



SLALEY NEWS FEBRUARY 2026



Welcome to “February Fill-Dyke” !

It has been rather damp recently, but can we hope for some improvement? However the Met Office says “colder conditions in the north and northeast will bring an increased risk of wintry hazards, especially where any precipitation from the south west interacts with the cold air”.

We have a look back at the many events in December and January, and forward to what’s coming in this month. We have thanks for all the Christmas events from Ian Stevens, and the very successful Ceili (not Ceilidh – that’s for the Scots!) held in January to support the Leek Club.

Forthcoming events include a new form of celebration: Sleafy’s First Galentines Day - exclusively for the ladies!

And all our usual contributors: the Parish Council, the Community Shop, the First School, the Women’s Institute and of course Karen’s beautifully illustrated gardening column!

We also have a special request from the Rose & Crown to complete a quick survey on their performance. You’ll find it as a separate insert, with more about this in their news item below.

These newsletters are composed and edited by Michael Elphick & Catherine Lincoln, printed in Hexham by The Hextol Foundation, and the printing costs are paid by the Parish Council.

Keep your contributions coming - anyone can submit news or comments!

*Contributions for the March edition by Sunday 22nd
February or earlier, please!*

*Send by email to slaleynews@icloud.com, or to
michael@elphicks.myzen.co.uk*

Parish Council Report

Your Parish Councillors hope you all enjoyed your festive season and wish everyone a happy and healthy 2026.



Our next meeting is 16 March, all welcome, 7pm in the Hall. We have not held our traditional monthly meetings due to our finances and Precept issues but we are all in regular contact by phone and email and still working as a Parish Council, albeit remotely!

Some of the issues in the Parish over the past few weeks include security. There have been a number of car thefts and equipment going missing. The police are very aware of this and have stepped up patrols. Our Facebook page is a great place to report to our community about anything suspicious, but always ring 999 and don't approach anyone.

Parishioners are also reporting an increase in dog poo in the village and on some rural verges. Please do pick up any dog poo and dispose of it either in dog bins or your bin at home, many thanks. We will ask the dog warden to visit the Parish if this continues to be a problem as this has helped with this issue previously.

Speeding remains an issue in various parts of the Parish, please take care on our wet, icy roads.

Planning applications appear to be processed faster at the moment and a number of applications in the village have been granted by NCC recently.

Please do get in touch if you think we can help with any issues in the Parish, we're always happy to hear from Parishioners.

Happy New Year!
Anne Livesey 07803 610077

The Rose & Crown

Dear Slaley neighbours,

As we step into a new year, we wanted to take a moment to say a huge thank you for the support you've shown the Rose & Crown since we took on the tenancy. Being custodians of Slaley's community-owned pub is something we're incredibly proud of, and we never forget that this pub ultimately belongs to the village.

You won't have missed the constant headlines over the past year about the struggles facing pubs across the country – rising costs, business rates, energy prices and staffing pressures have all taken their toll. Sadly, many village pubs like ours have already been lost, and once they're gone, they rarely come back.

Here in Slaley, the Rose & Crown is more than just a pub. It's a meeting place, a hub, somewhere to celebrate, commiserate, catch up, and feel part of village life. Losing our only pub would leave a huge hole in the heart of the community – socially, culturally and economically.

Your support really does make the difference. Every pint pulled, every meal eaten, every event attended helps keep the doors open and the lights on – not just for us as tenants, but for the whole village that owns this building.

Even Hawkstone, our so-called “celebrity” pub dog, knows how lucky he is to live in a village with a proper local (mostly because of the treats and fuss, admittedly).

Enclosed in this newsletter is a short survey, and we'd be incredibly grateful if you could take a few minutes to fill it in. Your feedback, ideas and suggestions genuinely matter to us and help shape how the Rose & Crown works for everyone in Slaley. Please do return it – it's one of the most important ways you can help us make the pub better for the village.

Thank you again for your continued support. We wish you all a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year, and we hope to see you in the Rose & Crown very soon.

