

Roll: **20251011-60252**

Camera: **Canon EOS 5D Mark III**

Format: **Digital:Full Frame:33MP**

Year: **2025** Month: **October**

Subject: Mizzled.

Notes:

Many years ago, perhaps as many as sixty eight, in the year 1957 Anno Domini, or thereabouts, Mam and dad took us to see an absolutely mesmerising spectacle. Lights and fireworks that were used to create magical tableaux with Robin Hood and Friar Tuck firing arrows from behind bushes at the Sheriff of Nottingham and his men, while we walked by rock pools and waterfalls and ships fought battles floating on the dark waters of a small river.

The memory continued to burn through both my childhood and adult life but I never could place the venue. Through my thirties and forties I vaguely entertained the notion that it had something to do with Trent Embankment and the Memorial Gardens. As is the way with these things while my parents were alive, I never thought to ask.

In 2008 I took the family for a holiday in Matlock and on Wednesday 8th March we walked through Matlock Bath and Derwent Gardens to the Cascades and bang it hit me. I was back in 1957, this was where the magic had happened, I recognised it instantly.

I read up on the Matlock Illuminations and vowed to myself that I would return again in Autumn and experience the magic once more and hopefully see the pleasure and awe in my own boy's eyes, but it was not to be. For one reason or another I found it impossible to get the family back to Matlock Bath at the right time of year, to find tickets or to book accommodation.

When I spoke of my memories to my sister, I found that she had been making an annual pilgrimage to Matlock Bath Illuminations for many years first with her own children then with her grand children. She would book into a hotel months in advance and buy the tickets to secure a place at the event. I dreamt of accompanying her on what for me would be a pilgrimage but that too was not to be.

The years went by and all too quickly we reached the point when my boy refused as hard as he was able, to engage with any form of public entertainment and was especially if it meant sharing any leisure time with his parents.

Then in October 2023, while Joseph was at college, Rahel agreed to accompany me in spending a week at Gilderoy in Matlock Bath. The trip was to be combined with a visit to Sheffield to visit Joseph. It was the time of the Illuminations and once there, I tried to get us tickets both on line and ticket office but the event was sold out.

This year, 2025, I finally twigged that I could take a train to Matlock, walk over High Tor to Matlock Bath, see the illuminations and take the train back to Nottingham in a single day. I bought the tickets at the beginning of July and looked forward to the trip with mounting excitement.

I booked for both of us but Rahel decided that she didn't want to go to Matlock Bath because secretly she suspected I had arranged to meet Becky or other members of my family there. I couldn't know for sure but it seemed that given my sister has been dead these past seven years, it was highly unlikely. The upside I suppose was that it saved the price of a rail ticket.

On the 11th day of October I caught the bus to Nottingham Midland Station and bought a cheap day return rail ticket at ticket office. The ticket cost £13:00 which I think is pretty good value for a lone traveller. It works out at a smidge over 13p per mile which is about the same as the marginal cost of taking the car if you discount parking charges. I left on 10:54 train and arrived in Matlock at 12:05.

It was a beautiful autumn day and when I disembarked I found myself to be immediately basking in warm sunshine. Think to hydrate before tackling the walk I tried the Mad Hatter Tea Room on Bakewell Road. Although it at first appeared packed, the staff quickly found me a table in the back conservatory and promised to be with me as soon as possible to take my order. Unfortunately after 15 minutes I still didn't have a menu so I decided to make a quiet withdrawal.

Walking through Hall Leys Park, the autumn leaves and the view of Riber Castle at the summit of Riber Hill quite stunning, picture postcard perfect. I stopped at "Café in the Park", which was also very busy, and queued for some time. I had booked a table for dinner at 5:00 in the Balti Restaurant in Matlock Bath and

being unsure how long the walk would take me I was anxious to press on. I skipped supping any beverages and settled for an ice cream and bottle of water for the walk.

Missing my way slightly at the southern end of the park, I made my way up Alfreton Road and on to Church Street, where I discovered the 12th century Matlock parish church of St. Giles. The Church was at the former centre of Matlock, adjacent to three pubs, of which only the "Duke William at Starkholmes" survives. The latter looks a good bet for a return visit.

