

Well would you look at that, who would have believed it. On the 1st of January I was walking along Ullswater in the Lake District letting a bright winter walk and the company of friends blow away



the excess of the previous night's celebrations. The 1st of February found us in the surreally deserted Hong Kong, knowing things were afoot but not knowing what. On the 1st March I woke in hospital, I had fallen the previous afternoon and dislocated my patella in such a way that it would not go back in no matter what was tried so a small operation was required to put it back in and I was kept in overnight. The 1st of April found me like most of the planet: in lockdown. Well there's a to do.

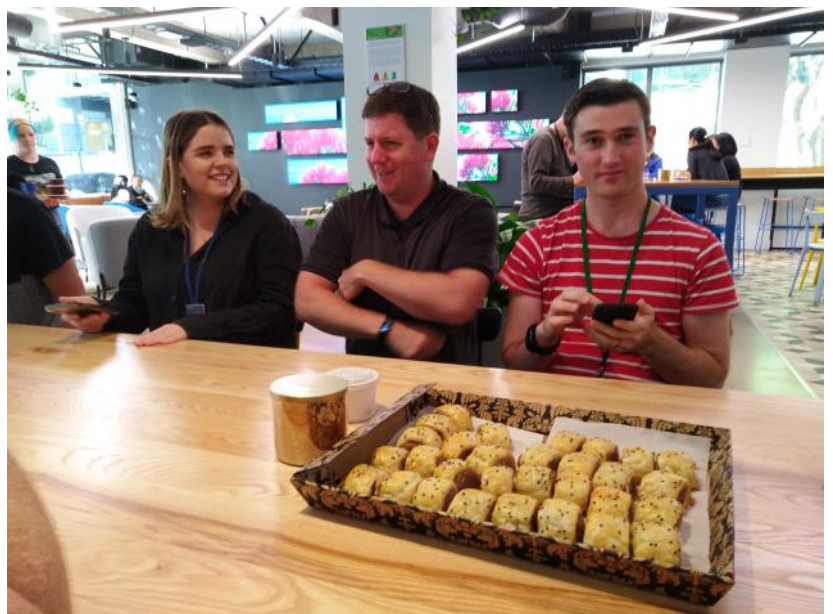


The knee was not ideal. It also hurt. Two weeks after the operation I was due to go to Tauranga to see Liz and Andrew and I was a little concerned about flying with my leg in a splint. Luckily I had my follow

up appointment and the splint was off, which made the whole flight-thing a bit easier. I was still a bit incapacitated, everything seemed to take forever, but at least I was mobile again and didn't have to be transported everywhere stretched out across the back seat of Steph's car.

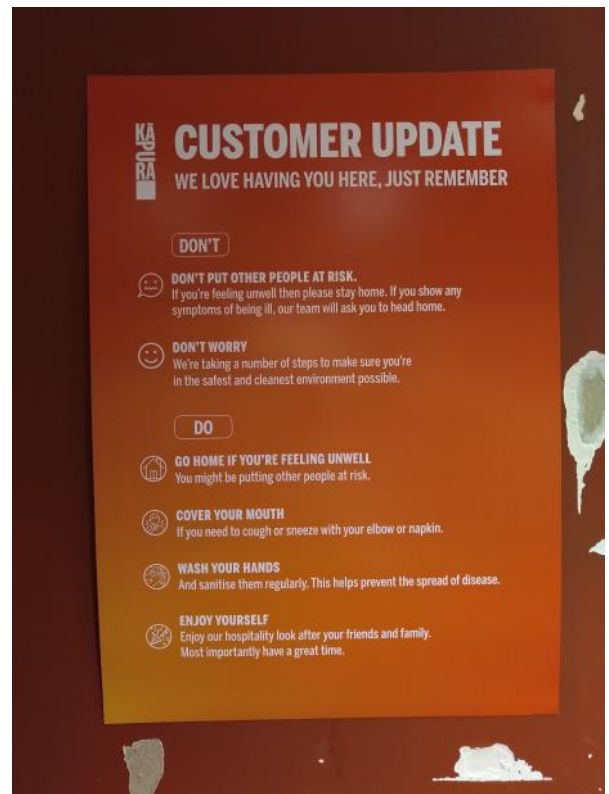
Now I write this seems like it is from a different lifetime, and yet it was only March. We got to see Liz and Andrew's new house; near enough to the cinema that even I could (just about) walk there. We got to eat pizza and drink beer and catch up with them but the background sound track, of world events rather than 6Music, gave another surreal weekend feel. The reports of the virus blooming across the world as we discussed how we would cope with isolation had the feel of a gathering storm. As we had done with the international flight to Europe returning on the domestic flight from the weekend felt like it would be the last for a while.

