

# Ricketty.com / News

The e-Newsletter of the Ricketts'  
December 2023

## Dearest family and friends,

We feel very fortunate to be able to greet you at this time of year, bearing in mind the circumstances that so many people round the world are having to bear right now. Our little missive keeps us in touch with you and lets you know a bit more about the things we've been up to this year.

We enjoyed a lovely start to the year in January, with a surprise birthday gift from Paul to Maggie – a short break in Vienna, where we'd never been before.

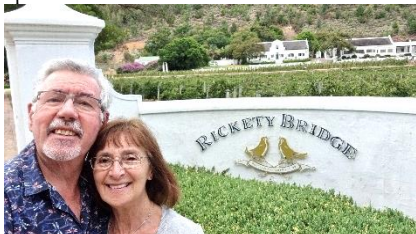


We enjoyed the music (Mozart!), the art, the architecture, and especially Sunday Mass at the extraordinary, medieval St. Stephen's cathedral, with accompaniment of two organs played in stereo by a world famous (we now know) organist!

In February we had a great, three-week trip to South Africa, hiring a car and driving from Johannesburg to Cape Town, spending a few days in several,



really lovely places enroute and learning a lot more about the injustice and legacy of apartheid.



A highlight of the tour was a stay at a beautiful winery in Franschhoek, a gift from our three daughters, especially chosen for its name – 'Ricketty Bridge'! We got back to the UK just in time to celebrate with Maxine and Jon their civil partnership – many thanks Maxine and Jon for a wonderful party evening!



March saw us spending ten days at the pad in Estepona, with gorgeous weather and long walks, while April included lots of family time: Easter celebrations with Sarah, Rachel and their families, Claire and Ben joining us for five days too.

May started off well. We were invited to spend the Bank Holiday weekend with Claire, Greg, Ella and Ben and were treated to a Greg Mills special BBQ, whilst watching Prince Charles being promoted to HM. The day after our return, we enjoyed a visit from Tim and Min, and all was going well until Paul jet-washed the patio, slipped, fell, and incurred several broken anklebones and a dislocated tibia. The upshot was a week in hospital with major surgery



and seven weeks in plaster, though we opted out of our annual wedding anniversary Cumbrian fell-walk to hear the cuckoos this year – tricky in a plaster cast and wheelchair.

It was lovely to have Gordon stay over in June, we visited RHS Bridgewater, with Gordon able to push the wheelchair (thanks Gordie) until Paul graduated to the mobility scooter, which two-year old Tate thought was great and insisted on working the speed and steering!

By July, Paul had recovered sufficiently for us to set off for a two-week stay in Estepona, with airport assistance. The daily walks helped so much that he was eventually able to get around minus crutches!



In August and September, we enjoyed lots of family time. Claire came to stay, supervising Paul's physiotherapy, which included a memorable fell walk on our favourite Cumbrian path!

We had a great celebration for Sarah's birthday, with the McGuires back home from Italy just in time.



Tate's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday followed in September, celebrated with a lovely meal chez Ricketts-Stanleys. Then we enjoyed a last-minute booking of a four-night trip to Corfu.



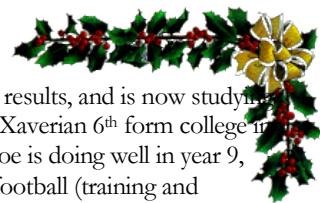
Finally, in late September, Maggie, Annie, Fran, and Mary enjoyed the annual 'sisters' gathering', this year (the 28<sup>th</sup>) being spent in a picturesque canal-side location in Staffordshire.



All sorts of good things happened in October. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, Paul, Maggie, Sarah, and Tate went off to Estepona for a fun week, where Tate had plenty of opportunity to master his balance bike.



On 11<sup>th</sup>, Sarah and Tate returned home and Claire came out for a further lovely ten days - glorious weather, lots of walking, and enjoying meals and 'aperitifs' with Dave



and Sue. Claire was joined by Greg and Ben at half term (all now in their own apartment just up the road) ensuring that the social gatherings continued!

We were all back home in time to celebrate with Lynn her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday – many thanks, Lynn, for a lovely party!



The following morning, 29<sup>th</sup> October, Paul and Maggie flew back to Palma, Mallorca, to collect a car which Paul's friend Neil needed to have brought back to the UK. Needless to say, Paul was delighted to be back behind the wheel of a super Land Rover Discovery (ours having been stolen in March!) in which we returned to UK via road, and two ferries, through Spain and France, stopping off with Tim and Min once back in UK (many thanks T and M for the hospitality).

Paul's driving delight didn't stop there. On 12<sup>th</sup> November he embarked upon a

two week and two days road trip (or should we say 'rogues' trip?) with Dave and Adrian around Argentina and Chile, over the Andes twice, and staying at



several interesting places along the way ... arriving back home just in time for our big (26<sup>th</sup>) annual family weekend Christmas gathering, which has taken place the first weekend in December. As ever, we've had a great time, all 22 of us, in a huge, converted farmhouse near Welshpool, walking, eating, hot-tubbing, playing games, quizzes, chatting and catching up – many thanks to everyone for a wonderful few days.

So where are we all up to now? Claire and Greg are busy with work and developments of all kinds, both work and voluntary related. Ella is enjoying her new job with a financial services company in Reigate. Ben did very well in year 11, achieving 9 GCSEs with excellent results and is now studying at A-level. He's looking forward to his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday at the end of December, when he can work towards his driving test and get his own car (like Ella)! Rachel and Iain are well, busy as ever. Rachel is increasingly involved in a range of research and roles related to mental health support. Mia did very well in year 11, achieving 9 GCSEs

with excellent results, and is now studying for A-level at Xaverian 6<sup>th</sup> form college in Manchester. Joe is doing well in year 9, still enjoying football (training and matches) and gym membership with his friends. Leo, year 5, is doing well at school and at football too. Sarah and Mike are both well, both working hard, and dealing with house renovations. Arlo is now 13 and a year 8 student. Tate, now 3, is a cheery little soul, full of conversation and starting Primary School (in the nursery - same school as Leo's) in January! Maggie is still involved with various aspects of Samaritans work, and a bit of educational consultancy now and again; Paul hobbles around trying to look busy.

So here we are in December, with heavy snow at the weekend, and bright sunshine in the garden today! We send you much love for Christmas and our very best wishes for a safe and healthy 2024. Do call and see us, or get in touch, when you can.

With love, from ....

**Paul & Maggie, Sarah, Mike, Tate & Arlo, Rachel & Iain, Mia, Joe & Leo, Claire & Greg, Ella & Ben xxxxx**

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