

An aerial photograph of a village, likely in the Cotswolds, featuring a prominent church tower with three spires. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden light, suggesting sunrise or sunset, and is shrouded in a thick, hazy atmosphere. The foreground shows a field with a line of trees.

diary in the plague year

paul farmer



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Introduction

On Sunday March the 22nd 2020 I went for a walk, north across the fields. The Coronavirus was seizing power in the UK, usurping Boris Johnson's Conservative Government that for weeks had blustered along in a state of denial but had now been forced to acknowledge it was not in control of events. The next day they would declare a lockdown to begin on Tuesday 24th March.

At the far end of my walk I took a photo on my phone and that evening I posted it online with a short statement acknowledging the strangeness of the circumstances. None of us had ever known anything like this. It felt like the times needed marking. The next day I did it again.

I did the same thing every day for the next five weeks, taking the pictures on my phone or on a compact camera, an old present I found in a drawer. In choosing and presenting the photos I tried to convey the feeling of what I was seeing too, not just a camera image. As you'll see, my thinking moved from observation to reflection on what was happening, then onto how we'd come to this and how we should emerge from lockdown.

I live in West Cornwall and that explains the spectacular content of many of the photos. Sometimes there might seem to be a huge gap between the beauty of the images and the thoughts I was expressing alongside them, but it became apparent that the knowledge of the virus had become a medium through which we were seeing everything.

As lockdown began I bought myself a second-hand electric bike with a range of about 25 miles. For my officially sanctioned exercise I began exploring the area minutely, learning the ways its pieces formed a whole in the way a child grows to know its home environment, stone by tree by shortcut; aware of a perpetual fever of reflection on the small items of information we were given between the endless imprecations to stay inside and the new vocabulary of lockdown. And, like everyone else, looking inward too for the symptoms of Covid-19.

It didn't matter where you lived, it was the same crisis, the same lockdown. We each dealt with it in our own ways and here is mine. I publish it as a reminder, to help us ensure we never forget that this time happened.

1. Sunday March 22nd 2020. Well, Trembroath.

I've got loads to do, but somehow feel I ought to spend these shut away times walking local lanes like some sort of ghost.

I found this a couple of miles to the north of here. Looks like a holy well.

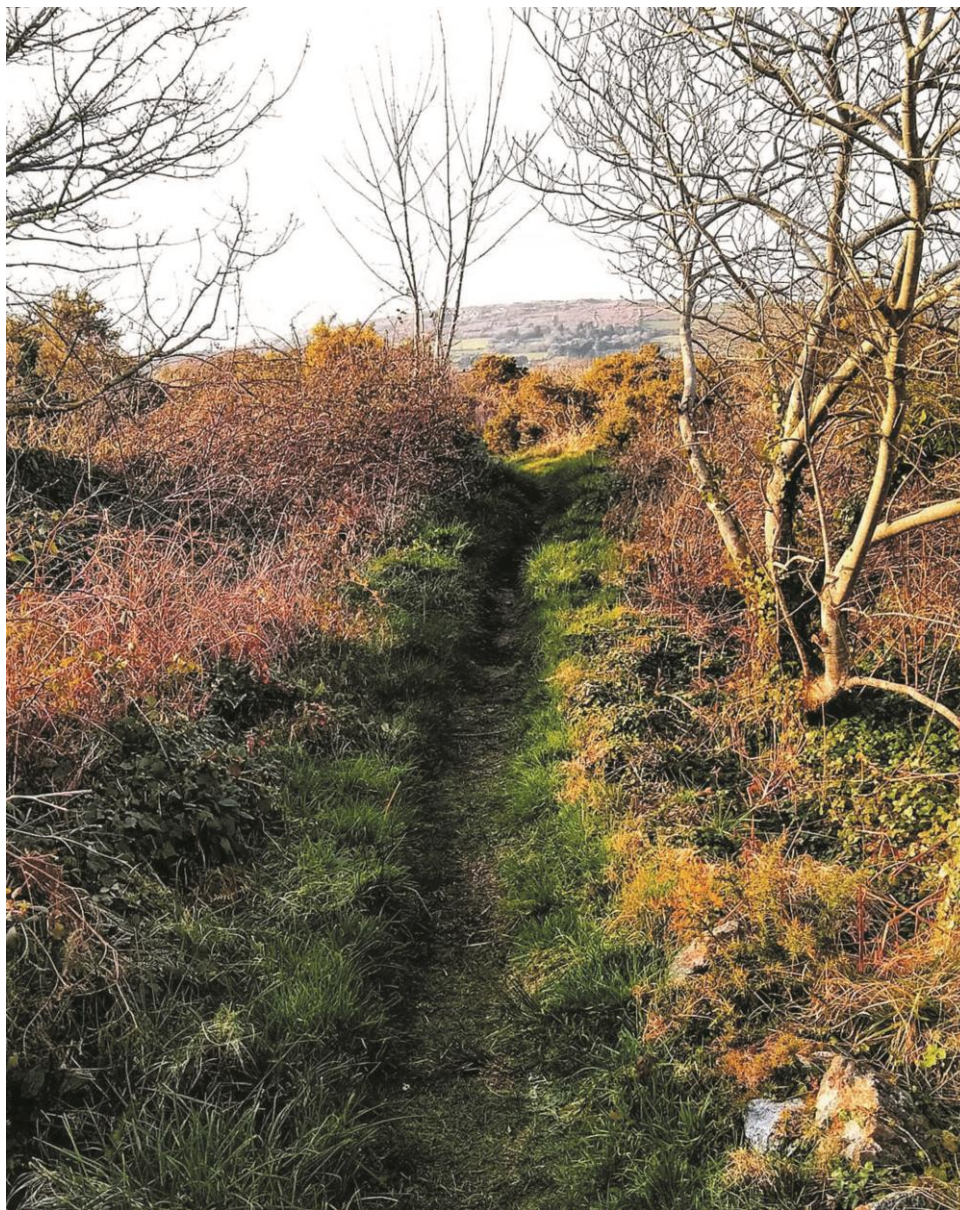


2. Monday March 23rd 2020. Miners' path.

Walking the high ground that's bounded by Carnmenellis to the west, Carnkie to the north and Carn Marth (that's it ahead) to the east.

The psychogeography here is that of Cornish miners walking to core. They made these paths, and theirs is the lasting legacy here. The tin miners had their own epidemics to

survive but we thought science and technology had relieved us of plagues. We were wrong. That was our certainty and now it's dead. Maybe you have to keep faith with civilisation and electing emotional children to leadership was when we indicated our resignation from that implicit agreement. And now it's evaporated into a viral cloud.



2. Tuesday March 24th 2020. Figure overlooking Rough Street.

Out on my statutory exercise I came across this figure in the landscape, flouting the laws of lockdown. Denounce that man!

Except that isn't a person. It's a fully clothed dummy, staring across the mining landscape up on the high ground. What's he doing there? You'll have to ask him. And they're good at keeping secrets up there, especially when inanimate.



4. Wednesday March 25th 2020: Late sun over Polkanuggo.

Roaming in the name of exercise I have now
placed what instinctively feels to be wrong:

Where is the snow?

Usually when the roads are so quiet and
people are off work it's because we're
snowed in. Either that or its Christmas Day.
Now it's sunny. And so quiet your ears hurt.
It feels like a sick room.



5: Thursday March 26th 2020. Towards the Great Flat Lode.

At the moment I'm gathering up all my old stories for Kneehigh, Scavel An Gow and other circumstances. Today's expedition turned into a circumnavigation of the hill of Carnkie.

This is the Great Flat Lode trail winding west along a contour between Carnkie and Carn Brea. And I remembered this was the territory of Mr Redruth Plus and his clodhopping interventions in Cornish lives and landscapes. I wonder where he is now (if he existed that is).



6. Friday March 27th 2020: Sunset over Stithians.

It's what happens to the day when the sun approaches the horizon. Nothing much else is normal. Silent beneath a show of sunrises and sunsets nature has turned on us.

We fear something invisible in the air we breathe, on the things we touch, on the people we live amongst. We move round each other in two metre radii, we watch the news to find out how we are. This is a time you will remember all your life.



7. Saturday March 28th 2020: Farm lane, Carnmenellis.

A strange figure-of-eight-day round Stithians Lake, up from Penmarth and down a rough track to the stunning valley at West Calvadnack, which I had no idea existed. Up to Nine Maidens, up and round Carnmenellis.

I passed this lane. I don't know the people up there. I have no business there. So it would be odd to walk up and knock on a door. But at the moment I can't knock on ANY door other than my own. And why would I knock on that?

