

**2/7/13 - Day 32 – Auckland, New Zealand :** We had heard and read about the community of Devonport which is a suburb located across the harbor from Auckland. It was described as a charming village with well preserved homes and shops, many of them retaining the architecture of the 1850 – 1900 time period when they were built. We teamed up with our friends, Roy and Gayle and left the Amsterdam about 9am. Our plan was to take the Auckland to Devonport commuter ferry boat that ran to and from the ferry building located had the head of Queens Wharf where the Amsterdam was docked. We bought round trip ferry boat tickets for \$11 NZ (\$9 USD) each and caught the 9:15am ferry boat.

As we neared Devonport we could turn and look back toward Auckland and take in the beauty of that city in the bright morning light.



With regard to Devonport, we could see the town in the distance from the decks of the Amsterdam but couldn't make out any detail. Now after about a 15 minute ride we arrived at the ferry terminal of Devonport and had our first good view of the city, as show in the picture below.



There was a pleasing contrast between the shining glass and steel sky scrapers of Auckland and the modest wooden buildings of Devonport. Rising above Devonport in the background was the extinct volcano, Mount Victoria that has been preserved in an undeveloped condition as a park. Today we would take a leisurely stroll around the base of Mount Victoria and in the process get a close-up view of the quiet, neat and orderly neighborhoods of Devonport which encircle the mountain.

We walked through the ferry terminal building toward the entrance but stopped for a moment to check out a bit of technology we hadn't seen before. What we were looking at was a drinking fountain that had additional spouts that could be used to fill water bottles that nearly everybody carries nowadays. We had seen them in Auckland and assumed there was a coin slot somewhere to activate the system. It turns out the water to fill your water bottle is as free as the water that you drink from the standard looking drinking spout. We thought it was a nice facility to have in a public place like this.



Leaving the ferry terminal we crossed the street and found a Visitor's Information Office. We stopped in to ask about recommended places to see in Devonport.



The attendant was very friendly and helpful. She gave us a map of Devonport showing a walking route that would take us through interesting neighborhoods and by significant buildings that were identified on the map. Facing the challenge of some structure in our random plan of attack, our adventuresome team held a strategy meeting. We quickly decided that following the map route was a good idea and got moving.

Gayle Roy      Orlin

We began our exploration by walking east along the bay on King Edward Parade Street. We had gone about a block when we came across the Devonport Public Library. Seizing the opportunity, Barbara documented the visit of her little yellow library card to Devonport, New Zealand, as shown on the right.





Nearby was a park where we saw a huge Banyan tree with its beautifully sculptured root structure, as shown below.



We proceeded along King Edward Parade Street. On our right was the bay with the city of Auckland sparkling in the distance. On our left were a series of neat and tidy old mansions with well trimmed hedges and lawns. The following selection of photos shows some of the marvelous old homes we saw as we strolled along well kept streets around the base of Mount Victoria in a counterclockwise direction.

After a few blocks we turned left into a side street that took us past many proud looking old homes and around the base of Mount Victoria.



We were constantly reminded of how much Devonport resembled the relaxed and sedate appearance of Coronado, near San Diego, California.





This well kept old cemetery was part of one neighborhood we visited.



The mail boxes that were in front of some homes attracted our attention. Many of them had a prominent sign posted that rejected the receipt of “Junk Mail” or “Circulars” as shown in the photos below.



We were curious about the way this request was handled in their postal system and wondered if a similar approach might be possible in the US where our mailbox sees much more junk mail than personal letters.

Later, we asked an official Tourist Information lady about the “No Junk Mail” signs and she gave a surprising description of the system. It turns out that New Zealand has two mail systems. One is the government run postal service that moves mail that is sent for private or personal business reasons and the other postal service is a private enterprise that only handles commercial advertisements or stuff we call “junk mail”. She said the private enterprise postal people are not supposed to deposit their goods into mail boxes marked with the “No Junk Mail” or “No Circulars” signs.



We completed our trek through the residential neighborhoods around the base of Mount Victoria and headed into the shopping district along Victoria Street. At this point there was a road leading up to the top of Mount Victoria and Orlin decided to make a quick trip to the peak while the rest of the team did a shopping tour of downtown Devonport. Taking the camera along on this short 45 minute detour we got the following pictures.



On the right is the unimpressive top of Mount Victoria.



The mountain peak did provide a nice view to the south with Auckland on the across the harbor.

All of the views showed well ordered neighborhoods spreading out from the foot of Mount Victoria, as in this picture on the right..



