



Christmas Letter 2019

It's Saturday evening and as I write, I can hear the rain drumming on the conservatory roof. We seem to have had more than our fair share of rain this November. Having experienced a flooded home ourselves (in 2004), I can't help but feel sorry for the people that have been affected by the recent deluges. Still, it promises to be a fine day tomorrow, so hopefully we can get outside and finish tidying the garden, ready for the winter.

I can't believe that I've been retired for over 18 months now and yet I still don't seem to be able to find the time to fit everything in! I guess it's my own fault really, as earlier in the year, with Edward's help, we started taking our kitchen apart and building a temporary one in our dining room...

This was the first step in a project to build a new kitchen/ breakfast area and utility room.

It's well on the way to completion, but

we need to break off now and get tidied up, ready for the festive season and then continue in the New Year. I suppose you're thinking 'how come it's taking so long?' Well, all I can say, is that it's not just a simple kitchen re-fit... It has involved taking down walls and ceilings, designing and installing structural steelwork, re-plumbing, new radiators, new wiring, new plasterboard etc. Suffice to say it's been a lot of work and apart from the skim coat plastering, we've done it all ourselves.



In January, I celebrated '60 years on planet Earth' with a party at a nearby [hotel](#) and a surprise cake organised by Alison. It was good to meet up with family and friends and I'm pleased to say the mini sub-woofers, that Ed and I built, performed admirably and a good time was had by all.

Throughout the year, Edward has attended numerous hospital appointments for tests and consultations, in an attempt to discover the cause

of his fatigue... No definite conclusions as yet, but he remains positive and I must, of course, give him recognition for his role as Clerk of Works, Co-designer and Project/Procurement Manager on the Kitchen rebuild – He's done a great job!



In April we travelled to Bradford with Edward, who was attending an origami convention. This gave us the opportunity to visit Saltaire and [Salts Mill](#), which these days houses a collection of [David Hockney's](#) work, among other things... A great day out and well worth a visit.

Alison went down to London in May, to meet her friend Jess again. She worked with Jess, when she first started as a newly qualified teacher, at her school and they have remained friends ever since. Alison has always enjoyed working in school but following an influx of children with severe behavioural problems, life was becoming just too stressful, so she opted to finish at the half-term break. It's always a bit of a wrench when you give up the job that's been your vocation for so many years, but I feel sure she's done the right thing.

In June the disco gear had another outing, when I was asked to provide music and PA for Eccleshall Scout Group, who were raising money to upgrade their HQ with a 'Beer Festival'. It was one of the hottest days of the year, so I was pleased that Edward thought to take a fan with us, to keep the tent cool. Around this time, I was invited by an ex-colleague, to join him for a talk and behind-the-scenes tour of the [BBC studios at Salford](#). Richard and Edward were also invited, so you might recognise a few of the people on the Breakfast sofa.



As you may remember, Edward completed his MSc last year, but opted for a July graduation at [Trentham Gardens](#), instead of an indoor ceremony. It was a lovely sunny day and fortunately the whole family were able to attend and celebrate his success.

In August, my Aunt Jessie came over from Canada and stayed with us for a few days. We then travelled down to Oxford for a spot of sightseeing and revisited [Blenheim Palace](#), before taking Jessie to Reading station to catch a train to Truro, where she spent some time with my sister Elaine. Elaine bought me a flying lesson as a 60th birthday present, so during a gap in the August showers, I took to the skies, from Doncaster airport, in a Cessna... That's one more thing I can tick off the bucket list (if I had one that is).

Our local residents association organised a 'Picnic in the Park' for August, but it had to be postponed, as rain was forecast on the day. Fortunately, the alternate day in September was much better and provided a great opportunity to get to know the people who live in our local area. Around this time, Richard and Victoria went to Madeira again, for one last time, before our friends Diana and Bill sold their lovely apartment.

In October, Richard and Edward visited the [Grand Designs Live](#) exhibition at the NEC, Birmingham. They thoroughly enjoyed their day out and even managed to get selfies with Kevin Macleod. At the end of the month we flew to Malta... Edward had visited [Saint Paul's Bay](#) a couple of times previously with his SCUBA diving friends and thought that we might like to go there ourselves, so we booked an apartment and did all the touristy stuff. Ed was also able to spend a couple of days diving. Malta is a place rich in history, with a strong British colonial connection (they even have UK 13 amp sockets!).



This week we're off to the [Gatehouse Theatre](#), in Stafford, to attend a lecture by mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington. It seems that he's been climbing mountains for as long as I can remember (and still doing it apparently). Recently we've been to a couple of musical productions at the Gatehouse (Godspell and Oliver). Both were really good, especially considering they were amateur youth productions.

We were very sorry to hear that my cousin David had passed away recently. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

So, that's just about all our news for this year. As always, we look forward (with 2020 vision) 😊 to hearing your news and wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Nigel, Alison & Family

P.S. If you want to view a PDF version of this letter (with working hyperlinks), you can download one from: www.holmelee.co.uk/xmasletters/2019.pdf (just change the year if you want to view any of the older ones).