

Northern *news*

BRINGING YOU THE LATEST NEWS
FROM OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS
AROUND THE WORLD

APRIL 2009



Editorial Ramblings



Sad to say, but our Easter holiday wasn't all we'd hoped it would be. It seems that every time there is a holiday, at least one of us becomes sick. And so it was this holiday. Alan could hardly move out of bed from Good Friday to Easter Monday, just struggling to get to church for the Easter Sunday family service which we enjoyed. We all went to the clinic on Easter Monday where the doctor was surprised to see that JP seemed so well, despite having a wheezy chest and cough. By this time, Grace's respiratory condition had improved somewhat but I had contracted a virus (the medical world's expression for "we haven't got a clue what is wrong with you"). By Thursday, I was feeling much stronger but had started a minor cough which got worse through the weekend. I saw the doctor on Monday but by the following

Thursday I was much worse and the antibiotics didn't seem to be having any effect at all. Another visit to the doctor who prescribed an inhaler (at my request!) of Ventolin. Friday night was rough - really rough. I hadn't been to bed for more than a week as laying down made me have the most awful coughing fits that seemed to be tearing me apart from the inside out (as I write this in the early hours of Sunday 26 April, this situation continues and I get very little sleep (if any) each night, sitting in a chair in our lounge). By 0500hrs I'd called the emergency doctor on call and he made an arrangement for me to drive to the local duty doctor for an examination. He immediately wanted to call an ambulance and grabbed the telephone. I managed to restrain him and suggested that it might be better for me to drive home, where I could leave my car and inform my wife that I was going to the hospital. He then made the telephone call and requested an ambulance to collect me from home. On arrival at the hospital I was thoroughly examined (diagnosis - acute Bronchitis) and given a cocktail of medication. After further tests and observation, I persuaded the doctor to let me go home on Saturday afternoon - still coughing my lungs out! Was I pleased to see Grace and JP again - as well as being at home-sweet-home again. I am now continuing the medication, but it seems unlikely that I will return to work before 11 May 2009 - more than four weeks of being away from the office. JP is also continuing his treatment. Even the computer (laptop) has been sick! On the Tuesday after Easter, it refused to work. Cutting the story short, I got in touch with HP, who sent a courier to collect it and take it to be repaired and it was returned by courier on Friday (24th) - yet another motherboard failure. Whilst it may be argued that 3 replacement motherboards (4 motherboards in total) is somewhat excessive in just a little more than two years, it is to HP's credit that they have effected all the repairs at no charge to myself - a great example of maintaining good customer relations. I bought the computer in Kuwait, had two motherboards fitted in the Philippines and now another one in the UK - all free of charge. This is in contrast to Canon who wouldn't even repair my very expensive (far more expensive than my laptop computer), professional model digital camera free of charge - even though it was under guarantee! - unless I returned it to the dealer in New York from whom I'd bought it. You may remember that I'd flown from the Philippines to Hong Kong to get it repaired. No international guarantee from the world's largest camera manufacturer! Don't they understand that photographers are frequent travellers? Not impressed. Another company that has failed to impress me is *Simply Electronics* (<http://simplyelectronics.net>) from whom I ordered the 'L' series Canon lens I mentioned in last month's newsletter. I received the lens on the same day I returned home from hospital (25 April) - just over a month from the date of ordering - and from the date when they took the money from my plastic card. Again, not impressed!



Once again, I must apologise for not responding to your e-mails. I will try to catch up with them as I recover - assuming the computer doesn't get sick again. It has been great to hear from so many of you and your words of support and encouragement mean a great deal to all of us. Thank you so much.

We ask for your prayers for our dear friend, Teresa, who has recently suffered the bereavement of her sister. Our hearts and prayers go out to her during this time of grieving.

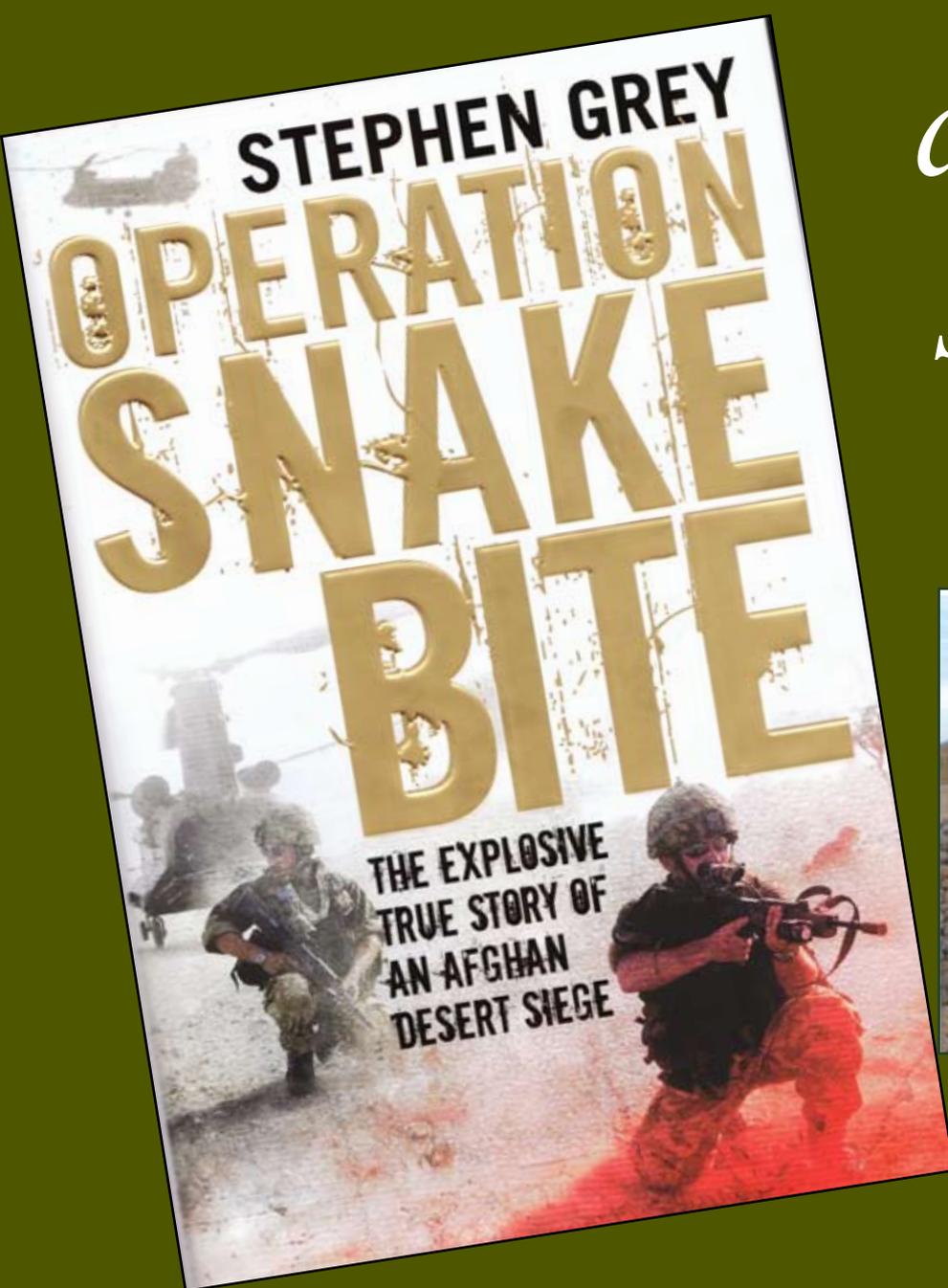
Incidentally, the photographs of flowers used to illustrate this edition of our magazine were all taken in our garden. We hope you like them.

- Photograph above:** Pleased to be home. Alan and Grace a few minutes after Alan's return from hospital on 25 April 2009 (Photograph by Little Lad).
- Cover photograph:** Apple blossom time in our garden.

A Happy Crew.....



