

# Northern *news*

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

JANUARY 2009



# Editorial Ramblings

I am writing this on what is usually considered to be the shortest day - 21 December. Of course, this should have been written for the December magazine, but as that was sent out early, this edition covers the last third of December 2008, as well as January 2009. You may remember that I said that we'd be off-line for a couple of weeks. The reason for that is hinted at in the cover photograph. We are located in a place so far away from civilisation that even our mobile telephones aren't connecting. We have rented a delightful



cottage (*right*) on the Mull of Galloway - the southernmost part of Scotland. A place that is miles

from anywhere. Of course, I cannot begin to describe this place

adequately by writing about it. The photographs are certainly worth

more than a thousand words of my prose. Suffice it to say, but this place is

rather wild and lonely. As anyone who knows anything about landscape photography will know, many of the best photographs are taken early or late in the day. The great thing about taking photographs in winter is that one can get up late and go to bed early and still get photographs at sunrise and sunset - assuming that the sun appears at all.

The cover photograph is such an example, taken soon after sunrise on our first full day in this beautiful place - not all that far off lunch time actually, here in these northern latitudes. Sad to say, but we are all suffering various ills. As I write, Little Lad has a fairly high fever and, particularly at night, endures vomiting sessions that are most unpleasant. Grace and I are both coughing our lungs out and, additionally, I'm still suffering with the cold I've had for a couple of weeks or so. Going out into the near gale force wind to take photographs takes a bit of determination. It would be so easy to sit in front of the log fire and read a book or watch television. I had to set the camera at 1000 iso as using a tripod was impossible because it would have been blown away, as I nearly was soon after dawn this morning while standing on the edge of the cliffs taking photographs of the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse (*below and next page, top*).



**Photograph above:** The most southerly point of Scotland, Mull of Galloway Lighthouse.

**Cover photograph:** These jagged cliffs are typical of the rocky terrain of the Mull of Galloway.



It is now Boxing Day (26 December) and this is the first time I've switched on the computer since I wrote the previous paragraph on 21 December. Our holiday has turned into something of a disaster as we have all been hit very hard by a virus - and by the miserable cold of the cottage, which we can't get warm. The Sunday night was a dreadful ordeal where none of us had much sleep. We all managed to get to the doctors clinic on Monday morning, after which I spent three days in bed, hardly able to eat or drink and unable to sleep either. Even getting to the bathroom was a major task. Dreadful fevers and coughing have been the worst aspects that have affected both myself and our poor Little Lad, who has also continued with his nightly vomiting. Mercifully, Grace has been hit the lightest, so far, although she's been nowhere near 100% herself and her condition started to deteriorate further yesterday. So far, she's been able to take care of the two very sick guys in her life like an angel. Yesterday, we were all able to enjoy Christmas Day, as both Little Lad and I started to recover and I ate my first proper meal in several days. We ate quite a simple meal, but enjoyed it just as much as a feast. Neither Grace nor I are into making a big fancy spread of a Christmas meal when there are only the three of us to eat it. What's the point? None of us are big eaters, and throwing good food into the garbage bin is a crime - particularly when we have seen with our own eyes so many people who just don't have enough food to eat properly and who are barely able to survive. Our next major decision is whether or not to stay here or go home early. In the end, we decided to go home, despite the beautiful sunshine that would have been so wonderful to photograph. The cold of the cottage had worsened as the outside temperature had dropped and it was impossible to

get warm. We all felt way below our best too. We left the cottage on the morning of the 28th (Sunday), the first day I felt well enough to drive the long journey home. It was so lovely to walk into our warm home, many hours later. It had amazed us that the owner of the cottage, who had spent more than a decade renovating and re-building the place, had completely neglected the astronomical heat losses and had failed entirely to insulate the cottage or even eliminate the draughts. On our way home, we received something of a bonus. We noticed a fairly large bird laying dead in the road (still in Scotland). I stopped the car and went to investigate further and found a cock pheasant - undamaged except for its head that had been hit by a previously passing car. I picked it up and carried it back to the car where we placed it in a plastic bag for the journey home. Once at home, Grace set too and drew it, plucked it and prepared it for cooking. The following day we enjoyed it for dinner, Grace having cooked it superbly.

