

Wednesday's with Harry





Wednesdays with Harry began early 2017...

Let's face it...living with cancer is not ideal.
It affects so many aspects of your being.

Besides the obvious crappiness, it can however,
if you let it, give you the gift of life.

If we speak of bucket lists and fulfilling dreams, then I
wholeheartedly forgo any such list and roll it up into one.

So let my legacy be this...devoting time with my son to
build memories that will last forever.

Life can be that simple.

Harry...no matter what happens, I will love you eternally.
You are my world, always have been, always will be.

2019 here we come!

Wednesday's with Harry
January 3rd 2019

Upon opening Wednesday's with Harry site, 'WRITE SOMETHING' are the words glaring back at me. Whilst hoping to encourage me into action, the instructions were direct and to the point. Perhaps Facebook's initial command is a little too demanding but they follow up with the gentler question by asking 'WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND'. So failing the need to lie down and unload on any in-depth level, I did think it time to once again post a post.

This time of year is always a little tricky planning too much as Harry is programmed for holiday mode. That means watching reruns of sitcoms into the late night, which invariably translates into late morning sleeping. Daily activities also seem to be dictated by the weather. This is not a Harry issue...it is mine. He has the constitution to go running on a 40' day however I can faint from cooking a piece of toast! Harry reminds me of the many years I spent in the outback where heat is extreme and constant... he questions if this actually happened and his patience for my suffering is limited.

So today, like many Wednesdays lately, our plans were not in sync. Harry was off to the tennis with his mate and I wasn't. I had to get some work done and he didn't. He had to go to footy training and I didn't. I had to pluck hairs off my chin and he didn't. I do plan to see him when he returns from football training about 9pm and as I deliver his dinner, I am sure the conversation will be informative and articulate in the 3 minute ad break in the seemingly endless Big Bash season. By the way... I am not someone who hides from our treasured sport of cricket, in fact I do really enjoy the tradition of the 5 day test and the thrill and action of the limited over bbl. I don't however wish to watch the Big Bash EVERY SINGLE NIGHT!

So there you go Facebook, I have managed to 'WRITE SOMETHING' and convey 'WHAT'S ON MY MIND'. And whilst it is simply a collection of rambling snippets of nothing...there you go. Stay cool and safe.



Wednesday's with Harry
January 20th 2019

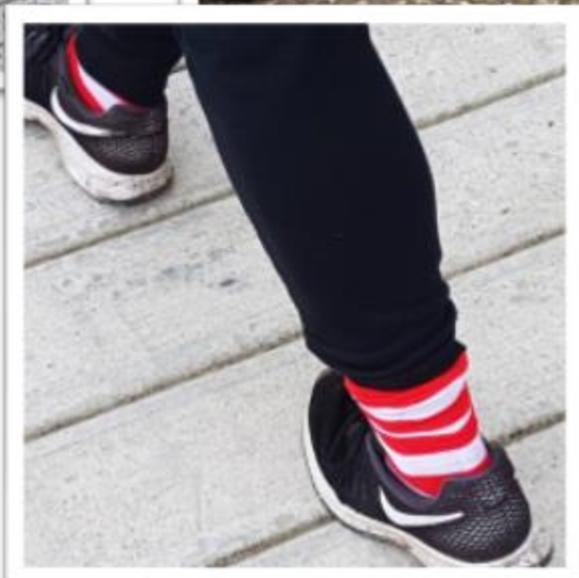
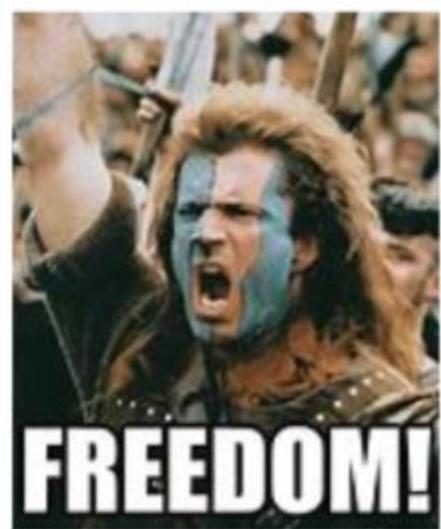
Yesterday was 37 degrees in Melbourne and as I have previously pointed out, Harry thrives whilst I take cover. He went for a 2 hour run... and I hovered near a fan. He then suggested our outing for the day would be to buy him some new socks. Harry seems to have a bit of a liking for socks and his collection of colourful feet coverings adorned with artwork from the 'anything goes' period include pizzas, watermelons, pretzels, palm trees, little toy soldiers, scotty dogs, swans and ducks. There doesn't appear to be any theme that cannot be reproduced on a sock. For quite some time now I have complained to Harry that rolling his strides up looks juvenile and as if his pants don't fit. It is a look that defies explanation as we witness grown men stroll about with half cast daks. Aha...but if the pants are of normal length then you would not be able to spy the sock! The alternative seems to be to not wear socks at all. Whilst this is perfectly fine if your shoe attire is sandals, thongs and maybe the odd runners, however in my opinion, wearing laced up leather shoes with a deliberate gap at your ankles to advertise your sockless protest is a desperate cry for help. As to which is the better look, this jury is still out. Harry constantly tells me that I am out of touch, the opposite of trendy and that I just don't understand high fashion. Now, I do admit that being trendy is not a high priority of mine. I have come to believe however, that as I am of the female gender, we have many ways to display our feathers with very broad and extensive fashion options. If we feel like wearing pants, shorts, a dress or a skirt the choice is ours, although usually not all at once. Whilst some men also partake in this wider range of clothing, no judgement, most stick to the pants or shorts option. It is therefore my thinking, that to cut through the repetitive boredom, the male population are currently a little obsessed with fluffing up their wardrobe with splashes of colour in their ankle area. They are standing on their platform with their sock or no sock rights. 'They may take our fashion sense, but they will never take our socks!'

Anyway, I digress. On this occasion Harry was after sporting socks and felt that this would be an outing worthy of our normal standard. There is only 2 reasons for this thought. Firstly, his enjoyment and fulfilment of what constitutes a normal Wednesday activity is very low indeed... or secondly he wants me to come on such an 'outing' so I will pay for the socks. It is most likely both scenarios. As already mentioned, my tolerance for the heat prevented such a journey so I explained to Harry that if indeed he was desperate for socks, he would have to go it alone. On return with 2 pairs of crisp white Nike socks he looked somewhat depleted. I inquired if he was okay?

'Mum,' he groaned, 'it actually physically hurts that I had to spend my own money on socks.'

Welcome to the world Harry Rothwell!

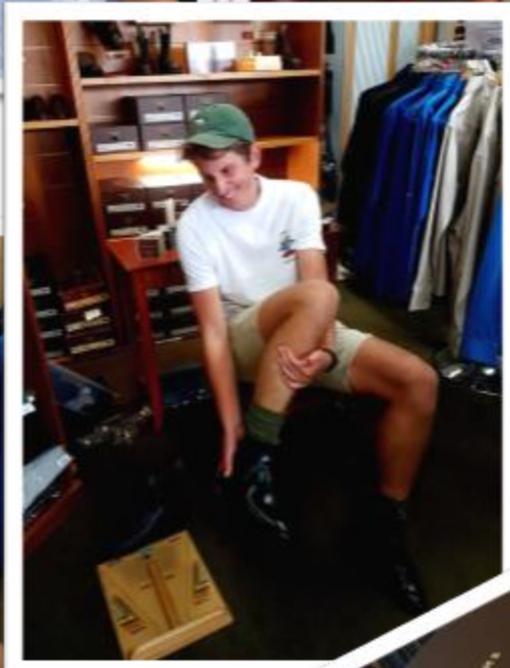
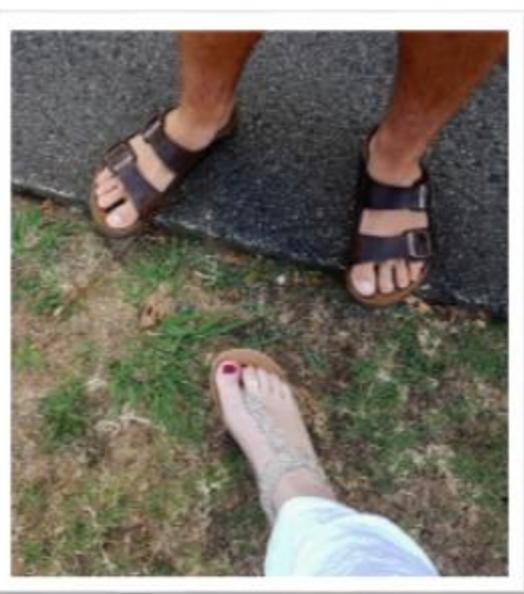




Wednesday's with Harry
February 6th 2019

Harry has been after a pair of R.M. Williams's boots for some time now. He added it to his Christmas list and when that didn't eventuate, suggested his birthday as the fall back option. In his bid for me to understand the value, he explained they can last for over 30 years and reminded me of my pair that I still wear which I purchased off a traveling hawker when working on a cattle station in 1990...then he quietly mentioned the price. I assured him that whilst I understood the value, I had to poo-poo the idea as it was something I couldn't afford. As we discovered from last week's sock 'outing', Harry parting with his own money is physically painful. Fortunately however, generous family members gave him some dosh for Christmas and whilst he had to add extra himself, he justified the expense and researched the best place to purchase. Delighted with himself for finding a pair that were priced \$100 cheaper, he came to discuss the road trip. A road trip you may ask? Yes... the R.M. Williams outlet he discovered was in Warrigal. For those not familiar, it is just over 100kms from Melbourne. So today, off we popped to Warrigal. Perhaps appropriately, on observing our foot attire for the day, Harry was sporting his overpriced Birkenstocks whilst I wore \$20 sandals from Kmart! Clearly I still have some work to do on the parenting front. Driving on the freeway, in between singalongs from Gold FM, a caller explained that her daughter needed an expensive calculator that had games in it. What? Why? What is happening? Surely when presented with an equation that needs solving, you do not suddenly feel the need to play space invaders? These, I suspect are invented by the same Ning Nongs putting TV's and computers in fridges. Please people, stop justifying the need to place virtual worlds in every single object. Why don't we harness all these brainiacs and channel their powers to remove all the plastic crap in the oceans. Anyway, still on the freeway, we pass under a big green directional sign for Ernst Wanke Road. I could sense Harry glance sideways in my direction to see if I was going to react. 'What an unfortunate name for a road', I said. 'Yes' he said, 'Shocker...and it's advertised on a 4x4 metre sign' Harry had a google and discovered Ernst Gottlieb Wanke was quite a prominent bloke in the area, was originally from Prussia and came to Victoria in 1849. This introduced a further discussion that original family names were often created from their occupations. Harry then suggested that perhaps that included hobbies? Hobbies indeed! Well we finally arrived in Warrigal and located the R.M. Williams shop. A sign advertising Akubra's was prominent and I was a little shocked that Harry had no idea what that was. Firstly his pronunciation was quite askew ...Akabarbra? No Harry, Akubra is a very proud Australian company specialising in hats. I owned a very worn and tattered Snowy River one, again from my outback days. He then discovered further unfamiliar outbackish items filtering through the air...Drizabone, Moleskins, Wranglers. Clearly I still have some work to do on the parenting front. The chap who assisted Harry's purchase took on the task of explaining every boot, its pedigree and care instructions and it was most likely the longest spiel on footwear that I can recall. He was sporting the most outrageous sideburns and we earnestly endeavoured to avoid this distraction. I believe I succeeded... Harry did not. He did know his stuff however and a mere 45 minutes later, with Harry assuring him he would polish and clean them once a week, he finally became the proud owner of R.M. Williams's dark tan Comfort Craftsman boots. Last week was socks, this week boots...next week perhaps some jocks?

On side note. Harry has just been offered a place at Deakin University to do a 4 year Sports Science degree. He is chuffed and I am proud.



Wednesday's with Harry
February 13th 2019

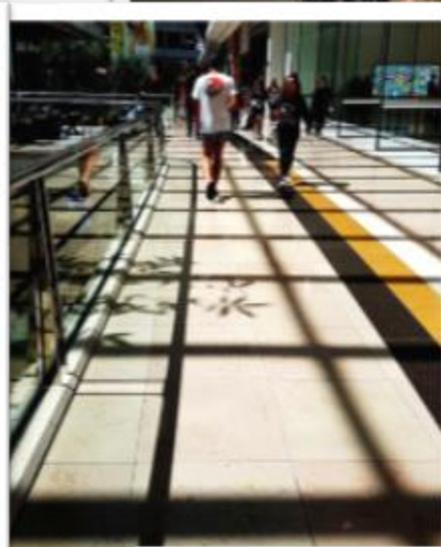
It is a requirement that Harry gain a student card for university and of course as a photo would be imprinted on the card, possibly for a number of years, it was important to Harry that it was an acceptable one. He has very thick and fast growing hair and the need for frequent hair clipping has always been an issue. This situation meant that the desire for a good photo with a half decent haircut was in direct conflict with the process of having said haircut. Just as I thought however, the photo won and so it was off to find a barber/hairdresser talented enough to cut just the right number of hairs. We decided that Chadstone Shopping Centre, quite possibly the largest shopping complex on the planet, would indeed house this gifted coiffeur who would take up the challenge. Speaking of challenges, finding a carpark was the first one. Success was only briefly celebrated after many failed attempts trawling various multiplex carparks with continuous disappointment... being teased with the rare green light indicating a vacant spot, hunting it down, only to find it housed a trolley bay, a disabled park or simply a malfunction. When faced with such a large shopping centre, I have established the practice that you need to draw a 200 metre circle adjacent to wherever your car is parked, and that is the imaginary boundary of shops required. Of course it does need some tweaking when the toilets or Boost Juice fall outside that perimeter. However if one wishes to avoid being lost in an endless labyrinth of shops, consumers, and blokes peddling skin care from Jericho, it is a plan worth trying. It also has the added bonus that you may return without swollen feet and the frustration of losing the car. Unfortunately this foolproof scheme did not eventuate today as the first idea to check out Legoland Discovery World meant drudging to the other end of the planet. The journey was not at all worth it as on arrival we discovered that we needed to be accompanied by a child in order to proceed!!! Failing to convince the staff that Harry was indeed still a child, we were left to linger in the gift shop and could only imagine by the look of joy and wonderment from those returning from their Lego expedition, what we had missed.

Trying not to bang on about how massive Chadstone is, however for such a large centre, one would think they would have more information stations available. On finally discovering such a system, I proceeded to enter the category to include hairdressers. Harry's patience with my understanding how such a screen should work was tested and it wasn't long before he took over the task. For future reference, hairdressers are not listed under B for Beauty as Harry assumed...astoundingly enough they are listed under H for Hairdressers! So we picked a possibility and then of course had to work out the map. If you have been reading Wednesdays long enough, you may realise that maps are not always appreciated. On this occasion however we managed to plot a course through the maze and discovered a first rate stylist that fulfilled Harry's hairstyle requirements.

We then found ourselves in that time vacuum, where one becomes oblivious to outside obligations and before we knew it we had to get to Deakin quickly if Harry was to have his card processed and get back for footy training. You may notice a few of the photos are of the back of Harry in Chadstone as he realised we had to hurry. The distance between us was growing, as his speed verses mine became more and more obvious. Eventually the escalator was one of the last obstacles between us and the carpark. Harry is very clear on his thoughts regarding escalators. 'Move it Mum...we didn't pay for a ride.'

So we made it to Deakin, trawled another carpark, navigated another map and discovered the Student Central Centre is in building HE. Mission accomplished and we made it back in time for training.

From rereading this post, it has become quite apparent that I am becoming a little too familiar with writing about absolutely nothing. I do however remain hopeful that we can buck the trend of the last few weeks and actually partake in something more worthy next week. Only time will tell!

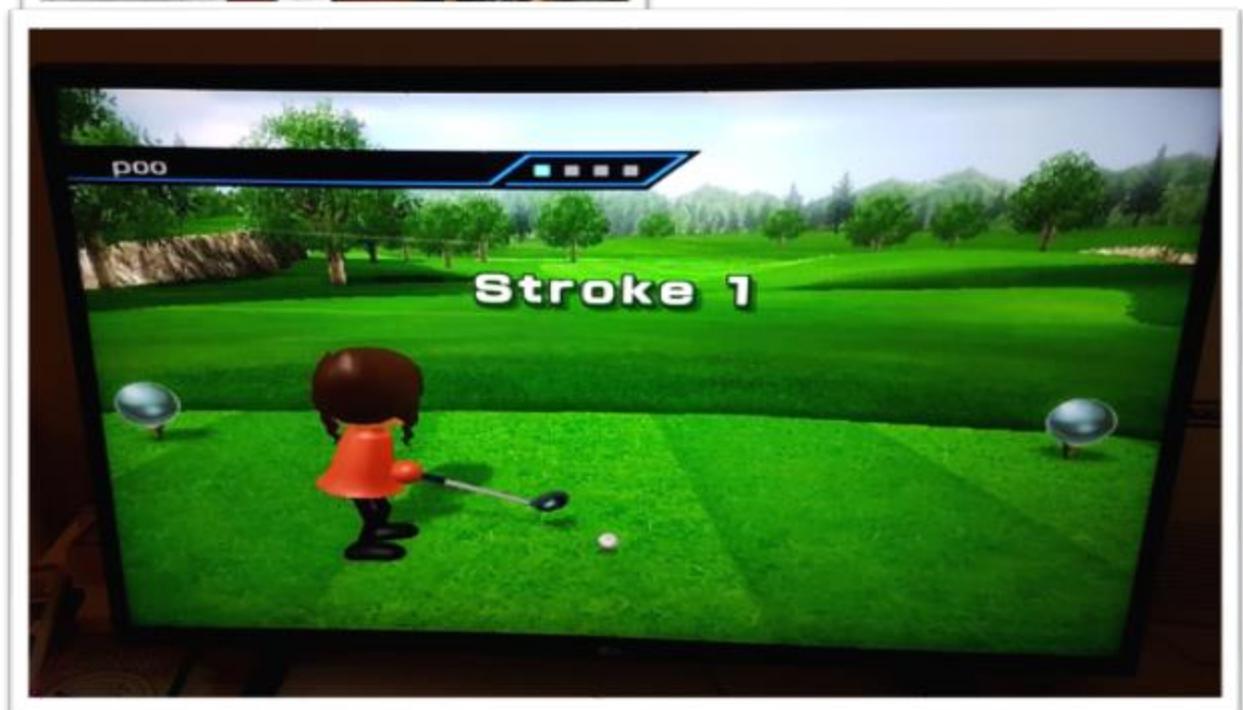
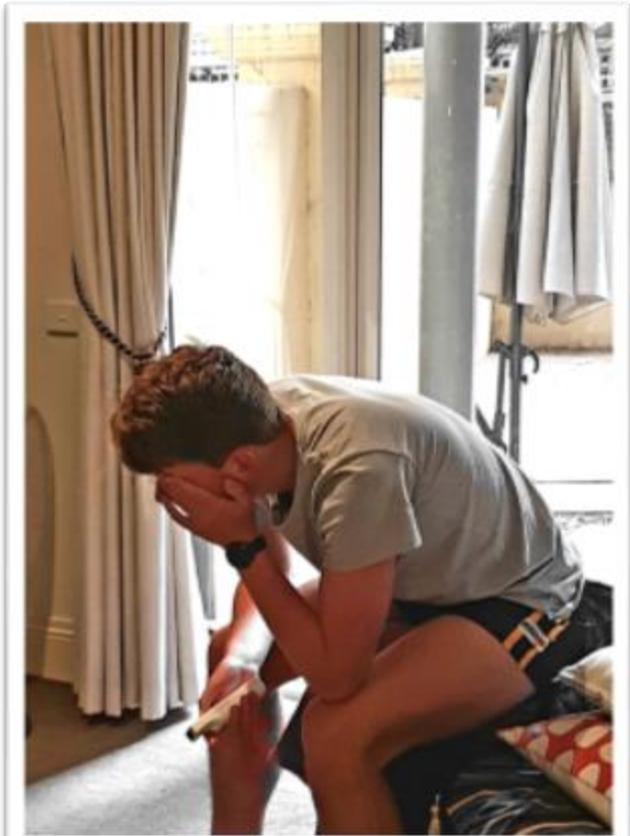


Wednesday's with Harry
February 20th 2019

Today I asked Harry what his ideal Wednesday would be. 'Play Wii', he said. 'Really?' I queried. Given the fact that he had to work in the morning and footy training this evening, it only left a small window of free time mid-afternoon. I was about to comment about the lack of time spent together but then remembered that Wii provided the opportunity for two to play. With the proclamation, 'You suck at video games' resonating in the distance, off I popped to get into the spirit of the game by the wearing the correct golfing, bowling and tennis attire. Now when I say correct attire, I really just changed into a more comfortable and flexible shirt. In my absence Harry was to locate the second operating stick thingy and set up and prepare for the Australian Open. On my return the second stick thingy was indeed located, however batteries were mysteriously missing. 'Not an issue,' I said, knowing there is a stash of AA batteries in the drawer...you know that drawer...the one that holds old take away menus, bent picture hooks, pieces of Lego, Ikea furniture instructions, and a broken mouse trap. Harry claimed to have checked the drawer but no batteries in sight. That seemed odd as I distinctly remember restocking batteries recently. 'Pity', he said, 'but with only one stick thingy working, only one could play Wii'. Persistently, my next suggestion was to dislodge and collect batteries from other devices in order for the challenge to commence. It was then however, that I began to notice that clocks had stopped working, and the TV remote was lying limp and lifeless. 'My, you have been busy', I exclaimed. Harry innocently declared that he had no idea what I was on about. 'Okay...how about an amnesty? I will leave the room for 5 minutes and when I come back, the batteries will be back in place and in return you will retain all your feeding rights.'

