

Melanie and Andy write

The major event of the year for us was moving house! We put our flat on the market in April and found a buyer in June (after a couple of interested parties had either dropped out or vanished off the face of the earth).

Our purchasers were well advanced in their own sale and were desperate for us to move. Having, until that point, been looking around at properties (although not too hard until we'd sold) we had a frantic couple of weeks searching. The housing market was going through a particularly buoyant period at that time and houses were being snapped up almost as soon as they went on the market. After some disappointments, firm action was called for and Andy took two days off work during which time he visited every estate agent in Christchurch and surrounding villages (not something he'd recommend for a future holiday activity). The second day (on which Mel too was off work for the day) was spent visiting six houses we had put on our shortlist. The final house was a three bedroomed detached in Mundeford, Christchurch not far from the old family home in Kestrel Drive and just round the corner from Fiona and Colin. We put in a quick offer, which was accepted, and moved two months later on August 27th. Andy hired a (massive) lorry for the move and both families pitched in. The unloading was all done in time to put our feet up, open some beers and watch

football on the television (we really know how to let our hair down!)

In June Jeremy came down from Bristol and spent a week on works experience with Andy who arranged visits for him to various departments. We also kept him entertained in the evenings (the ten-pin bowling and pool trips being won by Andy)

During our two week "summer holiday" we started to decorate, recording the events with a digital camera (the pictures are on Andy's web site). We became quite adventurous in our exploits with Mel producing sponge effect painting on the walls in the study while Andy laid a wooden floor (not at the same time, though!) We completed the bathroom and study, and over the coming months plan to tackle each room in turn changing the decor to suit our own taste.

In September, Andy was approached by the Information Technology (I.T.) department at the publishing company where he works regarding a possible move into that area. After a successful interview, he was offered (and accepted) a position as a Senior Software Engineer and starts in the New Year. He has been in the Production Department for 10 years and in his current position for nearly six of them during which time he has been responsible for 12 staff, so his new job as a programmer with no staff will be a different and challenging role for him. His

programming skills have been brushed up during the course of the year at home and one of his creations is available to download from his web site (see details below).

Mel's florist took in a new computer system this year and she has had to get to grips with the new technology. It has helped having a PC at home to practice on - although much of this time is spent playing cards or *Tetris!*

With the increasing costs surrounding owning and running two cars, we sold Melanie's Peugeot in the Autumn and are organising ourselves around one car. Andy's new job is 9 to 5 which means no more shift work (other than an occasional emergency call out) which should make things much easier next year.

Andy has continued to be involved on the committee of the Christchurch Parish News and has been heavily involved in a total revamp of the magazine to be launched in January. Not only did he design the new layout, but he also taught the editors how to use a different computer software package to create it. The new look is much more professional and should eventually be produced in far less time than the old "cut and paste" method employed to date.

Andy and Melanie Clayton
E-mail: andy@splatt.co.uk
Web site: <http://www.splatt.co.uk>

Kathy and Nick write

1999- The year of the car gremlin

In January Nick's coat, Kath's purse and Jem's coat containing his new camera were stolen from the choir vestry during a practice in the church. Luckily the items were recovered later that evening. The miscreant insisted that the belongings were his even when we pointed out to the police that the gloves had Jeremy's name in them. He was charged with handling stolen property. While on a church outing to see Mother Goose at the Bristol Old Vic, Nick's car had the wing mirror ripped off.

Also in January, we visited Slimbridge, the bird sanctuary in Gloucestershire, to see a night feed. Everyone sits in a huge glass-sided room in the dark and the birds are fed on the lake right outside the window under floodlights. In February, Jem's scout team came second in a district quiz. He celebrated his 15th birthday by having a skittles evening with his friends. The following month Jem came second in a scout orienteering competition.

