

14<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Hi all,

Well Stephanie is having a go at the missive this time. I have a little more time and want to focus on the strength of the “occupation” we have found ourselves in as summer slides into autumn.

You have to remember that we missed last winter so it is 18 months since we had a frost. We have been wonderfully busy through the summer and we are sliding into a homely winter.

Anzac Day was a big event in New Zealand, we went to a new park and crowded in with thousands to see a light and sound show. We did not get up for the dawn service, some people were 5km from the ceremony – and had got up at 4.30am to get there on time. When you actually learn more about the waste of the war it makes no sense. One cinema were forward thinking and we saw our first ‘National Theatre Live’ – ‘Warhorse’. It was brilliant, seeing the puppetry so close up was amazing. We had a problem as of course it was not ‘live’. So we had a 30 minute interval so the cinema could sell us food – all came back in and had a terrible ‘making of’ documentary. It gave away part of the second act, which was poor for us as we knew nothing of the story. It really stopped the flow of a theatre production. We will go to this kind of thing again.



Through May we gradually came to the decision that we would give up sailing. We started with another of those frustrating ‘sailing events’ we were due to sail out and have a BBQ. In the end we motored out – even though the wind was strong but good for sailing. We BBQ’d but did not find the sailing crowd that welcoming. We also did not get our certificate as we had not done the written test – slight frustrating but here you need nothing to sail/hire a boat!!! On the way back we went on the ‘rescue’ boat that Antoinette and Johan had arrived on – I think they call it a ‘thrilling ride’. You are better standing as otherwise you bounce everywhere on the side. You need perfect balance and a very strong belief that you will not capsize!!!



We eventually used our Christmas present of a ride on a keeler – a bigger boat that could take 8 to 10 people on. We had tried to book it 5 times. The last time had been the day of the cricket cup final – New Zealand V Australia. The wind was no stronger than the day we sailed – but it got cancelled – perhaps because of the cricket not the wind. Derek loved the keeler, I found at first I could not

get used to the idea we would not tip over at all and then got a little bored. Basically Colin did everything. It was a brilliant day to sail and a wonderful experience.

The final decision maker was out first social sailing. We went on a Sunday morning, the wind was twice the strength we were used to. I captained but within 20 minutes, we capsized and I thought Derek was too terrified to ever sail again. Hamish (the teacher) suggested we both spend half the session with him. I decided this was an amazing idea. Derek would learn if he actually liked sailing and I would know how far I was from 'skilled'. I am so frustrated that Hamish never sent the photos we took on his camera of him and Derek sailing. It was 'extreme' for us!! Hamish did not capsize with Derek, grew his confidence and decided Derek definitely needed a slightly bigger boat. Hamish had such fun with me – we were losing a batten out of the sail so he had me standing outside the boat to balance us while he walked on the sail to put the batten in. It did not work BUT Hamish could 'roll' me back in the boat. It was mega and thrilling.

So the outcome was Derek would need me to be as skilled as Hamish and I just am not that committed to the hours it would take to get to Hamish's level – unless I won the lottery and had a boat at home!!!! So our sailing days are over for now. If we fancied it again it would be going back on a course again.



We then got busy with other occupations. Antoinette and Johan invited us around on a 'play date' to learn how to make sausages. The 4kg of meat was a surprise and we had a sunny afternoon hand mincing meat, excellent upper body work and easy to chat over. We had real intestine, a very tactile experience as they have to be well washed as they are naturally salty. The end product, miles of sausage, was chopped and a section cooked on the braai (proper wood BBQ) – like a Cumberland sausage. Very rewarding and yummy. Apparently not quite as good as they should be – the recipe needs a tweak. The 'play date' was then returned as we taught Antoinette how to make halloumi and ricotta.

Derek and I went back over the hills to the Wairarapa, we were lucky with the weekend we chose as the hills had been closed after both a rain storm and a snow storm. We were back in the sunny wine region to do a little more picture framing.





John Slater, our teacher encourages us to progress our skills every session. This time all the picture had been enhanced on the computer, by us. Our combined effort had us able to sample a star in a picture, we then changed the colour of the star to be one of the blues in the picture. The final touch was then putting a boarder on the picture in that star. You can tell how proud we are of that picture!! We also tried out ordering metal frames – we had to be exact in measurements as they just clipped together. Our final flourish was double mounting an embroidery of a fish Caroline had done for my 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday card. It is always a day when we feel a sense of flow and mastery of an activity, with fabulous outcomes. There are always a group of very interesting people to chat with as you wait between processors. No idea at the moment what we will do next. Eventually we will run out of walls and will have to alternate the pictures - a good job we left all our previous picture in the UK!!

We combined the picture framing with an excellent meal out and the day after a walk up the cycle trail into the hills. We had butties at the top, where 5 houses used to be the home for a small community.



