

26th October 2021

Fleeting

“Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting.”

Bible, Proverbs 31:30

She was round-faced and rosy cheeked. As I only saw her for a few seconds, it was hard to guess her age, but I reckon she would be in her sixties. She smiled at me – and waved too. Then, she was gone. But the fleeting beauty of the moment simply made my day.

The road across the Island of Mull, from Fionnphort where the ferry goes to Iona, north-east to the ferry terminal for the Oban sailing at Craignure, is single-track with passing places. The hour-long journey can't be rushed, and you need your wits about you – ready for traffic coming over a hill or round a blind-bend; keeping a lookout for the next passing-place; knowing if there are cars behind travelling faster and being ready to pull over to allow them to overtake. It's a wonderful drive, but it requires constant vigilance. There are “protocols” to be observed too. Pulling in to allow faster traffic to overtake is one. Leaving plenty space for trucks and busses is another. But perhaps the most important is acknowledging the courtesy of someone stopping in a passing-place to let you to go by. Sometimes that's achieved with flashing headlights. Often, it's a cheery wave. You get a “thumbs up” occasionally. And the casual driver – usually a “local” – simply raises a finger off the steering-wheel to say, “thank you”.

So, there I was, waiting in a passing-place to allow three cars to pass. For the first driver, the “thank you” was a raised hand. For the second, it was one finger. For the third, it was a wave. But as well as this final driver acknowledging my courtesy, I also witnessed vigorous animation from the lady in the passenger seat. She waved *both* hands. She nodded twice. And she smiled, a round-faced, rosy-cheeked, mid-sixties smile that was quite wonderful. It lasted three or four seconds. Then, she was gone.

To that unnamed woman on her journey across Mull, I say “thank you”. In your cheery appreciation, you made my day. The beauty of the moment may have been fleeting, but the effect of it was lasting.

So I ask myself this question – can *I* make a moment of fleeting beauty change someone else's journey of life today?

A prayer for today

Loving God, your smile brightens my day. Might I do the same for others? Amen