



Lucky 13

Welcome. Better late than never, etc., etc. Get on with it.

Its Raining, Its Pouring...

The drought broke in a big way here in February. The Lake went from a low of 7% (heavy restrictions all round) to 62% full in the space of 36 hours. The new dam is no longer just airspace. The really good news was that it didn't leak (much).

It rained cats and dogs for two days straight and the water level rose over 300mm per hour. That's pretty impressive when the area of the Lake is over 3,000 Ha. Mind you its hardly rained since. All the predictions are for a wet summer and I will be quite happy with that.

The Old Man's Snoring

Michelle insisted that I have a sleep study owing to the fact that neighbours were beginning to complain about the extent of the snoring. The sleep study concluded that I had severe sleep apnoea and that I needed something done. That something was out with the tonsils.

So I had a very short hospital stay (overnight) in April, to have my tonsils out and palate



I just get better looking (and greyer, and fatter, etc. - but mostly better looking)!

reshaped (as though there was anything wrong with the old shape).

Anyway it seems to have worked. Michelle reports that I don't snore anymore (or at least only when I have a cold). I seem to feel a bit more awake in the mornings, which is a good thing.

To follow that up I've just had my teeth operated on. Nothing major, just a bit of knife wielding and bone scraping while I screamed like a girl. Between that and the tonsils I have rediscovered the joys of soup this year.



Granma and Emily in Rockhampton

Travel Bug

We haven't really gone too far afield in 2003. We all went to Brisbane in July for Hannah's doctors appointment and took in the sights while we were there. Hannah flew to the grandparents (Michelle's Dad and Carole) in Sydney after the appointment, while the rest of us spent a few days in Hervey Bay on the way home. It was back to Hervey Bay in September to help Hannah out on the Fraser Island leg of her school camp.

We all went to the Gold Coast at Easter to spend a few days with Michelle's Mum and Brian. Apart from that I have made about a dozen trips to Brisbane of varying length for either work or to watch the rugby.

Everyone was a bit peeved that I got to go to Tasmania in October for a conference on dams, while they got to stay home. Never mind, we are all booked to go to NZ in March next year.

It wasn't all one way traffic, Michelle's Mum and Brian have been up here this year and Michelle's sister Nicola is due on Boxing Day. My Mum and Dad were also here for a couple of weeks in May.

Hannah's Hospital Happenings

Hannah has had an interesting year, her first teenage year having turned 13 in May.

Two hospital visits - the first to remove a couple of teeth prior to getting braces. She followed that up with an extensive hospital stay in November to correct both her legs. She had orthopaedic surgery (chips to toes, seven incisions and goodness knows how many stitches each

leg) and is unable to walk for 4 weeks and has to spend a total of 6 weeks in plaster. She is presently half way through her 6 weeks. Plaster comes off New Year's Eve.



Amelia, Michelle and Emily

I can tell you that she must be getting bigger, because she is definitely getting heavier. Michelle and I have to lift her out of bed, onto a wheelchair, off of the wheelchair onto the lounge, etc. Hannah is getting better, Michelle & I are getting worse.

Healthier Pursuits

Most Saturdays Hannah can be found at Riding for the Disabled (RDA). She is very proud of the fact that she has started trotting. At the RDA Christmas party last weekend she was awarded "Most Improved Senior Rider of the Year". She was just a bit chuffed at that.



Hannah "Calamity Jane" Jewell on horse

Hannah made her Year 7 graduation resplendent in her plaster casts. Primary school is over, High School for Hannah next year. She is looking forward to it.

Netball Mania

All the girls played netball in the winter season this year, even Hannah who played goal shooter for a team of disabled kids. She isn't a bad shot either!

Emily continues with her team "Groovers" while Amelia started FunNet this year. Milly enjoys it but wants to get stuck into the real thing next year.

Michelle added winter netball to her repertoire, in addition to her Wednesday night indoor netball. She also took up as the Groovers coach. I'm yet to make my debut, although I'm quite partial to the thought of running around in a little pleated skirt....



