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## FROZEN OUT BY COUNCIL PENNY PINCHING

Firbeck and Letwell parish councils have gone into battle to try and force Rotherham council to reverse a decision which halted bus travel altogether for a week and seriously disrupted travel between the villages during the recent snowfall.

Kidd Lane looked more like a ski slope than a road after bosses at the Town Hall banned gritters from treating the route as a means of saving money.

The decision left bus travellers in both villages isolated during the period between Christmas and New Year with TM Travel halting services on safety grounds from December 27th. The buses didn't run again until the ice had melted on January 2nd. Motorists, meanwhile, risked life and limb trying to negotiate the hill.

One angry Firbeck villager told FLAG: "Kidd Lane was a disgrace. If you didn't have a 4x4 there was no chance of getting to the top of the hill. How can they grit suburban streets in Rotherham, and then just ignore a bus route like this."

Letwell Parish Council emailed the councillor responsible for Rotherham's environmental affairs Mahroof Hussain demanding a re-think. "If this was happening in Broom or Moorgate the council wouldn't get away with it," said a parish council spokesman.

Firbeck's clerk Angela Harrison wrote to Streetpride arguing that the road should be given priority in line with the borough council's own guidelines.



*Kidd Lane - treacherous in the snow*

TM Travel were equally frustrated by the ban. A manager told FLAG: "We didn't suspend services lightly. We checked out the road by car, and Kidd Lane was totally impassable. We believe the road should be given priority, and we can't understand why it's not happened."

The parish councils were awaiting a response from Streetpride's senior manager Colin Knight as FLAG went to press. Councillor Maggie Godfrey, head of Rotherham's parish affairs committee, has also promised to investigate, telling the Letwell council "some priority should be given to keep bus routes open....."

## FRIENDS OF FIRBECK HALL

The completion of the work on West Lodge (now to be known as Lodge House) marked a significant point in the redevelopment and restoration of the whole of Firbeck Hall.

Nothing much has happened for many years - ever since the Hall was a hospital and rehabilitation centre - other than the continuing deterioration of the three listed structures.

Prospects are now considerably improved and we are encouraged by the recent positive response to our recent enquiries. RMBC Planning tell us that their negotiations with the owner Jason Cooper and his team are well advanced.

Planning procedures on a project of this scale are inevitably complex and they are endeavouring to resolve as many issues as possible prior to the submission of a full formal planning application. We are told that this is now expected in the near future and it is their hope and expectation that the Council will be in a position to support the whole scheme.

### SIDELLIS

Anyone with an interest in any aspect of Firbeck Hall is invited to join Friends of Firbeck Hall. Subscription is only £1.00. Contact our Membership Secretary, telephone 01909 732191 or email [friends@firbeckhall.net](mailto:friends@firbeckhall.net) Visit our website at [www.firbeckhall.net](http://www.firbeckhall.net)

## CAROL'S HEART TO HEART - WITH A SQUIRREL

Carol Elston went to the rescue of a dying squirrel, and saved the furry creature by administering heart massage AND the kiss of life.

The pensioner was looking through the window with 10 year old grand-daughter Chira when she spotted the squirrel lying prone on the grass in the back garden.

Carol - who'd been at a meeting training to use the Letwell de-fibrillator the night before - rushed outside sensing time was running out and pumped the creature's heart to try and get it going again.

When there was no obvious response Carol crouched down, and then breathed in and out into the animal's little mouth three times.

After a short while the squirrel jumped up and scampered away.

Recalling the moment the long time Letwell resident, who was a vet's assistant in her younger days, told FLAG: "My instinct was to save the squirrel. I didn't think twice about it. We'd been to the de-fibrillator meeting the night before so I don't know if that helped.

"I didn't know whether I'd been successful at first so I laid it on a pile of leaves, partly covered it up, and kept the dogs in the house.

"I was quite concerned, but after a while the squirrel went off, and we've seen it in the garden a few times since then."

Carol's daughter Linda was shocked when she heard about the strange goings on later on. "She was quite pleased though when she found out that the squirrel had recovered. Chira was impressed, and told her teacher all about what her grandma had done later."

