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# THE VILLAGER

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## Editorial:

Welcome to the latest edition of the Villager. Firstly, many thanks to Frank for his 5 year stint as editor. I take on the role with some trepidation as I seriously lack IT skills. If anyone out there can teach me how to use Apple Pages properly please make yourself known!

I see the purpose of The Villager as a tool to help us develop and improve our community through communication. We can share experiences, news, ideas, recipes and opinions - in fact anything *you* wish to share. I plan to continue with four editions of The Villager each year, in February, May, August & November so please let me have your ideas and articles at anytime. The content of the newsletter is in your hands. For example, we had a poem and a short story in the last issue and any similar text will be greatly appreciated.

In this edition we have an update on our Broadband issue and an invitation to start a book club, in addition to our usual contributions.

I can be contacted on 01768352308 or at [richard.anne.king@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:richard.anne.king@hotmail.co.uk)

Richard King: Editor

**BROADBAND UPDATE:** Peter Davies, our Broadband Champion writes:

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Thank you to all those who have shown an interest in the provision of superfast broadband to Hilton and Murton. Enquiries have been ongoing, but unfortunately our villages are not part of the phase 2 rollout. To exert more pressure on the technology providers and Connecting Cumbria it was considered constructive to enlist the help of our MP, Rory Stewart. However, as you can imagine, given the latest flooding crisis and his responsibilities as Floods Minister, his priorities have been elsewhere. I will suggest a meeting with him and representatives from both villages in March. In the meantime we need evidence to present which demonstrates that our community has a real need. It is therefore imperative that those who have an interest go online to register their interest with Connecting Cumbria. There has been an insufficient response so far. In addition, if anyone can demonstrate specific hardships or disadvantages, especially in relation to business or employment, as a result of slow broadband please contact myself, Anne King, or any Parish Councillor.

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**St JOHN's CHURCH:** Gabriel Reid (Church Warden) writes:

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The Walker organ was installed in the North west corner of the church in November. We are so grateful to Leigh Harding for his extraordinary generosity and hard work in donating and installing the organ. He also played at the Carol Service and showed what an asset the organ will be to the worship in our church.

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The Carol Service was held on December 22nd, a weekday, which was necessary due to the shortage of clergy and the number of other Carol services on the Sunday. The service followed the traditional Nine Lessons and Carols format and the children who attended placed the figures in the crib at various stages throughout the service. Mulled wine and mince pies were enjoyed in the Institute afterwards. We are very grateful to Dorothy Elliott for, once again, supplying a Christmas tree.

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We welcomed Geoff Gordon and members of St Lawrence's choir who braved the bad weather and sang with us at our service on November 29th.

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The support for the bell has been repaired so the bell can now be rung safely.

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We are planning Messy Church on Good Friday from 10.00 till 11.30 in the Institute. this is for all ages - children and adults - and we have fun with pain and glue. There will be some quizzes, or you can just sit and chat. Coffee and hot cross buns will be served.

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Julie Cawson has most generously donated 50 cushions for the pews, which will be most welcome. She suggests a communal effort to cover the cushions and seeks volunteers and/or donations of material. Please contact me on 52399 if you can help.

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Our thanks go to our Rector, Rev'd Sarah Lunn, who is so overstretched with 12 churches to care for and a shortage of clergy.

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With Best Wishes for 2016.

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## **THE POTTING SHED: Tina Wragg writes:**

Happy New year to all you village gardeners. Wet, wet and more wet, just sitting on top of all the paths and flower beds in little muddy pools. However the temperatures have remained mostly mild, so there are far more perennials and shrubs in flower than is usual at this time of year. I walked around my garden this afternoon and was amazed to see three different types of pulmonaria in flower, the white, pink and coral. In the rockery the first few flowers of arabis were cuddling up to tete a tete daffs and purple aubretia. and in sheltered pockets the traditional small purple flowers of rock primula were happy to face the fleeting sun. I was also delighted to see the first celandines and pretty snow drops peeking out from under conifers and other winter flowering shrubs such as the hardy, sweet smelling witch hazel and the long flowering winter flowering viburnum bodnantese with its musky perfume wafting through the air. Other shrubs that do the winter garden proud are the cheerful jasmine, winter flowering honeysuckle and viburnum tinus.

