

1st March 2024

Wear

**“O ruined piece of nature!
This great world should so wear out to nought.”**

William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Gloucester)

The title of this piece should be “Wear & Tear”, but since I’ve committed myself only to use a single word to introduce my “Thought for the Day” reflections, “wear” will have to suffice. I’ll maybe get to “tear” another time.

Through the winter when I was a small boy, I wore what we know in Scotland as “tackety boots”. In other parts of the UK, these would be “hobnail boots”, but they are one and the same: stout, laced, leather boots, with a stiff leather soul, the “tackety” or “hobnail” referencing the studs, tacks, nails – or “segs”, in our household – which were hammered into the soles to ensure the boots were long-lasting. I wore sandals or sandshoes (that’s sneakers, for my American friends) in the summer (though, in my father’s day the kids went barefoot) and tackety boots in the winter.

The great thing about tackety boots was that they were repairable. I remember my father on a kitchen chair, with a cobbler’s “last” between his feet, getting my boots ready for the winter: removing the old “segs”; hammering in new ones; making sure the soles were in order; giving the boots a good polish; checking the laces were OK. Tackety boots needed to be looked after if they were to last. They didn’t have to “wear out to nought” if you made sure they were ready for the rigours of winter. A wee boy with his tackety boots was ready for anything – including scuffing merrily along and making a few sparks on the pavement. Happy days!

You and I are no different. If we are to withstand the rigours of life – through this season of Lent, for example – we should take care of ourselves. Sometimes that means we have to stop, turn ourselves upside down, make sure we’re well repaired, get rid of the worn parts, fit what’s needed for the winter, give ourselves a polish and make sure all is in order.

Our faith has to be fit for purpose, and our sole (or soul, indeed!) needs to be checked regularly to make sure it’s in good repair for the journey ahead. We need the tackety boots of faith to walk safely, and with conviction, on the rough paths of life – and perhaps make a few sparks along the way, as we scuff merrily along.

A prayer for today

Time with you, Lord, even being turned upside down ... And I’ll be the better for it. Amen