## GOOD SAMARITAN RICHARD

They say adversity brings out the best in people, and Richard McAlister-Martin proved the old maxim by going to the aid of complete strangers who were stranded as a ferocious snow blizzard struck the area on Boxing Day night.

Richard ventured out at 11.30 pm after a motorist knocked on his door asking for help to move his car which was stuck in the snow.

With the car safely at the side of the road the owner told Richard he was going to walk back to rescue his wife and elderly father, who were marooned in another vehicle at an isolated spot on Lamb Lane a mile away.

Struggling to climb into his Land Rover Richard - who was limping badly from a riding accident earlier in the day - insisted on driving the man to the scene where he found a couple and a little boy trapped in another vehicle,

Richard told FLAG: "Their car was stuck, and the little lad, who was only two or three years old, was really cold, and pretty distressed. I thought the best thing to do was to get them home so I drove them to Dinnington, and then returned for the other people.

"The elderly man was about 90, and he was confused, and it took a lot of encouragement from the three of us to get him in the Land Rover. I drove them to Todwick, and then set about getting home."

Conditions by this time were appalling. Richard added: "There were abandoned cars all over, and there were times when I wondered if I was going to get back, but I did eventually make it at around 2.30 am."

Well done Richard - you've earned the first medal in FLAG's New Years Honours list!

## FIRBECK CONCERT

Steve Knightley, acclaimed singer/songwriter and frontman with the leading folk/roots band Show of Hands, is set to play a gig at Firbeck Village Hall on Wednesday January 28th as part of a tour visiting local community venues the length and breadth of England.

Steve, once described the *The Times* as "a voice for the rural poor", has played the Royal Albert hall four times, and arrives with a huge reputation for the quality of his song writing and stories.

Tickets are priced at £16, and there's 100 available for sale. Contact Nick Wilson on 01709 709406 or [nwilson33@hotmail.com](mailto:nwilson33@hotmail.com)

## QUIZ DATE

The boffins in our midst - FLAG's seen them polishing their pencils at the Black Lion quiz nights - might fancy venturing to Letwell on Saturday February 28. A general knowledge quiz is scheduled at the village hall with the proceeds going towards the purchase of a prize for the summer fayre raffle. Entry is just £6 with pie and peas from Ann Wright included in the cost. Phone 01909 731626 or 540694 for tickets.

## SIGHTINGS AT LAST AFTER 20 YEARS

One or two surprising new arrivals feature in the latest edition of David Wright's popular Nature Report.

I reported my first local area Merlin sighting in the October issue of FLAG. Since then, two Firbeck residents have told me of a Merlin in their gardens. Amazing: nothing for 20 years and then three sightings in a month.

And, it gets better. I'd waited 20 years for my first Golden Plover sighting in the FLAG area, and then, on 2 December, a flock flew over Kid Lane in a northerly direction. This takes my life list of species in the FLAG area to 121.



*Golden Plover*

The Golden Plover is a winter visitor to low-lying fields, having bred in upland moorlands. They can sometimes be seen in flocks of thousands. They're brilliantly-coloured in summer, sporting gold and black plumage. In winter the black is replaced by buff and white. They fly fast, in tight formation, typical of waders. Golden Plover are on the game list, and can be shot between 1 September and 31 January.

An interesting sight, witnessed by several Firbeck residents, has been a Grey Heron standing in local fields. Its choice of position suggests to me that it waits for unsuspecting Red-legged Partridges walking by.

Further good news about Barn Owls. I reported in October FLAG that some have returned to a local site in the FLAG area. Well, it's encouraging to report that there's now a Barn Owl resident in a different part of the FLAG area. Let's hope it attracts a mate. These fabulous birds were wiped-out locally in the severe winter a few years ago, but are gradually returning.

A Firbeck resident was delighted to find a Marsh Tit on feeders in her garden. These lovely, little birds are almost identical to the very-scarce Willow Tit which is in decline for unexplained reasons.

Good numbers of Goldfinches and Pied Wagtails have been attracted to the old airfield, following lifting of sugar beet. I don't understand the significance of this, but it's obviously food-related. Perhaps a reader may have an idea?

A good place to see Tree Sparrows and assorted finches in winter is Kingswood Lane corner, opposite Lingodell, where the road turns to run down to Stone. As I write, I've observed that the Tree Sparrows are back.

