

Hi all,

Well I cannot believe it was May when we last put together a missive. I think Derek and I might both write a little of this missive as lots has been happening. I feel like:

*We're busy doin' nothin'  
Workin' the whole day through  
Tryin' to find lots of things not to do  
We're busy goin' nowhere  
Isn't it just a crime  
We'd like to be unhappy, but  
We never do have the time*

We have been very content and busy but I am not sure where the time has gone. With Derek falling off his push bike he had to stop playing badminton, I did not have to stop going but seem to have been too busy to get there – I made it back in July!!! I continue to have a problem with it being on a Monday but it is such fun. New people have turned up, and I feel very old as I want to comment on how tall young people have become since I last saw them. “Haven’t they grow” has never crossed my lips, honest. Social we continue to eat and chat with lots of people who seem to have much more complicated lives than we have – families arriving, babies being born and having renovation works done etc. Not sure how any of them manage – my



life is full enough, without any of that. We had our now traditional ‘mid-winter’ meal near my Birthday. A reason to heat the house with the oven and sit and watch a movie. This year was ‘Sunshine on Leith’ – the international audience managed well with the Scottish accent – American, Malayan, Kiwi and South African.

We seem to collect vouchers for activities that get stuck to the fridge at Christmas. It was almost sad to see the last of them being used up. I had booked for Derek to come and see ‘The Blue Men’ at the theatre. I had seen them in Las Vegas and tried not to tell Derek too much about them – so

I will not say too much here. The best bit was towards the end when they threw out huge balloons into the audience. They changed colours and we all had to play – keepy uppy. The most simple childhood pleasure – biggest grins on faces. Off course, as an occupational therapist I loved it even more as Derek had to put both his arms above his head – very good exercise.

My other favourite two, get Derek to put his arms over his head, activities have been

1/ Tai Chi on the platform of the station, now we travel to work together we get to raise our arms up, as the sun comes up

2/ We have been learning some sign language – one of my favourite signs is ‘awesome’ – then I found that on my new computer we had an emoticon for ‘awesome’ too. □

OK your arms are not raised far above your head – but we go really high – things are very awesome for us.

This is all out of order, you find that out when you look at the photos to go with the text. We started June with a 4 day weekend, before I left my last job. Our Friday off and the Queens Birthday. We planned to go and see Andrew and Liz in Tauranga – they are renting there, having moved away from Auckland. It is a good 6 hours drive so we split the journey with visiting people who have moved



away from Wellington.

We had wonderful weather but terrible health. Derek had only just had his surgery, to put a metal plate in to fix his clavicle, so was easily tired. My GP decided I had a virus when we got home, a week later I worked out I actually had a tooth infection. So Liz and Andrew got very pathetic guests. We did manage the stunning walk up Mount Maunganui – the best for me as it is really busy with people out exercising and enjoying life. We got to the top very sweaty and tired, and not in a glowing in good health way. Tauranga is very pretty with lots of variety of walking. Andrew and Liz rent a mansion with the most productive fei-

joa,  
lemon  
and or-  
ange  
trees.  
The is-  
sue is all  
the fruit  
arrives  
at the  
same



time. As usual we wittered lots and we discussed both our upcoming visits to the UK.

On the way back we had a short but fabulous visit to see



Andy and  
Di. They  
have  
moved to  
Cam-  
bridge, as  
it is much  
easier for  
work.  
They had  
two very

