

It's been an odd spring. We went to the UK and when we returned we just wanted to get back into routine and remember where we were up to. Well things have conspired to work against that.

We started well enough, trying to get cycle fit for our trip to the south island, and even trying out a new sport “Pickle

Ball”, for general fitness. I’ve never even heard of the game before, apparently it’s popular amongst older people especially in America. That didn’t sound like much of an advert for it but we gave it a go and it was great fun, a bit like “Short Tennis” I played years ago at CentreParc but

with a hard plastic ball rather than a spongy one. It was good fun and as nobody had played it before we were equally rubbish.

I found returning to work to be good, I



never really know after a long holiday if I am going to find that I have got out of the swing of it and will end up bored and dissatisfied. But no, after a couple of days I was back in the flow, I hadn't written any code for over a month but it felt good to be back with the team and threading together our next big feature. I know I am lucky to enjoy what I do and that people seem to want to pay me to do it, not everyone gets that I think.



We have cut down some of the trees above the house, as the wind blew they would bang on the house roof and it was a bit disconcerting. Any-way that meant we had a load of wood under the deck. So we thought we should have a bonfire on the beach. Well it wasn't the greatest piece of planning. We needed a fire

permit and when we contacted the council it turned out that fires on the beach are forbidden, something about not wanting the city burnt down, what with most of the buildings being wood: spoil sports. They did suggest we could have one on our property. Well “our” (rented) property is pretty much entirely made of wood so maybe not. We did manage to borrow a fire pit, however all we could do was burn last year’s wood as this year’s was all too green, like I said not the greatest plan. We did have a lovely time with a small fire and chilli and jacket potatoes and parkin its spring here but in food and temperature it just about matches up with a bonfire night in autumn.

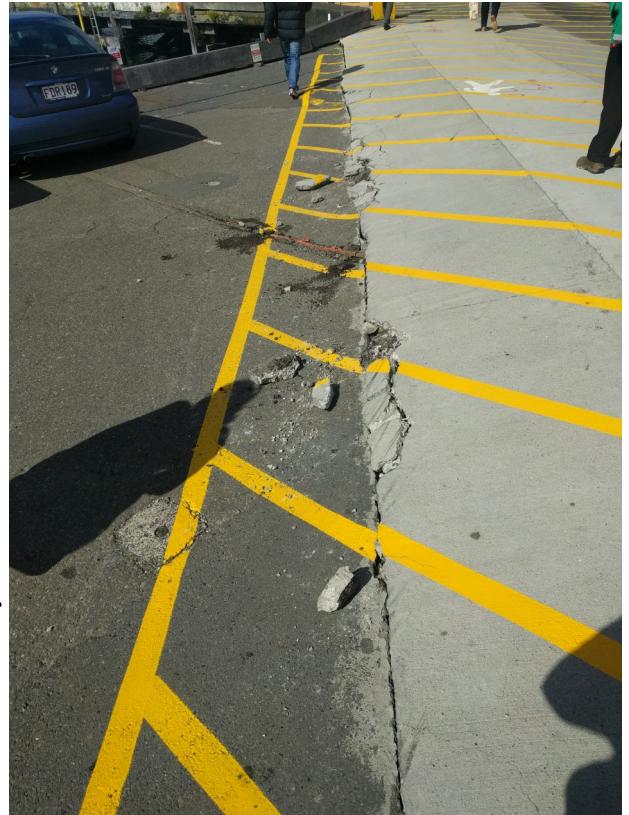
Right, that’s about it for us getting back into our rhythm. The next week we had an earthquake. The joint largest recorded here. So yes a pretty big one. Antisocially it turned up at midnight. Steph waking me up and getting me to “drop, cover, hold” (it’s what you do) as we crouched at the edge of the table at the back of the sofa. This is why all the buildings are wood, we don’t want heavy things above us. The last big one in 2013 was



in the afternoon so I remember it quite well, and it was quite alarming, I do remember thinking that this house will only stand so much of this punishment. I would love to tell tales of how much bigger this one was but alas, after crouching for five minutes I went back to bed and was soon asleep, in fact I am not sure I ever completely woke up so I don't really remember much about this one.

People in the city were more disrupted as they were evacuated in the middle of the night and got to stand around waiting for the all-clear. In fact there was a tsunami alert, but we slept through it. It worked out fine this time but I think we will have to rethink making our phones silent at night, we will need to be able to hear the alarms even at night.

Earthquakes are hard, if you haven't been in one its quite hard to explain it. When there



is a fire the advice is simple: leave. With an earthquake you need to stay in the building as long as it's helping protect you but at some point you are going to be better off outside. That's a hard call to make when the ground is bouncing around. I for some reason don't find them very upsetting (yet), but its an emotional response and some people find the aftershocks distressing. I installed an alarm on my phone and set it to alert me when we get an earthquake over 5, 5 is a pretty big earthquake but the alarm kept going off every couple of hours for week after the big one, its calmed down now, but as I write I have just had another alert, not sure where Wairoa is. Ahh its 400 KM away, we are alright.

