

# Gilsland Village Magazine

## WHAT DOES A PARISH COUNCIL DO?

*By Sue Seymour, Thirlwall Parish Council Chair*

A couple of months ago Gilsland's three Parish Councils organised a joint meeting attended by our two County Councillors and MPs. Afterwards I was asked 'What's the point of Parish Councils, what do you do?' What follows is how I, as chair of Thirlwall PC, see our role and responsibilities.

Firstly we own and maintain property for public use in the village. As the lowest tier of local government we are funded by a precept – a small portion of the Council tax levied and collected by Northumberland County Council. We tell the County how much we need – for Thirlwall in the current year it's £7,000 which means that the charge for a band D property is £40. Broadly we set the precept to cover the costs of managing our community facilities. More populous parishes in urban areas generally charge considerably more as they provide a greater range of services. We own and maintain the Play area in Gilsland and the Village green (official status confirmed last year) in Longbyre. Apart from that we own two bus shelters and a handful of benches.

A significant chunk of our annual income goes to the Haltwhistle and District Burial Board for the maintenance of the cemetery in Haltwhistle and the churchyard in Greenhead. All Thirlwall residents are eligible for reduced cost interrment in Haltwhistle cemetery and one of our parish councillors sits on the Board. Additionally we make a small annual donation towards maintenance of the churchyard of St Mary Magdalene. Another modest annual donation is made to the Village Hall committee to help with cleaning of the public toilet. Thirlwall PC purchased shares in Gilsland Community Benefit Society.

Other expenses include the clerks wages, associated admin costs and insurance. We have a small budget to support community initiatives and have previously funded youth club outings and kitchen items for the Village Hall. Parishioners and village groups are welcome to apply to us for a grant.

A second important role for parish councils is to support local democracy, representing views and taking the voices of local residents to the higher authorities, like County Councils and MPs. Planning Authorities, in our

case it's either NCC or Northumberland National Park, are obliged to consult us on planning applications – although, unfortunately, that doesn't mean they're obliged to pay much attention to our view! We are very lucky that our long-serving County Councillor, Alan Sharp, always attends our PC meetings and elevates our concerns, ensuring that voices from this western extremity of the County don't go unheard.

Parish Councillors are, in theory, democratically elected but, in practice, people are generally co-opted onto the Council when a vacancy occurs. There is an opportunity every three years for others to stand but again this is rare with sitting councillors regularly being elected unopposed, en bloc.

Thirlwall PC has five councillors and meets bimonthly. As a minimum, councillors commit to attending these meetings. Other responsibilities, such as regular safety checks of the play area are also undertaken voluntarily. Parishioners are welcome to attend PC meetings, officially, only as observers. Questions from the public will be discussed if submitted to the clerk in advance. Agendas for upcoming meetings are posted a few days in advance on our website (<https://www.gilslandvillage.org.uk/>) and on the two noticeboards outside the village hall in Gilsland and in Longbyre. Minutes of previous meetings, policy documents etc. are also available on the website.

Gilsland is unusual for a small village in that it straddles County and English Region boundaries with two parishes in Cumberland and one in Northumberland. Five years ago, when a vacancy for the position of clerk for Thirlwall PC arose, we considered ourselves lucky in recruiting Sue Hatt to the position. Not only is Sue an efficient and effective clerk for us but she is also clerk to the Cumberland parishes. This has facilitated joint lobbying and endeavours between all three of Gilsland's Parish Councils, such as the village wide meeting mentioned earlier. Recognising that villagers regularly cross the Poltross Burn and enjoy all Gilsland's facilities the PCs have developed a protocol for working together on projects and services, like the Play area and village website, which are available to all.

Parish Councils oil the wheels of village life. PCs themselves have limited funds and power but we do speak on behalf of parishioners to decision makers and purse-string holders. It's down to you to make sure we know what's bugging you – and it's always nice to hear when we've got things right too! Ask for support for your village initiative. And maybe even consider putting yourself forward next time you see a 'Notice of Vacancy for a Parish Councillor'...

