Is nursing in the UK losing its appeal as a profession?

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**JANE BATES**

The perils of alcohol

Listening to some of the older generation reminisce about the good old days, I was transported back to my childhood and a vow I made that when I grew up, alcohol would never sully my lips.

It’s kind of ironic. Like so many of us, I am embracing Dry January, aware that too much was imbibed over the festive season. But it was different when I was young.

‘Do you remember,’ said one older patient, ‘when we used to take a red hot poker from the fire and put it into a bottle of stout to warm it up, to boost our iron intake?’

The NHS was bright, shiny and new, but the public were still used to self-medicating, and alcohol was a key component in many folks’ formulary. My grandparents used spirits for just about everything (toothache, sore throats) and even revived a dying pet with brandy.

I learned not to complain about a cold, or feeling tired, because they went straight to the drinks cabinet. Out came the whisky (to soothe the throat) or the sherry (for its supposed tonic abilities) and my fate was sealed.

I can’t help but smile remembering those days when, for many of us children, alcohol was a nasty medicine, and therefore deemed punitive. The memory certainly helps me through this period of abstinence.

Now I just need to carry it through to February... and March...