

Bearing it all in a pandemic

An illustrated note by Blair Stewart, 13 April 2020

We're all at it. Social distancing.

That is, staying at home. (Sheltering in place.) Or self-isolating. Or in quarantine. Or managed isolation. Keeping in a bubble.

(Well not quite all. It's a bit different if one works in an essential service or is the Easter Bunny. But even they come home each evening to their bubble.)

We have limited (physical) connection to the outside world although many of us will take a daily walk around the block keeping at least 2 m from those we pass (assuming we haven't already crossed the road to avoid them). Walks are not available to those at high risk (e.g. over 70) or in quarantine.

Some of us wear masks in places where we can't be sure of physical distancing. Such as the supermarket. There may be no medical consensus on their use but it may preserve our privacy against face recognition software. (And obscure our mumbled curses against those who come too close.)



Our doors and windows are the connection to the physical world. (Although actually we are far more connected through electronic signals coming in by wire, satellite or the air to our TVs and devices.)

In medieval times doors of houses with residents infected with the plague used to be boarded up and marked with a cross with the victims inside. No TV or supermarket deliveries either. We've come a long way.

Windows are like a window on the world. So, to speak. It used to be said that the devout Dutch didn't draw their curtains to assure their neighbors they've nothing to hide. I don't know if it was ever true that the Dutch had nothing to hide. Or that they left their curtains open.

We in New Zealand are, of course, generally not very devout and have plenty to hide. To deter people from peering in windows during these uncertain times the custom has arisen of placing models of fierce beasts in windows, bears preferably. Privacy Foundation NZ Committee members have generously agreed to share photos of their windows to encourage this key security technique.



Marie has installed this semi-covert high-level surveillance bear at her home.



Kathryn has her home protected by a Yeoman Bear from the UK. After all they have protected the Tower of London for centuries.



Bears are very rare in Barbara's part of the country but a fox is just as scary.



Given the risk, Blair has enrolled three bears to protect his place, one with suitable medical training.