

## **John Goddard Christmas 2025 Newsletter**

As I noted in anticipation last year, the highlight has been an organised trip to India in the spring with Jane and David principally to visit the Darjeeling light railway. We indulged ourselves by flying business class to Calcutta and spent three days amidst the hurly burly of the city. We then took a long train ride across the Ganges plain to Darjeeling and a trip up the mountain railway on a precipitous track that is a road with houses and shop frontages. Amazing.

This was topped up (literally) by a visit to the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Not only was this stunning in terms of scenery but as a cultural experience of a country with restricted access to tourists situated between India and China and with a unique system of religious (Buddhist) governance. Jane and David, the youngest members of our party, climbed to world famous Eagle's Nest Monastery to top out our trip

The trip was great break from my work supporting the civic role of universities in the community. As part of this endeavour, I tripped getting off the plane in Newcastle returning from speaking at a conference in Paris and severed my Achilles tendon. Three months in an orthopaedic boot and unable to drive made life difficult but I acquired a mobility scooter with Dominic's help and was fortunate to have my friend Anne as a taxi to ferry me to hospital visits. I still managed to join Jennifer and her boys as an observer on a short activity holiday in Scotland which in part made up for her not being able to come with her siblings to India. I also had lovely New Year and Easter breaks with David, Hannah and the twins in Bishop Stortford and with them at the family cottage in Northumberland in the summer. This was followed by a BBQ with the whole family in Jane's garden.

The final highlight has been Grandson Sam, Janes's eldest, graduation with a first-class degree in civil engineering from Northumbria University on the same day as her birthday! He has done a modern apprenticeship and can carry on working as a certified professional. I see Jane and Dominic most Sundays for an evening meal and most Saturdays go to a show with Anne. Roles as a trustee of the Wylam Village Hall, of a church and community charity in Hexham, of Newcastle Cathedral and of Tyne Rowing Club have kept me busy. I also have a new role advising on the future development of the vast Minsteracres Catholic retreat site near Riding Mill. So, I am not socially isolated!

This local community work may become more important for me next year as my academic activity is curtailed due to the impact of financial pressures and populism on the work of universities with society. The professional team I have been working with in Sheffield Hallam University have all been made redundant. So next year I will be working on my own - but with support from the family team!



Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, March 2025



Birthday BBQ, August 2025

