

## February 17 to 27

### The South Island

#### February 17 Wellington and Christchurch

A good night's sleep. The taxi arrived and, in quiet Saturday morning traffic, got me to the airport in a very few minutes. I checked in, watched the planes for a while and then sat and awaited boarding.



*Wellington Airport*

The flight was bumpy on the way up and very bumpy on the way down. We were on time, however, and, after some false starts, I located the rental car shuttle bus.

The car handover process was reasonably quick and efficient and I was soon navigating the road round Christchurch in a bright red Yaris. I arrived at John & Anne's almost on the dot of one o'clock, as previously arranged.



*Benny was waiting for me*

With the temperature rising rapidly, I changed into shorts and we walked up the road for five minutes to Moon under Water, a new craft beer bar. There were some drinkable real ales and some acceptable food.



*An interesting bar*

The bar was quiet when we arrived but it filled up while we were there.

We walked home in searing heat and relaxed until some friends arrived for a quick visit.

After they left, John and I went outside, studied the monarch butterflies and then drove to the supermarket for supplies.



*A soon to be butterfly*

We dined at home.

## February 18 Christchurch



*Opawa Farmers' Market*

The morning started at the Opawa Farmers' Market, in bright sunshine. There were a couple of dozen stalls selling fruit, vegetables, bread, cheese etc. Unlike the markets at home, there was neither meat nor fish on offer.



*Proper pizza*



*Lots of vegetables*

We returned home, unpacked the provisions and set off up the Port Hills.

I was here when there was a raging fire burning last year. There are still signs of burnt trees but not where I was in a position to take photos.



*The Sign of the Kiwi - recently re-built*

The Sign of the Kiwi was closed for five years after the earthquake but is now open again, offering coffee with excellent views over the city.



*Good coffee. Excellent view*

We drove along the road which runs over the top of the hills to a viewing point where we had views across Lyttelton and Governor's Bay. It was a glorious morning.

We drove back down again to have lunch at home before having a very lazy early part of the afternoon.



*Governor's Bay*



*Lyttelton Harbour*

Some time after three, we drove into the city, parked near Anne's office and walked into the park. The Night Noodle Market hadn't yet opened so we walked past it and followed the river round the park and then into the Botanic Gardens.



*We entered the park*

The flowers were splendid and there was an excellent fountain. We followed the crowds towards the sound of music and sat on the grass, gradually moving nearer to the stage and any available shade. The "group" was two girls with good voices singing gentle folk tunes. Pleasant but not exciting.



*Fountain with flowers*



*We found the stage ...*



*... but couldn't see it clearly*



*The band grew after the interval*

After a break, they returned, accompanied by a fiddle and a string bass. The quality of the music improved dramatically, with much more complexity and depth. Very enjoyable.



*The sky was very unusual*

The weather improved with some interesting clouds and lots of sun. It was pleasantly warm but not too hot.



*A grand entrance to the Noodle Market*

We walked back across the park until we reached the Noodle Market. This was doing a good trade with queues outside all of the 20 or so stalls. We walked past all of them and finally decided to pick up a few dumplings for immediate consumption and to stop for a take away on the way home. This we did, collected dinner, ate it at home and watched the T20 cricket on TV.



*The Market was crowded*



*Lots of people eating lots of food*



*We bought an assortment of dumplings*

## February 19 Christchurch to Franz Josef

Late yesterday, the news of Cyclone Gita firmed up and it became obvious that it would have an impact on my trip. I worried a bit (a lot!) but, after reading lots of Met Office stuff and consulting the others, I decided to leave early and make it to Hoikitika. Depending on how things looked there, I could either go on to Franz Josef or return to Christchurch.



*A slow start to the journey*

Leaving early was easier said than done. A combination of rush hour traffic and road works meant that it took me fifteen minutes to drive from the house and onto the road out of Beckenham - at least half a kilometre.



*More roadworks and gathering cloud*



*Lake Lyndon*



*Bridge over troubled waters*

After that, progress was rapid and I was soon speeding along the West Coast road. It was very quiet and the skies were reasonably clear. I stopped to take occasional photos but not as many as I would have liked because of the uncertainty about my final destination.

After a couple of hours and a few delays for road works, I rose towards Arthur's Pass and the drizzle descended to meet me. I joined several others at the view point over the new(ish) viaduct, grabbed a photo and retreated back into the dry of the car.



