

# Gilsland Village Magazine

## WRITING TABLETS IN BRITANNIA & ON THE NORTH WESTERN FRONTIER OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE – PART II

*By Catherine Jarvis, Handy History Tours*



*A Writing Tablet of Vindolanda, from [www.vindolanda.com](http://www.vindolanda.com)*

The writing tablets are written not just by the elite of the Roman army, the commanding officers, they were also written by soldiers, the soldiers' families, women, slaves, merchants – a broad cross section of society, both military and civilian. But what do they all write about?

A birthday party invitation (containing the first example of a woman's handwriting in the Roman Empire); the receipt of socks, sandals and underpants; shopping lists; hunting parties; strength of the troop reports; reports about how the 'orrible little Brits tended to fight (known as the Brittunculi); moans and groans; business deals; the bad state of the roads from Catterick to Vindolanda; references to Roman Classical literary sources (Virgil and possibly Catullus) and much, much more.

Amongst the Vindolanda tablets there were frequent requests for beer (*cervesa*) from the Northern auxiliary troops stationed there. This is not surprising as these soldiers were originally from Northern Europe, such as modern Belgium and Holland. Within their ranks they had a '*cervesarius*' – a brewer named *Atrecto* and a '*bracarius*' - a maltster called *Optimus*.

What is also surprising is that at about the same time writing tablets were found in excavations at Vindolanda (in 1973), the late Dorothy Charlesworth was starting to excavate the southern limits of the Roman Flavian period fort at Carlisle (Luguvalium), in Annetwell Street. These tablets cover the period 70AD to 117AD.

Dorothy Charlesworth's excavations were succeeded by those of Ian Caruana on the site of the new extension to Tullie House Museum and later excavations at The Castle Green and at the Lanes by Mike McCarthy. Hence there were further discoveries of ink-written tablets and wax tablets which were contemporary to those at Vindolanda. These tablets reveal consumption of barley, wheat and weapons by a cavalry regiment (probably the ala Gallorum Sebosiana) from Gaul/France. They also allude to the province's best-known governor, Gnaeus Julius Agricola.

Carlisle in c. 100AD was the most important Roman base in North-West Britain. Professor Alan Bowman, who has translated many of the tablets, says "the documents from Vindolanda and Carlisle represent the most important body of evidence for Roman Britain to have emerged this century, and are a unique source for understanding not only military affairs and life on the Northern Frontier of the Roman Empire, but also the development of the Latin language."

A broken-leaf of a writing tablet was found at High House Milecastle, located on the west side of Birdoswald Fort, on the Turf Wall. It was the only milecastle built on the Turf Wall which was not rebuilt in stone. Writing tablets and fragments of papyrus (which rarely survive in Britain) were also found as part of the 'Corbridge Hoard' – a leather-covered wooden chest discovered in 1964 at Roman Corbridge (Coria).

## OTHER TREES ARE AVAILABLE...

*By Sue Seymour*

We may have lost the Sycamore Gap tree but the local area boasts a number of special, ancient or notable trees. For starters there's the two thousand year old Beltingham Yew, a Sessile Oak in Coanwood with a girth of 7½m, designated as a Tree of National Special Interest, and the Hanging Tree at Bellister, a pollarded Sycamore from which, according to legend, Royalist troops hung Cavaliers captured as they defeated Oliver Cromwell's army.

A group of volunteers is choosing then researching, writing about, drawing and photographing eleven special trees for next year's poster exhibition in Waiting Room 1 on Haltwhistle Station. If you'd like to get involved, or have a favourite tree to suggest, please contact me, Sue Seymour, on 07935 259 416. We're meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July to shortlist the trees and divide up the work.

# RECIPE OF THE MONTH - CLASSIC CREAM SODA

*By Barrie Garton*

A simple little recipe to make a cordial style base for a refreshing long drink for the summer months.

## Ingredients

- 200gms Caster or Granulated Sugar.
- 200mls Water.
- 1 good sized plump Vanilla Bean, or 1 tsp of Natural Vanilla Extract.
- 1 washed Lemon

## Method

1. Using a vegetable peeler, remove three or four strips of peel from the lemon, and then squeeze one teaspoon of juice.
2. Split the vanilla bean lengthways and scrape out and reserve the seeds.
3. Put the sugar and water in a pan and bring to a slow boil, stirring until all the sugar has fully dissolved, add the lemon peel, juice, vanilla seeds and the scraped-out bean (or the extract if using), allow to boil gently for 5mins. Remove from the heat and leave to cool.
4. Strain through a very fine sieve or muslin, or if you would like the seeds in your drink just remove the peel and the bean. Put in a suitable bottle or container to store in the fridge. Will keep for a week or two.

