

ISSUE 13

FREE
to the residents of Snitterfield



This year's village fete took place on a sunny June day at Snitterfield's sports field. While a school fete has been an annual event, this year the day was opened up to the village as a whole. It was enjoyed by all and raised over £2,000 for Snitterfield clubs and organisations. Volunteers for next year's village fete committee are urgently needed. Anybody inspired by this year's success should contact Lee Hillier at Snitterfield Stores or by telephone 01789 730007.



Rhythm is their
business!



Back by popular demand at
Snitterfield Village Hall for one
night only is the fantastic
DR TEETH BIG BAND.

Get your tickets soon for what's guaranteed to be a sell-out evening of rhythm and blues, jump jive, boogie woogie and ska from the seven piece (sometimes more, sometimes less) band, fresh from recent successes in Norway, Spain and, er, Warwick Business School. The Teeth play a storming set of jump and swing originals and standards with infectious energy that'll have you dancing in the aisles, and any other space you can find. New Breed Swing they call it. But don't just take our word for it. This is what *The Chicago Tribune* said (and they know a thing or two about their music over there). *"Dr Teeth reinvents the swing genre, the rhythm section rocks like the Rolling Stones and the horns play like a jam session with Bird and Diz on 52nd Street. This is a must."*

So dust off your dancing shoes and put the date in your diary – Saturday 23 September at 7.30pm. Tickets, including supper, cost £15 and are available from Snitterfield Stores. But they're bound to go quickly so hurry, hurry, hurry. Proceeds go towards Snipe Newsletter and Snitterfield Cricket Club, so as well as having a great night out you can feel good about supporting village causes.





News From Your County and District Councillor

People in the villages want better communications with their local policing team and have been asking me for details of the proposed changes recently outlined in the press. You will be interested to know, therefore, that from November this year, people living, working or visiting Snitterfield will have

a dedicated **Safer Neighbourhoods** team covering their area which will operate from Stratford police station. Each Safer Neighbourhoods team will typically consist of a sergeant, constables, police community support officers and special constables supported by response and other specialist officers.

Safer Neighbourhood teams will work together with local communities and partners to help reduce crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour. Their role is to listen to what most affects a community's daily life and feelings of safety, and agree the order in which these should be tackled.

This might include issues such as graffiti, noisy neighbours, or vandalism, or it could also be crimes such as burglary, drugs and robbery. The team will work in partnership with residents and other agencies to find lasting solutions.

Safer Neighbourhoods is about building better communities together, reassurance that the police understand and are dealing with the issues that matter the most to them, confident that they themselves can have an input and, where appropriate, help to make a difference in addressing those issues.

To find out more about Safer Neighbourhoods in your area you can visit www.warwickshire.police.uk but if you have any other questions on local issues please do not hesitate to contact me on **Stratford (01789) 730331** or email me at richardhobbs@warwickshire.gov.uk

I attended the official opening of Stratford Park and Ride on 12 July. At the Opening Ceremony I was very pleased to learn that over 9,000 people used the Park and Ride during the month of June and was delighted to meet several local people who were using the facility.

If you are over 60 or disabled you qualify for a concessionary bus pass, which means that the park and ride is free after 9.00am in the morning. You can use your pass for any bus journey that starts or finishes in Warwickshire and does not require a change outside the county.

Telephone **Stratford District Council** on **01789 260408** for an application form.

Richard Hobbs

RURAL HEALTHCARE

Change can be difficult to handle and change is what is happening all around us, nowhere more so than in the way our GP's are being asked to look after our health needs and expectations.

Twenty years ago Rural Doctors responded to our needs by turning out at all times to visit us in our homes and administer treatment for all types of ailments. This was driven by the difficulties of travel for the majority of their patients. Now almost all of us have transport or access to transport, so we can and do visit our GP in their surgery.

This you may think makes our GP's life easier and less stressful.

How wrong could we be?

Our GP's are more than Doctors – they are Business Managers with budgets and targets, running a company supplying health care. They need to be statisticians, investigators, analysts, communications experts, researchers – and a confidant when we have a problem.