The pots that I planted up in the Autumn are still looking very pretty, with autumn cyclamen flowering brightly along with winter pansies and the jewel coloured polyanthas that do not seem to stop flowering all year. Excellent value for money. the crocus bulbs are showing colour and I am sure they will open up the next time the sun pops through the clouds.

The borders are too waterlogged to do anything other than to clear any extra leaves that have lain over the last couple of months. I thought I had raked up most of them in November but I seem to have to have another batch spread around the beds. If we have a couple of mild, dry days you might be inspired to get on with a few garden chores:

### In the vegetable garden

- \* Begin forcing rhubarb-- place a large bucket or plastic tub over the crown to encourage pink new shoots. I find it very successful.
- \*Continue harvesting sprouts, leeks and parsnips.
- \*As crops are harvested, clear debris and cover the soil with polythene or fabric to warm the soil up and keep it weed free.
- \* If you have a heated greenhouse or lots of window sill space, sow lettuces, carrots, brassicas and sweet peas, ready for planting out under cloches when the soil has warmed up.
- \* Clean out the greenhouse and wash down the glass and the floor. Sharpen secateurs and wash plant pots and discard broken ones.

### In the flower garden

- \* Prune overgrown deciduous shrubs and climbers, and re shape beech hedges, roses, hazel and creepers and vines.
  - \* Remove the old leaves on Helleborus to show off the new flowers and encourage new leaves to form.
  - \* Prune winter flowering jasmine once all the flowers have faded.
  - \* Cut back scruffy deciduous grasses to allow the new shoots to grow easily.
  - \*If the lawns ever dry out re cut the edges to make them look smart for spring
- Well , I really hope the rain stops , the gardens dry out and we all feel inspired to get stuck in and enjoy the Spring tidy up , before a very early Easter heralds a visit to the local garden centres. In the meantime , get out and about and enjoy the snow drop walks at Lowther, Dalemain and Acorn Bank.

## **THE LAND OF A MILLION ELEPHANTS**

This is an historic name for the country now called Laos. We spent over 3 weeks there in January & found the country fascinating. As a landlocked country, surrounded by stronger nations in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, China & Burma (Myanmar), Laos has often been dominated by more powerful neighbours, most recently after the second world war when French Indochina broke up. Laos firstly fought the French and then moved into civil war as the Communist/Nationalists fought to remove the monarchy, who had supported the French. As the Vietnam war raged Laos was declared neutral by the UN.

China, Vietnam and the US each purported to accept this and denied having any military presence in Laos. However, the Ho Chi Minh trail ran through Laos and the US saw communist North Vietnam, supported by China, supplying it's army through Laos. Whilst successive US Presidents denied any involvement, the US dropped more ordinance on Laos than was used throughout the entire second world war. Laos became the most bombed country in the world. Worse still, the bombing was carpet bombing; essentially indiscriminate dropping of anti personnel mines on a civilian population. It will take another hundred years to clear the remaining bombs and we saw fields sprayed with agent orange which, over 40 years later, cannot grow crops.

Following the defeat of the US, the communists quickly won the civil war but found it hard to rebuild and develop as they lacked the infrastructure, raw materials and skills.

However, 40 years on the fascinating country is beginning to develop. Unfortunately the one million elephants have fallen to fewer than 900, of which only 100 are wild. The same can be said of most wildlife; as we saw markets selling everything from grubs, to swallows, rat and porcupines. The government has recently opened 27 conservation areas with a view to restoring wildlife but all this will take time.

Laos remains a one party state but, aside from major national projects, the economy is unfettered capitalism. We were amazed to find that parents have to pay for education. This may work for the urban middle classes, but the majority of people are essentially subsistence farmers who find it hard or impossible, to pay for education. We visited a village with no mains electricity (a solar powered TV for a few). The first 4 classes each had 30 children but the top class fell to 6 as parents withdrew children because they could not pay for secondary education at a few pounds per child, per term. With fees for college and university running to between £500 and £1000 per child per year these options simply do not exist for those living in the countryside. One of our guides had clearly been well educated, but it became clear that his parents and he had agreed that he become a Buddhist Monk at 8 years old. The monks recognised his potential and put him through secondary education and college, allowing the family to pay for the education of his siblings from their scant resources.