With warmest wishes, David & Sam Elphick (and Hawkstone 🐾)

And a further message from Slaley Community Assets Ltd

We are working closely with David and Sam to protect and grow the pub to make it more sustainable into the future. We are very keen to get feedback from the village - so please take time to complete the questionnaire. Many thanks.

Norman Watson Chair of SCAL Ltd.

February 2026 gardening column

Karen Melvin

Time to tackle the wisteria before growth starts. I don't know why this is such a chore, I've done it before. It's so vigorous I hardly have space for it in its allotted one story high garden corner, still trying to grow over the house roof and under the tiles.

So we have to tie in horizontal stems (there are so many of them, how to decide?) and to cut back whippy side shoots to 2-3 buds. Also the tangle of branches need to be thinned so there is space for flowers to show. Some of these branches are choking themselves growing around a metal grid support. It's a battle. It would be happier growing up a tree. It is hard to believe that spring bulbs might be pushing through the soil in February. But here is photographic evidence - daffodils, Thomasina crocuses and snowdrops.



Crocus Thomasianum

The attitudes to gardening worldwide are interesting. In a survey that looked at the number of botanical gardens and numbers of plant related instagram and google searches, as well as other indicators of garden interest, the UK came out top closely followed by Japan, Netherlands and the USA - then India, Malaysia, Costa Rica, Italy. The UK has Kew gardens, the largest and most diverse of all botanical gardens, highly important for conservation in an

extinction crisis during present climate change. All life depends on plants. Researchers at Kew found there were 1,730 plants recorded as being new to science in just one year. They also help by conserving seeds, growing and studying new plants, and protecting genetic diversity.



Here in the photo at Kew, they are pruning both the giant waterlily, *Victoria Regia*, and the lotus plants behind. The ribbed underside of the waterlily leaves inspired the structure of the great Palm House.



The beautiful sacred lotus is a symbol of purity over corruption in many cultures. Chinese school children at one time had to learn a philosophical homily about the lotus - it “emerges from muddy water but is not contaminated; it reposes modestly above the water, hollow inside and straight outside, its stems do not struggle or branch... resting there with its radiant purity”. The lotus leaf has a surface that repels water; the leaves self clean like Teflon. Water rolls around in an upturned leaf like mercury. In fact the “Lotus-Effect” is used as a manufacturer’s trademark.



The very first garden was an enclosed mythical place from Genesis, supposedly in early Mesopotamia. The first botanic garden, Orto Botanico di Padova, was in Italy, built as a symbol of Eden. It was founded by Benedictine monks in Padua in 1545, combining botany (with over 3,500 species), science and theology. It was designed as a circle surrounding a square, further divided into more circles, dissected by the four cardinal axes. The planted circle was surrounded by a waterway symbolising the world in the ocean. The garden and the adjoining library have been in continuous use since their founding so long ago

Slaley's First Galentines Day

Celebrate amazing women at this girl powered event.

*Mums, Daughters, Aunts, Nieces, Grandmas, Granddaughters, Wives,
Friends & Neighbours are invited to
Brunch with a glass of Fizz*

Friday February 13th 10a.m. – 12 noon

Slaley Commemoration Hall

*Spend a couple of hours with some of our accomplished ladies
Be entertained by the musical talent of our French Harp player
Listen to a story of success by a lady who appeared on TV*

£20 per ticket

*A unique gift for the Women in your life.
Reserve your ticket, email pat.wilson28@outlook.com*

A Post Christmas Thank You

It was wonderful to see so many get involved with the Christmas events that took place in the village/parish over the holiday period. The weather was kind(ish) for the Christmas tree lights switch on and the Christmas karaoke at the Rose and Crown left many marvelling at the talent on show that night!!!!

Of the competitions run over the festive period the best adult Christmas Jumper prize (donated by the community shop) was awarded to Phil Allsop. Lachlan & Alaria took the children's prize (which was kindly donated by Norman Watson). The best outdoor Christmas lights competition (sponsored by the Rose and Crown)

was won by Andy & Sarah Crawford - this was a difficult competition to judge though, given all the wonderful displays around the parish.