We must, as a community, understand that their job requirements have changed. From being in a RE-ACTIVE mode to the customers' needs our GP is now in a PRO-ACTIVE mode, where the task is to monitor our health and wellbeing by recording the key functions of our body. From the data they are able to detect possible problems and to plan the treatment needed to PREVENT illness. By repeatedly checking and recording key data such as blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar levels, respiratory functions and urine performance they are able to see trends

Snitterfield Parish Plan – moving forward

As the Parish Plan is now fully adopted and the action plan section is operational with several projects moving forward, here is some background information on a questionnaire you will be receiving later this year along with your SNIPE newsletter.

Development within our Parish is strictly limited for the next six to ten years to the requirements set out in the Parish Plan – namely small family homes and affordable

housing for young Snitterfield people or those with a strong family link to the Parish. Any development must follow our Design Statement Guidelines and the District Council's policies for Rural Housing.

As part of this project, The Warwickshire Rural Community Council has offered the services of its Rural Housing Enabler, Mr Charles Barlow, who will undertake an independent 'Housing needs survey' to establish if we have a need, and what type of housing would be required to meet that need.

The Parish Council hopes you will co-operate in this survey which could benefit your children in the future and our community in total.

The Parish Council will try to answer any questions you may have related to this survey during the Parish Council meetings which are held on the second Monday of each month at 7.30pm in the small meeting room in the back of the Village Hall.

Gerry Stammers,
Chairman of the Parish Council

in our health performance or deterioration of our physical condition.

If you then take all these tasks and add the GOVERNMENT FACTOR, the need to see 30 patients a day, you will start to understand why we need to understand the meaning of Change.

To make it simple – when you buy a car you expect it to have a service record of all the work that has been carried out to keep it in good working order, reliable and able to meet your daily needs and expectations. You also like to know what needs to be carried out when it is serviced. Well, this is what our GP is doing for the most important vehicle you will ever own – your body. This vehicle has a 70+ year warranty. Try getting that from the local garage!

Our GP is part of the team pioneering the basic software needed for the medical ‘computer of the future’ to which we all can be connected and have our performance assessed and shown in a printout. This will show where our systems may be starting to, or fail to, perform and maybe it will give us the corrective action plans needed to prevent a major failure in our systems and a visit to the repair or recycling unit at Warwick Hospital... or worse still... the final trip to the scrap yard.

Now like all modern vehicles, their parts are clearly identified so that recycling can take place. Our GP has already started this recycling programme by recording all the bits that we can re-use to keep our vehicle on the road. So the next time you start to grumble about our LOCAL HEALTH CARE think about looking at your ‘body service manual’ to find out if you have kept it up to date. Maybe a trip to the local surgery for an MOT chat with the nurse. This may prevent you being off the road for a major service or rebuild.

Nurse Practitioners are fully trained and qualified to overcome smaller everyday problems such as checking blood pressure, getting rid of warts, giving injections and attending to minor injuries such as, cuts, bruises, light burns and sprains. You don't need to resort to your own devices or go to your GP for these,

they can be handled by the Nurse Practitioners.

**What about our Village Surgery?
Why is it available for only short periods of time?**

The simple answer is LACK of DEMAND, in other words NOT ENOUGH CUSTOMERS! SO LET'S START NOW – MAKE FULL USE OF IT – BEFORE WE LOSE IT.



Chestnut Walk, Stratford 01789 292895
Station Road, Claverdon 01926 842205
Church Road, Snitterfield 01789 731592

Coventry Airport's Airspace Plans



Aeroplanes. They're noisy, intrusive and can be extremely irritating.

At times we get quite a lot of them over Snitterfield, and if Coventry Airport has its way there will be the potential for a lot more.

