

# *Bitterley*

## *Parish Plan*

# Bitterley Parish Plan

The Rural White Paper, 'Our Countryside: The Future: A Fair Deal For Rural England', was published in November 2000 and committed the Government to establishing Parish Plans. The Paper set out a range of measures to give local people a bigger say in managing their affairs, and a chance for everyone in the community to have a voice in how it develops.

A Parish Plan should bring together the views, needs and opinions of the whole community and cover the social, economic and environmental issues that are relevant to members of the community. It should set out what is important - whether that may be key facilities and services, or distinctive local character - and gives everyone a chance to guide future development over the coming 5-10 years.

The Bitterley Parish Plan has been put together by a group of local people after a public meeting in June 2006. 38 people attended the meeting which was used as a first consultation event; residents were divided into small groups to discuss which main issues they would like to see covered by the plan. A Steering Group of volunteers was formed from that meeting.



In the months before March 2007 we designed a questionnaire which was tailored to the parish's particular needs and in that month hand-delivered the questionnaire to everyone living in the parish. This survey asked questions about living in Bitterley parish and about what changes would make life here even better.



Information collected at the public meeting, the data from the survey and action plans on each subject are available from the Parish Council.

The project is supported by the Community Council of Shropshire and South Shropshire District Council and has received grants from both.

It is intended that the Parish Council will review the plan annually to ensure that, as far as possible, the aspirations of the people living in the parish are met. Ideally we would in time be able to set up a community website, for which some funding would be available. If you have the skills and willingness to update and monitor a website for Bitterley Parish then please get in touch with the Parish Clerk.

The results of the survey form the greater part of the Parish Plan, along with a history of the parish and a record of how things are now.

In February 2008 a letter was sent to all the households in the parish summarising the results of the survey and asking for any comments and additions. There were no responses.



# *Bitterley facts and figures*

Population: 802 total (Census, 2001)

Houses and places of business: 369

The village lies 4 miles east of Ludlow though the parish skirts the edge of the town. The parish amounts to 6592 acres, much of which lies in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Parliamentary Constituency: Ludlow

District Council Ward: Bitterley with Stoke St Milborough

County Council Ward: Corvedale

District Council: South Shropshire

The names and contact details of the MP, County Councillors, District Councillors and Parish Councillors can be found in the notice boards around the parish.

## **Parish Council:**

The Council usually meets 6 times a year unless a special need arises. It considers planning applications, reports on the state of the roads, and discusses correspondence. It has influence on other such matters as the reorganisation of electoral boundaries and sets the precept (how much the Parish Council needs from the Council tax annually. The precept covers the Clerk's salary, the street lighting and other administrative costs.

The annual Parish Meeting is open to members of the public to speak and must be held in the spring. The A.G.M. of officers must be held in May; at this meeting the grants awarded by the Parish Council and the Clerk's salary are decided.

The parish Council owns the silo and the village hall, though the operation and management of the latter is devolved to the Village Hall Committee.

## **Settlements:**

Angel Bank, Angel Lane, Bedlam, Bitterley, Cleeton St Mary, Dhustone Lane, Farden, Henley, Lower Ledwyche, Middleton, Snitton, Squirrel Lane, Stoney Lane

## **School:**

Bitterley Church of England Aided Primary School.  
104 pupils, mixed,  
4 to 11 years.

Head teacher:  
Miss Jane Bishop.

## **Churches:**

St Mary's, Bitterley;  
Holy Trinity, Middleton;  
St Mary's, Cleeton St Mary.

Bitterley and Middleton (part of Ludlow area): Rector (also of Stoke St. Milborough) – currently vacant

Cleeton St Mary (part of Bridgnorth area): Vicar – currently vacant

The chapels in Bedlam and on Angel Bank (Titterstone Methodist Chapel) have been converted into houses.

Diocese: Hereford

## **Rivers, Streams:**

Benson's Brook, Dogditch Brook, Ledwych Brook, Hopton Brook, Cay Brook, Bitterley Brook, Sugar Brook

## **Parochial Church Council (PCC):**

The PCC consists of the clergy and churchwardens of the parish, together with a number of representatives of the laity elected by the annual parochial church meeting of the parish. Its powers and duties are defined by certain Acts of Parliament and other legislation. It has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent rector or priest in charge in promoting the mission of the Church in its parish. The PCC is responsible for the financial affairs of the Church and the care and maintenance of the church fabric and its contents. These latter responsibilities are executed by churchwardens. It also has a voice in the forms of Service used by the church and may make representations to the bishop on matters affecting the welfare of the parish.

## **Tourist/visitor Attractions:**

Ludlow Point-to-point, Bitterley, April

Ludlow Hunt Horse and Terrier Show, Henley, August

Harness Racing, Henley, July  
Angel Gardens, Angel Lane

Churchyard cross, Bitterley Church

Crow Leasowes Oak, Middleton

**Meeting places:**

Bitterley Village Hall  
 Bitterley C of E School  
 Cleeton St Mary Village Hall  
 (not in Bitterley parish)

**Recreational facilities:**

Bitterley Village Hall  
 Children's playground

**Facilities:**

Mobile shop  
 Parish Magazine  
 Village Halls  
 Pre-school  
 School dinners

**Post boxes:**

Bitterley  
 Henley  
 Middleton  
 Angel Bank  
 Cleeton St Mary

**Phone boxes:**

Middleton  
 Angel Bank  
 Bitterley  
 Cleeton St Mary

**Bed and Breakfasts:**

Angel House, Angel Bank  
 (angelhousecleehill.co.uk)  
 Mill House, Squirrel Lane, Lower  
 Ledwyche  
 (virtual-shropshire.co.uk/mill/)  
 Cleeton Court, Cleeton St Mary  
 (cleetoncourt.co.uk)  
 Angel Barn, Springfield, Angel  
 Lane

