

GRANDPA'S ADVENTURES 2014

A newsletter prepared for Sophie, Theo, Jemima, Felix,
Raphael, Clara and David

But which grown-ups are welcome to read too!

Sunday 14 September

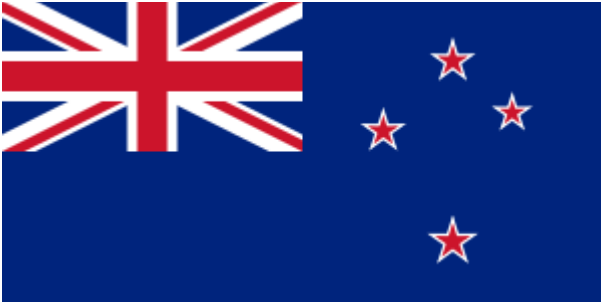
On Tuesday I fly to New Zealand. For me it will be a real adventure. According to the dictionary an adventure is 'an unusual, exciting, even daring experience'. Unlike Captain Cook and the crew of his ship the *Endeavour*, who first explored New Zealand in 1769-1770, I won't encounter any dangers on my trip – but I am sure I will have some 'unusual' and 'exciting' moments along the way.



It will be a long flight. The plane leaves London Heathrow on Tuesday afternoon at 4.15 – and arrives in Auckland on Thursday morning on 5.45. It is a long way – 5.437 miles to be precise. The actual flight time takes 23 hours 17 minutes; but the plane stops off in Los Angeles (USA) to re-fuel.

On the way I will cross many time zones – so that when I arrive in New Zealand at 5.45 in the morning, the time in England will actually be 6.45 the previous evening. Auckland is 11 hours ahead of London! Hopefully it will not take my body too long to get used to the time difference.

I will be flying out with 'Air New Zealand'. From the picture you will see that the plane's 'livery' depicts a silver fern. I am told that Maori hunters and warriors used silver fern leaves to find their way home. When bent over, the fronds would catch the moonlight and illuminate a path through the forest. The silver fern has come to be a symbol for New Zealand honour – and for that reason it is to be found on the shirts of New Zealand's rugby team, the 'All Blacks'.



The silver fern, however, is not found on the flag of New Zealand – instead the flag depicts the Union Jack and the four

brightest stars of the Southern Cross (these stars can only be seen south of the equator)

Grandma will join me in just over five weeks time – she leaves England on Saturday 25 October. I am sure that she would appreciate a letter or an email or even a telephone call from you all.

I intend to write to you all every Monday, giving news of what I have been up to. So why am I writing to you today on a Sunday? Because tomorrow I am speaking to a group of ministers in the West of England – I have to catch the 6.40 a.m. train from Chelmsford, and will not be back until 8.20 p.m. in the evening. I will not have much time or energy to write letters to anybody on that day. This is the reason for writing today.

So I am off on my adventures on Tuesday – and will not be back until Friday 21st November. Most of the time I shall be in New Zealand, but with Grandma I shall go to Australia for an Asia-Pacific coroners' conference, and then on the way back we shall stop off in Vancouver to see some really special people (who do you think they are?).

It would be lovely to hear from you while I am away – emails, photos, even 'face times' would all be very welcome.

With much love

Grandpa

Sunday 21 September

'Good evening' – or should I say 'good morning everybody', because while it is evening here, it is only just waking up time with you. Or perhaps I should simply say 'Kia Ora', the Maori for 'Hello'.

I am writing from Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, toward the top of New Zealand's North Island. Although half the population of NZ live here, the capital is a much smaller city at the bottom of North Island. Can you find the two cities on the map?



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For the next three and a half weeks I am living in Laidlaw College – you will see a picture of the imposing front building, which houses a large library, staff offices, and a student coffee shop. The College is named after one of NZ's most successful businessmen, who gave away 90% of his income to good causes, including this College. The College is made up of four 'schools': a school of theology, mission and ministry (i.e. they train church leaders); a school of education (i.e. they train teachers); a school of counselling (i.e. they train counsellors to help people with problems); and a graduate school (i.e. they offer more advanced courses for people to get further qualifications) – I will be teaching in the graduate school. The grown-ups might be interested to know that Laidlaw's 'mission' is 'to equip students and scholars to renew their communities with a faith as intelligent as it is courageous'.