In the early days of aviation, pilots avoided each other by keeping a good lookout, but as airports began to handle more and more aeroplanes, a system was needed whereby traffic using airports could be controlled by the airport – thus ‘controlled airspace’ was born. Controlled airspace is effectively a ‘road in the sky’ – they are three-dimensional corridors that (usually) lead to and from airports. This allows the airport to have control over arrivals and departures from their airport and all air traffic that enters their airspace is under the control of an air traffic controller on the ground and is marshalled by them.

Most of the commercial traffic flying over Snitterfield is either coming to, or going from, Birmingham Airport, and around here the Birmingham airspace has a base of about 3,500 feet above the ground, so aeroplanes under their control don't generally go lower than that height until nearer to Birmingham International (Elmdon to older readers!). Below is currently open airspace, used by balloons, gliders, micro lights, light aircraft, helicopters and the occasional RAF fast-jet. It is the ambition of Coventry Airport to take control of this open space, together with a large swathe of other airspace over south Warwickshire. This wouldn't mean that flights (of all types) going to and from Coventry Airport would be flying over us in droves at a low level from the word go: Coventry doesn't have that amount of traffic as yet, but if the airspace is established as they propose, then they would have the ability to send any of their traffic over Snitterfield whenever they choose – underneath Birmingham's traffic of course, and therefore nearer to us on the ground.

In February, Stratford on Avon Gliding Club received a copy of Coventry Airport's Consultation Document for the proposed airspace. This was an initial version prepared for “potentially affected organisations having an aviation interest”. On examination the document contains some dubious assumptions, and occasional factual errors. Nevertheless, Coventry's proposals contain a serious threat to Stratford Gliding Club and also to the local environment, and so we contacted the Parish Councils of Snitterfield, Norton Lindsey, Bearley, Claverdon, Wilmcote and Wolverton – Stratford and Warwick District Councils and W.C.C are senior enough to be contacted directly. All the councils who have expressed an interest should receive a non-technical version of the Consultation Document in due course for their comments. Snitterfield Parish Council in particular has expressed concern, and is “on the case”.

The Gliding Club has prepared and submitted a robust response refuting the need for the airspace as proposed (it is interesting to note that Coventry Airport wants as much airspace as Birmingham has already – and Birmingham has 15 times more traffic!). Whilst the Gliding Club is opposing the Coventry Airport proposals from its own specific point of view, we feel it is important that any relevant information that we get should be shared; hence our contact with the Parish Councils.

So what happens now?

The Civil Aviation Authority (which, amongst other things, regulates the establishment of controlled airspace) requires that all parties likely to be affected must be consulted, including interested local councils. It is a further requirement of the CAA that there must be agreement on a mutually acceptable scheme between the sponsors (in our case Coventry Airport) of the airspace proposal and the affected parties before the CAA will even consider the establishment of controlled airspace. Clearly the Gliding Club and Coventry Airport disagree significantly, as do all the other aviation organisations who have responded, and whose views have to be taken into account. There will have to be meetings, negotiations – and agreement – with all those affected before the whole thing is passed on to the CAA for its scrutiny. The entire process can take a long, long time.

Meanwhile, things remain as they are.

Bob Horsnell and John Dickinson, SOAGC

Stratford on Avon Gliding Club welcomes visitors – either to fly or simply to watch. We have concessionary rates for residents of Snitterfield, Bearley and Wilmcote who wish to fly – £25 for adults and £10 for young people aged 17 or under. If you would like to try gliding for yourself, ring the Club on 01789 731095 around 9am on the day you would like to fly and book your flight. Terms and conditions apply.





Sally and Andy Hopkinson (and Figgy) have ventured forth to map another easy walk through the lovely Snitterfield countryside.

Snitterfield to Claverdon and back via Wolverton

Distance: 8.5 miles (shorter versions 7 miles or 5.5 miles)
Typical time: Three and three-quarter hours for full walk
Map: OS 151
Start and end: The Foxhunter pub, Snitterfield

This moderately long but mostly level walk takes in some wonderful views and varied countryside, including rolling hills, beautiful woodland and attractive village lanes. It follows part of the Monarch's Way: the route allegedly taken by Charles II on his flight following defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. This walk is best enjoyed in dry weather as the woods can be muddy after rain. The churches in both Wolverton and Claverdon are worth visiting and The Red Lion pub in Claverdon serves the best, but certainly not the cheapest, fish and chips in Warwickshire. To shorten the walk, a car can be left either at Wolverton, where you would end a seven mile walk, or at Claverdon, to reduce the walk to five and a half miles.



