



October 2014

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## RECTOR TO LEAVE

Canon Judith Trickett, Rector of Firbeck, Letwell and Woodsetts, has announced her impending retirement from the ministry after five years in charge of the three churches.

Judith - who came here from the Herringthorpe parish at Rotherham - will leave her post on March 1st next year just a short time before her 65th birthday. As yet, Judith says she has no immediate plans for the future. She told FLAG:

*"I've enjoyed my time here a great deal. It's been a very different ministry for me working in a rural rather than an urban area running three churches when I'd only had one before. I've learned lots of new things while I've been here, but it's time to retire now just short of my 65th birthday. I don't know what I'm going to be doing or where I'll be living at the moment."*

Judith does know, however, where she'll be going when she leaves the Rectory for good.

*"I've booked a month at the convent at Whitby for the transition period, but I've said to the nuns*

*what I don't want to do is just sit and think. I want to be involved in the gardening and the cleaning because I'm not very good at sitting round and contemplating....."*

Decisions over the future of the three parishes have still to be made. Judith added:

*"I don't know what's going to happen because the whole deanery is going through a re-organisation at present."*



*New Mural at Letwell Village Hall -  
See story inside find*

## NEW MURAL AT LETWELL VILLAGE HALL

A large colourful mural depicting St. Peter's Church at Letwell is to take pride of place hanging on the wall at the village hall.

Members of the art class - which meets every Wednesday morning in the hall - have worked painstakingly for a whole year on the project, and the result is a delight to see.

The team took a range of photographs of the building from every angle to begin with, focusing largely on the historic stone tower, and then expanded each image before setting to work on the painting using subtle pastel shades.

Tutor Ann J. Viney Swann told FLAG that she was delighted with the outcome.

***"An awful lot of thought went into the work, and I'm really pleased with the way things have turned out, Everyone took part in the decision making process, and there were discussions***

***about shades and colour and the form the mural was going to take. It's been very enjoyable watching things progress over the last few months or so."***

The enthusiastic bunch of artists - Jenny Straw, Stuart Andrew, Aileen Cooke, Brian Fairhurst, Christine Clark, Barbara Morgan, Georgie Slater, Irene Balding, David Fielding and Christine John - decided to add a couple of vital ingredients to the work as they approached the end of the project.

Ann explained: *"Doves often perch on the church tower so we all thought the painting should reflect that. We also decided to add the flag of St. George - it seemed appropriate for a church in the heart of rural England."*

A few places are available in the group. Anyone wanting more information can phone Ann on **01777 838025** or Jenny on **01909 730635**.

## INSTANT ACTION - FOR ONCE

Rotherham council's serious shortcomings have been aired for all to see on the front pages of the national media during recent weeks. But while the scandal continues over child protection issues involving senior management at the Town Hall there's the occasional glimmer of hope closer to home at a local level.

Complaints about the overgrown state of the bridleway between Letwell and Langold produced an almost instant response from the council at the height of the summer.

Public rights of way officer Christian Hayes contacted Letwell Parish Council within a few hours of the problem being raised. Mr. Hayes

promised to clear a path through the brambles and overhanging bushes as soon as possible - and a team of five men turned up quite remarkably the very next day to do the job.

The end result was better than anyone expected with a wide swathe neatly cut through the undergrowth all the way from the gates at the entrance to the Galley Knight estate and over the county boundary to Dyscarr Wood - some half a mile in length.

All credit to the public rights of way team at RMBC. Just shows what the council can do - when they really try.

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

We had a great day at our Annual Coffee Morning in Firbeck Village Hall in August with lots of people browsing (and buying) among the stalls and then sitting and gossiping with friends with a coffee and cakes.

At our meeting in September Mrs. MacKay showed us lovely scenes of Autumn Glory and in October Sarah Lightfoot will be showing us Paper Craft items and perhaps the nimble fingered ones amongst us will be able to make some of the unusual items.

Naturally, we will be having our usual craft days in November making articles for Christmas. Also Maureen Banks will be giving us ideas for floral arrangements to adorn our tables and homes at Christmas at our November meeting – so if you are interested in learning how to make a table arrangement please come along.

