

I own a very old mobile phone, given to me by my sister the last time she upgraded. The coverage where I live is poor and I have to go down to the beach or climb up to the attic to make and receive calls. Our local pub has a little row of phones along the window at the front, and people hang out the window to read messages.

Because I don't get out much I rarely use the phone and it shows. I send empty text messages and ring random strangers just by sitting down on a bus.

After a year it informed me that I had run out of credit so I simply stopped using it for a fortnight until I could bribe a teenager to fix it. It is tempting to brazen it out, to pretend that I am above all this sort of thing, but I've decided it's time to move into the modern age.

The last time I tried to move with the times was in the early nineties. Having grown up with hand-written essays and homework, I decided that to keep up in the job market I should enrol in an IT course at my local college. In the very first class, the lecturer had written the following instruction on the board: **password: password signon: signon..** Everyone came in and was soon keying merrily away while I sat there confused until the kind chap next to me showed me where the 'on' switch was.

The next day, some wit had plugged my keyboard into someone else's machine & vice-versa meaning that everything I thought I had learned on day one no longer worked. It was very amusing, I'm sure.

This week, the challenge has been Facebook and Twittering. Web-sites are such a big part of my working life now, and I regularly check out my favourites (including [www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk](http://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk) of course), but it seems I am being left behind again. Everyone is now Bebo-ing, Facebooking or Twittering. The Church of

Scotland was even Twittering during the General Assembly this week. On reflection that sounds a bit too gay for them.

My boss has recently embraced Facebook (I'm not talking about the editor of this paper who I pay no attention to, but my proper during-the-day-boss). He is older than me, but more of a geek so is more able to take on the new technology than I am. Ever since he got an i-phone he has gradually moved into this century and left me and my quills behind. Every day he tells me about the people who want to be his friend, or more sinister who are following him (stalking him?) on Twitter.

There was an article in the paper about Morrissey (Britain's greatest lyricist according to our top University) and the journalist appeared to be judging his popularity by the number of Facebook friends he has. I suspect Morrissey doesn't give a fig, but I decided to show my loyalty by becoming one of them. I'm not sure having him as a friend will impress my boss or anyone else I know, but it makes me happy.

As one of my many delaying tactics before writing this, I attempted to register on Facebook. I should have realised after scrolling down so far for the year of my birth that I really am too old for all of this, but I kept going. It asked me if I wanted to continue running scripts on the page. I said yes. If I don't understand a question I always say yes, which is not an approach to life I would recommend but I just can't help myself. When it kept on asking me the same thing, I tried saying no instead, but the question just kept on coming. It seems as though my listen handler has gone. This sounded so dangerous, I decided to switch off and go for a wee walk instead.

I've long fancied walking from coast to coast and my lovely husband has created a route for me from Ullapool to Dornoch using an electronic mapping system he has on his laptop. He has printed me out some maps marked with my route and a

wee tent at the overnight stops. This software is so clever that I was able to fly through the route, and it translates all the lines on the normal map into hills and cliffs. By keying in my shockingly slow walking speed, it calculates how long each leg should take, allowing for up and down hills. I can see where the steep bits are so I can psychologically prepare for them.

My week's wandering amongst our lovely wilderness will be the ultimate get-away for me. I don't have a GPS, and if I did would probably end up trying to walk west from Ullapool, but I am grateful for the paper version of my electronic map, and will be taking my mobile just in case. If you see my dog and me on the trip, please say hello. You could even offer me some food if you want as I plan to carry as little as possible. Let's hope when I come home, I will be refreshed enough to tackle the 21<sup>st</sup> century.