1. At the crossroads by The Foxhunter pub, walk up the hill towards Bearley and past the Snitterfield Arms to reach a public footpath on the right with concrete bollards (see photo). Follow the

track to a stile which you cross and go straight on through the playing fields keeping the hedge on your left. At the end go through a metal gate on your left and keep to the right of the field until you reach another metal gate on the right with a concrete bridge and Monarch's Way sign. Cross the bridge and go straight ahead keeping the hedge to your left, enjoying panoramic views to your right.



2. At the top of the field go straight ahead over a stile following a footpath sign, this time keeping the hedge on your right. Cross three

fields, ignoring any tracks off to the side. There are stunning views across to Warwick on the right and deer can often be seen near the woodland of Snitterfield Bushes to your left. At the end of the third field follow it round to the left where you will find a gap in the hedge and a waymarked stile. Cross this and follow a path into a pretty wood with a golf course on your left.



3. As you emerge from the wood follow the waymark straight across the field ahead, unless crops force you around the edge, heading for the line of trees opposite the woods. At the gap

in the trees keep the same line following the waymark across a large field, keeping the hedge on the right of you. Swing right to reach a road.



4. Turn left under a railway bridge, cross the road, ignoring a waymarked footpath immediately on your right. Carry on up the road for 100 metres until you reach a finger post waymarked on

the right and a small wooden gate. Go through and straight across the field towards, and slightly to the left of, two metal gates on the far side. You will pass three large trees. Go through the gate and slightly left to rejoin the hedge about 150 metres ahead. Follow the hedge for 100 metres to reach a metal gate on the right. Go through and across a wooden footbridge and through a second gate. Follow the path uphill, keeping the hedge close on your right and ignoring a stile on the left and any other waymarked signs. At the top of the hill go

through a gap ahead in the hedge and turn left into another field.



5. Keep the hedge on your left but then bear right as the path separates away from it by two trees, heading towards a telegraph pole, enjoying lovely views to the left. At another large tree

follow waymarks to the right and then left to cross the field along a line of trees. At the end of the field turn left at a waymark and go through a gate on the right and over a wooden bridge.



6. Go straight on to reach a tarmac drive where you turn right towards Cutlers Farm. Continue on the drive until you cross a cattle grid. 100 metres on the right before the attractive farmhouse

go through a large gate. Follow the line of the hedge on your left towards Knowles Wood. At the top of the hill take a breather and turn to enjoy the views that have opened up after only a small climb. Edstone Hall is just visible through the trees in the distance. After 200 metres walking close to the woods on your left go through a stile into the woods, ignoring the waymarked gate ahead. Follow the path through the trees, keeping the field edge a few metres away to your right. As you near the edge of the wood the path starts to descend. 20 metres before the edge of the wood take a right-hand waymarked turn. As you reach the edge of the woods go left at another waymark through the woods for 130 metres until you emerge on the other side.





7. Continue on this path, with saplings to your right and the woods to your left. After 300 metres, just when you think you may have gone wrong, enter the woods again and turn left at a T junction.

Follow the waymark to cross a footbridge with a modern folly visible to your left. Follow the path with conifers on your left, ignoring a gate on your right. At the end of the line of fencing cross a drive and go straight ahead down some woodland steps to a road.



8. Turn right to walk up a gentle hill to a grass triangle (see photo). Turn left towards Claverdon, passing 'Woodside' and in the same direction walk past several houses and

farm buildings until you see a bungalow called 'Rookley' set back from the road on your right. Immediately after it go through a large metal gate on your right onto a pretty grass track. After 100 yards take a stile on the left. Walk along the field edge with a fence to your left and lovely views to

the right. Turn left at the end of the track to walk uphill to reach a lane.



