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PENELOPE WILTON
SARAH STANDING
JOHN TORODE
LISA FAULKNER
SALLY MAGNUSSON
SUSIE DENT
& JEREMY PAXMAN

Mark Gatiss

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for bringing back
Sherlock – and starring
in Mission: Impossible



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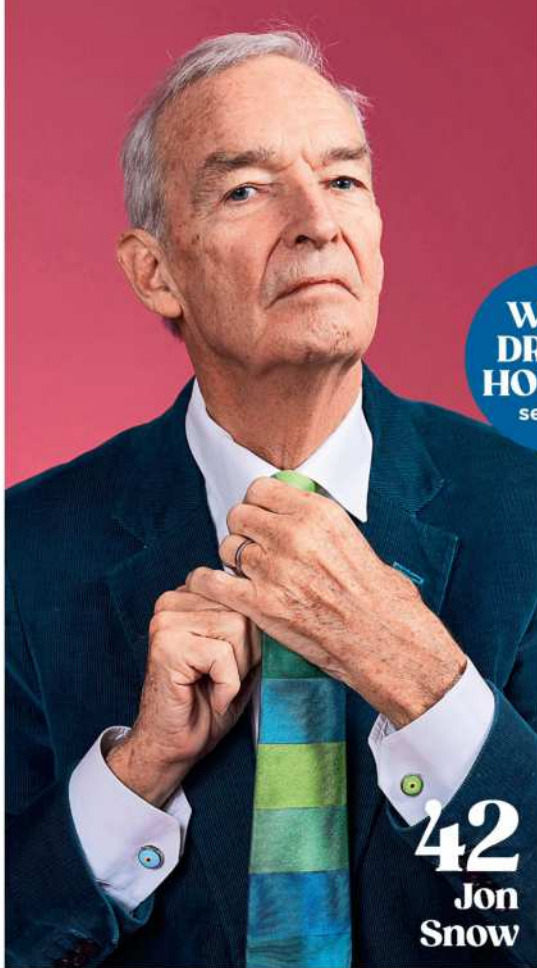
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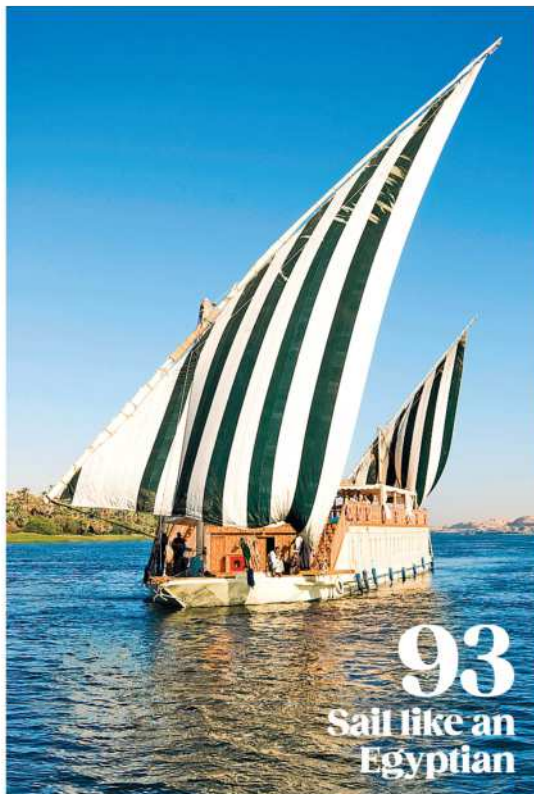
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Welcome Euan Sutherland

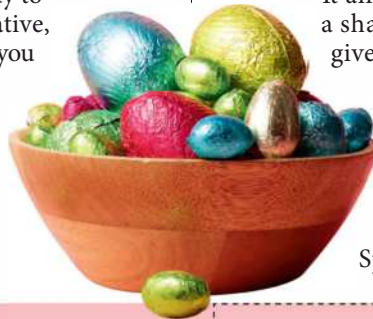
A very happy Easter to you all; I do hope the Easter bunny is generous. Here at Saga, we've been on a hunt of our own - for new products and services to inspire our customers across our businesses.

In our Travel business, we continue to deliver new experiences. Following huge interest in our first ever private jet escorted touring holiday that will take in cultural highlights from Rome to Rajasthan, we've launched Africa Uncovered, a 22-night private jet tour that will take customers on an unforgettable adventure though Ghana, Namibia, South Africa,

'Our dream is for Saga Village to become a way of connecting our customers to fantastic events'

Botswana, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya. And we have searched out new destinations and opportunities to explore off the beaten track from Costa Rica to Canada.

I'm proud to say that after months of research and planning, we are almost ready to cut the ribbon on our latest initiative, Saga Village, a digital hub where you can explore your interests, find brilliant online experiences and connect with others. We'll launch with our online health suite in the next few months. Perhaps you might start the day with a morning tai chi or yoga



class. In the afternoon you might join a lecture by a world-class expert sharing the latest thinking in their field or enjoy an evening wind down to help you sleep. And, if you need to speak to a GP, you'll be able to use the 24/7 private GP service.

Imagine exploring the world from the comfort of your own home with our online Travel expeditions, enjoying Spanish lessons, or attending an event at our online Playhouse. Our Library will host our book club, the Games Room will have the latest puzzles and bridge club. Our dream is for Saga Village to become a way of connecting our customers to experience fantastic events.

It all sounds hugely exciting - and it's a shame it hasn't yet been launched, given that I will have more free time than I anticipated this Easter. My sons are off skiing, and my wife Jacqueline's second book, *Twin Truths*, is being published. That leaves me home alone looking after the dogs. Where's a Spanish class when you need one? *



Euan Sutherland
Group Chief Executive Officer

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Hello, everyone

I hope you are all well and gearing up for the lovely long weekend. I'm extending my Lent chocolate ban this year and giving Easter eggs a wide berth. I shall be sticking to the real kind instead now that I've read about the huge health benefits they bring (p78).

Talking of berths, I've just - very reluctantly - disembarked from the Saga Magazine cruise on board our very beautiful and boutique ship Spirit of Adventure. A tough assignment, but I always feel it is so important to lead from the front, don't you? I was joined by a merry band of our regular writers, including TV personality Nina Myskow, tech writer Jonathan Margolis

'It was life affirming spending a week sailing around the Canaries talking magazine shop'

and our health columnist Dr Mark Porter. As Mark told the ship's packed Playhouse theatre, coming on a cruise was probably the easiest and quickest way to see a doctor these days. It was certainly life affirming spending a week sailing around the Canaries talking magazine shop with our lovely guests. We can't wait to do it all again soon, so watch this space for details.

I really hope you enjoy this issue. As a massive Sherlock fan, I was particularly pleased that the fabulous Mark Gatiss agreed to be our cover star. He was great fun on the shoot and the picture that opens the interview (p24) is

Centre stage
Nina Myskow
and Louise
Robinson



one of my favourite shots ever. Huge congratulations and thanks to photographer Pal Hansen for working his magic so brilliantly.

We have been overwhelmed by the response to our request for your Coronation memories. You can read some of them on our letters pages (p112) - but do please keep them coming as we are running more next month.

Have a wonderful April.

Louise Robinson

Editorial Director
Saga Magazine



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This month's CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Hardman
Royal Yacht, p38
The Daily Mail
journalist has covered more than 80 royal tours, and interviewed three monarchs, one emperor and five Prime Ministers. He has also ridden the world's biggest horse.



Jon Snow
Guest Column, p42
Best known as Channel 4's news anchor for 32 years, Jon now spends his time writing and making documentaries. He loves cycling around Primrose Hill, where he lives with his wife and two-year-old son.



Sally Magnusson
The World According To... ,p129
Broadcaster and novelist Sally lives in a farmhouse with her husband. They have five grown-up children and two grandchildren, who often come to stay.



MHJeeves
Older Love, p85
The illustrator has worked with clients from *The Guardian* to Selfridges. She uses a dip pen, ink, and collaged elements to create scratchy little pictures intended to be humorous.



Our April picks

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by VICTORIA GRAY



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Jeremy Paxman

In contemplative mode, our columnist considers the philosophy that we can only see what we are employed to see. Should people really be judged by their jobs?

The other day I was holding forth, when I heard myself saying, 'Of course, no man is a hero to his valet.' Reluctant though I am to disillusion readers, I do not have a valet. In fact, I have only once met a valet, when I went to stay with the Prince of Wales a few years ago, and he seemed a little pitying towards me (the valet, not the now-King, who, like father, like son, seems to reserve his pity for himself).

Perhaps he had guessed that I don't have one of his nomenclature of my own, although it's more likely that he couldn't believe I was unable to tell my bedroom from my dressing room.

By the way, the posh people who employ them know the word is not pronounced as a French import - 'vally'. Instead, it's pronounced as if we all had learned our foreign languages at the feet of our late lamented Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative party Edward Heath: 'vallet'.

Who cares now? We are long past the days when footmen fought duels to establish precedence and proctologists opined on the fate of empires, but still the figure of speech lingers on, usually attributed to some pre-revolutionary philosopher who seems to have believed that we can only see what we are employed to see.

But at the heart of this philosophy is a belief not in the unheroic nature of

the human animal, but in the inability of the valet to see heroism, merely because he is a valet. Imagine the outrage of the thought police if we were to argue the position the other way around: no man's valet can be a hero.

Monsieur Jean Passepartout, the valet and true hero of Jules Verne's 1873 novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*, would have a barely noticed walk-on part, while Phileas Fogg, the nincompoop who made a fuss about the temperature of the water in

his shaving bowl, would earn all the plaudits from the bores who have spent their 80 days festering away in gentlemen's clubs.

Michael Palin, an ingenious cove if ever there was one, seemed to manage well enough without one in his TV series *Around the World in 80 Days*.

The true meaning of the aphorism I quoted so thoughtlessly is that those who see the dangly bits

or are witnesses to the paunch, cannot imagine positive or even great things of the man who possesses them. This is absurd.

Hollywood may pretend that all the good guys have perfectly toned bodies but we know that good things - and bad - are done by all of us, even society's heroes.

Nelson Mandela may have been in pretty good shape for a man of his age due to an adult lifetime of imprisonment, but I would not care to speculate on the condition of the off-white Y-fronts worn by F W de Klerk, his partner in the end of apartheid. There was a man not only with no valet, but without even a factotum.

So let us now praise famous people and our fathers and mothers who begat us and not dwell too much on what our valets think of us. No one can or should be judged by someone who knows the quality of their underpants.®

I have only once met a valet, when I went to stay with the Prince of Wales a few years ago, and he seemed a little pitying towards me'





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Jenni Murray

There's nothing more attractive than an immaculately dressed man, says our columnist, so don't save suits for special occasions

Winter at last is over, spring has sprung, the temperature is rising, but instead of obsessing about what I'm going to be wearing now I can throw off the thick sweaters, I've been thinking about men. They too can put their weighty overcoats back in the wardrobe for another season. So, what should they be wearing?

No more 'working from home' jogging pants and sloppy sweatshirts, please. The pandemic is done. What needs to make a comeback is a suit. Look at the recent prominence of the BAFTA and Oscar nominations of one Bill Nighy who, my contemporary at the age of 73, knows exactly what makes a man look marvellous.

His collection of blue suits is renowned. He apparently turned up at a recent magazine photoshoot with an impeccable set of Savile Row suits from tailors such as Anderson & Sheppard and John Pearse. And he has allegedly turned down film roles because they would have required that he doesn't wear a suit. Surprisingly, his obsession seems to have nothing to do with being grandiose. 'They just give you some kind of oomph to get you through the door,' he says. 'I think there's a certain age after which you can't look, however self-consciously, unmade. You have to look made. I tend to overdress because I can say to myself, "Well, at least I've got the suit. It may have me in it, but there we go."'

He is not, of course, the only shining example of how attractive an older man can look in a good suit. We'll be seeing a great deal of King Charles as the date of his Coronation looms. Also in his early seventies, a well-cut suit emphasises his broad shoulders and slender physique. It makes him look powerful.

But even a great suit can't compare with a uniform. Not that I'm expecting the blokes with whom I'm familiar to go around in military dress,

but there is something about a man who does. I have no doubt it was my husband's look as a naval officer 40 years ago that bowled me over. These days, I have to make do with a suit and a slightly bigger tummy than of late. But a well-tailored jacket hides a multitude of sins.

There seems to be some evidence that young men are learning the power of a good suit. The actor Paul Mescal, another Oscar nominee, has sported one recently and looks kind of smart, but hasn't quite got it right. A suit needs a good shirt and tie, and he tends to wear a white vest under his jacket. A bit too Stanley Kowalski, although Paul was brilliant in the part in the recent production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

I've no doubt my fondness for a man in a suit began with my grandfather, Walter Jones, a working-class Yorkshireman who was a winder in one of our local pits in Barnsley, winding men up and down the shaft and bringing up the coal they'd hewn from the seams underground. Work meant overalls, but when he came home it was straight into the bath and dressing up to pop out for a pint.

Into one of his suits he would go, perfectly put together. His shoes glistened. He would stand in front of the mirror, ask me if his hair was sticking up at the back - it never was - pick up his silver-topped cane and off he would go, promising to be back in time for dinner. He generally was and was never drunk.

He never wanted to be seen in public after work without being immaculately dressed. Each year, my parents and my grandparents would take me for a week's holiday to Blackpool. Grandma would wear a pretty dress and a cardigan. Mum wore a frock and sandals. Dad, who taught me to swim, wore trunks and I, of course, had a swimsuit. Grandpa? Shirt, tie, socks, shoes and a suit to sit in a deckchair on the beach. Bit much, maybe, Grandpa, but you taught me dressing well would be good for me and was, in the end, good manners. ®

'No more "working from home" jogging pants and sloppy sweatshirts. The pandemic is done'

IN OUR EXPERIENCE...

John Torode and Lisa Faulkner

The celebrity chefs on writing romantic notes, their blended family and why being cooked for by friends fills them with joy

John, you asked Lisa out by writing her a note a couple of years after she won *Celebrity MasterChef* in 2010. Why not just call her?

John: Partly cowardice and partly I believe in romance and the written word. We still leave notes for each other now. My father once told me whenever he was going on his travels my mother would slip a note in his bag. Finding it was one of his greatest joys. I still have an old note Lisa wrote for me that I keep in my washbag.

Lisa: Just a simple 'Have a great day!' note left by a teacup is a lovely, romantic thing to do and John is definitely a romantic.

You're not coming across as a stereotypical macho 'Ocker' Aussie

J: No, I think I was probably 'metrosexual' long before the term was invented. I left Australia because I didn't drink beer, I wasn't good at rugby and there were certain words and name-calling that resulted because of those things. Fortunately, I'm totally comfortable with that side of myself. I think it's important to talk about feelings and to hug your children and have them hug you. I still hug my father and vice versa. I can't imagine not doing so.

You have five children between you: Lisa's adopted daughter, Billie, 16, and John's four (two of them teenagers, two in their twenties). You used to say the Drew Barrymore movie *Blended* was your favourite family film. Do you still get together to watch it?

L: When the kids were little the movie seemed to be all about us. Now they're grown up you're more likely to catch us laughing at the game Cards Against Humanity. There's a lot of joy when we all get together and we do that as much as possible. Although they're all good cooks themselves, on those occasions, they are perfectly happy for John and me to do it!

by DAPHNE LOCKYER

And do they all get along?

J: They have the odd falling out, but that's siblings and family life. Mostly, though, they really like each other and rub along pretty well. As they get older, the more 'blending' takes place because they turn up with their partners. I become my grandparents, who I used to laugh at - I'm the one saying, 'Take this home with you, dear!' while forcing leftover cheese or dessert on them.

'Waste not, want not' is one of the themes of your ITV show *John and Lisa's Weekend Kitchen* isn't it?

L: Certainly, right now it is, because people are struggling and we're conscious of that. This series we hope to show how to eat well for less - pork chops are cheaper than lamb, chicken wings are inexpensive and delicious.

J: And if you make risotto today, you can have arancini tomorrow. We try to inspire people in the kitchen, no matter what their budget.

You're a great on-screen couple. Do fans tune in for the chemistry as well as the cookery?

J: Recently, our producers said how difficult it would be to manufacture an on-screen relationship like ours. Fortunately, it comes oven-ready because we're already a couple. We're completely at ease with one another and, like a dance partnership, we know each other's moves - in fact, I think we only bumped into each other once in the new series! We also happen to like each other quite a lot and, hopefully, that also shows.

The relationship comes across as a lovely blend of chemistry and camaraderie. Which of those matters most in your fifties?

L: They both matter a lot in any relationship, at any stage of life. Like

Culinary duo in the kitchen and (be/ow) with Gregg Wallace on *MasterChef*





any good recipe, you need a little bit of salt, a little bit of spice, and a little bit of sugar. I'm lucky to have a husband who's also my best friend, someone I can chit-chat to endlessly, someone who really cares for me and who I care for equally. I'm also lucky that I think he's pretty sexy.

But can it be difficult to keep the romance alive when you're living and working together?

L: It might be if we were doing it every day...
J: But, aside from *Weekend Kitchen*, we both have our own careers apart. Lisa could be acting [she's recently filmed a new role in the

'A relationship is like a house: you can't let it fall into disrepair'

BBC One drama *Waterloo Road*] and I'm about to start filming the next series of *MasterChef*. In terms of time together, that will be it for quite a while.

So, can the separation be harder than the intensive together time?

J: We try to make sure we're OK with both. For me, a relationship is like a house: you can't let it fall into disrepair. So even when we're both working really hard, I'll be like, 'John, go and do something nice, mate. Go and buy some flowers or take Lisa to the pictures.' I like to remind her I'm there for her.

The culinary scene is constantly changing. Will the new series of *Weekend Kitchen* reflect that?

J: Yes, and change is what keeps this job so exciting. I remember cooking with coriander on *This Morning* in 1997 and Richard and Judy saying to me, 'Where do you get this stuff?!' Now it's a supermarket staple. In this series we'll talk about, say, kimchi and gochujang - ingredients viewers might never have heard of. But, at one time, chorizo was the same.

John, you're 57 and Lisa, you have just turned 51. What's the best thing about getting older?

J: I'm perpetually jealous of people in their youth! But getting older has opened my eyes to the world. I love going for a walk, appreciating nature, watching a sunset - the things I didn't have the headspace for as a young bloke because there was too much going on. My head is clearer now. Plus, I've found someone pretty amazing to grow old with.
 L: For me it's all about relaxing into the good things of getting older. We live in a world where everything's channelled for young people and it can make you feel invisible. But it's on us to say, 'I'm not invisible'. I've got the time and the wisdom to really appreciate being alive and I happen to be living my best life.

What's the most important lesson life has taught you?

J: I'll steal a line from a professor's speech at my son's graduation. His advice was, 'Never waste precious time procrastinating. Just make a decision and if it's wrong that's OK because you can always change it.' I've found that to be totally true in my own life.
 L: I learned a lot through my experience of three unsuccessful IVF attempts and then adopting Billie. I learned that no matter how you become a parent you never own a child. You have to work at that relationship. You can't just say, 'Well, I'm the parent and you're the child so do what I say.' You have to earn it. Having Billie opened my eyes to the special love that exists between parents and children and that feels like such a gift. I still get doe-eyed over every baby and yet the personal longing has gone. Maybe it's hitting 50, being menopausal and knowing



On-screen chemistry
 John and Lisa share a joke on *Weekend Kitchen* and (be/low) Lisa with adopted daughter Billie

it's no longer possible. More likely it's having a life that feels so magical as it is now.

And, what makes you laugh?

J: So many things. My children, especially. This morning, one of them called me 'a cow' and that tickled me. Laughter makes the world go round and it's usually better than anger or outrage. We recently got served soggy wedges instead of roast potatoes at a restaurant. We could have got shirty, but the spuds were so wrong and so bad it just gave us the giggles.

'No matter how you become a parent you never own a child. You have to work at that relationship'

If you were ministers for the Saga generation what would you lobby for?

L: How about a fully paid, three-day weekend for the over-50s?
 J: Make that four.

Your friends must find it slightly daunting to cook for you both...

L: We're lucky our friends are all amazing cooks. A group of nine of us hang out and eat at each other's houses. We all bring a plate and it's always delicious. If anyone were daunted, I'd say: 'You've no idea how excited we are somebody's cooking for us!' It's such a generous thing to do, like giving a part of yourself. We'd never judge what's on the plate.

What would you miss most if *John and Lisa's Weekend Kitchen* ever ended?

J: Well, working with a pretty girl, for starters, and hearing people say how much they love the show. Then, there are the moments when a crew member lets out an involuntary grunt of pleasure at something we've cooked. That really makes my day.*



John and Lisa's *Weekend Kitchen* returns to *ITV* and *ITVX* on 8 April at 11.35am

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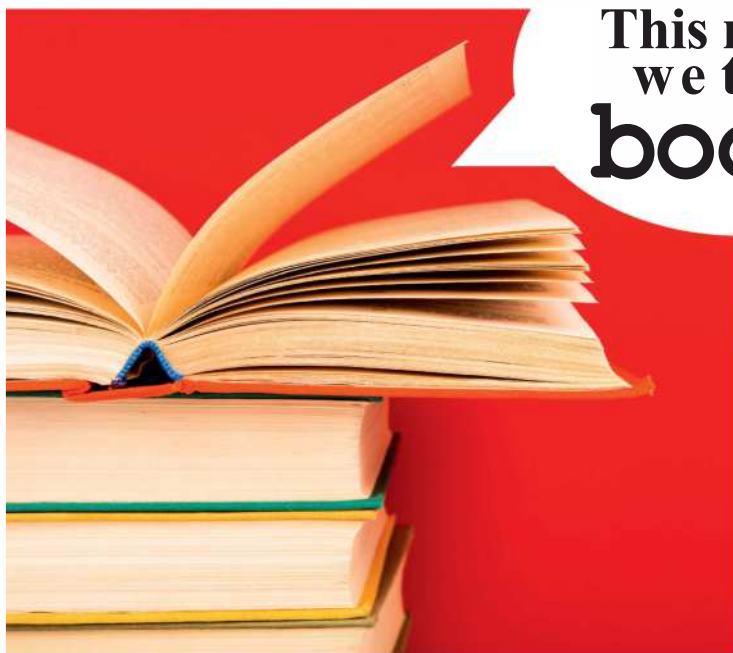
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This month we talk... books

then the other two. Self-help books were near rejected, especially by men (2%).

