

2011 ESSEX FAMILY TOUR

For many years I had promised my family that one day I would take them to Australia/NZ and it was in September 2010 that the decision was made and the flights were booked. Given that we wanted to spend around 5 weeks away to see as much as we could and that my eldest daughter is a primary school teacher, the only time we could go was July/August 2011. Doing the whole trip were my wife and I, eldest daughter Stephanie and her partner Tux, younger daughter Samantha and son Michael. Additionally, the boyfriend of my younger daughter, Neil, joined us in NZ for the last 2 weeks.

Given the distance, we wanted to spend 3 nights in Hong Kong on the way out and 3 nights in Singapore on the way home. Our full itinerary was therefore set as flying out on 23 July 2011 to Hong Kong and then fly on to Melbourne, then Cairns, then drive down to Brisbane, stopping off along the way, then fly over to Auckland and spend a week touring around North Island New Zealand, before flying from Wellington to Sydney, before finally flying home via Singapore and landing at Heathrow on 25 August.

As editor of the Overseas Bag, this trip seemed the ideal opportunity to meet up with many of the OFs that I corresponded with. As a result I arranged to meet up with OFs in Hong Kong, Melbourne, Cairns, just north of Brisbane, Auckland and Sydney.

I'm hugely grateful to Ian, Mike, Chris, John, Nick and Phil for organising meetings to greet us and the following is an account of all these get togethers :-

Hong Kong

On 25 July 2011 **Ian Howard (S57-62)** had been good enough to organise for OFs to meet up at the Sugar Bar on the top of the East Hotel on Kowloon Island. When we arrived at the hotel everyone we bumped into seemed to



know we were coming! Ian was already there and we had some drinks

and very tasty "nibbles". A couple of those expected to be there had had to cry off due to last minute business commitments. **Chris Hall (G62-69)**, who I had met at the London Supper only a couple of weeks earlier popped in. Chris is addicted to collecting ancient silks and brought with him one he had bought that day. It was about a yard square and 700 years old.



As Chris left for another dinner engagement, **Brian Williams (G72-75)** arrived. Brian is MD of the Swire Hotel chain, which amongst others, owns the East Hotel. Brian's family had arrived from England that day. A huge thank you to him for providing all the drinks and nibbles we had enjoyed in the Sugar Bar. I gave Ian a pair of OF socks (he chose the striped version) as a thank you and passed across 2 copies of the Norman Borrett book from Richard Sayer.

We had then booked to have dinner in Brian's restaurant in the East Hotel. As we went down to dinner we again got huge attention. On arriving in the restaurant and without even saying who we were, we were asked if we had enjoyed our drinks in the Sugar Bar! We were shown to best table in restaurant that gave a fascinating view into the kitchen. Both Ian and Brian had





recommended us to have the Tomahawk Steak that was for 2 to share and to have the huge prawns. Both were fantastic all washed down with some Pinot Noir from NZ and Chardonnay from Australia. The waiters were very helpful with advice about what to do the following day and were an absolute credit to Brian.

Melbourne

A few days later on 28 July 2011, we arrived and checked into our hotel in Melbourne. Greeting us in the hotel room was a bottle of Aussie champagne and a copy of **Mike Garnett's (R53-55)** latest book on real tennis. A lovely surprise.

The following evening Mike had kindly organised an OF Supper within 100 yards of our hotel at an Irish pub/restaurant called PJ O'Briens. Despite a couple of last minute drop outs there were 20 of us there. Apart from my family and Mike, others present were **Bob Munro (R54-60)**, **Keith Dann**



(S48-50) and his wife Pat, **Aubrey Whitear (G58-65)** and his wife Diane and **Tim Bellamy (G60-66)** and his wife Jill.



Mike and I made brief speeches before I gave him the traditional gift of OF socks, where once again Mike chose the striped version.

Cairns

A few days later on 31 July 2011, we took an earlier flight to Cairns, where on our arrival the first people we saw were **Chris Shaw (K49-56)** and his wife Rebecca, even before we'd picked up our luggage. He was standing there with a board he had made up, on the theme Carry of Framlingham! They got us organised with collecting our bags and ensuring we knew which bus to get on for our transfer to Trinity Beach. Rebecca was also good enough to lend my wife Eryl her hat to wear in



the sun the following day, on our trip to Green Island. When we arrived at our apartment waiting for us were 2 bottles of champagne, some lovely flowers, a note and a CD containing Chris's story book.



