

24th June 2020

Advice

“It was, perhaps, one of those occasions in which advice is good or bad but only as the event decides.”

Jane Austen, Persuasion

I shared with you recently my participation in two marathons with teams of local people. When I was in my thirties, however, I ran the whole 26 miles 385 yards *by myself* – twice! I was no great shakes as runner – four hours and ten minutes being my best time – but finishing was a massive achievement for me, and I’m grateful I have the medals to prove it! I looked to *Running Magazine* and other publications (pre-Google days, of course) and good friends for advice: proper running shoes; warm-up techniques; training regimes; the best routes; warm-downs; wet-weather running; hydration; injuries. It was all important. Advice mattered.

On a training run one day, I’d struggled up *The Mound* (one of Edinburgh’s steepest hills) and had stopped at the traffic lights. Jogging on the spot, breathing heavily and sweating profusely, I was conscious of an empty hearse drawing up beside me belonging to a familiar company. I was too exhausted to offer even a nod of recognition. But the Funeral Director wound down the window and suggested, “It looks like you may not make it home, Mr Gordon. But, if you lie in the back, we can give you a lift, if you like.” By the time I could think of a clever response, the lights changed and the hearse had gone – along with the advice.

There’s lots of advice around just now: some sage, and some complete rubbish; some we’ll take on board, and some we’ll discard; some will be helpful, and some is easy to dismiss. But, whatever the advice, we have to decide for ourselves, weigh up the options, and make the best choices we can. As Jane Austen said, advice can be good and advice can be bad. Whatever the event, only you can decide.

And me? I finished my training run under my own steam, thank you, and didn’t need advice from any Funeral Director to carry me home.

A prayer for today

Lord, before I decide, offer me – the guidance of sage advisors; prayerful reflection as I weigh up the options; and the wisdom to make the right choices for me. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>