

THE ELSEGOOD Christmas Newsletter 2017



This has been a travel year, work on charitable events and year to work around the cabin.

After a mild winter with only minor snow ... we emerged from the cabin ready to get the year kicked off with a bang.

The daffodils came up in early March more abundant than ever. We put the winter jigsaw puzzle away and starting planning and researching.

Harvey and Julie stopped by to visited us whilst traveling along the Blue Ridge Highway on their motorbike. It was a nice surprise even though they only stayed for a couple of hours on their way to Asheville.

Our wildlife returned in June with Bluebirds and hummingbirds coming north after the winter. Although we haven't seen them this year Bears and Deer frequent the grounds. Our Rabbit are a regular visitor to the birdfeeder.



FRANCE

Our trip to France we planned late 2016 after watching the Tour de France and seeing Chateau Angers in the Loire Valley. We had booked a house on the banks of the river in Clisson, we paid for tickets, booked a car and even got an International Drivers License each. Well about a month before leaving we got an

email from the owners' wife saying she and her husband had separated and he now occupied the house, so, she had taken it off the rental market. Panic set in! Luckily we had insurance and got most of the rental back and started to work on alternatives. We found a Best Western hotel on the opposite site of the river, which we managed to book, so the trip was back on.

France was incredible; the town was so picturesque with the river, the Castle and old narrow streets and two old bridges. The hotel room was small with not a lot of room for our cases but we had a good view over the river and the front desk staff spoke good English. My pigeon French was OK and we got



through most of the days without any problems. I drove with Linda being the navigator. We did have a problem finding places as the signage was not very good and the navigation system was something we had never used before. But that's part of the fun finding off

the beaten track places. The area around Clisson is wine country with grapevines and wineries at every turn. We spent the first few days acclimatising and discovering the town. Little did we know that an event featuring models dressed in Venetian Costumes was taking part that weekend after we arrived with

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an Art and Fashion show. It was so strange seeing all these models in fantastic costumes walking around the town. They just seemed to fit right in with the scenery. At the weekly open market we bought Cheeses and fruit freshly picked which were our snacks in the afternoons. It took us a little while to work out that restaurants opened for lunch 12-2pm, then closed until 7pm that evening.

We travelled to Chateaus and Castles most days, starting with the furthest. It is hard to express the wonderful experiences of visiting these places. Every one of these places was so interesting and the artwork and artifacts so professionally displayed. It just took our breath away. On one day we took the train to Nantes, a 9-euro ticket each way on possibly the smoothest train ride we have ever experienced. This train saved me a drive into the busiest town in the district and the train station was only about half a mile

from the Nantes Castle. We ate at a local restaurant just outside the Castle after walking around the ramparts and building inside the walls for about 3 hours. I think what impressed me the most was the audiovisuals that each place had put together.

Without writing a book on each place, I decided photos were better. The Castles and Chateaus included: Clisson, Nantes, Angers, Tiffuages, Saumur, Oudon, Serrant, La Chabotterie.

After such a great trip we had the most dreadful return journey. Our flight left Nantes late, so by the time we got to Charles De Gaul Airport we were running late, we had arranged for Air France personnel to escort us through the airport as we had to change terminals. Even with her taking us through the back entrances,

we still had Passport Control and Security. We got to the gate 3 minutes late... flight gone. So we were put on the next flight in row 30 as apposed to row 14 in the more expensive seats I had paid for. That of course

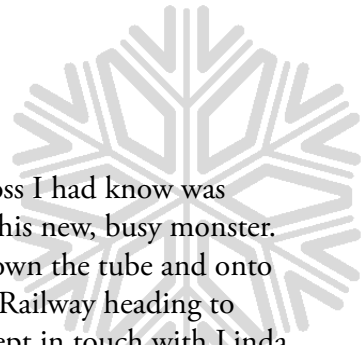


meant we were further back getting off and our connecting flight gave us little time to get through Atlanta.





