

European School, Kitale. Designed by Government Architect, P.W.D.

Photo: H. O. Weller.

Greetings to all Kitaleites

I have received so many contributions that I have decided to put out a mid-year newsletter but please keep on sending those contributions so that we can have a bumper Christmas newsletter.

Kitale School Reunion – Vipingo 2018

Arrangements are in full swing for the next reunion, I have had positive responses from over 30 of you, for those of you who haven't responded to my mail please let me know if you want to join us as it should be a fantastic get together.

We are looking at the logistics of going up to Kitale but will let you have the details when they are available.

For those of us in the Class of 1955, many of us will be celebrating our 70th birthdays so this get-together will be extra special.

Bridget (Doenhoff) Walton

I was very pleased to meet up with Bridget in London on Thursday 11th May with Rosalind (Williams) Graham-Smith. Bridget was in London to receive an honorary degree from the London University.



Kenya Visit



I was very fortunate to go to Kenya in February to go on a Gamewatchers Safari which took me to Amboseli, Ol Pejeta and Mara. Everywhere was very dry but we saw plenty of game, everything except for leopard. All the guides and drivers were excellent and the camps were very comfortable with beers and wine on the house so a few Tuskers were consumed in the evenings!!





I took the opportunity to go up to Prince of Wales School which wasn't looking too bad. All the pupils that I meet were very polite and courteous. One big difference was that no pupils wear shorts any more, everyone wears grey trousers!

Aiden



mugiecamp@ekorian.com | +254 722 692 708 / 722 385 727 | P. O Box 81, Rumuruti, 20321 | www.ekorian.com

June 2017 Update on the situation at Mugie:

Following our February update, here is some encouraging news on the situation here at Mugie. As you'll be aware West Laikipia has faced difficult times recently with the drought acting as a catalyst for Pokot and Samburu tribes to enter illegally and graze grassland previously rife with wildlife. With the grass now depleted and the rains hitting the tribal lands, we are seeing considerably fewer cattle on Mugie as they begin their journey home; things are looking up. Dialogue and coordination with the Samburu and Pokot has developed into a peaceful relationship whereby those who still visit Mugie for grazing enter through the arranged corridors and gates.

Mugie has always taken pride in its connection with the local communities, and in many ways the recent turbulence has further entrenched those relationships. New and exciting initiatives are being drawn up to complement existing ones.

Here on Mugie we have been supporting Kenyan security operations to move the illegal pastoralists away from the critical conservation land. The operations are proving useful, and accompanied with good rains we have every confidence that the remaining herders will continue to return to their families.

At Ekorian's:

During the recent months of disturbance Ekorian's Mugie Camp has remained open in order to accommodate and facilitate the vital work of external bodies such as veterinary professionals, media representatives and the Kenyan Wildlife Service. Since the last update it is great to see the wildlife now more readily visible than the herds of cattle previously seen. Elephant are returning to the dusty plains, many with young offspring. Heavily pregnant giraffe and zebra can be seen feeding and the big cats, full on carcasses consumed by the drought, roam happily amongst the bush. The situation has affected many animals and people, including friends and family close to our hearts and the road to recovery may be long.

We'd like to thank all those who contributed to the drought relief fundraiser which proved immensely successful. Your generosity enabled us to purchase 3000 bales of hay which we distribute daily around the conservancy, reaching the starving and weak buffalo amongst other wildlife.

At Ekorian's, providing the best safari experience, in the safest environment, is our utmost priority, and with your support we vow to continue our hard work to conserve these precious pockets of Kenya.

Camp closed during May as we do annually and we reopened as normal in June and welcome guests, new and old, to Ekorian's.

We'll be sure to keep you updated regularly on any changes here at Mugie – thank you for your continued support!

From Josh, Donna and the Ekorian Team!

Kenya63 Website

The Kenya63 website (www.kenya63.org.uk) has been set up for those who lived in Kenya to find other people that they knew there before and after 1963. It has become a platform for many people to be able to share happy memories and make contact with others across the world.

It is free to have your page on the website.

Please contact Mike McFarnell on mmcfarnell@hotmail.com

Allen Hallett

Allen Hallett
SCULPTOR

Drawn to Africa
THE PENCIL ART
of VINCENT REID

Two renowned Midlands artists have come together and put their names to a gallery which will be located in the newly renovated 3 On Mare building (formerly Thabo's antiques) in Howick. The Hallett-Reid gallery is a collaboration between bronze sculptor Allen Hallett and pencil artist Vincent Reid and will primarily be used as a vehicle to showcase the work of these two artists.



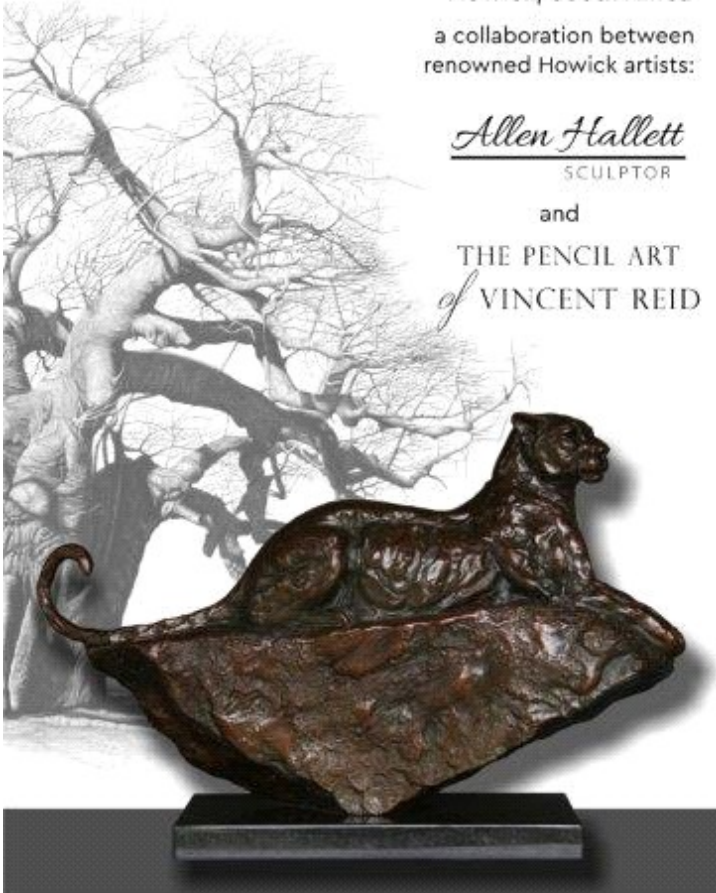
HALLETT © REID
GALLERY

HALLETT REID GALLERY

Howick, South Africa
a collaboration between
renowned Howick artists:

Allen Hallett
SCULPTOR

and
THE PENCIL ART
of VINCENT REID



Shop 2, 3 Mare Street
Howick, South Africa

+27 (0) 83 400 3961 (Allen)
sculptor@allenhallett.co.za

+27 (0)83 7934673 (Vincent)
vincentreid@telkomsa.net



HallettReidGallery



hallettreidgallery

www.hallettreidgallery.co.za

Allen Hallett has over the last 25 years established himself as a Midlands based artist who sells his work both locally and abroad, and Vincent Reid, based in Howick has over the last 5 years established an art career as a pencil artist with a trademark style. Vincent's work also adorns the walls of many prestigious homes locally and abroad. The decision to come together in this venture is driven by many synergistic factors, not least of which is the importance of being well

represented at a local level. The fact that there are few opportunities or quality outlets in which to display work in the Midlands has largely informed the decision to embark on the creation of this gallery especially as both artists have a considerable support base in the area. The local support base will now have the chance to get the first look at new artworks instead of just seeing them on social media. In addition, it will provide an opportunity for the local public to interact directly with the artists as they will regularly be in attendance at the gallery.

It is important to mention that both artists will remain fully committed to the selected galleries which they supply throughout the country.

A handful of renowned, professional selling artists have also been handpicked to take up wall space as guests in the gallery. Aside from their professionalism, they have also been selected based on their renown amongst the local art supporters as they are regular top sellers at the likes of Art in the Park and Hilton Arts festival, so expect to see some big names at the Hallett-Reid gallery.

The gallery launches on the 1st of November and one can expect to see the best of what these two artists have to offer.

Chris Hearne

News from the Hearnese – at last (January 2017)

Excuses are such inane things so I am not going down that road. Having just re-read my last letter I have already used the 'age' excuse for our long silences so I cannot even use that this time. Suffice to say we have survived the last two years with only a few hiccups – still live in a beautiful spot and still own the tourism business which has also survived the 'on line' booking onslaught. We hope that you are all well, minimal aches & pains – there are bound to be some - and carrying on carrying on.

I am sure plenty must have happened in 2015, but it is all a bit fuzzy now – age thing!! We did manage to get away for a couple of breaks during the year. The first was a recce trip for the upcoming tour which Phil & Tina brought out this April from Australia. Lesotho has always been the one place nearby where I could get some driving pleasure on gravel (murrum) roads playing in the mountains. Sadly, no longer, the Chinese have arrived 'big time' & tarred pretty much everything they could find to stick black, 'guy' stuff on. The only problem is none of the gradients have been changed so now the road is just as steep as before, just a lot faster so the accident rate has spiked & when it snows – which it does often in winter, the roads are really treacherous. So much for progress & so just another African country becomes beholden unto the Chinese. Already half the shop keepers in the rural areas are Orientals, however one has to say the Basothos are not the most industrious people & are generally much happier riding around on their superb horses or just sitting watching the sunrise & then it goes down at sunset. I think more & more that they have got it right – very little seems to be gained by our continuous rushing around. For the horse lovers – the Basotho pony is the most sure-footed in the world & have their own unique 'gait' called tripling – which is a cross between trotting & cantering allowing them to cover huge distances quickly. (How's that for a bit of useless information!!)

