



July 2021

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## OWZAT

Our villages produce hundreds of tonnes of wheat and barley every year - but another little known crop takes 15 years to grow, and ends up being exported all over the world from Firbeck.

During these last few weeks specialists have been busy harvesting 40 willow trees on land close to Lake House. Each tree will go on to produce 33 high quality cricket bats destined for markets wherever the game is played in England, Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

J.S. Wright and Sons Ltd., the Essex company involved in the scheme, are the world's largest and oldest established producers of English cricket bat willow.

Conditions at Lake House provide perfect growing conditions with good quality soil close to the nearby river water course. The willow "sets" originate from only the best trees, and are four years old before they are planted.

Owner Sheila Morrell is rightfully proud of her connection with the trade. Mrs. Morrell told FLAG: "The willows are treated like any other agricultural crop - just like wheat or anything else.

"The company harvests around 40 trees each year from our land, and then re-plants each tree. The Forestry Commission visited last year and checked everything was in order."

A huge stack of felled trees were waiting to leave the site for Chelmsford as FLAG went to press. "They're all ready to go," said Mrs. Morrell, "then they'll be back to re-plant, and the process starts again for next year."



*Cricket Bats in the Making*

## BEWARE THE KEYLESS THIEVES

Owners of keyless Land Rover Discoveries are being warned to be on their guard after a vehicle belonging to a Gildingwells farmer was stolen in broad daylight by two men wearing balaclavas and grey tracksuits - and then later used in an armed robbery at Killamarsh near Sheffield.

The incident follows a spate of similar crimes - which has seen Series 4 Discoveries snatched at Langold, Wickersley, Wentworth and Whiston and other locations near Rotherham.

Read more details inside the latest issue of FLAG.

## UPDATE FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL WI

We are celebrating our 75th Anniversary in July which is quite an achievement for a small group (we're even older than the NHS...and rationing was still in progress after the War). We will be having Afternoon Tea at one of our members' beautiful home (we've put in a request for fabulous weather - so fingers crossed!) and, of course, we will be wearing hats and gloves as in 1946 ladies didn't go out without a hat!

We are hoping to get back to some normality by resuming meetings in September with Sue Barton showing how we can wear scarves and sarongs with panache. In October we will learn about the trials and tribulations and adventures of the Pilgrim Fathers and in November we will be able to do some creative painting - even our less 'arty' members will be having a go.

It is a time to start looking forward and if anyone is interested in joining us in our future events, they will be very welcome.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary on 01909 540751 if you would like more information.

## BEAUTIFUL ORCHID IN THE CHURCHYARD AT ST. PETER'S LETWELL



## NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL

As we enter the second half of 2021 work at Firbeck Hall remains at a standstill, except for some ancillary activity. Construction work ended effectively in December 2020.

We have had no indication as to when work is likely to be resumed, which will be dependent on the outcome of the planning application, delayed whilst awaiting the District Valuers assessment.

Firbeck Hall was built in the late 16th century and has had a long line of owners contributing to it's fascinating history.

Always attracting interest, and in response to numerous requests, we are happy to reproduce the following brief resume.

1594 William West Snr	1878 Rev Henry Gladwyn Jebb
1598 William West Jnr	1898 Captain Sidney Gladwyn Jebb
1638 John West	1919-28 rented - Mr Albert Orlando Peach
1659 Elizabeth Fane	1934 Purchased by Cyril Aubrey Nicholson
1669 Sir Francis Fane	1935 Opening of Firbeck Hall Country Club
1669 William & Mary Woolhouse	1939 Royal Infirmary Hospital Sheffield
1676 Jonathan Stanyforth	1945 Miner's Rehabilitation Centre
1691 Disney Stanyforth	1951 NHS Sheffield Regional Hospital Board
1756 Jonathan Stanyforth	1974 Rotherham Area Health Authority
1779 Amelia & Henrietta Stanyforth	1988 Nature Reserve opened by Anthony Baker
1790 Amelia Stanyforth	1991 Rehabilitation Centre closed
1792 John Baker	1996 Purchased by Cambs Consruction
1800 Henry Gally Knight Snr	2010 Purchased by Mr Jason Cooper
1808 Henry Gally Knight Jnr	2015 Purchased by Mr Ashley Wildsmith
1846 Ecclesiastical Commissioners	2019 Purchased by One Construction Ltd
1853 Mrs Frances Harriott Miles	

For further information on this, or for any further information on Friends of Firbeck Hall, please contact Valerie Oxley at [valerie@mvoxley.co.uk](mailto:valerie@mvoxley.co.uk)>

Sid Ellis.

