

Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2023

Dear friends and family,

We managed to get away a few times this past year, and finally took our long-awaited trip to the NT with Outback Spirit. We also enjoyed the customary ACO and Bangarra concerts in Sydney. Dave managed to finally get over the effects of his virus infection reaching 80% by mid-year and is now completely recovered.

Early in March we had a special combined birthday dinner at our favourite restaurant – the Ocean View at The Entrance. They presented us with a surprise congratulatory desert – a very enjoyable occasion.



The Entrance panorama and Joint Birthday celebrations at Ocean View

Towards the end of March, we took a hurried trip to Port Macquarie to attend John Reeve's memorial at the Lighthouse Beach Surf Club. It was an emotional but uplifting event with all Jenny's relatives present many of whom gave overviews of his life and occupations.

Home again and almost immediately we took off for a night in the Hunter and then to Millthorpe to visit Derek and Lisa for three or four days. We always enjoy going to their farm to view the many changes that have taken place. While staying there we went to an exhibition of famous statues by the UK artist Laurence Edwards called "A Gathering of Uncertainties" at Orange's Regional Art Gallery.



Laurence Edwards' Exhibition at Orange Art Gallery and Anne at the farm

Then to Canberra to catch up with friends at a great lunch. We also visited the Glassworks, the National Arboretum, and the National Museum, before returning with a short stopover with Alex, Steve and family at Castle Cove.



Canberra Glassworks, National Museum of Australia and the National Arboretum

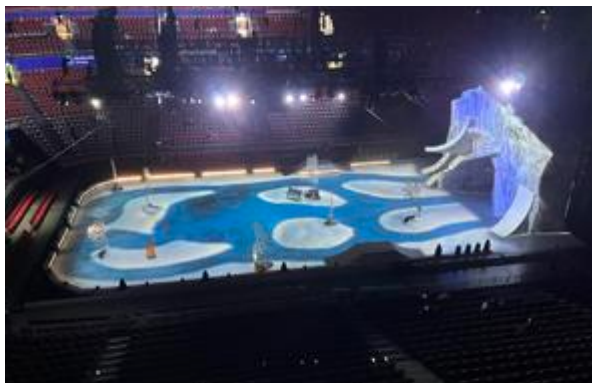
In mid-May, Anne had an operation on her hand supposedly to fix the “Viking complaint” of Dupuytren's Contracture. The operation went well but the problem seems to be returning – not a great success! During the same month we finally planted a long-awaited Crepe Myrtle tree at the front of our villa – the gardeners have since started to take out and replace trees all around our village.



Anne's hand after surgery and our new tree



Sydney Circular Quay Bird sculptures with real birds (in June) and Sydney Recital Hall (in August)



Cirque du Soleil stage for “Crystal” at Qudos Bank Arena (in August) and Sydney Recital Hall (in September)

Dave's grandson Jamie's birthday was in mid-June, so we visited the family in Castle Cove and fitted in Bangarra Dance Company's Yuldea performance at the Opera House in Sydney. On various dates in July, Anne and Dave's Christmas Letter for 2023

August and September we enjoyed an Ensemble performing in Newcastle, and two ACO concerts at the Recital Hall in Sydney (the second being better than the first). We also went to Olympic Park in Sydney for "Crystal" with Cirque du Soleil performing on ice! They come to Australia perhaps every two years and are always well worth a visit.

The final and best ACO concert of the year was on the 15th November when the international pianist Polina Leschenko gave us a scintillating performance of Felix Mendelssohn's Concerto for Violin and Piano in D minor. Unfortunately, Polina became unwell and was not able to give us the Chopin Piano Concerto in the second half.

On 27th September we left home for the holiday of the year, flying to Darwin for three nights before taking a small plane further northeast to Seven Spirit Bay on the Cobourg Peninsula (the second most northerly point on mainland Australia). We landed at a very 'bush' airport, where a 4WD took our small group to the Seven Spirit Bay Lodge. Here we could relax and have meals and drinks, overlooking the beach and the bay. Our accommodation was in villas which were dotted around the surrounding bushland. Very private, with their individual views and fully airconditioned.

Two excursions a day were on offer to those wanting to be active, on top of fishing trips for the enthusiasts. Dave managed to take in a couple on the first two mornings which were deemed to be a bit far and active for Anne who made her own explorations around the Lodge. There were a couple of small 4WD trips to points around the bay, and a longer one on the MV Arafura to the historic Victoria Settlement at Port Essington. This was the site of the most northern settlement by the British attempting to facilitate trade to the north. It was only in operation for a few years being subject to disease and isolation.

Activities were completed by a sumptuous lunch for everyone at tables above the beach at Kennedy Bay (to the east of the Lodge). After our flight back to Darwin we all enjoyed a sunset dinner cruise on Darwin Harbour. We stayed on for a further night in Darwin and devoured a great dinner at Hanuman, a well-known restaurant featuring excellent Indian, Thai and Malaysian food.



Special dinner at Pee Wee's at the Point and arriving at Seven Spirit Bay's International Airport



Sunset at the Lodge and some of our group at Gunner's Quoin



View of the Lodge



Rainbow Cliffs with The Elephant and Dave seen through it



Nypa Palms and Alaru Creek



Anne and others on the beach at Trepang Bay and all our group at the special Lunch on the Beach



Grave, Hospital Kitchen and Married Quarters at Victoria Settlement



Trees clinging to eroding bank and Evans Head



View of Lodge's Jetty with small boat for fishing and the MV Arafura at the Lodge's Jetty on our return



Our "room-with-a-view" accommodation

In late November we took a road trip to Port Macquarie to visit friends. The weather was a bit damp (raining nearly every day) but we managed to see everyone – Jenny Reeve, Keri and Milly but missed out on seeing Marg Newman whose accommodation was in lockdown with Covid.



Street art in Darwin, Anne's pearl necklace and Hanuman's special oysters

We also visited Expressway Spares to see Catherine Dunn who only caught us for a brief five minutes as her husband Jim had just been transported to the base hospital having suffered a small heart attack. We were given a good tour around the plant by Patrick's son Stephane. The site has expanded enormously since Anne left in 2000.



The Big Crane at Expressway Spares and a tracked vehicle being worked on



Port Macquarie's River Walk with painted rocks and Start of the Coastal Track near Town Beach



Port Macquarie's Rocky Beach and a Shag on a Rock



Evening light on the river at Port Macquarie

Our Christmas this year is to be spent on the farm with Derek and Lisa, which we are very much looking forward to. Before that trip we finish up in our Retirement Village with various Xmas activities.

Have a wonderful
Christmas and New Year,
and stay healthy and
happy in 2024.

Love to all
Anne & Dave



Anne and Dave at Pee Wee's at the Point