

‘You live in a village?’

Well, yes – I would say we do. The first thing a village needs is a church. Ours is a Grade II* listed building - parts of it date from the 14th century, and the tower arch is thought to be even older. The church has been in continuous use for some 700 years, and sprang from a priory built by Roger Bigod in 1105. The parish register goes back to 1653. A great deal of restoration work was carried out in the early 1870s.

There’s a pop-up shop on Thursdays, and sometimes you can sit and drink your coffee to the accompaniment of improvisations on the organ. Lovers of classical music occasionally get the chance to attend concerts at which chamber works are played by top professionals.

Features of note include two shimmering alabaster memorials to the Turner brothers who became canons of Aklavik Cathedral – a tiny mission church beside Hudson Bay.



The grandest tombstone in the churchyard is probably that erected in memory of Sir John Spencer Login, a Scottish surgeon in British India who was also at one time the guardian of the Koh-I-Noor diamond. Not far away from Sir John lies the East Anglian architect Thomas Cotman.

In the north-west corner of the churchyard you’ll find a lovingly maintained Garden of Remembrance. There’s a bench commemorating the lives of Arthur and Daphne Vaughan, who were born in the same year, but Daphne survived her husband by 21 years.

Every proper village needs a pub, and ours shares its name with a famous brand of whisky – perhaps you remember the adverts? A couple of years ago, Punch Taverns, the owners of the pub, wanted to demolish it and replace it with a mini-supermarket, but we fought them off, and a new management team has recently taken over. Situated opposite the church, it’s more than 100 years old and sits on a site used as an inn for centuries. The current building was designed by Thomas Cotman.





Every proper village has a community centre or similar facility. Ours used to be the Parish Hall. If you're one of those sociable people who like joining things, there's plenty of choice - virtually the complete alphabet from Aerobics to Yoga (what, no Zumba?), and the adjacent tennis courts are in use all the year round. Our Community Association recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, and the Centre has a beautifully maintained front garden.

Every village also needs a green of course, and you can sit and watch what's happening on ours from the commemorative bench that was unveiled when we celebrated the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The ping-pong table looks sad and unused, true, but the football posts and nets have been shifted away from the mud generated by regular use. The colours of the children's playground are vivid, but not so bright as to offend. There are lots of trees of various heights and ages. The elegance of their branches can be seen most clearly in winter, but Spring brings the joy of countless daffodils and crocuses. Rows of saplings were recently planted on the western end of the green.

And we have a village sign, of course. A follower of St. Felix sits beneath an arched doorway and reminds us of Roger Bigod's priory. The ship commemorates the assembly by Henry III of a fleet of ships in 1338 at a nearby stream ready to sail to France.



Yes – ours is a proper village, ours is!

Laurence McDonald