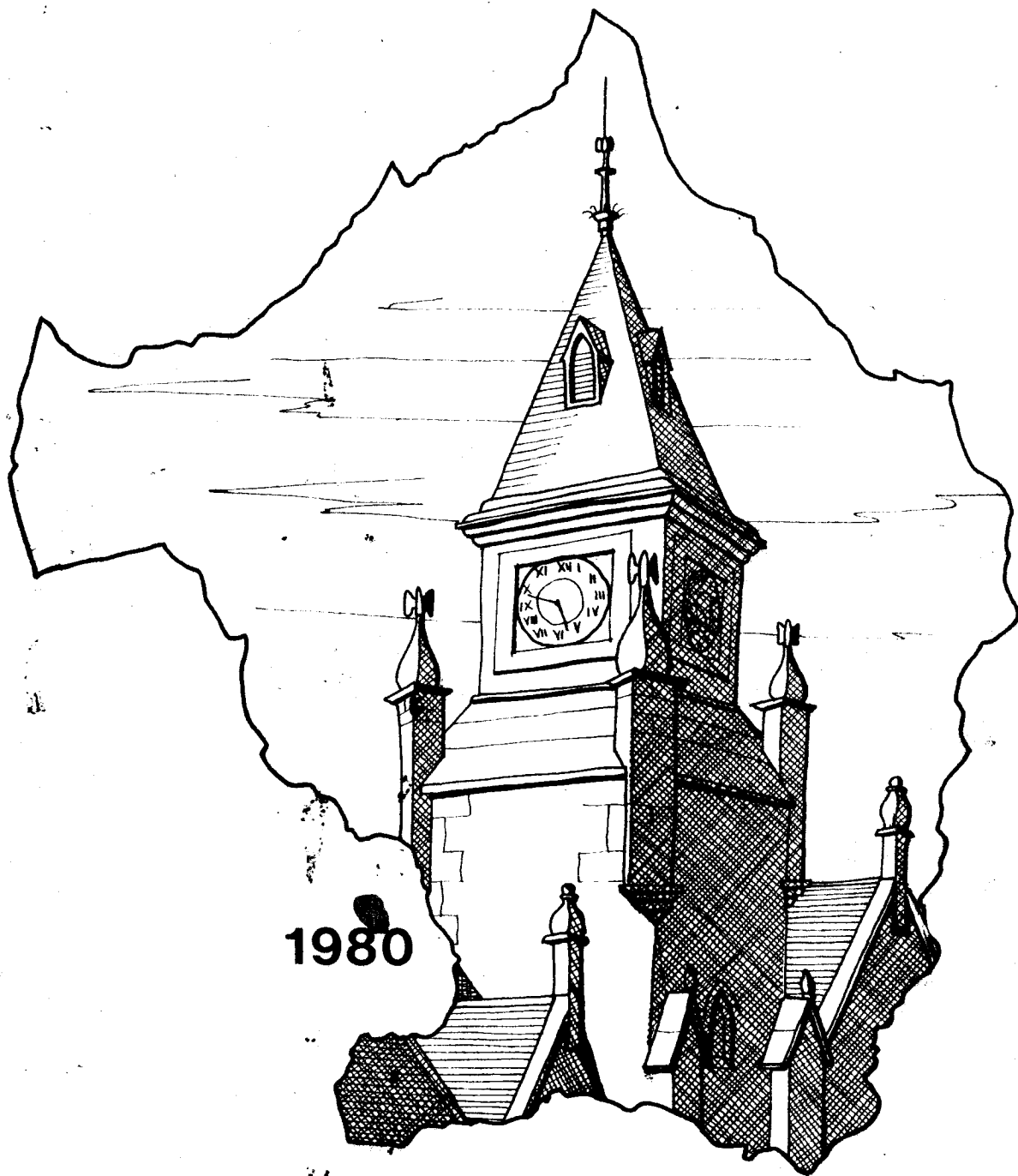


# ALSTON MOOR



AN APPRAISAL

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## ALSTON MOOR 1980 AN APPRAISAL

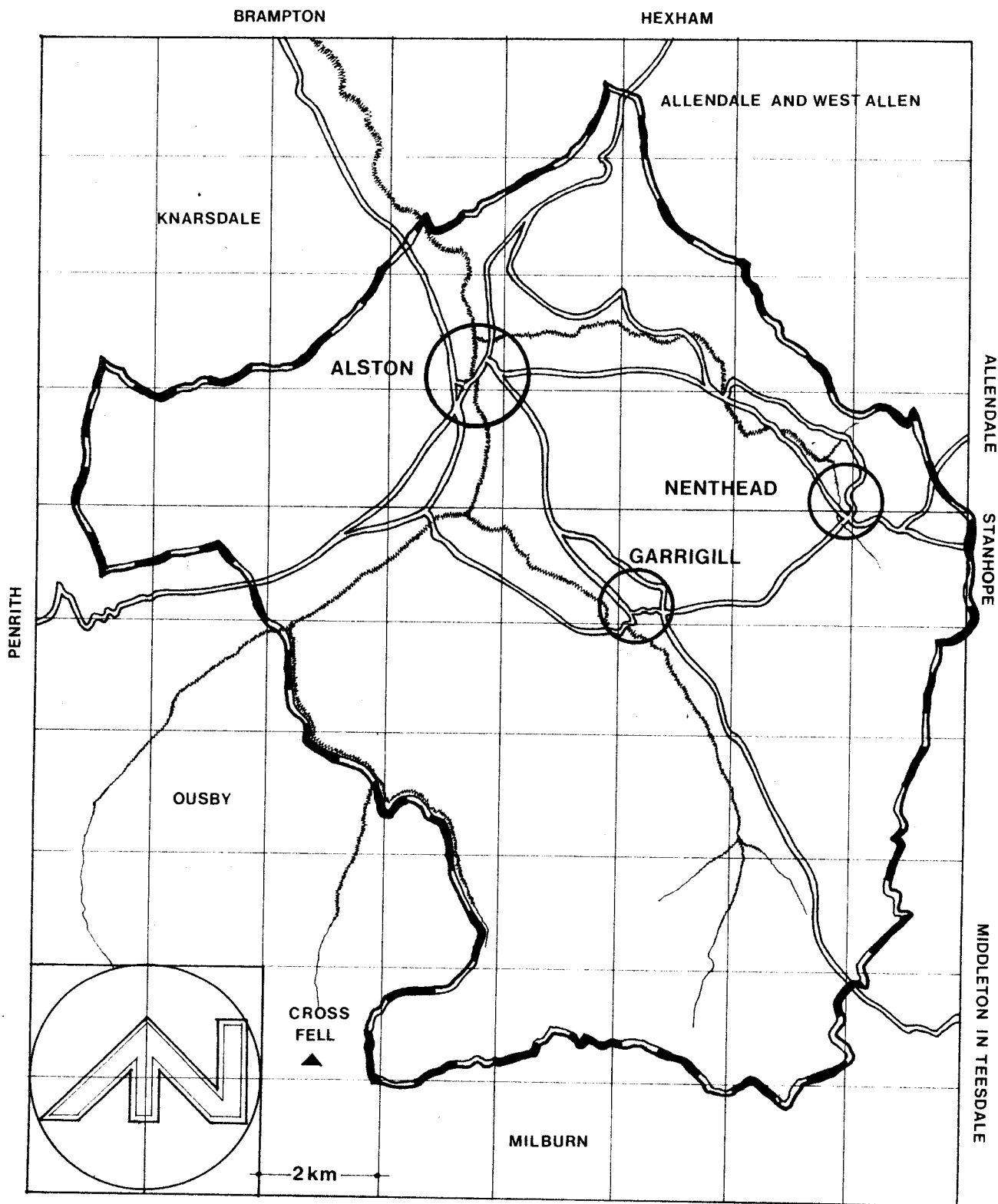
Alston Moor Parish Council is concerned about the recent closure of the Foundry in Alston, and the wider implications on the already slender social and economic structures within the Parish. The Parish Council has therefore commissioned this Appraisal in order to investigate these structures and identify the inherent problems and potential resources of Alston Moor.

A study team was specifically appointed for a four month period to undertake the Appraisal. During the time allocated the Study Team collected and analysed considerable quantities of data, culminating in this document.

It is intended that the completed report should fulfil three principal functions:

1. To provide a reference point for future local planning affecting the Parish and in particular to provide source material for the recently inaugurated Fellside Project.
2. To register a Parish point of view.
3. To provide reference material pertinent to prospective business enterprises.

The Study Team, Peter J. Kempsey, Dip Arch (Architect) and his wife, Sonia M.A. Kempsey B.A. Hons. M.R.T.P.I. (Town and Country Planner) are residents of Nenthead.



**PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR**  
**Scale 1:100,000**

**ENVIRONS**



1.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Location

Alston Moor is situated in the heart of the Northern Pennines where the three counties of Durham, Northumberland and Cumbria meet, and is in fact just within Cumbria, previously being part of Cumberland. It is renowned for its high altitude and remoteness from other centres of civilisation (by British standards), and although the great attraction to those who live and come to stay here, it is a deterrent to many forms of commercial development and accounts very much for the recurring economic problems of the area.

### 1.2 The need for a Study

The closure of Alston Foundry in January 1980 has highlighted the need to improve the local economy. In order to determine how this might be achieved, an appraisal of the area's resources is necessary so as to identify the problems and examine their causes.

### 1.3. Aims

Through studying the structure of the local economy and social and environmental characteristics of the area, the aims of this appraisal are to identify associated problems and their causes and to investigate how they might be solved or alleviated. It is hoped that in carrying this out, the Study will also distil and record local opinion on matters of concern to the community. In the longer term the aim would be to stimulate community interest in the affairs of the Parish and initiate the forum for the exchange of points of view.

### 1.4 Involvement of local people

During the information collection process, every household in the parish was circulated with a questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire, its delivery and retrieval, and the final processing of the data became a self-contained project undertaken by Lower Sixth students of Samuel King's School in collaboration with "Moorlands Software", the Nenthead-based computer firm. Although the retrieval of the completed questionnaires relied on the co-operation of each respective householder, a 31% response was nevertheless obtained. This can be considered an excellent response for such an exercise dependent on individual participation and compares favourably with response to similar research undertaken within other communities. In parallel, the Study Team interviewed the majority of local employers so that the present employment provision could be recorded and a commercial point of view established.

### 1.5 Problems in context

In order to successfully solve any problems, the root causes must be identified and investigated. In the case of Alston Moor, today's problems stem partly from the difficulties engendered by the isolated and exposed location and partly from an historical legacy of exploitation. Sections 2 and 3 of the report investigate these aspects.

2.

## 2. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

### 2.1 Geographical position and climate

2.1.1 Alston Moor is a self-contained area of approximately 60 square miles, surrounded by the highest fells of the Pennine chain which form the watershed of three major rivers, the South Tyne, Wear and Tees. Alston itself, the main population and service centre of the area, is relatively sheltered, situated in the South Tyne Valley at its confluence with the Nent tributary. The other two settlements in the area are Nenthead and Garrigill. Other than this the population is scattered in small hamlets and isolated dwellings. The whole of the parish lies above 788 feet and Nenthead (1460 - 1600 feet) claims to be the highest village in England. The high altitude means that the climate is cooler and wetter on average than lower lying areas of Great Britain (mean annual temperature 44 deg F, mean annual rainfall 49.6 ins), but to compensate there are certain attractive features about the weather, notably the outstanding clarity of the atmosphere.

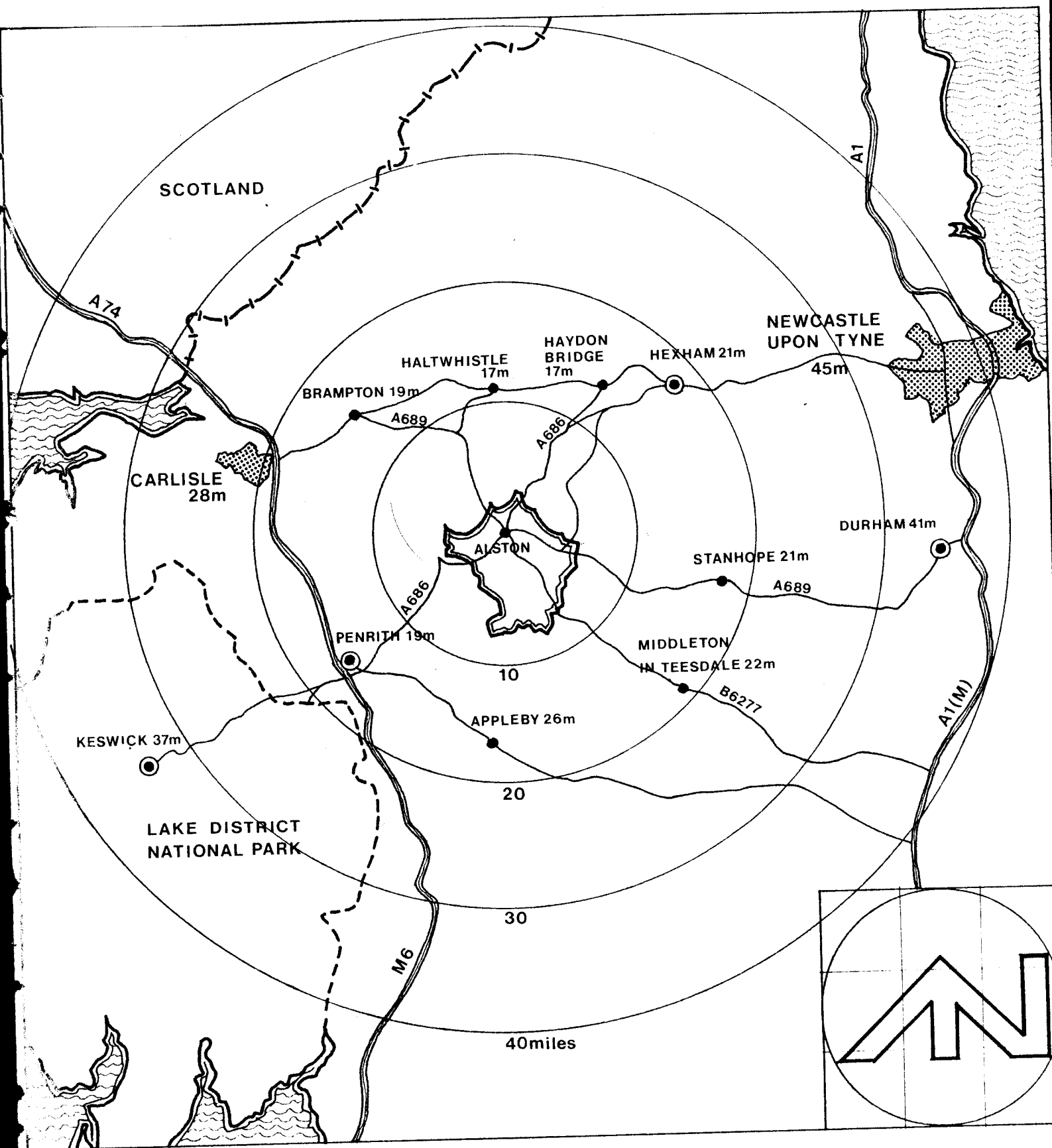
### 2.2 Geology

2.2.1 The landscape of Alston Moor, although predominantly carboniferous limestone, consists of alternating layers of limestone, sandstone and hardened clay which vary in thickness and are faulted due to movements in the earth's crust. The occurrence of mineral-bearing veins is widespread throughout these faults and fissures in the strata. The geology of the area has thus played a key role in local history.

2.2.2 Mining activity has probably taken place in Alston Moor since Roman times, and both lead and silver have certainly been mined since the 12th century. These and other metals such as zinc and copper (and also coal) were all mined in large quantities in the 19th century when mining activities reached their peak in the area. Other minerals such as fluorspar, witherite and barytes have also been extracted here. As the seams became exhausted or uneconomic to work, and foreign competition intensified, the industry declined until today three small anthracite mines are all that remains.

### 2.3. Communications

2.3.1 Alston Moor's isolated location is indicated by the distances from the nearest towns of any size; Penrith 19 and Hexham 21 miles from Alston. With the exception of the Alston-Brampton (Carlisle) "all weather" road, all the routes out of the area climb to considerable altitudes. Hartside Height at 1,889 ft on the A686 Penrith road is notorious for becoming impassable whenever winter conditions are bad. Killhope, the pass into Weardale at 2,056 ft is the highest A road pass in England, and the pass over Yad Moss to Middleton in Teesdale reaches 1,962 ft. The route to Hexham only manages to climb to 1,546 ft over moorland into Northumberland. Although Nenthead is not infrequently cut off from Alston in severe winter conditions, Alston itself is rarely completely cut off from the outside world and, even in the memorably bad winter of 1978-79, Wright Bros (coaches) the locally based firm managed to maintain their service on all but a few days. Doubtless, however, winter weather conditions are a contributing factor, together with remoteness, in deterring outside businesses from settling here.



PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR

COMMUNICATIONS

Scale 1 : 625,000 One inch to ten miles

3.

2.3.2

The nearest cities are Carlisle, 29 miles and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 45 miles from Alston. Distances to Penrith and Hexham have been stated previously. Haltwhistle and Brampton, much smaller employment and service centres are 17 and 19 miles from Alston respectively. Going East, Stanhope (in Weardale) is 21 miles and Middleton in Teesdale 22 miles from Alston. Thus Alston is too remote to be considered as a commuter settlement, although certain residents travel as far a-field as Carlisle and even Newcastle daily to work. It is therefore essential that Alston continues to provide a local employment base. Although the wild climate and communications difficulties may prevent some firms from deciding to settle here, Alston, is, in fact, far more favourably located than, for example, West Cumbria in terms of a central position, readily accessible to both East and West coasts.

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Sources:

Alston Moor Parish

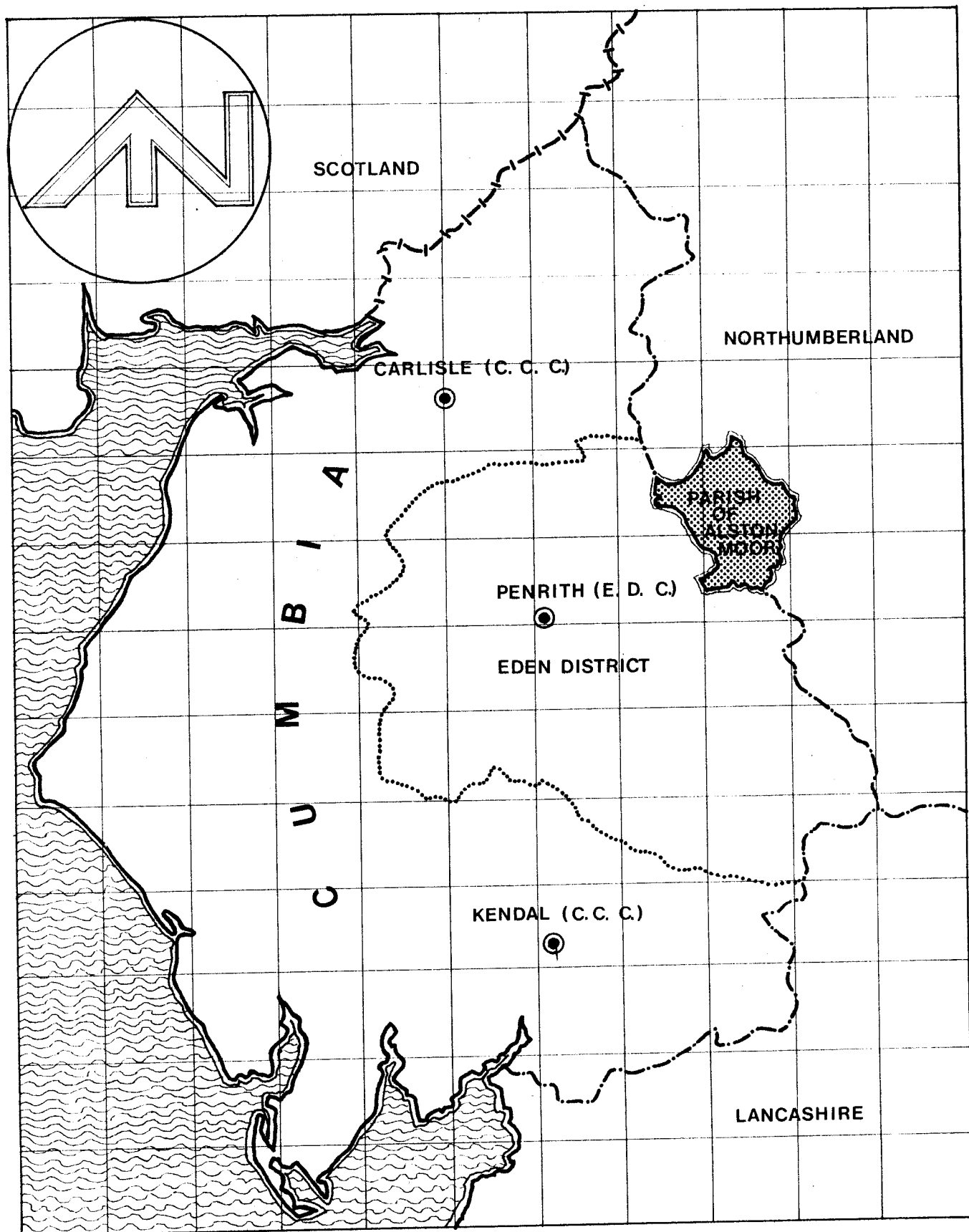
History, Directory and Gazetteer of Cumberland and Westmorland  
Furness and Cartmel 1829, Pearson and White

Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological  
Society, New Series, Volume 64, 1963, Paul N. Wilson.

The Independent Bus, Keith Turns

### 3. THE CHANGING ROLE OF ALSTON MOOR

- 3.1 Alston Moor's past history is inextricably involved with mining. Lead and silver were mined here as early as the 12th century although it was not until the end of the 17th century that mining activities were intensified, leading to the rapid development of the area over the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 3.2 The estate of Alston Moor was settled upon Greenwich Hospital in 1734 after its forfeiture by the Earl of Derwentwater on account of his part played in the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. The estate remained with Greenwich Hospital until its recent acquisition by the Catholic Trust who thus own large areas of land within the parish and also retain most of the mineral rights.
- 3.3 In 1750 the London Lead Company, created by a group of Quakers in 1692, started to develop the lead mining industry at the head of the Nent valley on a scale previously unprecedented, and Nenthead grew from a sparse scattering of dwellings to a properly serviced village.
- 3.4 Mining reached its peak of prosperity in the early 19th century, by which time it had become the principal economic support of the area. Alston was an essential service centre for its mining hinterland, providing the areas foodstuffs imported from the neighbouring fertile areas of Brampton, Hexham and the Eden Valley.
- 3.5 The population grew with the flourishing mining activity and a wealth of services developed including a grammar school, National School, Town Hall and Library. The London Lead Company retained hold of their leases throughout the main period of mining activity in the area, finally relinquishing them in 1882. During this time the area benefited from the philanthropic attitude of the company who provided services for the miners not normally associated with 19th century private enterprise. In 1825 the company planned the rebuilding of Nenthead and subsequently provided a wide range of services, namely a school, chapel, market hall, reading room, public baths and wash-house.
- 3.6 As the area prospered, communications improved. The road over Hartside, engineered by Macadam, was opened in 1828 by which time most of the main roads servicing the area had developed along their present routes. The Haltwhistle railway link was completed in 1852. This constituted a considerable engineering exercise as the line drops 500 feet from Alston to Haltwhistle. The railway provided an efficient means of communication and was used for the transport of lead and later fluorspar which was mined in the 1950's.
- 3.7 Towards the end of the 19th century, lead-mining suffered from foreign competition and this, together with the gradual exhaustion of the veins led to the eventual collapse of the local industry with a parallel decline in population.
- 3.8 Various attempts have been made during this century to revive the lead mining industry but none of these have flourished for long and the final closure of the mines took place during the 1960's.
- 3.9 Alston Moor, in common with many other remote areas of Great Britain has suffered from rural depopulation as fewer have been employed on the land and local job opportunities have diminished. This problem has been accentuated here through the dependence of the local economy on lead-mining, a declining industry.



PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR

LOCAL GOV'T STRUCTURE

Scale 1:625,000

5.

- 3.10 In 1940, Alston Foundry was established as a munition factory, the isolated location being an obvious advantage in a war-time situation. Since then, transport costs have soared, its isolation thus becoming an increasing disadvantage and no doubt contributing towards the final closure this year. As mining activity diminished, so the Foundry took on the role of major employer and gave the area a sense of economic security, thus perpetuating the area's dependence on a single industry.
- 3.11 During the last decade, two major losses have occurred in the area which were the effect of national trends rather than the local economic situation. The first of these was the loss of Alston's role as an administrative centre after local government re-organisation in 1974. Alston was no longer large enough to administer its own services as administration became centralised into larger, more powerful units. Alston with Garrigill Rural District Council was thus replaced by Eden District Council based at Penrith. Secondly, Alston lost its rail-link with Haltwhistle in 1976 as part of British Rail's programme of closure of small, uneconomic branch-lines.
- 3.12 In 1980, the closure of the Foundry has created a massive unemployment problem, nearly a quarter of the working population, now being out of work. With the loss of its main economic support, the future of the area is now very insecure. The possible loss of population which this may cause could lead to a decline in services. Alston has lost its administrative function and its role as a service centre has already diminished; it now serves a much smaller population than in the past and with increased personal mobility the local inhabitants are able to look further afield for their requirements. Nevertheless Alston is presently well-endowed with services for a population of its size, but without the emergence of a new role for the parish as a whole the demand for these services will decline.
- 3.13 Recent years have witnessed growth in the tourist industry although it is still relatively "low-key" and the place of tourism in the local economy has not yet been fully resolved.
- 3.14 The opportunity now exists for fundamental change in the structure of the area's economic base. Having lost the previous mainstay of its economy, Alston Moor needs to find a new direction and purpose in order to secure the future prosperity of the area.

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Sources: Alston Moor Parish Guide  
South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society  
History, Directory and Gazetteer of Cumberland and Westmorland,  
Furness and Cartmel, 1829 - Pearson and White  
Through the ages - Louise M. Thrain

#### 4 POPULATION

##### 4.1.1 Past Trends

In 1821 the population of Alston Moor was 5,699. Between 1828 and 1832 the depression following the Napoleonic wars caused 2000 persons or thereabouts to leave the parish. After the First World War there was again a severe depression in mining and by 1931 the population of Alston Moor had dropped to 2,678.

##### 4.2 Recent population change

4.2.1 The population of the parish continued to drop steadily until 1971 when it was below 2,000.

TABLE 1 Changes in Total Population - Alston Moor Parish

	1931	1951	1961	1971	1977
	2678	2327	2105	1902	2142

Source: Census of Population & 1977 electoral roll survey

4.2.2 Between 1961 and 71, compared with Eden District as a whole, the Parish of Alston Moor suffered a substantial decline in population. The particular section of the community largely responsible for this depletion in numbers was the 35-64 age group, perhaps reflecting the final closure of the lead mines in the 1960's. The proportion of people in the 15 - 34 age group rose over the same period but still remained well below the average for Cumbria generally, indicative of the restrictive nature of job opportunities locally.

TABLE 2 Population change 1961 - 71 (Population in private households)

	1961	1971	% change
Alston Moor Parish	2,063	1,870	- 09.35
Eden District	41,008	40,445	- 01.40

Source - Census of Population

4.2.3 However in 1977, the Electoral Roll Survey carried out by the County Council and Eden District showed an increase in the population of Alston Moor of 240 since 1971. In 1970-71 the total number of pupils on the school rolls in the area was 364. In 1976-77 this had risen to 403 (in 1979-80 the total roll had dropped slightly to 396). These figures would again indicate an increase in the population since 1971 at least in numbers of young families within the parish, although the largest increase would still appear to be in the over 60 age group according to the 1977 Survey. In any event the previous trends of population decline now seem to be reversed (probably as a result of an influx of incomers rather than more local people staying in the area).



7.

Whether this will remain so after the foundry closure remains to be seen and depends almost entirely on the degree of success achieved 'in encouraging' industry into the area. The questionnaire indicated that out of a total of 753 persons represented by the response, 66 residents (49 from Alston) intend to leave the parish.

#### 4.3. Age Structure

The population in 1971 showed a far higher proportion in the older age groups (i.e. 45 and over) than the national average, and lower proportion of those aged below 45. The disparity from the norm in the 15 - 44 age group indicates the lack of opportunities for the younger working age groups and although this proportion of the age group within the population rose from 1961-71 it is still well below the national average and below the average for Cumbria as a whole. At the same time the percentage of those over 65 years of age, already higher than average, rose by 2.1 % reflecting both the outward immigration of the younger elements of the population leaving older residents behind and the attraction of the area as a place for retirement.

TABLE 3 Age Structure 1971, Alston Moor-comparison with national average.

Age groups	% Males		% Females	
	Alston Moor	National Average	Alston Moor	National Average
0 - 14	22%	25%	23%	23%
15-29	20%	22%	17%	20%
30-44	16%	18%	14%	17%
45-64/59	28%	24%	20%	18%
60+/65+	14%	11%	26%	28%

Source : 1971 Census of Population.

## 5. EMPLOYMENT

### 5.1 Employment Types

A variety of employment types is represented in Alston Moor. In 1971, the proportion employed in agriculture was higher than that of Great Britain as a whole, although lower than for Eden District, whilst male employment in services was well below the national average.

TABLE 4 Persons in Employment in the Parish of Alston Moor.

	Males				Females			
	Total Working in parish	% Parish	% Eden	% G.B.	Total Working in Parish	% Parish	% Eden	% G.B.
Agriculture	90	16.1	29.4	3.5	20	9.1	14.5	1.3
Mining	20	3.6	3.4	2.5	-	-	0.8	0.2
Manufacturing	220	39.3	16.3	38.3	40	18.2	9.7	28.1
Construction	50	8.9	13.5	10.5	-	-	0.8	1.1
Services	180	32.1	37.5	45.2	160	72.7	74.2	69.3
TOTAL	560	100%	100%	100%	220	100%	100%	100%

Source: 1971 Census (10% sample)

### 5.2 Present Employment Provision within the Parish

In 1977, 137 people were employed full-time in agriculture (& 58 part-time including 22 seasonal employees). Seventeen men are currently employed in mining, approximately 80 people are employed in manufacturing (after the foundry closure) 52 in construction (this figure is derived from H. Kearton & Sons Ltd; and excludes self-employed builders, craftsmen and small businesses employing a full-time work-force of only one or two) and, very approximately 200 are employed in services. Part-time, casual and seasonal labour accounts for about 120 - 130 further jobs in services, nearly half of which are in the catering trade.

### 5.3 Self-Employment

Perhaps indicative of the independent nature of Alston inhabitants, there are apparently a high proportion of self-employed persons in the area. In addition to small retail businesses these include those who work on the land, builders, specialist skills e.g. electricians, joiners and craftsmen. It is probably a fair comment to say that the majority of these are people prepared to accept a low income in return for the benefits of living on Alston Moor. A total of 83 persons represented by the response to the questionnaire replied that they were self-employed, i.e. 22% of the economically active population covered by the questionnaire.

### 5.4. Travel to Work

From the response to the questionnaire and the results of the employer interviews, it would appear that 28% of the working respondents travel to a work location outside the parish (15% over 30 miles away) and 5% of the workforce within the parish travel in from outside, most of these from Slaggyford.

Data derived from the questionnaire would indicate that 41% of the workforce travel to work by car, 12% by public transport, 2% by bicycle and 30% walk. Of this latter, by far the majority are residents of Alston. Finally, 15% work at home.

### 5.5 Economic Activity

Male economic activity rates (i.e. the percentage of population in employment or seeking work) closely resembled the Cumbrian and national average in 1971, although slightly lower. Female rates differed slightly more, possibly reflecting a more limited range of job opportunities for women, although now approximately 42% of manufacturing jobs are taken up by female labour.. (This would have been considerably lower before the foundry closure). There are probably slightly more women than men employed in retailing and certainly the catering trade is dominated by female labour, as is the local hospital.

TABLE 5 Economic Activity Rates

	Male %	Female %
Alston RD	79.1	37.2
Cumbria	80.3	40.1
Great Britain	81.4	42.7

Source: Census of Population 1971, Unpublished Small Area Data (100%)  
Unemployment

### 5.6 5.6.1

In 1971, a total of 34 people in Alston Moor were recorded as seeking work. By November 1979 this had almost doubled to a figure of 62. Seemingly the increase in job opportunities over this period could not keep pace with the increase in population.

5.6.2 Unemployment was not a serious problem in Alston Moor in 1971. The main cause for concern at that time was the lack of job-opportunities for women. Approximately 4% of the working population were recorded as seeking work in 1971 (less than the Cumbrian average).

5.6.3 However, this situation has since changed, the principal problem now being an overall lack of employment opportunities. In November, 1979 the percentage unemployed was already high at 8.9% (compared with 5.5% for the Haltwhistle Employment Exchange Area as a whole). After the foundry closure unemployment rose drastically to around 25% (not accounting for the few who have since found work elsewhere). 15% of the workforce represented by the questionnaire response were unemployed. Unemployment, which was already becoming a serious problem in Alston Moor has thus been considerably magnified by the closure of the Alston Foundry.

