

It's been another busy year, 'though I seem to say that every year in these newsletters – It would be nice to have a calm and relaxing year for a change, then maybe I could finally get that massive backlog of papers that I have written up!

Once again I have to start with an apology, this time about last year's Newsletter, which many of you didn't receive. I only completed it in the new year, and ended up sending out only a very limited number of printed copies. If you have Internet access you can find an on-line version of that newsletter, this newsletter and all previous ones at:

<http://www.zi.ku.dk/personal/drnash/news>

I can also e-mail copies to anyone who wants them.

At the start of 2000, I moved jobs from the University of Aarhus to Copenhagen University, to take up a 1-year post-doctoral fellowship funded by the Carlsberg foundation (Yes, that's the same people that make "probably the best lager in the world"). I still had my flat in Aarhus at the beginning of the year, so I spent the first few months commuting between Aarhus and Copenhagen, staying in the guest rooms (also known as the *rat holes*) in Copenhagen for a week or two at a time.

I also spent a few weeks in Switzerland during this period, successfully combining visits to Drude Molbo in Lausanne with a workshop in Zürich in January and with the annual *Zoologia* conference and celebration of Darwin's birthday in Lausanne in February.

It was in early February that my remaining grandmother died, having reached the grand old age of 94. I went over to the UK for her funeral in early March, which took place in her home town of Southampton. The sadness of the occasion was lightened somewhat because I could combine the trip with a visit to Lucas and Kris (friends from my Bath days) and their 18 month old son, Benjamin, who also live in Southampton. I also got to see my aunt and uncle

A couple of days after my grandmother died, and returning to Aarhus from one of my trips to Copenhagen, I discovered that I had had a second break-in to my flat. This time the burglar was apprehended as he was leaving, and I got the things he took back, but it was still a shock to get back and find my hallway occupied by a large police dog, and to have to get an emergency repair carried out on my front door, which had been kicked in. This isn't easy in Denmark on a Friday night!

It came as quite a relief, therefore, to finally move to a flat in Copenhagen at the end of March. The flat was large and in a nice, safe area, but unfortunately was only available for 5 months. I was not sorry to end my life as a long-distance commuter. April was a quiet month in Copenhagen, since most of the Social Insect group were away in Panama, as was Drude for a couple of weeks, so it gave me a good opportunity to settle in to my new place.



*My parent's ruby wedding meal*

At the end of April I made a trip to the UK, which enabled me to combine a few events. The main reason for the trip was to celebrate my parents' ruby wedding anniversary, which was a rare chance to get all the family together for a pleasant meal out. It also meant that I was in Oxford for May Morning, one of the town traditions, and one that I'd not been to for some 15 years. I stayed the night before with Robert (my oldest friend; we've known each other for 25 years now...) and his girlfriend Iris and also met up with Julie and Steve (friend from university – only 18 years ago!) and their 18 month old daughter Alexia. I stayed in the UK for my birthday on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, and managed to pack a lot in to the first week in May. I visited the London Eye (the world's largest Ferris wheel) with my brother Pete, his girlfriend Marion and their 2-year old daughter Christina, who loved looking down on the trees and people. I also visited Robert and Iris' new house in Forest Hill and enjoyed the bluebells in full bloom in Surrey almost as much as Alexia when I visited Steve and Julie.



*Christina enjoying the view from the London Eye*

In May, Drude made a brief visit to Denmark, 'though it became clear that things weren't going as well as they could between us, but we patched things up, at least temporarily. At the end of the month, Koos Boomsma (my boss) gave his professorial inaugural lecture at Copenhagen University. I put quite a lot of work into helping him to produce a ('though I say it myself) stunning PowerPoint presentation and also an eye-catching poster advertising the event.

Over the rest of the summer I enjoyed a series of visits from friends and trips to exciting places which hardly let me draw breath. It started with a trip to Denmark by Drude and Cathy Liautard towards the end of June, during which we also managed to spend some time on the island of Fyn, visiting Jannie Nielsen, Hans Pedersen and their various animals, and seeing some of the sights of Aarhus.

At the end of June, I spent a long weekend in Oxford, primarily to attend a memorial service for W. D. (Bill) Hamilton, one of the greatest evolutionary biologists since Darwin, who had sadly died in March following complications of Malaria contracted in the Congo. Although this was in many ways a sad occasion, it was nice to meet up with many of my old colleagues from Oxford, and particularly to see Naomi Pierce, my old PhD supervisor, who had flown over from Harvard for the service.



*The Duomo, cathedral and Campanile in Florence*

Less than a week later, I went to Florence for the final workshop of the EU-TMR network on social evolution of which Koos Boomsma is coordinator. This is a city that I have been meaning to visit for many years, so it was nice to finally get there, albeit with little time for tourism.

