

FirstLight Trust.

Some background notes from Chris Harland.

FirstLight Trust's headline is "**Honour, Respect & Hope**". Sentiments which I personally feel echo our Masonic ideals. In this year of the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One when we remember the fallen I think it is particularly important that we don't overlook those who are currently in distress and in danger of falling themselves. FirstLight Trust's main introduction states: "We help the '10% hard to reach' Emergency and Armed Service veterans as defined by other charities. Those who are homeless, who don't know what is wrong with them; who cannot cope. We provide whatever it takes to make that tiny difference between life and death. And, most importantly, set them on the road to recovery".

FirstLight Trust is a national charity. With the help of one of our Brother Masons – Bro Ashley Tyson of Scarbrough Lodge - they have established one of their first centres at Stepney Hill Farm (owned by Ashley), overlooking Scarborough and North Yorks.

Ashley told me how it all came about and I quote his own words here; "Some time ago I began taking ex drug users and alcoholics from Ark house on Valley Road and a couple of ex-service men coming up to the farm to help me with feeding and bedding up the pigs inside the buildings and in the outside pens. After a couple of months of them coming up it was very noticeable that they started to open up to treatment while having one to one therapy which was amazing. Working with the pigs seem to have a calming effect on them and also giving them something different to do outside their daily routine, and seeing them caring for the pigs as if they were as one with them.

Over the past 12 months FirstLight has been developing 2 areas of land which I have donated, for a community garden project which has now been completed with a large poly tunnel, sheds, fencing, raised planting beds + 3 foot high beds in baskets and stone paths to allow wheel chairs access around the gardens.

The plan for the garden project is that veterans and other groups can use the garden project to grow veg and salads and the farm will then buy the produce from the charity to sell in the farm shop run by volunteers. We have also got a group coming up that are helping plant hedges and doing bits of fencing, these are 16 to 18 year olds who have lost their way in life.

The long term plan for us is to get the farm running as a care farm run by volunteers".

Jacqui and I were really impressed with the work FirstLight is doing with Ashley and we used the raffle at our Denison Lodge Ladies' Evening to raise £220.00 to donate to FirstLight. Since then Denison have voted to donate a further £280.00. The additional £1,500.00 from Constitutional Lodge will make a big difference to them. I know, from our conversation with Gill Taylor (founder and Trustee) when we visited that there is so much work that FirstLight will be required for in the coming years as veterans, young and old, succumb to the demons of PTSD, loneliness, loss of self-esteem and mental breakdown.

The FirstLight Trust website is at: <http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk/index.html>

I also suggest that you click the link from the site to their BLOG where you can see some of the work that has already been done – it does need updating somewhat but it gives a good impression of what has happened since inception.

Admin details are as follows:

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