

# Will Newcomb's Witterings

Occasional musings

## Witterings 2018



([https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/SIX\\_109B5DBC-760A-4D78-B15C-261516C17995.jpg](https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/SIX_109B5DBC-760A-4D78-B15C-261516C17995.jpg))

**“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and earth peace among those whom he favours...”**

Christmas may be quiet here in Changsha, for us two anyway. All our ‘ex-pat’ friends are back in the ‘old country’ and we haven’t made any plans. We haven’t even got the decorations out – well that’s a task for this weekend.

Reminds me of our first Christmas here: we had a dance class on the 25<sup>th</sup>! Being a Tuesday this year we won’t have any classes. That first year was a bit strange. On 24<sup>th</sup> we went for a walk up the local mountain Yuelu Shan, just over the river and it was 25°C. The forecast for this Christmas Day is 9°C and rain so I guess we won’t be doing anything outside.

Last year Yvonne didn’t really have a holiday while I went to the UK and on a river trip on the Yangtz. This year we’ve had 3 short ones, all package holidays, but really enjoyable, doing lots of things. The tour operators make sure you’re busy most of the time and require you to get out of bed as early as 06:00 sometimes. Our latest trip was to Vietnam with our singing/dance classes. I was one of only 3 men (the other two being teachers), so there were plenty of women eagerly wanting their photo taken! And of course I was more than willing to oblige if they wanted a man in the picture.

Perhaps I was more in demand because I'm a 'wai guo ren' – foreigner?



([https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/IMG\\_6750.jpg](https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/IMG_6750.jpg))

One of the bonuses for an introvert who struggles to speak any Chinese (I can ask for the 'bathroom' though) is that no-one expects me to be engaged in conversation. I can be around without being 'out there'. And having done some on-line photo courses I always have projects on the go to edit recent photos on the phone and post occasional ones to the social media. Apologies to those who are fed up of seeing my images. You can always 'block' me!

One of the problems of being in a Facebook photo group is that we're always being challenged to improve with creative suggestions from other participants. As a result I was a bit disappointed that I didn't have any images I was really happy with from our trip last week to Nha Trang, Vietnam. The one I was happiest with only turned out to suffer from camera shake which I never noticed on the phone but blown up on the computer stuck out like a sore thumb! Oh well.



([https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/SIX\\_66C0F288-BB29-4D94-921D-1BD2CA9F976E.jpg](https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/SIX_66C0F288-BB29-4D94-921D-1BD2CA9F976E.jpg))

Our cats have been a constant source of pleasure and also concern. Our youngest, Latte (aka Chubbies & TeiTei) had an increasing walking problem, unable to control his rear legs. In July he stopped eating so we took him off to the top vet in the area who did X-rays etc and recommend a major operation to both hips. After a month he came home at the end of August and was obviously doing better, and continued to improve until late November when he went downhill rather rapidly. We feared for his life. But thankfully he rallied and has spent another 2-3 weeks with the vet receiving some laser

treatment on his back. We're hoping he can come home in the next couple of days.



([https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/IMG\\_5637.jpg](https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/IMG_5637.jpg))

On another cat front, Jack is currently ill and having tests. He looks happy enough but is not eating or drinking. Fingers crossed.

And along with this we have lots of friends who are facing serious health challenges so my night-time prayer list has grown some. 大家安康 Da jia an kang. Good health to all of you.

In the summer our singing class took part in a local competition and won both our category and the overall prize. We have a young teacher, who trained at one of the country's top universities for music, and she's super quick at analysing what each of our problems are. We also had our end of term show where I was asked to do the male cantor bit. Sometimes I think I can sing, and then I listen to the recording!!! One of our classes was a bit more fun than usual. We went to a KTV (Karaoke hotel) and we each sang one of our Chinese songs and she gave us feedback. Since our Vietnam trip was with the singing and dance classes I thought we'd have singing sessions there, but the closest we got was volunteering to sing on the bus. I tried to teach them Yellow Submarine and also did a rendition of King Caractus. It's a far cry from Berlioz Requiem for the Dead in St Paul's Cathedral, but at least I'm still singing, and most of the class we're taught how to produce the sound and learning a song is only a small part of it. I haven't had that sort of training since I was a 7-year-old chorister!



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Thinking of music, I've been to two great concerts this year, the first with the LSO, and the second last month with Anne-Soffie Mutter. I'd like to go more but the prices are huge – probably because of the cost of funding a European orchestra tour. I don't think I've been to hear the local symphony orchestra, which plays at a different venue. Changsha now has two fabulous new concert halls, which are also very interesting for their architecture. One is by the famous Zaha-Hadid architects.

Next year we're looking forward to visits from one of my sisters. Don't forget we always have a spare room if you'd like to plan a trip!



[https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/IMG\\_7006.jpg](https://willnewcomb.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/IMG_7006.jpg)

### **Albums for those interested**

Flickr selection for year <https://www.flickr.com/gp/willnewcomb/GZ9664> (<https://www.flickr.com/gp/willnewcomb/GZ9664>)

Yunnan <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmhb5k3C> (<https://flic.kr/s/aHsmhb5k3C>)

Guilin <https://www.flickr.com/gp/willnewcomb/GZ9664> (<https://www.flickr.com/gp/willnewcomb/GZ9664>)

Vietnam <https://www.flickr.com/gp/willnewcomb/N4KCc0> (<https://www.flickr.com/gp/willnewcomb/N4KCc0>)

Beautiful Changsha <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmmqFHVK> (<https://flic.kr/s/aHsmmqFHVK>)

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