



REPORT ON ROTARY FRIENDSHIP EXCHANGE TO D1440 DENMARK

29 May – 14 June 2009

Exchange participants:

Max & Jenny Post - Armidale AM, James and Diana Auld – Inverell, Alan & Gail Barber – Port Macquarie West, Lorraine Coffey & Denis Chellingsworth – Armidale AM, Michael & Marie de Groot – Tamworth, Terry & Chi-Too Drury – Taree, Noreida Fotheringham – Wingham, Geoff & Judy Jhonson – Port Macquarie West, Arthur & Sue Lindner – Port Macquarie on Hastings, Paul & Beverly Moran – Coffs Harbour, Alan & Elizabeth St Clair – Guyra, Claudia Stern – Coonabarabran, Ken & Nola Tyson – Dorrigo, Ray Willing & Judith Jackson – Woolgoolga, Stephen & Sue Wines – Great Lakes.

The exchange required all participants to assemble at the Copenhagen Island Hotel on the evening of 28 May. As most of the team had selected to go to the Tivoli Gardens for the evening, Ken Tyson had arranged for us to meet with Steve Pickering a member of the Danish International Rotary Club for a drink. Steve is actively involved in the Shelter box project having recently been in the UK for a meeting. He advised us of the latest developments relating to Shelter box. It was a great evening with everyone enjoying the beautiful Danish twilight and the delights of the Tivoli.

Saturday 30 May

After a great breakfast we assembled in the foyer of the hotel at 10.00 am to await the arrival of our coach. It arrived a little late but it was most pleasing to be greeted by about 15 smiling faces that we all remembered from their visit to Australia last year. Our bus driver for the exchange, Louis Judvigsen, a Rotarian who had taken 2 weeks leave to drive us around district 1440, soon had the luggage under the bus and we were away on our adventure. We travelled through the Island of Zealand and then over a very long toll bridge to the Island of Funan and then to Odense. Our first visit of the exchange was most appropriate, the home of Hans Christian Andersen, Denmark's beloved poet, author and artist. We had lunch of rolls and a drink at a roadside park and then the journey continued to Louis' hometown for afternoon coffee and Danish pastries which was provided by Louis' wife and Scout members in their Scout Hall. We presented Louis with a dozen fine Australian reds as a thank you for him driving us. We then continued on to Grenaa for our meeting with the first group of hosts where we arrived at approximately 6.00 pm. Our first evening was with our hosts in their homes.

Sunday 31 May

- Our day started at 8.30am with only one couple a few minutes late.
- Sightseeing at the Overgaard Estate - The main building was built in 1545 but today is only lived in a few weeks each year. We drove in the bus around the estate having morning tea on a levy bank that is part of the reclamation of land that had enlarged the estate to its present size. We returned to the main house for a lovely lunch prepared by the Randers-East Rotary Club.
- Randers Tropical Zoo – This attraction is similar to the Eden Project albeit much smaller. There was a good selection of tropical plants providing natural habitat for the animals. We all then walked to a reclaimed wetland area behind the zoo to





view what can be done to reclaim farmland and to bring it back to its original state.

- Our first Rotary meeting was an evening meeting with the Randers-East Rotary Club where we had a lovely meal and a sing a long. All clubs seem to have a songbook on the tables for each meeting.
- An evening with our hosts.

