

My Somerset Life

A diary by Brian Snellgrove

- My Somerset Life
- Diary Entries
- Writing a diary
- About, and User's Guide
- Creative Listening service
- Privacy Policy
- Contact
- Thoughts
 - Blood clots
 - Enlight and Godlight
 - Interacting with others + the disadvantage of being nice.
 - Is Jesus only our local hero?
 - Loneliness or enjoying your own company?
 - Mobile phones – neutrinos and everything
 - People of different nationalities – the myth of separation
 - Personal energy and life readings
 - Quantum Entanglement
 - Sanity and Insanity – where do we go when we die?
 - The Second Coming of Jesus – where is he?
 - The twisting of space and other matters
 - What is sin?
 - What is the brain?
 - What vibrations can improve our lives?
 - Will the truth survive?

Spending Christmas on your own

Salt in the wound

It really is rubbing salt into the wound when for one reason or another you find yourself on your own, knowing that in the vicinity the majority of other people are getting tipsy, having their Christmas lunch, meeting family and friends, no doubt enjoying generous measures of mulled wine. We can forget that it is also a time for family arguments, but that's another story.

If you are on your own here is a link to a helpful article '10 mood-boosting things to do if you are spending Christmas alone'. Here is one practical site. Here is another one from GQ Magazine

My own recollections

I have always found Christmas time very difficult in terms of emotions. I remember that when I was young, I think I was 16 or 17, we were living in Bergh Apton (that's a little village in Norwich to the southeast) and for some reason my mother, father, and myself had Christmas lunch in complete silence. There was nothing to say. Eventually this became too much for my mother. She went upstairs and had a good cry. She eventually returned and we were still sitting in the same place waiting for her.

I remember another Christmas when I was very depressed and although I was at a place with lots of other people, I did not have an appetite and did not want to eat. Those you could say I was being my own worst enemy but that's just the way it was, I suppose we are all our worst enemies from time to time.

I remember once when I was on my own on Christmas Day, years ago now, I made myself a decent lunch and spent most of the time either reading or watching TV. I lit a fire in the room which provided some comfort. I did go to church in the morning. If I recall, the day did not pass too badly. The evening soon came. In the afternoon I went for a walk in the local park and greeted the odd person who was out and about.

I spent one Christmas in South Africa with friends and this was an entirely different experience. It is in the middle of summer there. It is celebrated but in a much more laid back way.

Activities for others

One of the commercial radio stations in London, Capital Radio, organized a phone-in for anyone who was lonely over Christmas and about a dozen of us took telephone calls from members of the public. We gave them information about what was going on in London, and we were able to support the callers. However in the years since that event, I think this was in the 1980s, more and more facilities have been open over Christmas, the structure of society has changed, so that there is not so much difference as there was between Christian festivals and other times.

I have great respect for people who throw open their homes to those who are for whatever reason on their own. It is nothing to be ashamed of. It could be that your family is living at the other side of the country and your work makes it impossible to visit them. It could be that your spouse has departed this life and you don't know anyone near who is on good enough terms with you to be invited or you could just be a single person, plain and simple.

I have been to one or two of these community Christmas Day events over the years and there is an amazing spirit. I admire the volunteers who turn out and cook. There are also those who

serve at the tables, equally commendable. I remember being quite surprised at the people who showed up, there were a few single people but also a few mothers with their children I suppose the victims of a liaison that did not work out. There was one at St James Piccadilly in London. There were a number of clients from homeless shelters and some were not well behaved alas.

Rituals

This evening we had our Scientific and Medical Network meeting on the topic of rituals. Christmas is indeed a ritual. I've shared with others the rituals that occur at Chalice Well in Glastonbury where we celebrate the various phases of the year. It is a wonderful time when people dress up, get together and talk to complete strangers. We are given a timely spiritual boost-talk by a wise person normally a goddess type figure, and there is the feeling that we have put our mark on for example the shortest day of the year and we are now moving on positively and collectively.

I think us Brits are very bad or should I say not very good at rituals. We can talk about a ritual handshake, an activity that precedes a meeting or conversation. For example it is normal to have small talk before you engage on the major question for your meeting. This is probably a convention, one step down from a ritual. I would say that we the 'leftovers' from rituals. There are some awful American imports. High fiving (ugh). Have a nice day. OK when used appropriately.