November saw us squeeze in a few days up in the Kruger Game Park. It was great to be amongst the animals again, but very sad to see the effects of the worst drought in 30 years. So many of the water holes were dry & it was tragic to see the hippos exposed to the sun trying to cover themselves in the little bit of mud left. They don't do well out of water & easily die of sunstroke. We remembered only too well the drought of the '80's when we were still on the farm & were really happy for not having to go through it all a second time, but everything & everybody is affected some way by these adverse weather patterns. The rain that should have come in September eventually appeared in January this year. This season has been much better, although it just does not want to rain properly; it comes down for a few minutes & then is gone. We have also had some vicious storms something our dogs & Magda do not enjoy at all.

Our one dramatic 2015 happening, also weather related – was on returning home one afternoon, also in November, I found a substantial amount of the thatch from our roof lying in the garden – there was no rain, but no shortage of hectic winds - which left gaping holes open to the heavens. That was the one advantage of the drought; our sitting room never became a swimming pool! We had an all new meaning to the phrasing 'living under canvas' which we did until May. Fortunately, there is a new process whereby the thatch is not removed – well what was still there - & a timber latticework is built over the existing roof & Harvey tiles are nailed onto the framework. This creates a really nice, maintenance-free metal outer roof while retaining the thatch on the inside. The best of both & the greatest of all was that the insurance did actually come to the party & paid for it. We had our cottage done at the same time so are now totally thatch-free & the wind can blow which it has done again this year.

Where 2015 was a relatively travel-free year, 2016 has been busy, busy, well for me anyway It started with a bang with me jetting off to Holland, Austria & France. All in 10 days. Through a connection with the info office our local area tourism association was invited to attend the Vienna Tourism Trade Show in mid-January. We started off at the Vakantiebeurs in Utrecht, Holland for 2 days also a tourism trade show, then spent 4 days at the show in Vienna, trying to persuade anyone that would listen about the wonderful destination in Africa called the Drakensberg. We ended off the trip with a couple of days in Paris.

There was a palatable feel of concern in France & that was even before the terrorist attack at the end of January, that they are no longer safe in their own country which, touch wood, is one problem we do not have. We just have a very stupid president who cost the country a fortune at the end of last year. That was when he decided to sack a perfectly capable finance minister & install a real 'dodo' which caused our currency to crash. Four days later the 'dodo' was 'redeployed' (we do not fire incompetency in government - we 'redeploy' the individual!!) & another, previous very capable minister was installed who has had to spend the rest of the year trying to persuade the world that we are a good investment bet!!! The Rand slumped to 27 to the British pound (I can remember when it was only 10 – definitely a while back!), 17 to the US dollar & 19 to the Euro – that's what really hurt us when overseas in Europe – especially when a cup of coffee in Holland costs 3.5 Euros or 66 rand (a coffee at home here is 20 rand). So while in France we did our bit to persuade them what a safe, cheap holiday they can have here – where? - yes, naturally in the Drakensberg!!!

However, the amazing thing about South Africa though is its financial resilience. Because the politicians, especially our crazy 'top bod' (well I'm not even sure 'crazy' is the right adjective, because one has to have a minimal amount of intelligence to actually be crazy, I rest my case!!) have managed to refrain from making any more stupid statements for a while the

Rand is now back to 17 to the pound (still nowhere near '10' but heading that way!!), just over 14 to the euro & 13 to the dollar. Even so it's still a hell of a cheap holiday coming from Europe or the States.

The real highlight of my trip to Vienna was meeting up with Margaret (Maggie) Reist whom we have not seen since our trip to Kenya in 2008. Margaret was, totally by coincidence, in Vienna from Switzerland the same weekend that I was there. The couple of hours we spent together were much too short & but very special. What is amazing about good friends is the time apart just melts away when you do get to meet up again – there is so much catching up to do and still such a strong affinity with each other.

Having not been overseas for many years now, I end up going twice this one. As a result of the January trip we – the tourism association were invited to participate in a five-day tourism, speed marketing road show in The Netherlands in November. There were 20 of us from various parts of South Africa each given 8 minutes to persuade a stream of Dutch travel agents & tour operators in four different cities that ours is 'the' place to come to in SA. I am very glad I never had anything to do with 'speed dating' if 'speed marketing' is that exhausting!! I have never been great on cities, but I have to admit Amsterdam I really enjoyed – no, it had nothing to do with the 'weed or 'red light district'!! – a part from always having to be on the lookout for bicycles. There are, supposedly, 1.2 bicycles for each living soul in Holland which I can believe – they are everywhere ringing their little bells if you dare to cross in front of them. Here it's the taxis one has to watch out for in the cities, but having to be on the lookout for bicycles - & they are not even very smart ones - is ridiculous albeit a lot more environmentally friendly. The trip also included a few days in Frankfurt and yet another tourism promo show in Ghent Belgium

Unfortunately, for both these trips Magda had to stay home to keep the home fires burning!! No not seriously - both trips were sponsored by our local municipality so both of us couldn't go, however a future European trip for us is definitely on the cards now as is another Africa trip. It's just this damn 'time' thing that seems to get ever shorter & goes past ever quicker. I really admire those who have the guts just to sell up everything & then just cruise the world. Maybe, just maybe next year!!!!

Both Glenn & Barry are well & still living in Jo'burg. Glenn is also at a crossroads at present feeling the pressure of time – or that it is slipping past fast - & has a notion of going back to university - at 45 – to do a course in 'creative writing'. It has always been his dream to write books and he has been writing other peoples (companies) stories for years now. The corporate environment is certainly not conducive to a relaxed life especially here in South Africa with its own unique set of challenges so in many ways we hope he does pursue this & starts a brand new career as a Hemingway, Smith or Shakespeare!!!

Definitely it is now time to stop boring you all further – to those who have persevered until this

point – congratulations. I will hand over to Magda to write her ‘bit’ and end with the hope that it will not be too long before we have the opportunity to sit face to face for a ‘Habari ya siku mingi’ (How are you after so long?). Have a wonderful 2017.

I think Chris has just about brought you up to date with our news except that he didn’t mention that at the beginning of October he gave us a bit of a scare. We very fortunately were up in Jo’burg staying with Glenn when he got a serious pain in the chest and arm. Glenn of course knew exactly where to take us to get to the hospital and within a few minutes he was admitted and the cardiologist, who also happened to be right there, did the necessary tests, an angiogram and put in two balloons and a two stents into the main artery which was in the process of shutting down. The Doc’s question to me afterwards was “what would you have done if you were in the Drakensberg?” (Well there probably would have been a good Irish wake – Chris’ comment!) However, all in all a very lucky turn-out of events. He seems well now though and hasn’t really slowed down.

I have now been in the Central Drakensberg Information Centre for 15 years and I must admit that I am beginning to feel that I wouldn’t miss it that much if I were to leave. Time to start smelling the Khakibos.

This just leaves me to join Chris in wishing you all a joyous Christmas and may 2017 bring you everything you wish yourselves but above all lots of love and happiness. We’ll be thinking of you all.

Chris and Magda

Jan (Dietrich) Simpson

Kitale School – 1959



BACK ROW. Janice Dietrich, Sandra Dyce, Margaret Lieghti, Sue Forrester, Jessy Barbour, Sarah Humphries, Desire Herbert, Sue Farmer, Anne Herbert, Pauline Crampton, Sonnie Crocamp, Madge Watts.

2nd Row from Back: Venessa White, Liz Statham, Yvonne Chapman, Cherry Roberts, Lindy Northcote, Jenny Combes, Liz Knight, Catherine Coulthard, Dolly Watts, Rosemary Whitiker, Gillian Leach, Caroline Barton and Anthea Dudin.

2nd Row from Front: Mrs Heather Munro, Gaye Moore, Evelyn Ruthman, ?, Hilda Van Rensberg, Veronica Josslyn, Jenny Northcote, Sue Barton, Pamela Hissey, Mette Bucholtz, Veronica Plunkett, Judith Hallows, Christine Jensen, Susan Flutter, Miss Kaye Yule.

Front Row: Pat Greaves, Susan Hufford, Moira Bridson, Christine Luck, Suzannah Van Rensberg, Janet Morgan, Anne Barrett, Annette Nielsen, Wilelmina Boshoff, Francesca Pellisier, Catherine Black, and Davina Hampson.

Thanks very much for this Jan! I have highlighted the names of the girls, now ladies of course, who I don't have details for, please help me and let me have contact details if you have please.

Many thanks. Aiden

Kitale School Database

I have confirmed contact with 350 Kitaleites but there are many names that I have no contact details for. I would be very grateful if you could go through the names below and let me have any contact details that you may have so that I can update the database in order to let as many people as possible have the newsletters etc.

