

**Calor Village of the Year:
Category 1. Building Community Life. Allendale, Northumberland**

Allendale is a very special place.

Recognised all over the district of Tynedale as a vibrant, friendly, cohesive community filled with music, art, drama and social events, this working village loves to live. The community website (www.allenvalleys.co.uk) provides a flavour of what it's like to live here, along with some 1000 households throughout the parish, but the village has to be experienced at first-hand to really understand it.

With four pubs, an extraordinarily active and engaged village hall, two churches, a B'hai community, a Buddhist monastery, a newsagent, two general shops (Co-op and convenience store), a friendly butcher, lovely Tea Rooms, a regionally-renowned Gift Shop and a new cooperative art café, a health centre and separate chemist, a new brewery developing within an incipient new heritage centre, two schools (primary and middle), a thriving coach and taxi business, four auto mechanics, builders, handypersons and tradespeople galore, a new childcare social enterprise, a residential conference centre, sports pitches, recreation ground, bowling green, cricket ground and clubhouse, golf course and clubhouse, and new Sports Hall, as well as idyllic walks and recreational pursuits, and well served externally by local holiday cottages, B&Bs, caravan sites and youth hostel, this busy village in the heart of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has faced a variety of challenges, and continues to thrive in spite of them.

A hotel awaits development in the heart of the market square, but this facility is expected soon to provide low-cost housing. The recreation ground has been a source of community worry for the past decade -- though a pro-active working group has eliminated dereliction and is trying to develop the two acre site inclusively for all age groups and abilities, there is only one children's playground on a nearby housing estate. The young people in this deeply rural parish need more local activities and jobs. The congregations at the Methodist chapels are dwindling (though the Church of England membership is now growing again supplemented with several new families), and the population is increasingly aging. Several years ago at the peak of the Foot & Mouth crisis, the village lost its petrol station. And can sustainable tourism bring friendly visitors and their financial investment without overwhelming village life?

But, perhaps typified by the camaraderie shared during the annual Tar Bar'l parade and bonfire, which always achieve national renown, the Allendale spirit seems to be to work together for the good of the whole community, and to get things accomplished in a friendly way while enjoying ourselves. Another important component of Allendale's friendly community spirit is the way in which generations interact with each other, the old supporting the young, and the young providing hope for elders in the twinkling of the Christingle candles and the local Allendale Children's Theatre productions.

Jobs in the growing tourism industry sector are regularly turning up now and being filled. The youth project within the village hall has helped to fill an activity gap as well. The two schools seem to provide ample evidence of hope for the future life of this intensely rural community a dozen miles from its market town. Regular music events and parties keep the community together, while fairs and festivals offer ample opportunity to work on date-limited projects that provide a real communal sense of achievement and satisfaction upon completion. The community as a whole is very receptive to new ideas and concepts from young people and incomers alike, while treasuring the traditions and strengths of the past.

At the heart of community involvement are several important organizations and informal networks, which often overlap in terms of participative membership, and apparently encompass some 40 different and unique social groups:

- (i) the community charity with an environmental heart, Fawside, which has purchased, renovated, and now runs a residential conference and activity centre, Deneholme. This charity has brought many hundreds of thousands of pounds of inward investment into the village, and continues to work with everyone in the area of benefit for the greater good of the community; the community office support services offered freely by Fawside are reaching legendary proportions among the actively involved in Allendale.
- (ii) the Allendale Lions Club, featured this year as an exemplar for community activity in the national *Lion* magazine, which reflects the community- and service-focused passions of its members in the variety of local activities it develops, sponsors and supports, like the May Fair, the Bonfire Night, the Burns Night; the 'Clean Dene'; the Beer Festival; the Christmas Santa, lights and carols.
- (iii) the community facility charity the Allendale Village Hall & Recreation Ground, which provides inclusive and accessible space for all in a great variety of social activities (and its continuing work to ensure appropriate playspace in the village, through continued perseverance in grants acquisition, and enlisting of volunteer activity); holding regular monthly meetings, and actively recruiting participation from its user groups, this charity is proud of its hundred-year old facility and is working actively to keep it going for at least another century.
- (iv) the Parish Council; not only a regular monthly talking shop, but a pro-active group eager to engage its community with a fully-fledged Parish Evaluation recently completed during the summer and autumn of 2006; renowned locally for taking on the decorative tasks of hanging basket placement and maintenance, and looking seriously at a full-time employee for public green and litter care;
- (v) the entertainment organizations (the Dale Singers who mount both a Christmas, and a Spring Concert in the village hall; Music in Allendale which promotes a season of typically 4-6 classical concerts performed in St. Cuthbert's Church by retired and current members of the Northern Sinfonia; Northumbrian Music Nights, which promotes a variety of popular, blues and traditional music events including the international award-winning SNAP project for teenage musicians; Allendale Children's Theatre, which puts on an annual show running over several evenings in the village hall featuring young actors from the parish; the Allen Valleys Drama Group which does its annual pantomime in the hall to great popular acclaim, in addition to shows during the annual May Fair in the big marquee in Allendale's market square; the Shakespeare Now collective)
- (vi) the religious groups, including Allen Valleys Churches Together, as well as the members of the Burnlaw B'hari community and the Buddhist monks at Throssel Hole Monastery: spiritual worship plays an important part in the life of the village. St. Cuthbert's is open every day for anyone to go in, and there is a bespoke information area and a children's area at the entrance of the church. The church hall is frequently used by organisations for fund raising efforts, and the concerts held by Music in Allendale in the parish church throughout their regular seasons are much appreciated by residents. People often go to church at crucial times in their lives, and the institutions (hatch, match and dispatch) at St. Cuthbert's, which usually has a congregation of about fifty each week, reflect a deeply felt concern for the sensibilities of the community. Many members of the parish and Methodist churches are heavily involved in other organisations/activities in the village. Similarly, the Burnlaw B'hari community holds regular musical and artistic events which bring a variety of people and generations together.

