

# Northern *news*

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

Christmas Eve 2017 to 31 January 2018



# Editorial Ramblings

We started our Christmas festivities by attending church at Preston City Mission on the morning of Christmas Eve. In the evening we attended the Christingle service at St. Paul's Church in Warton. How lovely it was to see that the church was packed! How sad it is that it isn't like this every Sunday. How devastating it is for us to know that this is where our little girl, Annelise, is buried. After the service, we placed a Christingle on Annelise's grave to accompany her little, decorated Christmas tree, just outside the church. So terribly sad that she wasn't here to enjoy Christmas at home with her family. We drove home with heavy hearts; visiting the home with all the Christmas lights enroute. Later that evening the three of us sat enthralled as we first watched a TV programme about the life of André Rieu, then watched his Christmas concert from London. A lovely way to start Christmas.

On Christmas Day, Grace attended church and JP and I prepared sausage rolls for lunch. I rolled out the pastry and JP did his bit with the sausage meat - good team effort! We thoroughly enjoyed them. After watching the Queen's speech, we opened our Christmas presents. Later, instead of the traditional roast turkey we had salmon as our main course for dinner. Our new family photograph (*above left*) was taken during Christmas Day. After getting home on Christmas Eve, I didn't venture out again into the misery of the English winter until it was time to return to work on 2 January 2018 - and that was something of a struggle. It must be lovely to be able to go off to a place in the sunshine - or hibernate!

Rather disappointingly, I haven't had much chance to try out my new camera because the weather has been so bad and we haven't been out very much at all this month, but we did pay a visit to the ancient churches of Heysham on 7 January (*see page 10*). By this time Grace had adopted my old camera and we took JP's friend Leo with us (*see photographs below - picture below left by Grace*).

We hope and pray that 2018 will be a good year for us and for all you and your families.



**Cover photograph:** St. Paul's Church, Warton. We all attended the Chrstingle Service here on Christmas Eve.

**Next page:** One family's Christmas lights! This astonishing display was on a house not far from our home - raising money for charites - including Derian House whose staff helped us so greatly when we were nursing Annelise at home. Annelise would have loved seeing these beautiful lighting displays - see more on page 4.





# *Christmas Lights*

# A Resolution for the New Year

*“Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.*

*Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.*

*All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamed would have come his way. Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.”*

William Hutchinson Murray (1913-1996)

from his 1951 book *The Scottish Himalayan Expedition*.

Or, in the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832):

*“Be bold and mighty forces will come to your aid.”*

**Murray later writes:** *There creeps abroad throughout the land a grey spirit of shelter-seeking - a craving for security - the educated adult tending to ask of every venture he makes: 'Is it safe? Is it useful? Does it keep the wolf from the door?' Himalayan mountaineering so obviously is and does none of these things.*

Writing with some experience of these matters, I too have found these statements to be very true, so:

***Begin now - and Go Boldly into your adventures in 2018.***

**Notes:** *The above quotation by Goethe is sometimes, incorrectly, attributed to William Benjamin Basil King (1859–1928) who was a Canadian-born clergyman who became a writer after retiring from the clergy.*

*In the text by Murray; the last two lines he attributes to Goethe (translated from German), however, this is unproven.*

# *Our family in the Philippines just before Christmas*



*Left to right: back and middle rows: Judilyn, Vangie, Nadia (Grace's sister), Stemson Sr., Pacing, Gideon (Michelle's husband), Vee, Stemson Jr., 2x names unknown to us, Mary Ann, name unknown to us, Elorde.*

*Front row: Alexander (Divine and Michael's son; Michael is Grace's brother), Michelle (Grace's sister) with Nadias's son, Leonardo Jr., Leopoldo Jr. (Grace's father), Carlina (Grace's mother), Divine (wife of Michael), Ethan (Divine and Michael's son),*



*A feast of food for celebrating Christmas and Grace's father's birthday.*



*More Party Pics!*



# *Then and Now! in Switzerland*



You may remember from our River Rhine bicycle ride blog, that JP and I pitched our tent in the garden of the holiday home of Ueli and Erika Sutter in Versam, Switzerland. This was on 29 and 30 July 2016 - see photographs above. We recently received an e-mail from these wonderful friends who were so helpful to us - with the photograph (below) taken on 30 December 2017. What a difference in the weather! JP wishes we had snow like that here in England and I'd certainly much rather live in Switzerland than in the UK. What a wonderful country.





