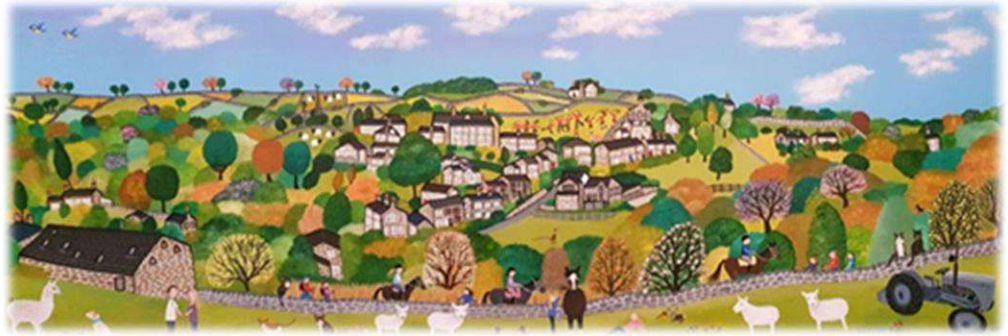


Mill Bank & Cottonstones Newsletter

Summer 2026



The Rescue of St Mary's Church Graveyard

What should a community do when its old graveyard becomes so overgrown that brambles overgrow the graves to head height, saplings undermine the headstones, and you can no longer reach many of the graves? Records show that nearly three thousand people have been interred at St Mary's since it opened in 1848, and although not yet closed, new plots are no longer available. The relatives of many local people have been buried there.

For decades, nature has been slowly reclaiming the land, on a certain path to dereliction by neglect. Families could no longer reach relatives' graves, or enjoy the peace of the place, sheltered by the reviving church. Although it is the responsibility of families to tend the graves themselves, the realities of our mobile population often make this difficult or impossible.

Recently, a group of local friends has taken action to bring the graveyard back to a better state, cutting back some of the invasive plants, removing the saplings that threaten the headstones, and uncovering others long-buried in the undergrowth. Their initiative has been warmly welcomed and matches the active revival of the community centre this year, and the growing Church congregation.

There are sensitive issues too, about protecting flora and fauna, and avoiding the use of pesticides. Though not roosting in the belfry, there are bats, an owl and diverse insect species.

The Mill Bank Group will be working with the Community Centre committee to explore ways of encouraging volunteers to take an interest in looking after the graves that are not tended.



*Charles, Stuart,
Nick, David,
Nick, Andrew,
David and
David*

There is a remarkable level of interest in very-local history, and the village History Group is also busy in the graveyard. Building on original records researched by Jim Skelsey and David Hutton, work is currently underway to create a digital record of the names on the headstone and to match these with photographs as more become accessible from the clearing work. See more in the History Group news.



*As the work
progresses,
many graves,
unseen for
decades, are
being
uncovered
and made
accessible.*

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

Around the Village

The growing conditions in May were perfect, including for weeds and grass between the paving stones and setts. In the absence of reliable street care by the council, volunteers set about clearing the worst areas. It's tough work, there are few volunteers, and it's hard to keep up with the work during the growing months.

There are two possibilities for improving maintenance on the streets. One is to engage with the new council to find out more precisely about their schedules and commitments to look after the pavements, steps and snickets. Once this is clearer – and we would aim to get something in writing – the Mill Bank Group can consider both the contribution of volunteers, and the scope for hiring in some extra help to keep on top of the weeds.



The School railings with fragrant lavender and a coat of paint.



A few villagers came together on the weekend of 15th & 16th May to take part in a community tidy-up event aimed at improving public spaces and creating a cleaner, more welcoming environment for everyone.



One of the harder jobs-weeding the snicket

Linda Wilson, Treasurer of the Mill Bank Group, writes:

Even though we were short of volunteers, we still managed to focus on one area and transform it by weeding, cutting back the overgrowth trees and bushes.

Thank you also to the volunteers who helped to take all the green waste to the tip.

