



A Strange Retirement

When I started work at the cathedral in May 2011, I was told that the Cathedral shop was situated in the cloister just outside a door called “miserrimus” – most miserable. This did not seem like a very promising start, however, the past nine years have been anything but miserable. It has been a great pleasure to be a small part of the Cathedral community, developing the shop, working with an enthusiastic and dedicated team and making many friends along the way.

My image of the typical shop volunteer proved to be very wide of the mark. One of my team had an MBE, one, in her eighties was still travelling the world, on her own. Another, also in her eighties, was playing competitive table tennis and yet another, whose roots are elsewhere in Europe, was able to recount stories of war and Nazi occupation.

Then there's been the privilege of meeting and talking with customers from far and near. I think of one regular couple who treat us all as their friends, he's a keen Liverpool FC supporter and once asked if I could obtain for him “on your computer” a Liverpool shirt. I duly did and he was thrilled. I started something there and have since, at his behest, obtained many items of Liverpool memorabilia. Is it part of a cathedral shop's function? I don't know but it's reinforced their love of the cathedral and its people.

I'd been mentally preparing for my retirement in June. Then, suddenly in March – the end! Since then I've been in a strange limbo, on furlough but knowing that I would never return. As my colleagues begin to think about going back to work, I am plotting a different course.

Retirement is an end but also a beginning. Apart from more time with family and other interests, I intend to devote significant efforts to doing my bit, my tiny bit, towards climate change campaigning. Covid-19 has taken over our lives but the climate emergency, unfortunately, hasn't gone away. We've now all seen what happens when a crisis overtakes unprepared governments. There is no vaccine for global warming and no cure once it has taken hold. We have, not a once in a generation, but a once in the history of the planet opportunity, to put things right and the time to do so is frighteningly short.

So you may not have heard the last from me but, for now, in hope, I wish all my colleagues and friends good fortune in what, without a doubt, will be a very different world.