

My Somerset Life

A diary by Brian Snellgrove

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Samuel Pepys, rapist – enough! – the winter solstice

The 17th century diarist Samuel Pepys was responsible for – or I should say gave me the impetus – to start this diary in his style. However, in the diary Tuesday 20th of December 1664 we read that he went to his friend Bagwell at his house, accepted their food and after the meal sent the husband on a false errand while he proceeded to have sex with the wife against her will. He then goes to his own home where presumably his wife is present and had another meal. He is so self-conscious or maybe ashamed or maybe indifferent about his act of sex that he describes the event in french. I have reached the point when I don't want to know.

Up and walked to Deptford, where after doing something at the yard I walked, without being observed, with Bagwell home to his house, and there was very kindly used, and the poor people did get a dinner for me in their fashion, of which I also eat very well. After dinner I found occasion of sending him abroad, and then alone 'avec elle je tentais a faire ce que je voudrais et contre sa force je le faisais biens que passe a mon contentment'. By and by he coming back again I took leave and walked home, and then there to dinner, where Dr. Fayrebrother come to see me and Luellin. We dined....

I don't really want to read this stuff. He is an excellent diarist in many ways but I think I have reached the time to thank him for his catalytic effect on me and go on my way so to speak.



a rather bad photograph of people surrounding the well of chalice well

Today is winter solstice, and by way of celebration we went that unique centre and focus for the Goddess energy, Chalice Well in Glastonbury. There is normally a charge but they let everyone in free before 12 o'clock on all these special days of ceremony. We joined everyone in the garden area for coffee and savories and then made our way through the gardens up to the well itself for a ceremony which started on the dot of 12.



the well itself dressed for the occasion

The celebrant reminded us of the significance of winter and the shortest day and invited us to do a meditation imagining that our heart chakra was full of the living fire and that this fire should be imagined to move to the Crown chakra. We were asked to envisage energy radiating throughout the body to the whole universe and blessing it.

Finally, we were asked to relax, take three deep breaths, all join hands and make the sound of Om three times and slowly.



the spring in the gardens from which people take the water supposedly containing healing powers



walking round the special labyrinth constructed for the occasion

Oh, I forgot to say, when we arrived we were given an interdenominational prayer to say to ourselves. Here it is:

The Glastonbury moment

Spirit of All Life, Mother and Father of us all, look with loving kindness on this community of Glastonbury and Avalon. Bless all beings here with love, compassion and growing consciousness. Help us to be good neighbours as a safe, creative and prosperous town in which all children are cared for and all people supported in their growth and fulfillment.

Inspire us to care for our sacred landscape sellers to benefit the natural world and our children's children for generations to come. Help us to be mindful of caring towards our many visitors and pilgrims, honouring their diverse parts and face, as we honour and celebrate the diversity of belief among ourselves. We pray for peace and justice at home and all across the world.

Blessed be. Amen, Om

After the celebration we sat around and talked with a few people. There is a unique atmosphere where everybody is open then you can speak to people on their own male and female. This space is safe. I noticed with great delight something about the women. Very few of them were wearing make up. I could then actually see their face, their expressions, and their real selves. I have always said about make out that if you can see someone is wearing it they got too much. I hate seeing eyebrows and lips daubed with this muck, this byproduct of the petrochemical industry. Anyway, I suppose this is not in conformity with the spirit of the winter solstice or Christmas so I'll shut up on that one.



general gathering place, tea and snacks on the left, a fire straight ahead (Ctrl and + to enlarge)

Anyway, back to the story. I spoke to a young man who had just moved to Glastonbury from Lincolnshire and felt very guided because he had nowhere to live and found himself ending up with a house share arrangement. Someone else was listening to the side, a chap in a Rastafarian hairdo, a beard and generally a hippy type though he said later he was trying to be anti-hippie. I mentioned my name and told everyone that I had joined a prayer group and what benefit it was. Lo and behold, this chap who was called Will, belonged to the very same group. The group consists of 50 people throughout the world. The world population is about 7 billion. The chances of two people from the same group meeting and communicating are vanishingly small, one in trillions. We might accept the fact that there is a higher force that is nothing to do with mathematical possibility but of something happening which draws people together of like mind. That made my whole trip to Glastonbury worthwhile.



