

Christmas  
2010

# The Knowle Farm Newsletter

This has been another very quiet year at Knowle Farm. Not particularly quiet for us as we seem to have been flitting hither, thither and yon, but nothing of huge interest, and everything else has been uninterestingly normal. Hence the reduced format newsletter - which has probably save several Amazonian rain forests.

Liz continues to improve slowly, so no story there, and my friend Mr X who can usually be relied upon to produce a car crash story (see 2008 and 2009) has failed to do so this year. Good news, but no story!

We have new tenants in the cottage - Laurie, Gail and 11 year old Sophie - who have fitted in very nicely, Laurie lets the ducks out for me in the morning which leaves me to enjoy my first coffee in peace.

Earl moved back to Maidenhead at the end of last year, and the flat has been occupied by Tony who has also fitted in well. (By fitted in well I mean that he and I have been known to pop down the road to the Puss for the occasional beer.)

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

## Terry's Story

Our rat problem on the farm has been out of hand. The little, well big actually, blighters are everywhere: in the chicken shed, in the feed shed, in the ducks' shed, everywhere. One of the gardeners (all of whom hate rats with a passion) had succeeded in killing several dozen by coming round at unearthly hours in the dead of night and catching them eating the chicken's food. But still they came.

## Liz's Year

Liz has had a much better year and we have largely learned to live with the remnants of her M.E.

At the start of the year we were feeling quite differently about her almost complete recovery. Liz, in her optimistic way, zinged into things with her "That's it, I'm cured, I can go back to living



Rocky, our one remaining Rodent Control Operative has never really had his heart in it. I think Rocky fancied himself as being rather more on the Arts side than the practical, so, lovely as he is, when promoted to Rodent Control Operative in Chief last year he didn't do a very good job. Well, not to put too fine a point on it, he failed abysmally.

New blood was needed. Step in two new RCOs, supplied by young Anna at a neighbouring farm, for whom names were needed. I recently started reading about some of the early nuclear physics research and, to cut a long story short, one is called Schrödinger and the other Heisenberg (Google them to find out more).

I wanted them to be left to run wild and be feral farm cats with the will to feed themselves on lovely fresh rat meat, but, alas, Liz and young Sophie next door had other ideas. They are now just two more pets. Sigh. ☹️

exactly as I did before" mindset. Me, with my "half empty" way of looking at things felt much more tentative and wanted to wind things up more slowly.

As it turned out were we both right. Liz has got almost to where she was before M.E. but not quite.

We made the trip to Lanzarote in March and Liz managed the journey quite well. But typically was quite dismissive of my suggestion that it would be

better to take the wheelchair for the journey.

As we waited in the hire car queue in Lanzarote airport though, she confided that she was very glad that I had insisted.

And so the year went on, but the good news is that life is pretty much back to normal. We go on holiday, we go to the pub, and friends come round, but we still have to watch for signs of tiredness.

## Liz's Story

We just don't agree on the approach. I, too want rid of the rats, as it's my job to go round with poison every other day - they seem to thrive on it! - but I am convinced that a loved and petted cat will catch just as much as a feral one. And faced with these two gorgeous, tiny, furry, squeaky things, how can you stop your heart melting? And how can you call them Schrödinger and Heisenberg for heaven's sake? Look at them! The (white) tom is Shreddie and the (tabby) girl is Heidi.

Terry would have just thrown them out in the yard to fend for themselves, but I managed to get them kept inside (in the tack room - no chance of getting them in the house) until they had all their jabs. I introduced them to Rocky slowly over a couple of months and after some initial spitting and whacking (on Rocky's part) they now seem to get along quite well.



They have been running around for a few weeks now (to the delight of Sophie and friends, who adore little Heidi) and are starting to make themselves at home.

At the moment (late November and freezing cold), they have been given leave to sleep inside - just while its cold enough outside to keep the taps frozen. This was prompted by my taking them hot water bottles in the middle of the night!

So far so good - come up and cuddle them sometime. 😊



## Sundry Comings and Goings

We lost Chivers in May which was very sad - and so Rocky was left by himself. It was clearly time to get some new kittens although I was worried whether they and Rocky would get on. But (see the main story on page 1) they are a huge success.

We have several new chickens and a couple of new ducks. One of these had a bad leg - so bad she had to be nursed in a broody coop. The vet (yes a £30 bill for a £15 duck!) prescribed antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and suggested hydra therapy. So we supplied a large tub of water and with a bit of encouragement she swam round and round until her leg got better. She is still a bit gimpy but managing to keep up with the rest of the flock.

