

January 2026 | Issue 23

village

Connecting Bridekirk, Dovenby, Gilcrux and Tallentire

POST



We know
the area, the people,
the news.
We strive to support
the community and
celebrate the joys of
village life!

Three teenagers
on a BIG adventure
to make a
real difference
in Borneo



WELCOME TO EDITION 23

From the team at Village Post!

Marjory Thompson **Village Post editor**

email: editor@villagepost.uk tel: 07836 371035



Our cover stars this edition are three village teenagers - Elizabeth Wilks from Tallentire (*main pic on the summit of Skiddaw*), Heidi Garforth and Henry Ellams, both from Gilcrux. Read all about their Borneo adventure on pages 6 and 7. Please support them if you can!

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Contents

Farewell to Bush Inn landlord Ray Seavers	3
THIS PLACE - with Colin Meredith	3
Gardening/nutrition	5
Intrepid teens	6/7
Bridekirk Dovenby School	8/9
Remembering Grace	10
Meredyth meets ...	11
Cookery with Annette	13
Pond Cottage news	14
Church news	15-17
Useful numbers	18
Teddy's dog blog	19
St Mary's Xmas saved	20

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Junior editor and DOVENBY REPORTER
Matthew Chambers



Farewell Ray - a true character

Tribute by his friend Ian McAdam

It wasn't the longest or easiest telephone call I've ever had but definitely one of the saddest. Early on Christmas Eve morning Monica called and said, "Ray's gone". Her husband Ray Seavers had passed away at the age of 78.

So what was Ray like.....

He was grumpy, very grumpy and sarcastic. Grumpy and sarcastic are two words to describe him. But he was so much more than that. He was very good company. He was funny, he was straightforward and he didn't suffer fools gladly as the young brewery rep found out as soon as he said he was there to help Ray build up his customer base and improve his profits. The only thing the young rep was building up was his confidence after he was shown the door.

Ray also had an extremely dry sense of humour as a couple found out the first time they ventured into the pub and asked Ray if they had a wine list. "Yes" said Ray, "red or white!"

I'm sure nearly everyone that knew Ray has either had or watched such an interaction and that's why so many of us loved him.

Ray and Monica were married for 30 years and owned the pub for over 20 years. In that time he made friends with so many of his customers in and around Tallentire. He really was a larger than life character who will certainly be missed.

Ray had two children Ben and Corra plus two stepsons Paul and Jonathon. His funeral was held on Friday 16 January at Distington and afterwards at the Bush.

RIP Ray

Landlord of Tallentire's Bush Inn, Ray Seavers passed away on Christmas Eve



Actor Colin chooses Gilcrux as his THIS PLACE whenever he can!

I picked up the latest edition of Village Post from the Post office on Beeches Caravan where we have had a touring caravan for the past four years, so Gilcrux is very much our second home, *writes Colin.*

We had just arrived to spend a relaxing Christmas there.

I read your feature on how you ended up buying a home in Tallentire after a varied career ... this area is definitely special.

We started looking for our first caravan four years ago and discovered this caravan on Beeches being sold with site fees paid for the year, so we bought it and have never looked back.

We regularly take our caravan to Scotland - mainly to the west coast - but always look forward to coming back to Gilcrux.

I thought the readers might be interested in my varied career since I left working in local government in 1973 in my home town of Rochdale to train as an actor in London graduating in 1976.

Since then I have fortunately been working professionally ever since working in theatre, TV radio and film (Brookside, Poirot, Coronation Street and more!)

Now 73, I spend most of my leisure time here in Gilcrux and try to involve myself in village life including playing badminton in the village hall and, of course, supporting the Mason Arms.

I'm currently on our screens in a TV commercial for British Seniors over 50's life insurance (see pic top right).



THIS PLACE

How do **YOU** feel about where you live? You may always have lived here, moved from somewhere else or grown up here, lived elsewhere for many years, then come back home.

Think about what you feel about your place, whether it is your house, your village or Cumbria as a whole.

Write to us (in no more than 300 words) about your place, explaining your feelings with pictures if you can!



Send your THIS PLACE story to editor@villagepost.uk

OUR GARDEN DESIGNS, PLANTING SCHEMES, GARDEN MAKEOVERS AND GARDEN RESTORATION ARE ALL ABOUT SENSITIVITY TO PLACE, BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABILITY. WE'VE BEEN MAKING GARDENS TOGETHER FOR OVER 30 YEARS AND WE'RE BASED IN GILCRUX.



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THE SHINING TREE

GARDENS BY MICHAEL AND BEE

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DARCY IS A VERY GOOD CITIZEN

Darcy would like to share the happy news that she has achieved her Kennel Club, Good Citizen bronze award. She loves living in Gilcrux village with Nathan and Beth Dwyer and loves all the fellow doggos.

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FEBRUARY

Top priority - bird feeding. They consume a huge amount - robins, great tits, blue tits, black birds, woodpeckers and even pigeons!

Apply organic-based fertilisers towards the end of the month and check that plant supports are sound and not too tight. Firm any newly planted trees and shrubs that have been lifted by frosts. Continue planting bare root trees and shrubs, fruit trees and bushes. Prune winter flowering shrubs and heathers when the flowers have faded. Remove old stems of herbaceous perennials. Start tender perennials under cover. Divide and replant snowdrops. Start off your dahlia tubers indoors. Cut back overgrown hedges and bushes before the nesting season starts. Prune roses and sow annuals undercover.

In bloom: hellebore, daphne, winter flowering pansies, winter aconite, winter flowering honeysuckle and cyclamen.