We are dealing with the invisible here and the pretty much unknown. Is there Coronavirus between me and those houses? With the right technology, could I see some sort of viral fug around them? We don't have a bloody clue. So we watch the television for instructions and try to enact the new rituals that are only half ideas. And we tell each other off for not doing them properly.

We're dealing with the nebulous, the unseen, the abstract. We're not used to this. Increasingly we have come to live in the world of the concrete, where the only symbols we acknowledge are those of status. I think this is holding us back from formulating ideas about where we are headed, about what the future might look like after this. If you think it's going to be just like it was, you need to think again.



8. Sunday March 29th 2020: Trinity suspended.

Round the lake and west. It was beautiful, quiet roads, blue sky, a freezing wind. I need to wear more clothes, I got so cold my ears ached and I drowsed away the evening.

This sign was posted up outside a chapel. Because of the Coronavirus all services are cancelled but a phone service is available.

That's the state of the country now. Mostly online. Virtual interactions in what has become a virtual economy. Some of us do real work. But generally that's not the work that's valued. The big money goes to those peddling 'information', 'knowledge', 'influence'. And power.

All imaginary. I don't want to insult anyone's personal beliefs. But I have never been a believer and for me ministers and vicars and bishops and popes have all dealt in the conjuring of meaning from the entirely imaginary. And I thought society would outgrow that. Instead society has embraced it as exemplary practice. The virus has parenthesised an entire new mumbo-jumbo.



9. Monday March 30th 2020: The last of the light, Trewithen Moor.

The strange thing is that though we're locked down and isolated, I haven't had a day off in weeks. That's why I mainly get out to see only sunsets. It's a great arrangement: the world as we've known it falls apart before our eyes but still our time belongs to someone else.

Of course, in these bizarre days my time is taken up by an experiment to try and do something that may not be possible. In fact large parts of me hope it's NOT possible. Some changes wrought by these times will be permanent and I do not want my work to be an example of that.

Out in the real world: I wonder if anyone else is old enough to remember the television programme Tomorrow's World, or James Burke. He was a TV futurologist.

There used to be such things, because we assumed there would definitely be a future. And the received wisdom was that the big problem we would have been dealing with for the past 20 years was how we would spend all our leisure time. According to the wisdom of 1970s experts, technology would mean we would only have to work one day a week. Work would be so scarce by now we would be fighting over it.

Of course they were wrong. Time is wealth and so the wealthy want it all for themselves. And they don't work at all. So here we are. The end of days. And those days still belong to someone else.

If we get out of this surely it's time we stopped being so stupid?



10. Tuesday March 31st 2020: Carn Brea and the distant Atlantic.

Trying to define states of mind. Coming over the top into Four lanes you can look along the coast across St Ives Bay with the Penwith Moors behind; and what I see is the plague year panorama. The situation even infects the view, it is the context of looking, it infects the light.

Except - not really. That perception is one of the manifestations of stress. Stress is the currency of media coverage of the time of Coronavirus. Its carrier is endless repetition of very little information, reiterated over and over again with a fallback position of 'stay inside!'

When there's nothing else going on, you'll find yourself defaulting to stress, in the absence of anything else - pay attention to the substance of nothing and you will find it to be stress. And it is being done to us. Our media have become lazy, supine, stupid. They think those qualities reflect us. But we have come to allow them to write us and our lives together.

Afterwards, this is something else we need to change.



11. Wednesday April 1st 2020. The A39 under lockdown.

To the softer south today. This is the A39 at 1745, peak rush hour. Silent.

Over the past days I have several times been told off by various people for what I've written here. Apparently we should all be positive and back Boris Johnson, our would-be Winston. If you're ever tempted to join this chorus of shh-ers, save yourself some wasted effort and don't bother. I will continue to say what I believe to be true and what I believe needs to be said.

We are ill-served by our press. They are either complicit in the lies our leaders perpetrate and in their interests slander better men and women; or they somehow believe this is a war and (god help them) "we are all in it together" and therefore must defer to people of the calibre of Johnson and Gove because they want us to.

We have a terrible Government run by habitual liars. Look at this photo: could you have imagined this scenario a month ago? These are extraordinary times, far more extraordinary than we generally realise. We must eventually emerge from it and there will be choices to be made about what gets restored and what we have found from this experience to be valuable; and what must never be allowed to return to the way it was. I do not want to live in a future decided and designed by selfish children like Johnson and Dominic Cummings. There are conversations we must have.

So we must not be silenced. I will not.



12. Thursday April 2nd 2020: Long shadows, north coast.

Very few people on the beach, surprising for a seaside town on such a lovely evening, though it was very cold with an abrasive wind. But people are staying at home as they've been urged to do.

On the way back a police car slowly cruises past, drives on towards the empty streets of the town. There to see and to be seen.

We know why we are acceding with the lockdown. It's not that we're frightened of punishment, it's that we agree to these controls, so we're controlling ourselves. But - look where we've found ourselves: undergoing curfew restrictions worthy of a totalitarian state. Voluntarily. To beat a virus.

That is why we need to remain fully engaged. We must not allow unscrutinised control of such a serious state to a Government led by Johnson and Cummings, who have proved over and over again they are unworthy of trust, policed only by media largely responsible for the election of this bullygarchy. We must maintain control over our consent and the power to withdraw it when it has achieved its purpose: the defeat of Covid-19.

And we also need to formulate for ourselves what we want to happen next and how we might cause it to be so....



13. Friday April 3rd 2020: Over Piece to Carn Brea.

This idea that “We’re all in it together”.

Swallowing that is the definition of hegemony: when you absorb someone else’s interests as ‘common sense’. “Of course we’re all in it together,” goes the argument. “We all have the same enemy.”

But we do not have the same interests. If you’re like me the events of the past few weeks have enormous significance. They have huge implications for the world beyond lockdown, for our lives after the virus. How did we find ourselves here, shut away in our homes, forbidden the streets, estranged from all other households, friends, family, everyone? How can we make sure nothing like this ever happens again?

This country a matter of weeks ago voted for a Government knowing that it would continue to destroy our public services, hurt the poorest and most vulnerable and above all continue to demolish the National Health Service - the same one Johnson now pretends to applaud every Thursday night, alongside not only those of us committed to the NHS, but also millions of people who

voted for its destruction. Are we meant to believe that he has changed his mind? Do you believe that?

Those of us chewing over the implications of all this know we MUST come out of this different to the way we went in. It’s too big not to. But Boris Johnson is interested only in maintaining the world that looks after those like him so well, those born to wealth, those born to power. He’s so desperate to ensure this that that he will, against everything his Party, his Government and his class believe in, borrow and spend massively to preserve it. The credulous amongst us see that and say, Look, he’s learned from Labour! Where’s your Austerity now Boris? But leave the future to these people and we will see Austerity like never before as they destroy everything we hold dear to make us pay for this enormous debt incurred to keep them in the style to which they are accustomed. Without our intervention they will destroy all that’s left of our services and our welfare state. And yes, our National Health Service.

All in this together? Not at all.



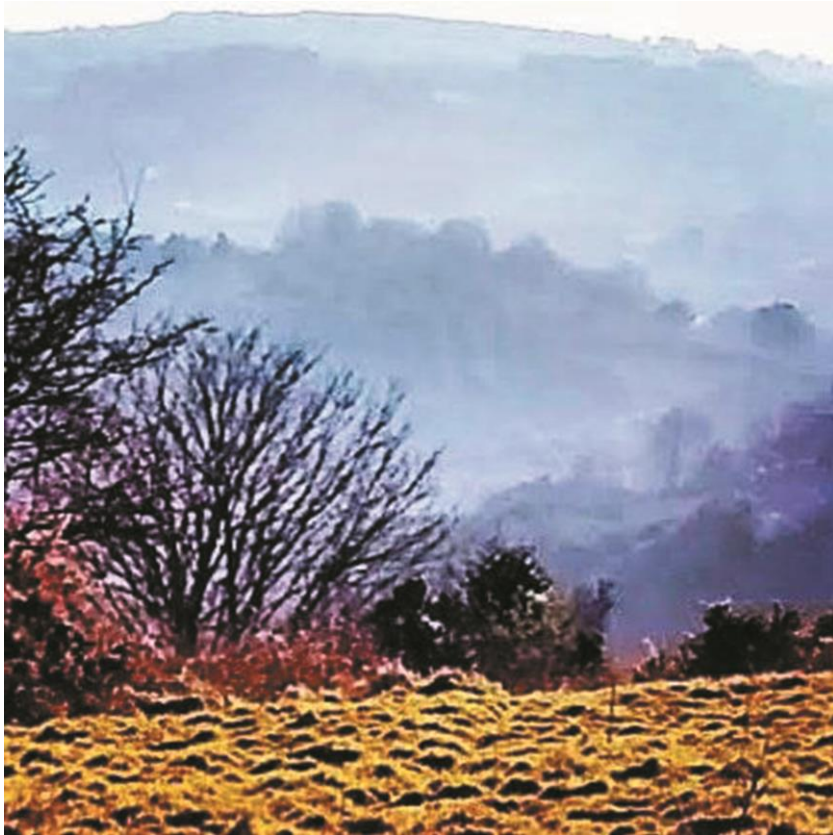
14. Saturday April 4th 2020: Across the Poldice valley over Wheal Maid.

