

**Pre-amble**

*Whilst, materialistically speaking, 'we've never had it so good', as one older-time politician used to put it, presumably valid questions remain such as how long it can last, with seemingly the whole world now bent on being 'super consumers', and, for some at least, as to whether such a money-orientated, fast-paced culture can and does lead to longer-term human satisfaction and fulfillment.*

*For those for whom western-type culture may be a touch 'over- paced' via fast-developing technology and a virtually continuous 'change, change' clarion call, and a little too one-dimensionally focused on materialistic living, life in mainstream culture may not entirely suit. Further concern appears to be that in such a tidal on-rush, solid human values that have taken an investment of time, effort and courage to build up, will be swept aside – the 'baby out of the bathwater' syndrome, with the 2008/9 financial crisis providing some evidence. Such a cultural on-going torrent may also cause difficulty for those individuals ('freerangers'-?) needing to anchor themselves somewhat, to gain perspective in order to locate their own truer natures and fuller potential.*

*Mainstream 'mass' culture by definition cannot comprehensively cater for bio-diverse individual human needs, further strengthening the case for the need for support for individual needs and growth, especially in an age which appears to have verred towards organisational control and priority.*

*One route for the individual to follow is that of the 'freerange' route, trusting to aim to determine their own self and social values and freerange practices, rather than being 'automatically' swept along by any fast-flowing cultural tide, threatening also, as some these days have expressed, maybe to then at times limit traditional free-world individual rights and actions. From both mental and physical points of view, freeranging involves having/creating the space, the time and the freedoms to think and act, as in the freerange practice with animals, in accordance with a fuller, 'natural behaviour' pattern of human nature, as opposed to any restricted 'battery-ised' world.*

*The **Freeranger Living for People** publications aim to support those interested in taking such a self-responsible 'thinking for self' independent approach to living. The first part (i.e. this book) explores freeranging and its mores and potential myths in relation to current culture, taking a exploratory re-look at some common areas – money, profit, work, business objectives, for instance - and featuring live examples of people leading 'freerange'-type lives. Further parts will aim to look at other facets such as **Freerange Lifestyle Enterprise Planning, Freerange Spirit and Values** , and **Freeranging – an Approach to Work**.*

## **Freerange Living for People**

***Exploring territory and ranges, modern mores and myths***

*Living independent-mindedly in a modern mainstream*

**Mike Robin**

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## **Intro**

*Modern mainstream western-style UK culture could be described as being materialistic, profit-orientated, competitive and focused considerably on individual attainment – personal wealth, fame and power, for instance. The prior culture in the UK seemed to be more socially-g geared, in which the individual had to think of others rather than themselves. It could be, for instance, that 'out-for-self' materialistic individualism has arisen as a reaction to what was felt to be an over-restrictive socially-g geared previous culture, ripe then also for an individual and competitive US-style culture import.*

*The socially-g geared and the 'out-for-self' two forms of culture could then be said to represent two ends of the spectrum, both geared to their particular foci, with much of peoples' reality, though, maybe operating somewhere between them, and containing elements of both.*

*A self-focused orientated culture might also be said to push people more into the 'having' mode, with for instance, its feature of having, say, personal wealth and material possessions as strong 'external' success indicators. Such a trend could then by default, limit attention to the 'being' mode in which the individual is interested and focused on self-exploration, development and discovery, with the ultimate aim of realising their fuller potential, sometimes called the process of 'self-realisation' or 'self-actualisation'. A recent TV documentary about life in the 'machine age' suggested too that the self-discovery process of the individual had been 'limited' by the fact that it had been held important that man's role was to hold a fixed 'natural balance' situation within a world eco-system; a view, though, which has since been challenged.*

*The prevailing culture, promoted as it tends to be by government, media, commerce and many of the general population is reasonably likely to be the one to get the attention and involvement of the majority; the path of self-exploration and development could then well therefore be currently one of a minority, possibly amplified by the fact that it might also be a harder way with more challenge to the self, and more demanding in terms of leading the individual to exercise considerable degrees of self-responsibility.*

*According to Eastern based human enlightenment-type spirituality, the self-exploration/development path could anyway be a 'minority' path, following a spiritual-path 'staged' template of 'mainstream mass > individual > spiritual'. The copious materialistic 'lures' of the 'mass mainstream' stage are also said to act as barriers to more undertaking such a spiritual journey, although with increasing popularity of newer religious/spiritual movements such as the 'Alpha', maybe more are following what some believe to be a natural human development progression (see 'self-actualisation' characteristics, 'The Freeranges' section).*

*Such a life 'development' path/journey could be likened to leading a 'freerange' lifestyle to explore possibilities, learn about the inner self and generally taking 'life as it comes' in its natural state, rather than, say, trying to impose too many restrictions and too much control on it, and requiring the at times exacting condition of keeping a relatively open mind. Some have pointed to man's 'separation' from nature. Tom Fort, in his reflective book 'Downstream' says:*

'Instead of seeking accommodations with the natural world, we strove to achieve domination. As a result that world ceased to have an intrinsic value of its own. It's only use was to serve us.'

*The potential benefits though, of a 'freerange' 'natural' life journey could be significant. In spite of political leaders' at times disassociation at times with things 'social', plainly people live on earth in social groups ('societies'), psychological researchers hold that humans have real social needs, and the act of doing business is in effect a social transaction, hence acquiring social skills would seem to be of essential and practical importance.*

*'Know thyself', said Socrates, presumably as an adjunct to achieving personal fulfillment. Exploring life and the universe with an open mind could seem to lead to the distinct possibility of living in a 'bigger' world/universe and becoming the potential 'larger' person, of which again the Socrates injunction could be an important part. Might doing individual work to explore, learn, find out, understand, too be a natural part of the human psyche, a 'spiritual' need, as many have averred - ?*

*This work aims in its own inevitably limited way to support such human 'gearing up' endeavours. Some sections explore freeranger ground and ideas, some examine mores and myths of the current 'materialistically' geared culture, re-looking at some basic areas such as money, profit and motivation; others look for inspiration from practising freeranger case-studies, and some look at ways for the individual to 'freerange' and offset any limiting cultural effects.*

*No attempt is made to supply any blueprints, surely inappropriate for such a freerange focus, and the work represents only the thoughts of one and (imperfectly) practising would-be freeranger, with some useful 'enterprise' knowledge and experience, and an interest in culture watching over a period covering varying cultural priorities.*

### **Freerangin' on-----'Close Range'**

*When people come up against the notion of 'freerange people', they seem to 'get' it pretty quick, even though it's being applied in the human rather than animal context. The culture of a society to some extent inevitably can tend to be of a generalistic, 'mass', nature, limited in its ability to cater to the level of individual needs, and indeed varying quite markedly to the degree it takes on board individual needs, according to the prevailing ideologies of particular societies. Perhaps people are generally pretty aware of the limitations and restrictions in modern 'mass' life, and how it might seem to want and need to influence and direct them.*

*The (2010) coalition government in the UK have signalled their recognition of an over-organisation focused culture, introducing the concept of a more inclusive society via their 'Big Society' idea. Whether it will prove to be difficult to achieve the devolution of power which could be needed to get real people 'on the ground involvement', remains to be seen. Some have suggested 'Big Society' could even be a ploy to take attention away from astringency, and with both the 2008/9 financial crisis and the MP's expenses 'scandal', public confidence might be in need a reasonable boost.*

### **The un-power rangers-----**

*Life has changed a lot since those times when people lived in smallish rural-based communities, in which everyone would know each other, and complement each other, probably then leading to a 'natural' way of gaining respect for fellow man.*

*Obviously many – most? - these days, tend to live in far bigger urban-type conurbations without that smaller more intimate community feel, and with considerably more contact with and influence and control from large-scale organisations than hitherto, potentially resulting in the possibility of the individual feeling less secure and 'at home' with themselves, feeling a very small cog in a very big high powered wheel, particularly maybe now 'globalisation' seems to be the order of the day.*

*Organisational operation often, too, seems to demand a level of instant 'perfection' performance and behaviour from people which, allied with ever-present work targets, may produce an over-pressurised and over-standardised situation, potentially though, maybe, uncondusive to creativity and fuller individual development. The 'freedom to fail', for instance, may be as an important freedom in practice as other freeworld freedoms.*

*Some, for example Buddhist spiritual mentors, see the individual as a unique and complex advanced form of life, who needs to be respected and valued as such, with creativity and 'life quality' stemming from individual sources, and the individual being held by some at least, to be the repository of 'soul'.*

*R ploughs his own freeranger non-pecuniary 'soul-full' furrow:*

*R's job involves looking after an extensive public garden in the UK midlands, in a stunning and gorgeous setting. R's partner looks after their joint financial affairs – she says R has zero interest in them and would be hopeless – an assessment with which he agrees – he is only too happy for her to shoulder this responsibility.*

He, in the meantime spends his time in this idyllic place doing what he loves to do- his own form of longer-term riches-? Getting up quite early to journey to his workplace is not a problem – he can't remember any days when he's not looked forward to the day without positive anticipation. He's treading his own path, unlured by the 'glint of gold' or the 'flame of fame'.

### **'Free-for-all' market-----?**

*It's been reported recently that the 'free-market' philosophy may have lead in actuality to more of a 'free-for-all' power-based market, suited to the large operators, but then by default disenfranchising to some extent the small and potentially to some extent threatening individual rights and freespeech in the process. Large commercial organisations, for instance, have been reported taking legal action against individual media reporters who have written critical copy of them.*

*Much has been made in recent decades of the wonders of the free market, which classically, though, is mean't to be 'a perfect market', in which there are many buyers and sellers, with no one of them with enough power to unduly influence the market forces. A potential limitation, though, now more frequently referred to, is that such a market driven culture then appears to sidestep the need for any human value judgement and thereby negate individual and social responsibility, a situation which some commentators have labelled as simplistic and potentially dangerous. If psychologists are correct in thinking that a higher set of human needs are related to social needs: social responsibility and social contribution, for instance, then a system which denies or avoids them could be seen to be incomplete and the fuller range of human satisfactions denied.*

### **Freerange wheeling and dealing-----**

*The individual, though, in the freeworld, still has the option of free-will and can 'self-responsibly' decide for her/his self to take what might often be the longer and 'harder' road of self-reliance and some independence, working out and living to self values, which according to psychologists 'naturally' include social values, and developing her/his self to fuller levels.*

*'Freedom' is often an attractive concept associated with the 'freeworld', but what exactly is it? Does it mean that the individual should be able to do whatever she/he wants? There are laws which restrict the individual's freedom if their actions or behaviour impact anti-socially on others – quite right, too, many – most? - might say.*

*Or is it more of a 'freerange' type of occurrence- where the individual has the scope to develop and 'mature' on a 'natural' plane, to the point where they become 'master of their own ship' and hence attain a certain independent responsible autonomy, a 'self-freedom' -? A society of such self-attained individuals could be impressive, and given that psychologists suggest that the fully-developed individual gains greater social skills, personal integrity, motivation and awareness, one that could well be both highly productive and 'socially cohesive'.*

*Such considerations could then lead to a somewhat radical thought: a society's first aim could be for the fuller development of its members, who then being motivated and creative would perform productively and socially, so 'profits' are automatically taken care of in a socially-cohesive environment, and everyone 'wins'.*

*The same approach could be used for any organisation, public or commercial. Not that radical in fact, it has been done, probably many times in fact, often though in smaller enterprises/situations that don't necessarily get too much known about, and in the larger situation ( see the Robert Townsend case-study later).*

A ran his own large farm business in the south of England. His advisor would arrive at the farm to find the whole gang – the farmer, his family and the farm staff - all seated in the kitchen enjoying a cooked breakfast, and like as not engaged in pretty vigorous debate, either on farming matters or often wider issues. Now and again it got a touch heated, but more often than not the gathering was good-natured, to say the least.

A would say:

*' I have to admit, I used to be a bit of a b---d. I'd drive myself, the business and its people hard to get the top business results. One day, though, the chickens came home to roost, and I had a hefty heart attack- it was touch and go, and took quite awhile to recover. In the meantime my sons ran the business and when I got up and about again, I was struck by their open, relaxed and friendly relations with the staff – all of them seeming to get genuine pleasure from work. It made me question myself as to what it was all about, and I realised people were the important thing, the key, if you like. And do you know what the amazing thing is? Yes, we all enjoy ourselves a great deal, but if anything, we seem to make more money now with less effort than before when we were pushing so hard to get it.'*

*It's interesting to note that in this new phase of 'Big Society', firms who operate more on people focused bases, such as the John Lewis partnership, are being currently consulted by government. Shouldn't, though, the individual adopt a modern 'super-consuming' approach to life, in that that is what is expected of her/him in such a current super-consumer culture? To be an upright citizen by doing what is expected of him/her i.e. super-consuming, as was written not long ago in one broadsheet article, by default maybe then not focusing too much on self-development? Certainly living in a society and benefiting from its advantages – collective defence, for instance – presumably comes with a price to pay. The other, potentially more damaging to the individual, price to pay can be that of personal debt, now running apparently at over £20k per household in the UK.*

*The tradition in 'freeworld' societies is that individual freedom is also a valuable asset to society, in terms of its ability to facilitate individual motivation, and in respect for the rights of the individual. So the individual who, say, does not join the super-consumer trend, for instance, who likes and wants a simpler and more 'frugal' lifestyle, is still valid and valuable to the society; such a standpoint might also have longer-term benefits.*



### **'Wanted – Big Earth-----'**

*It's been estimated that Earth would need to be several times its current size to sustain current and likely future consumption levels, now that eastern countries have become more super- consumer orientated. If this is right, and even allowing for technological advances, then in the future, one possibility is that consumption patterns could look likely to have to reduce, maybe even radically, if the human race is to survive. Current western society could be seen to be somewhat schizophrenic: on the one hand, for instance, the word is to minimise waste and re-cycle, on the other the production, say, of larger, less resource economic cars continues seemingly unabated.*

*The non 'super-consumer', more frugal consumer, then, might be already doing their far-sighted little bit for the future, and may also be maintaining and developing useful skills and mindsets for the future. Thus a society that retains individual freedom, retains more individual creativity, self-reliance and responsibility and stock of future potentially useful skills and knowledge, surely all valuable 'freerange' assets to any society - ?*

### **'Right-on freerangin' -----**

*The potentially more arduous freeranging way may well not suit all and not all may have conditions to be able to practice it. The hopefully helpful material and live case studies gathered for this series have been presented in the way of the 'enthusiastic amateur', not claiming to be all-encompassing, all complete or any form of blueprint. It is, at the end of the day, one person's take on the situation, no doubt self-deciding freerangers will weigh in their own balance.*

*All of the case studies are based on real, 'live' situations, and quite a few of them are set in the rural sector, where independent-minded small business people have successfully coped with complex and multi-dimensioned objectives and priorities for a long time, but could appear currently to be about to be in process of being replaced here in the UK as in the USA with large, 'factory farming' units, full of single 'efficiency' dimensioned economies of scale, but, as many feel, in danger of ripping the 'heart and soul' out of the countryside and its self-reliant rural community.*

*Eminent writers such as Erich Fromm, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Abraham Maslow, Robert Pirsig, Fritz Schumacher and Charles Handy have all cautioned against 'largism' and the over self-orientated pursuing of individual wealth and power, which Handy suggests originated in the Thatcher/Reagan era. Current eminent figures such as the Archbishop of Westminster have called for a new moral awareness in the financial sector, for instance, one more geared to serving society and less to celebrating profit seeking as an end in itself, although it remains perhaps to be seen whether a more secular society would heed warnings from traditional religious leaders - ?*

*Maybe one of the current immediate needs is to find a way to reconcile the needs of individuals with social needs. Even though Margaret Thatcher in her (in)famous comment 'there's no such thing as society' seemed to be preparing the way for an individual 'free-for-all' culture, plainly she was also wrong, in that people have to live by the rules and mores of society and financially contribute to it, and as psychologists suggest, people do have social needs.*

*Handy also suggests that there was and is an 'honourable' tradition of individuality:*

*' to be ourselves, to plan our own path through life, and whilst respecting the rights of others, to hold fast to the right to be true to ourselves'.*

*To be, in fact, right-on freerangers, though playing a 'David' role in a 'Goliath' world may not always be taking the easiest path.*

### **Freerangin' on ----- 'The Freeranges'**

*The chickens now wandering the paddock and orchard here on the eco 'micro' holding (small smallholding) were, apart from elder Black Rock stateschicken, Esme, rescue chickens from an intensive egg production unit. 'Scragger', so named due to her initial unfeathered dishevelled appearance, has nevertheless seemed to come into her own; thankfully she's also now acquired some more feathers. In the space of a few short weeks, these girls – Scragger, Ruby, Pearl and A. N. have adapted to their new freerange life and visibly become more relaxed and friendlier, presumably with lower stress/fear levels.*

*They look at home now, purposefully wandering their territory with occasional rest periods all flopped down together, wings spread akimbo- sunbathing. The odd soil scrape they occasionally make in the paddock is a small price to pay to see them so content – and who'd have thought that their new freerange life could have given so much pleasure and satisfaction to ourselves.*

### **Space, time, peace, freedom – powerful 'freerange' idioms to which many undoubtedly respond positively**

*The 'big' free-range idea is to give animals such as egg-laying chickens and dairy cows a natural (to them) environment which then allows them to express their innate, unique behaviour patterns, for their own sakes, and to facilitate their natural proclivities and productivities. The 'spiritual' foundation to this appears to be a feeling that as 'top animal' man should be working 'in partnership' with them and recognising their needs, rather than just trying to dominate and control them; husbanding and caretaking rather than merely exploiting, paradoxically though often leading to good, sustainable levels of productivity. There's just something so satisfying, too, about seeing those chickens scratting busily and contentedly about in the paddock.*

*Could the same principle presumably be said to apply to the human animal in that there could be a certain set of 'freerange' conditions which is conducive, vital even, to the individual gaining over time, and maybe with considerable personal effort and discipline, fuller personal development via personal growth, often referred to by psychologists as 'self-actualisation' or 'self-realisation'. Such a concept might perhaps pretty far removed from any personal freedom definition centred around the notion 'whatever turns you on- just do what you want to do', which could seem to be limited in its denial of any self or social responsibility - ?*

### **De-ranging-----?**

*'Free-ranging' can also imply some independence of mind and spirit, claiming a free-world right of self-determination. Imagine, for instance, in today's culture, getting up and shouting out:*

*' But I don't want to be a millionaire.'*

*Sacrilege, maybe in today's western world, and yet many patently do live quiet, non cash-rich, fulfilling lives involving 'multi-dimensional' values, rather than, say, single-mindedly pursuing the dollar:*

'Sub-culture' man, Z, also exercises his free-will in the free-world, by freeranging extensively, choosing his own route through life. Whilst he is very keen on exercising his personal sense of self-responsibility by leading it in a low environmental impact fashion, many of his needs being supplied in a re-cycled form, another key interest is computing. He is highly skilled in this area, and he uses the latest technology, particularly to follow his passion to use technology for beneficial ends. He creates usable software for social groups unable to afford it otherwise, for instance, and takes particular pleasure in providing in his spare time his highly skilled services free to these disadvantaged groups, as of course many others do, freely engaging in voluntary work, which may have taken on enhanced 'freerange' value in such a current materialistically-gearred culture.

*These days, though, are people, with crowded, fast-paced, long working hours modern lives full of qualifications, high money needs, big mortgages, work stress and health issues, for instance, finding it increasingly difficult in a super-consumer culture, to find the space, the time, and the freedom to be at least some of the time , 'free-range'?*

*Does though, today's fast-paced modern materialistically-orientated culture, with its particular conforming/standardising pressures, such as the use of socially pressuring techniques such as league tables, and a control culture generated by the extensive use of work targets and the plethora of multi media messages, work against the individual finding her/his fuller 'free-range' self, producing rather more of a standardised, 'batteryisation' type of effect? :*

A TV programme awhile back featured a Britisher trying to travel across the USA using only independent operators of petrol stations, eating houses and hotels/motels, to highlight the high prevalence of big national chain operators and their 'standardisation' effects on people via their homeogenous blueprinted service provisions. It proved to be a difficult, near impossible mission.

*It may be something of a curious modern paradox that whilst a 'mass' based culture can appear to work to conform us significantly to its needs, the tools for individual self-exploration and hence self-induced growth, have never been more available, via the internet, for instance, or via the considerable number of self-exploration courses and systems that exist nowadays.*

*The further paradox maybe that in the multifarious freedoms of choice which the super-consumer culture appears to deliver, people may have never been so under pressure to conform, given the existence of what some have called ' the nanny state', with its own politically correct people standardisation effects and 'micro-management' tendencies, and now transmuted according to one recent commentator into the 'nasty uncle' state complete with corporate control (several large retail chains now reportedly search staff at will, for instance), and of course the level of media exposure experienced by the average individual.*

### **Non-free ranging-----**

*'Small is Beautiful', said Fritz Schumacher, which was the main title of his ground-breaking 1970's book, which had the intriguing and relevant sub-title 'Economics as if People Really Matter'. A form of 'giantism' was taking hold, he said, wherein 'big' was automatically 'good', with 'small' relegated to 'insignificant', a trend which might well have accelerated since then, fuelled by political parties, according to MP Philip Dunne, who has recently (2010) commented on one political party's espousing of the 'big is beautiful' cause.*

*One of Fritz Schumacher's key points was that because of their sheer weight and size, large organisations become powerful and important, a process which then by default can disempower the 'unimportant', the small, particularly the very small, the individual. Such a process, given the inherent power imbalances, may not easily reverse, although the new ('10) UK coalition government appear to have taken this on board as an issue, with its 'Big Society' concept, now, though, under criticism due to swingeing cost cutting in the public sector, and with the appointment of a 'supermarkets adjudicator'.*

*Schumacher seemingly wrote his book as an attempt to re-balance the situation and re-emphasise the sanctity of the individual, maybe fighting, in the short-term at least, something of a losing battle, not helped maybe here in the UK by the semi-demise of that other traditional protector of the small, the Church. The 'borrow now, have now' ethos of the modern culture promoting what some have seen as an over self-indulgent environment, a notion to which events in the financial sector appears to have given succour to, may also have had the effect of masking any underlying diminishment of individual sanctity and rights.*

*Could, though, the current cultural strong financial focus potentially causing displacement of values such as social interaction and cohesion, and personal development, also then potentially cause a degree of confusion and complexity to people in terms of them relating their own internal values to the wider society?*

*Would it be better off in the long-run to follow Schumacher's advice to have a 'stop and think', lessening such a strong focus on gathering the cash, important as it is to a certain extent, to allow time and space for other necessary values such as social, environmental and personal values. To in fact then achieve balance between relatively complex multi-dimensional values, rather than heading down any simple single-dimension financial track, as Schumacher described? 'Freerangers' in particular might well find an over- focused and simplified culture problematic, in that such a culture might well be too narrowly focused to meet their enquiring needs. (see 'Values- the heart of freeranging' section for more on multi-dimensional aspects).*

### **Ranger roving-----**

*'Freerangers' then, could be said to be people who value a degree of independence, whilst respecting that of others, who like to think for themselves and come to their own conclusions whilst still being able to take into account other views and ideas, who accept*

*and take responsibility for themselves, who cultivate the ability to have open and enquiring minds and who have the ability and confidence to critically appraise, including self-appraise.*

*They could be said to be on the path of what psychologists call 'self-actualisation' or 'self-realisation', travelling further down the development track with characteristics identified by distinguished psychologists such as Prof. Cary Cooper (Lancaster University) such as:*

- perceiving people and events accurately, without undue interference from their own preconceptions
- focusing on problems outside the self, rather than on insecure introspection
- being autonomous, remaining true to self in spite of pressure to conform
- having respect for others, avoiding using them to self-boost
- having a strong personal morality sense, clearly distinguishing right from wrong
- being creative, capable of open-minded problem solving and solutions generation
- resisting any strong enculturation processes

*And this is yet in fact only half the spec. Such characteristics could well be aspirational for 'work in progress' freerangers and as such, may represent a pretty highly developed individual who would no doubt command a natural respect amongst peers.*

*Treading one's own 'freeranger' path in life may not necessarily be the easiest route, as can be seen by the demanding spec above, and particularly maybe within any culture with potentially strong 'control' conditioning elements. The spec for self-actualised woman/man above is indeed high – are many – most? – freerangers probably more 'work in progress'?*

*The possibility, though, exists that the potential reward for such undertaking is also high, such as longer-term fulfillment, as well as a 'negative avoidance' benefit of not unwarily falling into any potential 'dumbing down' pitfall trap. Such a spec and its demanding route would appear to need the resource of time, putting any shorter-term returns such as 'happiness' into relief against, say, the longer-term, 'hard won' return of fulfillment, with apparently an end state of 'self-actualisation' – realising the 'full-blown and fully fulfilled' human state, becoming the possibility.*

### **Wider ranging-----**

*'Freeranging' could be described more formally as the possession of enough natural resources - space, time, food, energy, for instance – with which to have the opportunity to develop, display and practice a full range of natural behaviours. These behaviours are relatively well-known and accepted for domesticated animals. Chickens, for instance, as above, if given their conducive conditions, will spend their time in activities such as scratching the ground on a wandering pattern, making a depression in the ground and then sunbathing.*

*Cows will follow a natural behaviour pattern by 'meander grazing' covering quite large areas of land, a system called 'set stocking', prior to which they were often grazed tightly behind an electrified fence or confined to very small parcels of land, which could often result in the larger 'bully' cows getting more than their fair share, with others not getting enough. This then impacted on the output of the whole herd, in that the younger cows in their first lactation and being yet smaller, would be one of the 'sufferer' categories, and their ability to grow well to then perform well in their second lactation, would then also be limited.*

*Considering a herd could easily be made up of 50% first and second calving cows, the potential for negative impact on overall herd results could then be considerable – a useful reverse example of providing an environment in which animals can behave naturally, which then in turn contributes significantly over time to higher levels of sustainable productivity.*

*The arguments generally put forward for 'non-freerange', for example, caged battery system egg laying chickens, are often centred around control, needed basically to facilitate keeping them in large numbers, following the ubiquitous economic principle of 'economies of scale', and economic efficiency – the use of less feed and hence cost by severely restricting access to space and hence limiting movement, although further debatable arguments supporting the better welfare of caged chickens have also been used by battery farming adherents.*

