

*“What’s pink and fluffy? – Candy floss.*

*What’s brown and sticky? – A stick”*

Yes, it was 8-year-old jokes all the way on the long walk back from school with Katie, in deep snow; at least when we weren’t stopping to pat every horse and feed them with snowballs, to watch the baby deer running down the railway line or hurrying to avoid being beaten up by an irate mother with a large handbag. Not Katie’s mother, of course (this handbag was bigger) – this was a loud-mouthed individual who was bawling insults at her 3-year-old. As we passed, Katie asked, rather too audibly, “has she got a megaphone?”. We had to hasten on, and have just arrived home.



Not that it was Katie’s first taste of snow this year. Far from it, in fact. In February the family spent a wonderful week in Aviemore, relaxing, walking and skiing in perilously-icy conditions. And then in October Katie and Tim had a 2½-week trip to Norway in connection with 7 concerts in the region where we used to live. We almost didn’t make it back because of heavy snow over there. For this trip Katie produced a daily blog to be read by the others in her class at school (it was part of the deal to get her out of school in term-time). If you want to read the blog or just look at the pictures you can find it (along with pictures of various other things mentioned in this letter and all our current addresses) at [www.rishton.info/2008](http://www.rishton.info/2008).



A large mug of steaming hot tea has just arrived, which is very welcome, and I’m starting to thaw out after the snowy walk. It’s a bit precariously balanced, though, so if this letter ends abruptly it means I’ve spilled it over the computer. So where were we? Our first full year in Haworth has been the usual eventful time, both for each of us individually and as a family. I’ve already mentioned our active and happy 8-year-old. Andrew (14), after a wonderful (if time-consuming) year of home schooling has found a new school a bus-and-train ride away, which he is enjoying very much. Not long ago, we used to contemplate our friends who had older children (or even – perish the thought – grown-up-and-living-elsewhere children) and wonder what it was like to be so very old. We’re finding out. Beth (soon 20) has decided (she can’t be 20, surely?) to stay in Norway (that makes us ... no, not going there). We don’t blame her one bit: she has a lovely house, a good job, all her old school friends within reach and lives in the only country in the world that isn’t feeling the effects of a “credit-crunch”. She’s very happy indeed. Matthew (shortly 18) has never wavered in his ambitions to work in technical/engineering design (preferably computer-aided design) and is also interested in fine woodwork and old things (like his parents). He originally intended to read maths at university as a way into this, but was very disappointed with his “A”-level courses, which he found he didn’t enjoy one bit. After some hard thinking he found a course that actually combined all his interests – computer-aided design of hugely-complicated machinery, fine craftsmanship and restoration of antique woodwork – and has started a 4-year course at Durham in ... organ building. We’re very pleased for him (Tim especially pleased to have a private organ designer). So we now have two children with other addresses (though Matt comes home at weekends).

Tracy has been very happy in her job both as Area Missioner and Parish Priest, though it's inevitable in a job with two halves that both try to expand into full-time, which means that she's sometimes been swamped with work. She's also (just to fill in any empty seconds) Yorkshire's only female police chaplain, so she sometimes gets brought home by a policeman.

*A charismatic policeman?*



Tim has had four or five trips to Germany (for concerts and one for an academic conference), the tour in Norway and played the closing concert at an international festival in Mallorca (with an audience of 800 or so), so what with work at Lancaster, book writing and a huge amount of consultancy this year he's not been short of things to do either.

This summer we tried to do something different and go camping by the chalk cliffs of the Isle of Wight. A couple of quiet weeks enjoying the sunshine, swimming in the sea and re-discovering places we used to know. 9 hours into our journey there we'd been looking at the same spot near Sheffield for a large part of the day (accident somewhere on the M1) and we finally arrived that night to put up tents in the dark. The next day we enjoyed a brief spell of sunshine and wander in the sea (though the tide was in) but then the rain began and the wind started to pick up. The following day we sat in the tent and listened to the rain beating on the roof (we couldn't go



anywhere because the car battery had developed a fault) and as the storms picked up we huddled into one tent, re-pegging the corners from time to time. Waving goodbye to our other tent as it was carried off protesting into the rainy night, we survived by physically holding the tent together (the boys slept in the car) until morning when we joined a sorry trail of others depositing the remains of tents in a convenient skip, waited for the AA to come and start our car and headed for home (we had to be re-started again to get off the ferry). That's the abbreviated version of a longer tale of woe, but it was certainly a holiday we won't forget in a hurry. We arrived home to a sad message that Tim's Uncle/Godfather had died. But we did enjoy a couple of days in Norfolk (another Tim concert) before the end of the summer, and we spent Autumn half term week

relaxing in an out-of-the-way farmhouse in Mallorca (courtesy of the concert there) where the weather was still warm enough for all members of the family apart from Tracy to swim in the outdoor pool, at least some of the days!

But all that seems a long time ago as we begin to look to Christmas and on to next year. And who knows what that will bring?