



October 2017

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## FOCAL POINT ROLE FOR BLACK LION

Big changes are afoot at The Black Lion with a new management team setting out to establish the pub as "a focal point" of village life.

The hostelry re-opened its doors on October 9th with director Joe Harper telling FLAG that he wanted to create a "relaxed and informal environment" at the pub - helping it to become a hub of the community.

Joe, who has a successful background running operations at the King William Inn at Scaftworth, said the Black Lion would be opening seven days a week in future - Monday to Thursday from 4.30 pm to 11.30 pm and Friday through to Sunday between 12 mid-day to 11.30 pm.

The objective was to serve high quality food, and the new menu would feature pub classics, ideal for weekday nights, alongside some very modern and high quality cuisine suitable for special occasions.

The new team will see Christina Atkinson in charge of day to day management with Hannah Dobson acting as relief. The culinary team will be headed by Rosette accredited chef Billy Frost. The intention will be to achieve a 1-2 AA Rosette.

Classic pub dishes will range from £11 upwards with specials in a higher bracket.



*New Management at Black Lion*

## POIGNANT REMINDER



*Poignant Reminder*

Letwell's war memorial has been decorated in recent weeks by a wreath - which recalls a tragedy involving a village boy serving in the RAF during the last war.

A handwritten note, placed alongside the wreath with a pot of pink roses, marks the 75th anniversary of Sgt. John Whitehead's death.

The airman, a member of 103 Squadron RAFVR, was shot down by the Luftwaffe on September 5th 1942.

The note, left by relatives, declares that Sgt. Whitehead, who lived at North Cottage, Letwell, "will always be remembered by future generations" of the Commons and Whitehead families.

Remembrance Sunday will be marked with a service at St. Peter's Church, Letwell, at 9.30 am on Sunday November 12th.

## THE LATEST FROM FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL

News from the RMBC Planning Department on the progress of the planning application submitted in respect of Firbeck Hall is generally good.

Except that the complicated procedures involved with the restoration of listed buildings, associated with enabling development inevitably take a long time to process.

The latest information we have is that the application is now expected to go before the Planning Board before the end of the year.

Assuming consent is forthcoming, we are told that the developers are keen to start work early next spring.

For those of us who's primary concern is the restoration of Firbeck Hall, the ongoing delays are very frustrating as deterioration of this 16th century building continues. With another winter approaching the structural condition can only worsen.

If you want to learn about the gas works at Firbeck Hall and the gardens at Firbeck Hall you should join Friends of Firbeck Hall. They feature in the Autumn edition of the Newsletter which all the Friends receive on a regular basis.

Membership fee is only £1.00, - and no annual subscription.

Telephone: 01909 732191 or email: [friends@firbeckhall.net](mailto:friends@firbeckhall.net)

Sid Ellis

## DAVE'S FIRST PAST THE POST

Dave Rose, Letwell and Firbeck's trusty postman, is galloping ahead with a first class hobby.

The passionate horse racing enthusiast set out two and a half years ago to visit every single racecourse in Britain - and has so far chalked up 38 of the 61 tracks from north of the border all the way to Taunton and Exeter in the south.

Dave has already ticked off all the courses within two or three hours of home. Mostly he drives, but if there's a station close to a course, then he often takes the train instead.

Favourite places so far are Newmarket, the renowned home of racing, and little Bangor on Dee. "It's a beautiful spot," says Dave, "there are no stands, just a hill, and you look down on the course, which is a natural amphitheatre with the fields set all around."

Dave isn't a gambler as such. "It's more about people watching. I love the atmosphere. There are some fantastic little courses, places like Plumpton, where they were so friendly, and made me feel so welcome."

It's not the first time our postman has taken up a sporting challenge. The avid Sheffield United fan, has already visited almost all the 96 football league grounds in the country. He's crossed 84 stadiums off the list so far, but places like Forest Green and Cheltenham still beckon.

