



April 2016

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## TIME TO CELEBRATE

Firbeck and Letwell are getting ready to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday with parties pencilled in for both villages on the weekend of June 11th and 12th.

Firbeck Parish Council are working with the Village Hall Committee to organise a Bring and Share Party on Sunday the 12th. Further details will be announced in due course nearer to the day.

Up the hill at Letwell a Street Party will take place on Saturday the 11th starting at 5 pm. The Village Hall Committee are funding a meal - with cold meats and a veggie option available. Family and friends are welcome to join in, but villagers **MUST** fill in the booking form when it's delivered round the village to ensure food's available on the day. A trio, fronted by Letwell's Roger Brooks, will provide the music.

Firbeck cum Letwell WI are also celebrating too - with a party on June 16th to mark the 70th anniversary of the group's formation way back in 1946.

Read more about the history of the Firbeck and Letwell ladies inside FLAG.



*Homes Taking Shape Beside the Black Lion*

## FIRBECK PARISH COUNCIL - WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY

We welcome Andy Shiel, who was recently co-opted on to Firbeck Parish Council. He is currently liaising with South Yorkshire Ambulance Service working on a scheme to set up a **defibrillator first response group** in Firbeck. This is a long term project but will hopefully benefit residents in the future.

There are currently a number of initiatives strengthening the Parish Council's links with the community and the various organisations within Firbeck. We recently distributed a **questionnaire to every household** in the Firbeck Parish. We received 54 completed questionnaires which will help us to create an action plan for the village. A **Steering Group** comprised of representatives of Firbeck community organisations and some other residents will collate the information and put forward some proposals for the Parish Council to consider. A big thank you to everyone who helped in distributing the questionnaires and to all who took the time to fill them in.

Working with Firbeck Village Hall Committee we are planning a Bring and Share party for the **Queen's 90th birthday**. This will be on Sunday, June 12th and more details will be available nearer the time. The Village Hall Committee are also looking into the feasibility of holding occasional **village markets** and we are working with them on this project.

To help spruce up the village a **Spring Clean** was organized by Cllr. Stanton on April 3 - thanks to all who helped, especially Sharon Collins who baked goodies for all the participants. The Parish Council has now furnished a number of volunteers who have agreed to take responsibility throughout the year with the appropriate equipment for litter picking various parts of the village and access roads. If you would like to join this scheme then please contact Cllr. Stanton or Cllr. Jopling.

The Parish Council has had early discussions with the new owner of **Firbeck Hall** and with RMBC planning department to begin to find out what might happen in the future development.

Our thanks go to David Burke who has been working with Cllr. Stanton to find out about the possibility of **superfast broadband** to the village. The news is looking promising, with our phase of the project scheduled for Spring 2017. David's report to the Parish Council meeting on 23 March 2016 will be available on Firbeckonline if you would like more information.

We have made representation to RMBC about the **state of our roads**. Some potholes have been filled in and they are considering the possibility of resurfacing New Road in the future-fingers crossed. Pot holes can easily be reported on the RMBC website so the more residents who do this the better.

A number of residents have mentioned about **parking on the verges** of New Road and even on the pavement/grass in some areas. We would respectfully ask people to park on the side of the road instead please, though trying not to block people getting in and out of their drives. Parking on the side of the road is a very good way of slowing down through traffic.

**Our mobile library**, which comes to Firbeck between 10 and 11 every Thursday morning, is under threat. There is a consultation process currently underway which finishes on June 13. Please give your views on [www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries) or pick up a consultation sheet on the mobile library. Once this service goes it will never be replaced, to the detriment of the community of Firbeck people who

## CONTINUED...

regularly use the bus to meet, chat, choose and order books as well as using the expert knowledge provided by the librarians. Firbeck Readers Group always get their readers sets through this facility. I, for one, would miss the mobile library and am conscious that, as I get older, I will find it more difficult to get to Maltby library especially as there are no longer buses going in that direction.



*Big Firbeck Clean Up Underway*

You can now find out which councillor to contact about various Parish Council matters by going to the Parish Council website or Firbeckonline and looking at the document “**Roles and Responsibilities**”.