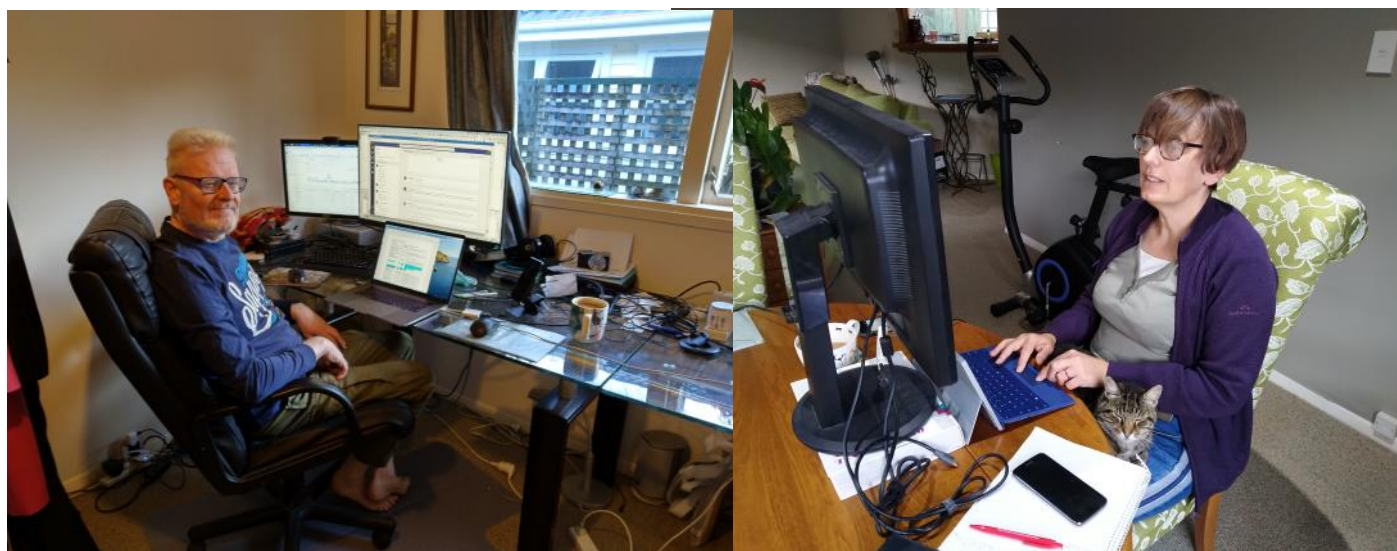
I made the effort to get back into the office, we are a new team and it takes time for a team to gel – and that would not be helped by me being at home. It was a bit tricky getting on and off the boat with crutches but I managed. One of our team mem-



bers was leaving to go onto another job and we had a beer with him on his last Friday, 20th March. Even at that point people were being warned to do this new thing of “social distancing” and the bar was half empty. That was the last time I was in the office and indeed in the city.

After that weekend we went to level 2 and then two days later to level 4 lockdown. Talking to people round the world it seems strange to me that we all refer to what is happening as lockdown but the exact meaning of lockdown seems to be quite different in each country. Here in New Zealand it meant that wherever you slept on 25th March was where you had to stay going forward, unless you were hospitalised. We needed to keep our “bubble” small. A bubble is the people you live with and get close to. Our bubble is me and Steph. We could go outside for exercise as much as we wanted, in our local area, but must not approach anyone nearer than 2 metres. There really wasn’t much need to go out, nothing is open. Only supermarkets can open, no other shops, even the GP surgery is appointment only and the pharmacy will bring the order to the door. No butcher, greengrocer, DIY, bakery, café, take-away, nothing.





