

March 12 to 19

Paraparaumu, Porirua and Wellington

March 12 Wellington and Paraparaumu

It was sunny but cool as I waited for the bus on Constable Street. I disembarked at the Saint James Theatre, only to find that the ticket agency there had changed and that I needed the other one.

I crossed the road with my bags to a big branch of the ANZ Bank, They didn't sell Chinese currency as there was no demand for it! I muttered under my breath as I left.

I carried my bags about half a kilometre to the Michael Fowler Centre, where they had desks for all of the ticket agencies. A nice lady seemed very confused about the prices of tickets for the cricket but, in the end, I got pensioner's tickets for two days at \$25 each. Not a bad price and quite ludicrous by UK standards.

Still needing Chinese money I walked another half kilometre to Willis Street, where I found a branch of BNZ. After a little thought, they agreed to sell me some cash so I came away with 1600 Chinese thingies (Yuan?) in 100 yuan notes. Not feeling like walking further, I caught a bus to the station. Once through the tunnels, it became much brighter and sunnier, which is often the case.



Back to the beach

Valerie collected me from the station, we did a little shopping on the way home and then lunched at a new gourmet burger café. Definitely not your average burger joint. On the way back home, I detoured via the beach to take the first photos for a day and a half.

The afternoon was quiet and restful, much needed after my ten days in Australia.

In the evening, we walked the short distance to the centre of the village, met Judith and had a good Italian dinner at Soprano.



A good Italian dinner

March 13 Paraparaumu

It was partly cloudy, partly breezy and partly sunny when I woke. Valerie departed on baby sitting duties and I did a mix of heavy lifting and laundry duties.



Part sunny and part cloudy

In mid morning, I walked the three and a half kilometres up the road to the station car park, where I met Gary and Judi. We set off on our expedition in glorious, almost wind free, conditions. These remained until we had completed our walk. An excellent day.



We set off into the sunshine ...



... followed the new Expressway ...

We crossed the Coastlands car park, entered the path towards the new expressway and followed it Southwards. After about four kilometres, we turned onto the road and eventually arrived in Raumati South and its café about 90 minutes after setting off.

The coffee was strong and good, one of the best that we have all had since arriving in New Zealand.



... and arrived at the café



We walked to the beach ...

At twelve, we left the café, walked down to the beach and the other two started to paddle. I remained on dry(ish) land. Once we encountered the jellyfish, I decided that I had made the correct choice!

There were few others around, the sun was bright and the sand was golden. Quite idyllic.



... and walked along it

After an hour of this, we reached Paekakariki Surf Club and moved from the beach to the Esplanade. Another 30 minutes took us into the centre of the village and Finn's Bar.



We reached the outskirts of Paekakariki ...



Paekakariki Station



... walked along the Promenade ...

Lunch was good, as were the craft beers. There was another party there, just off the Incline Path, a much more terrifying prospect than our walk. We met them again at the station, more POMS but long term New Zealand residents. I left Gary & Judi chatting to them as my train arrived first.

Clouds and quite a lot of wind had appeared by the time I left the train and was waiting for the bus. As this drove me towards the beach, the clouds darkened but no rain appeared.

Margaret arrived and we walked round the corner to China Beach, where we dined well.

March 14 Paraparaumu and Wellington

Another glorious morning. We drove up the road to one of Valerie's friends who has a small menagerie - chickens, bunnies, ducks and a pussy cat. The mother bunny was huge and hairy. From a distance she could easily be mistaken for a dog. We went to scrounge some vine leaves to be used in the evening's dinner and came away with a large bag full.



Wot a strange creature!



... and had a good lunch

We caught the train into Wellington and then a bus to the old museum - the carillon - which now functions as a war memorial.



The Carillon

It is a beautiful space and, as with so many New Zealand war memorials, creates exactly the right atmosphere.



A lovely exhibition space

The World War I exhibition, created by Peter Jackson and Weta Workshop, was as technically excellent as one would expect. Almost everything was well labelled and the graphics were of the highest quality.

Attached to the main exhibition was a separate one on the Gallipoli campaign, a turning point in New Zealand's history.



