

Peter & Angela Watts



Two old ladies – at least 50 years old – had been chatting, *Wouldn't it be nice if Peter and Angela met?* One was Angela's next-door neighbour and the other was Peter's aunt, who worked together in Civil Defence in Maidstone, Kent sometime in 1964.

Although Peter and Angela had attended twin grammar schools in Maidstone, and they're in the same year, they had never met. The two schools rarely mingled; only infrequently at church and on the hockey field (until the boys got too rough).

They were single, in their late 20's and unlikely to meet. Although their family homes were in Maidstone, Peter, after getting his Electrical Engineering degree at Nottingham University, was working in the north of England. Angela had spent a year nursing at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, which ended following a car crash and fractured spine. She then worked in a remand home, giving special care to a very disfigured seven-year-old who had tried to murder his younger brother and was in the remand home as a 'place of safety'.

After becoming secretary to the Headmaster of a School for Physically Handicapped children, she took a secretarial course – cart before donkey! Later she worked as a secretary at the BBC, a medical secretary in Rochester, in the British Embassy in Paris for three years, then back to the Foreign Office in London. A posting to Belgrade did not appeal and so she left and got a job as a purser's clerk on the Union Castle Line, sailing between Southampton and South Africa.

Finally they did meet. Peter's father had died and he returned home to support his mother. Peter had lost touch with most friends in Maidstone and so dancing classes.

As purser's staff Angela had to entertain passengers in the evenings. (No, please, remember this was the 1960's, not present day!) Angela's dancing was not very good and so dancing classes.

They began the same evening and were paired up by the teacher, being the youngest in the class. The next year (1965) they married.

At the time, Peter was working in the aeronautical industry, but the previous year Harold Wilson had become Prime Minister and decided that Britain could no longer afford to develop new aircraft, so the industry was largely disbanded, leaving thousands of engineers out of a job. As there were limited opportunities in the local area, amongst many other options they investigated emigrating to Australia.

Eventually in 1971 they saw an advert from the Australian Patent Office, seeking professional engineers in Canberra, with free transport for the whole family. By then they had two little sons – and they decided to give it a go, with a five-week cruise on the SS Angelina Lauro, bringing everything they possessed, from the double bed to the watering can!

Initially they had to spend three years here to repay the government, but Gough Whitlam changed that to one year soon after their arrival, by which time they were certain that this was the life for them (they loved it from the very beginning).

So here they are, 52 years later, their only regret being leaving their widowed mothers, but they both came to visit.

Peter stayed in the Patent Office until he retired. Angela joined the Public Service and took advantage of Whitlam's flexitime and study leave, eventually becoming an accountant, while working in several departments/authorities, including The National Gallery and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. She started her own tax accounting practice in the late '80s and retired from the Public Service in 1990. Her tax business increased from 7 clients to 1,000, before Peter retired in 1995 and they came up to the Sunshine Coast, where they have now spent nearly a third of our lives.



Throughout his life Peter has been interested in performing on the stage, starting out in amateur theatre in England. Shortly after arriving in Canberra he auditioned for the chorus of *Fiddler on the Roof*, in which he was successful and which ran for 7 nights in the Canberra Theatre. Thus began a new life in musical

theatre, during which he sang in some 36 productions of musicals and operas (and was never paid a cent and had to buy his own make-up!). Highlights include performing with June Bronhill in *Call Me Madam* and singing in St Paul's Cathedral and St Martin in the Fields on a European Tour with the Sunshine Coast Oriana Choir. He retired recently after nearly 75 years of choral singing, after somehow being persuaded to join the grammar school choir!

Over 20 years ago he went to a Genealogy class with U3A and has been following the family history ever since. At one stage they thought that one of Angela's forebears was a founder of the Mormon Church, and their daughter-in-law's origins do go back to the earliest convict ships. (Did you know that you could be transported for impersonating an Egyptian?)

They love Australia, and especially this part of it. They also love driving holidays and have toured to all of the capital cities and many places in between. Their longest trip was driving to Perth from here to pick up friends arriving from England, then giving them a tour of the Southern and Eastern states as they returned to Buderim. For overseas holidays they tend to go to the less familiar places (for ex-Poms) like Sri Lanka, Laos, China, Samoa and Antarctica. These days they mostly travel in Australia and are only now feeling as though they are old enough to retire!

They are fortunate to have two wonderful sons, Philip and Tim, a delightful daughter-in-law, Vanessa, who come up regularly from Melbourne, one grand-kitten in Melbourne, Lucy, a Bichon Frise, and her best friend, Jack, a black and white cat who thinks he, too, is a dog. They have their own home and garden, just the right size, and their interests including Peter's genealogy, Angela's painting and languages, jointly walking, the beach, gardening, cryptic crosswords, Aquacise and BRIDGE

(results up and down like a yoyo but enjoying it), and Angela now does not cringe when someone says, 'It's only a game!' (Angela was deeply into bridge at one point and directed for ten years.)

