

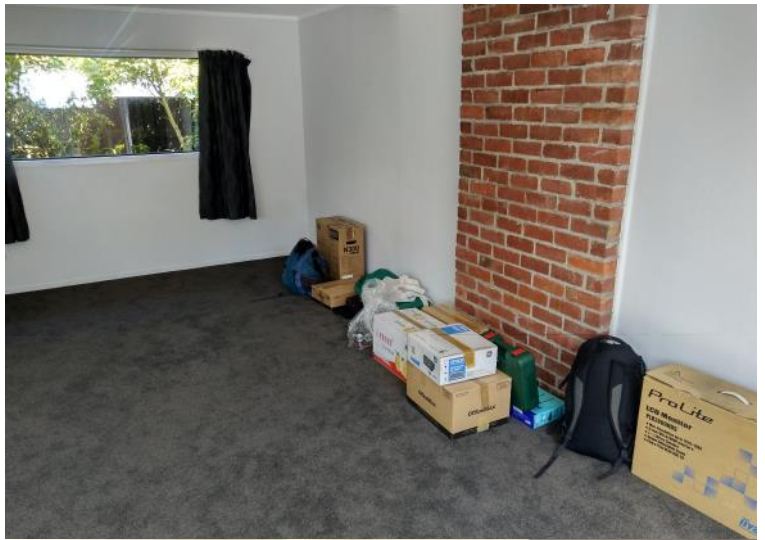
Sorry there has been a bit of a gap, we've been rather busy. It feels like the plans we have been advancing for the last decade have finally come together, we have managed to sell our property in Europe and buy here in New Zealand and we are once again mortgage free, for the first time in a decade. But I getting ahead of myself, the last time I wrote was Christmas and the last few pieces of the puzzle were still not in the right place.

We completed, or settled as they call it here, on a Thursday. The process is slightly different, on the Wednesday we got to walk the house with the agent, if we spotted anything it could be corrected but this was our last chance, the money would move on the Thursday and then we could move in. Actually in a typical Kiwi move the agent gave us the keys on the Wednesday to save us from driving up again on the Thursday, we had to promise not to use the keys until the money had moved.

As soon as Christmas was done we were in packing mode, packing away Christmas and in fact everything else as well. It was a strange echo of our Christmas in 2011 where Christmas interrupted our packing to migrate. So we were all ready and raring on a cloudy Friday morning, the move



was a bit complex as we needed to move from our house rental and also from our storage unit (the rental simply wasn't big enough for our furniture from the UK). I was posted at the rental and then went up to the new house with a car full of delicacies, Steph was at the storage unit waiting for the movers. Then the whole plan fell apart, the movers were already grumbling about not having a big enough van and that the engine wasn't great and in the end the grumbling developed into outright refusal to complete the move, they would put everything back in storage and give up. Not only were they not going to move us they were quite abusive about it. This is definitely not the norm





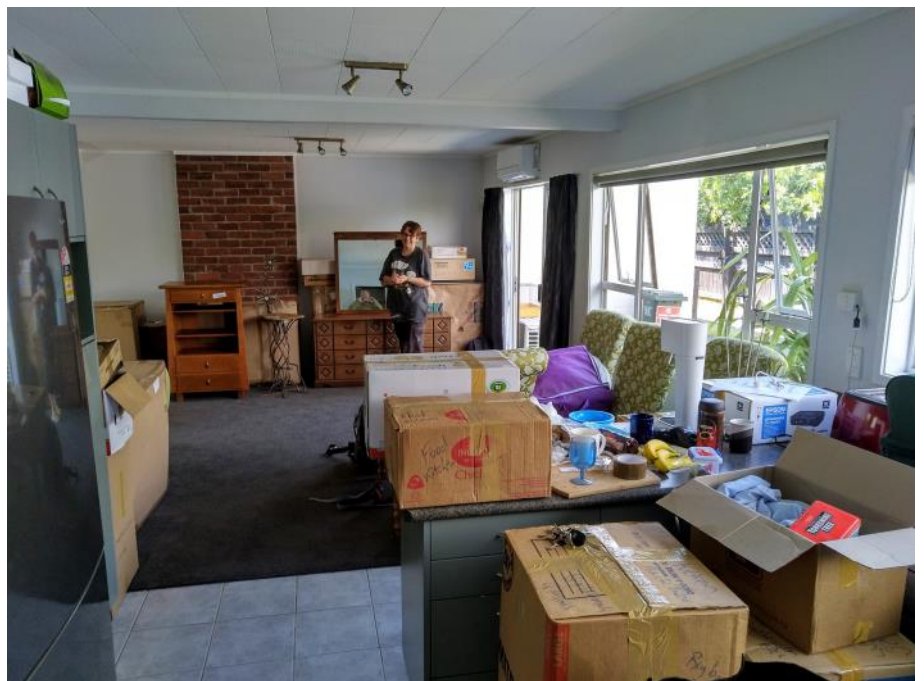
here, but now we had no movers on a Friday and our lease on the rental and the storage was up on the Sunday. Not ideal. Steph phoned around and we did get some offers of next week to next month until a very nice lady from



