

December 2025

Dear family and friends,

Another year has come and (nearly) gone ... We hope that you and yours are well, and you're satisfied in knowing you have realized some dreams and achieved some goals. We are very grateful for our families and friends, and appreciate the times we've shared over the past year, particularly since there is so much suffering in the world. We try to imagine a time when all people could live together in peace, as one ... *(John Lennon)*



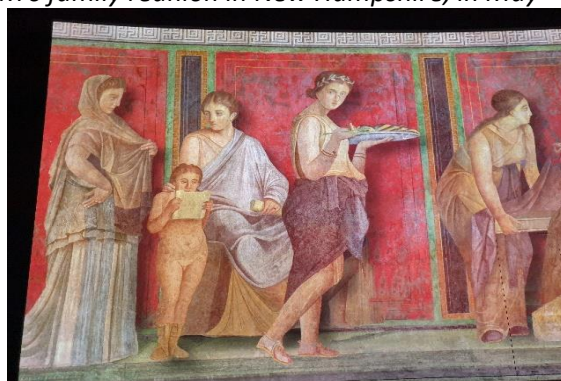
We began the year with some house improvements, some of which will make it more energy efficient. First, we had solar panels installed (on most days, we produce more electricity than we use), then we had the outside of the house painted, and finally we had new front stairs and three new "air-tight" windows installed. Outside, the recently planted native plants are growing well, but there is still quite a bit of weed-control needed before we can plant more (the weed is an "unkillable" vine). To balance that, we hope to have our best crops ever of potatoes, tomatoes and basil :-).



Newcastle beach with Perth friends David & Jane; Stephen playing with his reflection, Nat. Museum; wildflower

In April we attended the National Folk Festival in Canberra. It was great fun to camp for a week and listen to music from morning to evening, with musicians "jamming" over lunch or wherever they gathered – such amazing talent everywhere! It was a great mix of local, national and international musicians, and included many 'youngsters'. Standouts were Will Pound and Jenn Butterworth a duo from the UK (accordion, harmonica, guitar), Nano Stern from Chile, the Borough Bluegrass band from Brisbane, and Apolline, a trio of vibrant young Australian women (violin, cello, double bass), to name only a few. In addition to the music, we visited the Pompeii exhibition (amazing murals and artefacts) which was particularly good since M. and Theresa visited Pompeii while in Italy in 2024.

*Vivid mural at Pompeii exhibition, Canberra;
M's family reunion in New Hampshire, in May*



In May, we went to the US to visit Marie's family and spent most of our time in New Hampshire, where M's sister Theresa lives. She now walks long distances, speaks well and is doing much more, in addition to regular speech and physical therapy sessions. We managed to see most of M's siblings and partners, and a niece and nephew. We shared meals and laughs together, and enjoyed some beautiful walks past fast-flowing rivers and waterfalls along NH's Kancamagus Highway. In early June, S. went to Germany for a week-long Maths conference in the Black Forest, and then returned to Boston to join M for the (long) trip back to Australia.

Following on from our love of wildflowers which we developed in Western Australia, we thought it was time to learn about their NSW cousins. So, we visited Muogamarra Conservation Reserve which is only open for 6 weeks/year during wildflower season (Aug-Sept). It was a beautiful day and special area (donated nearly 100 years ago), where we saw and learned about many wildflowers.

In September, we met up with a group of 15 friends -- mostly from Perth and mainly art guides or retired librarians! -- for a short holiday in and around Alice Springs (centre of Australia). We spent time learning more about and looking at Aboriginal art, hearing about innovative and effective Indigenous health initiatives (huge need for these) and bush medicine, and visiting a Reptile Park and a fantastic new Megafauna Museum. Some 6-8 million years ago Australia had marsupial "lions" (*wakaleos*), marsupial "rhinos" (*diprotodontids*), giant flightless birds (*dromornithids*, 3m = 10' tall and weighing 600 kg = 1300 lb), crocodylians, and marsupial "wolves" (thylacines). It was also great to see exotic *living* reptiles, birds, and plants. We took day trips to visit art centres in the small Aboriginal communities of Titjikala (where we bought 2 paintings), Utopia, and Santa Teresa, where we spoke with some artists as they painted. The art in the Eastern MacDonnell ranges includes both traditional dot painting and contemporary styles, using various materials such as ochres, acrylics, watercolours, ceramics, grasses (woven objects), and silk (scarves). Listening to the Desert Women's Choir and others sing at Ormiston Gorge as the sun was setting was quite surreal, as we sat on a sand embankment on the opposite side of the river from the singers. Their colorful costumes were mirrored in the still water, and behind them, four wallabies came out of the rock crevices to listen to the singing and jump about effortlessly on steep rock slopes. It was quite an experience.



