



Friends of Firbeck Hall

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 17, Autumn 2013

Committee Report

On July 10th 2013, a presentation by Chris Jubb of the architects, Building Link Design was given in the Black Lion Inn, Firbeck on behalf of the owner of the Firbeck Hall estate, Jason Cooper. The meeting took the form of a PowerPoint presentation, which can be viewed, with permission of Jason Cooper, on our website at www.firbeckhall.net. Questions were taken at the meeting and village residents were able to express their concerns about the proposed designs and possible impact on the village and the community. At the end of the meeting village residents were invited to fill in a questionnaire compiled by Building Link Design about the proposed development.

Following the presentation we had a further meeting with Rotherham Borough Council's Planning Department. A frank and open discussion took place and we were able to voice some of the concerns that had arisen at the meeting in the village. We also raised concerns that the new builds would be built first and the Hall would not be restored, however we have been assured by the planning department that there would be a legal agreement in place to ensure that the Hall would be restored, to a minimum of a new roof and weather proofing, before any new build was constructed.

We expressed concern about the condition of West Lodge and lack of visible progress, particularly as there is now permission in place for extension and repairs. The Planners stated they would raise this concern with the owner.

The Planners again stressed that Green Belt regulations would be strictly enforced and that any new development at Firbeck Hall could only be allowed on the 'brown-field' site behind the

Hall; i.e. land previously developed in the 19th & 20th centuries. The area concerned is already screened by trees and the rest of the grounds should be unaffected. Further issues concerning the village will be taken up by Firbeck Parish Council.

On another matter, the Friends Group was dismayed to receive an email from Firbeck Parish Council questioning the legality of the Group. The Parish Council had sought the advice of the Director of the Legal Department at Rotherham Borough Council, and as a result barred the Group from speaking at Parish Council Meetings.

The Friends Group sought advice on the matter and with a supporting letter from the Rotherham District Civic Society, and various other documents, wrote to RMBC Legal Department. They replied that they were only acting on information from Firbeck Parish Council and if we let the PC know who we were, all would be resolved. They were astounded to hear we were a village organisation, and the Chairman of the Parish Council was a member.

On 25th September the Friends Group attended a Parish Council meeting and read out a statement to the effect that RMBC agree that "we are who we say we are" Hopefully that will be the end of the matter.

On a happier note, the Friends Group have given a second Powerpoint presentation on the Journal of Amelia Staniforth, who lived at Firbeck Hall in the Eighteenth Century. This time it was to Maltby Local History Society, there are six more local bookings throughout 2013 and 2014, don't miss it!

Two slides from the presentation for our members who are not on the internet.

FIRBECK HALL ESTATE



FIRBECK HALL OUTLINE PLANS

BROWNFIELD SITE
REAR OF FIRBECK HALL
36 TOWN HOUSES

CONVERT FIRBECK HALL TO 21 APARTMENTS

STABLE BLOCK DEVELOPMENT



36 Townhouses in Total

Scale 1:500@A3
SKETCH PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT 9D

Grantham Races

By Valerie Oxley



Internet image

In May 1782 Amelia and Henrietta Staniforth travelled to the races in Lincolnshire. It is well documented in Amelia's Journal and was very much a social event, but until recently we have been unable to locate the racecourse they visited. A visit to Belvoir Castle and subsequent correspondence with the Duke of Rutland's archivist has given us not only the racecourse but a link to the racecourse historian, John Slusar. The racecourse is now closed, but John has given us the names of the horses who won the races on the dates the sisters visited.

From the Duke's archivist we think it likely that the racecourse they visited was at Harrowby Fields, where the Grantham Stakes and Rutland Stakes were run for. The reasoning is that the Staniforth sisters were staying within walking distance of both Belton House and of the Grantham Assembly Rooms, and that their chaise drives to the races sometimes took them via Ponton. A secondary source also confirms the dates given in their journal: the Grantham Stakes and Rutland Stakes took place between 18th and 20th June 1782.

From the Journal:-

Tuesday May 7th 1782

Morning soon after nine Henrietta and Amelia set out to Grantham, George Lambert (*coachman*) with them to Worksop from there sent a pair of horses home and took a pair of post horses. Set out at eleven, got to Allerton (*Ollerton*) 14 minutes before one, just went in there while the horses eat hay – got to Newark ¼ after three, dined there and changed horses, set out from there before six and got to Grantham soon after eight, Mrs Slater (early) had dined with Mrs Forster, she went before seven.

Wednesday June 19 1782

At six Mrs Forster and Henrietta went in the Chaise by Ponton to the Race ground, and saw the horses run the heat.