9. Turn right towards Claverdon church. 50 metres beyond the church is Park Farm. If you have left a car at The Red Lion or wish to take a break, then keep going along the road for a short way

and take a right turn at the end to reach the pub. You will have to retrace your steps if you wish to continue the walk. To continue the walk turn right down the drive at Park Farm to reach a gate ahead. Take the stile to the side of it at a waymark sign and go diagonally right to the far corner of the field in a line parallel with power lines. Go through a metal gate, noting a pond opposite, and turn right down a stony track for a few metres before turning left, keeping a hedge on your right and the pond to your left. At the end of the field, go through a gap in the hedge to cross a farm track. Continue in the same direction with the hedge on your right.



10. When you reach the railway line cross it with care and follow the waymark across a

stile. Continue in the same direction straight across a field, with a red farm building on your left. After 100 metres, before you reach the trees ahead, go through a small metal gate and go diagonally left down a faint path to cross two stiles with a footbridge between. Go straight on across the middle of the field, aiming for a dip between the hills ahead. Go over a stile and uphill on a curving path, crossing another stile to reach the ridge above Wolverton, with pretty woodland to the left. You will get a view of Claverdon church in the distance behind you. At the road, ignore a stile ahead and turn right along the road for 200 metres.

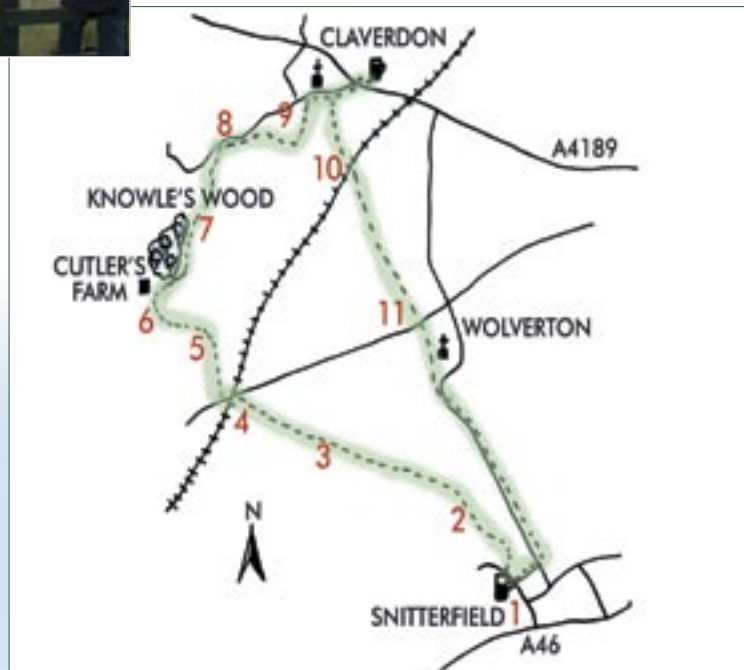


11. Turn left before a modern red brick house down the drive to Manor Farm. Go straight on past farm buildings with Wolverton church on your left. The path curves to the left to a

metal gate. Go through and onto the road. Turn right to continue along the road to Snitterfield or left to visit Wolverton church or retrieve your car.



Above: Claverdon Church





THE OLD VICARAGE

Lawrence and Janet Smith live in the delightful Old Vicarage on Church Road. They have helped us to compile a brief and intriguing history about the house and some past occupants, and they even believe it could be haunted!

The first vicarage of Snitterfield was built in 1757 by the rector of Snitterfield, Richard Jago, who was also a well-known English poet. He had other premises but Snitterfield was always his favourite residence. During the 17th century Lancelot Capability Brown, an eminent English landscape gardener, visited the Vicarage whilst landscaping the grounds of Snitterfield House, then owned by Lady Anne Coventry, who would have helped to finance the church at that time. Brown planted several trees in the front garden – one a convoluted weeping ash which sadly is no longer there – and the copper beech and yew trees which are still thriving today. The fence in the front garden dates back to the mid-18th century and the gate is original. The property was never part of the Trevelyan and Phillips Estate but always belonged to the church.