In what must be the best deal to come along in several years, as far as photographic equipment is concerned, is the reduction in price of the outgoing Canon EOS 5D camera body that is being replaced by the Mk II version that is just hitting the dealers shelves. Even in the UK where camera prices are always higher than in most other countries, it is possible to get your hands on one for less than £1000. Considering this was launched in 2005 at £2500 this is a real steal. It is probably available even cheaper in other countries such as the USA or Hong Kong, so keep your eyes peeled for this special bargain before it's too late. The Mk II version costs about £2300 here in the UK. Obviously, you'll need to add the cost of lenses - having

a camera body and no lenses is hardly an option. Which brings me onto another, related topic. Lenses. It is a fact of photographic life that camera bodies have developed out of all recognition during the last 25 years or so, none more so than in recent times with the invention of digital photography. Sadly, lens development has been left behind and nowhere is this more apparent than when using full-size (36 mm x 24 mm) sensor digital cameras such as the Canon models previously mentioned. Without going into too much technical detail, digital sensors find it much more difficult to cope with light hitting them from an angle than does film. Digital sensors like light to hit them “straight-on”, in order to get the best results. Lenses for digital cameras need to be completely redesigned to correct the unwanted affects (such as vignetting and chromatic aberration) that are very noticeable when lenses that were originally designed for film cameras are used on full size sensor digital cameras. There have been a lot of new lens designs for digital cameras with smaller sensors (out of sheer necessity), but not for full size sensor cameras. Another area of lens design seriously needing attention is that of resolution. None more so that in the case of zoom lenses (variable focal length). Too get the best out of even the outgoing, 12.8 MP (megapixel) Canon EOS 5D camera, it was necessary to use the *professional* i.e, expensive, ‘L’ range of Canon lenses. How much more critical it is with the new Mk II version can be imagined as this new model produces images of 21.1MP which is probably a higher resolution than many, even highly expensive lenses, can resolve - especially zoom lenses. In the recent review of the Canon EOS 5D Mk II camera, Ian Farrel, editor of *Professional Photographer* magazine (in the January 2009 edition) wrote: *disturbingly, a 50 mm f1.8 EF from 1987 turned in a better performance than a new L Series 24-105 mm f4 zoom*. Harsh words indeed when you consider that the current 50 mm f1.8 costs only about £80 and is considered to be a cheapie, non-professional lens, compared to the other aforementioned lens which costs about £800. In fact, the current 50 mm f1.4 lens is based on an even older, 1971 design, and costs about £235. Of course, one could argue that a zoom lens will always under perform a fixed focal length lens, but *should* it, especially in this case, given the popularity (and hence sales figures (i.e, profits)) of zoom lenses and the difference in cost (10x, in this case) and the many years time difference that the new zoom lens has had to be developed since 1987 (or earlier). It is my firm belief that lens resolution (measured in lines / mm) has not improved **significantly** since I first started serious photography about 40 years ago. In fact, one of my favourite lenses, that I still use, was designed about 60 years ago and still works well. It is a Carl Zeiss (Jena) Sonnar of 180 mm focal length with a maximum aperture of f2.8. Very advanced, and fast, for that time. There is a possibility that it was designed for use at the 1948 Olympic games, although some references say it didn’t go into production until 1951 or 1952. Another really good lens I still have, is the 50 mm f1.4 Super Takumar that came with the second-hand Asahi Pentax Spotmatic that I bought in 1972 (camera, lens and leather case cost me £95), and from which I had prints made as large as 8’6” (2.59 m) wide - something that many modern lenses would be hard pushed to achieve. It was by

