

## March 20 to 26

### Auckland

#### March 20 Wellington to Auckland

Everything worked very smoothly on a calm and sunny morning. The taxi took me to the airport, the plane flew me to Auckland on time, a bus was waiting for me at Auckland Airport and I only had to wait seven minutes for a train at Papatoetoe. I was in Glen Innes an hour after leaving the airport building.



*Dining on the deck*

John collected me, drove me home and we had lunch in the garden, chatting there for most of the afternoon. This morphed into the evening and we remained outside for dinner. I went to bed at a not too ridiculous hour.

#### March 21 Auckland

At 09.00, John departed for work, taking me with him as far as the bottom end of Parnell, one of Auckland's trendier suburbs and entertainment hubs. I'm not sure about the owl artwork but it was sunny, still and warm. As my plan was to walk back to Glendowie, that was just as well.



*I wasn't sure about the owls*

I found a café - not a real problem as there were dozens of them - had a coffee and thought about nothing in particular except that, at \$3.50, the coffee was cheaper than in Wellington.



*The coffee was good*

After coffee, I walked through Parnell, past some interesting old buildings and the cathedrals, old and new.



*Old Parnell*

The sun was shining brightly from right behind them so photography wasn't really possible. I did manage to buy a house moving card.



*Good views over the city*

At the top of Parnell, I decided to ignore Newmarket, no fun unless you are playing shopping, and entered the Domain, a grass hill on top of which sits the magnificent War Memorial Museum.

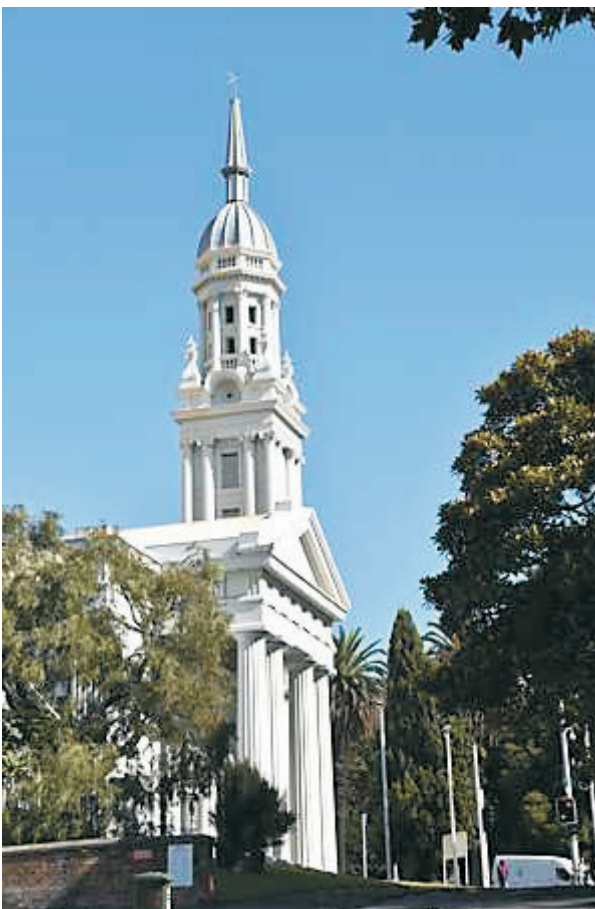
I took lots of photos and admired the excellent views.



*Auckland Domain War Memorial Museum*



*Flowers down the hill*



*Into the University area*

The lower slopes are adorned with lots of trees, some flowers and the odd old statue. I gradually descended and then climbed steeply into the main University campus. This has some old buildings and even a street which could easily be in France or Belgium.



*This could be in France or Belgium*

The city centre was busy and full of building work. The front of the station was hidden by work on the new rail tunnel but I managed to find a side entrance.



*Some interesting buildings in the CBD*

The Information Office had some bus and train timetables so I was able to do a little planning for the cricket tomorrow and even discovered that my entrance ticket covered the train journey out to Eden Park.



*The Custom House*



*The famed red fence ...*



*... surrounds the port*

The waterfront, long hidden behind the famed red fence, is now open to public view and has a large cruise ship and another owl statue. I sat on a bench and wrote my diary. The sun was hammering down nicely.



*Another owl*

For the first kilometre or so I followed the red fence, the road to the right of me and the commercial port to the left. There were lots of trains, lots of cranes and containers by the ship load.



*Trains and containers*

Eventually, the port ended and the bays began. The sea was beautiful and there were excellent views both ahead and behind.



*Excellent views in all directions*

The latter showed off the inner city skyline at its absolute best.



*Even some wildlife*



*Back towards the CBD*

The road meandered considerably, with the coastline changing direction frequently. This offered lots of different views, many of which served only to emphasise that I had a long way to walk. With lunchtime approaching, I had incentive enough to make good progress to Mission Bay.

This is a centre of sand, restaurants and night life. I didn't wish to play on the former or avail myself of the latter. As it was lunchtime, I settled for a restaurant.



*Mission Bay*



*Kohimarama*

The Belgian Bar offered large cold beers and a Caesar salad with added calamari. I felt that after a twelve kilometre walk and more to follow, I was allowed a large beer. I sat at the window, ate a good lunch and rested my slightly weary legs.