Almost all infrastructure projects are financed by neighbours, including China, Russia and Vietnam because Laos lacks the capital and the skills. Not only are the financial terms often heavily loaded in favour of the lender, but the projects themselves may have serious side effects. For example, the Chinese have funded vast pineapple estates on the banks of the Mekong, but insist on using chemicals unknown to an almost universally organic Laos, with unknown impacts of run off into the river.

Despite these problems, the people are almost universally welcoming, smiley and helpful. Their food is of excellent quality and generally cheap and plentiful. Beer Lao is

undoubtedly the best in South East Asia. Laos is a stunningly beautiful country. The north in particular is mountainous, with rivers carving their way through steep, tree clad valleys. There is plenty of scope for walking, climbing and kayaking - staying in hotels, simple guesthouses or homestays (simple village houses). The south of the country is much warmer and has a softer but beautiful landscape. The highlights of our trip included:

- a 2 day cruise down the Mekong, from the Thai border to the UNESCO World Heritage city of Luang Prabang
- Day treks in the stunning hills around Luang Prabang
- Nong Kiaw on the River Nam Ou, a wonderful base for walking, kayaking or climbing
- Nam Et-Phou Louey national park including river trips by long tail canoe, night safari on the river, overnight in the forest.
- Kong Lor Cave: a 7.5k canoe trip through a cave travelling from one side of the mountain to a village on the other side.
- Kingfisher Eco Lodge: trekking & bird watching
- 4000 islands: stunning scenery and waterfalls as the Mekong widens between Laos & Cambodia
- Buddha caves and temples everywhere!

If anyone is thinking of visiting Laos we would be happy to discuss our experiences with them. You might also find the Dr Siri Paibourn series of books by Colin Cotterill provides an insight into Laos & it's people.

For hundreds of years the role of tractor, plough and taxi was performed by the water buffalo. This has now been replaced by the "Chinese Water Buffalo" (see below). The eagle eyed may split that this is actually an upmarket Japanese model but don't spoil a good story!.



## NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTE

### Lunches

So far we have held 3 community lunches on the second Tuesday of each month. These have proved popular, with over 30 people coming in for lunch each time and to catch up on the craic.

A choice of 2 soups is on offer with a fresh baked roll, followed by a choice between a hot or cold dessert, then coffee or tea to follow.

All for just £3, which you couldn't beat anywhere!

Many thanks to the two teams of ladies who alternate each time in the kitchen and to Jacky Watkinson for co-ordinating the event. Please let it be known if there is anyone who would like to come out for lunch but needs to be picked up. Transport can be arranged.

**The Fellsiders** December meeting was a demonstration of Christmas decorations. As this coincided with a carol service in town we did not expect so many ladies to be free to come along and so set up in the meeting room. However over 20 came along and we did manage to squeeze everyone in.

Denise from Petals in Brough showed how to make 2 arrangements, one for a table and then an unusual shaped wreath for the door. Denise also brought along a lovely selection of seasonal gifts and arrangements for sale or to order which added a good deal of interest to the meeting. Thanks to Carol McDarren too for helping on the night and for setting up a stall again the following week at Coffee & Craic and again at the Tuesday lunch. You never know what you will find going on in the new Institute!

The meeting room makes a cosy venue for smaller meetings and is available to hire, with or without Kitchen facilities. Bookings are taken by Hazel Chapelhow

Then the day of the Christmas **Coffee And Craic.....**

Saturday December 5<sup>th</sup>, never to be forgotten as the day of storm Desmond and the worst flood in Appleby. As the morning wore on two big puddles formed, one between the hall and Hilton and the other cutting off Murton. So it was a bit touch and go whether those in the hall would get home and also prevented later arrivals from even reaching the Institute. It takes a lot to stop fellsiders from getting through!

