



By [JHLewis](#) | Posted: June 23, 2017

Hunting for value? Try the Fox & Hounds in Blidworth Bottoms



David Cole welcomes customers to the Fox & Hounds

The best place name in Nottinghamshire? It has to be Blidworth Bottoms, which is not quite a hamlet and can be found in that understated but lovely triangle of countryside between the A60 and A614. Burntstump Country Park, Cockliffe Country House Hotel and the magnificent Papplewick Pumping Station are all within easy reach.

Having found Blidworth Bottoms, less than a mile south of Blidworth itself, you won't have any trouble finding the Fox & Hounds. It is the stand-out cream-washed building at the top of narrow Rigg Lane. If the kitchen window is open you will pick up hints of head chef Richard Murray's cooking.

"We have a menu section called the Chef's Table but this is a place where you can also get a pie," says business owner David Cole. "But it will be a home-made pie and it will be packed with meat."

That explains the catering philosophy of David and his wife and business partner Diane. A country pub cannot survive on wet sales alone. You have to do food, and in a competitive market you have to do it well ... but in the heart of the old Nottinghamshire coalfield you skip the passion fruit foams and seven ways with whelks.

The building dates back to the early 19th century, when it was a farmhouse. In those days, farming was a much more labour-intensive business, so Blidworth Bottoms was a bustling little community with its own shops.

A Fox & Hounds beer shop existed in a nearby nail-maker's store. If demand for nails fell away, demand for ale didn't and the business moved to the existing building. And on the subject of beer, the draught ale choices at the Greene King-owned premises include Kimberley Best, Olde Trip, Golden Hen and Black Sheep. The Coles took over the Fox & Hounds in 2004. It was a departure for David and a return to old ways for Diane.

David, who was a quantity surveyor with his own building business, says: "We lived nearby so this was our local. We thought: shall we give it a go?"

"Diane had worked in the licensed trade and, knowing how much hard work is involved, she had vowed never to go back. But now we are in and enjoying it, she wouldn't swap it for all the tea in China."

The Coles are backed by a family team including their son Daniel, who is bar manager, and another son's wife, Sally.

David and Diane have invested heavily in the business over the years, most recently with redecoration and re-upholstery and the creation of an extension called The Orangery, with access to a new patio. Given his professional background, David project-managed the job himself



David (left) with daughter-in-law Sally and son and bar manager Daniel Cole

The extended pub can now seat 70-plus to a wide-ranging array of meals and snacks from a kitchen team led by Richard, who has put plenty of overseas experience into a menu that offers something for everyone.

Chef's Table features such offerings as turkey saltimbocca and bobotie, the South African dish incorporating spiced minced beef and saffron custard. There is a tapas section. David's favourite? The salad of squid, chickpeas and chorizo.

Starters include prawn cocktail, grilled scallops and, for two, a baked camembert cheese. There is a chicken menu and a pies menu. "The pies really fly out of the kitchen," says David. "You've got to be hungry." Steaks range from £15.75 for a flatiron to just under £24 for a filet.

Straight-from-Grimsby fish is incorporated into traditional haddock or cod and chips but also expect plenty of exotica: seafood chowder and teriyaki salmon, for instance.

Desserts cover all bases from the light and delicate to the belly-buster: from lemon and lime posset, for instance, to mega chocolate fudge cake.

Traditional Sunday roasts? Yes. Fixed price meals? Yes ... you can have a main course for £7.25 and add a starter or a dessert for another £4.25.

The Fox and Hounds may be off the beaten track but it has a devoted following. "We get customers from Blidworth, Ravenshead and Mansfield and we even have a couple from Sheffield who come for lunch every Sunday," says David.

"We are only ten minutes north of Arnold so we are easy for Nottingham people to get to. We get a lot of business on Papplewick Pumping Station steaming days."

The pub also makes the perfect place for a pint or lunch before or after a walk in the woods north of Longdale Lane. A visit by Nottingham branch of the Campaign for Real Ale concluded: "A visit there is heartily recommended. Bring a hearty appetite!"