The day after my return to Copenhagen I had a week-long visit from Robert and Iris. Although I had to work during the day, we managed to see some of the sights of Copenhagen in the evenings and at the weekends. This included a trip to the famous Tivoli gardens (the world's oldest amusement park) where Iris and I got our money's worth out of our "go on any ride" tickets, hair-raisingly, gut-churningly, but mostly enjoyably...

The following week I had to start packing up to move out of my flat, and was helped very much in the process by Max (Stefan) Garzarolli, an old friend from my Silwood Park days, and his girlfriend Michelle, who visited for the weekend. Luckily they were so efficient at packing that we also had time to do some fun things, and less fortunately, for Michelle to break her wrist jumping from a moving train. The move to my next flat, which I have for a year (ie. Until next July) went pretty smoothly the next week, though I and some of my helpers from the Population Ecology department could hardly walk for a few days afterwards having carried all my boxes down 4 flights of steps one end and up two at the other end. The new place is considerably smaller than the previous flat, and is consequently more cosy or cramped depending on your point of view. Unfortunately this means that my ability to put up visitors is restricted considerably. It was lucky, therefore, that I still had my previous flat for an overlap period of a few weeks, so that I could accommodate Lucas, Kris and Benjamin when they came to Copenhagen at the end of their trip to Denmark the following weekend.

On the day that Lucas, Kris and Ben left, I also flew out of Copenhagen for my biggest trip of the year, a probably the trip of a lifetime. My first port of call was Zürich, where I attended the 8<sup>th</sup> International Behavioural Ecology Congress. While there I stayed with Boris and Barbara Bär-Imhoof, who were perfect hosts. Boris will be moving to Copenhagen to join our research group next year, so I hope to be able to return some of their hospitality. It was also a good opportunity to catch up with many of my old Swiss friends and colleagues, not to mention many old friends from Oxford, Australia and the States.

From Zürich I travelled down to Lausanne for a couple of days with Drude before we set off together for our most exciting destination – Madagascar. We spent nearly a month in the northern part of Madagascar travelling around with Drude's Aunt, Karen Steffensen. This was a fantastic trip that would take far too long to describe in this newsletter. I kept a diary while we were travelling and I hope to write this up and post it on my home page soon (maybe by the time you read this), along with some of the over 1000 pictures that we took on the trip. If you have a chance, check

out: <http://www.zi.ku.dk/personal/drnash/madagascar> I'll also send out copies to anyone who'd like them.

In very brief summary, we visited the towns of Antananarivo, Diego Suarez, Sambava and Maroantsetra, plus the reserves / national parks at Montagne d'Ambre, Ankarana and Nosy Mangabe. We saw lots of interesting creatures including many types of lemur and chameleon, and met many very friendly people. I'd recommend Madagascar to anyone who is prepared to put up with some minor discomforts. There are already lots of pictures on the web site if you're interested.



*A small chameleon on Nosy Mangabe, Madagascar*

From Madagascar we flew to Capetown in South Africa for the 6<sup>th</sup> international conference on fig biology. This was a small and very friendly meeting, during which we also managed to visit Cape Point (seeing penguins, whales and ostriches on the way), and spend a day after the conference climbing Table Mountain. I'll also put some pictures from this part of the trip on my web site in due course.

The main down-side of the trip was that it soon became obvious that Drude had lost all interest in me, so I spent the entire trip trying not to get on her nerves too much, and since I returned to Copenhagen in mid September we have broken up. I think this hit me a bit harder than I realised at the time, and I've been a bit unfocused ever since, but hopefully I'm over it now.

Koos' research group at Copenhagen has grown continuously throughout 2000. Seirian Sumner (from UCL, UK) joined the group at the same time as me in January, and since then we have gained several new members, particularly from the Netherlands (Duur Aanen, Mischa Dijkstra and Tessa van der Hammen), plus Pia Gertsch from Finland (via Sweden). We now have a large enough group that the social life in Copenhagen has definitely improved, so since September I've enjoyed several trips to the Danish National Opera and Ballet, not to mention seeing several visiting folk and rock bands, something that was far rarer in Århus.

As for the future, the group will expand further in the New Year with the addition of Boris Bär-Imhoof from Switzerland and Bill Hughes from the UK. Although my 1-year postdoc in Copenhagen will end at the end of December, I shall be almost certainly be staying in Copenhagen for at least the next two years, as I have been offered a job at the department. This will involve doing somewhat less research, and spending more time assisting other people with preparing grant applications, making web-sites etc., but since this is actually what I spend a lot of my time doing at the moment, I'm looking forward to doing it officially. I'm now closely involved in the new EU network that was funded this year (INSECTS – Integrated Studies of the Economy of insect Societies), and am maintaining the web site for this at <http://www.zi.ku.dk/popecol/eunet> if you want to check it out.

In the meantime, I'm enjoying life in Copenhagen, but looking forward to having a break in England over Christmas. I hope you'll have an enjoyable festive season and all good things in 2001 – Maybe you'll even come to visit me in Denmark?

*David*