a lovely presentation in the street

A little later we decided to wander around the town and get some food. There was a very happy atmosphere along the unique Main Street of Glastonbury with buskers, people wishing each other happy Christmas, and a lady selling Chai tea. This brand of tea reminded me very much of my two trips to India and the tradespeople who used to sell this tea at stations in particular by shouting 'chai chai'. I said I would buy a cup but she would have to chant the 'chai chai'. She smiled and understood exactly what I meant and did so. The tea was lovely, I might say almost as good as the coffee which I drink too much of. Whilst I was being served, a thin young man came up to her and whispered in her ear that there was a free vegetarian and vegan meal on offer nearby at 5:30 PM.



A Puch 50cc moped with what looks like the original colours

Glastonbury certainly does have community spirit in spadefuls. People are connected with what they are selling and doing and what a difference it makes.



Glastonbury
Memorial
Tree



a memorial shrine in the middle of Glastonbury high Street

What an amazing day with lovely weather and the spirit of fellowship that if multiplied many times will transform the world. We are blessed.

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Creative writing course from the inside

What you may ask is your diarist doing going to a course when everyone else is rushing out to buy things, consume things, standing in lines to buy roasted pork sandwiches, mulled wine and the like. Good luck to these people BUT I was not in 'consumer mode' because *<strikes magisterial pose>* my dear friends, enemies, adversaries, critics, admirers, and those who don't know me from Adam, other business do I have.

The bus company were in a good mood this morning at the Park and Ride in Odd Down; a chap in a high viz jacket was giving out sweets as well as selling bus tickets.

Certainly, everything is going on today. I love these immobile human art installations. The person portrayed below was certainly getting plenty of money including a good supply of pound coins and all he had to do was to sit still in his made



On my way back from the event I'm about to describe, I detected raised voices among two people who were being asked to leave a mobile phone shop. I could tell from the body language and tone of voice that the two people, the complainants, had lost it and they were engaged in immoderate language.

The salesperson who they claim have been rude to them was asking them to leave the store so clearly this was the end of an acrimonious dispute. One of the reasons I do not use headphones when I am out is that you should ideally be alert for any difficulty or potential difficulty and prevent it if you can. This I achieved by walking up to the harassed sales assistant who was actually being very cool and siphoning him off in another direction. I have learned from long experience that if someone is angry beyond a certain point they will not listen to anyone.

The two complainants left threatening to report to the head office and I simply ignored them and asked the shop assistant whether he was okay. He said yes and thanked me for my intervention. It would have been so easy to walk by on the

other side but as I make practice of being fully alert when in public I knew exactly what I had to do and did so. We are not children and we need to police and look after each other. As Kenny Everett would say 'in the best possible taste'.

But I digress*. Maybe my whole life is a digression from my main purpose which is to cast off this mortal body and take my place in the real world where force does not prevail and time exists no more. I am waxing poetic because the morning was devoted to a three hour workshop on the topic of creative writing. First off, it is quite amazing what an apparently fairly normal group of people can produce if their minds are tuned to a common purpose.

* a digression can be a very valuable embellishment to a talk. After the speaker has laid out the main precepts he will digress, apparently telling a story that has little or no relevance to the topic but then show how the story does indeed relate to the main subject. In other words, a digression does not have to be counter-productive.

Five of us turned up. There were four ladies of middle-aged and myself as the nominal male. We were ushered into a downstairs room where stood a big oak table, a clipboard, plus a lovely open log fire and a view over the City of Bath which must be delightful in all but the worst weathers. The people who were meant to be there were there by some magical process. I have often had the experience of laying out chairs for a meeting after using my intuition to find the number of people showed up was exactly the same as the number of chairs I had laid out. This is neither a conscious nor a rational process.

The method of the course was just as interesting to me as the content. It is necessary at all courses long or short to orientate the people and get them into the mode and indeed the mood. We were asked to write three statements about ourselves,

two of which were true and one of which was false. I wrote that I was a Life Coach, that I lived in a bungalow in Midsomer Norton and that I was 68 years of age. The others had to ask questions to determine which was true. I was rumbled finally when someone asked me the year of my birth and I remained silent. We repeated that process with the five of us with much laughter and gaiety.

