

TT 13 Day 47 (It's not all bad)

Even with the help of historians, people's memory is short, or at least selective. This Coronavirus crisis is unprecedented in many ways, not least because very little is known about it and because containing it may not kill it. Even then, a vaccine to prevent it happening again is far from the production line, but it is not unique.

I know I have little to worry about as dogs are said to be immune and do not transmit it but I have to admit that I am devoted to the Guvnor and his wife and I don't want anything to happen to them so I am glad to see them taking correct and prudent precautions to keep themselves safe.

I am buoyed up by the thought that we (well, the country) have been here before and therefore it is not all unknown. People, even their ancestors, know how to behave and most people have a belief that everything will be alright in the end. The Great Plague of 1665/66 killed about 100,000 people, most of them in London, in eighteen months. At the time no-one knew what caused it and it was not really confirmed for another two hundred years that it was rat fleas. Because they didn't know this, the London authorities concentrated on getting rid of dogs and cats which, of course, encouraged the proliferation of rats. In September of 1666 the Great Fire destroyed the City of London but by then the plague was abating and the fire helped with the destruction of rats.

More recently (a relative term), came the Spanish 'Flu Epidemic of 1918/19 and which killed about 50 million people world-wide. Unlike either the Great Plague and the Coronavirus Pandemic which have mostly taken the elderly and especially those with underlying health problems,

Spanish 'Flu seemed to favour young adults as its victims and especially those young soldiers returning home at the end of the 1st World War. It is also thought that they brought it with them from the Continent and then it starburst across the country as they dispersed home from ports and railway stations. About 300,000 died in Britain. It took a couple of years for it to fizzle out, and it never came back with the same ferocity again.

Among the many cancellation casualties were sporting fixtures and concerts and, as summer gets into full swing, rock events such as Glastonbury have gone. On the other hand, every cloud has a silver lining and the Guvnor is cock-a-hoop that the Eurovision Song Contest has bitten the dust. Whoever made that decision gets the full 'douze points' in his book. Many more people have learned how to use the internet and to shop safely on it; there is more confidence among the elderly in internet banking and some of them are experimenting with Alexa, Cortana and Google. Indeed, a doughty octogenarian we know was persuaded by her daughter to ask Alexa something to see how it works. Her question was "How is my sister faring in Gateshead?"

Most people, and admittedly those who can, are just getting on with it. The Guvnor often quotes Theodore Roosevelt who famously said, 'Do what you can, with what you have, wherever you are'. Good, eh?

Finally, and cause for great joy, the Germans have shown a sense of humour in adversity. Forecasting a shortage of sausage and cheese while the crisis continues, a commentator warned that this could cause great distress 'in der wurst käse'.