

Well it's been a bit of a dramatic month. I had a bit of a fall, which seems to be all encompassing but hopefully there will be other things in this letter.

We had a birthday weekend planned. We were going to cook lots of yummy food including cheese and onion pie. Friday evening is works drinks. I seem to remember companies in the UK used to do this a long time ago but I think it's died out a bit. Anyway I think it's very kiwi, on Friday evening work provide drinks, and food sometimes a barbecue it's all very civilised. It's a whole pattern we have a team meeting in the afternoon where everyone just sits down, usually on the floor, and discuss what has been going on, then from about 4:30 we have drinks, play pool, table tennis and board games, yes a nice way to start the weekend I only work every alternate Friday and sometimes I am busy so I only seem to end up going once a month but I enjoy it

when I do. Last month Steph came in as well and we sat with the rest of the team in the evening sun and played "Secret Hitler". Hmm not sure





how to explain that, maybe google it.

Anyway this weekend I was away early as I had a date. I was off to Torpor a very nice Polish restaurant that is local to us and then on to Plimmerton little theatre and to see “Under Milk Wood”. I always thought it was a poem but it was written as a radio play on the 50’s, who knew? The performance was great, it was very well done. The tiny theatre reminded me of Pados House in Manchester, they seat about the same number, wine is \$5 and tea and biscuits are free.

On Saturday the very first bit I wanted to do was cycle down the Tawa Valley cycleway. Its a cycle path that runs along the train line I use to get to work. We have done it before but that was before it was completed. I had been watching them take ages to finally complete the last little

sections over the last couple of weeks and finally it was open.

We set off to cycle there at lunch time on Saturday. And that's all I've got. Isn't memory very strange? I can just about remember leaving the house, then nothing. So the rest of this day is hearsay from Steph. About half an hour into the cycle I went missing.

Steph went back for me and it looks as though I had hit a disabled access ramp to enable wheelchairs to get to the road. The ramp is a large flat triangle on the road, light grey on dark grey. Like I said I cannot remember but I guess that I didn't realise it wasn't just paint but 20 to 30 cm high. It's at the bottom of the hill so I hit it pretty hard and went over the handlebars and then landed on the other concrete ramp. Ouch.

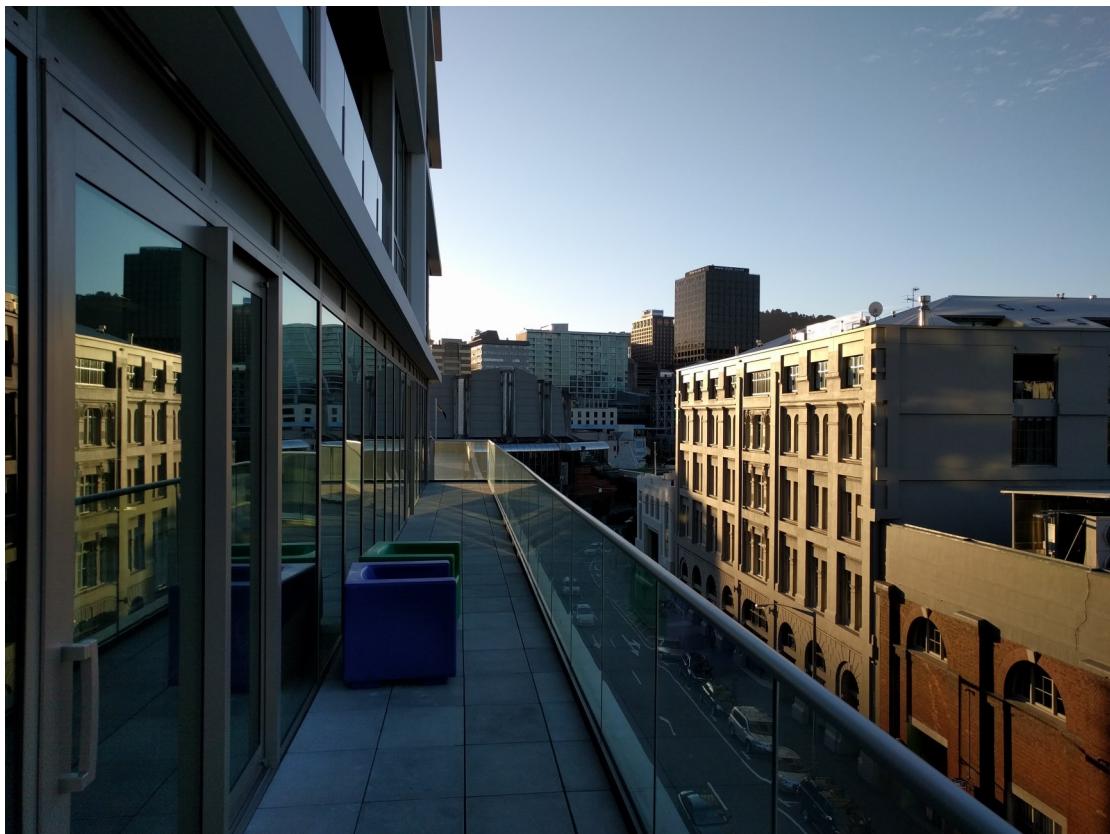
People were lovely. A passing couple stopped and would not leave Steph until the ambulance arrived. A woman from a nearby house came out with a blanket and something soft for my head. Wellington is proud of its free am-