I am living in a room as large as a school classroom (a 'bed-sit' with a huge TV), and off it there is a study and a bathroom. With the help of the College's IT specialist I have my computer and I-phone all linked to the College's wi-fi. So I can receive your emails!

The weather here is very mixed. Today we have had sunshine – but we also had a hail-storm. The storm was so noisy this morning that when I was preaching at the second service there were a few minutes when I had difficulty making myself heard!

All that may sound rather boring stuff. What about my adventures? Well, in the first place I have been lent a large powerful E220 Mercedes car – it

is a joy to drive. On Saturday I took it for a 'spin'. I drove out of Auckland heading north and went to do some wine-tasting in one of the vineyards (alas, I could only have a taste – for I was driving!). Then I went to Muriwai beach, where the sand is black (yes, black!), the winds are strong, and there is amazing surf – there were lots of wind-surfers. I drove up to Helensville, where there are hot springs – but unfortunately hadn't brought a swimming costume with me, so I couldn't go in.

On my way back I called off to see some friends at a seven bedroomed house they have just bought for \$4 million NZ dollars (£2 million to you and me) which they intend to use for people who need a break – fittingly it is called 'Whataka' (a Maori word for 'taking a breath'). It is a beautiful house set in large grounds. Saturday evening was the formal opening. There were loads of people milling around, there was an art exhibition in one wing of the house, a saxophonist was playing, drinks and canapes were being served – and then there were some speeches and I found myself asked to come to the front and ask God's blessing on the house. At that stage I was glad I wasn't in a swimming costume!

Then there was the adventure of preaching this morning to two large congregations, with people from all over the world. At the second service three people were baptised – one from India, one from China, and one from New Zealand. Interestingly, I noticed that the church runs English classes three days a week.

Tomorrow I begin teaching – that will also be an adventure for me. I have no idea what the students will be like. All I know is that I have to entertain (sorry, 'teach') them for three solid hours every day, Monday to Friday, for the next two weeks.

Well, it's time for bed and time for me to stop.

With much love,

Grandpa

Sunday 5 October 2014

Dear Everybody,

I have had a real adventure today. I woke up this morning to discover that there had been a massive fire in an electricity sub-station with the result that thousands upon thousands of people in Auckland were without electricity. I had to wash and shave in the gloom. I could not 'face-time' Grandma - no mobiles were functioning. The internet wasn't working - and nor were ordinary landline phones. But worse was to come. I then discovered that all the electronic doors and gates would not open. Thankfully there was one ordinary door in the house which worked - but I couldn't drive my car out from where I was staying, because the outside gates were shut solid. Yet I couldn't stay in the house because I was due to preach. Nor could I phone anybody to come and ask them to collect me to take me to the church at which I was preaching! Fortunately after wrestling with the gates for 35 minutes Terry Calkin, my host, was able to find a way to open the gates manually. So I set off - but I had to drive carefully because none of the traffic lights were working. What an adventure!

Another adventure was being invited out on Tuesday and Thursday evening for a meal - on Tuesday my friends the Calkins invited me to meet their family (they have two grown-up sons), while on Thursday one of my students invited me to meet his family (he has a wife and four children). Guess what they gave me to eat? Both families gave me roast lamb! Did you know that for every person in NZ there are seven sheep? Just over 4 million people live in NZ and there are over 30 million sheep. Not surprisingly roast lamb is a favourite meal in NZ.



Then on Saturday I had another adventure. I was taken into what New Zealanders call 'the bush', or what we might call a forest. We walked through part of the Whakarewa ranges – where Sir Edmund Hillary who conquered Mount Everest used to walk. I saw kauri trees (bottom left), which are amongst the mightiest trees in the world. They grow to more than 50 metres high (more than 25 times my height) and more than 16 metres round. What's more they can live for more than 2000 years (some would have been around when Jesus was alive!). Kauri tree wood is very strong – so the first settlers here in NZ cut down most of the kauri trees to make boats and houses. Today the kauri tree is a 'protected' tree.



I was also taken to Cornwall Park (see the cherry trees in the right-hand picture) – it wasn't an adventure, but it was very pleasant.

