

Clegg News 2012



I recall as a child my father showing me how to join two stocks of bees in a way that stops them killing each other. He sprinkled flour over them all. The process of cleaning up their hive and each other was such a good bonding exercise that they all lived together happily ever after. Or they were so exhausted they had no energy left for a fight.

The same principle, I thought, might work when I imported Santjie and so I quickly reduced to a fine rubble what was

previously one half of a perfectly functioning kitchen, a procedure which filled every nook and cranny on all three floors with a fine floury dust.

As a cleaning strategy it all worked fine; Santjie dutifully cleaned every bit of dust out many times over, familiarising herself, in the process, with every wood louse, spider, rat and badger with which we shared the house (the badgers foraged under the pantry in a hole they dug from the green-

house). But I'm not all that convinced about the strategy as a bonding exercise. And six months later the kitchen is still rubblesome.



Extreme cooking. The gravy thickens naturally without adding flour



I've got very little of interest to report this year except for the joy of my Wednesday visits to B&Q (old farts day, 10% discount) to get at least one of every DIY power tool known to man so that I can drill, grout, rout, saw, plane, sand, biscuit joint, grind angles, drive screws, bake bread and make yoghurt all at the flick of a switch.

So, much of this letter does not come from me this year, it comes from Santjie who reported regularly on her continuous struggle to adapt to our quaint island ways. Here are extracts from her Survival Guide....

The English are cautious and courteous drivers. (Thank goodness for that mercy; it feels as though 500 000 of the 16 million vehicles in England use the same stretch of road very time I drive.) Puzzled brother-in-law John points out

that I have been driving for years so what's my problem? The difference is: there are 20 000 vehicles on the roads in the whole of Nam, a country with the combined land area of: the UK (243 000 km²) and Germany (357 000 km²) and Portugal (92 000 km²) and Austria (84 000 km²) and Switzerland (41 000 km²) and Luxembourg (2 600 km²) and a few km²s left over.

The English are not as proper as I thought. Proof: Wessex, Sussex Essex and (lo and behold) Middlesex. The art scene is equally revealing.



In the sea up north. Many of Anthony Gormley's works are based on molds taken from his own body, 'the closest experience of matter that I will ever have and the only part of the material world that I live inside.' (Wikipedia)



Freud's thanatos and eros on a hillside near us. The 55 m x 51 m Giant of Cerne Abbas 'which antiquarians associate with a Saxon deity, a Celtic British figure, the Roman Hercules, or some synchronization of the latter two'. (Wikipedia)

English animals have strange habits:



One of my sadistic friends from sub-Saharan Africa sent me this weekend photo:



My reply

Dearest %\$£@, Don't think the English haven't been initiated to the delights and mastered the art of a BBQ. Lust after this a little bit:



An English braaiplace and white succulent sausages (there are patties too; they are waiting in the cellophane!).

The braaiplace must be gas-fired and portable to flee from sudden downpours. These white sausages were awaiting a break in the rain to be cooked at the Diamond Jubilee Bower Hinton Street Party (I expect there were some red and blue ones somewhere)



Unity is strength. The men (so what's new) ensure that the white sausages are JUST PERFECT. (Note other essential English braai features; the awning and the wellies)

Some advice to visiting Southern Africans.

There are wonderful places to visit and things to do in England: television, stately gardens, stately homes, stately museums (where you can dress up in old clothes) and reclamation yards (where you can buy a Russian tank).

Charity Shops are tops, but you have to abide by the rules:

Regulation 1: One doesn't do other people's underwear; then you could rather go without.

Regulation 2: The smarter the village, the more classic and better quality the clothes.

Regulation 3: Stay clear of pajamas and dressing gowns. Considering the aging British population, it is not impossible that the previous wearer died in them.



Trying on someone else's discarded underwear. Breathe in and hold.

And you can go hiking. Hiking in gruesome weather over muddy hills and dales is a revered middle class activity and is indicative of your steely resolve.



You need the right boots



Map work is an integral part of hiking. I still don't see the value of conferring for hours over maps when village pubs are only 1 to 3 miles apart.

Switch the SATNAV over to Flemish and enjoy the nearly-Afrikaans. Expect difficulties if your spouse is driving.

If things really get you down, drive to Worcester or Wellington or Kimberley or Aberdeen and get someone to photograph you next to the town name sign. Look for the South African Shop and buy Chappies (keep spouse happy during the outing with the the "Did you know" questions on the wrapper), Matabela porridge, Mrs Balls chutney, Nestle topdeck, Ouma rusks and Graca. Remember: you should have organised a bank loan before you left home, particularly for the Graca.



In extremis. Get on a plane to George and drive your brother's combi into the river

Aluta continua



Family snippets.

Dan has a new job at Barclays giving out money instead of receiving it.

Eileen continues her work at Fort Nelson near Portsmouth as Education Officer with the oversight of the biggest collection of guns in Christendom, including a section of Saddam's supergun, which she has to keep greased inside to stop her little children climbing up it. She has the capacity to fire annoying teenagers into the middle of Portsmouth harbour but so far has not been able to get permission from the HSE.

Little Andrew is in his second year at secondary school and is displaying disturbing signs of wanting to become a scientist.

Santjie, after two years, over £2000 in fees, and a test that most indigenous Brits would fail, has her Right To Remain and plastic card to prove it. She is also registered with the Health Professions Council.

