

2023 CHRISTMAS NEWS OF VARIOUS HEPPELL FOLK: BRIGHTLINGSEA, PORTLAND, BRIGHTON

Well, with the exception of Stephen (see below) its been another stable, healthy year all round . Stephen on the other hand had a bit of a cancer scare in May, with a quick (rather major but successful) operation, and then pretty much everything (as the doctors told him) that could go wrong, did go wrong. Sepsis, heart, liver and kidney damage and goodness knows what else in between. He has had some exciting ambulance rides with sirens and lights (!) and spent way too many nights in multiple hospitals with Carole heroically clocking up the miles visiting daily. However, the last bed stay (hopefully) was last weekend, so its onwards and upwards to 2024.

The main impact of all this is what you are reading now, a multi-authored newsletter: this year everyone has written their own contributions. It has been a busy, eventful year for them to report on; so let's see below how they have done! As ever this newsletter could not be printed, posted or indeed written without the help and encouragement of Lys (her son Harry graduated with a 1st this year!).

Since Grandad Stephen can hardly walk far yet, let alone ski, Les Trois Vallées will have to wait for some of the family, with Christmas at The Anchorage, for them for the first time in decades. Sadly, there is already much fluffy deep snow. Roll on 2024.

Toby and Cali write:

Toby and Cali (and their two very-spoiled cats) are still loving life in Brighton. Toby turned 40 this year and, much to his dismay, remembers Stephen's 40th birthday, which he recalls seemed to have a lot of old people present – he says doesn't feel as old as they seemed when he looks in the mirror.

In the vein of 'old people stuff' Cali and Toby did some long hikes during lockdown and this is something that continues to be a hobby, with some more South Downs hiking this year – preferably with a pub at the end of it. Next year will see them taking on another 100 miler along the rocky northern coast of France so stay tuned to next year's newsletter to see how that goes (a thrilling cliffhanger... though they're hoping for no cliff-hanging).

The house is a 'Heppell house' in that it remains about as far from finished as this time last year, with a few tweaks here and there. The garden still receives the bulk of their attention, with veg growing aplenty.

In terms of work Cali's still enjoying her job as a packaging designer and continues to take delight in seeing her designs rolled out nationwide.

By the time you read this Toby will be a few days away from stepping into a new role at the same company heading up the digital team for four marine titles. The work remains fun but challenging with “fast, good and profitable” all requirements that do not always go together!

Juliette, Josie and Elodie write:

This year in Brightlingsea has continued much the same for Let, Josie and Elodie. Now in Y5 and Y3, the girls are enjoying the whirlwind run up to xmas with more choir performances than we can mention, dodgeball tournaments and piano performances.

Elodie is loving being in the 'junior' section of the school and has thrown herself into every available activity, much like her sister. Outside of school, Elodie still loves ballet and the ambition to be a dancer remains. In between choir clubs, swimming, dodgeball, science club and goodness

knows what else, she has also managed to squeeze in a fair bit of sailing. She is looking forward to being able to race her Optimist next year. She sailed in the Mirror Nationals this year with Uncle Toby and thanks to Uncle Toby has finally fully regained her confidence after being stuck under the boat last year.

Josie is as busy as her sister. She passed her piano exam last year and is taking another grade at the start of next year. She remains Harry Potter obsessed and apparently can't wait for next year when she might receive her letter from Hogwarts! Josie's sailing has gone from strength to strength. Highlights include sailing a sonata in the Yacht Club races, her mirror with family friend Barney, her Optimist across the year at various events (and placing 3rd girl in the coached regatta at the Oppie nationals - her coach was big cousin Amelie) and a Tera during the sailing club cadet nights. She is sailing once a month through the winter at various Oppie events (and is learning how to deal with frozen ropes!). School is going well and this is the first year any of us can remember that she hasn't threatened to break out and head off sailing. We will take the win!