Miraculously, within a few minutes, the clocks were back ticking, the TV remote was happily revived and the second stick thingy from Wii was waiting for instructions. Now I will admit that I haven't played Wii in a number of years and with Harry already begrudging this encounter, the pressure was on. 'Give me a couple of tips and I will be good to go', I confidently informed my opponent. Bowling was the first game of choice and Harry selected his player from the list. For some unknown reason he picked a curly haired female with very severe eyebrows who was known by the name of Poo. I did inquire what that was about and he told me he set up her profile when he was about 10 and thought it was hilarious. He still thinks it is pretty funny. So to equal out the gender, I selected a Chinese male named Fred who seemed to have a slight resemblance to Charlie Brown and for some reason both players appeared to be legless. Harry was less than informative when it came to explaining the buttons, in fact I do believe he may have attempted to sabotage my game by his vague and confusing tuition, so it was fortunate that the screen informed me about A and B. The look on Harry's face was priceless when my first bowl resulted in a strike. Luckily for him, his competitive nature stepped up to the challenge and I discovered it was indeed beginners luck for me and Fred. After losing 3 games at bowling, Harry declared that I still was pathetic at video games. This may be the case, but perhaps another sport was my thing. Tennis was the next game of choice. This involved swinging the stick thingy as if it was an actual racquet. It took me 2 sets of swinging away before I cottoned on that I had to hold down the B button as well. It must have been somewhat entertaining as the Wii crowd watching were bobbing up and down on their torsos and cheering in admiration. Harry was chuffed that finally he had payback for all those Cluedo games I had won. The fact that I just wasn't up to his standard and without a competitive

opponent, he couldn't go on. Actually this was fine with me...and Fred. So there you go, a Wednesday with Harry where Harry and Poo were the ultimate winners...



Wednesday's with Harry
February 26, 2019

Well yes, it is Tuesday, a little ahead of ourselves this week...it is quite rare that the Rothwell's are on time for anything, so to actually be ahead of time is quite the miracle.

This week is in 2 phases. Last night Harry graduated with his Diploma of Sports Development. Not quite sure why, when he finished last November, that they wait until February...however here we are and it does seem somewhat similar to last years' year 12 graduation.

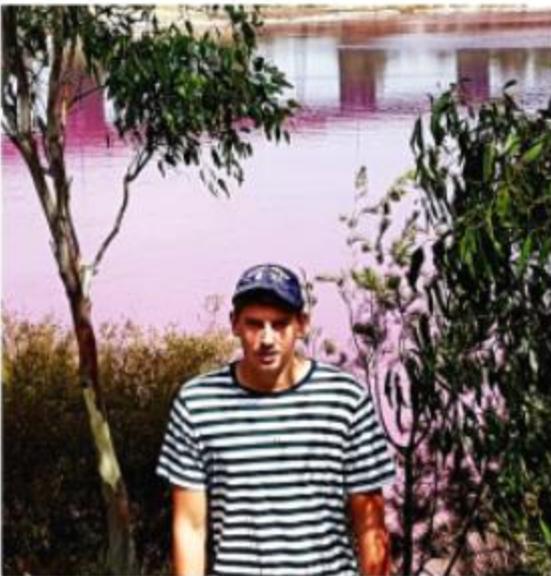
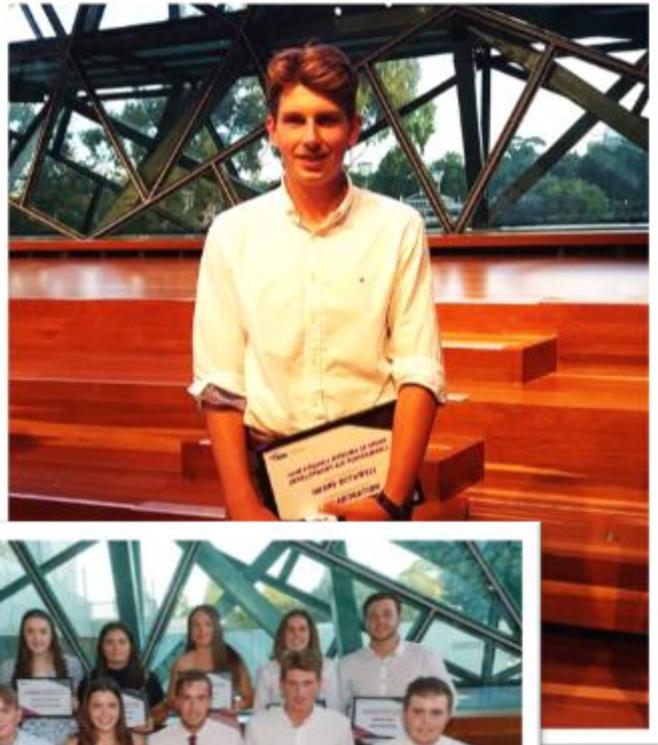
We entered the tiered auditorium at the Atrium at Federation Square and apparently we must have been the only ones not to be informed that parents should be sitting to the left of the room. Whilst it was not a shock that father and son may be left wandering, am a little annoyed that my normal observant self, happily followed and took a seat to the right of the room, which evidently was clearly marked with student classes. On realising our error, we quickly moved to the appropriate areas. Harry located his fellow peers and Bryce and I tried to quietly slink off to the parent seats to the left. Unfortunately our efforts to go unnoticed were severely compromised by me tripping on someone's feet. It felt like slow motion as I teetered on the edge of the slippery wooden step, desperately trying to balance. I could feel the apprehension in the room as I just managed to catch myself...partly from determination and partly from grabbing a strangers head! You could audibly hear the 'AHH' from the congregation when I fell into my seat relatively unscathed. It did occur to me mid-fall, that the assembled gathering would clearly believe I was inappropriately intoxicated.

Anyway, after listening to a couple of key note speakers, reminding myself that it was not the time or place to take a little nap, we finally came to the main event where they handed out the diplomas. Harry managed to be presented with one of the two awards given in each class. It was an award for Collaboration. What? Yes I do understand the meaning, however perhaps a sexier word could have been found. All very good, but the reality is that Harry was more excited about wearing his RM Williams for the first time and for his complimentary personalised biscuit on a stick. Holidays are now official over, thank goodness, and Uni begins next week.

Today Harry and I managed to find a small window of time together, so decided to check out the pink lake that has everyone fascinated. Now when I say everyone, it appeared on arrival, it was just us and a bus load of Japanese.

It was an odd contrast of worlds colliding. To the left was the hectic pace of the Westgate Bridge, the commotion of honking trucks, steel webs of power towers, industrial docks and shipping containers...and to the right was bush. Needless to say the majority of visitors took to the bush in an attempt to appreciate the pinkness of the lake. It is a salt lake, but currently algae is causing it to be extra pink. It is not predicted to last long and so hence the recent attraction. So we took a squiz, snapped some pics and contemplated going for a bush walk...but then we didn't. I didn't wish to go tramping through bush in thongs and Harry determined that he had seen a better pink lake on the way to Adelaide. I had to agree and so we left. So not a very long activity, but there you go.

Last night almost black and blue, but today am in the pink!



Wednesday's with Harry,
March 13-15, 2019

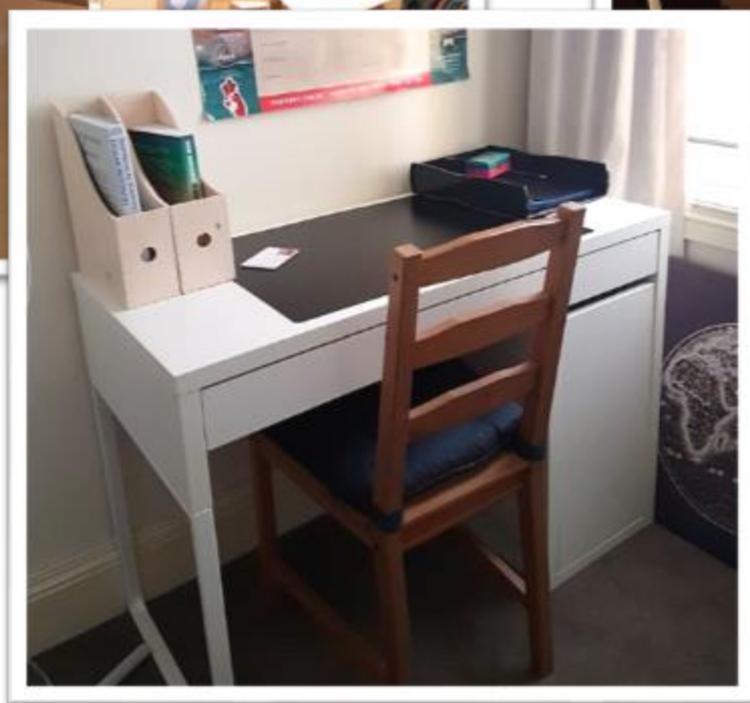
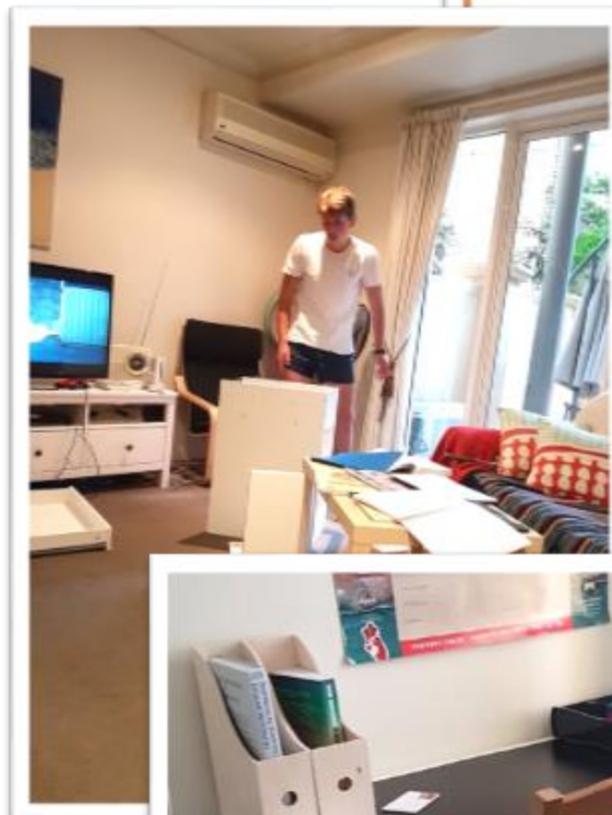
IKEA...the Swedish term for delusional.

We began the day with one simple objective in mind. Buy Harry a desk. In an attempt to encourage him to stop using the coffee table as his study area, Harry needed a desk. I have known about Harry's love of IKEA for quite some time so it was not a surprise that it was there he insisted on shopping. He seems to take delight in everything IKEA... from the 286 page FREE catalogue, to the showrooms full of household samples and the market hall exploding with domestic bliss...the plastic dispensers full of FREE stubby pencils, to the queue in the café to score a Kolsyrad Appeldryck and a cheap lunch (no not the meatballs!)

I explained very clearly that this was to be a very quick visit...find the desk and escape. Silly me. There is no quick trip to IKEA. You enter the showroom area and immediately the memories of past shopping ventures tickles your subconscious. You know there is something looming...and then it hits you. You have NO alternative than to spend the next hour and 45 minutes robotically following arrows, squinting at signs, then pleading with staff and begging to strangers...JUST LET ME OUT!

If anyone is obsessed with fulfilling their daily step count...just go to IKEA and try and work out the short cuts. There are none...it is a conspiracy and ploy to spin you around, increase your footprint and entice you with more bookshelves, and sofa beds, Poang chairs and cooking pots. So after countless steps and much frustration later, we finally spied the desk section and picked an appropriate desk. THEN...located the FREE pencils, noted the self-help location number, realised didn't need pencil could just take a photo, followed the arrows aimlessly behind a mother with 2 energetic kids and a couple looking for a futon, trudged through the endless muddle of a market hall, lost Harry in the lighting section, found him patting a fluffy rug, located the flat pack desk in box, loaded it on a trolley, paid at the checkout, realised the trolley with desk couldn't leave the IKEA area, left Harry with the desk to go find the car, drove to loading bay but no sign of Harry, phoned Harry but he doesn't answer, cursed a few times, left car to find Harry standing oblivious at the other end of the planet, transferred food shopping from boot section to back seat, cursed again, realised desk box would not fit in unless blocked rear view, didn't care, just get the thing in the car!!! One may have come to believe it was the shopping trip itself that caused IKEA angst. Aha! The fun had only just begun. I realised, that over the years of loving IKEA, Harry hadn't actually attempted to DIY flat pack assembly...until now. With the first bravado statement - 'don't need the instructions,' still lingering in the air, Harry's love of IKEA was rapidly sliding away. Now I did offer to help. This was readily rejected however as he felt the need to conquer the beast and slay the dragon. The assembly took place over a 2 day period. The instructions that were arrogantly tossed aside, were now relocated, perused and then abused. Fortunately the strength and durability of their paper source was in accordance with the Volvo test dummy standard and were able to be dewrinkled and rescruited. 'I HATE IKEA', were the words on repeat as small wooden pegs, allen keys and screws were tossed about the room.

So after many, many hours and much suffering from all concerned...finally a desk was born. Well done Harry. Yes there were quite a few spare parts, but there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry,
March 22nd 2019

For any footy lover, the end of one season and the start of another holds many emotions. When that last match has been played, we have to resign ourselves to the fact that it will be 6 months before the sirens sounds, the ball is bounced and we can once more yell and scream in earnest passion. The off season finds us filling the void with other sports and in our family it is a combination of tennis and cricket. So with attention temporarily transferred to yelling at Kyrios for being a knucklehead, or applauding Maxwell for hitting a six...we wait. We wait for the time when the excitement starts building, the adrenalin starts stirring, the meat pies start warming, the crowd starts gathering and all roads lead to the MCG...and in our case that is the first match of the season...Carlton V Richmond.

Anyone who knows us will be very aware that the passion and love for the Carlton Football club runs very deep and very true Blue. It is ingrained. Harry had no choice when sprung into life that he would join the generations of Carlton supporters and although there are times he has questioned why he barracks for a team that rarely wins, I explain about the history and convince him that one day we will again rise to the top.

If you follow the AFL you will be aware that Richmond is seeing a few good years and it has been questioned why the traditional season opener of Carlton v Richmond still occurs when clearly it is possible of a one way result. Bollocks! Last year after Richmond had won the 2017 flag, we lost by only 26 points, and by 9 points in 2016. Go back to 2012, it was Carlton who was dominant and beat Richmond by 44 points, 20 points in 2011. If anyone has a clue about football then you would know that anything is possible. If we question this match then let's question all the traditional matches such as the ANZAC Day clash.

