

## ODE TO A VILLAGE

### [with apologies to Robert Burns]

In years before, a grander name possessed this village here  
By ‘Allendale Town’ the locals called, on maps did it appear --  
But time has withered rank and file, and shops *and* pubs, I fear --  
The little town is village now, and that for many a year.

A couple score of years ago, perhaps a little more  
There seemed to be a vibrant force, an opening of doors,  
Throughout this valley, left and right, an energy re-stored --  
And people gathered up and down, with goodness to the fore.

I mark: Roundtable set its sights on Fair Day bright in May,  
In ‘eighty-three, to have some fun, and make a better day.  
Perhaps a quick’ning of the heart, or water magic say,  
But something ‘roused the folks around, and gathered up in sway.

Within a year or so from thence, a New Hall opened wide,  
With kitchen clean and toilets fine, and balcony beside.  
And heating plant, Youth Project rooms,  
and wheelchair access ride  
It was a thrill, to see how well, the Old Hall fit its bride!

And then a playground, funded by Roundtable charity,  
It must have felt, this happy spot, a fair community  
And when the Drama Group began, oh sweet fraternity,  
As panto season ushered in -- bemused hilarity.

All seem-ed fine, though harbingers of doom encircled low --  
Where were the jobs, or houses too, for local folks to go?  
And rural blight struck in the night, when big ‘Toon opened so  
The big new road -- A69 -- and traffic outward flowed.

Would little village dwindle more, a bedroom place for rest?  
A lovely spot, that time forgot, which locals loved the best?  
As one by one, the shops shut down, with moonlight flits the crest.  
The little village looked worn out, a sort of empty nest.

Throughout its years, without a fear, one feature stayed alive --  
On New Year’s Eve, the ‘guisers marched,  
with just a hint of jive,  
And kept the spirits of the place, appeased, e’en though deprived  
Of much -- besides good will, good sense, and yearly music live.

Then people started talking on . . . and on and on and on --  
And local groups re-energised; idea lights were shone,  
And music showed the way again, in classic sense and fond,  
Throughout the little village here another new day dawned!

Music in hall, and then in church, and pubs next --  
what a shock!  
When big names known the country-wide appeared  
around the block.

And folks from urban areas filled venues quite a-chock  
A lively atmosphere it’s been, since then,  
of which we could take stock.

There’s story after story then, from Fawside on to Lions,  
From Children’s Theatre success, to Co-op self-reliant.  
Pavilion . . . ground, for cricketers, all fancy and defiant  
And Deneholme -- what a brilliant coup!  
And village hall refinement!

The rec ground’s moving bit by bit, that derelict disgrace  
Will be no more, if we but race, and muster up the pace,  
With gangs of friendly volunteers, to tidy up the place,  
We’ll make a great and lively ground, with just a bit more grace!

There’s more to do, we know so well, and no-one is contented  
But we’ll work on, come friend or foe, or FMD! -- demented --  
We work together best, you know -- our friendship is cemented --  
By facing common challenges, with courage unrelented.

If venerable Rabbie Burns, were here, to witness show  
From wasting times to growing times, and watching out below  
The little creatures on Sports Ground, the timid water voles --  
He might be glad, the likely lad, to see the village so.

Perhaps he’d say, in better way, than I can ‘phrase just here:  
‘Yon little village, with a heart, of gold and silver clear:  
Your friendly work, inclusive cheer --  
[and by the way] your quite delicious beer!  
Deserve a token of esteem, like ‘Village of the Year’!

Larry Winger

**I pray you, raise your glasses to toast**  
**Allendale, Calor Village of the Year!**