

Christmas
2023

2023 has been a mixed year for the Derbyshire branch of the Chisman family. It started badly with the death of friend Mike leaving a huge hole. Then in October I reached the grand old age of 80 and we had a huge family gathering to celebrate.

So a mixed year for us, but we hope for a **Merry Christmas**, and a happy and prosperous New Year for ourselves, and for all our readers.

Yes, this has been coming ever since October 1943. Your favourite newsletter writer finally hit the grand old age of 80 - and that had to be celebrated.

We started with four small parties, just us and various friends having lunch in various local pubs, and then on the actual weekend we sat the whole of my new family (minus one grandchild in Costa Rica - 21 people in all) down for a catered dinner. And what a splendid do it was too.

The day before it hadn't looked too promising as we had huge floods in Derbyshire. The fields flooded, water poured down the road outside the farm (see picture) and our little river at the bottom of the hill burst it's

banks - something I have never seen in my 26 years on the farm. The road was blocked, impassible, and though I tried several other ways, there was no practical route from the farm to the motorway. This meant that the two families who we had hoped would come up on the Friday night were unable to do so. I worried all night whether the flood would subside enough by the Saturday for people to get through. If it didn't, there would be no party, and Henrietta and I would have to eat 21 evening meals between us.

In the event, the flood did subside enough for people to get through, but the trains were disrupted and some long journeys resulted. Finally, about 4 in the afternoon, to my relief, the



whole family was present, so we set off to the pub for a drink.

That evening we all sat down to a wonderful dinner. Vicki made a lovely speech saying some very nice things about me, and then she and my two granddaughters gave a rendition of "American

Pie" with completely rewritten lyrics. It was very clever and was very well received. Finally we cut the amazing guitar shaped birthday cake produced by my two granddaughters.

Certainly a birthday to remember.



Old Friends



Mike.

Alas, not long after we had celebrated his 80th birthday, my good friend Mike, who I had known since our schooldays, died. It was sudden and a great shock to everyone, including my other old schoolfriend Earl. Some readers may remember that the three of us have had many adventures over the last 20 years or so including racing cars, quad bike tours, gliding, skiing, and many con/destruction projects at the farm. He was a funny, clever, gentle man, a mental foil, and a dear friend. He will be sorely missed.

Just the two of us....

Last Christmas, Henrietta bought me a voucher for a Segway adventure for two. It was always unlikely that the second person would be Henrietta, and Earl loves this stuff as much as I do, so in September off we went.

I leant as far forward as I could but it still didn't go very fast at all, so I asked the instructor. "Ah", she said "you've hit the speed limiter". And this within two minutes of trying it. At 80, still the adrenalin junkie. 😂

It looks very easy, and it is, but initially it feels awkward. You can't fall over because if you lean forward it moves forward - ditto backward - and the more you lean the faster it goes. Inevitably, I

Despite this setback, we had a great hour and decided we'd like to buy a couple (without speed limiters, obviously) for chasing round the farm. Then we discovered that they're about £3,500 each - second hand!



A gathering of the Clans.

In April this year we had a gathering of our old school group, now sadly shrinking. We got together for a few days at the Warners Hotel near Hungerford and it was great to see everyone again. We enjoyed some of the

Warners activities, but mostly, in the day we just sat about chatting, and in the evening we sat about chatting and drinking. It was a great get together, and good that Mike enjoyed this last gathering before he died.



Heidi - (Née Heisenberg)

Some of you may remember that in 2010 we acquired two new farm cats which - as it was my turn - I named Schrödinger and Heisenberg (it's physics - Google Schrödinger's cat), which Liz promptly turned into Shreddy and Heidi. Well, Schrödinger left us a few years ago and this year, sadly, Heisenberg became very poorly and we had to put her

down.

He/she (Heisenberg was a bloke, the cat was female) is now at rest with our other cats, and, for the first time, the farm is without cats.

However, the good news is that Tim and Rachel in the cottage acquired a kitten earlier and Heisenberg was seen teaching her how and where to hunt. She seems to have been successful, so hopefully we still have our RCO (Rodent Control Operative).



The Travel Section

Nothing spectacular this year. February brought our regular visit to Lanzarote, which was sunny and warm as we had hoped.

The journey back was unfortunate as the weather in the UK was appalling - torrential rain - we were delayed, and several flights were diverted to East Midlands where we were headed. We flew with Ryanair (mistake, I know) and when we disembarked it was pouring with rain. Being Ryanair we had to walk about 300 yards to passport control, and as we crossed the "road" where the vehicles run, we had to stand, in the pouring rain,

as two bus loads of Jet2 passengers whizzed by in the dry. Next year we go with Jet2.

The final ignominy was dinner that night. We had planned to go home, then pop out to Tesco and buy something for dinner, but, with the flight being delayed and the awful weather, we decided we'd get something to eat at the airport, then go straight home. The only difficulty with that was that the only - only - place to eat was a Greggs. And so it came to pass that (something I never thought I would see) Henrietta's dinner was a Greggs pasty and a cup of tea. Oh dear!



