

Sorry it's been a while but it's been a bit of a hard winter, not the weather, that has been very mild, its everything else: house, health and work.

For starters, we both got the flu. Now I know that people often say they have the flu, I do it myself and mostly what they mean is they have a cold. I have had the flu, years ago as a teenager, and I remember how bad it was. Well this time it really was the flu, Steph had almost two weeks off work and I cannot remember the last time she did that, I had a similar experience, I tried to go back to work by working from home and started nice and bright at 8am and found myself asleep with my face pressed against the warm monitor at 10am, time for bed.

We got ill in the middle of "Wellington on a Plate", this is an annual festival to try and encourage people out in winter. Restaurants do good deals and there is a competition to produce the best burger. We had entered a draw to get a ticket to go to prison, no - really, though we would be let out at the end of the evening. It's a local prison where a well-known chef runs the kitchen and trains inmates to prepare them to get jobs in the food industry, and it does work, though the numbers seem very small to me, mind you this is New Zealand. Anyway places are so limited they run a draw and we managed to win, we had got all the information, we needed photo ID, no phones and we had to go through security, and then I got ill. I really wanted to go but I could hardly stand up never mind taste any-

thing so I stayed in bed and Steph went with some friends. She said it was very good, very unusual but a bit tiring, and as soon as she came home I knew why, she had what I had.

We retreated to bed for what seemed like ages, adding to the hibernation feel. Even when we were back at work, we tired easily and I had a hacking cough for over a month, a legacy from smoking no doubt. You would have thought that it would be restful but it didn't feel like it. We are both over it now and it does seem odd to look back on it, now I think about it it makes me appreciate how much I have recovered. We did manage to recover enough to go for "High Cheese" a cheese inspired high tea at the Inter-Continental Hotel, which was lovely, tasty and cheesy.

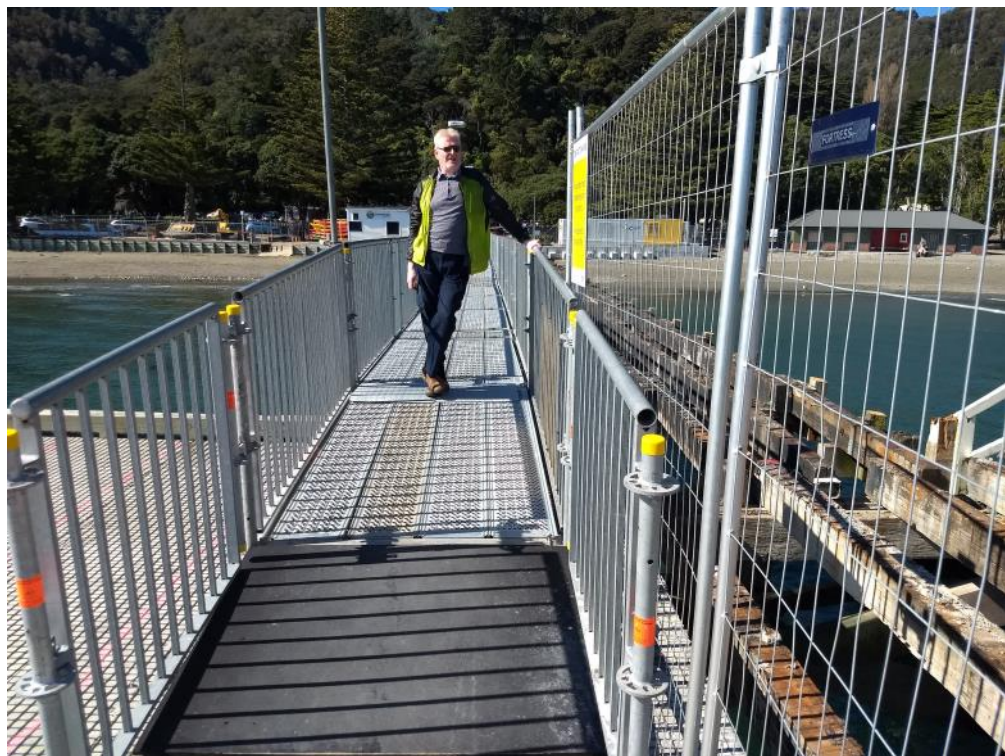
The aftermath of the earthquake that hit Kaikoura in November 2016 is still being dealt with around Wellington.

