

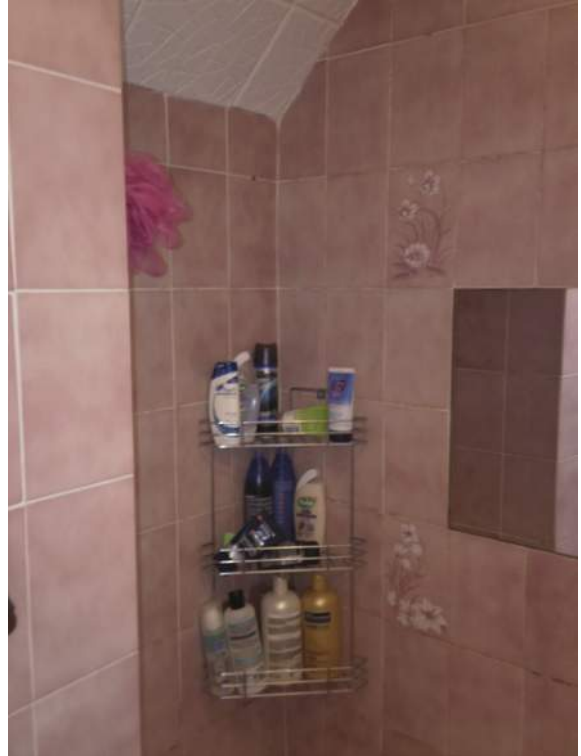
The James Report – 2008 – not so official really

'Every person, all the events of your life are there because you have drawn them there. What you choose to do with them is up to you' – Richard Bach

It seems like it's been ages since I put anything meaningful on 'paper' – I hear some sniggers amongst you and I doff my hat, smile back and laugh. I had this idea about summing up what has been a pretty busy, crazy and beautiful 2008 for Jen and I. Unfortunately this measly little PDF and the entries on my blog are all I have available to me as Her Majesty has commandeered all the 3pm slots and I couldn't possibly choose who got MBE's and who got knighted and who got told to carry the clean glasses into the drawing room...

The Easby Crescent hotel has been pretty busy this year. Shortly after returning from Greg & Nicola's wedding did Bronwyn move to the UK and spend her weekends with us in January before Andre and Jo-Lee joined her. That was quickly followed by Butch & Barbara popping over in May to visit and head over to France for my cousins wedding. Hot on their heels was Gordy and Lulu's 3 week UK visit over the summer. Justin then spent every weekend with us for 2 months in between sorting out his UK life and starting his SA life, fresh with new baby boy, Nathan. The year ended with Greg & Nicola squatting for a couple of weeks before heading off on their world travels in December. In between all that we had Tavis for 2 nights while on his whirlwind tour of the UK trying to drum up business in the stock markets – so sorry it had to be the mattress and the lounge floor buddy.

In between the guest we revamped the bathroom from this:



To this:



Closely followed by the garden undergoing a little transformation. From this:



To this:



A massive thanks to Andre for his help with the deck.

Luckily the credit crunch has curbed our enthusiasm just in time. The house plans will have to wait.

The year has been full of challenges and surprises. Jen had a small matter of settling the score with her university and has successfully completed the required English courses through UNISA. Once the admin is done next year, she will have her Bachelor of Arts degree from Natal University with majors in English and Marketing. Not to mention, a first in her 3rd year paper!

Through all that studying Jen has recovered from her ruptured ovarian cyst after a successful operation at Parkside hospital in Wimbledon.

Jen has celebrated a little over a year with XBridge Limited while I moved jobs yet again. Let's just say that I think I can't get rid of the geography factor. I joined CH2M HILL in July and am full time on the London Tideway Tunnels Programme as the Spatial Information Manager. We're replacing the original combined sewer system designed and built by Sir Joseph Bazalgette in the 1860's. It's a cool project – all toilet jokes aside. I've just finished my probation period so I should be there a while.

We've certainly racked up the air miles this year. It wasn't 3 months after getting back in January that we were packing our bags for SA again, this time to attend Jason & Toni's wedding in Natal. Back from that, it was a wedding in France 2 weeks later and then a week in Spain in August. It's no surprise that we spent Christmas at home.

Here's a taster of what we had to endure in Spain, tough for some I hear you say.



It certainly has been a time for celebrations this year. A successful winter rugby tour with a smashing of England at Twickenham, we are twice world champions after all. The most recent beautiful victory would have to be the Protea's series win in Australia. It did however take glory away from the Merton Hockey Men's 1st team who after a string of losses and draws, salvaged a win in the last game before going into the break largely due to a stunning short-corner execution by none other than number 9, Kendall James. The ladies 1st team are in line for promotion and it's no surprise to hear that their number 9, Jenni James has found some serious form.

It's been a good year, a busy year and certainly a challenging year. Despite the fact that it's the coldest December in 40 years, and that we had snow twice in the first week of December. Despite that summer was a bit of a wash out and that the kitchen is still that ghastly yellow colour (ok, I'll paint it, don't shout). It's all made better by being together and being able to communicate with each and everyone of you so easily. Man I live Web 2.0 and broadband!

Jen was a little concerned yesterday when she found out she only had 170 friends on Facebook ☹, I mean, is that all? LOL. For those of you that don't know, we are on Skype with a webcam. It has helped tremendously in closing the gap and keeping everyone feeling more in touch with the goings on around the world.

I don't know how much chance people get to read, and it seems so sad that we don't read as much as we'd like and that what we read is more often than not, utter rubbish. It draws u0s into talking about people rather than experiences, events or dreams. If I can recommend the following books as must reads this coming year:

- The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini (or just watch the movie at least)
- A Thousand Splendid Suns – Khaled Hosseini
- After the Party – Andrew Feinstein
- Blood River – Tim Butcher (no it's not about the Boer War battle...)
- Slash – autobiography written by Anthony Bozza
- Girlfriend in a Coma – Douglas Coupland
- Any of the Harry Potter novels – we are all kids remember

We hope this little message finds you and your families all well and that the future is something you can control sufficiently to be able to smile this time next year.



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