In September, Henrietta and I took the caravan to France, something we have both always enjoyed. We crossed over with Brittany Ferries for two main reasons. Firstly, Portsmouth to Saint Malo is a long crossing so you can get a moderately good nights sleep, and secondly, the ship has a great French restaurant - where we started the holiday with a splendid meal. France itself was as glorious as ever, and our first site was pretty much empty - as you can see - so our first few days were quiet and peaceful - a great way to start the holiday. But, around day 3, as we travelled south to a favourite campsite on the river Vienne, the temperature got up to 40°C. I.e. HOT. Travelling in the car was fine as the aircon kept things under control, but once we had parked we both struggled. The caravan has aircon, which reduces the temperature in the van by about 10°, and it's the only time I can

ever remember thinking, as I went in, that 27° was cool. For the second half of the holiday we moved over to the Atlantic coast, and we stayed on the Ile de Noirmoutier (which seems to run it's economy on oysters, which we, again, chickened out of trying). It is indeed an island, linked to the mainland, now, by a modern bridge, but until 1960 the only way on and off was a causeway that is only useable at low tide (see the photo). We were (well, I was) naturally, fascinated by this. It was originally formed by the two tides running round the island and meeting up at the other side creating a natural sand bar. This was developed over the years and is now tar-maced and used regularly. For a number of reasons, including the fact that it is 4.2km long, and only useable at completely low tide, I decided that we would use the bridge to get the caravan off the island rather than the causeway.



Then, in June, we went to Great Yarmouth for a few days with Henrietta's daughter, Kathryn, who likes to stay in a hotel where one can fall out of the front door onto the beach. Such hotels are, however, not always easy to find as many sea fronts consist largely of "kiss-me-quick" hat shops, one armed bandit arcades, and chip shops. Yarmouth is not entirely that way though, the beach is fantastic, and the Hotel Ocean is a real treat. Breakfast is served, outside on the prom, up to 11:30 - a wonderful option for those of us who are a bit slow in the mornings. I can recommend it. We enjoyed Yarmouth, and spent a lovely day on the Norfolk Broads where the weather was glorious.



Some Great One-Liners.

I've just bought a Van Gogh coffee table. I know it's a genuine Van Gogh because it's got a bit of veneer missing.

Been invited to listen to Schubert's Unfinished Symphony but can't because my wife hates classical music and if I go I'll never hear the end of it.

I once dated a woman who broke up with me because I only have 9 toes. Yes, he was lack toes intolerant.

I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin awareness.

If you boil a funny bone, it becomes a laughing stock. Now that's humerus.

I accidentally rubbed ketchup in my eyes. Now I have Heinzsight.

Did you know muffins spelled backwards is what you do when you take them out of the oven?

I tried to come up with a carpentry pun that woodwork. I thought I nailed it but nobody saw it.

The Black-Eyed Peas can sing us a song but the chick peas can only hummus one.

I was struggling to understand how lightning works and then it struck me.

Old Man's Dilemma.

On the one hand I am being told to live everyday as if it's my last, as at my age it might well be, but on the other hand I am told I should not be doing all those little things that make everyday living worthwhile. Things like keeping my lovely old house warm, driving my 10-year-old diesel car with a range of 600 miles which causes no anxiety, flying off for a little sun in February, living with just the two of us in my (large) 250 year old, memory filled, farmhouse...

Thank You Professor Brian Cox

Professor Brian Cox, Britain's favourite shiny haired physicist was thankfully on hand to respond to inaccuracies about the detained yachts of Russian oligarchs. "Detained superyacht is Dutch built Phi, launched only last year which has a 'patented' fresh water swimming pool and an 'infinite wine cellar'," the BBC News website reported. Keen to keep things super factual, the professor retweeted the report adding an important clarification: "It doesn't have an infinite wine cellar unless it contains an eternal Kerr black hole - although even then it wouldn't be a very good wine cellar because you couldn't get the wine out. At least into our universe."

A Maths Lesson

"I'm sorry, but you can't always be experiencing a higher volume of calls than average. That's not how averages work."

A Logic Lesson

How to stop drunk drivers from killing sober drivers? Ban sober drivers from driving. That's exactly how gun control works.

Dreadful Pun of the Year.

The Norwegian navy has bar codes on the side of their ships, so, when they come into harbour, they can "scan de navy in"

The Crit'Air Saga.

A Before we took the caravan to France, I checked the RAC website for things that had to be done as regulations change from year to year. I needed new number plates since we left the EU, which wasn't a problem, but the web site also said I needed a

crit'air sticker - a new French clean air system, rather smarter than our sledgehammer ULEZ zones. "British drivers heading to France are advised that driving without a sticker, called a Crit' Air vignette - which costs just €4.61 per vehicle - makes them culpable for an on-the-spot fine of up to €135."

I was in plenty of time to get mine, but Henrietta's son Neil was leaving for France in four days and hadn't heard of it. But it turns out that if you apply, you can display the

application receipt in the window and that's OK, so he sent off the money and duly put the receipt in the window. Just before he boarded the ferry I got a WhatsApp saying "I'm the only one on the dock with a crit'air sticker". It turns out that you only need one in certain cities, and neither of us saw a single British car (and very few French ones) with one the entire time we were there.

For the grandchildren in the year I'm 80...