**Holiday lets:**

The Cow Shed, Bitterley Court  
 (ludlowholidays.com)  
 Springfield, Angel Barn, Angel  
 Lane  
 Titterstone House, Bedlam

**Places to eat:**

Bitterley School:  
 term time, 12 – 1p.m., £2.50  
 (notice appreciated)

**Businesses:**

The major industry is agriculture.  
 Other businesses include:  
 SJH Print, *Angel Bank, printers*  
 A J Millard, *Stone House Farm, financial consultant*  
 Susan Wooldridge, *The Old Shop House, Bedlam, education consultant*  
 Angel Bank Garage, *car repairs*  
 Augernik Fruit Farm, *9 Angel Bank*  
 David Nicholls, *Greenfields, Bitterley, builder*  
 In-Tuition Mentoring and Tutoring, *Incline Cottage, Bedlam*  
 Angel House Barns Maintenance Company Ltd, *period properties*  
 RK & M Simpson, *Downton View, Farden, central heating*  
 P & T Poultry, *Cleeton Cottage Farm*  
 Kismet Enterprises (Sandra Wadhams), *Winterbrook, Cleeton St Mary, financial wellbeing*  
 The Picnic Basket, *Woodlands, Angel Lane, baked potatoes with homemade toppings*  
 D. Broome, *The Old Smithy, Bitterley Wharf, blacksmith*  
 BM Flowers, *2 Angel Lane*  
 Gaming World Ltd, *Garden Cottage, Farden*  
 Dr. D Oosthuizen MBChB (Stell.) MSc Sports Med. (Lond), *The Old School House, Bitterley, specialist sports and musculoskeletal physician*  
 Arkney Ltd, *The Green, Bitterley, financial consultancy*  
 AJ Auto Electrics, *1 Bitterley Court Lodge*  
 Chillie Breeze, *Chillie Cottage, The Row, Bitterley*  
 Healing Encounters, *Orchard Lea, Bitterley, healing and alternative therapies*  
*healingencounters.co.uk*  
 White Ensign Models, *South Farm, Snitton*  
*whiteensignmodels.com*  
 Country Foods, *Waterside, Snitton*  
 Hats by Elizabeth, *2 Ledwyche Close, Middleton*

Ian Childe, *1 The Row, Bitterley, agricultural services*  
 Mr Deedman, *Snitton, fruit and veg*  
 Eco-logicool, *6 Glebelands Close, Bitterley, environmentally sound heating and refrigeration solutions*  
*eco-logicoolservices.co.uk*  
 Marches Food Ltd, *Bitterley Court*  
 Geoff Evans, *Lowbridge Farm, Bitterley, point-to-pointers trainer*  
 Mark Woodward, *Snitton, cheese*  
 Sarah Dare, *Titterstone House, Bedlam, bookbinder*  
 Skellern Doors and Windows, *10 Titterstone Cottage, Bedlam*  
 Hawkeye Falconry Professional *Falconry Services*

**Clubs and Associations:**

Bitterley Women's Institute  
 Bitterley Youth Club  
 Clee Hill Commoners' Association

**Nearest pubs:**

The Royal Oak, Clee Hill  
 The Three Horseshoes, Wheathill  
 The Nelson, Rock's Green

**Accommodation nearby:**

Timberlands, Clee Stanton  
 The Moor Hall, Clee Downton  
 Lower House Farm, Clee Downton  
 Stoke Court, Stoke St Milborough  
 Criterion Cottage, Clee Hill  
 The Crown at Hopton Wafers

**Major rights of way:**

The Shropshire Way and the Jack Mytton Way clip the parish of Bitterley as they pass over Clee Hill

# Bitterley Parish – some history

The National Gazetteer in 1868 says that the parish of Bitterley contains the townships of Bitterley, Cleeton, Henley, Hill-upon-Cot, Middleton, and Snitton. Nowadays we might be more inclined to replace Hill-upon-Cot (now "Hilluppencott Farm") with Farden and Angel Bank, which have seen a great amount of growth in the last 140 years.

The parish was part of the Saxon administrative district called Overs Hundred, along with Boraston, Burford, Greete,

Milson, Nash, Neen Sollars, Silvington and Whitton. It lies within the Anglican diocese of Hereford, the archdeaconry of Salop and is partly in the deanery of Ludlow and part in the deanery of Bridgnorth.

A great part of the land within the parish is owned by three estates: the Downton Hall Estate, the Henley Hall Estate and the Bitterley Court Estate. The lordships of the manor of Bitterley, Middleton and Ledwych are owned by the Wiggins at Downton and that of

Henley by the Lumsdens at Henley Hall. The Windsor-Clives at Oakly Park are believed to own the lordship of the manor of Snitton.

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia (written and edited by members of the public) goes so far as to venture:

*Some people believe that 'The Shire' in Tolkien's famed novel 'The Lord of the Rings' was based on this area, which he was known to visit frequently, having grown up in Birmingham.*

## Bitterley Village



The name Bitterley is thought to come from a corruption of *butter-ley*, indicating rich pastures for dairy cows. It was already established by Domesday (1086).

The school was endowed by John Newborough, a former headmaster of Eton, in 1712 and retained its Grammar School status until as late as 1958. Within living memory pupils were boarded on the top floor of the Rectory (now "The Old Rectory").

The village hall is just over ten years old and was built on a green field site as a replacement of The Hut, which had been a prefabricated structure of corrugated iron and wood on the site of where "Davington" now stands. The Hut had been delivered by rail in 1921 and served the parish well for over 70 years.

The rest of the village is made up of mostly detached and semi-detached houses, from Georgian to the present day, with a

handful which have earlier origins, such as "Duce's Cottage", "Three Ways", "Lower Court" and "The Green".

The exception is Orchard Lea, a terrace which was built as low-cost accommodation on land bought from the Bitterley Court estate. The most recent big build has been at Glebe Close, again for affordable housing, built by the Housing Association at the same time as the new village hall, on land sold by the Diocese.

