

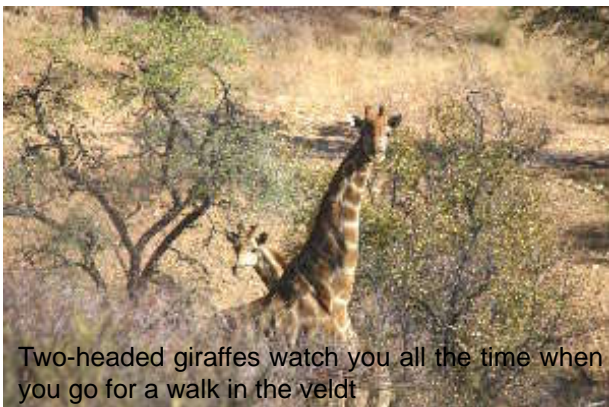
Clegg News 2004

Here is my annual news. Somehow it seems all a bit trivial in the light of the last week so I write with some apologies. One friend, with whom I have been working in Qatar, lives in Colombo and, with a group of friends is assisting one of the devastated communities get back on its feet. Being in the front line she is able to respond directly to the kind of need that may not be that obvious - like acquiring locally a whole load of flip-flops to prevent infection from broken glass. If anyone is interested in knowing more about this and supporting it, please contact me; the group is in the process of opening a UK bank account.

Rainbows just outside the front door

I dont have much to report this year; most of the time has been spent sitting at home in Windhoek, venturing out now and then for a few short walks in the nearby veldt. But in Africa you dont have to go anywhere for things to happen; they come to you.

I went to one new country, Senegal, where I reported at a conference at the time of the Venus Transit. I took 30 of the 16000 pairs of sun-viewing spectacles that were left over from the Namibia eclipse last year so that



Two-headed giraffes watch you all the time when you go for a walk in the veldt



Mayhem just outside the back door

we could all share the experience at coffee time. Dakar experiences two or three days each year when a sea breeze covers it completely with low cloud.....



This year I became 60, or as one kind friend put it, entered my seventh decade. This, I discovered, was significant. I found that I could get into the Cinema at half price; as long as I went on Tuesday afternoons. And also as long as there was a film I wanted to get into at half price; Puss-in-Boots dealing

with a hair ball problem is about as good as it gets in Windhoek. I can also get 10% discount in a shop called *Game* in Windhoek that sells everything you need except the thing you want. And, because I rather fancied the idea of being a part-owner of Stonehenge, I became a life member of the National Trust, at their greatly discounted rate for retired gentlepersons. They took the subscription out of my account twice, somewhat defeating one of the objects of the exercise. When I pointed this out they refunded me immediately. Twice. I wrestled with my conscience for a while and then pointed the double refund out to them. They checked and blamed Barclaycard. After much further wrestling I also pointed it out to Barclaycard. They blamed the National Trust. You can't lose them all.

In the middle of a 'holiday' in England in July I was invited to a kind of universal 60th birthday party of many of us who were at University together. Most I still recognised despite the tendency of (male) heads now to poke through the top of their hair. One was a Professor, another a Bishop, but most of us there, at some stage in life had opted (or been opted) out to do what we thought we wanted. There is no word to describe the occupation of one who is largely occupationless, except, of course, 'consultant'. So there we were, a group of consultants, sitting around, carrying on conversations broken off nearly 40 years ago, wandering vaguely where the pension was going to come from.

Generally, I have to report some slight success in meeting the challenges of increased age. I have given in to the curious spreading tendency of the feet by buying two new pairs of shoes (at no cost thanks to the loss of a fully insured case at Johannesburg airport) that are two sizes larger than any I have worn before, so although I have Chaplain-like self-image I can at least walk comfortably. Then there is the problem of sitting on my spectacles or leaving them on the meal tray and they are whisked away by the flight attendant. I have found that you can buy them

at about four pounds a pair at Johannesburg airport so whenever I pass through I stock up. But the really serious problem, that I have not quite got on top of is finding my mobile phone. The proper place for a telephone, we all know, is on the hall table, and the tendency these days of allowing them anywhere leads only to trouble. Whenever I want my mobile I have to ring it up, but it utters that curious kind of directionless electronic sound (mine actually plays the British National Anthem - in G) so I know its there but don't know where. Wandering from room to room helps little, I find, particularly when it is in my pocket.