Again the **Quiz**, postponed this time to January 16<sup>th</sup> hit bad weather on the night. It started snowing and by 7pm a couple of inches had settled and was still snowing steadily. Surely no-one would want to stop out on a night like that and risk not getting home? No way! Nearly 40 made it along, supper dishes in hand and it was a good night for the first Quiz night in our new building.

A date for your diary is the Weekend of April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> - the weekend after Easter - when we will be holding a **Craft Exhibition** in the Institute. Open to all those folk who have hobbies and hidden talents to come along and show off their handiwork. Teas will be served both days. More information will follow next month.

**FOOD HYGIENE CERTIFICATES** (photo to add)

Several ladies spent a day on a food hygiene course at the Institute and have all passed and qualified to handle food safely in our new kitchen. So you will be in capable hands for the lunches. The Certificates have been placed in a folder in the kitchen should anyone need theirs to produce at another venue.

**Forthcoming events**

**FILM NIGHT** Last Saturday of the month

**Sat Feb 27th: 7pm for 7.30 - Latest James Bond " Spectre"**

Daniel Craig's swansong as 007

Bring your own drinks and snacks.

**Sat March 19th: Lady in the Van**

**Sat April 30th - Gravity**

**SOUP'n PUD community lunches. Second Tuesday of each month**

**Tuesday February 9<sup>th</sup>, March 8<sup>th</sup>, April 12<sup>th</sup>, May 10<sup>th</sup>** from 12 noon to 1pm.  
£3 for soup and roll, dessert, coffee or tea.

**COFFEE AND CRAIC** 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every other month.

**Saturday February 20<sup>th</sup>**

10am to Noon £2.50 Bacon Butties or cake with coffee/tea

Sales tables. Come along if you have something to sell, new or pre-loved.

Next: April 16 June 18

**CRAFT EXHIBITION WEEKEND**

**Saturday & Sunday April 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> (see details above)**

Reserve a table/space with Tina Wragg 53642 or e.mail

[tina.wragg@btinternet.com](mailto:tina.wragg@btinternet.com) for more information.

There will be a small charge of £3 to exhibitors, and for visitors with all proceeds going to Institute funds

Coffees and Teas will be served on both days with scones or tray bakes. A rota of helpers will be needed so if you can help for a couple of hours during the weekend or bake some goodies that would be great, please contact Tina.

Opening times still to be decided.

**90<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN**

**Thursday April 21<sup>st</sup>**

It is not yet known whether the MOD will be planning a beacon on the Pike but at sometime round that date it is hoped to have a celebration in the Institute for this milestone birthday.

**LIBRARY THEATRE GROUP visit****Saturday June 25<sup>th</sup>****"HAPPY JACK" by John Godber**

We hope this will be the first of live theatre productions to come to the Institute stage. More details to follow.

**MURTON PHOTOGRAPHIC**

The sale of local Christmas cards this year raised £320 which has now gone off to the Air Ambulance. Thank you to all who bought the packs and helped support our local service. Maybe next year we'll be able to produce another calendar....No promises!

**VILLAGE GREEN ROUND UP:**

*Plans are going ahead to try and improve the appearance of the top green at Murton and the triangular patch of green in Hilton, whilst also making these areas more attractive to wildlife. We hope to increase the number of wild flowers in these areas of village green, with a lot of hard work, and some help from the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty pollinator project.*

*Later in the spring we will be planting plug plants of nectar rich native wild flowers in both these areas. Before we can do this we will need to cut the grass as short as possible, and we will be asking for volunteers to help with this work. We hope to be able to cut and plant the whole of the Hilton green, while work in Murton may initially have to concentrate on a few areas of green because of the size of the area involved. So look out for a note asking for volunteers as soon as the weather improves a bit. Everyone can help in some way, by using a scythe, strimmer or mower, or by helping rake up trimmings and disposing of them, or in due course by helping with the planting.*

