



The first 75 years!



Photographs: (above) the lost village of Burnhope in upper Weardale as it appeared in the 1930s when Durham Rural Community Council was formed, and (right) the scene today, with the village long since submerged beneath the waters of Burnhope Reservoir.

A Community News supplement



1935 - 'Community Service Council for Durham County Limited' founded (forerunner of DRCC)

1936 - Abdication of King Edward VIII

1939 - Outbreak of World War Two

1944 - D-Day landings

1945 - End of World War Two

1947 - Street parties celebrate Princess Elizabeth's marriage to Prince Philip



1950 - End of points rationing

1950 - Korean War begins

1951 - Easington Colliery Disaster - 83 killed

1951 - Category D villages identified in County Durham

1951 - Festival of Britain

75 years of history and a promise for the future

Way back in 1935, during the depression years when 30% of the county's workforce was unemployed 'The National Council for Social Service' (the Government agency of the day) recognised a need for social support for the unemployed. This led to the creation of 'The Community Service Council for Durham County' (now DRCC).

Pictured below is a 1975 staff photograph taken at Hallgarth House in Durham, to mark the 40th anniversary of the organisation. Miss Ivy Fox takes centre stage. Miss Fox, who gave 40 years of service, remains our longest ever serving member of staff. That kind of dedication shines today as projects may come and go but it's our people who make the difference - often going the extra mile to deliver more than is expected.

Over the years we have proven ourselves to be flexible, adaptable and responsive and pride ourselves in having responded to the needs and problems of the time - through the good times and, as now, full circle to a time when the going gets a bit tough.

Through these pages we hope to give a glimpse of our history - the work done, the experience gained, the appreciation of communities where we have worked. We also bring a promise for the future - to continue using our expertise as we respond to the on going needs of our rural communities.



1952 - Death of King George VI - Princess Elizabeth becomes Queen

1953 - Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

1953 - Sir Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay conquer Mount Everest

Do you remember them?

The above photograph was taken in 1975 at Hallgarth House in Durham to celebrate our 40th anniversary. Seated in the centre is Miss Ivy Fox; 4th from left (back row) is Mr. Derek Jones, Chief Executive; to his right are Mr. Ken Payne, (now Vice-Chair of East Durham LEADER), and Mr. Twernlowe, former Chief Executive. Can you name any of the others?

A look back at conditions during the 1930s in County Durham

Geographically, County Durham was even bigger in 1935 than today. It extended north to include Sunderland and South Shields and south to include Darlington & Stockton; although large parts of Teesdale were still in Yorkshire. 30% of the insured population were registered as unemployed.

Interestingly, the first report from DRCC highlights the problems for *"men suffering from prolonged periods without work,...concentrated in a relatively small geographical area, an area in fact which presents the "Special Problem"*.

By anybody's estimate, these were terrible statistics and a dreadful reality for the people living in County Durham in the 1930s. The Community Service Council for Durham (as DRCC was then known) was established to support and help, providing practical ways through the ravages of unemployment for hard pressed men and their families. It set out the rationale: *"What is known as the "Unemployment Problem" can, in effect, be divided into its causes and effects. The former is primarily an economic and political issue, the latter personal and social."*

It was to the personal and social effects that the Community Service Council attended, setting up what were known as "Service Clubs". They had the express purpose to *"enable men to use their enforced idleness so that it may be of some profit to themselves and to the community in which they live. They are not intended to be an alternative to normal industrial employment but are*

designed so that men may maintain their morale towards the day when they can once more take their place in industry."

There was a great breadth in the range of activities and training provided through the Service Clubs, including handicrafts, keep fit, education and drama. There were clubs for men and for women and they were widely taken up.

Most tellingly, the Clubs were financially supported, mainly by ordinary individuals and benefactors from outside County Durham, particularly from the south of England.