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With Passport control and then down to the luggage area to identify our luggage. Well we waited and waited with time running out until the last piece of luggage arrived off the flight. No luggage!!! It was still in Paris. So we took off again running going through security again joining a long queue, I lost it!! I kindly asked the girl on security if we could go ahead of the line. She said I had to ask everyone in front of us. I said in no uncertain fashion we had missed one flight, lost our luggage, been downgraded on the flight and we were not about to miss the next one. Everyone in the queue hearing me being a little loud waved us through. By then my blood pressure had reached boiling and Linda did a collapsing act in the train connecting terminals. Somehow we managed to get up the escalator and along the gateway to our Gate, which, by then,

we were 10 minutes late. Well as luck had it the flight crew had been delayed and the flight was just about to board.

UK TRIP

My brother Alan sent me an email to say they were going to celebrate their 50th Wedding Anniversary in Late June. I thought wow! We would have just got back from France. Linda said she probably could not manage two trips in such a short time and I agreed.... But I had to be there. After all I was the Best Man back in the dark ages. My generous brother told me to book a ticket and he would pick up the tab. Well tickets from here to Manchester were

running at \$1500. I set about looking at alternatives and lucked up. Asheville-Atlanta-Amsterdam-Leeds return for \$950. The flight was a little longer but the savings were enormous. I also bought train tickets on line for greatly reduced fares and had them sent to Alan's address.

So I arrived in Leeds and Alan was waiting for me. Settled in for a few days to catch up before Alan and Andrea went to the Lake District and I went down to London to stay at Anji's. Alan came with me as far as Leeds and I got on the Virgin Train heading for London. I was met by Anji which was a good job as

the Kings Cross I had know was nothing like this new, busy monster. We headed down the tube and onto the Southern Railway heading to Kingston. I kept in touch with Linda by email as I had taken my laptop. Alan had given me a cell phone but it was all double-dutch to me. After settling in and seeing the major improvements Anji had make to the property we went off to check out her allotment. I was amazed at what she had cultivated.

Ben, Lai and Hugh now lived in Kingston, Bassie and Kate living in Wales came up to spend time with us. It was great to catch up as it had been years since I had seen my godsons. A barbecue at Bens was a treat after a river walk and on Sunday morning a walk through Richmond Park to see the Deer and take the dog for a walk. Lunch at the Rose of York in Richmond, which I



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planned to meet up with old friends and relatives, was a total success. Although a few friends could not make it, all had a good time. My thanks go out to Anji for looking after me, Tiny, Gwyn and Yvonne, Sue, Chris and Anne, Conrad, Heni and the boys, Ben and Hugh, Bassie and Kate and rover for making this reunion such a good occasion. Sitting having coffee in Anji's new dining area I saw a fox in the back



to Ye Olde Star Inn and found Tiny

until I was 11. Soaked but happy I returned for breakfast at the hotel before awaiting Alan and Andrea on the next step of my journey. Off we went to Pickering to catch the North Yorkshire Railway to Grosmont. Ever since I can remember I have been steam train mad and the North Yorkshire Railway



and Isaac. Within a few minutes Malcolm Greaves and Stephen Bradley, Tim and Jenny Coleman had arrived. Malcolm, Isaac and Steve, I had not seen for over 30 years. Tim and Jenny had



visited Linda and myself a couple of years earlier in Burnsville. The beers flowed and time flew and suddenly it was time for a curry. I said my goodbyes and walked back to my hotel the long way around to see Clifford's Tower.



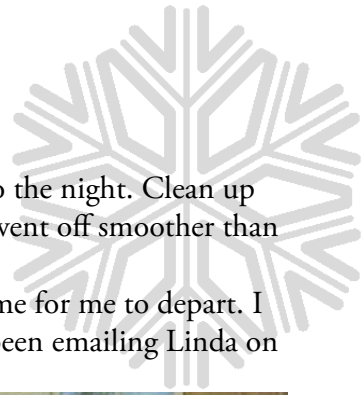
is one of my favourites. We got off at Grosmont and over the crossing into the pub for lunch. This place also had memories as Linda and I, Alan and Andrea, Carl and Caroline and their dogs took my folk there. After a good lunch it was back on the train to return to Pickering and the journey continued to Whitby. We found the Guest House and

Although the next morning it was raining I went on my pilgrimage to Trentholme Drive (where I grew up) across the Knavesmire (where my father's ashes are scattered) and through the allotments to Scarcroft School were I spent my school days





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checked in. Alan and Andrea had worked out where we were going to eat and the view over the golf course to the sea was just the spot. Although it was wet we toured around Whitby before we retired. A healthy breakfast in the morning and a final look around Whitby. We returned to Menston over the moors passing Filingdales, and the early warning system that stands out like 3 large golf balls on the barren moors.