While I am here I have been watching NZ television. A lot of it is taken up with rugby – but they do also have English programmes such as Coronation Street and Antiques' Roadshow. I have also been reading the NZ Herald, which is the local paper here in Auckland. Most of the paper is about local news – for example, there was the sad story of a five-year old boy playing on the beach who was suddenly washed away by a giant wave. But there was also an article on grand-parents, which included these words spoken by Pope Francis just last week: "A people that doesn't take care of its grandparents and treat them well is a people with no future". That is surely something to think about!

What is going to happen this week? I don't know. I have finished my teaching and so my work has come to an end. Apart from an invitation out to dinner on Tuesday and a preaching engagement on Sunday, I have nothing in my diary. So this week is going to be a journey into the

UNKNOWN – who knows what adventures I shall be involved in? It feels a little scary!

Well, enough of my news. I would love to hear of your news? Have you had any adventures? I can't believe that every day has been a boring day for you. So, do let me know what you have been up to.

With much love

Grandpa/Father/Paul

12 October 2014

Dear Everybody

Today is a special day. Do you know why? Because it is my sister's birthday! Yes, my sister Elizabeth is trying to catch me up – but she will never succeed!

You will remember that last week I told you that the electricity went off – amazingly, it remained off for two whole days. There is a church near where I am staying which has a moving electronic display outside it, with a different message this week. Since Tuesday afternoon (when the power came back) the message was:

GOD SHOWS US THE WAY –
BUT ELECTRICITY HELPS!

My adventures have been a bit limited this week – and are quite tame compared to Uncle Benjamin who sat on a ledge in Africa's Victoria Falls



I am told that Benjamin has a photo of himself on Facebook – perhaps he might send it to us all!

One of my adventures this week has been finding different ways of going for walk. Every time I have approached the Orakei Basin (see the pictures of the 'lake') a different way – one time I got well and truly lost and found myself having a much longer walk than I bargained. Some of the roads here are a bit like a maze.



Most of the week I have been working – I have prepared a sermon, written some blogs, sent lots of emails, and I have also been trying to improve a draft I have written of what I hope will be a book. BUT 'all work and no play makes Grandpa a dull boy'. So yesterday (Saturday) I decided to treat myself to an ADVENTURE.

I set my sat-nav and made my way to the Pah Homestead, a lovely old pioneer house in Auckland which houses the 'Wallace arts centre' (see the picture below). There I looked at a display of modern art (Rob, you should be proud of me), and then I sat down in the sunshine (yes, real sunshine at last) and had a steak sandwich and chips with tomato sauce, together with a glass of wine. I think I will take Grandma there when she comes to join me [Yes, in LESS THAN TWO WEEKS TIME she flies out, leaving dear old Essex to others to care for!]



I could have had a 'dessert', but instead I opted for another ADVENTURE. I re-set the sat-nav and made my way to St Heliers' Bay (see the picture), where I bought myself an enormous (two scoops) honey and almond ice-

cream. It was yummy! I sat in the sunshine and a lady commented that my socks matched my T-shirt, as, of course, they should.

Today I have been to preach in Pakarunga – it was an adventure just finding it. They had a great way of welcoming people to church – special parking for visitors, a welcome pack with a free pen and chocolate too, and quality coffee to boot. I needed the coffee, for I had to preach at two morning services. What fascinated me was the huge cross at the front of the church – I thought it was constructed of orange boxes, but then discovered that it was made of beer crates!



It's time for bed – so I must sign off.

With much love to you all – Grandpa/Father/Paul

Sunday 19 October

Dear Everybody

This week's adventures began last Monday with a long drive, over the Bombay ranges, to the town of Hamilton through which flows the mighty Waikato river.



I was due to stay with Neil and Sue Maclean, who came to stay with us in August (Felix and Clara, do you remembering having fish and chips with them on Mersea Island?). The Macleans have a swimming pool and a HOT TUB in their garden - I went in every day!



I was taken to see some very beautiful gardens in Hamilton - these gardens have been named the world's best gardens of 2014.



We also visited the local museum. Life was very tough for the early settlers.

This has been a great week of eating lots of ICE CREAM , and also of really yummy PAVLOVA ('pavs' as Sue Maclean called them). The Australians claim they were the first to create Pavlova, but almost certainly the first Pavlova was baked in honour of a Russian dancer here in NZ. Do notice that the Pavlova here has KIWI fruit on the top.



