

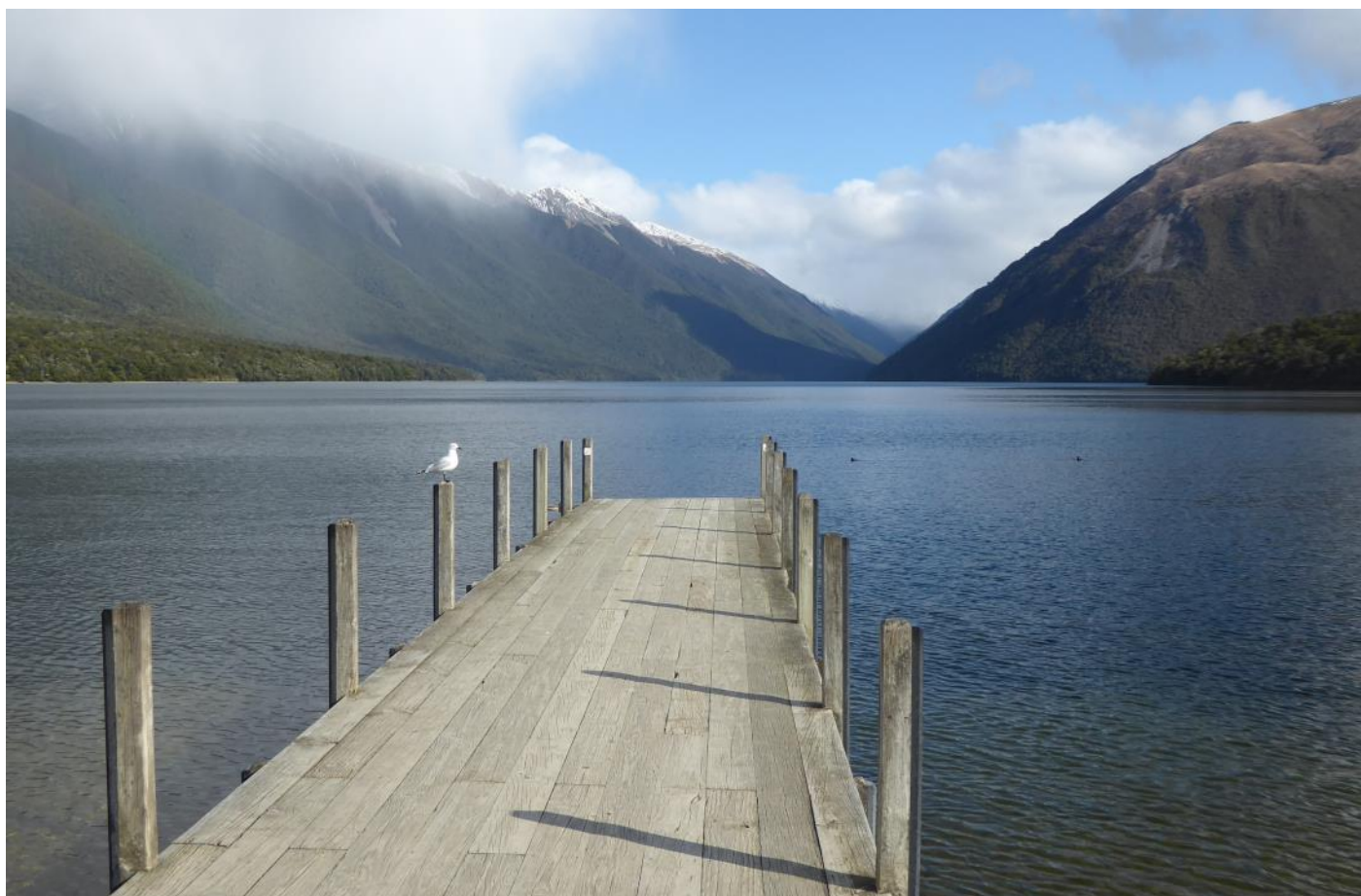


When people ask, I try and avoid saying that we are retired. I know that I am but Steph is not and I think that me extending my retirement to her when I am not the one who has to actually still have a 6:30 am alarm call, albeit usually only once a week is a little vexing for her. However I may be able to relax and stop having to try so hard as Steph is now ready to start winding down from work.