The church at Bitterley is late Norman, dedicated to St Mary and now lies away from the village, though evidence of the medieval village can still be seen in the parkland in front of Bitterley Court.



Inside the church are several notable memorial tablets and a list of the rectors, back to medieval times. The font is Norman and there is a large wooden coffer from the 13th Century.

In around 1843 four "lunettes" were commissioned by eccentric millionaire and former MP William Beckford for 'the Sanctuary', artistically the most important room in his house, Lansdown Tower in Bath, now owned by the Bath Preservation Trust and administered as a museum by the Beckford Tower Trust. These were four semi-circular paintings on panel of New Testament subjects which were suggested to the artist Willes Maddox by Beckford. Three of the four lunettes, The Temptation in the Wilderness, Christ's Agony in the Garden and The Annunciation, were sold in the Lansdown Tower sale of 1845. The fourth, St Anne and St Mary, was not mentioned in the sale catalogue. Nothing is known about the subsequent whereabouts of all the pictures until 1933, when they were bequeathed to Bitterley church by Colonel Price Wood of Henley Hall. They remained unidentified until a routine valuation in 2003 by Nicholas Carter, who recognised the work of Willes Maddox, and knowing of his connection with William Beckford, easily uncovered the provenance of the lunettes from Beckford's last sanctuary. They were offered for sale by Hy. Duke's of Dorchester in March 2004 and were purchased for £716,000 by the Beckford Tower Trust to be returned to their original positions in the Sanctuary as part of the continuing long-term restoration of the Tower.

The Cross in the churchyard is a very rare example; it has an octagonal shaft and tabernacled



niches. There is a hole half-way up the shaft which some people (presumably people who have never actually been to Bitterley), such as Alfred Watkins in his book *Early British Trackways*, say is a sight hole which lines up along ancient ley lines. Some others have rejoined that here are only two problems with this: first that there is no evidence for the existence of ley lines and secondly that the hole looks directly at the side wall of the church a few yards away.

There was a mill west of the village and the site of the old mill pond can still be seen quite clearly at "Mill Farm".



Just outside the village in a damp field next to the new Rectory are the remains of Park Hall. Though by then derelict it was still standing late enough to have been photographed in the 19th century. The house, which

had unusual crenellated gables like Crowleasowes Farm, is thought to have been built on a much older moated site. It is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument along with the old cock pit, which is well-preserved and almost unique in Shropshire. Much of the panelling from the house was removed to Bitterley Court and some of the building material was used to convert pig sties into what is now "Windsor Court".

Hillupencott was "a township" in 1540 when the court roll of the manor of Hints shows that it was held by Richard Sheppard at an annual rent of 16 shillings. In 1599 he was described as "husbandman" and in 1618 his heir, John Sheppard, purchased Hillupencott with 100 acres with pasturage rights on the adjacent hill waste (Clee Hill is called "waste" in most of the documents of the era). This Sheppard bought more land in Bitterley, Caynham, Coreley etc and after marrying well they became gentry and had a town house in Ludlow. But things went wrong to some extent and by 1721 a Sheppard was described as "a poor Esq" when his son William was baptised at Bitterley on 30 Oct. Hillupencott was valued in 1733 at £320 with 350 acres of arable, meadow and pasture land, 50 acres of woodland and 400 acres of hill waste. Sheppard had a lot of power, especially as the mining developed and people began to move into the Clee Hill area.

It was Richard Knight who purchased mineral rights from a John Sheppard in 1742 and leased them to his sons, which resulted in the extraction of iron ore and coal, the building of roads and quite a lot of settlement on the Hill.

An extract from the chapter "Gentlemen's Seats, Villages &c in the Neighbourhood of Ludlow" in History and Antiquities of Ludlow by Thomas Wright, 1826:

*At a short distance is Bitterley Court, belonging to the Rev. J. Walcot, at the foot of the Clee Hill; above which, the Titterstone, rising on the north-east, forms a grand and prominent object, and the prospect toward Ludlow, over a rich and well-cultivated tract of country, is highly pleasing. Near the house is the Church, in which are found records of various charities; that of Sergeant Powis, afterwards Judge Powis, who bequeathed £50; of Mr. Richard Page, of Park Hall, who bequeathed c.£10 ; and of Mrs. Ann Sheppard of Middleton, who bequeathed to the poor of Bitterley the sum of £500.*

*In the adjoining pleasant and healthy Village is Bitterley School, where, under the*

*superintendence of Mr. James Green, a limited number of boarders are comfortably accommodated, and well educated in the different branches of a classical, commercial, and polite education, on moderate terms. From the parish records we find this school has been founded upwards of one hundred years, as the following extract taken from the parish books will prove;—"The said school being by deed settled for the use and benefit of the parish, one Mr. Humphrey Butler was first elected schoolmaster there by a great majority of voices of the said parish that pay to church and poor, pursuant to said deed, upon Easter Tuesday, being the 7th of April, 1713." The original endowment was for the instruction of the parish children, for which the master has a commodious house, with garden, play-ground, &c. and also a weekly stipend from the parents of each child, according*

*to the amount of their respective rents. Mr. John Newborough, head master of Eton School, by will dated the 18th of January, 1712, left £400 to purchase an estate "for the use, benefit, and maintenance of the master for the time being, for ever." With £300 of this money an estate was bought, containing 39 acres, 1 rood and 23perches called Little Perth-y-bee, in the parish of Kerry, Montgomeryshire. The buildings on this estate being destroyed by fire, £50 was given in 1779 to the Rev. J. Attwood, (then master) to rebuild the same, of the remaining £50 no account can be obtained. The appointment of the master is vested in the parishioners who pay to church and poor. The good management and attention of the present master, (who was elected in October 1823,) has given general satisfaction, and the school is extensively patronised.*

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## Bitterley Court

Bitterley Court is a Grade II\* listed building and has been owned by the Wheeler family since 1901. The early history of the house has been lost to time. There may well have been a medieval hall on the site as far back as the 10th century to which a screens passage and solar wing would at some stage have been added.