*The drizzle arrived over the new viaduct*

As I descended on the Western side, the weather improved a little. It was quite bright by the time I reached Hokitika.

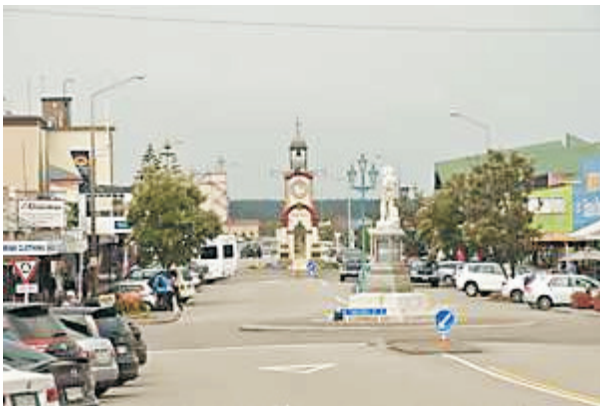
I performed routine chores - stamps, cards, money and petrol. I also called at the Information Office and sought information on the cyclone. The lady was quite positive so I decided to continue on my way and hope that she was correct.

The Craft Centre sold me some coasters made from the old wharf and I asked the chap behind the counter about Barrie, my potter friend. It transpired that I had seen him more recently than he had. Perhaps I should try to send him another email.

Lunch was slightly difficult as everywhere was busy. I found a café that had space and ordered a BLT with salad but no chips. Wasn't I good.



*Dull but not stormy at Hokitika*



*Grey skies over the town clock*

After lunch I took photos of the waves, not yet showing signs of the gathering storm, and then set sail to the South. The sun came and went, as did the drizzle. The road was quiet and the driving good.



*Lake Ianthe*

I stopped at Lake Ianthe, a favourite spot, where there were a number of others enjoying the tranquillity of this lovely spot.

The sun came and went. There had obviously been some rain on the road but none of it landed on me. Without further stops, a shame on such a beautiful road, I arrived at four pm and, after a little confusion, checked in.



*Franz Josef*

The man in the motel thought tomorrow shouldn't be too bad. I walked to the DOC (Department of Conservation) Office, only to find that it had relocated to just the other side of the motel.



*The old Information Centre was the best*

A very serious lady there assured me that no one should be travelling anywhere and that my friends should stay where they were or sleep in the car! This was supposedly advice from the Civil Defence authorities but an examination of their web site revealed nothing of the sort. There is a problem brewing but the authorities seem to be badly confused and are giving all sorts of mixed messages. Not a good look.

I called in at the restaurant near the hotel and was advised to come early as they were busy. I returned to my room, changed and checked some messages.



*A good bowl of mussels*

Not long after six, I walked the short distance to Alice May, had a table on the covered patio and a good meal of mussels and fish. The house Riesling, from Montana, was surprisingly good.

Back at the motel, I fought the wi fi, mainly unsuccessfully, but did manage to exchange messages with Tim and Jacky. They would come to Franz as fast as they could tomorrow and lunch was cancelled.

## February 20 Franz Josef to Lawrence

I didn't sleep well and was up and awake before the alarm sounded at 07.00. I was away from the motel at 07.30. It was gloomy and chilly with drizzle falling but none of the horrific weather which was expected later.

The road was quiet as I drove South as fast as seemed safe. With a largely open road, I made good speed. The wind hadn't materialised and everything seemed calm.

The road meets the sea at Bruce Bay and there was no sign of the waves crashing over the sea wall. The rain carried on, however, so that it wasn't nice.

I had calculated that it would take two hours to reach Haast and I was accurate almost to the minute. I crossed the bridge and started to climb up the valley.

The rain still fell but it wasn't particularly heavy. It is normal on a wet day up here for water to cascade off the cliffs and onto the sides of the road. There was no sign of this happening so one of the main potential hazards was eliminated.



*Makarora*

It took an hour to reach the Haast Pass after which I felt that the rest of the journey would be more relaxed. I had outrun the storm.

After another fifteen minutes, I stopped at Makarora for a coffee and a sandwich. Over three hours driving without a break and I needed a rest.

From there, another 55 minutes took me to Wanaka. That section of the trip took about ten minutes longer than my estimate. Ten minutes out in four hours seemed pretty good to me.



*Cromwell*

I completed the drive, still in rain, to Cromwell, where I stopped at the Quartz Reef winery for a chat, a tasting and to buy a couple of bottles. I then stopped in the centre of the town for a coffee and a salad. I also refilled the petrol tank.