Watch the television news and you are confronted with a prolonged Public Information film of the 1970s type. There are spots of actual news (that deaths are increasing every day) but framed and interspersed with assurances that things will get better - sorry, I have to use the word - 'dreckly' - as long as we all stay indoors. Talking head after talking head tells us to stay indoors. And that is all.

But what do we learn about the virus? How is our collective knowledge developing? Is nothing changing at all except the number of people dying? Is this it now forever? Is anyone thinking about how we get out of our homes again to reopen places and restart things? Either we are simply being 'handled' or there is no intelligent life form

at the helm of this country at all, just an increasingly disturbing-looking official face that comes into our living rooms over and over again telling us to stay indoors. Then I look at Johnson and I look at Hancock and I look at the 'spokespeople' who appear at the daily briefings alongside Johnson's henchmen; and I watch Kuenssberg and I watch Peston and I look at the newspapers and it appears to me that the 'consensus' they forever try to foist on us is headless and mindless and directionless.

Keep your head in this. Blind faith in such people is unforgivable. We must formulate better ideas, better ways to be, a better country to live in. And we must be prepared to assert those ideas.



15. Sunday April 5th 2020: Beach, Cornwall, empty.

(I know some people won't be able to see the sea perhaps for months: hope this helps.)

I was watching a piece by the excellent Novara Media on Instagram and they were discussing the fact that only a few days ago our leaders were happily espousing the 'herd immunity' strategy that would have seen hundreds of thousands of our people dead of Coronavirus.

Novara was saying there must be a public enquiry eventually to investigate our leaders regarding a significant period of possible criminal negligence.

My response to this? "Grenfell". Look at that enquiry: the Grenfell fire was the result of official decisions with clear culpability. But officially after nearly three years no one is responsible. How is such a result achieved? Well, first a fully paid up member of the Establishment is appointed to investigate; there is a massive delay before the enquiry starts; the enquiry is divided into sections and the most procedural is conducted first so we have a period when it's the fire service workers who are the only people ascribed any responsibility.

Meanwhile the victims are strung out to dry, alienated in the public gaze until that becomes all they are: "victims". Still the decisions and actions regarding the structure of Grenfell that caused the fire to spread and kill as it did are not officially discussed.

This demonstrates that the UK Government, theoretically custodian of a "mature democracy", is not capable of judging itself. The Establishment must not be allowed to investigate its own crimes.

So how do we prevent them escaping culpability for what they have tried to do?

And also: how can we formulate some way of sharing ideas about ways we want to come out of this huge social trauma? How do we make sure Johnson, Cummings and their bully-bolstering henchmen are not allowed to use the dictatorial powers they have been granted in the interests of their own selfish, mean, unpleasant vision of the world?

What fora or structures can we create to build a better world from this? We need to get on with it.



16. Monday April 6th 2020: Woods from the bridge near Little Seaureaugh.

I hope this picture from this evening's outing pleases - the alternative was a picture of my splits. Not an over-ambitious indoor exercise but the Cornish baked delicacy that should ALWAYS be preferred to scones in the cream tea. But I spared you that. "Not more lockdown bakery!" you would cry. And rightly so.

I haven't used my bread machine for years but we're in lockdown and it is incumbent on us all etc. I managed to find flour eventually. But where is the yeast?

There is no yeast in the shops. All the shelves are empty. But there is Tesco yeast on eBay, at several times the shelf price plus p&p. It is actually cheaper to import it from Bulgaria.

When we're thinking about lessons from this strange life experience we're sharing

let's think about this. In Thatcherite capitalism 'enterprise' is much endorsed in the 'entrepreneur'. Do these terms apply to someone who sweeps supplies from supermarket shelves then sells them back to the victims of this practice at multiples of the price? Plus p&p? Surely this is antisocial practice, perhaps, dare one say it, even more serious than miscreants who insist on sunbathing in parks. Do we want a world economy based on the multinational equivalent of loading up your trolley with all the toilet rolls, then knocking them out for maximum price in an artificially created sellers' market? Do we want to reward and encourage those who behave like that rather than those who would rather eat their own leg?

Times of virus can clarify some of the issues that face us.



17. Tuesday April 7th 2020: Granite quarry, Higher Trolvis.

The world of UK finance. The Government announced a system of loans to keep businesses solvent during the current crisis, so some of them may still be around afterwards. But the banks aren't giving out the loans. They just don't respond to enquiries.

The banks say they can't process the applications. Maybe that's true, but they have form here. During the financial crisis of 2008, the effects of which are still with us today in the form of Austerity, one of the strategies to rescue the economy was Quantitative Easing, which meant the banks were gifted huge sums of extra money to invest in business and industry. What did they do with it? Nothing. Nothing at all. And the economy bounced along the bottom.

Now possibly it's true that the banks just can't cope. Poor banks. How could banks be expected to know how to handle large quantities of money? After all, they're just banks. So an alternative idea is to use the power of the state directly by taking a stake in businesses in return for investment to sustain them through the dark days. This would have added benefit in that those businesses loath to risk a loan they may struggle to repay could also have a lifeline.

This would amount to large-scale partial nationalisation, part of a necessary and welcome mutualisation of the damage this virus will do to our society, enabling us all to work together to overcome it.

It sounds like an excellent, progressive idea. So we know immediately this Government will not do it.



18. Wednesday April 8th 2020: Mine buildings near Treskillard.

A beautiful day full of colour. Coming down off Carnmenellis there was a van pulled over at the side of the road. The driver called "Have you seen a wallet?" He'd driven off with his wallet and phone on top of the van. He'd found the phone but his wallet was still missing. While we were talking several yards apart a big blue tractor went by and we all waved and grinned at each other. It's all nothing much. And the poor bloke may still be looking for his wallet. But it was good to have an unexpected conversation. And good to carry on by Nine Maidens and Bolenowe down the Great Flat Lode. The gorse and the may are in full flower and beyond them you can see over St Ives Bay to the Penwith Moors.

This tiny event becomes a notable experience in difficult times. But there's a longing in it. And it's for a country that can prove itself worthy of responsibility for these places, its people, and their future.

We've put ourselves in one hell of a place. A once in a lifetime crisis with no one worthy at the wheel - at the moment in fact pretty much nobody at all. We don't know how we get out of this, we don't know what it means for our future lives and you can bet your bottom dollar there is no vision in our rulers that transcends the selfish misanthropy they have manifested in Government for the past ten years. And which the electorate have just voted into power again.

All of us with ideas regarding what we must learn from this, for what it makes us realise must be our priorities, what we must reject from what brought us to this, need to find a forum to share them and a political will to bring them to bear. Before we allow our suited, shambling rulers to default straight back to disaster.



19. Thursday April 9th 2020: The high road to Praze-an-Beeble.

One of my favourite roads in the world. This is forgotten Cornwall and it is stunning! Now forget I told you that. These roads are always empty.

Came back to the BBC News at Six. Why has the BBC appointed itself one big Government Spokesperson? It seems to see itself as the nation's morale officer, like Nelix in Star Trek Voyager. It tells us how we feel, who we're thankful to and precisely how much. Its correspondents are unctuous in delivering the latest news of the plight of the idiot Johnson. The Chief Plague Correspondent sits earnestly in conference with the anchor and shows a graph of the latest death rates, with Germany far, far below the UK, explaining that it's because they do so much more testing, as if that's somehow cheating. BBC news refrains from castigating those in power here for this blatant sin of omission, as if testing rates were bestowed on a nation by God, like mineral deposits or the climate.

Neither does it occur to the Powers That Auntie that these hushed sickbed tones and the not-in-front-of-the-children attitudes

increase the national stress level. There is nothing as disturbing as the threat you are deemed by others to be unfit to confront.

Channel 4 News isn't perfect but it is better. Tonight they had a piece with a healthcare professional explaining that at first, assumptions about ARDS lung damage had them dehydrating Covid-19 patients on entry to intensive care. But they have discovered that there is more danger to the kidneys, so they have changed approach radically with encouraging results.