By about 1655 the Walcots and Littletons jointly bought the house. In about 1766 the house was sold to the senior branch of the Walcots when they sold Walcot Hall to Clive of India. At this time the orientation of the



house was turned 90 degrees when the building was given a complete makeover inside and out by Thomas Farnolls Pritchard, a local architect was also responsible for the interiors of many notable houses in the

county and for designing the Iron Bridge in Coalbrookdale. The Walcot family were staunch Royalists. Papers that were once at Bitterley Court included requests for loans from King Charles I. William Walcot was Charles I's page when he was beheaded and Charles gave half his cloak to each of his two pages on the scaffold. William Walcot's half was kept at Bitterley Court for many years with the Royal bloodstains preserved for posterity. Members of the Walcot family still visit Bitterley from all over the world and one of these still has the cloak.

## *Titterstone Clee Hill* *Bedlam*

Clee Hill is only 20 feet lower than Brown Clee (the highest in the county) but is actually the third highest point in the county. The stone on Clee Hill is called dhu stone (dhu is Welsh for black) and is one of the very hardest stones to be found in the British Isles. It was used to build Cardiff docks, for which reason the Incline Quarry was begun in the late 1850s (see a longer description below "The Railway in Bitterley"). The stone was then used mainly for roadstone until the closure of the quarrying works.

The radar station on the top of the hill is one of the most important Civil Aviation sites in the country. The radars sit in an enormous 70 acre Iron Age enclosure built by the local tribe which the Romans called the Cornovii. There is still evidence of the walls (now just a wide smear of stone all round the perimeter) on the ground but a much better picture can be gained from above.

Clee Hill is always known as such by locals although it is properly called Titterstone Clee. The origins of the "Titter" part of the name are uncertain, though various experts have had a stab at guessing.

It must have been of no small importance in the past (even being described as "holy" by one writer) as it is the only hill in Britain to be named on the Mappa Mundi, drawn in about 1290 and now in Hereford Cathedral.

There is now a Titterstone Clee Heritage Trust, set up in 2006.

### **IMAGES** (Opposite page)

- 1** Radar Station, Clee Hill
- 2** Track over Common
- 3** Footpath across Clee Hill
- 4** Stream running off Clee Hill

For the most part the hamlet of Bedlam was built to house miners and quarrymen. The name Bedlam is a corruption of the word Bethlehem. It derives from a priory in Bishopsgate in London dedicated to St Mary of Bethlehem in 1247 and which was used partly as an insane asylum a century or so later. This eventually became part of St. Bartholomew's Hospital but it still retained the nickname Bedlam (some books, written even as late as 2005 still erroneously state that Bedlam is a corruption of Bartholomew). There was supposed to be a medieval lunatic asylum just above the current village and you can apparently still see evidence of the foundations on the edge of the Common. A job for Channel 4's Time Team perhaps.

The same recently published book mentioned earlier insists that no one living there likes the name Bedlam and that the residents are running a campaign to have the name changed to Titterstone Village (and even that it appears as such on OS maps). Presumably they are running the campaign from Bedlam's village hall, which the author maintains used to be the Newspaper Reading Room. Just below Bedlam is a dam on Benson's Brook which created a reservoir, now completely silted up, and one of the world's first hydro-electric power schemes. Some of the people who lived in the parish before the war can still remember jumping off the dam wall into the reservoir and using it as an outdoor pool in the summer.

- 5** Bedlam Village
- 6** Bedlam War Memorial and former Chapel

## *Cleeton St Mary*

Most of the current village of Cleeton is Victorian and built by George Pardoe of Nash Court for the miners and quarrymen who lived all over Catherton Common, including the old school (1872), which is now a private house. Opposite the church of St Mary (1878) are the Pardoe Almshouses (1888). When Pardoe's widow died in 1903 she made a bequest of £200 to ensure that the bells of Cirencester be rung every 29th May to celebrate the Restoration of the Monarchy, and another of £700 to erect headstones for any of the pensioners who had lived in the Pardoe Almshouses. The Attorney-General contested the will on the grounds that the bequest was not a charitable one, but lost.

The medieval village of Cleeton is about half a mile downhill to the north in a field called House Meadow. Evidence of five houses has been found there. The remains of a moated manor house are nearby and from the ground you can see how the stream was split upstream to fill the ditches which formed the moat.

Cleeton Court's original 15th Century great hall has been preserved despite many later additions to the house over the centuries, especially the 17th. The curacy of Cleeton St Mary was formed in 1879 out of parts of the parishes of Bitterley, Farlow and Doddington.

- 7** Bedlam from Dhustone Lane
- 8** Old Fort on Clee looking towards Cleeton St Mary
- 9** Cleeton Church and Pardoe Almshouses



# Middleton

The nave and chancel of Middleton church (or chapel) are Norman though what can be seen today is largely the result of an extensive restoration by Sir Charles Rouse-Boughton in 1857. Shortly after this, in 1861, Sir Charles built Middleton Court. Brook House Farm is at least 250 years older than that and is one of many of the significant buildings on the Downton Hall estate.

Middleton has increased in size during the latter part of the 20th century and into the 21st, mostly along the main road in the direction of Bridgnorth. The scrap metal yard, which had been the railway sidings, now has a cul-de-sac of 'executive' homes on it.

At the end of the drive of Crow Leasowes Farm (built in the 1660s) is the site of the Crow Leasowes Oak, second only in the county to Lydham Manor Oak and one of the oldest and biggest oaks in the country.

