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DAVID NASH News 2008

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2008 has proven to be the most momentous year of my life so far, packed full of life-changing events, both positive and negative (‘though thankfully few of the latter), so this year’s newsletter is a bumper double-issue. Please note the up-to-date addresses at the top of this year’s issue.

Last Christmas was spent in Denmark, with the traditional Christmas-eve dinner at Jane’s mum’s place, together with uncle Bent, aunt Annelise and 93-year-old grandfather Aage. It was a great evening, and I was very happy to be able to participate in a Hansen family Christmas. On Christmas day we had a very pleasant evening at Patrizia d’Ettorre and Mauro Patricelli’s place, and on boxing day it was our turn to entertain Jane’s father and his wife with traditional English fare, ‘though I’m still not quite sure what they made of the Christmas pudding.



Jane’s grandfather, Aage, and mum, Inga, Christmas 2007

New Year was spent in the UK at my parents’ place, and so Jane and I were there when an article on which I was lead author appeared in the journal *Science* on the 4th of January (If you are interested the full reference is: Nash, D.R., Als, T.D., Maile, R., Jones, G.R., & Boomsma, J.J. (2008). A mosaic of chemical coevolution in a large blue butterfly. *Science* **319**, 88-90). This generated quite a lot of interest and publicity, so I spent the next few days running around finding wireless hotspots from which I could reply to e-mails, talking to journalists on my mobile phone, doing interviews for Canadian radio etc. This was just the beginning of a very productive year at work, which has so far seen the publication of five papers and a book chapter, which is about five more than my usual output, and there are plenty more in the pipeline.

The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Home, News, Sport, Radio, TV, Weather, and Languages. Below that, it indicates the UK version and provides links for International version and About the versions. The main content area features a 'News Front Page' with a world map and a list of regional news links: Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, South Asia, UK, Business, Health, and Science/Nature. A 'WATCH One-Minute World News' button is also visible. The main article is titled 'Caterpillars con ants with smell' and includes a sub-headline: 'The chemical con trick used by Alcon blue butterfly larvae to get ants to take care of them has been detailed by scientists working in Denmark.' A small image of a caterpillar is shown next to the text. The article text describes how Alcon blue grubs deceive ants by mimicking their own brood smells. A quote from Dr. Nash is also present: 'The caterpillars first start developing on a food plant but after they reach a certain stage, they leave the food plant and wait on the ground to be discovered by these ants,' explained Dr Nash.

Part of the BBC News web site, reporting our *Science* paper

This trip to the U.K. was also sadly the last time that we saw my parent’s cat *Sam*, who had adopted our bed during the visit, as unfortunately he was run over shortly afterwards.

On the 3rd of February I finally took the plunge, and asked Jane to marry me, and was overjoyed when she immediately accepted. I had been thinking about this for several months, and was finally goaded into action by the saddest events of the year. Jane’s grandfather Aage’s health started to deteriorate rapidly after Christmas, and he was hospitalized in mid January, and once they had diagnosed the extent of the cancer that was plaguing him, was transferred to a hospice in February, where he died before the end of the month. He was an amazing old gentleman, who was still riding his bike most days up until Christmas, had a great sense of humour, and is sorely missed. I am glad that we could tell him about our plans to get married while he was still lucid enough to understand and smile.

It was only a few days after we got engaged that my brother Pete announced that he had also got engaged to his long-term partner Marion, so my parents were, I think, both surprised and pleased to suddenly go from having three unmarried sons to having two thirds of them engaged within a week (Paul has staunchly resisted the temptation to make it three out of three). Much of the middle part of the year was therefore spent in marriage plans. Jane and I decided that rather than doing it the easy way, and getting married in Denmark, we would like to

get married in my parents' village of Islip, since it is the only place that has any long-term meaning for either of us (We have both moved around a lot during our lives, but I did live in Islip for 20 years). This meant getting married in the local church, which in turn meant fulfilling various requirements. Since Jane is Danish, we needed to get a common marriage license, which meant that at least one of us had to live in Islip for at least two weeks before applying for the license. Hence, we spent 17 days in the UK in March, which unfortunately turned out to be of no use for this purpose, because it was too far in advance of our planned wedding date in September. However, we did get to see my parent's other cat *Chi* for the last time, as he had to be put down over the summer due to long-standing internal problems that he had had ever since they adopted him at the end of 2006.