Monday 1 June

- Another 8.30am start again with one couple late but not the same ones as yesterday.
- Also church - 500 years old and built on the same site as a previous church some 1000 years before. The churches are all painted white and are immaculately maintained. Svend advised that if a member of the community is a church member a government tax is levied and this tax goes to the upkeep of the church. The interior was beautiful with a highly decorated pulpit and organ. The cemetery in the churchyard was beautiful as were all the cemeteries we saw.
- A wonderful surprise, a visit to the parents of Anne Katrine, a YEP student who had spent 2008-09 with Armidale Central. Most people on the tour knew Anne Katrine and were delighted to meet her parents, Susan and Niels Peter, at their marvellous beach house. We were provided with champagne, strawberries and fruit for morning refreshments.
- Glass museum Ebeltoft - A remarkable collection of the most stunning glass pieces.
- Fregatlengyund Boat Museum – We had lunch at the museum and then toured the frigate Jylland, the largest wooden ship in the world. This ship saw active service in previous wars and is now in dry dock. Susan and Niels Peter joined us for lunch.
- Mols Mountain National Park – This Park is located in the southern part of Djursland, and was formed by glacial action.
- Grenaa to have an evening with our hosts. After dinner Jenny and I were driven to the coast to view a fantastic sunset whilst having a coffee. On our way home saw a herd of Crown deer that are very prevalent in that part of Denmark.

Tuesday 2 June

- This morning everyone was on time. Louis' practice of leaving on time is working.
- Old Windmill, (Baunhoj Molle), Grenaa - This is a prominent landmark and can be seen as you approach the town. The old mill dates from 1849 but burnt down in 2002. The present mill was constructed in 2005 at a cost of 11 million Kroner. A working windmill, the building is also used for art exhibitions and musical recitals.
- Kattagatcenter – An impressive marine park where we saw sharks being fed by hand albeit in a chain mail glove.
- Grenaa Rotary Club, for a lunch meeting. We gave our presentation for the first time. Alan gave the vote of thanks as I was unable to speak owing to a very sore throat.





- Walking tour of Grenaa where we saw many lovely old buildings and cobbled streets. Paul then took the people with a health problem to a pharmacist where we tried to obtain the necessary medications for our illnesses.
- The final night with our Grenaa hosts - We were guests of the members of the Grenaa and Grenaa Vestre Rotary Clubs at an old hotel. We were treated to some wonderful music from some members of the Grenaa Blaeserne Concert Band. The meal was magnificent and a great evening was had by all present. Michael and his host gave an impromptu performance on the flute and piano. I thanked all concerned for a wonderful four days and for the generous hospitality that we had received.

Wednesday 3 June

- A sad farewell with our hosts in Grenaa and it was on the bus for the next part of our journey.
- Billund and Legoland - Bruno Anderson who had arranged this part of our trip accompanied us on the bus. On our arrival at Billund we were taken to the Legoland complex and were given a guided tour of the new products, yet to be released, and of the museum. We were all presented with a gift pack of Lego bricks to commemorate our visit.
- Smorgasbord lunch in a hotel near Legoland.
- Legoland theme park - Our entrance fees were donated by the park. We had about two and a half hours at the park and many took the opportunity to ride the roller coaster and other interesting rides. Some got wet and used the drying cabinets to dry off. Many took the opportunity to visit the Lego store to make purchases for grandchildren.
- Thisted, and a new set of hosts. Arrangements were in place and we were soon on our way to our new home for the next four days.

Thursday 4 June

- Tican pig abattoir - This facility slaughters up to 33,000 pigs per week. We were given a presentation and then invited to tour the facility. All took the opportunity to take the tour except yours truly although I was soon joined by a lady from Coonabarabran. Tican generously provided lunch for the team.
- Opticon, manufacturer of hearing aids. Opticon is a major supplier of hearing aids in Europe and prides itself on the service provided to customers. Women carry out most of the intricate work. This was a heavy day for lunches as the Company again provided us with lunch.
- Walking tour of Thisted - We toured some of the old portion of the town and saw what equates to the Danish version of allotments. We visited the local museum, which had a wonderful display of Stone Age implements and sociological exhibits.
- Evening with hosts.