In 1936, a Mrs Clara Tillard of Bath put her house at Etherley at the disposal of the Community Council for women to enjoy a ten days' holiday. This set a tradition, which was paid for *"by the generosity of the people in Purley and Coulsdon, in Surrey"*. In all, over 300 women were able to make use of it.

Strangers and small organisations outside of County Durham "adopted" Service Clubs and communities. Members of staff working in various government offices in Whitehall helped with donations from their pay. It was reported that *"firm friendships have been made and new connections found between North and South."*

Economically and socially, conditions in County Durham have come a long way since 1935. The count for those claiming Job Seekers Allowance in County Durham in July 2010 was 12,284, which is 17.5% of the work age population. This compared to a figure of 30% in 1935.



1969 - Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to set foot on the Moon

1968 - Durham Light Infantry was disbanded

1963 - Beeching cuts lead to the closure of numerous railway lines

1960 - the first episode of Coronation Street was broadcast on ITV

1960 - The Beatles began in Liverpool & went on to enjoy worldwide acclaim



1954 - Roger Bannister runs the first four minute mile

1955 - Anthony Eden becomes Prime Minister – (from a famous Durham family linked to Windlestone Hall)

1956 - Suez Crisis

1959 - Tyne Tees Television is launched on 15 January



Barnard Castle Lunch Club remembers mangling the sheets to save on ironing in the 1930s at around the time the Tyne Bridge was constructed. Memories of the war years were about mixing up gravy browning to paint their legs with 'seams' drawn with charcoal when stockings were impossible to get. They talked of how good cut bread tasted when rationing was removed in 1946. It was still 'good bread' at that time with no additives. In 1947 the winter was grim and cleared snow was piled as high as houses in Barnard Castle. 1949 saw the end of clothes rationing



1970 - Beamish Museum opens to the public

1971 - Britain changes to decimal currency & VAT is introduced at 10%

1974 - Miners' strikes lead to electricity cuts & the 3 day week

1974 - Local government reform reshapes the boundaries of County Durham

1976 - The long hot Summer & severe drought



Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Service

Developed in 1997, UTASS was set up to look at ways of supporting the local farming community and its secondary services, and to provide help and advice at a time of great agricultural change.

The project was originally managed by Durham RCC, with funding for the UTASS steering group only secured to develop the project until June 2001. The onset of Foot and Mouth disease severely hit Teesdale and thrust the fledgling UTASS headlong into the crisis. Working closely with the NFU, Police, the Churches and community members, a small team of highly dedicated staff and volunteers worked day and night to man their base, giving practical and emotional support to those in need.

This tremendously valuable work, carried out in the face of adversity, brought enormous praise to the UTASS team, with Diane Spark at the helm more than ably supported by members and trustees. Indeed HRH Prince Charles can be counted amongst its many supporters. UTASS has since moved forward dynamically, and now includes the health and welfare of young people within its remit whilst continuing to respond to local needs and issues.

UTASS has been very successful in raising funds and obtaining grants to continue its services to the local community. The charity now operates from part of the Co-operative building in Middleton-in-Teesdale providing all sorts of activities, events and meetings.

Durham RCC is proud to have been associated with the early development of UTASS. We wish it every success for the future, and for the future of farming in Teesdale.

The Weardale Gazette - birth of a rural community newspaper



The Weardale Gazette came into being in 1986 when volunteers delivered their dream to have a community newspaper in Weardale.

Weardale, once a prosperous lead-mining community, has faced closures of mines, industries, shops, post-offices, businesses and public houses. People have learned to do without and to travel for what they need.

The idea of a local newspaper came from an education forum convened by the Adult Education Department of Durham University and Durham RCC. The object of the forum was "to interest people in the social and economic future of Weardale, and to consider ideas for practical projects which could realistically be developed".

A steering group of volunteers got together and produced a sample paper, followed by the first edition proper in October 1987. The original 1987 team of six volunteers deserve generous commendations for devotion to duty - unpaid and time-consuming hard work to produce a newspaper - cut and paste style, on kitchen tables!

