



October 2024

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## COMPETITION JOY FOR FIRBECK

Lots of hard work has paid off with Firbeck claiming success in the the RHS Britain in Bloom competition for 2024.

The village won the prestigious Gold Award after narrowly missing out with successive Silver and Silver Gilt Awards in 2022 and 2023.

Firbeck's entry was declared the winner of the small village category for Yorkshire with the judges saying "it's obvious this small village community are very proud of where they live."

The Parish Council say the credit goes to residents for maintaining their gardens and ridding the village of litter. The transformation of the village hall garden and the "fantastic" work of Brian and Julie Dunker creating planting displays were factors too.

The visiting judges were also impressed by the beautiful village sign painted by Enid and Derek Bailey and the updating of the telephone box into an information hub and seed bank.

Praise for Firbeck was fulsome with the judging panel saying "a feeling of peace and tranquillity is apparent as you arrive in this very charming country village with a beautiful old English church and a country pub..."

Read more news from Firbeck Parish Council inside this issue of FLAG.



*LETWELL'S NICKY BLYTH WANTS AN END TO LIGHT POLLUTION  
DAMAGING OUR NIGHT SKIES....READ MORE INSIDE*

## NEWS FROM LETWELL PARISH COUNCIL

As I sit to write this article, I find myself pondering the fact that the nights are drawing in, it's October already, and Christmas is fast approaching. It has been a challenging year, but it's great to be in a position where the council is in good shape, and we are focussed on what we can improve going forward. We have now filled the position of Clerk, and we are pleased to welcome Yvonne Colverson who will join us at the beginning of November. Yvonne brings with her a wealth of experience as a clerk and will certainly help us to continue to improve the council and provide the advice we need to continue to add value to the village.

Since my last article we have seen signs erected on the outskirts of the village warning drivers to slow down as there are regular horses on the narrow lanes – an ongoing problem which hopefully drivers will pay heed to.

The main approach to the village, Ramper Road has been a contentious issue for the village as there are so many conflicting views on how it should be maintained. At our last council meeting it was agreed that the hedge should be left to grow out to beyond the tree line and then maintained from there, allowing easier trimming of the hedge in future. We ask that villages avoid cutting around individual trees to allow this to take shape over the coming years. It will however be tidied up in the near future.

As we approach the end of the year, there are a number of events taking place in the village, which will be posted on the newly created Letwell Community Group page of our website.

Earlier in the year, the Parish Council set up a village hall funding page where many online purchases can contribute to the upkeep of the village hall. This has so far raised just over £100 with the support of just 9 villagers. If you regularly buy online, we would encourage you to sign up to help this good cause. There is no additional cost for you, it is simply the merchant gifting a percentage of your purchase price to the cause. It's simple to sign up, go to [easypfundraising.co.uk](https://www.easypfundraising.co.uk) and search for Letwell Village Hall or scan the QR code below.

The village was also gifted a new bench which has been located on the newly renamed Moore's Mound and replaces the rather dilapidated one that has sat there for a good few years now.



So, as we start to look forward to the Christmas festivities (I have 2 children so it starts early in my house), and reflect on another year passed, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself and all of the Letwell Parish Counsellors to thank all of the Letwell community for your support this year, it has been a challenging one but we are in good shape for a successful 2025.

Amanda Wood

Chair, Letwell Parish Council

## EMBRACING A DARK SKY POLICY: A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR OUR VILLAGES

Many villages in the UK are embarking on an initiative known as a **Dark Skies Policy**, a commitment to reducing light pollution and enhancing the natural night environment. This effort aims to preserve our view of the stars, promote local wildlife, and improve overall well-being by limiting unnecessary artificial light at night.

### Why Dark Skies Matter

The night sky has been a source of wonder and inspiration for centuries, but in recent years, light pollution has dimmed our view of the stars. Many people in urban areas now see only a handful of stars, while villages like ours have the opportunity to preserve this natural beauty.

