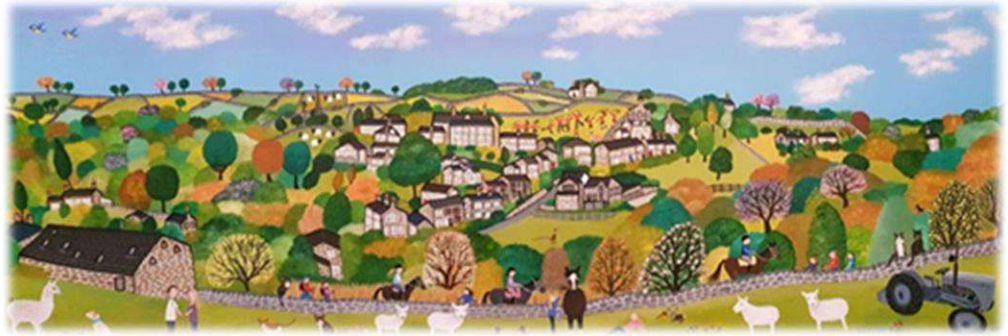


Mill Bank & Cottonstones Newsletter

Spring 2026



Incinerator victory for campaigners

The threat to health from a proposed waste incinerator at Sowerby Bridge has finally been removed. The Belmont Waste Transfer site in Sowerby Bridge has been taken over by a new company, Ellete Waste Ltd. The new company has said that the incinerator will be removed from the site, and added in a statement:

“We wish to make it absolutely clear that Ellete Waste Ltd has no intention of operating an incinerator at the Belmont site or any other site it currently owns.”

This victory for the campaigners comes after years of dogged resistance, public protest, inexplicable action by the council to approve the incinerator operation in the face of evidence of the risks to health, and expensive legal actions. Even a government planning inspector thought it was a bad idea.

This lengthy conflict remains a huge puzzle for many. Why would the council even consider an operating permit for a waste incinerator in a deep valley, so close to people’s homes and schools, in the face of concerted local opposition? Why were the crucial decisions left in the hands of council officers, rather than elected councillors?

The costs of this dispute are both financial and human. Members of the group who have opposed the incinerator have given endless time, money and expertise to achieve this outcome, and we all owe them our thanks.

Holding Back the Waters

Once upon a time, Cottonstones folk lived in tranquil bliss around the calm waters of their mill pond. Friendly hens laid every day, the laundry was hung out to dry, and only the odd squabble amongst the ducks disturbed the peace. Until an ominous trickle of water was spotted, leaking from the mill pond. It wasn’t long before the dangers were



identified by the council, and a full-scale repair was underway. Work is now well advanced, with a new spillway nearly finished before the area is reinstated. Pools have been left to accommodate toads for their annual mating migration.



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

<https://www.millbankvillage.co.uk/> Mill Bank Chat **WhatsApp:** ask Philippa, 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



Writer and children's book illustrator Chris Mould, with Mill Bank writer Graeme Hall and novelist Stephanie Power talking to Claire Murray about their writing.

A huge thanks to all who came along to support the Writers Event on 21st February in the community centre. We had a full house upstairs, beautiful live guitar music on entry, played by Michael Beazley, delicious wine donated by Ray (Ripponden Wine Co), a brilliant team of happy helpers, and a highly entertaining and insightful panel of very talented writers and illustrators.

Apart from having a great evening, we raised much needed awareness and funds (a whopping £275) and made some lovely new friends who want to help us too. Personally, it lifted my spirits enormously to see 37 people come together on a rainy night in February in our community centre to hear the authors read from their books, discuss their creative practices, and share thoughts with such a friendly crowd.

I'll be forever grateful to our writers, Chris Mould, Graeme Hall and Stephanie Power, for giving their time generously, for entertaining us heartily, and for being great panelists. We've heard such a lot of very positive feedback from this event, that more cultural events must surely follow.

Big thanks also go to...

It may have been a quiet start to year at the community centre, but we were bowled over by the kindness of a individuals and organisations who have made generous donations. These will enable us to pay the community centre bills and keep going during 2026, and are deeply appreciated by everyone involved.

Coming Up...

Spring is most certainly on its way now and the warmer months will mean we see more of our friends and neighbours in the village. More events are in the pipeline, but for now...

