**NINE MONTHS IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE**

I’ve been in NZ for nearly nine months and despite the recent (& expensive )hassle of flooded drains, everything has gone well; better than I could have anticipated in 2012 when I decided to take the plunge & move to the other side of the planet. This is in no small part due to the fantastic support which I enjoyed in NL from so many friends. Somehow, you all made those last few months such fun, that I got on the plane with a broad smile on my face, looking forward to the future – and I’m still smiling! Thank you!

Looking back over these past nine months, I feel a little as though I didn’t travel on a plane but with Dr Who in the Tardis. I didn’t land in an alien world but rather in a parallel universe where life seems similar, vaguely familiar, but so different! There have been challenges but I’ve enjoyed it all.

The house, so very different from my previous homes, suits my new lifestyle. It’s also reasonably boy-proof & dog-proof! The three months of visitors, which were such a pleasure, showed me how the house can be used and what can be improved to make my visitors more comfortable. The construction of a kitchen was a top priority and I am grateful that carpenter friend Johno, curious about a house made entirely of wood, took the project on board with such amazing results.

The garden, full of strange plants, as well as some familiar ones from the northern hemisphere, has been a magical mystery tour since I landed. It had been neglected but that’s another challenge, not least because of the Christchurch climate. It’s quite a lot nearer the equator than Lisse but with no moderating Gulf Stream and a strong Southern Ocean influence: on one side of the Canterbury Plain, the Southern Alps; on the other side, the Port Hills & the sea. The temperature fluctuates considerably over short periods and, oh,how the weeds grow! Both house & garden will be on-going projects to keep me well occupied.

It’s been a long haul to achieve a complete Wi-Fi system for the house but, I think that, with some expert help along the way, we’ve made it at last. Thank goodness for my Smart phone; it kept me in touch with the world and really made me appreciate Facebook.

Lincoln Village Vets & its clients fascinate me. I lend a hand as & when I am needed, if I am available. Sometimes, LVV books me in advance!

Christchurch is the main centre for Canterbury, which is the size of the Netherlands. In terms of NZ distances, Christchurch is nearby and I like living near a city, even an earthquake damaged one. The phoenix is rising from the ashes: theatres, parks, art, entertainments, exhibitions & shopping malls; re-opening, recovering & not far away. As to quakes, we have all become a little complacent but we are back on our toes after a 4.2 quake on Friday afternoon. It was about 7km away & 7km deep, rattling even my laid-back house.

Thanks to my generous friends & family, my beautiful chook house arrived on a trailer from Little River (not nearby in NL terms!) Then the chooks came; four young, skittish Silky Bantams. It took some time before eggs began to be laid, delicious for Sunday brunch in the garden, and just as suddenly stopped being laid. I await the next development. That arrived today when we came home to find my beautiful chook, Jane, dead with no signs of preceding trauma or distress. She had grown into a handsome chook with shiny auburn & black feathers, “Beatrix headgear” and bright blue wattles. I had felt that she was about to lay her first egg. Anneke did the autopsy after an X-ray, confirming the tentative diagnosis of egg(yolk) peritonitis. All very sad!

Injured & orphaned hedgehogs have come to live in my garden with varying degrees of success. Of the three I have now, two will stay permanently, one has 3 &the other 3½ legs, and the third one will be released after the winter.

Grandsons Joe & Jamie have been to stay together for a week at a time: fun, fun, fun – and an indulgent granny who can be quite strict at times, which they both survive pretty well!

I’ve been co-opted onto the committee of Lincoln Envirotown, a subject dear to my heart, but I’m the new girl on the block, of course. Another challenge! This has brought me into contact with the fringes of Lincoln University. Also, as a resident (& a senior), I have access to the university sports facilities – similar to ESTEC.

Golf did not reappear in my life until Wendy, Anneke & I took Joe to Lincoln GC on Feb. 24th, for their “Hook into Golf” open day. W&A found the Lady Captain and, without further ado, I was registered to play with the Ladies on the following Tuesday; when I heard, as expected, that stroke play is the norm. Since then I have had great time. With my official NZ golf handicap, from my Arrowtown GC membership, I was eligible to play in everything. On March 26th, I played in the 18 hole Bronze Interclub, the equivalent of the NL *competitie.* (The higher Silver category plays 36 holes!) I continued to play to the end of the Interclub season. I have been on seven different golf courses & I intend to join the Vets Golf as they play a different course each month. NZ clubs are very welcoming; lots of the competitions are open to members of other clubs with very low entry fees.

From my experiences so far, a few Canterbury golf facts stand out: the ages of some of the players coupled with the lack of electric trolleys and golf carts. Eighty year olds & higher walking 18 holes with push trolleys. The star is Lincoln member Betty, age 83, who also plays the in Silver Interclub. An 85 year old lucidly explained the NZ handicapping system to me. For a question on a rule, I was directed to an 81 year old, my namesake but called Jan. Yes, of course, there are younger players as well. One of them (4 children ages between 4 & 14) was my partner in the Lincoln Ladies Foursomes matchplay, which we went on to win won!

That’s enough of golf; I’ll just repeat: “seems similar, vaguely familiar, but decidedly different”

To close, I must add two news items although the details are being finalised:

1. Following the dis-establishment of the Queenstown Planning Dept with a future of 50% less jobs in a reduced hierarchy; rather than “wait & see”, (Senior Planner) Wendy has accepted an offer from Christchurch City Council. This is a drastic decision.
2. I have decided that I can safely leave the country without affecting my residency/right of re-entry, using the return half of my 2012 ticket. I will fly out of Christchurch on June 6th, arriving in Amsterdam on June 7th. I expect to fly out of Amsterdam on July 11th but I am waiting for confirmation of this ticket.

Best wishes to you all and don’t forget, if you get to New Zealand, there will always be a welcome & a bed for you in Lincoln.

Janice



 

 