Beyond aesthetics, excessive lighting disrupts wildlife. Many nocturnal animals and insect, such as bats, owls, and moths, rely on darkness to forage, hunt, and navigate. Artificial lighting can confuse their natural behaviours, leading to declining populations. By reducing light pollution, we help safeguard these species and promote biodiversity in our community. Additionally, studies have shown that minimizing exposure to artificial light at night improves human health. It can lead to better sleep, improved mental health, and of course, reduced energy consumption, cutting both costs and environmental impact.

### Practical Tips for Residents

To support the Dark Skies Policy, here are some simple steps every household can take:

1. **Use outdoor lighting wisely:** Install motion-sensor lights that activate only when needed, rather than leaving lights on all night.
2. **Switch to shielded fixtures:** Use downward-facing lights that direct illumination to where it's needed, rather than spreading light into the sky.
3. **Choose low-intensity bulbs:** opt for warmer-coloured, lower-wattage bulbs to reduce glare and unnecessary brightness.
4. **Turn off unnecessary lights:** Make it a habit to switch off outdoor lights when they're not in use, especially after 10 PM.

By working together, we can protect our night skies and create a healthier, more vibrant environment for all. Let's take this small but meaningful step towards a better future for our villages.

Nicky Blyth

## FIRBECK VILLAGE HALL GARDEN

On Saturday 24th August Firbeck Village Hall officially opened its garden to the community. Residents of Firbeck gathered for the grand opening at 2pm in the garden and hall to celebrate this fantastic achievement.

Tea, scones and ice cream were provided and we were blessed with lovely weather. Sharon, Chair of the village hall committee gave a presentation of the history of the garden renovation and then the ribbon was cut by Les, Jane and Dave, the driving force behind the ideas, building and planting of the new garden.



Please visit our website for a more detailed report and photos of the event at [www.firbeckvillagehall.co.uk](http://www.firbeckvillagehall.co.uk)

## MY FIRST 18 MONTHS AT FIRBECK HALL

Hi all,

My name is Barbara, I came to live in the village 18 months ago at the newly refurbished Firbeck Hall. I must admit it wasn't the place I intended to move to, I was intending that Bessecar In Doncaster was going to be my new home, but I got side tracked on Rightmove and came to look at the hall.

My daughter came with me, and when we drove round the front of the hall we were surprised by the lovely view of the lake. My daughter just stared at it and said: "Mum, you are SO going to live here " Well she was right ! I moved in 6 weeks later.

In the last 18 months I have met a lot of people in the village .This is due to me walking my three little dogs several times a week . Sometimes they are in a doggy pram like little princesses.

It's very different from the city ,where I came from at Fulwood in Sheffield. People don't tend to talk there if they don't know you. Here I felt a warm welcome straight away. I feel I know more people here in the last 18 months than I did there after all those years! Can't tell you how many as it will reveal how old I am!!

The view from window has changed from a few footings to some lovely stylish houses, and soon there will be the fountain, which I can't wait to see.

There are only a few properties left on the market now, Once the houses are lived in I wonder if the pub will need an extension to fit everyone in ? The Hall has been restored once again to a beautiful building and hopefully it won't be allowed ever again to finish up derelict .

Thank you to everyone in the village for making us welcome.

Barbara

## NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME EVENTS SUCCESS

We would like to express deepest thanks to everyone who attended our Open Garden event in July as part of the National Garden Scheme. Thanks also go to anyone who helped on the day, donated money or made cakes.

Your support and generosity has contributed to raising funds for various health and nursing charities. <https://ngs.org.uk/who-we-are/beneficiaries/>

It was lovely to see people meander around the garden, enjoying tea and homemade cake, despite the sometimes challenging weather! We thoroughly enjoyed sharing our garden with you and are grateful for the opportunity to do so. Together with the other charity garden group visits we held this year, we raised an amazing total of £2217.

Thanks to all once again

Vicky & Martin. 8 Church Lane. Letwell.

## QUILTERS ON SHOW

Dovecote Quilters are holding an afternoon of Quilts, cake and tea. Come along to Letwell village hall between 2 and 4 pm on Friday October 25th. Admission £3.00 to include refreshments.

