

News 2002 – The full version

January

The first big event of any new year for us (after New Year, of course) is always Ukrainian Christmas.

This happens on 6th/7th January, so just as everyone else is struggling back to the loft with the Christmas decorations and trying to find the rowing machine and diet books, we are starting all over again - but with big differences.

This year was certainly different for us. Daria's Mum was taken to hospital on English Christmas Day and was still there over Ukrainian Christmas. Fortunately her condition was less serious than we all feared, but it still cast a dark shadow over all our Christmas/New Year/Christmas plans. This was particularly so over Ukrainian Christmas as she usually prepares all the food.

So, for the first time, Daria and Gill were faced with getting things prepared. The big meal is on Christmas Eve, where tradition says the meal should consist of 12 courses (Apostolic significance). In truth, most manage nowhere near this number - and indeed some (JOHN!) seem to get by on a meagre 4! We usually get about two-thirds done, but would we this year?

Cookbooks dusted off, American measures converted to English approximates (Daria's Mum never uses either recipe books or measures, just her own nose), the girls begin on Saturday evening (5th). Amazingly, this is the generation whose parents despaired of too much English influence for fear that Ukrainian culture would suffer. Over the next 48 hours, one of the hottest discussion points is what should be prepared and how. How thick should borscht be and should it have cabbage in it? How much lemon juice is needed and why?

The borscht is under way and the girls start on holobtsi (rice wrapped in cabbage leaves) and the kutia - a sweet starter of wheat, nuts and poppy seeds. Tony starts to grind down the poppy seeds to a black powder but also manages to get poppy seeds everywhere, and we continue to find them for the next two days.

Preparation continues late into the night. Bleary-eyed on Sunday morning we drag ourselves to Club for 10.00 am mass, like all good Second Generations at 10.30 am. Hearing many voices chatting instead of just the priest's, we realise that either mass has finished in record time (UNLIKELY), or (worse) had not yet started. Actually, someone had changed the time of mass to 9.00 am and caught most of us out. We fight back our disappointment and, after stumbling over Christmas greetings (speak for yourself, Tony), return to food preparation.



Daria rolls out the pastry for varenyky

We all lend a hand. The boys (Roman, Tony and Rob) begin a varenyky production line, filling the pastry circles cut out by Daria with a whisky glass, with a dollop of potato/cottage cheese mix from a small mountain of mixture. These are then folded in half and crimped. Trays fill with the smiling parcels, but the mountain remains unmoved. Later, even Natalie lends a hand.



Tony & Robert on the production line



Roman shows how it should be done



Lets have a close up on that, Roman

Gill and Daria continue to prepare the fruit compote and the traditional Christmas bread, kolach. Done well, this is a superb table centre in its own right. Sadly, this one goes wrong (it is Daria's first go) and leans a little, and tasting too yeasty.

Time is running out fast and we still have to take food to Daria's Mum in hospital. She has hardly touched any food for the last few days, Sam finishing anything not deemed "tasteless". Her reaction is not encouraging. She screws up her face (we doubt if she is the world's first diabetic salt addict). Probably just her taste buds still out of action! Then she utters quickly "It's okay."

We had originally intended to eat early (as soon as the first star appears, according to tradition) and meet at the Ukrainian Club with the others at 9.00 pm UST (Ukrainian Standard Time - i.e. give or take an hour or so). By now, you are probably thinking Ukrainian Christmas is at this time of year because Uki's really meant to celebrate it on 25th December but were just late. But actually it was the West who moved the date, when Pope Gregory changed the calendar and the Ukrainian calendar remained as it was.



Table is laid and we are ready



Daria & Gill concentrate on the serious business of verenyky eating



Roman looks as if he is enjoying them too



Basil (the cat) looks interested as well



The meal over, Rob & Roman play cards

Anyway, by the time we start eating it is gone 9.00 pm. Too late to get to the Club and even too late to ring Ukraine and carol sing to relatives there. The meal is great and courses soon disappear, but it is now the early hours of Christmas morning when we finish. Too tired (OK - and intoxicated) to drive back to Daria's Mum's house, we stay overnight at Roman and Gill's.

Christmas Day. Time to meet the others at the Club for traditional carol singing round the houses. Teresa has arranged a 12.00 UST start. Daria, Tony, Rob and Natalie arrive early at 12.30 pm to find Teresa marshalling her troops, dispatching some to Stroud on a large white minibus. The driver looks totally confused as people are ordered on and then off the bus, Teresa's voice clamped firmly round their ears. He looks as if he is only doing this job in between flying lessons.

