

2nd April 2020

Travelling

“It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive.”

Late-19th century proverb

When I was a small boy, there was railway station in Fort William where I lived, with trains going west to Mallaig and south to Glasgow on the West Highland Line. Those were the days of steam, of course, and it was a joy to go by train to the Silver Sands of Morar or down to my granny's in Paisley – the hissing of the steam, the straining of the engine, the clickety clack on the rails and the hooting of the whistle.

On holiday one year, we went from Paisley Gilmour Street station to Largs on the Ayrshire coast for a seaside jaunt. But when the train pulled away, everything was different. There was no chugging, hissing, or clickety-clack. For the first time, I was on a diesel train, not steam. It was smoother, and quieter – but altogether *much* less exciting. We had a great day at the seaside. But a diesel train had robbed me of what I loved about the journey. For a small boy, it was all very disappointing.

Today, our world is on a different train. Familiarity, routine, rhythm, familiar sounds and feelings have changed. The journey will never be the same again. Like a wee boy on a diesel train, we may not like it because it's robbed us of so much. All very disturbing. Yet the thing I remember most from sixty years ago was that we got safely to the seaside and back – *and* enjoyed ourselves. The journey was different. But we got there, and home again, as we'd always done. Steam had gone. Diesel had taken over. But the journey went on as before – and still it does.

A prayer for today

*Loving God, we travel hopefully, for this is how we must be;
be with us on our different journey;
guide us safely when we don't understand what's happening;
bless us when we arrive safely. Amen*

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