

# Christmas Letter 2012



I woke up this morning (sounds a bit like the start of a blues song doesn't it?) to discover that Barack Obama had been re-elected as US president for "four more years" which made me think about what I might be doing in four more years myself?... Hopefully by then I'll be planning my retirement, but in the meantime I'm up in Harrogate, helping out Openreach, by delivering basic safety training to newly recruited engineers. Just recently, we've taken on a large number of ex-MOD people to help speed up the roll-out of 'Superfast Fibre Broadband'. I have to say, it's not what I really want to be doing, especially at this time of the year (Déjà vu), but needs must I suppose.

It's been quite an exciting year, what with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and of course the 2012 games. BT was a major sponsor of the games and this has provided me and my colleagues with some interesting opportunities and unusual requests for technical training. I honestly believe that no one can fail to be impressed by the performance of our sports men and women and the way the whole thing was organised. As a nation, we should be truly proud!

Alison was keen to soak up some of the atmosphere of the jubilee celebrations, so we arranged to go down to London for a couple of days. We watched and listened to the jubilee concert in St James's park, which was pretty spectacular, culminating with fireworks lighting up the sky above the palace. The sound at the live event was so much better than the BBC recording... I'm not sure why this should be, but I suppose it's more difficult getting the mix right for broadcast TV?

In the early part of the year, instead of the usual birthday presents, we opted for tickets to see a diverse series of plays at the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-U-Lyme (everything from 'Alfie' to Shakespeare), watch a number of films at the Stoke Film Theatre (including 'The Iron Lady' and 'The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel') and listen to live Music in Hanley with 'The Bootleg Beatles'. Sadly, I have to say that the 'bootleggers' did a much better job of covering the Beatles material than Paul McCartney did at the Queen's Jubilee Concert!



Edward celebrated his 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday this year (with a meal for friends and family at Frankie and Benny's) and also finished his second year at Staffs Uni. He is currently working at Capula in Stone (who design and manufacture controls systems for industrial applications). He opted for a year in industry before completing his final year and is enjoying the experience (and spending his wages on building computers, buying software and scuba-diving holidays)... So far this year, he has been diving in Spain and is currently in Egypt, squeezing in another diving holiday before Christmas! These days, when not at work, on holiday, or with his head stuck in a computerised device, he seems to be asleep or creating origami shapes and tessellations!

After a short spell of bar work and working at the local marina, Richard secured a job with Phones4u at the end of July. The jobs market is extremely volatile at the moment, so we're hoping that this time he may have better long term prospects... So far, so good! He enjoyed a sky diving experience for his birthday (in a vertical wind tunnel) which Laura had arranged (and participated in). They also enjoyed a few days in Bristol, Bath and surrounding area in October.

Alison took part in a challenge back in May with her ladies group (NWR) who were walking the various sections of the Staffordshire Way (a series of footpaths and back roads traversing the county) and we both joined the crowds in Stafford as one of the Olympic torches passed through.



Alison knows a lady who was a torch bearer and arranged for her to bring it in to the First School that she works at. Each of the children had their photos taken holding the torch and on another occasion, we were able to both pose whilst holding it. In addition to her supply teaching and nursery work, Alison is currently working as a Teaching Assistant for a newly qualified teacher at the school.



In June, on returning from the Jubilee celebrations, we spent a week in Norfolk with my aunt and uncle who were over from Canada, celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. On our way back we visited Gedling and I posed for a photo with my aunt and uncle in front of the church, as I had done 50 years previously... as a page boy at their wedding! Although we holidayed on the Norfolk



coast when the boys were young, we'd never really visited the broads, so it was an enjoyable break as well as nostalgia trip all round.

I've arranged our work's Christmas meal again this year at La Dolce Vita in Stone, so it was necessary to give it a trial run (in order to check the quality you understand)... It didn't disappoint. We've been through a number of re-organisations over the last year, so it will be interesting to meet some of the new faces that are now part of our team and conversely, say good luck to other colleagues that have been forced to move on! In the meantime, we're still hanging on at Yarnfield, although it's no longer a BT site and a large area is due to be re-developed for housing next year.



Our cat ('Guinness') is definitely part of the family now and manages to hold his own with the neighbour's dogs (3 in total). We're still enjoying square dancing and meet socially with the friends that we made when we first joined, although now we really could do with some more new members in order to keep it viable, as most of the existing members are now retired!

My sister Elaine and husband John spent a weekend with us in September. It was good to catch up, visit the farmer's market in the town and go for a walk in the local countryside. We also look forward to visiting them in Chester on Boxing Day.

We hope that you have an enjoyable Christmas with your family/friends and may you have a prosperous and healthy new year. We look forward to hearing your news.

*Kind Regards*

*Nigel, Alison, Richard & Edward*

