

Dear friend

Every year the days, weeks and months seem to pass by quicker and quicker. So here we are at the end of another one. 2008 has been pretty good, and busy as usual.

At the start of the year, inspired by Hospitality Clubber and now dear friend, Nicolai (who is cycling around the world), I cycled 400 km around Kangaroo Island with Jay, a new friend via Couchsurfing.

It's amazing how getting around solely using your own energy, and being close to the earth, can fill you with a sense of fulfillment and peace. I'd really love to do more cycle touring, but (as here comes my favourite catch-phrase :) "No time!"

This year was an Adelaide Festival year so in Feb/March I went to around 20 live shows (comedy, theatre, dance, music) and soaked up some culture. A high-

light was 'Sacred Monsters' (on my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday), a dance performance by Akram Khan & Sylvie Guillem. If you ever get the chance to see them, do. Even if you don't like dance, you'll be in awe.

Last year I wrote a list of things to do before I die, and this year I managed to cross two things off. 1) Shave my head (to raise money for a charity). My friend Heath planted the seed that 2008 could be the year for this. We both registered for the Leukaemia Foundation's World's Greatest Shave, and on 14<sup>th</sup> March we lost our locks (mine were considerably longer than Heath's) in front of about 100 of my work colleagues plus a few family & friends. Through the generosity of these people (and

possibly you!) I managed to raise over \$5000 for the cause. I donated my ~30cm ponytail to a wigmaker to use to make wigs for people who have lost their hair through illness or alopecia.

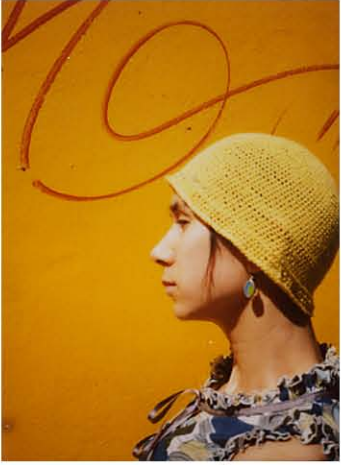
In May I headed north to Darwin for the first time in 15 years, for primary school friend Monique's wedding to Ben. I couchsurfed with a wonderful girl, Lari, and had the most relaxing holiday ever.

Back at work I was busy preparing to chair a meeting of Australian & New Zealand forensic document examiners (Melbourne, June). This group is supposed to identify critical issues and implement methods to improve the field nationally. At the same time I gave a seminar at La Trobe Uni as part of the process to convert my Masters to PhD. This went well and while I'm still awaiting paperwork from Uni, I'm pretty sure I'm now a doctoral candidate. My research is going well, although finding time

enough to dedicate to it is difficult. I have gathered a lot of data investigating whether forensic handwriting experts (that's me!) have a skill for identifying disguised handwriting when compared to laypeople (they do). Now I need to analyse and write up my findings. I presented some results at a conference in Melbourne in Oct. & submitted my first article to a journal. Still waiting to hear from them...

I have been fortunate this year in winning funding from various sources for my professional development. I was able to attend the Melb. conference thanks to a full travel award from the National Branch of the Australian & New Zealand Forensic Science Society. In the second half of the year I also became President of the SA Branch of the Society (after years as secretary).

In August I headed over to France, to begin 7 weeks away, and catch up with Philippe, Stephane & Nicolas, who stayed at my place last year (my first reciprocal guest/host experience :)). Switzerland was next, for the International Conference on Forensic





Inference and Statistics (funded by my employer). The statistics went mostly over my head, but there were interesting presentations on evidence interpretation. Next I spent 3 1/2 weeks in Iceland (the second thing to cross of my list: spend more time in Iceland). I stayed with a couple of very kind Icelanders: Benedikt and Birgir, hung out with Darwinite Lavi on a tiny island off the south coast, got familiar with the cafe culture of Reykjavik (including a Björk sighting) and saw a lot of the amazing country.

So many highlights, but again the sense of accomplishment and being close to the earth was felt on a 60 km, 4-day hike through the interior, which I did with four super-friendly French people. In fact, the experiences I had in France and with French people this year, coupled with plans to return there next year, have motivated me to try to learn French now - as if I don't have enough to keep me busy!



After Iceland, I went to the Netherlands for just 2 days to visit the lab, and then on to Ireland (with associated random but amazing couchsurfing experiences) for the European Document Experts Working Group conference (funded by the National Institute of Forensic Science). It's always nice to be surrounded by people you have things in common with, especially when they're as friendly and open as the European Forensic Document Examiners.



Rose  
←  
Pip  
→



I continue to volunteer at the Animal Welfare League and in July decided to increase my family to include a pair of sister tabby-tortois: Pip and Rose. It took a while for Suzy to adjust (and she's still not 100% comfortable with them), but the girls have settled in well and make me laugh with their kiddy-kitty antics (they are about 15 months old now).

Niece Kayla has just turned two and seems to really like me 😊 She can say my name (Cow-lin) and likes to take my hand to lead me around the place, instructing me how to play. Such a sweetie! The rest of the family is happy and healthy too, and I try to see them all almost weekly.

Couchsurfing also remains quite a big part of my life, having hosted 20 people and stayed with 8 this year, as well as meeting handfuls more both in Adelaide and overseas. I love how small it makes the world - friends everywhere!

Plans for the coming year include trying to focus more on my research and perhaps giving a workshop at the European Academy of Forensic Science meeting (peep!) prior to travelling to France for another conference, and some rest & relaxation in the South (hopefully speaking a little French!).

I hope you experience some peace on earth this season.

Much love, Carolyne.

P.S. This year's card is shamelessly inspired by the paper cuts of Rob Ryan.