*Such production processes – often called 'factory farming' – have caused considerable concern that animals should be treated in this way, which in turn has led to a certain amount of EC animal welfare legislation, and to considerable UK media coverage; Hugh Fearnley – Whittingstall's high profile TV campaign against the factory farming methods of meat chicken production being a good example.*

*Undoubtedly, the rise of more 'human friendly' production systems such as 'freerange chickens' owes its existence at least in part due to human resistances to the large-scale production systems employed, allied with that useful commercial tool – consumer power.*

### ***Ranging restrictions-----***

*This rise of environmentally- friendly production might appear to indicate that all will be well, the trends are healthy. Currently, though, there appears to be considerable concern that this is not necessarily the case; that in fact the 'environmentally healthy' production trends may even be at a 'cosmetic' level. Large business, these days, appear to have profit-making for shareholders as a key priority, using their size and power to that end. The UK supermarkets are a useful example, having and using oligopsonistic (few large powerful buyers) type power in the 'free- market' market place, against which, it's said, their relatively small 'unpowerful' product suppliers find it difficult to compete. The new coalition government has recently appointed a supermarket 'adjudicator' to try to address such power imbalance.*

*UK milk producers could seem to be a current example of small producers struggling to compete against large oligopsonistic commercial power, although many, it's reported have already having gone out of business.*

*In the 1920's and 30's small milk producers faced hard times and even ruin due to the low prices on offer from the larger-scale milk buyers; the answer then being government help and protection with the creation of the UK Milk Marketing Board, to give the small producers collective power with which to counteract the buyers' power. This board, though, was disbanded some years ago, leaving the relatively small producers of milk again in a vulnerable situation, and once again they have had a situation of struggling to survive in the face of low prices set by large buyers rather than a 'true market' price. One supermarket, for instance, was recently (FEB '10) reported as setting the price it paid on a 'cost-plus' basis, using its own analysis, rather than, say, any independent analysis.*

*A current 'solution' to this situation (i.e. squeezed prices to small producers) is to then follow the supermarkets' siren call of efficiency via economies of scale and establish in the UK as in the USA very large indoor milk production units. One recently planned (Feb.'10) in the UK was of a massive 8000 cows, whereas family farm herd size would average at, say, 150 cows, to be established on the factory- farming model; cows not being able, for instance, to now graze (i.e. follow natural behaviour patterns) for most of the time, being contained and controlled indoors for the greater part of the year; little free-range scope at all, in fact, just the large-scale heavily controlled environment route.*

*Large businesses are said to like to do 'large' business, small may well not be so 'beautiful' to them, presumably thinking that smaller businesses and producers, with their inability to exploit 'economies of scale', are innately inefficient, and should therefore not survive – 'big' is therefore 'best' and only the large survive. An ex Senior government rural advisor, Lord Haskins, also a large-scale businessman, is on record, for instance, as saying 'only the strongest and fittest will survive'. What hope then, though, for the rest of us – especially the non-powerful i.e. the individual?*

*To many, such a scenario is somewhat chilling, not only because it would seem to foster large-scale 'inhuman' production methods, but also it would appear to be based on the single economic dimension outlook, which is then taken to override all other dimensions, particularly, maybe for the 'free-ranger', the social, individual and environmental dimensions. A strong and single-dimensioned emphasis on maximum profit making could also cause some conflict within a culture, as plainly other needs, for example, personal, social and environmental, in reality exist, (see 'Values' section), a situation which could then come over as imbalanced and 'un-joined up', and potentially causing a further degree of general confusion and conflict for people.*

*Within a culture, particularly within a 'free-world' culture with its commitment to individual freedom, the needs of individuals are also thought of importance, and any freeworld culture then needs to show recognition of individual freedom and facilitate it. Perhaps, in terms of creativity and sustainable people productivity, bio-diversity of people could actually be a valuable asset to a (tolerant) society as a whole -?*

### **Lone ranging-----?**

*One of the options open to the individual in such circumstances is to exercise the individual right of self-responsibility and take their own measures to counteract any perceived negative cultural 'batterisation' effects, either within the parameters of their current lifestyles, or by a more drastic change of lifestyle – that is, become 'freerangers.*



*Of course, many do, particularly maybe those with significant experience to aid them gaining an 'out-of-culture' perspective, which might be more difficult to gain if experience is essentially limited to within the culture.*

*The fact that the individual in such a situation is accepting and exercising responsibility indicates that such a strategy may not be the adoption of an over self-orientated lifestyle, as maybe perceived, but rather the adoption of self-responsibility and self-motivation which could ultimately prove to be more productive all round. This hopefully can be illustrated by the live examples of freeranging described later, including some of the freerange efforts here on the eco 'micro' holding (small smallholding), definitely a 'work in progress' rather than any polished finished article, 'perfection' being taken as an over-expectationary target (see 'perfect specialisation' section).*

### **Range finding-----**

*It's probably unlikely that a 'freerange' approach is necessarily for everyone, but for those for whom a degree of independence is a life need, then to exercise and practice their rights to freewill and self-determination could well be important.*

*Some of the case-study 'freerangers' reviewed later in the series illustrate both the need to keep perspective and the adoption of responsibility to and for themselves, to cater for their own needs. For example:*

*A free-range couple took up what some might see as a relatively extreme approach, rearing their family in a semi self-sufficient manner on a small smallholding without any services attached, nor the use of any machines. They sought a 'small', quiet, unbustled life working with and close to nature, a love of which has also transferred to their children, who although not having as many material benefits as many, still seem to have enjoyed a fairly idyllic childhood.*

*A 'new' breed called 'philanthpreneurs' has apparently arisen, who make their 'pots of dosh' then satisfy their social needs by helping 'less fortunate' members of society. A further new breed called 'antipreneurs' is said to have emerged as a reaction to the heavy entrepreneurial emphasis of the recent and current culture.*

*Such live case-studies in the 'Freerange Living' series can also act as potential sources of not only inspiration, but also freerange-type ideas.*

### **Freeing the range-----?**

*The freeranging individual, then, might well be seeking to limit/counteract any perceived conditioning control from the culture, by taking more control for themselves. In some cultures such a process would be more difficult and dangerous than others, particularly in those wherein the state is seen to be infinitely more important than the individual.*

*The state no doubt is certainly important in that it represents 'collectivity'- which is needed for the on-going operation and safety of all, but then, the needs of individuals also patently exist, being important at the individual level and in relation to the functioning of the individual. Given the large size of the collective state and the relatively miniscule size of the individual, it's not hard to understand that at times the individual's cause can come a distant second. A society though of self-empowered, self-motivated,*

*self-responsible individuals might yet 'collectively' out-perform in the longer-run one in which collectivisation is more centrally organised and controlled by the state, just as could be the potential for, say, in a commercial organisation.*

*There are probably times too when a 'collective' state of affairs may have to be, in that national, collective security has to be the priority. A useful example of this occurred in the UK in the Second World War, when business self-determination was abandoned for a period in which national priorities were deemed to take preference. British farmers, for instance, were directed by a body called the 'War Ag' as to how their land had to be farmed to increase much-needed food production. The free-range habits and activities of farmers had to be put on hold until the national emergency was over, and broadly speaking this seems to have been generally accepted as appropriate, society's need being judged the priority.*

*Once the emergency was passed, then the priority moved back to individual rights, with farmers once more deciding how their businesses should be run, in accord with free-world principles, a situation conducive to free-ranging.*

*To tread one's own path and think for oneself can imply a degree of foregoing 'group' protection, thinking sometimes beyond the 'norm', and probably, meeting reactionary resistances. Whether this is bravery or foolhardiness is up to the individual to decide; there are no doubt times in which it might well be more prudent to 'keep one's powder dry' for sure, and cultures will undoubtedly differ in terms of the degree to which they will allow and cope with alternative, exploratory and questing thinking.*

*To freerangers, though, it may be that the maintenance of an open mind and the urge to physically and /or mentally explore, will be as much an innate need as the more regular human needs, even a core need maybe of the human spirit.*

### **Home ranging-----**

*Life here on the eco micro-holding (small smallholding) gives the opportunity to gain a semblance of independence by engaging as an individual with everyday processes, such as growing food, which has the added bonus of 'working with nature'. Growing your own food could be a classic freeranger practical measure which not only can give ultra fresh, tasty and healthy produce, but of course can also work wonders for the independent, autonomous spirit, nurturing self-reliance and responsibility as it does.*

*Presumably these in turn could be said to nurture self-image and self-status, as well of course as potentially giving much personal shorter-term satisfaction. Not so long ago, allotments were lying empty and unused, these days they attract long waiting lists, which says, along with various schemes to use spare land, that loads of people are again 'getting their hands dirty', maybe as a reaction to the mass processing aspect of modern life – they're practising freeranging.*

*Good for them, and more power to their elbows-----and arm muscles, leg muscles and backs.*

## **Freerangin' on ----- 'Freerange Practice'**

*Different societies fairly obviously have differing cultures. Some have a very strong centrally directed and controlled culture, others have more differential between central and regional influences. France, perhaps, is a good example of a culture with strong regional components, which may well give more scope for people at grass roots level to be involved and exercise and contribute their individuality, as potentially have Welsh and Scottish devolution in the UK.*

*A centrally organised/directed culture by definition cannot necessarily easily cater down to individual level: it has to be in a 'mass' form, which then appear to contain an implicit assumption that the laws and values enshrined in it, are subscribed to by all within the society, apart from maybe a minority with criminal or anti-social intentions, although the reality is that often the party in power has been voted in by an actual minority of the population. The old saying that 'the best government is the one that governs least' probably recognises that any 'mass' type culture has innate difficulties in terms of catering for bio-diverse individual needs and tastes, providing as it were a kind of minimum 'just society' framework which then doesn't hinder people too much from 'getting on with it'. The (2010/2011) UK government policy appears to some extent to be more in tune with such sentiments, instituting a series of 'individual freedom' measures, such as scrapping I.D cards, for instance.*

*'External' people control systems operating with measures such as work goals, workplace league tables and financial incentivisation seem to be the order of the current cultural day, potentially cutting across, though, peoples' personal internal motivation, a situation which may help to shed light on some of the reported current problems in some UK workplaces. Heavily controlled by such measures plus a plethora of laid-down procedures, it's hard maybe not to get the impression that low levels of management trust extend to employees, a situation which could potentially inhibit natural individual motivation not only by the lack of opportunity for human initiative such tight-control situations offer, but also by the lack of faith and regard such a system might convey to the individual.*

*Freerangers/would-be freerangers will likely anyway, though, want to still exercise their own motivated energy, developing their own values, thinking for themselves, making their own informed decisions and contributing their own self-responsible actions and ideas to society, for instance.*

B held a reasonably well paid lecturing position in Higher Education, but had started to feel 'stifled' by the seemingly ever-increasing package of procedures by which he felt he was increasingly controlled, and distancing him more from his real vocational passion: teaching. Feeling his motivation ebbing away, he decided to look at whether he could change his situation. One of his main passions was climbing and outdoor pursuits, in which he was very experienced. After much consideration and discussion with his partner, who had a secure regular position, he decided to end his lecturing career to then start a climbing and outdoor activities venture, which, he says, has given him a new 'lease of life'.

*Being part of society and accepting such a role means that generally people have to accept the operating central culture, with the proviso that they have the democratic*

*right to express any dissatisfactions/problems with it. In practice it may mean having, in the shorter term at least, to accept that the central 'mass' culture may not 'fit' exactly with their own particular values. If this is the case it may be a case of 'being in the culture but not being (wholly) of it' – a pretty normal state, as, for instance, differing political parties can hold significantly differing values at the same time within the same culture, of which its drivers could, in fact, have in practice minority support.*

*In such an 'imperfect' situation, the freeranger individual, in the freeworld, still has the option of leading life to as far as possible counter any perceived potential negative effects from the central mass culture, and enhance any particular positive aspects, within the limits of their own situation, and presumably within any normal anti-social limits.*

### **Freerange 'fixing'-----**

*Perhaps one of the first freerange jobs for the would-be freeranger could be to try to get a 'fix' on the current central mass culture, to work out their own 'fit' areas and any 'non-fit' areas. Before such an analysis, it may be useful for some to assess their own internal values, particularly if that's a relatively new process for them; others will no doubt know their internal values fairly well already. Such a culture analysis to get an 'overview' may not necessarily always be an easy process, as it's probably relatively easy to become embroiled within a culture, especially when leading busy, financially demanding, pressurised lives, and in cultures which 'assume' norm standards and values.*

*To aid overview, it may be useful if possible to visit other cultures, which can then help getting a 'fix' on the home culture. Taking an active interest in what's going on in other cultures either from TV media news and/or the useful foreign news sections of the broadsheet newspapers may also help, as reading other 'life philosophy' material can. No doubt, as ever, it's all 'work in progress'.*

### **Freerange evaluation-----**

*What, though, if the values someone comes up with are different from those of the central mass culture? To some extent at least, no problem. In a democratic society, such will likely be the norm, with many within it not necessarily subscribing fully to the values/ non values with which the prevailing political party in power are directly influencing the current culture. Similarly, when an individual judges a cultural trend might do personal harm, then within a freeworld society which respects individual human rights, for the individual to avoid such a trend is fully legitimate; an individual resisting the cultural lure in recent times of taking on considerable personal debt might be a good example of this. To take such a course of action, the individual might have also had to resist somewhat other associated cultural trends, such as, say, high materialism and social comparison pressure.*

*What, though, if the individual's differences with the prevailing culture are a little deeper and more fundamental? Maybe a useful current example of this could be the current mass culture trend of secularism, going against the spirituality which no doubt more than quite a few individuals feel. Full-on religious persecution, as has happened in history in some cultures, is perhaps unlikely to occur, but nevertheless such spiritual*

adherents are then reduced to a minority interest in such a secular- orientated mass culture.

*Spiritual individuals may have to recognise such a state of affairs and accept it, but maybe resisting any temptation of automatically judging that because they are in a cultural minority, they are necessarily 'at fault'. Being part of a cultural minority, though, can involve being under indirect levels of pressure, depending on the prevailing 'mass conformity' pressure operating within the culture, which the use of affirmations- meeting with like-minded people, for instance - can help to ameliorate. In this particular instance, contact with, say, newer forms of spiritual energy development such as the so-called 'New Age' spirituality movement might for instance also help.*

### **Freeranging -----and the fast flow**

*Back in the 1980's, Alvin Toffler wrote his book Future Shock, in which he pointed out that the immediate last 70 years lifespan, had had within it more change than the previous 700 lifetime spans put together. Possibly/probably few might argue that the rate of 'change' has not accelerated even more since the publication of his book.*

*Fritz Schumacher, in his Small is Beautiful book argued that whilst advancing technology was essentially for the most part good, its development needed to be managed for longer-term human good. Currently, he maintained, that wasn't necessarily happening, and he likened the on-rush of change/ 'progress' to a boulder hurtling downhill - and gathering speed.*

*Plainly UK society and culture has changed significantly in recent years in this 'fast-flow' and this will have impacted on individuals. Survey results have shown, for instance, that the majority of employees at work have felt undervalued and uncared for, which has been attributed to more and stronger commercial focus in the culture, then presumably by default diminishing social impetus and importance.*

*There may, then, in this fast-flow of cultural trends, be factors which could adversely affect individuals, and individuals themselves are probably the best judges of that, and what counteracting measures they may want to take, or are able to take. The following section looks at some of these possible measures.*

### **Freerange 'fixes'-----**

*Whilst it could be said that taking individual preservation measures could be labelled 'selfish', the other side of the coin could be that it's also in society's longer-term interest that individuals survive in a strong and healthy manner. In recent times in the UK, with the idea of 'Big Government' seemingly translating into a high central control culture, with its associated control checking mechanisms, one of the problems for those wishing to operate in another mode, that of self-motivated self-responsibility, probably a classic freeranger genre, has been that the tightly- buttoned control mode of the central mass culture appears to have left little room for any other mode, causing lack of self-responsibility opportunity for self-motivators, maybe then even with associated loss of self-integrity and hence self-stature.*

*Such a loss of self-motivation opportunity therefore can represent a restriction to freerangers/potential freerangers (and a potential loss of productivity to the culture as a whole), and an area they can individually address if they've got the circumstances and inclination.*

*One counteractive route for instance, could be to become self-employed and set up an independent enterprise, or as quite a few have, lead a 'portfolio' worklife existence, hiring themselves out to various sources. It's reported that, for instance, small farms have in recent years become popular as a base small enterprise on which then to build further, computer work presumably having aided considerably the ability to work from home.*

G leads a highly independent self-directed freerange type of 'portfolio' life, which suits her fine and limits any stress possibilities to a minimum level. In the summer she is pretty busy catering for the needs of her garden services clients, as well as continuing to run her two-day a week market stall and seeing to her part-time caretaking duties. Although she can be quite busy, things 'fit', not least because she can arrange them to. The winter brings a little less busy time with the gardening side of her 'portfolio' life dying down and giving her the opportunity to spend more time gaining enjoyment from her music – she also plays in a band- and some 'R & R' time in her former family cottage in the Western Isles.

*The perhaps most obvious example of one of the key positives of technological change is the computer, and the information and contacts available via the internet. Just very simple computer stuff like writing these few words, which can then be stored, then be changed into other formats, then changed instantly in form, then put into larger documents, then sent to others---- quite amazing really when it wasn't that long ago it was a matter of just a basic typewriter. As Schumacher has said, technology itself is mostly not necessarily the problem, it's how it's used which can be the issue.*

F found a way of making money via the computer to help her through her college course. She discovered the process of 'affiliated marketing', whereby money can be made by setting up websites which attract viewers, whilst hosting adverts on the same websites. It took a bit of a 'learning curve' to start to make decent money, but she was even able to use the time invested for her course in the form of a major project. These days she reckons to spend 15-20 hours a week running her computer activities to gain an equivalent middle management salary, which leaves her a useful amount of time to train for her passion, competing in triathalons.

### ***Freeranging in the fast-flow-----***

*The limitation occurring for some in modern culture could likely centre around the 'fast flow' nature of the culture and as mentioned above, the high rate of change. For others, of course, this will be a positive, exciting aspect of the culture, and from a more 'absolute' point of view, such a culture avoids the restrictions of one that's, for instance, over reactive – the 'stagnant pool' culture. Reservationists, though, have concerns that the flow is too fast, and too relentless, potentially washing away human civilisation values which may have taken a long time to acquire – the 'baby' getting 'washed out with the bathwater', as it were.*

*For freerangers, for instance, such a fast-flow culture focusing so much human energy on money making, may produce an over emphasis on 'having', by default then diminishing time and energy for attention to 'being'. Presumably such an aspect could be one of the root causes for the trend of 'downsizing', to reportedly cater better for personal interests, values and lifestyles and achieve a required work/life balance, often involving sacrificing a measure of material returns. Such a process can often be relatively straightforward:*

Limiting money-making time and activities was the process chosen by a freerange couple, T and J, who moved to renovate a relatively dilapidated country cottage with a large garden when their young family made its appearance. T was happy to give up the full-time job, working part-time on the renovation, looking after the children, growing their own food and making their own home-made products such as bread and jam to reduce costs and assure healthy fresh food, in the process managing to cut costs effectively. T and J consider that they've achieved an effective balance to their lives, giving a useful level of satisfaction over a relatively wide range of their needs, and whilst being materially not quite so well off, feel they've reaped considerable increases in their own quality of living.

*Other strategies can of course be used to help mitigate the cultural on-rush. Taking time out to participate in courses to explore 'the fuller self' is reportedly a growing activity, for instance, and for some for whom the current culture has become too secular, new-type religious movements such as the 'Alpha' movement have arisen. Personal spirituality courses are also said to have proliferated in recent years. Taking 'career time out' also seems to have become something of a trend, which again might help the process of developing life perspective, although presumably many might feel inhibited due to the often competitive nature of modern worklife. Simply taking a small 'time out' each day to relax and 'centre' via meditation techniques is also said to have longer-term beneficial effects for the individual.*

### **Freerange non-flowing-----**

*For those with the facilities, energy and inclination to be in the fast current culture, the pickings are undoubtedly rich and very high levels of material individual wealth levels have been reported. Some, though, tire of incessant motion, of a feeling of being 'swept along', then seeking more of the anchor that the developed individual being can become. Putting down roots would appear to be important for some, if only to avoid the feeling of being swept away, losing their own essential selves in the process. Some of those eschewing the mainstream then end up then in backwaters, glad to be out of the torrent, and now with time and space to really 'float their own boat'.*

*The eco micro-holding here probably represents such an individual backwater. It acts as a buffer, a sort of personal 'retreat' giving time and space to explore lifestyle, and life itself. It's not very big, only half an acre, but backing onto fields as it does, it can still give a good sense of space, and with this and the fact that it is something of a personal oasis, full of birds, plants and animals known and loved, where an individual can 'breathe easy', and feel 'at home'. No doubt people in more urban surroundings value open spaces such as parks, and smaller areas such as their own allotments in that they*

*provide such 'fuller breathing space'. Some freerangers are using waste ground too in towns and cities, putting it to good use growing flowers and veg.*

*Sometimes, such conditions may be life enhancing:*

One freeranger living a semi-reclusive life in the western wilds of the UK, certainly found himself out of tune with the modern mass mainstream culture, having few mod cons, and spending very little money. He chose such a lifestyle to try to simplify and clarify – he was finding modern life too fast, too big and too complicated – he felt he was suffocating and in danger of losing his 'real' self, or, rather, not being able to find it.

The space and time provided by his move to such a semi-reclusive existence eventually 'bore fruit', in that he then 'found himself' in terms of his own personal values, and now he has, in his own words 'a great life', working for an animal rescue charity.

*Perhaps time spent 'contemplating the navel' isn't always a waste-?*

*Of course, not everyone will be in a position to be as self-focused as in the case-study above. For those with more commitments, it may be a case of 'doing what one can', but still benefiting from the feeling of actively doing something to nurture the self, and even the soul:*

P reached the point of needing/wanting to 'slow down' but felt somewhat trapped by his circumstances, particularly his demanding work life. Driving along one day and as usual under time pressures for an appointment, he suddenly thought 'If I go slower, I'll still only be a little bit late- what's the problem?' In practice there proved to be no problem – the person he was to meet was herself late out of another meeting. He then decided to take further action by limiting his car speed when travelling to a less hectic limit, which he now mostly adheres to.

*'I can't believe that such a simple action can have had such an effect' he says. 'I feel calmer due to not rushing around, but also I feel better in myself I think because I'm doing something to stop being raced along'.*

*Freerange measures and actions to gain/re-gain some control in life, and not be at the total mercy of the culture tidal wave, seemingly then don't always have to be drastic. In the case-study above, P gained momentum from his basic initial actions to then go on and make other changes in a life which he now finds more fulfilling.*

*Many, it's been reported, have taken the relatively simple freerange step of growing some of their own food, getting access to land via allotments, own gardens or land-sharing arrangements. Some have extended such activity by meeting with like-minds, such as happens in a 'green-drinks' group nearby here- there are also for instance regional smallholder groups for those with those particular interests.*

*Although the advance of secularism may have arisen as a result of a reaction against more traditional, parental-type religion, a renewed interest in personal spirituality appears to be taking place amongst some, which according to the Eastern life- progress mode of 'mass > individual > spiritual' could represent a natural life cycle progression.*



*'Newer' forms of religious thought such as 'Zen' suggest that life occurs 'dynamically now' and that everything in nature is in reality sacred and deserving of respect, and as such purposefully have no laid down theology, proceeding along the lines that religious/spiritual experience is a 'personal experience' event, an area then which may well be of particular interest to some freerangers. This sort of thinking ties in with the psychologist Abraham Maslow who proposed that human needs were progressive and could lead to self-realised 'peak' experiences.*

*Many undoubtedly, have religious type of experiences and feelings with contact with the marvels of nature. A dry seed goes into the ground and hey presto – a life is born. Pretty miraculous too, probably, when you think about it, that the sun shines and the rain falls, without which, at the end of the day, no life or technology, however sophisticated, would survive. Those old pagans-----!*

## **Freerangin' on-----'Freeranging in practice' (2) - case studies**

*Quite why cats might need skinning is not easy to fathom and not something around here that's probably done too much, but according to the saying, there are quite a few different ways of doing it. From the freeranger perspective, thankfully there are, affirming that people are indeed in practice, bio-diverse. Humans explore, climb mountains, go into space, set up enterprises, learn to knit, take survival courses, gain extraordinary computer skills, create art, produce food, make jewellery, contribute time and energy to others –crikey, any list of human bio-diversity would be no doubt endless and inexhaustible.*

*The illustrative freeranger descriptions that follow are just two lots of rural peoples' own particular patterns that suit them and is available to them – what people can and can't do is probably likely to differ considerably due to their circumstances, their wants, their energies and their means. What the micro unit that is the individual can do might seem very small beer compared with the large organisational power bases that exist in the world, and the individual's ability or opportunity to influence is fairly obviously, 'micro minimal', yet to the individuals concerned fairly obviously their freerange lifestyles are all-important.*

### **All the world in a grain----? (Blake)**

*The world could be seen to be made up of billions of micro worlds, and it's the micro worlds that can still influence and facilitate individual needs and development, hence at the individual level they are vitally important, making individual effort highly meaningful, and such individual efforts might then encourage and affect others to the good – the 'ripple' effect. One sole individual's efforts to minimise her/his own resource waste, for instance, would likely make an infinitesimal 'drop in the ocean' contribution in terms of whole planet effect, but in terms of their own micro individual life, could likely be an important self-statement.*

### **Micro meanderings-----**

*'Necessity is the mother of invention' –and so it was to some extent in N and E's situation, finding themselves in a situation where an early retirement became an attractive possibility, due to some degree of disconnection with a new, high change, high control, modern work regime with perceived significantly less professional self-responsibility and hence opportunity for motivation. It mean't, however, a significant reduction in cash income for them, partly due to the normal lower retirement level of income, but also due to a lower pension level due to early retirement:*

After some due deliberations and much mental to-ing and fro-ing with this or that 'cost' and this or that 'benefit', the lure of a more independent life was strong enough, so, on the basis of 'you only live once', they gave it a go. How, though, were they to meet the challenge of living on the reduced income without sacrificing the basics of their own fulfillment and enjoyment?

