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December 2021

Dear All,

- 2021 started as 2020 had finished with virtual U3A classes and playing bridge and music online. We continued to do local walks in sun and snow (but drew the line at rain), grateful to have easy access to pleasant countryside, woodlands and the River Cam.
- The relaxation of restrictions in March coincided with good weather and we were able to meet up with friends at last in the garden and to venture further afield for walks. In mid-April we ventured as far as the coast for a day walking at Felixstowe Ferry.
- In May we had our first holiday staying in a 17th century cottage in Chawton, Hampshire where we were able to meet friends and family we hadn't seen for too long, but due to government restrictions were unable to visit any of the many indoor places of interest in the area. They (and the village pub) opened the day after we left!
- In June we ventured further afield to St Ives, Cornwall (at the same time as the G7 summit of world leaders) for an HF guided walking and sightseeing holiday, stopping on the way to visit the Eden Project. The sun shone and the G7 delegates were really no trouble at all. We enjoyed the air display put on by the Red Arrows for their benefit,
- In July we spent a week on the Kent coast at Sandgate visiting three very different castles at Sissinghurst, Dover and Walmer. It was the hottest week of the year and we were grateful to be by the sea. Life was beginning to feel more 'normal'.
- In August we celebrated Paul's birthday staying in the tallest Tudor gatehouse in the country, conveniently situated at Layer Marney in Essex. We took the opportunity to visit Beth Chatto's garden and Colchester Castle and to eat oysters on Mersea Island.
- September saw sightseeing in and around Dorchester including Thomas Hardy's cottage, followed by a few days walking from the HF house at Lulworth Cove. We were back to playing bridge in person and Margaret played badminton for the first time in 18 months.
- Paul was a tutor at a live concertina weekend in Somerset at the beginning of October. Margaret went as far as Bath, where we rented an apartment for a few days and enjoyed visiting various museums and the Roman baths. Later in the month we returned to Chawton for two days to visit the sights (and the local pub) that had all been closed in May.
- At the end of October Paul finally completed his mission started early last year in lockdown, to record all the 652 tunes in his folk music Session Tunebook, played slowly to learn, then faster. He also played and streamed at least eight each week live on Zoom for 80 weeks!
- We were delighted when one of our nephews, who lives in Texas, flew over with his daughter for a week's visit. We haven't yet ventured abroad but have hopes for next year.
- Autumn was late this year with leaves still on trees in late November. The colours were not as spectacular as last year, but we enjoyed woodland walks and kicking leaves.
- As we head into December, life has been brightened by Winter Lights events at two local National Trust properties where we have been volunteers. Paul is still leading (and mapping) walks at Wimpole Hall, and Margaret has joined the group of leaders for Sunday Strolls to keep her volunteering active while the effects of Covid restrictions limit other activities.
- We've had various minor health scares, but in general are fit, and looking forward to 2022.

Enjoy your Christmas and have a happy and successful year to come.

Paul and Margaret