

Xmas 2015

... and the show rolls on & on !! As I write at the start of Dec, Julie is unfortunately in hospital with a chest infection – fingers crossed it's not pneumonia.

Last year we had Christmas at home with Julie and then spent Boxing Day at Graham & Sally's with other members of the Sloan family who were also able to be there. Great fun & lovely to catch up! This year, Kate's Tom will be joining us along with Liz for Christmas lunch & several members of the Sloan family will come to us this Boxing Day – a chance at last to meet Sarah & Tom's little girl Louisa. Unfortunately, Kate is working both Christmas Eve & Boxing Day so we hope she'll be able to get back in time to see as many as she is able.

After a year in the flat, Kate is now in her own home with boyfriend Tom. We stumped up a deposit for her so the money she earns now goes into a mortgage & not into rent. Tom still has his place in Carne but during the summer secured a teaching assistant's post in Andover in a special school. The two of them have started to put their stamp on Kate's place and it's turning into a lovely home. A rewire has sorted the electrical problems (fingers crossed) and the heating system is hopefully functioning better for a service & clean up (but money has been set aside for a new boiler if necessary!!) Kate's enjoying her work as a physio at Winchester & from time to time recognises members of this locality. She still plays tennis & sings with a local choir!!

Hannah received some great results for her A levels and has almost completed the first term of her Foundation Course in Art & Design at Weston s Mare gathering skills & knowledge apace. Her college room overlooks the sea and her windowsill seat offers much entertainment watching the world go by!! The search is now on for a Uni for the degree course and with interviews lined up for Jan & Feb, we keep our fingers crossed !! Sport at Weston is almost non existent but she cycles to & from the Uni site & is walking more finding many places to refine her photography skills. She passed her driving test in June which finally gave her some freedom & the ability to drive herself to the numerous babysitting jobs she had accrued ! The proposed 18.5 birthday canal trip was a great success plying through the locks and moving the swing bridges on the Kennet & Avon Canal near Aldermaston.

The Uni interviews have postponed our proposed trip to NZ for a year as Hannah needs to transport several large art portfolios etc to them so we're on standby with the articulated truck. It will also give us a full year, hopefully with less distractions than this one, to get our heads around the trip and settle down to the planning.

Keith took his final Open University exam to obtain an BSc Open Honours degree 2:1 - the level 3 courses he took being Computer Algebra, Quantum Mechanics, Astrophysics and Relativity. He would like to do an MSc at Southampton Uni, but that would mean finding £10,000 for fees and travel. So in the mean time he has booked himself onto a pottery course starting in Jan. He did a week's watercolour course with David Howell at Dedham Hall back in June and has changed his weekly course to a different location and tutor. We are both booked in for a short break in Derbyshire with a day's watercolour course on trees on our 25th wedding anniversary in March and a short sailing holiday in Scotland on a 1904 Ketch "Bessie Ellen" in May partially replicating our honeymoon! It'll be a lot of hard work pulling on all those sheets as opposed to letting the crew sail the Andando in the Galapagos!!

We've both taken up bowls in Winchester but it tends to clash with tennis so I'm not as involved as Keith. I had never really taken on board what a challenging game it is both mentally & physically since it's played in all weathers and the games are easily 1.5 hrs long!! I've yet to make it through a game without completely losing focus !!

We still play badminton and boules helping our village to jointly win the Inter Village title with a neighbouring village since all things ended equal!! In the summer my doubles partner & I secured the tennis club's ladies title after many close run games throughout the tournament .

I took a digital photography course to try to figure out all the uses of the knobs dials & switches on my camera and have been pleased with the results. Now I'm trying to transfer all the info onto the bridge camera received on my 60th!

I celebrated said event at Selsey with family enjoying a favourite place from our youth as my Gran owned a bungalow there - so many family ties & memories. As a surprise pressie, the girls took me off dressed in my togs for a celebratory tea at an hotel in the New Forest – a most enjoyable experience with the youngest daughter acting as chauffeur!!

After 10 years, in June I was finally able to relinquish the Hall duties to another – oh the freedom and release from all the responsibilities!! Unfortunately the new manager has already fallen by the wayside and recruiting is going apace!

Work began in June on a long dreamt of kitchen extension which now, with just a few snags to iron out, is a total joy in which to cook. However with seating on one side of a central island opposite my workspace, I will need to get used to working in front of an audience as people are now able to come and chat sitting directly opposite me working !!

Julie & I finally went to the NEC Gardener's World Live - a trip we have been discussing for many years. Not in the same league as the big shows but still a very enjoyable if tiring day. We also dropped in on the Black Country Museum on the way home which has expanded somewhat since I was last there in the 80s!! After visiting Hannah recently, we also went to Bristol to the Clifton suspension bridge, the observatory & the camera obscurer and the following day to SS Great Britain which needs considerably more time than we gave it!! With an annual ticket there are more opportunities to achieve that goal ! If you've never been, it's fascinating - go for the full 5 hours in the car park, make sure you collect the 2 tickets, 1 for the car & the other to claim a refund of £2. The 5 hours will enable you to achieve much more than we did !! We also went on a trip to Highgrove which we both really enjoyed – apart from the coach travel !

So with Christmas cards to write and food prep to get on with for both Christmas Day and Boxing Day, I'd best get on!!

Have a lovely Christmas with plenty of new things to enjoy in the year ahead. In this troubled world, we hope you, your family and friends remain safe and well.

Merry Christmas
Jenny, Keith Kate & Hannah
xxx