



A BARONET'S DIARY

SIR RICHARD FITZHERBERT

A HOMAGE TO THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN DIFFICULT TIMES

We have all suffered in the long period of lockdown and some have suffered more than most. The most difficult aspect of the hospitality sector is that we have missed out on months of weddings, visitors to the cottages, customers to the Tearooms and so much more. Of these, the wedding couples are the most difficult to satiate as it is not moral to charge them twice for a booked date in 2020 (now cancelled) and a re-arranged date possibly in 2021.

We are fortunate in that we have been able to accommodate our couples - we have on average 25 nuptials each year- but I feel most sorry for the larger venues that hold up to 150 weddings per annum. Whatever happens, the sector is going to have to change to this 'new normal' and it may be that it will be a long time before we see significant gatherings at our venues. Our marquee, the Arboretum Pavilion, will probably remain unused this year but we hope to welcome many couples in 2021.



RESPECT OUR GREAT PEAK DISTRICT

Fine recent weather and the relaxation of lockdown sadly brought visitors to the Peak District. Usually this would be a welcome sight for the hospitality industry but we are all closed. However, the impact on the village of Thorpe towards iconic Dovedale was, by all accounts, utterly horrendous.



Cars descended on the hill by Thorpe Cloud and parked on the verges of this steep slope, making it impossible to access the farm at Thorpe Mill. The local constabulary were called but the damage was done. The problem is exacerbated by double yellow lines on the Staffordshire side that are strictly enforced but with hot weather, no schools open and a Bank Holiday the problem was toxic. How ironic that the very beauty spot visitors were visiting was in fact being despoiled! It should be noted the leftover litter on these days could easily be the subject of a future lengthy column.

VIRTUAL SERVICE WELL RECEIVED

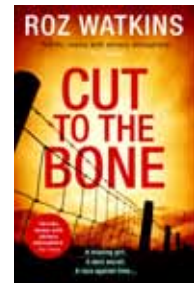
For the first year since 1988 I was not present in St Mary's Church for the Well Dressings service as, along with all other places of worship around the country, our wonderful Norman structure was closed.

Since the death of my uncle, Sir John, in 1989, I have read the first lesson (from the Acts of the Apostles) every year at the lectern in Church, but covid-19 put a stop to that this Ascension Day.

Instead, our enterprising clergy duo of

Carolyn MacDonald and Alan Griggs put together a 'virtual service' with Christian contributions from other local clergy as photos and videos of the wells were shown on screen.

The YouTube film received over 700 views, so it was well worth the trouble and it ended with a shot of myself at Hall Well welcoming everyone back to the village next year on 13th May... fingers crossed.



A THRILLER

I was delighted to receive a preview of the detective thriller by Derbyshire author Roz Watkins. *Cut to the Bone*, follows the goings-on at a Peak District abattoir. DI Meg Dalton is out to catch the killer(s) behind the unusual murders that follow the discovery of clothes in a skip. I invited Roz to the Estate to show her suitable places to 'hide a body' In the novel, Roz does not exactly replicate the scenarios I envisaged but I get a namecheck in the credits. Described by *The Times* as 'Terrific: teems with shivery atmosphere' it is out now at all good stockists.

HARD GRAFT

A result of lockdown is we have used the time to do many jobs around the Estate.. The family have been in the garden attending to various matters, including me clambering into the vast water-urn that collects rain off the roof. Over the years the detritus of twigs, leaves and debris creates a 'smorgasbord of stench' that needs removing for fresh water to collect. It should be noted that a shower is mandatory after extracting oneself from the urn.

