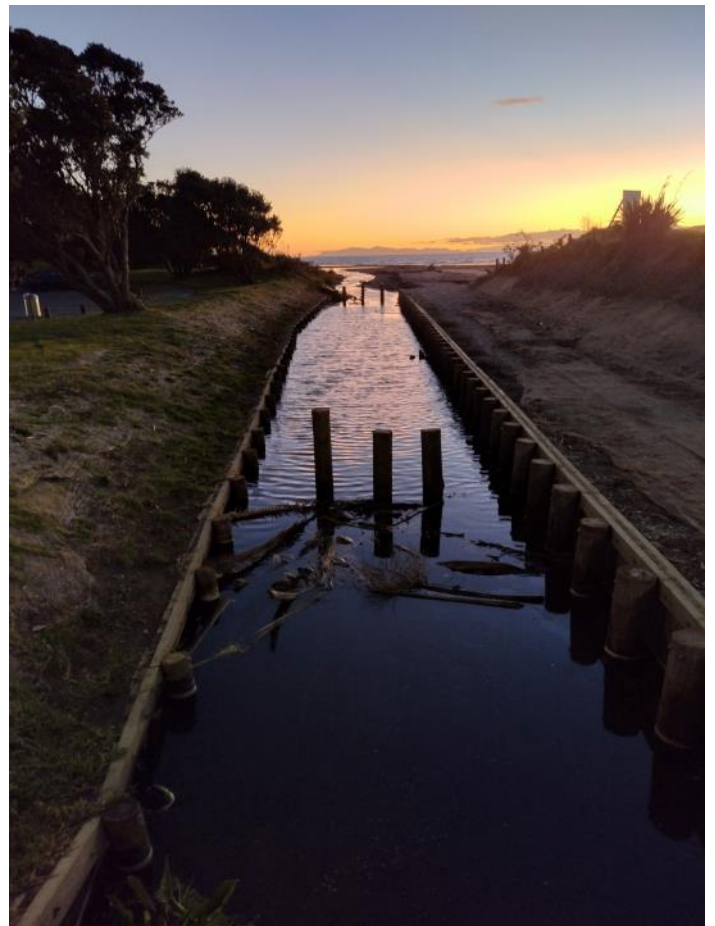


Rhythms are a big thing I am learning. To be honest I guess I have always known it. Well, rhythms sometimes are a bit hard to keep and I get to feel a bit disjointed when I fall out of them. I suppose that I made it hard for myself, we spent two month in Europe in the middle of the year and I spent a fair bit of that time considering what retirement might look like. Then when we did return Mr Stripey dies so all this has combined to make it pretty hard for us to feel like we were in a rhythm.

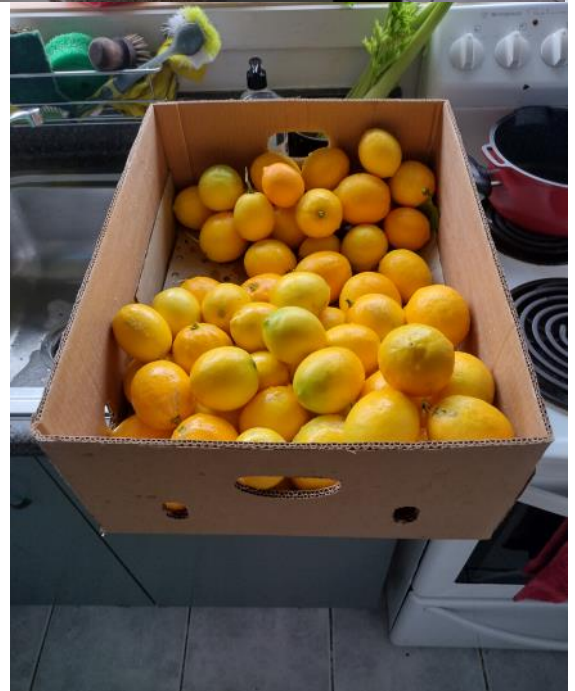
I often write this letter in the late afternoon on a Saturday. It always seemed like a magical time, far enough into the weekend to feel like you are off the clock and still with the majority of the weekend to go. In fact when I was a child, probably less than 10, Dad would feed me cheese at this time, probably largely to shut me up. We had a ritual I ate a block of cheese and he could watch wrestling on World of Sport. I remember this with some fondness even after all these years, I guess you would call it a happy place.

