

Christmas
2007

This has been another very busy year medically speaking, mostly down to Liz (see story below), but other than that it has been a relatively quiet year for us.

When Andy went into hospital last year we agreed that the sensible thing to do was to run Knowle Farm for minimum maintenance this year. That meant growing grass, and if Andy could mow it, all well and good, but if not we could sell it in the fields. So we have a few sheep around (and a few lambs ready for the freezer if anybody would like one) but otherwise it was a quiet year on the farm.

The holiday flat also had a quiet year, and, because Liz is no longer able to do the cleaning, we have decided to let it out on a more permanent basis. Earl (co-pilot of the Caterham) moved in, in late November, and will be staying for a while which will be a big help round the farm.

So a mostly quiet year for us, but a *Merry Christmas*, and a happy and prosperous New Year to us and to all our readers.

Anus Horribilis

Liz has not had the easiest of years. You may remember that she had an appendicectomy in April 2006, and ever since she has suffered with abdominal pains that have defeated the medical profession's finest.

This year has seen every sort of scan known to medical science, some of them twice, and while it is possible to come out of the doctor's surgery with worse news than "I can't find anything wrong with you" it is dispiriting to keep hearing it when you feel as poorly as Liz.

In February we had a skiing holiday booked, but at the last

(Continued on page 2)

The Knowle Farm Newsletter

The Well Dressed Couple

For many years, my old school friend Mike and two of his old college buddies, Mac and Colin, have been going to the Goodwood Revival in late summer.

The Goodwood Revival is all about reliving the forties and fifties for a weekend. Goodwood itself is a race track, so primarily it is about racing old cars (see the photo), but everyone enters into the spirit and most people get dressed up in time with the period (although it does get a bit extended each way and often goes back to the thirties or forward to the sixties).

There are lots of other period things too:-

Cars. We saw two absolutely gorgeous Rolls Royces complete with chauffeurs and at the other end of the scale, an original Bond minicar complete with a *trailer*. Those of you old enough to remember this particular vehicle will be left wondering, as we were, how it ever managed to move it!

Costumes. All sorts. Service uniforms are welcomed so lots of Army, Air Force and Navy, and nurses too. Pretty much everything.

But for me (Terry) the highlight was an air display by two Spitfires flying in formation. A real tear jerker. There just is nothing in the world to compare with the

sound of a Rolls Royce Merlin at full chat. On top of which the old piston engined planes fly slowly enough that you can see the whole display with ease. Also appearing during the day were several other planes of the same vintage including a Mustang. Magnificent.

That's the guy stuff. the girl stuff is all about getting dressed up of course, and we tried to make the effort (as witness the photograph - taken by my brother as we set off from his house at a bleary-eyed 7:00 in the morning).

So, where does one go to get this sort of stuff? Well, there are lots of hire shops local to Goodwood, but not terribly convenient from Derby. Our local shops don't really do this sort of thing - so what did we do? We went to ebay of course.

They even have their own sections - women's clothes, vintage, then choose by decade - 1920s, 30s 40s etc. Same for the men.

We found a supplier in Scotland whom we emailed with our sizes and budget and you can see the



result. All for under £100 - which has to be comparable with hiring, plus we get to use it again next year.

So. There we were. Eight o'clock waiting by the Lavant Grandstand cup of tea in hand. Mike eventually showed up with Colin and Mac (neither of whom we had ever met) and a pleasant day was had by all.

Mike stayed that night with Mac and his wife, and at breakfast the next morning Mike reports that Mrs Mac asked politely about me and Liz to which Mac replied "Terry is our sort of age and a rather dapper sort of a chap". Mike choked on his sausage and then fell about laughing. I still don't really understand quite why?



Anus Horribilis

(Continued from page 1)

moment, our GP said that he thought that flying with undiagnosed abdominal pain was not a good idea, so Liz couldn't go. Very upsetting.

Later in the year, another discussion with our GP led to some rather urgent blood tests. So urgent in fact that we had to cancel our imminent caravan holiday, and Liz didn't get away then either.

On the plus side, we did get away to Orlando with two of our nieces and a nephew in October, and Liz managed really well. We hired her an electric scooter with which to get around, and the five of us had a really great time.

While we were out there Liz got a very funny looking bite. It looked like a bite, but appeared to have a splinter in the middle. I tried to get it out with a needle while we were there, but I couldn't do anything. We decided to leave it and see what happened.