- (vii) the women's groups, including the Allendale Women's Institute which holds regular monthly meetings in the village hall; the embroidery club which brings a variety of skills into play in the warm main hall on regular weekday mornings; the tapestry/weaving group which created the impressive Centenary Tapestry to help the hall celebrate its first 100 years.
- (viii) the recreational clubs, like Allendale Sports Club which has elicited nearly fifty thousand pounds for improvements of its leased football pitches at Allen Mill Fields; Allendale Cricket Club whose pavilion is the envy of all in the region, and which leases its ground from Allendale's Agricultural Society who hold a Show there at the end of the summer; Healthy Life which brings older people together for friendly social exercise weekly in the warm village hall; the Allen Valley Striders, a novel idea brought forward by Allendale's Chemist, which encourages serious running exercise among adults in the community, and in the process helps to train local residents for the annual Allendale Challenge, a huge fell run promoted by the North of England Rescue Service; the Allendale Golf Club which this year celebrated its own Centenary and whose summer events are an important contribution to the recreational and social calendar of the community.
- (ix) the traditional 'societies' encompassing the Allendale Agricultural Society, which puts on its annual show to great regional acclaim; the Allendale Horticultural Society, whose annual flower, vegetable and industrial show at Allendale Middle School brings out crowds from around the district to exclaim at the gardening acumen.
- (x) the emerging Allen Valleys Tourism & Visitor Network, which is involving the local businesses concerned with tourism enterprise, and has recently acquired significant funding (circa £25k) for marketing and promotions that are aimed to increase footfall in the Allen Valleys; also encompassing the local branch of the Art Network, which links local artists' studios to the public.
- (xi) the health care and emergency service groupings, involving the Allendale Medical Centre which holds quarterly Patient Participation meetings; Allendale's Chemist which sponsors the Allen Valley Striders; the First Responders who provide crucial emergency service before the arrival of the regular emergency service providers who are more than 20 minutes away from our remote rural village; the social care providers both private and from Northumberland Care Trust, who help to take care of people in need; the volunteer firefighters who maintain a vital service for their community.
- (xii) individuals who are passionately committed to contributing to the community of Allendale, who spend endless hours organizing, sharing, accumulating and passing on valuable information, which does inform life in the village; the effort involved in the biennial publication of the information-packed services directory the *Allen Valleys Compendium*, for example, or the selfless dedication that informed the publication of the recent book *Allendale: Twentieth Century Memories*, are two examples of this sort of individual commitment to community life.

These organizations, groups and individuals do seem to underpin and nurture much of what actually goes on in the village, encompassing political, business, educational, medical, recreational and eclectic spiritual groups as well as friendship groupings who keep an active community spirit alive. As one beloved senior citizen, who has been involved for most of her adult life in the affairs of Allendale, commented, 'The great strength of Allendale is the way in which older people mix with the younger generation in many organizations, celebrating the big events together, and then supporting each other at sad times.' That sounds like a definition of a caring, living community. It is certainly one which fits with the perspective of those who live in Allendale.

Calor Village of the Year: Category 2. Business. Allendale, Northumberland.

Local businesses play a fundamental role in the life of the village of Allendale. As a deeply rural village, transport is usually top of the list of priority needs here in the remote North Pennines, and so transport service providers by definition contribute significantly to ongoing community life. Baynes Taxis is renowned in Allendale for encouraging mobility (for disabled and elderly people) with its fleet of multi-passenger vehicles. But this local firm is also a beloved sponsor of different community life aspects, such as the annual Karaoke competition which extends to and includes the May Fair. The bloggishly interactive Events Diary on the firm's website contributes to village good humour. Local mechanics Paul Gowland, Malcolm Lee, Howard Pringle and Mick Robson are highly sought services, keeping transport moving.

Health issues are an important part of community life, and the Allendale Health Centre encourages local involvement in pro-active delivery of health care by facilitating quarterly meetings of the Patient Participation Group. The local chemist contributes to its community by helping to organise the Allen Valley Striders, a recreational running group. In addition, its health information service and direct photo-printing capacity help to keep the village buzzing, particularly around the Agricultural and Horticultural show times, when local photographers young and old seek to print their best entries.

