

Christmas 2024

2024 has been a mixed year for the Derbyshire branch of the Chisman family. It started well enough with Terry and Henrietta going off skiing with Vicki, Naresh and the twins but then, as the main story (right) tells, it all went a bit pear shaped. However, it later redeemed itself.

But, yet again, we hope for a **Merry Christmas**, and a happy and prosperous New Year for ourselves, and for all our readers.

In early June things were looking good. We had tickets to see Abba Voyage, and we were booked for a weekend in Wales where the family would climb Snowdon (or some of us might ride the train) and do Europe's longest and fastest zip wire (although, almost unbelievably, others of us might skip this one). We had a fortnight's tour of Iceland booked (the country not the supermarket), and a fortnight booked in the Caribbean. We were excited.

Then. Oh dear. On 13th May Henrietta slipped and fell in the back corridor at the farm (which is hard tiles).

I helped her, painfully, to her feet, then helped her through to a sofa, where she insisted on

waiting for it to get better - which it didn't - the pain just got worse. By early evening, Henrietta - who, as those of you who know her will attest, is a stoic's stoic - was in tears.

To cut a long story short, she had fractured her pelvis (although we obviously didn't know this at the time), and according to people who know these things, this is the second most painful break you can have.

We called 111 and waited for a doctor to call back, and called again when no one did. Over the next 4 or 5 hours I made several calls to 111, and several calls to the ambulance service. Finally, at long last, an ambulance arrived,

Us at the weekly entertainment.



blue lights flashing, with two lovely ladies who hadn't been told how bad things were, so only had some gas and air. This was better than nothing, and eased things a bit, but it was still far too painful to move, and they called for a second ambulance. This arrived about an hour later - again without anyone having been told how bad things were - with two paramedics who administered morphine, waited for it to work, then put her into the ambulance and whisked her off to Derby Royal. Where she had to wait outside A&E for 2 hours.

To cut another long story short, after 24 hours A&E got shot of her to the Medical Assessment Unit so as not to mess up their

numbers. Then, after many more hours in the MAU they, in turn, moved her to a ward with 7 or 8 other women, 6 of whom were demented and kept everyone awake at night with their shouting.

Poor Henrietta was there for a fortnight, in pain, unable to sleep, unable to move even slightly as they waited for the hairline crack to heal itself. It drove her mad.

We tried to get her into the private wing but that meant putting her under the care of a private consultant and so many people are departing the NHS to go private that all the consultants were fully booked. Family rallied round, traveling from Leicester (most days) from Ashby (most days) and London (as and when they could).

Henrietta's reaction to hospital food was not hugely positive, so we all brought in the kind of food that she likes and made sure of a regular supply of proper tea.

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Bus Drivers

There is a hankering among many gentlemen of a certain age to drive a steam train, and there is often a similar hankering to drive a classic London bus, that icon of British tourism, the Routemaster (the two farthest in the picture).

And so it was that Earl and I both received the gift of such a drive for our respective 80th birthdays. Plus, we both got the bonus of driving a modern double decker, and the "bendy-bus" (picture right).

We got to drive all three of them



round a prepared circuit on an airfield in Essex in late August and what fun it was. The Routemaster was by far the easiest to drive despite a king sized steering wheel and no power assistance.

The bendy bus was the most interesting, and I have to say that 50 odd years of towing a large caravan certainly helped, but sitting in front of the front wheels adds another twist to the different driving techniques.

P.S. While Earl and I were driving red buses round a relatively short circuit, poor Henrietta was forced to sit and watch red bus after red bus come past as there was no café available. Not a happy bunny. Then, when I asked her to do a bit of filming (not her best thing, particularly when it's sunny and you can't see the screen) we got five minutes with half of the screen full of fingers, and the other half was her face. She had filmed it entirely in selfie mode.

Photo Created by Mark Roper Photography



Henrietta

(Continued from page 1)

Physios appeared at various times and didn't endear themselves by opening the conversation with "Do you know where you are" very slowly and in a very loud voice. Followed by "What mobility aids do you have at home" - also very slowly and very loudly. Many staff just assume that anyone over the age of 70 must be deaf, incapable of normal movement, and gaga. It can be very upsetting.

