

THE AWESOME TOUR 2003

31/10/03 Some of us started the day before as family and pets had to be left in the care of others, but even this could not be completed simply. En route to taking mother to the physiotherapist, the road was closed due to an accident. Then as we sat down for a meal we waited almost an hour to then find out that our order hadn't reached the kitchen. The only plus was that when it did arrive, we didn't have to pay for it. On arriving home Nelson, the dog was in a sulk, but fortunately the dog-sitter arrived before we left for London at 6.30. Got caught in a traffic jam prior to Watford, but we arrived safely at the Sheraton Skyline in time for a few beers.

01/11/03 Caught the Hotelhoppa to Terminal 3 to meet up with the rest of this specifically chosen select band for a flight to Los Angeles. The first meal on board was quite good and after 7 hours we had a further meal. On arrival at Los Angeles it was obvious that there was a luggage problem on our coach. There had to be a way and this was overcome by filling the aisle with suitcases. We soon arrived at the



Hotel Meridien, a very comfortable Hotel.

As expected certain people were tired but it was time for a beer. Unfortunately the draught Newcastle Brown was off, but we survived by drinking the local brew.

02/11/03 8.10 for breakfast, where there was excellent scrambled egg along with sausages and fried potatoes, followed by fruit and cheese; all of very good quality. We took an initial walk with **Peter and Greta, Tony and Ann** visiting the Rodeo Drive area. It all seemed to be under control as we viewed the expensive shops, but managed to keep the ladies on the street. Then it happened. There was "Tiffany's" and bye-bye to the Girls. First **Peter** was fetched, then **Tony**, but I survived, she paid for it herself. Time for a sit down, a beer and a quick check of the Bank Statement. After finishing the walk, it was then time for the first game of the Tour. Afterwards we were entertained at a Pizza House with giant Pizzas and Beers, both clear and cloudy, but who cared. Eventually returned back to the Hotel for a nightcap with **Paul and Betty**.

03/11/03 Breakfast at 8.15 and an 8.55 meet for a coach tour of Los Angeles. Initially went to downtown LA where we stopped and walked around a Leather Market (Mexican Style) and had a tour of the first house in LA, where to get from room to room you had to go outside. Afterwards we got back on the coach to Sunset Boulevard for a walk around including the Chinese Theatre and the Roosevelt Hotel. It was here that **Paul Bloomfield** found a couple of the Awards for the "Last Evening". Then we were

back on the coach to Bel Air and the houses belonging to the rich and famous, followed by lunch at the famous market, where every choice of food from around the World was available. When we returned to the Hotel there was still time for a quick shop around the Beverley Centre and Victoria's Secrets. There were purchases made by certain people but these will remain a secret. Afterwards off to the Airport for a short 11 hour flight to Fiji, crossing the dateline and therefore taking 36 hours. On arrival we got straight onto a coach for a 1 minute trip to the Tokatoka Hotel at 4 am. For some, the Bloomfields, there was a desperate need for a cigarette and with this in mind sitting outside in the early hours of the morning seemed a good idea, unless you happened to lock your door, **FROM THE OUTSIDE**. Fortunately they did gain entry thanks to the Hotel staff.

ONE DAY LOST

05/11/03 Up at 7, for a quick walk round the grounds, then breakfast at 8. Quick shop in Jacks at the Hotel with **Mr and Mrs Robson**, then joined by **Mr and Mrs Jameson** for shirts and sarongs or as **Bob** would call it a male dress.

Other people went on a trip but we went into the nearest town Nadi, and surprise, surprise, called in at another Jack's. This was a much bigger shop on 2 floors and one had one's own Personal Assistant who followed you round, as helpful as could be, without being overpowering. More shirts and new "matching" shorts. Unfortunately there was a jewellery shop further up the road and you've guessed it, in she went. This time I had no option but to be there and the Salesman was good, in fact he nearly sold us the shop. One opal necklace and a ring later we escaped, chased up the road as he tried to also sell us a black pearl, but we turned it down.



Returned to the Hotel, we sat by the pool had a couple of beers along with a toasted sandwich, had a swim and a chute, and then we were joined by **Trevor and Bob** as they began the "verbal jousting". As with all story telling there are two sides to the coin or as **Bob** would have it Conversely **Trevor**. It was at this time that we found out about **Bob's** part time jobs including "Crockery Purchasing" and "Film Extra".

When questioned further it was obvious that he was shy and didn't want to talk about either, but 1½ hours later we had heard only part of each story. Unfortunately one has to beware of copyright, so all questions to **Bob Jameson**.