bulance and I am a big fan as well. Most other places in New Zealand I guess the ambulance costs.

I was concussed. Oh and I had 6 broken ribs (2 displaced) and a broken clavicle and a punctured lung. Like I said the whole day is a muddle and I only remember segments and its all out of order. In fact its muddled memory from about 8pm, the accident happened about 2pm so I seem to have completely lost 6 hours.

Steph was holding my hand and trying to get me to relax; I was still babbling and hyper even though I was on morphine. I was transferred to a ward at about 10 pm, I was desperate to stay on the trolley and not be transferred to a bed, I really wanted to avoid being hoisted. They were very good and it only hurt a lot.

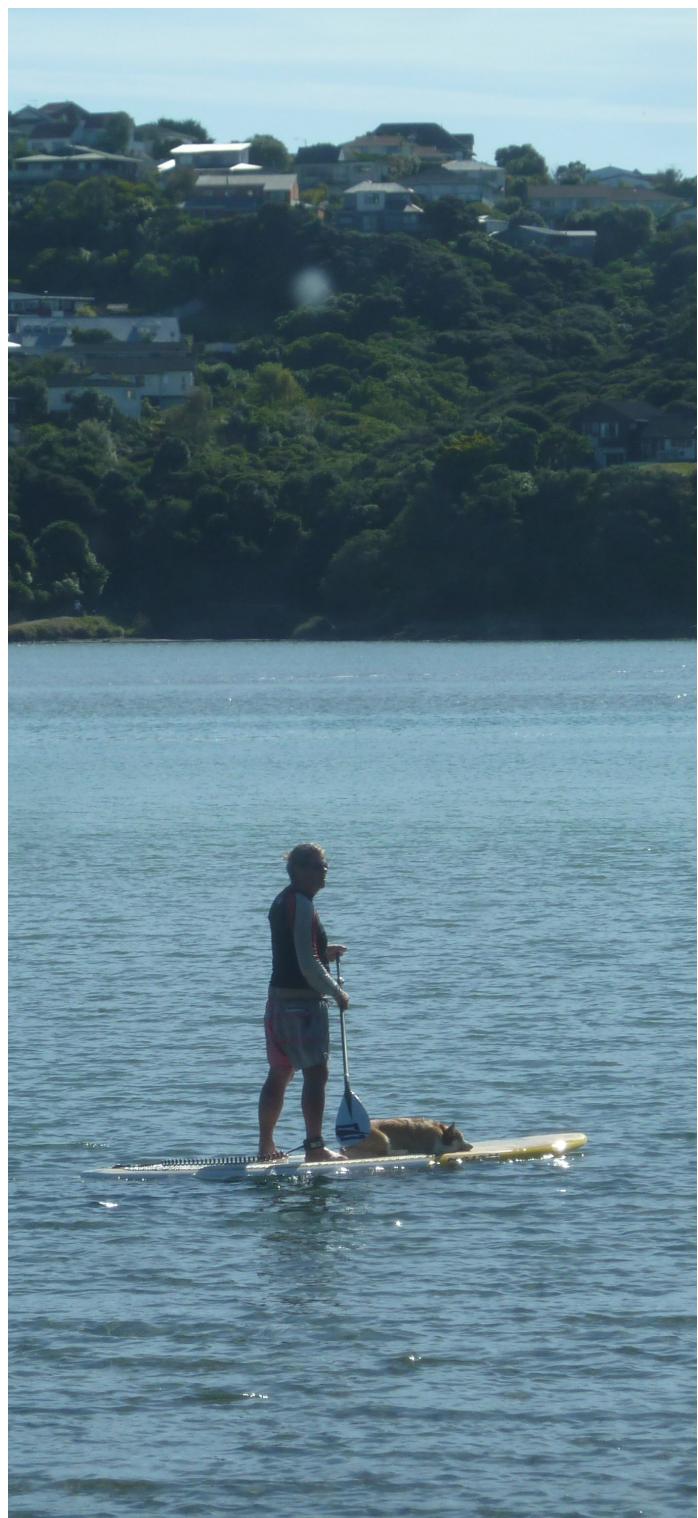


Antoinette and Johan took Steph home (no car, just a bike) and they walked her down the hill and

gave her soup to eat. It never occurred to me that Steph would be distressed – it all me me me.

So Sunday, my birthday dawned, early. Very early. In fact the night shift decided that the doctors would need my second X-ray to see if my lung had healed so took me down to X-ray at 6:30am to avoid the rush. Turns out that everyone had the same plan and X-ray was busy. Every time they need to do anything to me they dose me up with morphine beforehand.

The staff are great. Jan arrived at 7am and was going to be bright and happy and talk to every patient and nobody was going to feel sorry for themselves. It's all well and good to have to go to work super early on a Sunday but to then be manically happy about it seems incredible. It was bizarrely fun. Because I was on a cardio-thoracic ward it was a team effort to try and work out how to fit me



for a sling.

My birthday treat was the start of the cricket season. Steph brought my phone and headphones into the hospital and if I could not sleep, and it was a bit tricky at times then I could listen to Lancashire doing very well against Notts.

