

The Friggieri Family Newsletter

Editorial

My collections of postcards (the hobby is called deltiology) and lapel pins (no idea what this hobby is called) were greatly enhanced last year as we were fortunate enough to take several short holidays. Malta in February, Paris in the Spring, Dublin in September and an end of year break in Egypt. The week-long trip in February was instigated by my sister Suzette who having arranged a 40th birthday dinner for her husband Joseph, invited Lorna and I to attend. Never ones to miss a party we accepted and had a wonderful time catching up with family and friends. In April, Lorna and I took the EuroStar through the Channel Tunnel to meet Alexandre Frigeri and his lovely wife Cíntia in Paris. At the end of September, my parents Kathy and Walter and sisters Suzette and Amanda came to visit us in the UK. It was mum's 65th birthday and as a surprise we had arranged a weekend trip to Ireland so that we could celebrate the day with mum in Oldcastle, the town where she was born. Before my parents returned to Malta I had one more surprise up my sleeve when I took dad to see the Luciano Pavarotti concert at the NEC Arena in Birmingham. Ending the year in style, our youngest son Alan joined us for a cruise on the Nile. Amongst the many 'firsts' experienced during this expedition were hot air ballooning over Luxor at dawn, being awestruck by the beauty of the temple of Rameses II at Abu Simbel and taking a camel trek through some of the villages on the West Bank.

I'm pleased to say that our sons are all leading fulfilling lives. Robert is in the final year



of a Broadcast Journalism degree at Leeds University. During the summer recess he widened his life-experience by traveling around Eastern Europe visiting Hungary, Poland, Croatia and the Czech Republic. After a short but fun-filled summer holiday in Tenerife with his friends, Sean started a History degree at Southampton University.

Apart from a single distressing incident when he was mugged by a gang stealing mobile phones he is really enjoying his fresher year. Alan spent most of the summer in Malta

with our good friends Jo and MaryAnn Sammut and came back fit and refreshed to start Sixth Form at Aylesbury Grammar. The lucky chap has just returned from a school trip to the ski slopes at Killington in Vermont, USA.

Lorna's devotion to her work with teenagers at a Special Needs school in Dunstable continues unabated. Needless to say, it is a difficult job but she is an exceptional woman and finds it very rewarding. As for myself, I'm still freelancing as an IT Consultant (essentially someone who borrows your watch to tell you the time) and have just started a new assignment with a major utility company based in Nottingham. My job is very demanding and as a result I have not been able to allocate as much time and effort to the 'Family' project as I would have liked. Please be assured that if I am slow to respond to your letters and emails it is not because I do not value your contribution but just that I am juggling too many balls.



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Irish Family Reunion

My mother Kathy (nee Smith) was 65 on Saturday, September 21. To mark the occasion, my sisters and I arranged a surprise trip to Ireland. As my parents and sisters live in Malta and I live in England, this subterfuge required significant planning and coordination. They arrived in Edlesborough a few days before her birthday but we kept the secret until Friday night, only letting the cat out of the bag so that they could pack for the weekend and get an early night. We caught Ryanair's 07:00 flight from Luton, collected a Hertz rental car at Dublin airport and checked into the Fincourt Hotel in Oldcastle for a lunchtime Guinness. In the afternoon we walked around Oldcastle and visited St Bridget's Terrace, the street where mum lived as a child. Apart from the birthday treat there was another aspect to this trip. When my parents married in 1957 it was against the express wishes of my grandmother. Things went from bad to worse until a complete breakdown in relations shortly after Suzette was born. So for over 38 years mum had not had any contact with her family and we were hoping that we could bring about a reunion. That evening we had a wonderful dinner in the hotel restaurant and afterwards got chatting with the locals at the bar. Oldcastle is somewhere between a big village and a small town and word of our mission soon got around. The local grapevine very quickly put us in touch with Michael Cullen, the younger brother of mum's childhood friend Sean (now deceased) who also used to live on St Bridget's Terrace. Michael runs a B&B and via his guest book was able to put us in contact with mum's half-sister Margaret who had previously stayed with him. On Sunday at noon mum had a lengthy and emotional

telephone conversation with Margaret and they agreed to meet in Dublin the next day. We all approached the meeting with some trepidation but were soon overwhelmed by the loving reception that we encountered. Mum was reunited with two of her half-sisters, Margaret and Frances (see photograph) and their families. Our return flight left Dublin on Monday night at 21:05. The weekend was a great success and we are looking forward to meeting mum's other half-sister Mary and more of our Irish cousins who live in Eccles near Manchester.