The Vicarage was rebuilt in 1900 in memory of Reverend Donald Cameron (1840-1877) and Reverend John Radcliffe (1877-1898). There is a plaque built into the bricks at the side of the house containing these names and dates. In 1899 Edmund Richard Gayer and his wife Mary oversaw the building of the new Vicarage (believed to be the couple in the old photograph above). The Georgian architecture was retained, it was constructed of pitched pine timber, and to this day the house still has the original doors, windows, skirting boards and floor boards. The bricks were made locally, most probably at

Brickyard Farm at the end of The Green. The front of the property was lawn and at the rear there were orchards, the land owned by the property stretched as far as Glebe Farm and Lodge Farm.

In 1916 John Jervis became the Vicar. He had two sons who were both tragically killed in the Great War. After the war all the very fine silver was stolen from the church and has never been found, and it is rumoured that it is still hidden away somewhere, perhaps on the land of the Vicarage!

Servants were employed up to the end of the First World War and they lived in the kitchen end of the house, and used the back staircase. Their quarters were very sparse with a bedroom and sitting room, there was no bathroom but they did have a wc with a cast iron toilet.

The drawing room side of the property was very elegant with beautiful furnishings. There was a room at the back of the house which was used as a social room for the village to congregate. Many adults and children learnt their first dance steps there, and regular meetings were held by the Girl Guides, Brownies and Mothers Union. During the 60's and 70's the Reverend Woodward-Court used the attic rooms on the top floor for the local youth club.

Lawrence and Janet Smith bought The Old Vicarage in 1980 when it was in a very poor, dilapidated state. They discovered the previous vicar had actually created a tent in the bedroom with pegs set into the floor where he slept to protect himself from the damp on the walls as the property had no form of heating. Since then they have spent time, love and dedication to modernise it, taking care to keep the house to its traditional style wherever possible.

The sitting room still has its original coving and beautiful floral design ceiling.

There are two wells which at present are not in use, one is under the kitchen floor and the other by the back door. Lawrence is hoping to uncover both and put them into working order.

In 1997 a project to create a lake was started. This was based around the old brook and was completed in 2003. Now called Glebe Lake, it has encouraged a lot of wild-life including herons, geese, swans, coots, ducks, kingfishers, and even a snipe has been glimpsed there.

There is a belief that the house could be haunted. It has always been a happy family house for Lawrence and Janet and their three children. However, they have sensed an odd smell – perhaps of priests (a pleasant clean smell), and Lawrence believes there may well be a ghost – a small blonde-haired lady with a strong personality. One day whilst working in the orchard he had heard a voice saying “No, no, don't do that” and he looked up thinking it was Janet, but what he saw was a small fair haired lady, and then she disappeared from sight. Not long after this he was asked by an elderly resident if he had seen ‘her’, Lawrence enquired “Who?”, and the person said “Oh, never mind”. Lawrence then asked “Do you mean the small, blonde lady?” – it came to light the lady who had planted the trees in the orchard was a vicar's wife called Mary, and she was small and fair. Over the years there have been several people who have believed they have seen her. Could she possibly be the woman in the photograph...?

Acknowledgements and references: The WI History Scrap Book of The Village of Snitterfield; 18th Century Snitterfield, John Shelby; Stratford Records Office.

Below: an aerial photo of the house taken recently.



Over the garden wall and beyond...



Summer days are here again...

As part of the Garden Club programme, meetings in May, June and July are arranged to visit gardens or venues with a gardening interest.

Over the years we have visited some delightful gardens, Sezincote, Val Bourne's Organic garden, and latterly Julia Scotts' Herb Garden at Worcester just to name a few.

