

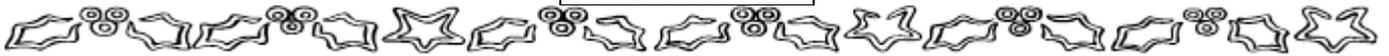


Maiden Road News



1998 Edition

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The Time of Small Type

Once again we impose ourselves into your life with a page of closely typed text and a few dubious photos. Have we ever been to these places? Are they just pictures from a travel brochure? That is for us to know and you to have sleepless nights over.

Work

Philip's job has been eventful. The cabinet reshuffle lost him one minister this year, and a resignation lost him another. To lose one minister is a misfortune...

But the new government has kept him busy, and he has had several late sessions in the House with the whip. He has even had the Minister fax him (don't even go there).

As for me, I'm on my fifth contract this year. And the money keeps rolling in. I must admit that the work collection this year has not been the best. I've got a nasty feeling that I'm being sent in to the sites no one wants as a firefighter. I'm known for describing chaos as chaos, and these sites have had plenty to describe. There seem to be some places where management have only a vague contact with reality: The Land of Oz, Narnia, Iraq, and Sites I Have Known.

My next site is, I am assured, easier to manage. I have also been given a £30-per-day supplement for team leading. Somehow those two statements don't coexist well.

Paris

In July we travelled with the Pink Singers as guests of the Paris choir, Melomen. We were not the only choir visiting, there was also the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus and the Sydney Lesbian and Gay Chorus, so it was quite a mini-festival.

The organisers had been concerned by slow ticket sales before the concert, so the choirs went out around the Gay district to sing at the bars (a strange experience). In the event they need not have worried. The show was a sell-out, all 1200 seats were filled - and so were the chairs.

The concert went very well, and we were able to explore some of the city both before and after. I got my mother a LaCroix brooch (sweetie, darling), and we visited Notre Dame, the West Bank, the Tuileries, Champs Elysees. But I have to admit that the highlight of the visit was an Australian restaurant, Woolloomaloo. The food was excellent (as opposed to the merely good we tasted elsewhere).

The only downer was getting back to England just in time for the power to fail. Literally, we made it out of the tunnel and stopped. And we stayed stopped for three hours. Still, we got free one way tickets to Paris, so we'll be back at the Woolloomaloo after Easter.



A French erection. All metal and a sharp point on the end.

Cornwall

September saw our now-regular visit to Cornwall to see Philip's family. They are all well, although his aunts Eileen and Sis are getting a bit frail. His brother is also suffering from poultry-keeper's lung, but he still keeps his prizewinning bantams (and they are magnificent).

Philip's family are always full of stories and I can sit and listen to them for hours. And there's always plenty to do and see in Cornwall itself. This year the weather was a bit wet, so we visited Newquay zoo and aquarium, Morrab Gardens in Penzance, and a strange place called Trebah, just the other side of Mawnan Smith. It is a garden that slopes down a long hill to the sea, and is like a nature trail all the way down.

Of course, we visited Falmouth and Truro to shop, and I picked up a few books for my course (see on). And other than that we just drove around and looked.

The holiday was a welcome relief in a difficult year, and I was sorry to have to return home.



A Cornish sunset. They are usually spectacular because Cornwall is in the West, closer to where the sun goes down.

Dublin

Dublin is a strange city, made all the stranger by a November visit by the Pinkies. We tagged, along, Philip to sing and me to gawk at the sights.

The concert, organised by the Dublin chorus, went well; but the venue, a student union bar, was difficult. The choirs had to compete with drinks-ordering and a general level of levity that British audiences do not show. Philip's jokes went well, but the quieter songs were somewhat drowned out by the clink of glasses.

Dublin itself is a city of contrasts. Our hotel was in a short (100 metre) street. At one end was a run-down semi-residential area, at the other was a street of Georgian high-class buildings. The whole city is a patchwork of wealth and poverty, residential, commercial and industrial. For some reason the whimsy of the Irish has found its place in the town-planning department.

But the people were nice, and the weather wasn't too cold. And, flying from City Airport, it was a convenient and quick mini-holiday.



Dublin Castle - a round tower with a church on the end. One gets the idea they weren't really trying.

Larning to Writ - II

My efforts to educate myself continue. Having got the taste for study with the English A level I have gone on to try for a degree in Linguistics. I have talked to the University of East London about a possible degree by Independent Study, but they persuaded me to do an MA, instead.

As the MA requires me to set my own study programme I am taking night classes at Birkbeck (the adult evening-class university in Central London), and I am also reading voraciously and widely. It seems, from my reading, that the discipline of Linguistics is about to undergo another upheaval like the Chomskyan revolution, and it is going to leave a lot of questions to be tackled. As my theories seem to fit well with the post-Chomskyans I may actually have something relevant to say here. Only time will tell...

Chorus of Approval

Other than Dublin and Paris the year has been quiet for the choir. They had a concert in June at the Union Chapel in Islington, which went very well. There is another at the Royal Academy of Music on the Saturday before Christmas, a venue which seems to be becoming a Christmas tradition.

The choir continue to get better, the sound is much mellowed and controlled now - they do soft and loud as well as notes. There is even talk of a CD in 1999. The Gay Men's Chorus has produced one and everyone is now thinking it's high time the Pinkies did one, too. So come next year you may be getting packages in the post.

Planet Martha Does It Again

Once again Matthew and Jonathan had a hit this year with "Girls with Guns". This play was about five women and the complicated lives they had woven for themselves. Matthew made his debut as a director and Jonathan took to the boards for the first time as the only male character. He spent a large part of the play unconscious and most of the rest dead, which is actually a very difficult thing to do.

The critics were reasonable, although the Gay Press showed their usual lack of attention span. If it lasts longer than a disco track then they don't know what to do with their hands. But the audiences arrived and the play even made a small profit.

Matthew also passed his A level English and A level Italian. Which is just as well, he persuaded me to do the English and I persuaded him not to drop the Italian. He was thinking of going on to do a degree in language at Queen Mary College (which is Philip's Alma Mater - he graduated as one of the most queenly Maries they had ever had). But he decided to postpone for a year to concentrate on Planet Martha.

I'm sure that, whenever he decides to get started, he'll get the degree he wants. The pride we take in Matthew's achievements is positively parental.

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

