



# OUR RURAL TIMES



## THE INAUGURAL EDITION OF OUR RURAL TIMES IN YORK DIOCESE

### In St Aelred's Footsteps

On 14 March we gathered for the Lent Pilgrimage Walk and Ride along the Saint Aelred's Pilgrim Trail. Beginning with welcome and hospitality in Old Byland,...

### Rogation Sunday

Rogation Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2026  
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### Land, Food, and the Iran War

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## Rural Services Network

[rsonline.org.uk](http://rsonline.org.uk)

Are you aware of the role and work of the Rural Services Network?

The Rural Services Network encompasses a wide range of partners and organisations who all work together to help provide a voice for rural communities.

'We represent over 500 organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors including leading national bodies, local authorities, utility companies, health trusts, housing associations, grass root community organisations and more.'

Visit their website above to discover more.



### **The Impact of the Gulf Crisis on Food Supply**

*(Observations from IGD -Institute of Grocery Distribution March 2026)*

Rising oil and gas prices in the UK are driving higher food costs and creating potential supply chain pressures, though immediate shortages are unlikely.

#### Energy Costs and Food Inflation

The recent surge in oil and gas prices, partly due to Middle East conflicts, has increased the cost of key inputs across the UK food system, including transport, fertiliser production, glasshouse heating, and packaging. While short-term price spikes are often absorbed by businesses, prolonged high energy costs can lead to sustained food inflation, as contracts reset and hedging strategies unwind.

Although the UK's food supply chains are resilient, disruptions in oil supply can indirectly affect availability. Rising fuel and shipping costs, rerouted shipments, and delays in air and sea transport can increase delivery times and costs, particularly for perishable goods and fresh produce."

### **The Land Use Framework**

*'We owe our very existence to a six inch layer of top-soil and the fact that it rains.'*  
- anon

How do we make wise and informed decisions about how our precious land should be used? So many competing demands on such a precious resource.

The Land Use Framework was announced last week, the first policy of its kind in England designed to optimise land use across nature, food production, energy generation, housing and climate adaptation.

It sets out the government's vision for land use across sectors, the principles and the mechanisms that will guide better decisions.

The key test now is how it will be used and the impact it will have. Will it help alleviate the fears of those concerned about our food security?

### **Rogation Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2026**

As the Book of Common Prayer indicates

'Rogation days are the three days preceding Ascension Day, especially devoted to asking for God's blessing on agriculture, industry and human labour.'

Some rural churches may choose to include Rogation as a theme on Sunday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2026.

Below are some excellent Rogation Sunday resources from the Arthur Rank Centre, one of the leading resource centres for rural ministry, and Chelmsford Diocese.

<https://arthurrankcentre.org.uk/church-life/rogation-sunday/>

<https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/uploads/files/Rogation.pdf>



### **In St Aelred's Footsteps by Revd Mel Burnside from Northern Ryedale Deanery**

*On 14 March we gathered for the Lent Pilgrimage Walk and Ride along the Saint Aelred's Pilgrim Trail.*

Beginning with welcome and hospitality in Old Byland, we moved through a pattern of walking, prayer, and shared life, stopping at churches along the way and ending at Rievaulx Abbey. It was, as George Gyte (the person who has driven the formation of our trail) described, a day open to all, shaped by landscape, story, and the simple act of journeying together.

What stood out was not scale or spectacle, but depth. The rhythm of walking and stopping, of prayer offered in different places, and of community formed along the way. Pilgrimage created space for conversation, for silence, and for people to encounter faith in a way that felt natural and unforced.

There is real encouragement here for other rural churches. In many ways, this is not something new, but something we already know. Traditions like Rogation Sunday and beating the bounds have long drawn people out into the landscape in prayer, blessing the land and those who work it. Pilgrimage is a natural continuation of that instinct, a way of renewing it for today.

The Arthur Rank Centre pilgrimage resources are an excellent place to begin. They frame pilgrimage not as something specialist, but as something deeply rooted in rural life and mission, open to all ages and abilities, and a gentle way of engaging those beyond the church.

In practice, it can be very simple. Start with a route you already know. Let the story of your place shape it. Build in a few points for prayer. Invite others to walk it with you. What matters is beginning, and allowing something to grow over time.

