

Christmas 2005

How time flies...for those of you I forgot to tell - we have moved again...You missed out on your card last Christmas because of a couple of reasons but the main reason was that my father died on 8 December and I lost all motivation to send out our usual cheery well wishes.

Dad died on the day John and I flew back to Australia from a 3 month round the world trip... we had an absolute blast and came back exhausted and I had full intentions of doing everything for Xmas in the 2 weeks we had to do it all in however I was affected more than I expected by dad's death. I never had much to do with him but I had always kept in contact and had rung him from the Qantas Lounge just as we were leaving Sydney on the first leg of our trip.

While we were away John's beloved Uncle John died and just after coming back in quick succession I found out that Uncle Jack from Orange, Uncle Ted from Shepparton & Uncle Geoff from Lane Cove all had died. It was really a very sad time at the beginning of this year and we spent some time thinking about the family.

The trip was a wonderful time and we both had a ball, nearly got divorced and gave up smoking. We started off where all good trips should start at Rooty Hill RSL and had a birthday dinner with some friends. We then had 5 days in Hong Kong where I got a terrible cold from the air-conditioning and John ventured off doing shopping on his own in Mong Kok which is like sending him to the other ends of the earth – however he did return and we did a couple of tours and generally got inspired for the travelling we were going to be doing.

Next stop Rome – we spent some time in the city and then had a 3 day trip to Capri, Pompeii & Sorrento and then back to Rome for a few days of wondering around. Rome is everything everyone says and it was just wonderful to be there. So overwhelming and so beautiful.

Next stop – meet Cheryl and Ron in Paris for Cheryl's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. 3 days in Paris, 3 in Champagne region and 5 days back in Paris. Could have done without returning to Paris and should have stayed in the country. Went to a WW1 cemetery in Vignacourt which was the best day ever.

Dublin was next with 10 days driving around Irish laneways – the road to Killaloe where Grandfather Malloy comes from isn't much changed in the last 200 years. Then the ferry to UK heading of course to Val and Alan's in Peterborough, dropping in on a little village in Wales for 3 days, Alan's sister in Manchester, the ferry across the Mersey in Liverpool, Penny Lane, Strawberry Fields etc. Tried to find Sherwood forest and missed it. Had Halloween in Market Deeping where Jill went all out with a party for the kids that would put all other preceding parties to shame. John loved being in the workshop with the men and Alan. I just went about visiting people and generally getting our strength back to continue on to London and USA. We also took the kids to Sherwood Forest and found Robin Hood.

London was 5 days that cost a fortune but we had a really good time except I left Westminster Abbey to the last day and found out they closed 5 minutes before we got there at 1pm Saturday.

We were then off to Florida and met an Eve cousin Susan and her father Harvey Oyer II who had Harvey III put us up in his guest house at West Palm Beach for 2 weeks – what can we say apart from first class hospitality. We cruised up and down the coast of Florida in Harvey's pickup to the Florida Keys, Cape Carnavara, Orlando and Disney World. The security in USA is to be seen to be believed boarding an intercity train was unbelievable. Driving was not a worry as the truck was so big we could run over anything that got in our way.

Las Vegas, San Diego & Los Angeles for 3 days each were really cool. Met up with a friend of John's in San Diego and had thanksgiving dinner with their family – now that is an experience you must enjoy. Did the usual tours in Los Angeles and moved on to Hawaii for a week where we hired a red Mustang and drove around Oahu for 3 days.

Evan – [evancastle@optusnet.com.au](mailto:evancastle@optusnet.com.au) is still living with us having moved out and back in since we last sent our cards. He is having troubles getting access to Jack as Janet has disappeared and won't tell us where they are. He is working for Arrows Express and was appointed permanent in Sept 2004 – the first time he has ever held permanency in all the jobs he has had. He had 3 months off with a knee injury and he too gave up smoking so we are now a smoke free house.

Pat [pat\\_castle@hotmail.com](mailto:pat_castle@hotmail.com) is still living in Shellharbour and managing the Steel Works Hotel in Port Kembla.

We are about to head off to NZ on 1 December for 20 days where we are meeting Alan & Val from UK. They are coming to Brisbane for an Aussie Xmas – bloody mad poms. At least this year we have aircon and a pool.

John is working at Gibson Tru Body in Brendale and I am still ploughing the field in GST. I love my job in Qld and would never consider returning to NSW however John would be back there tomorrow. In fact as I write this he is at the Shellharbour Juniors presentation being given Life Membership. He is hoping to connect with John Cartwright in the next 12 months and do some work with the Gold Coast Titans and then he might decide Qld is OK

Merry Christmas and a happy new year from  
Helen & John Castle



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