

William & Pardis stayed in Weymouth in June, and walked part of the splendid **Dorset Coast Path** once again.

Here we are above the amazing **Durdle Door**.

See 2007 *Schwitzer Times* for another photo near this spot!



**Parakeet Paradise.** 15 years ago we would occasionally see a pair of parakeets on Hampstead Heath, and like other walkers we would stop and stare at the incongruous green birds. 5 years ago they were no longer unusual on the Heath, and several urban myths circulated locally as to their origin: they were escaped pets, or - the most popular - they were the descendants of a breeding pair from the set of *The African Queen* (filmed 1951 in Isleworth, West London). This year the situation got totally out of control: it's now impossible to walk on the Heath without seeing parakeets in large numbers, with their long pointed tails, rapid flight and loud squawks. At dusk they hang about in groups, and can now occasionally be heard all over Highgate. It's unclear how they compete with native species, perhaps over nesting places in trunks of old trees, but they certainly sound much more aggressive than traditional species.



## SCHWITZER TIMES

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# SCHWITZER TIMES

Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2019

In the year in which William turned sixty we bring you a positive take on the climate action that may result from 2019's extreme weather events, and some reflections on how Three Word Untruths are shaping political discourse in Brexit Britain. But family first...

In September, **William** retired again, after 5 months in HSBC Private Bank, and now can't see where he found the time to work.

**Pardis** visited Iran twice, after an absence of 40 years.

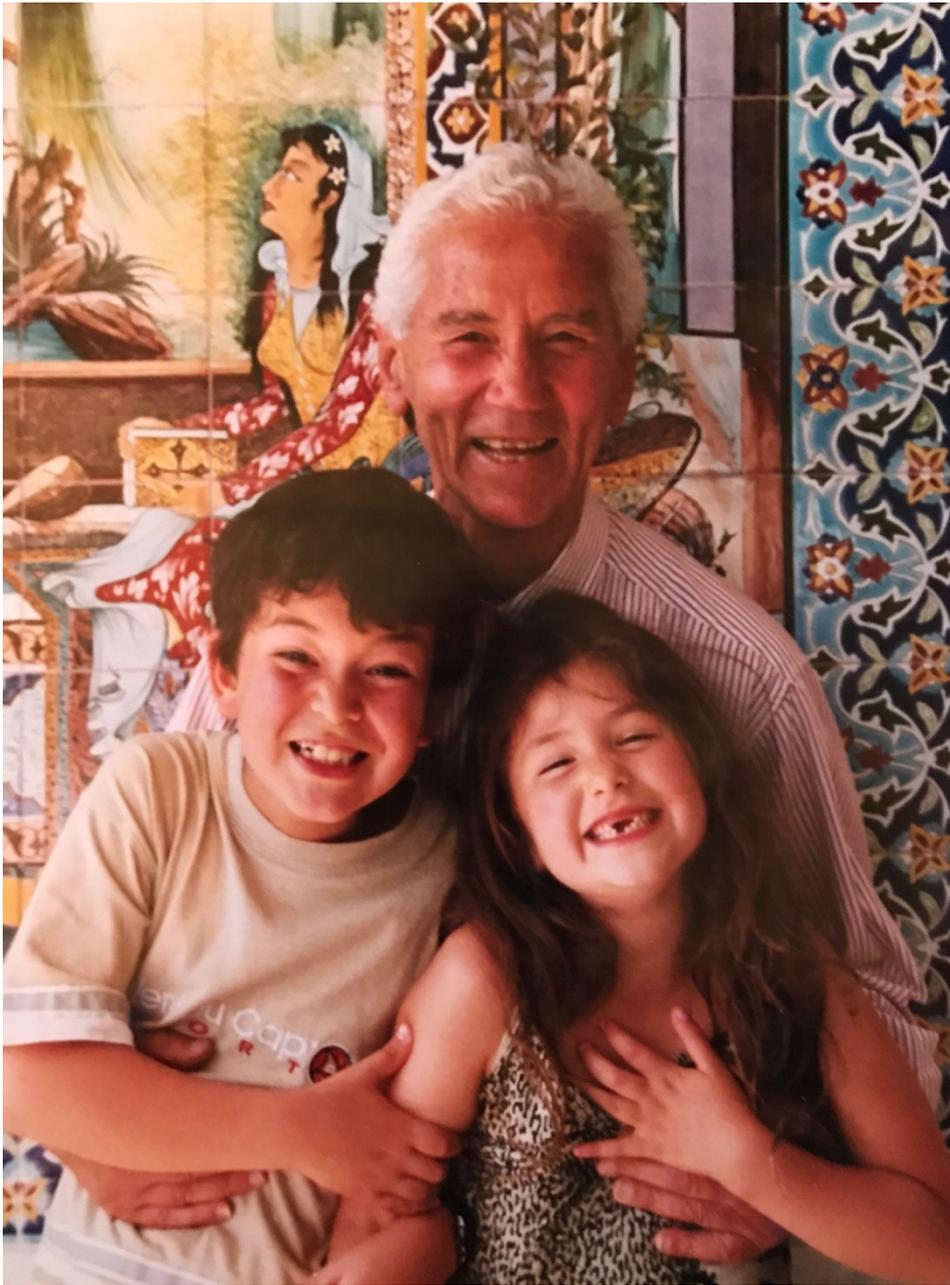
Civil Servant **Ed** had an enjoyable year, settling into his new flat off the Finchley Road and just about managing the chaos in wider government. He visited Japan in March/April with friend Jordan and his dad Michael, and in September showed girlfriend Laura around Lake Orta (*pics inside*).