Their decision was helped by already having lived rurally in the country for quite awhile, in a relatively compact cheap-to-run cottage, with a large garden – some years previously purchasing, along with two neighbours, part of a farmer's adjoining field, giving an extra small paddock and taking the whole to just a half an acre of ground (modern pundits, for instance, might say in excess of 100 hectares would be needed for a 'viable farming business'). Certainly not enough land they thought really even for a smallholding, but what about a small smallholding- a micro-holding in fact. The fact that they already home-produced nearly all of their veg requirements gave them confidence that they could live 'economically'.

The veg is grown 'organically' on an allotment size plot with home-made compost, green manuring (digging green crops into the soil) and crop rotation including legumes (i.e. peas and beans) taking care of soil fertility well, and at next to no cost. No fertiliser or spray costs, too, and the other major cost is kept down by buying veg seeds cheaper from a good seedsman's catalogue, (saving in excess of £1 per packet over many garden centre seeds), by re-using home grown produce as seed, particularly expensive-to-buy pea and bean seed.

Growing 'biologically' rather than chemically takes more thought and awareness, just in planning a healthy long-term rotation of crops, for instance, to minimise crop pests and diseases, but in the longer run, their view is that it does offer the potential of more satisfaction. Their chickens have a strawed pen and enjoy themselves afternoons, scratting around in the paddock, on half of which there is now a fledgling orchard – they're looking forward to good fruit and wine from it.

The hens obviously supply food in the form of freerange tasty eggs, keeping feed costs down and add to human contentment too – there's something intrinsically pleasant and comforting watching chickens scrat about in grass gently chucking to themselves and their mates.

This 'micro-holding' lifestyle fits in too with their other important 'freeranger' life values linked to the aim of practising self-responsibilities, one of which is environmental care, combined with Buddhist-type 'right-living' style considerations – getting and having a 'fair share', for instance, whilst at the same time not seeking to disadvantage or exploit others, the practice of which they feel would neither bring good inner feelings or longer-term 'good karma'.

The relatively small size of N and E's cottage means that energy requirements are not too heavy, helped also by the fact that radiators are only in use in the coldest weather in the evenings. Using solid fuel – mainly wood - and having a woodstove in the main daytime living area, means that they achieve an efficient living temperature over quite long periods cost effectively, probably achieving over a fifty per cent reduction on average heating costs, with the various woodpiles on the holding also giving some level of fuel security. The other evening 'front room' living area is heated via a small open fire for which 'small wood' is needed, and which is mostly gathered locally on walks in the local countryside, or accumulated from various, generally free, sources.

Once you get into a more 'economic living' lifestyle, N and E, say, a sense of 'frugal achievement' can strike you – it can become a challenge not to spend not too much, even though more expensive items could be afforded. You develop a 'nose' for it, you're

'on the lookout' with sharpened senses, and to satisfy life's needs in a 'super-economic' fashion brings its own intrinsic satisfactions. N and E maintain that in such a 'heightened awareness' state, somehow what you need seems to materialise – help from the universe-?

Just looking at some of their more recent needed acquisitions associated with the micro-holding 'frugal' lifestyle illustrates the point:

*mower- as new, newly serviced and with powered drive, at 25% of new cost from the mower man, who was looking out for what they needed; a small quality cast-iron woodburner stove – a friend's neighbour wanted to get shut of it – theirs for a song (and £20): sporty wheels for limited summer driving –bags of fresh air and very cheap from a car auction, where amazing buys such as this can be had : DIY ex-demo shed at half price, with then 10% further off with discount card: battered but in working order strong wheel barrow – free off neighbours builders skip (with their permission), and high quality hardwood unused double garden seat at 20% of new cost at local auction.*

For them somehow there seems to be an extra 'frissonce' of achievement and satisfaction doing it this way, with the added benefit of becoming an avid recycler, bringing the personal pleasure and achievement that having a light footprint can bring – small in terms of the overall 'mass' situation, but large within a person's own micro world.

*Maybe there's even a greater harvest of satisfaction to be gained than being able to just go out and buy whatever new - ?*

Then the ball rolls further- how else can necessary goods and services be obtained 'super-economically', money and the world's resources be saved? N and E raid the charity shops for work, and some other, clothes. Good sound clothing can still be had, they say, and with the added bonuses that the money goes to charity, and that it's still recycling. Surplus plants are swapped with other local self-sufficiencers as are services such as 'chicken sitting'.

*In terms of modern, materialistic consumption rates and material allegiance, though, no prizes probably awarded and no 'super-consumer' status to be conferred on frugal lifestyles. Given, though, that someone's recent prediction that with modern consumer consumption rates and the fact that the Eastern worlds consumption rates are escalating, a planet several times the size of earth will be needed within the next twenty years , N and E and other 'light treaders' may well be in the van in terms of what may be well needed for future survival – a prospect that whilst undoubtedly too 'hairshirt' for some, may still not necessarily render it invalid.*

### **Small-----and perfectly formed**

*The second 'freeranger in practice' live case-study is that of a couple who to some may be seen to have 'opted out' and taken things to some sort of extreme, having no mains services nor any machine support on their smallholding for over twenty years. Whilst, though, they have created a fairly solitary, almost 'shangri-la' type environment in which to live and work, they aren't 'anti-social' in that they've provided a valuable service over*

*the years to the local community by producing biologically grown veg for sale at reasonable prices.*

*Their's is an interesting micro enterprise, even by more conventional business standards, which is what the piece below attempts to show. What, though, a conventional business analysis cannot do, is in anyway convey the spirit of this enterprise – any visitor spending an hour or two 'on site', could not help but be calmed and re-spirited by its peaceful, aesthetic and productive nature, and by the fact that it's a virtually perfectly formed example of man and nature in harmony together:*

F and F ran a classic micro-enterprise, very small – their cash economy was probably less than £10k per year- well below the norm and low enough to be officially described as 'being in poverty', and yet they lead rich and fulfilling lives. Their place was an actual rural idyll, situated down a small lane off a country road. Through a gate in quite a tall hedge, there's then a stretch of meadow, fairly narrow, and facing, another hedge with another gate in it – quite a magical place.

This lead to an inner sanctum and a view, some 60 yards or so away, of their wood-tile clad chalet, nestling up to quite a substantial wood (over 2 acres in fact), wood smoke curling upwards from its chimney. Although their place is a rural valhalla, an oasis of peace, quiet and nature, it's also a working entity, a plot of nearly an acre yielding biologically grown veg for a cash market – the operation delivering their small cash economy, the holding of over 6 acres also supplying their own fuel and the majority of their food needs. Small-scale applications mean't that no mains services were needed or attached and the operation ran very effectively for over 25 years without the use of any machines.

*Such a micro enterprise and lifestyle would of course not necessarily suit everyone – it would be very limited, for instance in its ability to provide many of the available luxury material goods available in a modern super-consumer culture – but being a successful operation at more or less the other end of the scale, it can serve as a useful demonstration of a 'bio-diverse' micro freerange type of enterprise not heavily reliant on money or heavy capital investment, which might be described as being in the 'sustainer' category.*

### **Set-up**

Having become somewhat dissatisfied with their more urban lifestyles and employment, this couple decided some thirty-odd years ago that what they really wanted was a rural, natural lifestyle that interested and fulfilled them and at that time were able, with relatively little capital investment, to buy six acres with residential mobile home permission. To them, their independent lifestyle, together with environmentally harmonious production methods which produced a socially useful product – i.e. healthy food – were the priorities and they were willing to forego some of the 'norm' material standard of living to enable such a lifestyle.

### **How it worked**

The smallholding was connected to no main services – electricity and telephone only relatively recently having been installed. The economy of their holding and the lifestyle

requirements was such that no machines were owned (or used) and the production system was part self-sufficient – the make-up of this holding helps this. Two acres were woods, the thinnings of which provided fuel, 1½ acres cropping and orchard for organic food production and 2½ acres grassland for cattle and poultry and a kitchen garden providing vegetables and fruit for own consumption.

The cash economy was well-provided for – there were few bills to pay - by the sale of biologically grown vegetables from the ¾ acre 'commercial' veg growing plot which were transported in environmentally-friendly fashion on bike trailer to a local town 4 miles away to be sold at a weekly inexpensive market stall. The policy was to sell healthy produce at retail affordable prices – i.e. not to charge premiums for the 'organic' specification.

There was work involved beyond vegetable production in the running of such a small-holding providing a considerable degree of self-sufficiency, although the conventional definition of 'work' hardly applies in that, for these rural lifestylers there was considerable personal pleasure and satisfaction not only in their smallholding activities but in their independent lifestyles – i.e. their work activities and environment provided much of their personal goals fulfilment. Their lives, however, were not totally taken up with physical activities in that the vegetables were produced on a no-dig system and they reckoned generally to work five-day weeks, with leisure trips via public transport occurring most weeks.

### ***Wider social aspects***

From the social point of view things have been a little more complicated, with the family having experienced quite a degree of rural social ostracism in the earlier years, for their apparently different lifestyle, which for a while impacted negatively on their children, who, however, were eventually accepted by their peers and then in fact received quite a degree of recognition for their 'different' lifestyle and values. The family has found that in recent years, with environmental concerns coming more to the fore, their local social acceptability and status had risen quite significantly.

In terms of their own social situation, these rural lifestylers lived quite 'isolated' working lives – the holding itself was reasonably isolated. This was balanced, however, with their one day/week in town selling their produce in the market, where they met and chatted to what became a local and loyal band of customers, many of whom they got to know on a long-term basis. Not having had the burden of significant cash demands, they were therefore able to allow the time to build up their trade and customer group over time. They also knew a lot about their customers and their likes and needs, meeting and communicating with them as they did, face-to-face. For instance, one significant group of customers was that of widows whose husbands used to grow their own produce, another, that of young mums seeking to provide risk-free healthy produce for their families.

*This enterprise has stood the test of time and emerged as a very successful lifestyle unit when evaluated via their own objectives and achievement, but the hard work over the years and the determination needed to face and overcome the hurdles, should not be under-estimated – it took this couple a lot of time and effort to create their enterprise but at the same time they appreciated greatly their location, lifestyle and their personal fulfilment. It may well be, of course, that the facing and overcoming of challenges and obstacles adds to the degree of personal achievement and fulfillment realised.*

*Some relevant features of this enterprise:-*

## **Personal**

- clear values and realistic goals of participants.
- long-term motivation and determination of the participants
- degree of willingness to sacrifice other conventional 'social norm' benefits e.g. no car, i.e. willingness to make necessary compromises
- ability of participants to carry out and see through an enterprise seen initially as 'socially different'

## **Financial aspects**

the significant lower than norm cost levels to such a self-sustained type of business mean't that sales outputs could be correspondingly lower. These freerange 'lifestylers' have been able to operate their particular system quite comfortably – i.e. haven't felt they've had to over-extend themselves to reach and surpass their required income levels.

Cash-flow has been good in that it has been a) weekly and b) in the form of actual cash. Of course to start such an enterprise there would be around a six months plus 'incubation' (or longer depending on the start-up situation) period before a reasonable array of produce was available, and then it would still take time to build up a solid customer base.

*Capital investment.* This can be adequately described as low for the following reasons:-

- relatively small area of land needed
- little/no investment in
  - machinery
  - storage
  - marketing/distributing
  - financing stocks, inputs

## **Production aspects**

Growing seasons being non-standard, and organic methods not able to access short-term remedial actions (e.g. conventional sprays), production in terms of quantity, quality and availability can be variable. This tends, though, to be counteracted by the following:-

- wide range of crops/lines to minimise damage from a failure of any one crop
- one to one contact with the customer to give reasons and explanations – generally accepted
- production gluts are not a waste in such a system (i.e. they are composted and add to future land fertility)
- production shortages are rarer – the high soil organic matter and the no-dig production method tends to give, for instance, reasonable drought resistance, for instance
- one of the buying attributes to the existing customer group is that the 'organic' produce of such a system is in fact less standard than, for example, standard supermarket produce

### **Marketing aspects**

- produce is sold via a low-cost retail system (market stall)
- selling local – ensures fresh (untravelling) produce
- the market supplied could be described as 'a specialist local market' – and it is a loyal and proven market
  - selling retail has provided extra retail margins (for relatively low extra costs in this case) – as well as non-financial benefits e.g. social contact
  - direct contact with customers has created longer-term customer loyalty
  - market information is direct and continually up-dated via regular customer contact
  - market choice is being provided to customers, increasing their buying options
  - the low-cost system enables pricing to be at the non-organic price level, giving a competitive edge
  - regular direct contact with the local market gives regular further market information e.g. competitor prices
  - distribution and marketing costs are low e.g. no advertising costs – longer-term word-of-mouth being the main source

### **Risk aspects**

- physical (body) risk
- climatic – e.g. weather affects production
- customer food buying trends
- low capital investment risk

### **Anti-risk strategies**

- one person can cope in emergency/ for a period
  - restrict to less disease prone crops e.g. no main-crop carrots
  - high organic content in soil and no dig system limits drought risk, pest risk
  - existence of a specialist, local-based loyal and committed demand.
- capital reserve eg. the growth in the worth of the holding.



## **Summary – via S.W.O.T. analysis**

### **Strengths/potential strengths**

- enterprise     **a)** allows for multi-objectives – personal, social and economic  
                         **b)** achieves attainment of them
- low capital input
- low running costs
- high lifestyle capability
- strong environmental status
- social benefits e.g. via direct and close links and relationships with customers
- low cash – needs economy e.g. retirement not a problem
- close market contact building customer loyalty
- not a 'job' / 'work' – a way of life, labour of love
- organic an expanding market sector
- independence/direct decision making power

### **Weaknesses/potential weaknesses**

- physical inputs – personal physical risks
- degree of social ostracism (initially in this case)
- limited re material attainment capability

### **Opportunities/potential opportunities**

- combining with other organic producers to give customers 'fuller range' buying opportunities, more continuous produce marketing and possible alternative retail outlets
- limited degree of processing e.g. washing, packing
- potential to increase cropping area, hence income, if desired, allied with say:
- alternative marketing methods e.g. veg boxes
- customer growth/trend towards healthy image produce
- opportunity to add compatible products e.g. free-range eggs

### **Threats/potential threats**

- local competition, i.e. 'easy' enterprise to get into
- trend of pre-prepared food buying
- trend of production/marketing legislation
- physical incapacibilities
- production threats e.g. disease, climatic
- changing shopping habits

*A small, but very nearly perfectly formed enterprise, and one that's performed over time, giving a very high degree of realisation of this freeranger couple's life multi-objectives – it's perhaps hard to imagine a better situation in which to lead an independent, freeranger lifestyle on what was initially a very limited capital resources.*

*Land has now become considerably dearer, but the amount of land needed is relatively small – this successful small-scale enterprise on just six acres might call into question the conventional wisdom of land needed for a viable enterprise (possibly over 100 ha's these days)-? The possibility of renting rather than buying also exists, bringing capital needs to a very low level.*

*Such an enterprise might be low on 'quantity'; there's never going to be a fortune made, but is a fortune always necessary when the 'quality' of lifestyle is as high as in this 'freeranging' instance-?*

### **Freerangin' on ----- ' Money , money , money-----'**

*Tools of the trade on the eco micro- holding – hoes, spades, fork, handforks, rakes, small hand hoes, wood saws, scythes, crowbars , sledge hammer and suchlike - and all bought for very little at sales and the like – worth not a lot in money terms, but much used and much treasured by their user, enabling all the work on the eco micro-holding to be done, and becoming an extension of the user.*

*That seems to be one of the limitations with money, it can't necessarily always easily differentiate values. True these tools would not fetch much if anything in the open market, being 'out of fashion' used items, which anyway could be bought new relatively cheaply.*

*But, worth a lot more to their user, being the set of useful old friends that they are. Bright, shiny and new somehow wouldn't quite fit anyway-?*

### **Freeranger finance-----**

*There may be a couple of ways of looking at freeranging and money. One could be, say, 'opting out and doing own thing', self-sufficiency being a good example, the other to make enough money and then, say, sell the business to then change lifestyle to the 'doing own thing' style – presumably philanthropists could be to some extent an example of this. Some might baulk at the latter route with concern that 'joining the system' to make money might dampen their spirit and energies, whilst opting out reservationists may consider it to be an over idealistic approach and that in a modern world, like it or lump it, for most, money is a practical reality.*

*Some of the idealists may of course be reacting to what they perceive as an over-materialistic culture. The practical 'norm' reality at the end of the day is that probably a working compromise has to be reached for any situation to be viable into the longer term, which may well not be an abandonment of principles or values, but rather a recognition of limiting factors. The two situations outlined above could represent two ends of the spectrum – there are undoubtedly many situations at all stations between these two 'ends'.*

*The enterprise that's probably most alternative or 'opted out' described elsewhere in this 'Freeranger' series (see 'Freeranging in Practice (2)' section (above)), is that of the couple who ran a semi self-sufficient organic smallholding selling organic veg at a weekly market to meet their own cash needs, admittedly a fraction of the norm. But cash needs they had, and they needed a system which meets such needs, in their case a neat solution, as they then shared their 'bounty' at reasonable prices with others, adding another strand to their 'returns' package*

## **'Flash cash'-----**

*'Money, money, money---' - from an older song, but which could be a modern anthem. Modern culture success seems to be considerably defined by money, and there seem to be people around with plenty of it. Wealth in the UK has apparently reverted to its old concentration' ratio ( I.e.concentrating at the top of the pile) and the numbers of the wealthy are reportedly growing, including the number of mega wealthy individuals.*

*The recent and modern culture has seemingly fairly strongly promoted the accumulation of money as a 'success indicator'. Those bankers, getting all that acrimony and blame for the world 2008/9 financial crisis – weren't they were only really following the siren song of the culture? Top managers remuneration appears to have accelerated significantly in recent years, with their average pay rising reportedly by 55% in 2010, resulting in calls for curbs- moves limiting top levels of public pay to no more than twenty times the bottom levels appear to support this.*

*It's probably reasonably predictable that social justice will likely be a casualty of any 'free market' culture in which the market alone decides, in the sense that human morality judgements are then bypassed, in which case any effects of the 'unlevel playing field' scenario might have to be borne in the longer run (such as, for instance, potentially lower employee motivation levels).*

*Should bankers, for instance, have exercised more personal responsibility? (Latest (Sept. '10) EC moves appear to indicate they should have). Arguing that it was the system's fault, would seem to run the risk of diminishing personal responsibility, for instance. Having said that, it would seem quite possible that the 'free market' culture itself, so easily accepted as 'the market decides- no human input needed', significantly encouraged such a situation. For freerangers wishing to accept and exercise responsibility, could this, though, be a potential pitfall-? :*

*A local building firm was reputedly owed many thousands on account of the owner's forgetful and haphazard nature, forgetting at times to send out bills. Nevertheless, he'd carried out his part of the bargain by doing the work, and by repute doing it well, so although not paying the bill, as some reportedly did, might be seen as a 'winning' strategy, it may for some at least fall a little short in the area of self-responsibility, and therefore presumably also in the potential returns of self-esteem and integrity.*

*There are elements of the current money-orientated highly competitive free-market culture which might at times seem to suggest that 'winning is all' and that any concerns do not have to extend beyond the self. Larger concerns, for instance can then reputedly use their strength and power to exploit smaller business partners, as appears to have been recognised with the recent UK appointment, for instance, of a supermarket adjudicator. The traditional currency of doing business, trust, therefore now seems to be 'old hat' in the modern, thrusting, super-competitive world, and would seem to be under considerable threat.*

*Although trust, reliability and integrity may not always seem to be the flavour of current times and even be 'old hat', many do still in their own ways subscribe to these values and practice them, their own integrity being something of value to them – surely a self-determined freeranger trait. The freeranger individual, of course, as ever, will decide for*

her/himself which way to go, and how much their own self-integrity is integral to their own peace of mind, bearing in mind as ever that any prevailing culture is likely to be a strong and pervasive influence .

Some (buddhists, for instance), would feel that exploiting others for self-gain, for instance, could be counter-productive in terms of their own longer-term fulfillment.

'You'll reap what you sow', they used to say, and the Eastern concept of 'karma' suggests you'll get back what you do. 'Crazy karma', some may say, but then again, is such a view infallible? The weakening of organisational religion could, for instance, infer less focus on personal responsibility and longer-term repercussions - ?

### **Veiled values-----**

The potential limitations of money and associated power seem to have been known for quite awhile, no less an historic figure than Oscar Wilde, for instance, once remarking:

'we shall soon know the cost of everything, and the value of nothing'.

The world these days seems to be full of accountants and the like, so forefrontal has money become, in itself contributing further to Wilde's message seemingly apposite for today's situation. Maybe, though, people have succumbed to the economists perpetual message, now perhaps drummed in, of 'profit maximising'? Economists tend to like models and key assumptions. The notion that peoples' behaviour is continually and totally driven towards maximising returns may, though, in reality likely to be not necessarily always the case- too much of a generalisation probably- isn't man meant to be a social as well as a competitive economic animal, for instance-? ( one study, for instance, of rural entrepreneurs (by this author) found that they rated at least sixteen diverse areas of enterprise objectives as 'important' or higher).

There are though, the lurking dangers of what's been called the 'money veil' – the more people are conditioned to respond to money prompts, the more likely the truism that 'people work for money' could be accepted as a fuller reality than in practice it perhaps should be. The lure of bonuses, commissions, rake-offs - anyone who's worked in a high money- focus job will probably recognise the potentially strong conditioning effect it can have.

On a practical level, the degree of financial focus has also reportedly brought with it a sizeable problem of personal debt,( a recent (2012) UK stat puts it at over £8k per head), one of the reasons that the money lenders give for charging such high rates of interest. One recent Office for National Statistics study reports that Britons are now 'addicted to debt' and 'see no point in saving', choosing to 'live now and pay later', whilst also reporting that a considerable portion are then struggling to 'pay later', and getting into financial difficulties, some even losing their homes. At times it can appear that economic growth is everything- a recent news item appeared to be critical of individuals not borrowing enough on credit cards, and reportedly the Prime Minister of the Uk had to 'pull back' from advising too strongly repayment of personal debt. Individual freedoms, though, suggest that individuals are free to act in their own survival interests, something no doubt freerangers would subscribe to.

*The potential additional difficulty for freerangers in following 'cultural siren calls', could be the loss of independence- in this case the personal debt system then could have people by 'the short and curlies', so to speak, and often these days at a very tender age, with Higher Education students, for instance, acquiring often significant levels of debt at a relatively tender age.*

*Heading back to the 'maximisation' question; perhaps, though, the notion that human behaviour always gears to maximising returns was never originally meant to imply such a totality; it was just a key inserted assumption to help model certain directions of economic outcome. Some have argued that such a seeming 'truism' has been seized on to manipulate commercial thinking and practice. Whatever, the question remains as to whether 'progress' might have run too fast and too far down a 'wrong road'. As maybe a German saying has it:*

*'running is of no use if on the wrong road'.*

### **More than money-----?**

*The research alluded to above and conducted amongst small rural businessmen (farmers) in the 1980's, i.e. before any conditioning effect from the current strongly entrepreneurially focused culture, revealed that this group of rural enterprisers operated via a multi-objective package, rather than via any single strong objective such as 'profit maximisation', which appears to have gained its considerable current strength in today's culture.*

*The results from this particular group of rural businessmen showed that they were aware of a variety of key objectives, including personal, social, and environmental areas as well as economic, and that a need existed to achieve a balance over time amongst them, and also a need therefore to prioritise in the shorter term amongst often potentially conflicting objective areas. If, say, over time insufficient funds were available, then the business would flounder and none of the key objectives would be achieved. So making a 'sufficient profit' was a 'base' or 'foundation' key objective area, and the overall objective rated as of the highest importance was exactly that: 'making sufficient profit', again a somewhat different concept than making 'maximum profit'.*

*Once this 'foundation' objective area was felt to be being satisfactorily achieved, then other priorities came into play such as setting up wildlife areas on the farm ('environmental'), voluntary service on a farmers' group ('social') or making that long put off trip to New Zealand ('personal'). Younger farmers, busy setting up and establishing their businesses, did prioritise 'maximising profit' higher than the group as a whole, presumably being in the throes of establishing themselves, whereas the priorities of the older portion of the group were noticeably 'levelled' – a mix of economic ('profit sufficiency'), social ('having a good, contented workforce') and longer-term security ('passing on to subsequent generations a sound business fit for purpose').*

*Such survey results give an insight to the real life objectives and priorities of freeranger-type lifestyle enterprise individuals, proceeding into some complexity beyond any simplified single-strand assumed objectives such as 'profit maximisation', an example of going beyond the 'money veil', which may yet prove to be an important*

*journey to make, if the complexity which appears to represent reality is to be embraced.*

### **'Delicious dosh'-----**

*No, of course it's not the money that's consumed, it's really though just a medium - it's what it can give access to that really counts: survival, security, exclusivity, social standing, clout, protection, conviviality, pleasure, personal development, philanthropy to name but a few. What is this money, this 'dosh', this 'spondoolicks' anyway? There was a time when money didn't exist, or if it did, only in, erm. rarified pockets ----. This was also the time before urban centres, when people all lived in smaller closed communities with a high social content, and, for better or worse, everyone knew one another.*

*In those far off days, 'A' made and mended shoes, whilst 'B' made thatched roofs - perhaps he was an ancestor of Mrs. Thatcher? Both needed each other's skills and services, but instantly there's a big difficulty - 'B' needs 'A's (small) services several times each year, but 'A' only needs 'B's (much larger) services once, say, every twenty years, and having no common medium to work in, bartering between them for their respective services is at the very least, pretty problematical.*

*But help is at hand, a bright spark conveniently invents the common medium and for some reason or other calls it 'money'. 'A' can now charge all the residents of the community who use his shoemaking/mending services over the year, and over the years put by some of the money so that when he needs the new roof after the twenty years - no problem, he has the cash collected over the years to now pay 'B' to do the roof for him - sounds so simple in these days of high finance, hedge funds, derivatives, sub-prime products and the rest.*

*Yet, by far the biggest job money still does is surely to facilitate the exchange of goods and services, a vitally important function, and reminding that business is essentially about social transactions - if you produce something but no-one wants it, you won't be in business for very long.*

### **Let's twist again-----**

*Or rather, the twist is to now play 'lets'. In a bid to get closer to the real heart of 'trade exchange' and to remind themselves of the potential mind numbing effect of always dealing in and with money, as well as aiming to foster a waning community spirit, some freerangers have formed 'barter' groups, in which people exchange their goods and services. These are generally known as 'lets' groups, which certainly increases local social contact, a good thing according to the psychologists as people are social animals, whatever the of the message of them as just 'lone economic units' that may emerge from a strongly money-focused culture,*

*These barter groups, though, then encountered the same type of problems as the pre-moneyites all those years ago; that is the exchanges sometimes to be proved to be 'lumpy'- what 'C's got to offer can't easily equate with what 'D's got to offer. Some groups instituted a system of credits, some have even inventing their own internal*

*currency, which doesn't necessarily imply the scheme doesn't work. In practice it can seem to work well to facilitate local social interaction, and also to raise awareness as to the use and value of money, particularly maybe to youngsters- a good 'freerange' type initiative all round.*

*If, then, money represents the transaction value of goods and services, it can be seen as a representation of goods and services. It follows then that if 'E' aims to have more money than 'F', 'E' is in reality wanting a bigger share of the cake than 'F', and the reality is that there is a finite size of cake to share, rather than an unlimited supply of money. 'E' having more than 'F' ties in with a competitive, 'out-for-self' culture, but could incur problems if overdone within a more socially orientated culture:*

One South Sea island community had a unique solution to achieving the individual/social balance. Individuals were encouraged to do well and make wealth. When, though, they reached a certain level of personal wealth, the community tradition was that they then gave most of it away, back to the community, for which they received great social acclaim.

