

Of shop windows and human nature....some random ponderings!

Long time ago, when I was teaching, the dreaded Ofsted Inspections used to roll around with depressing frequency. Towards the latter years, it became the norm to nominate a colleague to be present when you received your 'feedback' from the inspectors. This was done because, sadly it is human nature to recall and dwell on negative feedback and ignore the positive. The idea being that the colleague would be able to retain a balanced view of what was said. I was forcefully reminded of this the other day in the shop. I had had a merry time 'setting' our Beltane window with lots of green men, logs and ivy. As is my wont, I trotted outside several times to check placing and balance. On the final occasion, I met a man taking a good long look. He complimented me on the window and said he always stopped to look, because our shop window is such a delight. We mused a while on the workmanship (I have in there some pieces by David Jermy of SummerIsle design). Turns out the gentleman to whom I spoke had been a pottery teacher. After a bit more chat, and a few more compliments, we parted company. Great! An hour or so later, an older couple walked by, casting a cursory look at the window, and through the open door, I heard the woman say, "Hideous things..." Now I know not whether she referred to the objects in our window, but immediately the glow of the previous gentleman's comments were obliterated and I found myself pondering whether this woman had been referring to our window and what was in there that could be described as 'Hideous' Sad, but true.



On a more positive note, we do love setting our windows and often receive compliments. What pleases us in particular is when people stop to look and gradually, a smile lights up a face, because they have seen something to delight. This is especially true of children. A number of parents and grandparents have told us that whenever their child/grandchild is given money as a gift, or when they have saved a bit of pocket money, they will insist on spending it at 'The Magic Shop'. It is a joy to watch them carefully budgeting the money they have; carefully choosing a crystal, a small figurine, but most importantly, enjoying the 'magic'. I recall as a child, going shopping with my mother. She used to go into the Market; at the time a huge barn of a place with trestle tables; the old fashioned sort. It was the highlight of my week to stop at the toy stall and look at the array of desirable things on there. Each week my brother and I were allowed to choose a small toy for 3d? 6d? I can't remember which. Some of you might not remember 3d! There was another shop which sold just about everything from fruit in sacks to paraffin. I recently found out that it was called 'Seeley's'. What an utterly magical place it seemed! I recall being fascinated by an animated advert for Lucozade, where a woman's wagging finger encouraged, 'Buy a Bottle Now' Oh and the metal Fry's chocolate advert! These places were magical to me. They weren't magical shops as such, of course, but still, places of mystery and excitement.

We often hope that children (and adults) will find magic at The Simmering Cauldron; in fact, we're sure they do. And if our shop enables youngsters to hang on to the feeling that there is magic in the world for a little longer, then that makes us happy. For indeed there truly IS magic in the world, but we sometimes forget....

Angela