Going back to the weather we are definitely in autumn. The rain storm was the most rain since 1976 – here they got water not the hottest summer. Wellington is known for being all hills, so the 12cm of water definitely caused some problems with floods and landslides. The trains all stopped so Derek would have taken 5 plus hours to get home. One of the reasons for the trains stopping was the underpass was flooded, the kids all went down and started jumping in!!!.

This was the road into Wellington from my work, passable but of course every-

body was trying to get home at the same time. So for Derek, when surrounded by water what is the best thing to do??? Get on a boat. Antoinette and Johan live in Eastbourne and offered us sanctuary. The normal ferry was running from the centre of Wellington. A resourceful boat owner joined in, so Derek and 99 other people took the unofficial ferry, for me the only amusing part was him not having docked at Eastbourne before and taking 15 minutes to actually land. The next day everything settled back down, we got home to find a hungry cat but no damage to the land/house at all.



Some of the colder nights had led to 'reading' in bed, with the hyper excitement of our new electric blanket and the support of Mr Stripy the cat. Having had 18 months without winter even the mild New Zealand winters are a big shock in houses heated by an electric fire and not double glazed. Hence back to cooking, although never again with gluten free pastry. I made seven gluten free tart cases, one survived and I will leave you to guess which one in the picture is the gluten free case!!!

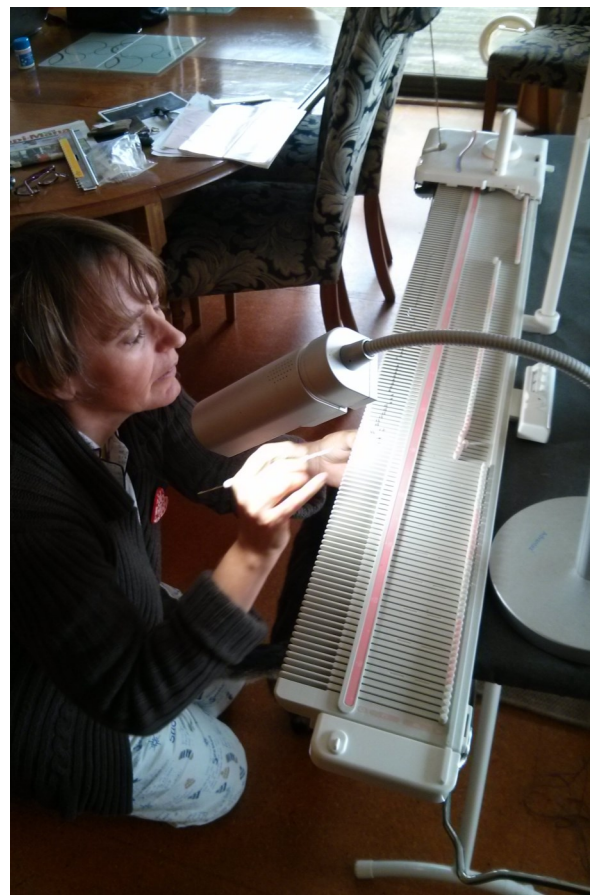


Autumn this year brings extra excitement as after a 6 year break New Zealand has 'Dancing with the Stars'. The joke is they took it off air as they found out New Zealanders cannot dance. It is a riot, so much in miniature. There are 10 contestants, 3 judges, the stage is a third of the size and one of the dancers married her partner from the last series!!!!!! We are already gripped and for us it will finish just as 'Strictly' starts in the UK.

I am at last getting going with both my hand knitting and knitting

machine. The knitting machine is straight forward for about 15 rows and then it is all about tension in the wool to keep going. I can now tell when there is a mistake. This is important as if you miss the mistake it casts off the next row. I can now also repair the mistake. This does lead to the knitting on the machine still being quite slow.

We have finally embraced badminton on a Monday night. Having played in the UK on a Thursday for 25 years the change has been difficult. Monday we are also low energy, until this year we have had to drag ourselves out!! Not any more. The group is a mix of people we have played with before and some new members – a much more even standard of skill. Many of the children that used to play are 2 years older and have improved in skill level.



And our final occupation, a return to bridge. Well nearly. They play on a Tuesday night and we have not actually made it yet!!! We have practiced on the computer and do remember the general idea. Derek has always been better than me and played for longer. Watch this space to hear news of how the bridge club is and if we get accepted.

We both say, well this time last year we were in the UK. We have a fantastic package arrive that reminded us of our 'Christmas' with Bunny and Allan in Texas last year. It was like Christmas all over again as we had forgotten what was in the parcel. You can tell Bunny is good at jigsaws as many gifts perfectly slotted onto each other. It made us smile.

I miss you and would like to be with you to celebrating many Birthdays at this time of year. Thinking of you all love Steph

P.S. As I put this together we have been on a cycle in shorts and 'T' shirts today. Not bad for the start of winter :)