

The Fourth Estate 2012

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Still No Cards?

Nope! On our tour around South Africa we saw just how poor many of its people still are with vineyard workers earning less than £6 per day and no free education, medical care, decent housing or even clean water in many places. So, as in previous years, we've committed ourselves to helping those who need our help most of all and we hope you will too, especially this Christmas, by gifts via **act!onaid** (www.giftsinaction.org.uk).

act!onaid

Tree Hugger!

Mr Jack cuts quite a dash these days, especially in his bow tie and wedding best! Now 2½ he's not only running, chattering 20 to the dozen but also hugging trees—obviously an environmentalist of the future. We may not be sappy, sentimental grandparents (honest!) but the first "love oo gandad John" was all that was needed to make our hearts melt!



The Walk of the Year

This year's walk wasn't anything really long but it was rather special. Over the four days of Easter, with Sherpa Noelene on luggage carrying duties, I walked the 73 miles of the Ribble Way from the river's

estuary just west of Preston to north of Horton-in-Ribblesdale in the Yorkshire Dales. And I had a walking partner with me as son-in-law Jon managed to avoid too many blisters and keep me company some of the way. Noelene and Dawn went shopping, as only they can! My main problem wasn't the walking but, at the source of the river, trying to find the insignificant trickle of water coming out of a rock which becomes the "mighty Ribble" 70 odd miles downstream!



Off to see the Boykies and Stukkies!

In October and November we headed south for four weeks holiday with the Titters (Gary and Charo) in our aforementioned tour of wonderful South Africa which, despite its still many problems, is an incredible and very lovely place to visit.

In our four weeks and over 6,000km we:

- Visited the Mandela family home and Hector Pieteron Memorial in a much improved Soweto.
- Saw the Rorke's Drift and Isandhlwana battlefields.
- Climbed a mountain in the Drakensberg.
- Zip wired in the Tsitsikamma Forest.
- Whale watched on the Cape coast.
- Wine and brandy tasted (of course!).
- Went to the top of Table Mountain, visited Robben Island and the Kirstenbosch Gardens in Cape Town.
- Almost got involved in a vineyard workers' strike and riot.
- Visited Kimberley's Big Hole (!).
- (Almost) did the Big Swing but it was "closed on Mondays".
- Spent four nights at an incredible game reserve and saw every animal you can think of from Aardvark to Zebra (actually the Aardvark was hiding).
- Had a jazz night in the rain in Sophiatown, Jo'burg.
- Visited the Voortrekker Monument and Union Buildings in Pretoria.
- Ate and drank far, far too much.
- Had an absolutely fandabidozi time with Mikey and Tertia, Newvie and Maggie and the Strydom clan.
- Came home for a rest!

We're going again in three years, so who wants to sign up for the tour?



Sundowners beneath African skies



Atop Table Mountain

Where Else Have We Been?

Out and about, as they say, though four weeks in sunny SA took up most of our year's leave. However, we did find time to sit on the beach in Wales at New Year with Goughie and Jules enjoying a



Just the thing on a chilly New Year's day!

cooling ale, to London to celebrate Mr. G.'s "second coming" (of age, that is!), Noelene and Dawn went back down to the Big L to win plaudits for their pasta cooking and we even went all the way into tropical Bolton for the excellent Food and Drink Festival! Who knows what excitement 2013 will bring.

It's in the Genes!

The "old fella" continues his (unspectacular) running comeback and did the Manchester 10k with daughter Dawn, the nearest we have these days to a family running machine, followed by the Salford City 10k in under 50 minutes for the first time in almost 20 years (remember when you could do it in 36 minutes, boy?). Then Dawn got injured and some \$%^&*£ ran a luggage trolley into my Achilles tendon at Copenhagen Airport. So the much vaunted comeback is on hold for a while but just you wait.....



That's my girl!

Musical Famine?

Well, not quite and music is always part of our lives but 2012 has probably been our quietest musical year for a long time. Early on we did see the wonderful Joan Baez, now 71, still singing beautifully and still as committed as ever to the causes she's supported all her life. Who knows what/who, apart from the Australian Pink Floyd Show, of course, will appear on the horizon in 2013.



What Else?



The two of us remain as steadfastly committed to the cause as ever, Noelene now being Secretary of the Bolton West Constituency Labour Party (we do love a good party!) and John the Chair of Bolton Labour's Local Campaign Forum. Oh yes, and the old fella got almost 30% of the votes in rock solid Tory Heaton in this year's local elections — so on, on, on comrades.....

Want to Read More!

As always we've run out of space but there's lots more at www.gillatt.org/2012. Our love, best wishes, a very happy Christmas, a peaceful New Year and we look forward to keeping in touch, or even seeing you in the flesh in 2013.

