



# MAIDEN ROAD NEWS

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Listen, do you want to  
know a secret?

2005 – 12 Months, no Waiting



## 2005: Packing it in

Packing it in has two idiomatic meanings: to fill something as full as it gets, and to stop doing something. Both are true of 2005.

The new job at NCH began to go weird in April, when the combination of weak senior management and intense middle-management rivalry led to a new way of working: the work was to be split by letter of the alphabet, and everyone would be doing the same work. When I raised the issue of everyone getting the same money there was an embarrassed silence, shuffling of feet and no shuffling of money.

I wrote a report setting out where the problems with this suck-it-and-see project would arise and how to overcome them. I also had a meeting with the senior manager to try to make it work. This was not what the office junior should have been doing, but the middle managers weren't going to do it. Still no mention of cash.

After seven months the SM was heard to say "I don't think this alphabetic split is working..." Well, quelle surprise.

Not that I care any more: I've got a new job as Communications Officer for a City Academy. I'm being paid £6,000 more, I get 3 more days' holiday, and I'm back working with computers. Just because there are less than eight years to retirement, it doesn't mean I'm going to keep rolling in other people's mess and call it a champagne bath.

## Becoming Learned

I continue to try to make an impression on the World of Acadème, but it's a slow and steady (and dirty) job.

I gave a paper at the Systemic Functional Linguistics conference in London in July, and this caused a bit of a stir. One Professor was "disturbed" by my approach to the subject, but he couldn't find any fault in my argumentation. I really do believe I've got something solid and different to say about the subject, and it's all beginning to work together.

I also gave a lecture at the Radical Anthropology Group in May, in which I was barracked constantly by a member of the audience. Not quite the behaviour you expect from your tutor; but I held my ground, and forced him into a couple of corners (he stated categorically that trees communicate with each other...)

I attended the BAAL annual meeting in Bristol as the Web Editor, and put forward a complete new design for the web. Hopefully this will go live over Christmas.

Most importantly, I'm still enjoying the learning experience. Even if it comes to nothing, I know that I have done my best and learned something in the doing. Mostly what I've learned is that Academia is a weird place populated by very weird people, but I suspect that is hardly news to most people.

Ah well, back to the writing up and literature review. All this just to put another book on my bookshelf.

## Holidays

We had a long weekend break in Paris in May. It was officially to go to some singing festival or other.

When not watching choirs we visited the Bois de Boulogne, went to the top of the Arc de Triomphe, and walked along the Seine. I don't think our visit had anything to do with the riots later in the year...

Once again, our major holiday was a week in Cornwall. It's having time that's the big problem: with all the conferences, tutorials and lectures, the best I can manage is a week off for real holidaying. Philip is being very patient, but I suspect he will be happy to get back to Oz when this period of academic madness is finally over.

Even in Cornwall, I dragged him to Men-an-Tol to check out the lay of the land, the "mining pits" and the alignments. He looks reasonably happy in the photo, but it was cold and wet, and trudging across open Cornish moorland is not the best way to spend your day.

In fact, most of the holiday was cold and wet, but that doesn't matter so much in Britain: we are ready for that and arrange our expectations accordingly. At least we got to see all the relatives, and we were able to stock up on Cornish wine – I think a large part of what we drink nowadays is English wine of one sort or another.

We went to Lands End for the first time in many years. It has been developed commercially, but it's not too touristy. Apparently, on a clear day you can still see America...



Philip at Men-an-Tol, which translates as Stone-with-a-hole

## My bit, by Philip

Work has been hectic this year. We had a general election in May following which all six Ministers in my Department were new (and eager to do great things). So the requests for briefing were continuous and substantial. It's no good telling a Minister his idea is barmy, instead you say that's an interesting proposal but have you thought of doing it this way! For most of the year I was the policy adviser on maternity and bereavement benefits. All I needed was Civil Partnerships and I would have been responsible for births deaths and marriages.

Talking of civil partnerships from Dec 5th we can get married in all but name. Martin said shall we

get hitched? I said don't be daft who would have us? Besides where can you get a wedding dress in black patent leather? Well, possibly at the London Modern Life Exhibition on November 20th and 21st where the Pink Singers sang to large crowds looking for everything that would make their civil partnership a hit – a church, a cake, a honeymoon, a partner...

Ironically a recent survey said that many people prefer the company of their pets to their partners. I tried to discuss this with Martin but he kept telling me to get down off the sofa. For those who are taking the plunge I have three bits of advice:-

- *It's generally considered poor form for either of the grooms to have dated the priest.*
- *On the day of the wedding, it's bad luck for the grooms to see each other at the gym.*
- *The father of the bottom pays for everything.* (Please don't ask me to explain this. It's not as rude as it sounds).

The Pink Singers have had a good year. We had a very successful concert at the Royal Academy of Music on April 30th then went to Paris the following week for the European Festival of Song (Various Voices). We sang in the Friday evening concert and were the only chorus to get a standing ovation. This is not a reflection on the other choirs but on the laid back attitude of French audiences. To get them out of their seats was an achievement. We chose our repertoire carefully – Beach Boys, Duke Ellington, Mozart's Requiem and Abba, complete with movements (well, not the Mozart!). We have also done some community events, most noticeably Gay and Lesbian history month in February and the first ever UK Gay Youth Prom. My jokes went down extremely well which just shows what good taste young people have these days.

London Pride took place the first week in July with a rally in Trafalgar Square and the Pinkies singing on the stage in the Square (we did last year, too). In early July we did a concert with the L & G Symphony orchestra - the Sunday after the London bombings. To finish the first half they played the Dam Busters March (all very British and in the event quite moving).

Finally, we hope you all have a happy Christmas, and we wish you success and good health in 2006.

## That Techie Stuff

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*If a pub replaced their peanuts with stripey sweets during December, would they be Christmas bar humbugs?*