

M E R R Y C H R I S T M A S 2 0 0 6

the KITTYPOMPUS flyer

YES, DORIS, IT'S ANOTHER OF THOSE DREADFUL ROUND ROBIN LETTERS



Steam Elephants

London came to something of a standstill in May as we were invaded by a herd of massive giant mechanical elephants. OK, only one. But it was a big one. How do you tell you've got giant mechanical elephants in your city? Footprints in the Mall. We were there of course, despite Jonathan's cynicism. "I don't want to go and see the giant mechanical elephant. Giant elephants are boring." Luckily he changed his mind when it came trumpeting towards him.



✧ *Headline News* ✧

We're all well, Alison's busily ensuring that workplaces are healthy and Steven's developed a fascination with international accounting standards. Marianne and Jonathan are just as brilliant and talented as you'd expect in a Christmas newsletter. Read on for all the gory details.

CENTERPARCS BELGIUM: BEER AND SATÉ

We braved the ferries and Easter weather to try a slightly different Centerparcs this year. My notes of the trip are somewhat befuddled, perhaps due to the way that every single outlet at a Belgian centerparcs sells a range of twenty or so different beers. Rubbish by Belgian standards but would be really impressive in Walthamstow.

with lots of swimming, activities, trips to the spa and so on. It was much cheaper than the same holiday in the UK would have been. I have no idea why. Highlight of the trip was perhaps the redcoat who gamely dressed up as a typical Brit, singing "All Around My Hat" while dressed in a union jack tshirt, a kilt, a pair of Doc



The holiday itself was much as it would have been at home,

Martens and a comedy mohican bowler hat.

Dimensionality

Stereo photography continues to be a major interest. If you cross your eyes while looking at this photo, so that the two pictures are superimposed, Conway Castle and Jonathan will pop into 3d!



What have we been getting up to?

NUPTIAL BLISS



We're not sure it's the kind of thing you mention in your Christmas newsletter, but Mike Scott, Alison's ex, got married in September, to the very lovely Flick, here seen carefully avoiding suffocating Jonathan with her killer dress. The people in this photo are the massed editorial collective of the fanzine *Plokta*, and they have just been told "Say Hugo"

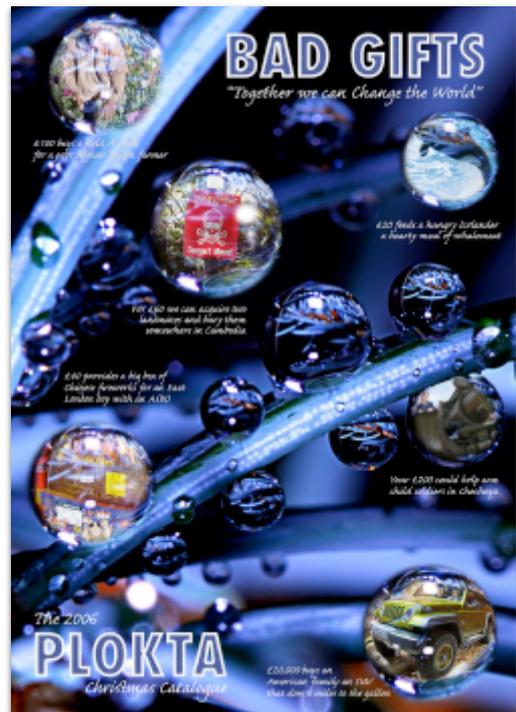
SAY WHAT?

By a strange co-incidence, *Plokta* has won the Hugo, or more properly the Science Fiction achievement award, for *Best Fanzine* in both 2005



and 2006. Here's Alison being given this year's award by ex-neighbour Pat McMurray.

One of the things that's gained *Plokta* its reputation is the art. Alison does much of this, and frankly, it's incomprehensible to the general reader. But we thought that those of you who've been thinking about buying goats for Christmas might like this one, the cover of the latest issue.



THE EDITORIAL PROCESS

Obviously award-winning fanzines of this kind take a lot of work to put together. Our intrepid reporters caught a glimpse of the *Plokta* team hard at work this summer.





Beards and Sandals



We spent a huge proportion of the summer of 2006 at folk festivals, ranging from the tiny (eg, Ely, spiritual home of the dodgy molly group pictured above) to the not terribly much larger. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, camping, getting flooded, searching whole counties for

decent coffee, and generally participating in the folk arts. Highlights included the many wild English ceilidhs (“it doesn’t terribly much matter what you’re doing if you’re having fun”), the wide selection of real ale, and Alison finally getting the hang of playing in sessions.

Superfluous Melody

Alison’s enthusiasm for the melodeon, the English button accordion, continues unabated. These are mostly used to accompany morris dance, and to give a bit of a kick to traditional English music, and they normally play a limited range of notes. Of course, Alison would have to go and get one of the world’s first electronic melodeons, able to play in any key, offering



weird keyboard layouts and the chance to have the



only accordion in the world that can be made to sound like a marimba. Marianne continues with the violin, and is playing with the “First Local String Orchestra”. She’s been learning the vital third violin part to Sloop John B, and complaining that it’s entirely unrecognisable. Although Jonathan has yet to start any formal music tuition, he’s showing a worrying penchant for drums -- here playing his uncle Mike’s electric kit.

Photography 101

Both kids have started to use cameras. Marianne took the pic on the left, of Jonathan meeting a giant smoothie. And Jonathan took the photo on the right. Using my cameraphone. I think it’s a macro study of incipient nasal drip.



The Review of the Year Bit

In general, we continued our habit of cosy domesticity. We finally got fed up of our old car, bought a lovely absolutely brand-spanking-new car, had our old car beautifully valeted to sell it, and noticed that it scrubbed up so well we could probably have kept it for another year or two. Plus the new one has nowhere to plug in an iPod. Shame.



Interesting days out included the Chiyo Aoshima installation, *City Gloze*, *Mountain Whisper*, at Gloucester Road Tube Station, and teaching the children to print with a hand press at the Museum of East Anglian Life.



We bought a second tandem, from a professor who had bought it as a surprise birthday present for his wife. Never do this. After nearly coming to bloodshed, they sold it to us for a fraction of its new value, with about four miles on the clock.

We saw Shakespeare, at the open air Greek style theatre at our local school, and avant garde ballet and an opera about Dalston at the Royal Opera House. Those were sort of an accident; the tickets were a fiver and we went along because we liked the band that was playing in the

bar. We kept dragging the kids to 3D movies, most notably *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. And picking up on the folk theme, we started to go regularly to our local folk club, and be consistently delighted by the standard of acts booked in the space, which you might describe as either 'intimate' or 'incredibly poky'. They proudly announced that they'd squeezed 85 people in to see Dick Gaughan.

Both kids passed swimming exams, Jonathan at the beginner stage and Marianne at intermediate.

Finally, we all spent too much time on computers in 2006; in an effort to counteract that, we've bought a shiny new Nintendo Wii for the New Year. Roll on 2007.



THIS HAS BEEN THE KITTYWOMPUS 2006 FLYER

Produced at breakneck speed, December 2006, by Alison with some help from everyone else. CC (attribute,sharealike,noncommercial). Thanks to Steve Wall for the original pine waterdrops pic. We are Alison Scott, Steven Cain, Marianne Cain and Jonathan Cain; 24 St Mary Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 9RG. 020 8521 4745. alison@kittywompus.com. A very merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.