

15th May 2026

Quietness

**"I have loved quiet in a leafy glade
Where boughs embrace above a flowering way,
Deep amber pools at sunset where the stray
Soft twilight colours stain the willow shade
And woodlands where sweet silence dwells."**

Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff, I Have Loved Quiet

A recent trip to Liverpool to see Scotland playing in warm-up match before the World Cup was an interesting experience in lots of ways – most of which were *much* more interesting than the game itself, it should be said!

There were four of us, and we travelled by car. (A train journey, with two changes, would have cost over £100 each, while the car-trip was just over £20 a head. No encouragement for people to use public transport, it seems.) With three of us living in Edinburgh and one in Dumfries, we took one car to Dumfries – two-hours – and another car from there to Liverpool – a three-hour jaunt. The first journey was by an all-electric car, and the second in a petrol one. And therein is an interesting contrast.

For a start, we had to wait for an hour on the journey back for the electric car to be fully charged. But more fascinating was the noise difference on the journey. No, I don't mean the banter in the car. I mean the noise of the car itself. I've never travelled a long distance in an electric car. But I couldn't believe how quiet it was. Not silent, but *considerably* quieter than the petrol cars I'm familiar with. It was weird.

I remember as a small boy the contrast between the steam train I travelled with to Glasgow, and the diesel train from Glasgow to Paisley. Again, not silent, by any measurement, but the diesel train was *considerably* quieter than the racket of the steam trains I was familiar with.

The older I get, the more I value quietness – in "a leafy glade", or anywhere else. In an age of ubiquitous earbuds and headphones, with many locked in their personal world of podcasts, *Spotify* and *Amazon Music*, are folk frightened of quietness? Don't they know how to listen to the silence – or even beyond it? Wouldn't they value being with their own thoughts and not what's being given to them by others in words or music?

Whether I invest in an electric car or not is something I'll have to look at – but I'm sure to need a bit of silence so I can have a proper think.

A prayer for today

"A still, small voice." Maybe some silence will allow me to hear that too.