



# Friends of Alston Hall News

January 2012 - Number 1 of 2012

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Welcome to the first newsletter of 2012 and on behalf of the Committee, a Happy New Year to all Friends.

Due to the timing of the new Alston Hall brochure, it was not possible to combine the mailing of the January newsletter ... but it does give me the opportunity of reporting on the New Year party; which was held earlier in the month.

Formal notice of the AGM and details of this year's Alston Hall Summer Fair are included in this edition, along with a retrospective of autumn 2011 events and plans for future events.

Also enclosed with the newsletter are details of the Summer 2012 House Party to be held at Alston Hall and also a membership renewal form for this membership year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April.

*Mark Pearson*  
Newsletter Editor

## Newsletter Contents:

1. News from the College
2. Past Events
3. Friends Diaries
4. 2012 AGM Notice & Arrangements
5. Alston Hall Summer Fair 2012
6. Membership Renewal
7. Future Events
8. Alston Hall on Facebook

## News from the College

Sarah Price reports that uptake of courses from the new brochure mailed earlier this month is 16% which is good. Also, last minute take-up of some courses from the current brochure advertised at the front of the next brochure has improved.

She is meeting with the County Council's property department in mid-February to discuss plans to refurbish/augment the Bar and adjoining Room 2, for which the Friends have pledged £10,000 in support. We should have a clearer idea of proposals by the AGM on 1<sup>st</sup> April.

A Wedding Fayre at the Hall is planned for Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April. The College plans to take bookings for between 8 and 10 weddings per year and for 2012, most of these slots are now booked, with enquiries for 2013 increased over similar enquiries last year and a couple of bookings for 2013 have already been made. Sarah confirmed that the policy of 8-10 such bookings ensures that the College's ability to schedule courses is not affected.

A 'thank you' has been passed on via Wendy Singleton to all those who assisted with envelope stuffing for the brochure that was issued at the start of the year.

Finally, the Friends are continuing to edit a revised and updated 'Story of Alston Hall' building upon the excellent book written by Marian Roberts and expanded by a new section authored by Graham Wilkinson who as many Friends will know, was the last formal "Principal" of Alston Hall. Kevin Ruffley is co-ordinating the new publication, assisted by Dot Little, Graham Wilkinson, Sylvia Davies and Mark Pearson. The aim is to publish the book in time for the Summer Fair in June 2012.

**Membership:** Helen Bailey, Membership Secretary (e) [2005baileys@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:2005baileys@tiscali.co.uk)

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## Past Events

In **October**, we enjoyed a new approach to a Friends Evening. Members had submitted favourite photographs, which Fred and Dot Little had transferred to computer and produced them as a 'picture quiz'. These 50 photographs were shown in quick succession for members to try to identify the places shown. Running through them again to give the answers gave rise to many cries of: 'of course!'; and 'why didn't I recognise that?'; and a smattering of 'I told you it was!' A small prize was awarded to the winner. Following the quiz, some of the members who had sent in photographs told us a little about why their chosen picture was special to them. Judging from the feedback, the evening was hugely successful and there are plans to have a similar kind of evening next year. Thanks go to all those who contributed, and especially to Joyce Riley (who supplied the majority of the quiz photographs but couldn't join us for the evening), and to Dot and Fred for all their hard work in sorting and preparing the photographs, as well as presenting them.

Our **30 November** event took the form of a Scottish Evening, it being St Andrew's Day. As members arrived, paid and bought raffle tickets (all prizes Scottish themed), they were able to enjoy traditional Scottish music playing in the foyer. The centrepiece of the evening was a truly magnificent Scottish meal of Cock-a-Leekie soup, followed by mince and tatties with carrots, and rounded off with Topsy Laird. After a short break to digest the meal and chat to friends, people settled down to watch a DVD of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo of 2006. Once again the feedback proved that this had been a most successful evening with more people attending this than any other Friends evening this year (with the exception of the post-AGM entertainment).

*Wendy Singleton*

On **Saturday 10th December**, a mix of over thirty Friends and their guests met at Alston Hall for an early evening meal before embarking on a coach which took us into Blackburn and dropped us off at the door of the Cathedral.

Awaiting us there was a 2-and-a-half hour "Christmas Spectacular" which comprised a choral concert with orchestral accompaniment and solo soprano. The concert is an annual affair and as usual, was a complete sell-out. The choirs of the Cathedral were supplemented by local school children, with a soloist soprano and brass, strings and cathedral organ accompaniment.

