



Friends of Fintry Provincial Park

The Octagon - January, 2019

Happy New Year to you and yours!

As we embark on this new year, we look forward to a year filled with infinite possibilities and exciting new ideas for Fintry. It is a busy time for our Board members as we sort through the many applications for permanent Caretakers for this wonderful old house, and are also in the midst of applying for grants for summer students. Having students will definitely take a load off our volunteers who tirelessly travel to Fintry and give Manor House tours throughout the summer. We will also be able to be open more days of the week and for longer hours each day.

We will keep you updated as and when these new changes take place.

This month's notes from our Curator, Dan Bruce:

Anyone looking through the china-ware in an English household would be almost certain to find at least one example of "Willow Pattern" crockery. This is a perfect example of "chinoiserie", the flattering imitation of Chinese decorative motifs that was common over much of Europe from the seventeenth century onwards.

The Manor House dining room has a fine specimen of a nineteenth century Staffordshire platter, decorated with the "authorised version" of this famous design. It is thought that the pattern was invented and first used by Thomas Minton, working for Thomas Turner at Caughley, (pronounced 'calflee') in 1780. The pattern was done in blue on a white background, this being in itself a copy of Chinese porcelain colour choice.

The design uses a combination of Chinese motifs that were taken from original pieces brought from China, and which were prized collectors' items in the West. Over the years it has been copied by a huge number of manufacturers, and not necessarily limited to ceramic items. (I have seen Willow



Pattern Kleenex boxes). The essential details remain the same, namely the bridge with three figures crossing, the pair of birds, the temple building with its fenced garden, and of course, the willow tree itself. Variations exist not only in content, but in colours as well. The collection at Fintry has a number of examples of the original version, and also a few of the “look-alikes”.

There are many publications devoted to this subject, not all of which are in agreement, but it is safe to say that “Willow Pattern” is the most popular design ever created to decorate household crockery.

So far we really don't have much to complain about this winter.....the snow shovel has hardly seen any use at all. Now if we can just get through January, we'll be almost home free and can start browsing through those seed catalogues in anticipation of Spring!

Good health and every happiness to you all.

*Kathy Drew, President,
Friends of Fintry Provincial Park.*