

DRC News

AUTUMN/WINTER 2026



Offering Spiritual and Pastoral Support to the Rural and Agricultural Community



In this issue:

Cover photo by Pauline Bernfield on Unsplash

Page

- 3 Welcome from Rev Phil Michell, DRC Lead Chaplain
- 5 Give us a drink..... by Rev Pete Evens
- 7 DRC's Evening on the Farm, June 2026
- 9 Reflections on the "old" Bakewell livestock market by Alison Fletcher
- 12 Peak District Men in Farming by Alice Bettney
- 13 Women In Farming: Rachel Hadfield by Alison Fletcher
- 15 Groundswell Festival 2026 by Alan Phillips
- 17 Spotlight on the work of Lowberdale Farm by Mark Lowe
- 20 Hugh Addison and the Borderline Challenge by Alison Fletcher
- 23 Derbyshire Farmers Management Committee by Robert Helliwell
- 24 News and Updates
- 26 Lester Lowe - The Man and the Company by Rev Phil Michell
- 30 The Impact of Conflict and Government Policies by Andrew Critchlow
- 31 Helpful Contact Numbers For Advice And Support

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Bookings now open for
DRC's Harvest Supper
(see page 2)

Invite a chaplain or contact the DRC on 07710 088972

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Derbyshire
Rural
Chaplaincy

Derbyshire Farmers' **Harvest Supper**

With Harvest Hymns & Stories of Faith In Farming

Wednesday 30th September 2026

Arrival from 7pm, supper served at 7.30pm
at The Cow Shed, Beltonville Farm, Millers Dale, SK17 8SS



Join us for pie and peas as we celebrate the harvest together

£15 per person - Booking Essential
(dessert included - tea/coffee £1 pp extra)

Email: jess@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk
Tel: 07593 380311 or book online using QR



Welcome from Rev Phil Michell

One of my favourite things since joining the DRC has been attending events where farmers are gathered. On every Friday in May, Ashbourne Farmers Club hold stock judging evenings and I was able to attend two of them; the first at the Archer's farm at Bradley Hall Farm, and the other was at Dunsda Farm, Chatsworth. I had a go at stock judging at both events. I failed miserably at the Archers but at Dunsda Farm I managed to bag two lots of prize money. Was it luck, skill or divine intervention? I'll let you decide.



An important aspect of all of these events is the social side of it. Farming can be quite isolating at times so gathering together, catching up with friends, having conversations, offering and receiving support is really important. For some, it will be more important than the stock judging.

The DRC offer opportunities for folk to gather. We had our Evening on the Farm at the Robinsons at Whetton in June (see report on pages 7 and 8) and we have our Harvest Supper on 30th September. We also contribute to the Carol Service at the ABC in December and we have our monthly service at the ABC on the first Monday of the month. The chaplains also attend some of the social groups which are supported by the Farming Life Centre in Bakewell along with the Peak Women in Ag group and the newly formed Peak District Men in Farming group (see page 12).

Meeting together, sharing food and conversation has been important for human beings for thousands of years. People would meet with others who were like-minded but would avoid certain members of the community like the plague. We discover in the bible that Jesus met with all kinds of people from different parts of the community – often with those that many others would avoid. To him, every person was important and had worth. When he died on the cross, he died for the whole of humanity, not just a few.

Continued...

In the DRC, we are here for the whole of the farming community, not just those who express some sort of faith or who go to church. Everyone in the farming community is important and has worth. As Jesus met and spent time with anyone, so we, as chaplains, are prepared to do the same.

I'm still 'the new boy' and you may not have met me yet. So do invite me to come to your farm. I'd love to meet you, see what you do and have a chat over a cup of tea about what is important to you at this time.

I look forward to meeting you and I hope you enjoy reading the rest of this edition of the DRC News.

“Do not give up the habit of meeting together”

Hebrews 10:25



Monthly Service
at Bakewell Livestock Market

Dates for your diary:
2026

Monday 7th September
Monday 5th October
Monday 2nd November
No Service in December
2027

Monday 4th January
Monday 1st February
Monday 1st March
Monday 5th April
Monday 10th May
Monday 7th June
Monday 5th July

A short, informal service starting at 10:00am in the conference room of the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1AH

Everyone welcome | Refreshments served

For details please call or email:
07593 380311 | jess@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk

Join the Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy this summer & beyond...

We will be serving drinks & cake in our hospitality tent at the following agricultural shows. We'd love to see you!

-  **Saturday 15th August - Ashbourne Show**
Osmaston, Ashbourne, DE6 1LW
-  **Monday 31st August - Hope Show**
Castleton Road, Hope, S33 8RZ
-  **Saturday 5th September - Turnditch & Windley Village Show**
Wirksworth Road, Windley, DE56 4AQ
-  **Wednesday 7th October - Brailsford Ploughing Match**
Sapperton Manor, Church Broughton, DE65 5SL

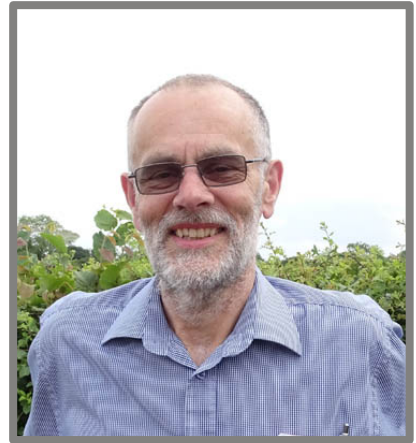
Contact us for details:
Tel: 07710 088972
Email: phil@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk



Give us a drink...