With thanks to
RHS
Gardening
Year and
Gardeners'
Year
Calendar

MARCH

Start mowing lawns regularly and seed any bare patches. Mulch bare soil in borders. Put pond pumps back into ponds and water your indoor plants regularly. Propagate shrubs by layering. Prune winter shrubs with colourful winter stems. Prune bush and shrub roses. Move evergreen shrubs. Take cuttings from Dahlia tubers. Split polyanthus after flowering. Sow sweet peas outdoors or plant out young plants raised under cover. Sow hardy annuals where they are to flower and sow vegetable outside.

Harden young vegetable plants to put outside. Plant early potatoes and asparagus and protect fruit blossom against late frosts. Plant snowdrops and winter aconites. Take grow bags into greenhouse to warm before planting up and put in stakes to support perennials later in the year.

In bloom: bergenia, cyclamen, forsythia, viola, sweet violet, magnolia, daffodil, crocus, camellia, dwarf iris.



Tempus fugit - or time flies!

Do you have intentions for your diet and wellness this year?

Or perhaps you'd love to eat better and enjoy better health but so far have found that difficult - unsure what to do for the best, confused by misleading marketing and conflicting wellness messages and lacking sound advice and support. And then there's that facet of human nature to put things off.

I suffered for 10 years eating wrong before I changed ... and then only after an 18 month illness.

We say, "I'll just do it later" or "There's always tomorrow."

Except that there isn't always tomorrow. I've just marked another Christmas without my vivacious Mum who died far too young.

The best time to start eating well was when you started eating. The next best time is now. Are you ready or will you put it off?

Losing Mum prompted me to tackle a life goal of writing a book (*Succeed in Sport* was my first).

Now to help you I've created, *Your Vibrantly Healthy Year*.

More than a book and arriving by email each week, it includes nutrition, movement and rest

Jackie Wilkinson
Village Post
nutritionist



themes, things to try each day, videos and most importantly, encouragement to continue to pursue your health goals.

Dramatic life events can be a great spur to us to get on with it.

Today is precious and tomorrow uncertain. Modern life is so full of distractions time can slip past unless we act on what's important:

- don't copy me and only get motivated when something awful happens
- don't put up with low-level health problems and misery for years and years
- don't wait until you're desperate before you sort out your eating habits.

Top Tip: Learn to Eat Well, do it NOW!

This could be your vibrantly healthy year.



Support our intrepid teens

Hi, my name is Elizabeth, I'm 15-years-old and I've been living in Tallentire my whole life. I'm fundraising for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Borneo, Malaysia for four weeks in 2027.

The trip is run by my school through the amazing Camps International, a company based in the UK that provides ethical trips across the globe, helping to make large impacts on small communities and ecosystems in impoverished rural areas. My trip includes:

- A large community project that could be anything from building a school to new offices or houses. These projects employ many local contractors, helping to bring money into the local economy.
- An environmental project such as beach cleanups or planting trees. Many of the camps we will visit are based in the jungle where, like the rest of the world, deforestation is rife. We can change this.

Visits to an orangutan sanctuary and a sun bear sanctuary where

we will learn about these beautiful animals that are facing rapid population decline due to many factors such as deforestation. We will learn how to prevent their extinction.

- An open-water SCUBA diving course supported by PADI (the Professional Association of Diving Instructors) that will leave us with a qualification allowing us to dive in open water anywhere in the world up to 18 metres.
- The opportunity to experience local culture and cuisine through the many different camps and communities we arrive at. This includes traditional dancing and language classes.



The Sun Bear

This trip is both an amazing experience for myself and an impactful opportunity for the communities we will visit. Many previous expeditionaries have quoted how the local people have been so welcoming and happy to assist in the community projects. This trip is something that will really make a difference in less fortunate rural areas and I hope to help with that.

However, there is no way I could go without your help. Travelling across the world for four weeks is not cheap. That's where you come in! I'm offering services across the villages in order to help my fundraising goal. Anything from gardening to pet sitting is on offer and I'm more than happy to accommodate requests. The community around the area has always been welcoming to me and I'm looking forward to this opportunity to give back.

On the left you'll find the prices for each job. For special jobs such as gardening I will use my own equipment, and for car washes I can negotiate between using my water at my house or the client's water at their home, whichever is easiest for both. **Thank you, Elizabeth**



Car wash - £10 per car for soap wash and dry, £20 for soap wash and inside vacuum clean

Pet sitting - £4 per hour

Pet feeding - £5 per day, £20 per week

Baby sitting - £7 per hour

Lawn mow - £5 per hour

Fruit and vegetables care/plantation - £3 per plant/£2 per bed of seeds

Driveway maintenance/weed kill - £7 per hour

Bookings required at least five days in advance unless it is an emergency (baby sitter cancellation etc.)

**Elizabeth Wilks 07515 174451
m.lambonwilks17@gmail.com**

New Gilcrux Community Exchange

The Gilcrux & District Social Fund (GSF) has recently secured funding from the Lakes to Sea Fund (Cumberland Council), the Aspatria Charity Shop and a number of local fund raising events and donations to convert the bus shelter at the bottom of the slope outside The Mason's Arms pub into a Gilcrux Community Exchange.

This will involve repairing the render inside the bus shelter and weather proofing the roof to ensure it is watertight.

Shelving units will be secured inside on which villagers can initially donate surplus plants during the spring and summer months.

Eventually it is planned to include donations of fruit and vegetables.

We are keen to ensure the shelter is kept tidy, so we will look-



ing for volunteers to assist with the day-to-day management of it.

In addition, we hope to install a waterproof library box as a book exchange either inside the shelter or nearby. More information to follow on this.

Finally, we have ensured that there will still be space within the shelter for the school children to stand in the morning whilst waiting for the bus.

If you have any questions about this initiative please contact:

**Tina at Brookwell House (opposite the pub)
or call on 07774 272239**

to make a difference in Borneo



Hello, my name is Henry. I'm 14 and live in Gilcrux.