5.6.4 Prior to the Foundry closure, most of those seeking work were either unskilled or semi-skilled, and most males were looking preferably for outdoor work but, because of lack of alternative opportunities, would accept any job offering over £60 a week.

5.6.5<sup>1</sup> The total number of persons employed at the foundry in December 1979 was 122 of whom, prior to the closure, 5 had found jobs elsewhere and approximately 12 lived outside Alston Moor. The labour force included 21 apprentice-trained, skilled workers (8 moulders, 7 pattern-makers, 5 fitters and 2 electricians) one of whom at that time had another

10.

job to go to, and one apprentice fitter who secured employment elsewhere. Other skilled employees, i.e. executives, supervisors, and clerical workers accounted for a further 29 jobs, two of these acquiring alternative employment in December 1979. The remainder of the work-force consisted of semi-skilled workers and 5 labourers. Most employees were aged between 30 and 60 and the average age of the workforce was 41 years. This would seem to indicate that the foundry did not offer attractive prospects to younger members of the workforce who consequently have little choice but to leave the area to seek employment.

5.6.6. One of the problems for unemployed people living in Alston Moor is of finding out where vacancies exist. An experimental attempt to rectify this short-coming is being considered by Hexham Job centre who intend to provide a job display-board in the Town Hall.

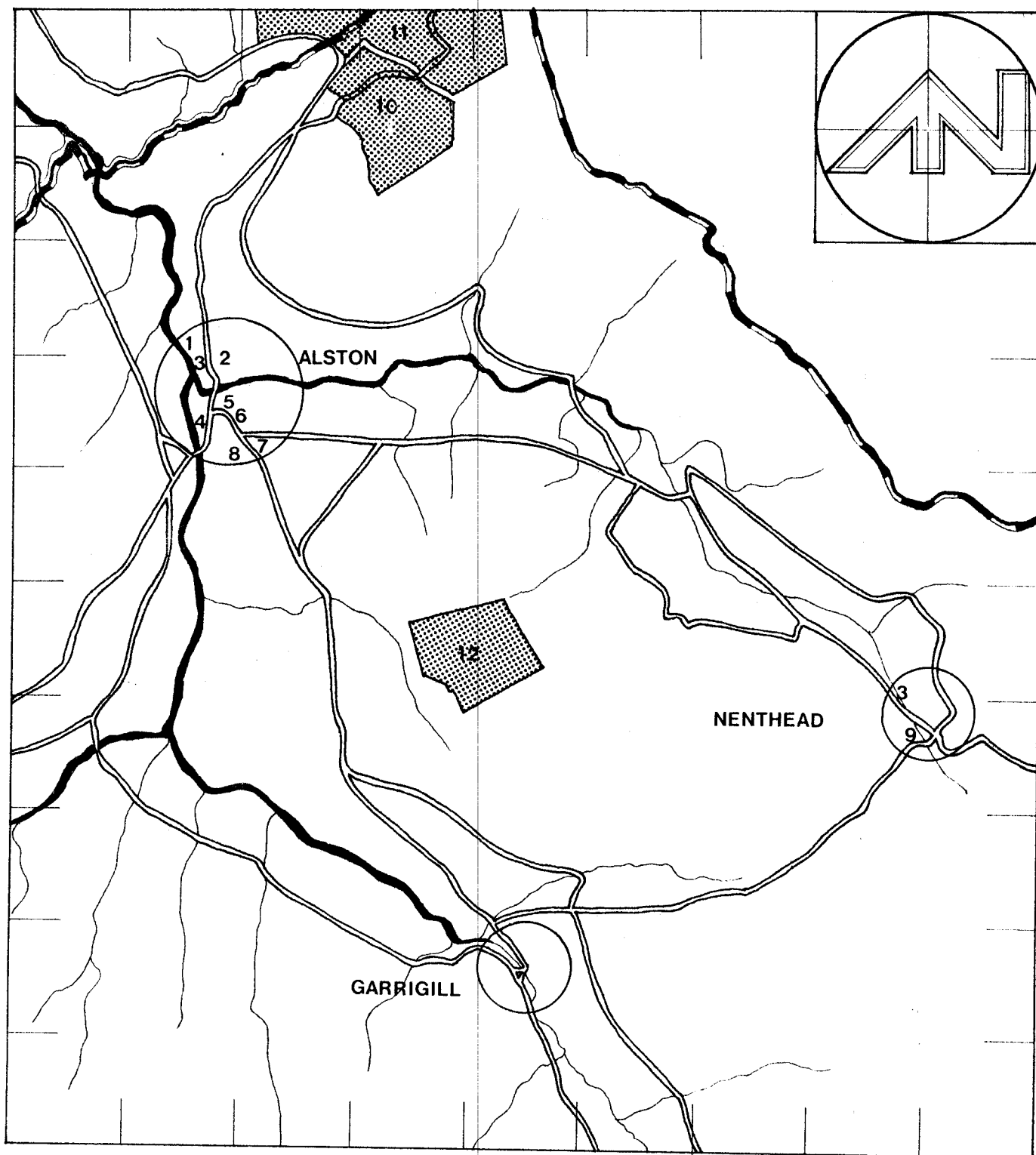
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Sources: 5.2. Local employees  
5.5 1971 Census & population, unpublished small area data  
Haltwhistle Employment Office  
5.6 County Council extracts from Haltwhistle Employment  
Exchange Area  
Alston Foundry Co. Ltd.

1 STATION YARD  
 Keartons - builder  
 Hodgsons - coal & plant  
 Advance factory  
 2 FOUNDRY SITE  
 3 Moredun garage

4 Henderson's garage  
 5 Aldenstone Industrials  
 6 Precision Products  
 7 William Ball Castings  
 8 Art & Commercial Construction  
 9 Overwater Guitar Co

10 Clarghyll colliery  
 11 Ayle colliery  
 12 Flowedge colliery  
 colliery workings



PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR  
 Scale 1 : 50,000

INDUSTRIAL PROVISION

## 6. ECONOMIC BASE

### 6.1 MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES

#### Present Provision and Future Prospects

6.1.1 The largest employer after the closure of Alston Foundry is Precision Products (Cumberland) Ltd., together with their subsidiary company William Ball (castings) Ltd., employing a total of 53 full-time employees (& 5 part-time). The company was founded in 1947 specifically to exploit the then newly-invented Shaw specialised method of producing high quality castings. The rapid growth of the firm led to the formation of the subsidiary company and the construction of an additional foundry to cope with the increased work-load. The new foundry went into production in 1970. The original building (High Mill) in the town centre provides a total of 19,000 sq ft of floorspace while the new factory at Fairhill provides 13,000 sq ft. The production of golf-club heads played a major part in the growth of the company. Precision products were the first foundry in the world to cast heads in production quantities, and in addition to supplying many leading British manufacturers, heads have also been exported to the United States, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Golf club heads formed about 90% of production 5 years ago, but this has reduced as a result of foreign competition to around 15%, and Precision Products have diversified to produce a very wide range of products, parts for machinery-building industries now proving to be the most important outlet. Other products include precision cast dies for plastic and rubber products, marine, aircraft, and aero-space components, parts for agricultural machinery, and parts for the electrical industry produced in alloys with special magnetic properties. The highly specialised nature of the work and the wide range of products would indicate that this firm is unlikely to be affected by the general crisis in the British Steel industry, and in fact last year, they initiated a 5 year programme of expansion. The aim is to treble output within this period, and in the process to provide an extra 40 jobs over the next four years. The firm has recently secured a loan of £75,000 from the Industrial and Commercial Finance Corporation Ltd. for this purpose. The policy of the firm is to employ from within the community where possible. Forty people are currently employed as Shaw processors, of which fifteen are female. The firm can thus offer jobs which will attract both sexes. The greater number of employees (54%) are aged between 20 and 39 (inclusive) which would suggest that this work offers attractive prospects to younger members of the workforce. Most workers are residents of Alston itself but 14 travel from Nenthead, 1 from Garrigill, 1 from Leadgate and 2 from Slaggyford.

6.1.2 Other manufacturing firms within the parish include Alderstone Industrials Ltd who occupy the premises previously operated by Redmaynes (1,500 sq ft) and produce clothing and other textile-based items, the Overwater Guitar Company located in the Nenthead advance factory unit (1,200 sq ft) who design and manufacture guitars, Art & Commercial Constructions, glass fibre fabricators, occupying 2,500 sq ft at Fairhill, Alston.

- 6.1.3 Alderstone Industrials Ltd took over the former Redmaynes, clothing manufacturer's premises in 1979 and were fortunate in being able to employ the existing workforce. Twelve machinists are presently employed (9 full-time) and proposals are to take on one extra full-time and one part-time worker immediately and one school-leaver trainee under the Manpower Services Commission work-experience programme in the summer. They are short of space and need additional premises. This firm relies entirely upon female labour (apart from the manager) and could consequently be adversely affected by the foundry closure as available female labour may decrease if ex-foundry workers, seeking opportunities elsewhere, take wives and daughters out of the parish. All the employees are local residents, four coming from outlying areas within the parish and the rest from Alston itself.
- 6.1.4 Overwater Guitat Company now employs 7 people (4 male and 3 female). It is an expanding business, having taken on three extra staff this year. There are no further proposals to increase the workforce, unless an application to the Manpower Services Commission is successful in which case they would be able to offer one clerical and one work-shop position.
- 6.1.5 Art & Commercial Constructions originally specialised in artistic moulding but now concentrate on repetitive process-work producing items such as fibre-glass litter-bins and road grit containers. Their workforce consists of 3 fibre-glass laminators (male) and one female clerical assistant. They expressed a willingness to take on one or two extra staff if resources could be made available under one of the Manpower Services Commission's schemes.
- 6.1.6 Educational and welfare services provide employment for a total of approximately 86 people including 27 employed full-time in education. The hospital employs a total of 23 (including 16 full and part time nursing staff), and Grisedale Croft Home for the Elderly employs 2 full-time officers and 9 part-time staff.
- 6.1.7 Wright Bros (Coaches) Ltd, operating the local bus service from Nent-head, employ 10 full-time staff and a few part-time staff with extra part-time drivers on Saturdays and in the summer.
- 6.1.8 Other major employers within the service industry include H. Kearton & Sons (Construction) Ltd., J. H. Henderson & Sons (garage business) the Moredun Garages & Hodgesons (coal merchants, plant & haulage contractors).
- 6.1.9 H. Kearton & Sons (Construction) Ltd, is a long-standing family firm which was established in 1878 and is now one of the biggest employers in Alston. The company employs a workforce of 52 (47 male) with a wide range of age groups represented. The labour force includes 22 craftsmen and 5 apprentices embracing the broad spectrum of skills necessary to the building trade, e.g. brick-layers, joiners, plasterers, plumbers, electricians etc. A wide range of construction work is undertaken by the firm from bridges to housing rehabilitation.

13.

Much of the work undertaken (approximately 80%) is outside the area (e.g. Penrith and Hexham) and three employees are currently based at Hexham. Apart from these three and two from Brampton, all the employees are residents of Alston Moor including 8 from Nenthead and 31 from Alston itself. Although a large proportion of work takes place outside Alston Moor, the firm considers itself ideally situated in that it can tender for work both in the North-East and in Cumbria. Therefore Keartons will continue to operate from Alston and in fact have plans to acquire a new one acre site in the station yard (plot no. 2) and to construct a 6,000 sq ft new building there. Expansion plans include an anticipated increase of 5 - 10 employees over the next three years to include craftsmen, labourers and apprentices. Long term plans could be affected if the foundry is not replaced by other employers. Local Government cut-backs in spending could also affect the firm as a substantial proportion of their work is in this field.

6.1.10

The major garages, J. H. Henderson and Sons and the Moredun, occupy a total of 16,000 sq ft and provide employment for 22 full time and 2 part time males and 5 part-time female staff. (Hendersons also operate a Haulage business from Langwathby employing 6 Alston residents as drivers). Staff of the two firms includes 5 skilled mechanics, 2 body repairers, and a skilled electrician and 4 apprentices (one a resident of Cowhill in Weardale). Hendersons have been adversely affected by the foundry closure through a direct loss of custom. Two other vehicle repair enterprises operate within the parish, a general repair-business based at Garrigill and a Landrover specialist situated nearby in the South Tyne valley. The latter is a developing concern stifled by lack of suitable premises. Their work-load is such that they are considering taking on extra manpower.

6.1.11

Hodge sons provide full-time employment for 7 men and part-time employment for 1 man and a woman. Their range of operations include a coal business, plant contracting, haulage and production of dressed local sand-stone. The coal business operates from the Station Yard. The dressed stone operation is developing and may expand into the station yard, utilising a plot adjacent to their coal depot for display of their product. The proposed development could create 2 or 3 further jobs.

6.1.12

Shops, banks and offices provide an estimated 60 full-time jobs, no single business employing more than half a dozen staff. The Co-op's proposed new shop in the market square, currently under construction will replace their present grocery and vegetable shops. It will be a self-service shop with 1,760 sq ft of floorspace on the ground-floor and 1,650 sq ft at first floor level giving a total of 3,410 sq ft. The new shop may take on one or two extra staff but no definite proposals exist and no significant change is envisaged in numbers employed by the Co-op. The hardware shop will continue to operate as at present but the existing grocery store will probably become surplus to requirements and be made available for sale or lease. The previous Co-op vegetable shop was demolished to make way for the new store and the Co-op currently rent premises to accommodate their department for greengroceries on a temporary basis to revert to the owner when the new shop is completed.



6.1.13 People wishing to start a retail business, of whom there are already a number in existence in Alston Moor, face problems in finding suitable premises in Alston. This situation is exacerbated by the reluctance of certain property owners to dispose of property which remains vacant or under-used, often in attractive trading positions in the town.

6.1.14 The fore-going paragraphs indicate the generally small-scale of operations in the area. A number of small firms hope to expand and take on further staff but their combined impact will not absorb the surge of unemployment created by the foundry closure. New businesses are essential to create the jobs so urgently required by the surplus labour force and in the longer term to stabilise the population.

#### Promotion of Industrial Development

6.1.15 The Government's proposed changes in Regional Aid will affect Alston which, as a Special Development Area, currently qualifies for the maximum financial incentives. Financial aid so far has largely been made available through the Tourist Board (see 6.5.2), the Manpower Services Commission (who have funded a number of employment schemes in the area including the building of the Nenthead Advance Factory as a job creation project), the European Regional Development Fund and funds made available for land reclamation under the Local Employment Act 1972.

6.1.16 Alston's Special Development Area (SDA) status is to be withdrawn on August 1st 1980. This will be a serious blow to any attempts to attract new industries to the area with the loss of incentives in the form of grants, loans tax free, allowances and the possibility of a rent free period of up to five years for tenants of advance factories. When the region loses its Special Development Area status, it will be demoted to a 'Development Area'. This reduced status will only be enjoyed for a limited period before being withdrawn altogether (subject to Government review) in 1982. This will effectively reduce all forms of central government aid for development.

6.1.17 Other areas within the county will be similarly affected and it will become extremely difficult for the County Council, faced with the resulting increased demand for aid, to implement their policies aimed at boosting employment through provision of a range of sites and premises for small scale industrial development.

6.1.18 It is therefore important to make the best possible use of special Development Area and Development Area assistance whilst still available.

6.1.19 The English Industrial Estates Corporation are presently executing an advance factory building programme within the parish on behalf of the Development Commission. Two 5,000 sq ft units will be provided- the first of these is under construction in the station yard and is due to be completed in mid 1980. The siting of the second factory unit has yet to be determined.

15.

6.1.20 The County Council, who built the 1,200 sq ft unit at Nenthead, have no immediate plans for further building but if the demand was shown to exist they would consider the possibility of either building further units themselves or making loans available to firms wishing to build for themselves.

6.1.21 The Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (COSIRA) is able to offer advice backed up by technical and management services, training schemes and financial assistance in setting up and developing small businesses. It is an agent of the Development Commission whose main aim is to improve the general quality of rural life by creating viable and prosperous communities in the countryside, particularly in areas of declining population or with other inherent problems. Thus COSIRA is likely to play an important role in the guidance of Alston's economic future.

#### Sites for Industrial Development

6.1.22 The station yard contains 4 plots designated for industrial development. 3 of the plots have been allocated to the advance factory and existing local industries (Kearsons, Hodgsons - see 6.1.9 & 6.1.11).

6.1.23 The Alston foundry site is now vacant and offers obvious potential for future industrial use. Rather than to perpetuate the problems associated with dependence on a single major employer, it would be of greater long term benefit to the parish if several smaller industries could be encouraged to share the site. This would ensure a healthier and more stable economic base and provide a wider variety of job opportunities for the working population. It must be borne in mind that conveyance of the entire site to a single employer would further impede diversification, due to the resulting shortage of other available industrial land.