By Rev Pete Evens, Agricultural Chaplain

His body cried out for water. He'd been walking too long in the middle-eastern sunshine. The dampness of the well rose to his nostrils, driving his longing. He stayed thirsty, for want of a bucket. With temperatures only in the mid-20s, he could wait a while. But, with the sun overhead, strong desire would soon turn to urgent need...



Our lives and livelihoods depend on fresh water. It makes up a high proportion of every living being. As much as we can, we've developed ways to close the gap between source and point of need. When those ways fail, we drop everything else to sort it out. Many of you know all about fighting with freezing pipes in a biting east wind, while your livestock are bawling for water. Whether from cold or heat, sometimes we still have to resort to the ancient method of filling a bucket, to carry water to where it's needed.

John Parsons has plenty of water on his farm. It flows out of the ground year-round, creating an area of wetland. He needs it 50 metres or so above that source, where there's decent grassland. The water supply up there was inadequate to allow regular grazing for his herd. How could he get enough water from spring to pasture? His solution is one I'd not come across before: a 'papa' pump. They've been around for 15 years or so. They're water driven, like cast iron ram pumps, but made of new composite materials, robust and rust-proof. Remarkably, with pump and pressure vessel set about a metre below the spring, they push water up the hill to fill and overflow a 10,000-litre reservoir. Now, with the water supply assured, John can develop a range of buildings for his cattle up there. And he'll be collecting rain off the roofs to double the water storage. I don't think the herd will go thirsty!

Back at the middle-eastern well, the thirsty man got connected to the water source when a local lady turned up with a bucket. At least, I think he eventually got a drink! There was quite a lot of verbal sparring between them. For starters social convention

Continued.....

forbade him, a Jewish man, from speaking with her, a woman from what we'd now call 'The West Bank'. Surely he wouldn't stoop to drinking from her bucket. He answers her objections with, 'If you only knew who you were talking to, you'd have asked me for "living water"'. She retorts, 'You don't even have a bucket. Who on earth do you think you are?' Yet she's very attracted to the prospect of having her thirst quenched once and for all. An internal spring of water? A non-stop life-source? Maybe then she wouldn't have to keep coming to the well! It would be like installing a papa pump, constantly filling and overflowing the reservoir.

When the woman went back to her village, a different sort of thirst had been satisfied. She told everyone, 'Come see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Christ?' They all flocked to the well to meet this man. His ability to see beyond their self-defensive prickliness and treat them as valued human beings, convinced them of his identity. They persuaded him to stick around for a couple of days. Social convention was suspended!

For more about moving water up hill, look at *papapump.com*.

For more about a non-stop internal life-source, it's the biblical book of John, chapter 4. Or you may want to talk to someone who's already tried out the plumbing.

Drink deeply!

Would you like to feature in a future issue of the DRC News?

We are always on the lookout for new material for the DRC News and if you have an interesting story to tell that you think our readers would enjoy, please do contact us. Your story could be about farming (either in the past or modern times), or Christian faith, or a combination of the two. You don't have to write an article out in full, you might prefer to just tell us your story and we can write it up for you to check afterwards. Please do contact us if you would like to contribute to the DRC News.

Telephone: 07593 380311

Email: jess@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk

DRC's Evening on the Farm, June 2026

It was a perfect evening! Towards the end of a blisteringly hot and sunny week at the end of June we gathered at Bottom Farm, Wheston, near Tideswell for our third Evening on the Farm. The sun continued to shine, it was hot but there was also a refreshing breeze. Some who had booked to come couldn't make it as they were out and about hay-making or shearing before the forecast rains were due. But there were still approximately 180 folk there on the night.



It began with hog roast filled cobs courtesy of Lizzie Kemp and her team, followed by drinks and cakes provided by our new administrator Jess and her team of helpers. We are grateful to them all for working so hard to keep us fed and watered throughout the evening.

We were pleased to welcome Sarah Thomas from Ashgate Hospice in Chesterfield who informed us of the work that they do there. This is the charity chosen by the Robinson family who were our hosts for the evening. Stuart Robinson spoke about the history of the farm and took us on a tour of the sheds and parlour, giving a very interesting and informative talk along the way. We then followed him into the nearby fields, wandering among the dairy herd as we walked through lush fields towards the orange glow of the setting sun.



Continued.....



On our return to the farmyard more food was consumed, the results of the stock judging were announced and prizes handed out. Congratulations go to James Heath who was the overall winner, pipping his mum Margaret to top spot. We are grateful to Michael Wynne who was our stock judge for the evening.

It was wonderful to see so many friends chatting and relaxing having spent a few hours away from *their* farm and enjoying the hospitality on someone else's farm.

The evening was brought to a close with lots of thank-yous, not least to the Robinson family who had welcomed us to their farm and who must have spent many hours ensuring that everything was ready for us to visit. We are so thankful for their kindness and generosity in hosting us this year. Before people departed, Rev Phil Michell said a prayer of blessing for all those present and their farms.

The evening was jointly funded by the DRC, Bagshaws and the High Peak Livestock Society. We are so grateful to Bagshaws and the HPLS for their continuing support of this annual event. Donations on the night totalled £1213.32 which is split between Ashgate Hospice and the DRC. Thanks go to everyone who came, who helped and who supported the event by giving donations. If you weren't able to attend but would still like to make a donation, please scan the QR code or contact Jess (administrator).



Next year: We are aware that the last few events that we have put on have been towards the north of the county, so we are planning on holding next year's Evening on the Farm a little further south, but still north of Derby. We'll be advertising it in the next edition of the DRC News and online nearer the time. It is such a worthwhile event as we gather folk together for a relaxed and enjoyable evening - we hope to see you there!

