

Hi, and a Happy Christmas to you all.

Far from the promised harsh Winter it's all grey and soggy just now, so this picture is more in the spirit of the thing.

This time last year we were up to our oxters (Scottish arm-pits) in snow, there was hardly any wind, which means it doesn't drift and block the roads, and it was exceedingly cold. This time it is almost 10° Celsius (or Centigrade, if you will) there has been almost no snow, very little frost, but most of our local roads are blocked with wind blown trees. I'm glad to report that we didn't have any significant damage from the storm although we were right in the middle of it. Several neighbours had roof damage. I slept right through it, the advantage of being surrounded by resilient trees. At 1000 feet we get the wind, but at least we don't have to worry about high tides, unlike a lot of the country. I wonder if the government will consider attending to global warming when they need wellies to get to work? I doubt it, I think they'll just retire to somewhere safe with nice big pensions.

One advantage of the mild weather is that we've been able to continue working in the garden. For my part that means building the poly-tunnel. The chap who sold it to me had it standing in a flat field, nice and level with deep dark soil, I wish my site was as nice, the ground was a bumpy, uneven slope with trees growing on it, the 'soil' was 50% bricks 20% lime plaster and sand and 15% waste shale, all of which had to come out. The remainder was hardly soil, barely dirt in fact, but has been improved with a few tons of horse manure, some spare soil that I had, and compost. The frame is up now, and reasonably level, awaiting a polythene cover. Hopefully that will make the current regime of Extreme Rabbit Persecution unnecessary.

Fiona has branched out into home food preservation, and found a pasteuriser, so that the garden produce can go into Kilner Jars, remember them? They still work, and don't need electricity. With them we should be able to prevent the feast / famine problem that vegetable gardens tend to produce.

Further back in the year, significant events were the Shetland Folk Festival, visited friends and doing the touristy bit. The Red Midge became road legal, and proved fun to drive. It might get a Tonneau cover for its first Christmas. The 5/2 diet continues to keep our respective weights reasonable in spite of our eating too much, as usual, when visiting Mum for a trip to the Isle of Wight. We built an extra woodshed and re-roofed the other, added a rockery and started on an additional garage

On a sadder note, Fiona's mother, Lillias passed away at 92, the service went well with a good eulogy and the hymns she had chosen. A bright, dry, if rather chilly day and quite a good 'turn out'. I think she'd have liked it.

Despite the mild, if blowy weather there is some chance of a white Christmas, we are stocked up with wood for the fire, chocolate biscuits, red wine and whisky, and intend to have a good time anyway. Hoping yours all go as well.

*Love from Jim and Fiona*

Happy Christmas