Requisites for life are always found at the Allendale Co-operative Society, renowned regionally as the best and most comprehensive shop of its kind. The Co-op directors have always been at the forefront of village life, playing important roles firstly within the emergent Community Trust and secondly within the community charity Fawside which encompassed that effort, and for their Sale Or Return policy for bar consumables at village hall functions. With Christmas colouring competitions, and special promotions and employment for local young people, the Co-op is a beloved institution in Allendale. Similarly, the Village Shoppe maintains a high degree of involvement in village life by contributing space for Tourism Information.

Information is an important component of community life, and its dissemination is enhanced by local events billboards at these two goods shops, as well as at the local Newsagent. This friendly shop cheerfully welcomes a variety of leaflet-stuffers most Thursday afternoons (distribution date for the weekly regional paper). Nearby, the Dale Salon provides the essential venue for the all-important village grapevine!

The contribution of local businesses to the entertainment and leisure life of Allendale extends beyond mere public house service. The Golden Lion hosts regular live music nights which are much appreciated by residents, while the Hare and Hounds provides large-screen televised football matches. The Lion hosts the Allendale Lions Club, as well as weekly rehearsals of the Dale Singers, the community choir, and is proud to showcase the products of the village's new brewery, an enterprise developed by a local young person.

Local tourism businesses are networking with each other in a formal bid to enhance their own businesses, and in the process contribute to the social interaction that constitutes community life. The local bank branch (Lloyds TSB) is intimately involved by way of Treasurer's Accounts, in many local organisations. The two gift shops in Allendale (The Gift Shop, Pebbles Art Café) each make important contributions to community life; The Gift Shop has hosted a local author's book-signing session, while Pebbles encourages young artists in a special display/conference room upstairs.

All local businesses and nearly all self-employed tradespeople, artisans and entrepreneurs cheerfully and promptly support the biennial Allen Valleys Compendium (a local directory), receiving reciprocal benefit from their community by being the point of first call by residents.

Local businesses pose few environmental challenges in Allendale, but the emerging Allen Mills Heritage Centre has successfully faced an enormous one. Allendale was the centre of lead smelting in England a century ago, and residues at the Ridley's Yard smelting site were a concern. Undisturbed ground has since been declared fit for sealing and new construction has begun on this important centre. One possible environmental challenge, in this the most tranquil area of England, is the potential effects posed locally by increased numbers of visitors, yet footfall is an important business consideration for touristically-based enterprises. The environment is everyone's concern here, and so the embedding of the emerging Tourism & Visitor Network within Fawside, the community charity with an environmental heart, is especially fortuitous.

Local businesses are encouraged by welcoming features in the local press, and the village hall has been pro-active in encouraging entrepreneurial activity by new user groups (eg Crafty Tots; Wimo's Wiggle). Letters of support are routinely requested and received from the Parish Council for local initiatives, and the council enthusiastically supported the launch of the 2003/05 edition of the Allen Valleys Compendium.

When the owner of the local Newsagent/Post Office quit his premises, Allendale's community charity Fawside swung into action, facilitating access for Post Office business by offering mini-bus transport to the nearest Post Office, and working diligently to encourage the rapid re-opening of this important service. Fawside has been remarkably pro-active in encouraging new business initiatives like Christine's Country Catering, and the emerging complex at Allen Mills, while running its own conference centre at Deneholme. The local community is eager to support local businesses, invariably using the friendly Compendium as a first reference point for local service.

Employment opportunities in Allendale tend to involve first jobs at the Co-op, moving on after high school to casual work at any of 7 local pubs, or placement in the national market survey business, 'Dipsticks' which originated and has its base in Allendale. Dipsticks is a real success story in Allendale on a national scale, and regularly scoops major business enterprise awards regionally and nationally, now employing hundreds nationally. Baynes Taxis have grown steadily too, now employing some seventeen local people on a variable on-call basis. There are new initiatives within the district for apprenticeships in stone-walling and local farming skills, but otherwise the tourism sector is emerging as a potential employer as well.

The two community enterprises in Allendale (Deneholme Residential Conference Centre and AVOOSC, the out-of-school child-care social enterprise) are both strong contenders for self-sustainability. The success of Deneholme will mean the self-sustainability of Fawside, the community charity, while AVOOSC creates employment opportunities for local residents while their children are cared for in warm local surroundings. Allendale is one of the vibrant centres of the Art Network, a collective of serious artists spread over Northumberland who open their studios to the public during summer weekends. Additionally, the new Arts Café at Pebbles showcases the work of some 14 different artisans and craftspersons.

The Parish Council, meeting monthly, is diligent in creating a welcoming presence in the village, which contributes to the success of local businesses. Hanging flower baskets sponsored by the parish and district councils are dotted around the village help to create a sense of proud ownership. Pro-active work involved in helping new enterprise, which might otherwise have landed on the Parish Council's doorstep is taken on by Fawside, the community charity. Businesses do come and go with demand, but along with the charity's work in facilitating the emergence of the new Tourism and Visitor Network, local businesses and farm diversification schemes are supported by the office facilities and website capacity which Fawside provides.

