

So what's been happening since last I wrote? Fairly busy I guess, Bella, my niece, Bill's daughter, came over from Australia with a few chums to take 4th in the international Dance competition in Glasgow. Her troupe is called 'Provocativ'. I must admit to a complete lack of skill as far as dancing is concerned, and generally a lack of interest, so I was pleased to find their HipHop routine (as I understand the term) rather entertaining. Several of the teams did quite well, though my final judgement may be a little biased. We had the usual stresses and strains expected of show-biz but managed to provide Mum, Bill, Emma and Bella accommodation and food when required and even managed a high speed chase when we found Bella was on the wrong train and heading out into the depths of Scotland. All turned out well though and she was retrieved before disappearing into deepest Edinburgh. No sooner was the competition over than Fiona and I rushed off to Montrose Airfield to meet up with Andy, an old friend of Fiona's, watch their open-day and see what he was doing there. Part of it is replicating a machine gun on a '1½ Strut' Sopwith Biplane



I'm hoping he will be able to offer some advice on my attempts to get a battery fitted to the house. The idea is to store the electricity generated by the solar panels so that I can use it myself rather than buying it from the electricity company. Otherwise, if I'm using more at a given time than is generated, I have to pay for it even if I then immediately generate more than I've used. The government prevents me from having enough panels to simply generate enough, so a battery should smooth out the surges and reduce the bills. Eventually I would like to be able to go 'off grid' and put up enough panels and batteries to have a zero bill, but that will have to wait until the feed in tariff ends in 15 years or so when I can add panels with impunity.

It does seem a bit perverse, but I think the power companies have more interest in profit than reducing mankind's carbon footprint.

Unsurprising perhaps that they don't want me to produce more than I use, but how they persuaded the government to go along with it I cannot imagine.

In the meantime I have about eight large pine trees that will need to come down before they get wind blown, and that will provide plenty of heat. They'll be replaced by deciduous hardwood specimens which will be better fuel eventually if the solar panels don't replace wood burning completely before their harvest time, and if it does then they'll still be nice trees to have in the garden.

After the Montrose trip we visited Dunoon in Argyll for a couple of days, Fiona was born there and lived in Sandbank just off the Holy Loch for her first few years before her family set off for Shetland. We drove overland into the Cowal peninsular to get there and then on to the island of Bute, returning by two ferries to Glasgow. It's surprising how far you can get from city life in a few miles of ferry crossing. The Glaswegians used to refer to the trip as 'doon the watter'



and would go there for holidays being a short trip to a different environment. Still wet though. There was also an advantage of a ferry trip in that you could get a drink on a Sunday, difficult throughout Scotland at the time. That was in the days of the paddle steamers like the Waverley, which was built in 1948 and accounts for the expression 'steaming' meaning well drunk.

The trip was triggered by an unexpected local offer of a discount on the usual Esplanade Hotel prices, we took that up and it proved to be a very reasonable price for excellent accommodation and food. While there we had a look at the local museum <http://www.castlehousemuseum.org.uk/>, incidentally curated by John



Stirling who went to school with Andrew, Fiona's brother. While chatting we mentioned the oil lamp in one of the exhibition rooms, as I have been looking for a glass 'shade' long lost from a lamp we inherited from Fiona's parents. John's assistant Linda said we could



have one she no longer needed, a very generous offer, and sent us around to her house where her husband gave us a complete lamp. So I'm still looking for a shade, only now it has to match the other lamp. I think I may have found one on eBay, so more on that later.

Dunoon was a delight, although you will need waterproof clothing if you go there as it rains a fair bit. Having said that, it rains a fair bit here too, especially when the hurricane season is in full swing so I guess it wasn't much of a problem, and

unless you come from Kent you'll probably manage. For the second ferry to the island of Bute and our exploration of Mount Stuart House

I had my camouflage jacket which is waterproof, but only works optically in custard. The house is a magnificent Victorian construction which demonstrates what you can do if you have a



vast amount of money, cheap skilled labour and access to all the treasures of the world, combined with the technology to manipulate the materials and transport them. It did worry my inner socialist, which was further stressed to note that a curator of the library had found a first folio (Shakespeare) which would be worth a few bob. The rich get richer....still, it is now open to the public and well worth a look. A small cafe underneath the house had well priced and excellent sandwiches as well as the best 'flat white' coffee I've had in years.