*St Helier*



*Refreshment after a long walk*



*Reinforcement ...*

The next bay from Mission Bay is Kohimarama. At this stage, I left the road and walked along the sand to the opposite end of the bay before returning to the pavement.



*... for the end of the walk*

At Saint Helier, I stopped for a coffee and a little shopping, before completing the last one and a half kilometres, mainly uphill, to the house.

A total journey of about sixteen kilometres. Not a really long walk but enough to keep me out of mischief. I spent the rest of the day relaxing and eating.

## March 22 Auckland

A leisurely start to what looked like being a nice day.

I left the house at 11.00, walked up the hill to the traffic lights, discovered that the next bus was almost an hour away, and walked down the hill towards the beach, over a kilometre away. This was the opposite direction to my walk of yesterday. Half way down the hill there were some excellent views towards the city centre, once again showing off the best of the city.



*More views over the CBD*



*More owls than in Harry Potter*

At the bottom of the hill I had planned to have a coffee but the electronic sign at the bus stop told me of a bus in seven minutes. It seemed sensible to catch it.

Once aboard, we followed the route that I had walked yesterday along the waterfront. The sea was just as beautiful but it didn't seem worth trying to take photos through the bus windows.

Almost on the dot of 12.00, we stopped outside the Britomart Station. I walked up Queen Street, very busy but not exciting, before turning onto High Street, much more interesting. There were even more owls to photograph.



*Vulcan Lane*

Vulcan Lane is narrow and trendy but has lots of cafes, so I was able buy a long black and some Vietnamese pork. The latter had some wonderful flavours but too many noodles, too much sweetness and not enough vegetables to be really good for me.



*Vietnamese pork*

At the station, I watched the train to Swanson depart as I approached the platform so had to wait twenty minutes for the next one. I occupied my time by taking photos of the station, the roof in particular.



*Britomart Station*

This has always been interesting and has remained remarkably clean - electrically powered trains, I suppose. We pulled out on time, the train being standing room only. Seventeen minutes later, we arrived at Kingsland and about two thirds of the passengers got off.



*I walked from the station...*

I followed the crowd a short distance down and then across the road, along the leafy streets to the other side of the stadium and the entrance for which my ticket was valid.

Once inside, I went right round the ground again so that I could have a seat in the shade. With such a sparse crowd, 5,000 in a 50,000 seat stadium, I should think, there was no need to worry about sitting in the right seat.



*... then round the outside of the stadium*



*This ball missed both edge and stumps*

The less said about the cricket, the better. In the first 100 minutes, the New Zealand opening bowlers pitched the ball up, bowled straight and let the pink ball swing. They also held all of their catches.

The England innings was short, not sweet, and one of their lowest ever scores. 56 all out.



*The support wasn't able to help*

When New Zealand batted, progress for the first 100 minutes was equally slow but the England bowlers were bowling slightly shorter and offering slightly more bad balls. The fielders dropped the only catch that was offered. As a result, only one wicket fell and the batsmen gradually gained control.

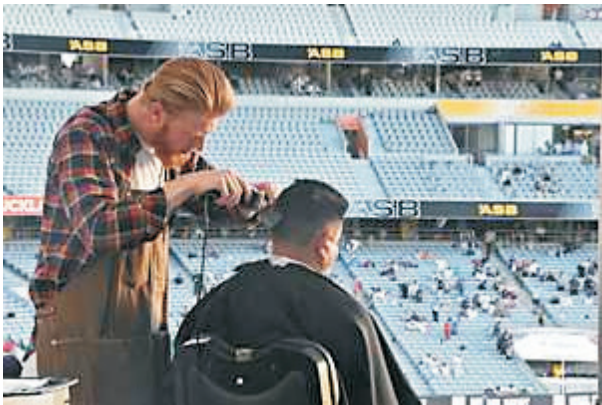


*The fielders awaited the next catch*



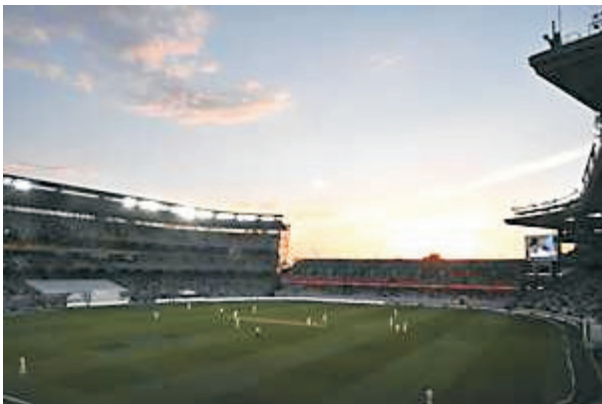
*Everyone queued at the food stalls*

At the long break, 18.20, I discovered the food market on the Outer Oval, the small ground adjacent to the main one. There were lots of interesting food stalls and lots of people queuing at them. I decided to eat the roll that I had purchased in the ground and not to bother with the nicer looking offerings outside from the market.



