

Tasmania: Hobart

It was a perfect day to fly in over Tasmania, and to see the island, fields, hills, forests, mountains, lakes ...quite beautiful, tho' the approach to Hobart with regular banking of plane, and low over the sea, left me clutching my arm-rests and praying. It is apparently a challenging approach for pilots in less perfect conditions. There was no fussy interrogation over food items, as I had expected, and here, in this provincial airport, welcomers mingle with passengers awaiting luggage. And there were Derek and Daayna at the airport to greet us. The journey to our next temporary abode, over the dramatic bridges and around the bay, was undertaken under blue, blue skies. We arrived at a home, hewn into the hillside, overlooking the bay (see header picture), with the city in the distance and Mount Wellington just over the water.



..and Christmas cheer!! A lovely room with windows showing the panorama has a grand Christmas tree with an array of Father Christmas's standing to attention, around – a child's (of any age!) delight.

Marg is a craftsperson, and has had each one of these figures (must be one a year!) There is a traditional Father Christmas dressed in green, others bespectacled, some Gandalf-ish and a splendid Bishop Nicholas, resplendent in white robe, mitre, crook, and ermine-

trimmed velvet cloak. Amazing!

As she was taking Isobel into the city, we joined Daayna who took us down-town to the harbour where, just two days previously in Melbourne, and on the television, we had watched the two leads in the Sidney-Hobart Yacht Race cross the line. Lots happening there! Then on to the famous Hobart Food Taste where we had a splendid selection of brunch choices! We shared a small fish and chips, followed by a small skewer of grilled lamb with salad, and then a pancake with fresh raspberries, cream and ice-cream. All much appreciated after our near-sleepless night and early start! We didn't do the wine or beer thing though there was a huge (but pricey) choice on offer. Then back here to Grevillia Avenue, Old Beach, still in bright sunshine and a blissful sleep for me, while Nick sussed the technology. When I awoke, the scene outside had changed, mostly overcast, but now the sun is out again, though there's a haze and a whisp of cloud over Mount Wellington across the water. So if we do nothing else here we will watch the never-ending changes of weather, below and around.



And a Happy 2012!! I'm afraid we were too exhausted to see the New Year in, though we watched the Royal Tattoo from Edinburgh and Stephen Fry at the Sidney Opera House before crawling to bed at 10.30.

New Years Day



A quiet day after a long, long tiring day! We slept in awhile and had breakfast and did the computer things. Nick and I went for a local walk in Old Beach, downhill, across the main road, down to the river which flows around a promontory, and along to a landing stage, where once upon a time a convict who had served his sentence ran a ferry to the east bank. We have to travel eight or so kms to the Bowen Bridge and after that it's another few kms into town.

After lunch the whole family was here to greet Marg, back with her sister, from the sad visit up to Devonport where her mother has died. The girls set to, and made a splendid lasagne for supper: the family eats on a covered lobby at the back of the house.

Monday 2nd

Another visit down to the city, to The Taste. We had a fishy taster – different fish pates, some smoked fish, an oyster (not easy to share but we did and neither of us were particularly impressed!) There were still lots of people and I was certain I saw Guy Brazil, a contemporary of my boys – our families were close, disappearing into the distance at one point. Could that be possible? I suppose it could!

Back on the ranch awhile, and we were kindly offered the use of Derek and Marg's car to go up



Mount Wellington which we see across the river from here, towering above the city. This mountain is on the east of the Wellington Range, pretty much the inaccessible SW of the island. It protects Hobart from the wet westerlies. One needs to drive south from the city to Fern Tree Gully and then take the road that climbs and climbs steadily to the top, winding round the mountain (approx height of Snowdon at 1270 metres!) First were the forests of towering, aromatic

gum trees with tantalising views occasionally to the east. The vegetation slowly became scrubbier and rockier until finally we were at the top. The previous day we would have been disappointed as it was cloud-covered but we had a moderately clear view down to the estuary of the River Derwent, south to Bruny Island, across Ralphs Bay and Storm Bay, east over to the Tasman Peninsular – a medley of water and landfall, far down below, disappearing into the haze. Looking up today, twenty four hours later, we can see that the view would be amazingly clear but the weather constantly changes. I guess you have to be *really* lucky to get a crystal clear day.



Tuesday 3rd and Wednesday 4th

On Tuesday we took an excursion, staying on the east side of the Derwent and then travelling



inland to Richmond and its beautiful honey-coloured stone bridge (Australia's oldest and built by convicts!) We visited the ancient gaol, looking, I believe, very much the same as it did, back in the early to mid 1900's, and learned of particular grisly methods of discipline, and lax management where the gaolers appeared no more civilized than their charges. (the only current internees are free to come and go as they please, and are, in fact, allowed conjugal

rights!). Though the village and the riverfront was delightful the day was extraordinarily hot. It is said that a possible hole in the ozone-layer makes Tasmania appear 5+degrees hotter than the readings on the thermometer and it certainly felt like a deal more than 28 degrees, particularly with the humidity. So after a picnic on the riverbank we returned to base and enjoyed a lazy late afternoon and evening.



