

Press Release dated 28/04/08

PARWICH.ORG

a community village website with a difference

Launched on March 16th 2008, PARWICH.ORG is a community website for the villages of Parwich, Alsop-en-le-Dale, Ballidon and Pikehall, in the Derbyshire Peak District. Unlike most village websites, which rely on traditional web page design to display static content, PARWICH.ORG uses blogging technology to create a lively, frequently updated weblog, with input from a broad cross-section of village residents.

To the delight of its creators, the blog proved an instant hit within the community, notching up an impressive 10,000 page views before the end of its first month. The site now averages 3,000 views per week: a remarkable achievement for an area with only around 500 people on its electoral roll.

The site has attracted a readership which spreads far beyond the parish boundaries. E-mails and comments have been received from "ex-pat" residents with fond memories of their time in the village, as well as from friends and relatives of village residents, former and prospective visitors, local businesses and voluntary organisations, local government officials, and even the Member of Parliament for the region: Patrick McLoughlin MP, who pronounced the site "excellent".

PARWICH.ORG is the first village weblog in the UK to engage fully with both the blogging medium and the rural community which it supports. It is maintained by a team of seven village residents, and is updated several times daily. In its first few weeks of existence, the site has covered the closure of the sole village shop and the opening of a new shop in the village pub. It has supported the work of organisations ranging from the First Responders to the Village Action Group, via the bowling club and the horticultural society. It has campaigned for action from the county council on a dangerous stretch of road, already with some degree of success. It has also provided a means of offering collective support for a villager who is seriously ill in hospital.

In addition to the blog itself, the site contains many other pages of useful local information. These include a calendar of forthcoming events, a directory of local businesses and services, dedicated "mini-sites" for various local societies, public transport timetables, historical information, and a parallel sister site for Parwich Memorial Hall.

Originally conceived by the Parwich Memorial Hall committee, PARWICH.ORG is intended not just as a community-building resource,

but also as a means of attracting support and funding for the rebuild of the Memorial Hall itself. Of key importance to the success of the rebuild project is the need to demonstrate that the village is an active, self-supporting community with the ability to act on its own initiative, and PARWICH.ORG provides clear, public evidence of this. Advertising space is offered to the project's partners and sponsors, who will hopefully wish to be publicly linked with such a remarkable success story.

As an isolated village, Parwich suffers from classic rural privations such as the lack of public transport, the recent loss of the old village shop, and the scarcity of affordable housing. Despite this, villagers old and new show a remarkable spirit and ingenuity to overcome these problems.

Part newspaper, part notice board and part discussion forum, PARWICH.ORG is actively trying to address the problems of rural disconnectedness, and to bring an already exceptionally strong community closer together. As such, it deserves to be seen as a beacon for any other villages contemplating a similar enterprise.

For more details contact parwich@hotmail.co.uk