*What to do when bored with the cricket*

As a sort of sideshow, there was a hair dressing salon at the top of one of the stands. I looked but didn't feel tempted to patronise it.



*The lights took hold*

The lights went on during the break but there was still bright sunshine to begin with. We

took a wicket in the first over so that might sow some seeds of doubt in the opposition! It didn't! Only one more wicket fell in the day and New Zealand's domination was complete.

The lights appeared to be very effective and the batsmen and fielders didn't seem to have any problems. Only the bowlers struggled.

The aim of a day/night Test is to increase attendances by encouraging people to come along after work. This might have brought some in - there appeared to be more children in evidence - but any increase in crowd numbers can't have been more than five or ten percent.

At 20.00 I collected my belongings and set off on a twenty minute walk to the pub where I was to meet John and Pam. It was reasonably dark but I found my way there up several hills. I had donned my sweater when leaving the cricket but had to remove it again as soon as I arrived at the pub. It was still very warm.

We chatted there for another half hour and then drove home.

## **March 23 Auckland**

Another leisurely start, at which point there was a short sharp shower. At about 11.00 we climbed aboard the car, drove through the city and up the motorway, accompanied by more showers.



*Sculptureum*

At 12.30, we arrived at Sculptureum, a sculpture park and posh restaurant, the far side of Matakana. It is a smart new restaurant building, largely open-sided. The service was very good and the food inventive. I felt that the sauces were a trifle rich but my venison and John's lamb were exceptional.



*My venison was very good...*

They were accompanied by a bottle of their own Chardonnay. We were given samples of the 2014 and 2015 vintages and chose the former. Both were very good but different in style.



*... as was the local Chardonnay*

While we were there, the weather varied from sunshine to torrential rain. We didn't venture into the sculpture park. It was decided to leave that for a future occasion.

We drove home through heavy Friday afternoon traffic and some more heavy showers. Once back at the house, we sat and listened to yet more downpours.

We watched rugby on TV, ate a light dinner and continued listening to the rain.

## March 24 Auckland

It rained much of the night, sometimes very hard. The day didn't bode well.



*Views over the city again*

It dried up for a while so I took the opportunity to walk down the hill to St Heliers, look at the beach, buy a Birthday card and walk home again. It was a journey of about an hour and it was sunny and dry.



*The beach looked good - but empty*

After lunch, we drove a few kilometres to Remuera, to visit Peter and Amanda and to meet Edward, their new cockapoo. A delightful little chap, all chews and licks but not fully in control of his arms and legs. I gave him lots of cuddles.



*Edward - my new best friend*



*Lots of dishes ...*

The rain was settling hard when we walked next door for dinner. It was a surprise Birthday party for Judy. She and Wayne are of Taiwanese extraction and he is a keen cook. The Chinese banquet to which we were treated was amazing, probably the best I have ever had. I cannot remember all of the dishes but there were approaching a dozen. I ate enough and drank too much. My recent abstemious behaviour has reduced my capacity for both food and wine.



*... all of incredible quality*

It rained hard again for much of the night.

## March 25 Auckland



*A good start to the morning*

Another leisurely start saw us drive down the hill in the late morning in search of coffee in St Heliers. It was bright and sunny, the beach was busy and all of the cafes were heaving. We finally found one with some space and had coffee. I decided to walk back up the hill.



*St Heliers*

We spent some of the afternoon watching cricket on TV - England still doing badly - before visiting Belinda and John just round the corner for a drink. We then drove back down to St Heliers for dinner at La Vista, a Mediterranean restaurant. Food and service were good. With a week in China to come, I decided to have a steak, which was excellent.



*A good steak*

## March 26 Auckland

A packing day. My clothes, which were washed yesterday, joined everything else in a muddle in my bag and I searched the house for anything that I had left behind.



*Sunny outside the post box*

With a Birthday card to post, I made a short walk in mid morning as far as the post box at the end of the road. The weather was still a touch cloudy but pleasant enough.

I returned in time for lunch, which we ate in the garden in very warm sunshine. Had we stayed there all afternoon, sunburn would have been a distinct possibility. We abandoned inside to the cricket on TV, a dispiriting experience for an Englishman.

I showered, changed into my travelling clothes and did another search of the house for mislaid possessions. We piled into the car and drove for about half an hour in reasonably busy rush hour traffic. Dinner was at a very busy diner called Little Jimmy's at Greenwood's Corner, named after an early English settler.

The food and service were both good - I've said that several times since I arrived in Auckland - as was the glass of Hallertau IPA which I permitted myself. My fish dish wasn't large but I felt full after it.



*Flowers at Greenwood's Corner*

Another twenty minutes drive got us to the airport. There was an amazing mix of sunset red clouds and blue skies in the West but stopping the car on the motorway to take photos didn't seem like a good idea.



*A large fish supper*

John and Pam threw me out and I checked in very rapidly, managed not to set off the alarms with my metal leg, and was soon in the Koru lounge. This was very quiet. Still feeling full of fish, I restricted myself to a tomato juice and a very good long black while I wondered how to waste a few hours. I had a few nibbles, read my book and then we were summoned for the flight.

