

Doyle's Restaurant, Watson's Bay, Sydney, Australia 2017

'The best laid schemes of mice and men, often go awry', certainly applies to benevolent event organisers. When Col Lipman's little band of fish-eaters arrived at Wharf #4 at Circular Quay in Sydney, we were told that the plan had changed, and that the ferry to Watson's Bay was to leave from Wharf #2. Being eminently qualified as international travellers of great discipline and perseverance, we were naturally totally unfazed by this, and adapted to the prevailing environment, as you do. It was the last ferry and should have provoked panic, but you don't like to do that, do you?

There followed a beautiful cruise through one of the most picturesque harbours in the world. The afternoon sunshine showed us a close-up of the Sydney Opera House, and the Sydney Harbour Bridge, which arguably throws the best New Year's Eve firework display in the world. There were even a couple of world-class international cruise ships preparing to leave.

The conversation of the Old Framlinghamians present on board the ferry was animated. Introductions to our guests, David (K42-49) and Ann Copeman, were made, and they were enthusiastically welcomed. Talk of old masters and their quirks, old times, old sporting events, and our own past histories were exchanged, with a certain degree of unreality in this modern world we now inhabit - if we are truly honest. It just seems so long ago!



Our arrival at Watson's Bay wharf in the full afternoon sunshine was spectacular, and the vote for a pre-dinner drink at the local hotel was unanimous. Square umbrellas over the tables provided shade from the setting sun, and there were overhead hoses that dispensed a very fine water spray to provide at least some humidity. The view was of a calm bay with small craft bobbing at anchor, the Sydney skyline in the distance, and a cloudless blue, blue sky; all at around 27C.

At 5.30, we adjourned to the world-famous Doyle's Seafood restaurant, to a flurry of activity; sorting meals and drinks, and welcoming James Hurlock and his lovely wife, Heidi, from Newfoundland. Their presence dropped the average age of the group from somewhere in the seventies, to somewhere in the forties!

The following people mutually enjoyed each other's company: Col and Lexie Lipman, our hosts who arranged everything; David and Ann Copeman, our guests from UK, who gave us the excuse to have the dinner; Hugh and Julia Richardson, Mike and Bunny Allport, Chris and Rebecca Shaw from Cairns, and James and Heidi Hurlock. Our conversation was

humorous, intimate and easy. While we enjoyed the 'fruits de mer' and the results of great expertise in modifying grape-juice, the sun sank in a blaze of scarlet behind the silhouette of the Sydney skyline, at the end of this very fine event.

We all thank John and Ruth Gates for alerting us to David and Ann's visit. Col and Chris thought that, while not being able to welcome each and every OF visiting our shores with the same treatment, we believe that there should be an OF network of people who are willing to connect with information, to share a drink or a meal, or generally to act as liaison. I have read too many spy thrillers and would call these people 'Agents-in-place', but Mike Allport, with his RAF background, would probably call them 'Aides-de-camp.' More of this later.

We thank Col and Lexie, and wish a safe journey to David and Ann.

Report by Chris & Rebecca Shaw

Below is a group photo followed by other photos taken at the meal and on the boat across to Doyles Bay







