

## Christmas 2008

This has been a very quiet year for us, so there is little to report in this year's (new, smaller) newsletter.

The farm was again run for minimum maintenance, but we did make some hay and silage, and we kept a few sheep on to produce some lamb for the freezer.

We took a one week break in Lanzarote in February, and a couple of weeks in the caravan in June, but that was it for holidays this year.

We have new tenants in the cottage - Sam & Sharon - who have fitted in very nicely, Earl has moved up here and is living in the holiday flat, and we had a great farm weekend with all my old school friends, but mostly this year has been about keeping Liz quiet, and trying to improve her quality of life.

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

# The Knowle Farm Newsletter

## How Sad Are We?

I hate to say this, but the best we can do for a lead story this year is Liz's health. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Never mind, things may look up next year.

This time last year, we finally got a diagnosis of M.E. or C.F.S. (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) as it is also known. There is no cure at the moment (the N.H.S. only recognised it about 18 months ago) only therapy to help you deal with it, but we have been amazed at how many people know someone with it. It is clearly widespread.

Liz started on her therapy, and it certainly helps. Relaxation, not letting her "batteries" get completely discharged, stopping before she is exhausted, it all helps. Unfortunately, trying to get Liz to "stop before she is exhausted" is exhausting in itself. It's not her best thing.

A big break occurred in April when, as a result of a Channel 4

documentary, we tried turning the wireless network off. Amazing! Liz was transformed. And it turns out she is not the only one affected by wireless radiation. Several European countries have legislation in the pipeline banning wireless networks in schools.

It's not only wireless networks of course, it is also cordless phones - they have gone. But probably worst is a mobile phone. They radiate up to 1,000 times the power of a network, which is why the mobile knocked Liz out so quickly. So Liz no longer carries a phone.

After that, things slowed down and her state varies enormously from day to day. Huge ups and downs. And in these ups and downs we are trying to detect a glacial upward trend. Not easy.

We also find ways of dealing with things. Travel has always been difficult because, we have learned,

one of the things that will wear Liz out quickly is a high level of sensory input. That is why busy pubs and supermarkets tire her. And why too many people talking at once wear her out. Travelling down a motorway at 70 mph is a total sensory overload, so she now wears a sleep mask (the sort they give you on aeroplanes), and her noise cancelling headphones with her iPod playing Mozart (it just *must* be Mozart). This, we have discovered, can get her through a two or three hour car journey, something that was a nightmare before.

We must thank all the friends and relatives who have helped enormously by providing meals to put in the freezer. The evening meal has always been our biggest problem. I can't/won't cook and a couple of nights a week, Liz is too tired to do it so a frozen meal is a much better option than the chippie.

While I don't cook, I did do one  
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## The Other Story

There is only one other story this year I am afraid, and many of you won't find THAT one interesting either. The Caterham had a very, very bad year.

At the last track day of 2007, at Mallory Park, to cut a long story short, as I was belting round the "Esses" - a chicane - at high speed, the engine decided, for reasons best known to itself, to spew all its oil out over the off side wheels.

As you can imagine, this did nothing for the grip of the two tyres and I spun off in a cloud of smoke and invective. Despite much work we never did get to the bottom of it. It appears that the engine we have has just been known to do this. Encouraging.

With Earl now living here, though, working on the car was easier. We cleaned everything up and had a good day drifting (driving sideways) at Oulton Park, and a good track day at Anglesea.

We then went to Cadwell Park and, after about six laps, it became apparent that the cylinder head gasket had blown. No more driving that day, and a £1,000 repair bill. Great.

They just got the car ready in time for a day that Earl and another friend - Mr. X - had promised themselves - Brands Hatch, the circuit of their youth.

Down at Brands, Earl had a great first session, going really well after all the tender ministrations that the engine had had. Then Mr. X took an old college friend - Mr. Y - out for a run and, during his warm up laps, the engine decided to do its "lets chuck all the oil out" trick

again.

Because Mr. X was on a warm-up, he wasn't driving hard so didn't notice. He knew something was wrong but didn't know what, and under the pressure of being out on the track didn't know what to do. So he tried to crawl back to the pits. Big mistake.

Having spread oil over about 2/3 of the Brands circuit (which took an hour to clean up and made him *very* popular) the engine gave up the ghost entirely, and threw a con-rod

through the crank-case about 50 yards from home.

So. Broken engine. Enormous repair bill. Only one track day completed. Not a good year.

We are going to work much harder at keeping the oil in the engine this year as, having gone through the "if it does this again, it's going" way of thinking, Earl and I have decided that we don't really want to go back to life without Nancy. She is just too much fun.



Driving Sideways  
at Oulton Park

(Continued from page 1)  
interesting deal this year. A lady

advertised in the local shop for  
someone to show her how to

create a web site. I  
volunteered, and when  
it came to the matter  
of payment, we hit  
stalemate. Until I  
asked if she could cook.  
I did a couple of days  
with her, and she put a  
goodly supply of  
(delicious) meals in the  
freezer. Good deal huh?

