

53 Brock Street
Macclesfield
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December 2008

Dear

Christmas greetings for 2008!

So ... where have we been this year? The beginning of April saw Robert and Beth enjoying a minor heatwave in Rome with a party from the local adult education college, organised by our friend Carol who proved a very knowledgeable and entertaining guide; lots of sights to take in (including some Roman ruins which double up as a sanctuary for stray cats!), wonderful Italian food and wine and good company.



In July all four of us enjoyed a wet week in the Lake District, with literary pilgrimages to Grasmere, Hawkshead and (less exaltedly, perhaps) Beatrix Potters house at Near Sawrey but not much walking. And in late September Beth and Robert spent three days walking on the North York moors, stopping in a different place each night; we were lucky enough to pick the one dry week of the whole summer and autumn, but the moors were like well-soaked sponges, water welling out with every footstep.

Clare has spent 2008 looking for a job – not the easiest thing in the present climate. She spends about two-thirds of her time here and the rest in Manchester at her boyfriend Nick's and at various meetings of Role-playing Gamers.

Chris left school in the summer with an A-level in English Literature and an AS in English language; pretty good for a young man with Asperger's Syndrome, the first special needs pupil at his school to go into the sixth form. He too is now looking for a job and after much thought and many meetings with the local disability employment advisor and work psychologist he now thinks that (as his real ambition to be a writer is unlikely to pay a living wage in the short term) being a postman might suit him.

November brought THE party of the year in honour of Beth's 50th birthday. We hired St Michael's for the night – the wooden flooring in the worship area is wonderful for dancing! - and held a barn dance complete with caller and live musicians. We certainly enjoyed it, and we hope everyone else did too.

Robert is still at TNEI and enjoying the variety of challenges from software development to supporting hardware at our 3 sites. A few changes over the 18 months but we look to be in good shape to face the recession with a strong involvement in environmental concerns.

Fed up with the accounts dept being asked to do ever more work in fewer woman-hours , Beth left Krogab at the beginning of July. I'm now working freelance, putting small business accounts together for a tax consultant, and working one day a week helping out in the finance/admin dept of an IT company in Wilmslow.

A peripheral piece of sad news during the year was the closure of Scargill House in Wharfedale where Robert worked for 4 years and Beth and Robert met. We managed a couple of trips up before the closure happened.

All Saints is still without a vicar (nearly 2 years of a vacancy) but with redeployment within the Team we'll be sharing one with another Macclesfield church in January. The Macclesfield team as a whole is in the midst of changes, hoping to move from being a Team Parish to a Team Ministry and also in the process of setting up Local Leadership Teams in each of the churches.

Hecate has spent the last six months sulking – the blackbirds stopped visiting our garden after she took another bunch of feathers out of the cock blackbird's tail (served him right for taunting her!) and to add insult to injury after four years of “only cat” privileges she's having to share everything... Six-dinner Sid wandered into Brock Street in the summer as a half-grown kitten in search of food and company (human and feline – he's VERY sociable) and stayed around in spite of various attempts to return him to his original owner (and quite a lot of very rude hisses and growls from Hecate). Hecate tolerates him pretty well now, although she finds his boisterous playfulness rather a pain.



Beth does still occasionally make lace, in spite of Sid's “help”. She's also carrying on with learning Spanish and has now joined a GCSE class at the local college.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year