

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2016

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Season's Greetings to our friends and family - we hope you all had an enjoyable year as well as good health.

Our 2016 year was a bit slow to start due to Anne's rehabilitation after her knee replacement, but we did manage to visit Port Macquarie early in February to have leisurely times with friends following a concert by the Australian Chamber Orchestra in Newcastle. Newcastle was visited a few times during the year for shows and music, and on several occasions, we took the impressive Anzac Memorial Bridge Walk along the cliff-tops.



Shoal Bay at eastern end of Nelson Bay, NSW



Sculpture on Anzac Memorial Bridge, Newcastle, NSW

The drive to Port was followed in early March by a quick trip to Nelson Bay to catch up with Alex and family who were entertaining Steve's parents, visiting from Scotland. We were very pleased to find that Marjory had recovered well from her knee surgeries with Peter's ministrations. We were also happy to meet up with Martin and Christine Gregory at Taylors Beach. Nelson Bay has some beautiful coastline and we had time to explore some of it.

Later in March we had a pleasant couple of days in the Hunter en route to visiting Derek and Lisa at the farm. It was impressive to see the progress they have made with improvements at Daleside, but there were no photos as the day dawned somewhat cold and windy. Lisa shows remarkable ability to be an active cattle assistant! Immediately after Easter we took our customary trip to Canberra to see Paul, who had survived having both knees replaced at the same time. He was recovering well under Heather's watchful eye and without too much stress! We returned via Sydney and lunch with Bev, husband of Anne's late brother Peter.

Derek and Lisa were able to slip away from the farm in May to MacMasters Beach, which is quite near us, so we spent a very enjoyable day with them. It was shortly after some enormous storms hit the Central Coast and the whole area was devastated – although the sand was pristine and good for 'exercising the toes'.

We had been to MacMasters beach a few weeks earlier and the amount of sand removal and damage was hard to comprehend. This encouraged us in June to see

what had happened to the waterways at The Entrance – a lot of damage to properties and movement of sand-banks were evident with a completely new channel cut right through the main beach!!



Anne at MacMasters Beach, NSW, before the storm(above) and
The Entrance Beach and Channel, NSW, before (left) and after the storm in June 2016 (right)

In early June, we had a blissful five days on Hamilton Island off the mid-north coast of Queensland. We left home in violent weather – wind and rain which followed us to Sydney and drowned us on the way to the airport. The sun was shining brightly in Queensland and on the reef, and so we had a relaxing time walking, exploring and eating good local products, especially the fish and seafood. Two thirds of the island is preserved as native bush with steep hills and magnificent views – a hiker's paradise – although some of the tracks allow noisy quad bikes which we didn't really appreciate.



View from the walking trail of the Reef Hotel, Catseye Beach
and the populated part of Hamilton Island, QLD



Seaplane view of the outer reef,
east of Hamilton Island, QLD



Seaplane view of Whitehaven Beach and Hill Inlet, near Hamilton Island, QLD



Sunrise from Reef Hotel, Hamilton Island, QLD

We indulged in a seaplane trip to view the outer barrier reef and returned with a stop at beautiful Whitehaven Beach with its extremely fluffy white seashell sand – it was interesting trying to get back onto the seaplane while it was being moved around in the waves! All worth another visit one day.

In mid-August, we spent a wonderful 17 days touring the Kimberley in a small four-wheel coach with Outback Spirit – Broome to Broome, but covering Cape Leveque, Derby, onto the notorious Gibb River road, Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary, Drysdale River Station, up to the very far north on the Mitchell Plateau to see the Mitchell Falls.



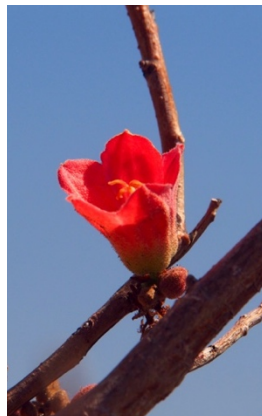
Boab Tree on Mornington track near to Gibb River Road, Kimberley, WA



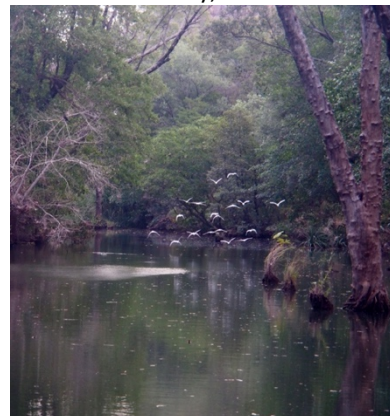
Our safari tent at Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary, Kimberley, WA



Henrietta the Falcon, Ngauwudu Safari Camp, Mitchell Falls, Kimberley, WA



Kimberley Rose, at Wyndham, WA



Birds on tributary of Ord River, near Kununurra, Kimberley, WA

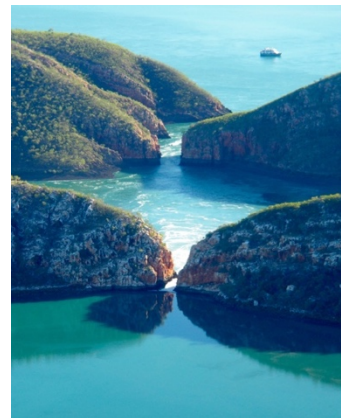
From here we returned back down the rough road to proceed to Emma Gorge accommodation at El Questro Wilderness Park, Kununurra and the Ord River irrigation scheme. The journey took us back to Broome via the main road with a few side trips including a very special safari camp in the Bungle Bungles to explore some of its gorges and extraordinary landscape, and Fitzroy Crossing including the nearby gorges.