A significant feature of this year has been the unusually large number of people around me who have been doctored. It started early in the year when daughter Eileen at Southport was awarded a doctorate for her groundbreaking (she's an archaeologist) work on Jordanian mesolithic detritus. This was closely followed by Santjie (for those who have not met her, Santjie and I are owned by the same cat in Namibia) who was given one for her illuminating study of lesbian teacher-pupil relationships in southern Namibia (there's not much else to do in southern Namibia). For 30 years I have been the only Dr in my near circle; suddenly finding myself one of three has rather devalued the currency. And I can't help feeling that doctoral subjects these days seem to lack *substance*. Mine was for microbiological hydroxylation of steroids and related substrates; you know exactly where you are with bugs and steroids. But I suppose these modern Universities like Liverpool and Western Cape have to make their mark somewhere.



It's been a year of elections. Many in Africa have difficulty in pronouncing the letter 'l' so that 'general election' here becomes 'general erection', an interesting and very Afri-

can concept which, the rock art suggests, seems to have quite a long history. Botswana had one and Namibia had one; no one is quite sure why as they always return the same people. Botswana has returned the same party for 40 years and Namibia returned the same team (but the leader stood down) with about 80% of the vote assisted by some helpful officials who burnt opposition ballot papers. There were seven opposition parties including a significant Namibian first, a party without either manifesto or policies.

Much has been said about *the* election. My only contribution is to note the difficulty I have in reconciling the wise and dedicated young US volunteers it is my pleasure to meet and work with each year in Namibia with the irresponsible bunch that they have re-elected back home.



Windhoek, sadly, is a place devoid of decent music. Things seemed to be looking up a bit last year when the Worldspace satellite started broadcasting a digital channel called Maestro ('the channel where Beethoven lives') bringing 24 hour classical music to a neat little radio with a dish the size of a dish. But they seemed to have only two CDs, Mussorgski's *Night on a bald Mountain* and a setting by Copeland of the sayings of Abraham Lincoln, narrated by H Norman Schwarzkopf. So when it became a pay channel I didn't bother.

But in January I was in Cape Town for a conference and went to a concert there. Cape Town City Hall reminded me reassuringly of my childhood days in Leeds; it was a small version of Leeds Town hall, right down to the porcelain knobs on the lavatory chains. So I sat there in comfortable familiarity, looking down at the choir under the chandeliers and in front of the gold-trimmed diapasons.

I have somehow managed almost 60 years without experiencing Mendelsohn's

Lobegesang. I suppose he has just never been a preferred flavour in a culture that for most of my life has insisted that the B Minor Mass be performed with a choir and band that you can get into one minibus. Fortunately Africa does not have these hang-ups. The organ was in good voice, the organist had big feet, the orchestra was excellent, but really superb was the now almost all black Cape Opera Chorus. Actually the *Lobegesang* is not entirely unknown to me, it contains that duet that Ferrier and Baillie recorded that they often used to broadcast on *Your Hundred Best Tunes* before Classic FM was invented.

The programme opened with one of the many works that are now coming out of this region now that black and white traditions are legally free to fuse. Van Dijk's *San Gloria*, a setting of the Gloria inspired by rhythms from the San, the world's oldest civilisation, was a particularly good example and the composer rightly got a big ovation. The encores from the choir were, of course, two rich *a capella* African pieces sung with the customary flair and movement.



Another musical experience happened when we popped into Exeter Cathedral on our way from the car park to an appointment. A choir was rehearsing modern music and a slight dark-haired young woman was leaping barefoot around a raised stage accompanying them on all manner of percussion instruments including some eastern ones I'd never seen before. Evelyn Glennie had hit town.

It was, of course, a sellout, but just by chance three (second row) seats had been returned. The centrepiece was a commission for choir and percussion from a young composer called Jonathan Girling. It had a choice of endings, one representing death and the other life; mercifully they chose it by a show of hands and not by asking us to phone sad and happy numbers. By a clear majority we chose death. (But they gave us life as a encore). Some of

you may not know that Glennie is not only the world's finest percussionist but, unbelievably, she is also completely deaf and hears the music through her body, particularly through the stage and her feet. She is tiny and runs barefoot with great agility between all the instruments and the strategically placed music stands. She's best known for her marimba playing and she played us a perfect little marimba piece of her own called *Prayer*. The choir also did the *Chichester Psalms* which took me back to their first Kalahari performance in the early eighties in Gaborone.



This year I learnt that I am insolvent. I don't feel very insolvent but then, I don't really know what feeling insolvent is like. I'm insolvent because my liabilities exceed my assets. I was told this stark fact by my accountant who has, as is his duty, to write letters reporting it to all and sundry, via the registrar of companies, who may want to, for example, to



Albertine covers the south gable

lend me money. As I have never met anyone who wanted to lend me money I don't think that aspect of insolvency is going to be too hard to bear.