## DAVID WRIGHT PRESENTS HIS EVER POPULAR COLUMN

The species people regularly stop to talk to me about is the Red Kite, which must now be breeding around here as people see them all year round. To quote from the RSPB: 'This magnificently graceful bird of prey is unmistakable with its reddish-brown body, angled wings and deeply forked tail. It was saved from national extinction by one of the world's longest-running protection programmes. It has now been successfully re-introduced to England and Scotland. Red Kites are listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.'

When sitting in my back garden one day in mid-April I was convinced two Ravens flew over in a northerly direction. They were flying low and slow and I immediately thought 'Raven!' Unfortunately, they'd passed over the house and were heading away before I saw them. I couldn't be 100% positive, but I can't think of anything else they could have been. Then a couple of days later I had a similar sighting from my front window. The Raven is a big, black bird, the biggest of the Crow family. They're uncommon in lowland areas such as ours, but we're not that far away from the The Pennines – as the Crow (sorry, Raven) flies!

A neighbour was delighted to see a Little Egret on Lamb Lane Dyke once more on 28 April. Another Firbeck resident has regularly had Jays in his garden and also Great Spotted Woodpeckers, including a juvenile in late May.

It seems to have been a good breeding season locally, if the results in my garden are anything to go by. For the second year running Moorhens have raised two broods; we had five to start with and then a later brood of four. The two broods would no doubt have been larger to start with, but they've stayed at five and four for a long time. It's always fun and interesting watching the first brood – sometimes they'll steal food from the younger birds and sometimes they'll feed them! Other juvenile birds seen in the garden include Blackbird, Dunnock, Grey Wagtail, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Robin and Song Thrush. Jackdaws appear to have bred well in Firbeck.

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*Red Kite*

# THE LANGOLD LADY IN DYSCARR WOOD

Spring had sprung, there was warmth in the air,  
The Sun was shining and the sky was clear.  
The hue of the trees showing splendours of green,  
The wild flowers and bluebells; a site to be seen.

But there on the path, as we walked through the wood,  
A Lady dog-walker, so still as she stood.  
Staring down to the side of the track,  
A 'neglect' of spewed rubbish, spilt out from a sack!

The beauty of nature abruptly stopped,  
By the thoughtless act some person had dropped.  
Downhearted, resilient and determined to act,  
Our lovely Lady was 'matter of fact.'

"I walk through the woods on a regular beat,  
And I pick up the rubbish I see at my feet."

A bag in her hand and a litter- pick-stick.  
She played the reverse of a paper trail trick.  
Nimble and neat, with a practiced hand,  
She loaded the bag with the foul contraband.

It hurts me to see the continued abuse.  
No mounting pressure to reduce the refuse.  
Beer cans and bottles, plastic and waste,  
Must, to all, leave an unpleasant taste."

Follow, if you will, this kind Lady's plight,  
And do what you might to do what is right.  
Carry a bag and do what you can.  
For nature's sake, we need a 'Game Plan'.

Raise the Flag!

William -

Gally Knight, Letwell.





## 75 YEARS YOUNG - FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL WI



*The Ladies of Firbeck-cum-letwell WI Celebrate Their 75th Anniversary*

## NEW COUNCIL CLERK

Long serving Letwell parish council clerk Martyn Sharpe has retired after 42 years of service, but remains a parish councillor.

Rebecca Thompson, who works as a successful clerk to a fellow parish council, takes over the reigns.

Rebecca, who lives at Anston, works locally for the NHS. She is currently working towards the SLCC local government qualification.

The married mum is no stranger to Letwell - she frequently volunteers at British Hen Welfare re-homing days at Peppersfield animal rescue centre which is based in the village.

Rebecca tells FLAG she is looking forward to working with the parish council, and welcomes queries or suggestions from local residents.

The parish council has a new email address [letwellpc@outlook.com](mailto:letwellpc@outlook.com)

Rebecca's phone number is 07759781828.

The next parish council meeting is due to be held at Letwell village hall on Monday August 23rd at 7.30 pm.

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

At long last we are able to hold our parish council meetings in person in the Village Hall and we look forward to seeing you once again at our meetings.

Our first non digital meeting (since pandemic lockdowns) took place on 19th May. This was our parish council's annual meeting at which we conducted all manner of formal business - approving annual accounts, renewing insurance, adopting powers of competence and the like. We also appointed a new chair - me (Caroline Jopling) and Chris Stanton as vice chair.