no means a new design, even then, but it was always highly rated. Many current lenses are based on designs that first appeared some decades ago - and are little improved. Yes, there have been some improvements, particularly in terms of reductions in size and weight, and the additional feature of automatic focussing and the popularisation of zoom lenses (previously only common on movie cameras), but in terms of optical principles and design, little has changed and maximum resolution is still much the same as it always was. In some instances, lens performance, particularly regarding the control of aberrations and distortion, can be said to have deteriorated due to the aforementioned differences in the way digital sensors work with light compared to film. Let us hope that the manufacturers grasp the importance of making *digitally specific, high resolution* lenses for full size digital sensor cameras very soon - and at sensible prices. Until they do, make the most of the bargain basement price of the old Canon EOS 5D and, more than anything else, enjoy your photography throughout 2009. *Note:* Written towards the end of January. If you want to buy any photographic equipment, DO IT NOW! Prices (in the UK) have started to increase dramatically. Nikon, for example, have increased the price of one of their camera models by more than £1400 and other manufacturers are following suit. One of the Canon lenses I want to buy has increased in price by about £200 in the last few weeks. Buy now, or pay more later.



The famous Carl Zeiss Jena 180 mm f2.8 Sonnar lens (Courtesy of URL: <http://photo.net/pentax-camera-forum/00RPy9>).

*The old lighthouse at Port Logan, Galloway.*



One of life's greatest pleasures is, for me, looking at maps. Even as a child, I spent many hours pouring over the maps in old atlases. What a delight it was to imagine those far away lands with such wonderfully evocative names as the "Orange Free State" in Africa. These images were sometimes backed-up by photographs in old geography books and a very early (pre-war) edition of *Scouting for Boys* that my father had used as a boy. The true adventure stories of Lord Baden-Powell in Africa fired my imagination and I lived every minute of his adventures as though they were my own. Sadly, modern editions have edited out his non-politically correct adventures. At Christmas one year in the early sixties, I requested a book entitled something like *The Pictorial Geography Book*. Never was Father Christmas thanked so much as when I received it. Later in life, I covered my (large) bedroom walls with maps that spanned the world. Last November, it was with great delight that I received *The Family World Atlas* as a wedding anniversary present from Grace.

One of the greatest achievements in British history is the incredible maps that our surveyors have produced. The standards of British Cartographers is unsurpassed and we have a great history of accurately surveying many of the worlds previously unexplored places. In modern times, the Ordnance Survey organisation produces maps that are considered to be the best in the world. When we visited Scotland recently, I took with me one of their 1:25 000 scale maps of the area where we stayed - it even showed the cottage that we stayed in, on this map.

One of the great aspects about reading old maps is that they portray a graphical history of our ever changing world. How I wish I had those old atlases and geography books to hand now. However, all is not lost. One of the greatest cartographic resources available is on-line - and it is free! Have a look at the David Rumsey Collection at URL: <http://www.davidrumsey.com> and you will be amazed at what is available - 18 460 (and growing) high resolution old/antique maps of all over the world. The best way to view these is to download the free .sid viewer, then the full resolution maps you wish to see. There is even a TIFF convertor with this software, so you can use the maps in documents and in all image processing and manipulation software.

In words from the David Rumsey website: *The David Rumsey Historical Map Collection has over 18,460 maps online. The collection focuses on rare 18th and 19th century North American and South American maps and other cartographic materials. Historic maps of the World, Europe, Asia, and Africa are also represented.*

*The David Rumsey Collection was started nearly 20 years ago, and focuses primarily on cartography of the Americas from the 18th and 19th centuries, but also has maps of the World, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Oceania. The collection includes atlases, globes, school geographies, books, maritime charts, and a variety of separate maps, including pocket, wall, children's and manuscript.*

*Digitization of the project began in 1997. The project was undertaken for numerous reasons: Maps are uniquely suitable to high-resolution scanning because they contain large amounts of detailed information, which can be seen more readily when the viewer is able to zoom in and enlarge images on a computer screen. Viewed over the Internet, rare maps become available to those who previously had no access to such collections or were not aware of the maps' existence. In their original form, maps and atlases can be large, delicate, and unwieldy. Digitization increases their accessibility, and combined with an online catalog allows the viewer a variety of ways to search the collection.*