One very sad note was my cousin Christine who lived in Australia had been over for a family reunion and suffered an accident and was rushed to hospital. After the hospital had checked her out they found she was terminally ill and put her in a facility in York. Helen and Jill all come across to York from Scotland and Australia to comfort my Aunt Gladys and Christine. Susan, Keith and David were there for support. Alan and I went across to York to see them and comfort them. Christine never recovered and died a few days later. It was my privilege to see her before her final journey. Her husband took her back to Australia for burial.

A few days later we set up for the party, gathering tents, chairs and tables from all over the place and decorated the garden. All was set



for the big bash. Carl, Caroline, Carla and Freya, Conrad, Alec and Luca, Ian and Geraldine, Elaine, Jan and Peter, my Uncle Joe and Aunty Colleen, Harvey and Julie represented the family and the friends and neighbours were numerous. The cake was cut, the cameras were flashing as the party

went well into the night. Clean up the next day went off smoother than set up.

It was now time for me to depart. I had been emailing Linda on



a daily basis and things back home were good. It was the first time we had been apart since 2000.

Alan dropped me off at Bradford/Leeds airport and I departed through security for Amsterdam and home. I would especially thank Andrea and Alan for my trip and making it all run so smoothly.

I arrived back at Asheville Regional Airport to find Linda, Mike and Carol waiting for me. The perfect ending to a long trip.

LINVILLE CAVERNS/ WINERY

A day trip out to the Linville Caverns was a welcome day out. It's always lovely to travel on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The amount of bikers this year has been astounding. The Three wheelers have become popular and the overlooks are always busy. We had never been to the Caves before. The guide took us through



the caverns to over a half mile underground. The fish in the pools are blind, as they never see the light of day. The Stalagmites and Stalagmites making interesting shapes weave their way through the hand made tunnels. The bats that lived in the caves are all gone due to the visitors causing disease. Now you have to wash your shoes on the way out of the caves. The guide took us into small crevices we had to squeeze into and at one point turned all the lights off to show what total darkness felt like underground.

We had lunch at a small local restaurant in the village that sat in three counties. The place was packed but the food was not that sharp. We moved onwards to the Winery where we had samples of 4 wines each. Bought a couple of bottles to keep for special occasions and the nice thing was they gave us our engraved glasses in a custom made hold all. It seemed to be extremely well run and has entertainment and events on weekends. We will go back.

CHATTANOOGA

I planned a week out for Linda's

birthday with a trip to Chattanooga to ride the trains and go on the scenic boat ride. A week full of entertainment. We travelled this time in our truck going the scenic route and not the fastest route. Going through the Nantahala Gorge where groups were white water rafting and canoeing.

Staying at the Quality Inn as our base in Chattanooga it was easy to get to the places we needed to get too. That being said, we still got lost far too many times. Our first



day train Ride was the Missionary Ridge, a short trip, but included the sheds and work area and watching the turntable in operation with a commentary by our guide. The train station had a great shop and so as always we bought a few items. The second day ride was to Chickamauga where the museum and town were the main stop. We had lunch on the train as we moved through the

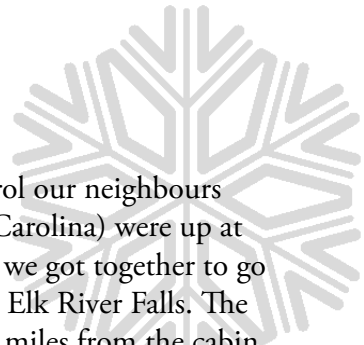


back of Chattanooga. The museum was incredible with its Pillared entrance, old cannons and wooden outbuildings, rooms full of artifacts, the place was full of history and well looked after. Day three found us on the Hiwassee Loop, the train went along the river and climbed to the top of the mountain circling around and coming back onto the same line over the tresselled bridge for the return journey. Unfortunately the views were not as good as we had expected. This journey would be better when the trees are not full of leaves or perhaps some tree trimming in areas would have helped. The highlight of the journey was when the conductor with his banjo had a





