



Happy Christmas All,



It seems that the 2011 Christmas season has seen a rise in the Harbury Folk Club Choir's profile. This year we have been invited to sing in no less than four Christmas services/concerts. Our biggest 'booking' was at Dale Street Methodist Church in Leamington Spa for their charity Christmas concert in aid of the National Children's Home (now called Action For Children). We selected our programme for that and our other bookings were subsets of it. It's been great fun to sing material from our two CDs, while learning our two new numbers for this year's Harbury Christmas Eve Church service. Our chosen charities, the Leamington Christian Mission (which helps homeless people in Leamington) and our own Harbury Church continue to benefit from sales of the CDs. Details are at <https://sites.google.com/view/harburyfolkclub/home/choir>

2011 has been another year of highs and lows.

In May Dave and I persuaded the girls to come on a sailing trip with us. Jennie's partner Dave came along too and we all had a great time on a Bavaria 44 – a veritable palace compared to the previous boats we've booked. We had a week island-hopping in the North Ionian, eating, drinking, chasing dolphins, fishing and generally chilling out. Here's a picture of a typical overnight mooring – this one is Mongonisi Bay on Paxos.



Dave had another year of working in London (with a couple of flying visits to Melbourne and Boston thrown in) and we continue to rent narrow boat Sweet William, taking full advantage of our London base. The fascination this year has been to watch the progress of the Olympic Park a stone's throw from the moorings.

Dave and I continue with music - I with Hereburgh Morris, ceilidh bands Reel 2 Reel and 4 in a Bar, Harbury Folk Club Choir and Harbury and Ladbrooke Extended Church Choirs; Dave with 4 in a Bar and the Delta Blues Band.



Dave's cycling trip this year was in Suffolk (and even included a bit of Essex, despite protestations from Pete J, their token Yorkshireman). Suffolk proved to be surprisingly hilly, but great for cycling with many quiet picturesque lanes and welcoming hostelryes. The usual 'Last of the Summer Winos' crowd were in attendance (left) and the trip was based in a couple of holiday cottages next to a micro-brewery – pretty idyllic really.

This year has been one of commuting. My Dad, after a full and varied life, including nursing my Mum (who suffered from early onset Alzheimers) until her death 14 years ago, is now becoming frail himself. Fortunately, where he lives, back in his native Rhondda Valleys in South Wales, the care system is proving to be very good, with Social Services' stated aim being to keep people in their own homes for as long as possible with suitable support. Dad now has a team of carers going in to assist him three times a day, and he makes a couple of visits a week to a local day centre where he leads the staff a merry dance making him interminable cups of tea. During the year, my brother, sisters and I have made more visits to him now that he is unable to travel unaided to us, and I've certainly enjoyed the more frequent opportunities to visit my aunts and uncles. Dad's very fortunate to live in such a close and caring community.

Of the girls:

A week after our return in June from sailing in Greece, Jennie and Dave lost an eagerly anticipated baby at 17 weeks gestation – one of those inexplicable events which, encouragingly, shouldn't happen again but which is no comfort. It was a little boy, and they named him Noah. His ashes are buried in Southam churchyard along with Dave's Dad.

Sadly, Claire and Rich succumbed to the difficulties of long distance relationships and decided to go their separate ways. Claire continues to enjoy her job in Nottingham.

After a six month search for a job, in June Michele was offered a temporary job in London, helping to manage a university hall of residence over the summer holidays. University halls are used as conference accommodation during the long summer holidays after the students have moved out, so her previous hotel reception experience stood her in good stead. Thoroughly enjoying the city life, she took a risk and looked for a flat with one of her workmates. Her gamble seems to be paying off - her contract has so far been extended twice and she is currently part of the students' accommodation support team. Dave and I are able to meet up with her whenever we're in town. Recently she entered a short story into a competition sponsored by the show Wicked. She was one of the finalists in her age category and we were invited to the prizegiving held in the Apollo Victoria Theatre. Sadly she didn't win, but I'm sure this won't put her off her first love – writing. We had a wonderful afternoon in the presence of Michael Morpurgo, the Duchess of Cornwall and the cast of Wicked, who read out the winning entries in each category.



Finally, this has been the year of house and garden. Having struggled manfully for twenty years, our trusty petrol mower finally gave up the ghost – not, as you might think, because the motor packed up, but because I had bounced it up and down so much trying to flatten the anthills (which had sprung up during a period of neglect up in the paddock) that the handle suffered metal fatigue and snapped. Unfortunately, the model was obsolete and we couldn't get replacement parts. But every cloud has a silver lining, and here's a picture of its replacement. No more hours of bouncing on anthills, now I get to do doughnuts around them. And much fun it is too. So much so, that Dave hasn't yet had a look in. Next to succumb to old age was the garden shed, so we replaced it with a cross between a garden shed and a greenhouse, complete with gutters and water butts ready for next summer's hosepipe ban. Next – housewise - were the replacement double glazing and the solar panels on the roof. We can now bore everyone with how much electricity we're generating...

We're looking forward to another Christmas with the girls with the usual lead up of choir/band practices.

With love from

Lynne

Dave

Lynne & Dave,
Jennie & Dave, Claire and Michele