

## DAY-by-DAY - NEW ZEALAND

NOVEMBER 2006

### Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November

Andy came over to Isleham and drove us to Heathrow. He drove our car and it was a pleasant sunny day for the drive. We arrived at Heathrow around 2.00 p.m. for our Air Malaysia flight to Kuala Lumpur at 6.05 p.m.

With the current situation and concerns about 'terrorism' passengers are advised to check in at least three hours ahead of flight departure time. We checked in with no problems, a wheel chair was provided for Beryl, as arranged, and we were through all baggage check and immigration by around 3.30.

Boarding started around ten to five but there were three missing passengers and the full complement were not aboard until just after 6.00 p.m. – scheduled time for take off.

The plane was a Boeing 747 with total capacity of 386 passengers. It was almost full. Started taxiing at 6.35 and took off at 7.05. The local time in Kuala Lumpur was three o'clock in the morning and the journey time was given as 12 hours.

By the time we were cruising at 30,000 feet over Poland dinner was served – a choice of chicken or beef as main course. Lights Out' at 10.00 p.m. (UK) and able to stretch out reasonably comfortably.

I awoke at what was – in the UK – about 10.00 in the morning. All window shutters were still down and we were somewhere over the India – Pakistan border area. Orange juice and cheese & cucumber sandwiches were always available and at around 2.00 a.m. (Kuala Lumpur time) breakfast was served as we cruised over the Andaman Islands. This consisted of chicken or beef curry with white wine on offer as well as coffee & tea.

All serving of food & drink was completed by around 1.00 p.m. Kuala Lumpur time and we landed at five minutes before three, Monday 6<sup>th</sup> November - local time. Having ordered a wheel chair, we were last to disembark and were taken to the train which takes passengers to the main terminal building. Here we were whisked swiftly through Immigration, using a Malaysian passport 'channel' and collected our baggage before passing Customs.

The wheel chair attendant took us to the Pan Pacific Hotel 'buggy' stop, we boarded one of the little electric buggies which shuttle back & forth all the time. The run into the hotel is the best part of a mile, through part of the terminal building then along and enclosed corridor. The wheel chair and buggy ride made it completely painless for Beryl who would not have been able to make the journey on foot.

We were booked into our room – 539 – by 4.15. We made a cup of tea. I had a good soak in the bath and Beryl decided to take a shower before we both lay down and rested.

We changed and went down for light supper at 7.30 and tried the mixed chicken &

beef satay. This was all we felt like after the long flight, but there were no other feelings of 'jet lag'. I had acquired plug adapters for charging camera batteries and mobile phone, but here in the Pan Pacific was a battery of plug sockets, two of which were for the standard British three pin plugs.

### Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November

A misty morning, looking out from our room onto the airport control tower and the countryside beyond. A wide selection in the breakfast buffet – traditional 'European' - but with chicken 'sausages' and beef 'bacon' as well as Malay & Japanese dishes and ample cereals & fruit. After a leisurely breakfast we took the buggy back to the airport and, down an escalator onto the KLIA Express. This is a train which runs regularly from airport to the main rail station in Kuala Lumpur. A couple of return tickets cost 140 Ringits – (£20). From the rail station we took the local metro train to KLCC – the "Twin Towers" stop. We did not, however, get to go up the towers. Tickets are free, but only 1,000 are issued daily starting, on site, at 8.30 in the morning. We were too late ! However, the KLCC area is a huge multi storey shopping mall, so we had a coffee, acquired a map of the place and its many floors and had a look around. The temperature & humidity outside air-conditioned buildings did not encourage much 'outdoor' exploration. Having 'window shopped' and taken a few photographs, we returned to the rail station and caught the KLIA Express back to the airport & hotel.

Having had a good – and late ! – breakfast we did not feel like much to eat at lunchtime, so at around 2.30 p.m. we retired for a rest. We awoke at 7.30 ! Down to the restaurant where we sampled some of the many interesting dishes – Asian and 'western' – on the buffet menu. And so to bed.

### Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November

Prunes for breakfast ! Something along the way had upset Ian's digestive system, but the gut ache soon passed. It was after 11.00 a.m. by the time we had finished breakfast. We had a sort out of our suitcases and rested in the room with our books and local television – some "Discovery" programmes as interesting as those in the U.K.

Our flight to New Zealand was not due to take off until 9.15 p.m. Allowing the three hour period for booking in and immigration, we had requested portorage and a buggy ride for 6.30 p.m. For some reason we were whisked off earlier, Beryl was provided with her wheel chair and we spent unnecessary hours hanging around in the airport.

The plane we eventually boarded was a Boeing 777, with a passenger capacity of anything between 200 & 270. Our plane had seats arranged 2-5-2 across each row and we had aisle seats across from each other, so leg room was not a great problem. Ian was in the centre block of five seats, three of which next to him were unoccupied.

We began to taxi out at 9.00 p.m. for a flight scheduled to take 9 hours & 40 minutes. We were off by 9.30 on the last 5,500 mile leg of our journey to New Zealand. A

supper was served – New Zealand lamb & New Zealand butter – somewhere over Surabaya and lights were extinguished over the Timor Sea.

The core of this whole trip was to be the few days staying with John Harper, a landscape designer and historian of the early settlements in North Canterbury. We took out the leather bound book in which Ian's great uncle Arthur Littleton Powys had recorded day by day happenings in 1866 & 1867. These few days were magical for John had researched so much from the "Journal". We met the two Wilson brothers, their parents and their families, who now farm the Astrop acres which Arthur and his brother had opened up.

For the days we spent in and around Astrop and on our sightseeing motor home week around South Island, I have recalled what Arthur was doing on those same days in 1866 & 1867

### Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Cold from S.W. Ploughed all day and finished the piece. Finished the sitting room.

**1867** - Played again. Got 0. We won by 34 runs. (*He had been playing cricket against the Albions the previous day*)

Some passengers were stirring as we passed over Darwin and most were awake by the time we crossed the coast at 39,000 feet above Brisbane. We had 2½ hours to go, with a 100 m.p.h tail wind and an outside temperature of - 51°C. At around 10.30 a.m (Auckland time) we had breakfast, landing at ten minutes after mid-day, local time.

The 'wheel chair' requests for Beryl had worked well. We waited until all the other passengers had disembarked and were whisked through Immigration and Customs and to the baggage carousel before many bags were appearing. We had completed a long Customs form on the plane as New Zealand Customs are very protective of their environment – no foodstuffs *Have you a sandwich or any fruit from the flight ?*) no wood or shell or ivory items. Had we confessed to having been any where near a farmyard before boarding the flight we would doubtless have been taken away and 'sheep dipped' !