The early Maori tribes had defensive forts on top of Mount Victoria. The European settlers continued the practice. This gun emplacement is what remains of Fort Victoria that was built in 1885 to protect the colony from possible attack by Russian forces.

With this mountain climbing adventure now complete (fortunately without triggering a heart attack) Orlin retreated to the shopping team down on Victoria Street.



The main attraction here was wool yarn and fabrics as well as jewelry made with paua shells. Paua shell, which looks like abalone shell, is a popular form of jewelry in New Zealand and is a “must” for the active tourist. Gayle and Barbara browsed through some of the jewelry and clothing stores that offered their goods from charming store fronts that were over 100 years old.





We found a fascinating decoration intended to draw attention to wool knit goods for sale. Some clever people with knitting skills had made strips of colorful fabric that were tightly stretched around some of the steel poles holding up the awnings in front of the stores. Some examples are shown below.



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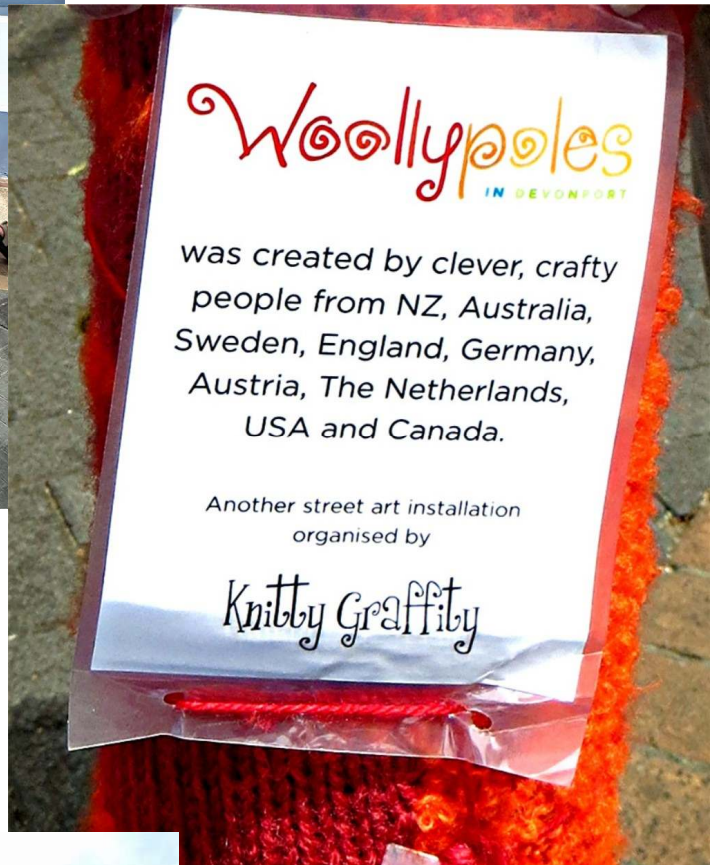
In this view shown below most of the city block had the decorated poles.







There were tags on some of the poles giving some explanation of the source of this whimsical decoration. In the picture on the left Barbara is pointing to the tag that is shown below.



Eventually it was time to return to Auckland. From the shopping area we made our way to the ferry boat landing. At the landing was a gentleman offering rides in his fine carriage pulled by a wonderful team of Clydesdale horses.



We could visualize ourselves riding proudly in this rig while these mighty horses clipped clopped through Old Devonport. However, as attractive as this ride looked, we turned it down and continued into the ferry boat landing.

Here are the happy tourists ready to board the ferry boat and return to Auckland.

We were quickly returned to the Ferry Building in Auckland. Roy and Gayle decided to call it a day at that point but we decided to take in the nearby “America’s Cup Village” before making our final return to the Amsterdam.



It seemed like every tour leader and shop keeper in Auckland would bring up some comment about the New Zealand effort to win the America’s Cup. The New Zealand team was preparing an entry for the upcoming races and we hoped that we might see the boat in the harbor. We walked out to the end of the America’s Cup Village that is near where the Amsterdam was moored at Queens Wharf. At one point we walked over a bridge that is frequently raised and lowered to allow the yachts to come and go through with their tall masts. We caught one of the passages in the picture below.



Here on the left a yacht passes through the opening created by raising the bridge. The ever-present Sky Tower in the background brands this event as taking place in Auckland.

Alas, we were not successful in sighting the New Zealand entry for the America’s Cup Race. We trudged back to the Amsterdam

after a full day of sight seeing.

The Amsterdam got underway about 6pm and headed for Tauranga, New Zealand where we will arrive tomorrow morning.