Another delightful photograph from Ueli and Erika showing the church that JP and I visited, near their home, together with a snow 'igloo' made by their grand-children



## *Heysham Churches*



Heysham has the great fortune to host two ancient churches, St. Peter's (*photograph above, taken by Grace*) and St. Patrick's (now a ruin). Adjacent to St. Patrick's chapel (8th or 9th century) are six ancient graves from the tenth century (*see left and next page*), two of which are those of children, hewn out of solid rock on the impressive Heysham headland. St. Patrick is said to have landed here after crossing the Irish Sea on a millstone. The chapel is one of the oldest in the country; the remains of its walls are 2ft 6ins thick, bonded with immensely

strong mortar made by burning sea-shells – this method was used by the Romans. Both these churches are on sites used for Christian worship for more than a millenia. In the case of St. Peter's church; it is believed that a church was founded on this site in the 7th or 8th century. In 1080 it was recorded that the location was the site of an old Saxon church. Some of the fabric of that church remains in the present church. The chancel was built around 1340–50 and the south aisle was added in the 15th century. The north aisle was added in 1864 and other extensions and restorations were carried out by the Lancaster architect E. G. Paley.



# *A story from one of our readers*

Part of your writing reminded me of this story:

There was once a businessman who was sitting by the beach in a small Brazilian village. As he sat, he saw a Brazilian fisherman rowing a small boat towards the shore having caught quite few big fish.

The businessman was impressed and asked the fisherman, “How long does it take you to catch so many fish?”

The fisherman replied, “Oh, just a short while.”

“Then why don’t you stay longer at sea and catch even more?” The businessman was astonished.

“This is enough to feed my whole family,” the fisherman said.

The businessman then asked, “So, what do you do for the rest of the day?”

The fisherman replied, “Well, I usually wake up early in the morning, go out to sea and catch a few fish, then go back and play with my kids. In the afternoon, I take a nap with my wife, and evening comes, I join my buddies in the village for a drink — we play guitar, sing and dance throughout the night.”

The businessman offered a suggestion to the fisherman.

“I am a PhD in business management. I could help you to become a more successful person.

From now on, you should spend more time at sea and try to catch as many fish as possible.

When you have saved enough money, you could buy a bigger boat and catch even more fish. Soon you will be able to afford to buy more boats, set up your own company, your own production plant for canned food and distribution network. By then, you will have moved out of this village and to Sao Paulo, where you can set up HQ to manage your other branches.”

The fisherman continues, “And after that?”

The businessman laughs heartily, “After that, you can live like a king in your own house, and when the time is right, you can go public and float your shares in the Stock Exchange, and you will be rich.”

The fisherman asks, “And after that?”

The businessman says, “After that, you can finally retire, you can move to a house by the fishing village, wake up early in the morning, catch a few fish, then return home to play with kids, have a nice afternoon nap with your wife, and when evening comes, you can join your buddies for a drink, play the guitar, sing and dance throughout the night!”

The fisherman was puzzled, “Isn’t that what I am doing now?”

*below left:* The fishing fleet about to depart from a beach near Alaminos, Philippines, 23 January 2007.

*below right:* A fishing boat (*Banca*) on Bolo Beach, Philippines, October 2006.