We were met at the airport by Keith Clampin – an accountant and 'part time' Isleham resident - whose wife Linda is presently teaching in Auckland, where her mother & brother now live. We were in the car and away on a chilly slightly wet afternoon, by just after one o'clock. We arrived at Keith & Linda's house, sat down and made a cup of tea – just as a typhoon hit Auckland ! Winds were gusting up to 120 knots, a very cold rain fell with some roofs being blown off and vehicles damaged.

Access to the Auckland "Sky Tower" was shut down as the lift was hitting the sides of its shaft! We partially unpacked – just the small case we had designated as our 'overnight' bag – and had a short nap. Linda was home by 6.00 p.m.

Much chattering and sharing of news as a lovely supper was prepared. Spring time in New Zealand means asparagus and strawberries. We were to be treated to these on several occasions ! We had green lip mussels as a starter and salmon – with

asparagus. Strawberries followed.

We were glad to be in bed by 9.00 p.m.

### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Got the mob in & killed two. In the afternoon, I whitewashed & went round the boundary. Ploughed a little in the morning & spent the rest of the day in shifting.

**1867** - Very bad cold; read "The Toilers of the Sea".

Friday was, of course a normal working day for Keith and Linda so it was suggested that Keith would drop Linda off at school on his way to work, leaving her car for us to use. The thought of driving a car to which he was not accustomed into a busy city of which he knew nothing at all did not immediately appeal to Ian ! However, Linda suggested that we could take the ‘commuter’ ferry across the harbour and see Auckland using the “Explorer Bus”.

This seemed an excellent solution. So, after a leisurely breakfast we drove down to the nearby marina at West Harbour and took the last of the morning ferries at 8.50 over to downtown Auckland. The crossing takes 35 minute, under the Auckland Harbour Bridge and into a berth right by the Hilton Hotel. NZ\$12 return for ‘senior citizens’. We heard a tale of the Bridge. Shortly after it opened it was discovered that the ‘planners’ had not thought large enough, nor far enough into the future – traffic flow was too heavy. A Japanese company – much to the chagrin of the British company which had built the original bridge - was given the contract to add two more traffic lanes. This they did by extending the supporting piers outwards and building a new road lane on either side. The bridge is now known as the “Nippon Clip On”.

A few hundred yards from the ferry terminal was the starting point for the “Explorer Bus” – a NZ\$30 ticket allows one to drop off and rejoin the buses, which run at regular intervals, at any of the stops around the city. We went first to the Museum, up in the Domain overlooking the city and spent quite some time there. Then we took a ‘satellite’ bus which runs a smaller circular tour around other landmarks, including the Mount Eden area. Unfortunately the cold driving rain made any sightseeing from this vantage point a complete wash out and we hopped quickly back on the bus. We stopped at Saint Luke’s Shopping Centre, where we changed some sterling into dollars and had lunch from one of the many snack counters – MacDonalds and KFC, of course. were there but there were fish and seafood counters, Thai, Chinese, Japanese sushi bars and many others from which to choose.

The ‘satellite’ bus only ran every hour so we timed our lunch break to catch the next one back to the Museum. We next stopped at the Sky Tower and took a ride up to the observation platform. Beryl had a cup of tea, Ian had a beer and we watched some of the folk who leap off the top of the tower. These are not ‘bungee jumpers’ – they jump head first off the Auckland Bridge, their ankles fixed to a long rubber cable. The Auckland Tower jumpers wear a full harness, similar to a parachute harness, and

their downward progress is controlled by a wire system with a fan brake, slowing them – they hope – just before landing on a platform at the foot of the Tower. Each ‘kamikaze’ jumper is stopped for a second or two immediately opposite the observation platform - so that their friends can take a photograph – before plunging down the full 630 feet (192 metres). At about 75 kms per hour it takes 16 seconds to reach the bottom.

We stuck to viewing the harbour and surrounding hills and islands, including Rangitoto, the latest arrival - 600 years ago - among the forty or so volcanoes in the surrounding bay. Having finished tea and beer, we returned to earth, caught the next “Explorer Bus” back to the ferry jetty where a ferry arrived some ten minutes later. Also joining the ferry for the ride back to West Harbour was Linda. So she drove us back home in her car, from the parking lot where I had left it that morning.

After a cup of tea and a rest, we took Linda & Keith out to dinner. They had booked us into a restaurant about twenty minutes away – right out in the countryside – where we had a most excellent meal. (NZ\$297). We were back and in bed by 11.00 p.m.

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November

1866 - A fine rain all night & warm, growing day. The Gaffer came over to dine & sleep.

1867 - Sent Woofe to port about the rams.

It dawned a fine, sunny but chilly morning. We breakfasted and waited for the washing machine to finish its cycle and to hang everything out. Then off with Linda & Keith to see some of the places they love to visit. We made a first stop at an old railway station at Swanson. It was nowhere near any railway, having been ‘moved’ – as have many old and interesting buildings in New Zealand – to a new location, where it is now thriving by providing coffees and refreshments alongside a road. We had a bacon & cheese bagel then set off for the Waikerere Range. Keith plays golf here, a hilly course (one fairway so steep it is called ‘Coronary’ ) set amongst a fern forest and with a few surviving ancient kauri trees – one of which is possibly 1,000 years old. There were manuka bushes, from the blossoms of which is made the lovely honey which we had tried at breakfast.

Then on to Piha, a surfing beach overlooked by Lion Rock. Great activity of surfers and the local volunteer rescue units keeping good watch on them. From here we visited the Arataki Visitor Centre, with views over Auckland and to both coasts.

We just had to have our photographs taken in a huge ‘picture Frame’ set up by the local authority, with a background view out over Auckland bay.

Mid-afternoon we stopped for tea and a snack in a fruit & vegetable growing region and then on to see a gannet colony. On a convenient flat cliff ledge and on a similar flat top to a rocky pinnacle just off shore, hundreds if not thousands of birds were just returning to breed. Breeding had not yet started but strident arguments over each individual’s ‘patch’ were being fought out.

We returned home having seen just a few of the lovely spots around and outside Auckland and with a better understanding of how much Linda & Keith love the place.



Another bright sunny morning. Breakfast of toast and manuka honey and we re-packed our cases. We went with Linda to a nearby footbridge over a creek and mangrove swamp where very often she has seen kingfishers. None today but we did see one cormorant, reluctant to dive into the shallow water left by the ebbing tide. There was also one Rosella – an Australian ‘import’.

Keith drove us out to the domestic terminal where we checked in at 10.45 for the Mid-day flight – an Air New Zealand Boeing 727 – to Christchurch.

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Ploughed all day. Dick rode over with Glubb & the mare to meet Stevens, who, indeed, came.

