

Well summer has arrived and then some. It's been sunny and hot pretty much constantly since Christmas Eve. The Wellington weather has set records for not raining and a lack of wind. I know that many of you in the Northern hemisphere have been shivering under a blanket of snow and to them I am sorry if it seems like I am gloating but after the unpredictable spring that we have had a hot spell is much appreciated.

Christmas was a joy. It was so nice to just stay at home. This I feel is our resolution for the New Year, to not travel round the world or move house for the first time since 2011. We pottered and read lots of books, Steph bought me a bread making book and I spent a lovely New Year's eve listening to cricket and baking breads.



We also had some projects that we had been putting off for a while. Most notably the shed. The shed has been a project for some time. We live on the beach and as such it's a steep 50 meter ascent to the road above when we want to leave the house. To give you a frame of reference this means that it takes us about 2 to 3 minutes from leaving our back door to getting to the road. This might not seem that much but its sufficiently steep so that talking while we walk up the hill is a bit of a labour and the round trip of over 5 minutes does rather deter just popping back to get something we have forgotten. Also it does rather make using our bikes a chore. So, given that we have a car parking space that we cannot use (Ewok the camper van simply does not have the turning circle to navigate the tight corners in the car park) we decided a shed would be a good thing to put in our parking space. We store things in the shed that we don't want to have to carry up and down the hill. Now





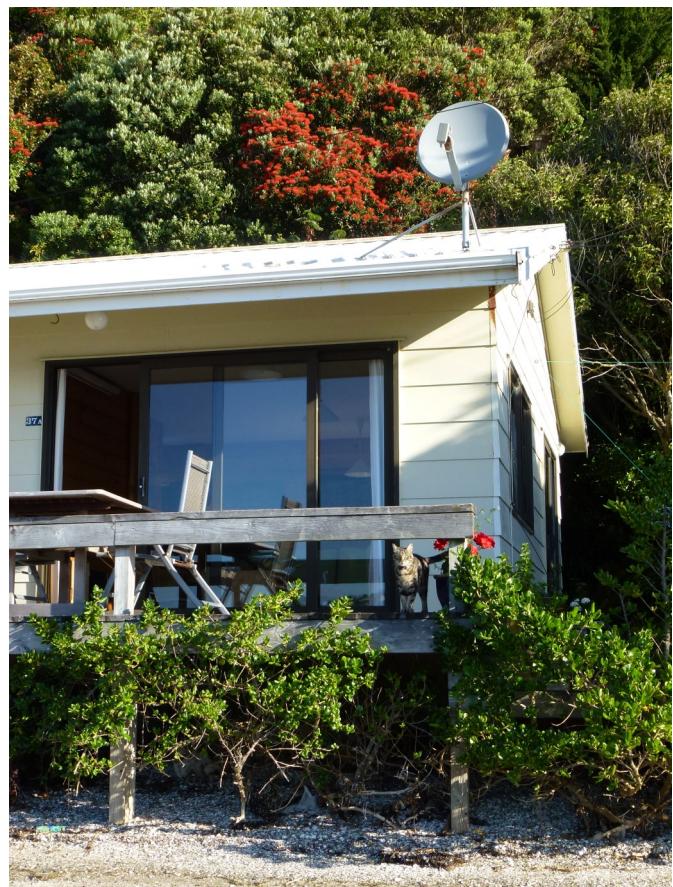
Wellington is windy, famously so, and obviously the shed's position at the top of a 50 meter hill does rather leave it exposed. In 2013 we had a 200 KM/Hour storm which sort of shoved the shed into the bushes. No matter, we repaired it and this time bolted it to the concrete carpark. While we were in the UK the Wellington wind had another go, this time simply ripping it up from the ground and flatpacking the whole thing. Neighbours very kindly rescued our bikes and stored the destroyed shed down the side of their garage. We could not face sorting it out when we got back but the long break at home meant we had no excuse other than to have a go at resurrecting it. Our neighbours were surprised, they thought it was a right-off, but Steph was supremely confident, so much so that they said that they were trying to guess how long before the Wellington wind will strike again. We shall see, it's



now got a wooden sub-frame and lots of attachments to the ground, let's see if it can get through a winter. It's great to have our bike store back again and it always feels good when a job that we have been putting off gets done.

We did manage to get out and about a bit. We were invited to Johann and Antoinette's for Christmas Day. It was very good to share someone else's Christmas trappings and traditions. We even collapsed and chilled in the evening and watched a film, "The Fastest Indian" in this case, and I can recommend it. We got to walk down the beach and look at the Christmas trees. In New Zealand we have these amazing Pohutukawa trees. They are normally green

trees all year long but just over Christmas they go bright red, like some kind of giant Poinsettia but as a tree. The only stay red for a very short time just



around Christmas.

Between Christmas and New Year I was off but Steph had to work so I was able to get on with some of my own projects, part of Steph's Christmas present was to provide a mechanism for her to be able to turn the heater on from her desk at work. I bought a plug that binds to the internet that had the fire plugged into it and I built an email bridge so that Steph can simply email the heater to turn it on. I also got to listen to the cricket from New Zealand and Australia and as mentioned above baking bread.