Although half own an e-reader, 68% prefer a paper book. Audio books aren't wildly popular either: 12% of men have listened to one, as have 26% of women.

Debbie Hicks, founder of The Reading Agency charity, is heartened by our survey: 'We know one in three people don't read for pleasure, so your survey shows what committed readers there are out there.' As she points out, those who read just 30 minutes a week are 20% more likely to report greater life satisfaction, and 19% say it stops them feeling lonely. The charity runs in-person and phone/online book groups to bring people together (readingfriends.org.uk).

It isn't the only benefit of reading - especially fiction. One study found people who had just read a story and empathised with the characters were kinder afterwards than those who read a newspaper - and they still scored high on empathy a week later. Other research says those who read more fiction than non-fiction have stronger 'social cognitive' skills. These are things like interpreting facial expressions, understanding the thoughts of others and responding to their emotions - all traits associated with having healthier relationships and less illness. Is any genre best for this?

'My research has indicated that comedy may be particularly associated with some social cognitive skills,' says Dr Rose Turner, psychology lecturer at the Open University. 'Others have suggested that the complex narratives found in literary fiction may hone social cognitive skills.'

But do we know why women tend to be keener readers than men? One theory goes that women are drawn to fiction because they have higher empathy/social skills and enjoy getting to know characters. We do know that the difference appears in childhood. 'More girls read daily than boys (34% vs 26%) and it seems to continue and widen as the years go by,' says Debbie. 'There may be something around gender expectations.'

The good news for all readers out there is that a good book may even help you live longer. A study in the US found that adults aged 50+ who read books regularly had a 20% lower chance of dying in the 12 years after the study. There was no such advantage for readers of magazines. Sorry about that.®

Each month our insight team conducts an in-depth poll of Saga customers to find out what you're thinking. This month: what do you read?

by RACHEL CARLYLE

The author Ian McEwan once handed out free classic novels in a city park one sunny lunchtime. Women accepted enthusiastically, but men frowned in distaste. 'When women stop reading, the novel will be dead,' he concluded. A cliché? Yes: Saga's men do enjoy reading - but nowhere near as much as the women.

In our survey of 2,500 customers, women get through 11 books a year on average, compared to five for men. And 44% say it's one of their passions, compared to 27% of men. Half of women read every single day (46%) and for at least 30 minutes (10% for more than two hours).

What do you read? Both sexes read more fiction than non-fiction, the favourite genre for both being crime fiction, which was named in the top three by 67%, followed by historical fiction (42%). Next for women was literary (31%), then psychological thrillers (29%). For men it was psychological thrillers (23%), then science fiction (20%). Almost everyone hated horror (2%).

With non-fiction, travel came top for women (50%), followed by memoirs/biographies (45%) and history (42%). Men put history top (53%),

73%
read one book
at a time

47%
give up a
book they
don't like
within
50 pages

42%
of women
read more
than 20
books a year



What do you think?
Join the conversation by emailing your thoughts to us at editor@saga.co.uk

He's the co-creator of *Sherlock*, the BBC's most successful international hit, so when we meet Mark Gatiss, there's one question we want to ask before all others: will the eccentric detective ever return to our screens? Happily, it sounds like there's a distinct possibility he will. 'I'd love to make a *Sherlock* film for the big screen,' says Mark, who co-wrote four series before the drama came to an end in 2017.


Mark, who plays Sherlock's brother Mycroft in the series, knows there would be no shortage of interest in a big-budget cinema outing starring the show's two leads, Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman. And he's not the only one. Co-writer Steven Moffat has said he'd 'do *Sherlock* again tomorrow', Freeman recently confessed his 'door would always be open' to the idea, and Cumberbatch has said he'd 'never say never'. So, what are they waiting for?

Mark is diplomatic. 'The success of *Sherlock* made Benedict into a big star and Martin into an even bigger star,' he says. 'Getting them together would be the problem. Even when we were filming the fourth series, it was increasingly difficult to get them in the same place at the same time. But, who knows? It would be nice to get the elements aligned and see what happens.'

Sherlock - sold to 231 countries - is one of many projects touched by the seemingly magical hand of 56-year-old Mark, who shot to fame in *The League of Gentlemen*. He has written nine episodes of *Doctor Who* and appeared in three, co-created and acted in the 2020 hit *Dracula* and is currently in ITVX drama *Nolly*.

He'll also be starring in the forthcoming *Mission: Impossible* film (*Dead Reckoning Part One*, out on 14 July). Plot details are firmly under wraps, but Mark has revealed that he had to pinch himself when filming scenes alongside Tom Cruise as he's been watching his movies since he was 14. 'That was... amazing, just a fantastic experience,' says Mark. 'The weird thing was that [my husband] Ian and I were living in a hotel just off Oxford Street in central London during the filming. We were having some work done on the house at the time, so it felt like we were tourists, which was actually a lot of fun. When you've lived in London a long time, it's easy to forget what a beautiful city it is.'

As if his Hollywood film role hasn't kept him busy enough, Mark has also recently directed Moffat's play *The Unfriend* and is about to star as Sir John Gielgud in *The Motive and the Cue* ☺



From *Doctor Who* to *Dracula*, Mark Gatiss has written, directed and acted in some of TV's top shows. He talks about starring in the movie *Mission: Impossible* and ITVX's *Nolly*, taking to the stage and why he'd love to bring back *Sherlock*...



Mark of success

interview DANNY SCOTT
photography PÅL HANSEN

at London's National Theatre. Directed by Sam Mendes, the play depicts what happened when the 60-year-old Gielgud and Richard Burton, 39, worked together on a 1964 Broadway production of *Hamlet*.

Mark grew up in Newton Aycliffe in County Durham, the son of a miner in an area that, even in the Seventies, was still dominated by coal and heavy industry. Mark, though, was fascinated by TV, cinema and books. 'When I told my careers teacher I wanted to be a writer or work in telly, he said I was living in a dream world,' he recalls.

By the age of four, Mark also knew he was gay. 'Obviously, at four, I didn't really know what "being gay" meant, but I was aware of certain things which made me feel funny,' he says. 'Being gay wasn't an issue; I was never the tortured soul. At 15, I told my schoolmates and I was sure that my older brother knew.'

Telling his mates was one thing, but he knew coming out to his parents - especially with his dad's background - wasn't going to be easy. 'I put it off and put it off until my mam asked me about it one night,' he recalls. 'I must have been about 20. At first, it felt like this massive weight had been lifted off my shoulders, but then I realised we still had to tell Dad. Mam said, "Don't say anything. It'll kill him." Although she told him a couple of weeks later, it hadn't been properly dealt with. It just became this thing that Dad didn't talk about. And he didn't really talk about it until a few years before he died [in 2021, aged 89]. We were having Sunday dinner in the local pub and, out of nowhere, he said, "My mates kept telling me that they couldn't have lived with a gay son. They wanted to know why I didn't kick you out. How could I? You were my lad!"

'Dad's attitude certainly mellowed in his later years. I think that had a lot to



'When I told my careers teacher I wanted to work in telly, he said I was living in a dream world'

Showreel
in *Doctor Who* and, below from left, *Sherlock*, *Nolly* and *The League of Gentlemen*



do with loneliness. He lost my mum to cancer in 2003, then my sister to cancer at 50 and my brother-in-law to a stroke at 52. He'd say, "No one understands loneliness until it happens to them." He got himself a lady-friend and became a lot less judgemental about the idea of love. I wouldn't describe my coming out as easy - I was only 18 when I first had sex with a man, so my homosexuality was illegal - but if you compare that to what the previous generation went through, I got off lightly.'

Mark could be referring to Sir John Gielgud, the man he'll soon be playing and one of the acting world's best-known 'secret' homosexuals. Gielgud's arrest for cottaging in 1953 was a national scandal and, having recently been knighted, he assumed his career was over and considered suicide.

'Because of his arrest, everyone knew he was gay,' says Mark. 'But coming out was impossible to contemplate for someone of his generation. Even in later life, he still felt he had to hide the truth, which is sad. The arrest drove him to a nervous breakdown.'

Although Mark never knew Gielgud, he is friends with several people who did, such as Simon Callow, who has advised him how the star spoke off-stage. 'To be honest, it's not the voice I'm worried about as much as the hairstyle,' he adds with a laugh.

'I haven't got much hair left myself, but I'm having most of it shaved off to get that particularly old man's look that Gielgud had. I'm going to leave it till the last possible moment - I will be wearing a lot of baseball hats in between performances. At least when playing Larry Grayson in *Nolly*, I got to wear a wig!'

Like Gielgud, Grayson was another of the previous generation's gay stars that had to 'pretend' they weren't. 'If





you were watching telly in the Seventies, the only gay icons you had were people like Larry and John Inman,' recalls Mark. 'Gay, but no hint of a partner or, God forbid, a sex life! I know a lot of gay men who totally resented Larry and John, and I can see what they're getting at. But when I spoke to Russell [T Davies, writer of *Nolly*] about Larry, he saw him as a torchbearer. An overtly gay man on prime-time telly.'

Nolly wasn't the first time Mark and Davies had worked together. Davies, the driving force behind 2005's *Doctor Who* reboot, produced two episodes written by Mark. 'I'm not lined up to do any more, but I am very excited for the upcoming 60th anniversary and the choice of Ncuti Gatwa as the Doctor,' he says. 'To me, the show has always moved forward; full of imagination and unconventional ideas. You can spend all the money in the world, but if you haven't got that spark of imagination, you end up with something like *Avatar*, one of the most boring films ever conceived. I couldn't give a monkey's about it - you're just watching money burn on screen.'

**Work-life
balance
With husband
Ian Hallard**



Despite the year's packed schedule - he is already in talks about a new Christmas ghost story for the BBC - Mark insists he is getting better at a work-life balance. 'My husband, Ian [Hallard, an actor and writer], has made me realise I don't have to say yes to every bit of work I'm offered. It is OK to go on holiday.'

But didn't Ian get you to direct his play, *The Way Old Friends Do*? 'Technically, that was work, but I was also able to spend every minute of the day with the man I love, which was wonderful.'

No arguments or creative differences? 'We've been together over 20 years and, creatively, we're on the same wavelength,' Mark asserts. 'Having said that, when we first met and he told me he was an actor, I didn't think we'd ever become a couple, especially as we met on the internet. In the late Nineties, internet dating was in its infancy. We didn't even tell our friends that was how we met in case they thought it was all a bit dodgy. How things have changed.'

The couple live in London with Bob the Labrador - 'anytime we feel broody, we get a dog!' - and Mark's collection of ghost story anthologies and vintage horror films. 'When I was growing up, we used to live opposite a Victorian psychiatric hospital,' Mark recalls. 'After Dad finished at the pit, he worked there, which meant it became part of our lives.'

'One summer, Dad got me a job looking after the gardens. Some of the patients were just old women who'd been thrown in there as young girls because they'd had babies out of wedlock but there were a couple of scary characters. Did working there contribute to my northern gothic sensibilities? Did it help me to understand that your life can suddenly turn a sinister corner just because this person says you broke the rules? Yes, it probably did.'

'We're very privileged in this country and it's easy to imagine that people no longer have to suffer the horrors such as those that the women who were locked away went through. But look at what's happening to gay men in Afghanistan and Chechnya. Look at America. Battles we thought had been won years ago - like abortion rights - are reversed. It's as if we're travelling back through time, back to Sir John's arrest and the Fifties.'

'What's that quote from Thomas Jefferson? "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." He was right. A single politician and a single election can change everything.'

The Motive and the Cue *is at the National Theatre from 20 April.*
For tickets, see nationaltheatre.org.uk

In the early hours of 12 October 1984, Margaret Thatcher was in her hotel room overlooking Brighton seafront doing what she loved best: working. It was a Friday, the last day of the Conservative party conference, and the Prime Minister was with her speechwriters in the lounge of the Napoleon Suite on the second floor of the Grand Hotel polishing the keynote address she was to give later that day. By 2.45am it was done and her speechwriters left.

A bright moon glowed over the Channel. Denis Thatcher was in the suite's bedroom, asleep. The Prime Minister, still in a ballgown from evening festivities, was wrapping up some pending minor government matters. At 58, her energy levels remained indomitable.

She went to the bathroom - even the Iron Lady needed time-outs - and returned to an armchair opposite her private secretary Robin Butler. He handed her a document. It was 2.52am.

Two minutes later, a bomb hidden in room 629, five floors above, detonated. A fireball whooshed through the sixth floor, unleashing a roar like thunder. The Irish Republican Army had set a time bomb to wipe out Thatcher and

her cabinet in the most audacious attack on the British state since the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

The explosion shredded rooms and punctured the roof on the eighth floor, firing tiles into the sky. Two great chimney stacks wobbled. One crumpled and fell, sending five tonnes of Victorian masonry plunging downwards.

In the Napoleon Suite, Thatcher heard a muffled crash and felt the lounge shake. Plaster dropped from the ceiling. A window shattered. After a few seconds of silence came a rumble as an unseen cascade gathered speed and violence. She went to the window, suspecting a car bomb on the promenade, then into the bedroom. Butler, frozen, watched aghast as Thatcher opened the door and vanished into darkness. He could hear the adjoining bathroom collapsing.

Moments later she reappeared with Denis. With fire alarms hammering, they all scrambled to a room across the corridor that appeared unscathed. The rumbling cascade stopped. Thatcher sat down and murmured: 'I think that was an assassination attempt, don't you?'

The bomb missed the Iron Lady. It didn't even scratch her. But it came very, very close.

The chimney stack's collapse multiplied the

Front page
news
Reports of the
explosion hit
the headlines



THE NIGHT

MRS THATCHER INEARLY DIED

When the Brighton bomb exploded in the Prime Minister's hotel in October 1984, it very nearly changed the course of history. Now, a new book uncovers just how close the Iron Lady came to being killed

by RORY CARROLL

blast's destructive force. Like a homicidal avalanche it smashed through concrete, steel and wood, sweeping all in its path before crashing to the basement in a two-storey tall pile of wreckage. Had Thatcher still been in the bathroom, instead of in the armchair 12 feet away, a blizzard of broken glass, ceramic, and concrete would have sliced her to ribbons. She escaped by two minutes.

Even in the lounge, however, she could have died. When the chimney stack fell it veered



sideways before plunging vertically, like a guillotine. Thus it obliterated a stack of rooms ending in 8, rather than adjacent rooms ending in 9. Thatcher's suite encompassed two rooms, 129 and 130. The vortex's swerve saved her. History pirouetted on a twist of geometry.

The attack was the culmination of painstaking IRA planning. The Prime Minister had been a target since 1981 when Bobby Sands and nine other republican prisoners died on hunger strike. The IRA had sent scouts to previous Tory conferences, contracted a construction engineer to study the Grand and tested bombs and timers before sending one of their best operatives, Patrick Magee, to plant the device. It was not just revenge. After 15 years, Northern Ireland's Troubles had reached a stalemate. Killing Thatcher could change the calculus.

She survived but the shocking scenes from Brighton ricocheted around the world. The promenade resembled a war zone. Smoke filled the air. Guests coated in dust and blood - some in tuxedos and ballgowns, others in pyjamas - stumbled out of the hotel. Sheets, pillowcases and curtains hung from lampposts. AV-shaped gash scarred the hotel's facade. Among those huddled outside a rumour spread that Thatcher



Lucky escape
Margaret and
Denis Thatcher
leave the scene
after the blast

was dead. There had been 286 people in the Grand, including staff and police. Most were unharmed as only a handful of sea-facing rooms - the VIP rooms - bore the brunt. Some guests, however, were entombed in rubble.

Bodyguards spirited Thatcher out of a rear entrance, so she did not see the scale of damage nor realise that friends and colleagues were fighting for their lives. Norman and Margaret Tebbit had been asleep in room 228 when the maelstrom hit. They ended up buried in debris in the ruins of the reception area, both grievously injured and unable to move.

Hours earlier, the industry minister had received rapturous applause from the party faithful. Now he was curled in a foetal position, a sticky mass of broken ribs and a punctured lung, with his skull squeezed as if in a vice. He felt his guts sloshing. Inches away lay Margaret. A huge weight pressed on her neck yet she (C)

She felt little pain - as a former nurse she knew what this signified. They passed the hours in this black, muffled hell speaking of their children. She did not tell her husband about the paralysis creeping through her body.

Firefighters feared heavy tools could collapse the mound so they used hands, knives and saws to clear a passageway to the Tebbits. They asked a BBC crew to illuminate the scene with TV lights. A nation watched as breakfast TV broadcast the rescue of Thatcher's lieutenant and his wife. A paramedic preparing drips asked Norman if he was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' he said, 'bombs.'

The assassination of Lord Louis Mountbatten, blown up with his family on a boat in 1979, had in a sense been a rehearsal for this even more consequential operation. For the IRA, Thatcher was the head of the British 'war machine' and a legitimate, precious target. Magee, the bomber, was in a hideout in County Cork, glued to a radio for news. He was a veteran bomber and member of a secret IRA department that organised attacks across the Irish Sea.

Three weeks earlier - 15 September, the day Prince Harry was born - Magee

Aftermath
Below from left: headline news; bomber Patrick Magee; damage inside the hotel; the Thatchers visit the Tebbits in hospital; press coverage

into a navy blue suit and looked immaculate. Officials urged an immediate return to London. Thatcher said no. In a press conference outside the station, she proclaimed. 'The conference will go on as usual.' It was a message to the IRA, and the world, that Britain wouldn't bow to terrorism.

As dawn broke over Brighton, surreal and tragic scenes unfolded. Ambulances ferried more than 30 injured people to hospital, among them the Tebbits. A fleet of buses and taxis took dishevelled Tories to a nearby Marks & Spencer for footwear and clothes - the party picked up the tab - and shuttled them back in time for the conference, held in a centre near the Grand.

Firefighters, meanwhile, were finding corpses in the ruins. Four died that day: Sir Anthony Berry, 59, an MP; Roberta Wakeham, 45, the wife of a government chief whip; Eric Taylor, 54, the North West Conservative Association chairman; and Jeanne Shattock, 52, the wife of another regional party chairman. Muriel Maclean, 54, wife of the Scottish Conservatives' president, died of her injuries later, bringing the total to five.

Thatcher delivered a rewritten speech



had checked into the Grand under an alias, Roy Walsh. He spent three days in room 629 assembling and hiding the device behind a bath panel. He barely left the room and did not let cleaning staff in. At one point, another IRA man, never identified, visited. When Magee checked out, the bomb had begun a countdown of 24 days, 6 hours and 36 minutes, timed to catch Thatcher in her suite on the last day of the conference.

The risk from time bombs was well known, but security services had no inkling of the plot. Sussex Police fielded almost 1,000 officers but only to block striking miners, fearing they may storm the conference. The force made a sweep of the Grand: a dog handler searched Thatcher's suite and other VIP rooms on the second floor.

In the aftermath of the explosion, there was shock but no panic among those shivering on the prom. Then word spread that Thatcher was alive. 'Maggie's safe!' They hugged in silence.

The Prime Minister had been taken to a police station a mile away. She changed

Killing Thatcher: The IRA, the Manhunt and the Long War on the Crown by Rory Carroll (Mud/ark, £25) is out in hardback on 4 April

condemning the attack, mourning the casualties and defying the IRA. The standing ovation seemed eternal. It was her finest moment.

Magee was caught a year later and sentenced to 35 years. He served 14, released in 1999, along with other paramilitary prisoners, under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. Norman Tebbit seethed. 'If I'd known when he was coming out I'd have gone and shot him myself.'

Magee is now in his seventies, back in Belfast, and walks with a cane. He obtained a PhD in prison and has written two books but struggled to find work in academia. The bomber expresses regret for the suffering he inflicted but defends the IRA. 'We did what we felt was necessary.'

As it was, Thatcher lived almost another 30 years, with six more as Prime Minister, and this month marks the tenth anniversary of her death on 8 April 2013, aged 87. But had she visited the bathroom minutes later, or had the chimney stack fallen in a different way in 1984, British history could have taken a very different course.®

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My journey to recovery



Sarah Standing, 63, loved being the linchpin of her family. But after a devastating cancer diagnosis she had to adjust to being the one who needed them

What happens when the fixer of the family gets broken and needs mending? This was the dilemma that faced me when I was told I had cancer three years ago. It was like a tidal wave of responsibility had hit me. When the doctor informed me I had non-Hodgkin lymphoma and was going to need chemotherapy, I mentally went into free fall. I've always thought of myself as the family parachute - the safety net - and loved the fact

Sharing her story Sarah (above with Labrador Hank), has written a book about her cancer battle

I was 'needed'. Now the roles were going to be reversed. The self-appointed fixer of the family was going to have to temporarily check out of duties and hand over control. Not a situation I ever envisaged facing, let alone accepting.

