

The
Shepherd Chronicles
March 2006
from
William Shepherd

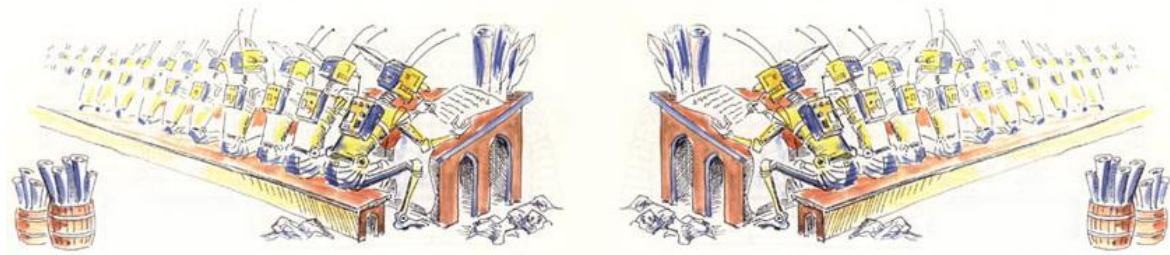


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Blogs 091 - 120

Wednesday 1st March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-02

blog 060/2006

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I was woken up by a bleeping mobile...and with a headache. The latter was the wine the night before; the former a text alert generated by an e-mail from Heidi offering me first refusal on her car for £150. I was sorely tempted but at 0730 I texted back 'Thanks but no thanks.' I get offered these good little runners every couple of months nowadays. I am always tempted but then I do the arithmetic and figure out how many taxi rides, hire cars and train journeys I can buy for £250 per month. A figure in the *Daily Mail* the other week put the costs of running a car at £550 per month. But stripped of the £150 depreciation, £50 parking and £50 finance which don't really apply to me their £255 per month was pretty much what I work on...£90 on petrol, £60 on insurance, £60 on maintenance and repairs, £30 for breakdown recovery and £15 for car tax. This compares pretty closely with the £190 per month my daughter's car had cost me in Wales where I paid £85 for two months of tax & insurance, spent £150 on fuel and forked out £150 on repairs but had no breakdown recovery. Yet without my own car it is going to be expensive moving my stuff into store up in Cambridge. So I might yet say 'yes' if she hasn't sold the car by the time I want to move my stuff.

Linda Smith has died of cancer three years after first being diagnosed. Even those, like myself, who only knew her as a voice on *BBC Radio 4* will feel we have lost a wonderful and brilliant friend. She was funny partly because she oozed and overflowed with compassion for the downtrodden and the ordinary man and woman in the street. But also because far from bearing no one any malice she had plenty of malice for the soulless corporate world of which she was proud to be an enemy and which she lampooned shamelessly week after week in programmes like *Just A Minute*, *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue* and *The News Quiz*.

Linda will be remembered for her charm, her wit, her destruction of pomposity and her subdued but burning English rage. She represented everything that is great in the British female character. Brought up in Erith on the south bank of the Thames not too far from Gravesend and within cycling distance of where I was brought up in Eltham, Linda once got herself into hot water by remarking that 'the town isn't twinned with anywhere...but it does have a suicide pact with Dagenham'. Her defence was vintage Linda Smith. When her comment attracted the wrath of the local paper she pointed out that the same paper ran a competition the following week to come up with the best name for the new Erith leisure centre which was won by the entry '*The Erith Leisure Centre*'. Then there were her wonderfully elliptical *lindasmithian* references...this one for instance to the *Elgin Marbles* saga. When the captain of Greece's soccer team was presented with the tournament trophy after winning the *Euro 2004* final, Linda was in there like a flash. 'We'll have that in the *British Museum* by the end of the week claiming its ours!'

Linda was one of the few women to conquer the world of stand-up comedy imported into British clubs and universities from the States as a new male- and Jewish-dominated genre...with just a wee touch of Scotch-Irish...in the early 1980s. When a student yelled, 'Show us yer tits', she retorted sweetly, 'Ah, is it time for a breast feed'...to the humiliated student. And then there was her attitude to authority. Like her friend and fellow panellist Jeremy Harding she understood the power of the jester. The best way to undermine authority is to render it ridiculous. When many people were refusing to pay the poll tax, the *Labour Party* would not back them, so Linda described the *Labour Party Campaign* as being 'Pay the poll tax...but while you're doing so...ooh!...you give that clerk SUCH a look'.

I had finished in town by midday and returned to the boat to do a job I have been promising myself I would do for almost two years. I patched up the holes at the back of the stove. It had never quite seemed worth it as I was always ether about to sell the boat or replace the caravan stove that has served me so well. I used some gray goo that I last remember using forty years ago to mend a hole in the exhaust of my Austin A35 van. It seems to have done the trick so I will be buying another tin to finish the job. It will be nice to have a stove that doesn't fill the cabin with smoke and threaten to burn the boat down.

A nice surprise in the evening when Heidi looked in and stayed chatting for two hours before her feet got cold and nature did her calling. There is a toilet on the boat which works fine for a bachelor but is not something I would wish upon a lady. As for the cold floor...the rest of the boat is toasty and warm...I wear a pair of Swedish clogs or some fluffy slippers onboard the boat...with two pairs of socks on cold days. Heidi had been busy over the past week raising money for her project in Lwala from the local *Rotary* and *Lions Club* people. One of the fundraisers produced £1600 although only a quarter will find its way into her project.

A final anecdote. Linda Smith was wonderfully playful with the other guests on those comedy shows the BBC allowed onto Radio 4 between 6.30 and 7 each weekday evening. Typical was the remark she once made when Alan Coren was looking puzzled., 'It's all right, Alan,' she said endearingly, 'the nurse will be round this afternoon. No she HASN'T been stealing your flowers.'

Thursday 2nd March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-03

blog 061/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

I was up with the light just before seven and walked into Rye to enjoy a cup of coffee at *Jempsons Coffee House* before getting down to the business of the day. My *Working Tax Credit* was in the *Nationwide* so at nine o'clock I got them to cut a £50 cheque for the *Good Yacht Guide* printing account and then moved £160 across to my business account so I could transfer £100 over the internet to my daughter and book my Swindon coach tickets with *National Express* over the phone.

The official academic theory of money has this theoretical construct of the velocity of money. The more you get into it the sillier the idea becomes but superficially it has meaning. I know of nobody with a higher money velocity than myself. Any money coming into any of my accounts is dispatched within hours. The same economic formula includes another strange theoretical construct...price. Quite apart from the old adage about knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing the idea of price itself is very woolly. Despite this 'price' is central to the theory of markets...and of capitalist propaganda about them. Economics makes claims to be scientific so it is not enough to know what a term in an equation means...you must be able to define it as well. The prices of products and services can be likened to the electron in modern physics...a cloud of probabilities. Prices are probabilities. There may also be an economic equivalent of *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle* along the lines that you can't simultaneously know the price of a good and the time it was delivered...price and delivery being the two things ordinary people want to know about a purchase.

Good news when I went to collect my post. A letter went off yesterday from *Walker & Walker* to Mr and Mrs Roud that included a demand to switch *Vemara's* electricity back on and mentioned the £25 per day it was costing this happily married couple as long as they failed to do so. Another piece of good news was that Jim Hollands the editor and publisher of *Rye's Own* had published my long article on *Local Power* without any amendments or alterations. I was pleased to see that he had used my graphic of Rye and her surrounding parishes. I had laboured long and hard over this after discovering that no such map existed anywhere in the county.

Betty Sayer is coming up to her fiftieth wedding anniversary next year. Those of us who have been through several marriages and/or long partnerships behold such couples with awe and admiration. How we wish that we had managed to last this long too. Betty was one of Connie's oldest friends...friends for the longest time...so I devoted a good twenty minutes to filling her in on everything going on around *Connie's Estate* and the *David Hutchings* and *Connie Lindqvist Trusts*. Betty is one of the more effective ways of feeding facts rather than incorrect hearsay and malicious gossip into the local rumour mills...something I feel the need to do to counteract some of the slanderous assertions currently doing the rounds. Sinclair Lewis wrote a novel called *Main Street*. *Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*.

One urgent item on my agenda was to bring the *Good Yacht Guide* accounts up to date. I owed Heidi money for looking after this microbusiness while I was away in Wales. I broke the back of the task over egg and chips at *Strand Cafe* and then took myself off round the corner along Cyprus Place to *PC Hut* to draw up a clean typed copy.

My normal weekly purchase at *Rye Market* is a bag of apples and a bag of oranges. The apples are parachuted in from all over the world...New Zealand, South Africa and so on...while the apples in our local orchards are left to rot on the ground. The oranges always look nice but are of variable quality...and it is difficult to tell until you try one. Quantities vary for no rational reason...like the weather or the season...from about half a dozen to a dozen for a pound of money. This week both apples and oranges were eight for a quid.

I was a little flattered to receive a call from Pippa Gausden while I was buying my fruit in the market. We had exchanged a few words and phone numbers when I was a little the worse for wear at our *Iolanthe Party* on Saturday. It turned out to be her birthday so it would have been ungracious to do anything other than accept her suggestion that we took ourselves out to *Camber Sands* for a long walk in a brisk cold breeze. We survived and had a coffee in *The Ship* afterwards. Then back to Biddenden and a birthday dinner organised by her children for her. And back to the boat for me.

Clive Ogden distributed assorted party leftovers in my direction on Tuesday evening. I had drunk most of them but still had the chives awaiting a larder full of eggs...scrambled eggs with chives being one of my favourite light bachelor dishes. *Gilbert & Sullivan* was still buzzing around in my head...it takes six weeks for this to disappear...as I lit the coal and gas stoves...for different reasons. Thursday is bellringer practice evening in Rye so the strains of the bells of *St Mary's* atop *The Citadel* wafted over my cabin roof and mixed somewhat inharmoniously with *Young Stephon is the kind of rogue...etc.* Continued reading *The Geographers Library* until bedtime at ten.

Thursday 3rd March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-03

blog 062/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Times columnist Libby Purves is no lover of the prophets of doom that assail her from every quarter. Here she is. 'I can't remember a time when we were more vigorously urged to squawk in alarm on a daily basis. When we take a short break from fretting that a virus might mutate into another different virus, which doesn't yet exist, but which might, if it did exist, cause a pandemic of incurable flu, we are invited to consider the Greenland ice sheet. This is melting much faster than anybody thought and will soon drown us, not to mention the polar bears...global warming, terrorism, bird flu. You can fret and make yourself ill if you want, but leave me out.' WARNING. No computer models were used to develop this opinion.

Meanwhile on the pavement of Whitehall not a few yards from Downing Street an Italian tourist chanced across a leaked copy of an advert for the *Daily Mail* blowing in a gust of wind from out of a window of the *Cabinet Office*. It read like this: 'Introducing the new Tessa Account. An incredible opportunity for investors. All you have to do is sign up for a Tessa and you get £350 000 paid directly via a series of offshore accounts into your bank...and you get your mortgage paid off! And it's all tax-free! Your Tessa account is guaranteed to give you a huge return of up to £350 000 overnight and you don't have to say or do anything! *Just keep your mouth shut and watch your money grow, grow, grow!!* Apply now to Il Banco di Berlusconi, Piazza di Silenzi, Milan for the investment opportunity of a lifetime sentence. (*shurely 'lifetime'? Ed*). WARNING: *With a Tessa you can go down as well as up.*

There is no truth in the rumour that Cabinet Minister Tessa Jowell is married to a Mr David Mills the tax avoidance adviser to the Italian Prime Minister. A government spokesman speaking off the record remarked: 'It is just one of those silly coincidences that happen when two people who hardly know each other and spend very little time together happen to have the same surname and live at the same address.'

I arrived in style by taxi at *Old Purton Farmhouse* at five o'clock after availing myself of the *National Express* shaving facilities at *Victoria Coach Station* and moving some money from London to Ashford courtesy of an internet shop on Victoria Street. A very social journey, meeting Mary Botwright on the platform in Rye and riding with her to Ashford and then having Sally who hosted last Sunday's soiree as my companion from Ashford to Staplehurst. One of Sally's three sisters lives in Cambridge and knows lots of dons and academics...could be helpful in getting digs when I finally get around to relocating away from Rye.

No sooner had I arrived than John Papworth whisked me off to *Purton House* to retrieve Tempe who must rank as the happiest dog in the world with two homes and a townful of admirers. We had tea and cake with Natalia Madison...and then helped ourselves to £17.72 of real good wholesome proper food. Here for the historical record is the produce we walked across town. '600gms courgettes £1.62; 700gms tomatoes £1.20; 700gms avocados £2.10; 500gms celery £0.45; 500gms spinach £1.60; 1100gms carrots £0.55; 1000gms onions £0.46; 600gms artichokes £0.75; 1300gms broccoli £1.00; 400gms lettuce £0.50; 200gms peppers £0.50; 100gms garlic £0.70; and a box of bean sprouts £ 0.40.' Not bad for a orphan boy from Stepney a stone's throw from Brick Lane and born within the sound of Bow Bells.

Natalia is the daughter of Douglas Barker, the war criminal...see the front page story in *The Independent* on Thursday 8th December 2005 by Jason Bennett & Terry Kirby. The war crime in question was withholding a portion of his income tax as a demonstration against *The Iraq War*. Thanks to the publicity a stand-off developed between Douglas and the tax gestapo with the national media on alert to swoop in by helicopter the moment the bailiffs marched in and broadcast the scene Waco-style on nationwide TV. But then Douglas paid a new chunk of income tax, the *Inland Revenue* grabbed at the chance of a face saver and a bit of it was used to pay off the unpaid tax bill...hey presto...problem sidelined for another twelve months. Douglas Barker must feel as irritated as Thoreau did when one of his friends paid his tax bill without his knowledge or approval.

Oxtail was on the menu for dinner...with much too much wine on the side. John tells me that you need an *Aga* to cook oxtail. 'And when did you last eat that?' he asked. 'Four weeks ago,' was my reply, 'When I was here the last time. But not for 40 years before that.' I was slightly drunk as we left for *The Angel*...which appeared to work wonders. I don't remember ever being able to place darts where I want to before. I moved rapidly from 301 to 51 and then threw Double 15, 1, 20 to win the match. But being such a long time since I last played I couldn't remember whether this counted as a winning go or whether finishing with a double meant just that. My host was given the benefit of the doubt. But it didn't do him much good. Next go I threw a 10 and a 1 before rounding off an

impressive display with a Double Twenty. On to three-card brag where I proceeded to sweep two of the three jackpots and went home with £16 in my pocket that had not been there before. I could get into this gambling lark. Feels rather good winning.

Friday 4th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-05

blog 063/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

On 5th February 1932...almost three quarters of a century ago...a review of Aldous Huxley's new novel *Brave New World* appeared in *The Daily Telegraph*. The reviewer was Rebecca West who had established her own literary reputation after years in H.G. Wells' personal and political shadow. The short 250-word review is remarkable not only for its foresight into the affairs of the day and the dangers of the emerging totalitarianism but also for its prophetic grasp of the dangers of the course civilisation was hell-bent on pursuing. Here is Rebecca's review.

'Those who are easily shocked had better leave Mr Huxley's new fantasy on one side; noting, as they pass, that since this is a free country they are not compelled to read it. Those who are not easily shocked can settle down to enjoy what is not only the most accomplished novel Mr Huxley has yet written, but also the most serious religious work written for some years. One would say that the book was about a Utopia if it were not that a line of dreamers have given that originally non-committed term a sense of imagined perfection, for the book describes the world as Mr Huxley sees it may become, if certain modern tendencies grow dominant, and its character is rather of deduced abomination.

If one has a complaint to make it is that he does not explain to the reader in a preface how much justification he has for his horrid visions. It would add to the reader's interest if he knows that when Mr Huxley depicts the human race as propagating by means of germ cells removed from the body and fertilised in laboratories (so that the embryo developing a bottle) he is writing of a possibility that biologists are seeing not more remotely, let us say, than Leonardo da Vinci saw the aeroplane. And it would add to the reader's horror if he realised that the society which Mr Huxley represents as being founded on this basis is actually the kind of society that various living people have expressed a desire to establish.'

One of the more interesting aspects of the review is Rebecca West's remark that 'the book was the most serious religious work written for some years'. Subsequently Aldous Huxley wrote a sequel: *Brave New World Revisited* and then a quarter of a century later in 1954 he released the companion novel *Island* which portrayed a very different alternative future...and which few have read. These three books should be regarded as a single work of prophetic genius. But instead a whole generation schooled in the 1950s and now at the peak of their generational power have been force-fed *Brave New World*. Cock-up of conspiracy?

It was a glorious winter day in Purton. Perfect blue sky, a warm sun...this is March...with a touch of frost left on the ground after a clear starry night of freezing temperatures. I walked with John Papworth and Tempe up to the local family butcher shop at the western end of the village and then back through town stopping off at the *Spar General Store* on our way to *Purton Farm* to pick up a few pounds of potatoes at the opposite eastern end beyond *St Mary's Parish Church* and the *Old Tithe Barn*.