In January we will be shown how the Elizabethans celebrated Christmas with Maureen Taylor and we will be providing a buffet perhaps along similar lines to that era – might have to stop at the roast swan though! All welcome to join us in the merrymaking.

Why not join your local WI? Make new friends, enjoy great outings, listen to interesting speakers and discussions and learn new crafts. We would love to have younger members join us so that we could put their ideas and input into our programmes too. Our meetings are held on the third Thursday in the month and start at 7.30pm and new members and visitors are always very welcome. Anyone wanting further information please contact the Secretary on **01909 540751**.

## PLANNERS SAY YES

Black Lion landlord Phil Rogers has won permission from RMBC to demolish the restaurant and build two detached properties on the site.

Phil - who had been waiting for several months for the planners to reach a decision - told FLAG: *"I'd like to thank everyone who supported us during the process, and hope that support will continue in the future."*

If you didn't know it already, the Black Lion's a precious asset.

A report out this week came out firmly on the side of rural pubs arguing that each and every one is worth up to £120,000 a year in vital economic and social benefits - sourcing local produce for food and drink, giving work to locals, holding events and bringing communities together.

Researcher Dr. Ignazio Cabras, who led the study at the Newcastle Business School, examined pubs in 2,800 rural parishes with

small populations, and decided, in his words, that "pubs are not businesses, they are assets..."

John Longden from the campaign group Pub is the Hub went further saying: *"The pub is yet another vital service the countryside cannot afford to lose."*

**Time for a pint maybe!!!**



## RARE COIN COMMOTION

Treasure hunters descended on Letwell en masse after a TV camera crew arrived in the village to meet an enthusiast who had struck lucky with a rare find worth up to £600,000.

Metal detectorist John Stoner unearthed the precious American threepenny piece - which was the currency of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1652 - in a field at King's Clipstone near Edwinstowe on August 24th.

But fellow enthusiasts jumped to the wrong conclusion and rushed to Letwell after John was filmed in the village talking to Sky TV about the find.

John, a member of the Coil to the Soil Club, which routinely combs the farmland around Dinnington, Thurcroft and Tickhill, was apologetic about all the fuss afterwards.

The dad of two explained: *"We did the interview in the village because it's somewhere I do go detecting quite regularly and it was convenient for the camera crew - but I actually found the coin near Edwinstowe."*

*"Quite a few people identified the fields in the background and the next day they were out there. That was the last thing I wanted because the farmer in Letwell is really good about*

*allowing us access to his land and I didn't want him to be over-run."*

The coin has since been valued by experts at the British Museum, and sent to the United States to be sealed in a special protective case.

Although estimates suggest the find could be worth £40,000 to £60,000 in the UK, enthusiasm for early American currency is such that the coin could fetch up to £600,000 on the other side of the Atlantic.



*Proud John with his precious find*

The find will go under the hammer at St. James' Auctions in Knightsbridge, London, on December 2nd. Proceeds from the sale will be split 50-50 between John and the farmer who owns the land at King's Clipstone.

John said: *"I'm trying not to think too much about the money, but I'm looking forward to the auction."*

## NATURE REPORT

David Wrights presents the latest edition of his ever popular column for FLAG...

A Firbeck resident was delighted to find a party of around eight Long Tailed Tits in his garden in late July. This was a first for him in Firbeck, so he was particularly pleased.

Another Firbeck couple had fleeting views of what appeared to be a Spotted Flycatcher in their garden in early September. Sightings of this African visitor are rare in our area these days, but occur occasionally.

I was pleased to see three Whinchats on Firbeck airfield in early September. These summer visitors from Africa were in Firbeck on their migration south to Africa. They could possibly have bred in North Yorkshire.

I also saw a very interesting creature in Firbeck in early September, in the form of a Polecat. I think it's the first time I've ever seen one of these hunters, from which domesticated Ferrets were bred. My sighting was brief, but I've little doubt that it was a Polecat – appearing dark brown and moving quickly through undergrowth.

Good news on the owl front. Barn Owl, Little Owl and Tawny Owl all appear to be doing well on the local patch. This is particularly good news for Barn Owl, which suffered badly in the severe winter a few years ago. We've confirmation they've returned to a local site in the FLAG area.

