

Clegg news 2010



The problem with Etosha Game Park is that there is no sand so the ostriches are forced to seek alternative places to hide their heads.

A month before this picture was taken, I had acquired a new fully-featured daughter, Lucy, without having to go through any of the puking and mewling phases; Tom married Lucy in Westonbirt Arboretum on the wettest day of the summer.

Here is a wedding picture of the two new stepsisters, Lucy and Eileen, starting as they mean to go on. Tom adjudicates. For their honeymoon, Lucy and Tom came here and we drove to Etosha, by way of the Okavango Delta and Victoria Falls.

On the way we camped at Chobe Lodge, made famous in 1975 by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, experienced honeymooners both, who spent their second here.



Back then ordinary folk like us just drove into Chobe Park and camped at one of the designated spots. You kept the fire going all night to deter lions and you locked all food in the car. Banded mongooses chewed their way into the tent if they could smell anything interesting, shoes left outside were eaten by jackals and any loose camping equipment strewn around the bush by baboons. And you always reversed towards elephants.



These days you no longer have to be super-rich to enjoy a honeymoon in Chobe Lodge

Now its a bit different. Registered game drive companies take queues of Landcruisers full of properly kitted-out tourists at dawn each day into the Park. The drivers all work together informing each other by radio of interesting sightings. The first thing they do each morning is to play Spot the Lion. As soon as one is spotted all the vehicles converge at high speed on it to provide photo ops of a group of lions completely encircled by tourists, the Japanese group clearly distinguishable by their little white facemasks to keep out African viruses.

The animals, however, seem to have got used to these convoys and ignore them. This is fine for taking pictures of birds but the animals are often a bit close and you get only parts in the frame.



Spotting the Lion



African Jacana and parts of an elephant



The Angel of Chobe.
An open-billed stork
get the oils flowing



The lion spotted
(snapped by Lucy who
was the only one with
a clear view)



The lion's interrupted breakfast, a
Roan, which is endangered. Slightly
less so thanks to us.



Look mummy, no teeth



Three eland, Africa's biggest antelope, two warthog, an impala and a gemsbok



A black crow dictates to his Secretary Bird



Burchells zebra. There are two zebras in Namibia; this has the shadow stripes.



Lucy wanted giraffe. We gave her giraffe



A gobsmacked springbok



Giraffe, teenage kudu and impala



A family of black rhino at night. Namibia is the last place in the world where these animals can wander wild



The south rim of the Messum early in the early morning with some coastal mist. A lone springbok is half way through a 30km walk to see friend



Welwitschia mirabilis; 2 leaves in 2000 years of baking sunshine



Springbok survive without water apart from what they can get from the plants they eat.

We keep coming back to the Messum. Like the rest of the Namib it is always different. Last time we went there, a year ago, it was a mass of grass and Quelea Finches. This year there was no grass and few birds but the Familiar and Mountain Wheatears were still there and soon found us. Like the Springbok, they must be able to survive with no water other than what they get from what they eat.

What strikes you quite hard, as you sit on the little pimple of granite left in the middle of this huge crater is what a big bang it must have made when it went off.



On the way to the Messum we spent a bit of time on the Ugab river on the desert edge in southern Damaraland. The Ugab is one of Namibia's dry rivers which for a few days each year becomes a flood that takes the bridges away. We were in a village camp and the man that ran it was in the process of replacing everything that the desert elephants had destroyed during the last floods. They are particularly fond of long drops which they dismantle and carry off. Sonja had brought him a new long drop, an old oil drum.

The whole area is at the bottom end of Damaraland, the last place left in the world where the black rhino wanders wild. It is a region also known for its classic cars. They are on permanent display many having been there for generations and will probably be here for many more. Several were spotted close to the camp.



