



# Friends of Smithills Hall



Patron: The Duke of Norfolk President: Sir William Goring Bt.  
Smithills Hall\*Smithills Dean Road\* Bolton\*Lancashire\*BL1 7NP  
Tel (01204) 338722 Registered Charity No. 1038507

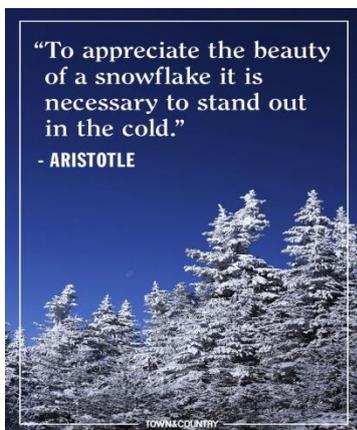
[www.friendsofsmithillshall.co.uk](http://www.friendsofsmithillshall.co.uk)



## FRIENDS BULLETIN No. 39 *Winter* 2019/20

### Friends of Smithills Hall Executive Committee

**Chairman:** David Williams, **Vice Chairman:** Joan Sheppard, **Secretary:** Sue Priest, **Treasurer:** Wendy Edwards, **Members:** Ann Marie Elliott-Clark, Ruth Ellison, Dorothy Lee, Elaine Fletcher-Cowen, Margaret Koppens



“To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake it is necessary to stand out in the cold.”

- ARISTOTLE

Welcome to our winter edition of the Friends Bulletin. I am looking forward to not having to mow the lawns or weed the flower

beds but winter for the Friends sees an increase in our activities:-

### CONTENTS

- Ghost Nights 24/10/19, 21/11/19 & 13/2/20,

- Wreathlaying Report and photographs
- Christmas Carols (11/12)
- Christmas Social (5/12)
- Christmas Decorations Report and photograph
- Robin Scott-Smith Obituary

### *Ghost and History Tours*

Three very popular ‘History and Ghost’ tours were held at the Hall, on the evenings of Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> October, the 21<sup>st</sup> November and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2020, led by Friends’ guides Ann, Dorothy and David who revealed the many ghost stories associated with the rooms

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around the Hall and in the context of the Hall's history.

A participant on the last tour took a video whilst doing the tour and was astonished to see orbs moving swiftly across the resulting video, which was shared with group members. Additionally a door handle was seen to move without anyone being nearby. Strange events!

These tours are highly popular, being booked up very quickly, and they provide welcome income for the Council as well as the enjoyment they bring to visitors and guides alike.

### *Chapel Memorial Wreathlaying 2019*

On the morning of Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November the Friends had their annual Commemorative Wreathlaying event in the Chapel at Smithills Hall at the 1914-18 Memorial.

After an introduction by Chairman David Williams there were poems read by Joan Sheppard and Dorothy Lee. Member Bill Sheppard kindly laid the wreath on the Memorial in memory of those who suffered in both wars. Those present assembled outside the Chapel for the laying of the 'poppy cross' and the individual poppies in memory of loved ones.



Bill Sheppard lays the wreath  
The Friends wish to thank all those who attended and gave their support, including staff from Bolton Council.  
*Folders on the Memorial give the history of each person named and they can also be read on the website under 'Memorial'*



Some of the members who attended



Poppy-laying outside the Chapel

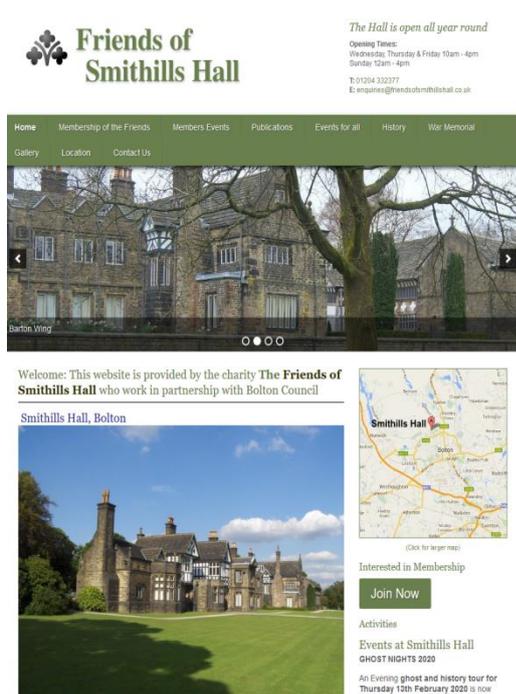
### *Robin Scott-Smith 1937 - 2018*



It is with great regret that we have recently learned of the death of our long-time colleague and friend, Robin Scott-Smith, at the age of 81 years. Robin has been a member of the Friends since 1994 and, as a keen historian, acted as a

tour guide, and an Executive Committee member where he became Vice Chairman until his health deteriorated. Latterly he has been an honorary member. We wish to extend our condolences to his family and friends. He will be sadly missed.