Sam and Chi

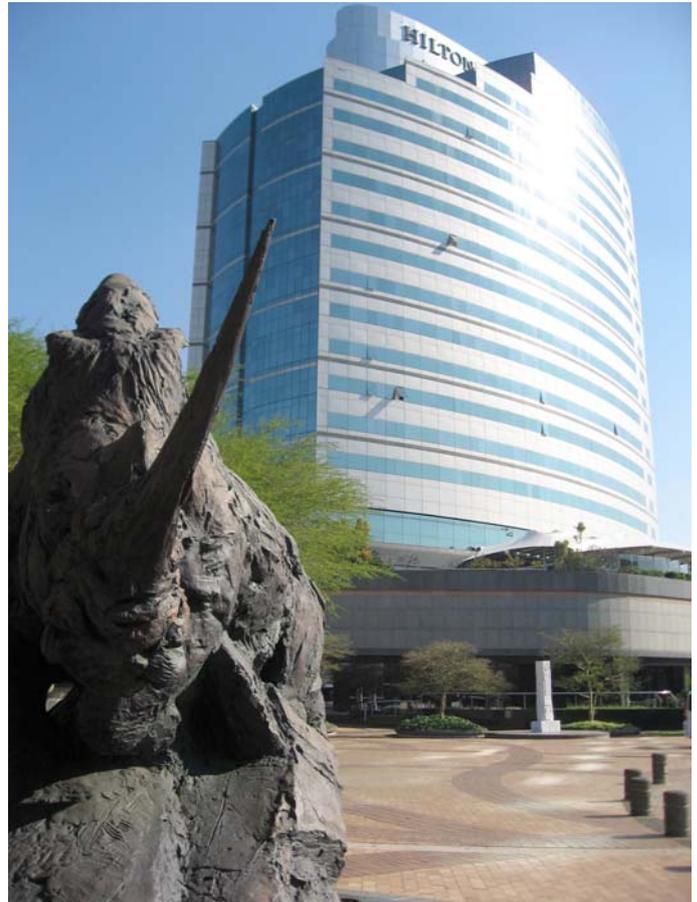
On our return to Denmark, we decided that we needed to get serious about finding somewhere to live after our rental contract on the flat in Bernard Bangs Allé expired in August. As we had been thinking about buying somewhere rather than getting another rental flat, we were pleased when Jane's mum and uncle both endorsed our suggestion to buy Jane's grandfather's house. As anyone who has bought a house knows, it can be a long and exasperating process, but at least we managed to set things in motion, while at the same time Jane agreed to sell her half of her old flat in Lyngby to her ex-boyfriend. So, now we had another thing to keep us busy during the middle of the year – dealing with all the legal and financial issues around buying a house and setting up a mortgage. Things went pretty smoothly (if not quickly) in the end, and we finally became proud owners of Snertingevej 30 (or at least owners of the mortgage on it) on the 1st September.



Snertingevej 30

In April I started my usual round of international congresses with a trip to Wageningen for a meeting on “The future of European Butterflies II”, which also allowed me to catch up briefly with Duur and Birgith Aanen and their daughter Cornelia, as well as meeting their second daughter Hanna for the first time. In May we took another brief trip to the UK, to celebrate my birthday (a couple of days late), and to make a bit more progress with the wedding arrangements.

June saw me spending more than the usual amount of time doing fieldwork on Læsø, assisted by and assisting my Ph.D. students Matthias Fürst and Line Vej Ugelvig, while most of the rest of the month seemed to be taken up with visits to the bank and our solicitors to arrange our mortgage. In July, I, along with a large delegation from Copenhagen, attended the International Congress of Entomology in Durban, South Africa. This was a rather surreal event, as the rather unsafe nature of the Durban streets meant that I only really saw the 50 m between my hotel and the congress centre for most of the week. At least I avoided the physical muggings that befell many of the other delegates, even if the South African culture I experienced was confined to the conference party and the hotel gift shop. Even so, my debit card cloned at the international airport, and large amounts of money were taken out of my account.



