

25th August 2020

Reality

**“Tis wonderful what fable will not do!
'Tis said it makes reality more bearable:
But what's reality? Who has its clue?
Philosophy? No; she too much rejects.
Religion? Yes; but which of all her sects?”**

Lord Byron, Don Juan

When the tide is out and the beach is exposed on the west side of the Longniddry Bents, the remains of a boat appear, stark against the yellow of the sand and the grey or blue of the distant sky. Just the prow and some of the ribs are still visible, and it seems to be about fishing-boat size. As to its origins, I have no idea. But I've worked out plenty possibilities ...

A boat cast on the shore in a storm, its crew dramatically rescued before it foundered? Smugglers landing contraband and unable to get their craft afloat to make good their escape? A boat set ablaze in a modern enactment of an ancient Viking funeral custom? A vessel abandoned, a nautical kind of fly-tipping? Plenty possibilities ... But the truth is, I don't know. I could make up a story, but the reality might be quite different.

My dog discovered a deep pool of water by the wreck and was soon cooling down in her own private lido. A little kid wandered over and, clearly fascinated by the dog's antics, started to squeal with delight. The more the child squealed, the more the dog performed. The wilder the dog's antics, the more pleasure it gave a little boy. *This* was reality for a child, living in the moment, enjoying life. Tales from a storyteller about the hull of a boat? Not just now, thank you. There's too much reality to enjoy.

We all have plans and ideas, then reality decides to intervene. For we live in that space between what might be and what is. But we can understand both. Life is not fulfilled by possibilities alone. We have to live with reality. Nor should reality – the *carpe diem* approach – deny us our hopes and dreams. The little kid and the dog-walker were *both* right. Reality and possibilities can live side by side – for us all to enjoy.

A prayer for today

*When life is hopeful, give me the pleasure of dreams.
When life is real, give me the wisdom of acceptance. Amen*

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