- 1** West End, Middleton Church
- 2** West Farm, Snitton
- 3** Quarry Farm, Middleton
- 4** East Lodge, Downton Hall
- 5** Middleton Church
- 6** Snitton Hall Farm
- 7** Crow Leasows Oak



# Snitton

Snitton was part of the manor of Caynham which belonged to Ralph de Mortimer at the time of Domesday.

In 1180 Hugh de Mortimer gave the manor to Wigmore Abbey but son Roger kept Snitton as a halting place between his castle at Wigmore and Cleobury. His wife lost their child in childbirth when they had to stop at Snitton (at the farm perhaps). Seeing this as a judgment on him she persuaded him to transfer the rest of the manor to Wigmore Abbey.



# Henley Hall

An extract from the chapter "Gentlemen's Seats, Villages &c in the Neighbourhood of Ludlow" in History and Antiquities of Ludlow by Thomas Wright, 1826:

*Henley Hall, the residence of the Rev. S. Johnes Knight. It is a large brick building, two miles from Ludlow, on the Cleobury road. On the south front extends a well wooded park, with walks and plantations. The river Ledwich passes close by the house.*

In 1770 Thomas Knight bought the ancient manor of Henley Hall from the Powys family who had built a gabled house of three storeys, to which by 1772 Knight had made handsome Georgian additions and alterations. He lived there with his unmarried sisters until his death in 1803. Thomas left Henley Hall to his only surviving sibling Elizabeth, who died in 1813.

Thomas stipulated in his Will that on Elizabeth's death, Henley Hall would pass to his cousin the Rev. Samuel Johnes, younger brother of Thomas Johnes of Hafod. Samuel Johnes took up his residence at Henley, where he died in 1852. Thomas Knight had also stipulated in his Will that in default of a male heir to the Johnes, Henley should pass to the Wolverley branch of the Knight family.

In 1852 John Knight came to

inherit Henley for the remaining 20 years of his life, spending it in planting, landscaping and restoring.

However, in 1874, soon after John Knight's death in 1872, his eldest son, another John Knight, sold Henley Hall to Edmund Wedgwood Wood. John then married one of his servants in 1876, squandered the proceeds and died in 1878.

A service block was added to the hall in 1875, a billiards room extension by Norman Shaw in 1892 and finally what Pevsner called an "elaborate service court" in 1907.

A stained glass sundial by Charles Eamer Kempe was installed in a window of the house in 1875 with the Wood coat of arms and the lines *Make time ~ save time, while time lasts.*

*All time is no time, when time is past.*

The wrought iron gates were originally at Wirksworth Hall in Derbyshire and were moved to the end of the drive at Henley in the late 1800s.



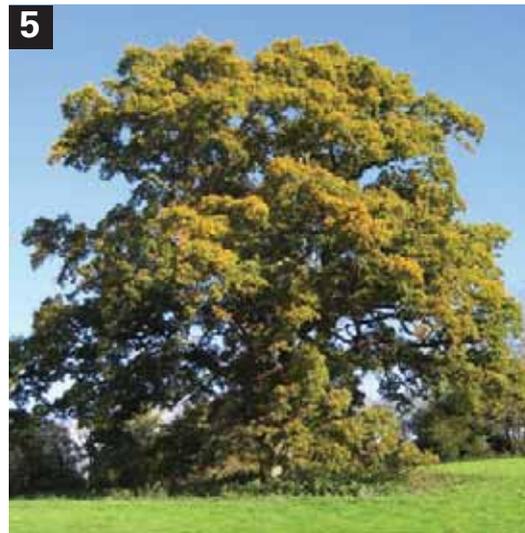
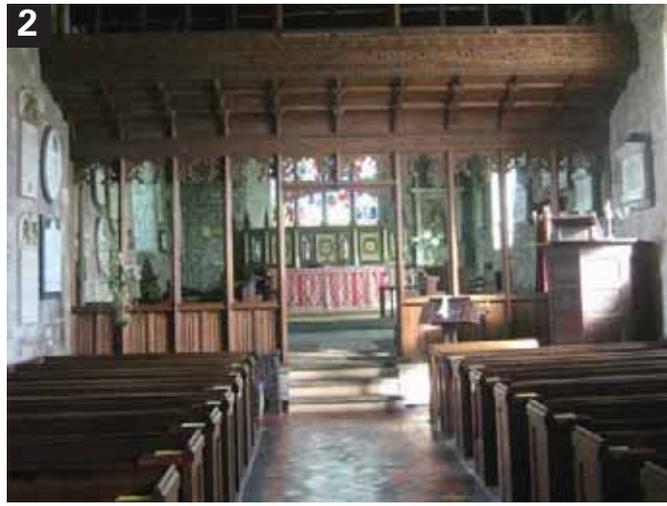
**1** Sluice Gate, Lower Ledwyche

**2** Game crop, Bitterley Parish

**3** Bridge over Cay Brook, Snitton Hall Farm

**4** Road Bridge, Lower Ledwyche

**5** Late Summer crop, Bitterley Parish



- 1** Bitterley Church
- 2** Interior of Bitterley Church
- 3** Bitterley Cross showing detail
- 4** Bitterley Cross with 'sighting hole'
- 5** Oak east of Bitterley village
- 6** Cattle, Bitterley
- 7** Effects of quarrying on Cleve Hill
- 8** Flood damage to church wall, September 2008
- 9** Giant's Chair, Titterstone



# *The Railway in Bitterley*

In the mid 1800s the various outputs of coal and stone from the quarries on Titterstone Clee Hill had grown to such a level that improved transport from the quarries was essential. This gave rise to the need to construct a railway connection from Clee Hill via Bitterley to a junction with the mainline just north of Ludlow Station.

The branch line railway was constructed in phases. On 24 August 1864 the first 4.5 miles was opened from Ludlow to the sidings at Bitterley Wharf. On 1 June 1867 the line was extended a further 1.5 miles to the quarries at Clee Hill, which included a cable operated incline as far as the village of Dhustone.

