

CHRISTMAS LETTER 2012

Dear family and friends

CHRISTMAS LETTER 2012

The past year has been full on, with four trips away including our fabulous extended seven-week tour around Alaska, Vancouver and the Rocky Mountains, Cape Cod, Ottawa and Montreal, Seattle and Mount Rainier, San Francisco and Yosemite National Park, and finally Big Island Hawaii and the volcanoes. Added to the holidays away from home, we managed to fit in twelve trips to Sydney for grandparent duties and family visits - as Anne explains - we must make the most of our time, and while she is trying to wear herself out, the same happens to Dave!

Our first excursion was in February 2012, when we spent an idyllic week on Lord Howe Island walking, swimming with the turtles and fish, and eating good food. Anne ended up on a bicycle puffing up the hills, while Dave kept up with his steady stride. We had an interesting boat ride round the island, seeing its hidden coves, cliffs and wildlife.

In March we met up with Ian and Gwynneth from Ottawa. They were catching up with family and friends, before six hard walking days on the Great Ocean Road track along beaches and cliff tops in all weathers - both exhilarating and exhausting but well worth the effort - even if Anne swore that she was never going to do that again! We had a wonderful four days in Melbourne with good friends Janet and Jo to recuperate and see some of the sights and activities of Sydney's rival city.

May gave us a quick trip to Canberra to see Paul and Heather. From Canberra it was a short drive to the farm for four lazy days with Derek and Lisa outside Orange - we are still anticipating the kitchen renewal following on from the vast changes in the manager's suite!

June was a time for friends at home and an assortment of medical appointments - all with successful results - we can travel on with impunity! In July we managed a quick trip to Queensland with three nights at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat exploring the bush in the rain, a good pub lunch with John and Sylvia Tomlinson at Mount Tambourine, followed by a day in Maleny with John and Lesley Mott admiring their magnificent view.

On the first of July, Dave's young sister Jenny and John her partner, arrived for a too-brief visit from London - it was wonderful to see them so happy. We then packed, introduced our house-sitter friends Jan and Richard to our new home, and started on our North American continent holiday of a lifetime. More details of that experience will be in an accompanying letter!

We arrived back in Sydney from Hilo, Hawaii on 28 September, wondering where the spring had gone. It took us a week to get home after recovering from jet lag and seeing Alex, Steve and Jamie again, also Anne's brother Peter and his wife Bev in Mona Vale. Luckily for them they were not all subjected to thousands of photos as Dave did not have time to process them from both our cameras - and is still working on it!

We caught up with Paul and Heather again briefly in October, in their comfortable new home, as well as fitting in a splendid dinner with Roger and Kate in their superbly renovated and enlarged house. It seems easier for us to travel to Canberra than for our Canberran friends to take a break in Port Macquarie to breathe the ozone!

The end of October saw Anne's brother Peter in hospital with pneumonia which has sadly led to an extended stay in a nearby nursing home - we have managed to visit several times but have had to leave the main visiting burden to Bev.

The last couple of months of 2012 have been filled with friends, gardening and delayed house chores, until now Christmas is upon us once more. We are very much looking forward to joining Derek and Lisa on the farm for the week's celebration.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy 2013.

Love Anne and Dave



Dave and Anne in Alaska's Denali National Park with Denali (Mt McKinley) in the background.