

Thoughts from the Manse 3rd June 2021

Life has been quite hectic recently and I am looking forward to a break next week when we will visit family in Scotland. Going away for a few days is wonderful as you can leave behind the pressures, although getting ready to go is a pressure in itself. There are so many to do lists, getting everything prepared workwise, which usually means having prepared worship in advance for when I return, deciding what clothes to take, which means covering all bases when you are heading to Scotland, and then there are the decisions over which leisure activities to take. I always end up taking too much, and usually too many clothes, and my other half is so used to this that he has stopped commenting.



My camera must go, so too some relaxing books to read, at least three just in case the weather is really bad. My crochet bag goes as well with at least one, and often two, projects lined up, maybe a DVD or two that I have not yet got around to watching, there are plenty on the shelf from which to choose, and then there are the puzzles.



I relax doing Japanese logic puzzles of many different kinds. Years ago, logic puzzles came in one variety, the clues and grid form where you cross referenced clues and hints to solve the mystery, you can still buy books of these puzzles, but the advent of Sudoku changed the landscape. I can remember the excitement with which a friend introduced me to Sudoku, a simple puzzle based on logic using the number 1-9 in a way that avoided repeating a number in any column, row, or cluster of nine squares.

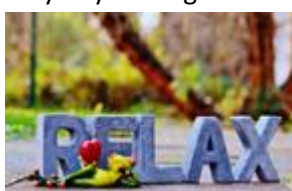
Now I love numbers, I think I blame my dad who used to try and teach me Calculus, and succeeded in teaching me to draw three dimensional shapes. I still occasionally draw a cube with a crossed v cut through to check I can still do it. At school my favourite subject was Maths, although calculus was still a mystery, so it was not only Dad that struggled to open my eyes to its mysteries. Years later when I studied Maths with the Open University the light bulb came on and calculus was so easy I wondered why I had not understood it before. I have always loved quadratic equations and I remember once using them to work out how many adult and child tickets we had sold for our Youth Fellowship pantomime!

Anyway, having been introduced to Sudoku, I was hooked and since then many new forms of number and logic-based puzzles have arrived. I log in to a website dedicated to Japanese logic puzzles - <https://www.conceptispuzzles.com/> where you can find eighteen different forms of puzzles. Every week there is one from each form available to play free, I go through my favourites in a more or less regular order, and as they are timed I also aim to do them as fast as possible. Whilst the pure number puzzles are good, my favourites are the ones which build a picture by using numbers in a certain way, some come as a grid with numbers inside and use symmetry or rules to connect the numbers, whilst others come as a grid with numbers beside rows and at the top of columns that indicate how many squares within the row/column are to be filled, according to the rules of the specific puzzle. So, puzzles are an almost daily exercise and I will take some paper copies with me as well as the means to access the website.

8	9				6	5	
4		3					1
	1	2					8
			1	2			
			4		6		
				8	9		
1	3					4	9
5						7	8
	2	6					1

I do like some days out, but I have discovered that planning every day as a day out is not relaxing for me, so these are activities fill the gaps, and those days when the weather is encouraging a day at base.

I wonder what you take away with you and how you decide. Perhaps you like beach holidays so plenty of books may be essential, or maybe you are a visiting places person and so a camera and guidebook are your essentials. Maybe like me you like a combination of days out and days in, and maybe your bag is as full as mine. I like to think I will do some art whilst I am away, but rarely does it



happen and so I have decided to lighten the load by not packing my paintbox and pad these days. That is a big step for me, and I have no doubt I will be encouraged to make more such decisions but one step at time is enough. Holidays, whether home or away, are about relaxing and I need the things that help me relax.

