

(continued)

Achill Island. The weather was very kind to us having only one day of rain, which is unusual for Ireland. We must be lucky as the weather was also kind to us on our last visit in 1997. We made sure that we caught the ferry home.

During our stay we made use of our new digital camcorder recording the highlights of our trip. On our return home Andy edited it down to an hour long film together with titles and music. We were to make use of it again a month later when Mel's sister got married. Andy was kept busy capturing events from the rehearsal through the bridal party and groom preparations and ceremony ending with the evening disco.

As well as 'video man', Andy was also an usher whilst Mel was Chief Bridesmaid. Mel was to put her floristry skills to the test, being asked to make the Brides bouquet, Bridesmaids posies and table arrangements for the reception as well as buttonholes for the immediate family.

During the summer Andy played tennis every Saturday with Colin, trying very hard to beat him. It finally happened, but Colin has Pete Sampras tendencies while Andy plays more like Pete Sampras' mother.

Andy continues as a committee member for the Christchurch Parish News producing the covers and main article layouts in his spare time. As the year draws to a close, he has started a course with the Open

University, studying at Post Graduate level in Computing for Commerce and Industry. The first subject (for which he must produce three written assignments and sit an exam next April) is on the subject of relational databases.

Mel is preparing for a very busy Christmas at the florist although with Christmas Eve being a Sunday she is hoping to have the afternoon off (luxury!)

Andy and Melanie Clayton

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Please note new e-mail address and web site

Kathy and Nick write

The New Millennium... (or is that next year?) or 'What Kathy Did Next' (the abridged and expurgated version).

January 2000

As the year turned we found ourselves in the church hall, where a big party was under way for the second thousand years of Christianity. We held a seven course banquet and Nick supplied the music; this was themed in decades going back to the 1920's and each decade was played during a course. At midnight we had a firework display, excellent even if a little misty. We finished about 3.30am. This was followed by a special service at Noon on 1st January.

Kath started an I.T. course (but she's letting Nick write this) and Tim didn't go to school.

February

"Murder in the Vicarage". Nick and Kath had successfully bid for roles in a Murder Evening in the Vicarage at the church bazaar. Kath was Countess Bogoff; Nick was Otto Von Pinkelworst. The evening was set in Vichy French controlled Casablanca. Everybody dressed up in appropriate costumes and some three hours or so later after 12 bottles of the Vicar's best wine we didn't care who had committed the murder!!

Kath went for a job interview with the DSS and then later that day sprained her knee necessitating 4 hours waiting in Casualty. Jem celebrated his 16th birthday by going for a family outing with a handful of friends to see *Toy Story 2* at the local cinema. Tim didn't go to school again (he has been diagnosed as "School Phobic")

March

We did nothing, Tim didn't go to school.

April

Kath started her new job dispensing assistance to the poor. (Where's ours then?). We purchased a mad cat called Sox (or Socks); having been taken in by his beguiling looks in the Dogs Home. He

is a complete nutter, so fits in with the family very well. He's also cheaper to keep than the kids—so any trouble from them and they'll end up at the Dogs Home. Kath had a scan on her knee, no problems.

Nick and the boys went to Wembley to see Bristol City lose in the Auto Windscreen Trophy final. Kath missed out on the adventure as she had to play the organ for the Palm Sunday services.

Also in April the Church Under-16 football team run by Nick reached the final of their knock out tournament before losing 4-1. Despite the result it was an excellent match and all the kids played brilliantly. Tim didn't go to school.

May

Jem took his GCSE's. We were not holding out much hope as he has been very lazy this year and missed a lot of lessons. We bought a new car, a deep blue Vauxhall Vectra.

On the Bank Holiday we had a family day out at Didcot Railway Centre. The highlight of this was being able to go onto the footplate of the Flying Scotsman. Tim didn't go to school.

June

Tim had his 14th birthday (and still didn't go to school). Both boys took the opportunity to go to the Glastonbury Rock Festival with Nick (who was working there). They managed to see Ocean Colour Scene, Travis, The Pet Shop Boys, Reef and Semisonic, although Nick says David Bowie on the Saturday night concert was not to be missed.

July

Kath won the office sweepstake by picking France to win Euro 2000. Lucky she didn't get England, eh? Jem walked with the church Youth Club from Bristol to Glastonbury, some 25 miles, for the pilgrimage the next day. They camped overnight in Priddy on top of the Mendips. We had to get up at 6am the next morning to transport all their belongings. Probably the most positive thing Jem has done all year. Jem also joined Keynsham Town

Under-17 Football Team. Tim didn't go to school.

August

Jem and Tim spent the week at Purley with Nicks' sister and brother in law. This is a traditional break, for the first time in years Kath was unable to go due to work commitments. The boys and their cousins had a good time at Chessington World of Adventures amongst other days out.

We spent the usual family holiday at Highcliffe with Joy.

Tim not at school due to holidays. JEM PASSED NEARLY ALL HIS EXAMS!!!!!!! (2 B's, 4 C's 3 D's and an F in French).

September

Jem started the 6th Form at St Brendan's. It's a Catholic College with a good reputation. He still does little work though.

