



# Helen & John's Xmas Letter

WISHING EVERYONE A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND A JOYOUS NEW YEAR FOR 2006/2007

## The year in brief:



Well another year has sped by. When we sent out cards last year we were on our way to NZ to meet Alan and Val from UK.

We arrived in Auckland on 1 December and spent 20 days travelling around NZ. I had been there 30 years ago and remembered lots of things - though I had trouble finding Devonport pub. We spent 3 days in Auckland in some excellent apartments (ask me if you are going there). John and I visited Fred Nabarro a friend from his school days, we had a good look around and then we headed north to Northland. Fred got his wife to give us an itinerary and it was excellent.

With Val driving and me navigating we set off up the west coast and somehow I directed us down the wrong road and we ended up finding Puhoi Pub on the east coast. I couldn't even use the excuse I was in the wrong hemisphere. We set off again and had a lovely time.

We were supposed to end up in Wellington but only got as far as Mt Manganui so we changed our flights and flew out

of Auckland.

We came home on 20 December, Mum arrived 21 Dec, Val and Alan on 22 Dec, Mike on 24 December. We ordered prawns and beer for an Aussie Xmas. We had a lovely day, went to Redcliffe Lagoon in the afternoon for a bit of air and had lots of lazy hot days.

I have never seen Val so flummoxed. She took to the shade under the trees in the backyard and stayed there. Brisbane heat is pretty awful in January.

We took Mum, Val and Alan to Hervey Bay but made a bad boo-boo and didn't book for Fraser Island in advance and had to miss out. John's cousin lent us her caravan and we had a lovely couple of days anyway.

What we hadn't counted on was that Brisbane closes down between Xmas and New Year and doesn't really get back into the swing of things until the next week. Val and Alan eventually bought an orange 1976 Kombi Kampervan and set off for Melbourne. John's mate Snake sent them off to Lightning Ridge to call on a couple of people he knows. It was 50 degrees when they arrived there. They had 3 months to get

to Melbourne.

Courtesy of an award from Microsoft, Mike, my brother, came up with some tickets to the dress rehearsal for the opening show of the Commonwealth Games and so we set off to meet Alan and Val in Melbourne. Mike is a Microsoft Valued Professional (MVP). In geek talk that's pretty impressive.

John and I got as far as Deb's in Raymond Terrace when we gave up and caught a plane the rest of the way. It's a long way to Melbourne.

We spent a couple of nights in Melbourne and went to the dress rehearsal for the opening ceremony which was different. Don't think anyone "got" the duck. I really loved the Melbourne tram bit and had a good night.

We decided to leave the city and had some time in the Dandenongs. We went for a ride on Puffing Billy and stayed in a nice B&B. We flew back to Deb's leaving Val and Alan to finish their holiday and return to UK.

The rest of the year we planned to stay at home however I didn't count on John's school reunion and winning a weekend away.

## A quick trip to Melbourne

John, Deb and I are off to Melbourne on Xmas Eve to go to Carols by candlelight at Myer Music Bowl so watch for us - we will be in row S of the seated section. We plan to visit Puffing Billy and the little penguins. Xmas day in Melbourne sounds dire at best so we will head off to Sorrento or Lorne for lunch.



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Wish we could say we caught it but we were given it by our hosts where we were staying in the Bay of Islands.

John returned to work at Gibson TruBody but finished up mid year. He did a stint with a wrought iron place but is now a lollipop man at road construction work. He has been doing a lots of work and of course prefers the night shifts but they have proved to be few and far between, so he is out in the heat.

Pat and Katie decided to give us a lovely surprise and drove up to Brisbane for Mother's Day. You could have knocked me over with a feather. It was a lovely weekend and I kept telling Carly that one day I would be as excited to see Evan!!!

About May I had got to the stage that my osteoarthritis in my left knee was unbearable and I had an operation on 1 June to relieve the pain. Basically they cut my leg in half and re-aligned it. Mum came up and looked after me for 5

**Evan** moved out early this year. He is living with Carly who he met here in Brisbane. They live in Zillmere in a nice apartment. Carly works at the Hilton and Evan worked as a courier until recently when he left and went to Doors Plus at Stafford.

Jack lives with his mother in Bundaberg who chooses not to stay in contact. Jack will be 5 in April.

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## The rest of the year was pretty eventful too...

weeks and was a gem. I was pretty useless for 4 weeks. I went back to work after 6 weeks and started swimming again on 1 August.

In July my sister Cheryl and her husband Ron went to live in Vanuatu for 2 years. They are working for Australian Volunteers Abroad on community projects. Have a look at their escapades on [www.candrvanuatu.blogspot.com](http://www.candrvanuatu.blogspot.com)

I had started swimming the previous Sept to help get fit for an operation I swore I would never have. I enjoyed it so much I kick myself I didn't start years ago. I have upped the ante a bit with swimming and exercise since the operation as I need to lose weight to get the best benefit from the operation.

John had a school reunion on 9 Sept which I was really cranky about cos that was when I planned to have a party for my 50th birthday. About a month before I contacted a few people and asked them to come to dinner on the 8<sup>th</sup>. So as far as I was concerned we didn't have to leave for Sydney until 5,6 or 7 Sept. Even then we would have time to visit on the way down. Little did I know until I got an SMS to ring Cheryl in Vanuatu who told me to shut up and go to Sydney, I was sending John demented.

John, Carly and Evan had managed to organize a surprise party for me and get lots of people who were important to me to come. I was blown over because I had not idea what they had been up to.

It was so lovely to see everyone and really made my day.

I had been on crutches since my operation but was able to lose them by the end of September and am walking fairly well.

I have finally left the field job I had for 6 years 3 months and 8 days (who's counting?). I am now office based in my job and like it so much better. I am still in the tax office at Chermside and don't envisage I will move again in quite a while.

A few weeks ago John and I won a weekend away at Stanthorpe in a cabin. We had a lovely time. There are lots of wineries, fruit farms and the like.

We were very sorry during the year to hear of the death of Alan Warburton, John's niece Julie's husband.

**Pat** is ensconced in Shellharbour with Katie in an apartment right on the main street. The main street is nothing like it was when we lived there. Pat is now working at a club in Gerringong.

When they came up to Brisbane Pat and Katie had their picture done.



Helen's website:  
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I don't do near as much on my research as I would like but I still keeping plodding along.