

12th August 2025

Hospitality

"I am your host."

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

We've had visitors, which has been a delight. We enjoyed offering hospitality – and our friends clearly enjoyed being on the receiving end! So, we explored the area; dipped into cultural events; shared meals; talked a lot; enjoyed an occasional libation. And had a great few days!

In the New Testament's *Letter to the Hebrews* (attributed to St Paul, though the authorship is now uncertain) there is this instruction:

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

Our friends, of course, weren't strangers – or angels either! And we needed no instruction about the benefit of hospitality. But our time with them got me thinking of the value of hospitality for family, friends and community.

Hospitality is, clearly, "a thing", something that's done. But isn't it also an attitude of mind, an awareness, an approach to life itself? "Don't forget," says the writer to the *Letter to the Hebrews*. Keep your minds open. Be receptive. Be aware. Be in the right frame of mind – *all* the time.

In the late 16th century, the poet Robert Greene, "upon the death of the right honourable Sir Christopher Hatton, Knight, late Lord Chancellor of England", wrote an epic poem entitled *A Maiden's Dream*. One of the stanzas offers us an insight into this Lord Chancellor's hospitality.

*He kept no Christmas-house for once a yeere,
Each day his boards were fild with Lordly fare:
He fed a rout of yeoman with his cheer,
Nor was his bread and beefe kept in with care;
His wine and beere to strangers were not spare,
And yet beside to all that hunger greved,
His gates were ope, and they were there relived.*

Hospitality isn't just for Christmas; it's for every day. It's not just entertaining Lords and Ladies; it's feeding the yeoman's family. It's not keeping your bread and beef; it's sharing it with others. It's not about selfishness; it's feeding the hungry, relieving the deprivations of others.

"His gates were ope", so hospitality was the prevailing attitude of this Lord Chancellor's life. Might our gates of hospitality be "ope" like that?

A prayer for today

Angels? Unawares? When I offer hospitality? Goodness! That means I benefit too!