

Notes from a Rioting Garden, 30 July

Bit of same old, same old ... but I am making efforts to get out and about in an attempt not to become an institutionalised paranoid.

First, a haircut – what bliss! My hairdresser works from home, so mask for me, mask and visor for the hairdresser. A visit to the dentist in some ways was the same as life BC; a hospital visit was like entering a spaceship with mysterious figures moving around in gowns and masks; drinks with friends in a garden were a welcome slice of normality. And after the wearing of masks in shops became mandatory on 24 July I felt more confident making a tentative foray into a Banbury supermarket – then scurried back to await the next home delivery service.

Had a very nervous birthday supper with my family in a pub in Chippy. We had our usual upstairs private room so that bit felt OK. It was only a few days after pubs had reopened, and let's just say they were struggling. A meal that normally takes a couple of hours took three and a half, with the same waitress having to serve all the drinkers in the bar as well as wait table. But not a time to complain.

At the beginning of lockdown, our supreme leaders said the over-70s should self-isolate until the end of June. Curiously no one has thought to let us out yet. But I've no desire to rush on to a train to London, much less get on a plane to anywhere. And if Dishi Rishi is depending on the likes of me to kick start the economy again, the country is going to be sadly disappointed.

I do take issue with a recent letter in the *Independent* by someone the same age as me who says, 'there are worse ways of going than via a respiratory disease. Hardly anyone under 65 dies of Covid-19 and I'm ashamed our economy and children's education were trashed by lockdowns to "save" old codgers like me littering the waiting rooms.' Many people under 65 *have* died of Covid, and there's the possibility of a second wave attacking the younger generation – those who up till now have thought themselves immortal and behaved accordingly. I'm not ready to roll over just yet!

Meanwhile the sun still shines, and the third nest of blackbird fledglings have just hopped off. The honeysuckle, cosmos, scabious and nicotiana have well rewarded my efforts earlier in the year as long as I keep the blackfly away – but that's what gardening is all about. *Il faut cultiver notre jardin*, as someone said ...

Mary Robinson