

The Robbins' Christmas Newsletter 2005



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May you and yours be richly blessed this Christmas time, and may you have a safe and restful holiday period. We send you our love and greetings as 2005 draws to a close and 2006 dawns.

What a year it has been ... and how quickly it has passed! We seem to have fitted quite a lot in and as always we wonder where the year has gone! It is hard to realise that it was almost a year ago that we took a holiday cruise in and around the Bay of Islands!

Jane has kept very busy at AUT (Auckland University of Technology) working as an analyst programmer on the student administration system and Larry continues at the Museum. We are both somewhat surprised to find ourselves still in these positions after 6 years (in Larry's case ... it is 5½ for Jane) or so. Occasionally Larry gets the 7 year itch [He keeps suggesting that being a 'kept man' might be an option – Ed] but then the sun comes out and shines on the harbour and he realises how well-off he is!

Jane's birthday was a milestone one [definition ... a birthday divisible by 5 – Ed]. It fell upon the day that the Museum opened a new exhibition entitled 'Intrepid Kiwis' [Those who have done daft things at sea and generally survived to tell the tale – Ed] Jane [magnanimously – Sub Ed] agreed that perhaps attendance at the opening function took precedence over being taken out to dinner. She noted a number of friends attending the opening but thought that Larry was stacking the invitation list with his mates on the 'no point in having power if you cannot abuse it' basis and thought no more of it. She was somewhat surprised to be inveigled into



the Boardroom where 20 selected friends were waiting. All enjoyed a splendid catered dinner in a lovely setting with a group of the museum staff forming an impromptu choir for a rousing chorus of 'Happy Birthday'. Jane was very spoiled by the Museum's caterers (Dawsons) and of course by everyone there. [Roll on the next milestone! – Ed]



The 'choir'



The table was beautifully set

The main pre-occupation at the museum this year has been the Triennial Congress of the International Congress of Maritime Museums – ICMM. You may recall that Larry travelled to Europe a couple of times to bid for the congress and it was won a couple of years ago. The Congress was co-hosted in November by the NZNMM and the RNZN Museum and went very well indeed.

There were a relatively small number of delegates (NZ is a long way from just about anywhere and a number of the visitors expressed their astonishment that Antipodeans travel to Europe so regularly!) but all seemed to enjoy the week.



Jane took an active part in the partners' programme [including a wine-tour on Waiheke island which she says was hard work – Ed] and we moved into a hotel in the city for the week to be a real part of the Congress. All in all we enjoyed it all very much and the congress went well. It included a social evening at the Museum and one at the Naval Base, a dinner at Auckland Museum and a day at sea with the Navy in HMNZS RESOLUTION. There were even some papers and other presentations! After the Congress Larry escorted seven of the delegates on a tour of the North Island for a week visiting a number of museums, tourist spots and a couple of vineyards. [Tough duty – Ed] He even tried Zorbing – where you climb inside a large plastic ball and roll down a hill. Jane was a little upset as she wanted to try it too and won't go on her own – but Larry has promised to go again with Jane. [Watch this space – Ed]

Larry was elected to the Executive Committee of ICMM which he can add to his list of honorary offices along with that of Hon National Secretary/Treasurer of the International Sailors Society (ISS) NZ Inc to which he was elected in October [Serves him right for dozing off during the AGM – Ed]. Jane continues as Hon Sec of the Auckland branch of the ISS; Larry is Hon Treasurer of the same and serves as their representative on the board of the Auckland International Seafarers Centre. Some church responsibilities have been passed on to allow some time for these new positions but we are still committed to, and engaged at, Milford Baptist Church, Jane now being the more involved there as sound operator. Larry has retained responsibility for the church's website.



Larry continues as the church's 'lay' marriage celebrant and gets a great deal of satisfaction from conducting weddings. Most of these come through his website or by personal recommendation. This year he will have undertaken 19 weddings, 3 baby-namings and also a funeral. This latter was far from easy as he

does not usually undertake funerals, however a couple he had married a couple of years ago tragically lost their first baby to cancer and asked him to assist. Larry says that there can be no greater compliment than this. As far as these things can, the day went well.

We enjoyed a winter holiday in Tropical Queensland, Australia, in July. We travelled to Cairns and took a four-day cruise in the Barrier Reef area including a visit to Cooktown (established where the ENDEAVOUR was taken for repairs after hitting a part of the Great Barrier Reef) [There is a chunk of the ballast from ENDEAVOUR in the Maritime Museum. This was jettisoned to help get the ship off the reef – Ed]. A couple of hills which Captain Cook climbed to survey the area were visited. Larry declined the opportunity to climb to the top of Lizard Island at dawn, saying that Cook would have climbed it later in the day to get the sun behind him. Jane, made of sterner stuff, undertook the trip. [The first hill was at Cooktown; we went up in a van. No suggestion that Captain Cook was carried up, and no insistence by Larry that he should be allowed to walk up! – Ed]



After the cruise we drove down to Townsville [to visit a maritime museum, of course – Ed] [Actually there are 2 in Townsville – Sub Ed] and then spent a few days driving back by a meandering route, visiting a number of tourist destinations including some scenic spots, wildlife parks, aviaries, and a couple of museums – including the Sugar museum which Jane found especially interesting given her food processing background [Larry liked the little trains that bring in the sugar cane – Ed] We visited a coffee plantation where Larry took a flight in a microlight aircraft with the owner of the property.

The museum's current exhibition is 'Snapshots – Moments from NZ Maritime History'. It is a joint exhibition and tells a number of maritime stories not told elsewhere in the museum. The stories were selected by the exhibitions staff and include the story of the 1994 storm in which MONOWAI was involved. Larry says it is galling enough to see toys that one played with put on display in a museum, let alone to be included in a museum's exhibition!

Jane's Christmas present will be a small motor scooter to be used for local trips when Larry has the car [notice the way round these things work! – Ed]. We've ordered it but not yet taken delivery, so no pictures yet. [Pure coincidence that Jane's life insurance has recently been increased – Ed]

We have enjoyed a number of visits from friends who have stayed with us. Canadians, Irish, Swedes, and Kiwis this year. There have also been a number of catch-up meetings with friends passing through Auckland. A number manage to visit

the Museum [It is actually a compulsory activity for those staying! – Ed]. We certainly enjoy the visits of friends (whether they are friends we have actually yet met or friends of friends as sometimes happens!) and hope that any of you passing this way will come and stay.



In the Museum's Immigrant Cabin in August (L-R) Wayne (NZ), Jane, Henry Burling, Jen & Brad (Canada)

To those whose cards and newsletters we have received by mail and email, thank you. It is lovely to hear from you and we value your friendship very much ... though this might be difficult for you to accept given our poor record for keeping in contact! As is our custom now we are emailing this to those for whom we have an email address and will be contributing the saved postage to a selected charity.

As ever, we wish you everything you would wish yourself for 2006. May it start, and continue, well.

Jane

Larry



Sunset in the Australian Bush