The council meeting was followed a week later by the parish's annual meeting at which meeting we heard reports of the activities and plans of the many groups and organisations connected with the village. Our new local councillors Sophie Castledine-Dack, Ben Whomersley and Charlie Wooding accepted our invitation to the parish meeting which gave them the opportunity of getting to know us; what keeps us busy and what concerns us.

By the time that this Flag edition is distributed, the minutes of the parish council meeting will be available on line for you to see what business was discussed and resolutions made in more detail. Following on from that meeting, I can tell you a little about what we have been progressing...

**Neighbourhood Plan** - we have put in motion work to start on a neighbourhood plan and there will be much to say about this going forward. We shall be advised and guided by Andrew Towlerton who has recently successfully steered Dinnington (amongst many other councils) through the process.

**Firbeck Hall** - We are told that the developers were asked to deliver a further financial appraisal to support their planning application. This appraisal has been carried out, has been assessed by the district valuer and his report is now with the planners who have yet to reach a view and formulate their recommendation for the planning board. There is as yet no date fixed for the application to be heard by the planning board. Can I remind you that if you lodged any comments relating to the applications, you do have the right to speak at the meeting of the planning board but to do so you must tell RMBC that you so wish. An e mail to Matthew Peck will suffice - [matthew.Peck@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.Peck@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Neighbourhood Watch** - Historically the NHW scheme has not been run by the Parish Council and we think that still is the right way to go. What we have at the moment is a limited informal scheme (Firbeckwatch) which I set up some time ago. It has served a purpose but now I think its time for me to pass the baton on to someone else. We really could do with new arrangements that are more extensive and structured in a way to be better fit with how NHW's now work nationally.

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

**I love Firbeck project** - We are pushing on with all aspects of this initiative and hope soon to organise a proper public launch. In the meantime, Cllr. Jo Pittard has the following to say about the Firbeck in Bloom aspect of the project.

“With the ongoing uncertainty around the pandemic, the RHS have replaced the traditional Britain in Bloom contest with ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ which aims to recognise the work of individuals and groups, in maintaining their local community.

This year due to there being no face to face contact and assessment, the campaign has gone digital. As with the standard judging process, three areas are assessed.

- Community,
- Environment
- Gardening.

This year the RHS are asking each group to submit information on line, for these three areas along with any supplementary info (images, portfolio, video etc). The deadline for entries is July 25th.

I have started gathering images from around the village to add to the portfolio- many gardens are looking great, and special thanks must go to Brian and Julie Dunker for their fantastic planting, with the newly created Firbeck wheelbarrow planter as the centrepiece, at the heart of the Village.

Unfortunately, RMBC don’t seem to have been able to maintain the verges and footpaths as frequently this year, so we would really welcome some community support with strimming, mowing, weeding and litter picking around the village, ahead of the final submission.

If anyone is available to offer some support on Saturday 17th or Sunday 18th July, could you please email me Cllr Jo Pittard (email: [jpittardfpc@outlook.com](mailto:jpittardfpc@outlook.com)) so I can try to coordinate a team to tackle the main areas around the village, before final photos and videos are taken. Thanks in advance

Also, it would be great to include any photos showing work you or your family or are doing on your own gardens or green spaces around the village. Please email me any images that you are happy to share on the RHS judging site, at the address below, before Thursday 22nd July.”

Enjoy the new freedoms safely

Caroline Jopling



## CAR THEFT SHOCK

Gildingwells farmer David Farnsworth had his keyless Land Rover Discovery 4 stolen as he chatted to a friend at 5 in the afternoon.

David had called at the friend's house at Woodsetts when two men in grey tracksuits and balaclavas set to work 50 yards away and by-passed the parked car's security system with an electronic gadget.

David thought he'd never see the vehicle again, but an appeal on Facebook from his daughter Emma and Woodsetts resident Selena Cawkwell worked wonders. Two care workers were suspicious when they saw the vehicle parked on a side street at Kilnhurst near Rotherham two days later with two flat tyres and damaged alloy wheel rims.

The women found details of the car theft on Facebook, and promptly made contact. False number plates had been fitted to the vehicle, but David was able to prove it was his via the V5 vin number.

The Land Rover was later linked to a robbery at Killamarsh near Sheffield, where two men in black balaclavas snatched another identical vehicle, threatening the owner's daughter with a hand-gun.

David's Barbour jacket, glasses and £50 in cash was missing when the car was recovered. The 66 plate Land Rover was carrying 65 plates when it was found at Kilnhurst.

David told FLAG: "I never thought I'd get it back. I'd written it off. Getting it back was all down to the power of the two girls and the message on the Facebook page.

"I'd no idea the car had gone. I was chatting to my friend in his garden, and they were stealing it 50 yards away.

