

15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## Politeness

**“Yet still between his Darkness and his Brightness  
There passed a mutual glance of great politeness.”**

*Lord Byron, The Vision of Judgement*

*“Knock, knock!” “Who’s there?”*

*“Isabel.” “Isabel who?”*

*“Is a bell necessary on a bike?”*

I know it’s an old joke and not a very funny one either. But I now have the answer to the final question. Yes! A bell is *very* necessary on a bike!

Given the number of bikes that have appeared in recent weeks, we’re either testing out East Lothian as a future stage of *Le Tour de Scotland*, or we have the fittest population in Western Europe. There are bikes *everywhere*. So, joining the trend, I unearthed my bike from my garage, dusted it down, got it checked over courtesy of a friend who knows about these things, sorted out the helmet, and off I went.

I quickly discovered how necessary it is to have a bell, *and* that I needed to learn cycling etiquette. To be honest, it wasn’t that hard.

1. Coming up behind someone on a path, you wait for a bit to see if they’ll move, and, if not, you give a little warning “ding” on your bell.
2. If they still don’t move after a few seconds, you’re allowed to give the bell a second “ding”, making it sound as urgent as you wish.
3. If that has no effect, you either have to give them a verbal warning, or you go off the track to find a way round – if there’s room.
4. Be polite – pass a “mutual glance of great politeness”; give an approving nod; say “thanks” – and hope the courtesy is reciprocated.

Politeness costs nothing. When we’re sharing the same paths and trying to find a way together, courtesy, tolerance, politeness are all the more important. Like Byron, we may be shrouded in darkness or bathed in brightness, but politeness is always going to make a difference.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, give me patience with those who share my paths. And please be patient with me when I’m not aware of your presence. A polite reminder might be needed. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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