I made some inroads into my e-mail inbox in the afternoon while John was taking his daily afternoon nap in true Churchillian manner. *Pinkfire* is a local Purton-based web design and digital origination business. Jane Stevens is now looking after digital origination of the five issues a year of *Fourth World Review* that are sent across the world for local printing in India, New Zealand and North America. I have been agitating unsuccessfully for many months to get the last eight issues sent to me in *Adobe pdf* format so I could bring the website up to date and make downloading and local printing possible to everybody. In fact I was beginning to despair of ever getting any response. In the changeover to *Pinkfire* from Geoff Ellis who had been looking after this side of our *Fourth World Review* business for more than 20 years I had been dropped from the mailing list. I requested the latest digital file from *Pinkfire* and this had come back immediately. Also five of the other seven missing files had come in from Helen Dew in New Zealand. Glad tidings indeed.

The *Radcon Planning Group* met for an hour and a half from five to half past six and stayed together for dinner and some fairly heavy drinking over a few games of three-card brag. I had terrible hands all evening but managed to keep my pot of winnings pretty much intact from the night before. The *Planning Group* set up a sub-committee for web communications...myself, Adam Crosland and Kate Cuzons. While John was preparing dinner we signed up for a *radcon weblog* on *MySpace*...a site with a younger feel. This site will now be used for internal communication.

Ali James motored over from Oxford to sit in on the meeting and stayed with us until after midnight. He is instrumental in plans to develop the university church of *St Mary The Virgin* into an Oxford-based version of *St Martin's in the Field*...my meeting point of choice in central London as it is right by Trafalgar Square and convenient for *Charing Cross Station*. We were discussing ways we could dovetail the September conference in Swindon with the planned developments at *St Mary's*. John Papworth will be inaugurating a series of *Academic Inn Dinner-Discussions* on Tuesday 9th May as part of this process.

Saturday 5th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-06

blog 064/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Criminals pretending to be *British Gas* officials made off with a staggering £1.5 billion yesterday in the most audacious raid Britain has even seen. The thieves, posing as energy suppliers, held the public to ransom and then grabbed an astonishing one-and-a-half billion pounds in cash...in broad daylight. 'It was simple,' said one astonished victim. 'They sent me a bill and threatened to cut me off if I didn't pay it.' He continued, 'I've got a wife and kids, so I had no option but to give in to their demands.' The mastermind behind the crime is believed to be an 'insider' with detailed knowledge of how a supplier of essential services can charge as much as it likes and get away with it.

During my time with *Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners* in the 1970s I worked with Luigi Genazzini on a regional roads development project in Oman and on a property development project in Port Louis Mauritius. We became good friends so when I was living on the American East Coast in the 1980s I would always fly across the North Atlantic with *Icelandair*. This was not because of any particular affection for Reykjavik but because their pilots dropped us off in Luxembourg. From there it was an easy day's train journey to London. By this time Luigi was working out of Luxembourg as the *Chief Economist* on the Africa and Middle East desk of the *European Investment Bank*. I would stay over in Luxembourg with him acclimatising myself before moving on to either Massachusetts or England.

The *EIB* which regards itself as the *EU's* soft-lending development bank launched a £220 million joint fund last month with the *Commission* to subsidise low-interest loans for water, energy, transport and telecommunications projects in Africa. Luigi would have been trying to inject some sanity into the lending. But unfortunately he was attacked in his hotel room in Beirut more than a decade ago, left for dead and then invalidated out of the bank.

Laudable as this fund might sound, many in the developing world have good reason to regard any intervention by the *EIB* with horror given the impact of 'infrastructure'...mines, oil pipelines, dams etc...funded with *EIB* loans in the past. For starters the money itself doesn't actually go to the developing countries very often. For instance a recent study commissioned by a group of *NGOs* in Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic and Holland revealed that ninety percent of *EIB* development loans in Latin America went to large European multinationals like *Shell* and *British Gas*. The figures are much the same for Africa. Perhaps this is not surprising. However it is not just European companies on the receiving end this largesse from Luxembourg. In 2002 the *EIB* generously handed over oodles of euros to the Canadian/Australian copper mining company *First Quantum* so it could become a major polluter...or as the *EIB* would say 'an investor in development...in Zambia.

I have had my eye on John's shower and bathroom since my arrival on Friday. So when he announced that he would be off to church for the ten thirty service I saw my chance. No such luck. He wanted 'all the support I can get'. The new woman in the vicarage has introduced some evangelical happy-clappy routines into the first Sunday worship of every month. John...a good old-fashioned *Anglo-Catholic Quaker* member of the *Anglican Communion's* *Zambian church*...hates every minute of it but feels the need to put in an appearance from time to time. Well I see his point. This sort of dumbing down of Christianity by turning the church into some sort of *Pop Idol* television studio just for the sake of a few more bums on seats seems a most peculiar direction to take. Billy Graham should be pleased with so easy a victory. Mosley, Hitler and the Billy Grahams of the Christian world are all much of a muchness to me. At one point in the service the whole congregation was expected to approach the altar, place their thumb in some ashes and make an impression on a sheet of cotton. That's the way they'll get everybody's fingerprints was the thought that went through my head. I stayed in my pew.

On the way back leaning into a bitterly cold easterly wind we stopped for a while to watch the *Purton Under 13s* draw level at 1-1 with the visiting *Lydiards* team...an excellent goal after some very poor defending by the *Lydiard's* defence. It was Luke that took the corner and Danny that ghosted in behind the defence to head in the equaliser at the far post. My father used to watch local football in *Oxleas Woods* and was coach for the Eltham Residents Association team for a few years. I would sometimes accompany him. You could become every bit as engrossed and excited by watching local teams as travelling for miles to see one of the *Premier League* clubs. I suggested to John that he appoints a sports reporter for *Purton Today* if he wants to reach a broader audience.

In the afternoon we worked on a grant application to the *Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust*. There is a quarterly meeting of the lending committees coming up at the end of March and the deadline for applications was this weekend. Just over a year ago the *Trust* began a new programme to look at 'the underlying issues of power and responsibility in a more holistic way across the public and private sectors'. Joseph Rowntree, a good earnest Quaker, saw business and politics as forms of service to be used to promote social justice, equality and a spirit of citizenship but was also much concerned about 'the power of selfish and unscrupulous wealth'. We thought it was worth a try.

Sunday 6th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-07

blog 065/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

My taxi came to 26 High Street in Purton at 0930 and whisked me away to *Swindon Bus Station* where I hitched a ride on the 1000 London coach. I was booked on the 1310 and this trick saved me a £2 rebooking fee. We spent the first hour of the trip travelling on the windy ways of Wiltshire and Berkshire as the coach driver tried to avoid a snarl-up on the M4 motorway. The taxi driver who had warned me of the problem told me there had been two long stoppages on the motorway the previous week...one caused by a suicide jumping from a bridge over the motorway.

Fairtrade Fortnight started today. On the face of it this fair trade idea is quite a success story. A typical *Fairtrade* product is *Divine* chocolate made by the *Kuapa Kokoo* co-operative in Abobiri in Ghana. Cocoa bean farmers there set up a firm to market the chocolate in Britain with the help of a £400 000 loan guaranteed by the British government. The price paid to them means money is also being invested in schools and clean water supplies in their community. In 2005 the Ghanaian company earned more than £7 million...a 35 percent increase in one year. The *Department for International Development* has given more than a million pound to the *Fairtrade Foundation* to help it promote and extend the *Fairtrade* brand, which is now on more than 1500 products on sale in Britain and sold almost two hundred million pounds of product last year.

However to put some perspective on *Fairtrade's* figures let's look at the money and killingry game...they are intimately related. The British have this quaint and ominous concept of 'bank holidays' while the rest of Europe has festivals for its saints. But this slippery doubletalk now extends to the idea of a '*bank reporting season*'...and there is no music by *Vivaldi* to accompany it. The season ended today with *HSBC* announcing an 11% increase of profits to £11 900 million pounds. *HSBC's* net operating income was £57 600 million against operating expenses of £ 29 500 million. Shareholders were delighted as their dividends were up 11% to 73 cents paid out of earnings per share of \$1.36. Shares on the *London Stock Exchange* rose 14½p to 989½p in response.

To date the war in Iraq has cost the British taxpayer £4 000 million and the cost is increasing at a hundred million pounds per month so it is not hard to see how a tithe of ten percent on the profits of just one of the UK high-street banks is sufficient to keep the killing going for as long as there is money in it for bank shareholders and the killingry industry on the receiving end of the commercial banks' government-maintained monopoly on money creation.

Of course it is true that only a fifth of *HSBC's* business is UK business. But *HSBC* is only one of the banks. Here are the annual profits from the rest of the gang in millions of pounds: *Royal Bank of Scotland* 7900; *Barclays* 5300; *HBOS* 4800; *Lloyds* 3800; *Standard Chartered* 1500; *Alliance* 508; *Northern Rock* 504; *Bradford & Bingley* 296. That's probably about 80% of the banking profits from this season's crop of annual bank company reports.

I got into London's *Victoria Coach Station* at 1215 and took a stroll across the city in the sunlight before catching the 13.22 train from *Charing Cross* to *Sevenoaks*. I had expected to get away after half an hour but the meeting with my solicitor Brian Walker lasted from 3pm to 5pm. In part this was because a reply was in from Mr Roud. In part it was because Ilona Price had phoned him up on Friday to inform him that she was not willing to be a trustee of the *David Hutchings Trust*. He thought the call itself was strange...and much of the conversation.

Walker & Walker will now be sending letters to *Vance Harris* seeking a formal handover of *Vemara* and artwork from the executor; and to Mr Roud to agree a set of numbers to haggle over. Meanwhile I am to write to *Provident*...Connie's Accident Compensation Insurer...to get the case moving again after three years in a drawer.

Bolivia is different from other countries in South America in that its population of six million is 90% indigenous Indian. It was ten years ago that my daughter met Evo Morales. At the time he was the boss of *CEDIB*...something to do with the *Central (or Coca Growers) Educational Development for Indigenous Bolivians*. Her memory was of a man who talked slowly and talked straight...very much in the North American Indian style. My daughter tells me that the best history of South America is written by Eduardo Galliano.

One notable success for Evo Morales was reported in the latest issue of Zac Goldsmith's *Ecologist*. It concerns not coca but water. Last month saw the end of one of the greatest water battles in history. The peoples of Bolivia successfully reclaimed ownership of their water from the mighty *Bechtel Corporation*. In 1999 *Bechtel* made an arrangement with the Bolivian government to take ownership of the water supply and charge citizens for its use. Within weeks of the takeover *Bechtel* raised water rates by fifty percent and made it illegal to gather rainwater without a permit. The ensuing citizen revolt forced *Bechtel* out of the country. *Bechtel* then sued Bolivia for \$50 million for 'profit losses'. After four years of legal disputes and public pressure the case was dropped. 'This is the first time a major corporation like *Bechtel* has had to back down from a major trade case as the result of global citizen pressure,' said Jim Schultz, executive director of *The Democracy Center* in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

Monday 7th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-08

blog 066/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

I have published more than a hundred articles. As far as *Fourth World Review* is concerned I come in fifth after John Papworth, Leopold Kohr, John Seymour and Kirkpatrick Sale. Many of my pieces are book reviews which suit my way of writing so is a genre I adopt quite often. When I looked in *Books in Print* ten years ago before *Google* was

invented I found that my principal claim to fame was as the translator of a book about the *King of Sweden*. However since then I have got myself an ISBN for my 1989 publication *The Rise & Fall of The Swedish Green Party (1982-1997)*.

Over the weekend I revisited this *magnus opus* about the future of European politics after reading an article entitled *How Big Government has Swallowed the Tory Party* by Fraser Nelson in the 25th February 2005 issue of *The Spectator*. In a chapter on *Democracy and the Money Power* I wrote about pocket boroughs and electoral bribery. Here is an extract from a meeting of the newly established *Money For Old Votes (MOV) Party*.

‘If we are going to bribe people to sell us their vote, let us get on with it and let the people know we will buy their vote. Why beat around the bush talking, talking, talking instead of getting on with it. The question is quite simple. What is the price? Once we know that, we can get on with the job of agreeing who is going to put up the money and how he is going to be paid back! Everybody has their price. So what does it cost to turn a Green Lady into a Blue Meanie? Throw out a scenario. 2801 Liberals to turn and 2437 Greens...[we are considering the Gotland constituency at this point]...A few idealists, but with a budget of a few million pounds, we could offer them five thousand kronor each. That compares with the hundred thousand we have to invest in each work station promised in the days before the New Realism, so looks cheap at the price. We will work on that basis.’

I continued with the arithmetic. ‘One Member of Parliament from a Rotten Borough will cost us five million pounds, allowing for our own fees. With something on the side for the Heavy Mob that’s a working figure of ten million pounds for each rotten borough member of parliament...five thousand votes bought gives ten thousand votes for us...so that means twenty rotten boroughs and we are into parliament...that is a quarter of a billion...no problem there...good...go ahead on that basis.’

Here is how I ended the chapter: ‘Unlikely? Improbable? Never heard of such a thing? Then you have not read history’...leading into the chapter entitled *Investing in Democracy*. There is one other extract I intend to burden this weblog with. It comes in the chapter about *Democracy & Communism*. ‘As a politician in a party created specifically to crush Capitalism, [the Communist’s] target is always to acquire the power to effect structural changes in the distribution of wealth and to shift the distribution of daily rewards from the looter, the moocher and the usurer to the producer. The *British Fabian Socialists* at the turn of the [nineteenth] century introduced the idea of ‘Earner’ and ‘Unearned’ income as helpful labels in this regard. Indeed the Shavian wing always insisted that Socialism was Equal Money.’

All this is by way of a preamble to the implications of *The Spectator* article that in the past two hundred years instead of electoral reform eliminating the corruption of the pocket borough it has extended this corruption to the entire democratic process so that mass elections are now exercises in mass bribery. Here is the reality confronting any political party seeking to win control of the *House of Commons*.

More than half the electorate are dependent upon the government for their guaranteed income and therefore have a vested interest in ever expanding government spending. Leaving on one side subsidy-dependent farmers and untraceable tax credit recipients, 52% of the electorate come from four groups dependent upon the state for their money: 15% are state employees (6.8 million); 11% are out of work and on welfare (4.5 million); 18% are benefit dependent pensioners and 8% are pensioners of independent means. The *Department of Works and Pensions* estimates that two-thirds of pensioners are dependent upon the government for at least half of their income.

This new democratic model was pioneered in Sweden by the ruling *Social Democratic Part*. Fredrik Erixson from the right-wing think tank *Timbro* summed it up when he remarked that ‘Even if Sweden has a change of government at the next election the policies will not change. It will just be new faces.’ Since the new *Conservative Party* leader David Cameron has reached the same conclusion as his Swedish counterpart Fredrik Reinfeldt it is of more than passing interest to British politics to study *The Swedish Model*...an essay that deserves more attention than the sixteen hits it received last month according to the *cesc* website statistics.

In my little local internet café community it is sometimes quite difficult to concentrate wit the banter that is bouncing around. Today everyone creased up about the Buddhist monk who walked into *Pizza Hut* and placed this order. ‘Make me one with everything.’

Wednesday 8th March 2006*Posted: 2006-03-09***blog 067/2006**<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

I was woken up around five o’clock by a rustling in the oven. Since ovens do not normally rustle there had to be some outside agency at work. There was. My houseboat guest was busy trying to remove a bag of bread from beneath the lid of my *lecreuset* placed in the oven to ensure that this very event did not happen. The mouse was unsuccessful. This was no surprise as *Le Creuset* manufactures the finest enamelled cast iron cookware in then world so is mouse-resistant. According to the website *Le Creuset* pots are colourful, versatile, energy efficient, and

have great heat retention. The rest of the food onboard is in plastic containers. *Le Creuset* 1 - Mouse 0. *Tupperware* 7 - Mouse 0.

After dozing off to sleep I awoke again at seven and was in *Jempsons* by eight organising my day which began with the downloading of a job from Sweden at the library. The *NCAB* website job needs to be translated from Swedish to English to provide a base text for the Danish, Norwegian and Finnish translators to work with next week. I promised to have the English text ready by Friday evening so we have the weekend for proof-reading.

I returned to the boat at midday and lit the fire so I could work there all afternoon. At 7.15 pm Heidi picked me up for choir practice in her new car. Afterwards I had the pleasure of her company aboard *Vemara* until 1130 which as unexpected as I thought we were on the verge of breaking up. Now I am not so sure. We now know that we are giving a concert o Saturday 17th June 2006 of *Mozart Magic*. This is going to include the *Flanders & Swann* song *Ill Wind* based on one of the *Mozart Horn Concertos* but arranged for four parts.

