

Christmas
2009

2009 has been a good year for the Derbyshire branch of the Chisman family - see the two main stories. They gave me a big headache - both are obviously front page material, but which one to lead with? Tricky.

Liz's recovery has led to us re-introducing the travel section, (see page 3) some stories from trips which have brought us pleasure during the year.

The farm has been quiet, but we have seen many friends during the year, always a pleasure too.

Earl has mostly had a good year in the holiday flat, and got the Caterham running in time for a couple of track days this year (see page 4), but alas, Sam and Sharon have departed the Cottage for pastures new, and, at the time of writing we have not yet sorted out the new tenants.

So a good year for us, and we wish a *Merry Christmas*, and a happy and prosperous New Year to us and to all our readers.

Annus Much Betteris

Well, you will all no doubt be very glad to hear that it would appear that Liz no longer has Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS - the latest name for what was called M.E.). As with the fact of Vicki's pregnancy last year, I haven't wanted to make too much fuss about it for fear that it would all go wrong, and prove only temporary. There are two versions of the story (as you might expect), here is Liz's.

At the start of this year, I began seeing a 'Reverse Therapist' who encouraged me to start 'thinking positively'. Evidently, although CFS is a physical illness, it causes you to generate a lot more adrenaline than is normal and one of the ways to control this is by changing your mind set to think

about nice things, rather than dwelling on the negative. This led me to reading several Christian books, the most useful of which was probably Joyce Meyer's 'Battlefield of the Mind'. It showed me that you can actually control the thoughts which go on in your mind and turn the negative into positive.

I did a lot of going over scenes from my past, letting go of bad memories, forgiving past hurts. I started actually to thank God for CFS. It sounds odd, but it really has brought me some wonderful blessings - the time to sit and read my Bible, the time to sit and

watch the birds in the garden, loving friends who have brought me communion every week, done my ironing, brought meals for the freezer, were willing to travel long distances just to sit with me for ten minutes, masses of prayer, and my loving husband who has looked after me with such care for the whole time.

In March, I submitted a request for prayer to Joyce Meyer's World Day of Prayer on March 11th. I was touched by their reply - one of Joyce's books and list of Bible verses, which I started to read each morning and night.

In July, our church ran a Holy Spirit workshop and at one session I was prayed for by a group who stood around me holding hands and praying for some time. One young man (in his late teens) who is one of those quiet, modest, faith-filled Christians, laid hands on me and I started to feel better. I have always compared having CFS with being permanently jet-lagged, or hung over - fog in the brains - and after this time of prayer this fog started to lift.

I hadn't managed to attend a

(Continued on page 2)

The Knowle Farm Newsletter

The World's most beautiful Granddaughters

It's not just us, is it? These really are the world's most beautiful granddaughters.

Last year, for my 65th birthday, Vicki and Naresh presented me with the most wonderful news - she was expecting twins. They had been trying for several years, so this was a most wonderful birthday present.

I didn't write about it last year, thinking about many a slip twixt cup and lip, but after an uneventful pregnancy, and a rather pro-



longed natural birth (at Vicki's request) our two lovely granddaughters were born on April 19th.

On the left is Sophia Kass Jayna, the senior partner, who arrived at 5.16pm and weighed in at 5lb 7oz. At the top is Asha Claire Jaymini who arrived at 5.24pm and topped the scales at 5lb 12oz.

Here they are at 5 months - what else can I say? They are adorable and we have truly joined the ranks of doting grandparents.

Annus Much Betteris

(Continued from page 1)

whole church service since I was first ill, because I couldn't cope with the noise and the people. It was so sad, as friends at church were merely expressing their pleasure at seeing me, but hugs and greetings just made me want to run away, and the noise of the worship physically hurt



What do you call it?

Here you can see Liz's new Smart car - a smartie - what is the collective noun?

Why - a 'tube' of Smarties of course.

Arrivals and Departures

We started the year with our 3 rescue hens, Mrs Brave, Mrs. Not-Very-Brave and Mrs Not-Brave-At-All, settling in and growing feathers - though it took about 6 months before they looked half way decent. In March, however, Mrs Brave disappeared. We thought she had tried to make friends with Mr Fox but a month later she returned with a cockerel in tow! (and a bald head for those of you who appreciate the subtleties) We asked all our neighbours if he belonged to them, but no one claimed him and so he has moved in. He is small, beautifully marked and has the character of sergeant

my ears. On good days (not very frequent), Terry would drive me to church with a kitchen chair in the back of the car, which he would put in the vestibule. I would sit for ten or fifteen minutes and listen to as much of the service as I could manage, and then stagger back out to the car. Terry would then fetch the chair and we would go home avoiding everyone we could. At the Christmas Day service, in 2008, I was there for one carol and half of the children's address.

