

2012 Waddington Christmas Letter

Christmas time once again so here's the usual resumé of what the Waddingtons have done this year.

Starting with New Year, we had a bunch of people round and we all went paddling; start as you mean to continue. It was cold but reasonably wet and got wet enough to run the Upper Wear on New Year's day. Two parties and no major incidents. Some of the team ran the big fall but most of us didn't. Planning another mini "paddlefest" again this New Year.

Then we went skiing to Courchevel 1600. Very good snow so the kids hounded down pristine black runs in complete control. We also did a bit of off-piste but because we were right at one end of the area we seemed to spend a lot of time getting to and from where we wanted to play.



Having passed her test, Sarah got her new car just in time for Easter, when a group of eleven travelled to Scotland for some paddling. We got up mega-early and drove up, had a look at the Orchy and decided it was too low so we ended up at the Etive, where four decided to paddle and the rest watched. Andy got lots of good video. After that we paddled the Spean Gorge, the Loy (and some did the Arkaig but not me because of a misunderstanding and the lack of a buoyancy aid), the Pattack, where we managed to lose Phil's paddle (returned by Glenmore Lodge about a week later, somewhat battered). Then the Roy Gorge where we had a minor epic and everyone got a little fractious, so the

next day we all had a day off: Andy climbed a Corbett; James and Ellie went back to the Pattack and found no water; Phil, Ben and Nicky went home with Nicky running the Etive again, this time with more water, and the rest of us had a look at the Nevis (don't want to do it ever!) and shopped in Fort William. Last day we ran the Orchy on the way home, this time with just sufficient water. Everybody's morale improved after a good trip, finishing with a successful run (in some cases more than one) of the Witch's step. Michael had several attempts before he was satisfied with his line.



Next, Andy and I went to Plas y Brenin on a rolling week in preparation for our summer holiday. I had a successful time but Andy got a bit frustrated. The kids managed to get themselves to school and college but were a bit frazzled by the time we got home. I feel it was a useful learning experience for them.



Then we went to Uganda. The advice I got was "Don't swim in the volleyball pool or you'll get bilharzia", "Don't get drunk and fall asleep outside or you'll get malaria", and "it's BIG". Well, no Bilharzia although we did take the medication after we got back; no malaria and this time we did all take prophylaxis as prescribed, and it was BIG, in fact I was

terrified! Andy and the kids had a brilliant time but I was quite frightened quite a lot of the time. Andy managed to get his roll to work whereas I ended up swimming again, this time in enormous waves! Andy did a short video for the SOC photographic competition (which he didn't win this year - just as well, since he was organising it), and a longer one in still "in post-production".





Then we did a safari, the chimp tracking and the gorillas. The gorillas were absolutely superb, a real David Attenborough experience.

Then came results day and Sarah managed to get the grades she needed to get into Leeds to do Geology next year, so she was off on her gap year with no re-sits to worry about. In quick succession she went to Tenerife, Venice, climbing course and then Chile (having departed thence just after

persuading Andy to dye his hair and beard red in October), due back 21st Dec. She has a blog (as does Andy) and seems to be having a good time. Some of the rivers she's been doing look awesome. There were some minor problems fitting her vaccinations in around her social calendar. Oh and she turned 18 and we had a party (predictably this involved a number of kayakers and a river trip).



Somewhere in there we also went to the Wet West Paddlefest in Fort William, and had another Boldron paddlefest at October half term.



Andy and I

then went to Glenmore Lodge on their advanced rivers tour.

We started on the Findhorn gorge as a "warm-up". I swam Randolph's leap again but Andy rolled up. Then the Etive, this time a good medium level, (Andy walked this time), then the Coe and the Orchy, then the Roy from top to bottom, finishing off with the easiest day on the Upper and Middle Findhorn.

Another weekend in Scotland starting with the Orchy with even more water, then Michael ran his first 4+/5 drop on the Leny. Both Andy and I walked round, I walked without even considering it; Andy after he'd watched the carnage.

Now starting to get ready for Christmas:- nearly finished decorating the dining room (it's only taken two years); christmas pudding currently steaming; first lot of mince pies made (Sarah's going to kill Andy if he doesn't turn up with a load when he collects her from the airport); letter nearly done. Now just got to deal with cards, presents, cooking.... Think I want to run away.



Happy Christmas everyone.

Rather than clutter the paper letter with links, see the online version at

http://pennine.ddns.me.uk/blog/andrew/?page_id=826 with bigger photos and lots of links to longer write-ups and videos.