Along with fish and chips ('fush and cheeps') I also ate PAUA fritters - YUK! Inside the beautiful paua shells found on the beaches of NZ are these 'abilones'. I didn't enjoy that culinary adventure!,



I returned to Auckland on Wednesday. In the afternoon my host, Terry Calkin (he is pictured below with his wife, Jayne), suggested we walk round

the volcano (defunct!) in Cornwall Park. Terry is very competitive – and was always trying to walk faster than me. Foolishly as we were coming to the end of our walk, I began to run – I wanted to reach car first. Here we were two men, one 70 and the other 75, racing one another!



Alas, I pulled a muscle in my left thigh, so to my great disappointment Terry won! Unfortunately it is probably going to take a week or two before my leg is right. This was an adventure which went wrong!

Friday we had big STEAKS cooked on a BBQ – but Terry cheated. His BBQ ‘fire’ is a modern gas cooker – not the old-fashioned charcoal which takes an hour or so before cooking is possible. Still, I have to admit the steaks were very g-o-o-d.

At crack of dawn on Saturday another adventure was beckoning. I drove down south to Tauranga, the largest port in New Zealand. There I met an old Cambridge friend, John Rayner, and we went for a walk around Mount Maunganui, an extinct volcano. People were on the beach, but it was still too cold to swim.



I am staying in Tauranga for a week, and my hosts, Gerard and Heather Marks, have six grand-daughters and one grand-son. Grandma and I first got to know them in 1991 (how many years ago is that?) when we visited New Zealand for the very first time.

My adventure this morning was to preach in Bethlehem. No, I didn’t see any wise men or shepherds! Bethlehem is a suburb of Tauranga. I rather liked the church’s strap-line – ‘where hope is born’. What do you think?



With LOTS of LOVE - Grandpa/Father/Paul

Sunday 26 October

Monday morning's adventure involved going for a walk and then getting lost. I was trying to walk around the estuary, but I ended up walking along a motorway. I longed to be stopped by the police – who might then have given me a lift home! By the time I had got back to where I was staying, I had walked for over two hours.



In the afternoon I was taken to see the Tauranga Mission House (known as the Elms). The house was built on a Maori battle site - in one battle 65 people were killed and eaten on the spot. Missionaries needed to be tough and had many adventures! Archdeacon Brown and the other missionaries would often stand between the warring sides and plead for them to stop. Eventually many Maoris became Christians – and then gave up their fighting and their eating people.



Monday was a busy day, for in the evening I went to a nearby Maori 'marae' where, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the coming of the missionaries to NZ on Christmas Day 1814, I attended an amazingly moving service led by a Kenyan group of Christians. There was wonderful singing and dancing in which everybody, Maori and Pakaha (white) took part.



On Tuesday I was invited for a meal in the home of the pastor of the church where I was due to preach on Sunday (today!). So yet more EATING had to be done - including a really YUMMY pudding. To my amazement I discovered that the sister of the pastor's wife is married to a man who had been one of my young people when I was minister in my first church in Altrincham (Christopher Millard). It is a small world!

On Wednesday I was driven up into the hills to talk to a group of farmers who wish to plant a new Baptist church in Whakamara where 10,000 new homes are to be built. They wanted me to give them some ideas! At the end of the meeting I had to EAT YET MORE FOOD.



To make matters worse, on Thursday I was a guest at a Rotary lunch - and was then taken out for dinner by my friend John Rayner. HOW AM I GOING TO FIT INTO THE AEROPLANE SEAT when I return home?



Thursday was a beautiful sunny day. My adventure was to drive to a sandy beach and eat 'Hokey Pokey' ice cream (= vanilla **ice cream** with small, solid lumps of honeycomb toffee). S-c-r-u-m-p-t-i-o-u-s!



Friday's adventure took the form of gardening for the people with whom I was staying! To say thank-you to my hosts for all their kindness I then went and bought some CHINESE FOOD - all very yummy.

On Saturday the sun shone again. I went for a long walk, had a snooze - and then ATE curried chicken, and we had Hokey Pokey ice-cream again! It really has been a week of eating!

After preaching this morning at Tauranga Central Baptist Church (see the picture below), I drove VERY carefully back to Auckland. It's a bank holiday weekend



here ('Labour Day') and police are everywhere. Top speed is 100 kms (60 miles) per hour, but in many places the speed limit is considerably lower. When you drive a powerful Mercedes car, it is tempting to put one's foot down and roar ahead - but I resisted temptation, and got to Auckland in 3 hours.

