



Alice graduates from Bentley Middle School in California



Blazers and badges return

**Back into Uniform**

*Trading the American school system for British, Alice and Henry had to make a few changes*

Alice (14) completed her eighth grade and Henry (11) finished fourth grade at Bentley school before heading back to UK. Alice saw friends disperse to various High Schools after graduation, as she headed off to her new school, Perse Girls in Cambridge, to start her GCSEs.

**Perse Strings**

A big difference in style (none of those distracting boys, for one thing) but she enjoys the academic focus, and relished a Paris trip on textiles in her first term. Judo is a hit, and it's not true that studying the Russian Revolution has made her all bolshie.

Henry underwent Britification a little more radically, losing his rat-tail hairstyle, gradually adapting his accent and forgoing burritos.

**From Minuteman to Red Coat**

He switched the colonialist mufty for a red uniform to return to St. John's College School. He traded baseball for rugby, Spanish for French, and Presidents for Kings. The school has helped him re-acclimatise, with a role as a Dickensian urchin ("Gor Blimey Governor!") at the Victorian fair, and some good old Latin vocab. New school friends, old school friends - all just an email away.

**Monster Movie**

*Thrill-a-minute homage to King Kong before Peter Jackson did it*

Our summer project was a short movie, *The Making of Monster Island*, starring Henry, Alice and a cast of friends and family. Thanks to Bill and Max Thompson for their production and acting skills! And to the scriptwriting team, make-up, Best Gaffer, Dolly Pull Grip, etc... Critics raved over Alice's Valley Girl heroine, and Helen won acclaim as angst-ridden Erica. No Monkeys!!!



The sock-monster claims another victim. Lavish special effects in the summer blockbuster



Technology Critic Bill hosts at BVSH HOVSE

**Watching the Radio**

*Go Digital* is a cutting edge radio show about technology on the BBC World Service, hosted by 'contraverticalist' Bill Thompson. What better day out for Grandma Edna's birthday treat, than visiting the BBC to watch Bill doing his shock-jock stuff.



Henry reads, flanked by editors Vanessa & Kelly

**Henry's Public Reading**

Cody's Bookstore, Berkeley, hosts readings and special author events. Henry was one of several invited to read their contribution to *The Dayton Tribune* created and edited by Vanessa Thill and Kelly Reed. Naturally this was followed by the authors signing copies.

**Midnight Pottery**



Alice & Henry hefting the 600-pager

Two fans were there for the release of Harry Potter VI at midnight on July 15. Their verdict? "No great imaginative leaps in this one, like the earlier books. She's cruising, but hopefully she'll resolve all the loose plot lines in the last volume." Was it worth staying up till midnight? "ZZZZzzz."

**Scratch-O-Matic**



Henry's invention of a self-operated back-scratching machine was exhibited at a school show. Order yours online at the Coburn family website [www.dittoncorner.com](http://www.dittoncorner.com)...



Please note our new address is now our old address:  
Ditton Corner, 5 Church Street, Fen Ditton, Cambridge CB5 8SU Tel: (+44-1223) 292066



A frosty reception: Back at Ditton Corner, the winter has started early

**Back in Our Corner**

*After three years in United States, we moved back to England in the summer to resume life in Cambridge. Our farewells were sad, but it is good to be back home.*

Perfect timing! Just unpacking the shorts and sunglasses when the scientists discover that the Gulf Stream is switching off and that Northern Europe is about to turn into Newfoundland. Certainly feels like it. We miss that California weather.



Saying farewell to our view across San Francisco

For us, 2005 was a year of two halves, changing ends at half time. The first six months were our last six months in the States - a rapid round of sightseeing and dream fulfillment, including skiing at Tahoe, trekking at Point Reyes, and a high-

point of surfing in Hawaii at Xmas. And of course, all those last minute trips to photograph the Californian buildings for Helen's book.

