

And finally ... my footnotes from my 2017/18 monthly reports

May 2018

And finally May does seem to be a month that marks the divide between the winter and a fitful spring and the summer. For me it's increasingly marking the end of a little frenetic election activity (please let's not have any more elections for a while), it includes a week away (Sardinia this year, go to <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmiBCBGe> for a few photos), the FA cup final and the first test matches, and it ends with the H&I Flaming June half marathon where I was on marshal duty this morning. Looking forward we've got the three 'summer months' of June, July and August and maybe a bonus in September. That means more cricket, lots of alfresco dining, complaints about the heat and opportunities to enjoy the events which characterise life in our summer. And this year we've got the 'bonus' of the football world cup to set it all off later in June and will seem to go on for ever until the final mid July.

June 2018

And finally ... there's been depressing news about rail services of late but I successfully used Cambridge North station for the first time to go down to London for a couple of meetings. It was an easy start to the day with none of the parking difficulties which you encounter at the main station. It was a fine sunny day and although I arrived in London at Liverpool Street and left via King's Cross I was able to avoid using the tube because my two meetings were an easy walk on the route between them. Not only do you get the exercise of course but you've also got the thrill of walking past the sites of London, in this case it was St Paul's and then the law courts, Fleet Street and the Aldwych, and chancing on the opportunity of a little alfresco dining on the way. This week I'll be going to London again and plan to be even more virtuous by cycling to the station; after all it's only 15 minutes max down the guided bus track.

July 2018

And finally ... it's been a remarkable month weather-wise with just the short respite a couple of weekends ago when the temperature dropped and it rained. Our lawns are looking very dry of course but it's encouraging how few people are taking their hoses to them. Notwithstanding the chance of water scarcity I always find it wasteful to think of water companies making our water fit for drinking and then for people to just use it for watering the lawn. But surely this weather should make us think about the future when it will become the norm. We need to factor it into our decisions for the future from the designs of houses, through to the technology we use for generating electricity to the way which we can care for our older and less capable people. It can't be just business as usual.

August 2018

And finally ... the summer seems to have gone on for ever and during August we were blessed at home by a visit from Number 1 son who lives in Australia. I drove him back to Heathrow 1 Sep 18. It's not a drive I do often now but I noticed firstly the housing development, including a goodly number of affordables, on the right as you head into Harston and then the apparent recent demise of three pubs (one more recently an Indian restaurant) along the High Street. Surely it's wrong when we get housing but lose the social facilities which enable people to live full and engaging lives. I don't see any evidence of any new shops either although there seem to be a number of properties which

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have been converted into offices. When we talk about sustainable development we need to be mindful that there are three dimensions to this: environmental, social and commercial. It doesn't seem to me that Harston's development is sustainable.

September 2018

And finally ... what dismayed me most when I observed traffic behaviour at the lights on the B1049 (see above) was the number of people who went through on red. That's selfish and dangerous. By contrast earlier in the month I'd seen traffic in India which is of course a little more chaotic. What struck me was that in a situation of zero lane discipline the traffic moved. It seemed that everyone looked out for everyone else, pedestrians, cyclists, bicycle riskshaws, Tuk Tuks, cars buses etc, so amidst all this chaos there was some innate sense of fair play and unselfishness. Quite a contrast. If you're interested there are a few of my photos at <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmosF5EU> and a blog post at <https://wp.me/phtcF-Mq>.

October 2018

And finally ... I've been a library user this month but not as a barrower of books but as a participant in a 'writing about your life' course with local author Judy Wilson. I'm one of five but the only male and we cover the range from young to old. I'm not naturally emotional so my writing tends to be rather dry and fact based. The others put me to shame with their writing evoking the experiences of days gone by and their impact on the author. Two or three of us read each week and then we all comment on each other's work. It's all very civilised of course and the other four have been very gentle with me. I read about my early life a couple of weeks ago and I'm due to read another text next week. I've posted the last one at <https://wp.me/phtcF-MB>.