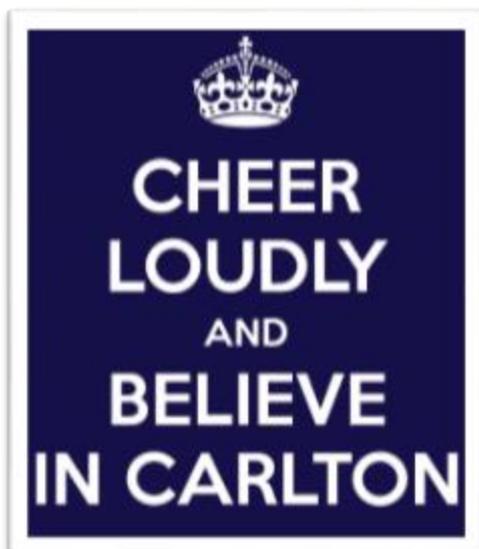
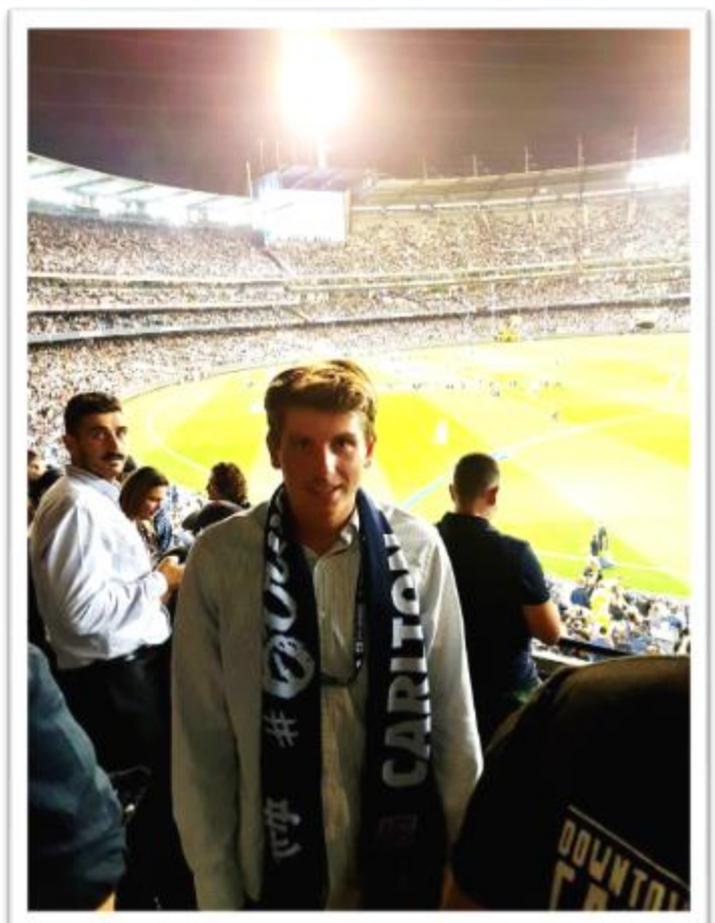
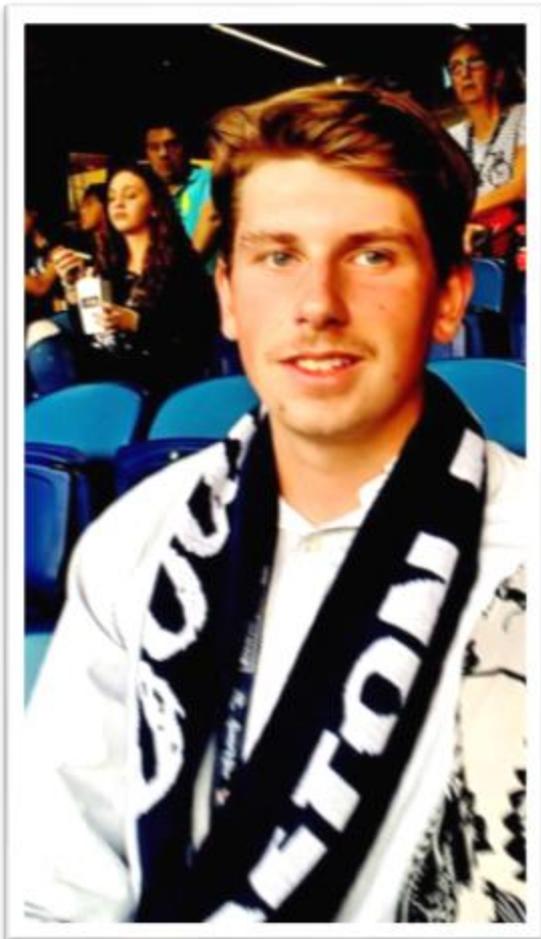
It was Carlton's home game last night and we still draw one of the biggest crowds...and it was part of this 85,000 crowd that saw us last night, once again, walk over the bridge to the MCG... those blissful moments leading up to the match where you naively believe that anything is actually possible and that this could be the year, Ahh...the anticipation!

Football is a winter sport and part of the paraphernalia is a beanie and scarf. As the night was a balmy 23 degrees, I decided to forgo said scarf...Harry however declared, just like wearing his lucky jocks, it was a necessity. The journey on the tram, sardined, with little breathing space, no aircon and windows tightly closed saw the scarf removed. I found myself concentrating on not fainting. Recovered from the tram ride, we slowly shuffled in a bulging muster of supporters...you could feel the expectation. Music from buskers was prominent...teasing us with team song renditions and the vocal cry of 'RECORDS' echoed through the air. We pass by TV crews preparing for Lavinia's weather report and further bustle our way to the appropriate gate. There we find ourselves in a sea of people lining up for bag searching and body scanning. Finally we enter the stadium...Do we queue for food now or later? Do I line up for the loo now or later? There is an overriding feeling to just get to our seats. The noise is rising, the team anthems are played, the players break through banners and we are here and present. The crowd then stand as one, in silence in respect for the NZ victims and nation. Absolute silence.

The siren sounds, the umpire holds the ball aloft, blows his whistle and another footy season has begun!

Okay, we didn't win. After the first quarter when down by 40 points, Harry declared, "here we go again...crappy umpire decisions and another losing season." I suggested he needed some more powerful 'lucky' jocks. The second and third quarters however saw us come back within 13 points. Not too bad and hope is resurrected. We will entirely forget about the last quarter when clearly we ran out of legs.

The trip home was another story...but there you go, until next week. Dadadadada...



Wednesday's with Harry
March 28 2019

It is always nice to go for an evening stroll along the posh South Yarra streets; lined with historic homes, wrought iron fences and knobbly trees. For some reason Jane Austin terminology 'take a turn' springs to mind as our sole purpose is to observe and meander with pleasant tête-à-tête mid amble. Now when I say 'we', that is in fact me. Whilst my mind was fixed firmly in the Regency era with high expectations regarding gentle sophistication, the reality of wearing a bum bag and leopard skin crocs absolutely shatters this illusion. Harry on the other hand is never content with a stroll and once again believed it was his mission to keep me moving as quickly as possible.

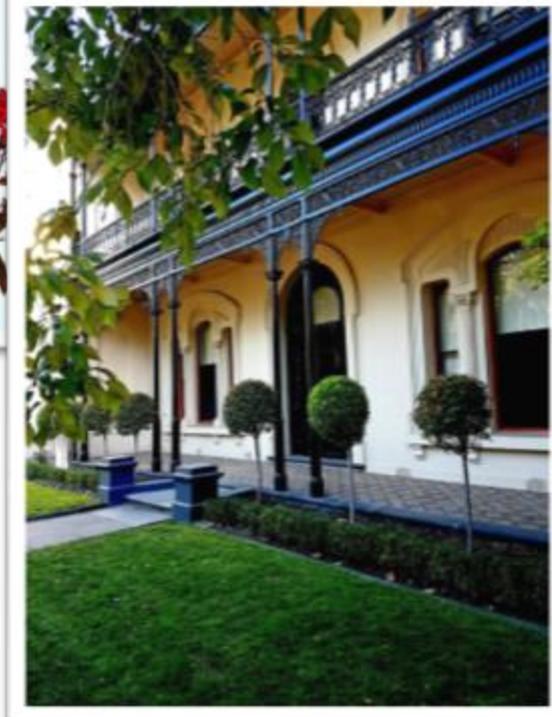
There is always a point in these type of walks that Harry's patience is tested. I attempt to amuse him with my light-hearted conversation in the hope that he will be distracted and oblivious to the pace. My speed is slowed even further however as I pause to take snap shots of ironwork and tree roots. Harry's opposition to my photo indulgence is clear. The usual pattern commences. He seems to assume that the more he insults my sensibilities, I will suddenly put the camera aside and break into a sprint. Never test a mother who has a point to prove, or too unfit to go any quicker!

Taking the high road and continuing my buoyant chatter, we finally reach that juncture. That point in the conversation when Harry is holding on tight to remain stern, grim and serious, yet the crack is slowly appearing. He hates it when he is trying to remain cross, yet a wave of wit has him break into a grin. Aha – my jesting triumphs again. Humour is my mediator, my rescue remedy, my hero and saviour!

We continue to stroll... it is the time of evening when workers are heading home, diners are spilling out on to the outside cafes and joggers are sweating their socks off. Now speaking of socks...one such jogger wore knee high socks and which forced me to suggest he must be English. Harry explained that he was wearing compression socks and they were supposed to help stop lactic acid building up. For a very brief moment I confused this with lactose intolerance and wondered how socks could possibly help with a bloating gut? Fortunately I kept that thought to myself whilst my brain quickly adjusted and realised the difference. I then asked Harry if he would rather have lactic acid build up or run in those socks... 'wouldn't ever choose to look like a knob Mum'

So we strolled on back, perilously dodging the numerous phone addicted zombies that recklessly roamed the streets...they stride along oblivious to surrounds, oncoming traffic, fellow androids and dog poo.

All in all, a short but quite satisfying outing...but there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
April 4th 2019

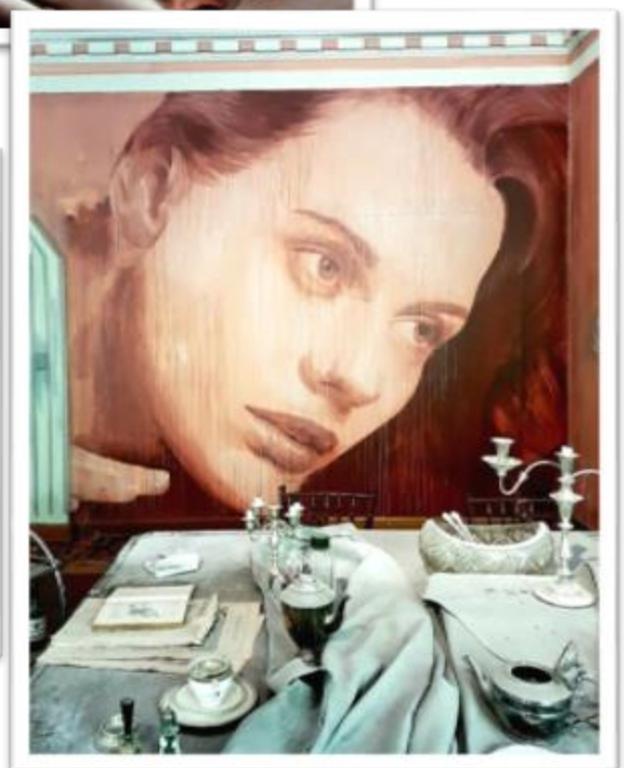
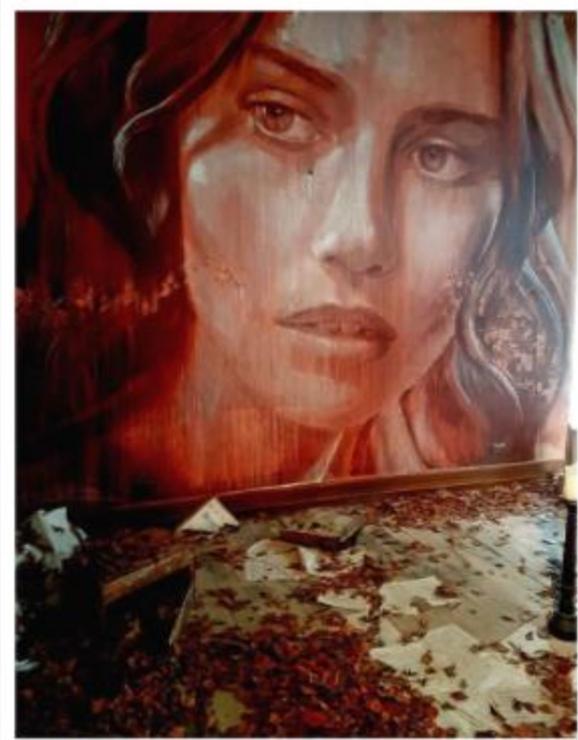
After weeks of posting about shopping for socks, boots and haircuts, we finally managed to go on a more significant outing. I had 2 of the now sold out tickets to the Rone Empire exhibit at Burnham Beeches in the Dandenongs. I did however decide to keep this information to myself until we reached the carpark. The reason I delayed explaining to Harry what precisely today was about was twofold. Firstly it is a difficult art installation to explain and secondly I didn't need a road trip listening to Harry groaning about the 'joy o' joys' of gazing at art. Over a pre-exhibition overpriced lunch of smashed avocado on toast, he convinced himself the afternoon would be participating in some sort of Escape Room farce or a tangled ballroom dance lesson...neither of which he determined as worthy. Therefore, in comparison, when the actual activity presented itself, he was quite relieved and really enjoyed it...okay 'really enjoyed' may be a slight exaggeration.

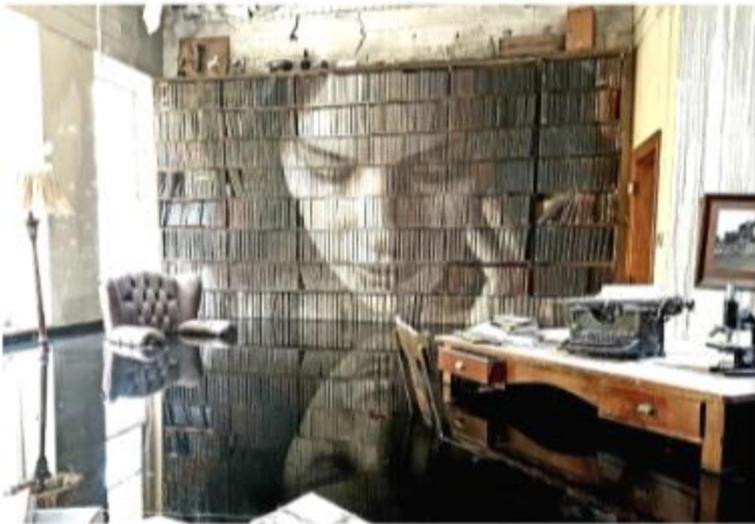
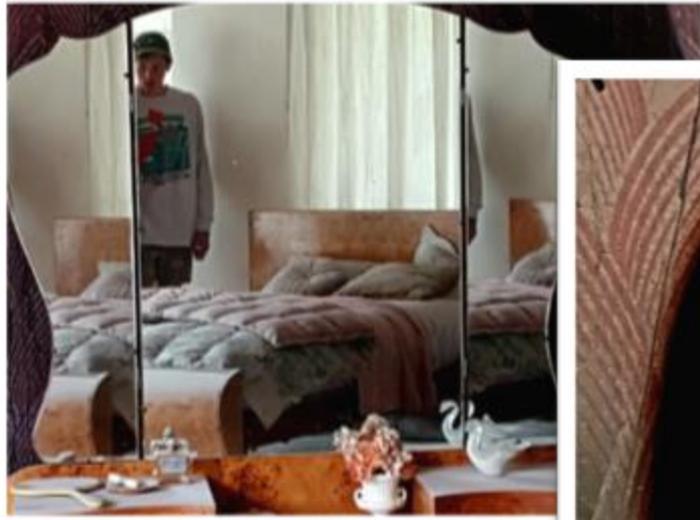
Now to begin to explain what this is about. Firstly the title Rone Empire – no Harry not about the Roman Empire...Rone is the name of the artist known for his street artist skills. Burnham Beeches is the most magnificent art deco mansion which has been vacant for about 20 years. Prior to it being restored and renovated to its previous glory, Rone took over and for the past year has applied his artist imaginings over the entire house. Every room has been transported into a bygone era; filled with art deco pieces and memories, autumn leaves and branches, cobwebs and dust and all accompanied by the artist impression of his muse Lily Sullivan. It is indeed The Great Gatsby meets the Shining... You feel you have intruded on the past, yet eerily the past has left in a hurry. Through the dilapidated decaying ramshackle building however it is easy to imagine the glory days...sipping cocktails on the south lawn, Billie Holiday teasing the mood and where life is simple and carefree.

I was pleasantly surprised at Harry's interest in the exhibit although he did question the need for so many twigs and leaves filling old chairs and corners. The outlined rules of admission were brief but they did include not touching anything in the exhibit. I reminded Harry of this on several occasions when he felt that he could perhaps add his own artist placement of 'old stuff'. Now here is the challenge. In one of the many photos attached, there is evidence that Harry has been in the house. Let me know if you find the moved object! The library, with its watery floor, where leather chairs and bookshelves are semi submerged in the blue pool was a favourite. Every room reflected the past and with artificial flowers, art deco pipe stands and heavy velvet curtains, the memory of Grandparents was fondly remembered.

The last part of the exhibit you are invited to watch a short film on the making of the installation by wearing virtual reality goggle thingys. Suddenly my world was filled with the entire project 360 degrees and viewed from my rotating chair. Now it may be that the giddiness I have been experiencing lately was partly to blame however this VR experience finished me off. My Stemetil prescription was no match for this spin out trip to the movies. To add to the calamity, the attendant removing the goggle thingys caught it in the clasps holding on my 'hair'. I swayed and staggered my way to the exit... woozy head in one hand and skewiff hair in the other.

All in all however a very worthwhile afternoon and even Harry agreed.





Wednesday's with Harry
April 10th 2019

This week I managed to drag Harry away from various activities and convinced him to join me in watching a film...AT AN ACTUAL CINEMA. It seems an eternity ago that viewing a film at the cinema was a regular form of entertainment. If you wished to watch a new release before the six months it took to be available on Video or now DVD, then you had no choice but to frequent the cinema. Of course if you knew someone visiting Bali, you may well have jumped the queue with a perfectly dodgy copy of the latest blockbuster complete with audience participation. You could enjoy the film wearing your Rolex watch, sporting some Air Jordan's and holding a Gucci handbag.

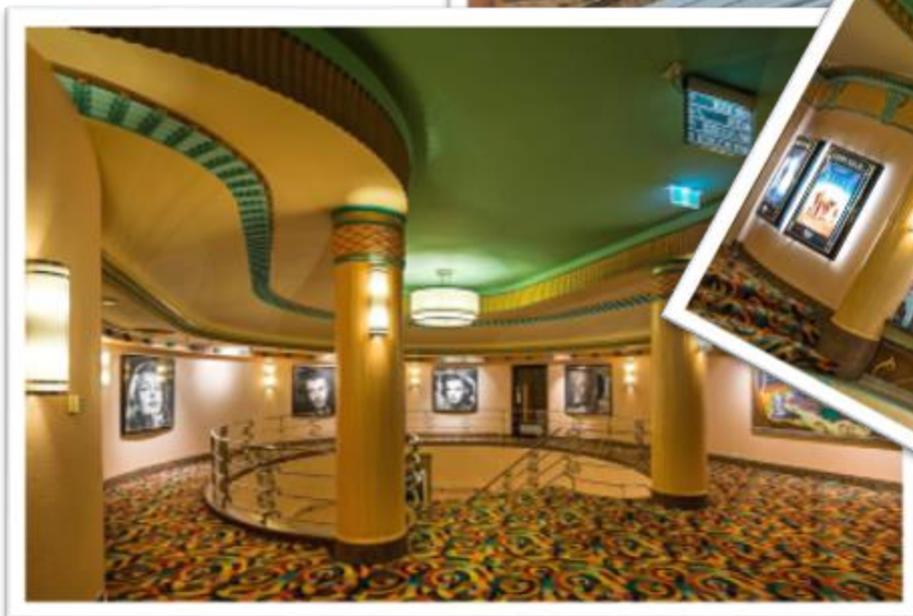
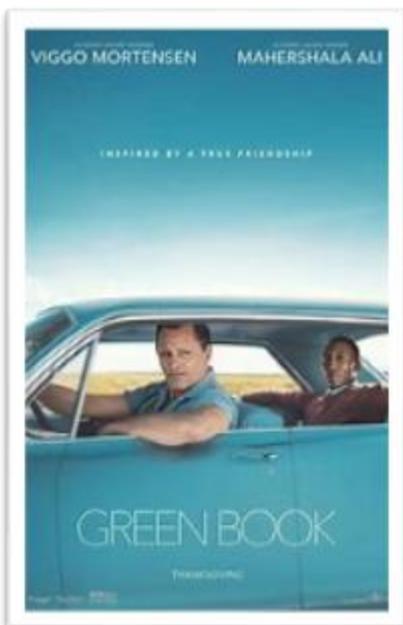
Now going to the cinema is more than just piquing the passion of film... it is the entire excursion that makes it worthwhile. Whilst I am sure there are many who still appreciate the effort to watch a film on the big screen, in our household it seems to have taken a back seat to flicking on the telly. Our choice of media shifts with technology...tossed aside were the outdated videos for the more durable DVDs. Nowadays however, my DVD library that once stood proud in uniformed catalogued rows, are now lying quite obsolete on a dusty shelf. Foxtel, Netflix and Stan have landed and have satisfied the instant gratification we seem to have for fulfilling our needs RIGHTNOW. Of course there are flaws in this modern movie watching experience. Our insatiable needs are flummoxed by the number of really crappy movies that are instantly available and we can spend precious movie watching time deciding the outcome. The most paramount failing however is that it leaves us still in our lounge rooms, removed from social interactions and the sheer joy of an outing.

