



McLoughlins' Missive December 2015

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2015 has been a bit of a rollercoaster ride for us. This time last year we were leaving Tasmania to join Ruth, Neil and our granddaughter, Emma, in Auckland. We had a lovely Christmas and New Year with them, made even more special by a surprise visit from John, Vicky and baby Jessica, then just three months old.

They stayed for three weeks and we did several trips together. In Rotorua, John took Vicky and Jessica to the thermal wonderland he had visited with us in the 1900s, when we holidayed in New Zealand from Singapore. The only difference this time was that the hot-water geyser he and Ruth had clambered around as kids is now fenced off and visitors sit in neat rows on benches to hear the story of the geyser and watch it spout.

In Coromandel, they visited Cathedral Cove, where a scene from the film Narnia was shot, and we all had a wonderful day at Hobbiton, the filmset where The Hobbit was filmed. We wandered around the pretty little hobbit holes in the hillside and finished up with lunch at the Green Dragon Inn.

We stayed with Ruth and Neil rather longer than we anticipated while we organised our NZ future, and we're extremely grateful to them for their hospitality. Hazel did a temporary English-teaching job for six months, then got a full-time position with a hospitality academy in the city, helping students improve their English before starting a cookery course there.

Mike found himself 'overqualified' for many of



Emma, Ruth, Mike, Hazel, John, Neil, Vicky and Jessica at Hobbiton, January 2015

the jobs he applied for, but was eventually offered a position as office manager with a firm of wine-importers, which suits him very well, especially as overtime sometimes gets paid in bottles of wine!

In September we made a quick trip back to the UK for our little granddaughter, Jessica's first birthday, which was a wonderful opportunity to get to know her better. We took her on her first steam-train ride, from Embsay to Bolton Abbey, which she seemed to enjoy but probably won't remember. We caught up with as many people as we could while we were back, but apologise if we missed you. The time we had was all too short.





Our new chez nous— très bijou

On our return we started looking for a place of our own and found a nice little rental property very close to Ruth and family. We moved in at the beginning of November with the few treasured possessions we brought with us from Tassie, and are now nicely settled. Our new chez nous is a small bungalow at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac with a spare room for visitors, so please include us if you're planning a trip to NZ. Our new address is at the top of this letter. Our street is named for the Pohutukawa, New Zealand's natural Christmas tree, which blooms with bright red blossoms just in time for the festive season.

Before we moved in we were delighted to be able to celebrate our Kiwi granddaughter, Emma's, third birthday in October, the first time we've been on hand for her birthday festivities. Her mum organised a 'mobile' farm to come to the venue she'd hired and the kids had a great time petting the animals and having pony rides.



As we approach our first Christmas in our new home, our best news is that we have at last sold our property in Tasmania! It was a long time coming, but we have lots of happy memories (and photos!) of our time there, and are pleased to have handed it over to a younger couple who are enthusiastically looking to take the grove to the next level. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped us while we were there, especially Sam and Dakota, who also kept an eye on the place for us after we left, and Richard who was our demon olive-harvester and kept all the farm vehicles in running order. We're grateful to lots of other people who helped us too, both locally and visitors from overseas who stayed with us for a while



Farewell to Mount Roland

The festive season began for us this year with the local Santa parade along Ellerslie main street and an evening of carols in a nearby park. Emma was great fun at both occasions, and we're looking forward to sharing her delight in a Christmas she'll properly appreciate this year. When it's all over we're absconding to Rarotonga, one the Pacific Islands within easy reach of NZ, for 10 days R&R and a peaceful start to the New Year.

We wish you all the joys of Christmas and a healthy, happy and fulfilling new year.

Much love,