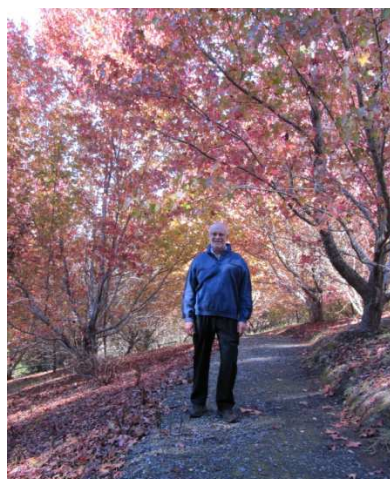




Preserving order in the South



The woods are a dangerous place

Christmas 2012



Somewhere between here and there

Look, Another Waterfall – The start of 2012 saw us in Tasmania. We were visiting our dear friends Captain Jon, a retired ship’s captain, and Bob, who a few years ago abandoned Adelaide to go crofting in Collinsvale, a village near Hobart. We spent New Year’s Eve at a dinner party at “Mill Croft”, and Jon and Bob over several days showed us the delights of Hobart and environs. Nam and I then went on a road trip round the island, going up the east coast, across the top and then down the rugged west coast. We had a particular liking for waterfalls, and there were plenty to be seen! Highlights were the Freycinet Peninsula on the east coast and the Gordon River in the wild south-west. Nam got to pat a Tasmanian devil, but he was not at all impressed – horribly smelly he said. Despite our best endeavours, there were no thylacine sightings though.

Send Him Down The Mine – My mother’s family (Cornelius) were from the “Copper Triangle”, a trio of towns north of Adelaide that flourished in colonial times due to rich copper deposits. The area was colonised mainly by Cornish folk, well known for their mining prowess, and the Cornelius family history is from there. My parents, sister, Nam and I spent a weekend exploring our family heritage. My great-great-grandfather, Thomas Cornelius, had been a mine manager there and was killed in a mining accident. His grave was the first in a Cornelius family plot at Moonta. Our first visit was to the Moonta Cemetery, and we were amazed to discover so many relatives, whom even I remember when I was young, now reposed in the family plot.



A clutch of crofters croitearachd



Woodland elves aren’t what they used to be



I’m not sure Vietnamese has words for “ice” and “snow”

On The Road Again – In the first week of December, we took to the road again. We flew to Melbourne, and then drove up to Sydney, the scenic way. At Ballarat, we visited “Sovereign Hill”, a replica town from the gold rush days, which included a trip down into one of the old gold mines. Nam was keen to participate in the gold panning until he saw that you had to get down and dirty with pans, shovels and muck. He figured that likely return did not match effort required. We travelled up through north-eastern Victoria, renowned from colonial days for the exploits of Ned Kelly and his gang. Nam had never even heard of the infamous bushranger, so we went to Glenrowan, the site of the famous siege in which the armour-plated Ned was finally captured. After also visiting Beechworth and Yackandandah, we headed along the Alpine Way through Thredbo to Jindabyne. At Thredbo, we took the chair lift up to the top and then walked part of the way towards Mt Kosciuszko. Despite being summer, the weather with the wind chill was icy. Nam had his first ever sighting of snow/ice lying on parts of the tundra. He took the opportunity to grab two handfuls of ice and pitch them at me. Gee, thanks! Nam was blown away by the vastness of the open rolling country between Jindabyne and the coast, and we were both impressed by the spectacular coastal scenery up to Sydney.

Ping Pong Diplomacy - Nam has discovered a local table tennis club. Having previously played in Vietnam, he decided to dust off his skills. He plays competition once a week, goes to practice twice a week, and is rapidly gaining a reputation as the player to beat! I had no idea how many choices there are for paddle blades, as well as rubbers - thousands of combinations. It seems that every week a new combination of paddle arrives in the post. I on the other hand am hopeless irrespective of paddle, so I just leave him to it.



Joan, Judith, Nam and Neil at Moonta Mines



Some members of the Cornelius family, past and present, at Moonta



I really should upgrade my mobile phone



28 years of a life sentence with hard labour

Gauntlets and Gavel – I am now the Junior Warden of the Prince Alfred Collegians’ Lodge. The JW is the third principal officer of the Lodge, and I get a pedestal, a pillar, gauntlets, a gavel and lots of other cool stuff. The only down-side is that I can’t have a nap during the Lodge meeting, as I’m forever banging my gavel. I do enjoy it though – who’d have thought? ☺ I am also the Senior Deacon of Saint Andrews Lodge, so I still get to wander about a Lodge room with a really long wand. Flippancy aside, I still find great spiritual value in Freemasonry which only extends and deepens the further I progress. This year I was a proposer for three young men who joined the Craft; it has been a great pleasure to get to know them better through the year and to see them also appreciate that Freemasonry offers “something more” than pop culture does.

They Shoot Horses, Don’t They – My health has not been the best this year. There was nothing catastrophic, but just an accumulation of little miseries. Like a statistical dataset, I’ve been broken down by age and sex – what hasn’t dried up, leaks! I’ve had the dubious honour this year of reaching the Medicare Safety Net due to sufficiently high medical bills. (That means that Nam also qualifies for the Safety Net, but he’s a healthy little bugger and hasn’t seen the doctor at all this year! 🤞) Firstly, I started to find myself strangely attracted to magnets, and indeed the iron build-up in my system due to the gene defect for haemochromatosis was causing interest in the board rooms of mining companies. So, it was off for another series of venesections – a modern way of leeching. Ah, good old eighteenth century medicine! Secondly, ever increasing episodes of bowel obstructions led to a visit to my surgeon. Due to my surgical history, he described my abdomen as a “battlefield” in his letter to my GP, and he declined to go messing with it. However, there is a piece of small intestine lurking where it shouldn’t be, and this has been identified as the culprit. So, in January, the surgeon will don his body armour, pick up his blade, and extend the battlefield. A bit of chicken wire and string should do the trick. Thirdly, over many years, my complaints of excessive fatigue have been put down to a combination of Crohn’s disease, medication, haemochromatosis and laziness. One of my specialists suggested a sleep study and sure enough: severe sleep apnoea. During my test, I averaged nearly 60 “events” per hour, with the longest cessation of breathing being a full minute! I have an appointment with a respiratory specialist in the New Year. Sigh! It’s just as well I’m not a horse. ☹️

For the Term of His Unnatural Life – Flinders University awarded me a Staff Service Award for my 28 years of ~~servitude~~ service. It made me realise that I had already been lecturing for a decade before most of my current students were even born! Nam, by contrast, has not let the grass grow under his feet, and during the year he swapped engineering consultancies – with a hefty pay rise in the bargain! But despite the grumbings of this grumpy old man, I am actually looking forward to the New Year. Once the surgery is done and the sleep apnoea has been treated, I expect to surge with enthusiasm for life – or at least not to be quite so grumpy. So, here’s to a renewal in 2013 – bring it on!



**Best wishes
for 2013,
with love from
Alan and Nam**