



October 2019

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LES HITS THE ROAD FOR THE HOSPICE

A crown green bowler from Firbeck put his best foot forward and completed a marathon journey to all the bowling greens in the Doncaster League - RUNNING 50 days in two days on the road.

Backed by members of Tickhill Bowling Club and supported by fellow bowler Dave Higgins from Wales village, Les Crownshaw raised a magnificent £1215 for Doncaster's St. John's Hospice.

The 67 year old was inspired to take up the challenge by one of his bowling friends at Tickhill.

Les explained: "It all started because one of our members works at the hospice, and many of the bowlers have family and friends who have used the hospice services."

The keen athlete, who trains with Killamarsh Kestrels Running Club, says all the bowling clubs in Doncaster rallied round to support the venture. "I thought it was a novel idea, and I received excellent support from all the club's involved."

Maureen Harwood thanked Les on behalf of the hospice. "What an amazing achievement," she said. "Every penny will be spent on our patients."



Proud Les to the right of the cheque

INFO BOARD FOR LETWELL

An information board, which sets out to provide an insight into the history of Letwell, should be unveiled in next few weeks.

The panel, assembled by the parish council with the help of a specialist company, features paintings of the village landmarks created by the Letwell Art Group.

One of the paintings re-creates a 19th Century sketch of the village hall in its original form as a malthouse with a conical-shaped Oasthouse at the rear.

FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Firbeck Parish Council met last on Wednesday 25th September and the draft minutes of that meeting will be available shortly on our website. The meeting was attended by two valiant members of public and we were pleased to have their contributions during the public discussion period (which is always scheduled at the start of each meeting).

The public discussion focussed on two things. First, the progress being made on the redevelopment of Firbeck Hall and second, the continued use of the village by certain HGV operators as a rat run between development sites and their depot/quarry/tipping sites. Assuming that Friends of Firbeck Hall will report in this edition of FLAG I will say no more about the Hall other than the PC welcomes the news of progress with the stable block and the bat survey.

We are still seeing HGV's through the village in spite of our new signage suggesting that we are an unsuitable route for such vehicles. We have alerted RMBC to this, but for the time being at least they and SY Police just want us to monitor the situation. To this end, it would be extremely helpful if villagers would note any lorries using New Road/Kidd Lane as a through route (as opposed to those servicing properties in the village). Please let us have the name of the company on the vehicle, the route seemingly being used and the date and time you saw them. An e mail to myself or our clerk with any such information will be appreciated and will enable us to establish the extent of the problem.

In other news -

- We are sorry to report that Julie Dunker has stepped down as parish councillor although she has said that she (and Brian) will continue to manage the planting of tubs in the village and to help with the Village Christmas tree. The council expressed their gratitude to Julie for all she has done in her many years as parish councillor.
- Since Julie stood down we are a person short and we are looking for someone to join us on the council. Could you be that person? If you would like to contribute to community life in the village then this may be a role you could fulfil. We meet six times a year and I will not deny that parish council meetings are not the most exciting of times but these meetings are just the decision making process which has to be open to the public. We then happily get on with what needs to be done, mucking in together as required to make things happen. If you would like to find out more about what would be involved then please contact any on the councillors.
- We are planning another Christmas tree festival on Advent Sunday which is on the 1st December. This year the parish council will once again be inviting our local groups and/or individuals to decorate a small tree in the churchyard and make a contribution towards our costs - for more details on this please contact me on my council e mail address cjoplingfpc@outlook.com.
- We expect to have 8 new rowan trees planted by RMBC along New Road before the end of the year - unfortunately one existing tree has to be felled as it is diseased but it will be replaced. Our thanks to those who made planting suggestions all of which were seriously considered but which for various reasons to do with the location proved to be unsuitable

FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL NEWS CONT..

- We are looking at replacing the notice board at the Village Hall as the existing board is looking somewhat tired and is no longer fit for purpose
- We are planning next year to run a competition to find Firbeck's Wildlife photographer of the year and are working on the format for this
- Woodsetts Against Fracking thanked us for our donation to their cause

Lastly, we realise that the agendas for our meetings do not always appear to be very illuminating as to what matters are to be discussed and we have committed to addressing this for the future. In the meantime, please feel free to contact any councillor if you would like further information about any item posted for discussion. And please come along to our meetings to let us hear - during the public discussion period - your ideas, opinions and views on any of the business under consideration. Or come beforehand to our Councillor's surgery (held just before a meeting) - we look forward to seeing you.

