

Andy and Mel write

Andy started the year on a weeks computing (XML) course in London, during which the capital ground to a halt due to heavy snow. Luckily the course centre was a short walk from the hotel, and the weather had improved by the time he returned on Friday. At the end of January, Andy had a nasty fall while at work slipping over in the heavy rain after crossing the road between buildings. He knocked his chin on the edge of some broken paving stones and needed 4 stitches. He is presently sporting a beard to cover the scar much to the disgust of Mel who can't wait for him to shave it off.

In the spring, we continued decorating concentrating on the lounge, stairs and landing. This included removing the existing handrail and balustrades and installing shaped newel posts and twisted metal spindles; painting the walls to complement the new carpet, curtains and 3 piece suite. This project has linked together all our previous decorating efforts and transformed the overall appearance dramatically (the previous owner wouldn't recognise the place).

This year Andy purchased a very nice near-SLR digital camera and has thoroughly enjoyed taking pictures with it. Some of his efforts can be seen on the family web site at www.claytonfamily.org.uk

In July we spent a week in a thatched cottage in Stratford-upon-Avon. As well as visiting places connected with Shakespeare's life we ventured further afield to Oxford (Christ Church Cathedral and College), Blenheim Palace (Churchill's birthplace) and Althorpe House (Princess Diana's ancestral home and burial place). The weather was wonderful and we had a

fantastic time. Continuing our holiday into August we ventured out from home on day trips. These included Portsmouth Historic Dockyard where we viewed Henry VIII's tudor warship Mary Rose and went aboard HMS Warrior and Nelson's HMS Victory. In the summer we held 2 family barbecues one of which coincided with Mel's birthday at the end of June. The other was held on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year (over 100°F) Andy felt considerably hotter than this as he stood cooking the sausages! Most of the meat was bought from a local organic farm shop —much tastier than the supermarket—and was enjoyed by all.

In the autumn we took our DIY skills outdoors to re-landscape the garden. We pulled up the old patio, increased the size of the lawn and laid decking. An arbour replaces the greenhouse, the contents of which have been transferred to a new shed. In the front garden we have planted 2 specimen trees and a new shrub border. At the time of writing Andy is eagerly anticipating England's triumph in the Rugby World Cup and personally continues to play golf and snooker; the latter of which included a one off game with Kath and Tim.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to seeing "Miss Saigon" which will be staged in Southampton in December.

We both remain busy at work (Andy earning a merit rise in the Autumn for all his efforts) and can't believe that 2003 is drawing to an end.

Andy and Melanie Clayton

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Fiona and Colin write

We ended our last newsletter expressing the hope that the legal situation with adopting Courtney would soon be finalised so that we could get on with being a family without the uncertainty hanging over us. We had to wait until March 27th before we finally adopted her. In Courtney's mind she 'married' us that day and has been a lot more settled since. After our visit to the court we celebrated by going to Paultons Park (a family theme park with lots of rides!) and had a super time together. It was a really special day. We had a family celebration in June with a special "Thanksgiving for Adoption" service at our church to which family members, teachers from school and a couple of her school friends came.

In May, Courtney began Riding for the Disabled and recently passed her grade 1. She continues to benefit from weekly music therapy and shows real promise in music. She is a popular student at school, but her developmental delay means that she is still behind and needs a lot of support. Thankfully we have a good relationship with the school and are confident that her needs are being met. She has made progress with her speech and language, her drawing has come on a treat and she is even tackling jigsaw puzzles (previously she hated them). What is most encouraging is an

improvement in her attitude – she is more willing to have a go, and to keep trying if at first she doesn't succeed.

Family outings this year have included a trip to Brownsea Island, a visit to Farmer Palmers in Wareham, a trip on Fi's birthday to the New Forest Otter and Owl sanctuary, several trips to Paultons Park (we do like those scary rides!) and trips to "Alice in Wonderland" (including one with Kath and Tim – Courtney loved having them along).

We had our first family holiday in June – a week in Torquay. We had a fantastic time and can't wait to go away again. We were all able to relax and just enjoy being together and having fun.

Just after we got back, Courtney had her first major accident and managed to knock out her two top teeth (milk ones thankfully). During the last month she lost her bottom two naturally – so now all she wants for Christmas is her FOUR front teeth! She has a very cute smile at the moment! Mischievous!

Over the summer she became dry at night and now has a new cabin bed. She is making progress in so many ways and it is lovely to see her growing self-esteem and self-confidence. She is also growing up – literally. Over the past 20 months she has grown 12cms and gone up 4 whole shoe sizes!

14th September saw Colin and Fi celebrating 18 years of wedded bliss by

Cover picture: **Christchurch Priory, Dorset, UK**

Unfortunately Nick and Kath have separated, hopefully only on a temporary basis. Nick can be contacted via post or e-mail and details of these are available by contacting Kath.

Kathy writes

Jan - Started year with usual trip to Mum's to exchange presents.

Feb - Kath went on a trip to Amsterdam organised through work with friend Laura. Week later came down with terrible flu and in bed for 5 days. Jem had a party for his 19th. Jem buys his own car, a Renault Clio 16v with leather seats and alloy wheels - now officially a boy racer!

March - Kath, Tim and Jem and a few friends go to see Feeder at The Colston Hall in Bristol.

April - Tim starts part-time job at Sainsbury's wheeling trolleys.

May - Nick and Kath collect tokens from local newspaper and go out for several meals including sushi at a fish restaurant.

