



HAPPY CHRISTMAS FROM JOHN & LIZ PARTINGTON

Season's Greetings to you from the lovely Cotswolds!

We seem to have had as full a year as ever, and remain very happy in this lovely part of the country. All the children now live away from home, and so we're a little reluctantly adjusting to a quieter way of life. We all shared a holiday house in the Lake District in the summer, together with John's stepfather and nephew Ben, which was a very happy time. The two of us had an autumn holiday, by train of course, in Germany, investigating Liz's forebears in Hamburg (where a fine house and an oil painting of one of them are still to be found) and in Berlin, where we stayed in a tenement in what was East Berlin, and greatly enjoyed the city life.

Liz continues to work a two-thirds week, and is pleased to have moved back into the main building, even though it's a quarter of an hour further from home. The job still involves a variety of office and home based working, and some travel, in what are usually quite stimulating proportions. Meanwhile, at home we've never had such a bumper year for apples in our garden, and as well as extra chutney-making etc we've contracted a local small business to pasteurise and bottle some of the juice for us.

John is enjoying work, complaining only that there is too much of it. He's taking six weeks' sabbatical early next year – his first since ordination thirty years ago – and will use it to study some of Katherine Parr's writings (she was born five hundred years ago next year, and is buried in our parish). He seems to have ended up at the heart of a number of local activities, most notably in the last year setting up a Trust to reopen the local Youth Centre when the County Council closed it as part of their enforced spending cuts – a crafty scheme whereby we sublet the premises to a local auction company, whose rental pays the youth workers' wages. He's delighted that the Archbishop of Canterbury is coming to visit it next summer.

Jobs are changing for **Sam & Emma** – the latter having moved school to a very satisfying position in Oxford itself, and the former having been made redundant as from early next year (a result of government cut-back in school IT provision). Various possibilities are looming, but he's glad of the opportunity to re-evaluate the shape of things, and may concentrate a little more on voluntary and charitable working.

James has had a busy time supply-teaching in Birmingham, where he's enjoying home and church. No sign yet of a more permanent position, but he remains up-beat.

Our **Rosie** has excelled this year, getting a good First in her degree course at Nottingham, and picking up a job on the graduate-entry scheme for the Civil Service. She's now living in Balham, and working at DEFRA in Westminster.

John's stepfather James lives with independent panache about half an hour away, exploring a hitherto latent gift for cookery; we've been seeing a bit more of him recently after his hip-replacement operation. Liz's mother Mary lives just down the road, and like us makes the most of that Winchcombe has to offer.

We do hope that you have a happy Christmas and new year. There seem to be so many sadnesses around, with illness and other problems – but so much happiness and love too. May plenty of that come your way in the coming months!

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