

Mill Bank & Cottonstones Newsletter

Autumn 2024



A warm welcome to new village residents, to others who have returned, and a fond farewell to those leaving too.

Sir Ernest Hall, who fought to save Mill Bank from demolition in the sixties, sadly died on August 3rd, 2024, aged 94. See page 2.

The **Christmas Fair** will take place on 1st December. There are more details inside, along with a taster of the merchandise that might make a perfect Christmas gift.

Would you like a stall at the village Christmas Fair on Sunday 1st December? If you live locally and have Christmas goods, gifts or food and drink to sell, please get in touch with Sue as soon as possible on 07762 271400. It's free, and we'll help you find a good spot, but you'll need to provide your own stall. We encourage stall holders to make a contribution from takings to the Mill Bank Group for the upkeep of the village's public spaces.

The **Christmas village carols** will be on the 23rd December at St Mary's Church. It's been a happy event since we sang in the street during lockdown. Once again, we are looking forward to the beautiful solo voice of Autumn as a musical highlight. Refreshments will be served. The crib service will take place the following day on Christmas Eve, so if you really like your carols, it will be a musical feast.

Look out for the **Christmas wreath making** workshop on 30th November starting at 2pm. The cost will be £10pp, including the ring and some embellishments, so you'll just need to bring your own greenery. Sign up with Linda on 07341 443989.

The Mill Bank AGM on 14th November will be a bit different this year. Having rattled through the AGM business, there will be a quiz – with prizes, of course – including a section on village history. Refreshments will be available.

At a Glance

14 Nov	7.30-9.30pm	Quiz Night and AGM	St Mary's School
30 Nov	2pm	Wreath making	St Mary's Church social centre
1 Dec	11-3pm	Mill Bank Christmas Fair	Lower Mill Bank Road
Dec 7th & 8th	11.00am - 5.00pm.	Ripponden Christmas Market	St Bartholomew's Church Ripponden
23 Dec	7-9pm	Christmas get together and carols	St Mary's Church social centre
24 Dec	6.30	Crib Service	St Mary's Church

Contact the Mill Bank Group:

Gail Parker (Chair), Fiona Peach (Secretary - messages to 07962 474914), Linda Wilson (Treasurer, 0734 1443989), John Anderson (01422 823589), David Baguley, Michael Beazley (077568 22995), Ellie Fitzgerald, Tony Gledhill (077705 98317), Mike Godfrey, Peter Hardy (07531 806279), Keith Kemp (01422 823687), Glynis Lord, Bronwen Pendleton (christopher174@sky.com), Phillipa Walton

Newsletter: contact Michael 07756 822995 **Website:** <https://www.millbankvillage.co.uk/>
WhatsApp: Search for the Mill Bank Group See **561/562** WhatsApp group for bus chat. **Email Newsletter:** On the website, find the box on the footer where you can enter your email address to receive the newsletter, as a longer edition. **Facebook:** search for the Mill Bank Group



Sir Ernest Hall - March 1930 – August 2024

Sir Ernest Hall, who fought to save Mill Bank from demolition in the sixties, sadly died on August 3rd, 2024, aged 94. He is pictured here with his first wife June, with whom he had four children. Ernest and June lived at Damside on Foxen Lane for some years.

Sir Ernest is probably best known for his transformation of Dean Clough, from what he described as 'a symbol of despair' on the Halifax skyline, to the hive of business and cultural enterprise that we see today. But some Mill Bankers will remember him equally for fighting a council decision in the sixties to demolish most of the village's homes. The campaign that he, June and others ran so successfully, led to the creation of our Conservation Area and laid the foundations for the thriving community that we enjoy today.

It must be rare to find in one person a fine pianist, composer and a visionary entrepreneur. Hall found passion in rebuilding a vast Victorian mill from dereliction and bringing business and the arts so closely together. This may have stemmed from his strong view that children's education was failing to cultivate their imagination and was still modelled on a system designed to prepare many of them for a life of labour in the mills.

