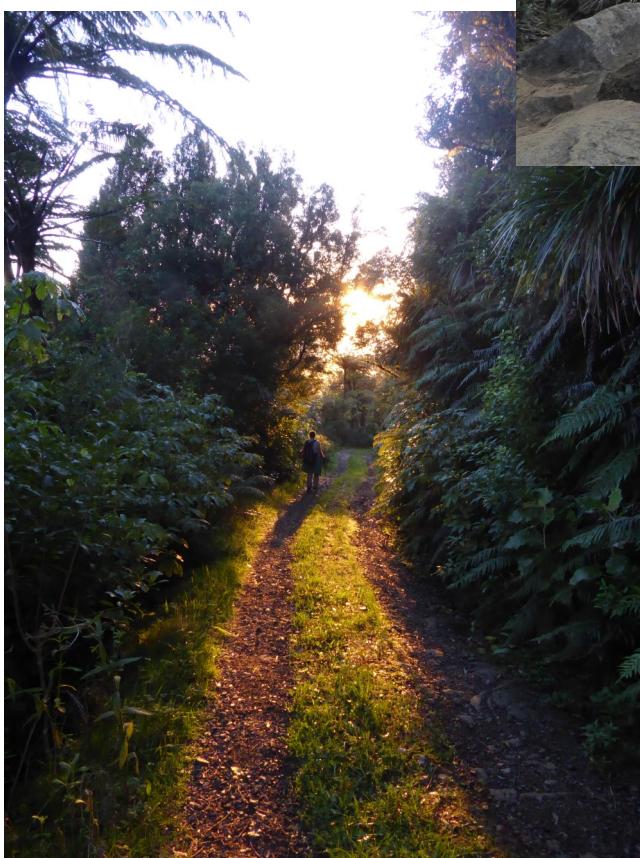


OMG – I am so exhausted. I thought other trips to the UK were hard work. Well I was wrong. I think we knew it was going to be tough; we could have used the time we had already booked at Easter but decided that we should have a proper holiday before the



trip to the UK. It was a lovely holiday. We went up to Tauranga to see Liz and Andrew's new house and then onto the Coromandel. We are so envious, they have a large (huge) well insulated house with a wood burning stove. We man-

aged to find the very last bit of the summer and hiked up some hills and generally chilled.

Steph has to do a little work while we were away so I read my book and drank a glass of wine in front of the fire.

Then its full on to the UK. In the past we have had lots of things to do when we were back in the UK, catch up with friends, do some chores for Mum, as well as have a holiday. I suppose the clue this time was that I was not taking any holiday from work. Well that clue was good – this was not a holiday. In addition to everything we usually do: we also had to clean and spruce up the house so we could sell



it; we had to get all the stuff we had put in the loft out and then unpack it, see if we wanted to ship it or we should sell/skip it; oh and I also had to do a days work as well. I suppose I



am complaining but Steph got to work just as hard as me but she was going into negative holiday as well so maybe I should shut up.

We set off back to the UK, I was still doing work on the plane as I needed to do work and why not use the time I am sat on the plane. How odd, its been years since I have seen so many empty seats on a flight. We managed to have a rack of three seats between the two of us which certainly helped with the sleep.

It is a trip that takes two days, mind you we are flying completely around the world. How 21st century is this, we

fly around the world and we arrive about 15 minutes early, on the way back I think we are about 10 minutes late. Wow. We are so early that we can afford to go shopping before meeting up with Tim to get the keys. Its like kids in a candy store, we can get Lancashire Tea, marmite, all sorts of goodies.





I have been fixated on fish and chips for tea for hours now, and when we eventually manage to get into the house we go down

the hill and get some, but strangely it's a bit disappointing. Ho hum. What is not disappointing is sleep on a flat surface after two days.

Sunday, we are at least able to take stock. Yes the house is a little unloved. It's a bit of a shock, the last time we were really here was in 2011 and we lived here. It smelt a bit damp. I had tried to organise broadband and phone SIMs none of which had turned up.

It did feel weird, a bit like opening up a house that has



been boarded up, but slowly we started to get going. We found keys for more of the doors and windows and threw them open and let the air and the sun flood in. When I got into the front porch I even found the broadband router that had arrived after all. Mind you there was no joy connecting it to the phone socket, then Mark came round and provided the final piece of the puzzle, a new phone socket had been fitted upstairs since we had moved out. Hurrah we are back on the internet, and also hurrah I can start work first thing on Monday morning.

It seems forever ago to remember that first day, trying to find a kettle so we could easily boil water. We cooked lunch, we only had two herbs and no pepper. So it was all a bit like camping in our own house. Its funny people throughout the time we were there were so good and helpful, Steph's cousin Cat came for lunch and stayed all after-



noon and polished furniture. I really didn't think it needed doing but I was surprised how much difference it made to the house – it started to look a lot less sad.

