

Merry Christmas 2003 and Happy 2004 New Year

Seasonal Greetings. Again, 2003 has rushed by and we are only a few days away from Christmas and New Years. It seems that our Christmas/New Year newsie-letter will continue to be created this late in the year, as Doug is still so busy outside everyday and I still have to walk-away from UNE-work before I can put my mind to this sharing task. We do wish you a pleasant, peaceful and safe holiday time. We have our fourth living Christmas tree set-up in our big room and in early January it will be planted down the driveway at Christmas Tree Corner with the others for marking our years at Walden Woods. Below is our usual overview of the last-12months of life in Armidale.

At home and farm work. It has been another busy year at **Walden Woods Farm**. Yes, that is our new official name registered with the NSW Fair Trade Dept for 'doing business.' Doug and Mister completed several fencing jobs this year (some short with top wires and some tall with electric tape on top): around the orchard of 40-plus fruit trees and some berries to keep the kangaroos, rabbits and hares out as well as foxes when we have chickens (quail & Guinea fowl later); around the House Vineyard - adding electric tape to help protect the 'Indies' (two white Indian Runner ducks that we acquired in April from friends Max and Margaret as they went off to England for 4 months study leave); around Millie's Vineyard, this is a temporary fence for now; and, posts and stays are in for straining the dividing fence between the vegetable/flower garden and the orchard as soon as the chook palace is completed on this boundary. Yes, the chook palace is nearly completed ([see](#)



[photo](#)), with a glasshouse lean-to on the North side for winter warmth for the chooks and for starting early spring plantings indoors.

Vines and wines. In early February, we hand-picked our first carefully size-controlled grape crop [we had picked off about 5000 small bunches early in the season!] and then we foot-crushed, hand-pressed and later bottled our first wine! From these initial 24 bottles, we are guestimating the current crop could reach about a tonne by March 2004 and that would mean wine to sell\$\$\$\$!! ***Question:** how many bottles does a tonne of grapes make? As spring began, the House Vineyard *Pinot grigio* were randomly hit at our-eye-level with a black frost; this happened after a few unusually warm days of rapid growth. Then some were frosted again two or three times. But now, most of the 500 vines are lush and green, very tall indeed ([see photo](#)), and loaded with bunches of grapes the size of baby green peas. Because of last year's drought and the non-delivery of ordered vines, Millie's Vineyard was only partly planted in September/October. There is one row of Merlot for our 'a red a day keeps the doctor away' health and all the others will be a continuation of our planting of up to 3000 *Pinot grigio* in the next year or two. Millie's Vineyard will encompass about 700 vines by spring next year. We are still unsure of the site for a third big planting; however, we have walked around the property checking for sites and dug a few test holes to check soils. This will be a very big project of deep digging rows, cutting posts and stays and erecting all of them, mulching and finally planting cuttings. In July/August next year we will have to create lots of cuttings as we prune so that new vines can be started.



Slow foods and family/friends. During the year we continued our **Donald Road Slowfood Informal Society Luncheons**; some were inside with white tablecloth and Nadine's grandmother's silver but others were outside and rustic at the stone woodfired oven and BBQ area. The BBQ area has 10 large rustic tree posts in place ([see photo below](#)) but the rafters and beams are still to be done before the skilion tin roof goes on. All these half-day meals included friends, great foods with multiple courses, new wines to taste and compare; they were slow eating and sharing times to cherish and remember. For example, in January we had a 6-Chardonnay tasting with

nine courses of luscious foods, in March we had an Italian white (5 wines) tasting with eleven courses including



Chardonnay sorbet, and in June we had our first wood-fired pizza lunch extravaganza in more than six months because of the drought. Nadine's mother, sister and niece were visiting at the time of this Pizza lunch; and, the highlight was a pizza of thick double cream spread over the thin dough topped with paper-thin, transparent prociutto ham slices - fresh bits of raw wild rocket were scattered on top after cooking. Our pizzas cook in two minutes or less. Such luncheon events have been our social focus, as during 2003 we have stayed very close to Armidale and the New England Tablelands. We did day trips when Nadine's family visited in June; participated in the first to be annual Merilba Estate Jazz in the Vineyard event at Kingstown about an hour away; and, drove to Brisbane in September

for Rhonda's EdD graduation (Nadine's colleague and doctoral student) and to visit Lovey (our old neighbour from our years in Brisbane).

Nadine and UNE. Nadine has completed another year of rewarding and some challenging experiences at the University of New England (Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies; School of Professional Development & Leadership). In July along with the Associate Deans (Teaching & Learning) from the other three faculties, I began working on a UNE Vice Chancellor's Teaching Development Grant research project about 'Understanding Attrition' of beginning students. I am the team leader and day-to-day supervisor of our Project Manager/Researcher, with this project running until November 2004. Secondly as AD(T&L), I planned, organised and chaired the Faculty's first 1 ½ day 'Honouring our Teaching' symposium (with \$15,000 provided by the Dean) where lecturers shared the best examples of aspects of their tertiary teaching at UNE. And, in April I helped the Dean read out the names at our Faculty graduation on the lawns in front of history Boolaminbah, a former grand home where senior administration and eating spots are now located. About mid-year I began contemplating resigning early from the half-time and three year appointment as Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) for the whole Faculty; and, I did step-down on 1st of December. This decision meant that I also had to move offices to be located with other members of my School (PDaL), who had moved up the hill to a cluster of small buildings in July.

As a half-time lecturer during 2003, I developed external studies materials for a new unit of study in the new Master of Professional Studies (Child & Family Studies); the unit 'Pedagogical Leadership for Young Children's Learning' includes an internet, online webCT discussion bulletin board for students to interact and reflect with each other at a distance. I completed a serious editing of the doctoral unit 'Professional Workplace Culture and Learning' in our 'New EdD at UNE' program; and, I revamped 'Young Children Exploring Their World' which is becoming a core unit in the fourth year Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) course. I particularly enjoyed mentoring two postgraduate students: an EdD candidate from Taiwan (studying at a distance with Armidale visits) and a Master of Education (Honours) candidate from Korea (living in Armidale last year and Sydney this year). In 2002 and 2003 I continued representative work for ECE at UNE with the New South Wales Technical And Further Education (NSW-TAFE) Colleges/Institutes which meant several all day planning meetings in Sydney. Finally, I recently applied for study leave in 2004 and I will be on leave from UNE to begin writing a book about 'food as a social event – present, past and possible perspectives' from 1 July 2004 to 1 March 2005.

Take care. Do have a Happy New Year and keep in touch with us at least once during the year. Our details remain the same as last year: 469 Donald Road, Armidale, New South Wales 2350 AUSTRALIA; the phone number is (02) 6772 8966; and, the email is: dhume@northnet.com.au

Fond seasonal greeting, Nadine and Doug

*Answer: about 900 bottles!