



Christmas 1998

The Heppell's Christmas Newsletter from Brightlingsea

Goodness, has it been a year since the last one of these pages updating you all with news from this boat mad edge of Essex coast. Aficionados of this annual note will not be surprised by the complete lack of progress during that year in some quarters: the Ducati is still "almost ready" after its engine rebuild - Stephen's mid-life crisis starts here - the house is still unfinished but showing bursts of inspiration here and there (the dishwasher is finally plumbed in), but in truth the house is quieter and tidier with two absent undergraduates to fund, feed and fret about.



Juliette (far left, with Melissa), is in her second year at Portsmouth University is now an old hand at student life and the dawn till dusk sailing that goes with it. Somehow she seems to have fitted in a rather good academic performance too, to everyone's amazement. With so much team racing to do she has finally sold her winning Mirror and moved on into singlehanded Europe's with a vague eye on the Olympics, but has had a pretty horrid year with back problems that may finally drive her into crewing. Thus this year is about sailing with as much (gentle) variety - including big boats and match racing - as can be fitted in whilst the back gets fixed. IBM are sponsoring her sailing. Carole crashed (not her fault, dog etc) Melissa's mini earlier in the year so Juliette's is now benefiting by way of a transplanted engine from the wreckage.

Melissa (shown here on 18th birthday with Toby) with better replacement Mini) has now taken her 5 A levels to the architecture course at UCL - the beginning of seven years of heaven and hard work in Bloomsbury at The Bartlett and probably of terminal bankruptcy for her parents. We do however anticipate a new beach hut in plate glass with titanium ducting somewhere around 2004, but don't over expect; currently she is building a volcano. Melissa had a great year in her Mirror and is in the UK squad for the South Africa Worlds next Easter, her crew Hannah has just been chosen as BT Young Yachtsperson of the Year (she has one arm, amazingly) and this has reflected well on her skipper, of course. Like her sister, Melissa's sailing is mostly team racing now and some 470ing is next on the horizon. Xemplar are sponsoring Melissa and Toby's sailing this year (notice a pattern?).



Sad news this year was Grandad Don dying from cancer (kidneys and liver) but a wonderful funeral brought friends from his swimming (water polo for England!), engineering, machine tool (work shown on Tomorrow's World), sailing and family life together and he was so clearly held in such affection by so many that it is hard to remain grieving after what was a pretty nasty, but mercifully rapid, end at home in the company of his nearest and dearest.

We all miss him dreadfully though and BOD racing won't be the same without him on the runners. Grandma is coping, we are glad she's nearby and has a good flow of visitors most days. She needs them.

Toby has been the biggest surprise of the year - his sailing in the Mirror Europeans in Kinsale was very good, he too is in the UK Worlds squad with RYA Youth Grant and a new boat is (almost - see right and the lack of focus helps to disguise how much is still to be done...) finished in the garage for him and crew Luke to ship out to South Africa.



However *Toby's* school life has been a revelation - mostly good marks all round, the lead part in the school's production of *Grease*, a Trombone solo in the school concert that had 'em cheering in the aisles and suddenly worried parents become proud parents.

Toby takes all this in his laid back stride but is ecstatic to have overtaken Dad in height. *Toby* has grown in stature all year really and 1999 is his GCSE year. And he's finally got his hair cut (see page 1 for earlier version)!

For all of us at The Anchorage it's been a good year for getting in touch with old friends and next year promises more of the same as Reading University Sailing Club celebrate 50 years of history. Maybe Carole and Stephen will get another chance to remember the fun of those (cheaper) undergraduate years too; the years seem to fairly rush by.



Life at Ultralab for Stephen and Carole gets busier day by day. With the Learn Zone in the Dome to finish (shown here in a **secret inside photo** about one week into this December - as you can see finishing'll be tight, **and it is very big...**), with 12,000+ schools on our Tesco SchoolNet 2000 (as seen on the carrier bags!) project, with Carole's Learning in the New Millennium project now Europe's longest running Internet and Learning project and with

a mass of other stuff including inventing intelligent toys (yes, we have Furbys and a whopping big European grant to do better) and also trying to finish our project giving every child in the UK and the US an email of their own, it has all been quite momentous and the Christmas break will be welcome, as you can tell by how late this arrived in your post... if only we were more organised.

...but there seems to be still time for fun too; the house is now ISDN linked to the 'lab with an ethernet network for all our laptops, so at least we get the ISAF sailing pages quicker than before and can also check the weather in South Africa live, ready for the Easter visit!

Elsewhere on the Brightlingsea front our Brightlingsea One Design Aina has been in action again this year and in a limited number of outings won a few pots, but she seems to go in later and come out later every year. At this rate in about ten years time it should be so late that it's in about right for the new season, if you see what we mean. The family launch Millie is still purring under her new posh engine and has an even posher depth display that shows fish and all sorts of unlikely things, and Grandma has been out in her, but only a little this year. More intrepid voyages are planned for next year.

Anyway, that's the news from here this year. We hope to see more old friends next year and maybe even come visiting on the Ducati if the weather is hot and the thing really is finished... Bye for now, and have a wonderful Christmas with all our wishes for a peaceful new year all round the world.

Stephen, Carole, Juliette, Melissa and Toby