As evening was beginning to fall, a table was booked for 8 people, meeting at 5.30. It seems that first arrivals were there at 6.10, when **Jon Beale** was at the bar and subsequently invited to join – now making a table for 10, then **Russell and Angela** 12, then **Alan and Audrey** 14, then **Gordon Heather and Marie** 17. But still no **Jamesons**. Perhaps the fame had gone to his head or he just wanted to buy us all a

drink after the Happy Hour had finished at 7pm. Not the best meal of the holiday but a Meeting of old friends as **Paul** found David Hall, a previous opponent in the Bar.

06/11/03 Breakfast at 8.30. All packed and then last minute drinks before a little last minute shopping at Jacks, when **Bob** actually acquired his sarong. Then onto the bus and off to the Blue Lagoon Cruises. But first, more shopping in the Cruise shop. En route to the ship we saw a large container with



holes. “That’s lucky they’ve put holes in your cabin Bob” said **Mike Greenhough**. We arrived on board and cabins were allocated and whilst we set sail, some of us got our first sight of dolphins as 3 were spotted just under the front of the ship. As people went to fetch their cameras, they disappeared. Some of us sat down and had a couple of beers before the evening’s Champagne Reception. For some reason I got a different Menu to everybody else. The Crew introduced themselves and explained the “Early Swimming Board”. Later in the evening we were entertained by the crew on guitars.

07/11/03 Up at 7.30, which upset **Dave Robson** as I had crossed off my room number for the early morning swim. After breakfast it was off to an island. Firstly it was the feeding of the fish, then the morning coffee, then some went off snorkelling, whilst others relaxed and someone had to be rescued en route to China after a failed self taught Windsurfing lesson. Then we had an extensive island Barbeque, which included piccalilli. This became the norm on the Cruise, every 2 hours stop, and time for food. In the afternoon, coral viewing from a glass bottom boat, then tea and cakes prior to the serious matter of GB v Fiji in the Volleyball Game. There was a slight problem with the pitch but our complaints fell on deaf ears. The sand was far too hard for our delicate limbs and full-length dives were out of the question, which was going to nullify **Jon “Luganis” Beale** and **Peter “Franny Lee” Band**. In the end we were so unlucky to lose to the odd goal. Well 15 is an odd number, even if we only had 7 or 8. It was then back to the ship and because of the insect population, it was decided to dine on board, even though we had earlier watched the meal being prepared on the island. At some time there was a minor mutiny led by **John Haggett** and it was felt that perhaps there should be a different crew. Not to let him down it was promptly organised under his guidance.

During the evening one had to put up with both of **Jon Beale’s** jokes about the Gynaecologist “numbing the spot” and the Vicar’s dog. Had a chat with the crew and was told that 2 of the crew were hockey goalkeepers but in the end they didn’t turn up.



08/11/03 Breakfast at about 8.15, **Vinny** is up again, even though he NEVER has breakfast !! Then off on a little cruise to the Northern Islands where the sea was a little choppy and then off onto another beach. Some people had stayed on the boat, whilst most went off for a hill-hike, others just relaxed on the beach. After a drink and some food, several went snorkelling. Lunch was back on the ship with several interesting dishes, especially one topped with cheese. Whilst dining the boat had moved close to Nacula Village, where our Captain and Cruise Director were born. We were privileged to sit in the local church, where **Bob and Janet Jameson** led the AB Choir, then to enjoy the local culture before being introduced to the local Chief, with **Mike** being invited to "take cava", which was later enjoyed by others; (well enjoyed by some).

Native dancing by the Fijian ladies of the island closely followed this with several AB's persuaded to join in. Afterwards they created a local market with wares for sale, including masks and grass skirts. We then went back to the boat for early beers with **Dave and Judy**, prior to the evening's South Pacific Buffet Dinner and Disco. Not only this but the AB's had deigned to provide a Cabaret for the crew. Practice duly took place with the women on the upper deck and the men in the Forward Lounge. The men were to perform a rendition of "the Woad Song". An initial quartet was easily found but attempts to find a second quartet was abandoned after a diplomatic "No Thanks" from **Choirmaster Bloomfield**. In order to add a little colour certain individuals were asked to "interrupt" or add a little extra at the end of certain lines. The evening began with a delightful Buffet with various mouth-watering dishes, closely followed by a cultural evening of split second timing entertainment. Well it could have been if **Janet** hadn't decided to iron her grass skirt. Whilst the audience began to get twitchy, out of the shadows came Marilyn Beale performing the "Sheikh of Arabi". This managed to quell the unrest of the crowd, whilst allowing the AB's Calendar Girls Troupe to prepare for their belly dancing routine. This was followed by a dance routine performed by the AB's answer to Bill and Bobbie Irvine in the shape of **Chris and Mike Heywood**. After this came the AB's Male Voice Choir with "The Woad Song". As there was a slight delay prior to the next act we were fortunate in having a quick fill-in as **German** told one of his many jokes. Then **Dave Robson** performed his body part act or "Wicky Wacky Woo" and the Fijians understood the "Peashooter" very well. Once the crowd had calmed down up jumped **Vinny, Mukhesk and German** to entertain us with an inclusive Sing-Song. Can anybody remember the words? The