Hall married Sarah Wellby in 1980, and they had a son together. He separated from Sarah and from 2006-2021 he lived in Lanzarote in a relationship with Prue Leith, before returning to Sarah in 2021. Sir Ernest is survived by Sarah and his five children. A number of villagers attended the funeral at Halifax Minster, and a letter of condolence from village residents from the Mill Bank Group was sent to the family.

Mill Bank Merchandise



▪ **Cards** for sale from the original drawings by Maureen Moore. 12 designs available in packs of 4 for £5



- The Mill Bank Calendar £7
- Heritage walks guide booklets. £4 for the pair or for family and visitors to the village a more detailed guide to Cottonstones and Mill Bank. £4.50
- Mill Bank tote bags and tea towels £8
- Mill Bank. The story of a West Yorkshire Village by Hazel Whiteley £10
- A Condensed History of Kebroyd Mills £1
- Mill Bank and area special map from Fiona on 079624 74914

Look out for a new book about Mill Bank in 2025 with first-hand stories from villagers. If you would like to tell your story or donate photographs, please speak to Ruth 077537 48482

Heritage Walks and Exhibition

The heavens opened for the fourth and final heritage walk in September, but despite the rain, thirty people enjoyed visiting the sites of two old mills on the road to Cottonstones, (thanks very much to the owners of the properties) and another twenty came for tea and cakes and to see the exhibition at St Mary's.

The exhibition is now at Sowerby Bridge Library until mid-November, and is being booked for a number of other venues in 2025. These will be publicised on WhatsApp

If you missed the walks, the booklets for the Mill Bank and Cottonstones walks and a new visitor's guide have recently been published. These will be available at the library, and at the Christmas Fair, or contact rhbeazley@gmail.com

Lots more village history can be found on the website www.millbankvillage.co.uk.

The Mill Bank Group struggled this year to identify a suitable place for a summer village BBQ and get-together. Any ideas?

The Mill Bank Group

Here are the main points discussed and agreed by the Mill Bank Group at its last meeting on 5th September.

Yorkshire Water

With further disruptions over the summer, including a recent 5 day road closure, a further letter has been sent to Yorkshire Water to press YW for material action to reduce disruption arising from road closures. We are seeking a meeting with the company with the support of Cllr Webster.

Clearing the Gullies

We asked the council in June to clear all the gullies in Mill Bank and up to Cottonstones/The Alma. Highways say that all gullies were last cleansed on 19 September 2023 and will be cleaned on next cyclic visit. At least 32 gullies were blocked and we have sent them a map marked with blocked gullies.

Replacement bins

Bins have been pushed into the beck and overturned in the park. Other bins have been taken away and this was also reported. It is proving difficult to find out what the council intends but we are persisting with questions.

Dog Poo

We installed a number of bag dispensers around the village over the summer, but a number were cut down and removed, and the bags in others removed within hours. This is very disappointing as the public spaces had been cleaner.

Village WhatsApp

The village WhatsApp group now has around 160 members in "Greater Mill Bank", and we have appointed two more moderators.

Neighbourhood Watch

Following a spate of anti-social behaviour, a Neighbourhood Watch zone has been set up in Mill Bank. Ten villagers attended an initial meeting and agreed its purpose, objectives and expectations. The aim is to help the community and protect belongings. The use of doorbell cameras/CCTV is encouraged. Although the local police had not responded to an invitation to attend, Cllr Leah Webster will be happy to be invited to any future meetings. NW members communicate via email and WhatsApp. If you'd like to get involved or find out more, please contact Bronwen (~B on WhatsApp)

The Mill Bank Calendar 2025

The 2025 calendar is on course for publication. It is the main source of income for the village upkeep, and we hope to sell out.

