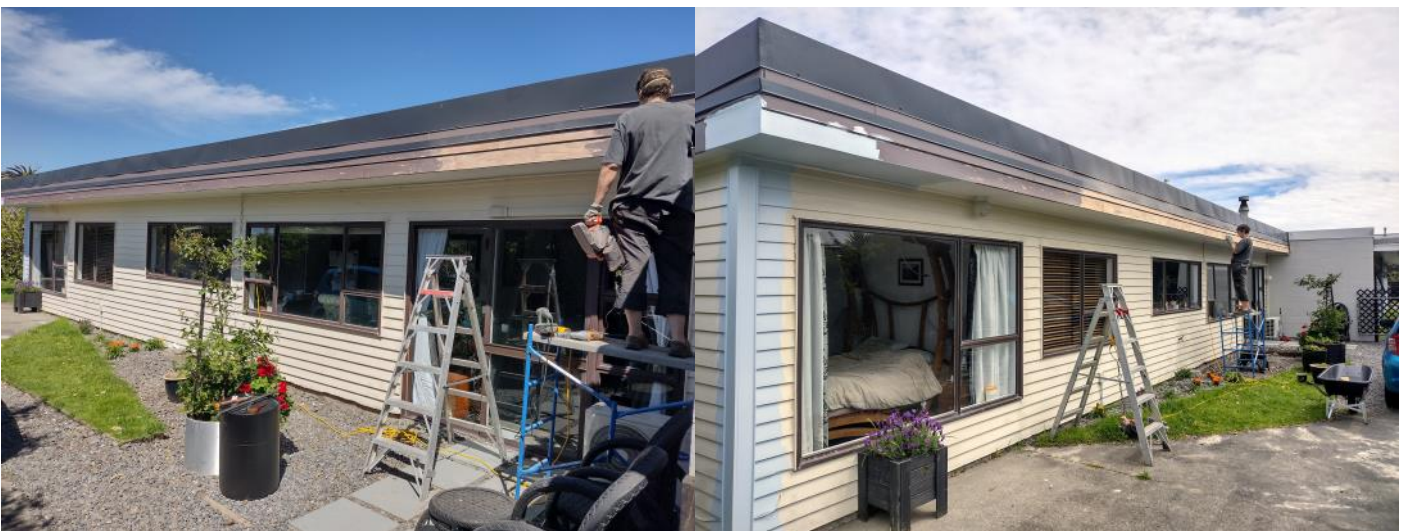




Year One. We have now been in the new house for one year. It feels like completing a circle, we have now lived in this place for a year and seen it in all seasons. We live by the beach, with very much a seaside/beach vibe. Eastbourne, where we lived before, was also seaside but more focussed on international tourists, I guess the Kapiti Coast is not a “must see” destination for visitors but is sought after by domestic tourists. This does mean that our penchant for walking down the beach on a Friday evening has many good restaurants as a possible destination. Over the year we have tried many, but not all of them.

People have been gently teasing us about “the joys of being a house owner”, in that you are always working on the





house, but in truth we enjoy it. We get to work and plan as a team and achieve something together, our jobs don't really have any overlap that allows this, and there really is a great positive effect is doing things, Occupational Therapy is a thing don't you know. Anyway last time we had just managed to protect and paint the corners of the house and move the raised bed, phase two for the house was to paint the fascia boards. Over the course of the spring, weather permitting we started the job of stripping the boards back to the wood so we could check and fill gaps. Paint is pretty expensive here; it costs about 600 NZD for the paint for the outside of the house. Given that, we would probably not want to change our mind about the colour too much, also we wanted to make sure that the base was done properly, hence stripping it back and putting two coats of primer and two coats of top coat on. We decided on pale blue for the walls and the eaves and light grey to match the stones for the fascia boards.

The reason we started there was that we are getting the





windows replaced; they are between 40 and 50 years old and look it. We have ordered new double glazing units and they have been measured and we even have a fitting date in March, though we have already been told this might change. We would much prefer to have the fascia boards and eaves repainted before then, so we don't drip on the new windows, and then afterwards we can paint the outside walls around them.

The lesson we learnt from our previous staycation was to not go quite so hard such that all other life gets excluded, so we took our time and just did what we could at weekends when the weather allowed, we got the fascia boards on one side of





the house done, which was good.

The other part of living here for a complete year is that we feel as though we have now settled and unpacked all our stuff that was shipped here. We have not seen some of the things for the best part of ten years. Christmas means that we got to unbox all our Christmas decorations and we had enough space to put them up. Its fun, and it took a complete day, to unpack and decide where the new place for everything was going to be, the garlands that used to run down the stairs went above the windows and around the beds (no stairs in this house), we had a stand made for the candle chandelier (we don't have any high ceilings). So, like our life, some adaptation has been needed.

