

Right, where were we. Ahh winter, I remember, we had just got back from some winter sun in Brisbane, well its spring now if you are in the southern hemisphere.

Pretty much as soon as we got back we set of for another instalment of Steph's birthday present. Last year I bought Steph a knitting machine and at the time I knew that it was a tricky device to operate. And indeed so it proved to be Steph did manage to produce knitting, but it was taking ages and she needed to continually repair dropped stiches. Also after about 50 rows she was just unable to hold the cloth together. So, not ideal. I had a look around and found what looked like a friendly group who looked as though they could help. They held knitting weekends where they would get together to help each other, so fingers crossed that they would help a newbie.

The group was in New Plymouth, which is about 4 hours north of here. So we loaded up the camper van



and set off for the weekend. We were staying in the middle of nowhere, in a big drafty hall. I was there as a non-



knitter so I scurried off into a side room to write some code meanwhile the group took to Steph and in no time she was knitting hundreds of rows in yarn. It was that simple just a few pointers and she was away but it was never going to happen on her own. All meals were provided – which was just as well as we were in the middle of nowhere. These people were hard-core; they were straight back to their machines after dinner, when Steph called it a night they were still at it.

Its great when these things work out, less good when they don't. On the drive back and we noticed that the fuel consumption was a bit up and sure enough the day after we got back the van cut out. The garage took the van in a to make a very long story short, 6 weeks long in this case,



the engine had gone, again. This is the second engine in a year, which is as expensive as it sounds and I think we will need to sell it, it's just too much of a risk. It just seems so frustrating to have to repair the vehicle just to sell it but its not worth anything with a broken engine. Anyway we now have the van back



again and it is running, fingers crossed it lasts until we can sell it. The demand for them really picks up in the summer – so lets see where we go.

We used to play badminton on a Thursday however our local club plays on a Monday, which is always a bit of a struggle after the first day in work. Actually we have been doing well this year and its been no trouble getting out and we have been enjoying a bit of a run around. The loss of the van rather took the wind out of sails, we couldn't muster the enthusiasm to go out on a cold dark night to either walk or cycle to badminton, even though it was only 3 KM away.

Oddly enough this malaise did not affect bridge. We had



popped along to a local club in the winter and rather enjoyed it. Even though it went on longer and was further away we managed to get out on a Tuesday night. Mainly it has to be said because our neighbour Kelly upon hearing about our car woes immediately offer to lend us her car, in fact another neighbour also offered, people are so nice. Any-



way we have been split up, we were allowed to play together for the first couple of months but we now need to move around partners. Steph was a bit apprehensive as she has never really played with anyone else. She needed have worried she won the September monthly competition with Colin.

Speaking of our neighbour Kelly, she has moved on. I think this means that we have had least 7 neighbours over the last two and a half years. There are any number of reasons, we are not terrible neighbours honest, but I think that the house being quite small (one bedroom) and ex-



pensive and not the least of it down a 50 meter steep path. Anyway we will miss Kelly, she was the nicest of our neighbours so far, we now have Tony and Georgia, who are very young and who are only staying until next January when we will get another new neighbour.

We had planned a trip to Rotorua before the winter.

Without a car it was going to be tricky but once again thanks to the help of friends who lent us a car we were able to go.

Its one of the most popular tourist destinations in New Zealand but weirdly enough we have not been there since we were here as

tourists in 1996. We drove up listening to a marathon podcast session of Mark Kermode and Simon Mayo's film review. We got



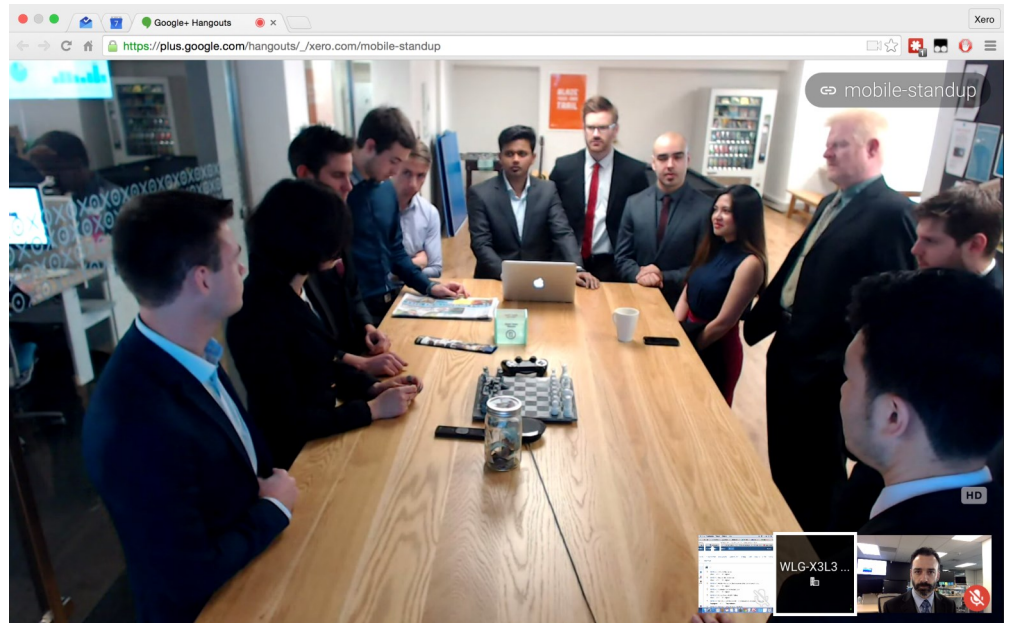
up there on a sparkly sunny Friday and Rotorua was just as beautiful and smelly as I remembered. There were areas we remembered and areas that were completely new, this seemed odd until I remembered that 20 years ago I had sprained my ankle and could only walk so far.

On the Saturday Liz and Andrew came across and we went to a spa pool, very chilled. The house we had was quite nice but a bit odd. Huge rooms with very little in them. Next day Liz and Andrew left and the OT's arrived.

I should explain. The reason for the trip was the Asia Pacific OT Congress that this year was in NZ and Steph was attending with 6 other colleagues. We had just tacked on the weekend away to the beginning as the accommodation needed booking anyway and a couple of extra days was cheap. On Sunday afternoon Steph went off to the airport to collect people and I stayed and started cooking, baking cakes and roasting chickens. While I was doing this the other seven were going through the congress schedule trying to decide what to go to. Right so here I am cooking for a bunch of OT's like some kind of giant "activities of daily living" assessment – needless to say I burnt the cake: fail. It was a fun evening as the sun set and everyone yakked. I flew back to Wellington at stupid o'clock on Monday morning.



Work is fun. It's a good team to work in. Its pretty diverse, we have people from the UK, US, Algeria, Philippines,



Germany as well as NZ. There are a few older people but mostly they are very young. Its usually quite an informal place to work, we have had onsies days in the past but when our new graduate was leaving for a new team he wanted a formal day so I got to wear my suit. I did bring suits with me but have never really work them so its fun to have a chance.

We have largely gone native – in that we don't hanker af-





ter English products. We do have occasional lapses, let me tell you that the NZ weetbix is not the same as Weetabix. Though bizarrely enough Weetabix cannot be sold in NZ unless the name on the box is obscured. However at this time of year we do subscribe to a VPN connection so we can watch UK TV, we must have our Bake Off and Strictly Come Dancing.



Indeed it is the time of year to bake the Christmas cake and they seemed to go quite well this year, now lets see if we can get a piece back to the UK for Mom.

Anyway this weekend is Labour Day which is the first public holiday after the winter hiatus. We are planning a last road trip up the coast for the van.