Letty has had a busy year. Her Beach School continues to grow and to rebuild following the Covid years and she has been running forest school sessions at the girls' school too. Her work with arts charity Time and Tide Bell is also growing leaving very little time for much else! In a fit of madness that might reflect the last year, she and her cold water swimming friends have signed up for 12 coldwater swims through December to raise money for Cancer UK - the sea is currently 5 degrees! As we edit this, she has just completed her 12th swim for December.

In true Heppell style the renovated house-next-door is progressing slowly but might one day be ready to be lived in, although the girls are threatening to live with nanny and grandy forever more... Who knows!

Melissa, Simon, Amelie and Louis write:

Life in Portland however has been full of less dramas but equally as hectic as the rest. The house seems to have become a permanent dwelling for any number of the sailing community who are keen to access the waters of Portland and a fantastic community has developed with sailing friends moving in next door. See first photos below.

The Portland team are heading off Skiing over Christmas, whilst the rest of the family have been put on an indefinite Postponement for recovery!

Melissa is still enjoying running the school as Principal (5th year and still going strong!) and although busy has worked hard continuing to develop the school as the heart of the Portland community. The school is growing from strength to strength and despite the challenges has created a wonderful Atlantic Family within the staff. Besides work, Melissa's time on the water this year has been rather pathetic, however she's still dabbling at wing foiling (still as hard as it was last year) and still foiling in the Waszp which is great fun.

Simon's business still goes strong - hosting a number of local world championships in Portland led to a busy summer but work has been flourishing. The tri is still 'not quite finished' but there's chat that this year could be the year.... Simon's been competing in the Moth again this year with world championships and a Moth National Championship (and title) under his belt - he's holding Amelie and Louis off from stealing the Moth, but for how long that will last we've no idea! Simon has also been spending time coaching on the 49er circuit this year - currently in Thailand - which has seen some great results from his teams.

Amelie, now 16, managed to navigate GCSE amongst her sailing time and astounded us all by posting some fab results. After heavy research on what post 16 program required the minimum effort and allowed the most amount of hours sailing she finds herself studying a BTEC Extended Diploma in Sport - as far as anyone can see this A level equivalent involves PE, every day, oh and sailing. She remains once again an active member of the 29er National Sailing team and this year has also been supported by TASS (Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme) which sees further support through a strong coaching program and is working towards a DiSE qualification (Diploma in Sporting Excellence) which as far as anyone can tell means you get a qualification for going sailing! Alongside the international competitions in the 29er she's been Moth sailing, Waspz sailing and is spending a decent amount of time in the olympic 49erFX, oh and has had time to throw in some coaching to top it off - it's been busy!

Louis, now 13, is trying hard to give Amelie's sailing time a run for its money - he started the year sailing his Feva. Louis has now progressed onto the 29er - he's new to the fleet and has already made it to the Class National Squad - a fantastic achievement considering he's a good 5 years younger than the people he is racing against! His plans next year are to be competing on the international circuit alongside his sister which he's incredibly excited about - Mum and Dad's bank balance is less ecstatic about all this! Besides the 29er Louis has also been mastering his Waspz skills this year - he's getting scarily good at it and gives us all a good run for our money. School wise Louis moves into GCSE selections this year and is still working hard - we have hope for him yet!

Stephen and Carole write:

Not much to say here; six months largely in a hospital bed for Stephen, same time for Carole on the road between home and hospital. Stephen still loves his relationship as the chair in learning innovation with Universidad Camila Jose Cela in Madrid, Carole is still keeping the vast extended family together and helping everyone's research and work too. She is very much the beating heart of all the above.

Next year we should have the dear old (1907) oyster smack up and racing again, and a few shows maybe in the old Austin 7 too? We might even finish the house! Till then here's our warmest Christmas cheer for you and bring on 2024! Keep well and keep safe.



Portland gang



Christmas Newsletter 2023 from all of us in Brightlingsea, Portland and Brighton, to all of you, around the world these days, with a very happy and festive season's greeting. The Anchorage, George Avenue, Brightlingsea, Essex. CO7 0NE www.heppell.net/christmas page 3 of 6



Brightlingsea gang





Brighton gang