*The self-orientated culture and the socially-orientated culture could represent the two ends of the scale - presumably what's needed is a culture which can adequately cater for both self and social human needs working towards an effective balance between various values, needs, priorities that are deemed important to people, particularly, maybe, those of the freeranger breed. The fuller, 'freerange' view of people as multi-dimensional, having both individual and social needs, as well as, for some at least, spiritual needs, fits the scenario of a deeper, more encompassing culture.*

An illustrative analogy could be that of an orchestra in which the small and delicate operators (such as, say, a viola) mix it with the stronger and louder (such as, say, a horn), but to produce overall output of harmony and beauty, a system is needed to ensure each is within their time and place to make their unique contribution to the harmonic whole. The 'system' is generally provided by someone (in the case of the orchestra, a conductor) with 'overview' and a grasp of the whole who commands the respect of each of the constituent parts and can thereby organise them effectively to gain the desired result i.e. a balance and a harmony.

*Transferring such an analogy to, say, society, it would seem that more work might be needed to produce a unifying cultural goal which maybe the intention, for instance of the UK's coalition government's 'Big Society' concept, which to be successful, though, may presumably have to tackle any situation of perceived un-level playing fields.*

*Within society then, presumably government would have the role of conductor, with the objective of achieving social harmony and productivity, by ensuring a reasonable individual contributory space via the 'level playing field' concept.*

### **Redundant rubles-----**

*Money is not always necessarily a vital necessity, or it can be needed at differing levels, according to lifestyles. Look at the groups reacting against what they might see as an over-materialistically orientated western-style culture. Squatters, of course, been around for many a long year, protesting against high costs and 'waste' in the mainly urban*



housing markets. Newer groups have more recently emerged such as, say, 'freegans', collecting and using food thrown out by food retail outlets, drawing attention to the high wastage proportion in modern food systems- reportedly possibly as much as 30%.

Modern times have also been described in terms of an epidemic in 'affluenza', the thought being that there is in western societies particularly, too much to have, and it is too easy to have it, the modern trend in increasing obesity in people being used as evidence. A 'freeranger' approach would surely be one that would involve making one's own decisions, both in terms of food purchasing and food consumption, allied to associated issues such as food sourcing and exercise/work practice. 'Having more' and 'having a lot' are maybe trends stimulated by a strong focus on maximisation, particularly maybe maximisation of profits, thus emphasising profit making focus in general.

Paradoxically, it may in fact , erm, pay to take the main emphasis away from 'money making' to offering a good or service as the main goal, in the sense that if it is good people will flock to it and then profits will look after themselves, as opposed to too much emphasis on chasing the dollar, which can sometimes result in eyes being taken off important balls, and in a self-induced counter-productive over-tense pressurised situation, which can work against sustainable longer-term results.

Offering the good or service to others – this could then be the primary function, with the money side coming after. Maybe, then, putting money first, as profit targeting does, could be putting 'the horse before the cart' - ?

### **Finding freerange solace-----**

P had high, well paid and bonused managerial position in the public sector, enjoying a high level of material lifestyle. The question that 'started the rot', as he said, for him, was the realisation that he'd got everything – the pad, the dosh, the luxury car, the very attractive girlfriend – to be followed then by a 'flat' feeling, followed by a sudden internal probe 'is this it?' and of course, as he said, at that moment he knew it wasn't. It wasn't particularly welcome news and he tried to fend it off, but it was persistent and after some prevarication, he faced it. 'If it isn't it, what is?' became the next question, to which there was no ready answer.

His dissatisfaction and frustration gradually grew, culminating in him handing in his notice. 'Oops a daisy, what have I done?' he thought when he got back home. Was it a brave or foolhardy move? His ex-colleagues seemed to be united in their assessment, thinking him mad to kick such a good position into touch. His chic, soon-to-be ex-girlfriend wasn't overly impressed either with this turn of events. In a way, he said, these reactions helped him, as not one person gave him any support or encouragement, which he said, roused his fighting spirit and gave him the courage to 'see it through'.

The reality was that the situation wasn't exactly too dire, in that he'd quite a lot of capital accumulated over the years from his well-paid career. What to do now, though? It took him some nine months to get sorted. He decided that if he didn't know his direction, he'd indulge himself in his interests, now that he had some time to do so. He liked a certain wilder area of the country he knew from childhood and went on several

exploration forays there whilst also signing up for courses on subjects he was either interested in or thought he would be .

One of the courses on quality home food production lead him to his current lifestyle of leading a semi self-sufficient lifestyle on a smallholding in a very pleasant rural area, which he combines with some part-time teaching and lecturing. Although his material standard of living is nowhere near his previous levels – he now drives, for instance a well-used pick-up rather than a limo - he much enjoys his new activities and lifestyle and somewhat to his surprise, has also considerably enjoyed being part of a local community.

*'It's such a varied life - every day is different, and most are absorbing and interesting',* he now says.

*Variety, they say, is the spice of life, and a trick which may often be missed within long-houred specialised working lives, as appears to be quite common these days. Maybe managers could organise more variety into peoples' work schedules to help in the arduous task of keeping spirits up, and of course variety along with independence and self-determination is one of the potential benefits of running an independent enterprise – a freerange practice surely if there ever was one.*

### **A Vicious Circle-----?**

*The freeranger in the case-study above was fortunate in that he had ample means with which to pursue his quest and find his holy grail, and the freedom to do it. Not everyone will be in such an advantageous position, nor presumably would everyone wish to pursue such an adventurous route. 'Escaping the system' may not always be an easy option, although there is always the option of 'doing what one can' and 'alleviating the effects of the system'. Unless sufficient insulation (eg. cash in the bank) is available, the need for money may be there and probably increasing. In a society, and a world that many might perceive as less stable than hitherto, amassing wealth and money can presumably be a strategy people use aiming at increasing security.*

*One TV documentary programme for instance predicted that future security given such developments as gated community living and privatisation of all quality services would cost in excess of most peoples' resources. Security can be achieved via other non-monetary routes as well, as the earlier semi-self-sufficiency case-study shows, both in terms of fuel security and food security, having their own grown food supplies and their own fuel, courtesy of their two-acre wood. Nevertheless, the reality is that many are likely to be on a 'money merry-go-round', needing ever increasing amounts of money to pay for housing, energy, food and utilities in the future.*

### **A Dorset idyll-----**

It was to these sort of elemental thoughts that an older weather-beaten west country farmer addressed himself in late spring, standing with his farm advisor in a remote emerald green field in beautiful rolling countryside, admiring his attractive cream and

light brown Ayrshire cows. What a picture they looked, the apple of his eye and rightly so, it had taken him many years to breed such a quality herd of cows.

It was a warm, drowsy sort of an afternoon, and after due, erm, rumination and reflection, he spoke, in that marvellous west country softly lilting voice:

*'Ah me boy' he said ' they tells me I should out these beauties here and bring in they great black and white Holstein milk machines. I'd make a sight more money, they says.'*

*' No doubt they'm right' he sighed, then after awhile, 'my, but ain't they a picture?'*

He almost seemed to be lost in his own world. After awhile, he continued:

*' ah love spending me time down here watchin' me gorgeous girls, an' enjoyin 'em – now that's somat that all the tea in China wouldn't bring me, innit? Money's alright, I reckons, but it ain't everthin', and as far as I c'n see, it dun't guarantee no 'appiness. No, d'ye know what I think, me boy?'*

He was warming well to his train of thought by now.

*' ah thinks this 'bout money – ah thinks it be a good servant, but a bad master'*

*It was the culmination of his little speech and it felt like he'd opened up his inner world, standing in this little mini paradise – a special moment with a grand 'ol boy. He may well have had more money if he'd have changed his cattle breed to the 'Holstein milk machines' but for what? He had more than enough, he'd always been a shrewd operator, and he knew better than to lose one of the great loves of his life in exchange for a bit more extra money, which in reality would have been relatively meaningless to him.*

*His words struck a chord then, and have been a 'freerange' inspiration since.*

### **Micro money minimising-----**

*Leading independent lifestyles can involve creating the ability to lessen money dependence, to whatever degree. It's reported that many, for instance, are choosing to become involved in their own food production, as ever increasing allotment waiting lists and new ideas such as Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's land-share scheme. One of the freeranger activity strands here on the eco micro-holding is to produce veg, eggs and fruit. Veg and eggs have been available for quite a few years, and the new 'mini-orchard' is starting now to produce.*

*Such home-grown production cuts cash needs down, of course, not then having to go out and buy the produce, besides of course bringing many other benefits – exercise, taste, health security, convenience, food security, personal satisfaction, cultivating independence and self-reliance and so forth, illustrating the range of different 'returns', of which financial return is only one – surely money is essentially limited in its ability to describe or account for all the different returns that in practice, do exist-?*

*Living here in a relatively small cottage ('last of the rural hovelists') and not always heating all of it, allied to using solid fuel which means being able to use quite a bit of cheap and free wood, has mean't being able to keep energy costs to a level below half of*

*average, which has given effective cost savings, whilst also doing the satisfying, self-responsible bit for the environment.*

*The freeranger couple living a semi self sufficient smallholder life featured earlier have a two-acre wood on their property, the thinnings and natural wastage of which provides about 98% of their energy needs – real 'energy security'. Their energy costs, apart from a tiny electric bill, are exactly zero.*

*Such freeranger fuel arrangements are not necessarily for everybody, true, although there could probably be a few yearning for a bit more peace and tranquillity in these super-charged, money-fuelled times.*

## **Freerangin' on-----'Right and Proper Profit'**

*The lifestyle eco micro enterprise here doesn't seem at first sight to be hugely endowed with profit: super tax rates are unlikely to feature. But just as some work doesn't seem like work, but rather 'a labour of love', some lifestyle enterprises presumably aren't first and foremost about financial profit, rather they're about being able to live chosen, fulfilling multi-dimensional lifestyles.*

*Is, though, profit purely a financial phenomenon? It's presumably possible to 'profit' from lots of things, and in lots of ways. On the micro-holding here, there seem to be many sources of 'profit', not least the oasis of peace and quiet the green haven itself proving provides. Then there's the close contact with nature, always a joy, not only by growing things – veg, shrubs, flowers, trees, - but also being surrounded by them and also wildlife, birdsong, for instance is ever present. Not just wildlife either, 'tame' life too, with Tia Maria and Tizz the Wizz, resident feline friends, and of course not forgetting mad Scots Border Collie Hipster Pipster, he's the best and a hoot – surely 'tame' life helps connect to nature too ?*

*What else? There's the produce itself giving pleasure via the freshness and taste, as well as health benefits. There's the feeling of a bit of security, knowing there's grub and fuel about- there's a year or two's fuel about the pace in woodpiles, for instance. There's the ineffable feeling of achievement and self-reliance in being directly involved in the basic living processes, in being to some extent or other, self-reliant, nurturing the spirit.*

*There's the challenges which are inevitably thrown up, the meeting of which give satisfaction, possibly one of the added factors why allotment-holding has become so popular in recent times, and then, of course, the other ineffable return of the feeling of some independence, some 'steering your own ship' type of feeling and satisfaction, which surely could be a prime freeranger-type return. So if the view of 'profit' is widened beyond its single-dimensioned financial aspect, then situations which don't necessarily seem to be that 'profitable' from the simple, single-dimensioned monetary point of view, can suddenly become abundantly so.*

## **The necessary evil-----?**

*'A profit in its own land is now much honoured.'*

*Yet it doesn't seem that long ago that 'profit' was here in the UK almost the 'dirty word', probably before the current 'businessisation' trend. Some freerangers might view profit making as 'the necessary evil', if only because they'd like to be able to spend more time on more interesting things. Others of course, may like to achieve profit targets as such a situation indicates to them an effective and successful situation. And, of course, presumably few might argue that making a profit is inherently a bad thing, those with some reservations might just be thinking that it's to do with the degree of focus on it and whether there might be a little too single-minded focus about its pursuit.*

*The broadsheets have recently highlighted some of the results of what might have been seen as an over single-minded approach to profit making. Several pieces have reported on the sweatshop work conditions existing in the east so people in the west can benefit from ultra cheap products, and no doubt many will feel a basic unease with such a*

situation perceived as exploitative. 'Free market' thinking may have appeared to have lessened 'moral obligations', but the Buddhist-type question as to whether the individual can ultimately be happy and fulfilled whilst exploiting another, presumably remains valid - ?

Supermarkets, controlling such a huge share of the food market in the west as they do, have been reportedly charged with using their considerable power to follow cynical and aggressive pricing policies in the pursuit of profit. Whether they do or not, many may have unease relating to their size and power, and seemingly voracious business appetites, together with their mass processing of people presumably carrying the possibility of some level of de-socialising effect.

The head of the Anglican church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has recently expressed concern that children are being pressurised into growing up too quickly in such a competitive consumer culture which does not recognise that humans are naturally dependant on each other, again presumably a potentially de-socialising process - ?

### **Profit paradox-----**

Freerangers involved in, for instance, rural enterprises, might not always have profit too much on the brain, partly because they often tend to be 'profit takers' rather than part of the modern trend of 'profit makers', because the output and prices relating to their enterprises are relatively 'set' – they often won't generally be having to be about chasing sales, for instance.

Many won't need to – the semi self-sufficient smallholders featured more fully in the 'Freeranging in Practice (2)' section (see earlier) sell their quality (organic) produce at reasonable prices at market. It's important to them to be providing a good deal and good quality for their customers and to be meeting their customers needs well. This conveys to their customers, who then become a loyal and on-going reliable band- the biggest problem is trying to fulfil this demand. By not chasing profits, profits chase them. One of life's paradoxes-?

### **Market pressures-----**

Sometimes larger firms have been charged with 'profiteering' and chasing profit too hard, at the expense of customer service and satisfaction. The modern consumer may need to be alert, to ensure value for money, a very practical 'freerange' practice. One national chain of rural requisites suppliers, for instance, supply chicken feed in bags which look 'normal', but in fact contain 5kg's less, for the same money as can be had from the agricultural merchants down the road. It's perhaps hard to escape the feeling of being 'done', and who likes that?

### **'Winning can be losing-----?'**

Of course the firm in question would no doubt argue rightly that they offer a certain deal and it's up to the customer to assess and decide. Nevertheless, if people do get the feeling that they're being at least semi- 'conned', then they presumably may react adversely, and lose trust in that particular firm, which could result in lower sales for

them in the longer-term. Another potential paradox? Short term 'winning', but longer-term 'losing-?'

The same might well apply in terms of negotiating a deal. Out and out 'winners' may go for the jugular and drive hard for the absolute best deal for them. The problem, though, may show up in the longer-term when trading partners might become more restricted because of their known business style.

'Profiteering' carries its risks, it seems, particularly if over time people get the feeling they're being conned and exploited, then losing trust and confidence in their ability to get 'fair exchange'. Trust would appear to be a fragile plant – takes quite a bit of nurturing, but capable of being laid waste in an instant, and then wants some considerable re-growing.

'Fair exchange' would seem to be a sound and logical on-going basis on which to do sustainable trade, with both sides of the deal going away feeling ok, feeling satisfied. Perhaps it's been the high degree of focus and pressure on 'winning' that's caused the loss of a bit of longer-term perspective, and the thinking that if there's extra profit now, that's the end of it, there's no counter-productive possible kick-back in the longer run.

#### **'Puffing profit'-----**

'Profit', though, has to work hard, providing as it has to, sufficient money for the business/enterprise to meet its needs. Taking a relatively small simple enterprise, say a sole-owned or partnership-type business; such a business/enterprise exists to provide goods or services to others, that's how it earns its money, which it needs to survive through time, and provide a living and other benefits for its owner(s). Such a view implies that the primary aim, the objective, is to provide others with goods and services, with money making then a 'means' rather than an 'end'.

If people don't want the goods and services on offer, they won't part with money for them, so then, non-survival. Unless there's market distortion, a large player, say, or a few large players in a position to flex their considerable muscle power to get their own way, the process of business can be a remarkably pleasing democratic process, indeed a social process as the act of doing business is a social transaction.

The business/enterprise needs though, not only to persuade customers to part with money, it must also rake in the amount which is then sufficient to meet its on-going needs. If it received only enough to cover its costs, it still would not survive; it would be said to be 'non-viable'. Just 'making a profit' is therefore inadequate as a goal, it needs to be at least the level of profit needed by that particular business, and which will be unique to that business/enterprise i.e. a specific level of profit that can relatively easily be calculated for each business/enterprise.

Lifestyle business/enterprise activity at its basics is relatively simple; it's concerned with input/output ratios. The business uses inputs, either bought (vehicle fuel, for instance) or part of the businesses make-up (slate deposits, for instance) which the enterprise's activity or process then turns into usable (and hence saleable) outputs. Sometimes, for instance, there are less tangible aspects. Someone painting pictures and selling them for

a living, for instance, would buy a certain level of physical inputs – paint, paper, brushes- but a large input would then be their own time, skills and personal creativity.

The sale of the outputs needs to bring in excess of the cost level of the inputs to produce sufficient profit for the business to survive over time (i.e. be 'viable'). This is because the lifestyle business/enterprise has various yearly needs which have normally to be met out of yearly profits for the business to 'survive and thrive', and which can be identified for the independent business/enterprise as shown below :

**Private drawings** (the living expenses of the enterprise's owner(s)).

**Tax payments** (i.e tax is charged on certain profit levels)

**Loan repayments** ( repaying the loan, not the interest payments (already in calcs))

**Capital replacement allowance** (a yearly figure to provide for the renewal of items eg. plant and machinery, which last longer than a year)

**Reserve/Development allowance** (to allow for short-term and long-term risk, and business/enterprise development)

The yearly profit (excess of yearly output value over yearly input costs) then needs to be sufficient to cover these yearly 'demands on profit' – profit has indeed to work hard.

A key part of business/enterprise, particularly maybe, lifestyle enterprise, planning is to ensure that the business/enterprise will indeed be able to do this, to ensure its viability, its on-going survival. This makes the sum total of the yearly demands on profit a key business target- fortunately it can relatively easily be quantified, as the following example from a UK rural farm business illustrates:

Private drawings yearly norm need:	£27,500
Tax – yearly norm estimate:	£ 5,500
Loan repayment- yearly commitment:	£10,000
Capital replacement –norm yearly allowance:	£12,500
Reserve/development yearly allowance:	£8,500
<b>Total yearly demands on profit:</b>	<b>£64,000</b>

(before yearly depreciation charges)

The system operating on this farm business would then need to demonstrate via a realistic profit prediction (via a budget), that it could run with a normal expectation of at least this level of profit (and preferably a bit more for luck), otherwise the system would need change in the direction of a certain level of increased profitability.

The profit target figure shown above demonstrates a yearly 'profit sufficiency' level of operation, which is likely to be unique to that particular unique small business; no-



one else will likely have that same figure, a natural milieu therefore for freerangers. This relatively easily identifiable objective of 'profit sufficiency' represents a far more useful reality objective or goal, than, say, 'profit maximisation', which is hard, if not impossible to pin down, and which can clash with the achievement of other important objective areas.

*If on a farm, say, 'profit maximisation' was the single-track objective, then it might lead for instance, to featureless, vast tracks of land suited to the 'economies of scale'-type of use of giant equipment and machinery, but at a big cost to, say, environmental needs and to human needs, for example, the freeranger trait of pleasure to be had in living in pleasant and 'natural' surroundings.*

*In practice there appear to be many important objective areas. One survey of larger UK farmers, for instance, identified sixteen key business objective areas. It could be a limitation to over-narrow vision to one all-important objective area such as 'profit maximisation': the multi-dimensional alternative is to identify current priorities amongst potentially conflicting objective areas, and then achieve a working balance to their fulfilment, 'balance' probably being the key concept ( see 'values' section).*

### **'Give me money, that's what I want'-----**

*Sometimes maximising or making more profit will have to be the top priority in business/enterprise life, according to the current operating enterprise dynamics:*

Take the case of F, who had a small metal fabrication business, and who'd followed advice to 'grow his business'. This had involved moving to bigger premises and 'tooling up' on a bigger scale, as well as taking on more staff, all of which was financed by a considerable amount of capital, conveniently loaned by a bank. Unfortunately, no sooner had F expanded his business, than a recession hit, and trade declined quite dramatically. With extra premises costs, extra staff costs and significant extra interest payments, F's overhead input costs had shot up, whilst trade had declined. He was now in a perilously dangerous position, and prospects looked pretty bleak.

Fortunately for him, an older friend of his father with plenty of business experience had always taken a shine to F and suspecting F was in trouble and struggling, rode to his rescue, to help in the fight to save his business. F was under severe pressure, getting to the stage where the stress of it all was hindering him to think straight, so the help of his experienced and 'unstressed' mentor was a godsend to him, and brought ideas and practice that he would not probably have managed himself.

For instance, they together drew up a 'fight-for-survival' plan, the very name of which was a master stroke in that it immediately focused everyone strongly on the most pressing priority, and emphasised its importance. They then went on the offensive to the bank, having worked out survival budgets at lower levels of trade, part of which was the plan for the bank to freeze the loan and waive interest charges for the immediate future. Banks tend to operate in their own interests, they are not charity organisations, as they will say, so when the bank agreed to their survival strategy and to waiving interest charges for a period, it was because they had seen that this business, with its clear and decisive survival strategy and plan, was in fact likely to survive the crisis, and therefore be a good customer in the future.

Another strand to the survival plan, apart from quite severe cost cutting, was to move to get work in lower value market sectors, which was successful, as a priority was to raise revenues by increased sales. Overall profits were still down, but with the 'drawing in the horns' measures and adopting a somewhat more frugal lifestyle, F, with his mentor's help, squeezed through the recession, gaining valuable experience on the way. These days he runs a slimmed down operation aimed now at the higher value quality end of the market, for which his firm now has a solid reputation and has the satisfaction of having weathered, with help, a pretty savage storm, which has also added significantly to his stock of experience.

### **Means to an end-----?**

*This case-study casts an interesting question as to whether the commonly promoted business/enterprise objective area of 'business expansion' ('growing the business', as it tends to be called these days) should actually be a prime objective area at all. As the case-study illustrates, there are times when business expansion may carry too high a risk and for some businesses, business rationalisation or even contraction may be the right business move for the prevailing time and business situation, and the unique priority mix of objectives active then for that particular (unique) business/enterprise.*

*Making 'business expansion' an 'automatic' business/enterprise objective could lead a business into expansion at an inappropriate time, then leading as above, into longer-term on-going business difficulties. If the question 'why is business expansion sought?' is asked:*

is it to get more security? to get a better 'survival'? to make more spending money? or to achieve more prestige?