Public spaces

We are hugely grateful to those who had attended the village tidy up on the weekend of 13/14 July, and over the subsequent weeks. Particular thanks go to Bruce for maintaining the graveyard and area around the Mill Bank stone. And to Keith for repairing the bench in the graveyard. There will be another date for a final tidy before the winter months.

The next meeting will be in December 2024.

The Mill Bank Christmas Fair



Why not plan ahead for some local Christmas shopping at the Christmas Fair? There will be many gifts that are either hand-made or have special relevance to the village.

From scented hand-made soaps to the finest honey, beautifully drawn village cards, prints and crafts, ceramics or even a village-potted cactus...there's something just right for most of us. Did we mention the excellent cakes? The preserves and the knitted chocolate novelties? The quirky bric-a-brac?

The Mill Bank Calendar will be an obvious gift choice for many, packed full of Bruce Fitzgerald's beautiful images of the area. There will also be local history books, and other village-branded items for sale.

You'll enjoy the satisfaction of supporting local arts and crafters and helping to keep the village in good shape. To keep you in good cheer, there'll be hot food on the hill, and a bracing tot of hot mulled wine. Last but not least, there will be a tombola for adults and children

Summer on WhatsApp

Life through the lens of the little green icon shifted up a gear to live-streaming crime over the summer. Mill Bank's doors were rattled at night by hooded thieves, and their progress was tracked minute by minute by village interceptors, leading eventually to an arrest.

There was more heinous crime when the Pantomime Camel was kidnapped, and a ransom probably paid. We could do with a sheriff or sheriff-ess to deal with our mini crime wave, but meanwhile, a neighbourhood watch scheme has been set up. The group encourages people to use security cameras / doorbells or similar, to deter ne'er-do-wells.

The finest honey in the dale was put on sale to villagers, and there was an opportunity to find out about eating well during the menopause. And if that diet didn't help with the hot flushes, giant cocktail glasses were on offer for a boozy alternative.

A blood moon hung over the village, enticing hedgehogs and badgers to visit our gardens, where they posed for photographs we could all enjoy. Buzzards are now seen circling over the village. Have the neighbourhood watchers trained them in surveillance?

The ever-lively bus chat WhatsApp continues to show the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Pedal-powered David's monitoring of the latest holes in the road and the walk-bys have helped keep group members up to date with the latest cancellations.

And finally, (thanks to Becky for this one), enjoy once again the heavenly light show that was so well photographed for those of us who didn't actually get out of bed to see it.



St Marys Church

A Eucharist service is held at 11.30am on the first Sunday of every month.

There is growing concern that lack of use of this lovely church and its community rooms may lead to its closure.

Councillors Visit Mill Bank

Cllr Leah Webster and fellow councillor and cabinet member Cllr Danielle Durrans will visit the village on 21 October, to see how the Mill Bank volunteers look after the public spaces, and how we have struggled to keep the place looking well as council maintenance has declined in recent years.

Remember when we were awarded gold and "Best Small Village in Yorkshire" by Yorkshire in Bloom? That was in 2016, and we have a long way to go to recover the standards of care and maintenance that won us those awards, but we can only do it in cooperation with the council.

Leah reports that repair of the zip-wire on the playing field has been tendered and an evaluation of the submissions will take place before a supplier is appointed. There is no specific timeline for when a new cableway will be installed, but the deadline to complete the work is 31st March 2025.

Thanks for looking after Mill Bank

A big thank you to all the willing workers who have worked hard to keep the village smart and tidy. Special thanks to Marge and Keith who have carried out some much-needed maintenance on the trees and shrubs in the triangle under the old Chapel and planted 100 bulbs for spring. Also to Derek for weeding the pavement under the Close. And to Shay and India who kindly donated gardening equipment for the group. We are grateful also to Jamie for all his trips to the recycling centre. Litter picker-uppers are available to borrow (the gadgets, not people!)