But the Sunday morning after I was prayed for, I woke up with an almost audible voice in my head (which I firmly believe was God) saying 'If you go to church this morning, I will heal you.'

So I went. I was fine with all

the welcoming hugs and greetings. My ears coped with the singing and I was able to stand up and join in (a minor miracle in itself!) I enjoyed the prayers and the sermon (on the subject of the Holy Spirit) and then the leader said we would have another time of prayer. At that point, I thought 'I am going to have to go forward'. So, shaking like a leaf, I crept to the front and whispered to the pastor's wife how I had felt the Lord telling me I would be healed. She said 'Oh good', and pushed me out to the front of the church. Slightly more exposure than I had planned! Funnily enough, it never occurred to me to think 'What happens if I am NOT healed.'

The two pastors and their wives, together with the young man



major. He very quickly earned the name of Adolf and if you get too close to his girls he is inclined to peck your ankles!

Later in the year Mrs. Brave and Mrs. Not-Very-Brave succumbed to the consequences of high living and popped their clogs. We can only be thankful that their last year was a lot more pleasant than the 18 months they spent in a tiny cage with no floor. Sadly, this year, we also lost Myrtle, the Mad Maran who was about 7.

In the summer three new hens arrived, (named by some children who are regular visitors to the camp site) - Snowy, a Light Sussex, Hoppy who is sort of silvery grey, and Tracey who is black.

Also in the summer, Terry's cousin David and Janice brought us 5 guinea fowl poults, who were fostered by Little Black Hen. She is tiny, but quite bossy, has very feathery feet and lays eggs the size of a robin's.

Vicki decided that looking after twins was as much as she could cope with (no surprise there!) and so her three chickens have also joined our flock on a (possibly) temporary basis, although since they will probably have passed the laying stage when they are due to be returned, I suspect that we may now be their proud owners.

So we now care for (and feed) 23 hens, 1 cockerel, 12 Guinea fowl, 8 ducks and 2 drakes. And we get nearly 2 eggs a day. Huh!

who had prayed for me before, all laid hands on me and I just knew I was better. There wasn't a dry eye in the church and in the last hymn I was dancing with a friend on the back row!

I am still very unfit and therefore still get tired but Terry says I have regained my 'sparkle'. After a meal with friends, soon after my healing, he said 'I've got my wife back - I didn't think I would ever see her again.'

My body is still recovering but I am walking, swimming, going to the pub, to the supermarket. I am healed. I thank God so much.

And a footnote for Fellow Christians....

Since my healing, I have had several bad days when I started to doubt my healing was real, and then I felt the Lord saying that I needed to keep telling people about His work in me. If I stopped, and let doubt set in, I would relapse. So I am trying to be obedient. I am also trying not to do things in my own strength, but in God's. It is very tempting to try and do all the things I did before I was ill, but I realise I must stick to what God wants me to do. One of the verses Joyce Meyer sent me, has been especially important:

Psalm 28:7 "The Lord is my strength and my impenetrable shield. My heart trusts in, relies on and confidently leans on Him and I am helped. Therefore my heart rejoices and with my song will I praise Him."

A Queue

While Liz was poorly, she struggled with too many visitors, and, at one point we were getting so many friends wanting to see her that I was hunting on eBay for one of those ticket dispensers you see at the Deli in Tesco. You know - "please take a ticket and wait at the end of the drive until your number is called."

A Ski Trip

Liz was determined that, despite her being ill, I should go skiing in January. (Obviously, I only write this so that it doesn't seem as if I am the sort of man to go swanning about enjoying himself while his beautiful wife lies at home, helpless, woebegone, and unable to care for herself.)

I organised two weeks in Big Sky, Montana with my old school friend Mike and Liz's cousin Sally. We have skied before, we enjoy each other's company and we ski well together. Apart from being a wonderful

holiday, two events stand out. The first was a trip in the evening to a local restaurant. It had been snowing (obviously) and we drove along the main road looking for the road house. After a time, it appeared in the distance, and as we got closer, the driver (naming no names, but not me) turned right for the car park and - woops - went straight down a ditch. To call it a bit of a surprise would be an understatement of Herculean proportions. Sally let out a shriek, Mike and I may possibly

have sworn. But there we were, one front wheel two feet lower than the others. What to do? Panic, obviously, but then what? I decided to get help.