There are many to thank for putting on events and making things happen over the Christmas period not least the WI, the boards of the Commemoration Hall and Community Shop, the Slaley Baker Boys and Girls, the Rose and Crown, Slaley Community Assets Ltd., Slaley Film Club, Healey Estate, Fiona, Helen, Phil, Norman, Stuart, Dennis, 'Lady Gwen Slaley' and Ian. Many others played a part too, so thank you to them also.

Tynedale Lions wanted to say a big thank you to everyone that turned out to see Santa on his sleigh and similar thanks came from the team at Cash for Kids who took receipt of the gifts we had collected for under privileged children in North East.

Newly Weds

Everyone that was there, would agree that Helen and Phil had a "right ol'" wedding party on 13th December. Hosted by Sam and David, who laid on a wonderful buffet at the Rose and Crown, the newly married couple were bowled over by everyone's kindness, goodwill and warmth as well as all the cards and gifts they received. The party went on to morph into the Christmas Karaoke night at the pub and Helen and Phil's day was made just that bit more special by some of the 'talent' that got up to sing, most notably, Andrew, Sam, Pete, Jolene and Angela (The Karaoke Superstars).

In short the couple had an absolutely wonderful night and would like to thank everyone who was there for making it so memorable for them.

The Slaley Leek Club Ceili

The Slaley Leek Club's fundraising Ceili last month is probably best summed up in these words, "Wow, what a do!". A full house of 'danceaholics' was treated to world class music and a wonderful supper.

The musicians deserve a special thank you - we had three members of the Hedgehog's Skin band, plus our very own Ros and Kevin Doonan. There was an amazing medley toward the end, with a great pipe player. And a very keen and willing crowd of dancers too.



The Club committee would like to say thank you to those that helped organise the event and those that attended. Everyone gave so generously, the event has given us enough funds for the next three years, thus ensuring the club's future for years to come - did you know that the Club has been going for over 50 years? And at one time there were a Women's and Men's Leek Clubs.

If you would like to join the Leek Club and help keep a longstanding Sleafy tradition alive please email ian.stevens686@gmail.com.

And don't forget the Sleafy Leek Club's Open Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Show later in the year - 12th September to be precise - everyone welcome to enter produce from your garden in one of the many show categories. Plus a chance to see potatoes put to very good use as vegetable creatures by Sleafy First School pupils.

Film Shows

Sleafy Film Shows (not really a club!) have been running since 2004, and we have shown around 180 films.

We are still continuing to use the MPLC licensing scheme, which allows us (and other users of the Hall) to show almost any film. However it has to be paid as a lump sum in September, and we need to accumulate enough profit for that by then.

Recent numbers have fluctuated, with 29 in December but only 7 in January. Our final three films for this season will be on Friday February 20th, Friday March 20th, and Friday April 20th - so tell your friends to try us out! We are providing light suppers again for those nights, which many people have said makes the evening more enjoyable.

We just ask for a donation of £6 - doors open at 7 pm, and the show starts at 7.30 pm.

The Community Shop

The shop have a new donation bin called Rosie's Corner. It's in addition to the existing one, and is for children's clothing etc as opposed to general donations in the large bin. Incidentally, the large bin is emptied weekly by ourselves and shared among the charity shops in Hexham. We visit one with a load one week and another with the following week's donations so they aren't all going to the same charity. We will collect the children's bin as required. Any branded school items may be kept in the village for the following year's new starters.

We are also initiating a 'help hub' for the village - marrying up tested and trusted tradespeople with anyone who needs help with things like painting, IT work, plumbing, joinery, odd jobs etc, as opposed to the general trades who advertise on the shop noticeboard. We are hoping people who do need help will ask for it, possibly by way of a book kept on the shop windowsill or by email at slaleyhelphub@gmail.com

Small jobs could be done non gratis, as a help to the general community. If anyone has any thoughts on this please email Helen or Phil at slaleyhelphub@gmail.com

Our thoughts are that if a paid job is needed, people can be connected to a trusted tradesperson.

Every Day 8:30-12noon

Whether you're picking up essentials or just popping in for a chat, we'd love to see you! Thank you for your continued support.

Together, we're keeping Slaley Village Shop at the heart of our community.

