

FREDDY FREMINGTON'S FIRST HOLIDAY

Hello, my name is **Freddy Fremington**. I live with Valerie & Peter Wilkins in Caterham, Surrey and we have all just been on a visit to Nocton, Lincolnshire. The reason for the visit was to look after the house of Alistair (Ally for short) one of their sons and his daughter, Sarah-Jane and Pepsi the dog, while Ally was away on business. We were there for a month and this is my story.



We left Caterham on Saturday **5th March 2005**, with snow all around us. Before we left I went out into the garden to say goodbye to my friends the birds. It was very cold and the roads were icy and slippery when we set off. However, as we travelled northwards the weather improved. We had thought we might not be able to travel at all but, as we ventured on, all evidence of the snow disappeared and we were soon seeing green fields again.



6th March was Mothering Sunday and Valerie had a nice card and a gift from Ally. We took Sarah-Jane over to her mum's house and to be with her brother Samuel. Ally then showed us all the places in Lincoln that we might need to go to during our stay and we marked them in our satellite navigation device, so

Peter could find them again later. We went to B&Q, Morrison's, Tesco's, the refuse dump, Sarah-Jane's school and the Air Cadet's Barracks. Ally had to return to work mid-afternoon and we took Pepsi for a long walk – where she chased some rabbits - before Sarah-Jane came back for tea. That night we all sat around the wood burning stove and were lovely and cosy.

Monday 7th March. Sarah-Jane had to go to school this morning, so we were all up early to make sure she caught the school bus. Valerie had said that while she was at Ally's she would tidy up for him and decorate the living room, while Peter said he would tidy up the garden. After breakfast Valerie set to and soon had everything out of a cupboard all over the room (and I thought she was here to tidy up!!) However, in no time at all, she had sorted things out, thrown bits away or relocated them and put others back and the difference was amazing. I managed to escape into the garden, where I helped Peter pull up weeds. I am looking forward to helping him with the bonfires and chopping up logs.



Tuesday 8th March. Valerie started by moving all Ally's old computers and associated equipment upstairs and began tidying up the living room and did loads of washing. Peter and I spent all day in the garden, chopping up bits of fencing and sorting out what could be burned on Ally's wood-burning stove and what we could burn on the bonfire. We were out there all day and we both smelt of smoke from head to tail when we went indoors. However, I did manage to have a sneaky ride on Ally's motorbike while Peter wasn't looking; although I think it is a bit too big for me, don't you?

That evening we drove Sarah-Jane into Lincoln to her Air Cadet Barracks and had a pub meal before collecting her. She was very excited and full of chat when we picked her up and we all hope that she does what she wants to achieve – to become a pilot. Hopefully, if her exam results are good enough, she will get into the RAF.

Wednesday 9th March. Today Valerie & Peter had a day off from working in the house and garden, although more washing was done! We needed shopping and we also took a large load of garden and other rubbish to the refuse dump. What a fantastic place! After that we walked around Lincoln for a



while before returning home. Sarah-Jane took Pepsi for a walk after school and we took her over to her Mum's for the evening. On the way back we were lucky enough to see an AWAC aircraft from nearby RAF Waddington – it flew low right over the car and was very exciting. Valerie did loads of ironing that evening, while I snuggled up by the fire with Peter.

Thursday 10th March. Peter and I went straight out into the garden to burn more wood. We also trimmed back the grass and weeds from the edge of the path that runs the length of the garden. At last some progress can be seen. Valerie was indoors hoovering, and cleaning

windows and did another load of washing. Peter replaced the washing line (with my help of course) and the whole garden is taking shape now. Later that afternoon Sarah-Jane took Pepsi for a walk and then Peter took Sarah-Jane back to her school to do her Duke of Edinburgh's Award. That night, we had to trundle the huge wheelie-bins up the garden for the refuse collection in the morning. It is all go here!

Friday 11th March. Valerie started on the bathroom today, while Peter & I continued in the garden. The neighbours were very friendly and noticed the difference we are making. Ally is due back today and arrived just before Sarah-Jane. We all took her to Air Cadets and had another pub meal before collecting her and returning home. Another nice day.