When we got back, for no apparent reason, Liz seemed to get even worse - felt sick,

headaches, couldn't get out of bed. A couple of days later was flu jab day at the surgery, and in my shower that morning I suddenly thought that the bite that Liz had got on holiday could well be a tic - and there are some very nasty tics in North America. So I determined to check with the nurse while we were getting our flu jabs.

We got to the surgery and you could tell it was flu jab day - electric scooters everywhere, and cars abandoned in the car park rather than parked. Inside there were three queues into three of the surgeries where, it turned out, our GP was doing the injections.

I got a very dirty look from the lady operating the keyboard when I asked him to take a quick look at the bite and say whether we needed to make an appointment to see him. He suggested that we come back the following day, and Liz got up as I sat down to get my jab.

Liz went extremely wobbly. Jelly legs. She had to sit on the desk and Chris (the GP) looked quite concerned, but we got out OK and sat back down in the waiting room. Liz slowly got fainter.

As Liz started to pass out, one of the staff came up and, in that quaint way we English have, said

enough, omlet) and it is supplied with absolutely everything. Hutch, two chickens, the first bag of feed, a (very good) book on caring for chickens and even boxes for your first two dozen eggs.

Vicki was ecstatic at the idea. Nash was appalled. However, by the time we had assembled the eglu and installed the two chickens he was won over. Vicki confided in us a week later that she expected to come home one night and find Nash watching the TV with the two chickens on his lap.

There was initially a problem with one of the chickens, as she was rather badly pecked by the other one. But the eglu people took her back (after Liz had es-

Three Great Birthday Presents

This year I "cashed in" three fantastic birthday and Christmas presents from Liz. I got to fly three very unusual aeroplanes.

The first was an aerobatic flight in a Pitts special - a stunt biplane with a roll rate of up to 400 degrees per second. Fantastic!

Then a helicopter flight over the farm from Sheffield airport. Got some great photos.

The third was another aerobatic flight in a WWII Harvard while we were in Florida.



"Is there anything wrong". Well, yes there is actually.

Omitting some detail here, we got Liz into a wheel chair, and then into a surgery where Chris duly appeared to check her over. Nothing obvious, but he took more blood (to test for Lyme's disease - nasty) and after 30 minutes sent us home.

We had however deprived the flu jab program of one third of it's workforce for half an hour and

the queues were now right round the surgery. Worse, no-one was getting their cars out of the car park. But that didn't stop the inevitable flow of others arriving.

The long and the short of it was that the A6 was blocked in both directions and Duffield was gridlocked with cars driven by people with their mouths open all trying to get into the surgery.

All Liz's handiwork!

Vicki, Nash and the Chickens

Vicki and Nash moved house this year, to a larger place that has a garden. Having a garden is a new experience for both of them, and Nash had a list (almost certainly kept in a spreadsheet) of all the things he wanted in the new garden. A forest area, a pond, a wildflower meadow, etc, to which Vicki added a vegetable patch. This was going to be some garden, particularly as it was the size of a normal suburban semi.

Then we upset things by suggesting that, for a moving-in present we would buy them an eglu. This is a beautifully designed modern chicken hutch, (from a company called, appropriately

established that they wouldn't just "neck" her) and she was put in the naughty corner (with two rather badly behaved hens called Voldemort and Asbo) and replaced with two more to keep the bolshie one in order.

Two months on, and the whole idea appears to have been a major success. Eggs have been bartered for all sorts of goods and services, and the odd half dozen always keeps neighbours favourably disposed. If they go away for the weekend, I gather that there is a waiting list to be chicken sit-

ters, so we are now waiting for an explosion of eglus in Chesham.

In case the idea appeals, the eglu can be recommended. The people there are lovely and the eglu is very safe. Nash woke up one morning to find a fox sitting on top of it, quite unable to get at the chickens.

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Stop Press!

November 19th. At last we have a formal diagnosis for Liz's condition. She has M.E. The NHS Direct website confirms that this will account for every single symptom that Liz has suffered over the last 18 months.

That is good news because it means that we do at least know what we are dealing with. The

bad news is that there is no cure, one can merely mitigate the symptoms. It should, though, disappear of it's own volition at some point in the future.

So. We can start to deal with it, and Liz can start to live with it. There are things we can do, but it means that Liz will be more or less incapacitated for the foreseeable future. She won't let it cramp her style any more than it has to if I know her.

Andy

As many of you will remember, Andy went into hospital for his big op last November (2006), and we are very pleased to report that he has recovered very well indeed.

He had an enforced convalescence of about three months, just sitting around the house putting on weight, getting very fed up, getting in Jo's way, and watching other people looking after his animals before he decided that he needed to get back to real life.