We woke at 6 to go to work, Steph very cleverly checking on local radio what the situation was. Work was not going to happen; we were instructed to stay out of the city until engineers had checked everywhere. So an impromptu duvet day.

We knew there was a storm coming, it had been forecast from before the earthquake, even so we were still not quite prepared for how much rain was coming, over 100mm in less than 12 hours. I had a physio appointment for my shoulder and I decided that I would attend as Steph still could not go to work and she offered me a lift.



After the hospital we drove into the city, the rain really was torrential, and after getting to work I decided to grab my computer and work from home, after all Steph was waiting outside with a car and who knows if public transport will carry on working.

It took us 4 hours to get home, its only 20 KM. Sometimes the number of millimetres of rain doesn't really get you to understand how much rain there is. It was apparently a month's rainfall in 12 hours. It had seemed heavy when we set off but it just got heavier, we were listening to local radio who had abandoned any attempt to have a normal program and instead people were just phoning in and describing how more and more roads were being cut off. We almost made it back, we got about 2 KM from home and then a nice policeman told us we couldn't go any further unless we were in a 4 wheel drive. We got out and walked, well waded, and eventually sodden we made

it home. The ground was so full of water that there were many landslides, Wellington was cut off as both state highway 1 and 2 were both impassable.



On our approach road one of the houses above us on the hill lost his garden into the road and then a couple of days later he lost his deck as well.

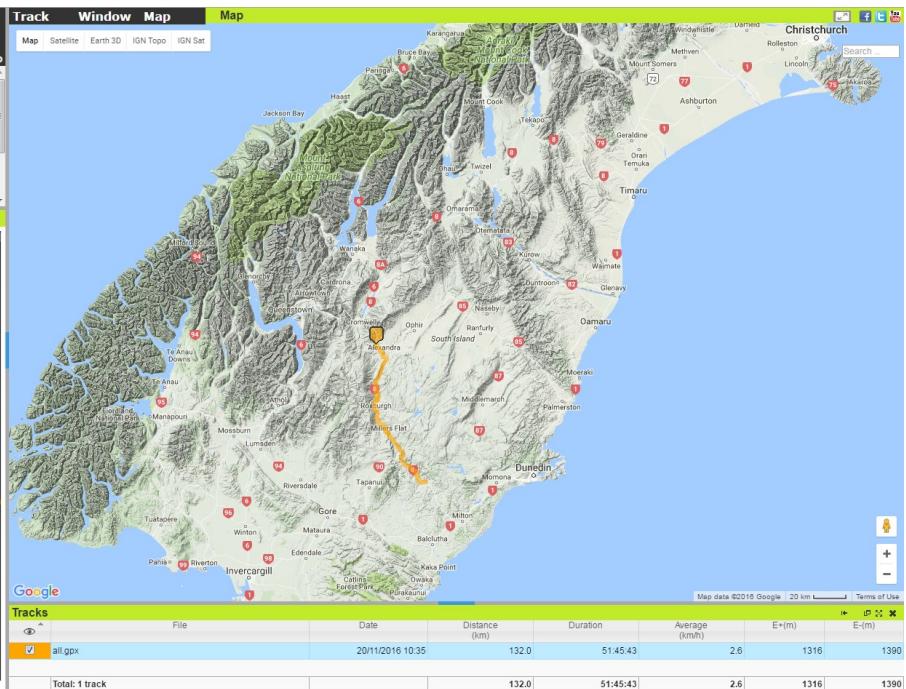
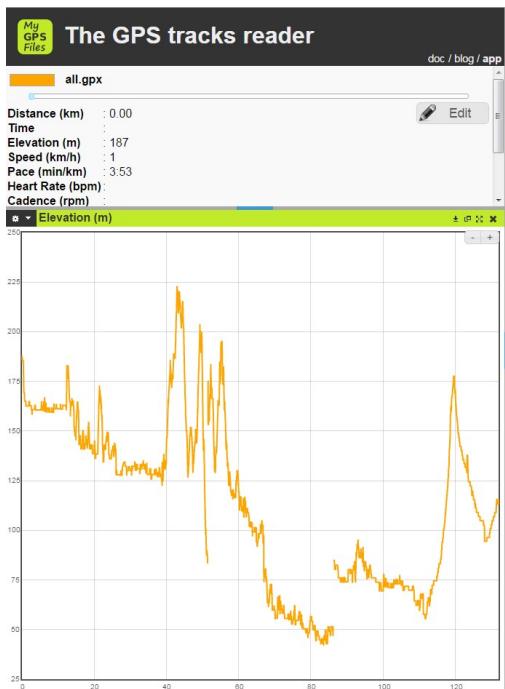
For the second day in a row we were sheltering in our little house. The next day we had another go at going to work and I made it, there was quite a bit of damage to the CBD and Steph's building was one of the casualties. She was out of the office for the best part of two weeks. Yes it has been very hard to find our rhythm.