Now the Gazette is a community newspaper providing jobs for four local people and, like most projects, it is the community support that has made it the success it is today.



1979 - Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain's first female Prime Minister

1980 - John Lennon assassinated in New York

1981 - Killhope Lead Mine opened in Upper Weardale

1981 - Royal Wedding of Prince Charles & Lady Diana Spencer

1982 - ET, the Extra Terrestrial huge worldwide cinema success

1982 - Falklands War between Britain and Argentina

1983 - 100th Durham Miners Gala Closure of Shildon Wagon Works

1984 - Community Service for Durham County changed to Durham Rural Community Council

Middleton Mental Health Group

Middleton Mental Health Group was established in 1989 with help from Mo Dobbie who worked with DRCC for many years. Currently the group has a support worker and holds regular meetings. Friday mornings are 'club' mornings and planned initiatives include 'new age curling' and digital photography.

The Association of Teesdale Day Clubs

Twelve years ago, Durham RCC played a vital role in the development and support of the Association of Teesdale Day Clubs. It helped to strengthen the board by providing trustee training and re-evaluating the constitution. In practical terms, Durham RCC enabled the clubs to secure a shared office and helped to look for continuation and revenue funding. Without that input, it is possible that the 10 clubs that now operate across Teesdale would have found it hard to continue and 300 people would not have received the support they have enjoyed.

Teesdale Day Clubs began in Cotherstone in 1995 when a group of concerned individuals identified a need for elderly, infirm or isolated individuals living within the village and its environs to be provided with opportunities to interact socially. From this beginning, the number of clubs increased and an Association was formed to develop a concept of Day Clubs in the Dale. Today, there are ten autonomous Day Clubs with about 250 members and the Association operates as an unincorporated registered charity.

The Association is very dependent on donations from charitable trusts and other sources of income and over the past few years, in common with many other small charities, has had problems in finding sources of funding. Durham RCC recognises the value of the Association and has been very supportive, particularly through the provision of an experienced member of staff to help with developing approaches to funders. The assistance and guidance provided by Durham RCC has helped to develop the skills of trustees and staff in dealing with funding applications. It has also led to a situation where the Association has secured sufficient core funding to ensure that it can continue to maintain its services to the members for at least the next 4 years.

A helping hand in Lunedale



Sometimes our staff become true friends to the group they are working with - always there to give a helping hand when needed, but also knowing when to step back and allow the group to do things for themselves. This shines out from this piece written by Lunedale's Carlbeck Centre.

(Left) the new Centre in 2010 and (below) as Carlbeck School in 1944.

Sandra Moorhouse, of Durham Rural Community Council, was instrumental in helping our small community group at Carlbeck, in Lunedale, begin the long process of developing our Community Centre back in June 2004.

She organised the first community meeting at Carlbeck and helped us to develop a feasibility study. Since then we have worked closely with Sandra - both through the Mid Teesdale Project Partnership umbrella organisation and individually.

Sandra advised us about which organisations to approach to provide funding for the various stages of the work. She guided us through the process of undertaking a feasibility study, developing a constitution, becoming a registered charity, gaining legal title to our building, and visiting other community centres in the dales to share ideas. She even arranged for us to attend a Countryside Agency conference at St James' Park, Newcastle to present our project to community workers from across the whole region. Our new hall was officially opened in August 2010



We have also worked with her on other related projects such as the Parish Plan and the production of our book about 'The Mickleton Lease' which was launched at a party on the actual 400th anniversary of the signing of the lease. Through Sandra's encouragement to apply (as we didn't think we fitted the criteria) our community of Lunedale was runner up in the Calor Village of the Year competition in 2007.

With her help, backed up by Durham Rural the group has grown in confidence and now able to provide support to others in turn.