For someone who used to work at the State Film Centre of Victoria, I should know better. Not that working there gave me any clearer notion of the film industry, in fact I was quite the opposite to the more arty type of employee. They used to call me GP for General Public and perhaps I was a little too honest in my opinion on some of the art films that were shown. I do recall the very first movie I had to publicise was titled, Salt, Saliva, Sperm and Sweat. I will leave it to your imaginations regarding the content. The point is however, that I loved the atmosphere that working within the film centre created. Showing a film provides the opportunity for the audience to leave their own world and be totally engrossed in another. And then there is that twilight zone feeling when you emerge from the dark. You are quite shocked that it is now raining and that you are not actually in Africa having your hair washed by Robert Redford... but instead you are adjusting your eyesight and wondering where you left the car! I applaud all those who still venture to the pictures.

Now back to our outing...Continuing the art deco theme from last week, I insisted we go to the Rivoli Cinema. Harry did not understand my selection of cinema and declared that the building being art deco could not possibly alter the movie experience. The point about delighting in the whole movie enjoyment was sadly lost on Harry. Anyway the Rivoli is a glorious building. On entering you are immediately transported back to the majestic days of cinema, complete with appropriately themed 40's music playing in the foyer and toilets. Ahh bliss...well it would be bliss if we were not running really late and had to contend with a very long queue of school kids lining up for popcorn and tickets to the Lego Movie. It is not our thing to

be on time for anything, but when it's an occasion where it will start without us, my penetrating glare at the limited number of staff selling tickets immediately goes into action. Please...POLLEEESE will the fussy kid and indeed his pampering mother please decide between M&Ms or Maltesers NOW. We are in a hurry and don't have time for you to deliberate, discuss and ponder over the pros and cons of chocolate choices. Fortunately the preshow advertising was the only bit we missed. We found our seats and it became immediately apparent that we were 2 of 5 people attending this film. I am not quite sure why you need a nominated seat number these days, however I would suggest that seating the entire audience side by side is really not necessary. Not one to particularly pay attention to such rules, we found alternative seats where we didn't need to fight for the arm rest or cup holder. Harry felt that the fact there was only 5 of us was a reflection on the watchability of the film. Nonsense...it was purely due to the fact that everyone else would have already seen it. The Green Book. One of the best films I have seen. An emotional trapeze. The fine line between disgust at the deplorable, instinctive humour, raw sensibilities and simple human kindness, was just perfect. Brilliant story based on a true story and enhanced by some outstanding acting. And hey, even Harry agreed.

My cinema experience has been reignited and just like the rebirth of the vinyl record, I can hang on to the hope that everything old is new again. Long live the cinema!



Wednesday's with Harry,
April 19th 2019

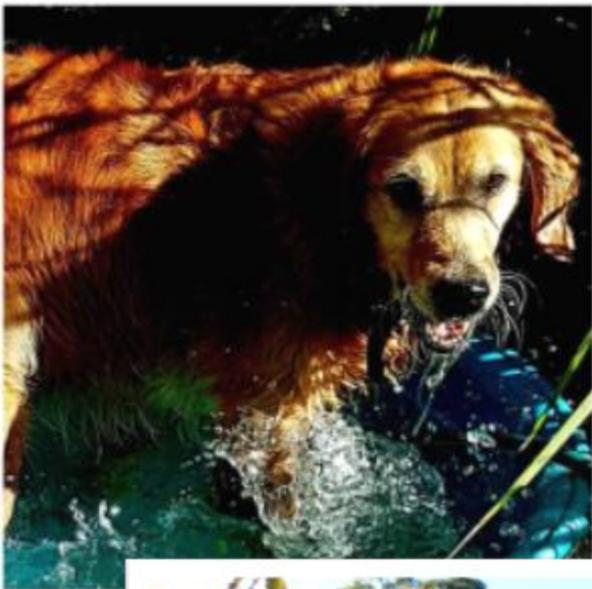
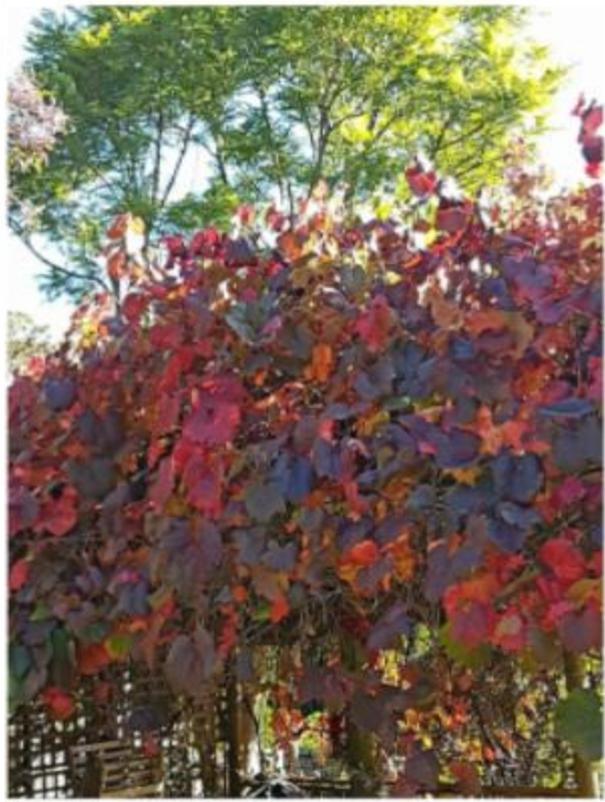
A football injury from week one of Harry's season has meant that any spare time this week was spent seeking treatment at the Physio. He appears to have injured his groin. My suggestion to ice the area was initially met with hostility. He did realise however that he needed to move again so diligently started some rehab.

As a female, it is always a bit of a mystery how blokes manage pain and illness. From witnessing dying carcasses who are couch ridden with the man flu, to the intense profanity from stubbing a toe. Harry assured me that there was no way that I would know or understand how bad this particular pain was. Of course not Harry. There was very little point in detailing the pain from giving birth to a 4.5kg child, having a burst appendix or thrombosed haemorrhoids! Now whilst I realised he was indeed suffering and I applied the appropriate amount of sympathy, it did become apparent that this pain was also somewhat helpful... 'Your turn to wash the dishes Harry,' 'Sorry, too painful.' 'You need to empty the rubbish', 'Sorry, walking is painful....and it is also too painful to think.' Fortunately after a scan cleared him of any damage and the next football match is fast approaching, the pain has dissipated to a dull ache. Welcome back petal.

So we have made it to the Easter break and whilst I still need to do my end of quarter tax, market some passports and write a kids' book on the Great Western Plains, I have put on the pause button to discover the glorious warmth of the sun on my sleepy head. I am sure I have previously mentioned how lucky I am to have such scenic views from our backyard. Surrounded by mountains, scarlet fired autumn leaves and sleeping dogs...Ahh, bliss.

Five minutes later the peace was shattered as Mulligan decided it was too hot for her woolly body so took a quick dip in the doggy pool. I have to say that her pool etiquette is lacking. Her desire to dig and bite at the water creates a cascade of water flowing over the edge. Reaching maximum waterlogged capacity, she bounds joyfully and excitedly as close to my dozing self as possible before shaking her water storage completely over me. Now she is up and about she may as well find a ball and leap her wet, soggy and hefty self on top of me in an attempt to encourage a ball game. Her keenness to play fetch is somewhat compromised by the fact that she refuses to disarm her jaws from the ball. The wrestle to remove the saliva covered tennis ball from her was quickly waning from my point of view. She was still overly keen however, so after she relaxed enough for me to prise it from her, throw it a ridiculously short distance, she looked at me with complete disappointment and then gave up.

We all settled back into a sunning doze...at least I thought we did. Five minutes later the peace was shattered as Mulligan decided it was too hot for her woolly body so took a quick dip in the doggy pool.
Happy Easter all.



Wednesday's with Harry
April 25th 2019

Anzac Day in Australia and New Zealand is by far the most significant day when we pause to remember and honour those who have served. Thankfully we have moved past the times when protests marred the day. There are most likely some who will try to compare its significance to other issues. It doesn't need to be compared.

'ANZAC is not a place or a time – it is a bond of people and a legacy we continue'.

Our first step in preparing for Anzac Day was to cook Anzac biscuits. I say our, but that means me. Harry did accompany me to the supermarket to buy some vital ingredients. I sent him off to find coconut but he returned with Anzac biscuits in a tin. He seemed to be missing the point. He felt that war time biscuits couldn't possibly include coconut and at least the biscuits in the tin would be edible. I do tend to collect the tins so happy to purchase, but I did have an issue with him declaring that they would obviously be better than our home made ones! This of course created the challenge of the Anzac biscuit bake off. I then suggested he forgo the gym to cook them together. There were no words in reply, just a look. You know that look...the one that could be likened to when aliens land. Now I must admit that the first batch were not quite right. I don't tend to follow recipes but can usually wangle out something worth eating. On this occasion, I blamed the gluten free flour. Conceding that taste was more important than gut health, and with plenty of Mylanta standing by, I began again. There you go. A perfectly fine batch of biscuits. Harry couldn't bring himself to declare them the victors, but the pile did seem to diminish quite considerably.

Anzac Eve footy match at the MCG is an amazing spectacle. 80,000 Melbourne and Richmond supporters holding their iphone torches high as the Light Horsemen introduce us to the ceremony commemorating the Anzacs. It is indeed the place to be and we find ourselves a little jealous that Carlton isn't playing. In lieu of actually being there, we munched on biscuits and took photos of the telly!

The alarm was set for 4:30am. Dragging Harry out of bed before daybreak to once again attend the dawn service at the Shrine, indeed tested his value of such an occasion. Sleep versus partaking in life's events is always a question that often sees sleep the winner. Fortunately for Harry however, he has a mum who nags, pokes, prods, persists and insists that he rises from his slumber and attend such a ceremony. We managed to overcome early morning challenges such as inserting contact lenses and finding matching socks and gradually gained some perspective on the significance of such a day. Thousands of people came from all directions, walking solemnly but somewhat proudly, magnetically drawn towards the beacon on the hill - The Shrine. There is a feeling of solidarity in the dark, the acceptance of bonding is evident with strangers silently acknowledging the reason we congregate on this day, at this hour. We learnt from last year and found a more prime position. Then the waiting begins. Quiet reflection is periodically broken by photos being snapped and cramp in the toes. When the ceremony comes to life we hear about individuals and groups that have experienced what no man should. Some making it home to tell the stories and others giving the ultimate sacrifice.

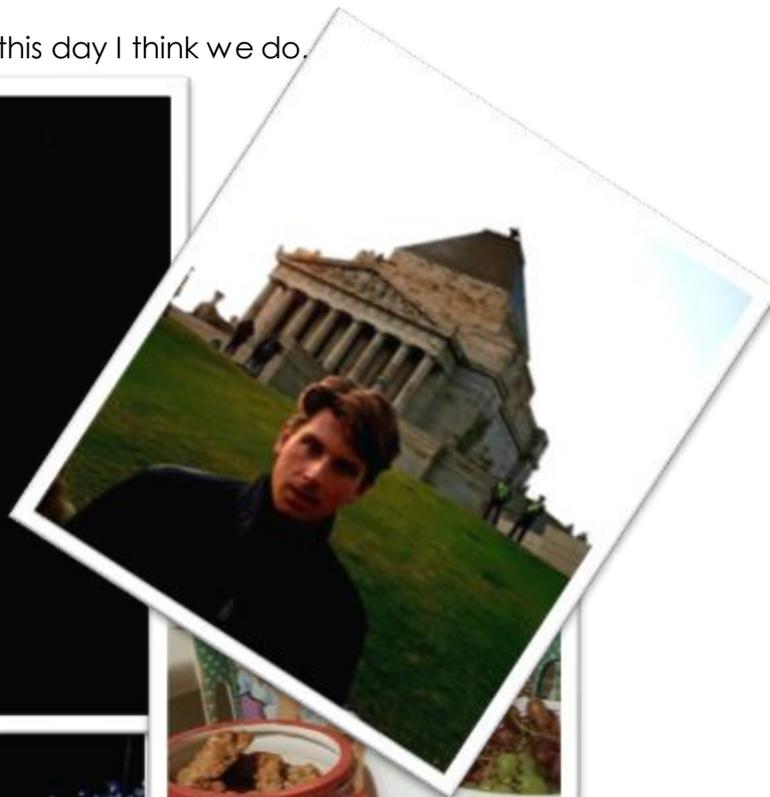
We listen to In Flanders Fields and try to gain an insight.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place: and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.
Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.



The Last Post is always a teary, significant and final moment. Played by a lone bugler seems somewhat appropriate. After the service we were invited to partake in the Gunfire breakfast at the Victorian Barracks however as Harry had to head off to footy training at 9am, sausages and baked beans did not seem advisable.

Australia doesn't always get it right – but on this day I think we do.



Wednesday's with Harry
May 2nd 2019

Sorrow...isn't a word that I frequently use, however it is one that feels appropriate this week and particularly today. There is little comfort I can offer to those who are feeling the deep and penetrating loss of family, but know that as we go about our day, you are held tight in our hearts and our thoughts. Sending love and strength to Darwin. ♡



Wednesday's with Harry,
May 29th 2019

Lego Masters...a new TV show that tested amateur Lego enthusiasts to build and create Lego into imaginative and technically challenging constructions. There wasn't the 23 instruction booklets that usually accompany Lego, in fact the more the teams could use pieces in NPU (Nice Part Use – an unexpected use of Lego) the better. How have I gone past 50 years of earthly existence and not realise the Lego world existed with its own language...AFOL (Adult Fan of Lego) or alternatively AHOL (Adult Hobbyists of Lego), MOC (My Own Creation) MOC Fodder (Pieces that are purchased that are not in a set design), SNOT (Studs Not On Top). So now one can say that my SNOT was MOC because I am an AHOL. Brilliant!

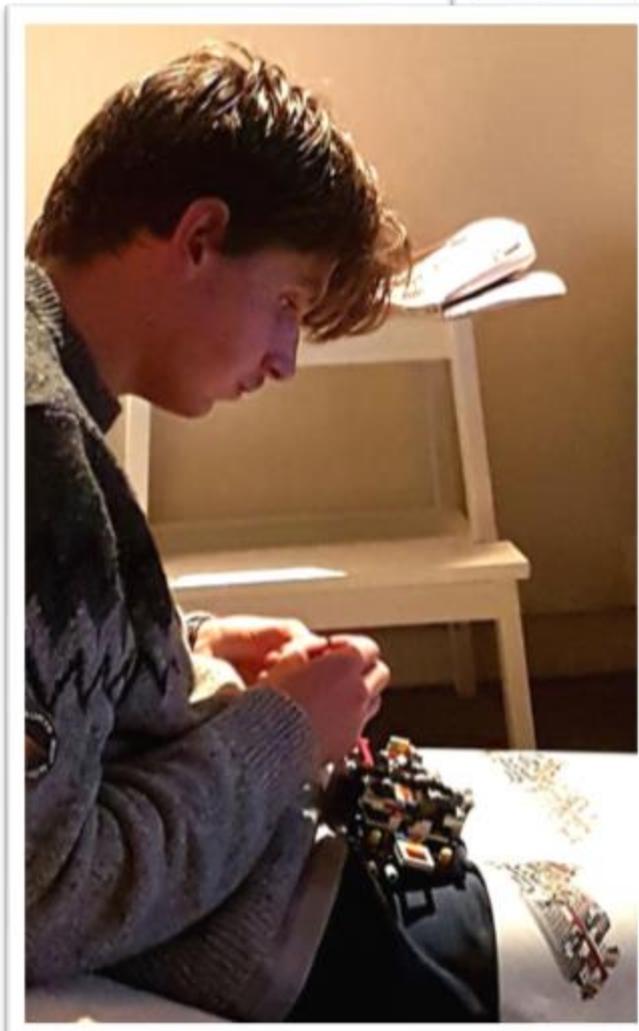
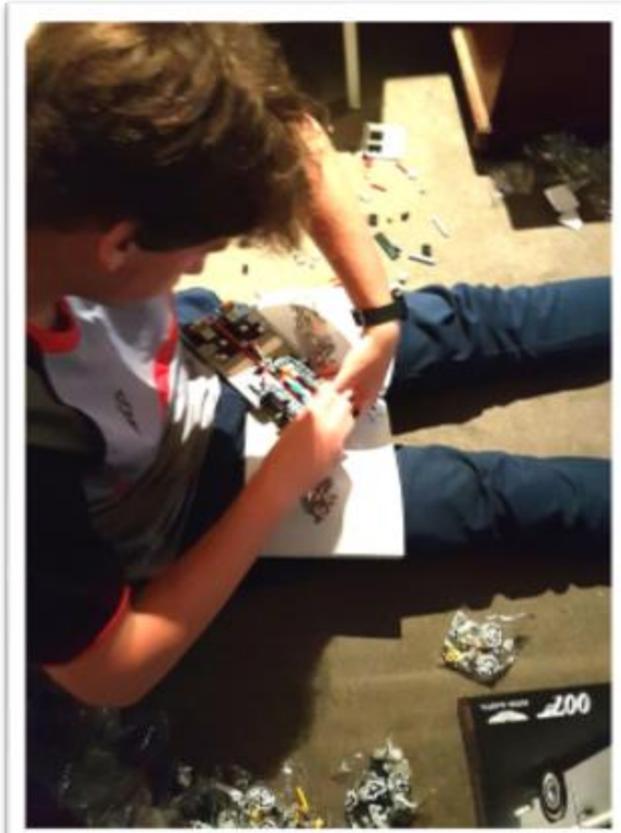
My own experience with building Lego was in the days when instruction manuals were not included. You had lots of bricks, a few wheels and 2 windows and then you just made stuff. Whole villages appeared and sure the people, trees, cars and buildings were all very square, but that was okay. Now the intricacy of the designs means that if you mislay the tiny piece on page 64 that is allocated as the headlight, then you have forked out \$350 for an incomplete creation. Invariably that small elusive piece will most likely be hiding in the plastic bag that has been thrown out in the rush to toss the pieces as far and wide as possible. And by the way, that tip is for blokes!

My more recent experience with Lego has been associated with Harry's collection. From the Tower of London to the Kombi Van, the Eiffel Tower to Big Ben and every Christmas advent calendar in-between. My role seems to have been the voice of reason and interpret the instructions when frustration and defeat has set in, to try and limit the spread of pieces to a cordoned off area and yes to locate those missing pieces. Much like Ikea flat-packs, the love/hate relationship with Lego seems directly apportioned to the ability to follow instructions. As Harry has matured, the Lego building has declined somewhat...however with the inspiration of Lego Masters dangling close by, he finally opened his latest...the James Bond 007 Aston Martin.