There will be plenty of handcrafted items for sale plus tombola and Chinese Raffle Proceeds to Letwell Village Hall and Sew Powerfull, a charity enabling girls in Zambia to continue their education.

## ART EXHIBITION

Letwell Art Group

Art Exhibition and Sale

Original Art Work

Letwell Village Hall S818DF

Saturday November 9th

10 am -3pm. Refreshments available - all welcome

## LETWELL MUSIC THRIVES

Letwell Music continues to thrive with a mix of old faces and new bound for the village hall in the next few months.

A busy autumn featuring a sell out show with the ever popular Jack T Harper Band was followed by a night in the company of former Eurovision Song contestant Lindsay Dracass and star sax player Steve Beighton. Just four tickets remained for the gig on Saturday October 26th as FLAG went to press. If you're interested phone 01909 731626.

Letwell favourites John Reilly and Lewis Nitikman - working towards their Christmas show at Sheffield's 1000-seat Octagon Theatre in mid December - head for the village on Saturday November 30th. The pair - surely the best duo around - are breaking new ground by inviting the Letwell audience to select the play list for the show. John and Lewis promise to play any song from their vast repertoire ranging from their own back catalogue to every song recorded by Elton and Billy Joel. Just email with the name your favourite before the gig.

A new name is bound for Letwell on Saturday January 25th with Julia Waldron and The Orchestrators making their debut. The band boast a strong following in Sheffield and have been winning great reviews with their intriguing mix of folk, roots and Americana. The line up features Nicola Farnon - one of the most acclaimed double bass players in the land.

Tickets priced £15 are available from Martyn on 07909 960 422 or 01909 731626. Email inquiries [martyndsharpe@aol.com](mailto:martyndsharpe@aol.com)

Doors open at 8 pm. Shows always start at 8.30 pm.



## **Firbeck Village Hall Christmas Fair**

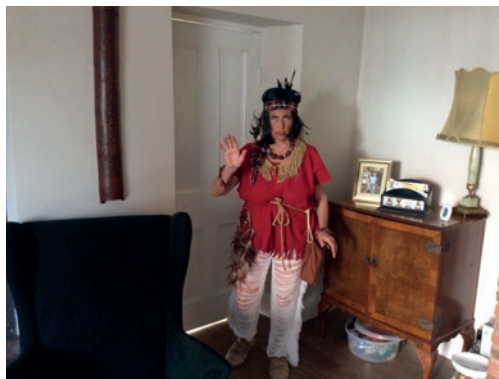
**Saturday 7th December  
3pm to 6pm**

**FREE ENTRY - Everyone welcome**

Come along with your friends and family  
Bring your children and grandchildren  
to see Santa - £4 including a gift.

**Cash only Sales \* On Street Parking**

- Handmade Gifts for Sale
- Refreshments including
  - Slow Roast Pork Rolls
  - Mulled Wine
  - Homemade Mince Pies
  - Hot Chocolate
- Raffle
- Children's & Adults Tombola
- Santas Grotto
- Hook a Duck
- Snowball Alley
- Carol Singing and much more.....



*SHE LIVED AT LETWELL FOR OVER 50  
YEARS - BUT CAN YOU GUESS WHO IT  
IS??*

For more information or to book to see Santa contact  
Sharon on 07410 899181 | [chair@firbeckvillagehall.co.uk](mailto:chair@firbeckvillagehall.co.uk)  
or Anita on 07505 461368 | [secretary@firbeckvillagehall.co.uk](mailto:secretary@firbeckvillagehall.co.uk)



## DAVID WRIGHT'S INFORMATIVE NATURE REPORT

As FLAG's nature columnist and wildlife guardian for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, I've concerns which many readers will share. More and more dogs are running loose on the airfield during the breeding season. It's a serious problem. Some dogs are hard to control once they get a scent and some get lost in the deep crops. Leverets, pheasants, etc. get killed. Ground-nesting birds (some Red-Listed) are disturbed and may abandon their nests. This spring I witnessed our only pair of nesting lapwings driven frantic by rampaging dogs. Yellow wagtails (summer visitors from Africa) used to be regulars, but I've not seen any for two years. Fewer skylarks were evident this year. There's also a general problem: several recent instances of loose dogs attacking other dogs.