When you require a drink, pour around 50ml of the syrup over some ice in a tall glass and add carbonated or ideally soda water. For a classic creamy 'float', top with a scoop of your favourite vanilla ice cream.

The syrup can be drizzled over a fruit salad to add interest or used to make a vegan friendly light summer dessert as follows.

Leave a bottle of carbonated water to come to a warm room temperature, put 100mls of the syrup and 300mls of the water in a pan with 2 teaspoons of agar-agar or veggie gel, whisk and leave to stand.

Place some fresh whole berry fruits washed and well dried, into glass tumblers or dishes.

Place the syrup and agar mix on the stove and bring to a rapid boil, keep boiling for a couple of minutes. Remove from the heat, pour into a plastic or warm glass jug, allow to cool just a little and then carefully add 300mls of the warm carbonated water. Mix well but gently to retain as much 'fizz' as possible and then quickly pour the jelly over the soft fruits to cover them. Chill until ready to serve, top with fresh whipped or soya cream, or a scoop of ice cream (vegan if required) or sorbet.

# HADRIAN'S WALL ART TRAIL RETURNS THIS SEPTEMBER

*By Amanda Drago, Green Croft Arts*

The Hadrian's Wall Art Trail returns this September, inviting visitors to explore a series of exhibitions celebrating the landscapes, heritage and creative spirit of Hadrian's Wall.

Taking place across three weekends — 4–6, 11–13 and 18–20 September 2026 — the trail will connect venues along the Wall, offering audiences the opportunity to discover artwork inspired by one of the UK's most remarkable cultural landscapes.

This year's theme, Underfoot / Overhead, encourages artists and audiences alike to consider the stories, histories and natural wonders that surround us. From archaeology, geology and hidden traces of the past beneath our feet, to skies, weather, wildlife and imagination overhead, the theme invites a rich range of creative responses.

The Hadrian's Wall Art Trail is a collaboration between Green Croft Arts and Field Shelter CIC, bringing together artists, communities and visitors through a shared appreciation of place. The trail aims to showcase both established and emerging artists while encouraging people to explore the unique venues, landscapes and heritage that make Hadrian's Wall such a special place.

Artists wishing to be part of the 2026 trail can submit work until 5 July 2026.

Whether you're an art lover, a regular visitor to the Wall, or simply looking for inspiration, the Hadrian's Wall Art Trail offers a unique opportunity to experience contemporary art in extraordinary locations across this iconic World Heritage landscape.

## THANK YOU MAUREEN! AND CAN YOU HELP US?

*By Malcolm Redman*

After many years helping to distribute the magazine, Maureen Rankin has finally put away her solid shoes and brolly! On behalf of the magazine and the community, we'd like to thank Maureen for all her help - it's very much appreciated!

It does mean, however, we need a volunteer to replace Maureen. It only requires an hour of time once a month and counts as a proportion of your 10,000 daily steps. It's also an opportunity to meet with neighbours and friends in the village.

Please message Malclom on 07920842253 if you would like to help.

# AN UPDATE FROM GILSLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

*By Nicola Atkinson, Head Teacher*

KS1 enjoyed a trip to the Life Centre in Newcastle recently where they took part in a range of interactive activities and hands-on learning experiences. The children explored fascinating science exhibits and discovered new ideas through play and investigation. It was a fantastic opportunity to bring learning to life outside the classroom. The children represented our school beautifully with their enthusiasm, curiosity and exemplary behaviour.



We wish Miss Jackson all the very best as she begins her maternity leave in anticipation of the arrival of her baby in September. Miss Jackson will be greatly missed during her time away and we thank her for all she does. We send our warmest congratulations and best wishes to her and her family for this exciting new chapter, and we look forward to welcoming her back after her leave.

KS2 recently enjoyed an action-packed visit to the water park at Lakeland Adventure Centre in Coniston. The children took part in a range of exciting activities including canoeing, paddleboarding and exploring the adventure playground. They showed enthusiasm and determination as they learned new skills on the water, worked together as a team and challenged themselves throughout the day. The trip provided a wonderful opportunity to build confidence, develop resilience and enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the Lake District. We were extremely proud of the children's positive attitude and the resilience they showed.

The children are currently working hard rehearsing for their end of term performance. Every child will be involved in the production, showcasing their talents and all the hard work they have put in throughout the term. The performance will take place at school on Monday 13th July at 2pm. Friends and family are warmly invited to join us.

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## BULLETIN BOARD

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**Hadrian's Wall Farmers Market** is on Sunday 12th July from 10am to 2pm at Greenhead Village Hall. Delicious meats, drinks, preserves and baking along with lovely crafts. All direct from the local producer.

**Brampton and District Community Choir** on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30 pm at the Brampton Community Centre. Homeward Bound - summer concert. A lovely selection of music from this long established local choir. Tickets from the centre or choir members, and on the door.

