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Our year began for us, in glorious sunshine, on the beach, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. We had flown to Cape Town on Christmas Day and enjoyed the sights and sounds of that city including the wonderful views of Table Mountain. We continued our adventure by driving east, along the ‘Garden Route’, to join our friends at Kleidemonde. Ben’s godsons took part in the annual games on the sands and we enjoyed several walks, barbeques and swam in the warm coastal waters. Ben even tried his hand at sand surfing on the massive dunes and mastered the art quite well.

We were delighted to host godsons Alec and Scott, in March, when they came over from Sweden to spend a week in the UK. Pete went down to Bristol to fetch them where they were staying a few days with their grandmother. It gave Pete the opportunity to meet up with his sister Carol and husband Mark who had travelled up from Weymouth and to share a little time with cousin Bridget and aunt Barbara, in Hanham.

Ben and I took the boys over to Bear Grylls adventure at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham where they enjoyed some rock wall climbing. Needless to say, the two boys got up the rock faces like spiderman and Ben struggled to get a grip at the lower levels ! but we all had fun.

In March, we decided to have our willow tree cut in half. It had reached quite a height. It has a fungus and we know it will eventually have to come down. We decided to keep the felled wood for our log burner but there was more of it on the ground than we bargained for and we still have a third or more to saw up this summer!

In April, we managed a short Easter trip to Weymouth, to Pete’s sister. We had our regular visits – first, out to Portland Bill for Pete’s very expensive crab sandwiches at the Lobster Pot then over to the Dorchester Curiosity Shop where despite our planned restraint we always end up buying something ! We called in at Winchester on the way home as neither of us had been there.

May was an eventful month. Like most people we watched the coronation on May 6th with our family who had gathered at our house to watch it and enjoy a special delivered coronation tea.

Then in the following week, as part of Ben’s 40th birthday present, last December, we went on a tour to ‘Arkles’ Brewery, in Swindon. Ben descends from the Arkle family so had always wanted to follow up on this branch of his ancestors. The tour began with a bit of a booze up and has changed Ben’s drinking habit from lager to pale ale. He met and chatted to his ‘cousins’ who now run the brewery. We did some ancestry research around a few Wiltshire graveyards then headed over to Thornbury, near Bristol, to stay with friends. We always like to do a park run in the locality when we are away from home so decided to do the Severn Bridge Park Run. It was different – running from Wales into England and back on one side of the bridge. Pete was less concerned about the running than the ‘height’ looking down from the bridge to the estuary but we both mastered it and it was another UK park run ticked off.

We flew over to Sweden in August for godson Alec’s 18th birthday and then made our way home by train. We spent a day in Stockholm then travelled south to Malmo, ferry to Rostock and on to Hamburg. We very much enjoyed Hamburg where we visited the largest model railway in the world including its amazing model airport. We took in the Hamburg ‘Park Run’ and basked in glorious sunshine by the lake in the centre. On to Amsterdam where we had dinner with friends and Eurostar home.

Running remains one of our joint interests though as you would expect Ben is more regular at it than me - getting out at least three times a week. Ben runs with our friend and neighbour Jeanette and they have been joined this year by Rupesh. All three had entered the London Marathon ballot for 2024 and both Jeanette and Rupesh won a place. Ben decided to seek a charity place and succeeded in getting several offers, finally choosing to run for MS UK. The challenge is now on for them and training will soon have to start in earnest. They all did the Leicester Half Marathon and are set to do the Ashby 20 again next year, along with several other events and their own running schedule. Any sponsorship support you can give to this enterprise would be most welcome. (See enclosed leaflet for details).

We attended ‘Equinox Running Event’ at Belvoir Castle in September where we joined other members of our running club and did the 10k runs. Pete has had back and leg pain for a few weeks but we are both hoping to do the Christmas lights run on December 18th. Our running club run from the village to Leicester Town Hall and back dressed in a variety of Christmas lights and costumes then return for a nice hot supper, at our base, in the British Legion.

Pete engaged a firm of London accountants to undertake all the filing and tax work associated with his two remaining clients significantly reducing his workload and responsibility but continues to enjoy his trips to Newcastle and regular weekly visit to his Leicester client. Ben has secured an assistant at Coles Nurseries which allows him to take on extra responsibilities and more importantly provides cover on his day-to-day work.

We continue enjoy our bikes, our ancestry research and always take the opportunity to visit antique venues or places of interest.

This Christmas we are staying at home with family and friends. We joined Ben’s Mum and Dad, sister Ellie, Aled and niece Pippa at Chatworth House Christmas lights early in December.

Check out our website [www.penprivate.com](http://www.penprivate.com) or see us on facebook (under our individual names) to keep up with our adventures

We would be delighted to see any of our family and friends, at any time, at ours should you be nearby or like to visit us. We both hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous, Contented and Happy New