**1867** - Went (*to the port*) myself & stayed all night. Saw Back.

On arrival I collected the hire car I had booked and we followed the detailed directions given by John Harper on how to reach his place near Hawarden, some fifty miles north of Christchurch. We were out of the airport and on the road by around 2.10 p.m.

We came through the Weka pass, often mentioned in the ‘Journal’. Driving along today’s modern road we were made aware of the distances that Arthur and his companions walked back in 1866/67. Casual diary entries such as ‘*sent Dick to the Pass for letters*’ involved a walk of at least a dozen miles each way along rough tracks through tussock grass and native bush. There was a strong ‘nor’wester’ blowing as well – many days in the ‘Journal’ refer to ‘*another d---d norwester*’.

Our little Toyota Corolla brought us to John Harper’s place by three p.m. We had stopped at the store in Hawarden and bought a bottle of ‘Waipara’ white wine – Waipara is a name which appears often in the ‘Journal’.

John Harper’s great grandparents James & Sarah with their first two children landed at Lyttleton on 24th October, 1856. Their passage from London had lasted 101 days, John is a landscape designer and tree planter. Since the death of their mother and the closing of the family home in Christchurch, he and his brother have found their own homes.

John has settled on a fifteen acre plot, Willowbridge, in an 1897 ‘colonial’ style bungalow with a veranda around two sides, a lovely view across open country to the distant hills. He has some magnificent pieces of furniture, rugs and paintings from the family home.

Somewhere in John’s ‘family tree’ must surely be Bishop Henry James Harper, Bishop of Christchurch in 1856 and Primate of New Zealand in 1868. The bishop was himself one of nine children, his father one of thirteen and his grandfather one of fourteen.

There were other ‘branches’ of the Harper family who came to New Zealand in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, John’s great grandparents among them, though they had a

relatively modest family – just ten children. By 1955 it was reckoned that Bishop Harper's descendants numbered 632 – by 1981 there were 1,400 .

John's research into the history of local settlement in North Canterbury and particularly the Astrop property, had more or less come to a halt with the Neeve family, who had bought the land from William Willes to whom Arthur and his brother had sold when leaving New Zealand in 1868. The discovery on the Powys-Lybbe website of the Arthur Powys 'Journal' had opened up whole new vistas and John & I have been in e-mail contact since 2005. Now the 'Journal' was coming back home ! Dalmeny Road, running through the Astrop property from Mason's Flat to the Waipara River was formerly known as Powys Road.

We spent much of the afternoon discussing the two Powys brothers, their time in and around North Canterbury and the folk - 'Occy', the 'Captain', Nathan and others - who feature in the 'Journal'. The deeper one's researches go the more real these people become. John knows all the local land owners and had arranged for us to visit Astrop – farmed today by two brothers as it had been in 1866/67. We were to meet them, the Wilson brothers, their parents and their families the next day.

John cooked and served us supper – chicken and fruit salad – and we continued to talk, of Arthur, of Astrop and of 'Occy' – Theodore Octavius Hurt – his cousin from Derbyshire until well into the night.

### Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Ploughed all day. Faked about all day. Carter & Little came over. Gave them the stable contract. Damned Norwester.

**1867** - Got the rams away in Belcher's cart; came to town by coach. Went on board the "Melita" & "Bluejacket".

The 'dawn chorus' began as the half moon was setting. A bell bird sat at the top of a tree just outside our bedroom veranda and trilled away for nearly fifteen minutes before moving on. I took several shots of house and garden as the light improved. After breakfast John drove us over to Astrop. Where Arthur had built his modest dwelling the Neeve family built a new house in the 1880s.. Some of the timbers from Arthur's house, which was only twenty years or so old, were doubtless re-used in this new house. Simon & 'Sam' Wilson in 2000 built a magnificent house on the site once occupied by the previous houses. They, too, re-used some of the timbers from the 1880s house.

Both brothers and their parents were busy cutting and carting silage. It was a glorious sunny day, with little or no wind and after lunch 'Sam' took us on a 4x4 drive around the whole property. They farm some 2,000 acres and run 8,500 sheep and 300 cattle.

Their sheep are raised for meat, not wool. The price obtained from the wool – which has to be sheared anyway – just about covers the cost of the shearing ! We met Simon and his brother as well as their parents where they were currently stacking silage. Their mother, Joanne, arrived driving a tractor with yet another load of silage to be dumped.

We were back in the house for tea at about 4.45 p.m. Afterwards, as we were leaving John & 'Sam' said : "We've got work for you !". John had provided a sturdy young English Beech (*Fagus Sylvaticus*) and having dug the hole – John did most of the work ! - we planted it alongside the driveway to the homestead. It will grow up not too far away from a magnificent English elm tree planted by Arthur, presently dominating the view from the main windows of the house away to Mount Tekoa and the mountain range in the far distance. Many pictures were taken !

Back home to Willowbridge, another lovely dinner and more discussion of the 'Journal' and its people. And so to bed.

## Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Stevens & I rode down to Leithfield, to the races. Poorish fun. Stayed all night. Tom Niblett to the front.

**1867** - Came to Leithfield by coach & rode up. Met young Woofe at the Pass. Shearing finished on Tuesday.

Around 4.30 in the morning a mighty wind blew up - a real 'Nor'wester'. It howled around the cottage and must have reached well up to 'Storm force 11' on the Beaufort Scale. Later newspaper reports spoke of winds up to 140/150 knots – well above anything in Beaufort, whose 'Hurricane – Force 12' only rates 65 knots.

Sixty foot trees were being ripped up by the roots or snapped off like matchsticks twenty feet or so above ground level. Pea straw and pine cones all over the ground around the house. Large trees fell right across roads and two crushed a nearby hay barn – the second one falling as we were out taking photographs of the damage caused by the first one !

It was almost impossible to stand against the wind, but John and I did go out to assess the damage on nearby roads and clear what timber could be cleared by hand. There was no possibility of using either tractor or chain saw while the blow was at its height. One unfortunate truck driver a bit further north was killed as he attempted to clear a fallen tree from the road in front of his vehicle.

The wind was surprisingly warm, there was lightning but little rain. We retired to the house and waited. By lunch time the storm had blown itself out and there was sunshine with intermittent rain. I managed a shot of a lovely rainbow.

After lunch John drove us along other boundary roads around the Astrop property and to Heathstock, home to John Mallock, - 'the Admiral' as Arthur seems to have nick-named him in the 'Journal'. We have seen the 'Doctor's Hills' and distant Mount Tekoa. We have met Simon & Sam, Mark & Helen and Bill & Joanne Wilson, a wonderfully close knit and hard working family – even Grandma hauling silage.

We called again at Astrop for tea and saw that the newly planted beech tree was still standing. Many larger trees around the homestead, however, had been felled or snapped off.

