

Karen's Lockdown Easing Notes w/e 23 August 2020

The last few weeks have been really strange. Mum has been to our house on another visit, this time less stressful although the house was still disinfected and sanitised. My son and his partner were able to break out of Surrey and make a flying visit to us last week for a couple of days. They were apprehensive on our outing to Sidmouth with Mum for a fish and chip supper. As it was raining, we decided against sitting outside with the supper but opted to eat in a café that looked fairly quiet and organised. However, as they had been out less than we had, the amount of noise and people was a bit overwhelming. Roy and I have been out, not once but twice recently. The first time we met some of my work colleagues for a catch up in a pub garden. This was fine and we stayed for half an hour. Thankfully, we were not going to join them in a meal as everyone converged on the door to the pub when the rain began to fall. We made for home and an online concert.

I miss live music events and this concert was a treat put together by a Russian pianist and violinist with my friend, a mezzo soprano as a guest. It was lovely to see and hear the extracts from previous concerts but we did miss the clapping and general camaraderie that follows live events.

Taking advantage of the government's eat out scheme, we bravely booked a table at the Devon Hotel as a belated wedding anniversary celebration. It was unnerving walking in to the dining area where the tables were well-spaced out with a paper menu laid out just for our use. However, the meal was as excellent as always served by friendly, visor-wearing staff. The early meal was followed by a stroll in Riverside Park to round off the evening.

As regards local events, so far so good. However, with more distant events things are still very different. A friend was due to hold a 70th birthday party at the beginning of September which has been scaled back to a small barbeque in his garden for those able or brave enough to venture half way across the country. Sadly, with the threat of a local lockdown where my daughter lives, we have decided not to go. At the time of writing, I do not know whether my daughter will be able to escape Leicestershire or whether we shall be able to visit her or meet halfway soon.

We have met up with my cousin who was on holiday near South Molton. No hugging. No shared meal. We took a packed lunch and sat gingerly inside until the rain stopped long enough to sit in the garden of the spacious cottage. They had found some places open and were saving visits to the beach til the latter part of the day when it was quieter. It was good to see them albeit a bit nerve wracking to actually see people from outside Devon.

As a really special treat, we were able to rebook a Christmas present to the Escape Rooms. Roy spends nearly 8 hours a day at work in a mask so he relished the opportunity to wear one and spend time in a hot locked room on a

Saturday for fun as we tried our best to work out the clues and find the stolen item and prove the police inspector's innocence. We were so close!

An old school friend from Berkshire made the journey to Devon to see us and one or two others as part of their staycation holiday. I set the table in an appropriate socially-distanced manner for a light lunch. Our plans to take them to Dartmoor proved a bit too adventurous given the amount of cars and people around. However, it was a real pleasure to see them and to have a photograph quickly taken of me and my friend together but not too close! With big birthdays approaching, it brought home to us how long we had been friends.

The amount of traffic and people still unnerve me somewhat. I continue to shop early in the morning and lurk in the shadows. I am happy to meet up with friends in suitable surroundings and find this helps towards finding my way to a new normal. I am pleased with the amount of produce our garden has given us thanks to the rain and sun recently. Watching the plants grow has gone a long way in keeping me sane. Local walks have supplied us with plentiful helpings of blackberries too!

