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I hope this Christmas letter finds you well and looking forward to the festive season and 2013. We know some of our friends have had bereavements and sad times this year and issues arising from the severe and variable weather we have all experienced. We hope that 2013 will bring fresh hopes and settled times for you and your families.

2012 dawned for us, in Reading, where we had a quiet New Year’s Eve with friends and got a soaking on New Year’s day while out walking in the fields near their home! This year we will be seeing in the New Year in Paris and enjoying the festivities around the Eiffel Tower.

I think we all had a fair amount of rain in the April to July period. We had a great wet weekend in Antwerp and Bruges with our friends James and Jeanette at the Jubilee Weekend and sampled a good number of Belgian beers !

Our mutual interest in biking was somewhat dampened by the awful wet weather and our preparations for our Civil Partnership in July. Most of our June was spent doing DIY around the house and refurbishing our guest bedroom. All went well until Peter put his foot through the ceiling during reorganising the loft ! The weather was kind to us over our special weekend 6th/8th July and despite almost wash out rainfall on Friday 6th by 4pm dry conditions allowed the erection of our gazebo and did not dampen the atmosphere of our pre ceremony barbeque. Most of our family and friends were able to gather and on Saturday we had our Civil Partnership Registration at the Charnwood Offices and then a wonderful ceremony and reception at the Town Hall, Loughborough. Again the weather held for our evening reception on the canal marina at Pillings Lock. Ben and I stayed in the Penthouse Suite at Pillings Lock and were joined by family and friends again on Sunday for lunch.

We left a damp UK on July 10th for a scorching short break in Venice and thoroughly enjoyed our time in that magical city.

In August we stayed with our friends Chris and Christophe in Vilamoura, Portugal where we had constant sunshine and a chance to relax with sand, sea and sun.

Ben continues to work as Stock Control Manager for James Coles Nurseries in Leicester and I maintain my work with a group of clients managing their financial affairs and continue to work with my business colleague to develop a Wellness Centre concept.

We have both had the opportunity to renew contacts with our wider families through our civil partnership ceremony but also by visits to them or through attending other family weddings and events. We hope that we both will be able to visit friends and family whenever the opportunity arises and even those more distant in Canada, South Africa and Australia in due course.

We both hope you have a happy and peaceful Christmas and send our best wishes to you for the New Year.