

A Letter from Africa

Oct 2015

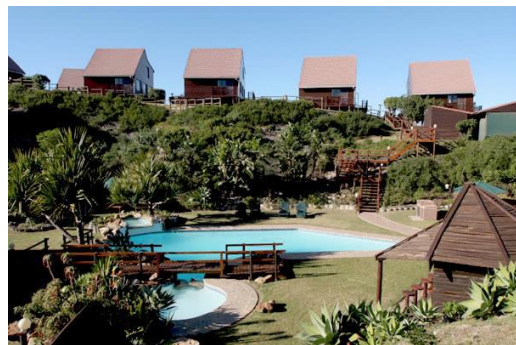
Welcome to spring in PE.

Winter is almost gone and miraculously we have not had any power outages for a few weeks, following the commissioning of the first of 6 units at Medupi power station. This was good news for our UK visitors and even the Sept. weather allowed for lots of outdoor activities.

So let`s start there. **Melanie, Alex and Mackenzie** were out and even though they were here for only 3 weeks they managed to do a great deal. We were booked into the Kowie River Chalets at Port Alfred for a few days that permitted some canoeing up the river, beach walks and trips to Bathurst and Grahamstown. We found a great little restaurant called Stanley`s with lovely views into the valley and river. It lies 3.5 kms outside Kenton on the Grahamstown Rd.



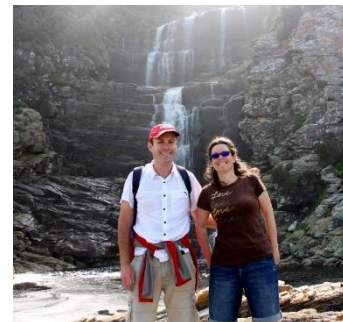
On the right is the Kowie River Chalets Timeshare resort and to the left the 3 of them take up odd poses on the steps



of the small auditorium within the heart of the 1820`s monument. It was opened in 1974 and comprises many facilities including the main theatre that seats 940. This Settlers monument is intended to display 2 prime features of British heritage in SA being the English language and the tradition of democracy. The yellow wood beams in the background represent scaffolding and thus a process still in action but also configured to reflect the crosses on the Union flag.

Melanie and Alex took time off to head to the Tsitsikamma Coastal Park with Mackenzie spending time with her cousin at home. They did the hike to the waterfall that forms the main part of day 1 of the Otter Trail.

At home they did the usual local things like braais and walks along our lovely beaches and coastline .A horse ride to the beach taken by Mackenzie and Courtney was so appealing that Courtney chose the activity for her Birthday. More about that later.



Our local beach (8 minute ride) is Sardinia Bay that links up with Schoenmakerskop. This part of the coast attracts divers who search for perlemoen/Abalone. The discarded shells can be found and we use them as part of a fun decoration in our garden path called the Walk on the Wild Side. Visitors use this path to register their marks in the “visitor`s book”.

We have extended the usual signature of a 5 cent coin to now include some art using the perlemoen shell as the canvas (or other strange findings along the beach).

I will talk about these delicacies and their impact on world trade and conservation.



But first let us show you their artistic efforts. They each decorated a shell to their own style that was attached to the branches along the pathway. In addition Mackenzie brought back from the beach this hard hat that now adorns the Wild Side.

We hope other visitors will continue this trend.



Perlemoen are an endangered species here due to their uncontrolled destruction. This trade is fuelled by the Far East seeing this marine animal as a much sort after delicacy. With prices up to \$1000/R13000 kg it is too much of a temptation for the many impoverished fishing communities along the coast. Fishing quotas are given out and many of the small local fisherman are excluded. Along come the gangs and organised crime and local divers and boat owners are sucked into the lucrative but illegal trade. The people at the bottom are paid some R20 kg with middlemen expecting R200 kg. It is not known how big the poaching is but some have it at 10 times greater than the level required for sustainability.

The Addo Elephant Park is now the third largest in SA after Kruger and Kgalagadi. Melanie had booked all 5 of us into the Forest Huts and thus we were able to explore at leisure and include the all-important evening campfire and braai.



The animals were very lively as spring seemed to have taken some kind of hold over them. Melanie took this picture of the zebra with the PC allowing a close up look. The big surprise, however, was the sight of 3 cheetahs. We mistook them for leopards but the cheetahs seem to have wandered into Addo from some adjoining game farm and made themselves at home.



A step away from travels for a moment. The **JSE** is up around 53000 after some volatile movements, with the Rand slightly stronger to the Pound being about 20.5 after falling to above 21. SA Breweries

is about to be bought out for around 1 trillion Rand which represents the country's budget for a year. It is a big SA company but the move of business and industry away from SA is shown up as Sky News refers to **SAB** as a British company. This is because it is also on the LSE where most shares are held. **Pistorius** will be released into house arrest next week but in Nov the *dolus eventualis* case will be heard that could mean more jail time. The big word here is "**transformation**" which could mean lots of different things but in our case it talks to the need for all institutions to reflect the demographics of the country. The ANC promise of free education (amongst many others) sees university students marching/rioting/confronting authorities about their right to free tertiary education in a country where the tax paying community is some 5 million and thus a tax base that is quite unable to finance the ANC promises.

Ok, got rid of that bit quickly.



Melanie had a **birthday** whilst she was here and they treated everyone to a lovely dinner at De Kelder. We had in the cupboard a bottle of French champagne and an Alto Rouge that added to the evening's fun.



A change again. I am off the two crutches but surgeon visit in a week or so will determine **hip**'s condition and perhaps more importantly the matter of bacterial contamination. Is it still there, what is it and how do we get rid of it? So no golf for me-yet.

Courtney had a birthday in Oct but before that let me refer to her band playing. Collegiate have a band that recently performed at a music festival and small sections were videoed. If you want to watch these tiny sections of Les Miserables and Rise of the Firebird , then go to the **blog**.



She has not returned to the water polo team and instead is trying her hand at squash. She had a recital/competition at the South Campus of the university and this large auditorium was most intimidating for someone trying to excite people with a solo performance of a euphonium! At the very least it was a character building moment.

The Rugby World Cup is on and this shot of Alex enjoying a braai on our patio complete with Springbok shirt shows that he would be quite at home living this life style.

I will not talk sport other than to say that the England defeat was offset a tiny bit by the Arsenal victory over Man.U.



So, back to **Courtney`s 14 th. Birthday.**



As I indicated earlier she was keen to return to the Outride for the pivotal



feature of her Birthday. Andrea organised the trail and chocolate cake from London and 4 of them set out. The weather for the 2 days of activities e.g. sleepover, horror films, dinner and swimming, was good and one or two pictures capture the event.



A full coverage is provided on the Blog that shows the horses going over the nature reserve and onto the beach. I tiny bit of video is also included.

Ok, I have mentioned the Blog a couple of times. So what is this thing and how do you access it? A good question.

With the arrival of short video clips I felt that these would bring some events to life in a way that this letter does not. A very simple Blog was set up to accommodate these clips.

You can get to it by going into the Internet and by searching for:-

aletterfromza.blogspot.com

You will find short (very short) snippets of the following:-

New Year`s Eve 2015 where we try, and fail, to take off people like Abba, Bing Crosby, Elvis and Glen Campbell.

Penguins being released from our local rehabilitation centre at SAMREC.

Courtney`s Birthday horse ride to Sardinia Bay.

Collegiate Band performance.

And so that is another good bye from me and a farewell from Bev.

Until the next time.

Alan and Bev

PS have a look at the Blog and let me know what you think.