

Focus

Stan Cullimore



Diary of an urban grandad

If you want adventures, check out the local ads

HAVE you made any new year's resolutions recently? If so, how many? My problem is that there are so many to choose from I tend to overdo it.

One year I decided to get fit, work harder, be nicer to everyone I met and earn more, whilst also not smoking.

Obviously, it didn't end well.

I found myself giving them all up within the first four days and coming up with a brand new plan. Namely, not to waste time on new year's resolutions.

But this year I've had a brainwave and if I say so myself, it's a real doozie. I've decided I'm only going to have one resolution. It's simple too, it's just this.

From now on I'm going to grab life with both hands and put my best foot forward. There. Easy.

All I've got to say to myself each day is; both hands, best foot. I even got Son No. 2 to take a photo the other day of me doing just that, so I can put it up on the wall to remind me.

The story of how I ended up at Gloucestershire Airport, clambering into a Tiger Airways aerobatic trainer plane is a pleasing little tale in itself.

It all started a couple of weeks ago as I flicked through *The Weekend* magazine. You know, the nice shiny thing given away with this very newspaper today.

I always enjoy reading the adverts because I've had some interesting adventures from answering adverts in the past.

On this particular day, I saw a tiny advert for Tiger Airways tucked away at the bottom of a page. They were offering fun flights of various sorts.

So I went online to take a look at their website (www.tigerairways.co.uk) and found they have a veritable smorgasbord of aeronautical delights on offer.

They do flights in new planes, old planes, big planes, small planes and even bi-planes. So I rang up and spoke to a very pleasant chap called Chris who arranged for me to take a flight with their lady flight instructor, Tizi.

A few days later, I tootled off to the airport and had a chance to look over their mouth watering collection of planes. Then I met Tizi, who turned out to be one of those relaxed adventurous types who have done pretty much everything you can think of during their lives.

She's flown with display teams, ridden motorbikes across deserts, trained a golden eagle to fly to hand and worked as a bush pilot in Africa for a few years.

Basically, she's the sort of person you



want at the controls when you're in a tiny plane being knocked about by winds and turbulence.

Which is where I found myself just after the photo above was taken.

Luckily, Tizi and I discovered a mutual admiration for canal boats. So when she offered to let me have a go at flying the thing, we decided I should treat it pretty much the same way as if I was driving a narrowboat.

Which worked surprisingly well, to be honest. Light touches on the tiller and all that.

Mind you, when Tizi suggested we could try a couple of aerobatic stunts, I was grateful that she took back control of the plane first. After all, none of the boats I've ever driven can loop the loop.

I realised quite quickly that there's

something delightfully scary about saying yes to questions like, "fancy flying upside down for a bit?"

Of course, once you start saying yes, it gets more and more difficult to say no. After a couple of roll turns, loops, stall turns and various nose spins I got the distinct impression that what Tizi really wanted, was to separate me from my stomach.

Surprisingly I managed to keep my breakfast where it was.

All too soon we were back on the ground. I found myself thinking that maybe one day I might even build up the nerve to try out the wing walking stuff they mention on their website.

Either way, one thing I do know is that up there as we skidded around the sky. It really did feel as if I was grabbing life with both hands and putting my

best feet in the direction that I hoped was roughly forward.

So my advice for 2013 is this. If you want adventures. Check out some local ads. You never know where you might end up!

PS: Talking of adverts, I got myself a new pair of winter boots on Park Street recently. I've been telling everyone I meet that they might actually be the best winter boots I've ever had. They're waterproof, made of leather, faux-fur lined and just about as warm and comfy as it's possible for boots to be. What's even better is the name. They're made in Spain by a company called Panama Jack. How cool is that? The other day Son No. 1 came in and showed me his new winter boots. Panama Jack's. Oh, yeah. Word of mouth, best ad ever. Happy New Year.

Bristol-based Stan Cullimore was a founder member of chart-toppers The Housemartins and is now a star of children's TV. You can follow him on twitter @stancullimore