On Easter Sunday, I was delighted to receive the above photograph (taken on 10 February 2009 using a Nokia telephone) from my dear friend Carlos (Caloy) Navarro (right, in blue fire-suit) - aged 50 and with 17 years service. Also in the photograph are Mr. Dado Sagcal - aged 56 and with 14 years service (left) and Mr. Rod Quinsay - aged 60 and with 16 years service, both former colleagues and friends at (formerly) Consolidated Maritime Resources Foundation Incorporated (CMRFI) in Manila, Philippines. It seems incredible to me that it is almost 12 years since I started working with these gentlemen. Not only that, but these guys (unlike me) don't look any older than they did in 1997! How do they do it? I was very privileged to work with these men, all of whom are fine instructors from whom I learned a great deal. As you know, I am sometimes very critical of the Philippines (as well as my of own country), but these men, as well as a few others in the same maritime training centre, are amongst the most highly competent, dedicated and professional instructors I have ever worked with - regardless of nationality / education. The story started in 1997. I left England in February and after 4 months was beginning to get rather short of cash. By this time, I'd just rented a tiny room on the 5th floor of a building overlooking the Pedro Gil LRT station on Taft Avenue. On my first evening there, I walked out onto the flat roof outside my room and got into conversation with one of the other residents, a young lady named Noelanie. I mentioned that I was looking for work and, after a few more minutes conversation she said that maybe there was a possibility that I could find a job at the company where she worked (also as an instructor (brilliant) - medical - she was a nurse). I followed up on our conversation and ended up working with Noelanie and the above colleagues teaching in a maritime training centre, where I taught a tanker course, that included fire-fighting. I spent 8 months with these fine folk and these were amongst the happiest days of my long (44 years) working life. I treasure the memories of those days with a great deal of fondness. Unlike most of my career, it was always a pleasure to go to work, even though the work was very hard and the hours long. What great fun we had! After leaving CMRFI I went to work in another maritime training centre (IDESS - alongside Subic Bay) that paid me four times more money, but where I was utterly miserable. The Filipino instructors were great (albeit nowhere near of the same calibre as those at CMRFI) and the courses very good, but I would flatter the senior management team by calling them 'scum' - the nastiest, most unprofessional managers I have ever had the misfortune to work for (especially the British person in charge) - and that says a lot! Leaving IDESS was one of the happiest days of my life! Leaving CMRFI was one of the saddest. As you can see, the three gentlemen in the photograph did the sensible thing and stayed, working happily for CMRFI (now under a different name).



a VERY special book



Royal Marines at their memorial to five British servicemen who had died at or near to Inkerman Forward Operating Base (FOB).

Whilst it is impossible for me to know and feel exactly what my son, Paul, went through during his deployment to Afghanistan, this book goes some way towards giving me a picture of just one of many operations - and what he had to suffer. Being blown-up (twice), shot at, the loss of friends and the hardships he endured. Paul is acknowledged in this book and, whilst this is primarily a book about Army operations, the Royal Marines are always there - in front of the Army. Paul's Troop (No. 2 of Alpha Company), is in the thick of the action and a whole chapter is devoted to them (Chapter 12 - The Battle of 9/11). This book reports on only one operation, but Paul tells me that it was like this almost every day he was there!



*left:
Paul's Troop in action.*

(All photographs from the book. © Stephen Grey - Penguin Books).

Operation Snakebite

by Stephen Grey: Review

Con Coughlin assesses a *Operation Snakebite: the Explosive True Story of an Afghan Desert Siege* by Stephen Grey, a critical report on Britain's role in Afghanistan.

Three years after British troops were deployed to Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan, the majority of the British public have no idea what they are doing there. When the first British combat group arrived in the spring of 2006, John Reid, who was then the defence secretary, implied that the mission's purpose was to help the Afghan people to construct their own democracy, and that "we would be perfectly happy to leave in three years and without firing one shot". Downing Street officials, meanwhile, suggested that the mission would eradicate the poppy crop responsible for providing 90 per cent of the world's heroin trade, while the British military believed its mission was to prevent the Taliban returning to create a haven for Islamist militants to plot terrorist attacks against the West.

Those three years are now up. But far from packing up for the journey home, the military is preparing to send reinforcements that will bring Britain's deployment to division strength by the autumn, nearly three times the size of the initial force deployed by Reid. In the meantime, British troops have been engaged in the fiercest combat operations experienced since the Second World War, taking significant casualties in the process. Yet for all the effort and sacrifice, it appears that we are no closer to achieving any of the stated goals. The Taliban remain a potent force, heroin production continues at record levels while democratic government remains elusive.

As the journalist Stephen Grey explains in *Operation Snakebite*, his study of the British military's campaign to capture the strategically important town of Musa Qala, responsibility for this sorry state of affairs lies with those responsible for prosecuting the campaign, who failed to agree on a coherent and co-ordinated plan of action. In many respects, the fluctuating fortunes of Musa Qala are a salutary lesson in the failings of the Afghan mission.

Originally captured from the Taliban by British forces in the autumn of 2006 after fierce fighting, it was abandoned after commanders realised that they did not have sufficient men or equipment to garrison it properly. A deal was negotiated with the town elders for them to take control on condition that the Taliban were not allowed to return.

But within months of the British departure the Taliban were back, and another costly military operation had to be launched to retake the town. It was eventually recaptured in December 2007. But, as Grey's detailed and fast-paced narrative makes clear, the operation revealed a number of unpalatable truths about the mission's flaws. On the one

hand, commanders had to contend with what Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, the troubleshooting diplomat who had been parachuted into Kabul, called "misplaced optimism" about the pace of military progress. "A lot of people have been rather naive about what could be done here in Afghanistan," was Sir Sherard's assessment. Meanwhile, Brigadier Andrew Mackay, the newly arrived commander of British forces in Helmand, was shocked to discover that, 18 months into the mission, senior officers were "making it up as we go along".

His predecessor compared operations to "mowing the lawn", where Taliban fighters quickly returned to villages seized but then let go by overstretched British troops. Rather than abandoning captured villages, Mackay thought it was essential to build relations with local communities. "Unless we retain, gain and win the consent of the population within Helmand, we lose the campaign," he told his commanders. "The population is the prize." But for that he needed resources that were simply not available.

Despite having to control an area roughly equal in size to Wales, Mackay had a total of just seven Chinook transport helicopters at his disposal, of which he could expect – on a good day – to have only four that were serviceable: two for emergencies and two for regular transport. Then there was the problem of having to deal with the mercurial Afghan president, Hamid Karzai, who one moment would be urging the British to up the tempo of their military operations to defeat the Taliban, and then launch into a public denunciation of their tactics.

The extra troops and resources the Government is committing to Afghanistan later this year should help to resolve some of the issues highlighted by Grey. But that does not mean the underlying conflicts and difficulties have been resolved.

To achieve success in Afghanistan what is needed is a clear mission statement and a clear sense of purpose that everyone, both in Britain and Afghanistan, can understand and support. Getting that kind of clarity is still a long way off.

Courtesy of URL:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5207944/Operation-Snakebite-by-Stephen-Grey-Review.html>

Oscar William Cook

born 15 March 2009

Congratulations

to Paul and Julie on the
birth of their son, Oscar.

Taken on 31 March 2009

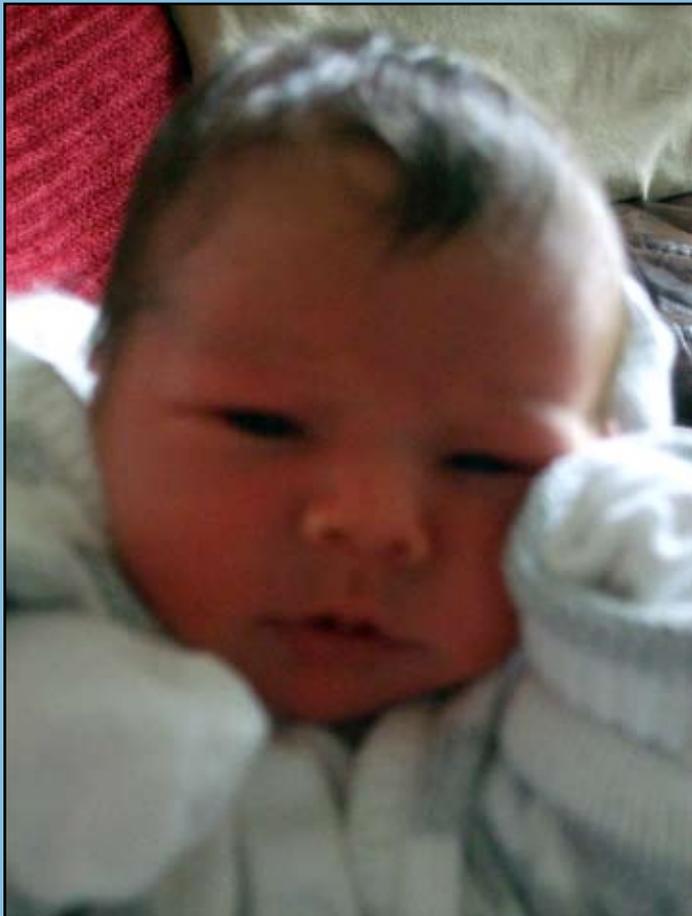


Taken on 27 March 2009





Taken on 20 March 2009



We are pleased to be able to report that both mother and baby are doing well.