Tessa Jowell, the *New Labour* Culture Minister living off the crumbs from Silvio Berlusconi's table has been given a very easy ride so far. But this may change. The urban elite are more nervous than they care to admit because they are all into tax havens and money laundering themselves. Minister Jowell and her tax avoidance expert of a husband are estimated to be worth a few million pounds at the last count...most of it in property. The reality could be much higher. Who knows what they have in offshore trusts and indirectly controlled shareholdings? However there is nothing special about Minister Jowell. If there is one thing that *New Labour* luvvies love it is money. Here is my report on the estimated wealth of the *New Labour* members for Barking, Leicester West, Slough and Stevenage.

Margaret Hodge was left shares in a £60 million steel business by her daddy and is worth an estimated £5 million with a five storey house in the same Islington street as the Blairs. Patricia Hewitt's father used to sit on the board of *Quantas* and is now Australia's top civil servant. She has a home in an affluent square in Camden and an estimated wealth well in excess of a million pounds.

Fiona MacTaggart inherited a fifth of her daddy's six million pound estate, owns property in London and a flat in her constituency ad is estimated to be worth five million. Then there is the luvvies of them all Barbara Follett. She and her husband Ken Follett are reckoned to be worth £15 million with a flat in County Hall, a house in South Africa, a home in Antigua, a flat in Soho and a mansion in Knebworth.

When I stood as the *Referendum Party* for *Oldham West and Royton* in 1997 I had a brief dust-up with my party managers when I drew up an election manifesto that included a pledge to take out only the average UK wage for my own use and put the rest of my parliamentary salary into a lottery for welfare recipients in the constituency. The argument was that this would distract from the *Referendum Party* message...which was true...so I was instructed to withdraw the pledge. Shame! It seemed a good idea at the time...and still is. I wonder when some real old-style socials like George Galloway will take up the idea. It could be an election winner.

You may have wondered about the breakdown of the figure for government handout dependents in yesterday's weblog because the official statistics provide a rather different picture. This is quite interesting. Unemployment in the UK for instance is officially about 5%...half German and French levels. Except it isn't. The figure of 870 000 unemployed and claiming benefit does not include the 2.7 million on incapacity benefit two thirds of whom would be forced to get a job if the Government had its way.

Then there is my figure of 6.8 million state employees...up from six million when *New Labour* came to power in 1997. The government figures leave out university staff, general practitioners and the ever increasing number of jobs generated by government contracts. They also leave out almost 800 000 lone parents and an ever increasing number of carers. These too are included in my figure of 4.5 million out of work and on benefit.

The situation becomes clearer when we look at particular places. In Glasgow, Newcastle and Liverpool for instance a third of the population is on benefit and a third o the public payroll. In places like Cynon Valley, half an hour north of Cardiff capitalism has been virtually squeezed out of the area.

Unemployment is no greater than average but almost 43 percent are on welfare and 35 percent of workers are paid by the government. As Fraser Nelson points out in his *Spectator* article, 'It is against such a background that Conservatives are trying and failing to win back Wales and Scotland. In both state spending is higher than in any country in the developed world save for Sweden and France.'

Thursday 9th March 2006*Posted: 2006-03-13***blog 068/2006**<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

As a townie I know nothing about rats, foxes and chickens. So it was quite an eye-opener for me at the weekend when John Papworth told me that he had lost three of his chickens to foxes...including the pride of the roost - his new cockerel. 'What do you do?' I asked Natalia when we were over at *Purton House* collecting Tempe and some free range eggs. 'We lock them in at night.' Apparently John didn't...but does now. He can see the foxes in the field

on the other side of the garden wall. Country folks tell me that foxes are unusual because they don't kill chickens for food but for pleasure.

Foxes and chickens I knew something about. But rats and chickens were another matter. John's dog Tempe was away all Saturday and I asked John why. 'She's out ratting!' 'Ratting? What's that?' I wished I hadn't asked. Natalia filled me in on the gory details. Every week or so *Purton House* requisitions a tractor to move one of the hen-coops...they are on wheels. Out from underneath swarm hundreds of rats. They set a pack of rat-catching dogs on them...this is ratting. Tempe was being inaugurated into the canine joys of killing rats...for pleasure. Between them the pack finished off 120 rats on that particular Saturday. Tempe slept all day Sunday. In my naivety I wondered whether it mattered if rats ate some chicken feed. 'No, of course not,' Natalie replied. 'The trouble is that they eat the eggs!'

My *Nationwide* card has developed a crack. Rather than be confronted at a crucial moment with a card that would not withdraw money from the wall I went into my local branch to have it replaced. A two-minute job? Nothing is simple anymore. Half an hour later the order for my new card finally reached card-making headquarters...probably in Bangalore. The problem? Once again it was my address. The *Nationwide* database refused to accept my PO Box as a good enough address. Delivering the card to the branch was not a problem. My address was not on their postcode database so I could not get a new card. Jennie was nothing if not persistent however. At last she found that by giving the post office an address she could hack her way into the system. My monthly statements will now no longer come out as P.O. Box 36, Rye TN31 7WP but will be P.O. Box 36, Rye Post Office, Cinque Ports Street, Rye TN31 7AA. Of course if I was laundering money I would have a normal street address.

Jo Kirkham is giving a talk at the *Rye Museum* next Tuesday evening entitled *The Huguenots in Rye*. Jo is a big fan of Connie's illustrations and in particular the pen and ink pictures in *Rye From the Water's Edge* so I put together a CD with the complete series of seventy five pictures so she could make her slides more interesting. The two pictures Jo had particularly asked for were *The London Trader* showing Rye's *Strand Gate* on the occasion of Daniel Defoe's visit to Rye in 1724 and *The Escape* showing Camber Castle in Shakespeare's times.

One of several tragic aspects of Connie's sudden death is that many of the projects we were working on together are now unlikely to come to fruition. On the two Rye books for instance...*Rye From the Water's Edge* and *The Maritime History of Rye*...we had planned a series of *Rye Tales* set in the ancient town through the ages. To enable Connie to draw these tales and place the characters and plots into their proper historic settings we had worked together developing outline plots and inventing our cast of characters. As a result Connie's illustrations give the impression of being illustrations from real stories. This is a big part of their charm...this and the fact that Connie was a stickler for detail and very thorough about her historical research. The working titles of these five *Rye Tales* were Chaucer's Times, Shakespeare's Times, Defoe's Times, Henry James' Times and Modern Times.

I managed to write two weblogs today...between other work...and in the evening finished reading *Enigma* by Robert Harris. Also a set of horoscopes dropped into my e-mail today. I will lower the tone of these weblogs by quoting them over the next few days. But be warned. I labelled them *horrosopes* and questioned whether they may start a new trend of *reality horoscopes* in our daily newspapers...desperately trying anything to stop their plummeting circulation. Here is *Aquarius* (Jan 23 - Feb 22), for instance: 'You have an inventive mind and are inclined to be progressive. You lie a great deal. You make the same mistakes repeatedly because you are stupid. Everyone thinks you are a jerk.'

Anyway these *horrosopes* amused me so I wasted ten minutes formatting them properly and sending them on their way around cyberspace. 'These will be all over Sweden within a week,' I remarked to Tony Payne at *P-Hut* where I was working at the time. Perhaps I should have said '*The States*' because the next day an e-mail came back from Susan May in Jackson, New Hampshire.

Susan's daughter Kristin...a close friend to my daughter during their time at *Cambridge Friends School*...works in a thrift shop and had come across a little book entitled *Sex After 50*. Susan had remarked quick as a flash: 'It's a blank book, isn't it!' Her e-mail continued: 'My horroscope for *Gemini* (May 23 - June 22) went like this: 'You are a quick and intelligent thinker. People like you because you are bisexual. You are inclined to expect too much for too little. This means you are a cheap bastard. Geminis are notorious for thriving on sex.'

Friday 10th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-13

blog 069/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Half of a new billion dollar hedge fund from *Kohlberg Kravis Roberts* will be spent betting on 'market dislocations'. The rest will be pumped into 'stressed' and 'distressed' debt. It was comforting to know that *KKR* expect two thirds of the fund to be gambling on disasters on the other side of the pond. But don't get any ideas. The minimum stake is a cool five million dollars...and you have to give six months notice before pulling out...twice the hedge fund norm.

These hedge funds are the shock troopers of the Anglo-American *New World Order*. They are unleashed whenever some recalcitrant country needs to be taught a lesson. It's good old-fashioned *mafiosa* stuff. Geopolitics and *The Great Game* are every bit as simple as Sir Halford Mackinder portrayed them a century ago...which is why Soviet strategists read Mackinder. The destruction of the *East Asia Tiger Economies* is a good example of how it's done.

At the *Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit* in 1993 American officials began to demand that East Asian economies open up their controlled financial markets to free capital flows...in the interest of 'level playing fields'. Previously the debt-free economies of East Asia had avoided reliance on *IMF* loans or foreign capital, other than direct investment in manufacturing plants, usually as part of a long-term national goal. Now they were told to open their markets to foreign capital flows and short-term foreign lending.

Once capital controls were eased and foreign investment allowed to flow freely in and out, South Korea and the other *Tiger Economies* were awash with a sudden flood of foreign dollars. The result between 1994 and the onset of the attack on the *Thai baht* in May 1997 was the creation of speculative bubbles in luxury real estate, local stock values and other assets. Once the *East Asian Tiger Economies* had begun to open up to foreign capital...but well before they had adequate controls in place over possible abuse...hedge funds went on the attack.

The first target was the weakest economy Thailand. George Soros, armed with a credit line from a group of international banks including *Citigroup* gambled that Thailand would devalue the *baht* and break from its peg to the dollar. By June the *baht* was floating and Thailand was in the arms of the *IMF*...the rottweilers sent in after the hedge funds have softened up their victim. In swift succession the hedge funds and banks hit the Philippines, Indonesia and then South Korea. They pocketed billions as the populations sank into economic chaos.

An early adopter of this approach was Margaret Thatcher. One month after the *Tory Government* was elected in May 1979 her *Chancellor of the Exchequer* Geoffrey Howe started to raise interest rates from 12% to 17% in twelve weeks while the *Bank of England* cut the money supply and removed the *Callaghan Labour Party's* exchange controls. I had sold my house in Hertfordshire and was preparing to buy a house in Cambridge Massachusetts at the time. Overnight the complex paperwork procedures lovingly devised over several years become superfluous. Suddenly no forms were needed. None at all. There was a look of complete disbelief around the bank as it began to sink in. Years of paper shuffling had been a complete and utter waste of time.

Many years later the Thatcher/Howe *Cut 'n Squeeze* approach was adopted by the *IMF* around the world. In England the only winners were *The City of London* and the oil companies. For everyone else it was mayhem. Unemployment doubled to 3 million within 18 months. Instead of capital being invested in rebuilding Britain's rotten industrial base funds flowed out in speculation on real estate in Hong Kong and lucrative (ludicrous?) loans to Latin America.

I spent most of the day at *PC-Hut* working on the English text for the *NCAB* website and getting the Russian, Spanish, Finnish, Danish and Norwegian translators ready for a five-day delivery when they receive the English text next week. In the midst of it all the glad tidings came through from John Papworth that Edward Goldsmith had agreed to setting up the *Edward Goldsmith Institute*. I reminded John of the text I had created for the institute when writing copy for the *Resurgence Group of Institutes*. It went like this.

The political battle between locality and interests transcends any difference between the developed and undeveloped world. Indeed private affluence for the few and public squalor for the many is everywhere both a global and a local phenomenon. There are no adequate theories of locality...the wealth of villagers...and few if any sustainable examples of good town or country living for the whole community...just isolated examples of individual sane humane ecological survival in the midst of a hyper-expansionist madhouse. Without viable alternatives outside interests ride roughshod over local people. The initial aim of the *Edward Goldsmith Institute* is to design theoretical and practical examples for future urban and rural villages and to persuade local communities to bypass governments and authorities in setting up their own local initiatives based on the working principles developed by the institute.

Here is my *Cancer* horrorscope (June 23-July 22). You are sympathetic and understanding to other's problems, which makes you a sucker. You are always putting things off. That is why you will always be on welfare and won't be worth crap. Everyone in prison is a *Cancer*.

Saturday 11th March 2006*Posted: 2006-03-13***blog 070/2006**<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Now that we are well into March it is getting light at six...and this is shifting rapidly and becoming earlier by several minutes each day. *Vemara* is moored on the south bank of *Rock Channel* a few hundred yards downstream from the confluence of the *Brede* and *Tillingham* rivers. The mooring has an *East End* and a *West End* separated by an engineering workshop and the boat-owners' washing facilities. The *West End* is closer to town...about ten minutes by foot and five by boat. There are six 'alongside berths' and twelve 'nose-to berths' in both the *East-* and *West End*. *Vemara* lies east to west like a church in an alongside berth in the *East End* with its pointy end facing

west into the setting sun and the blunt end looking out over the rising sun. A few days from now the sun will rise in the east and shine straight through the cockpit into the cabin. Very magical and megalithic...like living in an Irish barrow.

The most important work of the day was to make sure my English script for NCAB's website went across the German Sea to Stockholm. Target state achieved at 1600 hours. Looks like being a £ 5 000 job with a quarter profit although this is not a simple term and perhaps is better referred to as operating profit. NCAB make *Printed Circuit Boards*...although 'outsources the manufacturing of' would be closer to the truth. Their website tells the world that the PCB market is developing at an explosive pace and that their customers...*Ericsson, Siemens etc*...need NCAB to guide them through the maze. The widgets themselves are made in China of course.

William Engdahl's *A Century of War* finally found its way to my post-box today. As I suspected it is the *LaRouche Conspiracy Theory* without some of the crazier way-out add-ons that turn most people off. One of the quirks about Lyndon LaRouche and his *Economic Intelligence Review* is his love affair with nuclear fusion. Engdahl incorporates this into his analysis by portraying nuclear power as a prime target for the Anglo-American oil-and dollar-controlled *New World Order*. One place this comes out is in his discussion of the *Three Mile Island* nuclear disaster that stopped the nuclear business dead in its tracks just before the *Berlin Wall* came down. Here is William Engdahl.

Unprecedented diplomatic and legal pressures from the *White House* since 1977 had not succeeded in significantly blunting the attraction of nuclear power. But on March 28, 1979, in a town in the centre of Pennsylvania, a bizarre event occurred which was then portrayed to the world press in fictitious terms as though it were a Hollywood movie script or a remake of Orson Welles' 1938 *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast. Unit 2 of the *Three Mile Island* nuclear power reactor complex in Harrisburg underwent an improbable sequence of 'accidents'.

Later investigation revealed that critical valves had been manually closed before the event preventing emergency cooling water from entering the reactor's steam generator system. Within 15 seconds emergency back-up systems had brought the nuclear fission process to a stop. But a plant operator then intervened to shut off cooling water into the reactor core. In a word - sabotage. Engdahl continues.

On August 3, 1979 in its official report on the event the *US Nuclear Regulatory Commission* posed sabotage or criminal negligence as one of six possible causes for the *Three Mile Island* event. But even after eliminating the other five possible causes the government refused to consider the possibility of sabotage seriously. News to the world's media during the Harrisburg drama was strictly controlled by the *White House Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)*. Only suitably FEMA screened government or nuclear plant officials were allowed near the press.

The appearance of *FEMA* in a cameo role is intriguing as they were centre stage thirty years later when *Hurricane Katrina* destroyed New Orleans. According to Engdahl the blueprint for *FEMA* came from the *Trilateral Commission*...another *LaRoucherian* bogey-man. Engdahl claims that *FEMA* was under the direction of Zbigniew Brzezinski...another *LaRoucherian* bad guy. *The World of Lyndon LaRouche* is chock-full with good guys and bad guys with dupes and fellow travellers thrown in for good measure.

Apparently *FEMA* ordered the evacuation of the surrounding population despite there being no indication of radiation danger and refused to brief the media for days thereby permitting panic stories to fill the headlines. Curiously the agency went into operation on March 27 five days before its stated date of operation...and the day before the *Three Mile Island* incident. Mind you at the time I had quite a different conspiracy theory. *Hollywood* was my prime suspect because *The China Syndrome* starring Jane Fonda went on general release in the *States* the same month as Harrisburg...a little too much of a coincidence.

Now for today's horoscopes. *Pisces* (Feb 23 - Mar 22): You are a pioneer type and think most people are dickheads. You are quick to reprimand, impatient and full of advice. You do nothing but piss off everyone you come in contact with. You are a prick. *Aries* (Mar 23 - Apr 22): You have a wild imagination and often think you are being followed by the *FBI* or *CIA*. You have minor influence on your friends and people resent you for flaunting your power. You lack confidence and are a general dip-shit.

Sunday 12th March 2006*Posted: 2006-03-15***blog 071/2006**<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

It has been bitterly cold these past few days but the cherry blossom is coming out along the Old Winchelsea Road and the daffodils are just a day or two away waiting for the wind to die down and go round to the south-west. There was some urgent housekeeping on the agenda for the day...including a trolley run from Sea Cruisers my local coal merchant with another 25kgs sack of *Maxibrite* to keep me warm in the evenings for another week or so.