The Cathedral's new Musical Director had constructed a mixed programme of modern and traditional Christmas music and the massed audience was encouraged to join in at regular intervals throughout the evening. What a joy to hear "Hark! The Herald Angels" performed by a full Cathedral.

The main programme item was Bob Chilcott's 'and Peace on Earth' – a richly expressive cantata which sets five discrete texts, each reflecting a different aspect of Christmastide. The first movement is a poem by Tennyson; followed by 'Good day, Sir Christemas', a song for a children's choir; followed 'This endris night' and the carol 'Put memory away'. The last movement is a funky, rocking celebration of the nativity ... according to the Oxford University Press.



With traditional favourites such as 'Sleigh Ride', 'Ding Dong Merrily on High' and 'White Christmas', there was something for everyone and all seemed to enjoy themselves; though Friends who had attended this event last year felt that there was not as much of the 'traditional' this year.

Personally, my only criticism was that the orchestra needed to appreciate the difference between 'accompanying' the choir and 'playing over the top of them'.

A short coach ride back to Alston Hall observing the full moon which lit up Lancashire that evening and we were welcomed back to hot drinks and biscuits. Some Friends took advantage of the special bed and breakfast rate offered; others wended their merry way home.

Credit is due to Wendy for organising a lovely meal, a free raffle (I won a box of Belgian biscuits!), the coach transport, the concert tickets and the late evening drinks and thanks go to the staff at Alston Hall for, as ever, welcoming us with open arms.

Wendy is considering organising a pre-Christmas concert event following a similar format in December 2012; the venue for the concert has yet to be settled upon.

The Friends' New Year Party was held on **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January** and took a slight deviation in format. A sherry and nibbles reception gave Friends an opportunity to buy raffle tickets for prizes generously donated by fellow Friends and completing a fun quiz set by Wendy Singleton. On taking our seats in the dining room, we were then entertained by Janet Hindle, who performed the Twelve Days of Christmas in correspondence format taking the role of the lady receiving gifts from her 'true love'. Needless to say, the once romantic relationship between the two star-crossed lovers had completely disintegrated by the time the Pipers, Dummers and Lords were having their way with the dancing ladies and milking maids!

A three course evening meal was rounded off with a table quiz concerning the number of presents given by the 'true love' in the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' (364!) and a 'guess the number of chocolates in the box' competition which Wendy assured us had not gone down by one whilst she counted them.



We then retired to room 3 for an hour spent in the company of Tony Berry, of Houghton Weavers fame. Tony regaled us with songs and stories spanning his life and career and included a request slot, which saw Friends requesting songs such as Black Hills of Dakota, Athen Rye, Goodnight Irene, Flower of Scotland, The Gallant Forty Twa and Annie's Song. He talked about

the formation of the Houghton Weavers, apologised for his wife's absence that evening as she was attending an AGM on Pendle Hill!, and sang a range of songs including that which the Houghton Weavers performed as a tribute to Nat Lofthouse of Bolton Wanderers fame.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening, for which Wendy was thanked wholeheartedly.

*Mark Pearson*

### Friends' Diaries for 2012

Despite having 2012 diaries available at the Summer Fair in 2011 and marketing them through mail order via the newsletter, sale of diaries continue to decline and the committee will have to

consider whether or not to continue to arrange for the printing of Friends of Alston Hall diaries in subsequent years. Please let committee members know if this is something that you want the Friends to continue to produce.

### 2012 AGM Notice & Arrangements

The 2012 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Alston Hall will be held at 4pm on **Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April** at the College.

Enclosed with this newsletter is an agenda, a copy of the minutes of the 2011 AGM and a nomination form for one committee member.

The Friends committee is short of a Vice Chairman and if any Friend would like to nominate a fellow Friend, or even themselves, please return the form to Sylvia Davis via the College or by email to the Newsletter Editor, who will pass it on. The Committee meets between 5 and 6 times per year on a Sunday afternoon at the College and is always looking out for new blood.

Following the business meeting, Wendy Singleton is organising a light tea and evening entertainment. This part of the AGM is not 'free' and Wendy has provided information about the post-AGM meal and entertainment, including how to book, in the Future Events section of this newsletter.

The AGM is usually well attended and we hope that 2012 will be no exception and look forward to welcoming members. You do not need to register if you are planning to attend the AGM ... but be sure to book with Wendy for the post-AGM meal and entertainment.

