

MERRY CHRISTMAS & a HAPPY NEW YEAR!

From Burra, an epistle (finally) stories of youngsters arriving and being fed here; grass and trees growing; a wonderfully cool summer so far. 2011 a year of struggle and joy and blessing. May 2012 bring great blessings to you.

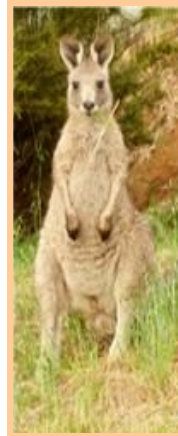
20 December 2011

This young kangaroo has been eating and drinking in our back yard for a couple of weeks with his mother. We stand at the door in the evening and watch them both and don't take photos. But yesterday I was taking photos of young "squeaky" the wattle bird, who is drinking honey water, and the young one hopped past and stopped for a photos shot!

(yes, "squeaky" is poking out his tongue!)



a butcher bird visited in spring and ate all the mice under the peach tree. We don't know how he saw them through the foliage in the overgrown bulb garden below!



PS

**Fred turns 70 next year! On February 15th!
everyone is invited!**



In Sydney we went to the Chinese Exhibition at the Art Gallery. (The First Emperor). Afternoon tea outside was shared with these two lorikeets. Having learnt about Rainbow Lorikeets last year on Brampton Island, we knew what (not) to feed them!



Skink babies were born and grew. We no longer have the original patriarch with us ("Tip") and have distanced ourselves from this large self sufficient family that live in the stone wall that Fred is continuing to build.

Fred has a new grass cutter and is cutting thick grass areas that haven't been touched for a few years. The growth is wondrous, the rain is still falling. The sun is shining on our panels and generating electricity and heating water.

1 We wait for you.
we long for you to come
Lord Jesus Christ,
bring Christmas to our home!
We covet peace,
the curing of the earth,
but not the pain
that carries you to birth.

5 You wait for us,
you long for us to be
a birthing place for peace,
a justice tree,

an energy for life,
a flag! a sign!
a fragrance in the air -
fresh bread, new wine!

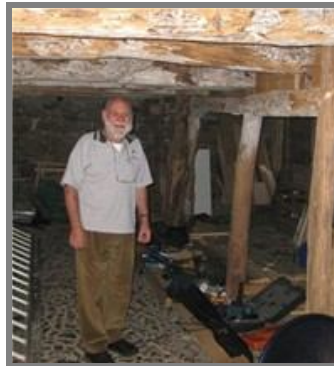
Shirley Murray (Alleluia Aotearoa)



We have been learning a bit more French. Fred practised in France. Here with Greg in Aurillac at a festival!



Fred collected more buses!



Fred worked with Greg and Wendy at the barn in The Auvergne again. Chris and Roger from Canberra visited and saw Fred in the bowels of 'La Grange' posing as the gnome in the cellar! (amongst the tools)

Fred stayed in a castle (Leeds Castle)... but now Fred says he slept in the stables out the back, not the castle itself!



It was a special trip in the UK and France.

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Linda stayed at home for the nine weeks Fred was travelling. Being abandoned in winter, things got too much! French was dropped, Jim & Bruce brought extra wood to keep the home fires burning, and in the absence of other helpers I went to see my neurologist. Earlier in the year an MRI showed up some new lesions, so I am now injecting every day. (yuk!) But October seemed to be an new exacerbation, so I went into hospital for three afternoons for infusions of methyl pred. I had cunningly avoided this kind of treatment for nearly 20 years! Since Fred was absent, I took some photos. He wouldn't even look at them, so with apologies but in the hope that Fred will be brave enough to look, I will put in this photo. (knowing that other friends have had very much worse and longer treatments this year!) The treatment worked for the first day, so I guess the problems really are in my head (i.e. neurological), but these have settled down to some difficulty walking especially on stressful or busy days. I use a walker at times and do less shopping and housework. (things do get done with a lot of help from Fred)

I went up to Sydney for a second opinion, and in 2012 will see a physio and a urologist up there at the MS clinic. I have ten years of good work in me yet and I want to be able to do it!



Church at St Philip's is a continuing joy. On the 21st December it was 20 years since I was ordained. We celebrated at the Advent Dinner. I put a lifetime of memories together. It was a very real privilege and gift from the parish. In the meantime, I also discovered that Vicki (who was at the dinner) had lived next door to my Grandma Watt (in Sydney) when she was 3 years old! What a small world this is!

We are looking at allhomes.com seeking an abode in the inner north. The idea of moving is difficult, but we do *live* in north Canberra! Is there some way we could use this special place here in Burra and still have a foot in town? All suggestions are welcome! It will take more than *our* minds to think this through!

Linda no longer does the parish web site. I am reconnecting with Diocesan clergy at conferences and retreats. I discovered the joys of "fast food": Gnocchi with grated cheese and baby spinach. Fred makes baklava every week and many other things like mince pies and simnel cake... (in their season)