A very special grapevine exists in Allendale, in which successful enterprise is rewarded with a dedicated customer base who delight in extolling the virtues of a newly beloved effort by word of mouth, passing friendly comments along from friend to neighbour.

Calor Village of the Year: Category 3. Young People. Allendale, Northumberland.

Young people are involved from cradle to adulthood in the life of Allendale. The Singing Babies initiative (in which mothers were prompted to croon to their bairns in an intimately lit space in the village hall) was a delightful springboard for imagination during its sojourn in 2005. More prosaically, Allendale's Pre-School Playgroup are an active bunch enjoying growing up in weekly activities with their parents. This group holds regular fund-raising events like buffet discos and theme parties in the hall.

Allen Valleys Out Of School Club (AVOOSC) is a social enterprise operating from dedicated premises beside the First School, which creates a childcare facility for working parents. This group is a tribute to its founders' passionate commitment and the early facilitation by Fawside, Allendale's community charity.

The overwhelming success of the region's first Children's Theatre (ACT), which has been thrilling audiences for nearly a decade now, is certainly unique throughout the northeast. Regular Saturday rehearsals in the village hall and a committed band of parents and helpers, passing the torch from the first performers to the second and on now to the third set, tend to coalesce in a yearly grand set of performances over a week. The Allen Valleys community does love this effort, which always incorporates huge professionalism using head microphones, specialised stage lighting, incredible costumery and expert stage direction. The local community choir, the Dale Singers, are particularly energetic in encouraging participation by young singers from ACT and from Allendale Middle School, in their Spring and Christmas musical concerts.

Allen Valley Scouts run weekly sessions in the village hall, engaging young boys and girls in energetic pursuits in the warm and lively space, with its special exercise floor in hardwood that had been acquired thanks to the efforts of the rather older Tea Dance Society!

Underneath the hall, in two dedicated activity rooms, Allendale's Youth Project enjoys computer access and a wide variety of activities facilitated by dedicated youth workers employed by the local high school. Young people from the age of thirteen upwards are warmly welcomed and encouraged to take part in all aspects of the operation and management of the project. The Youth project has adult representation at meetings of the Village Hall, the Parish Council, and the Allendale Lions Club.

The work undertaken with the young people is conducted under the government's Every Child Matters agenda, and most activities meet the 5 target outcomes: Being Healthy; Enjoying and Achieving; Staying Safe; Making a Positive Contribution; Achieving Economic Well Being. Excellent relationships are enjoyed between the Youth Project and local services: Northumberland's Fire and Rescue Service provides young driver workshops, and Northumbria Police officers meet with the young people. Group residential sessions, focusing on outdoor education and team building, together with personal development and life skill programmes, are activities directly supervised by trained youth workers. Continuing the virtuous community life cycle, the older teenagers were delighted to organise a friendly Hallowe'en Party for younger members.

Allendale's community supports the Youth Project in many ways: the parish council pays the rent for the rooms; access to the community mini-bus is provided at a reasonable rate, and Fawside offers a free and friendly photocopying service; the Village Hall Committee cooperate pro-actively to ensure the youth facility is fit for purpose. The project is also regularly supported by local volunteers.

Football teams for Under 8s, Under 10s, Juniors and Seniors are all accommodated by Allendale's Sports Club on its newly leased and renovated pitches at Allen Mill fields. Allendale's Lions Club have been proud to provide kit for the local junior football team.

Musical experiences for young people living in the Allen Valleys have taken on a profoundly international aspect in the past several years as the SNAP project based in Allendale has combined the traditional music of Sweden, the North Pennines, and of Ploërmel in Brittany, into a cohesive ensemble playing each region's tunes. The participation of young local musicians in Allendale's annual Young Traditional Musicians' concert at the end of May is always a unique pleasure for performers and audience alike. In the same way, local bands composed of young local musicians have been encouraged to perform at Allendale's annual Beer Festival, thanks to the effective showcasing of young talent on the same stage as gigging professional musicians. On an even more participative level, the Junior Karaoke competitions which always run up to the May Fair finals, are widely appreciated and hugely subscribed by young people showing off their singing.

There are aspects to growing up in Allendale that are really challenging. A deeply rural community like ours must make and support its own ongoing leisure, recreation and entertainment, especially when it can feel that there is nothing much to do but hang around the bus shelter. But Allendale's young people have banded together to generate funds for a temporary, wooden wheeled sports ramp facility, which they hope to site as a demonstration of feasibility on the village's recreation ground. The management of the recreation ground are aiming to incorporate the expert advice of senior citizens during this ramp's construction, as wooden decking around the nearby Bowling Green is scheduled for construction at the same time.

