

Eventful Celebrations

How would you, or did you, celebrate your 80th Birthday? Have a big party for all your family and friends? Or maybe hire a restaurant for a grand dinner party? Or perhaps go on a luxury cruise? All classic ways to celebrate, but not too much fun if, like me, you have a very severe hearing loss and can't cope in crowded noisy environments. Rather than those options, I decided on a series of very different "events" with my three children, seven grandsons and some close friends. Each event being something specific that we had in common and could enjoy together.

First stop was, with my partner Lisa, to visit my elder daughter and her boys who live in Norway and whose partner has a "hytte" (log cabin) high up in the mountains. Like me, Norwegians love the outdoor life so what better than to do some walking in the spectacularly scenic mountains. Memories of Munro Bagging in my slightly younger days - and a great achievement only a few months after the second of two knee replacements.



My younger daughter, her husband and two boys are all keen historians and I have always been fascinated with the industrial revolution and Victorian engineering. So what better than spending a few days with them visiting the Ironbridge Gorge Industrial Museums, walking across the world's first ever iron bridge and a day visiting the famous Blists Hill Victorian Village where we could step back in time, including watching a very early silent movie.



There was no problem deciding on an event with my son, his wife and three sons as, like me, they are all mad keen AFC Wimbledon fans. With a few other close friends, we had a minibus to and from Plough Lane, a Corporate Box hired for the day, with a lovely pre-match meal, and the best seats in the stadium to witness a stunning 3-2 victory for our beloved Wombles. What a great day out! Come on you Dons!



The weekend before my birthday, Lisa and I had Saturday lunch with my younger daughter and Sunday afternoon tea with my son. Then for my actual birthday, I opted for some quiet pampering and, with Lisa, indulged in dinner and an overnight stay at the luxurious Gravetye Manor. It was a pleasant surprise on arrival to find a bottle of champagne from my friends.



That left me with my final event, which I wanted to spend with a small group of close friends with whom I have been walking for 20 years in the Ramblers. They have been regular visitors to my cottage in the Cotswolds, walking together and celebrating every New Year, bar one (Covid), for the last sixteen years.

I wanted to invite them to an intimate dinner party, but where to get a really good meal without going to a noisy pub or restaurant. Then I remembered, in the summer, going to a charity Open Garden Day where we had a delightful lunch in the picturesque garden. That was at "Second Helpings" where the hostess, Barbara, provides an excellent catering and entertaining service from her lovely home and garden. She prepared a delicious meal which we all enjoyed, as highlighted by some of the thankyou comments from my friends:-

"I thought Second-helpings was excellent and what a great place you found - it was perfect for you as you were able to hear everything. The food was delicious and may I say that the menu a very good choice. It made for a very novel evening".

"The venue was an ideal choice and the meal was absolutely delicious. I thought everything about it was really tasty. All in all, a lovely evening"

"Last night was an inspired choice, well done. I think it's safe to say we all really enjoyed it."



Thank you Lisa for providing the decorations and brilliant birthday cake, and thank you Barbara for providing us with such a lovely evening to round off what has been a most enjoyable few weeks of fabulous events to celebrate my new decade.

Finally, thanks to Emily for prompting the idea and a big thank you to all the family and friends who made the events so enjoyable and help smooth the dreaded transition from septuagenarian to octogenarian.

Adam Wilson