



Friends of Firbeck Hall

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 24, Summer 2016

Chairman's Report

We reported in the last Newsletter that despite lack of physical activity on site at Firbeck Hall, progress is being made behind the scenes. We have heard from RMBC's Planning and Conservation Officer, Matthew Peck, that the proposed scheme for the Hall is reasonable and following some adjustments a full planning application is expected to be submitted later this year.

The local community will be invited to engage in a consultation with the owners about the proposed scheme for Firbeck Hall, and this meeting will take place in the village in the near future.

We also continue to remind RMBC of their responsibilities for Firbeck Hall with regard to the basic structure of the Hall and its listed status. RMBC are obliged to undertake regular inspections of the Hall, and we understand from Mr Peck that an inspection will take place this summer.

Friends will be interested to hear that Mrs Melody Denton (née Nicholson), the granddaughter of Mr Cyril Nicholson, the past owner of Firbeck Hall Country Club,

has kindly given, on long-term loan, a wonderful portrait of her grandfather. We are also grateful for the loan of items of Firbeck Hall Country Club tableware, and the loan of her late mother's scrapbook. The scrapbook has given us an interesting insight into the life at the Hall, during its famous Club days.

We are most grateful Mrs Denton and her family for their kind gifts which will be greatly treasured.



Mr Cyril Nicholson 1887-1955

**Simon Drohan and the FoFH Committee
July 2016**

Miss White's School, Park Hill, Firbeck 1901 by Valerie Oxley



Park Hill before it was demolished in 1935

We know that there was a girls' boarding school at Park Hill, Firbeck, which was the home of John St Leger at the turn of the 20th century. It is thought that that the school was transferred from nearby Maltby Hall. Park Hill may have been rented from John St Leger.

The 1901 census return confirms a school did exist and we thought you would be interested read about the people who resided there.

Mary White aged 40 in 1901 was the Principal of the school, she was born in Doncaster. A lady listed as a border was Ellen White aged 70, and it could be safely assumed she was Mary White's mother. The matron was Anna Lundtan aged 26 from Norway. The art mistress was Sophia Amsturter, aged 32 from India. There were three other Governesses/teachers Lea Vemdeville from Austria, Nellie Morrison from Scotland and Madeleine Landgent from Brighton.

There were eight domestic servants, one of whom was from Ireland and another from Denmark. The cook was Ellen Butler aged 40. The youngest domestic servant was the house boy. Charles Foxes aged 13 from Rotherham.

The school pupils were Susie Hoyle (17) from Yorkshire, Lily Godfrey (17) from Scotland, Helen Wild (14), a British subject from India, Mary Arnold (15) from Doncaster, Ethel Brown (17) from Nottingham, Dorothy De Kadiet (18) a foreign subject from London, Gurn Phillips (14) from Tickhill, Marie Fawcett (13) from Scotland, Nergia Stadden (12) from Hampshire, Hewart Ruegar (9) from Leeds, Marjorie Arnold (12) from Doncaster, Winifred Nicholson (10) from Stainton, Yorkshire, Hilda Hoyle (15) from Dalton, Yorkshire, Olive Campbell (13) from Cumberland, Marmier Carr (16) from North Shields, Marion Waterhouse (13) from Braithwell and Doris Johnson (16) from Conisbrough. Intriguing!

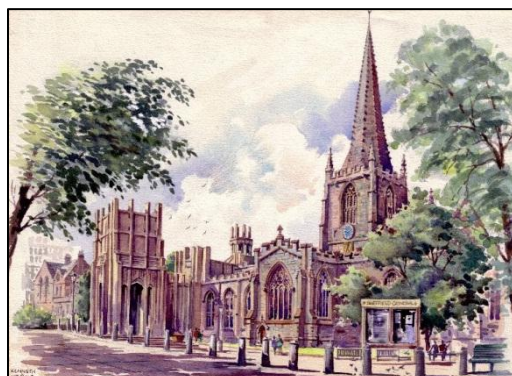
Kenneth Bromley drawing of Firbeck Church by Valerie Oxley



This lovely single pencil drawing of Firbeck Church was executed between 1970 and 1990 by Kenneth A. Bromley who made a number of similar drawings of churches to be printed as cards, or notelets. Kenneth Bromley was born in Bolton in 1921 and studied fine art at Bolton Art College. With the outbreak of World War II, he found himself serving in the Royal Corps of Signals of the British Army. During this time he continued to paint as a way to supplement his army pay. Following the war, Kenneth moved to London and worked on commercial art projects, but returned to Bolton around 1948. Through the 50s and 60s, he specialised in sketches for schools, churches and universities.

