

The Fourth Estate 2007

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Each Christmas we spend a fortune on cards and you probably do too. Very sadly our dear friend Anne passed away at the end of June as a result of contracting breast cancer for the second time. We were, and still are, terribly affected by her death and we want to do whatever we can to help other women faced by this awful illness. So instead of buying cards we're donating the money we would have spent on them to MacMillan Nurses (<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/donate>) in her memory. Why don't you do the same next year?

Almost Done

Claire and Carl's wedding last year made us get on with finishing the (now) four year project to get our house in order. And this year, thanks to the wonderful Ralph and his immaculate craftsmanship the job's done, give or take a few wardrobes, wardrobe doors and new drive. All being well, by this time next year....

Just Call me Sven (or Ranjit!)

Well, no more trips to Malaysia (cities or jungles) as my job which took me there and other fun places has changed and I'm now "Our Man" for India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Nigeria and (perversely) The Nordic and Baltic countries - so not much travelling to do, then! In September I made my first visit to India - wonderful, except that it was to the industrial areas of Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata. The grinding poverty of most Indians depressed me immensely. How can a country which is supposed to be one



of the developing powerhouses of Asia treat its people so poorly when there is so much wealth and beauty there?

The Southernmost!

After a couple of years without proper holidays (weddings and house rebuilding taking precedence) we went overboard this year and spent four weeks during October and November seeing all the "fandamily", friends and 6,500 kms of the country! For a while we were the southernmost people in the whole of Africa as we sat on the stone marking the meeting place of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.



While in the Drakensberg Mountains Noelene decided that she rather liked walking, managed a 17 km walk one day, got chased by a baboon another and climbed Van Hynegenis Mountain on a third. We visited friends and family we hadn't seen for years, went to Soweto and felt very privileged

to look around the humble house in which Nelson Mandela lived before he was imprisoned and ended our brilliant holiday with a superb party hosted by Noelene's bro Mikey. After such a great time coming back to cold, wet, dark Bolton and work was, to say the least, a bit of a struggle!

Anywhere

Else? - well we had a couple of long weekends in the Lake District (mostly wet, but very nice) and an amazing walking weekend in Wales this month where



we sat with friends outside in the sunshine at a pub on a beach, drank beer/wine and enjoyed (hot!) soup - fantastic!

Up The Workers!

It seems that we've all got new jobs in the last year or so—Noelene's now an official fully paid up member of the working class being employed full time by the Bolton Racial Equality Council and run-



ning their Young in Bolton project until next April, John is now "technifying" around some very strange countries, Dawn has moved jobs from salubrious Moston in Manchester to the (almost) rural delights of Harwood near Burnley and Claire, at last qualified as a nurse, is working at Manchester Royal Infirmary in the gory Vascular Surgery ward. At least we'll be well looked after in our dotage!

Zounds, Those Sounds!

It was rather a better year than last for live music, one of our real passions. Early on we saw the now one-legged John Martyn and the lack of that limb doesn't seemed to have inhibited his guitar playing in the least. One of our regular favourites is Eddi Reader and, in her own completely crazy way, she was just brilliant as usual. Then, later in the year, Graham took us to see what I described as "esoteric Indian music" - Shivkumar Sharma and Hariprasad Chaurasia—very, very different, immensely enjoyable and was one of Noelene's favourite musical events of the year.

But, leaving the best for (almost) last, there was the incredible Genesis re-union tour which we saw at Old Trafford, Manchester on the only sunny, warm night of this English summer (Graham, when asked if he'd like a ticket said "only if it's in the sniper's seat!"). Like many of us, they may be getting old but they're still rocking - and how!

And then, in Jo'burg we went with Mikey and Tertia to finish our holiday at the completely OTT Carnival City to see Foreigner ("*I've been waiting for a girl like you...*"). As with Genesis, age hasn't dimmed them and, even if there are only two of the original band left, they were still, as Aki would say, "FB"!!

Walkies?

It's been a while since John plodded over miles of moorland day after day seeking some sort of spirituality in sore feet and aching limbs. But the silly old bugger's up to it again next year as he plans to tackle the 300km Coast to Coast walk across northern England. So, if you're free and feel up to it at the end of June/early July you'll be very wel-



come to get wet, cold and "spiritual" with him! You never know, Noelene might also manage a plod or two!



What Else?

As always it's both difficult to remember and more so to sum up all that we've done in the past year. But, John stood in the local elections again (he says in a small voice!), came second with less than a third of the votes of the winning Tory but is having another go in 2008. The old fella, now that his knee is too %\$^&*# to run any more, swims most mornings and has discovered that swimming is the most boring form of exercise ever. The two of us have taken to playing

badminton regularly on a Sunday morning (both looking for the 7 - 0 win over the other!) Oh, and it was the 25th anniversary of John's first marathon (don't you just love the hair styles!)



The Best of 2007!

Not enough space for our Top 10 this year so here are the things which were really special for us in 2007:

- Graham's 70th birthday dinner at Ramsbottom
- The books of Haruki Murakami - stranger than fiction

but compelling reading (Noelene)

- The music of Zulu singer Simphewe Dana
- Visiting the former home of Nelson Mandela
- **The love of our families and all our friends**

Finally

If you like our photos you can see lots more of them at: <http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/gaijin1234>

A very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to all our readers!