The remainder of the journey was easier with less rain. I stopped at Etterick to buy a box of peaches (bad ones it turned out) and continued to Lawrence, where Barbara and Stephen were awaiting me.

We ate and then let the log burner keep us warm. The storm still hadn't reached us but it was a chilly evening. The two sweaters I had been carrying around definitely came into their own. Outside, we could hear the rain falling heavily.

## **February 21 Lawrence**

It rained overnight, well into the morning and again after lunch. It wasn't heavy rain but it was very damp.



*The local fishmonger*

After breakfast we ventured into Lawrence to patronise the fish van - a new acquisition. I couldn't photograph the fish as it was in frozen containers.

It doesn't come this far inland and stay fresh. We also had a coffee - not very good - bought petrol etc etc.



*Nothing happening in Lawrence*

We returned to the house, had lunch and tried to keep warm. I wrote post cards and my diary.



*Impressive fruit*

The rain eased and I wandered into the garden to photograph the fruit but the rain promptly started again so I returned indoors.



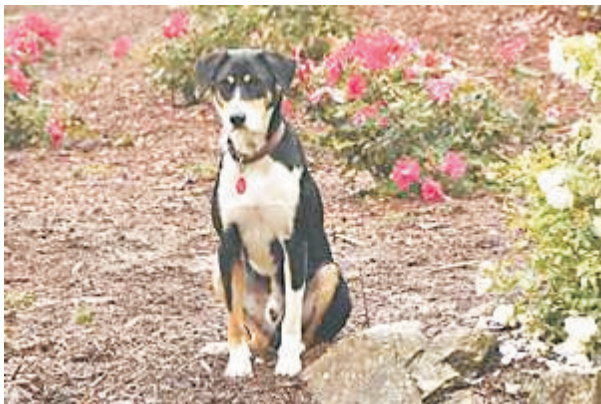
*The Information Centre*

In mid afternoon, Barbara and I set off in the drizzle to walk a few hundred metres into the village, past the Information Centre, bedecked for the Chinese New Year.



*Electric power reaches Lawrence*

It is not a very exciting place but they have just installed an electric car charger. There seem to be more of these in evidence than there are in the UK.



*Our progress was observed*

We looked at some of the historic buildings, met a couple of dogs and, suitably damp, returned home. I had an afternoon snooze.

The evening continued in similar vein with dinner followed by a lazy time in front of the TV.

## February 22 Lawrence

The weather seemed to be on the mend but it was still chilly when Barbara and Stephen drove me along the road to Beaumont, the start of my walk.



*My walk started in Beaumont*

The Clutha Gold Trail isn't big and ritzy. It runs along the road for much of the way, through quiet farmland and without particularly exciting views.



*The trail crossed a small bridge ...*



*... and followed the road*

I potted along at a fair speed, shedding layers after an hour and taking lots of photos.



*The locals looked on*



*Gentle rolling farmland*



*Autumnal fruits along the way*



*Gangers hut with tunnel in the background*

I met a group of cyclists soon after, a single cyclist shortly after that but no other travellers until the end of my walk.



*I was alone but for them*



*The tunnel was in good order ...*

At seven kilometres there was an old gangers' hut - the only seat on the track so far and the only one until near the end in Lawrence. This was followed by the tunnel, about 400 metres long.

It was straight and level so there was always light at the end of it. The surface was good and no one came towards me at speed. At the far end there was some lying water, the only bit of damp path that I saw.



*... but there was lying water inside*



*Not the most elegant table*

About half way, I found a timber bridge abutment which served well as a bench, unloaded my belongings and ate a couple of sandwiches.



*Dull but still and warm enough*

The weather varied considerably with occasional spots of rain. Importantly, there was little wind and the sun never became hot. My feet were holding up well and I was keeping to the time schedule that I had planned.

The trail crossed the road at intervals and made a couple of small climbs. The tunnel avoided the steep climb made by the road.



*The path climbed up a small hill ...*



*.. and then returned to the road*

There were a few animals in the fields, I spoke to some of them but many fled as soon as I arrived. There were fruit trees, just like on the Rail Trail. I tried a mouthful of apple from one of them but regretted it and threw the remainder back whence it came.



*Not very nice apples*

On the outskirts of Lawrence is the Chinese Camp, built in 1867 to accommodate the miners arriving to work the Otago goldfields. It will be the centre of the forthcoming New Year festival. The "traditional pig oven" looked more like a concrete pipe to me but I would probably change my mind if I was here for the weekend and ate the pork.