# The Adventurer's Page

Every month, I hope to add something of interest to this page (or pages!) concerning the world of travel and adventure. This may be a personal story of adventure or travel, a book review, or about something I've read or seen on-line. I would welcome contributions from any of our readers, many of whom I know are extremely well travelled. I hope some of what is written here inspires you in your future travels.

*“Mountains have been found to possess peculiar power of setting our minds free from daily troubles”.*

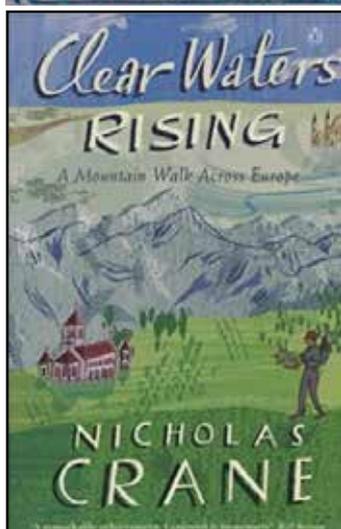
V.A. Firsoff in the preface to his book 'The Tatra Mountains' first published in July 1942 (Lindsay Drummond Ltd.).



I thought I'd start off in the south of the Carpathian Mountains for this month's book review as it is, for most people, some way off the usual tourist trail, which is what makes this region all the more interesting. This book, written during World War Two and illustrated with monochrome photographs describes an area that has been subjected to great turmoil both prior to and in the years following its publication. The dedication at the front of the book points to this turmoil: *To my young brother - fallen in the unarmed struggle for human dignity, who loved the mountains, flowers and the sky of the Tatra. No roll of honour will carry your name - no flags will wave over your grave.*

This is not a guide book but more a description of the way of life of the people who lived in this beautiful part of the world. Although the photographs haven't been reproduced very well, they do serve to show a little of what this area has to offer in its magnificent scenery and, more importantly, how life in the mountains looked nearly 80 years ago.

I just wonder how much of the way of life described in the text continues to this day. This is definitely a place to put on your list of great places to visit - and find out the answer to this question. This book is still available (used) and listed on Amazon.



Another 'mountain' book which I enjoyed immensely is 'Clear Waters Rising - A Mountain Walk across Europe' by Nicholas Crane. This is a much more recent publication (1997 - the same year I left the UK to live abroad). It tells of the amazing adventures of Nicholas in walking from the tip of north-western Spain at Cape Finisterre to Istanbul, in Turkey, following the chain of mountains that stretches across Europe - a journey lasting 17 months - carrying his ever present umbrella! Like the book about the Tatra Mountains, Nicholas describes not only the mountain wilderness in which he lived (and travelled through), but also the people he met in these remote regions way outside modern civilisation. I might add that these two books have a connection as, of course, his route also passed through the area described in 'The Tatra Mountains'. I'll leave you to compare the two books in detail!

# Alan's Reflections

## ALAN'S REFLECTIONS

Starting to compile this little newsletter on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day may seem a little unusual, but the *Cook* family aren't known for being particularly conventional or conformist. I'm pleased to say that JP is continuing this trend, or, as he puts it, "*being outside the social norm*". Watching our little lad grow up and seeing how his way of thinking develops is an interesting experience. His way of thinking really is extraordinary; mind-blowing at times. It's just very sad that it sometimes gets him into trouble at school as his high school teachers are..... (well, let's just say I don't rate them highly) ..... unable to even recognise his very special talent, let alone develop it. The only school teacher who recognised and brought out this innate talent was his teacher (now the Head Teacher) at his little village primary school. On his first day at her school he introduced himself to her by saying "*I'm your worst nightmare*". They got on really well together. How sad it is that he's had to leave her behind. With the politicising of our education system, children aren't supposed to think, let alone be taught how to think. They are just supposed to conform and follow the system like a herd of sheep - just as many of our schools have to do in order to obtain good marks from Ofsted, the education department's *school judging* section.

