

Christmas Newsletter 2010

This year has had far more downs than ups. The end of 2009 started with my almost 94 year old father having a fall suffering a broken elbow and broken hip. This was to set the pattern for the rest of 2010.

Hospital visits; visits to Mum (90 years old); or visits to Mum and then Dad have followed for 2010. Dad was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease in February 2010.

Mum (now 91) has recently had her fair share of hospital stays and, as I write this, she is currently in hospital for the third time in 6 weeks.

OK. Enough of the sad, depressing stuff. What have we been up to this year?

Christmas Day 2009 we shared with Jonathan, Nicola and Robert. We made garlic soup for the starter of our Christmas meal – the only reason I mention this is that Jonathan was some 10 yards from the house when we opened our door - and you guessed it, he had caught the odour of garlic!

New Year's Eve saw us once again trundling up the M6 to Chester to spend some time with Stephen, Nicola and Ewan. A lovely time was had by all. The following day we visited Nicola, Jonathan and Robert and again we had a lovely day.

Our frequent trips to London throughout the year have to some extent allowed me to take the camera with me and to take a few photos along the way.



Tower Bridge around sunset

We spent one Saturday evening on the South Bank between London Bridge and Tower Bridge. This is the first time that I had ever seen City Hall and I wondered whether Boris was in for an unannounced visit! This area has changed dramatically since I last lived in London (about 23 years ago now). It certainly has character, but I think in the process of modernisation a lot of the old character of this part of London has been lost forever.



The White Tower, Tower of London

February 17 saw my sister, Margaret, and my brother-in-law,

Brian as well as Caroline and myself meeting up in St Thomas's Hospital along with Mum. The day was to celebrate the 70th wedding anniversary of Mum and Dad. Sadly this is one of the last occasions that we had Dad on his feet.



Anniversary with the Queen!

Early March saw us welcoming Stephen and his family. I can't quite remember when Easter Sunday was this year, but we had to give Ewan his Easter Egg.



Ewan about to start the main course!

Unfortunately we have no photographic record of the visit of Nicola and Jonathan on Easter Sunday. We were in fact given our Easter Card and a little pressie.



We were to become grandparents again later in the year.

We normally take a break in February and head across the Channel. This year has not been easy, and because Mum &

Dad's anniversary fell during half-term week we had taken the decision some time previously to stay in Britain. We postponed our trip until June, when we spent a very enjoyable few days in and around Bruges (about the same time as the World Cup tournament was taking place).

Bruges is a really lovely place, and in the summer even more so.

The canal system and the properties on the canal sides are extremely beautiful. I would very much recommend a visit to this lovely Belgian town.



Bruges Canal with pleasure craft



Bruges canal side with pleasure craft

We also managed to get into Ypres to visit the exhibition "In Flanders Fields", Tynecot Cemetery; Passendale and lastly to be at the Menin Gate for the Last Post Ceremony. This was indeed an incredibly moving experience. Our visit to Belgium also took in Fort Napoleon at Ostende, Diksmuide, Blakenberg and Veurne.

On Caroline's birthday a trip to France for lunch was arranged. We visited Montreuil sur Mer and had lunch at St Valery sur Somme. A lovely day was had by all.

August was one hectic month. On August 2 we had a team of workmen in to gut the kitchen and to install a new one. The inconvenience and cost were both worth it in the end – the kitchen has been completely transformed.



Before picture 1



Before picture 2



After picture 1



After picture 2

Needless to say we are very happy with the end result.

It must be a bloke thing! After my annual birthday barbecue downpour, three of us lads were off to Germany for the Oktoberfest in the middle of September. Caroline took the same week as holiday and Helen came down to stay. They went off to various places and to see various things in and around London.

The 3 musketeers travelled to Augsburg in Bavaria where we had hotel accommodation for the week. It was left to me to plan the entire week and we had a truly magnificent time. The only thing I will now say is that I have been there and I would have no inclination to go again (but we did have a lovely time).



The 3Musketeers in Munich

Other than the Oktoberfest which started on Saturday 18 September we visited Innsbruck ..



Golden Roof, Innsbruck

the Zugspitze, Germany's highest Alpine peak at 2962m. They even had a beer garden, so we felt it was right to sample the local nectar...



The 3 Musketeers atop the Zugspitze



SonnAlpin at 2595m – top right is the summit complex at 2962m

... Lernoos in Austria. A really quaint Tyrolean town. We found a restaurant in the shadow of the Zugspitze – such fantastic views.



The Zugspitze from Lernoos



... and of course **Neuschwanstein Schloos**, reputedly the model for Disney's Magic Kingdom...

We also spent a day walking around **Augsburg**



Probably our most sombre "session" was the morning we spent at Dachau Concentration Camp which is North West of Munich. It still makes me angry to think of the philosophy of the Nazis - "Arbeit macht Frei"



The entrance to Dachau

... and the burial site of countless numbers of people...



Ash Grave just outside the Crematorium

From Dachau we moved off to the other side of Munich to a town called Erding. There is a brewery here which produces Erdinger! 10€ entry fee, a trip around the brewery, and at the end everything you would like to eat and drink for nothing! Fantastic day out.

Our final day in Germany, before setting off for home, was spent in Bamberg. This is one really nice place – with World Heritage Site status. Lots of micro-breweries specialising in smoked beers. An interesting taste, but not one that I would like to drink too frequently.



Old Rathaus, Bamberg

September 25 saw the birth of Christopher Jonathan Hunt, a baby brother for Robert and our third grandson. We met Christopher for the first time on 16 October.



Our annual trip to France followed very soon after returning from Munich. This was really just a week to chill out, and we did not travel anywhere near as far as our visit last year. However, we did manage to visit some amazing places – a Gallo-Roman Theatre, Pons and the evening spectacular at Futuroscope.

The end of November saw us yet again on our travels – Robert's second birthday and Ewan's third birthday. We are now set for the next cycle!

Year's Photos – www.medsan.org/2010

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This newsletter can also be read as a pdf file from :-->

<http://tinyurl.com/379zmx>

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year