Some of these photographs also include Paul and Julie's daughter, Emily.

All photographs by Paul and Julie Cook

Taken on 23 March 2009

Paint 4 Peace



*We were delighted to hear from our friend Vonnie, in Hong Kong, who sent us some information about the work she's been doing for **Paint 4 Peace**: It's all part of the world march for Peace and Non-Violence starting in New Zealand in October and moving on round the world. I just decided to do a bit too. I organised a tiny event - Paint 4 Peace with kids in homes right in my little village here - take a look - hope it transmits - just did something arty with it all for fun.*

Tony - remember him, and Mila, is local area coordinator for the March for Peace and wanted to know how art could be linked to it all etc...

So I said let's start with the kids ..and actually do something - far too much talk these days and too little action!! then the parents of course got involved and that's a better way to spread things than try to preach to folks I think.

*You can download Vonnie's **Paint 4 Peace** Presentation from: [http://www.cooksonline.info/newsletter/2009/Lantau children ptg 4 peace.pps](http://www.cooksonline.info/newsletter/2009/Lantau_children_ptg_4_peace.pps) or by clicking on the button on the right.*



Drowning in Plastic

Drowning in plastic:

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is twice the size of France

There are now 46,000 pieces of plastic per square kilometre of the world's oceans, killing a million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals each year. Worse still, there seems to be nothing we can do to clean it up. So how do we turn the tide? from the Daily Telegraph Magazine. 25 April 2009.



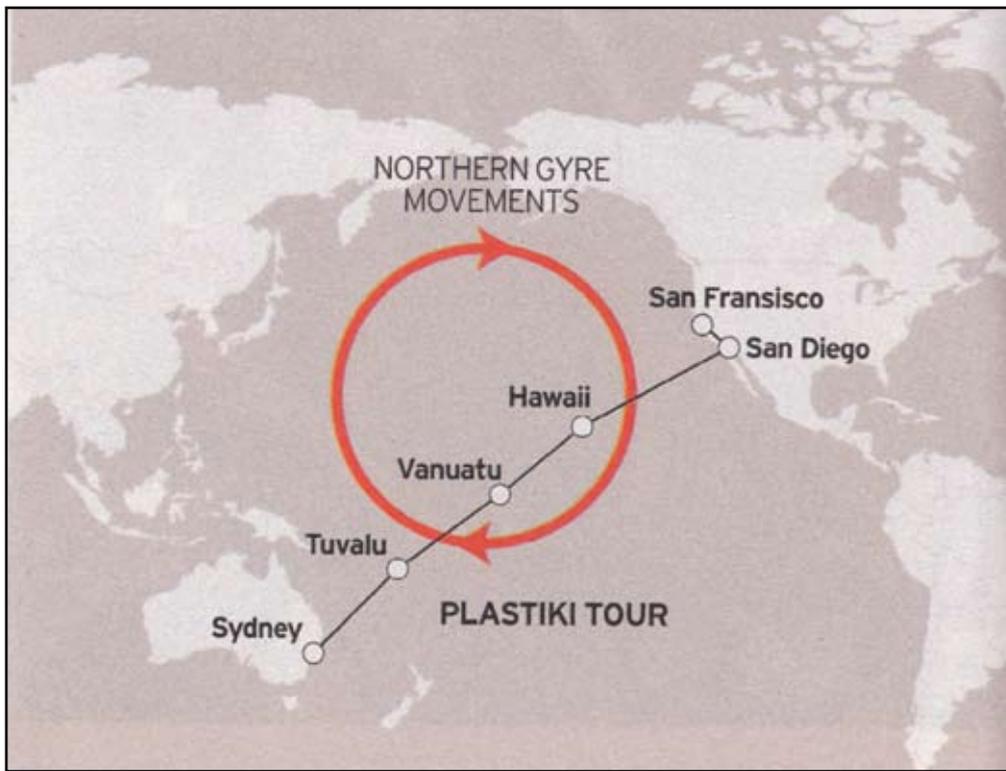
A shark carcass on Kamilo Beach, Hawaii, where plastic particles outnumber sand grains until you dig down about a foot Photo: ALGALITA MARINE RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Richard Grant reports on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, and a new expedition that aims to make us reassess our relationship with plastic. Illustrations by Brett Ryder

Way out in the Pacific Ocean, in an area once known as the doldrums, an enormous, accidental monument to modern society has formed. Invisible to satellites, poorly understood by scientists and perhaps twice the size of France, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is not a solid mass, as is sometimes imagined, but a kind of marine soup whose main ingredient is floating plastic debris.

It was discovered in 1997 by a Californian sailor, surfer, volunteer environmentalist and early-retired furniture restorer named Charles Moore, who was heading home with his crew from a sailing race in Hawaii, at the helm of a 50ft catamaran that he had built himself.

For the hell of it, he decided to turn on the engine and take a shortcut across the edge of the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, a region that seafarers have long avoided. It is a perennial high pressure zone, an immense slowly spiralling vortex of warm equatorial air that pulls in winds and turns them gently until they expire. Several major sea currents also converge in the gyre and bring with them most of the flotsam from the Pacific coasts of Southeast Asia, North America, Canada and Mexico. Fifty years ago nearly all that flotsam was biodegradable. These days it is 90 per cent plastic.



the gyre and near the mouths of Los Angeles streams, and comparing notes with scientists in Japan and Britain, Moore concluded that 80 per cent of marine plastic was initially discarded on land, and the United Nations Environmental Programme agrees.

The wind blows plastic rubbish out of littered streets and landfills, and lorries and trains on their way to landfills. It gets into rivers, streams and storm drains and then rides the tides and currents out to sea. Litter dropped by people at the beach is also a major source.

Plastic does not biodegrade; no microbe has yet evolved that can feed on it. But it does photodegrade. Prolonged exposure to sunlight causes polymer chains to break

‘It took us a week to get across and there was always some plastic thing bobbing by,’ says Moore, who speaks in a jaded, sardonic drawl that occasionally flares up into heartfelt oratory. ‘Bottle caps, toothbrushes, styrofoam cups, detergent bottles, pieces of polystyrene packaging and plastic bags. Half of it was just little chips that we couldn’t identify. It wasn’t a revelation so much as a gradual sinking feeling that something was terribly wrong here. Two years later I went back with a fine-mesh net, and that was the real mind-boggling discovery.’

Floating beneath the surface of the water, to a depth of 10 metres, was a multitude of small plastic flecks and particles, in many colours, swirling like snowflakes or fish food. An awful thought occurred to Moore and he started measuring the weight of plastic in the water compared to that of plankton. Plastic won, and it wasn’t even close. ‘We found six times more plastic than plankton, and this was just colossal,’ he says. ‘No one had any idea this was happening, or what it might mean for marine ecosystems, or even where all this stuff was coming from.’

So ended Moore’s retirement. He turned his small volunteer environmental monitoring group into the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, enlisted scientists, launched public awareness campaigns and devoted all his considerable energies to exploring what would become known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and studying the broader problem of marine plastic pollution, which is accumulating in all the world’s oceans.

The world’s navies and commercial shipping fleets make a significant contribution, he discovered, throwing some 639,000 plastic containers overboard every day, along with their other litter. But after a few more years of sampling ocean water in

down into smaller and smaller pieces, a process accelerated by physical friction, such as being blown across a beach or rolled by waves. This accounts for most of the flecks and fragments in the enormous plastic soup at the becalmed heart of the Pacific, but Moore also found a fantastic profusion of uniformly shaped pellets about 2mm across.