Returning from the Cathedral Gorge walk, Bungle Bungles, Kimberley, WA



Geikie Gorge river cruise reflections, near Fitzroy Crossing, Kimberley, WA



Horizontal Falls from the air, Talbot Bay, Kimberley, WA

Not content with that we finished our Kimberley tour with a seaplane flight to view the horizontal falls for half a day. This was all enjoyed in the great company of 18 other wonderful Australians. It was an amazing way to see the Kimberley – so very different to viewing from the coastline which also has its special moments – but from the road one appreciates the area's vast open spaces, magnificent ranges, rivers, gorges, and rugged isolation.

During the school holidays in September we experienced some of the children's entertainment venues in Sydney, taking Jamie to a trampoline centre and the adventure centre next door, for an interesting introduction to activities available to the young. The trampoline centre was well supported and policed to accommodate all ages and skills (and the coffee was passible), but the adventure centre was an extremely noisy place, somewhat cavernous and full of groups – to be avoided! Emma had her turn of amusement at Bunnings with face-painting.



Jamie on trampoline,
Sky Zone, Alexandria, NSW



Jamie on adventure climb,
Attractivity, Alexandria, NSW



Emma with face painted, Bunnings
Castle Cove, NSW

We enjoyed several musical events over the course of the year most of them taking place in Sydney for a change, as the train services from our nearby station provide a good low-cost alternative to the stress of driving and parking the car. Some of these were with Bev at the Opera House.

Late October early November found us back in Port Macquarie for a much more relaxed visit to friends and a performance of Swan Lake by the Russian National Ballet Theatre.



Flynns Beach south view, Port Macquarie, NSW



Dorrigo Skywalk view, NSW



Walk at Dorrigo NP, NSW



From behind Crystal Shower
Falls, Dorrigo NP, NSW

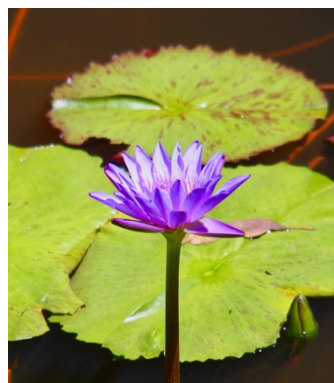


Waterfalls at Gloucester Tops, Barrington NP, NSW

Afterwards a leisurely detour took us via Bellingen, Dorrigo National Park (skywalk and walking trails), Armidale and Gloucester returning home to Tumby Umbi. We

visited several National Parks and Wilderness areas walking in very diverse country and vegetation. We must return!

Now that December is upon us the Season's celebrations have started. We met Derek and Lisa in the Hunter Valley for a festive dinner at Amanda's and gentle weekend away from farming. They are having a particularly busy time before going over to New Zealand to meet Jeremy for a few days, then flying to Bali with Lisa's family for Christmas.



Early Christmas with Derek and Lisa at Buffs of Pokolbin, Hunter Valley, NSW

Jeremy was in Australia midyear for a month working a veterinary locum at Wagga Wagga University in central NSW. He then rushed over to Mongolia to attend a week's horse endurance event, before going to New Zealand for work, but in all the flurry we were unable to meet face-to-face – perhaps next time!

Nicola has had more than her share of health issues, with ongoing viral infections and the removal of her gall bladder – hopefully all that is over now.

Our family Christmas will be with Alex and Steve this year in their comfortable home – they have done some alterations and improvements since they bought it, primarily re-vamping the bathroom to add a bath much to Jamie and Emma’s delight, but also improving the lighting, and sanding and re-polishing the floor which caused much furniture moving and an invasion of dust. The garden now has an efficient sprinkler watering system which is going to be needed this coming hot summer.

Alex and family were able to visit us briefly during the April holidays, however it was found to be easier to be at their home in Sydney amongst the toys and amusements, to give a helping hand. This we have enjoyed on several occasions, mainly during school holidays without any set timetable.

Bev is very busy now with Chamber Music and music workshops, and manages to keep herself active and stimulated. She finally recovered from the bouts of pneumonia which kept reappearing, and survived a bus trip to Tasmania in snow, rain and sunshine. We should be enjoying a meal with her on Xmas Eve.

Have a great Christmas and enjoy a wonderful New Year and 2017 - make the most of it in this changing world.



Dave and Anne (with seaplane) on Whitehaven Beach,
near Hamilton Island, QLD

*All the best from
Anne and Dave*

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