

2020 – A year to want to forget?

In future years the impact of the Corona virus on the UK will be documented thoroughly on the internet and this is not the place for a full historical record. However, some memorable images of what was happening in Settle from March to August 2020 are hosted here.

(Thanks to Dorothy Hemsworth and many others.)



Settle Market Place – not a person or vehicle in sight!



Doorways – check the instructions please



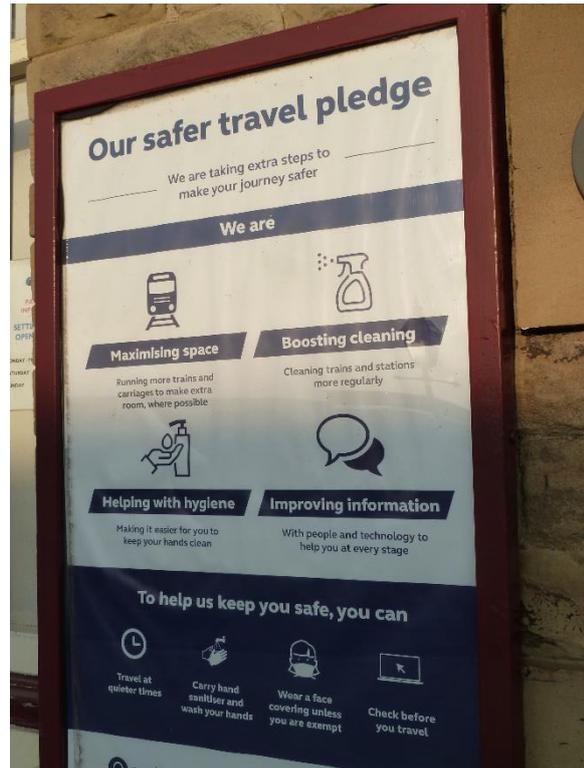
Support for the NHS staff was shown in many windows – the rainbow symbol being seen everywhere



Doorway etiquette



Signs everywhere



Travel by train



Queue two metres part – look for the signs on the floor or pavement – hungry visitors. Couples are in ‘bubbles’.



Discounts for care workers



How to eat



Cash not often accepted – contactless cards’ day has come



Control your child!

Decorated stones began to pop up all over the place



The common greeting between people was 'Stay Safe'

The celebration of VE Day (Victory in Europe) on 8 May 2020, the 75th anniversary was not forgotten





THOUGHTS ON THE PANDEMIC

July 2020 Ian Tennant

Over the last few months there has been intense preoccupation with the virus, its transmission, its treatment, and the need for a vaccine. There has been, quite rightly, a focus on the hospital services of the NHS. Our health service is designed to treat and to cure the sick, and a very fine job it does too.

Yet health is not just about the absence of illness. In 1948 the World Health Organisation set out a definition of health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. Whilst this definition could be considered to be somewhat “utopian” it does point to the concept that health should be about well-being as well as about the cure of illness. This brings us to the whole theme of public health.

In 1988 Donald Acheson, the Chief Medical Officer for England, defined public health as: “the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society. These efforts will address policy issues at the level of the population’s health and will tackle the role of health and disease, as well as considering the provision of effective health care services. Public health works through partnerships that cut across disciplinary, professional and organisational boundaries, and exploits this diversity in collaboration, to bring evidence and research based policies to all areas which impact on the health and well-being of the population”.

Since this statement in 1988 it can be said that whilst the rhetoric around public health has been impeccable, the reality has been disappointing. So in his 2005 annual report the then Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson upbraided the government for not doing enough about public health. Donaldson was critical of NHS organisations, by which he meant

Hospital Trusts, for raiding public health budgets to reduce deficits and make the books balance. This illustrates that in the world of health overriding power lies with consultant doctors based in hospitals. So there is then an enormous imbalance between a focus on treating and curing the sick and a focus on health prevention (keeping people well and improving well-being).

Yet this pandemic could bring a great deal of good in its wake. There is, for example, a clear spotlight on the social care of people in their own homes and in care homes. Governments for years have avoided this thorny issue as too difficult to tackle but the portents now look good.

Obesity is undoubtedly another national matter which has come into even sharper focus during the outbreak of the virus. If 63% of the people of this country are overweight with some 28% classed as obese then there are enormous implications for health.

Restrictions on movement for people, self-isolation and shielding have brought the whole question of mental health to the fore. Prior to the outbreak of the virus there was an increasingly recognised view that mental health was a comparatively neglected and under-resourced part of the health service requiring much improvement. Now the likelihood of mass unemployment as a result of Covid-19 plus the other outcomes of the pandemic will increase the need for a responsive mental health service.

So there is hope. Of course, major improvements of the type indicated above take years, not months, to implement. We live in an era when governments are all about short-termism and “quick fix”. Underlying everything mentioned here, in the public health arena, are the big structural issues of adequate housing for all, a fair society for all, effective universal education, waste disposal (particularly of plastic), global warming, sustainability and so we go on. But there is hope. Despite all the heartbreak over premature deaths, restriction difficulties, economic turmoil and the uncertain future there is hope.

Time will tell what the future brings – there are many lessons to be learned.