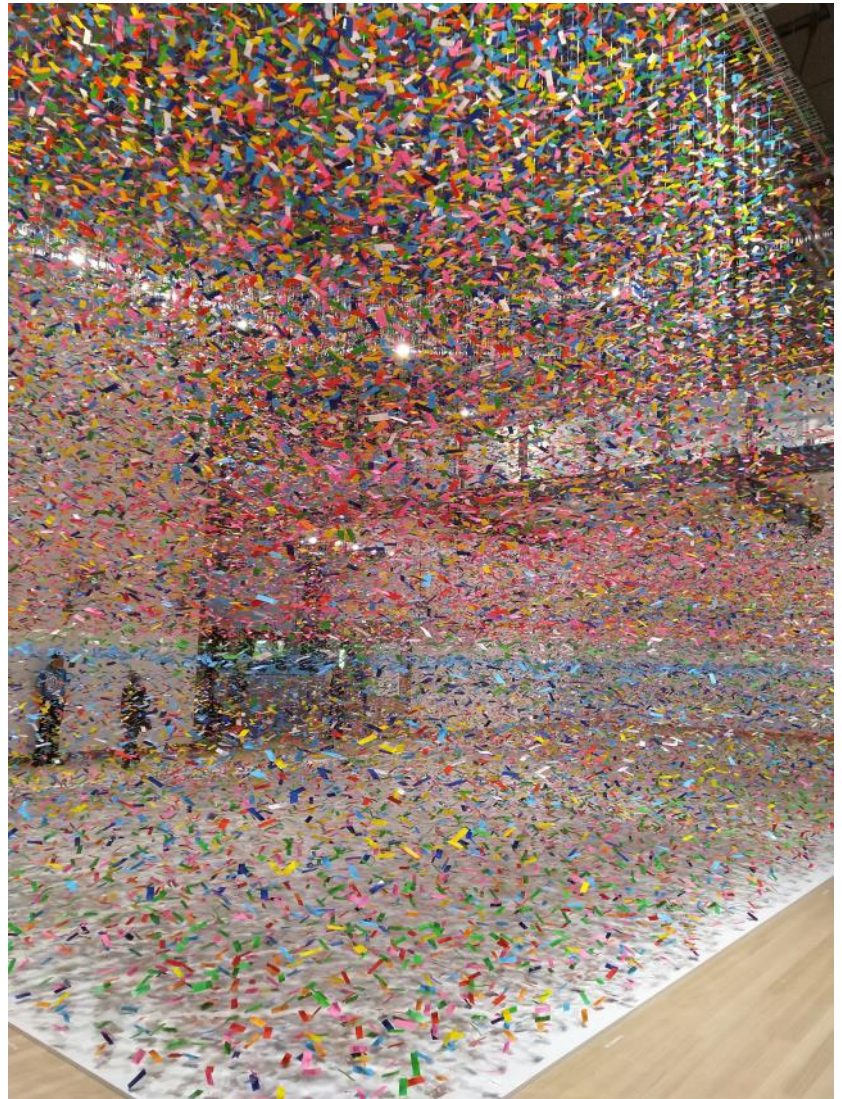


My timing is a little off. I guess because I was late with the last letter it means that there hasn't been much of a gap until this one. However as we are off to the UK next week and I am worried if I don't write now I will not find time until next year and by then I will have forgotten everything.

As always seems to happen we have been catapulted into summer. When I wrote last we were just at the beginning of spring and Helen and Charlie were coming out. I fear they didn't really see New Zealand in its best weather as it can be a bit up and down in spring and also it tends to be the windiest time of year, and for Wellington that is saying something. Now a couple of weeks later its wall to wall sunshine hot enough to not need a coat and to have the windows and doors open.

What a contrast. At the end of October when Helen, who trained with Steph, and Charlie came to see us it was good weather for escaping to museums and art galleries. We did get



some sun,
enough to allow us to
walk down
to the local
pub for a
pint and then
back along
the sea-front
for dinner.



As the
weather picks up everyone heads outside, including us.
Bridge comes to an end, it's been quite a successful year
for us we managed to win some of the weeks and at the
end of year event I cooked cauliflower balls and they went
down so well people asked for the recipe.



We drove
up the
coast to the
Kapiti
Food Fair.
It was a
great big
sprawl of
tents in the
sun, we
wandered



and grazed ate some nice things and some bland things. We tried “hard fizz” which tasted like Ribena but was as strong as wine, felt very dangerous, we loved the plum port, and bough some. We were talked through the lifecycle of asparagus – its super fat and juicy when its young and gets thinner and thinner as it gets older. We tasted every sort of jam and preserve and all in all it was an afternoon of grazing in the sun.

The sunlight drew us out on our bikes, we caught the ferry across the harbour to the stadium to see New Zealand beat England in the T20 cricket, a gloriously sunny Sunday basking in the sun and then cycling back through the bays for a Sunday roast and Strictly. We also cycled along the bays unsuccessfully dodging the surf to the cinema to see “Fisherman’s Friends” very twee, but just what was needed.



As I read this back it does all seem very twee, very small town and mundane but it suits us both at the moment. I think we are quite tired; we haven't had a break all year



apart from the odd weekend away. I suspect it's the calm before the storm looking at our calendar for the weeks in the UK. I cannot believe that we have so much arranged already it will be fun and hectic but I am looking forward to a proper holiday of pottering, exploring and reading and catching up with old friends.



We have a couple of trips to London and it's been nearly ten years since I just wandered around and gawped at the big city like a proper country rube.

Christmas draws near, we have limited decorations at home, as we are away, but the office is festooned and there are even the occasional trees

out in the streets. I was going to say that I have got used to a summer Christmas but that would be untrue, rather it doesn't surprise me quite as much as it used to and I can appreciate the glitter of tinsel in the sun but it is still odd. It does seem as though it will be a two stage Christmas, one over here and one in the UK.

There is a different pace to life here for Christmas – in the dark UK Christmas it always felt hurried. There was weeks of anticipation and then come Jan 2nd it was “Oh – we have to go back to real life now”. Over here it's different, for a start like I said the weather can be a bit patchy but generally from the second half of December through to





Easter summer tends to arrive big style. As a consequence Wellington starts to slow down mid-December, and empties out until

February. Even the public transport goes to a skeleton service for two weeks over Christmas as there is so little demand. We do pay for it with a long winter but combining Christmas and Summer holidays does rather make it an event, it's a thing to for people to head off to the bach on the beach and not come back for a while.

So Carl, one of our team invited us all out for a beer to celebrate Christmas and that he would be away in South Africa until the New Year. It was very pleasant to sit around a table, a South African, an Indian, Chinese, a Brit and even some kiwis. We got to talking about emigrating and it turns out that they were all in the process of getting NZ passports. I was intrigued as that's quite a step for them all as none of them can be dual citizens and must give up their other passports, in fact Jackie said how vexed she was to have to get a Chinese visa to go back to



see her family. I wondered why, but as Carl said, this is a different place from South Africa, the way they teach the children is

different, they reward acts of kindness – not a bit of wonder they grow up as kind people.

And now we shape for our trip back to the UK. I am looking forward to catching up with people and seeing the sights and shopping, and cheese and cereal and maybe even a mulled wine – after all it will be the season.