*Presenting individual maps in a digital format literally breaks the boundaries of an atlas's bookbinding, allowing the viewer to view single maps independent of their original encasing. With Luna Imaging's Insight® software, the maps are experienced in a revolutionary way. Multiple maps from different time periods can be viewed side-by-side. Or, the end user can create their own collection of maps by saving groups of images that hold particular interest. Complete cataloging data accompanies every image, allowing for in-depth searches of the collection.*

*Materials that were created in America and that illustrate the evolution of the country's history, culture, and population distinguish the collection. Close inspection of the maps often reveals the rise and fall of towns, mining excavations, the unfolding of the railroads, and the "discovery" of the American West by European explorers. The collection also includes European imprints containing maps of the Americas that were influential to American cartographers, as well as maps of other parts of the world distinguished by great craftsmanship, significance and beauty.*

I really hope you take a look at the wonderful maps that are available at David Rumsey's website and enjoy them as much as I have - and continue to enjoy them for years to come.

# *A cooling ardour*

by Melanie Phillips

from *The Spectator*

Thursday, 29th January 2009

Since Nobel Prize-winner Al Gore produced his movie ~~An Incomprehensible Untruth~~ *Inconvenient Truth* predicting the imminent end of the world through frying and drowning caused by man-made global warming, things haven't exactly gone according to plan. The generally accepted prediction has been that as carbon dioxide levels continue to go through the roof (or should that be the stratosphere) the climate would continue to warm as a result, ice caps would continue to melt (with the North Pole becoming ice-free by 2008), polar bears would become extinct, glaciers would disappear and seas would continue to rise (by 20 feet in the near future, said Gore); and with an unchallengeable scientific consensus that life on earth would gradually succumb to the catastrophic consequences of greed, big oil and the cosmic and diabolical evil of western capitalism.

A whole new industry has grown up of 'carbon trading' to reduce those fatal emissions, which threatens to cripple the economies of the west. Global warming protection measures have brought California to the edge of bankruptcy. In Britain, where climate change is now a Cabinet portfolio, climate change policies already account for about 14% of the average domestic electricity bill and 21% of the average business electricity bill, with an expected rise to 55% of the average business electricity bill by 2020; now the aim is to cut carbon emissions by a crippling 80 per cent.

But according to satellite data the earth has cooled -- with 2008 the coldest for ten years; global sea ice levels now equal those seen 29 years ago; sea level rise has slowed down by 20 per cent; of the 13 populations of polar bears in Canada, 11 are stable or increasing in number; in Greenland, said by Gore to be facing an ice Armageddon, outlet glacier flows have returned to the levels of 2000; and last December, 650 prominent climate scientists were recorded by a US Senate Minority Report dissenting from man-made global warming theory, with more and more prominent scientists joining their ranks virtually every week. Russian scientists, for example, have rejected the very idea that carbon dioxide was responsible for global warming, having discovered that, throughout history, CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the air rose 500 to 600 years after the climate warmed up. Therefore, higher concentrations of greenhouse gases were the result, not the cause, of global warming.

Two weeks ago the green guru James Hansen, who runs NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) and has done more than any other person on the planet to create the global warming frenzy with his dire climate warnings -- calling for the chief executives of large fossil fuel companies to be put on trial for 'high crimes against humanity and nature' by actively spreading doubt about global warming in the same way that tobacco companies blurred the links between smoking and cancer -- warned the then President-elect Obama that he needed to take decisive action in his

first administration as soaring carbon emissions threatened to trigger global flooding, widespread species loss and major weather disruption:

[Hanson] argues that most estimates of sea level rises are too low conservative - thanks to the accelerating ice melt, rises will be far greater than previously thought.

But now the US Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works reports that James Hansen's former supervisor, retired senior NASA atmospheric scientist Dr. John S. Theon, former Chief of the Climate Processes Research Programme at NASA who was responsible for all weather and climate research in the agency from 1982 to 1994, has said he thinks man-made global warming theory is anti-scientific bunk:

'I appreciate the opportunity to add my name to those who disagree that global warming is man-made,' Theon wrote to the Minority Office at the Environment and Public Works Committee on January 15, 2009. 'I was, in effect, Hansen's supervisor because I had to justify his funding, allocate his resources, and evaluate his results. I did not have the authority to give him his annual performance evaluation... Hansen was never muzzled even though he violated NASA's official agency position on climate forecasting (i.e., we did not know enough to forecast climate change or mankind's effect on it). Hansen thus embarrassed NASA by coming out with his claims of global warming in 1988 in his testimony before Congress...

