



Images of Firbeck Hall October 2018

Friends of Firbeck Hall

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 31

Winter 2018

Chairman's Report

In April 2009, the Friends of Firbeck Hall was formed at an Open Forum in Firbeck village hall. The group was established with 77 joining Friends. Over the years this number has steadily risen to over 500 joining Friends. Next April we will 'celebrate' our tenth anniversary. It is a sobering thought.

What have we achieved during the last ten years?

Whilst we have been watching and waiting, we have seen owners and prospective owners come and go, we have had hopes raised and dashed and raised again. We are now on the brink of planning permission being granted following a real commitment by the present owner to see the realisation of the 'Dream'; the restoration of the Hall and Stable Block and reinstatement of the landscape with sweeping lawns to a beautiful lake with uninterrupted views to the countryside beyond.

We understand from the Architects that the lawyers are working on the finer detail of the final draft of the Planning Application, which involves the phasing of the enabling development scheme. This is a government scheme to help owners and developers raise finances to ensure and safeguard the restoration of listed buildings such as Firbeck Hall, which would otherwise slowly degenerate into rack and ruin beyond repair.

The proposed plans were shown to local residents by the architects, in November 2016, when a consultation took place in Firbeck village hall.

Following the consultation, various adjustments and improvements were made to the plans and the

Application was finally submitted in the summer of 2018.

It has been a long, slow haul to get thus far, longer than expected as the application is complex, but all the surveys have been completed, Listed Building consent granted, and the Secretary of State, who had to be notified because the scheme is on green belt land, has expressed that he has no concerns about the proposed development.

It is a frustrating business while we watch and wait but we hope that our patience will be rewarded.

Last October the Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire Gardens' Trusts visited the grounds of Firbeck Hall as part of a study day on Humphry Repton. In the early 19th century Firbeck Hall was the home of Henry Gally Knight. The Gally Knight family had commissioned Repton to landscape their Langold property, but the house was not completed and the family purchased Firbeck Hall instead, sadly Repton was not consulted for the Firbeck Hall project.

About 35 members of the Trusts attended the study day and the visit was a huge success. Whereas we have become accustomed to only seeing dereliction and decay, they saw sweeping lawns to a lovely lake, yew tree walks, beautiful mature trees, box hedging, 'Handsworth' hollies and a Hall and gardens they could see springing back to life and beauty! We hope it won't be long before we can share their vision.

Simon Drohan and the Friends of Firbeck Hall Committee. November 2018

From Amelia Staniforth's Journal, 1791.

By Valerie Oxley

Background:-

After her sister Henrietta died, Amelia was the last remaining member of the Staniforth family to live at Firbeck Hall.

She was not alone, living with her was a widow, Mrs Dorothy Worsley and her daughter Miss Dorothy Worsley. Mrs Worsley's husband, the Reverend James Worsley died in 1777, he was the second son of Thomas and Mary Worsley of Hovingham Hall, Yorkshire. We think Mrs Worsley must have fallen on hard times after her husband died. She appealed to her brother James Pennyman, for help and he agreed to educate her three sons, James, Richard and Ralph.

We assume Mrs Dorothy Worsley knew the Staniforth sisters, Henrietta and Amelia through social contacts in London and Yorkshire. The sisters must have welcomed Mrs Worsley and her daughter into their household, as her presence certainly enriched their social life.

Mrs Dorothy Worsley went to live at Firbeck Hall in 1782. Her three sons James, Richard and Ralph were away at school but her daughter 'Little Miss Dorothy' in Amelia's Journal, lived with her and we know from Amelia's journal that private tutors were employed.

Her son, James Worsley became a Colonel in the Army, Richard was an Admiral in the Navy and Ralph went into the church and obtained a living at Little Ponton, through his Pennyman relations.



Little Ponton Church, Internet image

The Staniforths were related, through the marriage of Disney Staniforth to Christian Knight, to the White family of Wallingwells Hall, the two families visited each other almost daily.



Wallingwells Hall
Internet image

Two of Mrs Worsley's sons married the daughters of Taylor White and his wife Sarah Wollaston. James Worsley married Lydia White and Richard Worsley married Elizabeth White.

When James and Lydia were married they lived at Wigthorpe.