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH - ROASTED WHOLE CELERIAC

By Barrie Garton

This is a very satisfying method of using one of the tastiest vegetables, available almost all year round but at its best in the winter months. Use this as a base recipe to get you started.

## Ingredients

- 1 Whole celeriac 1-2kg in weight
- 2-3 Tablespoons of olive oil
- 3-4 cloves of garlic
- A couple of sprigs of 'hard' herbs (eg. thyme, rosemary, sage)
- Salt and pepper

## Method

1. Check your Celeriac is clean (most are pre-washed)- if not scrub clean and rinse around the roots then dry well.
2. If needs be, trim a little off the root so the celeriac will be stable and stand up.
3. Lay out a few sheets of foil, using a skewer or large needle prick the celeriac all over around twenty times to ensure even cooking.
4. Rub well with the oil and season well all over with salt and pepper.
5. Wrap up in the foil with the garlic cloves and herbs, use more foil if required to ensure it is completely wrapped. Place in a dish or on a tray standing up on the root end.
6. Place in the oven at around 180°C and cook for 2-3 hours (depending on size) and for the last 30-40 mins open up the foil to allow the skin to crisp and colour.
7. Test by giving it a squeeze or insert a skewer in the centre - it should be nice and soft.

To serve, cut into wedges like a cake, great with lashings of butter, or perhaps crème fraiche and a squeeze of lemon. Treat it as a side dish or make it the centre of a meal by adding a creamy sauce of mushrooms, or as a substitute for roast meat with gravy and all the trimmings. Also great with a salad. Refrigerates well and can be eaten cold or easily reheated.

Celeriac takes flavours well so you can substitute the oil, garlic and herbs for whatever you have to hand. Dried herbs and garlic will work fine or raid your spice cupboard and mix it up: chilli, paprika, barbecue spice, five spice, soy sauce, a dash of truffle or sesame oil will all give you a tasty crust. You do you!

# A NEW CHAPTER AT THE SAMSON INN

By Amy and Sean

Reopening The Samson Inn as a community-owned pub has been both a privilege and a joy, and we want to start the new year by saying a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has supported us so warmly.

From the moment we opened our doors, we were overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and encouragement from the village and beyond. We truly hit the ground running, and thanks to you all, we enjoyed a fantastic Christmas and New Year filled with laughter, celebration, and a real sense of togetherness. It was a pleasure to be able to open up and offer the community a place to come together to celebrate such a special time of year.

None of this would have been possible without our incredible staff, who have worked tirelessly to help bring our vision to life and create the welcoming atmosphere we wanted for the pub. Their dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm have been outstanding, and we are extremely grateful to them.

We have also been hugely appreciative of the advice, support, and kindness shown by local businesses and fellow pubs. Their encouragement has reinforced just how vital it is to support small, local enterprises and the communities they serve.

One of our recent highlights was hosting a very successful Burns Night. It was made truly special by the wonderful local support — from the music and quiz to the lively atmosphere. A special mention must go to Colin, who not only entertained us all but also gave a fascinating insight into Robert Burns and the meaning behind the traditions, delivering the Address to the Haggis with great flair.

This is exactly what The Samson Inn is all about, and we look forward to hosting many more events like this. February is already shaping up to be a busy one, with Valentine's, Galentine's, Chinese New Year celebrations, and selected dates where kids can eat for £1, including during the half-term holiday.

Once again, thank you all for your incredible support, and we wish everyone a very happy New Year.

## AN UPDATE FROM THE RED SQUIRREL GROUP

It is just over 12 months since Brampton and District Red Squirrel Group extended their area to the east, taking over part of the area covered previously by SAGG (Squirrel Action Greenhead & Gilsland). The group now covers Gilsland, Greenhead, Haltwhistle and Slaggyford, and all land in between.