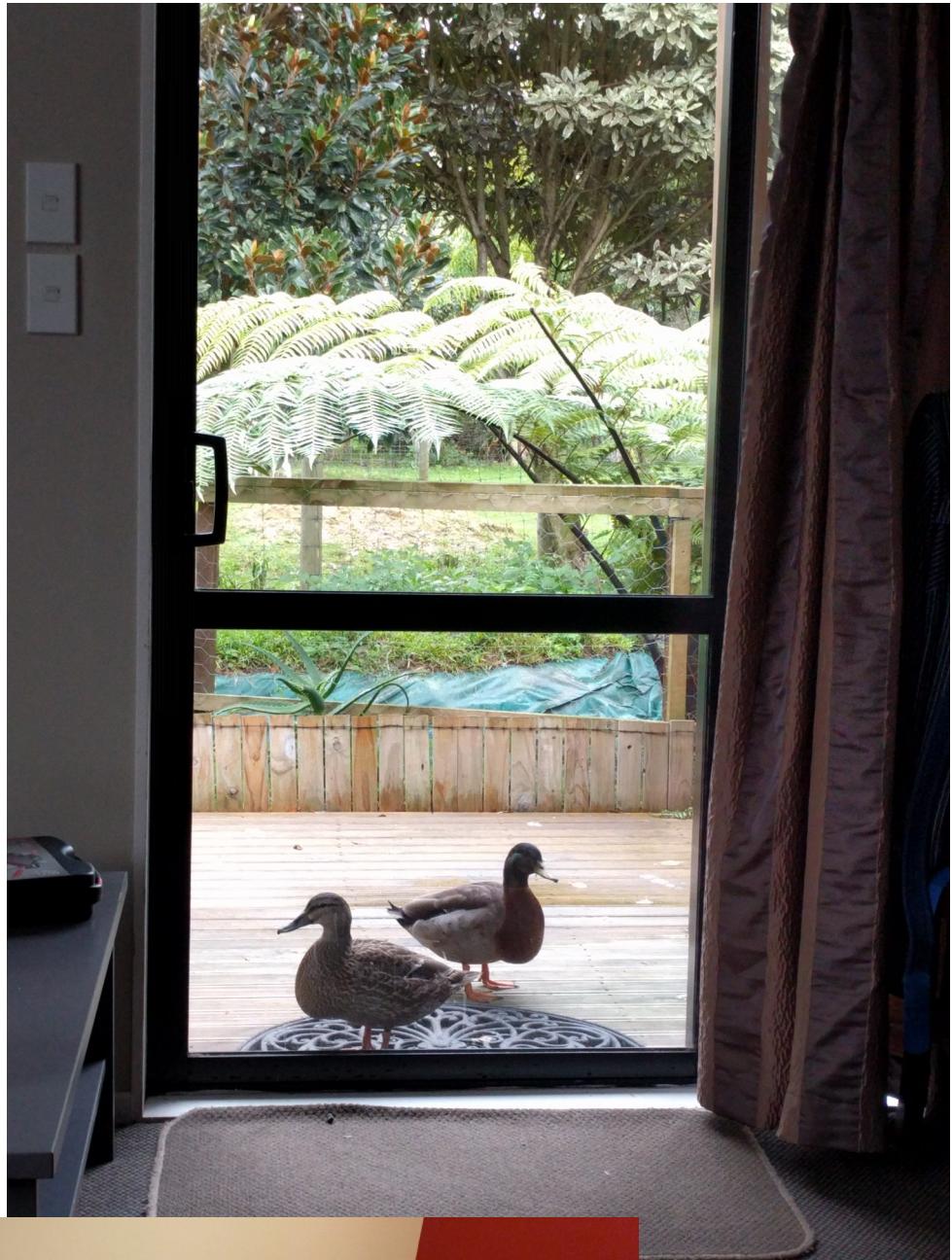
exciting new additions, a baby and a house that is being built. Both quite epic.

On the way back we got to drive the dessert road, past “mount doom” from Lord of the Rings. It is sparkly, covered in snow. We found that if you stop at the military museum for coffee you get to gaze at it.

We were then back up the coast again for my Birthday, Liz and Andrew had brought us a ‘book a bach’ weekend for Christmas – as we were just selling the camper van. A bach (pronounced “batch”) is a holiday shack, often on a beach. So we went off to Otaki, the outlet town by the sea. The photo made it look like a tin hut, which had us a little



worried as it was going to be a cold wet weekend. It was quirky and lovely. The owner was Thai and they had their own bird park. Huge cages of parrots, peacocks and ducks that kept knocking at our door to be fed. We could lie



in bed, ducks tapping and watch deer grazing. We walked on the beach, shopped and

had one chilled evening in. I had taken the blanket I have been machine knitting and my sewing machine to stitch it together. Derek took me for a lovely meal (OK we did have to walk up the state highway a short way to get there) including an open fire □

Then I settled into changing job. Veterans' Affairs had wanted me to start on the 20th June, that only left 3 weeks to pack up my job in the Hutt. It was not going to happen, I had too much to do, so agreed 27th June 2016. Quite exciting as in Jan 2016 I had said I would move job by June – and I did. Those of you have moved job will know how much there is to do when you are trying to leave. I had three weeks of trying to recruit to every post going. I completed a handover document – something I did not get when I arrived – but did not get it completely finished. It is quite a reflective time, leaving a job. It reminded me how much how I enjoyed it, how little of what I



wanted to achieve I had completed and just how huge a job it is. People said some lovely things and I had some really lovely time to talk to people and say goodbye. I have to admit sitting in some meetings thinking how pleased I was to be leaving – my ability to manage were being taken away.