*for instance - then these become the actual objectives, the ends, and 'expanding the business' becomes one of several possible routes to achieving the end(s), a 'means' rather than an 'end'. Being only one of several possible routes then implies that a choice and a decision have to be made, so the various alternatives need to be appraised to identify the appropriate course of action for the prevailing circumstances. Such a way of business thinking would then guard against any possibility of 'automatically' embarking on a 'wrong road', and re-emphasises the importance of 'freerange' type independent decision-making: making the right decision to suit that particular business/enterprise at that particular time, which could be then different than the decisions appropriate for other businesses/enterprises.*

### **'Running is of no use if on the wrong road' (German saying)**

*Others, in the business world are, of course, operating in their own interests, and to that end may seek to influence individuals' business decisions and strategies. The case-study outlined above, though, clearly highlights how important it is for individuals or groups of individuals to be making decisions right and relevant to their own identified priorities and objectives, rather than adopt generalised and assumed strategies and objectives, even at times, advised strategies, which may not work for their situations or for them. They need, in fact, to be 'business freerangers' making the right decisions for themselves and their businesses/enterprises, even though these decisions at times might appear to be odd to others.*

**'Live as if you're going to die tomorrow, farm as if you're going to live forever'**  
(farmer saying)

*How long is the long-term, though? The survey of the important business objectives of farmers/rural enterprisers already mentioned appeared to show that as they got older, and hence presumably more 'sorted and settled', their priorities focused more on the long-term, objectives such as caring for the countryside, rural community considerations and activities, the on-going well-being of their staff, passing the business onto future generations and the long-term health of the land all featuring more prominently, whereas the younger age group, presumably more involved in establishing themselves, tended to prioritise more on making profits and supplying adequate cash flow.*

*These rural 'small' businessmen could be said to be 'freerangers', in that their independent lifestyles, which various studies have identified as being important to them, lead them naturally to identifying and working towards their own multi-dimensioned priorities, which then change 'naturally' and dynamically over time, a somewhat more complex process than just, say, continual working towards a single-dimensioned objective such as 'profit making'.*

**Less of a business, more of a 'lifestyle enterprise'-----?**

*Conventional business planning and recording could be somewhat limiting, in that it largely just covers a single dimension, that of finance. Most would probably of course agree that finances are indeed important, but a 'freerange' lifestyle business/enterprise take maybe that finances are important to the 'survive and thrive' level, after which them other possible return areas are likely to then feature.*

*Larger business maybe tends to be more restricted by the wants and needs of shareholders, and seemingly concentrated on the 'norm' cultural path of achieving maximum profits, a process though which has lead to charges of over-focus on short-term results to the detriment of possible longer-term considerations, and which may run the risk of lower than needed focus on other key objective areas.*

*The lifestyle smaller business/enterprise can be therefore generally somewhat less tied, and so can be used as the vehicle with which to deliver the satisfaction of a multi-dimensional range of people needs; ideally suited, then, to 'freeranging'. It then follows that a multi-dimensional accounting/appraisal system is needed to be able to fully appraise lifestyle enterprises, one that is fuller even than those that have more recently been introduced for bigger business (which has introduced, for instance, environmental auditing). For instance, the 'returns' section for a 'freeranger' lifestyle enterprise might have to cover a variety of categories to cater for the required multi-dimensional approach, such as:*

Financial performance (eg.s profit, capital growth, cash flow)

Environmental performance

Sustainability performance (longer-term prospects)

Security performance (risk)

Social performance

Employee needs satisfaction performance

Personal performance – 1 (satisfaction of array of individual needs)

Personal performance – 2 (depending on how many involved)

*Such a complex and multi-dimensional appraisal maybe unavoidable for freeranger-type lifestyle enterprises that are in themselves multi- dimensional, any more limited version would automatically fail to represent the fuller and truer picture. Businesses/enterprises seen as only moderate successes via a one-dimensional financial appraisal, may in practice and via a multi-dimensional freeranger style appraisal, be then considerably more of a fuller type of success.*

*Many of the smaller, family-owned farm businesses, now seemingly under some degree of threat from larger-scale 'factory farming' trends due to the prevailing and potentially dimensionally limited 'economy of scale' approach, have been multi-dimensional goaled outfits and could well be used as models for multi-dimensioned enterprises.*

### **Lifestyle Enterprise Example**

J is an avid outdoors man, living in Scotland in an area well suited to his pretty rugged activities: rock climbing, mountain climbing, trekking and coastal canoeing. He needed income and was keen to be involved in an enterprise close to his heart. He looked at several possibilities, including setting up his own enterprise and also being an employee on someone else's. The latter option, though, he felt did not probably hang too well with his own unique and varied mix of objectives, which broadly speaking were:

- to make an adequate/reasonable living
- to have an independent lifestyle
- to protect as far as possible the natural environment
- to be able to pursue his interests/ to have sufficient time to practice his outdoor activities
- to have a decent social life
- to contribute his skills and passions to others

Having had some formal business training, he was aware that he'd probably have to compromise and find an acceptable balance between the various objective areas, and that he needed to be to a certain degree 'market aware', not just purely 'do his own thing'. In the end, he decided to go into partnership with a farming friend who had spare resources, and space, to set up a holiday activity centre operation, of which there were

no others in the area. He knew the character of his proposed partner well, feeling they could work together, and this arrangement had several potential advantages:

*it lowered initial capital investment significantly : it lowered risk levels : it opened up a market opportunity: it offered time in the 'close' season' for him to follow his own interests and activities: and it was fully suited to his interests and natural motivation.*

Though not without some problems, one very wet season hit him, for instance, by and large the operation worked well. Financially he was not making a fortune but he was making 'enough' whilst also achieving a good satisfaction of a range of objectives and needs, and leading a fulfilling life.

### **Non-profiteering-----?**

*A person could, of course, make piles of loot, retire, and then live a life of indolence, opulence, and luxuriance – pleasing themselves and doing what they wanted. Would such a life, though, necessarily lead to longer-term contentment and fulfillment? Certainly, for anyone working in excess of sixty hours a week in a sweatshop for thirty pence an hour, the likelihood is that the prospect of being rich will solve all the problems. In more prosperous people cultures, though, the evidence may be less clear-cut. Erich Fromm, a well-known American psychologist, undertook research which lead him to assert some years ago that whilst Americans had high material wealth, they also had noticeably less high psychological wealth/health.*

*There maybe also the paradox of 'trying too hard', and where there is, say, a strong focus on generating profits, such an approach can backfire in that the aggressive selling techniques such a focus can generate, can then switch potential customers off rather than on. It might then actually pay not to over-focus on profit-making, but rather focus on giving good value for money and good customer service, which in itself over time can increase demand and lead to good profit levels following, which are then more sustainable due to having strong basics and foundations, such as good customer satisfaction and loyalty.*

*Sometimes, it might even, for the moment, appear to pay to go 'backwards' :*

The business analysis of a large and mixed farm that had shown that the overhead business costs were too high, particularly labour costs. Out of a staff of six, the owner/manager should let two go, advised his advisor/consultant. This particular farmer was a well-mannered old-school type, and proceeded to gently question this advice. Which staff in particular should be dispensed with: should it be Sid and Joe, old timers with many years of loyal service to himself and his father before him, or maybe some of the younger, more technically with-it staff would have to seek employment elsewhere?

Now the job wasn't quite so easy and straightforward. If profit was plainly and simply his only business objective, then, job done , send the old boys down the road and keep the younger, more energetic and technically minded staff on the farm. The situation was however a little more multi-dimensional in practice, with this business-owner having social as well as economic objectives. He lived in a close-knit rural community and knew that if he sacked two old loyal staff, his local social reputation, which he valued highly, would be wrecked. To his credit, he felt the same way; he did not wish to treat his staff

in this manner. In fact, in practice, he'd already crafted an 'elegant' solution to the conundrum. His two older staff were due to retire in a couple of years, during which he'd use their high craft skills to good use on the farm, getting the hedges, ditches and some of the older buildings in good fettle.

When the old boys then retired, there would be some part-time work for them if they wanted it, but he wouldn't replace them with full-time staff, he'd rather scale-up his machinery and equipment so that the remaining four staff would mostly cope. In financial terms, it was probably true that his shorter-term profitability levels would be lower for the next couple of years, which he was well able to cope with, but of course he was also getting other 'returns'. His course of action could yet also reap a financial harvest in the longer-term, in that his decisions would reverberate with the rest of his remaining staff, and also the local community, adding to his already high stock of staff trust, loyalty and commitment, which over time can pay off in terms of higher long-term sustainable productivity.

*Sometimes, it's said, 'less can be more' – particularly maybe when other dimensions such as time and multi-objectives are brought into the equation.*

### **Micro profits-----**

*The phrase to 'profit' from something implies to get benefit from it, in which case the word 'profit' has wider meaning than a purely monetary context, as the Chambers English dictionary confirms.*

*Thinking then of here on the very small, enterprise – the eco micro-holding – where is the 'profit.'? Certainly, very little, if any, time is spent planning or measuring or even considering 'cash profit', so the 'profit' has to come in other forms. Cash profit, it's true, does not feature strongly because there is not a full cash economy- the produce is self-consumed rather than sold for cash.*

*And yet - miniscule small though it is compared to, say, a corporate giant, it is still an enterprise requiring resources and human inputs in terms of planning, organising and enaction. Other larger businesses will also not always be preoccupied with profit. The family farmers already mentioned, for instance, have over the years run their businesses on a wide range of goals and objectives of which profit making has only been one and then only often to a certain level. As long as they made sufficient profit, necessary of course for the longer-term survival of the business, that was fine, and after which other priorities such as community, care for the environment, family life, longer-term security, lifestyle enjoyment and long-term care of key assets (eg. land) also came into play.*

*Might, in fact, these businesses have been ahead of their time, real freeranger enterprises? They could be the pathfinder businesses, busy innovating a successful long-term multi-dimensional business and life survival style - maybe they could show the way ahead?*

*There's a thought – the small leading the big. Maybe this could even inspire some to undertake a freerange lifestyle enterprise application - they'll have got the itch.*

### **Freerangin' on -----'Perfect specialisation'**

*Logs to store, onions to weed, hay to collect, tomato plants to plant out, early pots to dig, swedes to sow, calabrese plants to put out, timber to shift – the 'to do' list here on the eco micro-holding can seem endless. Ah well, no doubt it'll all come to pass, worrying about it won't get it done. So much is unfinished, so much is to do – it can all seem pretty 'imperfect' at times. But, what gets done, gets done – what doesn't, doesn't. And as the saying has it, first things first, and (sometimes), second things never. If it was all bang up to scratch, what to look forward to tomorrow? Good, always to have something of interest to go at, banishing boredom -----*

### **'Knowing more and more about less and less-----'**

*'Stopping and thinking' about it, it can often be a pretty narrow track life these days. People have all got to, erm, train at this or that and then commit to spending their days – often pretty long days, too, just doing 'this or that'. It's the current specialised way and because many – most? - things are conducted on the larger scale, the narrower, specialist track becomes the way, which presumably can have an effect on thinking and outlooks.*

*This 'specialisation' trend could have started in earnest with the invention – in the 1800's-? – of 'division of labour' and early versions of production lines where people carried out simplified tasks many times over in the day, maybe as good a way as any to dull the spirit, so maybe unlikely to be freerangers most popular environment. Earlier communities probably contained a certain amount of specialisation commensurate with peoples' skills, but maybe the effect could have been less 'narrowing' in the sense that being smaller communities, people would know them more fully, understanding and communicating with each other, becoming aware of the various outlooks prevailing, and life activity would probably have been more naturally diverse.*

*One recent article by an ex-banker's wife, or was it the ex-wife of a banker, illustrates the small worlds that specialisation can create. Don't expect, she said, bankers to be aware of and sympathetic to public angst and dissatisfaction with their role in the big 2008/9 financial crisis. They live, she said, in a world so rarified, so specialist and so superior, that no-one else's views could penetrate it, they would not be seen as relevant or credible, they are the 'nouveau untouchables', she said, living in their own-created reality.*

*The potential problem, though, with man-made realities, no matter how superior the makers may feel them and themselves to be, would seem to be that they are still 'man-made' and as such potentially susceptible to human foibles and distortions; if actual reality then diverges from the constructed version, then potentially there are always the possibility of pitfalls.*

*Keeping feet on ground doesn't always seem to be a bad idea, and one way in a 'specialised' world is to remember that a specialist is akin to an expert – someone who knows more and more about less and less. John Stewart Collis, in his book *The Worm Forgives the Plough*, advocates, for instance, a varied lifestyle involving both physical*

*and mental efforts, a lifestyle which may be relatively rare in this day and age of narrower specialisation.*

*Whilst many freerangers undoubtedly develop specialist skills, it's interesting to speculate as to whether the modern practice of working many hours at the same thing really suits, in that a lively and enquiring mind might feel a bit restricted by over-activity in just one direction.*

A farm-based community, all with individual living units on the farm and using the farm as a communal resource, have a regime based on one day per week of rest, three days contributing work to the farm and allied group activities (eg logging), leaving three days a week for community members to 'self-responsibly' follow and practice their own particular interests, whether it's a spot of building work, contemplating the navel, growing stuff, running an enterprise or whatever.

*Such a system seems to operate well in providing a varied lifestyle and actively promoting, supporting and liberating the development of individual skills and creativity, not in the least because resources, particularly time, are made available, good news all round for freerangers.*

*For conventional work situations other solutions are available. Weekend shift work, for instance, can offer the opportunity of having more time per week to freerange, as can home working and maybe to a lesser extent, flexitime working. Home working could, for instance offer the opportunity to 'break up' the working day significantly to gain more 'life variety'.*

*Starting and running an independent lifestyle business/enterprise can also be attractive to freerangers looking for a more independent life, although the time involved in getting such an enterprise off the ground and up and running can be very considerable – maybe not something to give short-term extra time, for instance. (see 'books' page of FR site : 'Lifestyle Enterprise Planning')*

### ***In perfect'o-----***

*Maybe the significant specialisation factor within modern culture has something to do with the modern preoccupation, or so it sometimes seems, of having to have things 'just so'. Perhaps the ability to accept 'imperfection' and to 'get on with things', even if they're not entirely up to the mark, is being to some extent lost. Part of an explanation could be that peer pressure, having been cranked up by the big players in the culture – government's use of league tables, business and government's use of bonuses and targets, for instance - has reached the level where people are 'super' anxious 'to do the right thing', to have the latest goods, to live in the smartly opulent house, to be driving the 'right wheels', and so on, all of which act as a sort of 'perfection blueprint', for which there seems to be pressure for it to 'instantly exist', and also contributing no doubt to potentially high-risk high personal borrowing levels.*

*The problem may be not necessarily just the level of ambition behind the drive for perfection but the degree of pressure involved within the (man-made) culture for this to be the reality. Reality, is, though, reality, although there are those who maintain there's no such thing and in that it's man-made and merely relative. Could this, though, be a*



form of 'wishful thinking'? Presumably, the mind can come up with pretty much anything, and anyone can believe pretty much anything – but does that make it 'right'? Anyone can, for instance, believe the world is flat if they so wish – and can in fact join with others in the aptly named 'Flat Earth' society – but just because they want to believe it, does not necessarily make it fact- there is presumably the possibility they could be wrong ----- .

### **'Rose-coloured specs-----?'**

*It's a well known phenomenon that there's a tendency for people to veer onto the over-optimistic side when starting up a business enterprise, it's what any business advisor or consultant worth their salt looks at:*

*' how realistic are the predictions and expectations written into the enterprise planning?'*

*Such over-optimism can reveal itself on the grander scale, such as a general over-expectation of sales figure (often with under-estimations of the associated costs), or 'smaller ' errors such as predicting sales too early in the business's life – not allowing 'build-up' time.*

*The latter is a good example illustrating an underlying cause: anxiety for success, almost inevitable as a risky journey is about to be embarked on. The consultant/advisor's job is to 'allay' this anxiety and ensure the plans are realistic and achievable, and that peoples' expectations and then exertions are then more grounded. There does generally seem to be more pressure involved in modern times where 'instant success' is an expectation, as is starting 'big' rather than 'small', maybe due to a seemingly strong current business mantra of 'size matters'.*

### **'Organic' business growing-----**

*In the past, many businesses/enterprises started small and developed thereon 'naturally', 'organically', as it were, enabling the participants to dissipate the risk, reducing anxiety and stress levels, and to 'learn as they went', accruing useful and important experience and knowledge to stand them in good stead for the future. In today's more hectic, pressurised culture, ravenous for quick profits, maybe though the pressure involved is too great, paradoxically in itself then a potential counter-productive factor relating to the degree of business success.*

*The over-expectations often involved in, for instance, the business start-up situation, are 'normal' in the sense that they would appear to be a common human reaction to uncertainty and in that case, as has been stated, it can be important to try to mitigate against any possible negative effects coming from any strong initial 'instant perfection' desire for success, potentially resulting in a 'running before walking' scenario.*

*As one older Dorset farmer used to say: ' tek yer time, boyo'.*

*In a way, surely that's part of the freeranger creed – taking a bit of time to look around, to toy with ideas without necessarily buying straight into them, to explore other ideas and creeds to open up broader vistas, and also taking time surely, to 'stop and look at the roses along the way'.*

'A poor life, this, if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare'

*Maybe things can be just a bit too hectic, and following Fritz Schumacher's advice to 'stop and look', could provide help along the way, to find that 'right road' – could it even be the road to the freeranges - ?*

### **'What is, is-----'**

*'Where there's livestock, there's deadstock' - this old farmer saying seems to say it all. Hard luck, mate, you might want this or that, but what you get is what you get. Man cannot necessarily control everything, and life doesn't necessarily proceed according to any man-made perfection blueprint. There's also a northern UK tradition of 'endurance', again an acceptance of 'what is'; there will be hard times as well as good times. This sort of thinking is sometimes seen as 'negativity'. It's not always easy to face the prospect of less pleasant situations/outcomes, but the other, perhaps more realistic way of seeing it, is that such an attitude of stoic acceptance better enables people to deal with the harder times, which, like it or not, tend to be part of life.*

*'No-one', it's said, 'is promised a rose garden.'*

*This stoic acceptance stance has undoubtedly emerged from peoples' experience of harder times, it is hard won, and could explain why older people with generally that bit more experience, can often handle reverses pretty well, having previously been through, and survived, the terrors of 'failure'. Perhaps that's why they've got their 'grumpy' tag – they don't have to see things in any ultra positive 'success-city' light, they can cope with situations being less than perfect ----- ?*

### **In imperfect'o-----**

*Growing things here on the eco holding, there's always some degree of failure and reverses pretty much every year, the perfect growing season has yet to occur and imperfection is the order of the day. Win some, lose some, hopefully winning more than losing, which in fairness does usually happen.*

*Perhaps, though, it's also not entirely necessary to grow the perfect crops and produce. Supermarkets have a reputation for wanting perfect, standardised shape, whereas the freerange approach might be not to worry too much about a bit of non-standard shaping, rather judging it via a pleasure sensor i.e. taste.*

*Maybe the ability to allow a bit more imperfection, would, though, actually be better in that the lessened pressure could lead in fact to less errors and problems. Perhaps it's a case of not so much falling off the bike, but rather the getting back on and then getting it right-? In the history of successful businesses, there are often previous failures, the lessons of which then contributing to the current strong business performance. 'Failure' ('imperfection') can be useful over the longer-term-?*

### **Eastern un-promise-----?**

*Is it the Eastern Sufi sect which has a tradition of suffering is good for people, echoed by that quote: 'into every life some rain must fall'? Actually many creeds have seemed to endorse such sentiments, with eastern mysticism emphasising the need to learn to live*

*in 'imperfect' reality, which can come in various forms, and at times contradict any notions that instant happiness is the ever present appropriate human state.*

*The basic idea appears to be that 'suffering' is a learning experience. Many top pro golfers, for instance, have endorsed that, unpleasant though it maybe at the time, they gain more in the long-run out of losing and failure than winning, and that if they are to climb the top pinnacles these 'failure' experiences are in fact needed to build their characters to succeed at the top level.*

*Somewhat of a life paradox, the experience of 'imperfection', failure and losing needed if longer-term winning is to be experienced, and that when it happens, it should therefore be accepted if not embraced as an essential part of the life journey. Freerangers might likely be interested in experiencing a 'whole' reality, reality as it is, rather than, say, trying to live in any restricted man-made 'success' structured world.*

*Another interesting 'reality paradox' often encountered in eastern mysticism is the condition that wanting too much and trying too hard can lead in itself to failure. Again, golfers know this one well, with a classic response to a poor shot being the re-doubling of effort into the next shot, (i.e. to recover lost ground), only to experience repeated and amplified non-success. One of the golf life learning lessons can be that results are better gained from focus on the 'input' (concentrating on the moves and attitude needed to produce a good shot) needed to get the 'output' (the result i.e. in this instance, good shot), rather than over-focus on output - wanting the result, wanting success - then by de-default causing under-focus on the inputs.*

*It's interesting to speculate whether modern culture has been itself over-focused on results, eg a strong desire for mega profits, to the detriment of the actual (multi-dimensional) results achieved, especially in the longer run. And as Schumacher might argue, whether a better and fuller understanding and identification of what the 'results' are or should be, is necessary to better avoid going down too narrow a track. An understanding in terms of overview sight to be able to get a perspective can be a valuable asset, one with which many freerangers are perhaps likely to resonate. Some - many(?) - might subscribe that 'putting things in perspective' may even in fact be one of the most important jobs, a necessary one if 'right roads' and then right thinking, actions and solutions are to be found.*

### **A modern take-----?**

*The 'control culture' seems to have come into play in recent years together with an associated aggressive drive for profits. From government trying to control outcomes by, as one academic observer recently stated, centralised 'micro managing' public services, to commercial firms trying to drive results via money incentives and high control management systems.*

*A potential problem, though, with forceful control-centered regimes might be that of resistance from the people who are being controlled, and in the process potentially being de-stated, (eg. lack of individual evaluation and decision making), de-human righted (eg. reported problems with union recognition in some quarters), and even de-humanised (eg. reported spot body searches of staff in the workplace).*

*If people resist, as might be considered reasonable, at least in some quarters, then further counteracting control measures and authoritarian management styles can be seen as justified, fuelling then a self-fulfilling cycle of an ever-increasing control culture becoming the norm, which can also serve to fulfil the power needs of some. Such a situation could be likened to a self-sustaining vortex, in which people are entrapped and in need of understanding to unravel, as the Dalai Lama recently suggested:*

*'Reliable and genuine discipline comes not from repression, but from an understanding of all the whys and wherefores of our actions'.*

*The other option, often seen within agriculture where managers/owners and employees work closely together, is where people resistance is taken as valid negative feedback with a resulting need to find differing approaches. These more 'people involved' approaches are often seen in smaller businesses such as, for instance, farm businesses, but also in some larger businesses. The current coalition government in the UK appears to have recognised that staff management styles that are more 'people inclusive' than control-centered approaches are needed, consulting with the John Lewis Partnership organisation, for instance, on how to proceed.*

*History might in fact suggest that any on-going sustained control- centred approach could ultimately be counter-productive in that people could be unlikely to give freely of their best under such power regimes. The old saying that 'you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink' may yet still be apt.*

### ***'Into every eco micro-holding some rain-----'***

*Rain can be very welcome- especially in drier times. There's an interesting one – how often does someone on, say, the weather forecast, bemoan or apologise for the imminence of rain? And yet, presumably, there can be no 'a green and pleasant land' without it, and fairly importantly, nor can there be life –water's a pretty important commodity. Anyone involved in trying to grow things, pretty soon becomes aware of its vital role.*

*The produce here on the micro-holding might be 'imperfect', but its grown without chemical input and therefore any associated potential health risks, its available, there's always stuff to pick, good 'food security', and it's fresh and tasty. What then is the definition of 'perfection' - maybe it needs to be bigger, wider, deeper - ?*

*Over the years the growing 'problem' areas on the organic micro-holding here have definitely lessened considerably, which is a good longer-term bonus. Quite substantial growing problems such as club root and brassica root fly no longer appear to be a trouble – fingers crossed- maybe it's applying the wood ash every other year, which also seems to have kept the soil acidity levels under control, as well as, of course adding valuable potash nutrients to the soil.*

*Thinking about it, the whole growing process could be said to be 'imperfectly perfect'. There is wastage, but this then converts to non-waste by being turned into fertiliser (i.e. compost), so in reality, a zero-waste system. The fertiliser is then for free, appealing to the economical, frugal even, side of freeranging, taking, though, over a year, with three separate composting heaps being ideal.*

*This compost is then put on top of the growing area's soil (a good application every other year), which, having had any weeds shaved off (onto the compost heap ) is then just loosened with a fork, the seeds or plants pretty much 'bunged in', then over time maybe one or two weedings, and hey presto, stuff ready to eat.*

*Not maybe always the biggest and best known to man, but serviceable healthy produce, sufficient to needs. Big stuff, anyway, seems often to be 'taste challenged', and these days varieties here are chosen on taste criteria.*

### **Variety spice-----**

*Looking around the micro-holding here, it's immediately apparent that it's a non-perfect operation, there are generally quite a few unfinished tasks at any one time. In the notebook for mid-March, for instance, it says the potatoes were half planted, as were the onion sets. Half the veg plot needed de-weeding and generally tidying and preparing for the growing season, the grass area in the paddock needed rolling after winter, which apparently here had been the hardest and coldest for thirty years, and part of the paddock was in the process of being re-seeded.*

*The water catching arrangements to feed the 'new' (2<sup>nd</sup> hand) water reservoir had been hastily bodged to say the least. Rain had been given for that day and the morrow, hence the hasty erection of guttering to gather some water, needed to supply the new (2<sup>nd</sup> hand) glasshouse situated well away from the house in the paddock and now the 'early production' unit.*

*Creepers needed peeling back from the cottage roof, soil needed removing from the base of the cottage, the tool shed's organisation needed completing, the runner beans needed shelling for seed – the 'to do' list, as usual, was endless, so much incompleteness and 'imperfection'. Even when work's underway, it's a case of half-an-hour at this, then twenty minutes at that, then back to the first job and so on – keeps it interesting. Several hours at the same thing seems to be a classic recipe for mind-numbing boredom, yet many undoubtedly have to do it. Being able to do what you want to do, and do it how you want to do it, surely in itself has to be a form of freerange 'riches' - ?*

B ran a small farm with milk cows, rearing heifers, some beef animals, a few pigs, some acreage of corn and a small acreage of potatoes. He was canny, cutting his cloth to suit, not investing heavily in machinery or equipment, rather buying sound but cheaper tackle considered now too small for the advancing agricultural mechanisation trend. He knew that by modern rights he should specialise and increase his main potential earner, the dairy herd, so that it used all the farm's limited resources.

*'Yes, I might make more money', he used to say, 'but Lord above, I'd be tied to a cow's tail and bored to bits, and besides, we're doing ok- maybe not having too many flash foreign holidays-but, so what?'*

*Truth told, this was a way of life for B and his family which they were fully involved in and fully enjoyed; it was fulfilling enough in its own right, they didn't need any 'flasher' lifestyle and the money to support it – real rural freeranger lifestylers. Ironic too, that others who did borrow and invest heavily into dairy herd expansion, then suffering*

economically through low milk prices, were often subsequently more at risk than B and his family.

