

Hello Everyone,

Around the middle of every July I find myself thinking about old Nyasaland/Malawi friends, and of course it's because I am still expecting to see you all at the annual reunion. I just can't get out of that habit! Usually these thoughts occur during the damp, foggy Faroese summer, but this year we found ourselves in Denmark where, like most of Europe, we experienced cloudless blue skies and high temperatures - although not as high as those reported in England. The reason for this was that Jens Kristian - also sometimes known as "the Viking" - was diagnosed with prostate cancer in March and referred to the Danish Cancer Hospital in Aalborg, Northern Jutland, for eight weeks of radiotherapy treatment.



We were lucky enough to be offered a compact student apartment for almost all of that time. I have to say that when I was a student in 1979, all we got was a tiny bedroom with shared showers and lavatories on each floor, took breakfast and an evening meal in a canteen and had no technology to speak of - I think we had two sockets in the rooms so it was a toss up whether the bedside light, radio-cassette player or kettle was on! I believe I saved most of my laundry to take home at half-terms. These digs were positively luxurious by comparison - a bedroom and bathroom off a living room which boasted a kitchenette at one end and balcony at the other and, of course, no modern student can survive without the internet or a smart TV. Within the complex there were study rooms, a launderette with tumble driers and a gym!

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Jens Kristian's treatment took place every weekday, usually at eight in the morning. The apartment was a fifteen minute drive from the hospital and the appointment would be over by quarter past eight so after that we established a very convenient routine - he dropped me off at a large sports complex where I swam for an hour, and then walked back to the apartment which took half an hour. Unfortunately, he couldn't join me for a swim as his immunity was affected by the treatment, but he used this time to work remotely. (Some of you may not know that he left Air Greenland last autumn and started working for the Faroese national airline, Atlantic Airways, this spring. In fact he got the job and the diagnosis in the same week, so a bit of a Curate's Egg.)

In the afternoons we took advantage of being in Aalborg, which is Denmark's fourth largest city. It's not particularly attractive, which is unusual for Denmark, as it is quite industrial on the outskirts and the centre is overwhelmed by tall apartment blocks, but there are lots of murals painted on many of the buildings and it does have a nice waterside area where there were lots of tall ships one week. It was great to have a big variety of shops and to have really fresh fruit and vegetables whenever we wanted them (in the Faroes we get a weekly delivery.... not good by the end of the week). There are also various museums, galleries and events in the city so we had plenty of choice. One evening we drove out to the coast and admired 500 classic cars which were having a get together on a beach (you can drive on the beaches in Denmark). We spent one especially hot afternoon on the yacht of a Faroese friend who lives on a Marina there, and another on a beautiful

campsite where Danish friends live for six months of every year. And we had a couple of cracking days out, one at a labyrinthine complex of Chalk Caverns and one at the Jungle Zoo which is made of a series of temperature controlled domes (a bit like the Eden Project) where there are insects, birds and animals from jungle areas of various continents.



We were free at weekends. Many Scandinavians have summer houses, and we went to one belonging to a cousin of Jens Kristian twice. It was right on the east coast and quite breezy, which was a relief as both those weekends were very hot. Another weekend passed on the western coast of Jutland where one of Jens Kristian's family had a party. He had put up a marquee and it was so windy there that we half expected it to be carried off into the night! We also had a weekend in Copenhagen where we went to an IMAX cinema and caught up with more friends and family. I did have a couple of weekends back in the Faroes when some friends of mine came - they had arranged their trip before we knew about the treatment - so it was good to check the mail box and make sure the house was OK.

On one of the flights home, the plane was completely full and I was travelling stand-by. Imagine my surprise when they strapped me into the cockpit for the duration! Even more disconcerting - there was thick fog over the Faroes and we were circling for twenty minutes, then made a descent into what seemed like never-ending cloud. A disembodied electronic voice was reading out the altitude, like a speaking clock: two thousand five hundred, two thousand.... We got all the way to five hundred before I could see the runway lights ahead - and I still don't know whether we flew in over the lake or over the fjord which are the only possible approaches, because I never saw any land until we touched down. And yes, I did have my eyes open! (I was born in Blantyre, but my parents were stationed in Mzuzu at the time so, at five days old Dot brought me home in a Beaver. Apparently the pilot didn't look at me until they stopped halfway, and he was horrified. Small babies shouldn't fly very high. "Good God, " he said, " keep watching her. I'll follow the road and if she turns blue, let me know and I'll land on it!" Well, I didn't turn blue, and as my mother often remarked, I've been travelling ever since, so it was an auspicious start to my life!)

We are now both safely home. The doctor seemed very pleased with Jens Kristian who has suffered very few side effects so far and is already back at work. We won't know how successful the radiotherapy has been for three months, but the prognosis is good.

All that remains for me to say in this update is that I think of you, and all our missing members, often and am truly grateful for the endurance of friendships forged on foreign shores. Hoping this finds you well and happy.

Love, Vanessa

(Daughter of Doug and Dot Farmery)

28th August 2026