



# Christmas 2006

Jolly holly! it's the Heppell's Christmas Newsletter from Brightlingsea yet again;

Past editions: [www.heppell.net/christmas](http://www.heppell.net/christmas)

Well phew!, a much calmer year all round - no doubt regular readers will be pleased to hear this. Which is not to say in any way that fun was absent! We should, by the way, say a big "welcome" to our now surprisingly many Internet readers, and indeed to all of you. 2006 was mostly a rather good year for the family - we hope it was for you and for yours' too.

We should start with sailing, as ever. As promised last year we (sort of) bought our intended new mast - but it was a 65 foot carbon mast and it came with a rather nice X Yacht's IMX 40 underneath it! So now we have (oops) a new Cracker - **much** faster than the old one (20 knots!), bigger (ten beds!), and very hi-tech, bristling with micro-processors, carbon and kevlar. Happily old Cracker's last Cowes Week went very well - it blew old boots (almost) all week and we flew round as others broached, sank and variously collapsed. We ended up 3rd by a long way.. and very pleased too. Highlight of the delivery trips was a **very** windy sail home from the



Solent - in force 9/10 - the only other boat we saw was a lifeboat! We struggled to get into Dover - we kept confusing the place where waves were breaking right over the wall with the entrance to the harbour! Yikes! We arrived, jumped out, kissed the pontoons! The rest of the season was fun, and we've planned an even more ambitious calendar for 2007 - popping down to do Dartmouth Regatta after Cowes in August for example (and maybe seeing some old Kingsmead S.C. friends?). This Christmas, new Cracker is

parked at the St Katherine Docks, next to the Tower of London, and Stephen uses her in the off-season as an office, including quite a lot of filming on her, while everyone else pops in for Christmas shopping, shows, parties and the like. She even has Christmas lights!. What fun!

**Last year's** note also revealed a debate about cars - mpg or mph? Green or mean? In the event we got both - Carole chose a new buzzy black Seat while Stephen, clearly now gripped by a full-on mid life crisis, went for a black Porsche 911. Well, at least they match! Stephen has already been rushing round tracks in his of course (left), at alarmingly precipitate speeds. Oh dear... but at least his motorbike has gone. Carole's car delivers the huge mpgs, as intended. The **house** isn't yet finished (hah!) but we **have** been full of builders and can **at**





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**last** bath and shower in new splendor, and we've more loos to choose from at least. Maybe next year for finishing? Is that a Suffolk Saddleback we see barrel-rolling past the window?

As a radical (and 21st century) departure, this year **family** have penned their own notes:

**Juliette** and George (below): Another year has gone by and they are both now feeling

seriously old! George had his 30th birthday - is that officially middle-aged?! (No: ed) and



Juliette is teaching - with her own form class, 7L (she reports that

luckily they are the best form anyone could wish for!). All this has

meant a lot less nights out and more snoozy nights at home marking

and preparing with the fat cat (all good in helping save for a house

presumably). As her Dad's daughter (so to speak), teaching for

Juliette is as you would imagine: her form already taking part in an

excellent project with RM computers designing a "sustainable

library"; text messaging their "pupil voices" to a website; busy

installing a new interactive whiteboard, starring at the annual BETT

Show in Olympia, and much, more. Juliette **adores** teaching and is

very proud of her school in Hounslow too: [www.lampton.hounslow.sch.uk](http://www.lampton.hounslow.sch.uk) if any of you are

interested) and it has definitely been the right move for her. Gizmo their fat cat had an

accident earlier this year which took up a lot of time (and money) but he has just received

the "all clear" from the vet and is only left with a slight limp. Sailing has gone downhill again

this year (the old back problems again) but George is reveling in the snowboarding and golf

areas"

**Toby** and Cali: "Following a hectic year full of change in 2005 Toby has had a relatively quiet

2006. He is still writing for the internet sailing magazine, [www.TheDailySail.com](http://www.TheDailySail.com) and is still

living with long time girlfriend Cali (up the Eiffel tower -

right). TheDailySail now has an office in Hamble marina

so Toby now gets to gaze as some of the biggest, nicest

boats in the world are built/refitted/demolished outside

of his very window. He has also been let out of the office

on a number of occasions and seems to have developed a

taste for work trips abroad and expense accounts, all

very grown up he says. Unfortunately the nature of

Toby's job is to work at bizarre times of the day so in

addition to being in the office all day he can often be found in the early hours of the morning

interviewing folks over the phone or on Skype from the other side of the world. He also finds

himself increasingly at work over the weekends. Frustratingly all this sailing journalism work

has left Toby with little time to go sailing himself this year and aside from a disappointing

49er Europeans he has barely managed to hit the water. Hopefully next year will see him on





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the water a bit more often and his work have agreed to some more time off to go sailing, so he has his fingers firmly crossed.

