

Christmas Letter 2005



2005 did not get off to a brilliant start. In January, I offered to prune a neighbour's conifer tree, as it was overhanging the pavement and making it difficult to see up the road when pulling off our drive. We have a number of trees in our garden that I had already cut back quite drastically, so I figured that this would be a quick and relatively easy job for a Friday afternoon... Wrong! Having survived 45 years relatively intact, I was surprised to spend a night in Stafford A & E with a fractured wrist! Happily, I was able to complete the job a couple of months later, without falling from the ladder this time! Prior to the above mishap, Edward and a few friends, shocked by the Tsunami in Asia, decided to organise a sponsored cycle ride. Together they raised over £750 pounds for the appeal, which is very pleasing, even if I did have to go with them myself (www.holmelee.btinternet.co.uk/edward/).

We've spent quite a bit of time working in the garden this year and decorating downstairs (post flood). Towards the end of the summer I decided to renew the felt on the garden sheds and give them a coat of preservative... Whilst crouched down applying creosote on a Sunday morning, I noticed an object sticking out of the ground. So, I dug around a bit and was surprised to discover that the "object" was in fact an unexploded shell dating back to 1918! The initial charge had failed to detonate the main charge, so the Army Bomb Disposal team (from Chilwell, Notts) carried out a controlled explosion on the farmland behind us at 8 pm that evening!!



Richard turned 18 this year and went on holiday with his girlfriend's family to Cornwall, whilst we did our usual Filey trip with Edward, taking in York's National Railway Museum and the North York Moors. We also spent a couple of days in Chester. Despite having family there, amazingly, we had not had chance to see many of the sights on our previous visits.

In October, we decided to go in search of a last-minute holiday during the half-term break and ended up in Rhodes. Lindos is an interesting place, having narrow streets, donkeys, an ancient Acropolis and restaurants too numerous to mention. We managed to cover most of the island, visited Rhodes old town (well worth a visit) and discovered one or two interesting mountain roads that were, in fact, best suited to donkey transport! All in all, a good place to visit at the end of the season (no crowds and pleasantly warm).

Richard decided to switch courses half way through his BTEC and is now doing an AGCE in IT and an A-Level in Law! So far, he seems to be making good progress, no doubt time will tell if he made the right choice? Either way, it puts off the cost of university for another year! He has passed his driving test now, but is still car-less, due to the high cost of insurance... Most of his friends that do have cars seem to spend all their time working to pay to keep them on the road! He has worked at Morrison's since the beginning of the year and is always being asked to work extra hours. When not working, he spends a lot of time with his girlfriend, so he rarely graces us with his presence.

Edward has moved into year 10 and appears to have a keen interest in Electronics. For work experience, he was hoping to work at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre "behind the scenes". He helped with the Scout Gang Show again this year and although he does not go to Scouts any more, he has volunteered to help with the local Beavers, which he enjoys. He bought a new keyboard for his birthday, which re-awakened his interest in playing and creating music (using the MIDI features with his computer).

Alison Continues to work at the local first school, supplying for a year 1-2 AST teacher one day per week and gives PPA cover for another ½ day. I continue to work from home 2 or 3 days per week. I now work for "Accenture Learning" (as opposed to being part of HR Services). Some of my colleagues have applied for jobs back in BT, but I have decided to stay put as I enjoy the work. I have now completed my first year as an NVQ Assessor and continue to visit BT IT apprentices in and around London on a fairly regular basis.

I finished my "Build Your Own Computer" evening classes this year, as I was finding it increasingly difficult to attract sufficient students. The thing is, whilst it is fun to do, PCs are so cheap to buy now, that people just can't be bothered to build one, or even upgrade their old one. I do, however, fear for the environment with all this stuff ending up in landfill, so I do my best to re-cycle the old parts in an environmentally friendly way.

Speaking of the environment... It looks as though our campaigning to the authorities in the wake of the August 2004 floods is beginning to bear fruit, with a flood prevention action plan due to implemented in the next financial year (<http://home.btconnect.com/alrfa/>). However, on a worldwide scale, our problems seem a bit insignificant considering the number of natural disasters that have occurred over the past year!

We go up to Chester to visit my Mum and Sister whenever we can and they are all due to come here for Christmas Day, with Mum staying for a few days, so hopefully we will be able to make a trip across to Nottingham to enable her to visit a couple of old friends.

I have reached the end of the page (with just enough space for a bit more festive clip-art), so if you are still reading this, all that remains is to wish you a Happy Christmas and all the very best for 2006. As usual, if you are up this way, please call and see us.

Kind Regards

*Nigel, Alison,
Richard & Edward.*

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