

Christmas Letter 2008



It's late November, so I decided that I really ought to write our annual Christmas epistle. Before starting this time around, I thought that I would look back over previous Christmas letters for inspiration and managed to find a collection of files going back almost to the last century... Remember floppy disks? Anyway, I decided to upload them all to the website for posterity! The interesting thing, looking back, is that every year is different, each has its ups and downs and this one is no exception...

Alison has been to Lichfield today to meet up with Sue, wife of Tony (a colleague that I used to work with in Leicester about 15 years ago). Meanwhile, I spent the day sawing branches off the willow tree before going with Alison and Edward to Stafford to watch the switch on of the Christmas lights and firework display, then back to Stone where we joined Richard at Wetherspoon's for a curry.

At work, I spent the first couple of months this year designing training packages for BT Retail's Customer Service Advisors based in Delhi. Apart from that, I have spent my time mainly delivering training... as far north as Edinburgh and as far south as Southampton. I find that I am travelling more frequently as operations have been scaled down at Yarnfield and I also do safety training for Openreach engineers ("poles and holes").

Alison went in to hospital in January, for a pre-arranged op. Everything went well and although she was incapacitated for several weeks, she is back to her normal self again now. She continues to work at a nursery in the town two days per week, helps at the same two first schools and provides occasional supply teaching supply cover.

In March, we went to my Aunt (Shirley) & Uncle's 50th Wedding Anniversary. My uncle (Ray) does not enjoy the best of health these days, but it was a happy occasion none-the-less!

In June, Alison went to Cardiff with her NWR ladies (ask her about the Scotsmen and their kilts sometime?) and we (Alison, Edward and myself) went for a holiday to Corfu as soon as Edward had finished taking his AS exams. We stayed on the north coast at Sidari, which was peaceful (as we prefer), at that time of year... A pleasant island, although the roads leave a lot to be desired in places, but we enjoyed the break and the sunshine!

In July, we enjoyed an organ recital by Nigel Ogden at the local church. I must say, that I was extremely impressed with his awesome performance. He played a medley of songs from various Rogers and Hammerstein's musicals (which brought back childhood memories of my father's singing) and a rather unique variation on "A Teddy Bear's picnic".

In August we were invited around the corner to a friend's (Chris and Brian) 40th Wedding Anniversary and had a most enjoyable time. Next year we will have been married 25 years ourselves... Makes you think doesn't it?

In October we had a "bit of a do" at the local hotel ballroom, to celebrate "significant birthdays" that had occurred this year (50 and 21) or were due to occur in the first part of next year (50 and 18)... Yes, I am still 49 at the time of writing (just)! Alison did a great job making invitations, organising the catering, balloons, magicians and other finishing touches, whilst Edward and I spent some time and effort building a light box and putting a basic "laptop disco" set-up together. We decided to use the occasion to raise some money for charity and were very pleased to raise a total of £448 pounds!

Speaking of significant birthdays, in November, we were invited to a friend's birthday party (Tracy) back in Nottingham. It was an opportunity to meet up with old scouting friends that I have not had contact with for many years... Anyway, that's quite enough of my reminiscing.



Friends Chris and Brian



Our "Significant Birthdays"
Celebration



Edward and Natasha
on Rita

Edward continues to be involved with beavers as a young leader and honorary explorer scout. He spent a week in the summer camping at Kibblestone, with some Norwegian scouts (all girls!), followed by a few days home hospitality. Everyone worked hard to make sure that it was a great success and a good time was had by all. He also spent an adrenaline fuelled day with his cousin Natasha at Alton towers! He has just applied for a deferred place at Staffs University to study Electronic Engineering in 2010, hoping to spend a year in industry before resuming full-time study. He has spent quite some time this year getting his model railway established in the loft and developing a website to record his progress. Amazingly enough, he also manages to find a bit of time between his many hobbies and pastimes, to pull in an occasional piece of schoolwork!



Edward's Model Railway so far...

Richard has had a few ups and downs this year... He was making good progress working at Vodafone as an Account Manager and then moved into Retail Management, when his original job was outsourced. However a further change of management at a senior level, caused that department to be wound down also, resulting in him losing his job altogether! After hunting around for suitable work, he ended up back at Wetherspoons (the job he did part time when he first started working at Vodafone). So, at least he is earning some money now, at a time when jobs are scarce. He still has the same girlfriend (Laura) and visits her at Huddersfield University (where she is studying Fine Art) as often as he can.

So that's about it for another year. I hope you enjoyed reading our news. More pictures etc. can be found on the website..

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Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Nigel, Alison, Richard and Edward