Friday 5 June

- Tved Church - This was another white painted church with the usual immaculately kept cemetery.
- Thy National Park - This was an area of sand dunes that had been stabilised with trees and was now a dense forest. We then visited another section on the coast where it was blowing a gale but the sail boarders were having a great time.
- Hanstholm WWII Bunker Museum - The Hanstholm Rotary Club provided our lunch and we then toured the establishment. The bunker was built by the Danes for the Germans and housed a 38cm bore gun that could fire an 800kg shell 55 kms. The gun was on a turntable and, while fired for practice, was never fired at the allies.
- Black Houses - These buildings are painted black and were part of an old fishing community. They are unique in Denmark and are now used by the community for social functions. We were treated to a wonderful meal and then an entertaining display of Danish songs and folk dancing. This was followed by an 'American Auction' where each couple 'donated' 100 kroner to enter and then numbers were drawn to identify the winners. The Australians won several prizes and we all had a great evening's entertainment.

Saturday 6 June

- Nykobing Harbour and Marine Centre - We assembled at the harbour before taking a short ferry ride to the Shellfish Marine Centre where they are experimenting with research in mussels and oysters. The town was having a festival so we all dispersed to have lunch in groups or individually. It was a lovely hot day and the festive atmosphere in the town was great.
- Free afternoon.
- Final evening in Thisted – This event was hosted by the three Rotary Clubs. Another magnificent meal with a full spit roasted pig. We did our presentation again with mixed success (AV problems) and Sue Wines conducted our vocal presentation.

Sunday 7 June

- Departure from Thisted - Many sad faces as some great friendships had been established.
- Bygholm Vejle - This is a bird wildlife park with wonderful facilities for bird watching and beautiful scenery.
- Lakes of Bratbjerg - On the way to this stop we called into a small village where they haul their fishing boats up on the sand at the end of each fishing trip. The boats are hauled on to the beach using steel cables and a D50 tractor. We then stopped at the Lakes of Bratbjerg for lunch generously provided by the Rotary Club of Fjerritslev. It was in a community hut where if you require the use of the building you simply write your name on the list and the time and day required. From the Lakes we drove towards Hjørring and on the way Louis mentioned that we would drive on the beach. Most thought that this involved a scenic drive by the beach but, no, the road finished at the beach so we drove in a 25 tonne bus for some kilometres along the beach. Claudia was sitting in the front seat, asleep, so





we woke her and the first thing she saw was sand and water and she said 'Oh my God' but then proceeded to enjoy the drive.

- Hjorring - At our arrival at Hjorring we were met again by the smiling faces of our hosts and again given a very warm welcome.
- Evening with hosts.

Monday 8 June

- Church of Raabjerg and the Dune of Raabjerg - We met this morning at another white painted church again dating back to about the 14th -15th century. We had a short drive before arriving at the dunes. This huge, moving sand dune is listed on the National Register and is moving about 15 metres a year. There was a great view from the summit of the dune and then a ten-minute stroll down to the kiosk where we were greeted by our hosts who had provided morning coffee and Danish pastries and 'medicine'. A lot of our party had been introduced to 'Dr Nielsen' earlier in the tour but some had not. It is schnapps based with additives and it seems to be offered at most meals. Definitely an acquired taste, but enjoyable, and something that caused much merriment within the tour group.
- Skagen Museum - This was a very interesting museum with many great paintings by local artists from the 19th and 20th century. Lunch was in a waterfront restaurant owned by a Rotarian. After lunch many walked around this very picturesque town with its yellow ochre painted buildings.
- Grenen - This is the top of Denmark where the North Sea meets the Kattegat. We travelled to the point by a transporter called a Lugworm hauled by a big tractor but our group walked back to the bus along the beach. It was a stunning day with lovely sunshine and little breeze.
- Meeting with Hjorring Rotary Club, Vendia Brewery – We were again honoured by this Rotary Club with a delightful meal of duck and then treated to a wonderful musical presentation by two of their members playing piano and clarinet. Sue again conducted the 'choir' with some Australian songs. Lorraine gave the vote of thanks. We then adjourned to the brewery on the ground floor for some liquid refreshments.