Rituals over Christmas vary between each country. I know that in Germany the main emphasis on celebration is Christmas Eve. We in UK tend to be very traditional as you would expect. We have Christmas lights which come on any time from the first to December, we have a Christmas tree and on Christmas Eve the parents place presents for their children at the foot of the tree, Father Christmas does his meteoric rounds. We have a mistletoe strategically near the Christmas tree so we can kiss

each other.

Christmas Morning

On Christmas morning for children wake early and pesto their parents until they can go downstairs and open their presence no doubt with the latest offerings on electronics, gadgets etc.

The turkey goes on at about 10 o'clock in the morning and the family sit down about 2 pm for an overlarge lunch finished off with Christmas pudding. In my time we used to listen to the Queen's Speech at 3pm but I don't know how many people will listen to King Charles this year. The evening meal which may consist of the rest of the lunch or perhaps something quite different. I seem to remember that we had fish pie or was it a quiche.

Christmas time can be stressful and can often be the last straw for people deciding whether they want to live together or not. Holiday time is when things come emotionally charged and we have to add to that the strain of for example recent unemployment, or having lived through covid and the lock-down. In the legal profession, January has the unofficial title of 'divorce month' as it comes straight after this season. Even if it's clear that marriage is beyond repair before Christmas, many couples simply feel they don't have the time or energy to begin divorce proceedings before the new year.

Christmas Presents

On other matters – Christmas presents. My sister wrote to everybody in our family and says that she will not be sending Christmas presents this year and that anyone wishing to donate to a particular named charity should do so. I do not buy a present for my wife, nor does she for me. Instead, when we are out and about in our normal life and one of us sees something that the other person would like then that becomes a Christmas

present. I find this leads to a far higher degree of satisfaction than if you choose something arbitrarily and give it to them, because good manners should cause us to say 'thank you' even if it is the 16th pair of socks.

Catching up with friends

Christmas time is a time of good will, definitely, and it is a very good time to catch up with people that you do not have cause to speak with on a regular basis but Christmas gives a time to wish them all the best and hope they are well. I have a friend in South Africa that I have not seen for it must be seven years now. She has not done particularly well in her relationship but we love her all the same so it's very nice just to chat about old times.

Christmas cards

We tend to exchange cards with neighbors, family, and our closer friends. The price of posting these days is pretty stratospheric. It's about £0.75 for second class and £1.35 for first class. I am lucky that Francoise does all the leg work and all I do is to sign them.

Christmas vs. Easter

Funnily enough, if I have to spend Easter on my own, it doesn't have the same impact as it does for the Christmas period. There's plenty going on in church, good Friday, the joy of Easter Day and the weather is better. There is usually something to look forward to on Bank Holiday Monday.



I positively relish the interval between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. You can be invisible because no one expects you to do anything. This was more true when I was working but now I can have a lapse on my regular disciplines and no one will be any the wiser. This time I've decided to have a little party on Friday the 29th December right in the middle of no man's land to buck the trend so to speak and have one or two people along who have strong views on various matters so we can bore each other to death and enjoy ourselves at the same time.

Early spring cleaning

Also I will turn my attention to doing some early spring cleaning. There are far too many items that I have no use for and am unlikely to use. I will not throw away my beloved books because I love the sight and the smell and the utility of books should I ever need something for a reference. And then there are the new year sales. I might go and buy myself the odd pair of trousers, or something that reflects my mood.

New year sales

I noticed that these are being bought forward earlier and earlier so they can now be on Boxing Day which for my American viewers is the day after Christmas. Compared with Black Friday it is a fairly laid back event but I know that people traditionally queue outside Harrods, the famous London store, and are let in on the dot of 9am. I can think of no more ghastly way of spending the day but then if you've seen a bargain which is 75% off, then by all means go for it.

My Somerset Life by Brian Snellgrove

With over 1 million words and 7,130 images.

You can search for any place or topic including Bath, Frome, Wells, Bristol, Glastonbury, Cheddar, or you can search topics such as Christian, meditation, philosophy. You will also find extensive writings on Swansea, Cardiff, Weston Super Mare, London, Avebury.

- Christianity
 - health
 - Personal development
 - Philosophy
 - psychology
-
- How to use
 - Contact
 - Writing a diary
 - Privacy Policy
 - Creative Listening service

All content © 2024 Brian Snellgrove