



MAIDEN ROAD NEWS

Audited Circulation:
What goes around,
comes around

2004 – *And so it came to pass*



2004: The Year of Derision

2004 was offered as a cure-all to the World's ills: Iraq would have elections and the US forces would be garlanded with flowers; George Bush would face the US electorate, and this time he wouldn't be able to weasel victory out of defeat; Blair would be brought to account for his rule by diktat; Europe would select a new, corruption-free Commission; Expansion to the East would create a better EU; the stock markets would rise, people would be joyous, life would be sweet. I don't need to say more, you were all there. 2004 was the year that diamonds turned to coal; nothing came to those that waited; and there wasn't a pony.

So it's just as well that, for the inhabitants of 1 Maiden Road, it was pretty good, really. Let me lead you by the hand and take you into Wonderland...

The Secret of Life...

Having abandoned my attempt to become a teacher (a decision that seems wiser with every passing day) I was left with the question of what to do for work. I took a short-term job as an editorial consultant with a small magazine company (a three-month contract that was extended to six months), but which proved to be... problematic. I enjoyed the work, which was easy, although the pay was poor. However, my employment status was also highly illegal. I tried to get various Government departments to investigate matters, but nobody was interested. That's fine, they are the ones losing money; but I was also losing out on my State pension rights, which peeves me greatly. That's just par for the course for 2004, though.

I'm now in a much more suitable job: better pay, stable company, superannuation scheme, light duties... I'm a Pensions Administrator with National Children's Homes. I arrive, do some calculations, send out some letters, do a bit of this, a bit of that, go home and don't think about work until the next morning. I'm not earning the obscene amounts I got as a HR Consultant, but it's enough to live on while I spend my time working on the really important things in my life - and those, as you will see, are going extremely well.

Education, Education, Education

The Prime Minister thinks it should be free for everyone as long as they pay; Prince Charles thinks it is engendering a dangerous "can-do" culture; Charles Clark says everything is working fine, so he's changing the system again; and nobody believes that modern children are 50% brighter than their parents. But education remains a Good Thing, and mine is going pretty well.

In March I presented a poster at the Evolution of Language conference in Leipzig on the evolution of grammar; and in July I presented a paper at the Language, Culture and Mind conference in Portsmouth. It's all about getting your name known, so that people will say "I know him, he's the idiot who thinks language structure is all about

making models of himself". I think I'm succeeding.

I've also been managing the EAORC group, and in September I was elected as webmaster for the BAAL – see my website for details and what the initials mean. I also revised my tutor's website, and I'm being asked for advice by some other academics who want to set up websites: "rotten linguist, but he gives good Internet". I've also revised my own website so that it is all-up-front, but that's another story.

My PhD is just completing its second incarnation – the third incarnation may well be the final one. I'm really pleased with the argument structure this time: it is clear, logical and well-ordered. There may still be some pet ideas in the text which don't help the story along, but they'll get cleared out in the next attempt. I need a little distance from this draft before I can really approach it critically. I've also assisted my Tutor in the preparation of a paper about the paradoxes of language - but I don't expect that to see the light of day for many months. More immediate is a paper I have to prepare for the online linguistics magazine, CoReLa. It may or may not be accepted, but I'll have fun doing it. I'm also thinking about writing some corpus linguistics papers: that's where I'm most at home, gather linguistic statistics. I may even prepare something for the next BAAL conference in September 2005... Of course, there remains the question of what I do after I've finished this PhD – probably start another one, I suppose.

Cornwall

Our sole "big" holiday this year was a few days spent in Cornwall in September. It was the week before I started my current job, so was my last chance before Easter next year (6-month probationary period). We visited Philip's relatives, saw some gardens, bought lots of Cornish wine and ate traditional Cornish fare. Last time we were in Cornwall the Twin Towers were destroyed, this time we were able to visit Rick Rescorla's monument.



Cornwall remains the most pleasant part of Britain - not as spectacular as Scotland, not as rugged as Wales, not as rural as the North, not as organised as the South; but with a good mix of all the best features of the other parts of Britain. It's our Florida, and it seems likely that we will be able to add to the age profile when we retire.



From right: Philip, Joyce (sister-in-law), Nigel (Joyce's son), and Betty (Joyce's sister)

The Other Guy

Work continues to be difficult: the Government has decided to reduce the number of civil servants (or pen pushers as the Daily Mail calls us) in my Department by 80,000; luckily this is to happen by 2008, when I am due to retire. However, we have to take a 30% cut for next year. To rub salt in the wound our 2004 pay negotiations have not even started. But guess what? Our politicians got their 2004 pay rise at the end of July. Grrrr...

Recently Nanette and her daughter Katie, friends from Seattle, visited London. They hadn't seen the city before so Martin gave them a quick tour, including the National Gallery. When Katie saw a painting of the birth of Christ she wanted to know if it was Jesus. Martin explained the picture of the birth of Christ and called it a Nativity. From then on Katie checked out all the paintings, asking "is this a nativity?" A new word learnt!

Singing is a great stress remover. The Pink Singers sang in Trafalgar Square at the Mardi Gras Rally in July. I met Gandalf (someone said he was Syrian, or was that Sir Ian?) and Ken Livingston. Did you know that Ken plans to put a statue of Tony Blair on the empty plinth in Trafalgar Square? The Queen is already training a flock of pigeons.

We are now rehearsing for our 21st anniversary concert in December. These days Martin sits in the front row. Well, it's the only way he can be sure that his underwear lands on the stage, and not on the head of the man two rows in front.

They say I'm still middle aged – how many people do you know who are 112!?

That Techie Stuff

Philip's email address is:

philiprescorla@yahoo.co.uk.

My email address is:

martin.edwardes@btopenworld.com.

The website is now at:

<http://www.btinternet.com/~martin.edwardes>



Fa la-la-la-la... la-la-la-la!

They don't write lyrics like that any more.