Reflections on the "old" Bakewell Livestock Market

Interview with Ian Lawton and Greg Gagie

By Alison Fletcher, Agricultural Chaplain



Greg Gagie, auctioneer with the judge at Bakewell Market Christmas Show

Ian Lawton auctioning sheep at Bakewell Market



Whilst many people who regularly attend Bakewell livestock market today will have their own recollections of the "old" Bakewell market, as time goes by there are many others who never experienced it as buyers, sellers or observers.

The auction site was across the river essentially where the Co-op store is now.

Auctioneers Ian Lawton and Greg Gagie spent many years working there with WS Bagshaws and Sons and both became partners in the firm in 1967. Below they share a few of their reflections and memories.

Alison: When did you first start auctioneering livestock in the old Bakewell market?

Ian: August 1963

Greg: March 1st, 1964

Continued.....

Alison: What livestock did you primarily auction and where did you stand to do your auctioneering?

Ian: I auctioned sheep. I was always outside in all weathers walking on top of the pens.

Greg: I auctioned beef cattle. I worked from a small rostrum in an old, very open tin shed

Alison: We are used to electronic boards in the main sale rings these days but how did you communicate the information in the old market?

Ian: I had to shout - we didn't have any microphones.

Greg: Everything was announced just by voice.

Alison: I'm sure you both have many memorable stories from your time there but tell us about one of them?

Ian: My most memorable stories involve animals escaping! I remember one cow escaping and finding its way onto a nearby housing estate. Somehow it managed to fall through a garage, and the owner came out to find four legs through the roof.

Greg: It was 30th November 1974 and I was moving house - on a Monday. I got a phone call about midday telling me to get to market as it was chaos. There were about 400 beef cattle that day and I ended up selling for 2-3 hours. Even as I arrived there was a queue of lorries and trailers waiting to unload, and it was about midnight when all the cattle finally got sorted out.

Alison: Overall, what was it about the "old" market you enjoyed the most?

Ian: It has to be all the people I saw there week by week, year by year and seeing the different generations of farmers coming through.

Greg: The people I met there and of course some of them I still see now.

Alison: When the market finally moved across the river to its current site in 1998, what was it you missed most about the old market?

Ian: Absolutely nothing! I've always said we went from the 1800's to the 2000's in one jump.

Greg: Not a lot. Maybe the chaos and the rain because there was not much cover at the old market.

Ian and Greg can still be found at Bakewell market every Monday, albeit they have both now hung up their auctioneer's gavel, so if you want to hear more of their recollections or share your own memories of the old Bakewell market with them, I'm sure you can track them down.



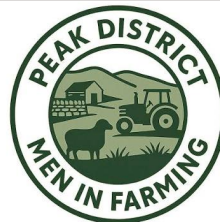
Ian and Greg today



There appear to be very few photos in existence of Greg and Ian auctioneering at the "old" Bakewell market but if any reader has any such photos hidden away then they'd both be very pleased to see them!

The Peak District Men in Farming Group

**By Alice Bettney, Farm Business Project Coordinator
The Farming Life Centre, Bakewell**



The Peak District Men in Farming group launched in May 2026 with a clear vision, to give local farmers a straightforward, practical space to meet, talk, and take part in activities that support both their work and their wellbeing. Farming can be isolating and demanding, and the group offers a reliable way for men to get off the farm and socialise with others who understand the pressures of the job.

The first meeting at Aston Hall Farm by kind permission of the Dalton family got the group off to a flying start. It was relaxed, sociable evening that gave farmers the chance to talk openly about what they wanted from the group. The farmers were taken on a fabulous farm walk by Joe who showed the group their upland sheep and beef farm and after had a BBQ.

In June, members visited Tideswell Welding Services by kind permission of the Bettney family for a workshop tour of their welding and fabrication business. The visit highlighted local skills, encouraged discussion around machinery and repairs, and showed the value of learning directly from rural businesses. It reinforced the idea that the group should focus on real-world, practical activities rather than formal classroom-style sessions.

If you would like to learn more about the group or find out what the next meeting is, please contact 07904 691457 to be added to the email or WhatsApp group.



Women In Farming - An Interview With Rachel Hadfield

By Alison Fletcher, Agricultural Chaplain

Alison: Tell us a little bit about yourself – how old you are, where you farm and something about your farm.

Rachel: I'm 29 years old and I farm with my mum and dad on the family farm which is a limestone hill farm and I believe is the highest in Derbyshire. I am the fifth generation to live and farm there.

It is a beef and sheep farm. We keep mainly Mules and Mules x Texel sheep. We lamb at the end of March into April and sell most of our sheep through Bakewell or Leek market. I have a small flock of my own ewes also.



We keep Limousin and Blue x suckler cows, and rear some calves and stores, which are also mostly sold through Bakewell stores or fat.

At the farm we also have a campsite in the summer months and at weekends I run a food van on the site.

Alison: Did you go to agricultural college or learn farming on the job?

Rachel: I left school at 16 and have worked on the farm ever since and learnt everything from mum and dad. I did a few courses through Buxton YFC like my trailer test, spraying and rat control.

Alison: So, what aspects of life on the farm do you spend most of your time doing and what's your favourite farming job ?

Rachel: I love the fact that every day is different and different jobs for different times of the year. To be honest, I enjoy lots of different things from lambing, tractor driving and walling to calf rearing.

Continued.....

My favourite time of year is autumn, getting the lambs ready to sell and the sheep and tup sales buying in the replacements.

Alison: Over the years I've bought some of my hens from you. Tell us a bit about your Rowter Poultry business, how you started and what's your focus now.