I don't know about you but this sort of information immediately cheers me - good hard evidence that intelligence and expertise is being brought to bear. What I clap for on a Thursday evening is not that our carers are cuddly and loveable, but that they are committed, brave and knowledgeable. And I clap for our bus drivers and our refuse workers in all their humanity for their day-to-day hard bloody work.

BBC: stop treating us like child-like idiots. This is not a world in which child-like idiots will survive.



20. Friday April 10th 2020: Higher Manhay looking south towards The Lizard.

Our first Bank Holiday under lockdown conditions. That is the first for all of us, young and old alike, the first in all our lives.

It's very weird. What's the difference? It's like every other day now, only with Hot Cross Buns. Potentially. Personally, I forgot to lay in Hot Cross Bun supplies, largely due to no longer ever having a clue what day it is. And I thought persuading the prowling Curfew police that Hot Cross Buns constitute 'essential supplies' might be a bit of a push.

Meanwhile the British Medical Association tweeted this today: "We are hearing reports of a shocking lack of PPE supplies across trusts in England today. The Government must address dwindling PPE supplies immediately - PPE should not be being rationed due to a lack of supply."

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said he detected 'green shoots' in a new plan for

Personal Protective Equipment. Green shoots? We are weeks into lockdown. We need to see huge equipment trees.

Then there is testing for Covid-19, the secret of its control. The UK continues to miss its targets. Germany can do half a million tests a week and the result is the lowest death rate in any affected country.

How can the Johnson/ Cummings Regime be so absolutely useless at coping with the most basic demands of this crisis? Is it intentional? Johnson clowned himself into infection, his Ministers clown us all towards failing in the face of it. Is this the herd immunity policy by default? Even where there is reporting of these issues there is no apparent political or media pressure on them. We are living through the failure of the UK establishment even on its own terms.



21. Saturday April 11th 2020: Old dock railway, Calenick.

Three weeks into this now. Johnson went into Intensive Care and came out again. New ways for the British to queue have been devised. But knowledge of how the virus can be defeated rather than just resisted or deferred? A working vision of a way to the future? A sense of leaders capable of doing more than watch what happens with bewilderment, then pretend it's what they intended? No. Competent handling of the logistical demands of a crisis? Definitely not. Government? No. It's a laissez-faire car-crash.

We're still going through this in a fog that obscures the road ahead, ill led and forced to watch Priti Patel engage in word games with our self-muzzling press. And again today I've been told by various people to stop posting about all this because "We're all in it together". Presumably a collective shambles, rather than an overtly Tory one, will lay waste the virus in a moral victory delivered by the god of bodgers.

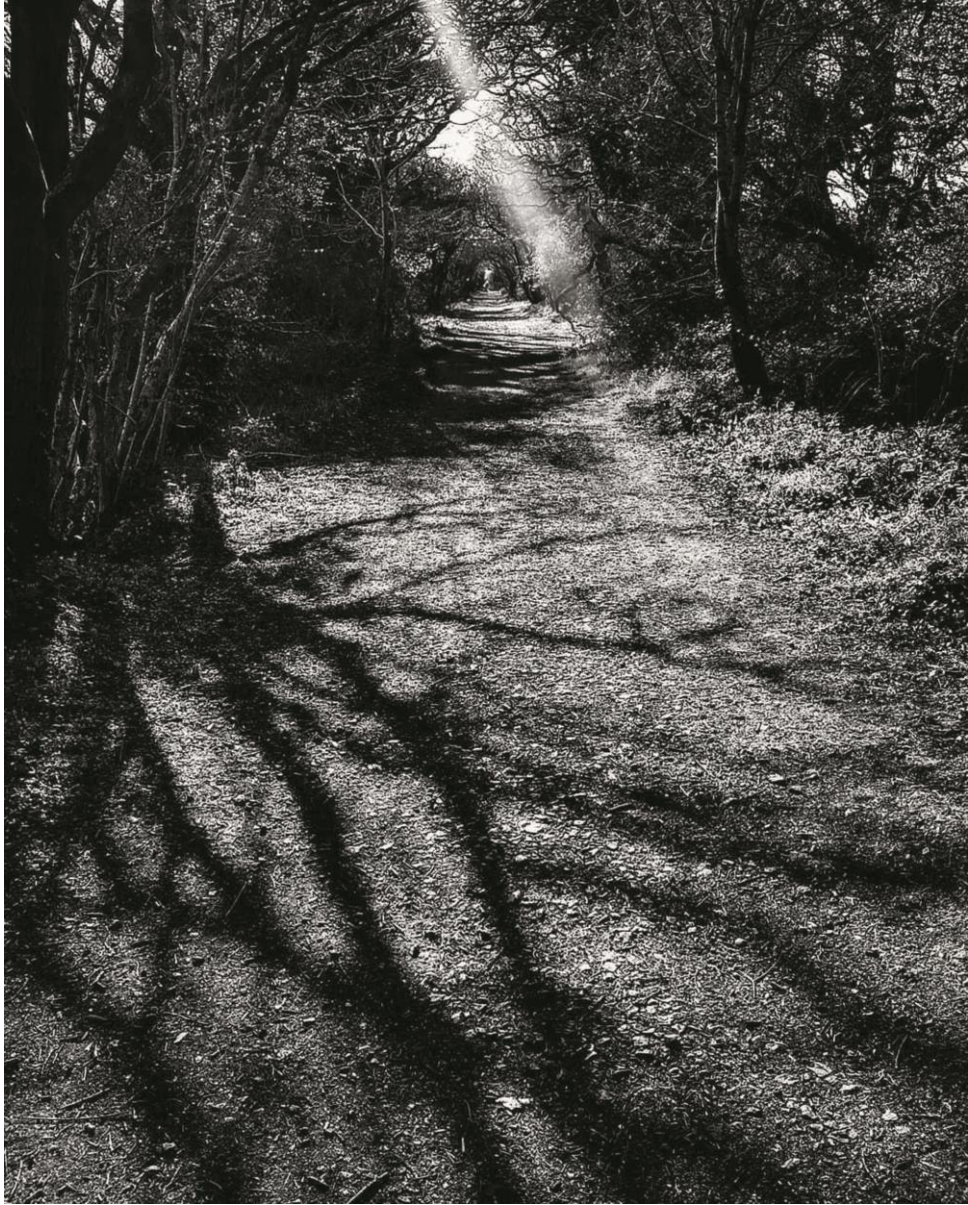
This idea also underlies the idea of "cross-party" organisation to deal with the virus.

Of course one thing that has changed in the past three weeks is the death toll. We are

officially at nearly ten thousand deaths. And that includes no one who has died in care homes or the community.

The Labour Party must not make itself complicit in the lacklustre bluster that is the stock in trade of Johnson's bully boys and girls. The only thing sincerely 'cross-party' for the Conservatives is the opportunity this represents to silence the coherent voice we need to oppose the Government's bad-hearted blunderings and conduct this campaign with justice and sense.

That must take the form of a concise, detailed alternative plan, clearly and effectively offered to the British people. It should of course provide PPE and massive testing. And it should also detail how the huge sums of money being pumped into the economy will operate as an investment in our future, not as a ransom paid to maintain a derelict status quo. It should define new institutions and mechanisms for a better, more equal country that recognises the value of those everyday British workers who fight this crisis on the front line. Each death is a huge tragedy. Let's give them all meaning in the ways they teach us to live together.



22. Sunday April 12th 2020: Stithians Lake from Polhigey.

A police car slows to crawl past me as I pause to look at the view from the high ground west of Rame Common. A police van is the only vehicle I see as I drop down towards Tregolls.

And Boris Johnson was back on our televisions after his personal battle with Covid-19. He said there was no question that the NHS had saved his life. He said the NHS is the beating heart of the country. It is the best of the country. It is unconquerable because it is powered by love. He understands now why we fight so hard to save it and he sees that he has been wrong to participate for so long in slowly choking the life out of it; so that it has been thrown onto the mercy and dedication of its workers who, thanks to a decade of underfunding and shambling mismanagement by he and his colleagues, now have to risk their lives fighting to save people like him without appropriate protection. He apologised for Matt Hancock blaming care workers themselves for the shortage of PPE and told us that he,

Johnson, had now sacked Dominic Cummings so such “misunderstandings” would not happen again.

He promised that underfunding was now a thing of the past, that what has been lost will be made good and funding will then increase at the rate of six per cent per annum. And from the perspective of someone saved by a socialist institution he now intended to form a Grand Council to formulate plans for a better country to come, one that has learned the lessons of these dark days and the greed and folly that has threatened to bring our world to its end and causes millions to live half-lives in misery.

And I watched and I heard and I asked myself, can I believe my ears? Is he really saying these things?