Theon declared 'climate models are useless.' 'My own belief concerning anthropogenic climate change is that the models do not realistically simulate the climate system because there are many very important sub-grid scale processes that the models either replicate poorly or completely omit,' Theon explained. 'Furthermore, some scientists have manipulated the observed data to justify their model results. In doing so, they neither explain what they have modified in the observations, nor explain how they did it. They have resisted making their work transparent so that it can be replicated independently by other scientists. This is clearly contrary to how science should be done. Thus there is no rational justification for using climate model forecasts to determine public policy,' he added.

Exactly as some of us have been saying since 1988. Since then, the Great Global Warming Terror -- with sceptics even compared to Holocaust deniers -- has intimidated many scientists into silence and cost other braver souls their jobs. With the global financial crisis likely to bring the green fantasy of crippling the capitalist world to a crashing halt, it is possible that the greatest scientific scam in history will simply fade away without the charlatans who perpetrated it being brought to book. But their names are on record; and no-one should take seriously what they say about anything at all ever again.

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.spectator.co.uk/melaniephillips/3302471/a-cooling-ardour:html>





About to cycle to school.  
*Photograph by Grace*

## An Obituary printed in the London Times..... Interesting and sadly rather true

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

Knowing when to come in out of the rain; Why the early bird gets the worm; Life isn't always fair; and maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an Aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death, by his parents, Truth and Trust, by his wife, Discretion, by his daughter, Responsibility, and by his son, Reason.

He is survived by his 4 stepbrothers;

I Know My Rights

I Want It Now

Someone Else Is To Blame

I'm A Victim

Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone.

If you still remember him, pass this on. If not, join the majority and do nothing.

# How's This For Nostalgia?

All the girls had ugly gym slips



Nobody owned a thoroughbred dog



When 3d was a decent allowance



It took five minutes for the TV to warm up



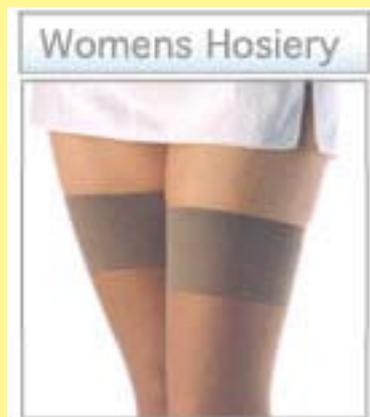
You'd reach into a muddy gutter for a penny



Nearly everyone's Mum was at home when the kids got home from school



Your Mother wore nylons that came in two pieces



All your male teachers wore ties and female teachers had their hair done every day and wore high heels

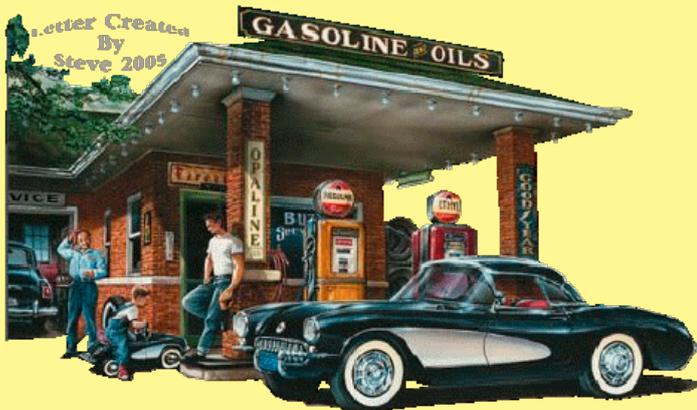


It was considered a great privilege to be taken out to dinner at a real restaurant with your parents



They threatened to keep children back a year if they failed. . . and they did it!