I set off to the road house and returned with a young man in his mid-twenties and his "bigfoot" truck. Despite temperatures of -30 this man was dressed in shorts and a tee shirt - *what* - but the temperature just didn't seem to bother him. Sure, he worked in the kitchen, they're tough in Montana. He clearly enjoyed pulling us out, and we got the impression that we weren't the first to avail ourselves of his services.

The other thing was that, while out there, I finally had to ditch my "boy racer" skis. "You can't

control them any more" the man in the shop said. "Another step down the road to old fartdom", I thought.

Thus it was that I returned from skiing with a pair of skis which their detractors insist are pink, but which in reality are rather more like Dusky Rose (although I would accept Crushed Strawberry).

The fact remains however, that they are not what you would describe as a masculine colour, and they represent another step on my epic voyage towards finding my inner woman.



Skiing & how to deal with the age-old worry of vermin in your ski hat.

Since the cats resolutely refused to die and provide my new ski hat, (see Christmas 2007 Newsletter) I had to take the old one when we went skiing again this year. Some of you will know of this hat, but some may not so I will outline the problem.

I bought my ski hat from the "Everything Under £1" bin in the Birmingham YHA when Liz and I went on our first ski holiday some 33 years ago now. I have never seen the like of this hat, and it has stood me in good stead ever since. It is unique in many ways, one of which has caused some of the more vociferous female members of our ski party to suggest, fairly strongly, that it might need washing.

Now, this is clearly nonsense as a moment's sensible reflection will show. Firstly, although only slightly younger than my daughter, it only gets used for about one week a year - a total usage of less than 30 weeks - little more than half a year. And secondly, its use has been restricted to the beautiful clear, clean air of the Alps, or more latterly, the American Rockies.

Despite this, these ladies are worried. Primarily, I gather, that there might be unimaginable



things setting up home in it. Things that moved in some years ago, and have now bred to create the bacterial equivalent of Milton Keynes. That they will be working on the foundation of their own Hat Empire. That under the guidance of some bacterial John F. Kennedy, they will be considering conquering their equivalent of the moon.

Absolute nonsense, of course, but - I now think that I have hit on a solution that will keep everybody happy. I shall pop said hat, with or without said Unimaginable Empire, in the microwave for 5 minutes on full power. And lest the fears extend to the possibility of some mutant strain of unimaginable thing, such as were frequently seen in 1960s post-nuclear-holocaust horror movies, I shall ask the man at security in the airport to give it an extra special zapping with the x-ray machine.

Surely, this will keep everyone happy.

A Caravan Trip

This year, Liz and I finally got our caravan back to France - something we have wanted to do for some time, but which Liz's M.E. kept us from doing. We hit on a spiffing wheeze:- I would tow the caravan from home to a camp site just outside the ferry port, and Liz would fly to the airport that Ryanair call Paris, from whence I would pick her up.

The trick would be performed in reverse from Limoges airport on our way back. And it worked very well. We had a truly delightful 3 weeks, including a visit to a site we had first visited in its first year, 14 years ago, run by a Dutch couple. We told them this and she said "I remember you". Ha! I thought, good PR, but a bit unlikely. "You had a red Jaguar, and you booked to come back a second time, but you were ill". Good Lord! Absolutely right. (Except

that I wasn't ill, the car broke down but - hey - near enough.) We are clearly memorable.

A lovely time, and a whole new meaning to the phrase "Fly/Drive".



The Band

Our band, variously known as "Mid Life Crisis" or "Sad Dads and the OAP", has had a mid-dling sort of a year.

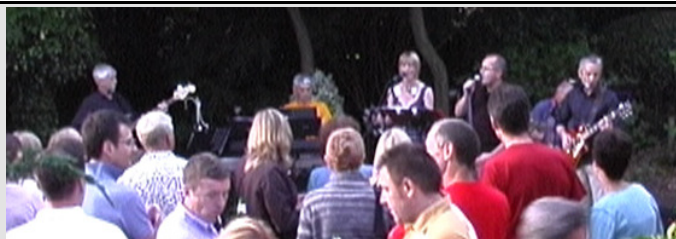
The good part was a gig we played in July, at the drummer's garden party. Two half hour sessions with music as diverse as Johnny B. Goode, Van Morrison's "Brown Eyed Girl" and Radio-head's "Creep". We played a good gig.

