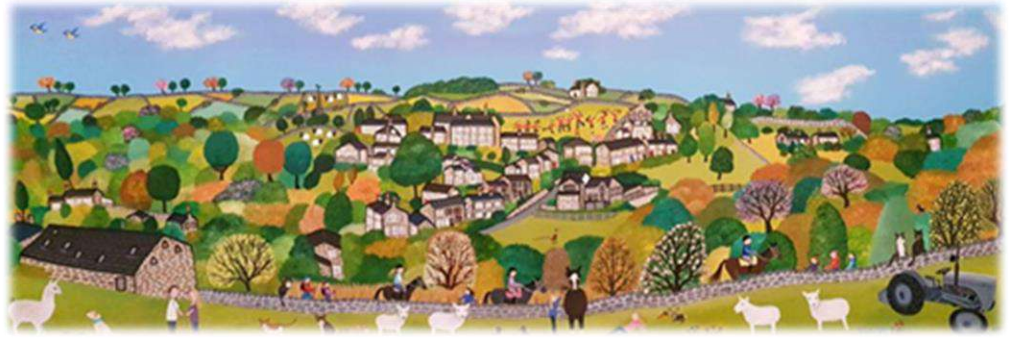


Mill Bank & Cottonstones Newsletter

Autumn 2026



The Joy of Rushbearing

This year's Rushbearing Festival took place in glorious weather, and as usual, it was happily celebrated at St Mary's Church Cottonstones and at Mill Bank.

The Rush Maiden atop the 16-foot-high rush cart ducked to pass under this summer's abundant foliage in the lanes, waved and smiled; the fiddlers fiddled, the accordions...accorded..., and the Ryburn Longsword Dancers danced with all their usual grace and perfect rhythm.

The sixty men hauling the cart were handsome in pristine white shirts, clogs, Panama hats, (and Ray-Bans). Some splendid beards were on show too. Small children on scooters or in carts kept pace noisily in the lanes.

Their arrival at St Mary's Church was (apart from the Ray-Bans) a perfect picture from ages past. The cart-haulers, musicians and dancers were welcomed with refreshments from the ovens of the village's finest bakers.

In the church, Reverend Jeanette led the singing of Jerusalem, and received the rushes from Gaz Baigent, who led the Rush Cart procession, resplendent in his top hat. The Rushbearing festival dates back centuries, when church floors were mainly stone flags or just beaten earth. At the end of the summer, fresh rushes were brought to replace the old floor coverings. The festival was revived for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 and has become a symbolic event for the sheer fun and pleasure of the rituals, the music, dancing, and refreshments at the pubs on the route.

From the top: the Rushcart approaching Cottonstones; Gaz Baigent presenting the rushes to Reverend Jeanette: The Rush Maiden: Irene, Sue, Jane, Cathy, Jenny, Ellie, Fiona and Gail, some of the organisers at the Cottonstones Community Centre.



What's On?

September			
22 nd	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
29 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
October			
4 th	Service (Pet Blessing)	10.00am	St Mary's Church
10 th	French Day with Ellie	TBA	Community Centre
13 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
20 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
27 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
November			
1 st	Church Service	10.00am	St Mary's Church
3 rd	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
8 th	Remembrance Service	10.45	St Mary's Church
10 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
13 th	Wreath Making	1-4pm	Community Centre
17 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
24 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
29 th	Christmas Fair	11.00am	Lower Mill Bank
December			
1 st	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
6 th	Church Service	10.00am	St Mary's Church
8 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	Community Centre
12 th	Quiz and AGM	7 for 7.30pm	Community Centre
19 th	Carols and mulled wine	7pm -9pm	Community Centre
24 th	Christmas Eve Service	6.30pm	St Mary's Church
29 th	Anne Lister Dancers	7.30pm	St Mary's Church

This year's Christmas Fair will be on Sunday 29th November, on Lower Mill Road. There will be all sorts of craftwork, ceramics, local honey, handmade soaps, village history books, hot food, mulled wine and much more. It's perfect timing for a bit of Christmas shopping, and a very sociable event too. Linda Wilson takes the reins this year to manage the Fair, so if you'd like to take part, contact her on WhatsApp or **07341 443989**.



