



Christmas 2009

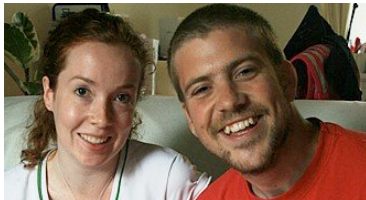
Massive Mince-pies!... it's that Heppell Christmas Newsletter time again

Oh my goodness - where did the time go? Suddenly our doormat is covered with friends' newsletters and snow really is falling in Brightlingsea. It must be that moment when we look back on the year and wish the most joyeux of Noëls to our friends scattered far & wide, to old pals of Don and Brenda and the many of you now reading this via that jolly modern Interwebby thing. Can't believe we haven't got a Twitter # or YouTube channel for it yet.

So let's start with the house. It is finally completely **done** (well, downstairs is...) and is now a delight of black granite, hot tub, induction hobs, paving, conservatory, woodworkshop, sailstore and much more! And we have a gym too now! so you'll be seeing a lot less of us next year (gettit?). It took 20 years to start, but only one year to do; we are delighted. Not seen this much black and silver since, er, well ever really. Stephen is **very** pleased with the workshop and is now making all manner of unlikely things (a grandfather clock case!) - 20 years won't be enough



Toby and Cali: well, after winning the family's **Big Change Award** last year it is fair to say they enjoyed 2009 so much that they are doing it all over again in 2010. That means - although perhaps unfortunately for the bank account - that it's back to the Alps for the whole winter and who would begrudge then even a second of it. They had a great time before, skiing five days a week on huge wide planks and have returned with avalanche packs and goodness knows what off-piste technology. By the time you read this letter the pair will be out in Val D'Isere enjoying the tiring, challenging but always hugely fun life working at the top of a mountain. In a way, in contrast to last year, this year has seen just about as little change in their lives as it is possible to get. Both have been sailing regularly on Cracker - with Cali (seen skiing here) on bow and with their position as the only members of the crew without major contractual obligations at work (!) were also to be seen on every single delivery trip of the season - a Cracker record!



They write: "Of course at some point a real job beckons for us both and we are set on staying put in the UK after this ski season comes to a close. However, this currently seems to involve looking for a job in the spring that allows for months off in the summer for sailing, months off in the winter for skiing and pays well enough to enable both. Hmm. If anyone does know of a job that would suit two ski/sailing bums who are not afraid of taking over a family newsletter to shamelessly seek work Toby and Cali can be contacted through the addresses below!"



Melissa, Simon and Amelie: have the **best news of the year** - with another baby due in February and Amelie now at 2 and a half. Lots of lovely family growing up news to report - Amelie now swims prodigiously underwater her in pirate wetsuit, has her own Mirror (of course!) Twinkletoes (sailing on board - left and right!), and is getting ready for some early school experiences after Christmas. The little cottage on Portland has seen some timely changes too - a log burning stove



for Christmas looking like a very good choice as the weather suddenly chills. Amelie is big enough to be an excellent excuse for all kinds of fun things for big people too: Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park, Santa at Selfridges (or Farmer Mistmas as A would have it) and so on. Melissa has poured herself into full

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time Mumhood and is involved in heaps of mum related stuff on Portland. Simon has decided that he won't have a charge at a 3rd Olympic selection for home town Games in 2012 at Weymouth, deciding that the phrase "Double Olympic medalist" is already pretty good and not a bad return for all those years on the podium. So he has officially retired to build his boat business. Simon's dad - who was fit as a flea - had a nasty health scare and is still in hospital now, but it does look as though he will be allowed out on Christmas day - so all in all it looks as though them all being at home for Christmas is a very good thing this year.

Letty and George have had an enjoyable year of consolidation. Let's teaching is going **very** well, adding the Association of Citizenship Teachers and the Victoria and Albert museum to the BBC, and thus growing her list of consultations. George meanwhile has been poached by Unilever head office and is spending increasing time back in central London. Their fat cat is being trained to chase the now many parrots in the back garden, but is useless at it (you can see him think "Jump? - yeah right"). Letty's highlight was a school design conference with her Dad, both there in their own roles - strange but fun! Home life is pretty work dominated (Letty marks and prepares, George sighs patiently) with weekends away here and there and a mad dash to Cornwall to catch the last of the summer rays after a summer of sailing (in the longest ever and much needed school summer hols). Their house is still progressing but has suffered yet another flood (a theme - see past newsletters! - but at least they get to be near water!). Letty's form class that she inherited at 11 are now in their *GCSE* year - scary! and now **so** articulate and confident. They show just what can happen when your teacher really does care about you! Laughably, George and Letty say "This year we might even learn what work/life balance is....!". and again the cat reflects "yeah, right".



Carole and Stephen are as busy as ever - with more work than they could ever possibly do. Carole now knows more than anyone on the planet about making on-line communities work and her advice is much in demand - she's bound to get head hunted from her charity soon, Stephen has projects all around the globe, and enjoys his PhD students and uni work at Bournemouth, as well as the heppell.net business, which is booming. Getting a chance to change the world is a bit special and both Carole and Stephen relish the opportunities presented - some parts of the world really, really do need help! They rush back from skiing to meet a <insert collective noun> of 70 or so world education ministers, and then the big BETT show, Stephen's stand sponsors this year include Google and YouTube, which is maybe a rather nice sign of the times - suddenly everyone cares about learning. A few of you will have caught Stephen's dulcet tones on TV and radio again this year, sorry if it ruined your breakfast / sleep. He has become the lead sponsor of a new O-21+ Academy on Portland - an exciting prospect and one the whole world appears to be watching. It had **better** be the best school in the world, Amelie will be going there!



Stephen and Carole's best thing this year, babies and families apart, has been soaking in the hot tub, in the new outhouse in the garden. Something about cold Sancerre in hot water that slows a hectic pace down for just a few moments. Blissful. Sailing has been fun - needs more time, but we enjoyed some spectacular races - across to Oostende in half a gale was quite memorable - an entire race on port tack was a bit unusual, and Cowes was

fun, as ever. All the boats apart from the B.O.D. (which was 70 this year) are up for sale - not a retirement here too, just a consolidation as we buy just one, but faster yet, new boat for next year. Hope your new year is fab too.

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websites: www.heppell.net www.buildingportlandsfuture.net