I collected a few pieces of timber – a piece of kauri wood, some rimu and another piece possibly from the earlier house on the site. I intend to use the kauri to make



another shepherd for the Christmas Nativity figures. (Later, in Queenstown, I collected some small pieces of pau shell which may be useful as decoration.)

### Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November

1866 - Rode to town with Stevens. Attended Committee - very slow.

1867 - Branded the wool bales and did various other small jobs.

A calm and misty morning with the bell bird singing again. We breakfasted and set off for Christchurch in the hired car. It was the Christchurch Show Week, but John had arranged a 10.30 appointment for us to be able to have a look around the Club, which features often in the 'Journal'. We wondered what had happened to the ladies hats at the race meeting on Tuesday.

We left Willowbridge at around 9.00 a.m with John driving. We stopped at the Weka Pass to take photographs and then diverted into Old Leithfield and to Saltwater Creek, where the Saltwater Creek & Kaiapoi Steam Navigation Company, promoted by William Willes, used to land cargoes. It is now a small non-navigable creek but a good spot to fish for whitebait.

We kept our appointment at the Christchurch Club – a place almost frozen in time. Apart from electric lighting having replaced paraffin lamps, and the absence of antimacassars, Arthur would probably have instantly recognised the rooms. Among the many photographs of members was one of Thomas Rowley, for whom Arthur worked for a time on a property on the Selwyn, south of Christchurch, in 1860.

John & I copied a few documents then we all lunched at "Brigittes" in Merivale. John recalled his childhood days in the area, when a local shopkeeper would see the youngsters on their tricycles across the not very busy road.

After lunch we walked in the Mona Vale Gardens and then drove along the Avon in Hagley Park and walked through the Botanical Gardens, before our appointment with the Curator of Manuscripts at the Christchurch Museum.

It was Joanna Condon's third day in the post of Curator and a truly 'ancient manuscript' - in New Zealand historical terms - drops into her lap. We left the 'Journal' with her to be photocopied.

We spent only a short time looking around at some of the exhibits as we were to meet Robert Cross, a lay clerk in the Cathedral, on secondment from Ely Cathedral, for a coffee in the afternoon. John Harper had told us of the wonderful concert he attended in the Cathedral with the combined choirs of six out of the seven New Zealand cathedrals. He had been in touch with Robert but unable to meet him in the melée afterwards.

We went through the road tunnel which now connects Christchurch with Lyttleton Harbour – and gained at least some idea of the work involved in Victorian days to transport goods over the narrow path over the rocky divide between port and town.

We did some shopping for our impending motor home trip in a supermarket at Kaiapoi – and having seen Lyttleton and the mountain pass one realises the reason for

the founding of the Steam Navigation company which used to transport goods from Lyttleton to an easier landing at Saltwater Creek.

We stopped in Amberley on the way home, where we treated John to supper at the “Nor’Wester” café. He had chosen the place – and chosen well. Beryl volunteered to drive back after supper, so that both John & I could have a glass or two of wine.

As dusk fell on the way home she began to regret this decision, not having driven the car before, nor being familiar with the roads, but continued nonetheless and we reached home safe and sound around 9.30. Coffee & bed.

### Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November

1866 - Rode to Mrs Carter's to brand the sheep. Rained too hard. Bade there all night; had a hop in the evening.

1867 - A fine steady rain. Killed a sheep. Tom McDonald came about the coal. The sow had a litter of pigs.

A glorious sunny morning. We left John's place – having forgotten all the wine we had bought at Kaiapoi - around 9.00 a.m and having removed a fallen willow branch, a late fall after the hurricane, from the bridge over the creek. It was a reluctant farewell as he had been such a wonderful host and inimitable guide to things ‘Powys’ in the Hawarden area. We went to Christchurch airport, picked up our mobile home and handed back the hired car and were on our way south by midday.

I had ordered a three berth van and a ‘hi-top’ – so as to have sufficient headroom. The boards which would have made the upper bunk were left in the van and we used that space to store the large black suitcase, which would otherwise have been something of an embarrassment. It did tend to slide forward when we were on the road, especially on the Crown Range road, but we had secured it around the boards with the luggage strap, so it never crashed to the floor. Happily, we were presented with a complimentary bottle of wine for our first night stop !

There was still a considerable wind blowing and it took a little while to get used to the driving. We were not more than five miles down the road when a “Road Closed – Diversion” sign forced us and everyone else into side roads. But we were back on the main road in under half an hour.

We found the whole system of road signs, speed restrictions and markings to be very good indeed. Drivers, too, tend to be much more observant of speed limits than do some of the ‘boy racers’ in Britain. For those driving slower vehicles, such as our motor home, there are frequent and well marked ‘overtaking lanes’, each usually a couple of kilometres or more in length, allowing one to keep to the left and let any ‘tail back’ of faster cars to overtake in safety. Notices saying “Overtaking Lane 4 kms ahead”, then 2 kms then 400 metres should save any frustrated driver from overtaking in potentially dangerous conditions.

We stopped after 86 kms at Ashbourne and did our shopping for the next few days. It was difficult to find small enough packages of things such as sugar, just for a few days – and what does one do in a motor home with an open packet of sugar which could well spill out all over the place ? Answer – clothes peg ! We had a snack

lunch at Ashbourne then got under way again by just after 2.00 p.m. It was much less windy and there were many more dairy cattle in the fields than the sheep we had been expecting.

We passed through Timaru (170 kms) by four o'clock and arrived at the Oamaru campsite (253 kms) and 'plugged in' by 5.00 p.m. Having settled in we at last got around to writing the postcards we had bought several days previously but had not yet had the time to write.

### Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Rode up home. Raining on & off. Couldn't brand the sheep. Got home about six.

**1867** - The Gaffer came with his paintings to go home.

It rained all night, but we slept well having mastered the dismantling of the table and construction of the bed. One has to live very tidily in the confines of a motor home and as the days went on we got more and more adept at making and storing away the bedding and other household chores.

I was awake by 5.00 a.m. and went and had a shower in a – not unsurprisingly – deserted shower block. I found, later, that the most convenient time to shower & shave was in the afternoon, once settled into the night's campsite.

I then slept through until around 8 o'clock. We breakfasted, stowed everything away and unplugged the electric cable before setting off into town. We discovered we had arrived at the start of their 'Victorian Weekend'. We had noticed a rather oddly attired gentleman in the campsite the previous evening – wearing plus fours and jacket and Highland bonnet, all in a strange pinkish tartan but had shrugged our shoulders and chosen to ignore it. First we saw a man in a dark suit and bowler hat – Captain Mainwaring on his way to the Bank ?