### **Dates of next meetings:**

**Annual Parish Council Meeting:** Wednesday, May 18 at 7.00 in Firbeck Village Hall

**Annual Parish Meeting:** Thursday, May 26 at 7.00 in Firbeck Village Hall. This is not a meeting of the Parish

Council but an opportunity for you to come along and have your say.

**Cllr. Wendy Hamilton**

## MARATHON TREK FUELLED BY LUCOZADE & CHOCOLATE BARS

James Moore walked all the way from Hemel Hempstead to Letwell to say thank you to the British Red Cross for helping his grandparents in their old age.

James - Letwell farmer Andrew Moore's nephew - raised £2000 for the charity with him and best pal Gary Allen completing a marathon five day trek which took them on the highways and byways via Northampton, Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray and Nottingham.

The pair were intent on repaying the charity for helping out James's grandparents with various walking aids and wheelchairs when they were ill in the later stages of their lives at Moorlands Farm.

The journey wasn't that easy with Gary in particular falling victim to blisters. James, ever resourceful, came to the rescue with a lighter and a penknife. Sounds painful, but it did the trick!

The boys were supported by family and friends throughout the trip. James told FLAG: "My wife works for Lucozade...which was handy as the walk seemed to be powered by Lucozade and Double Decker chocolate bars."



*James and Gary Reach Letwell*

It's not too late to add to the fund. Donations can be made by logging on to <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/jamesandgary>

## FIRBECK WINTERFEST

Prospects for Firbeck Hall continue to appear most encouraging. Our recent constructive meetings with the new owner have included a sight of the planned development. This is essentially a continuation of that already prepared by Building Link Design of Doncaster for the previous owner.

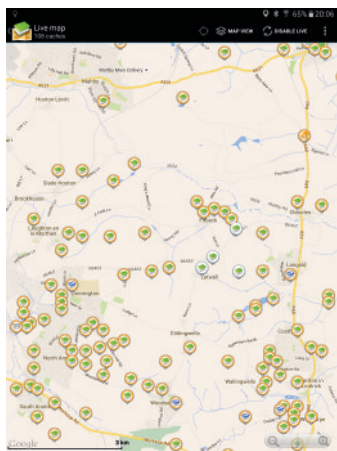
The project is at an advanced stage leading to the submission of a full planning application to RMBC who appear to be generally in favour. It is currently undergoing a comprehensive review by the District Valuer relative to the requirements of Section 106. This will determine a viable economic plan for the funding of the scheme which obviously includes repair and restoration of both the Hall and the stable-block.

All of which is a long and complicated process; but we will endeavour to keep in close contact with both the owner and RMBC and to keep all of our 'Friends' informed. Hopefully this will lead, in due course, to an open meeting when the full details of the planned development can be presented to the local community.

Interest in Firbeck Hall continues to grow and the Friends of Firbeck Hall now number over 500. If you would like to support us; if you are interested in the history of the Hall and Firbeck's past; if want to receive our Newsletters, regular updates and information; - please contact our membership-secretary; - email [friends@firbeckhall.net](mailto:friends@firbeckhall.net) or telephone 01909 732191. Subscription fee is only £1.00.

Sid Ellis

## LETWELL'S HIDDEN TREASURE



Letwell's famous telephone box library is attracting international attention on a website dedicated to hunting out hidden treasure. Geocaching, where users search for log books hidden across the UK's countryside, has come to the village. It's not thought anyone in Letwell knows a tiny log book is hidden in the phone box - but users from far and wide have been using GPS to locate the book, then quietly signing their names. The site - known as 'The Little Red Book Store' on the site - is particularly well hidden. One wrote: "Neat little cache in a well-stocked library. A brilliant idea for a disused phone box." While another - known as Mr Jonesy - wrote: "Lovely little village. Great book shop cache." People who don't use the geocaching website are known as 'muggles' (a phrase for non-wizards from the Harry Potter books), and it seems some local muggles have been spotted by those searching for Letwell's 'cache'. One user wrote:

"Some painters were working on a house 100 yards away. They immediately stared at me. However I decided that because of the nature of the phone box library I was safe to go and search. Checked a variety of possible hiding places before I located the cache."

Nick Sharpe



## WHAT'S BIG AND GREEN - AND KEEPS FALLING OVER

Those big green school buses which travel up and down Lamb Lane on a daily bus during term time seem to have developed an unfortunate habit of falling over in high winds.

