

More Notes from a Very Small Garden, 18 April

Four weeks on from my last ramblings, and day-to-day life is still OK. This is the new reality, social contact reduced to holding conversations with neighbours across the street and shopping left on the doorstep by cautious delivery people.

Meanwhile my garden is micromanaged and documented like never before – they don't call me Mrs Clipboard for nothing! I haven't been out for four weeks apart from a constitutional round the Castle Grounds where I've watched trees go from bare stems to full leaf in a matter of days. Small things suddenly matter. And I did the Clifton Road–Leadenporch Farm–Chapmans Lane loop the other day after a gap of many years. I was convinced I was lost and was going to end up in North Aston until Google Maps put me right.

There are inspirational stories such as 99 year-old Captain Tom raising £21m (at the time of writing and still rising) for NHS charities by walking round his garden. Such a small act which generated an astonishing outburst of generosity. And the weekly Thursday thanks to our front-line workers – Featherston House we want you outside so we can say thank you, please! There are desperately sad stories as well – don't get me started on PPE equipment and testing, the reckoning will come later.

Our community is truly astonishing in the way it has come together to look after its own. What's particularly gratifying for us oldies is that it's the younger generation who have stepped up. I know that our corner of Paradise is in good hands – thank you! We're starting an archive on Deddington OnLine to document this extraordinary episode for future generations.

I have bad days when I can't see the outcome of all this and, when we go back to normal, what will normal be? Wearing a mask and keeping 2m away from my family? Are we endangered species going to be confined to barracks until a vaccine is found – which could be a year away? Right now I've told myself 12 weeks lockdown – if it's less so much the better, and we're already a third of the way through.

In the meantime I put on my silly earrings and a bit of lippy (I'm not a child of the 60s for nothing!), and do shared-screen reading of *Matilda* via Zoom with my granddaughter. And Parish-Council- meetings-by-Skype are the highlight of my social calendar – bit sad, that!

I'd like to record here the passing of a dear friend and former Parish Councillor, Norman Drake. Tributes will come later and we'll raise a glass to him when this is all over. And when the lockdown is lifted, I'm heading the line-up at the bottle bank on the Milton Road ...

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