I have included some photos of the beginnings of what I assume will be something that will resemble the finished product and a vehicle that 007 would be keen to leap into. I would have loved to include pics of it completed, but I fear that may have to wait, quite a while. I have been assured that the finishing of the Lego Masters show does not mean the inspiration has been extinguished. Lego Masters has showed us that you can be creative, use your imagination and gain amazing results however I am not certain that will translate into MOC for Harry.

I wonder if this incentive from TV can be useful for other types of motivation. If Harry watches MasterChef, will that tempt him to cook a meal? Will viewing The Block encourage him to paint the house, or Getaway send him travelling?

If this indeed translates into the robotic mindset then I need him to watch a 'Master Clean your Room and Sleep Less' show!



Wednesday's with Harry,
10th June 2019

Okay, well the Wednesday theme seems to have gone completely out the window...I do believe Harry was diligently cramming his brain with 'human structure' information for an exam last Wednesday and that my friends is really not too fascinating to post about.

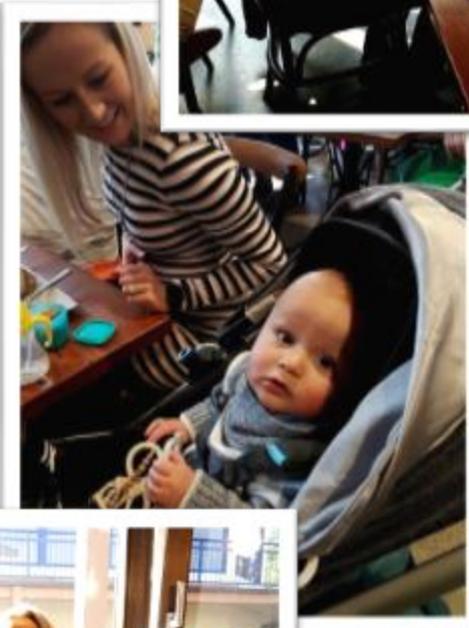
Today in Australia we celebrate the Queen's Birthday by nominating ourselves a holiday...that is most states, WA and QLD seem to have their own agenda. A perfectly wonderful reason for still being part of the Commonwealth. I do believe however that Lizzy's actual birthday is in April. It seems to have been a weekend of celebration. Yesterday my family gathered to salute our parents who on June 13 will have been married for 60 years. Quite the achievement and one that I envisaged us actually being at the venue on time.

Those in the know will recognise that the Rothwell's don't do 'on time'. No matter how much information regarding time we are leaving, dress code and allowing time to fuel the car, is acknowledged, the blokes in this house cannot seem to get it together. I believe they come from some ancient hereditary, 'last minute tribe'. Members of such tribe are recognised by their last minute actions and total ignorance on the time tasks take. I then feel the need to speak up and point out the obvious... 'You are not going out to lunch looking like that!' 'That shirt is dirty and that one needs an iron.' 'There isn't time to watch the footy show and please use some deodorant!' 'We are almost out the door and now you need a crap!' I vent my disappointment and Harry will invariably declare, 'Stop stressing about something you cannot change.' Using my own philosophy against me. Argh! Anyway, a very enjoyable day was spent catching up with family. We organised a picture of our family tree and it was fascinating looking back into history and checking out our ancestors. 'Who Do You Think You Are' show features well known people discovering their backgrounds of royals or rebels, convicts or crusaders, dentists or divas...all amazing history and something I would love to take a deeper search into our own.

Harry is now asking if the home made sausage rolls are ready in time for us to tune into the match at the MCG. Yep you would think I could find something else to do than watch another game of footy. Well in fact I am still a little weary after staying up to watch Ash Barty win the French Open and Australia lose to India and so I may just have a little nana nap. I am however very keen to watch the Fight MND (Motor Neurone Disease) group of personalities slide into the ice water. If you are not already informed, Neale Daniher, a champion footballer, now champion MND fighter initiated this fundraiser 5 years ago and has raised awareness and millions of dollars for research. He is a true inspiration. Lately I have been a bit reflective of my own little world of health issues, it was 4 years ago this month that the cancer metastasised and I was told I had up to 4 years to live. It has been on my mind a bit lately, however with people like Neale standing up and fighting so hard for his cause, I cannot help but be humbled. I am doing okay.

'Life's good but...life didn't promise to be fair.' I would urge everyone to take a look at the link attached and truly understand that attitude is a choice and that hope is real. So there you go...

<https://www.facebook.com/thefootyfrank/videos/352168038826236/UzpfSTEwMDAwMTY2Njc4MDEwNDoyMjg0NzI0MzQ0OTI2NDM2/>



Where Espie meets McEwan

60th Anniversary
15th June 1959-2019

Wednesday's with Harry
June 16th 2019

The idea to visit Herring Island was something I have had in mind to do for some time. It has a sculpture walk and is located on a small island in the middle of the Yarra River. I am currently working on a new kid's book. Dubbo council has asked me to do one on the Great Western Plains in NSW. Seeking out prominent places of interest, I discovered in the Pilliga area there is 'Sculptures in the Scrub'. Incorporating local attractions does test my creative skills and for some inspiration I thought a visit to some sculpture type of walks would be appropriate. Harry however did not.

On awakening this morning he discovered that playing a match of footy after many weeks sidelined with an injury meant his body was stiff and sore. He declared that I just wouldn't understand... Oh Harry...I am stiff and sore from just bending to put on my shoes!

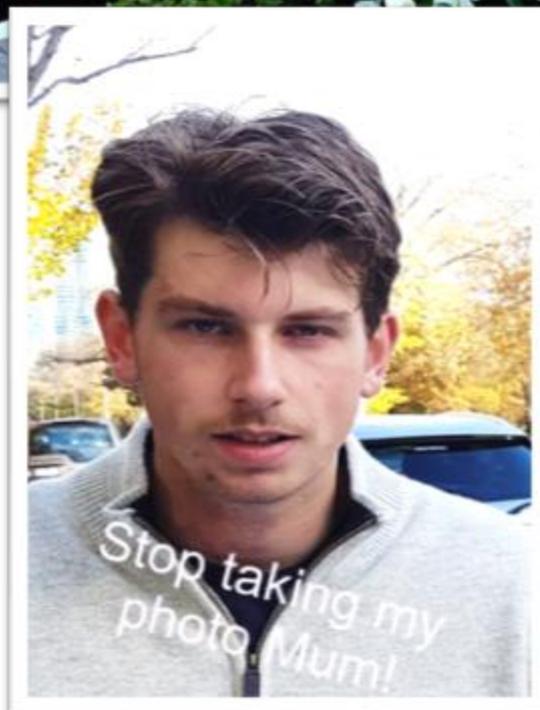
Suggesting that he and his aching muscles experience any form of cultural activity was met with disdain and disgust. 'Art is for old people, you need to be at least 60 and let's face it, what is the point? You stand and stare at some blob and pretend to understand it...seriously mum, it is a waste of my time'. He went on to explain his tiredness was out of control as yesterday was huge. After he played football we then went to watch Carlton lose by 3 points, followed by watching Australia in the cricket world cup until early morn. Loss, loss, win.

Being quite the football fan, I do feel the need to stray off topic for a moment to comment on the ridiculous nuff nuffs ruining the game and their outrageous overreacting and policing of crowd behaviour. We are living in such a nanny state. Perhaps we should be told how to dress, what to eat, when to speak and when to use the loo.

Actually, speaking of the loo, again I digress. As someone who is on the plus side of 50, I, like many other child bearing women have the need to frequent the toilet more times than I wish. Yes quite possibly too much information, however this does mean that public toilets are needed on a regular basis. I can only imagine it is males on local councils that approve and agree to unisex toilets. They need to stop it and if not please provide a Hazchem suit on entry and decontamination spray on exit. There is nothing more terrifying than approaching a unisex public toilet with apprehension of what horror you will discover. Argh, lovely...it is stainless steel set up, no seat and where no amount of toilet paper desperately scrubbing will remove the past...that is of course if you can actually access the toilet paper. It is invariably either completely void of paper or in fact of such a thin ply that it has merged with the rest of the roll. As the urge to go is becoming overwhelmingly, well urgent, your wary, cautious fingers scratch frantically at the holder in search of the end of the roll until you manage to pull away a sliver. Now I do realise that many female toilets can be just as frightening and can leave one completely baffled in what directions and angles of delivery are deemed acceptable. In my experience however, the odds of finding a satisfactory outcome from a unisex toilet are very low indeed. One can only pray to the toilet gods that you have the ability to hold your breath, are in and out in record time and that you remain disease free.

ANYWAY....By this time I had looked up the details to Herring Island and discovered that it was accessible via a punt however only in the summer months. This is something I neglected to tell Harry as I feigned my disappointment about his lack of interest. Perhaps then Harry you could suggest an activity. 'Okay Mum...I need to eat'. Fortunately breakfast is deemed to be all day on many menus and so precisely at 11am we sat down to scrambled eggs at a poshy type of venue in South Yarra. With Maseratis, Jaguars, and Porsches lining the street, of course we fitted right in. I do believe Harry may think that you can become wealthy via osmosis. After a pleasant meal we left in our perfectly suitable Hyundai.

Harry may not realise it yet, however I do believe there are sculptures in a walk in Toolangi that will be essential to visit very soon....so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
25th June 2019

For the past few weeks I have fought hard to save the life of my desktop computer, Lola. She has worked tirelessly over the past 10 years, rarely complaining about the incessant overload of work, the higher than average expectations, the burden of dust in her precious parts and the inexcusable physical and verbal abuse hurled in her direction. Always trying her best to do her utmost. Countless trips to the doctors to inject supplementary RAM, eliminate a virus, or to simply clean and she would always return with an earnest zest to work harder and longer.

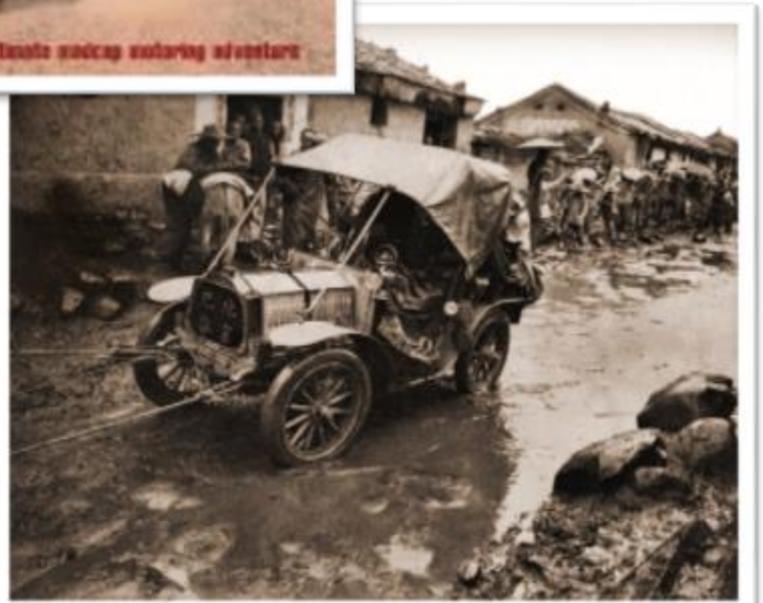
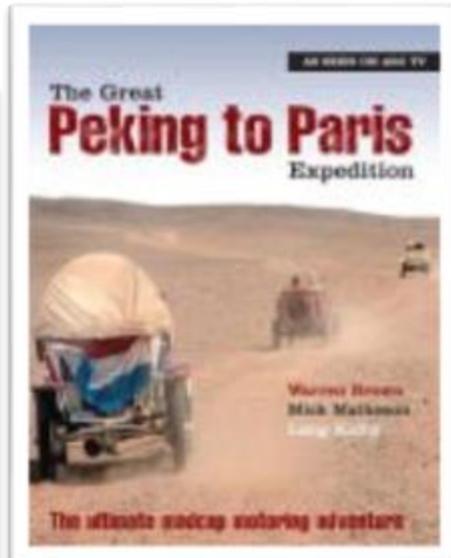
It is quite the odd feeling when you finally make the decision to farewell one innate object for a new shiny one. Whilst quite irrational, there is a slight sense of betrayal... you have entered the world of 'consumerism' and your decision to upgrade needs to be absolutely essential...or is that just me? The karma payoff of course, is the nightmare that is currently consuming my time. Setting up 'Bertha' takes all the patience and stability of a Zen master. Failing to fall into that category ultimately means that I and anyone in the near vicinity is suffering from upgrade remorse. It is truly a test on your resources to survive such a task. The first hurdle is locating the box marked 'computer stuff'. Questioning whether or not such a box even exists is actually the very first issue. Okay – there is a box with various tangled cords, old CD's with no labels, antiquated floppy disks, empty boxes that once housed something important and various manuals including one for Windows 95. Among such treasures I did manage to find copies of programs that may come in handy. So I finally put power into Bertha and voila, she comes to life and starts to speak. I listen intently and go through every possible set up situation. Now it starts getting tricky as she insists on knowing passwords, licence keys and ID codes. It would considerably cut the frustration if Bertha could simply talk to Lola. Finally after many challenging hours however, I can happily declare that the printer now works!

It isn't all bad news for Lola...she hasn't been thrown on the hard waste just yet. The thing is, Lola contains so much vital information that appears to be in a foreign language to Bertha. The copious copies of photos, scans and documents that could be lost forever if she did actually say her final shutdown. So whilst she is very old and slow, her memory is still required to function.

Now it was going through such old files and photos that I came across some wonderful memories of Harry's early years. One of these treasures I found was correspondence to and from Warren Brown. Harry was 7 when Warren Brown, a cartoonists for the Sydney Morning Herald and renowned history buff, released his documentary on the re-enactment of Peking to Paris. 1907 saw the first Peking to Paris car rally covering a distance of some 14,000kms. Crazy conditions challenged them then and in 2005 Warren and 4 other teams tackled the same route in the same vintage cars. For some inexplicable reason Harry took a liking to this documentary and watched it countless times. He drew pictures of the cars which included a 1907 Spyker, 1907 De Dion-Bouton and 1907 Itala. With Harry's permission, I sent them to Warren along with a note explaining a little about Harry's own challenges and how he was clearly somewhat obsessed. Just over a week passed before Harry received the most amazing parcel. Warren wrote back to Harry and included the Peking to Paris book, the antique compass he used and a blue silk scarf. Along the journey when they crossed into Mongolia, they were greeted by

locals who performed a dance. The women had blue silk scarves and gave them to the teams as good luck. Warren gave one of these scarves to Harry. For years Harry used this scarf as his own 'good luck' aid. I was flabbergasted then and re-reading the correspondence now, again am blown away with true admiration for Warren Brown. There are some pretty amazing legends walking among us mere mortals.

So many other items found, from letters to Santa to a drawing of Julie Gillard dressed as a bulldog player, to photos of parties past. Lola has indeed earned her right to sit quietly in the corner and remind me of the past every now and then. So there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
28th June 2019

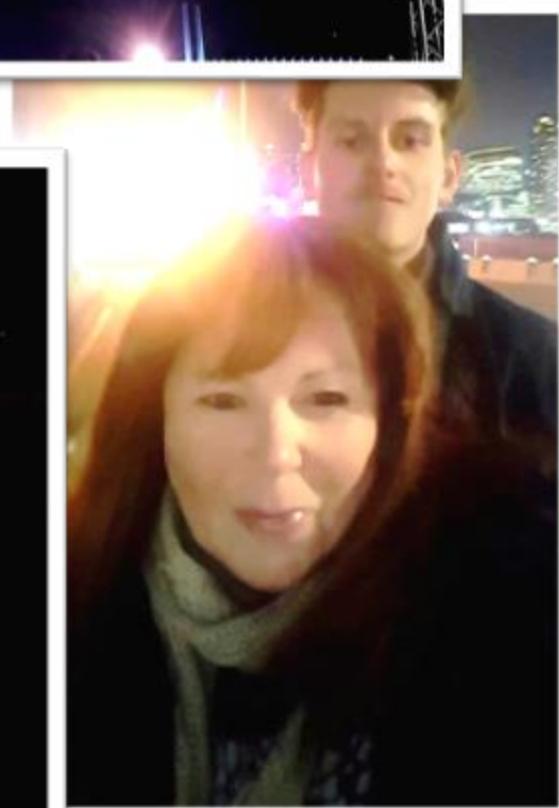
The Firelight Festival, Docklands, Melbourne, 5:30pm Friday evening...a festival to celebrate the winter solstice.

Essentially the festival was a combination of food, music and fire. So let's start with the food. Various cuisine catering for all lined the wharfs. From BBQ's to Limp Briskit, The Soup Factory and Frencheese. Dutch Poffertjes, Indian, Italian, Greek, vegan, non-vegan, gluten free and gluten expensive...and of course many many coffee vans. As it was still quite early evening, Harry declared it impossible to be hungry. Not so for the many fellow festival goers, wholeheartedly consuming mouth-watering gourmet gastronomies. Feeling the strong need to convince Harry that going to a festival didn't just mean to observe, it means to partake...to eat the food, to dance to the music, to drink the mulled wine...not sure my encouraging had any great effect, but he did manage to eat a pretzel!!

Just like the variations of food available, so was the assortment of entertainment on hand. Sprinkled along the walkway at various distances, performers popped up to enlighten, engage and entertain. The size of the gathering crowd hovering around each act seemed to indicate the level of amusement and its ability to hold attention. For example, the fire spurting saxophone player had a larger audience than the elderly trio strumming Waltzing Matilda on their harmonicas, the Jazz quartet attracted sway and movement among many, whereas the bloke wearing the one piece band was less effective. Various walking acts also roved about, including an elephant and multi-coloured polar bear. Now whilst some may have mistaken them for the real thing, I was quickly able to deduce that they were a couple of blokes in a suit. Very effective however and the kids loved them. At one point we were resting and an unassuming chap with a pack of cards was approaching. Harry was horrified that he was the focus and about to escape the encounter when the magician diverted his attention to the group of young ladies seated nearby...of course he did.

And finally the fire. How can we forget the fire burning phoenix...besides the 2 installations however there was fire shooting skyward at various unadvertised intervals, ensuring the unsuspected leapt back in surprise, and yes that included me. There was the impression of fire over the water with light shows and whilst we didn't stay long enough to see, there was the promise of fireworks to end the night. Much of the entertainment was fire savvy including various forms of fire eaters, and finally there were 4 gallon drums lining the streets oozing fire from their butane fuel supply, waiting for you to warm your hands, cook your 'Smores', melt your coat or singe your eyebrows.

