



April 2019

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INVASION OF THE LAWN EATING GRUBS

Gardeners have been warned to be on their guard for an invasion of small grass eating grubs - which have wrecked manicured lawns at Letwell, and left several looking like ploughed fields.

First signs of the devastation appeared last autumn when patches of pristine green lawn turned yellow in various gardens on Church Lane and Gildingwells road. Through the winter the birds set to work ripping up the turf to feast on the little beastsies.

Those C shaped insects which managed to survive are likely to remain in the soil for three years before emerging as chafer beetles. These then go on to mate and begin the whole awful cycle again.

A chemical treatment capable of killing off the grubs has been banned by our friends - and FLAG uses the word guardedly - in the European Union.

One couple - left helpless by an undersoil invasion - told FLAG: "It's an absolute nightmare. It's hard to believe how much damage the grubs are causing. We're at our wits end."

Read more about the threat - and how to combat it - inside FLAG...



SIXTY YEARS MARRIED

Sid and Una Ellis - who have played a huge role in Firbeck life for almost 50 years - celebrated their Diamond Wedding at the Village Hall this month, with a buffet lunch for all their family and friends. Among the many cards and presents was a message from the Queen congratulating them on 60 years of marriage.

FLAG would need extra pages to tell the story of their time together, but during the lunch Enid Bailey read out an humorous epic poem she had composed detailing many of the highlights.

Sid and Una are still very actively involved with Friends of Firbeck Hall and the Village Hall Committee. Congratulations all round to a lovely couple.



*Sid and Una Celebrate 60 Years
of Marriage*

UPDATE FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

This year's Firbeck Litter Pick organised by Cllr. Stanton went ahead on Sunday April 7 with a great deal of rubbish being gathered. The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who gave freely of their time making this an extremely successful event. Refreshments were enjoyed in the village hall after all the hard work and our thanks go to all those who provided them.

Following the results of the recent questionnaire, the Coordinators of Firbeck Friends have decided to go ahead with the scheme. People who have kindly volunteered to help will be contacted personally to find out what they can realistically offer. The scheme will, in future, be run separately to the Parish Council (PC), but with a grant from them to cover DBS checks and insurance.

Cllr. Jopling has been looking into the possibility of replacing trees which have been damaged on the verges of New Road. She has negotiated with RMBC, who are going to provide and maintain three young rowans. The PC has agreed to pay for these. This first stage of the tree planting project will, with any luck, be completed in the next few weeks.

The PC has applied for additional funds from our ward councillor to enable us to move to a second stage of the project which is to plant more trees on the verges to make up for other losses over the years. We shall probably have to wait until the next planting season to go ahead with stage 2. Hopefully we shall be able to restore more or less a full avenue of trees given time.

Following a request in the last edition of FLAG, thanks go to dog owners for their suggestions as to where an additional 'dog poo' bin might be sighted. As well as the two current bins there was a consensus that the preferred location for another bin would be near the junction of New Road and Penny Hill, with the entrance to the airfield from New Road as an alternative should that not prove possible.

Sadly RMBC will now not fight Ineos shale gas plans at Woodsetts on highways safety grounds. The Planning Board has voted to abandon the traffic reason for refusal when the scheme goes before a public inquiry in June. This was despite a local petition which collected 676 signatures in 60 hours. Councillors would, however, continue to oppose the Ineos plans at the inquiry on the grounds of disturbance and noise.

Road safety updates. The PC feel that recent pot hole repairs on Kidd Lane are of a poor standard with several holes being missed and our Clerk is to take this up with RMBC. A mobile speed sign has recently been placed near the junction of New Road and St Martin's Close and, following recent HGV traffic issues in the village, it is possible that RMBC may install 'not suitable for HGV' signs at both ends of the village to deter HGV traffic in the future. An explanation for the barriers recently installed on the A634 has been received from RMBC but bike safety 'skirts' have not been installed along the whole length of these barriers. It is felt there is still a risk in areas where these have not been installed and our Clerk is to reply to RMBC with these concerns.

A resident has highlighted that several properties have recently been affected by spraying from farmers. They requested that farmers be approached to see if they could spray in such a way as to not affect properties neighbouring their fields. Ongoing discussions between Cllr Jopling and local farmers are currently taking place.

UPDATE FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL (CONT...)

