

Hello All

Well, here's the Digital Christmas Card Mark 3. Herewith I wish you all the best of Festive good-will, compliments of the season and a most excellent New Year. The Christian bit is optional, feel free to insert the celebration of your choice.

So far so good, at least I haven't had any complaints, and have received a few (of a similar sort) back. In case you are wondering I intend to spend the money saved on a large bottle of whisky, and shall drink to your collective health. Though not all at once, especially since the Scottish Government has just halved the amount of alcohol allowed in a driver.

I think there are a lot of anti-social activities being squeezed out of life, mostly with good reason, I'm just hoping that it doesn't go too far, but then the slave driving plantation owners probably said the same thing. Perhaps I should pledge to give up alcohol when the politicians stop lying. I think I'll be safe for a while.

The year has been busy, I'm glad to say it usually is. We've had a look at Saint Petersburg and cruised the Baltic. (Strange to think that 70 years ago such a trip would have carried a 60% survivability). I discovered that the Baltic is rather shallow, and almost fresh water, and that's why it freezes so easily, mind it does get quite chilly, in Peterhof it gets so cold they can't use marble out-doors for fear of it bursting, it puts our Scottish Winters into perspective.

I think Tallinn and Peterhof were the best bits, followed by the food on the ship as a close third. Most entertaining, if rather fattening.

Our 5/2 diet took a bit of punishment, but we're back to optimal now. I thought I had put on a stone, but re-calculation suggests it was nearer 7lb (about 3 kilos) Just as well it didn't go any further as I'd bought a suit for the purpose, and only allowed a couple of inches of waist-line for such contingencies

On the technical front we've replaced all the lighting with LEDs, learned how to use an ipad, (I even used it to dictate part of this, it can transcribe voice to text. Whatever next?) We decided to clad the house with insulation and have put a new roof on the wood shed. I've built another garage and am considering filling it with a small grey Massey Ferguson tractor. I saw one with crawler tracks, but I think that might be a little over the top even for our winters. This one can run on paraffin or petrol, but sadly, although Tarbrax was the Paraffin capital of the world in 1900, you can't buy it anywhere near here now.

We've had a little snow, as I write, nothing serious, but the media is full of threats of an impending blizzard. I think they are just selling newspapers etc, but if you don't hear any more from me you'll know they

were right. Most likely not. I wouldn't want to be pouring cold water on their opinions, but it's what you get when hot air gets on thin ice. The lack of fluffy white stuff just now means I'll have to delve into the archives to find a suitable wintry photo for the card. Apparently garden furniture covered in snow is popular, but I think I used that for the first card. It also has the advantage that snow doesn't use much printer ink.

Well, 2015 approaches. Another year fades, We lost a few old friends and gained a few new ones. No major calamities, in spite of the media, or at least not here. I must admit the UK is a pretty good place, though I'm sure everybody likes their home. Scotland still needs independence, I'll not be changing my mind on that.

Whatever happened to the end of the world that was supposed to happen in 2012? Come to that I must have heard a dozen other similar. Funny how the prophets of such doom always go quiet, or decide it must have been next month after all. I occasionally wonder whether they are made up by newspapers like their weather forecasts, or politicians wanting to cause a distraction.

There's always more of this inconsequential stuff at <http://jimhewlett.homestead.com/> if you feel strong enough, but I'd advise going for a walk with your family / dog / thoughts / deity of choice. I'm going to light the fire.

Love from Jim and Fiona

Have a Happy Christmas and a great New Year

