

*Christmas
2022*

2022 was a good year for the Derbyshire branch of the Chisman family. With a family wedding, and two major travel spectaculars, it was a busy one too.

So a good year for us, and we hope for you too. We hope for a **Merry Christmas**, and a **Happy and Prosperous New Year** for ourselves, and for all our readers.

A Special Wedding

We all met Dan some years ago when Henrietta's younger son Aaron introduced us to his new partner. Dan is Chinese, and she became a member of the family almost immediately. Bubbly, with an amazing command of English after only a few years, two lovely daughters, and an infectious and frequent laugh, she fitted in very quickly. However, all her family still live in China, so she enjoyed her newly acquired assortment of parents, siblings, children, nephews and nieces.

Then last year she and Aaron decided to marry. They got married in August and wanted two ceremonies, a conventional one (which gets the legal bits completed), and then a Chinese one. Aaron



has two boys (Harry, 11 and Thomas, 14) and Dan has two girls of similar ages (Ying and Hui) all of whom were to be part of the ceremonies.

The day was sunny and warm, so everything was outdoors, at a gorgeous venue in Wiltshire. There were many guests from Aaron's family but because all Dan's family are in China they were unable to attend. Officialdom makes it difficult to get

permission to leave the country except in emergencies (which a wedding is not) and if that were not enough, lockdowns are frequent, ferocious and long. It was very sad, but they were able to watch the proceedings over the internet.

The day started with a traditional wedding with two registrars (Two registrars? Indeed. You need one to keep tabs on the other apparently. Who knew?)

and went smoothly, with a little humour and a great deal of love.

The Chinese ceremony was then conducted by a close friend of Dan's. This was largely in Mandarin, with instructions in English. We all had a part to play, and our various attempts at Mandarin brought merriment all round.

It was a lovely day, with much celebrating, and Aaron and Dan are definitely married

A Battle Refought.

Peter, a friend in Ashby, and I were bought an interesting Christmas present by our partners. Just outside Leighton Buzzard is a garden centre, with a couple of containers tucked up

in one corner, and in one of those containers are two flight simulators - one a Spitfire, and the other a Messerschmitt Me109 - the Spitfire's fearsome foe from WW2. The two are linked so that two pilots can dog fight - and this was our present.

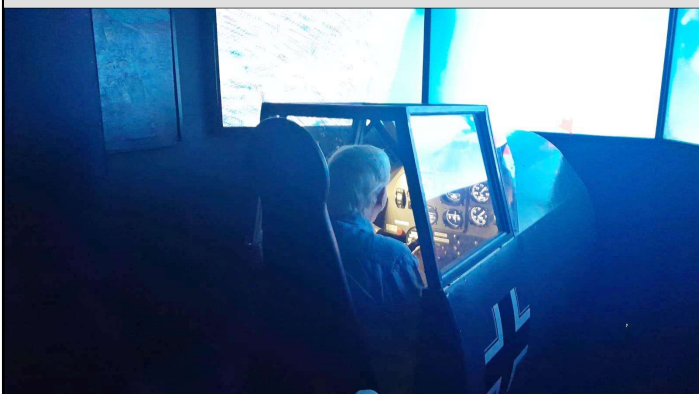
Now, I've never flown either of these aircraft but I have flown a number of things. I've tried small power planes, helicopters, a small jet, and I first went solo in a glider over 65 years ago, so I am at home in the air, I know how the controls work, I am, in a modest way, a pilot.

In the other corner as it were, Peter's experience was limited to sitting in cattle class in a commercial jet. This was going to be a walkover.

Pride cometh....

For the first half, I was in the Messerschmitt and Peter was in the Spitfire. The two aircraft, while very different, are fairly evenly matched and I spent a good proportion of the time right on his tail, getting off the occasional burst, but in the entire half hour I never got a hit, never managed to shoot him

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Amazing Trip 1

Henrietta is Irish, born and bred, but has never been to the north of her homeland. So, pre-covid, we had planned just such a trip, and this year, we finally got to do it. We drove to Stranraer in Scotland to get the ferry directly to Belfast, where we stayed for a few days.

Henrietta was to have a birthday while we were away (see later) and her son Aaron planned a little surprise visit while we were in Belfast. He would fly over and be sitting in the hotel reception when I arranged for Henrietta to walk through. We would see if she recognised him. Well, it took a bit of organising, timing wise, but no, she didn't recognise him so far out of context. It was a lovely surprise when she finally realised what was going on.

