

ADVENT APPROACHES

The other day I watched, with a slight tinge of envy I admit, a skein of Pink Footed Geese flying overhead in their characteristic vee shaped formation, for aerodynamic efficiency I understand. They seemed free to go where nature and inclination took them. Unlike us in our present restricted lives. But it lifted my spirits to see them.

Then, this morning I opened my little window into Lincolnshire's wildlife, a weekly Bulletin* from the LNU (Lincs Naturalists Union) which informs me of wildlife sightings and events all over the county. One post I keenly follow is the ongoing "soap opera" of the breeding Grey Seals at Donna Nook. Most years I make a pilgrimage to see them around this time of year, and to take yet more photographs and observe their interesting behaviour. I always see something new. Of course this is not possible this year, as the reserve is closed to visitors. But the joy is that they ARE there anyway, and the cows are producing the appealing white clad pups just as always. So far there have been well over 200 births, and of course we're still counting, the season lasts well into December as the Cows and Bulls mate and the youngsters head off into the cold, inhospitable North Sea after a little while. Yes, the seals get on with what they do regardless of us, and I find that helpful.

And all this goes on as the days inexorably shorten and it gets cooler and more wintry.

So too does the season of Advent approach, the time when we have a chance to reflect on the coming of Jesus into the world, culminating in Christmas the Feast of the Incarnation. The churches (in the Northern hemisphere) have chosen to celebrate this momentous event during the darkest days of winter. And there is a 1 in 365 chance that they have picked the right day! But Advent also has a more sombre message, the readings often refer to what are sometimes referred to as "the Last Things" and appropriately some of the readings are a bit doomy as they reflect on the return of Jesus in his Glory to judge the world. Just as Mary, Joseph and other people in the Biblical accounts of the Nativity were ready to welcome Jesus into the world we are urged to be ready to meet and welcome Jesus whenever he arrives.

Right now I cannot guess how things will be during Advent and Christmas due to lockdown and so forth, Christmas will still happen as we cannot, should not, try to alter this fact. Even if we can't sing carols (which looks pretty likely, except perhaps in the shower) and visiting and festivities be rather muted we can still welcome the Incarnate Christ into our hearts and lives after we have spent a reflective and hopeful Advent.

With my love & prayers for you and yours

Alice

*If you want to explore the LNU Bulletin, just let me know & I'll send you a link