- Quiz night **SATURDAY March 28th**, 7.30-9.30, hosted by Paddy Walker. Prizes, fun and maybe a couple of questions about AI and bees!
- Committee meeting - 19 March, 7pm, all welcome.
- Churchyard spring clear-up - volunteer outdoors to help clear weeds and brambles, likely to be a dry day in April but date tbc.
- Social & Games Nights - starting up regularly in July again with Fiona Peach. Please contact us if you're interested in us opening the games room before July.

Keep up to date on the website events page, Facebook page, or noticeboards in the village and church.

Get Involved...

Everyone is welcome. It really is that simple, and we'd love to see more of you at the centre this year. You can...

- Rent the room (only £25 per half day) for a private event - a birthday party, christening, family get together, baby shower...
- Rent a room for a public event - host your own fundraiser, charity event, cultural event, craft fair, exhibition, bingo, jumble sale...
- Come along to one of our quiz or games nights - always a different host, prizes...
- Volunteer - come along and help out at one of our events. We would very much appreciate your help!

Every little gesture really does help us - from popping up a poster on the noticeboard, to making a pot of tea for a visitor to the centre, or simply just turning up to an event. If you're interested to see what we're doing, come along and have a chat over a cuppa.

Claire, Chair, Cottonstones Community Centre

Hire the space contact.cottonstones@gmail.com

Drop us a line at contact.cottonstones@gmail.com or message the [Cottonstones Community Centre](#)

Spring

What's On?

Month	Event	Date	Venue	Contact details
March	Book Group	Thurs March 26		johnanderson48@icloud.com
	Quiz night, hosted by Paddy Walker.	Sat March 28th, 7.30-9.30	Cottonstones Community Centre	
April	St Mary's Cottonstones Easter service	Sun 5 th April	St Mary's Church	
	School re-opens Summer Term	Mon 13 th April		
	Talk on Mill Bank & Cottonstones by Ruth Beazley	Tues 14 April, 7.30pm	Ryburn Valley History Society	rhbeazley@gmail.com or 07753 748482
	Book Group	Thurs, April 30, 2026		johnanderson48@icloud.com
	School half term	Friday 22 nd May		
May	Book Group	Thurs May 28, 2026		johnanderson48@icloud.com
June	School reopens	Mon 1 st June		
	Book Group	Thurs June 25, 2026		johnanderson48@icloud.com
	St Mary's PTFA Owl Hunt	Sat 27 th June		

Around the Village

The village is waking up to Spring with some beautiful displays of spring flowers. With various repairs and improvements made last year, and the winter and spring tidy up sessions, the village is looking well. Thank you to all those who came out to help tidy up and to Linda for her organisation.

Quickline's full-fibre broadband is now being connected to homes around the village. Openreach is also planning to offer similar services later this year, with the promise of much greater speed at less cost. Other providers are available of course! The verges on Birk's Lane are slowly overgrowing the road with beech, holly and birch, making it tricky for walkers and drivers alike.

We'll contact the council about this and ask them to take action.

You probably know already what the Mill Bank Group does around the village – looking after the public spaces, organising repairs, contacting the council & utility companies, running the website, social media, the newsletter, the Christmas lights, and much more.

But we will be asking you soon on our WhatsApp page to let us know about the things that are most important to you. Please do take part – your thoughts are genuinely important to keep the group moving in the right direction.

Winter on WhatsApp

January can be a tough month, and so Jane's timely advert for free counselling was well-timed, especially after those warm family Christmas get togethers that get close to bare knuckle fighting after the second bottle of wine.

To work off the Christmas pudding, and for all those fed up with machines doing the laundry after Christmas, Carole's dolly tubs were up for sale. Younger readers may need to look this up, but they are fully weatherproof, and ideal for those winter days when you love working outside in the drizzle. And great for a full body work out too.

Spring cleaning was in the air too, and the spell checker's quirks were exposed when Pia asked for recommendations for someone to clean her chimney *flute*. Imagine the village orchestra if all our chimneys had flutes.

The village went all academic one day, with a survey on the 'psychological origins of mate-guarding behaviours', which lots of folk found interesting. For intellectual stimulation it certainly beat Evri's missing parcels.

We had a debate on how to react to noisy young people on the street, revealing a variety of attitudes, from tolerant understanding of youthful spirits to Having a Firm Word. What a relief that no one called for the re-introduction of the stocks, or deportation to Huddersfield- it just shows what a civilised lot we are.