**'Imperfect' the new 'perfect' ----- ?**

*Active participation in the life processes somehow seems to provide a strong 'connection' with the life forces themselves, as does being involved with nature, growing things and suchlike, and for those 'freerangers' who feel so, might then any 'press button' life of opulence prove to be a less fulfilling life - ?*

*Somehow, active participation in and contemplation of life processes seems to boost and bolster everyday life spirit, something a Buddhist Master is saying in the broadsheets today. It seems to generate a feeling of 'connectedness' rather than separateness and it's curious to note how often when working with nature, something feels as though it's given back.*

*And what if everything had to be done, done properly, and finished? Apart from being exhausted, there'd be nothing left to do, nothing left to look forward to, to get interested in. Better, maybe, to live perfectly with and in 'imperfection' and be working towards 'improvement'; a case of it 'being better to journey than arrive' - ?*

*Maybe, even, a case of 'tekin' yer time, boy' - ?*

## **'Freerangin' on ----- 'Freerange Practice' (3)- Live Examples**

### **Eco micro-holding 'magic' -----**

*The beauty of smallholding life is that it seems to have only limited contact with money – basically if you're doing what you want to do, having 'lots of dosh' is then somehow less of a relevance, as is spending time making more of it. Money is then a means, not an end. Making things, patching things up to make them work, growing things and 'maintaining' and enjoying nature, are all good practical activities relevant to the fulfilment of many people, capable of yielding a good harvest of human satisfaction.*

*The current mainstream culture has its mantras: 'money's what it's about', 'you've got to be rich and/ or a celebrity', 'being 'big' is what matters', 'winning is everything' and so forth – but what about deciding for self – the way of the freeranger-? Freerangers are probably likely to be those who reserve the right not to have to operate on automatic goals fed in by the system, but rather work things out for themselves and make their own key life decisions.*

*Martina Navratilova, the former tennis star, in a recent interview, said:*

*'In the States, we don't walk anywhere. We have air-conditioned cars, and air-conditioned homes. We've lost touch with nature.'*

*Easy, perhaps, then to see how that could happen in a modern, urbanised world, and that man could even get a sense of triumphing over nature. Those working with and close to nature though, often seem to get a reverence for it, and a respect for life in all its forms, a respect that sometimes these days seems to be generally lessened in wider society, perhaps as a result of what Martina alludes to. Rural freerangers, in spite maybe of relatively 'small stature' in wider society, with their closer working ties with nature, have perhaps yet something to offer it - ?*

*What about those brave souls too, who, eschewing fortune making and fame, glory and comfort, set out, say, in a relatively small boat to explore the world? Or off on a spell trekking in Nepal, or taking on the hefty task of writing a concerto, or a book- or whatever - there's some adventures- a bit of good freeranging – and maybe they're not quite the same people after the experience - ?*

*These might be examples at one end of the scale- there are no doubt many down-shifters who've seen their own light and less conspicuously but maybe no less bravely, changed their life patterns to then give more meaning and satisfaction - ? The eco micro-holding here in its own small way does just that, giving as it does more connection with a natural reality and life-meaning -----*

### **Stop the world-----**

*There are some who have had the opportunity to take the equivalent of significant time out to explore their fuller natures and find more fully who they are, in the pursuit of personal knowledge and fulfillment. The following are people who have done this and have therefore travelled well down a 'freeranger' road:*

G was in a demanding job and a demanding relationship, both of which were beginning to pall. Events suddenly took their own turn – unexpectedly she was made redundant

and shortly after her relationship was finished by the other party. For awhile she was struck pretty low by this sharply adverse turn of events, which had come as a sudden and sharp blow. Her friends then urged her to 'get out there again' and begin the fight back, which after a while indeed she started to do. After one interview, though, which had gone well, she had, as she sat relaxing with a glass of wine, 'strange thoughts', as she described them.

*'What if I don't want to do this?' she thought. 'Am I still on the same old merry-go-round?'*

Such thoughts were disturbing, but she was also intrigued, and resolved to follow them through. The next question arose, *'Well, if I don't want this, what do I want?'*, and she was a little startled to realise she didn't know, especially when she asked herself the follow-up question of *'what then really matters to me?'*

Although it was all a bit scary, it also came as a bit of a revelation to her, in that it opened up a whole new, and potentially intriguing area to explore. Something in her made her realise it would take some time, and that she'd need to have a much less hectic lifestyle to do it. To cut an interesting longer story a bit shorter, she decided to go on the exploration and to give herself the conditions needed to do it effectively. She already knew an out-of-the-way country district, which she visited and came across what she needed and wanted – a fairly remote country cottage to rent at a reasonable rate.

She calculated her living costs wouldn't be that high and that her redundancy money should keep her going for up to a year, and in the event she was in fact there for just over the year. Apart from an hour's radio a day and a weekly shop trip, she had no other people contact, having explained to friends and family her situation and having promised to contact them if she needed to. She instinctively knew not to rush it, even though the old mainstream 'hurry, hurry' life traits were there. Over time and by degrees these slipped away leaving her, as she described, 'in a peaceful limbo', and enjoying the calm and relaxation, and surprisingly to her, not really missing human contact.

Then a new phase arose, which she described as 'with thoughts coming to her', rather than 'her thinking them' and gradually she came to realise what was important to her, what she wanted to do and how she wanted to spend the rest of her life. She realised why she'd never really felt the urge to have her own children, about which she'd always felt a bit guilty: it was because the person she'd now got in touch with, the 'real me' as she said, wanted to give her real love and care to children, to needy children. She now does exactly this at an orphanage in India under quite difficult circumstances, and would not want to revert to her old life in spite of the difficulties, because she 'gets far too much from this 'new' life' -----

### ***Hands-on-----***

*Another who had a life-changing opportunity and experience also found himself in a position to do so, utilising accumulated resources from a well-remunerated career – a banker turned freeranger:*

T was a successful city banker who one day was sitting in his luxurious city flat, the Lamborghini parked outside, celebrating his latest mega bonus with a glass of champagne. Suddenly – a feeling of 'flatness' – *'is this it?' and 'shouldn't I be feeling on top of the world?'* But he wasn't, and in those brief moments of let-down, knew that he needed to start a search- his search for more meaning in his life. They thought he was mad – a few were even angry with him, when he'd handed in his



notice. Crikey, why on earth would you want to get off the gravy train? He wondered himself, in his darker moments, what on earth he was doing.

No problem of course with the basics – plenty of cash in the bank – but what strange odyssey had he embarked on? He didn't really know and could only bide his time and see what turned up. In fact, from giving in his notice to relocating and starting a new lifestyle took eighteen months – it took the best part of nine months before he really 'got' what he wanted to do. He undertook various trips, various courses but nothing seemed to gell, and then he read somewhere about 'following the path of the heart'.

'Yes', he thought, '*what do I really want?*' An important question to ask, maybe, - he'd 'drifted' into the banking game and stayed in its comfortable environs. It was awhile before his answer came. He'd always casually gravitated to antique shops on his travels, but only in a distant, uninvolved way. One day in a shop in the Welsh borders country, he got looking at a very nice piece of older furniture, and he suddenly realised why the antique side had always not grabbed him more fully - it wasn't the antique shop that was the main interest, it was wooden furniture and the wood itself which was drawing him.

It was like '*the light went on*' he said, and shortly after he attended a woodworking course, and it all went from there. He found an independent cabinet maker to whom he became a self-financing apprentice, sold his London pad and rented a small village cottage close to work, and settled down – amazingly quickly – to the simple life. Now, two years on, he's just gone on his own making quality wooden furniture to commissions- some of his old city contacts were useful. He's bought a relatively modest country place and is in a relationship with a local lady who has two small children.

*'I thought I had it all, but what I've got now means so much more to me'*, he says.

*Good to see his brave quest come off so well. Maybe that's the freeranger clue – following the quest. T's time-out and self-search led him to a very different lifestyle – very much that of a freerange lifestyle doing his thing, which appears to have answered his initial questions and quest and led him to a more meaningful 'hands-on' lifestyle. Maybe 'being free' isn't enough, and 'life meaning' is important - ?*

### **'Weird in the woods-----'**

*Another perhaps slightly more extreme example of the 'stopping the world' approach, and one which shows that it can also be done without substantial financial reserves, is a revival of the virtually lost art of 'hermit-ing', not perhaps a living mode totally in tune with modern life:*

B took off to live pretty much as a hermit in a hut in a wood. Given the 'fast pace' of modern life, it's perhaps relatively easy to see why some react to it, particularly perhaps if they have freeranger-type multi-dimensional tendencies. B had had what might be described as an 'artistic' upbringing with loving, creative parents, and had struggled to cope with and to relate to and connect with modern life. In fact he'd been relatively successful in quite a 'high-powered' computer related job, but had gradually become

disenchanted with the relatively long working hours doing similar activity, in spite of receiving good levels of material rewards.

His escape was to periodically visit an eco-community to undertake volunteer work, the simplicity and relatively gentle pace of which contrasted significantly with his 'normal' life. It was on one of these eco-community visits that he experienced a sort of 'minor epiphany' as he described it. He had a sudden realisation that he wanted to and needed to '*get back in touch with the basics of life*', as a sort of self-grounding and centering move. At the same time he felt the need to take time out and be by himself, which he was able to do by organising a sabbatical from work and going to live in a redundant hut in the wood of a friend he'd made at the eco-community, who also kindly left him provisions once a week.

The quiet and '*long hours of stillness*' initially took some adapting to, but he was determined to see it through to at least another phase, understanding that the effects of his normal life would take a time to wear off. His solitary sojourn lasted several months and he is now back in the computer game but running his own specialist bespoke computer applications and trouble shooting company with a couple of 'computer creatives' he knew and who he persuaded to join him. Some weeks, he says, they work crazy hours if the work is that absorbing, but then that's offset by other weeks which they devote to 'exploration' or alternative activities, such as hill walking and eco volunteering.

'*Boring it isn't*' he now says, '*in fact, it's great!*'

*For some, it might take a jolt to start to consider the possibility of a 'new' life:*

S had had a fairly troubled and turbulent life and during his latest spell in prison decided to '*get to grips with himself*', as he put it. At one point previously he'd done a fair bit of poaching, so was a handy shot, and he remembered that it often was when he was making his way home with the sun coming up that he was most at ease with himself. He contacted an ex-prisoner help organisation who were able to help him organise an out-of-the-way country location in which he could live alone in a tent on a fairly isolated country estate for several months one summer, fending and providing for himself and taking on his inner battle and journey. The subsequent experience changed him significantly –he became a real and pithy writer - which he attributed to both his own initiative to 'take himself on' and the quiet rhythms of nature which he felt provided the necessary time, space and nurturing environment.

### ***Living with imperfection-----***

*Whilst the freerangers outlined above were able, in a sense, to 'stop the world' in terms of being able to organise conditions for themselves to take significant time out to do their 'self-explorations', many are likely to have more pressing limitations, such as families and their needs, which may restrict their choices in many instances. The 'freeranger approach under restricted circumstances may then be to think of, organise, and put into practice measures which can protect and insulate them to some extent against what they perceive as any potential 'affluenzic' effects of a super-consuming culture, as the live case-study example below illustrates:*

Family F decided after visiting nature and eco-type venues that although they normally lived fairly 'normal' urban lives, they would offset 'urbanisation' by making all their holidays eco- friendly and eco-interesting. They also decided to go to war against waste and see to what degree they could as a family take the responsibility of producing as little waste as possible. By using the 100%- or as near as dammit - re-cycling rule when making their purchases, taking particular attention to packaging, for instance, to ensure it was re-cyclable, they were able to reduce their food waste to virtually zero ( against somewhere about 30% average), and their non-re-cyclable family waste to less than a bin full for a whole year. Such an achievement gave them quite a boost and a strong sense of good self- achievement that they were doing something positive themselves towards a value they felt strongly about.

*Although it could be said that their efforts were 'a drop in the ocean', they were still important to their own well-being and their own sense of worth, and in fact subsequently they did receive some strong regional publicity which means their example could then have well inspired others to make their own individual contributions- the 'stone in the pond' ripple effect.*

### **'Unspoilt by Progress'----- (Bank's beer slogan )**

*Somehow, change these days seems to be directly and indelibly associated with progress, maybe due to how much the desirability of change has been pushed, particularly by the political parties over the last decade or two. This may be connected with younger generations, keen on escaping restrictions from older generations, taking over in power in more recent times, getting change to be widely accepted as desirable, thus clearing away any potential hurdles and potentially greatly accelerating the pace of change.*

*With the wisdom of hindsight, though, change in itself has obviously not translated necessarily into times of unalloyed joy, given that there appear to be a reasonable number of current limitations and issues, of which banking practices and the financial collapse have been prominent. Maybe, though, change in itself does not guarantee benefits and if pursued too vigorously for too long could promote negative, counter-productive effects, of which 'throwing babies out with bathwater' and loss of individual and social stability could be potentially prominent:*

T and P are a couple not particularly perhaps totally naturally suited to a fast-paced consuming culture dedicated seemingly to 'change', as they as individuals could be described by some as 'old-fashioned'. They live semi-rurally and quietly, and both having professional-level responsible jobs, and both enjoying the 'quiet' hobbies of gardening and walking. They haven't a TV at home and limit computer time, partly as a 'protection' measure for their daughters and partly as their own statement to themselves to try to 'be in the culture, but not of it'.

Both have put conscious limits on their careers, seeing that if they adopt conventional ambition and then subsequent promotion, their lifestyles would be changed significantly due to increased work demands and current cultural expectations, they then being able to spend significantly less time with their daughters, a benefit which to them seems to offset the lack of modern electronic amenities, and their cherished pastimes.

*Maybe this couple have in their own manner achieved their own particular real 'work/life' balance which suits them, and which they've achieved by being strong enough not to be pulled along by the 'flow' - ?*

*Some freerangers take vicarious delight in 'countering the culture' and thereby give themselves a goal and extra meaning to life, as C's case illustrates :*

C describes himself as an *'ornery cuss'* with an innate dislike and distrust of 'authority', which he claims he was born with (!). Earlier in life he had one or two brushes with it, then deciding that it was a mugs game – the dice were loaded – so then aimed to challenge his natural anarchic resistance into, as he so delicately puts it *'somat a bit more sub-tle, lad'*. Since then he's dedicated his life to as much non-conformity as he's been able to get away with, along with as many ingenious ways of 'beating the system' money-wise as he can muster.

His mode of transport is a classic- no point in having a car – *'wuss than bloody useless'*, so it's a beat-up old pick-up rescued from a scrap yard and brought to life by him- he's a trained and natural engineer/mechanic who can more or less do anything – one of his recent projects has been to fabricate a ride-on mower from scrap and utilising Morris Minor steering gear. No paint of course – *'I dunno - no need for'it te look pretty'*, but works like a dream for the princely outlay of less than twenty quid.

*A freerange talent 'par excellence' - ?!*

The pick-up runs on biofuel made out waste chip fat oil, again at far less than conventional cost. Engine makes a bit of a racket, but it always seems to go. He lives with his partner J in a neat cottage on the edge of a small town and works conventionally intermittently, his original training having been in agricultural engineering which mean't he spent a fair bit of time as a student on a tractor seat. As a handy tractor driver he's in fair demand from surrounding farmers at busy periods, working longish hours for around a total of five months a year, which brings in a tidy sum - *'that'll do me just fine and dandy, me ol' tater!'*

The rest of his time is occupied running an allotment, a pride and joy, and using a fair bit of home-saved seed and muck acquired free from one of his farmer contacts, and some engineering/mechanic-ing projects as described, plus mechanic-ing/welding paying jobs for others- he's a very useful bloke to know. When he's presented with a job, though, it never seems very promising – he seems to go into a trance like state, stroking his beard, pulling at his earring and muttering *'well, I dunno, I'm sure.'* Then, *'You'd better leave it with me, maybe there's somat could be done with the darn thing'*. A couple of days later, rest assured, as good as new, like as not often having had a unique remedy applied.

Clothing is courtesy of charity shops although he's become a bit disenchanted with them, disparagingly now referring to them as *'bloody boutiques which 'av caught the big bucks bug'*.

J and C's cottage is more than adequately heated by a woodburner, much of the wood being collected by him and the pick-up for free from his various farming and waste outlet contacts. C likes a social drink in a nearby club, and he and J make a few demi-johns of

wine each year from surplus produce and fruit. He is thinking about taking a market stall one day a week, whether it will happen is another matter, as he's no pressing financial need and running it might be awkward in busy tractoring seasons. All in all, a very successful and self-reliant freeranger who gets considerable pleasure and satisfaction from all the various strands to his unique life, and considerable creative motivation from *'taking on and beating the system'*, whilst of course making a very strong and real contribution to his local society – very nearly a model citizen – just don't tell him that ----.

***'Straight are the roads of improvement—crooked are the byeways of genius'***  
(Willy Blake)

*The freeranger examples are undoubtedly many and legion, the living case-studies outlined above are but a few, but all demonstrate the freeranger basics of working out what's meaningful to themselves, sometimes by somewhat tortuous means, and then following a lifestyle that is likely to fulfil their particular needs and values. More often and not, and particularly within 'mass' based as opposed to individual based cultures, this may mean not going with the considerable 'flow', but rather the individual finding her/ his own unique route or path. That's surely the point, unique to the individual(s)- bio-diversity at its best- and 'freeing' internal, natural motivation.*

*Not always necessarily an easy or straightforward path, but problems can then act as challenges to give satisfaction in their overcoming and stimulating growth. When things aren't working out particularly well on the eco holding here, it can certainly seem like a 'unique' path. Often, though, it's amazing how something useful comes out of the gloom. Peas, for instance, just didn't seem to thrive here for a couple of years or so – a particular frustration as it's a favourite crop. One day, though, putting aside the frustration, and asking the simple question:*

*'why?'- why aren't peas growing? – the answers came via a thought process.*

*'Well, peas have long roots, so should be able to survive drought, so forget drought stress. Aha, what if their roots can't get down, though, into the moisture in the lower soil layers?'*

*Maybe onto something- they're sown in a nice soil tilth to ensure good germination, and this is created with a Dutch hoe, which, though, doesn't go too deep. Why not loosen up the pea soil with a fork, then create a tilth with the hoe – and voila!, this year, several good rows of healthy pea plants.*

*There you go - easy peasy.*

## **Freerangin' on -----'Values, the heart of freeranging - ?'**

*Motives and values regarding making money probably come from both the heart and the head, although it's maybe relatively easy to see that the head can easily take over : got to be 'hard headed' about making money, and suchlike. In a money economy, making money equates with such elemental human needs such as survival, so it's perhaps unsurprising that money making attracts such strong focus, maybe, though, potentially obscuring non-monetary values if over strong - ?*

One TV programme in the 'Tribe' series had the presenter living 'in the jungle' with a small tribe. Men and women lived in separate spaces in primitive but adequate 'home-made huts and the men appeared to spend quite a lot of time sitting round smoking, yarning and laughing. Roughly every third day, off they'd go on a hunt lasting several hours. All lead simple non-monetary lives whilst seeming relatively content – a view of life at the other end of the spectrum -----

*It can, though, sometimes seem in the current western-style culture that making the money, and lots of it to boot, is what really matters. Maybe that could be in fact the case in mass, mainstream culture but elsewhere other values are often still alive. In rural country areas, for instance, if one family farm experiences difficulties, say the 'main man' farmer falling ill or injured, the rest of the farmer community often rallies round and rides to the rescue of the stricken farming family, for the time being putting their own business affairs on hold or in second place, but also getting pleasure and satisfaction helping someone out, and the longer-term 'secondary' benefit of more 'group' security, surely then a real business/enterprise asset - ? (some recent (Nov. '15) research has come up with the novel-to-some conclusion that man is naturally unselfish). Isn't it natural, though, to have 'fellow feeling' for others, to feel social feelings and responsibilities as well as personal priorities? On the other hand, if the current culture conditioning is geared narrowly to self-focused personal wealth accumulation, then it may not be surprising that social priorities, for instance, feature generally less strongly, causing maybe a degree of conflict for some at least. Might there, though, in practice, be a wider array of many different values – economic, personal, environmental, social - the natural and on-going dynamic balance between them being the key element -?*

*Achieving balances between different areas of values leads to a multi-dimensional take on life, and, some might say, a rightfully complex rather than simplistic life situation – a 'freerange' take on life. Perhaps simplifying life in terms of reducing to the single-dimensioned view of 'money making' could have its attractions in leading to an 'un-complex' situation with which to deal with, but also its potential dangers if important multi-dimensioned areas are then left un-prioritised and un-attended.*

*The study of traditional rural entrepreneurs, farmers, already referred to in previous sections, identified as many as fifteen important business life value areas: from sustaining money making to social values, to environmental care values, to long-term sustainability values for instance, that were important to them, indicating that concentration on one area would definitely not 'cut the mustard' and could leave significant problems (see later).*

## **'Money monsterring'-----**

*Why, though, might have such a narrow and strong focus on money and wealth creation occurred? Perhaps it's a case of the traditional 'restrainers' such as religious values having been shrugged off by modern secular man (Dec '15, UK 'over 50% of population now 'non-religious') he/ she can do/have 'whatever they want'- ? Ally this with a seemingly determinedly de-socialised culture as witnessed by Maggie Thatcher's famous (or infamous) line 'there's no such thing as society', and the introduction of the ultra competitive 'every man for himself' US style of culture into the UK, a strong focus on individual wealth-making to the possible exclusion of other potentially important priorities may not then be too much of a surprise.*

According to one TV documentary ('Century of Self') the US approach was a 'nil trust' position emanating from Cold War tactics; everyman out for himself, which presumably then automatically demoted human social traits - ?

*The culture of individual wealth and fame appears to find a ready champion in the media; for instance, quite a few TV programmes appear to promote the 'pots of dosh' and/or 'fame is the name of the game' messages, with an implied sub-text that could be interpreted that the individual is/ should be automatically avid for either. Could, though, such a 'limited-dimensioned' view of human success be, though, restrictive regarding human bio-diversity? Aren't all sorts of people in many different walks of life 'successes'?*

*Take someone who, say, eschews modern levels of high materialism and chooses to live a hermit-like existence in contemplation, probably a relatively uncommon phenomena in modern times, it's true, to then realise self-realisation, enlightenment even – such a highly-developed individual presumably would then presumably not be counted a success by modern standards - ? If this were the case, it would seem fairly self-evident that limiting the notion of 'success' to, say, purely material and celebrity measures would be way too limiting to facilitate the necessary levels of human bio-diversity that in reality would appear to exist. Taking the wider view would seem to add more vistas and more potential dimensions to life, representing the broad church that life in reality could be:*

C is a bespoke furniture maker of some renown, each piece being made to order and on average taking about two months work. He isn't overly interested in material rewards but gains a great deal of his pleasure and satisfaction translating the skills and energies of his mind and hands into beautiful wooden objects.

One old boy who used to visit him in his workshop most days for a chat unexpectedly passed away, leaving a shocked and surprised C a very considerable amount of money, and attracting considerable amounts of advice from friends, family and acquaintances, ranging from the thought that he could now give up work and 'take it easy', to the idea that he now had the wherewithal to expand his operation and he could lead a more 'managerial' level of life.

As he said, though, he'd always had a cussed streak, and he'd noticed that no-one had really put themselves in his shoes.

*'I'm doing what I love to do, I reckon I'd be crackers to change it'*

was his considered response.

*It's easy to see, though, how such life events could influence life directions and activities. Not so, though, for C, who was already well aware of his real freerange-type priorities.*

***'It's business, my boy-----'***

*With smaller, lifestyle businesses such as, say, family farm businesses, plainly making profits is not necessarily the end of the story. Making profit is of course important, or the business/enterprise doesn't 'survive and thrive' into the longer-term. But once a certain level of profit making within the lifestyle business is achieved –that is the level of profit needed for that particular business to function on-goingly (and a unique figure, different for each business)- then other priorities and values tend to kick in, such as environmental care, personal satisfaction and development, social contribution and leisure/family time.*

*Larger business has to satisfy shareholders and 'the City', so may get more caught on the more single-dimensioned 'maximum profit' route. Some larger businesses are reputed to be relatively anti smaller business, believing them to be inherently economically inefficient due to their lower ability to compete due to lack of 'economies of scale'.*

*Such business thinking might, then, have lead to the mantra that 'big is therefore beautiful', and hence by default, small is not, and generally business development appears to have followed such a 'bigist' pattern, which also appears to fit with a strong emphasis on profit making and business growth as business objectives. The modern self-focused and competitivised 'free market' culture in which it's better and safer to be a large predator rather than 'small prey' presumably also would appear to play a significant role - ?*

*The oft-espoused logic to support 'big' would appear to be, though, at least questionable. Whilst 'small' business might not have, for instance, great economies of scale ability, it might not necessarily need to, and it anyway might have other counteracting advantages such as the ability 'to cut cloth to fit', to keep overhead costs lean, to respond rapidly, and to reflect human values within business activity. The economies which the doctrine of 'economies of scale' appears to readily predict, don't in practice, though, always work out to be exponential: a certain level of production can be reached at which a further raft of investment and overheads often have to be incurred, now increasing average cost per unit , thereby reducing profitability per unit.*

*To benefit from economies of scale, larger business developed production methods to suit, the 'specialisation of labour' being a case in point, to facilitate volume production. This in turn spawned the production line which then dictated the pace of work, with the worker stationed at one point repeating a similar simple process often many thousands of time per day.*



*J.A.C Brown in his book Social Psychology of Work described such work as 'boring, unfulfilling and meaningless', in which case, could its compensation, money, in the form of pay, have become an ultra 'over' important focus (to help 'work survival'), which in turn may well have significantly contributed to a common view that 'people work for money, full stop'? Motivationalists, though, point out that there are many potential reasons why people might want to work, but if work is so streamlined and simplified these could likely be nullified creating an over-emphasis on the only available return in such a situation, money.*

### **Freeranging to the rescue-----?**

*The individual, though, according to psychologists, is still a multi-valued, complex organism, and one who can themselves counteract any perceived simplification trends. When fulfillment of a mix of objectives representing a wide range of values - social, business, environmental and personal- rather than solely economic, is used as the measuring stick, then it is by no means certain that smaller and family enterprises could be described as inefficient. Indeed looking at rural entrepreneurs' (farmers) goals, such 'non-inefficiency' does appear to be the case, with significant evidence existing (see below) to suggest that farmers farming even larger farms operate far from solely on an economic basis.*

*Perhaps it is mainly 'experts' - governments, bankers, accountants, advisors, lecturers et al, and the larger business sector, who come from a mainly 'economic efficiency' point of view? Might, though, any one dimensional approach lack the balance which might need to be struck between potentially conflicting objective areas in real life - ?*

*Survey evidence for such aforesaid rural entrepreneurs shows that the leisure time objective, for instance, can conflict squarely with that of maximum economic results – and that a 'common sense' balance has to be struck. The independent rural entrepreneurs that are farmers in general seek to satisfy a variety of goals/objectives, which can often conflict with each other, and which bring into play a mix of values they hold to be important, as the results shown in the next sections indicate. These relate to the array and extent of objectives for a particular type of small rural business i.e. that of farming. It could be, though, that many if not all types of smaller individual/family businesses will have considerable arrays of values and therefore objectives.*

### **Values into practice-----**

*Rural entrepreneurs often appear to value independence, leading freerange-type of lives, and hence are useful examples by which to illustrate the multi-dimensional nature of business/enterprise objectives, and hence values, reflecting in turn, the complexity of life in reality. Their own particular values are reflected in their objectives for their businesses and how they run them:*

One older farmer had a suckler beef cow herd long past its modern sell-by date, and by current standards these cows should have gone down the road, to be replaced with an up-to-the-minute modern fast-growing continental beef breed of cow. He knew the score and that his business was suffering profit-wise, being under some pressure from nearly all quarters – bank, feed reps, accountant, advisers, family – to make the change.

