

Northern

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

news

JUNE 2010



Editorial Ramblings

This month is something of a special time as, not only do I count another year since I was born, but it also means that 10 years has passed since Grace and I first met in the Philippines. What adventures we've had together since then! Many homes too (I think 15, in four countries). We've also visited several other countries. The great thing is that we've also made numerous friends who are now, sadly, scattered all over the world and so are visited infrequently.

This month also means that we've been able to apply for Grace's Permanent Leave to Remain in the UK - although this could take up to 6 months to process, meaning that we can't leave the UK until a decision has been made as the immigration authorities at the Home Office have both our passports (always rather worrying!).

We're very pleased to be able to report that Grace's health has shown considerable improvement, at long last.

The doctor at the hospital seems to have identified the problem and she is responding to the medication.

Little Lad is continuing to enjoy using his new camera and a few of his photographs are included in this edition.

We hope you'll soon be enjoying your summer holidays and that you'll send us some photographs from your travels and adventures. This edition includes the first photographs we've published from our friends Graham and Kasni in Indonesia - we hope they (and you) will send more photographs to us soon.

Wherever you are - enjoy the sunshine!

Alan



Photographs above: Alan celebrating his birthday in the office.

Cover photograph: The memorial to the Royal Air Force at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Photograph overleaf:



The National Memorial Arboretum

The National Memorial Arboretum is the UK's year-round centre of Remembrance, a living and lasting memorial to commemorate and celebrate:

- Those who have given their lives in the service of their country,
- All who have served and those who have suffered as a result of conflict,
- Others who for specific or appropriate reasons are commemorated on the site.

The Arboretum is a unique haven of peace, contemplation and hope for the future. It consists of 150 acres of wooded parkland within the National Forest in Staffordshire where visitors can both enjoy and learn about the trees and their surroundings, and reflect upon their special symbolism.

The National Memorial Arboretum was conceived as a living tribute to the war time generations of the twentieth century and as a gift to their memory for future generations to reflect upon and enjoy.

From the start it was seen as a place of joy where the lives of people would be remembered by living trees that would grow and mature in a world at peace.

As planting began in 1997, it seemed most appropriate that the site should also celebrate the turn of the century. The Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness is a central part of the site and was created in such a way as to offer a place of tranquillity and reflection to people of every faith or none. This is in keeping with the planting philosophy which has always been inclusive as can be seen in the many and varied sites. Nearly all of these were designed in partnership and consultation so that every group could feel a sense of ownership of the plot to which they had contributed.

The project began with no money, no land, no staff and no trees. The National Lottery, in the form of the Millennium Commission, granted some forty per cent of the funds needed and this was matched by thousands of donations, both large and small, from a wide variety of organisations both military and civilian, men and women, corporate and voluntary.

The land was kindly leased for a peppercorn rent by Redland Aggregates (now Lafarge) who have generously supported the idea from the beginning. The site was created by a staff of thousands: a small paid group; a dedicated and very active Friends of the National Memorial Arboretum organisation; and countless others who have either planted individual trees or helped create a plot for their organisation. The initial planting took place thanks to grants from Forestry Commission and the, National Forest. The future of the project became assured when three proposals were agreed. These were: for the site to be the location of the Armed Forces Memorial; for the Ministry of Defence to pay a significant grant-in-aid to allow for free entry and that The Royal British Legion would accept the gift of the site as the focus for the Nation's year round remembrance. With those arrangements in place the trees can look forward to a very long, healthy and much visited future.

Text courtesy of URL: <http://www.thenma.org.uk>

On 23 May, we visited this lovely place (I didn't have time to include it in the last newsletter). The trumpeter, John Barker (below, photograph by John Cook) was playing. Despite the emotion, or perhaps because of it, our visit was a wonderful experience.



Make sure you have your sound turned on to hear John Barker play the trumpet.

See and hear more of John on his website at URL: <http://johnbarkertrumpet.com/>

I sent both John and Angela (*photo. below*) a copy of their photographs and received the following letters of thanks: Alan, The photos are fantastic, and thanks to your son, John for great work! I will let you know if I decide to use them., and I'm glad you like the CD's. Thanks again. Warm Regards, John.

Dear Alan, Thank you so much for sending through the pictures, much appreciated - and what lovely pictures they are too! My little girl will love seeing the proof that mummy does sometimes drive a buggy!! I hope you had an enjoyable day at the NMA and we look forward to welcoming you back again soon. Best wishes. Angela.