I was surprised at the alacrity with which the High Tor Grounds presented themselves. I had only brought a lightweight fleece for the trip but I was wearing corduroy trousers and was already perspiring heavily on the start of the climb. I peeled off my fleece and succeeded in stuffing it into my molle tactical bum bag with my camera. Memories of the walks on the Tor with Rahel and Joseph and another on the Heights of Abraham with my sister, mum and dad danced before me. Every view point pulled at the anchors in my brain. The telephone mast as I approached the path down to Matlock Bath was new to me but everything else radiated with familiarity.

Despite many stops for taking photographs I made extraordinarily good time and visited "The Midland" for a half, before going to the Balti Restaurant. I was shocked at the prices. It was £5.40 for a half of Black Sheep Bitter, that's 60p more than I am used to paying in the Strat, and I think the Strat's prices extortionate. Still, I had another half and left for the Balti Restaurant, outside of which, I was surprised to find others waiting. Everything about the restaurant was familiar including the staff who gave a good facsimile of remembering me too. I was disappointed however, to find that the menu had changed and not for the better. All the dishes had reverted to old popular standards of the last thirty five years. To make matters worse we had a pointless contretemps over the bill when I went to the desk to pay. The bill had been prepared manually and the pence column appeared to have been reversed, being 58 rather than 85. The error was obvious at first glance because all the charges ended in zero or five. The payments wallah got in a state of high dudgeon when I pointed it out to him. He recast it in his head then got out a calculator and did it again. "It's eighty five, it's twenty pounds eighty five" he repeated. "I know but that's not what you've written, your robbing yourself" I said. I wished I'd never mentioned it and just paid the 58 pence as he seemed so highly offended.

It was starting to get dark as I made my way down to Derwent Gardens. I was called upon to apologise for the no show of my wife at the entrance as the digital ticket on my phone showed two adult tickets. "It's ok, I'm the concessionary ticket but my wife couldn't make it tonight" I said. The security man grinned broadly and waved me through.

The gardens had a number of fairground type vendors and a few rides and stalls. The Cascades had been roped off, which was a disappointment. I went over the southernmost Jubilee Bridge to the eastern side of the Derwent and walked back up the riverside looking for a suitable place to sit and I also kept an eye out for potential bushes, behind which I might pee if necessary. The path was closed off before the playground, I spoke to the security guys to see if I could pass through their cordon to reach the upper Jubilee bridge to go to the lavatories. They said I could but I would need to complete the circuit again to pass through ticket security if I wanted to come back. The few benches that there were, were occupied, so I found myself a comfortable rock at the base of the cliff to sit and wait for it to become dark enough for the show to start.

The master of ceremonies on the tannoy appeared to confirm that the event was about to start, I stood momentarily and immediately lost my seat. "Sit here grandad, come on sit here, you'll be alright." Curses. The m.c. had misled us, it was another twenty minutes before the boats had moved into position. All the while I was troubled by the idea that this might actually be the show, particularly as the "models" were being described and the winners of the best "model" prizes were being announced, but then came the ubiquitous public countdown to lighting up.

What a disappointment. Fourteen rowing boats with really quite paltry light displays, or "models" as the announcer kept calling them. I watched them going round in their dreary pageant for about half an hour. Illuminations? Pah! This we kept being reassured was the biggest and best Illuminations to date. There were more "model" entrants than there had ever been before. Pah!

