

Proud Cuckoo Town has something to crow about

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by **Sheila Bowker**

CUCKOOS are coming to Austwick, the village known as 'Cuckoo Town'.

According to local legend the folk of Austwick realised that both fortune and weather improved each year when the cuckoo arrived. Deciding to try and extend the 'good times' one year, they found the tree in which the cuckoo perched and laboured all day to build a wall around it. As it grew dark, and just before the last course was completed, the cuckoo flew away.

But the folklore remains, and to celebrate the story Austwick traditionally holds a Cuckoo Festival and Street Market at Spring Bank Holiday, when the village is decorated with cuckoos. This year's festival will be on Monday, May 26, and to enhance the fun and spectacle two cuckoo making workshops have been arranged, with the one on the afternoon of next Friday, May 9, in Austwick School for both parents and pupils



Nikki Johnson, who will be leading the art workshops to create the cuckoos in Austwick, creating a dragon's head for a carnival procession

of the school. The second, at which everyone is welcome, will run from 12noon - 4pm in Austwick Parish Hall. Artists from Pioneer Projects of Bentham will be on hand to give ideas, demonstrate techniques and suggest materials that could be used in the design and construction of cuckoos.

After a difficult two years,

first with cancellation of the event due to foot-and-mouth and last year the clash with Jubilee celebrations, joint chairman of the organising committee, Bob Duckworth, is determined that this year will be remembered for all the right reasons.

He said: "The Austwick Cuckoo Festival & Street Market provides a celebration enjoyed by villagers

and visitors alike, and earns revenue which sustains vital village facilities.

"We want 2003 to be remembered for the imagination, fun and creativity of the cuckoos on display. We hope that by organising workshops we can inject that added inspiration so that the quality and numbers of cuckoos around the village reach new heights."

Artist Nikki Johnson of Pioneer Projects said: "The event is an attraction enjoyed by visitors and local people alike.

"We would like the cuckoos of Austwick to be heard everywhere, and to do this we need large numbers to be on display around the village. Everyone can make a cuckoo, and the workshops are there to help, so please come along.

"The festival demonstrates a Dales community working together to have fun, regenerate the area, raise vital funds and enhance the appeal of the whole area to visitors."

The workshops are supported by Craven District Council Arts Development.