No of course he wasn't. And what he did say was meaningless hypocrisy, written for him. He's forgotten it already. He's learned nothing.



23. Monday April 13th 2020: Running Water, Standing Stone, Horse on Hill. Lower Boscadjack.

I took another photo, standing in the middle of the Redruth to Helston road, normally a fast, busy road. But in lockdown, nothing. Just a ribbon of tarmac winding over and between the hills.

Going north for the turning to Calvadnack and suddenly there's traffic. A car pulls out to overtake and a green Citroen comes round the bend ahead doing ninety. The driver stands on the brakes and the car jumps and bounds, completely out of control, narrowly missing the other car, then us.

I shout at him and he stops. A young man who spends too much time eating bad stuff. I tell him my opinion of what he is and what he should do. He decides not to get out of his car after all. He shouts "what are you doing out? You shouldn't be out." He drives away.

Here's where we are. He thinks it's ok to drive as fast as his car allows and when he loses control it's someone else's fault because it can't be him, he is armoured with indignation. If he killed us, he would convince himself he was morally right and the morality would be that beamed into our

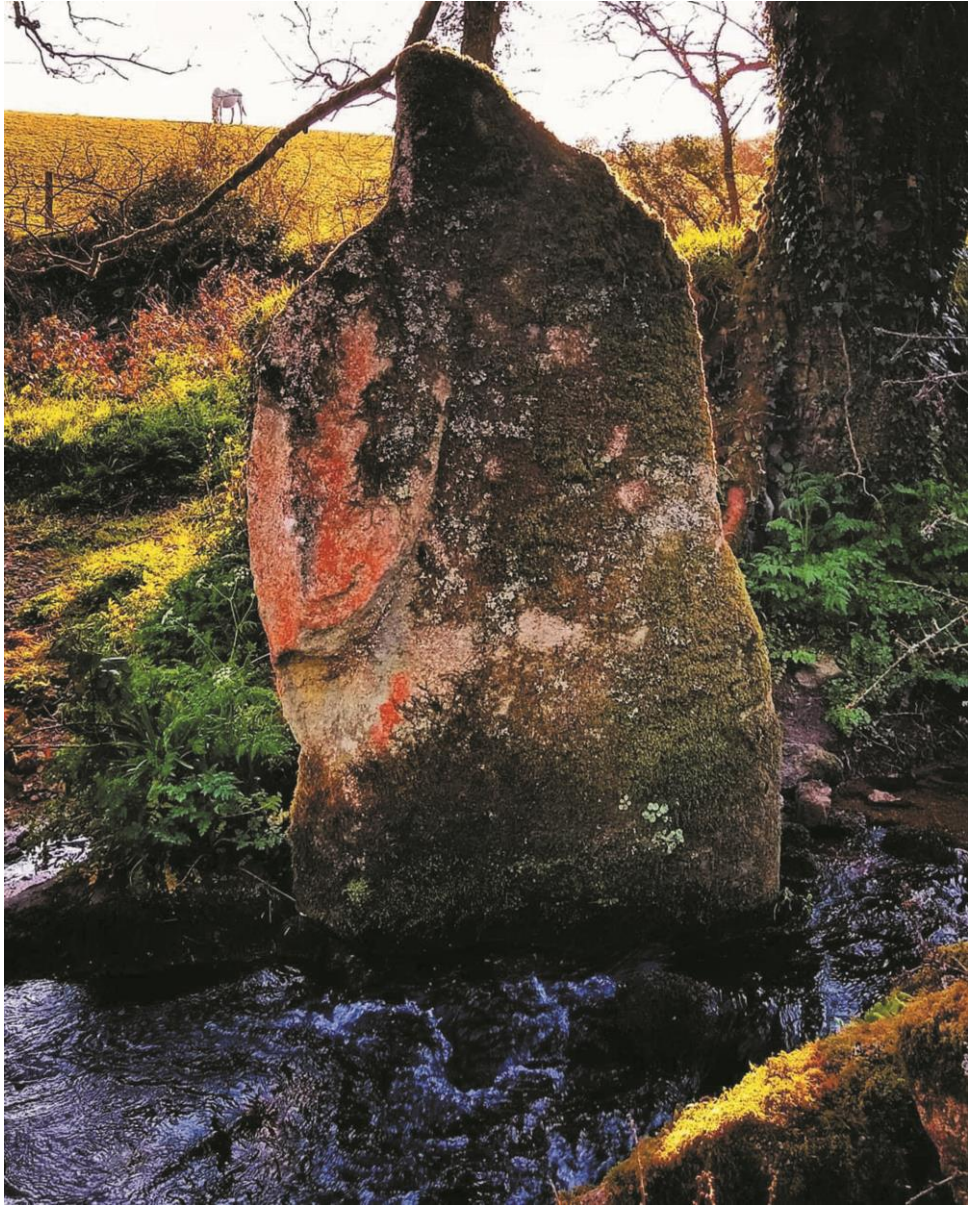
homes every evening following the words "A message from Her Majesty's Government".

The ill-framed letter of the law introduced three weeks ago is vague and continually modified ad hoc by personal opinion and received wisdom. Vague law is bad law.

Does that matter in these circumstances? Well apparently it does. Un-uniformed health, care and key workers have had threats and their tyres slashed. There is energy in this kneejerk nonsense, generated by the bizarre civitas of lockdown. It is the rule of the self-righteous, the rule of the indignant, making it up as they go along. It is Johnson Nation. And, in a country messed up enough to elect Johnson as its Prime Minister, with 'journalists' of the calibre of the Telegraph's Alison Pearson trying to elevate our Easter-risen idiot premier to saviour status, cut-price vigilantism is certainly a way this all might go. How about that for our collective future?

And in the news back at home: Dominic Raab tells us he sees "positive signs in the struggle against Coronavirus".

He's making it up as he goes along too.



24. Tuesday April 14th 2020: North Cliffs.

Going west it is warm like early summer.
Turn and the east wind makes it winter.

Lockdown is a medium and an ideology.
Coronavirus may be invisible but lockdown transforms everything we see. Every car, every walker, bike and runner silently interrogated for its relationship to the prohibitions we are subject to.

Lockdown is also a performance:
supermarkets have a ritual of entry, standing in a designated position defined by hazard tape, moving in symmetries. Inside we enact a dance of distance round each other in radii, demonstrating through exaggerated movement the mea culpa that one or both of us are bombs of virus.

And we watch ourselves for signs of submission, looking for clues, looking for signs that we have given birth to sickness. It's not a matter of "I'm OK," but "I'm not sick yet."

On The News each item, every personality glows in the light of lockdown, is immediately related to the issues of the virus. But Covid-19 itself is an absence manifested only in its effects and in stylised illustrations of a sphere with trumpet

protrusions. It doesn't look like that. That is a representation of how it behaves, how it relates to those it attacks.

It is like a religion too, an abstract set of beliefs with concrete information available only to its priests. And like a religion it is often served only formally, so Government ministers and experts nightly pay due obeisance at their separated podia, acknowledging their own status as virus bombs, as they announce the day's sacrifice of lives, perform the forms of leadership, move round each other in radii and absolutely fail in the ordinary day to day demands of their asserted beliefs, in terms of testing for infection and the provision of protection, as though they were the values of the Sermon on the Mount, or the stipulations of the Ten Commandments.

Why make these obvious points? Because we are always subjected to the rituals and contagion of ideology like this. But normally it's not obvious because it didn't begin three weeks ago, it's happened to us all our lives. It's what makes an inhuman, unfair system seem sensible when it's actually barking mad.



25. Wednesday April 15th 2020: Social distancing, Redruth afternoon.

The bones of the land appear again once mechanical movement becomes the exception rather than a constant drone in the landscape. Travelling north along the trackway of the old Hayle Railway on the hillside above Lanner, you become aware of a white van moving parallel but below you, rising until you are on the same level and only a hundred yards apart. Then it falls again as the road declines towards Redruth. In the rarity of traffic, this place reveals itself as a pass through the long ridge of high ground that separates the north and south of Cornwall.

And it forms the opportunity not only for the passage of the road to traverse Cornwall south to north, but also a passage west to east. Crossing the road at right angles is the connection between this spur and the next vertebra in the spine of Cornwall, Carn Marth.

On the peak of Carn Marth in a sunshine haze you can clearly see Falmouth in the South, Bodmin Moor far to the east, the hills of Penwith to the west. And spread around me Stithians Lake, Carn Brea, South Crofty, St Agnes Beacon.

The usual grid has gone. Our perception of our area is normally structured by the perpetually roaring lines of the major roads, the A393 below me, the A30 just there, even the A39 right down there. Just for the moment perhaps they have shut the hell up and we can start formulating Cornwall again.

