

Thoughts from the Manse Tuesday 6th October 2020

We have recently enjoyed a few days break in Scotland, visiting family, in an extended family arrangement. We were not sure we would be able to make the trip right up to the last minute as lockdown details changed in the area to which we were travelling, but we ventured forth and although what we could do in the area was quite limited it was a change of scene, and a chance to relax, which is at the heart of what a holiday should be.

I wonder if you bring souvenirs back from holiday. As children we always wanted to spend our holiday money on a toy or book, and usually a stick of rock. As adults, whilst the stick of rock may be a temptation, souvenirs are likely to take a different form. I remember bringing back wine from Spain, which had tasted wonderful in Spain but was disappointing in the cold light of Scotland. I also enjoyed collecting postcards of places I visited which were somehow different from the photographs I took. These days souvenirs are generally of two sorts, food and photographs. In recent years our holidays have been visiting family in Scotland and Devon or enjoying the wonderful light and beaches of Cornwall. Visiting Devon often results in a food souvenir, usually Ice Cream from a farm near where my sister lives, and which we used to visit when we lived in Taunton. Rather than a stick of rock, a visit to Scotland involves a stick of Stornoway Black Pudding as well as 'tattie scone' and 'soda scone', and maybe a bottle of whisky. Cornwall might be fudge but often is simply lots of photographs.



Photographs can be a mixed bag. I remember a quote by Patrick Litchfield in which he said, in the days of film, that if he got one good photograph on a roll of 36 frames it was a success. Digital photography has changed the parameters but unless you take a lot of editing equipment away with you it is only when you get home that you can really see what you have achieved. I am a photographer and have taken photographs all my life with a variety of cameras. I have photographed weddings, taken children's photos and had photos published but the ones I love to look at are the ones of family and special places. Photographs are memories, they act as catalyst for mind journeys reminding us of experiences and emotions. In my twenties I used to take lots of slides and for my recent birthday I was given a scanner to convert slides and negatives into digital images. I look forward to revisiting some special memories and being able to share them more easily with others in the family.

I have run workshops in Spiritual Scrapbooking encouraging people to engage with the essence of a photograph, what draws them to it, what colour is most pleasing in it and how does it make you feel. A box of photographs is a box of photographs unless you engage with them, it is the essence that makes them special.



So, what souvenirs did we return with from Scotland? Stornoway Black Pudding and tattie scones of course, some photographs from the garden where we stayed and some views of Ben Lomond and its surroundings, and the satisfaction of having made someone's life a little less lonely for a week.

