

# Stories from Newsome



## David's story

I am a member of Newsome Timebanking. I live in my own flat in Newsome supported by United Response. This is my experience of timebanking.

In August 2008 I helped Steven move home, I helped load the car which was supplied by another timebanker. This was my first experience of timebanking and it got me out and about meeting new people.

In the summer of 2009 I lived in Halifax and was waiting to move to a flat in Huddersfield. I travelled over from Halifax to do timebanking as this was a good way to get to know people in Huddersfield.

Here I am cutting an overgrown hedge for a lady called Catherine after she'd had an operation. This was the first time I'd ever cut a hedge and as you can see from my smile I enjoyed it.



Catherine gave us coffee and biscuits. I think she enjoyed chatting to us as much as she appreciated our hard work.



At first Catherine and I didn't know each other very well. I was a bit nervous at first but now I have done various timebanking jobs I have got to know her well and become friends.

In 2010 I also started to help at luncheon club. This occurs every two weeks on a Thursday. We prepare food, set up tables and wash up. I have learnt how to cook new dishes...

... and all about food hygiene, as you can see from my hat!

I have met lots of new people here and they are very friendly.





In autumn I swept up the leaves at Newsome Church, hard work but good experience. This makes a difference at church. It looks good in the spring when the flowers come out.

Here I am working at the allotments which are part of Growing Newsome. This encourages people to grow their own vegetables and promotes healthy eating. On the allotment I've helped build a greenhouse. I have done digging, planting, putting wood chippings down and got a lot of experience doing this.

I enjoy watching things grow and eating them!

Through my work at the allotments with Growing Newsome I attended the mayor's food festival at the town hall. I was quite chuffed as we won a community award for the mayor's local food initiative.

Timebanking has got me out and about meeting lots of people. I've been able to try lots of things and gain new experience. I am much more confident meeting new people.



I have really enjoyed it and hope it will help me get a job in the future.

## Janet's story



***"For me, it s completely changed my life".***

I was a housewife and retired and didn't do anything. I started timebanking and went to the Timebanking conference in Blackpool and met some lovely people. I was really inspired by the changes it made to people's lives.

At home I helped with a survey to see if people wanted to learn about how to grow vegetables, and from that Diane started Growing Newsome, which I got involved in as well.

So because I earned time credits I got some payback and another timebanking member helped me learn how to send emails.

Then I helped at the luncheon club.



Timebanking members cleared this area, I helped plant it up. The idea is that people will be able to help themselves to the plants and herbs that we grow.

As a result of this I've helped reunite the local tenants and residents association which I'm quite involved with and had the confidence to go on to do various courses.



I have never taken a proper exam in my life but timebanking gave me the confidence to go on to get my certificate in Leadership and Management. I can be an example to people who think they can't do anything - because you can.

## Pam's story



from:  
The Caterpillar

He's not the gardeners delight  
He and his friends are considered a blight  
But, this has no effect on him  
He keeps on growing and tucking in  
While sunny days are rolling by  
He looks up to see a butterfly  
'Blimey,' he says 'just look at those wings  
You'll never get me up in one of those things'.

It's a moving little story about a caterpillar but for me it has a more serious message, because if the caterpillar didn't get into that thing it would never become what it is intended to be. It would never reach its potential.

My job for the churches is to work with and for the community and to assist them where appropriate to gain a better quality of life – to help them reach their potential, to start releasing some of their butterflies. And this is where Timebanking has proved a great resource. Timebanking was set up as a skills swap organisation – I do your decorating and someone can do my gardening, that sort of thing – but interestingly something else has happened. It seems to be able to help people who have been very isolated, lacking in confidence and self esteem, to blossom and flourish so that they can become part of the community and feel as if they are doing something worthwhile.

The churches run a charity shop in Newsome called the Together shop. We have over 60 volunteers involved in all sorts of tasks, from selling the goods, sorting them, making sure the shop is fully stocked to collecting donations and the window dressing. We have seen people grow and develop because it has alleviated loneliness and isolation for many who work there and also those who buy things.

It's a bit of a chitter chatter shop because people who live alone will call in and have a chat, get things off their chest, have a bit of a laugh and go away smiling – it doesn't really matter if they don't buy, the main thing is they go away feeling better.

One of our volunteers is young lady who was introduced to us through Timebanking. She helps in the shop and the manager tells me that over the months she has been there she is more confident, she is so reliable and always on time and willing to do anything.



Every year we have a party to thank the volunteers for the time they give us and this young lady came this year. She hardly knew anyone there but she walked in, took her place at a table and enjoyed her supper. She laughed and sang along with the entertainer and do you know it's not that long since I could only get a very shy "Hello" out of her. And I wonder, is her butterfly beginning to be released?

Every two weeks I help run a Social Dance for older people in Newsome. Here again we have been able to work together. Rachel Taylor, the Timebanking co-ordinator, has introduced us to several people who have attended the dance. One lady (who has a learning difficulty) started coming to help us wash up when we had had our cup of tea. She was so shy and reserved when she started. Her support worker even brought a pot towel to encourage her into the kitchen No such luck. She wants to dance and that's what she does. She has a great time. Laughing, giving us hugs and telling us about where she is going on holiday. What a change in her!

About 18 months ago the churches and the community organised a weekend event at Newsome High School. The aim of the weekend was to celebrate all that is good in the Newsome area. It was a huge success with over 800 people attending. We saw friendships develop. Some of the people who helped hadn't been involved in things for a long time. They gained in confidence, and wanted to get involved in other things and a real feeling of camaraderie grew.



