

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2013

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Another year has past with many experiences, some good some sad, a move and another overseas trip – this time five weeks in UK and Ireland in August-September.



Peter 2008



Emma 2013



Irene 2005

In early February Anne's brother Peter died in hospital in Sydney – a great loss as they had followed each other around the world and been very close in spite of living worlds apart much of the time.

Dave gained a granddaughter with Emma Rose arriving into the world on 29th September 2013 – we are all besotted with the lovely well-behaved girl.

In November we also lost Irene, Dave's stepmother and a dear friend of Anne's. She was an interesting person who coped with challenges, enjoyed a varied life and did not deserve to suffer from dementia.

The second half of February and early March were taken up with a tour around the north island of New Zealand visiting old friends and exploring. It was wonderful to catch up with Jenny and Richard in Wellington, Ray and Ali in Katikati, and John and Rona in their delightful mountain perch at Tairua from where we explored the Coromandel Peninsular.

The explorations included the Ohakune snowfields, Lake Taupo where we were lucky enough to have a brilliant sunny afternoon to take a small plane trip over the volcanoes and national park, Rotorua including the Waimangu Volcanic Valley and ending on Waiheke Island. The North Island was suffering from a devastating drought, and the countryside was burnt brown instead of the normal brilliant green, but we did manage to sample some good wine on our journeys.

Dave managed to earn two 70th birthday parties, one in the Bonny Hills surf club, and the second a more formal event for friends and past work mates

in Canberra, both memorable affairs. Family members supported the latter, travelling to Canberra being easier than the drive to Port Macquarie.



Lake Taupo plane



Dave's 70th at Bonny Hills

We also managed to fit in a magnificent wedding of Anne's first great nephew Peter to Bex in Nowra – a great weekend.

The long drives to Sydney and back to Port had become very tiring so from the end of March we started exploring the coast from Tea Gardens southwards in order to move closer to Sydney and the family. Our final choice was a comfortable little villa in Glengara – a retirement village near Wyong on the Central Coast a mere hour by train or car from the outskirts of Sydney. We moved here in early July much to Anne's surprise, as she was not going to leave Port until the end of the year! It was a good move and we settled quickly.



Our new home

About a month after we moved we were off on our trip to the UK – half of which was devoted to seeing family and friends and the rest to tours in Scotland and Ireland.

We had an interesting stopover in Dubai seeing some of their history and extraordinary buildings. On arrival in Glasgow we spent a busy weekend at Kinlochard with Peter and Marjory who gave us a grand tour down a remote loch.

We then took a Rabbie's small bus tour round the west coast of Scotland – including Mull, Staffa, Iona and Skye – with lots of good experiences and plenty of rain. We managed to see some of Edinburgh's sites including a very crowded castle and a very wet walk down the High Street.



Dave, Anne and Sarah
Eilean Donan Castle, Scotland



Anne at Dún Aonghasa,
Aran Inis Mór, Ireland

The flight to Southampton was so much simpler than trying to navigate England by car and gave us more time to spend with Anne's niece Nicola and family – a most rewarding time spent catching up with them and the family news. Dave also managed to fit in a night in London with his niece Val and family, where they never stopped talking! We continued the English section with a night with Jill, an old work-friend of Anne's, and her cousin 'Cilla and Jack in Wells where we spent an interesting time discussing Hubert family history.

The final English section was with Dave's brother Don and wife Vera in Northwich Cheshire where a grand reunion of Johnsons took place – all sixteen of them enjoyed an excellent lunch – a great celebration and the first time the four siblings had been together. It was quite sad to be leaving the UK so soon but the ferry across to Dublin was very restful and comfortable.



Alison, Jenny, Dave, Val, Don and Tony
Mill Pool, Cheshire, England

At the end of the holiday we took an Irish rail/bus trip from Dublin to Cork, Killarney, Galway and back to Dublin. We had several day trips round the Ring of Kerry, the Cliffs of Moher, the large Aran Island and its mysterious fort circles, Connemara and Kylemore Abbey. From Dublin we took a train to Belfast and a bus to the Giant's Causeway – far too many tourists, otherwise well worth the visit.

We flew back to Sydney from Dublin having another stopover in Dubai.

In November we drove to Port to see Dave's 89 years old stepmother who was in a nursing home with dementia, poor soul. From Port we drove to the farm at Orange where we heard that Irene had died, requiring a hasty change of plan. As Irene's executor, Dave has been busy with managing her estate.

The end of the year sees us happily ensconced in our villa, being visited by various family members and dealing with a minor traffic incident on our local roundabout. We have been to various enjoyable functions at the Country Club, the focal point of our retirement village.

We hope that you all have a great Christmas and enjoy a wonderful New Year in 2014.