Community Council, experience and is



1987 - Durham Cathedral was recognised as a Unesco World Heritage Site

1990 - Gateshead National Garden Festival

1991 - Break up of the Soviet Union

1993 - New DRCC offices in Lanchester & Wheatley Hill

1994 - Opening of the Channel Tunnel

1994 - Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa

1995 - Durham City celebrated its 1000th Anniversary

Barnard Castle Lunch Club remembers they don't ever want to change to the Euro, decimalisation was bad enough and VAT an unwelcome extra. Also during the 70s they recall the long hot summer and the Queen's Silver jubilee - more street parties and re-building community spirit. Memories make fascinating reading. You can enjoy more from Barnard Castle Lunch Club on our web site at www.durhamrcc.org.uk/memories.

1995 - Launch of DRCC's Hands on Health project still running today

1997 - Tony Blair elected Prime Minister ending 18 years of Conservative rule



1997 - Princess Diana was killed in a car crash in Paris

1998 - The film Titanic enjoyed huge worldwide success

1998 - Angel of the North statue completed



Tow Law Community Association

In 1985 the Rural Development Commission (RDC) launched a new programme to encourage multi-purpose village centres. New services would operate alongside traditional uses under one roof, making best use of the buildings. This seemed to fit the bill for Tow Law where the old centre had been condemned as unsafe, but where would the money come from? In the hope that a grant would come from the RDC, the community came together to form a fundraising project group with advice and support from Durham Rural Community Council.



Demolition work underway at Tow Law

The first break came with an unprecedented grant from the RDC for one third of the cost. Then, with funding from all possible sources, the local authorities, the (then) Sports Council, local businesses and charitable trusts, the target was in sight.

The people of Tow Law rose magnificently to the challenge to raise the balance with every type of event, working together and involving all age groups.

Durham Rural Community Council helped in locating other services, such as a Job Centre outlet, a luncheon club and a base for the local Policeman, but the credit lies with hard working local people who were determined to succeed.

Rural Development Commission / The Countryside Agency

Durham Rural Community Council was fortunate to enjoy a successful working relationship with both the Rural Development Commission (RDC), and its successor, the Countryside Agency, stretching back over many years. Sadly the RDC and its successor disappeared several years ago. However, the connections remain strong. Two members of Durham Rural Community Council's current staff, Russell Hayward and Lesley Millgate are both former RDC and Countryside Agency employees, as is Glyn Bateman, now a member of Durham Rural Community Council's Board of Trustees.

Eddie Tomlinson, the former Regional Manager of the RDC, and now a Durham County Councillor and Durham Rural Community Council member has penned

a short note recalling the strong links.

He writes: "it is with great pleasure that I extend my congratulations to Durham Rural Community Council for 75 years of service to Durham communities. In particular, I wish to compliment it for the contribution that was made in the mid-nineties when I was North East Area Manager for the Rural Development Commission. The range and quality of the projects that Durham Rural Community Council introduced and delivered through the Rural Development Programme have had lasting effects on Durham's rural communities, with both social and economic benefits enhancing the lives of people. Long may you continue providing this invaluable work".



2000 - The world heralded a new millennium and survived the Millennium Bug

2001 - The Foot & Mouth crisis devastated rural communities across Britain

2007 - Financial crisis - worst recession for 60 years

2008 - Barack Obama first black president of the USA

2009 - Durham became a unitary authority



Middleton Crafts

Set up as a community enterprise by Durham Rural Community Council in 1986 through the Teesdale Patchwork project, Middleton Crafts is still in operation today.

The group continues to use the shop where they began and have nine craft workers who contribute a large range of goods.

Items range from wood turning to card making, lampshade and glass painting, together with a selection of wonderful fruit cakes, jams and marmalades. Traditional handmade teddy bears can also be purchased and the latest Middleton Poggles Bears are just leaping off the shelves.



The membership of nine is happy to encourage more people to become involved to work on new crafts; they try not to duplicate goods already on sale. Volunteers are always needed to man the shop which is open throughout the week during the Summer months but only at weekends in Winter. Despite having a Tourist Information Centre in the village they continue to give help and guidance to visitors when required.