Mermaid



Zepherine Drouhin, the thornless rose

It's come about because when I set up my company, I was persuaded to lend the company an awful lot of nonexistent money to

buy up the most significant of my worldly assets, most particularly my Landrover, which, of course, as is the nature of Landrovers, was exceedingly expensive. These worldly assets have since depreciated at a fiscally predetermined rate, such that my Landrover is now, technically, worthless, as is all my office furniture. But I have only paid myself a small amount of my money back and hence my liabilities to myself now exceed my assets. This seems to be a standard strategy thought up by accountants (I use the same firm as Parmalat); lend yourself lots of imaginary money and pay it back as real money. That way you avoid paying both company tax and personal income tax.



As a change from sitting in front of my computer I decided to come to England for a few weeks to take a sledgehammer to my old house. I came in June when the roses are out. It gave me stiff painful wrists and tennis elbow in both elbows. But the bed-



Rosa Mundi, the oldest, from twelfth century monastery gardens

room from which I removed two walls and a ceiling looks rather nice now its old elm timbers can be seen. And its amazing how much

building rubble you can get into the back of a Peugeot 206 when it's a hired one.



Bedroom completed I thought I would like to see a few bridges.



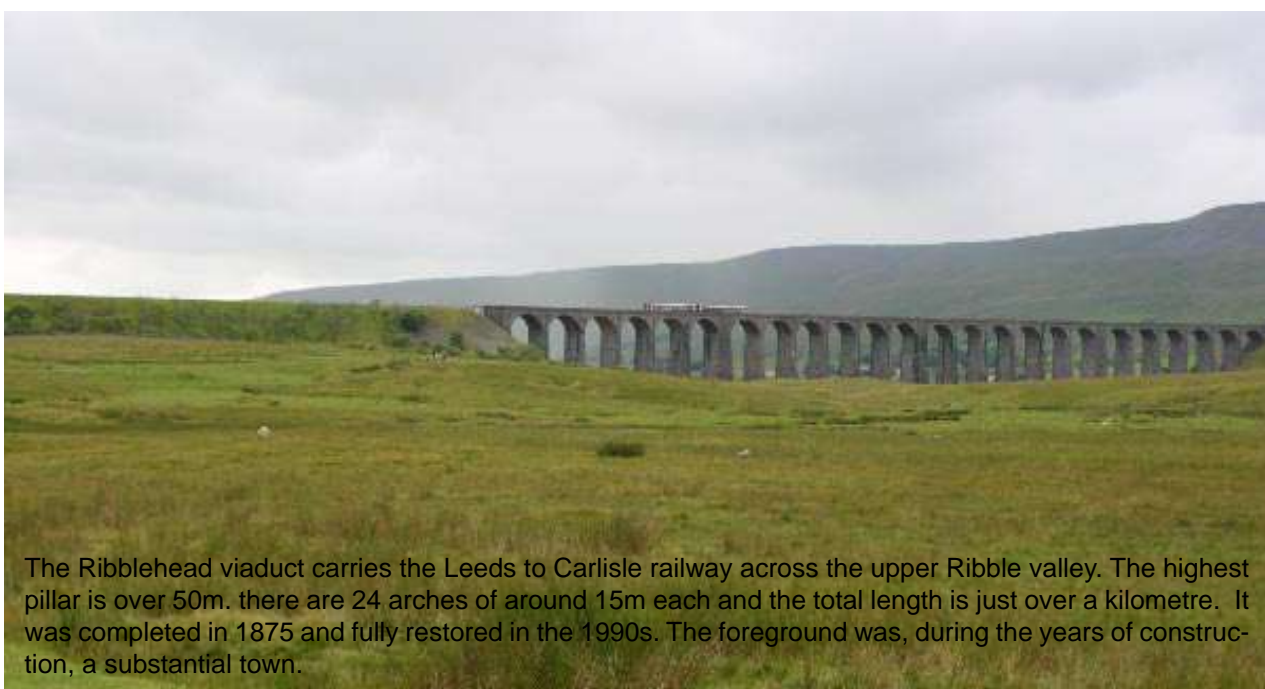
Ivelet bridge takes the corpse road over the Swale near Gunnerside. The corpse road was the way they got the corpses down the valley avoiding the villages. We saw a dipper, a grey wagtail and a kingfisher within a few minutes of stopping there.

So, after a brief stop at my mother's in Saxton to savour the Yorkshire rain we went over to Blackburn the pretty way via my old house in Upper Swaledale, a place I've always regretted selling. Mrs Collin, my neighbour, now 93, was busy looking at the wonderful

view that the row of cottages commands and doing lots of things that the doctors told her not to do, like baking cakes.