## NEWS FROM FIRBECK-CUM-LETWELL WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Happy New Year and let's hope that 2015 will be good for all of us.

In January, Mrs. Maureen Taylor will be in Elizabethan costume and telling us "How the Elizabethans celebrated Christmas". There will be a buffet with hopefully lots of Elizabethan type food. Entrance is free. It will be a fun evening and all are welcome to join us in the merrymaking!

Our AGM is in February and members only are allowed.

We have been planning our varied programme and trips for the coming year and these will be announced later. In the pipeline at the moment, we are holding a Woven Scrap Fabric Bag craft day on 7th February 2015 at Letwell Village Hall between 10.00am and 4.00pm - cost £10 with refreshments provided (please bring own packed lunch). If you are interested in joining us in any of the above events, please contact the president Mrs. Jenny Straw on 01909 730635.

Why not join your local WI? Make new friends, enjoy great outings, listen to interesting speakers and discussions and learn new crafts. We would love to have younger members join us so that we could put their ideas and input into our programmes too. Our meetings are held on the third Thursday in the month and start at 7.30pm and new members and visitors are always very welcome. Anyone wanting further information please contact the Secretary on 01909 540751.

## GILDINGWELLS RE-DISCOVERS ITS VOICE

Villagers at Gildingwells - who have been without a voice since their parish meeting collapsed some time ago - have united in angry opposition to a proposal to site a 65 ft high industrial wind turbine on unspoilt Green Belt land not far from Burrs Lane.

More than 20 objections had been lodged with planners at Rotherham as FLAG went to press - including one from the operators of Robin Hood airport at Finningley. Letwell Parish Council have backed the protests with an objection of their own.

A much-delayed decision on the scheme is due sometime in February.

One villager in Gildingwells told FLAG: "The community hasn't had a voice for quite some time, but this application has brought people together in a way that nothing has for years. There's a feeling now that the parish meeting should be restored to keep everyone in touch with events."

Few people knew about the proposal till a notice went up on a pole on December 16th. A woman living close by said: "It was a real shock. We didn't sleep for two or three nights when we found - we were so upset."

Firbeck Village Hall Management  
Committee Presents

### Winterfest Saturday, 28th February

Performed by  
The Hallam Sinfonia

A selection of classical favourites  
including Leopold Mozart's Toy Symphony

6pm at St Martin's Church  
followed by a pic and pea  
supper in the village hall  
"bring a bottle"

### Tickets

jody 814 606      sue 812 431  
simon 814 471      anita 818 927  
adults £10 children under 10 £6



## THE WHITE DOOR WINS IT!

The 2015 Firbeck calendar has now been distributed. The photographs on each page were all chosen from more than fifty entries, which had been on display during our scarecrow weekend in September. The results of the ballot were close, but the picture receiving the highest number of votes was 'The White Door' taken by Abbie Barker, one of only two junior photographers.

We are hoping for many more entrants next time and several people have already taken advantage of the snowy Christmas to try for the perfect snapshot.

The profit from the sale of the calendars amounted to £140, and was donated to St. Martin's Church.

Thank you to everyone who entered their photographs, took the time to vote and to those who purchased calendars.



*Abbie's winning snap*

Anita Stanton

## CHOIRS ON SONG

Carol singing earned a healthy profit for those venturing out in the cold and wintry weather before Christmas.

Letwell's hardy bunch of regulars earned an outstanding £172 with the money being shared equally between the Salvation Army and the coffers at St. Peter's Church. A great return for a night's work!



*The Carol singers make merry*

Thanks go to Firbeck's Chris and Keith Martin and their friend Glynn for adding to the fun - and hiding the croaky voices - with their musical expertise.

Keith and Chris led the tour of Firbeck as usual on Christmas Eve backed by a large gathering of warmly-clad volunteers. Thanks to the kindly hosts who opened their homes - as well as their larders - to the hungry, thirsty choir.

All the donations - which amounted to £188.50p - went to support the work at Rotherham Hospice.

## NEW FORMAT FOR CHURCH SERVICES

Big changes in the timetable of services at St Martin's Church at Firbeck and St Peter's Church at Letwell have been announced. Coming into force on January 1st the new pattern of worship was prompted by the impending retirement of Rector Rev. Judith Trickett and the news that three other clergy from the Deanery were retiring or moving on in the near future.

