



FIRLE ESTATE

Newsletter

Autumn 2024

Welcome to the September Firle newsletter



Conservation Showcase

Firle Estate tenant farmer Miles Walton of Alciston Court Farm hosted a recent summer visit of farmers and regional rural professionals to see firsthand his leading conservation work on the farm. Organised by Laughton and District Agricultural Society, it attracted a large audience keen to learn how it's done and how the biodiversity gains have been achieved on the farm as a result of conservation and regenerative management practices on the farm; more recently including the farm's conversion to organic production. Alciston Court Farm covers some 500 acres of the Firle Estate west of Bo Peep Lane, centred around Alciston. Cereals on the farm include the novel mixed planting of wheat and bean crops together grown for wildfarmed.com. The farm includes wildflower strips and wild flower meadow hedgerow management, to promote insects and farmland birds, bees and butterflies.

Estate Director Bob Baines says: *"These regenerative farming practices and the conversion to organic comes with a financial risk for Miles's business. The level of ambition fits directly with our aims to continue to increase biodiversity across our ownership in balance with the sustainable production of food. All farms on the Estate are engaged in environmental management, but probably none more so than Miles, who has really embraced it."* Miles who also now runs a flock of organic Romney Marsh Sheep as part of the farming system, said *"some people find this less ordered wilder farm landscape untidy. For me, seeing the flowers, insect and bird life - well I just love it!"*

House Sales and Investment Programme

We would like to thank all of those tenants who have worked with us in such a positive way this year as we seek to finalise our programme of twelve house sales. We are pleased to have been able to successfully offer alternative properties to the majority of the tenants affected, and we are delighted to be welcoming a number of these tenants and their families to Firle. This consolidation of Estate housing has allowed us to accelerate our repair and investment programme across the Estate and will ensure we can continue to provide rented accommodation in the locality that would otherwise not be available.

Introducing Rebecca!

A new appointment to the Estate team this year, **Rebecca Carey** joined us as Weddings Manager. Building on her wealth of experience in hospitality, Rebecca's role involves the management of Firle Place as a wedding venue, as well as overseeing all wedding related activities, including liaising with Firle Church when couples are looking for a traditional ceremony. Rebecca comments: *"It's been such a privilege to get to know such a beautiful house, as well as play such an important role in helping fund and sustain the maintenance of these historic buildings. Couples seem to fall in love with Firle, its setting and the village. We work hard to make sure that there is minimal disturbance in Firle, but I would also welcome any ideas and feedback. We are keen to keep it local too, whether that's our caterers, clients staying in the village, or by commissioning the help of the Bonfire Society when fireworks are occasionally requested. I think I have the best job on the Estate - I certainly get to go to the most parties!"*



Olympic Connections



In this Olympic year, a new exhibition at Firle Place celebrates the life of Willy Grenfell, Lord Desborough, whose diplomacy and networking was instrumental in helping secure the first London Olympics in 1908. The maternal grandfather of the present Lord Gage, he was a man of boundless energy, an astonishingly talented all-round sportsman and high achieving public servant. His 'modest' early feats included climbing the Matterhorn and four nearby peaks, taking part in the famous dead-heat Boat Race of 1877, swimming across the foot of Niagara Falls, rowing the Channel and representing Great Britain in fencing.

The exhibition includes extracts from a new book that seeks to disentangle the myths surrounding the man, ranging from an assertion of his contemporaneous service on 115 committees, to supposedly fighting in the Sudan armed only with an umbrella. Yet his gilded life was not untouched by the larger events of the day: in 1915 he and his wife Ettie lost both of their elder sons on the Western Front, they and their daughters enduring further grief losing their third son in a car crash in 1926. The small exhibition runs until 30 October. Titan of the Thames: The Life of Lord Desborough by Sandy Nairne and Peter Williams is published by Unbound.

Boiler Juice!

As we go to print, oil prices have remained at a 12-month low. It is therefore a good time to check your heating oil level and run your heating for an hour or two as a test before the real cold weather arrives. With less use and load on boilers during the warmer months, it is often at the start of the colder months that boilers can fail. So, to avoid getting caught out, it is a good idea to give them a quick run and health check now if you have managed to resist putting it on already! If you have any outstanding maintenance issues, tenants should not hesitate to contact the Estate Office who will be more than happy to update you or log the issue.

Open Gardens

As we enjoy the last of the year's blooms and any plants that survived this year's most notable plague of slugs and snails, the crescendo of Firle's June Open Gardens seems a long time ago. Thank you to the staff at the Firle Estate office for their administrative efforts for the day and congratulations to all of those involved in such a positive community day and village celebration, in particular Carro Wolstenholme who organised the day and hosted the raffle. **The day raised over £3,000 in support of Firle Church.**

Firle Estate Pub under new management

An energetic and creative team of hospitality locals Ben, Kim, Mathew and Saul have relaunched the Barley Mow as a family friendly country pub with a contemporary twist. With new and improved facilities inside and out, the whole pub and its gardens have been cleverly curated to provide a whole new experience for locals and visitors alike. Mathew and team advise *"the goal with the interior design was to reimagine the classic country pub; inspired by its natural surroundings but with sustainability and the environment in mind from the use of surplus heritage paints, recycled furniture and the use of preloved and vintage fabrics to create a fun but relaxing atmosphere."* The pub gardens and its popular large family play area has been reinvigorated for the new generation too, with outdoor bars for the adults and an outdoor kitchen with hog roast, pizza oven, and ice cream stand; there's even a DJ booth! A fresh and ever changing menu and evolving range of drinks, together with the more constant views of the Downs, secure it as a great local option, not forgetting the Bike Lane providing a sustainable route home.



Reminder of key times
and dates:

Firle Place closes for the season for public visits – **Tuesday 22nd October**

Firle Bonfire 2024
Saturday 26th October
from 7.30pm



If you have any news that you would like us to include in the next newsletter please email HelenT@firle.com