

One Year On ...

It seems extraordinary that a whole year has gone by since I started this monthly blog. Where has that year gone to? Looking back at the first offering, 'Notes from a Small Garden' in March 2020 there was no sign of the trying months that lay ahead. So 23rd March was a day of reflection when we paused to remember the 127,000 who lost their lives to Covid, and to thank those who volunteered to connect and support those in need. A sobering moment indeed...

We were certainly a year older, and I hope a bit wiser too. I've learned not to take things for granted: I was walking just now in the grounds of recently opened Blenheim Palace where the daffodils were outrageously cheerful and the riotous chorus of birdsong stopped me in my tracks. Last year I wouldn't have noticed them. I like walking in Blenheim, it feels safe – that's another non-Covid story.

I'm looking forward to sharing hot cross buns and Easter eggs with the grandchildren in the garden now that we are allowed to meet up outdoors again. I've not seen them since Christmas so it's a special treat. This time last year I was wondering how to cope without a haircut for 12 weeks; well now I know, for the second time, and it's not a pretty sight.

But, big but, I've had my second Pfizer vaccination – with no side effects – so I'm as protected as I'm ever going to be. There's talk now of a booster jab for the oldies in September, presumably to protect against any variants that have raised their ugly heads since the first vaccines were developed.

As I commented in the 'How Life Changed' series, the rollout of vaccinations in the UK was a truly astonishing success story, contrasting sharply with the chaos, backbiting and disinformation that was plaguing the European continent, with both the EU and member states equally to blame. Covid cases were again rising exponentially there and countries were going back into lockdown. Continental holidays again seemed a long way away.

And, more locally, we've had reason to be grateful to live in a small, caring community that has made sure no one has gone without. One social fault-line that this pandemic has opened is that we've had to set up food banks and buy laptops to enable children to take part in online learning. Pretty dreadful in 21st century Britain, and we waited to see whether it would lead to any of the 'levelling up' promised by our government. I'm not holding my breath ...