**Poetry Drop-in** at Greenhead village Hall from 1.30 to 3 pm. This month the theme will be Sports and Games. Bring along poems you enjoy on this theme to share!

**Haltwhistle History Group** will be holding its monthly meeting in July in the evening as it's officially summertime, so more people can come after work. The subject this time will be "The Great Inundation of 1771' that destroyed every bridge on the Tyne except one. Find us in the Comrades at 7.30. nb At the AGM it was agreed that a fee of £1 would now be requested at meetings in order to grow our funds.

**The Hadrian Singers** continue to prepare for gigs on Friday evenings every week in the community room at the Haltwhistle Hospital at 7pm. The number of male voices is now swelling, so don't be shy to come and join the fun if you are a man! As always the only qualification is to enjoy singing and your first session is free!

**Bush Nook Camping Pod** is now available for rent and overnight stays. Ideal for walkers or cyclists, we are close to the village and all its amenities. The Pod provides a peaceful location, towels and even snacks.. For more information or to book a stay please find us on Facebook, contact Michelle or Paul on 07348 654207 or bushnookpodhadrianswall@gmail.com

**TWANGO** has been bringing well known roots/folk/jazz to villages in the North Pennines for the last 15 years. Coming up in Gilsland we have Yis Aye on 31st July at 7pm followed by Shipcote and Friends on 15th August. Both gigs are in the Village Hall and will have a small bar. Tickets from <https://www.gigantic.com/>

**Thursday Coffee Break** (in the Chapel meeting room 10.30-12.00) would like to send thanks to our caring customers and supporters. Your generosity has enabled the Coffee Break to send donations to MacMillan Cancer Care, Great North Air Ambulance Service, Junior Diabetes Research Foundation and Alzheimer's Research. Many thanks again from Evelynne, Maureen and Elizabeth.

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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*

Jul 5th Songs of praise  
Jul 19th Morning worship  
Aug 2nd Songs of praise  
Aug 16th Morning Worship

### **St. Mary Magdalene**

*Services start at 9.30 unless stated*

Jul 12th Morning Worship  
Jul 26th Holy Communion  
Aug 9th Morning Worship  
Aug 23rd Holy Communion

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## BIN DAYS

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### **Northumberland County Council**

General waste:  
2nd & 16th Jul | 6th & 20th Aug  
Recycling:  
9th & 23rd Jul | 13th & 27th Aug  
[www.northumberland.gov.uk/waste](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/waste)

### **Cumberland Council**

Refuse & garden:  
6th & 20th Jul | 3rd, 17th & 31st Aug  
Recycling:  
13th & 27th Jul | 10th & 24th Aug  
[www.cumberland.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-street-cleaning/waste-collections](http://www.cumberland.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-street-cleaning/waste-collections)

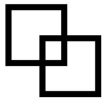
### **Haltwhistle household recycling**

Friday, Saturday, Sunday and  
Monday 8am - 6pm

### **Brampton household recycling**

10am to 6pm, every day except  
Tuesday

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# The SAMSON INN

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## BURGER NIGHT

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## **Handy History Tours and Roman Experiences**

Visit our website for more information about Guided Tours along Hadrian's Wall, Cumbria and Northumberland. We are also offering Roman Experiences including 'Write Like a Roman', 'Roman Food and Drink'. More Roman Experiences will be coming soon!

**Contact: Catherine Jarvis**

**Tel: 07759 020885**

**catherine@handyhistory.co.uk**

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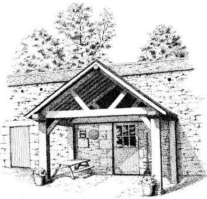
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### THE THRESHING BARN

What's On Summer 2026



#### VOICES FROM THE WALL Summer 2026

A Sound Walk in the landscape between  
Poltross Burn and Birdoswald featuring  
audio dramas written by the community.

#### CREATIVE DAY RETREAT

The Threshing Barn

Saturday 5th July 2026, 10:00 - 16:00

A day of tarot-inspired art, yoga and sound  
healing with Amanda Drago & Sally Anderson



#### HADRIAN'S WALL ART TRAIL

4-6 | 11-13 | 18-20 September 2026

A multi-venue exhibition celebrating art,  
landscape and heritage along Hadrian's Wall



Scan the QR code to find out more or  
visit the website.



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## WHO'S WHO

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### **Carlisle City Councillors: Brampton & Fellside**

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@mosspectral.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 Nicholson

Clerk: Sue Hatt:

waterheadpc@gmail.com

Councillors: John Woodmass-Calvert

### **Upper Denton Parish Council**

Chair: Dan Newrick

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

**Dominos:** 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.

### **Advertising**

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