Contact details for cllrs. can be found on our website (www.firbeckpc.org.uk) or we hold a surgery with two cllrs. in attendance prior to each PC meeting between 6.30 and 7.00pm in the Village Hall, please feel free to come and talk to us. Dates of meetings can be found on the website. On Wednesday April 24 there will be an Annual Parish Meeting in the Village Hall at 7pm. This is not a PC meeting but is rather an opportunity for residents to find out what is going on in the village and to raise any issues they may have.

Cllr. Wendy Hamilton



Volunteers gather for the Firbeck litter pick

WHO DUMPED THE POND ON THE RAMPER?



You think you've seen it all....but then along comes a fly- tipper in a grubby white van and dumps a fish pond and a huge pile of garden rubbish on the grass verge beside the Ramper at Letwell.

Streetpride carted away the pond and all the assorted debris after a week or so. But, as ever, the low-life in the shabby van got away scot free. That's unless anyone can provide FLAG with a reg number!!

Meanwhile, the parish council did a litter sweep along the length of the village. It looked clean enough at first, but a wheelie bin was filled with discarded bottles, cans and waste plastic after an hour or so.

TOILET FOR ST. PETER'S

A sub committee has been set up to investigate installing toilet facilities at St Peter's Church in Letwell.

The group is made up of members of the PCC joined by representatives from the Parish Council, the Village Hall Committee as well as the Street Fayre Committee - who have raised tens of thousands of pounds to support church funds over the past 20 or 30 years.

A church architect - with a history of involvement in similar projects elsewhere - met the group for a preparatory meeting at the church in March. Ideas at present appear to focus on adding a small extension - built in stone to match the fabric of the church - to the north side of the building.

The group believes that substantial grants should be available at some point to offset the cost of the scheme.

NEWS FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL WI

We started our Spring programme with a Theatre Fun with Sheila, Rosie and Frank. And it was fun - with them doing lots of funny recitations. In April we will hear of the experiences of Lia when she went to Everest Base Camp. This is an open meeting so please come along and hear of her many adventures on her expedition to Base Camp. Also in April we are holding a Spring Afternoon Tea in Letwell Village Hall - a good start to the Easter holiday! Many of our members are attending the South Yorkshire Federation AGM which is being held at Hillsborough this year and also the Federation International Day the theme being "Argentina". April is a very busy month!

The WI is holding a national "Get Creative Festival" week to encourage and inspire local communities across the country to try something new. So if you fancy being inspired to try a craft please come along to our Craft Day on 11th May at Firbeck Village hall, 10.00am-3.00pm. This is a great opportunity for families to come along to the craft workshop and try something new. It is open to all (men, women and children) and free of charge with perhaps a small cost of materials used, and home-made refreshments will be on sale. Look out for more details on posters in Firbeck and Letwell Halls.

Our resolutions meeting in May is members only. This is when we vote on the Resolutions decided on nationally and which are then put before members at the National AGM in Bournemouth in June. At our meeting in June, Sue Clifton is sharing her interesting experiences and adventures in Papua New Guinea. It is another open meeting in July when Val Oxley and Julia Colver will be telling us about the Firbeck Landscape - everyone welcome.

Lots happening for us, with events and trips to look forward to.

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.

FIRBECK SCARECROW WEEKEND

Saturday 14th &
Sunday 15th September



We have a list of over 60 Sports to choose from so if you would like to sign up to make a scarecrow please contact Anita or Pam to see what is available.

ANITA stantona50@yahoo.co.uk / 818927

PAM pamelaughton@msn.com / 204873

For other enquiries please contact

SHARON s.collins1234@outlook.com / 817327

NEWS FROM THE ROCHE VALLEY BRANCH OF THE YORKSHIRE COUNTRYWOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

We had been looking forward to the annual Wetherby Craft Competition and members of our Craft group had been busily discussing ideas for the branch entry, which was to be a display depicting one of the four seasons. There had been much hilarity as we tossed ideas around the table and eventually decided on an autumn theme. The ideas flowed freely and, before we knew it, the whole display had become rather like a scene from a famous D.H. Lawrence novel.

For weeks members had knitted, crocheted, sewn, needle felted, woven, modelled using various materials, built a mini shed and baked. It was very satisfying to be part of the group even if only giving suggestions and not actually producing an item to display.