Neil Amin
Robin Archer
Sheila Vaughan Davies Archer
Ian & Kate Bailey
Janette Bairstow
Willie Balabanoff
Ian Barberton
Drusilla Barberton
Anne Barrett
Catherine Homerchuk Black
Sandra Baker Black
John Blackman
Barbara Townsend Bowes
Lesley Younie Bowes
Gordon Boy
Ronnie and Barbara Boy
Robert Bradford
Ruth Macallister Brown
Mette Bucholz
Pat Burr
Clive Clarke
Glen Clarke
David and Bev Cooper
Caryl Coulthard
Catherine Coulthard
Sonnie Crocamp
Anne Dickinson Dargle
Claire Davies
Marie De Bruin
R Delorie
Anthony Durrad
Bryan Durrad
Sandra Dyce
Grafton Edwards
Charles Evans
Kathleen Evans
John Fall
Sue Farmer

Val Radford Forbes
David Forrester
Michael Forrester
Raymond Forrester
Gary Gladman
Vivien & Rod Young Greaves
Roger Hacker
Ian and Stephanie Hallett
Davina Hampson
John (Scoutmaster) Hannath
Frank Harrison
Peter Harrison
Stephen Harrison
Ann Martin Heath
Robert Heath
Robert Hemphill
Anne Herbert
Desire Herbert
Ann & Peter Sowerby Hitch
Jenny Hoare
Marion Hubbard
Susan Hufford
Sarah Proctor Humphris
Guy Innes
Joyce Van Nieuwenhuisen Keese
Winnie Steenkamp Keese
Sally Kidner
Sandra Kidner
Anthony Knight
Sue Wood Luke
Peter Manger
Daphne And Nigel [Hunt} Martin
Gaye Moore
C Moore
Janet Morgan
Ariadne Hartmann Munro
Devina Robinson Munro
Peter and Ian Nield

Hugo & Di Partridge
Elizabeth Peel
Francesca Pellissier
Fred Phol
Bill Radford
S Radulovic
R Raynor
Marie Roodt Retief
Debbie Oron Richard
Barbara Terney Richter
Cherry & Philip Quinlan-Robinson Roberts
Claire Brayne-Nichols Roberts
Tessa Roberts
George & Wendy Roberts
Fiona and Dave Ramsay Robertson
Pam Robinson
Karin Rogers
John Rosa
Grant Scroggie
Shirley Scroggie
Nigel Shelley
Patrick Shorten
Robin Sinclair
Alf Smith
Stephen & Susan Sparke
R Stevenson
Tony & Gill Sunde
Jonathan Sunde
Am Swan
Roger Symons
CJ Thatcher
Carol Christie Trevor
Gilly Parkinson Valentine
Evelyn Valpy
Rynie Van Emmenis
Suzannah Van Rensburg
Hilda Van Rensburg
Cherry & Robin Lindsay Vernon

Mike Fell
Anne Kempe And Son Graham Fiske
Caroline Nash Fleming
David Fleming
Alfred & Marge Fletcher

Vic & Mary Norris
Jackson Omedio
John Owen
Peggy Johnson Owen
Biddy Partridge

Irene Vorster
Vanessa White
Rosemary Whitiker
John Williams

Niels Sunde

Some months ago Aiden asked me to make a contribution to the Kitale School Newsletter. I pointedly ignored him. However, he was remarkably persistent and obviously the motto “Persevere” hadn’t been wasted on him. Eventually Aiden got through to me and muttered something about writing a few notes about my travels. Then (being an aficionado of Mafia movies) I recalled that Aiden was a much-loved aunt’s Godchild. I agreed. This was all well and good, until faced with a blank sheet of paper.

I don’t have time! Really? I heard a whisper from the past “Niels, you have all the time in the world!” ‘Ma’ Valpy used to say, of my excuses for never doing my homework. I have no recollection of anything she ever tried to teach me. However, that expression from a kind old lady has stayed with me through the past six decades.

I was born to travel. My first flight was on a seaplane to Denmark from Kenya at the age of six months or so – somewhere I have the certificate. At the age of five my parents built a caravan on the back of a five-ton lorry, took us four kids and set off from Kitale on an intrepid journey to the Arctic Circle and back. Some of you might recall my mother screening the 16mm film at Kitale School. Some might remember my parents bringing it to school to celebrate my birthday party. I digress.

The school reunion held in Kitale nearly nine years ago was an opportunity for me to come out with my eldest son and revisit Kenya. Post a very violent election my wife, believing all that was written in the press, spent a very fretful three weeks whilst my lifelong friend Robin chauffeured my son and me around Kenya and his wife Jessica Jensen. We had a truly wonderful relaxing and peaceful experience. Starting in Nairobi going to the coast and winding up to the Tana Delta by way of Mohammed-under-the-tree garage in Malindi up to Garissa, down to Nakuru the Kerio Valley, Eldoret and into the arms of a whole lot of you at Kitale Club. Wonderful! Many of you, I had not seen for fifty odd years.

I went back to New Zealand refreshed and excited by the vibrant Kenya that I had rediscovered. Revitalised indeed. Carol (my long suffering wife) was diagnosed with brain cancer and had a tennis ball sized tumour removed from her right frontal lobe. She made a remarkable postoperative recovery – the cancer itself will recur. We hummed and haa-ed about treatment options. One morning, completely out of the blue Carol said, “Let’s go and live in Kenya!” For those of you that know me I’m not often bereft of words!! Before she could change her mind I packed everything including the cats and booked the flight. I contacted my old friend Horace Horsey and with his customary generosity invited all of us to come and stay with him and his,

soon to be wife, the lovely Mandy (Stokke). (Note. Apparently Aiden has been pressuring Horace to do something about organising the next reunion here at the coast. That will be amazing!!!) Begin planning now – wild life? The very best, least touristified and natural wilderness camp run by Robin and Jessica's daughter and son-in-law I was breath taken when I went to Mugies (www.ekorian.com). Kitale, where else but Barnley's, just as it always was including the morning cup of chai. His brilliant mpishi remembers me as a young man up on Elgon!! (sirikwabarnley@gmail.com). The coast well, of course, one of the best restaurants in Africa is run by George Barbour's family (cave@alibarbours.co) Shameless plugging, I know. The old school tie and all that. George Barbour and my late brother Ole used to play snooker for vast sums (I thought) at Kitale club. I once asked Ole what kind of player George was to which Ole replied "Bloody useless!" Our youngest son was staying down there and asked George what kind of snooker player his Uncle Ole was, without hesitation George replied "Bloody useless!" Kat, George's first wife was my cousin, our boys were most disconcerted to hear that their three beautiful grand-daughters (the ones that are roughly their age) are relatives!!

Oh! I strayed again – the privileges of approaching three score and ten. So I accompanied our son on a trip to settle him into University in New Zealand last year. I had, through "Faceache" re-established a rather tenuous contact with Mike Fulton in Hong Kong. His sister Diana was a contemporary of my sister Else at Kitale School and does a wonderful and often thankless job here running the KSPCA in Nyali (Animal lovers your donations will never be wasted there!).

Anyway I booked a few days in Hong Kong, inviting Mike to take us out to a decent Chinese restaurant! The long flights give one time to reminisce. I remembered all sorts of things starting with Mike's father who always wore a green short-sleeved jacket. The faces went by in my mind and I focussed on the good things about Kitale School. The bonds that bind us, as we little children faced adversity. The Islands of love and tranquillity created by the likes of Jean Hallett when she sat us down in her little room and played her rock and roll records. The gorgeous Brigit Doenhoff (Walton) I prayed to all the gods that I would be in her class. Mortimer, for all his idiosyncrasies who gave me an undying love for art and history. McCormick with his sports car who followed me to Princo – I still read a book a week. Juma the school driver who put up with us "entitled" kids, our songs and exhortations to go ever faster. The swimming pool, built not with cash donations, but with a bag of cement here and there, a few tiles labour provided by the cash strapped parents. The hedges we hid in. The steel bars we swung from. The little kiss that Francesca Pelissier gave me outside the dining halls after dinner. Whatever happened to her, Chris Pease, Michael Robinson?

Hong Kong was wonderful Michael could not have been kinder. The years rolled away. He and his partner took Harry and I out for a Chinese feast, one I'll never forget. We had a little shopping list and Mike took us everywhere in search of electronics for Harry and Chinese fans for Carol. Singapore next and we stayed in the less than posh Indian quarter enjoying Diwali and wonderful Indian food. New Zealand, so green clean, ordered and quiet after all this. The polar opposite to Kenya – I love both. Then to Australia to visit my oldest sister Inga (another older Kitale School girl) who is full of energy and still spends time welcoming, helping and settling refugees into an Australian way of life. A funny anecdote here as a result of speaking Swahili, Inga has much to do with East African refugees. A Somali asked her where she had learned to speak the language. She

replied that she used to live in Kitale, Kenya. The Somali asked if she knew the butcher Jama Noor, a distant relative!

On to the US, in time for the election. I love the States, really! I would hate to live there though. I had to give a talk and afterwards a young man came up and we got chatting. He had family in Kitale and had gone on to Nairobi School (Princo). Now settled in LA, I asked him why had he not gone back to Kenya. He said that he could never have it so good there. He asked me why I had returned and I said that LA could never hold a candle to Takaungu. We both believe our version! Minneapolis I had never been to. A cock up on my part meant I had ten days there. Wonderful art galleries, such a treat to see wonderful works of art I had never been to before. Looking at the rolling fields that are the breadbasket of America. I liked that. The best root beer I have ever tasted and a restaurant that was a theatre – a wonderful meal (steaks to die for) followed by a fine performance of the musical Camelot – I have never seen it before. London and my older children and grandchildren. Good God grandchildren – I'm far too young, unlike you lot. A quick trip to Dorset spending time with my sister Else and having lunch with 'Aunty' Emmy Olsen (94) mother of my late childhood friend Flemming and his sister Marianne also Kitaleites.