The saddest thing,  
though, is that we had  
to swap Liz's lovely  
little red sports car for  
an electric scooter  
(immediately named  
"Dolly the Trolley").  
Not much of a swap,  
but she wasn't using the  
car at all, it was just  
sitting in the garage  
depreciating. And Dolly  
really will help. (cont.  
below right)  
So. A huge thank you to



From this.....



.. to this



But how many trolleys  
have an E Type key ring?

every one for your help, your best  
wishes, your cards, your emails  
sent with little or no hope of a  
reply, and your forbearance - its  
fingers crossed for 2009. If I can  
just keep her to her regime (and  
that is a big "if") we should be  
seeing some noticeable  
improvement.

## Sundry Comings and Goings

It has been a year of sadness  
and joy on the livestock front.  
Early on we lost our beautiful  
drake, Kevin, and three of his  
wives. Someone ran them over.  
We reckon they must have aimed  
straight for them, as there is no  
way you could miss seeing a pha-  
lanx of ducks crossing the road.  
  
To compensate, we bought three  
hens and three ducks. The chick-  
ens are VERY friendly indeed  
and will jump into your arms if  
you let them. One has been  
known to help herself to a drink  
from my teacup. They have been  
named the Cheeky Girls (even  
though there are three of  
them).

We thought that all three of the  
ducks were girls but one of  
them, Buffy, turned out to be a  
drake. He is very beautiful, with  
feathers in various hues of beige  
and grey. He and Derek seem to  
get on without any fighting, as

yet. The two girls are Ruby and  
Quackers.

In November, we collected four  
hens rescued from a battery  
farm. One had to go back as she  
had a deformed leg and we  
thought the fox would pick her  
off straight away, but the other  
three are settling in. They are  
very short on feathers, they  
can't roost, and so far haven't  
left the chicken shed but they  
are slowly getting braver and  
their feathers are starting to  
grow back.

The other new arrival this year  
is Melvyn. He is a cock pheasant  
who is blue/green all over. This  
variation is known as melanistic  
and Melvyn certainly knows  
how good looking he is. He  
stands at the snug window, ad-  
miring his reflection, turning  
his head from side to side, as  
if to say 'Am I gorgeous or  
what!'



Melvyn the Magnificent.

## Getting Older - 1

"Did the earth move for you?"  
Nowadays that means "Did I  
snore last night?"

## Wheelbarrow of the Year

My wheelbarrow was always get-  
ting punctures, so I asked the  
tyre place for some advice.

They suggested fitting an indus-  
trial strength tyre with much  
more tread.

## Getting Older - 2

After 30 years of happy  
marriage, I have finally found  
the secret to keeping a woman  
happy in bed - bring her a cup of  
tea every half hour!

## Getting Older - 3

This year was my (Terry's) big  
65. We celebrated with a small  
party, and the Government  
presented me with my state  
pension. A very useful £96.16  
per week.

I did this, and I noticed that the  
tyre has a speed rating of "R".  
This means that my wheelbarrow  
(and for similar reasons, my lawn  
mower) is safe at speeds up to,  
but not to exceed, 106 m.p.h.  
That's a relief.

## Observation of the Year

My brother lives in a place called  
Felpham, right on the south  
coast, not too far from  
Portsmouth.

We have stayed there on a num-  
ber of occasions, and as we have  
stood in our bedroom on the  
first floor, looking out of the  
window at the sea, have I have  
often observed to Liz that  
"there are ferries at the bot-  
tom of the garden." Boom! Boom!

This will bring great joy to my  
old age as I have calculated  
that, over any twelve month  
period, this will cover:-  
5 days out at Alton Towers (at  
the OAP rate of course) **plus**  
4 track days in the Caterham  
**plus**  
2 weeks holiday to Lanzarote in  
February for Liz and me **plus**  
1,552 pints of Guinness.

Now **that's** a good year. And for  
any of you still at work, may I  
thank you in anticipation of your  
ongoing support.

## Grand-dad for a day.

We had a lovely family staying on  
the camp site this year. Mum,  
dad, and four children between 5  
and 9. They were going to Alton  
Towers for the day - would I like  
to come. Is the Pope etc....?

We had a great day, and, as a  
substitute grand-dad I got to go  
on several rides that are not  
open to me as an unaccompanied  
adult. The Bouncing Frogs for  
example.

## Interesting Question of the Year

When and why does Liz smell  
chicken's bottoms?

Chickens suffer with a pest  
called Red Mite, and we get rid  
of them by powdering them with  
a rather overpowering smelling  
powder. The chicken shed smells  
like a down-market ladies'  
boudoir. Or so I have been told.

Liz usually does this job when  
the chickens are perched for  
the night, and I caught her do-  
ing it one night. The problem  
was, it was so dark that she  
couldn't see who had been done  
and who hadn't. The only way  
she could tell was to pick them  
up and - yes, you've got it -  
smell their bottoms. Ugh.