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It's that time of the year again and various people have asked me where my Christmas newsletter has got to? It's nice in a way, because people say they really enjoy it, and that's what makes it all worthwhile.....

If, on the other hand, you find it to be the irritating meanderings of an old bore then feel free to hurl it in the bin and that should give you equal satisfaction!

This year has, of course, been the year of climate change, culminating in the conference in Copenhagen taking place whilst I write. Of course, climate change is only the symptom of something rather more sinister, that of unparalleled population growth as we spread over the planet like a plague of rats leaving a mountain of our filth behind us. We are exhorted on all sides to consume to 'save the economy' and Christmas is now so commercialised as to put one off the whole idea entirely!

David Attenborough did the population thing on Horizon the other day so much more articulately than I could ever do, and, he even had a solution – educate the women of the world so that they can take control of their lives.....

For us it's been a year of some changes and some consolidation. You may remember that



Tom and Helen enjoying Halloween

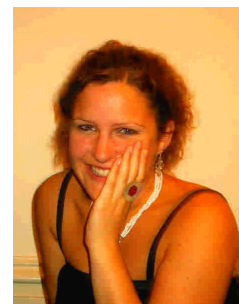
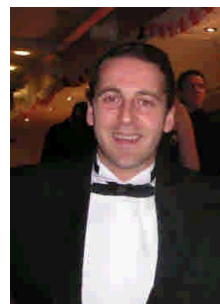
Meg's mother Joan died at the end of last year, and she was the last surviving 'parent' to go. We have been through probate, and watched the value of her investments fall through the floor during the process, without being able to do much about it. But things have come out at the other end and as a result she has helped both Tom and Jessie buy their own homes.

Tom has a flat in Cardiff and Jessie, a house in Stroud with Peter Lloyd, her boyfriend of quite a few years now.

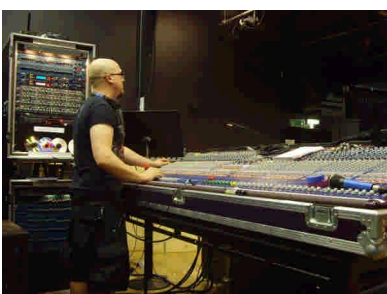
Tom's flat is in Penarth and he works in the Marina, not far from Mermaid Quay, the development I built with Sovereign Land back in the late 90's. He's happy there, complete with a lovely new girl friend, Helen.

And its wonderful to have Jessie and Pete near us in Stroud. Jessie got a job with Stroud Hospital (she's an occupational therapist) and Pete works at Delphi (who make diesel fuel injectors). He had a period on short time working but things are now back to relative normality so we keep our fingers crossed for both of them.

But what of Sam you ask? Well, he is still in Brighton, and has not shown great enthusiasm for becoming a property owner, even in the rather modest way he would be able to afford there. At the present time he is squatting on the top floor of a rock pub, and despite a panic last week when they were all



Jessie and Pete, now living in Stroud



Sam at one of his beloved sound desks

thrown out, he is back in there again and 'It's all cool, Dad' – whatever that means. Luckily, he remains in high demand as a live sound engineer, and he has four or five venues where he regularly twiddles the knobs. He has also travelled the length and breadth of the UK touring with various bands, the most famous being Example, and the latest being Tubelord. No, I have never heard of them either, but Sam says they are really good! This seems to involve a lot of driving and a lot of lugging equipment about, which was not helped by Sam breaking his wrist when he came off his bike.

But he is very optimistic, despite earning hardly enough to survive - let alone pay for his now extensive tattoos - and his banks credit facilities have hit the buffers.....

What of the golden oldies? Well, the year has been pretty good to us really. We went to Goa in February staying with Andrew Logan for a yoga and painting retreat. This was great for stress relief (I now seem to be able to get stressed just hearing the words 'Daily Mail', never mind reading it) and Goa was great for food, with some of the best we have had anywhere.

It was also great for Meg who was able to wind down after the fairly emotional time she had carting her mother's things off to auction and selling her Mum's home in Cardiff.



No, not the produce of the Amalfi coast, but fresh from our own green house



On the terrace of our lovely villa hotel in Sorrento...

In the summer we had a wonderful trip to Naples and the Amalfi coast, beautiful, fascinating and we were completely captivated by it. It was interesting for me going back to Naples, not having been there since forty years ago, when I had worked with the slum kids being looked after by Father Borelli. Naples is an extraordinary place and the museum was a highlight of our trip. But then so was climbing Vesuvius, visiting Pompeii and Herculaneum, and being driven up the Amalfi coast.

And talking of travelling, Ted Simon, the now veteran world travelling motorcyclist and good friend came to stay for a few weeks whilst recovering from an accident in Ukraine, you can read about it here <http://www.jupitalia.com/crash.html>. He made a good recovery and is now back in California before embarking on a trip to New Zealand to lead a group of touring motorcyclists. And all this at an age when most people are wondering if they are strong enough to put the cat out. So there is hope for all of us. And it was great to have him with us!

On the work front Meg is working harder than ever and her big project is a Pilates exercise for pregnancy book, which should come out in August 2010. The photographer has just finished taking the pics and Meg is busy on the words. This is in addition to her teaching fifteen exercise classes a week, running a mothers support group in Stroud, running the Guild of exercise teachers and being on the end of a phone for the NCT breastfeeding advice line.



Meanwhile, I try and support her in all these activities, but I have not yet got to grips with things like 'cleaning the house' which means we live in the usual cheerful but messy tip! However, we have managed to grow some fruit and vegetables, even a giant aubergine, and, of course, a lot of potatoes!

Love to you all, our door is always open, and have a wonderful Xmas and New Year.

Eliot and Meg XXX