Having been a bit of a couch potato for three or four months he struggled to get back to his previous levels of fitness, but he did it, and now he seems as fit as ever.

Because his surgeon moved on during his convalescence, he had a check up with another surgeon about six months after the op and the chap examined him and said "You look fine, you could start on a couple of hours gentle exercise a day if you wanted to". To which Andy asked - "Is that on top of the 14 hours a day I am currently working round the farm?"

Geriatric Hits Rock & Roll Lifestyle

Our friend Tago announced that he and a couple of friends were going to form a band. Because they all have children, and are at a very busy stage of their professional lives, there would be no time for gigging, so it was decided that each member would have to learn, and play, a new instrument.

Tago, having started to play the piano at a very early age, and given it up again at a very slightly later early age, decided that the keyboard qualified as a new instrument and went for that.

Mark (1) decided he was going to learn to play the drums. Mark (2) decided he was going to play the guitar - despite, apparently, having played one for years. (I don't know how he got away with that - but he is quite good.)

Obviously what they were miss-

ing was a bass player, and as I have never played the bass, I seemed eminently qualified for the part. If you can put on one side for a moment the 20 odd year age difference and the fact that I now need reading glasses to read the music.

The trouble started with the choice of music. They, all being around 40, wanted to do Oasis stuff. They put half a dozen tracks on a CD for me to listen to and Liz and I did our best. We would sit in the car with Oasis playing and after a couple of tracks one of us would say "Can we move on to something else"? We just didn't like it. Oh well. We are trying Beatles, Queen and Coldplay numbers too.

We recently had our second practice session, now with added singer and rhythm guitar, and the highlight was all actually arriving at the end of "Don't Look Back in Anger" within half a bar (or so) of each other.

We may not be any good, but we are all thoroughly enjoying ourselves and it is, as they say, a learning experience.

T' bloody world's goin' to't bloody dogs.....

You know how it is - political correctness goes mad, children don't respect their elders the way we had to when we were young, the NHS is going to the dogs, tax is up, the council are too concerned about racial quotas to mend the holes in the road or empty your bins, the police are more worried about paperwork than catching bad guys, and you can't get a plumber for love or money. Well, listen to Robert Crampton, in the Times on March 8th 2007

"Somewhere, right now, a newspaper columnist is whingeing. Even Matthew Parris has succumbed. Moaning has become the default temptation for the hard-pressed opinion-former. It's cheap, it's easy - but it's wrong. On balance, the world is a far better place than it was, say, 30 years ago, when I was the age my children are now. Here are some

reasons to be cheerful. Feel free to add your own.

Communism is all but gone. Even Castro is almost dead. Fewer countries are run by tyrants of any stripe. Fewer people do dirty, dangerous, soul-destroying, health-destroying or just plain boring jobs. Military casualties come at a much higher political cost: in 1972, when I was my daughter's age, 134 British soldiers were killed in Northern Ireland, exactly the number that have died in four years of war in Iraq.

Clothing and food are cheaper, better and more likely to be made of natural ingredients, though neoprene, Gore-Tex, Lycra and Velcro are more than welcome. Tinned mandarins are no longer part of our staple diet. My children eat delicious stuff I hadn't heard of until I was 25.

Obesity, narcissism and living too long are much less serious problems than hunger, disease and not living long enough. My children's grandparents are all alive. Three of mine were dead before I was four. Viagra has been invented. Fifty is the new thirty.

Divorce is not stigmatised. Neither are mixed-race children. Corporal punishment is against the law. Very few people think homosexuality is a sin or that racism is a bit of a laugh. More than 50 per cent of doctors are women. Bullying is taken seriously by schools. Domestic violence is taken seriously by the police. Parents, especially fathers, have warmer, friendlier, closer relationships with their children.

Shops open longer. Ikea, De-cathlon and TK Maxx benefit millions. More people than ever are writing, recording, painting, creating. The cinema, books and newspapers are still very cheap. Museums are free and more in-

teresting. Modern architecture is rather nice to look at. Good taste in matters great and small has percolated down. Duvets are preferable to blankets. The great cities of the North of England are rising again.

Very few people smell. Lidos are reopening. Canals are being dug once again. Unleaded is normal. There are salmon in the Thames, wildflowers in the hedgerows and farmers' markets in the high street. You can get to Paris by train in three hours. Many of the world's best footballers play in England. Immigration is up, emigration is up, the internet is utterly wonderful, the word "sir" is falling into disuse, ties are being cast off, almost everyone is on first-name terms.

