

Christmas Letter 2020



It's Sunday evening, as I sit down with the laptop, to begin writing this year's Christmas letter. We've just put the clocks back, which of course, means sacrificing an hour's daylight in the evening. I suppose it depends where you live and how early you need to get up in the morning, but personally, I wish they'd let us keep summertime all year round.

It's been a heck of a year, one way or another. In January, floods caused misery for people in some parts of the country, arguments over Brexit continued (and are still going on for that matter)... But who could possibly have foreseen the effects that a virus from China would have on the UK and the rest of the world.

We saw in the New Year at Little Stoke Cricket Club, with yours truly as DJ... This was a regular occurrence for me in the late 70s and early 80s as 'Phase I Disco' (all vinyl in those days). There was a brief renaissance as 'Phase II' at the Millennium and my Sister's 25th wedding anniversary (CDs and MP3s), then again in 2008 when we celebrated our own 25th, plus significant family birthdays. 'Phase III' was created for Richard's wedding and all was going well... that is, until Covid-19 put a stop to things (A birthday party on 14th February was our last gig).



Unfortunately, it's not just entertainment that's been curtailed by this awful virus. Sadly, some people have lost their lives, or missed out on urgent medical treatment due to lack of resource. Alison had not been feeling too well as we went into lockdown... To cut a long story short, after numerous scans and investigations, she was referred to Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham for what turned out to be a small Neuroendocrine Tumour (NET) on her left lung. The NET (a rare type of cancer) has caused lesions on her liver, for which she's now receiving hormone treatment. It's early days yet, but hopefully the treatment will help her to get back on an even keel. It's at times like this, that you are grateful for true friends and thank goodness for the NHS!



The good thing about lockdown is that, on the whole, people have pulled together, especially in the early days (clapping for the NHS etc.). Apart from the people that insisted on clearing the supermarket shelves of toilet rolls, there did seem to be a sense of community. Of course we're not out of the woods yet, with a second lockdown just announced, but hopefully, common sense will prevail and eventually we will get through all of this. At least during the first lockdown, hardware stores stayed open (click and collect at the larger ones). This provided Edward and I with the ideal opportunity to complete our kitchen project... However, rather than bore you with the details here, we did what any self-respecting, ex-training

person would do and put a [slide show](#) together, using photos taken at various stages throughout.

At the beginning of the year, we joined with friends, around the corner for a 'pudding club' evening, which was most enjoyable, Alison met up with her NWR friends in Hanley, to celebrate their Heritage Day, whilst Richard and Edward visited the [National Space Centre](#).

Alison's friend Jess also came up from London for a visit and a chance to catch up. Life from then on, continued with phone calls, texts and Zoom sessions (even church services)... Video conferencing is something that I'm very familiar with through work, but who would have thought that it would become so widely used for social interaction. Edward was due to attend a couple of Origami conventions this year (Hull and Edinburgh), which were cancelled, as were the monthly meetings in Birmingham. So, he's been very proactive, organising regular on-line 'virtual Origami meetings' instead. These meetings are well attended by fellow 'origami geeks' from the UK and across the world.



As restrictions were eased, Jess was able to visit her parents in York, before embarking on a tour of Italy. Alison was able to stay in touch with her throughout, via regular Zoom sessions... Female company is a bit 'thin on the ground' here, so it's nice to be able to use technology to keep in touch (girlie talk).

The weather has been really favourable for cycling, so I've been able to clock up plenty of miles around the villages of Staffordshire and Shropshire with my 'cycling buddies'... We can only meet up in pairs again at the moment and it's packed lunch rather than pub, but I'm not complaining.

In August, we were able to take advantage of 'Eat out to help out' (50% discount on food, up to £10 per head) and we've since been for an Italian meal to celebrate Edward's birthday. Sadly the show planned for after the meal ([The Magic of Motown](#)) was cancelled, having been postponed once already due to Covid.

Our entertainment this year has mainly been watching various box sets on catch-up TV and a 'Film Night' each Saturday. Our old TV, is now on the wall in the kitchen (above the breakfast bar, much to Alison's chagrin), so we treated ourselves to a new 4K TV for the lounge (along with a sound bar and sub, for a 'cinema like' experience). Sometimes we've watched old DVDs that Edward has never seen and sometimes new films, streamed through Prime Video etc. Some of our favourites so far, are the film '[Sully](#)' and the complete set of 'Death in Paradise'. We're still working our way through them, but needless to say, we're not planning on taking a holiday in St. Marie ourselves any time soon (such a dangerous place!). The background music is Reggae and Ska... Edward and I pretty well recognise every track.



In early September, Richard and Victoria were able to take a short break at a holiday park in Bude, but we've not been away ourselves this year... fingers crossed for next year eh! Alison's cousin Geraldine and her daughter Sara, have both been able to visit us on separate occasions, plus a few local friends, so we've not been totally devoid of company, but it does seem strange!

Sadly, Victoria is having to deal with Covid patients again, so she's opted to stay with her mother (who is also a nurse) and Richard has come back home for a second time this year. He's been furloughed during lockdown again, but his boss has looked after the staff very well.

We're holding a small fireworks display, with bonfire type food in our back garden and look forward to being able to share some better news with you next year. In the meantime, enjoy Christmas, as best you can, and stay safe!

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/2020.pdf (just change the year if you want to view any of the older ones).