Finally the day of the show dawned and we made our way to Wetherby with the fruits of our labour. Not only had we the branch entry to transport, but also several individual entries for various other classes in the show.

Our hard work didn't go unrewarded and our entry came first in its class. We were thrilled, but were even more so when we discovered later in the day that it had been chosen as 'Best in Show'. Individual members were also successful receiving 2nd and 3rd prizes for various items. Well done to everyone who took part. Now it is time to start thinking about entries for the Tockwith show in August!

Roche Valley YCA meets at Firbeck Village Hall on the evening of the first Wednesday in the month and the craft group meets in the morning on the third Wednesday. We have a mixture of speakers and hands-on events throughout the year and if you are interested in finding out more please contact Anita stantona50@yahoo.co.uk

Roche Valley YCA



Spring Into Summer Fashion Show & Sale



Friday May 3rd

FIRBECK VILLAGE HALL

At 7.00pm (Doors Open 6.30pm)

**HIGH STREET FASHIONS AND
ACCESSORIES AT BARGAIN PRICES
OFTEN LESS THAN 75% OF HIGH
STREET PRICES.**

**BACK BY POPULAR
DEMAND**

Admission Only £3.00

(To include tea and biscuits)

LOTS TO DO AT THE EASTER OPEN DAY

Abandoned ponies Daniel and Coco have found new homes after a spell of TLC at Peppers Field equine and poultry re-hab centre at Letwell. Here Louise Addy reports on the challenges that lie ahead....

It's been a very exciting time with lots of changes since our last update in FLAG.

With mixed emotions we have said goodbye to two of our first Rescued Ponies, Daniel and Coco Pops, with them setting off on the next phase of their lives as adored pets. They have gone off to a forever home in Gainsborough and have settled in perfectly. They are now living with two other retired horses, and Bev their new foster mum says she cannot wait for them to start coming into her kitchen. They are being thoroughly spoilt.

After sending Daniel and Coco Pops to their new foster home, we have welcomed Lewis and Tallulah. They came to us from Doncaster where they were abandoned in a field with eighty..... yes eighty other horses. Most of them were emaciated and they were left with no food nor water. Thirty of the sickest were taken initially by "Tia Greyhounds and Shire Rescue" – their premises are only a few fields away, so we agreed to take two from them.

It was touch and go for Lewis for the first few days, and we had to pick him up off the floor and help him stand as he was so weak. He is a lot stronger now and has been seen by our Vet four times already. He still has a long way to go before we can say he is out of the woods but things are definitely going the right direction.

Tallulah was a lot stronger, as she was still suckling from her mother, but as a consequence her mother was suffering from Rickets. We decided take Tallulah to reduce the load on her mum and in that way helping both of them.

We held another Race Night at Letwell Village Hall recently and with the support of local people we raised £515. We want to thank you all so very much for making the effort to attend and being so generous.

We are holding an Open Day at Peppers Field on Easter Sunday 21st April. Please drop by to meet the Ponies, feed the goats and chickens and see our Easter Chicks. We have an Easter Egg Hunt, a craft area with competitions for "Best Decorated Egg" and "Best Easter Bonnet".

There will be tractor rides, Tombola, hook-a-duck and much, much more. Any aspiring Bake-Off bakers out there – you will be welcome to bring cakes for us to sell, to help raise funds for the Ponies welfare. Open from noon until 4pm serving food and drink all day, come and relax in our farm environment.

We look forward to welcoming you back to Peppers Field on Sunday 21st April !!!



YELLOWHAMMERS SINGING 'A LITTLE BREAD AND NO CHEESE...'

Nothing stops the news getting through!! Phone and internet troubles left Dave Wright cut off from the outside world....so FLAG's hardy wildlife correspondent jumped in his car and delivered his latest column from a computer at Dinnington library. That's the spirit!!

"I had an interesting sighting at Langold Lake on 22 January in the form of at least 30 Pochard. These diving ducks would have arrived from eastern Europe and Russia to escape cold winter conditions.

"Goldcrests were with us throughout the winter and I know of two Firbeck residents who were delighted at their first ever views of this tiny bird. They're so small that I recently mistook one for a butterfly. It's hard to believe that a bird so small can cross the North Sea to join us for the winter - as some do.