Both boys went with the Youth Club to camp at Viney Hill in the Forest of Dean. New car breaks down. Arriva Vauxhall are no help at all, the same with the Warranty Company. Bah. Tim... school ?? No.

October

Tim gets an electric guitar on the basis of going to school soon. Nick, Kath and Jem get little peace. Tim not at school.

November

All visit Wells Carnival in Wells (well it would be, wouldn't it). Good night out. At the end of the month the family go to St Paul's Cathedral for the consecration of the new Bishop of Ebbsfleet.

Tim went to school for half a day. This is terrific progress. We are filled with optimism.

December

We will be spending Christmas at Whimple near Exeter with Nick's Dad before going on to spend New Year with Joy.

Kathy and Nick Gibbs

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

Joy writes

Saw the year 2000 in at a party at Andy and Mel's and now, unbelievably, it's almost gone!
I count my blessings each day, enjoying simple things like walking Sal, working in the garden, chatting to friends of whom I've made plenty during our daily perambulations – some with sad stories to tell, humorous ones too, like 70 year old Brenda, vague, always talking, owns Daisy the shitsu, discovered when halfway home one day it was a strange dog she had on the end of the lead, strong resemblance to Daisy but definitely not Daisy! Sally and I have eventual occasions too, like the time when walking along the beach lost in thought I realised to my horror that Sal had stolen a huge piece of bait from a fisherman's bag – didn't wait to find out his reaction. It was the same day that having hauled myself up the long flight of steps to the cliff top (too many to count) I discovered that the gate was still locked, most unusual, and it fortunately being a barred gate, was able to scramble over in a fairly dignified manner. Every Tuesday night I baby sit two little boys, Jack 6 and Joshua 3 whilst their mother goes out, visit Arthur once a fortnight, enjoy also the family board-games evening every so often, read and do crosswords and attend the Bible study group once a month.

Mrs J Clayton

Fiona and Colin write

The major development for us in the past year has been our decision to try and have a family by adoption. Initial enquiries were made and an 'information Evening' attended in November 1999 made us feel that we may have the qualities needed to be adoptive parents, so we decided to request that the matter be taken further. We had to wait until February 2000 before a social worker came to do our initial home visit - quite an eventful day as we were woken in the early hours by a neighbour who had spotted a couple of youths stealing wheels from our car! So, 4-45am saw us talking to a couple of policemen about the incident (no-one was ever caught) and subsequently trying to work out the best way to buy a couple of new wheels (the car looked very sorry for itself propped up on bricks) - and all this just a few hours before a social worker was coming to 'see if this was a good place to put a couple of kids who need a good home! Needless to say, we saw the funny side of the whole affair - especially as the tyres on the wheels that were stolen were on their last legs and were due to be replaced soon anyway. This first visit went well. We then had our medicals done in April (thankfully Fi's hearing problem is not a problem!) and then it's been a waiting game to see whether we could get on the next 'Adoption Preparation Course' in the Autumn. These are only run twice a year so there were big sighs of relief all round when we did get on that course and we are now (November) completing 4 sessions covering various topics which include legal aspects of adoption, cultural issues, managing challenging behaviour and looking after children who have suffered abuse. Following the completion of this course, our social worker will then conduct several interviews with us at home (with various issues looked at), references will be taken up (and referees interviewed) and finally, in the Spring, all the documentation will be presented to a panel who then decide whether or not we would make suitable adoptive parents. Once we are 'approved' then it is a matter of waiting for some suitable children to be matched - could take weeks, months or even years. We are hoping to adopt either one child or a sibling group of two, aged 18 months to 6 years old. Watch this space!

Fiona and Colin Mosing

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*Arise, Shine;
for thy light is
come and the
glory of the Lord
is risen upon thee*

Isaiah 60:1AV



Newsletter continues inside with more from Melanie and Andy, and Kath and Nick

Melanie and Andy write

We held a small party to celebrate the New Year for family and friends that included playing The Millennium board game created by Andy. We were also treated to an impromptu firework display by several of our surrounding neighbours at 12 midnight.

A new millennium and a new job for Andy who moved to the I.T. department at the publishing company he has worked for since 1990. His job title is a Senior Software Engineer, although his responsibilities vary greatly, including training users on a new computer system and developing a new corporate intranet site.

In May we traded in our old car and bought a "nearly-new" year old Ford Focus Zetec through a main dealership not far from us (see picture). It is light and enjoyable



to drive and was running well until we went on holiday in July to Ireland where we managed to rip the front tyre by driving over a rock in the road.

For our fortnights summer holiday to the Emerald Isle we stayed in a cosy cottage on the west coast in a village called Oughterard, County Galway. Our visit started rather badly when we missed the ferry from Holyhead to Dublin due to road works. We arrived at the port to see the boat disappearing over the horizon. We managed to catch the next one, making us about 4 hours late arriving to the cottage. We went out each day visiting various sights that included the magnificent Cliffs of Moher, Thoor Ballylee the home of poet W. B. Yeats, Galway City and the wonderfully scenic "Atlantic Drive" around