Finally, the groups are split in two and we are in the group heading for the local hospital - Daria's Mum our first "host". We squeeze as many as possible into our Galaxy and some go on the minibus, which will drop them off at the hospital and then go on to Stroud.

We manoeuvre out of the car park just as John H. arrives (almost ruining the veracity of Daria and Roman's assurances over the years that "the bus won't leave without us"). His VW Sharan can take the minibus's extra passengers and bring them back! "STOP THAT BUS" commands Teresa - but the driver's hearing is either very poor, or the phrase means something else in Arabic - or he is very brave/stupid! Teresa's instruction is not complied

with and we set off in hot pursuit. John is neither brave/stupid nor Arabic, so follows without question.

Overtaking is not possible in the narrow streets (no - it really isn't, Teresa) and the driver in front obviously thinks flashing lights and honking horns are all part of the act, so it is some time before mobile phones are brought into play to bring the bus in front to a stop. Teresa reallocates seats in John's car to the missing singers in her own inimitable style, and the minibus makes a swift departure for Stroud before minds can be changed.

At the hospital, John swaps seats with Steph and she departs before anyone can raise the issue of a return journey for her passengers. Never mind, its not that far to walk.

We number about 12, and must appear an odd sight as we follow our leader to the 8th floor. Chins drop on the nurses' faces when we request entry into the ward, but a suitable compromise is found. Daria's Mum can walk (she has improved significantly - must have been the borscht) to the Day Room and we can sing there.

It is a complete surprise when we collect her and a moment of great emotion when we launch into Dobrij Vechir Tobi for the first time. This is community at its strongest and is what makes the tradition so worth preserving. English Christmas has lost this gathering of not just friends and family but goodwill to the community.

We make our way down, Teresa commandeering a Staff lift and escorting us through the "Authorised Staff Only" route out. A few curious looks, but no one questions us (would they dare?).

And so we begin our tour of the houses where members of the Ukrainian community live. It is the tradition for carol singers to visit the house and sing carols in return for a donation to the organisation's funds. It is also traditional to share a small drink (usually vodka or similar) and nibbles before moving on, eventually returning to the Club.



We find spaces for ourselves at Alf's house while Teresa issues further instructions



Even Tony & Rob are in full voice

This year, we are plagued by empty houses. The word seems to have gone round about Daria's Mum and all seem to have taken off to visit her in hospital this afternoon. Roman and Gill joins us midway through our tour (they have been preparing food for two housebound

friends and delivering the food to them). We have been keeping in touch by phone and are close by to where they are. Sadly, another empty house so they will finish their visiting and join us again later.

Some hosts have masses of food and drink, obviously prepared just for us. Others, only the warmth in their eyes is our reward now, but we know they would do more if they could. We can't go into one house as the lady has bad legs and her husband is not well. In all the houses, we squeeze the dozen or so of us into small rooms and sing out loud, a mixture of Ukrainian speakers like Daria and others like Tony, Rob and Natalie, singing phonetically spelt English versions, hoping the sound is accurate. The end result sounds very impressive and seems emotionally uplifting for host and singers.

Two houses to go and Roman and Gill are on their way back to us. They are not far away as we enter the house singing Dobrij Vechir Tobi. Midway through our second carol, the doorbell rings and our host leaves the room to answer the door. Returning to the room alone, it appears he has closed the door on Roman and Gill as "the house is already crowded"! The situation is retrieved by his family and Teresa, and they are admitted to join us for a third carol.

We had arranged to meet the other group back at the Club at 4.00 pm UST and, as it is now 4.10 pm, we will only have time for one more house before our return. When we do get back, the Club is fairly full, but not with the other group. Drinks are purchased, the youngsters disappear to pool tables and a few more ad hoc carols are sung. The other group returns after a while and a buffet is unveiled. Core members of both groups combine (not us, as we can't attend practices) for a concert of carols, both traditional Ukrainian and Ukrainian renditions of English Christmas songs (Jingle Bells, etc.). By now, everyone is well into their conversations and not all know the tunes, so the level of noise barely drops when the singing starts. However, everyone seems to be having a good time, greeting friends they have not seen for a while.



The carols continue back at the club



Teresa organizes the Carol Concert



Even John has got the tune this time!