Miriam reminded us that 11th Jan is the first day the sun is seen in Greenland (to be fair, there had been very few sightings of the sun in Mill Bank for months too); and that the first Sunday after Epiphany is Plough Sunday, when we should be blessing our ploughs. Not so easy in sheep territory.

Fiona continues to harass the council's chatbot with enquiries from 2 thousand miles away, and our much-missed Gail has now opened a branch of the Mill Bank Group in Malta, sending a picture of a bag of Maltesers to confirm what we hope will be just their temporary overseas address. Perhaps we could take our offshore banking there and make squillions to keep the Community Centre open?

From Councillor Leah Webster

Local Elections will take place on 7th May. It's been a pleasure to work with residents in the Mill Bank area over the last two years, and to represent you at the Council.

I'd like to add a special thank you to all the volunteers who look after the villages and the Community Centre at Cottonstones. Working closely together has made it much easier to understand what local people are concerned about, to find solutions to problems, and even extra funding to help with new initiatives. Whether it's about gritting the roads, sorting out new playground equipment, or opposing the incinerator, it always feels as if we are on the same page.

I hope to be re-elected in May to continue this work and this time, I will be standing as an independent councillor. But if I am not re-elected, I just want to thank everyone and say that I'm proud of what we have achieved together and wish you the very best for the future.

Cllr Webster's next surgery will be held at Cottonstones Community Centre on Saturday 28th March 10-11.30am. Come for a coffee and to discuss any council-related issues you want to raise.



Maid To Sparkle cleaning services. Contact Verity on 07554 694323

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.

The History Group

The huge change that took place in the villages of Mill Bank and Cottonstones in the 20th Century is the topic for Ruth Beazley's talk to the Ryburn Valley History Society on Tuesday 14th April 7.30 at the Conservative Club Ripponden. All welcome.

The talk will be illustrated with photographs and stories told by the thirty people who contributed to the book, published last year. The book 'Mill Bank and Cottonstones' Stories for the 20th Century' is available from Ruth (07753748482) by post or collect.

The interviews undertaken to collect all the stories are now being edited and adapted for publication on the Mill Bank website www.millbankvillage.co.uk, to be published by the end of the year.

More work is being to identify those buried in the graves at St Mary's and the Mill Bank Methodist garden and it is hoped this will also be published soon on both St Mary's Church and the village websites.



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Village celebrity brings home top award



Congratulations to Tadi and Fran for this prestigious Crufts first-in-class award.



Thanks to Richard for this shot of a grey squirrel. Has anyone seen red squirrels in our corner of Yorkshire? The official 'red squirrel map' shows our nearest ones are at Barnsley!

Toad Heroes with Buckets

The workers at Cottonstones repairing the mill dam are clearly good at their jobs and looking forward to completing the task before they make good the surrounding area and refill the pond.

But they are also amongst the first to turn out in all weathers in the evening with their hi-vis and buckets, helping to protect the toads as they migrate across the road for their mating season. Danny, one of the workers, must lay claim to a prize for collecting over one hundred males in one evening.

According to Charlotte the other big numbers so far are: 564 live toads saved (503 males, 61 females), 80 dead toads, 74 live frogs, 16 dead frogs, and 1 live newt! Thank you to all toad patrollers for protecting our wildlife.

St Mary's School

St. Mary's is as busy as ever, and children have been out and about more often in the Spring sunshine.

You might have seen Year 5 undergoing their 'bikeability' sessions around the village, which includes road safety training. Class 1 enjoyed an expedition as they explored the village to learn about different types of housing.



There has been lots of interest in St Mary's recently and the school will be welcoming some new friends after the Easter holiday.

There are still have places in most year groups so if you know anyone who would like to come and see our small but very friendly school, they should get in touch. Tel 01422823353, or email to admin@st-marys.calderdale.sch.uk.



World Book Day stimulated some imaginative and unusual forms of 'extreme reading'.

Mind, Body & Home

Julia's keep fit class at St Mary's has now ceased, though her classes continue at Stones.

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.

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.



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Location - E Mill, Dean Clough

Sam Reynolds – plumber, gas engineer, and heat pump engineer. **07703 650063**

Dan Annison - help with home repairs or maintenance, and window cleaning by hand with ladders. **07794 169139**

Women – the Community Makers of Mill Bank

It was International Women's Day on 8th March, and according to the United Nations, it's usually the world's women who build communities – they organise, create relationships, and foster cooperation. Perhaps their studies began in Mill Bank, which has plenty of examples from history. The tradition continues to this day, when our Councillor, Vicar, Headteacher and the leaders of our village community groups have been mostly women too.