There's no reason why the airfield can't work well for everyone, but from a wildlife perspective dogs should be kept out of the crops and set-aside during the breeding season. It's not just me who's concerned: Rotherham Council has recently displayed signage and Firbeck Parish Council has displayed a notice on the Village Hall noticeboard. The Wildlife Trusts issue advice annually. South Yorkshire Police Wildlife Officers are aware of the problem.

On a brighter note, chiffchaffs almost certainly bred in the fieldside buffer strip behind Kingswood Close. Their nests are built deep in vegetation. They mainly migrate here to breed from Sub-Saharan Africa – not bad for a bird weighing no more than a £1 coin!

More news since my July report. Chaffinches, goldfinches, greenfinches and (probably) common whitethroats bred in Firbeck. Several pairs of house martins bred here including three pairs on Kingswood Close of which I think each pair successfully fledged two clutches. Swallows also appeared to do well here. A weasel in our garden was an unusual sight. A common snipe and two female wheatears on the airfield in September were nice.

In July FLAG I asked when you last heard a cuckoo? Well, it's good to report that one was briefly heard calling at Thornbury Hill in June. And some late news from 2023: a cuckoo was heard calling for ten days in Firbeck.

I was pleased to hear from a Firbeck resident who enjoyed Riff Reign's 'Summer's Here' after reading July FLAG. It's now autumn, so why not enjoy 'Summer's Gone' from our 'In My Time' album, free on YouTube. The song includes a thrilling guitar solo and builds to a dramatic climax.

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davidandgwenneth@gmail.com



CHIFFCHAFF

## OUR FIRST YEAR IN LETWELL

Around 4 years ago we decided to sell up and retire to North Yorkshire. With a healthy budget surely an old cottage on the edge of a village with a bit of land wouldn't be too hard to find. Well, it wasn't, but it turned out to be in our home county of South Yorkshire in the village of Letwell. Where, our friends asked?

The cottage in question was a heart over head purchase, it needed let's say "a bit of work." So on October 15th 2023 we moved into a caravan, yes we spent our first two and a half months in the field behind our dream cottage with a diesel generator supplying electricity....don't even ask!!

The village looks like it belongs in the Cotswolds rather than the coalfields of South Yorkshire, but benefits from friendly Yorkshire folk. The locals made us welcome, many introducing themselves to us. What a friendly bunch they turned out to be, cards and even a bottle of wine from our neighbour. The dog walking contingent - about half the village - passed our gate every day, usually stopping for a chat and the odd bit of gossip. I decided to go along to the parish council meetings chivvied by our neighbour across the road. I was led to believe these meetings were low key, but thought it was a good way to get to know the none dog walkers. I arrived at the village hall to find there was hardly room to take a seat. It seemed there had been some drama involving the financial side of things. Shock horror!

But matters are now on an even keel, and the flower beds and the flagpole - without a flag - are the hot topics of the day. Before I forget can someone get the light switch fixed at the bus shelter. Letwell has a lovely duck pond next to our property. I soon became aware that I was the guardian of the pond. On arrival it was duck-less due to the previous duck being removed after he apparently committed GBH. Whatever next??

I was approached by the local hen, horse and now duck rehoming centre, based at the edge of the village (also supplier of eggs take a look in the phone box, they're very good) and asked to re-home three ducks. After getting the said waterfowl I'm not convinced they're all ducks. Acclimatised they were released onto the pond, and as far as I know they've not attacked passers by. Result!!

As previous mentioned the village hall holds all kinds of events. We were asked by the music events manager, call him what you will, and asked if we would like to see and listen to Boy On A Dolphin. Not sure what to expect we went along, and were shown to our seats near the bar - so news travels fast! - and a wonderful night of original music from a first class band ensued.