November 2018

And finally ... and I'm sure I've said something similar before but mid-month I headed off to North Wales for a school reunion. That was on the Friday night and Juni and I then spent the night in Dyffryn Ceiriog, that's south of Snowdonia. It is what you might call a different world: hills if not real mountains, sheep farms and not a housing development in sight. Perhaps surprisingly the roads all seem to be in a good state of repair and we drove down lots of country lanes, we don't get them in Cambridgeshire either, with immaculately trimmed hedges on either side. I read an article in a local magazine about expectations for the sheep farmers post Brexit. It was a leave voting region but the general consensus now seems to be that sheep farming as we know it today will not survive outside the EU.

December 2018

And finally ... I took a week out early in the month for a holiday in Oman. It's an interesting place and quite different from its neighbours: Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. It's been run by the Sultan for 50 years and he appears to have done rather a good job. There's free universal healthcare and education, an excellent road system (no potholes!) and, apparently no crime. Visitors tend only to see the good side however and I was uncomfortable with a system which is tolerant of men taking multiple wives and one which so severely constrains the lives of women. However alongside its conservatism is a pragmatism that allows alcohol in hotels and some restaurants and bacon on the

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breakfast buffet. There's more about my trip at <https://wp.me/phtcF-NE> and a photo gallery at <https://flic.kr/s/aHsmsGKzVL>.

January 2019

And finally ... There's a lot of it about. I seem to pick up a virus most years and although it never lays me low it hangs around. This year's been no different but I seem to be OK now so I'm not grumbling. But I do note how many people seem to have been laid low and a lot more seriously than me. Is it getting worse? I can't help but think that prevailing levels of air pollutions have an impact and as these get worse we're all going to get sick more often, absenteeism at our schools and work places will increase and NHS costs will rise. As they say 'something must be done'.

February 2019

And finally ... twice recently I've taken issue with motorists sat in their parked vehicles with the engines running. Both times they've been trade vehicles (first British Gas which I reported on Twitter, second Martin Traffic Management see <https://wp.me/p7tuu7-1Qz>) and both times the drivers have given me to believe that they've thought that it was a little loopy to ask them to switch off their engines. What gets me is that at the very least it's a waste of money but more important it adds to the pollution of our community. It's unnecessary. Why don't these people give it a second thought and think 'yes, I've got kids and I'd prefer them to grow up in a less polluted environment'? But then we're all guilty sometimes so maybe we should all think about switching our engines off when we're waiting in a queue at traffic lights.

March 2018

And finally ... it's not been a bad month. Firstly Wales won the Grand Slam and then we didn't leave the EU. As far as Wales is confirmed every such success is a bonus and I wouldn't have put much money on it this year at half time in the French game but they delivered nonetheless. What was surprising about it though was that Wales won in a very un-Welsh fashion. Not by scoring lots of tries but simply by playing a game which resulted in more points, and conceding fewer, over the full 80 minutes of a game. And concerning the EU it's still a case of 'who knows?'. Some time or another someone on the leave side may just stand up and say 'it can't be done' because Ms May's famous red lines do not allow enough freedom for the negotiators to come up with a solution that works.

April 2019

And finally ... what is happening to the weather? Easter weekend was a blazer and we got the garden furniture out. This weekend we're down to single digit temperatures. It's all consistent with what the scientists tell us of course about the impact of climate change and we've recently become more sensitised to this by quotes from the likes of David Attenborough, the Extinction Rebellion demonstrations and the extraordinary lead taken by Greta Thunberg. I've been bought into the need for us to address climate change for some time but I increasingly think about what more I can do. For me it comes down to action in three areas: plastics, travel and consumption. I'm getting better in all three but my weakness is air travel. I've done too much in my time and I still do, last month I flew to Sicily and back on vacation, although most of my other travel is sustainable. I'm going to have to do some pretty serious thinking about how I can 'offset' my planned trip to Indonesia at year end.