Stronghold Inc said she could get two crews together for tomorrow, would that do? Well it certainly would do and we were so eager we didn't even ask the price, though in fact it wasn't any more expensive

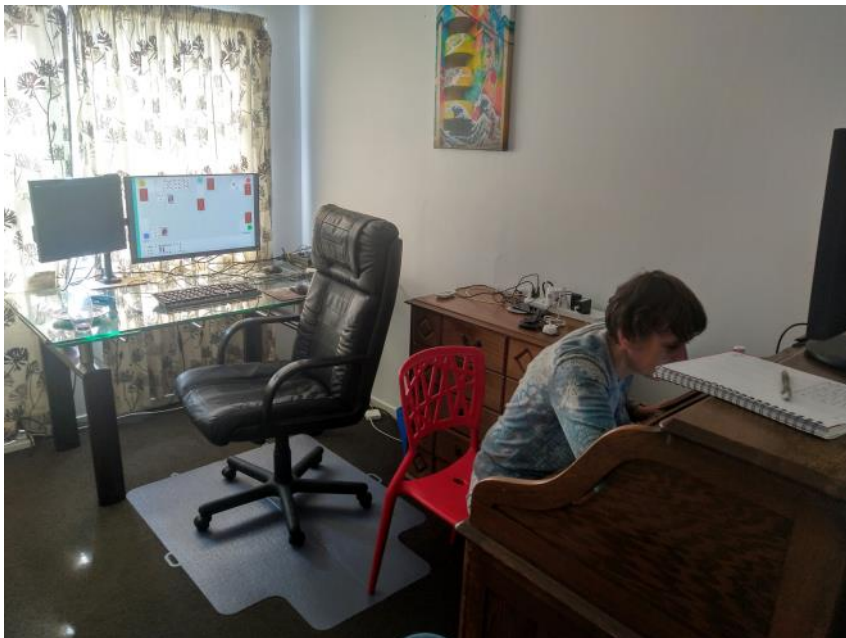
that the original movers. They turned up exactly on time and the whole thing ran like a military operation both vans were at the new house and unpacked by 2pm. It all felt like quite a whirlwind.