Like everybody else...I dream. Some I forget and some I don't. I have no idea of the proportions of each of course. The dreams I remember come in two distinct types. There are the Freudian-Jungian ones replete with archetypes and jumbled imagery. I think I can safely assume that these well up from the unconscious and are pretty well covered by

Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. I pay little attention to these...or about as much as I do to horoscopes. The other type are much more interesting.

These Type B dreams are much more vivid. I think of them as transmissions received by my superconscious. They are of quite a different quality to the Type A unconscious dreams...and they are a lot less frequent. Anyway I was woken up by one of these superconscious dreams this morning. There was a gentleman...and I would recognise him anywhere if I saw him again in waking life. He was standing over me and saying: 'I am an aristocrat from Luxembourg. I have just sold *Hrip Farm*.' I understood immediately, as one does with this sort of dream, that the *Hrip Farm* referred to the excerpts from the Finnish *Kalevala* that Connie incorporated into *The Private Papers of Crocodile Uppsala*. My response? A surge of joy... 'Oh I am so glad it really exists!' Make of this what you will.

Yesterday morning at *Schevingen Detention Centre* in The Hague, Slobodan Milosevic was found dead in his cell. Shortly afterwards a letter written by Milosevic on Friday conveniently arrived at the Soviet Ambassador's residence claiming that traces of strong drugs had been found in his blood...drugs normally used to treat leprosy and tuberculosis. The timing suggests disinformation. The newspapers will have a field day dragging out the usual suspects...SAS units dispatched by *MI5*, *Mossad*...always *Mossad* who clearly enjoy being regarded as thugs and killers...the French Stupidity Services and so on. The background however is rather more interesting. The *Balkan Wars* of the 1990s were complex in origin and execution. So there are an awful lot of people who were anxious to ensure that Milosevic never testified.

The long version of the *Balkan War Sagas* begins with the *Berlin-Baghdad Railway* and the Kaiser War of 1914-18 but we will fast-forward to 1990 when the *US Congress* passed the *Foreign Operations Appropriations Act* that instructed Yugoslavia's six republics to declare independence within six months or lose all *US* support. The Americans followed this up by sending in the hedge funds to prepare the ground for the IMF rottweilers and nasty operators like the *National Endowment for Democoray (NED)*...a new kid on the block for which please read 'C' for 'N', 'I' for 'E', and 'A' for 'D'...to destabilize by channelling funds into extreme nationalist or former fascist organizations. Slobodan Milosevic promptly signed his own death warrant by organizing a new *Yugoslavian Communist Party* dedicated to preventing the break-up of the federation. He never stood a cat in hell's chance.

By the mid-1990s all sides in the destabilized Yugoslavia were guilty of atrocities...*Bosnian Muslims*, *Croatian Catholics* and *Serb Orthodox Christians*. But the western media concentrated on Milosevic because he commanded a well-defended enclave and rejected *IMF* final solutions, *NATO* storm-troopers and American oil companies controlling Caspian pipelines. In 1995 the Dayton accord brought an end to the war in Bosnia when peace in the region was needed to develop oil routes from the Caspian into Europe...but it was a 'peace' on Washington's terms...such as extending *NATO* eastward into Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Dodgy dossiers had not been invented back in the 1990s. There were other ways. At Rambouillet in 1999 for instance an *Appendix B* was cobbled together ordering Milosevic to allow *NATO* troops to occupy Kosovo. He refused. The *Pentagon* started carpet bombing the Serbs back to the Stone Age (for humanitarian reasons)...ignoring international laws etc. And Slobodan Milosevic became the latest *US* bogey-man...a new 'Adolf Hitler'. No doubt about it. An awful lot of people were anxious to ensure that Milosevic never testified. Now for some more horrorscopes.

Taurus (Apr 23 - May 22): 'You are practical and persistent. You have a dogged determination and work like hell. Most people think you are stubborn and bull-headed. You are nothing but a goddamned communist!' *Scorpio* (Oct 23 - Nov 22): 'You are the worst of the lot. You are shrewd in business and cannot be trusted. You shall achieve the pinnacle of success because of your total lack of ethics. You are the perfect son-of-a-bitch. Most Scorpions are murdered.' *Sagittarius* (Nov 23 - Dec 22): 'You are optimistic and enthusiastic. You have a reckless tendency to rely on your luck since you have no talent. The majority of Sagittarians are drunks. You are a worthless piece of crap.' *Capricorn* (Dec 23 - Jan 22): 'You are conservative and afraid of taking risks. You are basically a chicken crap. There has never been a Capricorn of any importance. You should kill yourself.' Have a nice day.

Monday 13th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-17

blog 072/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Hrip Farm enters *The Private Papers of Crocodile Uppsala* in *Book Eleven Chapter 174* but we will pick up the tale a few chapters earlier. Aslak is a fulmar...*fulmarus glacialis*...with family around the *Arctic Circle*. Once he spoke of dinosaurs as his ancestors. But for Aslak modern fulmar history starts a quarter of a millennium ago with small fulmar settlements on Jan Mayen, on Grímsey off Iceland and on the islands of St Kilda to the west of the Outer Hebrides. Aslak is descended from the Grímsey Fulmars.

In 1978 the Grímsey Fulmars celebrated the centenary of the family's first successful nesting on Foula, outermost of the *Shetland Islands*. By 1900 Aslak's family were breeding along the North Scottish coast. By the 1920s they were being sighted all along the east coast of England as far south as the *Humber Estuary* and along the north coast of Ireland in Derry and Donegal. By the end of the 1940s fulmars were breeding on the northern shores of *East Anglia*

around the whole of the coast of Ireland and on the north coast of Cornwall and Devon in the *Bristol Channel*. By the beginning of the 1950s the only stretch of these offshore islands unfamiliar with the sight of fulmars breeding was the coastline 150 miles either side of Rye...to Brixham in the west and to Boston in the north.

In the *Landnámabók* there is a story about a Norwegian called Grímur who went to Iceland looking for land. He arrived in late summer and settled temporarily on Grímsey in Steingrímsfjörður in the north. Aslak was there. In the autumn Grímur went fishing...his young son Thórir lying safely tucked into a sealskin bag fastened at the neck in the prow of the boat. Suddenly Grímur hooked a merman, and when he had hauled him to the surface, Grímur asked about their futures. 'Where in Iceland should we settle?'



The merman replied that there was little point in making prophecies about Grímur...implying that he had not long to live...but the boy in the sealskin bag would settle and claim land at the spot where Grímur's mare, Skölm, lay down under her load.

Not another word could Grímur get out of the merman but as in all good sagas it all went as the fates decreed. Eventually Sel-Thórir settled at Raudamelur Ytri...Outer

Red Hill...where the modern highway to Snaefellsnes swings westwards into the peninsular.

Not so long ago I overheard Aslak telling Marley some more of the story. When Sel-Thórir was old and blind he went out one evening and saw a huge evil-looking man come rowing into Kaldárós...*Cold River Estuary*...in an iron boat. The man walked up to a farm called *Hrip* and started digging at the door of the sheep-shed. There was a volcanic eruption there that night and from here runs the lava field of Borgarhraun. Where the farm had stood there is now a crater. I got the impression that Aslak hoped Marley could throw some light on the identity of the man by the sheep-shed. But he's a dark sheep that one. And so to the last of our horoscopes.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22): You consider yourself a born leader. Others think you are an idiot. Most Leo's are bullies. You are vain and cannot tolerate criticism. Your arrogance is disgusting. Leo people are thieving bastards. *Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22):* You are the logical type and hate disorder. Your shit-picking attitude is sickening to your friends and co-workers. You are cold and unemotional and often fall asleep while doing it. Virgo's make good bus drivers and pimps. *Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22):* You are the artistic type and have a difficult time dealing with reality. If you are a male you are probably queer. Chances are employment and monetary gain are nil. Most Libra women are slappers and get VD.

Tuesday 14th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-17

blog 073/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

It is the fashion nowadays of many ladies to ignore their husbands' pecuniary affairs; they profess ignorance of money matters, and encourage themselves in the idea that their wishes at least must be gratified...with the rest they have nothing to do. Now the affectations of this is bad enough, but nothing can be worse than the actual practice...many a ruined house, many a bankruptcy and insolvency springs out of it...many a domestic circle is broken up and the pride which caused the ruin is humbled to dust as a reward. Tessa Jowell's mortgage is four hundred thousand pounds. But the Blairs' property loans are closer to four million pounds. Oh...and Mrs Beaton wrote most of this paragraph in 1857...*Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*.

This housing bubble is beginning to make more and more people nervous...on both sides of the loan agreements. The *Alliance & Leicester* have started running one of those thermometers you see outside city churches when they are trying to raise money for a new roof. But this shows rising interest rates...not the mortgage rates which would have been more useful but the *Bank of England's* base rates which is a few percentage points lower.

At present with base rates between four and five percent *Alliance & Leicester* reckons the country is between fighting fit and comfortable. But at six percent the financial health of householders in this sceptered isle turns poorly and by seven percent they are registering high fever. The health of the nation goes critical when base rates reach eight percent. Bear this in mind as you read the financial pages in the daily newspapers.

But there are glimmers of good news amidst the gloom. One of the banking industry's greatest secrets is that many of the fees they charge their long-suffering customers are illegal. A while ago the *Office of Fair Trading* ruled that attempts by the banks to cash in on late payment penalties is illegal.

Now the Courts have backed this up by threatening to send in the bailiffs to remove goods to the value of two thousand pounds from a branch of *Lloyds TSB*. The hero of the story is Brian Mullen, an accountant who ran up an unauthorised overdraft as a student but then took the bank to court arguing that the charges constituted an unfair penalty rather than a reflection of the bank's costs.

Lloyds failed to show up at court in Reddish near Manchester so the court granted a warrant giving bailiffs power to seize bank assets to the value of the outstanding debt. *Lloyds* blamed their failure to contest the action of an 'internal error'. Like what? Fraudulently claiming money? Big error.

On my walk into town every morning I often pass straggling groups of young men and women on their way towards Rye Harbour and its industrial estate. For some reason Rye is now a centre for furniture workshops...particularly low-grade pine furniture...and there are workshops dotted all over the place. These young people were clearly off to work...with a smile and a song...and were all white. Who are they?

A report was published recently entitled *Employers' Use of Migrant Labour*. Reports in the tabloids concentrated on the Eastern Europeans and my numbers are taken from *The Times*. Unfortunately the diagram accompanying the article did not add up so these are my adjusted figures...and could be wrong.

Top of the list come the Poles with 200 000. Next are the Lithuanians at 40 000 and the Slovaks at 35 000. Despite all the reports about Estonian Mafiosi and their prostitute rings, Estonians and Slovenians are in the relegation zone with just 5 000 registered workers arriving in the UK since May 2004. Above them come the Latvians, Czechs and Hungarians at 20 000 each making a grand total of 245 000. What are they all doing? Here are the top ten occupations: Factory 36%; Catering 10%; Warehouse 9%; Packing 9%; Cleaning 8%; Farming 7%; Waiters 7%; Maids 5%; Care Work 5% and Retail 4%.

I have a job with *Cultura* running through this week so am on call coordinating the Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Spanish and Russian translators and liaising with the client by text, phone and e-mail. I registered several dozen messages in and out during the course of the day making it difficult to settle down to anything else.

However I did get an e-mail off to John Papworth about the September conference. I have been pushing to keep the focus on the *Real Communities Charter* and was concerned that John was looking to give equal billing to the *Real Nations Charter*. But it seems I was worrying unnecessarily.

In particular I am anxious that *Any Real Questions* concentrates on the *Real Communities Charter* side of our concerns rather than going for the global concerns of our *Real Nations Charter*. I want to see Local Governance as the principal focus of this year's *radcon* and the setting up of the *Edward Goldsmith Institute* as the jewel in the crown of the *Press Release* following the *Final Plenary*.

I am not quite clear how to bring in Dele Oguntimoju's concerns but his thinking is much broader than the structure of Nigeria's disunion so I am hoping that he might welcome the opportunity to talk about *Real Communities Charter* issues from a Nigerian perspective. Besides the principal of cantonisation and 'managing power' is something that needs to be developed as much at the local as the international level.

So we may be able to persuade Dele to give this some thought and prepare a paper that brings Leopold Kohr's relative size and cantonisation principles on nation states down to a village scale? *The Breakdown of Local Government*.

Wednesday 15th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-18

blog 074/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

A few weeks ago I received a computer generated demand threatening to knee-cap me if I didn't cough up £142. The alleged reason was money owing to *British Telecommunications* by *William Franklin & Sons Limited*. As the demand had been sent to the company's registered address at *Landgate Chambers* in Rye...a neat trick this...I dealt with it straight away. But I had a problem. The last time *ME* & *BT* were in business was two years ago and the only contact since then was six months after I closed down my Rye office when I asked *BT* to make sure they had switched off all the phones as I had been told that a *BT* answering machine was accepting calls on the old numbers.

So I wrote to *BT*...not to *Sue, Grabbit & Run*...explained all this and settled down for a twelve month siege. Imagine my amazement when today I received a letter letting me know the debt was cancelled and the rottweilers chained. I will frame the letter...up on the wall in my next office. But after the euphoria faded I wondered whether my version of events was actually correct...which got me thinking of Tony Blair...not something I do too often.

I used to believe that at the moment of saying anything our *Prime Minister* thought what he said was true. But my favourite journalist Matthew Parris has moved a step ahead of me. He now believes that Anthony Charles Lynton Blair is 'an out-and-out rascal, terminally untrustworthy and close to being unhinged.' It gets worse - Matthew Parris again. 'I said from the start that there was something wrong in his head and each passing year convinces me more strongly that this man is a pathological confidence-trickster. To the extent that he ever believes what he says

he is delusional. To the extent that he does not he is an actor whose first invention - himself - has been his only interesting role.' Tony Blair's minders try to avoid encounters with searching interviewers...preferring the photo opportunities... but that wily old Yorkshireman Michael Parkinson got him.

Here is Blair's God exchange about sending our boys to death in Iraq: 'That decision had to be taken and has to be lived with and in the end there is a judgement that well I think if you have faith about these things then you realise that judgement is made by other people'...'by other people if you believe in God its made by God as well and that judgement in the end has to be you know you have to do the right thing according to your conscience.' God help us all! I think I'll send *Our Great Leader* a copy of *Shaw's St Joan* and suggest he read the *Grand Inquisitor's* speech.

I got to know Dr Aidan Rankin quite well a few years back when he was lecturing on *Government* at the *London School of Economics*. I reviewed favourably his book on political correctness and worked with him on the committee of the *London Academic Inn* for a few years. One of my many unnoticed little internet pieces is a questionnaire on *political correctness* on the *cesc website*. *The Spectator* should have offered Aidan and I a pot of gold for the rights to publish it but now they have lost their chance and it will go out to the world hidden away in the corner of an obscure little thousand word a day weblog by the unknown political commentator William Shepherd.

My *PC Questionnaire* is based on a hundred one-liners in Aidan's *Politics of The Forked Tongue* and asks the reader to rate them. After spending a few days putting the thing together I decided I was an expert on the subject. Hence my curiosity when the tabloids recycled the *Baa Baa Black Sheep* last week. They all had the story...the *Sun*, the *Mail*, the *Express*, the *Mirror* and the *Times*. It was the same story as twenty years ago. It was wrong then...and I suspected it was wrong now. So I checked it out. I was right. It was humbug...but it made a good story, the gist of it being that a politically correct administrator had commanded the removal of all racist references from *Baa Baa Black Sheep*.

Our intrepid *Fourth Estate* clearly never stepped outside the pub. Had they gone to the bother of talking to the teachers at the centre of this *PC* outbreak they might have come away with a different point of view because it turns out that we are talking about an *Action Rhyme*. To turn a nursery rhyme into an action rhyme the children replace the word *black* with a variety of other descriptive words dancing around the room singing about happy sheep and sad sheep, bouncing, hopping and jumping sheep...as well as black, white, blue and even pink sheep. The children love this sort of wordplay which encourages them to extend their vocabulary and enjoy words.

The wind went round to the west during the night so it was much warmer. Often this means rain but not today. A beautiful day. Blue sky. Sun shining. I returned to the boat in early afternoon by way of *Rye Harbour* along the old tramway through fields of sheep past *Castle Waters*. Today there were only ducks and swans on display...normally there are rather more exotic species. I picked a few daffodils and put them in a vase on my cabin table. Next time I walk to *Castle Waters* I expect it to be a blaze of colour.

Ryesingers practice in the evening. After last week's rehearsal I was a little disappointed as the pieces that Lesley Brownbill had chosen for our *Mozart Magic Concert* on 17th June seemed rather lightweight. *Flanders & Swann's Ill Wind* is fine in its place but I prefer the *Mozart Requiem* and his *Magic Flute*. So today was good news as we spent the two-hour rehearsal note-bashing *Lachrymosa*...and *Dies Irae*.