In an open letter Judith wrote that it was clear she would not be replaced by a full time priest in view of the fact that the Benefice was small in population terms.

Judith explained: "The Wardens, PCC members and I have looked seriously at a pattern of worship that is practical, manageable and financially viable for the foreseeable future."

Holy Communion services will take place at St. Martin's every second Sunday of the month at 10 am. St. Martin's will host a Service of the Word every fourth Sunday of the month again at 10 am. There will be a service at St. George's Church, Woodsetts, each Sunday at 10.45 am.

The future for St Peter's at Letwell doesn't foresee regular services as such.

Judith says: "St. Peter's will continue to be used for baptisms, weddings and funerals with occasional services according to local needs, e.g. Ash Wednesday, St Peter's Day, Harvest, Carol Service, Christingle etc. The notice board will clearly show details of such events."

Paying tribute to the enthusiasm of the group involved in the annual Letwell street fayre she added: "May I take this opportunity to say 'thank you' to all who worked so hard to organise and support the fayre. It's always such a terrific event, and the finances donated to the church go a long way towards maintaining its fabric and ministry."

Turning to her five years in the parish Judith tells FLAG: "Having always worked in highly populated urban settings it was quite a shock to be invited to minister in the country parishes of Firbeck with Letwell and Woodsetts. It's been a steep 'learning curve', as the saying goes, but on the whole a most enjoyable one.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your warm welcome and continued encouragement during the last five years. Now retirement beckons!

My last Sunday in full time paid ministry will be on 1st March. I will however continue to live in the Rectory at Letwell and, after a two month break, take up part-time duties within the Laughton Deanery. So you will continue to see me round and about, but wearing a different hat.

My retirement also means there will be a change to the worship pattern within the Benefice. Details of that new pattern are elsewhere in FLAG.

Again, with my thanks, and praying God's blessing on all these lovely communities."

Judith



*Retiring Rector Judith*

## "WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE BABY....."

Derek and Enid Bailey talk to FLAG about the joy of the Firbeck Nativity Play...

"Finding the First Christmas' was the title of this year's Nativity Play at St. Martins, Firbeck. We would like to say a big thank you to all those who took part. We had a cast of 36, ranging from two years old to grandparents. There was an amazing response to our invitations to take part but, as always, rehearsals were difficult, and in some cases, impossible to organise. In spite of all the problems our story came to life on the night.

"It was not a 'polished' performance but it had spontaneity! The children were wonderful and special mentions must be made of Matthew Ainsley who played Dr. Who and his two passengers in the Tardis, Thomas and Martin Ellis. Joe Lalley was the little shepherd boy left behind to look after the sheep. These four boys showed real talent and remembered their parts very well.

"We would like to thank the many people who helped with our production. It was encouraging to have offers from some of our young people to help with the writing of the script. This bodes well for the future. Andrew Willey wrote the scene from St. Matthew's Gospel, including five excellent character speeches. Alex Sigsworth co-wrote the main framework with Enid. As a Dr. Who fanatic who hopes eventually to write for his living, he was of invaluable assistance.



"Thanks also to Simon Copley for our 'Star-Gazing Live' scene. Simon as Patrick Moore, complete with monocle and Jody Beighton as Brian Cox were very convincing - which is more than can be said for their wigs!

"Peter Whilie gave us his great expertise in music and sound effects. Simon and Sarah Ainsley's provision of a Tardis with a blue flashing light gave a touch of real theatre. Its appearance, together with the dramatic music brought a gasp from the audience.

Thanks also to Rae Ainsley for new costumes and to those who lent costumes too.

"We very much appreciated the loan of the Village Hall staging and the efforts of Chris and Anita Stanton in putting it together for a rehearsal and again for the performance. Chris Oakley also gave time to help with the staging.

"Thank you to Anthea France for the sensitive way she always plays the piano when the youngest children sing. They gave us our traditional Nativity at the beginning. Thank you to all the parents and grandparents who brought the children to practices on dark, cold nights after school.

"Thank you to Freda Bannister for arranging our Crib so beautifully. Enid will never forget the moment when the little Shepherd boy turned to the audience, stretched out his arms and said, "Would YOU like to see the baby?" There was a resounding "Yes!"

