February 2012
A Happy & Prosperous New Year to all our readers!

Christmas Lunch 2011
2011 closed with a Christmas Lunch at Knuston Hall attended by 66 members & guests who enjoyed a delicious meal in festive surroundings.
[We plan to hold this year’s Christmas lunch at Knuston again].

Dates for your diary:
Our winter holiday to Bournemouth was a great success and we will repeat the experience with a November trip to The Isle of Wight, with plenty of visits and action as well as relaxed seasonal entertainment.
Join us in Shanklin from Nov. 26th - 30th. Flier coming soon.

The date for the Pensioners’ Supper in June is still in negotiation....watch out for further information.
News from the Antipodes – Jeannette Wong

When Brian Bateman visited New Zealand in January 2011 we met up in Wellington (North Island). He asked me if I would like to write about my life post Colworth so here goes. If you remember a 5’3” Chinese girl in Colworth between 1988 and 1995, lugging a 25kg box of palm kernel oil (PKO) around the pilot plant, or twiddling valves of the UHT rig amongst a big cloud of steam creating deafening noises, or rearranging pipe connections using a foot-long spanner in the Ice Cream Application Unit (ICAU) pilot plant, that was me. I married my husband Paul Chick whilst still at Colworth. I still retained my maiden name, Jeanette Wong.

I left Colworth in 1995 to pursue my career in Hong Kong but I never thought that I would live in any country other than England if we were to leave Hong Kong. However, my husband Paul went on a business trip to New Zealand in 1996 and he immediately fell in love with the place. On his return he asked if I would consider living in New Zealand instead of going back to England as our ‘next stop’. Not to rush into any impulsive decisions, we took a holiday in New Zealand and like all guided tours organised from Hong Kong; it was a whirlwind tour round the whole country in just 9 days. This brief taste of the New Zealand lifestyle was enough to convince me also that this was going to be our next stop. The country was full of natural beauty, open pasture lands and towering mountains, not to mention the numerous volcanoes and very few people, just a fantastic contrast to our life in Hong Kong. After working in Hong Kong for 12 years, we are now living in New Zealand and about to start running a Bed & Breakfast business, which has been our dream since we decided to live in this wonderful country. An even more surprising twist to our lives is that the block of land which we have chosen to live on is a vineyard. As Brian knows when we attended his “Bloody Foreigners Parties” we only consume non-alcoholic beverages. In England we never did much gardening other than growing a few tomato plants in our back garden. We are now learning how to grow wine grapes (a very steep learning curve indeed!), as well as learning how to make up beds and clean toilets properly.

We left behind the luxuries of city life for a life in the countryside where grazing sheep are our neighbours, the morning chirp of the native birds is our wake-up call, freshly squeezed apple juice and fried eggs in freshly pressed olive oil grown in our own garden is our breakfast, and pruning/mulching/leaf plucking the 14,000 vines is how we spend our days. Our friends did not believe we would survive more than a year living in the rural area and I believe we have proven them all wrong.

Our vineyard (photo 1) is located in a small rural town called Mapua (about 25 miles from Nelson), at the top of the South Island. It has an area of 8.672 hectares (about 21 acres), with 5 grape varieties: Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. Two varieties were used in wines that have won major national and international prizes, so even though we are not getting a very good financial return on our investment (take a look at the price of NZ wines in Sainsbury’s and you will understand why!), our hard work has been very rewarding.

At this time of the year the vines need pruning so we slip into our gumboots (Wellies), carrying a pair of loppers and secateurs, and happily prune each and every vine, getting them ready for the next season.(photo 2 )

It has been 18 months since we boldly made the decision to buy this vineyard (we know that we will not be making any money for the next few years) and we have not regretted one moment of it - we look forward to all the new challenges that lie ahead of us.

Please do let me know if you are over in NZ for holiday (Jeanetteyt_wong@hotmail.com). Our newly purpose built homestead will be ready in the not too distant future. Please make contact with us if you are intending to visit New Zealand and either book a room with us or just drop by to say hello. If you decide to stay with us maybe we can go hiking/fishing/hunting and definitely vineyard-hopping together!

Jeanette Wong
RUSHDEN'S UNIQUE, HISTORIC FIRST – BORN in a BARN!

We all are familiar with Rushden’s rich heritage as a centre of the leather, shoe & boot industry. But very few are aware that Rushden has a unique, historic “first” in another craft, in the form of the Austin pipe organ now to be found in the Baptist church in Park Road. The plaque on the console declares that it was built by John T. Austin of Detroit in 1897……but in fact it was built in Knuston by John Turnell Austin, the son of a farmer [Jonathan Austin] who in 1866 built the very first Austin organ which still stands in St.Margaret’s church, Denton. His son John was a keen musician & was taught the organ by Joseph Enos Smith, the then organist of St. Mary’s church Rushden, who remained a life-long friend. John emigrated to the USA in 1889, where in 1893 he developed an entirely novel design for pipe organs of which he built some 25 in association with the firm of Warren & Clough of Detroit. The patented design [called the Universal Windchest Organ] used as windchest an airtight room with the action of the instrument mounted on the ceiling [thus permitting easy access for installation & maintenance] with the pipes mounted externally on top. All but one of these were for American churches, the exception being the organ at Park Road Baptist church, which was the first to be exported to England in 1897. John went on in 1898 to found the Austin Organ Company of Connecticut which has since installed over 2000 organs – but only two in England, of which no trace can now be found. The Rushden instrument remains the only European example of John’s successful design.