Then a couple, he in tail coat and top hat, she in a dress with bustle, Then a cheery fellow wheeling a 'penny farthing' bicycle passed by. He told us of the weekend activities and explained that most of the inhabitants take an active part. He was not riding his 'penny farthing', having fallen off in a race the previous week and broken his shoulder. There was also an old traction engine – very obviously coal fired from the thick plume of black smoke which it spread as it trundled past the war memorial and up Thames Street

We stopped near Thames Street, the wide main street, and explored Harbour Street and its warehouses. Oamaru was first settled in 1835. The discovery nearby of beautiful cream limestone, an excellent and easily worked building material had, by the 1870s, turned the town and port into the ninth largest town in the country and left a legacy of some of the finest 19<sup>th</sup> Century streetscapes in New Zealand. Banks, the "Criterion" hotel, grain stores, the Custom House and St Luke's Anglican Church are all built in the 'classic' style – Corinthian columns and acanthus leaf capitals - which was then the height of fashion.

It was a pity for the townsfolk that the day was dull and rainy, for everyone did in fact appear to be taking part. We did not stay long, however, as we wanted to stop

along the coast to see the Moeraki Boulders.

These strange, rounded boulders are scattered along the beach between Moeraki and Hampden. The largest is some seven feet in diameter while most measure about three feet. They are 'concretions' – formed not by the action of waves, but by pressure and sedimentation within the cliffs.

The Maoris however have a different explanation. The boulders, (Te Kai Hinaki) are the food parcels and water gourds from one of the canoes of the great migration, the canoe Arai te Uru, wrecked in a storm upon the nearby Matakaea reef.

The weather did not encourage us to descend the long flight of steps and walk along the beach to see the boulders close up.. We did however, find most excellent and reasonably priced waterproof and windproof jackets in the inevitable 'souvenir' shop by the café.

We left after a warming cup of coffee and headed down the coast, stopping at Palmerston for fuel (NZ\$70) and a hot pie for lunch. We had plenty of time to eat our hot pies as there was a complete traffic hold up – a house was on the move ! Wooden frame houses – even churches - in New Zealand are frequently moved, complete, to new sites. There are even collections of houses for sale – choose your house – find your site and the house will be delivered onto prepared foundations. Here was a house, on a low loader and with Police escort vehicle with a sign reading "House Follows", being slowly moved along the main road. Eventually when it reached a wider spot, traffic control was set up and cars and vans were able to squeeze past. Continuing along the coast we arrived at the Aaron Lodge campsite in Dunedin by early afternoon (124 kms) and decided, because of the continuing drizzle that we were going nowhere that evening !

We did, however, get the reception at the campsite to book us a tour for the next afternoon out to the Royal Albatross colony and to see the rare yellow eyed penguins.

I contacted David O'Hare, Professor of Psychology at Otago University and arranged to meet him at midday the next day. We had brought out a package of his late mother's jewellery, at the request of his aunt, Isobel Williams in Titchmarsh, the village where Arthur Powys was born .

### Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Walked to the Gaffer's, who walked back with us. Did nothing carefully.

**1867** - Nathan & Bell got some manuka scrub, and made a screen for the tree seeds. Young Woofe went to the Pass.

It was still raining ! I did NOT go to the shower block ! We were getting more used to motor home living and little eccentricities like the toaster, which produced warm bread unless the slices were put through twice ! Tradition however was maintained and Beryl had her morning cup of tea in bed – in a mug – each morning. We were very glad of the electric fan heater supplied with the van, it being very wet outside and the temperature having dropped considerably. After breakfast we donned our

'Moeraki' jackets and waited for the bus into the 'Octagon', the centre of Dunedin. When it finally arrived it turned out to be a real 'country bus' heading off – up into the mist and rain clouds – all around the outskirts of town. Having passed 'Halfway Bush' – halfway to or from where ? - we did finally arrive at the 'Octagon'. We had a look around – in the rain – and I had a CD back-up copy made of the three hundred or so photos I had taken so far on the 1GB digital flash disk.

We then went to the Otago Settlers Museum. This provides an interesting display of local history with dozens, if not hundreds, of photographs of early 'settlers'. There were none however of Arthur Littleton Powys, although he had certainly been here with the Christchurch cricket team in 1864. The archivist was not working on a Saturday, but I left with the reception desk details of Arthur's cricketing history and asking whether she had any old photographs with the team names.

Unfortunately, on arrival back in England, I was to find an e-mail from her, saying she had been unable to trace any reference to the 'Powys' name.

We returned to the 'Octagon' and the Visitor Centre where I had arranged to meet David O'Hare. He whisked us out to his home where we met his wife and children and had a very pleasant lunch of carefully chosen typical New Zealand dishes.

We handed over the 'family jewels' – taking a photo for Isobel - and after lunch David ran us back to the Visitor Centre where we awaited the tour bus, due to leave at 3 o'clock.

There were only four of us on the bus – Beryl & I, a young Japanese girl and an elderly Israeli who had very little English. He had read "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" – although convinced that it was written by Shelley and not Coleridge !

It had apparently so impressed him that he had made the journey – almost a pilgrimage – to see a Royal Albatross. And see them we did. The drive out along the twenty and more kilometres of seashore road was impressive, but would have been so much more enjoyable had the weather been brighter. There was however, a stiff breeze blowing when we arrived at the colony – the only albatross breeding colony on a major land mass – and the albatross were up & flying. They are impressive birds in the air, with a wingspan of up to 3 metres, but not very good on land, hence the need for a good breeze to get them off their cliff sites.

It was cold and wet and one does not get close to the colony from the landward side. I managed to take some shots of albatross in the air and there was a very good display and history of the colony in the nearby visitor centre. When we had had a coffee and were warm again we went on to see the yellow eyed penguins. A local farmer had noticed, back in 1998, some of these fairly rare birds coming ashore to burrows on his land. He decided to turn the area into a reserve for them. He has dug a network of trenches reminiscent of the First World War, revetted and sandbagged and covered over with hessian and netting. These allow visitors to get about the areas across which the penguins come and go to the beach, without disturbing them. Little lean-to shelters have been provided as nest sites and the birds have made use of them.

We raced up and down the trench system, our driver being very anxious that we should not miss any possible close view of penguins returning from their day out



fishing at sea.

The path taken every day by one penguin actually crosses one trench on wooden boards, and we saw - & heard - him walking over our heads ! Beryl managed very well indeed – a lot of walking and on very rough terrain - but we both declined the offer of a walk down on to the beach itself to see them coming ashore as well as close ups of sea lions and fur seals.

All in all it was a good expedition, marred only by the cold wet weather. We were glad of our Moeraki waterproofs. The bus driver dropped the other two back at the Visitor Centre and took us back to our campsite. We were back by 7.30 p.m. – a long and tiring, but worthwhile, day.

### Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Ploughed after ten. Dug in the garden etc. Carter commenced the stable.