Once the advent tree had been found a new home we needed to fill it with silliness. We went into the city, Wellington, for advent tree shopping. Again adaptation is required, instead of winceyette winter pyjamas I managed to find cotton, short, summer Christmas pyjamas, I now have a Christmas shirt as well



as a Christmas face mask, the sign of our times.

Our Covid numbers went up in August, it seems winter is not a great time for anyone. While our vaccination rate was coming up we returned to a more restricted lifestyle for most of spring. Over here it is definitely a tale of two camps.

Auckland was locked down in a manner that sounds quite similar to the rest of the world whereas the rest of the country is more relaxed; we needed masks when outside and to work from home where we can. Steph needed to go to work, her's is not really a remote job, it did make her commute super quite as nobody else was on the road. BNZ was super cautious and we didn't go into the office for a couple of months. Now our vaccine rate approaches 80% we are in a strange place. We are back to having only a few restrictions, we still need masks and to scan in when we go out cafes, cinemas etcetera and we are back to going into the office, but only once a week at the moment. Still it was nice to be able to meet up with the team again. Our big QPS planning session was set to be remote, a three day remote teams meeting, we elected to meet up in





person for the first day and it was a reminder of what “normal” work life might be like, maybe later this year. We even got to combine the planning with board games over lunch. The final day wrap presentation was something where I only needed to be a viewer so, now at home, I perched my laptop on the dining room table and baked spiced biscuits as an advent tree present for Steph, and they say men cannot multitask.



It seems strange to say that we were looking forward to a break for Christmas but I guess this was not the year I was expecting. I guess this time last year with the vaccines being approved I thought that we might return to a more normal year, but not so. Like I said we are still in a strange place we are pretty unrestricted here but the international borders as closed, well international travel is possible but not something that you can rely on getting back from. So for Christmas we were looking forward to a more balanced staycation, we would

combine more working on the house with visiting friends and exercise in the form of cycling and hiking.

We started off by going to panto (oh yes

we did), its something of an institution in Wellington this year was slicker than most and had socially distanced audience participation. The whole event is held together by our local dame who has just announced his retirement, I wonder what will happen next year. On the way back we dropped around to a work colleague's house where he has decorated it with 16,000 LEDs and made massive splash on his street.

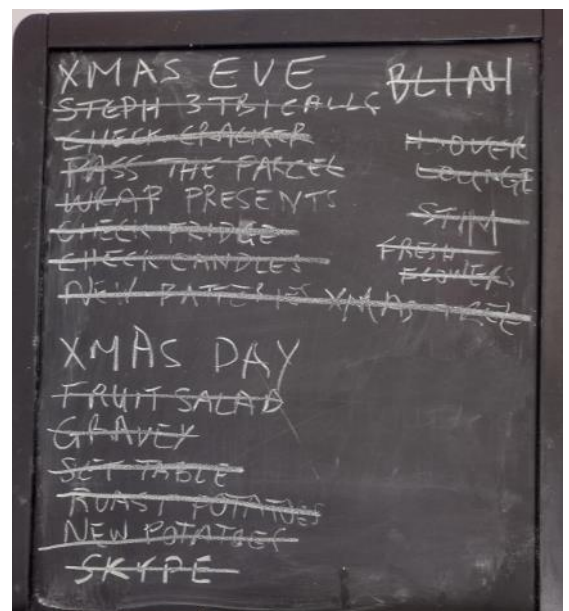






So phase next for the house, I am not sure how many phases there will be, let's take it one step at a time, will be to complete the painting of the fascia boards and eaves. It will be nice to complete a piece of work. Stripey the cat also likes having us around; his day appears to be centred on finding the right combination of sun and shade followed by stalking our laps in the evening. We also wanted to hack the ivy that has surrounded the garage. We are on sand so water just drains away except if we allow things to grow against walls.

We had been planning to have Christmas in our own house for years, but being in rented accommodation and waiting for the house build to start meant that we







were never in a position to actually do it. This year we had what is becoming a traditional Christmas in New Zealand where we have people who did not specific Christmas plans but who would like to come for a big Christmas get together, so we end up with lots of people who don't know each other round the table and then play Steph's pass the parcel



complete with forfeits. We even managed to play some Petanque in the back garden.

For New Year we ended up playing board games, Thunderbirds, Camel Up, The Crew and Love Letters, they were all good fun and I think everyone got an opportunity to win. Having time off and the way the daylight saving time works also meant that we could play Canasta with friends and family in Europe.



I guess as I sit here now in the afternoon sun listening to England make a complete hash of the Ashes the break does seem idyllic. Steph has even managed to get into the Tasman Sea, and it was warm. Almost a preview of what retirement might be like, but that is for the future.