"That is the real meaning of Christmas."



## NEWS FROM FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL

The Parish Council meeting was held on the 26th November. Members considered and approved the budget for 2015-16. It was agreed that there would be a specific budget for village maintenance but that the grant for the Village Hall and miscellaneous administrative costs would be cut. The precept was therefore set at £7,850.00

Members were provided with an update from RMBC regarding road markings on New Road and additional bridge signage. It was noted that some road markings had been undertaken but it was unclear if these were complete. RMBC had further advised that there were strict criteria for the provision of signage relating to the bridge.

In light of these developments the Parish Council is seeking further clarification from the Borough Council, together with a site meeting to discuss the Parish Council's requests for traffic calming measures.

The Parish Council also funded the clearance of drains on Lime Avenue and street sweeping in the village, which went ahead in December, due to a lack of resources being allocated by RMBC to provide these services.

Arrangements for the village Christmas tree were approved. Thanks are given to Councillor Julie Dunker and those members of the public who gave their time voluntarily to help install the tree and ensure it was a great success this year.

Designation of parts of the village as a conservation area was raised again at the November meeting. The Parish Council had been advised that residents would receive correspondence from RMBC in the week commencing 30th November which would include a map of affected properties, a questionnaire to enable residents to comment and details of what designation would mean in terms of restrictions to further development.

Unfortunately despite the above no progress appears to have been made to date and the Parish Council is therefore pressing for clarification as to which residents will be consulted and when this will now occur. All documents relating to the designation will be put on the local and parish council websites when finalised.

The next Parish Council meetings are on the 21st January and 25th March 2015

## FROM THE POPPY APPEAL ORGANISER

The 2014 Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal ended on November 11th and in Woodsetts District, which also includes Firbeck, Gildingwells and Letwell, we collected £2471.98, up 30% on last year and a new record. Thank you to individuals who gave so generously via collecting boxes and also to organisations, including Parish and Parochial Church Councils, Scouts, Brownies and the Lindrick Golf Club, which made donations. Many thanks to our 14 volunteer door to door collectors and to our local school, Church, pubs, clubs, shops and other organisations for providing 9 static collection locations. Over the past two or three years many of our very long serving collectors have retired and it is very satisfying that new collectors have come forward to fill the breach and have been active this year.

Chris Stanton

## EURO SONG GIRL RETURNS

It was regarded by most people as one of the best shows ever at Letwell. Lindsay Dracass blew away the audience with her extra-ordinary performance in May 2012. Several regulars posted notices on the Internet raving about the range of Lindsay's voice and the sheer quality of her music. One critic summed it perfectly in a few words saying: "What a performance ...it was a privilege to be there."

Lindsey, who represented Britain in the European Song Contest as a 15 year old back in 2001, returns to Letwell on Saturday January 31st having spent recent years touring the world with Paul Carrack and his famous band.

The Sheffield girl, who has worked with Jools Holland, Bob Geldof and Tony Hadley, among many big names, will be presenting a range of great classic material from artists such as Adele to Bonnie Raitt and Kirsty MacColl, and will also showcase tracks penned with guitarist Cary Baylis - who features on the bill with Letwell's favourite Canadian keyboards player Lewis Nitikman.

Cary - who plays with Sheffield band The Acoustic Angels - has collaborated with legendary bands such as Take That and The Spice Girls during a glittering career.

Tickets for this outstanding show are selling very fast. Please book early. Call Martyn and Andy on 01909 731626 or 540694 for availability.

One of Britain's finest young bands - who serve up an intriguing mix of American bluegrass, folk and country - are heading for Letwell on Saturday March 7th. The Jaywalkers feature Mike Giverin on mandolin/guitar with Lucy Williams on bass and Jay Bradberry playing the fiddle. All three harmonise on vocals.

The band were BBC Young Folk Award finalists in 2010, and went on to win third place in the European Bluegrass festival in Holland in 2012. Critics have praised their quality of their performances. Maverick Magazine didn't hold back: "Astounding abilities and proficient talents," they said, "the chemistry between them is electrifying...they show the world being young holds no boundaries."

Spiral Earth said: "An addictive mix of equal parts folk and bluegrass. Refreshingly different, and not be missed."

