

My Somerset Life

A diary by Brian Snellgrove

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A great day in Bristol – and the downside of Downside Abbey

We now have a direct service to Bristol which does not go around the houses but directly from the end of my street to Bristol Bus Station taking a mere 51 minutes. We took the 11.14 to that city and seated ourselves upstairs at the front for the best view. Nothing much has changed since my teen-years. Definitely the best seats in the bus if you dont mind less leg-room.

There is something about the Christmas Spirit that was not only lingering on but was thriving. People are more happy to talk with each other, exchange humorous banter, and generally going on their way showing good will. The sky was blue and although it was cold then lack of wind made this less than an ordeal.

We went to my favorite buffet restaurant, Cosmo, where at this time of day you can have an all you can eat for £14.99. The giant is ZaZa but they were charging £19.99 per head which we felt was a bit much for lunch time.

As usual I made it my habit to talk outrageously to as many people as possible. I notice that although I wonder how I get away with it people seem to take it in good spirit. I reckon people are starved of people to speak to and to be listened to.

In the evening a trip to Downside Abbey for a nine lessons and carols type of event. The acoustics are terrible so I could hardly hear what was being said and that in spite of knowing the texts of the bible excerpts that are used on this occasion. An added irritant was the introduction of an uumps uumpa brass band which ruined the sacred nature of the

traditional hymns. I stood right at the back as I could not bear to be seated and imprisoned at the front.

What was even worse – a women who insists on bringing her baby along. The baby cries when it wishes and this is hugely disturbing and very selfish behavior. I find the Abbey without atmosphere. Francoise my wife does not wish to go there again except for an exceptional programme.

Sunday morning – to an 8am communion at St. Johns, my local church to which I have recently taken a liking to. All Saints in Paulton is good on the social side and I regularly attend the Tuesday morning coffee mornings but I do not like the very informal nature of the services, with children running around. I mix and match which seems to work.

At 10 am off to the so called 'Super Sunday at the previously abandoned Methodist Church in Radstock. This is an informal group of Christians – The Vineyard' both adults and children where we can catch up on the gossip and share meaningful experiences.

At 3pm THE FOOTBALL FINAL started. One of the best football finals I have ever seen. Full time 2-2. Extra time 2-2. Then the penalties began. It was about 5.50 pm and the All Saints carol service was about to begin. I'm afraid the devil got me. A cozy room, fascinating play, raining and blowing outside. If the penalties had been just ten minutes earlier I would have jumped in the car but – rotten timing for the service.

Of all distractions...

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