The conservation group monitors and protects our native red squirrels, and removes (where permitted) the greys.

Please report any sightings of red or grey Squirrels in your area either through the Facebook page, by email to [banddrsg@gmail.com](mailto:banddrsg@gmail.com) or by phone/text to 07917 877303.

If you would like to have grey squirrels removed from your land/garden please contact the group. The grey squirrels will be dispatched quickly and humanely by one of our trained volunteers using legally approved methods (any other method could render any person responsible liable to prosecution). If you would like to get involved please make contact.

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## OLDER PEOPLE TARGETED BY FRAUDSTERS

Older people in the UK are often deliberately targeted by scammers, suffering major financial losses and serious emotional impacts. Those aged 55+ lose almost twice as much per scam as younger people — an average of nearly £4,000 each.

Common scams include impersonation frauds (criminals posing as banks, police, or officials) and investment or pension scams, often carried out via phone, post, email, or doorstep visits.

The Little Book of Big Scams helps raise awareness of these tactics and offers practical advice to avoid becoming a victim. It's available free online as a PDF from police websites or by requesting a hard copy from your local police force.

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## BULLETIN BOARD

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**Gilsland WI.** Our next meeting will be on Thursday 5th February (please note change of day) at 2pm in the Gilsland Village Hall. This month will be with Alison Higgs and she will be talking about the 'Haltwhistle Burn'. The cost for guests is just £3 which will include refreshments. If anyone is planning to attend could you please phone Doreen Gutteridge on 016977 47036 to let me know for catering purposes.

**Pancake Day!** On Tuesday 17th February from 11.45 until 12.45 sweet and savoury pancakes will be served in Gilsland Village Hall. Come and enjoy delicious food and good company and help raise money for Gaza Appeal.

**Hadrian's Wall Farmers Market** is on Sunday 8th February from 10am to 2pm at Greenhead Village Hall. Stock up the cupboards with our lovely local produce, now it is a new year. Maybe even find a valentine gift for a loved one. Meat, preserves, home baking, plants and crafts. Delicious home made refreshments.

**Poetry Drop-in.** We are trying something new this month - taking on a long poem. We'll be taking turns reading from Coleridge's great poem, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. As always, we meet in Greenhead Village hall from 1.30pm to 3pm, this month on Wednesday, 4th February. It's free and you can just listen or join in.

**Haltwhistle History & Heritage Group** are meeting at 10.30 in the Community Room at the Haltwhistle Hospital to sample the delights of the "Victorian Afternoon Tea, Etiquette, Remedies and Recipes" by Steve Gibbon. Another world. On Wednesday, 11th February. Free but we accept donations .

**New Hadrian Singers.** The choir has started back with a great set of new songs, all completely different and some pretty challenging. But we'll soon have them down! Join us if you enjoy singing - the first session is always free. You can find us in the Community Room at the Haltwhistle Hospital on Friday evenings ready to start at 7pm. And if you would like us to sing for your group, or find out more, email us on [mac.housty@gmail.com](mailto:mac.housty@gmail.com)

**Parking space wanted**, to buy or rent, for a motorbike in Gilsland. Please contact Jeroen Schrama at Merrilies Cottage, Gilsland; phone 07850674124; or email [jeroen.schrama.nm@gmail.com](mailto:jeroen.schrama.nm@gmail.com).

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## WEEKLY EVENTS

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### Mondays

- Community Coffee Morning | Village Hall | 10.30am - 12.30pm

### Tuesdays

- Yoga | Haltwhistle Leisure Centre | 10.30am - 11.30am
- G&G Knitting Group | House of Meg | 1pm - 3pm
- Outreach Post Office | Village Hall | 1pm - 4pm

### Wednesdays

- Craft Group | Village Hall | 1pm - 4pm

### Thursdays

- Outreach Post Office | Village Hall | 9.30am - 12.30pm
- Coffee Break | Methodist Chapel | 10.30am - 12 noon

