



2006 Christmas Newsletter



from:

Bridget, Malcolm, James & Matthew

A few changes to the weekly routine this year, with Matthew going full-time at school from January, and Bridget returning to college as both tutor and student from Easter. James and Matthew have had two different childminders for the college days, but are well settled now. Malcolm's routine has stayed much the same, although bi-monthly trips to one of Dublin, Munich, Madrid and Prague have become the norm now that his company is Spanish-owned.

New Year

We started the year off with a mince-pie special on the Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway. Almost an annual tradition, but made more special this year as we were joined by our friend Mark, on his way to some New Year festivities.



Easter

The bright and mild Easter holidays allowed for several day trips with friends, including a day at Beale Park with Lily and Thomas T-J, and a day in the Cotswolds with friends David, Alison, Ben, Sarah and Francis. Francis is one of Bridget's godsons, just a year older than James, and as keen to gather sticks, climb trees and paddle in the water as Matthew.



Spring

At February half-term we spent a long weekend in a log cabin in the Forest of Dean. The site has a large swimming pool, which is great for children, and an entertainment complex.



Matthew was hilarious in the swimming pool, and James unstoppable singing the Robbie Williams number "Angels" at the disco.

Summer



By the end of April, Bridget had walked the Thames Path as far as Ham House, near Richmond, and May saw three more walks. One was with friend Lucy whilst James and Matthew, and Lucy's boys Jamie and Mattie spent the day playing with llamas at Ham House supervised by the dads.

The second was a shorter, family walk with old University friend Liz, her husband Chris, and children Maddie, Clare and Dominic. The final walk was on a very hot day, with 7 months pregnant Tanya joining Bridget for the first half of the day, meeting the boys at Runnymede for lunch, and finishing in Windsor.



To celebrate her 40th birthday in February Bridget decided to walk the Thames Path, meeting up with old friends along the way. On a beautiful and bright Saturday

in March, Bridget started her quest at the Thames Barrier, getting to Tower Bridge to end this first stage. Along the way there was much to see, including what used to be the Millennium Dome, now called "TheO2". She shared this part of the walk with old friend Liz and her husband Stuart.



In June Malcolm's great-nephew Thomas was baptised in Cambridge on the same day that Bridget's other godson Alexander was making his first communion in Ipswich. So Matthew and

Malcolm went to Cambridge and also met the newest member of the family Samuel, here seen with his mum Caroline. It was a really hot day and a great family occasion.

Meanwhile Bridget and James went to Ipswich on the train, via the Natural History Museum. Alexander's communion was a wonderful event, and a very special one that we wanted James to understand more fully.



One of the highlights of the holiday was a day trip to Rathlin Island aboard one of the small ferries that takes locals and tourists alike across the often-choppy seas. The RSPB have a bird-watching observation point which was well set up to see shags and fulmars, plus we had a very close view of seals basking on the shore line.



Summer Holidays

The Summer holidays started with all of us spending a week at Lighthouse, the local



children's Christian Festival. Malcolm led a group of eight year olds, including James and some of his friends, whilst Matthew and Bridget were in the 4's and 5s tent for the week. A spiritually refreshing and physically tiring week.

Malcolm took James on a "dad and lad" train trip to Birmingham to visit the Sealife Centre, the "Think Tank" technology centre, and fit in a canal boat trip too. A busy two days!



For our main holiday we headed off to Ireland, staying at Dundrum House near Armagh for a few days to visit family before heading off the Cushendall on the Antrim Coast. We had a lovely time

catching up with uncles and cousins, as well as re-visiting the Giant's Causeway and spending some relaxing time on the beach. Ireland in August was, as in previous years, very quiet. More than once we were the only people on the beach (admittedly with our fleeces on).

Autumn

More walking for Bridget meant more day trips for the boys to places they might not otherwise have visited. This included Wallingford Castle and "Bunkfest" and the Oxford Museum of Natural History.



At October half-term we decided not to spend the week away, but to do a number of day trips. Perhaps not surprisingly one of these was to the Natural History Museum in London, to see the



special dinosaur exhibition. We also drove up to Birmingham to visit Cadbury World, stopping on the way at Redwings pony and donkey rescue sanctuary near Banbury, which James thoroughly enjoyed.

Although Matthew liked Redwings too, he was even keener on the chocolate indulgence at Cadbury World. Yumm!



As winter set in, we managed two trips to Ipswich in quick succession, one to the baptism of John and Katharine's daughter Susan, and one to meet up with our "cycling" friends for the annual Christmas dinner.



*Happy Christmas and New Year
to all our friends and family*