



So it's time for change. There seems to have been quite a lot of change around over the last couple of years. What with us coming to New Zealand, and me doing mobile phone development, owning a camper van, in fact the whole rhythm of our lives has changed. Well there is more coming, just one of the occupational hazards of knowing Steph. Anyway the campervan has been fun and we have enjoyed visiting all sorts of places around the country. However it has broken down just once too often so it has to go.

Anyway Labour Day is the first public holiday of spring. So we decided to go for one last road trip up the coast. It was a beautiful weekend and we stayed on a site right on the beach. We walked along the beach heading for the nearest town of Foxton. It was a lot further than we thought and everyone else was using massive four wheel drive vehicles, most strange. It was the final stages of the

rugby world cup, we declined the generous offer of getting up at 4am with the rest of the campers to watch the semi-final. Anyway they all got up very quietly and the All Blacks seemed able to win without our support.

We went to Daisy's christening on the Sunday morning after the final. Paul and Annie has a little girl, Daisy, at New Year last year. The vicar (and most of the congregation) had been up at 4am to watch the final and he was still wearing his All Blacks shirt as he baptised her.

The final was a different matter, I think everyone here expected to get to the final but

was a bit apprehensive about playing Australia but in the end all was well and the All Blacks got revenge for the Cricket World Cup earlier in the year.

Superficially our life hasn't changed at all since moving



here. After all I still write software and Steph is still an OT but the details are very different. I am sitting here on the deck watching the birds fish as dusk draws in, writing this and listening to Newfoundland folk music. Steph is knitting a rug for us to hide under in the winter on her knitting machine – she is quite the dab hand by now. This spring we have tried our hand at marmalade. It's to do with the fruit, it gets into season and it's so cheap they are giving it away, or people at work are literally giving it away, they simply have too many lemons to cope with. Anyway I have always liked lemon and lime marmalade so we started with that, the amount of sugar seemed insane so we scaled it back a bit. Bad idea, it did work but I need a spoon rather than a knife to put it on toast, consistency aside it the best tasting marmalade I've ever had (I may be bias). We also made some tangelo and star anise. Tangelo seems to be another kiwi thing, I've never seen them anywhere else but they seem commonplace here. They are basically oranges. No skimping on sugar.

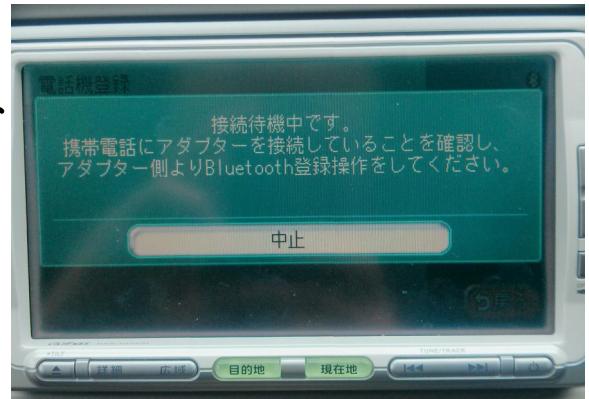


ar this time and its pretty good. Mind you we have made 5.5 litres of the stuff so it may be a while before we need to make any more. I guess that's what I mean, fruit was available in the UK, and people did make marmalade but not me, for some reason making marmalade, cheese, picture framing etc are all things we have taken to over here. Anyway, after owning sports cars and campervans for well over 10 years Steph has decided it's time to have a sensible car. Replacing the engine twice in the last year has been a tad too rich for us so the van will go and instead we have a small bright blue Honda, call Jim. According to Steph he is great, most people would not regard his 1.3L engine as being particularly powerful. However given that Steph has been driving a diesel campervan for the last four years she is having great fun actually overtaking other cars, even going uphill. The different from a 20



year old van and a car only 4 years old is amazing, he is so economical, it does 5.5 L/100KM, that means the fuel bill is half that of the van. The CD

player has been an adventure; I spent a couple of hours in front of it taking picture of the screen and using my phone to translate the Japanese instructions into English. In the end I managed to get most of it to work so Steph now has more Christmas music and podcasts than you can shake a stick at.