We make our way back to Roman and Gill's via the hospital again. John, Steph and their boys join us for the evening and discussions continue with John lending his expert opinion on the various dishes. By 2.00 am we have finished eating and discussing, and John and Steph set off home.

Another night at Roman and Gill's is followed by a lazy day for us. Roman and Gill are both back at work so we pack up our things (at both houses) and visit one of Daria's old friends, who tragically lost a son in a car crash before Christmas. We meet up with Roman at the hospital, where Mum looks much better and, after another late meal, head back south. Another Christmas over - thank goodness it only comes twice a year.

The next day, Mum is released from hospital. She was sorely missed, but it did give all of us another view on this traditional Christmas.

З Різдвом Христовим і

з Новим Роком!

Other Events in Jan

Rob at long last received his Chief Scout Award, the highest badge he can receive at his current level. This was during a presentation he and three friends carried out to the rest of the group about their Chief Scout Challenge (the three day hike they did last Autumn). Rob will have to wait until the new Explorer troop is started later this year before he can start on the Queen Scout Award (the highest of all).



Rob receives his Chief Scout Challenge certificate from the District Commissioner for Fareham East



Rob & fellow Challenger David receive their badges



Rob is congratulated on his Chief Scout Award from the District Commissioner

February

A sad start to February. Daria's uncle in Italy, Vincenzo, had been ill for some months. His situation got worse and Daria began looking for flights to Italy so that she could fly out with her mum. Vincenzo at first improved but just as we were welcoming guests to a small dinner party we had arranged we had another phone call. We finished our meal and Daria set off about 1.00am to collect her mum from Gloucester and then on to Manchester. There they joined Daria's uncle Silvio before flying out early Sunday morning.



Sadly Vincenzo had already lapsed into a coma when they arrived. He died in the early hours of Monday morning.

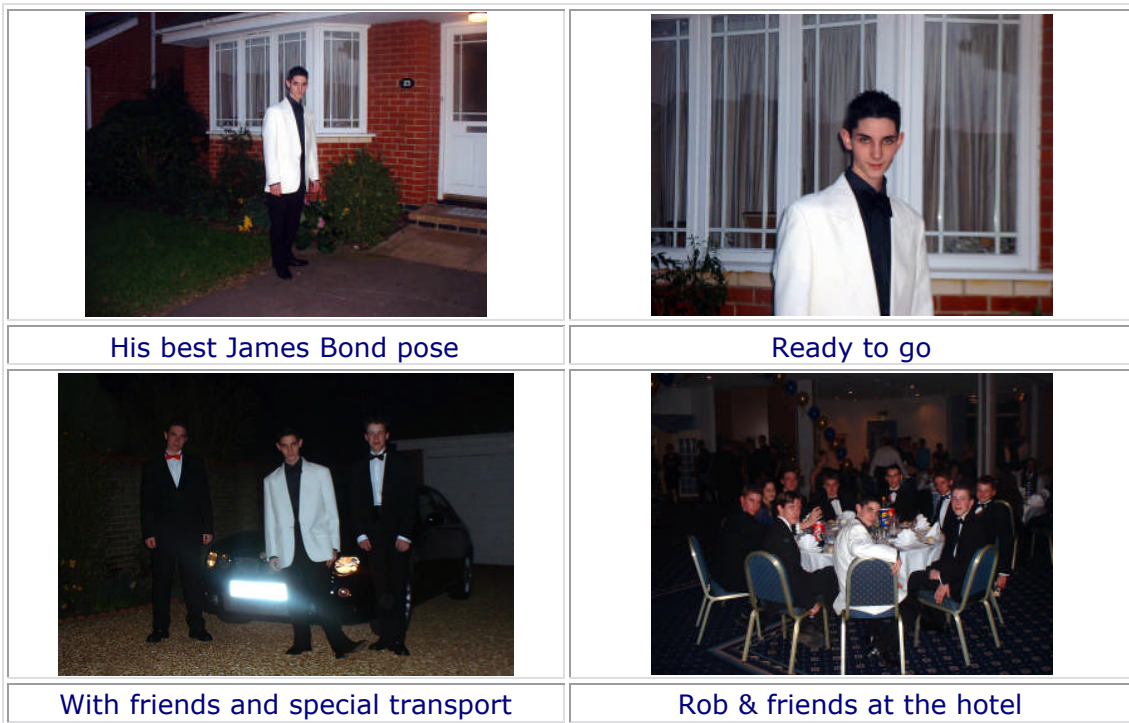
Many of our friends will know of Vincenzo even though they never met him, for many people through the years will have sampled the deep dark red wine we bring back from our frequent trips. I always regret that my Italian was never up to having a longer conversation with him than a few words. He always struck me as simple unfussy person, happier in his fields than being in a large group of people. I was never quite sure whether he was that keen on the annual invasion of the Kenefeck clan but he was always welcoming. He was a true character, who seemed to believe that all repairs could be achieved by a couple of sticks or some twisted wire. I always felt modern equipment did nothing for him, and he would rather have his trusty ape van or tractor any day. Lean, tanned and usually wearing just his woollen vest and trousers (at least when we were there) he reminded the kids in their younger years of Roald Dahl's BFG.