I have almost stopped work. This year I have been sorting out Uganda in a few short visits, a task made immeasurably more difficult by a barn owl that made snoring noises all night perched on my balcony rail and a pair of depraved Hadedas who copulated incessantly and extremely noisily on my roof.



Snores loudly all night



Hadedas are compulsive nest makers; they make the worlds largest nest that resembles a tree-borne compost heap.



And now to this years disease. I have been diagnosed with Dupuytren's Contracture, an irritating condition that everyone else finds very amusing that prevents me putting my hand in my pocket because my little finger (the G sharp key one) is permanently bent at right angles. I have been told laughingly many times that it was incurable but the other day a kind young doctor referred me to a clinic where they specialise in beating out bent fingers at appropriately named Shepton Mallet. If anyone reading this has ever had, or has known anyone with, Dupuytren's Contracture I'd like to hear from them. I want to know if the beating hurts.



This year we (which is to say, S, her cousin Melanie who is descended from a long line of tin miners called Lucas, and I) went to Cornwall searching for more of the few of Santjie's family ancestors that had somehow managed to avoid hanging or being burnt at the stake.

By pure chance we parked the car in the centre of Redruth right outside a wonderful branch of the Cornwall library that, to our amazement, had a section entirely devoted to finding ancestors. We received a lot of help there searching online census returns and quickly discovered that there were, in the 1860s, only two Cornish families that had the name of Lucas and were tin miners and both lived, it appeared, at Callington.

We were after one that probably emigrated in the Kimberley diamond rush of about 1871 but did not manage to pin him down before lunchtime closing (it was Saturday). We went out to sample a local Cornish pasty, from which we still have not quite recovered, and got some quite nice photos of Mr Brunel's spectacular railway that was the first stage of the Kimberley rush.



Redruth station about a century ago with departing miners on their way to Southampton and the Cape



The Cornwall end of the Great Western line was completed after Brunel's death when the company was running a bit short of money. They built the viaduct pillars but could not afford the arches so they erected some temporary wooden scaffolding on top to take the line. It was 'temporary' for about 30 years and it was the next century before they built it properly. Most of the viaducts were then rebuilt from scratch next to the old ones. A few, however, just had an extra bit added to the old pillar to support a new steel superstructure.



We were shown a Lucas grave in Callington cemetery in the rain by a chicken. It was on the non-conformist side. It was, of course, the grave of a Lucas that did not go to Kimberley but it was the best the chicken could do.



On the way to Callington we stopped at St Ive, a tiny village with a little church and a big rectory where, in 1860, Emily Hobhouse was born. She, it was, that later, by bringing the obscenities of the British concentration camps of the South African war to the attention of the people in Britain, brought about the downfall first the government and then the Empire. "I rub salt", she said, "into the sore parts of their minds". To see her salt that changed the world, look up Lizzie van Zyl in Wikipedia.

The elderly lady at the St Ive rectory considerably delayed her departure to church to tell us a lot about the Hobhouses' life there; her father was a spare son of a not-quite aristocrat who, as such spares did, went into the church after Eton and Balliol. So Emily grew up knowing how to bend ears and gain influence and was, by all accounts, both formidable and stunning.



St Ive rectory. Santjie with the owner who told us so much about Emily Hobhouse - and was late for church



After the South African war, the women of the Boer Republics collected £2600 pounds (about £100 000 in today's money) by asking each family to contribute half a crown. They bought her a little house in St Ives in which to live out her days. We were told that this was probably an error and the intention was to buy one in St Ive where she was born. Her St Ives house is now part of a hotel.

Emily Hobhouse (from an Anglo-Boer war celebration tin of Oumarusk)



Each year, on Emily's birthday, the wife of president Steyn sent her a hamper of South African foods, including dried fruit and biltong. After her death in 1926 Emily's ashes were sealed in the Womens memorial in Bloemfontein (see Clegg News 2011).



We still need to fill in a few holes in the Lucas story. But nobody will easily fill in the hole that he and thousands of others made in Kimberley. In those Empire days you could just walk into Africa and make a pretty big mess wherever you liked and the profits, although lining the pockets of the few, also built some splendid cities and spawned endless copies of the standard Queen Victoria statue.

These days there are a few differences of course; the mess is still allowed but the great buildings and Victorias are not; the money today seldom gets further than the faceless men in their tinted glass mercs.

Today the 'commodity' companies sell on the extracted metals at a loss to a subsidiary somewhere like Switzerland to avoid paying the agreed royalties to the country that gets the hole, a time-honoured process recently patiently explained by Starbucks to our naive Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee.

Like Starbucks coffee in Britain, commodities like copper, platinum and uranium are always mined at loss in Africa, and, quite often, even subsidised by the governments whose territory is being destroyed. And the mess these days is much bigger because you have to move a lot more rock to get the same amount of product. EDF, for example, in



A very great man indeed.

Queen Victoria, caught here in the Scarborough winter, carried her crown, orb and sceptre throughout the world. We encountered her again this year in Portsmouth and Cape Town and Santjie spent much of her early life with her outside the magnificent library building in Port Elizabeth.

order to supply with uranium the likes of the new reactor up the road from here at Hinkley Point, is in the process of digging a hole 40 square kilometres in area and 200m deep in pristine semi-desert on the edge of the Namib, an small, ancient and unique habitat of rare endemic species. The alternative would be to turn over a quarter of Dartmoor; clearly unacceptable.

The Empire is dead. Long live the Empire.



A Happy New Year.