Rachel: I've kept hens from being young and when I couldn't find any pullets to buy locally, I decided to start a business selling my own. So basically, it's a small business that I enjoy doing alongside my farm work selling hybrid breed pullets mainly to local people.

Alison: Farming is going through lots of changes just now with even more on the horizon. What most concerns you and are there any glimmers of hope from your perspective?

Rachel: It's a real concern in farming at the minute. Margins have gone so tight with the price of everything we buy in such as fertiliser, fuel, corn, straw and other bills going up such a lot. Although livestock prices have increased a lot too, the profit in the middle is only the same if not less in some cases.

For lots of young farmers, the high prices of livestock over the past couple of years meant it was hard for them to get into farming or increase their stock. Not everyone wants to take the risks of not knowing what prices you'll get when you sell your finished product.

I think for any glimmers of hope we need the Government to realise how important farming and food production really is.

Alison: Given that farming and all your other commitments are pretty full on, what do you do to help you relax when you get any spare time?

Rachel: When I get chance, I like to go to the races, or days out at agricultural shows where I sometimes take my food van. I also really enjoy going to sheep sales out of our area for a day out. Maybe one day I'll even get a passport and go abroad on a holiday!

Groundswell Regenerative Agriculture Festival 2026 by Alan Phillips, Chaplaincy Volunteer - Farm Support Team

Groundswell takes place for two days every July at Lannock, Hertfordshire. It is quite different from other agricultural shows; you certainly get that festival feel as soon as you arrive. But it also has a professional and determined side, showcasing all that regenerative agriculture has to offer. Now in its 10th year, Groundswell has grown to be the largest regenerative agricultural event in Europe, hosting U.K and international speakers on everything from the microbiome in the soil, through the nutrient density of food to how it affects the microbiome in our own bodies. Instead of "Farmgate to Plate", Groundswell goes from "Biome to Biome."

Seminar and lecture tents host a programme of talks and open sessions led by speakers from universities, research organisations, businesses and, crucially, actual "regen farmers." With so many innovators, Groundswell could be seen as a specialist "TED Talks" or "How the Light Gets In" for agriculture.

Trade stands promote the latest technology, equipment, and services to help farmers in the day-to-day running of the farm. It's great to see ideas from previous festivals being put to practical use. There are a mixture of niche and larger companies developing their regen presence. One talk featured a soil acoustic device that uses very sensitive microphones to detect sounds in the soil inaudible to the human ear. It will probably be five years before this technology is ready to go, but when it is, it will be used to identify tiny creatures in the soil in a similar way to the phone app for birdsong. This will give an immediate indication of soil health by the range of species detected.

Derbyshire was represented, not only by farmers and traders who had made the trip down to Lannock, but also on a stand featuring different styles of U.K. hedge laying, all displayed in living miniature hedges on a central display.



Continued.....

The festival centres on farming in a sustainable way that both cares for the land and is profitable. One speaker had moved to a style of farming more akin to how his family farmed before World War Two. He had one eye on the past whilst being aware of modern farming methods and innovations that could help him maintain modern yield expectations. He aims to reduce inputs, especially chemical fertiliser – particularly relevant with the troubles in the Middle East and its impact on fertiliser prices. He, like many others there, believes some chemical fertilisers and other inputs undoubtedly have their place. But nothing can replace a good, healthy soil fed by a quality composted farmyard manure. A speaker from a leading university sitting alongside him asked the farmers in the audience “Do you want to farm with oil or soil?” She looked out at some quite shocked faces when it is put as simply as that. Soil must be maintained; it is a true saying that humanity depends on six inches of soil.

They both then went on to talk about the wildlife boom his farm has seen during the regen process. A few years ago, in his own words, they “re-wiggled a river.” This was to reduce flooding and improve water retention for the farm, also providing a habitat that is still seeing new arrivals. They are now taking advantage of natural predators as part of the farm management in crop production. Another unexpected benefit was how this helped the people in the village downstream from his farm make insurance savings due to no recent floods - some of the savings are now being spent in his farm shop. He was very pleased to announce his farm is profitable and both he and the farm are feeling the benefits from the move into regenerative agriculture.

Human health was another key talking point, especially the concern about ultra-processed foods (UPFs) in our diet and increasing obesity. Nutrient density is important and is something regen can help with. A balanced diet with the optimum amount of nutrients is going to help everyone, but clear messaging is needed for the public. More testing of foods is required plus a label or standard showing that food is regen produced. Several organisations currently market products as regen, but requirements vary and this is confusing for consumers.

As I was leaving at the end of an interesting and enjoyable day, I met a friend who now farms in Dorset. He summed up the day by saying anyone visiting Groundswell with an interest in agriculture and the environment would leave feeling inspired. I think that is true, but also with a knowledge that there is work to be done. Regenerative agriculture is a positive option for farmers caring for the land and our environment. The clever name of the event says it all. The ground is well, and there is a definite groundswell towards it.

Spotlight on the work of Lowberdale Farm by Mark Lowe, Lowberdale Farm

Lowberdale Farm is a charity based at Field House Farm in Beresford Dale, near Hartington. Set on a working beef and sheep farm, it gives young people the chance to spend time in a welcoming family farm environment where they can feel supported, valued, and part of something real.



The farm works with young people aged 10–19 who may have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including those experiencing anxiety, low confidence, social isolation, or challenges linked to neurodiversity. Lowberdale offers a calm, supportive place where young people can learn through practical, hands-on experiences and develop confidence at their own pace.

Young people attend the farm individually or in small groups for weekly half- or full-day sessions. Guided by Mark Lowe, “the Farmer”, and supported by volunteers, they take part in everyday farm tasks - feeding cows and sheep, caring for lambs, bedding sheds, and helping with seasonal work such as lambing.

