

THE SHARP BULLETIN 2002

As I sit at my desk to write a Christmas message, I look out on a green and lush garden, with red kangaroo paws, six foot high, waving in the wind. The peaceful scene is at odds with the year now ending. It has been a year in which terrorism has exploded on our doorstep. The horrific Bali bombings, which killed almost 100 young Australians, have shattered our feelings of isolation and safety. Australia is no longer immune to terrorist attacks, in fact we are warned it will happen here, on our own soil. Since September 11, and now October 12, our world has changed irrevocably. The country is also suffering its worst drought in 100 years, and water supplies are severely depleted everywhere, with drastic consequences for rural Australia. In spite of this gloomy forecast, we try to live a fairly normal life, and hope sanity will prevail in a world torn by hate and terrorism.

On a brighter note, Frank and I decided at short notice that, instead of moving house, we would have one last trip to UK. We never thought we would be able to travel overseas again, but the presence of Kaye and her family in England for a year encouraged us, and the offer of a house near her in Taunton spurred us into action.

We flew out on 31st July, and arrived in Taunton at the peak of the English 'Towns in Bloom' competition. Hanging baskets with magnificent mixed colours adorned every building and home. We were charmed. It was great to see the family in their English home, and have time with the three children.

The major reason for our trip was to see seven cousins in England, and we visited them all: Angela and Robert in Devon, John and Ann in East Anglia, Michael and Mollie in York, Frank's cousin Nancy and Eric in Poole, Dorset, and also friends George and Sylvia in Devon. Later we caught



up with my three cousins in London, Jane, Mary, and Janet. We were delighted to renew friendships, and had a wonderful welcome from everyone. Many thanks to our amazing extended family. We travelled mostly by train and enjoyed being able to sit back and watch the countryside speed by, without having to negotiate the heavy traffic and all the roundabouts.

We then had 10 days in our favourite place, Scotland. We stayed in Edinburgh and Fort William, enjoying the history, the heather, and the atmosphere of the glens and the lochs, from Ben Nevis to Oban. From Scotland we sped by train to London, and flew to Madrid for a 9 day Trafalgar tour of Spain. The organization was excellent and the tour group very congenial. We visited Toledo, Granada and the magnificent Alhambra, the Costa del Sol, Gibraltar- dramatic and historically intriguing, charming Seville, Cordoba and its extraordinary ancient Mosque, with a Cathedral built inside it. Highlights for me were: the beautiful Moorish architecture and exquisite decoration inside the buildings, and seeing original paintings by Goya and Velasquez, well-known from my art teaching days, in the Prado Art Gallery in Madrid.

We departed England on September 11th (!), and arrived home on Friday 13th, not being superstitious. After a little over 6 weeks, we felt we achieved everything we had hoped for, without mishaps, and returned home tired but happy.

2002 has been a year of constant travel for us, most unusual. In February we flew to Brisbane to attend a Service celebrating the Centenary of Brisbane Boys College, where Dad was the second Principal and where I grew up. We were honoured guests, seated in the front row of the Brisbane City Hall. We took the opportunity then of visiting Frank's sister Elizabeth on the Gold Coast, and my brother Peter at Byron Bay. In March we again headed north for a RAAF radar reunion at Nelson Bay, near Sydney. After a brief visit to Lyn and family in Sydney, we drove to Canberra via Bowral, where Frank fulfilled a long-held ambition to see the Don Bradman (cricket) Memorial Centre. We flew home from Canberra after visiting friends there.

After our overseas trip, our next flight was to the Gold Coast again, for Elizabeth's 80th Birthday in October. Finally, to cap a remarkable year, I flew to Sydney in November to have a few days with Lyn and family. We have survived all this travel with our family contacts renewed and enriched. We will be thinking of you all at Christmas time. We hope to see Lyn and family in Melbourne after Christmas, and will welcome Kaye and Co back mid January.

One last item of interest is an exhibition of watercolour paintings by my great grandfather, Dr Charles Mackin, at Geelong Art Gallery. Geelong is Victoria's largest regional city, one hour's drive south of Melbourne. Mackin came to Victoria from London in 1852 at the time of the gold rush. A talented amateur artist, he painted scenes of life on the gold fields and in early Geelong, where he established his medical practice. This exhibition opened in November with 53 of his works. They are beautifully presented, and historically fascinating. I felt very proud to be a descendant.

Perhaps next year we'll think again about moving house. In the meantime we oldies keep active and hope our health continues to remain stable.

Our loving greetings to you all, and we wish you a happy Christmas and a safe and healthy New Year.

With much love

from Nola & Frank.