## UPDATE FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

Come and talk to parish councillors if you have an issue or an idea you would like to share at one of our Parish Council Surgeries. Two parish councillors will be available in Firbeck Village Hall from 6.15pm until 6.45pm before each parish council meeting. Lisa Shiel has very kindly offered to provide refreshments for anyone attending these surgeries. Dates for the next three meetings are November 27th, January 24th and March 28th.

Once again we are holding a Christmas Tree Festival which is being organised and coordinated by Cllr. Shiel. This will be held early evening on Advent Sunday December 3rd so keep this date free and join us for Father Christmas and a glass of sherry! More information about the event will be distributed nearer the time.

Following a consultation event in November 2016 the developer submitted a Firbeck Hall planning application to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC). A parish meeting to discuss this was held in July and the Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting in August at which the various concerns raised by residents were discussed. The Parish Council's comments on the application were agreed at the meeting and submitted to RMBC.

Firbeck A Handy Guide has recently been distributed to all Firbeck Parish Council households. At the last meeting it was agreed to broaden out distribution to those residents who currently receive Flag through Firbeck. Remember, if you would like to volunteer for a community scheme to help out others in the area requiring short term support (lifts, shopping etc) please contact Cllr. Wendy Hamilton on [wendy.fpc@outlook.com](mailto:wendy.fpc@outlook.com). Also, if you have had a good experience with any tradespeople we would like to compile a list to add to the Handy Guide-this will not be a recommendation but rather a starting point for residents who are looking to get quotes.

Ineos are now looking to frack in Woodsetts. Representatives of the firm attended a recent Woodsetts Parish Council meeting where the sole topic was the Ineos proposal for the drilling of a core well on land South-West of Woodsetts. The same company are currently in the process of seeking planning permission to construct an exploratory well site on land adjacent to Common Road in Harthill. I understand that so far there have been many objections lodged by Harthill residents.

Clearance work has begun on the ha ha which is reported to be the start of a two year project to restore the feature. Mature trees are to be left in place and the landowner is to instigate a wildlife strip along the edge of the field.

Cllr. Wendy Hamilton

## YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP

Is anything safe anymore? FLAG was amazed to hear that thieves had been busy at Gildingwells.....stealing the village post box. The wooden pole - on which the post box sat - was carted off at the same time. Three other post boxes have been stolen in Worksop.

## SAVE US FROM THE BIRDS

Jackdaws seem to be everywhere these days. Or maybe you only notice them when your chimney's become a maternity ward for the local feathered females.

Your man at FLAG HQ only found out what was going on when he tried to light a fire when the first cold snap arrived at the end of September. Huge clouds of smoke billowed from the log burner filling the house with fumes. We couldn't see out of the windows it was that thick.

The chimney sweep could shift the blockage. "There's one nest on top of another and then there's another and another," he said rather grimly. "They're at least 6ft. deep..."

The specialist heating engineer, who had fitted the stove some years ago, was the next on the scene. Dismantling the stove he spent the whole afternoon filling eight black bags with an assortment of twigs, sticks, and the odd young dead bird. Some of the twigs were black and scorched. We'd been lucky that the chimney hadn't set on fire.

It didn't end there. With the jackdaws circling ready to move in once more crows were fitted on all five chimneys.

Now nearly £500 worse off we're safe at last.

Here's hoping the squirrels don't decide to nest in the roof...

## ST. MARTIN'S OPEN EVERY DAY...WHAT DO YOU THINK

As last year, St. Martins, Firbeck decided to take part in the annual national 10 Days of Prayer. This ran from 25th May to 3rd June with the Church open for prayer 10am – 2pm every day. There were also some additional evening sessions to accommodate people who work and a Youth Prayer Session on the Friday after school.

A number of people expressed their appreciation of the Church being open every day, so the PCC would now like to know whether the community would like to have the Church open daily from 10am – 2pm. We accept that there would be a certain element of risk involved, but feel this would be far outweighed by the advantages of the Church being available to everyone every day.

