

ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Younger daughter Alison completed her degree in Social Anthropology at Manchester. She achieved the excellent result of a 2(i) honours degree and a proud Mum and Dad attended the graduation ceremony held in the splendid surroundings of the University's Whitworth Hall in July.



Alison in traditional pose following the graduation ceremony

In addition to her academic achievements, Alison also finished her university career on a sporting high as President of the University's Water Polo Club which had its most successful year ever, with both the men's and women's teams winning the BUCS (inter-university) championships and the Christie Cup (a northern varsity competition against Liverpool and Leeds).

Since graduating, Alison has returned back to Durham where she is currently researching and applying for graduate schemes. She is hoping to pursue a career in HR. In these testing times for young people, she has proved to be quite resourceful and picked up a temporary job at Beamish Wild (beamishwild.co.uk) for three months even though none was advertised. Post-university, Alison is continuing her involvement in Water Polo and is currently playing for Sunderland in the National League and doing some coaching of junior players back at her old swimming club in Durham.

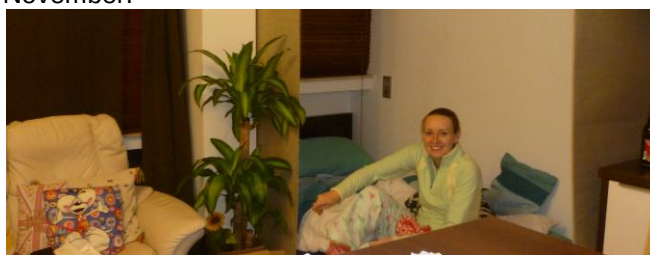
ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER COUNTRY

Elder daughter Rachael has been through another year of considerable change. The first three months of 2011 saw Rachael's last period of offshore working under Schlumberger's "tech and field" programme which had seen her based initially in Louisiana and then hurriedly moved to Aberdeen in mid-2010 following BP's "little incident" in the Gulf of Mexico. Under the programme, she moved at the beginning of April to a manufacturing facility near Stroud, Gloucestershire as a manufacturing engineer involved



in making the sort of tools she had previously used offshore. The transition was not a happy one and the outcome in September was a new job in a new country. Rachael is currently working for a supply chain company called Quick Release (quickrelease.co.uk) and is based at Ford's Merkenich site in Köln (that's Cologne to the rest of us), Germany. She is living in a smart

studio flat close to the centre of Cologne, now complete with about half her clothes and possessions following David and Janice's "road trip" via the Newcastle-Amsterdam ferry at the beginning of November.



Rachael in her new studio flat on Weyerstrasse.

Cologne Cathedral (pictured) is almost as impressive as Durham's but, as we discovered, a Billy bookcase is pretty much the same whichever IKEA you happen to be in.

PROPERTY EMPIRE

Janice's ambition to step the property empire up to the next level was achieved at the end of March when she finally became "white van woman" following the acquisition of a brand new Peugeot van. David's brother Stephen helped out by conveniently using one of Kirklees Council's traffic lights to write his own car off shortly before the purchase and was able to take the old Cougar off our hands (that's Janice's old Ford Cougar in case you were wondering!) The empire has been ticking over nicely during the past year, though

one property needed some fairly major and expensive structural works and we have continued to improve others through the addition of double glazing and new heating systems.



Janice inspecting her new toy

MORE CHANGE

David left his job at One North East at the end of May, or perhaps more accurately, the job left him as a result of the Government's decision to close the regional development agencies. During February and March David went on secondment to a local pharmaceutical company and helped them with the installation of a new IT infrastructure. Since leaving One North East David has gone self-employed (no more bosses!), and is continuing in a part-time consulting role with the pharma company helping them to implement a CRM (customer relationship management) system. David has also become a Research Associate at St.Chad's College, Durham University and, through this connection, is currently undertaking a consultancy assignment for a couple of North East local authorities.

HOLIDAY REPORT

Rachael and Alison escaped January's snow and ice with a pre-Arab Spring break in Egypt and spent some time sightseeing and hot-air ballooning.



Alison and Rachael in Luxor

Rachael also used her oil-industry affluence on a skiing holiday in March and a summer break in Ibiza, where one of the highlights was apparently seeing Dick and Dom in a bar. Alison's travels have also included a trip to the Netherlands for a post-exam water polo

tournament with the University and a September break in Lanzarote. At the time of writing she is away spending a few days with her sister in Germany.

In addition to taking a fully-laden van to Cologne in November, David and Janice spent a relaxing couple of weeks in May on their own back in Fuerteventura (see *Mello* 2007).



Relaxing in Fuerteventura after a hard day in the sunshine!

Is this a sign of impending old age – going back to the places you've previously been to on holiday?

SANDGROUNDER REPORT

Janice's dad, John, spent most of December 2010 and the first couple of months of 2011 as a guest of Durham's University Hospital following several falls at home. Getting John out of hospital proved quite a battle as nursing and medical staff were adamant he needed twenty four hour care. Both David and Janice felt it hadn't quite reached that stage and the escape committee eventually got John back to his flat at the end of February. With a lot of support, including paid for help and daily visits from Janice and David, John was able to stay living in his flat until late Summer. However, by then the arrangements had started to become unsustainable and John moved into a newly opened residential care home just up the road from his old flat at the end of August 2011.



Rachael and Alison with Grandad John, shortly after moving into his new home.

Whilst on matters Sandgrunder, it is good to see Southport FC at the top end of a league table, following 2011's close season reprieve. Every cloud has a silver lining, eh, Dagenham and Redheugh?

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. With love from David, Janice, Rachael and Alison.