Readers may recall one of the giant vehicles coming to grief on an exposed stretch of the road as it headed towards Throapham three or four years ago.

The empty bus ended up on its side in the field close to the junction with Leys Lane. Thankfully the driver escaped without injury.

In the most recent incident another bus - this time heading towards Oldcotes - left the carriageway on a straight section of the road just beyond the junction with Penny Hill. The vehicle keeled over into the adjoining field smashing a huge hole in the well established hedgerow. The police had to close the road while a crane was brought in to rescue the bus.

Take care next time you see a big green bus heading towards you on a windy day!

## FUN AT THE FAYRE

All the usual fun and games - plus one or two new attractions - are already lined up for Letwell's famous street fayre due to be held this year on the afternoon of Saturday July 2nd.

The traditional favourites, among them the Thurcroft Brass Band together with the coconut shy, pot smashing and splat the rat, will be there as ever with birds of prey on show for the first time. An exhibition of free flying will take place, weather permitting, on the village street.

Heartsease Country Dancing Team, who made their debut at the show last year, are hoping to return accompanied by the Jolly Beggars folk group. Members of the WI will be serving home made teas in the village hall throughout the afternoon.

There will be a bouncy castle and penalty shoot in game for the children and the police and fire brigade will be displaying patrol cars and fire engines too. Scalextric car racing has been added to the programme.

Organisers are short of volunteers to help out on the day. Phone Robin on 730351 if you can help.

Villagers are being urged to bake cakes and buns for the event. Home made jams, chutneys and garden produce is also being sought too.

A member of the committee said: "You can never have enough home made cakes and buns. People come from far and wide to buy them - the only problem is that our supply never quite meets the demand.

"We're hopeful this year that everyone will do their bit to make the fayre extra special."

Villagers are being asked to deliver home made produce to the village hall on the morning of the show. Volunteers able to help set up the stalls should report to the hall at 9 am.

All the proceeds from the fayre go to support St. Peter's Church.

## FIRBECK SEED BANK

It is that lovely time of year again when our gardens start to spring into life. It is a great time to be thinking about growing flowers, fruit and vegetables. There are lots of packets of seeds in the telephone box in Firbeck which were kindly donated by the Northern Garden Centre at Oldcotes. Please help yourselves to these and return any part packets if you don't use them all.

If you are buying seeds and have any spare please donate them to the seed bank so others can share them. If you are clearing out your sheds and greenhouses and find unwanted seeds please donate those. Alternatively if you gather any seeds from your garden these would be very welcome. Either put your spare seeds in their packets into the telephone box or put them into a small packet with details of what they are and how to plant them.

Happy growing and sharing!

Wendy Hamilton



*Seed Bank*

## WANTED: NATIVE SAPLINGS FOR WOOD

The first stage of a tree replacement project has been completed at Seed Hill which is a privately owned wood at Stone. The saplings were provided under a programme initiated by the Woodlands Trust. This aims to establish a wider variety of native trees in woods dominated by ash and sycamore which are likely to be adversely affected by Ash Die-Back.

Cases of the virus have been reported in the Worksop and Rotherham areas according to the DEFRA website though none in the immediate locality. The varieties planted were English oak, hornbeam and silver birch. A second stage was being undertaken in March with other varieties of native broadleaf trees.

Any donation of native saplings for the woods would be gratefully received to augment those provided by the Woodlands Trust. Contact Nicky Blyth - 01909 730217.

## KIKI'S SHOW IS A SELL OUT

Letwell's venture into the musical big time has paid off with tickets for Kiki Dee's show selling out within days of them going on sale.

Not even the necessary price hike - from the usual £12 to £24 - deterred any of the regulars who have supported Letwell music again and again for the past 10 years or so.

The few remaining tickets were snapped up almost immediately by fans only too happy to journey 50 or 60 miles to see Kiki - remembered by everyone for her duet with Elton John Don't Go Breaking My Heart.

Preparations for the event on Friday April 22nd were going ahead as FLAG went to press with organisers bringing in specialist sound engineers to fine tune the acoustics at the hall.

Ticket holders are reminded that Kiki's show with Italian guitarist and tour partner Carmelo Luggeri starts at 8 pm - half an hour earlier than usual. Doors will open at 7.30 pm.

