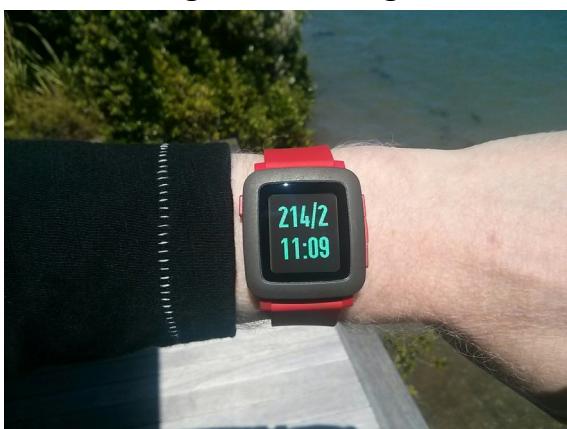


28th February 2016 6th March 2016 blimey now 16th March 2016

Summer of love!

Happy New Year to you all. Here we have been enjoying a couple of months of hot sunny weather, which brings with it many free outdoor events around Wellington and a focus on walking and cycling and, looking through the pictures: eating!! There have been many literary references since the last missive so it makes me feel like I need to paint a picture with words. Those literary references have included articles on the radio about keeping diaries and we went to see “Lady in a Van” yesterday – much loved (28th Feb).

The picture, well a windy Wellington day, with the sailing boats flying across the water but with it being warm enough to sit on the deck and have a natter and a catch up with all of



you. The cat is on the bed, having not moved all day and Derek is in his study writing more for his watch app – “wrist-spin”. His Pebble smart watch, vibrates when a wicket has gone down at the cricket, so you can keep up to date in a meeting.

As you can tell from the date change the missives take quite a long time to get organised, as I do them less often I have only just got the idea of the time it takes.

Well the New Year always starts off with all the Emke family having Birthdays. Here we have Antoinette celebrating with a divine cake that was just about to slide apart. A giggly girlie affair. Well not quiet all girlies as here you also see Frances Emke, pregnant, having just had her birthday – but her son Niocole joined the family tradition (they all have birthdays in January) and arrived in January!!

At Antoinettes’ Birthday I found the sad fact that our paradise of a home is not due to stay this way for ever, they expect the inlet we live on to silt up in 50 years. Imagine paying top dollar to buy a house here, because of the location, just to have no sea front in 50 years!!!! In fact they may build houses in front of you at that point!

While Derek was pottering on the computer producing wrist-spin I dedicated my time to gardening and the knitting machine.





When I pulled up this photo I am amazed how much more the celeriac has grown since then, not yet dug down to see how big the produce is!! We have done very well for beans then the beans attracted a moth and the moths ate my just mature rocket - over night. So much to learn about the local conditions. The knitting progressed to me practising with an 'O' as the blanket is my 'sampler'. Traditionally I want to knit "Steph 2016" into the design. The 'O' was slow but successful – I just need to find some different coloured wool to progress with my mark!

The ongoing beautiful weather enabled us to start to do more exercise, which had been the initial plan at Christmas, then we were ill. So with EWOK the van sold we got a bike rack for Jim, the new car. We are nearly the only people legal in New Zealand, as a clear number plate and lights are required when carry bikes and we brought one and use it! We went off to the hot Wairarapa for walking and cycling around the vineyards – a favourite of ours, made even more

pleasant by knowing people who live there so we could stop in for a good natter. I let Derek beat me at petanque and we celebrated with good food.



We then took time to potter into Wellington to see some free live bands and a free episode of 'Star Trek' It was held in the smallest 'park' I have ever been in. It was a riot. They were so ingenious with



the set and went through the script word for word. Whenever anybody needed a door there were two people stood as a door frame and they would stand together. Kirk (or another actor) would approach, the two people would step away from each other and say 'woosh' – try it and see how effective it was. It was even better if it was the door into the lift, as when they had wooshed shut the 'doors' and the actors would all slowly crouch down to indicate the lift was going down!!! The transporter room required glitter being thrown around.

After such flippant events my Uncle John and Barbara came over. It is some time since we had visitors for the UK and it was wonderful. We were tourists in parts of Wellington we had never done before, the rose garden and the cathedral. They came out to have dinner and the wind dropped enough to eat outside. This was just about the start of our



holiday.

As I had not been able to get Christmas off this was the first free week when we could get away from work. It started with the first day at the New Zealand/Australian cricket test. A very fast day, with too many New Zealanders being out, but a good show down.

We took one of our 3 day weekends to go up the coast and see Linda (Derek used to work with) and Regan. There was a small town vintage festival – New Zealand are great at having the smallest ‘events’ going.

It is charming but quite amazing how much effort they put in for so few people. They had some live bands. The final one we saw was an older persons rock band – not bad – with of course the older persons disco!!

Yes people with their walking frames getting down and grooving.

