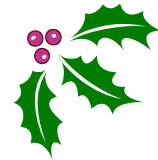


2004 Christmas Newsletter



from:

Bridget, Malcolm, James & Matthew

2004 has seen the usual batch of interesting outings and trips both locally and further afield, catching up with old friends, or exploring new locations. There has been much sadness too this year, with friends and family suffering illness and bereavement. Please know that you are all very much in our thoughts this Christmas, as we know for some this will be a difficult time. Below are a few highlights from our year - we hope it brings a little smile to you all.

Holidays

In June we spent a few relaxing days with our friend Susanne and her family in France. Enroute we stopped in Nice to visit the Matisse museum. The collection was brilliant, with much that James in particular could appreciate. Near the museum was a park, with a view over Nice, where the boys let off some steam after a long journey. We only managed one day on the beach with all the children, but they played well together, re-living the scene from 'Free Willy' where the whale makes an improbably large jump over the harbour wall.



In the summer we spent ten busy days in (mainly Northern) Ireland. We had time to catch up with much loved family, and particularly enjoyed a day trip to Warrenpoint with cousin Mary and her daughters.



One of the Ireland highlights was visiting the Giant's Causeway on a bright sunny day. The boys walked miles without complaint and enjoyed the curious rock formations. The Bushmills Distillery was also on the holiday itinerary.

Birthdays



The boys talked us into three parties between them this year – an outing to the local goat centre for James and three of his friends in August, a hugely mad chaotic party for both of them at the church hall in September and a tea-party for Matthew and a few friends in October. This also meant three cakes – elephant shaped for James, a red space-ship for Matthew and a large chocolate cake decorated with sweets and animals to feed the multitudes in September.

Our birthdays in February were rather subsumed into the celebration of Malcolm's nephew Chris's wedding to Emma on Valentine's day. This was a lovely family weekend, with my mum and dad joining us from Ipswich on the Sunday.

Outings

In the February half-term we took a mini-tour of the UK, taking in Cambridge, Lincoln, the Peak District, Manchester and Chester. Chester was targeted by the boys for its zoo, and by us as a chance to catch up with friends Mark and Junko, whom we hadn't seen since their marriage in Canada. Junko is an accomplished pianist and Mark plays guitar – the boys were entranced with both. In the summer we spent a few days in Salisbury with Malcolm's mum, and from here took a day trip to Dorchester to see the dinosaur museum. James remembered this from our first trip when he was only two, and was keen to see the triceratops again.



The boys and I all had a great week at 'Lighthouse' this year, the local Christian children's holiday club. Another local event was the 'Spirit of Prestwood' for which the boys dressed up as their favourite characters. We've a couple of National Trust properties nearby, and we've made the most of our membership at Cliveden and Hughenden Manor.

Happy Christmas and New Year to all our friends and family



Work & School

Malcolm still works for O2, and has ricocheted back to Slough after a 3-year sojourn in Hammersmith. His team looks after music, video, games and other trivial (but money making) services on the O2 network.

I'm still teaching yoga and telling other people what's wrong with their software. The yoga has become very popular this year, so from January I'll be running an extra weekly class. As well as my monthly feature, I've had some extra articles published – a couple in a yoga journal (one on RSI, the other on how yoga teachers can use the Internet) and one in my usual Health and Safety publication on the safety benefits of mobile phones.



In September James moved effortlessly from Year 1 to Year 2 at the local infant school, and his progress in reading and 'numeracy' this year has delighted and thrilled us. Matthew is still mixing nursery and pre-school with lots of outings with mum, but next year I'll have to let go a bit more as he starts school (five mornings a week) in Easter 2005.

By the New Year we hope to have two new additions to the family. Since the demise of our cat Spider in May we've been researching new pets, and now have a desirable residence ready for two new guinea pigs.



James researching pets