THE MERCHANT NAVY CONVOY
THIS GROVE COMMEMORATES OVER 46,000 MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BRITISH MERCHANT NAVY AND FISHING FLEET WHO HAVE SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FUTURE DURING THE CONFLICTS OF THE 20th CENTURY.
UPON THIS SITE WERE PLANTED 2,535 TREES,
EACH ONE REPRESENTING A BRITISH MERCHANT SHIP
OR FISHING VESSEL LOST DURING WORLD WAR II.
INAUGURATED 1st OCTOBER 1998
THIS TRIBUTE WAS CO-ORDINATED BY THE MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD.



IN COMMEMORATION OF ALL PAIRTS OF
THE ROYAL MARINE
WHO HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES ON ACTIVE SERVICE
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

THEY DIED
SERVING
THEIR
COUNTRY
WE WILL
REMEMBER
THEM

50 Years Late

by
Jodie Johnson (aged 9)
Lancashire, England

*I am Only a child
and it's hard to explain,
The feelings I have,
as I sit in the rain
And I think of the men
who went off to war,
Knowing they would not
come home anymore.*

*I cannot say thank you
to the men left in France,
Who laid down their lives
to give me a chance,
I cannot say thank you
to the ones who returned,
For thank you is not
what those brave men earned.*

*I owe them my life,
as I live it today,
A life lived in freedom
because of that day.
I owe them much more
than I can ever repay,
I owe them the lives
that they gave up that day.
They will live in my heart
for as long as I live,
And my children will learn
of that gift that they give.*

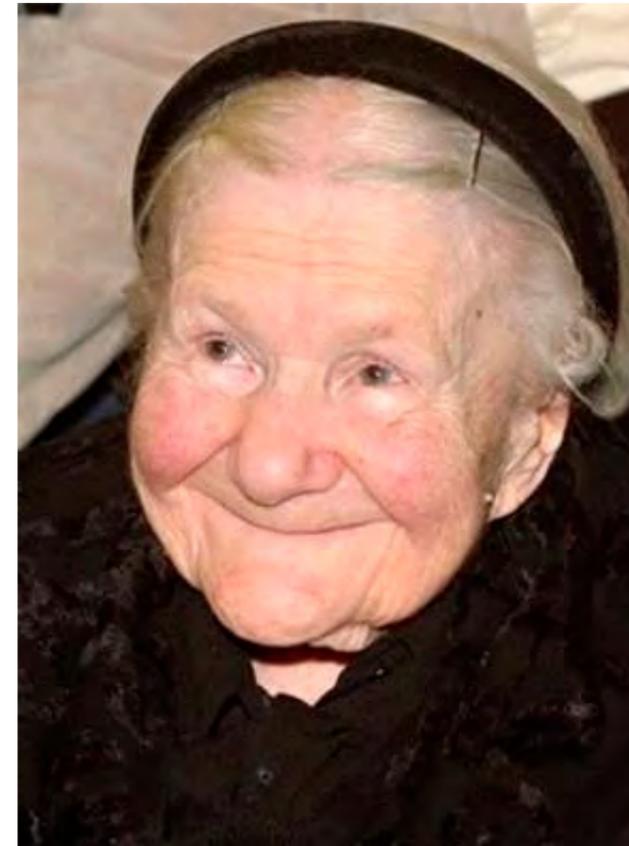


All the photographs on this page were taken by John Cook (JP).



The prizes don't always go to the most deserving.

Irena Sendler



There recently was a death of a 98 year-old lady named Irena. During WWII, Irena, got permission to work in the Warsaw Ghetto, as a Nurse. She had an 'ulterior motive' .. She KNEW what the Nazi's plans were for the Jews, (being German.) Irena smuggled infants out in the bottom of the tool box she carried in the back of her truck. She also had a dog in the back that she trained to bark when the Nazi soldiers let her in and out of the ghetto. The soldiers of course wanted nothing to do with the dog and the barking covered the kids/infants noises. During her time doing this, she managed to smuggle out and save 2500 kids/infants. She was caught, and the Nazi's broke both her legs, arms and beat her severely. Irena kept a record of the names of all the kids she smuggled out and kept them in a glass jar ,buried under a tree in her back yard.

After the war, she tried to locate any parents that may have survived it and reunited the family. Most had been gassed. Those kids she helped get placed into foster family homes or adopted.



Last year Irena was up for the Nobel Peace Prize ... She was not selected. Al Gore won, for a slide show on Global Warming. She died, whilst being nursed by one of the children she saved from the gas chamber.

Thanks to Vonnie for sending this article and the one on the next page.

