



## oh my days!! where did those 365 go; it's Christmas again? really??!!

Gosh - the grandchildren are growing, new houses appearing, sailing getting better and better, work is exploding (world has gone learning mad!) and it's all held together, of course, by the kind of fab technology that allows 2 year olds to FaceTime before dawn. This all means that we are all effectively cyber-local and permanently short of sleep. Last year we promised "if we are not toes up or senile by 2015, there'll be more news from this rather distributed family then" - mercifully we are neither, quite yet, so here is the news from 2015:



To start with **George, Juliette** and two year old **Josephine Lily**: big news from Richmond is the pending arrival of a **Josephine Lily Mk2** - a baby sister for JL due in and around the start of March 2016 (see next year's newsletter). Their life in **Hampton** is an endless round of baby related activity, this is the social whirl of little-uns these days: Singing Hands, gym, swimming, Rugby-Tots (yes, she plays Rugby already, such is the desperation of the English national side). Crusader, the 18' launch moored up on the Thames, has had a huge rebuild this year - basically new everything apart from the engine which was already new, and so their river picnics and lock excursions are now very posh - boaters and blazers may be required! Josie remains a water baby and continues to astonish us all with her vast vocabulary and (structured!) grammar. This week she has started telling her parents bedtime stories. Presumably this is what happens when your mother never stops talking? Juliette is back in the classroom part time (but since teachers work 150% of the hours available that is like a 7 day week!) and George is still highly valued at Unilever and working within cycle distance which is all ideal. He is still playing and supporting football, probably for the relative peace, cycling recreationally, and has become a very sound Thames skipper too. All good.

On then to **Brighton**: of course these days **Toby** is a journalist, and **Cali** is established in graphic design, thus it seems appropriate that they pen their own contribution this year, and here it is, hot from hip and indeed hipster Brighton:



"After Toby and Cali's big 'house buying' news last year, 2015 has been a year of wallpaper stripping, DIY-ing, painting, re-flooring, gardening, sanding, fixing (re-fixing) and generally learning all the little things you need to know to do up a house. Toby reports that moving into their new home in January, he was determined to have the work finished by Christmas, but (proving once again he is his father's son) there is a way to go yet - he insists he never specified which Christmas! Still, both Cali and Toby have loved their new house and specifically the process of making it a home. On which note they welcomed two new additions to the family this year in the form of two (now incredibly spoiled) cats, Huck and Gnar.





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Away from the house, Toby continues to commute daily from their home in Brighton up to Chelsea in London where he remains Deputy Editor of Yachts and Yachting magazine (watch this space for exciting news there though!). On the one hand he is thankful of this world of connectivity and small smart devices during the long commute; on the other (when work is busy) he curses it. Cali is still working as a graphic designer, putting together spreads for national newspapers and magazines for her work near Hastings – to which she drives silently in their whizzy new all-electric car. They really have embraced the Brightonian green-living ethos it seems.

Squeezed in between the DIY, work and cat spoiling Toby and Cali are still members of Shoreham Sailing Club and continue to enjoy racing their RS200 there. Some rare time away from work allowed them the actually get to their nationals this year in

Pwllheli – they returned muttering darkly about Welsh rain but commenting the sailing was enormously enjoyable, for which read ‘blowing old boots’...”

Back onto the **Isle of Portland** next where **Simon and Melissa** are trying to keep up with **Amelie** (8) and **Louis** (5).



They moved into the new house, Portland Towers (well, it is big enough for the epithet!) which has a glorious four floors of sea-view rooms and (quite a lot of) work to be done - stuff like putting a floor in the bathroom, and a bath... But Amelie and Louis are already in their own freshly decorated rooms, and the place looks “like their own” - which like Toby and Cali (above) was substantially achieved by removing mountainous skip-loads of the previous rubbish to reveal the sheer scale of their new place once empty. Melissa goes from strength to strength as a teacher - invited out to California to swap ideas, and at the heart of prototyping the new Portland school’s approaches. Simon’s business thrives - he’ll be in Rio for the Olympics sorting out the team GB fleet (Toby will be there writing about it of course too) and Simon has just enjoyed a really impressive regatta with his foiling Moth in Bermuda. Simon is really enjoying taking Amelie to her Optimist weekend training camps too - she is making great progress and already on her 2nd Opi, having crewed a 29er and goodness knows what else this summer. She is sailing right through winter, drysuted and focussed. Both children are thriving at school - Louis certificated as “best sportsperson” and Amelie all over her technology. It’s fun to see her chatting to her wrist (“Heh Siri!” when she needs to look things up). They do rugby (!), gym, swimming (very competitively too - they are in a club) and learning too, of course. Neither the Brighton nor the Portland houses have TV sets by the way. Interesting.

Which leaves just the **grandparents still in the** (not quite finished) **family home in Brightlingsea**. For **Carole** it’s been a frantic year of looking after Amelie, Louis and Josephine Lily at various fixed and

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unexpected points - she loves it though - and also doing bits of research and report writing. **Stephen** is bemused to find a world that has gone learning crazy (in a nice way) and has the joy of visiting long term projects ("You'll never guess what has happened to our children!!") and starting up the new ones. In the month before typing this he was in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Hong Kong, London, Hong Kong again, Helsinki, London and finally home again. Lys Johnson who makes all this work somehow for Stephen will have been working with him for 25 years next year, which hardly seems possible! The travel is a necessary nuisance, but the projects are just wonderfully exciting. FaceTime links around the family are regular and seem a normal part of everyone's mealtime and indeed bedtime. Or in fact any time!



We are all off skiing, as usual, to Les 3 Vallées in the French Alps over Christmas and the New Year: a white Christmas, a genuine tranquility - well, give or take the fireworks - and the family all around. Perfect. We have a new racier van this year; last year's drive was enlivened by gearbox mayhem in the old van. 1,200 kms with just 12 gearchanges...

Sailing at Brightlingsea has been wonderful: the family were here racing for Pyefleet Week, our lovely big old oyster smack, My Alice, has been so much fun to sail - we even came home from the Whitstable Regatta via Dunkirk, because we could (and clearly because of moules et frites, et bier...)! This winter she is not in the St Katharine Docks because a new mast is being fitted and that is a LOT of work. Even varnishing the blocks and pulleys is a bit of a mission, but so worthwhile. These days, the skipper needs a fair bit of maintenance too!



We launched My Alice's fab new workboat, predictably named Malice, this year - we put the biggest engine (a whopping turbo diesel) we could in a 22 foot launch and the result has been the most fun ever! She is a great family launch, a 22 knot speedboat, a workboat and, if pirating becomes a global way of life, a pretty nifty motor torpedo boat too!



So that's about it for the year - we've missed out many details like of a lot of shows: Stephen and Carole to Cinderella at the Royal Ballet, Josie at The Snowman, Amelie and Louis to Charlie & the Chocolate Factory, and the Lion King - etc etc but by and large, a rather nice year all round. Hope yours was too.



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**Happy  
Christmas  
everyone**