Further fund-raising efforts by young people have involved a long-distance sponsored cycle ride, as well as the engagement of popular bands in the hall (the heavy metal group Powerage and the more laid-back Stereophonics-type pop music of Diablo have been recent big events in the village hall).. Although there is no formal Young Person's Council within the village, the village hall management are always eager to listen to opinions from younger people (as for consideration of the wheeled sports ramp); the recent Parish Evaluation formally sought out opinions from every age group and especially solicited participation by younger members.

Voluntarism is not easy to gauge inherently in young people themselves apart from family involvement, but an enthusiastic band of young people have been involved in regular outdoor construction efforts on the Allendale Nature Trail and in the recent 'puddling' effort to consolidate a new environmental pond at Allen Mill sports fields. Recently, and quite spontaneously, young people in Allendale have undertaken two separate days of litter-picking around the village and in the parish church yard.

Success of Allendale's young people in the greater sphere is regularly applauded by the community, whether this success is in academic achievement, or in facing up to the challenges of life in a steady, persevering way towards becoming a contributive adult. The Allendale Exhibition Endowment Trust annually contributes significant financing to Allendale's young people for expenses associated with further and higher education and training. It's unfair to identify the many local young people who are making a brilliant go of their own lives, but within such a small community they are known and their individual successes are especially enjoyed for them and their families. Two young people have recently been commended publicly for their efforts: Graeme Gowland has been named Best Newcomer on the National British Motorcycle Championship Circuit, while Thomas Hick has set up his own micro-brewery (the Allendale Brewery Company), receiving a Pride in Tynedale award regionally for his efforts in the Young Business category.

Inevitably a diaspora of young people to the attractive jobs in the big cities is a reality of contemporary life. But for those who do remain in the village, new schemes for low-cost housing are now coming online, as Fawside has created an opportunity for the Denholme annexe to be turned into affordable flats, and a similar sort of arrangement is anticipated for the renovation of the local Dale Hotel.

Calor Village of the Year: Category 4. Older People. Allendale, Northumberland

Older people are the bedrock upon which the village of Allendale thrives.

Every year the centerpiece of Allendale's calendar involves a deep sense of history united with the present, as 'Tar Bar'lers with over fifty years experience join with new '*guisers*' in the annual parade and bonfire on New Year's Eve. They say that you have to be born within hailing distance of the river Allen to carry a Tar Bar'l, and this sense of tradition goes a long way towards uniting the 40 or so '*guisers*' in the year-end revel.

It's always an honour to step along on first-footing to parties held by any of several senior citizens, who thereby also provide a deep sense of continuity with past tradition, while welcoming friendly incomers at the same time into the life of the village. The population demographic, after all, is inevitably shifting towards older citizens, and Allendale is widely perceived to be a great place in which to retire.

Throughout the year, the village enjoys the accumulated wisdom and experience of its elders, and reciprocates with a deep sense of caring and commitment. Older, retired people have the time to contribute to many of the activities in the village, and they are often among the prime organizers of community events. Thus, for example, over the past decade the Dale Singers have been organized and passionately coordinated by retirees George Newman, Fergus Sandison and Sylvia Milburn, who have also contributed technical expertise to both the Allendale Children's Theatre productions and the Junior Dales singers. Similarly, senior citizen Nora Handcock has played a pivotal role in ensuring that the Healthy Living initiative (exercise for older women) has moved forward within the village hall's warm and welcoming environment.

Without the support of senior citizens, both in organizing and in participation, there could not be a Music in Allendale group. This classical music lover's organization promotes a regular season of exceptional music (often five or six concerts throughout the year), performed by retired professional musicians as well as by active professionals, within the acoustic space of St. Cuthbert's parish church. Similarly, the annual 'Shakespeare Now' events are almost exclusively supported by senior citizens of this parish. And older people love to go into the First School to support new learners in their reading development, so that Allendale is definitely blessed in its intergenerational commitment.

The first regular events listing for Allendale was developed by retiree David Orton, in response to community requests, and this formed the basis of the current Google calendar that is always online and always freshly updated, as found on the village's website (www.allenvalleys.co.uk). Similarly, efforts by retired neighbours at Denelands on behalf of the various flower pots, hanging baskets and floral displays around the War Memorial, do not go unnoticed!

It is almost inevitably retired people, senior citizens like Audrey Mathie, organizing a cheerful band of volunteers, who have supported the weekly luncheon club (replacing the erstwhile weekly Day Centre) on Thursdays in the village hall. When, in early autumn 2006, this friendly service sponsored by Age Concern was looking like terminating, the local organizers took a lead role in ensuring that it would go ahead under re-defined auspices, with exceptional support from the village hall management committee.

Local historian Nora Handcock, retired parish and district councillor and past-chair of the village hall, has contributed especially to the examined life of the village of Allendale by writing a book describing its past century. This book was published with the aid of grant funds that Nora secured, and its later sales provided an important revenue stream for some of the more recent capital improvements in the village hall (foyer renovation, kitchen modernisation).

