Christmas and New Year greetings to all our family and friends. It doesn’t seem a year since we last sat down to do our cards and Christmas Letter.

Our New Year 2019 was memorable. We were on Unawatuna Beach, at the southern tip of Sri Lanka, near Galle. We left the UK on Christmas Day 2018 and flew via Dubai to Colombo. We enjoyed heat for 10 days and relaxed in the wonderful surroundings of our spa resort overlooking the Indian Ocean. It was a joy and eye opener to experience the sights and sounds of this country. We spent our last night in a luxury hotel in Colombo and it was distressing to learn, as we all did, of the horrific attacks that blighted that area only a few weeks later, at Easter.

Both of us have maintained our working situations throughout the year. Ben has developed further in his stock managment role at Coles Nurseries and Peter is continuing his work for several clients, in and around Leicester, with monthly trips up to Newcastle to manage the finances of an Bespoke Shoe Company.

Ben’s mum has three sisters and a fairly large extended family. In May, it had been decided to have a whole family gathering at Glynde, in East Sussex, where Ben’s grandfather, Rev Max Godden had been Archdeacon for many years. It was a fun occasion. We had chance to socialise and take a few sturdy walks on the Downs. At Firle Church, one of Max’s old churches, Peter decided to play a few hymns, as no one was around, so exercised his skills on the piano (recorded).

In April,over the Easter Weekend, we took Ben’s parents, sister Ellie and brother in law Aled, on a trip to Belgium. We travelled by euro shuttle and visited Bruges,Ypres and Veurne. We both have witnessed the Last Post at the Menin Gate before but it remains a very moving ceremony to watch. It was a short break but a chance to enjoy time together.

Sweden beckoned at the end of May as it was time again to meet and catch up with ‘our Australian family’, Rob, Shelley and the three boys, Evan, Alec and Scott. We flew from Birmingham to Copenhagen and spent a day around the Danish capital then took the train over to Malmo, in Sweden. Shelley was teaching in the International School there so the opportunity to spend time with them couldn’t be missed. Alec and Scott joined us at the Park Run in Malmo, enjoying their first Park Run experience.

We had planned an 8 day holiday by train, in August, to Switzerland via Paris. Unfortunately, Ben took ill the night before with high temperature and what turned out to be a gastro infection. He ended up in the Leicester Royal Infirmary for 36 hours on a drip so we didn’t see the delights of Lake Geneva or the Alps! We recovered all our booked train fares etc and have booked for a relaxing time in Malta between Christmas and New Year.

Our common interests – bikes, running, ancestry and travel remain strong. Our overall family tree has continued to grow though we never seem to uncover any wealthy or titled ancestors !

We have both now clocked up around 29 park runs and enjoy our membership of Birstall Running Club. Ben particularly has taken to running ( more enthusiastically than me ) and of course monitors his distances and timings quite eagerly. We both joined the club at ‘Equinnox 24’ in September. It was a camping /running event in the shadow of Belvoir Castle. Ben did the midday 10k run and we both did the evening 10k run. Joining many hundred others all with headtorches was a great feeling and impressive sight. Overall our club, (with some doing continuous solo or team 24 hour runs) clocked up 1900 miles ! In early November, we did the Annual Poppy Day run around our local Watermead Country Park returning with everyone else to the British Legion for well deserved bacon rolls and coffee.

Our bike outings seem fewer than in past years but we still enjoyed a few days out often winding up at Wyndham Windmill or Melton Park for coffee. Peter – feeling the days of a racing style bike might be fading – bought a new Yamaha MT07 in May – but still kept his old one. – so we still have three bikes and two riders !

Peter’s model railway has mushroomed taking over spaces beyond his workshop. He has been away to a few railway exhibitions.

Ben has made a few weekend trips to Amsterdam to visit friends and has joined me in Newcastle for two long weekends. We had a tour of the Kielder Forest and took in the Gateshead Park Run, one Saturday morning.

In early December, we popped down to Weymouth for Ben’s birthday weekend and to see Peter sister, Carol and husband Mark. Trips to Dorset have been a lot less since Peter’s dad died so it was good to catch up with them.

This year we will be opening our Christmas decorations once more. They have largely stayed packed in boxes for three years as we have not been at home. We will be hosting Christmas here in Leicester before setting off to Malta on 27th December.

We hope this letter and our Christmas Greeting finds you well and you and your families have a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a prosperous year in 2020. There are several of you who live far afield and who we have not met or seen for sometime. We would be delighted to see and welcome you, should you be passing through or nearby.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

A pictorial record of our adventures are on our website

[www.penprivate.com](http://www.penprivate.com)