

Great North Alison working hard

After a good set of AS results in the Summer (2 A's and 2 B's) Alison is now working hard for her A2 's this Summer. Like her sister she is planning on a gap year before heading off to University where she is planning to study Social Anthropology. Currently she has an offer from Manchester and is waiting to hear from LSE, Goldsmith's, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Alison made her debut in the Great North Run in October, putting in a very respectable time of 2:13 and raising several hundred quid for charity. She is following up this feat of athleticism with one of heroism (or lunacy depending on your perspective): the Boxing Day Dip at Seaburn (yes, that is the North Sea). Currently, Alison is learning to drive. David is now well past the brown underpants stage and the test is due shortly.



The Mell girls: Alison (left) and Rachael (right)
Rachael's flying high

After a difficult first year ("it's too hard, I don't know anyone") Rachael has now settled into her university career at Cambridge and achieved a 2(i) in her first year exams. The relationship with boyfriend Nick is still going strong. Apart from water polo (reported elsewhere) and the academic stuff, current pursuits include being on the organising committee for her college's May Ball and the university air squadron. She was pleased to be kept on by the air squadron – they "retire" students who, like Rachael, haven't signed up to join the RAF on leaving university. In addition, to the two weeks of intensive flying training last Summer she's also been yomping across bits of the country, been whitewater rafting and on other assorted adventures (one of which merited her a three-month

drinking ban in the officer's mess!).

Water Polo

This bizarre sport (a sort of aquatic rugby) continues to play a part in our lives. Both girls are still playing for Harrogate Shortwalkers in the national league. After the glory of promotion at the end of 2004/05, 2005/6 was a tough season and they fought valiantly but unsuccessfully to avoid the drop to Division 2. However, this season has gone very well and they are assured of a place in the play-offs in January when they hope to get back into the top flight. Rachael has continued to play for Cambridge, who after convincingly taking apart Oxford recently, are looking to progress in the BUSA competition. Having got the tee-shirt and rucksack, Alison eventually decided to pack in the GB Squad – her decision and probably the right one. Having dabbled in refereeing at club level, David started refereeing some women's national league games in both Division 2 and Division 3 and so far has done 5 weekends (around 25 games) without getting assaulted.

David and Janice

David is enjoying a well earned rest after spending much of the year sorting out the eighth and definitely final acquisition of Mrs Mell's property empire on Durham's notorious Sherburn Road. Although a let was agreed with 3 students last February for the current academic year, the moving-in date (and more importantly, the start paying rent date) slipped back from July to nearly October as problems with wiring, damp, flat roofs, etc took hold. Taking advantage of our status as property magnets, Janice is currently in the midst of moving her dad to Durham: John's house in Southport found a purchaser surprisingly quickly a few weeks ago and the plan is to move him into a 2 bedroomed ground floor flat close to us that has just become vacant. She spent six weeks across in Southport just after Rachael went back to University in October and everything started from there – the old furniture was taken to auction, estate agents engaged, etc. The woman's a saint – taking on two grumpy old men.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

To all our readers, wherever you are we hope that 2006 has been kind to you. We wish you a very merry Christmas and hope that you have a very good and very happy 2007. With love and best wishes from David, Janice, Rachael and Alison.

