

## Kathy, Jem & Tim write

**Work and College: Jem is still working for Royal & Sun Alliance and unwittingly catching up on the sleep he loses from the all night partying.**

Kath still works in the local Social Security office, but due to the government's extremely short-sighted cuts the building will be closing. There is a place for her at another office in Bristol, but she feels it is time to move on, so is applying to the MOD. She has an interview on the 2nd of December. Tim did exams for his AS levels in May and June and only just managed to scrape through with a rather poor A in Media Studies, a B in Film Studies and a C in English; he is now continuing at college to finish his A Levels.

**Holidays:** Wanting to fulfil her lifetime ambition Kath set out for a 3 day trip to Venice which despite the minor flood damage was very nice.

Kath and Tim spent a few days at Mum's in the summer, being on hand for her surprise birthday party – Jem also managed to be there for the day despite having to put his party animal lifestyle on hold for an evening. Kath managed to fight off a rather nasty case of flu to go pony trekking with Mel and Fiona, which she enjoyed, as did the pony

**Knowle Constitutional Club:** Kath has now been Secretary at the Club for 2 years. This used to be a gentleman's club but then Jem joined. Kath was one of the first full lady members in the club. This year was the Club's 100th Anniversary and several events were held to mark this occasion, including a meal for all the members and a quiz night. Tim turned 18 this year, he was able to remain sober just long enough to join. Kath and the boys go up to the club quite often to play snooker and enjoy a drink together.

**Music:** Most of our special outings for the year have involved music in some way. Kath and Tim went to see Travis in March in Cardiff. Then Jem and Tim went to see the Red Hot Chili Peppers in Hyde Park; one of the warm up acts for this gig was the grandfather of soul himself, James Brown. Tim and Kath were overjoyed to get Glastonbury tickets. Tim went to the V festival in Stafford with a friend from college – this involved Kath driving them there in the pouring rain which took 6 hours!!!

Luckily it was much quicker getting home again. In October the boys joined Kath and some of her work friends to see FAB208, a local band who specialise in 70s covers, and 2 of whose members are ex-colleagues of Kath's.

Tim is still playing the guitar, and used some of his birthday money to buy a new, much louder, amplifier. The neighbours, fortunately for us, are a long-suffering bunch! He is still hoping to get a band going but is having trouble finding band members. He is still writing songs, though.

**Sport:** Jem still plays in a 5 a side football league once a week. He also joined a gym, telling us he was doing it to keep fit, but soon admitting that it was all down to the blondes in Lycra who were also members!! Kath's work organised a rounders evening which was great fun, even though it started raining. However lack of fitness was apparent in the office the following Monday when everyone had trouble walking! All the members of the family played in a skittles league in the summer, held at the skittle alley in the Club. Kath managed to lose in the final of the snooker doubles competition, the first lady to get that far.

**Church:** Kath has had to play the piano for the last few weeks because the church is full of scaffolding – it is being decorated for the first time in 20 years. The organ had to be dismantled – but at least we now know what happened to Mrs. Fitzharding of the Mother's Union, who disappeared 35 years ago and who was found inside one of the larger pipes!!

**Miscellaneous:** In January Kath and Tim went to a performance of Dick Whittington starring another one of Kath's work mates as King Rat!! Kath's boss was highly embarrassed to be dragged up on stage to give a rendition of 'What shall we do with a drunken sailor', a fact we are still reminding him about all these months later!!

Jem delighted the whole family in April by decorating the kitchen – a lovely shade of purple!! Still I suppose it could have been worse!! And once we've saved up for some nice beech coloured kitchen units it will look stunning!! Or so Jem keeps telling us!

Kath finally took the plunge and got contact lenses – it's wonderful to be able to see when you're putting on eye shadow, and not to steam up when you come in from the cold!!

Tim was involved for a few weeks in the summer helping out as a volunteer on a new TV production. He helped to build the sets and got to know lots of the production staff. The programme is called 'Starhyke' and is due to come out on Channel 4 (UK) during 2005.

Jem has failed to destroy any cars this year. Merry Christmas from Kath, Jem and Tim.

Kathy, Jeremy and Timothy Gibbs

E-mail: [nickath@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:nickath@blueyonder.co.uk)

## Fiona and Colin write

**The first few months of the year were difficult as Colin's mum was in hospital for 3 months with respiratory and heart problems.**

She finally came home in early April and seemed to be getting on ok, but died in her sleep 2 days before Colin's birthday. It was a bit of a shock as we had all felt she was improving, but it was peaceful and Colin is comforted by the fact that she was at home, where she wanted to be. Courtney coped with her first bereavement fairly well, and was a real blessing at the funeral. It will be strange celebrating Christmas without Rona, but we have lots of fond memories to cherish.