Subsequently a rope hauled incline was constructed, also starting from the sidings in Bitterley, running via Bedlam up to the quarries on the top of Titterstone Clee Hill.

Initially the line was used for hauling coal that had been mined on Clee Hill, and for a short time iron, but later the stone traffic became the dominant material to be transported. Wagons on the Titterstone incline were narrow gauge, and upon arrival on a raised siding at Bitterley Wharf, the stone would be tipped into

standard gauge wagons located alongside in a lower siding.

These wagons would then be steam hauled along the rest of the branch to the main line at Ludlow for onward transportation to many parts of the country. For instance it is known that the docks at Cardiff were built from this stone. The line was also used for general goods, serving the sidings at Bitterley Wharf and at the intermediate village of Middleton. Former local farm manager, Neil Ker, remembers his first delivery of fertiliser coming up the line for unloading at Bitterley Wharf in January 1958, and at the same time Jack Martin was sending sugar beet down the line.

In the line's heyday Bitterley was a busy and important interchange, so much so that in about 1907 the amount of train movements required a 13-lever signal box to be built. Trains of 12 empty wagons would be hauled up the line from Ludlow, but because of the steep gradient when entering Bitterley Wharf the train had to be split into two trains of 6 wagons then shunted into the sidings. Whilst this branch was a goods only line, it was occasionally used by locals for travelling to

and from Bitterley to Ludlow in the guard's van. Back in 1865 a special passenger train carried people from Ludlow to Bitterley Wharf to attend a celebration of the re-opening of Bitterley Church following a period of restoration.

It is also known that on occasions there were runaway wagons on the inclines, and it has been known for there to be runaway incidents from the wharf itself along the branch line. The Wharf was a hive of activity at its peak in the 1920's, with a specially constructed plant for the production of tarmac. But by 1951 the signal box had been replaced by a basic ground frame – an indication that the steady decline in railway traffic had commenced.

The first section to close was the Clee Hill incline in 1958, with the Titterstone incline closing in 1960. Trains to Bitterley ceased in 1962 and to Middleton in 1963. Traces of the old branch line still exist and can be explored by walkers, as can parts of the two inclines up Titterstone Clee Hill. This is all part of our local industrial heritage left for future generations to marvel at the inventiveness of the Victorians.



Bitterley Incline



Bitterley Wharf

# *Bitterley – now and in the future*

## *General Observations*

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There was an excellent response to the questionnaire from Bitterley's population of approximately 700. 258 adult responses were received, with 19 from younger children and 11 from teenagers. There were more responses from the female population than the male.

Of the people who responded, 10% were born in the parish, 50% gave the rural setting as the main reason for moving here, 20% work in the area, 30% are retired and 30% are in employment. The population is weighted towards to older age groups, approximately 2:1 being over 45. If 60 is taken as a demarcation point the ratio is not far from being 1:1.

There were some very strong trends within the responses in terms of perceived problems. Transport was a very clear issue as was concern about road safety and care of the local environment.

Most children in the area attend Bitterley C.E. Primary School and then go on to attend either Ludlow or Lacon Childe secondary schools. Most expressed a desire to go on to further education after leaving school but hardly any intend/ would like to live in the immediate area as adults. The young people see a need for activities that they can access easily especially those involving sport. There is an obvious gap here e.g. no post 14's use the village hall.

**ACTION:** *try to keep the young in the area after they have entered the job market.*

**ACTION:** *more activities for the young.*

Those who completed the questionnaires did so with honesty, enthusiasm and care. The Parish Plan Action Group was delighted and impressed with the response.

## *Housing*

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112 people thought that the parish could accommodate more housing whilst 81 did not. In terms of type of accommodation needed, 125 people thought housing for young people and 86 thought housing for small families. 34 thought there was a need for adapted properties and warden assisted homes. 18 people identified an actual current need for themselves for small family housing and there was also current need for other types of housing.

To respond to the current and perceived housing needs, 41 people said that no development would be acceptable whereas 96 said single homes in controlled locations, 94 said small groups of less than 10 houses and 129 said that conversion of redundant buildings was acceptable.

Provision of a wide range of accommodation suited to all, especially small families, would lead to the continued viability of the parish, in particular the pre-school services, the school, village hall and the church.

Although significant perceived and some actual housing needs for the Parish were identified, there were many (81) who voiced concern over how to achieve any new housing and the location. This is possibly due to the inevitable impact housing can have.

**ACTION:** *The Local Authority and Housing Association have been made aware of the findings and it is hoped that a more detailed study can be undertaken in the near future to clarify the apparent needs and consider how to respond to meet those needs in a way acceptable to the community as a whole.*

*Key parties that will be involved in considering this issue are the local authority, housing association, parish council and local landowners.*

## Health

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181 people had used the doctor in the last year, 30 had telephoned for health advice from their doctor and 49 had used the Shropdoc service. 30 had used the services of a health visitor or district nurse and 25 had used chiropody services.

A range of other health services such as meals on wheels, home care and loan of medical equipment are also used in the Parish.

There are no service providers actually located in the parish so people rely on going to services far more than services being brought into the Parish. 50 people identified themselves as having mobility problems and 55 thought facilities locally for disabled people were poor. To overcome difficulties in accessing health and other services, 49 people said they would use a voluntary car service if available and 36 people said they would be prepared to be a driver for such a service.

**ACTION:** *So a voluntary car service scheme will be investigated further and also the potential to bring more services into the parish investigated with the idea of using community facilities such as the village hall for services to come to.*

119 people said that they would help in a good neighbour scheme in the Parish.

**ACTION:** *a scheme should be set up and coordinated by volunteers within the community.*

## Crime

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There was a mix of opinions on police coverage of the Parish with 115 thinking it to be either good or reasonable but 69 thinking it poor and 59 having no opinion.

