

PLACES: AUSTWICK

The appeal of Austwick

It may have a Lancashire postcode but this is a Yorkshire stronghold, proud of its roots. Emma Mayoh reports

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KIRSTY THOMPSON





Reverend Ian Greenhalgh isn't your average clergyman. The 61-year-old vicar has travelled the globe as chaplain to the Royal Air Force, living in Germany, Kosovo, Bosnia, Iraq, Sarajevo, Sardinia, South Africa and the Falkland Islands. And although he has now settled in Austwick, Reverend Greenhalgh, whose parish covers four churches including the Church of the Epiphany in Austwick, still likes to be on the move.

He regularly runs marathons and fell races to raise money – while some places of worship rely on collection boxes to raise money, he has run up a total of more than £50,000 for various charities and organisations.

He was the first British runner to cross the line in a Las Vegas marathon and this October he will run

the Athens marathon. But there is nothing he is more dedicated to than Austwick. 'It is a fantastic village full of lovely, lovely people,' he said. 'The community is very active and take a real pride in the area they live in and they always get together to get things done.'

'We're also very lucky to be in such a beautiful place. There are the fells all around the village and some beautiful countryside. I have moved around a lot over the past few years and I can't think of a better place to have settled.'

As well as welcoming newcomers to the village, the church also plays a large role in the Austwick Cuckoo Festival and Street Market, an annual festival held every May.

A little way outside the village Farmer Edward Hird rears sheep and cattle at Wood End Farm. He was born there and now shares it with wife Margaret, where they also run a caravan site from part of their 160 acres.

The farm has been in his family since Edward's grandmother, Alice, took it on in 1943 and Edward said: 'The village has changed quite a lot in the last 15 years. There used to be a butcher and other local shops and now we just have the one shop but it is still the beautiful place it has always been and there is still a fantastic community.'

'I sometimes ask Margaret "Who would want to be anywhere else?". I can't see how anyone would want to be. I'll never leave here.'

Austwick, once a strong farming village, is still a thriving community bursting with locals who are passionate about their village.

There are many local groups, including clubs for tennis and table tennis players, wine enthusiasts, film buffs and keen readers.

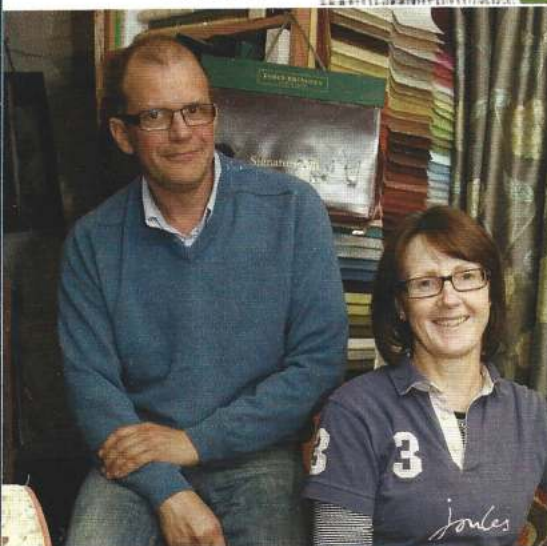
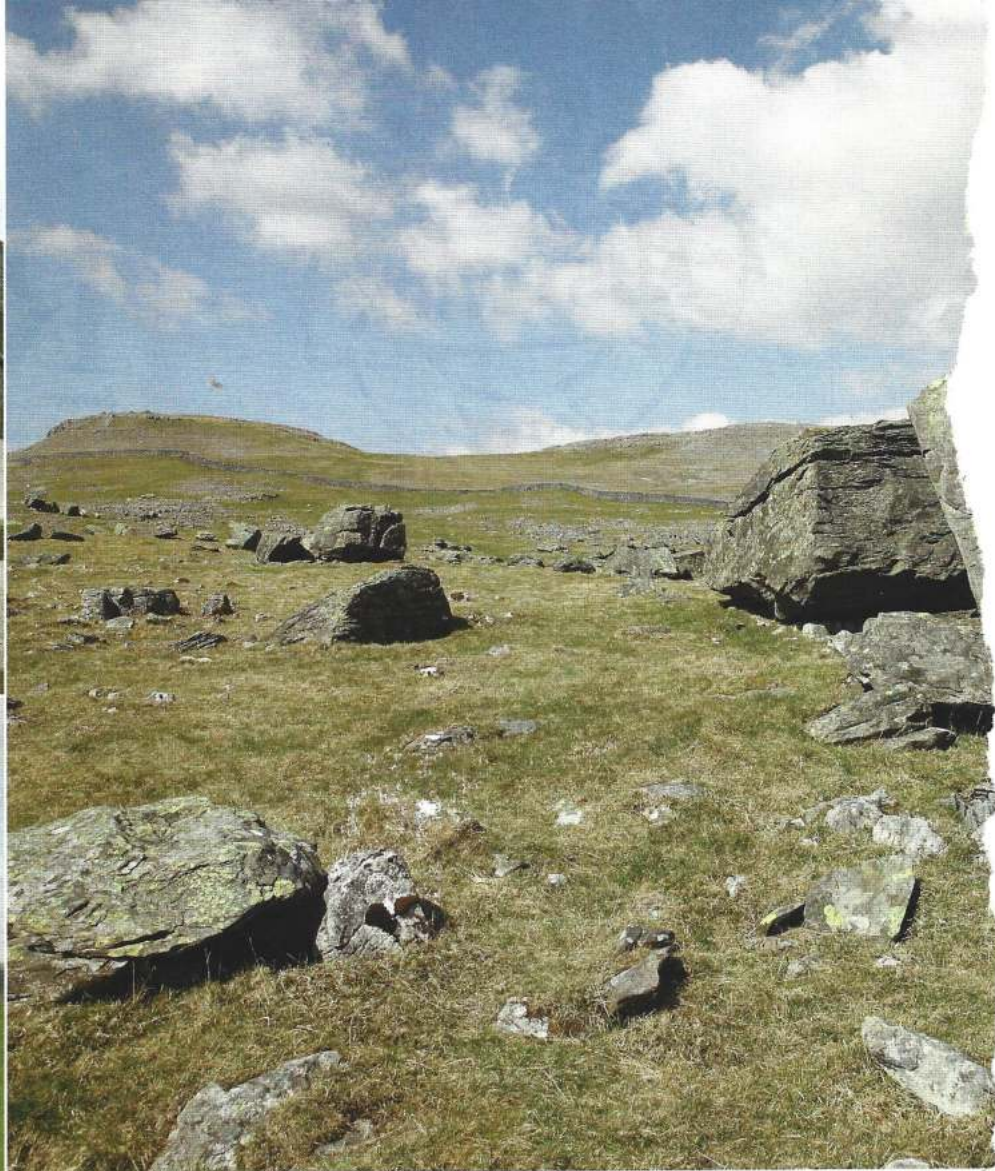
Plans are already in place for the annual



