



April 2017

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## CRACKDOWN ON THE LITTER LOUTS

Villagers at Firbeck and Letwell have completed a Spring clean of the local verges - and recovered a mountain of litter and unwanted household debris.

Volunteers and parish councillors came together at Firbeck backing a Rotherham council project called Love Where You Live.

In a separate move at Letwell, a huge array of plastic bottles, cans and food wrappers were cleared from the Ramper - the main approach road in and out of the village. Streetpride also removed piles of litter from the lay by on Lamb Lane at about the same time.

The clean up coincides with a crackdown on epidemic levels of fly tipping throughout the borough.

People littering - even on a small scale - now face fixed penalty fines of £400. RMBC have also taken on a team of extra enforcement officers to deal with the crisis out on the highways, byways and country lanes.

There's more detail about the initiative inside FLAG with Emma Hoddinott - the councillor overseeing environmental issues in Rotherham - spelling out her determination to stem the tide of anti social behaviour.

Editor's note: If you spot someone littering from a car phone Streetpride on 01709 336003 and report the reg number.



*The chicken lady has arrived...  
Read her story inside*

## DIARY DATES

Lots of events are up and coming in both villages. BBC Folk Award finalists Gilmore and Roberts are at Letwell Village Hall Saturday April 29th. Big Al's Hellfire Club - a renowned ukulele band - are at Firbeck on Friday May 19th. Acclaimed duo John Reilly and Lewis Nitikman are at Letwell the next night May 20th. There's details about all the events inside FLAG plus advance info about Firbeck Scarecrow Festival weekend and Letwell street fayre.

## FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL

We are encouraged by recent reports of activity in the Hall grounds which appear to be a clear indication of the start of redevelopment and restoration. It seems that the work is primarily concerned with creating easy access and preparation of the areas where building and repairs will be taking place.

We are told that the earliest work of tree/foliage clearance took place initially to avoid as much as possible any conflict with nesting birds.

The necessary legal work also continues with a particular regard to the important clauses which ensure that the restoration of Firbeck Hall itself takes place in the early phases of redevelopment and before the start of major new building activities.

At this time we are unable to give a firm date, but it is hoped that the formal planning application will be submitted within the next few months and certainly before the end of the year!

If you would like to join with the Friends of Firbeck Hall and receive our regular newsletters and updates on the progress of restoration and historical research, contact our membership secretary; email, - [friends@firbeckhall.net](mailto:friends@firbeckhall.net) or telephone 01909 732191. The joining subscription is only £1.00.

Sid Ellis

## LET BATTLE COMMENCE

The morning of Saturday 1st April saw 15 people armed with wheelbarrows, spades, rakes, secateurs and other weapons gathering at St Martins Churchyard, Firbeck to do battle with fearsome brambles and prolific ivy! Grateful thanks to all involved.

A second skirmish is planned for Saturday 20th May from 10.00am to 1.00pm. Everyone is welcome for all or part of that time. Coffee and biscuits will be provided at half-time.

Keith



*Let battle commence!*

## LETWELL ANUUAL MEETING

Letwell's annual parish meeting will be held at the Village Hall on Monday May 15th at 7.30 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Parishioners can raise any issue with the parish council. Praise will be gratefully received. The parish council will also try to deal with complaints as well.

## FIRST WOODPECKER SIGHTING IN 20 YEARS

David Wright delights in the sights and sounds of Spring in the latest edition of his ever popular column....Nature Report

For me the star bird this time was a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker - the first I've encountered for probably 20 years - in my neighbour's garden. My attention was drawn to the bird by its call. I immediately 'spotted' it in a tree, just before it flew into Firbeck Hall grounds.



*Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (Lesser Pecker in birding circles) is Sparrow-sized and resembles a miniature Great Spotted Woodpecker. The bird is black and white, the male having a red crown. It is very hard to see, favouring the higher branches of trees.