We stuck around the next day as neighbours had organised a street BBQ at the end of the cul-de-sac. 3 of them did a great job, their planning had been a bit drunken and they could not recall who had said they would do which job. They had

planned on an event that would last 2 hours and it went for 4 – when we left to pack for the holiday. We met some wonderful people and it was a very fun event – plans were made for the next time for us all to get in kayaks and go and have a BBQ at low tide on a spit of sand!! It would definitely be time limited.

For the holiday we took the ferry to the South Island and had 4 night in a bath on the Banks Peninsula and 4 nights in a cabin on a camp site in Hamner Springs.

Banks Peninsula is just down from Christchurch. Since the big earthquake in Christchurch it has also been the new stop





off place for Cruises, they stop here the night before they travel up to Wellington. They only stay one night, so a different boat to look out on, while we breakfasted on the deck. Akaroa, the main village had a complete change of fortune with all these day trippers. I wonder how it will fair if the boats stop coming??? Akaroa sells itself as being very French – from our point of view, having been to France, it really was not very French at all.

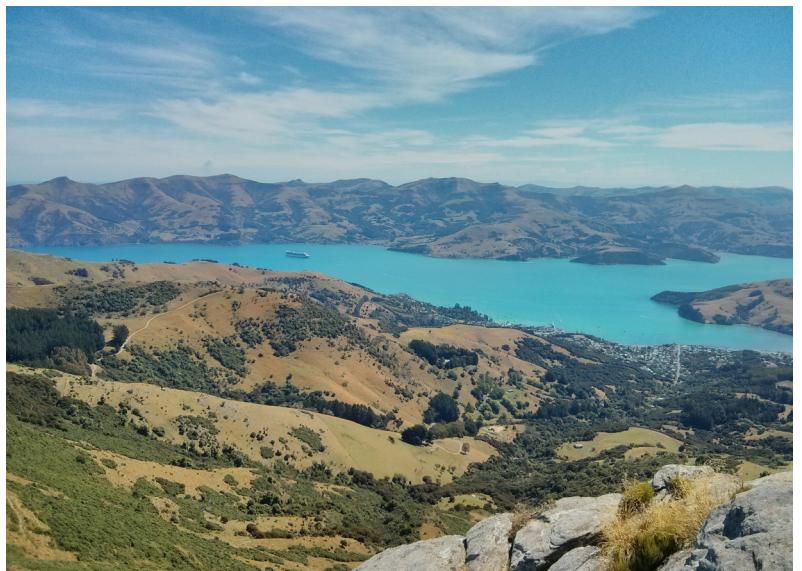
What we did get was a bach that was bigger than our house – a bit shabby, totally peaceful and the best deck to sit on and have long breakfasts. The reason we came was a cycle path along an old railway line and a very hot walk up a very big hill!!!

Both days were fantastic, that satisfactory ache of exercise and enjoying good food when you get home.

Then we had our only wet day, well timed as we wanted to go to the Cinema – our only option was Trumbo – quite enjoyable and lead to great discussion. As always a beautiful and welcoming boutique cinema – good coffee and scones. We could have stayed longer in this beautiful and simple part of New Zealand, more walking and we never got time to swim from the bach! They have a wackiest hotel, made out of grain silos next to the most innovative gallery I have been to – we were very good and spent no money!!

In contrast we got to Hamner Springs and I was a little worried there was not going to be enough to do for our time there. I need not have worried. The thermal pools are more beautiful than Rotorua and have an outdoor swimming pool that motivated you with the view you swam towards. Our camp site was 2km from town but we could cycle through a calm forest. Derek beat me at mini golf, a bit of a theme here – I am terrible at angle and the weight required to hit something!!

The maps of the area were a bit deceptive. We headed off up a road to find a walking track





up to Mount Isobel. The road became a gravel track – straight up hill. We stopped at the saddle but it was not the track. We drove a little further and then ‘The Department of Conversation’ (DOC) was wonderful as always and there was a clear sign for the path. It was a great walk, up another hill – John and Barbara commented on the fact that if you visit this beautiful

land, prepare to walk up and down hills! The view was for miles (oops I should say km) in all directions.

We felt very rested and happy when we got back. Mr Stripey was a happy cat as he had been loved by house sitters. As so often with our holidays we come back and have nothing planned. It has picked up as we are now in the middle of the New Zealand Festival – international arts.... But I will leave that for next time. We have seen some inspiring things – but bodies are not designed to move in ‘that’ way!!!! Wait for the next missive!

We have also booked for our trip back to the UK – mainly holiday (Derek may work for one week for Xero – but remotely). We fly out of New Zealand on 9th September 2016 and fly back on 14th October 2016. Our calendar is ‘open’ – so if you want to meet up let us know and we will start to plan in events. The only thing booked in for now is a night in hotel after a special wedding on 18/9/16. I have enjoyed our natter and think of friends at home often. Siobhan, Lindsay and Paul – we think Strictly will start while we are back – we should book a night to watch together. It will make us even more excited when we get back and watch it!!

Love to you all. Steph and Derek

