

The Robbins' Christmas Newsletter 2004



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Each year we seem to bemoan the speed at which the year has passed and how busy our lives have become. Our 'Christmas' letter (more appropriately named the 'End of Year Letter' but with the alternative title of 'Easter Letter' waiting in the wings) is written later in the year; Ed gets on to Sub-Ed (and vv) to get on with it ... I am sure you can imagine the scene. Time was when the Robbins' epistle was the harbinger at the start of the Christmas mail season ... [GET ON WITH IT – Ed].

We have been charmed to receive a number of cards and letters all containing various news and interesting snippets and an increasing number of Christmas email messages. Thank you for all of these and for your abiding friendship.

right – Larry escorts the NZ Governor General, Dame Silvia Cartwright, at the NZNMM



Larry has now been at the NZ National Maritime Museum (NZNMM) for 5 years, which we find to be rather astonishing [wonder how the Museum find it? – Ed] given that the move was something of a step in faith and into the dark. Jane has been at AUT for a similar period [ditto AUT – Ed]. Both of us are still enjoying our jobs and roles. Jane has become more of a systems/requirements analyst [which sounds quite grand, you would think they would pay more for it – Ed] and Larry continues to work to keep the Museum on an even keel. The project with Te Papa, the national museum, is still 'on' though progress is not what Larry would wish it to be [understatement of the year – Sub Ed].

We did not have the excitement of America's and Louis Vuitton Cups this year though life was full. As the university have sold the system that Jane supports to other universities, she has been travelling a bit, though mainly within a 200km radius of Auckland. Larry has travelled within NZ a bit, including trips to Wellington and also down to Bluff in the South Island.

We changed cars at the start of the year and went from a large Toyota to a Mini. Jane had [long ago – Ed] suggested that a smaller car might be more sensible. The Mini is a wonderful little car, though it keeps trying to get us into trouble!



In October we made an extended trip to Europe. We started at Bilbao in Spain where Larry attended meetings with the Executive of

the International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM) principally to discuss the conference that is to be held in Auckland in November 2005. Jane did some sightseeing around Bilbao including the maritime museum there [which funnily enough Larry did NOT get to visit! – Ed] [sent an impartial observer – Sub Ed]. Then we headed off on a driving holiday in Spain and Portugal.

We visited a number of Maritime Museums [funny that! – Ed] on the north and western coasts of Spain and Portugal and were very well received in the 3 museums where we asked for the Director. That is not to say we were not well received in the others, but they were the smaller museums usually run by councils whose Directors were not located at the museum. We also, naturally, visited a number of medieval villages, ancient churches and cathedrals (including the cathedral at Santiago La Compostela which we found fascinating). We did a tour of the cathedral roof and were told of a unique ceremony which takes place during the midday mass. A HUGE scenter (75 kg in weight if we recall correctly) is lifted aloft by 2 or more priests and then swings in a huge arc over the heads of the worshippers. We had a good viewing

position and enjoyed the spectacle and the music very much! However you will need to watch the video if you want to get the full flavour!

We also forayed into the mountains and took a cable car up into Picas de la Europas, exploring the upper level during a snowstorm. It was somewhat cool!!



At the opening of the Union Steamship Company Exhibition (The theme was 'dress for the Captain's cocktail party')

Our trip ended with 3 days in Lisbon. We had managed not to damage the car in any way, and were only hooted at by 3 other drivers that we know of. We only went the wrong way round one traffic island [Ed the navigator being alert and averting some other attempts! Ed] [It was poorly signposted – Sub Ed] [and anyway it was a Sunday and there was little other traffic –Sub Ed] [Amazing how well the Portuguese drive when waving both hands and arms about as you come at them from the wrong way! – Ed] [Wasted the extra spent on car insurance ! – Sub Ed]

Jane at the lighthouse, Cape Finisterre



From Lisbon we flew to Heathrow where we separated, Jane to visit her folks, Larry flying on to the USA to attend a maritime heritage conference.

Larry says that he did not see any museum to which the NZNMM did not stack up well [though some were obviously better funded and some were a little larger – Ed] Jane says how great it was to catch up with the family again and, my how the nieces and nephews have grown!