Slowly we did start to get ourselves sorted. Right we need a plan. What are we trying to do. Well in priority order: sort all the stuff we left in the attic when we left five years ago (we need to do this as we cannot sell the house with the stuff in it); make the house more sellable; sort some things out for Mum and maybe even try and see some people. Oh and I



am at work as well.

Boxes, boxes everywhere. We had to open every box and unpack it and decide what to do with the con-



tents: ship to NZ; sell or recycle. Some things were easy, I had already decided that my books are going to NZ to be on the book shelves in the new house. My comics I had decided to sell. I know I collected them over a number of years, I had 32 years of 2000AD, with only 3 missing, however 1,600 comics are physically very big and I really don't read them enough to justify the cost of moving them, and the cost of housing them in the new house. All of a sudden I am starting to appreciate how much each square meter costs in a property. Other bits are harder. Scrapbooks of cricket reports, the rockport boots I bought in the US, a linen suit, an ashtray from uncle Woodie. Anyway, I know that one of the real benefits of moving country is that we both value "stuff" less. Its just stuff and most things you can get by without but on the



other hand there are some things that make me smile. The daisy stool, the small cupboards made from

Chinese hand carved panels, Steph's sewing chest of draws.

Like everything it's a compromise.

So from Monday the days went like this.

6am I get up. Initial-

ly its jet lag but pretty soon I needed an alarm. To be fair Steph was usually up at this time as well. I made a cup of tea, caught up with my emails and then had a "stand up" with Scott, as he is in Australia rather than NZ means that we have better overlap. Then I work in the morning, usually I've done my day's work by early afternoon. Then its serious box shifting. It's a team effort to get some of the heavier boxes down. I need to get enough down in the afternoon so that Steph can carry on in the morning and then when I am tired I sort the boxes of my stuff that Steph cannot do. We stop in the evening and then have tea and then after 9pm it's a struggle to stay awake.

Along with the internet we also got "free" basic Sky TV, I thought that it would be handy to watch the cricket highlights, well I think I saw two TV shows while we were there.



When we go back to the UK we often travel around and see people, its good to catch up with people. This trip I think we realised that there wasn't going to be much time. In the first week Steph's father Brian and Anne came over from France. This was fantastic. It not only saved us time going to France but also they did decorating while I worked, thank you, as Asda says every little helps. We had spent a lot of money weather proofing and dry-lining the end wall, the builders had done a good job but they hadn't tidied up very well, they left paper hanging off the wall and paint marks on other walls. It didn't look great to anyone looking to buy the house, so between them the others sorted out the decorating while I worked.

Each week we managed to make it across to St Annes to see Mum. Its nice to help and sort out some of the small details.



We did get some time off, though it became a thing that we had an invisible “we are on holiday” flag that we raised for a

couple of hours here and there. I bought some shirts and some linen trousers. We even had a rather nice lunch at the Wing Yip, what a treat. I met up with Ed, Steve and Liam who I used to work with and Sarah cooked us a lovely dinner.

We had to decide what we could do to make the house more sellable. It seemed really dark and dismal to me,

maybe it's all the bright NZ sunlight that made good old Greenhill seem so dark. Anyway the net curtains had to go but also the ivy looked very picturesque but it was making the wall damp and also covering the windows. So it's a big job on top of everything else but we decided to cut back all the ivy and then repaint the render



white. It was a big job and we would not have got anywhere near doing it without Caroline's help. It turns out she has a really thing about ivy, she really wants to exterminate it. Social media: I tweeted a picture of Caroline cutting the ivy and got a reply from Louise (who works in brain injury) that Caroline was not wearing a helmet.

There were so many details to sort. How will we move the money when we sell the house? The bank said they would not accept instructions over the phone, I needed to physically go to a branch with my passport. It's a two day trip – each way. That really isn't going to happen, we need another plan.

