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Christmas 2012

Dear Friends and Family,

Over the past years we have maintained our tradition of sending Christmas cards to our many friends and family round the world. In later years we have added a newsletter to many of you who share our wider interests. In doing so we have always sent cards bought in support of our favourite charities. This year brings about a change. The costs of mailing have risen so much that the benefit to the charities is being dramatically eroded. We believe this needs a rethink. Sorry Royal Mail – you get to be the losers!

We think it is better to send our newsletter by email at no cost to our overseas friends and family and ask them to forego the traditional Christmas cards we sent before. We will not buy the cards to send you but instead make a donation to the Shipwrecked Mariners Royal Benevolent Society equal to the profit on the cards and cost of mailing. Where we can deliver Cards at no cost we will continue to send to F & F and thus continue support for Seafarers' Card program. This way the Seafarers are the winners.

Well this has been quite a year for us in England with the Royal Diamond Jubilee and the Great London Olympics not to mention the growing up of our extended family. Lord Coe's call to "Inspire a Generation" means a lot when we observe the activities of our Grandchildren. Too many for this short annual message but we have one photo which sums it up perfectly:-

This is Philippa, before her 9th birthday aboard "Spike", competing in a Pony Club event and no doubt doing her darndest to emulate some of the gold medal winners at Greenwich. Spike had a sunburned nose which accounts for his odd expression! He is a very good natured middle-aged Welsh Pony.



We spent last year with Jon and Lise and their family in Denmark coming home on New Year's Eve (quite unintentional but that's what a storm force gale does to North Sea Ferries – delays them!). This year we are hosts to the whole family once again. Martyn had been suffering from a persistent cough and went to the Doctor in January. After numerous tests culminating in a lung biopsy he was diagnosed with lung cancer in April. Further investigation showed secondary tumours in his spine which lead to an immediate course of Radiotherapy. This was followed by a course of Chemotherapy which completed in July. We are managing to cope and close family and friends have rallied round to help with things that now exceed our physical abilities. We remain positive in our battle with the 'dragon' as we have come to regard this illness. More tests and scans to follow in the next few weeks but morale is good.

One favour we would ask of all our friends on facebook is not to comment or discuss the subject on FB or any other social media. That way we avoid upsetting anyone we may have missed. Despite the restrictions due to rounds of appointments and treatments (and their side effects) we have been able to get out and about to fulfil most of our commitments to the Service Associations.

Jon who was on home leave from Oman joined us for the RFA Reunion in Southampton and we attended the annual Service for Seafarers at St Pauls as well as the Merchant Navy Day Service at the Tower Hill Memorial. Sadly Martyn will not be able to march with the Veterans at the Whitehall Cenotaph this year. Five hours on the feet without a break will be too much.

We did make it to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire for the Service of Dedication of the new RFA Memorial which has been constructed next to the 'convoy of trees' that commemorates the three and a half thousand merchant ships lost during WW2.



This is the new memorial designed to reflect the service that the RFA provides supplying fuel, food ammunition and spare parts to the Royal Navy. Every Officer and rating is a qualified member of the Merchant Navy and is a civilian, albeit with a much greater range of skills and training to fit them for the tasks of replenishing ships at sea.

This, or one of the other cards, is the one you would have received if Royal Mail had not been so profit conscious. And this one is special as it depicts a Royal Jubilee Pageant on the Thames opposite the Tower of London. Very appropriate in Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee year. We calculate that we have raised an extra £30 above our usual donation to Shipwrecked Mariners. I have sent them a copy of this newsletter so that they know that you, our Friends in distant parts of the world, also contributed by foregoing a Christmas Card.



We shall have a new complete family gathering photo after our Christmas celebrations but you will have to wait until about this time next year to see it. So once again we send our very best wishes for a happy Christmas and hopefully a more prosperous New Year.

Sylvia and Martyn