Now I am getting ready to welcome Grandma, who arrives tomorrow at 6 o'clock in the morning. I have put all my clothes away and everything is now spick and span. I am even going to sleep in another bedroom tonight, so that I don't have to mess up the beautifully made-up bed. I hope Grandma is excited at the prospect of seeing me again - what do you think? I look forward to a BIG KISS!

With much love, Grandpa/Father/Paul XXXXX

GRANDPA AND GRANDMA'S ADVENTURES

A newsletter prepared for Sophie, Theo, Jemima, Felix, Raphael, Clara and David

But which grown-ups are welcome to read too!

Sunday 2 November 2014

Dear everybody

My first adventure this week was finding my way to the airport! Fortunately I didn't get lost, and so was there in time to meet in GRANDMA. Grandma arrived full of energy and wanted an adventure her very first day in NZ. So our friends, Terry and Jane, took us on an expedition. First, Grandma wanted to see Eden Park, the home of the All Blacks rugby team. Below is a picture of the stadium, as also a photo of a statue of Michael Jones, one of the greatest of All Blacks.



We then drove to the west of Auckland, to see a colony of gannets at Muriwai Beach. These gannets nest at Muriwai Beach and then fly with their babies all the way across the Tasman to Australia – only to come back to NZ to nest again.



Tuesday's adventure was to take a train into the centre of Auckland to do some shopping (including Christmas cracker presents – sshh!); we also looked around the new Auckland art gallery (see photo on the left). In the evening we had a candlelit-dinner – it was Terry and Jayne's 36th wedding anniversary. All the men wore bow-ties and everybody had to make a speech!

On Wednesday we returned to the city centre to visit the Auckland Museum – there were lots of children there, and we were very sorry not to have you grandchildren there, for you too would have enjoyed the experience. We ended our day on a beach!

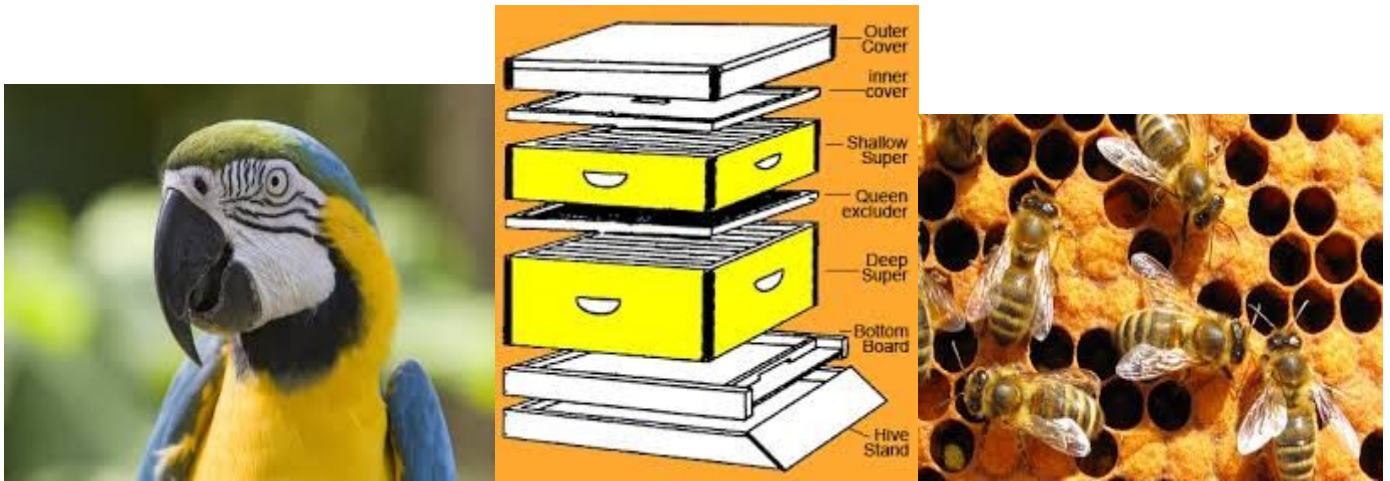


Thursday's adventure was the long drive up to 'Northland' and to the historic town of Kerikeri (it means 'dig-dig' – the ground is very fertile).

