

Mill Bank & Cottonstones Newsletter

Christmas 2025



Our Communities go from Strength to Strength

At the Mill Bank Group's AGM in October, Gail and Fiona sadly departed for warmer pastures new, but have left a strong legacy of achievements over the year. Gail's presentation gave us a summary to cheer us on:

Keeping us connected – no villager left behind

The Mill Bank WhatsApp chat now lists 195 avid members who made over 7.5 thousand posts since last year; the Mill Bank Bus chat has 43 active members; the Mill Bank Newsletter was delivered to over 200 households in and around Mill Bank; and the Mill Bank website is packed with beautiful and useful information.

From looking out for our neighbours, rehoming household goods, reuniting lost dogs with their owners, chatting at the blossoming community centre, we've never had communication as good as this.

Building Partnerships

It was a great year for strengthening our connections with others; including with St Mary's school, when they celebrated their 175th year. Ruth organised a history exhibition and a fascinating interview with the Armitage brothers at the school, whilst Fi and Janet guided school children on a village heritage walk.

Our connections with the Council deepened too, and we owe a great deal to Councillor Leah Webster and Secretary Fiona Peach, whose brilliant organisation, goodwill and persistence led to long overdue renovations,

– from new playground equipment, to restoring the gritting service, clearing the gullies, grappling with bus cancellations and much more.

With the Church, the group carried out a survey to consult on the future of the Church and Community Centre, and supported the new group set up to re-vitalise the community centre, with quiz nights, a games room and much more.

A Wonderful Place to Live

So many events and efforts help make the village a great place to live: the path to the park was made safe, there were village tidy-ups, weed pulling and spraying, new playground equipment, a restored gritting service, and the gullies were cleared. There was another excellent Christmas Fair – thanks to Sue Walker for her organisation – and of course, Christmas lights. We grappled with bus cancellations, Yorkshire Water, and supported action against the new incinerator. Fran and Tan took on the organisation of Neighbourhood Watch, with 200 stickers distributed.

Where Next?

With these priorities well achieved in the last year, decisions about 2026 are now needed. The group is currently operating with a lively committee and a temporary Chair and Secretary. There will be another General Meeting to appoint to these roles for the full year ahead. When this has been done, the group will be seeking views on the next steps and priorities.

All of us at the Mill Bank Group wish you a very Happy Christmas, health and happiness in 2026.

Newsletter: contact -michaelbeazley40@gmail.com / 07756822995 **Website:**

<https://www.millbankvillage.co.uk/> Mill Bank Chat **WhatsApp:** ask Phillippa, Fran or Bronwen to join: See **561/562** WhatsApp group for bus chat. **Email Newsletter:** On the website, enter your email address to receive the newsletter. **Facebook:** search for the Mill Bank Group

Cottonstones Community Centre Takes Off

From Claire Murray, Chair, Cottonstones Community Centre

Progress continues apace at Cottonstone's Community Centre, and our **clear up , clean up and glow up** efforts are really starting to transform the beautiful historic premises at St Mary's Church, making them more friendly, modern and welcoming.

Volunteers aim to prevent the closure of St Mary's Church and community spaces. The closure of our last remaining place to meet, celebrate, learn, enjoy, mourn, dance, eat and drink together would be too great a loss, and difficult to replace in future if we were to let it go. So we have confirmed and signed our constitution, and elected a small committee in October, which will enable us to apply for funding to secure the future of our community centre.

We are really grateful for the generous donations, transport/trailers loaned, precious time offered, and the many hands-on-deck to get the rooms cleared and ready. We have already cleared and cleaned the upstairs kitchen, ready for an upgrade., and were delighted to accept funding from the council's Ward Forum Grant scheme; also the generous gift of fixtures and fittings from a donor in the village, and funds from the Sowerby Bridge Freemasons to buy a replacement fridge, urn and new kettle. We hope to start work soon.

The Sip and Draw evening last month was fully taught but very sociable, attracting creatives of all ages and abilities. We enjoyed a couple of relaxing hours, drawing, chatting, laughing (those self-portraits were fun!) and enjoying our BYO refreshments. I will definitely repeat the sip and draw night in early 2026.

Outdoors, volunteers have pruned and cleared, and a donor has added a beautiful new bench along the side of the church, We are hopeful that more handy gardeners will join our gang to help get the shrubbery spring ready.

Coming Up... In the month up to Christmas, we have the regular quiz night coming up on Friday 28 November, wreath-making workshop 29 November, film night 12 December, carols evening 19 December, and the continued bookings from the Regency Dance group and Keep Fit classes.



Get Involved...

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all the support and goodwill we have received so far. Our goal is to ensure that there is a

community space for our friends, families and neighbours to meet up in, to laugh, enjoy good cheer and simply get together.

