

Christmas 2008

This has been a very quiet year for us, so there is little to report in this year's (new, smaller) newsletter.

The farm was again run for minimum maintenance, but we did make some hay and silage, and we kept a few sheep on to produce some lamb for the freezer.

We took a one week break in Lanzarote in February, and a couple of weeks in the caravan in June, but that was it for holidays this year.

We have new tenants in the cottage - Sam & Sharon - who have fitted in very nicely, Earl has moved up here and is living in the holiday flat, and we had a great farm weekend with all my old school friends, but mostly this year has been about keeping Liz quiet, and trying to improve her quality of life.

So a quiet year for us, but a *Merry Christmas*, and a happy and prosperous New Year to all our readers.

The Knowle Farm Newsletter

How Sad Are We?

I hate to say this, but the best we can do for a lead story this year is Liz's health. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Never mind, things may look up next year.

This time last year, we finally got a diagnosis of M.E. or C.F.S. (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) as it is also known. There is no cure at the moment (the N.H.S. only recognised it about 18 months ago) only therapy to help you deal with it, but we have been amazed at how many people know someone with it. It is clearly widespread.

Liz started on her therapy, and it certainly helps. Relaxation, not letting her "batteries" get completely discharged, stopping before she is exhausted, it all helps. Unfortunately, trying to get Liz to "stop before she is exhausted" is exhausting in itself. It's not her best thing. A big break occurred in April when, as a result of a Channel 4

documentary, we tried turning the wireless network off. Amazing! Liz was transformed. And it turns out she is not the only one affected by wireless radiation. Several European countries have legislation in the pipeline banning wireless networks in schools.

It's not only wireless networks of course, it is also cordless phones - they have gone. But probably worst is a mobile phone. They radiate up to 1,000 times the power of a network, which is why the mobile knocked Liz out so quickly. So Liz no longer carries a phone.

After that, things slowed down and her state varies enormously from day to day. Huge ups and downs. And in these ups and downs we are trying to detect a glacial upward trend. Not easy.

We also find ways of dealing with things. Travel has always been difficult because, we have learned,

one of the things that will wear Liz out quickly is a high level of sensory input. That is why busy pubs and supermarkets tire her. And why too many people talking at once wear her out. Travelling down a motorway at 70 mph is a total sensory overload, so she now wears a sleep mask (the sort they give you on aeroplanes), and her noise cancelling headphones with her iPod playing Mozart (it just *must* be Mozart). This, we have discovered, can get her through a two or three hour car journey, something that was a nightmare before.

We must thank all the friends and relatives who have helped enormously by providing meals to put in the freezer. The evening meal has always been our biggest problem. I can't/won't cook and a couple of nights a week, Liz is too tired to do it so a frozen meal is a much better option than the chippie.

While I don't cook, I did do one
(Continued on page 2)

The Other Story

There is only one other story this year I am afraid, and many of you won't find THAT one interesting either. The Caterham had a very, very bad year.

At the last track day of 2007, at Mallory Park, to cut a long story short, as I was belting round the "Esses" - a chicane - at high speed, the engine decided, for reasons best known to itself, to spew all its oil out over the off side wheels.

As you can imagine, this did nothing for the grip of the two tyres and I spun off in a cloud of smoke and invective. Despite much work we never did get to the bottom of it. It appears that the engine we have has just been known to do this. Encouraging.

With Earl now living here, though, working on the car was easier. We cleaned everything up and had a good day drifting (driving sideways) at Oulton Park, and a good track day at Anglesea.

We then went to Cadwell Park and, after about six laps, it became apparent that the cylinder head gasket had blown. No more driving that day, and a £1,000 repair bill. Great.

They just got the car ready in time for a day that Earl and another friend - Mr. X - had promised themselves - Brands Hatch, the circuit of their youth.

Down at Brands, Earl had a great first session, going really well after all the tender ministrations that the engine had had. Then Mr. X took an old college friend - Mr. Y - out for a run and, during his warm up laps, the engine decided to do its "lets chuck all the oil out" trick

again.

Because Mr. X was on a warm-up, he wasn't driving hard so didn't notice. He knew something was wrong but didn't know what, and under the pressure of being out on the track didn't know what to do. So he tried to crawl back to the pits. Big mistake.

Having spread oil over about 2/3 of the Brands circuit (which took an hour to clean up and made him *very* popular) the engine gave up the ghost entirely, and threw a con-rod

through the crank-case about 50 yards from home.

So. Broken engine. Enormous repair bill. Only one track day completed. Not a good year.

We are going to work much harder at keeping the oil in the engine this year as, having gone through the "if it does this again, it's going" way of thinking, Earl and I have decided that we don't really want to go back to life without Nancy. She is just too much fun.



