



6 Berne Avenue
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire ST5 2QJ
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A merry Christmas and a very happy New Year to you and your family; we do hope that all is well with you.

The highlight this year was the Diamond Wedding of my bother Ted and his wife Doreen. There was a nice celebration in Taunton in October of what is a real achievement; they were married in 1943 during the war, just prior to his departure on war service for India. The celebration also saw the four siblings (my two brothers, Frank and Ted, my sister, Kathleen Anne and myself) together for what was only the third time since the family departed from our London home in 1939. Both we and our respective spouses all seemed remarkably well preserved, rather more of an achievement for the others since I am the youngest by nine years. Pictures of this and most other things in this letter are on our web site: <http://www.luna.uk/~pborrell>.

Another celebration saw us with a further well-preserved group: Birmingham chemists gathering together 50 years after they started their degree course together. The state of health is remarkable since we were all taught together in a lab. full of H₂S, benzene and other nasties, all of which would be prohibited today under the Health and Safety Acts. More than half of the original number attended and there were best wishes from nearly all the rest. They were all with their original spouses – chemists presumably make good partners! We had a most enjoyable weekend.

There was a major change for Michael, Nicola and family this year. In June, they moved from Argentina to Indonesia, where Michael now seems to be in joint command of Total-Indonesia. They have settled in well, as we found when we visited them in October. They have a large comfortable house in the southern part of Jakarta – but it seemed to us a bit like a golden cage. Jakarta is a third world metropolis of about 12 million inhabitants so going out anywhere is awkward - the traffic is horrendous and it takes ages to go short distances (sometimes an hour to school) and there is nowhere to walk. However the climate is perpetual warmth (football there is a sweaty game both for the boys and the spectators – as is tennis for Nicky) and there are many lovely places in this, the largest Muslim country in the world. We visited, with the family as it was half term, Yogyakarta to see the splendid temples. The highlight of the visit was hiring a complete cog railway for a couple of hours and enjoying the five mile ride up and down the mountain on the footplate of the wood-burning steam engine. We then went on ourselves to central Bali to be amazed by the Hindu-Buddhist life and the volcanoes.

A coming change for our eldest grandson, William, is to return to the UK to go to boarding school at Malvern. The family are not at all keen to send him away, as he is enjoying his school in Jakarta, but the schooling – and out of school activities – are more limited for older children there, so he is coming home. He will have plenty of support here from both sides of the family. After a period of missing their friends in Argentina, James and Charlie seem to be adjusting well to life at the English school in Jakarta.

Despite the move they managed to visit us briefly in July, happily overlapping with Stephen and family who arrived from Germany for a week with us. It is ages since we have had so many of the family together and, thanks to the lovely weather, we were able to eat in the garden, something we never expected to do when we returned from Garmisch.

In Düsseldorf, Timmy has now moved from the Kindergarten to Sarah's school and both seem to be doing well. We were happy to see them several times during the year. Conny is working very hard as a translator and Stephen is still journeying frequently between Europe and the Far East where the market for his anodised aluminium is still expanding (thanks to his efforts I believe).

In Peterborough, Paul has moved jobs to a larger business services firm – he has to commute to Northampton now – and seems to be busy. Indeed that whole family are endowed with the ability to engage in a plethora of activities without tiring. Rosalind continues with her emotionally demanding

work with Home Start; Fiona turned in a spectacular set of GCSE results; Felicity looks set to follow her; all this as well as their riding and cross country running. Also they seem to have a talent for music, with both playing string and wind instruments in various groups and bands. We are looking forward to visiting them at Christmas.

We are adjusting to life in North Staffordshire and enjoying seeing friends more frequently, both here and elsewhere in the UK. Patricia is now on the buses – that is she drives a 12 seater for the Newcastle Community Transport ferrying the old (some younger than her!) and disabled to shopping and other commitments. You should get her to tell you the story of her first outing – but since that excitement she is out a couple of times a week, besides finding time to read for the blind.

My own volunteer efforts are to act a secretary for the local Hospice at Home Appeal. This started in an amazing hire and fire way but has now settled down. We are hoping to raise £450K to ensure that the much needed service can continue. Local friends will probably hear more from me in the New Year – and I do hope you will be prepared to help.

I am involved in a couple of projects for the European Space Agency: one to run a project measuring pollutants in the lower atmosphere with satellite instruments, and the other, for the World Meteorological Organisation, to prepare and edit a report to promote a future observation system to monitor the changing chemical composition of the atmosphere. The various workshops and meetings saw us on trips to Rome, the Netherlands and Belgium. Together we have also seen the completion and publication of a book that we edited.

One thing that seems have taken over our lives recently is opera; at this time of the year it is a frenzy here with Glyndebourne in Stoke, Opera North at the Lowry, the Welsh Opera in Birmingham and Liverpool, and several modern extras (one was, *Who put Bella in the Wytch Elm?*) at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and at the CBSO centre in Birmingham. We also made it back to several performances in Munich – and to think that we thought we would hardly be able to go again when we left Garmisch. The opera highlight however was the *Ring Cycle* in Glasgow performed by Scottish Opera. The four performances took place over ten days and they were out of this world – truly wonderful and moving productions.

To attend, we stayed in Glasgow and Loch Lomond for nearly a fortnight. Apart from enjoying that most lively city, we managed to get up Ben Lomond and do a little bit of boating. The big walks seem fewer now but it is nice to explore the Peak District and Shropshire at weekends and we climbed the Wank on our return to Garmisch. We skied from our favourite hotel in Hochgurgl in February – a trip marred by Patricia sitting down hard and cracking a vertebra. However, after being encased in a plaster jacket for six weeks, she was declared fit and has now booked a further holiday in the New Year.

One enthralling new activity for us is the garden. Our two chaps, who worked for so long last year, completed the works in February and we have been planting and tidying ever since. We had some lovely vegetables and colourful dahlias but the best were the new roses which bloomed from June until the end of November.

Reading this through, we are very fortunate in what seems, for so many, an evermore dismal world; we are truly thankful for our continuing good health and fortune. We do hope that you too are enjoying good health and fortune and are able to feel the same.