So, we had a few days in Belfast, then started driving north right round the coast. We saw castles and harbours, we visited the Giant's Causeway, and the rather frightening Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. We then took the little ferry from Magilligan Point in Northern Ireland to Greencastle in Donegal, which is in the Republic. And we were blown

away by the simple beauty of Donegal. It is just beautiful. See it if you can.

From Malin Head, the most northerly point, we headed south, sticking as close to the coast as was practical. Bundoran, Sligo, and Belmullet, nearly the most westerly point of Mayo, heading to the best hotel either of us has ever stayed in - Ballynahinch Castle. This was a special treat as our stay coincided with Henrietta's 75th birthday.

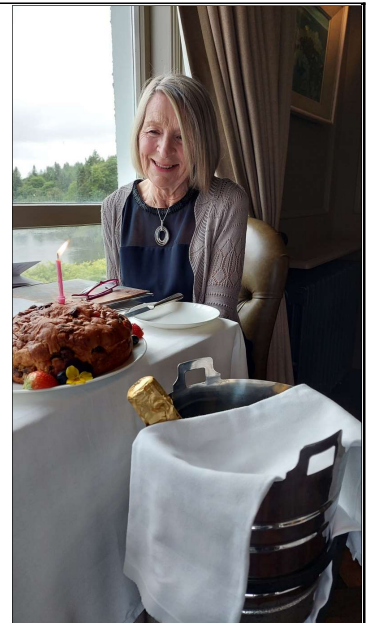
There was, however, a slight problem with the birthday, because, as lovely as the hotel and the staff were (and they were very lovely) they didn't do birthday cakes, and by this point we would be too many days from home for me to bring one. Because of this, a day or two before our arrival I bought a pack of four hot cross buns thinking that a birthday hot cross bun was better than nothing. I had also remembered to bring a candle - it was in a plastic tube to stop it being broken and it arrived safely. What I didn't have was matches, but as we stopped for coffee on the day of our arrival, I noticed a small supermarket next to the café so popped in to buy some. Then, waiting by the checkout, I spotted a reasonable sized fruit-looking cake for €2. Too good to miss. Probably not good enough

to actually eat, but too good to miss.

We had a wonderful dinner, the waiter brought out the champagne and the "cake" with its' single candle, which was duly blown out. Happy Birthday was sung, champagne toasts were made, and the cake was sensibly whisked away by the staff before anyone had to face the prospect of eating any. A marvelous birthday all round.

After a couple of delightful days at the castle, we moved on to Galway, and then headed down to Spanish Point where I had booked a rather special room for our third wedding anniversary (which comes 4 days after Henrietta's birthday). See the photo below.

From there, we visited one of Henrietta's sisters at the mouth of the Shannon, then eastwards to more of her family in



Mountmellick, a couple of days in Dublin where we visited another sister, the ferry to Holyhead, a night in Betws y Coed (a place Henrietta long wanted to see) and finally home.

A great three-and-a-bit weeks.



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down. He told me at half time that at one point he had run out of fuel and was making a forced landing. He was a sitting duck but I didn't realise what was happening. I was a little disappointed, but my time would come when I got in the Spitfire.

At half time, we swapped planes and I settled in for the kill. Alas, the second half didn't go - to mis-quote Emperor Hirohito - entirely to my advantage. Peter shot me down twice in the half hour and was - of course - cock-a-hoop. I retired with my injured pride.

We both enjoyed it though, and we hope to have a return battle next year.

Thoughts from the U.S

Many people don't realise just how vast the USA is, so before I go any further, let me give you three facts:- 1) The UK would fit easily into Wyoming. 2) The first US State **smaller** than England is Mississippi. 3) A flight from New York to San Francisco takes 6:30. America is huge.

The first thing we noticed on our travels is just how nice people are in the west. Several times we needed some assistance and it was always forthcoming with a smile, and sometimes a toolkit. The only fly in that ointment though is that, almost without

exception, we were traveling through Trump country. We stayed clear of politics, although we were in the throes of getting rid of Boris at the time, so it wasn't entirely one sided.

The next thing to say was that we were disappointed with the food. Firstly the salad bar has largely disappeared. The salad bar at the start of a meal in America was one of the pleasures, but no longer. You can order various set salads, but it's not the same. Secondly, there was an almost total absence of vegetables, which we both missed greatly.

Not only was the food not particularly enjoyable, it was expensive - it wasn't easy to eat out for much under \$100 - but in

all the time we were there, we only had three or four meals that we really enjoyed.

Tipping has gone mad. When paying by card the machine faces you with a choice "How much tip - 18%, 20% or 25%" even when just ordering a coffee at Starbucks. It is intimidating.

My lasting memory though, after the emotional visit to the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis (see right), didn't really hit me until later - it was just how completely that battle has been won.

