



McLoughlins' *Christmas Missive* *2004*

Here we are again, with another Christmas approaching and another year drawing to a close. Are the years really going faster, or is it just another sign of (our) advancing age?! This will be our second English Christmas since our return to the UK last April. Not much change in our circumstances since then: Mike is still working in London and we still have our family home in Halifax, so we still battle the traffic on the M1 on a regular basis!

2004 has been a good year for family celebrations – three weddings and a christening, in fact: in May, Hazel's cousin Graham married Lynn and confounded everyone who had him down as a confirmed bachelor! The following weekend we were delighted to attend the christening of Baillie, son of Emma, our eldest niece on Mike's side, and her partner Colin – the first of the next generation and the first boy in the family since our John was born. In November, Adney, another cousin of Hazel's, married Marie in Llandudno, north Wales and at the beginning of December, Chris, the younger son of Hazel's other cousin, Kay and her husband, Mike, married Jane in Congleton, Cheshire. It's lovely to see the family expanding, and we're delighted to welcome all the newest members.

John has left the home nest (again), to share a flat in Leeds with one of his work colleagues. We don't see so much of him as a result, but he seems to be doing OK, still working for Robson Rhodes in Leeds and studying for his public-sector accountancy qualifications – in another 12 months he should be fully qualified, and then the world will be his oyster.

Having had no success on the job market, Ruth took herself off to Australia in May and had a fantastic three months or so, travelling the continent - from Sydney south as far as Tasmania then up the centre of the continent, taking in Uluru (Ayers Rock) on her way up to the Great Barrier Reef and the Whitsunday Islands - before flying home from Brisbane, via Singapore. Grateful thanks to Sue and Grant and Colin in Sydney, Graham and Diane in Tasmania, Phil and Diane in Singapore and everyone else who helped her along the way. She reached home in mid August, in time for boyfriend, James' birthday and has just got a job as an account executive with a graphic-design company in Tamworth, to be nearer to James.

Hazel and Mike did a fair bit of travelling during the year. They had their own mini Aussie 'walkabout' in February, stopping off in Singapore on the way out, enjoying the sights of Sydney, falling in love with Tasmania and catching up with lots of friends along the way. In May they joined the Bush Hospital Foundation's annual fund-raising rally, this time to Barcelona – their first visit to this fascinating city, which they enjoyed immensely. In August they extended a business trip to Jersey into a long weekend and did a nostalgia-tour of the island in an open-top Mini Cooper on a gloriously clear day when France and Guernsey looked close enough to paddle to. In October they escaped to Cyprus for some late sunshine and a visit to friends Patrick and Simone, to meet the new addition to their family, baby Lukas.

You'll find photos of our various trips and Ruth's Australian tour on our website: www.mcloughlin.uk.com

We're pleased to say that Honey is still going fairly strong. She turned 12 in September and is a bit stiff in the old joints, but still enjoys reading the 'weemail' a couple of times a day on her walks.

We'll be spending Christmas Day with Mike's sister and family this year, then Hazel and Mike will travel north to spend Hogmanay with Hazel's folks in Scotland. Wherever you spend it, we hope the season will bring you lots of love and happiness and we wish you all the very best for 2005.



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