

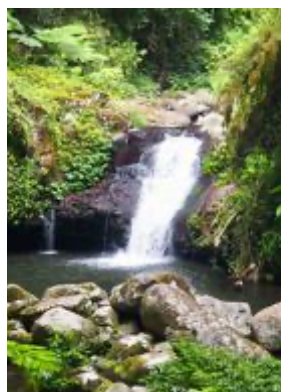
Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2017

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2017

Season's Greetings to our friends and family - we hope you all had an enjoyable year as well as good health. Sadly, this year we have lost Kevin and Frank, two dear friends from the Port Macquarie area who are missed. We have also lost Bryan from Newcastle and some of Anne's school friends have slipped away.

Our year has been very eventful with Australian travel and local days of entertainment and exploration, culminating in a most memorable European visit to the Channel Island of Jersey, Portugal and Spain. The Christmas Letter has grown so much it is now in 3 parts with our European visit taking two of these.

Five days at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat (on the Queensland-New South Wales border) at the start of March found us enjoying the scenery, walks and tours. We were there a few weeks before Debbie (an enormous tropical cyclone) blew through causing a lot of damage in the area.



Lamington National Park: sunset over the Scenic Rim from O'Reilly's (top), Bower Bird with a collection of blue objects (mid left), Conan the Kestrel from "Birds of Prey" show (mid right), view northwest from Luke's Bluff (lower left), Goondaree Falls on the Canungra River (lower mid), and the Wishing Tree (lower right)

At the end of March, we drove to Canberra for a couple of days and then continued south to Lake Crackenback in the Snowy Mountains near Thredbo – it was cold but sunny apart from a huge storm while we were enjoying ourselves at the top of the chairlift. The remnants of Debbie affected the weather in most of NSW but we managed to avoid most of the worst except for a horrendous drive down to Canberra – and of course Anne was driving when the deluge came!



Snowy Mountains National Park: Rams Head to Abbott Ridge from Mt Kosciuszko Summit track (top),
“time to go - it's raining over there!” (mid left), dark clouds over Eagles Nest (mid right),
Thredbo River scenes (lower left and right), and Lake Crackenback Resort near to the Park entrance (bottom)

We left the mountains driving the Snowy Mountains Highway in fairly heavy rain so we didn't see much of the wonderful views. We spent the night in Tumut and then next day we drove up the Goobarragandra River as far as we could get and then back via the Rock Flat Picnic Area, the site of major flooding in recent years, and the Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2017

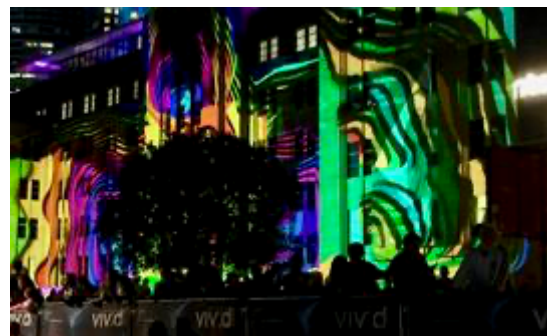
Little River near Tumut Plains, where Anne had spent a lovely Christmas many years ago. We then took the Snowy Mountains Highway to Talbingo, now a tiny settlement but once an important Snowy Hydro town.

The weather improved so we embarked on an exciting and nerve wracking drive through the Talbingo State Forest towards Adelong – a fabulous experience. After another night in Tumut we headed off to Orange, for a quick stay at the farm with nephew Derek and Lisa (both working very hard now that they have an additional property to look after).



Dave at Rock Flat Picnic Area on the Goobarragandra River (upper left), Little River near Tumut Plains (upper right), and Derek and Lisa's new property "Daleside" (lower)

We get down to Sydney quite often (for family and other reasons) and in June we managed to catch the Vivid 2017 light show. The highlight of the trip was to see and hear the world premiere of *Mountain* at the Opera House – a fascinating event with music by Tognetti and the ACO and mountain scenery captured on film by some really talented and adventurous cinematographers.