Today, Wednesday, we were able to have the car for the morning and travelled south through the city to the Huonville and downaway along the western side of the peninsula where the rocks and gum trees give way to orchards and vineyards. Today the weather is much cooler and more comfortable. We stopped for a welcome coffee in Cygnet and then did a detour down the northern side of the river (very pretty), then cut inland awhile through splendid country (sort of

off-road, but we did have 4-wheel drive!) before making our way back to Hobart.

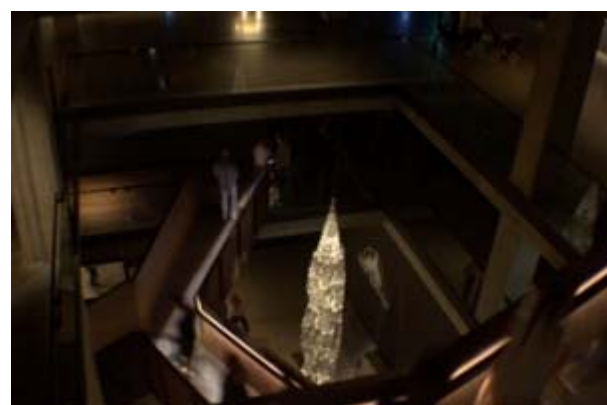


Unfortunately we were short on time as we had to get the car back for Marg to travel to Devonport so we didn't make Egg and Bacon Bay (it kinda sounded fun!) or the southernmost tip of the peninsula, but had seen the forests, the orchards (cherries, apricots, apples and pears), the rivers and hills. Tasmania is indeed very hilly – more homes on hillsides than on the flat ...and at least 80% are bungalows, often clapboard, often a verandah and quite likely a touch or

more of ornate metal lace/fretwork.

Thursday/Friday/Saturday/ Sunday

Without a car we have had to rely on buses which are good in the week, limited on Saturdays, and non-existent on Sundays, at least up here at Old Beach. We have visited the craft and quilting shop and I have the makings of a small quilt which Marg says is perfectly possible to make in a day! She helped Tennille, her youngest daughter, make a full sized one in a day!! I have chosen an aboriginal-inspired print to mark my first quilt attempt in Australia. I have just washed the fabrics, as advised, so any shrinkage happens before the thing is made.



One long day, Friday, was spent at the Mona Museum of Old and New Art. We had to change buses at Glenorchy and travel northward along the west coast, then walk up a hill through vineyards to the summit overlooking the river where the building stands, above a quay where ferries arrive from Hobart at regular intervals throughout the day. Just like our present lodgings, the museum is built into a rocky hillside and

the galleries are on three levels.

It is a truly beautiful modern building – a giant sculpture with iron stairs and walkways interlinking the levels, as well as a beautiful glass lift. I loved its utilitarian solidity, particularly the use of the natural rock, which I imagine, but don't know, is the rock on the hillside which is a golden-honey colour. The artwell, let's say the modern stuff was very challenging and very obviously 'in your face', some sexually



explicit, some brutal, some simply distasteful. The older stuff? More acceptable and discrete. There was no catalogue, but every visitor was given an I-pad which gave details of the works and you could record whether you loved or hated the work and discover whether others were like-minded – then down-load your visit to your own computer!!! I was impressed with an exhibition of sculptures by a Dutch artist Wim Delvoye, whose work had real substance and beauty: a display of metal tyres which on close inspection had intricate patterns and a tortuous helix of crucified figures (tortuous and beautiful) The less said of the lipstick marks applied by artist from the least accessible detail of the posterior part of his anatomy, on 10 separate sheets of hotel notepaper, the better – that just reinforced my suspicion that some modern art is just a bit of a con! Although we had a lunch break and rest before continuing our visit we were really too jaded to fully appreciate the afternoon session.



On Saturday we went to Salamanca Market in downtown Hobart. It was an eclectic mix – all characterised by LOCAL! Local crafts: woodwork, pewter, jewellery, wool (merino!), and food, especially fruits: apricots, cherries, raspberries, organic veg, local eggs and ‘food to go’ like pancakes and pizza. Had wanted to go to the 3.00pm Quaker Meeting but buses just did not work out and today, Sunday, it is out of the question.

Sunday, however, has been an amazing day – a ‘make a quilt day’ – all hand-stitched and with Marg’s added experience and her ‘eye’, my choice of fabrics has been developed and improved. And, most important, I have learned the important basics. The putting on of the edging, backing and the final quilting will not be finished before we leave Australia, but I’ll be well on the way and it’s looking good. A beautiful hanging for wall or it can be developed into a throw for the bed. And, oh dear, a few more grammes of weight and more bulk for our expanding, on-going luggage.



