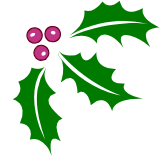




Christmas 2009 Newsletter

from Bridget, Malcolm, James & Matthew



2009 has been a year of many changes. Then again not all the changes we've wanted have happened, so there are more challenges for 2010.

Work

At the start of 2009 Malcolm took early retirement – an offer he couldn't refuse. With great excitement Bridget started job hunting, now freed from the constraints of the school day. Although there have been a few interviews, nothing permanent has yet evolved. A few extra articles for the usual health and safety magazine, plus some additional articles for a professional society website and some unpaid work have kept her ticking over.

Meanwhile, Malcolm took over bookings at the local Methodist Church, and has more recently taken on the role of Property Steward. He has spent more time in the garden this year, building an amphibian friendly pond, and a raised vegetable bed in which we grew a range of vegetables. He's also helped in the Young Engineers' Club at the local Junior School.

Education

James and Matthew both moved to new schools in September. Now 11, James has moved to Chesham High (Grammar) School.



We had noticed Matthew losing confidence and not thriving as he had done at the infant school. After much discussion and consideration we decided Matthew needed a new start, and since September has been at a different school down the hill.

He has settled quickly into the social life of his new school, making many new friends. His confidence was boosted early on in the term when he came top of his class for learning and performing a poem. And when you see Matthew you realise we mean "performing" not "reciting"!

Dinosaurs!

It's been a good year (at least for James) on the dinosaur front. For a birthday treat we saw the "Walking with Dinosaurs" Arena Spectacular at The O2, a wonderful show with some stunning life-sized animated "models".



The same week, the Dinosaur Encounter exhibition was in Bournemouth, not far from Malcolm's mum. So not surprisingly, we went.

Finally Malcolm and James took a trip in the October half-term to the Dinosaur Adventure Park near Norwich, stopping at SP Models on the way to buy a couple of "collectable" dinosaur models.



Entertainment

Both boys have been on the stage this year, Matthew appearing as a sailor in the local theatre club's version of Robinson Crusoe. He also appeared in a larger cast and a much larger venue when Bucks Junior School Choirs took over the Albert Hall for an evening of song, music and dance called "Echoes 3". A late night for all but quite an experience.



James landed one of the top roles in the Junior School leavers' play "The Seven Sided Dice". His character, Bookworm, was studious, clever and well, a bit of a bookworm. Talk about being typecast.



Meanwhile Malcolm was coerced into being stage manager for the local theatre club's production of "Sisterly Feelings", and even ended up taking a brief non-speaking role when nobody else "suitable" was available!

Outdoor activities

Whilst James was still at Junior School, all the Year 6 children went on an outward-bound style week at a PGL centre. James is not really the outdoor type, but he thoroughly enjoyed the week and tested his own nerve on more than one occasion.



At his new school James immediately joined the school pony club, and keenly

helps to look after the ponies and tack as well as going out on rides.

Matthew's enthusiasm for cubs has continued this year. He's in a small pack that has grown strongly through the year. He's really enjoyed all the activities, has been on two Cub Camps, and the badges are extending down his arm.



The Cub pack was a little short on helpers, so Bridget offered to help and was soon recruited as an assistant cub leader (code name Chil). Fortunately others also came forward, so the load is well shared between the very willing group.

Holiday

In the summer we spent two weeks in a gite on the west coast of France – probably the longest family holiday we have had in one place. It was great – much more relaxing, with fine weather, a swimming pool at the back of the house, and opportunities for rowing and walking. And with a boulangerie just two minutes' walk from the gite, we always had fresh croissants at breakfast.



Of course we dragged the boys round some chateaux but they got their own back at the aquarium and wild life park. We were close to the sea although the Atlantic was quite rough for swimming. But the sandy beaches meant James could indulge in sand dinosaur sculpture.

Family matters

Trips to grandparents in Ipswich and Salisbury have been regular through the year, often with day trips out to enjoy the local areas. One particularly enjoyable day out with Bridget's mum and dad was to a rare breeds centre, where the boys has the chance to chase piglets and chickens, and coo at some baby ducks.



With Malcolm's mum we've had a couple of trips to a local National Trust property where highlights include huge fish in the stream, a fascinating range of trees and a second-

hand bookshop. So far we've missed the rose garden in full bloom, so that's something to look forward to next year.

Malcolm's niece Caroline and nephew Chris are both expecting babies early in 2010, which will bring the great-nephlet total to nine!

Challenges for next year? Well, as no one seems to want to give Bridget the 20 hours a week highly paid, very interesting but local health and safety role she is looking for, she is now limited. That is, she has set up a limited company, and from next year will be approaching local businesses in an attempt to build up a client base offering work away from the computer, whilst continuing to write for the H&S magazine and to teach yoga. So this means learning to market – quite a challenge.

Happy Christmas

We hope this finds you well and happy, and send you all our very best wishes for a safe and healthy 2010.



*From Malcolm, Bridget
James and Matthew*