6.1.24 However the foundry site does not lend itself so readily to such subdivision. The services are particularly inflexible. No toilet or drainage facilities exist in the main site, the present facilities are entirely situated in the office/canteen block on the West side of the main road. The internal 3 phase electrical and the private gas layouts are convenient only to a single occupation and would require major alteration to serve a multi-use occupation.

6.1.25 The site is divided by the River Nent. Existing accommodation to the South of the river consists of the main old foundry buildings occupying 34,000 sq ft of floor space and the two-storey laboratory comprising 1,100 sq ft of floor space. The northern part of the site, across the river, contains a large new shed (19,000 sq ft of floor space and 32' 0" clear headroom) with adjoining office facilities converted from a row of cottages and the new pattern shop (2,700 sq ft) which offers a readily usable space for a small industry. The foundry offices with canteen and toilet facilities are located across the main road. A principal disadvantage of this building is the lack of vehicular access, entry being obtained across a pedestrian bridge. A further feature of the complex is a disused quarry behind the pattern shop. The quarry has a reconstituted floor which is unsuitable for siting permanent buildings although it presently contains two derelict hangars.

This space would however be invaluable for parking and open storage as the remaining site is extremely limited in this provision. The site, apart from this quarry, is in fact extremely cramped, although demolition of part of the old foundry buildings would permit better use of the new internal access bridge across the Nent and a more satisfactory traffic flow generally.

- 6.1.26 It is clear that the site has been developed around a single production process, which has determined the location of roads, bridges and buildings. However, limited alterations would greatly increase the convenience of the site for any alternative single production process and more comprehensive changes would convert the site tolerably for multi-use occupation.
- 6.1.27 It is essential that the foundry site earns its keep and supports once more a proportion of the working community. If for any reason the foundry site is not developed, the community will be faced with a shortage of accessible designated industrial land. It is desirable in the rural context to concentrate industrial development in specific areas, rather than permitting sporadic industrial sites. The recent industrial developments in the neighbouring station yard confirm the need for active industrial use of the foundry site as this will become an ingredient of the ready made industrial nucleus of Alston Moor.

## 6.2 MINING

- 6.2.1 When coal-mining was nationalised (in 1946/47) small collieries were allowed to continue operating under license from the National Coal Board. Thus there are three privately-operated mines in the Alston Moor area, the largest concern being Clarghyll Colliery Company which provides employment for 11 full-time males and 1 part-time female. This mine has been in operation for 40 years and its future life is not foreseeably limited. As the work, is unattractive, however, there is a problem in securing suitable and permanent labour. Two grades of anthracite are extracted which are distributed to Tyne & Wear, Weardale and Co. Durham. One grade of industrial dust is also produced which is sent to Stella North Power Station on Tyneside. Total production is around 2,350 tons per year.
- 6.2.2 The remaining collieries are situated at Ayle (near Clarghyll) which currently employs six men, and Flow-Edge, off the Alston-Garrigill road, where operations are temporarily suspended.
- 6.3. AGRICULTURE & HORTICULTURE

- 6.3.1 Although the quality of agricultural land on Alston Moor is poor (grade 4 along the valley bottoms but elsewhere grade 5), agriculture accounts for approximately 26% of jobs in the area. This percentage compares favourably with the 17% of the working population employed by Alston foundry prior to the recent closure.
- 6.3.2 There are 41 full-time and 46 part-time holdings in the area, and the majority of farms are quite small. As to be expected in an upland area, the principal type of holding is the livestock rearing unit, specialising principally in sheep.
1. Ministry of agriculture Parish Summary 1977 - A full-time unit is one reckoned to take at least 250 standard man days' to operate. Standard man days (SMD's) are based upon head of stock and acreage of crops.
  2. i.e. between 250 and 500 SMD's (only 6 require more than 1,000 SMD's to operate).

TABLE 6 Agriculture, Alston Moor - Stocking

<u>Cattle</u>	<u>no.</u>	<u>Sheep</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Pigs</u>	<u>Poultry</u>
dairy cows	314	breeding ewes	17,170		
beef cows	1551	shearlings	3,090		
other cattle	2259	lambs and other sheep	21,718	35	2,388
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4124</b>		<b>41,978</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>2,388</b>

Mins of Ag., Alston Moor Parish Summary 1977

- 6.3.3 Alston Moor is defined in agricultural terms as a 'Less Favoured Area'. This means that under the Hill Livestock (Compensatory Allowances) Regulations 1975, which implement EEC Directives on 'Less Favoured Areas' hill cattle and hill sheep subsidies are payable annually on a headage basis. Less Favoured Areas (LFA) are also entitled to additional concessions under the Farms and Horticultural Development Scheme. These will be affected to a certain extent by the Government's recently announced cut-backs, the most significant of these being the reduction in grant towards drainage schemes from 70% to 50%. Other special concessionary grants (50%) will remain unaffected. These are namely grants for roads, fencing, walls, sheep-pens and dips.
- 6.3.4 Two of the main limitations of farming in this parish are the small size of the individual unit and the predominately high rainfall. The late 1960's and early 1970's saw the amalgamation of a number of units in the area. However, the sharp rise in land prices since then has discouraged further amalgamations as the incentives offered to amalgamate have become outweighed by the attractions of selling on the open market. The lower land prices on Alston Moor have therefore encouraged purchasers from outside the area to show interest in local farms.
- 6.3.5 High rainfall causes problems of deterioration of grazing land caused by poaching of cattle and sheep. This can be dealt with cheaply and quite effectively by practising controlled grazing, i.e. by removing stock from the land in question around the end of September when the last grass crop is growing until the following spring. Over several years a noticeable improvement in quality of grazing-land can be achieved by this practice.
- 6.3.6 Land drainage is obviously important in this area of poor quality land and high rainfall, and in this respect the reduction in grants for drainage may have an adverse effect on farm improvements within the parish.
- 6.3.7 An unusual enterprise, Hartside Nursery Garden chose to base its operation in Alston Moor specifically because the high rainfall, clear atmosphere and incidentally the lack of pests forms the ideal climate for the cultivation of alpine plants. The backdrop of natural beauty is considered to be a valuable setting from a sales point of view. Located at 1,100 feet, it is considered to be the highest nursery in Great Britain. The greatest proportion of commercial activity is in specialist alpine cultivation, about 20 - 25% of trade being the wholesale distribution of the more common alpine plants to non-specialist nurseries. Although some business is carried out by mail, the nursery is well patronised by personal callers. Some are day-trippers and holidaymakers travelling to or from Scotland who call spontaneously, others specifically

make the journey to the nursery attracted by the special commodity on sale. This latter can be seen as a boost to tourist activity in the region.

- 6.3.8 The nursery garden at present occupies about 2 acres but there is ample room for future expansion. It is a family business providing full-time employment for 3 people and casual seasonal labour for about 4 people during the summer.

#### 6.4. FORESTRY

- 6.4.1 The Forestry Commission do not have any forests within the parish. Most forestry operations within this area are carried out by the Economic Forestry Group (EFG). All the properties managed by this Company in the area are dedicated to forestry under the Forestry Commission Basis 11 Dedication scheme, which means in effect that the land is under covenant for forestry use only. At the present time the EFG have no plans either to remove land from forestry use or to increase their activities in this area. As the total area of woodlands is fairly small and much of the planting is recent, insufficient work is generated to require a locally based labourforce. The woodlands are in fact managed (together with other woodlands in the Cumbrian area) by a workforce based at Newcastleton in the Borders region. Harvesting and other such operations occupy about 3 months of the year and are generally carried out by contractors from outside the area although local people are occasionally employed on a casual basis (the total no. of hours worked on this basis is very low).

- 6.4.2 According to the Economic Forestry Group the potential viability of the Alston area for afforestation is very high. From a climatological, geographical and geological standpoint it is excellent, and when its proximity to the highly afforested Borders region and associated service industries is considered, it is economically very well placed.

"There is a very considerable acreage of high potential forestry land which could be developed to the mutual benefit of both forestry and traditional land uses. An increase in the development of forestry in the area would very rapidly lead to opportunities for the employment of local people and at the same time make a valued contribution to the local economy"

- 6.4.3 Against this one needs to consider the fact that forestry is not, by its very nature, a labour intensive activity. Also, further land acquired for forestry would have to be taken out of agricultural use and this could consequently create unemployment. Nevertheless, it would help to broaden the existing economic base of the area. Further development of forestry within the parish, will be continually frustrated by the existence of large tracts of grouse moor which do not support a compatible activity. It may be worthwhile for an appraisal of the grouse moors to be undertaken in order to assess whether any of this land is poor shooting land and could be given over to forestry purposes, thus making the best economic use of the land.

- 6.4.4 From the environmental point of view, any large scale afforestation would completely alter the appearance of the landscape and could detract from the existing open character of the moors. However, trees are not foreign to this region and careful planting, paying due respect to contours and other features, could enhance the landscape and contribute to the economic viability of the area.

- 6.4.5 Any future development of forestry within the Alston area would very probably be carried out under the Forestry Commission's Basis 111 form of Dedication. This calls for very strict management principles relating to integration with agriculture, public recreation and the environment as a whole. If afforestation is carried out on this basis it could make a valuable contribution to the area, although traditionally hill farming and forestry have not been compatible, loss of land can be compensated for by the benefits of improved access to hill grazing, enabling improvements, such as drainage schemes (otherwise uneconomical) to be implemented.
- 6.4.6 Although areas of land, eminently suitable for afforestation, exist within the parish, the traditional unwillingness to release portions for forestry purposes remains the main obstacle to further development of this activity.

## TOURISM

### The North Pennines Tourism Growth Point

- 6.5.1 Alston Moor lies within the North Pennines Tourism Growth Point, which was designated by the Department of Trade in conjunction with the English Tourist Board for a three year period taking effect from April 1978. Total investment in tourist projects over this period is expected to be in the region of £3 million. The English Tourist Board has been authorised to provide financial assistance of £1 million towards appropriate schemes within the Tourism Growth Point area. Under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969, the English Tourist Board can provide financial assistance of up to 50% of the capital cost of projects related to tourism.
- 6.5.2 The area covered by the Growth Point scheme stretches from Barnard Castle in the south to include part of Hadrian's Wall in the north and lies mainly in the counties of Durham and Northumberland. The Parish of Alston Moor is the only part of Cumbria contained within the perimeter of the Growth Point. Already certain projects located on Alston Moor have benefited from financial assistance under this scheme. These include: extensions to the Cumberland Arms Hotel, new accommodation at Lovelady Shield House Hotel, some self catering units within the parish and the provision of a 48 bed outdoor activity centre at High Plains near Garrigill. Further assistance has been projected for the enlargement and landscaping of the Horse and Wagon caravan park, Nentsberry.

### Existing Facilities and Proposals

#### 6.5.3 Accommodation.

There are 5 hotels in Alston, providing a total of 88 bed spaces, which offer bed and breakfast plus evening meal and in most cases, full board. The Miners Arms and Crown Inn, Nenthead and the George and Dragon, Garrigill, provide a further 24 bed spaces. The licensed restaurant at High Fell can accommodate 12 persons overnight. Also within the parish there are 6 farm houses and 11 other establishments, offering bed and breakfast and sundry self catering cottages registered with the local tourist board information office. The Youth Hostel on the Pennine Way can accommodate 32 and also provides meals- 2 specialist hostels in the Garrigill area, one not yet complete, will provide a further 60 beds. An additional 22 bed spaces will be made available when Lovelady Shield opens in early summer 1980, plus a further 4 bed spaces the following year.

Nenthall have no firm proposals but may provide accommodation for up to 12 persons in the future.

#### 6.5.4. Dining.

There are 5 cafes (including the fish and chip shop) and 2 public houses where meals can be obtained, in addition to the hotels in Alston Town. The public houses at Nenthead and Garrigill provide food and there are two restaurants just outside Alston on the Penrith road and a further restaurant at Nenthall. In addition, the Horse and Wagon Inn, Nentsberry hopes to be able to offer meals when internal alterations are complete.

Hartside cafe lies outside the parish boundary but provides a service to visitors to Alston Moor. Its strategic position attracts day trippers in the summer and skiing enthusiasts in winter.

#### 6.5.5. Caravan sites

There are 3 caravan sites within the area located at the Horse and Wagon Hudgill on the Nenthead Road, and behind the Moredun Garage at Tyne Willows in Alston itself. At present these accommodate a total of about 80 static vans. The Horse and Wagon has 24 static vans and has permission to extend the site with landscaping to provide an additional 10 touring pitches. The Hudgill Caravan Park has permission for 70 caravans including a percentage of tourers and at present has 40 static vans on the site. The Tyne Willows site has permission for 30 caravans. There is undoubtedly a need for touring pitches in the area but more specifically for an organised camp site. The Tyne Willows site on the edge of the town, located at the intersection of 5 roads and closest to the Pennine Way is ideally situated for development to meet this need. Farms of more than 5 acres can accommodate 3 touring caravans or any number of tents for up to a total of 28 days in any one year, and therefore there is in existence already scope for a small amount of informal camping.

#### 6.5.6 Outdoor Activities.

Alston Moor is rich in outdoor pursuits. Nenthall (registered with the Pony Club of Great Britain) is a pony trekking centre and can provide mounts for 5 - 10 trekkers. There is dormitory accommodation available for children, restaurant dining on the premises and use of an outdoor heated swimming pool. Younger people can take advantage of the Scottish Schoolboy's Hostel (Chequers) at Garrigill and the proposed Y.M.C.A. activity centre at High Plains. Other activities on Alston Moor include shooting, angling, golf and skiing.

#### Potential Tourist Developments

6.5.8 Response to the household questionnaire indicated that most people (71%) who replied, were in favour of tourist development in the area, provided that it is carefully planned. The principal suggestions put forward in the questionnaire response were as follows:

- car & bus park in Alston
- a general 'face-lift'
- campsite
- indoor facilities for wet weather conditions (e.g. an art-gallery)
- opening up of mines and Nent-force Level to the public.

21.

- mining museum
- re-instatement of South Tynedale Railway
- development of winter sports

6.5.9 Some reservations were, however, expressed in respect of tourist development, the main points being as follows;

- concern that the area could become over-crowded in summer, the Lake District being frequently quoted as a familiar example.
- concern that tourism can be detrimental to agricultural interest, eg damaging farm walls
- fear of vandalism and tourists leaving litter.







6.5.10 Because of the tourist trade being seasonal, it would be unwise to consider the development of the tourist industry as the answer to Alston's economic problems. However, there is no doubt that tourist development could benefit the area by generally increasing trade. Scope exists for development in a number of fields, the most outstanding of these being the South Tynedale Railway and the historical associations with lead-mining, the Nent-force level in particular. The ideal time to exploit such opportunities is now, whilst the possibility of financial assistance exists through the Tourism Growth Point Scheme.