With a husband and mother the same age (88), three grown-up children (37, 36 and 32) and two grandsons (eight and two), I relished the role I'd given myself. Need childcare? I'm available. Too tired with a newborn to cook? Here's a casserole I made. Want to go to Italy for your best friend's wedding? Of course, I can have Huck (my eight-year-old grandson) for three days. Yes, I can look after your dog for

If cider to you means cold, sweet, fizzy pints sunk in sticky student bars, probably with lingering notes of regret, you need to meet Felix Nash.

The art-student-turned-cider-evangelist is championing a new wave of artisan producers who are going back to cider's roots and making subtle, wine-like drinks a world away from your teenage cider and black.

Fine cider is now served at some of the country's top restaurants, like The Fat Duck in Bray, St John in London and L'Enclume in Cumbria, and from April you'll be able to sample it in the new bar at Tate Modern in London. You can even train as a 'pommelier', cider's answer to sommeliers in the world of wine.

'These ciders are closer to wines than they are to mass market ciders, really,' says Felix, whose book *Cider (Dog 'n' Bone, £12.99)* is published this month. 'They're 100% juice creations, made seasonally. Some are aged in oak for 18 months. Compare that to mass market cider, where what people are getting is two thirds water and one third apple concentrate, no seasonality, and it's fermented in two weeks.'

He still remembers his first taste of 'proper' cider while working as a labourer in Herefordshire after leaving school. 'They were old-school bottles - 500ml with a horse on the front - but the liquid inside was incredible,' says Felix. 'I didn't know cider could taste like that. My dad and I started travelling round, searching out different ciders.'

Later, after art school, he was making a living doing plastering jobs for London galleries while also running supper clubs and began testing the ciders he'd found on unsuspecting diners. 'Back then, you only had a handful of makers - mostly men and many retired - showing what was possible and keeping the tradition alive,' he says.

Felix spent all his savings on 7,000 bottles made by Herefordshire producer Tom Oliver, got a friend to design new labels, and hawked them round London bars and restaurants from the back of the ancient family Ford Mondeo. Nine

by RACHEL CARLYLE

years later, his Fine Cider Company now sells 70-80 ciders and supplies some of the country's best-known restaurants.

Britain is the largest cider producer on Earth - 45% of our apples are destined for the drink - and there's evidence we were making it before the Romans arrived with their wooden wine presses to make squashing apples easier. The drink's heyday was in the 17th and 18th centuries, when cider-making became a pursuit of the gentry: new apple varieties were hunted out and named; stronger bottles invented to contain the fizz; and the newly set up Royal Society devoted serious time to the scientific study of what constituted a fine cider. Founder member, diarist John Evelyn, announced cider was 'the native wine of England'. We can't know how these ciders tasted, although they seemed to go down pretty well: 5,500 litres were drunk at Lord Scudamore's Christmas celebrations in 1639.

What Felix calls cider's fall from grace happened in the 1960s after the

Government declared that for excise duty purposes, cider could be made from 35% apple concentrate plus water rather than 100% juice. 'It left a lot of room for mass market cider to dumb down and it soon became a self-fulfilling prophecy,' he says. What followed was a series of takeovers of small producers, leading to the big cider makers we see today, including

Bulmers (owned by Heineken) and Westons.

A few miles from the gates of Bulmers' giant works in Hereford, Tom Oliver is leading the way in the renaissance of fine cider-making. A sound engineer by trade, he has worked with Van Morrison - he still tours with The Proclaimers - and began producing cider on the family farm almost 25 years ago after realising how hard it was to buy the kind he remembered from his youth.

'I wanted to keep the orchards growing and the apple varieties alive,' says Tom, now 66, who's known as the 'Godfather' of fine cider's new wave. 'This drink is better than it's given credit for, it's the perfect accompaniment to food. Cider gets lost in the PR of wine and it doesn't deserve to

To me, no one apple makes the definitive cider. Complexity and drinkability comes from blending - like music'

In cider trading Tom Oliver (far right) and some of his fine ciders (above right)



HOW DO YOU LIKE THEM APPLES?

Dabinett

The 'Godfather' of cider apples, and one of the most frequently grown in the UK. It's relatively low in acid but high in tannins. A savoury, almost meaty, taste.

Foxwhelp

Dating from the pre-1600s, it's one of the oldest cider apples still in use. It has a rhubarb-like tartness. Sometimes described as the riesling of apples.

Yarlington Mill

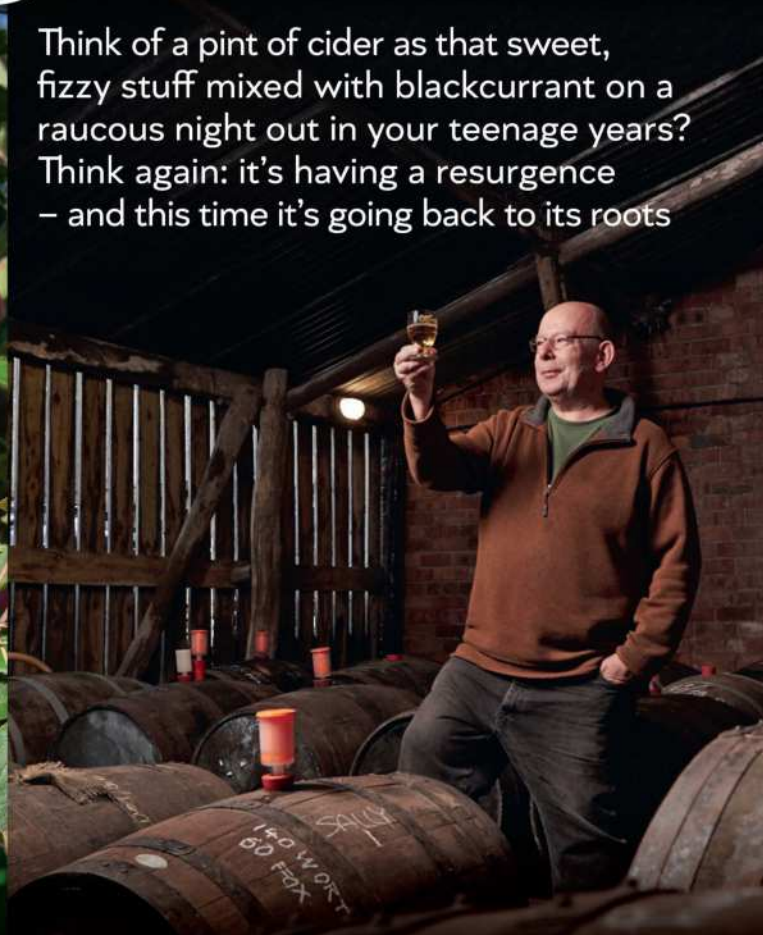
A Somerset variety, it has low acidity and medium tannins. Lends a smoky, and sometimes herbaceous, taste to ciders.



Pressing matters



Think of a pint of cider as that sweet, fizzy stuff mixed with blackcurrant on a raucous night out in your teenage years? Think again: it's having a resurgence – and this time it's going back to its roots





Pip ahoy!
From top:
Felix Nash;
a barrel
room at Tom
Oliver's cidery;
dessert wine
replaced with
ice cider at
Marksman pub
in Hackney;
Find & Foster
fine cider

be lost. The park bench reputation is tiresome - we've gone beyond that. I've never seen a single craft cider bottle lurking by a park bench!

Like Felix, he wants more people to be able to taste fine ciders. They're not in supermarkets, although you'll find some in wine shops and online from cider merchants or direct from producers. It's why he's part of the group - including Felix and Ted Dwane, the bassist with the band Mumford & Sons - that set up The London Cider House bar and shop in Borough Market, London, last summer, where you can buy a 'flight' of four ciders to sample.

Tom now produces 20-30 ciders a year plus 10-15 perrys (made with pears) in different styles - some from his own orchards. As is the West Country tradition, he only uses cider apples. These are tarter than the dessert apples used mainly in the east of England and the US, where the cider industry has grown considerably in the past decade. Cider apples have higher levels of tannins - the phytochemicals that give you that 'furry' dry mouth you get with red wine, which give the drink 'body'.

'Tannins are the key to our ciders, it marks them out as being different from ciders made with culinary or dessert fruit, which give you acid-based ciders,' he says. Unlike some producers who make single varieties, he believes the magic is in the blending. About 75% of the apples he uses are his four favourites: Dabinett, Yarlington Mill, Foxwhelp and Michelin.

In cider-making, apples are harvested in the autumn, then ground ('milled') and pressed and left in barrels or tanks to ferment over the winter. Some are bottled in the spring; others are aged for up to 18 months. 'My rule is, we don't start tasting and blending our ciders until after lambing in February,' says Tom. Nothing else is added - he relies on wild yeasts for fermentation.

'To me, no one apple makes the definitive cider. Complexity and drinkability comes from blending - like music. With drink you're looking for balance in terms of sweetness, acidity and tannins. In music you're looking for balance between drums, bass, vocals and keyboards. Everything in its place.'

Tom and Felix want to see more restaurants serving fine cider by the glass (they believe its balance of acidity and fruit goes better with food than many wines) and more pubs offering it. 'In the next ten years, I'd love to see hundreds more makers able to make a living; it can be a great source of rural income,' says Felix. 'Cider chimes well with the way we live now: it's lower in alcohol than wine, it's produced in Britain so has a lower carbon footprint and it's sustainable. And it tastes... Well, try it and see.' *

KNOWYOUR CIDERS

TRADITIONAL

'Champagne' method
 Sugar and yeast are added in the bottle to create a secondary fermentation.

About 8% alcohol with depth of flavour.

Try Find & Foster

Traditional Method Cider
 (findandfosterfineciders.com)

Drink with spicy dishes, roast chicken, salty food

KEEVED CIDER

'Normandy method'

An enzyme is added to stop fermentation, leaving a sweetness from the juice and a lower alcohol level (2-6%).

Try Pilton Somerset Keeved Cider (piltoncider.com)

Drink with Somerset cheddar

STILL

An acquired taste, but multi-layered and rewarding like a red wine. Most are dry. Try Little Pomona Wading In (littlepomona.com)

Drink with fish, any dishes with herbs and spices

ICE CIDER

Water is extracted from the fruit juice when frozen, leaving a more concentrated juice and a stronger, sweet cider (12%) that's a bit like dessert wine.

Try Brannland Iscider (brannlandcider.se)

Drink with pudding, a cheese board

PERRY

Not cider at all, but made of pears from trees that can be 300 years old. Fresh and sparkling with huge charm.

Try Oliver's Fine Perry (oliversciderandperry.co.uk)

Drink with fish/shellfish

See thefinecider.company



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When Britannia ruled the waves

Said to be the place the late Queen felt most at home, the Royal Yacht clocked up more than a million miles in service. Now, 70 years after her launch, we look at life aboard this floating palace



She would go on to become one of the most famous vessels in the world - and she saw most of it, too, during more than a million miles at sea in the service of Queen and country.

Yet her origins were rather less glamorous. Built from the designs for a pre-war cross-Channel ferry, her code-name was 'Ship 691' as she took shape behind closed doors at the Clydebank shipyard of John Brown & Co.

Finally, on a rainy 16 April 1953, the public had their first glimpse as 'Ship 691' went down the slipway and The Queen answered the question the country had been asking:

'I name this ship Britannia..!' Few even heard the rest of her speech above the chorus of *Rule, Britannia!* that ensued.

Coming two months before the Coronation, the idea of a new Royal Yacht added to the prevailing mood of post-war rejuvenation. Britain was very much a maritime nation, its shipyards producing many of the world's vessels.

Two years earlier, it had been the idea of Clement Attlee's Labour government to build a new ship for King George VI, though Winston Churchill's Conservatives were back in power by the time it launched. The King had been unwell so many hoped that some sea air would do him good. Hence the decision to use the designs for an existing ship in order to save time. Sadly, George VI did not live to see the result, though he would unquestionably have approved. The entire Royal Family would grow to love Britannia, none more so than The Queen herself.

All her other homes had been inherited. **This was the only one where she could choose**

by ROBERT
HARDMAN

everything herself - from the furniture to the light fittings. There was even a discreet colour code for different cabins: only royal cabins had mahogany doors; a beechwood door denoted a staff berth. Prince Philip, meanwhile, was closely involved in tweaking the hull design to include a more regal stern and bow.

When, in the mid-Nineties, John Major's Conservative government decided it was time to decommission Britannia, as the whole ship was in need of a costly overhaul, The Queen was very sad. But, contrary to the invented narrative of the Netflix show *The Crown*, Her Majesty certainly did not order the Prime Minister to think again.

Britannia was not just a ship for royalty, though; she was designed for a twin role. In wartime, she was to be a hospital ship (hence her huge laundry and full operating theatre). Peacetime would see her take royal visitors to all parts of the Commonwealth. She was the 83rd in an unbroken line of Royal Yachts dating back to Charles II. This, though, would

'This was the only home where The Queen could choose everything herself - from the furniture to the light fittings'

be the first ocean-going vessel.

It would be another year after the launch before sea trials had been completed and Britannia was ready to enter service. By then, The Queen and Prince Philip were still on their post-Coronation tour around the world, so the yacht would sail out to meet them as they made their way home. Britannia carried her first royal passengers - a small Prince Charles and even smaller Princess Anne (plus their nannies) - to a very happy rendezvous with their parents in Libya.

As they sailed back up the Channel, Winston Churchill was ferried out to join them for the triumphal homecoming up the Thames and under central London's Tower Bridge. Coronation-sized crowds gathered to welcome home their Queen.

There was a similar response wherever Britannia sailed in those early years. One former crew member told me how this presented problems when The Queen went to Canada to open the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959. All along the route, people turned out to wave and cheer but it was impossible for the crew, let alone The Queen, (C)

Sea change
Left: The Queen on board in 1972.
Below: at sea in the 1990s and passing under Tower Bridge in 1954





to stand at the rails and wave back for mile after mile. So, off-duty members of the crew were ordered to form 'waving parties', whose only job was to return the compliment.

A more prized role was that of the 'sea nanny'. Whenever royal children were on board, the strongest swimmers from below decks were deputised to follow them everywhere - just in case.

The yacht was crewed by a special branch of the Royal Navy, the Royal Yacht Service, and The Queen came to know many of the longer-serving 'Yotties' by their nicknames. On state visits, they might be expected to lay on a grand reception one minute and then rearrange the state rooms for a banquet the next.

However, while at sea, the atmosphere would be much more relaxed. The Royal Family loved to join in the weekly quiz competition over the ship's Tannoy. Another highlight would be the concert party with each section of the crew (and the Royal Household) performing a sketch or a song. The diplomat Sir Roger du Boulay recalled joining one Pacific tour and coming across The Queen helping her equerry to dress as a Polynesian beauty. 'He was stripped to the waist and she was fitting a brassiere on to him,' Sir Roger told me. 'It was an extraordinary sight!'

As well as serving as a floating palace and embassy, Britannia went on to be an effective showroom for British business. On many tours, UK firms would be offered the use of the state rooms to host conferences and receptions. Over time, these events - sea days - sealed contracts worth billions. The most elusive would-be customers could never resist an invitation to drinks in The Queen's drawing room or a buffet on the Verandah Deck. As a result,

Royal duty Prince Charles and Princess Anne join The Queen and Prince Philip on the bridge, 1954. Below: The Queen working on board in 1972

'When royal children were on board, the strongest swimmers from below decks would follow them everywhere - just in case'

former commander Rear Admiral Sir Bob Woodard recalls getting a bear-hug from a businessman who had just sold a £1.5 million sausage machine.

But, it was not all plain sailing. Sometimes Britannia would serve as neutral territory amid fractious Commonwealth summits. In 1986, on a passage to Australia, the yacht was diverted to a war zone in Aden to rescue hundreds of civilians.

As her family and friends will vouch, though, The Queen was never happier than on her annual Western Isles cruise, when Britannia would weave her way around Scotland en route to Balmoral. This was as near to 'normality' as life could be for the monarch. She loved to drop anchor off some empty Hebridean beach and go ashore for a walk and one of Prince Philip's barbecues.

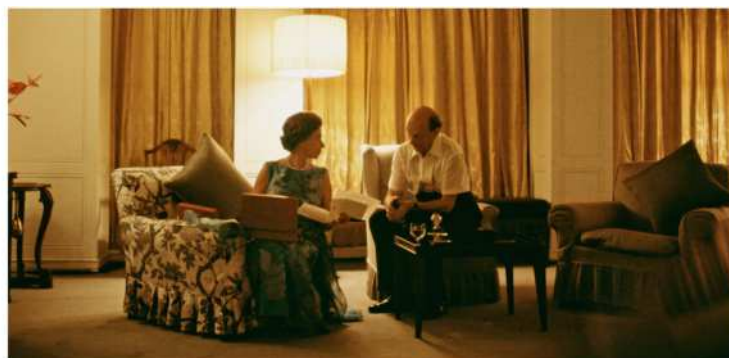
Britannia's last overseas mission was to Hong Kong, in 1997, for the official handover. Her last skipper, Commodore Anthony Morrow, then set a new speed record in order to get her home for one final Western Isles cruise and a farewell tour of the UK. On 11 December 1997, the Royal Family gathered on the Portsmouth quayside as Britannia was decommissioned. The media made much of the tears in The Queen's eyes. Had the cameras swung round to the adjacent grandstand full of former 'Yotties', however,

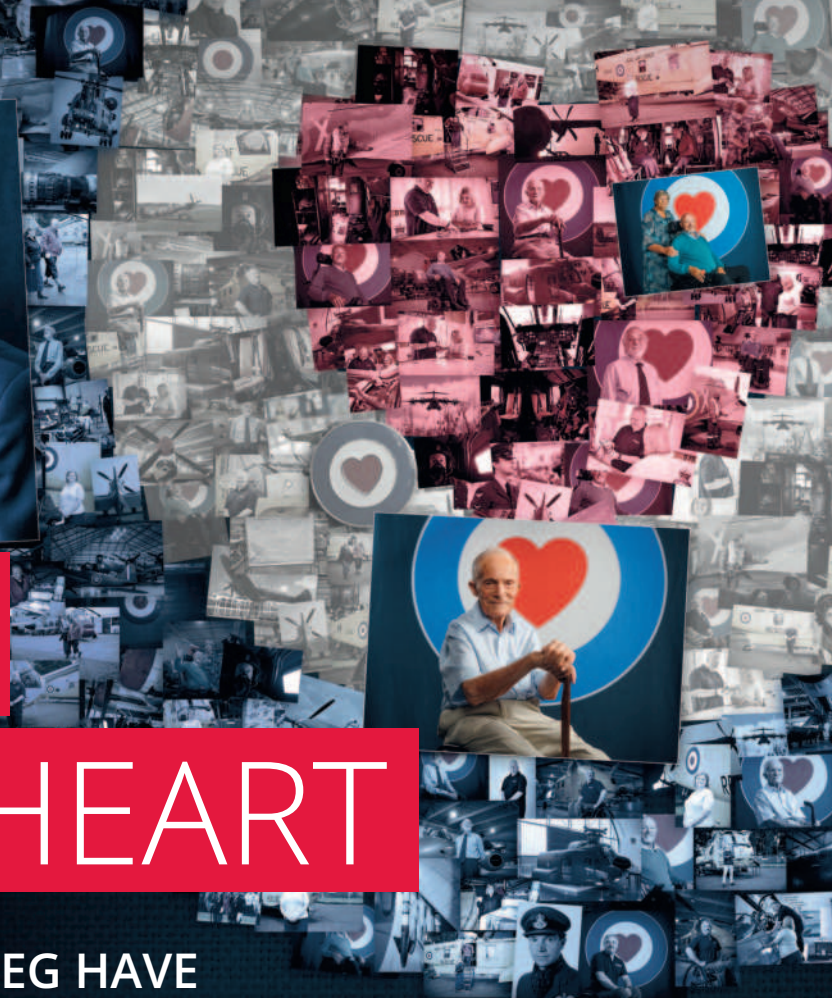
they would have seen an identical response.

Today, Britannia spends her twilight years docked outside Edinburgh, as an award-winning floating museum. It is testimony to her bond with the Yotties that many of them still return each year, unpaid, to assist with her maintenance, to say thank

you and to remember an extraordinary million-mile royal journey that began 70 years ago.*

Queen of Our Times: The Life of Elizabeth II by Robert Hardman is published by Macmillan





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SCAN ME WITH YOUR CAMERA





He may be 75 and no longer anchoring *Channel 4 News*, but Jon Snow doesn't see himself as retired. Here he talks about becoming a dad again in his 70s and why he is eternally optimistic

On with the Snow

Leaving my job at Channel 4 News in 2021 was hard. For 32 years, the adrenalin of presenting a nightly news show was like a drug. Yes, I was born in 1947 and, maybe, at 75, doing a five-day-a-week newscast wouldn't be the best idea. But was I ready to go? Not really.

Surprisingly, though, it's been quite a blessing, allowing me time to be more creative, reflective and available to my family. So far, I've yet to translate the time in to all the things I'd like to do. As a boy, I was a chorister at Winchester Cathedral but I've yet to join that adult choir. I'm a keen amateur painter too, but I haven't embarked on any major canvases. It takes time to adjust when retiring from any job, I suspect.

Not that I consider myself retired. The pace is different, but I'm still actively a journalist - with a book and three documentaries in the can, including *How to Live to 100*, about parts of the world where people live to extraordinary old age. Hopefully, I've learned something here about, for example, minimising stress and maximising family life. With luck, I plan to stay well, live long and carry on working to the grave.