Work continues to be fun. I work for Xero, in the mobile team. It's IT company but it's a kiwi IT company so there is a certain looseness and care in the organisation. It was quite small when I started, 150 people, and even though it's a lot larger now the culture is still pretty small-

company. Against that backdrop the mobile team are a start-up within a start-up. The team didn't exist 3 years ago, I transferred to them 2 years ago and we were about 10 strong. We are a bit "out there", we are noisy, boisterous bunch. We have a team hug every month, where we seem to eat a huge amount of junk



food, so much so that last month Bryan went out and bought a whole roast chicken and some buns so we could have some proper food (this is for a meal between breakfast and lunch). We have team meeting in the pub. Hasigo Zake, despite the name, has an excellent pint of proper hand pulled bitter brewed by a man from Salford. At the end of the year we went to a local bar overlooking the harbour and played games all afternoon, my group manager played HeroQuest with us.

We have been hidden away in a separate building from the main group of the company. Now one of the senior man-

agers has left, the manager that employed me, and now we are to be re-joined with everyone else. We are going to join back up with the main body of the company and



the mobile manager will manage the whole group. Apparently the other teams need an injection of flexible thinking and innovation from us mobiles. Well interesting days, we are back at HQ in the bright sunny seats in January.

As the Christmas period draws on I find myself thinking about the rhythms of life. It's funny; it seems that Christmas is particularly rich in traditions and habits so I guess I notice the changes. I think I wrote about this in an earlier letter, part of the reason behind leaving the UK was to shake up our lives and stop getting to a rut but as soon as we got here I found myself adrift from the pattern that held my life together and immediately start trying to build new patterns, new ruts. Well Christmas draws particular attention to this and we have now been here long enough

to have developed some traditions, if you can have something traditional after four years.

We have had our third Christmas par-





ty. Its not a very riotous affair. This year we had about 30 to 40 people around at our little two bedroom shed. Just as well the weather was good and we were able to spill out onto the deck and the beach. We met up with people we hadn't seen since last year and people we both worked with. I think it's a great opportunity to get our

Christmas decorations out, not that this takes very much time.

We have also started to play canasta again. There is a small

group who have been happy to learn Steph's backroads ruleset and every now and again we meet