*The Chinese Camp - with pig oven*



*A fine entrance to the village*



*An encouraging sign*



*An even more encouraging sign!*

As I approached Lawrence I found a sign encouraging me to treat myself. It was put there by people selling massage services but

I soon found a sign which offered me a better sort of treat. The car park at the end of the trail hove into view and I walked down the main street to the Coach and Horses, where I attacked a mid strength beer. After twenty kilometres I think I was justified and it was very cold!



*The end of the trail*



*This made it all seem worthwhile*

I walked the last few hundred metres home, had a chat to one of the neighbours and arrived back at the house.

I felt tired but otherwise OK and a shower soon revived me. Dinner and a quiet evening followed.

## February 23 Lawrence to Dunedin



*A barrowload of apples*

We spent the morning pottering and then picking apples in the garden. The crop, both eaters and cookers, is immense and I was able to take a couple of boxes with me for distribution round Dunedin.



*Something to go with them*

Just before lunchtime, I set off down the road towards State Highway 1 and civilization. There was a touch of drizzle in the air but also some growing patches of blue sky.



*A little blue in the sky*

I stopped to take occasional photos and then turned off the main road to follow the scenic route to the Taieri Mouth. I have travelled here once before but in the opposite direction when taking a roundabout route to the airport. This time, with no real time constraints, I was able to stop for regular photographs. Looking back over Lake Waihola was good. The views when I reached the sea were even better.



*Lake Waihola*



*Taieri Mouth*

Taieri Mouth has great views, some commercial fishing but no signs of a café. I took photos, therefore, and continued along the coast. The scenery was spectacular for much of the time.



*Taieri Mouth*



*Taieri Mouth*



*A beautiful and isolated beach*

I stopped at Brighton, somewhat smaller than its UK counterpart, but with a few cafes. There was an interesting one, which seemed to be closed and a more orthodox one, which sold me a decent coffee.

There was also a highly decorated bus shelter, something which is common in Otago. They do add a little excitement to a street feature which is pretty dull in other parts of the world.

The exciting looking café did have an elderly lurcher who was very keen to make my acquaintance but rapidly discovered that I had nothing edible in my pockets and soon lost interest.



*Typical Otago bus shelter*



*An interesting café - but no one about ...*



*... Except the doggie*



*Otokio Creek, Brighton*

The beach and estuary were excellent. Lots of seaweed, lots of sand and lots of big waves.



*Brighton Beach*



*Brighton Beach*



*Brighton Beach*



*The coast was beautiful*

I drove along the coast for several kilometres, stopping every so often to take photos. I eventually reached a large quarry on a headland. It obviously supplied lots of rock but it didn't do much for the look of the place.

Once in Dunedin, I did a little shopping and failed to do a little bit more. I will have to resume my search tomorrow.



*Shilo - in pensive mood*

I arrived at Paul & Kris's almost at the same time as they did so was soon unpacked and being given lots of attention by Shilo. After dinner, we drove across the city to Luna, a bar with a great view across the harbour, met Pete & Toni and had a couple of beers.

## February 24 Dunedin



*Struggling with the new toy*

The main excitement of the morning was attaching Paul's new electric car to a re-charging point in the city centre. This took longer than expected as there are two cables and only one of them had a plug which matched the socket in Paul's car. We had a coffee while the process took place and then took the car home. En route, I tried and failed to buy the right power adaptor for Shanghai.



*Sunny day in Dunedin*

Towards lunchtime I drove to Pete & Toni's for lunch, followed by accompanying Charlie on a walk. The sun was shining reasonably brightly and it was a warm afternoon.



*Charlie had a walk*



*Ombrello's*



*Salt and pepper squid*

I drove home again, got changed and we drove back into the city for a large family meal at Ombrello's. The restaurant is in two adjoining old houses and the food was excellent.



*An excellent steak*

## February 25 Dunedin

We drove Kris into the city for a yoga class, then had a coffee and a post card buying session. It was warm but dull and cloudy. Rain looked imminent but it didn't arrive.



*Coffee*

We drove home again, where Paul did some work, I wrote post cards and the dog adopted a familiar pose.



*Shiloh in familiar pose*



*A bus stop for a golf course*

We lunched at home, took the dog for a short walk, past yet another interesting bus stop, and then relaxed again until the Dunedin contingent re-assembled for the traditional Sunday evening takeaway. This was Thai and quite good. We spent the rest of the evening in front of the TV.