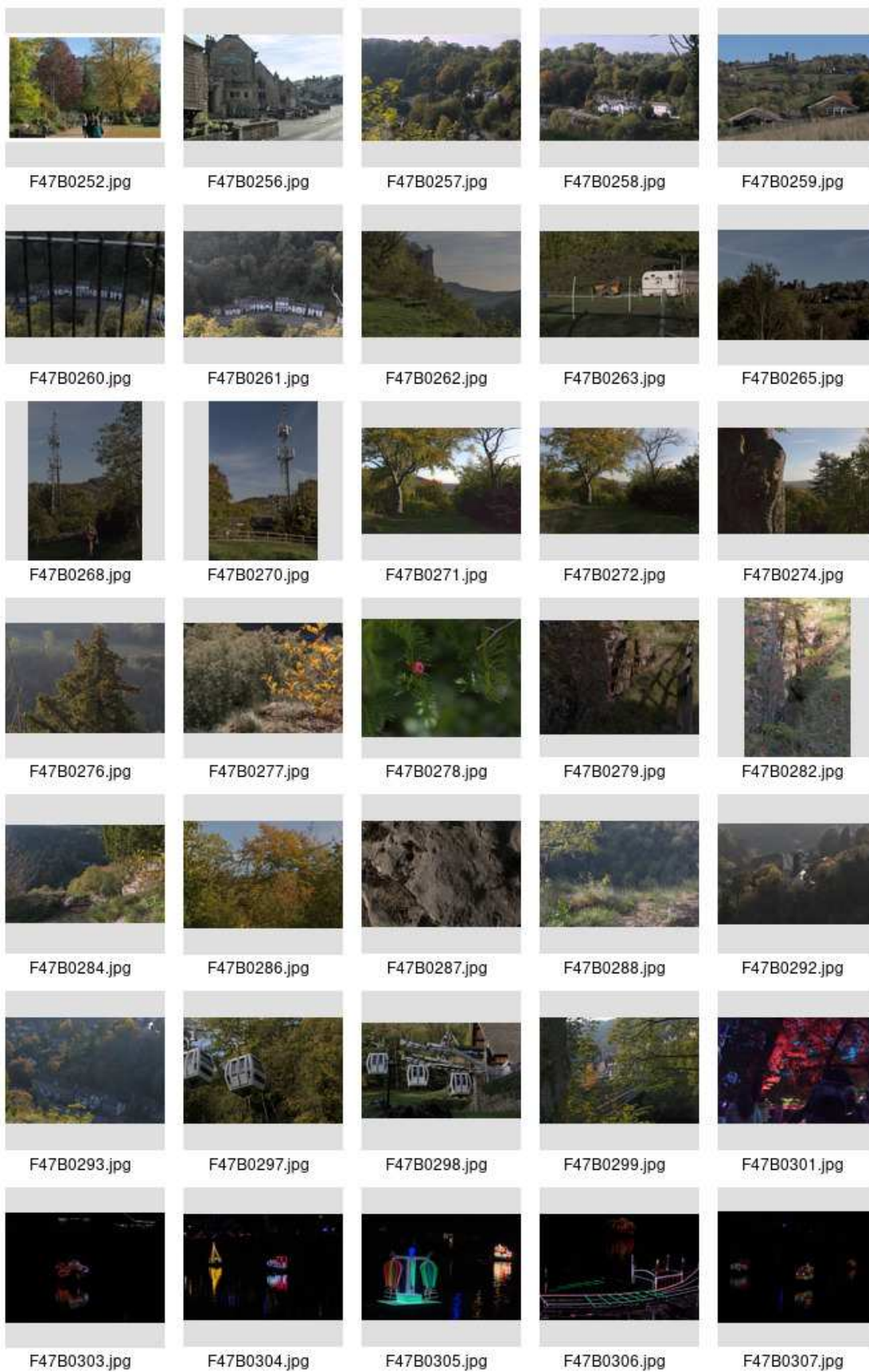
We were told by this patronising pain in the butt that the firework display would be around 9.30 and the best view would be from the west bank.

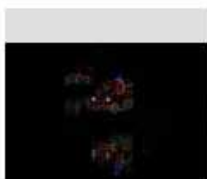
Some folks had already left so I joined an elderly couple on a bench. "Have you seen the fireworks display before I asked?" "No" the lady said, "Is it good?". "That's what I was going to ask you." I said, "I've never seen it either and I was wondering if it was worth sitting here for an three quarters of an hour in the cold and dark to see it." "We were wondering that but we think we might stay." I also volunteered that the show, so far, was rather disappointing and mentioned my treasured memories from a visit some sixty eight years

earlier. It turned out that she too had seen the illuminations in her childhood, not quite so many years ago as me but she also felt that it was much better then, "and I'm sure it was free." she said. I agreed that it probably was free, as I could not imagine my father ever paying for a family of four to visit a public spectacle. I checked the train times and confirmed that the 10:20 train was cancelled. This left a choice of the 9:20 or the 11:18. I didn't fancy waiting for the 11:18 which at best would mean arriving after midnight and at worst it too might be cancelled. In the circumstances I concluded the smart decision was to opt for the 9:20 and returned to "The Midland" for a pee... and another glass of Black Sheep.