The next surprise was the village fayre. This turned out to be quite an event. The street was blocked off, stalls were set up, a contingent of the American Army arrived on time for once, and a mobile shooting range turned up. The weather was typically British, cool and damp, but the event was well attended, and there were no reports of injury. Well done to the organisers, and we look forward to next year's fayre.

A quick mention for the Black Lion at Firbeck, which serves excellent food and beer in a proper pub atmosphere with log fires, something we had no access to at our old home. Letwell has proved a great choice as our new home. The village is one of the prettiest in Yorkshire,



and the people of Letwell have made us welcome, and we now feel part of the community. Perhaps we'll be classed as locals in 20 years time!!

Some of the residents have been especially kind and generous, and I would like to take this opportunity to say Thank You - you know who you are..

We look forward to living in this lovely village for the rest of our days. It really is a wonderful place to live, and we've made many new friends...oh finally, I'd like to apologise for the barking dog!!

Geoff and Lesley

## COUPLE RETURN TO CHURCH AFTER 50 YEARS

Celebrating 50 years of marriage Robert and Jean Fussell re-affirmed their wedding vows in a touching ceremony on the morning of the harvest festival at St Peter's Church at Letwell.

The couple were intending to marry at Oldcotes, where Jean had grown up, but the village church was closed at the time, so she got in touch with her aunty Muriel Needham, who lived three doors away from Letwell church, and had been a long-time member of the congregation. Jean was subsequently given permission to marry her fiance - who was a civilian airline pilot - at Letwell on October the 5th 1974.

The couple went on to live for many years in Swaziland and South Africa, where Robert ran a flying school.

Now retired and settled happily in south west France, the one time bride and groom exchanged vows, promising to love and honour one another, and were then invited to exchange a kiss in front of the altar. The congregation responded by giving the pair a rousing round of applause.



*ROBERT AND JEAN ON THEIR  
WEDDING DAY*



*THE HAPPY COUPLE RETURN  
TO ST. PETER'S*

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

### **Britain in Bloom success for Firbeck**

Over the past three years, Firbeck village has entered the prestigious RHS Britain in Bloom competition, with success annually, gaining the Silver award in 2022, and Silver Gilt in 2023.

After taking last year's judges' feedback on board, the Village Hall garden was transformed by a dedicated team of local volunteers, and the telephone box updated into an information hub and seed bank.

These developments, alongside the ongoing commitment from residents maintaining gardens, litter picking, the fantastic work of Brian and Julie Dunker with the planting displays, and our beautiful village sign, painted by Enid and Derek Bailey, really impressed the visiting judges, with their feedback commenting that:

'A feeling of peace and tranquillity is apparent as you arrive in this very charming country village with a beautiful old English Church and a country pub. With colour in abundance on the verges and surrounding gardens, the whole village is a haven for wildlife.

It is obvious this small village community are very proud of where they live'

We are incredibly proud to have achieved the Gold award this year, along with winning the small village category for Yorkshire! Thank you to everyone for their ongoing support in maintaining our beautiful village.

### **Neighbourhood Planning - the process begins.**

We have several very enthusiastic and committed residents who have now formed a steering group to work with our planning consultant on a neighbourhood plan for the village. Sincere thanks to them, this is valuable work for the village. The group is being chaired by Ian Barkley, work is now underway and the group will be reporting back to the Parish Council on a regular basis. We will, of course be keeping the village up to speed as appropriate.

### **Out with the dog and the new yellow signs on our footpaths**

Our footpath signage has been added to recently - bright yellow signs have appeared asking for dogs to be put on leads on the path. We have asked RMBC for clarification on this as some residents have expressed concern - asking - do they risk prosecution if their dog is off the lead? As we understand it, when you are out with the dog on our local footpaths and bridleways you are expected to adhere to the Countryside code. What this means is that you should always keep your dog under effective control to make sure it stays away from wildlife, livestock, horses and other people unless invited. Effective control means :-

you have it on a lead; or

you have it in sight at all times and are confident that it will return to you promptly on your command;

you make sure your dog does not stray from the path or area where you have right of access

Whilst on the subject of dogs, everyone knows how unpleasant dog mess is and it can cause infections so, as a common courtesy, we ask that you always clean up after your dog and get rid of the mess responsibly - "bag it, bin it" Never leave bags of dog poo around, even if you

intend to pick them up later. If you cannot find a public waste bin - there are several in the village - you should take it home and use your own bin.