(Continued from page 1)
interesting deal this year. A lady

advertised in the local shop for
someone to show her how to

create a web site. I
volunteered, and when
it came to the matter
of payment, we hit
stalemate. Until I
asked if she could cook.
I did a couple of days
with her, and she put a
goodly supply of
(delicious) meals in the
freezer. Good deal huh?

The saddest thing,
though, is that we had
to swap Liz's lovely
little red sports car for
an electric scooter
(immediately named
"Dolly the Trolley").
Not much of a swap,
but she wasn't using the
car at all, it was just
sitting in the garage
depreciating. And Dolly
really will help. (cont.
below right)
So. A huge thank you to



From this.....



.. to this



But how many trolleys
have an E Type key ring?

Sundry Comings and Goings

It has been a year of sadness
and joy on the livestock front.
Early on we lost our beautiful
drake, Kevin, and three of his
wives. Someone ran them over.
We reckon they must have aimed
straight for them, as there is no
way you could miss seeing a pha-
lanx of ducks crossing the road.

To compensate, we bought three
hens and three ducks. The chick-
ens are VERY friendly indeed
and will jump into your arms if
you let them. One has been
known to help herself to a drink
from my teacup. They have been
named the Cheeky Girls (even
though there are three of
them).

We thought that all three of the
ducks were girls but one of
them, Buffy, turned out to be a
drake. He is very beautiful, with
feathers in various hues of beige
and grey. He and Derek seem to
get on without any fighting, as

yet. The two girls are Ruby and
Quackers.

In November, we collected four
hens rescued from a battery
farm. One had to go back as she
had a deformed leg and we
thought the fox would pick her
off straight away, but the other
three are settling in. They are
very short on feathers, they
can't roost, and so far haven't
left the chicken shed but they
are slowly getting braver and
their feathers are starting to
grow back.

The other new arrival this year
is Melvyn. He is a cock pheasant
who is blue/green all over. This
variation is known as melanistic
and Melvyn certainly knows
how good looking he is. He
stands at the snug window, ad-
miring his reflection, turning
his head from side to side, as
if to say 'Am I gorgeous or
what!'



Melvyn the Magnificent

Getting Older - 1

"Did the earth move for you?"
Nowadays that means "Did I
snore last night?"

Getting Older - 2

After 30 years of happy
marriage, I have finally found
the secret to keeping a woman
happy in bed - bring her a cup of
tea every half hour!

Observation of the Year

My brother lives in a place called
Felpham, right on the south
coast, not too far from
Portsmouth.

We have stayed there on a num-
ber of occasions, and as we have
stood in our bedroom on the
first floor, looking out of the
window at the sea, have I have
often observed to Liz that
"there are ferries at the bot-
tom of the garden." Boom! Boom!

Wheelbarrow of the Year

My wheelbarrow was always get-
ting punctures, so I asked the
tyre place for some advice.

They suggested fitting an indus-
trial strength tyre with much
more tread.

Getting Older - 3

This year was my (Terry's) big
65. We celebrated with a small
party, and the Government
presented me with my state
pension. A very useful £96.16
per week.

This will bring great joy to my
old age as I have calculated
that, over any twelve month
period, this will cover:-
5 days out at Alton Towers (at
the OAP rate of course) **plus**
4 track days in the Caterham
plus
2 weeks holiday to Lanzarote in
February for Liz and me **plus**
1,552 pints of Guinness.

Now **that's** a good year. And for
any of you still at work, may I
thank you in anticipation of your
ongoing support.

I did this, and I noticed that the
tyre has a speed rating of "R".
This means that my wheelbarrow
(and for similar reasons, my lawn
mower) is safe at speeds up to,
but not to exceed, 106 m.p.h.
That's a relief.

Grand-dad for a day.

We had a lovely family staying on
the camp site this year. Mum,
dad, and four children between 5
and 9. They were going to Alton
Towers for the day - would I like
to come. Is the Pope etc....?

We had a great day, and, as a
substitute grand-dad I got to go
on several rides that are not
open to me as an unaccompanied
adult. The Bouncing Frogs for
example.

every one for your help, your best
wishes, your cards, your emails
sent with little or no hope of a
reply, and your forbearance - its
fingers crossed for 2009. If I can
just keep her to her regime (and
that is a big "if") we should be
seeing some noticeable
improvement.

Interesting Question of the Year

When and why does Liz smell
chicken's bottoms?

Chickens suffer with a pest
called Red Mite, and we get rid
of them by powdering them with
a rather overpowering smelling
powder. The chicken shed smells
like a down-market ladies'
boudoir. Or so I have been told.

Liz usually does this job when
the chickens are perched for
the night, and I caught her do-
ing it one night. The problem
was, it was so dark that she
couldn't see who had been done
and who hadn't. The only way
she could tell was to pick them
up and - yes, you've got it -
smell their bottoms. Ugh.