Built like a truck, drives like a car. The 1974 Ford One-tonner. The Brandberg with its cloud icing in the background





The all-new Fiat 1300. Six years older than the blonde across the bonnet



For the two of us its been a hot flush and hernia year. When they explained to me what an inguinal hernia repair was it occurred to me that a bit of duct tape and superglue from down at B&Q would do the job perfectly. So when I went into the hospital I was a little bit disappointed not to see the full size cardboard cutout of Alan Titchmarsh just inside the door. It was reassuring to learn however, from the surgeon, after I'd recovered consciousness, that the duct tape and superglue had worked just fine. The superglue, he explained replaced the bandage and would 'wear off in a week'.

I recalled the last time I was in hospital which was for an appendix operation in about 1959. No dissolving sutures then; I had been tied up with big knots with gut from real cats. And they covered it with a big plaster stuck onto the shaved area through which the hairs had grown for 3 weeks before they removed it. In those days operations were real operations.

The most irritating thing about this operation is that it was made necessary, not through an accident or through wear and tear, but simply through bad design. If I had been a car I'd have been recalled years ago. If you have a whole row of internal organs hanging neatly horizontally from a backbone and some bright spark decides it's a good idea to walk on your hind legs so you can see over the grass what you get is messy pile of bits and pieces at the bottom. And at some stage some bit of it will eventually find its way through one of the holes down there and you will have to be duct taped up.

A characteristic reflection came from Santjie's cousin Sandy, a nurse down near George. She has some reservations about the male inguinal hernia repair operation. 'Too near the brain', she said.



The great thing about this recession is that I'm not getting any work any more. So I'm considering myself retired and I've started doing all those things that retired babyboomers do like complaining a lot and buying highly dangerous retirement toys. I have a chain saw, a table saw and a thing that whizzes round and chops hedges (and heads) off. And the best of all, a biscuit jointer; nobody should be without one.

With all these new WMDs I've just redecorated my living room in Martock The problem with redecorating these old houses is that if you sand the plaster it falls off. Then you find the window frame is rotten so you take it out and get a new one. Then the elm lintel holding up the wall above the window crumbles to dust as you look at it so you you hold your breath and put in another (fortunately I had a bit of old elm from a nearby pub which burnt down). Then you decide you cant be bothered to plaster and paint the wall again so you leave it naked.

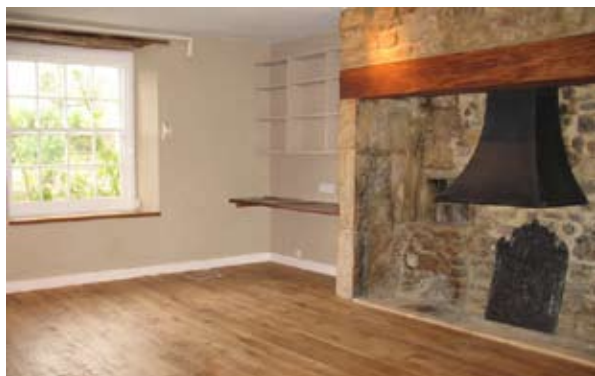


The plaster comes off then the window falls out and then the lintel turns to dust.

Only then can you start on the floor. A man called John explained to me the difference between good engineered oak boards and Homebase engineered oak boards. There were essentially two; one was that the good ones were twice the price and the other was that he had the good ones in stock. I was convinced.



You can see my new table saw in the room. I chose it for quality; it is a made by Charnwood, a long established British machine tool company; we make the best machine tools in the world. After I had bought it the man in the shop said I was very wise because the Chinese Yuan had just been revalued and the list cost of the saw was now about 100 pounds more than what I paid for it.



The finished engineered oak - plywood to you and me. They say it does not shrink or bend. Much. Biscuit jointed bookshelf in the corner - in case you were wondering.



In the Erongo Hills, on the edge of the desert, you see your way around by starlight and Venus makes shadows, unusual ones that are very sharp. From time to time I go there to work for a week, or try to, in the remoteness and silence. I took this year a jar of lemon marmalade, a rabbit stew (because Santjie does not like either of them) and a loaf of Berlinerbrot, a big heavy colonial ryebread that lasts for ever and improves with age. And my solar fridge and computer.

