



## Christmas 1999

### Another Heppell Christmas Newsletter from Brightlingsea

Oh dear - another year past? Surely not. And re-reading last year's letter all the things that were nearly sorted still are nearly sorted - Letty's back, the Ducati, the house... but it's been a big year one way and another so we hope this might make an interesting read by candlelight as you wait for the power company to sort out their Y2K bugs. Although "The Anchorage" still progresses slowly, our bit of the Dome is finished, just, and as you wander around "Learning" if you do a Dome visit (worth it!) think of us a little. Technology at home got a bit more whizzy this year with the ISDN lines and Ethernet all round (wireless next year) and dedicated video conferencing kit meant that Stephen could open/close conferences all around the world in his PJs with the cat on his lap in the middle of the night (cat is now a star and needs agent).

Real (rather than virtual) travel has been a big feature this year - all of us except Juliette went to South Africa at Easter for the Mirror Worlds (best features of SA were the warm optimism everywhere about their future, the weather, oh and beer at 18 pence a bottle) and other trips for various of us have included just about everywhere - best five probably Hong Kong (an astonishing mix of old China, new China and old UK), Australia (such a welcome and great sailing waters of course too), Washington (several times, but best visit was in the fall), Sienna (wonderful walled city but technology free - help!), Cape Town (see above). Skiing trips will be a bit chaotic - Juliette with her university chums in La Plagne, Toby and Stephen hoping for a late lastminute.com booking, Melissa busy in Phoenix architecturing so won't, Carole considering. Anyway, to detail:

Juliette seems to have arrived at her final year as an undergraduate in Portsmouth. We know this by looking at our bank statements (how can anyone send that many mobile phone text messages...?) Back problems (see last year) have continued to mess up her sailing but she is still actively involved with the team. She has a new(er) bigger car to hold more sailing bags and tow more boats and is now considering her future plans which don't appear to include employment in any form. The Europe will probably be sold in the new year and we need to plan sailing around her back, sadly. She will be at the New Year Millennium party with the rest of the family in the Dome which is probably her millionth party of the holidays (she's commuting between parties here and in Portsmouth as Christmas approaches) so the social bit seems to be going well, despite the back. (mobile: 07977 477 556. email: [juliette@ultralab.anglia.ac.uk](mailto:juliette@ultralab.anglia.ac.uk))

Melissa's architecture at UCL continues - she still hasn't produced anything that looks like a house yet, but it's early days - most of the others seem to be working in jelly and feathers - so the new beach hut is still a possibility. Sailing has gone every well and Melissa helms for the London men's teams and with Hannah has had a great year sailing - narrowly missing at the last race emulating Juliette and Melissa previously in becoming women's world champions. Melissa and Hannah are now sailing a skiff - a 29er - and they have been sponsored with new boats all the way from here to Athens in 2004. Henri Lloyd give them huge amounts of clothing too (see them in the catalogue). All in all a good year's sailing. Melissa's bad news was having her driving licence taken away for getting too many speeding points in her first two years driving (new law, bother) in London, but she passed the re-test and is back whizzing round Bloomsbury again, hopefully slower. (mobile: 07977 297 006. email: [melissa@ultralab.anglia.ac.uk](mailto:melissa@ultralab.anglia.ac.uk))

Toby has had a year of changes - from school to Sixth Form College and very much performance art related A levels; his music interest is leading him in singing and jazz and even dance. He has fallen on his feet at college with good friends, teachers and even good work. He and Luke had a miserable Worlds in SA - they were just too heavy (made the 20s) , but with new crew Abigail (Hannah's sister) he won a couple of races at the nationals and at one stage looked like winning the event. He is top ranked Mirror Youth but also (borrowing Melissa's Hannah and their 29er) is ranked 4th in the 29er Youth Squad too and may have just slipped into the 420 squad as a crew! 3 Squads! but he can't possibly do them all and probably will drop the (boring) 420. He's borrowed the

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Brightlingsea One Design with some mates this year too and won some prestigious local stuff in that as well, so his year has really just got better and better. Next year he will be able to start driving! (he has been allocated the Land Rover) - and oh no, we can't remember where all the years went either... (email: [toby@ultralab.anglia.ac.uk](mailto:toby@ultralab.anglia.ac.uk))

Grandma has come to terms with life alone, although being just up the road she sees a fair bit of all of us, but with a wonderful gardener and various local help services she sees a fair number of visitors. She has an electric "wheelie" but has some eye problems to sort out before she can see where she is going in it properly. Fortunately being Brightlingsea no-one else seems to care much about which side of the road they drive either. Gulp. Grandma has been out on Millie the family motor launch again too, including scattering Grandad's ashes out in the sea at Creekmouth on a calm warm day with David also down from Glasgow. Best Grandma news is a new digital keyboard for Christmas so she is back into music again - watch out top of the pops - Old Spice?

For Carole and Stephen it's been a hectic year at Ultralab -

check out the live camera at <http://rubble.ultralab.anglia.ac.uk/webcam>

- with one of the 'lab's projects making the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest Internet Learning Project in the World (but we don't get free Guinness though), a virtual school for those excluded from school and a new project for every Headteacher in the country (predictably called "Talking Heads") plus about 20 other exciting things (including developing an intelligent toy!) it's been a great, but exhausting, year.

Stephen get drawn more into policy making in Whitehall and both he and Carole are globe trotting most months. Stephen's sailing has been better this year - he won Pyefleet Week in the BOD despite bits falling off all week and he has been twin-wiring on a big, fast scary skiff - a Boss - to frighten himself this autumn. Nice really but raising questions about what to sail next year... mid life crisis obviously continues for Stephen! There's been lots more TV and radio work - best (for friends) was seeing Stephen bluffing a knowledge (he knows nothing) of nutrition as he stood in for an absent expert on BBC Knowledge ("Mars bars work for me...") but there were also some good shots of the BOD sailing at Brightlingsea under the pretext of some Channel 4 computers for school scheme (teamwork, unexpected events, that sort of thing...!)

One disappointment during the year was the Reading University Sailing Club 50th year reunion. We should have guessed that it was not safe to rely on student organisation but in the space of a term it went from a weekend, to a day, to an evening, and then finally we heard that "a few students just met up and got drunk but forgot to tell anyone". Nothing changes.

On the other hand we do have something of a reunion ourselves since we are hosting the Mirror European at Brightlingsea next August and many, many old friends from the Mirror class will be coming along for the week (and for Pyefleet Week the week before it) - doubtless attracted by free camping as much as great sailing. Toby and Melissa are sailing, Juliette is helping on shore, Stephen is on the committee boat as PRO and Carole is masterminding the whole organisation. Looks like being another quiet year (we wish...!) - keep in touch via:

<http://www.brightlingsea.net>

Anyway, that's the news from here this year. We hope to see more old friends next year, but we hoped the same last year and it didn't go very well, still...

...bye for now, and have a wonderful Christmas with all our wishes for a peaceful new century all round the world.

Stephen, Carole, Juliette, Melissa, Toby  
and Sinbad & Magic (cats, now famous)