A year ago Courtney had just started Year 1 at school and was really struggling. During that first term she spent some of her time back in the Reception class. It soon became clear that it would be best if she was backyearred and repeated Reception. This decision was vindicated when we received her end of year report in July. In July 2003 she had achieved 3 out of 15 criteria, in July 04 she had achieved 12 out of the 15 – quite a turnaround. She is now in Year 1 and loving it.

Courtney has matured in lots of ways during the past year and is a constant source of joy, amusement and love. In church recently, during a time of giving testimony, she wanted Fi to go up and tell everyone that 'God made me happy'. An amazing statement considering all she has been through in her short life. We are so thankful to

Continued on back page...

## Andy and Mel write

**In the spring we went to see Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical CATS at The Mayflower Theatre in Southampton which was very enjoyable and a very unique show.**

We moved our home improvements outdoors this year by landscaping the front garden. Although it is open plan we erected a low wooden fence around the new shrub border, which we created last year. We needn't have worried about what the neighbours thought receiving several positive comments during the construction work!

On April 18 we became very concerned when the oven appeared to lose power, the light and fan fluctuating as we attempted to cook dinner. Upon further investigation we found that all the household electrics were affected. It turned out to be a major fault across the whole street resulting in the power being shut off completely for several hours. It's only at times like this that you realise just how much we all rely on electricity! After attempting to read by candle/torch light we came to the conclusion to retire to bed for a good nights sleep! At 2am we were rudely woken by the electricity company excavating the faulty cables right below our window complete with JCB, light rigging and noisy generator! This continued until dawn (yawn).

Through his work Andy, along with 3 colleagues, this year started working towards Microsoft Certification. The first stage was a module covering databases, specifically Microsoft SQL Server. Having worked on enterprise

databases for a number of years he hoped that this would be a fairly straightforward part of his studies. However, Microsoft has increased the difficulty of the exams in recent years and it is necessary to achieve over 70% to pass! The course comprised home study followed by 3 days intensive "bootcamp" in London in July. At the end of Day 3 Andy took the exam and failed by just one question (according to his tutor). Not one to be beaten, Andy re-took the exam a few days later at a local college in Bournemouth and this time attained over 80% and with it Microsoft Certified Professional status. At the time of writing he is studying the next module in the course, which leads to two exams in February 2005 to become a Microsoft Certified Application Developer.

Andy was in London when Formula One held a "show" Grand Prix through the streets of the capital. Due to the massive crowds it was impossible to see anything, but the noise of the racing cars was something else entirely!

In July the florist shop where Mel has worked for 16 years was sold and she, along with the rest of the long serving staff there, decided to leave. For the remainder of the year she has thrown herself into looking after the home and garden and the spare bedroom (previously "junk" room) has finally been decorated! Andy made some new cupboard doors for the room out of lengths of tongue and groove.

In July we visited Scotland for the first time. To avoid the 10+ hour potential car journey we decided to fly from the local airport which took just 1 hour to get to Glasgow! We hired a car and stayed in a secluded cottage. Amongst the

places we visited were Edinburgh (the Castle and Holyrood House), The Royal Yacht Britannia and a number of local historical buildings and gardens. The scenery is stunning and another visit sometime in the future is certain.

Having owned a nice (but small) convertible for 2 years, we decided to go to the other extreme and have this year upgraded to a Toyota RAV4. We're very pleased with the car and no longer have trouble transporting objects (or people) whenever necessary.

Andy has continued to enjoy his photography this year and now uses a Nikon D70 Digital SLR camera. It will take some time to get to grips with all the dials and switches but he is thoroughly enjoying this rewarding activity.

In August we organised a surprise birthday barbeque for Mum to add to the celebrations for her 70th birthday. Her face when she arrived was a picture (taken with the Nikon, of course!) It was great to have the family together and a wonderful time was had by all.

In November we took Mum to the ballet in Bournemouth and at the time of writing are getting ready to hold Christmas festivities at Catalina Close for both sides of the family for the first time. Lots of preparation, but we're looking forward to it!

With love to all for an enjoyable Christmas and best wishes for the coming year.

