



For the first time ever we didn't spend Christmas 2012 with Chris's sister Wendy and her girls. Following the death of Wendy's husband Ian in August of that year they decided they wanted a quite time at home last



year. So we hired a house down near Kingsbridge Devon for a week and the family and partners joined us at various times over this period, with Stephanie, Samantha and Michael all being with us on Christmas Day itself. Tux surprised us all by arriving late on Christmas Day and Michael disappeared off to Bournemouth early on Boxing Day to see Sophie. Neil spent a couple of days with us before Christmas. This was the first time we had booked a whole week away and it worked very well.



We went off to Venice in April using flights that Stephanie and Tux had given them for Christmas. It was our first time in Venice and we thoroughly enjoyed it, especially as it wasn't too hot by then. Little did we know at this time that we would be visiting again in the summer holidays! Stephanie and Tux had booked a Carnival cruise out of Venice for 12 days in the Med, ending in Barcelona and we were invited to join them. Given that there were a number of places this cruise was visiting that we hadn't been to before, we readily accepted and booked on as well. We had a lovely time in some wonderful places, although Venice in particular was far too hot and crowded for our liking in late July.

We had hoped that 2013 was going to be a year when we had no deaths in the family, but sadly in early September Eryl got a knock at the door from the Police. Eryl's brother, who had suffered from Asperger's and lived alone in London, had been found dead at the age of 57. The coroner said that it was a heart attack and that because Eryl's mother had also been thought to have died from a heart attack at the age of 50 he recommended that Eryl and her sister get checked out. We then had some anxious weeks getting Eryl thoroughly checked out. We are relieved to say that apart from slightly high cholesterol and blood pressure she seems to be in very good health. Unfortunately the same can't be said for Eryl's step mum Janice, who is suffering from breast cancer and the rigours of chemo and radiotherapy at the moment. Sadly this has meant that they haven't been able to make their annual pre-Christmas trip down to see us and Eryl's sister's family.

Chris has continued to spend many hours every day supporting the local charity, Saltford Community Association, for which he is Treasurer and chair of fundraising – he's continued cooking beef curry for 160 or 300 rashers of bacon for a cafe! Over the last few years they have raised and spent over £50,000 on improving the Community Hall. He also continues to give his time to his old school in a number of roles, the most rewarding of which is keeping in touch with 600 former pupils who live overseas. He also organises reunions for his former company and provides lifts for the elderly in the village to a Day Centre. And he still finds time for a few days per month of paid work with the Phoenix Group. Eryl continues her busy and enjoyable role as an Avon lady as well as doing a wonderful job of running the home. As well as the



cruise and trip to Venice we have enjoyed a number of weekends away and going to concerts, including Bruce Springstein and one where we met Bryan Ferry. We also enjoyed meeting up in Oxford and York with the friends we met on our cruise in 2012.

As for the children, Stephanie (29) is now in her 8<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and is head of Year 1.



at Summerhill Infant School in Bristol. She continues to thoroughly enjoy it and still gets a huge buzz from seeing the children develop significantly during their year with "Miss Essex". She's now been with Tux for over 11 years and we see a lot of them as they have owned a house in the same road as us since 2009. Before you ask there is still no wedding date!!!

Samantha (27) after a couple of years doing property development, searched for a job using her skills and her degree in Interior Design. Early in 2013 she found a job in Bath and started planning to buy a property with Neil, who she's been going out with for over 4 years now. To help save up she has also continued to work at Saltford Golf Club. In early September they found a new build property in Midsomer Norton and are due to complete on it next week. As you can imagine they are hugely excited although for Eryl this means another has "flown the nest", but just 10 miles away.



Michael (24) is still at home and now works from home! Over the last 18 months he, Tux and another friend have set up an upmarket online business called Lullubuy ([www.lullabuy.co.uk](http://www.lullabuy.co.uk)). For 3 lads it perhaps surprisingly sells designer nursery equipment and toys. Around March time it became apparent that one of them needed to become full time and Michael elected to do this from home, whilst just keeping on one day of paid work with his previous online employer. Fingers crossed the business is continuing to grow and provide

him with a modest income. Throughout the year he has continued to be with Sophie who for 6 months lived with us while working in Bristol. She has recently moved to her sister's in Winchester and now commutes daily to a job in London. Michael now spends most weekends down there.

That's about it except to wish you a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We are delighted to once again be spending Christmas with Wendy and her girls. This year we have rented a converted barn in the Cotswolds for a week and all the family and partners will be there at some point, although for the first time Michael will not be with us on Christmas Day. He will arrive Boxing Day with Sophie, just as Stephanie and Tux fly off to New York and a cruise down to the Bahamas – alright for some!

Chris, Eryl, Stephanie, Samantha and Michael Essex  
3 Kingston Avenue, Saltford, Bristol, BS31 3LF [essexes@aol.com](mailto:essexes@aol.com)