Caroline Jopling - Councillor

MINK IN THE STREAM AND NEWTS IN THE KITCHEN

Wildlife abounds in Firbeck and Letwell....and you never know what you're going to see next.

Firebeck has welcomed a new visitor in recent weeks with a mink taking up residence in and around the stream near the foot of Kidd Lane. Mink can be voracious, but the three drakes and a duck living closest to the spot are unharmed so far at least. One villager told FLAG: "There used to be many, many more ducks around, but the four we have are okay at present.

"The mink was visible one Sunday after church near the waterfall.

"It was really dark in colour with its fur all wet.....in fact it almost looked black."



Mink

A newt made a surprise visit to a house at Letwell. The dragon-like creature was heading into the kitchen when the householder interrupted the journey. A few nights earlier a small green frog had appeared hopping across the kitchen floor. Another turned up soon after leaping towards the lounge. The householder told FLAG: "The newt looked more like a little dragon than anything else. We were amazed when we saw it scurrying across the floor. It had been pouring with rain when it arrived...maybe it was trying to find somewhere to keep dry."



Letwell Newt

BEWARE THE BEETLES

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

I begin by discussing two beetles, the flea beetle and then the viburnum beetle. The flea beetle is found in the UK in a narrow corridor from the Isle of Wight to Doncaster which unfortunately includes Firbeck. The adult can feed on sugar beet plants soon after seedling emergence in the spring. Feeding damage can lead to reduced plant growth and death of the plant. A crop failure was unfortunately experienced in Firbeck recently. Farmers are experimenting with new methods of sowing in order to combat this pest. I wish to thank the Firbeck village website for this information.

Now to the virburnum beetle. Last year a viburnum in my garden was attacked, leaving leaves stripped. Fortunately the bush recovered. I mistakenly assumed the attack was fungal and so I treated the bush with a fungicide - a big mistake! The bush suffered a second (more serious) attack this July which has left it in very poor condition with hardly any of this year's leaves left. I'd say it's 50/50 as to whether it survives. And the culprit was, of course, the virburnum beetle. How do I know? Because of the diagnostic foul smell on the bush. The damage is done by larvae in the spring, and later in the season by adults, feeding on the leaves. I'm keeping an eye on the bush and if it's still alive in January I'll start treating it with an appropriate spray. It's 25 years since I planted it, so I'd hate to lose it.

Today is 3 October and we've just had our first frost of autumn. It won't be long before we start to see fieldfares and redwings arriving from across the North Sea for their winter stay in the UK. Speaking of migration, I was surprised to see an early wheatear on the airfield in early August on its long journey to Africa. Residents have reported other sightings of wheatears recently.

Some positive news - a Firbeck resident tells me that both pied wagtails and swallows have bred on his property this year.

I close with the sad news of a grass snake found dead on the road at Firbeck on 12 August.

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Male Wheater

UPDATE FROM FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL

The scaffolding that surrounds Firbeck Hall is the best possible assurance that repairs and renovation have finally begun.

The interior has been stripped and the resulting rubble and debris removed. Unfortunately any construction work on the Hall cannot begin until a long awaited bat survey is received.

For Friends of Firbeck Hall it is particularly satisfying. It was the dilapidation of the Hall which led to our formation some 10 years ago. Since then there have been many setbacks and disappointments, together with three changes of ownership. Meanwhile, the Hall continued to deteriorate. But in One Construction Group we are now fortunate to have attracted enthusiastic and determined owners with realistic plans for the redevelopment of the whole site.

Additional activity has included the demolition of the gym and indoor swimming pool which date back to the period when the Hall was a rehabilitation centre. Also, there has been encouraging progress at the Stable block which now has a new slated roof. In addition the stonework has been cleaned and pointed.

We are pleased to provide photographs showing various developments. They were kindly provided by Natalie Johnson of One Construction..

