

## 2014 Another Year Older....

So, once again we launch into what we laughingly refer to as our Christmas Newsletter. I'd like to think that one day the hard disk it resides on will be dug up by future archaeologists and its contents deciphered, causing hilarity and incredulity in equal measure. Mind you, if Stephen Hawking is right, this laptop computer may have wiped us all out by this time next year, and be writing its own letter, to *your* computers!

Anyhow, **Ian & Lynne** are enjoying becoming grandparents for the second time with the safe arrival of Heath to Ben & Heather last March. He's proving to be a very happy little boy and has just started to crawl. Adia seems pretty laid back about him, though that may change now he can get to her toys. She, in her turn, continues to delight and amuse us all.

In October Lynne reached the magic 60 and laid down her stethoscope. She arranged things so she could finish a week early and we were able to celebrate her birthday in Madeira. On the day, we went for afternoon tea to Reid's Palace Hotel, which is one of the 'iconic' Madeira experiences. Everything was to an impeccable standard and we felt very special (and surprised!) when they brought out a little birthday cake with a candle towards the end of the proceedings.

Ian reached 60 in November and Ben & Susie masterminded a surprise party lunch for both of us in Ambleside. We really had no idea! Ian's situation hasn't changed except that journeys to and from work are now blighted by **extensive** roadworks on the M60 and M62 which limit a great stretch to 50mph and cause more delays. Apparently it's being upgraded to a 'smart' motorway, but it will take until Summer 2017(!) to complete. The Grumpy Old Man in me could say a few things, but there isn't space.



*Ian & Lynne hit 60  
(with Peter, Adia, Ben & Susie)*



*Ben & Heath*

Still, I should be grateful that I'm able to work from home a couple of days a week.

Lynne's Mum & Dad are still tottering along. Her Mum is still settled in the care home, and thankfully her Dad's partner, Joan, has recovered well from the operation she had just before last Christmas. So life has returned to normal for them.

**Ben & Heather** are getting to grips with the trials of having 2 little ones, and realising that sleep is a privilege, not a right. Heather has recently gone back to work doing a couple of sessions a week, and Lynne is helping with the childcare. Fortunately Ben can also arrange his work so he can help too. That's one of the benefits of a PhD; you have a lot more freedom with your hours.

However, this is his last year and he is having to think about what comes next. The research seems to have gone well but the division of Siemens he has been working with is being hived off to a joint

venture controlled by Misubishi, so there's a lot of uncertainty over their future and I imagine that recruitment is likely to be on hold for a while.

**Susie & Liam** are still in Sheffield, but the big news is that they are now engaged, having started to run out of other people's weddings to attend! Liam popped the question while they were on holiday in the USA, at the Grand Canyon in fact. So now they've become wedding planners which will keep them busy until May 2016. I had my hopes up that they might do the deed while in Las Vegas, but no such luck.



*Susie & Liam check out a wedding venue*

The other news is that Susie has moved on from Grant Thornton and gone into a 'real' company. Well, it's G4S, so some might argue with that. Still, they obviously need someone who can reconcile the number of prisoners tagged with the number of tagged prisoners invoiced to HMG! Actually, that was a different division, but I'm sure she will do them good.

**Peter & Emily** survived Iceland (but never want to milk another cow) and went on to do some work in Portugal before heading back to France with Eurocamp for a second year. This time they were on the west coast, in the Vendée, which enjoyed a fine & hot summer. They returned to the UK in October and have spent their time between us and Emily's family in Newcastle.

While we were away in Madeira they had a traumatic experience on the M6 when a lorry they were overtaking veered into them. Thankfully they were both OK, but extremely shaken. The car, on the other hand, was a write-off. Apparently the lorry's brake system failed which resulted in the brakes jamming on and the driver not being able to steer. Scary. The first we knew was when we had the kind of phone call that starts... "Hi Dad, don't worry, we're both OK...."!

As I write they're preparing to leave for almost 2 months meandering around SE Asia. They start with New Year in Thailand with an option on Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos before returning to Thailand for the flight home in February.



And so, as the world descends into its annual festival of Mammon, it's time to draw to a close. After all, I still have shopping to do...

It only remains to wish you all a joyful Christmas, and a happy and healthy New Year.

With love from,

Ian & Lynne & the family