

Christmas 2013

*May the Lord give you a Christmas season and a New Year blest
With peace and filled with love*

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Dear

We do look forward to hearing from so many of you and picturing you and your family through your news and happenings through the year. It is the *unexpected* that spices life doesn't it. Our year had unexpected events and people flow through our year, trust you may enjoy hearing of some of them.



We were given tickets to 'Yes Minister' by one of our families as a Christmas gift, last year. As we confirmed the tickets we became aware that the Show was at the Opera House in **Sydney**. Why not? By not changing them to Melbourne, we enjoyed 4 days as tourists in the heart of Sydney. The tour of the Rocks area was the highlight of the sightseeing, but it was the view as we came out of the theatre and stood on the apron of the Opera House and looked in awe at the scene of the Harbour Bridge, the ocean going passenger ship, the tall buildings rising up the escarpment lit up against the dark sky that took our breath away – beautiful. By the way we enjoyed the show! Loved the TV series.

The Federal election saw us involved with the pre-selection of a

new candidate for the seat of Mallee – John Forrest retired. Because we had a meeting for one candidate we had to have a meeting for the other four!! That was *unexpected* but a privilege to hear the issues that were at the heart of each of these excellent candidates. Andrew Broad who has a committed Christian stance won pre selection and went onto win the seat. Andrew has a grip of the big picture issues but we were impressed by Anne Webster from Mildura whose heart was on the social issues – single mums – the high level of abortions in Victoria – 53 viable babies born, last year from late term abortions – left to die!! – leaving room for much thought.



Having bought **21 McCracken Ave**, Donald (first built and owned by Ian's parents) as an investment property, a friend, Jenni helped us plant a garden to enhance it's appearance. *Unexpectedly*, we learnt how to lay out and plant shrubs correctly so one has success in one's gardening endeavours. Jenni helps many people with their gardens in Donald. As she pulls unwanted plants from one garden she plants them in another!!! There are many lovely gardens showing Jenni's hallmark. The photo shows Ian's contribution to the project – his answer to Alison's request to hire a rotary hoe!!!! He turned the tractor on a sixpence and squashed down what he had just ploughed up!

Donald celebrated 150 years of the founding of the town and district in March. We were delighted with Ian's siblings returning for the celebration as well as our own family members. We had everyone together for BBQ lunch on the second Saturday. As everyone has busy lives this was an *unexpected* 'special'. John McEwen brought the restored 1927 Dodge that has been in the family ever since and proudly drove it in the parade. Ian and James drove No 2 Shire grader (1948) and Bulldog tractor(1956).- part of Ian's collection.

Following a ten month dry period (only showers in October, '12), **the season opened late** but continued on to excellent results. The wheat yielding 2.5tonnes av, canola 1.3 tonnes av, barley2.5 tonnes av. With prices being above average, the **harvest** is very pleasing. As this is Ian's last harvest it is a good note to finish on.



Ian's extreme tiredness has been a concern for some time. So seeking a further opinion, we consulted a respiratory specialist in Bendigo. – was it the COPD(Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) or asthma? Should we be managing it better? On her advice Ian had a **sleep apnea** test. **Unexpectedly**, Ian was found to be waking 80 times during his sleep and now with the pump only twice. Ian went to the top of the therapist's class as the best patient she had. **Unexpected** -Alison will never forget the silence and the sleep of the first 3 nights. Amazing invention!!! The tiredness – a little improved may be because at 74 you cannot do what you did at 34 although you think you can!!

Debbie moved from Donald to Tennant Creek, NT in May.(much missed by her parents) She took up the position of Unit manager of the Acute section of the 18 bed hospital. Deb has found her niche. She loves the work – inspiring, challenging and exhausting, she says. The hospital provides 1st world medical care in a 3rd world setting. Her stories amaze and sadden at the same time. Deb misses the children but keeps in constant touch or they with her. **Levi, 18** this past September is managing his 1st year electrical apprenticeship and living on his own, very well. He is working on the Ararat prison project. **Rebekah** has completed her 2nd year of nursing, **Olivia**, first year out of Longernong missed her friends but is still in the agricultural scene – in the shearing and grain world. **Bill and Steph** still in Mackay, and **Steph B** at university in Launceston. It has been good to see them all through the year.



Debbie's farewell – young people assoc. with Fusion group

Rob and Marianne have bought a holiday home in Rye. **Cassandra** has completed her 1st year Uni at Monash majoring in psychology. **Georgie**, Year 10 travelled to United States for a 2 week course at NASA in October, **Harrison** has completed Year 7 with 5 exams!!!!!!! Wow. Basketball and clarinet being his first loves.

James and Grace's news is that they are moving to Geelong in the New Year. That they will be missed by us, the neighbours and friends is an understatement. James is constantly developing his skill in the hydraulic field, furthering this by taking a course at University of Ballarat, this year, & next year. He has his own website www.fluidpowercircuits.com.au – worth looking up. **Hamish** has completed his apprenticeship in steel fabrication, further study will lead to Project Management, while **Renee** has completed Year 12 VCE and looking forward to her 1st year at Deakin in International studies. She has recovered well from glandular fever – trusting she does not have any relapses.

Karin is still teaching at Heathdale Christian College in Werribee but also contributes to an outreach program on a Sunday afternoon amongst the Somalia families. She enjoys working on a team from St Judes - lots of laughs. Karin is most impressed with the dedication of the young people involved. She is also enjoying Rachel Aranez's company as her flatmate.

Our trip, in August to St Petersburg with a 12 day package along the Baltic waterways from St Petersburg to Moscow was **unexpectedly**, extra wonderful. The cruise provided time to relax as well as sightseeing. Palaces, churches, 17 locks, forest lined river, heritage villages and the overview of the history of Russia to take in.

Features were: Catherine's Palace, room after room sumptuously decorated with gold leaf. The Palace has been fully restored after the Germans bombed the roof and lived in it during the 2nd World War. Peterhof, a palace built by Peter the Great has hundreds of fountains run by gravity. We were amazed at the engineering feat (cc 1723). The Hermitage, within the Winter palace displayed many of the art treasures of Russia. In Moscow, we found the Kremlin and Red Square different to what we had imaged but intrigued with all we heard. The Kremlin – we thought was the Parliament. 'Can we sit in the public gallery during question time?' the answer -'This is Russia not a democracy!! The parliament is actually in the 'White House', President Putin's office is in a separate block of buildings which is part of the Kremlin.



Peterhof- fountains playing from gravity flow

Flying onto Kiev and travelling through **Ukraine** we received a very warm welcome from our network of friends and people who had received aid through the shipping containers of humanitarian aid. We love touching down with the families of the students who are receiving support through the Ukraine Fund. The team, here at home have spent many hours of love and time packing boxes of goods to send another container to Ukraine but we have struck a block – the authorities keep finding fault with the documents. Today's world news indicates why – Ukraine is slipping back into a controlled economy. We pray for the protestors that they will be successful – Putin would like to take Russia and Ukraine back into 'Soviet style Govt.'



Traditional welcome with presentation bread and salt

We trust you have a memorable Christmas with family and friends and a wonderful New Year