You got your windscreen cleaned, oil checked, and petrol served, without asking, all for free, every time. And you didn't pay for air. And, you got trading stamps to boot



When a Ford Zephyr was everyone's dream car... and people went steady

Washing Powder had free glasses, dishes or towels hidden inside the box



No one ever asked where the car keys were because they were always in the car, in the ignition, and the doors were never locked



Lying on your back in the grass with your friends and saying things like, 'That cloud looks like a...'



Playing cricket with no adults to help the children with the rules of the game



Bottles came from the corner shop without safety caps and hermetic seals because no one had yet tried to poison a perfect stranger



And with all our progress, don't you wish, just once, you could slip back in time and savour the slower pace, and share it with the children of today.



When being sent to the head's study was nothing compared to the fate that awaited the student at home



Basically we were in fear for our lives, but it wasn't because of drive-by shootings, drugs, gangs, etc. Our parents and grandparents were a much bigger threat! But we survived because their love was greater than the threat.

As well as summers filled with bike rides, cricket, Hula Hoops, skate hockey and visits to the pool, and eating lemonade powder or liquorice sticks. Didn't that feel good, just to go back and say, 'Yes, I remember that'?

*How Many Of These Do You Remember?*

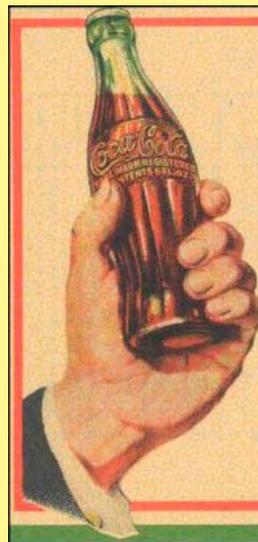
Sweet cigarettes



I am sharing this with you today because it ended with a Double Dare to pass it on. To remember what a Double Dare is, read on. And remember that the perfect age is somewhere between old enough to know better and too young to care.

Send this on to someone who can still remember Mr Pastry, 6.5 Special, The Army Game, Sunday Night at the London Palladium, Emergency Ward 10, the Lone Ranger, Hancock's Half hour, Trigger and Sgt Bilko

Coca Cola in bottles.



You're never alone with a Strand.



Coffee shops with Table Side Jukeboxes.



Peashooters.  
Andy Pandy.



Blackjacks and bubblegums.



Hi-Fi's & 45 RPM records.



Home milk delivery in glass bottles with tinfoil tops.



78 RPM records!



Newsreels before the film.

Telephone numbers with a word prefix...( Mayfair 3489). Party lines.



Green Shield Stamps.



Adding Machines.



It wasn't odd to have two or three 'Best Friends'?



The worst thing you could catch from the opposite sex was 'chickenpox'?

Scalextric.



*Do You Remember a Time When..*

Decisions were made by going 'eeny-meeny-miney-moe'? 'Race issue' meant arguing about who ran the fastest? Catching tiddlers could happily occupy an entire day?



Having a Weapon in School meant being caught with a catapult?

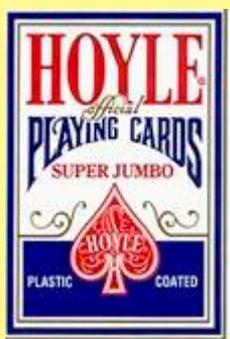


Saturday morning television wasn't 30-minute commercials for action figures?



Spinning around, getting dizzy, and falling down was cause for giggles?  
The Worst Embarrassment was being picked last for a team?

War was a card game?



Cigarette cards in the spokes transformed any bike into a motorcycle?



Taking drugs meant orange - flavored chewable aspirin?



Water balloons were the ultimate weapon?



***If you can remember most or all  
of these,  
Then You Have Lived!!!!!!***

***Pass this on to anyone who may  
need a break from their  
'Grown-Up' Life.***

***I Double Dare You!***

*with thanks to John Weston*



**On a cold and frosty morning!  
Noon on New Year's Eve in our garden.**