

Vilshof 3
92287
Schmidmühlen
Germany

13. December 2010

Dear Friends and Relatives,

Greetings from snowy Vilshof! Winter has definitely set in with over 45 cm of snow and with a white Christmas now looking fairly certain. School was cancelled twice much to the delight of all concerned!

Vilshof 1

Jutta (69) and Günther (68) are having a very active retirement. The both do a lot of work for various local charities. Jutta continues to make numerous visits to her homeland of Latvia, and Günther has been kept busy in recent weeks clearing the drive of snow with his tractor.

Maija (41) and Stephan (37) have had a lot of Woofers to stay www.woof.org during the year from all over the world (including Australia, Japan and France). "Woofing" is a scheme whereby people can stay free of charge at your house in exchange for a few hours of work every day. Maija and Stephan now have 8 chickens and a caravan for overflow guests.

Maija is now a very active trombonist and plays a lot of duets in public with Cris. She is also starting a brass band specifically aimed at adults who want to learn an instrument for the first time.

Lina (9), Zoe (7) are doing well at school and Julius (5) is at Kindergarten. Maija, Leo, Rosie and Lina now do a lot of rock-climbing in the woods where someone has kindly cemented in hooks needed for the ropes.

Vilshof 2

Christiane (32) still does the night shift in a bakery, and spends most of her waking hours looking after Darius (2). Johnny (31) is studying to be a machine operator. Elisabeth (76) still does a lot of walking and helps Gunther keep Vilshof tidy.

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Wanda (16) spent the summer term at a boarding school in England called Westonbirt and had a wonderful time. She now speaks the best English at Vilshof. At the end of term concert Janis (6) had great fun chasing the peacocks around the school grounds!

Cris and Marita got stuck in England due to the volcano, and ended up going home on a bus. But Leo (12) held the fort admirably for the several extra unplanned days. Marita and Cris also went to see their idol Jamie Cullum and went to Austria to see the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain.

Wanda and Leo are very active in the junior fire brigade and the life guards. Rosie (7) has won lots of cups for running and Janis is now a good swimmer (which is a great relief as the river is only 70 metres away) . Rosie and Janis learned to ski at the start of the year and are going to the Alps at the end of December.

The family holiday was as ever to the seaside cottage in Latvia (this year with Cris's conductor), but with a few days in Sweden as well with some successful fishing.

Cris is still having his midlife crisis has been playing a lot of Tenorhorn and Saxophone and composed a march www.youtube.com/watch?v=14e9S1bdvkg for his Um-Pa-Pa band. He is currently trying to learn Double Bass.

Marita did her first Triathlon and a half marathon. She also did a 4 km swim and helped at the "Iron Man" competition in Regensburg.

Merry Christmas from all of us at Vilshof!