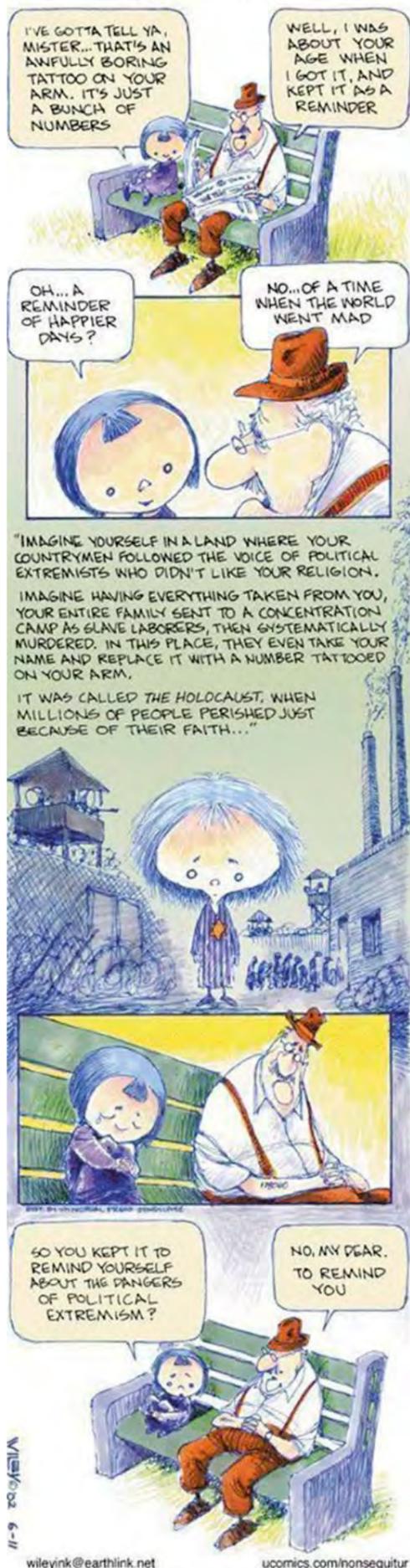
More can be read about this wonderful lady at URLs:
<http://www.auschwitz.dk/sendler.htm>
 and: <http://www.irenasendler.org/>

David has also sent me a few words which are worth thinking about in the context of the above story:

Be a Creator

Men have been taught that it is a virtue to agree with others.
 But the creator is the man who disagrees.
 Men have been taught that it is a virtue to swim with the current.
 But the creator is the man who goes against the current.
 Men have been taught that it is a virtue to stand together.
 But the creator is the man who stands alone.

**NON SEQUITUR
BY WILEY**



11-9 2009
wileyink@earthlink.net ucomics.com/nonsequitur

IN MEMORIAM - 63 YEARS LATER

Please read the little cartoon carefully, it's powerful. Then read the comments at the end. I'm doing my small part by forwarding this message. I hope you'll consider doing the same.

It is now more than 60 years after the Second World War in Europe ended. This, as an e-mail, is being sent as a memorial chain, in memory of the six million Jews, 20 million Russians, 10 million Christians and 1,900 Catholic priests who were murdered, massacred, raped, burned, starved and humiliated. Now, more than ever, with others claiming the Holocaust to be 'a myth,' it's imperative to make sure the world never forgets, because there are others who would like to do it again.

WHO ARE THESE MEN?

by
Jodie Johnson (aged 11)
Lancashire, England

*Who are these men
Who march so proud
Who quietly weep
Eyes closed, heads bowed?
These are the men
Who once were boys
Who missed out on youth
And all of its joys.*

*Who are these men
With aged faces
Who silently count
The empty spaces?
These are the men
Who gave their all
Who fought for their country
For freedom for all.*

*Who are these men
With sorrowful look
Who still can remember
The lives that were took?
These are the men
Who saw young men die
The price of peace
Is always high.*

*Who are these men
Who in the midst of pain
Whispered comfort to those
They would not see again?
These are the men
Whose hands held tomorrow
Who brought back our future
With blood, tears and sorrow.*

*Who are these men
Who promise to keep
Alive in their hearts
The ones God holds asleep?
These are the men
To whom I promise again
Veterans, my friends,
I WILL REMEMBER THEM.*

The Leica Freedom Train

The Leica is the pioneer 35 mm camera. It is a German product - precise, minimalist, and utterly efficient. Behind its worldwide acceptance as a creative tool was a family-owned, socially oriented firm that, during the Nazi era, acted with uncommon grace, generosity and modesty. E. Leitz Inc., designer and manufacturer of Germany's most famous photographic product, saved its Jews.

