

Well we are back and after living like a hermit all winter (southern hemisphere remember) we have emerged butterfly like and been rushing around like mad things.

We went back to the UK in September. I say “we went” rather than “we have been on holiday”, as it wasn’t a holiday. That’s not to say it wasn’t great but relaxing it wasn’t. I’ve had time to think about it and when we go on holiday we usually just go on holiday, when we go to the UK we are trying to do four things, visit friends, sort out our house in the UK, help get Mum out of hospital and oh yes have a holiday. I’m not really complaining because I think we got lots done on the house, we saw lots of friends and in helping Mum to get back home I feel as though I have managed to give something back. Yes Mum I know you are reading this but really I am not complaining after everything you did for me and then I go and move across the world it’s the very least I could do, and to see how happy you were sat in your own chair again make me smile even while I write this. But I am getting ahead of myself,



let's start at the beginning.

The winter really was set in here in Wellington and as I've covered before it's a pretty mild winter but then again I think I've become rather softer as I think it's pretty wintery but it's not really. Catherine and Sarah have been rebuilding their house and needed help painting and it's been so long that we have done any DIY that we rather fancied having a go for old time's sake, and I suspect Steph also thought that getting me to paint 3 ceilings would be good exercise for my shoulder.

We flew to the UK. It's a long flight and I do keep wondering as I get older will I be able to cope with such a long flight in economy. I mean I would like to fly business class but its so expensive its very difficult to justify the additional cost. Well I

have to say that I have managed quite well this time. Almost no jet lag in either direction, I wish I know what made the difference because on the



way to the UK we just got off the plane at midday and went up to our house, grabbed the bag we left there when we left two years ago and met up with Roger in Manchester and managed to stay up until 9pm and we were acclimatised. On the way back we landed in the middle of the afternoon and rushed to the supermarket and bough a chicken and then it was back home for a Sunday roast and Strictly Come Dancing (Dancing with the Stars in some regions) and then bed an work and we were acclimatised.

It almost didn't work out quite like that. I find it interesting how things change over time. It used to be that when you booked you tickets you waited until the day before and then checked in and picked your seat. Now apparently you can pick your seat as soon as you buy your ticket you



can pick
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months
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vance.
So as we
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know
that the
day be-

fore we flew I went to check in and there weren't two seats together. So we had to throw ourselves on the mercy of the check in staff and although I can see this not working every time on this particular flight we ended up with great seats the seats reserved for people travelling with babies and then with

the exit row seats, we got lots of sleep.

I guess its now been almost five years since we lived in the UK and over two years since we were there at all and it was slightly stranger this time. Manchester has lots of new shiny buildings and a new light rail crossing the city. I guess I do live in a very small place but Manchester was looking a lot like London, god knows what I will make out of London when I get there. For the first week I was working remotely so I spent the days on my computer while Steph was trying to sort out builders and other



workmen out for out old house in Manchester.

Initially we seemed to divide our time between travelling to St Annes to see Mum on the M61 and going down the Wakefield road to see Yorkshire. We have hired a very swish Fiat 500 with a glass roof and pottered around catching up on podcasts.

Mum fell over in July and broke her ankle; she has been in hospital recovering. It felt good to be useful and help Mum get back home, well I say I felt useful actually it was mainly Steph, talk about a busman's holiday, Steph was fantastic but was back to being an OT. It was worth it. Mum is still





quite fragile but she is happy to be back at home.

Yorkshire was interesting. I guess I've not been to west Yorkshire much but we visited Saltaire ,think Bornville with mills and a Hockney exhibition and also the rather splendid Yorkshire Sculpture park.

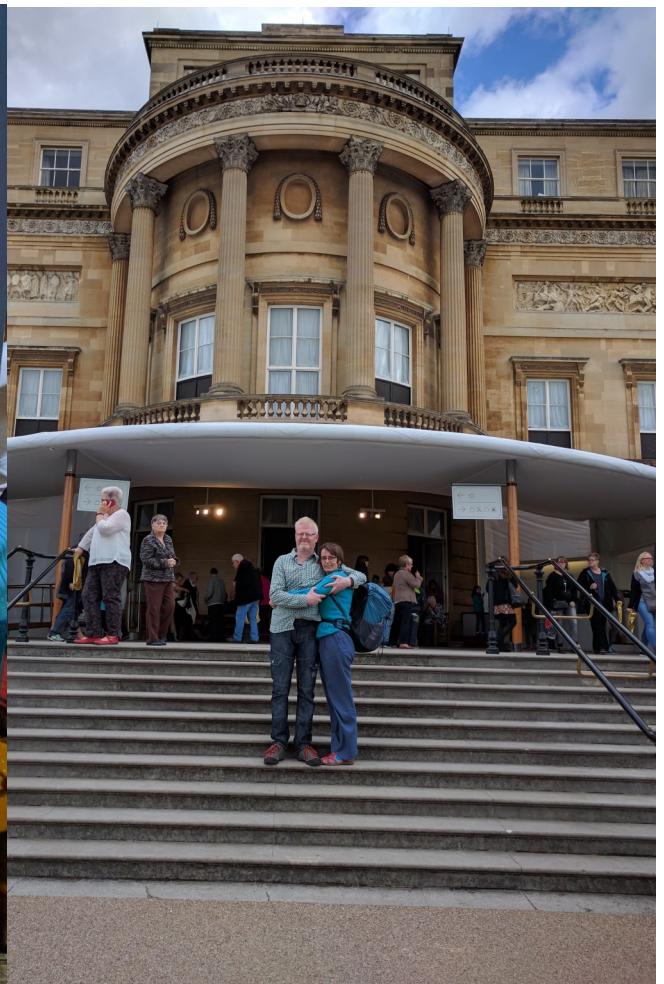
The reason behind timing of this trip was so we could attend David and Helen's wedding. Its been a while since I've been to a wedding (its my age) but it was a delightful day, lots of chatting to





Steph's family. Its always affecting to see a couple set off into the bright optimism of a wedding and the day seemed to go off without a hitch.