The next exercise was to discuss various genres of writing. There are many types including horror, Victorian Gothic, thriller, noir, mystery, crime and detective, fantasy – a world of magic and symbolism, magic and the supernatural which could be called occult, existential, literary drama, sci-fi, romantic including erotica, historical, comedy, biographical, and travel. We discussed the implications of all these and attempted a definition with varying degrees of definitiveness.



Has anyone considered the meaning of the word 'noir' as opposed to horror. Horror covers anything and everything which produces an intense feeling of fear, shock or disgust. I was horrified at the way they had

left the condition of the bedroom. There was a horrifying incident involving two cars.

The word 'noir' has a much more subtle meaning. People appear human from their appearance but their behaviour belies it. There is a dissonance between their words and actions. The feeling of 'noir' is heightened when we see in a film or story that one person is not aware of the true nature of the other. Worse still, we see what might happen if the innocent person does not see what might happen to them. In other words, two equally evil and twisted people are much less likely to constitute the attribute of 'noir'. The common element is deception.

We discussed that when writing, you had to decide what your

genre of preference was, to avoid causing confusion to your readers. Given sufficient artistry, you can slip from one genre to another.

Anyway, we played with these definitions in some detail and then after we had given our contribution, We were handed some leaflets giving the various classifications. We were then invited to write a story choosing any one or combination of the genres. We all came up with something completely different. I chose "Brexit meets Dracula".

This is my contribution:-

*T'was a cold and frosty night
and the moonlight shone
through the windows
onto the assembled brood.*

*... The last duties to complete
before they set off
on their pillaging, not of
worldly goods but of the
very lifeblood itself of their
distant relatives – the effete human being*

*These despised and unaware
'useless eaters', only 'valuable'
– if that is even the word – for the pulsating
warm fluid that passes through their veins*

*We entrance them
we suck from them
we engorge ourselves
and yet we are never satisfied
our need creates another need
for a power which creates a need
for more power.*

We do not take more

*lifeblood then needed
otherwise our object of derision
would be bereft of life.*

*And now, targets chosen,
we fly off into the night
seeking the strongest
that we can make weak*

*And what of our life eternal
in this contrary stance
where all but alas is inverted?
Our future we cannot see
save repetition without end.*

In such fashion we have no future

My poem tries to show that the evil doers are occasionally aware of their own nature but have lost the power of free will to deal with it

All five pieces were read aloud and comments given. We had a lively discussion about the balance between the need to praise the work, and give constructive criticism. I feel that most of us are very bad at this. We give a very brief thank you and you know that the word ...but... or ... unfortunately...is coming which negates the value of the first positive statement.

We then had a break and were then asked to do a briefer version of this procedure, to describe a person and the situation they were in.

I wrote thus.

A person called Donald who was sitting at Durham railway station thinking that he should end his life and finding that what he achieved so far amounted to zero. And he wondered if he could disappear from this life by being still an invisible, would anybody notice? He realised that he could not go

forward, or backwards or sideways and he asked himself "where is the freedom in that?" He then had a minor breakthrough or perhaps a major one realising that the only way out is up.

I made a comment that it was not possible to tell if someone was having a breakthrough by looking at them walking on the street for example. People, especially the Brits, seldom show their feelings though they are not so inscrutable as the Japanese or Chinese.

One of the participants asked if it was okay to copy someone else's idea and we made the point that everybody is unique and you can copy someone's idea but you cannot copy their mind. She is unique on the planet as we all are. I made comments about my work as a Life Coach and said the idea was not to interfere with people or make suggestions, but rather to facilitate their own thinking processes. I also said that unless the person was ready to work on something, you could say exactly the right thing, and it would have no effect whatsoever. I describe the process of becoming ready rather like a ripe egg in the female ovary.

I never cease to be amazed how productive small group of very eccentric and ordinary people can be as they wish to. For me, three hours was about right for concentration. The time did fly by or should I say float by pleasantly. The site of the sun rays on the log fire introduce a certain timeless element into the whole.

