

# Heppell Christmas 2011



**Crumbs and crikey - credit-crunching Christmas cheer...**

**...it's time for fun and snow and ~~champagne beer~~**

...this time last year Brightlingsea was already snow bound and this year more snow has already fallen (rather more helpfully) on the Alps than in the whole of last season. heaps! Woo hoo! And with also heaps of you now reading this festive missive via Facebook, Twitter and the Queen's post we'd better start with **jolly global Christmas hugs to one and all**; the "all" of course includes our oldest pals, the now aged pals of Don and Brenda, our learning pals, sailing pals, global pals and all. As with last year, we've added yet more piccies. again. We seem to have run to three sheets of A4; it's been that kind of a year. Everyone seems to be über busy - and we should be grateful in a recession, but there has still been time for a few fun family events: skiing last year (we were sooo lucky with early fluffy snow), a canal boat holiday (bump and bowl for sailors) all together in gentle celebration of a special Carole birthday, Pyefleet Week, racing the Oyster Smack and so on.

Big news headline for this year goes to **Letty and George** - they are **getting married in February** ([www.heppell.net/wedding](http://www.heppell.net/wedding)) near home in a lovely old Suffolk barn / farm. A very relaxed, fun filled, no ties, playful, everyone dancing, slightly boozy event is planned: Melissa and Amelie as bridesmaids, Toby ushering with George's brother Charlie, best man. We are **so** pleased, and really **very** excited, if bankrupt now. In her school, **Letty** said (almost) farewell to her inspirational form class as they passed on up to 16+ study and work. They are still working however with her new class - who are already shaping up to be pretty special. She finished her third degree, this time an M.Ed, this year, and she commands huge respect worldwide for her educational work, doing talks and writing research documents - but most of all inspiring young minds to be amazing. **George** has had another good year at work with Unilever - spending more and more time in the head office,



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but this year George has also **become a sailor!** Following on from his obvious seamanship on the canal boat holiday, we now have a family launch parked on the Thames at Hampton. It has been the most wonderful end to the summer for them, chugging up and down (it has a sprightly new engine!) through locks, tying up by pubs, and taking friends on river trips, chillin'. Their cat, astonishingly, is thinner, but not yet a sailor...



Both grandchildren are flourishing. **Amelie** (4) is adoring school (it appears to be mutual) and alongside her swimming, ballet, iPadding (her's is shiny red, of course), cycling and the party-filled life of a four year old she managed to fit in Pyefleet Week, competing with her mum, back in Mirrors again after the 470 years. Despite Amelie being the youngest competitor they won the week - helped no doubt by sweetie rewards

at every mark and Mum's driving. Dad Simon's double olympic medallist genes no doubt played their part too...Amelie has been dry ski sloping ready for the Alps too - she remembered heaps from last January. Meanwhile brother **Louis** has finally achieved hair - and Alpine snow quantities of it (same colour too). He is nearly 2, full of fun and adores / copies his sister - not a bad role model. And he loves the cats - turns out they were not kittens, but baby whopping tigers, oh well. Louis did baby

signing and singing signing, and (as a result?) is a very chatty chappy indeed, uh oh. Like Amelie he swims regularly and he sailed this summer too in the Portland Mirror Twinkletoes. He already has a chosen vocation in life: **monkey** (well, he simply loves them).



Dad **Simon** has been racing the big scary America's Cup (do please watch the Youtube

channel) catamarans for a Spanish team (see more on Spain below) and has finished



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building + launched his carbon, foiling Moth. His business is going well too and he has moved into posh new premises next to the Olympic venue on Portland. Mum



**Melissa** has been working two days a week in local schools, and is hoping to begin her teaching qualification if the sacked bankers and other economic refugees have not taken all the places. Fingers crossed. It was good to see her back racing again - and going so fast too! She remains wonderfully creative - from costumes to cakes.