Thursday 16th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-18

blog 075/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

On 15th September 2004 I set myself the task of doing an Eric Blair by living at the bottom of the social heap for twelve months. Out of the experience will come the best-selling *Diary of A Scrounger*...and have a well-thumbed copy of George Orwell's *Down & Out in Paris & London* as my style guide...that and Thoreau's *Walden*. I am now wondering how reliable my account will be when it is published as things are deteriorating fast judging by a recently published report from the *House of Commons Select Committee on Work & Pensions*.

While on *Job Seeker Allowance* I had to travel to *St. Leonard's-on-Sea* every fortnight to sign on. In the beginning I got my train fare reimbursed. But halfway through my *term of vagrancy* this was stopped...a *de facto* pay cut of five percent. But this it seems is nothing compared to the welfare recipients in *Kirkby Stephen* in Cumbria who have to make a 90-mile round trip to Carlisle every two weeks to collect their entitlement to £56 per week.

However the report's most damning condemnation was reserved for outsourcing of telephone answering to call centres. Here are two of the harrowing stories from the report's small print. A woman went to a *Jobcentre* to make a claim for *Job Seekers Allowance* and was told to apply by telephone. She returned some days later to complain that she could not get through but was turned away again and told to 'keep on trying'. She did.

After ten days she ran out of money and went back to the *Job Centre* cap-in-hand and at her wit's end to beg for a *Crisis Loan* to keep her going until she had spoken to the *Job Centre*. 'No problem, Madam. You can make your application at the phones there in the corner!' Franz Kafka was born before his time. Another woman whose husband had left her and their two children tried for a week to get through to a *Call Centre* to make a claim for

income support. When her money had run out she went 'stressed and anxious' to the *Citizens Advice Bureau* for help. Their advisers ain't seen nothing yet.

This depressing report from the *House of Communities* got me thinking about poor *Lord Browne of Madingley* of the *British Petroleum*...formerly known to its fellow seven sisters as the *Anglo-Persian Oil Company*. His pay was only £3.3 million in 2005...down £ 453 000 from 2004 because of disasters like the *Texas City Refinery Explosion* and the near sinking of the *Thunder Horse Oil Platform*. It's enough to make him join *Goldman Sachs* who have just reported the highest quarterly revenue and profit figures ever for a *Wall Street Bank*...equivalent to ten billion dollars of income a year...a fifth of it from insider trading - or equities trading as they like to call it on Threadneedle Street.

A study by the *Danish UNIEF Committee* showed that in 1979 a net sum of \$4 billion flowed from the rich *North* to the *South*. That flow was reversed in 1983 when the developing world sent \$6 billion to the industrialised *North*. Since then the amount has risen to £30 billion a year. But if the transfer of resources due to falling raw material prices throughout the 1980s is taken into account the transfer of capital from the under-developed countries to the over-developed countries is closer to \$60 billion a year...and that is before counting capital flight and black money.

This study by Hans Rasmussen pointed out that since the early 1980s there has been a wealth transfer from the capital-starved *Third World* primarily into financing of deficits in the United States and to a lesser degree Britain. Rasmussen estimated that during the 1980s the developing sector transferred a total of \$400 billion into the United States alone. This allowed the *Reagan administration* to finance the largest peacetime deficits in world history whilst claiming credit for the world's longest peacetime recovery. Put another way the *Third World* defeated Communism and destroyed *The Evil Empire*. Even Karl Marx would have been struck by the irony.

My friend Jennie Bayntun has two grown-up children. Her daughter Claire spent her formative years at *Benenden School* just across the county line from us here in Rye and is now living in London and training as a doctor. Jennie's son Martin meanwhile is doing entrepreneurial things with property development all over Europe. But before setting out on his own Martin worked as a whiz-kid in the *City of London*. He was recommended for his job as a high-flyer by his university tutor Patrick Minford.

Patrick Minford was in the news last week after recommending a simpler tax system. He calculated that anyone on £30 000 a year pays half their salary in tax. For every £1000 earned £314 goes on *Income Tax* and *National Insurance* contributions and £123 on indirect taxes like value added tax and duties on fuel & alcohol. Margrit Kennedy reckons it's worse than this because prices include a usury surcharge. This could be eliminated if money were not issued as debt. The higher the capital element in a product's cost the higher the usury in the price.

Christopher Strangeways is standing as a candidate for the *Rye Town Council*. Opposing him for the only place up for grabs this year is Jessica Neame, the 24-year old *Mayoress of Rye*. It should be no-contest....but it'll be close. Christopher runs the *Rother Environmental Group* and was responsible for getting *Rye Farmer's Market* set up. Next year will be the big push though when all sixteen places on *Rye Town Council* come up. Plotting has begun.

Friday 17th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-18

blog 076/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

It was another bitterly cold day and the cold weather is set to last through the weekend. The wind went back round to east on Wednesday night. In its first *Greenhouse Gas Bulletin* the *United Nations World Meteorology Organisation* is warning that greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have reached record highs and are still climbing. Carbon dioxide was half a percent higher in 2004 than in 2003. But the agency seemed to be concerned about methane which has risen dramatically over the past two centuries. But for me this was just another typical day.

Up with the sun before seven. To town at eight to warm up in *Jempson's Coffee House*. To *Rye Public Library* at 0930 for an hour of free computer time and internet access. Then to *PC Hut* for the rest of the working day. Back to the boat by six. Light the fire. Prepare my evening meal. Read by candlelight. Bed at 2200. The only deviation from the norm was fire-lighting by kindling from *Rye DIY* for £2.15. Aah...the joy of smoke-free fire-lighting...and a non-carcinogenic environment from six to half past six each evening. The wooden window frames I saw and chop up seem to be impregnated with something nasty...quite apart from the lead-based white paint sending me ga-ga.

We live in a *Golden Age* so do not mock my typical day. During the 1990s I worked closely with David Neame. A year ago David was diagnosed with *Prostate Cancer*. Every year thirty thousand men in Britain develop the illness and a third of them die. David is very thin and gaunt and no longer comes into Rye. This week he started on yet another round of chemotherapy. The doctors give him three years to live. What he would not give for my typical day!

It is hard to know what to think about cancer and the billions of pounds poured into cancer research. The epidemiology studies seem a complete waste of time and money. How many times can you run statistics through a computer and write about the results? Commercial research by the big drug companies is skewed because of the

need to end up with a pill or an injection. There is also the worrying thought that chemotherapy and radiotherapy may be implanting more tumours than they cure. But alternative medicine doesn't seem to work. So what do you do when you are told you have cancer? And what advice do you give when someone near and dear to you gets cancer?

Recent research at the *University of California* has found that chillies contain the substance *capsaicin* which triggers human prostate cancer cells to undergo programmed cell death in culture...as well as slowing the development of prostate tumours formed by those human cell lines grown in mouse models. This offers up the hope that *capsaicin* can be used in drugs targeting prostate cancers. But this sort of announcement from the *Cancer Business* hits the newspapers several times a month. How should we react? Chris Hiley, head of policy and research at Britain's *Prostate Cancer Charity* for instance while welcoming the report remarked that the high intake of chillies has been linked with stomach cancers in the populations of India and Mexico. There go the epidemiologists again.

New chemicals discovered on the laboratory bench have around a 1 in 10 000 chance of making it onto the pharmacy shelves...and only then at a cost of well over half a billion pounds. Commercial clinical development is in three stages once it reaches beyond mice and monkeys to people.

In *Phase One* the company developing the drug tries the new product on a dozen or so healthy volunteers. This stage is a million pound gamble and 90% fail to make it through to *Phase Two* where hundreds of human guinea pigs are brought in for testing. Failure rates are relatively low in *Phase Two* with three out of four new drugs making it through to the final phase. But *Phase Two* does not come cheap...allow ten million pounds. And so to the distribution testing phase and more failed products. Industry in general expects only one in fifty product ideas to make it through *R & D* to market. Pretty lousy odds...but not bad compared with the *Drug Companies*.

This week reports have been dribbling in about a drug called *Parexel* which has gone disastrously wrong during *Phase One* testing. Monoclonal antibodies (MCABs) were discovered at *Cambridge University* in the 1970s and won *Nobel prizes* in 1984 for César Milstein and George Köhler. MCABs play merry hell with the immune system. So the theory was that they could cure leukaemia...once 'we' learned how to control them.

So in 2000 a group of specialist immunobiologists from the *University of Würzburg* set up a company called *TeGenero* to bring the *Super MAB* drug *TGN 1412* to market. They raised six million pounds of venture capital in 2002 from the American investment bank *Bear Stearns* and from *HBM Bioventures* founded by Henri Meier, a former *Finance Director* at *Roche Holdings*. Everything looked hunky-dory...until this week. Completely unexpectedly the immune systems of the dozen *Phase One* volunteers started to go crazy. They are not expected to live. Suddenly getting £2000 to take part in the clinical studies no longer seems such a good deal.

I was on call at *PC Hut* all day on *Job 631*. There was a slight hiccup in mid-afternoon when the client discovered 200 lost English words in her bottom drawer. But otherwise everything went smoothly and I will be invoicing the 25% upfront part of our fee on Monday morning once we know whether or not we are doing the Russian website.

Saturday 18th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-20

blog 077/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Another typical day but devoted to *web logging*. Three were posted...equalling my record. A slight aberration at the end of the day when I went across to *The Ship* to have a pint of *Guinness* with Tony Payne...and enjoy an intelligent conversation about life the universe and women. Back at the boat I finished *Wycliffe and The Last Rites* by W.J. Burley...and went to sleep happy after getting through a bottle of *Valencia*...£ 3.29 for eleven and a half percent. The weather is back to normal after eight unusually mild winters. The 30-year average for March is 4.7°C. This year it is presently running at 2.4°C. The 8-year average from 1998 to 2005 was 6.1°C. So it is cold...but not unreasonably so...even though the English countryside seems frozen at the moment.

Along the lanes the glossy yellow stars of lesser *celandines* should be sparkling in the ditches holding their faces up to the sun but there is no sign of them. In the hedges one would have expected to see the first delicate white flowers of *cherry plum* with a sprinkling of green leaves on the twigs around them. But with the exception of a cherry tree by the side of the main Rye to Winchelsea road in the grounds of a private house next to the *River Haven Hotel* there is no sign of *cherry blossom*. As for the pure white *blackthorn* flowers the first of those should be out by the end of March but there seems little hope of that. A few *sweet violets* with their subtle fragrance were out before the recent cold spell struck but they have faded away.

Apparently *primroses* came out last month in *Devon* and *Cornwall* but I saw no sign of them in *Wales* despite unseasonably warm weather throughout my two and a half month stay. Nor is there any sign of them even now here in the *Garden Of England*. Normally I would have expected them on the shortcut across *The Ridge* to *Conquest Hospital* and St Leonard's several weeks ago. In milder springs the first white pink-tinged blossoms of the *wood anemone* would have been out too. Their fern-like leaves have already pushed up through the woodland floor but like the first shoots of *bluebells* dotted around them they have stopped growing.

Warmer days and downfalls of rain are expected next weekend and if they come the flowers and trees will quickly respond. In a fortnight we may already have forgotten that we had a chilly start to the spring this year...and the papers will be launching yet more stories about global warming. Global warming is the theory that increased levels of carbon dioxide and certain other gases are causing an increase in the average temperature of the earth's atmosphere because of the *greenhouse effect*.

Imagine the composition of the earth's atmosphere as a 100 yard football field. Most of the atmosphere is *nitrogen* so starting from the goal line this will get you to the seventy-eight yard line. Nearly all of what is left is *oxygen* which takes you to the ninety-nine yard line. Most of what remains after that is the inert gas *argon* which brings you to within three and a half inches of the goal line. That's pretty much the thickness of the chalk stripe. How much of the remaining three inches is *carbon dioxide*? One inch. That's how much *CO₂* we have in our atmosphere. One inch in a hundred yard football field. And do you know how much it has increased on our football field in the last 50 years? Three eighths of an inch...less than the thickness of a pencil.

Carbon dioxide is used by plants to photosynthesise. The plants take in the gas via small openings on the surface of their leaves called *stomata* that can open and close in response to atmospheric conditions and the plant needs. When the *stomata* are open some water is lost in a process called plant transpiration...plants sweat. Laboratory experiments have shown plants become more efficient in the presence of greater levels of carbon dioxide so the *stomata* do not open as often or for as long. More carbon dioxide means less transpiration which means more water stays in the soil.

It seems to be a well-known fact that the flow of many rivers around the world is increasing even though rainfall has changed very little in the last few decades. Aha...you have got there before me. Scientists and propagandists for global warming have their pseudo-scientific link between carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and rising sea levels. More water in the soil means more runs off into rivers which explains the increase in river flow and must lead in the fullness of time...and with the right parameters in the computer models...to the inundation of low-lying cities like New Orleans within all our lifetimes.

But sea levels are not rising...the last time I looked at the data a year or so ago there was no discernible shift over the past few decades. Of course sea levels move around. There was a disaster in Queensland over the weekend with sea levels changing by up to twelve feet for instance. And have you heard of tides?

My sea level goes up and down like a yo-yo twice a day and the waters of the *North Atlantic Ocean* swirl around like water in a cooking basin. And do you remember in the days before the invention of global warming all the concern about the increasing run-off all over the world as hills were stripped of their trees and intensive agriculture decimated the natural vegetation cover. Increased run-off? Of course. But caused by plants getting fitter and sweating less in their extra fraction of an inch of carbon dioxide. Pull the other one. What complete and utter baloney.

Sunday 19th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-21

blog 078/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

I am quite skilled at optimising my consumption of coal...the most personal warmth for the least burning. This would be easy if I spent 6pm to 8am on the boat each day. But I sometimes want to work at three o'clock in the morning...and some days I want to return to the boat at midday. Fuel disappears quickly or slowly depending on whether the bottom of the stove is open or closed...a rather crude regulatory device. Stoke up at 10pm and the stove is out by morning. But wake up at 3am and you can stoke up the fire and keep it going.



Today I did just that...although this meant clambering out onto the poop deck in the freezing cold in my pyjamas to tip the ashes from the ash pan into the river. This is the first time I have bothered to do this...so of course it was all in vain.

In Llangolman the ashes from the wood-burning stove were recycled and used in the composting toilet so it felt

rather extravagant to send them out to sea. But short of putting them in an envelope and posting them off to my daughter there was little else I could do.

One of the reasons I go to *Jempsons Coffee House* in the mornings is because a cup of coffee and a desk costs only 30p more than a daily newspaper which is offered free to customers. So on a bad day I might get through *The Times*, *Mail*, *Mirror* and *Express* by the time I leave for my one-hour library session. This week they all had the same photo of Prince Charles in the Royal Box watching the *Cheltenham Gold Cup*. And they were all agog at the presence in the box of Prince William's girlfriend Kate Middleton. Here is the picture...that's her on the far right.

Every bit as interesting to me was seeing Zac Goldsmith up there next to our future king. The only mention I saw of this interesting fact was on the back page of the *Sunday Times*. None of the other papers thought it worth mentioning.

My day started on message with a swim and a shower at *Rye Sports Centre* and I was still on plan by mid-morning which meant doing some shopping a *Budgens* when they opened at ten and then putting two 25kgs sacks of coal on the boat when *Sea Cruisers* opened for two hours at eleven. But then I got a text message from Jennie Bayntun to let me know she was back from her travels and would love to see me. So much for my planned quiet afternoon on the boat reading *The Sunday Times* from cover to cover, section to section, glossy magazine to celebrity chatter.

I hadn't seen Jennie for three weeks and in that time she had spent a week in New York, sold her house in Rye, bought another in St Leonard's, changed her mind, backed out and bought another one across town...and arranged the delivery of a new kiln for her glass-making. I made myself useful unpacking the kiln and was rewarded with lunch. Jennie's daughter Claire is doing her medical training at *St. George's Hospital* in London. Their *Professor of Cancer* Angus Dalgleish...a world expert on immunology...was in the papers commenting on the *Parexel Disaster* mentioned in my Friday weblog.

Dalgleish reckoned that the *Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)* should have consulted a specialist before approving the study. 'I can't understand it. They are normally super-cautious. I would have told the people doing this trial not to do it because the dangers were so great,' he said. Apparently the data that should have raised the alarm were presented at a meeting of the *American Society of Clinical Oncology* last May. An engineered antibody developed by a team at America's *National Cancer Institute* and using the same pathway as *TGN 1412* had produced severe side effects in about half of a group of patients dying of cancer.

Jennie Bayntun has taken to calling me Ingrid's ex-husband since I introduced her in my Monday 16th January weblog as having once run a restaurant with her ex-husband Derek. Since Ingrid is now Dr Ingrid Lundell and one of Sweden's leading microbiologists I have decided that I rather like it.

Monday 20th March 2006*Posted: 2006-03-21***blog 079/2006**<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Here is a tale of misalignment. The setting is Sweden...thirty seven years ago...and my first job. In January 1969 Swedish clogs were standard issue on Stockholm building sites. By six in the morning *Hallonbergen* was bitterly cold and it took an hour for the industrial heaters to get the site warm. My job was to have everything ready by seven when the proper workers arrived. Then breakfast.