You may remember that last year we gained a racing pigeon (She got stuck in the chicken

feeder and when we rang her owner he said to keep her as she had failed to get home on a number of occasions.) Well she stayed, gained a husband, Jake, had 2 babies and invited a few friends to join her. So as well as feeding the chickens, guinea fowl and ducks, we are feeding quite a large pigeon population—and they are still getting themselves stuck in the feeder. Then we found out that pigeons can bring red mite which infest chickens. They had to go.

Several suggestions were made - all of them unacceptable! Then we decided to catch them and take them off somewhere and release them. This we did. Terry went to Asda at Spondon (5 miles away) and released them. They were back here well before he was, so it may be pigeon pie for Christmas lunch.



## Down by the River-Side

Much fun was had down at the river this year. We spent many enjoyable hours there with our favourite family on the camp site: Alan, Sam, Gabrielle, George, Luke, and Isabelle. You get some idea from the picture - me with "The Terminator".

Luke it was who shouted across the river, as cheerfully and loudly as only a small boy of some 8 years can manage, "Mum .... I've got a nettle wrapped round my willie"! And there we will leave the story.....

## Quotes from "The Times"

### 1 - ASBOAPs!

Thursday 29th July 2010 - "Dozens of pensioners have been threatened with ASBOs after a row about late night parties at their sheltered housing estate.

Residents at the Ash Grove Road scheme in Birmingham complained about loud music and a new tenant bringing outsiders into the shared common room for bingo sessions.

The dispute escalated after older residents were accused of tearing down posters advertising the games".

Way to go Oldies !!!!

## The Ski Hat Saga - Part III

As you can see above, Chivers died in May, and my dream of making a memorial to her in the form of a new ski hat came a step closer. Unfortunately, Liz didn't see a new ski hat as a suitable memorial, she favoured the classic (but rather over-done in my view) wooden cross in the

orchard. The whole project was scrapped. No new ski hat. Huh! I just don't understand what it is with the cats.

(I still hold out hope though - with the new one it would be Schrödinger's Hat - physics joke!)

## Worrying Words

The nine most terrifying words in the English language:-

"I'm from the government. I'm here to help you"

Ronald Reagan

## Quotes from "The Times"

### 2 - Observation of the year

Letters November 4th  
Mr Rod Morris of Rodney Stoke, Somerset:-

"The problem between the British and the French is that both nations consider themselves to be superior to the other, while harbouring a sneaking suspicion that the opposite might be true"

## Stop Press!

Fancy a holiday in France next year? Try Liz's brother's place

[www.lesquatrepuits.com](http://www.lesquatrepuits.com)

A vast, and very lovely old farmhouse situated between Bordeaux and Angouleme, it has 5 beautiful B&B rooms, stunning vegetarian food, great rates and friendly hosts.

If you prefer self catering (vegetarian or carnivorous) there are 3 gorgeous gites on site.

Within easy distance of the famous Bordeaux vineyards, it has 85 acres of grass and woodland, it's own stream and a heated outdoor pool.

Give it a try.

## Squirrels in the feed shed.

We keep all the bird feed in plastic dust bins in the (imaginatively named) feed shed.

Until this summer this has presented no problems but one of our (human) visitors reported seeing a grey squirrel gnawing away at one of the dustbins. Having made a hole he (or she) climbed through and stuffed himself with our very expensive peanuts.

Battle was commenced.

The first move by us was to buy eight shiny new metal dustbins. He couldn't eat those - round 1 to us. 15/love

He could, however, push the top

of the bin off. Unbelievable, but round 2 to the squirrel. 15/all.

Round 3 was opened by upturning a very heavy plastic tub over the top of the bin. 30/15

Round 3 was lost by the squirrel pushing both heavy plastic tub and lid off. This was serious! 30/all

Round 4. An old bobcat tyre was placed on the lid, and the lid stayed in place. Round 4 to us. 40/30. Well, not really, as Liz now couldn't get the lid off either, so a draw. Deuce.

Round 5 required the purchase of some of those elastic hooky thingies used to secure cases on car roof racks and so on. These were attached, tightly, across the lids and, to date, it is game, set and match to us.

## Quotes from "The Times"

### 3 - A Classy Put-down

The Times Leader - 9th November on Rowan Williams statements on Welfare reform:- "..... his statements display a passionate certainty that exceeds the amount of thought invested in their construction....."