

## Christmas 2022

### Symons Family News



I think like for many in the UK, and the country itself 2022 has been a year of uncertainty, uncertainty, and sadness with a few bright spots.

**Graham's mum and dad** as noted at the end of last years letter dad was in hospital. Despite testing positive for COVID he was moved twice and eventually ended up at a nursing home on the outskirts of Norwich where he has remained. Graham has managed to visit a few times after restrictions were lifted, the last for his 90<sup>th</sup> at the start of December. He is pleased that he is mentally more alert than the picture mum was painting but is now unable to walk. Mum had a mini stroke and is suffering from gout. If/how long she should remain at home alone is a good question but not one that is on her agenda at the moment



**Deth's mum** was taken into hospital in early April but seemed to be improving so it was great shock when we were informed on the 20<sup>th</sup> she had passed away, Deth had Facetimed with her the previous afternoon. Thankfully Deth was over COVID that Matthew brought back from college with him before Easter so we were able to get her on a flight 2 days later, touch and go because not all the paperwork processed through the systems, so Graham was having to liaise between the booking agency and the check in staff. Anyway, she made it by the skin of her teeth, missing the funeral but able to join the family for other ceremonies.

**Family trip to Cambodia** While Deth was in Cambodia, she was approached by someone about buying the piece of land we still owned. When this tuned into a firm offer it was arranged for the children to spend their summer holiday with her in Cambodia. Enabling them to take part in 100-day ceremony for mum and become more acquainted with that side of their culture. Graham who also had to thumbprint the documents could only squeeze in a few days between end of year reporting and a TRAFFIC board meeting. After the formal bits were over the youngsters enjoyed it more with trips to beach and Angkor Wat included. Graham who had not been back to Phnom Penh in 11 years could not recognise large parts of it. He noted that the place was much cleaner and the traffic, maybe not to those visiting for the first time, was much better too. Sadly, the planned church trip was cancelled as someone they visited tested positive for COVID.

Graham's **Boys Brigade** company struggled on through to the summer, with meetings regularly cancelled or few attending because of COVID. He had decided that 2022/23 would have to be his last as Captain, but he would still be prepared to help, because in September 2023 Matthew could be transitioning into work, Paul will be in his exam year and Elizabeth would start high school. Unfortunately, things did not turn out that way. First the new helper

had to stop and with the appointment of a new minister at the church the lady from the circuit who had been helping was reassigned in the autumn.

The minister gave the church an ultimatum, find 2 staff by the end of June prepared to run the company or it will shut. None came forward.

With this and the land sale God had different timings to us and as events turned out his plans were better, as they always are!

In between all of this we were able to finish the parenting course that we were required to do for **Paul's** assessment to start. We have had one session with a therapist, which Paul found distressing as he opened up more than he expected. It was disturbing for us to know how low he was feeling. He now has a contact detail for support while we wait, having completed more forms for the next stage to happen.

**Matthew** has continued to study at the regional college and is now doing a business and retail course. He is enjoying it and his trainers are pleased with the progress he is making, particularly in listening to others. He has ideas for another course in September but does not really have a clear idea of what wants to end up doing.

He continues to help at the churches youth activities and went on a weekend away at a local activity centre with them. He goes with Deth to the services on a Sunday morning.

COVID still makes him nervous, so he has not restarted swimming.

Archery and dodgeball have been added to the football and violin for **Elizabeth's** activities of week. She is making good progress with the violin and would like to get some certificates to beat her dad's achievements. The school's girls football team did very well in a recent tournament. She was gutted to miss the Lionesses Euro's Final game as she was in Cambodia. After a bit of a wobble earlier in the year her schoolwork has picked up and she got some very good pre-SATS scores.

The results of having his kidney removed as an infant are limiting what **Graham** can do and makes trips to Norwich challenging, as was getting to Heathrow for the trip to Cambodia. He has, with proper planning, attended a few short events at school/college but continue to watch a live stream of the church services and work remotely for TRAFFIC. He has done a lot of background learning on his new role and can see real challenges ahead as the organisations new strategy includes more community engagement in fragile parts of the world that will require additional measures with no funds available to pay for it.

**Greetings of the Season to you all and best wishes for 2023.  
We can but hope and pray that it is better than 2022 has been.**