On the way up we had lunch at Dargaville (the first photo below), the 'sweet potato' ('kumara') capital of the world! We drove through a forest, where we saw the world's largest kauri tree. On our way up the west coast we saw some beautiful sea views (the last photo below is of Omempere which overlooks Hokianga harbour).



Here in Kerikeri we are staying with another Paul, a bee-keeper and honey 'merchant' – he has over 2000 hives and exports his Manuka honey all over the world. Paul and his wife Ruth have four children. They have a talking parrot – he says not just 'Hello', but also 'Praise the Lord' and 'Preach it, brother'!



Friday's adventure was a L-O-N-G drive (6 hours there and back) right to the very top of NZ, where the Tasman Sea joins the Pacific Ocean. The views were amazing (see the photo). On the way back we stopped off at 90 MILE BEACH – people actually drive along the beach, but sometimes they get stuck in the sand and cannot get out. I was very tempted to drive (that would have been a great adventure), but in the end we decided to be 'safe rather than sorry'. I don't think Terry would have been pleased if we had come back without his car!



On Saturday there were yet MORE adventures.

First we drove out on a main road into the countryside; we then turned off onto a windy gravel road, and after some miles, stopped and climbed a stile, and then walked down through fields to Marsden's Cross, which is by the sea and marks the site where Samuel Marsden preached on Christmas Day 1814 – the first Christian service in NZ. It was very moving.

In the afternoon we took a small car ferry to Russell, known as the 'HELL-HOLE' of the Pacific (because of the bad behaviour of sailors, whalers, and traders), which became the first capital of NZ, but now is just a sleepy village. There we visited Pompallier House, where the first French Roman Catholic missionaries lived – they specialised in printing Christian books for Maoris. We also drove up the very steep Flagstaff Hill, famous because on four occasions the Maoris cut down the flagstaff with its Union Jack.



This morning we went to an EXCITING church, where our friends Paul and Ruth are pastors. They give visitors not just pens, but also chocolate bars! They put on special events, when the prizes might include a free parachute jump! My preaching outfit, if not exciting, was 'casual' in style – I wore a bright red open-necked check shirt (no suit and tie!).



This afternoon our adventure has been to go on a four-hour 'cruise' round the Bay of Islands – the boat even took us through a hole in a rock (can you see it?). We saw a group of dolphins 'sleeping' in the sea!



This is Grandma signing on.....

Grandpa puts enormous effort into writing up these Adventures and it is a relief that this week's instalment is done!

With lots of love from both of us

Grandpa/Father/Paul AND Grandma/Mother/Caroline

Dear Everybody

Last Monday was a busy day. In spite of the heavens opening and the rain pouring down, we drove to Waitangi, where on 6 February 1840 a famous 'treaty' ('agreement') was signed between Britain and the Maoris – the Maoris accepted a British governor of NZ, and recognised Queen Victoria as their queen; while the British recognised the Maori ownership of their land and gave the Maoris the rights of British 'subjects'. So instead of 'conquering' the Maoris, the British accepted Maoris as their 'equals'. This 'treaty' would never have come into being without the help of the missionaries – unfortunately later British settlers did not respect the treaty and treated the Maoris badly.



Later in the day we returned to Kerikeri and visited the Stone Store (the earliest 'shop' in NZ built by the missionaries) as also an early Mission House, where the early missionaries lived – you can see the Stone Store on the left, and the Mission House on the right of the picture. When those early missionaries came to NZ, they had to bring everything with them – not just their clothes, but also things like hammers and nails with which to build houses, forks and spades with which to make gardens (where they could grow vegetables) etc.



Tuesday we drove back to Auckland (a good three hour journey) to stay again with our friend Jayne – Terry was away visiting churches in Tanzania (East Africa)

Wednesday and Friday we 'pottered' around – the truth was that we had got somewhat tired by all our adventures. However, on Thursday we took a ferry to the island of Waiheke – 45 minutes by fast boat – where we toured vineyards and olive groves. It was all very pleasant.

Saturday morning we got up just before five o'clock, because we had to catch a plane to Australia. On the plane we had breakfast: Grandma had a bacon roll and I had corned beef croquettes and scrambled eggs – I wonder, what would you have chosen to eat?

Our hotel is bang in the centre of Melbourne, just by this bridge. It is 24 stories high! On level 9 there is a swimming pool and a large jacuzzi (a bigger version of the 'hot tub' we enjoyed when we were in Bowser), and a large outdoor area with sun-beds – guess how Grandma spent our first afternoon in Melbourne!