I've been invited to take part in a dream school trip to Borneo in 2027 where I'll spend four weeks living and sleeping under the canopy of some of the oldest rainforests in the world. I'm very excited to see such a beautiful part of the world first-hand.

My [GoFundMe](#) page is now live, and the generosity I've seen so far has been overwhelming. But I want to earn my way there through hard work and community spirit. and I also have arranged a Bingo and Bangers Night (*further details to follow*). I'm starting my own Gilcrux Village Carwash in March (in Hollybank Car Park). Perhaps my biggest personal challenge will take place in the pool. I've set myself a strict target - swimming a sponsored mile in under 30 minutes. A mile is roughly 64 lengths of a standard 25m pool. Doing it at speed requires a good level of fitness so I'm currently training hard.



<https://gofund.me/cd29e32f5>

The total cost of the expedition is significant, as it covers everything from travel and insurance to the materials needed. Why Borneo? The answer is simple - I want to see the world from a different perspective. I've seen almost everything our wonderful island has to offer, but would love to see some REAL change of scenery and to finally feel like I'm making some REAL change. Borneo's rainforests are the "lungs of the Earth," and seeing the impact we make on the rainforest could be a real life changing moment. I want to be able to look back and know that I didn't just read about these problems, but I actually did something - however small - to help.

I would be incredibly grateful for any support the community can offer.

Thank you, Henry



Elizabeth, Henry and Heidi will visit an orangutan sanctuary. Their numbers are in rapid decline due to many factors such as deforestation

Heidi Garforth - raising money for Borneo and Alzheimers



<https://gofund.me/c25a30bae>

My name is Heidi, and I'm 13-years-old. I live in Gilcrux and have the incredible opportunity to travel to Borneo for four weeks in the summer of 2027 to work on community and conservation projects. It's a chance to make a real difference and leave a lasting impact.

My grandpa, who loved wildlife and conservation, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's before I started secondary school. Sadly, he passed away in October, and he no longer knew who I was. This experience has inspired me to combine my passion for conservation with a cause close to my heart.

I still need to raise £5,000 to make this trip possible. To help, I'm committing to run 100 miles in March. For every £5 raised on my [Gofundme](#) page, I will donate £1 to Alzheimer's Research UK.

Your support means the world to me and will help both the environment and those affected by Alzheimer's. Thank you for considering a donation. Together, we can make a difference.

Thank you, Heidi



Got an adventure story to share?



Governor chat

Happy New Year to all!

Well, the weeks before Christmas were full of festive fun (while still getting on with all the teaching, of course!)

The children had lots of enjoyable things to do, as you can see in the articles. The teachers enjoy it too but it's quite exhausting to do everything AND prepare for their own family Christmas!

Well, it's back to normal now. Something that impressed me was the report about two of our boys at Levels in Whitehaven. Julia, the Head, is keen for the school to use this brilliant facility much more and Sellafield is proving to be very welcoming and helpful. Also, the charity supported by P4 is such a worthwhile activity for children to be involved in and I hope they continue their involvement and make philanthropy part of their adult lives.

Silvana Hewitt
Chair of Governors

REQUEST!!

If anyone has any Lego that they no longer need, Bridekirk Dovenby School would make excellent use of it.

Please drop it off at the school or contact me (Silvana) on 07838 228426 and I'll pick it up from you.

THANK YOU!

Did they do well? Oh yes they did!

The children in years 4,5 & 6 performed 'Olivia' to a packed theatre at the Carnegie Theatre in Workington.

The audience were amazed at the standard of acting, singing and dancing. All the children were very confident in their roles and gave it their best.

The girls Anna, Dinah, Harriet, Gabriella, Martha, Everly and Freya sang their solos with confidence and, as for the boys, Theo, Lucian, Zach and Isaac impressed the audience with their singing parts. Sherlock and Holmes took charge of trying to solve the mystery and the London Ladies cockney accents made the audience feel they were in a London theatre. Fagin, Crachit and Dodger certainly had a disreputable air about them. Well done everyone!



An interview with Mrs Taylor, director of the panto and teacher of P5



by Harriet

H: Mrs Taylor, what pleasure do you get out of the panto?

Mrs T: I like to give pupils the opportunity to perform on stage, gaining confidence by speaking in front of an audience. In addition to that they learn to work in a team.

H: How do you choose the panto?

Mrs T: I look at lots of different pantos. I look at the songs and the parts to see if they match the number of children in that year.

H: What was your first panto at BD School?

Mrs T: It was Sleeping Beauty's Dream, way back in 2007!

H: Is it still fun to do?

Mrs T: It IS time-consuming and a lot of effort but it is worth it, especially now we get to perform in a proper theatre.

Imogen Interviews Max about his role as Dr Watson in the panto
(This was a leading role as children get to take part in minor roles when they are younger.)



Imogen

Imogen: What was your favourite song and why?

Max: I liked "Stop" because it was fun.

Imogen: What did your family think of the Panto?

Max: They thought it was great last play for me.

Imogen: How do you feel when you're on stage?

Max: Great! It's cool and made me feel nostalgic.

Imogen: What was your favourite line?

Max: It was "Good Heavens, Holmes!

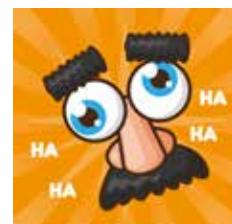
How did you deduce they were women?"



Max

Joke

Knock knock
Who's there?
Boo
Boo who?
No need to cry – it's just a joke!



corner

Knock knock
Who's there?
Europe.
Europe who?
No, YOU'RE a poo!



hope and kindness
next generation thinking

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Bring **HOPE** to a child facing challenging circumstances in our orphanage and school.
Your **KINDNESS** by buying this **SOFT TOY** will feed a child for a week with **Breakfasts and Lunches**

P4, Mrs Herbert's Class, have been learning about the work of **Hope and Kindness**, a charity working to raise funds for children in the Kosele community in Kenya.