Emily (GA) on attack

Emily's Escapades

Year 3 is now over for Emmy, who turned 8 in March. I think it was her best yet, she is the real little scholar. Loves maths and science (and most other things). She has picked up a swag of awards on parade, plus a Principal's award for her report card. Although the highlight for her was probably playing the lead role in the class Christmas play.

She did a 5-week modelling course for kids and now thinks that she is the bees knees. The lady-like behavior is fairly fleeting though. She is becoming a very good helper around the place and I think she would flourish on our farm - when we get it.

Milly's Musings

Amelia (Milly to us) has just turned 6 and finished her first full year at school as Queensland has only 2 days per week of kindergarten (which they call preschool).

She is proving to be pretty good at most things. If only we could get her to slow down a bit I'm sure that the quality of her work would go up a few notches. Everything has to be done quick smart. She got excellent report cards though, plus a Principal's award.

Not to be outdone by her big sister, Amelia also did the kids' modelling course and her deportment on the catwalk is 2nd to none!



Amelia, Michelle and Granma at 'school' in Rockhampton Heritage Village in May

Other Stuff

We have had the house-hunting bug this year, looking at quite a few places. As usual the places we like the most are too expensive. The house in Blayney is on the market (finally) and we are keen to buy.

We need to find the right place - fruit trees, 100 acres, decent water and on a school bus run - plus decide if we are staying in Gladstone. Not that we mind staying, but my contract was only extended for a year so I have to go through the rigmarole of asking for a contract renewal, etc.

Scooter City

We bought Hannah a scooter earlier this year, which made her much more mobile. She buzzes up to the bus stop in it (and Michelle buzzes home). We have to take it down to the school when she has some sort of outing. It has been a huge hit.

Then, out of the blue, we had a phone call from the Variety Club, who apparently had a package for Hannah. It turned out to be a brand spanking new shiny red motorised scooter.



Hannah zooming out of shot on new scooter, Granpa left eating dust in background

Michelle and Hannah went off to the Variety Club Charity Ball (I was unavailable owing to other commitments - rugby was on). It was a bit nerve wracking for Hannah to get up in front of 250 people and say thank you. Now she has a scooter for home and one for school. That's great because it means we (or Michelle) don't have to drop off and pick up a scooter to school every Monday and Friday - one can stay there.

Rugger Bugger

How dare Michelle suggest that there is any such thing as too much rugby! Including the final, there were only 48 games of rugby at the World Cup this year and I watched 47 of them. Hardly excessive. The other one's on tape.

I actually managed to get to see 5 games live in Brisbane at SunCorp Stadium. I even took along the whole family to one of the pool games - and although they are loathe to admit it - they had a great time.

SunCorp is a very impressive venue. The girls had their faces painted in England and Uruguay colours and got into the spirit of things, especially the Mexican waves. Watching the rugby was just a distraction.

I am still refereeing part time (when they are short of a referee - almost all the time) in the Rockhampton competition. Managed to do a lot of travelling, I seemed to referee everywhere except Gladstone.

Other Boring Stuff

I started back into study this year, finishing off my MBA. I have to complete 6 subjects by the end of 2004. I did the first half in the 90's (see your old newsletters) and have to have the whole lot finished within 10 years. I will go close, as long as I'm making reasonable progress nobody will be too concerned.

We've just had a doozy of a storm here (9th December) that included mini-cyclones, roofs torn off and trees ripped out all over the place, hailstones the size of tennis balls and so on. We even made the National News! Quite incredible the size of some of the trees snapped in half.

That's about it. The news for 2003. We are staying at Lake Awoonga this year and I am taking 3 weeks off to do some work around the place (i.e. sleeping, eating, etc.)



Hope this finds you in good health. All the best for Xmas and 2004.

Stephen, Michelle
Hannah, Emily & Amelia



Emily and Amelia on Fraser Island



Hannah and old wreck (Hannah on right)