The survey highlighted that parishioners wanted to see a greater police presence. 68 people wanted a greater police presence, 78 wanted better consultation, 64 wanted a neighbourhood watch scheme, 42 wanted better street lighting and 33 wanted more drug and drink education and prevention.

The top crime concerns were speeding traffic (155 people) and burglary (66 people) with vandalism, illegal drug use, car crime and antisocial behaviour all being noted by between 20 and 30 people.

In terms of actual experience of crime, again speeding traffic was highest (65 people), with Burglary second (40 people) and car crime reported by 21 people.

Specific roads were identified regarding speeding traffic by several people and 111 people would like to see some traffic calming measures. 26 wanted more street lights.

The local police have begun public consultations at open forums around the Ludlow area. There have so far been two such forums held in Bitterley village hall and advertised in the newspaper and on the noticeboards. Despite apparent public concern at crime levels, these forums each had precisely zero attendance.

**ACTION:** *The results have been notified to the police, local authority and other agencies involved for them to be aware of and take action on. The Parish Council will follow up and pursue any specific actions with the police and other relevant agencies.*

## *Environment*

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184 people thought the refuse service was either good or reasonable and only 21 thought it was poor. 34 thought street lighting was poor however and 60 thought the care of roads and verges including street cleaning was poor.

Many thought that a map of the Parish and having clearly identified footpaths would help encourage pride in the Parish and benefit both residents and the environment.

**ACTION:** *post a map of the parish in the parish noticeboards (Parish Council).*

Improvements identified included having more road sweeping (52 people), dog waste bins (35 people). Many others also suggested notices, cleaning days and 39 suggested entering best kept village contest.

People were keen on taking other actions too in order to benefit the environment, 95 said more recycling, 67 energy saving, 58 wanted improved public transport, 52 want more local employment, 44 want traffic reduction and 40 want improved rights of way. 44 people identified a need for areas for young people to play.

A village or parish fete, more flowers and shrubs and more seating were identified as possible improvements.

**ACTION:** *Parish Council and Village Hall Committee could investigate the possibilities of improvements.*

Most people knew where local paths were but 43 said they had difficulty using them and 55 said they were not well signposted. 84 said they would be willing to help maintain them so they are clearly a valued resource of the Parish.

**ACTION:** *a coordinator is needed to manage the volunteers, decide which paths require maintenance, liaise with landowners etc*

There is clearly a balance to be struck though with how the environment is managed. For example 45 said to let verges grow for wildlife but 63 said to keep them mown and tidy.

**ACTION:** *Concerns about the maintenance of paths and roads have been passed to the Local Authority.*

## *Leisure*

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Several respondents to the survey said that they would be interested in adult education classes, especially in computing tuition. It was hoped that the Village Hall Committee might be able to look into this and into schemes run by other village halls, like Stoke St Milborough's and that partnership could be made with Ludlow College, Learn Direct, Connexions or another similar education provider.

**ACTION:** *When this need became known an offer to run an Information Technology course was made by Sally Barrell who is the Skills for Life Programme Manager for Telford College and lives in Bedlam. 20 people applied to attend the course and the result was that 11 gained a basic IT/communication qualification, 3 gained a basic, straight IT qualification, 2 gained a straight IT with maths, 2 gained maths and 1 gained an English qualification.*

A sizeable number expressed the desire for either yoga or keep fit sessions to begin.

**ACTION:** *This again is thought to be something that the Village Hall Committee might take a lead on; there may be yoga teachers locally who would start a class and inquiries could be made at the Leisure Centre in Ludlow.*

Dance classes were also an attraction for a number of people.

**ACTION:** *Mrs Dall does run dance classes in the village hall, so perhaps these could be more widely advertised in places, such as the noticeboards around the parish and the parish magazine.*

There are no facilities for the young who are too old for the playground and youth club.

**ACTION:** *The District Council has been approached on this and our District Councillor is investigating any options.*

Some adults complained that there is either not enough to do in the parish and that there is not enough information about activities and events.

**ACTION:** *The Parish Council is just in the process of completing a project which will have a noticeboard in each of the hamlets in the parish: Snitton, Farden and Henley and in the villages of Bitterley, Cleeton St Mary and Middleton.*

Though there is a church magazine for the parishioners of Bitterley and Stoke St Milborough there may be a demand for a parish magazine for Bitterley parish, including Cleeton St Mary, if someone is prepared to start one.

**ACTION:** *seek volunteers to start and run a parish magazine.*

There is no access to Freeview in the parish, which annoys many of the people here who feel the Licence Fee payers in rural areas are getting a second-rate service, especially in the light of the fact that in time all analogue TV signals will be turned off.

**ACTION:** *Our MP may be able to lobby on this, as well as the District Council.*

Similarly the more isolated houses in the parish still have no broadband provision. Others who are close enough to the junction box to have broadband nonetheless get a relatively slow speed (no more than 1 meg compared with up to 8 meg in cities) and intermittent connection.

**ACTION:** *lobby for better quality broadband provision.*

The questionnaire asked if there was demand for a pub in the parish, since the closest – the Royal Oak, the Nelson and the Three Horseshoes, are all outside the parish boundaries. 98 people said yes and 108 people said no.

## *Shopping*

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The questionnaire also asked if you would support a general shop or sub-post office in the parish and 193 people said they would, with only 40 declaring they would not.

**ACTION:** *The sparse spread of houses in the parish would make the location of such a shop difficult to choose but further investigation into the feasibility of starting one, as a private concern or a community project, might reveal the need for one. There are successful schemes in other villages nearby, such as Stottesdon and Wistanstow. It may be that Tesco or Tuffins would support such a community project by supplying staples at a price to make the venture viable.*

## *Transport*

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It was not surprising in a rural environment that many people were concerned about the lack of public transport and the poor bus timetable.

A small but significant number brought up the poor access to public transport for people with disabilities.

