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The King and I

BY GYLES BRANDRETH

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Contents



30
Ones to watch



68
Andi Oliver

97

The best way to complain



MAY 2023

- 7 CEO letter
- 9 Editor's letter
- 10 Shopping list
- Coronation treats
- 13 Jeremy Paxman
- 15 Jenni Murray
- 16 In my experience Meera Syal
- 19 Saga Voices
- Let's Talk... recycling

Features

- 20 Fit for a king Broadcaster Gyles Brandreth shares his insight into Charles III
- 26 Write on Julia Donaldson on finding success after 50
- 30 Hot to spot The new wildlife to watch
- 34 Hits man DJ Ken Bruce talks fatherhood and why he quit his Radio 2 show

- 38 *That's Life!* 50 years on Esther Rantzen looks back on the groundbreaking TV show
- 42 A helping hand Meet some of Britain's volunteers
- 46 Festival special Our guide to the top summer events

Home&style

- 53 Interiors Artist Eleanor Tomlinson's royal collection
- 56 Antiques Coronation collectables old and new
- 58 Gardens Kew's kitchen gardener answers some common questions
- 63 Motoring We test drive the Mini Electric Level 2
- 65 Beauty Celebrity skincare
- 68 Andi Oliver on her eating disorder battle and why she's bored with being bald

- 72 Food Caribbean cuisine from Andi Oliver's new book
- 74 Tried & tasted Victoria sponge
- 75 Wine Celebration tipples
- 79 Technology Budget laptops
- 81 Generation games Mark Palmer talks letter writing

Health & wellness

- 83 Ask Dr Mark Our GP
- 86 The power of hugs Why touch is good for your health
- 88 Knee action Take control of your joint pain
- 91 Alan Johnson Our agony uncle advises readers
- 93 Older love Hunter Davies
- 94 SAGA SPOTLIGHT Protect your home

Money matters

- 97 Paul Lewis on how to complain effectively

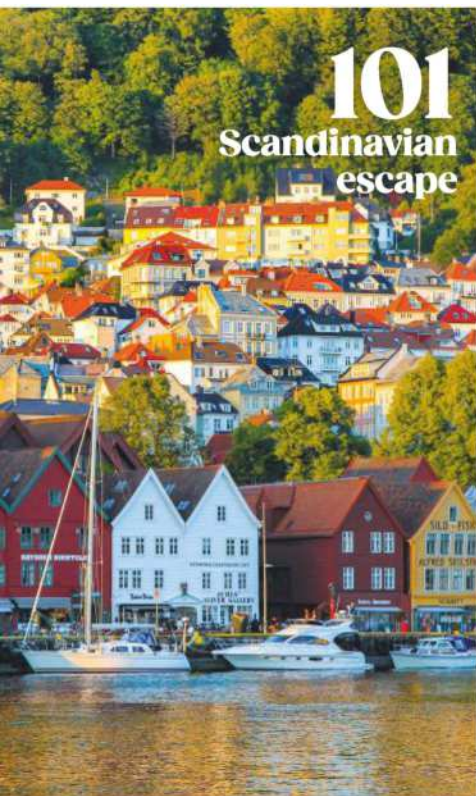
Travel

- 101 Fjord explorer Discover the delights of Norway
- 105 Letter from America Simon Marks' Stateside views



This month's cover showcases the official Coronation emblem created by designer Sir Jony Ive KBE and his creative collective, LoveFrom. Designed in the shape of St Edward's crown, the emblem features flora from the four nations of the UK and pays tribute to King Charles' love of the natural world.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA WOODHEAD FOR EWEN LLOYD DUNN



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What's on

- 107 Journey to Oz The story of the Ten Pound Poms
- 110 Going out Film, theatre, musicals and exhibitions
- 114 Staying in Latest TV, radio and podcast highlights
- 117 Books May's must-reads

And finally...

- 118 Your letters
- 129 Puzzles
- 132 Quiz
- 137 The world according to... Dame Maureen Lipman
- 138 Word to the wise Susie Dent

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Welcome Euan Sutherland

Hello everyone and welcome to our Coronation issue. Here at Saga, we are gearing up to greet the new Carolean age with gusto. The heart of the celebrations will be on our cruise ships - Spirit of Discovery, which is blessed to have Queen Camilla as godmother, and her sister vessel Spirit of Adventure. Both ships will be serving a Coronation dinner fit for a king (and queen!) and the momentous events at Westminster Abbey will be livestreamed in our Playhouse theatres.

We have an extra cause for celebration in our cruise business this month - a huge upsurge in bookings. So far, 2024 is our fastest-selling season ever, which is a wonderful result for our hard-working colleagues. Clearly the new itineraries are hitting the spot. I'm told that currently our best-selling cruise is to Israel and Egypt and is already 50% booked - so you may need to hurry to avoid disappointment. The



new season will also see some brand-new ports of call, including the ancient Greek island of Hydra, Chania in Crete (below) and - closer to home - the peaceful Scottish harbour of Holy Loch. Bookings are also strong for our river cruises, with guests attracted to the same commitment to excellent service that they've experienced on the ocean.

There is more good news from our media business, with CEO Aaron Asadi reporting hundreds of thousands of visits to Saga Magazine's digital home, exceptional.com. If you haven't had a chance to explore the site yet, I highly recommend it. You'll find articles on truly

inspiring older people (such as Jeanne Socrates, who at 77 became the oldest person to sail solo, nonstop and unassisted around the world), useful advice plus rigorous product reviews.

My websites of choice right now are camping ones as I prepare for my family's annual trip to the Isle of Wight. I'm keeping everything crossed that we don't have a repeat of last year when the weather was so bad that we'd order pizza for dinner and eat it cowering in the car while the rain hammered on the roof. Come to think of it, Israel and Egypt do sound very appealing indeed.

I hope you have a wonderful month and enjoy all three bank holidays, but especially the Coronation long weekend. ®



'The 2024 cruise season will see some brand new ports of call'

Euan Sutherland
Group Chief Executive Officer


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by VICTORIA GRAY



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Jeremy Paxman

As mornings come round ever more frequently for our columnist, he considers how we perceive the passing of time as we get older

Twenty minutes isn't a very long time,' said my mother in a voice resigned to the injunctions of cookery books. I forget which act of juvenile braggadocio had brought on my sneering at the length of time to which our teachers at my new school could sentence us to stand in the corner.

Time passed very slowly in those days and the second hand seemed to take an eternity to tick off one minute. Nowadays, you've hardly finished whatever it is you're doing when time is up.

So why on earth were we children always being told to 'get a wriggle on' as if the tempo at which we put on our shirts was delaying the crack of doom? The only conclusion is that not only is the crack of doom an illusion, but that time speeds up as you get older.

I have lived all my life on deadlines, in a world - in other words - where something was not as good as it could possibly be, but as good as it could be in the time available.

But the promise of news programmes is that if you reward them with your attention they will make sense of the world for you. Perhaps that's why they seem guaranteed to make one feel helpless.

'That's the world at 1.45,' says the designated broad-bottom presenting BBC Radio 4's *World at One*, when time is up. The fact is though, that it's much the same as it was half an hour ago, with a few nooks and crannies illuminated where some light has

fallen upon whatever lies beyond the closed door.

I was once sent to Washington, DC to cover the American elections. We were a much larger group than usual because there were plans to produce the entire programme from a rooftop overlooking the White House (a very bad idea, given the twin dangers of snipers and high winds).

Our group divided roughly in two, with all the veterans of foreign assignments opting to take last-minute public transport to the airport, with a lot of talk about how the plane couldn't leave without them.

Well, it did. And my friend George and I were the only two who arrived on schedule, having given ourselves time for an airport coffee. It turned out that he had never recovered from the childhood trauma of his father being late for an Irish Sea ferry.

The truth is, we are all partially sighted, which

is why politicians, with the pretence of omniscience, get elected. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

They may have had other things on their minds at the time, but Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* had it right when they argued whether they were hearing the lark or the nightingale - so much of life is a matter of perception only.

Being bored is the province of the young, when the world turns very slowly. No one should ever feel bored after the age of 40, for as adults we all know how fast things can change. How foolishly embarrassed must people who spent the Easter school holidays moaning have felt by the time Christmas came around in 1939?

But now I really must be going - it's almost time for breakfast. They do seem to come around with astonishing frequency. ®

'Why were we children always being told to "get a wriggle on" as if the tempo at which we put on our shirts was delaying the crack of doom?'





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Jenni Murray

Angered by the recent felling of healthy city centre trees, our columnist calls for more respect towards our planet

May is my birth month and the moment I'm cheered every year by the trees that are no longer the bare sticks of late autumn and winter, but have spent March and April bursting into life. I am so lucky to live in a part of London where trees are everywhere and woe betide anyone who dares to cut one down.

My road is a quiet cul-de-sac that feels more like a village than part of one of the world's greatest cities. It has trees from top to bottom, protecting us from the poisonous fumes of the nearby A1 and giving us plenty of oxygen.

It's this respect for London's trees and the pleasure they give me that's made me so furious at what can only be described as environmental vandalism, first in Sheffield and recently in Plymouth. Sheffield's 'chainsaw massacre' began in 2012 when the council

signed a deal for the removal and replacement of 17,500 mature, healthy and beloved street trees.

No attention was paid to the protests of those residents desperate to save their trees. There

were 41 people, often from the older generation, arrested for trying to stop the destruction, but by the time the council was found guilty of behaving dishonestly and destroying public trust it was too late. The trees were gone.

Similarly in Plymouth, the city centre's 'green lung' was destroyed as 110 trees were cut down at night by contractors accompanied by police with dogs and private security guards to see off any protesters. The council, ignoring 'overwhelming' public opposition, insisted the trees had to be removed because the 37 species, including pines, maples, rowan, silver birch, cypress and sycamore, were unsuitable for a 'built environment' and obstructed CCTV.

Ah! So, buildings, roads, pavements, cycle lanes and spying on us are more important than the joy of looking out of your window and seeing a beautiful umbrella of greenery spreading

against a springtime blue sky. More important than knowing your children can walk safely to school surrounded by that green lung or find a place to play in the shelter from a harsh sun or a trunk to climb and a branch on which to sit.

I am appalled at the lack of respect for the natural environment in both these incidents, but I'm most shocked at the utter callousness of a council claiming it has conducted 'meaningful community engagement', found public opposition and completely ignored it.

I have no fear for the trees that surround me thanks to the ferocity of The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, which is responsible for the management of the area I live in. No one can remove or prune a tree without the Trust's permission. Our trees are well cared for. Should things change, though, and a decision be taken to come out with a chainsaw and fell our majestic

sycamores, I would be out there hugging a tree with all my elderly neighbours. We must be a force to be reckoned with because we know what's best.

It's a comfort to know we are led by a man of mature years who also

knows what's best. The Coronation of King Charles III and his Queen Camilla is a delight. It's wonderful to see two people who have loved each other for decades step out together after years of being separated because their union was considered unsuitable in their youth. They are proof positive that it's never too late and I'm finally getting used to singing God Save the King after so long of admiring the Queen.

It seems the King has inherited his mother's love of the natural world. During her reign, she planted more than 1,500 trees worldwide and spoke alongside Sir David Attenborough about the importance of trees in the Earth's future. Her son, launching The Queen's Green Canopy for her Platinum Jubilee, said, 'Planting a tree is a statement of hope and faith in the future.' May his message be heard in Sheffield, Plymouth and everywhere our green future is under threat.®

'No attention was paid to the protests of those residents desperate to save their trees'

IN MY EXPERIENCE...

MeeraSyal

The actor, writer and comedian shares the secret of her happy marriage to fellow TV star Sanjeev Bhaskar and why she couldn't live without netball

You've been married to actor Sanjeev Bhaskar for 18 years. How did you get together?

Sanjeev and I had known each other for years because we worked together. But the turning point was when we were both invited to Australia to promote *The Kumars at No. 42*. We got this amazing free trip to Sydney and Melbourne, and well, it's a long flight - and there was vodka! So as we crossed the equator we also crossed the border from friendship to something else. One of those weird things where you look at each other and go, 'Oh, there you are!'

What makes a good marriage?

Having a laugh, being able to talk about anything, and choosing your battles. It's ideal to marry your best friend. If everything else fades, that friendship will always be there.

You're about to appear as the lead character in a detective series, *Mrs Sidhu Investigates*, and Sanjeev will soon be playing a detective in *Inspector Singh Investigates*...

Yes, it is quite hilarious. We joke that it's a job share. The difference is that unlike Singh, a police inspector who works from Malaysia, Mrs Sidhu isn't trained. She is a caterer who doesn't set out to be a detective but gets sucked in. She becomes the Miss Marple of Slough.

How does it feel to be taking on a leading role at 61?

We are in a golden age for older women in terms of roles, but it's still a tiny proportion. When we knew the series was transferring to TV [it started on BBC Radio 4] we were keen on creating a woman in her prime, and for many women in their sixties it is their prime. It's a golden period when your kids are grown up, you've still got your health and for the first time in years you're

by PAM
FRANCIS

'It's ideal to marry your best friend. If everything else fades, that friendship will always be there'

Star couple
With husband
and fellow
actor Sanjeev
Bhaskar

free. Women like Mrs Sidhu are redefining ageing. For our mums that was feet up, slippers by the fire, don't do anything that might crack a hip. We're not like that any more. She's widowed and had the choice to curl up and look sad or dye her hair red and find a new purpose.

Are there any similarities between you and the incredibly nosy Mrs Sidhu?

Who isn't nosy? There's nothing as fascinating as other people's lives, especially in our sixties. And let's face it, who is more invisible than an older woman? You stand in corners and eavesdrop because no one is looking at you any more. The main thing we have in common is our love of food. I even cooked a bit on set.

How do you feel about being 61?

Turning 60 was quite a thing. I'd spent six months planning a huge 60th party, which had to be cancelled when lockdown was extended. Much as I love it, there are loads of things about ageing that suck. I've been looking after ageing parents for the past decade so you are seeing 20 or 30 years into the future with them, and thinking this is really tough. But I think we're looking after ourselves better. A good walk and laughing with friends become important for your health and mental wellbeing.

Your parents arrived in Britain from India in 1960. What was it like growing up as the only Asian family in a West Midlands mining village?

My mum was a school teacher, my dad an accountant, and I was a fish out of water. We stuck out like sore thumbs. I learned to be a chameleon: an Indian girl inside the house, a Midlands girl outside of it, and had to bridge those two cultures all the time. I didn't fit in with the English kids and I certainly





didn't fit in with the nice, well-behaved Indian girls. I was my own new kind of creature and that's where the root of my creativity was.

How did you feel when Rishi Sunak became the UK's first British Asian Prime Minister?

It was huge to see the Prime Minister lighting Diwali candles [to celebrate the Hindu festival of light] outside Number 10. It wasn't something I thought I'd see in my lifetime. Whatever your politics, there's something comforting and optimistic about it. You want to reach a point where it's not mentioned any more and people are there because they are good at their jobs.

What's the one thing you can't live without?

