

2019 has been a pleasant but quiet year. I'm sure I can fill two pages with ramblings, but I doubt whether you are interested in a step-by-step trip down memory lane.

Family has featured on the ramble. On 23 January, Oliver Evan Davie joined the world, vying with Matthew for the attentions of Sebastian and Kadle and the title of chief Drosselweg squishybottom. Both the young Davies provide great distraction to their Aunt Tamsin and uncle Erik, and to their loving cousins Patrick and Sarah. This means that their grandfather only occasionally gets called upon for cuddling duties – there is an ample supply of cuddles from the Jenks in Rainstrasse, and from Kadle's mother in Kaufdorf. At the other end of the grandchild scale, I occasionally meet Patrick on the bus returning from his working day as an apprentice electrician.



Our goal of “somewhere warm in February” led us to Madeira this year. Unlike some of our Mediterranean destinations, Portugal's Atlantic island did not disappoint at all. We stayed in a delightful period apartment hotel right in the centre of Funchal, and mopped up the atmosphere – steep streets, painted doors, traditional markets, wine cellars, delicious fish and a feeling for what brought the rich and genteel here a century ago. A couple of long-distance bus rides convinced us that the mountainous scenery was worth a return visit – the whole island has a lot more to explore!

Tricia was made redundant in January after nearly 33 years in the same firm here – they have moved development to India, and although we were not too disturbed by unemployment (“0% of the work for 70% of the pay”), it did disrupt our holiday plans (because it's not actually 0% of the work – you have to spend time writing job applications!) Eventually we managed ten days in September in Croatia, a country neither of us had visited. The distances and the uncertainties meant we stayed in one place, and we chose Split, which was an ideal choice, if perhaps a bit too touristy. Again we rented an apartment in the inner city (“Diocletian's Palace”), which proved ideal. The city itself is lovely, and the life style relaxed, apart from the constant flow of tourists, tourists everywhere. We developed an in-depth knowledge of the city's bus routes and ferries, avoiding the package tours (though we enjoyed the Krka National Park, and Tricia succumbed to the Blue Cave).

In between, we managed a couple of weekends in France, but otherwise went every couple of months for Tricia to visit her mother, who was in a very good Methodist nursing home in Bury St Edmunds. Sadly, her mother grew weaker over the year, and died at the beginning of December.



We usually stayed in Tricia's flat in Norwich, and the year's project has been to buy a house nearby, with the aim of doing it up and, in due course, living there. 4 Ashby Street is a typical late Victorian terraced house, compact but convenient, a stone's throw from Sainsbury's, with potential. It is freehold, and has a garden and parking space, which we realize we appreciate having. We have been working on the possibilities, with an architect, and hope it will become a really desirable bolthole. It just needs imagination, time ... and money.



Freedom from responsibilities as treasurer at St Ursula's Church here has not made life much quieter – voting fresh minds on to the church council is a good thing, in principle, but they need someone to remind them “how we've always done it”, and as webmaster and repository of useless knowledge, I feel compelled to offer my advice (though luckily few people are interested in it). I have been active gathering an eco-group, which has been interesting and challenging – some things that are thought of in Britain as fit only for zany tree-huggers are commonplace here, and vice-versa!

I have found a bit of time for genealogy this year – but not many opportunities to get to the offices where the important records are. Some of the basic spadework of research can be done on the

Example

WANTED,
MATRON FOR THE ARMAGH COUNTY INFIRMARY.
APPPLICATION to be made, by Letter, and Testimonials deposited with the Treasurer, **GEORGE SCOTT, Esq.,** Armagh, who will give every information to Applicants as to the qualification required, and the nature of the duties to be performed.
 Salary—Thirty Guineas a-year, with free apartments, Coal and Candle.
 Application to be made on or before the 1st of January next.
 Armagh, 6th December, 1845.

internet, but fleshing out the details is much harder. One of my great-great-grandfathers died at the age of 35, and the Archbishop of Armagh arranged a post for his widow as matron of the local county infirmary. She resigned after a year, and then married a rich farmer, who became bankrupt, and there the trail peters out – I need to do some detective work *in situ*!!

This comes with best wishes for a relaxing and thoughtful Christmas and for the whole of 2020, whatever the year may hold!

Best wishes (and please, please, note the address – the Post will no longer forward letters from my old home unless I pay them a fortune!)

Hector