

Into the new millenium...

Welcome to the ninth edition of "Cheers". Another year, century and millennium over. Well almost, I won't get into the "when does the 21st Century really start" debate. It's close enough so I'm letting off a few fireworks come 31 Dec. For all the MCMXCIX news read on.....

Gone but not forgotten

Although we have moved to the relative ends of the earth we seem to have had quite a few visitors this year. Michelle's mum Jean and her husband Brian have been here twice whilst tripping around the country in their caravan. Michelle's sister Nicola & her beau Brett flew up in March and we went to Great Keppel Island with them for a couple of days. My mum and dad came up for a week from Gilgandra during August. We also had friends from Blayney, Gilgandra, Longreach and Newcastle drop in at various stages. It's been nice catching up with all the news from the deep south.

Offspring offal

We must stop buying stuff for the girls. As soon as we do they injure

themselves on it! We had a trike specially made for Hannah because she is just too big (she is 9½ I suppose) for training wheels, but hasn't the balance without them. She promptly fell off anyway and suffered a nasty concussion. She is still attending Brownies and is in the school choir. She got up on stage with the mike and regaled everyone with "Jingle Bells" and "Rudolph the red-nosed Reindeer" at the staff Xmas party this year.

Emily is an overactive 4½ year old and wants to do dancing and gymnastics next year (she can do one - not both). She spends all of her time dancing to Hannah's CDs and watching herself doing it in the mirror. I have to admit she is a darn good mimic of things she sees on music videos. Next year is her first year at school. Two down, one to go.

Amelia is setting new standards of independence and ratbaggery. The terrible two's is no exaggeration with her, and Miss Independent to boot. She would pack up and leave if she just knew how. But since she doesn't she seems to be content with damaging anything that she can get her paws on. We are forever discovering clandestine art works in cupboards and on the coffee table. When questioned she knows nothing. Hmmm.

Millennium fire bug

We are hosting a BBQ to welcome in the New year. I procured some fireworks via sources that shall remain confidential. Strictly speaking it is illegal to set off fireworks, but not to burn them, so I will set fire to each of them individually with a match. That sort of makes it okay, OK?

Midwife crisis

Michelle hit the books in a big way this year, doing her Graduate Diploma of Midwifery at Gladstone Hospital and Central Old University. She started the course in January 99 and will finish it at the end of

December 1999. I have learned some new child minding skills (apparently there are three of them) having taken off a couple of weeks to be Mr Mum while Michelle did her study blocks in Rockhampton. She will officially be a "midwife" in the new year and has been offered permanent part-time work at Gladstone Hospital. I wonder how much study she has to do before she will be a

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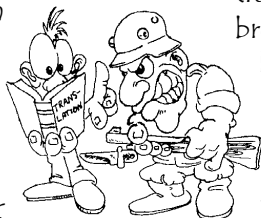


Work-wise things are going pretty okay. It is quite interesting working for an organisation (Gladstone Area Water Board if you've forgotten) that is spending big bucks. It is also quite exciting being involved in projects that are using very big stuff. Pipes that you can walk through, and pumps that you can crawl through for example. Although you'd get very wet if you tried either.

I also managed about 4 trips to Brisbane courtesy of the Board, shame I don't get Frequent Flyer points. The attitude of the Board to getting things done is a reminder that I spent way too long working for councils. I think I'm staying for a while - but that's what I always say.

Marine invasion

Talking of marines, there were a few thousand of them in Gladstone during the Crocodile 99 exercises. I organised some tours of the dam for some of them (and US Navy) while they were here. It was interesting talking to people from the other side of the world. We even organised a BBQ one evening after one of the tours and used it as a fund raiser for Emily's Tiny Tots quest. More on the Tiny Tots follows.



State of the Union

I started refereeing Rugby Union semi-seriously in the local (Central Queensland) comp this year. I still enjoy the running around and being involved, and it beats waking up with bruises from playing the game. The pay is poor but you do get to travel to exotic destinations like Moura, Biloela, Yeppoon and Rockhampton. Well they sound exotic.

The Refs Association is keen for me to do more refereeing next year (like every weekend, not every second or third weekend), so either I'm going okay or they are getting desperate.

The highlight of the year was refereeing a game between Gladstone and the Hawaii Marines in October while the US Marines were in town for Crocodile 99. A lot of fun and not too serious.

Tying the knot

Yes, everyone waits till we leave the State before deciding to tie the knot! Michelle's sister got married on 13 November to beau Brett. Michelle was Matron of Honour.

We drove down to Nicola's wedding then on to Jindabyne for a dam conference for three days, thence onto Blayney for Brooke and Colin's (friends) wedding the weekend after Nicola's.

Just when I thought that all the travelling was over Philip (my brother for those of you not in the know) marries his fiancé Kerry on 8 January, so we head down the highway to Albury for that one, only 1900 kms. That's the last of them, no more siblings to get rid of.

Tot with the lot

Emily won the Gladstone Endeavour Foundation Tiny Tots Competition in August, (watched by two very proud grandparents). She won a trip to Sea World on the Gold Coast for the State finals judging.

The trip was for one adult and one child and Emily elected to take her Mum, which was rather silly because I would have let her get into a lot more mischief. She didn't win unfortunately, because the prize was a trip to Disneyland!

She had that much fun that she is

entered again this year. More raffle tickets coming your way!

X mas cheer - right here

We are having Christmas here this year, we figured two big driving trips south in two months is going to be enough. We will clock up some ridiculous amount of kms, plus I won't have any more leave anyway. So we intend to just relax quietly on 25 December.

We are going to enjoy the services of the restaurant at the bottom of the hill and venture out for Xmas lunch - let someone else do the cooking (actually that's what Michelle said, I don't do the cooking). We will then amble up the hill to the neighbours who have kindly (or foolishly) invited us over for the day.

Okay, nuffs enuff. Farewell, au revoir and adiou.

Merry Christmas to all, and an enjoyable and not too hung over new year.

Lots of love

Stephen, Michelle,
Hannah, Emily and Amelia.



The final word...

Sorry, no time for final words, I'm already way behind schedule. I know you find that hard to believe, but it's true. So if you want any other news or I've missed something obvious then try the contacts list on the front cover.