New Year's eve we invited ourselves around to Sarah and Catherine's for tea and lasagna. Convivial and fun, we hadn't seen them since they had come back from the US and we were back by 10pm. We were in bed before midnight but were woken by people round the inlet letting off fire-

works, very pretty. Paul and Annie live just down the beach, Steph used to work with Paul. Annie is/was pregnant and due to give birth in January. She



went into hospital on New Year's eve and gave birth to Daisy. A somewhat exhausted and euphoric Paul popped around on New Year's Day evening and we basked in his glow as the sun set. Chatting and drinking very cold wine.

In the past I have said that I find the whole hot Christmas thing to be a bit weird. That may be but having the Christmas/New Year period aligned with the long school holidays and summer does mean that New Zealand has a real holiday feel for the whole of January. Indeed with our nine day fortnight and public holidays and the occasional day off means that between November and April I work one five day week. Sorry, more gloating I know. We have just spent a week driving from the Eastern Cape across the Bay of Plenty to the Coromandel. The Coromandel is where large number of people from Auckland go to holiday. It's a very pretty place; we went to the bizarre Leadfoot Festival. This festival is a hill climb event. It appears to largely be run as the rich owner of Leadfoot Ranch has a hilly drive and he wants to invite lots of people around

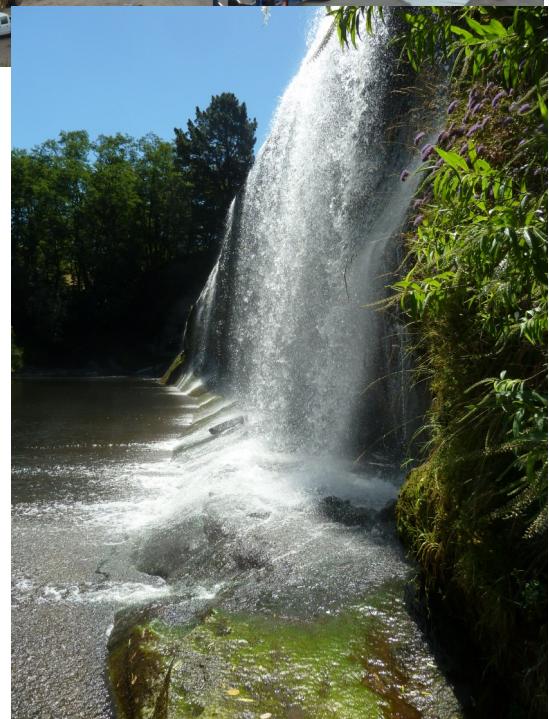




to see who can get up the drive in the fastest time. After the first day this turned out to be a go-cart that made it up in just over 49 sec-

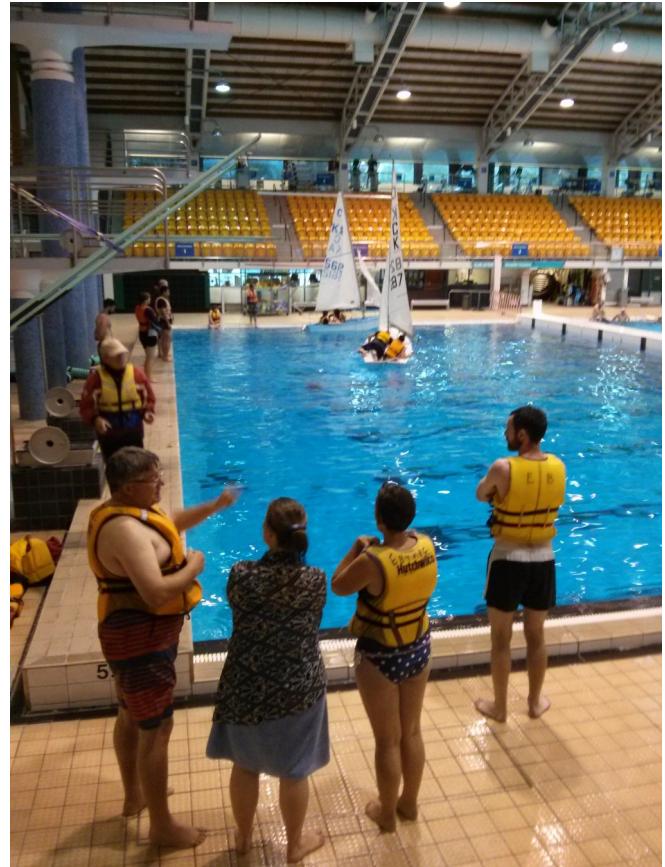


onds doing about 150 KM/H. The maddest competitors were the drifters who just liked to do the hill climb by drifting around the corners generating as much burning rubber smoke as possible. Very strange but it did attract a reasonable amount of spectators.



ble crowd. We cycled and hiked and swam and had a lovely time in the van.

We have now started our sailing course. I've been a bit apprehensive about this, still am really. I didn't really get on with the kayak lesson. It was all a bit shouty. The first lesson was quite surreal as the instructors took two skiffs into the local swimming pool and capsized them so they were completely upside down and we had to right them. It was quite fun and did build confidence. I did say to the instructor that when we capsize we will know what to do. He grinned and just said, rubbish you will just call the rescue boat, probably true but I think it rather undermined the effect. We have now been out twice and I managed to get through without capsizing and did have some fun, I can just about tack into the wind without sinking the boat,



mind you I think the instructor Anabel helped a lot. Steph wasn't as lucky and ended up in the water quite early on. I've not caught the



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sailing bug yet but I don't hate it yet, let's see how we go. Right, the cricket world cup has just started, so of course the weather has turned cold. Its quite exciting as New Zealand are expected to do well and I have tickets for three games.