

The Crawley Christmas Chronicles 2023

It's been a quite a year for us. It started off sad and difficult and yet there has been much to be thankful for and happy moments along the way.

January Sarah: Last Christmas we spent with my mum and dad in Somerset. Daniel came too, Joseph was with Phil's mum in Telford and James was in Istanbul. It was not an easy Christmas as it was clear that Mum was not well, finding it more and more difficult to walk and we were trying to help by getting carers sorted out. After Christmas we drove up to Telford from Street to collect Joseph, as the trains were out of action, finally getting back to London quite late. The next evening, Mum was taken ill and eventually taken into hospital that night so I drove back to Street. Dad and I spent a few days going to visit Mum in Musgrove Hospital in Taunton, but she deteriorated quite quickly and died on 3rd January. In the sadness, there was a lot to be thankful for. We got to say goodbye, we told Mum that we loved her and she told us that she loved us. We got to pray with Mum and the hospital chaplain was kindness itself. He read Psalm 121 over Mum, without knowing that this had always been a special psalm for me. In the midst of dealing with death and sorting out care for Dad, I felt so supported and loved by family and friends: Phil and Joseph enduring a long coach trip down and Joseph cooking for us all; my cousins arriving to support us; my church family encouraging us and work colleagues being so amazing. When we got to the day of the funeral, our Bible reading that morning happened to be Psalm 121. God knows! Dad is going to be 94 in January. Inevitably, after 69 years of marriage, he has missed Mum terribly, but friends and neighbours in Street have rallied round and he has sort of managed to keep living independently, which he wanted to do, with a carer coming each afternoon and Phil and I driving down every 3 – 4 weeks. Having school holidays has been such a help.



February We had an amazing mini break in Edinburgh, postponed from the previous year. Lots of walking, art, museums etc., despite the very windy weather.

March Our Joseph turned 30 (how is this even possible?) and we celebrated with a family meal out with Joseph, his partner Emily, and a spectacular cake. Joe and Emily live very near us in Crouch End and he continues to run engineering at a graphics company. March was also Sarah's birthday and we went to see the play of "To Kill a Mockingbird" (which Sarah read for O-Level English many moons ago).

April We spent Easter in Istanbul visiting James and his girlfriend Zeynep. It was great that James could show us round this crazy, hilly, but very interesting city. So much history. We loved it. We have never seen so many cats in our lives. We particularly enjoyed riding the ferry up the Bosphorus, visiting the Roman cisterns, the Hagia Sophia mosque (once a church in Byzantine times), the Galata Tower, and the Topkapi palace (home to the Sultans). James helped us haggle in The Grand Bazaar and we loved the Turkish delight and baklava. The best part, however, was our bus ride to Emirgan Park to see the stunning tulip festival. I bet you didn't know that tulips originally come from Turkey and not Amsterdam!



July Phil has been investigating electric cars for a long time and we became the proud owners of an MG4. It's certainly made all the trips to Somerset more cost effective and happily there are a lot of charging points in the streets around our house.

James, who had moved back to London earlier in the summer, had a major bike accident one Friday evening and was quite concussed and worrying confused for several hours. We spent the night with him in resus in a hospital in Whitechapel. Thankfully, although he was very battered and bruised, he was stitched up and, with youth on his side, his wounds healed quite quickly.



We also had a lovely holiday in Northumberland – back to the tiny, but beautiful shepherd's hut, where we had stayed once before. We saw puffins, went on many walks and had a wonderful week, despite the weather not being the best. Then on the way back, we stopped off in Cambois, near Blyth, to visit Auntie Betty, an old friend of Sarah's parents.

August We had a lovely time at Michele and Simon's wedding in the Quantocks. What a beautiful day and location.

September Phil: September was another mixed month. We had a great time at Sarah's Auntie Eileen's 90th birthday and enjoyed a theatre trip out to see "Ain't Too Proud" (the musical about The Temptations) for my birthday. Unfortunately my mum fell over and broke her hip and after a couple of weeks in hospital, is back at home making a good recovery. My sister and brother-in-law have been amazing looking after her and her dog Esme.

November The best thing about November was another theatre trip, this time, to see "Hamnet" (Sarah had read the book). We got the cheaper tickets in the very front row, thinking we might get sore necks, but actually, they were such good seats and the play was amazing.

December So here we are at the end of the year again. The plan is to spend Christmas in Street with Sarah's dad and all the boys are joining us.

Other news: Phil's work – Media Engineers Ltd ("For all your broadcast engineering requirements") has had a very busy year. In the summer we moved into a new workshop (only 200m from home; living the dream!) and did our first trade show stand at The Media & Production Show at Kensington Olympia. James is now pretty much working as the fibre technician full time (fine motor skills and good eyes are needed when everything is being done at 50µm!) and Phil has been travelling for customers in Glasgow, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Frankfurt, and *most exotically* Coronation St. in Manchester...!



Daniel – Dan is still the family's monster-of-rock playing drums in several bands including folk-rock favourites Metal Castle. He's also still cutting cinema trailers (don't ask him about "Fast & The Furious 10" – he really has had enough of that series of films! What have they got to be so furious about...?) and we had a wry smile when the Sunday School teacher from church told us one of the youngsters had said "I want to play drums, just like Daniel"!

See you soon! phil@threeboys.co.uk - sarah@threeboys.co.uk

Our good friend Onyeka's 70th birthday!