I am planning to hold another community tidy-up event in early July and it would be lovely to see more volunteers to help clean and improve areas in our village. Please look out for the posters and messages on our WhatsApp for exact dates

Summer on WhatsApp

This quarter's story on WhatsApp is, as usual, full of innocent creatures with four legs or wings. From the usual lost dogs, through bees in the eaves, to rats in the shed, and moles under the lawn. There was even a salmon favorelle cockerel wandering around Nic's house. Perhaps the high point for visual beauty was Sue's Painted Lady (of the butterfly variety).

From the bushes to the ponds, and Miriam's diplomatic mission to Germany brought home fraternal greetings from the toads in Bramsche, Germany to the Cottonstones Toads (a similar rescue mission is carried out there apparently). Were translators needed?

Verity wanted to know if anyone had anyone had used a mole man? She didn't say what for, but lots of people knew just who to ask. There was no photo, but AI was happy to make a guess.



From Ryburn's Councillors

Local Elections took place on 7th May, and returned three councillors for Ryburn Ward:

Cllr Leah Webster (Independent)

Cllr Alex Greenwood (Reform UK)

Cllr Christopher John Green MBE (Reform UK)

The change of overall control of the Council that took place following the May elections means that some policies are under review and may change.

In Ryburn, 2 Conservative councillors lost their seats at the council and were replaced by members of the Reform Party, Councillors Greenwood and Green MBE.

From Councillor Leah Webster

Thank you so much to those who supported me at the election in May, and I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to continue working with you for the next four years. I'll be focusing more of my time tackling the issues that concern you individually, and building on links with Ryburn communities, including the Mill Bank Group. I will keep going with regular news bulletins so you can always see what I am working on and contact me easily.

I will continue to hold surgeries at Cottonstones Community Centre on Saturday mornings 10-11.30. No appointment needed - just come for a coffee and to discuss any issues you want to raise. **Next date 8th August.**

From Councillor Alex Greenwood

Hello. I am one of your new ward councillors. I'm delighted to be writing for the newsletter and, more importantly, to learn what matters most to you in Mill Bank and Cottonstones.

Over the next few months, I'll be picking up local issues, from highways and drainage to footpaths, bins, planning concerns and the mysterious small irritations that make Mill Bank life harder than it needs to be. Not every problem has a quick fix, and some will require extraordinary persistence, but I will always try to give residents a clear answer and follow things through.
councillor.agreenwood@calderdale.gov.uk

An invitation to contribute was also sent to Cllr Green.

The History Group

Ruth writes:

Many thanks to volunteers from the History Group who have been working to develop the Mill Bank village and St Mary's Church websites.

Over twenty interviews have been edited with photographs for two new pages on the village website which will be published before the end of the year. These interviews tell fascinating stories of those who grew up and lived in Mill Bank in the first half of the last century.

Details of the nearly three thousand people interred in St Mary's Graveyard are also being documented with a chart. It is hoped these will be available in the Church as well as the web page for people seeking information about relatives.

Sowerby Bridge Library has expressed an interest in holding an exhibition about Mill Bank and Cottonstones in October where the new books will be sold. They will also be available at Book Corner in the Piece Hall, in the near future as well as Book Case in Hebden Bridge.

Book Group

John Anderson writes:

The Book Group beats on "through fair weather and foul". (We read the swashbuckling "Post Captain" by Patrick O'Brian in April)

We now have books planned until September: "A Woman in Berlin", the harrowing story of a woman who survived the horrors of Berlin at the end of the war in 1945.

