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December 1985.

A very Happy Christmas to you and your family.

Once again we are calling in the word processor to help with our communications, since there seems to be little likelihood of writing to everyone separately. We have had a lovely year and again we are keen to tell you about it.

The boys are all thriving, earning, and, I hope, paying tax to help to keep their Father employed! Paul and Rosalind have preferred the Peterborough effect to the Midlands, and enjoy living at Bourne. This year have taken what appears to have been a fabulous holiday in Brazil which they recommend. However within the last week, they have decided to go computing in California, and Paul will be leading a design team as part of an enormous project to replace the entire computing software of a large insurance company.

Stephen too is abroad. He is still with a Rio-Tinto Zinc subsidiary at Milton Keynes, but he managed to persuade them to send him to Germany for six months. He is settled in a flat in Köln, and not too far from his German girlfriend, Karen, who is studying in Giessen.

Michael too is gainfully employed! He completed his extra year in Cambridge successfully and is now with Total Oil in Aberdeen and Peterhead. He is helping to meter all the gas which comes ashore, is attending survival and firefighting courses and learning, as a petroleum production engineer, to drill holes in the sea bed. Nicky, his girlfriend, has now been called to the bar at the Middle Temple, and is agonising over whether to try to continue as a Barrister by going into pupilage.

In the summer Pat's parents decided to move from their bungalow in Downham Market into sheltered accommodation, and within six weeks they were safely installed in Homenene in Peterborough. They seem very comfortable there.

We ourselves have been lucky too this year. Before Christmas last year we had another party, to celebrate an Sc. D. and a 50th. Birthday. Everybody enjoyed the champagne and were most competitive in the game which has been mentioned, with pleasure apparently, many times since. Then in February I went to Cambridge to receive my degree. It was a lovely day, made totally splendid by all the family being there together with Pat's parents and my sister Anne and her husband. We used the sun to take pictures of everybody in their

various gowns - two B.Sc.'s, two B.A.'s, a B.Met., a Ph.D. and a D.Sc. Then we had a party in Emmanuel and enjoyed the company of a number of friends, some of whom taught me in Cambridge, some of whom I had taught at Keele, and also Sylvia Williams whom we had not seen since we graduated 29 years ago.

We skied in the spring, and Mike and I went sailing with Eric Whittle in July, helping him to take his boat to Scotland. It was very pleasant, but unfortunately it was the only good weather that Eric had in two months sailing. Patricia and I had a lovely fortnight's holiday in Utah, preceeded and followed by conferences in California and Colorado. It was most exciting to visit the great canyons and we would thoroughly recommend southern Utah for a holiday.

This term has been enlivened by an old friend, Nathan Rich, who came to work with me for six weeks. His wife Elizabeth was here for two weeks and we had many outings together. Nathan and Lars Kihlberg from Sweden, who was visiting the Department, corrupted us by encouraging us to eat pub lunches on our weekend walks instead of picknicking in the cold countryside!

Our work is going well with new results and many worthwhile things to do, but there is a paucity of funds from outside. However the Department has generously bought me a computer which I shall spend the Christmas vacation learning to use - "playing with" - according to Pat.

The department has been turned upside down by the arrival of a new colleague, Richard Catlow, together with his large research group. It is "musical offices" at the moment; we hope we will have settled in before the music stops!

The University too has been inverted! Brian Fender, the new Vice Chancellor, has reorganised the administration from top to toe, and now proposes a merger with the Polytechnic to form a University of Staffordshire at three sites at Keele, Stoke and Stafford. He has written a clever report, but it says little and encourages us to agree before knowing the details. It is hard to decide whether it is a good idea or not, but, candidly, at the moment it looks like an unfortunate dilution in the short term. It could work in the long term given goodwill and funding but there are a shortage of these in Government at the moment.

For the next year we are looking forward to going back to Göttingen again for six months in April; we had such a worthwhile and pleasant time there last time that we can hardly wait to get away. We are both studying German industriously and looking forward to some new work to do.

We do hope that life is being kind to you as it is to us.

With much love, and our Best Wishes for the New Year.