The class had a display at the Christmas Fayre, where they sold soft toys, cloth bags and aprons to raise money for the charity, helped by Teaching Assistant Apprentice Katie Thompson. They still have some of these lovely items so if you would like to buy something, or would like to know more about the charity, contact Silvana at sales@villagepost.uk



Who is having more fun? Singers or audience?



by Anna

BOTH says Anna! Before Christmas, our choir went to Gilcrux Village Hall and Bridekirk Church to tell the Nativity story with Nativity-based songs.

We each had a card with a part of the story on it and we sang songs where the audience could join in.

The songs were "Little Donkey", "O Little Town of Bethlehem", "Away in a Manger", "Silent Night" and "We Three Kings".

Our choir ranges from age 6 to 11 years. I, myself, go to choir and I find it really fun and enjoyable.

We each got a little treat for singing.

Dion and Luca visit the new Levels facility in Whitehaven



There has been a marvellous transformation of the old Whittles store in Whitehaven.

It is now, thanks to Sellafield, the home of the largest Virtual Reality Centre in the north!

Two P5 boys, Dion and Luca, had the opportunity to visit on the first day and here is what Tara Pearson, Dion's mum and our link with Sellafield, reports: The boys had a fantastic time and represented the school brilliantly. They were the only children attending, were very polite when speaking with sponsors and were even filmed by BBC while testing some of the equipment.

The building itself is really impressive. The ground floor houses the eSports area and café, where the boys tested Rocket League on the PCs. There was also a flight simulator, although this has an age limit of 12. The next floor is a VR arcade, with games played in a controlled arena environment.

Above that is the educational suite, which includes 31 PCs and VR headsets aligned to the National Curriculum.

The boys explored space in Science, visiting different planets and, in Geography, they travelled to Egypt to see the pyramids and to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower, both shown to scale.

They also spent time in a virtual science lab with animals on their desks. We were told that a teacher wearing a VR headset can control the whole class in a virtual classroom, including locking students into their seats if needed!

Coding can also be used to allow pupils to have conversations with historical figures, for example speaking to Ancient Egyptians or even Henry VIII.

There is also a podcast filming room on this floor, with equipment described as just one level below Netflix standard.

The top floor focuses on Art, using VR headsets that allow children to paint while seated at a virtual easel. There is also a virtual assistant on screen who can help with navigation around the building.

This is all so exciting and the school will certainly use it more!



Goodbye Grace by Abbie Murphy

Grace with
Abbie's
daughter
Isabella (6)

On December 11 we sadly lost my one and only Grace who was 30 years old and known by most of the village as the "sweet old horse up the lane" who was very gentle and friendly to all of the dog walkers and kids that came to see her as they walked by.

She was my best friend, my soul mate ... and life will not be the same without her. But we have 17 years of amazing memories together.

As Grace got older the rides got less and I knew the time was coming to semi retire her, I wanted her to live out freely for her last years. She hated being stabled so I knew when I saw the field advertised at Tallentire that it had to be her retirement home. It was perfect.

A year later she was joined by her Shetland friends Hercules then Rocket and our rescued sheep Seb who believes he is a Shetland pony! And so she became mammy Grace to them all, her little herd to love, protect and be their safe place just as she was mine.

Grace was a beautiful soul, standing like a statue as my two small children would bath and brush her. She was part of my family, she would listen without judgement and be there offering her calmness and kindness.

I'll miss and love you forever my girl, the yard will never be the same but we'll never forget you, may you run and roll freely now (she loved rolling!) until we meet again.

RIP beautiful xxx

So here we are in 2026! I hope everyone had an enjoyable festive period and are looking forward to spring with more daylight and temperatures rising! 2025 was another great year for "Gilcruix Village Hall & Educational Trust" with a variety of new user groups ranging from chair yoga, indoor bowls and a Sunday morning yoga group. These help with our day-to-day running costs and the various repairs and replacement equipment which, after 12 years of operation, had come to the end of their useful life. To that effect the blinds have been replaced in the "Todhunter Room", new emergency lighting has been installed, replacement of two air source heat pumps to name just a few. However, as is our remit, the hall is kept as self-sufficient as possible and in a pristine condition for all user groups and private hirers. So thank you to everyone for your continued support of your village hall

Early January sees the completion of the internal decorating of the hall with the external woodwork starting in the spring as soon as the weather allows. Also coming is a new sign for the front of the hall and a more efficient external light at the main entrance.

At our next meeting we will be planning our GVH & ET events for the year which we will publish once they are



Valentine's Day afternoon charity concert



A celebration of romance at the Kirkgate for Valentine's Day afternoon from 2-4pm.

Tickets £15. All proceeds to the Kirkgate Arts Centre and Linking Lives (a befriending service for adults who need extra friendship and support.)



confirmed but I can say there will be something for everyone! 2025/2026 "Lunch Club" has been very well attended with numbers growing, our average attendance is now 50-55 guests. However this would not be possible without those from our committee and our volunteers who not only help on the day but put out all the table and chairs. You're all very much appreciated

We would also like to offer a huge thank you to Henry Airey for all the help with repairs and his fantastic display of Christmas lights in his garden, supporting GVH & ET, St Mary's and the Gilcruix Social Fund. Also thanks to Rob and Chris Faulder for the fantastic job they did putting our Christmas lights and tree up, especially when they got them all up and one set failed!!

We're also delighted to have supported various educational grant applications last year which is all made possible from support for our events. So a massive thank you!

Helen Johnston - Chair

MEREDYTH meets

John
Stafford

You think you know someone until you start to interview them. This is the case with John Trafford. I knew he loves his bulls, regular photographs of prize ones come to church! But interviewing him with his lovely wife June revealed so much more. John was born at The Hill farm near Bassenthwaite and then his family moved to Bassenthwaite Hall Farm. John was the fourth of eight children.