County Durham Community Foundation



A small group was set up in 1991 to explore the possible establishment of a Community Foundation - led by the director of Durham Rural Community Council, the Bishop of Durham and David Grant (then Lord Lieutenant of Durham) with support from the Lieutenancy Office and the Baring Foundation. Pat Wynne (later to become the Chair of Durham Rural Community Council and still a Trustee), was appointed to work for us in order to prepare a feasibility study. Her final report, approved by the Executive Committee, paved the way for the next steps.

The Foundation, now a highly successful charitable organisation, was established in 1994. It dispenses grants to community groups to help improve people's lives. You can find out more about the work of the foundation by visiting www.cdcf.org.uk/.

Rural housing support

Over the years Durham Rural Community Council has been a supporter of rural housing. Most recently we employed a Rural Housing Enabler for several years with support through the Rural Social and Community Programme; prior to that we supported housing initiatives in Derwentside, Teesdale and Weardale.

From 1988 to 1995, Jan Worters (now a Durham Rural Community Council Trustee) worked with us as a Rural Housing Officer in Teesdale and Weardale with funding from the Rural Development Commission, Housing Associations and Charitable Trusts. Working with local people to assess their needs, she helped submit successful schemes in rural villages including Staindrop, Stanhope and Hamsterley.

Approaches were made to landowners willing to release land at agricultural value. Funded by various Housing Associations, affordable accommodation was provided for young couples as well as the elderly and people with special needs. The success of the scheme lay in the initiative and support given to local groups by Durham Rural Community Council.

This project was followed by the Durham Alarm Trust, aimed at protecting elderly people in rural areas made possible by a large grant given by BBC TV's 'Blue Peter'. This was the forerunner of such schemes introduced by local authorities.



The Dene Valley Villages

In 1951 Durham County Council published its Development Plan in which it addressed the problems of 350 scattered villages that had grown up around small mines. The plan classified a third of the villages as "Category D" because the council felt there was no way of sustaining them in the future. Those villages were to be left to die without economic assistance.

A glance down the list reveals the names of many villages that continue to exist today – without pit heaps or the scars of mining. Auckland Park, Coronation, Coundon Grange, Close House, Eldon Lane, Gurney Valley, Old Eldon and Eldon were amongst them.



Pictured: view across the Dene Valley towards Coundon Grange and Eldon Lane

With the help of Durham Rural Community Council, an action group was formed involving community members, the then Wear Valley District Council, Police and many small local groups who successfully applied for funding and then went on to rebuild their communities.

Loyal members worked long and hard over the years and their dedication was rewarded with a Community Transport system as well as a Community Centre and Cafe. During 2006/7 Durham RCC was again involved in helping to build the capacity of the group and to supply training. This enabled local people to continue working together in order to further develop the potential of their area.



For more information about DRCC's history, visit www.durhamrcc.org.uk/about/history.

Onwards and upwards

75 years! A few pages can do no more than record the events and give a small example of the vast experience our organisation has had in managing programmes, funding schemes and activities across a wide spectrum.

Our integrity is the same from big spend to small grass roots projects. As a charity we are neutral and impartial with no political affiliation - which means we can undertake consultation and advisory work without fear of compromise.

We see our work as building stronger communities, which means helping people to help each other. With our sound understanding of rural issues we also recognise the benefits of working in partnership, and enjoy a wide network of contacts. As members of the Rural Community Action Network we, and the other 37 RCCs across the country, have the clout to influence local, regional and national policymakers.

75 years is hard for anyone under the age of 80 to comprehend. But for Durham RCC, it's just the beginning. Our work goes on. In 2010 we are faced by similar problems to those encountered by our colleagues in 1936. Treading in their remarkable footsteps, we have a sound understanding of communication with rural people. An understanding of rural life and systems that we have developed to help us communicate and build trust to make their communities a better place to work, rest and play.

