

Christmas 1999



Windmill near Lefkes on Paros, May '99 (psf)

Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year

Trish.
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The first four months of this year were dominated by radiotherapy and chemotherapy sessions following on from the diagnosis of breast cancer and subsequent lumpectomy last autumn. Luckily all things come to an end and, after a couple of hiccups, we were able to fly off to Greece for 2 weeks at the beginning of May. By this time we both needed time out from Real Life and thoroughly enjoyed our fortnight on Paros, seeing the island for the first time clothed in flowers and green vegetation. We again hired a putt-putt and toured around over the whole island (falling off only once!) and also took the ferry to Antiparos for the day. Back home again life was immediately busy for Bob and a time for readjustment for me — something that I am still going through. The thought of cancer is never very far away, what with frequent self-examinations and 3-monthly visits to the hospital; but everything has been fine so far and so I am starting to relax a little and concentrate on what life brings in the next week.

Bob has been going back and forth across the Atlantic like a ping-pong ball, sitting on this committee and that. In September we were able to harness this momentum and fly both of us over to the USA for a conference sandwiched inbetween two slices of holiday. Our first port of call was Boston where we visited a friend from our Geneva days (20 years ago!). Having explored the city and then Cape Ann, we made our way south to Cape Cod, ending up in Hyannis for a 4-day meeting. When this had finished, we sped rapidly north and toured the coast from Portland (Maine) to Southwest Harbor (in the Arcadia National Park), looping back inland through New Hampshire and so back to Boston. We tried to stay in B&B inns where possible and had a really good time — lots of different experiences and unfailingly friendly people (but in a more reserved way than in California). Still jet-lagged, I was plunged into teaching at the local adult education establishment, where I was meant to have started work again last autumn before other things got in the way. I'm only teaching two days a week at the moment, but that doesn't mean that I'm twiddling my thumbs on the other days. I've started to

play Badminton on Wednesdays and what with my usual gymnastics on Fridays, my folk dancing on Tuesdays and every other Friday, plus a new class on Thursdays in Munich, I seem to have little time to sit and stare, let alone do my photography or patchwork — or letter writing!

The children have faced new challenges this year too: Emma started the first of her three clinical years at Barts and the Royal London in September and so has been having her first contact with real patients; Andrew left Imperial College in the summer having done extremely well in his aeronautical engineering degree. Unfortunately he was turned down by the RAF but was encouraged to try again next year. Thomas flew to the States in May and has just arrived back in London. He has been doing all sorts of things including part of the Pacific Crest Trail and, most recently, a 13-week course based near Calgary, Canada, ice-climbing, canoeing, skiing and learning about avalanches. We (plus Bob's mother) are all due to meet up for Christmas in our house in London — Hampstead Heath is 100 yards away if we need to get away from each other! This is our third attempt to have Christmas together in London — let's hope we succeed this year... (Trish)

A highlight of the year was managing, against all meteorological odds, to see the total eclipse from close to home in Munich on August the 11th: see my website for the results. At work, I've made a gradual transition from working on Hubble to the process of planning the Next Generation Space Telescope (NGST), an 8m origami monster which NASA, ESA and the Canadian Space Agency plan to launch around 2008. I also made my first trip to Paranal, the site of the ESO Very Large Telescope (VLT) in northern Chile near Antofagasta. This is really spectacular, both as a Mars-like natural environment and as an amazing piece of hi-tech engineering in the (red) desert. I felt a bit like an astronaut visiting Hubble but travelling with Lufthansa and Lan Chile rather than with NASA on the Shuttle! (Bob)



Pemaquid lighthouse, Maine, Sep '99, (traef)

About the photographs

These are all derived from recent colour transparencies by scanning — our standard system for printing photos. The sprig of freesias on the front is printed as a negative since the original image was taken against a black background. The Paros windmill was photographed on an extremely windy day — a pity it was not fitted with sails! Pemaquid, one of the many New England lighthouses, is on a rocky point which is often washed by larger than usual waves which can catch the unwary. The little building just above the fence houses the fog warning: originally a bell and now a horn. The picture was taken with a fisheye lens: hence the rather extreme perspective. The figures at Bly Farm were made for Halloween and the display of pumpkins is typical for the season in this part of the country. In colour, they are a splendid orange.



Pumpkin season, New Hampshire, Sep '99, (psf)