Clogs keep feet surprisingly warm but nonetheless I was overjoyed to be sent to *Hammakullen* for a couple of weeks. Gothenburg winter days vary between grey & wet and black & wet but the *Gulf Stream* ensures that the climate of Sweden's western capital feels positively tropical compared to its ice-bound Baltic rival in the east.

We were putting the final touches to an estate of factory-built apartments. The factory-built units with their triple-glazing had been supplied on a design & build contract from the company's Vaxjo factory in Småland several months before. We were tidying up by furnishing the gardens and playgrounds on the roof of an underground car-park. I was given the job of marking out where the lamp posts were to go.

Off I went with the architect's drawings under my arm...chalk, ruler and measuring tape at the ready. Later that day the proper workers came along with their *Clipper* concrete saws and *Hilden* hammer drills and busied themselves interpreting my runic messages.

By clocking off time the next day the six plinths were ready for their lamp posts. We signed off on the job two weeks later. The *platschef* took his Alsatian dog and his work gang to another employer and another site and I never saw him again. As it turned out this was just as well. I went back to Stockholm to freeze until the first of May and gave the matter no more thought...until later that year when my boss came to my wedding and was persuaded to give an impromptu speech. To the amusement of the assembled company he chose to tell the tale of the *Hammarkullen* lamp posts. His story went like this.

The lamp posts arrived late and were erected an hour before final site inspection. Skanz the *platschef* was there; my boss drove from Stockholm to be there; his boss had come from Småland to be there; and assorted local dignitaries from Gothenburg's planning and housing royalty were there. To my eternal gratitude nobody thought of asking me

to be there. As fate would have it the worthy gentleman chose to assemble themselves for the signing off ceremony at the end of the row of six lamp posts.

With pen poised and our firm's final contractual instalment of millions of kronor just seconds away, one of the dignitaries chanced to look up, frowned, deftly placed his hand between pen and paper, and pointed in the direction of lamp post number four. It was a half a metre out of line. As I have pointed out on numerous occasions it wasn't all bad. Lamp posts number one, two, three, five and six were in perfect alignment. Five out of six. But four was in the wrong place and this undoubtedly ruined the effect.

Swedes tell a good story and my boss was not one to miss the chance. But the story rings true. Skanz, we were told, went ballistic at this point in the proceedings and swore to do some rather nasty things to various parts of my anatomy. The planning dignitaries spent several minutes calming him down. They were so pleased at their success they signed off anyway on a promise from Scanz to sort it. It was unclear whether Scanz agreed to sort me or the misaligned lamp post.

Our real honeymoon was to be in *Mamaia* on the *Romanian Black Sea* coast after the English wedding guests had gone home several days after the wedding. The wedding night was to be spent at Saltsjöbaden's *Grand Hotel*...the setting for a famous agreement between the *Swedish Social Democratic Government* and the *Labour Unions*. Unfortunately it was less than an hour's drive to Saltsjöbaden so there was no early retirement. I spent the wedding evening plausibly justifying myself endlessly to each guest...one at a time.

My excuse got lamer and lamer with each telling. I couldn't get away for my mini-honeymoon soon enough...for one or two reasons. Here is the case for the defence for the very last time. I should have stretched a length of string like brickies do. Instead I diligently marked off the distance of each lamp post on the architect's plan view, scaled it up and laid it out *in situ* with my tape. On the drawing Number Four must have been six millimetres more than the other five. Scaled up that's a foot and a half. Surprising that I didn't notice. *Sod's Law* no doubt...the canteen truck arriving with coffee and sandwiches between setting out three and four.

I chanced across my old boss Roger Everett at Västerås airport last year and was invited to his seventieth birthday. He told me the 'remedial work' was easy to spot from inside the garage. But I don't think I'll bother to find out.

Tuesday 21st March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-22

blog 080/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

The front men for the *European War Party* are gathering in *Brussels* this week against a backdrop of unrest in France just thirty five miles away from where I write this weblog here in Rye on the *English Channel Coast*. The reporting in the English press focusses on the new *Contrat Première Embauche (CPE)*...a new French job contract that allows employers to hire and fire at their leisure. But French unrest is never simple. The French tradition is for unrest to become riots and for riots to become revolutions...or at least force governments to flee the country.



The change of job law...actually an addition to seven hundred different pieces of job legislation...is being seized upon by the unions, students and the left as an '*ultra-capitalist*' outrage...an attempt to smuggle wicked globalist Anglo-Saxon attitudes into France by the back door. After a slow-burn for three weeks the revolt has exploded in the last ten days to campus sit-ins, mass demonstrations and some scattered battles with the riot police.

But at the heart of the French unrest is the fact that at each election in the past 25 years voters have clamoured for change, governments have bounced from left to right and *plus ça change plus c'était la même chose*. Governments always get in. There have been one or two faint-hearted attempts at real reform but this has then been opposed by

street protest...and street protest in France normally wins the day.

In England the middling classes are the swing voters that the political parties woo for their election victories. Not so in France. Thirty five miles away the middle classes are regarded by the politicians as the obstacle to change. There is a large block of the French electorate...a kind of *lumpenbourgeoisie*...which benefits from the present system and fears reform. This group includes public sector workers but also many white-collar private sector workers. They see no reason to weaken their job protection and welfare benefits for the sake of vague promises of benefits to come from more *economic dynamism*. They see such promises as *Trojan Horses* for a shift in privileges from *Us*...the '*ins*'...to *Them* (whoever they may be)...the '*outs*'.

Meanwhile the students at the heart of the protests straddle the economic and social divide. They understand and support the anti-globalist, anti-markets, anti-American, anti-EU agenda of the *European Peace Parties*...ideas which helped to win the *EU referendum* and deliver a resounding 'non' vote a year ago...but they are middle class kids: the sons and daughters of middle class parents. Simmering in the wings is a new round of riots in France's poor multi-racial suburbs. So far there is little sign that anyone in power has much idea what to do...and even less indication that they actually care that much. Expect more rioting in France as the weather gets warmer.

Thames Water has drained seven reservoirs so private houses can be built on them. Last year the directors of *Thames Water* received bonuses of £ 700 000. This year they are imposing a hosepipe ban...70 000 days is the time a hosepipe ban would have to run to save as much water as *Thames Water* loses every day from leaks. The Company Spokesman explained in impeccable English that *Thames Water* would not have taken out these facilities if they were needed. What he failed to mention is why taking them out was needed. *Thames Water* is not who they seem but a subsidiary of the Essen-based German giant *RWE*. And ever since a series of acquisitions in the United Kingdom a year or two ago the *Board of RWE* has been desperately searching around for as many ways as possible of generating cash to bolster its balance sheet and bail-out its failed *German Nuclear Power* programme.

The *Ministry of War* is giving we the people back some of the land it forgot to return when the *Hitler War* ended. It's only 240 000 hectares but it's a start. And they're not actually giving it back. They are making it accessible. But let us be thankful for small mercies. From tiny acorns do mighty oak trees grow...full details at www.access.mod.uk

Wednesday 22nd March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-23

blog 081/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

A cheque from a *Good Yacht Guide* customer arrived in the post today. Once upon a time there was meaning in the notion of the crossed and uncrossed cheque. You could 'make the cheque over' to someone else. My *Barclays* account is *Ryeproduction*. My *Nationwide* cash account is in my own name. My *Nationwide Treasurer Account* is in the name of *Academic Inn Books*. My *PayPal* account is in the name of *William Franklin & Sons Limited*. *Barclays* accepted the cheque without blinking...made over to *Ryeproduction* by a director of *William Franklin & Sons*.

I have been off message with my *weblogs* for the past two days so herein my working life this week so far. On Monday I wrote my *weblogs* from *Rye Library* and from Tony Payne's *PC Hut* next to the *Night Club* by the *Ferry Road level crossing*. I also completed several administrative tasks...these are small but take time...and together quite a lot of time. I try to bunch them...a couple of days a month...this way they seem to take less time.

This fortnight's little tasks included responding to Percy Burt's worries about his *Nationwide* account which began as an assumption that I was not paying him £80 a month...but is now an even bigger worry (for him) because he knows I have been; then there was the need to react to the minutes from the *Radcon III Planning Group* meeting and respond creatively to several e-mails from John Papworth about *radcon* workshops; next there were checks to be made on my *PayPal* and *Barclays ibank* statements...which included the nice surprise of an unexpectedly rapid payment from the States via *PayPal*...prompting me to withdraw funds and send them to my *Barclays* business account; and finally there was the *NCAB* websites project...a flurry of texts and e-mails to keep everybody happy, the go-ahead for the Russian website and dispatch of *Invoice 631 (1 of 2)* for the 25% upfront payment.

Tuesday was *Rye Library Closure Day* so 0830 to 1100 was laundry time. There is a laundrette in *Rope Walk Arcade* that I avoid three weeks out of four...but cannot usually last out much longer. My last laundry session was in *Llangolman* so this was better than normal as I have now been in *Rye* for five weeks. I also do small washes on *Vemara*...adopting Connie's principle of never wasting any hot water. Otherwise the day was an *AWOL Day*...as in absent without leave. However, workaholic that I am, by mid-afternoon I was feeling guilty so rushed through a *weblog* along the lines of 'here is one I prepared earlier'...as the TV chefs say.

And so to Wednesday...*PC Hut Closure Day*. The normal routine brings me back to the boat around midday and has me lighting the stove five hours earlier than on other days. I leave it simmering away in the evening between seven and ten while I am at *Ryesingers* choir practice. But my hour of computer time at *Rye Library* was enough to send the *NCAB* English text files off to New Zealand...to be translated into Russian...and deal with queries from Pernille in Scotland who is doing the Danish webtext and Leena in Eastbourne who is looking after the Finnish webtext.

However these brief accounts of what I have been doing each day fail to mention my working life as a social gadfly. On Tuesday I was off-station for two hours enjoying a lunch and a coffee with Sandra Cracknell at *The Ship*...her lunch...my coffee. Sandra and I are regular users of the *PC Hut* so we spend several waking hours a day a few feet away from each other tapping away at our respective keyboards.

The day before I had spent two hours with Heidi. First at *PCHut* taking her through the online order processing procedures for the *Good Yacht Guide*. We have been getting more telephone orders from customers with *PayPal* accounts than expected and Heidi needed to know how to process them as she usually gets the job of talking to the customers to explain why we need their e-mail address. Afterwards we went to *Boswell Café* on Cinque Ports Street.

Heidi and I have become semi-estranged since the start of the year without either of us being quite sure why this was happening...or whether it was really what we wanted. So although this was a working session there were undercurrents of reconciliation. It was nice although we nearly managed a row about whether or not we had broken up...which is a first for me. Who's fault it was. Yes. That's as old as the hills. But whether you are an item or not. One would have thought that the two parties involved would know this wouldn't you?

Anyway we talked about the *Good Yacht Guide*...and to my surprise Heidi would like to carry on with this although I am never far away from deciding to close down the website and put the business in cold storage. Then there was the opportunity with the lease on the *PCHut*. Tony wants to get shot of it as he can earn £40 000 a year from his programming and computer skills so finds twiddling his thumbs manning the shop as less and less productive.

The lease comes with an apartment over the *PC Hut*. *Housing Benefit* and *Working Tax Credit* just clears the rent of £570 per month. But the benefits...storage for my stuff and an apartment for me in Rye when I am visiting from Lund...can be better arranged some other way. We agreed that taking on the job of running an *internet café* or replacing the retail area with some other business...*Connie Lindqvist's Art Reproductions* for instance...seemed to be a rather complicated way to get the somewhat limited benefits. We parted good friends. Watch this space.

Thursday 23rd March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-24

blog 082/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Melvyn Bragg has come out with a list of the top dozen books ever. He kept to English ones and his criteria were a book's influence on the world. Nine were predictable: *Magna Carta* (1215); *King James Bible* (1611); *Shakespeare's First Folio* (1623); *Isaac Newton's Principia Mathematica* (1687); Richard Arkwright's *Spinning Machine* (1769); Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776); William Wilberforce's *Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1789); Michael Faraday's *Electricity Research* (1839) and Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). But two surprises: Mary Wollstonecroft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) which demanded women's equality and Marie Stopes' *Married Love* (1918) with its assertion of the right of women to control and enjoy their sex and family lives.

I was in *Martyn Channons* looking at socks when I heard from a fellow shopper the astonishing news that Rahul Dravid and Sachin Tendulkar had gone shortly after lunch. After that India's second innings collapsed to 100 all out to give England their first test win in India for 20 years and square the three-game series 1-1.

It has been an astonishing few weeks in the Indian sub-continent for the *English Cricket Team*. England saved their greatest stuff for the times of their greatest misfortune. In *Bombay* they had only six players from the *Ashes* winning summer...and three were filling different roles. The team was unrecognisable, desperately short of experience and with an untried captain. Yet this series has been remarkable for Flintoff's almost complete lack of doubt. My favourite bad birdwatcher Simon Barnes felt moved to wax lyrical today in the sports pages of *The Times*. Here he is.

In India one thinks of Kipling and today it is particularly appropriate to see to what extent Flintoff passes the *If* test. One of the hardest requirements of that most exacting poem is the bit about defeat...if you can lose and start again at your beginning. Flintoff captained England to a closely fought draw in *Nagpur* and then a deeply distressing defeat in *Mohali*, in which England did many good things but were ultimately outplayed. England gave everything and lost. To come back from that to win in *Bombay* required copious qualities of the very toughest *If* virtues. And over the course of the past five days England and Flintoff, having learnt in *Mohali* that giving everything simply wasn't enough, proceeded to give more. Flintoff won in *Bombay* because he gave more than everything.

Later the same day *Chelsea* ground out another one-goal victory beating *Newcastle United* 1-0 at *Stamford Bridge* in the quarter finals of the *FA Cup* which keeps them in with a chance of a league and cup double. I only gave you eleven of Melvyn Bragg's top dozen books. The twelfth was released in 1863 by a bunch of upper class English toffs and goes by the name of the *Book Of Rules of Association Football*. This choice is not as silly as it might seem.

This short book made it possible for everyone everywhere to play the same game. Without this book 'the beautiful game' as the great Brazilian footballer *Pele* called it would not have kicked off. Because of this book and the proselytising enthusiasm of British sailors, merchants and adventurers on their expeditions around the globe it is now estimated that this year eight out of ten people in the world will watch something of the *World Cup* in Germany.

Football is played world-wide by more than one and a half million teams and three hundred thousand clubs...not including the hundreds ad thousands of schools and youth clubs. It has become part of the national consciousness of almost every country in the world. It drives television channels, radio stations and newspapers from the local to the national...a form of universal language.

The game has been around a while. Football is complained of regularly in medieval chronicles. In his pamphlet *The Anatomy of Abuses* in 1583 Philip Stubbs said of the players that 'sometime their necks are broken, sometime their

backs, sometime their legs, sometime their arms; sometime one part is thrust out of joint, sometime another.' *The Times* in 1842 reports: 'The Poor have been dispossessed of their games, their amusements and their mirth.' Football when played at all became much toned down, the number of players and even the space involved limited.

But help and salvation were at hand...from English public schools like *Charterhouse*, *Rugby* and *Eton*. Here what was once disorder, mayhem and a threat to public peace became a way to train the gilded youth who would lead and expand a nation. My old *alma mater* Cambridge can take the credit for starting the process that resulted in the book of rules. Here it was agreed that fourteen players from different schools should frame a set of rules.

The Cambridge Rules were superseded only a few days after their formulation on 26th October 1863 at the *Freemasons' Tavern* in *Lincoln Inn Fields*. On that Monday representatives from a dozen London and suburban clubs met to sort it out once and for all.

By the end of the afternoon it was announced that 'the clubs represented at this meeting now form themselves into an association to be called the *Football Association*.' It took another half-dozen meetings to classify and codify what eventually became known as the *Football Association Laws*.

Friday 24th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-25

blog 083/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

From 1972 to 1975 I worked for *Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners*. This firm of engineering consultants had provided years of good service to the colonial authorities of the *British Empire* but had been forced to leave *Salisbury*, *Rhodesia* in some haste after Ian Smith made his *Universal Declaration of Independence*. They had two hundred professionals working out of their Nairobi office when I called in looking for work after a two months trek by *land rover* from Europe...my second trans-African journey. These professionals...mostly civil engineers...were there to service *Gibb's* new clients in East and South Africa and the Middle East.

While with *Gibb* I wrote a few lesser reports that took a week or so....a *Japanese Tourist Project* in Western Kenya, a new *Commercial Development Project* for Port Louis in Mauritius etc...and three proper reports that took many months. One of my proper reports was a regional road development plan for the *Sultanate of Oman*. The other two were reports on the long-term water needs of Kenya's *Central Rift Valley* and Malawi's commercial capital *Blantyre*. *Sir Alexander Gibb* sent the proper reports to the commissioning authorities who passed them on to the *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)* for project funding.