In the 19th century, the Hadwen family owned Kebroyd Mills, where two thirds of the population worked. It was the two daughters, Ellen and Eliza Hadwen, whose initiative and money helped build St Mary's Church, run a 'Dame School' for mill workers' children at Aufhole and fund the building of St Mary's School. In the 20th century, during the two world wars, women stepped up to fill jobs originally done by men and during the hard times that followed the bankruptcy of Kebroyd Mills, the women of the village found alternative work and income. The same women still managed to find food for their families.

They knew how to socialise too. But contrast these two styles from the 19th and 20th centuries. On the left, a tea party held by the Hadwens for 'ladies of the village' and on the right, women of the Mothers Union gathered at St Mary's Church in the 50s for an outing.



From the posed elegance of the 19th century to the formidable post-war women of the village who also rose to the challenges of their era.



Sometimes, it was generosity and kindness that stood out and made a difference to the lives of individuals in the village. Mrs Beevers ran the post Office and shop in the 1950s. She also looked out for a farm hand who had a disability and was badly treated by his landlord. First hand local accounts suggest that he would not have survived without her. She was considered the 'heart' of the community. Mrs Beevers is seen here with her friend Mr Fishlock.

Later in the 60's, when the village fell into dereliction, the council began the process of demolishing the cottages, many of which were deemed unfit for habitation. June Hall (with Ernest, her better-known husband) organised the local Community Group (mainly women) to undertake an inventory of the village. It's hard to believe, but in 1970, this identified just 27 houses with indoor toilets. She and her committee fought to stop the second wave of demolition which would have closed the school - and they fought on until the area was recognised as a Conservation Area in 1976.



So, to borrow the old joke about the Romans' contribution to Britain: what have women ever done for Mill Bank? Apart from recovery from economic disaster, the education of children and spiritual care; preventing the demolition of the village, safeguarding the vulnerable, leading local politics, organising the renovation of the village, and running community groups? Well, we could mention raising families and making homes too. Quite a day's work.

It's Mela Bongu and Ciao from Our Foreign Correspondent...

Fiona and Gail left us for the delights of the Mediterranean last Christmas, but we haven't forgotten them. Although Fiona has been around and about a bit, she is still taken by the influence of different cultures over the ages and the more recent impact of globalisation on Malta.

"It's a crazy mix of familiarity, British plug sockets, English language, right hand drive cars, red post boxes and phone boxes, and M&S for sausages and socks. And yet... unmistakably the footprints of the Arabs, the sheer audacity, confidence and benevolence of the Knights Hospitallers which turned no water and no soil into this, and the reminders all the time that it's southern Europe and they do things differently here. Including having a dog poo bin on every corner.

The girls on the checkout at our posh supermarket are Nepalese, the 'lads' arriving with the tradesmen are sub-Saharan, the Bolt taxis and Volt scooter deliveries are driven by Indian and Sri Lankans, there are tiny Thais who are kindly to this grey haired farang (I was offered the old person seat on the bus a few days ago by a very sweet girl who called me ma'am). Our servers at restaurants are Georgian, Portuguese.

The young Maltese go and don't seem in a hurry to come back: everyone worries about who will tend the tiny plots of land in the future. Meanwhile everywhere you go there are traffic jams, cranes and the sounds of jack hammers beating away at the limestone bedrock and the trucks are driving around piled high with materials to modernise the mid-century Maltese homes and make them Mid-Century Modern.

And in all of this, we are blessed with the warmth, generosity and good-natured love of life of our wonderful Maltese friends and neighbours".

Book Group

In January, 10 of us met to discuss *The History Man* by Malcolm Bradbury - a biting satire about university life in the 70's, and of the era's fascination with sociology, with its growing body of left-wing - and sometimes intolerant disciples. It deals with themes of open marriage and the sexual boundaries (or lack of them) between teachers and students.

We wondered how students nowadays see university life, guessing that loan debts and the search for jobs might be more of an issue than raising hell. In summary a very entertaining book of a world and period now forgotten perhaps.

For fun in February, we watched a classic comedy film - *Groundhog Day* - and in March we'll be discussing *Post Captain* by Patrick O'Brian, set during the Napoleonic wars. There's plenty of variety! Come and join us if you're tempted - contact John johnanderson48@icloud.com



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