

HAVE WE GOT NEWS FOR YOU!?

As the world finally gets to grip with climate change, we have been snapping up airmiles before they become embarrassing – Ben reckons that between us we have clocked up about 82000 miles this year, though Judy has planted 500 bulbs in the garden as part of our carbon offset program. Judy & Chris also virtuously cycle into Cambridge whenever necessary, a major cause of smug. But changes have been happening, and more are on their way. Perhaps the main change has been Chris taking retirement (age 61) in October – it has meant more time with the family, and more time for music.

Change is also on the way for Ben, who is in his final year at school, and who has been applying for places in aerospace engineering – he has had offers from Manchester, Sheffield and Southampton, and is waiting to hear from Bath and Bristol. His AS results in the summer were very good (he has so far not told us exactly what he got), and he has visited Bath and Manchester for open days, which he clearly enjoyed, and has been to aerospace-specific events at Manchester and Sheffield after offers. Ben has now dropped geography A level (which he enjoyed and was doing really well at) in order to concentrate on the maths and physics which he will need for engineering. Stefan is in his final year of middle school, and will have to pick a Sixth Form for next September. There are a few options; he has a conditional offer at a fee-paying school in Cambridge, but it remains to be seen what the best choice will be. Judy has contemplated changes in her work, but the likelihood that we will be moving away from Cambridge in three years once Stefan has done with school makes her reluctant to take on a new challenge for such a short time. Continuing uncertainty about the future of the NHS makes it unclear which way (if any) to jump.

One change that has already happened is that for the first time we did not take summer holidays as a family. Ben went on a four-week trip to South Africa via Dubai in the summer and coped really well with the whole trip, including teaching Maths in a boarding school near Pretoria. He has also discovered baby giraffes are the same height as him. The rest of us had 10 wonderful days walking (just one rained off) in the breathtaking landscape around Zermatt. Ben endured miserable weather and shabby accommodation in February on a geography field trip to Malham, and Studland in October was only a bit better – time to give up on geography, Ben! But we did have a sunny short week at October half term all together with Judy's sister Jackie and her daughter Freya in Fuerteventura - a welcome recharge before the winter. Stefan presses on with his music – various county youth ensembles and another year of Guildhall each Saturday in term has advanced his cello playing a long way. Meantime he does clarinet as a kind of relaxation, but got a merit in Grade 7 last month apparently without much effort. A more practical enthusiasm is a metal clarinet from ebay, which he is polishing up and will have overhauled – he liked that so much he went and found another on ebay! The only downside is that he is inclined to leave one project unfinished on some work surface somewhere and just go straight on to the next – project and work surface! Ben continues to play (but not practice) cello and horn, and Judy has got into playing flute on Sundays at the Baptist church in the village. After a busy year with eight conferences, Chris has taken advantage of retirement to increase his practice on the horn, and this appears to be paying off (how else does one improve?) As a retirement autopresent, he has bought a new horn, which is bedding in, but promises to be a great investment.

We marked various events and anniversaries this year. Chris' mother Marian reached the grand age of 90 in September, but sadly her health deteriorated in March, when she was admitted to hospital for three weeks with a pulmonary embolism followed by pneumonia. Since then, she has come home, but now needs constant care, as she has been developing cognitive problems, and has very poor sight. She still seems to be quite cheerful, though most of the time she is in bed now. Our good friends Nick and Margaret celebrated 40 years of marriage this summer, and we had a lovely lunch at Downing College to mark the event. And this year will be the final year that the choir in which

Judy & Chris sing, the Orlando Singers, will be conducted by Peter Horley, who has been a great friend and musical leader for thirty years (in Chris' case) – we hope an equally good musician will come forward to replace him, but it will be a tough act to follow.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas, and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2016!

Chris, Judy, Ben & Stefan



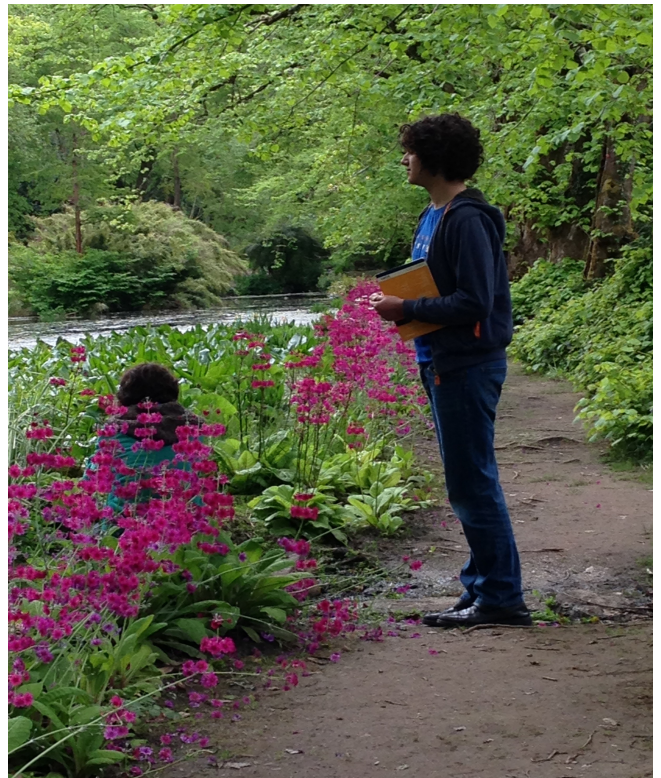
Last-minute Afrikaans revision



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Ben and Stefan at Enys, Cornwall