

14/03/05

Felicity will give me a hard time for typing this letter, particularly typing your name and address and the "Dear Di" bit. It's not a business letter she'll say. So, you'll have to forgive me; I just find it much easier to type than write. After all, if I make a mistake, I have immediate recourse to the delete key, whereas if I've written it, I have to crumple up the paper and start again

Well, this is certainly not a business letter. It's a where the (choose your own expletive) do all the years go letter. Here we are in 2005 and I discover that nearly two years ago you had words with your motor mower and it shouted rather more loudly than you did (or perhaps not). I'm ashamed, really, that we didn't know until you sent us Hortus. But, ashamed or not, the "utterly ghastly" reservoir of Marrian commiseration is big and bubbling, helped only by the hope, no confidence, that you have developed all sorts of clever ways of doing stuff that has to be done no matter how few fingers you have. The young chap who sells me coldwater fish and plants has no fingers on one thalidomide hand and he can do rather more with it than I can do with my good ones. He's had since birth to develop skills so we shouldn't make too much of it

We are all dead cool – and I'll get to the cool bit later. Sam is 24 and refusing to leave home. Emily is 21 and refusing to leave home. Try as we might, they just think that a pad in Chelsea is good enough for the time being. As part of their remarkably successful campaign (so far) to stay put, they have both signed up for PGCE courses meaning that they can, and will, argue that for the next couple of years the P word will be poverty (although in Sam's case it will also be princess) with all that implies for parental support. Sam got her 2.1 in Ancient History from Bristol. In fact, she aimed at it like an Exocet, arguing furiously with her tutor if there was any suggestion that an essay would not be marked 2.1 or above. Emily graduates in July; same subject, same university and on track for the same grade (or should that be class?). These two should have been twins. Thankfully they don't share the same boyfriend

Felicity continues to run the best nursery school in London and I don't say that out of any misplaced loyalty. I act as bursar and I've just had to close the waiting list for any term prior to September 2007 such is the clamour for a "spot", as the Americans say. I truly believe that we could alter the driving habits of Kensington parents by refusing to accept any child whose parents own a four wheel drive monster. Believe me, I am sorely tempted to impose this restriction to help rid London streets of these abominable "cars".

Now to the cool bit. You are the first friend to whom I have sent a copy of the enclosed CD. Ideally, you should listen to it on headphones as it sounds better that way (quite why I haven't figured out). This is the

story: I write songs and have done for a long time. To date they've been confined to friends around the dinner table. Over the last two or three months I've been documenting some of them in order to discover whether they're any good and, if so, whether I can find anyone who might be interested in recording one or more of them. Because I am not a musician, I've paid a guitarist to produce some simple backing tracks. I'm not a singer either but I've done the singing myself only because it was going to be too expensive to hire someone to do the vocals. The lyrics are printed within the cover booklet, on the front and back of which are two dead groovy photos of me: one on my way to the first "love-in" at Woburn Abbey in 1967 and the other in Porto Raphael, Sardinia! I've also enclosed some notes about the songs.

So, that's that! We shall see each other soon