

Thank you to Deb Bunt for our blog which is about friendship, books and meeting Pete Berry.

Peter Berry is a great friend but our lives could not have been more disparate. I have travelled extensively, I'm used to the pace of city life and I'm incapable of naming either flora, fauna, animal or vegetable (ok, I could probably name a turnip if pushed). Peter is a country boy, who has barely strayed from his birth place in Framlingham, who hates the fast lane of city life and loves the sounds and sights of rural Suffolk.



There were two unconnected circumstances which brought us together to forge this unique friendship: Peter's relatively new diagnosis of early onset dementia coincided with my desire to leave London and move to Suffolk. Without these two unrelated events, there would be no cycling, no books and, most crucially, no friendship.

My friendship with Peter has been well documented and, in our second book "*Walk with Me: Musings Through the Dementia Fog*", I wrote "Peter knows the value of a friendship, even if he does not know the layers of superficiality which encase it." This will never change. For Peter friendship is an emotional and not a factual transaction; the details might be hazy but the essential value of the friendship will remain, etched in his heart.

And it is through Peter that I have learned the true worth of friendship; it is through Peter that I have learned the benefits of living in the moment and to enjoy what life offers on that day, in that hour, in that minute.

Peter has described me (amongst other things far less complimentary) as his "plug in and save device". I am often his external memory because, quite simply, he does not remember events within moments of them happening.

A case in point: just after "*Slow Puncture*" was published, Pete Hill contacted me to ask if he could interview us on his radio show, "The D Word." It was a lovely interview and I remember great chunks of it clearly (not just the Arsenal related elements.)

Fast forward eighteen months when we met Pete and his family whilst they were holidaying in Suffolk. Peter was engaged with the conversation, cracking jokes and sharing anecdotes. Despite the introduction, he had absolutely no idea to whom he was talking, and yet he remained undeterred. All smiles and comradery, the two Peters posed for photos. And then, one Peter walked away with the memory of that meeting freshly packaged with a neat bow and ready to be filed in his brain, available to be revisited in the future; for the other Peter, that memory had been extinguished, snuffed out by the pinched fingers of dementia, and was gone by the time he cycled home. But it did not diminish the 'in the moment' pleasure that the meeting generated for him.

Peter is proof that friendships *can* be based on these precepts. Even if the finer details disappear, the emotional sensations live on and are equally precious. I have found that relating to Peter on this emotional, rather than a factual level, is essential but it has also demonstrated to me that friendships can come in different guises. How lucky am I?

Details of both of Peter's books can be found: [:https://peterberrylwa.wixsite.com/peterberry/the-book](https://peterberrylwa.wixsite.com/peterberry/the-book)