There's been a dramatic collapse in the UK population of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, declining by 72% between 1974 and 1999. I don't have any later statistics, but there are now thought to be no more than 2000 breeding pairs in the UK.

Another nice winter bird for me was a male Brambling on New Road, Firbeck - a visitor from Scandinavia/Siberia. This finch is similar looking to the Chaffinch, but can always be distinguished by its more-orangey appearance and white rump.

The Hen Harrier I mentioned in January FLAG has been showing well in Firbeck throughout the winter, delighting residents. The bird is a female and hasn't appeared shy of humans, resting very close to houses. As I said previously, Hen Harriers are in danger of becoming extinct in the UK through illegal persecution because of their liking for Red Grouse.

Once again, we had a healthy number of Grey Lag Geese at Lingodell - up to around 30 birds at times.

Kingswood Close is doing well generally. A pair of Tawny Owls showed well at Kingswood Close on a couple of occasions. A pair of Song Thrushes have returned to nest in the same bush as last year, and a pair of Pied Wagtails have taken up residence. A pair of Grey Wagtails often show and are probably breeding nearby. I've taken great pleasure watching a Robin extracting nesting materials from my front lawn, then taking them to a dense conifer where the nest will be concealed in the bottom of the bush - Robins' nests are very difficult to find. Feeders at one house are again doing well, attracting several species of birds.

David Wright 01709 813360 davidandgwenneth@gmail.com

## A SUMMER SERENADE AT ST. PETER'S

It's a few months away yet, but fingers are tightly crossed at Letwell for a warm summer's afternoon on Sunday July 16th.

The Sarentino Strings will be presenting what they describe as "a lovely sunny programme" of light and popular pieces at St Peter's Church. The quartet - two violins plus a viola and cello - will be joined by advanced music students from Rotherham and Chesterfield.

Visiting violinist Hannah Thompson-Smith knows what to expect from the perfect acoustics at St Peter's, and tells FLAG: "We promise you won't be able to resist singing and toe tapping along....."

Tickets for the event - which starts at 3 pm - are available from Robin on 01909 730351. Priced at £7.50 they include a free drink during the interval. Proceeds go to support church funds.

## GETTING READY FOR LETWELL'S BIG DAY

A hard core of volunteers have been busy behind the scenes preparing for this year's Letwell street fayre - taking place with one or two new attractions and lots of old favourites on the afternoon of Saturday July 1st.

Last year's show stoppers - The Hawks of Steel - will be flying free again and performing impossible tricks on the village street. The award-winning Thurcroft Brass Band will be delivering the music, and the newly formed Retford Pipe Band will be marching and playing too for the first time at Letwell.

The mouse hunt - a winner with young visitors last year - will be up and running as will the ever popular pot smashing, coconut shy and splat the rat. The fire brigade and police will be in attendance, and the scouts, brownies and rainbows will also be joining in cooking bacon butties and running children's games. Members of the WI will be serving home made teas in the village hall all through the afternoon.

Organisers are urging villagers to deliver home made jams, chutney and garden produce. More plates, mugs and jugs are wanted for the pot smashing stall. Contact Adrian on 01909 540218 if you have any unwanted bits and pieces.

The cake stall - which was very much on the depleted side last year - needs extra support. Villagers are being encouraged to deliver home made cakes, buns, biscuits, flapjack or even sweets to the village hall on the morning of the show.

Arnold Laver's daughter and grand-daughter - whose family have owned large areas of land around the village for many years - have kindly agreed to open the show around 1 pm.

## EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Big Al's Hellfire Club are bringing their ukulele band to Firbeck Village Hall on the night of Friday May 19th. Firbeck's No 1 ukulele player Keith Martin tells FLAG that he's hoping the show will help inspire the village's young - and not so young - group of up and coming players.

Should be quite a night as the Hellfire Club say the audience can "expect the unexpected...."

Phone Keith on 01709 769465 for more info.

