

‘A Dream Come True’ written by Mrs Mary Heaton in 1975

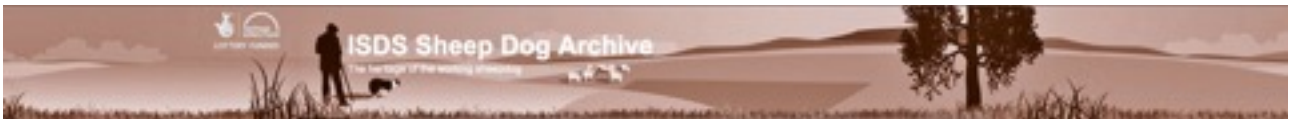
A combination of circumstances last autumn really made a dream come true for myself and husband Allan. We have been ‘going to the dogs’ for years, but never expected to travel 12,000 miles to compete in a sheepdog trial. It so happened we heard no-one was willing to travel to New Zealand to represent Great Britain in the 2nd Expo International Sheepdog Trials to be staged in Rotorua in February 1975. So, after careful consideration, numerous phone calls, permits and vaccinations, we finally secured a place on a cargo boat for our Border Collie, Mick. He left Liverpool on December 10th and we then made plans to meet up with him six weeks later in Auckland.



We have taken a great interest in the travels of our youngest son, Mark, who left England in October 1973 to work for a relief service in New Zealand, working on dairy and sheep farms on both North and South Islands. This was an opportunity to visit Mark, meet his many friends and generally have a holiday of a life-time. It took less than two days by Boeing 747 to reach Auckland, a fantastic experience. We were adjusting our watches all the time and

meal times seemed almost continuous.

In New Zealand, Mark packed us into his car, a 1958 Hillman, but still going strong (no salted roads to rot the bodywork). The boat was delayed so we visited farmers and dog handlers on the west coast of the North Island – wild rugged sheep country. New Plymouth is a lovely place, no smoke or pollution from the large Thermal Power Station. We were always welcomed into people’s houses and made to feel at home.



There was wonderful scenery around every corner, and Mount Egmont was magnificent. We travelled northwards again, passing Lake Taupo, the largest lake in New Zealand, and the Chatau range of mountains with the active volcano Ngauruhoe smouldering away in the distance. Ice-capped Mt Raupehu in the Tongariro National Park formed in 1886 when the Maori courts settled land. I've been asked whether they were backward in New Zealand, I think I am right in saying National Parks were first started here in 1955.

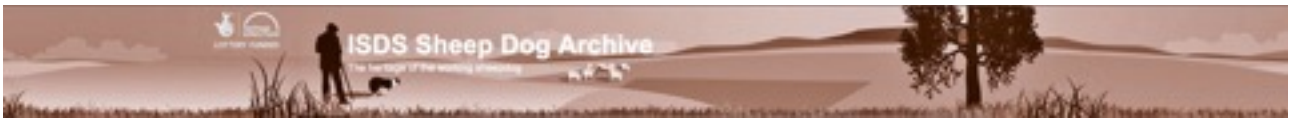


We visited the rose gardens and Anchor butter works at Te Awamutu, the dairy industry is very well organised, mostly co-operation between dairy and farmer. They are paid on butter fat percentage as most of the milk produced goes for manufacturing and exporting. A cousin of my husband farms near Whangarei and we stayed there one night, far removed from the smoke of Yorkshire – beautiful countryside, very good beaches and no winter at all. No wonder he likes it so much.

Mick, our dog, was collected on January 18th, a little overweight, but none the worse after his rough

crossing. We made for Rotorua, and the Agricultural and Pastoral Show, sheepdog trials were held in conjunction. We were delighted when Mark, with his dog Nett, 2 ½

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years old, bought in New Zealand and trained by him, took second prize at his first attempt on a New Zealand style trial course, different rules, but all very interesting. We motored around the North East coast via the Bay of Plenty, Opotiki, Hicks Bay, Tokomarn Bay, Tolaga Bay, where Captain Cook anchored in 1769, to Gisborne. We stayed on a sheep station, 500 acres sheep and beef farm, then spent four nights with a Coupworth sheep breeder near Young Nick's Head, the coastline sighted by Captain Cook's cabin boy and named after him. A lot of vines are grown in this area and some of the best crops of maize seen were here, although it is named Poverty Bay. Captain Cook asked for food for his crew and was refused. Two Maoris were killed in the conflict and Cook named it poverty Bay saying they were too poor to let him have produce – he found later it was a prosperous area but refused to rename it.



At the Expo trials, Allan and Mark just failed to qualify for the semi-finals, but we thoroughly enjoyed seeing the other dogs perform. People came to meet us, shake our hands and talk of their friends and relations 'back home'. Allan gave a very good demonstration of an English type trial to a large crowd on the Sunday afternoon after



six days of trials. Four weeks had gone by now, we had two weeks left, so hurried off down to Wellington to catch the ferry to Picton, Hilda (Mark's car) doing us proud, not stylish, but we were seeing so much and meeting so many people that it was grand to be mobile.

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We stayed at Omiki, north of Christchurch, with Phil and Millie Moss who went to New Zealand twelve years ago, and at Hinds with the Watsons, Gavin had visited us here in November and his sister Helen is coming tomorrow before she returns to New Zealand early in May. We travelled further south through Timaru, Oamaru, Palmerston, to Middlemarch. Both Allan and Mark won prizes at the hill trial on rough tussock country high on the Rock and Pillar range. On to Queenstown – a very popular holiday resort in summer, and Kingston, where an old steam- engine runs, the ‘Kingston Flyer’, which is kept in mint condition. Loads of deer pelts were travelling to be processed from the controlled shooting here.



At another dog trial at Hillend/ Awamunga near Balclutha, we had success again for both handlers in the long lead, short head and yard classes, then the long haul back up to Christchurch, flight to Auckland then back home again.

The farm had run smoothly in our absence under the management of our eldest son, Andrew. Mark is now back in England, and we can share our experiences and laugh about the funny incidents together.

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