

Its funny how things work out. At the beginning of the year we submitted our plans for the new house to our local council. I remember when I last wrote thinking that I would end up writing about the house all year and probably turn into a complete bore about the whole thing.

Well like I said its funny how things work out, pretty much nothing has happened with the plans, but as I sit here in a slightly damp late autumn day a week before Easter we are hopeful that we will know soon. So not so much with house news, in fact as you will discover Steph has written half of this and I haven't read what Steph has written there may be some overlap but hopefully in an interesting way rather than just being repetitive.

Other things have been happening. I have been settling into my new job and that has been interesting. I don't really like change, something I always find slightly surprising in myself, I mean I work in an industry that forces me to completely reinvent my knowledge base all the time, I moved round the world and started a completely new life



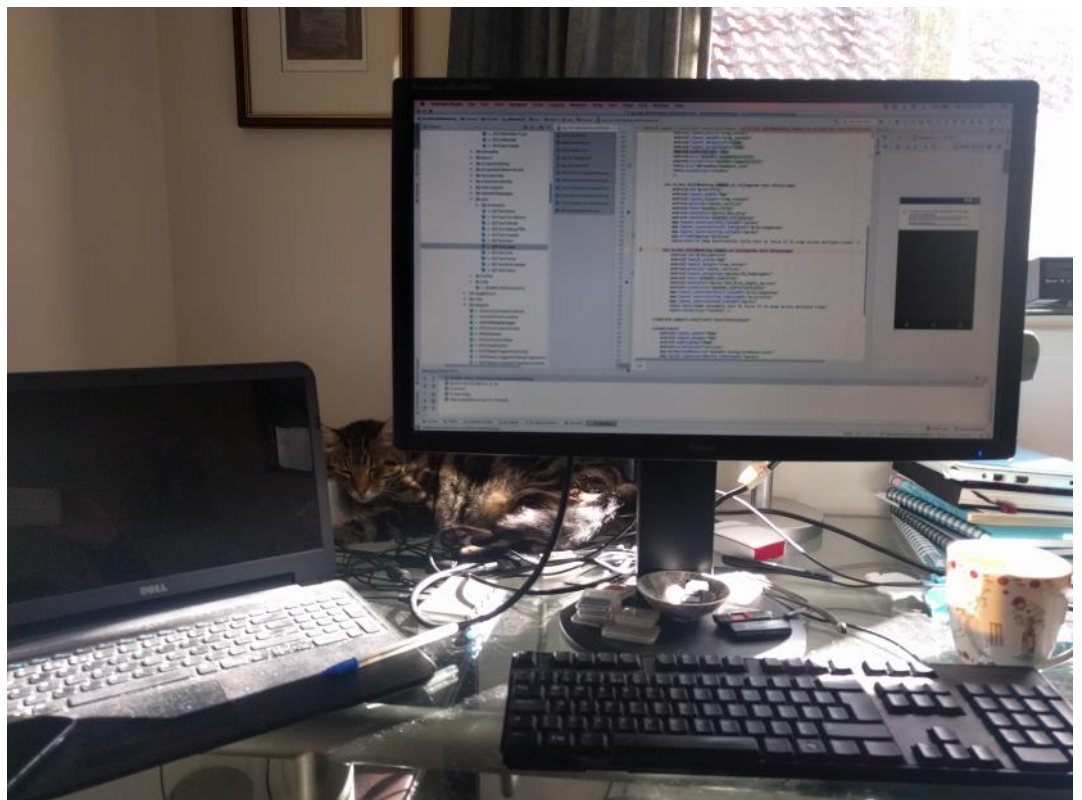


but even still, I find change difficult. Steph loves change, she almost seems to need it and I could not cope with all the change without her. Mind you she says that she would not have the confidence to jump into all these things without some stability in her life. So I have been settling in and at times find it frustrating and difficult, there is so much to learn but I have had a good week this week so currently feel as though its going OK.

I moved into mobile development about four years ago. That is writing software for mobile devices rather than doing my job on the run. At the time I think I commented that I was now working in a team where most of the people were half my age and attributed this to mobile development. After moving teams Xero and now to mobile development for Bank of New Zealand I think I have begun to realise its actually just me getting old rather than the

work I am doing. It is slightly strange, up until now I have been in teams where I am near the average age, and/or the team lead. Now as I get older I am obviously not going to be a manager or leader my role in teams has changed slightly. I know what I am doing but I am a bit outside the “normal” career progression. My managers are now a lot younger than me. It’s a new dynamic and given the shortage of skilled and experienced developers it looks like a new dynamic that we will all have to get used to. In fact its mostly me that has to adapt. I know its anecdotal but teams here in NZ seem to be a lot more diverse than in the UK, at BNZ there is a huge spread of ages and nobody seems to make a big deal about it. I am not management, and I am not at the start of my career curve, I am somewhere else and still working out how to behave.

BNZ’s main building in Wellington was broken in the last big earthquake in 2016 and as a consequence we



are scattered across many buildings though later this year we should all end up in the same building which will be nice. In the mean time



we hot-desk and are encouraged to work from home some of the time. For our team this tends to mean that I end up working from home most Wednesdays. In many ways its nice, I can get up late and still start early and I get lots done without any distractions. It can be a bit dislocation, and I always feel guilty no matter what time I stop work. Mind you Stripey does help and he is cute.