Choir reflection; ancient giant bird; Perentie lizard; Thorny Devil; tiny desert daisies



The new artwork we bought is now on the walls, and we are trying to get some of our old artwork framed and hung too. Speaking of art, we went to see the work of Billy Missi at a local gallery on Lake Macquarie. He was from Mabuia Island (between Papua New Guinea and northern Australia) and he created many large, incredibly beautiful and detailed lino prints (some of the best we have ever seen). His family travels with the exhibition and performed dance/song/music at the exhibition's opening. Another standout event was at the NSW Art Gallery, an exhibition called "Yolgnu" from Yirrakala (Northern Territory), which included lots of really old and historically important bark paintings dating back to the 1920s (created to convey their culture to European Australians). We continued the Indigenous art theme when we drove to Melbourne in November and saw the sister exhibition: "65,000 years -- A short history of Australian art". We were grateful for a personal tour from one of the exhibition curators, Judith Ryan. We feel fortunate to have seen so much this year.

Zebra finches near Alice; part of a Billy Missi lithograph; shark painted on bark



Stephen had a Maths conference in Melbourne (in Nov) and we decided to drive there, so we could visit friends en route. The first stop of our roundtrip journey (2200 km = 1400 mi) was in Sydney where we saw the Australian Ballet perform (Prism) at the Opera House – we felt like tourists, but it was great fun. We also saw Ron from Sydney Univ days. Next stop was Canberra to see old friends Peter and Nicki and the “boys” who are now young men entering university. There is always a lot to talk about with friendships that go back 46 years. The next stop was in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains to see friends Neil and Grazyna. We had lots of political discussions over delicious meals with wine. It was a moonless night and there were great stars, but the gale-force winds during the day kept us from helping with chores on their farm. Next, we drove to Melbourne for S's conference and to catch up with mathematical friends Tomasz and Mellisa, who had bought a new house, and then on to stay with dear Michelle and Thomas and go on some walks in the Dandenong Ranges. On our trip back to Newcastle, we stayed overnight in Goulburn, and then drove on to see John and Claire Black for a lovely lunch at their peaceful home nestled in the Blue Mountains bush.

As usual, we have enjoyed hosting a number of visitors. S's sister-in-law Belinda, and niece and nephew Karina and Ivan visited last summer and took advantage of our beaches. Perth friends Jane and David stayed with us several times, on their travels through NSW, before heading home (we were sad to see them go). S's mother and partner (Mary and Robert) visited next and we took them to a play in Newcastle. Nephew Ivan came to stay overnight, in conjunction with a work trip, and S's brother Chris rode up on his motorbike for an overnight visit, which was fun.



4 generations: Karina, Soli, S's Mum and Belinda



Mary's 90th birthday lunch, Dec.

In December S's mum (Mary) turned 90 and 13 of us celebrated – there are now 4 generations since the arrival of Mary's first great-grandson, Soli. We all enjoyed holding him – he's now 10 months old, very good natured and really cute. We ate lots of food while catching up on news with nieces, nephews, brothers and their partners.

We have both been going to the gym 3-4 times per week (for cardio, yoga, pilates and weight training), so we are stronger and better balanced than before, although sometimes very tired after the workouts! Thankfully, we've both been fairly healthy and staying busy with research, a few clubs, volunteering, seeing friends & family, and the long list of house/garden projects.

Marie's cousin Kevin St Martin and his wife Marianna from the US will visit us in December. We look forward to showing them some of Australia's unique fauna and flora, and a little of the Newcastle region. We will have a big Glasby gathering in Newcastle shortly after Christmas: lots of food and overnight guests -- it doesn't get much better!

It would be wonderful to hear from you if you have a chance. In the meantime, we wish you good health, and send our love and hopes for a more peaceful and just 2026.

Marie and Stephen

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New plants in front of recently painted house; newly framed spirit figure painting; wooden 'story board' from Papua New Guinea; back corner of yard with native plants



PS. For those of you who want to donate to help others who are less fortunate, we heard about a charity that evaluates organizations and provides a list of 20 global charities that are **most effective in improving people's lives** (where donations have maximum impact based on evidence). It is called **The Life You Can Save**: <https://www.thelifeyoucansave.org.au/best-charities/>.