## IT ALL STARTED WITH THREE EGGS

As a fairly new resident of Letwell, just celebrating our first anniversary of moving into the village I'm already getting to be known as the 'Chicken Lady'. I started keeping hens around seven years ago when we moved to a house with a very large garden. I started with three ex battery hens from the British Hen Welfare Trust.

When I picked up the three girls they were in a sorry state, hardly any feathers, but they were feisty, strong and ready to start the next stage of their lives as free hens. The next day I had my first three eggs and that's how it all started.



*New residents in Letwell*

I soon decided to get involved with the British Hen Welfare Trust charity as a Co-ordinator and along with a band of hardworking helpers, family and friends hosting a rehoming collection point at home and attending egg farms to get the little hens out of the cages.

You may have seen the signs in and around Letwell when we are running a rehome. Our day starts very early when we take our trailer to one of the many egg farms in the region to load up the girls in to specialist crates. All hens are pre-booked over the internet or via Hen Central and we can bring back up to 500 hens at a time to go off to their new homes on the same day.

There's something special about seeing hens look around them for the very first time – there's no cage, no wire to stand on, just ground to scratch, space to stretch and flap, and freedom to take their first ever dust bath. It doesn't take many minutes for instincts to kick in, wings to spread and absorb the sunshine. It's great to see them discover new foods over the coming days as they have only ever eaten a powdery mash.

These hens are around 18 months old and are deemed to be uneconomical as their egg production drops when they enter into their first moult.

They are destined for a much sadder fate if they are not rehomed. Most still lay eggs at least three a week, if not more and are back up to full capacity once their moult is complete. I also have a number of 'posh' special breed hens, but the ex-commercial hens are by far my favourite and make great pets and in general are much friendlier.

If you would like to rehome some hens or get involved helping on a rehome day please contact <http://www.bhwt.org.uk> or contact Hen Central 01884 860084.

Louise Addy



## MELBOURNE TO FIRBECK - AND BACK AGAIN

Firbeck girl Emily Simpson - now the happily married Mrs. Emily Fenn - tells of her new life Down Under, but admits she'll always call Firbeck "home" ....

August 2014, we'd sold or donated the majority of our worldly possessions, rented our house out and moved to Melbourne, Australia. After living and working in 'the world's most liveable city' for just over year we did it again, this time to embark on a career break before intending to return to the UK to pick up where we left off.



*Two of Emily's favourite places...*



*Mt. Cook in New Zealand and Uluru (Ayers Rock)*

We spent 13 weeks driving and flying around Australia taking in the iconic sights of Uluru, The Great Barrier Reef, Sydney and it's famous bridge and Opera House. We drove a total of 12,500 miles in our little camper vans before heading over to Australia's antipodean neighbour, New Zealand for 5 weeks, where we took in both island and a bit of a Lord of The Rings tour, including completing a 12 mile hike over Mount Doom (The Tongariro Alpine Crossing).

Onward from Oceania we flew to South East Asia travelling around Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia for 7 weeks to take in new cultural experiences, historical tours, amazing food and 13p beers! By this time we had decided our time in Melbourne wasn't quite finished and started putting plans in place for our return - typical Boomerang Brits!

Our final stop before returning home was Japan. Somewhere that we'd been wanting to visit for years but never got around to it. A whistle-stop two weeks on Honshu, stopping in Tokyo, Hiroshima, Kyoto and Osaka opened our eyes to the über modern but traditional nation, giving us the desire to revisit to explore further afield.

We returned to Firbeck in July, just in time for the summer and the scarecrow festival. We are now back in Melbourne again after enjoying a 'Firbeck Christmas' of Carols around the village and pre-lunch drinks in the Black Lion on Christmas Day.

People often ask us why we are going back or what we enjoyed most about Melbourne, and it is hard to put it down to one particular thing but the weather, food, cafe culture, diversity, friendliness and sport, don't forget all the sport, helps. As much as we love Melbourne, you can take Emily out of Firbeck but she will always call it home.