Tuesday 9 June

- Art Gallery of Vendsyssel – We saw an exhibition of jewellery and other items at this wonderful Gallery. (I missed most of this as I went with Per to the Post Office to pick up my replacement credit cards).
- Walking tour of Hjorring – We did a guided tour through the town with Rotarian Kjeld Bjerg who had designed the fountains etc. in the square. A highlight of this morning was a visit to the church of St Catherine where we were all treated to a brilliant organ recital by Rotarian Michael Austin playing works by Bach, Wesley and Widor.
- Morning 'medicine' at Rotarian Jens and Grethe Abildgaard - Jens and Grethe live in a heritage building in the 'old' section of the town, probably four or five hundred years old. We were treated to wine, soft drinks and 'medicine' with strawberries and chips. A delightful interlude and a great finale to our morning's activities.
- Historical Museum of Vendsyssel – We had a short talk by a guide at the museum and learnt about some of the famous and infamous members of the community.





Lunch was in a marquee in the grounds of the museum. We then looked through the out buildings and saw displays of old carts, tools etc.

- Borglund via Sonderlev, Lonstrup and the ruins of the church at Marup – Here the sea is eroding the sandy cliffs and it is anticipated that in a short time the church will tumble into the sea. It was decommissioned a number of years ago and now only a shell of the church and the cemetery survive. About one kilometre away was a lighthouse that was being engulfed by a sand dune. We then travelled to the Monastery of Borglund, which has been a monastic building in some form since the 13th century. We toured the chapel and then the very impressive museum that has been created in the out buildings. From there we walked across the road to the old blacksmith's building that is now a restaurant. We were treated to what was probably the most different and wonderful middle ages meal any of us has ever experienced. A young female folksinger provided a light musical interlude during the meal.

Wednesday 10 June

- Departure from Hjørring - We said our farewells in the rain but we knew we would see most people in a few days at our final farewell.
- Visit to view The Lady of the Sea, a new sculpture, but we stayed in the bus owing to the rain.
- Voergaard Castle – This is a Renaissance castle dating from 1586. We had a guided tour of the castle that has a most impressive collection of European art and furnishings. It has been run by a trust since the owner died ten years ago.
- Harbour of Asaa – We were hosted for lunch by the Rotary Club of Dronninglund in a room with a great view of the harbour. The meal was magnificent but the main attraction was that it was served by some of the Rotarians dressed as waiters. The club has a group of its members who hire themselves out as waiters for functions. They did an excellent job.
- Museums around the harbour – There was a great little museum that is about fifty years old and has a wonderful collection of items relating to the fishing industry. Items range from a full cabin from a fishing boat to jerkins made out of albatross feathers. An 80 something year old sailor was repairing a fishing net by hand and he did not wear glasses.
- Arrival at Aalborg – We were greeted with smiles and good cheer at the White House Hotel by Svend and his band of hosts.

Thursday 11 June

- Utzon Centre – We assembled at the Utzon Centre, which commemorates the achievements of Jorn Utzon who grew up in Aalborg. It is a building of sweeping ceilings and curves and is reminiscent of the Sydney Opera House but with a minimalist interior. Within the building was a large exhibition of paintings by his daughter, Lin Utzon, who was once married to an Australian.
- City walk – From the Utzon Centre we walked through the picturesque streets of Aalborg seeing a lot of old and some new forms of architecture. We visited an old monastery, Helligandsklostret, which is now an old peoples' home. The buildings date from 1461 and there are portions of the original structure that are still in use, some of the rooms still had original frescos on the walls and ceilings.





- Civic Reception at the City Hall - We were honoured to be given a civic reception by the city of Aarlborg in the Civic Chamber. The Deputy Mayor, Neils Bell, made a speech welcoming us to the city and then invited us to take lunch with him and other city officials. The reception was organised by Ms Anni G. Walther, Director of Administrative Services, who is also a Rotarian. Before leaving we were all presented with a small bottle of Schnapps and a picture book of the city.
- Aagaarden Retirement Home – This retirement home in the middle of the city is a part of the social services network of Denmark. Staff explained how old folk or the homeless gain access to the facility. We were provided with afternoon tea and then toured the building, meeting some of the residents in their rooms.
- Evening with hosts.

