



After the death of Chris's father's in 2010 and then his step mum Jean suffered a series of strokes, we had hoped that the last year would have been a happier one. Sadly this was not to be.



As usual our family and Wendy's family spent Christmas together. This time we rented a wonderful converted barn in Wrabness, Essex but our best laid plans were shattered by two events. Firstly, just a day before Christmas Eve, Wendy's husband Ian, who had been suffering with liver failure for nearly 2 years, had to be admitted to hospital because his condition had worsened. This meant Wendy spent the Christmas period visiting Ian each day. Then on Christmas Eve, Chris and Wendy had just arrived at the small local church at 11.30pm when his mobile phone

rang. It was Jean's sister Beryl ringing to say that Jean had just died in her nursing home in Croydon.

Ian was well enough to leave hospital shortly after Christmas but sadly the call from the liver transplant unit never came, before it was found that he was also suffering from cancer in his liver. This eventually resulted in him having to be taken off the transplant list and we then switched our attention to ensuring that Ian enjoyed a number of trips to places he wanted to visit, like Ironbridge, Stonehenge and finally a trip under steam on the Settle Carlisle Railway.



The end of July marked the Olympics and Chris took many of the family up to London for 3 days to enjoy this once in a lifetime experience and didn't we organise it well! We had a fantastic time visiting the Olympic Park, Excel Centre and Wembley Arena. Sadly it was during this time that Ian was admitted to a hospice near Chelmsford where he died in early August at the age of just 56.



After supporting Wendy during August, Chris and Eryl finally decided to take a holiday and booked a cruise to Venice and back, leaving early October. Imagine our surprise only a week later to get a letter saying the cruise had been cancelled due to problems with the engines! We hastily rebooked on another longer cruise going to the Black Sea and back, but to Eryl's horror it was leaving in only 6 days time! We had a wonderful 24 night cruise made especially memorable due to the lovely couples we shared our table with each evening. The picture here is of the library at Ephesus in Turkey.



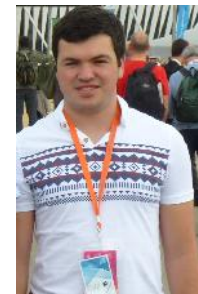
When not travelling up to Essex and Croydon, Chris has continued to spend many hours every day supporting the local charity, Salford Community Association, for which he is Treasurer and chair of fundraising – he thinks nothing now of cooking chilli con carne for 160 or 300 rashers of bacon for a cafe! He also still gives 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 for the children, Stephanie (28) is now in her 7th 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 10 years and we see a lot of them as they have owned a house in the same road as us since 2009.



Samantha (26) sold her first property development in 1st quarter 2011 and then her 2nd in early 2012. Since then she has tried to find a job using these skills and her degree in Interior Design, but sadly after over 6 months of unpaid work experience with a small design agency in Bristol, the company folded. She continues to search for the right opportunity but she’s been fortunate enough to continue working at Saltford Golf Club for a regular income. She’s been going out with Neil for over 3 years now.

Michael (23) amazed himself and us by getting a 2-1 in his Marketing degree at UWIC (Cardiff) in 2011. He’s also still at home and after some time spent getting some valuable experience with an up market web business, they offered him a permanent full time job. Best of all he only has to travel a mile to work! He’s been seeing Sophie throughout this last year and regular travels to Bournemouth at the weekends.



That’s about it except to wish you a very Merry Christmas and happy New Year. Sadly for the first time ever we will not be spending Christmas with Wendy and her girls, as they want a quite time at home this year. This year we have hired a house down near Kingsbridge Devon for a week and hope that the family and partners will join us at various times over this period. Finally, we really hope that the next year will be uneventful!

Chris, Eryl, Stephanie, Samantha and Michael Essex
3 Kingston Avenue, Saltford, Bristol, BS31 3LF essexes@aol.com

PS Below is a picture of our Jubilee Street Party – it was thankfully dry but not very warm!

