

23rd December 2014

Right, where are we, at the end of quite a tumultuous year for us. At the start we were at the end of a two year experiment of living in New Zealand and at the



end we find ourselves back in New Zealand on the beach. However, its not that simple. We spent three months in the UK, working and seeing people and a month travelling. I have changed job from writing web sites to building mobile phone software, Steph is now running a huge team and we have had to think long and hard about where we want to live.

At the start of the year Catherine said that our trip to the UK would dominate the whole year and I thought she was wrong as it was only a chunk of the southern winter, however it turns out she was right.

Last time I was feeling a bit sorry for myself, I cannot re-



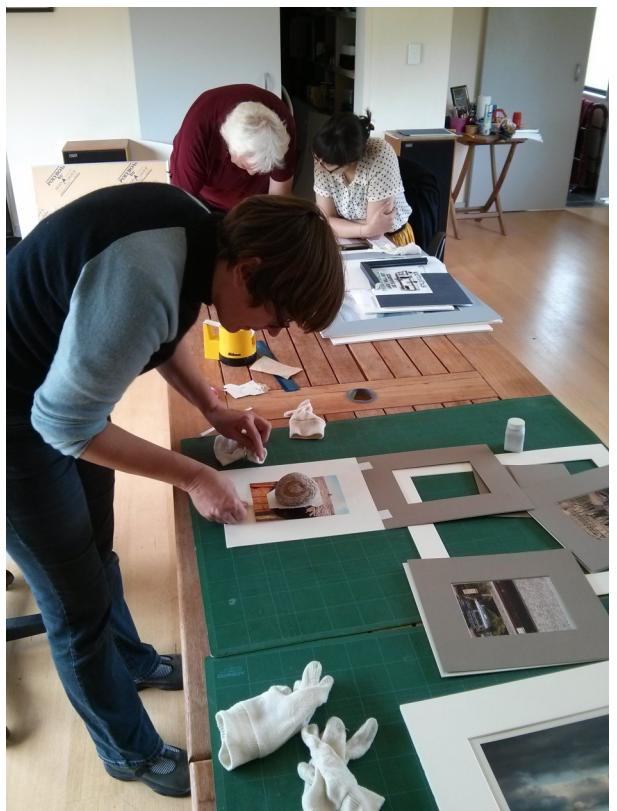


ally explaining why. I think I like to nest, I like understand what is going on and be in control. I think that in part that means that I resist change even though I actually really enjoy it

and benefit from it but this year had just too much change in it. Just before we set off to Laos in August I sat in Roger's flat watching the cricket thinking that this was the first evening in I had free since April.

Anyway things have started to settle down a bit. At the start of December we got our camper van back, cylinder head gasket and head rebuilt. Its quite surprising how much difference it made to me considering I don't drive but even I noticed how much easier things are now we have transport so I can only imagine how much of a relief it is for Steph.

We went to the Wairarapa to do some more picture framing. I am not completely convinced that there is huge economy in both of





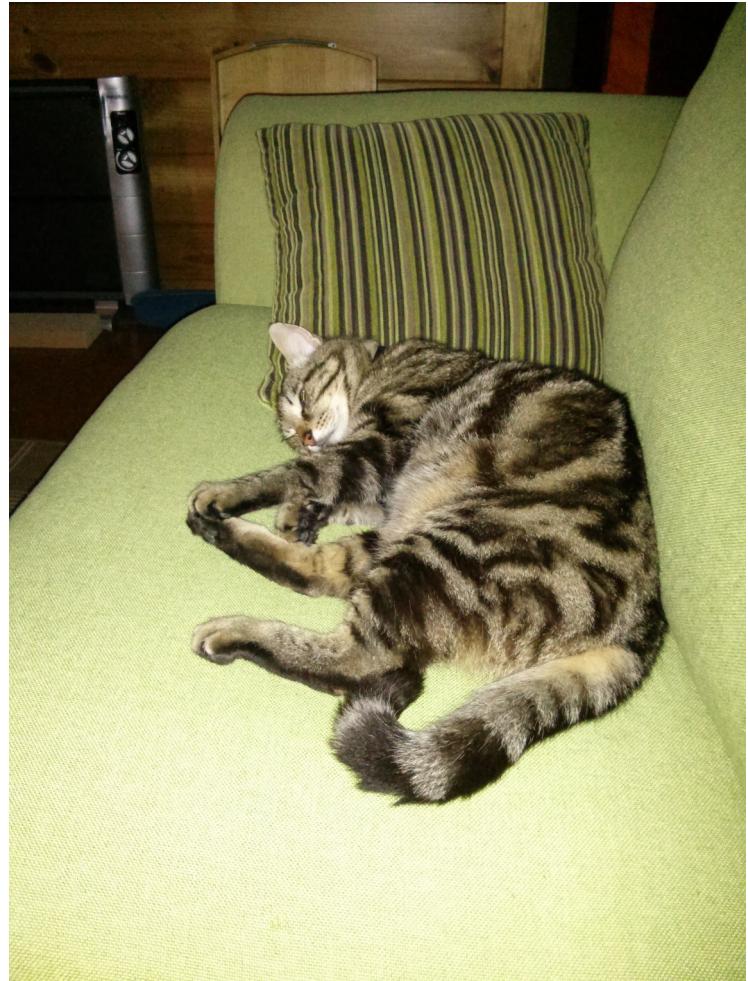
us spending the day framing pictures as it does take the whole day. Its supposed to be 10 till 4 but it always ends up with us all trying to get the pictures

