Friendship Force of Kapiti Coast Exchanges to Newcastle and Hobart, Australia

Date: 25 October - November 2015

These two exchanges were with The Friendship Force Club of Newcastle (25 October - 1 November 2015) and The Friendship Force of Hobart (1 - 8 November 2015) and involved 20 ambassadors from The Friendship Force of Kapiti Coast and 1 ambassador from The Friendship Force of Wellington.

The ambassadors were:

Diana Bradshaw
Adrienne Burleigh (ED)
Jan Beswick
Lynette and Bruce Connun
Jeanette Foote
Joyce Gibson
Rhondda Harris
Ron Head
Maureen Herlihey-Moloney (Wellington)
Debbie Lattey (Hobart only)
Beth Lough
Lenora Nysse
Eve and Vic Olsson
Jan Reid
Margaret Swain
Theresa and Graham Tuffnail
Bob Wilson

Newcastle:
The journey from Kapiti coast was not without its challenges. A number of the ambassadors had decided to go to Australia early and were to meet with the rest on Sunday 25 October at the railway station in Sydney to continue the journey to Newcastle. This was successfully accomplished in spite of the railways in both countries deciding that essential track maintenance needed to be undertaken that day resulting in bus trips having to replace trains both before and after the trans-Tasman flight. Brendan Mannion, ED, Newcastle, did an excellent job getting all the hosts to the meeting point in time to meet the bus and the tired ambassadors after a very long day and a not particular journey.

The programme for the week was very well organised and all of us were very pleasantly surprised at the range of very interesting activities that had been put together. Some of us had been given the impression that there was not a lot to do in Newcastle as it was basically a coal town on the river and was dull and dirty. Nothing could have been further from the truth. We had a great time. In the programme it was stated "Newcastle is one of Australia's oldest and most interesting cities containing a quirky blend of new and old architecture, a rich indigenous history, a working harbour and fabulous beaches."

Monday morning had us up early and ready to go. We visited Newcastle Memorial Walk, and walked along above the beach from the Strzelecki Lookout to the Bar Beach, rode the restored Newcastle tram, enjoyed a delicious picnic lunch and ended the afternoon with a visit to Fort Scratchley and its buildings and underground tunnels. An addition was a spectacular thunder and lightning storm which rounded that day's activities off with a bang.

Tuesday again began early. We spent the day enjoying the Riverboat Postman Cruise on the Hawkesbury River with some ambassadors and their hosts taking the train prior to and following the cruise. The ploughman's lunch was a welcome addition to the day, an event that was enjoyed by all. The evening was spent at a "non-host dinner" giving all the ambassadors an opportunity to meet more of the very hospitable members of the Newcastle club.

Wednesday was a welcome free day. The slower pace was a welcome change for some ambassadors but many of our group, whose interests had been discovered by our hosts, were taken to all sorts of
places in the area that supported their interests including a little retail therapy and a number of beach walks.

Thursday provided some challenges. We had been invited to a Lord Mayoral Reception but because of industrial trouble being experienced by the City Council, the smooth running which had been a feature of the exchange was somewhat disrupted although this was eventually overcome and we enjoyed the laid-back style of the Deputy Lord Mayor with an exchange of gifts. (The books we were given have been handed on to the Kapiti Coast District Library for enjoyment of all.) We did have the opportunity to look at the lovely old building which is the city hall and also the gardens and trees which surround it and some of the museums and art galleries in the area. This was followed by a barbeque and picnic lunch at the Blackbutt Reserve. Not only were we able to enjoy this wonderful facility with its native plantings and many different native birds, but there was also the opportunity to have a "Koala Encounter" and to meet and touch this unique original Australian and its family. That evening ambassadors took their hosts to dinner. Newcastle has a number of excellent eateries ranging from "clubs" to top-end dining and also a wide range of food and beverages available at the different places. The next day had the ambassadors exchanging comments on their evening and wishing that our area had some of the excellent facilities that were available throughout the city and beyond.

No trip to Australia would be complete without acknowledgement of its history. Friday became a day of history with a visit to Maitland Gaol, a Victorian prison that was still in use until 1988. It was quite chilling to imagine the life for both inmates and their gaolers behind these walls and to contemplate the continued use of confinement in this area of the world. We then went on to Morpeth and sampled life at a slower pace. The river, the vineyards the old houses and the demanding pace of a very active life that the early settlers had, had many of us thinking about how difficult yet fulfilling life must have been for the early settlers in the Hunter River area. The evening was in direct contrast as we joined together at the Warner's Bay foreshore for a picnic tea and a musical evening with our hosts and other members of the community.

Saturday and the end of the week. Everyone lent a hand to set out the venue for the pot-luck farewell lunch and entertainment at the Charlestown Uniting Church. Again a very well organised event with a "cowboy and cowgal" turn or two. After we had eaten extremely well square dancing became our next lesson. Once those participating had sorted out their left hands from their right feet they managed to do an almost reasonable rendition of some of the classic square dances while those who had not been persuaded to take the floor participated by laughing long and loud at their friends and hosts.

Sunday was a very early rise and then the train (no track maintenance this time) and off to Sydney and the plane to Hobart.

