

Don Talbot

From: Dorothy Beattie [canon35@tiscali.co.uk]
Sent: Friday, 30 May 2008 3:11 AM
To: Don
Subject: Hello from Winchester

Hi there Don & Pat,

Thanks so much for the lovely tiger birthday card - it's just what I would have chosen for myself, and it has pride of place on the mantelpiece. Thanks also for your email telling me about your cruise. I do hope that Pat is recovering from the virus - it takes ages to clear out of the system. Now they are saying that the air in certain planes causes illness. What with ships causing sea-sickness the pharmaceutical companies must be making millions.

When I went to stay with my friend Christine at Southwick, I was amazed to find that Worthing was such a big town. We went shopping there, and I hadn't expected all the large stores, and supermarkets, apart from the nice little shops one doesn't get many of these days. Bungalow land was much in evidence, with immaculate gardens.

Christine bought me a Tens machine from Boots. Have you come across these? It certainly helps with the pain: little electrodes are connected to a battery operated very tiny computer-like machine. Her daughter who is a nurse wears it all the time, but I found that the dangling wires rather got in the way. It has a timer, so I did 30 mins. this morning. After that I could go into the garden and clean up the debris of the last few months, and wash the dirty white plastic chairs. When I visited the chiropractor, he used it on my back. I hadn't thought of buying one myself.

John has suggested I get the train to London Waterloo on Friday 6th June. He and Rosalind will meet me for lunch, and then we get the train to their place, and I stay for a couple of nights. John says he will leave me in Borders Bookshop in Cambridge, and I can take my sleeping bag there, if I prefer! I have suggested to Rose and Robert that I catch the coach to Oxford this coming Sunday, and we go for lunch. Next Thursday June and I have a joint birthday celebration - it's her birthday 7 days after mine. We are going to Oxford for the day as she wants to see everything there. Martin is taking the day off and looking after the 4 children. He is a star and took me late night shopping this week.

Keira made her first Holy Communion this month, and looked lovely in her long, white dress and veil. I offered to look after the two little ones whilst the others went to Church, for they were looking for a baby-sitter. Last time, when Harry made his 1st H.C. Niamh danced up and down the altar the whole time, so it would have been rather stressful with two of them doing the same. We had a lovely buffet lunch afterwards.

Our weather has been typical. Half a day of hot sunshine, an afternoon of thunder and pouring rain. Of course it was a Bank Holiday weekend, and so the children are off school this week. Harry went camping with the Cubs, and then sleeping out in a tent in his friend's garden. I spent a lot of time indoors, reading the latest book for the blind and partially-sighted reading/listening group here. They meet once every two months and listen to the book on CD or tape, and then say what they thought of it. The next one is a heavy 529 page novel by Margaret Atwood - "The Blind Assassin" and I got it from the library.

The new library here is a gem. They now have a cafe, computer tables, rooms for meetings, and are open much longer hours. And I can get the bus right to the door. We have been given free bus passes

anywhere in England, but not on the National Express long distance buses.

Very glad to read all your family news. Christine has two cats - they were very suspicious of me, and sat guarding her on her bed, thinking that I was a threat in some way. I'm sure John and Ros's kittens wont be the same.

I am now signing off, getting something to eat and looking forward to watching 'The Bill'. Tell the family forensic scientist that she can have my body for research if she wants to know how to diagnose arthritis, osteo and spinal. I offered my body to Southampton but they said there may be a back-log to work through at that particular time, so couldn't guarantee to accept it!

Much love to you all.

Dot.

canon35@tiscali.co.uk

From: Don Talbot [mailto:dontalbot2@bigpond.com]
Sent: Saturday, 31 May 2008 4:21 PM
To: 'Dorothy Beattie'
Subject: Aussie reply

Greetings Dorothy,

 Pleased that the Tiger Card arrived ahead of the big event and thanks for all the news.

Pat has been back to the Scottish doctor who resembles a very short garden gnome and her blood test proved 'normal'. He said all her problems were to do with ageing. He told us not to use the car's air conditioning unless the switch was turned so that air from the outside was also admitted. Apparently this prevents contaminated air (Pat's) from recirculating and putting us all on our backs! Pat asked the Garden Gnome if she could get a handicapped sticker so parking the car would be easier. 'No, definitely not,' he said. 'I watched you walk in here and you only had a walking stick. If you had come in with a walking frame then you could have qualified.'