Getting involved can be simply turning up to one event a year or baking a cake for the summer fete (there's an idea!). Lending a hand at an event makes light work of setting up or clearing away at the end of the night. And we really do appreciate every gesture of help, right through to your generous donations that support our events.



You can keep up to date on the Facebook page, the events page or noticeboards in the village and church. See www.cottonstones-community-centre.com, and our Facebook page. We have some exciting ideas in the pipeline for 2026 - more on that later.

You can rent the room for £25 for a session, or £10 per hour (AM, PM or evening) and host your own event. It could be a private party, a fundraiser, a ceilidh, dance, pie and pea supper, or a village social - we don't mind! The community centre belongs at the heart of the community so please come along and see what we're doing. The doors will be open, and the kettle will be on...

December

What's On?

5th	Games Night & Social	6.30pm	Cottonstones Community Centre
7 th	Advent Service	10am	St Mary's Church Cottonstones
12 th	Christmas Films	4pm	Children's Film at the Community Centre
		7pm	Big Kids...at the Community Centre
19 th	Carols and get-together	7.30pm	Cottonstones Community Centre
20 th	Festive Quiz & Bingo	7.30pm	At Cottonstones with Quiz Mistresses Gail & Michaela
24 th	Crib Service	6.30pm	St Mary's Church Cottonstones
25 th	Christmas Service	10am	St Luke's, Norland

Looking after the Village

Woe on the buses

Cllr Webster is urging the council to use its powers more robustly to improve the management of road closures and the resulting bus cancellations.

Grit bin on Nathan Lane – at last, a grit bin has been restored to its usual place on Nathan Lane.

Village tidy-up – A village tidy up took place in November, weeding the setts in front of the village stone, There will be further village tidy ups (with cake) in 2026 – details to follow.

Tree stumps on the playing field – Cllr Webster is following up to find out when action is to be taken to remove the stumps.

Yorkshire stone flags - Gail has written to the council to ask when the temporary tarmac that replaced the stolen paving stones will be removed and the stone flags reinstated. Some of the 'temporary' repairs have been with us for years.

Council Action to support the Conservation Area

The MBG attended a council meeting to ask if they would take action to improve the care of the village, including its heritage features and architecture. The answer came that the village was not “at risk” and there were insufficient resources to carry an appraisal. They indicated a willingness to work with the Mill Bank Group, should we wish to have a go at producing new guidance ourselves!

Some years back, we consulted on the possibility of applying to join Ripponden Parish Council (RPC), but this was met with little interest. The additional taxation, lack of enthusiasm for extra bureaucracy, and the record of the RPC may have influenced thinking.

So, if we want to continue to get things done, it will be largely down to the volunteer efforts of the MBG, fund-raising, and working with our partners. This past year has demonstrated how much can be achieved, but the group needs even more active members in the team. If you have a little time and energy, if you can organise and communicate, please do consider joining in.

The group is still seeking a Chair and Secretary for the year, but getting involved in any way could make a real difference. Please contact Michael on WhatsApp or 07756 822995 if this could be you.

This is **your** newsletter, so please do get in touch with information, photos, or news. Feel free to comment on anything in this newsletter on the WhatsApp Mill Bank Chat page. On the Mill Bank Village website, you can sign up to receive the digital version of the Newsletter automatically by email. See the instructions on the home page – it's quick and simple.

From Councillor Leah Webster

You've kept me busy this year with Mill Bank business, but it's been very satisfying to see that active cooperation with the Mill Bank Group has been so worthwhile and productive. Children have been enjoying the new playing field equipment, the gullies were cleared, a new rubbish bin installed, and paths remade for safety. One of the highlights was the final replacement of the grit bin to its proper place on Nathan Lane, as celebrated with a special "Grit Cake"! What a saga that has proved to be...

Other work is in progress. Road closures and bus cancellations have been raised at a full council meeting, and with the cabinet too. Our MP, Josh Fenton Glynn is continuing to press Yorkshire Water for a replacement of the water mains. My efforts at the council are about better management of road closures, and alternative transport. I am strongly aware of the hardships that lengthy bus cancellations bring about and will continue to press for change.

I was happy to support the award of two Ward Forum Grants, one for the Community Centre improvements at Cottonstones, and one for the Mill Bank Group. I know how even modest amounts can be put to really good use by both groups.

Terrible weather didn't put off local residents who attended my second surgery at the Community Centre in October, and it's been good to meet Mill Bank people and discuss their issues close to home. The next surgery will be in January, so please do come along to raise any issues about council services. I will confirm the date and time early in 2026.

Finally, a big thank you to all those who have contributed as sponsors for the Secret Santa scheme, some for the fifth year running. Many children in families facing financial hardship will have a happier Christmas than would otherwise have been possible.

