

Christmas 2002



Yet another Heppell Christmas Newsletter from Brightlingsea

Well, what a year this has been. This letter already goes out to the many people in Mum and Dad's address book who will know that **Mum** (Grandma) sadly died almost a year ago on New Year's Eve and is sadly missed by us all. She had been having a pretty good year, but it all went a bit wrong in late Autumn with a fall or ten; she was whisked into a home near David and Pat and saw a lot of them and their's in the last few days. We all scattered her ashes where Granddad's were, around the Brightlingsea Spit navigation buoy (top right) so that we think of them both every time we sail in and out of the creek. We hope her address book contacts all stay in touch (please do).



Her beloved **Bertie**, the noisiest budgie ever, remains safely installed in Glasgow at D & P's. We kept Mum and Dad's bungalow "Lapwing" for a while, but finally sold it this Autumn; another sorrow.

Beyond these sad events **sailing** has been the usual big feature of this year for the family (no surprises there then!) with a lot of fun for all of us racing Cracker (left) around the East coast.



Our youngest (but also tallest) **Toby** (19) and crew Rick have been starting to make a real impact in the Olympic 49er class. A new boat built with loving care and shipped over from New Zealand, has produced a lot more speed and they are now largely surrounded only by full time pro-sailors on the course. Since Toby is in his second year as an undergraduate this is pretty good and bodes well for China in 2008. They have retained a spare 49er too for club and practice. Toby also captains the university team racing team, of course, as did father and sisters before him. He seems to be enjoying student life - probably too much - but has dived into his choice of Creative Writing with some verve. Mail him at: toby@ultralab.net phone him on: 079111 55767 (but he never answers) website: www.tobyheppell.com



Melissa (22), our middle one, is also right into a full Olympic 470 campaign (no wonder we are so poor..) with also a new 470 shipped over from MacKays in NZ (same container as Toby's 49er) and she too has a "spare" boat. She is currently 4th in the 470 women's ranking and this is good progress indeed with lots more to learn. She should be getting some good quality coaching and will be scampering all over the continent next summer from event to event. Melissa is self employed in between sailing and designs some pretty impressive websites (see her stuff from www.melissalucy.net - hire her!); in fact she just rebuilt our lab's website so she must be good. Mail her at: melissa@ultralab.net or by phone on: 07977 297 006 website: www.melissalucy.net



Juliette (23 - left with boyfriend George - isn't that last year's picture?) has moved from doing PR for the NHS, where the good news was that she did everything thus gaining loadsa experience (this was also the bad news, it took 23 hours a day to do it all - events, building

the websites, newsletters, press liaison and releases.. literally everything). She is now in a PR company where, curiously enough, she finds herself doing PR for many of the companies and organisations that we work with in the lab, who have of course known her since she was knee high and freckly. This is all rather nice, especially because she is really rather good at it and is thus bringing new work to her company. Doubtless she'll be quite solvent soon. Alarmingly she and Melissa are moving in together into a flat in Pimlico (outer Chelsea darling, please.) and I gather the whole area was on some kind of red-alert awaiting their arrival. It is interesting to see Juliette looking so smart on a daily basis; a long way from her days as a Brightlingsea ferryman during the Mirror Europeans! mobile: [07977 477 556](tel:07977477556). email: letty@juliette.org.uk website: www.juliette.org.uk

For **Stephen** and **Carole** (right, plus Toby, Melissa, Juliette, and various good friends) it has been a year of Big Boat discovery. Shortly after last Christmas a sail up to, and stay at, St Katherine's Haven at the Tower of London constituted our only "cruise" (and the trip back in dense fog made us grateful that the boat is so "wired"). But instead, we raced her all year and enjoyed it all enormously. Starting the year setting the old rags we purchased her with, we changed them for new sails during the year and just as important, made all the systems work.



The result was that we scraped into the prizes on the east coast SailEast series by the last event, but cleaned up at the local yacht club where doubtless our handicap will be slaughtered by next year. Carole navigates like a veteran and there are (some) moments when the whole thing looks like a well oiled machine... speaking of which our recipe for hot buttered rum can be found via the family sailing website (www.heppell.net/cracker). The boat is an Oyster 37 One Tonner (but she weighs about 7.5 tons of course) so we race in fairly flush decked comfort but she is wonderfully fast upwind and, with a whopping masthead spinnaker (left) of 110 sq. m., interesting downwind when we stop concentrating. Ramsgate Week was the most fun with all eight of us sleeping on the boat, live bands every night and great racing; next year Round the Island Race and then Cowes Week beckon as well as the Sail East series again. It looks like winches and navigation equipment again for Christmas for Carole and Stephen.



At work, life in the lab has simply got busier and very global; we both looked at the team of 64 people, with their partners, during the lab's Christmas dinner with some pride and they are all engaged in some huge projects including helping to design a prison, building some extraordinary "classrooms of tomorrow", a new lab in New Zealand and projects in Singapore etc., persuading the BBC to let children to make their own TV programmes, an assessment project where children are assessed by a kind of viva on the phone, a lot of other work with mobile phones and much much more too. Keep up with all this and loads more from www.ultralab.net

Mum's loss resulted in a few more trips that usual to Scotland - one result is that David and Pat and family are joining ours on the slopes at Val Thorens over Christmas where they have the best snow for a decade (basically all the UK rain we've been getting for months has fallen on them as snow, yum!) and we watch the webcams there daily to see it get better and better. David's eldest Ruska won't be joining us though; he and Linda have just become parents (baby Lewis is a gorgeous boy but at one month a bit young for the black runs). For once we have abandoned our usual parsimonious self catering for a catered chalet with cocktails and wine all thrown in... heaven help us, but it does look quite grand. With all this work on various racing boats it is not surprising to report that the house remains a bit of a tip. The bathroom is still short of a toilet and the kitchen missing an oven, but by next year (Aga?)... the Ducatti is still unfinished, but in the meantime, a jolly Merry Christmas to you all, (remember that past Newsletters are available from www.heppell.net/christmas if you don't get out much!), and our very best wishes for a peaceful new year around this rather unstable but shrinking world.

Stephen, Carole, Juliette, Melissa, Toby and the increasingly rotund cat Magic