

The Williamses Annual Christmas Newsletter for 2004

This has been a busy year (as ever!) with a handful of notable events. At the beginning of the year Jean & Rhys started out as 'early retired' and thinking about what to do with our freedom.



But it hasn't worked out that way, as you'll see. In more-or-less chronological order:

At the beginning of the year we spent a few days at Tortworth Court, in Gloucestershire, exploring the local area, and Jennie and Ian went off to Austria, skiing.



David and Lynne both started new jobs - twice in David's case - he did a contract with one of the big retailers near Welwyn and later moved to Telford, much nearer home. Later in the year they went off to the south of France on a camping holiday. They managed to take a fridge with them - got to keep the beer cool!

Rhys started some work for the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, running part of their Post Graduate Diploma in Customer Service Management and owning and rewriting one of the modules. Great fun to be working with students and the academic world again.

Rhys also started a new assignment with one of the big banks in Bexleyheath, Kent, doing part of their mortgage regulation project. He's still with them but now at Croydon doing Insurance regulation and keen to finish. We decided to rent a house whilst there, rather than stay in hotels all the time, so we got a place in the ancient but redeveloping Royal Arsenal at Woolwich. The site is, at the time of writing, featuring on 'Bricking It' on Channel 4.



Jennie and Ian went off to Paris around Easter to celebrate Ian's birthday, and came back engaged! They plan to get married in Saddleworth next August, and of course we are delighted and wish them every happiness.

In June we went to Florida and had a great week or so staying with Samantha, Mike and Elizabeth while they took a holiday in Orlando, sharing a lovely house with them. We did Disney, Universal Studios, Sea World etc., and, whilst we can see the attraction for many youngsters, we don't have any plans to return to the theme parks. They do it well though! We did take time out to visit Melbourne on the Atlantic coast and Clearwater on the Gulf coast, and particularly enjoyed Clearwater. However the diversion we had to St John's, Newfoundland on the way over took the edge of the start of our trip and meant we effectively lost our first day!

Sadly we came home to news of the passing of Jean's Aunt Irene - she was much loved and will be greatly missed.

In August it was Rhys' mother's 80th birthday and we went down for the weekend and took her out on a couple of trips. We were glad she was looking and feeling much better than of late, but she's been having a tough time since, though she keeps battling on well! We took the opportunity to also see Jean's Uncle Graham, who lives nearby and had a birthday the same weekend.



Jean then started a contract with another mortgage provider, in Docklands in London, so we've both been finding out much more than we wanted to know about mortgages and their regulation. Looks like we'll both be busy with these contracts and flitting up and down the country every week until January, when we want to catch up with all our friends, our close and distant cousins and our outstanding jobs.

Peter and Lianne had a new son, Thomas, on 3rd September. He surprised us all by arriving several weeks early and only weighed 3lb 13 oz. But he's now overtaken a normal size newborn in weight and he and Lianne are fine. Peter's a 'homeworker' now and has an office at home - we think this must actually be a good deal harder than it sounds.



Also in September we went to the USA again, to look after Elizabeth while Samantha and Mike came to Europe to find somewhere to live for when they were to return shortly afterwards. While we were there we took Elizabeth off to Canada for a few days - to Toronto and to Niagara Falls. We met up with Jean's Aunt Redina and her son, David, in Toronto. We loved Toronto and the Falls at Niagara, though the town is not up to much - a very small Blackpool without the benefit of the sea! But our 17th floor room in our hotel had a brilliant view right out into the Canadian Falls and we took the very wet boat trip into the Horseshoe Falls - everyone should visit Niagara Falls once!

Samantha, Mike and Elizabeth have now moved back to Europe and are living in Strasbourg, in France near the German border. Elizabeth is attending the International School there, with lessons in English and French, and she's doing well. She had two parts in the Christmas play - one as a mouse and one as a fairy. Apparently a key part of the rehearsals was to practise curtseys for the expected encores! We're planning to go out to visit in the New Year, contracts permitting.

During the course of the year we've continued developing our Family History links. We've had some success with Jean's Graves, Whybrow and Brotherhood ancestors, and found several new cousins, which has been great fun and very interesting. It's perhaps a little spooky visiting people you didn't previously know existed and finding that they've got the same old family photographs that we have. We're doing rather less well with Rhys' forebears so far, but are making progress with some of them via the Blunn line. We're making plans for a spell of much heavier research next year when we get some time back again. While we've been living in the Royal Arsenal we've found it interesting that several of Jean's family lived in the vicinity and worked at the Arsenal over 100 years ago, and a couple of them died in accidents in the munitions factory there.

Our latest news is that Jean has broken a bone in her foot and is hobbling about on crutches! She got superb attention from Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich but her timing was terrible. She's hoping to have the plastercast removed in time for Christmas but we don't think she'll be doing much dancing at Christmas and New Year parties!

You can see more about our exploits on the internet at www.williamses.org.uk



We wish you peace and happiness for Christmas and 2005

Love and best wishes from Jean and Rhys

