

The Farewell Edition

RACHAEL AND ALISON

Alison has continued her interest in aquatics and, having gained a beach lifeguard qualification in May, has spent the summer months working for the RNLI as a lifeguard on the exotic beaches of Sunderland. Subsequently, she has also qualified as a pool lifeguard and as a teacher of swimming and is looking to make her living from aquatics for the next few years or so. The picture below shows Alison in the uniform appropriate for an August day in the North East.



Alison scanning for people suffering from exposure on the crowded beach at Seaburn.

Rachael left her job in Cologne in May. A long round trip in the van by David (Durham, Amsterdam, Cologne, Calais, Durham) saw her stuff transported to Guildford where she is now living and working for a small consultancy company specialising in the oil and gas sector. She is settled in her new job and is currently in the process of buying her first flat.

Both girls are still playing national league water polo. Alison is playing for Sunderland. Rachael has joined one of her old university friends and is playing for Southampton Sirens. Although both teams are in

the same division, other commitments have prevented them from appearing against each other in the 2013 season.

Rachael also became a "guide mother" (a bit like a godmother but without the religious bit) to the newborn daughter of one of her oldest schoolfriends. All of us attended the naming ceremony (a bit like a christening but without the religious bit) which was held up in Weardale.



Rachael holding guide daughter, Lucy

PROPERTY EMPIRE

Last year's plan for selling the property vacated by long term tenants failed to materialise. Despite the buoyant nature of the property market elsewhere, we have had only a handful of viewings and not even a whisper of an offer. It has been a similar story across in Southport where the house in Court Road inherited from their mum by David and his two siblings has similarly failed to attract much buyer interest over the past 12 months. The current plan for both is some refurbishment and then renting out.

Refurbishment of the final acquisition in the property empire, a one-bedroomed flat was finally completed in time for its new tenants to move in on



July 1. Interested readers can see the final results at www.s555.co.uk/property6.html.

David's top refurbishment tip from 2013 is that when tightening a compression joint on a mains pressure cold-water pipe, do ensure that you have remembered to include the little brass olive in the joint. This is because without it no matter how much you tighten it, the joint will simply fly apart as soon as you open up the downstream check valve. This is particularly important when the joint is to a bath tap and necessitates lying on one's back in a restricted space to gain access, since one's clothing will not be wholly effective at sopping up the large quantities of water that will gush from the failed joint.

The main refurbishment project currently is the two bedroomed flat that Janice's Dad previously lived in. This had its rather dated kitchen and bathroom removed during the year. Following a full replaster of each room, the kitchen is now nearing completion and work on the bathroom will start shortly. Occasional forays across to Southport are also expected in the first few months of 2014 to get the Southport house back into order following removal of the kitchen and the old 80's room-width style stone fireplace from the lounge at the back end of 2013.

Despite the sluggishness of the northern property markets, the long term plan still remains to find somewhere warm and Canaryian for the cold, dark days of Winter.

THE WORLD OF WORK

David has continued in his associate role of Senior Research Fellow within a research group at one of the colleges within Durham University, where he has been involved in several projects. A final piece of work involving economic and population projections for use in the Local Plans of a couple of North East local authorities, was followed by some work for a representative body looking at the impacts of the reduction in government expenditure and welfare reform on the North East. This confirmed that it is, indeed, grim oop north.

For reasons which remain unclear, the world seems to believe that David is some sort of economist and future work in this area is currently beckoning for 2014.

THE BIG CAT'S FINAL JOURNEY



Farewell, big cat, you (sometimes) served us well

The big cat in question is David's beloved S-Type Jag which finally departed to the great scrapyards in the sky following an engine failure which was just too uneconomical to repair. After nearly a decade of motoring pleasure, and it was occasionally a pleasure to leave the garage with a bill which came to less than four figures, the big cat made its final journey on the back of a low loader in August. The credit card is missing her greatly.

The Yellow Submarine



Sky is blue and sea is green in a yellow submarine – and so it was

The picture shows David and Janice disembarking from the yellow submarine at Puerto Calero, Lanzarote and posing for the obligatory photo.

Mello!, Goodbye

Another Beatles song reference, this one signalling the final edition of Mello! After more than a decade of Christmas newsletters, including 7 previous editions of Mello!, the editorial team has written its final copy. Shortly the presses will roll for the final time and the annual ritual of folding and stuffing Mello! into the envelopes alongside the Christmas cards will take place one last time. Despite the encouragement of friends (you know who you are¹), media commentators² and the proprietress, the grumpy old editor is finally abandoning the annual struggle of trying to remember what happened over the preceding 12 months and spinning it into something of modest interest. So, in the words of another great spinner, we wish everyone, friend or foe, well. That is that. The end.

Well, not quite. The back issues will remain available at mello.s555.co.uk for as long as someone remembers to pay for the web-hosting and the traditional cards will, of course, continue. We hope that this farewell issue, finds you and yours happy and well. We wish you a Merry Christmas and offer our best wishes for the New Year.

¹ More importantly, we know where you live.

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20810452>