After 2 very long weeks, she was finally able to move enough to get out of bed, and we got her moved to a nursing home in Ashby. This was more convenient all round. She was in a private room where she could sleep, and friends and family could visit more easily.

At this point I must point out

that we owe a huge debt to a good friend, Ann, a retired physio, who helped Henrietta enormously with exercises to do regularly right from very early on. Henrietta was utterly fed up with being bed bound, with needing help to do everything, and with Ann's help worked like crazy at getting fit again.

After 2 more weeks of rapid improvement we rented a stair lift (who knew you could do that?) and finally she came home to everyone's huge relief.

At home, she improved rapidly and after the next three or four weeks got herself more or less back to normal - to everyone's amazement - including her physios.

But that all meant that we'd had to cancel most of those lovely trips, particularly Iceland. One of the things left on my bucket list is to see a lava flow, and having booked our Iceland trip

last November, Iceland duly provided an eruption early this year. Unhappily (for me, not for the Icelanders, obviously) things then calmed down. But, on the very day that we were due to arrive in Reykjavik, it all started up again quite violently. So Iceland had come up with the goods, but I wasn't there.

We did, however, manage to make it to the Caribbean. But even then what with one thing another (mostly to do with the travel insurance) we didn't actually know whether we would be going until 4 days before we were due to depart. To describe it as an all round stressful time doesn't really cover it.

But we had a wonderful time (see right) and Henrietta is back and as fit as she ever was, often to the amazement of people who don't know what Henrietta is like once she gets the bit between her teeth.

Kitchen Collapses

(Not ours fortunately). We were house and child sitting for Henrietta's older son as he and his wife celebrated a wedding anniversary in Spain. All had gone well, one child had been collected from school, another had had a friend round and we were feeling quite pleased with ourselves. Then, as I was sitting reading the paper there was the most almighty crash from the kitchen where Henrietta was preparing a meal. The noise was such that I thought she must have dropped the cutlery drawer - it was that sort of crash. But it didn't stop, it went on. We all rushed to the kitchen to find Henrietta safe, but in a state of shock, next to what had been an oven housing that (fortunately) had never contained an oven, but a microwave and many, many bottles and jars - all now smashed on the kitchen floor. The unit had detached from the wall and fallen flat. What a mess. Wine, jam, pickled onions, mustard, you name it, if it came in a jar or bottle, it was lying there in a huge puddle along with broken glass scattered everywhere. First job was to get the dog away from it all before he either walked on, or worse ate, any broken glass. Then the long clean up started - and it was a *serious* mess, brought about, I discovered, by some rather shoddy work fixing the cabinet to the wall in the first place with only two small screws. We eventually got everything tidied up, and the now dismantled ex-kitchen unit out by the bins, but the broken glass shards kept turning up all weekend.

It was quite a shock, but as nothing, I suspect, to that experienced when the travelers returned and inspected their slightly modified kitchen.

Sing Along 'a Handel.

Or Halle-bloomin-lujah!

Each Christmas I like to hear a live performance of Handel's Messiah. For the last couple of years we have been to Nottingham and until you have been face to face with a 140 voice choir belting out the Hallelujah Chorus you have no idea what an uplifting sound it is. So, when I saw that there was a performance this Christmas at the Albert Hall, where the audience could sing along I was intrigued. When I came to book, the first question was "Singing or non-singing Ticket?". Out of interest I selected singing - not that I can, (I gave that up at age 18 after hearing myself sing with our then band LOL). The next question was "What voice are you" - I selected Tenor. Then "Can you read music?". I can't but I said yes keep up the charade. Finally, "Have you sung in a choir?". So we were expecting a large choir - all of whom could sing.

Not what we got.



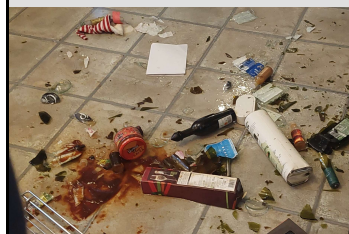
It was absolutely stunning. Pretty much everyone in the photo is in the choir (taken from behind the main body of the men - tenors and basses who are to the right). When the conductor called the choir to stand, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the entire auditorium got their feet. The stalls, the boxes, the upper circle, there was choir everywhere. It took my breath away. And the sound! Simply amazing, quite blew me away.