Last year the club travelled further afield enjoying two wonderful days visiting gardens of Kent and Sussex. This year a four day visit was planned to explore Northumberland centred around Wallington, the home of George Otto Trevelyan. We stayed at Matfen Hall, recently receiving 'Best Hotel Award' and coincidentally, owned by Sir Hugh Blackett, who is related to the Trevelyans. We were invited to visit his own modest garden complete with its own tower. What with so many architectural features similar to Park House of Snitterfield and the Welcombe, combined with exceptional hospitality, we felt very much at home!

The trip was a great success, visiting a range of stunning gardens, from the dramatic Quarry garden at Belsay, to the picturesque Herterton cottage garden and magnificent contemporary Alnwick Garden, all so different and created against the odds amidst the wild rugged countryside. We had time to explore Hadrian's Wall and take a windy hike along the east coast, climbing up to a ruined castle.

Traditionally we end the year's programme with a 'jolly' and this year enjoyed wine and nibbles at Ingon Grange and Hill Cottage. A thunderstorm broke as we started out but within half an hour the clouds had passed and we were able to leave our umbrellas behind and enjoy the interesting gardens so well tended by their owners. (Members can be seen enjoying the evening in the three pics below).

New members (any age, currently membership is 12-90 years) are always welcome and can look forward to an exciting and varied 2006/07 programme.

The AGM is at the Village Hall on 5 September at 7.30pm followed by the Annual Produce Show open to all residents of Snitterfield. Come and join us!

Margaret Tweed

The members of the Garden Club forward their thanks to Margaret and Dennis Tweed for all their hard work which ensured the Northumbrian trip was so well organised and enjoyed by all.

Thanks to Kelly Keen, for supplying many of the trip photographs.



Snitterfield Brownies

Hayley Ball, Brown Owl, 1st Snitterfield Brownies, enjoys running our local pack.

The 1st Snitterfield Brownie pack has been successfully running in the village for more than forty years. It has seen many girls through the unit over the years and some of you may have been members yourselves.

At the age of ten I was a Brownie Sixer in this very same 1st Snitterfield Brownie pack. My Brown Owl was Sue Lambert. At this tender age I had no idea that one day I would take over from Sue as Brown Owl. I am now beginning my seventh year in this role and I still enjoy every minute of my time that I spend with the pack. It is extremely rewarding and plays a huge part in my life, even enlisting the family (Hayley's daughter, Bethany in her uniform, is shown above).



The Brownies provides a fun and stimulating environment. The girls receive no merit for academic ability. The emphasis is on fun. The girls aim is to work as a team and to take small steps to achieve great things. Whilst in the pack the Brownies learn about many things ranging from environmental issues to



people who work in our community. The Brownies no longer carry hankies and safety pins in their purses, but they still need to be prepared for what life will throw at them in the future.

Since January 2006 our unit has been learning about Africa. We have already held a Safari evening and made African Jewellery. The Brownies created a huge map of this continent, which they decorated. We are now trying to cover the whole of this map with as

many one and two pence pieces that we can muster. This money will be purchasing a Shelterbox which contains housing for ten people who have been made homeless due to natural disasters or political reasons.

There are many ways in which village members can help keep our pack running for another forty years. We always need helping hands on Wednesday evenings. I could not run such a successful group without the support of a great team behind me.

Those ladies know who they are and they do a sterling job. If you have interests or

jobs that you may think the girls would benefit from hearing about, we would love to hear from you. And we'd be very grateful if you collect up your coppers and pass them on to us as we continue with the map.

Let's not let the Brownie Law die out with other traditions, because it's a law everyone should abide by: **A Brownie Guide thinks of others before herself and does a good turn every day.**



Above: the SNIPE team, Caroline Noble, Marylin Follis, Sally and Andy Hopkinson, Sylvia Birbeck, Ginny Crow and Cathy Kimberley hard at work on finalising this issue while they do a spot of refreshing research...

Snitterfield Bitter tasting good...

