

## The Journey

1937 words

by jol wardle 2023

There was a time long gone when leaving home was even more perilous than it is today.

Today you can plan ahead to arrange transport, accommodation, work or study, but many moons ago it was a true adventure where you needed to equip yourself for real independent living and be able to feed and really look after yourself.

Communication has indeed helped fledging, but when we lived solely by word of mouth, knowledge would have been harder to glean or would it? We would learn the ways of our elders and test our skills and try out our ideas until such a time as the need to venture further, perhaps to learn from others not yet met, perhaps initiated from the arrival of a stranger in our midst with new stories to tell or new tools or techniques to show.

When settlements enlarged and variety expanded there became a ready magnet for those far away to first visit and see the new thinking and hear the new sounds and experience the greater opportunity.

Lured by boredom or the promise of other youth we would head for the towns and later on the cities, but initially when we hunted, gathered and first farmed, there was often an isolation which in itself would drive us out to trade and travel or to take with us our skills of manufacture, fishing or tale-telling. We would feel the need to test ourselves against others who we did not know, and experience the unknown.

So today we still strike out in adventure or stay put when we need the known and better certainty or have need of some stability. Ruts become grooves and grooves can become ruts, as they said in the Sixties.

And so it was that our son set sail for other shores and we had him keep some thread to unwind as he went, so we could always feel some attachment and he the promise of a place for his return wherever he went.

We tried to teach him all that we had learnt, but he needed to learn his own way and make his own mistakes so we knew that it was best that he departed and made friends with the bigger world, the world where cats prey on pretty songbirds and wolves still hunt in packs though they wear their fur on the inside these modern days.

We packed him with advices: “trust all or tell the truth, but mind you don’t trust them all the time or at least learn to hold your tongue sometimes ”, “be wary but open”, “the glint in the eye cannot always be seen when it is dark”.

“Test the process through in your mind (heed the consequences), “write out the pros and cons, but that at some stage you will need to make a decision right or wrong, as sitting on the fence harms most men.”

The ever important “Never despise hypocrisy” where the faults we see in others are so often a reflection of what we ourselves exhibit or know”

These advices are though of course but sand in the wind that grit the eyes, but can at a later date be remembered and acknowledged, albeit so often well beyond the time when we may have made best use of them.

“Cut your losses” and “ know your worth” served me well in early travel days when I would threaten to leave an underpaid job early and not moan with the others, but would strike an individual contract with the Employer as best I could or else leave early and venture on.

These though are the un-teachables that really must be learnt or dismissed in situ and form the basis of our individual unique lives of love work and play. Natured or nurtured or a community mix?

Oh to have trained as a thoughtful ‘be prepared for everything’ solo sailor in my younger days when my Father’s words were forever “ you are so impetuous!”

This the same man who had instigated my departure from the family nest with a note pinned to the back door with “Go Away” on it!

Entirely understandable, as I had, in my wild teenage years, been treating our home as a Hotel and returning home late or not at all.

Thus he never really gave me a key, and the back door key which we used to leave in an outhouse for emergencies, did little if he had already locked up, leaving the key in the lock.

And so one cold dark night I happened upon his note as I staggered beer and cider sodden to the door. (He did however leave the car open that night)

We all agreed the next day that it was indeed time for my fledging, and I got my first flat and enrolled at a nearby Technical College to continue my studies away from the exam factory School I had attended most of my life.

Most of my school friends were now on the University journey, and my non academic friends were certainly showing me a different way, and the delights of Liverpool and its infinite mosaic of lifestyles and music scenes were indeed captivating. I had various jobs but it was probably the minimum agricultural wage work as a labourer — the forerunner of our National Minimum Wage, that catapulted me on to travel further.

£36 a week could be had for a 35 hour week, but the psychedelic orange sorting of carrots one day under strip lights in an open barn on a cold Winter morning with frozen feet in wellies, probably solidified my thinking that if I was ever to get somewhere, or not have to do this sort of work for ever (however noble it was, and indeed I learnt so much from working in the fields, as indeed later on had a Chinese Student of mine, a Professor of Astro Physics who told me, without any

malice, years later when questioned about his longtime spent in agriculture during the cultural revolution “where better to see the stars if not from the open fields?” ), I would have to return to my studies, and so it was I set off to visit some far-flung Colleges one afternoon.