Nearly all the plastic items in our lives begin as these little manufactured pellets of raw plastic resin, which are known in the industry as nurdles. More than 100 billion kilograms of them are shipped around the world every year, delivered to processing plants and then heated up, treated with other chemicals, stretched and moulded into our familiar products, containers and packaging.

During their loadings and unloadings, however, nurdles have a knack for spilling and escaping. They are light enough to become airborne in a good wind. They float wonderfully and can now be found in every ocean in the world, hence their new nickname: mermaids’ tears. You can find nurdles in abundance on almost any seashore in Britain, where litter has increased by 90 per cent in the past 10 years, or on the remotest uninhabited Pacific islands, along with all kinds of other plastic confetti.

‘There’s no such thing as a pristine sandy beach any more,’ Charles Moore says. ‘The ones that look pristine are usually groomed, and if you look closely you can always find plastic particles. On Kamilo Beach in Hawaii there are now more plastic particles than sand particles until you dig a foot down. On Pagan Island [between Hawaii and the Philippines] they have what they call the “shopping beach”. If the islanders need a cigarette lighter, or some flip-flops, or a toy, or a ball for their kids, they go down to the shopping beach and pick it out of all the plastic trash that’s washed up there from thousands of miles away.’



The carcass of an Albatross, filled with plastic debris.

On Midway Island, 2,800 miles west of California and 2,200 miles east of Japan, the British wildlife filmmaker Rebecca Hosking found that many thousands of Laysan albatross chicks are dying every year from eating pieces of plastic that their parents mistake for food and bring back for them.

Worldwide, according to the United Nations Environment Programme, plastic is killing a million seabirds a year, and 100,000 marine mammals and turtles. It kills by entanglement, most commonly in discarded synthetic fishing lines and nets. It kills by choking throats and gullets and clogging up digestive tracts, leading to fatal constipation. Bottle caps, pocket combs, cigarette lighters, tampon applicators, cottonbud shafts, toothbrushes, toys, syringes and plastic shopping bags are routinely found in the stomachs of dead seabirds and turtles.

A study of fulmar carcasses that washed up on North Sea coastlines found that 95 per cent had plastic in their stomachs – an average of 45 pieces per bird.

Plastic particles are not thought to be toxic themselves but they attract and accumulate chemical poisons already in the water such as DDT and PCBs – nurdles have a special knack for this. Plastic has been found inside zooplankton and filter-feeders such as mussels and barnacles; the worry is that these plastic pellets and associated toxins are travelling through the marine food chains into the fish on our plates. Scientists don't know because they are only just beginning to study it.

We do know that whales are ingesting plenty of plastic along with their plankton, and that whales have high concentrations of DDT, PCBs and mercury in their flesh, but that's not proof. The whales could be getting their toxins directly from the water or by other vectors.

Research on marine plastic debris is still in its infancy and woefully underfunded, but we know that there are six major subtropical gyres in the world's oceans – their combined area amounts to a quarter of the earth's surface – and that they are all accumulating plastic soup.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch has now been tentatively mapped into an east and west section and the combined weight of plastic there is estimated at three million tons and increasing steadily. It appears to be the big daddy of them all, but we do not know for sure.

Dr Pearn Niiler of the Scripps Oceanographic Institute in San Diego, the world's leading authority on ocean currents, thinks that there is an even bigger garbage patch in the South

Pacific, in the vicinity of Easter Island, but no scientists have yet gone to look.

The French cultural theorist Paul Virilio observed that every new technology opens the possibility for a new form of accident. By inventing the locomotive, you also invent derailments. By inventing the aeroplane, you create plane crashes and mid-air collisions.

When Leo Baekeland, a Belgian chemist, started tinkering around in his garage in Yonkers, New York, working on the first synthetic polymer, who could have foreseen that a hundred years later plastic would outweigh plankton six-to-one in the middle of the Pacific Ocean?

Baekeland was trying to mimic shellac, a natural polymer secreted by the Asian scale beetle and used at the time to coat electrical wires. In 1909 he patented a mouldable hard plastic that he called Bakelite, and which made him very rich indeed.

Chemists were soon experimenting with variations, breaking down the long hydrocarbon chains in crude petroleum into smaller ones and mixing them together, adding chlorine to get PVC, introducing gas to get polystyrene. Nylon was invented in 1935 and found its first application in stockings, and then after the Second World War came acrylics, foam rubber, polythene, polyurethane, Plexiglass and more: an incredible outpouring of new plastic products and the revolution of clear plastic food wraps and containers, which preserved food longer and allowed people to live much further away from where it was produced.

Single-use plastic bags first appeared in the US in 1957 and in British supermarkets in the late 1960s; worldwide there are more than a trillion manufactured every year, although the upward trend is now levelling off and falling in many countries, including Britain. We reduced our plastic bag use



David de Rothschild with a one-third mock-up of the Plastiki the catamaran made entirely of recycled plastic in which he intends to cross the Pacific Ocean. The computer generated image of this vessel is shown right.



by 26 per cent last year, to 9.9 billion. Bottled water entered the mass market in the mid-1980s. Global consumption is now 200 billion litres a year and only one in five of those plastic bottles is recycled. The total global production of plastic, which was five million tons in the 1950s, is expected to hit 260 million tons this year.

Look around you. Start counting things made of plastic and don't forget your buttons, the stretch in your underwear, the little caps on the end of your shoelaces. The stuff is absolutely ubiquitous, forming the most basic infrastructure of modern consumer society. We are scarcely out of the womb when we meet our first plastic: wristband, aspirator, thermometer, disposable nappy. We gnaw on plastic teething rings and for the rest of our lives scarcely pass a moment away from plastics.

The benefits of plastic, most of which relate to convenience, consumer choice and profit, have been phenomenal. But except for the small percentage that has been incinerated, every single molecule of plastic that has ever been manufactured is still somewhere in the environment, and some 100 million tons of it are floating in the oceans.

A dead albatross was found recently with a piece of plastic from the 1940s in its stomach. Even if plastic production halted tomorrow, the planet would be dealing with its environmental consequences for thousands of years, and on the bottom of the oceans, where an estimated 70 per cent of marine plastic debris ends up – water bottles sink fairly

quickly – for tens of thousands of years. It may form a layer in the geological record of the planet, or some microbe may evolve that can digest plastic and find itself supplied with a vast food resource. In the meantime, what can we do?

What we cannot do is clean up the plastic in the oceans. 'It's the biggest misunderstanding people have on this issue,' Moore says. 'They think the ocean is like a lake and we can go out with nets and just clean it up. People find it difficult to grasp the true size of the oceans and the fact that most of this plastic is in tiny pieces and it's everywhere. All we can do is stop putting more of it in, and that means redesigning our relationship with plastic.'

At the far end of a huge loading warehouse on the San Francisco docks dub reggae is pulsing and two young women are shooting dry ice into two-litre plastic bottles. David de Rothschild, the tall, bearded, long-haired, environmentalist son of the Rothschild banking family, wearing hemp Nikes and a skull-and-bones belt buckle, strides in past a display of nurdles, an aquarium full of plastic soup and various rejected prototypes of the catamaran he intends to build and sail across the Pacific to Australia, visiting the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and various rubbish-strewn islands along the way.

He wants the boat to be made entirely out of recycled plastics and float on recycled plastic bottles, and this has presented a daunting challenge to his team of designers, consultants and naval architects. Human ingenuity has devised many



A Jar of Pacific water held by the environmentalist, Charles Moore, hints at the amount of plastic swirling just beneath the ocean's surface.

fine applications for recycled plastic, but boat-building has not so far been one of them. The design team has had to start from scratch, over and over again. Furthermore, because the point of this voyage is to galvanise media and public attention on the issue of plastic waste, the boat needs to look dramatic and iconic, and it must produce all its own energy, generate no emissions and compost its waste.

‘The message of this project is that plastic’s not the enemy,’ de Rothschild says, speaking rapidly and unstopably in a mid-Atlantic accent. He is full of bright energy, good humour, marketing slogans and an almost childlike enthusiasm. ‘It’s about rethinking waste as a resource. It’s about doing smart things with plastic and showcasing solutions. It’s about using adventure to engage people and start a conversation that creates change in society. You’re always going to get people who say, “Oh, he’s a bloody Rothschild, sitting on a boat made of, what’s that? Champagne bottles?” And that’s fine because it gets people talking about it and thinking about where their rubbish goes.’