And spring is nearly here, and many types of cancer are in headlong retreat, and our kids will live a very long time, and Doctor Who will soon be back on the telly. So, given all that, why the long face?"

The Disappearing Muck Heap

Many of you will remember the muck heap (AKA Poo Mountain) after which the muck heap field was named. Well, alas it is no more. Andy and I shifted it over a couple of days in the summer with two tractors and his loader. It all went to the bottom of Sunset III, where we have gained another three feet of land as result.



Look mum - no muck heap!

Anyone who has skied with us in the recent past will know of the disdain in which my current ski hat is held. It is an old friend. It came from the "Everything Under £1" barrel at the Birmingham YHA shop some 30 years ago and has seen splendid service ever since.

However there is considerable external pressure to change it.

Now, Liz's cousin Sally, with whom we go skiing, has the most wonderful ski hat. She bought it in Mongolia several years ago as she

travelled on the Trans Siberian express from Moscow to Beijing.

It appears to be some kind of animal (dead, obviously), complete with tail hanging down the back and it is not so much

that she wears it, rather that it swathes her head in warm fur. People (in America anyway) are always asking about it, and they frequently enquire if she would sell it. I have heard her offered \$1,000 for it as we went up in one ski lift.

This is a source of some envy as you might imagine, and then this year I had a brainwave. We have two cats, and one day they will inevitably die (of natural causes we hope) and I could get the skins treated. They would then make a splendid new ski hat and it would be a nice way to remember them.

On this basis I have renamed the cats Ski Hat One and Ski Hat Two, and I think the significance of the new names has escaped them both. A (PhotoShop) artist's impression of how the finished article might look is shown.

I must, however, make sure that Jason, the original owner of "the cat formerly known as Rocky" does not get hold of this article.....

Awful Joke of the Year.

Liz took one of the ducks to the Vet. Unfortunately she took it to what is euphemistically known as "the small animal clinic". For "small animal clinic" read "the place to take your dear little diddums where they will cosset him/her to your heart's content and send a huge invoice".

Total bill for one duck - £48 plus VAT. For a duck that we can replace for £2.

Next time a duck needed some attention I suggested that she put it in a cardboard box, put on her overall and wellies and take it to the "large animal" clinic - i.e. farm vets. Invoice - £3.

On hearing this a friend commented "Ah, you see Terry, some ducks have large bills and some have small bills".

Daft Refusal of the Year

Julia's dad, David, (an electrician) was doing some work for Albert Roux (yes - *the* Albert Roux).

At around 12:00 he was asked if he, along with various other workmen, would like to "join them for lunch".

"No thanks" says David "I've got my sandwiches here". Doh!

Most Upset Liz Award

We were sitting in the Cross Keys, enjoying a quiet pint and a bite to eat. I like the Cross Keys because they play my kind of music on the radio- some rock, a bit of country - radio 2 stuff.

Well, Liz is listening to this and comes out with "hey - this is good isn't it?" and I could only agree. Five minutes later the station ident comes on and guess what - it's Saga radio. One deeply upset Liz. Swears she will never go into the 'Keys again.

A New Ski Hat



Stupidest Guinea Fowl of the Year

As you can imagine, this is not an easy award to win. It does have to be enormously, astronomically, heroically stupid even to qualify. But I think we have a clear winner this year.

Liz and I were sitting by the duck pond, a field with one tree and one telegraph pole, when this year's winner took off. The air around the duck pond is free of obstacles, there were no birds of prey likely to attack it, and no motorists have ever been seen in the duck pond field, let alone eight feet off the ground.

Despite all this though, our hero started to climb, gained ten or fifteen feet, and then flew straight into the telegraph pole. BOP. Then fell to the ground looking surprised. A clear winner!

Stupid Question of the Year

Dave, a friend from Newcastle, and I try to get a day out at Alton Towers together once a year. We usually have a good day dedicated to white knuckle rides.

Typically, by four o'clock people will be going home, the queues are disappearing and we will finish up going round and round on Nemesis on the front seat. Great.

This particular day there was something new to be investigated, so we stopped and asked a young Alton Towers employee if we were on the right track for the ride. "Yes" he said, "Just round the corner there".

We thought no more of this until throwing out time when we were heading for the gates along with several thousand other people.

As we headed out, we came across the young man who had helped us earlier in the day and he politely enquired if we had found what we had been looking for.

"How did he remember us?" we asked ourselves - very impressed with his ability to remember all the guests. Until we took a good look round and realised that we were a good 30 years older than every other face to be seen.