



Maiden Road News

Audited Circulation:
To audit something is to hear it. A listening auditor: now there's an oxymoron.

2002 – 50 years of Royalty Behaving Badly



2002: Not the Same Backwards and Forwards

This has been a funny old year. Princess Anne has been convicted as an international terrorist. President Bush was seen at a school, reading a storybook upside-down: apparently he has problems with weapons of mass instruction. Tony Blair has annoyed the French, embarrassed the Italians, confused the Germans and ignored the Spanish: it's good to see that old-fashioned British diplomacy is not dead. And Saddam Hussein has decisively beaten all his rivals in a Presidential election, but they'll be out of hospital in time for the next election.

On the home front, Gordon Brown tells us the economy is booming – mainly because share prices are falling faster than the speed of sound. As part of the government policy on personal pensions he has looked at the problem of poverty in retirement, and he says he can definitely provide it.

Meanwhile the war against terror goes on. John Prescott has appealed for metal to build more spitfires, and the Conservative party have offered to melt down Margaret Thatcher – and they are certainly experts in the matter of meltdown. Yet through it all we still smile, thanks to those professional comedians who stop at nothing to cheer us up. So let's give a big thank you to the Royal family and President Bush.

Philip Goes Travelling

Philip's working life over the past year has been like that of a travelling salesman. He has been going to various parts of the country to talk about the Government's new policy to get the long-term unemployed back to work. Among others, he has been to Dundee, where he saw the statue of Desperate Dan; now he's not so desperate. He's also been to Preston, Blackpool and that jewel of the Midlands, Birmingham (well, he loves concrete). However, he'll never pass up the chance to talk to a new audience, so he's enjoyed himself fairly well. His efforts have been praised by his audiences and, more importantly, recognised by his managers with a small stipendiary increment – yes, they actually threw money!

His ordinary work has also involved extensive travel: he has staff in Leeds and Newcastle, so he is constantly travelling North for meetings. Still, he goes First Class (yes, he's that senior) so he usually gets a free breakfast. It helps to compensate for the 6am wake-ups, but not much.

Martin Goes to the Twilight Zone

For me, life has become a little less complicated and maybe a little more, too. Up until September I was doing my usual job, earning money and giving large amounts to the government. It was mostly the same old, although I was able to set up a small intranet for the team, and I also wrote a Visual Basic database to maintain records for the Retired Staff Association of GlaxoSmithKline. With the demise of Uni2000, GSK were

converting all of the applications using Uni2000 to other systems. RSA was left, Cinderella-like, with no migration solution, so I offered my skills with Visual Basic to get the project converted. Everyone seemed happy with the result, so it was a nice way to finish off the contract.

Then, in September, I made a major change: I stopped work and started to work full-time on my MPhil, which I hope to convert to a PhD. So far it has been exciting and extremely interesting. My tutors are both anthropologists, and it turns out that they have been heading towards much the same conclusions as me, but from anthropology rather than linguistics. Our skills fit together very well, and our theories complement each other. My main tutor, Chris Knight, has also expressed a wish to co-author a paper with me on language genesis.

Both my tutors are surprised at the volume of work I have already produced; but, as I told them, this MPhil has been ten years in the making and I've got plenty of stuff already written. I'm approaching this as if it were a computer project, so I've got most of the organisational stuff well under control.

The financial side is also good. I convinced the Inland Revenue that, if they insisted I was an employee for IR35 purposes, I was also an employee for redundancy purposes. I thus got a very tidy sum out of the company tax-free, and it will more than support me over the coming year. I'll have to make some hard decisions soon, but not just yet – for the moment I can just enjoy things.

Forest of Dean

Our first break away from London was a weekend with our friends Graham and Allen in the Forest of Dean – it provided a much-needed chance to wind down and relax for a short while. The highlight for me was getting to Hay-on-Wye, a town on the Welsh border that is given over to bookshops – the most literary town in Britain. I was able to rummage through remaindered and second-hand books and find a whole pile of useful things for my course, including – wait for it – *Semantic Analysis* by Paul Ziff and Sturtevant's *Linguistic Change*. Trust me, at my time of life this counts as exciting. Altogether I got over twenty books, with an average price of less than £2 each!

Cornwall

Our holiday in Cornwall was in September, as usual, and we spent some of our time catching up with some of Philip's relatives. It is always good to find out what the family has been doing, and Aunt Eileen is downright entertaining! After our time in St Ives last year (they be strange folk in St Ives), we stayed in a new hotel at the West End of Hayle. It was serviceable and comfortable, and that's all you need for a holiday hotel.

Of course, one of our first visits was to Paradise Park to see our adopted choughs. We have been sponsoring them for over 10 years, but they never phone, they never write... We didn't do much sanding and wading as the weather was rather cold, instead we visited some of the gardens of Cornwall, including Trebah, on the St Mawes peninsula, which is Philip's favourite garden. It was a grey day, but not too cold, and we saw parts that we had missed before.



We also visited a couple of vineyards. We got several bottles of wine at Polmassick, and a few more at Pemboia, so we are well-stocked for Christmas. British wines used to be awful, but the Cornish ones are quite delightful – all white, of course. But we got a bottle of plum wine at Polmassick which is uncharacteristically dry, although still definitely a dessert wine.

The highlight of the holiday for me was a visit to a small wildlife farm in St Erth. It was advertised as a chance to hold a spider, and that's precisely what it turned out to be! You'll have to take my word for it that those are my hands, but it was one of the thrilling moments of my life.



Coming Soon...

All that remains is to wish everyone a happy Yuletide and a successful new year. "Try not to try too hard, it's just a lovely ride."

That Techie Stuff

Philip's has gone broadband. His new email address is: philiprescorla@yahoo.co.uk. I am still at martin.edwardes@lineone.net. The website is still at: <http://website.lineone.net/~martin.edwardes>. But then websites are so last year...



Santa Claus is coming to town!