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Another day brought us to the lunch cruise on the Riverboat. Parking was available right across from the boat on the riverfront. The office, Restaurant and gift shop was an old Paddle Steamer with an entrance onto the riverboat. Lunch was a buffet with a good selection of food and washed down with a beer for me. The boat was not busy as this was the week that the schools had gone back in. The two-hour trip up and down the river was informative and relaxing. We sat on the top deck after lunch and took in the sights. After the boat had docked we decided to visit the Hunter Museum

about a mile along the riverbank walk. This museum of American Art had room after room of amazing artwork and the views through the windows were river and bridge views. We didn't have time to visit the Aquarium this trip. We celebrated Linda's birthday with a meal at an Italian/Greek restaurant with a lovely meal washed

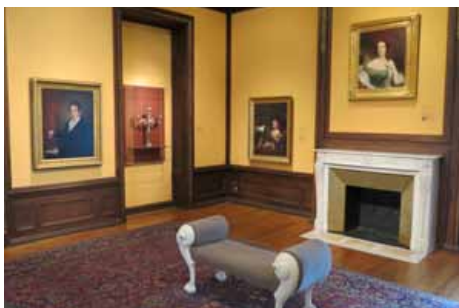


sing-along.

We visited the Zoo one afternoon. A small, but well kept with lots to see. The animal enclosures were well thought out and the walk around was very pleasant. They are enlarging areas and I would recommend if you are in the area spending some time there.

down with a few glasses of Italian wine.

ELK RIVER FALLS



Mike and Carol our neighbours (from South Carolina) were up at their cabin so we got together to go on a picnic to Elk River Falls. The falls about 40 miles from the cabin are easily accessible and have a good parking area. The path down to



the bottom of the falls needs some work but they have steps which help in one area. Even midweek there are people but not that busy. After navigating the path down taking photos we had our picnic lunch in the car park. Afterwards we visited the row of Antique-Bric-a-Brac shops in the village. We bought old windows for \$3 a window for Linda's

next project Cold Frames, to grow our own seedlings and save a couple of hundred dollars on plants next year.

GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN

Our twice-yearly visit to Grandfather Mountain in October was as always a lovely day out. They keep improving the animal



compound and this year there was a new Eagle. They were also redoing the deer park with Elks. That enclosure was closed. The Bears and Otters were on top form and we ended up in the Fudge Shop. The colours on Grandfather Mountain were changing and the walk across the mile high Swing Bridge on a clear day just added to a pleasant day out.

BLUE RIDGE RELAY

One of our areas biggest events is the Blue Ridge Relay. A team running event, which starts in Virginia and finishes in Asheville. The 208-mile route takes it through Pensacola from Burnsville. Our area is responsible for three checkpoints, these are change-over points for the runners where they hand over the magnetic wrist straps, and check times in and out. This might seem an easy job, well now multiply 200 teams with up to 12 runners in a team, vans and supporters and you have 2400 people plus coming through the area. We have tents set up for sleeping, two churches serving breakfasts at \$5 for a really good breakfast including juice and coffee and about 50 volunteers with jobs from Spotter (Linda's Job), Timekeeper (my

job), cooks, policing, traffic control, administration and a host more. Our checkpoint, Toodies Creek is the first of the three. We set up at 3am with tent, signs, chairs, cones and light ready for the first runners of the 8 hours on duty.



Linda is on the main 197 to spot and inform us by shouting "Runners Coming" to alert us of runners approaching and guide them over the bridge to the check in tent. Another helper Bruce makes sure the

parking of vans and in and outs of runners are not hindered. Mike our neighbor helps change-over runners get ready, takes numbers to check with me and make sure I have a clear view so I can time them in and the next runner out. This is essential as sometimes we have 6 or 7 runners coming into the checkpoint at a time.

You can image that at 3am on a September morning in the mountains it is cold. We get bundled up for it. This year like many other years we had a heavy mist until the sun at 7:45am burned it off. Equipped with coffee, energy bars and fruit we survived another Blue Ridge Relay.