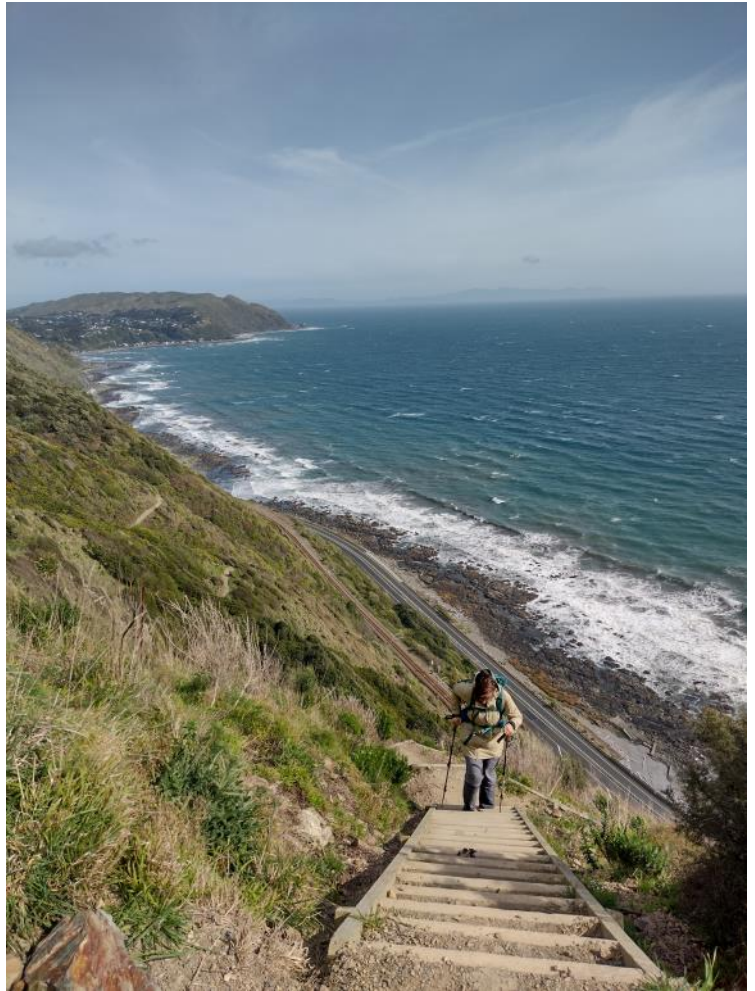
We (sorry, I) have been retired for over a year now and in that time we have done lots of different things, but in blocks of time rather than all at the same time. We had four months in Europe last year and then we spent last spring working through sprint-lists to start laying the garden out in the way we wanted. Then after Christmas we did the Milford Sound trek and padded that out to over a month on the South Island as we were there and, why not. Recently Steph has been doing paternity leave cover and

that has involved a substantial step up in her commitment to work. I guess that it the root of being vexed when I proclaim that we are retired. It's still only three days a week at the most busiest, which I understand that from friends who still work properly full time is not a cause for much sympathy. I think its been quite a shock after a quite relaxed start to the year. Anyway it does mean that I think Steph is ready to stop, she still enjoys being an OT and feels she can still change people's lives but she would still like to stop now please.

Which brings me to waking up. It seems such a mundane thing but it is something that has changed dramatically since I stopped working and I wonder if I am doing it right. On days when I used to go into the office my alarm was set for around 6am, I remember eating cereal in the



dark before dawn hoping hot tea would wake me up. Obviously this is selective memory as its only really dark at that time in winter but even if its light it still feels early, as if everything is hushed before everything starts. Now I have a strange inverted alarm regime, I pretty much never set an alarm in the week but do sometimes at the weekend so we can meet



up with people who do still work. I read somewhere, and it agreed with my world-view so I instantly believed it, that you should allow your body to go to sleep when tired and wake when rested. The artificial constraint of alarms was not a good thing. Having met people who do set alarms because they want to get up and get on, I do wonder if I am doing it wrong, but on the other hand I do rather love the luxury of waking refreshed, of never having that groggy feeling.

It will be different again when Steph does hang up her tape measure and stop work. She is not planning to renew her registration so next March has become a deadline, though she is planning to only supervise other OTs after



we go to Australia in October.

Now I think about the alarm only being a weekend thing I notice that there are other patterns that only happen at weekends, we tend to listen to different Radio stations at the weekend, and pretty much 6 Music during the week, I tend to cook at the weekend, Steph during the week, alcohol is a weekend thing. I had thought that weekends would disappear when I stopped work but its almost like I need to keep the weekly pattern in my life.

While Steph has been more involved with work I tend to write software. I guess I am very lucky in that I spent my working life doing something that I love and indeed carry on doing it even without getting paid. I write Trailblazer with Andrew, a GPS route tracking app, a bit like Strava but without having to log into an account or store your data in the cloud, all your data is kept on your own device. I also write a series of small apps for specific tasks that Steph wants to accomplish. For example downloading podcasts for offline listening, or getting a check-able shopping list on her smartwatch or even an app to help with pass-the-parcel. The pass the parcel app was fun as I just could not find one that did a very simple task, stop the music automatically so I could join in with the game, don't restart until manually triggered and let me pick my own music. It seems to have struck a cord with others as it seems to get quite a bit of use, though unusually most of the activity is at weekend. Anyway I bought a new



watch over the winter and have spent quite a lot of time getting my cricket score app and a custom watch-face working. Its an interesting stretch of my brain to write something where I have no idea how any of it works. The watch is a Chinese product and I was surprised how open and supportive the developer community was.