Netball. I've been playing since I was aged 11. Sometimes you are lucky enough to find the one thing you absolutely love and that makes you happy. If I could play every day I would, but my family might get annoyed.

Your 30-year-old daughter is in theatre. Are you happy she's following in your footsteps?

It's a double-edged sword. I can't say, 'Don't join the circus', because I ran away to join it myself. I understand that impulse because when you are creative it's the thing that gives you joy.

You were 44 when your son, now 17, was born. How was it being an older mother?

You are a lot more tired with much less energy so the sleepless nights really do rock you. But you are more solvent, a lot calmer and you've already done it once. The best thing is it keeps you incredibly young. It's lovely to have a house full of young people. They bring so much energy.

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

To keep our ageing population healthy and not a drain on the NHS, you need to make things more accessible, such as free theatre tickets, free art galleries, free yoga classes and walking groups. All of those things encourage people to take their wellbeing into their own hands.

What keeps you awake at night?

My husband tells me I can be a worrier, but what I find has really helped me is meditation.

What would you tell your younger self?

Life is a marathon not a sprint. *

Mrs Sidhu Investigates is on *Acorn TV* later in 2023



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Let's talk... recycling



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

by RACHEL CARLYLE

Our younger relatives may be the ones making all the noise about climate change, but it's the Saga generation who are the best recyclers, say experts. Our survey of 2,500 customers backs this up: 71% say they are highly disciplined about sorting their rubbish, with almost a third (32%) saying they don't toss a single recyclable thing into their general bin, and half (47%) saying only 1-10% ends up being chucked.

However, our halo does slip a tiny bit when it comes to food waste. Fewer than half (46%) recycle it all, with 20% admitting some ends up in the general bin. And a third (34%) don't use a food bin at all. For 60% that's because their local council doesn't collect food waste, but reasons given by the other 40% include nasty smells, flies and pests, inconvenience and a simple lack of space.

Fewer people are bought into food recycling, partly because of the yuk factor,' says waste manager Dr Anna Scott, director of services at Keep Britain Tidy. If you need persuading, she points out that food recycling is among the most valuable: food in landfill creates methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Recycling food creates electricity and the by-product is used as soil improver. 'There's a very, very

76%
recycle more
than 10
years ago

81%
find the
symbols
on plastics
confusing

15%
have 4+
bins in their
kitchen

clear benefit in food waste recycling if you have access to it,' she says. 'Although not everyone does, and if you empty your caddy regularly, there's no reason why you should have more smells than when putting food in the main bin.'

Plastics caused the most confusion to our recyclers, with 56% saying they weren't sure which plastics were acceptable and which weren't. It doesn't help that each council has different rules. Some don't even take glass, you told us, whereas others take everything from cling film to crisp packets and Pringles tubes (notoriously tricky to recycle).

Another bugbear of yours: the washing of recyclables. Is it really necessary? The cleaner the item the better, says Dr Scott, although a quick rinse is usually fine. A bit of baked bean residue in a tin isn't going to matter to the metal recycling process, but if it gets on any sheets of paper or pieces of card in the same bin, that's a problem.

This contamination is why 'source recycling' - where householders sort their waste into different boxes and bins - is considered better than 'one-bin' recycling, where everything goes in together. Contamination is a huge problem for councils, with half of residents putting out unwanted items - and studies find the keenest recyclers are sometimes the worst culprits. It can mean a whole lorry load is rejected.

'One greasy pizza box is not going to sabotage the whole collection but if 100 people put pizza boxes in when the council has said it doesn't want them, or someone puts a load of nappies in, then that may lead to the whole lorry being rejected,' says Dr Scott. Another big contaminant is textiles as they get tangled in the machinery.

Information is key: councils should tell us clearly what they want and don't want - and why. And where the recycling goes: 53% of you didn't believe it was all really recycled, but the majority is, says Dr Scott, especially as techniques have improved and we no longer send vast swathes to China.

'In the past, councils haven't wanted to make it more confusing by giving lots of information, but I think now there's an appetite to know more,' she says. 'With food waste, for example, I think it's important to convey the why - why we're doing this. It might make that crucial difference.' *



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

Ahead of King Charles III's Coronation, the TV personality, author and friend of the royals, Gyles Brandreth, gives an intimate insight into the man he calls a 'powerhouse of energy with a marvellous sense of humour'



When Charles III enters those hallowed halls of Westminster Abbey on 6 May - the scene of every English and British coronation since William the Conqueror's in 1066 - he will become the oldest monarch this country has ever known.

One can't help but wonder where his thoughts will take him. No doubt they will, at some point, travel back to the coronation of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, when he was a little boy aged just four. A photograph from the occasion shows him - wedged between his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and his aunt, Princess Margaret - looking thoroughly bored. Perhaps he was wondering what the fuss was all about. Now, of course, he knows.

I was born the same year as the King. As the young prince made his way to the Abbey in June 1953, I was somewhere along The Mall, sitting on my father's shoulders in the drizzle, trying to watch the procession through a toy periscope made of cardboard and tin mirrors.

What an extraordinary display of pomp that coronation was for austere, post-war Britain, taking place when we still had rationing. Oscar Wilde's son, Vyvyan Holland, was married to Thelma Besant, the young Queen's beauty advisor at the time, and kept a diary in which

'In these troubled times, it's actually rather reassuring to have an older King'

he spoke of how, even so, nobody balked at it. Why? Because this was exactly the tonic we needed; it marked the dawning of a new age.

We witnessed a great coming together of dignitaries from around the world; spectacular military displays and extraordinary pageantry - and in the middle of it all was this very young and incredibly beautiful woman being crowned Queen. No wonder we all cheered.

As Holland wrote in his diary in the run up to the great event: 'It is only the fact of having a young Queen that makes the thing possible at all. With an old goat like Edward VII the situation would become absurd.'

His Majesty King Charles is no old goat. But this summer, seven decades later, we do now have that great contrast of seeing two people in their mid-seventies - Charles and his wife

Camilla - being crowned our King and Queen. I can't imagine how it must feel for them to be starting this new way of life at such an age.

Daunting, perhaps. But, as someone who is lucky enough to have spent a bit of time with them both over

the years, and got to know them as much as it is possible to know royalty, I am certain they will be, above all, extremely happy to be taking on a role with which they intend to do great good.

Indeed, I firmly believe this is going to work out rather well - for them and for us. I think that in these troubled times, it's actually rather reassuring to have an older King.

What defined the late Queen was her consistency: she was crowned a young woman, she aged and became old, and through it all she was true to her vows to serve us her whole life, which people greatly admired. Even those who weren't monarchists recognised that Queen Elizabeth was someone rather special.

What's good about King Charles is that he has been around for as long as most people in the country can remember. He was born in 1948; he's part and parcel of the show. People have a good sense of what they're getting.

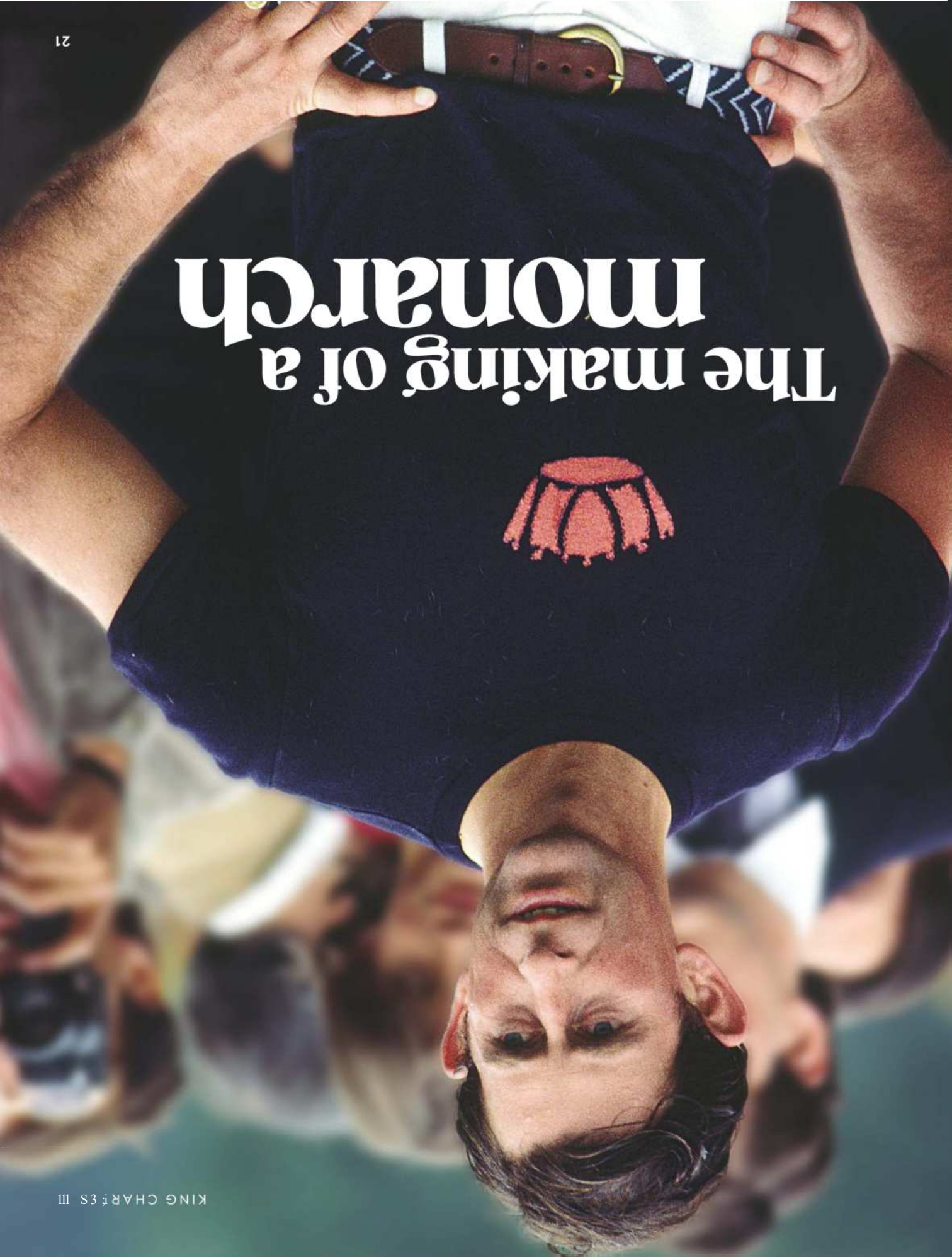
Charles the man

Charles is also a workaholic. I've been in his study, which is always piled high with papers C)



Charles play
Right: a young
Prince Charles
after a polo
match in 1982,
and (left) with
friend Gyles
Brandreth
last summer

GETTY



The making of a monarch



and documents. He's a powerhouse of energy and keeps himself in good shape, able to fit into suits he's had many years, which I always find impressive.

We know, too, that he is a decent guy. People rather like the fact that some of his early ideas - talking to his plants - made him out to be a bit of an oddball, yet he has since been proved right. (I talk to my flowers. They like it.) His concerns for the environment - something he began championing in the late Sixties - show he was a forward thinker who many of us are only just catching up with. Fundamentally, we know this is someone who clearly means well.

We also know that, as the Prince of Wales, he was very much a man of ideas and would write his famous letters to government ministers in order to share them. That's not possible as King, and His Majesty knows that. But it's good for us to know that being engaged with what is happening all around him is very much a part of his background - and while as monarch he must now keep his thoughts to himself, this is somebody who cares.

I remember talking to King Charles around the time of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and he was clearly distressed. Always very keen on making proper homes for people, he had expressed concerns about these high-rise blocks of flats for at least 20 years. Knowing what those people went through hurt him as much as it did the rest of us.

King Charles is also a deeply spiritual person, very interested in the cosmos, the universe and what links us all together. He has learnt over the years it's best not to talk about these things - perhaps in case he gets

branded a hippy - but they do count with him. There are people who will like him for that.

Becoming King

Over time, two questions were asked over and over again. First, 'Was Elizabeth II going to abdicate?' And second, 'Was Charles impatient to become King?' The questions were considered intriguing enough to become central to the last series of *The Crown*. Indeed, a meeting in which the then Prince of Wales is seen asking John Major to persuade his mother to abdicate was invented - all branded 'malicious fiction' by the former Prime Minister.

But then, *The Crown* is a TV drama, not a historical documentary series. As a nation, we always knew the Queen would never abdicate - she made that commitment, aged just 21, in South Africa, that her whole life, however long or short, would be devoted to service. She meant it. She was also a committed Anglican who, when anointed with holy oil at her coronation, made a promise not just to the Commonwealth, but to God.

King Charles always knew that, as long as she was mentally able, his mother would keep going. Which she did, having been on duty - seeing one Prime Minister out and another one in - to within 48 hours of her death on 8 September 2022. He also knew that as she grew older he would take on more responsibility, but without her ever fully letting go.

I recall being at an event with Queen Camilla last year, when she was Duchess of Cornwall, and discussing how she was recently at Cardiff with the Prince of Wales and Her Majesty. 'We were there in case the Queen wasn't well enough to attend,' she explained. 'But of course she came. She always comes if she can.' So, King Charles always knew she would go on to the end of the road, and there was never impatience on his part to take over. He has only ever been impatient to do good.

Certainly, nobody could become King having been better equipped for the job than Charles III. He has long been briefed by high-ranking ministers, and Prime Ministers too. The head of his college at Cambridge University and also his great mentor was Lord Rab Butler, the most experienced government minister never to have become Prime Minister - he served as Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Nothing about the job is going to come as a surprise to Charles III. We should also remember the King's grandmother

'Charles always knew the Queen would go on to the very end of the road, and there was never impatience to take over'



Royal couple Charles has found happiness with Camilla, now Queen. Below left: at his mother's coronation in 1953

Caring side Right: feeding chickens at Highgrove in 2018, taken to mark his 70th birthday. Far right: Queen Elizabeth II at her coronation (top) as crowds gathered on The Mall to see her



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lived to 101, his father to 99 and his mother to 96, meaning we could be in for quite a long reign. I hope he's going to pace himself.

Times of change

I'm sure changes will come, but that they will be gentle, sensible and subtle. This coronation is expected to be a little shorter, smaller and proportionally less expensive than the last, reflecting the straitened times in which it takes place. Charles has already indicated he wants to slim down the monarchy to himself and the next two generations - those in the immediate line of succession - with his sister, Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, and his brother, Prince Edward, the new Duke of Edinburgh, continuing with their royal duties.

'People can see that this is a family where the sadness of a broken marriage has evolved into the happiness of a successful second marriage'

Kindness and thoughtfulness will be at the fore. After all, our King has experienced the ups and downs of a real life, and one that relates to the modern world. When I attended my first Buckingham Palace garden party in the Sixties, as part of my work with the Duke of Edinburgh's charities, divorcees were not presented, such was the taboo around broken marriages.

