

Our Times in Leicestershire

Shepshed Edition
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Manitobian Weather For Train Spotting

Just before Christmas, when I should off been finalising this newsletter I had to go off to Bavaria for a week. I arrived on the Sunday evening with temperatures just sub zero. It got colder as the week went on and the Glühwein made walking around Ansbacher Weihnachtsmarkt pleasant! Friday evening it was below -10°C and snowing as I took photos, and when I walked around in the morning the temp was -17°C, with it warming up to -14°C when I walked to the station to get the train back to Frankfurt. Being sad I just missed a train so I could have an hour taking photos of trains in the snow! It fact by comparison Winnipeg was having a heat wave at that time and it was colder in Bavaria!

Grounded!

Graham at work thinks I am scared off Ann. This is because I try not to give Ann too much notice of days off as she will find me lots of jobs to do. Even weekends are not sacred. Ann was due to work both the Saturday and Sunday so I had foolishly planned to go for a long cycle ride on the Saturday. Friday Ann grounded me and told me to make her some flapjacks for work. So Saturday grudgingly I made a massive batch of flapjacks. I took some into her at work moaning to her colleagues and also to anybody who rang or I saw that I was grounded. As I had made a massive batch of flapjacks I took some into work, which caused Graham to comment, "If being grounded means cakes brought into work – Ann can ground me more often".

Ceri Nearly Becomes a Scout

Ceri has been actively involved with Guides at Sheffield, helping out at Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers. Her STINGS friends were trying to get her to become a Scout, so far she has managed to avoid taking the Scout Promise.

Mike The Lodger

Like most others in the world these days, sister Joy and her husband, Mike, faced a period of uncertainty over jobs and where they may need to live. This resulted in Mike lodging with us for a few weeks in May as he had started a job in Nuneaton, which would then moved to Derbyshire at the start off June. In the end he ended up going back to his old job in Somerset!

Stephen Puts On Women's Clothing...!

On wet mornings in addition to taking a clean shirt to work, I also take a spare pair of socks. So I got to work on this wet morning only to find they were a pair of Ann's. For Lumberjacks and other Canadian relatives – it was not Wednesday so no butter scones for tea.

We Are Old!

Ceri helped out at a Rainbows pack in Sheffield until the end of the school summer term. Ceri really enjoyed helping out at her Rainbow group and was disappointed that her second year lectures meant that she could not continue doing Rainbows, despite one little Rainbow thinking Ceri was older than her mum and was 50! To make things worst Ann and I first goes on a Nintendo Brain Training game my brain age after a bottle of wine was 62 (so I fathered Ceri at 12) and sober Ann's

Ceri Still Like Father Like Daughter

Ceri continues to be actively involved in STINGS – The Sheffield Guide and Scout club, taking a committee role in the Spring Term with the official title of Cake Lady. Her first Scout and Guide Club rally was in February in Birmingham – just like my first rally! Ceri seems to be really engrossed in STINGS as all she lives for are the SSAGO rallies which is nice summed up by her STINGS sweatshirt logo – "I Rather Be at Rally".

Mummy confused by odd socks

Our main holiday for all three of us got curtailed slightly due to a very adverse weather forecast, so we spent a few days at my sister Liz's in Orpington. As packing was a bit chaotic I found I had left my clean crusties at home which resulted in a trip to M&S to get some. There I discovered the latest craze in sock fashion – different coloured soles so you can match other wise plain socks. When I got home I immediately mixed up 3 pairs and threw them at random into the sock bin. When we took Ceri back to Sheffield to start the new Big School year I put on the most contrasting pair of odd socks for maximum embarrassment factor. When Ann was sorting out the clean laundry she started to scratch her head trying to find the other half to the odd par expecting to find them in the laundry.

Ceri Rather Be At Rally European Tour!

Ann did not get to see much of Ceri in the Summer, with Ceri staying up in Sheffield until the end of the School year. Then she came home for couple of days before setting off on her European Rally Tour. Her first Rally of the Tour was SSAGO rally hosted by Bristol. Immediately after that she travelled to Uncle Philip's for an overnight stop before getting a plane from Gatwick to Billund in Danmark where she went as a helper at the Danish/International Scout Jamboree, Blå Sommer 2009, in Jylland, for the set up, the camp itself and the clear up afterwards. After that Ceri joined me for a week in the Netherlands before we went to the Tandem Club International Rally in Friesland.

Ceri Is A Radio Star

At Blå Sommer 2009, they had a radio station broadcasting to the campsite. Ceri was involved with a small team who wrote and broadcast a bedtime story in 6 episodes. These can be heard over the internet if you want to listen. The story is in English and one concludes that the Danes and Ceri have some strange ideas about children's entertainment!

Ceri Goes To Roodeschool and Talks Like a Dane

Danish is a difficult language to learn with some tongue twisters. If you are foreigner there is a certain tongue twisting phrase which really impresses the Danes if you can recite it. Ceri never did manage that but she did pick up on some colourful language which was a surprise to me and polite society! Which leads to the above pun because on one of our trips by train in the Netherlands we went to Roodeschool.

Vinyl Fetish

I acquired a USB turntable at the start of the year and have been gradually transferring my vinyl collection to MP3 format and potentially CD. As a consequence I have now more than doubled my vinyl collection by buying second hand records from charity shops. I am also transferring to CD our neighbours remaining records who turns out to be closet hippy!