Our evil leaders, educated at their elitist private schools and universities, don't want people who can think; just take in their lies as being the truth and don't rock their boat. The political elite need to observe what has happened in the USA. President Trump may be many things; but he's certainly giving the political elite and the establishment a good kicking. That's what we need to happen throughout Europe. Apart from creating other disasters for my country (and other countries), our political elite are doing everything they can to overturn democracy by making a complete hash of getting the UK out of the EU. Of course, I know that true democracy doesn't exist anywhere in the world, but these evil leaders don't want the UK to exit the EU so they will do everything they can to keep us there. Throughout Europe we need a revolution and it's not too far off from when that day will happen. People eventually get so sick of the establishment they eventually take the law into their own hands - remember the French and Russian revolutions that happened on our doorstep? In fact, a few years ago, one of my former colleagues bought himself a main battle tank (I believe it's a *Challenger*) just for when that time comes! Three cheers for another non-conformist thinker. We need more people like him - and like JP.

Starting the new year by making resolutions is one thing; Starting with a new year revolution would be something else!

In context with this, I was delighted to receive an e-mail from one of our friends (a few days after I'd written the preceding text) who wrote (slightly edited): *Always great to hear from you and read of your adventures or musings! One of the salient points re: civilisation or whatever the opposite of that is lay in the point you made, recent newsletter, re: that church where they couldn't muster up 6 people to show sufficient interest in bell ringing to keep the beautiful vibes such performances create rippling through the universe... people are so intent these days on being busy. It's the new God and they worship him beyond all imagining... just went with neighbours to nearest point of a township - half an hour over winding up and down dale country very picturesque etc...at one point it was Sunday Market in a tiny village spot - so they did stop there but barely 20mins - I got some mandarins and the couple devoured mussel fritters but all done in such haste I found it peculiar - then on to the Big Smoke of that main town and again 10 mins in one discount shop and then 15 mins in the supermarket to replenish stores for a fortnight and promptly back on our way... and so the morning over... and why I wondered did they not just sit down and have a chat at one point over a tea/juice/coffee... but no it was all done with one eye on the clock! ... I felt they were just carrying out duties never able to switch into a low gear and allow the moment to be absorbed and enjoyed!!!! Showing you are actually enjoying the moment - how extravagant and frivolous of me! Enjoyment is only permitted if we say we are going to a specific concert or event where such behaviour has been sanctioned and practiced in past moments but once over - you must get back into busy routine!*

*BUT not to worry, I can clearly see I'm the odd one out ... and casual chatter and time taken to speculate, think ruminant, discourse about the universe or even the state of the weather (major cause of Brit downfall!) has become very wasteful and idle way to behave!!! - let's lead a protest movement for no movement!!! and the joys of the unbusy body! and roll about the universe causing a huge upset to all behaving so perfectly in accord with the masters controlling the puppet-people they have so cleverly crafted and have them working so intently to gain the approval of their mogul-creators who sell all the material sweetmeats that keep them nose to grindstone... without ever seeing the game --- Oh how envious the old slave owners must feel - they only ever got a few hundred at a time to whip, bring to heel and*

*have working for them begrudgingly... But they say we advance - Darwin style - and so Dear Charles did you notice how clever today's slave drivers are to have got their labour doing it all to buy the very things they produce in huge quantities - and doing it without having to raise the whip, indeed often as not they get high honours or even become POTUS ...(President of the United States).*

Our dear reader then went on to write: *BUT, let's not worry, just enjoy the moment while we have it, and YES everyone so different and bless them all and YES again why not take off on another cruising cycle ride or meander through the Universe... for what else is one likely to achieve in this blip of a thing called life!*

Following this train of thought, you may remember that one of the main problems I had with our River Rhine bicycle trip was the time constraint of having to get JP back home in order for him to be able to start his new high school on the appointed date. He would have learned much more by completing the bicycle trip instead of having to go to school. How lovely it would have been if we had been able to meander through Europe on our bicycles without having to think about deadlines. And all to keep our slave drivers happy by making them even bigger fortunes than they already have. And unless you come from a certain class and background, you've got no chance of climbing out of the 'slough of despond' that is normal life to most people. Us slaves are very much kept 'in our place' and few ever make it to the outside world where one can live a 'real' life of enjoyment and relaxation. Why do you think I still have to go to work at the age of 68? I certainly don't go for the entertainment value!

