

14 Anderton Street,
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4th. November 2018

Dear Friends,

Another year almost done and dusted. Was it a good one for you? Poss and I hope so. Ours was one of contrasts – either a lot going on or not much at all. Poss's shoulder joint was replaced at the end of 2017, followed by some months of rehabilitation. She has just had the annual review and passed with flying colours.

December and January passed uneventfully, with me being Poss's chauffeur as her arm was in a sling most of the time. In February we had away time, planned around Poss's nursing group reunion in Melbourne. In reality, we did a lot of value adding. On the way to Melbourne, we decided to take the Golden Highway, staying overnight at West Wyalong then to Melbourne via the Newell Highway. We had not been that way for more than thirty years, in those days we were travelling from Armidale visiting Poss's parents at Henty. The trip was a great reason to stay with Nicole, Andrew and Ivy for a few days. We flew to Tasmania to stay a week with friends from Armidale days, Nigel and Kerry, now living in Cygnet. They lived many years in Queensland then decided they'd like real seasons and Cygnet was the choice. It is a very appealing place, quite picturesque with interesting people and is now a very trendy place to be. Nigel runs a small plant nursery that came with their house, Kerry telecommutes from home running a business based in Brisbane.

Last time we were in Tasmania, nearly 20 years ago, we saw work being done to restore the Abt railway from Strahan to Queenstown. At the time, it was added to the 'if we are ever here again' list. Kerry was kind enough to loan us her vehicle, so we drove to Strahan and stayed in what we discovered was once the North Lyall Mine manager's house. It had been moved and reconstructed in Strahan. It was a bit of a coincidence because on our previous trip we stayed at the Mount Lyall Mine manager's house in Queenstown.

The next day we were up early for the train trip on what is now called the West Coast Wilderness Railway, and it was delightful. The weather in that area is very variable with rain most days, but our day was perfect. The train is quite slow, the engine is over 100 years old and stops frequently for water. Plenty of time to take in the views. The railway is partly standard rail and partly rack and pinion. The engine has two sets of pistons, one set to drive the wheels on normal track and one set for the pinion. This unusual system was needed to deal with the steep grades (by railway standards) involved. Lunch was provided in Queenstown followed by a brief town tour then the return journey, arriving back in Strahan late in the day. The morning after was such a contrast, we drove through rain for 5 hours returning to Cygnet and a pub dinner. Back to Melbourne for the reunion lunch then on the way home we stayed several days with our friends the Sheehans on their farm.

Our other excursions have all been to the Woolgoolga area. Poss's mum Dawn turned 90 in June, all our family gathered to celebrate. We stayed at Boambee Bay resort, the event was at the Woolgoolga retirement village where Dawn was living. Earlier in the year I became involved in a group who wish to preserve an old railway station at Glenreagh, and put my hand up to be treasurer. Maybe not a sensible move as Glenreagh is 400km from Newcastle. The rationale was it is only 12km from our bush block, and this was a way of getting to know the community better. So trips north have often included group meetings, and in October we stayed at the Golden Dog hotel in Glenreagh to celebrate the station's 103rd birthday. The hope was that the trips could also include some work on the bush block, but circumstances conspired against us. Either the weather was too poor to make it worth the visit, or we had other priorities. I made it there a few days, spending most of the time clearing back the regrowth. A few months have passed since my last visit so the vegetation is probably winning again.

Unfortunately in August Dawn fell and broke her hip. She has made a good recovery, but is now unable to live independently. After a stay in hospital then some weeks in rehabilitation, she is now in Legacy House in Coffs Harbour. She initially wanted to go to the Woolgoolga nursing home associated with the retirement village, but latest reports are she has settled into her new digs and quite content. We went to help clear out the unit, not too difficult as Norm and Dawn moved a lot and kept little beyond the essentials.

Our girls are all doing well. Sandra has settled into part time work with Peter Evans & Associates, and has moved to Kahibah. She is living in a house with an acquaintance from when she was at school, they share a kitchen but otherwise have their own rooms and rarely see each other. Michael has his own room for the days he stays with Sandra, the whole arrangement seems quite satisfactory. It is pleasing to see that her problems of the past few years appear to be over.

Scott and Joanne now have their three girls at school, and living the frantic life of working parents. Anna fell off a scooter and fractured her arm, currently sporting a purple cast. She is untroubled by it, just another childhood happening. We have not seen much of Andrew, Nicole and Ivy. They are still living in Yallambie and we gather are quite settled there. They are venturing north for Christmas with Andrew's folks in South West Rocks and Armidale so we will catch up in a few days when they travel through. I think every year I write that Beth has a new job, this year is no exception. She was working close to the Newcastle CBD, and the area has been in turmoil while a 'light rail' (i.e. a tram) system was built. This may not have been the cause, but the business was not doing well and Beth's hours were affected. So she quit and now works at the Lambton Park Hotel. It is closer to home, no parking problems, and steady work. As usual, we shall see how long it lasts.

Our day to day routine is unchanged. Renovations have stalled, partly as there is not much left and partly laziness. We bought a shade sail nearly a year ago and I am just now getting around to putting it up. The plans to finish the front fence are still plans. Poss has created a delightful little garden in the tiny space (less than a meter) between the deck and the front fence. I am still working on a backup solar system for the house, with four panels lying on the garage roof and a half complete battery rack. I got sidetracked by buying some microprocessors to monitor the panels and batteries then decided to program one to do something completely different.

As Bugs says "That's all Folks". Of course it isn't. When cramming a year into a page a lot gets left out. So if you want to hear the real story you will have to ring, email, SMS, Skype, Facebook, snail mail or visit.

Best wishes for the season and coming year. Alan and Poss xx



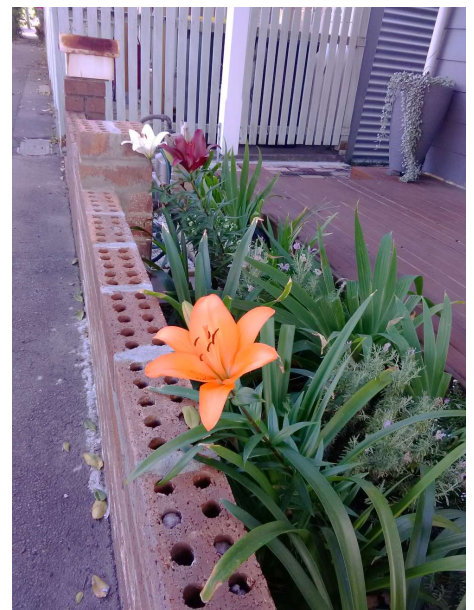
In the Hunter Valley, we watched Joanne take a balloon ride then we joined her for breakfast.



Jobson School photo
from left: Emily, Anna, Lucy.



Emily is donating her hair to
charity, for wig making



Poss's garden looking good



Mount Lyall No1 preparing for the trip from Strahan to Queenstown