

Bear with us (Grrr) for the annual Coon family chat when we entertain (?) you with our summary of the year.

This is actually perfectly appropriate as these short days are when we are supposed to be resting and digesting, allowing the batteries to recharge (more of this later!) and we like to make time to remember everyone we love and care about and especially those we don't see so often.

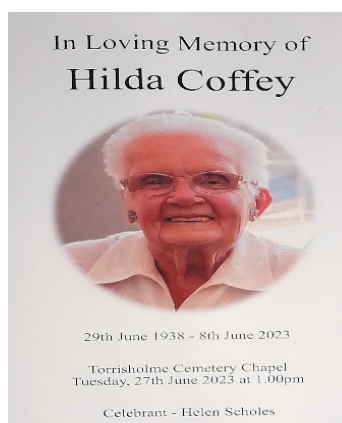


That Was 2023 That Was

When all non-essential contact and travel in the UK was stopped in March 2020, Emily's planned family holiday to New Zealand to celebrate her 40th birthday was put on hold. Finally, in Spring 2023, having been 39 for almost three years, the plans were re-ignited. John and I added on some cultural European cities by train to begin with, experimenting with train versus plane for our winter break. The trip was very successful but the chances of finding winter sun by train are low.

A detailed version of the trip is on our website at <https://larickhouse.co.uk/2023/05/06/the-long-postponed-trip-to-new-zealand-and-a-few-other-places/>

Back home, the early part of the summer saw us involved with the Kintyre Way Ultra again, this time from Tayinloan to Campbeltown. Long-standing sweeper Richard earned his missing coaster and now has the full set.



In June, after a period of declining health, Hilda, John's oldest sister died. We stayed for a couple of days in order to spend a bit more time with the family and despite it being a sad occasion, it was nice to catch up, especially to reconnect with the younger generation in Morecambe. We hope it will last.

July saw Suse attending her usual week in Stirling at Tai Chi Caledonia, then racing to source and proof read material for the Tai Chi Union magazine in time for publication in August. As well as teaching two local classes, she enjoys going to and giving workshops elsewhere.



Meanwhile, back at Larick House, the owl-cam had captured some pictures of mum, dad and three owlets, who we hadn't realised had taken up residence.

In August, we teamed up with The Birches in Findhorn for our biennial Scottish 5 days Orienteering holiday. Every year, fewer of our contemporaries attend but the lovely terrain of the Moray coast renewed our faith in the sport

Summer also saw visits to and from family, Uncle Bob in Dundee and cousin Robbie from Australia.



On the cultural side, we visited the Banksy exhibition in GOMA in Glasgow, Grayson Perry's exhibition in Edinburgh and the Van Gogh experience in York - are we becoming culture vultures in our old age?

After a record breaking solar panel summer, we installed a battery to store surplus electricity, believing that we would attract an over-night cheap tariff to recharge it. Despite this not being the case (don't get me started!) the forthcoming car and van MOT's and the introduction of an LEZ zone in Glasgow, led us to purchase a Toyota Proace.

We then put the charging systems of the UK to the test by making a 1000 mile road-trip visiting various friends and family members. Planning was essential, the objective being to charge up while you are stopped anyway for meals, shopping or toilets. Nothing happened to put us off so the van is booked in for the first stage of its conversion - roof and windows - in January.



Winter arrived with a vengeance while we were away and I have not been able to complete my winter garden routine, mainly dead-heading, splitting and muck spreading, though I still hope to finish it off before the end of the year. We do love all the space here at Larick House, but we know we won't be able to manage it forever. John's forte is keeping the log store full and thanks to a deal with neighbours for some FLS timber, we think that we will get through the winter without having to purchase any logs.

In an amazing volte face, John has very recently discovered the joys of the ceilidh - not actually dancing, but playing guitar - and the first performance of the Loch Fyne Rehearsal Band was well received. Whether they will ever emulate the emotional highs and lows of the Fynesiders remains to be seen.

Meanwhile the family are well, although both Joanna and Emily have had significant knee problems which are not resolved. They lead exhausting lives and are a source of wonder and pride.



In Australia, can you believe it, Johnny will be moving on to Secondary School in January. He does very well academically but his heart is with sport, in particular soccer.

Caitlin is also doing very well at school, and has a full social life. She swims, plays rugby, plays cornet in a brass band and judo and mountain biking are in the mix too, as well as occasional orienteering. Roslyn, as well as all of the above (except for the band) has just started a modern dance class which she loves.

If we haven't been able to see you this year, know that you have been in our thoughts - and there's always skype.