Now, divorced people are the ones hosting these events. People can relate to that; they can see that this is a family where the sadness of a broken marriage has evolved into the happiness of a successful second marriage, with step-children and step-grandchildren, and everyone making it work.

Family challenges

King Charles has also faced challenges with his own children. Prince Harry has written his book, *Spare*, in which he airs various grievances. But in 1994, the then Prince of Wales co-operated with Jonathan Dimbleby in the writing of a book that told his story, his truth, in his own way.

His parents, I know, because the Duke of Edinburgh told me, felt that some of what he said - describing his mother as being emotionally distant, and his father as harsh and hectoring - wasn't fair. Certainly the people who knew them in the Fifties who I talked to, told me they were wonderful, C)





loving parents who saw their children much more than many aristocratic parents of that time did. Like anyone else, they did their best.

But, of course, what that book reflects is where he was then - in a rather dark, difficult place as he grappled with the emotional fallout of his failed marriage to Princess Diana. I'm sure he wouldn't write that book now.

King Charles is a very loving father - in his first broadcast as King he mentioned his love for his children. I have been lucky enough to see him playing with his grandchildren, who rag him and pull him around. He has a lovely, easy and natural relationship with them. I remember being at an event at Highgrove when Princes William and Harry were still boys, and seeing them with the now Queen, I got the same impression of their relationship.

The advantage of being an older animal is that you have seen it all before. And so I'm sure that whatever he is going through with Prince Harry, his father knows that this too will pass.

Baby Charles

And truly, there is nothing new in any of this to King Charles. When he was born, the then Princess Elizabeth didn't issue a photograph of him for several weeks, nor was his name given out. Rumour became rife: is there something wrong with him; is he disfigured; why aren't they naming him? Is it because he's going to die?

It was simply that the young princess just wanted some private time with her new baby - she wasn't ready to share him with the world just yet. Thousands of people waited outside Buckingham Palace for news

of his birth, singing *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow* when the announcement was made. When he was a little boy, he will have seen in the papers various scandalous stories about his aunt, Princess Margaret, and who she was and wasn't going to marry. At his mother's coronation he must have known that his great uncle, who had once been King, wasn't coming. His own love life came under constant scrutiny.

So, you see, he's gone through a lifetime of this sort of thing.

Double act

There will be more to come, but he won't complain. Beside him will be the woman he refers to constantly as his darling wife. I first met her when I was 16 and she was 17 - I knew

her grandparents and went to their house one day where I spotted this girl in jodhpurs and an Aertex shirt smoking Woodbines in the garden.

One day, without thinking, I told the story in an episode of Radio 4's *Just a Minute*, not for a moment considering that the then Duchess of Cornwall might be listening. But she was, and a few days after the broadcast she happened to bump into my wife - at a flower show for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee at our local church - and said to her: 'Tell Gyles I don't deny I was smoking, but it definitely wasn't Woodbines.'

King Charles is a fan of *Just a Minute*, too. In fact, he told me he used to leave voicemail messages for William and Harry in the style of *Just a Minute*, doing his best to say what he had to say in under

60 seconds, without hesitation, deviation or repetition. The pair of them share a marvellous sense of humour. It's such good news that we

have this great double act, who so clearly get on very well. She's good for him.

We saw how frustrated he became for a moment with that leaky disposable pen last year, and how she soothed him - that was lovely to see.

I'll be there, at the King's Coronation, not on

The Mall but in a commentary box chatting away. The late Queen's coronation was the most globally watched event. And now, 70 years later, because of this curious yet wonderful institution called the monarchy, Brand Britain will be personified to the world by a new King and Queen.

I think people here and abroad will see these two decent people who've been dealt these strange cards and yet are playing them rather well, and will cheer just as loudly as I did on The Mall all those years ago. It really is going to be a wonderful day. *



Spanning the generations

From top: Charles as a baby with the late Queen and Duke of Edinburgh; with his sons William and Harry in 2005

Elizabeth: *An Intimate Portrait* by Gyles Brandreth (Michael Joseph, £25) is out now in hardback

A PHOTO BY GUY LAWRENCE FOR THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

'People will see these two decent people who've been dealt these strange cards and yet are playing them rather well'



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A woman of letters

Author Julia Donaldson was 50 when her children's classic *The Gruffalo* was published. Now, one of her books is sold every 11 seconds. But she began a different kind of story when she bought her village post office...

by ANNA MOORE

Visiting the children's author Julia Donaldson is a little like stepping inside one of her story books. First, you drive through deep Sussex woodland - the perfect setting for a witch flying by, a mouse taking a stroll or a wandering Gruffalo. Then there's the village itself with its ancient high street of heavily beamed Tudor houses, each one surely a witness to a thousand secrets.

Julia lives in the centre in a higgledy-piggledy, low-ceiling affair with a winding staircase. The top floor is stuffed with fantastical costumes, puppets and props all based on her books: a life-sized mermaid, snakes and dragons - a wonderland for her nine grandchildren. Down in the basement, with a window looking out at leg height, is Julia's office. Passing on the high street, I glance down and see her at her desk, immersed in work, gently smiling.

Now 74, Julia moved here in 2014 when her husband Malcolm, a consultant paediatrician, retired. Until then, she had always lived in cities: London, Bristol, Brighton, Glasgow. 'I told my children we were going to move to a village and they just laughed, rolled their eyes and said, 'TU believe it when I see it!'; she says. Now it's hard to imagine her anywhere else. Fan letters come addressed to 'Julia Donaldson, famous author, somewhere in Sussex'. Malcolm is a governor at the nearby school, they both belong to a book group/supper club, and Julia has a signing soon at the village bookshop. On top of this, in 2019, they bought the local post office to save it from closure.

'We didn't want to,' she says. 'The couple running it were past retirement age and it had been on the market for a couple of years. If someone had come along to buy it, we'd have been delighted, but that didn't happen.' So what prompted her?

'We worry about the high street dying,' she says. 'We're lucky here: we have a library, a thriving church, and a bookshop which also sells tickets for clubs and concerts. The post office is at the heart of the village. All the banks have closed so the post office provides banking for the shops. Also, people come from outlying hamlets to use it, then they're in the high

street with all these lovely shops. We felt if it closed, it would have a domino effect.'

The first step was to find someone to run it. Julia identified some entrepreneurial friends and sounded them out at a dinner party. They were keen, so Julia and Malcolm went ahead and bought it. 'It's a lovely shop now,' says Julia. 'It's a post office that also fills a lot of gaps. The hardware shop closed recently, so it now has hardware, cookware and gardening things.' Last summer, a popular local tearoom closed and now lies empty. It has been suggested that Julia buys that too.

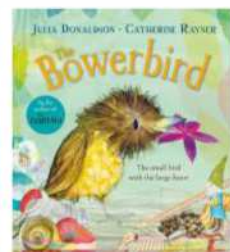
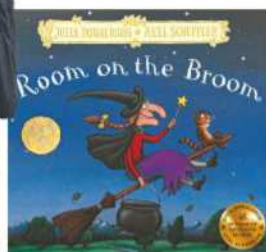
Really, though, she has more than enough on her plate. The former Children's Laureate and creator of childhood classics, such as *The Gruffalo* and *Room on the Broom*, is still phenomenally prolific. The *Bowerbird* - which tells the story of Bert decorating his nest to attract a mate - was published in March, and will be followed in June by *Book of Names*, in which Julia shares (in rhyming form) some of the

6,000 children's names she has collected during signings. There have been years where she has written more than ten books, each one a guaranteed hit. In the UK, a Julia Donaldson book is sold every 11 seconds and, between 2010 and 2019, her sales exceeded 27 million, making her the bestselling author of the decade - in any genre, for any age group.

It's mind-boggling, then, that Julia never set out to be a children's writer. In fact, she was 44 when her first children's book was published and 50 when *The Gruffalo* shot her into another stratosphere. Born and raised in Hampstead, London, in a family that loved music, poetry and performance, Julia's first plan was to act. She studied drama and French at the University of Bristol then auditioned at the Bristol Old Vic, making the final eight. When she didn't get a place, she took a secretarial course instead. 'I suppose I was in two minds,' she says. 'I didn't want to go off and sweep stages.' By then she'd met Malcolm and they married while he was in his final year of study. They raised three

'We worry about the high street dying. The post office is at the heart of the village'

'Magical partnership'
With regular
illustrator
Axel Scheffler
and their
most famous
creation, *The Gruffalo*.
Right: an old favourite and her latest work



sons and Julia worked in publishing, taught in schools, ran drama clubs, then found her niche writing songs for children's TV.

As a freelancer, there was lots of rejection. 'I was always sending letters, researching what programmes might need songs and sometimes I struck lucky, but more often than not, it was, "We've just finished commissioning" or "we're not ready to start",' she recalls. In the early Nineties, Julia was contacted out of the blue by a publisher who had played an old BBC song tape to her children in the car, and thought *A Squash and a Squeeze*, a song written by Julia for *Play School* in the Seventies, would make a good storybook. It was published in 1993, with pictures by Axel Scheffler, a German illustrator living in London, and went on to sell 1.5 million copies. It also marked the start of a magical partnership between the two.

It sounds like pure chance, but was decades of hard work, experience and talent coming to fruition. 'All the skills from those earlier years come into my life now,' says Julia, whose books have a seemingly effortless fun and rhythmic flow.

They have also taken her back to her original ambition of acting. This year, Julia has a theatre tour mapped out where she'll be performing seven stories and songs, with a cast of five, which includes Malcolm and Julia's sister Mary. It's hard to imagine a more compatible partner than Malcolm, now 73. In their younger days, the couple husked around Europe, sang Julia's songs in folk clubs, and he is usually beside her on stage, in costume or playing guitar. 'We share the music, the acting, and the love of nature,' she says. 'Then with the children, Malcolm looked after their bodies, I looked after their minds.'

They've certainly endured unimaginable trauma. Their eldest son Hamish killed himself in 2003 aged 25, after years of suffering from a schizo-affective disorder. His difficult behaviour began as a small child, and he was forever being excluded from school. In 2020, a documentary for the BBC, called *The Magical World of Julia Donaldson*, saw the author admitting she still finds it difficult to speak about Hamish.

However, viewers couldn't fail to be struck by how steadfast she and Malcolm stayed through these challenging times. 'If it was going to have broken up our marriage, it would have done so long before Hamish died,' says Julia now. 'All those years of coping, always being rejected by schools, by other parents. It was such a struggle really.' Malcolm, sitting beside her,

puts it simply: 'If you go for a walk and it's thunder and hail and lightning, you don't fall out with each other, do you?'

Their grandchildren - aged from two to 12 - give them much joy and Malcolm loves nothing more than reading them Julia's books. (I could spend all day doing that,' he smiles.) 'They're so honest though,' adds Julia. 'One said, "Granny, I do prefer my *Star Wars* catalogue!'

Their nine-year-old grandson is a huge Harry Potter fan. 'I found him at 10.30 at night, when I was going to bed, lying on his tummy in the bathroom, reading the last one,' says Julia, who believes children - just like adults - enjoy

a bit of danger and darkness in their stories. She tries not to create work that is too 'safe' and 'messagey'. One of her books, *Who Lives Here?*, is about a boy going to a friend's house, knocking

on doors and finding dragons, knights and other surprises. 'They put his dad with him in the pictures - I didn't want him to have his dad,' she says. 'It never used to be like that. We had *Swallows and Amazons!* In Roald Dahl's *James and the Giant Peach*, the parents are killed off at the beginning. And in Edward Ardizzone's *Little Tim* books, he says to his parents, "I'm going off on a voyage" and they say, "All right". In one book, *Little Tim* comes back and his parents have moved as they thought he must have died, so he goes on another voyage. No one complained!'

Whatever the latest thinking, Julia will carry on writing stories packed with jeopardy and danger, chaos and kindness. In addition to this year's publications, signings and theatre shows, she has a Canadian tour lined up. It's staggering that so much has sprung from one publisher playing an old tape of songs to her children and realising the potential.

'Well, there's always the other side of the coin,' says Julia. 'If the books hadn't happened, I might have written more songs. Who knows? I might have even written a West End musical...!' There's still time. Maybe that's the next chapter. °



'If the books hadn't happened, who knows? I might have written a West End musical'

Bringing books to life
Above: Julia with one of her puppets on stage, and (top) performing with her husband, Malcolm

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What's next for butterfly
counters and bird-watchers?
Today's wildlife enthusiasts
are taking their spotting
skills to another level

The new seekers



Can you tell a downy emerald from a golden-ringed? How about a red-tailed from a broken-belted or a whiskered from a brown long-eared? No, these names have not just been made up by me.

They are, in fact, the

names of British animal species - dragonflies, bumblebees and bats, respectively.

The UK is home to an impressive variety of wildlife, and also of wildlife spotters. Today, it seems, the scope of that spotting is starting to expand. Those who have long known their way round, say, birds and butterflies, are now getting a thrill out of chasing more elusive and harder-to-identify quarry. They are setting their sights on 'trickier' animals: the tiny ones, the water-based ones, the nocturnal ones.

Take moths. These humble creatures are all the rage among many enthusiasts who once stuck with butterflies. Wildlife spotters typically knew a few of the 'classics', such as the garden tiger beloved of old guidebooks. But the UK is home to more than 2,500 moth species (as many as there are bird species in Africa), many of which are tiny and nocturnal and require serious expertise to find and identify.

An increasing number of amateur enthusiasts have also been seeking out bumblebees, bats and dragonflies. Many are of an older generation - those who might have chased after butterflies in childhood but now, with more time on their hands, are finding fascinating new challenges.

For me, one exciting new challenge has been spotting cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises). As a child, the sea seemed to me as unfathomable as the night, meaning my marine mammal sightings were limited to occasional seals with a once-in-a-blue-moon dolphin. Today, our increased knowledge of these animals means I can seek them out with some confidence - sighting three species of dolphin on a recent English Channel boat trip, for example, and knowing from a glimpse of dorsal fin whether I'm looking at a harbour porpoise or minke whale.

'In the past, there was a perception that people who knew about these "difficult" groups must be "ologists" of some kind,' says author and naturalist Marianne Taylor, whose book *Dragonflight* describes her quest to find

by MIKE UNWIN

all the UK's 57 dragonfly species. 'They weren't people who did it for fun.'

She describes how her own childhood wildlife journey followed a typical progression from birds to butterflies and then on to dragonflies. 'Back then, if you were interested in, for example, bees, you would find either a general guide to insects with maybe ten kinds of bee in it, or a dense scientific tome,' she says. 'There was no middle ground; no nice, accessible field guide to all the bees.'

So, what has changed? Well, those spotter's guides, for a start. Today, you can find a host of affordable, comprehensive field guides to virtually every animal group - with pin-sharp illustrations, simple distribution maps and key

ID information - all in a portable, affordable format. Online, there is even more information, with top locations, recent sightings and ID tips, all immediately available to search through on your phone while you're out and about.

Other technology is also making wildlife more accessible. Moth traps - small portable devices with which to capture and identify moths (then release them unharmed) - now come modestly priced and are easy to use. Armed with these, ardent 'mothers' now record dozens, even hundreds, of species in their own back gardens, where they had previously noticed barely any.