*The Fellsider's programme for this year includes an evening in May to discuss attracting bees and other pollinating insects into our greens and gardens, and an opportunity to exchange of pollinator friendly plants is also planned for later in the year.*

**CALLING ALL BOOKWORMS:**

*Is anyone interested in joining a book group? For the benefit of anyone who has not heard of such a group, normally members choose a book to read each month & then meet to discuss it. I really enjoyed the group I belonged to in Lincolnshire & would like to belong to one here. If you are interested, please contact Anne King on 017683 52308 or at [felldodderers@btinternet.com](mailto:felldodderers@btinternet.com)*

**BANNER FOR THE INSTITUTE:**

*I was asked by the village hall committee to set a community project in motion. We plan to make a padded banner for the wall to help absorb some of the noise in the building. I asked three local artists to enter an idea and then during the coffee and craics and the lunches , people voted on their favourite.*

*The winner was John Sibson's entry. I intend to put things into motion shortly and will appeal for crafty sewers to join in if they have not already put their names down.*

*Hopefully there will be group sessions as well as folk working at home.*

*There will be a fabric amnesty where people can donate fabric to help keep a continuity of colours etc!*

*Watch this space!*

*Clare Patterson*

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**PARISH WEBSITE:**

*You may not be aware that we have a parish website. You can find it at [www.Murton.org.uk](http://www.Murton.org.uk) . So far there is not much on the site except for the Parish council which now publishes all its agendas, minutes and financial and management information on the site. This is to bring the council up to current standards for information dissemination and I think we were the first parish in Cumbria to do this.*

*The Villager is also on the site and you can find the last few back copies there if you've missed an edition or if you want to let family and friends outside of the parish know what we get up to.*

*There is the start of a set of pages for the Institute and a local directory but these need quite a lot of work doing...*

*If anyone has any ideas as to how the site could be more useful, easier to use or just simply better please get in touch.*

*Frank Price email to [website@murton.org.uk](mailto:website@murton.org.uk) or phone on 017683 54013.*

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**INVITATION TO THE MURTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**Everyone welcome**

**CUMBRIA HIGHWAYS**

**Tuesday 8 March**

**1.30-2.30 pm**

**Murton Institute**

**(immediately following the Community Lunch)**

This year the Murton Annual Parish Meeting will provide an opportunity for residents to find out more about the County Council's Highways Department.

John Banks, Network Engineer, Highways & Transportation, Cumbria County Council will give a brief description of the work of the Highways Department before answering questions.

Road repairs, planned maintenance, flooding and gritting are some of the topics we expect to be covered.

## **CIVIC NEWS Feb 2016**

Following a late autumn, this winter has been marked by wind, heavy rain and resulting flooding. Throughout the parish, people have been affected – water ingress in houses from saturated fields, overflowing becks and water on the roads making driving conditions difficult.

Therefore the flooding and its consequences was one of the main topics of discussion at the recent parish council meeting. Residents of Coupland Back made a presentation of the effects of Storm Desmond on their community which resulted in several houses being flooded when George Beck burst its banks. Councillors raised the damage to both roads into Appleby, and it was noted that the subsidence under the road at Ash Bank has become more marked. Concern had been raised about the state of erosion by Hilton Beck under the road along the edge of Brackenber Moor.

Therefore it was decided to invite a representative of CCC Highways to attend the Annual Parish Meeting to talk to us about the road maintenance programme and particularly the problems we have experienced recently. Please come and join the discussion – it will be a question & answer session with John Banks who is our local CCC Highways engineer (so he knows our parish well) on Tues 8<sup>th</sup> March immediately after the next community lunch.

As the spring approaches, attention turns to our villages. We have been in touch with Eden District Council about the garden waste skips. No decision has been made yet about the scheme for 2016 but we have made it as clear as we can that the skips are well-used and appreciated by gardeners in both Hilton and Murton. Cllr King is looking for volunteers in Hilton and Murton to help with preparation of the top greens for the wild flower meadows and we are proposing to have a 'clean-up' day to clear the cemetery of the fallen branches, edge the paths and apply weedkiller, and to tidy the Lane, Hilton. Please check the noticeboards for dates once the weather improves.