The first thing I do is brew up a mug of Taylors on a few burning twigs. It gives this nice quiet bit of Namibia a comforting Yorkshire ambience for a few days. Four warthogs appear in



The Milky Way. Looking from the Erongo Hills towards its centre

line on a purposeful mission, tail tassles vertical. They pass straight through the camp seemingly oblivious of the new Namibia-Yorkshire border arrangements.



My Erongo office

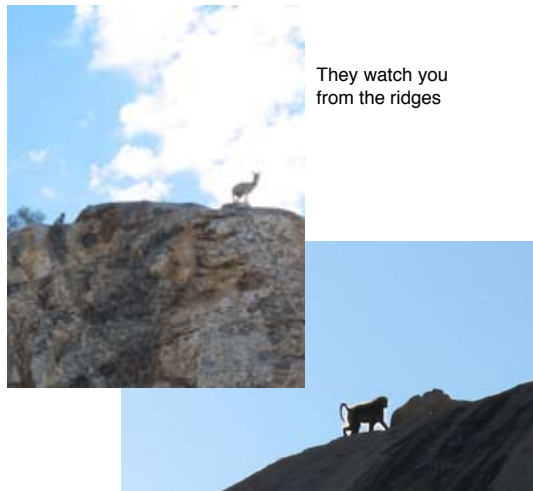
I dont usually get much work done. I see many new birds which I look up and usually dont find. One was a little black and white job called a Carp's tit. Then I remembered it was not new but that I had looked it up last time. I suppose I can look forward to the time when I forget every bird I look up and then every time I see anything it will be a new sighting. Endemic but locally common it said of Carp's tit. Most things in the Erongos are endemic but locally common.



Endemic but locally common

The group of farms where I stay have been given seven black rhino this year. Six are male because of the tendency of Namibian rhino to have boys; not a sensible strategy if you are critically endangered. I didn't see any signs of them - the really big animals are always invisible - but it was clear from tracks that a leopard and a few mountain zebras (endemic but locally common), unseen, watched me. Leopards, I had been told, quite like free-range humans.

The local baboon troupe and three klipspringers, watched me, seen, from the koppie ridge.



They watch you from the ridges

The baboons are in charge here. They run the place. They dig holes in the river sand that fill with water overnight for all the other animals. If I stop walking, the grown-ups quietly move back from the koppie edge until only the tops of their heads are visible. Then they quickly reach out to grab the inquisitive children and pull them back too.

The klipspringers are antelopes that walk on two widely spaced toes on each foot, each ending in a kind of rubber sucker. With eight perfect and continuously renewable

Leki tips; they can walk up anything. With me it was a bit different; 'Clegg is too stiff in the groin' was the dismissive report comment that ended my rock climbing career half a century ago. The klipspringers have another advantage over me; a coat that is more like fine hedgehog spines than fur so if they fall they bounce.

One morning I got up before dawn for a quick climb up the highest hill on this side of the farm before the scorching sun wilted everything. I'd never done it before; it's about 700m higher than the campsite and there are no paths. I soon wondered why I imagined I could get there before breakfast. After a bit of an initial struggle I stumbled across the gemsbokway, a well-trodden game track to the col and on down towards the desert. The col was a gemsbok service station; one big lavatory with lots of dust baths. Curiously one gemsbok path went on right on up to the summit. I wondered why they wanted to go there as the path just



Near the top. A Cobas tree. They grow high on these granite outcrops where water is trapped. The Afrikaners use its sap to cure mange apparently. Endemic but locally common. We have one in our garden in Windhoek but its not as happy.

came back down again. Yet another perfect Gemsbok-eye view of the Brandberg maybe.

At the top was a cairn. A bit disappointing really as I was rather hoping I might have been the first non-gemsbok there since the beginning of time. In fact there were two cairns on two tops quite close to each other. One was a pile of very large rocks, most of which I could not have lifted and I took this to be the Afrikaner peak. The other, a carefully made perfectly circular pillar with a post sticking out of the top was clearly the German summit. I put an identical stone on each; strict neutrality in such things is important.



The farm has its old car on display near the gate, a 1938 Ford one-tonner





Long Eaton School French room. Taken possibly in the 20s. My grandfather teaching. Many rooms had murals like this. They were painted over in 1949.