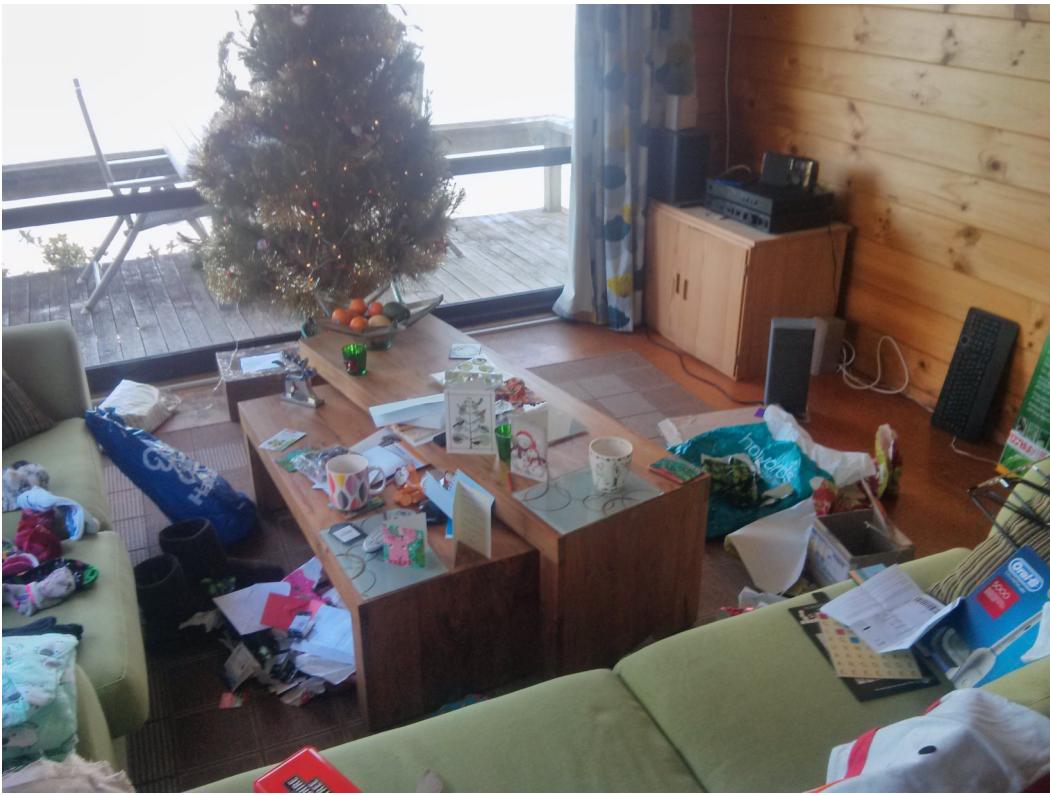


up and play in the afternoon, drink tea and eat cake and generally not take it too seriously.

On Christmas Eve we went round to Monica and Lawrence's for a barbecue, somehow it seems to herald the start of the whole thing. It also seems to mark the start of summer, as with last year we seemed to end up sitting around in brilliant sunshine that didn't end until April. Fingers crossed. Monica is from Sweden and she has been here for over 10 years and she says that you never get used to a summer Christmas. Also being Scandinavian it's all about Christmas Eve, they open their presents and I find that when we are there they sparkle with pleasure. Yes it's a lovely harbinger of Christmas.

Christmas Day was bright and sunny. We were supposed to have Helen, Steph's niece, here. It would have been great; we had been planning where to take her. However a family crisis called her back to the UK so we had time to ourselves to chill and relax. As it turned out this was good as we were both ill from Boxing Day.





On Christ-mas morning we opened our presents listening to BBC radio from Christ-mas Eve. For some reason everything I

wanted to get Steph was a winter item, winceyette pyja-mas, and sheepskin slippers. Not that I am trying to imply we are getting old but it what she needs but would not buy, the dictionary definition of a Christmas present. I mean who does not need “sheep dreams” PJs. Anyway it has made it very hard to find as I scoured the shops and the internet trying to find winter items in her size in the middle of summer.

It was such a bright and sunny day and crucially a calm day. So we decided to climb up Mount Vic. We had never



done the walk before. This is a hill the over-looks the city. It was a stunning walk and we were up looking

down over

the city by 11am. We have been joined by Scott, who I work with, his parents were over in December but now they had gone back he had nothing planned. So we all went round to Marie's and had a sprawling family Christmas meal, complete with pass the parcel and charades. Steph had made an enormous parcel, with 25 layers and a present (or forfeit) in each one.

This is where we bump up to other traditions. Marie had made Swamp juice, I am not completely sure what is in it, celery, mint and lots of other things. Its really quite refreshing. We never have it anywhere else other than at Marie's. Scott bizarrely had not seen crackers before, he recounted a tale of going to a restaurant with his parents and there were “these things” on the table, they started to



unwrap them and the waiter had to explain how to pull a cracker. Scott had never played pass the parcel either – these Americans!!!

Eventually we wended our way home and this was when our colds really started to bite and we crashed on the sofa and watched “Miracle on 34th Street” and went to bed early. Boxing Day was lots of sleeping and putting new presents in their place and more sleeping. And then Strictly Come Dancing.

So our rhythm of Christmas, barbecue, hiking, cycling, and friends was now derailed as we spend the whole weekend sleeping off our colds. Sorry that sounded like I was feeling sorry for myself, its really been fine. We potter and get things done and rest and recover. Steph is still getting better at knitting and I have been writing a cricket



score applications for my new Pebble watch, yes we are having fun.

So the New Year is rushing towards

us. After all the change in 2012 to 2014, 2015 has been about just staying still for a bit. It's been bliss, no boxes to pack and not living out of a rucksack. 2016 looks as though there could be more change. We are planning to be back in the UK in September and Steph is thinking about a change of job, watch this space but the last time she did this we found one 12,000 KM away...