Saturday 12th March. We all had a lazy start to the day, and then Peter went with Ally to get his car tyres sorted. While they were out they bought the paint so that Valerie could start decorating. When they came home, it was back out into the garden and more tidying up was done, plus another bonfire. Valerie started on rubbing down the paintwork, in readiness for painting.

Sunday 13th March. Today we had a visit from Ken & Margaret, friends of Ally, who brought three of their Beagle puppies with them. They were a little boisterous, so I kept out of the way! They could see the difference in the house and the garden and Ally seemed pleased with what Valerie & Peter (and I!) had achieved. Sarah-Jane went to see her mum and we went for a long walk with Pepsi and the beagles, while Ally was trying to fix Margaret's sister's computer. He managed to get it almost sorted but then had to return to Buxton. Later that evening Valerie made a start on the first undercoat on the cupboard doors and Sarah-Jane helped, too.

Monday 14th March. Once Sarah-Jane was off to school, we started work again. Peter & I did a little more tidying outside but couldn't have a bonfire because of next-door's washing. We took Pepsi for a run in the field behind the house and were able to start the bonfire later in the day. Valerie finished undercoating all the living room doors, including the front door and then decided to sort out some kitchen cupboards. That evening we were in for a treat – in the next village the local school was putting on a Concert to raise money for the Tsunami appeal and we were invited to go with Sarah-Jane. It was performed mostly by school children, interspersed with pieces performed by the RAF Waddington Volunteer Band. Refreshments, on an oriental theme, were provided and all made by the youngsters. A very pleasant evening, even though it was raining when we came home.

Tuesday 15th March – We woke to find it still wet and, as the wood outside was too wet to burn Peter decided to remove the one remaining pane of glass from the kitchen door, (one was already missing). It took him ages as the old putty was so old and, instead of getting it out in one piece, it eventually broke into three pieces. After lunch, he went to the dump again and then bought



two new sheets of safety glass and more undercoat. Valerie & I were continuing with the painting and even managed to get the front window and the radiator undercoated.

Wednesday 16th March. Today we decided to have a day off from decorating and gardening and drove into Lincoln. Valerie was looking for some new curtains for Ally's room, so we just had to go into what seemed like every shop! She did get exactly what she wanted, however, so it was worth it. We had said we would get some more crickets for Sarah-Jane's geckos and we did this before having a nice meal out.

Thursday 17th March. Valerie was worried about getting the painting done in time, so asked Peter and me to help her. As the doors were originally dark brown, each one required two undercoats as well as the topcoat. Also the walls were dark terracotta with the fireplace wall in dark blue, and they would all need three coats also. Peter worked hard to remove part of an old frieze at the top of the wall and then painted over the blue wall with a nice rich red. Valerie gave all the doors, the front window and radiator a second undercoat and planted polyanthus in the trough outside the front door. That evening we took Sarah-Jane to do her Duke of Edinburgh Award and then had an early night. We were all exhausted!

Friday 18th March. Peter continued removing the frieze today while Valerie started on the first coat of emulsion to the left of the fireplace and also managed to do the central beam, too. Peter painted the other window and we got on really well. When Ally came home he was pleased with what we had achieved. At first, he thought he was in the wrong house; as it seemed so bright! That evening we took Sarah-Jane to Air Cadets and had a pub meal with Ally. Valerie made pancakes for us all when we got home which was a perfect ending to a very tiring day.

Saturday 19th March. This morning we asked Ally to take down his stack of hi-fi equipment so that we could paint the walls in that corner. He also sorted out many of his collection of books, which we offered to take to a charity shop in Lincoln and our local hospital when we get home. Sarah-Jane was collected by her mum for the day and later Ally will pick her and Samuel up to stay the night. After that, we all stopped to watch the Formula 1 Grand Prix qualifying from Malaysia (although I must admit I had a little dose!) Valerie sorted out and tidied the shelf over the computer with Ally's help and did some more washing. Another busy and tiring day.



