

Reflections on our new life.

We never really planned to be small holding hobby farmers in Tasmania. It just sort of morphed into being. There we were, living in the hot climate of the Pilbara in North Western Australia, one of us in the Medical field, the other in the Marine towage industry. Came time I knew that I was ready for a different life in a different place. But Brian wasn't ready. We had land in Tasmania, spotted in 2001 as a real bargain, and indeed it was, but the longer we had it the more we realised we wanted to live on the water's edge, not atop a hill with sweeping vistas - and wind and rain and cold. We knew we didn't want to live in WA because that would mean we'd settle into a comfort zone surrounded by family and friends, and we wanted to face some new challenges, to extend our life experiences. There was a vague idea of 6 months in Australia and 6 months in the northern hemisphere on regular rotations. With friends in Tasmania, and the prospect of 4 very distinct seasons to enjoy we looked for some riverside property and found just the place. The idea was to commute as Brian kept working but after the first swing I was hooked and stayed to work on our bit of land while Brian commuted back to the Pilbara. There was heaps of wire to dig out of neglected paddocks, fencing to remove, replace and renew; tyres and rubbish to dig out of gullies and creeks, the outdoor physical activity was just what I was looking for.

Then it was obvious we needed a cow to eat some of the grass, and that cow calved. And aw, they were so cute we got another couple, and then they had babies. So we had 10 cattle. Then I saw a pair of alpaca wethers and they came along to eat the grass the cows didn't get to. They were so cute we got two females and now we have 9 alpacas, with 2 more on the way. Then our son moved to inner city Sydney and so his 2 adorable cats joined us. So now our isolated little small holding had animals galore, had become a drop-in centre for family and friends who came to check us out - had we really gone feral!!! - and we came to know our neighbours and make many new friendships. So now we had a strong community network, were into animal husbandry and had acquired many new skills. The idea of beetling off every 6 months faded away as our community involvement grew.

The first 18 months the extensive garden, the learning to handle stock, learning to manage paddocks etc, mopped up our time, but as these things came under control windows of time opened up for yet new experiences. Mountains to walk, rivers to explore, Gym classes to indulge in and my kayak - so familiar with the oceans off WA - came out of mothballs to skim over the rivers and oceans of Tasmania.

Then - shearing time. OH, all that FIBRE!!!! A resource I just had to use, no way could I leave it bagged and piled up in the shed. So off to find a spinner's group - and just the one popped up - Kingston SpinKnits nurtured my fumbling attempts and soon I was spinning away revelling in my alpaca fibre. Now I spin dog, goat, rabbit, yak, qiviut, alpaca, sheep, silk, baling twine; I dye, I felt, I weave - I wonder how I ever lived without fibre in my life.

We've always been great travellers and managed a trip together to North America last year, (2009) but I really did miss our land and stock. Brian has managed 3 international trips since we moved here 4 years ago, but my journeys away are generally shorter. I'm fitter and stronger now we live on the land; we eat better, we drink pure rain water and breathe cleaner air. It's All Good.

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