This year was the centenary of the founding of Long Eaton School of which my grandfather, Samuel Clegg, was the first head until his death in 1930. An enterprising local history group there invited us, the three Clegg brothers, to look around and meet a number of people associated with the school past and present. The school was designed by the Derbyshire county architect, George Widdows, who was in the vanguard of school design at the time. His designs paid great attention to health. They ensured good ventilation without draughts and plenty of light. ("To look at schools erected with sanction of the Board of Education one wonders whether the Board did really regard fresh air as an invention of the devil"). The louvres under the windows that admitted air without draughts are still there.

The plan for the school emerged after discussions with both my grandfather and also Michael Sadler, then adviser to



The school main entrance

the Education Committee (later Vice Chancellor of Leeds University), both of whom were very much influenced by Ruskin and Morris and the Arts and Craft Movement. A remarkable feature of the school was my grandfather's main teaching room, the splendid north-facing Art and Craft room lit by a continuous cast iron and glass window extending into the roof like a conservatory.

Art and Craft was an important subject on the curriculum and we have at home a number of objects from that time including a fine silver rose bowl and a carved oak chest made by my grandfather under the tutelage of the craft teacher. He wrote a book on teaching art for which Michael Sadler wrote an introduction to the second edition published after my grandfather's death.

The classrooms were all panelled in oak and each had its own fireplace. The upper floor rooms have a lath and plaster barrel vault ceiling. It is now a listed building but it is deemed no longer suitable for a school. When we saw it it was being converted for small enterprises which meant that the wood block floors were being covered in such a way as to preserve their integrity and the oak wall panels 'protected' with paint.

We were also shown round the new school that a short while ago replaced the 1910 one. It was a Blair PFI initiative school to be paid for, like everything else then, by future generations. It was a depressingly nondescript place, surrounded by a high fence to ensure the investors money is well protected, accurately described as 'reminiscent of a prison' by whoever did its Wikipedia entry. No murals there I noted. In fact they explained that they to get permission of the bankers every time they want to put in a nail to hang a picture.

We were also shown around Sawley, the village at the other side of the canal where my grandfather lived. We saw the house he designed on Bradshaw road. Bradshaw was my



A reminder of a past world. The tiny grave of my Aunt, Eunice Bradshaw Clegg, born 1906, died of diphtheria 1907. The grave was rediscovered this year when the graveyard was cleaned. Only my grandfather would have been allowed in to the chapel for her funeral, my grandmother would have to wait outside. My father, Alexander Bradshaw Clegg was the last born, two years later.

grandmothers maiden name and her father was a builder. He gave up work in his forties when he was given 6 months to live and died in his eighties when he fell off a ladder. All the family are buried around the Baptist Chapel.



This is the last photograph I took of my mother. She is reading Hilary Mantel's Booker winner about Cromwell in her favourite room with a view of the front garden. It was the second week of January and we were enjoying the snow that brought an unusual collection of birds into the garden, including a woodcock and a greater spotted woodpecker. At one point we had bullfinch, greenfinch and goldfinch at the same time on the birdtable. The whole family had been here for Christmas and had just left before the snow fell and mum was enjoying 'a bit of quiet'.

Hospice-at-Home team. She could not have had better care. Shortly after this was taken she was given a hospital bed so that she could sleep in this room. She died, with this view, but with snowdrops, aconites and the first crocuses, two months later. She was 93.



I warm'd both hands before the fire of Life; It sinks, and I am ready to depart. Landon's epitaph is around the edge of the grave of my grandfather and grandmother who died withing 6 months of each other in 1930. Sawley Baptist Chapel.



Eileen had given up her job to look after grandma for the year when some of the tasks such as cooking began to exhaust her. Eileen was helped by a superb team of on-call carers and the doctor and, in her last days, the MacMillan

159 Bower Hinton, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6LG. UK +44 1935 823439.
 Box 9159, Windhoek, Namibia, +264 61 221190, +264 811 290902
 ac@asclegg.co.uk
 www.asclegg.co.uk