Looking across to the Bolte Bridge created quite the scene and all in all worth the visit...Harry was suitably impressed but probably more so with the fact that I managed to capture a photo of his runners that light up in the dark!...so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
6th July 2019

My passport initiative began some months ago now and so far have over 400 destinations around Australia armed with a stamp to take an inky aim at your tourist passport. Not to mix business with pleasure, however today was just that. This very simple idea came from the time Harry and I ventured to New Zealand. I had been showing Harry my 3 previous passports and started reminiscing about such travels...oh look, there is one from Hell – Gods Expedition and another from Checkpoint Charlie...yes, before the wall came a tumblin' down. Perhaps showing my age, but indeed all still vaguely legible in faded blue and black ink. My memory drive is put into action and I search the corners of my brain to work out where I was and what I was doing. Looks like Sheerness and Dover were frequented often. I have no idea why I have a stamp from Brogeda, or in fact where that is. Fortunately Google is on hand to remind me I had crossed the border to Switzerland to have afternoon tea on a day off from when I was a nanny in the little Italian village of Casorate Sempione and I do believe chocolate fondue was involved. Of course this prompts me to wonder about the 6 year old boy, Roberto Cristofolletti who was in my care. As I recall, quite a strong minded young soul who constantly wanted to play hide and seek and who desperately required some boundaries! Now I will admit that I sometimes let him hide a little too long before the seeking began, but resilience is such a worthy trait. Again technology helps me out and I am able to search the net and stalk on Facebook to discover he is now quite the famous show jumper who competes for Italy. Makes sense as his parents were horse trainers working with top Italian show jumping riders. Wow...of course he looks a little older, but I can instantly recognise him. My time with him was somewhat brief, but perhaps he will appreciate that it was me who taught him to tie his shoelaces!

Well isn't this a fun game...now to work out where Vaalimaa, Çiğli Havaliman and countless others are. The latter appears to be a military air base in Turkey...nup, not ringing a bell. I did venture to Turkey and had a brilliant time backpacking about, albeit with constant worry and concern from friends and family who had watched the film Midnight Express. I did experience an overzealous taxi driver, an ardent shoe shiner, a persistent carpet salesman all expressing their fascination for redheads, however definitely not at midnight, so all good. By now I was totally caught up in reminiscing and recalling a much braver, more adventurous person who had many stamps to prove it.

Now back to our trip to New Zealand...Harry was excited to receive his first passport and with such item in hand we strode into customs ready for our passports to be christened, to begin their long and inky journey. Alas, this is not to be. Technology has played its role and the digital stamp is now in place. Bum and bugger. Not to be beaten by the digital world, I came up with the idea to create a tourist passport that can be used throughout Australia...and hopefully one day New Zealand. It simply means that you can fill it with stamps and create your own souvenir and memories. So today I summoned the help of Harry and Lil and off we popped to sell the idea to destinations in the Dandenong Ranges. Beautiful day for a drive and with any luck some additional places to stamp. I didn't think I had to state the obvious that it is indeed a tourist passport – not official...the Fremantle Gaol let me know that some chap recently used their stamp on his real passport, much to the amusement of staff and the horror of his wife. So there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry,
July 10th 2019

Triple Antarctic Blast – headlined the news this morning. Possibly doesn't take much imagination to conjure up how that would affect one's clothing choice for the day. Now whilst this information was acknowledged by Harry, he summed it up, scoffed and declared that as the sun was out, it was tee shirt weather. As we left, I once again suggested that Harry take a jumper... 'there's a coat in the car, I'll be right' ...back to that later.

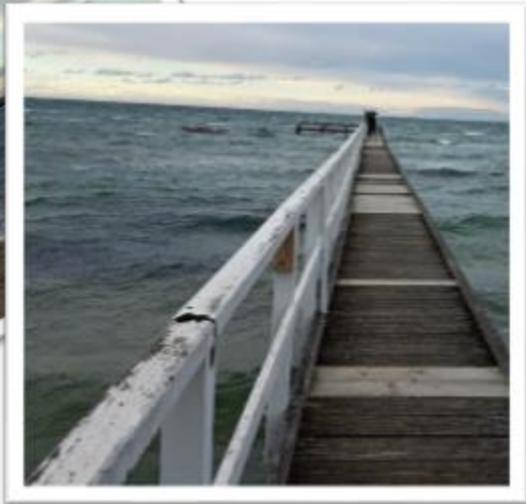
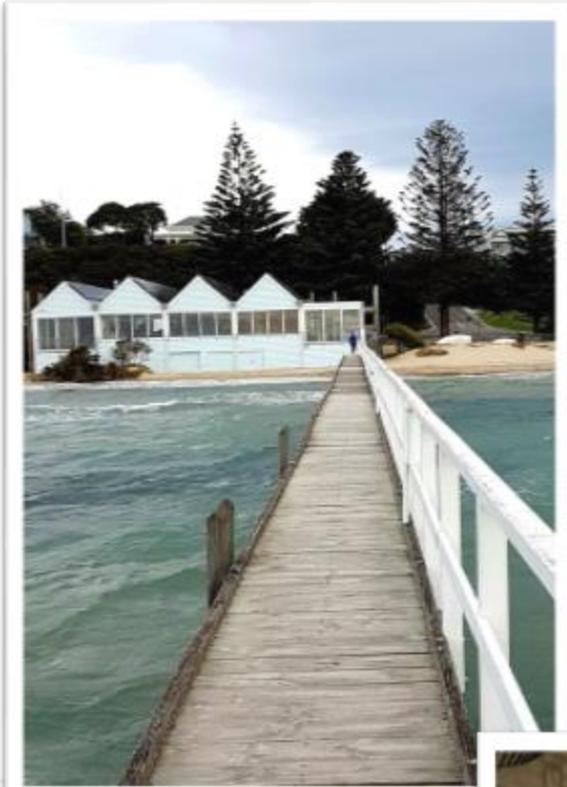
Did I mention that we were going to the seaside? Not quite sure why I just used the term seaside? Suddenly Enid Blyton comes to mind and I imagine us having lashings of ginger beer and egg sandwiches on a picnic with Dick and George whilst Timmy the dog barks gleefully at the gulls. Perhaps I was channelling the 'Englishness' of the very good friend that we were going to visit? Who knows where my mind travels to these days...it has its own ticket to whimsical worlds and I just try and keep up.

The Mornington Peninsula is quite the familiar destination and to make the most of the journey, we also popped in to drop off some passports to unsuspecting outlets. Quite the simple task as I had packages of information ready and merely needed to be dropped off. This job I allocated to Harry. Harry has indicated that he should be CEO of the business and as such, in his mind, the role would require high pay and little work. My attempt to shatter his illusions that indeed he needed to do more than nothing was met with stubbornness and a solid point of difference. That difference was the fact that he actually was not being paid. After much negotiation and given the fact that he was extremely cold, even with his coat, I agreed to buy him a jumper if he delivered some passports. Not quite sure who won with this deal. With contract in hand, off he popped into visitor information centres etc., armed with information. Okay, well there were a few questions that he had to deal with and it seemed that he managed to cope...that was until he came across Charlie from Charlie's Auto Museum. Apparently Charlie just didn't get it. Harry's attempt to explain to the elderly man was met by confusion and muddled explanations about personal issues and to talk to his bookkeeper that came on a Friday...or was that Monday? Harry retreated to the safety of the car and firmly declared that he quit. Suddenly we seemed to be in a Dr Seuss story... 'I do not like to sell these books, I do not like those puzzled looks, I do not wish to feel annoyed, by Charlie who is paranoid. I do not like this job at all, now take me to a shopping mall. I need my jumper and some food, to regain strength and fortitude!'

So with that we drove to Sorrento to find something warm for Harry's torso and tum. Now Sorrento is definitely not the place to find the most cost-effective piece of clothing, however after attending 2 university lectures on the subject of Economics, Harry was keen to explain to me that by purchasing a Rip Curl jumper on sale from \$135 to \$65 was indeed economically great value. I pointed out that had he worn a jumper from home, I would have benefited from an even greater economic value!

Met friends and sheltered from the gale force conditions before putting that regained fortitude to the test with a quick walk on the beach. Seagulls and pelicans hovered against the battering wind with brave determination. Whilst our resolve was strong, we were no match for the Triple Antarctic Blast. Deciding that sand and sea

whipping our legs and scratching our eyes was not at all pleasant, we swiftly escaped to the sanctuary of the car and drove home...so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry,
July 24th, 2019

Let's Roam – a fantastic Christmas gift voucher from my sister was finally cashed in and put to use today. One of us was very excited, the other, not so much.

After some technical difficulties... that is my bungling brain and its complete lack of 'app' intelligence, I managed to download then upload and then unload. The idea of the activity is to select your city of choice, take yourselves to the starting point and then follow the questions and challenges throughout the city. Of course in our case it was Melbourne. Connecting to a GPS meant Let's Roam had the next 2 hours of our entire journey mapped out and knew if we deviated from the course. This we found out when Harry suddenly decided a quick trip into Nike for a pair of tracky daks was desperately required. Let's Roam didn't agree and nor did I.

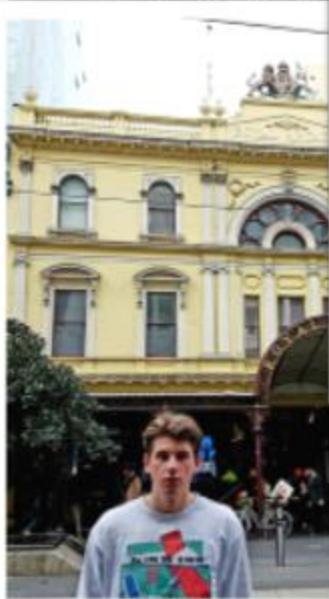
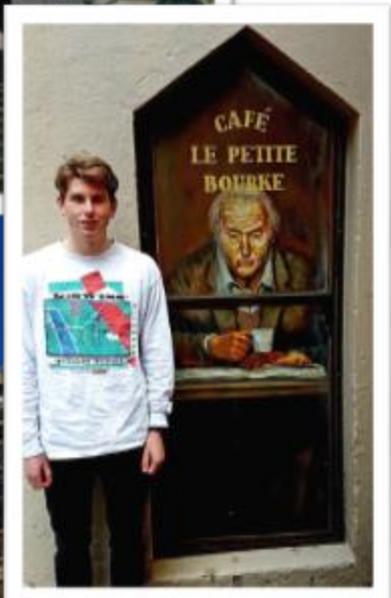
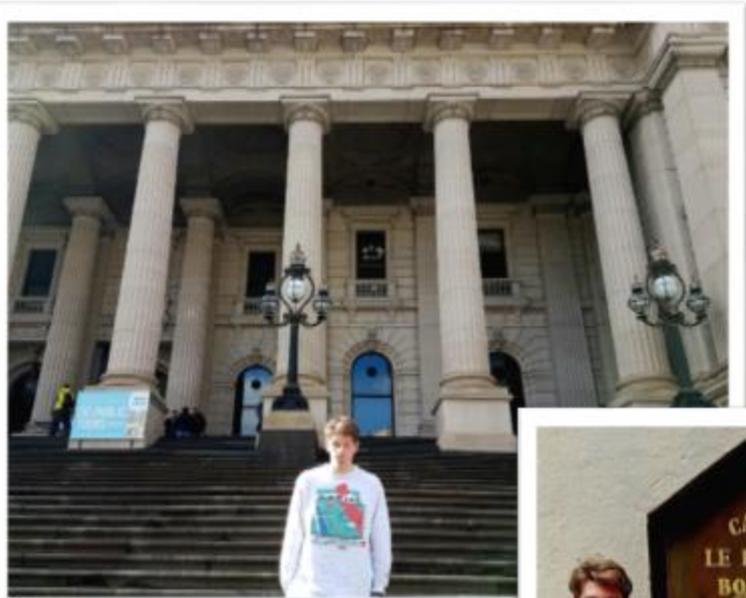
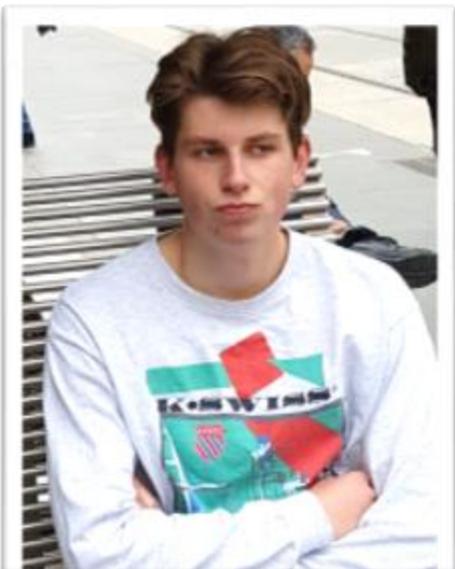
I guess you could call it a scavenger hunt, although it was more about finding/observing information at various stops. It did ask us to contribute to a few extra challenges, such as find something with 3 legs, a lucky number 7, something you can slip or slide on and find a sign with no edges...??? Sorry to say that besides finding a 7, the other challenges are still to be completed. I was prepared to slide a drink down whilst sitting on a 3 legged bar stool, and as for a sign without edges...well the fact that I am sitting here writing this with an aching hip and stiff joints is indeed a sign that I am in need of that drink.

So we began at Parliament House and the first challenge was to count the steps. Harry did debate if the sliver of a step in-between courses was in fact an actual step, and whilst we did have a slight variation in the final number, Let's Roam seem to account for such deviations by giving multiple choice within a range. Harry's idea of multiple choice, having recently completed his exams, was if in doubt go for C. I think he may need to rethink this theory on all counts...by the way, the answer was B. The journey continued, with Let's Roam excitedly adding up challenge points we gained and encouraged us with flashing stars to keep up the great work.

I discovered that there are lions on the Princess Theatre, more lions at Chinatown gateway, a unicorn and another lion at the Royal Arcade, the name of the shot tower in Centrepont and that there is a statue of Joan of Arc at the State Library. Harry discovered that we walked 8467 steps, was colder than he thought it should be, that the Nike shop in Centrepont had more choices than the shop in the Emporium, that he needed to eat soon or he would die, that there are too many people walking in Melbourne, that the seats in Bourke Street Mall are extremely hazardous, that he didn't actually care about the history of the Princess Theatre, Parliament House or the Royal Arcade and who the heck was Joan of Arc!

After 2 hours of Let's Roam, and only 65% completed, we jointly decided to press the pause button and finish next week. Crawling back home we passed a sign (with edges) advertising the latest exhibition at the NGV of Terracotta Warriors & Cai Guo-Qiang. Harry emphatically declared that he would love to have a gander at that. My head almost spun completely off with the double take. He recalled the time we visited a similar exhibition at the museum many years ago when he was in his Asian artefact obsessive period.

Righto – very excited about that and will plan a visit very soon...so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
July 31st 2019

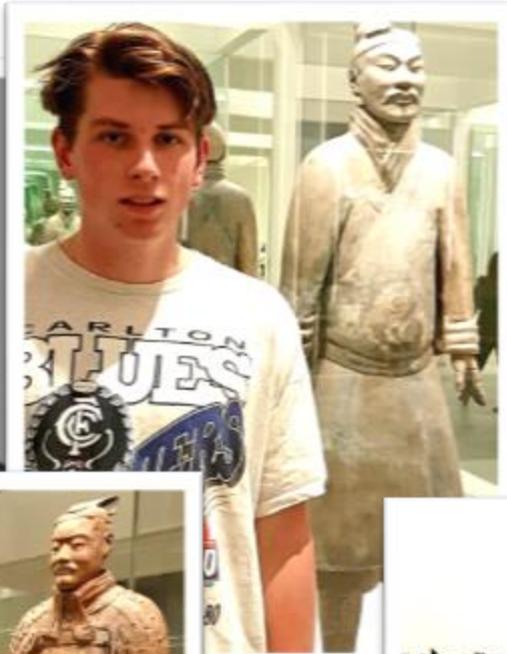
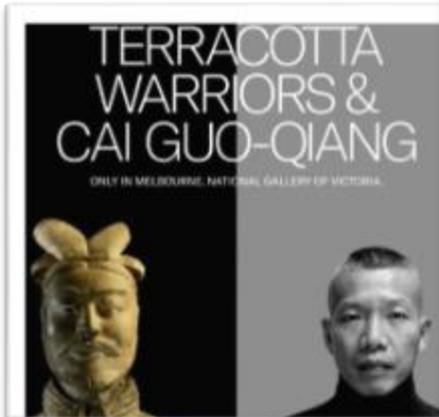
If you had read last week's post, you would have learnt that Harry was quite interested...enthusiastic even, in taking a look at the Terracotta Warriors at the NGV. So in order to keep up that momentum, off we popped today to have a gander. Now Harry and I have ventured to the National Gallery of Victoria on quite a few occasions and it has come to my attention that no matter what the exhibition is, we apparently seem to be the quickest to venture through. I explained to Harry that we needed to take our time and absorb the whole narrative of the exhibit. Harry scoffed at that thought and declared that if it involved reading, well that was not in the deal. I did suggest that perhaps we should take up the audio tour option, and thus relieving any eye sight/brain pain from actually reading the information. This was quickly rejected as he recalled the time we did just that at the sports museum and the length of time it took to complete left him slowly dying inside!

So we made our way through the exhibit and whereas other patrons seemed to slowly and thoughtfully take in the displays, and even sit and ponder on occasion, Harry and I successfully completed the race in 34 minutes. Harry believed that the people who sat and stared at the fake birds hanging on fishing line, were just trying to string out their time in order to get their money's worth. Anyway...regardless of the little time it took, it was worth taking a look. The Transient Landscape was quite special. It was fascinating seeing the process that Cai Guo-Qiang used to create his art. A video showed him using massive canvasses, applying the appropriate splodges of paint and then gunpowder to blow it up. The results were incredible. The Peonies that encircled one display room was amazing...perfectly depicting the flower with the addition of a texture that I gather was from the explosion. In our haste, I did manage to read the guff on this and Cai Guo-Qiang states "I've used gunpowder in my art for the last thirty years. What I like most about it is its spontaneity and unpredictability. Every situation is different. There's a sense of destiny. What will happen when you ignite it? It is an unknown which you will accomplish with the help of an invisible force. I'd often say a silent prayer. That's what draws me to gunpowder." Not sure if he was praying for great artwork, or that he didn't lose a limb, but either way something seemed to work.

Harry, of course was not here to look at art or display cabinets housing pottery bowls and jade necklaces...he was here for the big guns...the warriors and fortunately they were quite impressive. The discovery of these terracotta warriors was actually made by chance in 1974. A farmer was digging for water and unearthed fragments of the terracotta army. This was close to the enormous tomb of China's first emperor, Qin Shihuang. 2000 of the estimated 8000 warriors have been excavated. Now this information had Harry questioning if all this was just made up as it was labelled as dates such as 210 BCE. By the way...apparently due to political religious correctness, BCE means Before Common or Current Era, which is the same as BC or Before Christ. OMG! It did occur to Harry that as it was such a long time ago, they wouldn't have kept records and could have just made it all up. Harry – look around – these ARE the records! The warriors were individually displayed in glass cabinets with mirrors either side creating an even more impressive presence. Some of us became a little confused as to the infinite number of images and where they stood in the middle of it all.

So we appreciated Qiang's artwork, admired the terracotta warriors, glanced at the tomb items for the 'after life', snubbed the pots and bowls, ignored the question whether dragons were real, skipped our way under the swarm of swallows, avoided the look of 'my that was quick' from the gallery attendant guarding the doorway and then made our way to the exit.