Monday 9th January:



I could have stayed back at base and made inroads with the quilt but the car was so kindly available for us to ‘do’ Port Arthur so that is what we did. This entailed a journey of 90km or so, southwards to the Tasman Peninsular, along the side of the river, then off, across watery and forestry landscapes along a windy highway to the beautiful and secluded Port Arthur.

The number of cars in the car park made us fear that it would be crowded, but after the hugely informative introductory talks (delivered in groups of 30 or more) we found this vast and beautiful site relatively empty and well worth the journey. We were herded again for a while on the cruise which took us out over the water to the Island of the Dead (the graveyard) which gave us splendid views of the site from the sea and down south out to the Antarctic (though still further away than the equator). Port Arthur was the place where the convicts who had repeatedly



offended ended up – and a pretty harsh regime was enforced. Anyone attempting to escape was either lost in the bush (dense forests) or stopped at Eagleneck by soldiers with complete lines of vicious dogs. Difficult to conceive that harsh and brutal life when you wander up through the beautiful garden to the ruined church, where once all prisoners, of all creeds, were obliged to attend Sunday service.



We started our return journey, stopping to view some of the remarkable coastal features on the Tasman Peninsular, equalling in many ways those we saw on the Great Ocean Road. And to reach some of them, we had to pass through the village of Doo, where all the houses have inventively been named; 'We Doo It' (to which at one time the owner, at 75, had added underneath "but not often now"!) 'This'le Doo' (with a thistle above it), 'Please Doo Me Up' (added to a neighbouring house by some 14-year old boys!), 'Doolittle' – 30 or more homes! Back chez Marsh there was a splendid taco meal: we were initiated by young Eli into this new culinary treat. Then it was back to the quilt, to which Marg had added a border and prepared it for the

quilting which was started. However, that is going to be the slow part of the process, the creative and exciting part now finished.



Tuesday 10th January: Turners Beach, Devonport

So late to bed, that it was a hurried morning, packing what was needed for the few days, not that we needed much – stuff for a cool day and possibly Cradle Mountain and stuff for a warm day. . . more of that anon. Dear Marg was taking us halfway to Campbell Town where Phil was to meet us. A swift coffee all together, then on we went northwards, skirting Launceston and

stopping at a Fish and Ginseng Farm for tastes and smoked salmon, at a Raspberry Farm for guess what, and finally a Cheese Making Farm for more tastes and purchases. A brief glimpse of the Bass Strait, and up a gum-tree-lined hill to another amazing home.



Phil and Heather bought this hectare of land twenty years ago and built their home in an area of cleared bush with views over the trees to the sea. They have chooks, a productive veg'e patch, and a garden where possums, and potaroos (smaller, rounder versions of wallabies) come intermittently and mostly at night. After lunch we went for a drive around the locality and saw the house where the Glares lived when they were here, and went down to the beach where

the River Forth enters the bay. Heather, in short pants was shivery, but as we turned onto the main beach the wind was really bone-chilling and we turned back. Though we are nearer the equator here (as opposed to Hobart) we have hit a cool spell. Though I've bought my warmest things, I've been chilly and am beginning to wonder whether I have enough warm clothes for South Island, New Zealand where we will be this time next week! That sounds daunting!! A wonderful supper was had with Liz and Sam, fresh back home from their world travels. Have made contact with Son No 1, Patrick Spencer, whose birthday is today/tomorrow and made plans to speak tomorrow morning, his birthday evening.



Wednesday



A great start to the day with a Skype with Patrick, and even better an arrangement to do it again in 24 hours with Elanor. Great to hear Matt and Eileen are up there for coming weekend. Then down for a fresh boiled egg marked 10/1 (it was laid yesterday) so I celebrated Patrick's birthday with an egg, laid on his birthday, thousands of miles away, on the other side of the world!!

We set off for our day out, travelling westerly along the beautiful coast, stopping once or twice for photo shots and once for coffee at one of Phil and Heather's favourite stops, The Groovy Penguin in the village of Penguin, until we reached the ultimate viewing point at Table Cape with views easterly over land and sea and westerly, over poppy seed heads to the Wynyard Lighthouse. Then we travelled back away to Burnie where we enjoyed one of Tasmania's lauded fish and chip shops, sharing two Fish Frenzies and a few extra calamari rings, with a bottle of wine. We then turned inland to make our way to see an ex-colleague of Heather, who has taken up goat farming (dairy). We began to understand why she and her husband love these creatures – they were really engaging and affectionate (well, some were!) Witness my attempts to fit the machine on the teats!! Finally we turned for home, stopping to shop in P&H's local town before returning for a cup of tea and taking George down to the beach. After the cold, wet morning (zero degrees up on Cradle Mountain!) the walk on the beach was truly magic – a vast stretch of sand with barely a soul, hills in the distance, with a warm, fresh breeze providing optimum oxygen. And best of all a lithe, bouncing dog, chasing a ball with huge enthusiasm and joie de vivre.



