The Fourth Estate 2025

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Happy Christmas from the two of us



As Is Tradition!

Nope—no Christmas cards for the 22nd (or so) year and what we've saved is again going towards the Bolton Community Kitchen (BCK) allotment — a project Noelene has been working on tirelessly this year—come rain or shine (well, almost!). BKC grows and cooks veggies for the homeless and needy of Bolton so we are helping it to expand and grow (no pun intended) in 2026.

Just One Small Note



A year ago I wrote about our disappointment at some of the things the then new government had done and hoped that Starmer and co. would "come good". Yes, there have been a few improvements, especially regarding child poverty and workers' rights but we're still waiting for a real transformation of our society, something that we don't believe this timid government is capable of.

He Grew Some!

The wee laddie that we knew is now taller than both of us, is preparing to do his GCSEs and having interviews at several 6th form colleges to study textiles, fashion and design technology — just the thing for a well dressed young fella ☺. He's put together an impressive portfolio and loves the subjects he's chosen — even though they're not Microbiology! The three of us went off to the beautiful Isle of Mull this year and Jack and I (almost) climbed its highest mountain - next time we will! 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.

Life's A Holiday!

No trip to South Africa this year, though we did go twice in 2024 and will be heading south again in April/May/June. So we had more time to go to other places, including some new ones!

Star Gazing!



During a very cold January and a storm "someone or other" we spent a few days in Middleton-in-Teesdale admiring the spectacular High Force Falls, gazing at stars at the excellent Grassholme Observatory and visiting the rather wonderful Bowes Museum with its very eclectic collection.

Northing It

Whilst it was still chilly we headed further north to the Scottish capital to view the castle, climb Arthur's Seat (no bodies found Inspector Rebus!) visit the sculpture park, the botanic gardens and enjoy a small "libation" or two. It was great to go there in the "off" season when only about 75% of those thronging the streets were tourists! We also took a liking to the Edinburg buses — almost as good as those in Greater Manchester (thank you Mr. Burnham).

And South Westing It!

As our family grows (no new ones yet recently though — get on with it you youngsters!) and whilst we "original famous four" are

all still around, it's great to catch up once a year, this time in Cornwall. As you can see we've hardly changed.





Some of the braver ones (Noelene leading the way) surfed, John led the inevitable walk along the coast path and we ate, drank and were very merry for a few days. It was so good that we're heading back there next April. Thank you niece Serena for organising us!



Mulling It Over



Have you been to the Isle of Mull? If not, why not? It's really wonderful — from lovely Tobermory to the spectacular mountains and smaller islands of Iona and Ulva. We had a great week there in August and are now wondering which Scottish island to bag next year.



Not To Be Balked At

It seemed a good and more eco-friendly idea at the time and we duly embarked on a rail holiday from sunny old Bolton to Slovenia, Croatia and Montenegro, ending up in Dubrovnik (the latter part by coach). The places we visited, especially Lake Bled, the Plitvice Lakes National Park and Split were wonderful in their different ways. Dubrovnik was lovely but too crowded with tourists, even though it was out of season. However, the German rail system was diabolical — yes folks, worse than our own rubbish railways!

Nevertheless, we had a wonderful time, saw lots of fantastic places and met some lovely people. What more could you want?



Getting In The Mood



And finally….You know you're getting old when you start going on coach trips! Well, with Gary and Charo, Paul and Lin we six old fogies braved a 17 hour each way coach journey (NEVER AGAIN!) to the Christmas markets in Liege (Belgium), two in Valkenburg (The Netherlands) and another at Aachen (Germany). All were very special in their different ways. Intriguingly the Valkenburg markets were both underground.

A festive time was had by one and all to get us in the mood for the celebrations to come.

Want to Read More?

All this and more at (www.23fourth.org/2025).

Our love, best wishes to family, friends old and new , a very happy Christmas and a peaceful, healthy and safe New Year to all.