Please let us have your opinion by dropping a note through the door of either the Churchwarden, Rosemary, at 14 New Road or the PCC Secretary, Chris, at 38 New Road or email Chris at [kchmartin@talktalk.net](mailto:kchmartin@talktalk.net)

## WHAT AN OFFER!

Letwell's annual Christmas party takes place this year at the village hall on Saturday December 9th with the Dinnington Colliery Welfare Band in attendance - and free pie and peas on the menu courtesy of the village hall committee.

There will be a quiz - ready to challenge the local brainboxes - and carol singing to round off the evening. If you intend to join in then please call 731626 or 540694 with food orders by Monday December 4th or risk missing out on the pie and peas!!

# TAKING A LOOK AT THE AUTUMN MIGRATION

David Wright presents the latest edition of Nature Report.....

A very quiet summer for me in the local area. The only interesting report I've had is of a tame Jackdaw arriving at the home of a Firbeck resident and making itself at home.

So, on 27 September I decided to have a look at the Autumn migration by way of a trip to Filey and Flamborough Head, and was well-rewarded. It was great to see so many birds arriving from across the sea, including quite a lot of Meadow Pipits at Filey.



*Meadow Pipit*

Yellow-browed Warblers have arrived on the east coast in good numbers this year. I may have seen two at Filey, but they're so small it was difficult to be sure. It's a fact, however, that birds were present at Filey and Flamborough. They're similar in size to Goldcrests - green with a yellow eyebrow. They breed in Siberia and occur in the UK every year as they migrate south-westwards. It's amazing to think how these tiny birds migrate over several thousand miles and across the sea.

On to Flamborough and I was immediately rewarded with a view of a juvenile Redstart perched on the lighthouse perimeter wall. A walk around the headland produced a Whinchat together with a large number of Goldfinches. Back to the lighthouse area, and there in some brambles was a male Brambling. I couldn't believe my luck when the

Brambling was joined by two Stonechats.

A Common Rosefinch was present, but unfortunately I wasn't rewarded with a sighting. I've only seen one before, at Arne RSPB reserve in Dorset in 1995, which is a jewel of a reserve, attracting a mass of wildlife. It was a magical afternoon in which I also saw my first Dartford Warbler and Nightjar. The RSPB is currently fund-raising in order to restore a further 67 hectares of land at the reserve. Around £200,00 has been raised to cover the purchase price, but more money is needed to restore the land to its former glory.

Back to the local patch, and we'll soon be seeing Fieldfare and Redwing in from across the North Sea, and hopefully some other winter visitors.

David Wright

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## A “PROPER YORKSHIRE” WEEKEND

Once again the village was full of visitors for the Firbeck Scarecrow Festival. Musicals was this year's theme and once again the villagers produced amazing scarecrows. There was the Lion King relaxing by the apple tree, the Phantom hidden in the bushes, the dancing scarecrow in the rain, a scarecrow enjoying a spin on the Carousel and Fiddlers up on the roof! So many to find but the visitors declared their favourite to be the Wizard of Oz character, The Tin Man, a most clever scarecrow..... who needs a brain!

Visitors found their way to the Village Hall for refreshments. The helpers had a hectic time keeping up with the demand for homemade cakes and sandwiches. There was extra baking on Saturday evening to ensure there was plenty for the Sunday rush. One visitor commented the cake portions were too large while a gentleman nearby responded, the portions were just right! Proper Yorkshire!

Entertainment was provided by, Heartease Country Dancers, Organ music, Escafeld Recorders, Firbeck Ukuleles, and Lucy and the Bushbabies. A thoroughly delightful mix of music.

In the Village Hall, there were displays of crafts made by the talented people of Firbeck, from portraits of Firbeck characters, pebble pictures, children's books, a hobby horse to felted cockerels. Such a variety to admire. Ian Barkley and Wendy Hamilton provided a display 'Where is this?' photographs taken in and around Firbeck. A real puzzle, even for Firbeck residents. Children decorated gingerbread scarecrows and crafted flowers for the garden collage.



*Scarecrows on Parade*

The Superhero's made from vegetables made people smile, from the giant beetroot to the two legged carrot! What can you make from a cob of corn to a curly cucumber?