And Ernst Leitz II, the steely-eyed Protestant patriarch who headed the closely held firm as the Holocaust loomed across Europe, acted in such a way as to earn the title: *the photography industry's Schindler*.

As soon as Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany in 1933, Ernst Leitz II began receiving frantic calls from Jewish associates, asking for his help in getting them and their families out of the country. As Christians, Leitz and his family were immune to Nazi Germany's Nuremberg laws, which restricted the movement of Jews and limited their professional activities.

To help his Jewish workers and colleagues, Leitz quietly established what has become known among historians of the Holocaust as "*the Leica Freedom Train*," a covert means of allowing Jews to leave Germany in the guise of Leitz employees being assigned overseas.

Employees, retailers, family members, even friends of family members were "assigned" to Leitz sales offices in France, Hong Kong, Britain and the United States. Leitz's activities intensified after the Kristallnacht of November 1938, during which synagogues and Jewish shops were burned across Germany.

Before long, German "employees" were disembarking from the ocean liner *Bremen* at a New York pier and making their way to the Manhattan office of Leitz Inc., where executives quickly found them jobs in the photographic industry. Each new arrival had around his or her neck the symbol of freedom - a new Leica. The refugees were paid a stipend until they could find work. Out of this migration came designers, repair technicians, sales people, marketers and writers for the photographic press.

The *Leica Freedom Train* was at its height in 1938 and early 1939, delivering groups of refugees to New York every few weeks. Then, with the invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, Germany closed its borders.

By that time, hundreds of endangered Jews had escaped to America, thanks to the Leitzes' efforts. How did Ernst Leitz II and his staff get away with it?

Leitz Inc. was an internationally recognized brand that reflected credit on the newly resurgent Reich. The company produced range-finders and other optical systems for the German military. Also, the Nazi government desperately needed hard currency from abroad, and Leitz's single biggest market for optical goods was the United States.

Even so, members of the Leitz family and firm suffered for their good works. A top executive, Alfred Turk, was jailed for working to help Jews and freed only after the payment of a large bribe.

Leitz's daughter, Elsie Kuhn-Leitz, was imprisoned by the Gestapo after she was caught at the border, helping Jewish women cross into Switzerland. She eventually was freed but endured rough treatment in the course of questioning.

She also fell under suspicion when she attempted to improve the living conditions of 700 to 800 Ukrainian slave laborers, all of them women, who had been assigned to work in the plant during the 1940s.

After the war, Kuhn-Leitz received numerous honors for her humanitarian efforts, among them the Officier d'honneur des Palms Academic from France in 1965 and the Aristide Briand Medal from the European Academy in the 1970s.

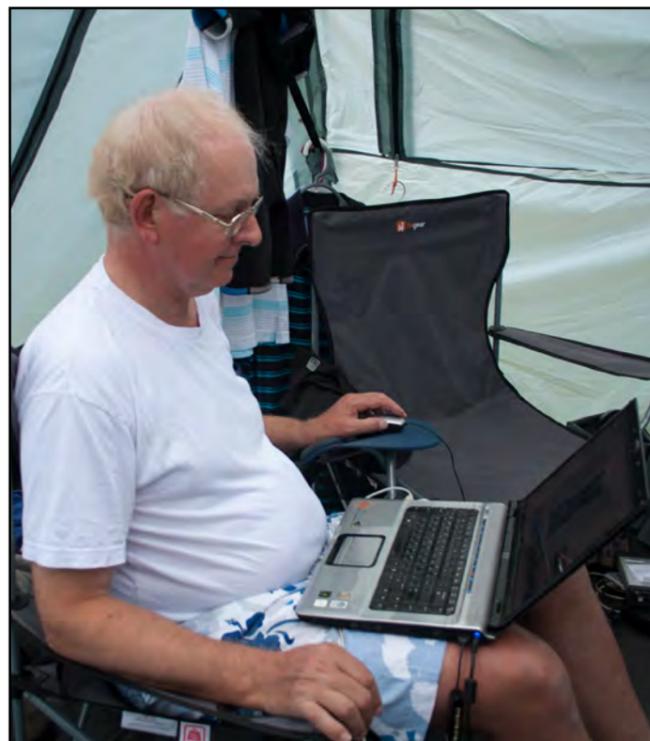
Why has no one told this story until now? According to the late Norman Lipton, a freelance writer and editor, the Leitz family wanted no publicity for its heroic efforts. Only after the last member of the Leitz family was dead did the *Leica Freedom Train* finally come to light.

