



Christmas 2010 Newsletter

from Bridget, Malcolm, James & Matthew



2010

has come and (nearly) gone with the regular crop of activities.

Work, Study and School

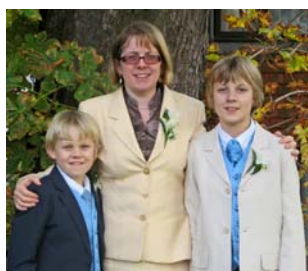
After a few months building up her newly-created business, Bridget decided that a Masters degree was becoming a necessity to progress. So in September Bridget started on a one-year "full time" Masters course at Brunel University at Uxbridge. Full time means two days at Uni plus study at home, which just about leaves time for her software reviews, training, cubs, yoga teaching....

After surviving year 7 at Chesham High School James was perplexed and a little annoyed at the renaming of his school "Chesham Grammar".

Matthew has enjoyed a second year at the Gateway, featuring as "Suetonius" in the Year 4 play about the Roman occupation, and Boudicca's fight back (see "Matthew's bit").

Family matters

In October Malcolm's nephew Mike was married to Yim in Petersfield, a great opportunity for most of the family to get together. And a great opportunity to get smart suits for the boys and get dressed up.



Matthew entered into the full spirit of the reception, but we were a little worried we might have to cancel his birthday party the following afternoon as he suffered from, in his words, an overhang in the morning. Luckily he bounced back, one advantage of youth.



We've kept guinea pigs for the past few years, but sadly all have now passed away. Matthew's was the last survivor reaching the fine old age of 6 years. No firm plans for a replacement yet, but the boys are threatening to get a kitten for Malcolm's birthday.

Holidays

In the June half term we spent a few days in Berlin. It's the third time we've been to Berlin although a first for the boys.

The city has changed much since our first trip in 1994, and feels even more relaxed and cosmopolitan than our last trip 5 years ago.



As the boys were with us this time a visit to the zoo was compulsory. Matthew was really looking forward to seeing the famous Knut the polar bear, and had a real treat watching Knut perform at feeding time.



James made sure that our itinerary included the Natural History Museum, with its "jurascope" bring dinosaur skeletons back to life

Matthew loved the trams, bendy buses and became an instant fan of the currywurst.



For our summer holiday this year we returned to Ireland. After spending a few days at our favourite B&B near Armagh and seeing all the relatives (including

Alannah and Aideen), we headed to Stangford Lough and spent a week in the gatehouse at Killyleagh Castle, which had been converted into holiday flats.

The castle claims to be the oldest inhabited castle in Ireland and sits prominently at the top of the main street in Killyleagh, with wonderful views across the lough. As the family were away we also had use of the (unheated outdoor) swimming pool. Only Matthew was brave enough to try it.



James was excited to see many species of seal and birds around the lough, which is a natural haven for wildlife.

James' bit



For my birthday this year dad took me and my friend Leon to Whipsnade Zoo. Here is a picture of us on a large model rhino. We did see the real thing of course but we were not allowed to ride them!

Of course, being the founder of *edaphosaurus.com* I did some dinosaur things this year. One was

going to Dinosaurs Unleashed in London, which was a collection of animatronic models made of rubber. They were very robust, so much so that you could touch them (that's a first)! The picture is of me stroking a postosuchus, not a dinosaur but a reptile that lived with them.



This was not my only dino encounter. I also saw some at the Berlin Natural History Museum (see holidays). As well as this I went to the science festival at the Southbank with dad where I saw many pterosaurs and had a two hour chat with a palaeontologist. I also saw some flying penguins, DNA being extracted and two "Bang Goes the Theory" live shows, during both of which I was brought up on stage. I also got involved in some experiments presented by the same people.



In October half term I finally managed to go to Crystal Palace. This is the home of the oldest dinosaur models ever. Being so old they are out dated as they all were on all fours like lizards. They also had many prehistoric reptiles and mammals along with a

gorilla statue. As you can see, this is the most realistic animal there!

Matthew's bit



I'm really enjoying the Gateway school. I was a Roman general called Suetonius Paulinus in the Year 4 play – I enjoyed learning the lines and ordering the soldiers around! My sword broke twice but dad repaired it.

This term I visited Hughenden Manor with my school and saw how Disraeli might have spent Christmas.

We had to dress up as Victorian children, and bring a Victorian pack-lunch (home made bread and a lump of cheese).

Cubs has been fun this year, and I am now a sixer. We went camping in June and we did archery, the Cresta Run and climbing. Mum had a go at the climbing, but she didn't get to the top as fast as I did.

As a sixer, like Suetonius I can order other Cubs and Beavers around, and help them to learn new skills. I led an orienteering group without any adults – we walked 6 miles instead of 4 but we made it back happily and safely, with all checkpoints completed.



For my birthday mum bought me a blacksmithing course. In Ireland I was fascinated to watch a blacksmith working at a National Trust property that we visited, but I couldn't have a go. But in half term I spent a morning with two other boys and a blacksmith and made a candle holder which now stands on our dining table and I light it using my cub fire-lighting skills. I had 15 boys at my birthday party this year, held at home. Mum, dad and James have suggested I might want a smaller party next year....



Happy Christmas

We hope this finds you well and happy, and send you all our very best wishes for a safe and healthy 2011.