It was like a second Christmas, we got to open all the things from the





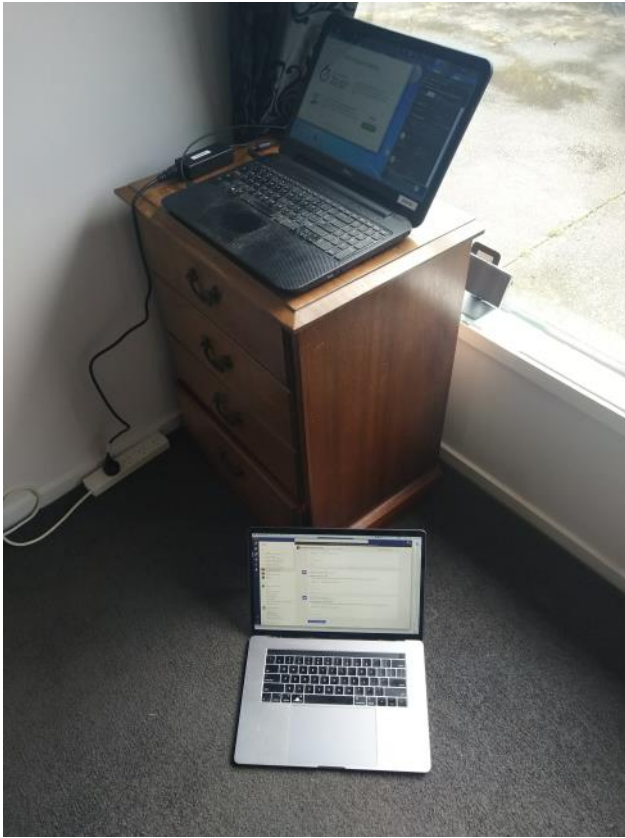
storage that we hadn't seen in a decade. We pottered away each day, making long lists of things to do, lists way too long to be completed, but it gave us a mechanism to prioritise. We did make a



final run down to collect some of the outdoor furniture and a lemon tree and we did need to take an extra day off work just to catch up but at the end of the weekend we were just about in.

One slight oversight was that there was no fibre to the house, and we could not be connected until the middle of February. Until then we had a makeshift laptop





acting as a router plugged into a mobile phone arrangement, it was not great but just about hung together so I could work from home. Also we were only going to be in the house for a week before we went off to the South Island on holiday, not ideal timing but after all the trauma of buying and moving we could do with the break.

The holiday was two very different weeks, the first week we went off hiking and cycling first of all in Abel Tasman and then down to the very remote the West Coast. The second week we were joining up with Liz and Andrew to do the Alps to Ocean cycle. The Abel Tasman hike along the beaches of the north end of the South Island linked by water taxis is one of the most popular attractions here; it was very strange to see the accommodation more than half empty on a holiday weekend in the middle of summer. One of the taxis did







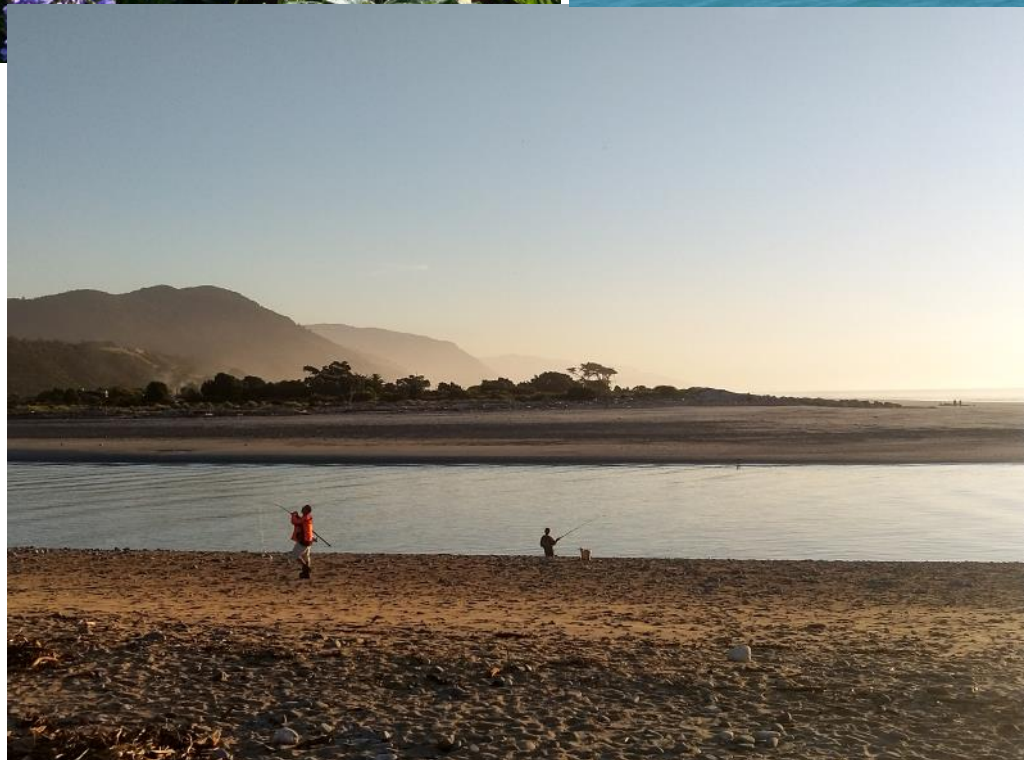
ask where everyone was from and of course we were all from New Zealand, he said that if he had asked the same question last year then everyone would have been from all over the world rather than here. We are trying to encourage local tourism, explore your own back yard, but even so numbers are down a lot. It did make for some very quiet hik-