We would have found it much more difficult to do the job if it hadn't been for Timebanking. We had so many volunteers willing to help and make the event the success that it was. I have a lot to thank Timebanking for.

We have other projects in the pipeline and I look forward to sharing the work with Rachel but what I look forward to as well is seeing how people blossom when given the chance to do something that makes them feel useful and cared for.

So long may Timebanking reign and we work together to release many more butterflies.



## Diane's story

On 6th November 2007 I found out that the owner of Newsome Mill was intending to demolish the building. When I walked around the corner of Hart Street that evening and saw the weaving sheds standing there without their roof slates, I felt completely powerless. I was told that there are some things you just can't do anything about. But I don't believe that.

It was only when we were about to lose it that I really understood the relationship between local people and our mill. Newsome is here because of the mill. It's part of our history, part of our landscape and part of our identity. A strange silence fell on Newsome when the mill clock stopped.

Within 2 months, I managed to get the mill Grade II listed. But that was just the beginning. The mill has suffered flytipping, theft, vandalism and arson. Even the war memorial was stolen. We made a public appeal and got it back. To try and stop these things happening, we started trying to find ways of telling people what was going on.



Timebanking helped us reach the whole of Newsome, spreading the word through newsletters that were hand-delivered by timebanking members.

The other half of the battle is the former Newsome Mill allotments at Hart Street. Many people had approached Newsome Forum asking for help getting an allotment. Meanwhile, the land at Hart Street has stood empty for 20 years, with the local community resigned to just complaining about it.



People with similar interests came together around the land at Hart Street - heritage campaigners, near neighbours, conservationists, local food activists and land campaigners. We met and decided what collectively we could do. We decided to get our own evidence of the local need for food growing.

We ran the Newsome food survey to find out whether there is demand for food growing in Newsome. We needed to find 12 people to volunteer to work a full weekend to run a door-to-door survey, which seemed like a massive commitment. Timebanking helped us to identify people who cared about the issue.

We learnt how to do this together – and we got 486 responses to our survey. We heard local people's stories first hand and found out that together we have everything we need to grow our own food.



The results were overwhelmingly positive. 53% of people were willing to do something to help others to grow their own food. We formed Growing Newsome and held our first event within 3 weeks of getting the survey results. 80 people turned up, and it was impossible to tell the organisers from participants. Everyone just got together and helped each other - so those survey results didn't just stay on the page.

Growing Newsome is all about sharing. We encourage the swapping of seeds, plants and stories. Older people with experience in food growing are helping younger people who are just starting to learn. This is building confidence about how to grow - everyone can participate in some way.

Next we looked at where to grow. We started a garden-sharing scheme. We started to learn that it's ok to ask for help, because we have things to give in return. One lady was brave enough to offer us her garden, which was shoulder-deep in brambles. We all got together one morning to clear it.

We also started to work with other organisations. We asked One 17 Design for help with the Hart Street allotments. They helped us to develop a vision for the site and to share this. After years of complaining, people were now talking about doing something positive with the land.

We shared our aspirations with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, who were looking at a much bigger area of land for food production at Stirley Farm. They carried on our survey work, and their plans were influenced by local enthusiasm for food growing.

Meanwhile, we still needed somewhere for our project to grow. So we took on 2 allotment plots, following council investment in local allotments that we helped to secure. We inherited a load of mud, weeds, pigeons and two old, battered glass houses. None of us could have taken this on ourselves.



I met Pat and Cherry through the allotment. The three of us live 2 minutes away from each other and we'd never met. We need to talk to each other all the time to get things done - to organise ourselves around the weather and work out what needs doing. We've become friends. So together we've grown far more than vegetables.

We worked with what was there already. We kept the vine and grew runner beans up the old A-frame.

People started to bring us things - rhubarb, an apple tree, seeds and veg plants. Some people brought their experience. Some brought strength. Some brought equipment. Some brought encouragement.

And the grapes began to ripen, due to (or in spite of) our efforts. And this way of working began to influence how I thought about other projects.

When we started a new technology project in Newsome, I stood up at a Forum meeting and asked if people would give their skills, as well as taking learning opportunities. I met Valerie that night, who immediately offered to help. And I didn't know that Valerie had just taken the plot next to us at the allotment...

We call our technology project Newsome Grapevine. Because it's about helping people to share what they know, to share it on the grapevine. But also because I was inspired by my fellow food growers and the vine that didn't give up.



We started running computer drop-in sessions, helped by Paddock Learning Centre. Rob, who we know from Growing Newsome, came along to help people with digital photography. Janet came to learn but also shared what she knew with others. And she brought other people along with her - some dragged out of the queue at the post office.

Some of the people who we met at the computer drop-in then came along to the Growing Newsome Autumn Fair.

Other people brought us courgettes from their allotments and apples from their gardens. We turned these into jam for the Christmas Fair at Paddock, which we'd been invited to by Simon from Paddock Learning Centre. In the process, I accidentally learnt how to make jam and cake, encouraged by our Timebanking Co-ordinator, Rachel, and by my mum.

Our technology project was also coming to fruition. A new website and text message mailing lists gave us new ways to share what we know. Things have also progressed at the mill, with new planning permission being granted in January 2011.

Exactly 3 years after listing, the mill clock hands were stolen, which was really upsetting. No-one seemed to want to take responsibility. But we are now actively looking for anyone who can help us to protect our mill and get it back into use. The future is still very uncertain, but we have given this building a voice.

So is my story about losing things, or about what we've gained?

Imagine if timebanking members became the custodians of this clock, so that it can be heard again in Newsome and beyond. Imagine if Hart Street became a local food growing centre. By working together, these things are possible.

**People + place + timebanking = getting things done.**