**Yasmin's** make-up business grew exponentially. She made up Bugzy Malone (a Manchester rapper for those who need reminding) for the filming of the Manchester City Kit x Puma advert, and in October appeared with a panel of fellow professionals on the BBC's *Points of View* television program (*pics*).

**Planetary News.** We entered the year in Brexit paralysis, but with hindsight 2019 is turning out to be pivotal. Brexit proved to be a Pandora's Box on steroids, Orwell's nightmares happened (*double spread inside*), and populism is here to stay in some form or other, for as long as the political rewards from big data and social media remain underestimated and unchecked. But Tr\*mp's wings were clipped by impeachment proceedings, and J\*hnson's Brexit will not be plain sailing, so populism may not be quite as easy as it was for the last century's dictators. Meanwhile on environmental issues, 2019 saw multiple dramatic climate events at a place near you, and - helped by Attenborough's vivid Blue Planet II footage - worries around global warming, widespread environmental contamination, species under extreme pressure, and the knock-on effect of all these on humans, all went mainstream.

**First Green Steps.** So finally individuals and businesses did something - or at least made bold pledges. Extinction Rebellion succeeded in greening the mainstream parties' policies, and we see small but real changes to food sourcing & packaging at supermarkets. So maybe just maybe we are that bit more aware of own plastic footprint and individual responsibility to make positive changes.

On that note, here's to wish you a **Wonderful Christmas!**



**Mohammad**, Pardis's father, passed away in December 2018, aged 89, too late to make last year's edition. He will be remembered for his quiet dignified manner and deep affection for his grandchildren. He was buried in Behesht-e Zahra (The Paradise of Zahra) Cemetery, Iran's largest, in the southern outskirts of Tehran.

**Who to blame?** Countries get the politicians they deserve, goes the old adage. We accept political commentators who confuse fact and opinion. We praise interviewers who don't know what an open question is, haranguing politicians into denials and red lines where none existed. Where interrogators once expected to draw out policy rationale, now they truncate every train of thought. We smile at the wedge rammed into the tiny chink between policymakers we thought were aligned, then wonder why our politics is in bits. We fail to teach the basics of our economy, constitution, history and geography. We STILL broadcast *Dad's Army* and revel in the war spirit without reference to the war it was a response to. And worst of all, we tolerate massive concentration of media ownership when we won't in any other sphere, and let public funding of the state broadcaster morph into political appointments.



*'Parts of the UK have had a year's worth of spending pledges in the last 48 hours'*

**Send Me A Postcard.** And that hymn? The public are hereby invited to come up with new words for *Land of Hope and Glory* more in keeping with the times. Ideas to the editor on a postcard. NB no clever "Boaty McBoatface" stuff again please.

**How far do we reach?**

The *Schwitzer Times* has global circulation, and we warmly welcome photos of readers in faraway places.

Here's **Guido** enjoying last year's edition in **Milan**.

**Santa's Savings.** Santa has three chests containing gold sovereigns, silver doubloons, and the third with equal numbers of sovereigns and doubloons and a few lead fakes, but the chests are incorrectly labelled. Can you pick a coin from a chest and tell what is in each?



**Land of Hope and Glory.** If that's still your Britain, kindly skip this double spread, it's not for you. Because oh, how the mighty have fallen, Britain is now a basket case.

On December 12<sup>th</sup> Britain **Re-Elected** a rag-bag of English Nationalists who cannot fathom anything beyond the borders of The Shire and care nothing for our 300 year Union (unmindful of its place in their Party's formal name). This disparate group held together because the media never challenged J\*hnson to define his Brexit end-state.

As *Il Principe* confided in Chevalley in *Il Gattopardo*: "ho i miei forti dubbi che il nuovo regno abbia molti regali per noi nel bagaglio" (*I have grave doubts whether the new regime will bring us many gifts in its baggage*). The fear of Corbyn's workers' paradise was why many voted for J\*hnson despite his Nationalism. Those at whom it was aimed didn't believe it and were played by J\*hnson as brazenly as a brass band. The rest were terrified of it. That car workers whose industry is in doubt can believe J\*hnson offers them more than Corbyn will surely prove to be the mother of all scams. But how did this happen?

**1984 came 35 years late.** Orwell got everything right except the year. Today's concerns over personal data and political targeting via social media are all about Big Brother's ubiquitous control foreseen in his *1984*. Make no mistake, it works.