Now home at Takaungu Creek (near Kilifi). I'm not given to nostalgia, however when we came here I wanted a little piece of open Africa, a feeling of wide open space, we have it here, a view over a tiny creek with mangrove swamps. Nearest neighbour half a kilometre away. Sykes monkeys calling and guinea fowl strutting their stuff. But for the heat, it could be the space I have always dreamed of.

Go to Kilifi Boat Yard on a Saturday afternoon and old familiar faces suddenly pop out at one.

Brandon Brooksbank

Brief impressions of Kenya 2016 (November 2016)

My first impression is how quickly the country changes compared to our 'old world' countries. Every time I go back (every 3 or so years) I see huge changes – some for the better and some for the worse.

These impressions are purely things that I noticed (during my stay in Kilifi and on a trip up to Nairobi and Nakuru) or read about and which interested me as a person who still loves the place, despite all its problems.

In no particular order:

The Chinese. They have moved in bigtime and are spending huge amounts of money. The new railway they are building is a monumental undertaking although why it has to be up to 6 metres above ground level over the Voi plain I'm not too sure. I also think that the engineering is a bit suspect and that it is going to suffer from erosion problems. The attached station buildings appear to be far too large for railway purposes and make one wonder what other purposes they have in mind. The huge retaining walls they have built near the airport where the track enters

Mombasa are horrendously ugly and wouldn't be acceptable anywhere else in the world. Apparently the track has been designed for 'high speed' trains and will undoubtedly change the economics of the whole of East Africa. No doubt the Chinese are not investing all this money out of the goodness of their hearts which leads me to question what their end game is? The politicians who own much of the trucking industry and the corrupt police who skim money from the road transporters will have to find other sources of income. Meanwhile expensive hotels like the Norfolk (Min. \$Aus330pn) are doing well out of the Chinese. I didn't meet any Africans who actually liked the Chinese. The local watus' problems with the Chinese seem to be that they don't trust their motives, they don't speak the same language and the Chinese don't share their sense of humour – which, as we know, is essential in Africa!

Islam. There is no doubt that Islam is taking on a more militant aspect in Kenya, as it is all over the world. New mosques are being built everywhere and the inscriptions above the entry doors have changed from "God is Great" to "There is only one God – Allah". This is a not-so-subtle change from a benign to a militant philosophy. In Kilifi the new mosques now all have loudspeakers on their turrets which start their caterwauling (now just a recording) at 4am and from then on every hour for 10 minutes to ensure that everyone within a 2km radius is woken up. In the old days nobody minded the mezzuen singing from the turret in the morning at daybreak. The human voice can be reassuring in the morning, can only reach a few hundred metres and it had always been accepted as part of the charm and history of the coast. Anyway the locals are getting sick of it and there is growing friction between the groups. Last year a Mombasa Muslim cleric was shot dead in his car by two guys riding past on a motorbike. While I was there 3 young Muslim girls walked into the central police station in Mombasa and killed several people before blowing themselves up. This unrest has decimated the tourist trade along the coast and there is more trouble brewing.

Counties. Kenya has been divided up into 47 Counties, each with a Governor and a Government House. The story in Kilifi goes that the new Governor Amason Kingi decided that he needed a Government House to match his new status as Governor. So he arrived, surrounded by five-armed security guards, at the best house in Kilifi (beautifully built and owned by an Irish builder) and asked for the price – walk in walk out. The house had previously been on the market for about AUS\$1million but was taken off the market. So our enterprising Irishman, sensing that Christmas had come early, said he wanted 1 million pounds sterling (about AUS\$1.6mill). No problem says the Gov and the amount duly appeared in the Irish bank account. So, if this is happening all over Kenya, there doesn't seem to be a money problem over there!

Corruption. Is still flourishing in Kenya although Uhuru Kenyatta says he is trying to stop it, but there is no doubt in my mind that the culture of any organisation comes from the top. For example, Lamu County published their budget for next year while I was there. They allocated AUS\$1mill for travel and accommodation expenses for their 20 Councillors and only AUS\$400,000 towards Trade and Tourism, the main income earner for the County. So what hope does the average African have with no social security, no job and very poor infrastructure. The old joke about the relationship between the size of a policeman's stomach and the length of his service is still true. Every road has its spikes across the road and police with guns extorting money from

black drivers (they don't bother with the whiteys as they are too much trouble!). Apparently the going rate is 500Ksh (about AUS\$6.50) about the same as a labourer gets paid per day for working on the roads. There was a story about a whitey from Kilifi who was stopped and refused to pay and ended up in a small bare concrete cell with a bunch of smelly Africans and no toilet or furniture of any kind.

Wealth. There is conspicuous wealth now among (some) Africans. I was passed in Kilifi by the latest Bentley Coupe (worth about AUS\$0.5mill) with the blacked out windows beloved by the African elite. The car parks in Nairobi are full of the latest model large 4-wheel drive vehicles. Africans in the flash new shopping centres are well dressed (especially the women) and sip lattes in up-market coffee shops. This is in striking contrast to the crumbling infrastructure of the surrounding pavements and roads. When quizzed about this, every African I spoke to said that the Councils responsible for maintenance were corrupt and that is where the dollars are going. So they are aware of the problem, but I also wonder how much they pay in rates. I know that in Kilifi the majority of the rates are still paid by the few Europeans (which is a good reason to keep them around!). When I owned a block of land in Kilifi I was paying higher rates than I was in my house in Perth – and the Council didn't even take away the rubbish! Anyway I came away with the distinct impression that all the little old ladies in first world countries who devote part of their pensions to charities to help the poor third world countries would be better off helping the poor in their own countries. There is plenty of money sloshing around in Kenya and it is high time the elite Africans learnt to distribute it more equitably.

Security. I didn't feel at all nervous in Kenya, even walking the streets of Nairobi where I was often the only white face in the street, although I was advised not to walk around at night. I was harassed by touts wanting to guide me but I found I could get rid of them by speaking Swahili and saying 'kwenda, hapana sumbuu mimi'. Most businesses in Nairobi now employ security guards who are everywhere on the streets. Security is the largest employer of locals – the Masai are doing particularly well out of it.

Land ownership. Is still one of the biggest issues in Kenya and the watu still believe that they can just walk onto any piece of empty land and squat on it permanently. They did this in Kilifi several years ago when they took over the old Govt owned airfield. There was a stand-off between the squatters and the local police but the squatters stood their ground and the police backed down. There are now several thousand people living there and they have built substantial coral block and concrete houses. Recently more squatters tried to move onto adjoining privately owned land that had been subdivided and the blocks sold off. The problem was that some of the blocks had been bought by wealthy black Africans who ordered the police to evict them. This was done with a degree of brutality which has resulted in a backlash and a white resident was subjected to a fire bombing which left him badly burned. So the policy of black politicians encouraging squatters to move on to white owned land in the 1960's has come back to bite them.

I was told of a case where a mzungu owned a 120acre block of land in Rumuruti on which he intended to retire. When squatters moved on to the block he went to see the Minister for Lands (under the Kibaki Govt) who told him that she would not move the squatters off the land but that she would offer him 10% of the value of the land and that she would take 30% of the 10% for her

costs. It is obvious that the corruption starts at the top.

A bigger problem is that the Lands and Titles Office has been corrupted and officials have been bribed to issue bogus land titles. The newspapers are now full of reports of courts trying to sort out who the rightful owners are of blocks of land which have several sets of title deeds and for which several people have paid for the same block of land. The Govt has also made the problem worse by legitimizing land ownership for people who have squatted on land in the past and have paid no money for it – so now nobody wants to pay for land. It is not unusual now to see large notices on empty blocks of land all over the country informing people that the land is privately owned and not for sale and that squatters will be evicted. It is a mess which threatens the stability of the country.

Population Growth. This is the country's biggest problem. Polygamy is still legal and will not be abolished any time soon because most of the men in Parliament have multiple wives. Also the three main tribal groups are actively encouraging their young to have more babies so that they can gain power through the democratic process. Tribalism is still the driving force in Kenya. The Govt does not have the resources to carry out a proper census so the population numbers quoted in the press are just guesses. My guess is that the population is close to 60million (ten times more than the 6million at Independence 53 years ago). All the lovely little towns I remember that were clean and orderly are now surrounded by huge, sprawling, filthy slums with no trees or flowers or any modern facilities. There are literally millions of small children growing up in these conditions and with very little prospect of getting jobs when they grow up. I did find some locals in the cities who had decided to limit the number of children to 2 so that they can educate them properly, but I also talked to a 25-year-old Masai in the bush who had 2 wives and was saving up for another one (the last one cost him 5 cows and 10 goats). So it appears that the only hope is education – but I fear it will come too late.

