

Greenmount – December 2009

Looking back at last year, our plans are not as awry as I had believed them to be. The Christmas tree was adorned more or less on schedule, thanks mainly to Rachel, who then promptly flew off to Arhus for a week end break to recover.

I can hear you thinking “Where is Arhus?” Well, it is in Denmark, a country that is even colder than here. And your next question is “Why would anyone want to go to Arhus?” I do not know why *anyone* would want to go there but Rachel is visiting a chap she knew at University and who lives and works there. I hope you are taking in all this because it is about to become a little more complicated. Rachel’s friend is not Danish. He is Norwegian and his parents live in Oslo. He teaches, in English, at a local establishment, to students from different countries.

Anyway, we had a quiet week end at home and managed to send off the Christmas cards. We also managed to tidy up a bit and the house is looking better, which is more than can be said for me.

I have finally purchased the licence for Nero media Home software, the DLNA server for my PC that allows me to play films and music stored on my PC on the new Sony television. I can also use the software to view pictures stored on my computer on the TV screen. I have been trialling the software for about two weeks, until the demonstration licence expired (what you’d expect from a Yorkshire man) and it seems to work extremely well.

Sunday 13th gave me the first reasonable opportunity for months to wash the cars (yes, I washed Rachel’s as well). Rachel and Jenny officiated at the Christingle service in the local church, Jenny’s Beavers having been chosen to lead the service. Jenny had to stand at the front with her Beavers and Rachel occupied the pulpit.

We had called in at Matthew’s house on the previous day to collect a large, external disc for my computer on which he had recorded several television programmes for me while my computer was out of commission. It was my intention to edit the programmes, store them on my disc and watch them. My plan did not encompass that great anathema of all intelligent life, Microsoft.

It can’t have escaped your notice that Microsoft, hot on the heels of the most inaptly-named and relatively-recent operating system, Vista, disliked by almost everyone I know who has used it, has brought out a new operating system, Windows 7 (7th time lucky?) and is marketing it very aggressively.

To be fair, I have heard good reports of Windows 7 and it does look much more like Windows XP, the best PC operating system in Microsoft’s history (so long as you’ve applied all the service packs and patches) prior to Windows 7. Like certain versions of Vista, Windows 7 comes with Windows Media Centre, which is designed to handle all your music, videos and pictures, including recording from television, if you have the hardware installed with which to do this. So far, so good.

There are several standards for storing video on a PC, the most widely used being MPEG 2.

It seems that none of these are good enough for Microsoft and, in Vista, Microsoft confused the world by tweaking MPEG 2 and recording in something called DVR-MS. This new format was quickly incorporated into third-party video editors and did not cause too much of a problem for good old Windows XP users, like myself.

And then came Windows 7. The recording format used by Media Centre in Windows 7 is something called WTV, whatever that is. Those who would defend Microsoft (yes, there are some) suggest that this has been introduced due to pressure from the media industry to allow a whole host of new features, such as media-rights (to prevent copying and distribution) to be included in the recording.

Having spent several hours trying to decipher WTV files on my Windows XP system, I conclude that Microsoft has succeeded, not only in preventing TV recordings from being distributed (at least, to me) but also in losing a lot of the few friends it had.

Interestingly, in Windows 7, if you right click on the WTV file produced by Media Centre and select "Convert" from the drop-down window, Windows 7 will automatically convert the WTV file to DVR-MS format and, as already said, XP users can handle these. So what was the point of WTV?

Not having Windows 7 yet, I do not know whether it is possible to select the recording format for videos in Media Centre. It would seem sensible to have the choice of WTV, DVR-MS or the industry standard of MPEG. But then, we're dealing with Microsoft here.

Microsoft so makes Linux (that's a Unix-based PC operating system) look more and more attractive. And there's always the Apple Mac.

And now for the serious, depressing bit.

This month has seen the Copenhagen summit on Global Warming fail to reach agreement on so-called Greenhouse Gas emissions. That is not good news for anyone and the future looks extremely bleak.

I reckon we have until 2022 to reverse the rise in temperature of the earth. After that, I believe the process will be irreversible.

I also believe that it is not enough to reduce emissions. We must take action to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere rather than simply reduce the amount we pump into it each year.

I can understand the developing nations wanting to progress. Unfortunately, they are making the same mistakes the rich nations of today have been making over the past two hundred years or so and the children and grandchildren of the people of today will suffer the consequences.

I really cannot see the kind of global action required being taken.