His was a relatively common dilemma. He'd bred the herd up over the years from a few cows, improving it as he went, until it was a cracking herd of cows, if somewhat dated. His head, of course, said he should move with the times and make his business viable via a change of breed, while his heart and emotional investment were with his herd in which he'd played such a role in building up; a classic head/ heart lifestyle business dilemma.

*How to resolve the dilemma?*

With the help of a good friend, and probably a bottle of decent Scotch, he faced the problem squarely and developed his strategy. He decided to give himself five more years farming, knowing that with his lower 'unviable' level of expected profits, he'd have to borrow some capital to get through, a plan to which his bank readily agreed ; his existing borrowings were at negligible levels and he had oceans of collateral (security) in the land he owned. This solved the business side and satisfied his family. It satisfied him in that it gave him a time frame to continue at what he loved, and it also gave him scope to enact his secret plan, which was to save his beloved girls from the knackers yard. In practice over the years he pretty much achieved it too, gradually selling his herd off to the few other breeders of his breed and to rare breed establishments. He had a happy last five years farming and then retired *tres content*.

*Such a case-study can indicate that there's a potentially wide range of lifestyle business/enterprise situations and that many do not necessarily for instance, feature profit making strongly. In some business situations, such as above, profit making has become largely irrelevant, in others, for instance, the current priorities may sometimes have to be more about damage limitation – minimising losses.*

*The lifestyle business/enterprise itself could be said to be the means- the vehicle- by which rural entrepreneurs such as farmers achieve satisfaction in these objective areas which are plainly not restricted, to purely economic objectives such as profit making. They appear to be demonstrating a need to achieve a mix of and a balance between various important life values, as the overall group priority rating in the study previously mentioned shows below:-*

- 1) To make sufficient profit
- 2) To be good at what one does and develop personal skills
- 3) To have and maintain a good, contented workforce
- 4) To ensure a good/adequate cashflow
- 5) To husband the land and undertake a longer-term countryside caretaking capacity
- 6) To maximise profitability

*Even though a profit objective is number one priority, interestingly enough it's 'profit sufficiency' which comes well before 'profit maximisation', thus facilitating the achievement of the other personal, social and long-term husbandry objective areas. These rural entrepreneurs appear to be indicating that to them, there is a need to achieve a balance in satisfying a composite wide-ranging mix of objectives – social, environmental, economic and personal - rather than focus on a narrow range of solely economic (commercial) objectives.*

*Such a priority list is usually by no means static. A business well set up profit-wise for instance, will often then bring in other objective areas as the priorities and vice-versa when profits are under pressure. In practice, it can be an ever-changing dynamic process, illustrating the need to regularly assess business/enterprise focus to steer the goal-achieving vehicle that is the business/enterprise, onto the right road for that particular time in the enterprise's journey. The diversity of such goals and values is further emphasised when identifying some of the objective areas recorded individually in the study, such as 'being good neighbours', 'to protect and care for wildlife' and 'to harvest personal satisfaction'.*

*Other studies of farming rural entrepreneurs with varying sizes of enterprises have tended to show a similar wide, diverse range of enterprise objectives, with one finding as many as twenty-one primary business objective areas for farming rural entrepreneurs and identified the differing objectives under four main categories:-*

- instrumental e.g. making a satisfactory income
- intrinsic e.g. enjoying the life/work
- social e.g. belonging to the farming/rural community
- personal e.g. chance to be creative and original

*Such business objectives relate fairly obviously to the values of the people involved: the four categories above could, for instance, easily be used to categorise the different areas of values, and represent therefore a range (a 'freerange'-?) of valued values which go beyond, say, one-dimensional profit/wealth objectives.*

### **Features of Rural Lifestylers- 'rural freerangers'**

*Based on the rural lifestyle case study participants interviewed for this work the following features, ('non-definitive') reflecting values, can be observed within the rural lifestyle freerange culture. Although these enquiries are related to a traditional 'freeranger' sector, the rural sector, it's presumably not unreasonable to attribute at least some of these characteristics to freerangers beyond this sector:*

- people enjoy being part of a relatively small local rural community with a strong community feel
- the work involved is mostly meaningful, interesting and satisfying to those involved, and the work itself provides significant intrinsic returns
- work can involve highly individual work methods and skills
- the people involved often exhibit strong social traits, enjoying working, sharing with others in small teams

- people at the same time value independence and demonstrate independent traits
- money generation is important to the needs level, but personal, social and environmental needs satisfaction are also important
- the desire to do a 'good job' eg. produce good, healthy produce
- an awareness of and respect for nature and natural forces
- a positive caring approach eg.s bonds with livestock, care for the environment, care for customers, care for staff

*Are rural (and other) freerange lifestylers, then, in the 'van' of actually putting important people and environment values into practice, and seeking to achieve a working balance to a relatively complex and dynamic mix of values and objectives - ?*

### **Au naturel-----?**

*Rural/countryside dwellers often seem to experience a certain 'natural effect', maybe due to living in touch with nature, becoming then 'super' aware of natural factors such as, say, seasonal effects. It's perhaps as if a sort of natural calm and peace 'seep into the bones' over time and induce what's often taken to be a more leisurely pace of life, but in effect may well be due to people operating on different energy wavelengths, as it were. Fast-pace livers, who it could be argued may well form a significant majority in such a fast-flowing 'change, change' culture, might well struggle to connect to such a slower, calmer wavelength, in which any change might likely take place at a natural tempo, rather than at any 'man-made' 'fast' schedule of change.*

*Tuning in to the 'au naturel' slower-tempo wavelength, then could presumably lead to the possibility of gaining a fuller, 'holistic' understanding of how things work in the wider sense, particularly in terms of the inter-connectivity of things and of the nature of 'universal natural balance'. Eastern philosophy referred to this larger 'natural balance' reality using the term 'Tao' (pronounced 'dow') which referred to 'how things work in the natural way' within the universe; individuals who've not experienced this sort of wavelength may then be disadvantaged in terms of gaining such holistic understanding.*

*Such a natural wavelength could also then potentially contribute to other human sensibilities, such as, say, developing the ability to respect and revere the larger natural processes and phenomena, and ultimately reverence for nature and 'mother earth' themselves. It would seem, for instance, that many indigenous peoples living from and close to nature, have then 'naturally' developed a strong respect for it, and undoubtedly many (i.e. unsung) modern individuals connect to 'universal values' - ?*

### **Nurture---and nature---**

*A useful question might presumably be: 'what is 'natural?'. It seems to be a widely used and understood concept, but pinning it down maybe not so easy. For example, how much of an individuals behaviour is natural behaviour, and how much is influenced by conditioning forces, past and present? A manager, for instance, might not necessarily feel in tune with, say, the level of pressure she/he is expected to exert on people to push for results and profits, but of course might comply due to current elemental 'conditioning' forces such as the need to make a living.*

*Having a feeling for 'natural balance/harmony', as many individuals appear to have, could emanate from human intuition linked to the inherent nature of man, an area presumably mainly outside of science and technology and in a scientific/technological age, therefore currently possibly likely to be less rather than more prominent - ? Having said that, it's reported that there is more recent scientific opinion in support of a Gaiaen type of approach, which suggests that planet earth is a self-regulating entity using a dynamic force of 'balance' as the regulating mechanism, which might also help to explain why so many get the sense and feel of 'natural balance' - ?*

*Maybe the relatively high degree of human urbanisation in more recent times has mean't less opportunity to keep in touch with such elemental natural forces, and a degree of such a potentially important touchstone has been temporarily lost - ? Peoples who did live 'close to nature', such as, say, native Americans, seem to have had a highly developed sense of and reverence for nature, and conducted life in a 'naturally sustainable' mode.*

A recent TV programme about a little-known jungle tribe billed as 'the last free people on earth', illustrated the close connection people can have with nature, with orphaned baby monkeys, their parents having been killed for food, being then suckled within the tribe to ensure their survival.

*Undoubtedly in modern times closer to home, many living in rural areas still retain a strong sense of such 'natural balances'. Here on the very small unit that is the eco micro-holding, it's possible to get a strong sense of natural cycles – seasons – if only because much of the daily activity is dictated by them. In spring, for instance, the activity priority is soil preparation and planting and sowing, supported by fairly strong human biological urges to do so, whereas summer is more to do with 'gathering in' harvesting – a 'time of plenty' – and autumn/winter tidying and maintenance, alongside relevant seasonal jobs such as sawing and chopping wood.*

*Each season seems to have its own 'natural' interests/preoccupations/satisfactions which, in sum, aid consciousness of the whole cycle, and in practice considerably add to the 'natural interest' factor- perhaps a useful example of a natural form of 'variety being the spice of life'.*

*For freerangers/aspiring freerangers, connecting/re-connecting with 'nature' could then be one of the areas likely to help to gain a more 'rooted and connected' feel, which in turn could help counteract any insecurities stemming from any fast-paced, 'change' focused culture - ?*

### ***Intrinsic and independence objectives: conflict with modern times -?***

*Such values, of course, are presumably not likely to be exclusive to rural sectors – 'purposeful activity' and 'independence' could likely be attributed to many if not most smaller businesses, and reverence for and respect of nature and its forces could well be developed and enhanced, for instance, by activities such as urban gardening and allotmenting.*

*Studies of farming in particular elsewhere, also tend to highlight the importance of these intrinsic-type objectives. A study of US farmers reported that 41% of farmers rated 'independence' as the highest valued aspect of the farming occupation. Logically this would imply that they would be prepared to sacrifice a certain amount of profitability (ie. not maximising profits) before surrendering independence.*

*It has been argued that today's society has become increasingly 'mass' based, with standardisation seemingly a common theme and result, and that associated lower tolerances exist for individual differences. It could be argued that society appears to be making a relatively strong demand that individuals should fit the model of society provided, rather than provide, for instance, the stability and framework for the full development of the individual, a question Schumacher addresses.*

*If such is the case, then this trend could be seen as an actual/potential conflict area with the multi-diverse basic objectives and values of smaller freerange entrepreneurial outfits. Have the 'businessisation' trends which seem to have been a common theme over the last decade, strongly focusing attention mainly on efficiency, profitability, return on capital and capital growth, and hence away from the non-readily identifiable goal areas which intrinsic goal areas represent, given then only a potential partial satisfaction of multi-dimensional goals (and therefore values)-?*

*As case-studies within the 'multi-objectives' study also tended to indicate, the priority ratings of objectives are subject to dynamic forces, and when for instance, finances and profits are under pressure, profit objectives become more urgent and a higher priority. It is when a certain 'survival' or 'survive and thrive' level of profitability is attained, that a wider mix of objectives appears to come more on stream and 'higher-order' objectives come more into play, which ties in with the message of the psychologist Abraham Maslow, who held that humans had a progressive ascending array of needs moving the individual away from self-centredness to a wider and fuller compass. (see A Freerange Approach to Work, FR book page).*

### ***The pursuit of 'happiness'-----?***

*A discussion of values without trying to explore the notion of 'human happiness' could be incomplete. The pursuit of 'happiness' would seem to be a seemingly common human goal, but what exactly is it? Does it mean instant, short-term gratification – or is it more to do with a form of longer-term fulfillment? Can shorter-term 'happiness' even be pursued over-vigourously to the detriment of fuller life experience and fulfillment?:*

An experienced business consultant colleague giving a talk to budding younger entrepreneurs, was surprised and somewhat shocked by being taken to task by them for having an over-negative approach, which appeared to clash with their own relentlessly positive 'guaranteed success' approach.

Having seen many examples of enterprise non-success, often caused by over-optimistic plans, he may well have come over to them as 'negative' in his attempts to help them not come unstuck by over-positivity.

*Positivity is of course needed, but it's maybe at its best when tempered with reality.*

A risk manager was interviewed on TV at the time of the (2008) financial crisis, saying that he'd tried to bring some reality into his firm, telling them their financial practices had come way too risk-prone. He was sacked for his troubles – in effect trying to do his job . Perhaps they should have thought out of their current box, and listened to him.

*Maybe the situation indicated in the first case-study above applies to life: an over-vigorous pursuit of happiness might in itself cause some problems, in that non-happy experiences then become 'problems' rather than normal life events - ? Another take on it could be to call the emotion of happiness an instant or short-term experience, with longer-term personal fulfillment the longer-term experience. This would then move back into Maslow territory- longer-term fulfillment being then defined as the satisfaction of a progressive array of human needs, culminating (potentially) in the state of 'self-realisation' – becoming one's fullest potential, which presumably implies all other need*

areas have been satisfactorily met, and for some at least, can involve personal spirituality - ?

At the more 'applied' level, lifestyles can be examined to indicate areas of potential satisfaction leading to 'happiness', which one of the rural studies mentioned above set out to do, identifying, for instance, under the general heading 'intrinsic' the following particular 'happiness/satisfaction' producing areas, likely relevant to freerangers:-

- enjoying the work itself - individual tasks, variety, challenge etc.;
- pursuing a healthy, outdoor life;
- purposeful activity, value in hard work;
- independence - from supervision, free to organise own time

A 'myth of wealth' can sometimes appear to imply that work should be a non-event and that lotus-eating endless leisure for instance, is the pathway to happiness, and plainly the evidence presented above could counteract such a view. Purposeful activity such as meaningful work of interest to the individual clearly has so much of a potential satisfaction harvest to offer the individual, that to write off work in a generalised way as, say, a 'four-letter word', may not then give the whole story; at the same time it's probably clear that not all work situations necessarily offer the individual positive experiences.

The 'good' work experience surely potentially contributes also significantly to the development of the individual and therefore to the capacity of that individual to expand her/his personal harvest of satisfaction, which could likely be of some interest to freerangers - ?

### **'To have, or to be', is that the question-----?**

Such considerations inevitably touch on the 'having v. being' debate, wherein western cultures are said to be over- materialistic, over- geared to 'having', and traditionally eastern cultures over- geared to the 'being' mode, although some of them appear to swinging swiftly and significantly towards the western mode. Plainly the 'having' mode is essential to enable life to be sustained, but if it's over emphasised, could there then be a risk of 'barrier-ing' progression to the so-called 'higher human need' areas indicated by psychologists such as Abraham Maslow in his 'hierarchy of human needs' exposition - ?

Individuals, of course, become aware of such situations:

J, early retired and widowed, looked a pretty fit older man. He drove a sombre but quality car, five years old, the sort that might be expected of someone in his position, and lived in a modest bungalow in a cul-de-sac in a smallish town. His passions and pastimes were bowls and golf – he belonged to a smaller club in the vicinity. To look at him and his lifestyle, there'd be no clue that he was in fact a wealthy man, a multi-millionaire, nor that earlier in life he'd been a professional sportsman, after which he'd built up a successful business. He'd always lived well within his means, working hard and only really had felt wealthy after the sale of his business, not that this changed his lifestyle as such.

*'I've got great neighbours here, they're all good friends and I'd risk losing a lot if I moved away into a bigger house, which I don't need anyway', he'd say.*

Similarly he enjoyed being 'one of the crowd' with his friends at the bowls club and the golf club, he very much enjoyed the 'craic' and had no wish to unavail himself of such pleasures by moving 'upmarket'. One day though, he did reluctantly let slip that he did put his money to some use. If he read in the regional paper of a deserving case in need of money to survive – an animal sanctuary, youth centre/café, drug rehabilitation centre or similar – he'd send a sizeable donation anonymously via a solicitor.

*'It gives me quite a buzz to be able to do something to help good people in a deserving cause, to be honest', he'd say.*

### **'Be in it to win it'-----**

*Do, though, modern competitive materialistically-based cultures put undue pressure on the 'having' mode, by default then causing too little attention to the 'being' side? Such a culture perhaps suits commerce in that if individuals are conditioned into 'strong self-focus' and competitiveness, then their force as consumers becomes stronger- good for business. Interesting to observe, for instance, how much the media emphasises and promotes individual competitiveness. Many programmes are geared to individual 'winning', such as a plethora of cookery shows, whereas that particular industry itself is traditionally focused differently, in that it's been about reaching certain standards which are available to all to reach.*

*Generally modern western-type culture has appeared to strongly promote competitiveness, with the government a strong player itself with the use of socially competitive league tables, for instance. It is, though, conceivable that any over emphasis on individual competitiveness could impact negatively, for instance, on other important human traits and values, such as, say 'sociability'.*

*Some have argued that this can be dangerous territory in the sense that man is 'naturally' competitive enough, and ramping it up consciously is asking for trouble, which is what John Heider in his interesting book 'The Tao of Leadership' alludes to. He has concerns that the longer-term effects of such a culture could likely be negative for many: rather than a culture which can result in 'big success' for a relatively few, he champions a culture which offers reasonable success for 'many', which could be more of a long-term viable and stable situation - ?*

### **Freeranging to the rescue-----?**

*'Freeranger' type of independent-minded, multi-dimensional thinking, though, might come to the rescue. Because a current culture may have been deemed to have become strongly 'self focused', presumably doesn't mean individuals still can't individually choose to exercise their own 'fellow feelings', their own sociability, their own natural sense of community, if they so choose, for instance.*

*Maybe, though, too, such a strong 'having' focus is not so good for the environment, or for long-term sustainability; earth's already scarce resources becoming depleted at an over- rapid rate, which then has the potential to produce a vortex type of effect, with ever increasing competition for ever scarcer resources, with a longer-term, scary scenario being that of running out of resources.*



*Whilst a 'reining' back of competitiveness would conflict with the free market 'do whatever' culture, might it not yet though be a wiser course of action for humans in the longer-run, and one which has the potential then of lessening the longer-term risk of world conflict , and therefore enhancing the prospects for longer-term worldsustainability-? Might a more mixed culture, retaining a reasonable element of free-market individualism, but at the same time also having the ability to supply longer-term overview sight and control functions, prove to be needed - ?*

### **Micro-holding having or being-----?**

*At the very micro level, what's important, having or being - ? In one sense of course, it can be a classic trap, like the salesman's trick of not asking a person directly to buy, but rather presenting the psychological trap, such as 'which would suit you better, the economy version or the de-luxe?'*

*Reality intervenes -today here in the paddock in the 'Rough Office', it is a cold grey, drizzly day, a 'dreich' day as the Scots might say. The birds on the feeders outside the window five feet away are a good compensation, though – a brief visit just now to the peanut feeder of 'Woody', a greater spotted woodpecker who lives in these parts, seen in close up. The normal gang of great tits, blue tits, chaffinches, sparrows, long-tailed tits and coal tits are about, and hungry – well into 'having' mode. Amazing little creatures – so vital, so full of spirit.*

*Do 'having' and 'being' in practice have to be a duality- aren't both necessary and available – is it more of a question of getting a 'balance' to suit again? Here on the eco micro holding , operating on a 'lower' money economy and aiming to live 'lower economy' eco-type lives, what's produced and consumed here is materially important in that for instance, providing nearly all the veg and fruit, all the onions, two-thirds approx of potatoes needed and all the eggs, it makes a substantial material contribution, although there still remains the option to buy.*

*This would seem to suggest that the process of producing quite a bit of own needs, and trying to live eco-soundly is perhaps even just as important, which is probably true. In turn, the implication is that the lifestyle's 'being' benefits such as gaining practical skills and knowledge, personal integrity, a greater, fuller sense of self from an 'independent' lifestyle, a wider connection trying to make the small contribution to earth health, and physical fitness and health, are even more of a personal harvest.*

*Not that of course the produce the micro-holding offers isn't valued – organic winter greens with that special tang, freerange flavoursome eggs, tasty fresh tomatoes for four months of the year, and that first picking of young broad beans straight from the growing bed, to be eaten with new potatoes, boiling bacon and parsley sauce .*

*Ah, the taste buds are tingling.*

### **Freerangin' on-----Motivation magic**

*Potatoes three feet high, the onions in the onion bed two feet high, four bursting rows of sticked peas, runner beans in full glorious flower reaching for the sky at the tops of their canes, raspberry canes bent over with the weight of the sumptuous red fruits, beetroot, swedes, turnips, salsify, tomatoes, winter veg plants - all looking thrivingly healthy, courgettes, spring cabbage, celery, overflowing opulence. Not too hard to be motivated in the face of such bounty and fullsome satisfaction -----*

### **Motivation's moved-----?**

*Leadership, motivation, trust, team spirit, responsibility – at one time these used to be the cornerstones of managing staff, but they're seemingly not too much heard about these days, in which there seems to be more of a 'control/reward' culture, a seemingly recent form of the old 'stick/carrot' thinking.*

*Not maybe though, too brilliant news for freerangers, for whom their own personal 'motivation' is perhaps likely to be their natural milieu – in fact, even their very 'raison d'être', given needs such as independence, self-responsibility, enquiry and 'personal growth'. The theorists say that not all efforts are necessarily 'motivated' efforts, in terms of being made because someone wants to make them; this seems to be an area of possible confusion these days – some of the 'theory' a bit later in this section might help with this.*

*There can also feel at times that there's a cultural vibe that everyone should be motivated the same – motivated by money, for instance. This could occur, of course via a simple misunderstanding or view limitation. In a money culture, few might argue that money isn't needed, which could then convert maybe too easily into a truism, 'we are all motivated by money'. Surely, though, only to a degree; it's not necessarily a blanket, all-consuming motivation. Money could be said to be just an 'agent' - it's what money then gives access to which is relevant. And, as they say, are there somethings money just can't buy, such as comradeship, loyalty, trust - maybe even fulfillment-?*

*Once a certain level of 'money need' satisfaction is achieved, the motivation theorists then propose that at that stage other human needs 'naturally' become more prominent, such as social and/or personal development needs, and that the exact 'mix' will be determined individually according to which wavelength the individual's operating on, the current needs priority of that individual and, according to some, the energy vibration level/plane within the individual, assuming natural energies haven't been thwarted by over-conditioning. Whatever, it would all seem to suggest strongly that the individual will be a unique package and entity – a bio-diverse package. Good news, then, for 'freerangers'.*

*Perhaps easy to see, though, how the truism that 'people are motivated by money' takes hold. A story relating to a bit of a rural rogue character from these parts illustrates some bio- diversity uniqueness though, with the strength of the money need dependant on the individuals own mix of priorities:*

*B was sitting by a small lake, relaxing and seemingly fishing the lake, having a rod in his hand. The warm late-spring afternoon was making him a bit drowsy – knowing him*

he'd probably visited a local hostelry at lunchtime. Suddenly, a voice stirred him, taking him by surprise.

*'Caught anything?'* it said, causing him to look up at a youngish, smartish-looking couple, out on an afternoon country stroll.

*'No mate'* replied B, lifting his rod up from the water only to reveal a hook with no bait on it.

*'Well'* said the onlooker *'perhaps not too surprising looking at your hook- why not put some bait on it?'*

B looked at his questioner quizzically:

*'why's that?'* he said laconically, hoping that would end the exchange.

The other shot straight back, though, *'well you could then catch some fish!'*

*'And then?'* retorted B, starting to sound a little churlish.

Again a rapid response *'well you could sell the fish, and make some money'.*

*'Why would I want to do that?'*

A note now of exasperation in the voice, *'well then you could buy yourself a boat, go out on the lake, catch more fish and make more money!'*

*'And then what?'*

Warming to his task, for this was a business expert getting into his stride, *'it's obvious, you could then employ someone to do it for you.'*

*'And what do I do?'*

More exasperation *'then you can do whatever you want!'*

*Well, what d'ye suppose I'm doing right now?'*

*It takes all sorts, and there are many ways----- . B was a man for whom money passed through his fingers fast, and he sorted life out his way, thank you very much, and who's to say he was wrong? He may not have got too rich, but he did have a lot of fun, motivated to do what he wanted.*

Another apocryphal tale about him had him sitting on a kerb in the main street of a rural town, casting an imaginary fishing line into the middle of the street. A small crowd gathered attracting the attention of a policeman, who decided to humour the old boy:

*'Well, what we got 'ere? Caught many, me old lad?'*

*' No mate----- you're the first!'*

*A man with a style all his own – a fully-fledged freeranger even ----*

### **Mixed-message motivation-----**

'Why are we here?' 'What's it all about?' 'Where's life leading?'

*Ok, maybe in today's fast-paced world, this sort of self-questioning may have somewhat fallen by the wayside- nice to have the time to do it. Many are undoubtedly more than fully occupied coping with modern life and its potential problems, although there does appear to be an expanding 'new-age' movement, and the rapid rise of the 'Alpha' Christian movement in the west could point to a level of reaction to what some might perceive as a superficial, over materialistically-g geared culture, in which style can at times appear to triumph over substance.*

*Maybe too in these 'large organisation' orientated times, people might not feel too empowered as individuals to think too much for themselves. The enquiring, questioning nature of the natural freeranger will, though, probably mean these sort of questions arise, and link directly to the essential core of motivation and spirit of the individual.*

*In terms of, say, workplace motivation, then often motivation is taken to be linked to any workplace efforts, whether the stimulus comes from within the individual, or the conditioned effect of an 'outside' influence (such as, say, the offer of a financial reward). Fred Herzberg was one motivation theorist who believed it was important to make the distinction, if a fuller understanding, always probably of interest to the freeranger, was the goal.*

*Real motivation, said Fred (an American psychologist working in the 1960's), stemmed from an internal (to the individual) source – the individual doing something because they wanted to. Work efforts induced by outside influences: financial incentives, orders (i.e. managerial authority), peer pressure, and the like, were not motivated efforts; he referred to this type of people management as 'movement' management, 'external' measures (to the individual) to get people to 'move' in the direction you want them to.*

*The latter approach appears to fit in with a 'control culture', wherein people are 'moved' by management, often these days seemingly by money, seemingly on the basis of the truism already mentioned, 'people are motivated by money'. Might such generalisations, though, be in themselves limited, and even in the longer-term, counter-productive?*

### **Lurking counter-productivity-----?**

*When, for instance, the money culture hit UK Higher Education in the 90's, and bonuses were applied in the form of performance related pay, many staff were generally surprised if not a little shocked by the seemingly simplistic parameters used in its calculation, which they felt demonstrated a level of non-understanding of their sector, and of themselves as self-motivated individuals.*

*Such an application of an external work stimulus also, it was felt, demonstrated a non-understanding and recognition of staff's basic vocational approach; they were doing their jobs because they wanted to, they were naturally and individually 'motivated'. The imposition of such a bonus culture cut across the vocational self-motivated ethos, potentially then creating counter-productivity due to de-motivation. The notions that 'money is all-powerful', and that 'people are motivated by money', could, though, act as*

*barriers to any understanding of other realities - ? The existence of external work stimuli also potentially adds a control dimension to the situation and motivation purists might argue that any use of force (such as 'imposition') when dealing with people, runs a strong risk of eliciting a natural response/reaction of resistance, by which time any motivation effects could already by then probably undermined.*

### ***The 'open' road-----***

*Freerangers will naturally with their open-minded investigations, be probably aiming to see a broad a view as possible, therefore better able to keep a perspective, which may then help significantly in terms of understanding the nature of things. Sometimes things can be relatively simple rather than complex:*

Times were hard on the dairy farm – it was proving to be a long, difficult winter, after a long hot summer which had produced a lower straw harvest. The cows then being dirtier than usual, had to have their udders and teats washed before milking, adding to the herdsman's considerable workload. N, the farmer was concerned it the situation was impacting negatively on the herdsman's motivation.