The Rushden instrument was not first assembled in the Baptist Chapel, nor in the current Baptist church, but in father Jonathan’s barn at Knuston Lodge Farm, a fact confirmed by Joseph E. Smith’s recorded eyewitness account of this event. We surmise that John wished to show his father how to build a better organ….or more likely, to provide a sales example for the English market for church organs, which was burgeoning at the time. In January 1897, the church records of the Little Street Rushden Baptist Chapel show that an anonymous donor proposed the purchase of a new organ, offering to pay £200 [or half the cost, whichever the lesser] for a new instrument, on condition that it be installed by the end of the year. The chapel records also show that John Austin offered the Knuston instrument to the chapel at the carefully calculated cost of £400!. There then ensued a debate amongst the deacons of the Chapel as to whether the instrument should be immediately installed in the [Old] Chapel in Little Street, or installation delayed until the planned [New] Church was built nearby in Park Road. Enquiries were raised with John Turnell as to whether the instrument could continue to be stored until the new church was built. The chapel organ committee ultimately settled the matter by organizing the organ’s installation in the Old Chapel on the grounds that monies earned from concerts there would be useful in funding the new church building [also no doubt encouraged by the donor’s condition that installation be complete by the end of the year!]

On completion of the new church on Park Road in 1901, the organ was moved to this new location. Records so far found reveal nothing further about the Rushden instrument until the mid-1930s, when they show that Nicholsons of Malvern had a contract for tuning & maintenance. By the late 1930s, the instrument had developed major problems & Nicholsons recommended a complete rebuild –offering a greatly enhanced specification for the unaffordable sum of £3,230. Not surprisingly, the church elders settled for a more modest upgrade with 5 additional stops costing £1,825. Work began on October 3rd 1949 & was completed in time for the dedication service in December 1949 – just in time for Christmas.

The research of this history resulted last year in the award from the British Institute of Organ Studies of a certificate of recognition of the organ’s position as an English historic first & unique example of John Austin’s design. The instrument continues to give reliable service in services & concerts: a tribute to John Austin’s ingenious design & Nicholsons’ sound craftsmanship. Designed & built by a local lad who formed an American company which has since installed over 2000 pipe organs, this is a heritage of which Rushden can be justifiably proud.

A retired organist
NEW MEMBERS
We welcome:
Neil Willsher                     Steph & Ron Whitney
Philip Humphrey                  Alison & Roy Brown
                                  Tony & Maureen Meadows
                                  Ken & Marie Mack           Richard Hall

With great sadness, we report the passing of
David Osborne, Cliff Harris [Electronics engineer, Instruments section] & Patricia Staughton

David R. D. Osborne.

David was born in Cornwall but grew up near Portsmouth and during the war was evacuated to his grandparents in Scotland. David initially failed all but one of his A Levels (chemistry) and so went to Portsmouth College of Technology where he gained 4 A Levels and then a degree in Chemistry. He did a PhD in Chemistry at the Pittsburgh University and joined Unilever, Colworth in 1964. David asked Anne out after rescuing people from a chemistry lab fire, married her and lived in Riseley with their girls, Mandy and Mel.

David will be remembered for many senior roles in Colworth including Section Manager Analytical, several PAM and Division Manager posts, 2 years as R&D member of Frozen Foods Co-ordination in Rotterdam, and then a member of the Colworth Executive heading either Biosciences or Foods from which he retired in 1993.

David’s germicide patent won him well-deserved recognition as it became the first $1,000,000 patent earner for Unilever, and went on to earn much more in royalties when it was licensed to others. He inspired people with his tremendous enthusiasm that permeated down to all his staff and his attitude that we could achieve anything if we tried hard enough. David often challenged researchers to ‘Friday afternoon experiments’ and if it did not work he was sure they had done something wrong. Colworthians loved working for David, finding him a stimulating, challenging and caring boss, wonderful colleague and family man and he will be remembered for his wicked sense of humour concealing the skill and tenacity he demonstrated in everything he did. His ‘blackboard creativity test’ challenged many an interviewee, and he often formulated solutions to problems when a project required a radical rethink.

A founder player/member of the Colworth Rugby Club, David loved the sport and also played golf. He was a passionate gardener / allotment holder who argued the merits of Sutton Foremost new potatoes and still conducted vital experiments cross-polinating delphiniums.

Many will know that David has not been well in recent years, and our condolences go to Anne, Mandy and Mel for their sad loss of an exceptional man.

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