Fijians then sang their National Anthem before they started up the band, with Jiving music etc. A few stayed up for late drinks but unfortunately someone woke his wife on his return, **Jon**.

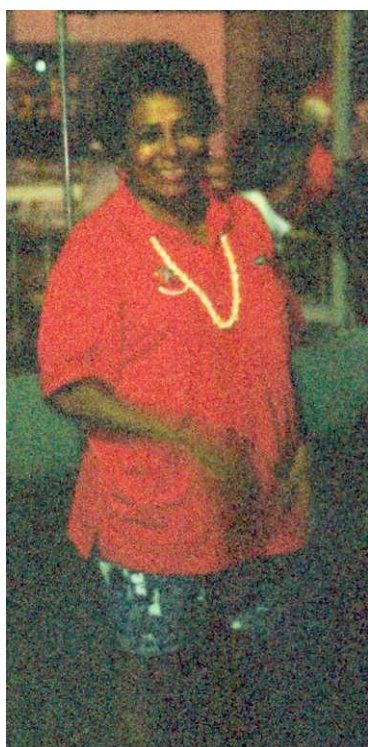
09/11/03 Breakfast at approximately 8.15, whilst the boat began its return journey. We eventually arrived back at about midday in time for a quay-side welcome by **Doris and party**.



Onto the bus and a real long journey lasting to the Lautoka Bags Clubhouse or was it the Colonial Mansion, for a light lunch and a bit of World Cup Rugby, watching a recording of New Zealand beating South Africa, then changing in the Swimming Pool changing area prior getting back on to the bus for a trip across the road to the “Fijian Astro”.

In order to save time the bus drove pitch-side to save the spectators a long walk. There are expected to be Match Reports by the **Skipper** who will probably mention the pitch, but suffice it to say, the West Indies quartet of Michael Holding, Andy Roberts, Joel Garner and Malcolm Marshall would probably want to bowl rather than bat.

After the game back to the Lautoka Bags Clubhouse for a quick swim then the beers began. We were also entertained to a BarBQ for about 6 teams.



As always not everything went smoothly as one of their female players ended up shirtless, but **Paul Bloomfield** covered her embarrassment as shirts were swapped.

Alcohol may have played a tiny part in the reason for the exchange as Beer flowed like water and certain players **Gary, Phil and Paul** were never short of a drink or two or three or whatever was on the table. A Fijian farewell of singing bade us on our way as we got back on the bus for the trip to the Tokatoka Hotel for a quick sleep before Croissants and coffee at midnight.

10/11/03 A quick early morning snack before we were back on the bus and off for a 1-minute ride to Nadi Airport. After arriving in Auckland we had a little wait prior to flying to Christchurch, more beers and rum for Ailsa. Unfortunately she thought it was brandy and stated that it tasted different from the previous day's. Fortunately **Dave** was there to point out that yesterday it was rum and it had coke in it.

No wonder it was different. This was just the start of giggles and trying to use **Dave's** sting remover just made the whole scenario worse.

Then off to the Copthorne Hotel around midday, with the bar closed – but not for long! A few of us went next door to the Oxford-on-Avon pub for lunch and a few bevies. It was now the chance to get some washing done, if you got in the queue.