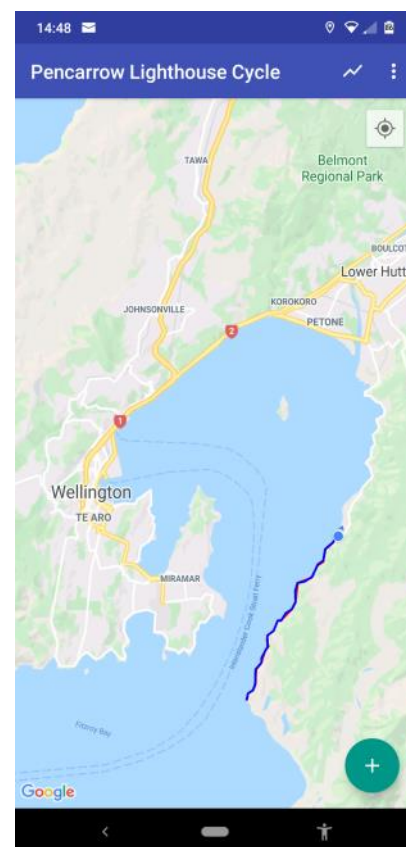
We are both lucky in that we can continue our work from home. The meme on the internet is that everyone has lots of time on their hands; it's the opposite for us. We are both working long days, probably because remote working can be a little inefficient so it's harder to get things done. I work a nine-day fortnight, that is I take a 10% pay cut from my full time wage, Steph also works nine days a fortnight but she does long days so that she can do her full time hours in less days. So, we are both setup to work at home, Steph has the dining room and I have the spare bedroom. I may say it's not ideal but many others have a far more difficult environment, judging by the number of meetings that are interrupted by animals and children. Steph tends to get up just after 6 and is on her computer before 7, I set my alarm for 7:30 with a view to getting to my computer by 8. I break off for my first batch of physio exercises just before my daily team stand-up at 9:30. Steph and I meet up for lunch, meeting schedule allowing, and another batch of exercises. Then we try to finish up

around 4 so we can exercise outside. As winter approaches it gets dark around 6 which gives us time to walk along the front to the little supermarket in the village or maybe cycle along the gravel track towards the lighthouse. I supplement the outdoor exercise with an indoor cycle, Steph had managed to organise delivery of a hired exercise bicycle, the last one in the shop, as the lockdown was being declared.



And it's been great; I have a chart where I tick off my exercise schedule every day.

A perennial theme in the lockdown is watching boxsets and we are working our way slowly though “The Expanse”, which is good enough.





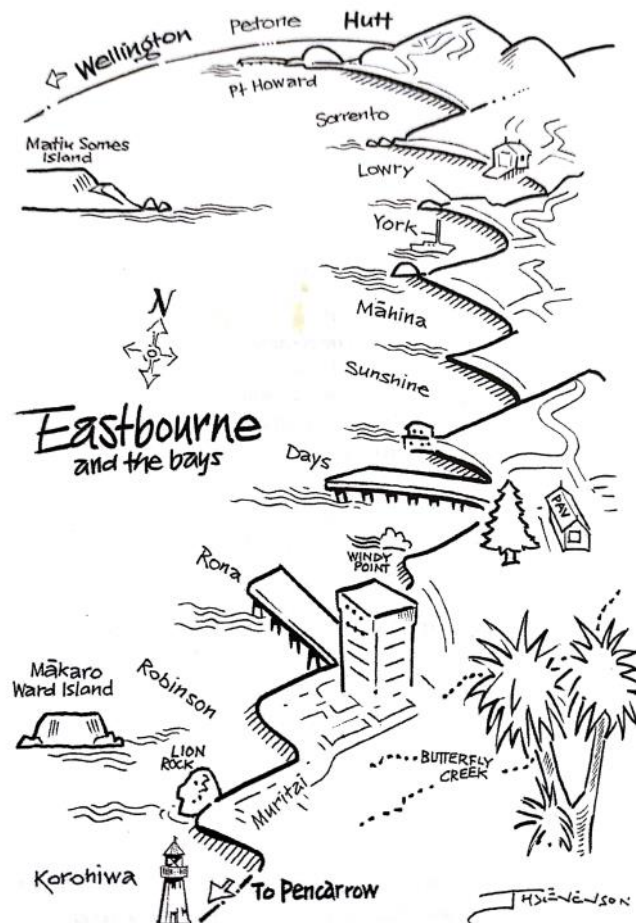
After the first week I managed to find a web site that enabled us to play cards remotely and we seem to be playing 4 or 5 times a week with different

