

# ❧ Christmas Letter 2022 ❧

It's late October as I start to write this, and very mild for the time of year. I took the hanging baskets down and emptied the planters at the beginning of the month, to avoid any overnight frosts and salvage a few plants for next year. Needless to say, there have been no frosts (at least, not until November) and I've just had to cut the back lawn again, as it's still growing, along with various plants that are blooming again... presumably they think it's Spring already!

Alison passed away on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2021. She was sleeping in her chair, after a visit from the district nurses that morning, and I was sitting next to her on the sofa. Suddenly, she stirred, moved her hand, and murmured something, so I took her hand and asked if there was anything I could do for her, at which point she said 'I love you'. I, of course, responded with 'I love you too'... that was the very last thing she said to me, but who could possibly wish for anything more!

We held a small cremation service on 23<sup>rd</sup> December for immediate family. Alison's cousin (Anne) also attended, along with a couple of close friends. On 18<sup>th</sup> February we held a 'Celebration of Life' service, followed by a social event, for the wider family and Alison's many friends. It was a joyous occasion and well attended, but unfortunately, not everyone was able to make it (mainly due to Storm Eunice), so we captured the essence of the day on our website: [holmelee.co.uk/alison](http://holmelee.co.uk/alison).

Sadly, we were not the only ones to have suffered grief during this time... Alison's NWR friend of many years (Marilyn), lost her husband on the day of Alison's celebration, and my brother-in-law (John) passed away just 3 days later. Death, of course, is a part of life, but who would have thought that it would affect 3 families, in as many months!



Alison planted crocus bulbs in our front lawn several years ago. Sometimes they would struggle to put in an appearance, but there would always be a few, dotted about here and there. This year however, despite the winter storms, on a sunny day at the end of February, I couldn't help but notice the wonderful show they made... what a lovely legacy!

After the equinox in March, the weather improved, and inevitably, some tidying up in the garden was required, but it was good to feel the warmth of the Spring sunshine on my face.

In April I opted to re-join my ex-BT cycling buddies on their next bike ride... a mere 47 miles! It wasn't the gentlest return to cycling, but it was good to be back in the saddle again and amongst friends. For his birthday, Edward managed to find a Lego Tower Bridge set on eBay. So, after we'd travelled to Retford to collect it, our lounge became a Lego workshop for a couple of weeks. Although it's an impressive model (almost 4,300 pieces), it continued to occupy our coffee table throughout the Summer!

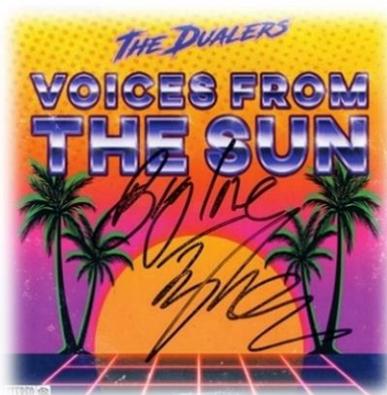


Richard continues to work at the Swan in Stone (he virtually runs the place), whilst he waits to take up his job with Openreach. He comes over for a catch-up most weeks and has a meal with us.

In June, Edward suggested that they could both go to Alton Towers, to celebrate Richard's birthday and 're-live their youth'... they enjoyed it so much, that they each bought a season ticket and have been going there every few weeks since. Guess where I got to go for a Father's Day treat! The picture, is of the Towers lit, for their Spooktacular 'Scarefest' event.



In July, the local residents association held a '[Picnic in the Park](#)' event and Richard was able to join in the fun. It was good to meet up again, having been unable to hold any social events for the past 2 years, due to Covid. We also travelled to Wentworth Castle, where Edward had been invited to join a group of fellow Origami enthusiasts, for a weekend of folding. On the Saturday, I went up to York, to meet with Jess. We had an enjoyable walk around the walls and lunch. It was nice to catch up with Jess, who was a true friend to Alison. The [Castle Gardens](#) are looked after by the National Trust, and well worth a visit, as is the [Biddulph Grange Garden](#), where we met up with my sister Elaine.



In September, Edward and I went to Yorkshire again (to Bradford this time) and helped with the organisation of the [BOS](#) Autumn convention (after visiting Saltaire). A couple of weeks later, we travelled to St. Albans to see '[The Dualers](#)' (a brilliant Ska and Reggae band), on the first gig of their tour, following the launch of their [new album](#) (which we got them to sign). We then went on to Chester, to visit Elaine, who was keen to visit [Lyme](#). The house and its 'Reflection Lake', was the location for the 1995 BBC adaptation of 'Pride and Prejudice'.

One thing I've discovered, over recent months, is that there's never any shortage of things to do... I had intended to offer more support to the group of volunteers that help to keep the estate tidy. But all I've managed so far, is one session of hedge cutting, and helping to paint the play equipment, on the park, on a couple of occasions... there always seems to be other things that need doing more urgently, around the house or in the garden. We're gradually catching up with jobs, in between the usual domestic chores and finding a bit of time for various hobbies and interests.



So, life goes on, albeit differently to the life we once knew. Alison remains very much in our thoughts of course, and no more so than now, as Christmas approaches. Our chosen charity this year is '[Operation Christmas Child](#)' (organised in conjunction with our local church). We've each packed a 'shoebox', Edward and I put things in ours for a teenage boy, including origami books, paper and models. Richard & Victoria packed one for a younger girl, which included a soft toy. Many of the boxes this year, will go to children in Ukraine and hopefully bring a little joy, in these troubled times.

Happy Christmas to you and your families and let's all hope for peace in 2023.

*Nigel, Edward & Family*

P.S. For a PDF version of this letter, go to: [holmelee.co.uk/xmasletters](http://holmelee.co.uk/xmasletters).