

SATURDAY 23RD DECEMBER 2023

With Lavinia Donling

T M W R O A D T R I P

I have had the pleasure of whizzing down to Plymouth. We have stayed in the same 'home from home' for the 2nd year running, although I remembered to take a coffee pot down with me as they did not have one last time. Tye is noticeably struggling with the stairs. The EPS office in north wales was upstairs, and he was really struggling with that. John's new office is on the ground floor, and so there has been no reason to climb stairs. It has been interesting watching their behaviour. Away from the collies, Libby and Jude, there is no rush to eat their food. There is no garden, so it is regular trips out to walk along the water's edge, which Monty loves because there are so many birds

that live on the water. Instead of a quiet village location with the occasional thundering lorry passing by, we are now hearing emergency vehicle sirens - often - as well as the trains rattatata above our heads crossing the Brunel railway bridge. What sounds like wind is often high sided vehicles coming on to the bridge. Occasionally we might hear low level engines from small boats going past. Last night we could hear music across the water from Saltash.

Going into Plymouth was pleasant, sad, and frustrating at different times. For a Friday afternoon, it was not busy - I have seen it where people are struggling to pass one another at Christmas time - but it was busy. Shops had closed down, but, bizarrely Wilko's was open, or shops had moved to smaller or bigger premises. Someone was playing his saxophone, whilst another at the top of the mound was playing on African drums. At the top of the mound, there had been trees over a 100 yrs old, which had been cut down which caused an uproar with locals as they were healthy trees with no logical reason to cut them down. It changed the skyline, when we were walking on the hill later looking down over the city. Clearly there have been transitions since I was here a year ago, but considerable since I last lived here (1996).





I am telling you all this because Christmas time is usually a temporary transition, but sometimes and some places are more permanent. For some of us, having a change from the norm can be interesting and fun, yet at other times frustrating and overwhelming. But they are usually temporary, and it is finding ways to adapt to the temporary change - like me bringing our own coffee pot - like spending less than an hour in the shops - or sitting with the dogs in a pub chosen by the locals where it is not too noisy and we can enjoy being out but not quite in the thick of it. Doing familiar activities in familiar places tends to go well, as is being around family with low expectations, and having moments for peace, quiet and sanctuary are always helpful.

Our son and daughter-in-law were relaying the recent assertions from our youngest granddaughter, aged 2yrs, who will say, 'I am ready to go now' and starts walking purposely for the door. Whilst it is highly amusing, is it not lovely that she has no inhibitions to say she has had enough. Or when her Granddad teases the older grand-daughter and says 'close your eyes and put your hands in the bag', and the youngest pipes up, "I want to" and keeps her eyes firmly open and has a good look to choose her chocolates. I will leave you to guess what my thoughts are on her Autistic presentation.

It is 2 more sleeps until Christmas Day. Some of our families have celebrated Winter Solstice, others will be celebrating Christmas on Christmas Eve, whilst others might celebrate Christmas Day, and others still on Boxing Day. Some of you might dress up in fancy dress, whilst others might dress down in pjs and slippers. Some of you may get up late, although unlikely with young ones, and others might be up super early with all the food preparation. I will confess now that we, as yet, have not bought the 'big bird', but this is largely my fault as I have been working right up to Christmas with very little down time. This morning should be fun as I am joining Mike live on our 3rd Saturday Christmas radio show at Ferndale Community Radio, before we head home for Christmas - although I heard on the radio that an estimated 21 million people will be driving on the roads over the Christmas weekend!!!

Anyway, to you all, have a lovely festive weekend!

Lavinia