and C. Tipton.

20 years ago A team of army frogmen spent more than two hours searching

dark water in an ancient well below the Old Well Inn in Barnard Castle. It was used over a century ago for brewing beer.

Len Thwaites, who was making motor cycling suits in his farm cottages at Baldersdale, was given the go ahead to set up a workshop in Barnard Castle. He already had a growing list of customers in America and other countries.

25 years ago Kenneth Longstaff of Barnard Castle qualified for his higher national certificate in mechanical engineering and gained distinction at Darlington College of Technology.

Mr S. Finlay of West End Terrace, Cockfield, retired as a pianist, after 50 years of entertaining in the area. Mr and Mrs Finlay acquired Cockfield Village Hall and introduced roller skating, variety shows, plays and silent films for which she played the piano.

A grand by the Parrot at Staindrop Co to raise funds towards the of domestic o be used as pr

Mr and Mrs been told they garden behind 1 field, into a nursery garden told no extra being provided not cause any

Some beautiful scenery of Cumberland was shown and also local scenes of the Christmas lights and decorations in Barnard Castle. During conversation afterwards there was much appreciation of the quality of the slides with immediate hand-clapping when the last one was shown.

Once again the wonders of the work of God were brought home to those present. The leader of the meeting was Mr C. Cook. Mrs J. Robinson accompanied hymn singing.

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Course lambs to

In preparation Hamster an Group is run hypothermia (Thursday) at instruction fro

trains the young lambs s thermia. The fee for £7-50, which covered vet Diseases in a month. Recognition in young calves will cover health under six month weeks' course s about parasit

These two co instructed by v Anyone inter place on the c last the Hamst organizer, Chris 83347.

Nuisance at village Mr David Fer with a N Council order causing nuisance on Garage, Orving

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