On 2 August Chris had arranged an OF Supper attended by all OFs within 50 miles of Cairns – **Peter Hughes (G52-56)** and his wife Janet, **Louis Simon (BH72-75)** and his wife Fiona and Chris' wife



Rebecca. Chris had arranged for us to be picked up from our apartment at 6.15 and driven to Yorkeys Knob Boating Club. We had drinks outside before going upstairs to a separate room for our meal. Chris & Rebecca had done a fantastic job decorating the room with Aussie and Union Jack flags and the table with tropical flowers from their garden, orchids for the ladies and a personal commemorative

booklet for each person. This personal booklet had a picture of me arriving at the airport, all our names, a picture of the wonderful board Chris held up at the airport and some Aussie translations of Latin sayings e.g. Carpe Diem = "My god! Would you just look at the size of that fish". This was all held together with ribbons in Fram colours. During the evening these booklets were circulated round for everyone to sign. After puddings, Chris and I made speeches - Chris's far more amusing than mine!



Unfortunately by the time the speeches were over, all the other Aussie patrons at the yacht club had needed an early night and we were the only one's left and they wanted to close up! Chris quickly put Plan B into action and we all went back to their house for quite a few more glasses of the red stuff before departing for the night (note Chris is the only one still firmly holding onto his glass!)

The next morning we were grateful to Chris for picked Tux and I up at 8.30am to take us to the airport to pick up a hire car.

Brisbane

After a few more days in Cairns we started the long drive down to Brisbane, stopping off for a few days in Airlie Beach along the way. Driving down we must have seen about 700 miles of sugar cane, but no real signs of the devastating flooding they experienced earlier in the year.

On 8 August we drove about 150 miles down to Twin Waters to meet up at **Peter Bailey's (K34-38)** house. The Tom Tom easily managed to find 21 Bracewell Road, but little did I realise that this address comprised over 200 retirement homes! Fortunately there was a sales office, which was able



to give me Peter's address. He lived on an idyllic retirement complex with a lovely large bungalow going down to the waters edge. It reminded us very much of **Richard Rowe's (S65-74)** house in Fort Myers. Peter, who is 90 next year, greeted us sprightly at the door with his wife Joy. Already there was **Neville Marsh (S53-61)** and his wife Alison. Peter had a distinguished flying career (see Distinguished section of OF website) and he had some memorabilia round the walls of his study, including a Fram shield (see picture). I encouraged him to record his life story.

We took a short drive to the Twin Waters Golf Club, where were met by **Peter Simpson (K32-40)** and his wife Henrietta and Ruth Gates, who is **John's (S44-48)** wife. John had organised the lunch

but was unfortunately unable to attend because of illness. We had a great lunch and I passed round Richard's book on Norman Borrett. It's amazing to think that the two Peters were at school with Norman. I repeated my usual speech and gave out a pair of socks to Ruth to give to John for organising the lunch. Neville responded to my speech and I also gave him a pair to go with the tie that he had on! We then drove on to Brisbane where



we were staying for a couple of nights.

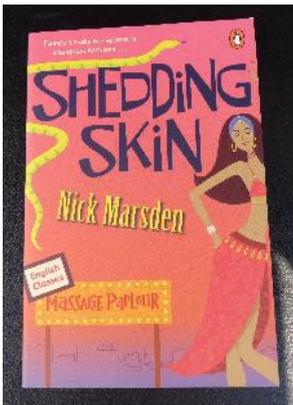


Auckland



A couple of days later (10 August) we flew to Auckland. The tallest building in the city is Sky City atop of which is a revolving restaurant called Orbit – the perfect venue I thought for another OF meeting, so I'd arranged for a contemporary of mine **Nick Marsden (G72-76)** and his wife Yoko to meet us there for dinner that night. Also joining the family that evening were an old school friend of Tux and his partner.

I'd arranged to meet Nick and his wife in the bar, the floor below the revolving restaurant and we all enjoyed a drink and the wonderful views.