We were in the deep south - Louisiana, Alabama & Tennessee - and there were brown, black, white and yellow faces everywhere causing no comment whatsoever.

Amazing Trip 2

I will be 80 next year, and at that age I can no longer hire an American motorhome, so, as I wanted to revisit the states, and Henrietta has never seen the western US, two years ago I started planning a major visit.



We set off on September 11th and flew to Seattle, where we spent a few days getting adjusted to the time before picking up the largest motorhome I could rent - and it was big. But we had a long way to go and four weeks to do it in.

We headed east across Washington State through the North Cascades National Park where we were, at one point, less than 20 miles from the Canadian border. As we continued east across the Idaho Panhandle we visited three of the dams on the Columbia River - including the Grand Coulee (anyone remember Lonnie Donegan?). Then we were into Montana and heading more south to Yellowstone National Park - which is huge, 2/3 size of Yorkshire. We had a great few days there - and saw a black bear, a first for both of us. Then it was south again, though Salt Lake City, and on to Utah with it's five national parks.

Utah is Mormon, and used to be entirely dry (no alcohol), and although this has relaxed to the point where one can buy beer freely, if you want a bottle of wine or spirits, you have to go to a State Liquor Store. There they will sell you your wine, but you exit the store with it wrapped in the traditional American brown

paper bag. It all feels a little grubby somehow.

But, Utah has Arches, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks. All vast, all stunning - Henrietta's favourite was Arches, mine Canyonlands.

Finally, we drove to Las Vegas where we dropped off our motorhome. My original estimate of our mileage was about 2,600, so we prepaid for 3,000 to be safe. As we drove into the return depot, we clocked up 2,947 milers - just 53 miles spare, but an amazing drive.

We spent the rest of that day goggling at Las Vegas. It's a terrible place (or a wonderful place, depending on your perspective) but you do have to see it once. Someone once described it as vulgarity raised to an art form, and that's about it. Amazing sights, but awful food, no coffee machine in the hotel room and crazy busy 24/7.

But - the reason we stayed there was the next day I had booked a flight out to see the Grand Canyon. We landed near the west rim, and a helicopter took us down to the Colorado River at the bottom where we had a short boat trip to see the canyon from

a unique viewpoint. (The helicopter pilots were doing some remarkably skilful helicoptering - it was interesting). Back at the top, a bus ran us out to two points at the top of the canyon, where the views are breathtaking, and finally, we flew home. What a day!

The next day we flew out of Las Vegas at 7:30, and even at 5:00 when we got up the slot machines were rattling away. I will never understand gamblers.

From Vegas, we flew to the western tip of Florida - Pensacola - where we picked up our rental car and drove for a few days R&R (for me) to a sand spit in the Gulf of Mexico called Gulf Shores in Alabama. The few days there, surrounded by golden sand and sun (we had aircon in the house) girded our loins for the second part of our trip, America's three southern music cities.

We started in New Orleans, in the French Quarter, where we were looking for jazz. We found the best bit quite by accident - walking out of a lunch restaurant, we went round a corner and there, in the road, was a six (occasionally 7) piece band, just playing for tips. It was a great half hour.

After New Orleans we headed north to Tupelo Mississippi to the Elvis Birthplace. Henrietta was a huge Elvis fan in her youth (and still doesn't really understand why he never married her), so Tupelo was a must. It was a small place, friendly and uncrowded, and it felt quite intimate. We both thought it worth while.

Then on to Memphis for Blues and Graceland. Graceland was a disappointment, very, very commercialised, very busy, and very expensive (\$77 each). But we shuffled round the house in a crocodile with everyone else, looked round his cars and planes and came home. Other museums were better, the Rock 'n' Soul Museum, Stax, and most memorable, the National Civil Rights Museum housed in the motel where Dr. Martin Luther King was shot. That was an emotional visit showing the long, violent and bitter fight for civil rights in the deep south. I remember it from the news stories in my early twenties, but I hadn't realised just how nasty it was. A real eye opener.

Finally to Nashville and country music. We walked Broadway and listened to several bands, we saw the Ryman Auditorium (original home of the Grand ole Opry) and we spent a few absorbing hours at the Country Music Hall of Fame where we were so engrossed that we got thrown out at closing time - along with quite a lot of other folk. I found out a lot about the way rock and roll evolved from Gospel and Blues via Country and performers such as Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis. White folk playing "black" music. Fascinating.



Maths vs Fashion.

