

Paul and Margaret Hardy,
15 Kentings, Comberton, CAMBRIDGE CB23 7DT
Email paul @ paulhardy.net; margaret @ paulhardy.net,
Web: <http://www.pghardy.net>, Tel 01223 263232

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Dear All,

- 2018 has been another very busy year. How on Earth did we find the time to work?
- Paul celebrated his 65th birthday in August walking in Switzerland on a Ramblers Adagio holiday in Zermatt. We took advantage of the train, cable cars and gondolas available to do all the ascents and just enjoyed walking around and down, with views of the mighty Matterhorn.
- Paul gleefully received his first state pension payment in September. Reaching age milestones doesn't come without various creaking joints - but so far nothing too serious.
- This year Margaret enticed Paul to join her as a volunteer at Wimpole (our local NT stately home), initially as a walk leader, but then branching into helping Margaret run pumpkin carving. He's now producing a set of walk route maps, to keep his cartography skills going.
- He's continued playing concertina, including being a tutor at a beginners' weekend in Somerset. Another first this year was a trip to the Scandinavian Squeeze-In, held in a scout hut in a forest in Sweden. He's still got four concertinas which need restoration, awaiting free time!
- This year's visit to our twin village of Le Vaudreuil coincided with the village's celebration of 1000 years since the founding of its church, the whole village stepping back in time. We were appropriately attired to blend in, most of us of peasant stock, though Paul went as a splendid knight thanks to the local drama club kindly loaning items from its store.
- Although we have limited our travels to Europe, we have had holidays with very varied scenery, experiences and weather. As well as walking holidays in Tenerife, Greece and Switzerland we did city breaks to Malaga and Istanbul and went to Italy with friends to the Umbrian hill town of Spoleto. The worst weather was in Tenerife where it was wet and windy!
- We have also continued to explore England with walking and sightseeing breaks on the Isle of Wight, in East Sussex, Norfolk and Suffolk as well as visits to friends and relatives in other parts. Margaret even ventured over the border into Wales on our rambling club's weekend to Llandrindod Wells. She opted out of the walking due to the wind and rain but met up with old friends and enjoyed wonderful scenery.
- Paul went to Iceland on a walking holiday in July, missing most of the UK heatwave and leaving Margaret to keep plants in garden and greenhouse alive. Iceland had its wettest, greyest summer for years, but Paul enjoyed the dramatic scenery, glaciers, geysers and waterfalls.
- We have again taken interesting courses with U3A. Following Italian Cities last year Margaret is doing a class on the Balkans with the possibility of a visit to Dubrovnik next year. Paul has finally got into Beginners Latin, though without the chance of a visit to ancient Rome. Paul's other class is "Joints, Muscles and Nerves" which is an excellently presented tour of the engineering of the human body. He can now correctly name the bits that twinge!

Enjoy your Christmas wherever you are, and have a happy and successful year in 2019.

Paul & Margaret