The raffle was drawn at the Monday coffee morning, several lucky winners of vouchers for meals at local hostelrys and tea rooms. Prizes having been donated by local businesses and villagers.

The new Scarecrow 'Pop Up Booth' for selfies and pictures was a resounding success.

Many families and friends took photos creating a lasting memory of their visit to the Firbeck Scarecrow Festival 2017.

The Firbeck Scarecrow team of Sharon Collins, Lisa Shiel, Anita Stanton, Sarah Ansley and Pat Robinson, would like to thank each and everyone who helped and supported the Firbeck Scarecrow Festival.



## A "PROPER YORKSHIRE" WEEKEND



*Scarecrows on Parade*

## THE VISITOR

For one week at the beginning of August we had a rather unusual visitor to our garden. Our grandchildren named him Jet and he was a very friendly young crow, in fact he was sometimes a little too friendly and wanted to be with the children wherever they went. If the kitchen door was left open after they had been playing in the garden he would perch on the top looking in and, although he was cute, we didn't want him in the house and so carefully closed the door.



*The Visitor*

The weather was good that week and the children spent much of their time in the garden playing football. Often Jet would sit on the fence or fly about to be near his playmates. He seemed to take a particular liking to Tom and once flew onto his shoulder and another time onto his head, luckily he was wearing a cap at the time.

On one of our family excursions Jet seemed keen to get into the car with us. We managed to set off without him but he flew alongside, perched on the wing mirror, and then disappeared. We thought that he had fallen onto the road and so we almost had to perform an emergency stop. I rushed around to look for an injured bird but he was nowhere to be seen. As I returned to my seat I spotted him just about to hop through the open car door. We quickly set off again hoping to outrun him, but he succeeded in flying alongside the car for 0.2 miles passing the church before having to give up the chase.

On another occasion the children were playing football in the garden observed by their feathered friend when the ball flew out of control over the fence and into the cornfield behind. The children searched for quite a while with no success and had given up hope of finding their football. It was then that Jet came to the rescue. He flew in a circle around the children and then flew four times around the youngest before flying off and landing in the field. It was nowhere near where the boys had been searching, but they decided to go and investigate anyway. They were amazed to find the football in exactly the spot Jet had marked out. What an incredible bird!

I wonder how many other families had the pleasure of his company during the summer. I am sure that we weren't the only lucky ones.

**Anita Stanton**

## BAND SEEKS NEW RECRUITS

Thurcroft Brass Band - always one of the most popular attractions at Letwell street fayre - are eager to attract new players, and affirm South Yorkshire's musical heritage by forming a new training band primarily for adults.

Spokeswoman Sheila Hancocks admits that brass bands in the locality have been struggling in recent years due to lack of players. Thurcroft say the new band is designed as a route into the main band.

Sheila admits it's unusual for any band to target adult players, but declares new recruits would be given a warm welcome.

Interested adults should contact the band secretary for more details.



## NEWS OF LETWELL'S FAVOURITE MUSICAL SON

These are exciting times for singer and songwriter John Reilly, whose many different musical guises have earned him the title of Letwell's most frequent performer.

Never one to put all his eggs in one basket, John now has the prospect of major musical success on two very different fronts.

Not content with his solo work, his partnership with Lewis Nitikman and his central role in Boy on a Dolphin, John has been instrumental in the campaign to honour local women's vital role in wartime factories.

That led to success with his song Women of Steel, and to the unveiling of a statue in their honour in Sheffield City centre.

Now John tells FLAG a leading television production company are planning a series about the women's contribution to the war effort, and John's music and ideas will form an important element of the programmes.

This would mean national and possibly international acknowledgement of not just the hard and dangerous work these Yorkshire lasses undertook while their men were serving in the Forces but also for John's music highlighting their achievements.

Another Reilly favourite When I Come Marching Home, is also likely to feature in the television series, along with other new material.

Meanwhile, another of John's songs could be destined to earn a place in the lucrative and long-standing hierarchy of popular music, a Christmas hit.

