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A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and all your family.

After a lovely summer and autumn, the winter arrived early this year and now, as we sit down to prepare this letter, the room is bright with the reflections from the three or four inches of snow outside. The scene is magical with trees drooping in the new snow and snow flakes falling thickly against a grey background. The ski season has already opened and we are wondering whether to go out for the first time this afternoon. It already seems like Christmas!

The family celebration this year was for Pat's parents' Diamond Wedding Anniversary. Sixty happy years together really is an achievement! They received a telegram of congratulation from the Queen on the 25th. April, the anniversary of their wedding in 1931. They threw a large party for more than fifty of their family and friends which was such a lovely occasion, highlighted by the two great-grandchildren who both chose that week to learn to walk. It was wonderful to have all the family together for the weekend and the following day Rosalind, Nicola and Pat organised a superb lunch at Paul's house, in honour of the great-grandparents, for the whole family.

Paul and Rosalind are bringing up two charming daughters. Fiona has just started school, with which she is thrilled, and Felicity is making an increasing contribution to family life. It is interesting to see how quickly they are learning that a combined effort is much more effective in dealing with their parents! Paul continues to thrive in IT in Thomas Cook. Rosalind, although fully occupied coping with the very full social lives of the two young ladies, still manages to engage in a variety of activities in the neighbourhood.

Stephen is the family traveller with nearly 26 weeks away this year on various trips to the middle and far East, and Australia selling anodised aluminium for his firm in Wuppertal. He would have been away even longer had it not been for the Gulf war. He has been at home long enough however to form a nice relationship with Connie, whom we first met here last year when she came to stay for Christmas. Connie is also selling: she travels frequently to Eastern Europe to negotiate contracts for a variety of chemical and metal products.

Michael, Nicola and son William moved from their small flat into a house on the other side of Blackheath. It was an older house in poor condition with an odd arrangement of rooms (the bath in the kitchen for example) but, while living there, they are completely remodelling and redecorating it. We visited them several times during the crucial period and so were able to enjoy seeing the new home emerging from the inevitable mess. Despite the excitement at home, Nicola resumed work as Clerk to the Magistrates' Courts in Woolwich, thanks partly to a good baby-minder. Michael seems to be assuming more responsibility with Total Oil.

Our own year has been dominated by travel to European capital cities including probably eight visits to London by the end of the year! Necessarily this is mostly work but Pat comes sometimes and then we make use of the opportunity to visit family or friends or, as we did last week in Vienna, go to the opera.

As you might guess, the European project is running fast now but it seems to need a lot attention from the Secretariat in order to realise some of its enormous potential; in particular we are trying to find ways to integrate the work of our projects and to see that the appropriate scientific results are incorporated in to the legislative side of atmospheric protection in Europe. This entails organising meetings and trying to encourage people to do things, both of which need personal contact. From my viewpoint (as a sort of sheep dog or, if you are a nuclear physicist, a gluon!) everything seems to be going well but we shall soon know how well for we are having a review done by an outside firm and several American scientists. They report in January.

Pat has been occupied in the Institute constructing a discharge apparatus to manufacture HO₂ radicals. She also regularly helps to improve the English in the many manuscripts sent out for publication. At home

the "Stockholm" embroidery has been progressing and we are looking forward to seeing it completed at last in the New Year.

Unfortunately, at the time we wrote last year's letter, Pat's Uncle Henry died suddenly and, although 86, quite unexpectedly. He was a very nice man who never forgot our family's birthdays or Christmas. As the sole mobile relative, Pat organised the funeral and a lunch for the family and friends who came. She then had a large part in sorting out the estate culminating in a last visit in May to clear and sell the house. We discovered new talents as furniture removers and van drivers at that time!

Surprisingly, we took mobile holidays this year but using other forms of transport. In August, we took our bicycles to Passau on the train and then rode about 210 miles, over a period of six days, along the Danube to Vienna. It is of course mostly downhill and the paths along the river bank are well maintained so the cycling was easy. We stayed in pleasant guest houses and small hotels and altogether had a lovely time.

In September we drove to the South of France to hire a boat on the Canal du Rhone a Sete and the Canal du Midi. Luckily Pat and Eric Whittle, who keep their own sea going boat in the vicinity, were there on the first day to give us helpful advice so we soon learned to master the intricacies of manouvering the boat and settled down to two largely untroubled weeks of watching the world go slowly by. We were able to go down the Petit Rhone from St Gilles to the mouth, which was a remarkable experience since we saw no other boats and few other people and we enjoyed the rich river bank birdlife. The Canal du Midi was a bit more tricky with just two of us to manage the boat and the locks but Pat could soon leap up the banks like a cat while I watched admiringly from the boat. Altogether I can recommend a canal boat captain's life as very relaxing, when one has a crew who shops, caters, housekeeps, handles the moorings and ropes, scrubs the decks and takes over the helm when one feels sleepy. I think Pat enjoyed it too!

Another summer excursion was a trip to Verona where we saw Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet and Puccini's Turandot. The atmosphere in the open air Roman Amphitheatre was wonderful and, as we were coming out of the Ballet, the experience was complemented by meeting and having a brief conversation with Bobby Robson, the former England football manager.

We have had visits from all the family and from a number of friends who, depending on the time of year, ski or walk or relax and we went on a skiing holiday to Hochgurgl with Christopher and Gwenda. The skiing was mixed but we supplemented it with table tennis and had a very cheerful holiday.

On winter weekends we explored the skiing in some of the many small Austrian resorts which are all just a few minutes away in the car. During the summer we managed to scale several more of the intermediate local peaks (more than 3000' above the valley & no cable car!) as well as making a number of more modest walks. It is still unbelievable to be able to walk, ski or cycle from the door.

You should have been able to discern that life here for us is still very enjoyable. We have more friends here now, although we are not able to look after them properly because we are away so much. Our German is adequate and indeed I reached a goal a couple of weeks ago when I gave a lecture in German but we are ever more conscious of the gaps and inadequacies which underlie our reasonable fluency.

Since last year the Gulf war has come and happily gone but it is always necessary to remember the hollowness of a victory which leaves so many people suffering and so many problems to be resolved. Also we hear much of the happenings in Yugoslavia since Tomi Cvitas, my colleague in the Secretariat, is Croatian and has a daughter studying in Zagreb and a son of military age.

While these letters seem to be an artificial way of communicating with everyone, we are very encouraged that nearly everyone sent some news either at Christmas or in the course of the year. It is always lovely to hear from you and of course we would be delighted to see you should you feel like coming in this direction.