I left the workshop, promising to return. As I walked down to Bath city centre (you either walk up or down in Bath. It is very much in a valley) I found myself disjointed from the hordes around me referred to above. Without the capacity for original thinking or come to that any thinking which will do for a start, the prognosis for humankind is not good.

Israel are at it again, using Trump's decision to move the US

embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, to vastly over react to Palestinian protesters by conducting bombing raids with missiles when the Palestinian has fired a rocket or two. They actually want protests to give the justification to take over what is left of Palestine which is exactly what the Zionist psychopaths have in mind. But enough of such gay banter. Hopefully, this Christmas I will be able to switch off the nasty things and either go into a pleasant vegetable state or perhaps something akin to meditation where I can link my higher mind with the real sources of harmony in the universe and thus link to other people, good and bad, in a different way.

Approaching home base I went to our allotment and dug up about six semi-frozen leeks and some spinach which we will no doubt have for a meal this evening. The soil has changed from being delightfully diggable to a morass of mud. Three new allotmenters have signed up; it is very good to have a complete allocation of 64 allotments, a nice round number if you ask me.

My goodness, it is 4:10 in the afternoon and dark already. At least we don't have any snow.

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So called 'rape' allegations



In this groundbreaking day of another step forward in the Brexit deals I find myself momentarily concerned with another matter. I read once again about allegations, sometimes decades-old, made against well-known people for sexual molestation. We seem to

have had a stream of these in the last weeks, so much so that it is becoming tedious.

There are two broad classes of molestation of all types, consensual and non – consensual. I'm not referring to sexual abuse of under age people, or innocent youngsters in their mid or late teens or predators jumping out of the dark to assault a hapless victim. I am talking about supposedly mature ladies who claim to have been 'raped'. Frankly, I'm sick of the whole nonsense and simply don't believe the accusations.

The thigh muscles for obvious biological reasons are among the strongest in the body. If they are 'closed for business' so to speak they are more than able to repel a small visitor if I can tactfully say that. If a person waits 10 or 20 years before reporting an instance of rape there must be a reason, and that reason in my submission is conscience. If my car was stolen or I was raped with violence I would be on to the police straight away. What is the scenario?

Here am 'I', an ambitious actress wanting a part in a film. I'm invited by someone for an interview in his hotel room and I open the door to find him in a bath robe. Only by ignoring my woman's instinct not to mention my intuition would I allow myself to proceed into the room. Only if the desire for fame is stronger than what is left of my moral integrity would I enter the room. In the particular case I'm thinking of, the reputation of the person concerned must have been well known.

As the old song says, 'it takes two to tango'. In a morally bankrupt 'me me' society the so-called victim in this category should not complain but instead look why she got herself into the situation in the first place. She did so because she was prepared to prostitute herself to get real or imagined benefits. Part of the bad feeling post event was due to plain and simple conscience but then (sudden brainwave) she thinks of a cop out. If she shouts 'rape', the possibility is that she will be believed. Also, the resulting publicity

will not harm what she hopes to be her career. Unless the so-called rapist is a very skilled hypnotist, of course it is consensual. Come on guys, we are not babies. We know what we are doing.

The acquisition of blame? 50-50 unless proven otherwise.

Samuel Pepys, the 17th-century diarist, continues to be my inspiration for writing these diaries but in future I will only make direct reference to the diary if I see something that I particularly wish to comment on.

I continue to recover from my debilitating virus. But it's not my virus, it's part of the world in which we live. Rumi the famous Afghani philosopher of the 13th century wrote a number of poems and scholarly works had this to say " If you desire healing, let yourself fall ill let yourself fall ill"

Yes, he did repeat that for a reason. Allowing and accepting ourselves to be taken by illness can be a prelude to a very valuable period of meditation and renewal. I have spent most of today in bed staring at the ceiling thinking about nothing but very much enjoying the fact that I have no obligations apart from generally being around while my wife entertains a visitor, an old friend, with whom she enjoys hanging out with. The friend has impaired hearing but she is not completely deaf. She is very good at lipreading so you have to remember to face her when saying anything. If she does not get it the first time she certainly gets it the second. She unfortunately dropped her mobile phone into a glass of water the previous day so we are cooking it over the radiator to see if that will help. A faint hope, but that's all I could think of to do.