Friday 12 June

- Siemens Windpower – It was a wet day but luckily we were transported to the front door of the factory. The Siemens Company makes the blades for the wind turbines that can be seen all over Denmark. The blades are 49 metres long and are made of resin, fibreglass and balsa wood and are huge when seen up close. The factory can produce up to 70 blades per week. Both males and females are employed building the blades.
- Gabriel – This Company produces fabric for office furniture. It is a very progressive organization, which has transferred the dying of the fabric from Aarlborg to Latvia and has transformed the old dying mill into a modern office and display area. We were given lunch before a tour of the facility.
- Rebild National Park – Danish Americans who had made good in the migration to America in the mid 1800's established the park. The area is used to commemorate 4th July each year with prominent Americans returning to celebrate the occasion.
- Farewell Dinner – We were the guests of all our hosts who had travelled to be with us on the final night of our exchange. We were treated to a wonderful meal in a forest setting and it was just wonderful to see most of our hosts again for a final time. There was much wine and beer to help with the celebrations. It had earlier been decided by our group that we would use some of our slush fund to make a donation to our wonderful friends and to District 1440. DG Finn Munk was in attendance so he was called forward. On behalf of the exchange team I made a presentation to DG Finn of 4000 Kroner (approx \$1000) to put into a project of the District's choosing, to much applause. We had also taken up a collection for Louis, our wonderful bus driver, and the presentation was to thank him for his friendship, great driving and for being a great bloke. Ken Tyson made a small speech and then Paul Moran and Judy Jhonson provided some light entertainment. The choir performed again under the baton of Sue Wines and the evening concluded with 'Auld Lang Syne' on the gravel courtyard, followed by much hugging.

Saturday 13 June

Today was spent with individual hosts, shopping, sightseeing or both.



In conclusion I would like to thank the Friendship Exchange Committee for nominating me to lead the exchange to District 1440. I was apprehensive at the time of selection because of the size of the group but everyone fitted in extremely well. It has been a fantastic exchange and no problems were encountered other than Lorraine damaging her ankle and about six of the team succumbing to a throat virus. The Rotarians of District 1440 were wonderful hosts who have provided everyone with a first class experience and Svend and his team are to be congratulated for organising such a terrific itinerary.

Many, many thanks to Claudia for all the hard work she put into our presentation. It was unfortunate that the electronic equipment did not work properly all the time but it did work well for our final night when almost everyone concerned was in attendance.

At the conclusion of the exchange Jenny and I took the opportunity to visit Anja and Bing Tan in Valkeakoski, in Finland. Bing and Anja hosted us on the exchange to Finland in 2006, while Lorraine and Denis visited Mina, a former YEP student of Armidale AM. Lorraine had been Mina's counsellor while she was with the Club. While we were with Bing and Anja we were told that Matti Wall's wife Vokka and Anja were sisters so we were thrilled when Matti and Vokka came to dinner one night together with Ms Sirkka Mattila who also looked after Jenny and me. Sirkka invited us to a District Changeover that proved to be very interesting particularly as we could not understand a word of Finnish.

Lorraine, Denis, Claudia, Jenny and I attended the 100th Rotary Convention in Birmingham, UK. The convention was a wonderful experience with inspiring speakers such as the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, Mia Farrow and Jane Goodall. The entertainment was wonderful as was the home hosting night. The Rotary Club of Ellon, near Aberdeen in Scotland in District 1010, hosted Jenny and me. The club hired a hotel in Meridan, just out of Birmingham and invited about eighty guests. We were treated to bagpipes and haggis and the usual several drams followed by a wonderful meal. Members of the Club then performed some musical items and the evening concluded with two Rotarians being awarded Paul Harris Fellowships.

Jenny and I then toured England and Scotland for a month and took the opportunity to visit friends who had hosted us on the Cornwall 2001 and Scotland 2007 exchanges.

Thank you again.

Max Post

23 September 2009

