

# Ricketty.com / News

The e-Newsletter of the Ricketts'  
December 2024

## Dearest family and friends,

Here's our Christmas letter 2024, being in written in November! We have snow covering everywhere outside and looking very pretty.

I know some people like to put their activities and photos on Facebook as a way of keeping in touch – I think the Ricketty News must be a bit the same! We enjoyed a lovely start to the year in



January, looking after little Tate, enjoying a big family birthday meal (Maggie's and Iain's), and then, unsurprisingly, a New Year visit to



Estepona for beautiful weather, long sunny walks, exploring new places and doing more DIY in the pad.

In February, Claire, Ben and Ella came up at half term – we always enjoy their visits – and we all had a fab time celebrating Rachel's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday with a wonderful party for friends and family chez McGuire.

In March we enjoyed family visits to cousin Doreen in Preston, and cousin Margaret and John in their beautiful new home in Preston.



Our next big trip started on 21<sup>st</sup> February. We embarked on a 3 week visit to Spain, starting with a 2-night crossing from

Portsmouth to Santander, then gradually driving southeast, staying for one or two nights variously in Leon, Salamanca, Valladolid, Zaragoza then Valencia. We especially wanted to see the extraordinary processions for Semana Santa and were amazed in



each place by the musicians, young and old, male and female, sometimes in their hundreds, and with mainly drummers accompanying each procession. Finally, we took the long drive southwest to spend another 8 days in Estepona, where, as ever, there were lots of innovations and activities taking place! We arrived back in the UK in April, in time for a post-Easter gathering with all the family.

Some lovely things happened in May. Amongst other things, Gordon came to stay; we celebrated Adrian's 60<sup>th</sup> with a lavish birthday bash chez Armstrong and a fun filled event at Adrian's



music venue New Century Manchester; and we enjoyed a 3-day visit to Cumbria in glorious weather, which was a joint birthday gift from our lovely family. It also coincided with our 54<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and this year (unlike last year when Paul was confined



to a wheelchair) we were able to celebrate in traditional fashion with our usual fell hike, listening to cuckoos calling all the way.

Early June we enjoyed a delicious Father's Day evening meal with Rach and Sarah, at a new (for us) venue, The Black Friar, in town,



and a birthday lunch for Walter's cousin Doreen. And by late June we were up for another Estepona visit. They seem to come round fast when one starts writing the Christmas letters and omitting the visits to doctors and hospitals, gardening, shopping and cleaning etc! This year we had great fun with visitors to Estepona. Ella and



boyfriend Ollie stayed at the Millses own pad up the road and enjoyed meals out with 'Grandad and Grandma'; then friends Jean and Drew arrived, and we enjoyed meals out, coastal path walking, and evening drinks on the roof bar at their smart hotel. We also had some building work done, with Antonio and son expertly repairing the lounge ceiling. We had some very hot weather, sea dips, tasty meals out and at home (thanks to the resident chef). All-in-all it was a great 3-week visit. This was swiftly followed by a



lovely 4-day stay in July with Claire, Greg, Ella and Ben in Chipstead.

In August we were lucky to have lots of family time. We had a family day out, and an opportunity for a late celebration of Sarah's birthday, at 'Manley Mere' where 'the lads', including Iain, donned wet suits and enjoyed the challenges of the water park, and the rest of us snuggled into the café for lunch and hot drinks.



Later in August the 'Ricketts 5' had an unusual night out at the Aviva venue in Manchester, where a Tuareg band, Tinariwen, whom we had very much wanted to see, were playing, so we turned up in all our Tuareg gear, clothes and jewellery, and enjoyed the performance.



Then we got to September. In June two years ago, we had a wonderful trip to western Turkey, all organised by Paul's relative Mal Ricketts and his travel company, based in Izmir. We'd enjoyed it so much that we wanted to explore the Mediterranean and further inland parts of Turkey. Consequently, on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September we flew off to Antalya to start our 2-week journey, again, expertly arranged by Mal and Company. We stayed in lovely accommodation, had glorious, hot weather, saw many fascinating and ancient sights, ate delicious food and met many friendly people. Highlights of the trip were, amongst several, staying in Konya, the birthplace of the Dervish sect and seeing the 'whirling' Dervish;



staying for 3 days in Cappadocia where we were taken by a very knowledgeable guide on tour of many early Christian and 10<sup>th</sup> century underground settlements and monasteries, staying 3 nights in a cave hotel.



