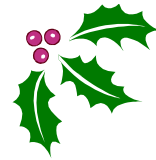




2005 Christmas Newsletter

from:

Bridget, Malcolm, James & Matthew



2005 has been a year for new arrivals – Malcolm’s nieces have been busy, with Millie born in September, and Samuel in November. Some friends have also delivered new babies, two at opposite ends of the year - Thomas T-J in January, and Susan H in December, with baby Cecilia K half way between the two.

Congratulations to all of you, and enjoy your first Christmas with the new arrivals. We’ve had our own new additions - three guinea pigs (Lily, Abby and Nibbles) joined the family at the end of 2004, and have been thriving.

Holidays

At February half-term we went to Bristol to meet up with friends Alex and Anna, and to visit the SS Great Britain, Brunel’s famous iron ship. Alongside the GB was a newly-built replica of a 500 year old boat, ‘The Matthew’. Our rather younger Matthew was very taken by it, and loved clambering around the decks. Of course, we had to visit Bristol Zoo. Too many animals to mention, but the twilight zone

was a treat, with an opportunity to see nocturnal creatures such as bats and sand cats awake. From Bristol we travelled to Cheddar Gorge, where we walked, visited caves and to James and



Matthew’s delight found a stray Soay lamb.

Two years ago Malcolm took James to York on the train, and this August it was Matthew’s turn. Matthew and Malcolm had some good father and son time on an overnight trip, visiting the Jorvik centre and the National Railway Museum.



Our main holiday in August was to Scotland, visiting friends Alan, Sheila & Jeunese, spending a week in Aberfeldy and calling in on cousin Noel and Louise in Co. Durham on the way back.

Having missed our Cote d’Azur fix in June, we decided to spend a few days with friends Susanne, Catherine & Christopher in Menton in the October half-term. We left wind and rain behind, and found ourselves short of suitable summer clothes whilst we built up our vitamin D levels for the winter ahead.



For our tenth wedding anniversary we left James and Matthew in the care of their grandparents, Marie & Andrew, who kindly came to Prestwood for the weekend. We headed off for Berlin, location of our first weekend away together. A lot has changed, and we stayed on the East to experience it better. The highlight was the restored Reichstag, which we visited early in

the morning with the tourists, and again at night for a meal in their fabulous restaurant with a view over night-time Berlin.



Rain in August, Sunshine in October

Our final trip of the year was to the Isle of Lundy, by helicopter, to celebrate friend Sue’s 40th birthday. We had a brilliant weekend of bracing walks, good company, fine food and spotting black Lundy rabbits and Sika deer.



Birthdays



James choose again to take three friends to the local goat centre for his birthday in August, with the main incentive being that since he had to write his own thank you letters this year, fewer friends meant fewer presents and therefore fewer letters. Matthew's party was another huge hall party, with bouncy castle and daddy's disco. Several of his school friends were in my 'Lighthouse' at the local children's Christian festival in the summer, which meant I'd had five mornings to get to know them well. As a result, it was probably the most fun children's birthday party we've had, with Matthew's friends behaving really well.

Both the adult birthdays fell in half-term, (and in Lent worst luck) but we had time for a chocolate free birthday cake for Malcolm before heading off to Bristol and Cheddar Gorge.

Outings



As well as Bristol Zoo, the boys and I have been to Easton Farm Park and Colchester Zoo with grandparents Andrew and Marie, with more opportunities to hug goats. We've had a good share of outings with Grandma Brenda too, including the Chiltern Open Air museum, Aylesbury museum, and

Ham Farm for lamb hugging. There have been plenty of opportunities for dressing up this year, with birthday parties, school and church events and even 'James and the Giant Peach' at our local Roald Dahl day. James devised a short sketch for him and Matthew to perform at a church concert back in February. All of which keeps me busy making and adapting costumes.

Whilst James is always thrilled by animal based activities, it's been good for Matthew to discover some interests of his own this year. In particular, he enjoyed a trip along the local canal, travelling up and down the lock gates.



Work & School



Malcolm has stayed working in Slough for the whole of 2005 – something of a record. There has of course been a re-org, which has resulted in Malcolm having a Swedish boss. So of

course, their team building session this year could be nowhere other than at the boss' summer cottage in Sweden.

My yoga teaching has tripled this year – from one class to three, with the possibility of an extra day-time class next year once Matthew is at school full-time. Software and website reviews carry on in the back ground, but this is the first year I've made (marginally) more money from yoga than from sitting in front of a computer. Matthew started school part-time at Easter, and James changed school in September, moving to the junior school. This meant they overlapped at the infant school by just one term, and I now have three years of journeying between two schools before



Matthew catches up again. As the Junior school is further away, starts earlier and finishes later than the infants, Matthew is getting a lot more exercise than James. Matthew has also had an amazing social life this year, playing with friends almost every week, and attending numerous birthday parties. James now has homework, and to my delight sits down every evening and ploughs through it with a little help, but without needing to be nagged.

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