*'Yes', said W, the herdsman, 'it's not the easiest time, but we'll get there'.*

Had anything particularly helped him cope?

W thought for a minute and then said, laughing,

*'you'll laugh when I tell you this, but yes - the boss coming every morning half way through milking with a cup of tea for me'.*

*So little achieving so much. 'The thought that counts' - ? The thought saying ' I'm aware of the situation and difficulties- I'm thinking and caring about you'. All based, though, on an existing positive situation of solid mutual trust and respect.*

### ***Mining motivation-----***

*Way back when, maybe even earlier than when Fred Herzberg was addressing motivation, Douglas Macregor also pondered on its intricacies, and came up with what he called 'Theory X' and ' Theory Y'. Theory X postulated that there really was no such thing as 'natural human motivation', that people were 'naturally lazy', didn't want to take responsibility and put limited care into their work. Macregor saw this view as the prevailing view in the US at the time.*

*What about an alternative view, the 'Theory Y' view, though? What if Theory X was over limiting? You could observe the reality of people not seeming to want to put their backs into work, but what if that was a reaction response to the nature of the work, and/or the way they were being managed? This was in the earlier days of the production line, which Henry Ford, the carmaker, had allegedly invented to give people a greater sense of achievement by enabling them to stand in one spot and achieve the same task many times a day- maybe though at the real risk of boredom generation.*

*Macregor then argued that people in real life have real needs which they seek to satisfy, and therefore those satisfaction seeking efforts are a demonstration of 'natural*

*motivation', which therefore in reality exists, and given the right conditions and relatively 'unconditioned' people, they will work hard, will take responsibility and will care about their work efforts and effects. Freerangers, who are already probably feeling and are aware of their natural motivation, are therefore likely to be amongst those seeking to exercise their own responsibility, to practice and demonstrate their care and to happily make the efforts needed to satisfy their needs, and to identify them.*

A pink rainbow shimmered on entering the building, looking quite eerily beautiful, until the reality of seeing the pigs hanging upside down in the Danish pig slaughter house with their throats cut shot through any artistic visions. Along the production line, there were staged work stations where people carried out repetitive, simple tasks on the carcasses as they came by, conveyor-belt delivered.

*Had they experienced any staff problems?*

*'You name it, we've had it', came back the reply, with productivity seemingly on a long slow irreversible decline. No amount of motivational initiatives taken from the manual had seemed to have had any beneficial effect.*

*Things, though, seem to be going ok now?*

*'Well, in the end, and in desperation, we asked the workforce what we might do to improve the situation. The answers shocked us but we gave them a try and problems have dwindled away, and productivity shot up.'*

*So, what was the answer?*

*'They told us to throw away the motivation manual- their's was 'idiot' work, and internal motivation (eg. 'to do a good job') was just not relevant. It was a 'movement' work situation in effect, so 'make it bearable' and 'relieve the boredom'.*

*How?*

*'Introduce radio headphones instead of noise reducing ear protectors and a ten-minute tea break after every hour of work'.*

The latter didn't sound too clever, but being somewhat desperate, management agreed to a trial run, now long over but still with maintained much improved productivity.

*Not all situations, then, appear to be 'motivational', in terms of having the ability to fully engage people and providing fulfilling work experiences; it would seem to depend on the nature and the level of work and the 'mix' of activities. Presumably one of the keys is to what degree natural interest is engaged and maintained. Freerangers are people who are perhaps amongst those particularly keen to follow their own natural interests, their own path, self-responsibly exercising their own motivation, which could well be what vocational work is all about.*

*Fred Herzberg, the aforesaid American motivation researcher, maintained that people must not only be treated well, but used well (eg. suitable engaging work) if they are to be fully motivated and give of their best over time. These days, though, there may also be the additional considerable hurdle of people having been significantly conditioned*

over time, by for instance, money prompts and messages, potentially inhibiting natural motivation instincts.

### **Cultural inhibitions-----?**

*Papers reflect a culture and perusing broadsheet papers over recent months leaves an impression of a penal rather than positive culture. In the UK public sector, plans were announced to penalise hospitals for discharging patients too early, resulting in them potentially losing £1.5 billion a year. In April it's reported that someone owing the taxman £1000 has been fined £1400 for late payment, and another report suggests that Britain has become the third most surveillance hit society in the world.*

*In the private sector, another report suggests that a large financial provider is automatically accusing customers of fraud if they complain about money missing from their accounts, and several reports indicated that some employees are struggling with their employers to get their full employee rights.*

*Would, though, a penal, 'hit', blame culture seem to be that conducive to stimulating the natural motivations of individuals, which could be a useful and healthy way to get long-term, sustainable people productivity, together with a longer-term healthy, vibrant society? Such, of course, may not be the priority, with shorter-term control and centralised micro-management seemingly more in fashion. Still, creating conditions for people to exercise their natural productivity, empowering people to be able to practice their skills and judgements, and not to get in their way too much with sundry ad hoc control systems and measures, to create the conditions for individual internal motivation, would seem to make a degree of sense in the long-run, producing sustainable work productivity - ?*

*A case, maybe, of 'battery operated', or internal 'freerange' power source - ?*

### **Magic motivation-----**

*Freerangers then will likely not be strangers to 'natural motivation', being drawn to follow their interests and instincts as they can be. In such a state, one can be said to be 'fully engaged', with interest fully aroused, and time just slips away. It's easy, for instance, to pass quite a few hours on the computer following up personal interest stuff. Being able to harness such focused high energy for, say, business use could potentially reap the twin benefits of high productivity and high people needs satisfaction. It has been done:*

Robert Townsend and his partner in America some years ago, took a small and struggling car rental firm to being a major player in a startlingly short time – or rather, Robert Townsend, partner and staff, as he might say. His eureka moment was apparently when he and his partner were trying to analyse problems, and one of the inconsistencies thrown up was that whereas it was clear that they were getting only around 50% of their management decisions right, they were expecting their staff to operate at 100%, which they then decided was a limiting and inhibiting factor.

This then lead to the courageous decision to let staff operate their own way, accepting that mistakes would in practice be made, just as they made mistakes themselves.

Periodic reviews were held to identify both success and problem factors and a culture of 'non-blame', 'learn from mistakes' introduced. The whole process, undoubtedly led and encouraged by their own admissions, unleashed a torrent of productivity, which then took the company on its journey of real success.

*This success story involved the principals taking a leap of faith, and trusting that they could, given the right conditions, rely on people, because anyway, it was what people wanted themselves. It also meant in reality, themselves giving up a considerable degree of power and control: presumably the existing base management/employees relationship situation might influence whether such a move might or might not work. Many smaller rural (farm) businesses, for instance, with close working relations, operate on longer-term motivation basis rather than the shorter-term 'control' approach.*

*Sometimes motivation can play a key role in basics such as elemental business/enterprise survival:*

C's small – very small, with only V to help him – building firm was nevertheless very successful, being well-known and well-used in the locality. In down-turn times when other building firms in the area struggled, C and V always had 'bread and butter' work to turn to, due no doubt partly at least to the fact that offering good value for money, good quality and good service, as well as being seen as 'good guys'; their customers rallied round to find work for them.

As a duo they were an integral part of the community and were accepted as such. Suddenly, C was struck down with a debilitating illness which was going to take a longish recovery time – in practice it took five months. V held the fort, aided admirably by a selection of sub-contractors with whom they often worked, all not only working for themselves of course, but also motivated to help out C, who they all liked and respected.

*True human motivation came to C's rescue and whilst being unquantifiable, still proved to be a real and tangible business saving asset as and when needed in the longer run.*

#### **A 'Blake-ian' world** ('within a grain---')

*Running an enterprise as minutely small as an eco micro-holding might provide a useful illustration of human motivation, in that it is relatively unclouded by the presence of money. Yes, the produce from it, although maybe not that considerable, does reduce costs, so a 'money effect' does exist, even if it's not that great, and as many have said, it's not worth the effort, easier and cheaper to buy it from the supermarket.*

*Buy it from the supermarket? And miss out on the exercise growing it, the creativity in planning it, the ups and downs ride along the way, the ineffable feeling of 'connectedness' working with and in nature, the anticipation and hope generated, the feeling of creating some independent component of lifestyle, the delight at the first uncovering of a harvest eg. potatoes, the sheer freshness of produce pulled straight from the soil, the satisfaction of contributing, however minutely, to the health of the environment, the pleasure in generosity – of giving produce to cherished others, the on-going satisfaction of nurturing the key asset i.e. the soil – not to mention the exquisiteness of the overflowing taste from taste-selected minute-fresh produce – ??*



*So, such seemingly simple small-size micro-holding motivation turns out to be a bit more complex and multi-dimensional, then? But, if people are multi-dimensional and complex as they would seem to be, might it be a limitation to over-simplify the complex? M. Scott Peck started his well-known book *The Road Less Travelled* with the high-impact phrase 'life is difficult', the implication seemingly being that getting out of one's own small world brings us into a complex world, but that such difficulty might be needed to prompt growth.*

*What was yesterday's (complex) eco micro-holding motivational harvest? Building up the road border of the cottage that the local 'big' farm outfit uncaringly damages pretty often - putting something 'right', and by manual effort, that's satisfying. This time with an added twist, finding an injured racing pigeon on the lane and giving him some sanctuary and succour - more satisfaction, the human role as nature's caretakers-?*

*Then to seed sowing, to catch up in the growing department. Time to get in some spinach which helps to bulk winter greens in winter - a mix of second/third cut greens throughout the winter along with tangy Swedes tops and they're tasty. Patching up the swedes rows with a few more seeds to fill the gaps - there's always some 'failures' in the growing season - and then to sowing a bed of carrots- probably a lost cause due to the tiny wee beasties that are the carrot fly - but, hope springs eternal. Occasionally, though, some usable young carrots that, fresh dug from the loamy soil - mm-manna from heaven- probably more so due to their infrequency.*

*Then, after a cup of tea and a needed rest, some log stacking, wheeling them in by barrow from where they've been dropped and filling the log store handily available in the close-by 'micro-holding logistics operation centre' - a re-cycled concrete garage with the handy feature of having a 'wall' which opens giving clear access. Watching the log store filling up gives yet more satisfaction and the further satisfying feeling of what might modernly be called 'fuel security'. After tea and another needed rest, to the gentle pleasant task of sticking beans on a lovely quiet, warm evening, soaking in the tranquility - a needed job you can certainly see the results of, and all adding to the rich harvest of micro-holding motivated satisfaction.*

### **Multiplying motivation-----**

*Leading the non-push button type of lifestyle means leads fairly obviously to extra efforts; growing your own food for instance, leads to extra effort. Having the eco micro-holding with hedge, building and land maintenance needs leads again to extra life effort. Why do it? One of the key answers surely has to be that it isn't 'work' with negative connotations; it's rather satisfying (for the most part) 'life connecting' activity and as such, mainly a 'labour of love'.*

*It probably greatly helps of course, having the independence to be able to plan and organise to suit, and then do the activities to suit. Changing jobs frequently which means leaving unfinished work, seems to be a great help in avoiding the dreaded 'work ennui'. Long periods of 'samey' work for some - many? - may be a seeming recipe for boredom, weariness and de-motivation. It helps too, being in a position to be able to do it, and even leading a relatively low money-need lifestyle, money is needed and often some level of compromise living is maybe needed.*

*The four-letter word that 'work' is often described as does not seem quite so relevant when doing the micro-holding work. Making efforts to enhance enjoyment and satisfactions, transmutes into enjoyable activity, particularly when there are additional added benefits such as keeping fit; it surely then becomes then 'a labour of love'-? There can of course be even then too much of 'work/labour of love', so the basic 'design' of lifestyle can be important, as can the factor of independence – being your own master means you can decide on the work patterns.*

*The ability to, say, switch between jobs as mentioned can be vital; variety is, after all, mean't to be 'the spice of life'. Then it's surprising the amount of 'work' that can be done over say, 2-3 hours without the dreaded ennui setting in and de-railing the enjoyment. And with a good harvest of enjoyment and satisfaction, motivation is not a problem.*

### **Handy hands-----**

*Working practically and with the hands to help meet needs or, say, create something seems to bring its own particular kind of satisfaction, partly because a need has been fulfilled, but also maybe to do with using individual unique creativity and effort, in an independent fashion, surely a classic freeranger mode, and quite possibly an effective anti-dote to on-screen work. Working in and with nature also seems to be a key feature. Maybe it's not only the pleasure that nature and being a part of it can bring, but also the feeling of connection with a larger reality. If you follow a freerange type of mode and spend time and energy on 'labours of love', does that then become cumulative, nurturing and building over time, say, a stronger caring and nurturing side-?*

*It could be argued, though, that the reverse is the main trend in mainstream culture, with many people apparently spending long periods of time at highly specialised activities getting a narrower rather than broader life experience-? If so, still more power to the freeranger's elbow to take the right to sort the job for themselves within the normal human constraints (eg. for instance, not anti-socially).*

*Even if a 'full' freerange lifestyle is not possible/practical, it may still be useful, important even, to 'do what one can' in terms of anti-dote freeranging, to not get over swallowed up by any 'mass culture' effects. Part-time freeranging better than no freeranging - ?*

*Karl Schwenke, in his interesting book 'Successful Small-Scale Farming' describes his experience of such small, individual existential satisfactions:*

*'Perhaps the answer lies in the few seconds the farmer finds at the end of a punishing day, when he surveys what he has done and finds it good. He knows that there is no more satisfying thing to do in the world than to put seed in the ground, and then to sit back and watch it grow.'*

*No prizes, then, for 'innovation' or the like – just good ol' work-a-day common-or-garden-or-farm 'job well done', stuff.*

*But then - maybe Karl doesn't need prizes though – he's probably got enough of his own motivated freeranger satisfaction.*

## **ENDPIECE:**

### **A 'Brave New World' ---- ?**

*Aldous Huxley's work of the same name as the title above depicted a power-concentrated world in which the denizens had to take a daily 'happy' drug – there was little scope for individual operation and development. Large organisation mis-use of power has been in the news lately, and presumably there is always a risk of 'sleepwalking' into a 'fait accompli' situation – true democracy may need a considerable degree of working at.*

*Older values such as, say, thrift, self-discipline and self-denial, do not appear to be in current vogue, perhaps understandably in a 'have now, pay later' culture. Some, though, perceive that longer-term limitations will be the result.*

*Cosmo Landesman, in a piece in the press in early 2010, put it as follows:*

*'Since the Eighties, we've had 30 years of dynamic individualism, a social phenomenon first unleashed by Margaret Thatcher which was for many people an empowering and beneficial idea. What this essentially meant was that people were encouraged to be selfish in their desire to better themselves, to become wealthier and more successful and in some cases more famous. In the 1987 speech in which Mrs. Thatcher announced: 'There's no such thing as society', she also said: 'People must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves'. And that's exactly what people did. The problem is that as a result we lost the civilising restraints – like modesty and self-deprecation – that prevent this cult of the individual becoming too excessive, too self-indulgent.'*

*Landesman continues to then suggest that 'shallow celebrity' has replaced the former 'doer' role models of sportsmen, engineers and the like, and that such a celebrity driven culture:*

*'has pampered and flattered the individual to think there was nothing so important as what she/he thought and what he/she wanted'.*

*'Consequently' he says, 'the healthy and invigorating individualism of the Eighties has grown so inward looking that it has imploded into mere egoism'.*

*Interestingly, Landesman does not highlight the best-known phrase of Thatcher, that of 'there's no such thing as society'. Such a theme is picked up by Prince Charles in his concerned comments also in the British press:*

*'When you think about it, culture stems from the rural communities that grew up over thousands of years and established their customs, habits, and traditions, ways of thought and song and dance and reverence for nature. The tragedy is that throwing all those things away, we lose that connection with what sustains us ultimately'.*

*Such sentiments echo Yamate Kunihiro's 'Way of No Thinking' work's radical comments which assert that only in connectedness and 'oneness', can true fulfillment be found, and therefore by definition not in competitive individualism as a total mode. As earlier reviewed, psychologists suggest that people are social animals as well as individuals,*

*needing to find a way of combining both aspects, and that limiting themselves to their own (inevitably small) worlds might act as a barrier to fuller development. ( a recent academic study (2015) found that 'people aren't just naturally selfish -they have the capacity for un-selfishness), A freeranger approach could be to look at what values are important to themselves and gain an insight to where these differ from the prevailing culture values, therefore then being in a better position to self-manage effectively.*

### **'On yer tod-----?'**

*Prince Charles is not the only one regretting the loss of community/social values in the on-rush of this 'brave new world. The TV retail guru, Mary Portas, recently criticised supermarkets on a similar theme:*

*'The rise of the supermarket giants-----is killing Britain's small shops. We're not just sacrificing our greengrocers, our butchers-----but also our communities -----for convenience'.*

*In the fast-paced, busy modern materially-orientated culture, it appears short-term convenience could have become more of a priority than longer-term community, with the added possibility that impersonal processing of people by these super-retailers is then potentially adding to any de-socialising effect.*

### **How can the (freerange) individual survive and thrive-?**

*The would-be 'free-ranger', caught within the system and maybe not then fully 'in tune' with the 'mass' culture, could feel a degree of individual alienation and frustration, leading to possible feelings of invalidity/incorrectness, personal alienation, anger/frustration, low self-worth, and even threat. How can the individual respond and combat any sense of lack of individual space, individual worth and free-range opportunity?*

### **A crusade - ?**

*The individual could become a reformer and this may well be important to some. Standing against a tide, though, is a formidable task and it would be well to recognise this and accept it's a 'long haul' situation, although currently according to the broadsheet papers, there may be more of a reaction to the current culture. For instance, the John Lewis Partnership, a pioneer in employee involvement in the UK, has been asked to advise the public sector bodies on how to improve by involving staff in their management. As the John Lewis chairman, Charlie Mayfield states:*

*'-----such an empowered and informed workforce and a close alignment of motivation between managers and employees has helped us build a strong culture of trust, innovation and customer service'.*

*Trust, a non-monetary value, has, though, often seemingly withered on the vine in modern, competitive and 'high control' workplaces. Might yet, though, individual 'inner motivation' make a come-back? Hopefully such a move as above might help to spread the word that maybe people can't be controlled/forced to do whatever, nor can they be (anti-democratically-?) exploited, if longer-term productivity and cooperative performance from employees is to be gained.*

*It may be that questing 'freerange' motivated individuals are always likely to be in a minority, although, who knows, given differing types of cultures? For now, though, maybe it's a fact which might need to be recognised.*

*The sustainer-strategy smallholder case-study participants featured in the earlier 'Freerange in practice(2) - case-studies' section certainly met with a considerable degree of local social resistance when establishing their particular lifestyle enterprise, indicating that personal strength may be called upon to sustain such ventures. In this particular case, this happened and they were able to win through and become accepted, then to become in a way local 'social leaders', which leads to another approach.*

### **Own path persistence – overcoming the odds**

*The individual (s) can make their own mind up and get on and do their venture, their 'thing', recognising that they may attract resistance from others – including family and friends, as in the case-study mentioned above. This family were socially ostracised initially, the kids getting verbal abuse at school, only then to discover themselves at some stage then being seen as 'eco-heroes' as the environmentalist climate changed. In the longer-term, then, such 'pathfinders' may then receive the plaudits they have earned, but maybe the potential difficulties encountered shouldn't be underestimated, nor the time needed for the 'tide to change'.*

### **On the other hand-----?**

*Sounds, though, as if the freeranger way could be the harder road - ? Why bother, why not just go for the 'easy' – and currently materially comfortable- life? To explore the 'territory' and the human spirit, though, may, as above, be a normal development urge and need, which could be potentially thwarted adopting a non-questing approach - ? The other question then can become : what's the alternative?- especially if there's some risk in 'easy-life' living to personal integrity, which is the way the former major union leader Jimmy Reid, saw it in his address to students as rector of Glasgow University:*

*'A rat race is for rats: we're not rats, we're human beings. Reject the insidious pressures in society that would blunt your critical faculties to what is happening around you, that would caution silence in the face of iniquities, lest you jeopardise your own chances of advancement.' ----- . The price is too high. It entails the loss of your dignity, and human spirit'.*

*Many courageous individuals of course do tread their sometimes difficult and unvalued way. All those operating in what appear to have been the 'unfashionable' vocational caring sectors, their material returns often not over-conspicuous: professional people trying to maintain their standards in spite of what often has appeared to be interference, particularly maybe from what's been called central government 'micro' control. Then there's a raft of craft band trades operators, many of whom are maintaining their own integrity and spirit by working from their own values giving 'value for money', operating on the 'fair exchange' principle.*

*All these have not necessarily significantly prospered or been valued in this 'fame and fortune' culture, but nevertheless, they have soldiered on and often done their best in not always the most conducive conditions and without over recognition - maybe they should be among the 'reality' heroes of recent times - ?*

*Such freerange, self-responsible folk operating out of their self-integrity, perhaps don't want or need to be controlled by targets, or be bribed by large financial carrots. The pre-supposition that such individuals need such carrots to be made to work, could in fact be even something of a thwart to their freerange, self-responsible sense of self-motivation, Surely they just want the space and the trust to just be able to get on with the job - they want the 'freerange', not the 'battery' cage - ?*

### **Affirmations – use of**

*It may well be useful and even at times necessary to have help along the way – and affirmations are important, particularly if that way is likely to be 'different' and somewhat 'alone'. Gary Zukav, author of 'Seat of the Soul', alludes to this:*

*'Therefore, the decision to approach life with reverence means acting and thinking as a spiritual person in a world that does not recognize spirit.'*

*People who have a natural feeling for nature and the protection of nature surely have 'reverence' for life'–? Certainly gathering with similar-minded people to help and encourage each other can be productive, as can be the use of affirmations, not only from live contacts with similar inspirational people, but, of course, also from written sources from people who have trodden a similar way.*

*Relocation to more amenable locations where individual development/way of life is not only supported but also encouraged may be a possibility too. There are still areas, in the margins of the UK, for instance, where such a conducive, inclusive community spirit survives and thrive.*

*Authors such as Zukav, again, can act as affirmers and/or clarifiers:*

*'To live with reverence means being willing to say, 'That is Life, we must not harm it'. Without reverence, without the perception of the 'holiness' of all things, the world becomes cold and barren, mechanical and random at the same time, and this creates experiences of alienation and acts of violence. It is not natural for us to live without reverence'.*

*Maybe too many have had to live in a cold and barren world ruled by black-and-white 'straight-lined' logic for too long, affecting outlooks - ? Some, perhaps even many, might argue this may have occurred due to man's 'separation' from nature, living in urban surroundings, a view which might be supported by the fact that the countryside is such a draw for many, and that ruralites who do live close to nature often do tend to have that reveration for it.*

*Gary Zukav, as we've seen, also reminds that in spiritual terms, all life is sacred, as Zen people and the like aver, and would no doubt further remind us that human life being as complex as it is – a human being is an amazing organism after all - is sacred, as no doubt many freerangers would naturally feel.*

*Such sacredness, together with fuller human growth and development and the finer human values, may well be important strands, as has been stated more than a few times, of civilisation and civilised human behaviour, needed to avoid societies becoming over 'power' based, and not necessarily producing the most effective conditions for freeranging, Handy's concept of 'honourable individualism'. And might freeranging, as*

*can be seen from such enquiry, be an integral and pivotal part of building civilised developed society in which the finer human values can thrive and grow - ?*

### **One day like-----?**

*Others affirm at a more 'practical' level. Karl Schwenke, in his practical and helpful book Successful Small-scale Farming, asserts:*

*'Farming is a state of mind, not an adopted avocation. If your life's objective is to make enough money from farming to become a part of the consumer culture – to amass things like new cars, automatic dishwashers, and colour TVs – then small-scale farming is not for you.*

*----- Simplicity of lifestyle, a dedication to careful planning, and a steadfast commitment to permanence are the essential elements of a successful small-scale farm venture'.*

*-----even today, acquiring and maintaining a sense of perspective is one of the most difficult tasks the small-scale farmer confronts-----.'*

*Not only perhaps because 'small-scale' is out of favour, against the trend, but also for everyone in a culture which seems pretty fast and headlong, the task of gaining and retaining perspective can then be likened to trying to hold onto a rock in the middle of a fast-flowing torrent.*

*Perhaps an alternative to any cultural 'dumbing down', could be to adopt a Browning-type 'wising-up' counsel:*

*'A man's reach should be beyond his grasp, else what's a heaven for?'*

*And then perhaps 'free-ranging' would be more valued, and more people would experience the primary satisfactions expressed by Ian Anderson, of 'Jethro Tull' group renown and now also a professional agriculturist, who in one TV programme talked about the unique satisfaction to be gained at the end of a hard but successful day's harvesting.*

*Ian Anderson's 'job well done' - maybe this points to real, 'spin-free' achievements being one of the keys to self-fulfillment, with, as Jimmy Reid alluded to, self-integrity and self-respect integral parts of the deal - a freeranger deal - ??*

### **Mike Robin biog**

M R has worked at various jobs such as a timber yard hand, builder, encyclopaedia salesman, farmhand, bus conductor, barman, wildlife society recruiter, salesperson, farming adviser/consultant, farmer, farm diversification consultant, journal editor and

lecturer in farm business management, acquiring an agricultural economics degree along the way.

His interests are organic farming, rural community, the environment, longer-term sustainability, reading, music, golf, culture watching, human potential and he aims to practise imperfect eco-living and small-scale organic growing. He has previously written *Rural Lifestyling: Whys and Wherefores of Starting a Small Independent Rural Enterprise*, a series of rural management guides, as well as sundry academic journal and conference papers.