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Dear All

Well this year has flown by, and it seems as if last Christmas was only a couple of months ago! They say that time flies when you are enjoying yourself, but it also goes quickly when you have lots to fit in, which I haven't always managed to do! My mother used to say "the older you are the faster time goes" and talking about it with a friend recently she said "that's because you get slower and everything takes twice as long" – and I think that about sums it up!

There has been lots to enjoy this year so I'll try and mention things briefly and share some photos with you. John's and Hanka's son Matthew was one in August, and his birthday party was held at Alan's house. Luckily I was asked to house-sit nearby just before, which made it easy to attend. Here he is with Hanka blowing out the candles – and maybe another train enthusiast in the making! I haven't done much in that line this year, but I was able to tell Alan when *Tornado* was due through Andover, and they managed to combine watching that with a nice pub lunch!



Also while I was down in the Newbury area during the year I was able to catch up with some of my other friends, and my other grandchildren, who as you can see, are both growing. Alan has bought a kit car, and took me out for a spin in it, which was great fun!



And in August Brian (my ISP) sourced a new laptop for me to collect while I was down. It is much more up to the work I need to do, the old one was getting even slower than me!

You will notice that Sophie is looking rather grumpy as she



did not want to have her photo taken, but in September she started school and luckily, as you can see, she was far happier about that! She is enjoying school, but Luke misses her company and wants to go too!

At home I have been busy too, both with B&B guests, contractors working on the UBL factory and friends visiting. Among the former were a couple cycling from John O’Groats to Lands End in aid of charity; an author from France attending a book signing and the aunt and uncle of the footballer Daniel Gabbidon, a Welsh footballer playing for West Ham, who got married at Eastnor in June. They were a lovely couple and I really enjoyed their stay, although had to admit that I had never heard of their nephew before, although Google did help me out....



And the latter included Joan Dils, my original evening class tutor from Reading University who started me out down the tutoring trail and Rosemarie, my best friend from Colston’s Girls’ School who came to stay over the Bank holiday at the end of May. As she said she probably chose the best weekend in the whole year, and we enjoyed visiting Weston’s – a local cider making firm where the cider is still matured in very old, and huge, wooden vats. I couldn’t help thinking how different this would be from the UBL set up, although some parts of Weston’s process, such as the juice extraction, is now done by very modern equipment too.

This year work has also kept me busy, two more runs of the Oxford Online Census Course and also two more runs of the evening class at HCT; plenty of house-sitting (luckily the recession doesn’t seem to have slowed that down much) and also car counting. The latter has been taken over from the council by Amey under a Managing Agency Contract, so life has gone full circle for me - from working part time on the farm at Wantage when I was married for Ron Amey the son of the original “Amey” to working part time for the company – now owned by a Spanish firm! I still work part time for the Council doing Electoral Registration work. This year this has involved one day of last-minute canvassing before the European Elections; Presiding Officer at that election and then five weeks electoral register canvassing in October and November. This remains enjoyable to me as I get to explore places I would never otherwise get to see, and enabled me to find a cottage where some of Sharron’s ancestors lived in Bishops Frome, which had previously escaped me; but new computer software made the paperwork side of it an absolute nightmare... There were also some very interesting research commissions, even if they did involve some tight deadlines at times.

Talking of getting older it is my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in February, and I will be celebrating with a Sunday lunch at the Hundred House Hotel, Great Witley, WR6 6HS on the day before, Valentine’s Day! You are cordially invited to join me – just ring 01299 896888 to add your name(s) to the list (just mention my name), but be prepared to pay for your own lunch! While I will be getting my pension straight away (one of the last women to do so), it isn’t going to be a fortune, although it will be very welcome.



Finally you may not think that my card this year has a very Christmassy picture, and I have to agree that it doesn’t. But after a November where it rained every single day except one, I decided I needed a sunny picture to cheer myself up. Having already been asked where Scampi was in it, I will finish by sharing the view out of the front door. As you can see it was too hot for him! We both continue well, and hope that you and yours do too.

We wish you a Happy Christmas and all the best for 2010!

*Polly*