The only safe and clean method of producing power is by taking advantage of renewable

resources. The amount of power available in this country falls far short of our present level of consumption and the obvious consequence is that power will have to be distributed and provided on a priority basis.

Automotive travel will need to be severely restricted and we shall need to use electrically (from renewable resources) propelled vehicles and sailing ships. Flying will need to become a transport mechanism of the past. The use of fuels, including electricity, for sport, entertainment and comfort (domestic and street lighting, for example) will need to cease.

That will place considerable pressure on the oil industry, which will, in all probability, need to be wound up anyway, resulting in the loss of almost all artificial fibres, plastics, tyres and other every-day items.

On the pro-active side, we need to plant trees and restore the forests that existed hundreds of years ago, balancing this with farming needs. In south America, they are doing exactly the opposite.

It is very clear that to live in harmony with nature, the world cannot support the existing large concentrations of populations and if we do not take steps to limit the numbers of children being born now, natural events will do it for us in a far less selective and controlled way.

In short, it means taking developed countries back in time about 150 years and rethinking our development. To take this kind of decision and act upon it is simply not in our nature.

So what are the consequences likely to be?

Sea levels will rise and mountain ice will melt. Scientists have already doubled their estimate for the rise in sea levels. These figures, again, I believe are grossly underestimated and, by the end of this century, there will be wide-spread flooding of landmasses due to the rise in sea levels and rivers swollen from melting, high-altitude ice and increased rainfall. Not only will coastal towns and villages become uninhabitable but a large proportion of the arable land will be underwater, resulting in food shortages and wide-spread famine.

I fully expect London to be permanently under water in the latter half of this century. I believe that there are already plans in Whitehall to move the seat of government to higher ground, somewhere along the M62 corridor and probably in the Huddersfield or Halifax area.

Power stations, including nuclear installations on coasts, will be flooded and there will be virtually no electricity and a good degree of nuclear contamination, affecting the health of any survivors from the flooding. Anyone who doubts this should take a look at the reports of contamination at the Dounreay Materials Test Reactor in Caithness.

Sewage systems will be overwhelmed and unable to cope. Raw sewage will enter rivers and flood waters and there will be a revival of many fatal, highly-contagious diseases not seen in this country for many years. We have already seen the contamination of flood waters in several areas of this country. Imagine that repeated at almost every coastal town and many

low-lying inland towns at the same time.

The global view is not pleasant and my own prediction is that almost 85% of the world's population will perish before the end of this century. The future is not going to be very pleasant for those who survive and the sad part is that all of this could be avoided if people weren't so selfish and greedy.

The contingency plan (plan B) is to ensure that survivors, if there are any, are as well equipped as they can be to survive. Young people need to be taught basic survival and farming skills so they are able to live off the land, hunt and fish.

There are some who disagree that global warming is induced by people and even that it is happening at all. Indeed, judging by the amount of snow and cold weather we have had here, there is little first-hand evidence of it and one must trust in reports of receding glaciers, reports of increases in sea temperature, changes in global weather patterns and research linking the accelerated increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to human activity over the last two hundred years or so.

Here endeth this weeks lesson and I've put my soapbox on the new wood burning stove. My own ambition is to live long enough to say "I told you so".

We had a very quiet Christmas this year, with just the three of us at home. Jenny and I spent Christmas Eve dining with Matthew and Carrie at their home. Carrie's parents were also invited but could not navigate the road off their estate in Ramsbottom due to snow and ice.

On Boxing Day, Jenny and I went for a stroll and took some pictures around the village. The



picture on the left is of the cemetery and north side of Greenmount Church with the sun behind it. The picture on the right is of the tree-lined stream that runs through the golf course, taken into the sun, with a star-burst effect. The snow is about six inches or 15 centimetres deep and is starting to melt.

Rachel has posted some pictures on her Facebook account.

We had a most enjoyable meal with the local Scout Leaders on the 28th at the Pack Horse Inn on Watling Street (yes, the original Roman Road) in Affetside. Jenny and I are contemplating booking a table for her birthday in January.

New Year's Eve was also a quiet affair. We spent the evening watching DVDs and I telephoned my big sister in NZ. Her Yorkshire accent has a lovely antipodean twang but there is no mistaking her origin!

As the first decade of this century draws to a close, it only remains for me to wish everyone a happy New Year and if you didn't receive a Christmas Card it doesn't mean we weren't thinking of you. It's just that, being from Yorkshire, our bank balance was a bit further up the priority list. Either that or the Post Office failed to deliver it.