Andy and Melanie Clayton

E-mail: [andy@claytonfamily.org.uk](mailto:andy@claytonfamily.org.uk)

Web site: <http://www.claytonfamily.org.uk>

*Joy writes*

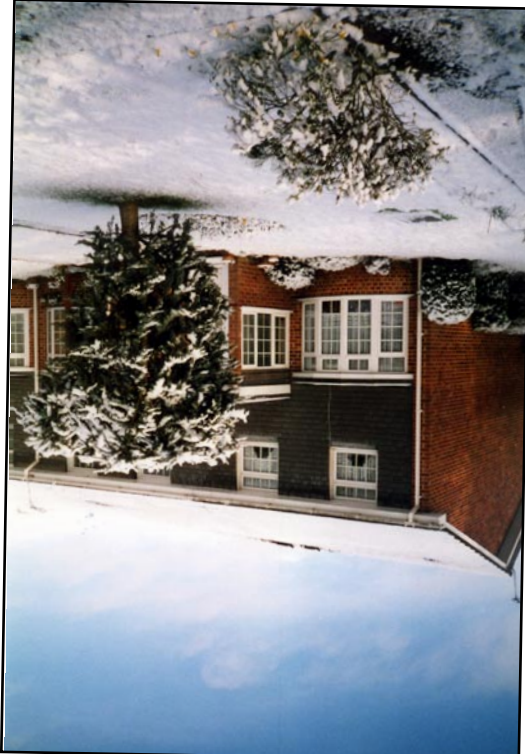
The end of January saw fairly heavy falls of snow, the first in these parts for 15 years or more, if I remember correctly. Great fun for all, including those of more mature years!

2004 was the year of my 70th birthday and what a lot of surprises were in store for me. So much loving effort by my family went in to making this special occasion a delicious memorable one. Having enjoyed a delicious dinner at Colin and Fiona's home where they presented me with a terracotta garden thermometer I was then driven home where I found the lounge decorated and Andy and Mel sitting on the patio under a very large green garden parasol (another gift from all my children). To my mystification I was then handed a bag of nuts. All became clear when, on being led round to the front of my garden shed I found a very smart Brushwood bird table complete with "thatched" roof and nut feeder. My third present! To my delight Kath and Tim arrived the following Sunday afternoon to stay over and I was told I would be taken to lunch the following day – it being a public holiday. However, Kath persuaded me on some pretext, to stop off at Andy and Mel's on the way where again I received a very carefully planned surprise – a barbecue party, which was attended by Mel's parents,

Barbara and John, her uncle Ray, my brother Arthur, Colin's dad Ed, Jeremy, turned up shortly after our arrival so there were 14 present in all. During the afternoon we enjoyed games of darts and bagatelle. Another birthday treat was a trip with Andy and Mel to the Moscow City Ballet's production of "Cinderella" on 1st November - my first visit to the ballet for many years. It was a wonderful evening – superb dancing, beautiful costumes and our seats were in the dress circle which meant an uninterrupted view of the stage. It was an evening to remember.

For the first time in many years Christmas celebrations will not be held at my home. Instead we will be going to Andy and Mel's - something to which I am greatly looking forward. New Year festivities will be here with Kath, Jem and Tim joining us as usual. At the time of "going to press" Sally is recovering from an encounter with an alsation which resulted in her needing 4 stitches in a wound on her back. It could have been much worse.

My thoughts will be with friends and relations far and near, and my wishes for a blessed Christmas and God's peace in the year ahead to you and your loved ones.



Above: Joy's house in the January snow

November 2004

E-mail care of Andy or Fiona (see inside pages)

Joy Clayton

**Continued from inside page...**

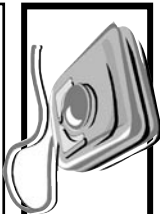
God for all that He is doing in her – and us. Courtney's interest in nature has not diminished in any way. At school they have to check her pockets after playtime – they turn up all sorts of things – wood louse, spiders, ants and snails! During the spring we got fed up with her constantly bringing snails into the house so we gave in and Courtney is now the proud owner of 2 Giant African Land Snails called Charlie and Nina! They were only 3cms long when they arrived; now 5 months on they are 8cms long and could breed! They are very tame and have different personalities (I bet you didn't know a snail could have a personality, did you?) with Charlie being the adventurous, sociable one of the pair and Nina being more shy and quiet. They had a visit to school with Courtney and seemed to really like the noise, waking as soon as we went into the

classroom. They also like Courtney's disco light. (Yes, I know, I've completely flipped! Motherhood has changed me—for the better I hope).

Family life keeps us active and Courtney is always coming up with ideas of how we can spend our leisure time – whether it's trips to the beach, finding conkers, swimming, etc. Our trips this year (apart from the normal ones-beach, parks, rides, farm etc.) have included going up in a (tethered) hot air balloon, a visit to Monkey World, a week long holiday in Dawlish Warren and a trip by train to Basingstoke to visit 'Milestones' (the Hampshire Heritage Centre).

August 2nd saw Fi reaching the big '40' and Colin did a brilliant job of organising a surprise 40th birthday party for her. (Courtney did really well to not give the game away.) It was lovely to see family and friends making such an effort to make the day so special.

Fiona, Colin and Courtney Mosling  
E-mail: [moslingfamily@ntworld.com](mailto:moslingfamily@ntworld.com)



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