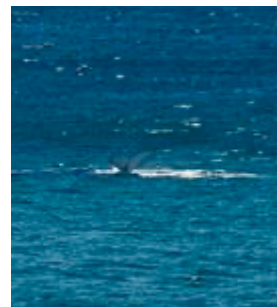
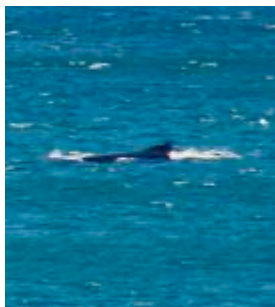


Sydney Vivid 2017: Sydney Harbour Bridge (left), and Customs House at Circular Quay (right)

We had planned a mid-year return visit to Hamilton Island but the Whitsundays had suffered extensive damage when Debbie hit so we postponed our trip until 2018. We took the opportunity to spend a most enjoyable few days in July at Byron Bay visiting long-time Kendall friends Geoffrey and Maureen Snelgrove, walking their beaches and sampling a good variety of national dishes in town.



Byron Bay: north from Watego's Beach towards to Nightcap National Park and Mt Warning (upper left), Julian Rocks at the most easterly point of Australia (upper right), eastern end of Watego's Beach (lower left), and Cape Byron Lighthouse (lower right)



Humpback Whales off Broken Head, Byron Bay: just cruising (upper left), "and thar she blows!" (upper middle), and flukes up - going down! (upper right)

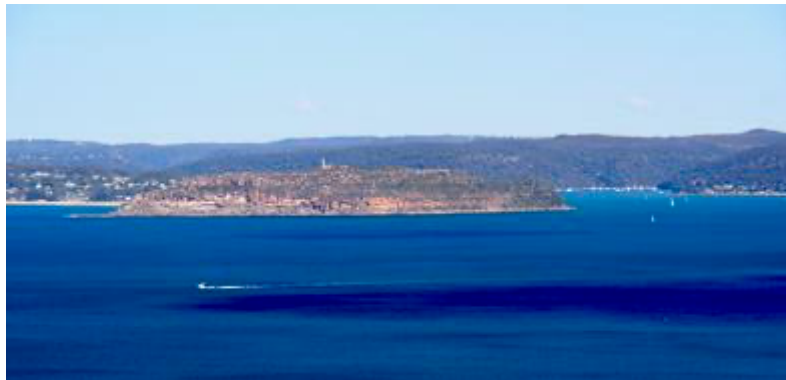


Maureen and Geoffrey with Anne at Broken Head (left) and with Dave at Suffolk Park Beach (right)

We also took the chance to revisit Lennox Head, where Anne had been many times before seeing relatives and with Dave on the last visit. From Lennox Head, we walked up to the top of Lennox Point, watched the surfers in action and then over and down to the track towards Skennars Head. We returned the way we came so we had time to indulge in a nice lunch in Lennox Head!

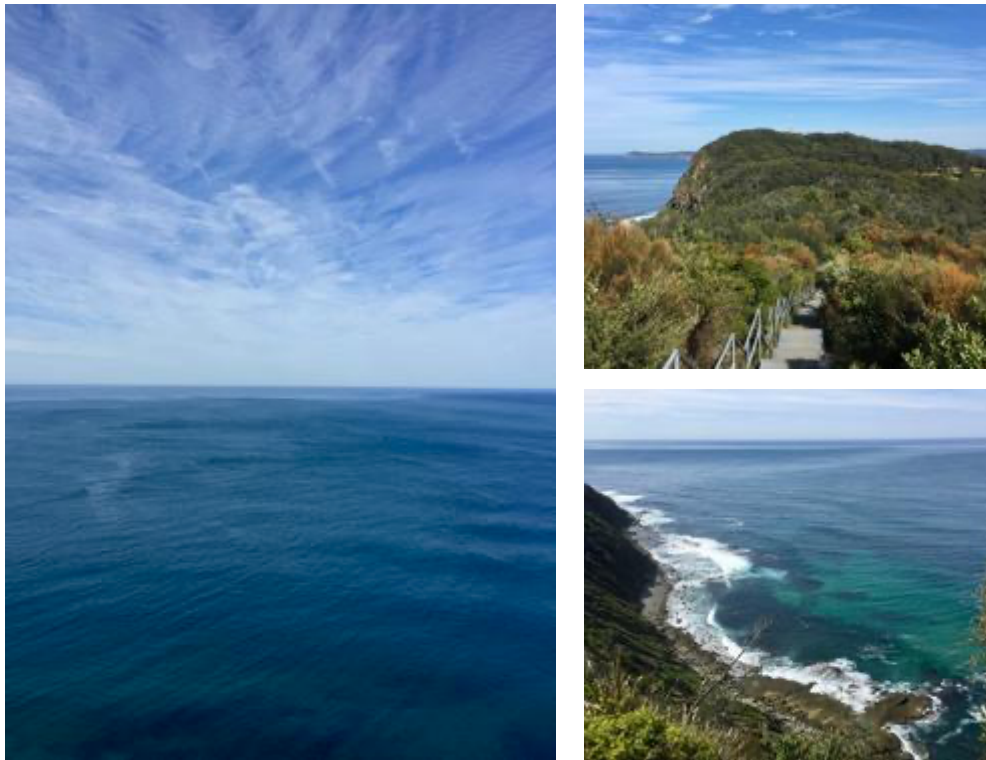


Lennox Head: view of Lennox Point from Lennox Head Beach (upper left), view south from Lennox Point towards Skennars Head (upper right), and surfers in action off Lennox Point (lower)



