

## *Fiona and Colin write*

**We spent a lovely week in the Cotswolds in June, staying in the same chalet as on our previous visit in 2004.**

Gorgeous weather meant that Beth was entertained by feeding the local wildlife – swans and ducks, and by ‘hunting’ rabbits. One unsuspecting baby rabbit found itself having a cuddle with Beth – Fi had the camera and recorded the event. Beth had the chance to cuddle tamer baby rabbits on a visit to the Cotswold Farm Park, together with guinea pigs and chicks. We also visited Cirencester, Chedworth Roman villa and various other local attractions. This year sees us going away for a second time. In December we have our first trip abroad going to Disneyland Paris (3 nights) and then Paris itself (2 nights), travelling on the Eurostar. An early start in London on departure day made us opt for a stopover the night before, staying at a hotel near Trafalgar Square. Beth hasn't been there so lots of new experiences for her!

All three of us have been making progress on the educational front: Colin is nearing the end of his diploma in Forensic Science; Fi has a few more Open University courses under

her belt (including a distinction for Applying Psychology which completely amazed her) and Beth is finally beginning to get the hang of reading. Even more pleasing than this, is the fact that her teacher reports a huge improvement in her attitude to learning. During a recent assessment by her educational psychologist Beth worked really hard because she knew the report would be sent to the admissions panel for the special school we're applying to for Year 7. Beth really liked it when we visited earlier in the year and is desperate to go there. She kept asking us if 'Beaucroft' has said "yes or no" yet. We have only just heard that she has been awarded a place much to her (and our) delight. She has significant special needs, the extent of which are only now becoming more obvious as she gets older, so her being in the best school is essential. We feel it offers her the best chance of eventually being able to live independently as an adult because the curriculum includes many opportunities to practise life skills.

September saw Colin & Fi celebrating 23 years of wedded bliss and Beth turning 11 so we went out to celebrate! Following a few hours at Splashdown and a meal, we ended up watching Mamma Mia at the cinema. It has now become a firm favourite with Beth and

she is currently learning all the songs so we listen to them in the car – again, and again, and again! Going to the cinema is a popular pastime with the Moslings and Beth is now of an age when her interests are widening and us girls go and see 'chick flicks' on occasions. She is also partial to Sci-Fi and especially loves adventure stories.

We remain active in our church - Colin with the youth and Fi with the worship band. Beth sleeps over once a week at Mum's so we can attend house group together. It's lovely having some respite and we really value the space it gives us. Occasionally we give housegroup a miss and go out for a meal as a couple instead.

The only 'fly in the ointment' this year has been that recently Colin once again joined the ranks of the unemployed. He had a temporary position at Honeywell for over a year, and was hoping it would be made permanent. We think the credit crunch may have led the company to lay off all temporary staff. Fortunately a couple of weeks later and he begins a temporary job until Christmas. We wait to see what 2009 brings in the work line for him.

**Fiona, Colin and Beth Mosling**

## *Andy and Mel write*

**In January Andy started having alto saxophone lessons fulfilling a long held ambition to learn to play a musical instrument with professional tuition. He is progressing well and thoroughly enjoying this new hobby.**

Mel and Misty have to endure his nightly practising. Luckily (as we live in a detached house) the neighbours don't. Andy purchased his own instrument in April and in September was asked to join the "Sax Pak" an ensemble comprising of baritone, tenor, alto and soprano saxophones. They will be performing at a local Christmas Carnival on 13 December and at a concert in the New Year.

This year, Mel and Misty have attained an in-house Bronze award at the dog training class we all attend weekly. They also passed the Kennel Club's own equivalent certificate. At the time of writing we're preparing to take the in-house Silver test with the Kennel Club version to follow early next year.

In March we changed the car, getting something smaller and more fuel efficient but still a hatch back big enough to hold a Misty-sized cage! That same month saw Mel visiting Crufts. This year she came home with shopping including a new dog bed and lead.

In July, Mel and Misty joined with other members of the dog club to perform at local summer fayres. This included a line-dance routine, tricks and games. All of the dogs (and owners) thoroughly enjoyed the experience as did the many people who came to watch.

In August, Mel 'put on her floristry hat' to help a friend make up the flowers for her daughter's wedding. This included bouquets for the bride, bridesmaids and the church flowers and took a whole day to put together.

At the end of August, Mel and Andy went to Bournemouth to witness the first air show to be held over the beach there. This included parachutists, wing walkers and planes (such as the Vulcan) and team displays by helicopters (one did a loop the loop!) and the fantastic Red Arrows.

In September Mel, Andy and Misty stayed in a cottage in West Norfolk for a week. It was the first time that we had all been on holiday together and Misty was very well behaved, sitting under the table in pubs while we had meals. We did lots of walking and visited very pretty villages including Burnham Thorpe, the birth place of Lord Nelson where his father was Rector of the Parish Church.

In October we attended a Barn Dance in aid of Caring Canines, a local charity that takes dogs to visit people in hospitals and nursing homes.

We've continued our family history investigations, this year concentrating mainly on Mel's side of the family where there's an intriguing mystery surrounding a 1901 census completed with the incorrect surname. A genuine mistake or something more sinister? To coincide with the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War, we've transcribed letters sent home from the Western Front by Andy's Great Uncles (George and Ernest) as well as a very interesting diary written by Joy's father between May and December 1914. By the time you read this, much of this information will have been added to our web site ([www.claytonfamily.org.uk](http://www.claytonfamily.org.uk))

Andy's work is still as uncertain as ever. There have been several more redundancies this year and as of October 19 the IT department comprises just Andy and one other person. Meanwhile Andy continues to design and host web sites and is in the process of setting up a new business venture with his music teacher and her husband.