finished after 6. It may not be economic but its great therapy to be able to operate the intricate equipment and create a thing with our hands and then be able to hang them on our walls. We were trying something a bit different this time, Steph's sister Caroline had given her a cross stitch for her birthday and we framed that. It was something we hadn't done before and something our teacher John hadn't either so we made it up as we went along. It now hangs in her office at work.

I have now started to settle into my new team at work. As always at Xero it's a team that is changing and growing, the team is almost double the size of when I got back so I am no longer the new boy. It does take a bit of time to feel valued by the team and to share the common jokes and I feel I am getting there, we have shipped the first app with my code in it. In the last month we have started working

from home one day a week
and I have to say when its
sunny I can start work
when Steph leaves at 7 and
sit on the deck reading at 4
in the afternoon sun,
though sometimes the re-
verse happens and I am
still working at 6.

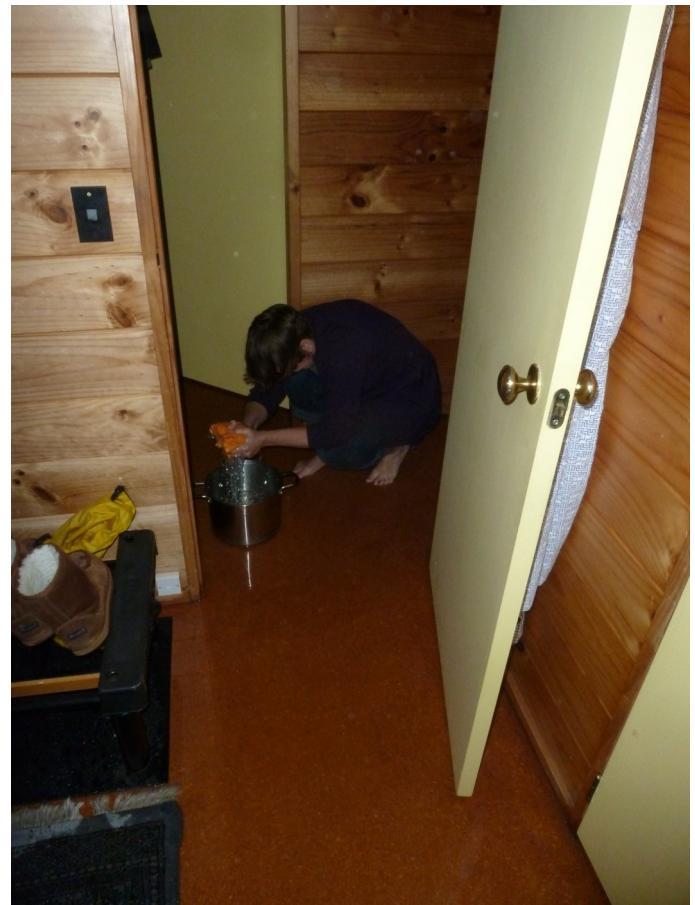
One of the things that
Steph had decided while
we were in the UK was
that we needed a cat, now
that we know we are staying for a bit. We went to the cat
protection league and tried sitting down to see who would
sit on us as Steph's prime requirement is a lap cat. We
were discussing what kind of cat in the office Jacqui
thought I needed a male cat Jie thought that I should get a
thoroughbred and then Tony chipped in with his thought
that we should have his cat. You see that his partner's 3
year old had taken against the cat and was terrorising the
cat. So we went to see Mr Stripey and he is a lovely cat so
we have adopted him. He spent the first couple of days
hiding under the bed but eventually he settled. He is very
much a lap cat and no evening is complete without him



sitting on both of us, sometimes at the same time and he is very compliant. Yes he is a very welcome addition to our life here.

About a week after he arrived he was rudely awoken at 4am. I could hear some kind of rushing sound and it woke me up, I swung my legs out of bed and placed them into 3cm (about an inch Mum) of water. My first thought was to get back into bed and pretend it hadn't happened. A more sensible me decided that this was a very poor idea so we both got up. One of the oddest bit of language translation from the UK to here is the stop-cock, its just not a word in the kiwi vocabulary, I believe they call it a toby for some bizarre reason anyway whatever its called we didn't know where it is. Which is a problem as the house started to fill up with water.