## The Friends' Website.



[www.friendsofsmithillshall.co.uk](http://www.friendsofsmithillshall.co.uk)

This is just a gentle reminder to members that you have a website which we do our best to keep up to date, and which can provide you with a wide range of information about the Hall and all the activities going on there, whether provided by the Friends or the Council.

The site has a contact page for you to contact us at any time if you wish to do so.

Why not have a look at it from time to time.

DW

## Christmas Decorations



Volunteers Sue, Jon, Jim, Dorothy and Alison

Period themed Christmas decorations were put up in the Medieval Hall, the Tudor Withdrawing Room and the Victorian White Room, amongst others, by a team of Friends

helpers on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November. These decorations remained in place until Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January.



Thank you to all of you who turned out on a frosty morning to help with this transformation. Our thanks go to Ann for her leadership of the group.

The Entrance Hall and Devey Room were decorated by Hall staff.

These decorations were the inspiration for a 'Festive' guided history tour for the paying public led by Ruth Ellison, on the 18<sup>th</sup> December, which attracted 15 members of the public and was well received.

## Christmas Social

The Friend's annual Social evening was held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December in the Devey Room. Members and guests were able to visit the rooms decorated for Christmas before being entertained by Peter Turner demonstrating some mind games, with the participation of



the audience, called, **Sleight of Mind.**

Peter, with the help of volunteers from the group, showed how simple tasks brought very different responses.

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With a pause in the entertainment the meat and potato pie/cheese pasty and cake supper followed.

Peter then did the second half of his performance with more mind and card games. The raffle was well supported and raised money towards Friends funds.

### *Christmas Carol Service*

Our annual carol service was held in Smithills Chapel on the evening of Wednesday the 11<sup>th</sup> of December.

The service was conducted by Canon Paul Hartingham. The organist was Revd. Michael Taylor.

David Williams welcome those attending, and did two of the readings with other readings from Bill Sheppard, Margaret Koppens and Joan Sheppard.



After the service friends and guests gathered in the Dome Room for mince pies and mulled wine to round off a very pleasant evening.

### **FOOTNOTE**

You may have seen the reports about the death of self-styled medium and mystic Derek Acorah (real name Johnson) at the age of 69. He was born in Bootle, Liverpool

This for me triggered a memory of when I met him on the evening of Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2004, at Smithills Hall.

Leigh Francis and his film team had booked the Hall to film himself in his comic creation of Bo Selecta/Avid Merion. He currently appears on television as Keith Lemon.

They had set up lights outside the Parterre and had fake branches waving in front of them to appear to have trees waving in the moonlight on the Hall buildings. I gave Leigh Francis an 'historic' tour to give him a flavour of what would later be filmed.

Derek Acorah arrived and signed a contract for his part of the evening.



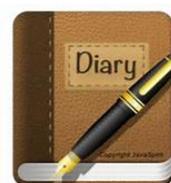
The theme of the evening was going to be 'Ghosts and Ghoulies'. It did not start well. In the library, close to the panelled east door the two celebrities

faced each other. The cameraman who had the only light, on top of his camera, stood in front of them and the director lay on the floor with his laptop attached to the camera. 'Tell me about Ghosts and Ghoulies' said Bo Selecta.

At this point, and before Derek Acorah could answer: the roller blind next to them shot upwards and rolled around itself with much noise. The cameraman dropped his camera and fled the room as the lights went out. Everyone rushed past me into the dining room.

This was my introduction to the world of Derek Acorah.

### *Dates for your Diary*



The following events have been arranged with further details nearer the dates.

**Annual General Meeting** – Wednesday 1pm  
10<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Annual Garden Party** – Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020  
12noon – 4pm

**Wreathlaying** – 1045am Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November  
2020

**Christmas Social** – 6.15 for 7pm Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>  
December 2020

**Christmas Carol Service** – 6.15 for 7pm,  
Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020