In April, the saga of the car continued with Nick's having the lock drilled out when he left it overnight outside the vicarage after an Easter party. In May, we met up with Nick's sister Veronica, her husband Paul, and their children Rachael and Joshua at Longleat Safari park. The wonderful day out was spoilt somewhat when

Nick's car overheated in the monkey enclosure. Perhaps we will end up as one of the rescues featured on the BBC's 999 programme? Luckily we limped slowly through the lion enclosure, the elephant enclosure, and the wolf enclosure while the children had nervous breakdowns in the back of the car. The rest of the day went well, especially feeding the seals. Apparently the large silver backed gorilla, who lives on the island in the middle of the lake, is called Nicko which afforded the boys no end of amusement.

In June, Jeremy had 2 weeks of works experience, one with Andy at Exchange and Mart in Poole, and one at the Customs house in Bristol. The highlight of his fortnight was being bought a drink in a pub by the Custom's Rummage crew. In July Nick left for work one morning and was back almost immediately as he couldn't find his car - it had been stolen! (Good riddance!) It was recovered later that night but was not worth fixing and so was written off by the insurance company.

In August we bought a 1992 Rover and have been really pleased with it. Kath and the boys spent a week in Croydon with Veronica and were there to celebrate Rachael's 12th birthday. We all spent two weeks at Christchurch going bowling a couple of times (Jem got his best score of 167); we helped Andy and Mel move house; and took Mum to crazy golf in Bournemouth. We also bought

a computer and are online (see contact details below).

In September the church youth club spent a weekend camping at Vinney Hill in Gloucestershire. The youth club football team, the Apostles, started the season with a new kit sponsored by a member of the congregation at Holy Nativity. They are already doing much better than last season (when they came last and won the fair play trophy!) Tim plays in defence, Jem plays in mid field and recently Nick has taken over as team Manager.

In October Jeremy visited the 6th form college he hopes to attend from next September. Tim started writing a novel on the new computer. We travelled to Croydon for Rachael's confirmation service. On the way home the Rover kept overheating but topping it up with water seemed to do the trick. The garage put in a new radiator, but then the engine seized up and they eventually had to put in a new one. (I think we will have to get a motorbike instead!!!)

In November Kath started a City and Guilds I.T. course. At the time of writing she has passed level 1 word processing and is about to take her exam in level 1 database.

Kathy and Nick Gibbs
E-mail: nickath@familygibbs.fsnet.co.uk

**With love and best wishes for Christmas and the new millennium from
Joy, Kathy, Nick, Fiona, Colin, Andy, Mel, Jem, Tim (and Sally the dog!)**

Day writer

When my brother, Arthur, was here last Christmas I suggested that he sell his flat in Wokingham and move to Highcliffe. Although not keen on the idea at first he soon changed his mind after a visit from a burglar in the middle of the night in January!

Fiona and Joy enjoying one of their regular games playing sessions at 37 Ridgelfield Gardens - November, 1999



On 1st May he arrived in Highcliffe, Andy having fetched him after the removal men had packed and left (they stored his effects in a warehouse in Christchurch), and he stayed with me until 14th August. Since then he has been happily settled in a warden and security controlled block of flats in Highcliffe, close to shops, library, medical centre and the beach (where he has enjoyed the occasional stroll, even going down one morning before breakfast). I am half-an-hour's walk away or I can hop on a bus in order to visit him.

This year I have had the pleasure of a visit to a stately home, Kingston Lacey, together with Fiona, Colin and Arthur; a picnic and boat trip, again with Colin, Fiona and friends, at historic Buckler's Hard where we also toured the museum, cottages which depict life in bygone days and a small chapel which contains a memorial to Frances Chichester, the famous round-the-world yachtsman. On my birthday I was taken for lunch by Kathy and Nick to a pub in the New Forest and on 27th we all helped Andy and Melanie move into their new home in Mudgeford.

Instead of holding our usual games evening here Fiona, Colin and I went to Andy and Mel's new home in September which made a local change. Sally and I still take our walks on the beach or the local field where we meet the many friends we have made (both human and canine) and I'm still involved with the monthly Bible study group.

