

27th June 2020

Groupies

“So, follow me, follow, down to the hollow ...”

Michael Flanders and Donald Swann, The Hippopotamus

From time to time I'm invited to Church and Community groups to read some of my stories and poetry. A few years ago I was programmed to give two talks to Church Guilds on successive Monday evenings. It meant I would be offering the same set of readings two weeks in a row. But since the churches were on opposite sides of the city, it wouldn't be a problem.

The first talk went well, and I pitched up for the second one in good spirits. But I was surprised to see, sitting in the front row, the same lady who'd been sitting in the front row the previous Monday. Thankfully, she still laughed in the right places and applauded loudly at the end. Clearly, she wasn't disappointed, and I decided it was another successful evening.

But I was intrigued. So I sought her out afterwards and said, "I seem to recognise you. Have we met before?" "Oh yes," she replied, reddening somewhat. "I enjoyed your talk at my church so much last week, when my friend told me you were to be here tonight, I just *had* to come again. I could listen to you all day. Tell me where you're speaking next, and I'll be there." There was a burst of laughter from round about. I didn't know where to look. I was rescued by the Guild President, but not before I shook hands with a lady who would clearly "follow me, follow, down to the hollow" – wherever that might be. The truth was ... I'd bagged my first groupie!

I haven't attracted any further groupies, it has to be said, and, thankfully, this groupie *hasn't* followed me everywhere. But, embarrassed as I was (*and* the butt of some surprisingly ribald comments from mature church women) I've never forgotten that lady – though I don't even know her name. In my less successful times, I remember a Guild member who liked me enough to come to hear me a second time. In my darker days, I picture someone who was pleased with what I'd done. When I find that I'm doubting myself, I give thought to my one and only groupie, for, whatever I did for her, I thank God for the lasting gift of worth and value she has left with me.

A prayer for today

Lord, how good it feels when someone says, "Well done!" to me.

Help me to see the good in others, and to offer them a "Well done!" too. Amen.

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