The Churches under the guidance of our Pensacola Club sold \$5,000 in breakfasts, which goes into our funds to assist people in need in our area. Whether it is illness, fuel, funeral or just hardship. This year we have helped over 12 families.

It is wonderful to see our area pull together on this event and we look forward to being around to assist for many years to come.

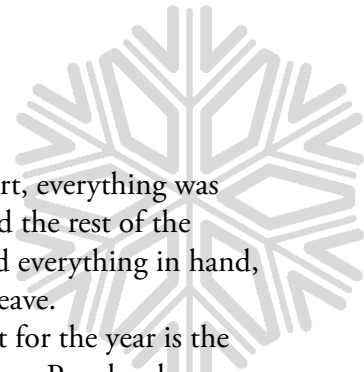
LAURA AND RON VISIT

Laura and Ron's yearly visit to us was part of Ron's Cycle competitions in Tennessee. I think he is in training for the Tour-de-France. He is doing really great at these events. We left him to do a tour of the area whilst we had an easy day at home. We gave them our tiller, as our





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ground is too tough to try and make flowerbeds. The rock and gravel base under the cabin plays havoc on the tiller. We had a meal in town at the "Pig and Grits", went around the shops and generally relaxed around the cabin.

We did take a day out to discover the WNC Nature Center in Asheville. Hidden away this little gem had all sorts of animals and reptiles. Pleasant walk around ending up or course in the gift shop. We also played a round of mini golf at the new course in Weaverville.

OLD TIMEY FALL FESTIVAL

The yearly festival was probably the most successful Old Timey Fall Festival event we have ever hosted. With over 50 vendors, Antique Tractors and Cars, Entertainment from the stage and games for both Adults and Children with prizes.

Our jobs are numerous but on the day we were in charge of set-up. This entails being on the square at 6:30am to greet and position all the vendors, get them into designated positions, get signage into place and see to parking of all vendor cars, trucks and trailers. This year we also had to set up decorations for the stage with pumpkins, corn shocks and bails. For the first time in 10 years we took time out for a ride on the mule wagon around

the square before my next job of photographing the event. The crowd this year was huge, possibly because of the fantastic weather, cloudless and in the 70s and partly my advertising and publicity covering about 60 miles in each direction.

Vendors all did fantastic, some food vendors sold out by 1pm.

By about 3pm Linda and I had

played our part, everything was going well and the rest of the organizers had everything in hand, we took our leave.

Our last event for the year is the yearly Christmas Parade where we steward Floats into order for the procession into Town. Before winter really sets in we need to paint the front and back porch, finish off the roadway gravel and start working again on the front entrance but the temperature has started dropping so they might get put off until spring especially since I am about to start work on the design of a book with author a friend Frank Thompson and a couple of websites. Linda has a list of things she wants to do including make a table and benches for the front porch. Alas, with having to apply for a new Green Card and Drivers license international travel looks a little less likely in 2018.

Finally we wish everyone a safe and Happy Christmas and hope that the New Year will sort out problems in the World.

John and Linda



Photos Page 1 - Cabin in Winter and Spring, Harvey & Julie Visit, Our Rabbit and Clisson Castle

Page 2 - Venice in Clisson, Re-enactments at Tiffauges Castle, Angers, Nantes, Chateau Saumur, Chateau Serrant.

Page 3 - Oudon Castle, Chateau Chabotterie, Gathering in Richmond of the Tindals, Richmond Park Deer.

Page 4 - Rose of York reunion in Richmond, Ye Olde Star Inn reunion in York, 9 Trentholme Drive, North Yorkshire Railway, View of Whitby

Page 5 - John with Christine in York, 50th Wedding Anniversary with family and friends.

Page 6 - Linville Caverns, Linda at Chattanooga Depot, Conductor entertaining, Colourful inhabitant of Chattanooga Zoo.

Page 7 - Linda at Riverboat entrance, Boat ride along river, Hunter Museum, Elk River Falls, Mile High Bridge at Grandfather Mountain.

Page 8 - Photographer on the edge at Grandfather Mountain, Otter at WNC Nature Center, Cougar at WNC Nature Center, Ron preparing for a ride.

Page 9 - Band on stage at Old Timey Fall Festival, One of 25 Antique Cars at OTFF, Good Crowd enjoying the Festival.