

## That's all folks ...!

A reflective piece to finish off this Covid archive. I've looked back at the first piece I wrote in April 2020 and noted a certain jolly hockey sticks gung ho-ness about it. This was a novel situation that would soon pass if we just followed the mantra 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives'. But the first two waves of Covid with their shocking numbers of hospitalisations, deaths, and what we now call long Covid, taught us this was serious and not going away any time soon. And then the vaccination programme gave us hope again.

So where am I now apart from being older, sadder and wiser? I'm more aware of the fragility of life, and that what economists like to call 'an external shock' can have devastating effects for many and, for the rest of us, knock us all sideways. I've re-learned the value of family, friends and community. And relied on the redemptive, life-affirming value of music – 'if all else fails there is always Mozart', just 'the right number of notes' – and 'in the right order'. And I've seen the power of plants and gardens, capable of change and stability at the same time – *'il faut cultiver notre jardin*, as some 18th-century philosopher once said.

I still feel very diffident about venturing into the outside world – where is safe? We're going to have to live with social distancing and masks for some time yet, I fear. Yet why I am I too concerned? I've got to die of something – but please not just yet if only to spite Bojo's alleged desire to sacrifice us oldies on the altar of national economic welfare. I mustn't stop visits to the theatre, concerts, holidays in this country and the Continent. I've done my long-haul travelling and plenty of it, so much to be thankful for there.

And now for the next shock that's going to be bigger than anything recently experienced. Climate change is already here, with everything from extreme weather volatility, unbearably high temperatures, forest fires, Arctic ice melt and floods. We ain't seen nothin' yet.

An observation at the outbreak of Covid in April 2020: 'We've had 75 years of peace and growing prosperity and we think it's our right to have just what we want, right now. Is Covid a wake-up call from Gaia telling us to stop our selfish over-consumption and live a simpler lifestyle? Maybe it's the only way the planet will survive.'

And on that happy note, I will cease my monthly ramblings ...