Each young person has an individual support plan developed with SEND specialists and their wider support network. These plans ensure that support is tailored to each young person’s needs, helping them build confidence, develop practical skills, and move towards positive next steps. Breaks around the kitchen table give everyone time to relax, talk, and feel part of the farm community.



Continued...

Tilly's Developing Lowberdale Farm Story



Tilly is autistic, severely dyslexic and has Irlen syndrome. She often feels overwhelmed by sensory things, such as busy environments, meeting new people and crowded places. She struggles to read people and understand social cues, which makes her anxious in social settings. Small interactions can trigger overwhelming thoughts and feelings, which consume Tilly's mind for prolonged and debilitating periods. This results in her retreating to safe places and people, and not being able to attend school or anything else – a state which could be referred to as 'autistic burnout.'

Tilly first came to the farm in Summer 2023 for the Summer Shepherding School, initially she sat in tears in the car, too anxious to get out. After some time watching the other young people, with support from her Mum, she was able to join in. Tilly then came every week, building in confidence and independence – she returned again at Easter for lambing and again in the Summer that followed.



From September 2024, Tilly came to the farm every Wednesday as part of a small group of neuro-diverse young people. She confidently works with the cows and sheep and enjoys learning new skills, and also builds friendships which she continues to develop outside of the farm setting.

She appreciates that at the farm, she feels safe, valued and accepted for who she is. She enjoys feeling like she is contributing to the farm, as a valued member of a team.

Being physically active in the outdoors helps Tilly to regulate her emotions and gives her a break from the thoughts consuming her mind. It has given Tilly the confidence to pursue her interests in working with and keeping sheep of her own.



In Autumn 2025, Tilly was given a small flock of Ryeland and Jacob sheep, along with access to four acres of land and in May 2026 enjoyed her first lambing. She takes great pride in caring for her own animals and getting prepared for the season ahead. She continues to attend Lowberdale for a group day each week, where she builds on her skills, knowledge, and confidence with the support of farm staff, volunteers, and the company of her friends, as reflected in her regular catch-ups and 'Individual Support Plan'. One afternoon a week, Tilly also supports a young man with severe learning difficulties in her new role as a 'young leader.' It is wonderful to see her enjoying her developing skills and now confidently helping others to grow theirs.

Contact information

If you would like more information on Lowberdale Farm, to support either financially or potentially as a volunteer, please contact either Mark Lowe (mark@lowberdalefarm.org.uk) or Dorothy Hawton (admin@lowberdalefarm.org.uk) or refer to the website: <https://lowberdalefarm.org.uk/>



Introducing Hugh Addison from a farming family in the Eden Valley, Cumbria and the Borderline Challenge

By Alison Fletcher, Agricultural Chaplain

Over the past 10 years or so when we've taken a short break away, on several occasions we've stayed at a very special place in the Eden Valley - Kings Meaburn.

The Eden Valley is not a million miles from the Lake District and can sometimes be described as ..."going north on the M6 you turn right at junction 40 instead of turning left to the Lake District." There are similarities between the two locations - stunning rural scenery being one - but there are differences, the main one being that the Eden Valley is much less touristy and therefore less busy. We absolutely love it.

Over the years as we've got to know the owners of the property where we stay, we have become friends. They are part of a long-standing farming dynasty in the area and it's been a joy to hear both stories of times past and current experiences on their family farms.

A few months ago now, I heard all about a rather extreme physical endurance exploit (an ultra-endurance triathlon) completed by two of the younger generation of the family back in September 2025 in aid of RABI, with a particular focus on promoting wellbeing and support for RABI's work in combatting isolation and mental illness amongst the farming community.

Hugh Addison and his sister Alex took part in the challenge, supported by friends and family, and there is a YouTube video that gives a very good account of their experiences that is well worth a watch and will put this article into context: <https://youtu.be/eOnEdzwYmYU>



Mental health issues amongst farming communities are not confined to any one county, so given that we in the DRC, working alongside RABI and other farming support organisations exist to promote wellbeing - physical, emotional and spiritual - amongst the farming community in our county, we thought that it would be good to highlight this challenge and ask Hugh a few questions about what's happened in the year since they undertook it, what they learnt and what, if anything, has been the impact.

Alison: So it's about a year since you and your sister Alex undertook the challenge, can you outline the main impact of your achievement from your perspective?



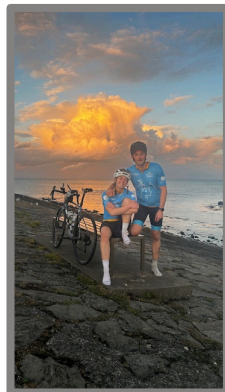
Hugh: I think there are a number of positive things that have stemmed from our challenge but by far the best thing is that we've raised over £20K for RABI which well exceeded our expectations. We found out that it costs RABI approximately £50 per hour for the support therapy they offer and so our sponsorship money will hopefully help with that spend.

We have really enjoyed working with RABI who have been so supportive, and we were also really encouraged to find so many people we know who are outside the world of farming take a genuine interest in the issues we have been raising about mental health and isolation issues within the farming communities.

I have to say that the Clarkson's Farm TV series appears to have been instrumental in raising issues about farming in recent years so maybe we benefited coming in on the back of some of that awareness. The challenge also opened more doors that we expected including an invitation to speak at the Farm Fest event at Stoneleigh Park at the end of May this year.

Alison: A little bird told me you and Alex were invited to an event at Buckingham Palace earlier this year. Tell us what that was about?