Worth a visit...and yes Harry's tee shirt would be by now considered somewhat retro...so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry,
August 14th 2019

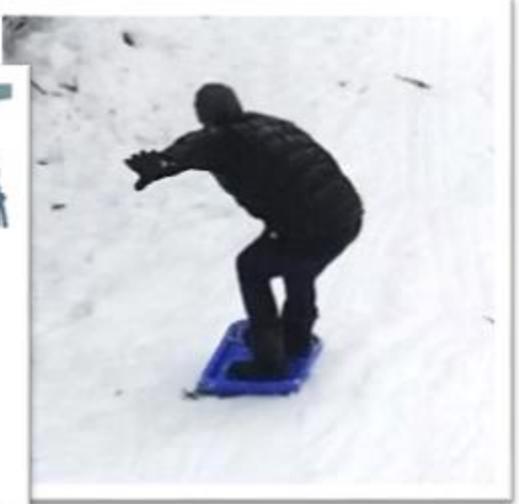
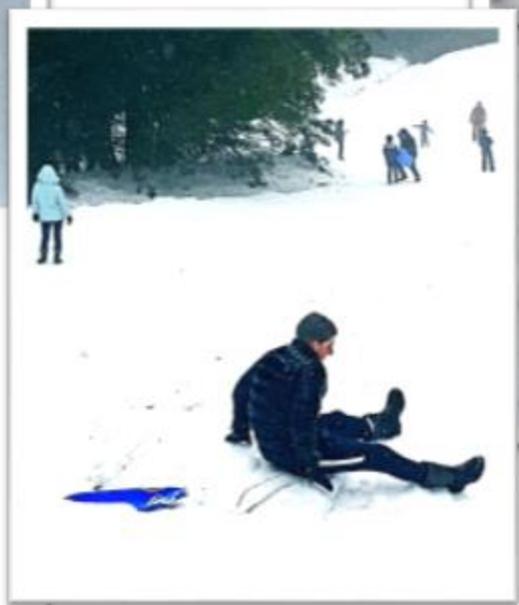
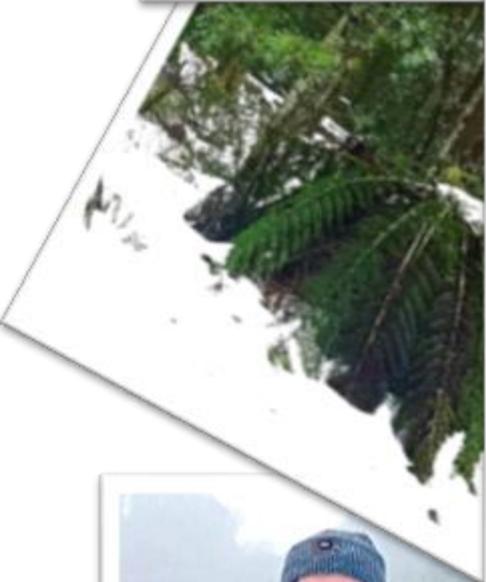
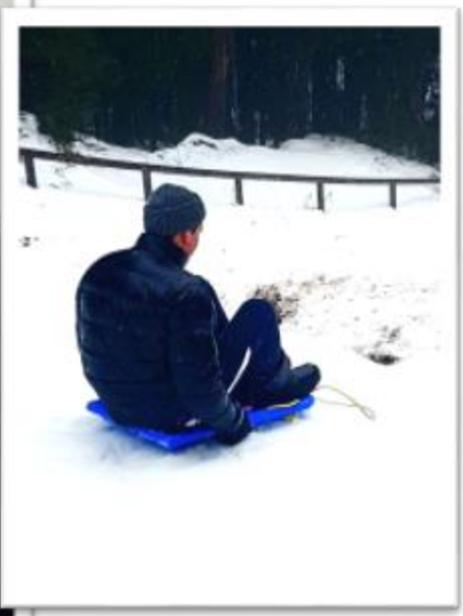
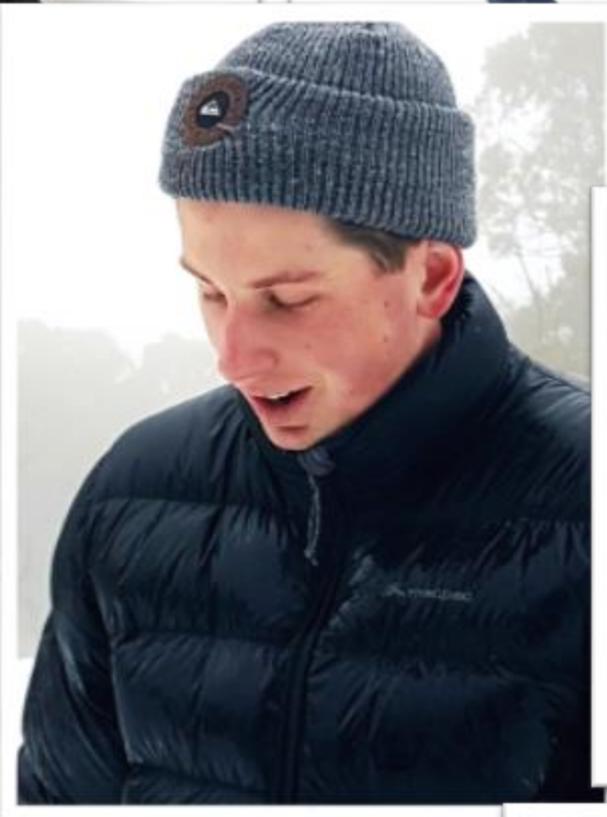
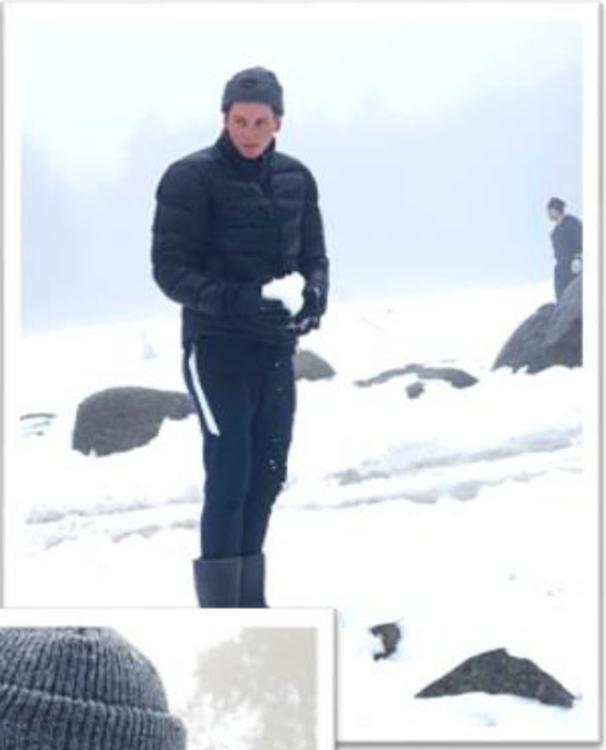
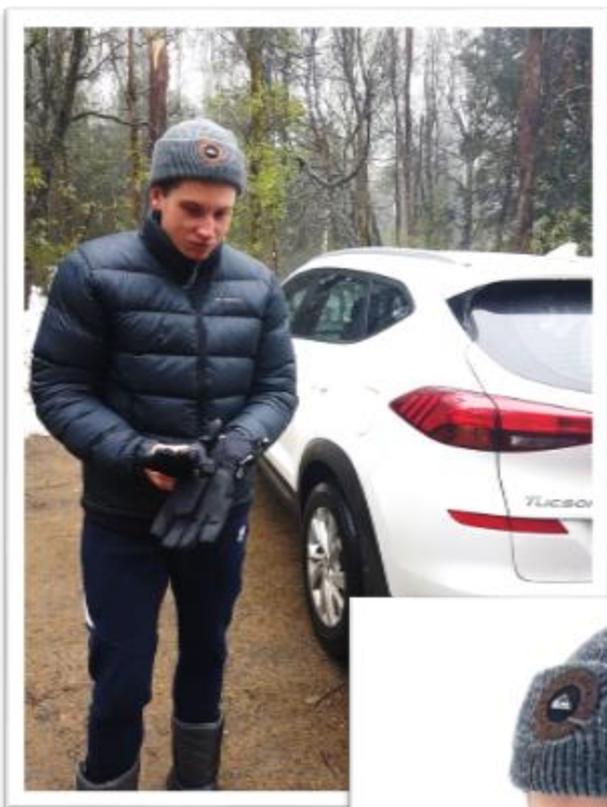
For whatever reason, Harry has a week off Uni...I imagine the purpose for such a break would perhaps have been explained, however it is unlikely that information will cross my path. The emphasis to complete assignments, essays, quizzes and any other educational related obligations was moderately noted, however these commitments are mixed with the need to complete gym workouts, 20km runs, watching The Office reruns and securing a front row seat to watch the 2nd Ashes test which begins tonight. In the midst of such activity, I suggested to Harry that he should indeed be able to find the time to do something together today. The expectation for him to declare that it was not at all possible was quickly quashed as he enthusiastically suggested that we should journey up the hill to play in the snow. He may possibly have noticed that my keenness did not come close to matching his and this I might add cemented his determination for such an outing. ...'Mum this is payback for all the museums and galleries I have suffered in for you!' I had little choice but to go along with the plan and gear up for the snow.

Living in Warburton means that we are at the base of Mount Donna Buang and so a 15 minute drive can see us up the top and instantly be frolicking in snow. Well yes, that sounds like fun and attracts many locals and tourists to also frolic. So you may be wondering why I seem hesitant...well firstly it is cold, secondly I don't have a warm waterproof coat, thirdly it is cold, fourthly it is raining and did I mention that it is cold? I did however recall that we own ski gloves, snow boots and a toboggan. So with a less woosy attitude and faith that at least my hands and feet would be catered for, off we popped.

You may remember a couple of weeks ago the issue of Harry's understanding on appropriate clothes to wear for warmth arose. It ended in him acquiring a new jumper. This morning the conversation went like this. 'Great chance to wear your snow boots, gloves and ski pants and jacket Harry'...'No need Mum, it isn't that cold and I have a coat in the car!'..., 'that jacket didn't help a couple of weeks ago'....'it will be fine Mum'. Well it wasn't fine. On exiting the car near the peak of the mountain, Harry was a little apprehensive that his Nike runners and puffy jacket may not be up for the task. Fortunately Harry's mum had the foresight to throw in his boots and gloves. It is of course then the question if he is more annoyed that the weather was not how he expected, or the undeniable irritation that his mother was right. I suspect a little of both.

Quickly throwing clothing issues aside, we strode to the top...me with the idea to create a snowman, Harry with the plan to destroy. The remains of several unsuspecting snowmen plus a random tourist's picnic hamper were the subject of violent abuse as snow balls were hurled in their direction. Fortunately reprieve came as the toboggan run beckoned. The 'every man for himself rule' was possibly a little too maverick for this particular day however, as the run appeared littered with pre-schoolers and toddlers. This resulted in a somewhat tame and less precarious approach.

So with the rain now constant and my not so trusty Carlton coat soaked through, we retreated back to the car, a little wet and cold...but there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry,
August 24th 2019

Going to watch Carlton play football is not a usual Wednesday's post as it is an outing that we share on a regular basis. On Saturday however saw us venture to Geelong for the last match of the season. For anyone supporting the eight teams remaining in the finals...best of luck. Well that actually is not quite sincere for Geelong, Richmond, Collingwood and Essendon. It is a compulsory contractual clause for Carlton supporters not to encourage any more success for these teams. Firstly as we could be overtaken with premierships wins and secondly we are intense rivals and cannot feel anything but derision and contempt.

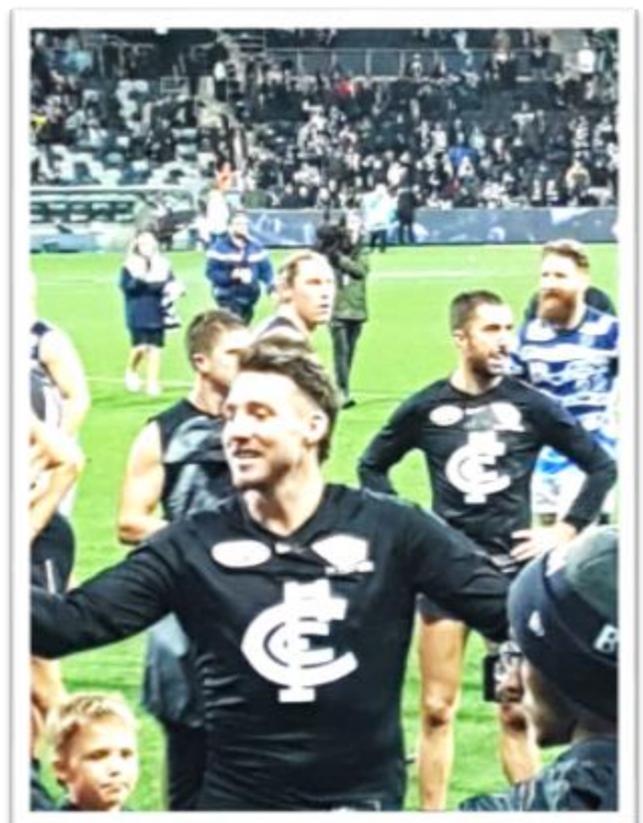
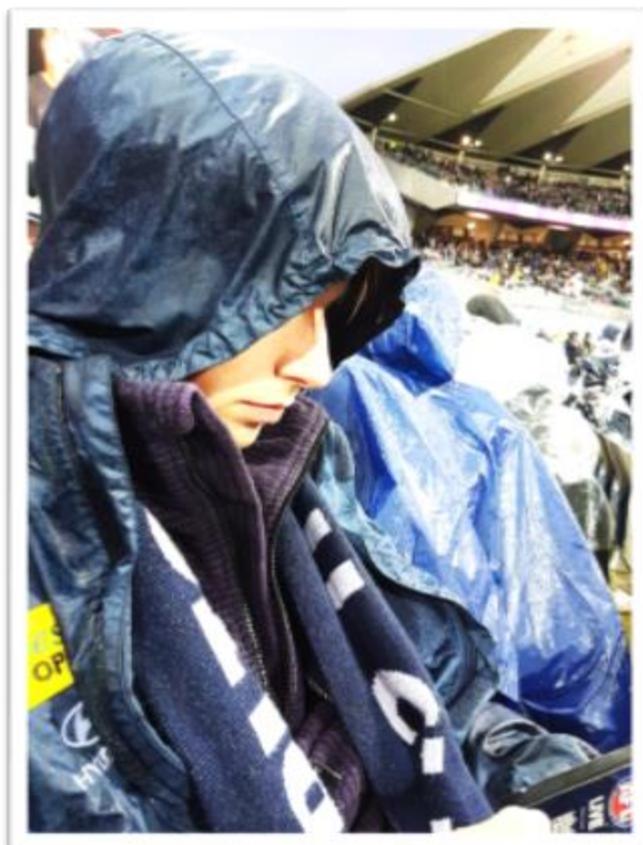
Geelong – the second largest Victorian city and 74 kms from Melbourne. Its football team seem to think this distance is insurmountable to play where everyone else does and so has developed their own football sanctuary where only Geelong players and supporters are allowed to penetrate. They recently developed their ground, updated grandstands but seemed to overlook the benefits of car parking and shelter.

The day began with Harry playing his own last match for the season and unfortunately no matter how much a win was hoped for, it didn't happen. The time between the end of his match and the start of Carlton playing Geelong was limited, so it was a rapid change in the car, a necessary spray of Lynx deodorant and a quick sprint down the M1. It was always going to be a challenge to find a car park. Along with hundreds of other hopeful car parkers, we unsuccessfully cruised the backstreets, me cursing at the overwhelming build-up of traffic, and Harry cursing at everyone living in Geelong. The stress was rising as game time was fast approaching. Thankfully I managed to turn a corner and the boy scouts were offering a park in exchange for \$10. Bargain! So we bolted from the car had the presence of mind to grab a couple of raincoats and joined the myriad of Geelong supporters in a queue to enter their stadium.

It is quite the experience watching football at Geelong. The hordes of supporters are of course predominately Geelong followers. They only seem to allow a token couple of hundred opposition supporters in the ground and at this point I was yet to determine if we were privileged or not to be two of them....This question was quickly answered as we saw the small enclosure out in the open that was Carlton's allotment and totally understood where we ranked. So we made our way to the second front row at seat 1 and 2 that nudged up against the players race...we were right among the action and soon discovered we were right among the most annoying array of football supporters. I swear if I had a film crew, we could have made a fascinating documentary on the human condition. Seated in the front row was a collection of 8 somewhat elderly women who in my opinion were too old to be groupies, but indeed that is what they were. Prior to the match, they congregated as close as possible to the player race in an attempt to attract the attention of players and any official looking personal. They proceeded to utter their guidance and counsel with the real understanding that their advice would actually be taken on board. Then when finally seated seemed to believe their constant banshee like screaming was required or necessary for the game to continue. In addition was the three, out of control 7-10 year olds seated behind us. Their high pitched, non-stop yelling, combined with constant kicking of our seats and hitting

the metal sign reverberating beside them was a nightmare. The final straw was when they leapt up and managed to distribute barbecue shapes in my hair. Their father appeared oblivious to the glares and comments...good on you bloke! Have a clue. There was the older 'wiser' supporters who added to the noise by complaining about every umpire decision and finally we have the angry vocal 20 year olds who uniformly synchronised the word 'deliberate' every 5 minutes. So when the rain came pelting down, I was hopeful that all who surrounded us would run for cover. Silly me for thinking these diehard supporters would leave. All that eventuated was that we entered a new level of nightmare...sitting in a puddle, rain soaking through rain gear and surrounded by saturated noisy nuff nuffs. Add to this the fact that Carlton was getting thrashed, I felt quite justified in suggesting we leave early. Harry would have none of it as it was Daisy Thomas' last match and we were in prime position to see him be chaired off at the end. Yay. Well eventually the match ended, we paid our respects to Daisy, dripped our way back to the car and spent the next hour stuck in traffic surrounding the ground.

Do we wish to go back to Geelong? Not so much...so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
September 11, 2019

It has been quite an emotional week...perhaps because we are overtired from watching the Ashes all night, but mostly for the passing of Danny Frawley. For many not connected in the football world, his passing may not have triggered such a response, and whilst we didn't know him at all personally, the tragedy of his death has left a very hollow, shocked and empty feeling. For Harry, Danny Frawley has been significant in his world for many years. He would always scramble to listen to Triple M's Saturday Rub and in more recent times would never miss an episode of The Bounce. Of course it wasn't only Danny's involvement that enticed such an audience, it was the combination of banter among personalities bonded over the sport of football. There is no denying that Danny's contribution to these groups had a huge impact, especially his contagious laugh and sense of humour.

