

22nd March 2020

Back-up

**“Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack;
For those behind cried ‘Forward!’
And those before cried ‘Back!’”**

Thomas Babington Macaulay, Lays of Ancient Rome

Pinned on the corkboard above my study desk, there’s an old, brown envelope labelled, *Lexar Backup January 2020*. I use a *Lexar* USB stick for my writing, and, having lost some of my material some months ago through my own stupidity, I now back things up regularly, because I don’t want to lose important thoughts again.

In this period of enforced isolation – however long it lasts – I’ve found myself more and more unwilling to look very far ahead. Some cry “Forward!”, but I’m less able to follow their instruction. Of course, I can do the *Carpe Diem*, thing and “live in the moment”. We’ll all find our ways of doing that. But I’ve been doing more of the “back-up” stuff, thinking about the past and taking what matters with me into this unknown and uncertain future. I’m listening to voices that cry “Back!” – not to retreat into the past, but to take solace and lessons from it.

My wife’s digitally preserving family photographs from the beginning of the 20th century. I’m writing about my early childhood memories. There is much in the past that’s worthy of our “back-up”, much more than could be contained in any old, brown envelope or a fancy USB stick; so much to be thankful for; so much to keep safe.

A prayer for today

*God who is our Alpha and our Omega, our beginning and our end,
who was, and is, and ever shall be,
remind us of your past blessings; sustain us with your attentive love;
walk with us into the unknown future –
as we trust your promises of constancy and faithfulness. Amen*

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