The Fourth Estate 2024

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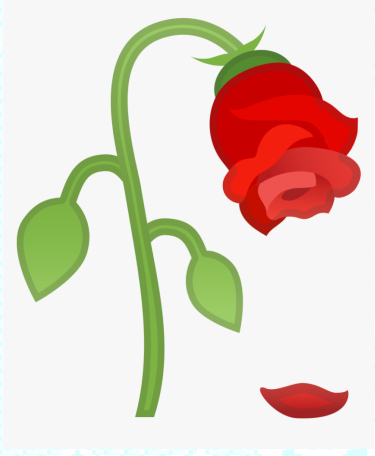
GCSEs. His main interests still seem to be fashion, shoes, his hair style (☺)and lots of similar ephemera. Oh, and girlfriends!! Who know, he could end up as a fashion designer since Design Tech seems to be his favourite subject at school. Thankfully he's still a kind and loving lad, an increasingly good walking companion for the "old fella" and still likes holidays at the seaside.

Nope, As Usual No Cards!



This year Noelene took up gardening on a BIG scale, helping out at the Bolton Community Kitchen allotment — a project growing and cooking vegetables for the homeless and needy of Bolton. So this year our Christmas card money is going to the project, helping it to expand and grow in 2025.

About That Election……



You'd think we'd be delighted to see the end of the Tories and the election of a Labour Government and, yes we are glad that Sunak's useless crooks were thrown out. But, we're both sadly disappointed at some of the things the new government has done, amongst some admittedly positive steps. As you can see, we are conflicted but really do hope that Starmer and co. will "come good" and bring about a real transformation of our society – making sure that those who most need help get it.

What Happened To The Wee Laddie?!!

He grew some and then he gruesome more! It's a sobering thought and a reminder of how quickly time passes that Jack has started on his two year run in to

Faces and Places

In the year in which we both had birthdays ending in "5" we made sure that this was another good one for us to get "out and about". Thank goodness for retirement!

Carry On Up the Rhine!

Each 5 years for Noelene's birthday we've done a "cruise with a difference" - the Nile, the Norwegian coast in winter and this March, shortly after coming back from South Africa, we sailed the Rhine from Amsterdam to Basel — a wonderful, relaxed and fascinating 10 day meander, amongst other delights meeting some old friends and colleagues in Speyer. And John even managed a walk in the Black Forest! But the trip reminded us of our "European-ness" and how much we've lost by leaving the EU.



So Good We Went There Twice!

Sadly, we missed the snow by leaving "dear old Blighty" in January (☹) and then, after such a *%$^ English summer, we headed south again last month (and I'm writing this in Johannesburg). In the first visit John and bro-in-law Mickey climbed to the top of the



world's highest waterfall—the Tugela Falls—and then, along with Noelene and sis-in-law Tertia to the base of the falls. We returned to the Kwa-Zulu Indian Ocean coast almost 10 years after a previous abortive attempt and this time actually got to see a giant leatherback turtle lay eggs on the beach, bury them and return to the water—an amazing experience, never to be forgotten.



More recently we caught up with another Tertia—a former colleague and friend, recently re-married and living on the Western Cape coast, and then travelled all the way up to the Namibian border, crossing it for just half an hour simply to take some photos of the Orange River estuary!

On the way back we stopped at the Lord Charles Hotel in the Cape where we met almost exactly 35 years ago to the day and were right royally treated by the staff and management. We promised to be back for our 50th anniversary!



Cape Town in the distance

In The Footsteps of the Legionnaires!

The first long distance walk of the (now very) old fella's 4th quarter century was the Hadrian's Wall Path from, unsurprisingly, Wallsend to Bowness-on-Solway. Somehow or other he managed to do 94 miles of the 84 mile route, though no (serious) navigational "malfunctions". For two of the five days it poured down (I was going to say "pissed" but that would've been rude!) . Of the 3 nights on the trail we stayed at one pub and two breweries. Not bad going, eh? More at www.gillatt.org/hadrians.



In May we spent a great week exploring the ancient French city of Carcassonne and its surrounds with our friends Gary & Charo.



And in late August we had our traditional end of school holidays trip with Jack and Claire, this time to Aberdaron on the lovely Llyn Peninsula, where Dawn & Jon joined John in dragging Jack away from his phone long enough for his first 10+ mile walk.



Want to Read More?

Unfortunately the Fourth Estate website (www.23fourth.org) is currently "broken" but will hopefully be fixed in the new year. Our love, best wishes, a very happy Christmas and a peaceful, healthy and safe New Year to all.