When I was working one of the team members, Karl, was very much into board games. Board games in the modern sense, he dislikes Monopoly and other older games, apparently there isn't much skill in Monopoly its all about the dice roll. He used to bring games into work on Friday (when Friday was Friday, it became Thursday when we were working from home for part of the week). Anyway, since I stopped work I have tried to keep contact with him and now we play board games twice a month with and his wife. Its fun as we can try lots of different games, he has a whole room full of them, and he does the rule reading and

setup. We seem to quite like the cooperative games where we have to work together as a team to solve a problem. Over the winter we have been playing Pandemic Legacy Season 2.



There is lot to unpack here. Pandemic is one of the new breed of cooperative board games, where the players work together as a team to try and save the world from a pandemic, how topical. We used to play this in the office, Season 2 is a spin off game that is set 70 years later when the world has gone to custard and the team need to try and save what remains of the world. Legacy games are a relatively new concept in that they are designed only to be played once as the board is constructed during play and cards are re-veiled and torn up (yes I know) during the game play. When I say once its one campaign, that is one series of games. We need to commit to play at least 12 games, each game takes an evening, and realistically it takes much longer as each of the 12 games can be played up to 3 times (until we succeed). The game reacts to our play getting harder if we do well and easier if we fail. Spoiler alert, we fail a lot. If the world is looking to us for crisis leadership then we are in serious trouble. But it is



fun.

We have been doing our two-weekly sprints for a year now. We only plan our time together, not Steph's work time, and we use it to do manage bigger projects such as the garden and to make sure we get enough exercise by hiking and cycling to the cinema. The latest phase of the garden project has been to relay a chunk of the lawn. When we removed the raised beds that were next to the house (a bad idea according to the building inspector) we kept the spare soil where we thought we would build our new raised beds. Of course we guessed incorrectly and ended up building the raised beds in a different place and we killed a big chunk of the grass. Its not really a big deal





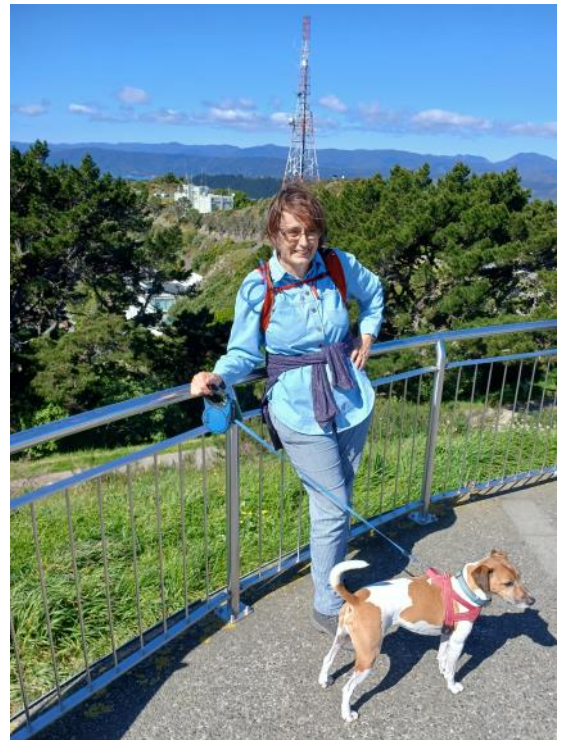
as the grass there was very uneven and as we discovered had large lumps of wood buried in it. Well we have now turned all the soil in the affected area and rolled it so its a lot more even and hopefully the spring weather of alternating rain and sun will mean that we can enjoy the new lawn in the summer.

I am guessing that the pattern of chunks of time spent at home and in Europe will continue but we also fancy traveling as well. We did some of that in our trip around the South Island on the way to Milford Sound earlier this year. However there is a snag. We have all the time we need and it really doesn't cost any more for the ferry or flight ticket if you go away for a week or a month but accommodation cost soon mounts up. We were away for over a month in the South Island and the same is true when we go to Australia next month but even if we stay in hostels or low cost accommodation we are looking at 150NZD / 75GBP a day to be away, that's a lot and our pensions certainly will not cover that. So Steph has come up with a cunning plan: house sitting. We have known friends who have successfully done this and its not just the cost that is appealing. We have not got another cat since Stripey be-





cause being away for chunks of time really doesn't work well with a cat but we do miss having one and many of the house sitting involves looking after cats and dogs. In fact being New Zealand is can also involve horses and cattle but I think we draw the line at that. Anyway its a trust relationship between the house owner and sitter and this



is mediated by a house sitting web site service, I guess a bit like Uber or AirBnB where we review each other. We do occasionally look after Barney and Evie on a casual bases so hopefully it will not be a great leap but lets see how it works out. In fact I am typing this while we are house sitting Barney and Evie and it adds another twist to our rhythms as we are focused on getting two good walks in every day and we get to surf streaming services and do computer tasks in our down time.

It very much feels like a pivot point at the moment, our first winter at home in three years is drawing to an end as is Steph's work. In a couple of weeks we are off to Australia which will very much act as a break.