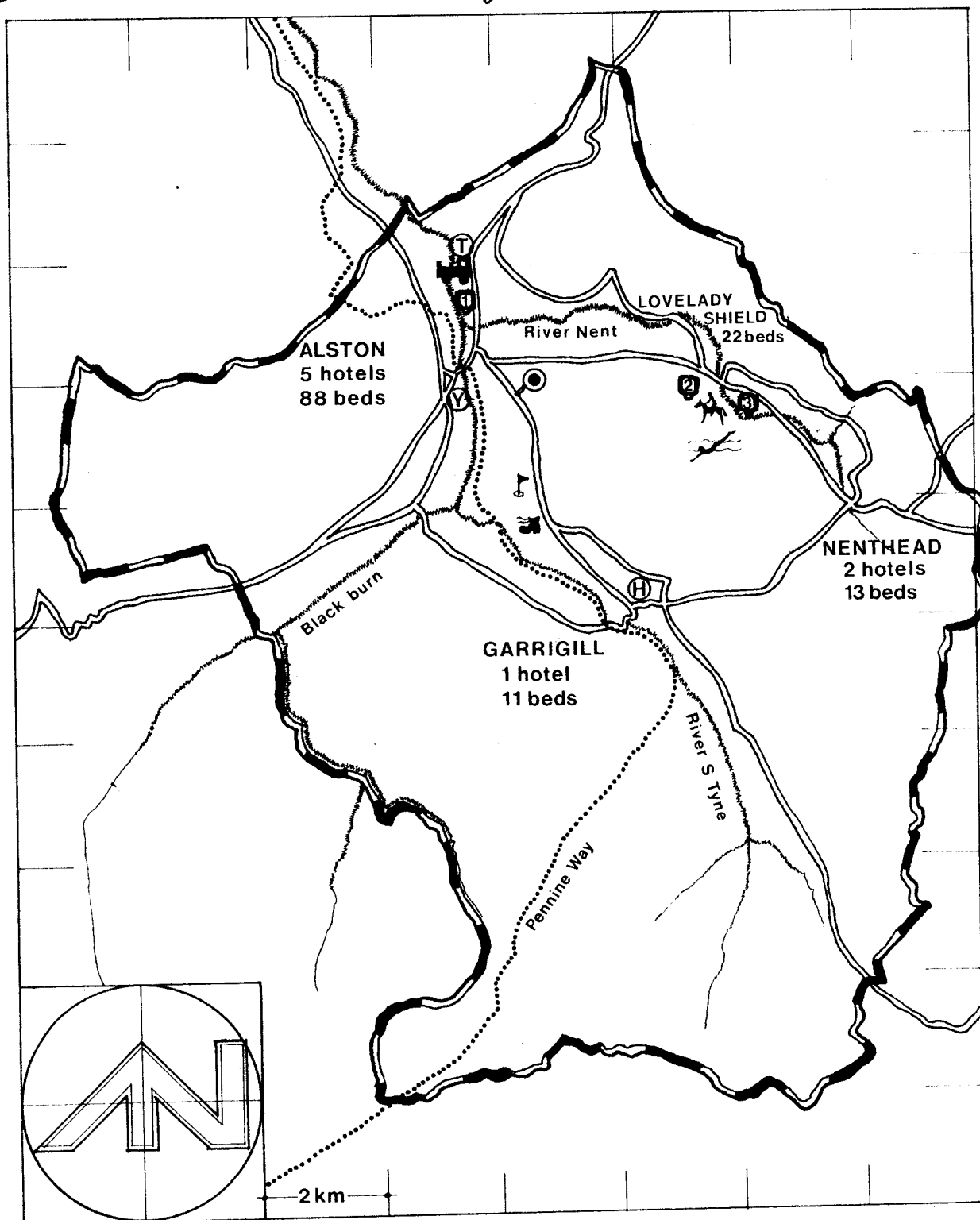
6.5.11 Apart from attracting railway enthusiasts, the South Tynedale Railway must be amongst the most scenic railway in the country and could be re-instated without any detriment to the environment.

6.5.12 The Nent-force level constitutes a remarkable piece of engineering, created when the lead mines were thriving, it took 66 years to complete (1776-1842). The level was driven from Nentforce, Alston towards Nenthead and created an underground canal. There is a change of level at Lovelady Shield of 210 feet and thereafter it was continued purely as a drainage level to Nenthead. One of its main purposes was to discover ore deposits in the unexplored strata below the bed of the Nent and in this respect it failed. However, it was invaluable as a drainage level keeping the mines clear of water from the early 19th century until the closure of the mines. One function which could never have been envisaged at the commencement of the scheme was its value as a tourist attraction. It is interesting to note that by 1810, when the canal to Lovelady Shield was completed, the era of tourism was starting and a trip up the Nent Force Level became one of the attractions of Alston. 30 feet long boats were propelled along the water, which was 4 - 5 feet deep, by means of stakes driven into the side walls of the level. The level was generally 9 feet wide and 9 feet high although it varied considerably. At the southern end was "Jennie's Dancing Loft" a platform cut in solid rock just above water height with a smooth floor where dancers used to be held. There was incidentally also a ball-room in one of the Nenthead mines. Nenthead was the main centre of mining activity in the past and the opening up of former lead-mines to the public under supervision with an interpretive facility (i.e. instructive lead-mining museum), could also generate considerable interest in this area, but combined with opening up the Nent Force Level would constitute a very substantial tourist attraction without detriment to the environment.



- 6.5.13 Projects of this magnitude would require considerable capital investments before becoming self-funding. Without assistance from public sources of finance, there is little hope for their realisation. It is therefore recommended that full support should be given to any responsible scheme of this nature. It is certain that implementation of such projects would generate greater numbers of tourists who would inevitably contribute to the general prosperity of the region.
- 6.5.14 The possibility of developing winter sports in or around the parish to any great extent is not a realistic proposition as adequate snow cannot be guaranteed. The present participants travel from the North East to Hartside when conditions are promising. But as conditions are constantly changeable, booking in advance is not practicable.
- 6.4.15 It has been suggested that provision of a chair-lift from Hartside cafe to the ski runs could double in the summer months as a scenic attraction. However, it is doubtful whether this would be considered a worthwhile proposition financially and it could be regarded as detrimental to the wild open landscape.
- 6.5.16 The Alston Moor Golf Club boasts a nine hole course located about 2 miles out of Alston on the B6277. It is intended eventually to increase this facility to an 18 hole course which should certainly increase the attraction for the golfing fraternity.
- 6.5.17 There would appear to be further scope for the development of the existing pony trekking activities, in particular the establishment of a post-trail. This is a long distance trek lasting for several days. The trekkers, however, require overnight accommodation on the trail and suitable stabling facilities are not always available. Another problem to be encountered would be the resistance of land owners to assist in the establishment of a long distance bridle route.
- 6.5.18 Alston's proximity to and central position amidst other northern tourist attractions, makes it the ideal base for exploratory tourism. It has been shown (6.5.3) that Alston Moor is well provided with tourist accommodation. These two attributes could be mutually exploited by developing Alston as an excursion centre. The region could be specifically advertised in this vein and regular trips organised to Hadrian's Wall, the North Eastern Lakes (Keswick, Ullswater), Teesdale (High Force, Bowes museum) and Beamish for example.
- 6.5.19 Environmental improvements could benefit Alston's image to tourists. The respondents to the questionnaire were particularly concerned about raising environmental standards. An average of 63% of respondents replied that they considered additional provision of litter bins, tree planting and off street parking necessary in Alston. 40% of respondents offered their own suggestions and the majority of these referred to the untidiness in the parish (including mine dereliction) and Alston town in particular (derelict property, scrap, unmaintained toilets). These comments would indicate that the residents are not satisfied with the existing environmental standards.
- 6.5.20 There are no public toilets in Garrigill. This village is situated on the Pennine Way and also attracts motorised visitors. There is clearly a need for provision of this facility.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ① Tyne Willows caravan park 30 vans   |  South Tynedale narrow gauge steam railway |
| ② Hudgill caravan park 75 vans  | ⓧ Tourist Information Office  |
| ③ Horse & Wagon caravan park 36 vans  | Ⓨ Alston Youth Hostel 32 beds   |
|  High Plains YMCA outdoor centre 48 beds | Ⓜ Chequers Hostel Garrigill 12 beds   |
|  Nenthall pony trekking stables          |  Alston golf course 9 holes                |
|  Nenthall swimming pool                  |  Fairhill tennis & bowling green           |



**PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR TOURIST FACILITIES**

**Scale 1:100,000**

6.5.21 Additional small scale improvements could be carried out to make better use of our resources. Provision of a local information board in the proposed station yard car park, indicating places of interest within the parish and comprehensive signposting of short walks in and around the town would, directly offer further opportunities to the interested tourist.

6.5.22 There is much potential for promoting tourism in the parish, without detriment to the quality of the landscape, provided that developments are carefully executed and integrate sensitively with existing social and environmental structures.

## 6.6. THE CHANGING ECONOMY OF ALSTON MOOR

6.6.1 The economy of Alston Moor has historically depended on mining, agriculture and the service industry developed to support them. All that remains of the great mining boom of previous centuries, are three small, privately-owned anthracite mines (6.2.). Agriculture is an important source of employment, often overlooked in this area. There is little reason to expect any significant change in this sector of the economy (6.3.).

6.6.2 Alston's historical role as a service centre has diminished as more services become centralised in larger towns. Nevertheless, for the size of the present population, the area is relatively well equipped, having the advantage of a heritage of facilities left from times when Alston's importance was greater than now. Because of its remoteness from other service centres it is important that existing services are retained and to ensure that this will be the case, it is essential to maintain existing levels of population and hopefully even for population growth to occur. (4.2.3).

6.6.3 For the past 300 years, Alston has suffered from dependence on one major industry previously mining and more recently since 1940, Alston Foundry. This has created problems whenever recessions occurred in mining and now the closure of the Foundry demonstrates once again the danger of dependence on one source of employment. The ensuing shortage of jobs tends to encourage population decline and consequential deterioration of services. The Foundry closure presents a unique opportunity to introduce a variety of types of industrial development on a smaller scale, which can draw upon the resulting increased labour pool. The adaptability of the indigenous workforce has been mentioned by a number of employers who also commented that labour relations are generally good.

6.6.4 104 households who responded to the questionnaire indicated that member (s) of their households possessed a skill. There is the possibility that some of the skilled workers now unemployed (5.6.5) can adapt their skills to new but allied types of work e.g. pattern makers taking up carpentry.

6.6.5 Industry, whether existing or prospective, will always be faced with the problems of satisfactory road communications here. Nevertheless the local difficulties encountered in winter are compensated somewhat by the strategic location of the parish for access to commercial markets in the North East and North West. However, it is evident that the types of industry most suited to this area, are those which produce high value, low bulk goods, thus reducing transport commitment.

## 6.6.6

Certain industries which do not rely so heavily on road communications are establishing themselves within the parish. These businesses (icelandic tour operator, computer software firm and proposed architects office) rely primarily on telephone, telex and postal communications, although in this type of commerce, personnel may require to travel more frequently. These are all businesses that could be located more or less anywhere, but have chosen Alston Moor for personal rather than commercial reasons. There is possibly scope for encouraging further 'paper intensive' enterprises into the area and in so doing, contribute to the local economy.

## 6.6.7

Tourism is a growth industry and has recently become a real factor in the changing economy of Alston Moor. The existing provision of residential, dining and other facilities is well out of proportion with the size of the parish and the population it supports, which must also reflect the confidence of the individual proprietors in the seasonal tourist market. The Cumbria Tourist Board also express confidence in the development of this new industry. "..... it is our firm belief that there is a strong case for the provision of more tourist attractions which are in keeping with the environment and historical associations of the area".

## 6.6.8

In summary, the security of the future economy of Alston Moor appears to rest with:

- a) the development of a diversity of small industries (6.6.3)
- b) increased tourism through sensitive exploitation of the existing scenic and historic potential (6.5.)

## Sources:

## 6.1. local employers

Cumbria County Council

Eden District Council

COSIRA

## 6.2. Local employers

National coal board

## 6.3. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Hartside Nursery Garden

## 6.4 Forestry Commission

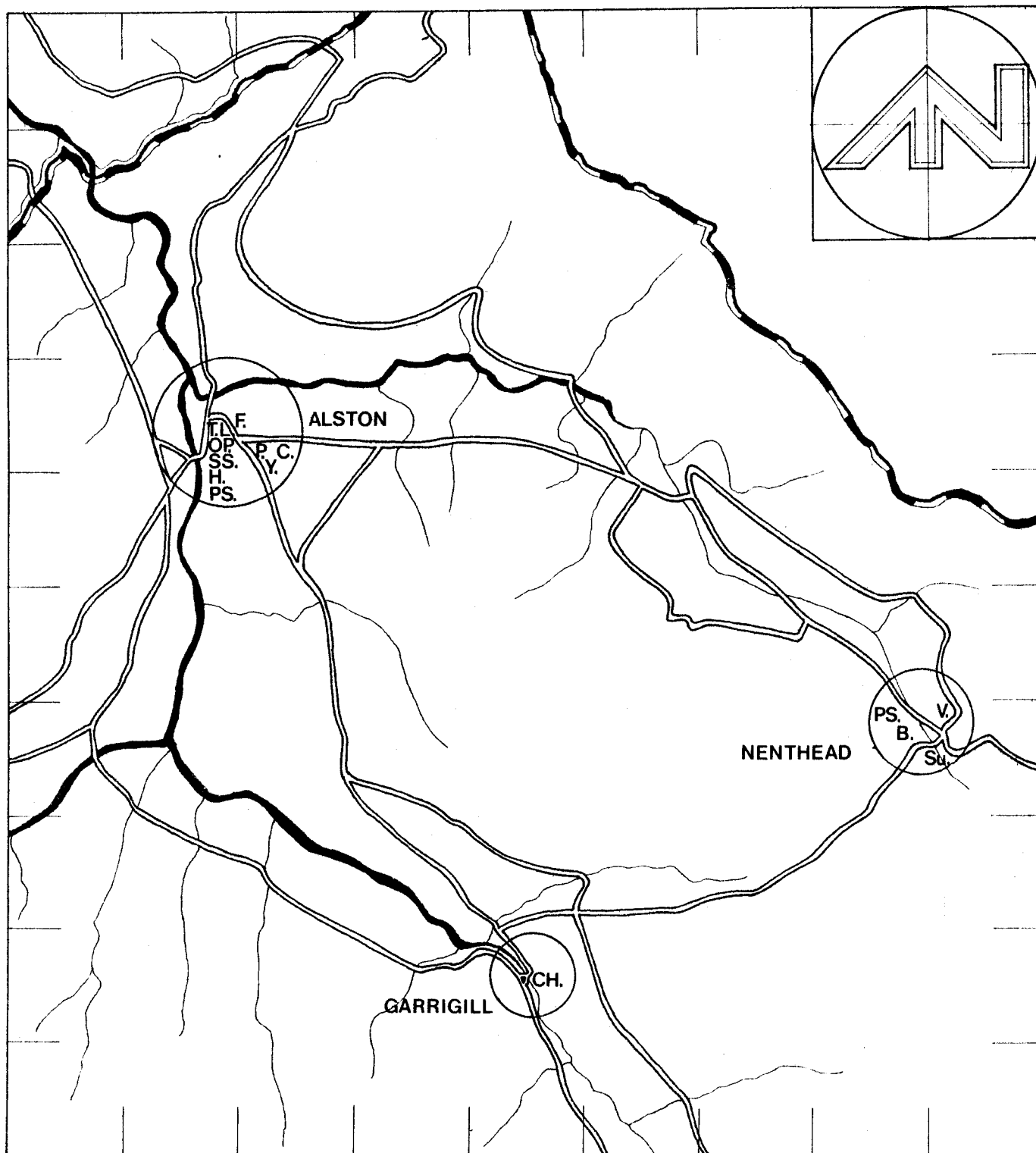
Economic Forestry Group

## 6.5. Cumbria Tourist Board

Local caterers, hoteliers, publicans & caravan-site owners, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society, New Series, Volume 64, 1963 Paul N. Wilson, "the Nentforce Level".

SS. Sam'l King's Secondary School P. Police Station  
 PS. Alston & Nent Primary Schools F. Fire Station  
 H. Cottage Hospital Alston C. County Council Depot  
 Su. Surgery at Nenthead B. Wright's bus garage  
 OP. Grisedale Croft old peoples home L. Library

T. Alston Town Hall  
 V. Nenthead Village Hall  
 CH. Garrigill Church Hall  
 Y. Topp Amenity Hall Alston



**PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR**

**SUPPORT FACILITIES**

**Scale 1 : 50,000**

## 7. SUPPORTING FACILITIES

### 7.1 HOUSING Condition

7.1.1 A 10% housing condition survey carried out by Eden District Council in 1976 indicated that within Alston Moor, 30 properties are considered unfit, 80 below the 5 point standard and 330 below the 10 point standard. 500 dwellings are indicated as being at or above the 10 point standard. Eden District Council further estimate that scattered within the parish, there are approximately 15 vacant dwellings in a reasonable state of structural repair and capable of renovation, together with 25 in poor structural condition and not really capable of rehabilitation.

The 5 point standard consists of the following conditions:

1. The standard amenities are provided for the exclusive use of the occupants.
2. The dwelling is in a good state of repair (disregarding internal decoration) having regard to its age, character and location.
3. It complies with Part F of the Building Regulations regarding roof insulation.
4. It is in all other respects fit for human habitation.
5. It is likely to have a further useful life of 15 years.

Dwellings which comply with the 10 point standard:

1. Are substantially free from damp.
2. Have adequate natural lighting and ventilation in each habitable room.
3. Have adequate and safe artificial lighting and provision of electric sockets.
4. Have adequate drainage facilities.
5. Are in a stable structural condition.
6. Have satisfactory internal arrangements.
7. Have adequate kitchen facilities.
8. Have adequate facilities for heating.
9. Have proper provision for storage of fuel and refuse.
10. Comply with Part F of the Building Regulations regarding roof insulation.

7.1.2 Since 1974, when the present system of grants came into operation, 28 Improvement Grants together with 1 intermediate and 1 standard Grant have been approved. These were located as follows:

TABLE 7 Distribution of Grants under the Housing Acts, Alston Moor.