I have, though, mostly hung up the collection of flamboyant ties that were my trademark when presenting the news. They dangle from the rack - all 150 of them - pleading to be used, although I know no one mad enough to want to wear them. My trademark socks, though, are still in active use. Today, I'm wearing a pair of bright pink ones. Happy the sock, happy the man.

the cycle of life

I haven't given up my trusty cycle either and while living in London's Primrose Hill, I never would. I'm a huge advocate of cycling, for making it more accessible and safer for all - and I am president of the charity Cycling UK. Throughout my career, my bike was the perfect and quickest way to get to any job ahead of the pack and it remains my favourite way to get from A to B in central London.

I own a lovely titanium-framed, hybrid bike that was custom built for me by Condor, a specialist bike maker on London's Gray's Inn Road, close to the Channel 4 News studio. I religiously protect it with two D-locks, and so far the wheels have never been stolen, which would be a disaster. Touch wood, I've never had a bike accident either.

There's hardly a day when I don't cycle, but this morning the rain was torrential and my wife [the epidemiologist Dr Precious Lunga] put her foot down when I planned to ride to a barber's appointment. To avoid a row, I grabbed a taxi.

Mostly, she's pretty relaxed about it. I was a cyclist when we met and she accepts I always will be.

Wedded bliss

Although I was with my first partner, human rights lawyer Madeleine Colvin, for 35 years and we had two daughters [Leila, 40, and Freya, 37], we never felt the need to marry. We were part of a generation who deemed it unnecessary and we were perfectly happy with that. These days, although society is still relaxed about the question, the value of marriage has very much returned and I'm not sorry about that. Of course, it remains a personal choice, but Precious and I decided that we did very much

'With luck, I plan to stay well, live long and carry on working to the grave'

want to marry. We wanted to make a statement to each other and to the outside world and I'm so pleased we did. Marriage to me now feels like an anchor in an uncertain world where there are so many choices on offer. I find the stability that it brings so attractive and I love being married to Precious.

Father time

There are three very small people in my life - two grandsons, aged one and three, and a son, Tafara, who is two-going-on-five. He's got his mum's brain and my extrovert nature. I love how you can already have great conversations with him. Having him was not easy but we persisted because, at 48, my wife is a good deal younger than me and she very much wanted and deserved a baby. When he was born, life felt complete.

I'm completely at ease with late fatherhood.

I don't feel I'll drop him; I don't feel exhausted. I haven't found age relevant to my relationship with my son or grandsons.

Is being a grandad different to being a dad? Not really. In the end, it's all love, isn't it?

A different kind of dad I'm much more relaxed and present as a parent than my own father. He was the Bishop of Whitby - 6ft 7in tall and even taller in his full regalia. I'm 6ft 4in now, but was only 4ft 6in as an eight- or nine-year-old child, when it really mattered. I found him pretty scary and remote at that time and my

Ontwo wheels

Jon uses his custom-made bike to travel around London



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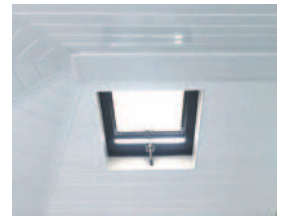
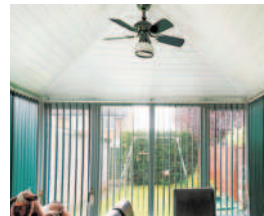
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Cl being sent to public school didn't bring us any closer. The idea of taking a child out of the family to educate them strikes me now as bonkers.

How wonderful it might have been to sit down to do homework with my father. Never once was I able to say, 'Dad, two and two. Are they really four?' His only involvement in my education was to loudly agree with the damning reports from my teachers because, unlike Precious, who is Cambridge-educated and the boffin in our relationship, I wasn't bright at school. There are many kinds of intelligence. Mine was the raw, animal kind. I was good at picking up signals and understanding people. I made a career from it.

I'm certain my drive to succeed came from wanting to prove the naysayers - especially my parents - wrong. And wrong they certainly were.

Goodbye to shame

There was a lot of unnatural shame attached to everything when I was growing up. My mother, a brilliant pianist - who I was closer to because of our mutual love of music - suffered from alopecia totalis. She was bald and wore a wig and yet my two brothers and I were not allowed to know this. We discovered it when I was about ten. My father overturned the car and her wig fell off. Can you imagine not knowing something so fundamental about your own mother? She saw it as disgrace, but why? It was hardly her fault.

Same thing with sex - my parents never talked about it. One might once have said, 'I've got a book I can lend you..' I never borrowed it!

Out of Africa

I've felt deeply connected to Africa since doing Voluntary Service Overseas in Uganda, aged 18. There I was on the banks of the Nile teaching kids who longed for education. Often, I was only a couple of pages ahead in the textbook, but I managed to be convincing. I can still sing the entire Ugandan national anthem too, as I proved at a recent reunion of Ugandan Asians at Buckingham Palace hosted by King Charles. I've got to know him a bit through our mutual involvement in various projects. I have a lot of respect for him.

Uganda was the most incredible, formative year of my life, along with the time I spent working for Lord Longford's organisation to help the homeless, London New Horizon Youth Centre - a charity of which I'm still a patron. Had I gone straight from public school into my career, I'd have been a different journalist and a different man. It shaped everything

The State of Us: The Good News and the Bad News About Our Society by Jon Snow (Bantam Press, £20) is out now

about me: my politics, morals and way of looking at humanity. I've returned to Africa often and though I've interviewed popes and PMs, the one I remember most is with Nelson Mandela. Who aside, perhaps, from Jesus Christ, achieved so much and against so many odds? He was the most communicative, understanding, and warm person. He was extraordinary.

Precious is originally Zimbabwean and I believe we are becoming more accepting of interracial marriage and race in general. I look at football, where brilliant, black players are loved by the crowd regardless of their ethnicity.

'My flamboyant ties dangle from the rack - all 150 of them - pleading to be used'

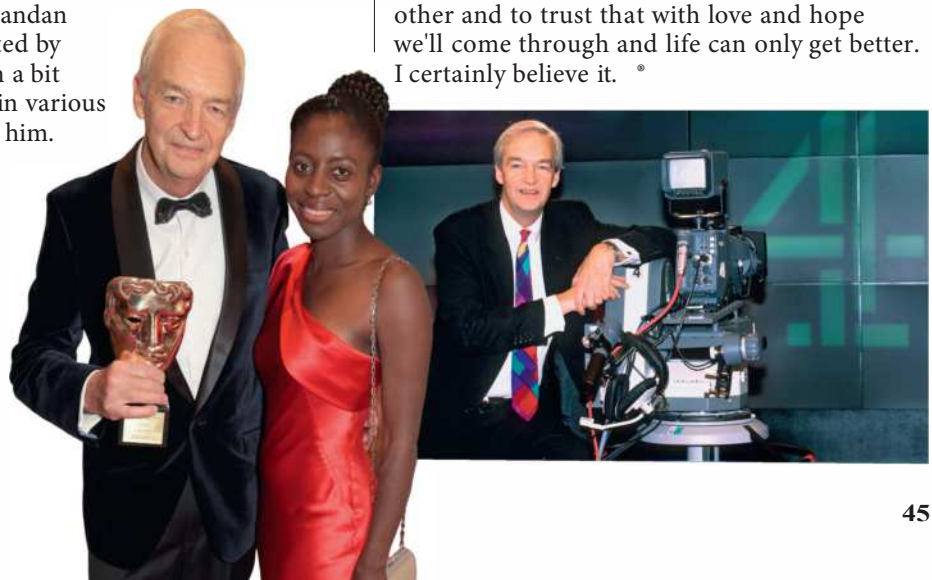
I never thought football would be a grandstand for racial equality but we have the England team taking the knee. These are brave and beautiful moments in the fight against racism.

What the world needs now

I wrote my autobiography in 2004, but at 75, I've moved on emotionally and politically - otherwise, where have I been for the last 20 years? Hopefully, my new book, *The State of Us*, offers a more mature reflection of my life and the world.

It can seem we're in the bleakest times - war raging in Ukraine, a pandemic we're still recovering from. Yet, I still feel so hopeful. Ukraine hasn't bowed to Putin, and despite the dark days of Covid, we survived it rather well. My book is written in praise of the indomitable human spirit and hopefully readers will come away believing no matter how big the problems, these too will pass and that we're extraordinarily well equipped to live the good life we owe ourselves. I'm an incurable optimist who finds pessimism the curse of humanity. But we have to be optimistic, to believe in each other and to trust that with love and hope we'll come through and life can only get better. I certainly believe it. *

Work-life balance With wife Dr Precious Lunga. Right: Jon was a Channel 4 News anchor for 32 years



by
KATHRYN
KNIGHT

T

he measured and composed actor Penelope Wilton is, on the whole, not a woman given to pronouncements on a grand scale. There is one subject, however, on which she is vehement.

'I would hate to retire,' she declares. 'There'd be no point. I mean, what on earth would I do? So I'll carry on for as long as I can.'

Now 76, and doyenne of a stage and screen career of more than half a century, we must certainly hope Penelope is as good as her word as she is a stalwart of some of our most dearly loved comedies and dramas. From Eighties sitcom *Ever Decreasing*

Circles to *Downton Abbey*, her presence on a cast list is a hallmark of quality. And that's certainly the case with *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, her latest

screen outing, starring alongside Jim Broadbent.

Based on Rachel Joyce's novel, it follows the decision of the titular hero, played by Broadbent, to walk more than 250 miles to visit the bedside of a dying former colleague, driven by the belief that in doing so he can save her life. Penelope plays his bewildered, tricky wife Maureen, and the film traces their relationship as Harold gains the strength to face the unspoken grief that has driven them apart.

'It is a beautiful story,' says Penelope. 'As you see in the film, the revelation of the great sadness in their lives comes through very slowly, and you realise what has driven this man to do the walk. It's wonderful storytelling.'

Joyce's book sold more than five million copies worldwide and Penelope devoured it after being offered the role of Maureen. For

all the sorrow at its heart, it proves to be an uplifting story of forgiveness and redemption. 'I think that's what ultimately drew people to it,' she says. 'It's about people finding a way out of a terrible sorrow, and the kindness of strangers.'

Penelope is no stranger to grief herself, having endured the trauma of losing a son at 29 weeks pregnant, before later giving birth to daughter Alice, now 46. With horribly poignant timing, she also lost her older sister Rosemary to Covid shortly before filming. Nonetheless, she is careful to separate her own experience of loss with that portrayed on screen. 'You don't equate that with the real thing - it was a different sort of grief,' she says of her recent loss. 'I was terribly sad, while Maureen is terribly angry. Of course, you can't separate yourself entirely from how one is feeling, but imagination is so important.'

'As you get older there are fewer parts in the theatre for women so I'm lucky to have done some wonderful things in film and TV'

This is doubtless the key to Penelope's long-standing success both in theatre and on screen. She is resolutely unshowy - she was made a Dame in the 2016 honours list, but describes it

modestly as 'very nice' - and politely guards against revealing too much information about her private life. Twice married, to the late actors Daniel Massey and Ian Holm, she prefers today not to say if she has a partner on the basis '[when acting] you can be more convincing when

others don't know too much about you.'

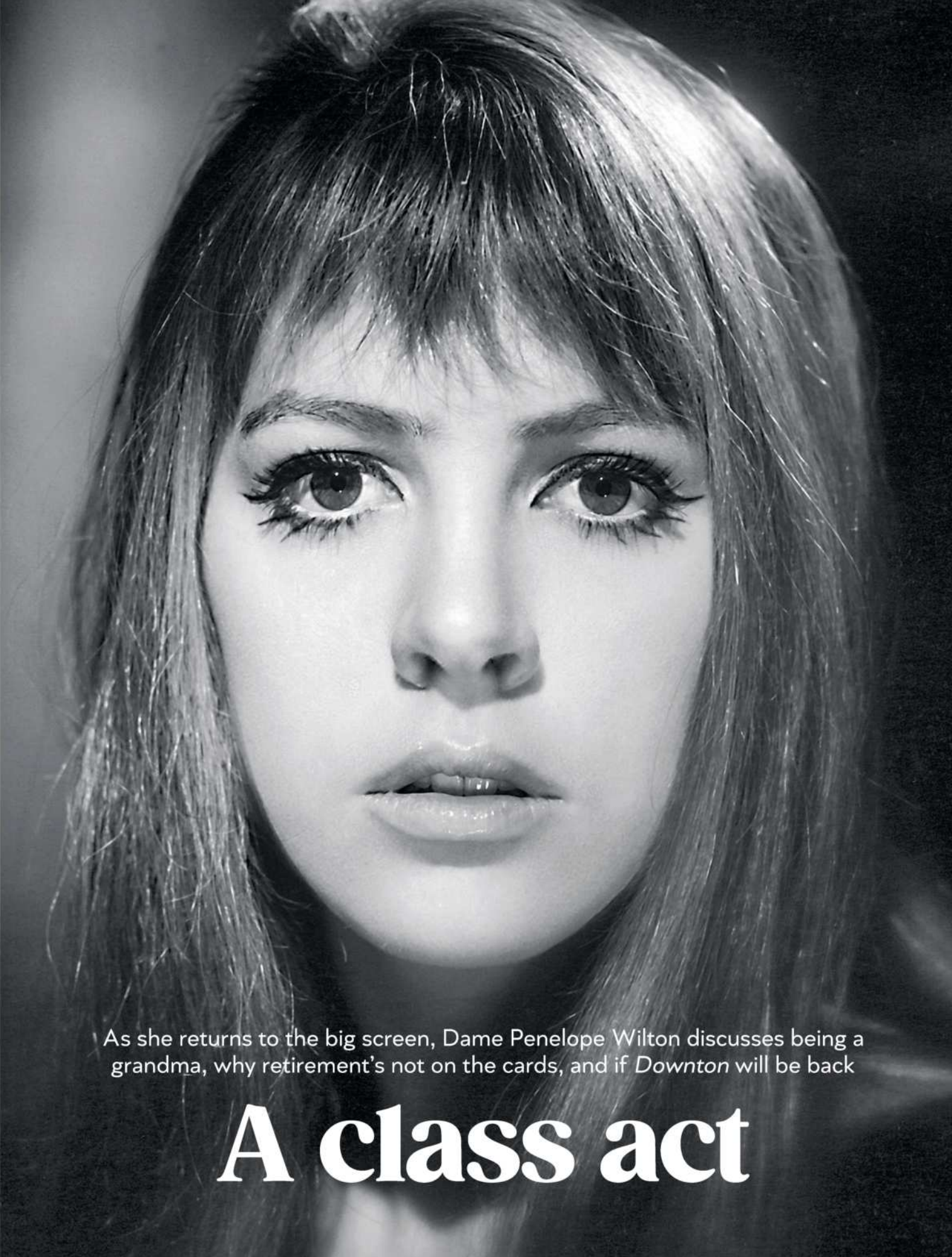
Nonetheless, it did cause a stir when it emerged that Massey, who is Alice's father and died in 1998, later married Penelope's younger sister, Linda, although apparently not to the detriment of their relationship. They remain close: Penelope has just finished her regular morning walk with Linda in the park near her London home.

When I'm not working, I meet my sister and we walk in the mornings,' she says. 'It's marvellous energy, moderate exercise, and you



SO-year career
Penelope in 1968 (far right) and in more recent times (right)

PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY AROCH

A black and white close-up portrait of actress Penelope Wilton. She has long, dark hair with bangs and is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The lighting is soft, highlighting her facial features.

As she returns to the big screen, Dame Penelope Wilton discusses being a grandma, why retirement's not on the cards, and if *Downton* will be back

A class act

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(» see seasons changing.' There is an area of her private life about which Penelope is joyfully open, and it comes in the form of her grandchildren, Daniel, ten, and six-year-old Ella, by daughter Alice. Penelope adores being a grandmother.

'I love them,' she avows, unable to contain her enthusiasm. 'I love being with them and hearing their conversations and doing things with them. And, of course, being a grandmother is a very nice thing because you don't have to bother with any of the rules. They can eat what they like, and they can do what they like, and they can be on their computers for ever if they want to be - that's a grandparent's privilege.'

Of course, the role also comes with none of the juggle that so often accompanies working motherhood. I think it's still very difficult for people to have a career and to have children,' says Penelope. 'You never quite reconcile it because you always think you should be somewhere else.'

Scarborough-born although later raised in Sussex, Penelope's father was a businessman, her mother an actor and dancer. One of her earliest memories is putting on a show for her parents - and theatre remains her greatest love. 'There's nothing quite like it,' she says. 'In cinema and TV, the director is in charge, but on the stage, aside from the writer, it's the actor who tells you where the focus is and that's rather special.'

Olivier-nominated six times, Penelope laments the fact that stage roles tend to dry up for older women. 'As you get older there are fewer parts in the theatre for women, so I'm lucky there have been some wonderful things in film and television that I've been able to do.'

That's no understatement. Penelope may have initially found small-screen fame as the put-upon Ann Bryce, wife of Richard Briers' pedantic do-gooder Martin in *Ever Decreasing Circles*, but she has also enjoyed latter-day screen success, notably as Anne, who shares the grief of Ricky Gervais's grieving newspaper reporter Tony in Netflix's *After Life*, and the strong-willed Isobel Crawley in *Downton Abbey*.

Her scenes with friend Dame Maggie Smith's Dowager Countess became the beating heart of the hit show, and she confides that should there be another *Downton* film she will miss them terribly, as Maggie's character Violet died at the end of 2022's *Downton Abbey: A New Era* - its second big-screen outing. 'We used to love those scenes and they were such good fun to do,' she recalls. 'Maggie and I enjoyed

sparring with one another, and it added a sort of acerbic quality to the drama, too.'

Will there be a third *Downton* film? Penelope is unsure, although she would happily take part should it come to pass. 'There have been rumours and I think you have to finish something once you've started it, don't you?' she muses. 'We're quite a large group of people who have worked together on and off over many years, so it would be churlish to turn it down if it came along.'

After *Life*, however, is resolutely finished. After three series, Gervais has made it clear there will be no more episodes of his ratings hit (it has become Netflix's most-watched British comedy series, with more than 120 million views). 'I'm

delighted for Ricky,' Penelope says of the viewing figures. 'He's the most gracious man to work with and I enjoyed it enormously.'

She welcomes the fact that much of her recent

work depicts the subtleties of relationships in later life: in *Downton*, Isobel Crawley enjoys a romance with family friend Lord Merton. 'They're interesting territory: often the relationships are more nuanced because they're more than just romance,' she says of this pivot to depicting older relationships on screen. 'They're more to do with how you feel about life in general; your children, the world, death, all sorts. Those feelings come into more mature relationships.'

May she depict many more - a hope that, as we know, she resolutely shares. 'I have a lot of friends who are still acting,' she smiles. 'Judi [Dench] and Maggie have just made a film as has my friend Sian Phillips, and Eileen Atkins is doing a play - they're all more senior than I am, so I hope that I will be like them.'

'A lot of people have to do things they're not wild about, but I've been lucky to be able to enjoy what I do.' ®

'Being a grandmother is nice because you don't have to bother with any of the rules'

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry comes to cinemas on 28 April

Screen queen
Clockwise
from top: in
Downton with
Dame Maggie
Smith; with
daughter Alice;
in *The Unlikely
Pilgrimage of
Harold Fry*
alongside Jim
Broadbent



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The joys of spring

Spring has sprung so seize the moment, pack up a picnic, head outside and find an idyllic spot to celebrate Easter and the unfurling of this special season

by SELINA LAKE

Photography
SUSSIE BELL

DREAMY SETTING This heavenly location under the blossom of a Pink Shell cherry tree invites you to set up an outside dining space. Nature has already provided the beautiful decorations, so keep the table styling minimal. Directors' chairs, £145 each, and stool, £60, thestripescompany.com; TARNO chair, £15, ikea.com; tablecloth, £92, alsohome.com; placemats, £14.99 for four, *Dobbies*; Habitat bubble glass tumblers, £4 each, *Sainsbury's*; bowls, £75 for six, and side plates, £75 for six, *Homesense*; palm leaf tray, £27.50, thedanes.co.uk; jug, £30, and flower bucket, £20, *The Country Brocante Fairs*; napkins made in fabric by pippablackerinteriors.co.uk C)



PICNIC TIME

The weather is warming up, so pack a picnic basket with food treats, gather rugs, cushions and foldaway stools and head outside for a seasonal lunch break. Herringbone tassel blankets, £52 each, tartanblanketco.com; cushion with Arabella frill, £65, pippablackerinteriors.co.uk; pom-pom cushion, £12, Homesense; William Morris enamel mugs, £6.99 each, and enamel plate, £7, all Dobbies; stool, as before. For a similar mattress roll, try trouva.com. For a similar basket, try tkmaxx.com



Shop the look

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- 1) Natural raffia placemats, £20 for a set of two, talkingtables.co.uk
- 2) Cotton striped cushion, £19.50, marksandspencer.com
- 3) Green ribbed tumblers, £9 for a set of four, wilko.com
- 4) Floral glass tumblers, £15 for a set of four, marksandspencer.com
- 5) Picnic basket with floral lining, £24.99, TKMaxx
- 6) Primavera floral jug/vase, £24, daisypark.co.uk
- 7) Rattan serving tray, £22.95, thenorthernline.co.uk

DECORATIVE NESTS

Twiggy nests make pretty Easter table decorations. Add moss, blossom flowers and small-scale greenery along with chocolate eggs with mottled shells. Place them along the table in between vases of fresh flowers. Natural twig birds' nests, from £4.75 each, and natural blown quails' eggs, £6.75 for 12, all thedanes.co.uk

EASTER TREAT POTS

Cut out bunny, bird and floral designs from leftover wallpaper or recycled gift wrap and stick them on to Kraft card pots using PVA glue. Once dry, fill with chocolate eggs or other food treats, pop the lid on and tie up with string or raffia. Round Kraft containers with lids, £3.50 for ten, and raffia, £2.85 per pack of 90 strands, all thedanes.co.uk

**MAKE A SEASONAL WREATH**

Create an Easter wreath by attaching dried hay or straw on to a moss wreath base using wire or string. Decorate with spring flowers – use what you have in abundance in the garden. For a rustic touch, attach a faux bird's nest with eggs and a ribbon made from a fraying length of linen fabric. 16in wire wreath base, 50p, and natural sustainably sourced moss sourced via a local florist. Bag of straw from a local pet shop. ☼

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Top Kia

Sportily styled, feature-heavy and fully electric, the EV6 SUV crossover is a premium eco-option – and it's really rather good

Kia is a driving force in electric vehicles with its popular - and relatively affordable - fully electric Soul and Niro models and a range of hybrids. However, the firm is also now delivering a premium eco-conscious option with the EV6. And it's rather good.