Bat detectors, meanwhile, can pick up ultrasonic echolocation from these flying mammals as they flutter overhead. The sounds are inaudible to our ears, but these clever devices can produce playback and sonograms with which users can identify individual species.

And there are clubs and societies dedicated to almost any wildlife group you can name. Commercial operators have been quick to catch up. 'In the Seventies and Eighties, UK wildlife watching was all about birds,' says Andy Tucker, managing director of tour operator Naturetrek. 'But from the Nineties - especially over the past 10 or 15 years - birders have graduated to many other groups.' Naturetrek now offers guided UK tours in search of everything from

'Why chase the Big Five on an African safari when you can track down the "tiny 270" closer to home?'



Spot on
Above: Mike Unwin on the look out for cetaceans.
Left: the beautiful blue-tailed damselfly

dragonflies, butterflies and orchids to cetaceans, bats and reptiles. 'We always have our antennae out for the latest trend in wildlife watching,' adds Tucker.

So what drives the wildlife watcher to seek out these ever-more-difficult challenges - as though they are moving up the levels in some fiendish computer game?

Sceptics have suggested it is more about the collecting mania - the competitive thrill in ticking off the longest list or the rarest species - than a genuine love of nature. Taylor is not convinced. 'I don't see the collecting

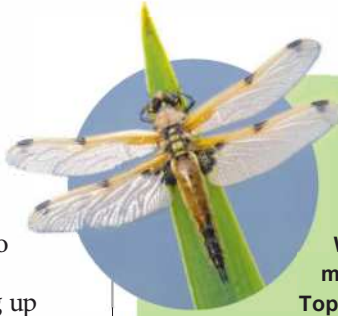
'In the past there was a perception that people who knew about these "difficult" groups must be "ologists" of some kind. They weren't people who did it for fun'

mindset as a negative,' she says. 'Most people don't just move on from one thing to the next; they're building a portfolio of knowledge.'

This portfolio is important - not just for our pleasure but for the wellbeing of nature itself. The more we know about the natural world, the more we notice when species begin to disappear and the more incentive we feel to protect them. And finding more wildlife excitement on our doorstep may help us to reduce air travel. After all, why chase the Big Five on an African safari when you can track down the 'tiny 270' (that's Britain's bee species, in case you were wondering) closer to home?

If you worry that the magic and mystery of our natural world will soon be exhausted, rest assured that many challenges remain. For the moth, dragonfly or bat spotter who wants to take it to the next level, there are still freshwater fish, traditionally the domain of anglers, and rodents (can you separate a bank vole from a field vole, and where would you even start looking?). Or why not take a closer look at the hoverflies buzzing around your garden during summer ('On the up,' according to Taylor).

So, what are you waiting for? Grab yourself a field guide and get out there. After all, the **UK is home to 4,200 species of beetle - and they won't identify themselves.** °



ONES TO WATCH

Dragonflies and damselflies

UK species 57 (including damselflies)

Where and when Beside any water (pond, marsh, canal) on still days in summer.

Top tips Use binoculars with close focus and practise tracking birds in flight; get a good field guide

{eg *Britain's Dragonflies* by Andy Swash and Dave Smallshire}; dragonflies are most active round noon.

More information british-dragonflies.org.uk

Two for starters Four-spotted chaser (*above*); emperor dragonfly

One to aim for Beautiful demoiselle

Cetaceans (whales, dolphins, porpoises)

UK species 25+ regularly recorded

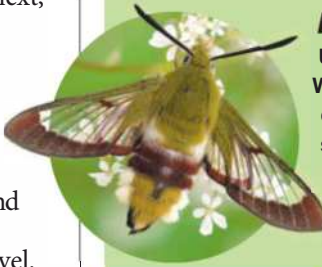
Where and when All coasts, especially western and northern; any ferry journey (especially Scottish islands); year-round but best in summer.

Top tips Find a headland and scan the sea with binoculars methodically; flocking seabirds may reveal feeding cetaceans; the shape of the dorsal fin will help identify the species.

More information orcaweb.org.uk

Two for starters Harbour porpoise; common dolphin (*above*)

One to aim for Minke whale



Moths

UK species 2,500+

Where and when All habitats; year-round, especially May-October; at night (though some species are diurnal).

Top tips Get a good field guide {eg *Moths of Great Britain and Ireland* by Paul Waring and Martin Townsend}; invest in a moth trap {try NHBS Moth Trap, £165, nhbs.com}; grow

night-scented nectar plants like honeysuckle and jasmine.

More information butterfly-conservation.org/moths and ukmoths.org.uk

Two for starters Large yellow underwing; angle shades

One to aim for Broad-bordered bee hawk-moth (*above left*)

Bats

UK species 18

Where and when Woodland and gardens at dusk, dawn, and after dark; from spring to autumn.

Top tips Watch at dusk near ponds, lakes, canals and any inland water; get a bat detector {try the Beginners Bat Detecting Kit, from £86.50, nhbs.com}; join your local bat group for bat walks and other activities.

More information bats.org.uk

Two for starters Common pipistrelle (*above right*); noctule

One to aim for Greater horseshoe bat





amazing
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Experience is everything



After 46 years at the BBC, beloved DJ Ken Bruce, 72, has now taken the mic at a commercial rival. He tells us why he really chose to quit his top-rated Radio 2 show and talks about meeting his wife, managing diabetes and being a dad of six

by NINA MYSKOW

Legendary broadcaster Ken Bruce stunned his listeners when, in January, he announced his decision to quit his Radio 2 show after 31 years. He's now happily installed in a new mid-morning slot at commercial station Greatest Hits Radio (GHR), providing living proof you can successfully rise to a new career challenge at the age of 72.

'One of the things I wanted to show is that you can, over 70, take on a whole new way of life, a way of work,' he tells me. 'You're not on the scrapheap. Of course it's very easy just to stay, it's comfy. Someone once described the BBC as a fur-lined rut.'

No doubt his many listeners, and perhaps the BBC, assumed he would see out his time at Radio 2. Was he taken for granted? 'I think there were moments when I thought, "Hello, I'm here. You do notice that I've got this big audience?" But it was never really talked about.' That audience of 8.5 million made him the most listened-to broadcaster in Europe.

'I think you would struggle to find a BBC press release that said that, put it that way,' laughs Ken, who hosted his last Radio 2 show on 3 March before starting in his new job exactly one month later. 'My vision looking back over the years is totally affectionate. But when you've been doing something for so long then the choice is, "Do I challenge myself a bit?" I've reached the summit, there's no mountain left to climb. So I thought, "Leave at the top." This is a totally new adventure.'

It was very much his decision, but was ageism involved? 'Look at Tony Blackburn,' Ken says. 'He's 80, so I don't honestly think there is. But there's a natural wish to refresh. Radio 2 must evolve,

and has evolved over the years, and I've moved with it. But you get to the point where you think, "Right, if I stay, will I feel out of place in two or three years?"

'I've still been playing the music I like to a large extent but when you listen to the rest of the station do I start to feel that it's moving in a direction I might feel uncomfortable with? And I don't want to get to that stage.' He admits that the enforced departure of Steve Wright, 68, from his afternoon slot on Radio 2 last year came as a bit of a shock. 'That did feel wrong, or untimely to me,' admits Ken. 'No, I didn't feel that the writing was on the wall, but I thought, "Some day it will come to that." And I did want to go at a time of my choosing.'

He didn't want to be the old git then? He grins. 'One of the other things I don't like is being the oldest person in the room. For

years I was the youngest person on Radio 2 and regarded as the up-and-coming youngster. And overnight I became a veteran and didn't even notice it happening.' He roars with laughter. 'Suddenly it was, "The veteran broadcaster said..." and I thought, "What? I'm not the veteran broadcaster. I'm the young guy!"'

His final show had listeners up and down the country snuffling but was nevertheless as no-fuss as he could make it. 'A daily radio show is a continuing conversation,' says Ken, who worked at the BBC for a total of 46 years. 'So you never say goodbye and you just pick up where you left off.'

Warm, self-deprecating and charming, his quick and subtle, sometimes subversive, wit is as disarming in real life as it is on air. Either way, Ken's company is a joy. We are meeting at a studio at his new working home in London's Soho. On his part there are no regrets. But won't he miss Eurovision? He's been a stalwart since 1988. 'I thought I would, but last year when we came second I thought, "It's a good point to give up."'

It was at Eurovision in 1998 that he met his wife, Kerith, 12 years his junior. He had been married twice before. 'It was the last time we

'You can, over 70, take on a whole new way of life, a way of work. You're not on the scrapheap'

Then and now Ken in the studio in 1985 (be/ow) and today (right)



**‘What?
I’m not the
veteran
broadcaster.
I’m the
young guy!’**



PLAY POP.MASTER

- 1 Which singer had top ten hits in the 90s with *What Is Love* and *I Miss You*?
- 2 From 1999, what was the first number one for Britney Spears (*below*)?
- 3 Released in 1987, what is the title of the only UK solo hit for John Farnham?
- 4 *Nothing Ever Happens* was the biggest hit for which Glaswegian rock group?
- 5 Which of these songs by The Move gained the highest chart position: *Curly*, *Tonight* or *Brontosaurus*?
- 6 *Hello Happiness* and *There Goes My First Love* were both top 20 hits in the 70s for which legendary group?
- 7 From 1997, what was the title of the only top 10 hit single by The Brand New Heavies?
- 8 In 1977, Rod Stewart topped the charts with double A-side *The First Cut Is The Deepest* and which other song?
- 9 Space's 1998 song *The Ballad Of Tom Jones* featured which female singer?
- 10 With whom did Johnny Mathis duet on the 1978 hit *Too Much, Too Little, Too Late*?

Answers over the page





(; hosted Eurovision,' he recalls. 'She was a researcher and we were stuck in this little studio box together in Birmingham - not the most romantic of venues - but we had a nice chat and found we liked the same things. We had a little dance at the after party, and then went out to dinner after that. And that was it.'

They married in 2000 and live in Oxfordshire with their three children, Murray, 21, Verity, 18, and Charlie, 15. 'And then I've got the older kids - Campbell is 43, Douglas is 41 and Kate is 30,' he adds. Ken also now has three grandchildren.

To his listeners' relief, PopMaster, his iconic daily phone quiz, has arrived at GHR with him - he was smart enough to register it and retains the rights. During lockdown, he broadcast from his home and his show was a comforting, stable lifeline to many.

'I was broadcasting from an upstairs room for 14 months and I loved it,' he admits. 'I'd get a cup of coffee and a biscuit when somebody was in the house, usually a KitKat. A bit naughty as I'm diabetic, type 2.'

'I rattle with tablets but it's OK, I'm not someone who is massively overweight,' he says. 'It's something in the family, we tend to suffer from it in later life and it's a bit difficult for me as I've got a Scottish sweetie mouth. I'm not drinking as much as I used to. I've got a lovely local pub so I'll pop over and have a Guinness. It's a health drink, isn't it? It's got iron in it!'

He doesn't take formal exercise but walks a lot. 'And we have an autistic

New challenge Ken started his show on Greatest Hits Radio in April. Below: with his wife Kerith and autistic son Murray

'I've never come off air feeling worse than I did coming on. I always feel better. It's free therapy'

son, so I do a lot of stairs,' he says. Murray is non-speaking. 'He's on the top floor, so I'm up and down. It keeps the weight off.' The painful irony of the fact that the top broadcaster in Europe has a son who cannot communicate verbally is not lost on Ken, as witnessed in Chris Packham's BBC documentary *Inside Our Autistic Mind*, broadcast in February. It featured Murray and the family and was both moving and uplifting, exposing the struggles and heartache without being mawkish or intrusive. 'Chris is a top person and it was beautifully done,' says Ken.

It's heartwarming to see the way they cope. 'What we've done is to say, "This is the hand we've been dealt, so you play it." You don't say, "If only". It's "Right, we'll see what we can do to make this better"'. In autism, there are quite a lot of broken families because one or other partner just can't cope. Usually it's the man. So we've taken a conscious decision that we'd work on this together and do the best we can and Murray is a huge part of the family.'

How did Murray react to the film when it was broadcast? 'Chris saw him afterwards and said that Murray had just given him a big hug,' Ken says. 'He is a hugger, but not to everybody. Chris doesn't hug, but he said it was a lovely moment. Murray's very, very grateful for the chance and eager to be an advocate for non-speaking people.'

Wisely, Ken has not listened to his old show on Radio 2, which is being hosted by Gary Davies until Vernon Kay starts later this month. 'Gary's a great friend and I wish him nothing but the best,' he says. 'And Vernon is a lovely man and I wish him nothing but the best as well.'

For himself? 'I'd love to be at GHR for several years doing daily broadcasting, in touch with the people I've been in touch with as listeners. And some new ones, I hope. I just want to continue having fun.'

'I've never come off air feeling worse than I did coming on. I always feel better. It's free therapy. It's a lovely job, a two-way conversation, there's a lot coming back. That's the really special thing about radio.' *



Listen to Ken Bruce on Greatest Hits Radio on weekday mornings from 10am-1pm

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Shorefield Ownership

Five decades since *That's Life!* hit our screens, we talk to its inimitable host, Esther Rantzen, about the groundbreaking show's lasting legacy

by BENJIE GOODHART

Fifty years ago, on Saturday, 26 May 1973, a new consumer affairs programme was quietly making its debut on BBC One. Given a late-night slot, *That's Life!* could easily have sunk without trace.

It did not. Initially commissioned for six shows it would go on to run for 21 years, clocking up 442 episodes, broadcasting to audiences of more than 20 million. It received up to 15,000 letters every week, and conducted more than 2,000 consumer investigations.

But the numbers don't tell the whole story. With its courageous campaigning ethos and pugnacious zeal, the show changed the face of modern Britain. It also managed to straddle the line between serious journalism and the lighter side of life with extraordinary dexterity.

That's Life! was undoubtedly a team effort with a hugely talented production crew behind it but, for all the expertise on and off screen, the show was synonymous with its host, Esther Rantzen.

Now a venerable 82-year-old, her ready wit and vivacity seem undimmed by a recent lung cancer diagnosis. In a storied career encompassing documentaries, chat shows, light entertainment and charitable work, her pride and affection for *That's Life!* is palpable.

In 1968, Esther was a researcher for another show when the decision was made to feature her on screen in a new consumer affairs and light entertainment series. 'I didn't think it would last,' she says. 'I thought they

were making a big mistake, but they didn't seem to notice.'

Esther came up with the title *That's Life!* and presented the first series alongside Bob Wellings and George Layton. By the second series, Esther was made sole presenter, given a role as producer, and was joined by reporters Kieran Prendiville and Glyn Worsnip.

Squirrelled away after 11pm on Saturday nights, and initially billed by the *Radio Times* as a 'collection of jokes, dramas and problems that happen in real life', *That's Life!* nevertheless attracted a loyal audience with its unconventional mix of the serious and the jovial. Items about comen or corporate intransigence shared equal billing with talented pets, newspaper misprints and rudely-shaped vegetables. 'It was a bit unusual then, and it remains unusual,' says Esther. 'I don't know a show that covers quite that range - life and death stuff, and the jokes.'