While we were away it appears the potential war between America (or as I should say the USA) and North Korea has been through a lot of foot stamping and general sword rattling, though I suspect it has more to do with the USA and the USSR really.

I wonder if someone would be kind enough to explain why the USA thinks the answer (to a country having the temerity to build a nuclear bomb that they might let off,) is to pre-emptively throw another at them. Quite apart from their reputation of exploding the wrong targets with pin point accuracy, and a tendency to attack the wrong country for the wrong reasons and a total inability to learn from their or anybody else's experience this does seem a little dim. They already know what happens to loose radioactive material around Japan in the jet stream and ocean currents. Perhaps they just recognise a two year old tyrant when they see one. Hopefully there will be a responsible adult keeping an eye on them. Fortunately a third world war (ie a world war in a series of at least three rather than a war involving 'third world' countries) would be so expensive that we'd all end up A./ Dead and B./ in debt... or dead broke. You might think we'd be safe here, or even in Dunoon, but some idiot has parked a load of nuclear weapons in our back yard and, if it did all kick off, then I'm sure somebody would decide to plant one here to stop anyone else using them. Exactly the same scenario as North Korea. Another good reason for putting them next to the houses of parliament. Sorry London, but you voted for them, I didn't.

On a lighter note I managed to get another of Mum's stories onto the web-site with the aid of a new narrator, Rachel, consequently my favourite cousin, who sounds very similar to my mother in this circumstance. you'll find it at [h t t p : / /](http://www.)



wardrobestories.homestead.com/Dr-Plum-and-Prof-McFarlane.html

I didn't get the editing quite right so there's a ten second delay where there should be a short introductory burst of Paul and Ben's 'Last Buds of Summer' but the recording sounds good to me, thanks Rachel.

A little progress has been made on the Midges, I need a certain amount of time pootling around in the garage, even if it's just tidying though not to the point of actually having a tidy garage you understand. Shed therapy is very important but I could really do with a separate shed for each activity. Woodwork, welding, painting, electrical / electronic, meddling with obscure and usually broken bits of machinery and of course computing, but as they all, except computer work, happen in the same shed so they tend to get complicated and cluttered. I did think about getting something like an aircraft hanger, but I now know they get just as cluttered with bigger things, like aircraft, and you still need separate sheds for wing building, engine testing, storage and fuselage construction. So a few Midges are a relatively compact version.

I've replaced a track-rod arm on the green Midge for an upcoming MOT and made some interior improvements on the red one, notably seats, carpets and gearbox housing with a view to making the red one road-legal. However the MOBC has been getting most of the attention as the magazine is due out at the end of September, so the MOTs have been delayed. I also discovered I'd mis-positioned a mudguard (under the exhaust), but I think I've worked that problem out so that'll be ok.

Well, that is some of the things we've been up to, other elements included travelling, but some damn fool has been jamming sat-navs near here. It has enough trouble getting through Glasgow as it is, especially as I hadn't updated the map since the new bit of motorway has been built, and the new Queensferry Crossing still isn't on it. Apparently it is now possible to buy jammers on the internet, although I guess anyone doing that would be giving out a traceable signal. Still, the paper maps and road signs get you through most of it as long as you approach Glasgow carefully, their road planners have what is referred to as a GSOH. Fiona tells me there is something in Morrisons carpark that prevents car central locking from working properly, which would make them

easy targets for thieves, which presumably why it is being used. It might be worth checking that all the doors have locked in car-parks, (it makes a slightly different sound if they don't) and I doubt it is just the one incident.

Errol the cat is still with us, quite thin, no surprise at 17, but apparently happy and has taken to singing to us between 3am and 7am after which he goes back to bed. He still finds closed doors a never ending source of amusement, and will sit half in and half out for ages if allowed. Open doors are ignored. Today he sat on the mat in the porch between the two closed doors and refused to make his mind up. I think it's called the uncertainty principle. Schrödinger has a lot to answer for.