The people. I still find the average mutu a delight to talk to. They always seem cheerful and love a laugh and they seem to accept their lot in life. I admire their entrepreneurial attitude (compared to the attitude of the Aborigines in Australia). They have no social security and so have to make a living any way they can. For example, there are now mounds of sand, blue metal and other commodities all along the sides of the roads. It appears that a local will buy a truck load of stuff, have it dumped on the roadside and then sell it off by the bucket or trailer at a profit to passers-by. His problem is that he has to guard it 24 hours a day. Another example was along the road down the escarpment there must have been over 100 guys selling roasted mealies or bags of salt (dug up from Lake Magadi). How they all make a living is incredible and one has to admire their enterprise. The roadsides are all crowded with 'jua kali' businesses selling beds, furniture, clay pots – you name it – where the goods are all made right there on the roadside and some of it is of quite respectable quality. The best one I heard of was that in the huge Kibera slum in Nairobi (now the largest in the world!) entrepreneurs have removed the nearby sewage manholes, set up toilet seats and tents over them and charge people to go to the toilet.



Jua Kali carpenter and bed maker – excellent quality considering the working conditions

Jua Kali lounge furniture.
Don't you just love the local fashion!
road.

Roadside salt sellers on escarpment to Nakuru





Education. There are now, believe it or not, 49 full Universities in Kenya and hundreds of Technical Institutes and Colleges. How they have managed to staff (and pay for) all these Universities is beyond me. I suppose that they are the recipients of a lot of overseas aid as Kenya is still the 'shining example' of a successful and stable African country and the West (and now China) is still pouring in aid dollars to shore the place up. Nevertheless, the papers are now full of academic pontifications from Professors, Vice Chancellors, Doctors etc.etc. A lot of the graduates have to go overseas to get jobs and money sent back to Kenya by this Diaspora is now Kenya's largest foreign income earner. We even have a Kikuyu Vet in little old Brunswick who is well liked and thought-of.



Duke of York School.

met up with the current Head Master William Mwangi who seems a decent fellow trying to do his best for the place, but it must be a real struggle. Previous to his reign not only was there no money spent on the school but it was vandalized in a bid to expunge its previous colonial times history. For example, all the beautifully painted Honour Boards were thrown away. There has since been a token effort to replace some of them such as the School Captains Board but, as you can see, it is a shenzi effort. They have even got the names wrong (Colin Brooks is now A. Brooks). In fact, that great, descriptive Swahili word 'shenzi' is a good description of the state of the place. Everything is dirty and in need of maintenance. But they are starting to do something and they have fixed the main hall ceiling. Mwangi told me there are over 1,000 boarders there now and I saw a new multi-level boarding house being built between Delamere and Junior House. On a positive note the boys were all well dressed in our old uniforms and seemed to be good kids, but I suppose they come from more privileged backgrounds.





Hum Jambo Wayote.....

I have just been forced to go through the list of email addresses that I have somehow accumulated over the last 10 years or so because I have just learned the hard way that a pain in the backside worse than haemorrhoids is having to change one's email address!

So I am pulling all the old Kenya rafiki ones out as I thought that you may be interested to read my impressions of a recent trip to the 'old country'. I must say that I still enjoy going back there but I always leave with a feeling of sadness after seeing the destruction of the natural environment and the endemic corruption. But the old colonials in Kilifi still enjoy life by keeping

a low profile and minding their own business. Some places are still beautiful and I came back with some great photos.

I am still playing at farming and keep reasonably fit chasing cows and sheep around the paddocks. I now have two new knees which are so good that I have just finished a walk across Scotland along the Caledonian Canal walking 130Km in 7 days with no pain at all. It is a new lease of life as I was becoming a virtual cripple (and very grumpy!) before the operation.

I was forced to change internet providers after having terrible trouble with our first internet provider (see the PS below if interested). My new email address is: brooksie1@skymesh.com.au

So I hope this reaches you. If anyone has been back recently I would also like to read your impressions of the place. I am reading a great little book at the moment about a kid brought up in Tanganyika that reminds me of my early days in Kitale. It's called 'Speak Swahili, Dammit!' by James Penhaligon (ISBN 978-0-9568902-1-4) and I can recommend it. I can also recommend the best book I have ever read on the early history of the coast called 'In the Wake of da Gama' by Genesta Hamilton, but it was published in 1951 by Skeffington and Son and is hard to get now.

Mingi salaams,
Brandon B

PS: Our internet saga:

For many years our internet provider was a great little local company called Westnet which was started by a couple of young blokes in a garage in Perth. They built it up into quite a large company based on excellent service and everyone was happy. But they got greedy and sold it to iinet who promptly sacked some employees so that they could increase their profits and buggger the good service. So the profit margin went up as the service went down, but it made the books look good. iinet were then in a position to on-sell it to TPG, a Sydney company run by an even more greedy, but highly "successful" (code these days for wealthy!) Chinese entrepreneur who promptly sacked the rest of the local employees and moved their support office to Cape Town (how is this not 'asset stripping' that put Alan Bond in jail??). So our internet support was now 5 hours behind us in time and they spoke a different language (at least that is what it sounded like). They all read from a common script which is designed to fob you off when you want support and their 'technical department' is a couple of Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert. Capitalism is such a great system!! In the meantime, we have been without our internet service for 2 months.

So we have changed providers to the new National Broadband Network which our great and glorious Government told us would connect country people to the world with high speed internet - but that is another story and another bloody disaster. I reckon they have a better service in Kenya!

Karin Ganz

A group of us gathered for lunch, we were all old friends Jim a bald golfer type, about 85-years old, came along with them; all in it was a pleasant bunch. When the menus were presented, my

friends and I ordered salads, sandwiches, and soups, except for Jim who said, "A large piece of home-made apple pie, heated please." I wasn't sure my ears heard him right, and the others were aghast, when Jim continued, completely unabashed.... "along with two large scoops of vanilla ice cream." We tried to act quite nonchalant, as if people did this all the time, but when our orders were brought out, I didn't enjoy eating mine. I couldn't take my eyes off Jim as I watched him savouring each bite of his pie a-la-mode. The other guys just grinned in disbelief as they silently ate their lunches.

The next time I went out to eat, I called Jim and invited him to join me. I lunched on a white meat tuna sandwich, while he ordered a chocolate parfait. Since I was chuckling, he wanted to know if he amused me. I answered, "Yes, you certainly do, but you also confuse me. How come you always order such rich desserts, while I feel like I must be sensible in my food choices?"

He laughed and said "I'm tasting all that is possible for me to taste. I try to eat the food I need and do the things I should in order to stay healthy, but life's too short, my friend. I hate missing out on something good. This year I realized how old I was." He grinned. "I've never been this old before, so, while I'm still here, I've decided it's time to try all those things that, for years, I've been ignoring."

He continued, "I haven't smelled all the flowers yet. There are too many trout streams I haven't fished. There's more fudge sundaes to wolf down and kites to be flown overhead. There are too many golf courses I haven't played. I've not laughed at all the jokes. I've missed a lot of sporting events and potato chips and cokes. I want to wade again in water and feel ocean spray on my face. I want to sit in a country church once more and thank God for His grace. I want peanut butter every day spread on my morning toast. I want un-timed long distance calls to the one I love the most."

"I haven't cried at all the movies yet, or walked in the morning rain. I need to feel wind on my face. I want to be in love again. So, if I choose to have dessert, instead of having dinner, then should I die before night fall, I'd say I died a winner, because I missed out on nothing. I filled my heart's desire. I had that final piece of pie before my life expired."

With that, I called the waitress over. "I've changed my mind, " I said. "I want what he's having, only add some more whipped cream!"

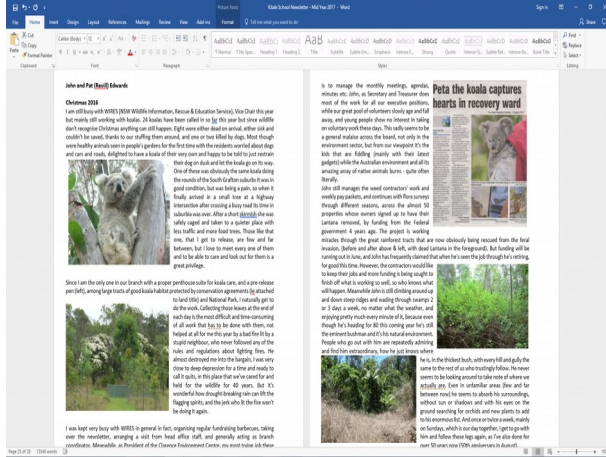
This is my gift to you - We need an annual Friends Day! Live well, love much, & laugh often - Be happy and enjoy doing whatever your heart desires. You only go around once on this crazy planet.

Be mindful that happiness isn't based on possessions, power, or prestige, but on relationships with people we like, respect, and enjoy spending time with.

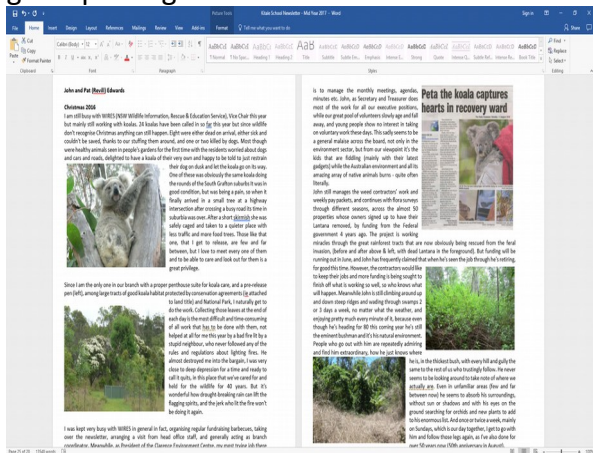
Remember that while money talks, ICE CREAM SINGS!

