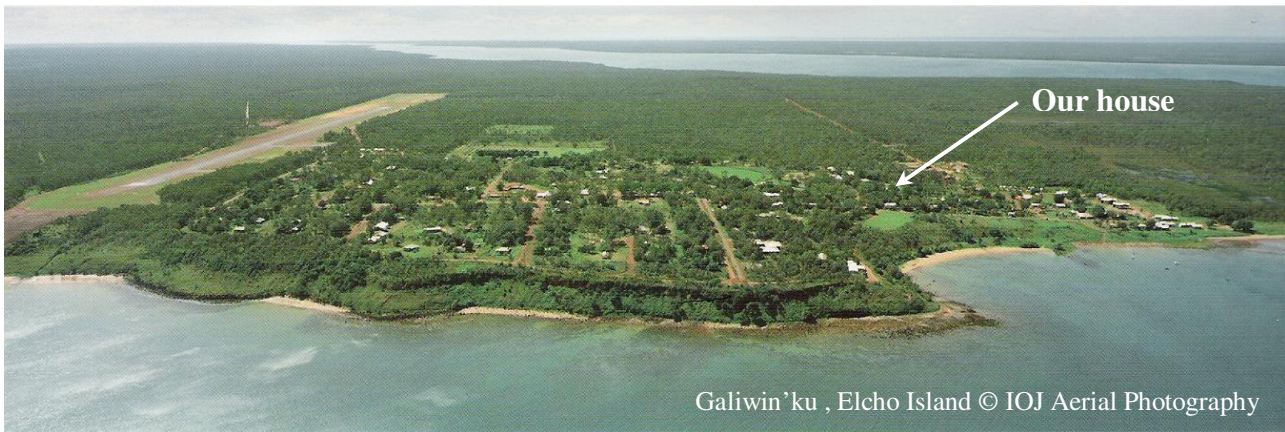




Dear Friends

Welcome to our second newsletter from Arnhem Land and the first in 2007. We have now survived 9 months in the 'Top End' and, most importantly, the oppressively humid build-up leading to the wet season. We must be acclimatising because it feels cold when the temperature occasionally drops below 25°C. There have been some awesome thunderstorms but, like most of Australia, the rains are not delivering their usual downfall. Even so, Arnhem Land has been transformed almost overnight into a lush green wilderness with widespread flooding around the rivers and coast. We have been on 'cyclone watch' twice already but nothing developed locally.



Galiwin'ku feels like home and we are enjoying being here in spite of some of the difficulties we face living in such a remote community and unfamiliar environment. Life is relatively simple without many of the pressures we put upon ourselves elsewhere, however, trying to complete even basic tasks can be frustrating. We are grateful for the developing friendships and support we get from other people here, Yolngu and Balanda (non-Yolngu), and those who encourage us from afar.

We are enjoying the company and assistance of Jen's mum, Ann, who is in turn enjoying the climate here rather than the British winter she left behind. We have enjoyed having other staff to visit and we fly to Nhulunbuy every two months for a staff meeting. We shall be taking our mid-term break in April and will travel to Melbourne for a week on the coast (without crocs) and then to BCV to visit friends still there and at our partner church in Lilydale.

Graham and Jonathan's efforts to keep the garden under control continue to amaze us, considering the heat. With no more than hand tools and a lawn mower they have maintained our half-acre and now have casava plants producing a potato-like vegetable. Their banana plants, paw-paws and sweet potatoes are developing too. They have five chooks who provide regular eggs and a borrowed rooster ('Rocky') has the potential to produce a lot more chooks! A first clutch of eggs hatched in late December but sadly only two chicks survived. Rats and snakes have been a continual problem but a concrete floor has made entry more difficult for them. A neighbour took David and the boys out in his boat in December and they proudly came back with four fish that became a tasty curry.





Jen is enjoying her role as 'school-teacher' and has recently started assisting with the Sunday school at the church. The boys and Jen also help with a market stall (top left) which supplies Christian resources to the local believers and raises funds for the Bible translation project. We had the privilege of attending the Christmas celebration at Gawa Christian School at the other end of the island and the Christmas Eve celebration in Galiwin'ku. We also took our adopting sister, Guymun, and her family up the island to her beautiful homeland, Dharrwarr, where we gathered dye roots, fished and cooked damper on the beach. In February, David and the Base Manager, Jonathan, flew to Manmoyi (90 miles west) to join a travelling pastor who has been working with a group of new believers. The next day they flew some of the group (top right) to a neighbouring community to join other Christians for fellowship before returning with the pastor to Elcho.

So how does a typical day in the life of the Pett family work out? It starts around 6.30am with first light and David leaves before 8am to prepare his aircraft for the first flight. Graham and Jonathan tend to their chickens before breakfast. Jen and the boys start school by 9am and cover maths and English each day before breaking for 'morning tea'. School then continues with other 'textbook' subjects through to lunch. After lunch, the subjects become more practical and cover in turn art, technology, language, music and sport. Once school is finished they have 'free' time. Jen continues with marking, lesson preparation and domestic chores. David returns sometime after 6pm. Chickens are put to bed and the garden subdued before an evening meal at around 6.30pm. The boys are encouraged bedwards and we hope to be in ours by 10pm ready to start the next day.

From the Pilot's Log ... the change of season came slowly and it allowed lessons to be learnt in small steps as each new hazard came: lowering cloud cover, rain showers, thunderstorms and finally minimum visual conditions. Flying for miles sandwiched between wooded terrain and a cloud covering at 500 feet, whilst weaving through a maze of solid rain walls has become a new and regular feature. Open blue skies now seem a distant memory but should return soon. With six month's experience came a 'check-out' on the Cessna 206, the other Marthakal aircraft, and authorisation to fly into the short and unusual airstrips.

Thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement which we value so much, and we wish you God's blessing. With our love, David, Jen, Graham and Jonathan

#### **Praise Points**

- Interim approval from the Northern Territory government to homeschool for 2007.
- A regular language session with Malpundhurr from the Marthakal office.
- Developing friendships with people in MAF and on Elcho Island

#### **Prayer Points**

- Safe flying and good judgment in the often marginal conditions
- Rest and relaxation whilst on leave in Victoria
- Deepening friendships with the Yolngu
- Continuing progress with our language learning

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