A technical report

This time last year, I bent the scales at around 107kg. On Thursday, standing gently on tiptoe, I clocked in a sylph-like 91. That's only of interest as some sort of measure of the sort of year that has passed; the "diet" was called Tour de France. It might explain a bit why there have been no huge technological break-throughs this year on the COIN front, though it has been a relief that most of the year has passed fairly uninterestingly.

We finally moved COIN from one server (Gabriel) to a new archangel (Chamuel). Now that this has more or less settled down, I may well move the website (not the mailing lists) onto a third home, Raziel because that is where the regular updating of the software occurs. This move will be, in that dangerous IT phrase, "trivial".

The moving of the lists (everything at lists.coin.org.uk) proved to be a bigger challenge than I had hoped, largely because the new installation of Mailman differed in some small but significant ways.

One outcome of this is that the list archives have failed. It is probably something pretty insignificant but I've not yet got to the bottom of it. The fact that not one person has written to me to complain about the lack since we moved on 16th June, is both a measure of the reliance that we put on this resource and of the urgency with which I have treated the problem. I apologise to the crowd of you who have all missed this facility like mad, but have not quite got around to kicking me for it.

A somewhat unrelated change happened in September. The domain, coin.org.uk was registered back in 1994, before Nominet existed and, until 2005, when Nominet asked that it be put onto a tag at Nominet at which point it had to be paid for. There was a lot of the standard contact detail missing and, in a general tidy-up, we needed to provide names and addresses. These are now registered to COIN with me as the contact detail. In this world of checks and counter-checks, these new details had to be verified – and sadly, the mail requesting me to do that never arrived. As a result, on 24th November, coin.org.uk died. Fortunately, the re-registration took place pretty painlessly and so we were soon back online. In the interim, it was possible to continue running the mailing lists on a temporary address for a couple of days.

This change of the details has not, actually, changed a great deal. It was decided at last year's AGM and endorsed by the Exec that we should take over the full ownership of coin.org.uk from IPCortex. We requested this at this time of change and, though all of the contact details have been altered, the domain tags are still pointing at justus1.anglican.org and the IPCortex servers. This is something to chase up on.

With the rather patchy archives, it's difficult to produce facts, but on the CofE-2020 list (where the archives do go up to 2014), the figures tell an interesting story. In the four years to 2010 the March archives record an average of 490 messages in the month.

In the past three years that average has fallen to just 44.

There continues to be an issue with spam. I think that, with one or two exceptions (where someone actually subscribed the list's own address and used that) there have been few breaches into the actual lists – but, as list owner, I am receiving well over 100 unwanted mails a day. While they, of themselves, are no huge problem, they do mean that genuine bounce messages get swallowed in the crowd. I think that we have also managed to put a stop to the dreaded invitations to join LinkedIn which are generated whenever a genuine member of a list signs up to that

And finally… It doesn't affect a great deal of COIN, but the website does run on my own software, "PCC". This is under constant review and is currently moving towards a complete new version number. There will be little difference to see for the casual visitor, but the control software behind the face is being significantly upgraded to allow for much improved (I think!) handling of files, pages and folders. A "gallery" facility is nearing completion (if you get some photos of today's meeting to me, then I'll put them up on the site, using a beta version) and I will shortly begin work on producing some "skins" that will allow for a greater variety of "look" to a PCC site as well as improving the WYSIWYG aspects of the editing box. At the moment, the edit box produces a WYSINWYG – What You See Is Nearly What You Get. As you may know, I wrote the original PCC system to produce a much simpler content control system than any that were on the market at the time, with the particular needs of the church in Sudan in mind. The needs of the ECSSS have changed, as has the complexity and capability of PCC. It all makes one wonder where we should go from here, but, with some 100 loyal customers using the system, I think we're in it for a while longer!