The Albert Hall holds about 5,200 on an average night, and the organisers confirm around $\frac{3}{4}$ sing. So we heard the Hallelujah Chorus (twice*), and the Amen, being absolutely belted out by

over 3,500 trained choristers. Has to be heard to be believed. We're amazed the Hall still has its roof.

So if you like your music by a great composer, brim full of joy, in a fabulous setting, performed by a brilliant choir, and at a stupendous volume, why not give "Messiah from Scratch" a try on November 9th 2025?

*In the interval, they auctioned the conductor's job for an addition rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus. The winner bid a staggering £9,000 (which went the British Heart Foundation). He made a great job of it, and we got blown away twice.



The Travel Section

To Ski or not to Ski

For the last 6 years I have been trying to take my (now 15 years old) granddaughters skiing, but for one reason or another it has never quite come off. This year, however, we made it.

When organising such a holiday, one factor to be taken into account is that the twins' mum, my daughter, Vicki, is very hot on green matters and won't fly - so they would go by train. This meant I had to find a resort that was easily accessible by rail. We were lucky and I found a perfect catered chalet with just three bedrooms which meant we had the place to ourselves. It was on a direct TGV line from Paris, which was also a big plus.

Henrietta and I would fly from Birmingham. Or at least that was the plan - right up to the time we discovered that the flight left at 06:30. Couple that with all the waiting at the airport the other end, and we decided we would go by train as well.

We would catch a train at our local station down to St Pancras, Vicki would come in from Chesham and we would board the Eurostar to Paris, where we would spend the night before getting the TGV to Grenoble. From there we'd get a taxi up to Les Deux Alpes, arriving about tea time. Perfect.

Alas, it didn't quite work that way. There was a train drivers strike that week, and although Henrietta and I were traveling down the day before the strike, there is always the chance that, the day before, trains are out of place. As it was so critical that we got to St Pancras I needed an alternative plan.

Fact 1, The train we catch starts in Sheffield, and we catch it about 45 minutes later.

Fact 2. It takes about 2:30 to drive to Vicki.

So I changed to a train that, should it not leave Sheffield on time, gave us time to drive down to Vicki and go from there. In fact it did leave on time, we caught it, and all went well. We had a lovely hotel, 100 yards from Gare du Nord, and we rode the top deck of the TGV both ways.

Henrietta wasn't looking forward to the holiday greatly as she wasn't going near anything that slid on snow, and I hoped to be skiing with Asha and Sophia.

Again, it didn't quite work out that way. I put my skis on on the first day and started at the top of a slope so gentle you needed a spirit level to tell it was a slope at all, skied about 20 yards and fell over. That was bad enough, but it got worse, I couldn't get up. Then, when it couldn't get any worse, it did. An attractive young lady in her twenties offered to help the poor old git to his feet. Oh dear, oh dear, what a farce.

To be fair, I tried again on day two and did a little better but fell over again, and struggled to

get up. What an ignominious end to a brilliant (though I say it myself) skiing career that started in Switzerland in 1967.

There were some good parts though. Henrietta and I, both being over 75, got free lift passes so were able to go up and down every lift in the village (see back page bottom right). The chalet was perfect, and the host (who, every day, cooked breakfast and dinner and left cakes for tea time) was brilliant. The twins loved skiing (which is what I'd hoped for) and a grand time was had by all.

And, I learnt two things:-

1. I'm too old to ski. and
2. I'm too pig-headed to admit it



One to Remember

Last Christmas, Henrietta's younger son, Aaron, made us an offer we couldn't refuse - "Would you like to come with us to Mustique for a week?". Mustique - the island of Princess Margaret and Mick Jagger, of David Bowie and Tommy Hilfiger?

Who could refuse? Of course we accepted. The few weeks before we went were a bit traumatic (main story, front page) but we got there.

We flew out a few days before Aaron and family, and stayed on St Lucia (which we loved) for five days. Both islands are quite

beautiful and the beaches on Mustique are stunning, as was our luxury villa (Butler, Under Butler, Chef, & 2 chambermaids).

