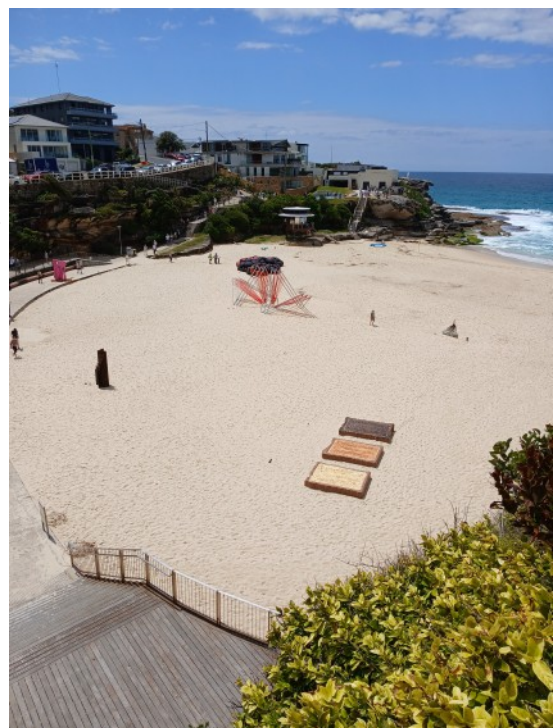
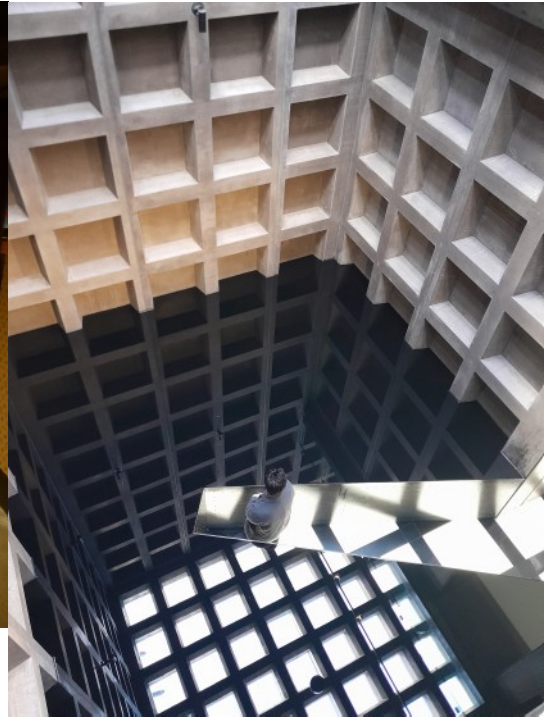


Well its the summer, and this summer seems to have arrived suddenly. In some ways that's because of the weather and also we did rather go and meet summer by going to Australia in November. We met up with Steph's sister Caroline and two of her walking buddies in Australia, we did arrange this, we didn't just bump into them, Australia isn't that small. Caroline was going to Tasmania and its somewhere we always wanted to go to so we decided we could meet up. After spending the winter pottering around our house it was a bit of a shock. The weather was suddenly hot and sunny and we were doing long walks. There was a very pleasant rhythm to the days, we got up gently and would spend the day hiking and then return to eat and play cards as a group in the evening. We even managed to roll in some of the sights we wanted to see into the weeks such as Bondi Beach Sculpture festival, Sydney Opera House and MONA art gallery







in Hobart. The sculpture festival was fun but very crowded, I guess I now find big cities and crowds a shock. We heard a performance of Chopin at the opera house and MONA was the strangest place I've been to in a long time. Still not sure if it was a building or a set of connected caves and the artwork was amazing, from Andy Warhol to platinum disks of David Bowie via



a deflated tank in leather, and it's a private collection belonging to a professional gambler.

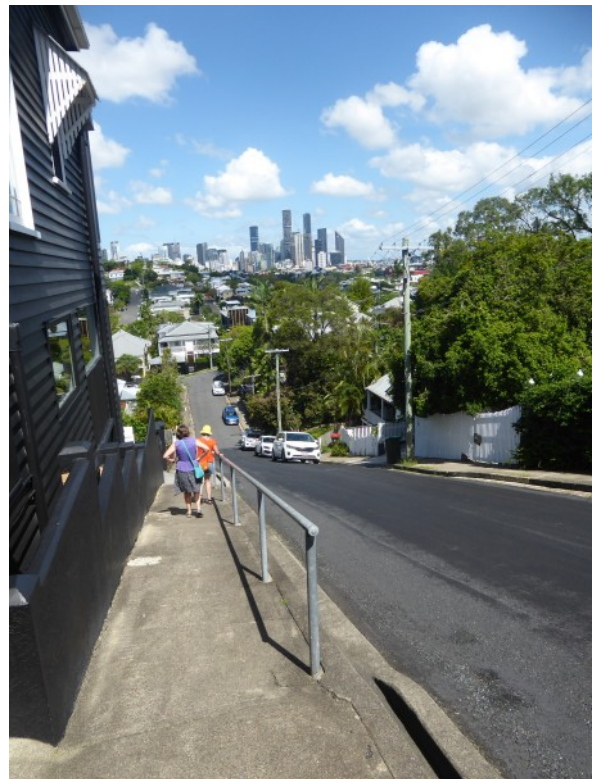


I was surprised how different the vibe was in Tasmania from New Zealand, being so far south the weather was similar to what we get



but the rest was quite different. The landscape and fauna for a start but more tellingly was the history of the place, there is a lot more history for a start, Hobart is a comparatively old city, and also the forced migration of over 150,000 people has had a massive effect on the culture and landscape. Not everyone was worse off, there were winners and losers but a lot of the losers ended up in Tasmania and walking around Port Arthur you could get a feeling for the “hell on earth”

