

Dear Everyone,

A very Happy Christmas to you, and may it be the best ever, and lead into a New Year of Our Lord full of many blessings to you and yours!

As grandparents, Now We Are Two, and Kitten is rapidly becoming human. She lives with her parents Michael and Margaret, at Botley, just outside Oxford, and sees them both off to work each morning, and then settles down to her own task of helping Auntie Babs look after a succession of foster-children. She comes home in time to welcome her Daddy back from Boffinland, or Germany, or from wherever he happens to have been. She is asking for Book Tokens for Christmas, and is going to hang up her Blue Stocking at the end of her bed, and hopes to get "First Steps in Computerisation, with special reference to Fast Breeder Reactors", and "New Light on A Molybdenum Phthalocyanine", in order to help Daddy and Mummy with their pwoblems.

This year, for our summer holiday, we joined the gipsies and took a caravan to Scotland. Alas! it was a borrowed one, and came back with two honourable scars, one on each side, but nothing that a friendly and all-powerful Insurance Company could not put right, raising their loss for the year to just over the £2 million mark. We lived during the fortnight on fresh-caught trout and fresh air, with a small supplementary diet of four square meals a day out of tins. On our way home on a Sunday, we were Presbyterians in the morning at Arrochar, and arrived at Moffat in the evening, just in time to double the congregation at the Church of Scotland church, and were most hospitably entertained afterwards in the manse. A highlight of our return journey was a stop-over on the lawn of Darlington Vicarage, only a mortar-bomb throw from the hotel where Mr. Whitelaw was due to meet for his Conference. Our charming and handsome nieces and nephews introduced us to many fine pieces of music known as "pop", with deep sentiments nobly expressed, alternating with high sentiments, deeply expressed, and now and then a noble sentiment, highly expressed. We realised as never before the full wealth of the American language. All these and many more experiences came to us out of our gipsy life, leading us to exchange our little cottage in Steeple Bumpstead (in the nick of time, just as we were about to alter its name to "Dunroamin'") for a Viking 2-berth Fibreline. It is stronger than most, and will definitely come off better in an argument. We are hoping it will take us to the clay-banks of Kimmeridge in July.

Church-wise, this year has seen the opening of our new Church Meeting Room, with Kitchen, Choir Vestry, etc, at a cost of approximately £15,000, completing the work which Earl Fitzwalter, who led the Barons against King John at Runnymede, left unfinished in 1215. He did not even build a porch for Christian gossip! The Meeting Room and accessory facilities has quite transformed the pattern of our church life, and the next 7 centuries should show a marked improvement in Church attendance. We also have a magnificent new Car Park, with room at the back of the Church for a heliport. Do you have Youth Services? In our enforced absence recently, due to 'flu, one occurred. Our Youth leader, (following three other testimonies), preached for 45 minutes, and told me it was marvellous. Who better than he should know? He is licking his chops at the thought of a Sunday evening in (apropriately) the season of Lent. Who said today's young people were effete?

Spurred on by the fact that £2,500,000's worth of lost coins lie just beneath the surface of this England, we have invested in a (home-assembled) Electronic Treasure Seeker. It emits a low-pitched howl which rises excitedly as it passes over metal objects underground. In the small space between this ancient vicarage and the North Door of the Church, trod by the feet of Saxon earls and Norman monks, we have already unearthed two rusty nails and a four-inch piece of iron, whose lack of design proves its early provenance: a little imagination can go a long way in the use of this wonderful device. Can you tell us of museums that pay good prices for offerings of this kind?

Our affectionate greetings,