



THE HALLAS NEWSLETTER 2011

Sam has been urging me for a fortnight to write the annual newsletter, so I suppose I had better do it. As always, we send greetings and apologies to those of you we haven't seen this year.

Unlucky Slip

Last Christmas didn't go exactly to plan. On Christmas Eve I fell on the ice, damaging both wrists and necessitating a visit to A and E, where two nurses diagnosed soft tissue injuries. Three months later there was

little improvement and following numerous doctor's appointments and fruitless physiotherapy sessions they were finally x-rayed. Report? Malunited fractures of both radii and too late to do anything about them. Most function has now returned but

I still have slightly limited movement. I gave the NHS nearly 25 years. When I needed it, the service I received was abysmal. Apologies to those of you reading this who still work for it. Anyway, having got that off my chest, on to happier subjects.

Gadding About

Sam and I have been gadding around a bit this year. The highlight was a long weekend in Romania on a train called the Danube Express – comparable in luxury to the Orient Express.

We saw people scattering seed from a basket – just as in the New Testament – and medieval strip farming. The houses in the villages were very dilapidated but they all had satellite dishes on the walls.



Boarding the Danube Express



Sibiu, European city of Culture 2007



Symonds Yat in evening sunshine

Romania

Romania is a country of contrasts – desperate poverty, ugly concrete buildings from the communist era and 21st century cities.



Bran Castle - Associated with the novel Dracula

Somerset & Wye Valley

In June we spent a couple of days in Somerset visiting Wells and the Cheddar Gorge. We moved on to Symonds Yat in the Wye Valley which is one of our favourite places and had a day in Oxford on the way home.

Liverpool in the rain

In August we passed a couple of days in Liverpool in pouring rain. However, we did everything we'd planned. We inspected the revitalised docks area, went to both cathedrals and took the compulsory trip on the ferry across the Mersey.

Sadly the famous cascade at Chatsworth was only running for two hours a day and was a rather pathetic trickle, owing to the drought and insufficient water running off the moor to power it.



Hardwick Hall seen from the Old Hall



The grand staircase at Chatsworth

Church Matters

Church remains time consuming. Sam is Health & Safety Officer, webmaster, one of the small band of sound operators, does technical stuff, is pianist when required and Fabric Secretary. With three elderly buildings to care for there is always something that needs repairing. Since March I have been Church Secretary which seems to mean that I do everything that isn't in anybody else's remit. The routine tasks such as compiling meeting agendas are fairly straightforward. Coping with whatever strange request the next phone call or email might bring is more challenging.



Matt (centre back) in the Springtime for Hitler dance number

Matthew

Matthew is still struggling to find a full-time teaching post. He has had a number of small jobs playing for shows or as an accompanist for exams. In March he sang in The Gondoliers for the Hitchin Thespians at the Gordon Craig Theatre in Stevenage. More recently he started playing for the Berkhamstead Theatre Company as rehearsal pianist for the comedy musical, The Producers. He enjoyed it so much he joined the cast and appeared in the production a couple of weeks ago. He has also been doing a bit of labouring, such as sanding and oiling, for a friend who is a furniture maker. STOP PRESS! Matt has been offered a term (maybe two) as maternity cover at a prestigious school in Harpenden.



Tim & Harriet

Tim and Harriet are always busy juggling their various commitments. Harriet has passed her Masters in 'Music, Mind and Brain' with distinction. She said when she began the course that some of her fellow students are musicians and others are psychologists but she is the only one who is both. Harriet starts a new job as a Department Administrator early in December. Tim is now head of two branches of the Herts Music Service at Broxbourne and Hertford & Ware. He also does free-lance writing for magazines about electronic music and music in education. In his free time he is Chairman of the Queen Mother Theatre Committee.

Sam writes:

I've been particularly busy this year with a project for the Hitchin Historical Society. This year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Festival of Britain in 1951 when the town of Hitchin staged a historical pageant which was attended by the Queen and was captured on 16mm film. Similarly exactly a century ago Hitchin put on a pageant and grand procession to celebrate the coronation of King George V which was also recorded on film by film pioneers the Blake brothers. I've been editing videos of these two films and adding sound and a commentary by

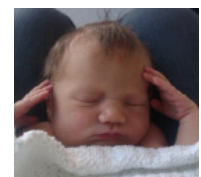
former newsreader, Richard Whitmore for showing in the Hitchin Festival and finally being issued as a DVD in time for the Christmas market.

I've also given more of my old telephones away having found that the prices on eBay are very poor. However, by asking for a donation for charity, I've made a tidy little sum for the Railway Children – a charity helping runaway and homeless children both here and abroad, and widely supported in the railway industry.



HHS Film Crew:
Tim Ray, Richard Whitmore & Sam

We will close with a little news on the wider family front. We've had no babies born in the family since 1986, so this year we were thrilled to welcome a new great-niece, Elspeth, in April and a new niece, Gracie, in October.



As always we are sorry that another year has passed without seeing some of you. We do however, send our love, wish you a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Sheila & Sam.

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