### Alston Hall Summer Fair 2012

The 2012 Summer Fair will be held in the grounds of the College and throughout the College buildings on **Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June** – that's the Sunday of the Jubilee Weekend. So put the date in your diary!

The Friends will be assisting with meeting & greeting and with refreshments. The Friends traditional raffle, gift stall and plant stall will put in their usual appearance and the plant crèche returns after a short absence. Hopefully Dorothy White will be bringing a supply of home made preserves!

Volunteers are needed to assist with various aspects of proceedings; volunteers' details will be taken at the AGM in April. If you are unable to attend the AGM but would like to volunteer, please contact the Newsletter Editor by phone or email.

## Future Events

### Thursday 16 February

Lakeland Lines - Steve Williams

In his illustrated talk, Steve looks at the railways in the Lake District then and now – from the closed lines to Coniston and Keswick, to the preserved line to Lakeside and the narrow gauge Ravenglass and Eskdale railway, and finally to the present day single track to Windermere.

### Sunday 1 April

Friends AGM

Followed by a talk by Richard Stanier of the Lancashire Constabulary Air Support Unit about the work of the Police Helicopter.

The AGM will commence at 4.00pm, after which there will be time to relax before the buffet is served at 6.00pm. Richard will talk to us after the buffet, starting at around 7.00pm.

#### Please note:

Whilst the AGM is open to all, in the first instance places for the buffet and talk will only be available to those who attend the AGM. If all places are not taken by the closing date for bookings (see below) they will be offered to anyone on the reserve list. If you would like to be added to the reserve list (i.e. if you would like to come for the buffet/talk but not the AGM), please let me know by telephone or email but do not send any money until you know you have a place.

### Booking and payment for those attending the

**AGM:** If you are attending the AGM and wish to stay on for the buffet and talk, please reserve your place by sending a cheque for £7.00, made payable to 'The Friends of Alston Hall', to me at 9 Cornwall Road, Rishton, Blackburn, BB1 4DB, to arrive no later than **Friday 16 March 2012**.

Any places remaining after this date will be offered to those not attending the AGM, but wishing to come for the buffet and talk.

### Wednesday 9 May

The Quaker Tapestry – *the stories behind the stitches* - Ann Taylor

Ann - who is a volunteer speaker – will give us an illustrated talk about the Quaker Tapestry – which is an embroidery of community art, the creation of more than 4,000 people in 15 countries over a period of 15 years. It shows 300 years of social history, beautifully illustrated.

It is a series of 77 separate narrative crewel embroidered panels, telling the story of the Quaker Movement over the 350 years since the founding of the movement by George Fox in 1652. Some of you may have seen this work when it was on display at Blackburn Cathedral in February 2011, and the permanent exhibition in Kendal is on the itinerary for our summer outing in June.

### Wednesday 20 June – Friday 22 June

Friends House Party (strictly members only)

Incorporating the annual summer outing

In 2012 the residential House Party will involve two nights at Alston Hall. It will start with dinner on 20 June and end after dinner on 22 June. Members may book an optional third night on 22 June at additional cost of £30 (special rate).

The House Party will incorporate the annual summer outing on Thursday 21 June (see separate item below). Members may book for the outing only should they wish.

The fully inclusive cost for the House Party will cover all meals and refreshments (including a packed lunch for the outing and dinner on return), all costs connected with the outing, a full day of workshops (with alternatives at each time slot as in previous years), two nights' accommodation, and after dinner speakers/entertainment.

(I would ask you to bear in mind when considering the cost/value for money of the 2012 House Party that the combined cost of the House Party and the Summer Outing in 2011 was in the region of £180. Also, the House Party in 2012 involves a two-night stay, not one night as in 2011.)

A provisional outline programme for the House Party is attached to this newsletter. However, please note that workshops and timings may be changed before the programme is finalised.

The per-person, all-inclusive cost is as follows:

Single en-suite	£190
Twin en-suite	£185
Standard single	£175

To reserve your place, please send me a non-returnable deposit of £30.00 per person **to arrive no later than Friday 20 April**. The balance must be paid in full no later than Friday 18 May 2012. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Friends of Alston Hall'.

### **Thursday 21 June 2012**

Annual Summer Outing (members only)

Those of you who book for the House Party will be automatically allocated a place on the summer outing ... but Friends who want to go only on the Summer Outing are welcome to do so.