David and Emily Fenn

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Once again there has been an extremely successful Spring Litter Pick organised by Cllr. Chris Stanton and supported by Wayne Munro-Smith from the Love Where You Live project run by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC). A big thank you to all residents and children who tackled the task admirably with real community spirit. A great deal of rubbish and fly tipping material was collected. Refreshments were kindly organized by Sharon Collins, Irene Botham, Lisa Shiel and Anita Stanton. Talking about Love Where You Live, what lovely flower displays we have in Firbeck courtesy of Cllr. Julie Dunker and her husband, Brian.

Cllrs, Wendy Hamilton and Andy Shiel have been working with a number of residents looking at producing a Firbeck Handy Information Pack that can hold a number of A5 leaflets. These can be updated and added to at regular intervals. Once completed this will be distributed to all residents and then offered to all newcomers to the village.

Thanks go to Cllr. Andy Shiel who, in conjunction with Emma from South Yorkshire Ambulance Service, recently ensured that our village defibrillator was inspected and furnished with new pads. This equipment is always checked weekly to ensure it is working correctly.

Cllr. Wendy Hamilton recently approached Firbeck Village Hall Community to ask if they would house a new grit bin so we can join the RMBC Winter Partnership Scheme. They kindly agreed to this and the grit bin, provided by a donation from Borough Councillors Simon Tweed and Jeanette Mallinder, has now been purchased. Cllr. Chris Stanton has agreed to be the chief snow warden and thanks go to those individuals who have also agreed to be 'snowmen'!! The salt will be used to clear pathways around the Village Hall in bad weather.

At our last council meeting we arranged for a talk about fracking to take place before the main business of the evening. This was delivered by Peter Allison, a parish councillor in Wilsden, who has personal knowledge of the oil and gas industry.

There are a number of other areas under development at present. Responses from the village questionnaire overwhelmingly demonstrated that preservation of the village's heritage assets were important to villagers. Cllr. Caroline Jopling has drawn up a project proposal for the preservation of the Ha Ha. Concern has been raised by a resident about parking around the sharp bend on New Road where children cross to access the village hall play area. The clerk is currently corresponding with RMBC requesting appropriate signage in the village to alert road users to children playing. Requests to RMBC are also in process to try looking at ways to improve the verges at the Kidd Lane and New Road junction.

Cllr. Wendy Hamilton



*Spring Has Sprung - this duck arrived out of the blue at Letwell pond with 12 little ducklings!*

## FIRBECK SCARECROW WEEKEND 2017



*Get involved!*

**23-24 SEPTEMBER 2017**

We had such a wonderful time last September that people are already talking about this year's event. It will take place during the Harvest weekend and the theme is **MUSICALS**.

Put the date in your diary and dig out those old clothes for your scarecrow. Remember it's not a competition - we are grateful for every entry.

We will send out information nearer the time with details of activities and events, but in the meantime if you have any questions please contact the Scarecrow team.

Sharon Collins 817327 \* Lisa Shiel 818540 \*

Anita Stanton 818927 (email  
stantona50@yahoo.co.uk) \*

Pat Robinson 813593 \* Sarah Ansley 818232

## THE HGVS KEEP COMING

The long campaign to stop HGVs travelling along those narrow and winding lanes at Gildingwells continues in spite of Rotherham MBC erecting warning signs to stop the heavy traffic.

The advisory notices were erected some weeks ago at either end of Doe Quarry Lane at Dinnington. Traffic engineers were hoping that lorry drivers heading to and from the CPL fuel depot at Carlton would heed the advisory signs, and stay away from the dangerous route in future. The company agreed to fully co-operate with the scheme.

However, some truckers employed by outside contractors have chosen to ignore the "Unsuitable For HGV" notices, and have continued to use Red Quarry Lane and Rotherham Baulk. Ten 40 foot trucks were clocked in the space of a few hours on one day alone in early April.