Some great news in from Gildingwells, where a Hobby has been seen chasing Swallows. It's Kestrel-sized, resembling a large Swift, and is very quick, chasing large insects and small birds. It's capable of rapid aerial manoeuvres, and has to be in order to catch birds like Swallows. We know that this summer visitor

from Africa has bred in the local area recently.

Continuing with birds of prey, I was thrilled to see a Merlin on fields north of Dinnington on 25 September. This was a first for me in the local area. It's the UK's smallest bird of prey. The UK population increases in winter with a large influx from the Icelandic breeding grounds.

Finally, as I write (3 October) I've just seen my first flock of Fieldfares in from the continent. Very nice.

**01709 813360**

**davidandgwenneth@gmail.com**

On the musical front guitarist David plans to release an album of his music in December. "I've been in a rich vein of writing form recently," says David. One of 17 new songs titled Rio Grande recalls a real-life incident....when David witnessed a bar-room brawl in the US in 1982.

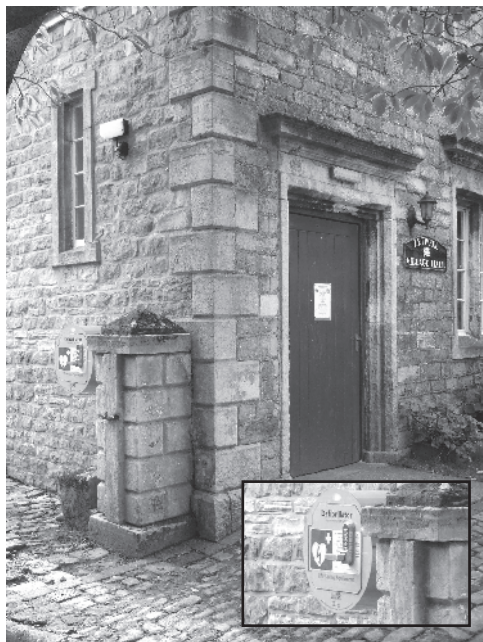
Famed Firbeck melodean player Keith Martin was about to go in the studio with David as FLAG went to press....adding an extra element to the album.



*Polecat Sighting*



## DE-FIB ARRIVES AT LETWELL



Installation of the Letwell de-fibrillator was going ahead in mid October as campaigners prepared to host a question and answer session about the new life-saving equipment.

The de-fib has been fixed on the external wall of the village hall - in the alleyway next to the main door fronting Barker Hades Road. Extra lighting has been put in place to help in the event of a night-time emergency.

Villagers were urged to attend the information evening at the hall on the night of Tuesday October 21st.

Rita Harrison, who helped organise the cabaret show which largely funded the equipment, was hoping for a large turn out.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service's community officer Emma Scott - who was in the audience on the night of the cabaret - had been invited to demonstrate the equipment, Rita said:

***"The meeting was a one off opportunity to gain knowledge and learn how to use the de-fibrillator. A lot of enthusiasm has gone into the project, and we're really pleased that the equipment has been put in place so quickly."***

*"We don't know how often it's going to be used - but the de-fibrillator would only have to save one life to pay for itself many times over."*



*Villagers learn all about the new De-fib*

## GUY FAWKES IS ON HIS WAY

Bonfire Night will soon be upon us - and the event will be celebrated as ever at Letwell on Wednesday the Fifth with fireworks as well as a bonfire and lots of grub.

The festivities will begin around 6.30 pm - whatever the weather - at last year's site on the land beside the recycling bottle bins alongside Ramper Road.

If you intend to come along please remember to bring some food to share - anything from toffee apples to bonfire toffee, brandy snaps, hot sausage rolls, baked potatoes and parkin. Your man at FLAG feels positively hungry just thinking about it!

\*People leaving rubbish at the site of the bonfire are being urged to act responsibly. Please do NOT dump dangerous plastic and metal items.

## QUILTERS ON SHOW

Those talented ladies from Dovecote Quilters were busy preparing for their annual autumn show at Letwell Village Hall on Friday October 24th as FLAG went to press.

