

COMMAND PERFORMANCE

Metrication comes to Durham

July 2008 saw metrication finally arrive for swimming in Durham. The City Council, which will be abolished and replaced by a new authority in March 2009, came good on its promise build a new swimming pool. The old 25 yard lane pool was finally allowed to retire into the clutches of property developers and other ne'er do-wells and a shiny new 8-lane 25 metre pool was opened in its place. David sneaked into the ceremony courtesy of a well-known sporting celebrity to join the civic dignitaries when an even more well-known official-opener officially opened the new pool in July. In spite of the crap photograph, isn't she just instantly recognisable?



"I declare this pool well and truly wet"

INDIA MADE ME UNFIT

Alison spent four months working in an orphanage in India following a last minute dash to London this time last year to get her visa organised. The anticipated gap-year placement in South America actually turned out to be in a small village between Calcutta and the Bangladesh border. Googling Alison, who didn't manage to take a working camera with her, reveals a surprising number of hits including the following award winning picture from the sub-continent.



Alison getting a kick out of volunteering in India

After her time in Baruiapur, Alison spent time travelling the length of the Ganges and back and then up into Darjeeling, the tea growing area which is in the foothills

of the Himalayas. She says it was pretty "brrrr!!" particularly when compared to the tropical temperatures she experienced throughout the rest of her time. She seems to have thoroughly enjoyed her time in India and is talking about going back there in the Summer.

Alison arrived back in Blighty complaining about being unfit because she had been out of a swimming pool for nearly six-months. Sessions in the gym and pool soon put matters right and judging by recent performances in the Women's National Water Polo League, it is all coming back to her.

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Rachael achieved a first class honours in her third year exams and that will be the classification of her Bachelors degree. Well done, girl! She is now in her Master's year at Cambridge. She is specialising in Production Engineering and has spent quite a proportion of her time since September visiting manufacturing firms across the country finding out who is going to be successful and who is going to the wall. She is living out this year for the first time and, just like the rest of us, is grappling with the realities of life, such as the timer control on the central heating boiler and precisely what sort of rubbish do we put out for the recycling this week? Earlier experience with the development of the "intellibin" (a recycling device which separates aluminium and steel cans) might be helpful in understanding Cambridge City Council's extremely thorough but complex (actually its completely bonkers) recycling scheme.



Rachael and colleagues with the prototype Intellibin

Alison has started her studies at Manchester University and, following a slight change of study options in the early weeks, has settled in well to her chosen subject of Social Anthropology. She is living in halls very close to the city centre and a Spar that sells booze until 3am!, Unsurprisingly (and despite the Spar), she has gained her place in the university water polo team.

The GB Water Polo team are largely based in Manchester and train at the Aquatics centre. Alison

knows quite a few of the girls in the women's team from her time in the national youth squad a few years ago and was pleased when one of her former coaches sought her out on poolside to have a chat with her about how she was getting on.

The journey to Manchester at the start of term was a bit eventful. Just onto the A1(M), we looked up though the sunroof to see Alison's new bike swaying alarmingly on the roof rack. A first stop on the hard shoulder didn't cure things and David was grateful when the toy police showed up at the next stop half a mile further on. They stood by, all fluorescent jackets and flashing lights, bravely protecting David from the traffic whilst he dismantled the roof rack and made sure it was firmly fastened to the car this time. Well done lads, much appreciated (as would have been a hand getting the bike on and off the roof bars instead of just watching me struggle).



Alison shortly after arrival into the groves of academe

Rachael is still an active member of the University Air Squadron and seems to enjoy the life it offers. In May, the squadron organised an open day at their base at RAF Wyton in Cambridgeshire. Because Rachael was heavily involved in the organisation of this, David was one of 8 lucky parents who got a flight in one of the tutor aircraft that are used for initial flight training in the RAF. It was an amazing experience, with the instructor doing a few loop-the-loops and barrel rolls in David's 30-minute sortie. Overall it was an excellent day: loads of aircraft ranging from a Eurofighter Typhoon to a World War II Messerschmitt either at or flying over the base.



Flying Officer Kite with Dad

Building on her air squadron experience, which also included a week on a combined services yacht sailing from Portsmouth to Liverpool in the run up to the tall ships race in Summer, Rachael applied to join the RAF and has been offered a place as an Engineering Officer. Despite the bursary they have given her, she is presently a little undecided about her future, so is also pursuing jobs in civvy street as an alternative after she graduates in 2009.

Both girls are still playing water polo. As well as their respective university teams, they also continue to play for Harrogate in Division One of the Women's National League. Following a pre-season tour in France, the team is struggling a bit this year against tough opposition from the much bigger clubs of Manchester and Liverpool, so it might be Division Two next season!

SANDGROUNDER REPORT

Janice's Dad John is coming up to the end of his second year in Durham and continues to live in the two bedroomed flat that is just five minutes away by car. Walking has become a bit more difficult for him since last year, so he no longer gets out to the local shops on his own. However, apart from that, he manages very well. Janice sees him practically every day and he still enjoys his few "wee drams" every afternoon. Once again, despite the harsh Northern climate, he managed to coax a few beans out of the cold Durham soil in Summer. Fee, fi, fo, thumb, anyone?



Janice and her Dad

PROPERTY EMPIRE

Despite the credit crunch, Janice's property empire continues to flourish. It would be good if all of our lenders reduced their mortgage interest rates in line with the Bank of England's reductions. Some have and the reduction in mortgage costs will go some way to offset the squeeze on capital values. We'll probably just sit it out for a few more years, though if we were ten or fifteen years younger we'd probably be buying loads more houses now.

AND FINALLY...

We hope this edition of Mello! finds you and yours in good health and we wish you all the best for Christmas and the New Year. Just like the man who had difficulty pronouncing his "f"s and "th"s, you can't say fairer than that!