Newsletter: contact -michaelbeazley40@gmail.com / 07756822995 **Website:** <https://www.millbankvillage.co.uk/> Mill Bank Chat **WhatsApp:** ask Phillippa, or Fran 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

Meeting with Councillors - a New Village Partnership?

In spite of volunteers' hard work over the years, the village footways have become choked with weeds, overdue repairs have been neglected, planning controls for the Conservation Area have been ignored or not enforced.

It's a far cry from the days when we were winning regular Yorkshire in Bloom gold awards. Community-minded volunteers just cannot take on the full extent of street care that the council once provided.

So we are looking forward to a visit this month from Councillor Hunt, (Cabinet member for Public Services) Councillor Greenwood (Ward Councillor) and Councillor Webster (Ward Councillor), to discuss the condition of the village, and to see if the Mill Bank Group can enter into a partnership with the council to improve the care of our handsome village.

We can do better if we understand each other's responsibilities in looking after the place, identify some priorities, and set out what we can and can't do as a voluntary group and a council.

We can make our case for a fair share of the resources available, agree on priorities, identify the level of council services that can be committed, and work out our respective roles.

If we know better where we stand – when the footways will be serviced, repairs made, the streets swept, and the gullies cleared - we can at least make better local plans with greater confidence.

That's the plan anyway! Please have your say on the WhatsApp Mill Bank Chat and let us know what you think.

From Councillor Alex Greenwood: I hope you have all had a lovely summer and enjoyed the good weather. My first three months as a ward councillor have involved a great deal of chasing. Some has been the usual ward work: potholes, speeding, parking, drainage, planning, road closures and access problems. Some has involved more determined digging where the first answer did not explain the problem.

The sheer number of temporary works and traffic restrictions across Ryburn is becoming absurd. Residents should not have to navigate one set of works after another without anybody considering the cumulative impact. I have been making stern representations and pressing for better coordination.

A lot of councillor work is invisible: emails, phone calls, finding the right person, asking the awkward follow-up question and asking it again. Quite often, the important bit is refusing to accept that "the system" is an answer.

I have also spent the summer getting to grips with my role as Chair of Calderdale's Audit Committee, looking at how decisions are made, how public money is spent and whether problems are being fixed.

There is plenty to sort out, and I am not one for leaving things half-explained.
Here's to a crisp autumn. Best wishes, Alex

From Councillor Leah Webster: It's been a busy few months across the ward. I've continued my weekly surgeries, including sessions at Cottonstones Community Centre, and supporting residents with a wide range of casework.

A significant amount of time has been spent on the M62 diversion. I've been gathering evidence of the impact on residents and raising concerns with National Highways and Calderdale Council. I'm pleased to share that National Highways have now agreed to split the works, increase signage to protect smaller roads from HGVs, and increase the workforce on site, all steps that should help reduce disruption and shorten the overall programme.

I'll be meeting with the Mill Bank committee in the coming weeks to discuss future projects and strengthen links with the council. As we move into autumn, I'll also be focusing on this year's Secret Santa project alongside my ongoing ward work and surgeries. Upcoming dates are Cottonstones Community Centre – 9 January

Wishing you a wonderful Autumn and please do reach out if you would like to discuss any concerns or issues.

The Kebroyd Bible

We are looking for some expert help to conserve the famous Kebroyd Bible, which is in a state of decay. Its wooden case at St Mary's Church has also been attacked by woodworm.

In 1903 there was a huge fire at Kebroyd Mills which destroyed most of two large buildings. A Bible was found in a cupboard miraculously unscathed by the flames. This was reported in the Halifax Courier and the Bishop of Wakefield came to see it.