The wharf that our little EastByWest ferry uses to get us to work have been badly affected. The wharf at Petone is still closed and the wharf

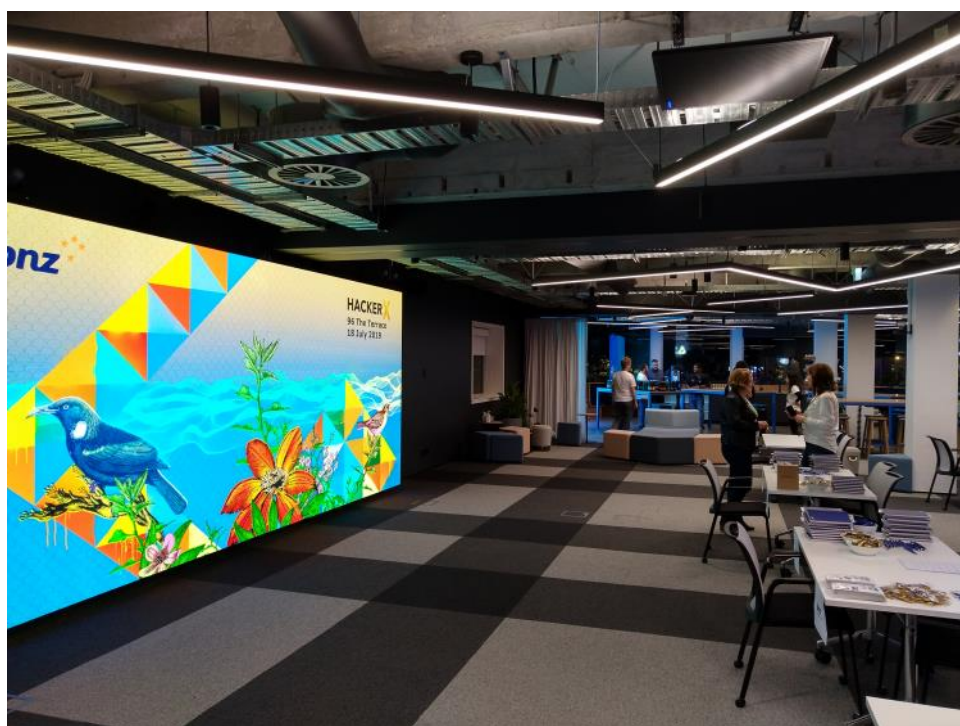




at Days Bay is now being re-built. It's a big job they are pretty much knocking it down and re-building it, while keeping the ferry running. It's going



to take the best part of a year to do and as it is our way to work we get to see the progress on a daily basis. Days Bay is two bays down and we cycle through Robinson Bay and Rona Bay, past the aptly named Windy Point to Days Bay most days and then we clamber along the temporary gangway and get to see the progress. One particularly wet, windy and cold Monday morning I saw the divers in wet suits dragging large wooden beams into the water at 7am and thought that I was glad I got



to work in a nice dry office. Though we both like to blow away the cobwebs by cycling along the front and catching the ferry to work.

Which brings us to work, there is change afoot. Steph has also been looking around; she still loves her job, but has been looking at the openings for People Leaders in BNZ. The advantages would be that she gets paid more for doing less work. She has not actually gone for an interview yet but as Scott used to say, you should make sure you are practiced at doing interviews, even if you don't take the job, so its good exercise for her I think.

In my work we are reorganising, as most large organisations seem to do from time to time. It does mean that people are full of gossip and apprehension, and I guess that time will tell if it's a change that suits people. I don't know what to make of it, literally I don't know, because I still don't know which team I will be on, who my lead will be even where I am going to be sitting. Time will tell.