To gain the maximum amount of freedom one can achieve as a human being in this evil, over-regulated world, one has to have money. That rarely happens to working class (i.e. *slave class*) people such as us. We either work and have money and no time to travel (be free), or we have the time (being unemployed) but insufficient money.

Still on the topic of being a slave; one of the little things that irritates me more than it should is when I receive an e-mail from a recruiter that reads something like this (and these are words from just one actual e-mail):

*In the meantime I wanted to make you aware of an amazing opportunity I have at the moment for an experienced..... This is a great chance for you to work on an exciting new project..... You would be working with a fantastic global medical device company based in.....*

Please will someone tell me what is *amazing opportunity / great chance / exciting new project / fantastic company* about going to work every day and making very little

money in return for a lot of aggravation and lost time out of one's life? In fact that is the text of the e-mail I sent to the recruiter (except I changed *someone* to *you*). I'm still awaiting his reply.

Just now I saw an advertisement for a 'special offer' on a product made by Chinese slaves living in poverty. It's called an Apple iPhone X - and the cost? £999 (but you do get free delivery!). How ridiculous is that? When the Apple corporation has more cash than some countries and pays very little tax. More money into the pockets of the rich and less for us slaves who are stupid enough to buy these things. My telephone cost me £18 and does all I need it to. There is nothing smart about buying a smartphone! In fact, the company for whom I work bought me a smartphone. I can't think why they bothered as it hardly gets used. A complete waste of money. We live in a world of madness.

Of course, most people might throw back at me that I spend far too much money on photographic equipment - and I would largely agree. This is why I keep my cameras for a long time - just to keep the cost per year to a sensible figure - and why I've recently bought an elderly second-hand camera. The annual cost of the camera I've just replaced was under £220/year + lens cost) and the camera is still in use as Grace has adopted it and my older lenses are passed onto JP where they are still being used.

The photographs taken with our cameras are priceless and of far better quality than could ever have been produced by any telephone camera. It's also a far cry from the cost of expensive smartphones which, statistically, people replace every 18 months!

Continuing the theme of relaxation and living a happy life; my hobby of photography has given me a great deal of pleasure over more than 50 years and that too is priceless. It has also given a lot of other people happiness in seeing some of the photographs I've taken. Only yesterday, JP came to me with his iPad (which we were blackmailed into buying by his conformist school!) where he showed me a photograph (*below*) sent



to him by one of his cousins in the Philippines. It was a photograph of JP with a group of his cousins. The cousin in the Philippines said he'd kept it all these years as it reminded him of a happy time that he'd spent with JP in July 2007, when JP was only just over 2 years old. Isn't that wonderful? I found the original on one of my external hard drives and showed the complete set of photographs to JP via the album I'd backed-up on line. In actual fact, the photographs were taken by Grace (on her Canon camera) when she visited the family home. We're certainly a family of photographers!

Some years ago, just before we left Qatar, we attended a party hosted by a couple who were leaving the country in order to retire. Some years previously they'd bought a home in rural Spain where they'd spent their holidays and where they were now going to live. Showing some interest in this, I was told something about it. It was in quite a remote location and was a very basic property. For instance, there was no electricity, something we all take for granted nowadays. They really were going into a world of little materialism which one has to admire in many ways. I'm not sure I could manage without electricity though. How could I produce this newsletter? However, there must be a lot of satisfaction and happiness in leading a much simpler, less materialistic way of life.

Maybe I should bring our caravan back into service!