It is now the subject of a book, *The Greatest Invention of the Leitz Family: The Leica Freedom Train* by Frank Dabba Smith, a California-born Rabbi currently living in England.

Thanks to Tessa for sending me this story.

Weekend in the Lakes

On Thursday morning, I was sitting in the office with not a lot to do. I knew the sun was shining, even though I couldn't see it. I also knew Little Lad was on his half-term break. By 9:00 a.m. I'd had enough. I called Grace and told her we were heading out for an adventure and left the office to go to the camping shop. Grabbing a big trolley load of sleeping bags, air-beds, tent pegs and other equipment I drove home and started packing. Grace was entertaining one of her friends for lunch so wasn't able to help as much as she usually does, but nevermind. By 1630 hrs we were on our way. As we drove out of the driveway of our home we decided to head for the wonderful English Lake District. After rather a slow journey we arrived at a site on the shores of Coniston Water and pitched our tent (*see photograph, below*). On Friday, we rested and visited a few shops in Coniston. On Saturday, we all climbed the Old Man of Coniston and on Sunday we struck camp and travelled home - just as it started raining.



One of the most useful gadgets I bought, just before we set out on our trip, was an inverter. This always me to run mains powered electrical equipment from the car battery. This is great for running my laptop computer with several external hard drives (*see photograph, left*), as well as re-charging our mobile telephone batteries.

Photograph, below: Little Lad fast asleep in his sleeping bag.



Youngest Mountaineer!

JP conquers *The Old Man of Coniston*

On 5 June 2010, JP climbed to the summit of the 803m high mountain called The Old Man of Coniston in the English Lake District, so becoming one of the youngest mountaineers (if not THE youngest), at only just 5 years old, to climb an 800m peak in the history of mountaineering.



Photograph above: JP standing next to the Trig. Point of the Ordnance Survey on the summit of The Old Man of Coniston.

Photograph left: The Old Man of Coniston from our campsite. Photograph by John Cook.



The Old Man of Coniston is a fell in the Furness Fells in the English Lake District. It is 2,634 feet (803 m) high, and lies to the west of the village of Coniston and the lake of the same name, Coniston Water. The fell is sometimes known by the alternate name of Coniston Old Man, or simply The Old Man. The mountain is a popular with tourists and fell-walkers with a number of well-marked paths to the summit. The mountain has also seen extensive slate mining activity for eight hundred years and the remains of abandoned mines and spoil tips are a significant feature of the north east slopes. There are also several flocks of sheep that are grazed on the mountain. Before the 1974 revision of county boundaries in England the Old Man was the highest fell in administrative Lancashire

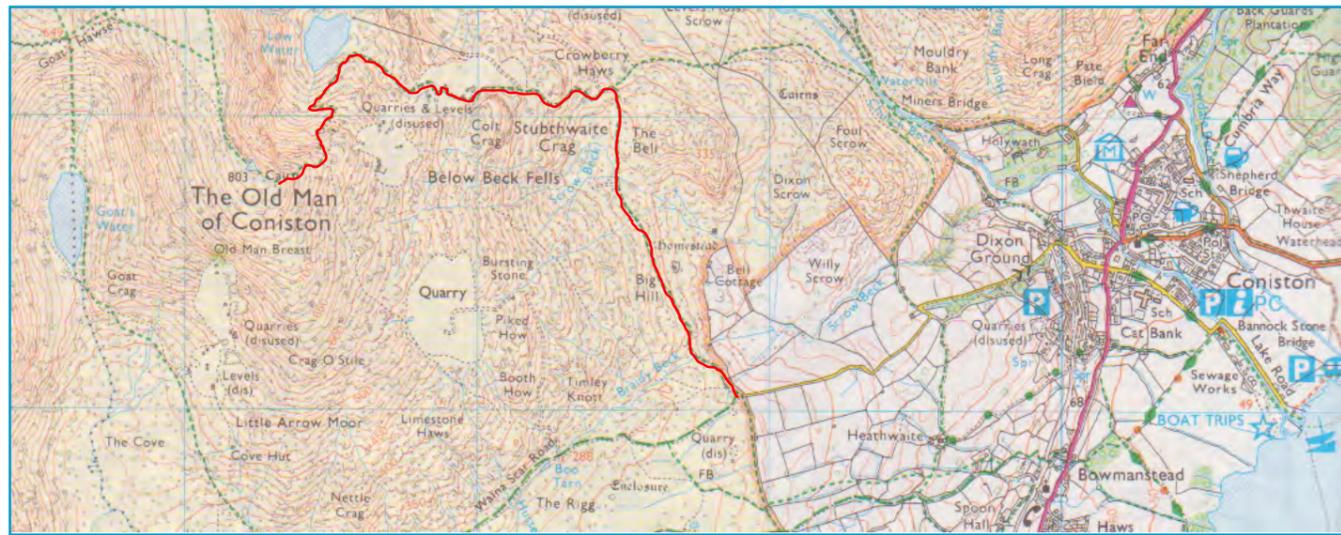
Text courtesy of URL: http://www.bing.com/reference/semhtml/?title=Old_Man_of_Coniston&src=abop&fwd=1&qpvt=The+Old+man+of+Coniston&q=the+old+man+of+coniston