Location	Improvement	Intermediate	Standard
Alston	12	-	1
Nenthead	6	1	-
Garrigill	3	-	-
Rural	7	-	-

Council Housing

7.1.3 Council house provision is generous as a result of past policies of the Alston with Garrigill Rural District Council, there being a total of 220 council houses and flats within the parish, including 28 at Nenthead, 7 in Garrigill and 2 in Leadgate. Current waiting list figures (which include a number of applicants presently living outside the parish) relate to Alston Moor as a whole and are as follows: 25 general applications and 19 Old Age Pensioners.

7.1.4 The most recent council development of 29 houses at the Firs was completed in 1976. There are no current proposals for further council housing provision.

Private House Building

7.1.5 New housing in the private sector has been negligible over the past five years, although permission exists for two estate developments to provide a total of 31 new houses. These are located at Lowbyer (19 dwellings) and Raise Park (12 dwellings). During this time, permission has been granted for renovations to eleven derelict buildings in order to provide residential accommodation (including conversions of barns and chapels).

Second Homes

7.1.6 Results of Eden District Council's Housing Condition Survey (1976) and a study of the Electoral Roll returns would indicate that there are between 120 and 130 second homes within the parish. Response to the household questionnaire on the issue of second homes was fairly evenly divided (114 in favour and 129 against). Those in favour reported that second home ownership promotes improvement of otherwise derelict property and thus helps to uplift the general appearance of the area. The arguments against, included the consequential rise in property prices and the difficulty for local people to compete in this market.

7.1.7 Garrigill possesses a high proportion of second homes and homes occupied by retired persons and tends to be therefore a less active community than Nenthead which supports its own village school, two shops, a post office and a newsagent. Second home ownership is likely to continue to grow, particularly if Alston Moor becomes better known as a Tourist area. Provided that this growth is concentrated on derelict properties in the countryside, which generally require considerable sums of money for rehabilitation, local feeling would seem to be in their favour. These properties are generally outside the scope of a first time home buyer, who would encounter difficulties securing a mortgage and would be deterred by the high cost of renovation.

7.1.8 However some houses in a reasonable state of repair within the settlements have been purchased as second homes and local people wishing to secure this type of property are unable to compete with the inflated prices. This can lead to a decline of the resident population, large numbers of houses standing empty for most of the year, a diminishing community spirit and a loss or deterioration of essential services. This is already taking place in Garrigill which has lost its village school and has a minimal bus service.

## 7.2. EDUCATION

### Primary Education

- 7.2.1 There are 2 primary schools on Alston Moor located at Alston and Nenthead. The Nenthead school catchment area extends as far as the county border to the east and otherwise extends to approximately a two mile radius encompassing the areas of Greenends, Dykehead, Hayring and Nentsberry. The remainder of the parish and also Kirkhaugh and Slaggyford in North-umberland are served by Alston Primary School.
- 7.2.2 There are currently 160 on the school roll at Alston Primary School and 40 at Nenthead. Of the 160 at Alston, 25 are "bussed" from the Garrigill area and 12 from the Nenthead direction. 4 come from beyond Garrigill being transported by a school taxi and 2 others (from Slaggyford and Hartside) are also transported by a taxi. The remainder of children live in or near Alston. There is no school bus for Nenthead children as school transport is only provided for those living more than 2 miles away. Parents are expected to dispatch their children within this distance which could cause hardship to any non-car-owning households outside the village.
- 7.2.3 The school roll at Nenthead has maintained fairly consistent numbers over the past 10 years with a maximum of 50 in 1970 and a minimum of 34 in 1977. The projected number on the school roll in the next school year is 36, with 35 in the following year. The number of children continuing to secondary school education at the end of the current school year will be 8.
- 7.2.4 The Alston Primary School roll has varied considerably over the past 10 years from 130 in 1970 to 193 in 1976. (It is interesting to note that these trends reverse the situation encountered at Nenthead). Variations on this scale can cause difficulties in terms of staffing and accommodation. In addition to 6 classrooms the school possesses a library and a hall which could be used as classrooms and if necessary the former Alston County School known as the Topp could probably be utilised if numbers were to expand greatly. However, in the immediate future the roll will decline as 31 pupils are expected to enter Samuel King's School in the next academic year and the projected intake is only six. Two children (in the same family) have already left as a direct result of the foundry closure. The capacity of the school according to the County Council Education Dept. based on D.E.S. premises regulations is 193.
- 7.2.5 Nenthead school is well provided in terms of space. The school was built around the beginning of this century for 200 pupils but now has an official capacity of 50 pupils. In the immediate future it is probable that there will be no great change in numbers attending the school (by looking at numbers of under-5's in the area at present. Obviously this would alter if significant numbers of young families moved away).
- 7.2.6 In addition to the facilities previously mentioned Alston Primary School possesses an open air swimming pool (this is further described in 7.5).



## Secondary Education

**7.2.7** Samuel King's school is a comprehensive school for children in the age range 11 - 18 which replaces the former Samuel King's Grammar School (premises now used by Alston Primary School) and the all-age County School (The Topp). It was formed in 1957 when the present building was opened and is the smallest comprehensive school in the country. 185 - 190 are currently on the school roll. In the next academic year numbers are likely to remain much the same. Since 1970 the roll has varied from 152 in 1972 to a maximum of 200 in 1977 (last year there were 196 on the school roll).

**7.2.8** Samuel King's School serves the whole of the parish area and in addition, takes children from Slaggyford and Kirkhaugh in Northumberland. 26 pupils travel from Nenthead, 4 from between Nenthead and Alston, 18 from Garrigill, 3 from Garrigill-Alston, 3 from Leadgate and 13 from Slaggyford/Kirkhaugh. The remainder are from Alston.

**7.2.9** The capacity of Samuel Kings is 197 (Cumbria County Council Education Department), and the school is at present rather short of space having to use a science lab as a classroom, and also occasionally using the laboratory technician's room and school hall as classrooms. The problem of space is more pronounced during G.C.E. examinations which utilise the school hall, a multi-purpose space used for indoor games and as a canteen at lunch times.

**7.2.10** The school hall is let for functions and local club meetings, e.g. the Badminton Club, Flower Club, Historical Society etc. It is the venue of Alston and District Flower Show every September, and of various fund-raising activities of the Parent Teachers Association.

**7.2.11** Further Education classes are also operated from the school, although out of seven courses offered, only one (Keep fit) obtained sufficient numbers to continue this year. Another class ("Modern and Old Tyme Dancing") has recently started on Tuesday evenings and the Art & Pottery class has been able to continue in the form of an affiliated club.

**7.2.12** The top class of Alston Primary School have P.E., games, and music lessons at Samuel King's, a valuable asset in aiding the transition to secondary school education. The top class at Nenthead also send a recorder group to Samuel King's for lessons although it is obviously impractical to go there for games and P.E. A remedial teacher, shares her time equally between the three schools, primarily to aid those who are backward at reading, in literacy. Ideally more specialists would be shared amongst the three schools, but in the present climate of educational cut-backs the resources are not available. Cut-backs in finance and therefore staffing aggravate the present situation where teachers spend a very high percentage of their time in the classroom which consequently causes additional difficulties if any member of staff falls sick. However, this is a general complaint and not specific to Alston Moor.

**7.2.13** Because the school is small, it has the advantage of small classes and more individual attention than is possible in many schools today. However, it also means that the choice of subjects available is more limited, although only a very small minority of pupils leave to take 'A' level subjects elsewhere.

- 7.2.14 Common criticisms, that were found in the questionnaire response, were levelled at the lack of financial resources and the limited equipment and study options particularly at sixth form level. Also the suggestion was made on more than one occasion that assistance should be provided for children who travel to school outside the parish to study special subjects.
- 7.2.15 An alternative to sending children to Samuel King's School is to apply for entry to one of the county boarding schools, but the boarding fee is quite expensive and probably prohibitive for most parents. 12 children from respondent households attend school outside the parish.
- 7.2.16 In general the response to the questionnaire indicates that educational facilities are considered to be adequate in the area. If the sixth form, which is very small, were to close, and pupils sent elsewhere for this level of education, the remaining school would undoubtedly suffer as staff cuts would follow, reducing still further the range of subjects taught. In the long-term, more able teachers would be less inclined to apply for posts in a school without sixth form provision. If, as a result of population decline and further severe educational cut-backs Samuel King's School were to close, the resulting effects on local education would be severe indeed. Local children would either spend a considerable part of their day travelling (when weather conditions permitted) or alternatively be boarded at considerable expense to their parents. The present educational facilities when considered per capita of population are a vital asset to this community.

There are no plans to change educational provision in the area.

### 7.3. HEALTH

- 7.3.1 The central health facility in the parish is the cottage hospital which provides the following services:

- surgery accommodation for a two doctor practice,
- hospital accommodation for eleven general medical and one maternity case,
- outpatient physiotherapy and chiropody services,
- minor surgery and accident service (including X ray provision for extremities),

Ante Natal, post natal, child welfare and family planning clinics are also held there on a regular basis.

There are no short or long term proposals to change the nature or level of services provided, although the threshold for maintaining the services is assumed to be based on population (Area Health Authority). A dramatic decline in population would therefore put these services at risk.

- 7.3.2 The doctor's practice also holds a surgery at Nenthead, with either a doctor or nurse in attendance, every morning (except Sundays). A post natal clinic is held here twice monthly. Medicines may also be collected at the surgery which is a valuable service for the older residents of Nenthead who would otherwise have to travel to Alston for dispensing of prescriptions. A surgery is also held every Friday afternoon in the Reading Room at Garrigill.
- 7.3.3 There are three community nurses serving the area; 1 full time district nurse, 1 part time district nurse, and 1 part time health visitor. The parish has one dispensing chemist located in Alston, whose premises are also used monthly by a visiting optician.

7.3.4 Patients with serious illnesses or requiring specialist treatment are referred to Carlisle and the ambulance and hospital car services are available for this purpose. The journey can be onerous for an invalid and is certainly a long trip for hospital visitors.

7.3.5 72% of the respondents to the questionnaire replied that they considered the existing health facilities are adequate in the area.

#### 7.4. SOCIAL FACILITIES

7.4.1 Care for senior citizens within the parish is centred on Grisedale Croft home for elderly, which has a capacity for 10 residents. A waiting list exists with 8 applicants citing Grisedale Croft as their first preference.

In addition to providing meals for the residents, the following extra services are provided from the home:

- 20 meals on wheels (Tuesdays and Thursdays) are delivered to elderly Alston residents.
- 12 meals are delivered (Mondays) to the Garrigill luncheon club for elderly people, held in the church institute, Garrigill.
- 20 - 25 extra meals per week are prepared for consumption on the premises by residents of the adjacent old peoples flats.

Grisedale Croft thus provides an essential service to the resident and non resident senior members of the community.

7.4.2 Home help is provided to 22 homes in Alston, 6 in Nenthead and 2 in Garrigill, clients receiving an average of nearly 4 hours service a week each. Alston Moor receives almost 6,000 hours of home help a year out of a total budget for Eden District of 68,000 hours.

7.4.3 It has been suggested in the past that the home help service should be supplemented by a volunteer 'pop in' service for elderly housebound persons. In small communities this need is often met by neighbouring friends and relatives and an organised service may not be relevant. However the housebound elderly and infirm in isolated locations could well benefit from a supplementary visiting service.

7.4.4 This summer, the Social Services Dept for Eden District hope to introduce a Day Centre within the parish. Similar centres are already in operation in Penrith, Shap, Kirby Stephen and Appleby. The purpose of these centre is to provide the opportunity for a small number of housebound elderly and handicapped people to meet together, enjoy a midday meal in company and establish helpful contact with voluntary workers. This will help to fulfil a need indicated by several respondents to the questionnaire.

7.4.5 There are two organised gatherings for pre-school age children. The Alston Pre-school Playgroup with 24 places, meets twice a week at the Topp, Alston and an informal Toddlers Group is held weekly in the village hall, Nenthead. There is one Registered Childminder in the parish, who lives at Leadgate and can babysit 2 children. However, there is no creche facility for working mothers and such provision could enable more women to seek work.

7.4.6 The Alston Youth Club meets at the Topp, Alston, two nights a week, and a newly formed Nenthead Youth Club also convenes twice a week in the village hall (1 evening for under twelves, the other for the older children).

- 7.4.7 In a time of high unemployment and lack of job opportunities, these youth facilities play a vital role in occupying the youngsters, providing them with recreational facilities and broadening their outlook. Cumbria Social Services Dept responsible for Eden District emphasise- 'the importance of youth services in these circumstances even in a period of cut-back'.

## 7.5 LEISURE AND RECREATION

### Accommodation

- 7.5.1 Alston Town Hall, Nenthead Village Hall and the Church Hall at Garrigill are the principal venues for meetings, dances discos etc. In addition the main hall of Samuel King's School is used for a variety of purposes (7.2.10) and the Topp, Alston accommodates the Alston Youth Club, Pre-school Play Group and Cubs. Several of the public houses and hotels have function rooms. The backroom of the Crown Hotel, Alston is the venue for Saturday Night Discos, Bingo sessions thrice weekly and the fortnightly film show.

### Library Service

- 7.6.2 The Public Library, located in Alston Town Hall, is open daily except Thursdays and weekends. The hours vary and include morning, afternoon and evening periods up to 7.0 p.m. There is also a travelling service, every third Thursday, to Garrigill and Nenthead calling at places en route. The majority (71%) of respondents to the questionnaire considered the local library facilities to be adequate.

### Clubs and Societies

- 7.6.3 Alston Moor supports a wide range of clubs and societies for a community of its size. These include the Agricultural Society, AMSAC (Alston Moor Society of Artists and Craftsmen), Alston Male Voice Choir, Anglers Association, Badminton Club, Cricket Club, Flower Club, Football Club, Golf Club, Rugby Club, Tuesday Social Club, Women's Institute etc. Charitable foundations include the Fairhill Charity Trust who own the Fairhill Recreation Ground and also subsidise local coach excursions and the Garrigill Luncheon Club (7.4.1.)

### Sports Facilities

- 7.5.4. Respondents to the questionnaire criticised the inadequacy of sports facilities and in particular suitable facilities for teenagers.
- 7.5.5 Existing sports provision include rugby football, soccer and cricket pitches on the Tyne Willows Playing Field, Alston. There are children's recreation grounds and football pitches at Fairhill (Alston) and at Nenthead and Garrigill. There are tennis courts and a bowling green at Fairhill, a further tennis court at Nenthead which could be revived and a billiard room in Garrigill. The nine hole golf course is situated between Alston and Garrigill.

### Swimming Pool

- 7.5.6 There are two swimming pools within the parish, a learners pool at Alston Primary School and a private swimming pool at Nenthall. They are both outdoor pools and, although heated, this limits their use throughout the year.

- 7.5.7 A fund was created to finance construction of a new pool, but as funds were insufficient, consideration has been given to using the money to cover the existing pool at the primary school. If this were carried out, the facility could be more intensively used by school children and local organisations.
- 7.5.8 The proprietors of Nenthall are prepared to hire their private pool to organised groups, but report that little interest has so far been shown. Although this is, at present, an open air pool, there are plans to cover it in the future.
- 7.5.9 The need for a swimming pool featured prominently in the questionnaire. 22% of the respondents commenting on additional recreational facilities, stressed this need. Although, in the present financial climate, the possibility of funding a full size indoor pool, with diving boards et al, is remote, the conversion of the primary school pool for indoor use and arrangements for wider use of the facility by organised groups within the community would considerably increase the value of the present asset.
- 7.5.10 The prominent response to this aspect in the questionnaire indicated that there may be sufficient local interest to form a swimming club which could make best use of facilities within the parish and elsewhere (regular sessions at the local pools and excursions to better equipped facilities).

#### Facilities for Young People

- 7.5.11 A frequent comment on the response to the questionnaire was the lack of social facilities, other than the public houses, for teenagers. The problem of inadequate provision of constructive activities for this age group is not confined to this parish. It is unlikely during the present financial restrictions that external aid will be available to improve the local situation. The initiative must therefore come from within the community to make maximum use of the resources available locally. Success of any such endeavour normally depends on the efforts of a small number of dedicated pioneers. However, the interest in this issue, demonstrated by the response to the questionnaire indicates that any such initiative would receive enthusiastic support. The Nenthead Youth Club, which was restarted in March (after the closing date for the return of the questionnaires), has already not only partly met the need by providing new opportunities for the children of Nenthead, but has also illustrated the value of such enthusiastic support.

### 7.6. TRANSPORT AND CAR PARKING

#### Car Ownership

- 7.6.1 Approximately 70% of households in the area own a car according to the questionnaire response. The figure for Alston was lower than average, which reflects the greater accessibility to essential services, work locations and public transport facilities. Out of 153 "working" households in Alston who replied to the questionnaire, there were 60 who reported that members walk to their place of work.