A major project at home – occupying the second half of the year – has been in remodelling the bathroom and putting in an ensuite. We were blessed by having been lead to an excellent builder who brought with him his tradesmen contacts and we are very pleased with the job they did. People told us it would cost us twice as much and take us twice as long as we expected. Fortunately though it did take twice the time estimated (primarily because we stopped the job when we went overseas and there was a slow start-up on our return) the cost was pretty much as budgeted [even if Larry did get a little carried away with the tapware –Ed][but they look wonderful! – Sub Ed]



Jane (4th from left) with the Ball family from Australia

We have enjoyed a number of visitors this year. Some were just passing through Auckland and we were able to meet up for meals (to you all, thanks for looking us up ... come again!) Others have stayed with us. A friend from Dunedin has stayed a couple of times, braving the various states of chaos as the bathroom work progressed, as did a couple from Sweden ...friends we had never before met but whom we enjoyed very much!

Jane continues as one of the sound-system operators at our church while Larry has a number of ancillary roles there – commissar of church security [keys and lock-up roster – Ed] and property manager [talk about being mis-cast – Sub Ed]. The church is going well. We enjoy the young minister and the other members who are

a good group of people of various ages. Larry has continued his marriage celebrancy work which he really enjoys. He does not keep a strict count but the tally this year is about 22 weddings (including a couple of renewal of vows ceremonies) and a baby naming. There are about 6 booked for next year. Venues have ranged from homes to vineyards, boats and on a hilltop on what seemed to be the coldest wettest day of the year ... and this was in summer There was hail and it was only marginally warmer than on the mountain top in Spain! Larry works on the theory that the ceremony should be 'long enough to be memorable, but short enough to be endurable'. The hilltop ceremony should be memorable for many reasons, including the speed at which the final blessing was delivered [with the couple's encouragement I should add – Ed].



Larry marries Gaelene and Ross. Gaelene lived in our 'granny flat' for about 5 years.

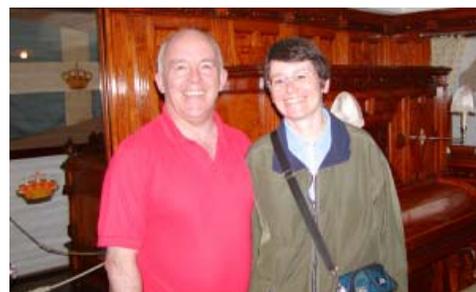
Larry was invited to become patron of the Auckland Maritime Society [... and accepted when he found it would not cost him money – Ed][oooh- fibs! Sub-Ed] which is a great honour. At the end of the year he received a letter advising that he had been elected as 'Member Emeritus' of the Australasian Hydrographic Society which is also a great honour [though he has less idea what this means than being patron of the AMS! – Ed] . We have both continued as Hon Sec (Jane) and Hon Treasurer (Larry) of the International Sailors Society in Auckland. Larry continues to run a number of websites. This latter hobby has been a bit stressful [masterful understatement – Ed] as there have been some problems with the server space he rents, so the past few weeks have seen preparations for a server move.

Looking ahead to 2005 ... we are heading to the Bay of Islands (about 4 hours north of Auckland) for a 4 day cruise over New Year. Naturally we are hoping that summer finds us at about that time! We are anticipating busy years at work as Jane's computer project continues to make developmental progress and as the Museum moves forward. The ICMM Congress will take some time (in planning and then in the running) and if there are sufficient numbers Larry will escort a post-congress tour of NZ for about 10 days. That will bring us to Christmas which we anticipate will be spent at home recovering! We do not anticipate any major overseas trips this year though we might pop over to Australia or one of the South Pacific islands for a week or two in the winter. We do NOT plan any renovations to the house, a new car, pets etc. We ARE anticipating, with great expectation, some overseas guests, some of whom we have not seen in a number of years.

As ever, we wish you everything you would wish yourself for 2005. May it start, and continue, well.

Jane

Larry



In the King's cabin of the Portuguese Royal Yacht (at the National Maritime Museum in Lisbon)