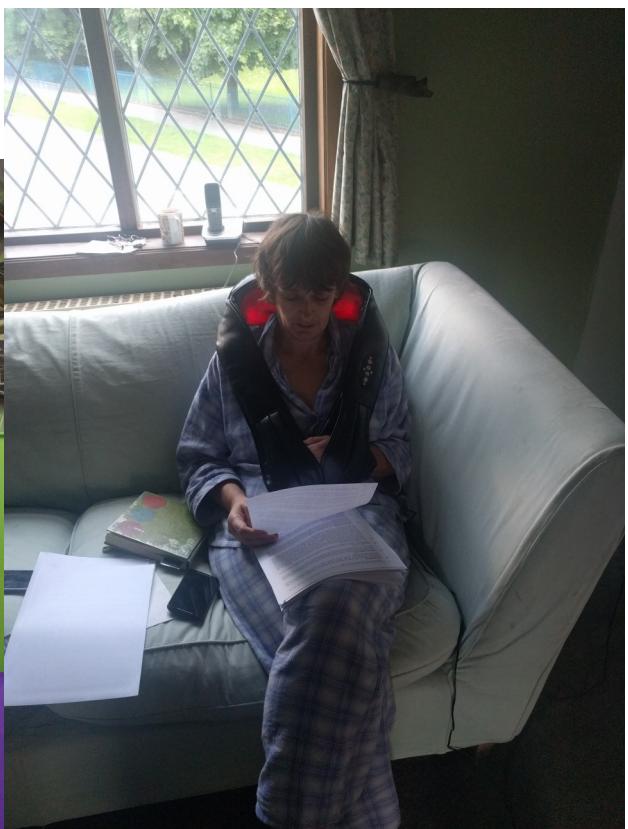
I remember joking to someone that if this "holiday" was any longer it would kill me. As time went by it became less and less of a joke. It was an emotional time, we were saying goodbye to our house, we probably will not see it again but I was so exhausted that I just felt numb.

Having sorted out stuff, there was loads of stuff we could sell. Steph had this idea that we could sell stuff to generate enough money to ship the stuff we wanted – well its not going to happen. Its funny, last time it was pretty cheap as Steph had loads of Tesco club card points. This time the shippers seem to want about 5,000 pounds. So we didn't have enough time to sell much, but at least we managed to

give most of the house contents to a homeless charity, maybe we didn't profit much but people who really need a break might get some help. Some of the little things we did sell were bizarre, a broken computer from the 1980's sent for 150 GBP about 30 minutes after I put it on the internet. No idea why – I did tell him it was broken.

We did manage to get the invisible holiday flag out again. We went to the ideal home exhibition, trying to get ideas for the new house. It was big and glitzy, apparently the new thing in houses is a bed with a TV set built into the foot of the bed, not really for us I think. We did find a tremendous massage machine. We were both so knackered that it was a big hit with us and we bought one. The other thing we learnt is that spa pools are a lot cheaper in NZ.

We are continually looking for things for the new house. Its



good to look forward to it but is seems unreal, too far in the future to really believe in. We went to B&Q and Ikea having looked at similar shops (not the same, no Ikea in NZ) we were blown away by the sheer number of products available, mind you a lot of them are of a similar ilk, shiny wallpaper is very “in” so there are a lot of wallapers but most of them are shinny. Wallpaper is not a thing over here, they just don’t seem to get it, as a consequence there is very little choice. We took the plunge and bought paper for four of the rooms in the new house and put them into the container, we know exactly how big the rooms will be so we could buy the right amount, mind you if we make a mistake and need another roll it’s a long way back to the shop – so no pressure.

And then it was over. Towards the end it was all a bit of a blur I am afraid. On the



final Friday evening we had another little bit of a holiday moment. I had offered to take Steph and Caroline out for dinner as a thank you but they preferred the idea of a Marks and Spencer picnic and playing canasta. I have to say I am glad they chose this as it was defiantly one of the highlights of the trip.



Saturday was Steph's birthday and also the day we fly. Another madcap day. Steph sitting with friends while Caroline and I do the last run to the tip. Its such a shock



to suddenly be sitting down and talking to people and having a drink. We really must go to the UK at some point and be able to actually have a holiday. Mind you I think we did manage to make the house look a bit more appealing.

I have been a bit bored and frustrated at work for a while now. However I have been a bit selfish in that if I stay put that I would be able to work in the UK and not wipe out all my holiday. Well I am back from the UK now and I need to sort things out. As Caroline said in that last



tip run, “there is no point in just complaining you need to do something about it”. There are jobs around and I started to look, bizarrely the jobs that caught my eye were at the firm I currently work for Xero. I guess my frustration is with the team I am on rather than the firm then why not. I chatted to a couple of team leaders and one of the teams said they didn’t know how to handle an internal candidate so I said that they should just treat me like any other external candidate. Stupid thing to say. They made me do an interview and the technical test. In retrospect it was fun and they must have been a bit impressed because they offered the job. Now I just wonder – what have I done – I have moved out of mobile back into back end .NET dev and everyone says the team is very dysfunctional and tried to warn me off. Oh well, whatever, what’s the worst that could happen – I need to find another job, well that’s where I was before.

What with jetlag and thinking about work its been hard to get back into the rhythm of life but a month after we got back we are starting to have time to be normal people again. Now we just need to sell the house.....