Thursday

Phil had earmarked today as the only possible day to 'do' Cradle Mountain. While the UK is experiencing a mildish winter, Southern Australia is experiencing record-breakingly low temperatures for this time of year. Heather had prepared our bed with a summer douna (duvet) but we have had a winter one over the top for the last two nights!! Just as in the UK, where we have weather rather than climate, here is just the same! Melbourne may experience three seasons in a day but here, it is said, 'if you don't like the weather, just wait for an hour' (it **is** milder tho' – P&H grow lemons, limes and kumquats). So, this



morning, after breakfast, a picnic was packed and off we set, the weather dull tho' the odd bit of blue was available. We travelled first thro' the rich, rolling, productive agricultural area around Devonport. Here we saw fields of white poppies, used for medicinal purposes. Another crop is pyrethrum – an excellent anti-mozzie product. Also fields of potatoes, carrots, brassicas, all on the rich red soil. As we travelled inland, the land is used for for livestock and further still, the hills start to



erupt and the splendid Mount Roland was well worth a view.

Then as we slowly climbed towards the Cradle Mountain Country Park, through the bush, the clouds sank and a fine drizzle started to become heavier tho' it eased partially for a splendid picnic and we were thrilled to see a couple of wombats wandering aimlessly, disregarding the few humans around. The younger one was a delight, not unlike a badger, but no stripe or pointy nose ... and out and about in daylight! Then a short walk, up through an amazing area of bush, dripping with lichen. P&H tell us that this profuse growth only occurs where the air is especially pure! Then onwards through the damp towards the iconic mountain which cradles the Lake beneath it. The two hour walk around the lake was abandoned because of the weather but we did part of it, clambering up to Glacier (aka Suicide) Rock and the beach below. But, for the most part, the mountain top was swathed in cloud. We travelled on down thro' the park a-way for a



hot coffee, then turned back as the weather was lifting and some of the summit was visible (just!) but finally came away. As we travelled down, guess what, the skies lifted and very shortly we were enjoying beautiful weather, Mount Roland looking great!

We stopped in Sheffield, a small town that was dying until somebody painted a mural on their wall; it became a cult, there now being murals on many walls – and an annual event when artists come from all over to add their contribution - and consequently, the town has been revitalised: it was well worth a stopover. We finally arrived back at six-ish and are about to share our final evening meal, this time round, together.

I can barely believe that in two days from now we'll have had a taste of Sydney and be winging our way to New Zealand and a new experience in our amazing journey – travelling freely, with no friends to support us, and no set agenda!



Friday

And now it was time to say goodbye (for now) to Phil and Heather: again, as before on several occasions and in several countries, we have been treated to wonderful hospitality. The day started with a trip back to Turners Beach – a long walk, the four of us giving George an opportunity to run and tire himself out for the day.

We returned home for breakfast, this time poached eggs on toast, before setting off for Campbell Town where Marg' was to meet us for the return to Hobart. We took a final look at the north coast, going via the foreshore at Devonport, before taking the road south. Marg' was waiting patiently,- we were twenty minutes later than the appointed time (can't you tell that it's Nick writing this!)- before final hugs and goodbyes to P&H, reminding them that Gloriana is at their disposal in the Spring of 2014.

An aside: on several occasions Heather has remarked how much Jackie's accent and phraseology reminds her of Nigella Lawson, so if I refer to my partner as anything other than "Jackie", you'll know why.

On our way south from Campbell Town, we stopped off at Ross, the most charming of villages we've seen in Tas. Here Jackie/Nigella finally achieved one of her wishes; she had an scallop pie, for which Ross is apparently famous. Not far onward, we diverted off the main highway to drive through Oatlands (Jim/Katie: very nice, but Ross is nicer), and an hour or so later arrived back in Hobart to find that India was already 74-for-4 (or 4-for-74 as they say here – it must be because we're upside-down) and they were all out by teatime.

A relatively relaxed evening (after the packing was done); a good night's sleep; and the morning meant yet more farewells, this time to Derek and Marg' who, despite considerable demands on their time over this period, have been so helpful in making our stay in this southernmost province of Australia so memorable. Our flight from Hobart took off on time, and shortly after eleven we landed in Sydney. We had planned to spend the day in the city but, by the time we had lodged our big bags in the left-luggage facility and bought our train tickets, we would have been \$100 down. So, as we are due to be back here in March, we felt the money could be better used, though our planned meeting with David will now be at the airport rather than at the boat club. It will be good to see him, however, wherever we are.