It seemed like the ideal job. 'Go along and find out how they make Snipe Bitter' the editor said, 'that wonderful nectar that quenches thirst and raises money for village causes.' But, living up to my reputation as someone who couldn't organise a heavy drinking session in a brewery so to speak (as my wife and others who know me frequently tell me), I managed to arrange to visit the Warwickshire Beer Company at 9 in the morning – a little early in the day even for me!

When I arrived at their premises, tucked away in Queen Street, Cubbington, they were preparing to make the week's deliveries. The company supplies a number of outlets as well as its own two pubs – The Market Tavern in Atherstone and the Market Tavern in Southam – both small traditional real ale houses.

The Warwickshire Beer Company was set up in 1998 and now produces eight bitters for the trade, ranging in strength from 3.4 per cent to 5.5. It also has its own hand bottling plant and, alongside Snipe Bitter, bottles, labels and sells five other bitters (available from Snitterfield Stores). All come stamped with the CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale) endorsement that this is 'Real Ale'. They also produce a filtered and pasteurised bitter, sales of which benefit the Guide Dogs for the Blind organisation and regularly label one offs, including one for Snitterfield Bowling Club in 2001.

As owner Jerry Lewitt and Graham Soden set off on their delivery round I went to talk to Head Brewer (and indeed only brewer) Neil Hunt (also pictured at work) about the process for making Snipe Bitter. The trick of the trade that gives it such a wonderful flavour and aroma is adding a handful of dry hops when racking off he confided.

The brewery itself is smaller than I'd imagined, criss-crossed with a wonderful array of containers and pipes, and infused with the heady aroma of fermenting beer. As in all trades brewing has its own language. You start with the 'kettle' – a 2,000 pint immersion heater that holds the liquor (what you and I would call water!). When this has reached temperature it goes into the Mash Tun where the malt is added – six 25 kilogram bags for the weaker beers; 11 for the strongest – and this mixture is brought to the boil.

The hops are then added. This is an area where the skill of the brewer comes to the fore. Hops come in two sorts – those that make the beer 'bitter' and those that give it 'aroma'. How much of each to add to the mix is of course down to personal choice. Altogether though about three kilograms of finest Worcestershire hops go into each making, giving the beers their distinctive flavour and aroma. Incidentally, the hop is related to both the nettle and the cannabis plant. It's Latin name is *Humulus lupulus*, which gives rise to that favourite brewers' joke about too many of them sending you 'loopy'.

When this mix has all bubbled away (it's known as brewers' tea and has a syrupy consistency) it's run off into a fermenter – one

of four large tanks which started life on a dairy farm. Some 250 grammes of yeast are added and the mix is left to ferment for the next four or five days, with Neil keeping a careful eye on the bubbles and checking the specific gravity. As with the rest of the process, getting the temperature right is crucial to the success of the fermentation – if it's too cold it won't ferment; too hot and it'll kill the yeast. The range between 20 degrees to 24 degrees is just right.

The final stage in the process (apart from me drinking it of course) is called racking off – running the beer from the fermenters into barrels. In brewers' parlance a barrel is 36 gallons. This would be too big and heavy to move easily so Warwickshire Beer Company uses firkins, which hold nine gallons. Each fermenter holds up to 2,000 pints so you can see that, without automation and with three or four brews being prepared each week, it can be a lengthy process. Barrels are then sealed, stored to allow the contents to settle and they're ready for either bottling or delivery.

Then comes the fun part. Cheers.

Andy Hopkinson

The Warwickshire Beer Company can be contacted on 01926 450747, or write to them at Cubbington Brewery, Queen Street, Cubbington, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 7NA.



Bill Greenwood snapped this pic of contented horses 'relaxing' as they enjoy their view over the Snitterfield fields.

Available for hire

SNITTERFIELD VILLAGE HALL

Situated in the heart of the village, the hall is the ideal place to hold meetings, events, parties and family gatherings.

The facilities include: main hall, meeting room, kitchen, toilets, electric piano, stage and microphone.

For more information, rates and booking please telephone the secretary, Renata Stephens.

01789 731426