When we were living in our caravan in December 2014 there was a small motorhome parked nearby. The owner was a lady who had got rid of her 'proper' home and now lived in her motorhome with her little dog. She did some part time work to bring in the little cash she needed and lived quite a simple life. One day she just drove off and disappeared without a word to anyone; never to be seen on the site again. We were most surprised. The point, regardless of the manner in which she left, is that she had the freedom to do just that - disappear. She could go off to wherever took her fancy, whenever she liked. She didn't have the constraints that a conventional life has in controlling just about everything we do. Isn't that marvellous? How wonderful that must be. Just to be able to get up and go to wherever one pleases. No wonder so many retired people have taken to travelling in this way.

Quite near our home there is a business that stocks many millions of pounds worth of motorhomes as well as caravans. None of them are cheap. Some of them cost as much as a small house. This can only mean one thing - people are buying them. There must be a huge demand for them otherwise their manufacturers and retailers wouldn't be able to stay in business. I love seeing these travellers on the roads with their homes on

wheels. I hope I get the opportunity to join them one day.

In fact our dear reader, previously quoted, also wrote: *'Focussed' is another buzz word I'm hearing too much about I suspect, with people behaving as if total concentration on one thing is a major attainment and so they dismiss everything and anybody that doesn't relate to what they are doing at any stage of the day - or their life. I am more and more aware that people are only interested in how things in their immediate circle will apply or benefit them and if it looks like it won't, then they don't even nod to it.*

*Once you realise they are doing the same thing to everyone, and it is a common practice nowadays, you stop worrying about thinking it must be your fault, which is the first response, and so you upset yourself, but the only one that actually feels anything then is yourself, as they have no interest in you at all and were never thinking of you, actually, so you have to cultivate a different approach / understanding... and realise they are just not touched by so many things... and actually you can feel sorry for them as they really aren't very aware at all of the greater value of mankind.*

*So many things amaze me in this world that I now just see it all as part of our little journey through this lifetime and know that the best way to enjoy the ride is to be welcoming and friendly to all and if they are not happy with that - that too is their choice and I'll find someone else to talk to etc!!! But again, I just have to smile and get on with improving myself in my own way and become more an observer, like Darwin, rather than fight the relentless result of crass / mass stupidity... so long as we can stay on the edges and skirt about the madness there is hope. I think that one day the good will out - but don't hold your breath!!!*

*Let it all out!!! and keep laughing instead!*

There is a lyrical, almost mystical, description in *Ireland Illustrated with Pen and Pencil* (1891) by Richard Lovett, where he gives some meaning to life on the Skellig Islands, a place where Gaelic Christian monks sought extreme solitude beginning sometime in the 6th to 8th centuries and lasting through the late 12th or early 13th century as:

*It is good for the soul to be thus lifted out of and away from all the mean and petty detail of life, to escape from the wearing friction of the selfish every-day life, and to be alone with the noblest natural features — the wide sky, the broad and health-giving ocean, the immovable rock, so firmly rooted that through countless generations the Atlantic surges have vainly thundered against it.*

It somehow seems even more appropriate in this modern age.

Now for another sort of revolution: One of the things I want to experiment with this year is, as much as possible, *going paperless*. We've all heard or read of the *paperless office*, well, if you saw my office at home you'd get the message - I'm surrounded by paper and files of paper. However, I do have a plan to get rid of much of this stuff; before I can no longer get into my office. For many years I've stored all my photographs in digital form on external hard drives. I can find photographs (and videos) quite easily as everything is stored in dated folders with a suitable caption. I'm going to try that with my paperwork. Every piece of paper that I don't need to keep, physically, I'm going to scan and store (with back-ups, of course) on external hard drives in a set of dated and captioned folders - just as I do with my photographs.