## February 26 Dunedin to Timaru

It rained and blew overnight but the worst had ceased by the time I got up. Paul and Kris departed for work, leaving me in charge of the dog. Sarah emerged and took on this task and, with her help, I loaded the car.

I had planned to leave after the major rush had finished but mistimed this slightly. At 08.50, it was still fairly busy but I was soon out of the city and heading towards some blue sky.



*Blueskin Bay, Waitati*



*Blueskin Bay, Waitati*



*Evansdale Farmhouse Cheese*

I stopped for a few photos and then at the Evansdale Cheese factory to buy a small lump of cheese. I would have liked to buy a whole one but that would have been greedy.



*Shag Point*

I stopped again for more photography. There was a small amount of blue but a lot of grey in the sky. Some drizzle appeared briefly, then stopped and reappeared as I drove into Oamaru.



*Duller in Oamaru*

I managed to avoid the elderly tourists meandering in the roads of the old town, parked and walked towards the harbour. In addition to the brewery there is now what looks like a rusty iron café. This was busy, had great sea views and sold a very good and strong long black.



*The rusty red café ...*

I took more photos of the touristy areas, visited a gift shop - without a successful purchase - and returned to the car.



*... sold good coffee*



*The whitestone Criterion*



*Harbour Street, Oamaru*

There was a flashing sign as I entered town warning of road works and delays. This was accurate but I was only held up for about ten minutes.



*A good view into the kitchen*

Riverstone Kitchen is about 20 kilometres North of Oamaru, has won national awards and is very good. There were lots of people there but they did manage to find me a table. This had an excellent view into the kitchen. I was able to watch one of the chefs draining the greens in a sieve, then drying them in a tea towel before serving them. I must try this at home.

The spicy squid was off. A shame. I opted for the sausages and a glass of local (Ostler) Riesling. I then had a chat with the chef about which of his puddings - they are amazing here - had least sugar in it. He seemed to think that the orange and almond cake would be the best bet, so I resolved to have that.

The sausages arrived on a large bed of crunchy cabbage. Very healthy. The sausages were very good, as was the wine. Full of varietal characteristics. The cake arrived, was reasonably sweet but as good as I expected. If I had one every day, I would be poorly. One a week, however, is probably OK. I was good and didn't lick up the syrup which had been poured over it.



*I ate the cake but left the syrup*



*A fruitful kitchen garden*

Outside it was sunny and warm. I had a quick look at the eclectic mix of shops outside the restaurant, looked at the very productive gardens and also at the amazing castle at the rear of the restaurant. I seem to remember being told that this was built for the owner's Mother.



*A present for Mother?*

The drive to Timaru took about an hour and was quiet and uneventful. I reached the town and, much to my surprise, ended up outside the motel in no time at all. I unpacked and went outside to explore.



*Safely ensconced at the motel*

It was warm in the sun but there was a biting wind. I discovered the restaurant that I had pinpointed about fifty metres away, just round the corner. It was in a rather attractive row of cafes and bars, all overlooking Caroline Bay. I booked a table for the evening and stood on the terrace looking over the park and towards the sea. There was even a European style "matrimonial bridge" with an array of padlocks on the railings.



*The Matrimonial Bridge*



*Street sculpture*

There were lots of flowers and an interesting sculpture on the way into town. I took photos of some of the more interesting buildings and of a couple of churches. My plan to visit the Museum, however, came to nought as the sign said that it was closed on Mondays.



*Chalmers Presbyterian Church*

I went, instead, to the Information Office, which was very busy, where I collected a small leaflet detailing a walking tour of the town.



*The Grosvenor Hotel*

I followed this for half an hour, looking at all sorts of buildings, before deciding that what wasn't on the tour was just as exciting as what was.



*Not much happening at the station*

I entered the huge park which leads onto Caroline Bay, decided that it was worth exploring but also that the wind was biting and that I was feeling rather cold. I decided to return to the motel to rest and to warm up.



*The Royal Arcade*



*The steps to Caroline Bay*

With the evening rush approaching, I realised that my room was almost within touching range of the main State Highway. Closing the window improved both the temperature and the noise levels.

I rested for a while. checked in to tomorrow's flight to Wellington - it was 30 minutes later than I had thought - and wrote my diary.