Firm Letwell favourite John Reilly, the voice of Sheffield band Boy On A Dolphin, returns with Canadian keyboards player and song-writing partner Lewis Nitikman on Saturday May 28th for an evening of original music - featuring many of the tracks which have won rave reviews on Radio 2.



*John Reilly and Lewis Nitikman*

Big name presenters have queued up to praise latest album Zebulon.

Paul O'Grady said: "Fantastic album. Brilliant voice. Out of 5 I'd give it 10!" Graham Norton said of John: "I've simply got to see him live..." Aled Jones was just as enthusiastic about the pair's single release Not Alone saying: "What a stunning, moving song..."

Tickets are available from Martyn and Andy on 01909 731626 or 540694 priced £12. Please book early to avoid missing out.

Letwell's annual Dolphin-fest continues at the end of June with the band - which has filled Sheffield City Hall on nine occasions in the recent past - appearing on two successive nights Tuesday and Wednesday the 28th and 29th.

Tickets for Boy On A Dolphin are available from the same two numbers.

Check out the music at [www.flippermusic.com](http://www.flippermusic.com) and [www.johnreilly.org](http://www.johnreilly.org)

## IF YOU GO DOWN IN THE WOODS TODAY...

....you're sure of a big surprise (as the song goes) particularly in Ivy Lodge Plantation at the top of Ivy Lodge Lane, and its no teddy bear's picnic.

There has been a spate of wilful damage recently to numerous trees including many established Yews.



Someone is using a chainsaw to randomly cut off branches along the edge of the permissive footpath. It would appear this is being done to clear the way for horse riders who use this path on a daily basis instead of using the permissive bridleway at the top end of the wood.

And, curiously, someone has taken to 'adorning' one of the Yews with strange unpleasant objects using plastic cable ties. These 'decorations' include fragments of bone, a chimpanzee and other assorted bizarre items. FLAG has had reports from walkers and families who find this upsetting and that these objects are frightening children. They may also be a threat to wildlife.



It is believed this ancient woodland - midway between Letwell and Firbeck - dates back to the time of the first St Leger in 1775 as the trees follow the line of the Oval Field – it may even date back to the 1600's. The wood is in private ownership and both the footpath and bridleway are accessed permissively.

### *Ivy Lodge Wood Under Attack*

The Rotherham MBC Tree Service Manager told FLAG that the whole wood including small seedlings is protected (W3 of Tree

Preservation Order No 5 1977) and that consent is required from the Local Planning Authority (LPA), not to mention the owner, to carry out any work to the trees within the woodlands, including any cutting, pruning, felling, lopping, topping or uprooting. It is also a designated Local Wildlife Site.

Anyone responsible for vandalising or damaging the trees in any way will be liable to a minimum fine of £20,000. FLAG understands that the current damage and hanging 'decorations' have been reported to RMBC and the LPA Enforcement Officer is taking investigative action in discussion with the owner, who would be within their rights to restrict access to the public due to this inconsiderate behaviour.

There are many local people who enjoy walking through this beautiful ancient woodland which has remained undisturbed for over 50 years. It would be a shame if the actions of a few individuals led to the wood being closed to the public.

Anyone spotting any untoward activity should report it to Chris Wilkins at RMBC by email with photos if possible: [chris.wilkins@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:chris.wilkins@rotherham.gov.uk)

If you walk regularly through the wood and wish to register an interest in the footpath then contact Chris Hayes, Rights of Way Officer at RMBC at [christian.hayes@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:christian.hayes@rotherham.gov.uk)



## FIRBECK WINTERFEST

This year's Winterfest was a resounding success. Performed by the Hallam Sinfonia and conducted by George Morton, the programme opened with the Capriol Suite composed by George Morton and based on Elizabethan dances.

This was a lively and vibrant piece which demonstrated the impressive abilities of the musicians. We were treated to a wonderfully diverse programme - the theme being loosely connected to Shakespeare.

Vaughan Williams "Fantasia on Greensleeves" was enhanced by being interwoven with a second tune Lovely Joan. Did Henry V 111 really write this tune? Do choirs still include the song in their repertoire?

Next came a dance composed by Purcell from the opera The Faerie Queen. Then in Vivaldi's concerto for two trumpets the string group was joined trumpeters and their vibrant sound filled the church. It was splendid!