*Stop the HGVs*

Campaigner Ken Goodall tells FLAG: "There has been some improvement, but things aren't perfect by any means."



## ANOTHER ACCIDENT ON LAMB LANE



*Time to slow down? A Fiat 500 is the latest victim*

Why do so many drivers come to grief on the bend where Lamb Lane and Penny Lane meet?

This little Fiat 500 became the latest casualty last week - ending up with its bonnet halfway up one of the roadside trees!!

Might help if everyone slowed down just a touch....

## PHONE BOX RINGS THE CHANGES

Letwell's old red telephone box - which has served as the village lending library for the past few years ago - has now got a new role in life.

Villager Louise Addy, who works as a volunteer rescuing unwanted battery hens, has started selling fresh laid eggs from the kiosk at the top of Barker Hades Road.

The eggs are priced at £2 a dozen.

Louise says the initiative is going well so far with a steady stream of customers snapping up supplies.

Proceeds from the book sales - which have gone to Safe At Last for some time - are now going instead to Rotherham homeless charity Shiloh. An initial donation of £30 has already been handed over.



*Letwell's lending library*

## A WALK TO CAP IT ALL

Walking the dog can be a bit of a chore at times. You tend to walk the same route day in day out. If you're not careful then the dog gets bored and so do you.

FLAG came up with a solution not long ago, courtesy of that trusty bus which passes through Firbeck and Letwell en route to Dinnington and Rotherham four times a day.

Hopping aboard the number 20 - free for me and 60 pence for the border terrier - we trundled off to Slade Hooton and then set forth across the fields with Jess running free across the wide open spaces. It was beautifully peaceful at the foot of the wooded valley with just the sound of the little river running towards the lake at Roche Abbey. Passing the ruins we went onwards along the water meadow into Stone, and then across the airfield with the spire of St. Martin's Church coming into view. A perfect walk worthy of any guide book.

Of course, something had to go wrong. And it did. En route it suddenly hit me fair and square on top of my bonce. Yes, I'd gone and left my favourite woolly hat aboard the bus!! Not just any old hat either, but a rather expensive Christmas gift from my wife.

Not a problem, I thought. All I had to do was catch the number 20 on its return journey into Firbeck, and I'd be re-united with my festive prezzie.

The driver knew all about my hat when I asked. "Mm, nice grey one with a bobble," he said. "Sorry, it's gone off to the lost property office in Sheffield...."

TM Travel were very helpful when I called. "We'll put it on the bus in the morning, and it'll be in Letwell by 9.15 am."

Next morning there was no sign my prized possession when the bus pulled in. But the driver called the office. "I'll put it on the lunch-time service myself," promised the man in the office. And by 1.15 pm the hat was back on my head...

Try the walk if you get chance - but keep hold of your hat if you do!!

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL W I

The sun came out which made us think of summer and we had a taste of the seaside and became kids again with Patsy and her Punch and Judy Show. Alas, this is a dying entertainment as there are now only about 50 left in the country. But it brought back many happy memories for us.

In the coming months we will learn about the Sand House at Doncaster, debate and vote on the Resolutions to be put to the National AGM in June, be shown how to make stunning hanging baskets, have a Poems and Puddings evening and in August we are having a trip out for Afternoon Tea and a guide round the Harley Gallery - feeding the mind, body and soul!

Plus a St. George's Day lunch at Letwell and a Chantry Group AGM and Lunch at Dinnington and a trip to Chatsworth for the RHS Flower Show. Plenty to look forward to ...and a rather lot of eating!

If you are interested in any of the above events please contact the Secretary on 01909 540751.

## COMING SOON - FOLK'S HOT PROPERTY AND THE DOLPHINS

Great music beckons at Letwell starting with highly rated folk duo Gilmore and Roberts on Saturday April 29th. Katriona and Jamie (mandolin, fiddle, guitar and vocals) have twice been finalists at the BBC Folk Awards, and played some of the UK's biggest acoustic festivals, winning countless accolades with their original song-writing and trademark harmonies.



