

The REGISTER

Not this again

<https://minorityattack.org.uk/?s=register>

Saturday 14th December 2024

Karrie came home this time last year with a cold that wouldn't budge, which morphed into an endless chest infection that kept her off work for most of January and February, so that was a bit of a bumpy start. She was planning to work just four days a week last year but picked up some rescue teaching at the parallel girls' school, so probably ended up with a five-day timetable compressed into four days. Just three days this academic year, which suits better. I still work two days in the office from Bovey and have dropped another day this Autumn, so we both have a total of a 3-day working week and four-day weekend, which we just love. We intended to start an era of tightened belts, trimmed cloth and reconsidered purchases but...

Alex started his third and final year of his Dutch degree in Japan, so Karrie and I went to see him for two weeks in the Autumn half-term. Getting there wasn't cheap, but Japan itself wasn't as expensive as its reputation, and we had a wonderful time. Every hour of every day of the visit brought something new or fascinating or fun, or all three, so if you have two weeks to spare I'll tell you about it... In brief: people were every bit as polite as advertised but very friendly and kind; we were warned that there wasn't much use of credit cards or free WiFi, but there were plenty of both; the food and the loos are just as good as you might hope.



The only shadow during our visit was cast from across the Pacific; after the double whammy of 2016 I promised myself I wouldn't ever again watch election results come in, but we found ourselves stuck in front of a giant TV screen over lunch, watching Trump take all the swing states... We ended up chatting to a very affable¹ American

couple as the votes piled up, and got on so well we had supper with them too, talking about taiko and the music business and how good the food is here, and not about prospects for a world more MAGA.

Other travels included (1) an Easter visit to Alex in the Hague (doing very well there I must say), which took in a visit to Scheveningen² where we met our Dutch friends Ellie and Mark from our annual French camping holiday, and (2) our annual French camping holiday. The meteor shower which was so spectacular last year was a bit of a damp squib this, but we did see glow-worms.

It's our staff Christmas dinner tomorrow; since John retired, I have always done the after-lunch speech, but my eroding vocal cords aren't up to competing with a noisy restaurant any more, and I will pass the baton to a colleague. It's also a way of getting them to imagine a World Without Dave³ before I am pushed out of the igloo. Angela has at last grasped the nettle of the crisis of the ageing population in the Unit, but not its tradition of nepotism... So now we employ Nigel's son, Mike (Angela's nephew). Lovely chap and an experienced secondary maths teacher, but no track record in web design, statistical analysis or business development, so I am anxious about how fast he can shape up.

The annual Autumn migration of my family to Devon, surely one of the most magnificent spectacles of nature, was a bit different this year: just Mum and my sister Nicky, so we had a rather nice and lower-key time. Jack preferred to take a house-sitting role while Evie looked after the menagerie and her daughter Betsy, who is thriving. Her ex, Steve, and his family, have moved on from making anonymous complaints about Evie to Social Services to making anonymous criminal allegations about her to the police. She is still putting a brave face on it all but I could cheerfully stuff Steve and all the rest of his kin in a sack, and batter it with a big stick, and not mind too much who got the worst share of things. Jack came to stay with me at the start of the year in pursuit of a mechanic's job, and did a Trojan's labour with Karrie's IKEA furniture while here, but dipped out on the job, and sorry to say is still looking.

I was dragged out of retirement to play a County chess game in the Summer (a cowardly draw

¹ Could they aff? very ably

² Chess fans will recall this as the site of Euwe's 1928 introduction of a new setup in the Sicilian Defence.

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXe7qeHT78k>

against an old friend from Norfolk), but I have no desire to return to the fray (too frayed...).

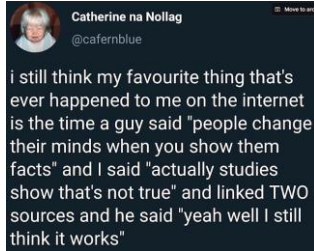
The junior chess club is thriving, had a recent record of 18 attending on a couple of nights; still benefiting I guess from the COVID chess boom, and I remain very grateful to my colleague David Beckwith for doing most of the graft for the club behind the scenes, while I am its genial frontman. As regards the Devon juniors, I seem to be doing all the graft behind the scenes as well as being the genial frontman... Some of my colleagues on the committee don't seem too bothered about contributing any effort towards the events we plan, but now my working week is much shorter, I have more time and flexibility to do all the admin. Our U18s won the local chess jamboree in January.



I'm still regularly going to the local prison to run chess sessions, and this year have also visited a couple of schools; no prizes for guessing who were the better-behaved audience.

I continue to chat with Theo once a month about his progress in US Chess (Georgia Open Champion this year); I still have one or two private students keeping me on my toes.

Somewhere between working in Exeter and having long weekends in the South Hams, jazz gigs have become harder to get to, but we've managed a couple with Paul this year, and some other meets for a meal. When we don't physically meet, he and I usually have an hour or so each week on the 'phone putting the world to wrongs; it's quite the effort some weeks to find a hint of a glow ahead in the tunnel, or at least one without that green radioactive hue. Western liberals seem unable to find a way of dealing at all constructively with the fact that so many of us are now hooked into a 24hr swipeable outrage machine that is designed to be the most distracting thing in the world, while also being the least reliable.



Earlier this year, Laura got fed up with her firm's culture of neglect with a side order of patriarchy, and rather bravely resigned. She has since briskly completed a bunch of short stories and has the first draft of a novel, which is very good going. Harry continues his editorial work for a money magazine and I learned recently also does a regular podcast⁴, all while turning out some very professional wooden furniture. Young George entered the Pokemon phase just in time for our visit to Japan and was approving of our choices. Leo is still keen on reading comics and drawing from imagination; he's finally

⁴ <https://audioboom.com/channels/4964652-igim-talks>

been given an EHCP, some years after his first assessment and its blindingly obvious need for support. He's off to secondary school next Autumn, so that's going to be an important step, but one made easier I hope by the Plan in his pocket.

I have recently resolved to step up my war against lousy deliveries, which includes taking a photo of all the parcels left on my front doorstep next to the sign that says *please leave around the back...* I always make a point of expressing sympathy with over-pressed drivers, but leaving parcels on the step is an invitation to theft (my front door opens onto the street). If you are short of a present from me this year, I have my excuse ready.



Wildlife encounters this year had a strong showing from Japan black kites, mantis, convolvulus hawk moth, Joro spider:



And from France, a fine Musk Beetle.



I hope the New Year brings good things for you and the world, and if not, at least a renewed appreciation of irony.

Saudi Arabia to chair UN forum on women's rights and gender equality
By Jennifer Hauser, CNN
2 minute read · Published 8:36 PM EDT, Thu March 28, 2024

Love and peace

Dave