Frames:

F47B0252	1110	13:44	Riber on the hill.	90	200	f6.3	1/200
F47B0256	1110	14:11	The Duke William at Starkholmes	65	200	f8	1/250
F47B0257	1110	14:19	Houses in the Derwent Valley.	70	200	f7.1	1/200
F47B0258	1110	14:25	Houses in the Derwent Valley.	70	200	f6.3	1/200
F47B0259	1110	14:26	Riber Castle	105	200	f7.1	1/320
F47B0260	1110	14:29	Roadside housing in Matlock Dale	55	200	f6.3	1/160
F47B0261	1110	14:29	Houses in Matlock Vale.	50	200	f5.6	1/80
F47B0262	1110	14:31	Cliffs of High Tor.	70	200	f13	1/640
F47B0263	1110	14:33	Youngsters and a dumper truck.	105	200	f8	1/400
F47B0265	1110	14:33	Riber Castle	95	200	f9	1/500
F47B0268	1110	14:43	Phone mast on High Tor	58	200	f14	1/640
F47B0270	1110	14:45	Phone mast and a fence.	32	200	f16	1/500
F47B0271	1110	14:45	Turner on High Tor	32	200	f14	1/400
F47B0272	1110	14:45	High Tor by Turner.	24	200	f14	1/400
F47B0274	1110	14:47	Cliffs of High Tor.	35	200	f22	1/160
F47B0276	1110	14:52	English yew on the cliffs.	93	200	f5.6	1/160
F47B0277	1110	14:53	Cliff edge on High Tor.	93	200	f5.6	1/200
F47B0278	1110	14:53	English yew on cliff edge.	105	200	f4.5	1/125
F47B0279	1110	14:55	Entering a mine.	58	200	f8	1/200
F47B0282	1110	14:56	Mine entrance on High Tor.	84	200	f5	1/160
F47B0284	1110	14:57	Cliff edge.	28	200	f8	1/125
F47B0286	1110	14:57	Autumn colours on High Tor.	47	200	f9	1/200
F47B0287	1110	14:58	Trace fossils on High Tor	105	200	f7.1	1/400
F47B0288	1110	14:59	Cliff edge on High Tor.	105	200	f4.5	1/125
F47B0292	1110	15:03	Matlock Bath in the mist.	93	200	f10	1/500
F47B0293	1110	15:03	Houses in Matlock Bath from High Tor.	67	200	f6.3	1/160
F47B0297	1110	15:16	Cable car to Hieghts of Abraham.	93	200	f5.6	1/200
F47B0298	1110	15:16	Cable car to Hieghts of Abraham.	47	200	f7.1	1/125
F47B0299	1110	15:21	North Parade from the Dale Road.	55	200	f7.1	1/200
F47B0301	1110	17:46	Lights in the trees.	65	25600	f4	1/40
F47B0303	1110	18:06	Chitty Flies Again.	105	200	f5	1/160
F47B0304	1110	18:06	Derwent Racer and Disneyland Paris.	105	800	f4	1/125
F47B0305	1110	18:06	Up, Up and Away - Fighting fires	105	2000	f4	1/125
F47B0306	1110	18:08	Gloriana L.E.D. and Chitty Flies Again.	102	200	f5	1/200
F47B0307	1110	18:09	Derwent Racer, Fighting Fires and Chitty.	58	200	f5.6	1/100
F47B0309	1110	18:09	Derwent Racer and Fighting Fires.	105	200	f5	1/200
F47B0310	1110	18:14	Peacock of the Peaks	105	16000	f4	1/100
F47B0311	1110	18:14	Dumbo of the Dales,	105	320	f4	1/100
F47B0313	1110	18:15	Four illuminated models.	58	2500	f4	1/50
F47B0314	1110	18:16	Knuckles by the Motley Bunch.	80	2500	f4	1/80
F47B0315	1110	18:17	Sound of Music.	105	320	f4	1/100
F47B0316	1110	18:18	Jaws tribute and Chicken Jockey.	65	640	f4	1/60
F47B0317	1110	18:18	Candle lit model.	65	2000	f4	1/60
F47B0318	1110	18:19	Illuminated models.	65	640	f4	1/80
F47B0319	1110	18:20	Illuminated models.	65	640	f4	1/80
F47B0320	1110	18:20	Illuminated models.	65	1250	f4	1/60
F47B0284	1110	14:57	Cliff edge.	28	200	f8	1/125





F47B0309.jpg



F47B0310.jpg



F47B0311.jpg



F47B0313.jpg



F47B0314.jpg



F47B0315.jpg



F47B0316.jpg



F47B0317.jpg



F47B0318.jpg



F47B0319.jpg



F47B0320.jpg