The closest I came to South African wildlife

August saw me back on Læsø again for ten days, after which we packed up most of the stuff in our flat and put it in storage. We then had another go at fulfilling the residence requirements for the marriage license with

another trip over to the UK. We arrived on the 20th, which meant we could celebrate my mum's birthday on the next day, as well as meeting my parents' new cats, *Jody* and *Jester*, who will hopefully outlive their immediate predecessors. We then went up to Clifton-upon-Dunsmore for Pete and Marion's wedding on the 23rd. This was a wonderful, colourful and (as you might expect if you know Pete) rather untraditional event, even if it was also a church wedding. Their daughters (my nieces) Chrissie and Carys were flower girls, and stole the show with their rendition of A. A. Milne's "us two". After the ceremony, the celebrations got under way in Pete and Marion's large back garden, with music, speeches, a pig roast and liberal quantities of alcohol and wedding cake.

omy, and Jane's web site is www.equinox.dk if you want to take a look).



The Dove valley in the peak district in the rain

We had decided long in advance that we wanted to keep the wedding fairly small, so we only invited people who we both knew, so I hope no-one reading this will feel offended at not being invited. Although it was late September, the 20th was a marvellously warm and sunny day, and the whole experience was magical. After the ceremony, we had cake, sparkling wine and coffee in the garden of the "Red Lion" inn, before adjourning indoors for the reception, where the landlords did us proud.



Pete, Carys, Marion and Chrissie. The happy couple are overcome by emotion...

Jane had to return to Denmark on the Monday, both to work, and to move the final bits out of our flat in to storage before our lease expired at the end of the month. Meanwhile, I stayed on in Islip for the next two weeks, taking a couple of days away to take part in a course organized by Ian Hardy in Sutton Bonnington, where I gave a lecture as well as spending a very wet day walking in the peak district. Jane returned to the U.K. on the 4th September, and we finally visited the Dean of Oxford and applied for our marriage license on the 6th, before flying back to Denmark on the 7th.



The other happy couple are overcome by emotion...

We only spent eight days back in Denmark, staying in Jane's mum's flat, before we were back in England for our own wedding. The wedding itself took place on the 20th September, a date chosen because it was the nearest Saturday to the equinox (we are both interested in astron-

I could fill up the whole newsletter with pictures and descriptions of the day, but maybe it's better to give you the web site where you can see lots of pictures and more information about the day:

www.bi.ku.dk/drnash/wedding/

After a day of recovery, we then headed off on a mini-honeymoon, just spending three days driving around in my Dad's car, staying in B&Bs and visiting ancient British sites such as the Uffington White Horse, Stonehenge and Avebury, before heading back to Denmark on the 26th.



Stone'enge (where the demons dwell...)

When we got back, Jane's mum once again very kindly let us stay in her flat, while the bathroom and kitchen in our new house were being renovated. This was supposed to take 5 weeks, but in fact we couldn't move in to the house until the first weekend in December, and as I write this we are still living among moving boxes, slowly unpacking a few more each day. The forthcoming Christmas break will hopefully allow us to make more progress on this, so hopefully we will be fully installed and ready to accept visitors in the New Year. Please update your address books with the new address, which is:

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Since we returned after the wedding, we seem to have been living something of a double-life, working as usual during the day, and then putting a few more hours in at night painting walls, cleaning up or unpacking, so it has been a pretty tiring time. We were therefore very grateful for a mini break to London at the end of November, where I attended the annual meeting of the North West European section of the IUSSI, after which we had a relaxing weekend of tourism. The next day, Jane started a new job with a new company (PFA pensions), which has certainly added to her stress, so we were even more grateful when our new bed arrived on the 9th December (thanks to all the contributions we had received as wedding presents), and we no longer had to sleep on my knobbly old sofa-bed. We even managed to sleep right through the magnitude 4.7 earthquake that Copenhagen experienced on the 16th December!

What will 2009 bring? Well, I can almost guarantee that it won't be as momentous as 2008, but there are a few things in the pipeline, which I hope won't be too dampened by the current financial crisis. Work-wise, I have many new projects getting underway, which should continue this year's productivity, and I'm particularly looking forward to the arrival of András Tartally, who will be working as a post-doc with me from next spring. Jane and I are also planning to have a real honeymoon next summer, where we hope to visit China for the total solar eclipse in July, which should be another once-in-a-lifetime experience. I also hope that our new house and garden will continue to give us joy, and we should have plenty of space for visitors when the boxes are out of the way, so maybe we'll see you there in 2009.

David



Jane and the white horse at Uffington