Toad Patrol Report. In the summer newsletter, we claimed that no one could possibly know how many toads had been saved by the toad patrol. How wrong we were! In the 2024 season, 795 toads lived to croak another day, though 83 were sadly killed. Fifty-five live frogs were rescued, and volunteers were out on 57 evenings. The toad patrol will be trying to recruit more volunteers early next year to help with this vital service to wildlife. What a brilliant record! There will be more about this in the spring newsletter 2025.

If only Yorkshire Water were as successful with their performance management and reporting.



Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones (*Proverbs*)

Mill Bank is well-known for kind words, but now also for honey. At this year's Halifax Show, Paddy Walker won 'best in show' with his Mill Bank honey and has told us about his passion for bees. His honey has sweetened the toast of many Mill Bank residents in the spring and late summer this year, but he is as much interested in the life and welfare of his bees as he is in their final product.

Building safe and healthy hives for bees is quite complex, although the basic design is around a hundred years old. Careful thought is needed to build a hive that will keep out hungry wasps, foraging mice, even cheeky woodpeckers and the wax moth. There are even more complex difficulties in keeping the bees safe from mites and viruses, which can destroy whole colonies.

During the autumn, Paddy leaves plenty of honey in the hive to sustain the bees over the winter as they protect their queen, with thousands of bees forming a ball shape around her, keeping her warm and only popping out occasionally for a toilet break or a drink.

Next year's honey-making will begin on a warm spring day when the bees set off to work. The flavour of their honey will depend on where the bees forage and this will even differ between the spring and the summer. They may fly as far as Norland to find something they really fancy – for example the heather on the moor tops. And who knew that bees set off to forage with colour vision but if the return journey is very tiring, they may only have black and white vision by the time they return?

If bee diseases are your thing, Paddy has also published a comprehensive guide for beekeepers on how to identify and treat afflictions. Search on Amazon for *AI in the Apiary by Paddy G Walker*. But if you're more interested in spreading honey onto some fresh buttered bread, look out next year for a message on WhatsApp to say that the spring honey is for sale and be quick to ask for a jar before it sells out.

Incinerator Protest – Our Last Chance

NO SOWERBY BRIDGE INCINERATOR
Calder Valley Skip Hire has applied to Calderdale Council for an Environmental Permit to operate a waste incinerator in Sowerby Bridge

Not a new application
The company was refused to appeal on 5th July 2023 by a government inspector, John Woolcock. The company chose not to take the opportunity to appeal the decision. The inspector said that given the height and proximity of the trees and woodland he was:

"unable to find that waste gases from the incinerator would be discharged in a controlled way as to safeguard human health and the environment"

Calderdale Council have employed an external consultant, they have said, quote:

"The effect of trees on dispersion have been considered in the modelling to the extent possible with the inherent limitations of the dispersion modelling software, but ultimately the software is not designed to account for such effects"

Planning issues
Calderdale Planning have said: "In order to operate the incinerator we also consider that it would be necessary to apply again to vary conditions 5 and 12 of the 2004 planning permission affectively resubmitting 14/0014/VAR"

Flooding
The Environment Agency says: The area around Calder Valley Skip Hire Ltd, Sowerby Bridge, HB8 3LL has a high risk of surface water flooding.

Residents Objections
All councillors oppose the permit; over 850 objections published on Calderdale's website, over 1000 local residents signed a petition opposing the incinerator. The smoke stack is below the tree line in a valley and is lower than the road surface, and houses, on Rochdale Road, less than 90 metres away.

Energy from Waste?
There are no technical documents from the manufacturer, as requested by Calderdale's external consultant, concerning the 2000kg per hour burn rate of the incinerator. The incinerator is supposed to use excess hot air to run a dryer for aggregates and feed electricity back to the grid; there are no technical details of how this would operate.

Why is the council asking officers to decide?
The council is refusing to vote on this matter; instead they are asking the council officers to decide instead of elected representatives.