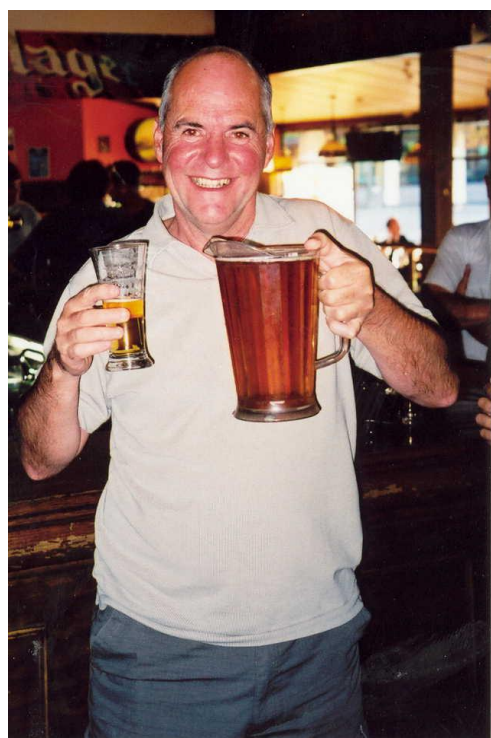
11/11/03 Up in time to be in the Cathedral Square for 11 o'clock on Remembrance Day. We then went for a walk around the area afterwards, then off to the Antarctic Centre. First of all a Hagglund trip on a short Adventure Course, then into the cold igloo for a spell, can still see Tim sitting inside. Then back into town for a bite to eat at "Warners" – black pudding, bacon and a poached egg carefully and decoratively piled high. En route to the Hotel, a quick beer in the Vic and Whale, before changing for the game against the Canterbury Supporters Club. Because of the time of finish even though the result was not favourable celebrations were held over to the next day.

12/11/03 Up early for a further trip on the coach, this time it was Whale Watching. First the stop for coffee, then for lunch before boarding the boat and heading off "Jacques Cousteau" style. We were lucky as we found 2 whales during the trip plus several dolphins.



The second whale surfaced about 5 minutes after the first and the Captain then rushed to the spot. We were also fortunate to see several sea birds including the Albatross. Then back on the coach but this time just a short trip to a local Vinery for tastings.

Afterwards back to the Hotel but first a quick visit next door to the Vic and Whale to celebrate **Jon Beale's** hat trick the previous day. For those of you who never saw him buy a beer, this contradicts.



In the evening a group of us revisited Warners for an enjoyable evening meal. On the way back a nightcap in the Vic and Whale.

13/11/03 Up around 10'ish for an early morning tram ride, visiting Arts Galleries and the Arts Centre, then to Regent Street with its boutiques, before a Mixed Hockey game. Back to the Hotel for a beer and a quiet evening. Unfortunately some people need looking after and it is off to find a Pharmacy for **Mr Jameson**. How he was expecting to fetch painkillers in his bare feet, goodness knows. Ah well, good deed for the day.

14/11/03 Time for travel so up at 7.45. We left at 9.15 for the Airport, flew to Rotorua, then bus to Lake Taupo to the Copthorne Hotel. We arrived in time for lunch so had a walk along the coast to the nearest restaurant “The Cove” for an enjoyable snack including crayfish soup. A gentle walk back was followed by a relaxing afternoon talking with **Eddie**.

In the evening back on a boat for the evening meal, including steaks, then back to the Hotel for a few last beers.

15/11/03 Up for breakfast at about 9.50. Information was received that the game today had been advertised on the local Commercial radio stating the time and venue and that their 1st team were coming. As there was still plenty of time, we walked to town, which was designed a little like Milton Keynes with blocks, then taxied back.

After the game we went into town for a pleasant meal, returning to the Hotel to watch Australia thrash the All Blacks. **Jon Beale's** antics with the Australian Flag didn't go down too well and certain comments about the All Black's inadequacies saw their supporters leaving before the end.

16/11/03 Breakfast, then on to the coach for a trip to the Maori Arts and Crafts Centre where we saw the traditional Maori welcome and were then entertained with Maori music, alongwith the Thermal Reserve of geysers, hot springs and boiling hot pools.

We then moved on to Rotorua where we took a cable car up to a restaurant. For those who were into adventure there was then a luge run. Once at the bottom it was back to the top on a ski lift. Some decided to do this more than once as there were 3 different runs.

After lunch it was back on the bus to Paradise Valley, which was a flora and fauna delight along with several animals.

We then returned back to the Hotel for a meal in the Brasserie, followed by the World Cup Semi Final victory over France. This ended with early morning celebrations ending with **John Peirce** and myself, there to the bitter end.

17/11/03 Onto a coach, leaving sticks behind, we soon stopped at Hoka Falls where several people took pictures. Then off to the Big Apple Café for lunch. Afterwards it was off to the Waitoma Caves to see the glow-worms by boat (very popular with the Japanese).

