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Perhaps it will be a real winter this year: following a spell of lovely autumn weather we had some snow in Garmisch early in November which, thanks to the cold clear frosty days, stayed. So now we are looking forward to Christmas and the prospect of a skiing holiday in Saas Fee with Stephen and family.

Happily, once again, we have had a nice year, with the family still prospering and happy, and a number of chances to meet old friends and visit interesting places.

The grand children are growing up fast. In Peterborough Felicity is now at Deacons together with her sister, Fiona, and they are both turning into personable young ladies, working hard at their school work, sport and music. We heard them playing the violin in their respective orchestras. at an excellent pair of concerts in the Spring.

William, James and Charlie in Argentina are likewise engaged, with school, football and the piano. And in Düsseldorf, Sarah is enjoying the Montefiori school while Timothy is now at Kindergarten. You can see pictures of them all on [members.gaponline.de/p.borrell/family/family.htm](http://members.gaponline.de/p.borrell/family/family.htm)

One thing, which gave me a great thrill, was to get some practical advice on dealing with a problem in some Microsoft software from Fiona, and some useful tips on downloading unsuitable films and music from William. I am looking forward to the time they can teach me a bit about object-oriented programming, with which I am struggling at the moment.

All the parents too seem very cheerful. Paul is changing his job at the moment; Rosalind is actively engaged in Home Start, a voluntary scheme to help parents in difficulties cope with their children, Stephen travels often to the far east and Conny is very busy with translations of books and documents for a major architectural project. Michael and Nicky have moved to a splendid house with a view of the Rio del Plate, and lead an extraordinarily active life there. Michael clinched funding to develop a gas field off Tierra del Fuego which involved, for one month, weekly commuting between Buenos Aires and Paris (quite a day trip!).

We have divided our time between Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Newcastle. We are getting ready to switch the emphasis so there has been a lot of decorating and refurbishing at Berne Avenue. The new conservatory (*Wintergarten*) has just been added, and we are planning to re-model the garden. However the choices about the future are not so clear: we are keen to get back to our own house and be among friends in Newcastle but, after thirteen years here, we are not keen to leave our friends and comfortable flat and the wonderful location in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. We are perhaps beginning at last to learn that one cannot do everything!

At home Patricia is embroidering seat cushions at the moment. She recently took a drastic step to get me to learn a bit more cooking (her desire since I retired): she decided to go into hospital to have a cartilage operation on her right knee and risk my catering when she came out. This happened in November and everything seems to be progressing satisfactorily. We hope to ski again after Christmas. During the year, we have done a number of long walks but the knee was a nuisance going downhill and occasionally on stairs. Our operas were not so far flung this year but we have been quite a bit in Munich, Innsbruck and Stoke. We also had a hectic trip to London in March and managed to take in a couple of operas and several plays.

We are still engaged with the satellite project and with helping out a bit at my former secretariat. The project took us to Nice in the spring to attend the European Geophysical Society meeting; it was nice to be in the warm at that time of the year. Then we found ourselves for a few days in Rome prior to running a workshop at the space agency facility at Frascati. We also ran a workshop in Leicester in

November where we able to meet Pat's cousin, Ann and her husband Karl, whom we had not seen for forty years. The project is going well but everyone is on tenterhooks awaiting the launch of the next Ariane satellite in March 2002; for some it is the culmination of ten or twelve years work which goes straight down the drain if anything goes wrong. I have also given a couple of scientific talks on satellite data as well: one at the Pacific North West National Lab. in Pasco, Washington and another in my old department at Keele. The Keele date was almost exactly forty years to the day since I gave my first research colloquium in the department so we surprised everyone by offering them a glass of champagne to finish up with.

Although the weather was odd last winter with the first snow not arriving until the middle of January we managed several skiing trips to our favourite resort in Hochgurgl: it is high and snow sure and we go to a lovely family hotel there.

In July we went to the Pacific North West where we visited Jake and Katie Hales, new friends with a lovely house on the Columbia River; he runs a similar US/Mexico/Canada project to the European one for which I was responsible. Then we travelled north via the Grand Coulee Dam to spend a pleasant weekend reminiscing with my first research student, Colin James and his wife Katy; Colin is a Dean at the University in Kamloops, BC. Then northward again to Stewart BC, where we crossed into the southernmost US outpost in Alaska, Haider; a very wet place but with some marvellous grizzlies catching salmon. Thence to Prince Rupert, where we spent nearly a whole afternoon in the company of a humpback whale. A long ferry ride through the Inside Passage took us to the north end of Vancouver Island, where we travelled south, using dirt roads where possible, to Victoria. A further ferry completed the circle to Seattle, where we finished up playing bridge, hiking and sailing with Bob and Marcia Brown. It was a wonderful trip all round, but renewing friendships was the high point.

Not long afterwards we were off again for a family visit to Argentina. We used the opportunity this year to travel north to visit both the Iguazú falls, which became ever more impressive during our stay as the river rose some eight meters above normal, and Yacatinga lodge right in the jungle. Then we journeyed south to the Peninsula Valdez to see whales, sea elephants, sea lions and penguins at close quarters. One nice thing: while walking along the shore we found ourselves in the company of a huge Southern Right whale which drifted back and forth within a few feet of us for half an hour or more.

An excitement to look forward to next month, in 2002, is the changeover to the Euro (€). Things have been dual priced for a long time; securities changed a year or more ago and now our bank accounts have altered. On December 17th we get a first feel of the coinage and the notes start coming out of the cash machines on January 1st. By the end of February the old Deutsch Mark will have gone. We are likely to spend a lot more at first since the prices in € are roughly half those in DM and it is difficult not to regard things as cheap! Our lives would be a lot easier if the UK was doing the same.

As you can see we have had a wonderful year. Things will surely calm down a bit in 2002 though we hope that we shall see some of you then, either here in Garmisch or perhaps in Newcastle.

With very best wishes for the Christmas and the New Year.

*Patricia and Peter*



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