

* Christmas 2000 *

With the help of a minor miracle, this may yet reach you in time for Christmas or, failing that, for the new millennium! We hope you celebrate both well.

The past year has been a very full and memorable one for us. The first couple of months were spent settling in to our new abode



The crab apple in blossom

at 54 Grayson Street, which by now is our much-loved home. We have thoroughly enjoyed watching it change with the Canberra seasons and especially the progress of the Japanese crab apple that is the centrepiece of the garden. It is visited regularly by rosellas and other parrots, which feed from the bird feeder in its branches, and possums come at night. Christine has resurrected the fishpond

and given it a Chinese theme with ceramic ornaments brought from Hong Kong.

Renovations have proceeded—more slowly than we expected, but maybe that's the way with renovations? The bathrooms are almost complete and we can look back at the three weeks we needed to use our patient neighbour's bathroom facilities with amusement. The heating was installed just in time to help us through the Canberra winter. We now have a very pleasant shared office where Geoff has done heaps of voluntary work, especially for CCA, and Chris studies (but not as often as she should).



The possum at the bird feeder at night. Crimson rosellas visit during the day

So the house has been one important source of domestic satisfaction. Another has not been domestic at all: the year has been full of travels. We started in January with a trip to Adelaide via the Great Ocean Road and back through Deniliquin to visit Chris's aunt. In Adelaide Chris attended a workshop related to her study. In February–March, we both travelled to Hong Kong—Geoff to work with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and Chris to catch up with old friends. Geoff travelled to Tomohon in North Sulawesi in Indonesia in May–June to the General Assembly of CCA, where he produced the Assembly's daily newspaper. While he was away, Chris visited her family in Queensland. Her Dad had had a car accident in mid-May and was unable to return to his home in Toowoomba. This was a good chance to visit him and other members of the family—more about Dad's progress below.

From late June to early August we had our big European adventure. We travelled to Geneva, London, Oxford, Aberdeen and the Shetland Islands. Chris had a meeting with the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in Geneva and a workshop related to her study in Oxford. Chris visited the farmhouse her grandfather



Ford Place, Wrotham, Kent

left in 1888 in Wrotham, Kent. The current owners had an extra surprise—they introduced us to some new Ledger relatives. We also visited some distant relatives of Chris's mother in Faringdon, Oxfordshire. To top it all off, we had a wonderful time in Shetland at a family reunion and visited the croft Geoff's great-grandfather left in 1868 and met lots more new relatives. Shetland is a magical place.

On our way back from Europe we stopped in Brisbane for Geoff to attend the World Convention of Churches of Christ and this was another chance for Chris to catch up with her family. When we did get back to Canberra in mid-August, we hardly had time to unpack our bags and do our laundry when Chris was off again, this time to Ecuador for another WSCF meeting. Finally Geoff travelled to Malaysia and Hong Kong for CCA again in December.



Alves at Alves, a little village in northern Scotland

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hile our church and ecumenical commitments have brought plenty of travel, they have also brought increasing involvement and responsibility here in Canberra

as well. We continue to attend both the Ainslie Church of Christ and Holy Cross Anglican Church and have enjoyed deepening friendships at both. The Church of Christ

is currently in transition, planning for new directions and a new minister, and Geoff is on the Transition Team. He also chairs the National Literature Department of Churches of Christ and this responsibility takes him to Melbourne regularly. Chris is a member of the Parish Council at Holy Cross and serves now and then as Minister of the Word. She is also an Anglican representative on the ACT Churches' Council, the local ecumenical body.



The fishpond in the garden with ornaments from Hong Kong, now home to five goldfish

Another important theme of the year was family. Geoff's favourite niece Giz married Brett Butterfield in January and a good time was had by all at the wedding in Sydney. This followed hot on the heels of Chris's niece Tammy's wedding the previous month to Marc Ventner on the Sunshine Coast. (We must have started something.)

The year 2000 has been a tough one for Dad Ledger, soon to be 85. After his car accident in May, he was unable to return home to an independent life and stayed with various members of the family. The first couple of months he recuperated in Queensland, having daily dressings for a nasty wound to his leg. By the time he came to stay with us in late August, he was over that and ready for all sorts of long-term assessments. To cut a long story short, the doctors confirmed that he will need ongoing care, especially as his memory is not the best. He subsequently decided to accept an offer of a place at Symes Grove, an Anglican hostel in the northern suburbs of Brisbane and moved there in mid-December. The hostel is very close to Chris's sister Alison, whose husband is the chaplain there.

Those of you who know Dad may like to make a note of his new address: Phil Ledger, Symes Grove, 333 Handford Road, Taigum Qld 4018. Tel: (07) 3265 3885.



Jerry with his lion cut for summer

And Jerry the cat? He is thriving and has adopted a new Canberra habit of having his long coat clipped in the fashion of a lion each summer. He thinks he's very smart. He's now eleven and the vet expects him to live to twenty so he should feature in a few Christmas letters yet.

And what of the farm at Wroxham? We haven't spent as much time there as we would have wanted, for obvious reasons, but did manage to arrange for a new water tank to be installed (with lots of help from our friends) after the old one collapsed. Most importantly we did get to Wroxham in March for the Back To Reunion, for which Geoff produced the souvenir book. That was a wonderful occasion. We intend visiting there again before Christmas to mow the ten-foot-high grass and catch our breath.

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alking of health, Geoff is now gall bladder-less. With impeccable timing, he came down with an excruciating attack the night before Chris's birthday in September and another bad one around the time of our first wedding anniversary in October. He spent a miserable couple of months before having laparoscopic cholecystectomy on 10 November. He bounced back remarkably to travel two weeks later to Malaysia and Hong Kong. Earlier episodes of stomach pains now make sense and we look forward to his health being better all round. He can now eat anything he likes. Chris's health has been pretty good except for bouts of hayfever now and then.

'What about Chris's study?' we hear you asking. Somehow some did get done and progress has been made on chapter one and she presented a seminar in November. The working title for her thesis is now 'Towards a Theology of Technology'. She also coordinated a series of lectures and did some essay marking at St Mark's for five weeks while her supervisor took long service leave.

Chris with Shetland ponies in Shetland



Chris with Shetland ponies in Shetland

The farm at Wroxham



The farm at Wroxham

hich brings us to Christmas. We are heading north to spend it with the Ledgers and to help out with Dad's transition to the hostel. There'll be sorting out to do at the house in Toowoomba, no doubt.

The year 2001 is shaping up to be just as exciting. Keep tuned for the next instalment!

Wishing you a very happy and joyful Christmas and New Year season. We hope our path might cross with yours in the year ahead.

Love, Geoff and Christine