In 1976, the BBC raised the show's profile, giving it a Sunday

9pm slot. 'Inexorably, week after week after week, the audiences grew and grew,' Esther recalls. 'We tried to put something in that would be what is now called a water cooler moment, that people would be talking about on Monday morning. And lo and behold, it worked.'

The new slot had an added bonus. 'Sunday nights is one of the few nights MPs watch television,' says Esther. 'And they used to watch us - including Mrs Thatcher - because they knew their voters watched. If the voters were talking about issues we were discussing, they changed the law and reformed practices as a result because they knew it was important to people.'

That's Life!'s campaigns had a remarkable success rate. The show was responsible for so much positive change, including mandating seatbelts for children in cars, safe surfaces in playgrounds, a huge uptick in organ donors, and bringing to justice a range of criminals, including comen and paedophiles. Perhaps most lastingly, the children's charity Childline

was born in 1986 after an episode of *That's Life!* prompted thousands of children to phone in and report incidences of abuse. It continues to help children facing a range of issues to this day.

Was it emotionally exhausting, working ◯

'We tried to put something in that would be a water cooler moment, that people would be talking about on Monday morning. And it worked'

Public interest
From left: meeting the public, and in the studio with Kieran Prendiville (left) and Glyn Worsnip in 1976



on such powerful material week after week? 'Nope! We were buoyed by adrenaline,' says Esther. 'It was so pressured, it was such hard work, that we just flung ourselves at it for six months of the year. At the end of it, we'd lay down a lot.'



Creating legislative change could take months of hard work. But sometimes the fruits of the show's labours were more immediate. I remember once we showed how to save a baby's life if they were choking on something. The next week, we had more babies in the studio whose parents had saved their lives that week. It was an incredible partnership with the viewers.' That partnership was not limited to sending letters and support for campaigns. The show also went out on to the street and interacted with real people, getting them to take part in vox pops and taste tests. The show exhibited the British public at its eccentric best.

The vox pops were not without incident. In 1980, Esther was getting people to try bat soup when police asked her to move on, as she was causing an obstruction. She continued to film. 'A policeman called A Herbert - and I thought he was a bit of a herbert - arrested me!'

It wasn't the last encounter between PC Herbert and Esther. 'He wasn't as foolish as I thought he was,' she adds, 'because when I did *This Is Your Life*, he was one of the surprise guests, and it turns out he'd been dining out on having arrested me for many years.'

Inevitably, for a high-profile woman blazing a trail in the 1970s, Esther encountered plenty of sexism. She once said: 'I was there when some of the glass ceilings were broken through. Indeed, some of the fragments are still stuck in my skull.' In an era where most women on entertainment shows were bikini-clad studio props, Esther was not only speaking, but running the show.

In 1988, *That's Life!* screened a segment that Piers Morgan later described as 'the greatest moment in television history'. Sir Nicholas Winton was a British stockbroker who, in 1939, arranged for 669 Jewish children to be rescued from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia and rehomed in the UK. His innate modesty meant that his story had never been told, until *That's Life!* paid tribute to him. Sitting in the audience, the unsuspecting Winton was stunned to



Life-affirming
That's Life!
pays tribute
to Sir Nicholas
Winton in
1988 (above).
Esther in 1986
(right) and
last October
(below)



discover that, flanking him on either side, were people he had rescued as youngsters almost 50 years before. In a later episode, he was similarly astonished when Esther asked anyone in the audience who owed him their life to stand up. Whole rows surrounding him got to their feet.

All good things inevitably come to an end, and on 19 June 1994, *That's Life!* said goodbye to viewers with a 90-minute special, *That's Life All Over!*, recalling the show's finest moments. 'It was fabulous,' says Esther. 'We invited back people who had taken part in the show and David Frost did a tribute that made me cry.' Among those expressing gratitude was the then Prime Minister, John Major, who praised the programme's proud campaigning history.

And when it comes to the show's lasting legacy, Esther references the individual campaigns, and the fact that there are now many more talented women presenting and producing television. But she believes not all developments in the medium represent progress.

'There are more naked people than I've ever seen appearing before my startled eyes late at night,' she laughs. 'I should add, I'm not watching a porn channel. This was on *Naked Attraction* on Channel 4.'

So genitalia on television are best displayed in the form of funny-shaped vegetables? 'Yes, exactly right. "Bring back rude vegetables, less rude people." That's my slogan for the future.' *

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Give them a hand

As the Coronation weekend celebrates the nation's volunteers, we meet some of those who donate their time to guide visitors round the UK's historic buildings

The Coronation weekend will not only mark the first time we've seen a British monarch crowned in 70 years, it will also seek to highlight the invaluable work carried out by Britain's volunteers. The additional Bank Holiday Monday on 8 May - added to calendars to mark the Coronation of King Charles III - has been dubbed 'The Big Help Out' as it will see the UK's largest ever one-day effort to encourage more people to lend a hand. Charities, including the Royal Voluntary Service, have organised the day to showcase the benefits of volunteering - something eight million in the UK participate in at least once a month.

Around 600,000 of those work in the highly popular area of heritage and most volunteers in this sector are over 50. In fact, the vast majority of the 44,000 working for the National Trust are actually over 60 with some in their 80s and 90s. Almost 70% of English Heritage's 3,500 helpers are over 50. A number of these heritage volunteers study the history of a house or location in depth so they can guide visitors round while imparting a wealth of insight into all the drama of its past. From retired vets and office workers to ex-engineers and nurses, like taxi drivers learning 'The Knowledge', this brigade of volunteer 'professors' master a brief bursting with dates, context and anecdotes.

Sonia Heywood, 79, is one such volunteer. She's now an authority on Stonehenge having worked as a guide at the English Heritage site for the past 17 years. She handles the diverse theories proposed to her by visitors about who built Stonehenge - and how - with diplomatic care. Her task, she says, is to lay down the evidence that the early bluestones came from Wales and that the site was built and rebuilt over a thousand years beginning in about 3,000 BC - then let people decide for themselves. But she assures visitors that the medieval account by Geoffrey of Monmouth ascribing the arrival of these

by
ANDREW
SOUTHAM

megaliths to the wizard Merlin probably isn't true. Before tourists arrive in the morning, Sonia helps to weed around each 25-30-ton stone by hand. 'Working in this ancient arena as the sun rises gives me a sense of connection to people who once worshipped here,' she says.

Sonia couldn't have imagined starting a new career as a volunteer neolithic expert when retiring at 62. She managed a social services department in Essex, then moved to Wiltshire after retirement, having raised two children. She became one of the site's first volunteers in 2005 - and has stayed ever since. Now every day is different in her role as education volunteer.

Her work includes escorting groups of adults or school classes of up to 30 children around the stones. She's developed extensive knowledge of the site thanks to great training, which ranges from voice projection to

neolithic cookery (which is 'really rather good'). She's even graduated from a part-time archaeology degree at the University of Bristol. 'It's brilliant, simply brilliant,' she says. 'I love the outdoor life, meeting new visitors and making new friends.'

Every experience is a delight. 'My favourite question was being asked by a tourist from Japan, where sheep are a novelty, how I had managed to place the ewes so carefully around the stones,' she smiles. She resisted saying she'd spent all morning on the task.

Sonia works as much or as little as she wants, from one to several days a week using an online rota to check available slots. 'The social life has no comparison,' she says. 'There are bacon butty breaks, lots of treats like the end-of-year party and you're always learning new things.'

Volunteers like Sonia love the sense of purpose the role gives them. That's exactly what organisations like the National Trust and English Heritage strive to achieve for their helpers, whose support they depend on. 'Volunteers are at the heart of what we do,' says Mukith Miah, the national lead for volunteering at the trust, which thanks its helpers with social events including

'It's simply brilliant. I love the outdoor life, meeting new visitors and making new friends'

Rock-solid knowledge
Volunteering at Stonehenge has taught Sonia Heywood lots of new things



summer barbecues and mince pie parties as well as long-service awards. 'Their passion and dedication always shine through.' It's the same at English Heritage. 'It's all about making the roles fun, valued, exciting and stimulating,' adds its volunteering and participation advisor Anneka Coleman.

For Charles Webster, who volunteers at the National Trust's Blickling Hall in Norfolk, his role is all of those things - and more. In 2012, Charles - known as Chuck - was so captivated by a visit to the hall, which is Anne Boleyn's first home, that he enquired the same day about volunteering. He was enthralled by the 4,600-acre estate where the land was first owned by King Harold before being bought by the Boleyn family in the early 1400s. 'Blickling tapped me on the shoulders and said now it's your turn,' he says.

He loves unearthing layers of history in the house, which was remodelled into a 1600s redbrick estate by the Hobart family. Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, took possession of Blickling in 1499 and Anne was born there soon after. Her birth date has remained a matter of debate: historians had placed it somewhere between 1500 and 1507, which means they didn't confidently know her age when she married Henry VIII in 1533. But, Chuck says, 'We've now proved using secondary sources, which most historians agree with, that Anne was born at Blickling around 1500-1501.'

At 77, he is an expert guide and respected authority on the house, although his life today contrasts starkly with a background growing up in Brooklyn, New York, to a mother who fled Nazi Germany. His German emigre father died in the Second World War shortly before Chuck was born.



Chuck (left), who has three daughters and five grandchildren, joined the US navy at 17 and was stationed in Scotland before moving to Yorkshire while working for the US National Security Agency. On retiring and settling in Norfolk, he became a volunteer history expert aged 67 and has written numerous articles on the Boleyn family, which are

now used to train other guides at the estate.

He loves his volunteering so much that each Wednesday and Friday he drives the 72-mile round trip from his home in Great Yarmouth to Blickling. So what does his partner think of him disappearing for such long periods? 'Well, Dianne is actually very happy that I have something I enjoy to keep me busy - and out of the house for a bit,' he laughs. 'She's a guide in Norwich Cathedral, which keeps her equally as busy.'



'I love working with wonderful and dedicated, like-minded people, to preserve Blickling and educate visitors'

Chuck thrives on his role. 'I love working with wonderful and dedicated, like-minded people to preserve Blickling and educate visitors from around the world,' he says.

In fact, he says, it is this camaraderie, plus the research that has allowed him to explore his passion in Tudor history, which has 'kept him alive'. You can't have a better recommendation than that. *

Discover more in a newsix-part series, Hidden Treasures of the National Trust, which starts on BBC Two in mid-May

THE BIG HELP OUT

The Big Help Out is one of the official Coronation weekend events. Its aim is to encourage people to try volunteering and celebrate the work of existing helpers. You can find out about the activities available on the day in your local area by downloading the Big Help Out app. Opportunities available range from working at food banks and teaching computer skills to gardening, running Scouts activities and helping with charity shop collections. See thebighelpout.org.uk



BECOME A HERITAGE VOLUNTEER

You don't need any prior knowledge or skills to become a heritage volunteer as the National Trust and English Heritage will help you with inductions and training. If you're unsure about guiding, there are abundant volunteer roles in gardening, property administration, book cleaning, flower arranging, buggy driving and sewing - one is even a seal ranger at Blakeney National Nature Reserve, Norfolk, while others care for donkeys at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight.

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Photos: RNLI/Nigel Millard, Lynda Huxley

-10

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Best fests

by REBECCA NORRIS

Festival season is here and whether you're a foodie, jazz aficionado, culture vulture or Champagne lover there's an event to suit. We pick the best of this year's bunch...

BEST FOR FOOD

Big Festival KINGHAM, OXFORDSHIRE 25-27 AUGUST

thebigfestival.com

Former Blur bassist Alex James hosts this music and food extravaganza on his idyllic Cotswolds farm. Here, you can dance in the fields before refuelling on some world-class street food or sharpening your culinary skills at a cookery workshop. Singers such as Sigrid and Tom Grennan provide the soundtrack, while chefs, including Asma Khan (owner of Darjeeling Express restaurant in London) and TV personality Anna Haugh tantalise your taste buds.

BEST FOR THE MIND

KITE KIRTLINGTON PARK, OXFORDSHIRE 9-11 JUNE

kitefestival.co.uk

If you like your festivals as intellectual as they are musical, this is for you. Overlooking the Chiltern hills, KITE blends live music with a series of speakers on literature, politics, art and culture. The line-up includes Dame Joan Collins, Sir John Major, David Baddiel, and Alastair Campbell.

Also consider

Bluedot 20-23 JULY JODRELL BANK OBSERVATORY, CHESHIRE discoverthebluedot.com

With exploding dustbins and combusting microwaves, science tussles with music to be the main event here. See outrageous experiments live on stage, while Grace Jones and Pavement headline. Plus, hear keynote talks from the likes of Mike Berners-Lee and Maggie Aderin-Pocock.



**Also consider
Henley Festival
5-9 JULY
HENLEY-ON-THAMES,
OXFORDSHIRE**

henley-festival.co.uk

Rag'n'Bone Man and Westlife are headlining the UK's only black-tie festival, a civilised affair on the banks of the Thames. There's a jazz club, a world & folk music tent, and a visual arts showcase of ceramics, sculptures, paintings and more. Comics Jo Brand and Jack Dee are performing, and every night ends with a spectacular fireworks display.

**Also consider
Hampton Court
Palace Festival
6-17 JUNE
HAMPTON COURT PALACE,
SURREY**

hamptoncourtpalacefestival.com

Festival surroundings don't get much fancier than this. Across two weeks, a series of concerts will grace the Tudor courtyard of Henry VIII's palace, with acts including Tom Jones and Kaiser Chiefs. Soak up the pre-concert atmosphere in the Palace Gardens before taking your seat (no mash pits here) or upgrade your ticket for a Champagne welcome and/or fountain-side gazebo. Splash out on the VIP experience to enter the palace and dine on a three-course meal before all the fun begins outside. **C**

MOST REFINED

**Wilderness
CORN BURY PARK,
OXFORDSHIRE
3-6 AUGUST**

wildernessfestival.com

Discover a varied programme of music, fine dining, crafts and wellbeing at this boutique festival. Fatboy Slim, The Chemical Brothers and the reunited Sugababes are all performing, while jazz

**Trolley dash
Capers on the
banks of the
Thames at
Henley (above)
and below,
from left, Kite,
Wilderness
and faces in
the crowd**

institution Ronnie Scott's presents a tribute to Aretha Franklin. Radio 2 DJ Jo Whiley brings her 90s anthems tour to the countryside, while The Lakeside Spa offers the chance to unwind in a steaming hot tub. If you'd rather not slum it in a sleeping bag, there's also the option to ditch the tent in favour of luxury yurts, cabins or country wagons.