Sunday 20th March. Valerie, Peter, Ally and I got up at 6.30am to watch the Formula 1 Grand Prix and then Valerie & Peter continued with the emulsion for a while. Valerie also washed the bathroom curtains and the front door curtain before vanishing into the kitchen and producing a great roast chicken dinner, followed by apple crumble and apple pie. After dinner Peter carried on with the painting, while Valerie & I fell asleep. Well, we had been up for hours!! Later on Valerie did the ironing and Ally had to return to Buxton, dropping Samuel off en route.

Monday 21st March. Valerie, Peter & I carried on with the painting. Without the family around today, we could really crack on and managed to get a lot done. All the white walls and the red chimneybreast wall got their final coat and a bit of skirting was done, too. Peter managed to first coat the top half of the wall behind the geckos and the computer. Once all the painting is done there are just a few jobs to be done – ease the

cupboard door, add wood to the screws at the bottom of the larder door, glaze the kitchen door and hang the new curtains. A good but busy day again.

Tuesday 22nd March. We awoke to rain again. No gardening again, but Peter & Valerie had to move the gecko's vivarium, which was quite traumatic for us all. First, it was very heavy and secondly, there

were large pieces of slate strategically placed. We had to be VERY careful, in case one of the bits of slate fell and hurt one of the geckos! In the end we moved them very gently and placed the vivarium on two chairs. We also moved the computer table forward and could then clean and paint the walls behind there. We are getting there! When she got home from school, Sarah-Jane announced that there was no Air Cadets today. We had planned to do a bit of shopping after dropping her off and have our usual meal out before collecting her. We decided to stick to this plan and, leaving her a meal to warm up, did just that. We had all got used to this break from work and the house! When we got back home, we could see just what we had achieved and felt very pleased with ourselves.

Wednesday 23rd March. We are on the last leg of the decorating now. Valerie glossed the five doors and Peter did the second and final coats of emulsion on the walls behind the computer and geckos and then glazed the kitchen door. I was there to make sure he did a professional job! They replaced the gecko's vivarium onto its very wobbly table and Valerie made a mental note to ask Ally whether they could bring downstairs a unit which was up in one of the bedrooms. It was exactly the same size as the gecko's vivarium and would provide useful storage for office / computer equipment as well as Sarah-Jane's gecko bits and pieces. Today made us all realise that most of the time had been taken up moving various bits of furniture from one place to another and hoovering up constantly! Peter sprayed the nettles in the garden with weed killer and Valerie did another pile of ironing before we all had an early night.



Thursday 24th March. Today is 'finishing everything off' day, as Ally will be home earlier than usual as it is the Easter weekend and it is his birthday tomorrow. We had had an early message from our friend Annie (who works at Little Bridge House at Fremington) to say that Johnnie had had his heart operation and was doing well. What a relief! Valerie & Peter hung the new curtains and Peter finished painting the beads on the kitchen door. Valerie took all the suite covers off and washed them – and then it rained again! That was not on the plan, so the suite had to be covered with dust covers, which rather spoilt the effect. Valerie also washed the lampshades, put plants on the windowsills and generally prettied up the room. When Ally got home he was delighted with the finished job. Peter took Sarah-Jane to do her Duke of Edinburgh Award, while Ally collected Samuel.

Friday 25th March. Ally's Birthday – the new curtains were his birthday present! Valerie made a 'full English' breakfast for everyone and then we all walked over to the big house and into the derelict hospital in search of a tap top. We didn't find one, but did manage to collect a toilet roll holder, a door



handle and a bathroom mirror as well as some daffodils. Valerie is mad about daffodils. We had bought a birthday cake for Ally, which we had kept in the car. Peter went to fetch it and we got Sarah-Jane and Samuel to give it to him while we all sang 'Happy Birthday'. Ally had decided that he didn't want to go out for a meal, but would like a Chinese take-away instead so Valerie and he went to get it while the rest of us chatted and watched TV. It was a lovely meal and was the perfect ending to a lovely day.