The Bible was mounted in a glass fronted cabinet and displayed on the wall in the Board Room of the mill until it closed, and since then it has been in the keeping of St Mary's Church.

The Bible itself will need specialist repair, and the original cabinet may need to be replaced. If you are able to help with this project practically or by donation or have any suggestions, please get in touch.

Books for Sale

If you'd like to know more about local history the following books are for sale from Ruth Beazley 07753748482 rhbeazley@gmail.com

Mill Bank. The Story of a West Yorkshire Village. By Hazel Whiteley and Ruth Beazley £10

Mill Bank and Cottonstones. Stories from the 20th Century. By Ruth Beazley £12

Stansfield Mill. Home of the Triangle Mill Sisters. By Ruth Beazley £8

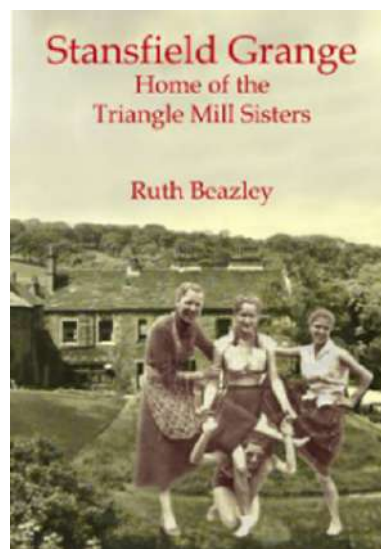
A Heritage Walk Guide around Cottonstones and Mill Bank £3

Local map. Available at the community centre £5. (Proceeds to the Community Centre)

The History Group

The Triangle Mill Sisters exhibition won a national prize from the Women's History Network when it was shown in Calderdale libraries in 2014. It was based on stories told to Ruth Beazley by women mill workers who lived in Stansfield Grange Triangle when it was a hostel and photographs supplied by Ted Fenton who married one of the hostel women.

As part of a Heritage Day, the talk and exhibition were presented again at St Mary's Community Centre on Saturday 12 September by Ruth and Janet Webster. On display were some of Ruth's original digital artwork where she used images of the mill workers and some of the stories that the women told embroidered on cloth. More information is available on the website www.stansfield-grange-triangle.co.uk.



Some fifty people came to the presentation and enjoyed tea and cakes. Afterwards, many chose to explore the church and some of the heritage artefacts, including the Church's stained glass windows. The Friends of St Mary's launched a new guide to the stained glass and memorial windows and their origins. This will be re-printed available for £3.

A reprint of the book *Stansfield Grange, Home of the Triangle Mill Sisters* is now available from Ruth. Proceeds from sales will go towards developing the Stansfield Grange website as Ruth has a great many photographs that were not good enough to publish but which AI could possible now enhance.

Cottonstones Community Centre

Firstly, a huge thank you from all the committee members to Claire Murray, who stepped down during the summer as our chair. Claire's extensive efforts in securing a future for the centre have ranged from organising our regular quiz nights, the very popular Spring Writer's Event, securing investment for the refurbishment of the upstairs kitchenette from a Ward Forum grant, working with Craig Oates and the members of De Warren lodge to fundraise for a new kettle, fridge and urn for the downstairs kitchen, creating the Book Nook, sourcing a table tennis table, donating furniture and many hours of clearing, cleaning, painting, and beautifying. We are delighted that Claire will remain an active member of the committee.

The new urn and fridge were put to good use in the newly painted kitchen on Rushbearing Sunday. The volunteers made it such a success, raising a wonderful £650. It was great to see the spread of sandwiches, cakes, sausage rolls and pasties so appreciated by all the cart pullers, maids, dancers and entourage.

Every penny of the money raised through fundraising events, donations and private hires goes straight back into keeping the centre open, and the next improvement project. In 2027 we are prioritising the refurbishment of the upstairs kitchenette. If you are a local tradesperson and can help with this project we would love to hear from you.