This kind of reassessment and re-evaluation of mapping is psychogeography. It's powerful. It's the opportunity to re-engage your imagination with the place we live and love. It's not just physical exercise we need in lockdown.



26. Thursday April 16th 2020: Train going west, near old Carn Brea station.

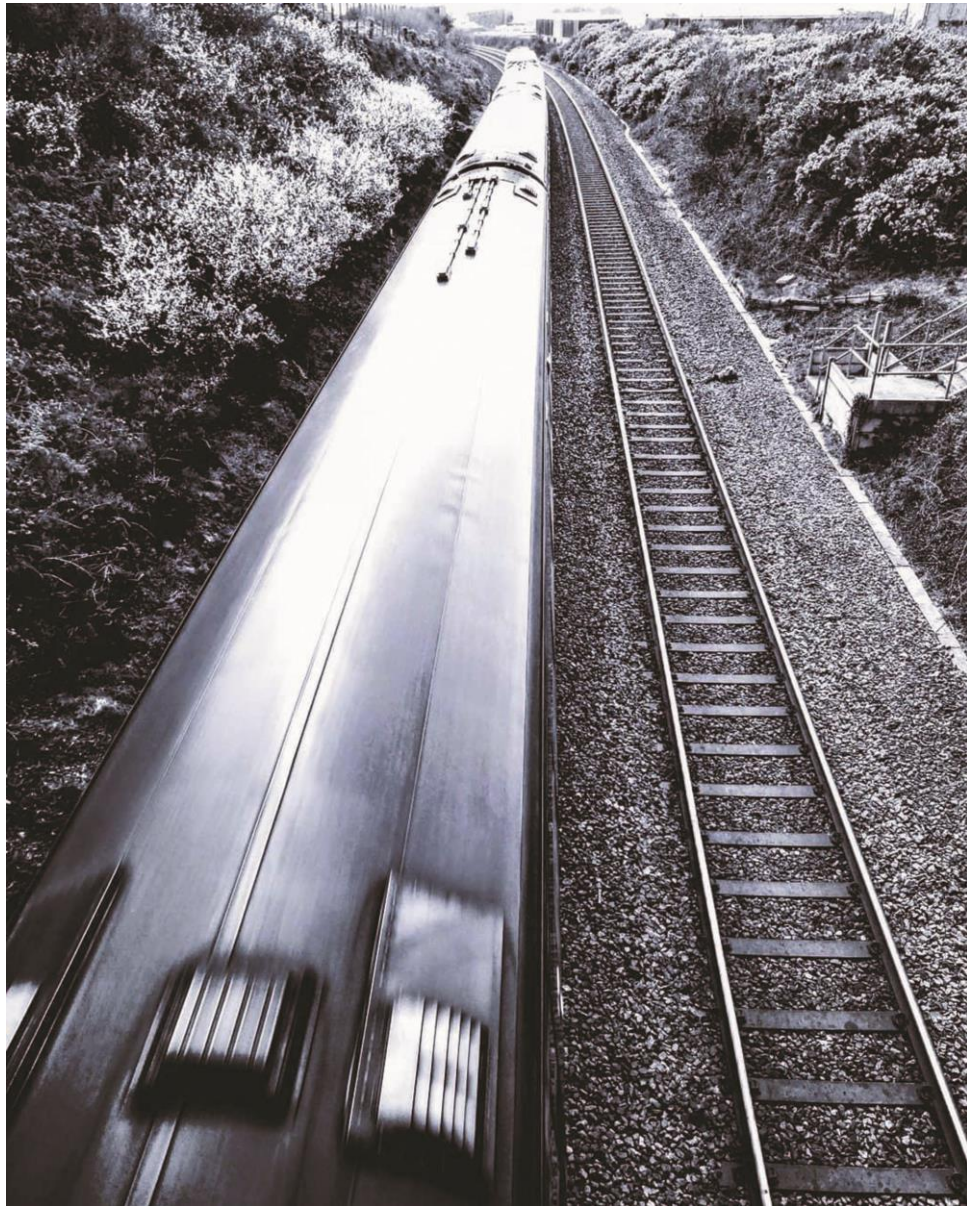
For me mainland adventure has always meant travelling west, and that means this train's adventure is almost realised. In less than an hour it will be slowing into Penzance station, as far west as it can go.

Here's my state of knowledge and maybe I'm typical: I hadn't even heard a train since lockdown began and I wouldn't have been able to say whether they were running or not. So here are some more heroes for us to applaud: our transport workers.

Let's look at the everyday adventure this train has experienced. It has come through a country in lockdown, something that has never happened before, the sole physical link with the distant and with the idea that

one day travel might be possible again. Lockdown itself will cost lives: in a survey by Kings College, half of those surveyed said they suffered increased depression because of it.

So there will be people here suffering through this. Discarding the cant, we really do need to look out for each other. But we do have something special here. It's the place to use our time outside, our permitted exercise, to watch trains, walk the hills, the shore, the Opes, our granite streets, all the places I've been posting pictures of. We're the place at the end of others' journeys and we need to remember why. Then we should find that destination in our places and ourselves. That's Cornwall.



27. Friday April 17th 2020: Drowned tree, Polhigey.

Jeremy Hunt was asked this evening, wasn't it you who reduced the number of ventilators in the NHS to 5000? Hunt just said that there will be a great enquiry into all issues when all this is over.

The Great Enquiry. Let's talk about it again.

Its evocation is the standard response to talk of the mishandling of the crisis: like the Government's insistence that care homes full of the ultra-vulnerable must accept untested Coronavirus patients from hospital into locked-down institutions with no possibility of social distancing. As a woman said of the home where her mother lives "Basically they've just all got it."

Sounds a bit like murder and yesterday Matt Hancock said it will all be looked into. At the Enquiry. Keir Starmer says it too.

It reminds me of Dame Barbara Clayton DBE FRCP FRCPath FMedSci. She chaired the Royal Commission into the Camelford water poisoning scandal in the 1980s. Impending water privatisation made the 'right' conclusion highly desirable for Thatcher's Government. Fortunately Clayton found the symptoms were caused by anxiety due to "inaccurate and exaggerated" claims of

health damage by scientists and the news media. When this caused outrage the Government ordered another enquiry to check the results of the first. In charge of this they appointed - Dame Barbara Clayton. Who found she fully agreed with herself. In 2006 victim Carole Cross's brain was found to be full of aluminium when she died of early-onset Alzheimer's.

Those letters after her name and her title tell us Dame Babs was a representative of The Great And The Good. A Safe Pair Of Hands. When you're watching The News and on comes a medical Sir or Lord who is Chair of this or Advisor of that and they speak of the Government's bizarre actions with quiet approval as if everything is proceeding beautifully - that's them. The Great And The Good. And they do very well out of it. Lots of honours. And money.

If you have hopes of a great Enquiry here's my word for you: Grenfell. The Great And The Good in charge. A genteel, delayed, drawn out process. And the firefighters done it. The Establishment quietly looks after its own. Remember the saying: justice deferred is justice denied.



28. Saturday April 18th 2020: NHS heavy armour, Great Flat Lode.

This is an installation. A powerful image.

I pay tribute to whoever has created this for me to point my camera at. It's not my doing, though I took the photo.

And yet and yet and yet.... I do feel like this about the NHS. For me and my comrades in Camborne, Redruth & Hayle Constituency Labour Party the National Health Service is totemic, the living embodiment of socialism, of the kind of society we want to be part of. And I'm sure whoever created this installation feels the same.

But we live in a country that just a few weeks ago elected a Conservative Government led by Boris Johnson. That is a vote to destroy the NHS. And don't tell me people didn't know that. For whatever reason that is what the majority of the voting population chose: an end to the NHS and the Welfare State.

Now it is possible that the coming of the Coronavirus caused the people of this country to come to their senses and realise that our doctors, nurses and other NHS staff are the true heroes of the UK. During lockdown perhaps they have reassessed what is important to them personally and

have embraced the political beliefs and commitments that caused the NHS to be created and are necessary to ensure its future existence and its growth as a symbol of all that's best about Britain. And every Thursday at 8pm that is what they manifest by clapping on their doorsteps.

Do you believe that?

How many of us understand what this country is now? When Johnson came out of his self-administered visit to Intensive Care some of our people greeted this over-privileged, lazy, amoral, entitled liar like a beloved son. How many? Are we sure that the collective judgement of the UK isn't capable of teary-eyed, even violent assertions of love for the heroes of our NHS and equally teary, maybe equally violent dedication to the Prime Minister and Government who, given time and opportunity, would certainly choose to destroy it?

What are we now? Where is this country going? Has it learned anything? Maybe it is all up for grabs. We must decide what's going to happen. It is clear our leaders will not.