The idea took hold of him in July 2006. He had just got back from the North Pole, where he led an expedition designed to heighten awareness about global warming. On the internet he came across a UN report describing the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and estimating that there was now an average of 46,000 pieces of plastic per square kilometre of the world’s oceans. ‘I thought, this is nuts that we don’t know about this! Six-to-one plastic-to-plankton ratio? This has got to be my next expedition.’

Born in London, de Rothschild, 31, was a reckless, hyperactive child and teenager who found an outlet for energies in competitive showjumping and triathlons. His school career was erratic but he managed to buckle himself down, pass his A-levels and get into Oxford Brookes University to study computing. Afterwards he got a job with a music licensing and merchandising company, designing websites for Britney Spears and U2, and absorbing lasting lessons on the power and strategies of marketing.

Then, with the encouragement of a girlfriend, he got deeply involved in alternative medicine, which led him to organic farming in New Zealand and the subsequent realisation that it was all for naught if the air, the water and the natural environment continued to be poisoned.

In 2004 a friend’s brother invited him on a 1,150-mile traverse of Antarctica by foot and ski, and on a whim he invited schoolteachers and children in New Zealand to follow the expedition’s progress and learn about Antarctica.

On his return he founded an organisation, Adventure Ecology, intended to use expeditions to get schoolchildren interested and actively involved in environmental issues. The Arctic global warming expedition was the first. Crossing the Pacific in a recycled-plastic boat will be the second.

He decided to name the boat *Plastiki*, in homage to *Kon-Tiki*, the raft of balsa logs and hemp ropes in which Thor Heyerdahl sailed across the Pacific in 1947. He recruited designers, a public relations team and corporate sponsors, including Hewlett-Packard and the International Watch Company. He won’t say how much it is costing or how much of his own money is going into it, only that it is more than he would like and less than it could be.

Jo Royle, the renowned British yachtswoman, has signed on as skipper, and two of Thor Heyerdahl’s grandchildren have agreed to join the crew. And through Adventure Ecology, de Rothschild has launched a competition called SMART, inviting individuals and organisations from science, marketing, art and industrial design research and technology to present tangible solutions to the problems of plastic waste, and offering grants and publicity to the winners.

In general terms, it is already clear what we need to do about plastic. Since it is made from oil, which will run out in our lifetimes and get more expensive as it does, we have to start re-using plastic and designing it for re-use. At present only a few of our many hundred plastics can simply be melted down and moulded into something else; the rest are cross-contaminated with other chemicals and types of plastic. But the billion-dollar plastic industry is tooled for virgin plastic and resistant to change.

Charles Moore gives talks to plastic industry executives whenever he can and finds very little interest in recycling, because it’s the least profitable sector of the industry. ‘A lot of companies and product designers and marketing people

don't like recycled plastic either,' de Rothschild says, 'You can't dye it with those bright, attention-grabbing colours.'

For consumers, the easiest way to make a difference is to give up plastic shopping bags and plastic water bottles, which contribute more to plastic pollution than any other products. Then comes plastic packaging, which is a little more complicated. It is easy to point out examples of excessive packaging, but plastic does have the virtue of being lighter than paper, cardboard and glass, which gives it a smaller carbon footprint. For food especially, recyclable plastic packaging is probably the best option.

For the hull and cabin of the Plastiki, the team was enthused about recycled plastic lumber until they discovered that it sags badly unless reinforced with glass rods. Now they are excited about self-reinforcing PET, a new product manufactured in Denmark, similar to fibreglass but fully recycled and recyclable. When heat-fused to boards of PET foam, it appears to be capable of withstanding the battering of Pacific waves for a hundred days, although the effect of salt water on the material is still unknown. Dry ice in the two-litre bottles hardens them without losing any flotation, although some of the bottle caps have managed to work themselves loose and are now being resealed with what de Rothschild calls 'a very cool bio-glue' made from cashew nuts and sugar.

Sitting now with a pint of beer and an artichoke in a restaurant opposite the waterfront, he is confident that the Plastiki will be built and on its way to Australia some time this summer. 'We do need to get from A to B but what this project is really about is remarketing and rebranding the message about recycling, about sustainability, about interconnectedness,' he says. What he sees as the failure of the environmental movement, as measured by ever-increasing carbon emissions, rainforest destruction, species extinctions and marine plastic debris, he understands as a failure of marketing and communication, rather than insurmountable forces working in the opposite direction.

'The environmental message has been very exclusive, very guilt-mongering, very fear-mongering, and is that the right way to engage with people? We're bombarded by 2,500 images a day. How are you going to stop someone watching Lost and make them watch someone saying, "You're a bad person because you don't drive a hybrid"? To effect change, you've got to inspire people, not moan at them.'

After another pint, he admits to serious doubts – not that the Plastiki will get built and complete its voyage, but that it is still possible to save the oceans from ecological collapse. Overfishing is the most urgent problem, but what really scares him and the marine scientists is acidification caused by global warming. The oceans are absorbing more and more of the carbon dioxide that we are putting into the air and it is changing the pH of the water, turning the seas more acid, with potentially catastrophic effects on marine organisms and ecosystems.

'A lot of scientists think we're basically screwed, but what are you going to do?' he asks. 'Enjoy your beer, enjoy your family, make the most of it while it lasts? I think there's a real big movement for that at the moment and part of me understands that. But there's a bigger part of me that says we've got to find a solution, collectively. I mean, come on. We spent \$265 billion preparing for the Y2K bug and we didn't even know if it was going to happen or not. We know for an absolute fact that if we continue on our current rate of consumption, we're going to run out of resources. But the annual budget for the United National Environmental Programme last year was \$190 million. And the budget for the latest James Bond movie was \$205 million.'

He chuckles at that, checks his watch and calls for the bill. It is time to walk the dogs and then work the second half of his standard 17-hour day. Outside, he points to San Francisco bay, looking pristine and lovely in the late afternoon sunshine. 'Maybe that's the trouble,' he says. 'You'd never guess what's under the surface if you didn't know, would you?'

References: theplastiki.com ; algalita.org

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/5208645/Drowning-in-plastic-The-Great-Pacific-Garbage-Patch-is-twice-the-size-of-France.html>



Help this aeroplane carry passengers once more.....



My late father, Douglas John Cook flew in the Douglas DC3 - The Dakota - during WWII in operations against the Japanese in India and Burma before flying to Australia towards the end of 1945. He was very fond of this aircraft and passed that onto me as a youngster - a fondness that still remains for this old aircraft. Because of this passion, I would ask that you consider helping Classic Flight Club International return this lovely classic aeroplane to passenger carrying condition and airworthiness once more - despite the European Legislation doing its best to prevent this happening.

I have been in touch with Classic Flight Club International and you can read our exchange of e-mails in the following pages as well as reading more about the aeroplanes they are trying to get back into the air on their website at URL: <http://www.classicflightclub.com/> (Courtesy of URL: <http://www.classicflightclub.com/aircraft?acName=Douglas+DC-3+Dakota+&acID=3> and: <http://www.classicflightclub.com/>).

I hope you can help.

The Dakota started life as the Douglas Skysleeper. Its fourteen luxurious seats could be folded to make seven comfortable berths, with another seven being lowered from the cabin roof. It was fairly common in the thirties to provide this sort of luxury, given that flights were long, slow and – before the Dakota – often hazardous.

The DC-3 made money. Before this, passenger flying was viewed speculatively by airlines who relied heavily on government subsidies. With its high cruising speed, economical engines and cast-iron dependability, the DC-3 made a persuasive business case. As a result it was an almost overnight success. In standard trim it seated 21 passengers, and its speed, dependability and – above all – outstanding safety record made it the world's most popular airliner.

Enter the C-47 - As World War II approached the US military became interested in the design. In 1941 the first orders were placed for a modified DC-3, designated the C-47 Skytrain. In fact little modification was required and, apart from an enlarged cargo door and reinforced floor, the C-47 was effectively identical to its civilian sister. The DC-3s operated by Classic Flight are, in fact, ex-military C-47s.

The name Dakota was coined when the DC-3 joined the RAF. American aircraft were rarely named other than by their model letters, so familiar names like Mustang and Lightning were widely invented by transatlantic users. Dakota is said to come from Douglas Aircraft Company Transport Aircraft. It was widely known in its native America as the Gooney Bird.