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Silence

Friday 28 October 1664

Slept ill all night, having got a very great cold the other day at Woolwich in [my] head, which makes me full of snot. Up in the morning, and my tailor brings me home my fine, new, coloured cloth suit, my cloake lined with plush, as good a suit as ever I wore in my life, and mighty neat, to my great content.

Click date above for full content



the world's
quietest room

The more I experience silence the more is the outcome rich and productive. There are very slight overtones, quiet hums, rumbles and these are not all due to pulsing of the blood activity in my eardrums, maybe the vibration of the head itself. I was sitting particularly quietly and meditating on silence about which a lot has been written.

I remember reading that existence in an anechoic room is very difficult to bear for a long time and it can send people out

of their mind. I believe the record is 45 minutes in the 'Worlds quietest place' which is in the Orfield Laboratories in South Minneapolis.

The Quietists were a movement of Catholic monks based in France, Italy and Spain starting in the 1670's. It was later dismissed as heretical as it elevated contemplation over meditation, intellectual stillness over vocal prayer, interior passivity over action, spiritual growth and union with God.

The quietest place I have every experienced was in Northern Finland which is well beyond the arctic circle. Ice and snow are good absorbers of sound and you can literally hear yourself breathing, and even see your breath due to the intense cold.



Silence! vs Sit quietly! There is a difference in meaning and implication. The first is the vocative tense, and order. The second is descriptive. The former contains an element of duress. We can be 'silenced' by something but not 'quietened'.

Noise is a physical thing, the pressure of sound waves, measured by decibels, named after Alexander Graham Bell of the USA. However, peace is an entirely different animal. This is about the harmony of the mind body spirit enabling a human being to conduct themselves with equanimity (lovely word). I find the human psyche to be robust and enduring but we need to give it the circumstances it needs to function but then you did not need me to tell you that.

Sunday is my day of rest and the computer was not even switched on until 5pm. I did not miss it though <confession> after 24 hours I would probably get a bit twitchy.

I was tempted to have a log fire this evening. Our worthy chimney sweeper came on Friday to do his annual deed. He has all the latest gear and makes no mess. The brushes are operated by an electric drill. The whole process took 25 minutes. It is useful also to have an official certificate for the insurance company as many house fires are caused by an accumulation of soot in the chimney (4,193 incidents in 2015-2016). I did not know that temperatures can rise to 1000 degrees centigrade

Now to watch David Attenborough's latest nature offering, Blue Planet II

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Is watching TV worthwhile?

Wednesday 26 October 1664

...Up, my people rising mighty betimes, to fit themselves to go by water; and my boy, he could not sleep, but wakes about four o'clock, and in bed lay playing on his lute till daylight, and, it seems, did the like last night till twelve o'clock...

Better playing the lute than fiddling with an electronic device. My goodness what a day our Pepys had. It makes me exhausted just reading it. Click on the link above for the lurid details.

Today dawns bright and sunny. I am further resolved to make a collective appeal to my fellow allotment holders to keep neat and tidy for everyone's sake.



how not to watch TV

At the last count I have a choice of about 500 TV channels not to mention numerous unwatched videos, many books that I need to complete, and I won't even go to Netflix which I could watch for 24 hours a day and still not see every worthwhile offering. What did I watch last night, what did I not watch, and what did I gain? Are you ready for this gripping item of news?

6.30 PM – BBC1 *Points West*. I like my fix of gossip. Not sure how and where a rocket can go on land at 1,000 MPH. Seems like a suicide mission.... 330,000 people are absent from work due to mental problems. So get rid of American type companies who drive people to work for minimum wage under inhuman conditions.... Someone try to wake up Jeremy Hunt (our health minister) to actually campaign for people instead of feeding the pharmaceutical companies.... When is this wretched chancellor of Bath University on her £450k salary plus grace and favour house going to resign? ... Must have the local weather.

Now let's have a look at the evening which for me starts at 7 pm.

