

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2014

Season's Greetings to all our friends and family - we hope you all had an excellent year with good health and plenty of activities to keep you amused.

Our year has been full as usual, with an eclectic combination of good shows and music entertainment in Newcastle, Sydney and Port Macquarie, added to grandparent visits to help the young family in Sydney – keeping us nice and busy.

In November we had an exciting trip to the farm at Orange, to visit Anne's nephew Derek and partner Lisa, who then joined us for an early Christmas in Mudgee with Alex and family. It was very hot (44° C) but we enjoyed a lovely vineyard luncheon and weekend before Alex and family fly off to celebrate a real (possibly white) Christmas in Scotland. We will have a quick visit to Port Macquarie to see friends and attend concerts followed by a couple of nights in the Hunter Valley to celebrate OUR Christmas. What it is to be retired!

We managed two of our 'wish list' holidays in 2014. The first was to Adelaide to see dear friends, spending a couple of days on Kangaroo Island before joining the Shelley's for the Ghan train ride to Darwin. We broke our journey in Alice Springs for a five-day tour of Uluru, Kata Tjuta, Kings Canyon, Palm Valley and surrounding areas. We also visited interesting galleries, some National Parks and the Flying Doctor Base, before continuing our Ghan journey to Darwin. The side trip up the Catherine Gorges was a highlight. While in Darwin we took a two-day Kakadu and East Alligator River tour, viewing the ancient aboriginal art site at Nourlangie Rock and taking an amazing plane flight over the rugged western area of Arnhem Land.



Waiting for the Ghan



Dave and Anne at Uluru



Palm Valley

The second 'wish list' holiday took place about ten weeks later, when we took an Outback Spirit 4WD bus tour from Cairns to Cape York, seeing lots of interesting places, people, flora and fauna of Cape York ending at the

northernmost point of mainland Australia – the ‘Tip’. Our bus went back to Cairns while we continued to Thursday Island, visiting a pearl farm on Friday Island, and flying back to Cairns from Horn Island, which was once a prominent WWII air base. Both holidays had their most memorable moments, too numerous to mention here, however the biggest impacts were the distances and empty country as well as the diversity of land, peoples and cultures.



At the Tip of Australia



Outback Spirit team



Our Cape York group

Returning to family, Alex and Steve's little family are doing very well, Emma coping with an older brother with 'vigour and push', Jamie progressing well in his first year at school and thoroughly enjoying it. Derek and Lisa are having fun and putting in much hard work on the farm - also brewing plans for the future - and Bev is getting the best out of Sydney and the music scene with the support of her family and chamber music playing friends. Derek's younger son Sean married the lovely Claire in April in Bowral, a real friendly affair, with Pete and Bex being part of the couple's entourage before they went back to Singapore to work.



Emma at St Malo's



Jamie on brand new bike

We also had the pleasure of having Dave's niece Val with her daughter Katie staying for a few days and treating us as a base while they flew off to do some Middle Earth exploring and see Val's brother Philip in New Zealand. They completed their trip with a cousins week for them both with Alex and family, and an exploration of NSW (via Barrington Tops) to Port Macquarie where they loaded their extra suitcases and themselves for the long return to the UK.



Alex and very proud dad



Katie, Val and Koala at Port

At the start of the year we enjoyed the company of our Canadian friends Ian and Gwynneth who graced the sunroom – there was much reminiscing and of course vino. In March, we enjoyed a wonderful 80th birthday celebration for Anne at Bonny Hills' Fat Fish Café together with many of our Port Macquarie and Camden Haven friends.

In November, Dave and Steve went to see Alex receive her very well deserved Master of Medicine (Paediatrics) degree at the University of NSW.

We hope that you all have a great Christmas and enjoy a wonderful New Year in 2015.

*All the best from
Anne and Dave*

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