

The Westhead eTimes

Christmas 2005

Having finally passed the milestone that allows me (Brian) onto the Saga¹ mailing list I now realise that the celebrations have been in the planning for three years! Not being allowed to let significant birthdays go unmarked, my 50th year has included a trek, a cruise and at least two parties. In chronological order...

The Trek

This started as 'wouldn't it be good to do something with Adam to mark my 50th/ his 25th'. I had a couple of days in Skye in mind, but by the time it was done it was a trek in Nepal to Everest Base Camp. I panicked briefly having booked it but in the



Khumbu Glacier at the foot of Everest

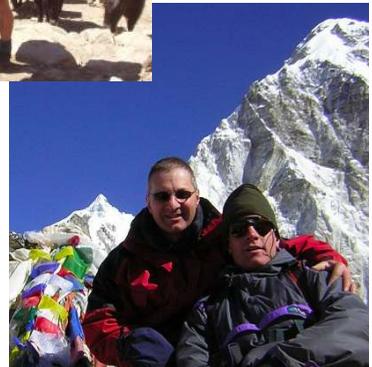


Bhaktapur

event I turned out to be quite fit enough (it was a bit tame for Adam who trains with the Territorial Army). This was one of those once-in-a-lifetime things that will stay with me for a long time. Not exactly 5-star comfort (washing at 6.30am outside the tent before the water froze) and the toilet facilities left a little to be desired (photo on request) but a fabulous experience! We were rewarded with brilliant weather at the highest point (Kala Pathar, 5545m) and views of Everest, Nuptse, Pumori and other peaks that will be familiar to fellow armchair climbers like me. Lowest point was being thrown to the ground by a charging Yak...



Adam tries his hand as a Sherpa



On Kala Pathar

¹ For overseas readers, a magazine/marketing company specialising in over 50's

The Cruise

This is where the three year plan comes in: I now know that Julia has been squirreling money from her private pupils into a secret bank account all that time to organise a (hopefully not once-in-a-lifetime) Mediterranean Cruise. Until the week before I thought we were going for a wet week in Anglesey with the caravan. The next surprise was the friends at the airport (or in the case of Julia's brother the aircraft – he doesn't believe in getting to places too early) who were coming too. For those of you who think cruises are all



deck chairs and dinner jackets I can recommend this one (Ocean Village) highly. Apart from cruising we got to see Pompeii, Naples, Florence, Pisa, Carthage (and Tunis...).

Pompeii ranks with the Himalaya as one of those places I have dreamed of since childhood. Julia enjoyed the sun, Sasha enjoyed the freedom, Lydia was disappointed because she wanted to go to Wales in the caravan and I recov-

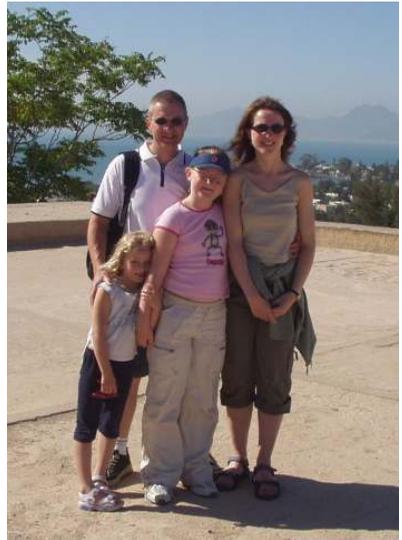
ered from the surprise.

Woman's column

This year I decided to try and get the old brain back into gear. I have completed an interior design course and done two music exams. I also decided that it was time to take Millie the five year old border collie to dog obedience classes (known in this house as 'Dogs behaving badly'). What is it they say about old dogs and new tricks? Put it this way, at the end of each session there is one spirit

broken and it isn't the dog's! I began work on my Christmas CD but was forced to postpone

its release until next year so watch this space! GOT MY KITCHEN FINALLY!!!! (with kitsch sparkly worktops—Ed).



Girls

This year Sasha gave her 'Blousey' at the school production of Bugsy and looked scarily grown-up. She has such a busy social life we hardly see her. This is the year she got a mobile phone – something we re-

sisted but actually rather vital! She also went to see Adam and Adèle (Otley) and Lorna and Rob (Sheffield) on the train on her own (with a bit of help at stations). Lydia still mostly inhabits Barbie-world (including Barbie.com) when she's not being an experimental musician. She is learning piano and (a very small!) violin, and spends ages trying out her musical ideas. She has written a couple of pieces



(including 'Cloudy Tower') that she likes trying in different places on the keyboard, on black notes etc. Unfortunately most of her lessons comprise showing the teacher



what she's been doing, so we don't have much hope of any grades any time soon...

Grown ups

Adam and Adèle have taken the plunge and bought a house in Otley – how you get on the housing ladder these days I can't imagine. It's much harder for young ones starting out these days. Adam is studying for an MSc in Hydrology (or something like that) and training with the SAS reserves in his spare time. Adèle is teaching at Pately Bridge and putting up with him. Rob and Lorna are now well into their second year at Sheffield where they are studying English Literature and Music (and of course being Abigail's parents, and No 2 is due in June!).





Busy times here. Between us we lead the Worship Team, and Brian continues to serve as an Elder of the church. We have set out a vision of where we want to be in a couple of year's time with particular emphasis on children and youth. We are especially fortunate to have a strong group of young men in the church who have taken up the challenge and are really driving youth activities. This year we've gone from one band of musicians to three (Children, Youth and 'senior') and Brian has produced a DVD-Introduction to the church to give to visitors (you church types might want to consider this one – has turned out to be very useful). As I write we are thinking about one more new venture we are starting this year – 'Room at the Inn' – a free Christmas Dinner for people on their own in the town. (www.aognewmills.org.uk/roomattheinn) If successful we hope this will be an annual event, but we're not quite sure what to expect!



Millie caught on the bean bags...

So hello to all of you

We seem to be acquiring a growing list of friends around the world from HOST visits, Chernobyl children and random people who come to stay with us so this year sees the launch of the 'The Westhead e-Times'. Remember – you're all welcome to drop in whenever you're in range!

We'd love to hear from you—or better still see you!

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