My father kindly drove me to the main road roundabout where I was going to start hitchhiking. He told me later, that he didn't even get round the roundabout before I was gone, whisked off on a crazy 4 or 5 day tour that of course never could go to any plan, as hitching was the epitome of serendipitous travel and circumstance.

I was offered College places and jobs a plenty but somehow never got back there, instead ending up on a plane the very next day of my return; my Mother telling me that while I was away, I had been offered a teaching job in Southern Italy if I could get to Luton Airport the next day. (ironically near to where I had just hitchhiked from that day). I borrowed the plane fare and lived in Italy for quite a few years.

Thus my journey had begun, but what of my son?

Hitchhiking is now not recommended (are folks more dangerous these days or are we just too scared, too aware or over informed of the wrong'uns or the not-rights?)

Where are his lost days going to be found, when mobiles connect us constantly?

Where are his serendipitous journeys going to come from, now that hitch hiking is no longer supported or is sold as an adjunct to fear and folly?

Do I mind?

Would I have him hitching, squatting in Cities, walking the dark streets with his rural ways?

Or am I content for him to be happily looked after by Uni and resource teams, his learning augmented with online facts, fiction and falsehoods?

His journey is certainly going to be a different one, and indeed is going to be for a major part, an inter web, a social media of good bad wild and wonderful.

It will be for him to sort.

The poetry of landscape, quiet and lost nature is still there to be found, and the promise of fine friendships to share joy and marvel and protect and humour us remain, as we strike out to who knows where.

“ Towards the sea go you and me

towards the distant sand

together to catch a fleeting glimpse of far-off distant lands”

— — some short paragraphs on the wider world's journey

Meanwhile the world turns, and while our real needs of water, food, clothing housing and love remain, we are distracted by what we don't need.

Our corporate lobbied administrations too often rely on outdated Monetary Economics to excuse themselves from addressing inequity and poverty. They continue, many of them, to control through division and fear of debt, of immigration from unknowns, from a disturbance to the status quo they sell as the secure and only option, as they produce or contribute to more 'left behind' marginalised and many understandably angry people, by virtue of having fewer opportunities, and less nature in the form of green space, trees and flowers, restricted education and good housing.

We leave people behind at our peril.

"We can't spend on those things, it would be inflationary", they mendaciously say, although for warring and themselves there is always the purse.

They of course liken our National Economics to home housekeeping and the need to keep expenditure within income whereas a sovereign currency is spent and created first before the population can be taxed, which only then contributes and is not a pre-requisite or cap for responsible government deficit spending.

7:84 was a Scottish left-wing agitprop theatre group. The name came from a stat-



istic on distribution of wealth in the United Kingdom, published in The Economist in 1966, that 7% of the population of the UK owned 84% of the country's wealth.

Those figures are now 54 years behind the times, and there remains the fight to come, betwixt those with, who wish to keep, and those without, who wish a better share.

Our World in this 'Age of Uncertainty' as JK Galbraith called it in the mid to late Seventies, needs better humane, equitable socialist policies and radical reforms, for without our better stewardship and care, we will be lost with the fallout of species that is resulting from our rape of resources.

We must care for our soils plants fauna et al and ensure their variety and substance endures for not only our future generations but for the other sentient beings we share our space with, without whom we would be and are truly lost.

Our journey will be returned to the stars, from whence we came, abio or exo-genesis. Whichever or both, and, as Lovelock has maintained, our World, our Earth, our Planet, needs not Us, to continue, and its homeostatic corrections do not, by necessity, include the need for our sort.

But where will my son's first paths from home take him?

What golden threads will appear as his long term goals get waylaid by love life

and happenstance?

I can but wish him satoris a plenty to keep him centred on his course which  
whatever will meander or rush through the mountains and meadows towards its  
forever culmination of foaming seas and astral oceans.

Thus his time will be the new and mine will be but memory.

Cool and fair winds I bid him as I disembark at rivers' mouth with returned youth-  
ful naivety for my next journey across Styx on sparkling sea-sky promise.