June - Glastonbury festival. Tim goes with girlfriend Jude, Kath goes with friend Deb, Jem commutes daily as he doesn't want to sleep in a tent! Fantastic time had by all.

July - Jem packs in his job and finds another one in 'motoman'. Whole family go to see Yes - Nick gets their autographs and is overjoyed. Kath manages to get to the semi-finals of the doubles in a snooker competition. She goes out into town with mates from work for her birthday.

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having Courtney's 6th birthday party! Family helped out with preparations and we entertained Courtney and 11 of her friends for a couple of hours. Fi was exhausted afterwards but reckoned all the hard work was worth it! Courtney herself has been to numerous birthday parties so far this term – has a much better social life than her mum and dad!

Other news includes Fi seeing Donny Osmond in concert; Colin getting a pay-rise/bonus at work; Colin becoming a leader for Crusaders and Fi starting to teach Sunday School. Colin had a bit of a health scare this year, but all seems to be well again now.

Life is full and wonderful. Parenthood has been well worth the wait. Courtney is so special that we reckon she is more than worth every tear we've cried over the years of waiting.

Fiona, Colin and Courtney Mosling,

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English Language, Media Studies and Film Studies. Jem wins a billiards competition.

Oct - Jem packs in his job (again) and starts looking for something that pays better and is more interesting. Tim and Kath spend half-term week at Mum's. Tim uses his wages to buy a Fender Stratocaster to replace his very old cheap electric guitar. He and his friend Dave have got a band called The Deformed Mushrooms and Tim has written lots of songs. They hope to do their first gig in the new year.

Nov - Jem gets new job at Royal Sun Alliance. Starts on 24 November with a solid months training in customer relations.

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August - Tim does brilliantly in his GCSE's, getting 2 A's, a B and 2 C's - the highest mark ever for the course he took. He celebrates by going to The Reading Festival with his mate Dave from which he returns smelly, exhausted and very happy! Kath and Jem head for Castle Combe for a driving day. Jem paid for Kath to do this, so now thinks he doesn't have to buy her a Christmas/Birthday present for the next 20 years! They both drive a Formula Ford racing car, a Subaru Impreza and a Lotus Elise!

Sept - We decorate the front room and install a new sofa. Tim starts his A level -

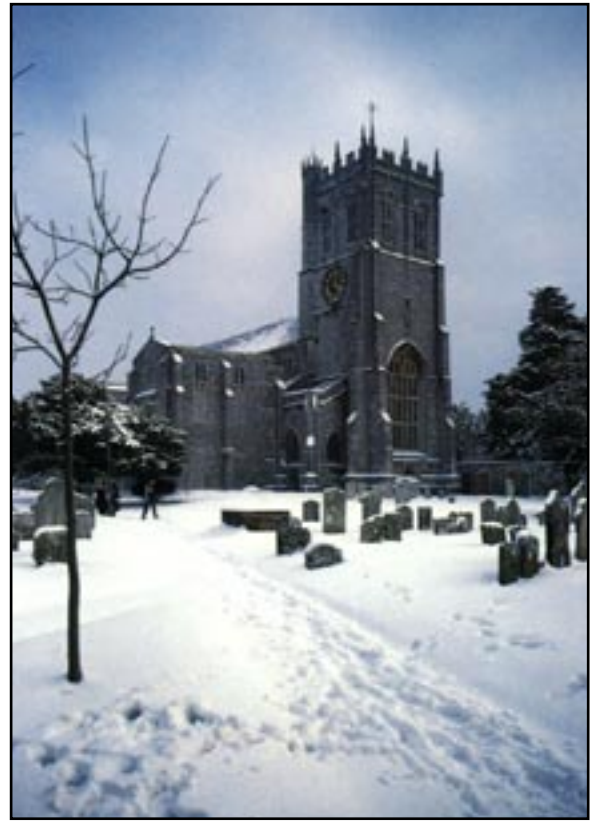
Kathy, Jeremy and Timothy Gibbs

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For the latest news, photographs and contact details for the family see our web site at <http://www.claytonfamily.org.uk>

See inside page for news from Melanie and Andy, and Fiona and Colin



Christmas Blessings

Dear

Joy writes

November 2003

November already and the usual panic to give our newsletter contributions to Andy who does all the hard work printing and running off enough copies for overseas before the posting date deadline.

The most moving and exciting event for me this year was going to Bournemouth Crown Court in March where Courtney was handed a certificate by the judge stating that she "is now a full member of the Mosling family". She looked so pretty in a full length lilac frock, carrying a small basket of flowers prepared by Mel.

I have given up as a leader of the Bible Study Group although still going to meetings as my hearing has deteriorated considerably and in spite of wearing hearing aids, it is sometimes difficult to catch what other people are saying, especially if they speak quietly.

Recently I attended a lunchtime organ recital in Christchurch Priory, something I've been meaning to do for years, and intend doing so again from time to time.

Last year I discovered that there is another clergy widow living a few streets away, made contact, and we have become friends. Her late husband started a Christian Fellowship group at a local community centre and I have been going on Sunday mornings over the past few weeks. However, I still go to my parish church on Friday mornings for Holy Communion.

Arthur is well and happy in his flat. Sally and I visit him fortnightly. It's a 40 minute walk and Sally walks me rather than the other way round - she's a very energetic dog! I'm looking forward to seeing Courtney in the school nativity play; last year she was a lamb.

Joy Clayton

E-mail can be sent care of Andy or Fiona



Above: Sally and Courtney. Christmas 2002.