

BROADLY SPEAKING

Our man behind the gates, **Richard Jordan-Baker**, shares life living at Broadlands



I write in late April after yet another month with an email from 'headmistress' editor Elizabeth, as I am barely on time with my contribution. I wonder if my fellow contributors are early, on time or, like me, require a polite and friendly nudge to get cracking and deliver? I do now have sympathy for those that write who have to deliver their thoughts weekly, or, unimaginably, daily. I can imagine sitting in one's PJs, empty-headed, minutes to a midnight deadline, with a blank page staring into the abyss of nothing at all. Awful.

Just recently at Broadlands we hosted a very worthwhile fundraising run for Help for Heroes with just shy of 150 people running 10km to raise money. As ever with these events there was a tremendous mix of competitors from those athletes that easily bounded along and seemed to finish in no time at all, to those less fit and less able who – regardless of their own lack of athleticism – bravely completed the course to help those less able than themselves. I tip my hat to them especially. There will be more brave souls in May running in the Romsey Rotary Marathon – our biggest charity event of the year.

On the wider estate the bluebells were glorious this year and right now the wisteria is as good as I have seen it. The colours seem more vibrant and vivid than ever and the smell wafts constantly on the breeze through the open window and across my desk. Almost all the leaves are on the trees and hedges, the calves are larking about, now in a gaggle together and apart from their mothers, and the buzzards glide on the thermals high above everything and everyone. At home our pair of kestrels have returned for their fourth year and are very busy doing unmentionables on a large bow high up in the dead tree and maybe the swifts will at last inhabit their very own boxes we installed five years ago.

Two weeks ago the recognition of inevitable age, my own that is, mixed with the sheer joy of fragile, new life. We have chicks. Eight literally featherweight individuals pushed their way out of their shell homes having consumed all the energy filled contents and arrived in our lives. We had five from one mother and three from another, both Peking bantams. Our boy, Kenneth, fathered all. Here, all cockerels are called Kenneth. It's a thing. After registering the births with DEFRA, rearranging all chicken arrangements to ensure chick safety and buying the necessary crumb mix, they have quickly become the centre of all attention and all activity revolves around the Secret Seven. Yes. One has perished somehow so we moved swiftly from the G8 to the Secret



Meet one of Broadlands' Secret Seven chicks

It's in the jeans

Seven. Hopefully by the time of publication we're not down to the Famous Five or the Gang of Four! So, that's the fragile, new life.

Then, there's the inevitable ageing process. It all started when I decided that new jeans were required. How difficult could that be? I would simply go to West Quay, find a suitable shop, find a pair of jeans, buy them and come home. Surely a short, stress-free, solo mission, without budgetary worries or any need for concern? But no. Instead, all of the above. I won't dwell on the visit to the very famous denim shop with the sort of Biblical name. I left feeling 100 years old and without the need to spend over £100 on a pair of casual blue trousers! Next, a large and famous 'corner' department store where there were no staff whatsoever with whom to discuss the variety of options. I was, after all, advised prior to leaving home, to 'ask the man'. With no man, or woman, to ask I retreated to the other 'corner' department store. I think they're called 'anchor' stores if you are a budding city centre developer. I was now amongst dozens of pairs of blue jeans. Bingo! Here we go. No problems. Or

so I thought. (Apologies, that sounds very Clarkson). Skinny. Slim fit. Straight leg. Loose fit. Tapered. Baggy. Slim straight. I could go on. I will. Relaxed fit! Straight taper. Aaaaahhhhh! With the bewilderment mounting I began to lift examples off the rails and hold them up to my waist and outside leg. Crikey. Have I become a really short person overnight? They were huge. Maybe I was in the Peter Crouch department. Help came by ringing my fashion guru in Lincolnshire – long term best friend and ex-model, Sara. The sort who would look terrific in 48in marble-washed, straight-tapered, fat-fit, skinny latte. I won't even start with coffee; another minefield of bewilderment. Having ascertained that I needed a 36in waist, 32in leg, straight leg jean, yes – you've guessed – not a single pair on the rail. Is it just me?

Currently being read is *Cloistered: My Years as a Nun* by Catherine Coldstream. I will report back next month on whether it really is a 'gripping and rich memoir'. In the glass is Riverlore 2022 Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Perfectly good Monday evening drinking. ●