BEST FOR THE FAMILY

Latitude
20-23 JULY
HEN HAM PARK, SUFFOLK
latitudefestival.com

George Ezra joins a line-up including Pulp, The Kooks and former members of The Beautiful South Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott. Ed Gamble headlines an extensive comedy programme, and if you'd like to take a break from dancing to enjoy a different kind of workout, you're spoilt for choice with wild swimming, stand-up paddleboarding and yoga classes. Meanwhile, children are more than catered for with activities such as puppetry and theatre.

Also consider
Camp Bestival
LULWORTH CASTLE,
DORSET
27-30 JULY
campbestival.net

It's Camp Bestival's 15th birthday, so expect a weekend that's suitably celebratory. Headline acts are Grace Jones, The Kooks, and Craig David's DJ set TSS, while offstage, you'll find an inflatable church, a roller disco, and the world's biggest bouncy castle. There's also a host of stars from children's TV, including Dick and Dom, Mr Tumble, and Horrible Histories Live. Camp



Bestival's sister festival in Shropshire (Weston Park, 17-20 August) is now in its second year, featuring top-billed acts Primal Scream, Rudimental and The Human League.

Also consider
Victorious
25-27 AUGUST
SOUTHSEA, PORTSMOUTH
victoriousfestival.co.uk
Mumford & Sons, Kaiser Chiefs and Ellie Goulding feature on the line-up for the

Do the robot
Celebrate
in style as
Camp Bestival
(above) has its
15th birthday
this year.
Below, expect
music, yoga,
swimming
and a range of
kids' activities
at Latitude

UK's biggest metropolitan festival. Southsea Castle hosts a Champagne bar with views of the Solent, and you'll also find a skatepark with BMX demonstrations and a comedy tent with stand-up from Joel Dommett and Milton Jones.

BEST FOR FOLK & WORLD MUSIC

Towersey Festival
25-28 AUGUST
CLAYDON ESTATE,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
towerseyfestival.com

Proud to spotlight 'any stream but mainstream', this folk celebration is the UK's longest-running independent festival. This year, headliners include Frank Turner, The Divine Comedy and The Proclaimers. It also offers a ceilidh, ghost walks, crafts, music workshops, storytelling, plus an outdoor games space and a host of family entertainment.



GETTY IMAGES/DAVID J. PHILLIPS

Also consider

Black Deer Festival
16-18 June

ERIDGE PARK, KENT
blackdeerfestival.com

Striving to host the most acclaimed acts in Americana and country music, this year's line-up includes Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats, The Pretenders, and Steve Earle, plus Bonnie Raitt, fresh from her Song of the Year win at the Grammy Awards. The weekend also celebrates outdoor cooking, promising to emulate the smokehouses of America's Deep South, and offers expert demonstrations on foraging, butchery and knife-making.

Also consider
WOMAD

27-30 July
CHARLTON PARK,
WILTSHIRE
womad.co.uk

Enjoy acts from around the world on one Wiltshire estate, including Nigerian musician Femi Kuti, Portuguese fado singer Mariza, and British band Bombay Bicycle Club. Artists are also invited to cook their favourite dishes on the Taste the World stage as they chat and deliver more intimate live performances. There's spoken word, debates, science experiments and kids' cookery classes, too.

BEST FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT

The Great Estate
2-4 June
SCORRIER HOUSE,
CORNWALL

greatestatefestival.co.uk
Here, you might attempt to balance an egg on a spoon at the Victorian Sports Day, then head to the Wall of Death to watch daredevil motorcycle riders cheat gravity. The Selecter and



Primal Scream headline, and at night the manor house will be illuminated by light shows. Step into The Beatles Dub Club to hear an eclectic playlist of remixes that sample the Fab Four, while The Bowie Lounge celebrates another music legend.

Also consider
Barnes Children's Literature Festival
24-25 June
BARNES, LONDON

barneskidslitfest.org
Lenny Henry, Michael Morpurgo and Cressida Cowell top the bill for this year's edition of the UK's largest children's literature festival, while Judith Kerr's daughter will commemorate her mother at a special event to celebrate the centenary of the late Barnes resident. With more than 100 events,

performances and activities across the two days, there will also be appearances from illustrators Axel Scheffler and Lauren Child.

BEST FOR JAZZ

Love Supreme
30 June-2 July
Glynde Place, East Sussex
lovesupremefestival.com
Europe's biggest outdoor jazz festival celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. With



Run for it
The Great Estate offers a Victorian sports day (above) and music from The Selecter (below left).
Top, Towersey Festival. Below, Love Supreme

a line-up led by Little Simz and Grace Jones, it is the only major UK festival with an all-female headline bill. Other acts appearing include Emeli Sande, Candi Staton, Thundercat and Gabriels, while non-musical highlights are organised hill walks across the South Downs, long-table-style banqueting and secret swimming. *



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home&style

INTERIORS/ ANTIQUES/ GARDENS/ TECH/ BEAUTY/ MOTORING/ FOOD/ WINE



Prints charming

PROOD FORV ENVISAGE

Her sketch of the late Queen brought artist Eleanor Tomlinson global fame. We visit her at home and take a peek at her joyous new Coronation Collection





by KATHRYN KNIGHT

When artist Eleanor Tomlinson picked up her pens and paints during the Platinum Jubilee celebrations last June, she had no idea it would lead her to global stardom.

The sketch she produced (*far right*) showed a back view of the Queen hand in hand with Paddington Bear, one of her trusty corgis by her side, walking away after the festivities, a length of red, white and blue bunting trailing in their wake (not to mention an obligatory marmalade sandwich left on the ground).

'It was only ever meant to be this small, happy social media post,' laughs Eleanor from her chocolate-box cottage in rural East Yorkshire. She titled it Jubilee Ma'amalade Tea and duly uploaded it on to her Facebook page.

When she next looked, her website had 'gone into overdrive', with people from all over the world desperate to know if they could purchase a copy of her sketch. 'Something about it just resonated,' she says.

For many people, it became the defining image of the UK's Platinum Jubilee celebrations - and a symbol for the nation's grief, when, three months later, Her Majesty died at the age of 96. Eleanor's work appeared



Royal line
Above: Eleanor works on her prints. Above left: Limited Edition Coronation Capers Collectable Fine Bone China Mug, £27.50

on thousands of tributes around the country.

So it is perhaps only fitting that, as the country prepares to mark the formal accession to the throne of King Charles III, Eleanor has released a Coronation Collection, including a joyful limited-edition print titled Coronation Capers, depicting a gathering of dogs looking out from the Buckingham Palace balcony.

Eleanor's role as something of an unofficial 'artist laureate' has certainly taken the young art graduate by surprise. She doesn't have a studio, preferring to work at her six-foot dining table looking out over the garden.

Wildlife and the open countryside are her biggest inspirations, and she produces intricately detailed animal and wildlife portraits alongside the royal works. A sketch begins with pencil, she explains. 'I plot out the

composition in pencil but not in detail - there's some messy pencil lines which I might keep in, then move into using fine liner before adding watercolour.

'Funnily enough, I never used to like working in watercolours, partly I think because I was using them in the way that other artists use them. It was only through my own experimentation and play and working with different combinations of line drawing and watercolours that I developed a love for it'

As a girl, Eleanor wanted to be a forensic scientist, then a chocolatier, but got a taste for art after winning a card competition aged six. She won another aged 13 and was emboldened by seeing the process of sketch to sale, having been invited to watch the card being manufactured and printed.

'I think that really helped me understand that this could be a living, seeing that whole process,' she says. After studying illustration at York St John University, she embarked on life as a full-time artist, and is now 25.

Her commissions have always focused on an appreciation of the UK countryside and rural life - underpinned by a love for her home county, Yorkshire. Incorporating royal elements was entirely accidental.

In fact, it almost didn't happen at all. At the time of the Jubilee pageant last June, Eleanor was on a walking weekend with her mother. 'I nearly didn't take my pen and brushes,' she says. She thanks her lucky stars she did: while watching television coverage of the Jubilee festivities, she was seized by an urge to produce her own small commemorative piece.

'I'd been mesmerised by seeing the Queen taking tea with Paddington. I instantly had this vision of the two of them holding hands and walking away'

'Like many of us, I'd been mesmerised by seeing the Queen taking tea with Paddington,' she recalls. 'I instantly had this vision of the two of them holding hands and walking away from the back.'

Her sketch took only a couple of hours from start to finish; her most agonising decision was what colour to paint the queen's outfit. 'Then she happened to step out on to the balcony of Buckingham Palace in that bright, stunning green and that was that,' Eleanor recalls.



**Coronation seat
Coronation Capers
Reversible Velvet Cushion
Cover, £55**

Even today she remains amazed by its global popularity, as she does too for the work she sketched in tribute to the Queen following her death. 'Our Beloved Queen' depicted Elizabeth II with Prince Philip and Emma, the fell pony known to be one of the Queen's favourites.

Unwilling to profit from such a sombre occasion, the original of this was only shared online with Eleanor's followers.

Her Coronation Collection is quite a different matter, however. Anticipating demand for souvenirs of this most British of occasions, Eleanor's print is part of a wider collection of her work featuring on stationery, gifts and homeware.

She's so busy that her mum and dad have had to come on board to help with the business, making it quite the family affair.

'It's fair to say none of us expected this,' Eleanor says of her sudden projection into the spotlight. 'But it's been rather wonderful.' ®

Visit eleanortomlinsonart.co.uk to see Eleanor's collection and purchase her work, including the Coronation Collection products pictured





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Objects of desire

While many of the King's Coronation 'collectables' will be mere junk, some of our previous monarchs' merch are now seen as crown jewels, including pants...

by JENNIE BUIST BROWN

From coins to coffee cups and plates to pants (yes, pants!), the market for royal memorabilia is massive, and the Coronation of King Charles III will no doubt see the market flooded with all manner of 'collectables'.

But despite claims they're 'limited-editions', most of these items are little more than junk. Fun to collect perhaps, but not as investments. Unlike an English delft 'blue-dash' charger that was made to celebrate the coronation of King Charles II in 1660 when he was restored to the throne. It sold at auction in 2011 for £105,000. And a tin-glazed delft polychrome royal portrait plate dating to 1715-25, depicting King George I, sold at Christie's in 2008 for £17,500. By the time of King George III's coronation in 1760, transfer printing on pottery had been invented and the plates made for that occasion can now fetch up to £8,000.

The royal commemorative market took off in 1838 with the coronation of Queen Victoria. At the time, not many ordinary people knew what the Queen looked like, so much of the pottery and porcelain included a picture of the monarch. Pretty pearlware cups and mugs from her coronation are now very rare and the best quality ones can fetch well over £1,000.

Moving into the 20th century, coronation collectables were produced in large quantities and are consequently much less valuable, with

Coronation picks

The mug designed by Eric Ravilious for King George VI's coronation (above) and a toy model of the Queen's coronation coach from 1953 (below)



the exception of mugs designed by Eric Ravilious for Wedgwood. Made initially for the crowning of Edward VIII in 1937, the design shows a royal coat of arms beneath a lively fireworks display, with blue and yellow colouring and Edward's cypher and crown within. Due to the King's abdication, they've become highly sought after. It was quickly redesigned for King George VI's coronation, and these mugs are also valuable, selling often for more than £500 each.

The late Queen's coronation in 1953 saw an enormous amount of souvenirs produced, with many cups, plates and mugs still available for a few pounds in charity shops, flea markets and online. One rarer collectable to look for is a toy model of the 1953 coronation coach made by Lesney. The coach was repurposed for the Queen's coronation - it had originally been made for the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the original king figure was removed - though his legs still remain! The 1953 coaches can now sell for up to £1,000.

But what about the pants? In a rare twist, a pair of Queen Victoria's knickers sold at auction in 2016 for £16,250. Made exclusively for Queen Victoria, the linen pants were embroidered with her emblem VR - short for Victoria Regina - beneath a crown. Gone was her tiny waist from her coronation in 1838 - this underwear dates to the late 1800s and is fairly sizeable. Charles III Y-fronts anyone? *





Kew the questions

As kitchen gardener at London's world-famous Royal Botanic Gardens, H el ena Dove often gets asked questions as she goes about her work. Here she addresses the most common of her visitors' growing pains



1 How do I deal with slugs?

Nearly all the vegetables in the Kew kitchen garden are started off in modules or pots, so are relatively mature when planted into final positions. This deters slugs as they prefer new, lush growth. We mulch annually, with a fairly rough compost. The woody elements are a rough surface for the slugs to move over. When it's very wet, meaning an attack of slugs is likely, we use a Nemaslug [pest control] and whenever I see one, it's disposed of into the compost heap. At home, a beer trap is an excellent solution, as is a pond, which will encourage frogs, who love slugs for lunch.

2 Why does my Florence fennel bolt in summer?

Florence fennel will always go to seed when the day length reaches 13 hours - July in the UK. It's best to sow it in March to harvest in June, or in late August for an October-January harvest, in a mild winter.

3 Why aren't my apples fruiting well this year?

There are several reasons why apples might struggle: it could be a dry spring where the flowers didn't set well, or a mild winter where they didn't get to stay dormant for long enough. Most likely, though, the fruit wasn't thinned in the previous season. Many apples are biennial croppers, which means they produce a lot one year, then very little the next. By thinning in July, after the June drop, it discourages the tree's natural biennial habit.

4 How and why do I sideshoot tomatoes?

Only cordon/indeterminate tomatoes need sideshooting. Most fall into this category. Cordon tomatoes are trained

Green fingers

Helena Dove (right) is kitchen gardener at Kew Gardens. *Opposite, clockwise from top left:* Florence fennel; pinching out tomato sideshoots; dwarf French beans; thinning developing fruits on an apple tree



as a single stem up a support. There will be sideways laterals coming off the stem that hold the leaves and the fruit, but left untamed, the tomato will put out more sideshoots than it needs. A sideshoot will be a secondary growth - just above an existing lateral - light green and generally growing upwards. Just pinch these back with your fingernails.

5 Can I sow tomatoes in February?

Sow tomatoes in February if you are going to grow under glass for the entire season. If destined to be grown outdoors, wait until April so they aren't too large when you transplant them, once the risk of frosts have passed in late May.

6 What should I grow as a beginner?

One of the easiest plants to grow is dwarf French beans, which do really well in a pot and are highly productive. Courgettes are also easy, although they need a little more space to run around in.

7 What can I do about powdery mildew on cucurbits (courgettes, squash, cucumbers)?

Although powdery mildew looks horrendous, it mainly affects older leaves that are fairly nonproductive, so I just cut them off. This allows more airflow, which helps to reduce the mildew. Watering the plants at the base will also help reduce the problem.

8 How do I know if my potatoes are ready?

It depends on which type you are growing - always use certified seed potatoes and make a note of their name. First early potatoes are harvested when they flower, second earlies around a week after they finish flowering, and main crops once their foliage has gone brown and fallen.

9 I struggle getting my carrots to germinate. Why?

Carrots are one of the few crops that need to be sown directly in the ground. Sow ☺





just below the surface, and keep moist until they germinate. The freshly emerged, tiny leaves are fodder for slugs, so try using nematodes and be vigilant in the two weeks after sowing.

