



***Best wishes for
2012***

The future started in 2011

What an eventful year it's been. Last Christmas we were snowed in in our temporary accommodation in Portobello, Patience was finishing her treatment for breast cancer and we hadn't decided what to do about our move to Norway. One year on, we have settled into our new surroundings and have just celebrated our first Christmas in in our new house in Norway.

Obviously last winter was a bit of a low point in many ways, but we managed to get through it all with the help of family and many fantastic friends from Portobello. In that context it seemed strange to leave it all behind and move to another country so soon after Patience's treatment had finished. But having decided to move about a year earlier and feeling it was going to be such a positive change for us it didn't see to make sense to reverse the decision or to postpone the move any longer than needed.

Much of what we got up to since leaving Scotland has been documented on our blog at www.geozenn.wordpress.com, but here's a little summary of the year.

Our new life started before we left. Having decided to go ahead with the move, it seemed appropriate to organise a proper farewell party. We rented the Rosefield church hall and invited almost half of Portobello and a few colleagues and other friends from further afield. A lot of you showed up and we had a wonderful time, with food, wine, live music, dancing and poetry. It gave us a fantastic memory to take with us on our long journey to Bergen.

We actually left a week after the party. The last bits of packing had been quite manic, but we managed to get all the essentials in the car and once on the move the stress seemed to disappear immediately! Four days later, having travelled by two overnight ferries and briefly visited Leo's family in the Netherlands, we arrived in Bergen on the 15th of April.

The first few months we stayed in an apartment close to the city centre. The apartment was not ideal, a bit cramped, noisy (inside and out) and located opposite a park full of drug-addicts. It was clear that finding a permanent residence was a high priority. So asap we got ourselves registered, opened a bank account, transferred the money from selling our house in Portobello and started going to viewings. Buying houses is a stressful thing, doing it in a country where the system was different from at home and all the documentation is in a language that we didn't quite master yet took it to a different level, but by the beginning of June we had found our new house and signed on the dotted line.

We moved to Laksevåg at the beginning of August and enjoyed some fantastic summer weather before the start of the rainy season. After nearly five months we feel very at home here now. Now the days are very short we still get a lot of light into the house, we have an amazing view across one of the seven hills of Bergen, our garden backs onto another one. We feel we have really lucked out.

After our move the girls started at the local school, only 3 minutes walk from the house. Saskia has found the transition fairly straight forward and has made her first few friends. The kids in her year don't speak that much english yet so she has had to get up to speed with her norwegian rather quickly. Esther has found the transition a bit more problematic but feels a bit more relaxed about it all since she started joining in with the football and basketball matches at playtime. She has enjoyed some of the things she's done this term, her class has been on several hikes instead of gym and they also had a fantastic music teacher who got them all to play together in little bands! Esther is very keen on the athletics club to which she goes 3 times a week, Saskia goes to a gymnastic class once a week.

Both Patience and Leo have been going to an intensive lanaguage course over the last semester, 6 hours a week + homework. We have all learned a lot since we moved her and are now starting to have the odd conversation in norwegian (emphasis on odd).

Leo has been a bit frustrated about the progress on his PhD. Stuff has been getting in the way, but it is still moving forward and he should be able to finish by the summer. He mostly works at home but he has got a desk in the biology department in the university where he goes about once a week. It's a very friendly group of people who make an effort to make him feel at home. In his spare time, he is managing to go for the odd run and has recently started going to athletics with Esther on Fridays.

Patience is really enjoying the new job. She feels appreciated and enjoys the people she works with, so from that point of view the move has already been a success. She spends a lot of her time working as an editor for Geology but now she and some colleagues have managed to get a grant proposal accepted she is starting to get some new research of the ground. Patience has also joined a small local Quaker group, that meets twice a month. And recently we had them all over for a little Christmas celebration at our house.

So although at times things have been rather hard, mad and hectic, we feel strongly that we are doing the right thing. We have had a very warm welcome from the Norwegians and hope you will come and visit us so we can pass on that warmth to you.