Manchester may have looked like London but we went down to the real thing and actually had a weekend being tourists. We even went round Buckingham Palace. I thought it was pretty good value for money and the audio tour was great though Prince Charles' claim that it was a family house took some believing. The diamond encrusted



Andy Warhol picture of the queen was particularly striking how many people have that at the top of the stairs? We went out in swinging Brixton which was very colourful though not as colourful as Paul's baking. I think that the time in London was the time that felt most like a holiday.

We did fly across to France to see Steph's father. Now France seemed so much more familiar than Manchester. It was nice to see Villereal again and to eat lots of cheese. I think the combination of cheese and lack of exercise after my accident has had an effect on



my waistline.
We did get to see lots of friends, alas much of the meetings were over food which also hasn't helped the



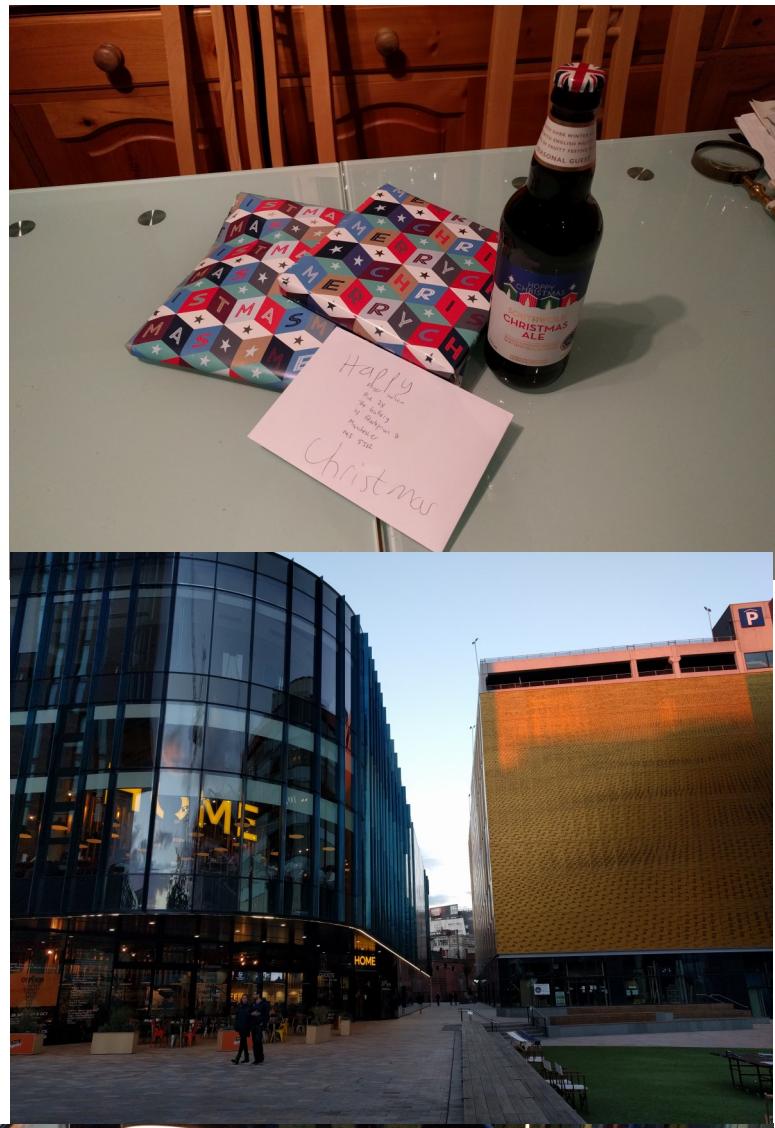
waistline, well I will just have to get more exercise now we are back. Its good to see how people are progressing as we all try and work out how we are going to get to retire given all the changes in the world and pensions.

Its quite odd that we did get to go to the John Rylands library, this place has been here all the time I lived in Manchester and yet I have never been here, its such an exceptional place.

When I was a student in Manchester
I used



to go to Cornerhouse, the independent cinema, it has merged with the Library Theatre to produce HOME. We went to see a very good Iranian film there and also booked it for our last meal. We had a huge table and it was a very pleasant night. Then we were off again, leaving Christmas presents for Roger and baking a



Christmas cake for Mum.

Back home. And we are very keen on just having time at home and sitting on the deck listening to the cricket with a G&T. I have even revisited the scene of my accident, though they appear to have painted the float white and put a sign on it so it does seem easier to spot than before.