Downing Street controlled by Rasputin-like Psychopath and indistinguishable from Vote Leave campaign. Leader a Bumbling Buffoon who's surrounded himself with Ministerial Doormats, a CHINO (Chancellor in Name Only) forbidden to make spending announcements, a HINO (Home Secretary) accompanied on public outings for fear she say something stupid. The Maunder Minimum of Cabinet Calibre, an Ice Age of Integrity, they would not hesitate to unplug your life support to charge their phones.

**Slogans** for public consumption are limited to three words and compete in their mendacity, trapping the unwary into unpicking their precise meaning so as to miss the mismatch between action and declared intent. Thus "50,000 more nurses" when every government policy reduces numbers, "20,000 more police" while government made steep cuts. And a brazen "Get Brexit Done" when there's zero progress in three and a half years on the shape of the end-state (let alone any detail), and of course "Take Back Control" when what's on offer is withdrawal from international affairs, lumbering & outdated bureaucracy, and standards-free food & products. Orwell would be proud.

These **Three Word Untruths** now pervade every government discourse in Brexit Britain. Ministers rapid-fire TWUs on air. Newspapers use them too ("Enemies Of the People"). The incoherent ramblings of *Question Time's* engineered audiences are applauded vigorously the moment they manage to get out a familiar and comforting TWU. As in "*We I have am had a enough local the factory government worker should GET BREXIT DONE!*".

**TWUs** then are Brexit Britain's answer to Orwell's "*The party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command.*".

Our **American cousins** recognise the exact same sentiment in Tr\*mp's "*What you're seeing and what you're reading is not what's happening*".

Meanwhile "**Jeremy Corbyn**" is the Buffoon Leader's favourite distraction to deflect policy questions and redirect our political anguish, spat with the same venom as "Emmanuel Goldstein" was denounced daily in the *Two Minutes Hate*.

William, Pardis and Edward on William's **Sixtieth Birthday** in the Oxo Brasserie overlooking the Thames.



**William's Sixtieth** in March was four days before one of the botched Brexit dates, so it didn't feel like there was much to celebrate.

But then as the plans for one went awry, the plans for the other took shape, and we ended up on Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> with 16 close friends and family in a **Tapas Bar** in Camden Town.

Here I am with a modest cake and not much else left in evidence by way of a great meal (*er... except the tummy*).



Michael, Jordan and Edward in **Japan** for the Cherry Blossom (*and much more*).



Edward and **Laura** visiting Lake Orta in September.



In November, William caught up with schoolfriend **Chris** and spent a couple of days on his spotless barge *Caterina* on the **Grand Union Canal** near Milton Keynes – my last canal trip being some 35+ years ago.



The Grand Union is getting a bit overgrown through lack of maintenance, but is just as pretty as I remember it (*when the sun comes out*).

Right, William trying to point the 62-footer at a bridge.



Also in November, William spent a long weekend with sister **Veronika** & **Terry** in Bexhill. Here they are on our Sunday coastal walk in the Firehills.



In November, Trinity organised an evening with **Antony Gormley** at his stunning exhibition in the Royal Academy. Here we are amongst the sculptures and catching up with old college friends **Wilson** and **Osman**.



Yasmin as she appeared on BBC1's **Points of View** on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October. She was asked to comment on *RuPaul's Drag Race UK*, the reality competition show for Drag Queens.



Here we are with about a million others making our views known, though unfortunately these **Anti-Brexit Rallies** were held on Saturdays, marching through an empty city, so largely ignored by media and government.



Above on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, Pardis's first march, with friends **Rosa** and **Peter**.

Below on 21<sup>st</sup> October, with cycling partner **David's** wife **Kay** and their sons.



Catching up with old friends **Tim** and **Cressida** on the balcony of their beautiful apartment in the skiing resort of Haute Nendaz, outside Sion, in September.



William and old friend **David** at his wife **Wendy's** Sixtieth in October.



The stunning **Stupinigi Royal Hunting Lodge** outside Turin, which William & Pardis visited in June. Now beautifully restored, the last time we were here was in the eighties, when the central hall had no electricity and the rain came in. Italians don't trumpet their royal past, which makes this remarkable palace a hidden gem.



In June, the The Highgate Festival celebrated the lives of local women by putting up **Pink Plaques** around Highgate. This is the plaque to our mother **Joan** which was put up on the school gate at St Michael's, where she taught, and the subject of her 2002 book *Model for London: Victorian Farm School to Modern Primary*, published for the school's sesquicentenary. St Michael's was also of course the primary school for two generations of young Schwitzers.



Although temporary in nature, as we went to press, the plaque was still in place, passed daily by all the current schoolchildren.



Above, **Angel of the South** spotted at Lake Orta.

Opposite, **Yasmin's truly amazing makeup** for client going to a Halloween Party. Near right, client without make-up. I kid you not.

Below, Yasmin making up rapper **Bugzy Malone** in May.

Bottom right, **temperature** in Alsace on 25<sup>th</sup> July. We saw it reach 42C, and it didn't fall until after 6pm when we climbed out of the Rhine valley up to Husseren-Les-Chateaux. Not normal.