Needless to say, John was expected to muck in and do jobs around the farm. The jobs started out small - bringing sticks for fires and then moving up to mucking out sheds, clearing refuse and working with horses, some of which were placid - others not so!

He then went to Cockermouth School and wanted to do pure maths and physics. However, due to a lack of other students wanting those subjects, the school couldn't offer him them. So he left school despite having 8 O-levels and trained as an auctioneer at Mitchells. His interview was quite short - a once over and "the boy'll do"! John worked his way through furniture and paintings, but he really loved the cattle markets. Hence him building up a herd of Simmental cattle.

At the time, Mitchells had a company secretary, Michael Boustead, who was very knowledgeable. When John asked him to pass on a few tips, he replied "NO - I've learnt the hard way and you can too". Sadly, Michael died in 1963, and John had to take over the furniture side - he knew the difference between Chippendale and Hepplewhite! Hence why he uses "Hepplewhite" with his herd - as Simmental cows are so much more elegant than the Charolais (which he calls the Chippendales).

Unexpectedly, the then Company Secretary was sent to prison for stealing money and the Board thought John, as Managing Director, should have known so he was sacked as well in 1988. The injustice of that had a huge effect on John and he spent the next six months trying to recover.

John and June - together for 63 years

John got married to June in 1962 at Bridekirk Church (June was christened there).

Whilst at Mitchells a Miss Burns asked him to value the contents of her home in Lorton Park. Miss Burns died and he managed the inventory of contents. He noted the signature on one of the paintings and received loads of phone calls about it. The artist was Aggas, a landscape painter, and when it came up to sale (starting at £5,000) it eventually sold for £17,000. In those days, when catalogues were sent out, buyers would come in, often all dressed up for the social aspect - or they would camp out all day with flasks and sandwiches. It's completely different nowadays, buyers go and leave a bid or even just phone in a bid.

After leaving Mitchells, John concentrated on the farm, growing it from 20 acres to 130 over ten years - finishing up with 200 acres. It now covers 400 acres. When the farm originally came up for sale, June pushed John to buy it (it being next door to where they lived). She made John go to the bank and get a cheque. Starting out on the 20 acres, John milked cows in the morning before he went to work at Mitchells.

In 1970 milking Ayrshire cows didn't get such a high milk yield. Swiss Simmental were just introduced into England and so John decided to cross breed - ending up with bigger cattle and higher milk yields. Eventually he realised that the value was going to be from the meat. So, in 1973 he imported two pure-bred heifers and started the pedigree herd. Quite novel at the time. He came out of dairy farming in 2010 - when John and June retired.

John and June are incredibly proud of their grandson who plays for Manchester City!



John's skills are so valued he is invited to judge shows all over the country - including the Royal Bath and West Show, the Royal Cornwall, the Three Counties and the Yorkshire Show and the great Bath and West. June goes with him - they love it.

At the Yorkshire Show he wore a white rose buttonhole and was highly praised for dressing the part! He also served two stints on Simmental Council, based at Lemington Spa. John proudly shows off photographs of his Hepplewhite premium - selling via auction and privately, while driving his wagon at 88.

John's local church is at Brigham - where he was church warden. Brigham has a lovely painted ceiling. The restoration cost £48k and John was part of the group that lobbied for lottery funding. The lottery rejected them saying it was too high by £5k. Thanks to John they raised the gap in one day, so successfully paid for the restoration. Other fund raisings have required marathon bible reading sessions - spanning over 90 hours. John and June are big fans of St Bridget's in Bridekirk.

Time for hobbies? While in his youth the couple would go all over the north motorbike scrambling - transporting it on their pickup! Nowadays it is just motorbikes! Triumph Tiger Cubs in particular. John picked one up from a retiree down south who kept it under his stairs! Ever the romantic, John and June did their courting on motorbikes - outings to the pictures in Aspatria. If they didn't fancy films there they would scoot off through to Keswick.

This was an amazing interview. The hour and a half just disappeared - I loved it every minute!



John's prize Simmental bull



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Home grown cooking with Annette Hazelnut, chocolate and pear puding (gluten free)

ANNETTE GIBBONS is well known for her wonderful cooking. A former Cumbria Woman of the Year, she hosted her own Border TV series "Home Grown". Annette has taught nutrition and cooking, run her own cookery school and organised 'Cumbria on a Plate' gourmet tours.

It maybe a strange thing to say but I just loved being in the garden over the Christmas holiday. The grandchildren picked carrots, leeks and potatoes and my Lithuanian daughter-in-law was astonished to find beetroot too. She made a traditional Pink Soup and it was delicious.

Of course the weather was very kind to us with bright, cold sunny days.

Now as we wait for the warmth to return, our food is often comforting and perhaps sweeter but with essential nutrients. In this case plenty of protein, fibre, good fat, vitamins and minerals. With that in mind, I've loved making this light and squidgy chocolate and pear pudding made with hazelnut flour (or toasted hazelnuts ground roughly). I'm intending to use apples and almonds this week for a change.



Ingredients:-

150 hazelnuts toasted cooled blitzed roughly or hazelnut flour
200g milk or dark chocolate (look for no palm oil)
150g butter
150g soft brown sugar
4 eggs separated
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon fine salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
2 pears cored and sliced. Peel if you must
Icing sugar and crushed hazelnuts toasted cooled scatter after cooking

Method:-

I find my air fryer useful for melting butter and chocolate on the reheat button. Once melted, add the mixture to a mixing bowl and add sugar, cardamom, salt and vanilla and whisk well.

Cool the mix then add the egg yolks, gently whisk again.

Fold in the hazelnuts.

Whisk the egg whites in a clean bowl until soft peak forms. Take a spoonful of the whites and using a metal spoon gently fold them into the chocolate.