In the mid 1970s, through the Bromley Art company, Ken produced sketches and watercolours depicting local views from around the country. It is from this period between 1975-1990 that most of his artworks originate. Many artists will know of Ken Bromley art supplies now run by his son Richard, and his famous 'perfect paper stretcher'.

Below is a beautiful watercolour of Sheffield Cathedral in which diocese Firbeck is situated.



Copyright 2016. Kenneth A Bromley,
Bolton, BL6 5HY www.artsupplies.co.uk

Sheffield Royal Infirmary, Auxiliary Hospital at Firbeck 1939 – 1945

*Memories of being a patient at the Eye Hospital
by Mr John Timperley January 2016*



In 1940 when I was two years old I developed a squint in my left eye and was prescribed spectacles presumably in an effort to correct it. I was treated by Mr A B Nutt, an ophthalmic surgeon based in Sheffield who had attended King Edward VII School which both my brother and I were later to attend. I remember going to a house on West St or Glossop Road in Sheffield for tests, which could have been Mr Nutt's consulting rooms and was admitted for the first time to the ophthalmology ward at Firbeck Hall in, I think, 1943 for surgery. On this occasion my bed faced a long window in the opposite wall through which I could see the grounds of the Hall and there were other patients in beds along the wall, I gather that there were twenty five of us altogether. I don't remember any curtains between the beds like they have nowadays and I had a clear view of the other patients. I remember watching unconscious patients being brought back to the ward and lifted into their beds – no recovery rooms in those days. Among the toys which my parents had given to me was a toy searchlight which during the day I used to try to pick out aircraft with, with a 4.5v battery and a 3w bulb I doubt if I made any significant contribution to our war effort!

I don't remember how long I had to wait for my operation or how long I stayed afterwards, it was probably a short stay as my first operation was carried out under local anaesthetic and I vividly remember my eye being held open with some sort of clip. The patient in the bed on my left was a Mr Cundy from Woodseats in Sheffield. He was blind and I was allowed to walk with him in the grounds describing the flowers but keeping well away from the disused swimming pool which I remember as being filled with bright green water. The procedure reduced my squint by ten degrees but obviously

didn't cure it and I was scheduled for another visit the following year but this had to be cancelled as I had an infection.

My second visit to Firbeck was, I believe, in 1945 when I was seven years old. I think that it was 1945 as I do remember some sort of celebration whilst I was there which could possibly have been VE day.

This time the operation was more serious and I was in a bed on the opposite side of the ward. My parents visited every week, coming on a bus from Sheffield and sometimes bringing relatives with them. I had a locker at the side of the bed and I kept jars of food there which my parents brought. I particularly remember the strawberry jam which I used to spread on the bread which the nurses brought round at teatime. I also had one or two eggs which the nurses would collect and take away to be boiled for tea. You had to write your name on the shell to be sure that you got your own egg back but this wasn't necessary later as my parents brought duck eggs which were bright blue! I don't know what the procedure was with ration books, presumably my parents had given mine to the almoner at Firbeck. Last thing at night the nurse would come round with a cup of tea but sometimes they had neither milk nor sugar so I didn't bother. A barber used to visit the ward and I watched in fascination as some of the patients had their hair cut.

Various people including the men my father worked with would send me things in the post. Nothing of any great value, often little pictures or post cards but I used to look forward to receiving them as the days must have seemed long. My operation this time involved a general anaesthetic and I remember trying to fight off the mask of ether which they put on my face. Ether was a very unpleasant and dangerous anaesthetic but was all that was available at the time. The operation this time was on my right eye. My mother told me later that they were trying to balance the muscles in my eyes so that they were both straight but I don't know if this was correct. The operation was a partial success but left me with a slight squint in my right eye which I didn't have corrected until fifty years later.