Younger, more active villagers (particularly within the ranks of the Allendale Lions Club) reciprocate the wealth of experience and wisdom provided by senior citizens by organising a variety of free activities for older residents, throughout the year. An annual summertime Mystery Trip is always a favourite activity, eliciting perhaps forty senior citizens out for a merry day trip, while the Christmas Shopping trips to Gateshead MetroCentre are also deeply appreciated. Fawside organises a Christmas dinner for older people at its residential centre Deneholme.

Local churches work together too, for the benefit of older people, by organising monthly Coffee Mornings (the Methodists on the last Saturday, the Church of England on the first), which are a great opportunity for all generations to get together for a chat. Sometimes these coffee mornings involve different perspectives, as when they are combined in support of the Pre-School Playgroup with a professional photographer's session to immortalise the grand or great-grand-children!

Newer clubs springing up in the village are often supported particularly well, and with never-ending supplies of patience, by older people. Thus, persisting through an endless succession of projector failures, older people have participated in ensuring the ongoing success of the village hall film club, achieving through gentle prompting a new audio loop in the hall as well!

A great deal of effort, from both the Primary Care Trust (which in Northumberland has incorporated social care together with health provision) and the independent private sector (Helping Hands) goes into helping older people to live independently. Although there is no Village Care Scheme as such, there is an informal (but no less real) grapevine network that involves the milkman and the postman, and friendly neighbours, which works to ensure that the needs of older people are considered and attended to.

The Allendale Lions Club have spearheaded the Message in a Bottle scheme in Tynedale, which is particularly dedicated to house-bound older people to ensure that a record of their health needs is always available in the case of emergency.

Housing for independent older people is provided in Allendale in the sheltered scheme at Arnison Housing. Additionally, the bungalow estate at Wentworth is an ideal retirement centre just beyond earshot of the market square, which inevitably does experience some challenging, anti-social behaviour on weekend nights.

Older people regularly contribute to the life of Allendale by organising recreational clubs and activities for themselves. Thus, the local Tea Dance Society enjoys its weekly sessions on the new hardwood floor in the hall (elicited by grants supported by the society), and similarly the Carpet Bowls group are delighted with this facility for their weekly matches. In the summer months, the Bowls Club hold their matches and practice sessions on their manicured green in the Recreation Ground, and they actively support plans for development of the facility for the benefit of everyone in the community. A new scheme involving decking around the bowling green is scheduled for work in the spring of 2007, and will involve a significant amount of volunteer effort to accomplish, all of which is kindly offered by the club members themselves. A high proportion of senior, retired citizens support the local Allendale Golf Club, both in regular usage, and in organising special activity Saturdays, like the recent 3 Pros challenge. The Golf Club has enjoyed unprecedented publicity, through the efforts of its retiree officers, in the local press during this its Centenary Year.

Senior citizens are encouraged to make their views known locally, and in particular their views have been solicited in the recent Parish Evaluation, which has garnered a high response (over 25%) rate overall. Naturally, older people often have time to write letters to the editor, and their views in the local weekly paper, the Hexham Courant, are often seen and commented on by villagers!

Village of the Year: Category 5. Environment. Allendale, Northumberland.

Allendale, in the heart of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, cannot help but be concerned about its environment. The local community charity, Fawside, has an environmental heart, having been founded by Zane Foster, an environmental consultant. The charity's remit has since extended to overall community concerns, but it is unstinting in its environmental perspective and activity. Development of a Natural Heritage Trail (known locally in memoriam as Zane's Trail) between Allen Mills and The Peth in association with the RSPB's 'Working with Waders' scheme, continuing efforts on riverside conservation and management, willow tree planting, coppicing, stone wall renovating, and a host of specific environmental activities are regularly annotated in Fawside's annual report. Recently, Fawside's sensitive environmental considerations in the renovation of the local residential conference centre, Deneholme have garnered environmental awards, and the community charity is proud of acquiring inward financing for the renovation of two neighbouring village halls with particular emphasis on sustainable, environmentally sensitive energy balance.

Thus, Deneholme is heated by a geothermal ground source heat pump which utilises latent heat procured from deep bore holes drilled onsite, while also using grey and recycled water when feasible, incorporating solar panels for hot water heating, and the facility is insulated throughout with sheep's wool. The neighbouring village halls at Whitfield and Sinderhope will also use heat exchange technology, and Whitfield's energy needs will be supplemented by a micro-hydro-electricity plant. Allendale's own village hall recently acquired funds for the re-configuration of its heating system for more specific localised efficiency, and aesthetic (health and safety) considerations in terms of the siting of hot air heating vents.

In addition to Fawside's environmental efforts, Allendale is blessed with another local action group, the Allen Valleys AG, which works particularly effectively on issues relating to BOATs (Byways Open to All Traffic) that potentially cross sites of significant scientific interest (SSSIs). Margaret Keyte of AVAG has been instrumental in working with the community and with governmental representatives to ensure that unenlightened access does not harm the upper moorlands and these SSSIs, and AVAG's work has been recognised at a district and regional level as profoundly important in this regard. AVAG regularly holds meetings for information dissemination, as well as musical events for fund-raising, and contributes usefully and pro-actively to the district's weekly newspaper on the matter, which is also of compelling interest to neighbouring villages.