"On 7 March I was delighted to see seven Yellowhammers near Lingodell. These beautiful little birds were once common along scrub-lined country lanes, with their distinctive song of 'a little bread and no cheese', but they're sadly on the decline along with so many other birds. This leads me to the matter of a summer migrant from Africa, the Spotted Flycatcher, dramatically down 87% in the UK since 1970. It's perhaps 20 years since I saw one in the FLAG area. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) suspects that the decrease is partly down to many birds not surviving their first year. Research is being carried by the BTO which is currently appealing for donations to fund its research - www.bto.org/flycatcher.

"Also in March a Firbeck resident was pretty sure she'd seen a Cuckoo in her garden. If she was right, then great news, as the bird is rare around here these days.

"A pleasant March sighting along East Field Lane - between Kings Wood and Laughton - was a pair of Grey Partridges. This is another once-common bird sadly in decline, but I'm happy to report that, for as long as I can remember, a fair number have inhabited these particular local fields. The birds rarely stray from the local area of their birth.

"Finally, on the subject of partridges, a pair of the Red-Legged variety have taken up residence in the local area around my home. They're inquisitive and quite tame."



Goldcrest

THE REV. JACKIE RETURNS

The Revd. Jackie Lidgate, a popular figure among the congregation at St. Peter's Church at Letwell, is returning to conduct services at the church - which take place at 9.30 am on the second Sunday of each month.

FIRBECK VILLAGE HALL NEWS

Ian McMillan and Luke Carver Goss returned to Firbeck Village Hall in February. As before, there was a full house, who were royally entertained. The performance was a mixture of music, poetry and anecdotes, and, of course, the creation of the Firbeck Village Musical.

Knowing Ian's penchant for stealing public notices that he can ridicule, we laid a trap to see if he would fall for it. He then tweeted a picture on his twitter account.

The annual Firbeck Winterfest event has now become Springfest. A buffet meal in the Village Hall was followed by a concert in St Martin's Church by the Friends in Harmony Choir. The choir number around 40 people, and they gave an outstanding performance, covering songs from musicals, gospel, pop music, classic hits and Simon and Garfunkel.

The evening gave the opportunity for the Village to show their appreciation to Jenny and Alan Tolhurst for their contribution to the Church and Village life over many years. They recently moved out of Manor Farm to a cottage in Wellingore, Lincoln. A collection from the Village was organised by St Martin's Church, and they were presented with a plaque and gifts during the buffet

Cinema Paradiso is the regular film night, which takes place in the Village Hall. It is becoming increasingly popular and entry and refreshments are free (although we are happy to accept a small donation if you enjoy it). Over the Winter the films have been monthly, but will switch to bi-monthly over the Summer. The next three dates will be the 4th of May, the 13th of July and the 7th of September. Flyers giving details will be circulated nearer each date.



BURGLED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT

Opportunist thieves burgled a house on Barker Hades Road at Letwell last month while the couple, who live there, were out shopping at lunch-time on a Saturday afternoon.

The intruders smashed the lock at the rear of the property and stole precious family possessions - including the wife's engagement ring well over 50 years old and other irreplaceable jewellery.

Police recovered CCTV footage which showed a man and a woman acting suspiciously near the scene of the crime at the time in question.

The pair - thought by police to be travellers - are seen arriving in an small electric blue van. A little girl, aged 10 or even younger, appears to be accompanying the couple.

Villagers are being urged to be extra vigilant in the weeks ahead.

FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL

THE GLORIOUS YEARS AT FIRBECK HALL COUNTRY CLUB

In mid March the 'Friends of Firbeck Hall' transported their 'Friends' group back to the heady days in 1935 when Firbeck Hall opened as an exclusive Country Club. As people started to arrive in Firbeck the strains of Henry Hall's dance band were heard drifting from the village hall, a table was set with Firbeck Hall Country Club cutlery and silverware and a copy of the original decorative New Year's Eve menu was prominently displayed alongside a pretty floral arrangement.

A large oil painting of the owner and entrepreneur Cyril Nicholson, which is on permanent loan to the Friends group, was positioned on a large easel near the stage and behind him was an oil painting of Firbeck Hall, looking simply magnificent!

Everyone knew they were in for a treat!

