

The Fourth Estate 2017

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Happy Christmas from the two of us

Nope, No Cards!

Every day we realise how lucky we are compared with the millions of refugees and asylum seekers around the world. That's why we're donating our Christmas card money to a charity that helps them in their new home town. BRASS (Befriending Refugees and Asylum Seekers), here in Bolton, helps them to learn English, to be able to have a life without barriers and integrate in the community; visit the doctor, find a job, support their children and socialise with other people. Please also help people such as them this Christmas.



Reunion

More than 60 years after she first taught me, I was reunited with my very first primary school teacher, Norma West, a.k.a. "Miss Bray", this summer. Now in her early 80s, she was just out of teacher training college when she taught most of we Gillatt kids all those years ago. She's as beautiful a woman today as she was then and has had a fascinating life.

The Lad

Young Mr. Jack is growing up far too quickly and, of course, already knows more than we old fogies about everything! But he's a very loving and sweet little lad, still doing well at school and with Maths as his favourite subject! We took him on holiday to Wales this summer



and he had his first ever holiday romance!



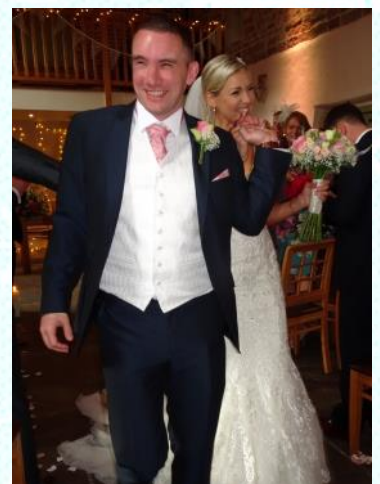
Two Weddings

Talking of romance....

First our adopted half daughter Sam married Phill, the pie-eater from Wigan, at a beautiful celebration on Rhodes, then grandson Kyle tied the knot with Janine at an equally bedazzling place in Staffordshire.



Sam & Phill in Rhodes



Kyle & Janine in Staffordshire

As you can imagine we had a wonderful time with the bonus of a great holiday with our "besties" in Rhodes and the chance to explore a little bit of Staffordshire—a county we've ignored for far too long.

And next year WE celebrate 25 years of wedded bliss!



Yaapies Invade!

For the first time in many years we had a visit from the South African fandamily when Mickie and Tertia spent a crazy three weeks with us around Easter. We spent a week in the Highlands, around Glencoe, did a “mad dash” day trip



to the Isle of Mull, had a ride on the “Hogwart’s Express” and sampled many of the Scots’ delicacies, especially of the liquid variety! Then, again with Gary and Charo to España and the wonderful hospitality of nuestros amigos. We even managed, despite both our cars being stolen (!), a trip to Chester and followed in the Romans’ footsteps along the city walls from ancient pub to ancient pub!

Where Else?

Being people of leisure it’s wonderful to go where we want to and when (though Ryanair rather than BA Business Class!). So, apart from Rhodes and Staffordshire for weddings, Scotland and Spain with the Yaapies, we’ve been to Normandy and the home of the Gillatt ancestor Guillaume Le Conquéran in Falaise (picture), made a poignant visit to the D-Day battlefields and saw more beautiful churches than we could have imagined existed. Not bad for a pair of devout atheists!



Then, for the first time, to Northumberland. It really is a wonderful county and if, like us, you’ve not been there yet - get to it, boys and girls!



We did a “who dunnit” murder mystery weekend in Leicester, where we disagreed about the miscreant (they were right, of course) and a lovely week with Claire and young Mr. Jack on the north Wales coast. Noelene joined the RHS and we visited their gardens at Harlow Carr and Wisley as well as the Tatton Park Flower Show. Noelene was too busy pruning apple trees to notice that John was “all petaled out”!

Finally, just before Christmas we’re heading for a real German Christmas Market, rather than a British copy, and are off to Regensburg in Bavaria to savour sausages, beer and who know what else?

In The Red?

No local elections in good old notloB this year and, after coming “a good second” 13 times, John is having a rest from the fray in 2018. Despite doing pretty well elsewhere we unfortunately failed to gain Bolton West in June but, later in the summer, there was a warm welcome for Comrade Leader when he visited the constituency.



So Long, Mr President

John ended his three year term of office as President of the International Biodeterioration & Biodegradation Society (we kid you not!) as one of the main organisers of their three day scientific conference in the wonderful city of Manchester, aided by his glamorous assistant and quite a few others. Some said that it was the best conference they’d ever been to; others thought it was the best piss up they’d ever attended! But we got to meet the Lord Mayor of Manchester and dine at the Midland Hotel. That’s what we call a RESULT!



Africa Forward

This year Noelene’s been doing a lot of work with the African Community Association of Bolton — much of it “behind the scenes” but she was also one of the main organisers of this year’s black history month opening celebration at Bolton’s Octagon Theatre at which the wonderful Boabab tree which she designed (and John built) was unveiled by the mayor.



The Sounds of 2017

Not enough time for all the musicians we wanted to see this year but we did manage to get to Mike and the Mechanics, those “good ole boys” the Doobie Brothers, the Australian Pink Floyd Show (Johnny no mates on his own!) and the excellent octogenarian John Mayall. Next year we’re already booked for Runrig’s farewell concert in Stirling and Roger Waters “in the flesh”!

Want to Read More?

Yes, we’ve run out of space again but there is much, much more on this year’s Fourth Estate website - www.23fourth.org/2017. Our love, best wishes, a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to all our loyal readers.