Bridgnorth Cliff Railway

For over a century Bridgnorth Cliff Railway has been transporting the people of Bridgnorth up and down the 111 ft sandstone cliffs that separate High Town from Low Town and the River Severn. It is first and foremost a working railway; its importance to both the townspeople of Bridgnorth and to visitors to the town is undiminished by age.

The railway operates two carriages on parallel tracks. Connected by steel cables, the carriages serve to counterbalance each other - as one rises to the top station, the other runs to the bottom station. The cars are now powered by an electric winding engine, but were originally driven by a system of water balance, each carriage carrying water ballast in a tank beneath the passenger compartment.

Text courtesy of URL: <http://www.bridgnorthcliffrailway.co.uk/>



Map above shows the route JP took (© Ordnance Survey).



Photograph left: JP climbing above Low Water.

Below, top to bottom: On the summit with his Mum and Dad, Our names inscribed on a rock on the summit cairn. JP drawing on a piece of slate.



Christ Church Infants School Sports Day



Little Lad winning one of his races (*above*) and sitting with his fellow pupils watching the events (*below*).



Making a dash for the line (*left*).

Alan's Birthday



Photographs above: Alan by JP.

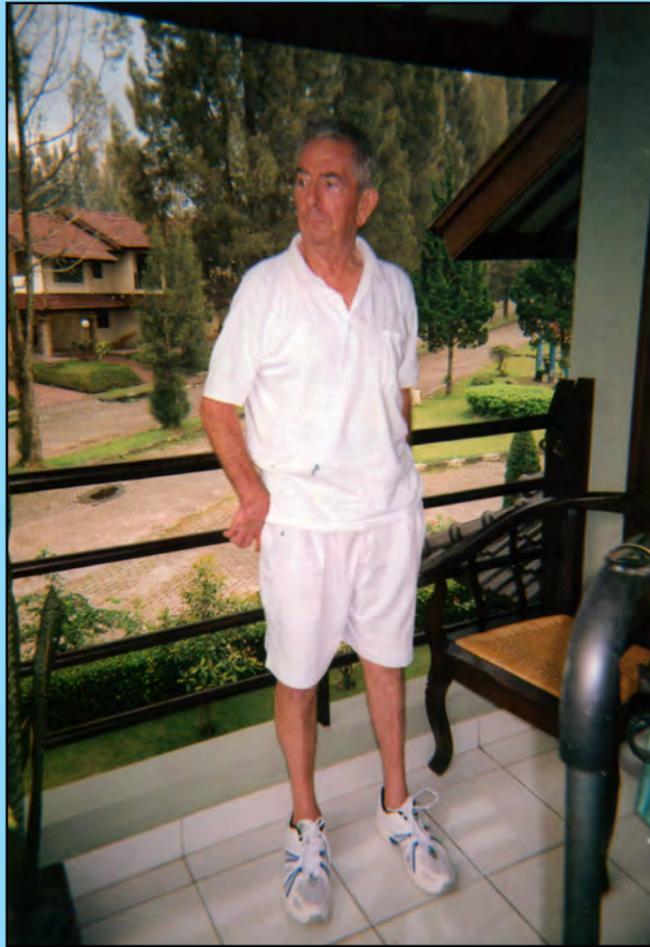


JP by Alan

Guests at Alan's birthday party.



Photographs from Graham and Kasni in Indonesia



We were delighted to receive these photographs of Graham (left) and Kasni (overleaf, top) in Indonesia.

The photographs (above and below) show their delightful home and garden in the tropics.



(above) Kasni.

(right) - Kathryn and Andry

(below) Graham's Grand-daughters.



The Department for the Perpetuation of War, Tyranny and Terror

by **Melanie Phillips**
Daily Mail, 19 June 2010

When the Conservatives announced that they intended to ring-fence the international aid budget, many eyebrows were raised.

