



Whittingham Bridge in the snow on 19.11.10 by Doreen.

As I write this a very unseasonable blizzard is blowing outside. We are cut off from the rest of the world but following last winter's similar icy blast we are well stocked with food, fuel and general comforts!

We left it too late to catch some autumn sunshine abroad this year so we settled for 4 days touring in glorious sunshine the Shropshire/Wales border and arrived home just as autumn made its lightning switch to winter.

We made a summer trip to one of the "secret" corners of West Northumberland to see the village of Great Bavington which has the oldest Prebyterian Church in the county. The main street of the village takes you straight back to Victorian times. Nearby is the isolated church of Thockrington on its little hill where the great founder of the Welfare State, William Beveridge, is buried. We ended the tour in the secluded village of Beltingham, south of the River Tyne, where Bishop Ridley, the Protestant martyr, was born. The churchyard has yew trees reported to be over 2,000 years old.

The village newspaper, the local history society, the activities which have developed since the Village Memorial Hall was transformed with the help of a National Lottery grant and the nearby Anglican church community keep us busy. The United Reformed Church in Alnwick which has been recently refurnished is a real stimulus to the congregation who now have to think through in what ways they can more effectively serve their community.

Living in the far North Eastern corner of England means that we don't see our family and friends as often as we'd like but we are looking forward to spending Christmas in Sheffield with Lyn and Rod and Paul. They spent two weeks with us in the summer and Max came up as well. Max is going to spend Christmas this year with his mother and friends in Hertford

Paul continues to work in recruitment but has moved to a larger firm where he expects to have better prospects. Lyn now shares an art studio in Sheffield with a friend and teaches art and craft as well as selling her art on "open" weekends. She still runs courses for various agencies in management on a self-employed basis. Rod is enjoying semi-retirement from his Library work in Hallam University and is expanding his music interests. Max is in his final year of GCSE studies but like most teenage boys he is finding it hard to be weaned away from his real interest in the football team he plays for. Lisa has just branched out by setting-up her own hairdressing business in Hertford. It's a brave move in the present economic conditions but she's a very hard worker and knows the business, so we hope she'll succeed.

Doreen's cousin comes here now and then and we go off with him trying to trace the Turnbull family in the "reiver" country of North West Northumberland, which was once a lawless area where Scots and English fought and stole each other's cattle and sheep. The Carruthers were also one of these "reiver" families so it's no wonder we are incorrigible dissenters!

Speaking of which we are not fans of the coalition lot who currently "govern" us.

In these difficult times we wish you all peace and joy at Christmas and hope that the New Year will offer more fairness and equality to the world's underprivileged.