**1867** - A cold Norwester. Dick & Nathan went to town. Bell put up a gate on the way to the stable.

We were up and all bedding was stowed by 7.30. I had thought it was too wet and dismal to have to manoeuvre the motor home to allow me to empty the waste water in the ‘dump site’ and to refill our water tank. But in the end I decided to do so before leaving, which was just as well since we were nearly out of water altogether. We set off on Route 1 South, for Queenstown, at around 8.45 a.m.

Stopped an hour later at a garage in Milton. The radio aerial had taken to banging continuously on the side of the cab. I bought a roll of duct tape and taped the aerial down. The roads were dry and the wind had dropped. We turned off the main road and into Gore township after 155 kms at ten minutes past eleven. More shopping at the local Woolworths – in New Zealand Woolworths are a supermarket like Tesco or Waitrose. This branch however did not sell alcohol! So, over the road to ‘Liquorland’ for some wine. This was necessary as we had left behind at John Harper’s place the bottles we had bought on our last shopping expedition with him !

We had bought a snack lunch in Gore and stopped in a layby some way out of town. It was a bright sunny afternoon and the wind had dropped. Beryl took over the driving when we set off again at around 1.15 p.m. She drove for about 70 kms until we got to Lumsden (219 kms) where I took over again. Beryl was by then quite happy and comfortable with the handling of the motor home, but quite happy to be driven rather than drive.

At 2.25 we saw a wonderful old steam locomotive - with steam up - at the side of the road near Kingston. We were not the only folk to drive off the road to have a look. This was the “Kingston Flyer” which is run by railway enthusiasts on a tourist circuit going in towards Queenstown. It was just leaving on its run at 2.30, so we saw it on its way – black smoke pouring from its funnel as it headed for the hills.

By 4.30 that afternoon we were on site and plugged in for another two night stopover at our Queenstown site. It was a bright sunny afternoon. Day’s run was 331 kms.

Having collected brochures from the site office we booked a table for dinner the following evening at the 'Boardwalk' restaurant and settled down to our own home cooked meal. Beryl had found some beef schnitzel which we had with peas and new potatoes out of a can – easiest way of getting potatoes. We had half a melon from previous night which were marinated with some grapes and a generous helping of Cointreau – from 'Liquorland' ! Coffee and a little more Cointreau – and so to bed.

### Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Ploughing all day. A reporter from the "LYTTLETON TIMES" came & stopped all night. Went over to the Gaffer's. (*This was to report on the steam plough, the first imported into New Zealand*)

**1867** - Rained a little in the morning and in the afternoon, in torrents.

A clear blue sky, scarcely a cloud to be seen, but for a 'Spring' day surprisingly chilly. Beryl had her mug of tea at 7.00 a.m. and once the kettle had boiled we were able to turn on the fan heater – we did not risk having both on together. My phone had run out of charge during the night. We had heard it 'bleeping' piteously but it was in my shoulder bag, under the bed and I was not getting out to grope around looking for it. Panic ! Nothing at all happened even after I had plugged it in and started recharging. It did, however, start up again after a longer charge.

We drove into town and parked in a very short term (5 minutes !) site by the waterside and put Beryl's 'Disabled' cards out. We had intended to look around then visit Arrowtown, the old gold mining area twenty minutes run out of Queenstown. However, we saw the T.S.S. "Earnslaw" tied up alongside and preparing to leave for a one & a half hour cruise up and down the lake. It was a lovely sunny morning, so any thoughts of Arrowtown were dropped. Beryl bought the tickets and Ian moved the car to a safer parking place, returning in time to board at 10.00 a.m.

We took a seat at a table amidships, near the funnel, which was probably the warmest spot aboard – apart from the boiler room, where stokers fed the coal boilers. It was a lovely run – clear blue skies and wonderful mountain scenery, with a busy café serving drinks and snacks for those who wanted them. We docked at a farm, 45 minutes up the lake shore, where many passengers got off to indulge in a day's horse trekking or perhaps just a barbecue lunch at the farm. The less adventurous of us stayed aboard and returned to the dockside in Queenstown., where a tip lorry and bucket excavator were ready to load another few tons of coal into the bunkers. Having done a bit of window shopping, we drove back to the campsite and took tickets for the ride up the 'Gondola'. The ticket office was just a few hundred yards from our camper van. The little passenger cars, each seating four people, came slowly round without stopping and folk were supposed to hop aboard. We were paired up with a couple of elderly ladies who, like Beryl, were unable to 'hop' but we all managed to get aboard very well.

The car was, in fact, stopped for ten seconds or so at the top to allow us to leave it in a slightly more dignified fashion ! It was a truly spectacular ride up the cable, between huge conifers to a large restaurant and viewpoint complex up at the top. One

could then take a ski lift up to a higher point and hire a 'luge' to race on a concrete track back down to restaurant level. We didn't !

We ordered lunch and enjoyed the view before returning to ground level and back to the van for a short shopping trip in town. Then we had a 'siesta' followed by a cup of tea. At 4.30 we walked across the nearby cemetery to the 'Kiwi Park'. Kiwis being nocturnal, the few they have are kept in darkened enclosures and it takes several minutes for one's eyes to adjust. As the ground and vegetation in the glass fronted enclosures was itself very dark, and kiwis are a dark brown it was very difficult to see them. When an attendant came in to drop some food for them, well to the front of the cage, the kiwis did at last become visible.

The rest of the park had enclosures with other native birds and wildlife. We wanted to see the flightless 'weka' – a small brown chicken-sized bird, for which the Weka Pass in the 'Journal' was named. We did see one, but it never came out from under the bush where it continued grubbing for food.

We returned to the van, changed (that was quite an occasion as we had lived in fairly 'comfortable' clothing all this time !). We had a drink, before driving into town for dinner at the 'Boardwalk' restaurant. Beryl had a crayfish, I had salmon, and we thoroughly enjoyed our evening out. We did not have to boil a kettle to do the washing up !

## Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November

**1866** - The bloke stayed all day & night. Ploughed all day & then shifted to cross what has been done. Norwester. (*The steam plough had not been the success that Arthur had hoped*)

**1867** - A Norwester all day. The rams arrived all right; so did Woofe. Sent away the wool.

Another bright sunny day. Morning tea at 7.00 a.m. bedding stowed. We had breakfasted and unplugged and were away by 8.30. Stopped for petrol (NZ\$70). We were heading for Lake Wanaka and, as Beryl peered at the map I saw a road sign saying "Wanaka - via Crown Range". Beryl could not immediately find 'Crown Range' on the map but as we were right at the turning, I took it.