The final piece was originally created by Gustav Holst for the St Paul's Suite for St Paul's Girls' School. The orchestra stood to perform this fast and exciting piece. The players were almost dancing as, with great skill, rhythm and enthusiasm, they brought the concert to an exciting end with a flourish of their bows. The applause was long and appreciative.

At the Black Lion the party spirit continued as we were served pie, chips and mushy peas with a choice of lemon meringue pie or fruit crumble to follow. It was delicious.

This Winterfest was truly a bright spot after some dreary weather. It lifted our spirits.

Derek Bailey

## WHO'S EATEN ALL THE PIES AT EATON'S

The best brains in Letwell gathered at the village hall for a quiz night with the Rev Jackie Lydgate's bunch of eggheads claiming victory.

Most of the numpties on FLAG's table admitted they were only there for the pie and peas - not from Ann Wright's kitchen this time round. With the Carlton cook busy feeding visitors at the Hodsock snowdrop festival the grub came from Eaton's little butcher's shop at Tickhill. And delicious it was too.

FLAG doesn't do adverts, but that man certainly knows how to put a smile on a numpty's face!!

The quiz itself raised over £300 to offset the running costs of the summer fayre.

Many thanks go to ace quizmaster Adrian Parkinson for taxing the Letwell brain cells.



*Eggheads at Work*

## MAKEOVER FOR LAMB LANE

Good news for motorists weary of trying to dodge the craters on Lamb Lane.

The carriageway close to Salt Hill - which has just become one big pothole in recent times - is to be completely re-surfaced by RMBC in the month of May.

FLAG understands that the highway will get a make-over all the way from Salt Hill to the county boundary beyond Haven Farm. Streetpride tells us that the work should take around three weeks. They're hoping to restrict disruption to a minimum.

Streetpride has promised that a section of the road at the junction of Kidd Lane and Lamb Lane - which somehow missed out last year - will definitely get a new layer of tarmac this time round.

Regular users of the road will be mightily relieved once the work is complete.

One couple at Letwell's Galley Knight estate have been hit three times by oncoming vehicles in recent weeks - all of them trying to avoid the worst of the potholes by travelling on the wrong side of the white line.

The husband's car survived without any damage, but his wife's BMW ended up "looking a real mess" after it was struck by a white van "going hell for leather trying to dodge the holes in the road."

The wing mirror, as well as the door and wing panels, were all badly damaged in the crash. The repairs cost £1700 to put right.

The husband told FLAG: "We can't wait for the road to be re-surfaced. It's just got worse and worse. The worst bend is just one big pothole, and anyone who hits it at speed can find themselves in big trouble."

## RAISING FUNDS FOR THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Volunteers and fundraisers have been transforming young lives since 1881. Today, thanks to amazing people, The Children's Society are able to help thousands of children escape the devastating cycle of neglect, abuse and violence. Last year, their services directly helped over 34,000 children and young people, bringing life-changing support to almost two million, giving vulnerable children up and down the country the hope of a brighter future. In Woodsetts, Letwell, Gildingwells and Firbeck, kind people have had small money boxes at home or places of social gatherings, collecting loose change from friends & family since 1987 raising thousands of pounds. We are appealing for anyone who wishes to have one of our boxes for a year just collecting spare change from close relatives and friends. (The money boxes are not to be used calling from door to door as this is not the company's intention). The box will be collected from your home address, the monies counted by us, then issued with a certificate of confirmation of the money box value and then it's your decision if you wish to carry on for a further year.

If this is of interest to you or require further information, please contact : Wendy Bourne, The Children's Society Money Box Co-ordinator, Keeper's Cottage, 79, New Rd, Firbeck S81 8JY. Tel: 01709 819620

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE WI

Firbeck cum Letwell WI are celebrating their 70th birthday with a night of burgers and beer at Letwell Village Hall on June 16th. Curious about the history of the group, FLAG delved into the records carefully put together by Valerie Oxley - and was fascinated by the detail contained therein .

Yes, times may have changed, but the WI's founding principles seem to ring true even in today's hi-tech world. Back in 1946 our local womenfolk, headed by Lady Matthews of Letwell, were busy campaigning about the closure of village post offices, and the need for well equipped village halls to use as meeting places. On another front they were also fighting for the "provision of a bus service to take country people to the town.." All sounds very familiar doesn't it?

