

nilesletter

A busy year! And Christmas has really snuck up upon me this year, so apologies if this missive reaches you after the festivities.

This year I finally passed my driving test. My 8th attempt paid off and I got a licence in March. It would be fair to categorise my driving history since as chequered. I'm now on my third car: a 600 quid Rover shook itself to pieces in weeks; and a lovely, expensive, smooth-running Fiesta came to grief in a rear-ending, no-injury, my fault collision on a slip-road of the M1 two months after I bought it. I'm now driving an enormous Skoda Favourit Estate that friends gave me as a doer-upper. It gets me around, and I do like the freedom.

In May, I continued my dopey habit of moving house during an election (my busy time at work) and moved in with my other half of two years Paul Weston. Half a year later, and we seem miraculously to have survived without murdering each other. We're settled in, and getting on with domestic stuff: composting, baking most of our own bread, and brewing our own beer. Amazingly, the tiny garden of this rented, city-centre mid-terrace has a vine which went mad with fruit that unfortunately didn't ever swell. But hopefully with better irrigation next year...

We've had two great holidays abroad this year, as well as some camping weekends in Wales in a variety of



Bayeux cathedral

challenging weather conditions. In March we went to Normandy to stay with my former French teacher and her husband in their beautiful house near Bayeux. They were kind enough to put us up, feed us fabulous home cooking, and act as native guides for some of the sights, in particular the

Normandy beaches from the 1944 landings, being spruced up for 60 year anniversary commemorations later in the year.



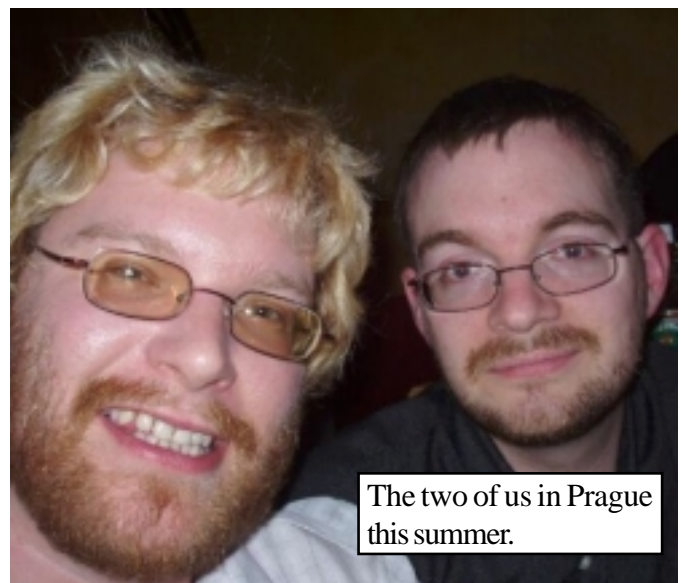
Château Sneinton

In August we flew to Prague with lots of other friends to take part in a wedding: our friends Tom and Marie had decided to get married in a castle in Bohemia. It would have seemed churlish not to get on with sight-seeing at the same time! Plenty of holiday photos on my website.

Over the summer, six weeks of my life were taken up by a parliamentary by-election in Leicester. I don't think I've ever worked so hard—early starts, late finishes, with an ever-increasing

number of like-minded activists who'd come into Leicester from all over the country. The work paid off, and the Lib Dems got us a new MP. And now, a re-election campaign. A busy year ahead!

All the best to you and yours for 2005! If you're in London in the first week of August, come and listen to my choir singing evensong in St Pauls.



The two of us in Prague this summer.