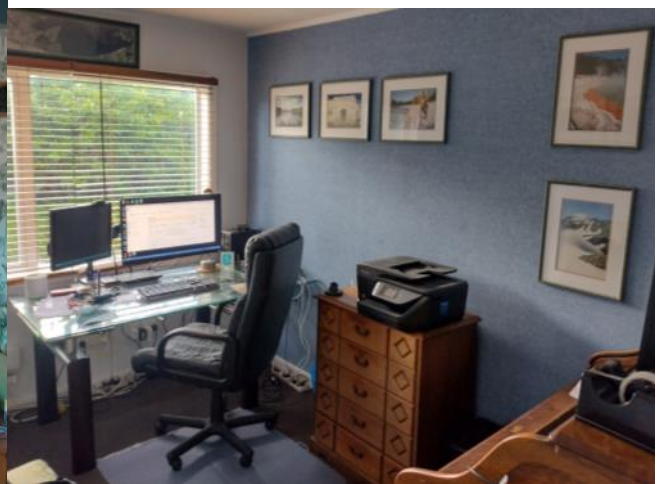


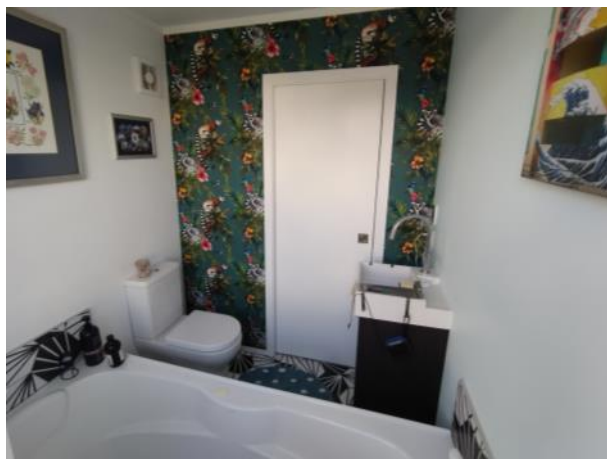
Well hello all, continuing the change Steph is writing the missive; in part as I have more time, turned 60 and also to get a different perspective on retirement. I enjoy reading Dereks letters and add an occasional bit. Even more I love getting email responses from the letter; they give me a richer picture of peoples lives. Always read with a mug of tea.



Since the last time we have finished painting the last exterior wall. Well very nearly as we have to wait until spring to paint the downpipes. I painted them and the paint just fell off, it was too cold. It is a major task completed and now means our sprint list has dramatically changed. Now we have activities that take less than a month to finish. It is just so rewarding. We brought wallpaper 7 years ago and

wallpapered 2 room in 2 days. It radically changes our space. New Zealand is not big on wallpaper, in part as it is about price. Cheap wallpaper in New Zealand is 32GBP a roll compared to 10GBP in the UK. We love wallpaper and it really defines our spaces. It is so long since we





last did it but we are a great team. Wallpaper has progressed and is quite technical. We did not get into the paste the wall technique, still rigid in pasting the paper. This weekend we will have completed all 5 rooms, finished.

I am definitely changing my lifestyle as I move towards retirement. I do think and talk about retirement quite a bit – why don't people talk about it more? Am I hacking my non-retired friends off? I am loving having more time, I do need to relearn pacing a bit as I can charge at a day and end up knackered. I question what I want in retirement. Will I miss supporting others to be the best they can? I have to refine what is really important to me, I think about lots of different ways I could volunteer and need to hone in on what I value most.

When we talked about retirement in our 40's we talked of travel and perhaps COVID and enjoying DIY has made us not think about that aspect. Now is the time to put on the agenda an adventure for 2026, any suggestions of where to go for 3 months? 2025 is likely to be UK but even then thinking of an adventure in Europe (2 to 3 week) in a small area, possibly Rome and the Dolomites.

In part, to support travel we are looking into house sitting with looking after animals. We had a weekend with Barnie and Evie, dogs we have sat for before.





They are much calmer dogs than when we sat for them 3 years ago. It is great to not be at home, do different things and have the dog walking. I had looked on one of the house sitting websites and saw a 10 day house sit in Madrid where you had to look after one cat. Since we no longer have a cat having to cat sit for 10 days would only add to our holiday. To build up our recommendations we will start by sitting in New Zealand and see if it suits us.

So in June I turned 60, so of course lots of people I know also turned 60. I changed my Birthday plans 3 times; initially in the UK to celebrate with the people I trained with, then a large house in the local wine area and then eventually I decided on an ‘at home’;

*"a few of my favourite things"*

You are invited to join us for anything that suits you

*Friday 14th June*  
11 am onwards — cook to "The Archers"

*Saturday 15th June*  
12 noon — mid winter meal and a film

*Sunday 16th June*  
10am to 12 noon — Repair Café  
12.30 — Cards/games and snacks (afternoon tea nibbles)

*Monday 17th June 2024*  
*Actual Birthday Weather dependent*  
walk or art galleries/museums

*Tuesday*  
My first seniors cycle to Waikanae cinema

It was a fabulous long weekend. I received oodles of cards, 95% before my Birthday. Liz and Andrew came and joined us to celebrate. I had saved 2 months of the Archers and loved being able to make ‘faffy’ food. Others came to join in the baking, a great way

to chat and catch up and have time to make food to share.