(Whenever I talk to Vicki about the band and the music we do, I

Summary of the Year

There is good news and bad.

The good news is that the bad news isn't as bad as we were expecting.



frequently see this look of horror pass quickly over her face and I can see her thinking "I've got that on my iPod - I can't have music that my old man is playing on my iPod". I am sure she goes straight home and deletes it.)

The not-so-good part came as a result of the gig we did for the 40th birthday of the wife of the keyboard player in 2008. I put our rendition of Oasis's "Cigarettes and Alcohol" from it up on YouTube (search for "Mid Life Crisis" and "Cigarettes").

Earlier this year, two of the band members were in the local secondary school waiting for

their children, and happened to catch the tail-end of a music lesson with the music teacher, a Ms Softly. She was running them through an analysis of just this song. "Great" they thought, "just what music lessons at school should be like".

Then, she finished the lesson with "Now, this is how it *shouldn't* be done" and - you're probably ahead of me here - she had pulled our version from YouTube, not knowing they were local parents.

Is this fame or not? I'm not sure, but there were dire mutterings about "Killing Ms Softly with our song".

Painted Corner of the Year

From The Times letters page in the week when, on August 3rd, Harriet Harman claimed that "men cannot be left to run things on their own".....

"If a woman is an essential element in the leadership of the Labour Party, then it follows that women possess qualities that men do not. As a corollary, it must also be accepted that men possess qualities that women do not. If both these statements are true, then it further follows that there is nothing wrong with employers preferring to appoint a woman, or a man, to a particular vacancy because one possesses qualities lacking in the other. And if this is true, then where lies the Government's policy of equality in the workplace?"

Forgetful moment of the Year

Our friends Mike and Gil came with us to the Lake District, and together, we were wandering round the Lakeland shop (many thousands of wonderful little bits and pieces for the kitchen).

They were searching for some sealable plastic boxes. But not just any plastic boxes - these ones had to be just right for the job. They had searched high and low - and Lakeland is a shop with some very high and some very low places. So we joined in, and after some

time, they settled on some which which, while not *exactly* what they had been looking for where near enough.

Pleased with the results of their visit to the shop, we all went back to the car and, in due course set off home.

We enjoyed our week with them, and thought no more about it until, some 3 months later, I got a phone call from Mike. Rather sheepish. "You remember those plastic boxes we bought"? "Yes". "Can you remember what we wanted them for"? Neither of them could remember the purpose for which these much sought for boxes had been bought, and as far as I know, they have never remembered.

The Caterham

You may remember, at the end of last year, we left the Caterham sitting, rather forlorn, in the workshop while it's engine was over in deepest Suffolk being rebuilt.

Well, it took Earl most of the year to get it back together again and working, mainly due to poorly timed events like:

We were virtually ready to go and we need to run the engine in gently for the first two hundred miles, which meant re-taxing her. To get her taxed we needed an MOT. To get an MOT we needed two mirrors which were attached to the aeroscreen thingey. That broke when Earl was fitting it, so we needed another one. Wallop. £265 and a six week wait.

Anyway, by July she was tested, taxed and ready to go again. So, off we went to do a few miles with the new engine. We decided the sensible thing to do was to drive up and down the A38, which is dual carriageway, long and 70mph. However, driving something like the Caterham, while not exceeding

4000 rpm is, say we say, slightly boring. 200 miles suddenly seemed like a very long way.

However, we persevered, ignoring boy racers who would appear alongside us, challenging. Well, mostly anyway. We certainly ignored the ones we had no chance of beating.

Eventually, the running in was done, and we set off for our first gentle trackday at Cadwell Park. I found that if I just took every corner one gear higher than I was used to we managed to keep the revs to their limit and we had a good day. A similar day followed at Oulton Park with a few more revs allowed, and we had a good day there too.

It seems that Earl has made a remarkable job of installing the engine, resiting the troublesome oil filter, and fitting oil temperature and pressure gauges.

She sounds lovely and feels ready to go, and although the engine still feels a little tight, that will wear off leaving her as raring to go and lively as ever.

Good old Earl!

Bonding moment of the Year

The very first time that Terry was handed his brand new granddaughter Sophia, she immediately began to emit wind. Loudly and copiously.

Instant bonding.

Sign of The Times

From The Times letters page on July 14th 2009 "At last, the search for a permanent exhibit on the fourth plinth (empty, in Trafalgar Square) is over. The safety net erected last week is a perfect symbol for our age"