Paris in the Springtime

Alexandre (b. 22/10/63) and Cintia (b. 19/04/66) Frigeri (pictured below) are from Cuiaba in Brazil where Alex is a University lecturer specialising in Marketing & Advertising. Alex had scheduled a brief study visit to the Sorbonne and following a flurry of emails earlier in the year, we agreed to meet in Paris. We stayed at the Hotel Veronese, near the Place d'Italie and had a really nice weekend full of sightseeing, shopping (the credit card took a battering at the Samaritaine department store) and excellent cuisine. Alex is the sporting type and lists fencing, football and sky diving amongst his interests. Alex and Cintia were married in 1988 and have two children named Gregorio (b. 15/12/90) and Ana (b. 07/12/94). Alex traces his roots back to Mantova in Italy via his father Oribe (b. 08/03/28 d. 24/06/88), grandfather Jose (b. 08/06/02 d. 20/07/94) and great-grandfather Antonio (b. circa 1871) who emigrated to Brazil to work on the coffee plantations in August 1895.



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World Poetry Day

As well as being the first day of Spring, March 21 was declared by UNESCO as World Poetry Day.

Quite appropriately, on that day, Oliver Friggieri (described in Italy as "il maggiore poeta maltese contemporaneo") was presented with the Trieste International Poetry Prize at an award ceremony held at the Caffè Tommaseo in Trieste. I am pleased to say that my personal library contains several of Oliver's works including his "Il-Poeziji Migbura" (Collected Poems).



An English Reunion

On Sunday September 9, 2002 while I was digging the vegetable plot in the back garden, my youngest son Alan passed me the telephone and advised that I would be interested in taking the call. He was right. The caller was Samantha Pedder who with her husband Tom is on a military posting in Germany. Samantha explained that she had found my number on the Friggieri home page following a surname search that she had run on behalf of her mother Linda Leedham. Linda who lives in Kent had on the previous day been astounded to be told by her own mother Irene that she was actually an adopted child.

In 1948, Irene and Stanley Barber responded to an advert in the London Evening Standard offering children for adoption. This led them to an address in Soho where they met a blonde woman and a Maltese man with the surname Friggieri. Escorted into a bedroom they were confronted by eight children sitting on a dirty mattress. Irene and Stanley were taken aback to be offered the chance to take their pick. Nevertheless, they chose Linda, who at 18 months was the youngest. However, it stuck in their minds that the second youngest girl was named Lola. According to Linda, Lola went back to Malta shortly afterwards with her parents but the other six children were left at a Convent in Clapham. It is not clear whether these children were all siblings but Linda seems to think that all of their names had the initial letter 'L'.

As Samantha was talking I was making a mental connection to another post-War baby named Lola. However, I was reluctant to prematurely build up hopes and told her that I would need more evidence to prove the link. Samantha told me that Linda was going to request her full birth certificate from the Public Registry and would be contacting me soon.

Over the next few days, I had several animated telephone and email exchanges with both mother and daughter. By Wednesday, Linda had obtained the certificate showing her birth date as October 12, 1947 and naming her biological parents as Lydia Sophia Searson and Paul Friggieri. The document clearly states that she had been put up for adoption and provided the evidence needed to confirm my earlier assumption.



Publio (a.k.a. Paul) Friggieri was born on April 27, 1911 in Floriana, Malta. At the start of the 1930s he was working as a tailor and on October 20, 1932 he married Paola Portelli in Valletta. The records show that between 1939 and 1941 he served in the Merchant Navy aboard SS Gregory and SS Dunsley and subsequently enlisted in the Royal Navy. It is not clear when he separated from Paola and met Lydia Sophia Searson (b. February 20, 1910) but Lola was born in London on February 15, 1946. In the 1950s they had another two children, Christina and Michael. Publio died of a heart attack on October 8, 1962 in Hitchin and Lydia died of cancer in Stevenage on August 15, 1976.