The first meeting was held at Four Lane Ends in Firbeck, and featured a competition for a posy in an egg cup which was won by Mrs.Needham of Letwell. The meeting closed with the singing of God Save the King.

At another gathering soon afterwards there was a draw for a pair of silk stockings - a real luxury then - which the records note had rather mysteriously been "brought from Switzerland." There was a raffle for a dozen eggs, Royal tea parties for the Firbeck children at the airfield NAAFI, and guest speakers calling in to talk about How To Make the Most of One's Rations and the work of the District Nurses.

The Firbeck NAAFI's long gone and so have the Ration Books - but the WI's still going strong! Congratulations to the ladies of the Firbeck cum Letwell branch...and keep up the good work.

Just for the record the next meeting takes place on April 21st at Firbeck Village Hall. TV Gardener Rob Scott, one of the stars of the BBC series The Big Allotment Challenge, will give a talk titled Growing Success at 7.30 pm.

## PLANNERS SAY NO TO LETWELL SCHEME

Rotherham's planning board have rejected an application to build a large agricultural storage building on land beside Ramper Road at Letwell.

Fourteen villagers, supported by the parish council, spoke out against the proposal at the board's meeting at Rotherham Town Hall on March 31st.

The councillors, who had visited the site and toured the village earlier in the day, ultimately voted against the scheme by a unanimous margin of 9 to none ruling that the building would impact negatively on the main approach to the Conservation Area, and affect the setting of the listed properties close to the site at North Farm.

The board also ruled that the open fronted shed would damage the setting of St Peter's Church which dates back to the 15th Century and is protected by a rare and prestigious Grade 2 Star Listing.

## BUY AN ALBUM - AND HELP THE FARMLAND BIRD APPEAL

There's been lots of new visitors flying in. And one or two Mink have moved in too. David Wright keeps FLAG up to date with the latest news in his regular Nature Report column....

Bird feeders in a FLAG garden have proved a big success this winter, attracting a variety of species, including Blue Tit, Chaffinch, Coal Tit, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Great Tit, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch, and Long Tailed Tit; plus birds feeding on scraps on the floor, including Blackbird, Collared Dove, Dunnock, Pied Wagtail, Robin and Wood Pigeon. And it gets better: a good number of Siskin have been feeding there all winter, but the stars of the show are a party of Brambling that arrived in late March.

Brambling are winter visitors to the UK from Scandinavia and western Siberia, but they're special because we aren't always fortunate to see them every year. They're similar in size and shape to the Chaffinch, but with a different colouring featuring a lot of orange.

Other nice sightings include an albino Carrion Crow near Red Quarry and an impressive flock of 84 Pink Footed Geese over Firbeck on 27 January. A local gamekeeper has reported confirmed sightings of Mink in the local area.

But the regular, local birds are there for us as well, and a Firbeck resident recently told me of the great pleasure she gets from seeing the Song Thrushes in her garden. And on the theme of local birds, it's great to see the results of the RSPB Big Garden Watch, which confirm the presence in our gardens of good numbers of House Sparrows and Starlings. These two species haven't done well in recent years.

And on to the selling! Last year my band, Riff Reign, released its first album. I sold copies in the FLAG area for £5 each, and donated the whole proceeds to research being carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology into House Martin decline. We raised £150. It worked! For the first time in 12 years, House Martins nested at a Firbeck residence. Not just a nest, but four nests. One was taken over by House Sparrows, but the other three successfully raised young. Riff Reign's second album is released in April, and I will be repeating the exercise, so if anyone would like to purchase a copy, please say so. This year I'll be donating the proceeds to the Farmland Bird Appeal, which is looking into the reasons for decline of birds such as Skylark.

David Wright - 01709 813360

davidandgwenneth@gmail.com

## WELL DONE

Those hard working women from the Roche Valley branch of the Yorkshire Countrywomen's Association raised £840 with a Valentine's Dance at Firbeck Village Hall. The proceeds went to the Teenage Cancer Trust and Rothercare. The ladies have raised a grand total of £9601 since they set to work three years ago with cancer charities benefitting from their initiative. The group is hosting a Coffee Morning at the Village Hall on Saturday May 7th starting at 10.30 am. Delicious home-made cakes and buns will be on sale. There will also be soft furnishing and plant stalls to view.