My granddaughters were having a maths lesson - an introduction to statistics - and the tutor came up with the old question "if you have 12 pairs of socks in a drawer, all mixed up, how many socks do you have to take out in the dark to be sure of getting a pair." The answer is 13 socks, but Sophia said 2. The tutor started to explain that they probably wouldn't match, then Sophia explained to him that nowadays a pair of socks doesn't have to match.

The next day the tutor turned up with non-matching socks.

Mr Clarkson Sums it up

"I shall therefore keep [my old tractor] going and my farm will soon be like my wardrobe. Full of shirts that no longer fit, and never will again, and jackets that are full of holes. But which I can't take to the charity shop because each one of them brings back memories of things I've done and places I've been and curry I've spilt.

The life humanity has created for itself means we are all tempted by the new and the shiny. But for me the old and the worn and the precious is always a lot more appealing."

A Night at the Opera.

My old friend Earl happened to mention one day that one of the items on his bucket list was going to the opera. Now, I am no

expert, but I suggested that, if he was only going to see one opera it should probably be "The Marriage of Figaro" (which is the usual mixture of Mozart's sublime music and a ludicrous plot). And there it was left until I noticed that Covent Garden were staging Figaro in January.

agreed to join us, and we all asked our WAGs if they were interested - as indeed they were.

Now, I was a little let down here as I have been to Covent Garden several times and the days of getting all poshed up are gone - at least they are in the seats that I can afford. Mike and Earl, however, decided that they would put suits on and that they would pay good money to see Henrietta's face when they turned up in suits and I didn't. So it was that three glammed up ladies arrived at Covent Garden with their three besuited old men looking out of place and for all the world like three country bumpkins all dressed up for a "night out". Which was true of course, but who wants to look like that?

The highlight of the evening occurred in the second act. Earl's phone alarm went off to remind him to take his pills. This was embarrassing enough, but, panicking, he then couldn't turn it off. Having tried everything, he finally popped it on his seat and sat on it and while that quietened it down a bit, it didn't shut it up. That task fell to the young usherette who quietly took the phone and turned it off. Earl's face was the same colour as the Covent Garden stage curtain, but we were killing ourselves laughing.

So we crossed an item off Earl's bucket list even if the opera failed to impress five of the six attendees.

This Year's One Liners

I told my wife she should embrace her mistakes so she hugged me.

I thought growing old would take longer.

I told my wife I wanted to be cremated. She made me an appointment for Tuesday.

Tweet of the month from @SummerRay: "I was the first person to install trampolines in musicians' tour buses and now everybody is jumping on the bandwagon."

If you leave a debit card in your pocket while the shirt is in the washing machine - is it money laundering?

People in Iran are terrified of spiders but in Iraq no phobia.

Can a hearse carrying a corpse drive in the carpool lane?

How did the man who made the first clock know what time it was?

We got together, the third member of the triumvirate, Mike,

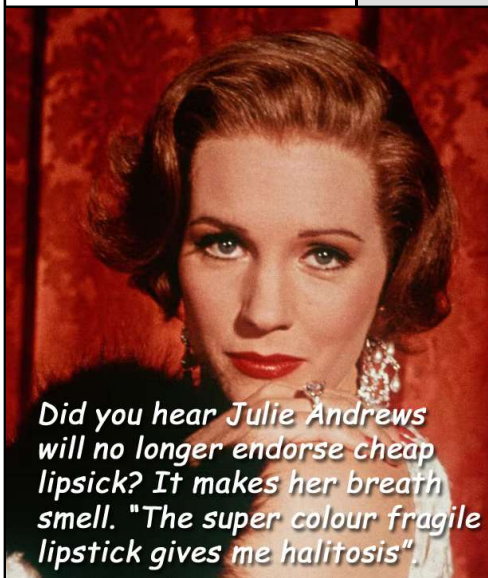
Definition of the Year.

What is the difference between complete and finished?

If you marry the right woman you are complete. If you marry the wrong woman you are finished. And if the right woman should catch you with the wrong woman you are completely finished.

New Covid Symptom?

On our way back from America, I managed to pick up a dose of covid. It wasn't too bad, but I think I may have found a symptom that hasn't received as much publicity as perhaps it should. I started eating salad. Anyone who knows me will know that this is clearly not normal behaviour, so I wondered if you have heard of anyone else exhibiting this rather worrying side effect, and if so, how long can I expect it to last?



Did you hear Julie Andrews will no longer endorse cheap lipsick? It makes her breath smell. "The super colour fragile lipstick gives me halitosis".



**I'LL BE BACK
IN 10 MINUTES
BUT IF I'M NOT
JUST READ
THIS MESSAGE
AGAIN.**

Spotted in Ireland