For example: I could start with a folder just having 'Data 2018' as its name. That could then sprout sub-folders such as 'Utility Bills', inside of which could be dated files such as '2018\_January\_10\_Telephone\_Bill'. That is the basic idea I have in mind so will have to try it to see how well it works. Doing it this way means I don't need to keep, say, all the printed telephone bills which fill my office to overflowing. Not only will my office be less crowded, so giving me room to work, but it will be much easier to find specific documents. I wonder why I didn't think of doing this before. It's got to be worth a try. I suppose the down side is that it takes time to scan and file a document rather than throwing it onto a heap of other papers somewhere in the office! However, the heaps are overwhelming me now so I have to do something about it. This is happening throughout the business world these days, so why not give it a try at home?

By the way; if you're looking for a good search program to help you find your digitised files, I suggest you try 'Super Finder XT'. It works a lot better as a search engine than Microsoft Windows Explorer - and it's free.

Moving on; I used to enjoy driving. It used to be a fun and pleasurable experience in the days of *Sunday Afternoon Motorists*. Those were the days when whole families went out to enjoy the freedom of the road and enjoy the scenes and places such freedom gave to the (fairly) early motorists of that era. Remember that I've had a driving license for more than half a century. Now it's just a battle for survival; at least, it is in the UK. I happened to mention this to Grace and JP a few days ago after yet another fraught battle on the roads. This morning was a typical example of what I mean. Today's school run - a round trip of about 21 miles: The shortest section of the journey, a mere 1.2

miles, is along the A6 Garstang Road between the M55 Motorway and St. Vincent's Road, where the school is located (look it up on Google Maps). Under sensible driving conditions this takes just a very few minutes. This morning, I arrived at JP's school at 0755 hrs. Allowing time to wake him up and get him out of the car - which takes a couple of minutes - meant that before 0800 hrs I was out of St. Vincent's Road and back onto Garstang Road, heading north to go home. This short, few minute, 1.2 mile journey, actually took 35 minutes!

The afternoon school run was even worse - far, far worse for all those stuck in the monstrous traffic jam. As I drove out of St. Vincent's road, heading north, I soon realised that the situation was even more ludicrous; even more catastrophic that it had been in the morning. After struggling to turn round, I eventually headed south until I was able to head west by joining Blackpool Road and travel home along the scenic route instead of the motorway. I know from bitter experience that I'd have been stuck on Garstang Road for about an hour before I was able to join the motorway and head for home. As it was, travelling the scenic route took 35 minutes for the entire journey. Yes, it took somewhat longer than the 'normal' drive would take; but it was a lot quicker than sitting in the traffic jam!

Now, let's think just about those wasted 35 minutes on the morning trip and who knows how long for all those stuck in the afternoon traffic jam. This only occurred because of the sheer volume of traffic using this road. Think a bit deeper and you'll realise the real disaster of this. Let's consider some of the more obvious angles:

- 1) Time wasted - i.e. non-productive time. Think of the cost of this to not only the individual, but to British industry. A truly massive cost.
- 2) Fuel wasted - engines are running for far longer than normal - consuming more fuel, as well as additional wear. Not only cars, but commercial vehicles too.
- 3) Massive amounts of additional pollution - we all know about this - and the health effects too - and the cost of treating those health problems.
- 4) The cost of Road Traffic Accidents brought about by this massive overcrowding and the frustration and difficulties this causes.

If one extrapolates this information in quantifiable financial terms and adds that to the cost of the other, countless traffic jams around everywhere in the UK, the cost is truly unimaginable. It must cost the country - including the cost to individuals - billions, if not trillions of pounds every year, as well as making much of the country's air unpleasant and unhealthy to breathe.

One needs to ask “What is being done about it?” and “What can be done about it?” Of course, to answer these questions one would need to start by looking at the big picture and at society as a whole, rather than consider motoring in isolation. Most sensible answers would be highly controversial and none of our evil leaders would even consider them if there was any likelihood of them losing out at election time. After all, since when did our evil leaders do anything other than look after themselves?