Listen to the band at [www.jaywalkers.co.uk](http://www.jaywalkers.co.uk)

Tickets from the usual two numbers.



## SWORD DANCING AT FIRBECK

Did you know that Firbeck once boasted a boys under 16 sword dancing team? FLAG only found out when one of Firbeck morris man Alan Simpson's pals unearthed a newspaper cutting reporting that the lads had been placed second in a competition at Doncaster. It all happened way back in March 1928 .....is there anyone out there who knows more??

## LETWELL JOINS THE GREAT EXPERIMENT

Letwell has signed up to take part in the Great British Elm Experiment with a young sapling being planted in St Peter's churchyard as part of the project.

Several decades after Dutch Elm Disease wiped out over 25 million trees in the UK the Conservation Foundation is attempting to unlock the mystery of why some trees have survived.

St. Peter's has been given a special tree - individually named - which has been propagated from cuttings taken from parent trees. These parent trees appear to have withstood Dutch Elm disease for over 60 years.

Our sapling has been registered on the 'elm map' and will be monitored over the next 20 years or more. Hopefully, in years to come we could provide cuttings which could form another chapter of the Great British Elm story.

Nicky Blyth

## DAVE REIGNS

The Riff Reign album - featuring Firbeck's resident rocker and FLAG nature writer David Wright on bass guitar - is now out with all proceeds from the sale going to the British Trust for Ornithology's House Martin Appeal. Donations had reached £140 as FLAG was published.

Firbeck's Keith Martin also features on the album on mandolin and melodeon. The line up was completed with James Bennet on keyboards, Peter Courcey, percussion and vocals and Richard Nettleship, guitars/vocals.

All the material for the album - which runs for 43 minutes - was written by David and recorded at a studio in Retford.

Priced at just £5, the album is available from David on 01709 813360 or via [davidandgwenneth@gmail.com](mailto:davidandgwenneth@gmail.com)

## MINE'S A CIDER

It could be the toast of Gildingwells - Ken Goodall is anxiously awaiting his first glass of home-grown cider.

Ken splashed out on a cider press to deal with the harvest from the 100 apple trees in his garden.

He's playing a waiting game at the moment while the brew - made up of 80 per cent dessert and 20 per cent cooking apples - matures.

"It's supposed to be the ideal combination of apples. I tasted it after a couple of weeks and it wasn't great, but a couple of months later it was quite nice. Either way I'm not going to rush into drinking it - waiting is the key and it'll get better...."



## SPORTING TIMES

Letwell's Kath Woodward talks to FLAG about the challenge of curating a prestigious exhibition at the Olympic Museum in Switzerland - and argues that time is the factor that makes sport so compelling to watch.

"I was asked to curate an exhibition at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, after publishing Sporting Times, written during the London Olympics in 2012. This was a wonderful opportunity. Time matters in sport. It's what makes it so exciting; setting targets for going faster and beating the clock. Time makes memories, histories and the stories which make sport spectacular.

"The exhibition takes you through the cyclical time of the Ancient Games, ruled by the seasons and day and night, through early attempts at measurement, laboratory time, chronometers and stop watches into contemporary devices that can measure a 100th of a second and future time.

"To get the feel of time we use films, interactive activities and recordings of athletes. (Usain Bolt only slows down more slowly than all the others in the 100m, even though we spectators think he speeds up; he can split 9.58 seconds into sections too, as well as being 'lost in time'). Installations to replicate spectator time, athletes' time, training, leading up to the event, post event, review times as well as getting into 'the zone'.

"The measurement of time and the impact of the photo finish are central. Omega's technology (no I didn't get given a watch) has become so sophisticated, but human beings can only cope with what they can see in the end. Rules matter; is it the athlete's ski, or foot, or head which decides who's won? Do you beat the clock or the other athletes?"

"Think about cycling or swimming. The exhibition shows that not only has time measurement changed but rules have changed and time is experienced as well as measured. Time is social and in our busy everyday lives we can learn a lot from sporting times.

The exhibition ran from June 5th to January 18th.

More information is available from <http://www.olympic.org/museum/explore/programming/time-and-sport-programme/time-and-sport-programme>



*Images from the Olympic exhibition*