

Greetings, a-gog readers!



Struthious. That's the word of the year. Meaning later, if I remember.

NEWS: we moved. Phew. Next morning went like this:

You are in a room full of cardboard boxes. There is a door to the north. There is a door to the east. What shall I do?

-- Go north.

That route is blocked by cardboard boxes. What shall I do?

-- Go east.

You are in a room full of cardboard boxes. There is a door to the north. There is a door to the west. What shall I do? ... You need coffee.

-- Open a box.

The box contains a small blue bird's egg, a George IVth hapenny, a bag of dirty shirts, unbelievable numbers of small pots of paint, a bundle of old letters, a butterfly net, seven precision-tooled unrecognisable plastic objects saying 'Replace when not in use' and a coffee mug. What shall I do? ... You need coffee.

-- Make coffee.

You have no kettle. What shall I do? ... You need coffee badly.

-- Open a box.

There is no room to do that until you repack the last box. What shall I do? ... You need coffee urgently.

-- Help?

You are in a room filled with boxes ... The builders have left a large circular saw outside. You seize each box in turn and carefully slice it into bacon, then place on the ground as floor tiles ... You have died from decaffeination.

The rules of our new game **Box Patience** now available together with starter kit of **30 still-to-be-unpacked boxes**.

We have new windows. Would you believe they come with user manuals? These things open 4 different ways and 5 on Sundays.

Been spending much time trying to persuade paint to become vertical instead of horizontal. Now discovered this will soon be a thing of the past. ePaint uses collective-action Paint Directors, which determine their latitude and longitude by GPS and their height above sea-level by moon-radar, then distribute themselves evenly over the surface and attract the magnetic paint towards them. The Paint Manager program on your mobile phone directs

operations by Bluetooth. Still some difficulties: only works during certain phases of the moon, and if your mobile loses its connection it paints the whole house and then the street outside until it runs out of paint. By the way, how many sides has a door? Not 2, that's too easy. Not 6, either: you don't seem to paint tops and bottoms, but to make up for that you *do* paint the door frame. So it's 7, right? Now that's clear, question 2: if the door connects a green room to a red room, which bits of the door are supposed to be green and which should be red?

MORE NEWS: Martin and Inge have acquired a new and quite loud instrument called Ewen Thomas (much chuffed to share my name with him); book now open on future career of son of two professional traditional musicians -- indeed, professional accordion players, no less: (a) accountant, (b) long-distance runner, (c) deaf. Owen, who's researching electro-acoustic music in London while



living in Edinburgh (why not) takes us to meet his lovely lively Alex from time to time, most recently at the Tower of London (which has more sharp objects than is comfortable) then bracing strolls beside the Thames, which promises to run softly

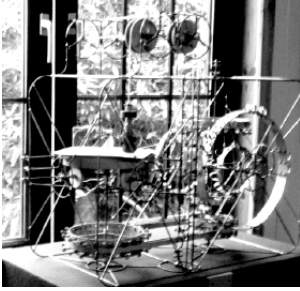
until he finishes his PhD. Not that the Thames could give Owen's music much competition anyway. Sarah has at last got a studio share and is busily verticalising paint, see her lovely website at <http://www.sarahroberts.net/>

Jo and I have work-rooms looking across the river. I like it. We watch weeping willows waft the woeful waves, while gawky geese gobble the green-haired grass. Tired tourists tramp the *shut up!* **More news!! - Ed.**

OK, but I do like living by a river - all the gardening is done by the ducks.

Proud and touching moments: on leaving Leeds, two of our friends (Phil Green and Terry Simpson) wrote songs for us. We were astonished and delighted. Maybe we should move more often.

Recent rambles 1: Kirkudbright Open Studios Weekend (okay, you southerners, this is how you say it: ker-coo-brie) where with Owen and Sarah we toured numberless studios,



chose not to examine local scenery in the rain, found a pub session (where as soon as we walked in a voice from the past said Hello Thomas, did you bring a flute?), and scoured the streets for grub, amazed that a tourist centre with a big event had failed to provide more nosh. Some great stuff on show, especially pottery, plus a baffling set of mechanical artforms, some of them mercilessly dropping balls onto drumheads, others drawing weird patterns (left).

The big 80's: Jo's mother Rose had her 80th birthday. There was a family trip to Long Melford to see how the other 0.001% lived, and her sister Andy got the quartet from Rigoletto played for her on Classic FM. Never done that before. An ideal birthday present - no wrapping!

Another friend of ours had an 80th, too, which got treated rather differently. The ambition was to write a masque to be performed in the garden, but we had difficulties with the masque traditions, such as lowering a chariot from the skies containing the 12 Hours clad in silk, each in a colour appropriate to her time of day, who then daunce to the musicke of 30 Rusticks who emerge soudenely from a bush (and so on). In the end we settled for all his friends turning up to play a succession of party pieces, while John, the birthday-ee, presided lordlily [*be quiet, spelling checker. Of course there's such a word*] over our revels.

Recent rambles 2: Between us the Editor and her assistant went to five music courses, of surprisingly different characters. Thomas's fave moments included helping to play a fanfare on a dead-straight 8-foot trumpet (only the one note, but I got to play it lots of times, and my arm nearly fell off holding that great drainpipe); and listening in the starlit grounds of Dartington Hall to a Scandinavian group who stopped in their late-night walk home to serenade the statue of a swan with swanly madrigals, entirely from memory and entirely in the dark. Jo's moments included playing improvised bass on the viol under the fiddles hollering through a klezmer piece, and having an interesting tune written for her by a fellow-guest at our B&B.

..... There go yet more police cars. We hadn't realised how many sirens would pass our way. Ambulance and fire engines too, racing off to the A64 to pick up the pieces after a smash. Quite a racket as they rush past. A sort of alarms race. Last week Jo was much shocked to see armed police arresting a man outside our house. This week the same thing happened again and Thomas was even more shocked. Were they picking off the neighbours one by one? By coincidence both events were on Thursday lunchtime but wait. It seems the police do training exercises in the grounds of the adjacent college at that time of day. By the time we'd found that out we were quite edgy. Littering is one thing, but shooting is another.

This year's competition was Paint Name of the Year. Short list (all genuine) included 'Pale Hound', 'Allure', 'Timeless', 'Almost Oyster', 'Illusion', 'Wellbeing'. Who thinks of these things? Easy winner: 'Dead Salmon'. (Goes well with 'Revive'.) Naturally we chose 'Folly Green'.

The Editor says there should be a pic of me, so here I am with a rat on my head.



Now I must go off and work on my Chaucer follow-up. I'm writing the Manx Cat's Tale. (*Or the Manx Rat's. - Ed.*)

And lastly Struthious means 'of or like an ostrich'. That's from the Concise Oxford. If you try Webster's online you get a side panel advertising 'Pure Australian Emu Oil'. Must be wonderful stuff - it costs £7 for 55 grams. Strewthious.

Farewell for now, de-gogged reader. Happy Winter Solstice and Thriving Commercial Festivity from the Greens.