**We missed New Orleans...**

As we got busy in the New Year we shelved our plans to visit New Orleans for Mardi Gras. Never mind, we thought, it'll still be there for a trip in the future. Oops. It vanished under the waves of Hurricane Katrina only months later.

**...but Katrina didn't**

Actually Andrew got to visit and pick his way through the debris later in the year, as part of the disaster reconnaissance, but by then it wasn't the New Orleans we had pictured.

**Sent Packing**

Somehow in just three years we had forgotten how painful a transatlantic move is. There was all the packing and selling up of the entire contents of the house, cars, bikes, TVs - how

did we acquire so much stuff? Just a container load left to ship home.

**Home again, home again, jigitty-jig** It's merely taken us the second half of the year to unpack and settle back in to our house. New schools, new cars, old friends, old habits.



It never rains in California - except when we'd hired a convertible for our last week.

Seems strange but comfortably familiar. We've traded NPR for Radio 4, The Giants for Man United, and 1880 for the 8.15 to Kings Cross. And of course, now we're busy planning our next vacation in California.



Bidding our Californian friends farewell at a party for Helen's birthday. Magicians and all.

**Vanishing Trick**

*The expensive magician made all our money disappear, but we had fun saying farewell to our Californian friends before we vanished ourselves.*

May and June was just one giddy round of parties. A 'Farewell' here, a 'Welcome Back' there. The dinner-dance in the Highlands Country Club was only spoiled by Dad playing air-guitar on the dance floor. Most of the eighth graders showed

us how Green Day should be appreciated. Many thanks to all who came to celebrate our extradition. Note that we got well clear before the Americans started their traditional July 4 celebration of limey-culling. So long and thanks for all the fish!



If God had intended Englishmen to wear Hawaiian shorts he would have given them legs.

**Hawaii Sleigh Bells**  
*Christmas holiday on the beach*

Christmas dinner after scuba diving is a real treat. Our trip to Maui with the extended family saw us soaking in the rays and catching the waves with the best of them. Apart from sun, sea and sand we also drove up to the rim of the amazing Haleakala volcano, and snorkled with the giant turtles through the coral reefs.



Henry and Alice catch a wave

Andrew's birthday was celebrated with Mai-Tais and hula skirts, and then it was down to the beach to try our hands at surfing. OK its not as easy as it looks, but the youngsters seemed to get the hang of it pretty quickly. The older guys just hung out on the beach getting whistled at by the chicks, or was that the faint sound of laughter we could hear?



Helen, Andy, Alice & Nick scuba diving on Maui on Christmas Day

**Hot Bumps**



Rowers admiring the hats on the bank

A groveling apology to those who 'noted the date' in this Gazette last year and came to the Bumps party a week early. Yes we got it horribly wrong when the University Boat Club switched the week. Those who ignored our information and came on the right day had a scorching hot day watching scorching Caius keep everyone at bay.

Note the Date!  
**2006 Bumps & Carnage Party**  
will be on  
Saturday 17 June 2006  
(Probably!)  
*No honestly we're really sure this time...*



On the slopes of Squaw Valley at Lake Tahoe

**Trouble on the Piste**

A few days skiing on the slopes of Lake Tahoe with Uncle Ian and Aunt Jane and then nine months recuperating from the knee injury. Poor Helen's ambitious slalom on the black run (!) did for her anterior cruciate ligament and had her in a leg brace for several months. Apart from that Mrs Lincoln, as they say, it was great fun. Henry took to it quickly on his first time on the slopes. Helen shouldn't have been trying to keep up with him.

We were sad to lose Sue Gray, longtime assistant in Cambridge Architectural Research, when she lost her long struggle with cancer in November.



Shrinking the Great Wine Lake of Vienna

**Reductive Planning**  
*Shrinking Cities Team*  
*Co-locates in Vienna*

The Shrinking City project coordinates international researchers looking at planning issues in urban areas in decline. Helen is researching the urban energy implications. The group was established at Berkeley, and has regular web-based meetings spanning several continents. Occasionally they all get into the same time zone for a face-to-face meeting, such as the annual congress of the Association of European Schools of Planning in Vienna.