We put our house on the market in July, but are not holding our breath for a sale any time soon. Luckily we're happy where we are and are mainly selling to gain a bigger garden for the benefit of a certain four-legged member of the family.

Wishing you a very Happy Christmas and 2009

**Andy and Melanie Clayton  
Web site: [www.claytonfamily.org.uk](http://www.claytonfamily.org.uk)**

## *Kathy writes*

**Here are a few of the highlights of 2008 for the Gibbs family:**

I accompanied a local choir in a performance of Olivet to Calvary on Good Friday and joined with another local choir to sing at a festival choral evensong, as well as continuing to run the local church choir.

We went to several musical events, including a concert by Radiohead in London in June. The gig itself was wonderful, but the trip back to Paddington was a bit stressful as we caught the wrong tube train and would have only caught the last train back to Bristol by the skin of our teeth if it hadn't been delayed by half an hour, which we only discovered when we were sprinting along the platform.

As usual, Tim and I went to the Glastonbury Festival, this time joined by Jem and two of his friends. The weather was kind to us this year, the first dry Glastonbury since 2003, and we have already booked our tickets for next year. Highlights this year were The Verve, Neil Diamond, and The London Community Gospel Choir, as well as some crazy man in the circus tent who was meant to be juggling ping pong balls, but was having one of those nightmare days where everything went horribly wrong, which made it hugely funny.

Our local team, Bristol City, made it to the Championship playoff final at Wembley and we took advantage of the opportunity to take a trip to the new stadium, well worth it. You approach the stadium from the tube station along a wide straight mile long pathway, all the supporters mixed together, singing and chanting, which really adds to the excitement of the occasion. Although we lost in the end, the one thing that really impressed me was the mutual respect of the two sets of supporters, something that doesn't happen very often at a football match.

The boys went camping in Woollacombe with a group of friends and had a memorable time. I'm not sure that they ever got around

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Joy writes

**haven't anything to report for the first half of the year as I contracted a virus which put me out of action for a few months.**

On my 74th birthday in August I was taken out for lunch at a pub a few miles away by Andy and Mel. To my surprise and delight the rest of the family turned up, including Tim's girlfriend, Jenny.

You may recall that in last year's letter Andy and Mel mentioned that they had attended a live demonstration by Richard Curtis with his dogs. I was unable to go on that occasion as Sally was sick. However, I got the opportunity to go this year in September with Andy and Mel and was thoroughly entranced by the dogs' performances. Richard was due to fly to America two days afterwards, so it seems he is much in demand.

Kath spent a few days with me towards the end of October "recharging her batteries", she said, whilst I thoroughly enjoyed her company.

I still attend the Bible study group on the 1st Monday of each month, leading twice a year, and go to the Support Group at church on Fridays. Beth sleeps over every Wednesday night and we have great fun together watching DVDs, drawing and reading stories.

Sally is over 12½ but still energetic and always ready for "walkies", usually on the meadows but also through the local nature reserve and on the beach where we have met up with Andy, Mel and Mistry a few times. Sally sleeps a lot now (I hope the neighbours don't think it's me snoring!)

Autumn started with sunny days and mild temperatures but has now turned into heavy rain and gales evocative of Cape winters when as a child I came home from school soaking wet, evenings were spent in front of a blazing fire listening to "They Walk By Night" (terrifying ghost stories) on the "wireless" as we called the radio then.....

Enough of reminiscing – I end by wishing you and all those whom you love the blessings of a joyful Christmas and God's peace in the year to come. With, as always, my Love.

Joy Clayton

(above) Jem and Tim enjoying themselves at Glastonbury 2008



November 2008

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to putting the tents up but as the weather was warm it didn't seem to matter too much. Tim went on trips to York and Glastonbury (the town) with his girlfriend Jenny. He very much enjoyed visiting York Minster.

In May, Tim produced his first publication, a short story called 'Tunnels'. A copy of this book is now stored in the British Library. One day when Tim's a famous writer, this book might be worth a fortune so let me know if you would like one, only £2 each. (or you could get two, one to keep and one to sell on Ebay in years to come...)

Tim passed the second year of his Creative Writing degree with a 2.1, and I passed the second year of my accountancy exams.

Tim is now working part time as a Visual Behaviour tutor to an autistic boy called Max.

This involves teaching him life skills and working on his vocabulary and communication. All this is designed to help Max become as independent as possible, and Tim is finding it rewarding and challenging.

In November, Jem got promoted. He has only been at Network Rail for two years so he has done very well and put in a lot of hard work to get there. Hopefully this is the start of a long and glittering career.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to seeing the comedian Dylan Moran in Bristol in two weeks. You may remember him as the drunken Irish bookshop owner in Black Books on Channel 4 a couple of years ago.

Here's hoping you all have a wonderful Christmas and a New Year full of good health and happiness.

Kathy, Jeremy and Timothy Gibbs

For more photographs and news please visit our website  
[www.claytonfamily.org.uk](http://www.claytonfamily.org.uk)

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

