



Ehrwalder Straße 9
D-82467 Garmisch-Partenkirchen
Germany
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Some snow is falling; the Christmas puddings are being prepared in the kitchen: it is clearly time to think about friends near and far and what to tell them this year!

And what a year it was: a major change in the family and the holidays!

Michael, Nicky and the boys moved to Argentina in August. He enjoys a fabulous view of Buenos Aires from his office high on the 17th floor, where he is now responsible for strategy and development for Total Austral. The family lives in a spacious house about ten miles to the north in Acassuso, still however within the city sprawl. The boys have settled in well to an American school where they are taught in Spanish in the afternoons. We enjoyed the school assembly (William playing the trumpet after just three weeks!) and watching their respective teams win the various soccer finals. At one point during a gentle match between children and parents, Pat pointed out to Nicky that there were three generations of the family playing on the field!

In Düsseldorf, Sarah graduated from Kindergarten with a play and a party that lasted until after midnight (the grandparents had to go home to bed before the end!) and now attends the Montessori school in Garath. Timmy, the youngest, is growing up fast and has taken Sarah's place in Kindergarten. Conny is still busy running the family but also finds time to do translations for her sister's architectural practice. Stephen seems wholly responsible for the far Eastern activities of his firm and travels there frequently.

In Peterborough, Felicity at primary school and Fiona at Deacons, are fully engaged in school work, music (violin, piano), riding, cross-country running and seemingly everything else. Rosalind has undertaken a lot of supply teaching which enables her to attend to the needs of her active family and hopes to do more voluntary work in the future. Paul has prospered in a reorganisation and is increasingly responsible for providing the global services offered by Thomas Cook.

And we've been on holiday - almost continuously - and often, happily, with friends.

There was skiing: with Gwenda and Christopher at Les Deux Alpes, with my nephew James and his son, Edward, and also Stephen and family, and Paul and family here in Garmisch;

and camping with Pat and Eric Whittle in Tuscany;

and visits to Bill and Jian Stockwell in Reno and Kerry Kelly and Ross in Salt Lake City while on holiday in the South Western US;

and much boating: cruising with Melanie on the North Atlantic to the Faroes and Iceland; navigating a narrow boat on the Llangollen Canal with my sister, Anne, and her husband, Bill (still leaping on and off the narrow boat at eighty!); cruising through the Beagle Channel and the Straits of Magellan, and also days out in a speed boat on Lake Powell, to the islands around Gothenburg, in the estuary of the Rio del Platte and to the Uppsala Glacier in Patagonia; and hair raising runs to the shore in inflatables during the two cruises;

and scaling the Shaffer trail at Island in the Sky with a the four-wheel drive vehicle, wished on us in an unrequested upgrade.

And there were also the sights: glaciers in Iceland, Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia; whales and dolphins near Iceland, penguins by the ten thousand in the Magellan Strait, puffins by the hundred thousand on the Faroes;

and walks: not only around Garmisch but in national parks in Arches, Island in the Sky, Grand Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, Escalante and in Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia;

and operas: in Munich, Santa Fe, New York, Gothenburg and Hanley (Stoke-on-Trent);

and oratorios: in the Wiesskirche, in the Christuskirche and the Frauenkirche in Munich and at Penkhull parish church in Stoke on Trent (May Walley's 34th festival there).

It is still not clear when we shall return to North Staffordshire but we have paid a number of short visits this year, principally to re-furbish the bathroom which now boasts an amazing hi-tech shower. We hope to initiate some further changes in the coming months so that the house is cheerful enough to attract us back.

In March we were guests at the biennial Symposium of our former project, EUROTRAC-2. It was great fun to attend without responsibility and to renew so many scientific acquaintances. It was also encouraging to see the project which occupied so much of our lives progressing so well under my successor, Pauline Midgley.

With the publication during the year by Springer of the last two volumes of the final report, it seemed as if the connections with the project were coming to an end, but we were asked by a couple friends to help organise a new subproject, TROPOSAT. The aim is to encourage the use of the data now becoming available from satellites to determine concentrations of pollutants and trace gases in the lower atmosphere. The European Space Agency has offered some support and we have already organised a couple workshops and are setting up a web page (www.iup.uni-heidelberg.de/luftchem/troposat). The availability of such data heralds a new era in the subject and it is nice to be involved with something so forward looking.

As you can see we have had what, at times, seemed a hectic year but expect things to calm down a bit in 2001. We are looking forward to being at home here in Garmisch for Christmas and to enjoying a visit from Stephen and family.

With very best wishes to you and your family for Christmas and the New Year.