

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2020

Dear friends and family,

Our best wishes go out to you for this Christmas Season and 2021.

Unlike last year, life in 2020 has been quite quiet – a forced situation due to the Covid-19 epidemic which overcame the country but left us thankfully unscathed – and so this letter will be much shorter than previous efforts.

We did manage to scrape in a trip to Western Australia for ten days at the start of March getting back home just in time to be 'locked down'. We had a great time meeting up with old friends in Perth and seeing Sculptures by the Sea at Cottesloe Beach.



Sculptures by the Sea at Cottesloe: Marcus Tatton's (pre-Covid!) Viral Escapade (left) and Homer Homer by Cool Shit (aka Dave Glass) (right)

We were then bussed down to the Margaret River district for Dave to accomplish one more item on his 'wish-list' – to walk part of the Cape-to-Cape track along the coast and hinterland between Cape Leeuwin and Cape Naturaliste. This required four days of lengthy walking interspersed with good eating and wine tasting. Anne in the meanwhile was being driven around the district on a private tour of exploration ably assisted by our congenial bus driver. Our accommodation was quite luxurious in a spa resort on the coast.



Walkers at Canal Rocks Lookout (left) and Surfers at The Three Bears (right)



Anne near Sugarloaf Rocks Lookout (left) and Sugarloaf Rocks (right)



We made it to the top of the Willyabrup sea cliffs (left) and Guide Anne with our mob at Wills Domain (right)

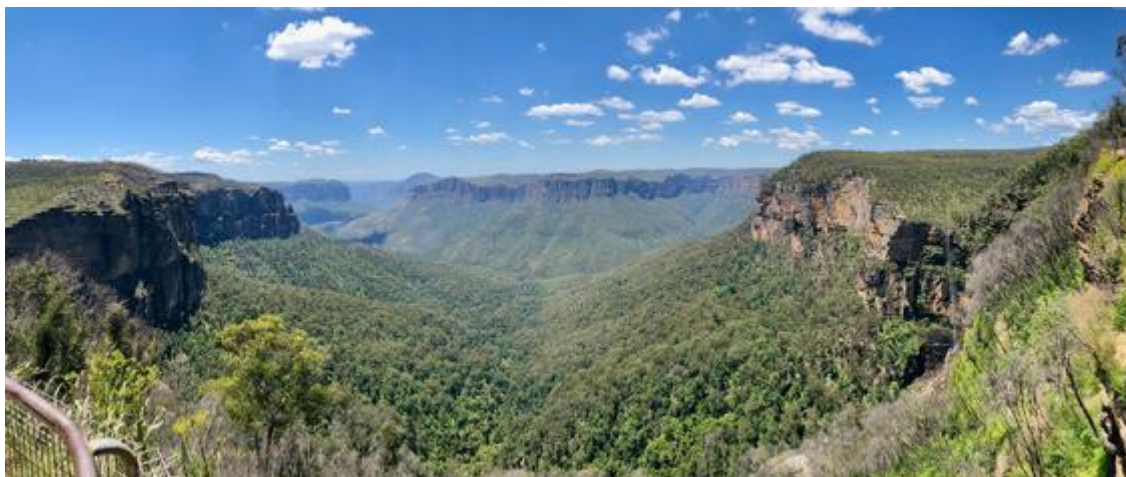
From March to June our village was in virtual ‘lock down’ and, when the restrictions eased a little, we managed to escape to Sydney for a brief weekend visiting Alex and family. Steve and Alex have had quite a difficult time with work and managing the kid’s schooling. Jamie, now 12, will be going to a new school next year but Emma, now 7, will continue at North Sydney.

From then until the end of November our activities seem to have been entirely local, with Dave joining the Glengara Walking Group and restarting the Tablets Group, the renewal of Community Nights and other village activities and attending our never-ending list of medical appointments.



Glengara Walking Group: Birdlife at southern end of Tuggerah Lake (left) and The Entrance after the bar was washed away (right)

At the end of November 2020, we were able to celebrate our Christmas 2019 dinner in the Blue Mountains. We had to cancel this in 2019 due to the bush fires, and then rebooked and cancelled again due to Covid-19. Finally, we made it. We stayed two nights at the very up-market retreat ‘Parklands’ in Blackheath and dined out at the Hydro Majestic down the road – together with fabulous sunset views over the Megalong Valley. A few National Park viewing spots were also enjoyed in the district together some minor walks.



Grosse Valley panorama from Govetts Leap Lookout



Bird sculptures and live ducks in the gardens of Parklands (left) and Flowering Grass trees and distant view of the Hydro Majestic from Hargraves Lookout (right)

We continued driving west to Millthorpe to visit Derek (Anne's nephew) and Lisa's new farm 'Daleside' between Bathurst and Orange. They had spent the earlier months of 2020 making major house improvements and removing the effects of the previous tenant's depredations – it is now a very comfortable and spacious house with a large unruly garden.

Derek was in the middle of hay and silage making, as it was a good farming season after three years of drought. His cattle are all thriving – altogether they are both very happy with Derek giving no thought to his past 25 years at Tantallon farm. Lisa is enjoying working five days a week in Orange with a bit of travelling thrown in – and the occasional frantic search for their dog 'Lola' who seems to be quite an escape artist.



Busy weekend on the farm: results of hay making operations (left) and Derek moving silage bales (right)

Derek's two boys Pete and Sean have both been holed-up in Singapore for the past eleven months with their growing families – they now have two children each, and the cousins are close enough in age to be able to play with each other though Ella, Sean's youngest, was only born in October.

William, younger son of Anne's niece Nicola, is now studying Mechanical Engineering in Plymouth UK, while his brother Michael has finished university and is now working on F35 fighter jet simulators while living at home. They have all been free of the pandemic (so far!) but it did interrupt William and his girlfriend's planned travel around Britain in his fully reconstructed van.





Our lunch at Gryphons Caffe Bar

Our next stop was in Canberra to catch up with friends for a hilarious lunch and see more of Paul and Heather. We stayed at the historic Hotel Kurrajong which was quite an experience with its interesting past and design. We couldn't miss the chance to visit The National Arboretum and see how it has evolved since our last visit.



Top of the Steps at The National Arboretum (left) and
View towards Black Mountain from the Steps at The National Arboretum (right)

After Canberra, we drove back to Sydney to see Alex and family again before returning home to the Central Coast to prepare for Xmas and village festivities. It feels as though we have enjoyed more than usual, and that is without starting on the real season.

Alex and family have booked a nearby camping spot at The Entrance this year for Xmas. They had invested in a camper-trailer earlier in the year which they only received from the manufacturers in November – so it is still a fresh experience for them. Luckily, us grandparents can sleep at home and still enjoy their company for a good Christmas lunch and other activity! As of the time of writing, this all depends on what happens to the progress of the Sydney Northern Beaches Covid-19 cluster – we keep our fingers crossed!

With very Best Wishes for Christmas, New Year celebrations and the year to come from us both to you all.

We hope that 2021 will turn out to be a more peaceful, healthy and less stressful year than 2020, and that you can catch up with travels and family members overseas as well as in Australia.

Anne and Dave



Anne and Dave
in the karri forest
near Margaret River