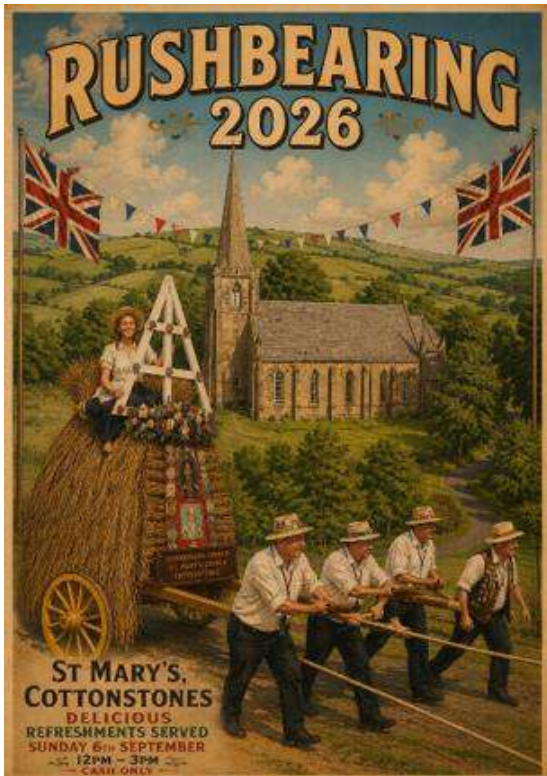
"Elizabeth is Missing", a story some may have seen with Glenda Jackson, and "The Summer of the Bear", a story based in the Highlands.

Plus Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury in September.

Please come and join our lively group.

Contact John Anderson 07934 512861

What's On?



Rushbearing 2026

Rushbearing 2026 will be celebrated once again at St Mary's Church, Cottonstones on 6th September.

Following the arrival of the cart at around 1.10pm, Revd Jeanette will receive the rushes and a short service of celebration will be held.

Refreshments and hot and cold drinks will be served between 12pm and 3pm. Volunteers are sought to help with baking and sandwich making, and to serve our hungry and thirsty guests on the day.

Please get in touch with Fiona (Peach) if you would like to help out. All proceeds from sales go towards keeping the community centre open for all.

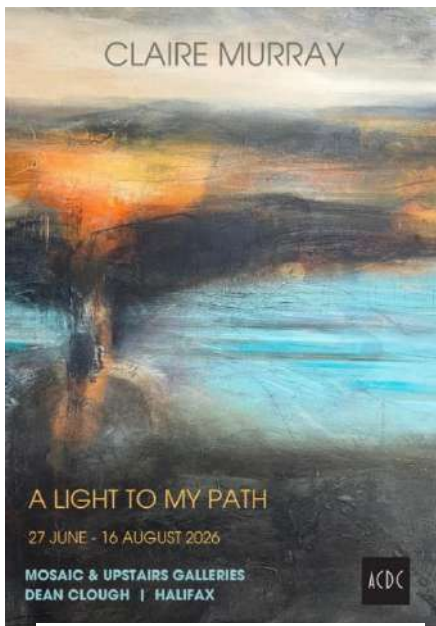


Thirty different studios and venues in Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd and Heptonstall will open to visitors for this three-day event.

Over 130 artists will be sharing their work, including 16 new members and some new studios for 2026.

All venues will be open 10.30am to 5pm on Friday 3rd, Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th July, with the exception of the Methodist Church, which will open a bit later at 11.30am on Sunday.

<https://hebdenbridgeopenstudios.org/>



Claire's new exhibition opens at Dean Clough on 27th June



WAINSGATE CHAPEL 2026

Music events hosted by [Dave Nelson](#) at Wainsgate Chapel (Old Town, Hebden Bridge HX7 8SU) a lovely old chapel with a near-perfect acoustic.

Sunday 12 July 3pm - Mazaika

A unique take on Russian Folk and Gypsy, Classical, Opera, Tango, Gypsy Jazz, Latin, Italian, French Chanson, Balkan Beat, Klezmer and evocative original material inspired by all of the above.

Sunday 26 July 4pm - You Are Wolf

You Are Wolf is the alt-folk project of award-winning British composer, vocalist, author and recent inhabitant of Hebden Bridge, Kerry Andrew.

Village Celebrates Mary and Derek's Wedding Anniversary



Mary and Derek Higgins celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary on 26th May. Their daughter Katie chose this photo of the couple at St Mary's Cottonstones in 1962. Following the ceremony, they had a honeymoon at Blackpool before returning to live on Nathan Lane.

They married as teenagers at 17 and 18 years respectively, both starting their working lives in Sowerby Bridge where they first met. For a while, Mary also worked at the Essoldo Cinema, and Derek would take her home on his motorcycle.