The Sandhurst-trained *Sultan of Oman*...and his economic advisers from the *City of London*...were a little puzzled about their need for the *World Bank* as they had rather a lot of oil. But it was suggested that the rebellion on their Southern border might get out of hand so they eventually figured out that a *World Bank* presence constituted protection. The Sultan's advisers were also persuaded that to put down the uprising they needed to build a very large macadam road to move guns and soldiers from the hotels of Muscat to and from the battle zone...even though skirmishes in the South had never involved more than half a dozen 'insurgents'.

Meanwhile further south the *Kenyans* were persuaded that they needed to dam the *Turusha Gorge* in the *Kenyan Highlands* and the *Malawians* were assured they needed a second water pipeline...and electricity from *ESCOM* in South Africa...to meet the commercial needs of such vital development projects as the *New Carlsberg Brewery* shipped out from Copenhagen to Blantyre when the Danes built themselves a new one. I am not sure I learnt much from my foray into the roads business...although counting donkeys and camels and writing a computer programme to turn them into trucks and traffic jams twenty years hence is enlightening.

The two water supply projects taught me a couple of things...things which have escaped the notice of many people throwing up their hands in horror about the *Global Water Crisis*. Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hildyard have written a book about *Large Dams* in which they pointed out that most large water projects are driven by civil engineers wanting to construct dams, reservoirs and pipelines but their true purpose is not the supply of water but the supply of *World Bank* debt-usury money. Nothing in my engineering studies at *Cambridge University* or my business studies at *Stockholm University* had prepared me for such wild ideas.

The *Blantyre Water Supply Report* was interesting for several inter-related reasons...standpipe policy, peak supply and demand characteristics and water pricing policy. The first was central to the Bolivian dispute with *Bechtel*. To capture the rain landing on your roof all you need is to fashion some guttering and lay hands on a barrel to trap the water. Let this free water run away down the hill and you will need to bore a well, dam a stream or build yourself some pipelines to bring it back again. I wrote an appendix on water catchment tanks which was removed from the final report. Standpipes and water charges were the way forward.

Peak supply and demand characteristics fascinate engineers...and this fascination leads to chronically over-designed engineering systems when *First World* standards are applied to *Third World* realities. There are several aspects to this issue including the abuse of water extraction rights on the water supply side and the perverse effect

of water pricing policy on the water demand side. I wrote an appendix about garden watering to address some of these issues...and to my surprise it was not removed from the final report.

When urban water supply systems are developed the first water source is invariably the cheapest...and this has nothing to do with inflation. You tap the nearest water supply first and then go further and further afield for your water supplies as the town grows. Put this together with the anatomy of water demand and social justice requires that drinking water should be priced close to the cost of the first water supply scheme.

Restrict urban water supply policy to clean drinking water for all and many engineering schemes built to meet 'rising demand'...with their dams and pipelines, pumps and boreholes...become luxury developments. An equitable water pricing policy would price water in terms of a *Hierarchy of Needs* with water prices increasing dramatically as customer water wants rise...from drinking to washing to toilet flushing to garden watering to washing bottles at the local *Coco-Cola Bottling Plant*. This policy would bring social justice to the urban poor.

Saturday 25th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-25

blog 084/2006<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

I was on call all week project managing the *NCAB Project*...the client has received the Danish and Finnish translations of their webtext, the Spanish has been lost in translation, the Russian is due in mid-week and completion of the Norwegian has been promised for Friday. A bulletin on our delivery promises and an invoice for 25% of the fee went out to the client. But today an interesting flurry of e-mails turned my attention to my *political pillar*...to use *Brussels* jargon. Kirkpatrick Sale has put me on the spot for his decision not to attend the conference in September...so I anticipate some firecrackers from Purton on this. Here is Kirk to John Papworth.

John. I am indeed grateful for your offer, and flattered, but after much thinking I've decided not to be on the *radcon* program. The small reasons are that I hate flying intensely, I'm supposed to go to a *Nuclear Free Conference* in New Mexico then, and I need to prepare for my *Secessionist Convention* soon after. But the main reason is that, having read William Shepherd's excellent laying out of the *radcon* agenda in his March 17 posting, and its emphasis on local control, and working from the *Real Communities Charter*...with the conclusion that people will have to actually go into their neighborhoods with one or another agenda... I don't think I would have anything really to say or add. It is specifically British, and can best be handled by Brits, and I don't see that I could be of much help, except to cheer you on from the sidelines. What you will need there is someone(s) to get the attendees to commit to neighbourhood action, not some Yank talking about secession and scale. I wish you luck with the event, and I trust you understand. And I will be cheering you on from a distance. Thanks, old man. Warm regards, Kirk. My *March 17 posting* went like this:

I think we should try to keep *Any Real Questions* focussed on the *Real Communities Charter* side of our concerns rather than going for the global concerns of our *Real Nations Charter* as I want to see *Local Governance* as the principal focus of this year's *radcon* and the setting up of the *Edward Goldsmith Institute* is to be the jewel in the crown of the *Press Release* following the *Final Plenary* so the questions we arrange to be asked should be communities charter oriented.

I am not quite clear how to bring in Dele's concerns but his thinking is much broader than *Nigerian Union vs EUnion*...and I think he might welcome the opportunity to talk about local communities charter issues from a Nigerian perspective...besides the principal of cantonisation and managing power seems to me to be something that needs to be developed as much at the local as the international level...perhaps Dele could give this some thought and prepare a paper that brings Kohr's relative size and cantonisation principles on nation states down to a village scale? *The Breakdown of Local Government?*

Making Local Government Local is the focus of the conference and the idea was to aim to look for action solutions on a range of issues...hence the list of workshops that went out with *Fourth World Review*...which were all *Real Communities Charter* oriented...'Two days of intensive workshops on Food, Health, Police, Money, Environment, Schools, Transport, Employment and Shops' to quote the *FWR* leaflet. There was an article from Dick Body advocating this sort of direction for *FWR* around the time of *radcon I* that I particularly liked...a paper for *radcon III* perhaps...Chris Wright produced some specifics on healthcare in response that were particularly interesting...they too should be papers for *radcon III*. I also think my article in this month's *Rye's Own* entitled *Local Power* is beginning to push in the right direction by trying to link Kohr to the specific of present local governance.

We should also commission a paper about the *Local Government Act 2000*...my *Rye's Own* article might be complete nonsense in the light of this development...I just don't know...and don't know anybody who does...has anyone you know read it and understood it?...the *2000 act* includes the idea of the *Local Referendum* that Jakob Von Uexkull got excited about...but clearly never read as a cursory look at the small print indicates that existing authorities are given *de facto* veto power over all stages of the referendum process so it is the reverse of *power to the people*.

Perhaps we should also add in some of the *Ghandi Institute forums* from the 1981 *Fourth World Assembly* which were: 1. Human Scale Economics; 2. Politics and Community Empowerment; 3. Communications; 4. Ecology and Bioregionalism; 5. Urban Life; 6. War, Non-Violence and Community Power; 7. Ethnic People and Decolonisation in Asia and 8. Village Development. I also like the idea of taking your *Village Democracy Chapter Five* and having a forum look at this in conjunction with the *Rowntree Report* and a revision of the *Real Communities Charter*. Incidentally I have persuaded *East Sussex County Libraries* to download a copy of the 311-page *Rowntree Report*, print it and make it available in their *Reference Libraries*...although I had to argue until I was blue (red) in the face.

An e-mail from John Papworth this morning went like this: *The Rowntree Trust* have refused our application for a grant. Kirk Sale says he will not be able to attend. I am about to go to press with *FWR 137*. We need to send out a *Radcon Programme*, which means deciding a new keynote speaker and also deciding the titles and the Chair names of our two main workshops. Any suggestions would be helpful. *Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold*. W.B. Yeats.

Sunday 26th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-27

blog 085/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

By the end of the day I was aching all over after a second Sunday morning at the swimming pool. I managed a four length starter and then four two length sets...twelve lengths in all. It can only get better. I was already aching when I got up from the day before when I had done my most extravagant *Lidls* run yet...returning on the train with £20 of loot...including a £2.75 bottle of 13% French red wine which seems to have disappeared inside me on Saturday night.

Yesterday's Ashford trip was a big disappointment as *Starbucks* was closed until *All Fools Day* for a makeover. Fortunately there is a large *Ottakar* in Ashford with a pleasant place to sit and relax over a cup of coffee so I spent some time there after buying Heidi a copy of *Chocolat* by Joanna Harris for her birthday.

Walking into town it was good to feel the breeze on my face coming off the *River Brede* as this meant the wind had gone round to the South-West bringing with it some rain but also much warmer weather. The daffodils agreed with me and spent the weekend bursting into bloom all over Rye. I did not want to stay on the spot for too long following Kirk Sale's decision to keep away from the *September Conference* so I moved in quickly with some diversionary tactics...the *Dunkirk Strategy*...and declared the defeat to be a great victory. Here is what I had to say.

Any focus on the *Real Communities Charter* should be on a European basis so the loss of Kirk and the Yank dimension is a blessing in disguise. Don't ask Zac to give the keynote speech. Leave him where he is. If you ask more of him he will smell a rat, think he is backing a loser and pull out of the Thursday event. As *Any Real Questions* is our fallback position this would be bad news. If we can't make a go of the conference we must still make sure that (1) the *Any Real Questions Public Meeting* takes place; (2) we own the format and (3) we produce a TV quality programme video tape of the meeting for subsequent marketing to TV channels world wide and/or for setting up our own *Fourth World Channel*. We might need to tweak the format a little to distinguish it from the *BBC* programmes.

What is needed now is not to ask the first person on the street to think of a celebrity to give a keynote speech but to work strategically to put together a European coalition with the French and the Germans and the Scandinavians who are much much better organised locally in terms of the *Real Communities Charter* concerns than the Brits...and I suspect the Italians and the Spanish and the East Europeans can teach us a thing or three too. We can take the view that all our common European concerns centre on the *Brussels* and *NATO* agendas...but not the way the *Tory Right Wing* and the *UK Independent Party* view it...it is much more insidious and widespread than this.

If anybody had bothered to listen to Tony Pinschof at *radcon 1*...the only one there with any real working experience of *Brussels bureaucrats*...he repeatedly tried to get a hearing for his point that national bureaucrats...in our case *Whitehall*...and the multinationals corporations hide behind and blame and use the *European Union* as they push through their own global and national agendas. We must take care to attack the right targets instead of being spun off into the weeds...as is happening at the moment.

Personally I would give Anton Pinschof the keynote speech in place of Kirk...if he would agree to do it...and get him to focus on the dynamics of the Local-National-Global-Euro dimensions in Organic Farming and Good Food distribution. Just having a keynote speech available (and delivered?) in English French and German will send out very positive messages about the agenda of the *European Peace Parties* as we begin thinking strategically about how to tackle *The European War Party* and set up local fronts throughout Europe to meet the continents real concerns (good food good governance etc) village by village, town by town.

I spent a hundred minutes on the phone with my daughter in the evening which must be my longest ever phone call to her. And it was just a social chat...although she sneaked in at the end that she thought it was seriously dumb of me to smash her radio aerial...and she wanted £40 to get it replaced. She also reckons I am wasting my time trying to

wheedle out the facts behind global warming. I first did some work on this at the end of 2004 with a view to doing a book review of Michael Crichton's *State of Fear*.

However Crichton's line about how environmentalists falsify their case...and the convincing evidence he brought to bear in support of his view...meant that I needed to do more delving before publishing so controversial a review. I also asked Tom Greco to read *State of Fear* and give me some moral support but that has not yet happened. However I am now convinced that my work got lost in one of my dongle or computer collapses so I have been recreating everything from an old draft in hard copy and some scribbled notes.

Glad tidings from Sweden over the weekend. The missing Spanish webtext had been lurking in the bowels of Alan's in-tray all week. It was a little puzzling receiving an invoice before receiving the finished job. So wearing my *Project Manager's* hat I can claim three down...Danish, Finnish and Spanish - and four including the English...and just the Norwegian and the Russian to come through this week. It will be interesting to see how profitable it will all turn out.

Monday 27th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-27

blog 086/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Simon Barnes is back from India where he had been covering the cricket. *Nimbyism* is an acronym from the struggles in the seventies and eighties...*Not In My Back Yard*. Today in his *Wild Notebook* column in *The Times* Simon Barnes remarked that one of the great joys of coming home is to have confirmed for you that all the essential processes of life are continuing in the place that matters most to you. The family thrives, the garden grows, and there is a woodpecker in it. It is an aspect of *Nimbyism*. It's supposed to be a Bad Thing. Me, I've got a lot of time for *Nimbyism*. *Nimbyism* is an attempt to protect a place you love, a place that has meaning for you. There is a difference between 'don't destroy this fine place' and 'I don't care if you destroy somewhere else'. I love my backyard, especially after a spell away from it, and I was thrilled that a woodpecker felt the same.

This got me thinking about the *Nimbyism* motivating my fellow blogger *riverbend*...female, Iraqi and 24. 'I survived the war...that's all you need to know...and it's all that matters these days anyway'. Her *chronicles* about life in the new Iraq are a cross between an underground manifesto and a polished cultural history. The *weblog* was started in September 2003 and is being published in book form by Marion Boyars under the title *Baghdad Burning*.

I am sceptical about these *Radical Consultations* and *Fourth World Assembly* gatherings John Papworth believes in as they seem to me to be perpetuating the attitudes inherent in mass politics and refusing to admit that democracy does not work in opinions, ideas, scholarship and knowledge. Fools seldom differ. Fritz Schumacher a key thinker behind the *Human Scale Movement* was very conscious of this point...his chapters in *Guide for the Perplexed* on the meaning of the Latin term *adaequatio* provide the deeper background to these remarks.

It is in this context that I respond to such initiatives as the Thomas Naylor project for a *Second Vermont Republic* and to a new project on *The Commons* proposed by Thomas Greco. The idea seems to have originated in an exchange with John Jopling who works with Richard Douthwaite and the *FEASTA* people in County Kerry, Ireland. Tom has just returned to Tucson Arizona after a month in India where he talked about exchange alternatives and community economics. Tom now believes that the greatest challenge in regards to privatization and corporatization is to work to restore the commons in all its aspects...including in particular what Tom calls *the credit commons*.

I entered the debate when Tom copied me on an e-mail to John Jopling that went like this: Would you be open to convening a colloquium to focus on the process of restoring all aspects of the commons...I would envision this to be a week-long (or longer) process involving collaborative research, mutual education, and joint creation of some product such as a *blog*, a *wiki*, a *website* or a *paper*...[a forum discussion with the word 'paper' in the title]. Some areas of research are how elites succeeded in privatizing the commons? We should do some deep research on this and put on our best Machiavellian thinking caps. Some things that come to mind are enclosures, clearances, genocide, legal privileges of various kinds (corporate charters, franchises, etc.). (2) Exploration of current efforts to commonize in various realms, e.g., the creative commons, open-source software, the identity commons, the credit commons, etc.

I thought Tom was homing in on something important so here is my response. I think this tighter focus on detailed processes behind the end result is what is needed for the next few years...and the disappearance of the commons...as if by magic...is one process that needs to be laid bare. Richard Douthwaite's *Schumacher Briefings* Number 4 *The Ecology of Money* is very good and has the best discussion I have yet seen of multiple currencies in his chapter *One Country, Four Currencies*. I don't go for his ideas about an *energy currency* but the discussion and the agenda-ing of the issue is important. Douthwaite works behind (or in front of) the *FEASTA* label...and this is the connection to your e-mail. I will be writing a weblog on Douthwaite's parallel currencies chapter next week and will send you a copy.

Here is the text of *The Second Coming* by WB Yeats. Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ the falcon cannot hear the falconer;/ things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/ mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/ the blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/ the ceremony of innocence is drowned;/ the best lack all convictions, while the worst/are full of passionate intensity/ Surely some revelation is at hand;/ Surely the Second Coming is at hand./ The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out/ when a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*/ troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert/ a shape with lion body and the head of a man,/ a gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,/ is moving its slow thighs, while all about it / reel shadows of the indignant desert birds./ The darkness drops again; but now I know/ that twenty centuries of stony sleep/ were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle/ and what rough beast, its hour come round at last/ slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Most days I browse the small news items in *The Times* in the right-hand column of several inside pages. One of them today was headlined *Body in Harbour* and went like this. The body of a middle-aged woman was found floating in the harbour at Rye Bay in East Sussex yesterday. A spokesman for *Sussex Police* said the death was being treated as suspicious pending the results of a post-mortem examination. The victim has not been formally identified.

Tuesday 28th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-29

blog 087/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Captain Wilkinson asked me if *Vemara* was for sale. He has an enthusiast wanting a traditional boat and *Vemara* is the only classic wooden boat for miles around. So I adopted the Gilbert White approach. Five years ago Gilbert sold *Skua 4* for £7 500 and bought *Kim II* for £30 000. Over the next couple of years he spent £10 000 replacing the engine, adding self-furling gear to the foresails and generally making a good boat better. He has been sailing up and down and across the English Channel and in Rye Bay in his new yacht for four years. Throughout this time his boat has been for sale...for £40 000. 'Every boat has a price. This is what I will sell for. If somebody offers me £40K I will sell. If they come with an offer I will think about it.' I told Alan Wilkinson that I would sell *Vemara* for £36 000.