Following the end of the war, thousands of C-47s were converted to civilian use and they became the standard “bus” for airlines around the world. The success of the design became a competitor even for Douglas itself; the company introduced its uprated Super DC-3, only to find that hardly anyone saw a need to upgrade. The popular axiom “The only replacement for a DC-3 is another DC-3” underlines the attitude of post-war operators. There was simply no other aircraft that could compete.

As jet aircraft made air travel ever faster and more convenient, the faithful old Dak was finally forced into retirement. But when the last scheduled commercial flights came to an end the DC-3 had seen more than 50 years of world leadership.

A Never-Ending Story

Several hundred DC-3s remain in commercial use today. G-ANAF carries an auxiliary power supply and chin-mounted radome for radar testing. With care and proper maintenance, the Dakota is immortal.

Dakota Letters

Sir,

As a fan of the DC3 I was very disappointed to see that you've discontinued passenger flights. I understand that there have been various legislation problems but these would appear to be easily surmountable based on this response from URL: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/Page18785> which states:

The Government recognises that the Dakota DC3 is a special aircraft of historic significance which has had a lasting impact on the airline industry and played a significant role during the Second World War.

The DC3 has not been grounded by European legislation. New harmonised EU rules covering aircraft operations, known as "EU-Ops", require aircraft to hold a standard European Certificate of Airworthiness, but operators of historic aircraft are still able to undertake commercial passenger flights if they receive an exemption from the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) from the requirement. To date no DC3 exemption application has been received by the CAA.

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), whose remit is to promote the highest common standards of safety and environmental protection in civil aviation, is developing new rules on airline operations. These new rules should enter force in 2012 and will replace EU-Ops.

The Department for Transport has been working with EASA, the European Commission and the CAA to resolve how aircraft exempted from the EU-Ops requirement to obtain a standard European Certificate of Airworthiness, known as "Annex II" aircraft, will continue to operate under the EASA rules. For the present, the CAA has informed the Commission that the UK intends, subject to appropriate conditions, to exempt operators currently using Annex II aircraft until the EASA rules come into force. The CAA has advised the commercial operators of historic aircraft of the process that needs to be followed to obtain the relevant exemptions.

Currently, the CAA has received and granted exemptions for DH 104 Dove (a British monoplane short-haul airliner), DH89A Rapide (short-haul passenger airliner of the 1930s) and Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer aircraft (transport aircraft built in the 1950s). The CAA has not received any exemption requests for DC 3 aircraft. If a request was received there is unlikely to be any reason why the CAA would not be able to issue an exemption.

I would appreciate your comments and a date when we can look forward to flying in your treasured Dakota once more.

Alan J Cook

Dear Mr Cook,

Thanks very much for your mail regarding our DC3 operations. As with so many things these days, regrettably it's not as simple as getting a dispensation from the CAA. As a well established operator of historic aircraft over many years we have a very close relationship with the CAA and have been following the situation as it has developed and changed since last year.

Although in essence it now seems possible to operate the aircraft without the costly modifications previously insisted upon, I am afraid that, in common with all commercially orientated organisations, we have to be sure that we operate profitably.

A substantial amount of money would be required for us to obtain the necessary approvals and licences to re-commence passenger operations, and whilst we would all love to do this, it just does not stack up commercially.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad tidings but realistically I can't see us operating passenger DC3 flights in 2009. One should never say never though, and I can assure you that we will continue to monitor the situation and if favourable conditions prevail, we will be happy to bring back the Dak!!!

All the best and thanks for getting in touch

Alistair Rivers
Classic Flight Club

Dear Alistair,

Thank you for your e-mail. I'm sorry to hear that you won't be flying the Dakota in the near future. My father flew in them during WWII and was always fond of them. He was in RAF Transport Command and flew in Dakotas in India, Burma and then Australia.

Can I suggest that you launch an appeal similar to that of the Vulcan to the Sky Trust (who raised over a million pounds in a very short time, recently), which has brought in huge sums of cash. I'm sure that there would be many people, such as myself, who would be willing to make a donation to get the Dakotas flying with passengers again.

I hope you can get this project to succeed.

I wish you all the best.

Alan J Cook

Hi Alan,

Thanks for your quick response, much appreciated. Funnily enough, we have started a kind of appeal, called the Classic Flight Club, see www.classicflightclub.com This has been set up to support all of the aircraft that we look after including the DC3s. Members have the option to pay over and above the minimum and then select the aircraft of their choice. They then become members of that aircraft group, and get detailed information on the aircraft as well as regular magazines etc. We have 9 members so far who have joined the DC3 group.

Interestingly, we already have a Club member too who used to fly DC3s in India and Burma. I wonder if he would have known your father?? This chap is 80 something years young, and still flies regularly, amazing huh?

Cheers for now

Alistair Rivers



(left) courtesy of URL: <http://www.zap16.com/Duxford%202007/IMGP5135%20Dux07%20Douglas%20C-47A%20Dakota%20%28DC-3A-456%29%202100882%20N473DC.jpg>

(right) courtesy of URL: http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ac/row/dc-3-dakot_p4.jpg



Welcome to the official website of Classic Flight Club International.

Classic aircraft need to fly. While it's possible to preserve them in museums, the deterioration from mould and rotting is virtually impossible to prevent. But get them up where they belong and the wind blows it all away.

And we think the old girls enjoy it.

So Classic Flight Club is dedicated to keeping these irreplaceable treasures in the manner to which they're entitled. We want to protect them from ending their days as stuffed, dead animals in some museum. We want those precious few flying examples to thrill our grandchildren - and to do that we need your help.

The Club is a not-for-profit organisation. We're aiming to raise money through memberships and other support to preserve classic aviation - not just the Air Atlantique Classic Flight. It's an ambitious project, but if we all get behind it we'll keep history alive for future generations.

The Mother of all Scares

by **Christopher Booker** - Presentation to the 2009 International Conference on Climate Change
Heartland Institute, New York, 8-10 March 2009

I think you should know that a university near where I live back in England was also having a conference on climate change this last weekend. Led by a professor, a group of psychotherapists, 'eco-psychologists' and 'climate activists' were solemnly discussing how they could get 'climate change denial' officially classified as a form of 'mental disorder'.

So, good morning, fellow lunatics. It is a great honour for me to be invited to speak at this historic conference. And what a delight it has been to hear and meet so many people whose good work I have been reporting on over the past year or two:

Professor Lindzen, Dr Fred Singer, President Klaus to name but three - not forgetting those two heroes of our time Steve McIntyre of Climate Audit and Anthony Watts of What's Up With That.

As we are all aware, thanks to global warming, the world seems to be heading for an unprecedented catastrophe. But it is not, of course, the technicolor apocalypse we have so long been promised by the likes of Al Gore and Jim Hansen – melting icesheets, rising sea levels, hurricanes, droughts, mass-extinctions. The real disaster hanging over us through global warming lies in all those measures now being adopted by the world's politicians to meet a crisis which was never going to happen anyway. Never before in history have politicians come up with proposals so astronomically costly or potentially so damaging to their economies.

Some of us back in Britain thought our own politicians were crazy enough when last year they voted almost unanimously to make it the law of the land that within 40 years Britain must cut its carbon dioxide emissions by an insane 80 percent. And then you voted in President Obama who is pledged to do just the same, Stop breathing out Mr President!

Everyone speaking at this conference has their own individual angle on the great theme which has brought us all together. In my own case, I first came to this subject in a serious way when a year or two back my co-author Dr Richard North and I were putting together a book on a subject we knew quite a lot about. For fifteen years we had found ourselves investigating a long succession of those 'scares' which became such a conspicuous feature of Western life in the closing decades of the 20th century. Repeatedly we had seen supposed experts hitting the headlines by raising some new fear, some supposedly terrifying new threat to human health or wellbeing: food scares such as 'mad cow disease' which was soon going to be killing half a million people a year; the Asian bird 'flu that the WHO said in 2005 was soon going to kill 150 million people; 2YK, the 'Millennium Bug' which was going to bring civilised life to a halt by knocking

out millions of computer systems; dioxins; lead in petrol; passive smoking, the deliberate confusion between different types of asbestos and many more. And again and again we had seen how these scares followed a remarkably similar pattern. Each of these supposed threats had originated in what would eventually turn out to be a misreading of the scientific evidence. Usually this was because scientists had put two things together and guessed, incorrectly, that one was the cause of the other.