From the Journal Firbeck Hall 2nd June 1791

Thursday morning

"Amelia walked in the walk. After eleven two Mr Worsleys (*Richard and Ralph*) came here from Wigthorpe. About 12, Mr and Mrs James Worsley came, all went in the Drawing room. After two, Mr Woolliston (*White*) came."



When they were at dinner a Jackdaw came down the chimney, which brought so much soot down that they took the dinner off the table and had it carried into the Hall where they dined.

After dinner the ladies went into the garden, Miss Dorothy Worsley came in from the Bowling-green, the other three walked a little and sat upon the Honeysuckle Bench – then all sat in the Drawing-room.

They drank tea upon the Bowling-green. Miss Sally and Miss Fanny White called and stayed a little.

Soon after tea the gentlemen went a fishing to the mill dam – Mrs James Worsley and Amelia with them. Miss Worsley went to them when the Miss Whites were gone.

Mrs James Worsley (*Lydia*) and Miss Worsley (*Dorothy*) came home designing to go again - but did not, Amelia stayed longer walked about there and came home with Mr Worsley – found the Ladies upon the Bowling-green – Amelia walked with them to the Leese.

“All came into the house a little. Mr and Mrs James Worsley and Mr Woolliston (*White*) soon after went away – Miss Sally and Miss Fanny called at the door and went with them.

Mr Bates (*physician*) called, went to fish, and brought a Trout.”

Life at Firbeck Hall in the late eighteenth century was certainly not dull. There were a lot of young people around and Amelia now in her sixties was certainly not ‘stuffy’ as other accounts might suggest. (*Edward Miller*)

The reference to bowling green, which is spelt ‘bowlingreen’ in the journal, is interesting and could suggest there was a cricket pitch.

When cricket first became popular in the early 18th century, the ball was delivered underarm along the ground. The player who delivered the ball was known as the bowler. Although overarm delivery was introduced in the 1760s, the terms bowler and bowling and bowling green lived on.

There are numerous mentions of walking to the bowling green, the bowling green walk, the bowling green border, in the journal. There is one of Amelia walking down the shady walk to the bowling green. Tea is often taken with guests on the bowling green.

References to playing cricket however, usually refer to Mrs Worsley’s sons playing at Wallingwells Hall.



An early cricket match
Internet image

The White family of Wallingwells Hall.

Taylor White (1701 – 1772)

By Valerie Oxley

In the previous article, the White family of Wallingwells feature prominently, it was noted that they were related through marriage to the Staniforths at Firbeck Hall.



Taylor White 1701 -1772 Internet image

It may interest readers to know that Taylor White, the grand-father of Lydia, Elizabeth, Miss Sally and Miss Fanny was a friend of Thomas Coram with whom he established the Foundling Hospital, and became its Treasurer.

Before succeeding to his family seat at Wallingwells, Taylor White became a Lawyer. He was man of independent means, living in London. He was a patron of the arts, and specialised in the collection of natural history illustrations.

Through his acquaintance in London with the Duchess of Portland, he was introduced to Sir Joseph Banks and through him the German artist Georg Ehret, whom he commissioned to supply him with over 300 natural history drawings in body-colour (*gouache*).



Lady Margaret Cavendish-Holles-Harley,
Duchess of Portland (1715-1785)
Internet image

This was the age of enlightenment and during her own life, the Duchess amassed the largest art and natural history collection in Britain. She also commissioned Georg Ehret, who painted over 150 British native plants for her collection.

On Margaret's death in 1785, her art and natural history collections were sold as her children had no interest in them. There were over 4,000 lots and the sale lasted 38 days.

Taylor White commissioned nine hundred and eighty-seven 'atlas size' natural history drawings by notable artists of the day, the subjects included flowers, birds and animals, and were amassed in 29 volumes. He borrowed shells and stuffed animals from the British Museum for his artists to draw. The drawings remained with the White family until 1926 when they were sold at Sotheby's.

Although some of Georg Ehret's drawings are in the Botany Library of the Natural History Museum, London, other drawings from the Taylor White

collection are in the Blacker Library at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Few people today know of their history or existence.



Magnolia by Georg Ehret. Internet image
'EHRET Flower Painter Extraordinary' by Gerta Calmann

PLEASE KEEP THIS DATE FREE!

Friday 15th March 2019 at 7.30pm
Firbeck Village Hall
New talk about Firbeck Hall in the 20th century
Including the famous Country Club in the 1930's

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