11th Family Tandem Camping Weekend

Ceri and I went to the Tandem Club Family Camping weekend in July which was near Langport, Somerset. Ann was working that weekend so was unable to go. We went down to Somerset early on the Saturday morning as I had been to Germany for work and did not arrive back home until past midnight on the Saturday morning. I had already told Ceri she was doing the driving all the way down as it was good practice for her. The weekend was a pleasant weekend of short rides around Langport well worth the trip despite the early start – although Ceri complained as I had dictated a 6am departure – but did not get up until 6am!

Camping In Norfolk

Ann and I had our holiday together May Day Bank Holiday week. Initial thoughts we would go to the Tandem Club Suffolk camping weekend and then go on to Norfolk, but we decided as it was not Blaxhall we would give it a miss. We found a nice CL site about 5 miles north of Hoveton which we then used as a base for rides out by car or bike. Ann was not up to much riding so we would go out by car in morning and I would have an evening ride, or I go out in morning and then we would go out lunch time. This gave Ann a chance to recover from sleep disturbed by my singing to her at night!

A Right Pair Of Knits

My shrunk wool mitts were getting a bit religious so I decided to knit a new pair. I scaled up a knitting pattern and knitted a pair. The only problem was when I shrunk them they were too small for me or Ceri. So when we next saw Ceri her friend Mimi, from Mauritius, was with her and they fitted her perfectly and apparently she wears them all the time – hence her name of Mimi! My reputation for knitting is such I get people stopping me at work for advice on knitting! Ceri has taken up knitting as part of learning a new skill for the Philip The Greek Award. She has taught herself to knit a pair of socks with a proper turned heel and also cable.

Ann Suspicions Were Not Groundless

Ann was suspicious that I caved into being grounded with no complaint. Yes I own up – having looked at the sub zero temps and threat of snow even I thought a 100 mile ride would be fool hardy!

Daddy Can You Pick Me Up Please

Daddy can you pick up me up please is a classic plea from one's kids. I have managed to avoid such duties, until a call from Ceri at the end of Blå Sommer. Ceri's original plans were that she would get a train from Danmark through Germany to the Dutch border area. After looking into train times and cost it resulted in a plea for a lift. So the first 3 days of my holiday with Ceri was spent driving. Day 1 got me to a NTKC campsite at Lochem in the Netherlands, and then day 2 which should of been an easy drive took all day to drive up through Germany on the worst possible weekend for such a journey with massive road works on the A1/A21, it took 10 hours to do the 380 odd miles, 2 hours of which just to get through the Elbe Tunnel at Hamburg. Ceri arranged an overnight stop in Danmark at the home of the mum of one of the helpers at Blå Sommer, so on the Sunday I threw Ceri into her first stint of continental driving, with a brief trip to Rømø, so we could tick off another Danish island. Ceri shared the driving from then and she can now claim to have driven in 5 European countries plus driving across their borders.

Daddy Doghouse (What's New?)

After our week in Eenrum we moved about 40 miles south to spend a week at the Tandem Club International Rally at Appelscha in Friesland. Apart from the Sunday we had good weather and the Rally was well organised with lots of little extras. I managed to get in to severe dog house with Ceri as on the Wednesday which was a rest day, Ceri took the coach tour option and I went for a cycle ride to Groningen and then across to Germany. The only problem was my estimation of distance was way out – I did not get to Groningen until 1pm and into Germany until 5pm! The ride included two off road border crossing which I really enjoy about that area. As a consequence I did not get back to the campsite until 10pm. As it was an extremely hot day Ceri worried about me as feared she may have to drive and rescue me!

Ann Rides More Than Me!

With the ice and snow the week before Christmas I drove to work and did not use my bike all week, whereas Ann Bike-hiked on one day to get to and from work

Dutch Entertainment

After I picked Ceri from Danmark we spent a week north of Groningen at an NTKC campsite at Eenrum. We had a lazyish week with a few short rides on the tandem and trips out by train. We got some strange looks when we explained to a fellow camper that we had been for a day trip to Vlissingen. Our last trip was spent bashing the local branches out of Groningen, which involved taking the "International" train to Leer as far as the Dutch – German border. On the outward trip we were entertained by one of the routine drug busts which take place on most trains on that route. This included intimate body searches in the toilet with the door left open, and we had full view from seats in the circle!

Structural Engineering

With the snow we had in the East Midlands, Ceri had more in Sheffield, which caused her into change courses from Chemical Engineering to Civil and Structural Engineering in February so they could go to the snow man building lecture course. This resulted in Ceri and her friends building a massive snow rabbit. In addition Ceri was not happy when she went base over apex after she volunteered to go out and take tram photos in snow for me!

Shepshed Becomes Internationally Famous

Despite Ceri having left Hind Leys Community College for two years, we still book a row of seats for the last night of the school show. This year it was Fame and Ceri brought a real international contingent to come and see it, friends from her course from Poland, Mauritius and Sabah. They really enjoyed the show and I can see them wanting to comeback for next year's show. Jen from Sabah enjoyed Shepshed so much she came back and stayed with us for Christmas!

Mummy Goes To Brownies Big Day Out

September saw the start of the Guiding Centenary. So as Ceri helps out at Brownies, my birthday was spent on a trip to Sheffield so Ceri could take her Brownie Pack to the Sheffield Guiding Centenary Party. As Ann used to help out with Brownies in Shepshed, Ceri signed up Ann to help her with Brownies and I was left alone to wander around Sheffield.