It's all still hush hush, but a top-ranked international star management team have signed to have an option on John's song Peace Sign, and he's keeping his fingers crossed that they take up the option.

But, as he puts it philosophically after having had a series of career setbacks over the years: "If it comes off, great. If it doesn't, the rights on the song revert back to us, and we can try elsewhere."

That's the spirit, John.

Meanwhile, fans can look forward to John and Lewis presenting two nights of Christmas music at Sheffield Cathedral on Saturday and Sunday December 9th and 10th.

And finally from John Reilly, what does the man who spends so much time and energy on composing his OWN material actually have at the heart of his own personal song list? FLAG asked him, and some of the answers might surprise you, ranging as they do from light pop to driving rock, country and soul.

People have the power - Patty Smith, Drive all night - Bruce Springsteen, Fanny be tender (with my love) - Bee Gees, Lying in a bed of fire - Little Steven & The Disciples of Soul, Two doors down - Dwight Yoakham, He's Misstra Know it all - Stevie Wonder, Crying like a church on Monday- New Radicals, Hissing of summer lawns - Joni Mitchell, Sympathy for the Devil - Rolling Stones, Won't get fooled again- The Who.

## NEW IDEAS FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE

The Letwell New Year's Eve party is heading for a change of format.

There won't be a band or a buffet this time round. There won't even be tickets to buy. Instead the village hall committee are proposing a free and easy open evening with villagers encouraged to bring along their own food, drink and music.

There's already been offers of support from a famed local ukulele player and a retired DJ eager to dust down his old turntable. The festivities will start at 9 pm. Phone 731626 or 540694 for more information.

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL W I

After our very enjoyable and interesting summer trip to the Harley Gallery (Welbeck) for a tour of the Portland Collection (well worth a visit) and then afternoon tea which was also very good, we started our Autumn programme with a trip to Denby Pottery in September and some of our more artistic members painted some plates...and very nice they are too! We also learned the history of the essences and their uses in aromatherapy with Katherine Round of Appleton Therapies and could then but some of the tantalising products afterwards.

In October, we will hear "What funny thing happened on the way..." with Jane Price. (I wonder what it is?). Members will have a chance to learn how to do Silk Painting in November and we will hopefully carry on those skills at our Craft Workshop on the 18th November when Dee Mitchell will show us how to do folk art painting, plus other crafts to make. A chance to learn a new skill, have a natter and make new friends. Perhaps a few Christmas presents in the offing too!

Our Christmas meeting will have us listening to Andrew Firth on "Christmas in the Dales" with of course food being served. It is Christmas!

In 2018, we start the New Year with Val Oxley telling us about Mrs. Frances Harriott Miles of Firbeck Hall - who was well known in Bristol, Rome, and of course Firbeck.

If you are interested in any of the above and would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary on 01909 540751.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT FIRBECK VILLAGE HALL

On Saturday 21st October from 7pm, the Village Hall Committee are presenting Happy Jack, a play by John Godber. Performed by the Library Theatre Touring Company, it is described as "a heart warming mix of pathos and comedy". Tickets £5 from Anita 01709 818927, David 01709 819171 or Sharon 01709 817327.

On Friday November 17th again from 7pm, renowned folk duo Megson are returning to the Village Hall. Megson are husband and wife duo Debs and Stu Hanna and bring an infectious mix of heavenly vocals, lush harmonies and driving rhythmic guitars. Tickets £14 from Nick Wilson 01709 709406, [nwilson33@hotmail.com](mailto:nwilson33@hotmail.com) or [www.wegotickets.com/event/395180](http://www.wegotickets.com/event/395180).

## REVIEW OF SUMMER SERENADE CONCERT - ST. PETER'S CHURCH, LETWELL

At the heart of this bold musical venture is the Sarentino Strings Quartet whose members ( Hannah Thompson-Smith, Lucy Phillips, Natalie Roper and Jonny Ingall) are drawn from the Rotherham peripatetic music teaching service – long may this continue! . This concert in Letwell was their first public performance. They started with Mozart's String Quartet in C major, K 157, played with assurance and a strong sense of rhythm.