For further information about Friends of Firbeck Hall please telephone 01709 813451; - or email valerie@mvoxley.co.uk

Sid Ellis

* As FLAG went to press news arrived that the bat licence had been finally been approved.

Sid Ellis was delighted: "It's probably the best news of all," he said. "It means the roof will be in place before the worst of the winter weather, and the continuing work can proceed."



Looking forlorn in 2017



Work in progress 2019

LIVING ABOVE A CAFE IN DINNINGTON FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS....THE TAME BLACK POT BELLIED PIG WITH A PASSION FOR PIZZA AND CHINESE!!

Louise Addy from the Peppersfield animal rescue tells the strange story of Twigglet's arrival at Letwell

During a routine inspection from Rotherham council, which we passed with flying colours, the inspector asked if we knew anyone who wanted a pig. Not having had pigs before we offered as a last resort and that's all we heard for 3 weeks. We then recieved a call from Thornbury Animal Sanctuary who were going to take the pig but the home for their current piggy residents had fallen through so we were now the last resort.

After a few calls from the RSPCA we arranged to meet them at 1pm at an address in Dinnington with the horse box in tow. After a bit of googling we realised the pig called Twigglet was located in a first floor flat on the main shopping street in Dinnington above a café!

When we arrived the only way to remove the pig was down an external flight of what can only be described as fire escape stairs! After having to wait an hour for the owners to gain access to their own flat, as the keys had 'gone missing' we finally got to lay our eyes on Twigglet. The RSPCA came equipped with a seal stretcher and two police riot shields with a plan to usher the pig on to the stretcher and for four of us to carry her down the stairs wriggling and squealing into the horse box.

Then we saw her, all 5ft long 200kg of her...we now needed a plan B. The RSPCA called the Fire Service and ask if they could attend. They arrived on blues and twos, as to take as the engine out of service for as little time as possible. We called our vet, which was one of the strangest conversations I've ever had

'Can I have a vet come out and sedate fully grown pot belly pig so the fire service can remove it from a first floor flat as they won't attempt to move it while it's awake.....' Our vet attended promptly and once sedated Twigglet was very professionally strapped into a bariatric stretcher by six firemen and winched down the stairs.

If that wasn't bizarre enough... the flat backed to a local dance studio. Just as the huge hog was being lowered down a fire escape, now snoring very loudly, a group of little girls walked passed wearing tutu's. At this point I got to thinking: "Am I hallucinating....." Thankfully, Twigglet was safely extracted from the first floor flat and is currently residing in a stable at Peppers Field.

Due to her unconventional start in life she won't entertain proper pig food and prefers pizza and Chinese. Hopefully we can find her a more appropriate home once the 21 day movement restrictions are over.



Twigglet safe at Letwell

DEEP IN THE WOOD LIES A SECRET.....

A walk in the countryside is invigorating and, at times, surprising as there is often an interesting encounter to be had (of the human and furred variety!)

Encounters like these proved an inspiration for one Letwell resident. Budding author since childhood, Stephanie Varah is about to realise her dream and have her first novel published.

Escaping into the woods at the end of a stressful working day with her Lurcher Tal, Stephanie often had fascinating conversations about local history and legends with colourful characters she bumped into on the footpath. It made her wish she could turn back the clock to see the village in a different time.

A visit to Letwell Street Fayre by the Sealed Knot re-enactors one year was the moment when the idea for Stephanie's book, 'The Woodsman', came to life. Researching local history Stephanie discovered Letwell may have had some significant connections to the English Civil War.

'The Woodsman' is the story of Amos, the keeper of King Charles the First's forest in 1642, who becomes trapped, by some mysterious alchemy, in the 21st Century. The only way he can find his way back to life four hundred years ago is with the help of a bunch of furry adventurers with a unique view of the world; Tal, the free-spirited Lurcher and his feline housemates Bungy and Pie.

A heart warming tale of everyday magic, 'The Woodsman' is an escape into the hidden, mysterious worlds of ancient woods which come alive under the full moon. Local history and legend combined with the folklore of trees make this a truly atmospheric read FLAG HQ can confirm.

