

Express Community

There's lots going on in and around Beeston for all age groups.

For those caring for younger children, information about toy libraries, playgroups, toddler groups, and parenting skills is readily available from Beeston Clinic, Dovecote House, 38 Wollaton Road, Beeston.

If you are planning events or wish to advertise products or services for families, ring 0115 922 8007

Brownies turn into cub reporters *by the Editor*

BROWNIES of 6th Beeston were called into action as cub reporters for *The Beeston Express* when one of their guider leaders, Alison Mills, achieved her Queen's Guide Award.

Alison Mills had travelled to London at the end of April to collect her award and wanted to share the day's excitement with the youngsters under her weekly charge, and with the wider readership of *The Beeston Express*. It seemed logical to combine the two fact-finding sessions, so the Brownies were asked to act as fledgling reporters, quizzing Alison during their regular Wednesday Brownie night at 6th Beeston HQ about becoming a Queen's Guide and her day in London. One of the Brownies volunteered to take notes as the others asked their questions and made sure that all aspects of the story were covered.

Alison (26) began by telling the Brownies how long it had taken

her to achieve her Queen's Guide – three years – and what had been involved. She explained how working towards the Award had greatly increased her confidence in her ability to make things happen, and that gaining her Pack Holiday Licence as part of the Award's Outdoor Challenge element now meant that she could take the Brownies away for residential trips.

She said: "As well as helping with weekly Brownie meetings, I helped to organise trips and pack holidays, one of them a Young Friends weekend with activities to be arranged for 1000 Rainbows, Brownies and Guides. That took some doing!"

"Also, as a chemistry student at the University of Nottingham, I organised a hands-on science evening in the chemistry laboratory for 100 Brownies. Some of you were there and made green slime and batteries from lemons in the lab,

and smashed flowers and fruit that had been frozen in liquid nitrogen."

Alison told the Brownies why, although she was being awarded her Queen's Guide, she didn't go to Buckingham Palace and she didn't meet the Queen.

Explaining that the Queen's Guide Award, the highest accolade in the Girlguiding movement, was not usually presented by the Queen but by the president of Girlguiding UK, Alison said that this year, BBC newsreader and TV presenter Kate Silverton had stood in for the Girlguiding president, HRH the Countess of Wessex, who is currently on maternity leave.

When asked about other things involved in achieving the award, Alison talked about the organisation of a four-day exploration on board the 'Tuptonia', a narrowboat jointly owned by Girlguiding Birmingham and Northamptonshire, as one of her 'outdoor challenge' elements. "This

was a very enjoyable challenge. Together with friends who had no experience of Girlguiding or of narrow boats, we learnt how to steer and maintain the boat, and operate the locks along the canal."

The Brownies also heard how, to complete the Personal Skill Development element of the award, Alison had finally passed her driving test. "This was a huge achievement for me," she told them. "I'd had a bad experience when I first took driving lessons some time ago. I ended up in tears and lost my confidence. But you'll be pleased to hear that, when it came to steering the narrowboat, I was quite good and I didn't cry at all!"

Alison was one of 60 young women invited to receive the Award from Kate Silverton, herself a Queen's Guide, at a special ceremony at the Gibson Hall in London. Alison told her audience of 20 enthralled 6th Beeston Brownies

how she had been nervous in case she stumbled and fell down some steps in front of all the dignitaries.

Commenting on her achievement, Alison said: "During the time it took me to complete the Award, I had to move house four times and lived in four counties. That meant that I had to become quite independent. I like being a Guide, and working on the Award helped me to become involved in Girlguiding each time I moved."

The diligent young 6th Beeston Brownie reporters then checked they had all the information they needed for their story before assembling themselves for a photo call at the end of the evening.

Arts Festival gets off to a masterly start

IN spite of a dreary grey morning and teeming rain, Beeston's new Arts Festival was successfully launched on June 21 at the Pearson Centre on Nuart Road.

Sixty artists with 216 pieces of work between them that they were happy to put on show emerged when a 'call for artists' went out during the early planning stages.

Novice Arts Festival organisers Rita Mitchell and Lynda Child had decided that Beeston needed an annual exhibition for local artists to call their own after the Indigenous Art Exhibition, organised by

Broxtowe Borough Council, was moved from the Town Hall on Foster Avenue to a new base in Eastwood a couple of years ago. Teaming up earlier this year, Rita and Lynda set about arranging a replacement and issued the call for artists.

As the inaugural Beeston Arts Festival got under way and the first of the day's 485 visitors headed through the door, Rita confessed just how nerve-wracking arranging the exhibition had been; the first time she and Lynda had attempted such a thing. "For instance, we'd

been told we could have access to the hall in the Pearson Centre on Friday evening – but didn't realise that we would have to wait until an earlier group had finished using it. We had to spend a couple of frantic hours getting all the display boards assembled, and were back early on Saturday morning to get all the pictures hung before our 10am opening time."

Lynda added: "We do need to thank our husbands for their incredible support in getting the exhibition ready. We simply couldn't have managed everything on our

own."

An application for a grant from NCC Member Funding Forum provided a crucial cash injection of £350, enabling Lynda and Rita to buy materials for free painting workshops and activities for children to run concurrently with the exhibition, as well as publicity. Members of the Boys' Brigade provided refreshments, the proceeds being put towards their 'Jamaica' project. (They also managed to have the fire brigade arrive after triggering the alarm as they cooked, but that's another story!)

Rita Mitchell said: "Lynda and I are really pleased that the Festival went so well. I think we can call it a success when, at our very first attempt at organising anything like this, 485 visitors come to look at 216 paintings contributed by 60 artists. We've had lots of feedback forms returned and every one of them is positive about the festival, the venue – and the fact that it was being held in the middle of Beeston."