Steph has a plan, last year we hiked 35 KM from where we lived down the spine of the peninsula into Wellington. This year we fancy cycling from where we now live across to the Wairarapa. It's a reasonable cycle – according to Google maps its about 75 KM. The plan is to use the long weekend of Easter, as well as our Friday off, to cycle there on the Friday (and possibly the Saturday) then chill on the Sunday and then cycle back on the Sunday.

Well it's a plan, there is a rail line that accepts bikes so we have a contingency.

Now we realised that we needed to practice a bit. We already were cycling to the cinema most weekends, 25 KM round trip along the very beautiful bays. We had started some longer cycles to upper hut, about 27 KM one way, when I detached my retina. According to the surgeon the cycling and the retina were not related, I was just unlucky.

On a Monday evening on the way back from work I got on the ferry and my vision seemed OK, half an hour later I had a strange brown splodge at the bottom of my vision in the left eye. Like a real man I decided that I'd go to bed and I was sure that it would be all right in the morning. It turns out this is not a recognized treatment for a detached retina and I woke in the morning and the splodge was bigger, I

now could not see anything below the midpoint of my left eye. So maybe hospital was a better idea.



I guess I knew right from the start that it was pretty serious. And after going from one hospital to another all of a sudden I was on a list for an operation, in fact it was a case of needing the operation or lose sight in the eye. A bit scary and now the relief of not going blind has turned to irritation at not being recovered. The surgeon keeps saying things like “early days”, “a major operation” and “significant trauma to my eye”. It will be six months before I will know how much vision has returned so I will just have to wait.

It was weird, 24 hours after it first happening I was being operated on, I was awake, only a local anesthetic. I had to sleep face down for the first week, not as easy as it sounds and it sounds hard. I was the new owner of a very fashionable bright green wristband that gave sire warnings that I was not to fly, or even go up a big hill while I had a gas balloon in my eye. There was surprisingly little pain and apparently if my right eye was OK I could carry on normalish. So I went back to work and waited, still am really. We only had one comedy moment where we were waiting for the lift and I was stood to the right of everyone else, my blind side, after a moment I turned so I could see them and discovered I was alone, the others got on the lift and I hadn't noticed.

I guess it does seem like a big event but I cannot stop for

half a year, so other things have been going on. At the end of January, the week it happened, friends of friends were in Wellington. When I used to go to San Jose we



would occasionally meet up with Barbara who we originally met on holiday in China, friends of hers were in Wellington and it was a pleasure to share an evening with them. I find I learn as much about myself as others when you start a completely new conversation and try and explain the reasons why you moved around the world. It was also good to meet people from a different chapter of my life.

Exercise has been a little curtailed but recently we have started cycling and hiking again, we have a lovely hour



and a half hike up to the top of the cliffs overlooking the sea and also our new plot.

Like I said we cycle to the cinema a lot and last weekend we cycled all the way around the harbour to watch the cricket at the Basin Reserve. Well like I said it is late autumn and it was quite chilly so after an hour

we went off in search of a coffee. It was an important game, Wellington are trying to win this year's championship however there were not many people there to witness it, no matter we had a nice cycle and ended up having a nice glass of wine with friends in a sunny restaurant just off the ferry.

February/March was the New Zealand festival, the festi-



val happens avery
second year and
we went to see
lots of very
strange things, a
Hemmingway's
The Sun Also
Rises rendered as
a play, a future
technology playground complete with speakers that we
wore as a backpack and felt the sound in our bones as
well as hearing it. We built up to watching Star Wars ac-
companied by a very full orchestra playing all the music,
it was very good.



Derek



Well as we approach Easter both of us realised we have not completed a missive for some time. So we are going to try a combined effort.

The last paragraph of the last Missive we had paid for our Resource Consent on the house we want to build here. Of course we are now hoping that we get that consent before Easter. I have pretty much given up on being in the house by Christmas 2018. Come June and I will have been saying we will move into the house in a year for a year!!! Since we walk past the land every couple of weeks it still looks good.

Greenhill has had weekly viewings since 2018, sometimes more than one. No offers, not even silly ones. Come May it will have been on the market for a year too!! We just do not want to be asked about houses, we will tell people when anything happens.

So this means we have been gentle to ourselves as life has not gone mad busy. We have had a fabulous summer, still totally spoilt by the weather. Still amazed by the cycle/ferry/short walk to work. Derek even got a whole pod of dolphins on the way home on the ferry. You occasional get to chat to tourists and enthuse about the best bits of Wellington.

Looking back at the last couple of months I reflect on

meals with friends, the arts, starting to uncover and recover the dining room chairs and proving I am an occupational therapist. Other things I will leave to hubby.

