

As previously, we shared Christmas Day 2011 with Cherie, Mike, Larissa and Marcus and the extended Marriott family. For New Year's Day, we went North to Waipu Cove in the motorhome for the Annual Highland Games, and then wandered even further up the east coast for a few days. In mid January, we went south to Papamoa Beach in the motorhome to spend a week with Cherie, Larissa and Marcus. Fortunately, most of the oil pollution on the beaches from the wreck of the 47,000 tonne container ship *Rena* just off the coast a few months earlier, had been cleaned up. We continued down on the East Coast road through the Bay of Plenty towns of Whakatane, Opatiki, and around the East Cape (where we hadn't been since we travelled to Wellington just after we were married), to Gisborne via Lake Waikaremoana, and eventually as far south as Napier.



Larissa in a Land Yacht

Marcus 'Drifting'

We came home in time to farewell Lyndell as she and Lance headed for Melbourne, and then we headed off in the motorhome for 6 weeks in the South Island. (Lyndell subsequently opted for a Chef's job in a mine at a place called Newman, 2 hours flight north from Perth - and another 2 1/2 hours bus ride - where she works two weeks on, one week off, cooking for upwards of 150 miners). We wandered down to Paul, Miro and Solly at Ahaura, inland from Greymouth, and spent a week with them. We then crisscrossed from coast to coast working our way south, caught up with Jan's brother Murray and his wife Marion a couple of times before getting to Wanaka at Easter for the Warbirds Fly-in. Great flying. We spent another week with Paul and the boys, and came home to plan the final details and preparation for our 3 month trip to Europe and UK in June.

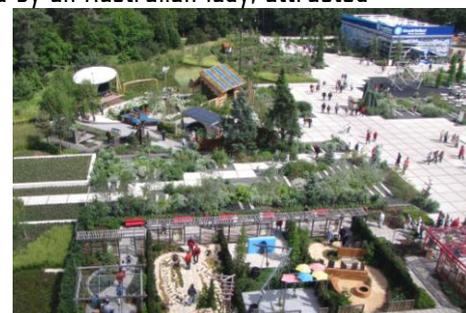


Lyndell and Lance



Jan, Miro and Solly

The Europe visit started in Amsterdam where we had a few days before beginning our river boat cruise south to Floriade in Holland for a horticultural show held every 10 years on a 50 acre site. The trip organised by an Australian lady, attracted 120 Australians and 5 NZers. Each day there were 2 or 3 options of gardens or castles for garden enthusiasts and some alternatives for the 'horticulturally challenged' like Reg (such as the excellent War Memorial at Arnhem - the location which spawned the film 'A Bridge too Far' or the Transport Museum in Speyer). We progressed south up the Rhine, crossed over Switzerland to an identical boat on the Rhone, and continued down from Lyon to Arles almost on the Mediterranean. A very pleasant way to travel in convenient slow-paced luxury.



We spent a week in an apartment on the banks of the Thames, and re-familiarised ourselves with central London - carefully avoiding anything to do with the Olympics, but having time to attend the 'Taming of the Shrew' at the reconstructed Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, and the unveiling of the Bomber Command Memorial in Regent's Park by the Queen, visited Greenwich, and Straddled the Greenwich Meridian line. We spent a few day with our friends Richard and Janet Burfitt at Hurley-on-Thames (between Henley and Maidenhead) including a fascinating time at



Globe Theatre



East West Line



Shankhill Rd, Derry Jan Kisses the Blarney Stone

the Henley Festival. Jan was declined entry to one event, because she was in slacks, not a dress, and needed to go back and change. A formal evening function required a dinner suit and bow tie for Reg, and a long dress for Jan - all borrowed!. We enjoyed a 2 week bus tour around Ireland, kissed the Blarney Stone (as if Reg needed it - Ed!), visited a fantastic new Titanic museum in Belfast, flew to Edinburgh, roamed around





Windsor Castle from the Thames

Northern Scotland looking, unsuccessfully for 'Nessie', but we did ride in the rotating Falkirk Wheel Boat lift - an alternative to a lock for raising canal boats. We drove back to Henley before heading off for a week on the Thames on an 8m launch we hired. Visits to Runnymede (site of the signing of the Magna Carta), Hampton Court Palace, Windsor and Eton were highlights of our time on the river. We became efficient at handling the boat and Jan was excellent at rope throwing through the locks.



Tug-of-War Raft v Raft - Henley

We concluded by returning to Henley to help with the setting-up and running of the one day Henley River Regatta - and then home.

Back home, Reg was pleased how little damage had occurred on the property over the very wet winter, only to have a substantial wash out to half a dam on our ponds in a severe rainstorm just after our return. We joined Murray and Marion and 60 other Christian 'Good News Vanners' on a week's trip around Taranaki and New Plymouth for the Rhododendron Festival via Waitomo Caves. The motorhome performed well throughout our several trips this year, despite us getting stuck in places where we weren't meant to be, and ruining 2 tyres and a wheel (Duch)! (Driver Error - Ed) (Only the wheel and ONE tyre! - Sub-Ed)



While we seem to have been away from home for half the year, 'normal' activities have continued as much as possible - occasional 'sibling' meals with Jan's brothers and sisters-in-law, Jan's embroidery group weekly meeting in Auckland while Reg visits the office, Jan's weekly Church based Coffee mornings, and our Home Bible Study group. Reg has continued with Presbyterian church administration matters at both local and national level,

Larissa and Marcus continue to grow, and Jan is now the shortest of the three, although Larissa is challenging Reg. She has moved on to ballet in her dancing, and won a class Maths Prize (5th form - year 11). Marcus goes to Rangitoto College next year. They are both a delight to us.

As we write this, we have been married for 50 years (and one day). Lyndell came home from Perth to share in a dinner with Cherie, Larissa and Marcus, and to help plan the 'major' celebration event scheduled for 10th February next year when Paul and the boys will join us with 40 or so others. After that, we will probably head off to the South Island again in the motorhome.

We are blessed with continuing good health.

May the joy and peace of Christmas be with you and your loved ones now, and throughout the year.



Jan and Reg