The impact of his death has shattered the football community. Whilst we are a football loving family, many perhaps don't agree, understand or care about the sport. It is indeed just a game where players run about kicking an odd shaped ball between 2 posts. You may dislike the game, have an aversion to its aggressive overtones, are indifferent to the excessive fervour that afflicts its supporters, and be completely bored that it is a topic of conversation that dominates workplaces and public spaces. You may easily conclude that there is more to life than this sport and be totally bamboozled by those who have been taken under its spell. I have no need or desire to change minds on any of that, nor apologise for my love of the game, but I would like to attempt to explain why football is important to us and why the passing of Danny Frawley holds such emotion. Growing up in a football household meant Saturdays were spent fervently following the team Dad coached... riding the highs and lows and knowing that his contribution positively affected so many... and then in later years standing in the outer screaming for Carlton to win...again experiencing the highs and lows. For me, the positives far outweigh the negatives and Danny Frawley was the epitome of everything great about the game. Giving young people and in particular young males a purpose to be fit, healthy and a sense of community is such an important factor. The importance of the football community using its popularity to educate on subjects such as racial and gender acceptance and mental health issues, has been invaluable. With Harry in particular it has given him a healthy fit lifestyle, taught him resilience and a social acceptance that has been vital in his development. I know from my father's involvement, it has given him the most amazing set of friends and bonds that have lasted a life time. It is indeed a family. Danny Frawley's passion for football and his forceful sense of humour attracted so many fans. He reinforced the spirit and promotion of the game in such a likeable fashion. The shock of Danny Frawley passing, has left us questioning how such a vibrant, passionate and humorous personality could come to the conclusion that he needed to leave this world. It highlights the true ramifications of mental health issues and depression and how even those surrounded by close mates and who appear able to fight through the fog, are left vulnerable to depression's dark spaces. Perhaps his legacy will be this very realisation. I have had discussions with Harry about how he feels. He is still shocked that this man he revered on many levels is no longer here, but it has opened up dialog regarding mental health issues among his peers and I can only hope open discussions and awareness will help and that he never feels so desperately lost and alone.

In my world, the longevity of my own life is challenged, but I am grateful that I have a very strong determination that I will do anything to prolong it. The thought that others choose to leave this world, in my mind simply cements the understanding that I am the lucky one. RIP Danny Frawley

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings - Maya Angelou

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.



Wednesday's with Harry October 2nd 2019

Upcoming Uni exams have become priority and Wednesday's with Harry have taken a backseat. The word study is an interesting one. It implies that one is being studious, scholarly and I can only assume that Seinfeld and The Office offer some erudite qualities that fit that definition. Perhaps Kramer is a unique example of Human Anatomy and Ricky Gervais shares some helpful Sports Management theories?

Enjoyed a wonderful 21st party celebration on the weekend where a collection of photos of the boys growing up was screening. Brilliant memories which triggered thoughts of days gone by. Whilst I don't often take the time to recall Harry's youth, when prompted however, am magically transported to the days when life seemed less serious and stress was deciding which steam train to ride! Harry will be 21 next year and between now and then I have no doubt I will be reflecting more frequently and will delve into the archives to add to the celebration. Embarrassing moments may just find themselves to be included. If you visit, The Better Guide to Parenthood, you will find that awkward memories disclosed at 21st celebrations are absolutely encouraged. This mandatory training for resilience and acquiring a sense of humour is rated very high as positive and necessary characteristics. I will do my best to ensure that Harry scores excellent marks in these qualities.

Anyway...plans are afoot for us to complete many more Wednesday's once Uni demands are overcome...that is of course if the poor petal can recover...till then.



Wednesday's with Harry
October 8th 2019

So the first day of exams was a hoot...actually let's go back 12 hours to 11pm the night before. 'Mum, can't find my student card!' I of course am not in panic mode just yet as this could just be the typical 'boy look' that defies logic and prevents males from finding what is under their nose. If he didn't find his card however it could mean he couldn't sit his exam that began at 8.30am. So for the next hour I join in the search, scavenging through drawers, pockets and copious sports bags, and whilst I did manage to locate a missing mouthguard, various Lego pieces, an array of half eaten muesli bars and a petrified apple...no luck on the student card. Harry declared that it must be in the city flat. Oh yay! By now it was 12.15am. I had no choice but make the call to go into the city as time would be limited the next morning. Leaving our ramshackled Warburton home, off we popped. Stress levels were rising in Harry as he contemplated his fate would be determined after an hour driving. At precisely 1.30am we arrived and the moment of truth awaited as he checked his desk. Not there. Oh...crappity crap crap crap! The next 35 minutes were spent repeating the search format as previously mentioned and still no card. The reality was sinking in that a full trimester of economic study could be determined by Harry's ability to convince the exam dudes. 2.10am sleep, only to wake by 6 to get to the Uni asap to try and solve this issue.

As I write this, Harry is half way through his exam. He managed to gain a temporary card. On a completely different matter, I have just finished grocery shopping and managed to dislodge a punnet of blueberries at the top of the escalator. They leapt joyously from the trolley as they bounced and then sadly squashed into the metal bars for fellow shoppers to appreciate for days to come. Bugger. On a more normal day, I believe I would try to chase, collect or gather them in an attempt to clean up the rogue berries. Sorry to say, on this occasion, I simply left them to bobbing up and down.



Wednesday's with Harry
October 29th 2019

Well exams are over and survived...not sure yet if thrived however what will be will be. Regular discussions have occurred around the idea of Harry gaining employment for the summer. Now when I say 'discussions' that actually equates to me rabbiting on and Harry vaguely acknowledging he is listening. He does work one day a week at a tennis club, which is fabulous, but that leaves 6 days left in the week to account for until Uni starts again.

Perhaps it is the influence of watching The Block, or the fact that Dulux was offering a can of jelly beans, but Harry's counter to this employment suggestion was offering to paint the house. Yes it is sadly overdue and the colours selected 10 years ago are perhaps a little tired and so I agreed. Now let's face it, nobody enjoys painting...well certainly not me, even though it appears contrary to that fact as it is I who has had the task in the past to cover every wall, ceiling, floor, window frame, chair and cupboard. There was no escape. I had mastered the brush and roller, succumbed to the latest trends, created suede effect feature walls, conquered the art of cutting in, designed painted patterns on the floor and impulsively updated and altered colours as my mood dictated. Well that was a decade ago. Lymphedema in my right arm and neuropathy in hands and feet has left me somewhat incapacitated to wield a brush without considerable consequences. So the house and I have taken a very long breath and learnt to relax and accept the colours that be. Any spontaneously urges to alter the tints, hues and affects have been quashed and the rollers have retired to a dark corner of the shed and sadly surrendered to crustiness and rust.

So Harry's suggestion to paint the house was readily accepted but did come with the warning that my contribution would be minimal. Yes of course!

Day 1 of painting in tradies terms would quite likely mean prising open the lid of the sparkling new paint tin early morning. I was up, dressed in appropriate paint coaching attire and sat with anticipation beside paint, new rollers and brushes as I waited for my 'tradie' to arise from his slumber and join the party. Eventually he surfaced and explained that he still needed to go for a run, shower, eat breakfast and read the paper before work could possibly begin. I explained to Harry that is not how tradies work...he explained to me that is exactly why he is going to Uni and chose not to be one! So at precisely 1pm, Harry attempted to release the lid on the paint...with a stick. This task appeared to be the first stumbling block and at that point I realised I needed to locate old paint worthy clothes, put aside thoughts of inflammation and help get some paint on the walls.

I would like to say that we worked well together, however that would be quite an exaggeration. The issue seemed to be that I believed I had some experience and knowledge and began to advise Harry on how to hold a brush, how much paint to put on the roller, how to cut in, which ladder to use, why he needed to lay a drop sheet, why he shouldn't stand on the couch with paint on his feet, how long to leave the paint tape in place, and why he should clean up paint that had dripped on the floor due to misplaced drop sheet as soon as possible...and Harry seemed to believe that none of this information was necessary. The differences of opinion continued until I found myself shuffling along on my rear end, painting architraves and

discovered that I couldn't seem to get off the floor. With cramp in one leg and spasms in my side, I suggested that I may need some help arising. Finally Harry agreed. Fortunately we also agreed on the type of music that Spotify provided. Music is quite often the answer.

So we have now managed to spread paint in the general vicinity of the walls in a few rooms and hallway...almost half way, and then there is the outside. Yay! Not sure my aching bod will cope with much more, but if a job is worth doing...you know the rest. As for Harry's input...very proud of his efforts and for persisting to do a good job, He hasn't managed to start before midday yet, but there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
November 20th 2019

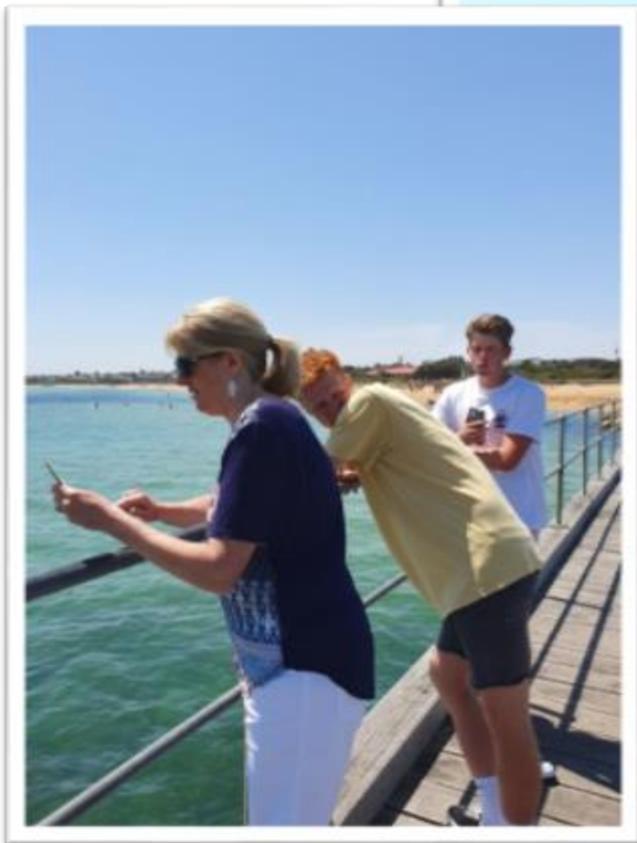
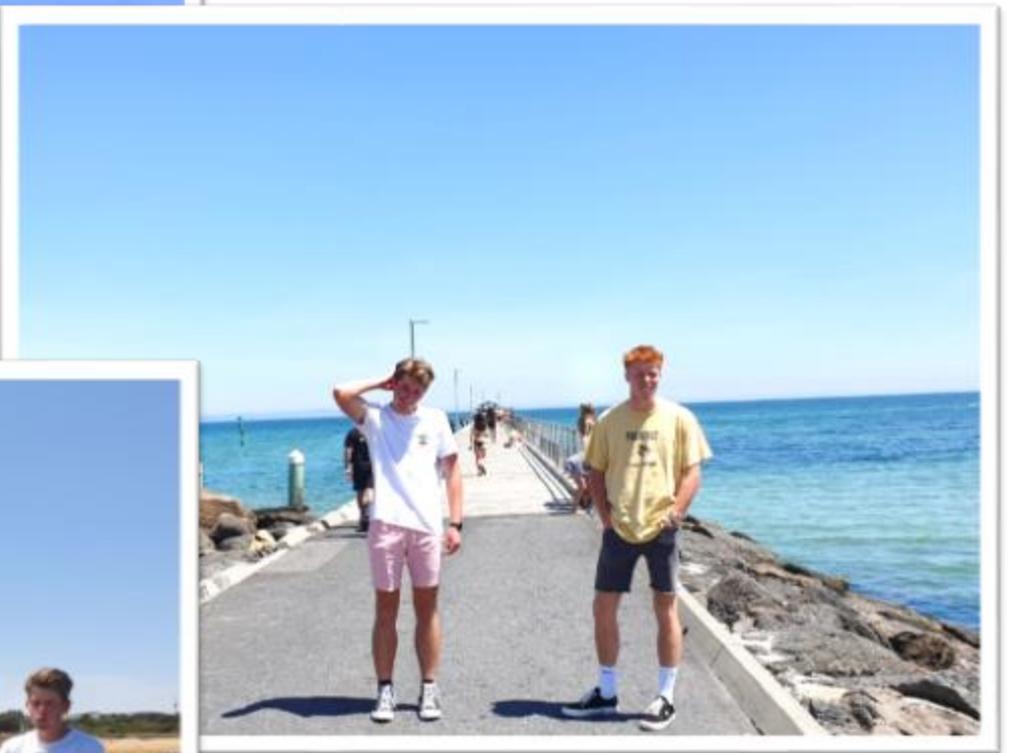
To understand the reason for Wednesday's with Harry may not always be apparent to many and certainly to Harry himself it is often questioned. We often seem to be swept up in the generally speaking life 'housekeeping' moments that may not always allow us to stop and take the time. This week, perhaps more than ever, the reasons to me are very clear. Life doesn't always go to plan and I have had to learn to accept that I cannot always control the outcome.

Today is my birthday and the signs of aging are becoming more and more obvious. Whilst I would love to turn back the clock to when my body wasn't showing such wear and tear, I do understand and appreciate that in my case, reaching another birthday is significant. It also meant that today being a Wednesday, Harry had little choice but to appease me. His gift to me was to take me out to lunch. Very good friends Leanne and son Jacob were on hand to help celebrate and so met at a restaurant in Mordialloc.

Over the years, it does seem to be our MO that we are late for any such outing. I honestly have a clear conscience when I believe that it is rarely my doing. We had arranged to meet at 12:15 and Harry was under instructions to limit his gym workout so we could leave in plenty of time. Harry's estimation of traveling time however was sadly lacking and along with frustrating traffic, we managed to be half an hour late. Most who know us will expect to receive a phone call apologising for our tardiness with hope that we will soon be there. Harry isn't stressed and insists that there is no point in getting up tight about something you cannot change. Yes, however it does seem to be that this theory only applies to situations that don't affect him. I point out that if it was him late for a footy game, it would be a different story. 'Nah...chillax Mum'. Chillax indeed! I also began to explain about the need to keep up some sort of behaviour that resembled social etiquette, however the look on his face clearly indicated that listening to a lecture would have absolutely no effect. I turned up the music and hummed along to the Cranberries...in my heeeead, in my heeeead. Sitting out on the deck, overlooking the water on a beautifully sunny day was bliss. Catching up with Leanne and Jacob was a bonus and we chatted away oblivious that food was needed until the waitress suggested we order. A generous serve of calamari was sitting in front of me and I would have hoed into it immediately if it wasn't for the fact that I dropped my fork and with amazing accuracy it managed to fall directly through the small gap in the decking and landed well out of reach in the undergrowth below. I did briefly wonder if other pieces of cutlery also met their demise in this fashion and if some poor wait staff had the weekly task of crawling under the deck to retrieve them. I then figured that perhaps not everyone was as fumbly as me and it was more likely that my fork would be the one lost and lonely utensil. Fortunately the restaurant found a replacement so I could in fact eat my lunch.

A walk on the pier followed and the time of year was clearly evident as young school leavers were the predominant sun seekers.

All in all a lovely way to spend the day and appreciate time spent with friends. Thanks for all the birthday wishes...not particularly entertaining reading, but there you go...

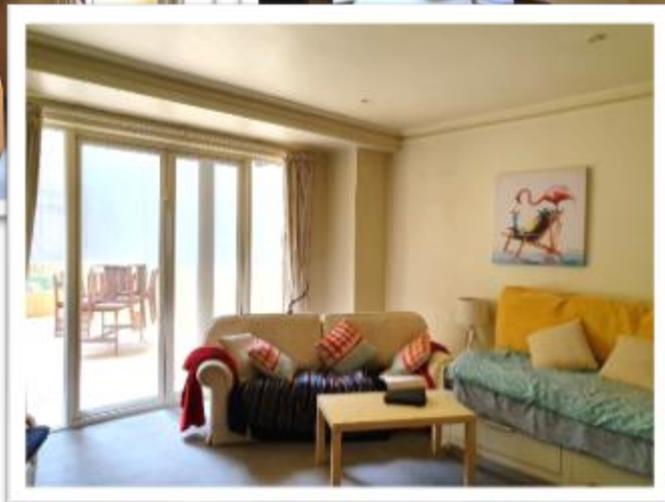


Wednesday's with Harry
December 11th 2019

Due to the wonderful generosity of family, and some scrimping on our bank account, for the past 4 years we have rented a flat in the city of Melbourne. Whilst I love living at Warburton, having the city flat meant that Harry was able to attend the school most suited. It also provided opportunities that have been invaluable in him gaining independence and confidence. With shifting priorities however I made the decision to vacate the flat and return full time to Warburton. This Wednesday was the day to move. If I say that really quickly, it doesn't sound too stressful at all...that is until you actually have to organise the move. Anyone who has moved house will understand the impact of packing and unpacking and no matter how many boxes you have organised, there is still more stuff! Now keep in mind that we were renting a second living space, so indeed it should have been a relatively mild inconvenience to vacate. I can only assume that the accumulation and multiplying of clutter was entirely justified. The impact on yesterday's nightmare has left us grumpy and tired and whilst the major move has happened, we still need to return for the last load and joy oh joy, clean everything!!

Moving out of a property is one thing, but unpacking at the other end is another. I have spent today creatively juggling furniture into nooks and crannies and our little house in Warburton is bulging at the seams. Harry was a great help loading and unloading the truck, however today let me know that it was definitely beyond his expertise to decide what to do with a second toaster, kettle, saucepans, copious amounts of linen and doonas, extra TV, tallboys, beds and couches. You can also assume correctly that his offer to help sort pantry items was not exactly forthcoming. Also the golf and cricket were being televised and he explained that his attention and energy would be focused elsewhere. Excellent.

Unfortunately for Harry, among the accumulated pantry items is a bountiful supply of canned tuna. Due to a stubborn childhood tuna incident, Harry has quite the dislike for my tuna mornay. I, on the other hand happen to love it and if I can work out if canned tuna actually has a use by date, will be hoeing into a tuna casserole very soon. Farewell to the Botanica, you have served us well and have thoroughly enjoyed your shelter...so there you go.



Wednesday's with Harry
18th December, 2019

One week until the jolly one comes to visit and I am sure, like many others, I find myself immersed in Christmas preparations. It is indeed fortunate that I love this time of year and all the magic it can bring.

These days of course there are various judgements and opinions on the reason and need for Christmas. Some of these appear to include topics such as irrational overspending, overeating, questioning the religious meaning, and an overzealous compulsion to be PC and call it Happy Holiday. I have total respect for any one person's individual acceptance or rejection of Christmas and truly understand it can be a tough time for many. I however chose to embrace all the chaos and traditions and appreciate every Christmas that I have left.

So with tree in place, decorations located and dusted off, lights tediously untangled and tinsel sprinkled strategically around the house, it was time to put on carols and make pressies with my grand nephews. Brilliant day spent earlier this week with Parker and Chandler as they leap into the awe and excitement of Christmas. Life can be so simple if we look through the eyes of a child.

It seems to have become the tradition over the years for Harry and I to take on the festive streets of Melbourne and soak up the Christmas spirit. The Block Arcade is always a favourite destination and whilst we didn't have the stamina to join the queue to fossick for chocolates at Haighs, I did manage to encourage Harry to open his wallet and guide him in the direction of a favourite perfume of mine. Magic indeed! The Myer Windows showcasing the animated version of Snugglypot and Cuddlepie was of course a major attraction and fortunately we were both tall enough to see over the majority of the crowd. Whilst we most likely missed a few details, we were able to get the idea. Harry's list of gifts were sought and bought under his instruction and I thank David Jones for supplying a seat for those of us weary ones who struggle with indecisive shoppers. One tradition I have each year is to buy Harry a snow globe. A couple have broken over the years and Harry is no longer fascinated by them...I however will continue to add to his collection and so the search was on.

So the Christmas spirit is in full swing and whilst I expect a few lulls in the coming week, I will endeavour to keep up the momentum... through glazing the ham and watching carols, through layering the trifle and leaving out milk and bickies. Thanks to all who have come along on Wednesdays this year and I wish you all a wonderful, safe and healthy festive season. Ho ho ho! 🎄🍪❤️