John and Pat (Revill) Edwards

Christmas 2016



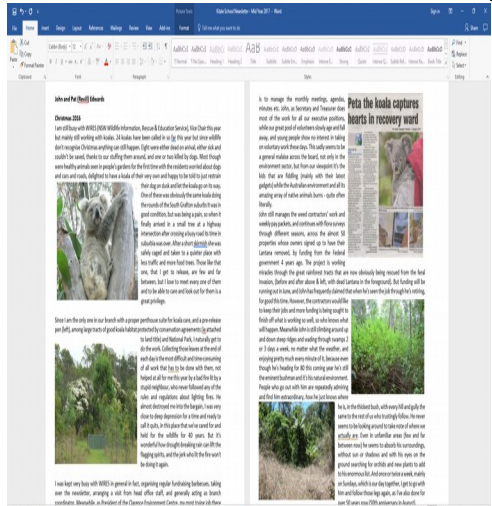
I am still busy with WIREs (NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue & Education Service), Vice Chair this year but mainly still working with koalas. 24 koalas have been called in so far this year but since wildlife don't recognise Christmas anything can still happen. Eight were either dead on arrival, either sick and couldn't be saved, thanks to our stuffing them around, and one or two killed by dogs. Most though were healthy animals seen in people's gardens for the first time with the residents worried about dogs and cars and roads, delighted to have a koala of their very own and happy to be told to just restrain their dog on dusk and let the koala go on its way. One of these was obviously the same koala doing the rounds of the South Grafton suburbs It was in good condition, but was being a pain, so when it finally arrived in a small tree at a highway intersection after crossing a busy road its time in suburbia was over. After a short skirmish, she was safely caged and taken to a quieter place with less traffic and more food trees. Those like that one, that I get to release, are few and far between, but I love to meet every one of them and to be able to care and look out for them is a great privilege.



Since I am the only one in our branch with a proper penthouse suite for koala care, and a pre-

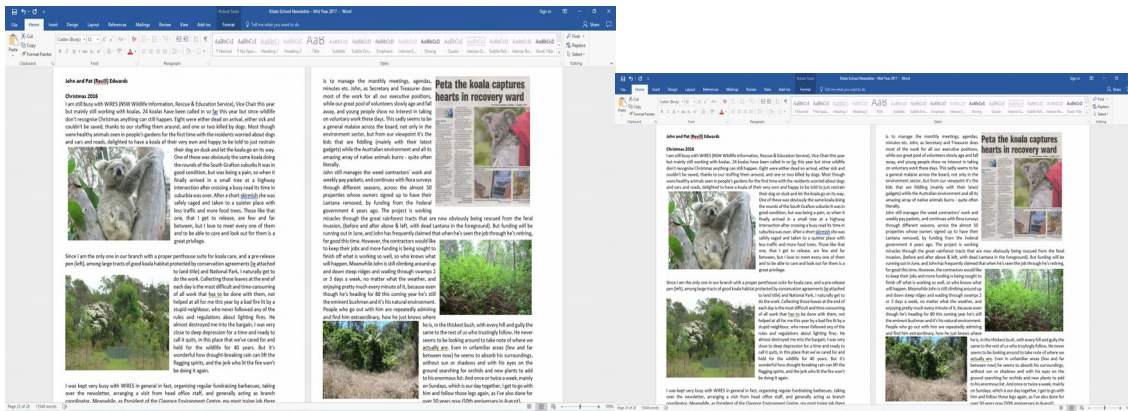
release pen (left), among large tracts of good koala habitat protected by conservation agreements (ie attached to land title) and National Park, I naturally get to do the work. Collecting those leaves at the end of each day is the most difficult and time-consuming of all work that has to be done with them, not helped at all for me this year by a bad fire lit by a stupid neighbour, who never followed any of the rules and regulations about lighting fires. He almost destroyed me into the bargain, I was very close to deep depression for a time and ready to call it quits, in this place that we've cared for and held for the wildlife for 40 years. But it's wonderful how drought-breaking rain can lift the flagging spirits, and the jerk who lit the fire won't be doing it again.

I was kept very busy with WIRES in general in fact, organising regular fundraising barbecues, taking over the newsletter, arranging a visit from head office staff, and generally acting as branch coordinator. Meanwhile, as President of the Clarence Environment Centre, my most trying job there is to manage the monthly meetings, agendas, minutes etc. John, as Secretary and Treasurer does most of the work for all our executive positions, while our great pool of volunteers slowly age and fall away, and young people show no interest in taking on voluntary work these days. This sadly seems to be a general malaise across the board, not only in the environment sector,



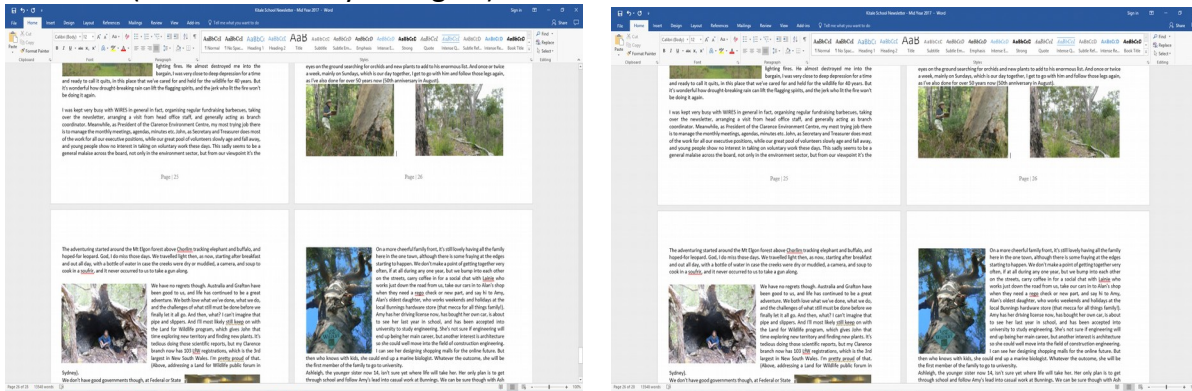
but from our viewpoint it's the

kids that are fiddling (mainly with their latest gadgets) while the Australian environment and all its amazing array of native animals burns - quite often literally.

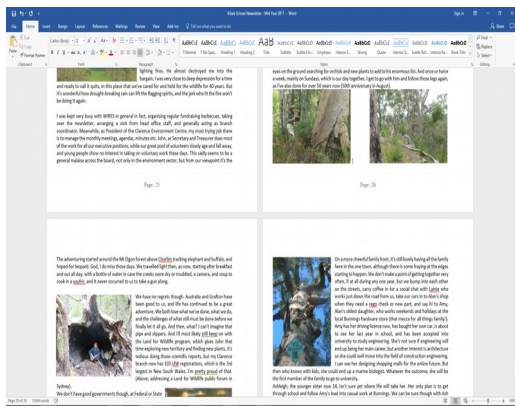


John still manages the weed contractors' work and weekly pay packets, and continues with flora surveys

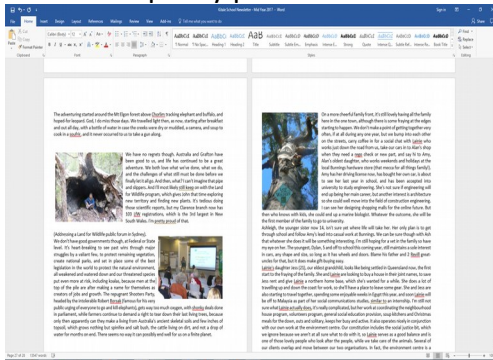
through different seasons, across the almost 50 properties whose owners signed up to have their Lantana removed, by funding from the Federal government 4 years ago. The project is working miracles through the great rainforest tracts that are now obviously being rescued from the feral invasion, (before and after above & left, with dead Lantana in the foreground). But funding will be running out in June, and John has frequently claimed that when he's seen the job through he's retiring, for good this time. However, the contractors would like to keep their jobs and more funding is being sought to finish off what is working so well, so who knows what will happen. Meanwhile John is still climbing around up and down steep ridges and wading through swamps 2 or 3 days a week, no matter what the weather, and enjoying pretty much every minute of it, because even though he's heading for 80 this coming year he's still the eminent bushman and it's his natural environment. People who go out with him are repeatedly admiring and find him extraordinary, how he just knows where he is, in the thickest bush, with every hill and gully the same to the rest of us who trustingly follow. He never seems to be looking around to take note of where we actually are. Even in unfamiliar areas (few and far between now) he seems to absorb his surroundings, without sun or shadows and with his eyes on the ground searching for orchids and new plants to add to his enormous list. And once or twice a week, mainly on Sundays, which is our day together, I get to go with him and follow those legs again, as I've also done for over 50 years now (50th anniversary in August).



The adventuring started around the Mt Elgon forest above Chorlim tracking elephant and buffalo, and hoped-for leopard. God, I do miss those days. We travelled light then, as now, starting after breakfast and out all day, with a bottle of water in case the creeks were dry or muddied, a camera, and soup to cook in a soufir, and it never occurred to us to take a gun along.



