



McLoughlins' Missive December 2007



The sun is shining, the grass is growing, the olive trees are about to blossom so it must be almost Christmas! Hard to believe we've been here almost two years now. The time has flown and we're enjoying it as much as ever.

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Our efforts seem to be paying off too, as we were thrilled when our very first oil got a bronze medal at the Hobart fine food awards in September and followed that with a silver at the national olive-oil awards in Canberra at the end of October. The trees are heavily in bud at the moment, which we hope will mean lots of fruit next year.

We've recently acquired 29 sheep to act as four-legged lawnmowers among the olive trees. The sheep auction we went to was a whole new experience, but Mike managed to nod in the right places to secure our flock. We still have our two goats keeping the brambles at bay in other parts of the farm, but we aren't risk them among the olive trees for fear they'll damage the bark.

Our remaining three chooks are still going strong. We borrowed a cockerel from our



John in New York in July



Ruth & Neil on their balcony

friends, Graham and Diane, in the hope of increasing our brood, but he doesn't seem keen to play away from home. He's all noise (from about 5am!) and no action!

Quin, our Husky, is still doing a good job repelling unwanted intruders in the garden. We recently found what was left of an unlucky possum, after he'd finished with it.

We're very busy in restaurant at the moment, in the run up to Christmas - which is great, though we'll be glad to have the week off between Christmas and New Year.

Ruth and Neil are spending Christmas and New Year with us, which will be lovely. John can't make it this time, which is a shame, but it is an awfully long way to come.

We managed to get to Auckland to see Ruth and Neil in September, and had a lovely few days with them. They took us to some very pretty spots in and around Auckland, and we were very impressed. They're renting a little flat in the city-centre, virtually in the shadow of the Sky Tower, where we enjoyed Sunday lunch in the revolving restaurant at the top, watching Auckland slip by around us. While we were in Auckland we managed to catch up with several old friends from various times in our past life, and were delighted to make contact with them again.

Several friends have visited us here in Tassie too over the last twelve months. We were a bit afraid

we'd stranded ourselves too far off the beaten track this time, so it's good to know we can still be tracked down! We've a few more visitors booked in the New Year, but still have lots of time and space, so if you haven't planned your trip yet, please do think about it.

We're planning to be back in the UK in May next year for our niece, Nicola's wedding. Ruth and Neil are coming too, so we're looking forward to a good family reunion. We'll do our best to catch up with friends too, but if we miss you we can only apologise. Ruth and Neil get married in Chesterfield the following May, so we'll be back again then.

Sadly the last time Hazel was back was for her mum's funeral at the beginning of February. Her dad is still soldiering on. He's been much better in himself since a stay in hospital earlier in the year set him to rights. Mike's mum is still having trouble with her first hip replacement, which unfortunately seems to have broken down, causing her mobility problems.

We hope all is well with you and yours and wish you a very happy Christmas and a rewarding year in 2008.

Much love,

Hazel & Mike



Mike on 'Big Red' inspecting the olives



Hazel & Ruth at a vineyard on Waihiki Island