



McLoughlins' Missive 2017

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As 2017 draws to a close, we have lots to look back on, with gratitude for another year of happy memories.

Family always comes first in our thoughts, and this year was special for the birth of our grandson, Alexander John, on September 2nd. We're thrilled that the McLoughlins will carry on for another generation at least. His sister, Jessica, turned three later the same month, a happy, outgoing young lady, who seems devoted to her little brother.

Here in Kiwiland, our other granddaughter, Emma turned five and started school, leaving us all wondering where the last five years had gone! She's taken the move in her stride and seems to be loving school life. Mike and I pick her up on Fridays and enjoy spending time with her until her mum and dad get home. She never fails to entertain us with her insightful chatter.

On the travel front, we've managed a couple of nice holidays this year. We saw in the year in the Bay of Islands, towards the northern end of the North Island, the area where the Europeans first settled in New Zealand and made their first capital, and where the treaty of Waitangi, between the British and the Maori, was signed. We stayed in Paihia and explored the area by car and boat, watching dolphins swim among the jewel-like islands and marvelling at the magnificent ancient Kauri trees that are found in that part of the country. We also managed to catch up with some old friends: Sarah and Martin, who we knew in Singapore and have settled in Mangonui, near their daughter and family; and Ken, from our student days whom we had not seen for a good 30 years.



Vicky, Alexander, John & Jessica with Santa



Hazel, Mike, Emma, Ruth & Neil with Santa

In July we celebrated our 44th wedding anniversary with a trip to the Pacific island of Tonga, a short flight from Auckland. We found the island much less developed than either Fiji or Rarotonga, the other Pacific Islands we've visited, but we found the people very friendly and enjoyed discovering the natural beauty of the place. The highlight of this holiday was a boat trip that allowed us close-up – if fleeting – views of a whale on its migration south to warmer waters – one of Hazel's long-standing ambitions finally fulfilled, on the day of our anniversary even.

In June we welcomed our first overseas visitors - David and Megan, friends from Tasmania, on their way to a holiday in Tahiti. Together we explored some of the gastronomic delights to be found in Auckland and its surrounds, as well as the interesting sculptures at Brick Bay vineyard.

Health-wise, Mike had a rough patch in April/May, culminating in prostate surgery, from which he has made an excellent recovery, feeling much better now than he has for a long time. He's currently working as Office Administrator for a small engineering firm, just up the road from home, so very convenient.

Apart from a stubborn tummy-bug, Hazel has enjoyed pretty good health this year. She's still teaching English, but on a supply basis at various language schools around Auckland, which means she gets the occasional, appreciated, break when there's no work available. She's also pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Translating, in the hope of making some use of the French and German she studied for so long.

We plan to spend Christmas with Ruth, Neil and Emma and then head off to New Plymouth in the south-west corner of North Island NZ – an area we'll be exploring for the first time. We're planning a trip back to the UK next summer – when we'll finally get to enjoy cuddles with our little grandson, and hope to catch up with as many family and friends as possible.

Meantime we wish you a Very Merry Christmas and the best of health and happiness in the coming year.

Hazel & M



Bay of Islands



The one that didn't get away!



Blowholes, Tonga



Blink and it was gone!