Currently, this country spends about £3 billion every year on such aid. The Coalition has pledged to increase this total to meet the UN target of 0.7 per cent of national output by 2013.

Since only the health service is also to be ring-fenced against the draconian spending cuts threatened for the rest of the public sector and expected to be outlined in next Tuesday's Budget, many have asked how the Government can justify spending even more on humanitarian assistance abroad while causing increasing hardship at home.

Surely a government's first duty when the country has a £155 billion deficit is to its own people? And why is a Conservative Prime Minister adopting an attitude that is more commonly identified with the Left?

The reason is not the presence in the coalition of the Lib Dems. It is principally because of David Cameron's driving imperative to transform the image of the Conservative Party from nasty to nice. And a precondition of niceness is that hearts must bleed for the wretched of the earth.

After all, who but the heartless could possibly be against the idea of feeding the hungry or providing the basics of survival such as clean water, sanitation, shelter and health care?

Burned onto all of our retinas are the harrowing pictures of dying babies, swollen stomachs and pitiful lines of homeless refugees in faraway places about which we know very little.

Cameron says he stands for 'progressive conservatism'. And international humanitarian aid is a totem of progressive thinking, even more than support for the welfare state at home. It runs through the progressive psyche like the stripe in a stick of rock.

Ring-fencing the aid budget is therefore brandished as proof that the Tories are now the party of conscience, driven by the desire to ameliorate need rather than accentuate greed. It transforms them from out-of-touch Little Englanders into the trendy soul-mates of the likes of Bob Geldof and Bono.

And, according to Cameron, reducing third world poverty is also the key to tackling major global threats such as terrorism and climate change.

Truly, international aid would seem to be the Tories'

philosopher's stone.

But there is a problem. For sure, there is a moral duty on relatively rich countries such as Britain to help relieve humanitarian catastrophes. But the common complaint is that much of this aid doesn't go to the poor at all, but ends up instead in the pockets of tyrants and kleptocrats.

In addition, it is said that it does nothing to tackle the root causes of third world poverty, because it fosters dependency and corruption without requiring the political or economic change necessary to enable such countries to thrive.

The Government is clearly highly sensitive to such concerns. Accordingly, the International-Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell, has trumpeted a review of the way this aid is distributed, pledging that, in future, it will be a transparent system guaranteed to go to the poorest of the poor.

But this is a worthless promise. For the problem is far deeper than just transparency.

The horrifying truth is that, far from such assistance going to alleviate starvation, disease and the suffering that follows conflict, much of it actually serves to perpetuate war and tyranny, persecution and mass murder.

How can this have happened? The key error is that famine, drought or disease are regarded as suffering to be alleviated regardless of its context.

But such need is often manipulated or even created by tyrants or warlords — in order to obtain the aid that then enables them to kill and enslave even more people and prop up their own corrupt and brutal regimes.

This means that the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which administer this aid become the unwitting tools of repression and mass murder — as do the governments and well-meaning, but naive people who have stumped up the aid in the first place.

On top of this fundamental error, there is another fiction — that aid and the agencies which deliver it are neutral players in world events.

Humanitarianism is conceived as the duty to alleviate human suffering unconditionally — which means a blind eye must be turned whenever it is abused. However gross this abuse, the aid must continue to be provided on the grounds that, wherever there is suffering, there must be humanitarian relief.

And so the aid itself becomes the key means by which war and terrorism, tyranny and genocide are actually perpetrated.

The results of this profoundly misguided approach are set out in stark and horrifying detail in *War Games*, a brilliant new book by the Dutch journalist Linda Polman.

What she conclusively demonstrates is that David Cameron's belief that relieving global poverty will diminish the threat of terrorism or war is the precise opposite of the truth. To warring parties in many conflicts, money and supplies provided by the aid agencies represent a business opportunity and an essential element in their military strategy.

For example, in Rwanda, where the Hutu tribe massacred millions of Tutsis in the Nineties, a record \$1.5 billion for immediate relief alone poured in from Western governments and NGOs to deal with what was presented as an epidemic of cholera among the refugees.

What the aid organisations failed to report was that some of the refugees who poured across the border into Goma in neighbouring Zaire were not dying of disease, but were being murdered by Hutu militias.

The Hutus stole the aid — by some accounts, as much as 60 per cent — and levied tax on food rations to pay their militias and thus continue murdering Tutsis back in Rwanda. Without international aid, the Hutus' war of extermination would have ground to a halt.

And this pattern has been repeated over and over again in pretty well every conflict zone, where aid is given in the tragically false belief that a distinction can be made between conflict and humanitarian assistance.