It was only later that we found out that this was the highest road in New Zealand ! I was immediately faced with a series of tight 180° hairpin bends – maximum speed 15 kph – on a rough track with passing places. It was a hair raising drive and I saw little of the scenery until we stopped in flat land at the top ! All along the road were signs to the many ski fields. The vista down into the valley below was spectacular and the weather was bright and sunny which made it all the more magical. We made a photo stop at Cardrona, with and 1860s Hotel and general store – and a 1920s car parked outside.

Eventually, after a run of 70 kilometres we reached Lake Wanaka at 10.00 a.m. and parked along the lake shore. We made a cup of coffee, using the kettle for the gas ring for the first time. Looking across the lake we could see the distant mountains – Black Peak, Fog Peak (we hoped this would not apply when we neared Mount Cook) and Mount Aspiring.

After an hour there we started off again over the Lindis Pass and through field after field of lupins. We were running through a vast flat plain – with strange little stone cairns alongside the road, presumably raised by passing tourists and back packers.

After 188 kms, we stopped in Omarama to shop and find something for lunch then headed north towards Twizel where we took the road up the western side of Lake Pukaki towards Mount Cook – Aoraki. At Peter's Lookout on the side of the road, with a magnificent view of Aoraki – the Maori name for the mountain - we stopped for lunch. There was not a cloud in the sky and the opaque turquoise waters of Lake Pukaki made a wonderful foil for the majesty of snow capped Aoraki.

There was just one other car there. We had just got out our folding chairs and settled in the peaceful brilliant sunshine to eat our meat pies when a coach load of some forty American tourists arrived and parked within ten yards of our motor home, disgorging a rowdy mob. They were taking pictures left, right & centre and I did collar one, gave him my camera and asked him to take a photo of Beryl & I, which he did. It appeared to be one of those rapid tours - "It's Monday so this must be New Zealand". They had recently arrived from Australia and were due to fly to Auckland the next day then on to Fiji. Happily the coach was soon on its way to the foot of Mount Cook and peace returned to the scene. We went some way up towards the mountain but not to the village itself – we had more than enough photos already !

Beryl was delighted to see the mountain as it had been wreathed in clouds when she last visited some thirteen years ago.

We were back to the turning above Twizel by 3.00 p.m. and at 4.15 after a day's run of 368 kms, we were into the Lake Tekapo campsite. This was probably the most picturesque site we had stayed in – and by far the worst administered.

Visitors were given a plan of the place and told to find whatever site pleased them - and the sites were very badly marked and numbered. Half of the better sites along the front and overlooking the lake were closed off with red tape strung between oil drums. These, however, we noticed were opened up as more and more vehicles drove in. We finally settled on a site and plugged in.

### Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November

**1866** - Fine warm day. Employed in shifting tackle etc. Threatened rain in the evening. Dick finished plastering my room & re-whitewashed the sitting room.

**1867** - A Norwester. Dug about the place. The Gaffer dined & slept here. Got the books from home.

Before leaving the next morning I took some photos of the massed lupins and Californian poppies which line the lake shore. It was a glorious sunny morning and we were on our way by 9.15 a.m. Just outside Tekapo, having crossed the hydroelectric dam which has raised the water level in Lake Pukaki considerably since Beryl last visited, we stopped to visit the little Church of the Good Shepherd. Built in the 1930s to commemorate the work of the pioneer farmers of Mackenzie Country, it looks out across the lake. The altar is backed by a large picture window giving a magnificent view out to the mountains beyond. Nearby is a bronze statue of

a sheep dog, sculpted in 1968 by the wife of a Mackenzie farmer, commemorating all the faithful sheep dogs without which the settlement of the area would scarcely have been possible.

We stopped for petrol (NZ\$58) and after 94 kms stopped in Geraldine at 11.00 o'clock. We had a coffee in a little café with quaint wooden figures sitting at their breakfast table on the veranda outside – bought ourselves something for lunch and were on our way again just before twelve o'clock.

We stopped just outside town on a side road, had our lunch and continued on our way back to Christchurch and the airport, where we arrived at the 'North South Park' more or less at the end of the runway by 2.00 p.m. The day's run was 240 kms. The whole trip had been 1326 kilometres – 1326 never to be forgotten kilometres. I went and topped up the fuel tank ready for handover the next morning (NZ\$34) and we settled down to make a cup of tea. Beryl washed a few items and hung them out to dry. We found the idea of using a motor home for a short trip – all too short – was a good one. No worries about finding a B&B each evening. At between NZ\$13 & NZ\$20 a night it was cheap and there was never any problem about finding a site. I did book a few sites in advance but found this had not been necessary at this time of year.

Some sites may become much more crowded in full summer. To make sure of our last night's stay, however, I had booked it in advance. We found all the campsites well equipped with toilet, shower, laundry and drying facilities.

John Harper arrived around 4.00 p.m. He returned the 'Journal' which had been photocopied by Christchurch Museum – and they had made a copy for us as well. During our time away John had been in contact with Javier Moore in Argentina, whose great grandfather was the other man killed alongside Arthur Powys in the ambush on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1875. John had also found the records of the burials in the Alexandra Colony church and gave us copies of all the information he had gathered. John has been a most diligent researcher into Astrop and Powys history and doubtless his enthusiasm – and ours – will continue.

We had a cup of tea and a last drink with John who took all the odds and ends of food and supplies we no longer needed and we bid him a sad farewell at 6.00 p.m. The four all too brief days we spent with him delving into Powys family history have been the most memorable of the whole trip.

We had kept sufficient wine from the wine box for our supper of smoked chicken breast, ate the rest of the grapes and finished off the Cointreau. We did – momentarily - consider taking the bottle to give to David Bateman but convinced ourselves that there wasn't really enough left to make that worth while !

### Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November

**1866** - Commenced crossing the ploughed land, but did not do much, owing to the rope breaking. I commenced papering the sitting room.

**1867** - A Norwester. Did the same. Nathan came back in the evening. Went a-bobbing & caught an eel.



We were up bright & early – tea at 7.15, quick breakfast, suitcases packed, waste water ‘dumped’ and off to hand over the van. No problems and we shared a taxi to the airport – about a five minute drive - with another couple who were also flying out that morning. Air New Zealand flight 522 was on time and we arrived at Auckland at just before midday. David Bateman met us off the plane, with Janet sitting in the car in the ‘drop off’ zone right outside the Arrivals gate. This was the first time we had seen them since a Frankfurt Book Fair many years ago. They were all packed up and ready to drive the three hours out to their beach house on the Coromandel peninsula.

It was a glorious sunny day and the drive along the coast road was spectacular. We passed one nasty accident along the way, but were able to get past. We just hoped that a similar accident would not close the road completely when we came to return for our flight to Kuala Lumpur in a couple of days time ! We stopped at one of their regular spots for a snack lunch then again for an ice cream and some delicious smoked fish (for dinner) and arrived at Rings Beach and their house in time for tea.