A mixture of technologies



Life in the trenches



In Memoriam

This featured old photographs which had been converted from black and white to full colour. Who knows how accurate the process was but the impact was amazing.

Finally, there was a small exhibition on the role of women in the war, mainly centred on a film. All very good and informative.

We emerged into the bright sunshine, walked half way back to the station, visited some shops, grabbed sandwiches for lunch and caught the train home.



A Middle Easter dinner

I did more heavy lifting in the afternoon, after which we drove up the road to Nic and Mariam's for dinner. She had prepared an excellent lamb, rice and dolma dish, full of beautiful flavours. I played with the pussy cat and Valerie played with her grandson.



Valerie played with Eli

March 15 Paraparaumu and Wellington

A chaotic start to the morning. Emails from the UK told me of problems with my central heating boiler and my attempts to ring Simon were thwarted by his new telephone technology, which wouldn't accept computer calls from foreign parts.

I abandoned breakfast half eaten, rushed off for the bus and just made it to the station in time for the train into Wellington.



Midland Park

I walked to the Astoria, took my usual photographs of the water features, and awaited Judith's arrival. It was warm enough to sit outside - just - so we drank coffee and chatted for an hour and a half. I was good and didn't make up for my lack of a complete breakfast with one of their buns.

The sun was shining brightly as I returned to the station but the normal Wellington "breeze" was blowing, dropping the temperature by a few degrees.



Wellington Station

I arrived back at Paraparaumu, met Valerie at the charity shop and we did some shopping in the mall before returning home for lunch. The afternoon and evening were spent packing, Valerie for her house move and me for the next leg of my journey.

March 16 Paraparaumu, Wellington and Plimmerton

Another reasonably early start. It was dull and much colder than yesterday as I waited for the bus. This was late, meaning that as we approached the station, the level crossing gates had closed and the bells were flashing. I sprinted through the underpass and arrived on the platform as the train doors opened. I scrambled aboard, grateful that I was only carrying an overnight bag and not my big suitcase.



Dull & windy in Wellington

In Wellington, it was colder and windier than when I had left Paraparaumu. I walked slowly through the city and met Liz at the travel agents. After a chat, we went next door for a lengthy coffee. When we emerged, it was considerably windier.

I departed to the bus station and, after a ten minute wait, took a No 2 to Miramar. This is an ordinary suburb on the South Coast which, in all my years in Wellington, I have seldom visited. The cinema is the most notable building, one of Wellington's classics. Much of the rest is forgettable.



Miramar has some fine buildings ...



...and a lot of ordinary ones

I met Jo outside the garden centre café. We talked for ages and ate a good lunch. My Thai chicken soup was really a chicken curry. Very good indeed.

Jo went back to work and I caught the bus back to the railway station. I waited twenty minutes for a train and then travelled out to Paremata. The station is by the side of the harbour, offering great views of the water and up the hill towards my old house. I then climbed the 213 steps up to Doon Grove, realising that my new hip was much better able to cope with the climb than the old one, but my lungs seemed to have forgotten how to do it.



The station by the sea

I spent a couple of hours chatting with my old neighbours - two of them in their 90s - then returned to the station, crossing the traditional Friday evening rush on the main highway.



The usual rush hour traffic jam

At Plimmerton, a couple of stops North, I walked up the hill for seven or eight minutes, took a few photos of the amazing views and arrived safely at Sue & Wayne's.



Plimmerton Village

We walked down hill again to the Polish restaurant in the centre of the village. My fish was excellent and I think we all ate well.

Back up the hill, we watched TV, had a little more wine and let Harry entertain us.



Harry entertained us

March 17 Plimmerton



Down the steps

After a light breakfast, we set off down the 250+ steps and then along the promenade to the centre of Plimmerton. The weather was cool but not too windy and it was a nice walk. We had coffee outside the café with several others and then walked back round the promenade and up the steps.



Dull but calm

After a few minutes turn round, we piled into the car and drove for half an hour to Lower Hutt for the Saturday Market. The traffic jams were almost UK style and it was very busy.



