

"What goes up must come down", and presumably the converse is also true.

So the FTSE went down, and is now back up. Gold went up and has recently declined.

These numbers affect many, but not all of us.

Of even greater impact in the longer term for all on the planet is the atmospheric CO₂ concentration, and this is rising inexorably. We have little expectation that it will decline in the foreseeable future.

In May it finally breached the "psychological" 400ppm barrier. We know from analysis of air bubbles trapped in ice to expect average temperatures to rise by as much as 2°C as a consequence. It is predicted that this may happen as early as 2035. The undesirable consequences have been widely publicised, as the need to reduce our dependence on burning fossil fuels, including the recently welcomed shale oil and gas. Increasing the efficiency of tidal and wind power, as well as photovoltaic, remain important scientific challenges.

Alfred Russel Wallace, the centenary of whose death we are commemorating this year, would have been fascinated by this uncontrolled experiment in changing the environment, and then observing which of the fittest survive.

While mankind as a species will make it through, there will be many who will suffer from increased drought conditions, and changes in seasonal temperatures and rainfall. We will undoubtedly need to step up our research into new crops able to cope with the new weather conditions. Fortunately, we have recently had public statements from both Owen Paterson (Defra) and David Willetts (Science), advocating that the UK (and indeed the rest of Europe) need to abandon their blanket opposition to the exploitation of GM crops. Where BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) leads Britain will eventually follow!



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1. to inform the scientific and industrial communities of activities within Parliament of a scientific nature and of the progress of relevant legislation;
2. to keep Members of Parliament abreast of scientific affairs.

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