My plan was to escape. Yes I was pretty beaten up but everything would heal and I hadn't done any permanent damage. In fact there wasn't a lot that they could do for me at the hospital, everything would heal on its own, they even don't bother to set collar bones as they sort themselves out. I just needed to get me pain under control and prove I was capable of normal ADL (activities of daily living). Washing myself, going to the loo and getting up and down stairs. So I had a mission I would prove I could do all of

those and
then I was
free.

New doctor
on Monday
and he was
not happy
with my
plan. He



wanted me to cough. Hmm my body is not keen on that, in fact I could not even force it to do it. He wanted me on IV antibiotics. I played dumb and asked the nurse if could take pills instead and she said she would see what could be done. Eventually an important looking man in a suit arrived at the foot of my bed. Luckily I was sat on my chair looking like I wanted to go home. He seemed far more interested in my notes than me. When he asked how I was and I said that I had discovered that I could not fly he just looked baffled. Hmm, time to behave like an adult and try and convince him I'm not mad. Two minutes later he nods and says he thinks I can go home. After that it's all just paperwork. Mind you it still takes 3 hours and then a very careful walk down the hill to the beach followed by a two and a half hour nap.

I still don't know why I was so motivated to get out of hospital and get home. I mean it was nice enough at the hospital and the powered remote control bed was fantastic and everyone was helpful and kind but I guess I wanted to put it behind me, I wanted to get well and the first part was to be at home. Mind you it did also remind me it could take a little bit of time to get well. It takes lots of pain meds and about 5 minutes to just get out of bed in the morning. I guess that this is a lot of what mum has to cope with every day and if she can do it without complaining

then so can I

It was easier and at home and I am getting better. My pattern is that I am working 4 hours a day, I can work from home, and then I have an afternoon nap and then I play a game to see if I can walk up the hill at just the right time to meet Steph after work.

