

Addis Christmas letter 2009

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You know the double dip recession everyone's worried about? Well, hold onto your wallets because it is a virtual certainty. The Addises are buying an apartment in Hong Kong. At least, I hope it will still be an apartment by the time we complete. During the course of negotiations we have twice had building orders requiring various bits and rooms to be lopped off. I have reason to believe it is trying to escape. Anyway, we have not yet completed on the incredible shrinking apartment. So no address as yet but watch this space.

The beginning of the year saw us combining New Year in Hong Kong with a ski trip to Japan. New Year's Eve had, perhaps, a tad too much projectile vomiting for true perfection but the following day made up for it. Sam, having shown the steely self-discipline for which the male Addises are famous, turned out for the Overseas schoolboys in the New Year's Day match. OK, they lost, but much fun was had by all. Then, off to Niseko for our first Japan skiing experience. Which has much to recommend it, I must say. Fantastic snow, wonderful ramen noodles, glorious scenery and more slippers than snowboots. They go in for a lot of deciduous trees in Hokkaido, which gives a different feel to the mountain and with Mount Fuji-like volcanoes as the back drop, it really is stunning. Equally stunning, but not in a good way, was our discovery that the only "international" ATM machine in the region was 10 miles from the resort. "Oh. Do you only have an International card?" said our Australian resort rep. "Sorry." I apologised. "I expect most overseas tourists come a month or so early and apply for a Japanese card, do they?" That made for a fun first night of bus journeys and cursing. Take lots of cash.

That trip whetted our appetite for skiing so we forced ourselves on poor Philip and Kaye Jackson in their beautiful house in Meribel for February half term. That was wonderful, for us at least, though I did suffer a very embarrassing prat fall on the nursery slopes and have a stiff shoulder even yet.

May witnessed a true extravaganza. We held a collective party celebrating our 139th birthday (C and J averaging 50, Kate 21 and Daniel 18.) Sam's 15 was considered not "significant" enough so he is keeping his powder dry and budget untouched. Actually, it was a really great evening. We took a Mississippi steam boat up the Thames from the Tower to the Barrier and back. Opening Tower Bridge en route was a highlight. We waved gaily as drivers fumed. Wonderful! Dancing, champagne, food, the usual and, less usually, glorious evening sunlight. So a bit of a success, all told.

The summer was quite "bitty" in the end. We had the bittersweet leaving of Rugby for Daniel. Bacchanalian revelry on a Greek island followed by leavers ball etc. Then the long summer of waiting for A level results. Daniel filled the time by doing a bit of teaching in a local school in KL and more excitingly journeying into the Heart of Darkness. He went to a research station in Danum



Valley, Borneo to count ants. They broke him into this activity by letting him walk around in sandals for a day, at the end of which he was able to count leeches on his toes (7). These are easier to spot than ants, don't move as fast and are generally fewer in number, so presumably a good intro to ant counting. He was there for a couple of weeks and had an amazing time but I gather it was long enough. The A levels came in fine so Daniel started at Downing College, Cambridge in October. So far he has managed to play rugby for the college (at Flanker!),

start rowing, join Footlights, do a few stand up comedy gigs, learn many, many drinking games, dislocate his knee and upset his Director of Studies. And he is only 6 weeks in.

Kate's summer was sadly shortened as she had to start "studying" at National University of Singapore in late July, which brought her closer to boyfriend Leon and, less relevantly, her loving Mother and Father. She is doing an exchange year there but I have my doubts on the intellectual rigour front. Since August she has been to KL (3 times including 5 days for "e-learning week"), other Malaysia (once), Indonesia (twice including Bali for 9 days for "revision week"), Bangkok (twice), Hong Kong and Cambodia (10 days for "reading week"). In the meantime she learns a bit of Malay and Sociology/ Anthropology. She is enjoying it and I am sure it is all very broadening but I do worry we will discover a "residency" requirement just too late.



Sam's life is comparatively simple and has revolved around rugby more than ever this year. In addition to his usual school activities he has also managed to represent the Royal Selangor Club in a tournament in Taiping and attend a coaching clinic by the Northampton Saints. He still props for a living but those days are clearly numbered. He has grown a neck for one thing, a body part that for props is the equivalent of the appendix for the rest of us; useless and liable to be troublesome. He claims it allows him to burrow further into the chest of his opponent in the scrum but I point to the 100% absence of necks at Test level. We agree to differ. He has been pushing hard for parts in plays, in pursuit of his more artistic side, and we are looking forward to an appearance in Pirates of Penzance next term. I should also mention the boys' televisual exploits, with Sam helping demonstrate how Rugby Football started on Blue Peter, while Daniel was once again runner up in the Songs of Praise School Choir competition. They wuz robbed! Lots of dark shennanigans and backstage deals in these SoP competitions, you know.

Corky continues to flit between Europe and KL as she continues to try to sell "that blasted ship". Apparently, they are no longer actually selling the ship so it beats me what else there is to sell. Contracts, apparently. Anyway, it is all very high powered and pays for lots of flights back to see the kids. I continue much as before. I have now visited all corners of Malaysia in the course of my duties and it is a wonderful country. One thing that is rather special is the degree of acceptance of foreigners. I think because the country itself is so multi-racial, other nationalities just slot right in. It does create a bit of a challenge on national identity though. I continue to play golf excruciatingly poorly and have found a choir. Admittedly, my new choir has a pretentious name (Cantus Musicus – barf!) and also has girls in it, which is a bit of a shock and dampens the "touring" culture a bit after the excesses of the "HK Welsh". Good fun though and keeps me sane.

What else to report? Oh, the dogs. Well, they flourish and are winning 2-1 in their battle against Assorted Malaysian Fauna. Jess Squirrel-bane (you may remember from London days, see letters passim) has notched up another couple of victories over the year. Having raced to a 2-0 lead, though, Ranger let the side down by succumbing to a charge from a wild boar on a jungle walk. Corky was with them and describes it as watching a hairy, grey safe proceeding rapidly from left to right across the path and sending 30kg of Labrador into orbit. He recovered after a couple of days but I decided to award AMF the points for effort. Certainly, we are all more watchful since – could that really have been a tiger print we saw?



Well that's all for this year. We are off to Whistler for a bit of skiing (for most of us) and fly-fishing (for dislocated Dan and his Dad). Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a fabulous 2010.