We visited the birthplace of St Paul in Tarsus, and the hometown of St Nicholas aka Santa Claus. We climbed a steep and rocky hillside in Lycia to see permanent flames leaping up from crevasses at our feet, believed to be evidence that the three-headed fire-breathing monster, the Chimera, slain by Bellerophon riding his horse Pegasus, still exists. We returned home in time to celebrate Tate's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday with a great meal out with Sarah, Mike and Tate.



Then later in September, Maggie, Annie, Fran and Mary enjoyed the annual 'sisters' gathering', this year (the 29<sup>th</sup>) being spent at Brookhouse Farm in Nantwich. We chatted, ate delicious home-cooked grub, had walks, explored local villages and celebrated Fran's

birthday (of 17<sup>th</sup> September) with a game of scrabble (Mum and Dad's scrabble set) and a nice glass or two of prosecco!

All sorts of good things happened in



October. Tim and Min stayed over 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>, then on 9<sup>th</sup> we went off to Liverpool to a big party gathering of 'old girls and boys' to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Christ's College, Maggie's Teacher Training College (now Liverpool Hope Uni). It was good to meet up with many former friends and colleagues. On 15<sup>th</sup> October we flew off to Spain (of course we did) for our final visit this year, met up at Manchester airport with friends Jean and Drew, travelled together to Estepona, and met up for some good times, chats and aperitifs with Dave and Sue. Claire joined us on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and Sarah and Rachel joined us on the 18<sup>th</sup>. As we had done 6 years ago, we all visited the superb restaurant in Arriate near Ronda for a Sunday lunch – even sat at the same table! Rach



and Sa went home after 5 days, while 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!



November was a busy time on the Bury Samaritans' front. Paul, Maggie and colleagues made up 30 Christmas hampers, which are

currently raising funds in locations around Bury for the work of our branch.

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>, we were given the opportunity for a

charity performance of Noel Coward's 'Hay Fever' at a local theatre, our fourth similar venture, through which our ticket-

sales and raffle raised a generous amount towards running costs of our listening service and outreach activities.

Following this, our big (27<sup>th</sup>) annual family weekend Christmas gathering took place from Friday 29<sup>th</sup> – Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December. As

ever, we had a great time, all 20 of us: the Ricketts extended family and the Smiths



(Paul's sister) likewise, in a huge, converted barn near Welshpool. We enjoyed walking, eating, hot-tubbing,



playing games, quizzes, chatting, catching up, birdwatching (thrilling to observe a kingfisher fishing!) and joining the local bell-ringers' group – many thanks to everyone for a wonderful few days.

Since then, on 5<sup>th</sup> December, Maggie was admitted to hospital for



the early Christmas gift of a brand-new hip, all done and home the next day, 6<sup>th</sup> December. Patient and new hip are doing fine.

On the family front, Claire and Greg are busy as ever with work and developments of all kinds. Ella is enjoying her new job with a financial services company in Reigate.

Ben is doing well in year 12, preparing for his A-levels and enjoying driving himself and family/friends in 'his' car. Rachel and Iain are well, busy as ever, including a big building project nearing completion. Rachel is increasingly involved in a range of research and roles related to mental health support. Mia is working hard in year 12 towards her A-levels at Xaverian 6<sup>th</sup> form college in Manchester. Joe is doing well in year 10, enjoying football (training, matches and refereeing) and getting glowing school reports. Leo, year 6, now a prefect and a budding drummer, is doing well at school and at football too. Sarah and Mike are both well, both working hard, and dealing with on-going house renovation plans. Arlo is now 14 and a year 9 student. Tate, now 4, is a delightful little soul, full of conversation and attending the same Primary School as Leo, which they're both very happy about. Maggie is still involved with various aspects of Samaritans work, and Paul is always busy, with DIY, creating gourmet meals for us and family, being IT technician and financial advisor as required ... the list goes on.

We send you much love for Christmas, and our very best wishes for a safe and healthy 2025. 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**

123 Rufford Drive, Whitefield, Manchester M45 8PD

Tel: +44 (0)161 766 7123

Email: Maggie.Ricketts@ntworld.com

PSRicketts@gmail.com

ClaireEMills@yahoo.co.uk

RachelRicketts@gmail.com

SarahRicketts@hotmail.com

**Merry Christmas**