groups so between the two our evening are pretty full.

Weekends especially seem to get quite full, we are often playing cards in the morning and the evening and remote board games during the day. It is fun and in many ways I enjoy playing cards so much I am glad that we have had the push needed to get the remote version sorted out. We played cards with Helen at Christmas two years ago when she was in NZ and with the whole Slater family last Christmas while we were in the UK so I am looking forward to being able to play next Christmas even if we are not in the same country. I do have to try and keep my wits about me as we are playing multiple different versions of canasta and I seem to be a different coloured piece in each one and there is talk next week of playing six handed 500, which is a game I have always wanted to try. 500 is played a lot in New Zealand and Australia, it's a bit like

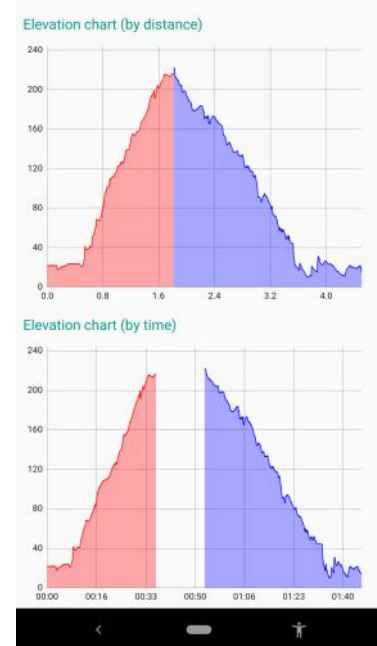
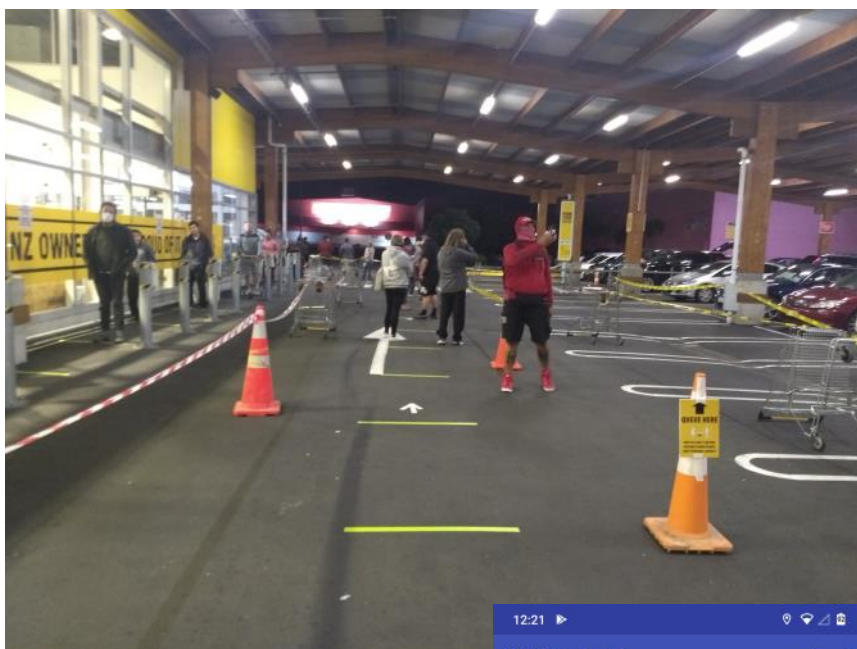
bridge but played with an odd deck of cards that includes the 11, 12, and 13 of suits.

