

Winter Gloom – and then the Sun Shone

A different Christmas loomed, one like no other I've ever known. Decision made early on to spend it at home on my own, and I'm glad I saved us all the hassle and angst of having to change plans as the Covid news got steadily worse. My decision, didn't want sons feeling guilty.

So wearing the weirdest combination of Santa hat and face mask, on Christmas Eve I delivered presis to no. 2 son and family on their doorstep. And shared mulled wine and mince pies with no. 1 son and wife in my garden. And did a family Zoom on Christmas morning before they disappeared to their various outlaws for the day.

Highlight of the day was sitting round a socially distanced firepit in the garden of dear friends, also spending Christmas on their own, nursing a bottle of champers and scoffing smoked salmon and mince pies. Followed by 'Some Like it Hot' on the telly – the best film ever. And secretly enjoying ditching tasteless turkey and Christmas pudding and all the bits-you-pretend-to-like-because-they're-traditional in favour of my own favourite cooking.

The frosty sunshine of Christmas Day was followed by a raw, dank, flat Boxing Day – not a good day, needing the comfort of music to lift the spirits. The weather reflected the national mood as, along with a good chunk of the country Deddington went into the tighter anti-Covid restrictions of tier 4. News of a variant of the virus, exponentially rising case numbers, and more strains on the desperately overstretched NHS, deepened the gloom.

Time for positive thinking, don't drift, keep working on those family and parish projects you don't normally find time for. Head down to get through the darkest winter hours.

And then the sun shone! The Oxford vaccine was ready for distribution. Bring it on, starting with our sorely overstretched health and social care workers! This has to be the beginning of the end ...

Will we emerge from this strangest of years the same people as we were back in March? I hope not: I hope we care more about our fellow human beings of whatever colour, race or religion. And I hope we care more about our planet before it really does for us ...

Mary Robinson