The Incinerator Action Group is continuing its fight to prevent the proposed incinerator at Calder Vallery Skip Hire. There is a further, final consultation taking place and you can read the application online – search for CVSH permit S13/006. To make your views known, email the council by Sunday 3rd November at community-safety@calderdale.gov.uk

Book Group

October's book is "Precious Bane" by Mary Webb, a 19th century novel set in Shropshire. So far this year we have read "Suite Francaise", "Olive Kitteridge", "The House by the Dvina" and "Small Pleasures" by Claire Chambers, amongst others.

We welcome new members, so if you enjoy reading why not come to our next meeting? Our catalogue of reading over the last 15 years or so is now probably around 200 and covers a wide spectrum. Contact John for details on 823589 - John Anderson.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

You can make your final objections by Sunday 3rd November 2024 and should be sent by email to: community-safety@calderdale.gov.uk

Even more ...CREATIVE MILL BANK

Creative people who live in and around Mill Bank are still coming forward. Contact them as shown or via Mill Bank Chat WhatsApp.



Keith Foster is an artist with a grand view to Norland Moor from his window.

"I've been an artist ever since I could hold a crayon (thanks Mum). My latest foray has been a series of abstract landscapes, acrylic on canvas, one of which is shown here. You can see more on my Facebook page, under Albums."

Sam Standring-Brown is a Mill Bank artist who specialises in portraits. This is *Whitby Goths*, a modernisation of Gustave Caillebotte's 'Paris Rainy Day'. *"Every Halloween, Goths, ghouls and ghosts arrive at Whitby in masked masses. Their costumes are elaborate and fantastic. I wander the streets and pubs listening to dark stories and fables of old Whitby, making up a montage of images for my Modernisation of Caillebotte painting."* Please contact Sam if you would be interested in art classes or commissions of portraits etc. 07885 989986. Instagram [standingbrown](#)



Mind and Body

Keep Fit at Cottonstones Church, Wed evenings 7.00pm. No need to book - just turn up with a mat for floor work. Great music too. Phone 823589 for more information. £5 per session.

Ellie's French and beginner's Spanish classes run through the year. Contact Ellie on 07868 279513 and you could try the first lesson free.

Claire at *Bien Être* is a qualified massage therapist and well-being coach specializing in chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and also menopause. She works from her therapy room in Sowerby Bridge. Text to 07971595648 for appointments, either for relaxing treatments or deeper treatment for pain or an injury, or if you would like a free coaching consultation.

Village History Group Celebrates

Congratulations to the history group, which has just been awarded a grant to publish a new book next year as part of Calderdale's 50th celebrations. The 'Culturdale' programme includes a 'Caldertales' project, which is designed to promote our heritage and bring together heritage organisations across the borough.

The book will include stories from recent interviews and research. You can still tell us your own story or share photographs of the 20th century and see them published in the book or possibly the website.

Please contact Ruth if you would like to be involved or can help with proof reading. Contact rhbeazley@gmail.com

The History Group has had a busy year, discovering and promoting the villages' heritage. Members have conducted interviews, arranged four heritage walks, organised a photographic exhibition, and published Heritage Walk booklets.

Over 170 people have enjoyed these popular events, which have helped people feel even more connected to our beautiful villages.

Thirty Years of Hot Dinners in Style

There have been progressive dinners in our valley for over three decades. Ruth and Terry Marns described how they work: "Sadly, each year someone is affected by a life changing event or illness, and we bear this in mind when we decide who we are raising money for. Usually, £3-400 is given to local charities, such as multiple sclerosis or prostate cancer. Each couple hosts two other couples before moving onto a different house for the next course. It's quite difficult to organise to suit all the people all of the time especially if someone drops out at the last minute and mayhem ensues. We make sure that vegetarians and vegans are catered for. For this year we have not yet selected our charity for the dinner, which is to be held on Friday November 22nd from 6.30". Anyone interested in joining in should contact Ruth Marns 07968 200735.