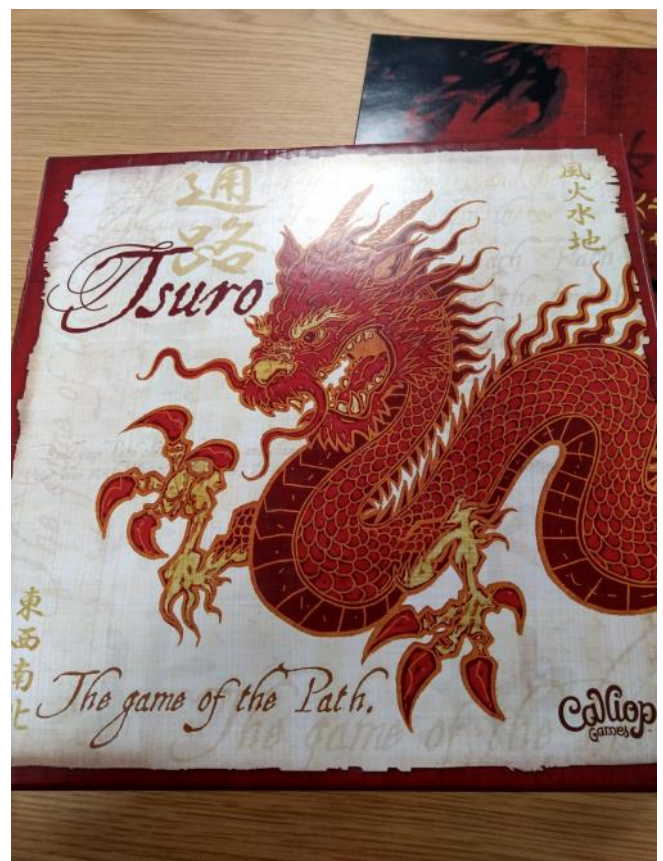
Against that background it was interesting to do a recruitment event, hosted in the BNZ offices and to talk to people about why they would come and work for us. I even got a free head shot.





I am prepared to wait and see, because our team is really starting to work well together. We trust each other and are a good balance of skills, we can cover both IOS, Android and server work between us get along very well. I was talking to Caroline, Steph's sister, and telling her about a meeting where we got a bit off topic and one of the team asked if I regretted not having children. We talked about it for a bit and then got back on topic. It was only when I told Caroline that she commented that was quite a personal, maybe even private conversation to have in a meeting, but I guess that's what I meant by trust, the team feels like a safe place. Even though we are all quite different, ages and backgrounds, we give each other space and respect.

On Fridays, when I am there, three of us play board games at lunchtime. Its great fun as Karl is really into board games and buys load of them from Kickstarter, he has hundreds and even though we have been doing this for most of the year there is no risk of needing to repeat a game. It does have a feel of being allowed to bring games in on the last day of school, we usually play between 1 and 2 on a Friday afternoon and then at 3:30 its Friday night drinks, a pleas-



ant way to end the week. My favourite game so far is Tsuro. Its local election time here. We did go to the local meeting where we got to see and question



all the candidates for the Ward, Eastbourne Community and the Mayor. It was very, very local. People wanted to know all the little details like what style of recycling bins were we going to use. On one hand it was very small scale, I did wonder if we really needed to discuss if there was enough seating on the promenade, but on the other hand it was fantastic that people really cared about their community, the room was packed, we had to open the doors to let the hot air out. The meeting went on for two and a half hours but could have easily gone longer. I never felt this connected in Manchester, but to be honest that could easily be me rather than Manchester, maybe I never took the time to find these meetings there.