So, many, many thanks to Aaron for an unforgettable holiday, and during our stay there are four things I learned about the Caribbean in general, and Mustique in particular:-

1. It is **HOT**.
2. The people are lovely.
3. Mustique is French for mosquito and the island lives up to its name very well indeed.
4. While the other seven each got 10, 15, 20 bites daily, I got none. Mosquitoes don't like me and I don't like them, a state of affairs with which I declare myself well pleased.



Observation of the Year

The news that Nasa is again receiving data from Voyager 1 after mending a glitch from 15 billion miles away was met with glee by Professor Brian Cox. "It never ceases to amaze me that a spacecraft launched in 1977 can be fixed remotely from Earth," he tweeted. Alas, the responses left the astrophysicist wondering if it might just be sensible to reboot the human race. "A few of the replies exhibit a level of stupidity that suggests it won't be long before our spacecraft are the only things that remain of our increasingly dim-witted civilisation," Cox sighed. "I'm of the view that the reason for the Great Silence [why we have not been contacted by extraterrestrial life] is that civilisations are inevitably crushed by the weight of 'knobheads' shortly after inventing the internet."

Sad Reflections of the Year

Firstly, as I pass into my 82nd year, I realise that our days of travelling to exotic, far flung places are probably over and we are sinking to the "Coach Tour of Scotland" end of the holiday market.

Secondly, we had been out and about quite a bit, and I was feeling exhausted when we went out to lunch - again - with friends. They had kindly offered to drive - often a welcome bonus - but I was so tired, I ordered alcohol free beer with my lunch out of sheer habit. Oh dear.



Perception of the Year

In my youth I prayed to the Lord for a bike but eventually realised He didn't work that way. So I stole one and prayed for forgiveness

A Short Reading from the Bible

From Genesis: "And God promised men that good and obedient wives would be found in all corners of the earth."

Then She made the earth round and She laughed and laughed and laughed!

Clarity of the Year

The Nobel physicist Richard Feynman maintained that "if you can't explain something in simple terms, you don't understand it".

Advantages of going green

837. With a heat pump and underfloor heating, you could leave your underwear lying around on the floor and if an unexpected visitor were to call you could say you were drying it.

#838. To cut down on CO2 produced by cattle, the Germans have taken to eating Racocon sausages.

What ever next? Sea birds?

Another Tern for the wurst?

Apparently, there's a third option between burial and cremation.



Introspections of the Year

1. My weight remains much the same but it shifts about.

2. Fashions come and go. When I was younger beards were in, then they were out and now they are in again. Cardigans were in, then out, now in again. The fashion world washes over me - but like a stopped watch that's right twice a day, my time "on trend" comes round regularly.

Every 30 years or so I am a style icon.

Put-downs of the year

I've polled 1,000 women asking if they would sleep with Boris Johnson - 20% said 'Never again' Pollster Frank Luntz

"If all the girls who attended the Yale prom were laid end to end, I wouldn't be surprised." Dorothy Parker

"A man doesn't know what happiness is until he marries. But then it's too late" Frank Sinatra

"She ran the gamut of human emotions all the way from A to B." Dorothy Parker on Katharine Hepburn

"Dear Ingrid - speaks five languages and can't act in any of them" Sir John Guilgud on Ingrid Bergman.

"Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realise it bears a close resemblance to the first". Ronald Reagan.

Tweets of the Year

"Remember when plastic surgery was a taboo subject? Now you mention Botox and nobody raises an eyebrow."

"They phone you up, your mum and dad. They do not mean to, but they do. With apologies to Phillip Larkin."

"Lord Nelson was 5ft 6in. His statue is 17ft 4in. That's Horatio of 3:1."

"I wonder if the guy who came up with the term 'One Hit Wonder' came up with any other phrases?"

"Describe yourself in 3 words: Lazy."

"We all get old or die trying."

"A farmer joke is corny, but an optician joke is cornea."

"Nobody ever gave a good funeral eulogy that consisted only of what the deceased said on Facebook."

"I'm off to The Punctuator of the Year awards tonight. The winner gets presented with 'a posh trophy'".

A photo you never expected to see.

Taken from a cable car on our ski holiday. The mountain has both ski slopes and walking / cycling trails - but it was quite a surprise.