Well known cycling book author, Josie Dew, has some interesting thoughts on this at URL: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/blog/josie-dew-why-we-love-cycling-school>.

As I write this, today is the first anniversary of a certain Mr. D. Trump becoming President of the United States of America. Just before I went out on the equivalent of today’s fourth school run (JP’s youth club is also located in Fulwood, not far from the northern end of the notorious Garstang Road), I caught part of the news on BBC TV.

Now, I don’t often watch mainstream news as it is so controlled, and as has been seen in the past year, is doing all it can to give Mr. T a good hammering because he is not part of the ‘usual’ governing elite. However, the reporter was talking about Mr. T’s attendance at a huge anti-abortion rally - the only president ever to attend and address this rally. Not only did the reporter at the event elicit responses from the people attending the rally, but gave space on the programme to a very highly regarded lady (apologies, I can’t remember her name and haven’t yet managed to discover it) who was very much pro-Mr. T, as were all the people interviewed at the ‘March for Life’ rally, and not only for his stand regarding anti-abortion but also for the fact that the USA economy is booming, the stock market is at a record high but also that working class people are better off because of this boom and because of recent tax cuts. The one thing that stood out was the fact that they all agreed that Mr. T is standing by his pre-election promises and doing everything he can to make them work - The very promises that made the people decide to elect him as President. This, despite the ravaging he receives from the mainstream media - today’s BBC news item being a rare exception.

On the subject of abortion, it would seem that Mr. T has done a bit of a ‘U’ turn on this since 1991 (and also in 1999) and is now very much standing in the anti-abortionist’s camp. Let’s hope his stand on this continues and the anti-abortion law is passed which, at least goes some way to protecting our unborn children, although not banning abortion completely. If so, he

can’t be classified as ‘all bad’ as most of the media would like to describe him (and thereby influence the people who suck up to this misinformation).

On something of a personal note regarding ‘the choice’ as it is described, where women are permitted to decide whether or not to legally murder their own child; I have known a small number of ladies who did have an abortion and in every single case it has haunted them and negatively affected their life - and will do so until they die. The pro-abortionists don’t seem to recognise this or they wouldn’t take the stand they do - unless they have no conscience. I sometimes wonder what those murdered children will say to their mothers when they meet up one day in our ‘spirit’ life in the next world. I’m sure it will make for some interesting conversations.

On the subject of life in the next world, you may be interested to read a book entitled “After Death: Letters from Julia” by William Stead. It is easily found on line as a free download at a variety of websites, including: <http://www.jhardaker.plus.com/pdf/After%20Death%20-%20Letters%20from%20Julia.pdf>. It’s certainly an interesting read.

Rather than thinking too much about the next life, I suppose this is the time in a new year when many of us think about what might happen in the year ahead. Of course, it’s only a date on the calendar just as every day of our life is, and no one knows how life is going to turn out - which is a blessing indeed. For me, it’s just another year in which I’m getting older; another year where much of my time will be wasted away doing my boring but necessary duties; another year without our dear little Annelise; another year of captivity in the system that I hate and resent more than you can ever imagine; another year where we have to work and struggle to get through financially; another year in the UK where the weather is, in the main, too savage and miserable to be able to set foot outside the house unless one is forced by duty to do so; another year of hopeless, unfulfilled dreams; another year with few, if any, adventures; another year with no freedom; another year nearer the time that will come to us all eventually - to me perhaps sooner than many others. I wonder what adventures Annelise and I will have together when that time comes. It’s only being such an optimist that keeps me going!

I have a message for Annelise:

*Please click here to listen to the message.*

*I wonder if my father was in the audience of the RAF in Burma as he was there when this recording was made in WWII.*



The 'Great War' memorial in the graveyard of St. Peter's church in Heysham. Unusually, this First World War memorial is dated 1914 to 1919 (most are dated 1914 to 1918). The churchyard contains the war graves of eight Commonwealth service personnel of World War I, and three from World War II.