Farmers, Margaret and Edward Hird



Gordon James



Simon and Sally Robinson



The village marathon man, Rev Ian Greenhalgh

village show too, which will be held in August, with more than 100 categories for locals to enter.

David Dewhirst, who runs Wood View Bed and Breakfast, is also the clerk to Austwick Parish Council. Wife Sue is on the Village Show committee.

He said: 'It's always a fantastic event. There are so many different categories to enter and everyone gets competitive. But it's all very friendly. It takes a lot of organising but people always enjoy it. My cakes won three times in a row, a friend heard about it and decided he was going to try and beat me. It's all in good fun though.'

The village is popular with walkers and cyclists wishing to take advantage of the surrounding countryside. But unlike other parts of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the nearby Lake District, you will not find scores of holiday homes.

On fells overlooking the village stand the Norber Erratics, a cluster of boulders eroded from cliffs less than a mile away

and deposited here in the last Ice Age. As well as being one of the most photographed local landmarks, they are also of great geological significance and attract experts from around the world. Channel 4 also recently filmed in the area for a new series expected to be screened later this year.

Gordon James, secretary of the Field and Local History Society, said: 'Over the years the limestone has been weathered away and they now looked like they are perched on top of smaller stems of rock. They really are remarkable.'

'At some point in the last 12 months one of the boulders collapsed. I suppose eventually they will all do this. People come from around the world to see them, they are fascinating.'

Gordon, a former mathematician at Imperial College, London, recently raised £7,000 for Cancer Research with two friends Catherine and Michael Menday. They walked 18 of Alfred Wainwright's favourite walks, covering more than 200 miles.



Norber Erratics

Another pair of Austwick's charity champions are Simon and Sally Robinson. As well as creating bespoke, handmade furniture under the name Dalesbred Furniture and Upholstery, they have also raised £17,000 for Macmillan by cycling more than 1,000 miles in 14 days.

Simon, a former shepherd and farm worker, and Sally, a former nurse, fell in love with Austwick the second they set eyes on it. And the couple could not resist setting up home and their business in the village's old smithy and the Smithy House.

They create beautiful hand made pieces crafted from fine cuts of wood including European oak and burr wood. All of the furniture carries their trademark Dalesbred rams head.

'We are creating pieces that will outlast most of their owners,' said Simon. 'These are pieces that are meant to last; they are antiques of the future. We're incredibly happy to be based in the village. It's a fantastic place.'



Quiet corner of Austwick

At the heart of Austwick

Christine and John Hooley are at the heart of the village. The Lancastrians, who moved to Austwick five years ago, run the village shop as well as the post office. 'It's not just a shop, it's like a meeting place for the locals,' said Christine. 'We know everyone in the village because they all come in here and we love it.'

Austwick Church Afternoon Fellowship is about to publish a book about the history of the village. Lindsey Smith, following the encouragement of lifelong Austwick resident Molly Preston, decided to apply for a grant from the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust to produce three books based on villagers' memories of Austwick. The first book looks at the shops and businesses of the village from the past 150 years. It contains lots of old photographs donated by locals and was launched last month. The book, priced £5, can be purchased from Cross Leigh Stores in Austwick, or from ricksmith@austwick.org at a cost of £6.



Christine and John Hooley

Austwick Beck runs near the centre of the village. Here you will spot some of the local wildlife including oystercatchers, dippers and some of the resident ducks.

Been out walking and want a hearty meal? Try the Austwick Traddock, a multi-award winning restaurant and hotel that is a former Yorkshire Life Food and Wine Award finalist.

Austwick may be in Yorkshire but it has a Lancashire postcode. The LA (Lancaster) postcode is a bone of contention in the village.

Austwick Hall, which has parts dating back to 1180, is now a country house hotel just outside the village where Winston Churchill once stayed. This year a new woodland sculpture trail will be opened in the hall's beautiful gardens. It will be open to the public.

For more information about Austwick log on to the Austwick Parish Council website at www.austwickparishcouncil.org.uk.

Where is it: Austwick is located in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, near Settle and close to the Lancashire border. Type LA2 8BB in your sat nav to get you there.

Where to park: There are no official car parks but there is limited on street parking. During the busy summer months expect to park a little outside the village centre.

What to do: Walkers understandably gravitate to Austwick. It is close to lots of lovely walks through the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the village is also a popular spot for cyclists and mountain biking enthusiasts who use the village as a base.



What do you love about Austwick? Share your thoughts and memories with us on our website yorkshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk.