Hugh: Well RABI awarded us with the honour of being their "Fundraisers of the Year 2025" and that opened a number of doors. The most prestigious being an invitation to a reception hosted by the King at Buckingham Palace in April 2026. It was to honour the late Queen's 100th birthday and she had been patron of RABI and so RABI were invited to send along representatives. We got to speak to the King about our Challenge and he was very interested in our focus on mental health within the farming



Continued.....

communities. He told us about things being done within the Duchy to address similar issues. We also got invited in the spring to join RABI at a reception at Westminster amongst rural MPs and others who were looking at issues affecting the farming community.

Closer to home at the Rheged Centre in Penrith back in early 2026 we had a showing of the film of our Challenge taken by our friend who's a wildlife photographer and that showing went very well.

Alison: So given that you are part of a farming family, and your family live in an area made up of many family farms, you'll be only too aware of all the ongoing pressures that can so easily affect wellbeing and mental health. Have you any other plans to support the issue?

Hugh: Well, in June this year we finally got to do the planned swimming part of the triathlon in the Irish Sea that we'd not been able to do back in September 2025 due to weather problems. Instead, we'd had to use our "home lake" of Ullswater for the swimming part of the challenge! Doing that made us feel the challenge was finally completed as we'd originally intended.



I think we'll probably do another challenge in 2027 but as yet we've not got it organised so there's nothing to say about it just yet.

Alison: And finally, whilst most of our readers are in the Derbyshire area, there are definitely some overlaps within the world of farming. Not many will be fit enough to take on a challenge like you did but give us your top three tips on how to prepare for a challenge based on the lessons you've learnt, just in case anyone reading this would like to undertake their own challenge to support a farming charity.

Hugh: 1. Have a firm plan - choose something that's a bit different to catch people's attention. 2. Prepare really well both the actual physical training if relevant but also have a strong social media plan. 3. Break the challenge or event into small chunks to help with your planning, preparation and with the execution of the event itself.

Derbyshire Farmers Management Committee

by Robert Helliwell, Secretary DFMC

Derbyshire Farmers Management Committee (DFMC) is a Trust established in 2003. It is managed by National Farmers Union (NFU) members from across Derbyshire. The purpose of this Trust is to manage Derbyshire NFU's assets realised when changes were made to the structure of the NFU across England and Wales back in the 1990's. Many of you will remember Agriculture House at Matlock - that was sold off and the funds were put into this Trust to ensure that those assets are invested wisely to generate income and that income is put to good use for the benefit primarily of current NFU members.

The DFMC committee consider that health and safety around the farm is of great importance. Recently DFMC has supported the Health and Safety event held at Flag Hall Farm; it has been subsidising the cost of First Aid courses operated by NFU Mutual, training in the Safe Use of Sheep Dips and Safe Handling of ATVs. Derbyshire Young Farmers has benefited from subsidised training in the past and we are happy to continue that support if we can make a difference to health and safety on the farm.

DFMC will subsidise the cost for younger NFU members who would benefit from attending events such as Groundswell, the Real Oxford Farming Conference and of course the NFU Conference. If you are interested and would like to know more get in touch by email via the address below.

The DFMC Trust has some furniture (large, oak) that was originally in Agriculture House at Matlock and which is to be sold. If any NFU Members are interested in acquiring any of these please get in touch by email -

robertsbelties@outlook.com

#Make Farming Safe



Derbyshire Farmers Management Committee

MAKE FARMING SAFE

News & Updates

Donation Thank You's!

We were very grateful to receive a donation of £2,617.00 from Derby Artefacts Recovery Metal Detecting Club at their March meeting (pictured right with Rev Phil).

<https://derbyarc.org/>



Alison was delighted to attend a meeting of the Little Eaton WI in April where she was presented with a cheque for £1,500 (below).

<https://littleeatonwi.weebly.com/>

These contributions make such a difference to the work of DRC in carrying out much-needed support to the county's farming and rural communities.



Electronic Giving

We have now put in place the facility for people to make a donation to our work electronically, via the Give A Little website. To make a donation, please scan the QR code here or visit <https://givealittle.co/c/RuralChaplaincy>



Social Media

You can now keep up to date with DRC's latest news by following us on Facebook and Instagram.



[derbyshireruralchaplaincy](https://www.facebook.com/derbyshireruralchaplaincy)



[derbyshireruralchaplaincy](https://www.instagram.com/derbyshireruralchaplaincy)

Introducing DRC's new part-time Administrator

Jess O'Dwyer

Hello! I'm Jess. I started as the new administrator for Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy at the end of May and the first few weeks have been a bit of a whirlwind! So far, I have been to three monthly services at Bakewell, done some farm visits with Alison and Pete and - best of all - helped out at the Evening on the Farm at Wheston. I was lucky enough to be able to have a chat with Nicola, the previous administrator, and she very kindly left me some excellent notes to get me off to a flying start. Everyone has been so friendly and welcoming and it has been lovely to meet some of you in person. I am absolutely loving working for DRC and really looking forwards to what is coming next; agricultural shows and the harvest supper. Hopefully I will meet more of you soon and with practice I will be able to remember some names!



DERBYSHIRE FARMERS' CAROL SERVICE

SUNDAY 6th DECEMBER 2026
at 2.30pm

**BAKEWELL LIVESTOCK MARKET,
AGRICULTURAL WAY, BAKEWELL, DE45 1AH**

(FREE PARKING)

EVERYONE WELCOME



For more details please contact the Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy on 07593 380311 or email jess@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk

Lester Lowe – The Man and the Company

By Rev Phil Michell, Lead Agricultural Chaplain

In 1969 Lester Lowe, almost by accident, began his building and farm supply business. He had bought some cement in bulk to modernise and expand his farm and ended up selling it to his neighbours as a favour. He bought it for £7 a tonne and sold it for £8. And so began the (so far) 57 year history of a well-known and appreciated Derbyshire business. His ethos back then was to never overcharge for goods, and it remains part of the fabric of the company to this day.