The number of anniversary congratulations almost blew the village WhatsApp fuses. But this was no surprise and only reflects the love and respect of a village that knows them for legendary kindness and their love for Mill Bank.

Generations of children at St Mary's will remember them fondly from their years looking after the children and keeping the school in good order. Others will be grateful for their warm welcome to newcomers, and for setting a standard of care for their neighbours that many communities can only dream about.

We wish them many more happy anniversaries to come.

Cottonstones Community Centre

Quiz nights continue to thrive. Look out on the Mill Bank Chat on WhatsApp for news of Games Night and further quizzes. A music night is planned for the late summer.

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!
contact.cottonstones@gmail.com or message the Cottonstones Community Centre



Are you off on holiday, but not sure which way to turn?

John Anderson has lots of maps and walking books for sale. Old maps are £1 each and modern ones £2-3 each. Literally hundreds for all areas of England/ Scotland/ Wales. **Call John on 07934 512861**

...and if you're staying in Mill Bank, don't forget the walking map for the Ryburn Valley and Mill Bank for local walks. On sale at the Community Centre.

Maid To Sparkle cleaning services.
Contact Verity on 07554 694323



Church News from Reverend Jeanette Roberts

Little thoughts....

At the back of the church at St Mary's, just under the gallery, are emblazoned the words; 'BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW'. They are there in gold for everyone to see, but I wonder how many of us ponder those words and wonder what they could mean?

It is a quote from Revelation 21:5 and is about God's ultimate restoration of creation. It is an enduring message of hope, signifying that all pain, sorrow and decay will be overcome.

We have certainly had to face some challenges & overcome obstacles in our little church just to keep going.

On the theme of 'renewal', we have just installed a new altar frontal. It was created for us by local artist Jane Pugh and reflects the nature of God in creation in the rural area we find ourselves. We also have an exact copy of the altar frontal which we would like to get the local community's help to embellish. That would be something we can all contribute to and be proud of. We will display it above those very words 'BEHOLD I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW' when it is completed. Watch this space for details as they say!!

We also had our Quinquennial Inspection (the church is inspected every 5 years or so to ensure its maintenance and viability as a sound and safe building). I'm pleased to report that the damage under the floor in the church is not as bad as first thought, which is a huge relief. However, the work to make the building 'water tight' may cost quite a bit of money so we may be fund raising in the near future.

You will see on the front page the wonderful work that is going on in the churchyard, for which we are eternally grateful. There also the ongoing efforts of our Community Centre too. These are all signs of renewal, of our beacon here in the village springing back into life. We have a long way to go but do please keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we try and build for the future and give the community a place it can be proud of.

From Miriam: Rose Sunday on 5th July. All welcome at the service – bring a rose.



Cottonstone Toads Pleased with Restoration

With repairs to the mill dam at Cottonstones completed, nature has wasted no time in restoring the banks and creating a peaceful home once again for much-loved amphibians.



Photo Claire Murray

Mind and Body

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

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.

Hot Weather Precautions

It's almost guaranteed that in the spell between the hot weather and newsletter deliveries, there will be rain and a cold spell, but just in case....here are few suggestions not always mentioned elsewhere:

Homemade Air Conditioning: Place a shallow bowl of ice or an ice pack directly in front of an electric fan to circulate chilled air.

Avoid excessive caffeine and alcohol, as they act as diuretics and can quickly dehydrate you.

Cool your pulse points and drop your body temperature quickly by applying damp, cool cloths or ice packs to your wrists, neck, and ankles.

Medication storage: Store heat-sensitive medicines below 25°C or in the fridge.

People in poor health are more vulnerable to heatstroke, which is a medical emergency. Look out for symptoms including a very high temperature, hot skin without sweating, fast breathing and a fast heartbeat, confusion and restlessness, seizure (fit) or even loss of consciousness.

Home Services

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**

Linda Wilson - **All Around the House**, for garden tidying, cleaning, dog walking, shopping, ironing, organisation of rooms, help with Airbnb's and some soft furnishings.