We are also lucky in where we live. We are at the end of a road through the bays that just ends in a gravel track for cycling, so there is no real reason for anyone to come here. Eastbourne itself only has a population of 4,500 people so social distancing is pretty easy. We went for a cycle today and it's the first time in over a month that I have been back through the bays to the Hutt Valley. Our local 4Square supermarket is small but its conveniently placed a 3 KM round trip walk from the house. So for the first part of the lockdown it was part of my therapy to walk to the shop most days each time faster than the last. Of course the sudden lockdown meant that the shelves were a bit Spartan for a couple of days but we pretty soon got the idea that there



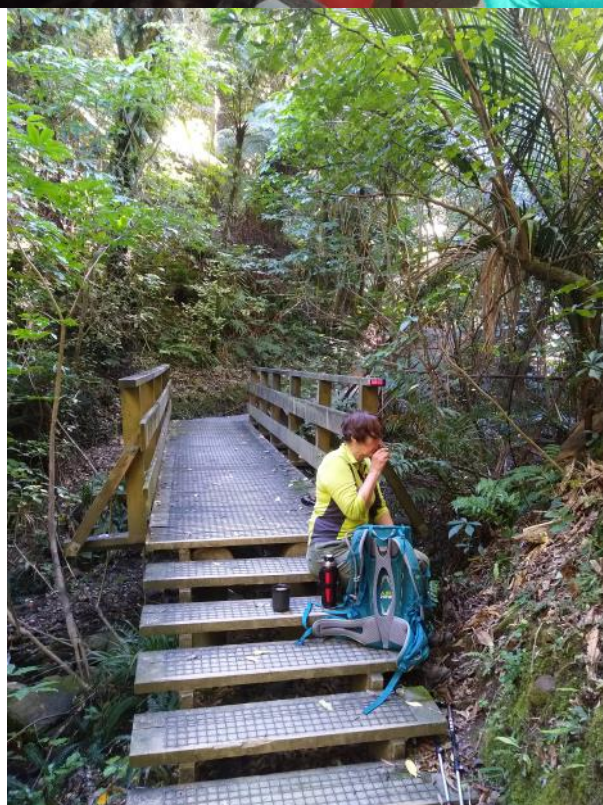
would be food. For a week or so there wasn't any flour but then some enterprising person managed to split some sacks of flour into smaller packages to sell. With the exception of yeast pretty much everything is now available. We supplement that with a trip back to the Hutt Valley to a bigger supermarket every two weeks, as its one in one out and a 15 KM drive Steph does those trips.

As my rehab continued and I got stronger I progressed from indoor cycling to outdoor cycling, at first just along the front but pretty soon along the gravel track to the lighthouse for a picnic. Steph's ambition was to get me to walk up our hill. It's a nice but steep track that is a loop up onto the hill behind us, its about 250 meters up and



250 metres down. I had to have a few practice goes but I am now doing the track 3 or 4 times a week and even progressed onto the two and a half hour longer walk through butterfly creek onto Eastbourne. Yes all in all when we do go back to trying to get on the boat and going to work I'll be much more able to do it.

Before all this happened I used to work from home one day a week so I thought that I would already know how to do this working from home thing. It turns out that you can always get better at something. I have noticed that after the first couple of weeks I got much better and more productive at working from home and actually enjoyed it more. I have also managed to go down from a nine day fortnight to a four day week, more pay cuts but I guess nobody gets to their deathbed and says "I really wish I'd worked more". Going forward I will have every Friday off. Its not uncommon, there are three developers in my team and both the

