

2008 PROVED TO BE A REMARKABLY BLACK YEAR AND SHOULD BE DOCUMENTED FOR POSTERITY.

Black in every sense of the word, details of which countless generations will be expected to regurgitate at exam time.

And as the years leap forward, their only source of research will be the printed word.

For us it's easy; we lived through the proceedings as they evolved, but what about those who, say, in 100 years time, want to establish how things unfolded in 2008?

None of us can truly comprehend the unbearable suffering that occurred in Europe 90 years ago, or to be precise, the four years leading up to 1918.

Today there are only eight men alive that experienced WW1 first-hand.

Who knows, by this time next year there may well be none, and then what?

Books, grainy black and white footage and depressingly eerie cemeteries will be the only reminders.

So either we develop damn good memories, or get into the habit of writing things down. As they happen!

Admittedly, our lot was never as intolerable as those living nine decades ago, but even so, the banks, the politicians and the media peppered us for over two years with gloomy economic news.

Black Monday occurred in October 1929, and again in 1987; black Wednesday in 1992 and black Friday in 1869.

Unequivocally, these were regarded as the worst four days in financial history. Multicoloured Saturday hit one weekend in September, increasing the tally to five.

And all because Le Grand Fromage of managing director's, George W. Bush, allowed the American banking industry to trade unregulated throughout most of his term in office.

Combined with his costly, gung-ho crusade into Iraq and Afghanistan to flush out the elusive Taliban,

he finished his disastrous presidency with the US federal debt standing at \$8.8T, and rising. Fast. An inexcusably, unimaginable legacy!

US subprime mortgage lending, to those who couldn't afford it, was the meteorite that ripped into the heart of the global economy.

Avaricious bankers made high-risk loans on the mistaken premise that the upward trend of rising house prices would continue.

When it didn't, world markets were thrown into financial meltdown.

The first casualty in the UK was Northern Rock, who fell quickly and was eventually nationalised.

Next to falter were three of Iceland's biggest banks, leaving thousands of UK internet investors – including the British Government, numerous councils and top universities – with little or no recourse. Even the high street banks required a massive injection of equity to stave off collapse.

It appeared that no bank was immune, as the lack of capital sloshing around prevented them from lending to each other.

Giovanni Medici would have been writhing in his grave, knowing that what he started in the early 15th century was close to collapse.

After what seemed like an eternity of campaigning, America elected a new president. Barack Obama was his name, charismatic his nature and black the colour of his skin.

So exactly 40 years after Martin Luther King's assassination, and 45 years after his infamous 'I Have a Dream' speech, predicting racial integration, we witnessed a 47-year-old African American taking centre stage as the most powerful man on the planet.

In stark contrast, rebel fighting in the Congo was helping to create the world's worst

humanitarian disaster.

Nearly 1M Tutsie died in the 1994 genocide and low and behold there we were again, with 17,000 United Nations peacemakers doing everything in their power to prevent a cataclysmic recurrence.

Islamic terrorists inflicted mass carnage in Mumbai – formerly Bombay – killing at least 200 people and wounding 330. The terror group, of approximately 15 militants, singled out westerners, in particular American and British passport holders and butchered them in a frenzied shooting and bombing spree.

Other financial centres braced themselves for similar atrocities.

In his first year since leaving office, Tony Blair reputedly earned £12M from speaking engagements (72 times more than he made in his last career), the head of the Metropolitan Police – another Blair – was ousted by the new London mayor, Boris Johnson, for racial discrimination (amongst other things) and Prince Charles turned 60.

Formula One had itself a new champion in the honed physique of Lewis Hamilton. Named after the American sprinter, Carl Lewis, Hamilton, a British citizen, became one of the youngest black men (23 years, 300 days) to reach the top of a white, middle-class sport.

After 55 years of trying, Wales were – with crushing inevitability – beaten by the mighty All Blacks on home soil.

And in the same weekend, South Africa handed England's rugby team their worst ever defeat at Twickenham.

Somali pirates quite unbelievably staged the largest hijacking in maritime history. The 'Sirius Star', a Saudi super tanker, brimming with 2 million barrels of crude oil was boarded off the Horn of Africa and held to ransom for, initially, US\$100M. It was subsequently reduced to \$15M for the release of the tanker, its cargo and the 25 crew members held hostage.

During the year we said our goodbyes to Sir Edmund Hilary, Paul Newman, Bo Diddley, Bozo the Clown (or the individual who played him), Isaac Hayes, Nora Batty, Charlton Heston and one of the most thoughtful and widely revered copywriters the world of advertising has been lucky enough to observe – Hal Riney.

Paul McCartney survived a disastrous six year second marriage, wriggling free from his estranged wife with a mere £24M divorce settlement.

A German politician called for 'marriage expiry dates', maintaining the way forward was for a seven year contract, renewable if the marriage was thriving.

So, Macca, one more year was all it would have taken.

By the end of the year, UK property prices had fallen by 25% and global repossessions were at an all-time high; in the UK alone, one million homes stood empty.

Thankfully, interest rates were forced down – 1.5% in one month, the biggest single drop in 25 years – providing temporary solace for families continually battered by rising food, utility and petrol prices.

Woolworths collapsed into administration in the UK, closing 815 stores and laying off 30,000 staff.

It was the biggest casualty of the recession, but not by any means the only one.

And finally, an American, Thomas Beatie, was the first man to give birth to a child. He was transgendered; his, or her, real name or previous name being Tracy.

She, er, he, even started 2009 with yet another bundle of joy on the way.

During the entire year, this was quite possibly the most baffling, nonsensical load of codswallop that strayed across the metaphorical black and white divide.

But as we wanted to finish this slightly self-indulgent epistle on an upbeat note, we included it for your merriment.

temujin-creative

LEST WE FORGET.