Allendale's service organisation, the Allendale Lions Club, has been especially active on local environmental issues, organising 'Clean the Dene' days which have seen this late rubbish tip tidied up and its natural beauty, a secret garden meandering through the village's heart, returned to its natural splendour. This club also responded enthusiastically to a recent serious dereliction problem in the village, as the old 'Band Hut' was in serious and dangerous disrepair. The club's engineering department demolished the shed, using it as the basis for last year's Bonfire Night!

At the same time, the local BTCV group are renowned for eliciting the support of volunteers on a variety of conservation efforts, working dedicatedly with Fawside and the community all over the Allen Valleys for the good of the countryside, and its inhabitants.

The emerging Allen Valleys Tourism and Visitor Network has targeted regular cleanup of the road verges leading into Allendale, to help create a more welcoming entrance to the village. Similarly, the Parish Council has been pro-active in acquiring funds from the District Council for hanging baskets strategically throughout the village, for the third year running. But the village is united in its eagerness both to increase

footfall, and at the same time not to see its environment overwhelmed by tourists or visitors, as the patch is particularly proud of its significant reputation within the last remaining tranquil area of England.

Allendale is proud to have its own centre for waste disposal (of perhaps a dozen county-wide) and regularly achieves 60% recycling rates (of total weight deposited). The district council has recently introduced a bi-weekly system of recycling bins, to which villagers are trying to adjust, but many prefer to do their own recycling directly to the waste disposal site! Some of the older systems for recycling (like jumble sales, for example) have apparently become defunct, since there has been a recent surplus of charity shops emerging in Hexham, Allendale's nearest market town. But the village hall is now considering re-launching a quarterly table-top sale to help in the recycling effort locally, as well as to improve on its own revenue. Certainly the recent success of the Lions Club in its recycled Book Stall at the hall's Mini-Market has contributed to this sense of can-do recycling!

Allendale's Horticultural Society, and the two Leek Clubs in the parish, along with the Gardening Society, are all keen environmentally-minded groups, as they might be expected to be. The local produce shows in late August are always a tribute to the green-thumbs amongst the villagers. Allendale's Sports Club has recently acquired a grant for its own 'environmental pond' within the Allen Mills playing fields site. The club expects to use the services of volunteers to puddle the clay bottom, thereby re-creating a natural facility which, it is hoped, will be inhabited by local water voles that have been sighted in the valley.

As one of the few remaining areas in England in which red squirrels can still be seen regularly, everyone is very concerned locally at the increasing frequency with which greys are observed. The village participates in the Red Alert scheme, and a new effort to help in the conservation of everyone's beloved little red friends is being launched. The recent sighting of a pine marten close to Allendale Caravan Park highlights the gold award-winning conservation efforts of this enterprise built upon the old Allendale railway line, which has also helped to publicise three local walks around the area with the financial assistance of the AONB, a strategic authority that creates annual Rock and Plant Festivals including Allendale within its catchment.

Children at Allendale First School have produced a Nature Trail map which highlights their local environment, incorporating their own nature garden, and involving a tree nursery specialising in native, indigenous species as well as a new wooden sculpture. This joy in nature has extended to efforts from AVOOSC, the social enterprise that provides out-of-school care, to engage in natural spaces.

At the beginning of the last century, Allendale was at the centre of lead mining in England. The post-industrial landscape that still exists involves a series of ventilation shafts and tall chimneys up on the moors, although the village's lead mining past is still reflected socially in the annual Tar Bar'l parade, a remnant of the Victorian tarmacked road system by which the lead mines and smelters transported their goods. The chimneys are beloved sites of special conservation efforts, and they are carefully monitored and repaired as necessary. Meanwhile, the new Allendale Heritage Centre at Allen Mills, when it is completed in a few years, is expected to help showcase and conserve the unique engineering efforts that resulted in such sophisticated mining operations here in the Allen Valleys.

Nowadays, the rural landscape around Allendale reflects the more pastoral pursuits of the hill farmer, with its never-ending system of stone dykes and cascading fell streams. Continuing efforts regionally, in part in association with Northumberland National Park, the AONB and other strategic authorities, to conserve the stone walls of the district, and to maintain the fells landscape, are part and package of rural life. The local estates are conscientious game shooting enclaves, and as such are dedicated environmentalists in a unique position to provide a clear view of wildlife and the natural resources of the Allen Valleys.

Calor Village of the Year: Category 6. Information Communications Technology Allendale, Northumberland.

Broadband internet access is beginning to impact significantly on the life of Allendale's community.

Allendale is a very active and involved community, welcomingly inclusive of incomers and locals alike, with a delightful variety of events promoted locally and regionally by a huge variety of local groups and organisations. Within this context, a continuing source of local worry has been the problem of date conflicts between different events organised separately by different passionate groups. 'Too many things are going on at the same time' has been a regular refrain heard at coffee mornings and pub sessions alike. While everyone agrees that 'You can't be involved in everything', still most people seem to expect that organisations should work in partnership to promote unique participative events on unique dates.