Sunday morning began, not with breakfast, but with me returning to the airport. The previous day, in the taxi to the hotel, I had discovered to my alarm that my Swiss watch was no longer on my wrist. But amazingly we discovered that the watch was in the airport's lost property department! On my return we went to a morning service in an old-fashioned church (Collins Street Baptist) bang in the heart of Melbourne.



After service we had lunch overlooking the brown river Yarra (the joke is that in Melbourne the river flows upside down). Grandma did more sun-bathing, while I did some exploring. Then in the evening I preached at Kew Baptist Church, where Nicholas Tuohy is the pastor. The congregation was made up of 70+ students.



Grandma adds:

I wonder whether any of you watched this weekend's rugby matches. Yet again the northern hemisphere teams were unable to beat the southern hemisphere teams. Wales seems to have played pretty well against the Wallabies (Australians) – level pegging at half time. It seems strange to see Christmas decorations on display and the sun shining!

Well, enough of our news. This time next week we will be in Canada – and five days later we will be back in England. I wonder what adventures the next two weeks hold?

With much love from Grandma and myself

Grandpa

20 November 2014

Dear Everybody

We arrived safely in Vancouver, having had a good journey from Melbourne via Auckland. Jonathan was at the airport and took us to the Sylvia Hotel on English Bay, once one of the tallest buildings in Vancouver, but now overshadowed by much bigger buildings.



Later that evening all the family - Jonathan & Fiona, Sophie, Theo & David - came to see us. We went out to the Cactus Club Café - but saw no cacti!

Monday morning David came for breakfast at 7.30 and stayed with us the whole day. Tuesday he overslept and came a little later, and again stayed the whole day. And Wednesday he came for breakfast at 8.30 and likewise stayed the whole day. So we have had a GREAT TIME getting to know David. Some of the time we have been out and about - on the Monday we all visited 'The Bay' where we bought maple syrup. I walked to False Creek with David on my shoulders and took him on a little boat to Granville Island; every day I have taken him on his bike to Stanley Park, where we 'rode' a red fire engine and pretended to put out fires, we played a lot of hide-and-seek, and generally messed around.

Unfortunately Grandma has had a bad cough and cold, so she has had to stay most of the time in the hotel. However, when David came back to the hotel we have read books together, played the memory game, AND even watched children's TV! David has been absolutely PERFECT - well-behaved and always full of questions!

Every evening we have seen Jonathan and Fiona. On the Monday evening we had a meal together in our hotel. On Tuesday evening we went with them to hear some jazz in a Vancouver café. Last night we went to see some very modern ballet!

ALAS, all good things come to an end. In an hour or so we have to catch a taxi and make the LONG journey home. We shall miss Jonathan & Fiona,

Sophie, Theo & David VERY MUCH, but we also VERY MUCH look forward to seeing everybody else.

So this is the last instalment of our adventures

With much love

Grandma and Grandpa

Saturday 15 November 2014

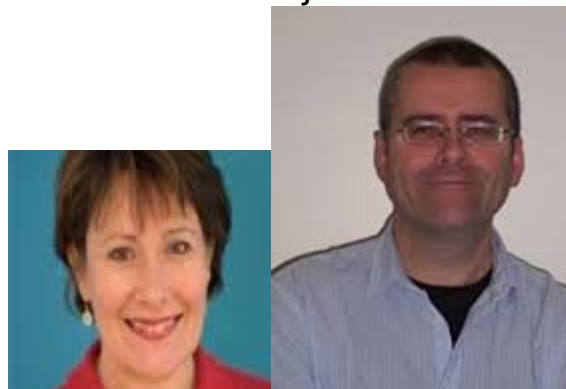
Dear Everybody

Melbourne is a beautiful city – we have been told that every year for the last four years it has been voted as the world's best city to live in (with Vancouver normally coming second!).