No sooner had we got back to work and we were off again. We were off to do the Clutha Gorge Cycle Trail as part of Liz's birthday treat. A couple of year's ago we did the Otago Rail Trail and that was fun, it was on the old railway line so it was pretty flat. The George trail is an extension but to that not on the railway and as such it was

quite a bit hillier. We hadn't been able to get much practice in for cycling what with the broken shoulder and floods and earthquakes it's been a little difficult.

The first day was a bit of a challenge, shall we say, I nearly went to sleep in my dinner but either we got fitter or the cycling got easier, I suspect the latter. It was great, a proper holiday, pottering along stopping and chatting to a nice man who was very pleased with his electric bike.

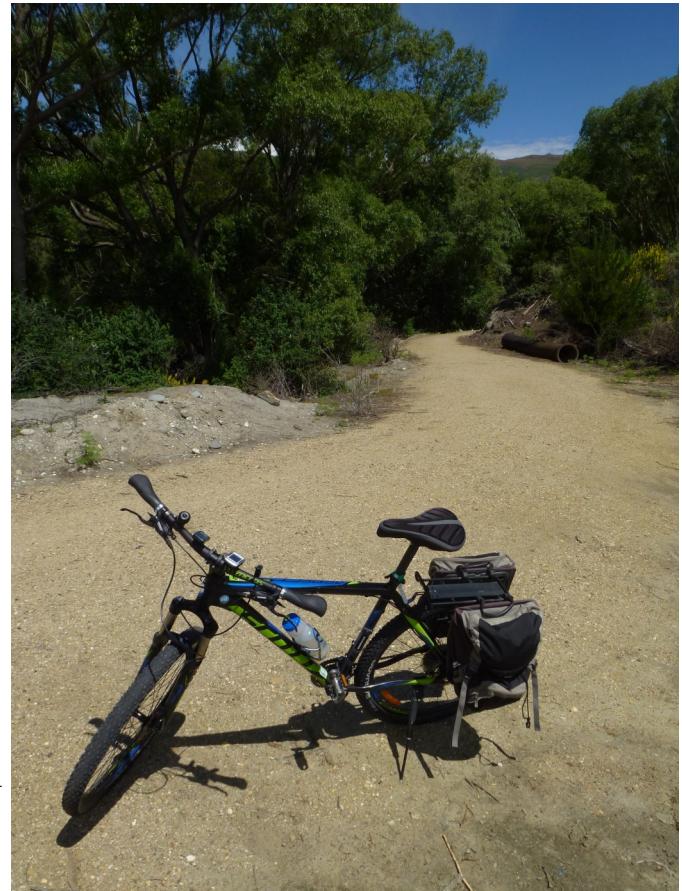
While I was not looking electric bike seem to have really come along, they are not cheap but they seem a lot more



capable, with full off road specs. On the first day we took a ferry ride on a little power boat with a cycle rack on the back and very nice lemon curd muffins made by the pilot's wife. His job was a very strange one, he picked up cyclists and transported them across the river and then later in the afternoon he went and cut back the lupins,

which are apparently taking over.

The whole area is here because of the gold rush. In the 1860's they struck gold here and lots of people came here including a large number of Chinese from the gold rush n Australia. As seemed to be a thing at the time the Chinese were not treated very well and the whole thing seemed like an incredibly difficult pursuit. Hosing down river banks looking for gold, they worked mainly in the winter and in central Otago its pretty cold. They lived in caves. The Chinese though the food was bland and brought thyme with them, it now grows wild across the hills and the local honey is thyme flavoured as the bees collect from the herb.



And then  
it is  
Christmas.  
Suddenly.  
The ad-  
vent tree  
has start-  
ed, many  
of the pre-  
sents col-  
lected sur-

reptitiously when we were  
in the UK. I have got a  
number of “presents” for  
Steph that I hope she thinks  
really are a present. The first  
one was a walking tour of  
Wellington, guided by me J.  
She seemed to enjoy it we  
learnt lots and took shelter  
from the windy squally day  
in a very good hot chocolate shop. Steph got me an entry  
into the Santa Fun Run, a short run along the front here in  
Wellington for charity, in a Santa costume. Two hundred  
Santas was something to behold.



This weekend has been lovely. We have celebrated doing very little. Steph bough a tree and I decorated it. We have pottered and been for high tea (another advent tree present). I am looking forward to Christmas, we are planning to extent the plan of doing very little, possibly with some sunny walks and cycles thrown in for good measure.