This was followed by beautiful interpretations of slow pieces by Massenet and Borodin, which were set between a brave string arrangement of the Grand March from Aida, which is usually scored for many more instruments. By now their guests had joined them, talented students of theirs, who clearly enjoyed performing Professor Teddy Blor 's humorous juxtaposition of Scottish songs and sections of Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik.

After the interval the dissonances of Aaron Copeland's Hoe-Down stood in contrast to Elgar's soulful Chanson de Matin in this carefully constructed programme. Works by Vivaldi, a unique concerto for violin and cello, Haydn, Shostakovich and Corelli were performed with relish and regard for contrasting dynamics and textures. The concert ended with two pieces of ragtime by Scott Joplin and the finale of String Quartet in F major by Dvorak, which recreated the sounds of his beloved railway trains What fun!

### **Steve Woodward**

\*A quartet, headed by Hannah Thompson-Smith, will be performing a concert of classical and light classical pieces with a Christmas theme at St. Peter's on Sunday December 3rd. The event starts at 3 pm, and tickets, priced £7, include a free drink during the interval. Phone 01909 732729 for tickets.

## LIVE MUSIC AT LETWELL VILLAGE HALL

Those zany Geordie boys The Happy Cats make a farewell appearance at Letwell on Saturday December 2nd with ex Lindisfarne star Marty and his long-time pals Les and Leonard heading for musical pastures anew.

Tickets for the show - always a riotous occasion with bags of banter and oodles of great music - are selling fast.

Phone 01909 731626 and 540694 to check availability.

January 20th sees the return of former Eurovision Song contestant Lindsay Dracass. The Sheffield girl - who can out-sing Adele - appears alongside Canadian keyboards star Lewis Nitikman.

Tickets, as ever, are priced at £12.

A few tickets remain for the visit of BBC Folk Award winners Chris While and Julie Matthews on Thursday October 19th.

## HELP PLEASE

Villagers are being encouraged to take part in a mass spring clean at Letwell pond on Sunday November 5th. Please turn up at 10 am with wellies and gloves.

## CONKER BONKERS

Firbeck Village Hall looks to have taken a battering from the recent fall of conkers. What apparently started as a child innocently throwing a conker at the wall to try and break the outer casing, looks to have got out of hand.



*Conker Bonkers*

It is not felt that this was initially malicious, but children are continuing to do it and it will cost the Village Hall a significant amount to get these stains removed and then repaint. That wall is the first thing that people see when they come into the village and it's a pity that all our many visitors over the Scarecrow Weekend would have seen it.

Children are using the Village Hall Car Park and Garden as a football pitch and general play area. This is unfortunately risking damage to cars, trees, windows, and themselves and the Village Hall insurance would not cover them. It is also on the most dangerous corner of the Village. Additionally children should not be playing there when the Hall is in use as this can disturb the users. Hirers can pay for the whole facility and this should be respected.

The Village Hall Committee fully appreciate the lack of a Village Playground, and will be raising this with the Parish Council. In the meantime we would ask that parents try and ensure that the children are made aware of these issues. Hopefully with consideration all round we can prevent future incidents or damage.

## CLOSURE BY STEALTH

Letwell Post Office closed its doors for the final time on Thursday October 12th after a pay review - which saw the postmistress earning less than the minimum wage in spite of all the responsibilities.

Senior management - unable to shut down rural offices as part of Government policy - came under fire from local MP Sir Kevin Barron amid accusations that they'd pursued a policy of "closure by stealth..."

Janice Sharpe, postmistress for five years from 1975 to 1980, and then for a further 22 years from 1995 till 2017, remains appalled by the Post Office's high handed tactics.

"I pity anyone who has to work for the Post Office. It's a great shame it has come to this, especially for my loyal band of customers, but nobody is going to take on all the risks and responsibilities for less than £7 an hour.

"Letwell's had a post office for at least a century, but that doesn't count for anything anymore. I'm just very sad to be the village's last postmistress."