With the stunning summer we have had many meals outside with friends. It is just such a lovely thing to do. We both enjoy cooking but also going to other nationality houses. I used to be a girl who struggled with salad and hot food on the same plate – now it just seems routine. We hosted strangers Bruce and Lisa who know Barbara, a trekking friend from America. It is great to get a feeling for what it is like to live in America and also how others see New Zealand. A favourite discussion for me was which art medium is the most important to you e.g. paintings, theatre, movies, dance, music, and opera. Especially as in the group were musicians and creative folk



This topic started as every 2 years we have the New Zealand Arts Festival. Lots of international art which we booked in November – over

500GBP

worth of tickets!!! Of course when we got to the events I could remember why I booked things, or



what we were going to see. At “Home” I said to Derek – this is a play!!! Well it was silent and more like mime. I was not certain I was going to enjoy it but in the end enjoyed it. The stage started empty and they built a house and then showed how 5 people lived in it (You saw them all at the same time but in fact they owned the house at different times). It was a commentary on home being the same for many people. We make memories and experience many of the same events. The second half they looked at the celebrations in a house. It was like the ‘Generation Game’ – they picked 20+ people out of the audience and as they brought them up they gave them jobs to do and some of them got props that had written on them what to do. It must be very different every night. Then I find out it is in the “absurd theatre” genre. I have

to admit many of the pieces did not tell you much about what you were going to experience. This piece was at the Edinburgh Festival and commissioned for the two events. Hard to choose what was the best thing we saw, I really enjoyed it all. The opening piece was a New Zealand event – the waka (boats) gathered from around the country. I was concerned as I do not really like crowded events. It was a stunning evening and we took a picnic and went straight from work. So we got to sit on the front, a fantastic view and no sense of crowds. I am glad I went, impressive. Little things like they put a late ferry on after these events, 9pm, and it was free. Bless the people traveling by train. A new company had recently taken over and they had no extra trains on. People waited an hour to get on a crammed train.

I have to mention Future Playground. An art gallery where



you had to bring your mobile phone. Art meets technology. Flat pictures in a book that you point your phone at (set to a specific application)

and the picture becomes an animation. 15 minutes of relaxation where you have to wear a tight fitting backpack as the very deep relaxing



sounds you do not hear with your ears but through the vibrations going through your body. It worked so well as a relaxation, better than the massage we managed to have out on that day in Wellington. It just made you think how this technology will be used in other aspects of my life, before I die

And finally, as I have just put the CD on the Bach Partitas. 7 movements of solo pianist in a church. After each movement a New Zealand composer had reworked the movement – it was just inspiring. There was a real joy each time you got back to the Bach – it flowed and lifted your heart in a way that familiar and fluid music does. At my age I had a revelation that music is such emotional art form. It does not make me connect as cognitively – a play so often gets me debating/discussing where music is about feeling.

While at home I have finished a skirt and putting pockets on Dereks' trousers. This means that I have been able to get to the very tired dining room chairs. I started with the one that got burnt by getting too close to a candle. I started taking it apart and broke a screw driver on the staples. We went out and brought a fabulous staple remover and a powered staple gun as I think there are over 100 staples in each chair. I have photographed along the way so I know how it all goes back together. Proud to have at last finished taking the first chair apart and have a pattern to cut the fabric. I am sure it will be much quicker to put it back together. Sorry the cat has come to help!!! Walked across my knee and is now sit on it, so I have to type to the side.

Work for me is very exciting. Veterans' Affairs is always developing and changing. It is a little too busy. When we got back in January I had a resignation – Jill chose to go and have more hands on with patients and a 10 minute



trip to work – not over an hour. Who can blame her? I ask her what she does with all that extra time – walk on the beach sounds good. We have interviewed twice already and found two great candidates. The first decided that she too would miss the patient contact. The second we employed but not in my job – I am thrilled she is working for us, a great match for the organisation. So I am out to advert again. It is tough as we are 4 and now we are 3 the same work need to be completed. We are also advertising what we do more so in fact we have more work. I am still no doing silly hours – as I have in previous jobs, but could quite easily be drawn in as it is exciting work.

The other part of this is that 3 years ago the Occupational Therapy Boards computer system that ensures we are keeping up to date as Occupational Therapist broke. We had a year of no computer system while they had a new system written. The new system is much better and means we now have a two year cycle when we have to establish 5 goals to prove we are current and safe in all aspects of our work (this used to be 7 so an improvement already). April 1st is the end of that 2 year cycle and the beginning of a new cycle. So although we meant as a group 6 times a year to make sure we keep doing things EVERYTHING has to be sorted NOW. So every Monday night we have met to progress proving that we are occupational thera-

pists. We have been joined by two therapist who only arrived in this country in the last 6 months. Other countries do not collect this evidence in the same way – so they are trying to learn how to work in New Zea-



land and now have to learn how to use this system and get 5 goals written and reflected on by April 1st!!! Fortunately I have done all my writing so have time to help them while I read what others have written so I can sign of to say they are jolly good occupational therapists!!!! After this Monday we will be all done.

So I am off to sew and Derek can read what I have written and decide what he would like to add. We hope you soon stop getting snow and spring will come forth. That of course means that autumn will have to come for us – so not all great. We normally still get stunning days every week, they will just be a bit shorter.

Love to all. Steph