ing and when we moved down to Gentle Annie's camping ground just north of Westport is got even quieter. In fact







the nearest shop to the camp ground was an 80 KM round trip but it was very restorative to chill and hike and read.

Then we went across to Christchurch to meet up with Liz and Andrew for the cycle. This was due to be a more demanding cycle than the rail trail, it had some reasonable



hill climbs and was 300KM long, we had done some training for it and I felt we were match fit in November, however in December and January we





got bogged down in buying and moving house. The start was lovely, we went up to Mount Cook and hiked some of the trails up there in the sun

and the hotel had a good restaurant and free cricket coverage. The actual start of the cycle was less ideal, the mountain weather had closed in and between the wind and the rain we were unable to take the helicopter to the start of the cycle and instead we were driven for over an hour and then got out into the wind and the rain to start. After 10KM I was knackered, and thinking there was no way I

would be able to keep up with the others. Then Steph spotted that I'd been cycling with a flat front tyre, so we ended up having to







upturn the bike and replace the tube in the rain, yes not an ideal start. It was good to get that nonsense out of the way as the rest of the trip was pretty good and there wasn't any more rain. I had, I learnt later, got an infected bite on my leg and was in progressively more and more pain but luckily it

didn't really impact our cycling. Each day we got up early, a long cycle in the sun at our own pace and then the satisfaction of a good meal and a cold beer and the ache in your legs telling you that you had earned it.

Then it was back home, the down side of going on holiday a week after moving in was that we had to find everything we had put away all over again. My favourite places in the new house is the large bright kitchen doing the Sunday roast being able to look through the dining





room into the lounge either listening to Simon Mayo or watching the projector TV. The other place is sitting just outside the lounge door, as soon as I sit down Stripey the cat



will curl up on my lap and I can hear the roar of the surf on the beach across the road.

After weekends of pottering, we had managed to get through the lists to the point that we could start to emerge from our nest and explore a bit. We started by walking down the beach at sunset on a Friday evening, randomly picking a restaurant, eating and then walking back along the beach in the moonlight. This is why we moved here. We haven't tried all the restaurants here yet but we did







manage a great handmade pizza, a cosy table with views across to Kapiti Island and for my birthday our local Turkish restaurant for a meal complete with coffee and baklava.





Then last weekend we had a house warming party, with a mixture of friends, neighbours, work colleagues, Steph made large quantities of ice cream and I burnt some pizza, we seemed to do tours of the house



every half an hour but the mesh network of music and people gathered together chatting was lovely.

Then this week the final piece arrived, we settled the sale of the land we bought.

This means we can pay off the mortgage, hurrah. I guess as I write this it can look like a sad thing, giving up on building a house, but we decided to not build last year so it's not sad at all, rather its completing the decision. It has taken us three years to get the plans approved and it will probably take another couple of years to build, and we would need to spend more than we wanted to, now we are in a position to decide when we want to retire. The woman



who bought the land plans to build our plans so it will be interesting seeing how long it takes her.

With furniture unpacked and pictures hung we can start to feel as though we are at last settling in, we still need to find some good walks and cycle routes to our local cinema but that will come.