It turns out that what has helped us get back into life's rhythm has been to find our happy places. Steph loves being in the kitchen turning



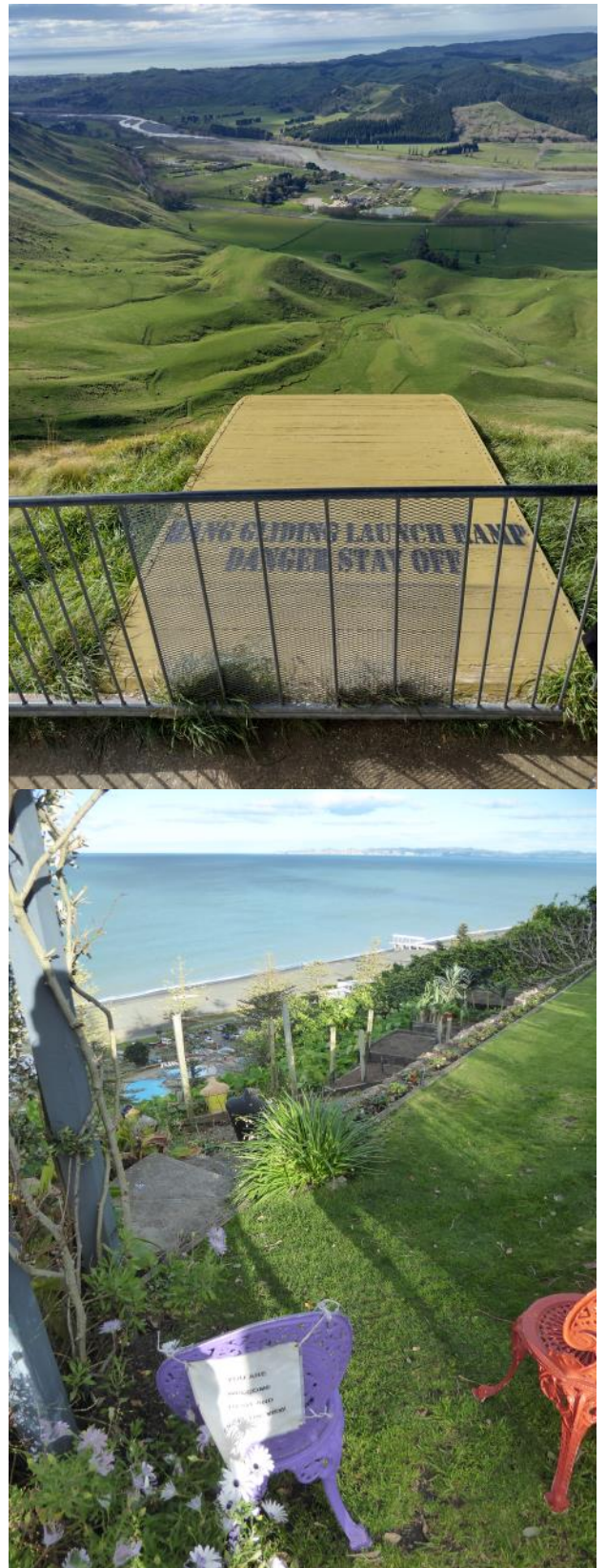


our lemon
crop into
preserved lemons, and pottering in
the garden. We often walk down
the beach for dinner on a Friday,
Steph dragged me along to a fabric
clearance sale and we bought three
bolts of cloth at ridiculously cheap
prices. We went on a road trip to
visit friends and cooked for other



friends, starting to enjoy living in our house.

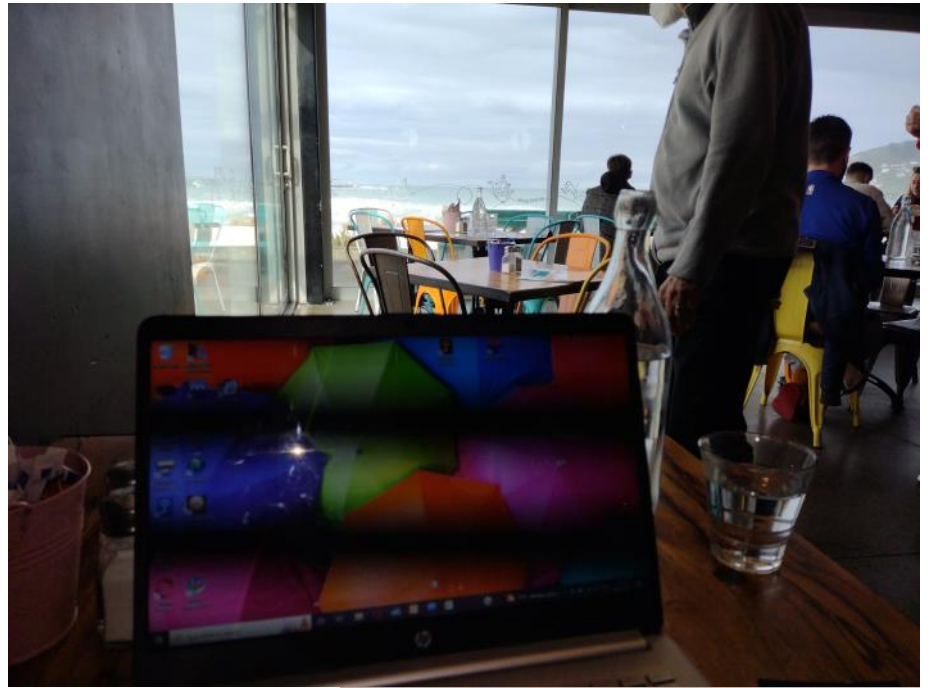
For most of this year I have been going into the office one day a week, Tuesday as it does make the abruptness of a Monday morning seem a bit more civilized if I don't have to get up until 8-ish. Now the bank, in line with some other employers, is starting to get a bit more hard line about hybrid working. It seems as though they are very keen for staff to be in three days a week. I know people do seem to make some reasonable and sensible points about the efficiency of home working but at the end of the day it does seem to be the one paying the piper who gets to call the tune. As a compromise for us "techies" we get to come in two days a week and to be honest I quite like it, maybe because I know that it will not be for very long? Spending some time on public transport means that I have found that I am at last able to make some progress in my podcast backlog. I particularly