### Fridays

- Outreach Post Office | Village Hall | 9.30am - 12.30pm
- Yoga | Haltwhistle Leisure Centre | 7.15pm - 8.15pm

### Saturdays

- Hatha Flow Yoga | Green Croft Arts | 9am - 10am

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## CHURCH SERVICES

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### Gilsland Methodist

*Services start at 10.30 unless stated*

Sunday 1st | Songs of Praise

Sunday 15th | Morning Worship

### St. Mary Magdalene

*Services start at 9.30 unless stated*

Sunday 8th | Morning Worship

Sunday 22nd | Holy Communion

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## BIN DAYS

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### Northumberland County Council

General waste: 12th & 26th

Recycling: 5th & 19th

[www.northumberland.gov.uk/waste](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/waste)

### Cumberland Council

Refuse and garden: 2nd & 16th

Recycling: 9th & 23rd

<https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-street-cleaning/waste-collections>

### Haltwhistle household recycling

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Monday 8am - 6pm

### Brampton household recycling

10am to 6pm, every day except  
Tuesday



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**Valentine's Night**

14th February

#### **OPENING TIMES**

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Thursday - Sunday: 12pm -  
11pm

016977 44188

**Chinese New Year**

20th February

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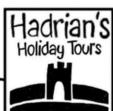
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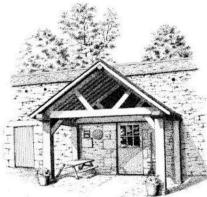
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Mike Mitchelson

**Cumbria County Councillor**

Mike Mitchelson, 0169772871

**Northumberland County Councillor**

Alan Sharp, Office: 01434693693, Home: 01434320167, Mobile: 07759665200

**Thirlwall Parish Council**

Chair: Sue Seymour 07935259416, sue@mossrpeteral.com  
Vice Chair: Judith Armstrong  
Clerk: clerk@thirlwallparishcouncil.org  
Councillors: Emma Guerrero, David Keen, Owen Wilkins

**Waterhead Parish Council**

Chair: David Rackstraw  
Vice Chair: Jovan Nichiolson  
Clerk: Sue Hatt: waterheadpc@gmail.com  
Councillors: John Woodmass-Calvert  
**Upper Denton Parish Council**  
Chair: Dan Newrick  
Vice Chair: Tim Gordon  
Clerk: Sue Hatt: upperdentonpc@gmail.com  
Councillors: Mike Harris

**Knitting Group:** Brenda Smith, 47361

**Community Coffee Morning:** Doreen Gutteridge, 47036

**Craft Group:** Sue Maughan, 47607

**Dominoes:** Doreen Gutteridge, 47036

**Folk Club Brampton:** Katy, 01228 674209

**Gilsland Parish Church:** Alison Higgs, 47409; Rev Ben Phillips, 07936 099123 or ben@lanercost.net

**Gilsland School:** 47302**Greenhead School:** 47347

**Gilsland Show secretary:** Vicky Baty, 01228 675368

**Methodist Church:** Melvyn Whatmough, 47524

**Tourism Partnership:** Catherine Jarvis, 07759 020 885

**Village Hall Committee & Bookings:** gilslandhallcommittee@gmail.com

**Village Hall:** 01697 543229

**WI:** Doreen Gutteridge, 47036

**Youth Club:** Clare Hawkins, 47371

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**Submissions**

The magazine is always looking for submissions! The deadline for submissions is the 20th of the month. Submissions may be edited.

**Digital copies**

Digital copies of the magazine will be available from the 1st of the month at [gilslandvillagemagazine.co.uk](http://gilslandvillagemagazine.co.uk). You can sign up to get an email alert when the issue is published on the Contact page of the website.

**Credits**

Thanks to the contributors and advertisers featured in this edition. This publication couldn't be produced and delivered without the help of volunteers. The magazine is edited by Chris Cantrill, Owen Wilkins, Malcolm Redman and Liam McNulty.

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