Saturday 26th March. After the excesses of yesterday, we all had a lay in. Peter & Ally wanted to fix the kitchen light and outside bulkhead lights. We all went to Metherringham for some flex and bulb holders and Valerie bought a new washing line pole. While Ally took Sam and Sarah-Jane to their mum's, Peter fixed the lights and Valerie replaced the suite covers. Later on we moved the storage unit downstairs and put it under the gecko's vivarium. It was a much better option and Ally used the table to stack his hi-fi equipment on, which made it much easier to get to and use. Things are starting to look good now. Meanwhile Valerie

was cooking another wonderful roast dinner – pork this time, plus apple crumble and apple pie to follow. Their mum returned Sarah-Jane and Samuel home, so it was full house again.

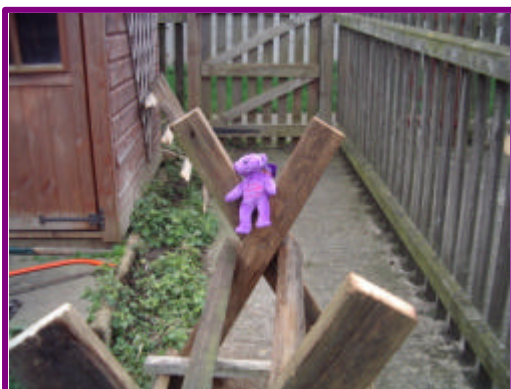
Sunday 27th March. Easter Sunday. We awoke to the wonderful sound of the church bells ringing out. Today Peter, Ally and the children are going to Cadwell Park for some motorcycle racing and I am staying at home with Valerie. They set off – completely forgetting that the clocks had been put forward an hour for British Summer Time! As they neared Cadwell, it was getting foggier and foggier and was bitterly cold. Valerie had several text messages to say they were coming home – then they weren't! In the quiet Valerie pottered about and then settled down to do some watercolour painting. She painted some sticky buds and then made a collage of leaves as another birthday present for Ally. When they did eventually get home, they were frozen and very muddy but had really enjoyed what racing they had seen. Valerie and Sam played cards, Sarah-Jane and Peter read, Ally made a giant pizza for us all and later Valerie made sandwiches and we enjoyed more crumble or apple pie before she tackled another pile of ironing. Afterwards we all watched a really good film.

Monday 28th March. A quiet day. Ally was working on the computer, and Peter went into the garden to select some wood to make a sawing horse. The nettles were not showing any reaction to the weed killer yet. Soon it was time for Ally to return to Buxton and he took Samuel home en route. Peter & Valerie then started putting a wardrobe together upstairs and also made a smaller one accessible for Sarah-Jane's school shirts and other clothing. Once done, the whole room looked much more spacious. That evening we watched a film and had an early night.

Tuesday 29th March. Sarah-Jane's 16th Birthday! Another treat today we are going to Newark Air Museum at Winthorpe after she has opened her birthday presents. There was an open-air display of many aircraft, including a Vulcan bomber. Peter & Valerie love the Vulcan and Peter couldn't resist going up inside the cockpit again! There was so much to see that we stayed there all day, having lunch and another warming cup of tea later. Sarah-Jane was very taken with a brick wall in the newest hangar, which had people's signatures and messages written on them. We bought one for her and she wrote, "Sarah-Jane Tonks was 16 on 29/03/05" and "204 Sqn Air Cadets are great!" We all look forward to seeing her brick when the next hangar is completed. We had arranged to drop Sarah-Jane off at her mum's afterwards but we arrived too early, so drove over to a motorcycle clothing shop I had spotted en route and bought new jackets for Valerie & Peter. Then, we took Sarah-Jane back to her mum's as she was being taken out for the evening. Her mum was going to take her to school the next day. We had the house to ourselves, so all was quiet.



Wednesday 30th March. We had a lie-in this morning and then Peter & I went into the garden and burnt the last of the scrap wood. We then relocated all the large logs to the wood cutting area in the garden. Valerie, meanwhile, having finished tidying and painting everywhere else, made a start on the kitchen and started painting the walls white! Then she thought she would tackle the lobby – when will it all end? I just sat on the windowsill surveying all our handiwork! Later on Peter collected Sarah-Jane from school and she was really chatty and told us all about her night out.



