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4. Dezember 1990

The weather outside, with the trees and mountains sparkling under fresh snow in the brilliant sunshine at a temperature of -6°C , is a reminder that Christmas is nearly here and that there is a welcome chance to get in touch with everyone again.

May we wish you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year?

The highlights of our year were the births of two new grandchildren in April. Felicity Alice, second daughter of Paul and Rosalind, was born on the 2nd; her arrival was celebrated by a remarkable number of people since it was the opening day of the Symposium which we organised here in Garmisch, and we couldn't resist announcing our good news. William Henry, the first son of Michael and Nicola, arrived on the 25th April; we ourselves saw him the very next day on a trip previously planned to view the new additions. It really is very pleasant being a grandparent since one receives frequent congratulations for something that one only contributes to with prayers and goodwill!

Fiona, Paul and Rosalind's older daughter, is now a sweet little girl who charms us all with her enthusiasm and alertness. Paul and Rosalind seem fully occupied with their growing family but still find time for squash and aerobics, as well as helping with the playgroup and numerous other things. Paul seems to be able to ensure that his increasing responsibility in IT at Thomas Cook does not interfere with his enjoyment of his family. Felicity was christened in September at what was a very pleasant occasion with nearly everyone from the families of both parents being present, including the Great Grandparents, Pat's mother and father, who are still enjoying good health in their eighties.

Stephen is still single but seems to be enjoying life in Wuppertal with a large social life and lots of squash; he now plays number one for a club in Cologne. However he cannot always play since his work frequently takes him to the far east. As I write this, I believe he is in Singapore having, we hope, arrived from Australia yesterday, but we are looking forward to seeing him for Christmas. His itineraries seem romantic but the schedules do look gruelling; however he appears to thrive on it.

The family had a remarkable success in a football World Cup too! "What a save" Michael was goalkeeper for his company's team in the Total Oil Group's football tournament in Aberdeen. He kept a clean sheet in the final when his team beat the other finalists from Abu Dhabi, and their pictures were all over the company magazine. He also plays some rugby but unfortunately he is a true sportsman: either unfit or injured! His work at the head office in London seems to grow in responsibility; at home he and Nicola are enthralled with the new addition who takes up a lot of space since he is a very large lad! However they are negotiating to buy a house at present which promises a lot of space, but also a lot of work since it is in need of renovation. William Henry was christened in Market Drayton last weekend with lots of family and friends present. We ourselves had a lovely time since we were also able to visit a number of old friends at Keele, and our voices are still hoarse from talking so much! Nicola is set to return to her legal work in the New Year, but is agonising about whether to stay at home to care for the family.

We ourselves expected a quieter year than last but we were mistaken! The Institute moved into a spanking new building in March and, just two weeks later, we had a wonderful Symposium with nearly four hundred people from all over Europe attending. Pat made the arrangements for the display of one hundred and fifty scientific posters, while I bustled about claiming credit for the vast amounts of work done by enthusiastic colleagues. I also achieved a lifetime's ambition and hired a train! - two in fact, to take the majority of the participants on an excursion to the top of the Zugspitze, the highest peak in Germany. People were very appreciative of the

atmosphere at the meeting which made it all worthwhile. Since then Pat has been engaged in preparing and editing the contributions for a three hundred page book of the proceedings.

There has been even more travelling than last year as our project develops and our contacts with other organisations increase; the car practically knows its way to München airport. I have to say I didn't get quite the same thrill last week as I took my fifth trip to Brussels this year in order to run a two day meeting there. But it is still fun and there have been some delightful trips, with Pat too, to Rome, Assisi and Madrid, as well as others too numerous to mention! EUROTRAC is going well at the moment but it is fair to say that we are reaching the hard bit now. We need to keep up the momentum and enthusiasm through the middle section and find ways to encompass the vast amount of work being done so that something worthwhile is produced at the end.

The travelling has of course been augmented by the demands of the new members of the family, with visits for Christenings and the like; it has reached the point of farce at the moment when, for unforeseen reasons, we shall have been to England and back three times in as many weeks in addition to business travel!

It has been delightful to see a number of visitors; our skiing friends, the Hordens, turned up for a cheery weekend at 'Chalet Angst', and we were very happy to welcome a cousin of Pat's, Peter Winney, with his wife, Pat whom we had not seen for more than twenty years. However Melanie who was also here at the time felt that life would have been easier if the four of us had more than two names between us! And at Easter Enid encouraged us into the Sunday Service at the packed Parish Church, where we heard Mozart's Coronation Mass in its true setting.

The religious highlight was a visit to Oberammergau, which is only about ten miles away, for the Passion Play. The five and a half hour performance was in no way an ordeal; it was a moving depiction of the Passion with impressive tableaux of the Old Testament prophesies and a surprising amount of music. We would gladly have gone a second time had we been able to get tickets.

We have discovered the joys of cycling, particularly if you take the bike on the train, for then it can be downhill all the way home! We have also been up more of the mountains and indeed, only a couple of weeks ago, climbed the hill behind the house (ca 3100 feet above us) to walk along the ridge in new snow; we did however come down in the cable car.

We also skied at Val Thorens and had two wonderful weeks in Andalusia with Anne and Bill in October. We stayed in the mountains and, if you have only experienced the overcrowded Costa del Sol, we would urge you to explore a marvellous countryside.

Life here has been dominated by the rapid reunification about which only the politicians seem totally enthusiastic. However, despite the undoubted problems, it will certainly be successful. Our recent trips home have coincided with stages in the momentous changes in Government circles (although we ourselves were not asked to stand!). A more positive attitude towards Europe could well help us in the future.

It sad to see that Murphy's Law operating on the International scene: we have seen the world change visibly for the better in the last twelve months, and it is tragic to find ourselves now poised on the brink of another war. One must pray that a peaceful solution is found, although there seems to be no goodwill at the moment.

So that's our annual report for this year! We were alarmed to hear during the year that in some places these letters, which are our lazy way of avoiding writing individually to people, are read out on Christmas Day; they are not intended to have the same weight as the Queen's Speech! However if you are just having Christmas Dinner: Guten Appetit!

With much love and very best wishes