

Aaarrggghhhh! Two weeks to Christmas and we still haven't prepared the newsletter, bought all the presents, written the cards or generally sorted ourselves out. "Don't panic, don't panic!" We are struggling to maintain the everyday and the ordinary, without throwing Christmas into the mix. To quote a certain Mr. Tinie Tempah, British rapper extraordinaire, "We live a very, very, very, wild lifestyle...we can do this until we pass out." presumably from exhaustion!

James, Daniel and Joseph

Anyway, we digress, back to the newsletter. Let's start as we should have done, by wishing you all a wonderful Christmas. It has been quite a year, all in all. Not quite sure why that should be, as most of it seems to have consisted of driving various teenagers around (and waiting for them to come home), making packed lunches, trying to find keys / Oyster-cards / clean socks / wallets / homework and P.E. kit (none of which has been put away in the correct place), making homework/revision timetables and trying to get offspring to abide by them, arguing (constructively) with said offspring and handing money out to them when requested to do so. Still, such is family life as we know it.



Phil continues to work for the same broadcast engineering consultancy he has for nine years now, which is unusual in an industry that is largely populated by freelancers; "I've had a mixed year with some very pleasant jobs getting to know new industry colleagues and other much harder contracts where the customer is definitely out to '...reap where they did not sow"! One of the better clients has been Arsenal football club; we started the year building edit suites for them and then in the spring a virtual TV studio. A virtual studio is a small green room that (by the magic of electronic imaging) looks like a large fancy room. We continue to do lots of work for them which is great since the Emirates is only ten minutes walk from our house and I've enjoyed getting to know some very *non-media* people. I've also spent a couple of weeks in Manchester in the last month building editing and sound rooms at Salford University. It has been splendid seeing all the youngsters wandering around and made me feel quite jealous; I'd quite like to be eighteen again! I'm off to Nigeria with a colleague in January to finish a project for the state broadcaster. It seems we have a very full order book until the summer and early in January we move our workshop to new premises which is (coincidentally!) two-hundred yards from our house!" Phil has also continued his involvement with the Camden Churches Cold Weather Shelter - <http://www.c4wshomelessproject.org> and we encourage you think about them when you next re-assess your charity giving. Every pound goes to where it's needed.

Sarah has also had a busy year. "Those of you who diligently read last year's newsletter, may recall that I was just about to begin a part-time job as a Bookstart Officer with Barnet Libraries in addition to my Saturday Library Assistant job at Golders Green. Unfortunately, after just three months encouraging parents to spend time reading with their under fives, the post fell victim to the local government spending cuts and a new position was sought. God is good and answered our prayers with a new, full-time, term-time job as School Secretary at St. Paul's CE Primary School in Mill Hill North London, which lies about nine miles north of our home. For those of you who don't know London very well, Mill Hill (the part in which the school is based) is the nearest thing to a village which you can get in a modern metropolis. When I say village, I don't mean a real, countryside type of village, with tractors, mud, cows and cider, but a rather upmarket village, with horse riding, large 4x4s pushing their way



along narrow roads, a Rotary club and a Waitrose. I have been made to feel very much part of the school community, replacing the previous secretary who had been in the post for 24 years. I have settled into school life, although it has been a baptism of fire. I started at the end of April and since then, the head teacher left after a serious illness and we were without a head for most of a term, we have had a part-time interim head, an OfStEd inspection, the tragic, unexpected death of a Reception

Class child at home one weekend, a RE inspection and the appointment of a new head teacher. Fortunately, the planned audit has been postponed until February! My days are busy, varied and never, ever dull. Duties can include such diverse tasks as having a naughty child sit with me in my office, and welcoming a native American in full costume. My only regret has been having to give up the Saturday library job in order to work full-time. This job was a brilliant job for a book worm and I enjoyed it very much.”

February half term, we went to Calais for the day, together with Phil's Mum, to celebrate Joseph's 18th birthday. Unbelievable – our baby is officially an adult and now towers above us at 6' 3". Joseph has recently started as a Saturday library assistant – my old job, although obtained by fair and open competition and at a different library. Joe is hoping to go to university next year to study engineering - he has also got into photography this year and taken some fantastic pictures. His debating skills have led to the regional finals of the Cambridge debating contest.



The boys have once again been involved in music this year. In the Summer term, they were all in a band together with some others and were the headline act at the school concert. Joe and Dan (aged 16) continue to play in the church band, Joe on bass and Dan on drums. James (now almost 13) has bought a ukulele, which acts a contrast to his main instrument, the electric guitar. James and Phil took part in the Big Busk – Billy Bragg directed two thousand guitarists strumming along to busking classics on London's Southbank. Daniel also played as part of a drumming duo at his school graduation ceremony. It was quite a stunning performance – check it out here at: <http://tinyurl.com/7xh7dkg>

Dan also managed to improve his film editing skills with a week's work experience at the top film editing facility The Moving Picture Company and in addition edited the concert footage, when a family friend and his hospital band, played a charity gig with Florence, of *Florence and the Machine* fame. James, is now well established in Year 8 of secondary school and continues to be the most outgoing and lively member of the family.

During the Summer we went on a road trip to the South of France, where we spent two weeks with our good friends Joe and Damaris from Düsseldorf. What an amazing holiday in a beautiful, unspoilt area (The Aude in Languedoc-Rousillon). We passed many days swimming in local rivers and natural cascades (the absolute highlight), visited a Cathar castle high on a mountain top, bathed in the Med near Perpignan (a first for us all), enjoyed leisurely dinners on the terrace of the house we were staying in (yes – a house and not a tent!) and passed the evenings chatting, watching films on a large projector screen and playing board games. Sarah particularly enjoyed practising her French, especially the instant interpretation required at a honey farm.



Our parents are all well. Bob and Brenda continue to be very busy down in Street and have enjoyed a few holidays in the caravan and abroad this year. They have both been helping out with the old people's coffee morning at Crispin Hall in Street and Bob retired from being captain of the bellringing team after more than 40 years of service. Rosemary has bought a dog and now walks miles each day, as well as continuing to help out with encouraging children with their reading at a local primary school. We had a surprise at the end of the Summer, when Phil's sister Heather phoned up out of the blue to say she had got married to long term partner Chris earlier that day. We are really pleased for them both and thrilled that Chris is now “officially” part of the family.

As always, we are really looking forward to the Christmas break, as a few lie-ins and a major house tidy are required. Christmas will be in Telford doing onto Somerset for Boxing Day. This year, Paul, our minister, has encouraged us to prepare spiritually, by re-reading the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, the amazing and intricate preparations for the birth of Jesus, the story of the birth itself and the three outbursts of praise recorded in the Gospels – Mary's song, Zechariah's song and Simeon's song. We are hoping that this December 25th, we will be filled with a new sense of wonder at God's plan for humanity and his astounding love for us.

We would like to finish by wishing you all a very merry Christmas and all the very best for 2012. Do pop in and see us if you are in the area. One good thing, we can now cross the newsletter off of our to-do list!