While it looks like a sporty hatchback, the EV6 is a crossover SUV, giving extra elevation and plenty of space for people and luggage, yet keeps a slick aesthetic that turns the occasional head.

Walk up to the car, tap unlock on the key and at night you'll be greeted by the head and tail lights, plus small lights on the underside of the rear spoiler, which illuminate its rear haunches.

It's an enticing vehicle but accessing it could be easier, with fiddly door handles that make you wonder what was wrong with the traditional ones. They sit flush to the body to improve aerodynamics and, in turn, range - but I wish they'd pop out automatically when you unlock.

Once inside, there's plenty of room. A large central console provides ample storage, while the electrically adjustable seats in my GT-Line spec accommodated me nicely, even if they were a little on the firm side. Something else firm is the ride. It's not uncomfortable, but the suspension feels relatively stiff. However, there's enough pep in the throttle response to keep things lively when pulling away from a junction, especially in Sport mode.

Range is comfortably good, and during my mid-winter testing (with temperatures around 10°C), I achieved more than 220 miles from a charge. You'll get closer to Kia's quoted 328 miles WLTP (Worldwide Harmonised Light

by JOHN McCANN

Vehicle Test Procedure, measuring fuel economy, range and emissions) in warmer months and in the city.



'Fiddly door handles make you wonder what was wrong with traditional ones'

For Saga Car Insurance, call 0800 092 6308, quoting SM22MT, or visit saga.co.uk/dr-article

Opt for the GT-Line spec and you get lane assist and adaptive cruise, plus heated front seats and steering wheel. It also comes with four USB ports and a full-size, three-pin plug socket in the rear footwell.

A pair of displays adorn the top of the dash, the central one providing access to Kia's serviceable sat nav system and media controls. The second is behind the steering wheel and acts as the instrument cluster, but it's not the most feature-rich setup. Climate controls are on a touch-sensitive bar below the centre screen, although there is a physical dial to adjust the temperature. It's a best-of-both-worlds approach. However if you wish to do more than turn the heating up or down while driving, the touch bar demands an extra split second of attention.

With prices from around £45,000, the Kia EV6 has much to offer. The range is pleasing, features are plentiful and the styling gives it a presence. ®



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- * Power 239kW
- * Top Speed 114 mph
- * 0-62 mph 5.2 seconds
- * Claimed range 328 WLTP
- * Price £51,745

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A lush, multi-tiered waterfall cascades over large, mossy rocks in a verdant garden. The water is captured with a long exposure, creating a soft, ethereal white flow. In the foreground, a traditional stone lantern sits on a rock to the left, and a wooden bench is partially visible at the bottom. The background is filled with dense green foliage, including a vibrant red maple tree on the left. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

A perfect Zen

Elegant and serene, Japanese-inspired gardens evoke natural wonders in a beautifully restrained way, making them ideal for small urban plots

by BEN DARK

In my city street there's an almost perfect front garden. It's a simple rectangle in front of a terraced house, with a mulch of tumbled slate and three granite rocks. The only plant is a Japanese maple - an *Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum* from the Dissectum Atropurpureum Group - with an elegant dome and filigree leaves. As far as I am aware, this is the only Japanese-style garden between us and the botanic gardens. I wonder why? In our crowded and confusing towns we should be surrounded by such thoughtful compositions. When done well, nothing makes an urban space as calming or evocative of distant nature.

The traditional Japanese garden is a landscape in miniature; the mountains, rivers and forests of the archipelago on which the art developed but abstracted until only the essence remains. A stone on its end may represent a mountain, a dome of clipped azalea an island, and a pool of moss the rich floor of a temperate woodland. This tradition of exquisite refinement can best be seen in the famous dry gardens of Zen Buddhist temples with their symbolic boulders and watery ripples of raked gravel.

Dry gardens are enmeshed in the Zen Buddhist tradition. They emphasise space and



Sense of calm
Left: Kyoto Japanese Garden, Holland Park.
Above: a meditation garden with a modern Japanese moon gate, stone sculpture, pool and acers

absence, and encourage us not to understand them but to experience them - to make our mind as free from clutter as the space before us and to feel calm. But there is a parallel tradition in Japanese landscaping, that of the 'stroll garden', where the visitor walks along a path and is delighted by set-piece vistas representing lines of poetry, snatches of Shinto folklore honouring nature, or famous mountains or palaces. Here we might spot a bridge, cascade, stream or pond based on real features but idealised, with the sea becoming a reflecting lake and a celebrated waterfall represented as a miniaturised cascade.

To capture the effect in our own gardens we should use simple, natural materials. A rustic stone bench rather than a plastic wicker-style chair nods to local geology, grows moss or lichen and seems as permanent as hills while still weathering each winter. Bow-shaped bridges and granite lanterns resembling bird tables are also classic elements of Japanese design, but they can look jarring if plonked straight in (C)

WHAT TO PLANT

Azalea japonica 'Hino Crimson' This can be clipped tight after blooming and still bear red flowers each year.



Pinus thunbergii The traditional niwaki pine for those with sharp shears and lots of patience.



Acer palmatum var. *dissectum* 'Seiryu' Unique maple suitable for underplanting with moss or ground cover.



Acer palmatum 'Emerald Lace' This is feather-leaved, slow-growing and suitable for large pots.



Acer palmatum 'Bloodgood' A large, easily available red maple for the medium-sized garden.



from a catalogue. Instead, consider something that seems made for the place in which it sits. A bridge can just be planks with a bamboo handrail, and a cast-iron lantern on a flat-topped rock has a simple beauty of its own.

A British garden might seem a little cramped for a pretty walking route, but a look at the ancient gardens of urban Japan demonstrates that these designs are well fitted for small spaces. In tea gardens, paths wind over miniature pools and beneath trees on their way to the small house where green matcha tea is served. The features need not be large. A stone trough holds enough water to bring tranquillity, while the beauty of life and death can be shown through well-chosen trees; perhaps a flowering cherry for its youthful blossom and an acer to blaze out the year.

Which brings us to plants. Many Japanese species grow best on acid or neutral soils, but gardeners on limey ground should not lose hope. Acers, azaleas and camellias grow happily in pots mixed with ericaceous compost. I adore the characteristic domes of azaleas clipped *Karikomi-style* into lozenges, but the effect can be replicated using hebes (*Hebe parviflora* var. *angustifolia* is ideal for loose mounds; *Hebe pinguifolia* 'Sutherlandii' for tighter shapes.)

Sambucus nigra f. *laciniata* is a good substitute for green-foliaged acers, *Sambucus* 'Black Lace' for those with purple tones. Think about the texture and colour of the leaves. Flowers take a less important place in Japanese gardens than they do in their modern British equivalents. The Japanese style shows us a different way to treat our spaces, teaching us to appreciate the subtlety of shade and showing us that green comes in a hundred tones.

This green starts at ground level, with the Japanese garden often carpeted in deep moss, something that can be imitated in dry areas by planting *Pachysandra terminalis*, Mind-your-own-business (*Soleirolia soleirolii*) or *Asarum europaeum*. A higher veil of foliage can come from hostas, Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*), Japanese anemones and shuttlecock or painted lady ferns (*Matteuccia struthiopteris* or *Athyrium niponicum* var. *pictum*), all of which are shade-tolerant giving leeway for choice shrubs and small trees. I like *Cornus kousa* with its butterfly blooms, but consider sweet-smelling Japanese snowbell (*Styrax japonicus*), particularly if there's water around to reflect its bright autumn leaves. If the garden is too small for trees, take comfort in the flowering cherry *Prunus* 'amanogawa' with its tall, trim silhouette.

Japanese garden elements should be thoughtfully chosen and positioned with care. But this does not mean less gardening. The

Serene dream

Right: *Hebe pinguifolia* 'Sutherlandii', phormium and miscanthus.

Below: *Cornuskousa*



reward is in the engagement they demand. A representation of nature so stylised cannot be left to nature -

there are always leaves to clip and grass seedlings to tweezer from the moss. Perhaps the most satisfying job in horticulture is the slow shaping of a *niwaki* tree - the ground-grown and full-sized equivalents of bonsai. The best are from seed-grown Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) but common garden plants such as cotoneaster, yew, holly, privet and box can be cloud pruned to achieve the effect.

My outlook on gardens was partially shaped by the book *A Gentle Plea for Chaos* (1989), Mirabel Osler's brilliant condemnation of straight lines and sharp corners. But chaos can go too far in a world as confusing as ours. The Japanese garden offers an alternative: a gentle plea for serenity. *

WHERE TO GO



Tl,e Kyoto Garden,
Holland Park, London
Stone lanterns and Japanese maples surround a tiered cascade and koi-filled pond.

Tatton Park, Cheshire
An Edwardian garden in the tea-garden style containing a Shinto shrine and many authentic artefacts collected by Alan de Tatton.

Birmingham Botanic Garden
Here a traditional courtyard garden or *tsubo-niwa* hosts the National Bonsai Collection.

Lauriston Castle,
Edinburgh
The Kyoto Friendship Garden contains a classic dry garden and serpentine water spanned by picturesque bridges.

Compton Acres, Dorset
The wooded tea garden sports a lily-filled lake burning bright azaleas in the late spring.

Tl,ree Wheels Shin Buddhist Temple, Acton, London
A traditional Zen garden. Open to visitors on the temple's community days and by request.

Sparkling selection

Our columnist chooses the bottles guaranteed to make your Easter celebrations fizz



by JOE FATTORINI

Spring sees the start of the sporting season, for fair-weather types anyway, and for me it's no different. The annual Champagne and Sparkling Wine World Championships is not a Monty Python sketch, it's a thing that actually happens.

My usual role is to announce the names of contenders and winners at the ceremony. Reader, it requires a unique set of skills. With entrants from around the world, flipping flawlessly from 'Cleto Chiarli 2021 Vecchia Modena Premium in Magnum' to 'Llopart 2017 Imperial Panoramic Corpinnat' in the right accent is no small feat.

What this event also shows is that great-value sparkling wine comes from surprising places. It pays to look outside Champagne, not least in the Formula 1 World Championships, where success is no longer celebrated with Champagne, but with Ferrari Brut from the Italian region of Trentodoc, regular winners of 'best sparkling wine producer in the world'. **Ferrari F1 Brut** (12%, £27.50, champagnedirect.co.uk) offers podium-quality brioche aromas and lingering fruit.

Spain is a powerhouse of great-value fizz. **Arestel Cava Brut** (11.5%, £4.49, Lidl) is dry, zesty and fresh with a mouth-filling foamy fizz made exactly the same way as Champagne. And it's something you can enjoy any day of the week.

For sparkling France, look for Blanquette de Limoux, particularly the apple and honey-scented offering from family winemakers Antech - the sparkling wine on TV's *Love Island*, no less. You can try it (without the show's branding) in **Berry Bros & Rudd Cremant de Limoux by Antech, Brut, Languedoc** (12%, £14.95, bbr.com). It's possibly the best-value wine at Berry Bros. Another to seek out is **M&S Found Blanquette de Limoux** (12%, £10, in store or at ocado.com), which is grassier with more pronounced biscuit, yeasty aromas. It gets its apple character from the ancient Mauzac grape that leads the blend.

Germany makes fabulous sparkling wines, including Sekt. For non-drinkers, **Thomson & Scott Naughty Organic Sparkling Chardonnay** (0%, £9.99, Majestic) with its crisp, fresh apple flavour and no alcohol, is a real treat.



Toast the difference
It pays to look outside Champagne for good-value sparkling wine

These are bottles made for a big occasion, too. At Nelson Mandela's inauguration in May 1994 he celebrated with wine from the South African producer Graham Beck. The story became so well-known that when Barack Obama won the Democrat nomination he also toasted it with a bottle of Graham Beck.

This complex, elegant and toasty **Graham Beck Selection Sparkling Wine** (12%, £13, Tesco) is perfect to celebrate Easter - or whatever victories, triumphs, and even tribulations come your sporting way this summer. *



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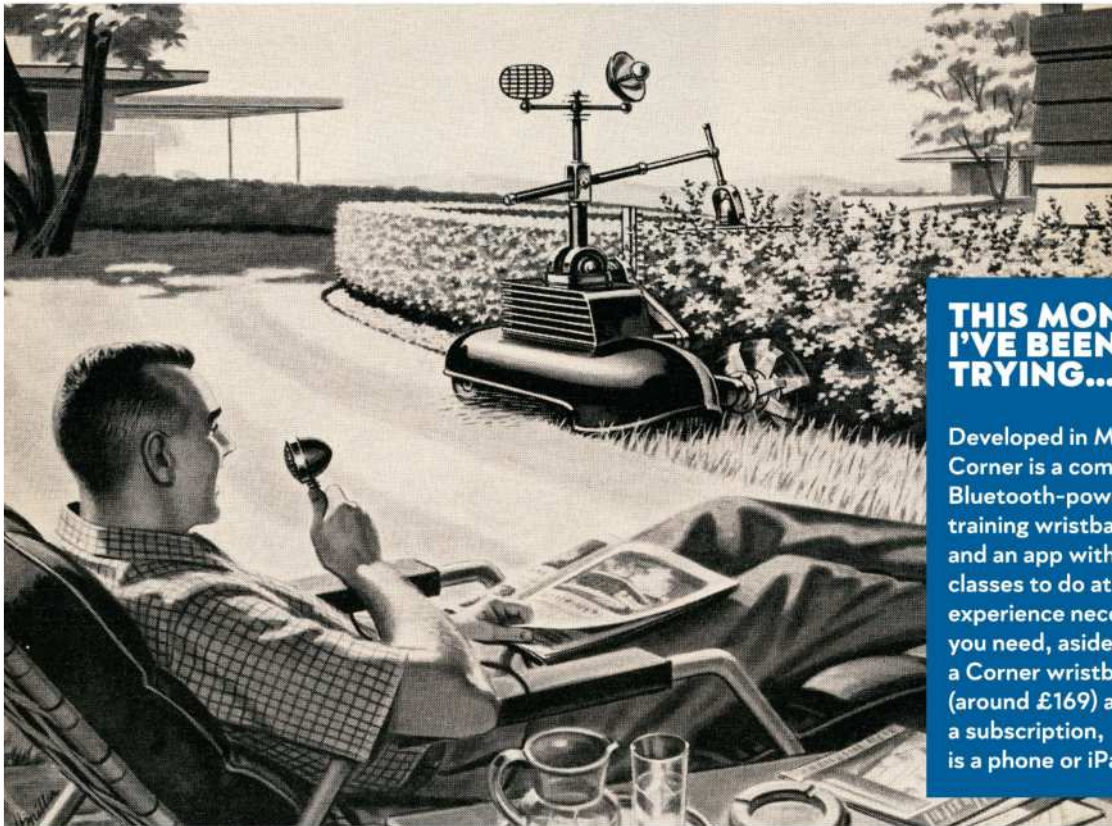


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'None involves that 1970s pastime of possibly slicing through a 240v cable'

THIS MONTH I'VE BEEN TRYING...

my pick

Developed in Manchester, Corner is a combination of Bluetooth-powered training wristbands and an app with boxing classes to do at home. No experience necessary. All you need, aside from a Corner wristband (around £169) and a subscription, is a phone or iPad.



New plot lines

From lawn mowers to moisture meters, these outdoor gadgets will help your garden grow

Electricity and water not being the best of playmates, the garden was the last area of the home for which electrical gadgetry was developed. But now we're in the age of electronic, app-controlled robot mowers, cordless hedge trimmers and the like - none of which involves that 1970s pastime of slicing through a 240-volt cable.

Remember Segway, the personal transport scooter introduced in 2001 only to die out by 2020? Well, Segway was acquired by a Chinese company, and now has a garden product that, although pricey, is really exciting. The Segway Navimow avoids the need to lay out the physical wire boundary marker that keeps other robot

by
JONATHAN
MARGOLIS

Growing gains
Below, from left: Suplong soil moisture meter, the Segway Navimow and Boot Buddy



mowers from roaming off course. Its boundaries are set via an app that Segway says is centimetre accurate, as well as having sensors to detect small animals, so you won't accidentally mow the cat. It costs from £1,299 and for an extra £170 (until 31 May), you can attach an AI-based VisonFence Sensor for even more mowing accuracy.

German firm Stihl is renowned for tough and reliable garden gadgets and its new SHA 56 is a £240 cordless leaf blower that can also be set to suck. In its vacuum mode, the hybrid machine also shreds leaves and hedge cuttings to reduce their volume. A separate battery and charger is needed, but these work in other Stihl products.

Of course, garden tech doesn't need to be expensive. The Suplong soil moisture meter (about £9, *Amazon*) is just what's needed to avoid killing your garden - and pot plants - with kindness by overwatering. And there's no battery needed as the 17cm probe derives power from damp soil.

Finally, a low-tech gadget: a boot scraper for when you finish. It has a cleverly shaped gouger, a stiff brush and a squeezezy tank you fill with soapy water. The Boot Buddy (from £14.99) was designed by Arminster Singh Dhillon, who, aged 15, won a £60,000 investment on BBC's *Dragons' Den*. He's now sold one million - dig him! *




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Generation games

by MARK PALMER

For our columnist, Easter means encouraging his children and their little ones to go to church. Can he put up a convincing argument?

Easter is in early April this year. So, expect a wonderful show of daffodils and, as ever, congregations swelling in churches up and down the land for this big moment in the Christian calendar.

I shall be encouraging my children to attend an Easter service with their own children, but fear it might come to nothing - if Christmas is anything to go by. What a struggle. They all made it... but only just. My argument was that as most of them (three out of four couples) had been married in church, they should at least make an appearance every now and again, especially since some of their children were baptised into the Church of England.

I ventured that their non church-going was hypocritical, but then one of them came up with this retort: 'Would you still go to church if the service was held in a modern hut?'

The honest answer to that is probably not. But modern huts don't play such an important



What do you think? Email us at editor@saga.co.uk with 'Generation Games' in the subject line

role in Britain as our churches do - even if they stand empty most of the time.

I'd like my grandchildren to attend church for cultural as well as religious reasons. I don't see how you can understand the history of our country without knowing its Christian heritage. The Reformation, for example, did not just allow Henry VIII to divorce and marry without the Pope's blessing, but changed the course of all our lives. And Charles I's Divine Right of Kings, which led to his execution in 1649, was such a pivotal moment it makes Prince Harry's spilling of the royal beans look positively pedestrian.

What I keep telling my children - but they don't seem to believe me - is that it's not just a generation thing. Attending a church service is a chance to be exposed to beautiful language, centuries-old hymns, prayers from *The 1662 Book of Common Prayer*, or just sitting quietly for an hour or so in a building dating back as far as the 12th century.

Except that, sadly, many church services have dropped beautiful language, centuries-old hymns and prayers from *The 1662 Book of Common Prayer*. And they have done this because they think services are too austere and that they go over the heads of children. Instead, informal family services have become little different to classes at school. 'Now, children, hands up, why do we celebrate Easter?' asks the vicar. 'Who can point to the donkey's tail?'

Far better, surely, for children to be exposed to the mystery, the unfathomable. Let it go over their heads and I guarantee that it will seep into their consciousness. Talking up to people reaps far better results than talking down to them.

Pomp and ceremony leaves an indelible mark. Tiny children watching the funeral cortege of the late Queen as it made its way through the streets of London might have become restless half way through - but in some curious way it will remain with them for the rest of their lives. I remember having to watch Winston Churchill's state funeral on 30 January 1965, aged 11. While I would rather have been outside playing football, it has stayed with me forever more.

It would help, of course, if the average sermon was of a higher calibre, even something along the lines of the *Today* programme's Thought for the Day, which only lasts a few minutes.

Going to church is a discipline, a duty even, especially if we appreciate seeing churches dotted about the country. And some disciplines and duties are more enjoyable than others. So much of life is a paradox. I don't mind if my grandchildren turn out to be non-believers - but I still want them to go to church. ®



ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN WOOD



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While you may be an excellent driver, others on the road are not always quite so skilled. Unfair as it might seem, another's carelessness could mean you are out of pocket. Even when, say, your car is parked and you are not at the wheel, there is always the chance it could be damaged by the clumsy manoeuvring of vehicles in neighbouring spaces.

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saving your hard-earned cash in the event of an incident, buying a Nextbase dash cam might also lower your insurance bill. Many insurers offer savings to drivers who have a dash cam installed.

Damage in car parks costs motorists approximately £1.5bn a year, according to research by Skoda UK. This includes dents in unattended vehicles caused by car doors that are flung open that bit too far, as well as scuffs and scratches from drivers who try to squeeze their cars next to yours in a space that is too small.

Without video footage, it can be tricky to prove this damage was not your fault or responsibility.