Paul said she should have rented a wheelchair for a day.

It is good that you will be meeting up with John, Rosalind, Robert and Rose in a few days' time and be able to exchange news in person. As Robert and Rose have met the kids at this end I can give you a little more news to pass on.

We took young Emma for her driving exam on Thursday and this was the second time – and fortunately she passed and is now driving her sports car with the hood down and her blonde hair flying in the breeze. At 18 she looks like a movie star and you can't help but smile.

She is working part-time at a local jewellery store and in her element handling diamonds and gold and has been sent on a special course to learn how to value diamonds. I can't remember if I told you but she has explained the costing of rings and watches to the customer as being the wholesale price, and then doubled and added to the goods and services tax (our name for VAT). I always thought jewellers were rip-off merchants.

Tonight (Saturday), her brother Michael graduates from a modelling course which Pat and I paid for. He would like to get into doing television adverts and has been learning how to present himself and build up self-confidence. He is still working on computer animation and earning some dough as trainee manager at McDonald's. They are now open 24 hours in Toowoomba and he has been handling the drive-through as well as doing the cooking.

The forensic scientist is applying for jobs in pathology labs, although her course won't finish until the end of this year. Meanwhile she's working part-time in one of the bigger bookstores in town and also two days a week at a major clothing, toy and computer store. I got her the job at the bookstore as I sell my books there and it is working well because she can get books with a staff discount!

On the other side of town, Warwick and Ding Dong Denise are fighting a losing battle with kid problems. Their middle son Scott, who works for a building society, blew up his car engine two weeks ago and asked us for a loan of \$1000 to get a reconditioned motor. Two days after we lent him the money he was involved in a major prang and the car was written off. Fortunately no one was seriously injured – but I wish he had borrowed the \$1000 from the building society. Warwick has been working in the Queensland Outback, close to desert country installing communication systems for companies and hotels. He doesn't like the heat. While he is away Ding Dong is busy working at the Fernwood Ladies Gymnasium, where she is being trained as a trainer and has to take the women through gymnastic circuits. She says they are a bitchy lot and always criticising each other behind their backs.

Just down the road, Dianne has been delivering trampolines and kids' swimming pools with her van. She has now gone into partnership with another woman and they are both making kilts with material imported from Scotland. Most of this is hand work and very tedious but the orders have been pouring in from everyone from our Town Crier to groups of girls who enjoy Celtic and Scottish dancing.

Robbie is enjoying life working at Boeing, handling spare parts and the computers for army helicopters and his sister Katie is making big money working shifts at the Fire

Brigade emergency call centre. She lives at home when not with her boyfriend of six years James Connolly.

Trevor is still hanging in to his Fire Brigade job and Dianne is still hoping that he will NOT take early retirement. She gets really fed up at weekends when the house is full of either the radio or TV set blaring out race results and football scores. Dianne and Trevor are planning to go on a P & O cruise from Sydney to New Zealand next year.

As for Pat and I: Well, Pat's family history is now in proof form and should be printed by the end of June and we will send you a copy as promised earlier. You can laugh at the photographs!

My next book, Volume 6 of 'Toowoomba Strange and Unusual Tales' will be ready in a couple of months and we are planning to launch it at the local funeral parlour, in keeping with the title. Pat gets a bit fed up with me because she considers it finished now But there is always a new and better tale coming on the phone or through the letterbox.

When all the ends are tied up, we will take a week off and head to the coast hopefully to the unit which is owned by a friend I met at university. I have told Pat that this will be the last book in the series and will finish with a print run of 2000.

Then it will be getting my head down to write the novel on university life, which I should have done years ago. Most of the ideas and material are in two large cardboard boxes sitting in the garage. It's going to be great to get some of the unusual happenings when I worked there on paper and my former Head of Marketing has promised to sue me if I mention anything about her. She doesn't know it, but in the book the former atrocious Head of Marketing will be characterised as a man.

Have a great birthday and I hope you eventually master the 529 Assassin novel for the book reading.

Love,

Don and Pat
Toowoomba