

My Somerset Life

A diary by Brian Snellgrove

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£4.25 for a latte whilst homeward bound

Thoughts on leaving as a guest.

I have known my friend John for about 40 years and there aren't that many people that I can say that I have had relationships of such duration. People often drift away from each other and although they might meet occasionally to say hello the duration tells its own story and speaks its own message. I have another friend called Gregory who I met at the age of about 20 through a grill at the Streatham (London) sorting post office. This relationship has lasted a similar time.

In a way I want to return to get back to familiar surroundings, and in a way I would rather stay because whenever I am with John I always get stimulated with looking at the same subject from different points of View. For example, I shall be writing later about the difference between soul and spirit. We also discussed whether we tolerate people who have different views than ours, or those who have a limited willingness to learn. Is it worth spending time with these people in the hope that they will change?

I have discovered a fault in my car, not an actual fault but a defect in the drivers tyre. There are wires that have been exposed and I suppose it makes the tyre illegal but the annoying thing is that the tread conforms to the specification so I wonder how safe the car is to drive. On the way across country I dropped in to a Quick Fit garage, I had a look at the car, and decided that the situation was not bad enough to interrupt my journey so I proceeded home.

By way of a refreshment break, I stopped off at the Organic

Farm Shop, originally called Abbey home Farm, 2 miles from Cirencester in Gloucestershire. You will gather that I asked the M4. I like to drive fairly slowly but even in the slow lane I tend to annoy people and I find the whole thing a bit of a strain so I'm very happy to go cross country from Banbury to Bath and enjoy the scenery, stop as I like, see the entertaining pubs and shops along the way, and admire the countryside.

It was 11:30 when I turned up at the shop where there is an excellent cafe. It was only 11 30 and they only start serving lunch at midday. I decided to have a latte with almond milk and was quite shocked to be charged a (to me) record price of £4.25 for the same. I was quite shocked by this since it wasn't even a particularly large cup of coffee but you have to understand that the background of this is the clientele of what I can describe as quite a snobby and choosy clientele. I rang home and said that I would not be having lunch which actually turned out to be the best decision. Main courses are now about £15



As if the coffee was not expensive enough, I have never come across six eggs for £3.25. All the food is very good quality and the vegetables are all locally grown, many of them in the adjoining farm project itself. If people are willing to pay

£3.25 for eggs then so be it and good luck to the sellers but I find it's a bit disproportionate, bordering what I call silly money.

I wandered around a bit and had a look at the poly tunnels. They must be about 50 meters long and they were growing many crops relevant to the the cafe including salad of course but also leeks



The whole venture is actually quite exciting consisting of a farm, with the subheading 'experiential learning'. A testimony reads thus: *there have been so many positives spin-offs for the young people but I would summarize it in the following way : each of the children now has the seed of an idea that life can be different.*

A participant says 'I did things I thought I would never do in my whole life' this is a young lady of 11 who lived in York



However, if you look at the whole venture, for me it represents the microcosm of society. In case you find this notice difficult to read, the monika is *the land is not ours but belongs to the future and it is our responsibility to leave it in good heart. We are committed to re-establishing the connection between nature, farming and food and believe that, as Farmers and land stewards, we have a responsibility to efficiently produce food for the local community while protecting our soil and creating and maintaining biodiversity.*

There are various headings which are expanded on the website including family history, history of the land which we find dates back to the Bronze Age. We read about organic practice and principles and find that organic agriculture is based on the principles of health, of ecology, of fairness, and of care. We then read about animal welfare and the farm and find that they rear hundreds of dairy cows, beef cows, 600 sheep, 350 laying hens, pigs and even a boar.

We then learn about the Organic Farm Shop and cafe which sells over 200 varieties of fruits come a vegetables and flowers. I bought an excellent loaf of bread for £3.25. There is a slogan *thanks to the earth, thanks to the farmers and growers, and thanks to the sun and the rain.* They also do woodland walks with the theme *'sit in the woods and be still for a moment'*.

They also have eco venues and accommodation where you can choose from a variety of accommodations to get back to nature.

They also give talks on soil, geology and climate, and they also emphasize wildlife, listing what animals and birds can be found on the farm. They also talk about conservation and biodiversity, quite a lot about renewable energy though I don't quite know what they've done in this respect and finally access and education. It is quite clear that this example or model has an influence that spreads far and wide. I do wish the announcement was a little less weather worn as it was difficult to read which is why I will refer you to the website which is here.

There is a subsidiary website www.thefarm.education

Arriving Home

Arriving home from anywhere after a break is always a pleasure. When I first see my house I'm glad that it is still standing and has not been broken into. Although the rates of burglary are quite low in this part of the world you never know who would want to get up to what. I find that houses with burglar alarms are almost an invitation because it implies that there is something valuable inside.

When I first arrive I find that for a couple of hours at least I have not arrived so I do various mindless things like unpack, glance over mail if any, see how the garden is, have a snack to eat, and of course greet my other half with a summary of my trip. I then settle down to writing my diary. With longer breaks when holidays occur, I write the current day while it is in my immediate memory straight away, and then start from day one and move forward.

Closing ceremonies are distinctly lacking. When I say goodbye to my host I tend to say the right things and exhibit gracefulness for what they have done for me in terms of their

hospitality. I try to be an ideal guest and leave the room where I slept in as tidy a condition as possible and I always strip the bed and bring the sheets etc downstairs to be washed. I had an arrival ceremony where I went out and bought a bottle of red wine and gave some reflections of my visit to Francoise. I feel much better after a closing ceremony and an opening ceremony, I don't just want to lurch into something and get on with it.

I was shocked this morning to hear how refugees are treated in terms of the generosity of the UK Government – and our tax money. I was told that in August this year 175,000 refugees had arrived on these shores. Not only do they get free board and lodging, but they get if I can remember, £45 a week, free phones and bill payment, free National Health Service treatment, free travel home and return once every two years, free visits to the doctor, and if they want it a free Green Card to go to America.

I can hardly believe I'm writing this. All the while, English nationals are homeless and suffering, and I can only see this as a part of a deliberate plan to introduce alien people who have no empathy with Brits and in my view will be used as a standing army to reinforce legislation should it ever come to this stage. I also understand from three or four sources that ammunition has been supplied to some of the refugees in their accommodations. Some of what I hear from trusted sources is beyond understanding, and this is one of them.

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