Of the 2,000 motorists polled for the Skoda study, four in ten admitted to accidentally hitting another car with their door when climbing out of their vehicles. On average, drivers who have had their cars harmed in car parks have been left with a hefty repair bill of £396.

If something were to happen to your unattended vehicle, a dash

cam from Nextbase will ensure you have sufficient evidence of what really happened, so you don't have to pay out unnecessarily.

Nextbase's eSOS feature also provides help if a more serious accident were to occur. In the year ending June 2022, there were 137,013 reported road casualties, with 29,804 reported killed or seriously injured. In the event of a collision where the driver and any other occupants are unresponsive, Nextbase dash cams can notify emergency services of your exact location and make them aware of any relevant medical information prior to attending, such as allergies, blood types and your doctor's details. They can also share personal details, including your next of kin and home address.

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health & wellbeing

YOUR QUESTIONS / EGGS / POLYMYALGIA

This month our expert offers advice on eye floaters, swollen ankles, menopause and taking vitamin D

Q Why does fluid retention become so much more of a problem as you get older? I used to have nicely shaped ankles until I reached my late sixties, but now they are sometimes so puffy by the end of the day that I can't wear my shoes.

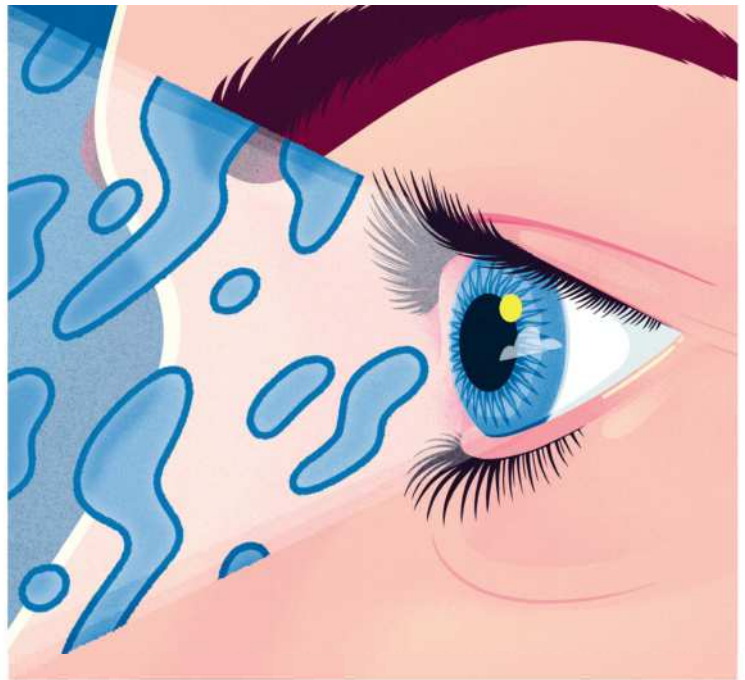
O'M There are myriad possible causes for ankle swelling (peripheral oedema) and I am sorry to report that most become more common with age.

Swelling is often most noticeable in the ankles and lower legs because gravity pushes any excess fluid down to the lowest point. Conversely, it tends to be least noticeable in the morning after your legs have been elevated in bed all night.

Causes range from heart, liver, kidney and lymph system problems (generally painless) to blood clots, infection and injury (generally uncomfortable), and you will have to see your own GP to get to the bottom of yours. Whatever the cause, the swelling is often aggravated by warm weather, eating too much salt, inactivity and being overweight.

One cause that's often missed is a side effect of medication. The calcium channel blocker family of blood pressure treatments often cause ankle oedema. These are the drugs that end in -ipine, such as amlodipine and felodipine. And anti-inflammatories used to treat arthritis, such as ibuprofen and naproxen, can exacerbate it too.

Whatever the underlying cause in your case, it is a symptom that warrants discussion with your doctor who, after examining you, will probably want to do a few investigations - typically blood tests to start with. Treatment



varies depending on the cause but may include a diuretic (water tablet) to shift the excess fluid.

In the meantime, try to keep your legs elevated - on a footstool or pouffe - when sitting. Gentle compression stockings/flight socks can help too.

Q Over the past couple of years I have occasionally noticed spots floating in front of my eyes. They are greyish blobs and are most noticeable on sunny days. We have just come back from a holiday in Lanzarote and they seem to be triggered by the sun reflecting off the white buildings. I am short-sighted and wear glasses, but my vision is otherwise normal. Is this anything to worry about?

O'M Any change in vision should prompt a visit to an optometrist for an eye

I advise anyone over 45 to book an eye test every two to three years'

Q

check. Indeed, I advise anyone over 45 to book a test every two to three years even if their vision is fine.

This sounds like a classic case of floaters, caused by age-related changes in the fluid within the eye and more common in people who are short-sighted (myopic). If they are only occasional and have been present, on and off, for a couple of years they are likely to be innocent.

If they are new, or there are lots of them, it is more suggestive of an underlying problem. And pink ones, or those accompanied by flashing lights, should never be ignored as they are associated with haemorrhages and/or a detached retina.

Assuming your eye is healthy, the floaters should settle eventually, but are likely to be replaced by more over time. They can be annoying but are best ignored. In extreme cases, surgeons sometimes suggest laser treatment, or flushing out the eye (vitrectomy), but both procedures carry risks and are rarely required.

Q Now the days are getting longer and sunnier (hopefully), is it necessary for my husband and me to still take a daily vitamin D supplement?

Current advice ([nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d)) is that every adult in the UK should take a daily vitamin D supplement (10mcg/400 units) from the end of September to early April when the sun is not strong enough for us to make enough (it is produced by the action of sunlight on skin).

You can get vitamin D from your diet too - natural sources include oily fish, red meat and eggs - but it is hard to reach recommended levels, hence the advice to supplement (doctors typically favour the D3 form).

For people who don't get outside much, such as those who are frail, housebound or in care homes, supplementation should continue throughout the year. And the same applies to

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own GP

anyone who has dark skin or who covers up extensively when outside. If this does not apply to you then you can stop supplements from now until the end of September, but it won't do any harm to continue them.

Quite what benefits such supplements offer remains the subject of fierce debate. While suboptimal levels of the 'sunshine' vitamin are associated with a number of conditions ranging from osteoporosis and diabetes to cancer of the prostate and colon, this does not mean supplementation protects against any of them (rickets being an important exception). More's the pity..

Q How long do hot flushes and night sweats go on for? I am 55 and thought my periods had stopped 18 months ago, but I have just had another light bleed. The flushes and sweats show no signs of abating so far but, having discussed options with my GP, I am not keen on HRT so will soldier on. But for how much longer?

The strict definition of the menopause is your last period (average age around 51 in the UK), but the term is often used to describe the changes that occur around this time due to waning oestrogen levels, such as hot flushes, and these can go on for many years.


I think you should assume you had your menopause 18 months ago, at 53, and that this latest bleed is not 'just' another period. Vaginal bleeding that occurs more than 12 months after your last proper period (postmenopausal bleeding) is not considered normal and it warrants investigation. In most cases, such bleeding is caused by hormone-related thinning of tissues in the vagina and surrounding areas, or non-cancerous polyps, but it can also be a sign of more sinister problems, including cancer of the cervix and lining of the womb.

You should tell your GP who will want to investigate further and refer you to a gynaecologist if required. *



The right direction

Could orienteering be the ideal activity for keeping your brain sharp? Possibly, according to researchers in Canada who found that participants in the sport, aged 18 to 87, reported better spatial skills and memory. It's thought the 'magic' of orienteering lies in the mix of outdoor exercise and the brain's quick transitions between different types of spatial processing – reading a map and discovering your own position in real time. *By Rachel Carlyle*



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Eggs

unscrambled

by RUTH TIERNEY

There aren't many foods that have yo-yoed between health superhero and villain as many times as the egg. But it seems the latest research is on the sunny side

Whether poached, hard-boiled or fried, you probably still serve your eggs with a dollop of doubt. Are they a healthy option? What about cholesterol levels? How many is too many? From the positive 'Go to work on an egg' campaign of the 1950s and 1960s, to the salmonella scare and then the dire cholesterol warnings of the 1980s and beyond, eggs have certainly had a chequered history.

'In the 20 years I've been a dietitian, I've seen recommendations around eggs change many times,' says Victoria Taylor, senior dietitian at the British Heart Foundation (BHF). 'It's not surprising that the most common question I'm asked by a confused

public is whether it's safe to eat them if you have cardiovascular disease. The answer is a reassuring yes.'

It's the link between eggs and cholesterol that has proved the most controversial, and one that has become somewhat scrambled. Older studies stated that the high cholesterol in yolks (177mg in a medium egg) raised our own levels of cholesterol and therefore increased the risk of heart disease.

But it is now known that, for most people, dietary cholesterol does not significantly raise blood cholesterol. In fact, only a third of our cholesterol comes from diet (our liver makes the rest). 'Previous studies have been observational, so only show an association rather than cause and effect,' says Taylor. 'It was difficult to pull out whether it was eggs or the rest of the diet that was increasing the risk.'



Eggcellent Advertising campaign from the 1950s

Saturated fats found in meat and dairy are now known to have a much more harmful effect on your levels of "bad" cholesterol than dietary cholesterol. Eggs are low in saturated fat.'

A study of 177,000 people in 50 countries published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* in 2020 backed this, finding no significant association between the consumption of eggs and raised blood lipids or cardiovascular disease. And an eight-year Chinese study published in 2022 went further, finding that eating three to six eggs a week was associated with a lower risk of mortality than eating none.

How many?

Health bodies used to advise eating no more than four eggs a week. But in 2000, the then Department of Health and the BHF both changed their advice, and there is now no upper limit for healthy adults. The news is even good for people at risk of heart disease. When NICE guidelines were last published in 2014, those at risk were advised to eat less than 300mg a day of dietary cholesterol. But NICE is removing that guidance this year and there will be no recommendation about dietary cholesterol intake.

There is an exception to the rule, says Taylor. 'People who have familial hypercholesterolaemia (an inherited condition where you have exceptionally high levels of cholesterol) will still be advised by NICE to eat less than 300mg of dietary cholesterol a day as they need to take more care than the general population.'

All about the yolk

So, for most of us, tasteless egg-white omelettes are finally off the menu. 'Eggs are like a supplement in natural packaging, and the yolk is the most nutrient-dense part,' says Laura Southern, nutritionist from London Food Therapy (londonfoodtherapy.com). 'Egg white is just 90% water, 10% protein. When advising older clients on ways to protect their bones and brains, I always recommend eggs because they are an easy, inexpensive way to pack in a lot of protein and vitamins.'

Protein is especially important for the over-60s, agrees Dr Sue Reeves, nutritionist at the University of Roehampton. 'It helps maintain muscle mass and delay frailty. Because eggs work well in breakfast, lunch or dinner, they encourage a more even distribution of protein

'Eggs are like a supplement in natural packaging, and the yolk is the most nutrient-dense part'



WHAT'S IN AN EGG?

Calories 66
Protein 6.4g
Fat 4.6g
Saturated fat 1.3g
Vitamin 812
56% of NRV*
Vitamin 82
18%
Folate 12%
Biotin 20%
Vitamin A B %
Vitamin D 32%
Choline 36%
Selenium 22%
Iodine 17%

Based on a medium egg.

* Nutrient reference value, the amount considered adequate to prevent deficiency.

throughout the day, which has been shown to better stimulate muscle growth than skewing all protein consumption to the evening meal.'

Protein also helps you feel fuller for longer, which might explain why people who eat at least five eggs a week are slimmer than those eating none, according to a Spanish study published last year in *Clinical Nutrition*.

Brain (and eye) food

Not only are eggs good sources of vitamin B12 (essential for cognition and energy), vitamin A (eye health) and vitamin D (bone health, immunity), they are abundant in two lesser known nutrients: lutein and choline. 'Lutein is a polyphenol antioxidant found in yellow and orange foods, and eggs are one of the most concentrated sources of it,' says Southern. 'Supportive of the retina, it can prevent cataracts and macular degeneration.'

Choline is an essential nutrient for brain health, yet 90% of the US population is deficient in it, according to figures (similar data does not exist in the UK). 'Because it helps with focus and memory, it's often used in supplement form for children with ADHD, but it's just as beneficial for older adults,' says Southern. A recent US study has even linked deficiency to increased risk of Alzheimer's. Two eggs contain more than 50% of your RDA, and studies have shown that the natural choline in eggs is better absorbed than supplements.

'The fat contained in eggs acts as a carrier for nutrients such as choline, and fat-soluble vitamins A and D, allowing the body to access them more easily,' she adds. *

MAKE YOUR EGGS EVEN HEALTHIER

* Boiled or poached are the healthiest ways to cook eggs as there's no fat or extra ingredients.

* If you prefer fried eggs, use cooking oil low in saturated fat with a high smoke point, like rapeseed oil. Oils with low smoke points (eg flaxseed, walnut) can break down when heated and form aldehydes - harmful compounds that may cause disease.

* Buy organic eggs if you can. They have twice as much omega-3 fatty acids and higher percentages of vitamins A and E, according to US research at Penn State University.

* Cook thoroughly, says Southern. 'As we age, we are more vulnerable to infection, so use fresh eggs and cook well - avoid runny scrambled or very soft boiled eggs.'



Taking the strain

Polymyalgia rheumatica affects around 278,000 people in the UK - twice as many women as men - and can often be tricky to diagnose. But help is out there, as our writer discovered



One day I woke up with a cricked neck that didn't go away. But when, within weeks, the muscles of my shoulders, upper arms, hips and thighs also felt stuck and achy it dawned on me that something else was wrong. Previously active, I found just turning over in bed was a Herculean effort. Going upstairs was painfully slow and so hard I often resorted to crawling.

Physiotherapy didn't help, nor painkillers. I was at my wits' end until I remembered something I once wrote for *Saga Magazine* about polymyalgia rheumatica (PMR). The autoimmune disease is the commonest inflammatory rheumatic disease to affect older people, with an average age of onset of 73 - my age exactly. Around 278,000 people in the UK have PMR, which is on the rise, yet still under-recognised. Research suggests that an estimated one in 100 women, and about one in 200 men, over 40 will have a diagnosis in their lives.

A GP visit, followed by an appointment with a consultant rheumatologist, confirmed my hunch. I was prescribed prednisolone, a corticosteroid (steroid) that reduces inflammation and is the mainstay of PMR treatment, plus calcium and vitamin D to protect my bones from the increased risk of fracture that can accompany steroids. Within a day, my muscles loosened and the pain improved.

by PATSY WESTCOTT

But what causes this painful condition? Genetic and environmental factors are thought to play a part but exactly what and to what extent remains a mystery. One of the biggest advances has been the ability of scans, such as PET and MRI, to pick up symmetrical 'blobs' of inflammation at sites where patients experience the pain and stiffness. This is most prominent in the neck, shoulders and hips, but sufferers may have low back pain, and aches and stiffness in the knees and wrists.

It's no longer thought to originate in the joints. 'We think PMR could be linked to age-related changes in the immune system, in the body's connective tissues and the way these interact,' says Dr Sarah Mackie, consultant rheumatologist and associate professor at Leeds Teaching Hospitals, and co-author of 36 papers on PMR.

As I write, my symptoms are more or less controlled. But many aren't so lucky and have ongoing struggles with debilitating pain and stiffness, fatigue and depression. That's partly because of the difficulty of diagnosis. There is no definitive test for PMR, and the classic signs and symptoms can mimic other conditions. What's more, although levels of inflammatory chemicals are raised for some, according to consultant rheumatologist Dr Samantha Hider of Keele University, they aren't in around 5% of cases. The fact that many sufferers are grappling with other health issues further clouds the diagnostic picture. 'Remote GP consultations haven't helped either. And with





the average GP encountering PMR relatively rarely it is not always on their radar,' says Dr Hider.

One of the most pervasive myths about PMR is that once diagnosed and treated it is done and dusted within a couple of years. 'But while around a third of people do follow this classic trajectory it's a lot more variable than it appears in medical literature,' says Keele University's Dr Sara Muller.

The cornerstone of treatment - prednisolone - hasn't changed for decades. But although it quells symptoms dramatically, it comes with unwelcome side effects, including an increased risk of problems affecting the blood vessels, respiratory, hormonal and gastric systems, cataracts, fragile bones, fractures, thinning hair, weight gain, mood swings, diabetes and the round 'moon face' of those taking steroids.

Unsurprisingly, doctors are keen to keep dosage to the minimum and to wean sufferers off it as fast as possible. This is done by gradually 'tapering' the dose over a year or two, which can be a struggle. Around 50% of patients relapse.

Geoff Davis, 79, from Brixham, Devon, was on prednisolone for eight years after being diagnosed in 2013. 'As soon as I got the dose down to a certain point, my symptoms returned with a vengeance and I had to up it again,' he says. Fortunately, by going slowly he was finally able to come off it and has been PMR-free for two years. His is a familiar story. One of the latest papers from the PMR Cohort Study found that around 40% of participants were still on

Look out for:

Symptoms suggestive of PMR include:

- * Symmetrical pain and stiffness affecting the shoulders (most patients), hips, neck and sometimes the back, wrists and knees

- * Morning stiffness lasting more than 45 mins and sometimes into the late morning/afternoon and after sitting still, for example after a car journey

- * Tiredness

- * Low mood

- * Night sweats

- * Fever

- * Loss of appetite

- * **Weight loss**

Symptoms often appear suddenly over a few days or sometimes even overnight

prednisolone more than five years after diagnosis.

The good news is that research is opening up possible new treatments. Scientists are examining whether inflammation-blocking agents called IL-6 inhibitors might be effective. And Dr Mackie is planning a new study looking at the value of adding disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs, such as methotrexate, to steroids for people with relapsing PMR. Methotrexate is an immune suppressant used to treat conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis and Crohn's disease, which is already widely used in the US for PMR. Few UK patients are currently offered it.

As for me, I'm slowly tapering the steroids while eating healthily, keeping moving, getting enough rest, relaxation and sleep, and pacing myself. Some sufferers on PMR forums swear by a keto (low carb) diet but that's a step too far for me. I've also found the charity PMRGCAuk.

You should not put up with symptoms or be fobbed off under the mistaken belief it's your age

Trustee Janice Maddock, 65, was diagnosed ten years ago. She says you should not put up with symptoms or be fobbed off under the mistaken belief it's your age. 'Too many people still haven't heard of PMR or confuse it with conditions such as fibromyalgia,' she says. What has helped? 'When first diagnosed, the doctor advised me to stop moving, which we now know to be wrong. I walk, swim, do Pilates and a tap class. I keep my carbs low and have been working with a nutritionist as I piled on a stone when I went on steroids. I also alternate massage and osteopathy every month or so.'

Your GP should be your first port of call. Physiotherapy and graded exercise could get your fitness and strength back, and occupational therapy could help with fatigue. And there are patient groups too. 'The important thing is there is hope,' says Dr Mackie. 'There's lots you can do to optimise your health, and no one should have to go it alone.'*

Read... *Polymyalgia Rheumatica and Giant Cell Arteritis: a survival guide* (2nd edition) by Kate Gilbert
(CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform)

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The former Home Secretary uses his wisdom, wit and experience to tackle the problems troubling you

Q A friend has started asking me where I buy my outfits - and then buying the same clothes. She's now getting her hair cut at my hairdresser, and she's even copied my sofa and patio pots. I know they say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but I hate her stealing my style. Is the only answer to avoid her?

O' I'm struggling to understand why this \:.,1 is such a problem for you. People are always taking inspiration from others, be it apparel or patio pots, and you obviously have a sense of style that your friend feels is worth duplicating.

I wonder how close a friend your copycat is. If she's a casual acquaintance, and it's really spooking you out, your best course of action may be to quietly disengage. If, however, this is a close friend who's only just begun to act in this way it might be worth trying to understand her motivation.

'People are always taking inspiration from others, and you obviously have a sense of style that your friend feels is worth duplicating'

Are problems emerging in her life that are making her try to duplicate yours? If she's facing a traumatic event, such as a break-up with her partner or looming redundancy, it may explain the sudden onset of what seems to be a change of personality. If she's a close friend you should be able to broach the subject without causing offence.

Either way, the biggest issue here is probably your friend's lack of confidence in her own taste and this only becomes a problem for you

Ask Alan

Email experts@saga.co.uk or write to Alan at the address on page 7. He can't reply individually, but will respond to questions on this page

if she were to suggest that it was you doing the copying. If you're going to a big event together, why don't you suggest comparing dress notes. That will at least give you a valid reason to reveal your increasing anxiety about her behaviour.

Q I got divorced three years ago, and have been with a new partner for six months. Unfortunately my grown-up children are frosty towards her - and now my daughter says my girlfriend cannot be my plus one at her wedding, as it may upset her mother, my ex-wife (who's single). I don't want to upset anyone, but I do feel insulted by their attitude, and on my girlfriend's behalf. What can I do?

O' Weddings are such joyous occasions, particularly for the happy couple, but there are frequently tensions around the guest list. Grown-up children often take time to adjust to a parent's new partner (dependent children have no choice). Given that you've only been with your new partner for six months and that she was therefore nothing to do with the circumstances of your divorce, I'd expect the frostiness to melt away in time. I wouldn't rush this process but I would ensure your children have no cause to complain that your new relationship has led to them being frozen out.

I'm sure this doesn't need saying but you must refrain from criticising their mother regardless of the circumstances of your divorce.

The real problem concerns your daughter's imminent wedding. My advice is to go alone. If you insist on taking your girlfriend it will probably be horrible for her and if you refuse to go because she hasn't been invited it's likely to be something you regret for the rest of your life.

