

Cassie & Selwyn Tillett

The Rectory • Somerton Road • Winterton-on-Sea • NR29 4AW
07802 475110 (Cassie mobile) • 01493 805060 (home)
cassie@tillett.org.uk • selwyn@tillett.org.uk

16 December 2017

Dearest friends

And so it continues. So many good and happy times, so many challenges, but as one of my favourite Sondheim ladies puts it, we're "still here".

Life in coastal Norfolk follows its seasons, in the church and on the beach. Cassie has enjoyed her duties taking visitors up Winterton's 130 foot tower during the summer. Long walks alone and with friends take us into all corners of the parishes. The present **seal-pupping** is apparently a record-breaker: there are over 2,500 seals on the beach at present, with over 1,600 pups born in the last few weeks.



Cassie continues proudly to help her clients achieve organisation and clear spaces, with most of her home-visits being in and around Norwich. Coupled with our work at the Sewell Barn Theatre, this makes for quite a lot of mileage. (Selwyn is now secretary to the committee, for his sins, and Cassie is into her second season – and preparing for her third – as Joint Artistic Director.)



Said Sewell Barn Theatre has been a great preoccupation, challenge, and source of joy and pride this year. Our own directorial project was a production of Alan Ayckbourn's *A Chorus of Disapproval* – a riotous play-within-a-play about a not-very-good operatic society putting on a production of the 18th century show *The Beggar's Opera*. Despite life imitating art with tedious regularity (two actors were forced to drop out due to difficult family circumstances, and another broke her arm at the first dress rehearsal) the show was a commercial and artistic triumph; we had a magnificent cast (all fourteen of 'em), including, of course, a certain downtrodden pianist in flat cap and duffle coat.

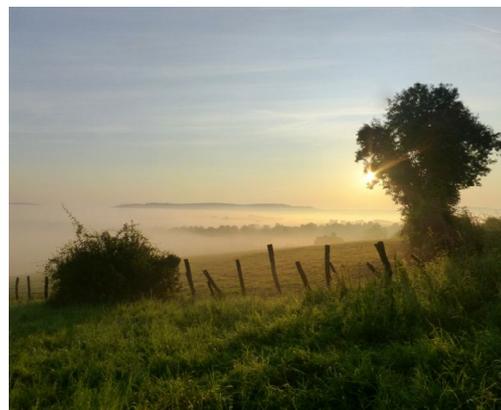
All the Barn shows were included in our 27 visits to the local amateur theatres, as well as the Maddermarket (we especially loved *Skylight* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*), a magnificent *Sweeney Todd* by Sound Ideas, and a terrifying, innovative production of *A Clockwork Orange* by Moco Theatre. This didn't leave much time (or money) for seeing professional productions, and the highlight of those was in fact at the cinema: the NT Live screening of *Follies*, including very proudly watching a long-ago stage colleague, Alex Young, playing (beautifully) the younger doppelgänger of Imelda Staunton. Of the few other visits to the cinema, the undoubted winner was *Paddington 2*!

Cassie's other great preoccupation this year has been to continue with her health and fitness, and other 'new experience' challenges. The work on the 'life list' continues; during 2017, this has included successfully posing for a life drawing class (yes, really); German Wheel (like a giant hamster-wheel for humans); **conquering her first mountains, climbing Blencathra and Skiddaw (near Keswick in the Lakes)** on two consecutive, wonderful days; and walking a marathon (actually, 28 miles) along part of the Ridgeway in a single day, as well as the walking of the complete Norfolk Coastal Path in six sections across the previous four months, by way of training.



So many wonderful friends have been part of these superb experiences, but especially Karl (who has provided training schedules, encouragement and facilitation); James (who was responsible for the mountain trip); **Kim** (who has walked countless miles with Cassie, including the marathon); and Selwyn has been his usual supportive and patient self through all these eccentricities – including acting as chauffeur and support car for the marathon!

Two of our holidays in 2017 were shared with our great friends, Dorothy and Milton. We spent our habitual post-Christmas crashout with them in Bolton in January; and on that occasion, we planned a summer holiday to France, deferred from many years before. We spent two glorious weeks in August & September based in the Burgundy area, touring towns, churches, vineyards (of course) and **superb countryside**.



Our post-Easter break was dictated by sadder circumstances. We took ourselves to a charming self-catering flat in Little Yeldham, Essex, which enabled us to incorporate the funeral of a particularly dear friend, Beryl Board (one of Selwyn's parishioners in his Essex incumbency, 1985-1993). Beryl was a remarkable, intelligent, kind and unique individual, who we miss very much. We are honoured to have been asked by her to complete the editing of a book she compiled in her final months: a collection of essays about the local history of her village of Stow Maries, its people, buildings and landscape.

Beryl is just one of several especially difficult and sad RIPs this year. At the very end of 2016, Cassie's dear friend and business colleague Clare Parrack was taken, too fast and too young, by cancer. Others include Dot Binns and Robin Dauncey from the local Norwich theatre family; Ernie Woodward, a late-discovered family connection of Selwyn's; John Clayton, a dear friend from Beddington days; Char Hartzell, a redoubtable and inspirational American friend; Michael Walters, a true individual and eccentric from the world of musical theatre; Marie Skingley, wife to Cassie's uncle Peter; and Christine Jobling, mother of Cassie's fellow Artistic Director at the Sewell Barn. May they all rest in peace and rise in glory.



The last loss to mention is the most difficult of all. After just over four years spent in a Norfolk care home, **Cassie's father Nick** finally passed away on 4th December, aged 87. He had, as our friends will know, left us in real terms many years ago, and was left a sleepy and vegetative shell of the kind, characterful, energetic, loyal and loving man he was. In the end, his body simply packed up after a few weeks of gentle decline, loss of speech and eating ability, and just a few hours of shutting down. We didn't have time to reach him, but we had said our goodbyes many years ago, and every time we had visited him; the wonderful staff at Dorrington House assured us that, in the end, he simply went to sleep.

This is being written three days before his funeral, at which we look forward to welcoming friends and family to celebrate his life. Cassie's mum has had a difficult time of it ever since Nick went into the care home in 2013, and it is truly said of dementia patients that the family loses them twice. Peggy continues in reasonable health in her bungalow in Winterton with Cassie's daily support.

We know that we're becoming the 'older generation' – but this simply inspires us to do as much as we possibly can, whether we have a year or forty years left to us. There are walks and mountains and performances, songs and meals and friends and family, services and prayers and books and learning – and each other. As we approach our 23rd wedding anniversary (and 24 years as a couple), we continue to celebrate every wonderful element that makes up our life together. That includes you, by the way.

Sending you every good wish and very much love for 2018 –

Cassie Selwyn

