

# Christmas Letter 2009



The Aerodrome Hotel, Croydon, was originally built to serve the needs of air travellers in the 1930s... The airport itself has long since gone (replaced by Heathrow) but the old buildings remain as a business/leisure complex and a museum dedicated to the pioneers of long distance aviation such as Amy Johnson. What has this got to do with Christmas, I hear you say? Well it is where I happen to be at the moment, writing this letter, having travelled down today in order to deliver some safety training to BT openreach engineers... I show them how to avoid digging up electricity cables etc!

After nine years or so working for Accenture, I was a little surprised to discover recently, that our department (Learning) is being handed back to BT. I suppose it is not so surprising really, considering the ever reducing volumes of training provided on the BT contract? So, interesting times ahead for myself and colleagues as we revert back to our old employer (and office) on 1<sup>st</sup> December! The good news, in the short term at least, is that BT is going to retain a presence in Yarnfield, so I can still cycle to work, when not working at Croydon or elsewhere!

My latest project, on the home DIY front, is extending the en-suite bathroom to incorporate a shower cubicle and some fitted furniture. So far I have installed the shower and managed to make things half decent, for when my aunt and uncle came over from Canada to stay in the summer. There is still much to do, as I also needed to refit the wardrobes in the bedroom prior to building a new stud wall and major changes to existing plumbing, new wiring etc. It should be finished by this time next year!

Speaking of long term projects... After much campaigning, construction of the flood alleviation storage facility finally got underway at the top of the estate in August, five years after the original flooding incident. The work is almost complete now and knowing this gives us great peace of mind whenever there is substantial rainfall over Stone! <http://home.btconnect.com/alrfa/pictures.htm>

In January I celebrated my 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, by meeting up with Elaine and family for a meal in Nantwich. My sister presented me with a number of gifts that she thought were appropriate for a brother reaching his 1/2 century, including a Diablo and a small, furry item, which I think it's best that I don't describe further here!

At February 1/2 term, Alison visited Nottingham, as she likes to visit her relations and keep in touch with old friends. In April, Edward turned 18 and went with Alison to a Simply Red concert at the Ice Arena. Sadly, my uncle Ray passed away around this time, so we also attended his funeral. On a happier note, we spent a few days in Amsterdam with Alison's old college friend (Diana) and her husband (Bill). We visited the bulb fields at Keukenhof, Anne Frank's House, the Van Gough Museum, took a boat trip on the canals and ate in a variety of restaurants... A good time was had by all!

In May Edward completed his A-levels (A2 exams) and attended his school prom. In June, Alison travelled up to Harrogate with me, whilst I delivered some training. It was a hot few days, but we enjoyed being able to visit the theatre and restaurants in the cooler evenings. The last time I visited Harrogate with Alison was over 25 years ago (before we were married!).

As you may remember, Alison did her teacher training at Culham College Oxford, so in July we took the opportunity to join a church bus trip visiting the city of "dreaming spires" to take a look at her "University of Oxford" college, visit the Botanical Gardens, a Local History Museum and take tea at the Randolph Hotel. Alison also managed to squeeze in another bus trip later the same month to Althorp (home of the Spencer family).

In August, Richard got to drive a Porsche 911 Carrera 4S around a local airfield (at speeds well above those that would be legal on the road!), as a birthday gift from Laura. Alison and Edward spent a few days in London, staying with Natasha, taking in the sites and the west end show "We Will Rock You". By chance, I happened to be working in London myself at the time, so I was able to meet up and join them for an evening meal. My aunt and uncle (Jessie and Don) came over from Canada to help us to celebrate our 25th Wedding Anniversary, along with Aunt Shirley and family, bridesmaids (Diana and Sara) and their respective partners/family, Elaine and family and our friends (Chris & Brian) from around the corner. We all went for a meal at a local Chinese restaurant and then came back home for cake and champagne. Richard, Edward and Laura bought us a digital photo frame, which they had loaded with photos scanned in from our wedding album (not changed much really... as long as you don't look too closely!).

On the 1st September (being the actual date of our anniversary), we travelled down to the Sussex/Essex border AKA "Constable Country" and spent an enjoyable few days touring and walking in the area. We stopped at Cambridge on the way down and via Gainsborough's house at Sudbury on the way home, so quite an arty break! Edward went up in a glider for the first time at the local Staffs gliding club. I think he enjoyed the experience and may go again before his free membership runs out at the end of November! He also travelled by train to Whitehaven, Cumbria, on two occasions this year, to stay with a friend who shares his interest in computers and model railways etc. Richard went for a late break, camping in Filey with his girlfriend Laura and thanks to the mild weather, they had a good week.

We have seen a couple of good films this month ("Julie and Julia" and "Dorian Grey") at the Stoke film theatre (part of Staffs University). It is a small venue, but it has a good Dolby sound system and at only £5 a time, it's good value for money and you certainly get to enjoy the film without any disturbance.

In December, we are travelling down to London to meet up with Elaine (and family) for lunch, following the presentation of her CBE (for services to local and national further education) at Buckingham Palace... Quite an achievement!

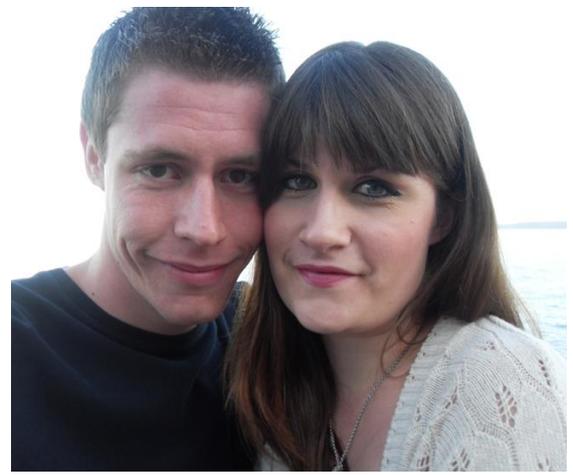
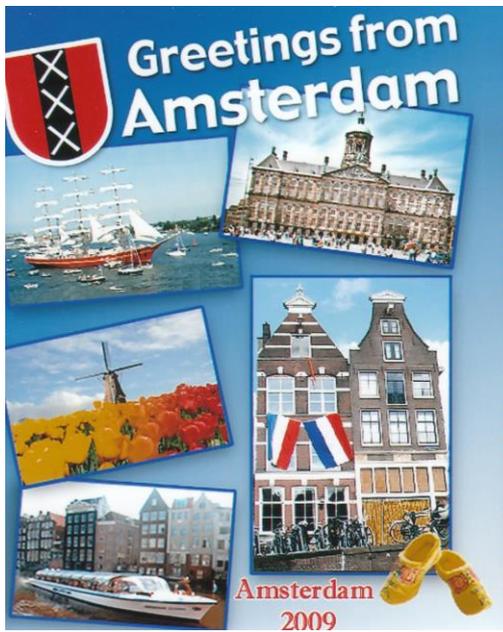
Life here in Stone carries on much the same, with Alison working at her nursery two days a week and at two first schools on other days. Richard is still working at Wetherspoons, whilst looking out for alternative employment. Edward is enjoying helping out in the Technology Dept. at his old school and is working an extra shift at the local garage to supplement his income, until he takes up his place at Staffs University, where he has been accepted to study Electronic Engineering, next September.

Well, that's all our news for another year... So, may I wish you and your families a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

Kind Regards

*Nigel, Alison,  
Richard & Edward*





Richard & Laura



25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary



Porsche 911 Carrera 4S

Constable Country...  
"The Hay Wain"



Edward