The scare had then been picked up and magnified by the media and campaigning groups, to the point where eventually governments gave way. This was the tipping point of the scare, as they proceeded to mount a massive legislative response out of all proportion to the reality of the threat. This had invariably resulted in huge financial and economic damage, often running into billions and even hundreds of billions of dollars.

But finally in each case new evidence came to light to show how the supposed threat had been wildly exaggerated. The panic had been based not just on misreading the scientific data but even deliberately distorting it. What struck us when we came to look into the history of the alarm over global warming was how uncannily it seemed to have echoed the pattern of all those other scares with which we were so familiar. There was the initial putting together of two things – the rise in CO2 levels, the rise in global temperatures – leading to the assumption that one must have been the cause of the other. There was the way in which this scare had been obsessively promoted by the media and environmental lobby groups, Then there was the remarkable speed with which this cause was taken up by governments, as they rushed to propose a massive regulatory response. When we examined all this in detail, we had no hesitation in making it the subject of the longest chapter in our book, which is called *Scared To Death: From BSE To Global Warming, How Scares Are Costing Us The Earth*. But we finished the book in 2007 and since then, of course, the story has moved on a long way. In fact we are now in the middle of writing a new book which seeks to reconstruct the whole story of the global warming panic in considerably greater detail.

The drama, as we see it, has unfolded in three parts. Part One, which takes the story up to the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, we call 'The Forging of a Consensus'. This begins back in the 1970s with that brief panic over global cooling. Then, of course, temperatures began to rise, certain scientists began to ascribe this as due to the rise in greenhouse gas levels, and in 1988 two things happened to set the great scare on its way.

The first of these was Jim Hansen's carefully stage-managed testimony to a Senate committee, claiming that the five hottest years ever recorded had been in the 1980s, and

that 1988 promised to be the hottest yet. The second, quite independently, was the setting up in Geneva by a small group of meteorologists of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC.

As we know, the IPCC was to become, through its series of reports, an absolutely key player in this story. Yet the more that comes to light about its workings, the more we see what a very odd body it is. It was always essentially a political rather than a scientific organisation. It was tightly controlled from the start by a little group of meteorologists, led by Bert Bolin and Dr John Houghton, who took what they called 'human-induced climate change' as an unarguable fact. Although its reports are still to this day described in the media as representing a 'consensus' of 'the world's top 2,500 climate scientists', only a few dozen of its contributors are strictly climate specialists and most are not really scientists at all. One of the characteristics of a scare is that, although there are usually experts who spot very early on that the science behind it has gone off the rails, such is the momentum generated by a scare that they can be safely brushed aside. When the IPCC produced its first report in 1990, for instance, Professor Richard Lindzen of MIT, a more knowledgeable climatologist than anyone on the IPCC, pointed out that the computer models on which it based its projections were fundamentally skewed by all the crucial factors they had missed out, such as the negative feedback effect of the greatest greenhouse gas of all, water vapour.

The IPCC's second report in 1996 provoked that magisterial blast from Professor Seitz, the former president of the National Academy of Sciences, who said in effect that in all his 60 years as a scientist he had never known such a perversion of established scientific procedure. But the bandwagon was now unstoppable on its way, and the famous 1992 'Earth Summit', drawing up the UN Convention on Climate Change, led five years later to the Kyoto Protocol. This committed virtually all the governments in the world to what was now accepted as the 'consensus' view, that CO₂-induced global warming was a major threat to the future of the planet.

Part Two of the story, lasting from 1998 to 2007, we call 'The Consensus Carries All Before It'. The official science grew even wilder, symbolised by the IPCC in 2001 adopting as its supreme icon Michael Mann's 'hockey stick', the graph which completely rewrote the historical record to make 1998 the hottest year in history. No matter that within a few years Steve McIntyre and Ross McKittrick had turned the 'hockey stick' into one of the most discredited artefacts in the history of science. By now the scare was in full swing, as governments, led by the European Union, proposed ever more ambitious measures to change the world's climate, intended not just to meet their original Kyoto targets but to go far beyond them.

By 2005, as the EU launched its first 'cap and trade' scheme, while tens of thousands of highly-subsidised wind turbines

rose uselessly over Europe's countryside, the hysteria was approaching its peak. 2006 saw Al Gore's celebrated Oscar-winning movie, so full of errors that scarcely a sentence in it was correct. By 2007 the potential bill for all the measures now being proposed by politicians across the world was so colossal that, if they were all put into effect, it would require such a drastic change in the way of life of billions of people that it is hard to imagine how modern civilisation could survive in any recognisable form.

Then, in the past two years, we have quite suddenly entered act Three of the story, what we call 'The Consensus Begins To Crumble'. Firstly, although CO₂ levels in the atmosphere have continued rising, it has become clearer than ever that global temperatures are no longer following suit. Far from continuing to hurtle inexorably upwards, the temperature curve since that El Nino year of 1998 first flattened out and then dropped, in a way none of those IPCC computer models had predicted. As the past two years across the world have seen some of the heaviest snowfalls and coldest temperatures ever recorded, even the true believers in man-made warming have had to come up with new excuses to explain what is happening. We are told that, although the world is temporarily getting cooler, thanks to shifts in ocean currents which the computer models somehow didn't allow for, this is only 'masking the underlying warming trend'. In due course, we are assured - 10 years, 20 years, who knows - we can expect that dreadful warming to return worse than ever. Secondly, it has also become increasingly clear how that much-vaunted scientific 'consensus' was never anything like so unanimous as the politicians and the media were led to believe. Despite the tireless efforts of Dr Mann, the evidence that the world was several times warmer in the few thousand years before the invention of SUVs remains overwhelming. Other theories to explain the temperature rise towards the end of the 20th century have become ever more convincing, notably those related to the activity of the sun. With increasing force, a growing number of climatologists and other experts have shown how the evidence for a human link to such warming as has occurred in recent decades was not just being seriously exaggerated but even deliberately manipulated, to produce findings which the data simply did not justify. In a sense it has been hilarious to see Steve McIntyre yet again tearing apart Mann's latest bid to resurrect his 'hockey stick' - just as it was to see McIntyre and Anthony Watts catching out James Hansen's Goddard Institute for Space Studies fiddling its temperature figures, and forcing him to admit that US surface temperatures were higher in the 1930s than they were in the 1990s.

Despite the best efforts of Mann and Professor Steig to splice together the temperature records from various weather stations, real and imaginary, Antarctica stubbornly continues to get colder rather than warmer. That Arctic sea-ice cussedly failed to vanish in 2008, as the BBC and others so longingly predicted it should. Even Al Gore's favourite picture of those two polar bears on a melting iceberg about to drown turned out to have been shot only a short distance from land because the wind-sculpted ice looked so pretty.

The bears weren't drowning, they were waving.

Desperate to make reality fit their theories, the more fanatical warmists have grown ever more reckless in their claims, as when Hansen talks of the 'death trains' which carry coal to the power plants which still supply the US with 50 percent of its electricity, and predicts that a single planned coal-fired power station in Britain will alone be responsible for the extinction of '400 species'. But now another new factor has entered the equation. Since last autumn, as we are all keenly aware, the global economy has been plunging into its deepest recession for more than 70 years. As the clock ticks down towards next December, when 10,000 politicians, officials and environmentalist groupies converge on Copenhagen to agree a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, we have seen political attitudes towards global warming begin sharply to polarise. On the one hand, the majority of Western politicians, now led by your new President, are still firmly locked into their belief that the IPCC orthodoxy is correct. All those astronomically costly measures they have been talking about for years, from carbon taxes and 'cap and trade' to building thousands more useless windmills, are still as necessary as ever. But others, including several nations in the EU, have begun to argue that the immense economic sacrifices these would involve make them simply no longer affordable. Developing countries such as China and India continue to insist, as they have done ever since Kyoto, that, if they are expected to cut back on their 'carbon emissions', the bill for this must be picked up by those developed countries whose economies are now in meltdown.