The photo above was taken a couple of years ago, when he had finally consented to allow Daria & me to join him on his annual trek up a mountain for a festa. Prior to this he had always walked all the way from the farm (some distance) and had doubted our ability to do it (although he probably couldn't see why we would want to do it). It involved leaving at dawn and on this occasion we drove part of the way, joining many other pilgrims making their way to the top. When we got here we found families sitting around munching breakfast on boulders outside a little chapel. Soon after a tractor arrived. The path was so full of deep ruts and boulders I was at first amazed even this had got through - but on the way back we passed even Unos, Pandas, as well as four wheel drive cars parked at all sorts of angles. The tractor was surrounded by boys running, almost like flies, and from the trailer at the back the priest descended - along with a couple of oil drums which I think contained soft drinks. I found it an amazing experience and was very grateful Vincenzo had given us the opportunity to experience it. *Buon Viaggio* - may you rest in peace, Vincenzo.

Having rushed to Italy at no notice, getting back wasn't as easy as Daria expected. In the end she was out there for almost two weeks which caused a little disruption to lessons and meant she had to miss a tutored wine tasting from an Australian vineyard owner she had been looking forward to.

March

Apart from the frustration that the web site continues to be beyond reach of my editing, the most significant event in early march was Rob's Prom night. Much time was spent searching for the right colour jacket and a black shirt to go with it as Rob did not want to be too conventional! The evening was held at a local hotel and again Rob wanted to avoid the convention of a stretch limo so travelled by sports car instead.



April

Easter was spent in Gloucester, fairly quite but very enjoyable. Rob was anxiously awaiting the arrival of the new ADSL modem, enabling him to surf the internet even faster. On our return excitement continued to mount, but this time it was generated by Natalie concentrating on her birthday party at the weekend. As I write this she and three friends are beginning a sleepover - in our old tent in the back garden. Let's hope they all survive to the morning!

Later in April, Maria was 18 and we took her, along with Rob & Natalie, to TGI Friday to celebrate. The staff were very friendly and have a custom of getting anyone celebrating a birthday to stand on their chair while the waiters and waitresses sing Happy Birthday. Needless to say we ensured Maria had her turn. However they did present her with her own personal birthday cake (including candle).

May

May flew past, but not very much to report about it. Rob was 16 at the end of the month and we had a small gathering for him at a pub in Warsash. The following day Natty went off for a weekend camp with Guides, to Windsor. This was Jubilee Weekend, start of the World Cup, so we took it easy (well apart the DIY), watching TV of either the footie or Jubilee celebrations.

June

More World Cup watching - and for Rob exams. Revision seems to have consisted of weekend parties and lots of going to bed late/getting up late. Apparently nowadays, all that is required for some exams is that you turn up and sign your name! Lets hope so.

The third weekend is traditionally a busy time for celebrating. On the 21st it is our Wedding Anniversary (22 years!) followed by Roman's birthday on the next day, and Daria's mum's on the 24th. This year we did very little for our anniversary, as Tony came down with a bad bout of food poisoning after a restaurant meal midweek. On the Saturday we travelled to Gloucester for a barbeque on Saturday night, followed by a family meal at a pub on Sunday. For the first time in 2 years, Maria joined us after she had finished work on Saturday - making it even more special.