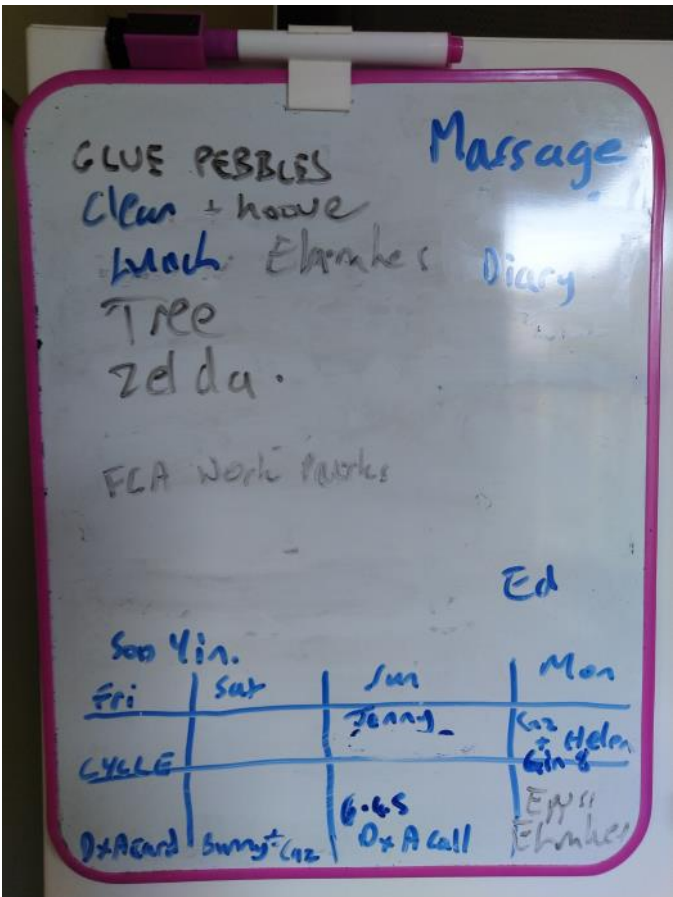


other two also work a four day week, they both have Wednesday off, which does mean that I have to do front line support for mobile banking on my own that day but it does mean that nobody appears to schedule any meetings on a Wednesday I guess as then they would be out of the loop.

I still try and keep a defined difference with the weekend. I wear work clothes and listen to 6Music during the week and pack away my work computer and wear casual clothes and listen to Scala Radio at the weekends. It all seems to help. The weekend is full of



small tasks that need doing, longer exercise trips and of course the cards schedule. One of the things I have just heard on Simon Mayo's show was a segment on what thing have you found during lockdown that you want to carry on doing when this is all over. It's a nice thing to think about, I really enjoy that I can get outside for proper exer-



cise with Steph every day and also, as I've mentioned, the remote card play is such a thing.

This weekend is a long weekend, its my Friday off and as its Anzac Day so we also have



Monday off as well. Anzac Day is a thing here, I guess in the same way that Remembrance Day is in the UK. It also needed modification for the current events. Usually people gather together for a dawn service. That was not going to work here so the idea was that we would stand by our letterboxes and listened to the service on the radio. I thought that we would be the only nutters up at 6am listening to the radio outside but I was surprised to see that there were a number of people in sight on our little road. As the service progressed and the sky started to lighten it was a strangely consoling act, mind you I did go back to bed.

We are moving from lockdown level 4 to 3 on Monday, it doesn't make any difference to us, we still work from home, but construction and forestry and take-aways can start to open. However the plan is that we move from level 3 to 2 in two week's time and that might make a difference. All of a sudden I realised that in two weeks' time I might need to start getting up at 6am like I used to do to

go into the office, OMG, now there is another thing I quite like about lockdown, setting my alarm for 7:30 and rolling into work before 8.

Usually at this time of year I get to listen to County Championship Cricket, live ball by ball as I go to sleep, Steph seems to manage to go to sleep quite quickly. Now there is no cricket at all. In fact now I think about it the last game I listened to live was the last game of the 2019 season, I listened to the last Lancashire game live while I was on a plane flying to South Korea, they had free Wi-Fi. Looks like none of that will be happening again anytime soon.

Yes indeed this has been an odd couple of months. Simon Sharma in his “A History of Britain” (a box set worth watching if you haven’t already) said that history tended to have long tracts when nothing happened and then all of a sudden everything started in a rush. Well, it appears to be rush-hour.