

ANDREA

Under lockdown, a tradition spread from one Brunswick office to another: At day's end, a colleague sent a short essay to his or her working-from-home office mates. These notes were funny, sad, inspirational and philosophical, and often sprinkled with favorite recipes, TV shows, and games. On May 6, Graham Carter, Contracts and Data Manager, sent this note to his colleagues in Brunswick's London office.

TODAY, 6TH MAY, IS A DAY THAT HAS BEEN ETCHED in my mind for well over 40 years as it is my mum's birthday. That used to make it a day of joy and happiness.

That changed at 5:13am on 6th May 2018, when I received a call from St. Christopher's Hospice in Sydenham, informing me that my wife, Andrea, had died. I then had to do the hardest thing I'll ever have to do, which was to tell my son, Ben, that his mum had died. This broke my heart. A bit later I had to call my wonderful father-in-law to let him know that his daughter had died. That broke my heart too.

Andrea had an amazing inner strength and her Yorkshire grit and determination shone through from the moment her consultant spoke those fateful words in October 2014: "Your mammogram showed signs of cancer."

Her daily question to herself was, "Will complaining about it make any difference at all? Yes or No?" To which she answered, "No, then don't complain about it." And she didn't. No complaining when secondary breast cancer was found in her arm leading to shoulder replacement surgery. No complaining when little metastases were found in her brain, leading to gamma knife surgery. Still no complaining when more metastases were found in her liver. She handled it all with a smile and immaculate nails.

Will complaining about it make any difference is a question I've asked myself a lot recently. The answer is no. This lockdown is what it is and we need to adapt accordingly as individuals, as a business and in the wider society.

Recalling his late wife's courage

During this time, I've often wondered how Andrea and I would have dealt with the lockdown together, and with Ben too. We'd have probably driven each other up the wall. Our little foibles and annoying traits, which we'd usually take for granted, would have been magnified. I know that she would have smiled whilst putting stuff in the dishwasher purposefully in the wrong place (I have a process).

If there were two ways of doing something, we'd



Graham and Andrea with their son, Ben, in September 2017.

find them. More often than not we'd end up in the same place, which was always the important part. The lockdown has shown us all that there is more than one way to do something and achieve the same goal.

This was read at Andrea's funeral. It's from Winnie the Pooh and it makes me think of her and smile:

*If ever there is a tomorrow when we're not together
there is something you must always remember,
You are braver than you believe.
Stronger than you seem and smarter than you think.
But the most important thing is even if we are apart,
I'll always be with you. ♦*