*Gilmore and Roberts*

laid back world class music on Saturday May 20th. Expect passionate songs and lots of banter from this hugely talented pair.

Listen to John and Lewis at [www.johnreilly.org](http://www.johnreilly.org)

A Letwell tradition continues on Tuesday and Wednesday June 27th and 28th with two nights of Boy On A Dolphin. The band, who rarely play anywhere these days other than Barker Hades Road and Sheffield City Hall, love coming to the village just as much as we love having them.

No wonder tickets to see John, Pete, Darren and Andy sell so quickly each year!!

If you've never heard the band there's lots of material worth checking out on line.

Tickets for the shows are available from Martyn and Andy on 01909 731626 or 540694. Tickets are priced £12.

Please book early as concerts sell out quickly.

## MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

The brain boxes of Letwell gathered for a highly successful quiz night at the village hall. The pie and peas were undoubtedly the highlight of the evening for some of the dozier members of the audience - including one man from FLAG.

Fifty people joined in the fun altogether. The event raised a commendable £312 to offset the costs of staging the summer fayre.

Katriona grew up at Knebworth, Hertfordshire, and met home-grown Barnsley boy Jamie - brother of folk star Kathryn Roberts (a visitor to Letwell last year) - at the Leeds College of Music. They released their debut album in 2008, and have toured widely in Europe and Canada. Most memorably the pair were invited to tour Britain with folk legends Fairport Convention.

Roots magazine simply described them as "Hot Property..." Q magazine said simply: "Head and shoulders above their contemporaries..."

Check out [www.gilmoreandroberts.co.uk](http://www.gilmoreandroberts.co.uk)

Sheffield's favourite Liverpudlian John Reilly, the voice of Boy on A Dolphin, arrives with long-time collaborator and keyboards player Lewis Nitikman, for a night of stripped down,

# WAGING WAR ON THE FLY TIPPERS



*Mission Accomplished - Job Well Done at Firbeck*

Fly tipping is on the increase and our rural verges have become a dumping ground for every imaginable bit of waste. Driving anywhere around Rotherham it seems as though the local authority are fighting a losing battle with the mountain of debris piling up week after week.

So FLAG asked Emma Hoddinott, the councillor overseeing the environment in the borough, to tell us her thoughts.

## **Time for Action on Fly-tipping**

Fly-tipping, littering and dog fouling are highly visible to all, degrading the environment, reducing the quality of life and blighting the rural landscape. Not to mention that the removal of fly-tipping costs the Council over £250,000 per year. That's why we have said it is 'Time for Action'.

## **Fixed Penalty Notices**

One of the first things we did was to increase the level of fine for fly-tipping to the maximum available - £400. The fixed penalty notice enables us to use civil monetary penalties rather than having to go through court action. However, in the most serious cases we will still go to court and one recent case for fly tipping commercial waste saw the individual get a criminal record and prison sentence.

## **Enhanced Enforcement**

From this month, we are bringing on board extra enforcement officers to increase the number of people we catch committing dog fouling, littering and fly-tipping offences. Members of the public can help us by reporting hot spots and information to Streetpride: [streetpride@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:streetpride@rotherham.gov.uk) / 01709 336003

## **'Love Where You Live'**

We also want to work with local communities to make the area look nicer. That is why we launched Love Where You Live, which gives support and recognition to the fantastic volunteers that clean up their area. It was great to see over 30 people attend a recent litterpick in Firbeck. You can get involved in Love Where You Live and register as a volunteer here : [www.rotherham.gov.uk/litterpick](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/litterpick) / 01709 823726

Across the country there has been a huge rise in fly-tipping; councils across England recorded nearly a million cases of fly-tipping last year with the clean-up bill costing £49.8m. In Rotherham, we will continue to develop and use what powers we can to stop this blight on our countryside.