If you wish to hire a space on the run up to Christmas, please get in touch via the booking enquiry form at www.cottonstones-community-centre.com. At £25 a session, £50 for the day or £75 for a days whole centre hire, we are the perfect choice to bring people together which doesn't break the bank.

Finally, if you have ideas for events at the centre, or are interested in joining the team, or becoming our new chair, please contact Stuart, Sue or Fiona. More information about the role is on the website.

St Mary's Church

A New Website

Friends of St Mary's will soon launch a new church website. As well as information about service times, church news, baptisms and weddings, the website will include a wealth of material delving into the establishment and history of the building, interior ecclesiastic art, stained and memorial windows, the organs (past and present), previous incumbents and a complete history of St Mary's vicarage, Mill Bank.

If you have photographs, materials from past church services, memorabilia, memories and any and all items related to the history of the church which you would like to share please contact the friends via:

Facebook: St. Mary's Church Cottonstones and Mill Bank
email: ryburnbenefice3@gmail.com

Churchyard Restoration Continues

What a difference six volunteers have made to the Churchyard this summer. All the heavy clearing work has now been completed, the graves are now accessible everywhere, and local volunteers are now organising to pick up the ongoing maintenance responsibilities. Their aim is to keep it accessible and prevent it from becoming overgrown; protect its character and make it a friendly habitat for plants and all creatures great and small. Well... perhaps the smaller ones anyway.

Looking after an old churchyard isn't straightforward, and there are always a few tricky questions – such as how far you should clean the memorials and headstones to keep the inscriptions legible.

If you like the idea of sociable gardening in the churchyard, the churchyard volunteer group will be very pleased to see you. It's relaxed and informal – the aim is to make the work a pleasure. There is a handbook, some tools are available too, and the heavy work will be done by contractors.

If this sounds like you, please get in touch with **David Hutton 07368 152237**

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.

Book Group

The group continues to plumb the depths of interesting books out in book land. Last months was "The Summer of the Bear" by Bella Pollen, a cross between "The Thirty-Nine Steps" and the "Famous Five" books and enjoyed by all the group. In September we are reading " Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury, particularly relevant as we hear that books are being physically destroyed to feed the great AI machine.

In the coming months we plan to read a Robert McFarlane and perhaps more non-fiction like "The Lighthouse Stephensons" by Bella Bathurst. We meet on the last Thursday of the month at 7.30 and all are welcome.

Contact John Anderson 07934 512861

Welcomes and Thank Yous

A warm welcome to you if you've recently arrived in the village. This newsletter comes to your door four times a year, and/or you can receive the digital version by adding your name to the list on the village website <https://www.millbankvillage.co.uk/>. The Mill Bank Chat WhatsApp is a great place to share thoughts, ask questions and find out what's happening. But for the real low down, make sure you have a dog and walk it a few times every day.

Thank you to Charles, Stuart, Nick, David, Nick, Andrew, and the two Davids, who have completed the major clearance work in the churchyard. To David Hutton, for stepping up to recruit volunteers to maintain the standard of care, and Kevin and Sue for updating accounts of the memorial inscriptions.

To our anonymous benefactor who continues to donate the top-quality printing of this newsletter, and to the company team member for the friendliest support you could ever hope for.

To the brilliant team at the Community Centre who are revitalising the place and giving it new purpose.

To Shane, who stopped to take care of a fatally injured cat and repatriate it with its owner.

To Fran for reuniting numerous lost creatures with their owners.

To all the volunteers who organise, budget, weed the pavements, bake cakes for events, and so much more.

Mill Bank and Cottonstones People

It's been fun to find out more about the village's artists and crafters this year. Now we are moving on to find out about people who volunteer. Why do they do it, and what do they achieve? Our first pen picture is of Les Patrick, an experienced worker at St Augustine's in Halifax, which supports refugees and people seeking asylum.