Leaving Swaledale we headed across the moors to Ribbleshead where the Leeds-Carlisle railway crosses the Upper Ribble valley. Then down the valley to Blackburn where Eileen's mother knew that she knew me but did not quite know why. She always brightens up, however, when I turn the conversation back to her youth and the Cyclist Touring Club outings to the Lake District of which she remembers every detail. They used to begin by meeting up under the Whalley Arches (48 spans built at a cost of £35 000 out of 7 million bricks to take the Blackburn to Clitheroe line over the Calder valley), Back to the present; she asked me who I was and told me she was 84. I said I was Andrew and she was 87. What I could not tell here, because at that moment I did not know it, was that Tom, her grandson, who rings her up every weekend, had just been given a First by Southampton University. How pleased Eileen would have been.

On the way down we stopped off where it all began, and a different kind of bridge. It was around 1710 that Abraham Darby thought



The Ribbleshead viaduct carries the Leeds to Carlisle railway across the upper Ribble valley. The highest pillar is over 50m. there are 24 arches of around 15m each and the total length is just over a kilometre. It was completed in 1875 and fully restored in the 1990s. The foreground was, during the years of construction, a substantial town.

up a way of smelting iron not with charcoal but with coke made from coal, of which there was quite a bit around the Severn Gorge. He did not know what he had started. His original furnace at Ironbridge is still there under



The bridge across the Severn Gorge built in 1779 out of cast iron smelted with coke

Woodworking techniques in a metal structure

kind of wood and glass pyramid thoughtfully provided by the EU, but the overshot waterwheel and the bellows it drove have to be imagined. When he built the Iron Bridge in 1779 nobody had developed any skills in making large structures out of cast iron so they pretended it was made out of wood and used mortise joints and wedges and plugs.



Three of four generations this Christmas (the fourth was behind the camera); my mother, Andrew and daughter Eileen

On to Southport to stay with Eileen daughter, now over-qualified for most of the jobs on offer and looking after a Downs child in a local school. Her main job, however, is little Andrew, who took me to the library



to pay his overdue book fine and acquire a poster about the gingerbread man. We came home to read the new books all of which are, these days, it seems, PC versions of old stories about nice wolves and evil pigs and squatters that illegally occupy bear houses when they are out at work.

Eileen lives in the Borough of Sefton, a council that is, it seems, busy diverting its funds from people to squirrels. The school that Andrew was to start at in September had sud-

denly been closed in the name of efficiency; all primary schools, it seems, should have at least 1000 children. (Instead he now attends a small Catholic school outside Southport and keeps asking me if I'm a member of God's Family.) Sefton has, in an area of National Trust land between urban development and the coast, an interesting population of red squirrels which, being less intelligent than their grey relatives, tend to get themselves squashed as they cross the Southport-Liverpool road. The borough has therefore put aerial ropeways across the road. The squirrels perform on these in the manner of a beer advert, diverting the attention of the drivers beneath who now tend to squash each other rather than the squirrels.

Dominic, Eileen's partner, took us around Liverpool. One quarter of the world's trade once went through Liverpool making it the world's richest city. Now the docks are silent and empty and, like Cape Town, (but with a degree of taste), the warehouses have been

rescued and restaurantised. Unlike Cape Town, however, clientele seem to be few. But, reports Dominic, there are signs of change; Liverpool is limbering up to become European City of Culture in 2008. His local butty shop, the *Better Butty* in Fazakerly (where he works in the same building as, coincidentally, my Uncle worked in 60 years ago) which has traditionally specialised in a dense lime green pea and bacon soup, now offers such exotica as bacon, egg and sausage panninis (with or without butter depending on whether or not you are on a diet).