News from the School

It has been a busy start to the year at Slaley First School. The children have been monitoring the progress of our daffodil bulbs which were planted in the Autumn. We have dedicated two large areas of our school grounds to growing daffodils and sunflowers and the children are watching for the shoots appearing and are excited to see our flowers blossom throughout the year. We are also using this as an opportunity to encourage our children to develop their early business skills and we plan to use the flowers to enhance our curriculum and to provide money making opportunities. The children have already started to look at profit margins and make plans to use the flowers to encourage greater recycling projects.

We have encouraged the children to recognise the importance of using pre loved items whilst encouraging our Eco Warriors to look at how we are contributing to protecting our environment. We have an excellent example of how using pre-loved items can create an environment which can be comfortable, cosy and relaxing just as well as any new items can. Our new 'Living Room' formally known as the 'Club Room' has been real success for children using before and after school care. It is also used as a teaching space which encourages good Mental Health and all items in this room are pre loved and have been either donated or sourced locally at no cost from the local selling pages. The room was named by the children and launched on Friday 16th January. The response from all those who attended the launch was overwhelming and the feedback was very positive. We are proud of this facility and look forward to promoting it with all future parents and children.

Our work with Whitley Chapel School continues to be successful as we share training and resources. We are excited to develop this Federation over the next year and provide opportunities for the two schools to work together, sharing expertise and learning opportunities for the children.

Please continue to share details of our lovely village school with friends and family, we have so many wonderful plans for the year ahead which will involve the children some fun experiences.

Healey & Minsteracres Local History Group
A family of collectors, from shells to Hadrian's Wall
by Dr. Frances McIntosh
Monday 23rd February 2026
7.30 p.m. Slaley Commemoration Hall.
£4 adults 50p anyone in full time education.



The Story of 'The Bridget Atkinson Shell Collection' appeared in the Hexham Courant during March 2024. Some of you probably read the article and thought "how very interesting" and many of you will have missed the story, therefore, this talk will explain the significance of a collection of shells and bring you from the 18th century to the present day explaining the twists and turns of a 200-year-old story.

Bridget Atkinson (1732-1814) was the grandmother of the antiquarian, John Clayton.

Bridget's collection contained more than 1,200 items from around the world. Unlike other women of her era who collected for decorative value, Bridget was a serious student of conchology (the study of marine shells).

Frances will end her talk by telling the audience where they can see some, or all, of the collection.

For more information contact Pat Wilson 01434
673388, email: pat.wilson28@outlook.com

From St Mary's Slaley

Wintering

I was inspired by a colleague to start reading the book 'Wintering' by Katherine May. Maybe some of you have read it? It is billed as 'A poignant and comforting meditation on the fallow periods of life, times when we must retreat to care for and repair ourselves.' She quotes some words from Edward Thomas' poem, 'Thaw' at the start:

Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed
The speculating rooks at their nests cawed
And saw from elm-tops, delicate as flowers of grass,
What we below could not see, Winter pass.

As I am writing this, the landscape around me is one of half snow, half thaw, in the aftermath of one of those named storms – this one missed us. There are hopeful shoots of daffodil and snowdrop bulbs peeking through the snow, while small buds of hellebores hang below last year's leaves giving them shelter from the snow and the freezing temperatures. God's creation seems to be speaking of the potential vitality of life of spring ahead, if we just allow the winter to do its thing, protecting those buds and shoots of fresh new life until their time comes.

Reflecting on Jesus' Baptism and Presentation in the Temple these coming Sundays, and with Lent just round the corner as you read this, gives us a time to dwell on a spiritual form of new life, remembering afresh the new life that is found in Christ, who offers us rest and refreshment as well as life in all its abundant fullness.

Rev'd Diana Johnson

Her motto is *Ultreia et Suseia!*

Slaley WI Notes for February

Christmas came and New Year went and now its suddenly February. Snowdrops and lighter evenings are on the way hurrah!

Our monthly meetings continue to be on the second Wednesday of every month, and we are quick to respond with alternatives should our planned schedule go to pot, which quite literally did happen last month. The iPots session sadly had to be cancelled but is now planned for July; so, what did we do instead? We treated ourselves to afternoon tea at The Travellers Rest. Not much official business happened but it was a fun way of catching up on the season's jollities. The willow event was also postponed, so a trip to the Forum Cinema became a substitute to see the much talked about Hamnett film, booked in good time before it became a sell out because of speedy organisation by treasurer Helen.