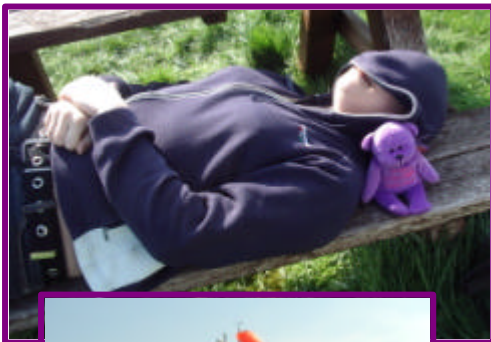
Thursday 31st March. Today we loaded the car up with the rest of the rubbish for the dump and some bags of books for Oxfam. Once in Lincoln, Valerie went off to purchase some bits for Ally – another plant, mat and a log basket, while Peter & I pottered about. We were only there for an hour but got everything done. Peter made a start on making a sawing horse for Ally, which only took him an hour. It looks very nice and is really sturdy and will make our work a lot easier. After

lunch we continued cutting up more wood – all at the same length this time – and made a start on Ally's log pile. Valerie was busy painting the lobby and washed and mended the door curtain.

Friday 1st April. Today we were going to visit Ken & Margaret – you know, them with the Beagle puppies. I braced myself as we were leapt on by the five puppies but after a while they calmed down and Saffy and I became friends. We had a very nice lunch, a tour of the house and garden and then, sadly, had to say our goodbyes as they had a prior engagement. They are very nice people and good friends to Ally. However, they did say they would call in and see us all on Sunday morning before we leave for home. That evening, after Ally had come home, we took Sarah-Jane to her Air Cadets and then had a lovely Chinese meal.



Saturday 2nd April. Today is another special day! As part of Sarah-Jane's birthday present, her dad (Ally) had bought her a flying experience / lesson and we are going off to RAF Wickenby, north of Lincoln city this afternoon. First, we watched the Formula 1 Grand Prix Qualifying and then made our way to Wickenby. There wasn't much there, but it was a lovely sunny day and plenty of light aircraft and micro-lights to watch. We had a nice sandwich lunch and then Sarah-Jane and I had a little doze in the sunshine. I was also given the task of looking out for her Cessna coming back from re-fuelling. At last, we were called forward by Steve – her pilot – and walked over to the waiting plane. It was beautiful! He demonstrated all the controls and their effect on the aircraft and answered Sarah-Jane's questions and I was allowed to sit on the front before take-off. Valerie took lots of pictures and then handed the camera to Sarah-Jane, so she could take to aerial shots. Then, she was up, up and away and we sat in the sunshine waiting for her return. She was so excited! She had flown out towards the coast over Lincoln, Cadwell Park and even her own house in Nocton. They had had to get special clearance from RAF Waddington to fly over Nocton, as it is so close to Waddington. They had hoped to reach Skegness, but weather conditions were against them, sadly. Sarah-Jane was able to take control of the aircraft on two occasions and said the control was very responsive. She had managed to take some fantastic photos. What a lucky girl! Then home to one of Valerie's stew and dumplings and apple pie. The perfect end to a wonderful day!



Sunday 3rd April. Sadly, today we are leaving Nocton. Our month here has been very hard work, but we are more than pleased with what we have achieved. A tidy garden, a sawing horse and a log pile outside. And, instead of a dark and messy living room painted in orange, brown and blue – a tidy, clean and airy living space. We took Pepsi for a final walk into the woods, where Valerie picked some daffodils to take home. When we got back Ken & Margaret were there (without the Beagles) and they liked the changes we had made. They didn't stay very long, but it was nice to see them again. Sarah-Jane was going to spend half term with her mum, so she and Samuel went off, leaving Ally and us. Ally seemed quite vulnerable today, but we do have to leave. We had a good journey home, calling in on a friend of Ally's with some videos en route. When we drove over the Queen Elizabeth Bridge at Dartford, I know we were almost home.



Watch out for my next adventure!!

Freddy Fremington