Saturday a different group of people arrived and we enjoyed the excitement of



people who had just come from a house viewing and were quite giddy. As my Birthday has moved to winter in New Zealand it is the right time to eat sprouts and have a log fire. It was a bit warm for a fire but the mulled wine hit the spot. We had spent the two weeks before watching lots of potential films and had plumped for the Japanese version of 'Shall We Dance?'. Better than the Richard Gere version as in Japan touching a stranger is not fully socially acceptable so learning to ballroom dance has a different meaning. People were very generous in watch a film that brought me joy. My Mum taught ballroom dancing, we are Strictly Come Dancing addicts (even with the recent controversy) and Blackpool Ballroom rocks.

Cards on Sunday was just a laugh. We learnt a new lively card game, Bastard Gin. You all play at the same time so it is very fast. I have played cards all my life, Fridays at my Grandparents and always when we are travelling in a group. It means so much to me, I just love the gentle conversations that emerge around the card play.

My birthday managed to be dry enough for a walk in the hills and then I had received a garden centre voucher so we had a good excuse to go and choose plants. Being a Yorkshire lass I was over the moon to arrive and they had a sale on. I got 4 plants, the best a second Brambley Apple tree (for pollination) at a third the price of the first one. Of course these are now all planted in the garden and very happy. Being a Monday we ate up left overs as finding



an open restaurant is not easy.

The only film we had not seen at our local cinema was ‘The Way My Way’ – various levels of enjoyment were had as it was about a grumpy/self centered Australian walking the Camino de Santiago. I wanted to see it in part as I wondered if I would want to do the walk. I learnt a lot, I do not want to do a pilgrimage (I want to be able to do it at my own pace and take a couple of days if I find a pretty village. That looked to be frowned on as a ‘pilgrim’.) and would start by doing a week long walk in New Zealand. The Camino has become very popular so busy and expensive. The staff at the cinema said between 2500GBP and 3500GBP – not sure what that included.

On the Tuesday we added an addition favourite thing and walked down the beach for dinner. All in all a fabulous Birthday even with the surprise of actually having cards with 60 on them – it is just a number.

We seem to have been through autumn which has less of the rust colours but is embodied in the smells of the fig tree. Winter arrived and it is our first in New Zealand for 3 years. I has not been as cold as I expected but is reported as being about usual!!!! Interesting in the way your body starts to adapt to the lower temperature. The first week of waking up and the house being 18 degrees C had me rushing to light a fire. Now it does not bother me and as long as it is sunny





insulating the house and putting in double glazing means we do not always need a fire in an evening.

A further life decision for me is that it is time for a newer car. Jim jams (my car) is now 14 years old and is just going to start costing money. There is so much more to investigate this time. Do I go electric/hybrid or stay petrol. The final decision is I will stay much the same, except go for an automatic not a manual Honda Jazz/Fit. I cannot believe how few second hand petrol cars there are to buy. I think there are 2 cars in Wellington that meet my brief. Now I just have to priorities test driving and actually changing. Then only this week I realized that I need to buy a car at the end of September because when you buy a car that sets your WOF/MOT date and we are more likely to be away in August!!!!

We had a big adventure of a Mirimiri course. Mirimiri is Māori medicine approach; years old and an Eastern feel far away from the Western medical model. As Derek and I have previously really enjoyed learning together; shiatzu, biodynamic massage and Tai Chi I bought him the two days for his Birthday. It was a joyful time; learning, stretching the mind and giving and receiving some wonderful massage (body work). I partly wanted to go as the accident insurance base health care (everybody in New Zealand gets) will pay for Mirimiri sessions and I do not know enough about them to know who to recommend go – I do now. Treatments are in a



room and people will sing and spray you with sea water and it will be a good experience.

The core belief system was very refreshing and I would describe it as tough love. You are responsible for your healing – they will guide the way but then it is up to you, so you do not have endless sessions. It presents as holistic. Pain is important, which leads to the massage being quite deep and encouraging cold water swimming.

There are then a ranges of treatments. A mixture of; health tarot cards,



stomach and deep massage, reading and influencing your energy and asking you three question;

- 1/ What are you doing well?
- 2/ What am I doing that is getting in my own way?
- 3/ What do I need to do to evolve (progress)?

There was also; politics, colonialism, practices that would not fit in with my concept of ‘safe’ and a clear message of you cannot be a Mirimiri practitioner after this course. There were 26 people on our course and I came away feeling how generous and trusting they had all been. There are definitely past clients I would have recommended Mirimiri for.

From one extreme to the other. Part of being in New Zealand is that I can feel starved of culture. If I thirst for a classical concert I may have to wait 2 months. To mitigate this we use National Theatre Live at the cinema – Vanya with Andrew Scott

satisfying me. This week we have some modern dance. Planning for a month in Australia in November I search the theatre listings for anything. First World problems!

Our final new experience was being invited to be part of a Legacy Pandemic board game. It is a revelation and such fun as you share the experience with a group and you collaborate to win. You have a unique experience and can only play the game once – it will take us 6 to 12 months to do that! This does mean you have to do radical things like tear up some of the cards and write on the board.

At that I will leave you and hope you are having joy and new experiences in your life. Even during tough times I believe there need to be some bright spots. Gosh it seems like writing the letter has brought out the philosophical part of me.

