

The rain has arrived and not just overnight, and jumpers have been looked out of drawers as the temperatures have fallen. Somehow the rain seems to have added a little normality to things! Certainly, the garden needed the rain, although a little gentler than today would have been better, we are just never happy, are we?

I think I have found a new crochet project, a little smaller in size but promising to be rewarding. I came across the charity 'octopusforapremie.com' whose members create small stuffed octopi and jellyfish both with long tentacles, out of cotton yarn. The tentacles are the key as premature babies have a habit of grasping at the many tubes which surround them, and the tentacles provide an alternative. There are a lot of rules, all for very good reasons, and also a new way of doing crochet stitches. Every article made is sent for rigorous testing before being forwarded to a hospital. Thousands of little creatures are needed as the item goes home with the baby. Those that do not make the grade, either because the yarn is not colourfast, or the crochet too loose, are not wasted as they are added to 'angel boxes' which are provided for the parents of babies that sadly die. I am making my first attempt with some untested yarn at the moment to see if I can follow the pattern and produce an item of the correct size, but I have already ordered some recommended yarn so I am definitely going to do this, and I know they will go to the L&D, who are part of the scheme.

When an email from Amazon dropped into my inbox, advertising a Tracks of my years album, I was reminded of the time I produced my own tracks of my years for a talk I was asked to give at one of the churches in Gloucestershire. If you have never heard of this, it is a feature on the Ken Bruce radio programme on Radio 2, each week a guest is asked to share the tracks that have influenced their life, two each day Monday to Friday. I made my list and gave my talk, playing a little of each track, I chose one or two tracks for each decade of my life, and identified seven tracks. As I talked about this later to other folk, it mushroomed as people began to identify their tracks and talk to family about them. It was amazing how significant some of those conversations became.



The email prompted me to revisit the topic, as it is now some fifteen years, or a decade and a half, later; would I stick with the same songs and what songs would I add for the intervening years. My song from the 50's was sparked by an experience when I was four; Mum took me on a day trip to Ayr and as well as a trip round the bay in an amphibious vehicle, the splash as we entered the water from the ramp sowing a lifelong love of water shuttles, we went to a concert with Max Bygraves, who my mother really liked, as the top of the bill. The long and the short of it was I ended up on stage singing a duet with Max of Tulips from Amsterdam, a memory that has never faded, so that is the first track on my list. The first single I bought for myself at the local record shop was 'Hippy, hippy, shakes', so that is track two, I loved the Beatles but they did not make it onto my list, the next track was Knights in White Satin by the Moody Blues, the Moody Blues were very significant for me in my teenage years and we used to listen to and discuss tracks at Bible Class. In my early twenties it was Mike Oldfield, and Norman and I have all his albums with Tubular Bells making it onto that original list. In my thirties we discovered Runrig and they too became a lifelong passion and in those early days it was the track Loch Lomond that was a favourite – a rock/folk version. Next on the list was the song 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' which has marked key stages in my spiritual and church journey since the mid-nineties, and the final track of the original was Shine by Take That. The girls were very into Take That in its original line-up but it was the re-incarnation that sparked an interest for me and there have been some very meaningful songs through the years.



So, what would I add? There are many to choose from Adiemus by Karl Jenkins, Theme from a movie that never was by Eric Clapton, Search for the Hero by M People, Angels' from the Ashes by Runrig, Gone but not forgotten by Rick Wakeman, theme from The Plague by Vangelis, Broad Sunlit Uplands by Mike Oldfield. Each a story in itself.

So, what tracks make up your years, what has opened up a new horizon or led you deep into your soul? Why not start a conversation and see what wonders unfold?