

THURSDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020

**LETTER TO FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN, U.S.A.**

Dear Martha and All the Volunteers at the Warner Mansion

What turbulent times we are living through at the moment and life here in Hickling is far from normal. The plans we all made in January and the worries we had, now all seem a trivial and distant memory.

Usually at this time of year in Hickling the sky is grey, the wind is howling, the rain fall heavy and it is cold.

This morning the sky is blue and without a cloud in sight; the sun is shining; and the temperature is 15 degrees. The newly born lambs are skipping around their mothers; the hares can be seen running across the fields; the birds are singing; the pheasants in their pairs by the hedgerows; the swans are gliding along the Canal and the daffodils with their golden heads stand proudly at the entrance to the village and in the grass verges. Hickling looks really beautiful this morning.

However, the population is nowhere to be seen.

Corona Virus has spread from China and across Europe and has now reached our shores and it is on its way to America. We are being told we will hit our peak in about 3 weeks time.

Every person in Great Britain is having a life changing experience. The over 70yr olds and those with health problems have already been isolating for almost 2 weeks. Schools, colleges, theatres, cinemas, restaurants, cafes, retail shops, universities, gyms, churches, leisure centres etc are all now closed. All sporting events have been cancelled. Unless you are a key worker [eg in the health service or in food production] you have been requested not to go to work . Many people are working from home and parents are schooling their children.

Wherever possible no one goes out of their homes unless it is for essential food shopping or to get fresh air and exercise. When we are out, we must keep at least 2 metres apart from each other. A vast army of healthy people have joined the Voluntary Service to help their local community and the whole country is pulling together to try to delay or to stop the spread of this deadly virus. A pandemic so large and so deadly has not been experienced in this country for hundreds of years.

In Hickling Churchyard there is a small area which is known as the 'Plague Pit'. It is believed that the plague reached Hickling in the early 1600's but how many died here is not recorded. A nearby village has records of 23 of its residents dying at this time due to the plague. Hickling may have lost a similar number who would have been buried quickly in a large pit. 400 years later the swift burial or cremation of those dying of the Corona Virus is a problem we will have to address shortly.

Now there is an effort to get thousands of ventilators manufactured and companies such as Dyson have turned their production over to the making of these vitally needed pieces of life-saving equipment.

Each day the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, along with specialist advisors speaks to the nation to inform us what the Government is doing; what they are requesting we do to keep safe; and to give us an update on the Corona Virus spread.

Technology is helping us all to keep in touch; helping to educate, socialise and inform.

Hickling is a small rural village but not immune to the virus which has now reached even the isolated Highlands of Scotland.

Hickling has always had an enviable community spirit and this is continuing throughout this crisis. We are extremely lucky to be in a rural area with no high rise flats and all homes have a garden

There is an active neighbourhood watch scheme where people are receiving regular e mails

One resident lives in the 'Old Bakery' house and has for many years been interested in traditional bread making techniques. He has been making daily loaves and leaving them outside his house for people to pick up.

People have been telephoning, doing food shopping and picking up medicines for the elderly and those completely isolated.

There are free book and DVD pick up and drop off areas

Everyone is supporting each other in the knowledge that many of us will contract the virus but hopefully no one will lose their life. We are all endeavouring to be careful and responsible.

We do not know how long this will last but on a positive note most of us find ourselves with a bit more spare time to do the tasks which we have been putting off doing for ages. We will all have clean and tidy houses and magnificent gardens!!!

Thinking of you all in Farmington during these uncertain times. Where possible keep isolated and stay safe and continue to keep in touch.

Yours sincerely

Carol & the Hickling History Gp

Ps/ you have my permission to put a copy of this letter in the Hickling Display in the Warner Mansion Museum