There was little work going on yesterday. Behind me as I walked into town at eight o'clock there were 892 000 demonstrators getting ready to invade the streets of France...'Pardonnez moi monsieur: 2 680 000 according to the unions.' Whatever. A third of France's public sector workers took part and one in five French schools were closed for the day. In Paris 5000 police turned up for work but train drivers didn't as half the trains were cancelled.

In Britain a million demonstrators took to the streets...'Excuse me, old chap! Only 400 000 actually. Jolly old *Local Government Association* says so, eh whatever? Perhaps. But in Manchester nine out of ten council workers came out on strike and 70% of the schools were closed...17 500 in all although it varied a surprising amount from almost none in Hampshire and West Sussex to every school in the North of England. So I suppose we can say we beat the French at school closures by 7-2 but lost 9-4 on demonstrators.

Heidi and I spent several hours chatting on Monday afternoon at *The Ship Inn*. It was a nice enough but no surprise that text messages were buzzing across town between us on Tuesday morning...and no sign of any reconciliation on Tuesday evening...or any other evening. *Tant pis!* My birthday present to Heidi...like my Christmas present...was not a success. Heidi had seen the film of *Chocolat* as well as having read the book. So third time lucky. On order from *Ottakar's* in Ashford is a copy of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*.

The Winchelsea Singers are in need of tenor voices for their *Spring Concert* in *Winchelsea Church* on 8th April. So as a *Journeyman Tenor* I have stepped into the breach for the last three rehearsals. Today was the first of them. There are various operatic standards in the first half of the programme ...*Puccini's Humming Chorus*, a *Donizetti* drinking song, Wagner's *Chorus of the Pilgrim Slaves* from *Tannhäuser* and *Fauré's Requiem* after the interval.

A cloud of gloom descended upon me as I was walking back from town at six o'clock. This happens from time to time...out of the blue...for no apparent reason. Jennie chanced to be passing...back from *Hastings Art College*...and took me back to her house at *Rock Channel Quay* for a late afternoon tea that became an early evening meal. Today is my ex-wife's birthday. Later on the boat I got through half a bottle of wine. Thank you Jennie.

Jennie was telling me that her son Martin Bayntun had advertised for a receptionist for one of his hostels a couple of weeks ago and had received three hundred applications. He interviewed a third of them and reckoned nearly all of them would have been just fine. Jennie was also telling me of the times that she had applied for jobs in the *NHS*. Normally she would be one of perhaps fifty applicants.

My son decided to change jobs last year. He wanted to move to Gothenburg to be with his fiancée Andrea. He got himself short-listed for several jobs out of dozens of applicants but failed to quite make it into the number one slot. Eventually his present job provider *ABB* came up with a better offer so he decided to stay in Stockholm commuting

every day to Västerås. Despite being very successful by comparison to nearly all the other applicants Nicholas nonetheless found the whole process debilitating and somewhat humiliating.

Ordinary people do not enjoy selling themselves like a commodity on a supermarket shelf. There is something profoundly distasteful about launching yourself onto the job market to tell complete strangers what a jolly good chap you are and how superbly you will do whatever job they throw at you. The hypocrisy is only part of it. There is something else...the sense of *contra natura* about the whole process. *Know thyself. Love thy neighbour as thyself.* Such notions seem alien to the *World of Jobs*.

Another aspect of this great social underbelly of jobs and appointments are those who never come even close to being short listed. They eventually drift towards the bottom of the heap and the world of welfare hand-outs. I went to court in Swindon with John Papworth five years ago when he refused to fill in his *2001 Census Form*. While waiting for his case to come up we sat there as a procession of young teenage girls were brought before the magistrates for some trivial benefit misdemeanour or other. Nearly all were lone mothers and none of the options open to the magistrates made the slightest sense. What might have made some sense would have been to give them each a few thousand pounds, send them home and tell them to look after their children.

Wednesday 29th March 2006*Posted: 2006-03-31***blog 088/2006**<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

High tide today was at midday and midnight, the sun and the moon rose at quarter to seven and set between half past seven and eight in the evening. We had moderate southwest winds, good visibility and moderate seas...it has been blowing hard for several days or the sea would have been calm. Here in *Rye* we had three hours of sunshine, a quarter of an inch of rain and an average temperature during the day of 55 Fahrenheit. *Beijing, Bogotá, Boston* and *Christchurch* in New Zealand had much the same temperature. Interesting hot spots around the globe were *Mexico City* at 72F, *Sydney* at 75F, *Nairobi* at 77F and *New Delhi* at 81F. The pound was priced at \$1.75 and €1.45. Welcome to the thinking man's wire service...*Cliff's Top Signalling Service(CTSS)*.

It is not easy being poor. *Her Majesty's Government* has a policy to dock the benefits of lone parents if they fail to attend a *Work Focussed Interview*. An internal government report that looked into the impact of these sanctions on the poor victims found that this policy had two principal consequences. Firstly sanctions were often not imposed. And secondly when they were imposed the lone parents either didn't notice or simply believed that their benefit had been reassessed.

Now just think of all the thought, the meetings, the memos, the manpower, the argument, the worry that will have gone into that policy. Imagine the paperwork sent out to all frontline staff. Think of all the meetings missed and the warnings issued before somebody loses a tenner. And in reality it makes not a blind bit of difference.

It is no surprise that frontline staff...being human...do not like docking benefits. But it is a little surprising that the victims don't notice. I don't believe it. I think they do notice but decide it is too much of a hassle to think about it. When your money arrives in the wall you have other things to think about. The fact that there is only £156.20 instead of the £168.45 you were expecting is low on your list of priorities.

All your energy is needed for paying the phone bill, filling the fridge and the larder, buying Laura the designer label shoes she needs to keep up with her friends at school, finding money for the gas meter and for TV licence stamps at the post office and putting petrol in the car. The docked benefit would have given you enough small change to treat yourself to something nice. But not this week. I think people notice...and I think they are beginning to get angry.

This week *The Independent* has been putting out supplements on *Global Warming*. Today it was the turn of its readers. There were two things that struck me. Firstly nearly all the letters, while well-meaning and sensible to the writer, were based on much ignorance. Secondly solutions to global warming fell into three categories: world government must do this, our government must do that and each of us must do our bit and turn off the lights.

The *Archbishop of Canterbury* was on *BBC Radio Four* the other day being quizzed about *Global Warming* and he took much the same tack...although it was good to see him insisting that the *Anglican Church* had a moral duty to address the problem instead of contemplating its collective navel by going on and on and on about women priests and homosexual curates. But Rowan Williams is missing an opportunity to make *Her Majesty's Church* relevant again.

Neither the *United Nations*, nor David Cameron's *Conservatives* nor *The Man in the Street* can solve the problem of *Global Warming*. It can only be addressed from outside the mindset...and the institutional structure...that created the problem in the first place. *District Councils, County Councils, the Westminster Parliament, The City, Whitehall, Brussels, the World Bank, IMF and WTO, multinational companies*...none of these can solve the problem.

But in sharp contrast to every other seat of power in the land Rowan Williams is blessed with an institutional structure that can solve the problem. In doing so, the English Church can act as a beacon for the rest of the world.

Villages and urban parishes are capable of cleaning up their own local acts in a way governments can't. Parishes can reclaim the power to act on *Global Warming* within their own boundaries and in collaboration with their neighbours. The *Anglican Church* could lead the charge. The key to success is not global treaties or legislation or exhortation but working together in local communities across the land and across the world...village by village and parish by parish.

In 1989 a *Boeing 747* arriving at *Heathrow* from *Brisbane* with 255 passengers almost landed on the A4 west of London. The pilot mistook it for the runway. *Ryanair* have managed to go one better. But then they have pioneered the art of flying passengers to far-flung airfields and telling them they had arrived in one of Europe's loveliest cities.

Yesterday *Flight 9884* from *Liverpool* to *Derry* landed at a disused army airfield in *Ballykelly* five miles away. Oops! Steps had to be transported 5 miles by road from *Derry* to *Shackleton Barracks* to get the passengers off the jet. How they got the jet off the runway has yet to be explained. Relatives and friends waiting at *Derry* to pick up passengers were somewhat dismayed when a notice went up telling them that *Flight 9884* had been indefinitely delayed. But then *Ryanair* changed the sign to read: *Passengers Arriving By Surface...* at which point everybody burst out laughing.

Thursday 30th March 2006

Posted: 2006-03-31

blog 089/2006

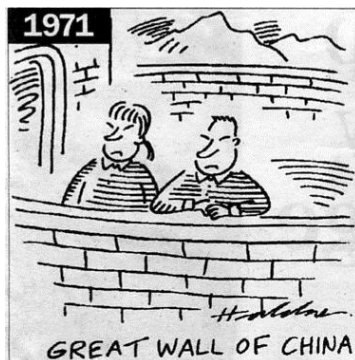
<http://williamsshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Today was a day of virtue with eyes glued to the computer screen and messages whizzing back and forth to *Stockholm* by text and e-mail. In between I dashed off a 350-word translation for a hotel brochure...£60 in the kitty for that...and did clever things online. Here are a few of them.

The *Llangolman BT* phone bill got paid, the *Annual Return* for *William Franklin & Sons Limited* was filed online with *Companies House*, my *Rye* post office box was renewed for another 12 months for £56, £40 went off to my daughter to reimburse her for the car aerial demolished at the *Cardigan Car Wash* back in February and Clare was paid £111 for some recent translation work from Swedish into English.

One of the strangest arrangements on the planet is the way China is shipping cheap goods to America and Europe, making a handsome profit and taking their winnings in very dodgy bits of paper and electronic promises. Economists have no problems with all this. They tell us that it keeps interest rates and inflation low and maintains growth in the global economy. The *Thinking Man in the Street* is less sanguine...being distrustful of economists and smart enough to wonder what will happen when China backs out of the deal and leaves the *West* to its own devices. Two American Senators...Charles Schumer and Charles Grasser...are also concerned. But they plan to do something about it.

This week the Schumer and Grasser double act were in China to warn the Chinese that the *US Senate* will take action to stop the flood of cheap Chinese goods into America. Their message is 'Stop dumping and destroying American jobs or we will slam a 27.5% tariff on all Chinese imports!' If the Chinese want to avoid this then the *Communists* must stop controlling the exchange rate between the *yuan* and the *dollar*. The *yuan* was revalued by two percent last July and currently stands at eight to the dollar. Presumably the two Charleys are lecturing the Chinese on *The Gospel according to Ricardo* in which exchange rates are free to adjust to imbalances between currencies. What fun to be a fly on the wall and hear what the Chinese have to say by way of a response. They might mention their reserves.



Seven years ago China's reserves were worth \$ 150 billion. These reserves are increasing at the rate of \$17 billion a month, currently stand at \$854 billion and are expected to top the trillion by the end of the year...i.e. no let up in the rate of accumulation. The actual breakdown of these reserves is China's most closely guarded secret...after its nuclear arsenal. But somebody somewhere has guessed that three quarters of China's reserves are in dollar-denominated assets...a third of them in *US Treasury Bonds* where the Central Bank of China holds \$ 263 billion and is America's biggest holder of these bonds with the Central Bank of Japan not far behind.

The key factor in the ballooning of China's reserves is the rapid growth in the gap between China's exports and imports. To thwart any strengthening in the *Chinese yuan* against the *American Dollar* China's Central Bank intervenes vigorously in foreign exchange markets by trading between two and three billion dollars every day. One rumour doing the rounds is that the inscrutable *Chinese Communist Party* is shifting more of its reserves into *euros* and *yen* to reduce its dollar exposure. But discriminating between information and disinformation with billions of dollars at stake is no simple matter.

When Luigi Genazzini was *Chief Economist* on the *European Development Bank's Africa desk*...we had spent two weeks in *Oman* counting camels and donkeys together in the mid-70s...we spent a couple of evenings when I was passing through Luxembourg pondering the ways of exchange rates. Luigi was puzzling over the *Zambian* economy at the time but his broader agenda was to get the bank's economists' to develop a consensus view on how to handle exchange rates. As a trained economist he knew all the official theories. But as a banker he also knew they made little sense in the real world. Our conclusions? We didn't understand exchange rates...why they were what they are...but nor did anyone else. What to do? I had no advice for him then. And I have no advice for anyone else now.

Friday 31st March 2006

Posted: 2006-04-01

blog 090/2006

<http://williamshepherd.blog.co.uk>

Some people never learn. I should not have drunk three quarters of a bottle of cheap red wine last night. Restless night and all the symptoms of a hangover as I dragged myself out of bed and got myself ready for a trip across the country at seven o'clock the morning after.

Some systems were beginning to function normally and I was firing on two cylinders by the time I caught the 0954 Ashford train from Rye. By the time I emerged from *Charing Cross* station to look for a Number 11 bus to *Victoria Coach Station* at a quarter to twelve I was starting to fire on three out of my four cylinders. I could have done with all four though as the bus driver refused to let me into the bus without a ticket and refused to sell me a ticket.

So I played the lost tourist routine until he felt sorry for me...or came to the conclusion that he could not move off while I was standing by his window without a ticket...and directed me to the ticket dispensing contraption on the pavement next to the bus stop. Well how was I to know? That wasn't there four weeks ago when I last passed through London. Fortunately I had the necessary £1.50 of coinage to deal with the 'no change given' apparatus without suffering significant loss Even more fortunately the bus driver was in good humour and waited for me to finish my transaction with the machine and return to the bus with a valid ticket.

On my £36 000 yacht the previous evening...before the intoxicating brew took its toll...I calculated that I would have an hour to spare in Victoria before my two o'clock bus left for Swindon were I to forego an hour of computer access at *Rye Library* from 0930 to 1030 and took the ten o'clock train rather than the eleven o'clock. Prominent on all my mental town maps is the location of internet access points and watering places...cafés for liquids in and toilets, restrooms, gentlemen or public conveniences for liquids out. The best places are where the three coincide.

I had plans to use my spare hour profitably at the *Internet Café* on Victoria Street to write my Wednesday weblog. Duly done and duly posted I had time for my planned 20p shave at the facilities in *Victoria Coach Station* before settling down with half an hour to spare to enjoy two large vegetable samosas and a cup of coffee. Back firing on all four cylinders again.

Samosas remind me of Nairobi. On my two days a week teaching at the University of East Africa in the mid-seventies I would often take lunch with Dan McDonald, a Canadian *Professor of Accounting* at the *Faculty of Commerce*. Some days we would take a beer beneath the jacaranda trees of the old colonial-style *Norfolk Hotel*. On other occasions we would wander over to the African commercial area next to the university and lunch on samosas.

Samosas also remind me of Buckminster Fuller. It's their shape. Triangular. In Bucky's *World of Synergetics* a pyramid was not a mausoleum but the biggest piece of disinformation ever built. The real secret of the universe was the three sided tetrahedron...from this the universe is constructed. The Egyptian priesthood understood this secret cosmic accounting but wanted to keep the knowledge to themselves. So they organised the building of all these four-sided pyramids to throw lesser mortals off the scent of true enlightenment.

Nowadays you can get quite a good quality of traveller on the *National Express* buses...young foreign tourists and old English pensioners. And they all talk to you...sometimes quite intimate life stories. Today there was the nice well-spoken lady from *Cirencester* who had been to *Eastbourne* for a trip down memory lane. She had lived in Battersea when she was very young and remembered going to the seaside at *Eastbourne* for her summer holidays. Her father came from *Liverpool* and flew with the *Royal Flying Corps*...biplanes...in the *First World War*.

Then there was the gentleman with the *Guardian* under his arm and no luggage who put my empty coffee cup and discarded samosas packaging in the waste bin while I guarded his guardian. He had left *Cheltenham* the day before to visit an old aunt in *Southend*. His trip had been in vain and he had got up at four that morning to make his way home. When he got to his aunt's house he found she had moved. He left a large bunch of daffodils with the

neighbours and turned around. His aunt had *Alzheimer's* and so we talked about that for a while; how the sufferer seemed to be happy enough inside their world of forgetting but that those around them...the nearest and dearest...seemed to be the real sufferers not knowing what to do for the best and remembering the person they once knew.

We all know there is a very much better way of looking after the elderly than simply shovelling money in the direction of strangers in the hope that they will look after them in a retirement home run for business not for pleasure. It is only at Christmas and Easter that the sons, daughters and grandchildren of the inmates of England's retirement homes come in any number to visit their elderly relatives. When they arrive most have a pious and dutiful look about them of martyrs going to a grim fate. When they leave, they are all smiles of relief at the thought that they won't have to go through that again for another few weeks or months...or even another year. The very old in the Third World have a much better time of it. They are looked after by their families in communities bustling with life...and hope.

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