I asked Lester about his early life:

I was born and brought up at Breck Farm and have never lived anywhere else. Looking back, life was both enjoyable but hard as well. We had no electricity or mains water. Milking was done by hand and when my father was alive he farmed with horses – no tractors back then. I went to Kniveton primary school which had pupils from age 5 up to 15 but I was fortunate to be able to move up to the grammar school in Ashbourne. I left school just before I was 15 years old. My father died when I was just 12 years old, so I was often allowed days off school to ensure the jobs on the farm were kept up with. That was in addition to milking 2 or 3 cows by hand both before and after school every day. The farm was rented so we had to get out or borrow most of the money to buy the 85-acre farm for £6,000. It was a lot of money in 1953.

What family did you have growing up?

I had three sisters growing up, plus a fourth older sister that we knew nothing about until a few decades ago. She was adopted before the rest of us were born but thankfully found us when she was 60. Unfortunately, she died a few years ago.



Lester as a boy, stood next to his sister on the tractor



Tell me about the origins of your business:

It began as a side-line to the farm and contracting that I used to do and it gradually grew from there as people kept requesting that I source a wider range of items. It eventually got to the stage where I had to give up dairying and devote my time wholly to the business. Although I did keep beef cows for a while. That was probably about 30 years ago.

Some of your staff have worked for you for a long time – what's your secret?

I've always believed that you should treat your staff and customers fairly. I charge fair prices for the goods I sell and I pay my staff as well as I can. Some have shares in the company and as I have been loyal to them, so they are loyal to me. Six of them have been with me for over 20 years.

Are you fully retired now?

No! I can't live here and not be involved so long as I am physically and mentally able. I do pop in to open the post and often jump on the fork truck or JCB. It is a challenge letting go of it completely.



Tell me a bit about your faith journey:

I can remember folk coming to the village from Cliff College (at Calver) and from London City Mission. They helped my faith. I've always believed in God, always had faith. I don't understand many things – especially why there is so much suffering in the world, but I do have faith. I know that

God is always there to help me. He has seen me through some tough times – from working all hours when I was younger in order to keep the farm going, to losing my beloved Linda.

I wish I'd shared my faith more. I've found it hard to talk about it. *[To which I replied: Lester, you might not have spoken about your faith very much, but the way you have run your business, been generous to many organisations, your fostering and kindness to people have all been ways in which you have lived out your faith and been a blessing to others.]*

How did you and Linda first meet?

My hobby used to be hedge laying competitions. It was at the West Hallam event when I unfortunately had an accident cutting the muscles in my knee. I was taken to the DRI, was

Continued.....

stitched up and a very shy boy, maybe “in shock” got talking to a 17-year-old cadet nurse. It was one of those moments that you don’t know if God planned it or not. If I’d not had the accident, we wouldn’t have met! After a three-year courtship and Linda had finished her training, we got married and had 37 years of a very happy interesting life.

Unfortunately, we could not have children of our own and so fostered for 18 years. Sarah was our first along with her brother Steve. She was only 3 years old but is still with us 47 years later in charge of our equestrian department and a daughter to be very proud of.

In addition to the fostering, over a period of ten years we supported various children through the Chernobyl Children’s Life Line (CCLL), as did others in the Ashbourne area. They would come and stay for a month with us and we would also go out there to support them. They were so appreciative of the help they received. It brought us much happiness in being able to help them.

It was through the CCLL that I met and got to know my present wife of 18 years, Nina and her family in Belarus. We are so proud of Nina’s granddaughter who, at 24, has completed her first year as a junior doctor at Derby Royal.

How do you view farming now?

It’s a shame that there aren’t anything like as many dairy farmers around here as there used to be. There’s also so much administrative work that has to be done online. If I could change one thing about farming now it would be to reduce the amount of rules and regulations that surround farming and which take up so much time and money. Some of the health and safety rules in our business now are unbelievable.

If you could go back in time and give your younger self a piece of advice, what would it be?

Talk to people and learn from them instead of just learning from experience – especially when you get things wrong. I learned a lot from the salesmen in the early days but I was mostly self sufficient and wanted to do it all on my own. You can learn from your mistakes but you also need to ask others for advice.

What would you like to be remembered for?

Leaving something good behind. Respect. I’ve helped a few people develop and grow themselves and their businesses. Helping the Chernobyl children.

Chaplain Visits

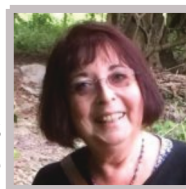
The DRC chaplains talk to many farmers at Bakewell Market, but did you know that we also visit people at home on the farm? Our chaplains are always keen to learn more about farming and are happy to spend time chatting and talking with farmers. If you live in Derbyshire and either farm, or have a connection to farming, and would like one of our chaplains to call in for a friendly visit, please contact Phil.

Telephone: 07710 088972

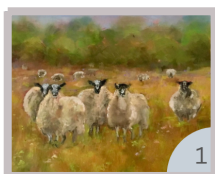
Email: phil@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk



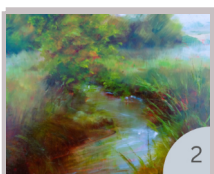
Order Cards in Support of the DRC



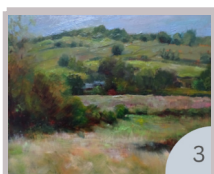
Our local artist, Lesley Griggs, has produced some beautiful paintings from Derbyshire landscapes which have been made into cards and are available to buy in support of the Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy.