The WI, at national level, have much planned this year around fundraising for the whole organisation which in turn will benefit every WI nationwide. It is expected that they will introduce sporting and challenge events, both national, and individual. There is certainly interest amongst the fitter members in our group to do a challenge walk and we will be forming a subgroup to discuss dates, routes etc and a back-up crew. We have much to discuss at our birthday dinner celebration on February 11th at 7.30pm, again at The Travellers Rest.

One thing we have clearly decided is that the Remembrance Day poppy wall we project managed last year, is to continue. The box will be back in the village shop with new starter balls of wool for those who would like to continue or be new starters. The aim is the other bit of the wall to the left of the lynch gate and hopefully the front wall of the shop. We are determined to do something decorative to the postbox too but ours is such a peculiar shape!

On a national level, a few years ago, WIs were encouraged to provide knitted poppies to create floral borders for the crates which house the Standing with Giants metal figures. Many of them have deteriorated and faded and need replacing. An extraordinary 37,000 were made. So, whether poppies are knitted here for our church wall or for Standing with Giants, we have another busy year of clicking needles.

We're sending off our votes for the national 2026 resolutions any day now – we voted almost equally between creating more accessible public toilets (and indeed more public toilets generally) and accessing and creating green spaces for what's now termed 'green health'. The overall results give the national WI organisation

the 'go ahead' to lobby at government level and gives us permission to raise awareness in our own communities and to our local councils.

We were all very sad to hear of the passing of former member and friend Dorothy Bell, expert craftswoman and adventurer who tirelessly tackled all sorts of decorative projects which over the years she sold at different craft fairs.

Many of us possess these handmade treasures which are now very poignant. She was an inspiration.



Dorothy's life was celebrated in January with a wake, held in the Rose & Crown.

Our March meeting is 'Bean to Bar', a talk and demonstration from The Canny Chocolate Company based in South Shields. It will be a bigger meeting than usual as we've invited Hexhamshire WI and we'd like to extend the meeting to any ladies in the parish who have an interest in chocolate. It's a good chance for non members to come as a non-obligation visit. The date for your diaries is Wednesday 11th March. We're sure there will be tastings!!!

Please contact President Catherine Myers on 673023 or Secretary Vicky Pepys on 07802572326 for further details.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Badminton Group	Fran Pugh	673429
Carpet Bowls	Karl Beckett	07914 693199
St Mary's Parish Church	Rev. Diana Johnson	682768
St Elizabeth's Catholic Church	Father Emmanuel Kabinga	673248
Commemoration Hall	Chairman: Andrew Coney	07990 041324
	Bookings	slaleych@gmail.com
County Councillor	Colin Horncastle	618259
Dial-A-Ride	A.D.A.P.T.	600599
Electricity	Power cut?	105
Film Club	Michael Elphick	673443
Friends of Slaley School	Andrea Foster	634865
Hexham Hospital		0344 811 8111
Ladycross Nature Reserve	Joan Jewitt	673245
Leek Club	Catherine Lincoln	07918 120125
Local History Group	Pat Wilson	673388
Mobile Hairdresser	Linda Johnston	673196
Northumberland CC	Report faulty Streetlights/ Potholes	0345 6006400
Parish Council	slaleypc@gmail.com	
Post Office Van	Martin Nichol, Stocksfield Post Office	01661 842110
Police	For non-emergency calls	101
Rose & Crown Pub	David & Sam	673996
Slaley Community Shop	Shop enquiries	673201
	Sandra Innes (Chair)	673845
Slaley First School	Head: Mrs. Hayward	673220
Slaley Parish Website	www.slaley.org.uk	
Slaley Show	Vice Chair: Gemma Common	
	Secretary: secretary.slaleyshow@hotmail.com	
The Travellers Rest	Lucy & Jed	673231
Women's Institute	President: Catherine Myers	673023
	Secretary: Vicky Pepys	07802 572326