Stephanie's book is released in early November and can be pre-ordered from JJ Moffs Independent Book Publishers at www.jjmoffs.co.uk . Book signings in Waterstones, Orchard Square and Meadowhall are hopefully being lined up. A book launch with refreshments, crafts, local produce, woodland, beekeeping and wildlife displays will be held at Letwell Village Hall on November 23rd from 11.00a.m to 1.00p.m.



CINEMA PARADISO - FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 9th November
Rocketman

Saturday 7th December
Yesterday

Saturday 4th January
Good Morning Vietnam

Film nights start at 7pm
Refreshments included
Free entry

NEWS FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

We had a lovely time at our Wine and Cheese Evening in August. All members and guests enjoyed the social Evening, catching up with old friends and making new ones.

We kick started our Autumn Programme in September by doing flexi sitting exercises. Not as laid back as you may think for we all knew we had done some exercises by the next day!

Our Quiz team entered the South Yorkshire Federation Quiz at the beginning of October - and we didn't win this year (the questions seemed so much harder!!). At our October meeting we have Mike Smith speaking on Rhythmic Rhyme and Poetry. Perhaps the creativity of the poetry will help us at our Craft Workshop on 16th November in Firbeck Village Hall. This is always a popular event and we have lots of different crafts to try our hands at - silk painting, rag wreaths and swags, decorated serviette rings and napkins, gift bags, tree ornaments and button cards. Also in November we will be having a demonstration on First Aid...always an important skill to have.

We are hosting the Chantry Group Carol Service this year at St. Martin's Church, Firbeck on 2nd December at 2.00-3.00pm. Followed by mince pies, tea, coffee and mulled wine!

The December meeting sees us being entertained by Phil Ryland with the sounds of the 60s music and beyond. Please do come along and join us for the evening and enjoy the music and, of course, the food.

And before you know it, we are into the New Year 2020 when we have a talk on her Hen and Pony Rescue with local girl Louise from Letwell.

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.

ROWANS ON THE RAMPER

Letwell Parish Council is encouraging villagers to turn up on the morning of Sunday November 24th to tidy up the avenue of Rowans on the Ramper.

Some of the trees need re-staking while others need pruning. Weeding is also necessary at the foot of each tree.

It should only take an hour or two. Volunteers are asked to meet by the bus shelter at 10 am.

FIRBECK SCARECROW WEEKEND

The sun shone for the Firbeck Scarecrow Weekend with Sports and Leisure as this year's theme. Once again villagers rose to the occasion with a terrific display of over 40 Scarecrows.

Visitors came from far and wide to follow the trail. Synchronised Swimming by the Gambles family was voted Favourite Scarecrow followed closely by Skiing from The Bourne family and Bart Simpson on his skateboard made by the Ansleys.

In the Village Hall there were Tai Chi and Keep Fit demonstrations and information displays from local sports groups. Adults were tested by sports themed quizzes and children were kept entertained with Storytime corner, where an army of volunteers read stories both familiar and new. The Scarecrow Team crafted a miniature display of The Scarecrow's Wedding, inspired by the book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler with a competition to guess the date of the wedding. In St Martin's Church there were musical performances by the Firbeck Ukulele Group, Escafeld Recorder Group and Local Folk Musicians.

Over £1300 was raised through the sale of trail maps, raffle tickets and refreshments sold in the Village Hall. This will be divided between Firbeck Village Hall, St Martin's Church, Rotherham Hospice and Lost Chord. The Scarecrows are having a break next year but will return in 2021.

A big thank you to everyone who helped make this such an enjoyable community event.

Sharon Collins, Anita Stanton, Pat Robinson, Sarah Ansley, Pam Laughton and Jane Crownshaw
Firbeck Scarecrow Team.

** Turn to the back page for colour pictures of the Firbeck Scarecrows*

IS THERE ANYBODY THERE?

It's taken nine months, but RMBC have finally replaced the two street signs which were flattened by a car at the junction of Lamb Lane and Ivy Lodge Lane at the start of the year.

Letwell Parish Council made endless calls to Streetpride about the delay in re-instating the missing signs. On one occasion a mind numbing 23 minutes elapsed before someone at RMBC's call centre eventually deigned to pick up the phone. The member of staff promised that an officer from department would call the parish council to sort out the issue. Inevitably, nobody phoned!

