

Surviving Summer Horridays

from the diaries of a Modern Mrs Bennet by Tracy Spiers

Mrs Bennet is a mother of a five small daughters who like Jane Austen's Mrs Bennet in *Pride & Prejudice* does her best and is on the look out for young Darcys of the future. She is often seen running or having a date with Mr Latte to escape the monotony of daily chores. Mr Bennet occasionally lives in a shed to escape the increasing hormones.

– a few tips for any parent or grandparent with apperidages



"I'm not sure why they call it the summer holidays. Summer implies sun, and holidays a rest. At times, it's more like summer horridays, so I must devise a cunning plan," thought Mrs Bennet as she debated the best coping strategy for the impending six weeks. Coming up with 10 action points was the only way. Like a cake, she'd chop the weeks up into bite-size chunks, take a day at a time and ensure it is digested with the help of her beloved Mr Decaf Cappuccino or extra hot Mr Latte.

She scribbled the following:

1 Visit travel agent, book six weeks away to Remote Island. Don't tell Mr Bennet until

the night before departure. Stock up freezer, leave him the survival list and pack for ONE individual, not seven.

2 As above is fantasy, aim for five minutes' sun at some point, encourage children to splash water in bowl and pretend I'm sunbathing next to five-star pool.

3 Google all child-friendly gardens and attractions in the Cotswolds, recall successful trips of the past like Birdland in Bourton-on-the-Water; Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge; Prinknash Bird and Deer Park and Cotswold Farm Park, Guiting Power near Cheltenham. Funny that they all have birds or animals.

They say don't work with animals and children, yet the two work well together. I'm not getting a dog though.

4 Stick to the simple. Library, park, museum such as the Corinium Museum, Cirencester; Museum in the Park, Stroud; Gloucester City Museum or Waterways Museum, Gloucester Docks; treasure hunt in garden, painting patio with water, making cookies, holding tea party for dolls or take them to Winstones on Minchinhampton Common for a run around and ice-cream. Recall discovering a state of the art park in Broadway which was absolutely fabulous. The children enjoyed it too!



Ink and collage of girls at Stroud's Museum in Park

5 Be creative. Pick up cones and leaves from forest floor at Westonbirt Arboretum, near Tetbury; Batsford Arboretum, near Moreton-in-Marsh; Cirencester Park or Stratford Park, Stroud and turn into collage or make rubbings; do brass rubbings at Gloucester Cathedral; look at art workshops at the New Brewery Arts, Cirencester; make daisy chains; hunt for nature or

Heffalumps along the cycle paths, Cotswold Way or on our lovely Commons; make up a story with found treasures. Must remember to take bag of gold chocolate coins just in case.

6 Plan a Mummy or Granny treat each week. Leave children with Mr Bennet and hunt out all the wonderful galleries and coffee shops. Pick a Cotswold

town and just go. Try a cheese crumpet, buy a packet of childhood sweets to recapture youth; finish a conversation; admire the architecture, find a historic fact from the place visited; laugh; climb the highest point of that town and buy a postcard and send it to myself.

7 Make up a fabulous picnic – making unusual bits for it ►