We did seem to cover a lot more ground than just going to Tasmania, we can't fly direct there from Wellington so we went via Sydney and as James and Philippa are now in Brisbane we flew back via their new place. Its odd to see people who you associate with one place in a completely different place, I wonder if that's what people see when they come to visit us. We only had a weekend there but it was lovely to be able to sit on their deck and catch up. We even got to see and listen to Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the







Mood at the planetarium.  
The second half of the trip was “up north”, which in New Zealand means more sun. We went to Hobbiton, swam in the pacific, and had dinner in the Sky Tower. All in all just like real





tourists.

Then just as suddenly we are home and Steph still isn't retired but it's a lot closer, she is now only doing less than ten hours a month. It's a whole new



dynamic, I don't automatically get one or two days a week to write code. I mean I could, but when Steph went out to work it just happened now I need to actually plan to put time aside. This is still a work in progress and I guess we will find our way next year. Some rhythms are easier to pick up, we are back cycling to the cinema, loving the pleasure of being able to take the time to cycle along the river and watch whatever is on in our little cinema ("There's still tomorrow", a black and white Italian film this week).

My view of the weather is probably skewed by Australia and north New Zealand as friends who stayed on the Kapiti Coast complain about the rain but my recollection is that we have had a lot of sunny days and the heart of the summer is still ahead of us. I still find it weird to have Christmas in the summer, as I sit here writing this on Christmas Eve the sky is blue and the doors are open to catch a breeze, and that just doesn't seem right. I have to

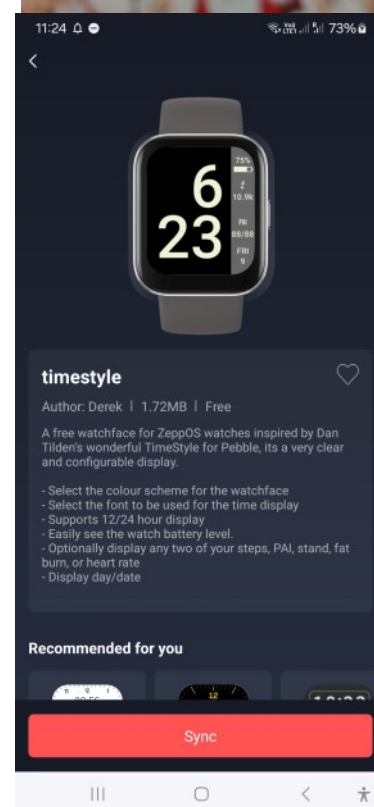
make a real effort to get in the Christmas mood. The advent tree is up with its daily dose of silliness which helps, we didn't know if we would be able to do it this year what with being in Australia but we found an amazing Japanese shop called Daiso which provided all sorts of things from Christmas tree pens to garden ties and holly hair grips. We have decorated the house and have Kate Rusby's Christmas music on and we also have our silly Christmas books (this year The Christmas Book Club and It Always Snows in Mistletoe Square) and lots of very predictable Christmas films, between all of that it is slowly starting to feel a bit like Christmas. Mind you we did go out to visit friends on Christmas Eve and as we were driving along I could see the





Pohutukawa trees with their bright crimson seasonal colour and I did think that they made me feel like Christmas had arrived. So maybe I am going a bit native. The Christmas Eve visit was a very good idea, during the conversation Steph was explaining how she missed having a real camera and Johan said that he had one that was unused and she was welcome to have it, I have a suspicion that it might be her best Christmas present. I have written a watchface for my new watch and I have been trying to get it published on the app store for a while now and when we got home on Christmas Eve after 11 my phone pinged – the watchface had been approved and was published so we both got unexpected presents on Christmas Eve.

I sort of expected life to settle down and become more predictable as I got older but the only constant seems to be change. The transition from work to unstructured time and sunny beach Christmases and I suspect more change next year – its probably good for me and even though I



find I have to get the hang of change I think I like the end result.

Christmas especially seems a million miles away from those of the past, I remember as I teenager playing

whatever board game was bought this year in the back room while Mum and Dad watched TV. I guess I miss those family Christmases but they were replaced by sprawling days with friends and now latterly we have a tradition of inviting anyone who doesn't have anywhere else to go and the contrasting and interesting people is a refreshing change.

Well here we are at 2025. I guess all my contemporaries also have Christmases that are changing as work patterns and family structures evolve. I look forward to meeting up with people and finding out how their change is working out.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