In 2012 our trip will take us north, first to visit the Quaker Tapestry Exhibition in Kendal, where we will have morning coffee on arrival, then on to Bowness-on-Windermere for a sail on the lake. The coach will pick us up again at Waterhead (Ambleside) and take us to Hayes Garden Centre for a leisurely browse and perhaps some shopping. Afternoon tea will be at the Waterhead Coffee Shop where we will enjoy their renowned blueberry scones before setting off back to Alston Hall. After dinner, there will be a photographic quiz on the theme of 'The Lake District'.

A provisional itinerary is attached to this newsletter, but please bear in mind that times are subject to change as planning progresses. (You may be interested to know that the Olympic Torch will be arriving in Bowness during the evening of 21 June for an overnight stay.)

The per-person cost for the **trip only** is £34.50. However, this does not include a packed lunch or dinner at Alston Hall in the evening. (These are included for those attending the House Party). You may order one or both of these if you wish, and the per-person costs will be:

**Trip plus packed lunch** - £43.00

**Trip plus dinner** - £49.50

**Trip plus packed lunch and dinner** - £58.00

(If you book dinner in the evening you are welcome to stay on for the photo quiz.)

To reserve a place for the summer outing, please send a cheque for the appropriate amount in full to arrive no later than **Friday 18 May 2012**. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Friends of Alston Hall'.

Please note: If you would like to stay overnight on either 20 or 21 June or both at the special B&B rate of £30.00 pp/pn, this must be arranged directly with Alston Hall, and is subject to availability of rooms.

Payment for any or all of the above events should be sent to me at the address below, where I can also be contacted for any further information.

**Wendy Singleton**

(e) [wsingleton@virginmedia.com](mailto:wsingleton@virginmedia.com)

### **Membership Renewal**

Friends are reminded that membership renewal is due at the AGM. Single membership remains at £8.00 and joint membership remains at £10.00.

Friends attending the AGM are welcome to renew their subscriptions there; a renewal form is included with the newsletter. Please complete and return the form with your membership renewal ... even if renewing in person at the AGM.

### **Dates for your Diary**

**Wednesday 25 July &  
Thursday 30 August**

#### **Friends' Summer Afternoons**

Each afternoon will begin at 3.00pm when members will assemble for tea/coffee and biscuits. At 3.30pm (approximately) there will be a choice of attending a workshop or taking an afternoon guided walk in the local area. The afternoon will end with a two-course buffet and tea/coffee served at 6.00pm, after which members will disperse or stay on for a drink and a chat.

Look out for further details in the next newsletter.

### **Alston Hall on Facebook**

Did you know that you can follow Alston Hall on Facebook? Just point your web browser to:

[www.facebook.com/pages/Alston-Hall/240368625350](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Alston-Hall/240368625350)

It's just one of the additional ways in which you can get up-to-date information about events and courses at the College.

## **House Party (Wednesday 20 June to Friday 22 June 2012)**

### **Provisional programme**

#### **Wednesday**

6.00pm Arrival, registration, room allocation  
7.00pm Dinner followed by speaker Alan Crosby with a talk on the past, present and future of the Preston Guild

#### **Thursday**

8.30am Breakfast  
9.30am Depart for Summer Outing (see separate provisional itinerary - below)  
6.00pm Return  
7.00pm Dinner followed by Lake District photo quiz

#### **Friday**

8.30am Breakfast  
9.30am Workshops session 1  
10.45am Coffee  
11.15am Workshops session 2  
12.30pm Lunch  
1.30pm Workshops session 3  
2.45pm Short break  
3.00pm Workshop session 4  
4.15pm Tea  
4.45pm Activity TBA (for example, quiz, DVD)  
7.00pm Dinner  
Depart or stay optional 3<sup>rd</sup> night

Workshops will include (amongst other things yet TBA), a craft session, Origami with Stephen Watson, a local walk (probably Longridge Town Trail).

## **Summer Outing - Thursday 21 June 2012**

### **Provisional itinerary**

9.30am Depart Alston Hall  
10.30am Arrive Friends Meeting House, Kendal  
Morning coffee and view tapestry  
12.30pm Depart  
1.00pm Arrive Bowness  
1.25pm Sail to Waterhead  
2.10pm Arrive Waterhead  
Board coach for transfer to Hayes Garden Centre  
2.30pm Arrive Hayes  
4.00pm Depart  
4.15pm Tea at Waterhead Coffee Shop  
5.00pm Depart  
6.00pm Arrive Alston Hall  
7.00pm Dinner

**All times from 10.30am onwards are approximate and may be subject to change depending on road conditions.**