



1998 Christmas Newsletter

from:

Bridget & Malcolm Appleby



1998 was certainly the year that changed our lives - in the most wonderful way. On August 7th, at 2pm, James Andrew Appleby was born at Wycombe General Hospital, weighing 4.192kg (9lb 3.5 oz). Some of you may already have read the details of the labour itself and the first days on our website (www.luthien.demon.co.uk). This is an attempt to summarise the weeks since then.

Malcolm had the first week of James' life at home, which was a huge help. In those early days getting James fed was as much as I could do - there was little time to feed myself, let alone cook. In the second week Malcolm was back at work, part-time, giving me a hand in the morning, and coming home early



enough to get a meal ready. This broke me into the business of full-time 'housewife and mother' in a more gentle fashion.

James at 3 days

old

Before James was born we had done our best to get in all those things we thought we wouldn't be able to do once he was born. This included our African safari and a trip to China in 1997, and in April 98 a long weekend in Dublin. However, having a baby hasn't been as restrictive as I had thought. In James short life, he's been to 3 weddings, had a weekend at the sea-side, and a number of trips to grandparents in Ipswich and Salisbury.

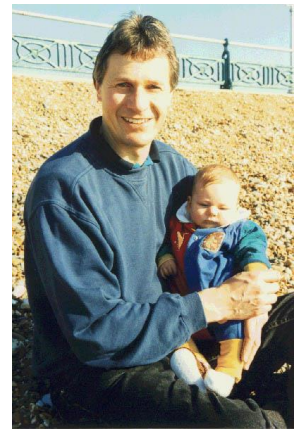
The first wedding was of my dear friend Alex, from Ipswich, now living in Bristol. It was a 10.30 wedding, so we had to get up early to ensure that James had a good feed before we left and again at the church. Alex's friends were very helpful, showing me where I could feed James in peace. James was very good throughout and really seemed to enjoy the hymns. However, he was less keen on the violin music played during the signing of the register!



The second wedding was back in Suffolk, of two friends of ours from the cycling group through which Malcolm and I first met. This was a great opportunity to show James off to many old friends (as well as a chance for granny & granddad Leathley to see their grandson.)

The third wedding was that of my cousin Susan, a curate in Toxteth. The wedding was during the Sunday morning service, so we travelled up on Saturday. This was the same Saturday as a yoga seminar I'd booked up months ahead, so Malcolm & my father spent the day looking after him, keeping him happy on expressed mummy milk. We drove straight from the yoga seminar to Liverpool, stopping for a proper feed (for James) at the hotel, before heading for the wedding party.

In October we took James for a long weekend in Brighton. I was pleasantly surprised at how well set-up places are for babies. The hotel provided us with a cot, the shopping centre abounded with both baby change facilities and feeding areas, and even Brighton pavilion had no difficulty with our pushing a pram around the beautiful building. We couldn't take the pram upstairs, but the attendants took care of it for us and moved it to the opposite staircase for when we returned.

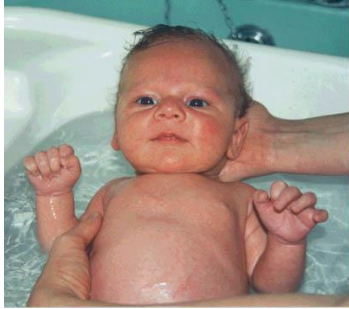


James and Malcolm on

Brighton Beach

James himself has been a delight. True, there have been some very bad days, where he seemed to cry all the time, and some very bad nights, where he wanted feeding every 1-2 hours. I've been sore in places I didn't know could get that sore, and I've been more tired than I can remember. But even then, James would always do something each day to make it worth while. In the first few weeks, it was a joy when he opened his eyes for more than a few seconds at a time. At about 5 weeks, he started smiling. At first, almost accidentally, but as time went on, for longer, and in a more controlled manner.

The first time he enjoyed having a bath made an otherwise mundane task sheer joy. Then there was the first time he played with his baby gym, laughing as it responded with movement and sound. On Monday evenings I teach yoga, and I was overjoyed the first time I came



home and he looked around as I entered the room, recognizing first my voice, then my face, and clearly glad I was home. Even when his colicky crying sessions were at their worst, James would give me a few minutes of cooing in between to make it all worthwhile.

Having a baby has a strange effect on adult conversation. Instead of discussing work, politics and DIY, we find ourselves discussing the consistency of James' nappies, how many times and for how long he has fed, and more recently what new pureed food he has tried that day (and how it has affected his nappy..).

November 22 was a big day for James - his Baptism. We had around 20 friends and family for lunch, which meant a busy Saturday preparing food, as well as buying flowers for the decorations Malcolm's mum did for the church and for our newly built conservatory. As well as three weddings, James had been to church on a number of Sundays before the Baptism, and had always been well behaved (usually falling asleep during the sermon!). As you might expect, on his big day he decided to cry throughout the first part of the service. Whether this was due to the coldness of the church (the boiler had packed in), the slight tension he may have detected from us, or the fact that he felt silly in a dress (a beautiful white robe, first worn by Malcolm's mother's



grandmother) we don't know, but the minister was well able to speak louder than James could cry!

We have had a wonderful response from the people of our church to James - they have all taken him to their heart, and turned out to support us. As in the weeks following his birth when we were overwhelmed by presents, including some from Ireland, New Zealand and the USA, we were surprised by the generosity of Christening presents and cards. We are pleased to have as godparents for James three of our friends: Katharine, probably my oldest friend from Ipswich, Trevor, one of Malcolm's friends from Cambridge days, and John, a new friend from our church in Prestwood.

1999 is likely to be an equally exciting year, taking James to new places, and watching him walk and talk for the first time.

I hope to return to work as a risk management consultant in Abingdon for 3 days a week, in January or February, providing I can find a suitable childminder, and continue to teach yoga one night a week, giving Malcolm a chance to have James to himself. Malcolm is clearly enjoying fatherhood. Duties of the modern father include changing nappies of course, as well as developing a web site on which to show off his offspring. More traditional and mundane tasks we'll have to sort out next year include toddler proofing the garden with new hedges and fences and covering the pond. Since we've had an extra telephone line put in at home, Malcolm can now spend the odd day working from home on his various mobile phone and internet related projects, which gives us more time together as a family.



Finally, we would like to thank all our friends and family for their good wishes and kind thoughts this year, and wish you all the very best of health and happiness for 1999.

Happy Christmas and
a Joyous 1999 to you all