29. Sunday April 19th 2020: Big white flower, Higher Treluswell.

Strange but true:

1. The UK Government will deploy huge sums of money to preserve the economy through this crisis.
2. We currently await deliveries of surgical gowns from Turkey that haven't turned up.
3. British manufacturers offering to make PPE are being ignored by the Government.
4. This is rude.
5. To conserve your economy, it makes sense to spend money within that economy. On, for a start, masks and gloves and gowns and ventilators and vaccines.
6. The money circulates, gets invested, gets paid as wages, gets spent, causes demand, comes back as taxes.
7. Johnson is absent so we are ruled by the unelected Dominic Cummings through his teatime podium stooges.
8. This junta has no concept of a collective approach to anything except voting Conservative and looking after your own.
9. Romanians are being flown into the UK to pick fruit that will otherwise rot.

10. It's illegal for me to go to Truro without a good reason. While hundreds of people are flown thousands of miles to pick fruit.

11. Yes, that did say "to pick fruit."

12. Picking fruit is apparently beyond the indigenous skill set of the thousands put out of work by the Coronavirus precautions.

13. A better idea: the Government comes to the people with a New Deal.

14. A way we really are "all in it together".

15. To work together to get through this.

16. Collectively to make what we need to make, test what needs to be tested, pick what needs to be picked.

17. The Deal: there must be a national process and convention to administer the lessons of what we're going through, appreciate who it turns out we really need, what it takes to be a democratic country that does not alienate huge numbers of its people so much they just vote against things, anything, everything, including their own children and their own future.

18. A New Deal to make a UK that makes sense.



30. Monday April 20th 2020: Crowan from Black Rock.

Keir Starmer is a proponent of the 'all in it together' approach to Coronavirus. As his job description is 'Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition' the Queen might feel she's not getting her money's worth. Interviewed on television he supports the Government, with a little mild quibble perhaps, because criticism steps outside the game we're all in together.

But there isn't anyone to 'all be in together' with and a one-sided alliance is, by definition, not an alliance. It's a gesture. The ineptitude of the Johnson/ Cummings regime leaves no depths undived. Obviously before Johnson went for the job of Prime Minister he took pains to ensure there need be no work involved. Having received the promise of Dominic Cummings to do whatever needed to be done, Johnson put himself forward, thinking how good it would look on his CV when he applied for a decent job.

Then came Coronavirus and Johnson's ultimate form of laissez-faire is revealed for the disaster it is. Any call on him

immediately plunges him out of his depth. Which leaves Keir Starmer's earnest desire to collaborate for the sake of the bigger picture up poo creek with no means of self-propulsion. The Conservatives have no bigger picture. They have no picture at all.

So Sir Keir. It's up to you. People talk about the need to "Hold the Government to account" but it goes beyond formal roles. Your refusal to criticise this disaster threatens to implicate Labour in a fatal mess. It is redolent of 2010 - 2015 when the Conservatives and Labour were dangerously similar in policy and outlook and Labour's stirring cry was "Us too! Only not quite so much..." Remember how we have all been damaged by the cynicism this created amongst the electorate. It has left us a country with no coherent story to tell.

The Conservatives cannot lead the UK out of this crisis. Therefore it falls to us to do it. You are the leader of the Opposition. It is up to you to make this happen. Please do your duty.



31. Tuesday April 21st 2020: Windmills at Roskrow Barton.

(I would like to take this opportunity to point out that 'Roskrow' is very nearly 'Worksop' backwards. Though the two places aren't really very similar.)

Yet again we have people commenting on social media that I should shut up. Please: if you're tempted to add to the queue of those who have tried to close these opinions down, just save your i-breath and conserve your e-ink. There are very few ideas it should be impossible to express. One would-be censor complained that as she had voted for me in the general election she was appalled that I should post an opinion that offends her. Let's be quite clear that I am not at home to criticisms like that because in everything I printed and spoke I made it clear that I would always say and fight for what I believe to be right and true.

And bizarrely even when I'm demonstrating that the 'we're all in it together' approach doesn't work, I am told I shouldn't be discussing it. Because we're all in it together.

So let's come at this from another angle.

It is not possible for Keir Starmer or anyone else to be all in it together with the

Conservatives because the Conservatives are not all in it together themselves. The Sunday Times, an ultra-Conservative newspaper, two days ago ran as their main story 'Coronavirus: 38 days when Britain sleepwalked into disaster' revealing that Boris Johnson refused to work weekends, went on holiday and didn't turn up to any Cobra meetings for the whole of February, though he did turn up in London for a fundraising dinner. Where did this information come from?

At the end of last week there were stories that schools would re-open soon. This story was then contradicted by Michael Gove. This isn't just confusion; this is members of the Conservative Government quietly briefing against each other. Johnson is absent, and the mice smell a rat's crown.

There is genuinely nothing to form a unity with. The Government is inept, ill-led and divided. In these circumstances I don't know about you but it makes me feel exceptionally uncomfortable that the Leader of the Opposition in this country now appears to be Piers Morgan.



THE TALE OF THE PPE

Since the 1990s and Margaret Thatcher's Government, manufacturing industry has been in decline in the UK. This was no accident. The move away from manufacturing towards 'service industries' was significantly motivated by Thatcher's wish to destroy the power base of trade unionism, beginning with the steel and mining industries.

Manufacturing has been in decline ever since with the economy predicated on the 'financial services' of the City of London. One result has been growing inequality regionally, with wealth concentrated increasingly in London and the South East. Working class well-paid skilled jobs are gone, replaced by low paid work, with a growing insecure 'gig economy' of zero hours and temporary contracts and false self-employment, all the product of the beating down of trade unionism. In 2008 Financial Services bit the hand that obsessively fed it, with the Financial Crisis. The Conservatives got away with using that as justification to wind down the remains of the Post War consensus, including the NHS, through Austerity.

Coronavirus has proved this ideological destruction to be catastrophic. And the poverty and dissolution of the old manufacturing communities has destroyed their people's belief in society and a future. Their vote is for resentment and revenge.

This was why the Labour Party offered huge investment in manufacturing and infrastructure at the last election, to rebase the economy and the UK as a society. But resentment and revenge voted ironically, with old power, old money, for more of the self-destruction of the past 40 years.

The basis of all this has been the belief that the products of manufacturing could always be imported at low cost, through the low wage rates in the developing world; the assumption that things would continue as they were in the 1990s, the West dominant, the world dependent and stable.

This was a false assumption. And now the UK needs PPE. The Government looks abroad for it, to a world where those 'developing economies' are now developed and are themselves threatened or ravaged by Coronavirus.

And they do not find it.



33. Thursday April 23rd 2020: Deer in a field, Stithians.

The deer watched me pass without fear. For humans this is a time for fears and here is mine: I'm afraid of stolen opportunities.

There's a lot of talk about the lessons to be learned and assumptions that things must be different after Corona. It's reasonable to expect Governments to recognise the importance of the NHS in the future and fund it properly, that there will be proper provision for the possibility (certainty?) of future pandemics or mass peril, that society will recognise that workers previously considered lowly and underpaid, like shop staff and transport workers, delivery drivers as well as health staff of all grades, are vital to our common survival.

Those alone should be enough to mark a change in the fundamental values of society. Why would we go back to ways of being that have brought us to this? Can't we do better, find better ways to be represented that don't lead to tens of thousands of us dying because of whimsical decisions made by those in whom far too much unchecked power is vested? Can't we create a new way of living together that values all our people, with the right to a

home and security and freedom from hunger guaranteed?

Isn't it time we finally got round to giving civilisation a try?

A civilisation that sees a primary duty to prevent the death of the planet; and to spread the world's wealth beyond a tiny minority so rich they could never spend all that they have taken.

The trouble is that those holding power are those who have done best from the ridiculous world we had to lock the door on a month ago. They will try and take us back to exactly the same injustices and inequalities, and they will do it by making the poorest in society, with the least influence on who rules it and who benefits from it, pay the immense debt they are incurring in their attempt to preserve their wealth and the structures that support it: Ultra Austerity.

We must not let them. We must formulate our own demands for the future. We must define the better ways we choose to live together. I call it socialism. You can call it what you like. But we must do it now. Before they steal the future from us too.



34. Friday April 24th 2020: Restronguet Creek from Point Quay.

The whole experience of the past five or six weeks has been an experiment in modern media and what they can achieve.

When social distancing and lockdown were declared, they were simply announced through our televisions and radios and social media. And suddenly our whole lives changed. Nobody forced us to comply. There were no soldiers on our streets. We agreed massive changes almost overnight.