**Hobart** 1 - 8 November
Sunday. An uneventful trip from Newcastle to Sydney, everyone arriving safely and all on board for the flight to Hobart. The Hobart Club met us and took us to our various hosts, a welcome drink and then getting ready for a Welcome Halloween Party at the home of one of the hosts. Debbie joined us during the evening, having been met by two very oddly dressed people at the airport. A great time was had by all.

Monday a cool day with a morning tour of the Moorilla Winery followed by a picnic lunch and then a visit to INCAT. This International Catamarans visit really appealed to the men but the women also found it interesting.

Tuesday was a long but very interesting day visiting Port Arthur and adding to the knowledge of Australia and the convict system that was such a key factor in Tasmania's establishment. There were casual meals in private homes in the evening.
Wednesday was a free day and people went to many interesting places with lovely weather to make the day even more special. This day out was followed by an evening out when there was dinner hosting by non-hosting members.

Thursday took us on a long but very interesting drive south of Hobart to Hastings Cave preceded by a BBQ lunch at the Thermal Springs Reserve - a very beautiful spot and greatly enjoyed - Lenora fell and broke her arm but the break was not confirmed until the next day

Friday brought us back to the reality of early Hobart with a very informative visit to the Female Factory where we were given "Her Story" - an enacted story of the lives of convict women and one in particular on the actual site of the women's prison. This was a chilling tale and all the more disturbing because of the truth of it. In the afternoon there was a beer pulling contest and a tour of the Cascade Brewery, Australia’s oldest brewery.

Saturday was the day to visit Salamanca market with the rest of the day free followed by a fun Farewell Dinner.

Sunday was a day of farewells with many of the ambassadors leaving on the "Tassie Tour" to explore much more of Tasmania, organised by Vic Olsson and his committee. Thank you Vic. Those who were not doing this tour spent the day in various ways with their hosts and our thanks go to these very hospitable people for taking the extra time to accommodate our needs. We then stayed overnight at a hotel near the airport to be able to catch the early plane home via Melbourne to Wellington.

**Comments:**

**Travel Arrangements:**

Initially it was suggested by some of the group that we could save money on fares by making group bookings through one travel agent. This was explored but other than making a group booking for the flight from Melbourne to Hobart the idea was abandoned. These days people who travel are very adept at making their own bookings, whether on-line or through a personally preferred agent, expanding their time away to include visits to friends and family or linking with others who are also travelling and developing a personal itinerary. My approach then became to have every ambassador arrive at the initial venue on a certain day at a certain time and to take responsibility for their own travel arrangements. At the end of the final exchange, people were free to again make their own travel arrangements to undertake further trips or to proceed back to New Zealand. This worked well and resulted in as many variations in travel as there were ambassadors, and it also made for far less work for me as ED, although I was always available to advise when and where necessary.

**Health Issues:**

Lenora Nysse was our only real casualty. She lost her balance while climbing into the seat at a fixed seat picnic table and benches, fell backwards with her arm underneath her and broke it in at least two places. Initially she felt she had only bruised it badly but the following morning realised she needed medical attention. Her transport to the hospital and the subsequent running around was very willingly and graciously provided by Stan Mather, her host. Many thanks to Stan for this support. The damage to her arm was more than had been first anticipated but the breaks were stabilised and were fully dealt with on her return to New Zealand. She has made a full recovery and continued travelling with The Friendship Force both in New Zealand and overseas. Well done Lenora
Tight Connections:

As is often the case, the airline or train connections can be very tight. We experienced this, especially on the return journey made by members of our club who did not go on the Tassie Tour following the Hobart exchange. It is a factor which needs to be taken into account, especially if people are not going to have time to eat at the airport if the flights do not have food available. I would, on any future trips, make sure I had discussed the situation with the group and suggested that each person carried some "emergency rations" to address any need that might arise.

Programme Choices:

At times on any exchange, the programme provided is not one that is of interest to some of the group attending. This is always of concern as there can be resentment of "being made to go". It is a situation that needs to be handled with care as to whether those people are able to opt out of the activity, stay in the provided transport or not come that day. There is no easy answer, but if people are not happy to attend any particular activity, then the fees negotiated by the host club should not be refunded even if the ambassador/s do not take part in the activity. I am very well aware of this as, although I had planned to be involved in all activities other than Port Arthur, my mobility problems precluded me from involvement in all of the programme that involved walking for any distance or standing for more than a couple of minutes. As such I was not a good role model to others who wanted to opt out, even though each activity/s had been discussed prior to the exchange. While this is always a challenge, I am strongly against coercion.

Because of business and family concerns, Wilson and Debbie Lattey were not able to undertake the full trips for which they had booked. Debbie did manage to make the journey to Hobart, but Wilson was not able to attend at all. Both Clubs took account of this and returned to them as much as was able, of the club fees. This generosity was greatly appreciated. It could be useful to explore whether airlines would return airfares via travel insurance when business or family concerns disrupts travel.

My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to Graham Tuffnail. Graham did a marvellous job of managing the finances for both exchange venues and got it all down on paper for me to smile about and others to read. His report is attached.

I need to add my apologies for my very late submission of this report. Due to other things happening in my life and also some bouts of ill health it has been long delayed in being presented to the committee. Thank you for your patience.

Adrienne Burleigh  ED