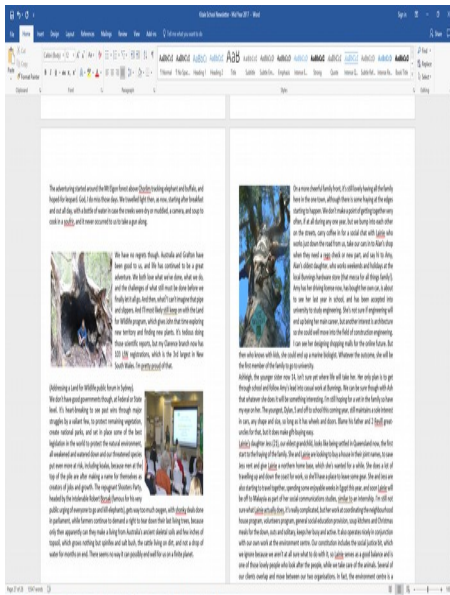
We have no regrets though. Australia and Grafton have been good to us, and life has continued to be a great adventure. We both love what we've done, what we do, and the challenges of what still must be done before we finally let it all go. And then, what? I can't imagine that pipe and slippers. And I'll most likely still keep on with the Land for Wildlife program, which gives John that time exploring new territory and finding new plants. It's tedious doing those scientific reports, but my Clarence branch now has 103 LfW registrations, which is the 3rd largest in New South Wales. I'm pretty proud of that.



(Addressing a Land for Wildlife public forum in Sydney).

We don't have good governments though, at Federal or State level. It's heart-breaking to see past wins through major struggles by a valiant few, to protect remaining vegetation, create national parks, and set in place some of the best legislation in the world to protect the natural environment, all weakened and watered down and our threatened species put even more at risk, including koalas, because men at the top of the pile are after making a name for themselves as creators of jobs and growth. The repugnant Shooters Party, headed by the intolerable Robert Borsak (famous for his very public urging of everyone to go and kill elephants), gets way too much oxygen, with shonky deals done in parliament, while farmers continue to demand a right to tear down their last living trees, because only then apparently can they make a living from Australia's ancient skeletal soils and few inches of topsoil, which grows nothing but spinifex and salt bush, the cattle living on dirt, and not a drop of water for months on end. There seems no way it can possibly end well for us on a finite planet.

On a more cheerful family front, it's still lovely having all the family here in the one town, although there is some fraying at the edges starting to happen. We don't make a point of getting together very often, if at all during any one year, but we bump into each other on the streets, carry coffee in for a social chat with Lainie who works just down the road from us, take our cars in to Alan's shop when they need a rego check or new part, and say hi to Amy, Alan's oldest daughter, who works weekends and holidays at the local Bunnings hardware store (that mecca for all things family!). Amy has her driving license now, has bought her own car, is about to see her last year in school, and has been accepted into university to study engineering. She's not sure if engineering will end up being her main career, but another interest is architecture so she could well move into the field of construction engineering. I can see her designing shopping malls for the online future. But then who knows with kids, she could end up a marine biologist. Whatever the outcome, she will be the first member of the family to go to university.



Ashleigh, the younger sister now 14, isn't sure yet where life will take her. Her only plan is to get through school and follow Amy's lead into casual work at Bunnings. We can be sure though with Ash that whatever she does it will be something interesting. I'm still hoping for a vet in the family so have my eye on her. The youngest, Dylan, 5 and off to school this coming year, still maintains a sole interest in cars, any shape and size, so long as it has wheels and doors. Blame his father and 2 Revill great-uncles for that, but it does make gift-buying easy.

Lainie's daughter Jess (21), our eldest grandchild, looks like being settled in Queensland now, the first start to the fraying of the family. She and Lainie are looking to buy a house in their joint names, to save Jess rent and give Lainie a northern home base, which she's wanted for a while. She does a lot of travelling up and down the coast for work, so she'll have a place to leave some gear. She and Jess are also starting to travel together, spending some enjoyable weeks in Egypt this year, and soon Lainie will be off to Malaysia as part of her social communications studies, similar to an internship. I'm still not sure what Lainie actually does, it's really complicated, but her work at coordinating the neighbourhood house program, volunteers program, general social education provision, soup kitchens and Christmas meals for the down, outs and solitary, keeps her busy and active. It also operates nicely in conjunction with our own work at the environment centre. Our constitution includes the social justice bit, which we ignore because we aren't at all sure what to do with it, so Lainie serves as a good balance and is one of those lovely people who look after the people, while we take care of the animals. Several of our clients overlap and move between our two organisations. In fact, the environment centre is a haven for dysfunctional single middle-aged males with medical problems. John and I, as a married couple, are the oddities.

Now I have no time or space left to comment on your own comments to us about your last year, only to say these are always read with interest, and noted and stored for future reference. It's nice to be able to check back and see who is who, and where, be reminded which kids belong to which friends, and what you have all been up to over the last 12 months. It hasn't always been good for some of you, and our deepest commiserations for the rough spots some of you have

had to face. All I can say now, though, is just stay safe, have as much fun and enjoyment as possible, eat and drink and be merry without too many negative effects, and know that you have all our very best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year.

All our love always, John and Pat

Joanna Pickford



Happy 2017 everyone, the new year started with lots of fake news and radio shows all saying how horrible 2016 was and that we should hope for a better 2017. Well in my wee small world 2016 wasn't that bad but 2017 has started with a deafening thump. Firstly, my lovely wee day old chick which several years ago I stuck under a broody (now Deceased Hen Penny) and who became known as Duckie Lucky got Bumble foot, (on a humorous note Aly thought I said Abra had bumble foot and sent her a get well card!) Bumble foot for those not in the know is an abscess in the cookies foot usually found in bird who are not free ranged or who have to grip wire all the time. It was very painful and poisoning her she was very low, sitting down a lot. I took her to the vet and she was put on pain killers and antibiotics. She was getting better every day and eating well. On Friday Ollie was petting her on the lawn with such care then Saturday she was refusing food and water and couldn't stand and she had to be put down I was very teary. Now I am charged with finding a buddy for Goosie who is a bit lost. You get so very attached to pets.

The next disaster was I went to get some fabric from under the sewing table in this room my all-purpose sewing room/ office. This involves the pulling out of plastic containers on wheels and to my horror I found what looked to me like borer in the floor boards. I have fumapest coming to look on Friday the 13th!!! Its borer alright I know those tell tail signs so the visit is \$350 and the minimum treatment is \$600.00!

The next was a little accident of a certain person using my kitchen drawers as a ladder to gain height to get lolly jar! I have to find a new runner and I think I can fix it myself. Anyway that was all by the 4th January. What more can I say? Have I got the 3 bad things over all at once? Or is there more to come?

On a cheerier note Abra came over with the boys for a few days and on Thursday we drove to Orange for the day its about 2 1/2 hours each way. Orange is such a pretty town lots of Art Deco Buildings wide streets with angle parking and avenues of trees Good shops and nice places to eat and the best park. We met a guy who asked if I liked the weather and I said yes it's a lovely day and he said "Orange tricks you like that wait till winter then you'll know a thing or two!" I miss the really good country town parks there is a great one in Bathurst too. I took the boys there to play on the equipment and when we walked in Matthew skipped with excitement and said Nana, If we don't find any equipment we can play hide and seek. And he was right beautiful old trees and bushes with like playrooms underneath where the branches bowed to the ground. The park had an aviary a Begonia house a lake with bridge and ducks baby ducks and cheeky birds which I think are a honey eater playing silly buggers in the lake then drying themselves in the tree above



us. There were swings and a sunken rose garden with lovely old-fashioned roses that smell delicious. Huge old trees planted a couple of hundred or so years ago make it so shady and cool. We had lunch in a trendy pub and afternoon tea in an old style milk bar with the proper stools. On the way home I photographed some good letterboxes and saw a great garden I want to photograph for an Instagram person I follow who has a page called "hit gardens, A Celebration not a condemnation." His page makes me laugh and Laugh you'd be amazed what people do in their gardens there is a great one with asphalt out front right up to the

house and in the middle as the roundabout is has a purple foot bridge with fake water underneath represented by painted pebbles in blues and whites!

I have been walking as usual and started to go back the way I used to go years ago out past the RAAF base. Those who have been listening long enough will remember (? I wouldn't!) me waxing lyrical about a block of land near the water towers with a view over the lowlands and the Blue Mountains as a back drop. It had a derelict house on it which over the years has slowly fallen down. I remember when squatters moved in for a world cup and had stolen electricity direct from the electricity line on the road powering the biggest TV screen I had seen back then! Anyway I used to say If I had the money I'd buy that land and build my dream home I even planned one in my mind made with straw bale walls. Well Mr Zibarras who owned the land sold it a while back and not there is a house almost built is a spec build not architect designed which the block demands but at least is has big windows to take in that amazing view. It's a 1500K house at least. Oh but for the money Hey! The farm next door where they old man used to stand admiring the road in his birthday suit has also been bought and done up. It's a cattle farm now. Small holding actually.

The other exciting on the Horizon even is out family trip to Kenya. We are planning 3 weeks in June and will visit Kitale, Langata cemetery I want to put a desert rose or something on Mums grave. Then Naivasha for flamingos and a school friend Nanyuki, to see Tony Mills and family, Amboselli Tsavo East dian and another beach, Zanzibar then home exciting huh.