Your girlfriend shouldn't feel insulted, it's nothing personal - your children don't even know her. I'm sure she'll understand that this is part of the usual fallout from a divorce. If she can accept that, so should you. Go to the wedding, give your daughter away and wait for time to heal those wounds. ®



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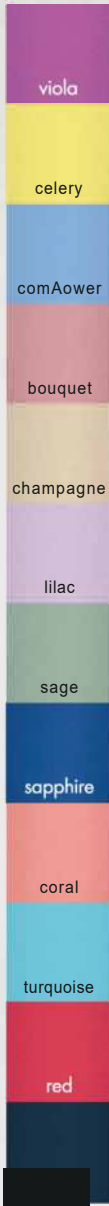
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Old age, young love

by HUNTER DAVIES

A chance discovery about his new lady friend's past has left our columnist excited to find out more. Will she be keen to share?



Miranda, my new lady friend, whom I met at the bookshop talk, agreed to visit my house - but not to stay the night, which she made clear. I should think not. It was, after all, just a second date, the first one being by complete chance.

I gave her some coffee and suggested a beach walk along Ryde Sands to The Dell, my regular cafe call. It usually takes me about an hour, but I was staggering, felt so tired and had to have lots of stops. I worried about what Miranda may be thinking. Did she want to get mixed up with such an old, staggering fella? I already knew she was 76 - ten years younger than me. A fine-looking woman: good features, cheekbones, with rather nice straggly hair, a bit like Mary Beard's.

When we got there, the cafe was closed. Oh God. I was spitting. I was desperate for a proper sit down. We had to walk back. Bad beginning. At home, I gave her a drink in my courtyard garden and we sat chatting till it got parky.

I went in to get her a coat, and brought out my ancient, heavy, grey herringbone tweed coat, which is about 50 years old. My late wife bought it for me in Regent Street, London. Not cheap, probably the most expensive item of clothing I have ever owned. I still love it, though it is moth-eaten and falling to pieces. Aren't we all?

'Here, pet, this will keep you warm,' I said. As she was putting it on, she saw the label.

'Aquascutum! Oh, I used to work for them.' 'As a shop assistant, on the till?' I questioned. 'No, on the catwalk. I was one of their house models.'

Miranda showed me how, on the catwalk, the models had to slip the coat off their shoulders and reveal the sleeves and lining in a certain way. It came out that, for three years, she had been a full-time model, doing advertising,

'In my mind, I was already telling friends what she used to do. Won't they be jealous'

catalogues, catwalks. It was her first husband, she said, who had talked her into it. She had not mentioned it so far in telling me about her life and work as an

artist and art therapist in old folks' homes.

Did she have a portfolio? Did she keep any of her cuttings? Miranda seemed reluctant to talk about it. I wondered if she thought my fascination with this stage in her life was a bit unhealthy. She did once appear on the cover of a Sixties pop record, her image having been stolen. That was funny. She would show it to me some time.

In the Sixties I was, for a time, woman's editor of *The Sunday Times* and met with agents and fashion people. Perhaps I saw Miranda bustling down the King's Road in her black mini-skirt, off to a fashion shoot? I kept asking questions, but worried I was appearing like an over-excited schoolboy, which of course, I still am.

I think Miranda would have liked me to have been more interested in her present-day life, not the silly things she did in the Sixties. In my mind, I was already telling my male friends, 'You won't guess what Miranda used to do'. Won't they be jealous. I did later tell my daughters who were not at all interested. They thought it was sad their poor old dad should be so excited by Miranda once having been a model. They also said, 'Burn that horrible coat at once. It is disgusting.' (When I am gone, that'll be the first thing they do.)

No chance. It is part of our joint history. Yet it all came out by chance. I am now wondering about other episodes there must have been in Miranda's life. When you meet someone new, everything about them is new... and exciting. *



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letters

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Gone too soon

I have just finished reading the article in the March issue about losing an adult child and feel that I have to write to you. My lovely son, Robert, died 28 years ago at the age of 23.

He was living in London while we were in Scotland and I can still hear those dreadful words that he was dead, all these years later. I had spoken to him on the phone only a couple of nights before.

My husband, two daughters and I were absolutely poleaxed by the news. We have, of course, had to live our lives without him and I find I can go some time without thinking about him but then suddenly, out of nowhere, will come a trigger that brings him to mind and the pain is as bad as ever.

My younger daughter is going to Florida, as her partner hasn't been, and is worried because the last time she was there we went as a family and Robert was with us. She feels she's going to see Robert in so many of the places she is planning to go. Even after 28 years she still feels the hurt.

I visualise what he would be like now as a 52-year-old pilot, which he was undergoing training for when he died. No doubt with a wife and children.

I feel so much for the family you featured who lost their daughter only last December, as the 'first' birthday and Christmas

without her will bring back memories of 'this time last year..'

I'm afraid we didn't try counselling as we knew that nothing could bring back Robert and that nothing could make us feel any better without him. It's true that time is a great healer, but the pain is still there from time to time, as raw as ever.
Josephine Cunningham
Wargrave, Berkshire

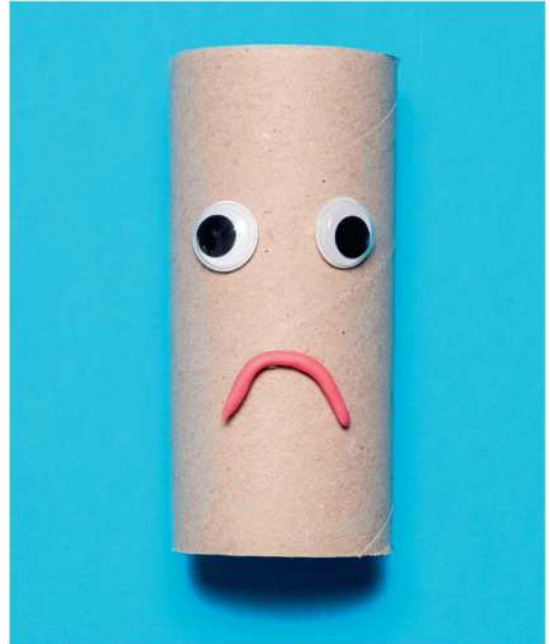
False economy

The councils of the UK should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves in closing down nearly all public toilets in towns, cities and villages, as reported in your March issue (*The Great Inconvenience*). It's disgraceful.

They say they care about health and safety but they obviously don't, otherwise they would make sure that public toilets are kept open everywhere. A lack of them drastically limits the lives of so many people, including myself. I have stopped going for much-loved days out because of the fear of not having easy access to public toilets due to some of my health conditions. The councils think that they are saving money, but at what cost?

It's so very wrong to ruin people's lives like this. There are other, healthier ways money could be saved. Closing public toilets takes away the freedom of so many people.

Sue Just (Mrs)
Kendal, Cumbria



Caught short
Many are disappointed by the lack of public toilets

Spending a penny

I am a member of a group (More Loos for Merton) and we have recently met with local councillors about this issue and are expecting our council to conduct a consultation shortly. While our council has a Community Toilet Scheme - in which businesses allow people to use their toilets for free - the number of firms signed up is miserable.

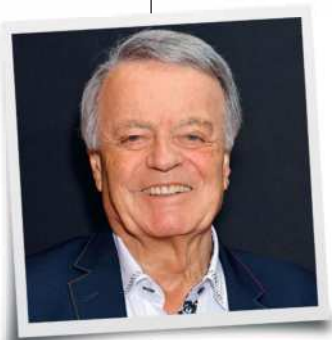
However, through our own efforts, we have discovered that there are numerous businesses with customer toilets in the area. I believe one of the solutions is to persuade more organisations to allow easier access for non-customers, even if this involves a small charge to use their facilities.
Julie Johns
Morden, Greater London

Locked in
Thank you for printing this article (*The Great Inconvenience, March*). I am 81 and regret the fact that there are many places I cannot go because of the lack of conveniences.
Julia Bradley, Sunderland

User unfriendly
If I'm going out anywhere I abstain from food or drink for hours beforehand. Many of the loos that are available take only credit cards, or are frequently closed with no alternatives. All this precludes me from visiting so many places where I would spend money.

The population is ageing so this entire fiasco is a national disgrace.
Rob Baldock
Friskney, Lincolnshire

About turn-table
As a teenager in the 1970s, I listened to Tony Blackburn [below] on Radio 1, and I'm afraid that he seemed rather silly and superficial. Your interview in the January issue showed him to be anything but this - he came across as someone who is kind, thoughtful and very likeable. It just shows how wrong one can be.
Phil Partridge
Bishops Tawton, Devon



Just sacrifice
Your March article on Averil Mansfield, the UK's first female professor of surgery, brought back so many memories. In the second half of the 1980s, my father spent three months as a patient in St Mary's, C)



Do the bright thing
Readers were inspired by Prue Leith's colourful wardrobe

you're all talking about...

PRUE LEITH

Inspiring sight
I would like to congratulate you on your interview with Prue Leith (**February**). Both the article and the information about Prue's styling were extremely interesting.

I will be 70 this year and have always dressed conservatively but, having seen how fabulous and youthful Prue looked, I have been inspired to get out of my comfort zone.

Giving full details of where readers might be able to source the clothing and jewellery used has been very useful and, although I won't be able to buy the whole look, I hope to buy a couple of pieces, starting with those eye-catching glasses.

It is so easy to get in a rut, so, thank you, Prue and Saga Magazine, you have woken me up as to what is out there.
Sue Baudains
Grouville, Jersey

Prue love
As a huge fan of **The Great British Bake Off**, I have come to fall in love with Dame Prue Leith. She shows why us older folk should not allow ourselves to be dismissed as over the hill, dull and boring. I applaud her bright wardrobe with striking designs and bold use of colour.
Natasha Russell-Carr
Tingley, West Yorkshire

Down with drab
I loved the interview with Prue Leith. Being a similar age, I try to wear bright clothes but, in my price range, most shops sell drab, mud-coloured styles.

So many people do not agree with looking alive and bright. But it lifts your mood to get dressed in colourful clothes, especially in winter.
Ann Sharpe
Blaby, Leicestershire

A right to choose
I see Prue Leith has been speaking out in favour of assisted dying. I agree with her. When I was young, my mother, dying from cancer, was bedridden and groaning with pain - my abiding memory of her. One day the doctor saw her and told my father she would no longer need any more medicine. She died that day.

My wife has many medical problems and has now been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and vascular dementia. She says she wants to die with dignity, when she is lucid enough to converse. She is also in constant pain, caused by skeletal deterioration.

It is quality of life that counts not quantity. Something has to be done, but MPs are set against any change in the law. Why can't we have the choice?
David Broomfield
Address supplied



Medical hero
One reader
is grateful
to Averil
Mansfield
(left) for
helping her
father

Paddington, and she was his consultant. I remember her asking my mother and myself to come into the office, where she informed us that Dad was seriously ill and that if it came to a choice between removing his leg or him losing his life, she would remove his leg.

Well, he did lose his leg, but I then had my dad for another 25 years. No words can ever express my gratitude to her and her team.

Sue Melville
Christchurch, Dorset

Dancing through the decades

I loved the article in your February issue about 61-year-old Nikki Spencer and her dance nights.

I am 96, so probably a little too old for Nikki, but I have had so much pleasure out of dancing. In 1948, I met my future wife dancing, and we were married for 70 years before she passed away. But we always danced, even in the nursing home.

Albert Parker,
Malpas,
Cheshire

Keep dancing,
Nikki Spencer
believes you
can enjoy
clubbing at
any age



you're all talking about...

THE CORONATION

Birthday bash

The Coronation on 2 June 1953 was the day before my fifth birthday, with 3 June a day of street parties and party food. All of the tables were put out and laid out with jellies, cakes and sandwiches, squash and other party pieces. My mum had to break the bad news to me that this was not my birthday party but to celebrate our new Queen. Susan Dredge
Piddlehinton, Dorset

First to the post

I was in my second year at college in Norwich and John (later my husband) was at Loughborough. We decided to hitch-hike to London and meet up at a Tube station on the outskirts. We made our way to Marble Arch and headed for the barricades near the road. We chose a spot by a lamppost that John said would give us extra protection if there was a crush. The atmosphere was wonderful - everyone so excited and friendly.

Eventually the procession began with cheering and waving as each carriage passed. Then, to our dismay, some tall revellers stood in front of us blocking our view. John gave me a leg up on to the barricade, climbed up alongside me and we held on to the lamppost and had a fantastic view. John was convinced Princess Margaret smiled at him but I think that was wishful thinking.

Later that year, when the new students arrived, we all shared our memories of the Coronation and one of them said she had watched at Marble Arch. 'Where exactly were you?' I asked

'Opposite a pair of idiots up a lamppost,' she replied. Sheila Hector
Kingswood, Bristol

No cold shoulder

We were about six deep watching from the roadside. It was raining and, being short, I couldn't see much. My fiance hoisted me on to his shoulders and I saw it all. I am still married to him. Doris Grimsley
Abbey Wood, London

Power struggle

We were given a day off school, but in our village of Ardentenny, on the shores of Loch Long, we were not on the national electricity grid. However, this was no problem, as we could call upon generators used every month by the Highlands and Islands Film Board, when villagers could see one of the latest films in our local hall.

We found the village hall to be suitable for a TV signal, so a cable was installed and a TV set placed on a table.

On the day, I estimated everyone in our village attended for the free hot drinks and ample home baking. The country was still on rationing and bags of sweets were a rare treat. 111omas Lee, Ayr, Ayrshire

Window display

My father had a village shop in Hertfordshire and he purchased a small TV and placed it in the shop's bay window. A lot of people came to see it as there were few TVs in the village.

This was followed by a party in the village hall, which was very memorable, and so exciting for the people in the village. We dressed up in our best clothes

© EVANGELINE WILSON



MA-

Mind the generation
As always, the delightful
Susie Dent gave me a good
laugh in your March issue,
but the biggest fun I had
was with the story by
John de Lange about
sharing his home with
his 28-year-old grandson.
I had a real belly laugh at
his description of various
incidents and can so
understand his feelings about
young people making one
feel rejuvenated.

I always enjoy the company
of my grandchildren, whose
lives are so full of activities,
both personal and also in
making the world a better
place by caring about - and
acting on - plans to help
in those areas, which makes
me so proud.

I think John's grandson is
a very lucky young man to
have such a grandfather.
Erika Kosminsky,
South Petherton, Somerset

Dressed and
impressed!
Never mind Saga's dating site
sagacconnections.co.uk, I will
settle for alternate weekly
lunches with Dallas and
Orlando, who were modelling
men's clothing in your
February issue. How about it,
chaps? I'll pay! Just make
sure you are wearing one
of those super outfits.
Valerie Hooley,
Coventry

Family gift
My husband and
I were extremely
moved by your
article on
forced adoption
(January). I feel
so strongly for
the women
and children
involved in this
brutal adoption

system. My experience comes
via my older brother, David,
who was adopted from
birth in 1955 via Catholic
nuns in Glasgow.

He always knew he was
adopted and I knew that if
it were not for David I would
not be here, as my parents
had been trying for a
surviving child for 16 years.
Mummy said that I came
along because they relaxed
after they adopted David!

When the opportunity
came for David to find his
birth mother, he decided
against it. He said he needed
no one other than Mummy.
I have often thought of her,
as I know Mummy did, and
we would have loved to have
thanked her for the precious
gift she gave us in David, who
sadly passed away aged 55.

I wonder about the
circumstances that caused
her to have to part with her
son and how her life has
been since. I hope she
found happiness.

Mary Davies
Ball, castle, Count, Antrim

Substance and style
I have been a Saga Magazine
subscriber for a number of
years and wanted to say how
much I enjoy reading it. The
interesting articles are
complemented by the lovely
photos and graphics. Please
keep up the good work!
David Birchenough
Manchester

Looking
good
Our models
Dallas and
Orlando



Formal
address
Your Saga
Voices article
about titles
rang more than
one bell with
me - it rang
a whole peal
of them! My
mother wrote C)

and danced until late. I would
have been 11 years old and was
so excited I could stay up late.
Elizabeth Johnston, York

Screen time

As a 21-year-old living in South
London I have lovely memories
of that day. With a room full of
friends and neighbours we
gathered around a very large
polished wooden piece of
furniture. The doors were
opened and a small screen
appeared - the first time I had
seen a television.

We celebrated with little
sandwiches and Babycham
and as it was still in the time
of rationing, people had given
part of their sugar and butter
rations to the best cook to
make a special cake. I am
amazed at how we managed to
see anything but it all seemed
so magical and we were all
thinking how things would really
seem so much happier after the
hardships of the war years.

Early in the evening,
I caught a bus with my then
boyfriend (we married two
years later) and joined the
thousands in The Mall. I am
lucky to have been able to
watch and look forward to the
Coronation of King Charles III.
Jill Wright, Buckland
Dinham, Somerset

diaries from 1923 until shortly before her death, and from 1951 until it closed down in 1975, she worked in an old-fashioned department store in Basingstoke, Hampshire. Without exception, throughout those 24 years, all the staff are called, in the diaries, by their titles and surnames: Miss Wilson, Miss Jones, Mrs Eccott. Not a sign of a Christian name. Are You Being Served? was well researched and accurate!

After the closure of the store, the staff arranged to meet for lunch once a month. The diary records how at their first such lunch, they agreed that from then onwards, Christian names would be used!

When Mum was nearing the end of her life, a new young vicar called to see her. As he approached her he said, 'Well, how are you, Mary?' Her reply was not what he expected. 'Have I given you permission to use my Christian name?' she said. He did not stay long. Robert J Soutter Exmouth, Devon

Cary-fully guarded

After reading your article about Cary Grant (February), I recalled a story that maybe apocryphal. An author was writing a biography of the actor, but could not find his date of birth and therefore his age; information Grant kept close to his chest. Eventually, the author sent him a telegram, which bluntly asked, 'How old Cary Grant.'

A few days later, he received a telegram from Cary Grant,



which read, 'Old Cary Grant fine, how you.' David Dabell Mansfield, Nottinghamshire

Had love, will travel Your article by Jonathan Margolis in the February issue, about how he has coped with losing his beloved wife by visiting places they had been together, resonated so much with me. I lost my husband to Covid 18 months ago, though we discovered towards the end that he was more poorly than we'd realised with other

conditions, so for him it was a blessing that he went when he did.

That doesn't stop me from missing him, and I have already been back to his favourite place, Swanage [left], as that was where he wanted his ashes scattered. I enjoyed going to the places we'd been together and reliving some happy memories, but as we had been married only six years and known each other for two more, we hadn't had a lifetime to look

Grant access **It is claimed that film star Cary Grant didn't like to reveal his age**

back on. So, what I have thought I could do is to visit the places he'd talked of taking me on holiday that we never got to see. Mostly they are in Britain, so that is easily doable.

Emotions are so complex and we need to encompass the whole range of them where loved ones are concerned. While I do feel sadness, there is also the glorious joy of having loved and been loved at an unexpected time in life. Pat Allchorne Weston-super-Mare, Somerset

Head-scratchers

I am a great fan of Susie Dent's column and submit two sayings which have come down through our family to add to the ones she mentioned in the January issue. If something isn't put up straight, my husband always says, 'It's all over to Will's aunt' (don't ask). And asking my mother what was for supper, the answer was always, 'A filleted gnat on a slice of wind.' Again, please don't ask! PA McKay Headley Down, Hampshire

Roll on autumn

I couldn't disagree more with Euan Sutherland, who welcomed the spring in the March issue. I dread the weeds rampaging through the garden, which entails hours of tedious digging, and find summer heat unbearable. I long for the autumn, when clocks go back, and I look forward to lovely long evenings in front of the fire.

