



MAIDEN ROAD NEWS

2011:
 International Year of Forests
 International Year of Chemistry
 The Arab Spring, the Euro Crisis
 George Osborne achieves record
 high on the smugness index



Living in Interesting Times

We all talked about it, and wondered what would happen when the American hegemony began to fade. Throughout my youth it was the threat posed by the USSR that defined our lives: who would win the superpower conflict? Like all the previous one-on-one contests in history (Rome v Persia, Austria v Turkey, England v France, England v Germany), the two contestants exhausted each other. While there was a final victor, their day in the sun was brief. A third, unlooked-for power always emerges to challenge the victor.

A study of history shows that we learn from our mistakes and, when called on, we can repeat them exactly. So I would like to say, at the end of this trying year, 欢迎，东部珍珠.

A Year of Changes

This year has been a difficult year at the Academy, the school in Bermondsey where I work(ed). In March the Principal retired, and it was all-change from the top down. The Senior Vice-Principal retired in July, and one of the two Vice-Principals has got a job elsewhere (on promotion to Principal). The new Principal hit the ground running, and instituted a series of changes, some of which have worked and some of which haven't. As 60% of all projects end in failure, his batting average is reasonably good.



Red Nose Day at the Academy, 19 March

The Academy was caught early this autumn by an Ofsted school inspection. We were expecting to be inspected sometime soon, but we turned out to be one of the first of the Academic year. Our outcome was Good with elements of Outstanding, which was an improvement on our result three years ago of Satisfactory with elements of Good. The communications was given an Outstanding – gold star for me.

However, all things come to an end, and I took the opportunity at the end of November to leave on early retirement. I had been getting stale and tired, and my mind was being dragged elsewhere, as the next section tells. It has been a good stint (just under 6 years – about 15% of my working life) but it is time to move on. I have books to write, things to do.

Being Academic

Because of all the changes at the Academy, I have not had as much leisure time as I would have liked to dedicate to being academic. I only gave one paper this year, a study of extreme tenses, but it has been published in the proceedings of the conference where it was delivered.

At Kings College London I have been involved in tutoring a dissertation student, and I have

marked several dissertations as well as the usual batch of Psycholinguistics essays. The lecturing went very well this year, and I got some high marks from the students. My lecturing hours have been increased for 2012, and I'm working on a new student book for the subject – there is no text I can use for the course, so I'm writing my own.

My tenure as British Association for Applied Linguistics Web Editor continues, and I like to feel that I've made some important changes to add value to the site. There is now a members-only area, and the redesign seems to have increased "footfall". It is certainly easier to navigate, with a standard drop-down menu which gets you to (almost) all parts of the site. (www.baal.org.uk). I will be reviewing the site over the coming few months, now that I'm not working, so it may get even better!

The Evolutionary Anthropology newsletter passed its eight-year milestone – every week for eight years feels like a real achievement. This started out as a small-scale weekly email of relevant papers in key publications for a few students, but it now has some important academic names signed up. Now that I have time I'll be looking at improving this, too – and maybe extending the readership.

Seeing the World

Once again, we have had no formal holiday this year, just trips out and about. We got to see the dinosaur exhibition at the O2 in March, an impressive feat of animatronics. While perhaps not completely lifelike, they certainly created a feel for life in the Mesozoic. Other trips included a visit to Eltham Palace in Southeast London, a walk around Stave Hill and Canada Water in South London, tea at the National Gallery, a trip to Crystal Palace to see more dinosaurs, and several walks out to the 2012 Olympic site here in Stratford. We also went to Pride in July, and made several trips to the theatre, including *Much Ado about Nothing* with David Tennant and Catherine Tate. We are shortly going to see *A Lion in Winter* with Joanna Lumley; *Pippin*, my favourite musical; and we are going to see *Priscilla* again before the show finally closes in London. This will be Philip's eighth visit!

After due consideration, it does seem that we have had quite a busy year!



Philip & Tony, Eltham Palace, 7 May

The Westfield shopping centre opened in Stratford in September, next to the Olympic Park. It is very strange to have so many good shops within walking distance of home; and we have made several visits so far, both by ourselves and with friends. As a shopping experience it is actually better than the West End: the shops are closer together and more interesting – and, for the most part, cheaper!

We had a white Christmas last year, but until today it seemed very unlikely that temperatures would fall enough to give us snow. Today they have plummeted, so we shall see ...



The "Eyesore" Mittal Tower on the Olympic site, 22 October

Philip's Corner

Philip finally went part-time in June this year, working 18 hours a week. This meant that he could take his pension – which was nearly at the maximum, anyway. He is therefore slightly better off than working full time – National Insurance is not deducted on pensions.

He has been chosen as a volunteer team leader on the Olympic site for next year. So, although we got nothing in the ticket lottery, he is going to have a role in the games. He will be leading a team of about ten, performing important crowd organisation around the stadium and park. He will be wearing the maroon and red uniform, and he will be allowed to keep it after the games – so I'll probably be for the high jump in September (and the clean and jerk, and the triple front flip – make up your own jokes).

The Pink Singers continue to go from strength to strength. They are so well-established now that they have waiting lists in all singing parts, and those that get a place are totally dedicated. To find out more about what they have been up to, visit their website at www.pinksingers.co.uk.

That Techie Stuff

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A carol was originally a song accompanied by dancing, and it had nothing to do with Yule. What we now refer to as carolling was originally known as wassailing. Carolling was banned from Medieval churches, and Oliver Cromwell banned all forms of singing at Christmas. This, however, has not stopped the Pink Singers: the next concert is 14 January at Cadogan Hall. Tickets on sale now.