In Somalia, warlords extracted from the aid agencies as much as 80 per cent of what the aid supplies were worth. After the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, which left 40,000 dead and displaced 2.5 million people, Dutch relief workers were forced to pay a levy of up to 25 per cent of the aid to the terrorist Tamil Tigers.

In Sudan in the Eighties and Nineties, where two million were slaughtered, the government army that committed these atrocities fed itself on food aid that it stole. The truth is that this aid kept the genocide going.

As Polman observes, warlords, rebel leaders, terrorists, militias and others wreaking death and destruction impose on aid agencies heavy import duties on supplies, fees for visas and work permits, harbour and airport taxes, and road permits for cars and trucks. Some also levy taxes for the 'use' of children for vaccination or rehabilitation.

And even more devastating than this mafia-style aid protection racket, refugee camps all over the world turn into paramilitary or terrorist strongholds. Withdrawing into these camps allows those bent on violence to regroup, rearm and train undisturbed, often using civilian refugees as human shields against any outside attack.

All this courtesy of international aid organisations, which provide food, clean drinking water, medical care, shelter, education and welfare on the spurious grounds that this is merely 'humanitarian' relief and so is nothing at all to do with the conflict in question.

Yet such aid is the key factor that enables the violence and terror to continue — a fact carefully concealed by the NGOs in case this bitter truth dries up the funds.

As Polman writes, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) camps that sprang up in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza developed into 'fully-fledged city states from which the "freedom struggle" against Israel — and against each other — continues to this day'.

Indeed, in Gaza — to which the Cameron government has just committed a £19 million first instalment of a five-year £100 million aid package — UNRWA admitted last year that the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hamas had stolen 3,500 blankets and more than 400 food packages, including 200 tons of rice and flour, that were supposed to be distributed to Gaza residents.

In this calamitous situation, the key is the collusive and deeply questionable role played by the NGOs and aid agencies.

These form a vast, powerful and unaccountable industry. The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates that every major disaster attracts on average 1,000 aid organisations.

Directly after World War II, the supply of aid was tightly controlled by the U.S. and Russia. With the fall of Communism, however, the nature of global conflict changed from war between states to terrorist or rebel insurgencies.

The superpowers withdrew from the scene, and local warlords were left to decide the conditions under which aid organisations would be granted access to the suffering needy. In this combustible arena, many aid agencies have become highly politicised advocacy groups — and they have a symbiotic relationship with the media, which is so keen to tug public heart-strings that it often censors the ugly manipulation behind the images of human suffering.

The aid organisations then move in with their begging bowls on the back of these harrowing, but highly manipulative dispatches. So much so that former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, referred to the U.S. TV news channel CNN as 'the 16th member of the Security Council'.

Of course the UN itself has been accused of being heavily complicit in this collusion between aid and violence.

There have been allegations for more than six decades that it has run the Palestinian terror camps in the Middle East; that in the Eighties it helped nurture the Taliban in its refugee camps in Pakistan; and that in the Nineties,

Liberian refugees in its camps turned into rebels after only a few months.

Interestingly, one of the first people to recognise the trap into which humanitarian aid would lead was Florence Nightingale.

Having seen at first hand the appalling conditions in British military hospitals during the 19th century Crimean War, she concluded that the only people who could remedy such a situation were those whose incompetence and heartlessness had caused it in the first place — in that case, the British government.

When the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in 1863, on the principle that voluntary organisations should deliver humanitarian assistance regardless of why it had become needed and what was actually done with it, Nightingale observed: ‘I need hardly say I think its views most absurd, just such as would originate in a little state like Geneva which can never see war.’

Today, this Geneva-based organisation has developed a self-aggrandising moral blindness that pervades the West’s whole approach to aid.

Ultimately, international aid is not about rescuing the starving of the world. Instead, it is all about burnishing the self-image of the person, organisation or government doing the giving. That’s why blind eyes are so resolutely turned to the way aid is used as the life-support system for tyrants and mass murderers.

There is surely a case for saying that, rather than being ring-fenced as Cameron’s government vows to do, the entire international aid programme should be axed — along with the department that administers it.

Failing that, it should be renamed the Department for the Perpetuation of War, Tyranny and Terror. Now that would be transparency.

As for the generous-minded members of the public who want to dip into their pockets to relieve distress, they would be well advised to give the international aid racket a miss and donate to charities caring for the poor, old or disabled in this country instead.

Courtesy of URL: <http://www.melaniephillips.com/articles-new/?p=746>

Roses in our garden (*right*).