**Demand Responsive Transport (DRT):** This is a system using the buses in a similar way to using a taxi. You call the booking centre from your home and request a single or return trip to go to a nearby town, interchange or local facility. The booking centre communicates with the driver of the bus, and the passenger is fitted on to a service round. These may be regular (for example hourly) or entirely according to demand. A pick up point and time are agreed and the bus collects the passenger within a time window of, say 10 minutes, rather like a taxi.

**ACTION:** *Bitterley is now included in the **ShropshireLink** service. Telephone **0845 6789068**. You will be required to give your **name**, your **Zone** (Bitterley is in Zone 3), where you want to travel **from**, where you want to go **to** and **when** you want to travel. You can book your return journey at the same time.*

It has been suggested a covered bus stop in Cleeton St Mary would be a benefit to schoolchildren and other bus users, who are often elderly.

**ACTION:** *Councillor Nick Barclay has promoted this as a project for the two councils prior to their uniting and the application was successful. A covered bus stop should soon be sited in Cleeton.*

The need for better road maintenance and for hedges to be kept trimmed were important to many people.

**ACTION:** *The County Council has been informed of these concerns and the Parish Council in Bitterley discusses the state of the roads and any problems at each of its meetings. If you have any particular problems in mind then do contact one of your Parish Councillors or attend one of the Council's meetings.*

The lack of parking for the school in the village was an issue for many, including the parents whose children use the school and the people who live in the village who sometimes find their way blocked.

**ACTION:** *It has been suggested that the parking for three cars at most on the edge of the road by Orchard Lea could be deepened to accommodate up to eight cars parked "nose in". This possibility has been discussed by the Parish Council in relation to the extra traffic which might be created by the expansion of the school's facilities when it takes on the pre-school children formerly based in the village hall. No conclusion has yet been drawn.*

The biggest cause for concern regarding the roads is the speed of traffic in two places in particular: Angel Bank and Middleton.

**ACTION:** *Since the survey the highways authorities have put forward a plan to reduce the speed of the main road between Henley and Clee Hill. This was looked at in great detail by the parish council and the proposals were approved with one or two suggestions. Hopefully this will address the problem of cars and motorcycles racing up and down Angel Bank and the problem for our farmers and hauliers of using the roads safely without the fear of being driven into while turning into a side road.*

**ACTION:** *There is already an advisory speed limit in Middleton but it has not allayed the fear of the residents who cite the lack of a proper footpath as a worry, as well the location of several driveways onto the road as two reasons why the current situation is highly unsatisfactory at best and potentially life-threatening at worse.*

*District Councillor Nick Barclay has paid particular attention to the dangerous nature of the road in Middleton and has been campaigning on behalf of residents for months.*

Not mentioned in the survey was the fact that the roads around Bitterley are prone to flooding, as was seen in the summers of 2007 and 2008, when the village was effectively cut off to cars and the road surface was lifted outside Mill Farm and on the lane between the church and Wart Hill Farm. Several properties were inundated. Although the Parish Council keeps on top of problems with the roads, informing the maintenance department of the County Council, nonetheless there are still problems with the drains being too small, or not cleared often enough and with the route taken by run-off water from surrounding fields.

**ACTION:** *Rainwater coming down the road from Angel bank frequently blocks the drain at Hilluppencott Farm. Water runs down the road from the drive of Furlongs Farm, past the turning for Bedlam and the church and is not carried away by the drains in heavy rain. The drains cannot cope with field water run-off above "The Green". There is now a continual flow under the old railway bridge and onto the road opposite Mill Farm. The Parish Council should ensure that these problems have a permanent solution.*

## Young People

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The responses to the questionnaires showed that our young people take a great deal of pride and pleasure in their parish. They are appreciative of the beauty and tranquillity of their location and keen to enhance the experience of living here. For instance there was a good response to the volunteer 'litter pick'.

There are two main areas noted as concerns. The first is the lack of provision of clubs/activities locally, especially for the post 14 age group. The second is the absence of transport to activities further afield e.g. Ludlow.

**ACTION:** *The following action points should be considered in order to address these issues affecting our young people.*

- *Provision of youth clubs for 7-10 year olds and 14+*
- *Setting up a car-sharing scheme for outside activities*
- *Investigate the possibility of creating a cycle path*
- *Investigate open space and/or creating supervision for the school field to provide a safe and suitable area for outdoor games.*

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## Steering Group

Members of the Steering Group would like to thank everybody who has helped to produce this Plan:

- First of all everybody who took the time to fill in and return a questionnaire.
- The little army of volunteers who ensured that the surveys were delivered to every house in the parish.
- Nick Barclay and Neil Ker for providing the history of the railway in Bitterley and Tony Mason for his work on Snitton and Hilluppencott.
- Bitterley School for hosting the meetings and Jean Monteith for preparing the schoolroom.
- The Community Council of Shropshire and South Shropshire District Council for providing support, both financial and advisory, and especially Lisa Bedford of SSDC and Gemma Robinson and Charlene Sussums of CCS.
- Everybody who kindly supplied photographs including Richard Osborne, Jennifer Hewitt, Sara Chance and Henry Chance.
- If we have forgotten anyone else it is only due to oversight and we hope that we may be forgiven the unintended omission.

### Steering group members

Nick Barclay, Bitterley  
Jane Bishop, Bitterley  
June Buckard, Bitterley (Treasurer)  
Henry Chance, Bitterley (Chairman)  
Andrea Draper, Snitton  
Dave Evans, Farden  
The late Mik Grimm, Stoney Lane  
Tony Mason, Snitton  
Mary Jane Millard, Cleestanton Lane  
Tony Millard, Cleestanton Lane  
Richard Osborne, Bitterley  
Towy Price, Henley  
Trish Price, Henley  
and several others who have from time to time dropped in to help.



*Filming Parish Plan*



*10th Anniversary, Village Hall*