There was much rushing around trying to lift all the electicals and we had to switch off the power so then we had to do everything in the dark. We then were down to bailing until the emergency plumber turned up, which thankfully he did at around 5am. We had a split mains

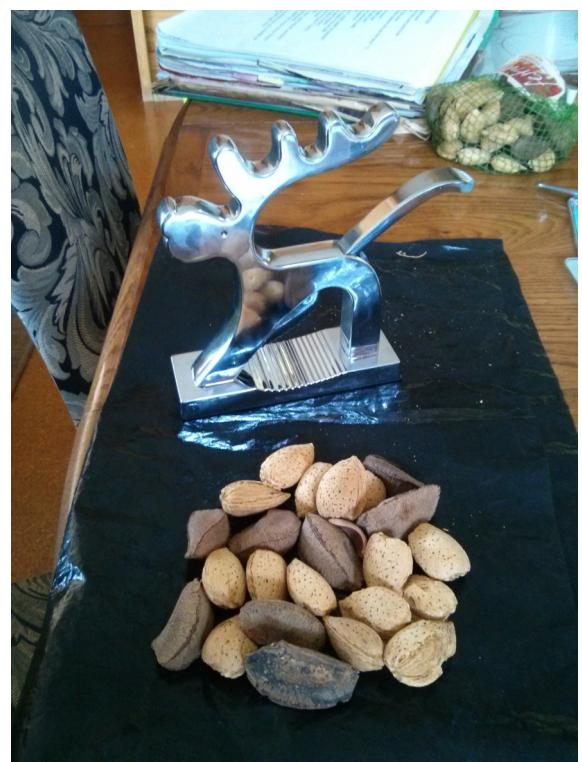


water pipe and it took him about 10 minutes to fix it.

Then another two hours of mopping up we collapsed back into bed around 8am.

For the last two years we have had a Christmas party at our house and this year we decided to do it again. Its quite a nice thing to do. We had about 30 people around and they weather was a little grey which did make it feel a bit more Christmassy. We had cooked pigs in blankets, pizza, Christmas cake, cheese and pate. As the weather was a bit grey most people stayed inside and it was nice to make pizza in the kitchen surrounded by people just chatting away.

Another of our traditions is Steph's advent tree. It does start to feel like Christmas when we get the tree out and for some reason this year I am well prepared. Some years I feel there is a bit of



a race to have thought of and wrapped each present before the day its needed, this year everything was bought and wrapped before December 1st. I bought some Christmas New Orleans Jazz for Steph but that may have actually been a present for me. Steph managed to find an incredible reindeer nut cracker and I got Steph “Sunshine on Leith” which was pretty good but I would suggest that it may give people unrealistic expectations of the weather in Scotland.

I am typing this sitting on the balcony of our room in the fabulous White Swan. Steph bought it from TreatMe and we are having a weekend in Greytown for the Christmas craft market and Santa parade. I particularly liked that they just closed state highway 2 for the parade, so everyone behind them could just wait. The room is bigger than our house, it has a separate bedroom and bathroom, com-

plete with a bath, so we can lie in the bath and listen to podcasts, a special treat. I really haven’t got the hang of antipodean Christmases, I have come away





this weekend without any sunblock, sunglasses or hat, however I do have my raincoat.

Only in New Zealand. We found a note on the wind-

screen of the camper van asking if we would consider lending the van to Mike and Irene, neighbours that we hadn't met before. I am pretty sure that nobody would try that elsewhere because it's so unlikely to work, however they seem like a nice couple and they will lend us a car in return so why not. They have a Christmas holiday planned and the iffy spring weather has got them to look for a van but they haven't found one yet, so this way they get to see if a van is what they need. The weather has been very patchy here this spring, people say that it will improve in summer and autumn after



Christmas, let's hope so.

Its that kiwi dressing up thing again. As December progresses I am seeing more and more people dressed up on the train into work. Last week when I got off at the station I found myself behind Gandalf and Frodo and then as I approached work I was passed by Arwen. My team worked all day in black tie and dinner suit on the Friday of our Christmas do. Steph for some reason I am still not sure I understand



went to a retirement do at the hospital dressed as a dwarf, with my shoes strapped to her knees.

So now here we are at the end of the year. Like I said it's been a frenetic and exhausting year and we are very happy to not be going anywhere for Christmas. We will sit on the beach with the cat and read and



chill, we will potter around and see friends and drink cups of tea. Summer Christmas is quite an unusual thing, something I still am not used to, however I am assured by Monica not to worry about it as she is originally from Sweden and has been here for more than a decade and has still not got used to it. We are going to her Christmas Eve barbecue after work and then to friends for Christmas Day. I am off for the whole of Christmas Steph has to work but we have both got lots of time already booked off in January and February so we are looking forward to exploring a bit in the summer.

We both wish you a very Merry Christmas and look forward to hearing all your news of 2015

Lots of love Derek and Steph