Everybody gathered in the Gazebo



Daria brings out the flaming cake



Mama puffs out the candles



All gathered for our meal at the pub



Nonna and grandchildren



Nonna, Daria & Roman

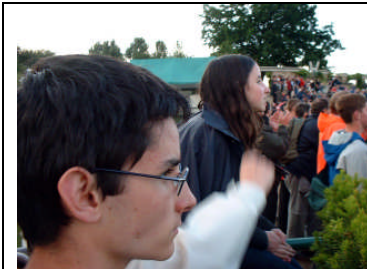
July

As usual July was a busy month, filled with garden parties and trips to open air events.

We started with an evening visit to Wimbledon but managed to choose the first rainy day - and arrived in the first outbreak of rain. Soaked, we made our way to No 3 Court, where we had intended to stay for several matches. In the end we saw a Womens Singles before joining everyone else on Henman Hill in the fading light to watch the man himself just struggle through.

Open Air Shakespeare at Titchfield Abbey was enjoyable both times we visited, and a trip to Portchester Castle for Last Night of the Proms was a new experience for us. In between Natalie was confirmed at our local church, with party to follow in our garden.

Our gazebo was in action quite a bit as first Wine class, then Italian class visited as well as the confirmation party. Tony & Daria found time for a Midsummer Murder Party, while Rob seemed to never stop partying now exams were over. His relationship with his girlfriend Sue increasingly dominated his thoughts and he began to doubt his ability to survive a Scout Camp and three weeks with us in Italy. The Scout Camp was dropped, while negotiations continued re his holiday with us.



Daria punches the air as Henman goes through - we are watching from Henman Hill along with hundreds of others.



A fantastic summers evening listening to the BSO's version of Last Night of the Proms



Natalie waits to cut the cake at her confirmation party

August

Much of August was spent travelling to Switzerland and Italy. A fuller diary is still being prepared, but the trip was the usual good fun, with Rob surviving the whole period, and Natty bringing along her friend Natalie (very confusing). The highlight was that Maria asked to come along too, and on her return asked if she could come home permanently. For Rob there was great news about his GCSE results but Maria was not as fortunate with her A Level Maths. However it did give her an incentive to return to college and continue with her other studies through to full A Level.

September

Lots of changes for all to start September off. Rob has moved on to Sixth Form College in Gosport, Maria is back home and still at Fareham College, while Natalie moved up to Year 9 at Cams School.

For Rob there was the added excitement of getting his first scooter, which now means he is more mobile, without waiting for lifts from Mum & Dad. To pay the running costs he got a job as a waiter in a Greek restaurant at weekends. Maria continues with her weekend MVC job and evening job for a parcel delivery firm, paying for her driving lessons.

Daria was also back at University, returning to Aston Uni for a weekend revision school in preparation for her final exam in October.

October

A major change for Tony to begin October. A run of poor business results led to a reshuffle of managers, and as the Andover branch was among the poorer performing branches, Tony was moved sideways - to Asst Manager at Salisbury (a bigger branch). For Tony this was a return to the branch he started at 28 years ago. There have been many changes in the 23 years since Tony left but already several familiar faces have appeared, previous colleagues who are now just customers. It was also a weird feeling revisiting Salisbury, which we have hardly visited since Mum & Dad left 7 years ago.

Daria faced her final exam in mid month and now we have to wait until December to find out if she has been successful. Maria took her driving test and passed first time. It didn't take long before she had found a small car for herself - a grey cinquecento sporting. Now she is zooming off to pubs far & wide following her favourite band, the Purple Monkeys.

In the same way Rob has now clocked up several miles on his new scooter - although he is back seeking part time work as the Greek restaurant waiter's job has fallen through.

Finally we have picked all our grapes of our vines, hoping we are more successful this year with our wine production efforts

November

A quiet month so far. Rob has put his restaurant skills to use - his new job is at MacDonald's. Although at this early stage it mainly involves sweeping up.

Tony has been doing more research on the family history and continues to find more Kenefeck ancestors alive in London in the 19th Century. A trip to the Public record Office produced some interesting detail about Kenefeck's who fought in the First World War and some new leads.

He has also been busy doing various jobs around the house, new lighting for entrance and bathroom, as well as extending the driveway to accommodate 3 cars.

Maria continues to chase the Purple Monkeys all over the area - taking Tony along on one occasion and more recently, at Robs request, she organised a gig in Gosport so that the under 18's could go - only for Rob to discover his friends weren't as enthusiastic.

As Christmas approaches, the social calendar begins to get more congested and the first event starts on Friday with a Vodka Night for Tony & his football colleagues - Daria repeating her presentation from last year.