Bouddi National Park:
view from Box Head across the Hawkesbury River to Pitt Water, Barrenjoey Lighthouse and Palm Beach (upper),
Tallow Beach from the Box Head track (lower left), and flowering gorse on the Box Head track (lower right)

After we returned to Tumbi Umbi, we were determined to get at least a little bit fit so we began to explore the nearest National Parks on the Central Coast – Bouddi (pictures above) and Wyrabalong (pictures below) – somehow, we had missed going to these previously but we had beautiful weather during our explorations (and we have been back many times since!).



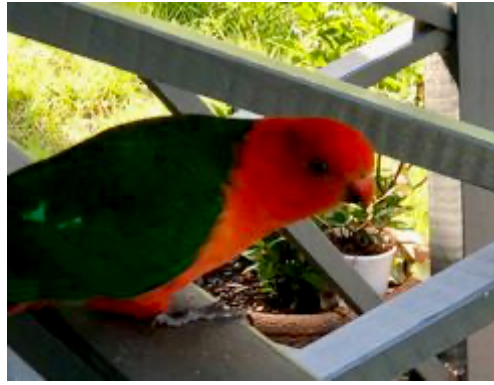
Wyrabalong National Park: Sea and sky patterns from the Wyrabalong Track (left), steps down and then up again to the Cromarty Hill Lookout (upper right), and steep coastal view from the track (lower right)

The fitness activities were designed to enable us to get the most from our major holiday of the year – six weeks travelling in Europe via Dubai. We started in early September, arriving at Manchester airport to be met by Dave’s brother Don and his wife Vera, thereby helping us to avoid Heathrow! They provided the opportunity to de-jetlag before accompanying us to the island of Jersey, flying direct from Manchester, where we settled for two weeks with the main aim of doing some family research for Anne, whose father and forebears were born and raised on the island, as well as exploring the island (Anne had visited Jersey many years ago but Dave had never been there before).

Part B of this letter “Two weeks in Jersey, September 2017” is coming separately.

Part C of this letter “UK, Portugal, Spain and Dubai, Sep-Oct 2017” is a work in progress and will be sent when it is completed.

Dave’s finger, which suffered from an accident in Portugal, has since been placed in rehab! He now sports a brace to straighten it, and exercises to force it to bend at all joints – it is finally improving and our insurance claim has actually been approved. All distance travel has been put on hold for the time being, however, although we did manage an overdue visit to visit Derek, Lisa and Jeff (one of several King Parrots) at the farm near Orange before Christmas.



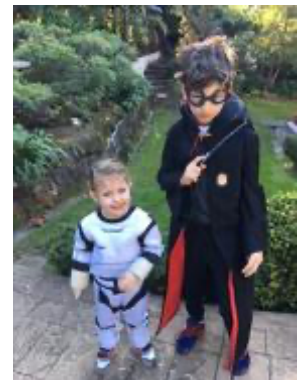
Jeff the King Parrot at the farm near Orange

Other family news is that Anne became a great-great aunt in April with the birth of Darcy Alexander Craig-Hubert, Pete and Bex's adorable son who we met in Sydney immediately before going overseas.



Darcy - Anne's great-great-nephew: why is it so cold here? (left),
Derek, Anne and Pete with Darcy (middle), and Pete with Darcy in Singapore (right)

Alex, Steve and the children were in Scotland at the same time as we were in Europe, Emma celebrated her fourth birthday in September and Jamie is now nine and plays the piano and tenor sax like his dad.



Emma in party mode (left), Jamie and Emma in the pool (middle), and scary Halloween kids! (right)

Alex continues to update her knowledge at overseas seminars, is admirable at juggling family and work commitments and loves her garden. They are planning to visit us before the New Year. For Christmas, we plan to indulge ourselves with prawns and oysters at home!

Have a wonderful Christmas, and best wishes for the New Year and 2018.

Anne & Dave

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2017