First, a few facts: people seeking asylum aren't allowed to work by law; can't claim benefits; can't travel; might live as a family in one room; receive less than £50 a week to live on for absolutely everything other than a roof over your head: that only 0.5% of the UK population is a refugee or seeking asylum; that it is not illegal to seek asylum here (or any of more than 80 countries signed up to the International Refugee Convention) no matter how you arrive on our shores or what paperwork you don't have.



"I first became aware of St Augustine's Centre Halifax (that supports people seeking asylum and new refugees in Calderdale) during Covid, when I worked at Opera North. Some of our performers gave a concert in the St Augustine's garden to people seeking asylum. It was such a special and moving thing. So in 2022 I became one of over 100 active volunteers".

"People often say it's a charitable thing to do, but for me it's so different. It was joyous even though people were trying to survive their worst of times. I have met the very best of people from over 70 countries, speaking over 50 different languages."

"People like A, one of the few women in Iran to have her own architectural practice, who had to flee with her life in a backpack when the regime targeted her for speaking publicly about women's rights. And S, an amazing tailor from Afghanistan, who was at risk of the death penalty for being gay. A doctor from Sudan, an electrician from Syria, a chef from Iraq, a farmer from Democratic Republic of Congo, children of all ages who were so excited to go to school in peace."

Les is full of praise for people in Calderdale – individuals and companies – who give support of all kinds to people who arrive here. They are grateful to be alive but have often lost so much to find sanctuary.

There are many opportunities to volunteer at St Augustine's Centre. Just visit the website and click the volunteering tab. <https://staugustinescentrehalifax.org.uk/>

Life on WhatsApp

A new support group has been set up for Evri victims, some of whom have been found staring at photos of doorsteps with glazed eyes or raving in the woods. Or if a group hasn't been set up, it certainly needs to be, with a focus on anger management. This might help the furious C too, who drove a round trip to the south coast without incident, only to fall to the "\$%&^! King Cross speed camera for a trifling few extra miles an hour over the limit.

At Rushbearing, the symbolic gift of clean rushes for the floor at St Mary's Church went down well with a rendering of Jerusalem, with its odd lyrics about Jesus visiting Glastonbury, Kebroyd, or some other Satanic Mill. Not very likely, but there was a quip from the back pews that the rushes would look more attractive on the floor than the wicked old floral carpet, even if it would be a bit trickier with the vacuum cleaner.

The Glorious Twelfth didn't bring many grouse to shoot in August, but there was a rash of ingenious solutions to the shortage of Solar Eclipse sunglasses. Kitchen colanders were turned out in force to project the exciting image onto cornflake packets. But it was Sally who said what many of us were thinking: "Was it just me or was anyone else expecting it to go darker?" Even eclipses just aren't what they used to be.

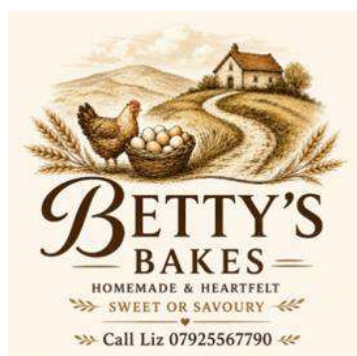
Local Services

Jaqui Barron at Mango Fox Design is taking commissions for portraits by Christmas, working from your photos. Fully mounted and framed, 16 x 16 inch or 16 x 23 inch framed. Contact Jaqui on Messenger, Face book, Instagram or directly at jaqui@mangofoxdesign.com. Book now for Christmas.



Maid To Sparkle cleaning services. Contact Verity on **07554 694323**

Baking from Liz, locally based in Soyland, and using top quality ingredients, eggs from her own hens, and home churned butter. Vegans catered for. Sweet or savoury, she can produce bakes for all your needs. Call **07925 567790**



Robert Stead, Dairyman, 07790 635913.

Milk, butter, eggs and orange juice delivered quietly to your Mill Bank door, Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. The milk is from a local family farm near Sowerby, where the cows graze outside for as long as the weather permits. The milk is, of course, in returnable, reuseable glass bottles.



Photo by Emily Peterson



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