We are coming to the UK for a long break over Christmas, have you heard ☺. Given that it will take up all of our holiday we steeled ourselves to not have a winter sun break. Then out of the blue Steph was asked to go to



South Korea to present at the International Workshop on Veterans Affairs. So given that her air fare was paid for we decided to have a week away together. Steph went out to work for a week and then I came out and we had a week together. It was a trip of contrasts for Steph, the first week was all official visits, banquets and





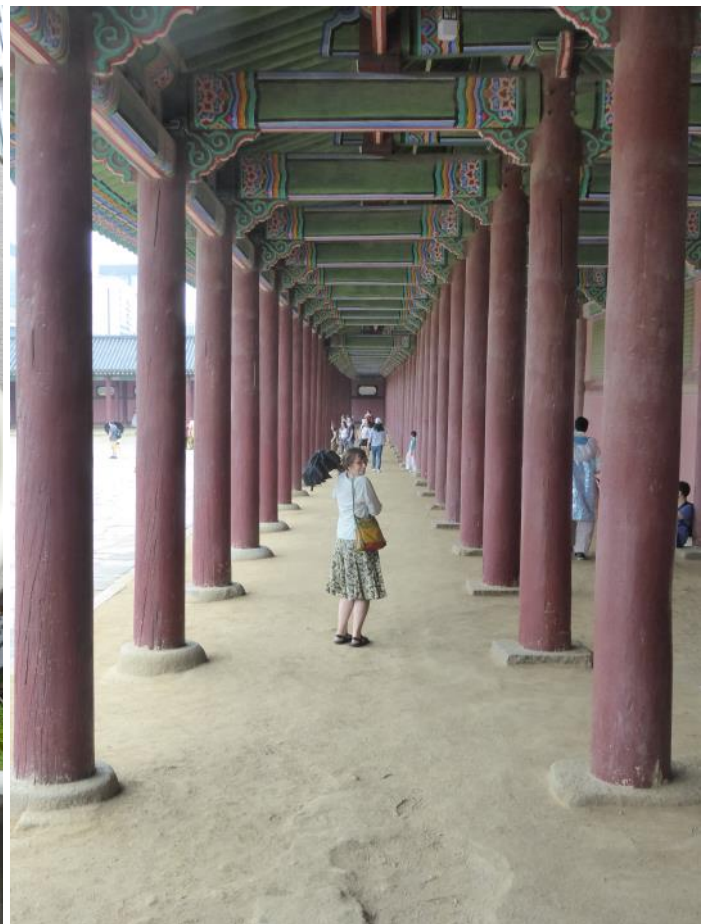


champagne, they were followed around by a film crew and even caught a bullet train to Busan just over 300KM but there in under two and a half hours. She was in a huge room in the Hilton on the centre of the city, I got to stay there for one night when I arrived then we were off for the second half. In the second week, we were in a hostel it was small but was clean, en suite, with super-fast internet. We hiked up hills, along city walls





and wandered through maze like streets finding little places to eat in. It was super relaxing, we just did whatever we







pleased, it had that warm golden sunlight that east Asia seems to do so well and we just had time to read, wander and walk. On the last night there was a firework festival. It was immense, there were teams from Sweden, China and Korea, there were five minute gaps between the teams but effectively the display went on for over an hour and a half. They got through an aw-







ful lot of fireworks, using buildings and the bridge and even writing words in the sky with fireworks.

Now we are back and instead of doing the sensible thing of sorting out



booking things for the UK trip and even unpacking from Korea we took up an offer to go sailing around the harbour with friends. It was great fun, we just pottered around the island but I enjoyed it. I didn't always know what I was doing but it was still fun. We learnt to sail a couple of years ago,

but on very small 3 meter long boats, this was a much bigger keeler. With a lot of imagination it could sleep seven, there was no way this was going to tip over. It was fun but hard work, only after I finished did I realise that I had winched both sails up and down using the shoulder I broke coming off the bike, Nona my physio would be pleased.



The perennial project of the house still rumbles on but at last there has been some progress. We now do have engineering drawings, this means at long last we can try to get quotes from builders and hopefully by the end of the year we will know if we can afford to build it or if we need to sell the land and find somewhere else to live.

Now we really are starting to think about the UK trip, we have started to book up hotels, cars and trains. We have also made the Christmas Cake, we plan to take some to Mum's when we see her over the festive period, hopefully there will still be enough left over to share.