I wish you a Happy Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Life on WhatsApp

The autumn newsletter had a squawky - but well-spoken - pair of Quaker parrots for sale. It was inevitable that this would be followed by a request from Sally who was looking for "a sweary parrot in a cage that I can hire for a party in December? 🦜". Who knows what really goes on at parties today? Claire introduced us to "Sip and Paint" nights, taking care not to clean her brush in the gin and tonic.

The Winter WhatsApp prize definitely goes to Sally for making us guess which parrot expletives are the most popular these days, and let's hope she tells us how it went.

Anyone interested in acquiring a superpower will have learned about The Eccles Parlour Transformer, where new energies might be found. In the darkling woods, lost black dogs howled, but help was at hand from The Microchip Reader, who has the Power to Identify and Reunite. A beam-me-up dog machine will be next no doubt, and will certainly save a lot of leg work.

In the great Mill Bank home clear-out, Dave advertised his Sooty and Sweep puppets and must be a mentioned here too...as he just "wanted them off his hands"...

Back in the WhatsApp kitchen world, Jodes asked ..."does anyone have a few spare cooking apples?" and soon discovered that there was a four-ton surplus available due to the warm weather. Enough for at least couple of thousand crumbles.

Nature – The Return of the Raptors

Buzzards now seem to be well established in and around the village, and more often spotted circling overhead in search of food. Sparrowhawks too appear to be thriving, especially where the smaller birds gather. With so many bird species declining, what is it that has encouraged the raptors' return?

John Anderson reports that he saw a badger for the first time after 43 years living in the village. He also came across 7 deer in 3 groups on Blue Ball road in a field. Although common now, they are a beautiful sight.

Pheasants are taking up residence too, but please don't entertain any ideas about alternatives to the Christmas turkey.

Book Group



Don't call the police. These bandits from a past year were just on their way to the village Book Group. We now have 150 books under our sombreros and though there is not as much dressing up these days, there's still plenty of lively discussion about books.

We meet on the last Thursday of the month in Mill Bank, and we throw in a few films in-between books to give reading time for the longer ones. (The charming *My Life as a Dog* was the last film). November's book was the more startling *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonny Garmus.

If you are interested in joining the group, you don't need a sombrero, just an interest in reading and sharing ideas. Contact John on 077934 512861. Everyone welcome.

Please Bin It

At St. Mary's Church, refuse bins are now back in use, and any cuttings or dead flowers, wreaths etc should be put under the tree in the dedicated compound behind the church. Dave Hutton is tidying behind the church and would welcome help.

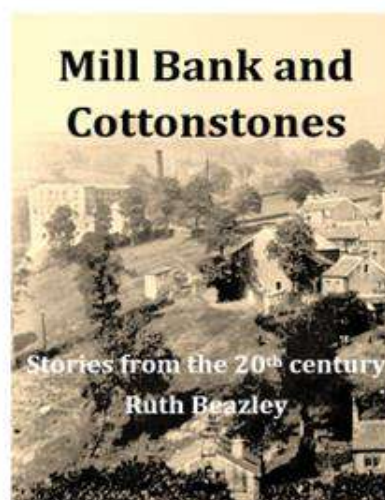
Mill Bank History Group

The Book Launch and Heritage Walks in September were enjoyed by over fifty people, when new research was shared about the village.

Did you know the Leeds architects who designed St Mary's Church and School in the mid-1850s also designed Sowerby Bridge Town Hall and other important listed buildings in Yorkshire including Armley Gaol?

Funds from the sales of Ruth's new book about the village will fund the digitisation of the archives and development of the website. So that the discovered village history treasure – photos, stories, and more – can be accessed by anyone in the world, online.

The latest history book 'Mill Bank and Cottonstones - Stories from the 20th century' could make a great Christmas present for friends and family.



Over 50 people contributed to a collection of stories about local life when this was far from the beautiful well-kept place it is today. Following the closure of the local mills, people recall with affection the freedom of their childhoods living in semi-derelict cottages, and some of the local colourful 'characters'.

All proceeds from sales of the book go towards developing the website. The book is £12 and available at St Bartholomew's Christmas Fair and from Ruth Beazley at 66, Lower Mill Bank Road.

Linda Wilson - All Around the House

After 30 years in education, I have decided to hang up my hat but am not retiring completely. I am setting up a small business offering the following services: garden tidy, cleaning, dog walking, shopping, ironing, organisation of rooms, help with Airbnb's and some soft furnishings i.e. cushion covers, curtains, seat pads.

If you need my help with any of the above, please contact me on 07341443989 / looby24@outlook.com for further information or quotation.

St Mary's School News

The school had its Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAM) in July, which evaluates the impact of a church school's Christian vision on pupils and adults (this is separate from inspection by Ofsted).

St Mary's was judged as functioning as a very successful church school. The links with the local community were recognised, particularly following our 175th celebrations.

