

## 2010 – Is it that time already?

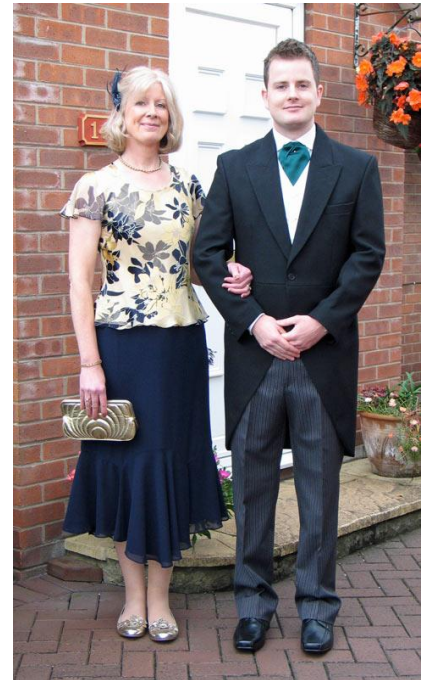
As I hear the sound of rapidly approaching sleigh bells I'm driven once more to record the highlights of our year.

The big news that managed to break too late for last year's missive was Ben's engagement. He popped the question on Christmas Eve amid an excess of candles (apparently this is supposed to be very romantic, though I consider it something of a fire hazard), and the happy couple soon settled on an August wedding.

Heather, or the new Mrs Rodgers to give her her proper title, is in the second and final year of a post-graduate course in Music Therapy. This takes her to London one day a week, together with placements in local schools. Meanwhile, Ben has decided to return to Engineering and is now doing a one year MSc in Nuclear Engineering at Manchester.

The wedding was lovely, though I felt we got off lightly as far as the planning and preparation was concerned.

It was held at the church that they both attend, which is the same one where we were married (over 30 years earlier!). Who would have thought?



*Mother & Son*



*The Happy Couple*

Susie is settled in Sheffield where she continues in her accountancy training, and has well and truly left home. She is now renting a house with her long term boyfriend, Liam. No one has mentioned wedding bells yet, but I'm steeling myself and checking my savings. I think if Liam asks my permission I'm going to set him tasks to prove his worth; starting with a solution to the European banking crisis and working up to a fair and lasting peace for the peoples of the Middle East.

Peter is now in the second year of his Music Technology degree at Huddersfield, enjoying life and blissfully unaware of the harsh realities of job-seeking that will inevitably follow. At least he's managed to get in ahead of the anticipated hike in tuition fees, thus ensuring that his debt will only be massive, rather than crippling.

Back at home, we have gone a bit greener this year by having a solar panels installed on our south-facing roof. Despite the poor summer we have still generated over 3,000kWh since April, which represents a good financial return too.

Last winter's freezing weather caused a few casualties in the garden, including a cabbage palm that we had struggled to move two years earlier. It had established well, and as a result, ironically, caused another great struggle to remove. Recent weather doesn't bode well for the banana we planted out this year either, despite its lagging!



*On holiday in Florence*

Lynne is still doing 2-3 sessions a week at the local surgery and Ian is still travelling to Oldham, although the technology means he can work one day a week at home. Lynne's Mum celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in May though she is gradually retreating from the real world. The care home arranged a little party for her, which she seemed to enjoy.

In October we took a break and enjoyed a week in Tuscany with some friends at their apartment, which was very welcome after a summer spent anticipating 'The Wedding'. The weather was pleasantly warm and we enjoyed trips to Florence and Vinci (as in Leonardo da) as well as the beautiful countryside.

And so, as the collared dove of hope dives to escape the sparrow hawk of fate, and flies straight into the patio door of destiny, it only remains for me to wish you a merry Christmas and a very happy New Year.

With much love,

Ian, Lynne, Ben & Heather, Susie & Peter

*(Web version available with a few more pictures at <http://www.duckdown.me.uk/xmas10>)*



*And finally, on the Ponte Vecchio, we find evidence of Leonardo's early experiments with satellite TV*