

Christmas 2010



Billions of bilious blue blistering barbecued barnacles... it's that Heppell lot and their Christmas missive ...where did that year go? It is only early December and the family home in Brightlingsea is already snow bound!



Roads blocked by ice, no way in or out, but the pause provides an unexpected opportunity to look back on 2010 with affection. As ever we will start with a **Merry Christmas** shout out to our extending family, our Facebook and Twitter pals, our oldest pals, the now aged pals of Don and Brenda, and the many of you who read this from www.heppell.net/christmas. In a curious and rather nice way, you **all** feel like one big warm wonderful worldwide family now. But flip, it **has** been a year of change hasn't it? Politics, economics, yachtics, everything is changing. But change keeps you young doesn't it? It has certainly kept us busy.

You asked for more pictures, so we've **added more and a card too** (cash saved goes to charity): let's start with **children / grandchildren**. Simon and Melissa's Amelie (now 3!) has a baby brother, little Louis - or at the rate he is eating, soon to be not-so-little Louis. **Amelie and Louis** are, of course, adorable - having a full time mum makes such a

difference. Following a lively birth, and few weeks early, Louis James arrived on 21 January this year - the day before his late great-granddad Don's birthday. Amelie (right, in Dad Simon's 49er) is delighted to be 'big sister'. She has grown up this year, starting pre-school in January (see below left) and now attends a lovely small infants' school where play-led learning is the

(right) priority. She goes 3 days a week and can't wait to go every day. - she'd do 7 given the chance. Ballet and swimming are still very hot on the agenda too - she swims very well. Like her mum and dad she throws herself into everything she does, whether it's winning running races at school sports day (Dad won his too, pretty competitive race with the Olympic Sailing Centre in the hinterland!), getting the best newcomer trophy for ballet, swimming like a fish, or sailing in Twinkletoes (her Mirror dinghy). Most of all Amelie loves to cycle her bike which she got on her third birthday, making the conversion from a balance bike to "a real bike with pedals" in less than 3 hours! Why did we bother with all those arm-bands and stabilisers when we were young? Waste of time. Meanwhile, Louis is making his mark on the world. Now cruising around the furniture and turbo-baby-nippy



he is sure to be found pulling the kittens fur (Amelie and Louis now have 2 über patient kittens - Jakey and Percy) or calling for "Aaaa-mee", whom he seems to find constantly and endearingly hilarious.

The grandchildren's parents, **Simon and Melissa**, the Fortuneswell end of the family, have been all-a-change this year too. **Melissa** has been busy doing some work in Portland schools, with the aim of following her genes and entering teaching in the next couple of years. She has really enjoyed the early years setting and this has helped her confirm that it is in this area that her future career lies. Meanwhile she has put her artistic talents to full use and can often be found bent over her sewing machine making toys, games and surprises for the children or rummaging with Amelie in the 'art cupboard' to make some new, exciting creation. **Simon** (right) has been further focusing his sailing on much larger boats and was selected for the Artemis Academy this autumn, following his success as part of the winning team in the Round Britain and Ireland Race in the summer. Simon is currently spending a considerable



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time in France training (between December and April) but keeping well in touch with Melissa and the children by regular Skype calls (thank goodness for modern technology!) This leaves Melissa to rely on granny and granddad for childcare support. The road to

Portland is becoming well worn!!



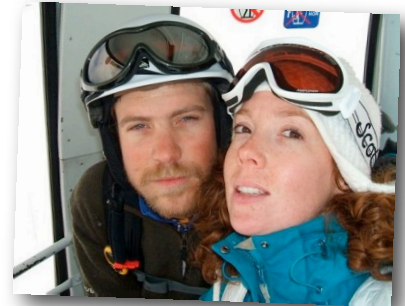
Toby and Cali (Cali in powder, left) are once again back in the French Alps.

They now have skis the size of scaffolding planks, avalanche survival kits, and use words like **rad** and **peeps** which we struggle to understand, or **muchos drinking** which I think we can grasp OK.. When Toby mailed last year to say he'd been down a tricky black run non stop, **but backwards**, we knew they had moved to another level, so to speak. It turns out that they are very good at what they do in chalet managing too, winning awards and plaudits. Last year they spoke of "staying put in the UK after this ski season comes to a close" and we'll paste that in again for this year.... Toby is doing some writing while they are out there this year, so a skiing sailing

journalist and inspired graphic illustrator may be next year's news from the two of them, or they may be skiing again! It's a good life. In the Alps all lifts are open already.