The group, which meets at the hall on Tuesdays from 11 am to 4 pm, were displaying a beautiful

array of quilts and hand-crafted items - many of them for sale. There was a raffle and competitions too.

All the proceeds from the event were donated to the Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Appeal.

## PIE, PEAS, CAROLS AND A DISCO

Christmas might seem rather distant, but the village hall committee at Letwell have already booked Dinnington Welfare Brass Band for an evening of carols on December 6th. Tickets, which include pie and peas - yes they can't stop scoffing them at Letwell!! - are on sale at a giveaway £5 for adults and £3 for under 16s. There'll be the annual village quiz too  
They'll be jiving the night away at Letwell on

January 10th when a disco comes to town. Tickets again are a fiver - a bargain at the price. An era comes to an end at the village hall with Friday morning keep fit tutor Yvonne Boughton leaving the area to be closer to her son, daughter and new grandchild in Scotland. Letwell will be sorry to see Yvonne go after many, many years of genuine active service in the community.

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council meetings were held on the 23rd July and 24th September.

The members were delighted to welcome Mrs Caroline Jopling onto the Parish Council. Mrs Jopling was co-opted at an extraordinary meeting on the 2nd September.

RMBC surveyor, Mr Jonathan Marriott attended the September meeting to provide information to members regarding the “Community Right to Bid” policy being operated by the Borough Council.

It was noted that the scheme would allow a parish council or community group to identify and nominate local assets which they considered to be of community value. If the property owner then decided to sell the asset the council or group would be given the opportunity to bid and purchase the asset on the open market.

The scheme could not provide a guarantee of a sale but looked to provide time to raise finance, put together a business model and make a full bid for the asset for the owner to consider.

Members further discussed the Borough Council's agreement to designate parts of the village as a conservation area in accordance with their 2011 appraisal. It was reported that the conservation officer dealing with designation had advised that the matter was

being progressed and that all residents would be informed of any plans in due course.

Any final decision would only be taken after a public consultation and vote by residents. The Parish Council agreed that it would look to provide information about the potential benefits and restrictions imposed by conservation area status. It would also offer an opportunity for any comments or concerns to be raised by residents which could then be forwarded to RMBC.

The Parish Council adopted a Filming at Meetings policy in accordance with recent new legislation. Members of the public are now allowed to photograph, audio record or film public meetings for live or subsequent broadcast.

Arrangements for the village Christmas tree, traffic calming, the Neighbourhood Watch scheme and an update on conservation area designation would be among the matters addressed at the 26th November meeting.



## RESTORATION WORK HAS SPURRED ME ON, SAYS HALL OWNER

Pleased with the progress of work on the restoration and extension of West Lodge, Friends of Firbeck Hall recently took the opportunity to discuss the current situation regarding the development of Firbeck Hall with owner Jason Cooper.

He responded with the following statement:

***“All is going really well in respect of planning permission. RMBC responded to our Pre Planning Application and we have taken on board all of the comments from their various departments.***

***“We are co-operating fully and fine tuning our application to try to ensure the full support of RMBC so that planning can be granted as soon as possible. We expect this period to be no more than 6 months from now. Also, seeing the simple beauty of Lodge House evolve has really spurred us all on.”***

'Friends of Firbeck Hall was formed in 2009, responding at that time to the deteriorating condition of an unoccupied listed building. Since then and with a change of ownership, prospects for the Hall - and its associated listed structures, West Lodge and stable-block - have considerably improved.

West Lodge - renamed Lodge House - is now well on the way to complete restoration. At the present time the Hall itself and stable-block are passing through a lengthy and complicated process of Planning Application with local authority RMBC for full restoration and the development of the site.



*Firbeck Hall*

If you are interested in the history of the Hall and care about its future you are invited to join Friends of Firbeck Hall. Subscription fee is only £1.00. Contact our Membership Secretary - telephone **01909 732191** or email **friends@firbeckhall.net** Visit our website at **www.firbeckhall.net**

**Sid Ellis.**

## SHOW-TIME AT THE HALL

Polly and the Billets Doux kicked off the autumn programme at Letwell Village Hall, and made history as the first band to play the venue acoustically without a microphone anywhere in sight.