Continue until all the whites are used.

Using a suitable dish for the air fryer or prepared tin for the oven, pour the batter into the dish. Core and slice the pears and place them on top of the chocolate mix.

Bake at 170 degrees no 5 until the outside edge of the pudding is set and the centre is slightly wobbly.

Cool and serve with sifted icing sugar and crushed hazelnuts.

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Share your favourite recipe for our readers to enjoy

13



The Pond Cottage good life we can all enjoy ...

Dave and Kelly enterprises

When we moved to Pond Cottage, Oughterside in 2023, our vision was to be as self-sustaining, environmentally friendly and as off-grid as possible.

In our first year we were extremely pleased with what we were able to achieve, including installing our own solar/wind power source, a rainwater collection system and growing more fruit and veg than we're able to eat/store!

To this end, we've been really successful in being able to sell our excess produce to the local community and to offer some of our knowledge and skills to people in the area - after all there will always be some bills we can't get away from!

Here's a snapshot of the sort of things we do:-

Pond Cottage Fruit and Veg: we've been really successful growing potatoes (several varieties), kale, courgettes, green beans, beetroot, lettuce, tomatoes, chillies, peas and even aubergines and celeriac over our 88sqm and three greenhouses of growing space. When our veg is all sold (which it does very quickly) there's still a huge demand for local homegrown veg.



After much research we've been able to source all our veg from local growers. Our potatoes, beets, carrots and parsnips are all grown within five miles of Oughterside and the furthest we go for anything is North Lancashire, which isn't a million miles away!

We support local growers and farmers and veer well away from food grown outside the UK and that which comes is nasty plastic bags! We do lots of research and we think you'll agree that our veg - both grown by us and local producers - tastes and lasts much longer! We're also a lot of the time cheaper than the supermarkets. Our veg is literally straight out of the ground to you. We put up pics/advertising when produce is ready - we've people coming back for more of our organic, homegrown, without the use of chemicals/pesticides veg and fresh eggs from our free range, rescued hens and ducks!

Pond Cottage Preserves: we also make jam and pickles! This last year we've had bramble, mixed berry, gooseberry, blackcurrant jams, beetroot relish, caramelised onion, tomato relish as well as pickled beetroot, pickled red cabbage and pickled onions.

Pond Cottage Ground Maintenance: we currently have several customers locally for whom we cut grass, tidy/prune/weed and plant - even the odd bit of garden design for people! We can offer one-offs or regular upkeep - entirely up to you and we only charge £20 per hour for the both of us.

Pond Cottage Property Services: again, we already have a few people on our books for who we do those odd little niggly jobs you never get round to. This includes cleaning, painting/decorating, woodworking, general repairs and even fixing the odd two-stroke engine and tumble dryer. If we can't do it we'll let you know. Again, it's £20 per hour (or about) for the pair of us but we're also happy to barter if we can come to some sort of mutually beneficial arrangement then everyone's a winner.

Bee expansion

Pond Cottage Bees: we are also BBKA bee keepers. We now have several colonies of bees that we will be expanding in 2026 and for the first time will be producing our own honey. We've already successfully sold honeycomb and beeswax products from our girls and next season they should be booming. We're also fully insured swarm collectors, so if you get a swarm of honey bees land on or near your property (or see one in a public area) give us a shout and we will come to get them.

Pond Cottage Crafts: we also make things. We've driftwood sconces, trinkets, ornaments and little seasonal bits and pieces at Xmas/Easter/Halloween. You'll also find us at local fayres/markets etc where we take our shop - these are particularly popular and we always get folk buying veg from us. We can also supply veg boxes to order for collection from us. This is particularly popular at Xmas and we do things a little differently.

Rather than just a 'veg box', you can order exactly what and how much of each item you want rather than leaving it to pot luck - if all you want is a quarter of a cabbage and a carrot you can have it. Also if you want four stone of potatoes



Village Post editor Marjory Thompson picking up her Christmas veg

and two stone of parsnips you can have that too. Do remember though that we only supply seasonal, local fruit and veg - don't ask us for lettuce and tomatoes at Xmas or swedes in June.

Our opening hours are pretty much everyday from about 9.30 until about 6pm. We're on Facebook and update the page regularly with news, offers and if we are having to close the shop for some reason. Our website has recently been launched and is proving popular.

You can see most of our products and order online for collection from our shop within 48 hours at the most - can only take this long if it's not in stock and we have to order it in - most orders are ready within half an hour.

Do feel free to pop down to the shop at any time, join our Facebook group or take a look at the website and place an order. We love nothing more than a good chat and to talk veg and bees. Be great to see you at the cottage soon.

Dave and Kelly Nanson-Heeps, Pond Cottage Enterprises

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/g/pEnkQPPTaJR5dVwH/?mibextid=K35XfP>

(Dave also posts regularly on the village facebook sites)

Website:

<http://pond-cottage-enterprises.sumupstore.com/>



New Year, New Growth

Well, it's 2026, what's going to happen this year?

Some of us have already noticed the signs of new growth in our gardens and in our church grounds at St Bridgets, Bridekirk. The snowdrops are peeping through.

Each spring, I look forward to the order of new growth or life, snowdrops, crocuses, primroses, daffodils and the busyness of the birds flying to and fro as they build their nests. As the Winter nears its end, Spring and new life draw nearer.

What about our lives though, as we start to come out of our Winter hibernation? Do we look towards a brighter future? Or just to refreshing our lives in some way? Yes, we have only one God given life and it can be a good time to start to live it to the best of our abilities. Perhaps look to join a new group, it's good to look for the good things in life and to learn new skills or engage in creative activities. Set yourself some goals, perhaps to volunteer, improve your lifestyle or just be more positive. They don't need to be big, but they do need to be achievable - maybe make someone smile or laugh each day!