10 What can I grow in pots?

Most crops will grow well in pots if they are a good size and deep enough. There are dwarf varieties of a lot of veg now, such as tomatoes and runner beans, while herbs like parsley and basil do well in pots too.

11 How do I know if I have blight on my potatoes and tomatoes - and what do I do?

Blight can take down plants overnight. There are two types: early blight and late blight. The former attacks in early summer showing as small black patches on the leaves, but won't affect the crop or kill the plant. Late blight is the one to look out for. This shows as black patches on the leaf, with a halo of white around the patch on the

Veg out Nematodes and vigilance are the key to successful carrot growing. Below from left: herbs are ideal to grow in pots; edible flowers can help improve biodiversity; and comfrey leaves will pass on nutrients to other plants

Botany of the Kitchen Garden by Helena Dove (Kew Publishing, £22) is out now

underside of the leaf. Late blight will quickly move to the fruits of tomatoes and roots of potatoes. In an organic system, the best thing to do is to grow blight-resistant varieties, keep a good amount of airflow, and water at the base of the plants, avoiding splashing any on to the leaves. If the plants show signs of blight, remove all fruits on tomatoes and burn the plants. The fruits need consuming fast in case they have spores on their surface. With potatoes, remove the haulms, or tops, and burn. The potatoes themselves may survive underground for a week, but won't store for long.

12 What are the orange patches on my pear leaves?

This is pear rust. Sadly, there is very little that can be done in an organic system. Ensure you burn the leaves that come off the plant as the rust won't be killed in a normal compost. Keep trees well pruned to ensure good airflow and water well in dry spells. The rust rarely affects the fruits.

13 How do I control aphids?

Aphids are sap-sucking insects that attack lush growth and spread diseases. They can be treated with a soap spray or by soaking them with a jet from the hosepipe. Encouraging beneficial insects like ladybirds and hoverflies into the garden

will help control populations - attract them with flowers like cosmos and wild carrot, which are particularly good for hoverflies. Edible flowers, like nasturtium and calendula, mean you can get a harvest while improving biodiversity.

14 What do you feed your crops with?

We don't feed the plants regularly, instead we feed the soil by adding mulch annually. The mulch is formed of green waste and well-rotted manure and is laid on top of the soil as part of a no-dig cultivation system. A healthy soil will be balanced and provide all the nutrients a plant needs. If there is a need to give a plant a boost, I use comfrey leaves from the plant in the kitchen garden. Comfrey has a long tap root and accesses nutrients other plants can't. Therefore, using their leaves to make a tea, or as a mulch, gives these nutrients to the other crops.

15 My lettuces bolt in summer. Why?

Lettuce doesn't like hot, dry summers and will run to seed when they occur. We grow lettuces for spring and autumn, and if the garden had shade, we could grow them in the heat. At Kew we grow alternative leafy crops in the summer, like Malabar spinach, Minutina and dandelions, which all make delightful salads and enjoy the heat. ®



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The fully electric Mini, complete with Union Jack rear lights, is sure to garner a seal of approval from any EV-championing royal

A great British icon



Few things are more iconic in Britain than the Mini. And now the star of the silver screen has been refreshed for the 21st century with a fully electric flavour. While the brand is entrenched in British history, its underpinnings are now distinctly German thanks to parent company BMW, but this EV still carries the charm of the badge. A quick glance at the taillights gives you a flash of the Union Jack. Is there a more patriotic car on our roads today?

Sure, modern-day Minis are larger than those from the 60s, but this is still a compact car. You sit low to the ground, the windscreen is less slanted than a typical car, the bug-eyed headlights burst with personality, and it's playful around city streets with pleasing acceleration away from junctions. It's just good fun. That playful nature continues in the cabin. A circular surround sits atop the centre console, housing the infotainment display. An illuminated bezel features lighting that moves around the circumference as you change the stereo volume.

There are pleasing mechanical switches, which have great tactility to them, allowing you to flick on the cabin lights and trigger the ignition. Climate controls come via a trio of twiddly knobs, while the touch screen can also be controlled via a physical dial and buttons next to the gear shift if you prefer.

For passengers in the front, the cabin is surprisingly spacious, with plenty of head and legroom and comfortable seats that cuddle your sides. Things are less spacious in the back. The rear two seats lack legroom: a tall front passenger

by JOHN McCANN

and driver can lead to no legroom at all for those in the back. They're best reserved for bags or small children. Mini

'You sit low to the ground, the bug-eyed headlights burst with personality, and it's playful around city streets. It's just good fun'

claims 144 miles WLTP (World Harmonised Light Vehicle Test Procedure, measuring fuel economy, driving range and emissions) from a single charge, but we found you'll get 90 to 100 miles with real-world driving - especially in the colder winter months when EV range dips.

Four driving modes allow you to keep a closer handle on range: Sport gives more agility at expense of battery, while the Green and Green+ modes utilise one-pedal driving (where the car brakes as you release pressure on the accelerator). We found Green the best balance for efficient driving without compromising on comfort features such as climate control and heated seats (which are disabled in Green+).

Prices start at £29,000 for the Level 1 model, making it one of the cheaper EVs available. Not bad for a British icon. ®

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Get the star treatment

From models to musicians, A-listers everywhere are launching their own beauty ranges. But are they any good? Our columnist finds out



by EMILY DEAN

George Orwell was right to have a bad feeling about 1984: it was a year when terrible things happened. Mainly, to my hair. It all started with a terrifying Italian stylist chopping off my teenage split ends. He'd promised to make me look like Audrey Hepburn. What I ended up with was Lord Farquaad from *Shrek*. 'I've got hair like a medieval man!' I sobbed to my mum.

My sister had a crisis management strategy. 'It's a bit like John Taylor from Duran Duran,' she offered. That, I could work with. All I needed to nail his look was a few golden fringe streaks. So, I did as every 14-year-old did in the Eighties and grabbed a bottle of Sun In Hair Lightener. Four hours later my hair did not look like John Taylor's. It looked like a medieval man had dyed

'If you want to be a bona fide A-lister in 2023, you're going to need a skincare range'

his fringe orange. Lesson learned: never be suckered into a beauty choice by a celebrity.

It's a lesson I've increasingly had to unlearn with celebrity brands swamping the beauty industry. Big stars are no longer content to just slap their signature on a scent. If you want to be a bona fide A-lister in 2023, you're going to need a dedicated skincare range. That means sorting the real skin heroes from the hype and finding the ones that do the job for us over-50s is tough. But relax. I've done the research for you.

First, the make-up remover of dreams, from model Rosie Huntington-Whiteley. Her Rose Inc range has soft make-up shades and seriously impressive skincare. **Rose Inc Micellar Makeup Remover** (£19.50, [sephora.co.uk](https://www.sephora.co.uk)) is a multitasking wonder. Mature skins love micellar water, and this gel cream remover glides on gently, while brightening, plumping and reducing redness.

While we all made banana bread in lockdown, Idris Elba and his wife Sabrina (above) spent the time developing their own skincare brand, S'Able Labs. They've also joined the micellar

tip

**Freshen up
Pour micellar
water into
a spray bottle
for a hydrating
facial mist**

**Red carpet
worthy
From left:
Harry Styles'
The Pleasing
Pen; S'Able
Labs Rooibos
Micellar Water,
from Idris Elba;
and Full Night's
Sleep Blurring
Under Eye
Balm, part
of the R.E.M
Beauty range
from Ariana
Grande**



party with **S'Able Labs Rooibos Micellar Water** (£23, uk.sablelabs.co). A cleanser, soother and glow giver, it's got hydration-boosting African-sourced extracts. Idris sprays it on post workout. Less sexy, I find it a godsend for a hot flush.

Another skin hero comes from Harry Styles' Pleasing range, a surprising winner for mature types. I'm deeply in love with Harry's Pleasing Pen. Sounds weird but bear with. **The Pleasing Pen** (£33, uk-eu.pleasing.com) is a dual-sided roller ball with nourishing lip oil and refreshing eye serum. The lip treatment is beautifully matte, the soothing eye gel had me at hello.

My 21-year-old niece urged me to check out Ariana Grande's R.E.M range. 'I've got eyeliner older than her,' I said. Turns out, I owe them both an apology. **R.E.M Beauty Full Night's Sleep Blurring Under Eye Balm** (£18, selfridges.com) is an anti-puffiness hero for eyes. It melts on to smooth away dark circles and blur imperfections.

Finally, to skincare created by Hollywood legend Brad Pitt. His genderless Le Domaine range is based on the antioxidant properties of grapes. Prices are steep, but **Le Domaine The Cleansing Emulsion** (£60, harveynichols.com) is next level. Airy and velvety, this mousse

detoxifies and removes impurities leaving skin close-up ready.

Before I go, I'd just like to thank these celebrity skin heroes, and their agents, without whom, none of this would have been possible. *





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Back to her roots

As she launches her first cookbook and prepares to turn 60, *Great British Menu* host Andi Oliver talks about battling an eating disorder, recovering from a recent hysterectomy and why she's getting bored with having a bald head

by SARAH OLIVER

Andi Oliver is in one of her trademark frocks. Today's dress is a hot, bright coral accessorised, as ever, with a huge pair of cat-eye glasses that she perches on her newly shaven head. She is also, rather unexpectedly, wearing a blue sling because the TV chef has just fallen down a flight of stairs and had surgery to repair a tendon in her shoulder. 'Getting old is not for sissies,' she sighs, 'but what's the alternative? It's not a good one. I'm always amazed to have survived another year..! And then she starts to laugh because, right now, in the run-up to her 60th birthday (my jubilee as I like to think of it)', she is having the time of her life.

The presenter of BBC Two's *Great British Menu* and a contributing chef on BBC One's *Saturday Kitchen*, Andi also presents foodie programmes for Channel 4 and serves up a side order of literature on Sky Arts' *Book Club Live*. Earlier this year, she and her daughter Miquita Oliver went in search of their Caribbean heritage

for a critically acclaimed BBC Two two-parter *The Caribbean* with Andi and Miquita, and now she is publishing her first ever cookbook, *The Pepperpot Diaries*.

'There's something about garnering success as you get older that means you're ready for it,' she says. 'I feel a lot of things would have been overwhelming when I was younger.'

Andi will be 60 on 26 May and is planning 12 months of celebrations with her boyfriend of 30 years Garfield Hackett, Miquita, and a girls' trip to Bali with her friend, the singer Neneh Cherry. (The two women fronted Eighties band *Rip Rig + Panic*.) 'I'll be eating a lot of food I love with the people I love across the year,' she says.

Some will be Caribbean - a stout-braised Oxtail is one of her go-to traditional dishes, 'the kind of cooking handed down through stories and families and generations' - but ask about her guilty pleasure and that's the umami crunch of a Marmite rice cracker. 'Preferably buttered,' she confesses.

It's not a snack you'll find in *The Pepperpot Diaries*, which is crammed with Caribbean classics, such as Green Banana and Coconut Dumplings and Pork Belly Souse, and is 'a bit of a love letter to my grandmother and my





Cooking up a storm
Andi Oliver
 is seeing a
 huge amount
 of success as
 she turns 60

family and friends, because it encapsulates all the things that have made me who I am.'

She's already working on another cookbook and at the time of writing is about to announce a joint project with Miquita and a mum-daughter podcast following on from the success of her own Radio 4 podcast, *One Dish*. Professionally, she is truly in her prime - despite having had major surgery, a hysterectomy, last July.

'I was in a terrible state with ten fibroids, it was like I'd been walking around five months pregnant for a couple of years,' she remembers. 'The operation was an exercise in surrender, which is not characteristic of me, but I think

'Twas dangerously ill, sitting in the dark, crying, wanting to die, unable to stop myself eating'

the things you find hardest are the things you learn most from in the end. Immediately afterwards Miquita said: "Come here, Mummy", and I went to stay with her, and she made me healing teas from a hanging herb garden on her balcony. Then my cousin moved in for two months as I couldn't drive. I felt very loved. These are the circumstances where you find out a lot about the people around you.'

Recovery was supposed to take six months. Andi gave herself six weeks, her only concession was a little room with a bed, duvet and fridge, created for her on the set of the *Great British Menu* in case she needed to retreat from filming for an hour or two.

It sounds tough, but Andi is a great believer in the old adage that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. She traces it back to her ☺

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childhood in the Suffolk market town of Bury St Edmunds where she was the only black girl in her school. 'It was pretty hellish but the Seventies were a long time ago,' she says. 'I believe the horror taught me empathy. I learned to not be a bully or a bigot. I step in today when I see someone vulnerable because no one stepped in for me back then.'

At the time, she kept her distress from her parents. They were coping with the sickle cell anaemia suffered by her brother Sean, who later died of the disease when he was just 27. She was fractured by his loss and developed a compulsive eating disorder that saw her enter residential care for three months when she was 30.

'I was dangerously ill, sitting in the dark, crying, wanting to die, not being able to stop myself eating,' she recalls. 'I was in a scary place for quite some time.' She talks about it openly today because, she says, 'So much shame goes hand in hand with an eating disorder, with addiction of any kind. It's very lonely because you don't know how to talk to anybody. I didn't know I had an eating disorder, I just thought I was disgusting. Whenever I talk about it now I am still inundated with people saying, "I thought it was just me."'

She still considers herself to be in recovery and has weekly therapy when her work schedule permits. It sounds as though her extended trip to Antigua researching *The Pepperpot Diaries* had a therapeutic element too - certainly it sated a hunger and was nourishing in more than just the culinary sense. Andi's parents arrived in the UK from the Caribbean in their early twenties and she was born here, in touch with her island roots but not deeply familiar with them until her recent trip.

'It was so gladdening to feel connected to the island and my heritage in a strong, clear way,' she says. 'It was good to explore who I am as a black British woman of Antiguan heritage, and what that means to me as a cook.'

Andi's parents divorced when she was 15. She says her late father was 'a terrible dad though great in the kitchen, really flamboyant'. Her mother Maria is now 86 and lives with Andi and Garfield, 55. 'She is very independent, impressive, she has her **trainers and a little backpack and most days she's just gone,**' says Andi fondly.

They live in east London, 20 minutes from Miquita. They're mulling over a move to East Sussex when the cost-of-living squeeze stabilises and I wonder if she won't miss her daughter. 'I am nearly 60, she is nearly 40,



Close bond
With daughter
Miquita in the
Caribbean
for their BBC
documentary



On stage
and screen
Above: on the
set of *Great*
British Menu
and (above
right) with
Neneh Cherry
in the band
Rip Rig + Panic

we need to get a grip,' she guffaws. Andi and Garfield, a cultural curator, have been together since Miquita was 11 but have never married. Even the prospect of another great dress, a wedding dress, isn't enough to change Andi's mind - 'I can wear a great dress just on a Tuesday to go down the shops,' she points out. 'Garfield would like to get married. I, on the other hand, not so much.' So it's an open offer? 'I haven't checked. He may have rescinded it!'

So for now she's going to stick to shopping for more glasses, fans and everyday frocks, though she might grow her hair soon so she can have traditional Caribbean canerows. 'I love having a bald head but also sometimes it gets a bit boring - you look in the mirror and think, "Hmm. This. Again."'