The Budget for 2016-7 was discussed and approved with a small increase in the precept resulting from a reduction in the assistance we get from EDC. David Kipling's tender to maintain the cemetery has been accepted for a further three years and we have included expenses for our defibrillators for the first time.

Many thanks to Brian Moncaster and the First Responders for organising a defibrillator for both Hilton and Murton. As you know, Age Concern has kindly funded a defibrillator for Hilton which will be sited in the former telephone box. Siting a defibrillator for Murton has been more problematic because of the need for an electricity supply immediately adjacent. Brian has managed to secure a machine from the British Heart Foundation and EDC have agreed that it can be connected into the street light. Mr and Mrs Cawson have agreed that the defibrillator can be sited on the wall of Bridge House.

Finally I would like to thank Alan Ormrod for his grass-cutting skills over many years, maintaining the play area on the Top Green in Murton. We are looking for someone to take this over, so if you are able to help, please speak to any of the councillors.

**Barbara Govan**

Chair, Murton Parish Council

### ***Mrs Pinafore's Butternut Squash Soup:***

Inspired by the community lunches, Mrs P thought she'd add her own recipe to the growing list of yummielunchtime specials on offer.

#### **Ingredients**

1 medium sized butternut squash, peeled and chopped into 2 cm cubes  
1 medium red onion, chopped  
1 medium sweet potato, peeled and chopped  
Three garlic cloves  
Olive oil for roasting  
Pepper, herb of your choice (eg bay, thyme or rosemary)  
(Option - 4 or 6 chicken wings or drumsticks or 250 mls coconut milk)

#### **Method**

Preheat the oven to 150°C with a good roasting tin and a generous splash of oil, meanwhile peel and chop the squash, onion and sweet potato. Add all the chopped veg, the garlic and chicken if using and roast for 1 hour. Give it all a good turn two or three times to get ever thing nicely browned, especially the chicken if using.

Remove the roasting tin from the oven and put all the veg and herb of choice into a large pan squeezing out the roasted garlic from its skin as you do. Shred the chicken and add it all to the pan. Deglaze the roasting tin with boiling water – make sure you loosen all the brown gooey bits and add the glaze to the pan. Add 750 mls water (or 250 mls coconut milk and 500 mls water if not using chicken) and bring to a slow simmer for 25 minutes. Mash all the veg into as fine a pulp as you like – anything from chunky to smooth puree is fine – adding more water if necessary to bring it to a nice soup consistency. Bring back to the boil and serve.

### ***Beef/Venison Koi Saa:***

From Natacha Du Pont De Bie's book on Laos entitled *Ant Egg Soup*. I suggest this as one of a number of dishes to eat with rice, or simply increase the quantities.

1/2 lb beef sirloin, rib-eye or venison fillet very thinly sliced into 1 inch pieces  
1 tablespoon fish sauce  
2 stalks lemongrass  
2 spring onions (green bits only) finely chopped  
1 dash of oil  
1 clove garlic, peeled and finely sliced  
1 or 2 dashes of light soy sauce  
1 large handful mint leaves

Marinate the meat for up to 24 hours with the fish sauce, lemon grass and half the spring onions.

Heat the oil in a wok to a high heat & fry the garlic until golden & crispy. remove & reserve.

Add the meat & soy sauce to a very hot wok & toss for 1 to 3 minutes so the meat is seared on the outside & rare on the inside.

Remove the meat from the wok, toss with the fried garlic, mint leaves & remaining spring onions. serve immediately with rice.

## **CITIZENS ADVICE**

### ***VOLUNTEERS NEEDED***

#### *HELP YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY*

We need more volunteers at our Penrith office. If you have time on your hands and can give us one day a week for a fascinating, stimulating and demanding volunteer role, why not get in touch?

**Full training and ongoing support provided, as well as travel expenses.**

Volunteering can help alleviate stress, develop skills and give purpose and structure.

For enquiries about volunteering call 01768 891503 or email [officemanager@caedcab.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:officemanager@caedcab.cabnet.org.uk)

Look at [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) for more information