Compared with where it was only a year or two back, the whole global warming picture, scientifically and politically, is now beginning to look like a total shambles. Quite how the story will unravel from here, without that gift for foreseeing the future which is vouchsafed to the IPCC, I would hesitate to predict. But I would certainly put money on Copenhagen as not being a very happy occasion for all our warmist friends, any more than was Jim Hansen's recent attempt to whip up the youth of the nation into a frenzy of protest against runaway global warming just after the Almighty had dumped six inches of snow all over Washington. I bet they were grateful for those coal-fired power stations when they got back in the warm.

As an epitaph for all that has happened in this story so far, I will only recall the words of the late great Professor Aaron Wildavsky of Berkeley, when he described the panic over global warming as 'the mother of all environmental scares'. And that was back in 1991.

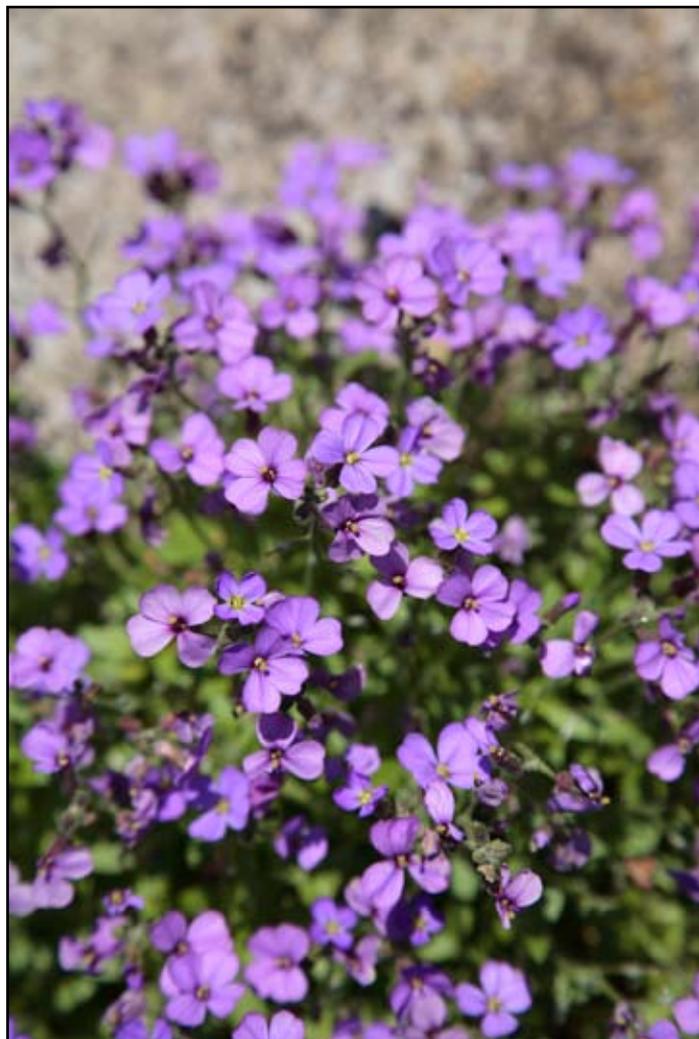
Part of the message I hope we can take out from this conference is that what we are confronted with here is precisely that: something we have seen so often before in history that we should be much readier to recognise it for what it is. When people are in the grip of a scare they are carried away into a sentimental bubble of fear which not only detaches them from reality but makes them unreachable by reasoned argument. So armoured are they in their belief

system that it is impossible to have dialogue with them. They bristle with humourless indignation, intone their empty, well-worn mantras and fly off into personal abuse. But even the most powerful of scares, as history teaches us, follow the same age-old pattern and eventually have their day. And in this battle, as I reminded Fred Singer a few months back when he was in rather a gloomy mood, we have two great allies. One is nature, The other is truth.

With allies like that, who can doubt that we shall prevail.

Christopher Booker is a leading UK columnist at the Sunday Telegraph, where he has recently become the most prominent global warming skeptic in the British press. Two of his recent columns on global warming were the "most viewed" items on the Telegraph Group's Web site for the whole of 2008. His latest book, Scared To Death: From BSE to Global Warming, an expert analysis of the "scare phenomenon," was a UK bestseller; and he is currently writing a sequel, The Real Global Warming Disaster. His many other books include The Great Deception, a comprehensive history of the European Union, and The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories. He was also the founding editor of Britain's leading satirical magazine, Private Eye, to which he still contributes.

Courtesy of URL: http://www.globalwarmingheartland.org/full/24901/The_Mother_of_All_Scares.html



Rise of sea levels is 'the greatest lie ever told'

The uncompromising verdict of Dr Mörner is that all this talk about the sea rising is nothing but a colossal scare story, writes Christopher Booker.

Daily Telegraph 28 March 2009

If one thing more than any other is used to justify proposals that the world must spend tens of trillions of dollars on combating global warming, it is the belief that we face a disastrous rise in sea levels. The Antarctic and Greenland ice caps will melt, we are told, warming oceans will expand, and the result will be catastrophe.

Although the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) only predicts a sea level rise of 59cm (17 inches) by 2100, Al Gore in his Oscar-winning film *An Inconvenient Truth* went much further, talking of 20 feet, and showing computer graphics of cities such as Shanghai and San Francisco half under water. We all know the graphic showing central London in similar plight. As for tiny island nations such as the Maldives and Tuvalu, as Prince Charles likes to tell us and the Archbishop of Canterbury was again parroting last week, they are due to vanish.

But if there is one scientist who knows more about sea levels than anyone else in the world it is the Swedish geologist and physicist Nils-Axel Mörner, formerly chairman of the INQUA International Commission on Sea Level Change. And the uncompromising verdict of Dr Mörner, who for 35 years has been using every known scientific method to study sea levels all over the globe, is that all this talk about the sea rising is nothing but a colossal scare story.

Despite fluctuations down as well as up, "the sea is not rising," he says. "It hasn't risen in 50 years." If there is any rise this century it will "not be more than 10cm (four inches), with an uncertainty of plus or minus 10cm". And quite apart from examining the hard evidence, he says, the elementary laws of physics (latent heat needed to melt ice) tell us that the apocalypse conjured up by Al Gore and Co could not possibly come about.

The reason why Dr Mörner, formerly a Stockholm professor, is so certain that these claims about sea level rise are 100 per cent wrong is that they are all based on computer model predictions, whereas his findings are based on "going into the field to observe what is actually happening in the real world".

When running the International Commission on Sea Level Change, he launched a special project on the Maldives, whose leaders have for 20 years been calling for vast sums of international aid to stave off disaster. Six times he and his expert team visited the islands, to confirm that the sea has not risen for half a century. Before announcing his findings, he offered to show the inhabitants a film explaining why

they had nothing to worry about. The government refused to let it be shown.

Similarly in Tuvalu, where local leaders have been calling for the inhabitants to be evacuated for 20 years, the sea has if anything dropped in recent decades. The only evidence the scaremongers can cite is based on the fact that extracting groundwater for pineapple growing has allowed seawater to seep in to replace it. Meanwhile, Venice has been sinking rather than the Adriatic rising, says Dr Mörner.

One of his most shocking discoveries was why the IPCC has been able to show sea levels rising by 2.3mm a year. Until 2003, even its own satellite-based evidence showed no upward trend. But suddenly the graph tilted upwards because the IPCC's favoured experts had drawn on the finding of a single tide-gauge in Hong Kong harbour showing a 2.3mm rise. The entire global sea-level projection was then adjusted upwards by a "corrective factor" of 2.3mm, because, as the IPCC scientists admitted, they "needed to show a trend".

When I spoke to Dr Mörner last week, he expressed his continuing dismay at how the IPCC has fed the scare on this crucial issue. When asked to act as an "expert reviewer" on the IPCC's last two reports, he was "astonished to find that not one of their 22 contributing authors on sea levels was a sea level specialist: not one". Yet the results of all this "deliberate ignorance" and reliance on rigged computer models have become the most powerful single driver of the entire warmist hysteria.

For more information, see Dr Mörner on YouTube (Google Mörner, Maldives and YouTube); or read on the net his 2007 EIR interview "Claim that sea level is rising is a total fraud"; or email him – morner@pog.nu – to buy a copy of his booklet 'The Greatest Lie Ever Told'

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/5067351/Rise-of-sea-levels-is-the-greatest-lie-ever-told.html>





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