like "No Such Thing as a Fish" but I am three years behind on that. Not commuting to the office has had other effects, not just on my ability to listen to podcasts. I also found that my exercise really dropped off, I used to easily do my 10,000 steps but at home hardly ever.

Steph tries to get out and walk when she has a gap between visits, she grabs a coffee and then walks along the from and gets to see a sculpture I didn't know exist, and then later took me there.

Steph stopped her regular job as we went back to Europe and on returning now only does contract work so she gets to control how much work she does, and thus how much money she makes, every week. While we were back in the UK Steph did a course on Manual Handling. The plan was to be able to train people in Manual Handling here in NZ. The work is pretty well paid and people who work in



healthcare are required to be trained. Ahhh, but its not that simple. Steph needs to be accredited by CareerForce and to do that she needs to work for an organization recognized by CareerForce. So step one is to convince one of these organizations to give Steph a casual contract, do the interview and get the job. She has done that now so at least we are making progress.

Now Steph is also at home more we are having to adjust to a shared workspace and a shared lifestyle. We share an office, though when I go to the office Steph sits in the comfy seat by the window where I usually sit.

The advantage of all this home working is that does mean in the late afternoon we can just down tools and do some more house painting. It does seem to be all we do at the





moment. I was talking to someone at an early Christmas party last week and he was also painting his house and he described it as therapeutic. I would agree, we both find it therapeutic, another happy place, which is just as well as its taken six months, though granted two of them were in the UK, but we have finally completed painting the front of the house. Its good to see it with the new windows and properly sealed.

We have been trying other mechanisms to address the lack of exercise. If we don't paint then one or other of us will get us out to wander along the beach, its only two minutes to the beach so we have very little excuse and its so beau-

tiful no matter what the weather. Now we have finished painting the front the plan over the Christmas break is to put in the new kitchen, which is currently in boxes stacked in the garage.



All this makes it sound like we have been hibernating and painting all winter. We have managed other things honest. We volunteered for our local "Repair Cafe". The plan is that people can bring along whatever they want and us



volunteers will try and fix it for them. I volunteered largely to try and help people with problems configuring or connecting there soft-

ware. There really wasn't a great deal of that but people seemed happy enough that I showed up. I did unjam a paper wreck in a printer. Probably the most satisfying was a lovely old woman who had some old dictaphone recordings of her father one of the others cleaned the contacts on the player so she could hear the recordings she had made of her father, the first time she had heard his voice in years. It made her cry. I managed to find a place reasonably local that would digitize the tapes before they were lost forever.

As I am sure everyone has noticed the political situation in the UK has caused some comment of late. In fact as we were crossing the car park to a supermarket a passing stranger who heard my accent did stop me and ask what was going on in my country. I had to admit I had no idea. At the other end of the political spectrum we had our local elections. We have seen this process before in Eastbourne and as we now live here on the Kapiti Coast we decided to invest some time so we could vote sensibly. It really is local, its all about roofs on bus stops and coastal erosion. Anyway we went along to the candidate meeting at the local brewery (the person I sat next to did comment wryly that we



could really use a community hall)

In previous houses we have had Christmas parties. Sprawling afternoon affairs that combine friends and work colleagues and sometime migrate one to the other. We haven't done one for five years so I thought it might be nice to try and do one again. Given that most of my friends know I am thinking about retirement and its not known at work that should be interesting.

Christmas is now starting to ramp up, Strictly is in full swing and the advent tree will need to be assembled next week.