There is also growing support across the wider Church. The Church of England's Pilgrim Places initiative is helping churches rediscover their identity as places of prayer, welcome, and journey: [churchofengland.org/faith-life/pilgrim-places-holy-lives-gospel-journey-early-english-saints](http://churchofengland.org/faith-life/pilgrim-places-holy-lives-gospel-journey-early-english-saints)

Alongside this, Faith in the North is developing networks and practical support for churches exploring pilgrimage in their own context: [faithinthenorth.org/pilgrim-places](http://faithinthenorth.org/pilgrim-places) Pilgrimage is already present in our rural places. The invitation is simply to notice it, name it, and offer it. [Saint Aelred's Pilgrim Trail](#)



## **A Reflection On 'Lady Day' by Geoff Sansome**

*Lady day, farm rents and income tax:  
the inextricable link between farming, finances and our churches.*

25th March was Lady Day, when farms would change hands, rents were paid and, until 1752, the New Year was celebrated, all of which impacts on income tax returns. That takes a little bit of unravelling!

March 25th is traditionally the day that Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she would bear a son, Jesus. This day is now a church festival called "The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary". Hence the day of 'our Lady'. It also falls conveniently at the end of the first quarter of the year and is one of the 'quarter days'.

Historically, farm tenancies would start and finish on either Lady Day or Michaelmas (The feast of St Michael and All Angels, 29th September, the third quarter day) as these were times when crops had yet to be drilled or had all been harvested, so it was a convenient time to leave or take on a farm. A Lady Day tenancy was more common in livestock areas as it coincided with the end of winter and the turnout of stock.

Michaelmas tenancies were more common in arable areas to reflect harvest and crop drilling patterns. For the same reason, rents were also paid on those days and the March payment was known as the 'Lady Day rent', which still exists in many farm tenancies, or as a time for rent reviews. The other two quarter days are Midsummer day (24th June, the feast of St John, Baptist) and Christmas Day. So why was the New Year on March 25th?

This date coincided with the beginning of spring, the vernal equinox, and was symbolic of a new season, new growth, so that made a lot of sense. The Romans had March as the beginning of the year but only had 10 months in their year, giving them Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec, as the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th month, but now they are not! Julius Caesar changed this to the 12-month (Julian) calendar but that was still quite inaccurate by 11 minutes per year. So, the New Year date changed in 1752 when Britain adopted the more accurate Gregorian Calendar and moved New Year's Day to 1st January, this becoming the new legal date for the start of the year.

But, traditions die hard and all of this lives on in our tax year which ends on 5th April. Why? Because when the changes were made in 1752, September had 11 days less to help re-set the calendar. But this may have disadvantaged those paying rents on the quarter days, so it was agreed to move such payments backward by the same 11 days and thus the 25th March became our current 5th April and end of the tax year!



## **News from York Auction Centre**



The livestock sales on Mondays and Thursdays keep busy with farmers travelling from miles around to sell and buy cattle and sheep, and many retired farmers coming for an outing to watch the sale with their pals and put the world to rights. Prices for cattle remain very high – last week a Limousin heifer sold for an amazing £2360!

Farmers are rarely happy but high prices do please some farmers, although others are very concerned about their businesses and the future. The conflict in Iran with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz has caused soaring operational costs for farms due to the very high cost of diesel and fertiliser, and the increases in energy charges. How long will this situation go on and can I survive? It's a very stressful time.

There is a some relief that the government relented and increased the threshold for inheritance tax on farms which came into effect on April 6th, but the announcement came too late for some smaller farmers who had unnecessarily spent considerable sums on solicitors' fees sorting out their succession plans.

We hear many complaints about the government and it's apparent lack of support for agriculture. Farmers feel they work long hours in all weathers to look after the land and produce our food but the government allows supermarkets to import meat from countries with lower animal welfare standards which undercut their prices. In addition there is great concern about the loss of agricultural land to the proposed solar farms around Selby when, as a country, we should be working to become more self-sufficient in food supply.

And lastly – the weather! Depending on the type of land where they farm, we hear many complaints about the land being too wet or too dry! Agriculture is always an unpredictable occupation and today farmers have many worries and anxieties in their lives due to national and international politics, as well as the weather.

### **A Prayer for Rural Communities**

Loving God,

We thank You for the beauty of our countryside – the rolling fields, the quiet lanes, the rivers and skies that speak of Your creation.

Bless the people who live and work here: farmers, shopkeepers, teachers, carers, and all who serve their neighbours.

Give strength in times of hardship, joy in moments of harvest, and hope when challenges seem overwhelming.

May our rural communities be places of welcome, peace, and shared purpose.

Amen.