Following this we had a quick comfort stop before arriving at the Sheraton Hotel. Too tired to go out, we decided to dine in the Hotel Brasserie.



Already in the restaurant were **Mr and Mrs Jameson**. **Janet** waved. **Bob** was polite and came over saying that **Janet** was waving to a strange young man; at least 1 of the words was true. We were then joined by **John and Val, Mike and Julia, then Alan and Janette**. After an enjoyable meal joined up with several more in the bar for a lively discussion until it was finally decided that the fit athletes need their beauty sleep.

18/11/03 Late start for some but there was time to take the shuttle bus into town. Several took a walk round the shops and the Harbour Village, which contained the 1998 Admirals Cup Boat. Time to have lunch and then back to the Sheraton, for a couple of beers prior to a 6 pm leaving for a game against Western, whilst our Mixed Team played Gold Diggers without females.

19/11/03 Up for a trip on the coach to Whangerei. All the luggage was at the new Hotel, apart from **Ken and Sharon's** which had been left at the Sheraton. Stopped as usual for a comfort break, prior to arriving at Whangerei where we had a quick tour around a small compact harbour. This was followed by 2 games, 1 Men's and 1 Mixed simultaneously.

An evening afterwards included a large Buffet and a few beers, then entertainment by Paul Fletcher and Frank Spencer. We got to the Copthorne Hotel at about 11 pm for a beer before bedtime.

20/11/03 Up early to get on the coach for the Cape Reinga Tour. Firstle we stopped for a walk around the forest of Kauri trees. Then back on to the coach travelling to the Ancient Kauri Kingdom, where we had a coffee in the shop full of wood.

We then had the coach trip on the "90 Mile Beach".

During this ride we all got out and for some of us, ie **Mrs Davies**, it was time to inscribe the beach with "I LUV DORIS" or "I LUV AB's". Somebody even daubed this on the back of the bus.

For some it was also time to find out whether there was any chance of batting for England.



The answer was soon found after the first ball was bowled.



It was conclusive, he could play for England. We went sand boarding before rejoining the coach for a short trip to Cape Reinga and the lighthouse, where we had a pleasant picnic lunch. En route back we stopped at a roadside fruit shop. Back at the hotel it was time for a few beers before the evening's buffet. Our table of **Dave and Judy, Paul and Betty, Jon and Marilyn** was booked for 8:30. As we approached our table it was decided that we would swap with **Peter and Greta** and their party who were at the buffet. As they returned to their table they were for a split second confused to find people at their table. **Greta** reacted quickly to regain their table by putting ice down certain people's necks. After the meal some of us watched the New Zealand – France Semi Final. All in all, we had a good night, as **Jon, Dave** and I saw in the morning.

21/11/03 Up by 8.20 for an 8.40 boat trip for a tour of the islands. Saw the usual school of dolphins, which increased in size but we unfortunately, did not swim with the dolphins. We returned to the Hotel after a slight hiccup (as always, sorted by Julia), for lunch with **John and Angela, Bob and Janet**. During this **Mr Haggett** was said to be enjoying a bottle of wine. Decided to go for a quick walk round the Treaty House, the Maori Canoe and Gardens, but was invited for a swift glass of wine with **Paul and Betty, Gary, Mike and Chris**, who had started earlier. Before the evening's entertainment it was time for a quick change, before dressing for Dinner. Our table of **Beales, Bloomfields and Robsons** was again expecting the "Waterboy" to serve their drinks. Fortunately he was up to the task. The evening was as usual well controlled by skipper **Mike**. Prior to the start we had attempted to create a goal on the stage from props found at the back.

The evening began with anecdotes by **Jon Beale**, followed by **Dave "Wicky" Robson** performing to a front row who had missed it on the boat. For some it was too much.



To keep the evening going Mike told a few Aonoch and Eli jokes in between announcing the Main Award with **Bob Jameson** Man of the Tour - Why no Woman of the Tour ?? This was followed by a few of us joining **Bob Jameson** in his version of Widdicombe Fair and Uncle **Ed Moorby**. The girls then did a Pam Ayres poem and the evening finished with the Woad Song. What an enjoyable evening, which sadly had to end.

21/11/03 Up at 8.30 for the coach, which took us to the **German** Café stop. Some of us went to watch GB lose 2-1 to NZ, when **Bob** shook hands with Craig Parnham as he said "still got the Roller". We then taxied back to the Airport, flew to LA, queued in the corridor with our green card, then to collect our yellow card before leaving the USA and flying home. **GREAT HOLIDAY.**