There are plenty of groups around this area, such as the Bridekirk Friendship



Rev Roy with the aptly named rambling rector rose

Group (BFG), that meets every Monday at Bridekirk Church. Or if you are energetic and able to do so, join the Park Run each Saturday morning in Cockermouth. Engaging with others can be rewarding. If you want to do something on your own take up a new hobby, anything from reading, knitting or jigsaw puzzles to walking in the local area. These can be rewarding and beneficial to your physical and mental health, and it doesn't need to cost you much financially, just your time. So, for me this year, I am looking forward to new adventures, God willing, but what we should all do is to take a little time to look after ourselves and make the best of our lives.

Reverend Roy

St Aidans says thanks and a warm welcome to you!



A belated Happy New Year to all our friends, parishioners, and Village Post readers.

As the new year begins many of us like to make a fresh start. Instead why not take a fresh look at how we do things around our house. This month we have gathered together a few quick ECO tips for the kitchen which we hope will help save you money as well as the environment.

1 Never put warm or hot food into the fridge or freezer as this will make the fridge work extra hard to try and keep it cold - always allow food to cool down first.

2 Use a bowl to wash up rather than a running tap and save £25 a year in energy bills.

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-energy-efficiency/energy-saving-quick-wins

3 When making a cup of tea, only boil the amount of water that you need. You waste electricity (and money) heating water you won't use.

4 Stop using aluminium foil for cooking wherever possible - use a container with a lid that can be re-used. Aluminium is a rare metal and its extraction and purification uses a lot of energy.

5 Eat less meat, particularly red meat; producing 1kg of beef produces the equivalent CO₂ to you driving a 300 mile round trip while leaving all your lights on at home.

As we look back at the start of the year, we're giving thanks for a joyful and meaningful Christmas season that we enjoyed at St. Aidan's. It was a real gift to welcome so many people of all ages, **says Vicar John Freeman**. Our Christingle service was full of light and life, with children (and adults) enjoying the craft, the candles, and the chance to explore the meaning of Christmas together. It was especially encouraging to see St. Bridget's filled with so many families and guests who joined us for the first time. We're thankful for how this space continues to make ministry with children, young people and families possible.

At our Crib Service - shared with friends from Bridekirk - the Christmas story came to life through dressing up, laughter, and angels, shepherds and wise ones of all ages joining us to tell the story. It was a joy-filled and memorable way to get ready for Christmas for us all.

We also sang our favourite carols together at our Carol Service and started off the Christmas Day celebrations at our Christmas Morning service.

As we move into the new year, we want to say a heartfelt thank you to the Bridekirk congregation for the continued welcome, support and use of the facilities each week. This partnership enables a growing ministry with children, young people, and families, and we're excited about what lies ahead.

Whether you've joined us over Christmas, or are simply curious to come along, you're always very welcome. We meet every Sunday at 3pm at St Bridget's.



ST. BRIDGET'S, BRIDEKIRK

People of hope and love

St Bridget's Church: A Spring of Hope and Community

As the first signs of Spring begin to brighten our villages, St Bridget's Church stands as a beacon of hope and continuity for our villages. With roots reaching back to Norman times, our parish church has long been a place where generations gather to celebrate, reflect and support one another through every season of life.

At the heart of our church community is a simple aim: to trust in God as we discern His call, to follow Christ's example, and to bring hope and love to all. Whether you are a regular worshipper or a newcomer, you are warmly invited to join us.

A Church for All Seasons of Life

St Bridget's is here for people in all seasons of life - offering support and celebration at weddings, baptisms, and funerals - as well as in the everyday moments that make up our lives. Our doors are open to everyone and our community is enriched by the many groups and activities that bring us together:-

- Bridekirk Friendship Group: A welcoming space for those in their later years to share companionship and conversation.
- Baby Club: A lively gathering for parents, carers, toddlers and babies, where friendships blossom and support is always at hand.
- JUMP Youth Group: For young people aged 11–18, a place to connect, grow, and explore faith together.
- Bridekirk Craft Group: a fortnightly afternoon of creativity in the Church Room.
- Bellringing: Monday evening bellringing practice keeping this ancient art alive, rooted in English tradition but enjoyed globally.

Spring Services and Special Gatherings

As we move through February and March, our church calendar is filled with opportunities to worship and reflect.

Sunday services continue each week, and we look forward to special, seasonal gatherings - Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday - each marking a step on our journey through Spring towards Easter.

It is in these Spring months that we especially celebrate renewal, hope and the promise of new beginnings.

A Presence in the Community

It is a joy to be present in our local community - not just as a place of worship, but as a listening ear and a helping hand. We offer comfort to those who are grieving or in need of support, and we strive to be always here, always present, for everyone who calls our parish home.

As the days grow longer and the world awakens to Spring, we invite you to join us - whether for worship, fellowship, or simply a cup of tea and a friendly chat. Together, let us continue to bring hope, love, and support to all.

Revd Christina

Services at St. Bridget's Church

Children's Church will be available during the 11am services.

February

- 1: Holy Communion (11am)
- 8: Morning Worship (11am)
- 15: Holy Communion (11am)
- 18: Ash Wednesday - imposition of ashes and Holy Communion (10.30am)
- 22: Morning Worship (11am)

March

- 1: Holy Communion (11am)
- 8: Morning Worship (11am)
- 15: Holy Communion - Mothering Sunday (11am)
- 22: Morning Worship (11am)
- 29: Holy Communion - Palm Sunday (11am)

Easter

3 April: Good Friday (1-3pm) Join us for some or all of this service
 1pm: All Age Service followed by refreshments then at 2pm Stations of the Cross
 5: Easter Sunday Holy Communion (11am)

BRIDEKIRK FRIENDSHIP GROUP



St Bridget's Church room, Bridekirk

10:30 - 12:00



We offer a warm and friendly place for people who are in need of friendship to meet others for a chat over a cup of tea, coffee and home baked cakes each Monday morning.