### **Christmas trees**

Our Christmas tree festival will be on Sunday 1st December, details will be posted nearer the time. We shall be providing the little trees to line the church path once again and inviting our village groups to sponsor and decorate them as before. Of course we are also arranging for a big tree in the centre of the village.

### **CCTV**

The cameras are all installed now.

### **Next parish council meeting**

27th November 2024 at 7pm in Firbeck Village Hall.

Caroline Jopling

Chair

## **LETWELL COMMUNITY GROUP - WHAT'S ON IN LETWELL**

**Here's what's on in Letwell over the coming weeks. Everyone is welcome to all events.**

### **OCTOBER**

**FRIDAY 25th. 2-4pm. Quilts, Cakes & Coffee.** By Dovecote Quilters in the Village Hall. £3pp to include refreshments. Plus a Chinese raffle and a tombola.

### **NOVEMBER**

**SUNDAY 3rd. 11am. Village Litter Pick.** Meet at the Village Hall. Equipment provided.

**ALL welcome to FREE Refreshments** served from 11am, not just for the litter pickers !

**SATURDAY 9th. 10am-3pm. Art Group Sale and Exhibition.** By Letwell Art Group. In the Village Hall.

**SUNDAY 10th. 10am. Remembrance Service at St Peters, then 11am at the War Memorial.**

### **DECEMBER**

**WEDNESDAY 11th. 7pm. Wreath Making in the Village Hall.** £8pp. to include hoops and wires, basic greenery plus refreshments. BYO extra greenery and decorations etc.

**FRIDAY 13th. 7pm. Christmas Party.** In the Village Hall. £10pp. Free for Children. Pie & peas, cake, carols and a quiz. Raffle. Book by 9th Dec. lcg@gmail.com or 07795-058490.

**TUESDAY 17th. 7pm. Carol Service at St Peters.**

**MONDAY 23rd. 6pm. Carol singing around the village.** Meet at the bus stop (to be confirmed).

**DECEMBER 31st. 8pm. New Year Celebration.** In the Village Hall. £5pp. 'Race Night'

followed by music/disco. BYO food and drink. Raffle. Bar open. Book by 15th Dec. lcg@gmail.com or 07795058490.

**SAVE THE DATE: MAY 11th 2025 - VE Day 80th Anniversary Celebrations** with the popular 'Lahdidahs' (1940's harmonic vintage vocals). More details to follow.

Please remember that the Village Hall events are organised by village people for fellow village people, to the benefit of the hall. Your support and engagement are extremely valuable. Events held by Letwell Community Group have raised enough funds for a deep clean of our Village Hall and to provide a donation of £750 to the Parish Council for specific Village Hall requirements (not regular bills). Some items will be purchased in the near future, such as various kitchen items and plants for the outdoor planters. Any money remaining after this will be kept in a separate Parish Council bank account for future Village Hall requirements.

We welcome anyone wishing to join the Community Group on a regular or ad hoc basis. Please speak to Hazel, Louise, Rita or Vicky.

Sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the use and upkeep of the hall in any way. Your continued support is very much needed and appreciated.

## SPRING CLEAN

Many thanks go out to Izabella, who has an awesome reputation for keeping quite a few Letwell properties spick and span.

Hearing that St Peter's Church needed a spring clean - if that's possible in October - she and her husband Adrian spent several valuable hours giving the old building a serious going over.

The couple, from South Anston, refused any recompense later on. Well done!!



*LIA EMMERSON'S REMARKABLE PHOTO OF A DEER STARTLED BY A COMBINE AT GILDINGWELLS*