

Christmas letter from Ken and Elizabeth Joyce, 2014

We surprised a lot of people including ourselves by selling up and moving house so rapidly in June. After a couple of years of driving up and down the coast to family it all came together: we had someone keen to buy our place, despite it not being on the market, and we found, fell in love with and purchased a lovely old home in Bellingen on the mid North coast of NSW. Moving suddenly after living in the same home for 40 years left us little time to make sure all our friends and neighbours knew and understood what we were doing – we are sorry if we shocked you. We are getting over it and hope you are, too.

The house was built in 1903 for Mr Mewton. It is made of locally milled rose mahogany, walls inside and out and the 3 m ceilings. It has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, study, swimming pool, veranda on three sides, some huge trees, 1042 m² block – and the best view in Bellingen! Like its owners it is solid, reliable, groans a bit and needs a little TLC. Many locals know it as *The Ranch* and others know it as the *Danny Deckchair* house because it was used as the location for a movie of that name in 2003.

There are lots of photos in an album that is updated from time to time at www.flickr.com/poweringon.

It has been a joy to have friends come and stay occasionally and our family here frequently. Having children and grandchildren so close – Peter, Virginia with Ethan and Elliot an hour away; Anna and Andrew with Josh, Elisha, Jacob and Zachary 30 minutes away – is wonderful and we are mid-way between Simeon and Kelly with Charlotte, Oliver and Thomas in Sydney and Chris and Brooke with Laura and Lily in Brisbane where Sam, Ben and Eliza also live. We walk down to the town most days for a coffee and some shopping or to eat out – there are a dozen or more places to choose from in walking distance. Although on hot days we go for a swim in our pool instead. Ken has even started swimming laps although not the number nor with the ease of his grandson, Jacob.

In January we took three grandchildren; Jacob, Laura and Ethan to Hong Kong, Rome, a western Mediterranean cruise, Singapore and home. For them highlights were Rome, Tunisia's Medina, Ocean Park in Hong Kong and the time in Singapore at Chinese New Year. (We stayed with nephew DJ and Julie Sidey in Singapore.) That's eight grandchildren taken on overseas trips – six more to go.

Our 14th grandchild, Thomas Jonathan Joyce, was born to Simeon and Kelly in March – a beautiful healthy boy now crawling around.

In September, after moving house, we had family and friends come to celebrate Ken's 75th birthday in Bellingen and it turned into a wonderful weekend starting with Thomas's baptism, the town Markets, lunch at the Federal Hotel on Saturday and, on Sunday morning, pancakes and the *Horns on Helium* jazz band, with grandson Josh on sax, on our veranda. 60 or more family, neighbours and friends came along.

Of course, we miss regularly seeing the wonderful friends we have made in the Shoalhaven and especially those from St Peters church in Shoalhaven Heads. We have been getting to know some lovely people at the Bellingen Uniting Church and are trying to work out if and how we fit in there.

Our cultural experience is expanding conveniently by walking down the road to hear concerts by such as flautist Jane Rutter, pianist David Helfgott, various orchestras and groups or going further afield to the *Morrison Brothers Big Band*. We are enormously impressed with the school and youth orchestra in which grand-daughter Elisha plays clarinet, including solos.

Our grand-daughter, Eliza has announced that she and Josh Smith are expecting to deliver our first great-grandson next February, an exciting piece of news we are adjusting to but it's Eliza who has had the very uncomfortable pregnancy.



For five days up to Boxing Day almost all our family will join that of Elizabeth's sister Prue and brother John at Scotts Head – about 60 of us together for our every-four-year gathering, celebrating family and Christ together.

Intolerance to Christ is becoming more assertive, even arrogant in our world but to us, and we hope to you, the good news of Christmas is a blessing every year.

Our love and best wishes to you and yours.

Ken and Elizabeth Joyce

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And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:8-11 ESV)