PWatson Waterlooville, Hampshire





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O

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grey matters

PRIZE CROSSWORD / CRYPTIC CROSSWORD / SUDOKU /
CODEBREAKER / ADD A LETTER / WORD WHEEL /
SET SQUARE / WORDSEARCH / PUB QUIZ / ANSWERS

PRIZE CROSSWORD

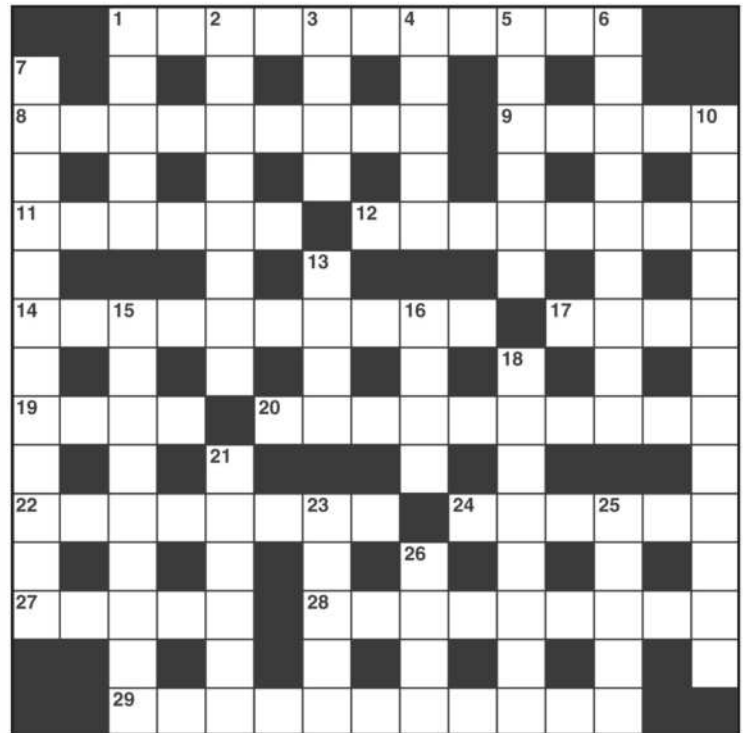
ACROSS

- 1 Harry Lime actor in *The Third Man* (5,6)
- 8 Bond film in which Maud Adams plays the title character (9)
- 9 Common name for calcium carbonate (5)
- 11 The Spanish word for a bullfighter on foot (6)
- 12 French composer of the 1943 piano suite *Visions de l'men* (8)
- 14 Code-name of Hitler's doomed 1941-42 invasion of Russia (10)
- 17 Mountain range with a 4,809m peak as its highest point (4)
- 19 Isle of Wight town just east of the Fishbourne ferry terminal (4)
- 20 US actor who directed 2006 film *The Hottest State* (5,5)
- 22 Element such as neon or argon (5,3)
- 24 Italian city where Luciano Pavarotti was born in 1935 (6)
- 27 University two miles west of Newcastle-under-Lyme (5)
- 28 Scene of a disastrous First World War Allied campaign, 1915-16 (9)
- 29 White European plant with a scent that resembles aniseed (5,6)

DOWN

- 1 Wild animal that lives in a holt (5)

- 2 Comic hero invented by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster (8)
- 3 Loch that has Fort Augustus at its southernmost point (4)
- 4 Classic 1960s Jaguar model (1-4)
- 5 Migratory winged insect related to the grasshopper (6)
- 6 Orkneys naval base that finally closed in 1956 (5,4)
- 7 Town and former royal burgh on the Firth of Forth (5,7)
- 10 Writer of the 1986 Booker Prize-winning novel *The Old Devils* (8,4)
- 13 Animal representing the zodiac sign Capricorn (4)
- 15 Nickname of the parachute regiment (3,6)
- 16 Triumph sports model in production from 1970 to 1977 (4)
- 18 Second lightest of the halogen group of elements (8)
- 21 Surname of the star of the 1963 musical *Half a Sixpence* (6)
- 23 Secret language or slang used by thieves and tramps (5)
- 25 Hardwood that is dense enough to sink in water (5)
- 26 Languedoc location of the Sainte-Cecile Cathedral (4)



To enter

Email a scan or a good photo of your entry, using General Knowledge Crossword (April) in the subject line and send it, with your name and address, to [crosswords\(!\)@saga.co.uk](mailto:crosswords(!)@saga.co.uk). Or cut out the crossword (no photocopies) and post it with your name and address attached to: General Knowledge Crossword (April), Saga Magazine, Enbrook Park, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3SE. Closing date: 28 April 2023

SUDOKU

Place each of the digits 1 to 9 in each row, column and 3x3 box. There is only one solution.

			9	1		5	7	
9			6	4	3			
4	6						9	3
		1				7	8	
3	8						5	4
7			5	9	4			
			7	2		4	3	

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WORD WHEEL

See how many words of four letters or more you can make using the central letter in each word and the other letters only once in each word. You can make at least one word by using all the letters. No proper names, plurals or verb forms ending in the letter's' are allowed, and all words are from the Collins Dictionary.



GOOD: 14
 EXCELLENT: 17
 BRILLIANT: 21
 GREAT SCORE FOR KIDS: 10

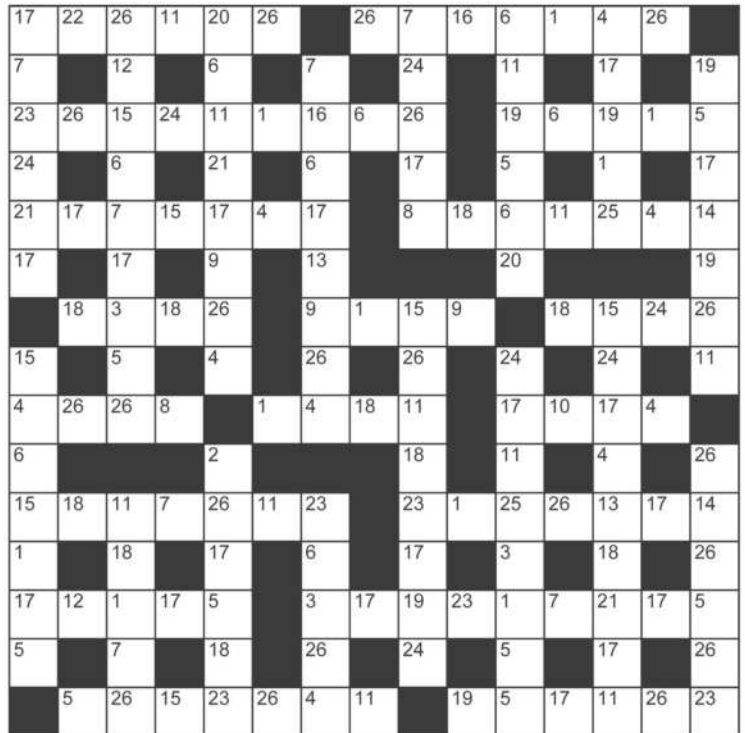
ADDA LETTER

Rearrange the letters and add one to these words to make five-letter words that fit the clues. The added letters will spell a word.

- PAIR **CJ** Eiffel Tower's city
- FIAT **CJ** Adam _____, 1960s singer
- TUBA **CJ** Concerning
- DONE **CJ** Donate
- PAST **CJ** Sudden outbreak
- GAPE **CJ** Small radio device for contacting people

Codebreaker

Each number in the grid represents a different letter. We've given you two letters to start you off, which show that 1=I and 4=R. Write these letters wherever their corresponding numbers appear in the grid and then begin to work out the identity of the other letters. All 26 letters of the alphabet will appear in the finished puzzle.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
I			R									
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

SET SQUARE

Place each of the digits 1 to 9 in the grid to make the sums work. We've started you with two numbers.

	+	5	-		= 8
÷		+		÷	
3	x		-		= 22
+		+		-	
	+		-		= 10
=	=	=			
10	17	2			

The pub Quiz 18



From composers to the first commercial jet airliner, test your knowledge with this month's teasers

by MARCUS BERKMANN

1 Which lager is sold with the trademark 1664 (the year of its birth)?

Q
2 The composers Rachmaninov and Prokofiev had the same forename. What was it?

3 What is the name of the Australian cultural attache created by Dame Edna Everage's alter ego, Barry Humphries?

4 In the 16th century, these specially trained animals were used to take hunters as close to their timid quarry as possible. What were they called? The phrase is used only metaphorically today.

5 David Browning played the cornet on the original recording of the TV theme tune in 1960 and on a re-recording in 1964 and he received a one-off payment of £36. What was the show?

6 In *Gone With The Wind*, Scarlett O'Hara lives on her family's cotton plantation, which is called what?

7 Five is grey, 10 is red, 20 is blue, 50 is orange, 100 is green, 200 is yellow and 500 is purple. What am I talking about?

8 Holly Golightly, in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, was played in the film by Audrey Hepburn. But Truman Capote, who wrote the original novella, had wanted someone else in the role. Who?

9 Which English king has his brain buried at the abbey of Charroux in Poitou, his heart buried at Rouen in Normandy, and the rest of him at the feet of his father at Fontevraud Abbey in Anjou?

10 Which is the only city in Cornwall? It's also the most southerly city in mainland Great Britain.

11 Clark Gable, Marlon Brando, Mel Gibson and David Essex have all played which historical figure on stage or screen? He died on Pitcairn Island in 1793, aged 28.

12 Which supermodel, born in 1965, once said she wouldn't get out of bed for less than \$10,000 a day?

13 Three tsars of Russia, three kings of Scotland and eight popes have all had what name?

14 What term is used to refer to uncoined gold or silver in mass?



15 During WWII, American-born Briton William Joyce became part of Hitler's propaganda machine and made several broadcasts to the UK. What was his nickname?

16 How are Jade Thirlwall, Perrie Edwards, Leigh-Anne Pinnock and Jesy Nelson collectively known?

17 Who in government office has an official residence at 12 Downing Street but has been working out of 9 Downing Street since 2001?

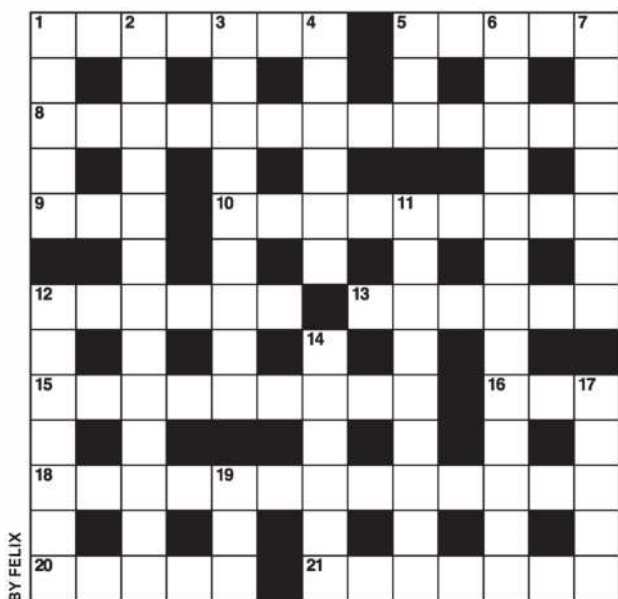
18 The Comet was the world's first commercial jet airliner, first built in 1949, and manufactured by which British company?

19 Name the small, uninhabited island in the Atlantic, 220 miles west of the Hebrides, that gives its name to one of the areas used in the shipping forecast.

20 The Beaufort scale for wind intensity is loved by all pub quizmasters. Force 12 is a hurricane. What does normal breathing register on the Beaufort Scale?

◆ Answers on p127

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



BY FELIX



ACROSS

- 1 Person learned about shops abroad (7)
- 5 Soldiers by base formed circle (5)
- 8 In time, newspaper boss welcomes a go-between (13)
- 9 Date marine, we're told (3)
- 10 Cover over a copper chimney for Angus (9)
- 12 Brother brought back nothing for player Josh (6)
- 13 Bird reduced descent with trick (6)
- 15 Begrudging demonstrating without leader (9)
- 16 That's not pleasant bug harming bears (3)
- 18 Complex male leader in athletics beating popular lad (5,8)
- 20 Loose rabbit fed by the Parisian (5)
- 21 Fever put large strain on mother (7)

DOWN

- 1 Equipment stored in emptied brass vessels (5)
- 2 School by old hotel has transformed (9,4)
- 3 Monster's drink upset over Scotsman (9)
- 4 Veg planted on new land (6)
- 5 Little bird lacking wings shows charm (3)
- 6 Large ship from US, relic at sea with external damage (6,7)
- 7 Sloppy mud near part of wood (7)
- 11 Cook prime cut with some water (9)
- 12 Townsman picked up fast food (7)
- 14 Wind is rising emanation from cow close to ram (6)
- 17 Layer on overturned article is stain (5)
- 19 Light gas by magic (3)

To enter

Email a scan or a good photo of your entry, using Cryptic Crossword (April) in the subject line and send it, with your name and address, to [crosswords\(!\)saga.co.uk](mailto:crosswords(!)saga.co.uk). Or cut out the crossword (no photocopies) and post it with your name and address attached to: Cryptic Crossword (April), Saga Magazine, Enbrook Park, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3SE. *Closing date: 28 April 2023*

WORDSEARCH

Find all the words below (horizontal, vertical, diagonal, forwards and backwards) associated with spring flowers.



AMARYLLIS
AZALEA
BERBERIS
BLUEBELL
CAMELLIA
CROCUS

DAFFODIL
DAPHNE
FORSYTHIA
IRIS
LILY
MAGNOLIA

MUSCARI
NARCISSUS
PRIMROSE
PRIMULA
TULIP
VIOLET



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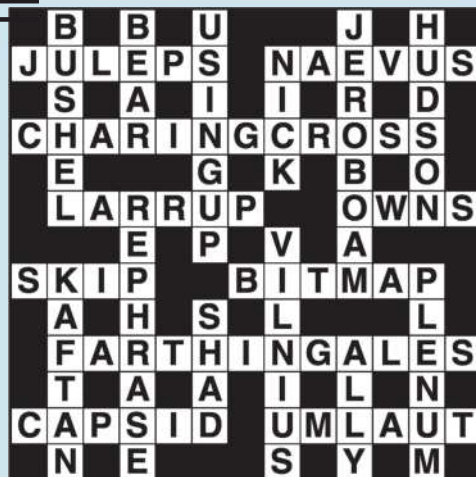
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Solutions

FEBRUARY



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C, February General Knowledge Prize Crossword:
£250 winner:
Tom McClelland,
Larne

THIS MONTH'S ANSWERS

Word wheel

4-letter words

acne, acre, cafe, cage, cane, care, carr, crag, face, race

5-letter words

cager, carer, crane, farce, franc, grace, nacre, racer

6-letter words

arcane, carafe

7-letter word

carnage

9-letter word

FRAGRANCE

Add a letter

Paris
Faith
About
Endow
Spate
Pager

SHOWER



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Codebreaker



Wordsearch



saga pub quiz

- 1 Kronenbourg
- 2 Sergei
- 3 Sir Les Patterson
- 4 Stalking horses
- 5 *Coronation Street*
- 6 Tara
- 7 Euro notes
- 8 Marilyn Monroe
- 9 Richard I
- 10 Truro
- 11 Fletcher Christian
- 12 Linda Evangelista
- 13 Alexander
- 14 Bullion
- 15 Lord Haw-Haw
- 16 Little Mix
- 17 The Chief Whip
- 18 De Havilland
- 19 Rockall
- 20 Force 2

Sudoku

1	6	2	8	5	7	3	4	9
8	3	4	9	1	2	5	7	6
9	5	7	6	4	3	8	2	1
4	7	6	2	8	5	1	9	3
5	9	1	4	3	6	7	8	2
3	2	8	1	7	9	6	5	4
7	1	3	5	9	4	2	6	8
6	8	9	7	2	1	4	3	5
2	4	5	3	6	8	9	1	7

Set square

9	+	5	-	6
÷		+		÷
3	x	8	-	2
+		+		-
7	+	4	-	1

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From browsing the web wherever you are, checking train times, acting as a sat nav... And best of all they can make it so easy to keep in touch with family and friends - in so many ways, from sharing photos to making video calls

But using them isn't always as easy as you'd want - and that's putting it mildly!

Do the manufacturers do it on purpose?

Sometimes it can seem like the manufacturers deliberately make them complicated. It can drive you absolutely bonkers.

Whether you have problems with the basics or you're trying to do something slightly more advanced, it *can* be easy to use them... once you know how. But until you've been shown, it can be like talking a different language.

That's why we've published these books: *iPhones One Step at a Time*, *Android Phones One Step at a Time* and *Doro Smartphones One Step at a Time*.

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We can't list it all here. But amongst other things, you'll discover:

- The basics of controlling it - swiping, tapping, opening apps & so on.
- How to use it as a sat-nav... in the car or even on foot.
- Send emails from your phone.
- Most phones have a good camera so you can take photos: here's how to use it properly (and for videos)... & share the photos with friends.
- See updates, photos and video clips from friends & family, as soon as they "post" them.
- Make it easier to read the screen.
- Browse the web at home or out and about.
- Choosing and downloading apps.



Modern phones can be baffling, but there's a solution...

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The world according to... Sally Magnusson

The broadcaster and novelist, 67, on life at home with her husband - and whichever of her five children are staying



I come from two lines of great storytellers. My late father [the former *Mastermind* host] Magnus Magnusson was born in Iceland, where historical fiction goes back to the sagas of the Middle Ages. My mother, Mamie, a Scottish newspaper journalist, was a wonderful raconteur of stories about her family from the Isle of Mull. So I grew up drenched in story, and then went on to become a journalist with stories of a different kind, seeking to tell them in a truthful way.

The hot seat

I inherited the original black *Mastermind* chair when my dad died [in 2007], and it takes pride of place in the hall of our farmhouse near Glasgow, where everyone, including repair men, asks if they can sit in it and take a selfie. It was originally a basic office chair, but the wheels had to be changed to something solid as nervous contestants kept going round in circles. Dad was presented with it when the BBC cancelled the show [in 1997]. Since the show has been back, John Humphrys and Clive Myrie, who are both good friends, have done a wonderful job.

The catchphrase, 'I've started, so I'll finish' is still used, which is great as it means there is still a bit of my dad there. But it was the bane of my life as a teenager - as soon as someone heard my name, they would say it. I've been asked to go on *Celebrity Mastermind* but always politely declined. If I ended up with no points it would be a newspaper story I could do without!

Family matters

As one of five, I'd always thought it would be lovely to have a big family. My mother always put her children first and I have carried that through although, even when I had five under-tens, I kept my toe in the broadcasting waters. When, tragically, one of my brothers died in a road accident when he was 11, my mother's reaction to that amid all her grief was, 'My other children are not going to lose a mother.' His death when I was 16 was the formative trauma of my life. At uni, I was crying myself to sleep at night when

others were working out how many pints they could drink. I think it made me more serious.

Babylove

Being a grandmother - to Atli (15 months) and Wolfie (21 months) - means being able to enjoy that glorious feeling of having a baby nestle in your neck all over again. But 30 years makes a big difference in terms of your energy levels. So it is nice to hand them back.

At one point, my children - four sons and a daughter from 28 to 37 - were all over the world. Now they are all in the UK and there are always some of them staying with me and my husband Norman [a drama director]. I love the joy of having the people you love around you, but it's difficult to get any peace. When I need to write, I'll go to the islands or to Iceland, which feels like a second homeland.

'I inherited the original black *Mastermind* chair. Everyone, including repair men, asks if they can sit in it and take a selfie'

Late-life relationship

My new novel, *Music in the Dark*, is partly inspired by my great grandmother Annie, who was evicted by landowners from her home on the Isle of Mull in 1863 and finally settled in Rutherglen [near Glasgow], where I also grew up. She was a feisty, difficult woman who fought to make ends meet taking in washing. When her third child out of four died, she had a spare bed so took in a lodger. She was in her fifties or sixties, and he was a lot younger. They married and she was redeemed by this late-flowering love, which seemed a great theme for a novel.

Soul music

My mother had a great store of music and Scots ballads. When she had dementia, my two sisters and I, who were caring for her, began naturally singing them with her. We noticed certain songs would perk her mood up and right to the end it was music that kept her connected to us. When she died [in 2012], I wanted to share what we had learned, so I set up the charity Playlist for Life. Anyone looking after someone with dementia should make them a personal playlist made up of music that has mattered to them in their lives. @

Music in the Dark by Sally Magnusson (John Murray Press, £16.99) will be published in hardback on 11 May

Word to the wise

by SUSIE DENT

As she gets to grips with some teenage slang, the *Countdown* lexicographer argues it proves English is evolving as it should

Has anyone ever given you the ick? Especially if they went full factor 50 on you? Don't let yourself be mugged off, but don't be a melt either, lest people become a bit salty with you. It's all a bit extra, don't you think?

If this paragraph transports you to an alien universe, then you are clearly not a fan of *Love Island*, a programme that builds its own lexicon with every series, and whose contestants create their own linguistic brand through signature phrases that are inevitably propelled into the mainstream. Lexicographers almost have a duty to watch it in order to keep up with the latest slang.

Of course, it's not just the *Love Islanders* who create their own lingo. Most of us have stared uncomprehendingly at teenagers chattering away with joyful abandon in a vocabulary that might as well be Klingon to the rest of us. And that's its point in many ways: slang is intended to keep outsiders out and to give insiders a sense of belonging. For the young it is a *wardrobe*, a thing of fashion and identity, but the moment it becomes too established, it has to move on. Slang is the fastest-moving area of language we have.

Not all teen slang bamboozles us immediately. Some of it is deceptive: we think we understand because it draws on words we know. When I hear 'it's not that deep' from my own teenager, for example, I assume she means I'm overthinking it or getting too emotional. Instead she means 'no big deal'. If her friends have big gossip to share they have some 'T' or 'tea' that they're about to 'spill'. The inevitable gasps of 'whaaat?' that this said T inspires will then produce a 'no cap!' - aka, 'no lie'. Whenever



I hear such offerings I type them into the notes app on my phone - the successor to the little black book (the Dent version) I once carried around with me religiously.

I strongly believe any linguist worth their salt must also be a good eavesdropper, particularly in unexpected places, for lexicographers are never really off duty. The ladies' loo is a publicly very convenient place for picking up the latest slang. It is here I first encountered the phrase 'It's an iss-you, not an iss-me', a declaration from one teenager that something was her friend's problem and not hers. (The loo also happened to be where I heard a teenager complain, 'I've got this awful coleslaw on my lip!', pointing to what was clearly a cold sore.)

'Slang is intended to keep outsiders out and to give insiders a sense of belonging'

Of course, should an adult try to emulate any of these expressions they are immediately 'cringe'. Worse still, they elicit the 'big yikes', a whole extra level of embarrassment. A teen might immediately text their friend to that effect

and end with 'periodt' - the fullest of full stops and a way of saying 'this is my final word; I've proved my point'.

Let's not even get started on misspellings - we've had them for centuries, after all ('OK' is said to have begun as a riff on 'orl korrekt' in the 1830s). But do we really need 'that's a mewd', the successor to 'that's a mood', used for a picture that evokes strong emotions?

Yet if some of these new-fangled creations are jarring to old-fangled ears, they are ample proof that English is alive and flourishing, and evolving as it should. Slang, once described by the US writer Carl Sandburg as 'a language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work', is as core a part of teen identity as we'll ever find. We enjoyed using it ourselves once upon a time, as will all the generations of the future. So let's embrace it, shrug off the ick, and enjoy it for what it is. Periodt. ®