An early idea to defuse this issue, heroically initiated about seven years ago after prompting from the Allen Valleys Charitable Trust, was the circulation of a single page, monthly event or date-claiming diary using computer technology to squish the events into one side of an A4 coloured sheet. This effort was subsumed within another, year-long effort involving email circulation of a monthly Activities Listing.

Five years of assiduous reporting by Larry Winger in the 'District Notes' pages of the avidly consumed regional weekly paper, the Hexham Courant (www.Hexham-Courant.co.uk) have created a central information distribution point for most local events. Three years ago, the regional development authority One-NorthEast sponsored region-wide broadband access through BT, and every exchange in this region, including Allendale and the Allen Valleys, is now broadband accessible. These two functions nicely coalesced, this year, when Google launched its interactive, publicly shared calendars, and the dream of a fully representational, correct and timely, events listing that is accessible to all, or at least to most of the active organisers of the village, was realised.

The community website: www.AllenValleys.co.uk now has a Google Calendar link which is updated and publicly served as soon as information of any event is received. This regular listing service has been particularly useful to help to defuse the challenging issue of double-bookings; nevertheless, in a community as active as Allendale's, some dates are always going to be in high demand! People communicate directly with the Calendar compiler, by phone, letter and email, and information is rapidly assimilated and provided based on these inputs.

The local community website www.AllenValleys.co.uk was proudly re-launched about two years ago, building on the content provided across the patch by the first issue of the Allen Valleys Compendium, a desktop publishing enterprise cataloguing local services, which was spearheaded by local media transfer company (www.MultiWrite.co.uk). Although the community forum aspect of the community website has not developed as hoped, there are still regular feature items, screened and presented through the auspices of Fawside (www.Fawside.org.uk) which provide information of great value to the community. Frankly, however, most people rely on two important communication devices for their local information: word of mouth and the weekly newspaper.

But at the same time, people like to know that Allendale stands equal to the challenge of ICT, and so there is a kind of compelling interest in a variety of internet aspects that can impinge on community life, as viewed from both within and from without. So the news items on the community website do accumulate in local consciousness, and contribute to a shared sense of pride in a vibrant community, which within recent memory has struggled against nearly overwhelming odds; the devastation universally of the local economy

in the wake of the Foot & Mouth crisis will not soon be forgotten. But the future continues to look bright, and Fawside's efforts to promote the wider-scale uptake of broadband and general internet access have been particularly appreciated by the community. No doubt these efforts will have an increasing impact in future.

The friendly blogsite at local firm Baynes Taxis (www.BaynesTaxis.com) involves various items which add to good local humour. Additionally, the annual website devoted to the May Fair (www.allendalefair.org) provides a comprehensive repository of information dealing with events associated with this community activity.

The new local network of tourism and visitor-associated businesses, the Allen Valleys Tourism & Visitor Network, will shortly be launching its own contributions to the local community website, seeking to provide a centralised booking service for local accommodation providers, and expecting to link into regional (Destiny, via Northumberland Tourism) and national portals. The Allen Valleys are a unique destination in this the most tranquil area of England, providing a base for exploration westwards toward the Lake District, and eastwards toward the castled coast of Northumberland and the metropolitan cultural centre of Newcastle-Gateshead. When the coordinator for this AVTVN project is in post, then a variety of internet-based initiatives working through the community website and linking appropriately with partnership efforts regionally, should come online during the early months of 2007. The village hall in Allendale will also be particularly eager to contribute to the content and information provision in the community website, when it returns to full internet functionality with its broadband access restored. Meanwhile, of course, the marketing of Allendale's premier residential conference centre, Deneholme (www.Deneholme.co.uk) is particularly well facilitated by its own website developed by a local designer.

Local public access to ICT is scattered, though the community-wide initiative of 'Computers for Village Halls' was taken up avidly by the village hall management committee several years ago. Two of the computers procured in this initiative are used for the Youth Project, and another is expected to be re-installed, over the next few months, in the hall's foyer to help in services there. The local library provides, at the moment, the most useful public ICT connection point in the village, but most internet access is done privately. The training in ICT under the 'computers for halls' programme was not well supported in Allendale, but this may be because most people depend on their children, or local professional support services, to enable their private internet access for them. Everyone knows that the local Allendale Co-op is the best place to go for FAXing documents, but at the same time Fawside's offices at Deneholme are a friendly space within which to develop useful business paperwork and communications which are often a fundamental starting point for a variety of village promotions efforts.

The community website (www.AllenValleys.co.uk) was developed according to simple and user-friendly templates, offering a large variety of subtopics and providing useful community information (parish council reports; pew leaflet from the parish church; intermittent quarterly newssheet; District Notes archive). The site exists to provide information, and as such it depends on information provision by interested parties. Fawside's personnel help to serve the information provided, within a reasonable time window. The inclusivity of these Village of the Year category documents, for example, have depended to a large extent on comment received through the community website as solicited from the community at a variety of public meetings, press notices and email alerts.