

# Christmas 2000



Another installment of Christmas news from the Heppell family in Brightlingsea

A new Millennium, still the same old newsletter, still a bit late for the post... but, alarmingly, Christmas cards are now arriving saying "we're are looking forward to the newsletter" so this is in danger of being an institution. The children always said their parents would end up in an institution so it's comforting to find us all in one together. This year we've added more pictures.

It's been quite a year; as we predicted about this time last year the Millennium Mirror European Championship at Brightlingsea was a monster event, "best ever" many said, and with 124 boats and about six people accompanying each boat Carole's on-shore organisation saved us from chaos whilst on the water Stephen's race team had enough technology (loads a digital cameras) to save the incredibly competitive fleet from infinite restarts; the boats got away for two great races each day. Toby and crew Abigail were uniquely consistent discarding a 15 in a 124 boat fleet 10 race series! They finished top UK youths and 6th overall whilst Melissa and new crew Emma were top women by a mile and 9th overall. Letty, who still has her bad back and thus still can't sail, spent the week (dawn and late nights) running the family launch Millie as a ferry service across the creek to the plentiful accomodation on the other side. In all it was a very good week for the family although the wind was rarely breezy and never in the south so local knowledge was pretty much useless (how many championships have we laughed at the locals as they say "it's never like this here normally" only to find ourselves chanting the same mantra at our Brightlingsea home. Sigh!). The Euros followed right on after Pyefleet week but Stephen didn't win the Brightlingsea One Designs this year. Since the first race of the week was also his first sail of the year, defending the title was probably a bit optimistic anyway...



Sailing since the Euros has been exciting too. Toby's Mirror is now up for sale and he has bought an awesome 49er which he looks pretty good in so far... Melissa's Mirror is sold and with 470s confirmed again as the women's Olympic class she's out of 29ers and moving into 470s. The BOD did manage one victory winning the BSC big Three Creeks Crawl which shows there's still some hope for the old team yet, even without Grandad. Anyway, on to people detail:



Juliette (21) has graduated! Of course we are still paying all the bills but there is hope of solvency somewhere in the next decade maybe, for her at least - although she is still flitting from job to job without any clear idea of a career yet. She's returning from Portsmouth in February to try out some PR work in the city - all those student parties must be good training for something, maybe PR is it!  
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Melissa (20) is now in her final year of architecture at UCL and seems to lead a charmed life in and around Bloomsbury - a trip to San Fransisco for this year's project site if she can manage to fit it in with the UCL ski trip to Val D (with new carver skis, oo er) She's most enjoyed the model building and installation work this year which may point to a future direction? And she is still team racing too before the 470 arrives. Her Mini thrives in London and she hasn't been banned all year, which represents progress from

her speeding troubles last year!

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Toby (17) would like me to mention belatedly (sorry son) that he did pass his GCSE's rather well last year (we now do errors and omissions in these newsletters too); of course he is in his last A level year with applications in to various drama colleges and universities. His trombone and euphonium continue to echo down George Avenue and the Land Rover is nearly rebuilt (new engine) for his drive to college. Life is pretty full for Toby and fitting in driving lessons has not been trivial but he is heading for his test about the time you bin this after Christmas. Quite how the sailing, drama and music will all fit together is anyone's guess but he is too good at them all to give any one up - perhaps a remake of the Onedin Line would solve it all in one hit. He is now officially taller than Dad and thus fills the rôles of baby and biggest at the same time.



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Carole is suddenly (and belatedly) rather senior in the lab - her "longest running Internet learning project in Europe" is replaced by one which will eventually bring all the UK's 100,000 aspiring headteachers on-line so she is quite grand nationally too. She is at the heart of much of our important research. This is probably just in time to start helping pay off the girls' undergraduate debts. How did we manage to have children born just as the tax allowance was abolished, starting school as married allowance disappeared and at university as grants were abolished and fees were added to the injury? It is really not the country to be parents in any more is it? Carole is of course now working about 23 hours a day (price of fame) so having a fast wireless network all round the house and garden has been quite a useful improvement for this year (Internet in the hammock and Internet in the bath? It's all now possible at The Anchorage but is it desirable?)



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Grandma (80) has NOT been out and about on her battery racer but she did enjoy a hectic 80th birthday week and has had a successful eye op so is in pretty "good nick" for an octogenarian; Grandma does get out in Millie from time to time. She still has great help in the garden and around the house from lovely people and is very fortunate to still be able to live in the big bungalow and manage fine. New addition to the Grandma household is Bertie the Barmy Budgie who appears to be some kind of comedy bird clearly recently escaped from a circus, but he chats well to Grandma and they both seem to understand each other alarmingly well. Some of you have chatted to Bertie on the phone. Well done! phone: [01206 30 4506](tel:01206304506)



Stephen's 50th year has had a lot of travel: Singapore, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, USA, lots of Europe, etc. No Concorde this year though. He's spoken to a lot of education ministers from around the world (50+), but still struggles for a collective noun for them (suggestions?). More radio and TV too but favourite this year was a quick half hour on the Steve Wright show - loadsa fun. The lab goes from strength to strength as a team of a few in a little hut has grown into 56 people looking at yet another new building and global expansion; our bid to buy the Dome was (mercifully) turned down. Ultralab is now the fourth biggest faculty in the university but with no undergraduates and huge amounts of research. Maybe this is the future of higher ed! Predictably, Stephen's Ducati is still not fixed, nor is his midlife crisis.

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That's about it for this year's news. The house is still in a state (you know it's not going well when people wipe their feet as they leave) and the cars are fast, but wrecks...

...you are always all welcome here if a bit of summer seaside sounds like a tonic, the "seeing old friends" bit has been quite good this year. As we write skiing is uncertain apart from Melissa but we will be having a big family Christmas and a last day for the five of us in the soon-to-close Dome. So finally we wish Toby good luck in his As and Issa good luck in her finals and Juliette good luck in employment and to the rest of you, our very best wishes for a peaceful year all around this rapidly shrinking world.

Stephen, Carole, Juliette, Melissa, Toby  
and the one remaining cat Magic (sadly, Sinbad died, probably from indolence)