Contact Linda on 07341443989 / looby24@outlook.com for further information or quotation



Servicing and Repairs by Rio

Baking from Liz, locally based in Soyland Town, and using top quality ingredients, eggs from her own pet hens, and home churned butter. Vegans catered for. Sweet or savoury, she can produce bakes for your needs. Call 07925567790



Services

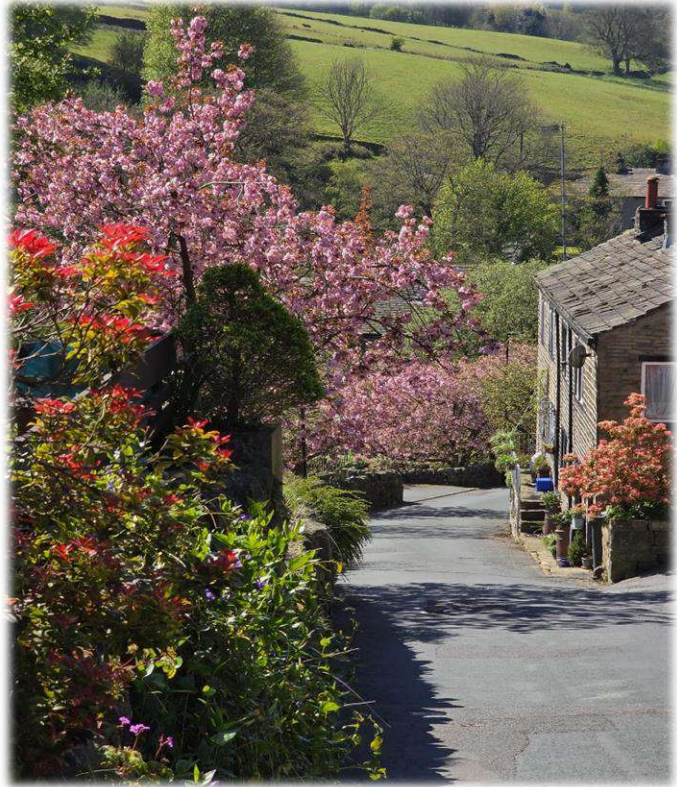
- Builder gel
- Acrylic
- Lash lift & tint
- Brow wax & tint
- Gel Toes

Contact ~ 07597326240
Instagram ~ @ca_beauty02
Facebook ~ @eabeauty02
Location ~ E Mil, Dean Clough



No smoke and no fire, but it was a tricky task for the Fire and Rescue Service to take off a chimney pot that had blown over in a gale and threatened to fall on to the road.

The turntable appliance came promptly from Bradford, and the crew demonstrated great skill in finding a way through telephone wires and other obstacles to bring down the chimney pot safely.



The height of Spring on Lower Mill Bank Road.

Mill Bank Group Survey

In July, the Mill Bank Group will be asking for your help to carry out a survey of its activities and asking you to say if these matter to you. It's not easy for community groups to get feedback on their work, but it's important so that everyone is clear about the group's direction and priorities.

The survey is being tested currently and will only take a few minutes to complete. So please do take part when it appears on WhatsApp and let us know what's what!



**Sunside
Service
Station Ltd**

Family owned and run for 43 years.
Servicing and repairs by qualified technicians.
MOT testing and servicing and repairs to all makes of vehicle.
Free collection and delivery. Courtesy cars available.

SPECIALIST SERVICES
Air conditioning service & repairs
Hunter 4 wheel alignment
Electronic fault diagnostics
Engine management reconfiguration tuning

SUNSIDE SERVICE STATION LTD
SADDLEWORTH ROAD, GREETLAND, HALIFAX, HX4 8LZ
OPEN 8AM - 5PM MONDAY TO FRIDAY

sales@sunsideservicestation.com 01422 373127
SUNSIDESERVICESTATION.COM



Accommodation near Mill Bank. Great for visiting relatives or friends.



Phone Ruth on 07968 200735

airbnb.com/h/moorshawhead and
airbnb.com/h/aoldpiggery