**Toby and Cali** are once again back in the French Alps. Working and skiing. Hang on, that was last year's newsletter? Well, why change a

good thing? They spent the summer with us, sailing and cooking away. Cali learned to trapeze and with Toby they managed a remarkable 2nd in the 420 in Pyefleet Week. They are really very good cooks indeed - and whip up some utterly fab dishes and yummy nibbles. We had all the fun of the practice runs (double yum) in Brightlingsea over the summer. They were both regulars on our big oyster smack this summer as well - and very handy hands they were. As with the last three years, this is once again definitely their last year in the Alps (!!), but... they are having a lot of fun, learning so much, being employed and, well, we'll see. Carole and Stephen would have probably stayed for a decade at that age... They will be doing a mad sprint



back for the wedding of course in February, so it will be nice to see them both mid season for once.



Meanwhile **Carole** has had her significant birthday, and as well as the family canal boat adventure on the Oxford canal. Stephen also took her to Venice to see what canals could really be like (fab, as it happens). Trips to Portland have been frequently on the agenda, visiting the grandchildren, as well as being able to help child-minding when Simon has been racing abroad, has been a real pleasure for her. Carole was delighted to have the full family back for some, or all, of Pyefleet Week this

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year and despite the constant food requirements of hungry sailors, and the never ending loads of salty and sandy washing, she seemed to be in her element!

Workwise, Carole has been really busy this year finishing her Nominet funded project for a big press launch in January 2012, but she was still able to grab a couple of weeks in October - full on touring, complete with wild penguins and dozy koalas - visiting Stephen when he was in Australia this autumn. Other trips abroad have included a couple of short periods spent in Oslo. Carole has another new car this year - an eco-thingamajig which seems to use no fuel at all and is a very bright, Amelie-approved, red. Carole has been navigating the smack in all her races again, and has all the computer systems working down below now. She hosted a royal wedding party on board and managed some 28 folk with relatively few drownings and quite a lot of eatings.

**Stephen** has had another busy year - he loves it - and once again been all over the world with some wonderful projects, just about everywhere. Heppell.net Ltd is booming. In addition to being a professor at Bournemouth University - with some brilliant PhD students - he is now also a visiting prof in Madrid at Universidad Camilo José Cela and is struggling to learn a bit of Spanish (pero él no está aprendiendo muy bien); it's taken him half a century to be able to buy bread in France, let alone not to try to buy it in francs, so we are not hopeful. Beyond work, family and sailing, Stephen still dotes on his faithful 911 Polly but hasn't been taking her round race tracks this year. He really enjoyed rebuilding the "new" family launch in August



but has still to finish his now rather depressingly unfinished grandfather clock. It has been a jolly full year. Having gone to school in the 60s, Stephen still thinks he can mend the world with learning, and who knows, he might just be right. Follow him on twitter as @stephenheppell



Which leaves us with, finally, our wonderful 104 year old Oyster Smack **"My Alice"**. You can follow



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her via her website at [www.ck348.com](http://www.ck348.com) or just wait for the annual news here. The new Volvo Penta engine was fitted, new sails have been purchased, a new bowsprit commissioned and all were agreed that this was a most wonderful sailing season, even if we did keep going aground (skipper's fault, not the navigator). She seems to go a little quicker each race, as we learn how to sail her, and she learns about us. We even won a trophy in our last race of the year. Perhaps the most



unexpected fun was a race to actually catch oysters (alongside racing, it was what she was built for) and we caught hundreds!. She is all sorted out down below now, with 10 beds in three cabins - and we have managed to keep her authentic working boat feel, despite the microwave, fridge, hot water etc etc. She is one of the UK's [National Historic Fleet](#). and a bit special. We love her, or should that be £ove her?



So, that's it for this year - a wedding next year to look forward to and a few world problems it would be nice to leave behind. We do hope you all have a fab time this Christmas, not being too abstemious, and remembering to hug each other. Maybe the one will lead to the other? We will all be up a mountain in the Alps as usual, firing new year rockets, and trying to avoid the rockettes. This year, alarmingly, Stephen has a pair of freestyle (curling up at both ends) skis. As Toby pointed out, he ends up going backwards often enough - at least this way it will look as though he meant it...

***A Happy Christmas to you all...***





a very happy  
christmas to you  
all and a peaceful,  
prosperous,  
olympic 2012

