

# Paul Mundy, Evelyn Mathias, Oliver Mundy

---

✉ address	Weizenfeld 4, 51467 Bergisch Gladbach, Germany	✉ email	paulmundy@netcologne.de
☎ tel	+49-2202-932 921		evelynmathias@netcologne.de
✉ fax	+49-2202-932 922	🌐 website	<a href="http://www.netcologne.de/~nc-mundypa">http://www.netcologne.de/~nc-mundypa</a>

---

December 1999

"Write another one of your funny letters", said Evelyn. I'm glad she finds our annual chronicle of accidents and disasters amusing.

## January

---

CHANNEL TUNNEL—Leaving Evelyn in bed with flu, Oliver and I took the Eurostar train to London. Passengers in Brussels check in just like at an airport, have their luggage scanned for bombs and booze, undergo a body search, and go through passport control. The train seats are airline-style: there's an in-flight magazine, and even a pocket in the back of the seat in front of you. The train hurtles through Belgium and France at near-take-off speeds, then zooms into the tunnel. It actually slows down as it emerges in Kent. But there are no stewardesses, no trolley service, and not a barfbag to be seen.

After forcing passengers to undergo its check-in indignities and then making them sit facing backwards and hungry as the train dawdles past row upon dreary row of yellow-brick semi-detached houses in Surbiton and Orpington, Eurostar might at least provide a decent barfbag. Perhaps a few hurling passengers might induce a change in corporate policy?

Barfbags? See below under *August*.

HEREFORD, ENGLAND—Oliver and I snuck out of the church during my sister Phillippa's wedding (to Steve Willmot), wrapped the Happy Couple's car in wedding paper, and attached balloons. It was windy, raining, and freezing cold. Hard to get anything to stick to the car: we had to chase the balloons around the car park. By the time the procession emerged from the church, part of the paper and all the balloons had blown away, and it was raining again. The congregation dashed for their vehicles, not bothering even to hurl confetti... And we couldn't get the sellotape off the car afterwards. Ah well, can't win them all.

LONDON, ENGLAND—After a happy hour being scared out of our wits in the London Dungeon horror-theme museum, Oliver and I emerged into the obligatory gift shop. He wanted to know which of the overpriced junk he could buy. We returned home to Germany with a set of 10 horror fingers and two white, glow-in-the-dark, bouncy rubber balls with eyes painted on them. Oliver said they'd come in useful for Halloween. See the picture at <http://www.netcologne.de/~nc-mundypa/photo.htm> for more.

## February

---

CALICUT, INDIA— The veterinary conference went well, and the Indian martial arts show afterwards was excellent—but just a bit *too* realistic. The whips cracked and swords swished within inches of the spectators' ears. Evelyn and her colleagues flattened themselves against the wall, just in case the performers decided to amputate body parts without the anaesthetic normally required for surgical procedures.

## June

---

DOVER, ENGLAND—Our first virtual holiday. We came over on the ferry (sadly, plain white barfbags only) to pick up the car we had rented via the Internet. The car was there at the Alamo office in Dover, but they wanted double the price advertised on their webpage... which hadn't mentioned the compulsory insurance or various other add-ons. We negotiated, we complained, we took the car for two weeks and were eventually charged the advertised fee. You have been warned.

We arrived in Cornwall fearing that the holiday cottage we had also rented over the Internet would prove to be built of virtual bricks and mortar. But no, it turned out to be delightfully real.

## July

---

PERRANPORTH, ENGLAND—"Is your spade big enough?" asked the small boy. Oliver and I were trying to divert the River Perran as it flowed across the beach towards the Bristol Channel. The technical term for this vital (and exclusively male) summer activity is "beach engineering". Evelyn calls it "playing in the sand". After snapping the handles on two beach spades, I had borrowed a Cornish shovel from our landlord. These shovels have a tapered blade and a 2-metre-long handle: ideal for mining tin and for diverting rivers.

Evelyn complained I didn't pay any attention to her (see picture). The fact that the beach was full of bikini-clad 19-year-olds playing volleyball was irrelevant. Nor was it because Evelyn's chosen beachwear would have kept her warm in the Antarctic. No, I was concentrating on foreshore environmental enhancements. She went off in a huff in search of the nudist colony at the other end of the beach.

My spade wasn't big enough: the tide came in and washed our dams and channels away before they were complete. Still, Oliver and I have started work on a book of designs for sandcastles that will make us both rich and famous. Look out for it soon in a bookshop near you.