TABLE 8 - Car ownership. Alston Moor Parish Questionnaire

	Alston	Nenthead	Garrigill	Rural	Alston Moor Parish
PERCENTAGE CAR OWNING HOUSEHOLDS	66	71	89	97	72

- 7.6.2 The percentages for specific areas are directly related to comparative isolation of households. Isolation in Garrigill is aggravated by the limited bus service and consequently car ownership is high in this settlement.

#### Use of Public Transport

- 7.6.3 The percentage of persons relying on public transport (derived from questionnaire results) correspond directly to comparative accessibility to this service. Alston and Nenthead are terminus points with easy access to the bus service, so that residents of these two settlements consequently make greater use of this service.

TABLE 9 - Use of Public Transport - Alston Moor Parish Questionnaire

	Alston	Nenthead	Garrigill	Rural	Alston Moor Parish
PERCENTAGE POPULATION RELYING ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT	21	25	4	14	20

#### Public Transport Provision

- 7.6.4 Local bus services are operated by Wright Bros (Coaches) based at Nenthead, and Ribble Motors Ltd.
- 7.6.5 Wright Bros provide daily services from Alston to Penrith and Keswick, and also Newcastle via Hexham. They also operate local services from Nenthead and Garrigill, including the school bus service which are shared by the public. Public transport links to Garrigill are restricted to the school bus, except on Fridays when there are two additional services in the morning. This latter service was previously sponsored by a local charity, the Garrigill Foundation and is now additionally subsidised by Eden District Council. A special market bus operates on Tuesdays from Alston via Nenthead, Carrshield and Allendale to Hexham. (This has the distinction of being the highest bus service in England, reaching 1,999 feet).

- 7.6.6 Ribble Motors Ltd operate the Alston to Haltwhistle route which also acts as a connecting service for Brampton and Carlisle. The Haltwhistle service replaces the previous rail link from Alston to Haltwhistle which closed in 1976. (The use of the line for freight transport was discontinued much earlier). The advantages of the railway over the bus service indicated by the response to the questionnaire, are the higher speed, greater convenience and the more reliable service during winter. 44% of households who replied to the questionnaire were affected by the closure of the railway and although the highest proportion of these came from Alston, a number of households throughout the area, including 23 at Nenthead, said that they were affected by loss of the rail link.
- 7.6.7 The present bus service to Haltwhistle connects with the rail services to Carlisle and Newcastle from Haltwhistle station. The bus service to Carlisle is inconvenient for commuting purposes and it is likely that persons travelling to work in Carlisle using public transport would patronise the Haltwhistle connection and continue to Carlisle by train.
- 7.6.8 Wright Bros. do not operate any service into Weardale or Teesdale as they consider there is insufficient need to justify a regular service. A possible source of employment exists in Weardale (cement works) but it is not clear whether it will generate sufficient traffic to warrant a specific bus service. It is also not clear how many unemployed residents of this parish may have been deterred from accepting work in Weardale because of the lack of suitable public transport.
- 7.6.9 The reassuring permanence of Wright Bros demonstrates the independent spirit of the local population. The firm started operating with a pony and trap during the first world war and the ensuing history was one of striving to survive and stubbornly maintaining independence. The company started the Hexham - Alston - Penrith bus service in 1925. In later years the Northern bus company competed with Wrights for the Newcastle to Keswick trade. Finally agreement was reached to share operations (pooled service) on Saturdays and daily during the summer months. Wrights meanwhile doggedly maintained the less lucrative winter weekday service. During the coming year however, the pooled service will only operate on Saturdays. Wright's will now independently run the summer weekday service.
- 7.6.10 Wright Bros operate a fleet of 16 coaches ranging from one 20 seater to three 55 seaters, and in addition to public transport services they also provide contract and private hire facilities. They have been directly affected by the foundry closure as a contract bus service for Nenthead operatives has consequently been discontinued.
- 7.6.11 Alston is fortunate in having its own independent bus company which undoubtedly provides a better local service than will usually be possible in comparably remote areas. In particular, the special Hexham market service and shared public use of the school bus are examples of services directly geared to meet the needs of this community.
- 7.6.12 However, it may be worthwhile supplementing this service with a "social car" or "voluntary bus" scheme in areas impracticable for commercial operation. A more frequent service to Garrigill and an exploratory service to Weardale are examples of where a smaller subsidised transport scheme could usefully extend the existing facility.

Car Parking

- 7.6.13 At present there is no formal public car park in Alston, although every conceivable space in the market square is utilised. In the summer and at weekends this space is at a premium, particularly now that the new Coop premises occupies part of the previous informal parking provision. Unfortunately, car parking detracts from the appearance of the town centre, but there are no alternative off street sites conveniently situated to serve the centre.
- 7.6.14 Cumbria County Council propose to provide a car park in the station yard. This is well situated to serve the tourists using the Hexham - Penrith road, but otherwise has several inherent drawbacks. The location is some distance from the town centre and pedestrian access to and from the site is hindered by a narrow pavement adjacent to a busy road. However, there is an attractive pedestrian route which leads through picturesque back lanes to the Butts, which if properly signposted could provide a safer and more interesting alternative for tourists.
- 7.6.15 The proposed car park is part of a mixed complex of development projected for the station yard site. It is intended to provide four industrial plots and a picnic site in addition to the proposed car park. Sensitive design will be required to successfully accommodate such a diversity of activities. In particular the shared access point should incorporate a segregated pedestrian route.
- 7.6.16 The site is inconvenient for local people. They are used to parking in the centre of Alston, close to the shops and will no doubt continue to do so.
- 7.6.17 It might be possible to provide further parking accommodation at Fairhill, at the top of the town, if an access road was constructed into the recreation ground with parking bays on either side.
- 7.6.18 Other possible sites around the town centre are rendered impracticable due to unsuitable or non existent vehicular access. Alston is certainly a town which does not lend itself readily to accommodate the motor car. There is no totally satisfactory solution to the parking problem in the town. Nevertheless, the proposed station yard car park will go some way towards meeting the need.

Traffic Flows

- 7.6.19 Cumbria County Council carried out a traffic count in September 1979, and the results indicate that the greatest volume of through traffic uses the A686 Penrith road. The A686 Hexham road and the A689 to Nenthead are slightly less heavily used and least traffic was recorded on the B6277 Garrigill road.

TABLE 10 - Traffic count for Alston. September 1979

Road No.	Direction	Average axle pairs per 16 hour day.
A686	Penrith	1200
A686	Hexham	1100
A689	Nenthead	1000
A689	Brampton	900
B6277	Garrigill	600



- 7.6.20 Casual parking on the main street, delivery vehicles unloading and the increasing volume of heavy traffic passing through the town centre cause congestion. The market cross was demolished in January 1980 (for the second time) by a heavy lorry which lost control in icy conditions.
- 7.6.21 About half the respondents to the questionnaire (49%) were in favour of a bypass for the town centre. Cumbria County Council carried out a study of traffic conditions in Alston in 1966 and designated a bypass line. Although this line is not protected by order, it has in fact been protected in principle in relation to siting of new developments which have been the subject of planning proposals.
- 7.6.22 Although a new road is obviously an uneconomic proposition at the present time, and would, in any event, be detrimental to Alston's tourist function, it is recommended that serious consideration be given to diverting heavy vehicles from Weardale through Blagill. This alternative route was suggested by several respondents to the questionnaire. A local representative of the Highways and Transportation Department of Cumbria County Council reported that most heavy traffic (an estimated 90%) is generated by Weardale Cement works, and most of this traffic, (about two thirds) is travelling to Carlisle, the remainder using the A686 to Penrith.
- 7.6.23 The proposed alternative route via Blagill would be a longer detour for the traffic and certain improvements would be required to make this diversion feasible. In particular the junction with the A686 Hexham road should be re-aligned for this purpose and the difficult bend at Blagill would require to be widened (there is sufficient verge for this purpose). With these improvements incorporated it is likely that the proposed detour could be a more attractive proposition to the H.G. V drivers than the series of hazards to be negotiated using the town route.
- 7.6.24 Continuous heavy traffic is no doubt damaging, not only to the road setts but the buildings adjacent to the main street. This is an outstanding conservation area and many of the buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries. In order to protect these buildings and to make the town centre safer for pedestrians, more convenient to locals and more attractive for tourists, it would be advantageous to remove heavy traffic from the town centre. Although this is not entirely possible, re-routing the heavy vehicles from Weardale could significantly improve the present situation.

## 7.7. COMMERCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- 7.7.1 There are 3 banks and about 20 retail shops in Alston, 2 general shops, a post office and a newsagent in Nenthead and a post office/general store at Garrigill.
- 7.7.2 Alston is reasonably well served by a variety of shops meeting everyday needs, including 2 butchers, 2 bakers, several food and vegetable dealers, a chemist, ironmongers, hardware and drapers. There are also a number of shops orientated towards the tourist market namely the craft products shop and 3 antique shops. There is no wet fishmonger although a travelling van from Haltwhistle visits the area weekly. Other services include ladies and gents hairdressers and a laundrette. The town does not boast a dry cleaning establishment but installation of a dry cleaning machine into the existing laundrette could extend the present service into this area.

- 7.7.3 There are two repair garages in Alston, which also have car sales facilities, and are qualified to carry out MOT testing. In addition the Moredun garage has further premises at Nenthead and there are two smaller vehicle repair concerns within the parish, one specialising in landrovers. (see also 6.1.10)
- 7.7.4 A wide range of dining establishments exist in Alston Moor including a fish and chip shop, various cafes, licensed restaurants, pubs and hotels offering bar snacks and full meals and in some cases facilities for functions. (See also 6.5.4).
- 7.7.5 Services which would be desirable in Alston and were particularly cited by respondents to the questionnaire in addition to the resident fishmonger and the dry cleaning facility already discussed, include shoe repairer, animal food stuffs depot, self service grocery supermarket and additional clothes shops. The majority of suggestions include a blacksmith and a vet, but as these had been given as examples, the response was obviously weighted. However, it would appear that scope exists for a business combining wrought ironwork with a farrier's trade and that a veterinary surgery held perhaps once a week by a visiting practitioner would be a popular service.
- 7.7.6 Recent and imminent changes in services include the construction of the new Coop premises which will be a self service facility (see 6.1.12) and will satisfy those respondents to the questionnaire who sought this type of shop. Planning permission has been granted for a second fish and chip shop (2 respondents suggested that a chinese take away shop would be a desirable addition to the town's services). An estate agent, who also acts for a Building Society has recently opened on a part-time basis and a proposed Architect's practice is shortly to move into premises within the town.
- 7.7.7 Fragments of the previous administrative facilities are operated from the Town Hall. A registrar's office is open 3 days a week and Eden District Council maintain a sub office manned by a public health inspector and visited on Wednesdays by a rent and rate collector. The public health inspector was the rural district surveyor prior to re-organisation and is extremely knowledgeable about aspects of the parish pertaining to his previous job and in particular water and drainage services. This source of local knowledge is invaluable and in part compensates for the loss of area administration to Penrith during local government re-organisation. 40% of respondents to the questionnaire reported that they had been directly affected by the change. The principal comments, which accompanied this response, criticised delays in council house repairs, frustration at not being able to conveniently deal face to face with council officers and resentment at paying rates into a larger less tangibly defined pool. The second criticism is somewhat mollified by the presence of the Eden District Sub office where personal contact with the council's representative is ensured. It is essential that this facility is maintained in the future and it is recommended that wherever possible the service should be extended to represent as many district council functions as can be reasonably operated by one or two staff. This should help to foster a developing local confidence in the district authority.
- 7.7.8 It is important that the village shops and post offices in Nenthead and Garrigill are retained. Their loss would cause hardship to the elderly and infirm who would be forced to travel to Alston for simple errands. It is particularly important that the combined post office and general store in Garrigill continues operating as shopping trips to Alston could not be entertained as a reasonable substitute, bearing in mind the minimal bus service.

## 7.8 MAINS SERVICES

### Electricity

- 7.8.1 Norweb report that they consider the present supplies to be satisfactory "..... the security of supply to the township and surrounding villages, considering the geographical position of Alston, has given no cause for concern over recent years". They add that "There is scope for the extension of the present 11,000 Volt network to cater for small pockets of industrial development". Future industrial activity in the Station yard and possibly the foundry site may necessitate re-inforcement of the Lowbyer network at the northern end of Alston.

### Gas

- 7.8.2 The existing gas supply extends throughout the township of Alston. The supply is restricted under the Gas Act to only those potential new customers whose property is within 25 yards of a suitable gas main. Alston's gas works is located on the A686 beside the foundry premises. The supply is a butane/air mixture which is replenished by road tanker. A joint review carried out by Northern Gas and the Health and Safety Executive in 1977 led to extensive redesign of the plant and the resulting work was completed in 1978.

- 7.8.3 The capacity of the plant is limited by the amount of low pressure gas which can be stored on the site and the ability to replenish stocks in adverse weather conditions.

- 7.8.4 The choice of appliances which are suitable for this fuel is limited. Natural gas appliances must be modified.

### Water

- 7.8.5 Alston is served by Springfield Reservoir which has a capacity of 84,000 gallons per day. Garrigill has two sources of supply, Fewsteads which has a capacity of 90,000 gallons per day (30,000 gallons of which can be transferred into the Alston mains) and Paper Hill with a capacity of 10 - 12,000 gallons per day. The Nenthead area is served by Hayring (50,000 gallons per day) and Hardedge (12,000 gallons per day). With the facility to transfer water from Fewsteads to Alston, the supplies within the parish are considered to be ample.

### Sewerage

- 7.8.6 Alston (a new plant) and Nenthead have fully equipped sewage treatment plants. Garrigill however, still relies on a settlement tank discharging effluent as field irrigation. This latter is considered to be unsatisfactory and replacement of the substandard plant essential.

## 7.9 EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Police

- 7.9.1 Alston Moor is served by a section station located at Town Head, Alston. The premises also contain a Magistrates Court which is in session on the first Friday of each month.

Fire

- 7.9.2 The fire station in Alston is a retained station. This means that the firemen are otherwise engaged in their primary employment, but undertake to respond and turn out with the appliance within 5 minutes of being alerted. There is one appliance, a water tender carrying 400 gallons of water and specifically designed for rural areas. There are 10 firemen retained by the station, and a maximum of six attend a call (thus allowing for flexibility in availability).

Ambulance

- 7.9.3 The ambulance service is operated by Moredun Garage on a contract basis and their personnel are trained accordingly. The garage also operate the hospital car service.

Snow-plough

- 7.9.4 The snow plough service is essential to maintain communications in Winter. The service within the parish is shared between the Cumbria County Council Department of Highways and Transportation area staff and the Moredun garage who operate under County Council direction.
- 7.9.5 The participation of a local garage to maintain an ambulance service and bolster the snow plough operation demonstrates initiative born out of independence and the need for self help in rural areas.

