

Jill and Mike's Christmas Newsletter 2012



When we got down to Devon last Christmas we found Mary was not feeling her usual self and she announced that she thought it was time for her to go into Tracey House, which is a wonderful, family-run retirement home on the edge of Dartmoor just outside Bovey Tracey. There was a long waiting list because it is so popular – and they only have 23 spaces - and so in the meantime I started to go down to stay every week for 3 days and do the shopping etc, and I arranged for Wiltshire Farm Foods to deliver ready meals and for a local care company to come in once a day to help her prepare them. Eventually in May a place came up and she moved in to a lovely room – quite small but with two windows with stunning views over the gardens and countryside beyond. She has since had some more health problems which would have put her in hospital had she not been in Tracey House, so that was a close call. The staff are wonderful there and she is very well looked after and it is such a relief to know that she is being cared for so well.

We are keeping her house on in Devon – it makes a useful base for visiting her, and I am also going to go down and spend more time in Devon from the new year. I was 60 this year and felt it was time to give up most of the stuff I do and enjoy a proper retirement with more “me” time to try and cut down the stress I have been feeling for a while. To begin with I am going to go down one week every month (with Suki) and Mike is happy to stay in London on his own. I shall do lots of walking and cross stitching and also some of the other projects I have on my list – such as learning to use a knitting machine I have had for some years. I may even start playing the piano again! Mike and I enjoyed a weekend down there a few weeks ago – walking to the pub with the dog for lunch, and ringing at Bob Brown's mini ring in his garage which is just round the corner! We are going to have a peal attempt on them at Christmas.



There were two big birthdays this year. In July Mary was 90. We arranged a surprise lunch for her at a nearby hotel – she thought she was just coming out for lunch with me, Mike and Lorraine but when we arrived at the hotel she found most of the rest of her family and



friends in the bar drinking sherry! The hotel provided a lovely lunch and afterwards we all went back to the house where Mary played the piano and we all drank tea and chatted. Mary was very tired when we got back to Tracey House, but had to muster the energy to go in to the dining room to be presented with a cake! She spent the whole of the next day in bed recovering!!



In November I was 60 – I didn't have a party but I did have several “dos”. Firstly my friend Monica put on a small dinner party at her house – where we also rang a celebratory quarter peal on handbells. Then I had 14 family and friends round to the nearby Thai restaurant – even Amanda and Sam came over from Majorca. Amanda made me the most amazing cake (which we are still eating – I cut it up and froze it). Then on the day itself I arranged drinks and nibbles for my choir friends at the pub where we go after choir practice. That worked very well and even the conductor came and joined us. Earlier in the afternoon I rang a quarter peal on tower bells with 4 other people who had a birthday on the same day (one was 50, one 60, one 64 and one 78) – and Mike who had a wedding anniversary that day!! We were all very pleased with it and hope to do it again next year – perhaps finding even more ringers with the same birth date. I now have my 60+ Oyster card which gives me free travel in London on Buses and Tubes 24 hours a day 7 days a week, and National Rail off peak and have already made good use of it.

I am in the process of giving up the job at St Stephen's (as a first step in the “retirement” process) and am currently training



Lorraine to take over – which is working really well. Lorraine has given up her job at Thomson Airways to do a 2-year course in Health & Social Care, plus a course on Counselling. She attends Hounslow College three days a week and so one morning a week at the church fits well and gives her a bit of income to help her fund it. She seems to have a lot of assignments and homework to do and is very diligent – getting very good marks so far.

Handbell ringing has dropped off a bit towards the latter part of the year because Roger, my handbell mentor, has been very ill. We haven't felt much like ringing at Guy's Hospital without him (our usual weekly venue) but we have been round to his house to ring with him a couple of times, and I have also done some ringing with Steve Mitchell and his band. I have not rung many peals this year but I have rung two new methods, my first of Grandsire and my first on 8 on an inside pair (3-4 to Kent Major).

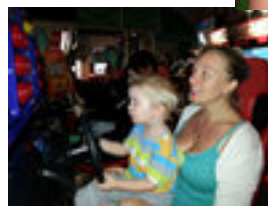
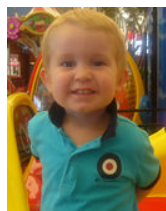
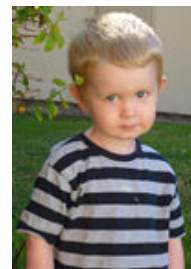
The canal boat holiday on Intrepid was a 3-week affair this year – although I missed the middle week with all the cycling and ringing because Mary was moving in to Tracey House and I went back to help her with that and then rejoined Intrepid later. I missed the bad weather and enjoyed the last week just boating back to Stourport as the days got more and more sunny.

I went to Majorca for a few days early in the year to visit Amanda and Sam, and also had the usual couple of holidays to Turkey – a fortnight in June on my own and a week in September with Monica. Wonderful to get away to the sun and to eat lovely food on a warm balmy evening with the Mediterranean lapping nearby. Meanwhile Jayne came back from India in May for the Summer and got a seasonal job at the Dartmouth Country Park and Hotel to finance another trip to India this summer. As her house was still rented out she stayed in Mary's house – which was very convenient as it meant it wasn't standing empty. It also meant I got to see a lot more of her this year than usual. She visited Mary regularly, taking her additional clothes etc as she needed them – and also did a lot to de-clutter the house and make it look really lovely and tidy and attractive. She has now gone back to India but we hope to have the same arrangement in place next year.

We went back to Market Harborough for the Barnes summer ringing trip this year – again organised by Mike. Plenty of new towers to ring at, plus a few old favourites. We also did most of the Roving Ringers tour this year – which was in the Peak District so somewhat challenging particularly for Mike on his handbike. I found it quite gruelling – especially as I don't sleep well at night because of being in a dormitory. I have announced my retirement as from this year – and we are currently looking at ways Mike can still go, perhaps with me supporting him by transporting his luggage etc by car without getting in the way of the tour. There was a bad accident this year and one of the Roving Ringers was seriously injured coming off his bike. He has broken his spine and lost the use of his legs too – so perhaps the "support vehicle" will be able to be useful for him too. Early days yet though – he is still in hospital (Oswestry spinal unit) at the moment.



The family holiday at Butlin's was reinstated this year, and my brother, sister, two nieces, great nephew and I all went to Bognor Regis in September. I was a bit apprehensive, especially as my brother had booked us all in to one chalet with half board – but actually it was great. The chalet was just about big enough and the food was excellent – buffet style with a huge choice. Of course the main reason for going was so that we could all watch Ollie enjoying himself – and he certainly did.



Suki and I have been lucky enough to have two walk leaders in the Chilterns this year. We have continued to walk with Maryanne on a regular basis, and also now walk with my ex-husband Malcolm. We are back in touch and discovered we now both like walking – he is a very experienced Ramblers' leader. So we got a book "Adventurous Pub Walks in the Chilterns" and have worked our way through it. We are about to start at the beginning and do them all again! A review of the book states that the "Adventurous" bit comes from trying to follow the instructions! However Malcolm plots it all into his GPS and everything seems to go very smoothly for us. So what with that and going to Devon more often, Suki and I are managing to get plenty of really nice walks – not to mention the lovely pub meals that are an essential feature!

We are doing Messiah at the Royal Albert Hall again this year with Goldsmith's Choral Union, and also did Elijah with them at the Festival Hall in the Autumn, both with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. We have also continued to sing with Chiswick Choir and Mike is still with Cantanti.

There are more photos etc on our website—www.wigneys.co.uk. I hope you have a lovely Christmas and a very happy New Year.