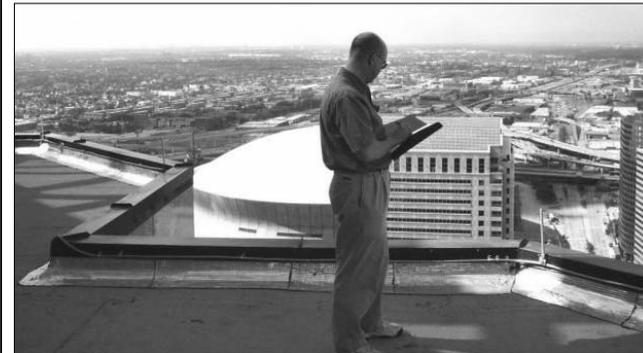
Photovoltaic panels used as architectural features on a Santa Monica studio apartment building

**Powerful Facades**

*Low-Energy Buildings in California*

Helen continues her investigations into low-energy architecture in California for publication by Taylor and Chapman next year, using 12 recent buildings as case studies.

Technology tends to eclipse design for energy-efficient solutions in California, but some useful lessons can be drawn. There are also parallels with the collaborative project Helen set up on Large Scale Building-Integrated Photovoltaics, now into its fourth year at CAR.



The damage in New Orleans, and a repaired Superdome, surveyed from a downtown rooftop.

**Katrina Tops Off A Record Catastrophe Season**

*A record number of hurricanes, the New Orleans flood, tsunami, quake and an impending flu pandemic gave RMS a busy year*

This year's hurricane season was a belter. Hot seas spawned more and stronger hurricanes than usual. They ran out of names, and hurricanes were still forming in December.

*Katrina And The Waves*

And then there was Katrina. RMS estimated it caused the biggest insurance loss in history at \$40 to \$60 billion. Its clients scrambled to assess their own losses and RMS's phones never stopped ringing. The New Orleans flood hit the headlines as 100,000 people were stranded in the waters. Andrew put together the RMS report on Katrina and joined a client team assessing damage in New Orleans. The destruction is on an unbelievable scale and will take many years to rebuild.

*Tsunami and Quake*

Other catastrophes also broke records: last Boxing Day was the Indian Ocean tsunami that killed 280,000 - the deadliest tsunami ever. In October the Pakistan earthquake killed 73,000 in an area close to Andrew's fieldwork in the 1980s. The winter looks bleak for the 350,000 survivors who are without shelter above the snowline. Both of these events have involved RMS in research and publications about risk of other super-catastrophes.

*Red Cross Aid*

RMS also contributes to disaster charity, and this year marked a record corporate contribution.

*Terrorism Risk Insurance Act*

Other areas of risk management have also hotted up this year. U.S.

legislation to backstop terrorism insurance is in its final year, and RMS has been centrally involved in the debate about potential renewal. Andrew was the author of an RMS whitepaper analyzing the bill, that was widely cited.

*Award-winning Recognition*

The RMS business continued to grow rapidly, with strong demand for models and services for risk management. In July, RMS won the 'Risk Modelling Agency of the Year' award from Reactions magazine, citing the TRIA contribution and production of new models, like the Global Terrorism model.

*Avian Flu*

Emerging risks with the potential for catastrophic loss are currently being researched. Recent work has involved modeling the risk of pandemic influenza. No doubt next year will bring more challenges but fingers crossed for fewer big Cats.

**London Bombing 7/7**  
*Terrorism Research on the Northern Line*

Andrew took his role as Director of Terrorism Research a bit too seriously, standing on the Northern Line platform at Kings Cross when one of the bombs went off on the Picadilly Line several platforms away. Evacuated from the station, he spent the day doing roll-call in the office and fielding press interviews, before he gratefully returned to his worried family.