

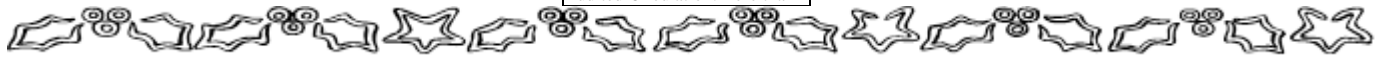


Maiden Road News



1997 Edition - the Year of Silver

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Yuletide Already?

Yes that time of year has come round again, when friends are presented with a sheet of closely typed text, relieved by a few grainy images. But look on the bright side: no, I can't think of anything on the bright side. You'll have to make it up yourself.

Work

Our Jobs bring in the zlotys, and continue to be soft, clean and absorbing. But then, so is toilet paper. My place in the Universe is still at SmithKline Beecham, despite attempts to break free. I tried raising my rate: they paid. I tried "there's nothing for me to do": didn't work. I told them I was leaving at Christmas, they said end February. Ah well, just count the money and keep busy, even if it's my work and not theirs.

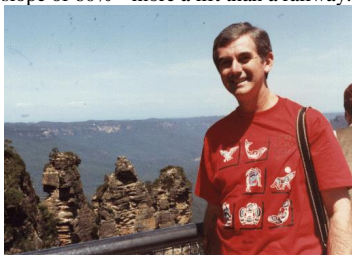
Philip has had an interesting year, thanks to the change of Government. Up to May he was involved in the last knockings of the old crowd, and from then on he has been busy with the efforts of the new Ministers. This has meant that it has been a stressful year for him, and no sign of let-up in the next few months. At least this new lot want to be called by their forenames, I'm sure that makes all the difference.

Australia III

January saw us in the Southern Hemisphere again. This time we visited New Zealand first, which meant that we flew via Los Angeles. Yes, we've circumnavigated the globe – eat your heart out, Michael Palin.

NZ is a strange place. It feels a lot like England of 20 years ago, but there are all kinds of strange local things that give it its own character. We only visited the North Island, which is perhaps not the best of the two, but we got to see Rotorua and Waitangi. We stayed in Auckland, which is relatively small and boring – Birmingham with sunshine. But we've seen it now, we don't have to go back.

After NZ we went to Sydney, which Philip enjoys. We visited Taronga Zoo, which had some really amazing insects. They were all outside, however – and when I asked about an insect house I was told that they only kept insects to feed the exhibits! We also took a coach trip into the Blue Mountains, which gave me an opportunity to see the scenery, and it is truly amazing. On the trip we saw the Three Sisters, and we travelled on an amazing railway that has a slope of 60% - more a lift than a railway.



The Four Sisters

The rest of the time we schlepped around Sydney, visited Bondi, saw the Bridge, the Opera House, and left with a whole lot of things left to do. Then it was on to Melbourne for the main part of the holiday. What can I say? Trips to the You Yangs and the Dandenongs, Melbourne Zoo, Arthur's Seat, the Great Ocean Road, and William Ricketts Reserve –

twice. We swam with the Jellyfish, we walked with the Ant, we ate with the Cutlery.



Arthur's Seat

Hannah, Philip's goddaughter, is fit and growing apace, and daddy continues to be one of the handsomest daddies around. We left Melbourne with regret, and already making plans for the next visit.

New Labour, Old Games

The highpoint of the election: when Michael Portaloo was beaten by an out-gay candidate. And it was followed by one of the longest honeymoons any government has ever had. But, like all politicians, they've managed to blot their copybooks, and the year closes with disappointment. I have a theory that Labour and the Tories are now one single party – the Laboratory party. And we're the rats.

New York, New York

In June Philip went to Noo Yawk, a place he has always wanted to see. I had no enthusiasm for the place; although, after his glowing description, it may have something to recommend it. He saw the usual tourist things – many from the air, as he took a helicopter trip "around the bay". But he visited Central Park on foot, and drank at the Stonewall (where GLF started all those years ago). He also walked through Chinatown without being trapped by the Tongs. In fact he says that NY is now quite safe for tourists – and a lot safer than Luxor. Perhaps one day even I might visit.

More Trouble Than It's Worth

In August I bought a wonderful new dream-machine computer. Needless to say, the dream had a rude awakening. The computer is fine, the printer is wonderful, the scanner excellent, the Zip and Jaz drives really nifty. But Mr Gates' software is, as usual, crap. Lots of little problems, and Windows 95 has crashed once in a major way, with a corrupt registry (for the non-computer people that is baaad). My one hope is that Uncle Bill's new computer house is controlled by Microsoft software. He will be found drowned in the lavatory one morning.

Larning to Writ

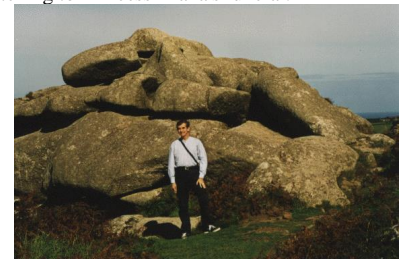
In September I started a course in A level English (Matthew got me into it). I justified it as a need to write properly when producing User documentation, but really it's just for interest. If it works out OK I may go on to an OU degree. So far I've been getting 'A's in all my coursework, and the teacher has asked if he can use some of my work as model answers! But, most importantly, I'm learning a whole lot about how language works – it is completely fascinating.

Go West, Young Man

Also In September we finally made a visit to Cornwall, Philip's home, after an absence of seven years. And it was a reminder that there are other places to retire, now that Oz no longer seems an option.

We stayed at a Gay-run guesthouse a couple of miles from Hayle, so we were very close for visiting Philip's relatives. He is the one who has ventured out of Hayle, let alone all the way to London. But Cornwall is a beautiful place, so it is easy to see why they stay.

We spent a lot of the time visiting, but we managed to get quite a bit of sightseeing done, too. One of the memories was sitting on top of Tren Crom and listening to Princess Diana's funeral.



On Top of Tren Crom

Hi Ho Silver!

This October we celebrated 25 years of unmarried bliss. Yes, 25 years ago this year we met for the first time and thought what awful people we each were. But we got over that.

We celebrated for virtually the whole month, one weekend by ourselves, one weekend with Mum and Dad. All the family had bought us presents, which was sweet, and we got cards from all over. The highlight for me was at the restaurant with Mum and Dad, when a cake was suddenly brought out and *Congratulations* played over the sound system. Onward to the next 25!

Chorality

The choir has been a bit quiet this year, and Philip took a rest for the first half. They performed a full show in April and their usual 20 minutes at Pride. Some also went to Munich to sing in the European Festival. The new Musical Director, Mladen, has taken the opportunity to tighten up the choir musically, and Philip says that they are going to sing really well at the forthcoming Yuletide concerts. I'm looking forward to it (it says here).

Planet Martha Spectacular

Matthew and Jonathan had a hit this year with *Mother Tongue*. Set in Limbo, the play addresses the issue of language and non-linguistic communication. Sounds heavy, but it was full of humour, and was extremely well-acted by a cast of six. Most importantly, the critics loved it, and it was a success with the audience. Hopefully it will be restaged very soon.

That's it for another year. We wish a Merry Yuletide and a safe New Year to all our readers.

