

BROADLY SPEAKING

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



There was a lot of reminiscing recently at my Mother's memorial service in the flat lands of Lincolnshire. There were, after all, 89 years of life to look back on with no shortage of truths, half-forgotten tales and badly remembered stories. I had the honour of providing the address.

At the end of it I handed my sister my mother's wedding ring; to my eldest niece went my mother's silver-topped walking cane and I gave my youngest niece my mother's brown-striped Maidstone Grammar School tie, from 1947. Because, although we all have our memories, I think it's good to have something tangible to keep and treasure.

This event, a celebration of life rather than a funeral, brought me to think about reminiscing, its pros and cons, its dangers and its pleasures.

I think one of the things we miss most when someone close to us dies, is that the ability for shared reminiscing is lost, forever.

Reminiscence is, essentially, history. Simple. It is narrating stories, normally, but not always, with those who shared the experience. I am always fascinated by people who have no or little interest in the past. After all, none of us have the skill of learning from the future. But yet some seem happy to muddle through without a thought of asking others that were there at the time for any insight into what might have occurred. Odd, to say the least.

In the last cogent conversations I had with my mother we talked of how, when I was about six, the Bishop of Grimsby visited our home and gave me my very first brand new 10 pence coin and how I then went to the village sweet shop and bought three Mars bars. Three for 10 pence, with change! Then, how I would always take my boarding school exeat weekend for the FA Cup Final as it was for me the best day of the year, beating Christmas and my birthday, whoever was playing, and how I would always have beans on toast with fried eggs on top, just after the two teams arrived on their coaches at Wembley.

So with November here it will not be long before the end of the year. The estate is at its quietest in the winter months and thoughts go to what went well, what went not so well and what is to be learned from the last 10 or so months. What do we need to change and what do we want to change. Are there better ways of doing things? It is a good time to reminisce, not necessarily about the price of confectionary in the early 1970s but about more recent history. Did we set the right objectives for the year? Was the budget suitable and realistic? Can we measure our successes and failures?

After a request from a reader, Richard shares what he's reading and drinking this month



The way we were

Some say that we don't learn much from success and that it is failure that teaches us lessons. I don't necessarily agree. We probably learn more from failure than success but if we don't consider and discuss success, how can we be sure that we learn to repeat it? These questions, and many more, are our conversations in the darker months with the shorter days.

So. Reminiscing. Almost certainly good, useful and thought provoking as long as not wallowed in and only looked at through rose tinted spectacles. That is its danger.

Its pleasure is that it provides some comfort, some learning and some laughter.

But, probably more importantly, it keeps family, (and other) stories and tales alive for the newer generations. It goes with the wedding ring, the cane and the old school tie.

Finally, for this month, after a request from my reader, what I am drinking and what am I reading? Well, drinking as I write, Hochar, the second wine from Chateau Musar in the Lebanon. A famous and wonderful winery that has kept going through many wars and I hope it manages through its country's current struggles. And I'm reading, David Bowie guitarist, Earl Slick's autobiography. Because I can never know too much about the greatest rock star to have lived. ●