On 27th April 1935 the Sheffield Independent reported that the £100,000 luxury Firbeck Hall Club had opened its doors. Dancers swirled round the mirrored ballroom, there were soft changing lights and the art deco interior was the latest fashion. The club was one of the finest of its kind and was declared to beat anything, even in America.

Specialist journals including Architecture Illustrated, published pictures of the hall's la mode zebra prints, sweeping plaster work and streamlined ocean lineresque fittings.

Where once there were darkly-panelled rooms, there were now dance halls with maple floors, cocktail bars with stainless steel furniture, dining rooms, grill rooms and billiard rooms.

Mirrors ran the full length of the dining room walls. Cut into them were sporting scenes depicting the activities of the club. In the grill room they created windows with silhouette figures. These, with large mirrors in the ballroom, ballroom lounge and bars were regarded as 'the finest glass work executed in the British Isles'.

Although the Friends Group have been assiduously gathering information together about the history of the Hall and the village, the presentation took a week to write and even longer to find illustrations to match the text. Rehearsals, correcting and rewriting the text took place during the winter months and the preview was first given in Retford. It was well received, but even then, more illustrations were added, the final ones being popped in the day before the special event in Firbeck.

The presentation was a sell-out and hugely enjoyed. Members of Cyril Nicholson's extended family were present, one having travelled from Edinburgh especially for the event.

Before the talk started, Simon Drohan, Chairman of the Friends group, gave an optimistic appraisal of the current position at Firbeck Hall, stating that work has started to clear the Hall of rubble and to make it a safe working environment.

The Friends group committee are all volunteers, who work tirelessly to help ensure that this important building will be saved for the future. We never know what is around the corner, so our talks help to provide a stable financial base, just in case...but be assured, we are not going to buy it!

FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL (CONT...)

If you would like to join the Friends Group, Friendship is only £1 with no annual subscription. Friends receive three emailed Newsletters a year with updates on progress at the Hall and historical articles of local interest. A number of groups have already booked the talk for the coming year and beyond, but there are no definite plans to repeat the presentation in Firbeck at present.

If you would like to join the Friends group, please contact the Treasurer Valerie Oxley on valerie@mvoxley.co.uk

Val Oxley

THE DIZZIES ARE COMING

The Dizzy Club head for Letwell Village Hall on Saturday April 27th - bringing with them their intoxicating mix of toe tapping melodies tinged with elements of country, blues, jazz and swing.

The band boast a repertoire full of contradictions serving up a sound described as "pop Latin." Anything from Van Morrison to Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra and Cole Porter can get thrown into the mix. And there's always lots of humorous Sheffield banter on the side.

Frontman John Naylor delivers vocals and rhythm guitar with groovy Mike Fleming on double Bass and Richard Hawley's long-time guitarist Shez Sheridan laying down the beat. John Watterson, who has played with the Grimethorpe Colliery Band since 2005 and once auditioned for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, completes the formidable line up on drums.

Limited tickets, price £12, are available from Andy and Martyn on 01909 540694 or 731626.

Boy On A Dolphin, Sheffield's second most famous band - after the Arctic Monkeys - continue a Letwell tradition with two back-to-back nights of cool summer sounds on Wednesday and Thursday July 3rd and 4th.

There's always a massive demand for tickets so please book early. Tickets - still £12 - are available from the two numbers listed above. All tickets must be paid for in advance.

LETWELL STREET FAYRE - SATURDAY JULY 6TH

Plans are taking shape for the Letwell Street Fayre - due to be held on the afternoon of Saturday July 6th this year.

Thurcroft Brass Band, Letwell's long time musical favourites, are booked to play all through the afternoon. Homemade teas, always a big draw each year, will be served by the ladies of the WI in the village hall.

There will be fun and games galore with plenty to entertain visitors from 1.30 onwards with volunteers manning the coconut shy, splat the rat and the ever-popular pot smashing stall. Snail racing is on the programme too - providing half a dozen competitors can be found before the big day.

LETWELL STREET FAYRE - SATURDAY JULY 6TH

Military vehicles will be on display, and the fire brigade and police will be present as well. Children will be able to meet the ponies, goats and chickens from the Peppersfield animal rehabilitation centre at Letwell.

A mouse trail - with prizes for all the young competitors - is being organised to challenge visitors too. Villagers are being urged to provide donations for the cake and home made produce stalls. Items should be delivered to the village hall on the morning of the fayre.