I spent ten days after the operation lying flat on my back with both eyes bandaged which can't have been a very pleasant experience for a seven year old and may be why I have such vivid memories of the time. I was fed by the nurses other than when my parents were there and drank out of an invalid cup. I would try to identify my visitors by feeling their faces but I don't remember being very good at it. At the end of ten days I remember the bandages being removed and the nurses being concerned that I didn't look at any bright light for a day or two. Eventually I was allowed to leave and I clearly

remember a long and uncomfortable ambulance journey back to my home in Sheffield.

I'm afraid that is all I can remember, it is after all more than seventy years ago. One thing sticks in my mind and that is that, apart from the ether anaesthetic, I have no unpleasant memories of either of my visits to Firbeck Hall which is, I think, a great credit to the nursing staff who were there at the time. It's a shame that the building has been allowed to decay and hopefully ways can be found of restoring it to something resembling its former glory.

The Roosevelt Question Answered by Julia Colver

Earlier this year when Valerie Oxley and I had finished one of our talks on Amelia Staniforth's Journal 1782-85 and 1791 Firbeck Hall, to The Rotherham Retired Teachers' association, a question was asked by a lady wishing to know whether we knew that James Roosevelt (the eldest son of President Franklin D and Eleanor Roosevelt – President 1933-45) and the lady's grandfather, the Mayor of Sheffield, had visited Firbeck Hall during the Country Club days. This was exciting news to us and we couldn't wait to see what Google came up with. Sadly we could find no reference, but we didn't have to wait long for an answer, as a couple of weeks later Mrs Melody Denton (Mr Cyril Nicholson's granddaughter) had been sorting through her late mother's possessions and had found her scrapbook of press cuttings of her father-in-law's progress from renovating Firbeck Hall and turning it into one of the most glamorous Country Clubs in Europe. The Club operated from 1935 to 1939 when war broke out. As mentioned on page one, we kindly have the loan of this scrapbook which is proving a marvellous insight into the glamour and prestige of this once wonderful place.

There inside the scrapbook was a photograph of James Roosevelt's visit and a press cutting which is too long to reproduce here, but was from the Sheffield Telegraph of 24th April 1939, this being his tenth visit to England.



The caption below the photograph reads "**Mr H J Staines (Managing Director Sir W C Leng & Co, "Sheffield Telegraph" Ltd) introducing friends to Mr James Roosevelt, son of President Roosevelt on his arrival by plane at Firbeck yesterday.**"

The newspaper report mentions that Mr Roosevelt was in England regarding the showing of 'Wuthering Heights' and was making a special point of visiting Yorkshire in order to see the Brontë country. The following day he visited Haworth in order to compare the Yorkshire scenery with the synthetic scenery at Hollywood where the film was made.

Mr Roosevelt said that American and English people were really cousins and he hoped the friendly spirit of today would always exist. He avoided all questions of international politics though he admitted he was pleased when his father's actions were commended by this country.

Sadly war was declared with Germany just five months later in September 1939 and that was the end of the era of Firbeck Hall Country Club.

The following month James Roosevelt resigned the lieutenant's commission he had been given in 1936 and was commissioned as a captain in the Marine Corps. He went on active duty in November 1940.

Despite suffering debilitating health problems, he served as a major in the 2nd Raiders and took part in the Makin Island raid in August 1942 where he and several others were awarded the Navy Cross which is the second highest decoration for valour awarded in the US.

Committee Contacts

Chairman	
Simon Drohan	01777 712696
Gen. Secretary/Press & Publicity	
Sid Ellis	01709 813330
Treasurer/Membership Secretary	
Valerie Oxley	01709 813451
Meetings Secretary & Newsletter	
Julia Colver	01709 812982
Assistant Secretary	
Una Ellis	01709 813330
Environment	
Derek & Enid Bailey	01709 815075
Minutes Secretary	
Chris Stanton	01709 818927
Email:	friends@firbeckhall.net

Website: www.firbeckhall.net. The observations and opinions expressed in the various articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or of the FoFH Committee and their accuracy cannot be verified.