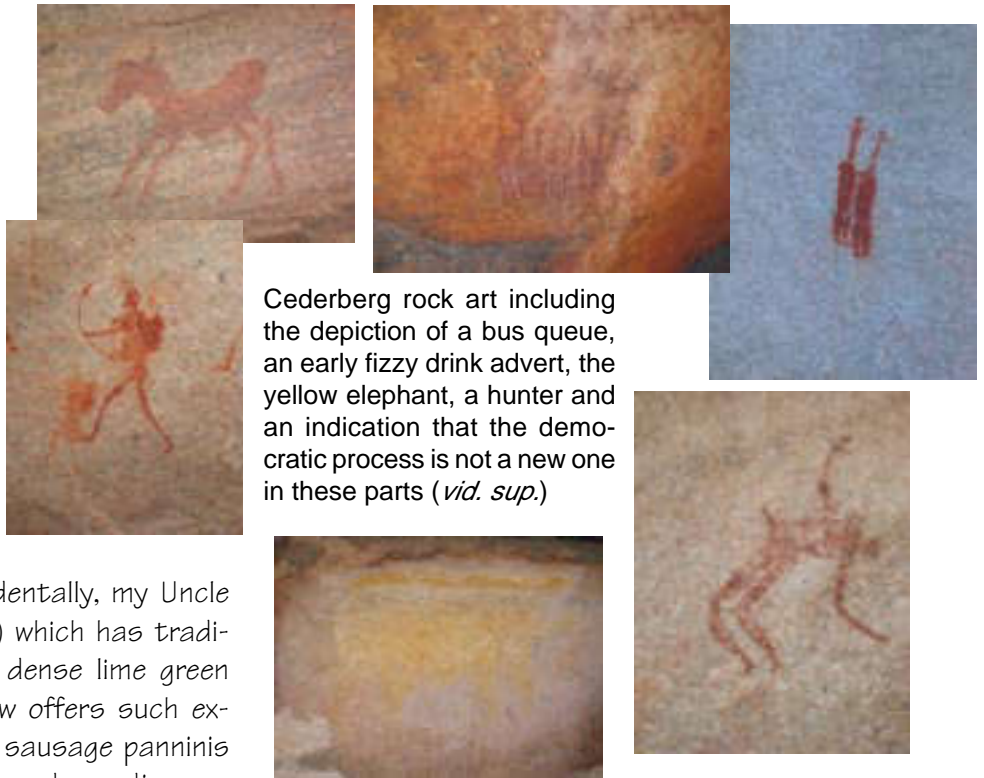


There are four roads out of Windhoek, north, south, east and west. Come holiday time, the Ovambos take the one north, the Hereros take east one, and the whites go west. Noone goes south. This is a well established apartheid tradition that lingers on, indeed has been fully reestablished by the post-colonial government with an appropriate nomenclature change; 'reserve' is apparently out, 'regional assembly' is in.



The road south

At Easter we, took the empty road south, four in the Landrover sharing the driving, down to the Cederberg in South Africa, about 1200



Cederberg rock art including the depiction of a bus queue, an early fizzy drink advert, the yellow elephant, a hunter and an indication that the democratic process is not a new one in these parts (*vid. sup.*)

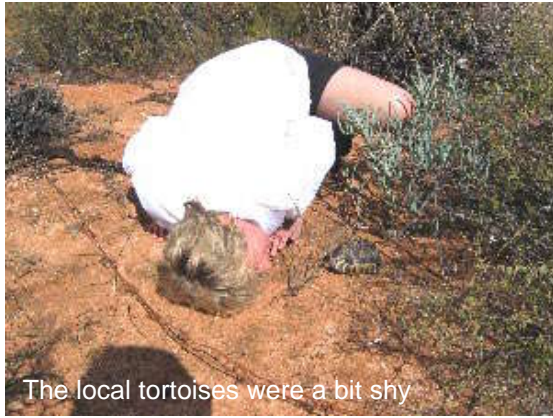
kilometres away, for a couple of days walking. The main purpose of this journey was to see the rock art, which, as regular readers will know because of my colourblindness, not to see it. However, one of these artists, anticipating my visit, made his (or maybe her) el-



The Karoo through the Wolfberg Arch

ephants yellow. The Cederberg mountains have two other notable features; there is a natural rock arch through which you can look out over the Karoo, though it is not clear why anyone would want to. The second is that it is the home of Rooibos tea or, in my case, bos tea as I cant see the rooi bit, which is

good, so I have been reliably told, for (a) sending you to sleep and (b) generating breast milk. It is now on the shelves of your nearest Sainsbury's should you feel the need of it.



The local tortoises were a bit shy



I still remember the day years ago in Botswana when my class suddenly got up and rushed out of the room. I wasn't, I discovered, anything to do with me; it was just that it had started to rain and they wanted to dance. Brits have a strange attitude to rain; this year the weather forecaster on BBC World

described the storms in Cape Town that broke a long and devastating drought as 'dreadful'. Coming home in June I had forgotten how really nice and gentle the best British rain can be; we should be proud of our rain, we do it rather well. In June we had lots of it and just up the road 150 000 people were up to their knees in yellow Somerset mud at Glastonbury apparently loving every minute of it. More people watched Beckham miss there on a big screen than live in the stadium in Lisbon. That was the night of Oasis, Sir Paul and, astonishingly. The English National Opera performing Die Walkure.

The gentle rain was perfect for the Roses; here's another; its a musk called Rambling Rector.

Have a good year.