It turned out to be a great night with the band - from Bristol and Winchester - bringing along a smattering of friends and relatives, among them Polly's mum and dad, currently living on a narrowboat at Doncaster.

Long-time favourites John Reilly and Lewis Nitikman filled the hall as usual on Saturday October 18th. John arrived at Letwell within hours of returning to the UK from a tour in Spain.

The singer-songwriter and Boy On A Dolphin frontman has been heavily involved in a project to erect a monument to the working women who kept the steelworks of Sheffield rolling during the Second World War - and have been largely ignored ever since.

Proceeds from a concert at the City Hall helped part fund a statue. A new single titled Northern Girls - which was written by John in collaboration with John Parr and Elliot Kennedy - is due out soon with the proceeds going in the same direction.

Ex Lindisfarne frontman and multi instrumentalist Marty Craggs appears at the

hall on Saturday November 29th with fellow Geordie boys Leonard Brown, the current Scottish accordian champion and guitarist Les Dodd. The hugely talented Happy Cats always deliver a potent mix of great music as well as lashings of good fun.

The show always sells out quickly every year. If you want tickets please call Martyn or Andy on **01909 731626** or **540694** as soon as possible.

Bookings are already being taken for the New Year's Eve celebrations at the village hall - featuring Canadian keyboards player Lewis Nitikman with guitar/vocalist Shaun McLoughlin from ace Sheffield band The Sharp Cuts.

Tickets, which include a sumptuous buffet from Ann Wright's famous Carlton kitchen, are available from Martyn and Andy on the same numbers printed above.

Priced £25, the tickets are cheaper than the cost of taxi ride to and from the Charnwood at Blyth on New Year's Eve!!



*The Happy Cats*

## POO FREE AT LAST

Dog lovers in Firbeck appear to have heeded the warning in the last edition of FLAG about unsightly piles of poo littering verges along New Road.

Long time resident Darren Straw - who had threatened to film the offenders - says there's barely been a problem since he highlighted the issue three months ago, Darren told FLAG:

*"I think people read FLAG, and the message has got through, I've still got my camera next to the front window, and I'll use it if I see anybody not clearing up after their dog. But at the moment things are fine in front of the house, problems still exist on the footpath leading to the aerodrome from New Road, It's like dog poo alley down there. People with dogs really should know better."*

## JACK'S GOT THE X FACTOR

FLAG doesn't usually tune in to X Factor, but the success of teenager Jack Walton on the show has changed all that. The fresh-faced 16 year old performed his very first show in front of a live audience at Letwell two years ago - only ever having played the odd pub gig in Barnsley before that.

Jack's certainly worked on his routine since he appeared at the village hall. Two years ago he was overcome with nerves at the prospect of playing in front of 70 or 80 people. Now Jack looks like a star in the making.

Former Spice Girl Mel B - who is on the judges panel - thinks he's destined for great things. So little 'ol Letwell might not be able to afford a repeat performance!!!



*Jack walton from x factor*

## SCARECROWS TAKE OVER FIRBECK - FOR THE WEEKEND

Firbeck experienced an invasion of Scarecrows in mid September with princesses, cyclists, onion-sellers and jugglers among the 30 characters that residents and organisations made and displayed around the village. There were even guest appearances from Spiderman and Dr Who.

The week-end festivities also included displays of country dancing, harvest decorations and historic registers in St Martin's Church and photographic entries for the 2015 Firbeck Village Calendar. The invasion coincided with St Martin's Harvest Festival weekend, raising £400 for the church and concluding with Harvest Supper in the Village Hall.

Around 400 people enjoyed refreshments in the

Hall on Saturday with many visitors from all over Rotherham. *"The event seemed to strike a chord with residents and visitors alike,"* said Village Hall Chairman, Simon Copley.

***"There is a definite demand to repeat it next year - hopefully with even more scarecrows!"***

The latest initiative for the Village Hall is to hold a monthly film night using the recently-installed projection equipment funded thanks to a grant from the National Lottery. Charlie Chaplain's "The Kid" attracted a good crowd in October and the next showing, on December 6th, will be a Christmas double bill: a late afternoon film for children followed by James Stewart in "It's a Wonderful Life."



*Scarecrows takeover village*