Lola is married to John Gray and they have two daughters named Lisa and Donna. Her younger sister Christina (b. December 20, 1952) is a divorcee and lives in North Carolina, USA. Michael (b. March 3, 1955) a former Grenadier Guard is married to Jane Elizabeth Cawdell and they have three children named Amy Louise, Zoe Louise and Matthew John. Mick also has three children from a previous marriage – Tony Paul and twins named Stacey Louise and Danielle Louise. Linda now 55 and recently retired from the Prison Service is married to Dave Leedham. She has three daughters from her first marriage. Samantha is 33 and has a daughter named Ashley. Rachel is 30 and lives with Linda. Nicole is 25 and lives with her partner on a farm in Wales. They have three children, Lennie and

twins named Jack and Mai-Leigh.

Linda was very excited about her 'new' family and wanted to make contact as soon as possible.

As luck would have it, Michael and his family were away on holiday and Linda was just about to go to Majorca for a week. However, once everyone was back in the UK things moved very quickly. Linda's initial lengthy telephone conversation with Michael on September 24 led to a full blown reunion in less than a week. The following weekend Samantha flew in from Germany and together with Linda, Dave and Rachel drove to Royston to meet Michael, Lola and their families (pictured above). The photograph below shows Linda, Michael and Lola together for the first time. Since it was taken they have met several times to get to know each other better and are planning a future trip to Malta to further explore their roots.



French War Hero

In 1944, Guy Friggeri was serving as a policeman in Toulon. He was killed during the Allied landing at Provence and the *Rue du Sous-Lieutenant Guy*

Friggeri

commemorates his bravery. Although only 24 when he died he had already started a family. His widow was Madeleine Bordenave and they had a daughter named



Noelle who was born in 1941. The information about Guy comes from Arnaud Friggeri (b. 01/02/74) a medical student who lives in Amiens, France (email: afriggeri@dyadel.net). Arnaud's grandfather Henri (born 23/08/17 in Milan) was Guy's brother.

A.M.C.O.E.

Last April, Lorna and I attended a *Vin D'Honneur* evening hosted by the Association of Maltese Communities of Egypt at the Imperial Hotel in London. My second cousin, Oliver Friggieri (see page 2) had suggested that making contact with this organization might provide some information about the members of the family who used to live in Egypt. Serendipity is not a word that I get to use very often but it describes the fact that on entering the hotel reception area the first person that we met was Lorna's aunt Josephine Sciberras. Josephine had lived in Egypt as a child and unbeknown to us has been a member of AMCOE for many years. When Lorna and I first moved to the UK in 1980 we stayed with Josephine and her late husband Maurice until we could afford to move to our own flat in Streatham. During the course of the evening, we made several

new acquaintances and decided to join the association. In November we also attended the annual dinner dance held at the same venue.

At the Movies

Shortly after I published the second issue of this newsletter, I received a letter from my second cousin Albert who lives in Malta. He told me that his father John had been watching the Italian TV channel RAI UNO and that during an awards ceremony had noted that Francesco Friggeri had been presented with the prize for '*Il miglior scenografo*'. This prompted me to check the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) where I discovered the filmography of Production Designer Francesco Friggeri. Intrigued, I further mined the public domain to collate the following biographical information.

A native of Italy, Francesco Friggeri was born in Mantova on May 17, 1954. He studied literature and philosophy at the University of Bologna, enrolling in the experimental Academy of Fine Arts. There, he came into contact with some of Italy's most stimulating and provocative cultural figures including the writer Umberto Eco (remember Sean Connery in *The Name of the Rose*), politician Furio Colombo and the late film director Nanni Loy.

Production Design is an integral and important component of successful film-making and the role has to consider the importance of physical space in the creation of the filmed environment. This means finding

locations that fit the mood, atmosphere and general 'look' of the film and ensuring that set design and construction meet the needs of the Director in terms of props, composition, colours, perspective, elevation and lens angles. Since the beginning of his career in the early 1980s, Francesco has designed over 30 features for such directors as Roberto Benigni and Giuseppe Tornatore and been nominated for several prestigious awards including an Emmy nomination for his work on the television mini-series '*Christopher Columbus*'.

Some of his recent achievements include designing the sumptuous but often chaotic atmosphere of an immigrant ocean liner for '*La Leggenda del Pianista Sull'Oceano*'. Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore in 1998, this film starred Tim Roth and was scored by Ennio Morricone.



Once again teaming up with Giuseppe Tornatore and Ennio Morricone in 2000, he successfully recreated a lyrical, sleepy Sicilian village for '*Malena*'. This film received Oscar nominations for Best Cinematography and Best Musical Score. His most recent credit in 2002 has been for '*Ripley's Game*' starring John Malkovich with music by Ennio Morricone.

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