So now I am the team leader of the new rehabilitation team at Veterans' Affairs. We had a two week induction with about 10 new starters. The unit is only 67 staff large. There was a new Veterans' Supports Act in 2014 – this had led to a big change in how Veterans' Affairs works. Veterans are getting younger so they have launched rehabilitation and vocational training, they closed the Hamilton Office and they introduced a new computer system. I think somewhere they also did an office refurbishment to fit in all the new staff.

The first two weeks was intense training, so we understood the computer system. Week 3 I was then doing some of the induction for even more new staff – I was telling them what the rehabilitation service did! By then I think I knew what to say.

The case manager team leaders have 9 staff each, I have 2! Quite a change from 27 at the Hutt Hospital. I have tried for many years to reduce the number of jobs I have been

doing in one role. I actually feel that I might now have done this. The rehabilitation team offer advice and to do that research what the best evidence is. We have to be consistent with decisions, that follow what the Act says we will do. We ensure our veterans are getting quality rehabilitation and services that meet their needs.

So as Team Leader I identify how we do that to a high, consistent quality. There have been lots of things set up before but there are still lots of things to change to improve the transparency of decisions.

Veterans' Affairs is a benevolent service, so unlike health where you are looking for exclusions, you are often saying yes. I have to monitor how my benevolence is working, as I am on the tough side. During training we were given an example of a 72 year old man who was getting less mobile and needed his lawns cutting for him. He lived with his 70 year old wife – my first question was did she want to cut the lawns?? It is an example of how the Act has changed things. Before the new act they would have just cut the lawns, not asked about any family who might do it. Now everything is ‘needs’ assessed. So they will ask what support you have. The other example of my benevolence being at the correct level was for a chair. The veteran did need a new chair – health or insurance would not fund it – not essential, desirable. BUT I was right we would not

fund a leather chair, only the fabric version.

We are part of the Ministry of Defence – which did mean I had three security questionnaires to complete and know how much rules mean to some people! They do all their appraisals at the same time of year!! Now I am glad I have 2 staff not 9!.

The culture is the biggest change. I work on the 11th floor of an office block. It is like a call centre, except the veterans as happy to talk to their case manager. I over hear conversations about the weather and families. Derek and I catch the train together, most days. Some days I go in early as I need to keep my hours up. The staff are lovely – they are part of a benevolent organisation and I think you can tell. I love taking the train, very pretty 20 minutes walk to the station, will improve in the summer. Then Tai Chi on the statin as the sun comes up. Either witter to Derek or read my book on the station. On the way home there is a ‘Le Mans’ style exit from the train. There is a large carpark for commuters, but the entrance and exit are onto a roundabout that crossed the state highway. So this is 2 lanes of traffic going into town and 2 lanes coming out. This makes it very hard to get onto the roundabout. So people carefully park near the exit when they arrive in the morning. They then run out of the train and dive into their cars and race for the exit. It is so funny watching them

every night! I just walk to the beach, listen to the birds loudly singing and chill on the way home.

I go out every lunch time, not brought anything from the shops yet, except Birthday cards and bread when we had run out. It is so pleasant. I can have an hour for lunch so am going to do a relaxation class on a Friday and occasionally be a lady that lunches.

We have dress down Friday – where jeans are worn – I still go for my smart jeans. At 4pm we get to stop for team drinks (normally 5pm). We do have to buy our drinks 1.70GBP for a very full glass of wine, free crisps. Very nice chat and still home on the normal train. I am such a Methodist work ethic person the only week I actually stopped at 4pm was when we did the training. We also have a lovely kitchen, with dish washers and a choice of 7 drinks. Derek tells me that the desk chair I sit on is worth 400GBP and I have two monitors – I never realised how useful 2 monitors would be!

I am of course still having every other Friday off – but this weekend was the first time in 6 weeks that we have actually done that – what with changing jobs and Derek having some (no lots) training.

It is winter here. We have had it really light, but in the last week it has been very wet and windy. The highest tide and

wind lead to the waves washing higher than ever, washing away the board that covered the bottom of the house. No indoor damage but very dramatic.

Steph is right I should write here now but I think I will try and get Steph part out now and do mine soon (honest)