At 18.30 I returned to the real world, collected my waterproof from the car as another warm layer, and walked the short distance round the corner to the restaurant.



*Over Caroline Bay*

Over the road, the view was now shrouded with cloud. It was still cold!

The Winemaker's Wife Riesling was very acceptable. One of the very long line of New Zealand Rieslings which is very good value for money.



*The Winemaker's Wife Riesling*

The dumplings came on a bed of very spicy Asian Slaw and were very good. The lamb shank could have been cooked longer and slower but was accompanied by some Indian style vegetables. The restaurant is both Fusion by name and fusion by nature. Well worth another visit. Feeling full, I returned to the motel, played with my photos and watched TV.



*Dumplings and slaw*

## February 27 Timaru to Wellington

I checked out at 09.00, left my car at the motel and looked at the view over Caroline Bay. The biting wind of yesterday had gone but it was dull and cool.



*The path to Caroline Bay*

I walked along the path towards the sea, not far short of ten minutes away. I reached the boardwalk across the dunes but the continuation of the path looked very wet and the beach looked as if it had been recently groomed. Very artificial.



*Looking back to the town*



*Not a nice looking beach*

As far as the eye could see to the right was the commercial port. It is a major feature of the town and, presumably, a major employer.



*The centre of industry*



*The sea has retreated a long way*



*Back up the steps to the road*

I retraced my steps, passing the markers denoting the shore lines in past years. There must have been a huge amount of land reclamation.

I climbed the steps to the main road and wandered into the town centre. With an hour to spare before the Museum opened. I stopped for a coffee. Not the best but perfectly drinkable.

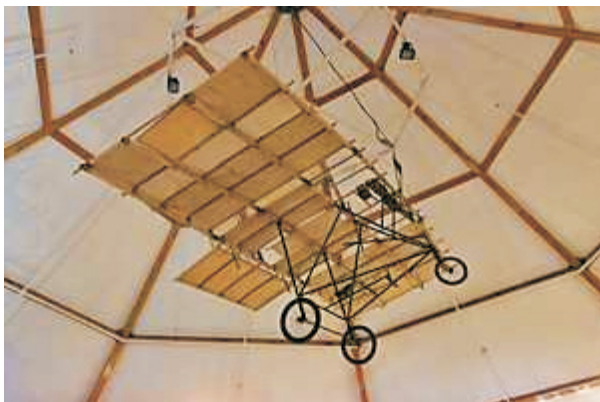


*St Mary's Church*



*South Canterbury Museum*

I arrived at the South Canterbury Museum about three minutes before the official opening time but the nice man at the desk said of course I could come in.



*Richard Pearse's plane - approximately*

I explained that I was interested in the Richard Pearse exhibition and his face fell. He told me that this section of exhibits was being repaired but that there was a representation - not a replica as no one knows quite what it looked like - of his plane hanging from the ceiling.

The man was a real enigma. His claim that he never achieved "controlled" flight has to be accepted, even if he did die in an asylum. As the possible first aviator, however, he is worthy of commemoration. He must have been one of the greatest examples of the famed New Zealand "number eight wire" mentality - the ability to produce amazing things with the most basic of materials.

The rest of the collection was typical of many local New Zealand museums - Maori and colonial artefacts - but this one was particularly well labelled. There was also a special exhibition on the '70s rock scene in the town.

I collected the car from the motel and drove North. It isn't an exciting road but progress was steady, traffic was fairly light and I had no major delays.

I arrived at the Apex Office at 13.00. just over two hours after leaving Timaru , and was in their shuttle bus on the way to the airport in under ten minutes. Once there, I had considered trying to move to an earlier flight but I could only see one Air New Zealand person to ask and she fled as I approached. There's a surprise.

With two and a half hours to kill, I walked to the café outside the airport where I had met John a fortnight ago. As it was next to Kate's flower stall, I popped in to see her and she came to the café with me for a chat. I had a reasonably healthy salad and a coffee.



*Back to the airport*



*A fairly healthy salad*

I found my way back to the airport and located a really comfortable bean bag to sit on. As it was set on some sort of astro turf, it was like being at a rural picnic.

The regional section of the terminal building was unusually quiet so I found a seat and waited for a short time for my plane. This took



*An unusually comfortable airport seat*

off on time and landed in Wellington a few minutes late.

The airport bus - a normal one not one of the Airport Fliers so it had no luggage space - took me to the station. A train took me to Paraparaumu and Valerie took me home. We had dinner in front of the TV.