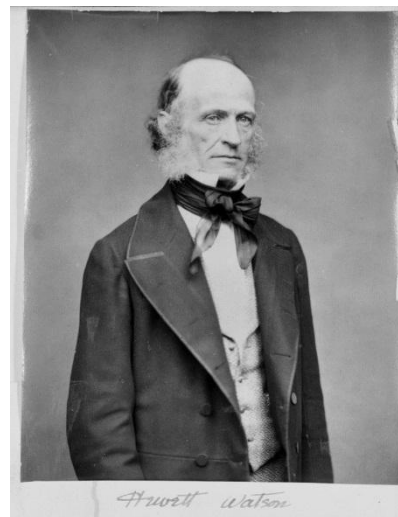
Thursday 20th June 1782

Afternoon – ½ past four Henrietta and Amelia went in the Chaise the nearest way to the race ground, a very little Race came away at eight by way of Ponton.

Amelia was 60 years old in 1782 and her sister Henrietta a little older.

It is interesting to learn that the local patrons of the races included the Duke of Rutland, Lord Scarborough, Lord Manners, Lord Rockingham and Sir Thomas Dundas.

Hewett Cottrell Watson



© Natural History Museum

Last September the Friends organised the unveiling of a Blue Plaque in the village to the botanist Hewett Cottrell Watson who was born at Park Hill, Firbeck in 1804.

You will be interested to hear that photos of the plaque, Park Hill House and Watson himself have been requested for their Archives by the Curators of the University of Cambridge Botanic Garden Herbarium, the Manchester Museum Herbarium and the Fielding Druce Herbarium, in the Plant Science Department at the University of Oxford, all Institutions where his pressed specimens are lodged. George Claridge Druce based his *Comital Flora* on Watson's *Topographical Botany*.

Frances and Maria Jacson The Tale of Two Sisters:

Researched by Julia Colver, Valerie Oxley

In 1808 the Rev Simon Jacson died, leaving his two unmarried daughters Frances and Maria without a home, they went to stay with their brother Roger but his second wife made them feel unwelcome and they began to look for lodgings elsewhere. For sixteen months they stayed with relatives or friends. One such relative was Henry Gally Knight (1752 – 1808) of Langold and Firbeck, the son of Dr Henry Gally and Elizabeth Knight.



Selina Gally Knight Internet image

Henry Gally Knight was married to Selina Fitzherbert (1751 – 1823) the daughter of William Fitzherbert of Tissington Hall and sister of Sir William Fitzherbert 1st Bart. and Alleyn, Lord St Helen's. Frances and Maria's father was married to Anne Fitzherbert the elder daughter of Richard Fitzherbert of Somersal in Derbyshire.

Frances and Maria Jacson stayed firstly at Langold but were then given Firbeck Hall to live in until eventually a home was found for them by Lord St Helens. In 1809 they moved into Somersal Herbert where they lived for the rest of their lives.

As we have become aware, Firbeck Hall has a colourful and vibrant history. The two Jacson sisters who lodged at Firbeck Hall for some time are no exception.

Frances Margaretta Jacson (1754 – 1842) was a novelist of some merit. Her sister Maria Elizabeth Jacson (1755 – 1829) published a number of works on botany. Frances was devastated when her sister Maria died, but she resumed her social life and political interests with the help of her favourite nephew, Henry Gally Knight jnr. who had inherited Firbeck Hall from his father.

The sisters turned to writing partly to help their younger brother Shallcross Jacson who was over fond

of drink and horse racing. He went to stay with them at Somersal which caused them some alarm until he was confined for a short time in an asylum near Liverpool. The sisters had each contributed £300 from their writings to fund an insurance which would give him an income, but it was with some relief to the sisters when he died in 1821.

Maria wrote about botany and gardening and Frances wrote novels. As was often the custom of the time the first novels by Frances Jacson appeared anonymously and her novels have been wrongly attributed to various authors over the years. The mystery of the missing novels has been unravelled by Joan Percy in a paper published in 1997 called 'An unrecognized Novelist: Frances Jacson (1754 – 1842)' and available to read online.

The sisters were on the edge of the circle of Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin. Erasmus Darwin supported the botanical writings of Maria Jacson and it was a huge blow to Maria when he died in 1812.

A selection of works by Maria Elizabeth Jacson:

Botanical Dialogues between Hortensis and her Four Children 1797

Botanical Lectures by A Lady 1804

Sketches of the Physiology of Vegetable Life 1811

A Florists Manual, or, Hints for the construction of a Gay Flower Garden 1816

A selection of works by Frances Jacson:

Plain Sense, a Novel, 3 volumes 1795

Disobedience 1797

Things by their Right Names 1812

Rhoda. A Novel 1816

Isabella 1823

Every Day Christianity (a pamphlet) 1816

In 2010 Christies sold a first edition copy of *Plain Sense* by Frances Jacson, it realised £1,125, the estimate was £700 - £1,000.

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