"A man living two doors away had them on his CCTV in grey tracksuits and black balaclavas.

"It was missing for two days, and in that time they used the car to steal another Disco at Killamarsh after threatening the owner's daughter with a gun. They travelled something like 160 miles in the car in those two days, and there was only diesel for another 25 miles when we found it.

"It was fitted with a pair of 12 plates at Killamarsh, but when it was found at Kilnhurst they'd changed them again to 65 plates.

"I was very lucky that the two care workers saw the car. They were on their way to put an old lady to bed in a bungalow nearby, and they thought it looked very suspicious with two flat tyres and the damage to the alloys."

Police inquiries are still continuing.

David added: "Disco 4 models are at risk from thieves like this.....You can't do the same thing with a Disco 5."

## THREE CHEERS

Not very often that Rotherham council comes in for praise, but their response to the latest fly-tipping incident at Letwell deserves three cheers.

The council were so quick removing the mountain of broken tarmac, car parts, concrete and household waste abandoned by the bench going out of the village towards Gildingwells that FLAG didn't have time to take a snap.

There's no sign, however, that road-side littering is getting any better.

A recent sweep of the verges along the Ramper and Gildingwells Road produced a bumper crop of lager cans and bottles.

Why do the offenders think it's okay to booze as they drive along, and then throw the debris out of the window??

## TREE BRANCHES CRASH TO THE GROUND

Letwell Parish Council has been pressing RMBC to remove fallen branches from a large, mature tree at the junction of Church Lane and Gildingwells Road.

The debris landed partly into the road moments after an open-top sports car had passed by.

A witness told FLAG: "There was a huge crash as the branches fell to the ground. It wasn't raining at the time, and the wind wasn't even blowing so it's hard to know what caused it to happen. The people in the car were very fortunate because they could have been hit..."

A council forestry officer visited the site a week after the incident happened, and insisted the tree itself was safe.

Meanwhile, RMBC have told the parish council they do not own the land in question - in spite of the authority cutting the grass each summer where the tree is sited.

Further inquiries are ongoing to establish responsibility.



## FOOTBALL STAR'S SURPRISE VISIT

Sheffield United legend Tony Currie delivered a personal Get Well message to Letwell youngster Tom Hall after he underwent a 9 hour spinal fusion operation at Sheffield Children's Hospital.

Tom - a big Blades fan - happened to be at school when his club hero called at the family home with a DVD wishing him well.

Mum Karen was out walking Tilly the dog, and dad James was working in his office, and didn't hear the ex England star ringing the bell.

Tony ended up calling next door, and was mistaken for a door to door salesman by the neighbour!

Karen told FLAG: "Our neighbour didn't recognise Tony, saw he was carrying something under his arm, and thought he was a salesman of some kind. He ended up saying: 'Are you someone famous.....'"

"James came to the gate eventually, he's a big United fan too, and ended up having a long chat with Tony. It was great of him and the club to respond as they did.

"Apparently, the club had had four separate requests from people, who thought Tom would appreciate a visit."

In case you're wondering....the operation was a complete success and Tom, who is 20 in November, has made a great recovery.



*Tom in His Blades Kit*

## ARE YOU INTERESTED??

New members are needed to help run Letwell Village Hall following a number of recent resignations.

Please contact Vicky Bennett or Martyn Sharpe for more information.



## CHRIS MARTIN REPORTS ON ST. MARTIN'S 200TH ANNIVERSARY

### 200 Years (and a bit)!

In 1820 Firbeck got a new church.

In Firbeck and the Three Estates it is referred to as 'the building erected by Mrs. Gally Knight,' but I doubt that my mental image of said lady wielding a bricklaying trowel is very realistic!

That church building consisted of what is now the nave, a small chancel and a tower on the front corner. For the next eighty years there were many additions and alterations, but the structure we have now has changed little since 1899 when our lovely octave of bells was installed in the new tower and began to be heard far and wide. The church was re-consecrated after the building work by the Bishop of Beverley in July 1900.



*Last time Bishop Pete came to Firbeck*

So our 200th Anniversary was 2020 and that's where the 'bit' comes in. Our plans for a big village celebration with meals and concerts etc. were scuppered by Covid-19. Fortunately, the Bishop of Sheffield was able to come this year instead, so we re-scheduled our celebration Holy Communion service for 18th July, but again our planned community celebrations were affected by the pandemic. Last time Bishop Pete came to Firbeck

Perhaps we can organise something for later in the summer – we do hope so - the church is here for the whole village and this one has been ours for a very long time.