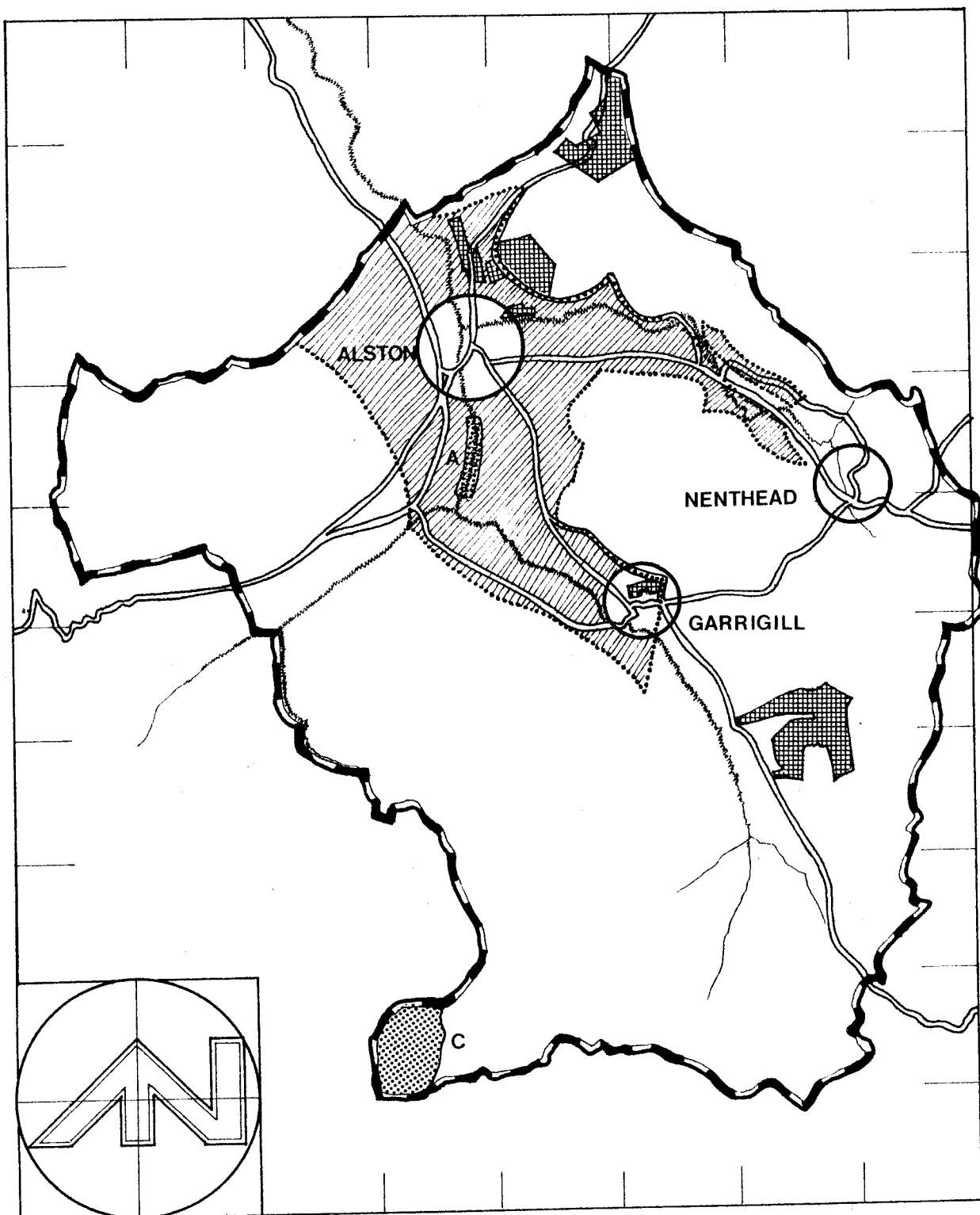
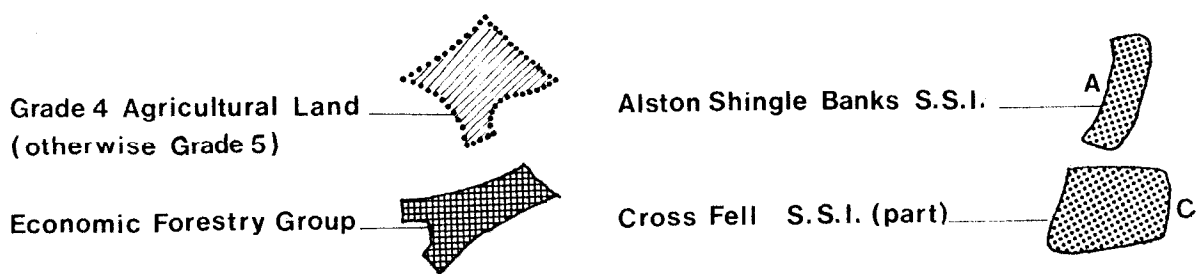
Sources:

- 7.1 Eden District Council (Environmental Health, Housing & Planning)
- 7.2 Alston & Nenthead Primary Schools (Head-masters)  
Samuel King's School (Headmaster, Secretary, staff)  
Cumbria County Council (Education Department)
- 7.3. Cumbria Area Health Authority  
Alston Cottage Hospital (Matron)
- 7.4 Cumbria County Council (Social Services Department)  
Local residents
- 7.5. Cumbria County Council (Library service)  
Local residents
- 7.6. Wright Bros (Coaches) Ltd.  
Cumbria County Council (Planning, Highways & Transportation)
- 7.7. NORWEB  
Northern Gas  
Eden District Council, Alston office
- 7.8. Alston Police Station  
Cumbria County Council (Fire service, Highways & Transportation)  
Moredun Garage, Alston

## 8. THE ENVIRONMENT

### 8.1. Landscape

- 8.1.1 Alston Moor is characterised by wild, uninhabited expanses of moorland. Because the landscape is very open, with extensive views, it is also very susceptible to change, a fact recognised by the Countryside Commission in their attempt to designate the area an "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".
- 8.1.2 The sense of freedom from civilisation which can be felt on the moor, with curlews and lapwings wheeling overhead, is experienced by the increasing numbers of Pennine Way walkers every summer. It draws people to live here and holds people who might otherwise be tempted to move elsewhere to earn a living in easier circumstances. For people who enjoy outdoor pursuits like horse-riding and fishing, and for those who simply enjoy the peace of this remote area, Alston Moor is a very attractive environment to live in.
- 8.1.3 The landscape is rich in bird and plant life and is also of considerable geological interest. Moor House Nature Reserve is approached from Alston Moor although it is, in fact, outside the parish (at the head of Teesdale). The parish is also bounded by the Upper Teesdale and Appleby Fells SSSI (site of special scientific interest). In common with Cross Fell SSSI, part of which is within the parish, these fell areas are of great biological importance. They contain diverse geological structures which support a variety of plant communities and are the breeding grounds of wading birds. There is also an SSSI, "Alston Shingle Banks", between Leadgate and Alston. This is an area of riverside shingle bank along the South Tyne and is of botanical importance. The landscape's general attractions are thus supplemented by features of specialist interest and ecological importance.
- 8.1.4 These are all positive aspects of the landscape but they are compromised by certain prominent features which mar its present appearance. These negative points include derelict buildings, untidy areas, spoil heaps and other industrial debris, particularly in the Nenthead area.
- 8.1.5 Derelict buildings are a testimony of Alston Moor's more highly populated past. In 1971 the proportion of vacant property in Alston Moor was twice that of Eden District. (Alston Moor 18.2%, Eden 7.3% of total stock). Previous planning policies tended to perpetuate this particular characteristic by refusing permission to rehabilitate or convert derelict property. This trend has been halted in recent years and such properties may now be restored for residential use (see 7.1.5). The restoration of derelict property should be encouraged throughout Alston Moor as a step towards improving the area's image both for local residents and visitors.
- 8.1.6 Improvement of untidy areas is generally a matter for the private individual concerned, but provision of more litter bins could reduce scattering of litter, particularly in the centre of Alston. (The Parish Council are in fact planning further provision).
- 8.1.7 Industrial relics could become an attraction if the historic connections with lead-mining are exploited and further reclamation of spoil heaps at Nenthead could greatly improve the village's present appearance (discussed further in 8.2.2).



PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR

LAND USE

Scale 1:100,000

- 8.1.8 Improvement of these features would create a generally more prosperous impression of the area and should be coupled with policies to conserve the primitive aspects of the landscape (e.g. by very careful integration of new tourist-orientated ventures).

8.2. Nenthead

- 8.2.1. Nenthead is not an attractive village, and despite previous County Council reclamation schemes, it is scarred by industrial despoliation. The centre of the village is dominated by a large brick building, previously a smelt-mill, which now houses Wright's bus garage. Large areas of partially reclaimed spoil heaps are also prominent features of the village landscape. The "Miners Arms", the Lead Miner's Reading Room and the inscription on the nearby village pump are all further manifestations of Nenthead's past. The previous centre of activity which included the public wash-house, clock tower and market hall, located further up the Nent at Rampgill has virtually disappeared, only a few very derelict buildings now remaining. Nenthead is a somewhat scattered village, each individual area having its separate identity; i.e. Overwater, which consists largely of terraced miners cottages, and Whitehall about 200 feet above the village centre approached by a steep cobbled hill.

- 8.2.2. The large spoil heaps which have previously been graded and flattened are to be the subject of further landscaping, primarily tree planting and the addition of topsoil, by the County Council during 1980-1981. The reclaimed area opposite the primary school is intended for future use as a children's playing field. Further reclamation schemes to improve areas of dereliction not previously improved, including land at Nentsberry, are proposed in the future, probably during 1982. Once the full effects of these schemes are visible, trees having had time to mature, the appearance of the Nenthead area should be considerably improved.

8.3. Garrigill

- 8.3.1 Garrigill is a picturesque village which clusters around a very pleasant village green, located in the upper reaches of the South Tyne Valley. Although Garrigill's history is also associated with lead-mining, the mines were generally further up the valley, away from the village itself which has the appearance of a rural agricultural settlement. In fact this function has largely disappeared as many houses are second homes or occupied by retired persons.

- 8.3.2 Nos 1 & 2 Bridge End Cottages (just over the river from the village centre) are listed as being of Special Architectural or Historic Interest, and the disused Congregational Chapel at Redwing (on the Leadgate Road) is also listed.

- 8.3.3. There is little need to improve the environment in Garrigill but the children's recreation ground is in need of new equipment and there is a need for carefully-sited public conveniences to serve visitors.

8.4. Alston

- 8.4.1 Alston's an old market town situated on a hillside rising from 921 to 1102 feet. The whole of the town centre is a designated conservation area. Quite a number of properties date from the seventeenth century and a particular feature of Alston is its cobbled main street and market square

2. with a market cross which is listed (but was recently demolished - see 7.6.20).

8.4.2 The oldest surviving part of the town is the Butts to the north of the town centre. This is potentially an attractive area of narrow lanes, and old houses but at present contains a large proportion of derelict property. Some of these have recently been restored to provide holiday cottages. The area is currently in mixed use containing some industrial premises and some permanent dwellings. If the Butts were to be generally improved, primarily by restoration, and walks through the area signposted, it could emerge from being a backwater to become a busier, more lively part of the town. This could be further aided if the mixture of activities in this area were to include a few small shops, bearing in mind the scarcity of available premises in the town centre (described in 6.1.13). Viability of any future retail development would be increased by use of the route through the Butts to the Town Centre by people walking from the Station yard car-park (7.6.14), and possibly in the long-term by opening up of the Nent Force Level (6.5.12). Vehicular access would need to be restricted if this were to be successful.

8.4.3 A number of small lanes and footpaths exist off the opposite side of the main street, such as Kate's Lane which dates from a similar period to the Butts.

8.4.4 There are very few listed Buildings in Alston, properties of equal age and merit to those which are listed having been excluded from the List. There are also a number of buildings of group value which may be worthy of listing. It is therefore suggested that the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest for Alston should be reviewed. This would help to ensure that any alterations to the more outstanding properties in the town are carried out sympathetically, and although some property-owners may feel that it is onerous to have a building listed, it can sometimes assist in obtaining financial aid.

8.4.5 Alston Conservation Area is recognised by the Historic Buildings Council as being "outstanding". This, in effect, means that it is entitled to benefit from grants available under Section 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972. These grants (25 - 50%) may be awarded by the Department of the Environment (DOE), on recommendation from the Historic Buildings Council, towards expenditure incurred in connection with the preservation or enhancement of an outstanding conservation area or part of such an area. The scope of these grants is wide and may include not only buildings but, for instance, special street lighting and landscaping schemes, and undergrounding of overhead cables.

8.4.6 The County Council has limited funds for conservation and may offer grants of 12½% towards structural repairs of listed buildings and other buildings of townscape quality.

8.4.7 There would appear to be a strong case for setting up a 'Town Scheme' in Alston. The purpose of these schemes is to restore groups of buildings in outstanding conservation areas thereby having a greater impact than the improvement of scattered properties. There are several groups of properties in a poor state of repair in Alston (e.g. in the Butts, at Overburn and in the market square) which could benefit by such a scheme. Financial assistance under a Town Scheme is given for structural repairs and not alterations (although the latter are sometimes eligible for Section 10 grants).



LISTED BUILDINGS WITHIN CONSERVATION AREA

- ① Market Cross
- ② Church Gates
- ③ Bluebell Hotel
- ④ Hillcrest Hotel



PARISH OF ALSTON MOOR

CONSERVATION AREA

Scale 1:2500

43.

The contributors are the DOE who provide 25% and the County and District Councils who each provide 12½% of the cost of approved structural repairs, thus leaving the owner to provide 50% of the cost. In special cases the DOE contribution has been increased to 50%, the owner then only having to provide 25% of the cost (notably in Whitehaven and Cockermouth in West Cumbria which both have Town Schemes in operation). However, before considering whether a special case could be made for Alston, a first step would be to initiate a Town Scheme.

8.4.8 A large proportion of comments received in response to the questionnaire stressed the need to tidy up Alston and to improve derelict buildings. Therefore local opinion would appear to favour the possibility of utilising sources of finance for conservation, to enable the improvement of the environment and the structural fabric of Alston.

8.4.9 A number of respondents to the questionnaire suggested removing the setts in the main street. This was probably precipitated by the demolition of the market cross, and although suggested for reasons of safety, setts are purposely incorporated in some new developments to reduce speed. If removed, traffic would probably travel faster. The setts, a feature which has long since disappeared in most towns, are an inherent part of Alston's character and, particularly in view of its outstanding conservation area status, should be retained.

8.4.10 Some superficial improvements which would brighten up the appearance of the town centre can be made quite simply, at relatively little cost and have an immediate impact. These include provision of flower tubs, suitably designed litter bins and seats. (65% of respondents to the questionnaire were in favour of provision of seats and litter bins). Further and more costly improvements, in the long term, might include some tree planting for instance between the cobbled car-park areas and the main street. This would help to enhance the rather barren appearance of the market square which only possesses one tree, at present. (54% of respondents to the questionnaire were in favour of tree-planting).

8.4.11 Alston is a town with its own distinct character, but its full potential will only be realised if sufficient funds can be made available for the implementation of sensitive schemes of restoration and enhancement.

## 9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1. Alston's isolated rural location and a legacy of exploitation constitute the principal components responsible for the present insecure economy of the region. The area is rich in, as yet unexplored, potential. Appropriate injection of funds and active co-ordination may realise these latent resources.
- 9.2. The future prosperity of the area ~~would~~ appear to depend on financial input in three fields:
  1. Development of a diversity of small industries in order to expand existing employment opportunities and retain a stable population.
  2. Development of existing features which could be promoted as tourist attractions.
  3. Environmental improvements with particular emphasis on restoration of derelict property.
- 9.3. Local initiative tends to be ~~repressed~~ by lack of finance. However, sources of finance exist in all three areas of activity described above. Knowing of the existence of these various forms of aid and how to gain access to them is a different story.
- 9.4. It is recommended that a co-ordination role be established to marry local initiative with external sources of finance and to provide a local comprehensive information base for prospective industrial and tourist enterprises.
- 9.5. Such an agent as envisaged would acquaint himself with the potential sources of finance and advice for anticipated entrepreneur and environmental rehabilitation schemes. He would also need to liaise with the relevant authorities who would be concerned with implementation of proposals. Thus he would need to establish close links with the Development Commission, CoSIRA, the Cumbria Tourist Board, Cumbria County Council Industrial Promotion and Planning Departments, Eden District Planning Department and the Historic Buildings Section of the Department of the Environment. A realistic publicity exercise would be essential in order to ensure that the service can be enjoyed by the maximum number of users. The necessary contacts between 'projector' and source could then be established which may hopefully culminate in the establishment of new businesses within the parish. The service could also embrace an up to date register of available premises and sites and this facility could be advertised to encourage owners to make vacant property available for registration.
- 9.6. This proposed service could be implemented in one of several ways. The Parish Council could sponsor the establishment of an information and advisory service if an external source of finance could be made available for this purpose (this might even be seen as an extension of the Parish Clerk's role). Alternatively the service could be incorporated within the existing local office of Eden District Council. In this case, the service may not necessarily be confined to the parish, but be made available to other regions in the eastern fringe of Eden District, i.e. in parallel with the recently established Fellside project. A further possibility would be to incorporate the role within the Fellside Officer's terms of reference.

- 9.6. Bearing in mind the withdrawal of Special Area Development Status in August 1980 and the imminent loss of Development Area status in 1982, there is a need for an economic study of Alston Moor to be undertaken. This should be submitted to the Department of Industry arguing the case for retention of Development Area status in time for the proposed government review in mid 1981. The case would be strengthened by a substantial record of success, made possible directly as a result of harnessing regional aid.
- 9.7. The parish supports a respectable number of thriving societies and clubs. However, some facilities exist which are presently underused. Inevitably the onus rests within the community to organise fuller use of these social resources. Increased publicity and co-ordination would invigorate these essential community activities.
- 9.8. Despite the continued decline in population over the past century, Alston is well provided with services in relation to the size of the population it supports. It is important however, to establish a stable or even growing population in order to ensure that the existing level of services is maintained and hopefully improved. Therefore the successful development of small businesses will play a vital role in the future well-being of the parish.
- 9.9. In conclusion, to attain prosperity and assure the quality of life on Alston Moor, investment is needed on a scale which is unlikely to be achieved without external financial support. However, resources exist within the parish: available and willing labour, latent tourist attractions, a potentially very attractive environment and the uncompromising local initiative of an independent spirited people. These features positively harnessed, could create a vibrant and exciting future for Alston Moor.