Away from work Toby is beginning to look like a 'proper adult' as he puts it. Recently he and Cali have moved from their old flat in Portsmouth into a nice, new, slightly bigger place in Southampton (Toby insists he is 'going up in the world.')

This looks to be where they will live for at least the next year until they presumably get itchy feet and move on again at some point in the future.

**Melissa and Simon:** Melissa's life as a full time dinghy sailor has taken her to Olympic events all over the world: from Spain and France early in the season, to Hungary and China towards the end. Boyfriend Simon (left) is also full time sailing, in a 49er, so they do seem to pass each other in airports and dinghy parks half the time! The cottage in Portland is already more finished than the parents' house (which isn't saying much!) and the flood from last winter is resolved. She even has a mower now rather than scissors.



Highlight of her gardening year was demolishing the shed to find quite literally a nest of vipers! Portland is a lovely community with the National Sailing Academy based there too. It makes local pub quizzes interesting now as sailing questions mingle with TV soap ones and teams go from hero to zero round by round!



Melissa has changed crews this winter too so won't be out in the sunshine in Melbourne this Christmas! But she and new crew Kat looked pretty quick so that 2007 will be interesting. Stephen and Carole will be watching the warm events (eg Palma!) or wherever and Melissa will be sailing as tactician on Cracker a little more this year too (hurrah!). The very good news is that she and Simon will be with us all over Christmas & New Year in Val Thorens.

**Carole:** This has been a **busy** year for Carole. Getting settled in a new, enjoyable but demanding job has taken up a lot of time and entailed a mass of traveling, especially up and down the A1! her shiny new black SEAT Ibiza with **all** the 'mod cons' made the trip to Stansted a lot easier. The highlights of the year were (1) attending the BAFTA Film Awards in February, which included the walk down the Leicester Square red carpet with myriad flashbulbs popping and then (2) sitting back to back with Pierce Brosnan (mmm!), and (3) navigating us to third







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place in Cowes Week (it was windy and hard work but something of an achievement) The 2007 challenge for Carole will be learning the complex navigation software which comes with the new boat - new Cracker is now bristling with micro-processors, wireless screens and laptops...

**Stephen:** is really enjoying being re-potted as he describes his new life running a global virtual business and work is amazingly diverse: new schools everywhere from Japan and the Caribbean to Liverpool (Knowsley), the TV company is doing well ([www.teachers.tv](http://www.teachers.tv)), and a new children's channel to come. There is a heap of work with lots and lots of interesting people - from the BBC to BAFTA, from Microsoft to Balfour Beatty, from the games industry to charities, from Tate Modern to a new museum for William Blake. Lots of TV, radio and writing too, which all helps keep him in the public eye a bit. Never a dull moment and barely a blank page in the almost new passport! He has had quite a lot of fun living on the boat at St Katherine's and then riding all over London to meetings on a bicycle in rather an unexpectedly green, but eccentric, way. Hoodies beware!

So... it has been a year of consolidation - everyone enjoying their new challenges in their new places and by all accounts doing pretty well at them too. Friends on this newsletter's list from Brenda and Don's address book will be saddened to hear that Brenda's brother's wife, **Joan Cumber**, passed away **just** before Christmas - the last of a generation in this family that lived through some extraordinary times, with some absorbing memories to share. It would be wonderful to hear from any and all of you on this circulation list - so see if you can't pop in to St. Katherine's, or Brightlingsea, Dartmouth, Cowes... or email us, or look for us on Skype, or iChat, or phone, or txt us, or visit the website. It hasn't, to be honest, been a very good year for the world, has it? But all of us here believe that if we can get people worldwide learning and communicating together, we can mend quite a lot of the cracks.. And maybe we can do that quicker than we did the bathroom...

As usual, we'll be skiing at Christmas and New Year, turkey skewered on ski poles, rum in pocket, fireworks from the balcony, cat in kennels, car in chains, legs in plaster. We'll pause mid piste to toast you all, and to wish you a peaceful, happy, 2007.

It looks like the 21st century is going to be built on family and friends. The cat on the other hand, at 22 years old now, firmly believes it will be built on chicken and custard. He may yet be proved right.

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the cat still doesn't have an email yet; but he is showing some interest in the mouse

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