It is all encompassing. I am torn in the sense that I want there to be other things in life but it's so much the largest thing that happened recently that I end up thinking and talking about it again. Like those 24 hour news programs that go on when a global event happens I am desperate for news even when there isn't any.

Other things do happen. We can play bridge and also for Christmas I got Steph tickets to go and see The Proclaimers, they were very good and it was a fun evening. It did



suit my current state in that it was a quite gentle concert, some people did dance a bit but it wasn't required.



The planned birthday event obviously could not go ahead but we did manage to rearrange for the week afterwards and it was a beautiful sunny day and they were even kind enough to let me win at cards.



Regular exercise is a good thing, apparently, and I can now walk reasonably well again.

ble distances, though it does feel as though life is on hold a bit for me.

Steph has decided that she wants to find a new job away from clinical healthcare. Her new style CV is up to date and she has started applying for jobs, it just looks as though it might take a little time to get the right job.

And then it's back again.

At the fracture clinic we had a discussion with the doctor. He said that I could have an operation to correct my shoulder. He went through the risks and they sounded horrific, 1% chance I could loose mobility in my right arm and hand, also I might lose sensation in my chest and I would

be scarred. It seems ridiculous that I am surrounded by a doctor and an OT (Steph) and yet it's me that needs to make the decision; I must be the least qualified person in the room. Anyway Steph seemed to think it was a no-brainer I should have the surgery. So off we go. I have to say, its very easy



to be intellectual about deciding to have the operation and its quite another thing to emotionally prepare for it. It felt incredibly quick, the appointment was on Thursday and we were scheduled for the following Tuesday. I was very nervous and hadn't slept very well. When the nurse took my blood pressure I was high, which is not like me. I know it's a very routine operation, I didn't even need to go into Wellington, they were going to do it in our little local hospital at Kenepuru so it must be straightforward. I guess knowing something and feeling something is very different. Anyway we were last on the list and they were running late so we were cancelled, well I'm not sure I want anyone rushing. We went again on Friday and for some reason I was much calmer, I guess I knew some of what was going to happen. This time I was on the morning list so I was going to be done. There were some exciting new things to worry about, the anaesthetist said that as I would be intubated when they pull the tube out sometimes they might knock out loose teeth, nice to know, when we are on the way into the operating theatre. Also I was cold, my temperature was 35 centigrade, so they decided that I should be warmed up by putting me in a paper cocoon that had hot air blown into it, they raised my temperature by 1 degree in about an hour. Apparently recovery is better if you are warmer.

Right so for the second time in a month I get to wake up in a hospital bed at the weekend. It gave me lots of time to think. I think I have reacted well to this problem. I haven't let it get me down too much and I think I have worked out what needed to be done to get my life back on track and mostly got on and done it. The staff were just as much fun, this time Meg was my nurse. When I told her of my injury she said "50 year old men on a bike, you have to laugh", thanks Meg.

The unbiased view from Steph is that I get a bit directive and grouchy when Ill and I am a bit of a drama king.

This week we have started to get back into the swing of things, we went to the Wellington Food Show which we do enjoy and we have treated ourselves to water jet tooth picks and organic food boxes delivered to the door. We



went to a flat house warming for Scott, one of my team who is mid-twenties and who wanted to escape from those wild

younger generation (18/19 year olds) – you have to laugh. Anyway, the result has been successful, my shoulder is in the right place not and it has felt better from the word go. After I stopped sleeping from the anaesthetic I am recovering much better, I can get through the whole day without needing a nap so I am hopeful that at next week's fracture clinic I will convince them that I can go back to work. It will feel great that my life is starting to get back to normal, and not a moment too soon as we have quite a busy tome already scheduled for June.