Lots of Love and stuff Jo xxxx

More from Joanna

Hello Lovely doves and Beautiful ones, Mum uses to call us that! Anyway Its been a bit of a while since I wrote. I have been meaning to really I have, I had a great MRI story to tell and this and that but my mind is a wee bit blank at the moment so I thought I should start and see how I go on.

As you know I am flying to Kenya with the family on the 31st of this month for 3 weeks and was to visit a school friend Josie Paps. I was really saddened to discover she had died on 1st May. Josie was diagnosed with a very fast nasty cancer and it took her away from us way to early and very very quickly. I am so sad for her children and grandchildren. I am hoping I may still get to meet her family whilst I am in Kenya. The trip is coming closer though now tinged by sadness. I can't believe how quickly she went, we had been chatting with excitement about the visit right through February and she seemed to me to be the same cheeky funny girl I knew in school.

I have had to put a lid on the chicken feeder having had to take it apart to release a dove that had got itself stuck in there. I am paying a good price for chook food and in consequence have a tribe of the best fed doves in the area. I have to fill the feeder at night so my girls get some in the morning. The doves then finish it off during the day I am getting a bit mean and only quarter filling it at night cos my girls free range most of the day so they just eat at the feeder until I let them out. Goose is moulting, silly chook she looks like a badly plucked chicken on legs I wonder

why she does it in autumn when the nights are getting colder! There are feathers all over the place. We are having beautiful days like today where it is just a peaceful pleasure to sit in the garden with a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. I'm wondering if I should pop to the bottle shop for a glass tonight but I really don't think I could be bothered!

My skin cancer scars are healing up nicely the surgeon is good no real scarring though he's not quite happy with it! I have taken to carrying a children's umbrella as a parasol, it works much better than a hat. Claire (Martins daughter) you will remember me buying you and Anna an umbrella each, we could only find children's ones and the weather was so wet you needed them well they are both still going strong and that was back in 1988 or 89? I certainly got my money's worth. Hats are uncomfortable really I am leading a new vanguard for the return of the parasol!



I had to have an MRI on my hip to finally find out why I can't lift my leg without extreme pain. Anyway I had to go to Penrith for the MRI and this young man doing my MRI got me to lie on the skinny bed and once on, he got a strap and strapped my feet together into an upright position at the ankle and as he tightened the thing I yelled. He asked if my ankle was sore I said No its the hip! Anyway he proceeded to strap my hip into the bed so I couldn't move it. He then gave me these yellow matchsticks to put in my ear. I said "do they expand in the ear?" he looked at me for a moment and then said "they get bigger in the ear." OK! He then slapped a pair of head phones on and I found myself listening to one of those American singers who warble all over the place without actually finding the note and I hate that! Before being drawn into the tunnel of doom. Then the jack hammering starts and he has told me its half an hour and I have an itch on my nose dare I scratch? No think of something else concentrate on the music. Oh it's Sydney's Smooth FM and they are playing some syrupy song that I recognise from my early life, the scanner is now making a sound like newspapers coming off a print machine with the jack hammers in the background and the man is singing "If I could turn back time." and I think no no just keep this half hour on fast forward. Now my nose is itching and my leg is itching and my knee is starting to ache, and I MUSTN'T move cos we don't want to start this half hour again and Please please please don't play the one about the cake in the rain I have never understood that song and someone singing with such heartfelt feeling and emotion about a cake being left out in the rain .. *and it took so long to bake it and I'll never get the recipe again!* What is that about? I mean there is poetic license, illusion and then there is utter balderdash! Concentrate on the songs. Ah the

Walker brothers I remember liking them back in the late 60's Scott Walker was rather handsome, didn't they sing a song about Joanna. Not many songs about Joanna doesn't rhyme well except in cockney rhyming slang! Tinkling on the old Joanna! That has to be the longest half hour of my life and the utter relief of being able to get out! I learnt one thing though from our man If you need to use those wee yellow doodads that you get given to muffle sound (and I'm here to attest to the fact they don't really work when you are there right in the middle of that road gang hammering and buzzing and squeaking away do they?) the way to get them in your ear with ease is to twist them into a match stick and let them EXPAND in your ear. Isn't English a wonderful language?



No surprise really that I have been mosaicing. I find on these nice days its if pleasant to sit out and do a wee mosaic. I decided that the memorial plaque for my Mum and Dad in the local cemetery needing a makeover it really was looking ugly so I found a new nice piece of flat sandstone that someone put out for the rubbish pick up and redid the plaque on the new stone with a mosaic of a hibiscus one of mum's favourite flowers. It looks nice I think.

Well I am officially exhausted having gone with Abra and the boys to the Hawkesbury show. I would like to have looked at the pavilions with the displays and the animals and such but the draw of the show bags that the children drag one inexorably into the confusion, noise and utter chaos of the amusement section where there is stall upon stall of junk food and dodgy games with a prize for everyone, and you can't tell a young child that they may not get the prize that is their hearts desire and expect them to understand and then you have to suffer the bewilderment, disappointment and inevitable melt down that follows! Then there are the screams of fear as people are thrown about on rides that I would not ever consider getting on even in my youth, I have always hated that kind of thing. Matthew chose a ride which looked like fun you climb into a giant plastic transparent ball and crouch covering your ears whilst the man

blows the ball up then you roll it around a pool with a bunch of others doing the same thing. Matthew was good at moving it by standing up and running. Oliver chose to go on the dodgem cars with him mum. Anyway we did get into the pavilion for home arts and saw some lovely stuff and some seriously dodgy stuff. I don't know if its child hood making things better than they were but those women around Kitale and Eldoret were far more creative and products some seriously beautiful and intricate stuff. We go to see the animals in the petting zoo but that's all.

I love eggplant and have been unsuccessfully trying to do some of my favourite recipes, I have tried to gently bake it up nice and crisp like my dad did and have twice burnt it to a cinder! Last night I decided to try a curry style as that is always nice too so got out my recipe book and choose my recipe. Yes, I have all those ingredients. So a bit later after cat and chook chores I set about cooking up the eggplant, you had to cut it into cubes and rub it in chind and turmeric before frying and drilling whilst you start the next bit. Frying chind makes an aroma which catches your throat if you know what I mean! Natural yoghurt, I don't have that I'll have to use something else I know coconut milk. So I prepare the coconut cream with the spices and green chili and it is at this point I realise I am doing the wrong recipe. I should have realised at the Not having any yoghurt! I had all the ingredients I needed I knew I did! Anyway I find the right recipe leave out the tin of tomatoes because this one had a tin of coconut milk in it and go from there. I have to say this it was very yummy despite being a hash up of two totally different recipes! I served it up with Dosa which I love. I'm getting dodgier as the days go by but never fear it keeps us all amused!

Anyway my loves I am going to love and leave you and go watch TV and eat supper xxx Love Jo

Hello Peeps,



I thought one more email before I head off to Kenya might be in order, particularly in light of the busy week I have just had, Friday Abra myself and Ollie went off to the shops to collect his DS present. He was then happily involved whilst we shopped before heading home to make the cake which I have to tell you is a masterpiece. Abra amazes me. My job is to mix the colours of fondant and roll it out and put it on the cake Abra then does all the decorating having planned as usual quite impeccably every little detail. She had Harry Potter glasses and cauldrons for the lolly bag. The food was themed and the cake was Headwig the Owl. As usual it was a fun party for children and adults I had to leave early I was so

tired.



On Sunday we set off early to Harold Park Tram Sheds which have been converted into a trendy place with some nice restaurants. This was a Mother's Day treat for the Mums from Adam and of course Ollie and Matty came too. As we set out I sang rap style as per Grandmaster Flash (google its good.) "Don't Push me cos I'm close to the edge." And Matthew muttered something under his breath which made Adams Mum Karyne laugh; later she told me that he said "I don't know what Old ladies are listening to these days!" It was a busy and fun week all up.



Abra got me into this thing called a bitmoji, for those of you who don't know what this is it's like emojis but instead of a yellow happy face you create your own avatar and can then attach your avatar with a greeting to any text messages.

Abra and my friend Kari have them and they are very like but mine is a bit off because they don't have things like a shit green colour for eyes and salt and pepper hair. I attach a selection for you to see. Anyway These come with a variety of messages many written in Millennium speak or whatever they call it and before you send one it's a good idea to check the meaning of message because as I discovered some are not the kind of thing you say even to your best friend! maybe to a partner of very long term persuasion! I had to laugh because some are obvious to most people but not to me so I found one and googled what does LAMO stand for and this is what I got back and I am not kidding. *"LAMO, definition of LAMO, LAMO is a misspelling of the word LMAO, which is what I am doing right now, at you!"* Well how cheeky is that? As you can understand I typed the doodad in incorrectly! Anyway I got to thinking each generation tend to think they are the very first to discover or invent things and so they are very smarty pants about their millennium language; but there is nothing really new in it. Every generation of children come up with secret languages I remember very well speaking egg language in fact I can still speak it accurately and without thought. I am not so quick with back slang or pig latin. Ackbey angley!



Earlier this month I went to Matty school to see him run the cross country and he did extraordinarily well considering; he came about 15th out of 50 odd 7 and 8 year olds and at the last bit he was walking cos he got a stitch. He has the build for it. I gave him an early mark and took him home with me afterwards he was so tired poor lad.

Good Peeps I had had this sitting here for a few days awaiting any inspirational sayings or thoughts and none have come to me. I think I'll send this before I forget in the last minute rush to get unnecessary and necessary things done.

Lots of Love Jo xxxxx