Why not drop in anytime in the morning, for as long or as little time as you feel comfortable. You will always find a warm welcome from our volunteers.

£3 per person

FOR MORE INFORMATION

bridekirk_church@grasmoormc.church
0785 8074 133

EVERY MONDAY MORNING
(EXCEPT BANK HOLIDAYS)

Are you feeling lonely or isolated?

Why not come along and meet the team. We love to meet new people.



Christmas Flower demonstration raises £560

Thankyou to Margaret Hall (left), Margaret Abbott (right) and all those who helped make the afternoon happen - organising, baking, organ playing, IT support, cleaning and other behind the scenes roles. Well done all!

**St Aidans
All Age
meets 3pm every
Sunday at Bridekirk**

Bible fun, friendship and prayer for school years 7-13

Christ Church Rooms Cockermouth
7 - 8:30pm

Upcoming Dates:

25th January,
8th and 22nd February
8th and 22nd March

For our program and parental permission form visit:
cockermouthareachurches.church/jump/
Go straight there:

or email us on jumpyouthgroup@gmail.com

Baby & Toddler Club

You're Invited!

Date - Starting - Thursday 8th December
Time - 1-3pm. Every week
Place - St Bridget's Church, Bridekirk.

EVERYONE WELCOME

An opportunity to share time and a chat with other families whilst the children play together.

Join our team!
Perhaps you would like to volunteer to join our helper rota?
For more information contact us : bridekirk_church@icloud.com

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Cumberland Council	0300 373 3730
Cockermouth Library	01900 822634
Aspatria Library	07557 499129



Liz Condon from Tallentire invites you to her next musical as MD with Workington Amateur Operatic Society. 2026 marks 25 years since the tragedy of 9/11 and *Come From Away* tells the uplifting story of human kindness that came in the hours, days and weeks after. The musical tells the remarkable tale of the 7,000 passengers from all over the world who found themselves grounded in Canada in the wake of 9/11 and the small Newfoundland community that invited them into their lives with open hearts. With incredible songs and a beautiful story, accompanied by a live band, this is a show not to be missed!



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By popular demand ...



Teddy's dog blog

Hello Humans and Doggy Dudes,

Teddy Edward, your Rover reporter, is back on the case, wishing you all a very Happy New Year.

I wonder what 2026 will bring? Lots more Tedster tails and paw puns from your canine correspondent - that's for sure.

Now it seems to me that every time I have a nice stretch to deliberately knock the remote control off my sofa, it turns off the TV.

It drives my pawrents completely bonkers. What fun! I can't understand why, as all they ever seem to be listening to is the next weather warning, so being a diligent dog I took heed and acquired myself an additional fur coat.

Putting a sheepskin rug from the chair to a far better use than just looking pretty seemed like a splendid idea to me.

Fail to prepare, then prepare to fail. Good motto that!

I think it looked quite fetching, but Mummy wasn't awfully impressed, growled a bit and then quickly relocated it, whilst Daddy was much more interested in taking an action photo for inclusion in our wonderful *Village Post*.

Each to their own....

We all went off to introduce me to the inhabitants of York over New Year, along with some of the half pint humans and the rest of their family tree.

We were staying in adjacent kennels, so the opportunities for racing from one house to the other were endless.



All it took was a quick scratch on the door to be let in or out, and I had as much attention as I could possibly need. The treat count was fairly impressive too - even for me. What a wonderful place!

We're all now very busy trying to reduce the fat reserves that we painstakingly built up to get us through the winter, with lots of adventures to Allonby.

One day Daddy fitted one of the half pints with a set of wheels that he called a bike. Absolutely amazing - within seconds he was off down the cycle path like a whippet's whip.

In a vain attempt to exert some pawrental control, I ended up sprinting between the two of them, telling one to slow down and the other to hurry up. By the time we got back to the car I was absolutely exhausted with a capital knock. I only just had enough energy for a final lick of the food bowl to check I hadn't missed anything before snuggling up on the duvet for a little well earned bed-rot duty.

See you all in the next edition.

Love, **Teddy Edward**



Momentary attention deflection from **Teddy Edward** towards his pawrent **Wendy** who just celebrated her 60th birthday. Eyes and paws off that cake **Teddy!!!!**

Happy birthday Wendy



Christmas at St Mary's saved!

With the adverse weather and just a week before Christmas, St Mary's church suffered wind damage to the roof resulting in a devastating leak which has resulted in water damage.

A falling tree could have caused further damage but prayers were answered.

So, this is a massive thank you to Kevin Armstrong and Rob Faulder. With the aid of an industrial dehumidifier and a team of roofers, Kevin carried out an urgent temporary repair. Rob tackled the falling tree and the community enjoyed a beautiful Christmas service because of their gifts.

To the small group of people fighting to get funds to save this beautiful Church - thank you! You are all truly wonderful.

The church is in urgent need of a roof replacement otherwise it will sadly be condemned. Some people have asked if they can make donations. Yes please!

Please email me and I can send you the bank details

jmellams@hotmail.co.uk

A small donation every month will make so much difference. Please get in touch if you can help in any way. Our services are listed and you're all invited!

Jo Ellams, Church Warden



Joanna Litt (10) of Greengill Farm got 2nd in her age group at the Christmas young handler show at Mitchells.

Sister Grace (5) won the 5 & under and then took overall reserve supreme.

(Extra well done to Joanna as she did all the hard training work!)

GOING THROUGH A STORM OR JUST BEEN THROUGH ONE?

ANDYSMANCLUB are talking groups for men to **HELP YOU** through those storms.

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MORE www.andysmanclub.co.uk

Locally ANDYSMANCLUB meets in James Walker & Co in Cockermouth on Mondays at 7pm



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