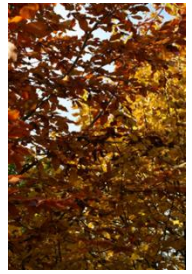


Thoughts from the Manse 23rd October 2020

We are fast approaching the end of British Summer Time and whilst for a week or two the mornings will be lighter the evenings will come sooner. When we visited Scotland in September I was hoping for some autumn colours to inspire me but it was not to be as the trees were still holding their green. It was only last week, on a trip to Milton Keynes, that I realised the autumn colours had arrived. That is the problem with not travelling about so much, you can miss the subtle changes, and suddenly the trees were ablaze, although mostly in places we could not stop.



I love the autumn colours and this year they do seem more vibrant, with rich yellows, oranges and reds. It is a catalyst to get ready for the warmth of home in the winter, an altogether different warmth from the stifling heat of the summer. We are encouraged to wrap up, be cosy and enjoy the



times of contemplation that winter brings. The Danish call it Hygge. I wonder if it will be different this year as many have had more time than they wish already for contemplation. I hope not, as this time is an important restorative time in the cycle of life. We need time to absorb all the things we have done during the year, to catalogue the photos, to catch up on reading, and to get out the recipes for soups and casseroles, both of which I love.

I can remember visiting forests in the autumn, kicking through the fallen leaves and searching out sweet chestnuts to take home and roast. The latter was a prickly business and required gloves if you were not to end up with fingers like pin cushions. It was like wrestling with hedgehogs! When I was a teenager, we used to roast the chestnuts in the open fire, whilst eating pomegranates by picking out the seeds with a pin. This was a standard pastime whilst watching the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance, something I still watch every year although there is no open fire, and I am not that keen on pomegranate seeds anymore.

Remembrance is a marker in the journey through autumn to winter and as a Scout Leader it often involved a parade in the cold and wet which was followed by a warming cup of Bovril. This year will be different although the Cenotaph Ceremony will still take place, I believe, but other gatherings may be curtailed. However, the pause to remember will still be held in some way and our worship together on the 8th November will reflect this important time. Even though we are all struggling with the pandemic there does seem to be more unrest in the world and remembering that war is rarely the answer to grievances is important, the cost is simply too high.

So, take a moment to enjoy Autumn, it is more than looking wistfully back to summer and forward to the cold of winter. It is a special season when walks take on a different feel, we harvest produce to enjoy later, we reflect on all that had happened, and we plan our winter pastimes.



Left, autumn sycamore at Westonbirt Arboretum

Right, November at Glastonbury Abbey