Mrs J Clayton

Fiona and Colin write

1999 began well for Colin with the start of a new job at a firm that make modular buildings. Initially it was to cover maternity leave, but in September the new Mum decided to stay home with her baby and Colin was taken on permanently. He really likes the firm and his boss and so we are very happy. His studies continue to go well (he passed his first set of exams in May with flying colours) and his new firm are very supportive of his efforts, even paying his course and exam fees.

Continued overleaf...

Fiona and Colin write Continued

Fi has had more of a struggle this year (being signed off work because of depression for most of the year) but thankfully the 'light at the end of the tunnel' is getting a lot brighter now! One thing that has helped has been starting work with a couple of autistic children who live near Mum. They attend mainstream school, but their parents are keen for them to have after school coaching to help them keep up - which is where Fi comes in. Not having done anything like this before she was a bit apprehensive, but so far it seems to be a great success with the school already noticing an improvement in their work.

Leisure wise, Colin and Fi (together with good friends Paul and Liz) visited the Peak District in February staying in a cottage on a dairy farm. The weather was reasonable for the time of year and we got in some good

walks (the scenery is breathtaking) and had some adventures on the way! Having said that, the best bit was coming back to the cottage, starting up the fire and sipping mulled wine to get warm! We didn't want to come home - a feeling that was reinforced by the fact that when we did, we found that there had been a leak in the roof while we had been away! (Thankfully no serious damage was done.)

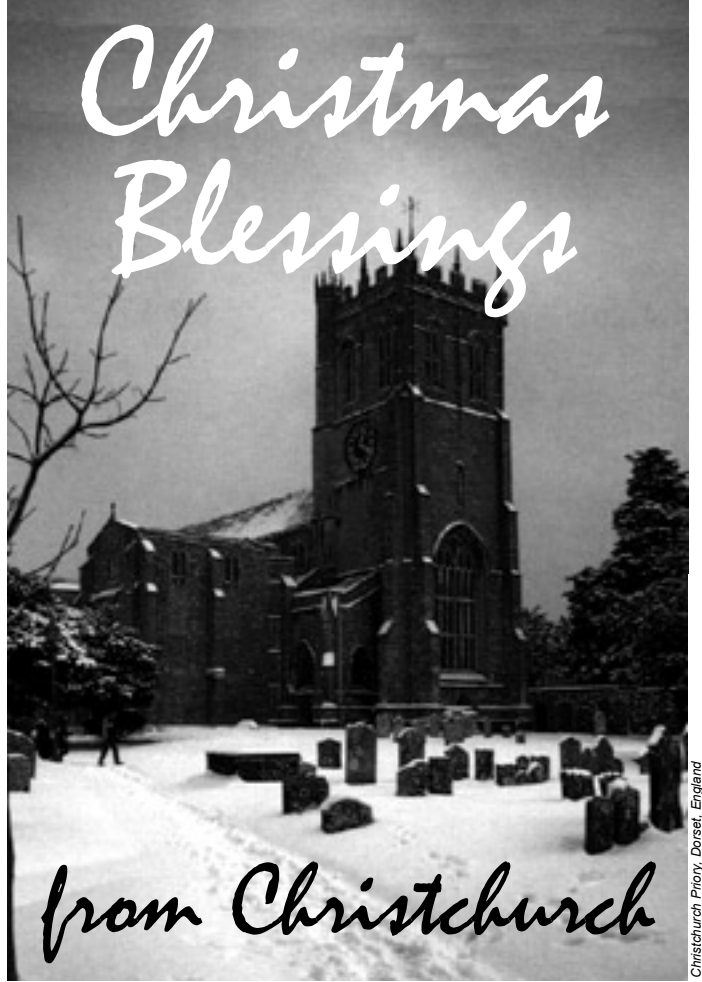
Other outings included various trips to tea-rooms in the New Forest (usually with Paul and Liz), visits to National Trust properties (we're both members), as well as visits to the beach.

Fiona and Colin Mosling,
E-mail: mosling@mosling.screaming.net

Newsletter continues inside with messages from Melanie and Andy and Kath and Nick

Christmas Blessings

from Christchurch



Christchurch Priory, Dorset, England