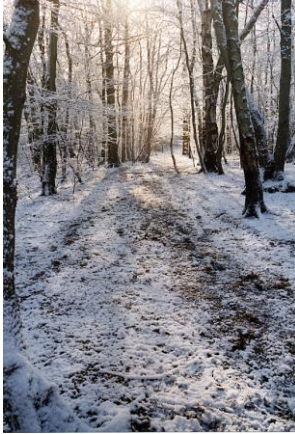
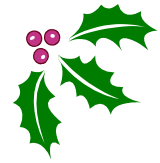




# 2003 Christmas Newsletter from: Bridget, Malcolm, James & Matthew



No, we haven't had snow yet this winter in Prestwood – this is from much earlier this year, one bright crisp morning when James was at school and Matthew was at nursery, and I felt that software reviews and yoga lesson plans could wait for an hour whilst I took a walk in our local woods. The woods are just behind the house, and it is such a luxury to be able to go for a nice walk, without needing to drive somewhere first.

James started school in January – I swore I wouldn't cry seeing him in uniform, but it really is a sight to tug a mother's heart strings.

Whatever schools say it's so different from the child-minder / nursery / pre-school situation where you know you can telephone any time to check how your child is. James however took to school like a dolphin to water, and in September went full-time. He enjoys 'numeracy' and 'laptops' the most, as well as 'Golden Time' (when the children can play) and has even grown to like P.E.



*James' first day at school*



*Matthew displaying flowers he grew at nursery*

Matthew meanwhile continues at nursery two mornings a week, and since September has added a morning at pre-school, all of which he thoroughly enjoys. On our remaining mornings we go to Toddlers and Jingle Tots. I've been secretary of the Toddler group for most of the year, and have just handed over the reigns of this job in order to take on the role of newsletter editor for the theatre club.

Matthew started splashing lessons in September, and his confidence in the water has grown enormously, so that at half-term he was teaching James how to put his face under the water!

Looking back at past newsletters, it feels as though we haven't done much this year. We've had such a



*Lazy, hazy, crazy days in the sun*

beautiful spring, summer and autumn that we didn't feel the need to go very far for most of the year – the boys (at least, the two smaller ones) and I seemed to spend most of the school summer holidays playing in the garden, growing tomatoes, peas, beans and blackcurrants, spraying each other in water and generally having a fun time.

We did go on holiday to France in June, staying with my school friend Susanne in Menton for a few days, before returning to 'our' caravan at Camping du Pylon for a week (ie the same place as last year). Very relaxing it was too.



*Building sandcastles as Juan-Le-Pins*



*Matthew and James in the Dome*

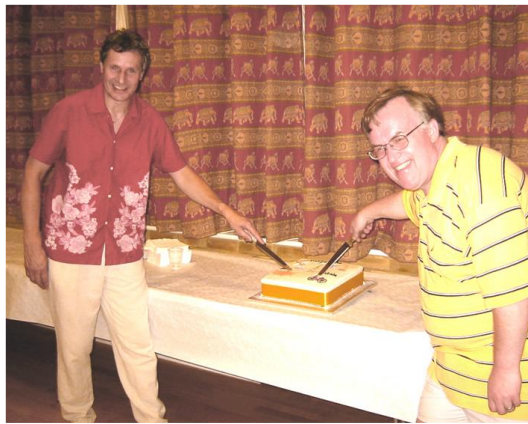
We also took a UK holiday, staying with Malcolm's mum in Salisbury for a few days, and then taking her down to Cornwall with us to see the Eden Project. The boys were more impressed with the Eden Project than I expected, and were particularly fascinated by many of the sculptures.

Whilst in Salisbury we took a day trip to Marwell Zoo, which we all loved for the range of adult and baby animals, and the obviously good state of health of the creatures.



*James and Matthew with Alexander and Jemma at Odd's Farm Park*

The year did start a little sadly, with Malcolm's Dad passing away at the grand age of 90, just before Christmas. By chance James and Matthew had paid a visit just the day before he died.



*Malcolm and Dave cutting their joint birthday cake*

It was also a year of celebration. James was 5 in August, Matthew was 3 in October, each having a party with a bouncy castle. And of course Malcolm was 50 in February, and then again in July.....

Matthew still can't quite understand why daddy had two birthdays, but the barn dance and barbecue held in Waldringfield with Malcolm's old friend Dave, now living in the US, was worth waiting for.

Malcolm's party was a good chance to catch up with many old friends, but I still have the feeling we didn't see as much of our friends as we'd like to. We did enjoy a great day out in September with Katharine and John who took the trouble to arrange their annual holiday in the area. We enjoyed unseasonably sunny weather at Odd's Farm Park, which the children especially enjoyed.

I was allowed a weekend off this year, and headed off to Wales for a weekend of yoga and walking. We had a yoga practice on waking, an enormous breakfast, walked for 7 hours (Saturday) or 5 hours (Sunday), followed by a further yoga practice, an enormous and delicious (vegetarian) dinner, and a final gentle practice before an early bed. It was a brilliant break, and despite being out of the practice of walking any further than a three-year is capable of I suffered not a single blister, ache or pain. And by the second day I didn't even mind that I couldn't get a mobile phone signal. Any one want to come with me next year?

Malcolm's job at O2 is currently being re-organised but unfortunately (he keeps saying) he has not been made redundant, and will soon bear the grand title 'Head of Entertainment'. In the boomerang style that he's used to now, he's moving back to Slough in the new year.

**Happy Christmas and  
New Year to all our  
friends and family**



*James' picture of a reindeer with Father Christmas and a Christmas Tree.*