Summarising the school's strengths, the inspection report concluded that "St Mary's School is a place where both pupils and adults thrive" and a recent parent survey confirmed that all parents responding agreed or strongly agreed that their children do well, were happy and safe.



St Mary's pupils with their Remembrance tribute

There have been several open days for potential new families to look around the school. Although these are now over, anyone can book an appointment anytime to come and visit us. Places are available in many year groups, where smaller classes can offer more individual attention.

Mind, Body & Home

Keep Fit with Julia at the community Centre, St Mary's Church continues on Wednesday evenings 7.00pm. No need to book - just turn up with a mat for floor work. Great music too. Phone 823589 for more information. £5 per session.

Bien Être – Wellbeing Coaching for Fatigue & Recovery

Coaching support for people living with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS/ME), fibromyalgia, Long Covid, and the challenges of menopause.

Claire offers qualified & personalised coaching to help you improve energy, manage symptoms, and create a life that feels more balanced and fulfilling. Sessions take place from her therapy room in Sowerby Bridge or online.

Text 07971 595 648 to arrange a free coaching consultation and take your first step towards feeling more like yourself again.

Ellie's Language Courses

Places are available in Ellie's classes for French or Beginners' Spanish for Fun. It is possible to join at any time, so come and try a lesson - the first one is free. Contact ellie@languageforfun.uk or 07868 279513 for more information.

Dan Annison for help with home repairs or maintenance, and window cleaning by hand with ladders!

Contact Dan on 07794 169139

Sam Reynolds – plumber, gas engineer, and heat pump engineer.

Contact Sam on 07703 650063

Advertisements in the Newsletter are for services or products from people who live or work in the village area and aim to encourage and support local suppliers and services.

CREATIVE MILL BANK

Mill Bank teems with artists and crafters, some just starting off, others with decades of experience, whose work has been featured throughout this year. The season ends with a look at the work of Mac Moore and Keith Kemp.



Mac Moore, musician, artist.

Mac studied at Scarborough College of Art in the fifties, where he grew up and roamed the cliff tops, even remembering a dogfight when an early wave of aerial attacks took place during World War II. Later, he made his living as a professional jazz musician, and in graphic art. He was married to the late Maureen Moore, whose landscape paintings and portraits adorn numerous homes around Mill Bank and much further afield.

Mac describes this self-portrait from the sixties as “*a new me trying to climb out of the old me*”. He has real concerns about the role of AI in art, fearing its distraction from raw creativity. He has always prized drawing as a vital foundation for artists, and particularly admires the work of Caravaggio, Van Gogh, and Picasso.

Keith Kemp, stained-glass maker

In 1985, I became a “mature” apprentice learning the craft of stained glass. Most of my work then was by private commission, though in the 80s and 90s, interest from the Middle East led to panels for a palace in Oman, and a pair of 4 metre dragons for a Chinese restaurant in Muscat.

Church windows have been a small but important part of my work including the church at Winster in Derbyshire (pictured). As time went on, work focussed more on restoration and I was privileged to assist The York Glaziers Trust in the renovation of the 700 year old west window of the York Minster.

It has been a varied and rewarding 40 years, and although officially retired, I occasionally make panels for family and friends.

Sadly, Heritage Crafts, who monitor traditional craft skills in the UK, have recently added “the making and restoration of historic stained glass” to their endangered crafts list’.



From Revd Jeanette

Greetings from St Mary's Church

On the outskirts of the village, the church is busy getting ready for Advent. That's Advent, not Christmas....not yet anyway.

As children, and some adults, open their Advent calendars on December 1st, so the new church's year begins, and we too begin counting down. Each Sunday in Advent reflects a different theme: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love.

It is a time of preparation, of excited anticipation as we wait for the long promised light to come and lighten our darkness. I am of course speaking about the baby who will be born in a stable and change our world forever.

As we prepare our houses for the festive season, so we prepare our hearts and minds to receive the greatest gift of all.....LOVE.

There is a service at St Mary's on the first Sunday of the month. We next meet on Sunday 7th December at 10am. It's a chance to begin our watching and waiting together.

There is a whole raft of things going on at the Community centre that shares our building in the run up to Christmas, including Christmas movies and Carol singing.

We next meet in church for our Crib Service on Christmas Eve at 6.30pm. A chance to tell the Christmas story, sing carols, celebrate & have fun whilst remembering 'the reason for the season'.

We are working hand in hand with the community centre to create a welcoming, warm space that can be a place of connection. Where hands can be extended in hospitality & love.

May I finish by offering my favourite blessing to each and every one of you:

May the eagerness of the shepherds
the joy of the angels,
the perseverance of the Wise men,
the obedience of Mary & Joseph,
and the peace of the Christ child
be yours this Christmas time and
always. Amen.

Happy Christmas everyone!
xx Revd Jeanette



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