7 pm Channel 5, *All new traffic cops*. I started to watch but found myself getting so irritated with the moronic idiots trying to escape from the police that I switched off. There was nothing new about it – more of the same – Brian -what are you doing?

7.55 PM Channel 4 *Grand Designs*. Listed in my national paper but did not show. I must remember that different regions have

different schedules. I love that programme particularly the measured comments of the long serving presenter and the manic enthusiasm of the property owners.

8.00 PM Channel 5, *Bargain Loving Brits in Blackpool*. This brings scraping the bottom of the barrel to a fine art. I know people need to save money and in a town with such a high level of unemployment (about twice the national average, more stats here) there will be enough to make a programme. I doubt if my knowledge of human nature will be enhanced so that's a 'no'.

9.00 PM Channel 4, *Feral Families* will tell us how children are allowed to grow up without rules. I can see enough of that on the street thank you. An aspect of Political Correctness? Possibly. I pass on that one. 'no'

9.00PM – Film 4 *Fast and Furious 6*. I'll give it a go but set the recorder so I can fast forward through the innumerable ads. Have you noticed that the more popular the film, the more ads there are? It's about MONEY. The allowance was 12 minutes an hour but now the arrangements are more flexible – 20% of viewing time spread over the time period 7AM to 11PM

and now to what we did watch.

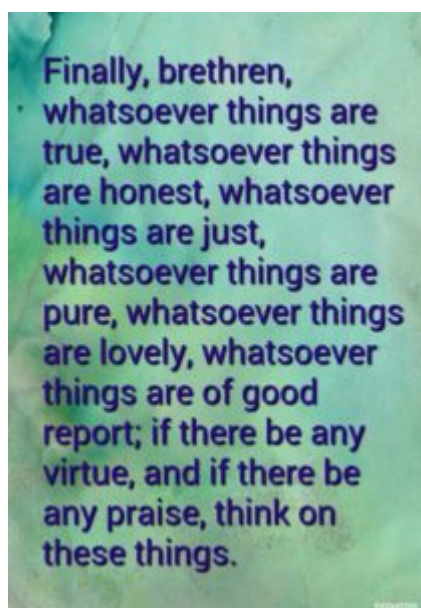
BBC4 is what BBC2 used to be a decade or so ago. We spent out evening watching three hour programmes in succession.

900PM *Retreat: Meditations from a Monastery*. This is part of the channels peace and meditation week. It showed monks from a Benedictine Monastery going about their business. There was a Peruvian monk making an icon; I was struck with his dedication and calmness. There was very little commentary – actually now I come to think of it, none. What a blessing. It reminded me of Slow TV in Norway. We got an undistorted view of the daily round, the common task and could form our own opinions. I would like to try that for a week or so to detox myself from all forms of technology

10.00 PM *Confucius: Genius of the Ancient World*. Taoism, the expression of Confucianism, was attacked by Chairman Mao in the 1960's but so embedded was the culture that it rose from

the brutalist destruction and is as strong today as it ever was. These people have a different quality of life, a different disposition, a calmness. Magnetic viewing.

11.00 PM *The Work – Four Days to Redemption – Storyville.* Every six months in a high security US prison, outsiders are invited in to meet the prisoners and interact with them. We see violent men with terrible records being reduced to sobbing children. We hear how they never learned to be men and suffered from a complete lack of example in their early life. Amazing how people can counsel each other and that both prisoners and visitor were equally affected. The enhanced perception that manifested as a survival skill in violent gangs can be turned to good effect to perceive the inner depths of brothers who are suffering similarly.



So, a brilliant evening, and all because – don't say it – the lady loves milk tray (archive of useless memories/advertising jingles) no actually because our time is valuable and I want to fill my mind with good things. It has enough junk in it already without adding to it. 'nuff said.

I have recently discovered and am enjoying Trans World Radio which is a hub for many Christian broadcasting networks. I like it's straightforward no nonsense explanations. No preaching, no fluff, no ego-centred personalities.

So folks to state the blindingly obvious, choose carefully and there is a feast out there. I do not think TV should be passive but something you actively watch, think about and compare views. This cuts out most of main stream media which alas is a perception management and control mechanism for the

most part but there are still avenues of hope for the living human spirits amongst us.

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