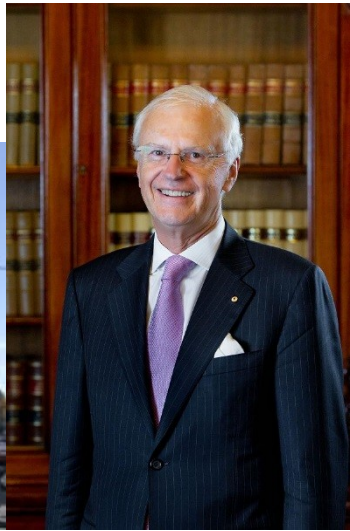
Just near our hotel there are a number of parks, with trees, flowers and fountains. In one park we visited there is a HUGE war memorial, where a flame is constantly burning, in memory of all those who lose their lives in the two world wars as also in later wars in Korea and Vietnam.



On Monday evening we were invited to the home of Anne and Mark Wilkinson-Hayes (see the photos). We know Anne well, because FORTY years ago she was one of our 'young' people in Altrincham. I baptised her, ordained her as a minister, took part in her wedding and in her daughter's dedication. When she left school Anne worked for a year in the church at Altrincham. She has many tales to tell of our 'young' children – Jonathan, Timothy, Susannah and Benjamin!



All around us are concert halls, art galleries and museums. The picture on the left is of one of their art galleries. The other is of the Governor General of Victoria, who invited us (along with the other coroners) on Tuesday to his magnificent Government House



On Wednesday, while Grandma was in her coroners' conference, I spoke to a group of Baptist ministers. In the evening we had the weirdest of experiences – for three whole hours we had a magnificent meal in a tram which went round and round Melbourne. We had no idea where we were, we saw very little, but we ate and drank a good deal!



As a result of all this eating and drinking, on Thursday morning I went for a long fast walk along the banks of the banks of the river Yarra. It was a very hot day, for there was a strong north wind blowing hot air from the deserts of central Australia.



Alas, all the good of the walk was undone by a GALA DINNER in the evening!

In the afternoon, while Grandma was still in her conference, I did some more EXPLORING. I took a tram to the Melbourne Museum, and learnt that is less than 200 years old – in 1837 the settlement was named 'Melbourne' after a British prime minister. It was only after the discovery

of GOLD that Melbourne began to grow – over 500,000 people arrived in 1851 to dig up nuggets of gold (see the photo) and make their fortune!



1851 was the date when the new state of VICTORIA was created, of which Melbourne became – and remains the capital. In 1901 Melbourne became the CAPITAL of the new independent nation of Australia (before that it was a colony governed by Britain), but that changed in 1913 when the Australians decided to build a new capital city called Canberra.

That Thursday afternoon I did an official tour of Melbourne's huge Parliament House.



Melbourne is also famous because it was in Melbourne Gaol in 1881 that the infamous GANGSTER, OUTLAW, ROBBER, KILLER, Ned Kelly, was hanged. When fighting the police, Ned Kelly wore a special suit of armour!



Grandma's conference finished just after lunch on Friday. We visited the Immigration Museum which is set in the Old Customs House. There we discovered that over 9 million people have migrated to Australia since 1788.

In the old days a journey by sea could take up to three months - while today a plane flight from England takes just 24 hours. Although travel is so much easier, it is still quite a challenge settling down in a new country, far from home.

Later that day we met with a group of people who meet up every Friday evening for a meal. They call these meetings 'Table Church' - or 'Thank God it's Friday'. Four of the couples were from England - interestingly every year they all go back 'home' to see their parents, even although air-tickets are not cheap. Indeed, one couple go back twice a year because of their concern for their parents.

Today Father Christmas came to Melbourne!



It seems to us very strange celebrating Christmas in the middle of summer!

Our final engagement in Melbourne is yet another special meal, for our friends Nicholas and Amanda Tuohy have invited us to dinner. It really is a hard life!

Then tomorrow (Sunday) at 8 o'clock in the morning we take a taxi to the airport and our long journey to Vancouver begins. But from the times on the tickets you would think it is a short journey: for according to the tickets we leave Melbourne at 11.45 a.m. and, after stopping off at Auckland, we arrive in Vancouver at 12.15 – just half-an-hour later! In fact we are crossing the date-line and are going back in time, and the journey will take us just over 24 hours. We are getting EXCITED at the thought of seeing Jonathan and Fiona, Sophie, Theo and David! Because of all the complications of tomorrow's journey, rather than wait for Sunday, I am sending off this letter today (Saturday).



Grandma (who is sitting on the sun-terrace in her swimming costume – even although the sun is mostly hidden behind the clouds!) joins me in sending her love to you all.

Grandpa/Father/Paul