Working and skiing.



Letty and George have asked us to reflect that work is much the same as last year, but (we would add) a bit more senior, a bit better rewarded. Letty's form class continue to blossom - they are a wonderful family now (below, right) and her department has moved to rate as "outstanding" under her leadership, George's employers remain mercifully stable and solvent in this terrible recession and he is more often now found in the London head office. Other constants for Letty and George include their fat cat Gizmo (fatter), the garden parrots (chirpier) and the garden itself (lovelier). Put the three together and there lies an unchanging landscape of fat cat laying on lush lawn watching unobtainable parrots. Plus ca change?



The two of them have enjoyed more snow-time, with the family Christmas skiing being supplemented by holibobs in Corchevel at Easter. As with Christmas, the snow was great. The holidaying didn't stop there; their pals' wedding in Vienna led them there sightseeing too, and saw George Segwaying (Google it). Indeed George seems to be entering a rather early mid-life crisis and has added go-carting at Daytona (the Sandown Park one). Perhaps the biggest news for this London pair is the complete rebuild of the downstairs of their house (21 years faster than the B'sea family home) - kitchen, floors, technology and goodness know what else are renewed. We are quite surprised to find the

cat still black & white, but even he looks glossier somehow.



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Meanwhile **Carole** (right) left the charity she was working for at the end of January and spent much of February and March helping Melissa, following the birth of Louis. The girls (Carole, Melissa, Amelie - Letty was sadly working) spent a week in March in the sunshine in Lanzarote (Louis came too of course!) and had a fun time on the beach playing and swimming in the sea. Not only was it fun but they all came home revitalised. Since then Carole has been working alongside Stephen helping with the vast development task that is the new Portland Academy. In January Carole starts a new Nominet funded internet research project three days a week, which still allows enough time for her to enjoy her granny role.



Stephen is still working double full time and is having the time of his life doing so, with projects in the Caribbean, Norway, Australia, the USA, and indeed seemingly everywhere including England - he is lead sponsor a new all-through school proposed for Portland, Amelie and Louis would both go there - and is involved with a host of new schools and learning spaces worldwide. His professoring at Bournemouth Uni carries on - he really enjoys that too and has some really smart PhD students. The month before Christmas saw Stephen in Abu Dhabi, Tromsø, Doha, Las Vegas and London; he is very much in demand worldwide. Conveniently, it is the very world he wants to change that is asking for his help. **Stephen and Carole** have found the odd moment to enjoy time off too, with even a few days (almost) away from boats altogether - most recently a holiday for three days in Abu Dhabi (since they were already there for work and it had been a while since they'd had a free weekend!). Pure coincidence surely that the

hotel there was alongside a classic dhow racing club! Both are looking forward to their next break, our usual Christmas and New year skiing with Letty, George, Simon, Melissa and the grandblighters. Amelie is already booked into Ski school, Carole is already booked into a bar, Stephen is worrying about broadband and Louis will be eyeing up the boulangerie.



CK348, "My Alice". As well as new baby Louis we have another new family member too, but this one is **103 years old**, weighs 20 tons and is 68' from end to end. Of course, in their own sweet ways large Alice and tiny Louis are both quite a handful. Cracker, our IMX40 with its carbon rig, carbon sails and seemingly carbon everything has been sold (to Sweden) and the new bigger boat, somewhat unexpectedly, is a large Oyster Smack, one of only two Kidby smacks remaining. The only carbon in her was in the log burning stove (now removed!). She is quite, quite lovely and becoming more so by the ~~pound~~ minute. She had already been lovingly re-planked and rebuilt, but is very traditional and thus remains on the UK's historic ships register. We will keep her so, but are busy remodeling the saloon and galley, and adding an engine, whilst coming to terms with the rig and its kilometer of rope. We'll race her, largely on the East Coast (thus wasting a lot less time boat delivering) and in mainland Europe. All our crew from the IMX have come over to the smack. 2011 promises to be enormous fun!

So, that is it for the first decade of the 21st century. Looking back it's been a wonderful decade for the family and a rather unexpected one for the planet. We do hope that your bit of this vast worldwide family of pals and contacts and colleagues and relatives and facebookers and twitterers and browsers has a stormin' celebration, a wonderful new year break (you'll have to wait a bit longer in China) and a very peaceful year ahead. With a bit of work together, we might just help to ensure that the world has one too.

Happy Christmas

from the Heppell family



Christmas Newsletter 2010 from still growing Heppell family in Brightlingsea, Portland, Val D'Isere, London
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