Lots of people = lots of cars

The market is huge and very well patronised. Large quantities of all fruit and vegetables - a strong South East Asian influence - a wonderful cheese stall and some meat and fish. I followed Wayne and Sue around as they shopped and Harry minded the car.



Fresh fish ...



... and Asian spices

We spent about an hour there, buying lots of vegetables for tonight's dinner, and then drove back home through more heavy traffic.

We unpacked our purchases, then walked back down the hill to Topor, the Polish restaurant. We all sat outside while Harry had an ice cream and the rest of us had beers and lunch.



The weather was improving



Harry had an ice cream

I had a quiet afternoon, part snoozing, part watching rugby on TV, part writing my diary and part reading Wayne & Sue's diary of their trip to Shanghai.

In the early evening, Doug and Rae arrived. Sue produced an excellent dinner, half way through which Jim and Dianne arrived. The bottle of very expensive shiraz that I had bought at the wine auction proved to be in excellent condition. I paid about \$58 for a wine which, even when new, retails at about \$275. What a bargain! We ate, drank and chatted until about 23.00. I went to bed and slept well.



We all had a good dinner

March 18 Plimmerton and Paraparaumu



The sun always shines here

Another glorious sunny and calm morning. I don't think I have ever seen as little wind in New Zealand. We breakfasted and then walked down the road to the café. We had coffee, met lots of people - mainly the same ones as yesterday - and spoke to lots of dogs. It is a very convivial way to start the day.



Café society



We met some new friends

I left the company and crossed the road to the station car park, where I watched a game of junior baseball and waited for the rail replacement bus. This eventually arrived and took me North to Paraparaumu.



Junior baseball

From the station, I caught another bus down the road to Valerie's. By now the sun was shining and it was a lovely morning.



A smart lunch

At lunchtime we met Di at the new brunch and burger bar and had a very nice, but not wildly cheap, lunch.

The afternoon saw more heavy lifting and preparation for the big move.

The family assembled in the evening for the last family meal there after 30 years of occupation by Valerie and her Mother. We spread fish and chips over the table and had a good evening.



Final family dinner at Ocean Road

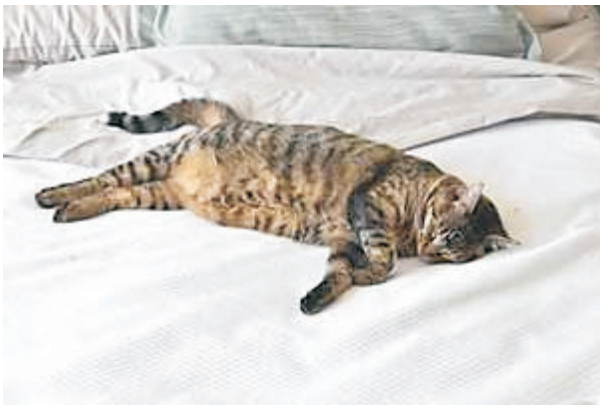
March 19 Paraparaumu and Wellington

A very quiet day. We stayed around the house, moving more furniture, dismantling beds etc and trying to sort belongings into different heaps. I packed my bags and realised that the main one was nearly twenty kilos. Not good news for the days on which I would have to carry it.



Entertainment for a pussy cat

All the rearranged furniture gave Gen the opportunity to explore. She then seemed to succumb to the anti-stress drops which were added to her food to prepare her for the forthcoming excitement of the move. She is normally lazy and overweight but today she seemed to spend even more time than usual comatose on Valerie's bed.



The drugs took hold

After lunch, we loaded my bags into the car and I took the train and then a bus to Jane and Robert's in Wellington.

After a little time for relaxation, we went down the road to a small restaurant called Monterey. It wasn't the cleanest that I have ever seen and the waiter was a very odd individual. He was so cool that he remembered our orders without writing them down. He then had to return to check what the orders were.



An unprepossessing café

The food was surprisingly good. Mexican style tapas and burgers. I was very good and was vegetarian all evening. I only had one pint of beer, an excellent IPA.



Interesting food



Even a good vege burger

It was still a very pleasant evening as we walked home.