Problems ! Problems ! A hydraulic ‘lift’ had been installed in the house, to avoid taking up too much room inside the room and having to use the outside wooden – and occasionally slippery – staircase.

David had already been on to the installer to complain about the lift not working properly but now the door was jammed as well. Much telephoning ensued – nearest available help is at least two hours drive away ! We left the lift to its own devices, but not before David had dismantled the door lock system and tried all the solutions which were given to him by telephone and a couple of power cuts – not David’s fault. It was time for a drink ! We had chicken casserole for dinner, with copious draughts of good wine – and excellent conversation.

We regaled David & Janet with a true tale from John Harper about power cuts. The mother of a friend of his was visiting John, from England. During a power cut she remarked to John : “*Of course you must expect power cuts here – your electricity cannot be as good as ours – it’s made by water*” \_

### Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - A lovely day. They broke the brake twice today. I went on papering. (*The entry for 26<sup>th</sup> reads : ‘All the paper peeling off again – damned bore’*)

**1867** - A beastly cold sou'west wind with a little rain. The Gaffer came to breakfast.

Awoke to a glorious sunny morning and the sound of breaking waves on the beach. Went to have a look at the pair of dotteril, which had raised to chicks on the shore just in front of the house. They appeared to be in good order, chicks barely distinguishable in size from the parent birds.

We had a lazy breakfast then drove along the coast to Kuoatunu, a settlement from the gold rush of 1852. The reef produced about 15 ounces of gold per ton mined.

Back for lunch of oysters & scallops in wine – then a rest ! Then a short walk on the beach – with the dotterils never very far away and a most excellent steak supper, followed by brandies – and bed.

These couple of days, far from the madding crowd, have been a wonderful end to a wonderful trip. Elastic stockings on tomorrow and off to Kuala Lumpur on the long flight home.

### Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November

**1866** - Rode to Heathstock with Dick. Stayed till 7½ . Bishop etc there.

**1867** - A still day for a wonder. Sent Nathan to the Pass with Alice. Killed a sheep. Those lubberly Leicesters won't settle down anywhere.

We set our alarms for 6.00 a.m. but were all awake beforehand. Breakfast was taken as David & Janet went through their well practiced routine of closing the place up and packing everything into the car. We were away by 7.45 on the long drive back to Auckland airport. No hold ups along the way – just one short stop for petrol and a coffee and we said goodbye to Janet & David as they dropped us at the International Terminal by 10.30.

Booking in for our Malaysian Air flight MH 130 was already under way so we got rid of our luggage and waited for the take off, which was at 2.15 p.m.

It was a 10½ hour flight, daylight all the way and with the five hour time change we arrived in Kuala Lumpur at 7.35 p.m. local time. As we descended through the storm clouds into KL airport the plane was very badly thrown about causing some cries of alarm from some of the passengers, but we got down safely.

There was a wheel chair to meet Beryl and the 'buggy' brought us to the Pan Pacific hotel. We were in bed by 9.00 p.m. having been with both a lunch and a supper on the aircraft at times with which our systems did not really agree. We slept soundly until around 3.30 a.m then dozed until 7.30.

### Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November

New Zealand was a long way behind us. We awoke to a bright sunny Kuala Lumpur morning and went down for a leisurely breakfast. Many of the guests in the hotel were the teams for the A1 Grand Prix, taking place at the nearby circuit all over the weekend. We thought we would take the train into Kuala Lumpur and had planned to visit the butterfly park, bird park and orchid houses, all of which are near each other. When, however, we stepped out of the train and into a taxi to the butterfly park, the heat & humidity hit us. We had been accustomed to such a climate in Mombasa, but that was a long while ago !

We did get around the butterfly park and I did get some shots of these fast and erratic movers – there were some gorgeous specimens but they seldom stayed still long enough to focus and shoot ! By the end of twenty minutes my shirt was soaked. We were told that the bird park was “only five or ten minutes walk away” – but took a taxi !

An excellent system of taxis – one books and pays in advance at a desk and is ushered into the next available cab. A good idea as it avoids all arguments about

fares at the end of a journey.

We abandoned all thought of the orchids and took a taxi straight back to the station, for the KLIA Express back to the airport. It began to rain heavily as we sped through the countryside and it had become a real monsoon downpour by the time we reached the airport. No problem for us, though, as the buggy was there to run us back, under cover, to the hotel.

We showered and changed and turned on the TV to watch the A1 GP racing. The start was delayed for half an hour due to the torrential rain and when the race was allowed to proceed the cars made five or so circuits of the track behind a 'safety car'. We stayed awake long enough to see the German team win, then we slept from 4.00 pm. until waking, in the dark, at 7.30. Light supper then back to bed !

### Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November

It was another bright sunny morning and we breakfasted late. Our flight was not until midnight and we had the use of the room for the whole day.

I should have looked more carefully at the timings when making the original bookings because there was a Malaysian Air flight at 11.00 a.m. which would have suited us better. I did enquire about seats on this and there were some available but at a cost of another £100 for the two of us. We decided against this and took the buggy into the airport for a look around and to buy a book to keep us occupied for the rest of the day – and the flight home. We bought a couple of sandwiches, returned to our room, sorted and packed the cases and lay down to rest.

By mid afternoon another monsoon storm began with spectacular lightning and torrential rain. We read our books !

We had supper in the hotel around 7.30 p.m. – mixed chicken & beef satay - and the buggy took us to the airport around 9.00. We booked in – the required “three hour before departure” for international flights makes for long, boring waits in airports. There was none of the ‘political correctness’ which seems to have hit Britain over the possibility of Christmas decorations ‘offending people of other religions’ – the whole airport, in this predominantly Muslim country, was decorated with traditional trees.

The flight took off later than scheduled and we were in the dark all the way, racing ahead of the sun.

Mike & Clare had, as a ‘Thank You’ for the use of our house while we were away, arranged for a car to meet us. At 5.30 in the morning – and a foul wet and windy morning too – we were very glad of this. But the driver was nowhere to be seen – until I had a call put out and he came to the Meeting Point.

We were back in Isleham – Mike & Clare had left the day before – by 9.00 a.m. and settled straight back into village routine – cutting holly the very next day to decorate the font in Saint Andrew’s church, for the Festival of Light.



Ka mate, ka mate  
Ka ora, ka ora  
Tenei te tangata  
Pu huru huru  
Nana i tiki mai  
Whaka whiti te ra  
A upane, kaupane  
Upane, kaupane  
Whiti te ra

It is death, it is death  
It is life, it is life  
This is the man  
Fierce powerful man  
He who captured the sun  
And caused it to shine  
It rises and sets  
Rises and sets  
The sun shines