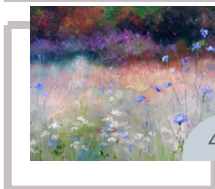
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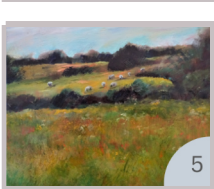
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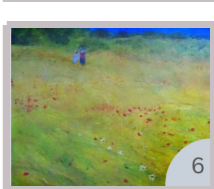
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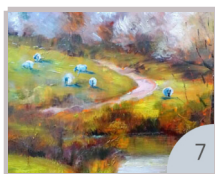
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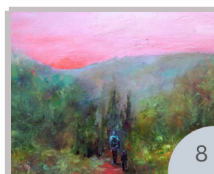
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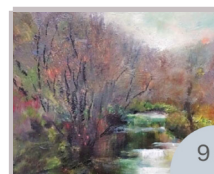
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The cards are A6 in size (4" x 6"), produced on FSC card, blank inside, and come with envelopes made of 100% recycled paper.

The cards are available in sets of any six designs (please specify which design(s) you would like), for just £10, which also includes postage.

All proceeds go towards supporting the DRC.

To order, please contact 07593 380311

The Impact of Conflict and Government Policies by Andrew Critchlow, Derbyshire NFU County Adviser & Midlands NFU Dairy Lead

The Iran conflict has become a major influence on the UK and global economy, creating volatility and uncertainty. This is especially true for the farming and onward food sectors.

- Red diesel is between 30% & 40% higher than at the start of the conflict. Even with the cut in the rate of fuel duty applied to red diesel from 10.18 ppl to 6.48 ppl, effective from 15 June to 31 December 26.
- Fertiliser prices at the farmgate have risen between 25% - 40% over the same period.
- Electricity and gas prices have been pushed higher.
- Any increase in energy and fuel prices puts up the cost of virtually all other inputs due to increased manufacturing and transport costs.



A bit of background to fertiliser costs: Natural gas drives 60–80% of nitrogen fertiliser costs, so price rises feed through quickly. The UK imports ~60% of its nitrogen fertiliser and no longer produces ammonia domestically, leaving it exposed to global supply disruption. The UK now uses ~50% urea/UAN, increasing exposure to global urea price movements. The disruption to shipping routes via the Strait of Hormuz is tightening global supply, raising prices across fertilisers and substitutes.

One of the key asks of Government by the NFU, is to postpone and review the implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for fertiliser. To prevent CBAM becoming a barrier to fertiliser reaching the UK market. As well as introducing long-term measures to offset CBAM related costs on farmers and ensure that the funds raised are used to support productivity in the sector.

The Governments justification for CBAM as taken from Gov.UK: *This will ensure highly traded, carbon intensive products from overseas face a comparable carbon price to that paid by UK manufacturers, so that UK decarbonisation efforts lead to a true reduction in global emissions rather than simply displacing carbon emissions overseas.*

It is a given that rising input costs just can't be magicked away by any Government, which is why the NFU is constantly pushing for greater fairness in the supply chain. The Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator (ASCA) currently oversees The Fair Dealing Obligations (Milk) Regulations (FDOM). Consultations are ongoing, or have been held, to extend the ASCA powers to some other sectors. It is also clear from the dairy sector that the ASCA's powers need strengthening and the NFU welcomes a review of the current regulations being brought forward a year.

Helpful Contact Numbers for Advice & Support

Struggling and not sure where to turn?



Offering spiritual and pastoral support to the Agricultural and Rural community
phil@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk
07710 088972 (Rev Phil Michell - lead chaplain)
www.derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk



- We understand the pressures you face
- Don't face them alone
- Freephone Helpline:
- 0800 188 4444



THE FARMING LIFE CENTRE
SUPPORTING FARMING & RURAL LIFE
IN THE PEAK DISTRICT

A vibrant farming charity supporting people living and working in the Peak District, the focus of The Farming Life Centre is on maintaining a healthy farm business coupled with promoting good physical and mental health.
Tel: 01629 810903

SAMARITANS

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call FREE from any phone on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org

**TOMORROW
PROJECT**

Suicide Bereavement Care offering support to those in suicide crisis.

tomorrow@harmless.org.uk
01246 541935
www.tomorrowproject.org.uk



The Farming Community Network
Helpline: 03000 111 999
E-helpline: help@fcn.org.uk www.fcn.org.uk

The Soil Beneath Our Feet – Seen and Unseen

The soil beneath our feet; earthy, soft and crumbly,
sometimes muddy and slippery, at other times hard as rock.
It is essential to our lives as from within it most things grow:
Our food, our shelter and millions of species seen and unseen.
We give thanks for those who tend and till and toil with soil
to sustain and bring fullness to our lives;
those who are seen, those who are unseen.
Bless them with all the good things they deserve:
good weather, good growth, good prices, good health.
Plant within each of us the seeds of your love dear Lord
That we may blossom and flourish and share your love with others.
May compassion, kindness and gentleness be the fruit we all display
to those who are seen and those who are unseen.

Amen.

Prayer by Rev Phil Michell
Photo by Dylan de Jong on Unsplash

DRC NEWS

We post the DRC News out free of charge to over 900 farms across Derbyshire. In order to help us save on some costs, if you would like to receive the DRC News by email instead of a hard copy, please get in touch with us using the contact details below.

We will still be printing the DRC News and it will still be available via Chaplains.

Telephone: 07593 380311

Email: jess@derbyshireruralchaplaincy.org.uk