

Christmas card 2016 from Jim and Fiona.

Ho ho ho, and now we've got that over with, time to look back 12 months, reminisce and make apologies. Sorry, for instance for the lack of newsletters that I assume you all enjoy, sorry about the weather and the climate and most of all sorry about Brexit. It might seem like the end of the world, what with Trump, well that's about it really. Trump. Wasn't there something in the bible about the last trump? Still, it could be worse, and judging by his history it soon will be. Talk about the sublime to the ridiculous.

Having dealt with the gloomy bits what's the good news? well in 2016 we took Mum to Sardinia for a wee holiday, and popped over to Corsica while there. Strange how normal and comprehensible French (Corsica) is after a week or so of Italian (Sardinia). Good cooking and excellent wine available in both and nice and warm too. I was most impressed with the Sardinian Hotel, it even had a sea-water moat. It's a kind of dry island, so you wouldn't want to waste drinking water, especially since the hotel was 100yards from the Mediterranean and in the swimming pool it's easier to float.

My brother Bill dropped in (to the UK) and stayed. Which Mum is enjoying, especially since he is an excellent cook. I think Charlie our nephew likes that too, so Mum is entertained and fed, and we managed a Mum visit in August around a Wickham Music Festival, saw Bill and also got fed

At home I've dropped a couple of trees, and paid to have several more dropped (tricky positions). Made some Garage doors, had snow in April and November. In March I bought another Midge, a trailer and a Spitfire. In September Fiona and I went off to the Kyle of Lochalsh and Plockton (remember Hamish McBeth?) and paddled around with Helen and Derek in the sea-kayaks enjoying some excellent weather. I did manage to fall in the river, but surprisingly the iPhone survived. The folding caravan got an airing, it is really easy to tow which means we don't generate great queues of traffic. It worked really well considering it had hardly moved in several years. Later in the year Fiona was able to get hold of a really nice Swarovski telescope for her bird watching. Modesty forbids I tell you who paid the very reasonable but still slightly eye watering price, but it made me feel better about the cars.

The village had an Heritage Festival which went well, our WATIF? charity is starting to bring a bit of 'community' back in and reverse the dormitory effect, and we're hoping to make some local signed walks with the cooperation of the Forestry Commission. On the house front we bought a new more efficient wood-burning stove, and put the old one into the rental house, to the delight of our tenant. Also the Microwave I bought in '84 became unreliable. I'd bought it when Bill visited from Australia in that year, so I currently buy one every time he visits Scotland. This one is a lot smarter, and tells us what to do and decides how long to cook. Seems to get it right too.

I've been doing a bit of helpful in the village and just got back from wiring a new CPU (computer) into a neighbour's air-source heat pump. It's

Chinese as most bits of tech are nowadays, and kept turning into a block of ice because the defrost mechanism wasn't being triggered by the computer. The ambient temperature was around zero, so it needed fixing before the pipes burst. I'll re-write this paragraph if it blows up before I post this, but so far....

On the motoring front the Zafira threw its Engine management module (another computer), and I had to get that replaced. That would be well outside my skill set, although I suppose the Air-Source one was too, but in that case there wasn't an engineer available. The air-source suppliers said I should 'have a go' so I did, the garage just drained a lot out of my bank account, smiled and gave me the keys back.

The festive photo of the shale 'bing' is a bit bleak, but it has a certain majesty, of that's not to grand a word for a few hundred thousand tons of industrial waste, but it has a sort of presence, and you can get quite fond of it in a strange way. Anyway the snow in the garden hasn't been deep enough to do justice to the Christmas card. Meantime, have a merry one and a happy one of the others.

Love from Jim and Fiona