## August

---

NEPALGUNJ, NEPAL—First time I've ever had to catch a trishaw to an airport. No taxis to be had in this town, but the airport is only a couple of kilometres away. So my colleague and I waded down a couple of trishaws, loaded in our luggage, and wheeled along in delicious silence past rice fields, dodging buffaloes and potholes strewn along the road. We arrived at the airport to find that trishaws weren't allowed past the gate, so we had to lug our bags the last few metres.

KATHMANDU, NEPAL—Some of the smaller airports in the world have the airline offices in the passenger lounge. I went into the Lumbini Air office, put on my sweetest smile, explained to the ground staff that I collected airsickness bags, and asked if she had any. "How many do you want?" she asked. Well, I didn't want to appear greedy, so I suggested five. She happily pulled a handful out of the cupboard for me.

A similar strategy in other airline offices netted a rich haul of bags, which I advertised via email. Within a week, other aficionados around the world had snapped up all my spares, and supplied me with 30 new bags. My collection now boasts over 150. Check them out at <http://www.netcologne.de/~nc-mundypa/barbags.htm>. Want your name on the web? Then pick up a bag (or two or three) next time you fly a weird-and-wonderful airline; send it to me, and I'll credit you on the site.

## October

---

JAKARTA, INDONESIA—A few nail-biting weeks leading up to the presidential election. There were daily demos as the students tried to occupy parliament and were shot at by the police. The party of presidential candidate Megawati had won the largest number of seats in the general election earlier, but she didn't have a majority in the parliament, which elects the president. If she didn't get elected, everyone knew her supporters would rampage.

The parliament members' votes were counted one by one on television—and Megawati lost to a half-blind Muslim leader called Abdulrahman Wahid. Riots in Bali, of all places, and Jakarta held its breath for 24 hours... then Megawati decided to run for vice-president, and to almost everyone's relief, won. Her supporters went home, leaving Jakarta unburned and Indonesia with more hope than it has had for years.

## November

---

NORTHERN KENYA—Driving along after dark, Evelyn's car was stopped by a group of armed Samburu tribesmen. "Thanks for coming", they said, "you've just broken up a gun battle with some Turkana who were stealing our cattle". Nice to feel wanted.

## December

---

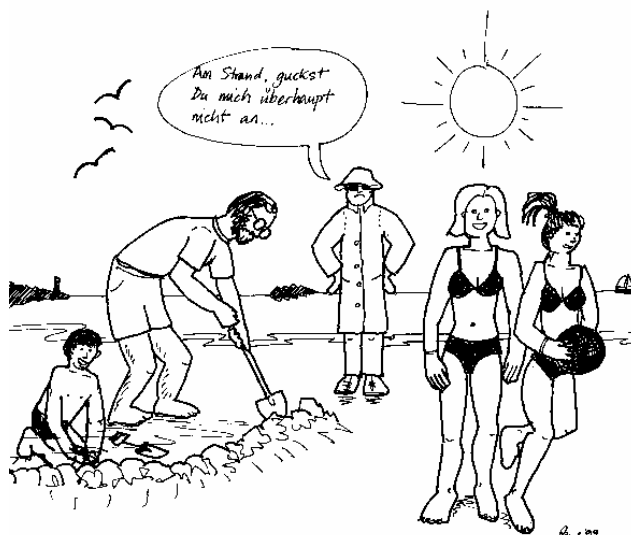
BERGISCH GLADBACH, GERMANY—Oliver is already preparing for next Halloween. Our wardrobe is full of skulls and skeletons, and our fridge is plastered with glow-in-the-dark pumpkins. Oliver scours the Internet for gruesome clipart, which he paints in transparent colours and sticks on any smooth surface available.

Computer technology continues to enrich our lives. Evelyn and I now communicate mainly via email, even when we're both at home. A typical bedtime conversation begins with "Did you get my email about...?"

We have a new prospective daughter-in-law: Lara Croft, the buxom, athletic, virtual heroine of the computer game that Oliver calls "Tom Rider" (the CD cover says "Tomb Raider"). Archaeologist Lara must negotiate numerous perils in an underground labyrinth in order to reach the treasure and finish the game. En route, she is attacked by sundry wolves, bears and vampire bats. Oliver, a member of the local nature-conservation society, normally weeps at the sight of a dead carnivore and bemoans the loss of biodiversity. But he pulls out Lara's six-shooters and happily blasts away, littering the floor of this virtual dungeon with furry corpses.

Have a wonderful Christmas, Hanukkah, Idul Fitri and New Year. Oliver wishes you a happy Halloween as well. Let us know if you need a glow-in-the-dark skull or some bouncy rubber eyes.

Paul, Evelyn and Oliver



"You never look at me on the beach"