A committee member said: "We can never have enough cakes and buns. It doesn't have to be fancy cakes - homemade is good enough. Anything from scones to flapjack, everything sells..."

COURT CONVICTION

A man, who runs a smallholding on Lamb Lane at Letwell, has been convicted of illegally docking the tails of four terrier dogs - causing them "extreme discomfort" when they were six weeks old.

Wayne Glasby pleaded guilty at Sheffield Magistrates Court to causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal, and was banned from keeping dogs for five years, and ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid work. Fellow defendant Joanne Glasby, who was jointly charged and lives with Glasby at Thurcroft, was given the same punishment. Each of the pair must pay £600 costs.

The Rotherham Advertiser reported that the offences came to light after a vet happened by chance to see photographs which had been posted online offering terriers for sale.

RSPCA inspector Leanne Booth told the court the defendants had "lied" during the investigation "blaming each other at one point," she said, "saying a vet did the docking, then saying they didn't even know the dogs had no tails."

LETWELL INITIATIVE

Letwell Parish Council plans to install an interpretive panel in the village - which will go some way to chart the history of Letwell and identify outstanding landmarks in the parish.

The council was conscious that the village is a popular destination for lots of walkers and cyclists, but visitors come and go at present without learning anything about the place.

The art group - which meets at Letwell Village Hall each Wednesday morning - have volunteered to help with the artwork. Members of the parish council are meeting at the end of April to put together some of the text, and identify some of the memorable figures who have featured in village life over the centuries.

Our RMBC ward councillors are - thankfully - contributing partially towards the cost of the initiative.

WHO'S EATEN MY LAWN

A desperate villager tells FLAG about her ongoing battle with the nasty little grub devastating gardens at Letwell.....

Q: How can something so small cause such catastrophic devastation?

A: When it's a grass root chomping chafer grub!

My whole lawn has changed from a calm and green oasis to now resembling a ploughed field.

Last summer, patches of lawn became yellow, but I thought it was just very dry after the hot weather. Through autumn and winter the birds have torn up the turf in order to feed on the grubs.

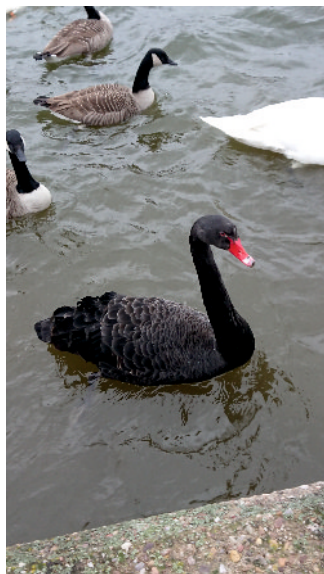
My initial instinct to exterminate these tiny, voracious grass gobbling grubs was thwarted, as the EU has banned the chemical treatment for them by home gardeners. The biological, nematode treatment would be totally impractical because of the size of the area. What could I do ?

These white, C-shaped grubs could remain in the soil for up to three years before emerging as chafer beetles. They would then mate and begin the whole cycle again ! Yikes...time to improvise...

I tried (and failed) to crush them to death with a whacker plate (Yes.... really !), but it amused the neighbours immensely!

Then...I thought...lets try CHICKENS! ...to gobble up these tiny, munching machines. So, I have loaned five heroic hens from the local 'chicken rescue centre' and they are doing a sterling job. I have also invested in chafer beetle traps, to deal with grubs that escape consumption and manage to pupate.

I will be able to re-seed the lawn when the grubs are eradicated. In the meantime, we are enjoying fresh, tasty eggs every day and being entertained by humorous and characterful hens.



*Rare black swan pictured by Letwell's
Christina Warr at Langold Lake*

MISSING SIGNS....AND IMPROVED HEATING

Two signs, one a finger post pointing towards Firbeck and the other a sign saying Lamb Lane, appear to have been demolished by a vehicle where the road meets Ivy Lodge Lane.

Letwell Parish Council have asked RMBC to re-instate the signs which have been lying on the verge by the junction for several months, but action is still awaited.

Meanwhile, the village hall committee at Letwell are calling in specialists to try and resolve heating issues within the building.

New radiators are being proposed for the gents and ladies toilets as well as the hallway at the rear of the hall and improved ventilation is also planned too.