This is odd. Not in terms of our reaction to Coronavirus and ways its spread can be combatted, that is entirely admirable.

But that is the point. We can achieve consensus when the stakes are agreed. So what goes wrong the rest of the time?

Look at the state of our political life. It is a roiling turmoil that mysteriously results in the same contradictory, self-destructive impasse time and time again. Surely we can establish some principles that we all agree should govern ways we organise ourselves? Let's have a go now:

1. People should have the best possible chance of not dying of viruses. Or anything else unnecessary. We seem to agree that as

our entire national life is currently predicated on it. How about:

2. People should have somewhere to live. Tell me when I get controversial. Let's try:

3. Children should not grow up in poverty. Which probably means parents will have to stop living in poverty. OK with everyone? Right, here we go:

4. People should have an equal say in how we live together. That's the democracy clause. Go for broke:

5. People should feel their lives are worthwhile; we mustn't destroy the planet.

OK? I don't hear any complaints. But if we all agree, why can't our communications help make these happen? Why the showbiz of collective conflict, the stasis, the hatred?

Could it be intentional? Could continual, obsessive pseudo-disagreements suit the purposes of people with the power to influence the media, perhaps because they do not want us to achieve a consensus of fairness and equality?

Perhaps because our inequality is their privilege. Our powerlessness is their power.



35. Saturday April 25th 2020: Self-isolation, Falmouth Bay.

By mistake I recently became a subscriber to New Yorker magazine, while living in a place you could not take to be New York even if your lockdown was so fierce you had bricked up all your windows. But my silly error means that I get to read some very good writing.

We don't have anything like the New Yorker in the UK. It's both very traditional, commissioning actual writers (rather than celebrities or 'think-pieces' that contain no thought worthy of the name), and also fleet of foot and adaptable. At the moment it is full of writing about Covid-19.

There's a lot of it. I haven't read anything else for months and am still currently one-and-a-half issues behind myself. I can't wait to catch up so I find out how this all ends.

As regular readers will know my concerns about the whole Coronavirus thing include fear we will not catch on to what's happening until too late; that we fail to recognise the full significance of a period when once-in-a-lifetime strangeness is our everyday experience; that we will relive this vicariously as history at some time to come

and realise we were actually here and didn't fully inhabit the time. The New Yorker is not prepared to see that happen. Each issue contains an array of rich reflections on how life is currently lived in that hard-hit city.

I was struck by this quote from a piece by Lorrie Moore: "We are in the zombie apocalypse, which my students have been writing about for well over a decade, so young people are mentally prepared." Well, my students too. Zombie films and television play out in endless permutations.

But not a single example prepared us for the horror of living in countries where the zombies have actually been elected to office and are running the place. For such is the defining nature of our current apocalypse. How else to explain calls by leaders of modern states in the face of Coronavirus to inject ourselves with disinfectant or open our innards up to the light; or adopt a policy of 'herd immunity', i.e. just let people catch it?

That's consistent at least: all problems relating to zombies end once everyone becomes one.



36. Sunday April 26th 2020: Well or dell, East slope of Carn Brea.

I'm intrigued by this place. There's a track around the east side of Carn Brea, from the pathway above Carn Brea Village, to Carnkie. Mostly the hillside is covered with bracken and gorse but hidden there is this strange crevice, like a Cornish holy well.

It has spared you my other choice of image from today's expedition: a mobile phone mast between a railway embankment and an industrial estate.

I live in West Cornwall, one of the most beautiful places in the world, so why would I consider such a picture?

It's history. On the track from Tregajorran I passed a family group, a man and a woman I took to be his mother. He was running with a small girl on his shoulders, another running by his side, and they were all laughing, laughing too much to notice my passing. It's not an image of these shut off, shut in, closed down times; times of the internet and the computer game, times of the drawn curtain, times of lockdown.

No, it was an image from my own childhood, now distant history, a history bounded in the present by that phone mast.

I thought of the passage of that history: the wastelands left by war, the huge cultural shifts of the 60s, Vietnam, the Cold War, revolutions, punk, Thatcherism and the turmoil of the 80s, the fall of the Iron Curtain, always more wars, then 9-11. The Financial Crisis. Austerity and the destruction of the Welfare State.

And now us. We're not going to come out of this well. The Coronavirus has ensured we are nailed onto history, we will certainly be examined. And what will be the verdict?

A country that voluntarily elected the most unfit, supine, irrelevant Government ever, led by a man who made no secret of his misanthropy and cynicism, his hostility to the NHS. And that was immediately punished with the testing of that ideology and Government to death: the death of tens of thousands of its electorate. The irony is terrible and terrifying.

There's no room for any kind of satisfaction here. Some of us hoped for more. We had a hope to redeem history. I even stood for bloody Parliament. But this is what we got. This insult to progress.

What are we going to do?



37. Monday April 27th 2020: Seven Stars, Stithians. Dark.

This is our local pub at the heart of our old granite village. The faces behind the bar are friendly, and it's easy to get into a conversation. We came to take them for granted but our pubs are most of our remaining public life.

I have no reason to suspect the Stars is in particular peril. But like all our pubs it is currently closed to visitors.

The question is, how many of them will open again?

We have seen too many aspects of our lives abandoned to the cold mercies of the peculiar contemporary Conservative version of capitalism. Many of our villages and towns have lost their Post Office, sacrificed to lubricate privatisation, and their banks, again sacrificed to the interests of shareholders. And as the only defining virtue admitted by Conservatives is profit, there is no sanction to oppose this. Except when, as now, the whole shaky edifice threatens to collapse when such strictures are forgotten and the entire resources of the state for years to come are mobilised in support of a system that's defining belief is

supposed to be laissez-faire success or oblivion.

But another of the unpleasant aspects of ten years of Conservatism in our rural communities is the insecure state of pubs often centuries old. In some villages, pubs have become temporary, flighty, opening and closing unpredictably. Sooner or later that usually means death. And many others have already gone, converted into very cheap, very large houses. I passed the old Wheal Basset Inn in Carnkie today, once a famous music pub, now apartments. This is another sad by-product of the status of 'properties' predominantly as investments, their nominal purposes secondary to the storage and increase of wealth. So our empty pubs are flanked by empty houses.

We don't know what world we will emerge into when this strange time is over, what will still be left of what was. That's why we need to take hold of this country in its bewilderment and give it a bloody good shake. We can no longer tolerate our ridiculous drift. We cannot surrender it to the same old sicknesses.



38. Tuesday April 28th 2020: Beyond Wendron Moor.

Panorama revealed elements of scandal in the Government's handling of the Coronavirus crisis, but further horror is revealed by scrutiny of the fatality statistics for care homes.

If you take the deaths ascribed to Covid-19 away from the total in these establishments, then compare the remainder to previous years, there is a huge unexplained increase. So unless there is another massive unidentified killer, Covid-19 deaths are being hugely under-reported.

The conclusion must be that the policy of forcing care homes to take untested Coronavirus patients on discharge from hospital has killed thousands of our most vulnerable elderly and reporting procedures are obscuring it.

That goes beyond scandal. That is an outrage.

Channel 4 News also featured Professor John Edmunds of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He is a member of the Government's Scientific

Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage). Asked about Herd Immunity Edmunds claimed he wasn't sure there had ever been such a policy even though he was on television just a few weeks ago apparently justifying it. He also claimed Dominic Cummings's own presence on Sage was a good thing - "We need the civil servants there, otherwise it would just be scientists talking to each other." As a 'scientific advisory group' we might think that is exactly how Sage should be but being the conduit for Sage would undoubtedly add to Cummings's power - who would describe him simply as a 'civil servant'?

Edmunds said lockdown had not been recommended earlier because they thought the public would not conform to it. But that is a (bad) political judgement, not a scientific one. How lucky they are to have an unelected political advisor on board.

So beware: when Government claims are made that "We are following the science," remember John Edmunds and think about who the science is itself following. Up each other's orifices.



About the author

Paul Farmer is a writer, filmmaker and artist who lives in Stithians in Cornwall. In 2000 he was made a Bard of Gorsedh Kernow with the Bardic name 'Skrifer An Tyller', which means 'Writer of the Place'. At the 2019 General Election he was the Labour Party candidate for Camborne, Redruth & Hayle Constituency.

Paul is a lecturer in Film at Falmouth University. His next project is the publication of his collected short fiction, written for Kneehigh Theatre, Scavel An Gow, BBC Radio Four and others, which will be available later this year.

The photos in this book were taken on a Motorola Moto G6 mobile phone and a Lumix TZ40 camera that had been lost at the back of a drawer for years.

*(Photo of the author by
Amanda Whittington-Walsh.)*



*Roaming the lockdown in images and words
in a year like no other.*

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