In case you're wondering - one of the signs reads Lamb Lane while the other is a three way finger affair pointing the direction to Firbeck, Oldcotes and Dinnington.

ANDREW WILLEY CONTINUES HIS LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF LETWELL...

This edition of flag, it is my pleasure to return with the history of Letwell from where I left off in the 1700s. We begin by looking at the local nobles, who began crafting the village we know today.

Sir Ralph Knight's son, also named Ralph went on to build the Palatial stables and summerhouse we know as 'Langold Farm', designed by the Architect James Paine who also designed nearby Sandbeck Park. The resident noble family descended into the White Family who owned Letwell for 228 years! Letwell owns many of its features to the family, the Dovecote, Village hall and they rebuilt the Church after the disastrous fire in 1867.

By the 1820s, Letwell had a population of 135, which included a resident carpenter, shoemaker, a brewer and several farmers. The Village Hall remained the centre of the village, beginning life as a school, a brewery and mortuary, though luckily not at the same time.

The 1920s, Edwardian village would be easily recognisable, minus some of the newer houses and bungalows. Still no electricity or running water, the village did boast its first car in 1923, a Ford Model T owned by the Giniver family, who owned a local shop. There was no school in the village anymore, so children would walk to Firbeck for their education. The 1930s brought the introduction of electricity and running water bringing it into the twentieth century. The village remained peaceful until the 1940s.

TRULY GIFTED HUMAN BEINGS.....

Letwell's thriving music scene continues apace with legendary folk rock figures Chris While and Julie Matthews appearing on Sunday October 27th followed by village favourites John Reilly and Lewis Nitikman returning for a show next month.

Chris and Julie have spent 25 years touring every continent, and have written countless hits for major US stars including Emmylou Harris, Crystal Gayle, Bonnie Raitt and Bette Midler. James Taylor, one of America's all time greats, is a huge fan saying "they light up the room with their amazing energy." Sheffield's own Richard Hawley describes the pair as "truly gifted human beings...."

Tickets for the show, which marks the final night of the duo's 25th anniversary tour, had virtually sold out as FLAG went to press with some fans planning to travel hundreds of miles to catch the event. Some were booking in at local hotels and making a weekend of the trip to Letwell.

Only a few tickets remain for the Reilly/Nitikman show on Friday November 15th.

Ex Lindisfarne frontman and multi instrumentalist Marty Craggs visits Letwell with his brand new Geordie band on Saturday December 7th. Given Marty's popularity - built up over many years on the road - tickets are likely to be in short supply. If you want to come along don't leave it too long to book.

Limited tickets, priced £12, are available from Martyn and Andy on 01909 731626 or 540694. Email inquiries to martyndsharpe@aol.com

FIRBECK VILLAGE HALL EVENTS

Tannie and Tannie - a new play by Claudine Bennent

Saturday 26 October 7.30

Performed by two Sheffield based actresses Claudine Bennent and Melanie Crawley

Tannie & Tannie is a warm-hearted tale of ordinary hard working people faced with the most difficult decision of their lives. Set in rural South Africa, it tells the story of two 'Tannies' (Afrikaans for 'aunties'), storytellers of their community who are forced to leave their home of many decades to take their chances in the wilderness on a 'trek' - a journey that echoes the Great Trek of South African settlers in the 1800's as well as every mass migration since and every potential human displacement in the future.

You'll join the Tannies at midnight as they attempt to finish their packing and as they try to decide where to go while mourning the loss of the lives and memories they must leave behind. Before they go, there's just time for a story or two about ghosts and gods and the bleddy British, then, off they'll go on their trek.

Tickets £10 available from:

Sharon Collins

01709 817327 s.collins1234@outlook.com

Sarah Ansley

07792 991299 sarah.ansley@hotmail.co.uk



VEGETARIAN & VEGAN FESTIVAL

Sunday October 27th in Firbeck Village Hall from 2pm - 4pm

Free Entry

Come and taste complementary samples of vegetarian and vegan food. Be inspired by delicious recipe ideas & discover how you can make small changes to benefit the environment and your health

All profits raised will be donated to charity

Organised by Firbeck Food for Thought



SCARECROWS ON PARADE