Over the two hours of dinner we took a couple of revolutions of the tower and enjoyed some wonderful food. Nick recommended the local Hawkes Bay Pinot Noir wine, which was excellent. As was customary I gave Nick a pair of OF socks, although he had no choice but to have a crested one due to the previous popularity of the striped version!



In exchange, Nick gave me a copy of his book *Shedding Skin*, which I have arranged to be donated to the College Library.

Sydney

After a week in snowy North Island New Zealand (first time in 50 years they had had snow!) we flew from blizzards in Wellington to the comparative warmth of Sydney.

Phil Bower (G65-74) a contemporary of mine at Fram had agreed to organise a get together in Sydney, with his initial thinking being a fancy dress party in a McDonalds! After some persuasion and a recommendation from **Simon Narroway (G72-75)**, who was my



best man 31 years ago, we assembled from 7.30pm at the Bazaar Beer Café. Already there when we arrived were Phil and his wife Dee and Simon, plus **James Harrison (M80-85)** and his wife Maggie, **Mark Birrell (G73-83)** and **Jon Newbery (R79-84)**. Unusually I was about the oldest OF there, but this was soon to be corrected by the welcome arrival of **Hugh Richardson (S43-48)** and his wife.



The following is Phil's write up on the evening, in his own unique style.

"Hats off to all who attended, times 3 for those who didn't, and a

further times 6 for those who said they would and didn't! And if you have no idea what I'm talking about, that'll be a further times 3!

Since my memory for names has been utterly destroyed by a life of zero attention to detail, all of the faces in the attached did actually attend the Fooding, held at the previously mentioned and booked venue. Sadly, we failed to out-do our northern mexican cousins [Cairns] - no one was evicted and neither did we manage to get the Essex clan arrested! Damned shame. That would have been extremely amusing, although perhaps not for them. And yet, they survived a trip across the Tasman so they must be a hardy lot. Said venue, being the recommend of Simon Narroway, proved to be



more than adequate and food was extremely palatable. The only negative being a lack of wheaty items so a bread fight was not possible (thinks - maybe that would have gotten us evicted?!).



The tariff for the night almost made it to AU\$800 and the previously mentioned Mr Narroway exercised his excellent banking skills and calculated an even split for everyone - and if you know anything about how the banking system works, you'll know who got a free lunch! Just kidding.....

My personal thanks to Chris E for providing me with an extremely attractive pair of socks as a reward for my (it must be said) rather lackadaisical efforts to convene a number of people of a common bond at a mutually agreeable location for the purpose of getting pissed and fed! Conversation was varied and covered so many subjects that I didn't hear most of them. Hugh and I spent many a happy moment trying to guess what each of us was saying because a) there's a small generation gap and b) we're both equally deficient in the audible department! I think I can confidently state that the only people who carried more hair than me were both female - but in fairness I did have to make up for those males who's follicle status is definitely of a small portion. And I spotted at least one male personage who appeared to be sporting.....hair gel! Whatever next - girls at Fram? Bedsits for dorms? Bah, humbug!!

PhilB

(currently hurtling (within the speed limit) towards northern mexican cousins in a truck loaded with a small mountain of audio, lighting & truss!)"



As Phil mentions, at the end of the evening I gave him his pair of crested socks, which he immediately converted into a glove puppet (see photo)— perhaps he's hit on a new avenue for sales!! I've subsequently heard from Phil that they have become his gig socks, which he wears every time he plays.

Finally a huge thank you to Simon who treated us all to the considerable amount of red wine we had consumed that evening.

A couple of days later my family and I travelled in horrendous rain to visit Simon and his wife Yoko at their home in North Sydney. We had a great evening with his family and friends to round off our meetings with OF. We started off with Oysters and a large range of Sushi, followed by a choice of 3 main courses that Yoko had cooked, followed by some cakes and a home made pavlova. This was all washed down by large quantities of red wine. Afterwards Yoko and his eldest daughter Lisa ran us back to the station.



For me it was my 9th OF meeting in less than two months, having also attended the London Supper and West of England Suppers in early July.

Finally my thanks again to all the wonderful organisers and to all the other OFs and their partners who took the trouble to come out and meet us. It was truly a trip of a lifetime for us, that we will remember for years to come.

Chris Essex (K69-75)