

Dear Horace

For a hundred years we have not seen a virus as bad as this. It has been ripping across the world - Boris Johnson, our Prime Minister has led us through this pandemic.

Leaving school in March, I could never have possibly imagined that it would be almost six months until I would be back again. Seeing my friends walk away down the street it struck me that I might not see them for a long time. How long would it be? Driving back with my mum, I felt a strange longing for everyday life. We were all worried about an unknown virus and how would it affect us. I knew it was serious when I stopped getting the bus to school but I couldn't have imagined the time ahead. Early on in lockdown the Queen made an encouraging speech, urging us to stay at home; she praised our key workers who were working tirelessly to keep our country safe.

Outside everything has changed, fewer cars, fewer planes. It is very quiet. The juxtaposition of tranquilly amongst emergency is breath-taking. The world stopped. Empty buses patrol the streets.... their seats vacant.

When exercising its safer to run on the road than on the pavement. More people are out now, walking cycling, enjoying nature more.

Our daily routine has changed. Now I wake up at eight instead of six. Now we are stuck at home...but it means our family can have meals together 3 times a day. Our house is v busy, 3 different calls on 3 different floors. My sister and I are doing online school using platforms like MS teams and zoom. We had to do our end of year exams online. It was really strange doing my first exams on different platforms.

Every Thursday night, the community comes together and claps for our carers. It's moving to see the whole street coming together, appreciating all the key workers; it's strange - the sense of coming together while being so far apart.

Online shopping is the norm now, normal stores were empty and had queues extending round the corner. I first saw these astonishing scenes when we drove past our local shops in March.

Every day at 5 o'clock the government TV conference make deadly statistics seem banal.

Nestled in the middle of this lonely disaster was VE day – a day we were meant to be celebrating. The celebrations were muted though it still felt like a breath of fresh air during the pandemic.

When we saw our grandparents for the first time the ecstatic elation was overwhelming. I had to resist the overpowering urge to hug them.

Now the government have eased the restrictions and we are allowed to see people, it seems like we are stuck in a macabre purgatory where we can't go to the next stage.

We get fleeting glimpses of reality always with the threat that the freedom will be short lived. For now, we will take whatever liberties that we can.

Yours sincerely
Ben