Frankly though, there's nothing boring about Andi Oliver,

whose 60th year is set to be as well seasoned and just as celebratory as, well, a Caribbean pepperpot. @

Turn the page for some recipes from Andi's book *The Pepperpot Diaries*



'I love having a bald head but also sometimes it gets a bit boring'



TV chef **Andi Oliver** serves up an easy curry chicken and a coconut and lime cheesecake bursting with the flavours of Antigua

Caribbean dream



Curry chicken

Simple, delicious, and a family staple, curry chicken is familiar and comforting. I love a second-day pot of curry. If you make a big enough pot of this recipe it will see you through a couple of mid-week dinners.

Serves 6 - 8

YOU WILL NEED

- 8 chicken thighs and/or legs, skin on and bone in
- 3 tbsp green seasoning (See *tip for the recipe*. It makes about 500ml and can be stored in an airtight container in the fridge for 2-3 weeks)
- 3 garlic cloves, finely grated
- 1 Scotch bonnet or a chilli of your choice, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp ghee or rapeseed (canola) oil
- 1 large onion, diced
- 3 tbsp Caribbean curry powder
- 375ml chicken stock
- 2 tbsp chopped coriander (cilantro), to garnish

METHOD

- 1 Wash the chicken in a solution made with water and a splash of lemon juice or white vinegar. This step is entirely optional, but it is considered key in Caribbean culture. Pat the meat dry with paper towels.
- 2 Place the chicken in a large bowl and add the green seasoning, salt, and half the



For the green seasoning, combine in a food processor
 2 sprigs of thyme,
 10g fresh bay leaves,
 1 small bunch of flat-leaf parsley,
 1 small bunch of coriander,
 4 spring onions,
 10 garlic cloves, peeled,
 1 green chilli, mixed mini peppers (about 20g),
 ½ white onion,
 400ml cold pressed rapeseed oil, salt and freshly ground black pepper

garlic and chilli. Mix with your hands so the chicken is well coated. Marinate overnight in the fridge or for a minimum 30 minutes.

- 3 When you are ready to cook, set a large saucepan over a medium-high heat and add the ghee or oil. Sear the marinated chicken pieces until browned on all sides, then remove them from the pan to a plate and set aside.
- 4 Lower the heat to medium-low, then add the onion and remaining garlic and chilli. Saute for 5 minutes until slightly softened. Add the curry powder and a splash of water - enough to form a paste. Gently cook for 2 minutes, being careful not to burn the spices.
- 5 Add the chicken back into the pan and stir, ensuring it is coated in the curry paste. Increase the heat to medium-high, add stock, cover and simmer for about 1 hour until the chicken is cooked and tender.
- 6 Serve immediately, garnished with chopped coriander, alongside rice or bread of your choice.

Coconut & lime cheesecake

The first sweet things I ever made were cheesecakes - they provide endless opportunities to explore flavour and are easy-peasy! This particular iteration brings together the creaminess of white chocolate with toasty coconut and vibrant lime to sublime effect. Not too sweet, just right.

Serves 12

YOU WILL NEED

- 100g ginger nut biscuits
- 100g oat biscuits, such as Hobnobs
- 50g desiccated coconut, toasted
- 120g melted unsalted butter
- pinch of salt

For the filling

- 280g full-fat cream cheese
- 4 tbsp coconut condensed milk
- 200ml coconut milk
- 150ml double cream
- grated zest and juice of 2 limes
- 100g white chocolate, melted

For the topping

- 1 fresh coconut
- 1 tbsp maple syrup



- grated zest of 1 lime
- 1 fresh mango, peeled, cored, and diced

METHOD

- Put all the biscuits in a sealable food bag and bash to fine crumbs using a rolling pin. Tip the crumbs into a bowl and mix with the toasted coconut, melted butter, and salt. Press into the bottom and sides of a 22-24cm (8-9in) fluted tart tin, base lined with baking parchment, and chill in the fridge for 1 hour or until set.
- Combine all the filling ingredients, apart from the chocolate, in a large mixing bowl. Beat using an electric hand whisk until smooth and slightly thickened.
- Mix through the melted white chocolate. Spoon the filling on top of the set base and chill for a couple of hours in the fridge until set (this cheesecake has quite a soft-set finish).
- Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C/400°F/gas 6.
- Crack open the fresh coconut and peel off flakes of the flesh using a vegetable peeler. You want about 2 handfuls in total. Toss the flakes in the maple syrup and half of the lime zest on a baking tray, then toast in the pre-heated oven for around 10 minutes until crisp. Leave to cool, then top the cheesecake with the toasted coconut.
- Mix together the mango and remaining lime zest and serve a little spoon of this alongside slices of cheesecake, or pile it on top of the cheesecake as well. ®

Recipes from The Pepperpot Diaries: Stories from my Caribbean table by Andi Oliver (DK, £27), out on 27 April



No time to bake a Victoria sponge for the Coronation? We see which supermarket versions are fit for a royal spread

Our reviewers Mother and daughter team Diana Redfern and Emma Gill



Morrisons The Best Hand Decorated Victoria Sponge 365g, £2.89

Good colour, great jam flavour and a firm sponge. Not only did this well-balanced cake look good but it also tasted delicious. A perfect example of what a Victoria sponge should be - and at a brilliant price too. **Rating: 9/10**

Tesco Finest Victoria Sponge Cake 365g, £3

A lovely looking cake with a substantial, rich, sweet filling. The sponge had a pleasant colour but was a little on the heavy side - more of a 'cake' than a 'sponge' - but overall, it tasted good. **Rating: 7/10**

Co-op Victoria Sponge 224g, £1.75

A small, shallow cake with a pale, fluffy, dry sponge. The filling was a little thin and did not deliver a great deal of flavour. **Rating: 5/10**

Waitrose Victoria Sandwich 350g, £3.65

Although the sponge looked appealing and had a relatively firm texture, it did not really deliver on flavour and was a little dry. The jam was good, but it was let down by the buttercream filling, which tasted a little 'synthetic'. **Rating: 6/10**

M&S Victoria Sponge Cake 460g, £3.70

The most attractive of all the cakes - with a 'homemade' appearance. The delicious, moist sponge had a lovely texture and was complemented beautifully by a well-balanced filling. Yummy! **Rating: 9/10**

M&S Plant Kitchen Victoria Sponge Cake 435g, £3.90

As a vegan alternative, this was very appetising and delivered a pleasant overall taste. Although the sponge was a little heavy, the tangy jam and creamy filling combined well to produce a satisfying, tasty cake. **Rating: 7/10** ®

Sip for aking

Raising a glass to Charles III? These wonderful wines all have the perfect royal pedigree



by JOE FATTORINI

The son of wine-growing parents and the nephew of a vine-growing pioneer, our new King drives a car powered by biofuel from excess English wine production. His wife, Queen Camilla, is the daughter of a wine merchant, granddaughter of a wine writer and is president of the trade body for the English and Welsh wine industry.

So I don't think I'm wrong in saying that this is the most wine-interconnected Coronation in history. Now we just have to decide what to drink on the day. Why not start with Windsor? The late Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were winegrowers, having re-established a vineyard in Windsor Great Park in 2011 after an 850-year gap. A glass of **Windsor Great Park Sparkling White** would start the festivities nicely (12%, around £40, The English Vine, The English Wine Collection, Laithwaites). It's a top-tier English fizz, with brioche richness and a fresh, citrus zip.

You'll have to go a bit further back in royal history for my next choice. The Windsor Great Park vineyard was first established in the 12th century by Henry II, who acquired Bordeaux when he married Eleanor of Aquitaine. They toasted their wedding with wines from what is today Chateau d'Issan. So celebrate like a medieval monarch with a bottle of **Chateau d'Issan 2014** (13%, £54, The Wine Society), with its layers of poised blackcurrant and plum fruit.

Henry's 7th-great-grandson George, Duke of Clarence, was apparently drowned in 'a butt of Malmsey' (Madeira wine). If you want to honour the story, try **Blandy's Duke of Clarence Rich Madeira** (19%, £12.99, various supermarkets), which will honour your Coronation cheeseboard too. In fact, there are few better cheese wines. In an unusual piece of wine advice, don't swim in it.

King Charles's aunt, Princess Margaret, grew wall-trained grapes in her Kensington Palace garden that went into some of the earliest English wines. The King's Aston Martin is even converted to run on biofuel, made mostly from the excess production of wine grapes. And he gave the first royal warrant to an English wine, the amazing Camel Valley Brut (12.5%, £32.99, Waitrose).



**Royal reds
Princess
Margaret
grew grapes
that went
into early
English wines**

According to John Betjeman, Queen Camilla's grandfather P Morton Shand 'led the way to my own generation in the appreciation of good wine'. Shand wrote three wine books, although in one he said, 'it is arguable whether sparkling wine is really wine at all', so I'm not sure what he would have made of all these royal sparkling wines.

But he did think South Africa had a great future. And he was right. So, grab a bottle of **Co-op Fairtrade Irresistible Sauvignon Blanc** (12%, £6.85) for the best value white on the high street today - and say cheers to Charles III. *





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'There's a whole genre of perfectly serviceable new laptops from reputable manufacturers for under £350'

THIS MONTH I'VE BEEN TRYING...

my pick

If you have an appliance or a light you want to turn on or off from your smartphone, try this great-value plug. The TP-Link Tapo P110 (£9.99, Argos) is a Wi-Fi-connected, smart 13-amp that handles appliances of up to 3Kw.



Lap it up

New laptops can cost more than £1,000, but if you don't need all the bells and whistles, here are some great budget options

by JONATHAN MARGOLIS

My daughter had her expensive Apple MacBook die on her recently. Discovering the cheapest new replacement was £1,000 and that some high-end Windows laptops cost the same or more, she considered her options with a heavy heart.

To her surprise, she found a brand-new Lenovo Windows laptop in John Lewis, with a two-year guarantee, for just £150. Months later, she is still pleased, if not delighted, with it.

At a time when prices of gadgetry are rising, there's a whole genre of perfectly serviceable new laptops from reputable manufacturers for between £150 or less and £350.

Ellie's Lenovo, she says, is a little slow, the screen and the sound are not top-notch, and if you like to run dozens of applications at the same time, it will struggle. Yet the reality is that expensive laptops are far more powerful than most of us need. For writing, web browsing, video calls and emailing, a cheap laptop is fine.

Furthermore, if you lose it, have it stolen or spill coffee all over it, it's less of a disaster.

Top buys
Below from
left: Asus
Vivobook
X415; Acer
Chromebook
Spin 311

Choosing a budget PC can be confusing as there are so many, and the names, model numbers and prices change all the time. One solution is to search on Amazon for 'netbooks', a description used by some for budget computers.

They come in two types: machines with their own reasonably big hard drive, like Ellie's, and Chromebooks, which have a tiny storage capacity, so your data is stored on remote servers. Chromebooks are fine but do require an internet connection most of the time.

Ellie's new PC is Lenovo's IdeaPad li - and at the time of writing, was £199 from Currys. A Chromebook model, the IdeaPad 3i, was still available in this always volatile market for £149.

Even cheaper, Toshiba's Satellite Pro Dynabook (£134.99, Amazon) is 'ruggedised for education', meaning toughened up for use in schools (and handy for those a bit cavalier with tech).

For £299.99 (John Lewis), you can buy Acer's Spin 311 Chromebook, with a screen that swivels 360 degrees so you can use the machine as a tablet.

Fellow Taiwanese brand Asus is also big in budget PCs. Its Vivobook X415 (£329.99, John Lewis) is sleek-looking with a large 14-inch screen, making it arguably the best value of our selection. *



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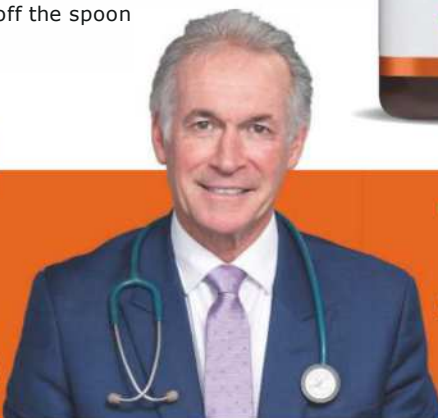
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Generation games

by MARK PALMER

Our columnist wants his family to appreciate handwritten letters - but it's hard to make a point when you're guilty of double standards

We all know that letter writing has gone out of fashion. The recent 15% increase in the price of a first-class stamp to £1.10 didn't exactly help the cause. I feel for our postman, who now mainly delivers pizza flyers and notes from local estate agents that normally begin with 'Dear Occupier' and go on to say how there has been a sudden interest in our street from potential buyers - even though the house opposite has been on the market for 18 months.

Handwritten letters nowadays only tend to be sent when someone dies, and on those sad occasions they clearly bring some comfort. What comes through is that the person writing the letter has made an effort: paper, envelope, pen or Biro, stamp, finding a post box.

I've tried discussing the importance of letter writing with my children. They get the argument but do nothing about it. I remind them letters are historical documents that shed



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

light on the past. A case in point is a collection of letters my mother's boyfriend, Bill Birch Reynardson, wrote to her between 1943 and 1948.

During that time, she wrote to Bill almost once a week but all her correspondence to him on the Front was burnt when his tank caught fire during a period of German bombing. In return, she received 242 letters. A great number of those made it into print four years ago in a book called *Letters To Lorna*. They are not laden with salacious gossip or laced with sexual intrigue and may not have great literary merit. Yet they do possess a fascination all of their own.

But here's the rub: I'm not a great letter writer myself. Never have been. The will is there but there's a more fundamental problem: my handwriting is appalling. So awful, in fact, I'm embarrassed by my scrawl, even more so on reading a letter in *The Daily Telegraph* saying that 'everyone's handwriting is an expression of their emotions, making it as unique to the person as their fingerprints'.

Presumably, that's why autographs are so prized - another thing the young don't bother with any more. Stumble across a celebrity and the impulse is to ask for a selfie, not a signature.

Growing up in the 1960s, my local football team was Reading and after every home match I used to stand outside the players' entrance in the hope of securing an autograph. On one occasion, shortly after England had won the 1966 World Cup, my prep school arranged for some of us to watch Arsenal play Leicester City at the Gunners' old Highbury ground. The great Gordon Banks was in goal for Leicester and I got his autograph just before he boarded the team bus. Today it's framed and hangs on a wall.

Banks had nice handwriting. But nothing like as beautiful as that of the late Diana, Princess of Wales. Yes, her grammar might have been a little suspect but her handwriting had such elegance, such class.

Come to think of it, my daughter Olivia, who, like Diana, was never a candidate to appear on *University Challenge* (although she's a fantastic primary school teacher), also has good handwriting. Certainly, it puts mine to shame. Which is why when writing to Olivia on special occasions - such as her engagement, marriage, birth of a child - I always start by apologising for my letter being typed rather than written by hand.

So, there we have it. That's another double standard on my part, another reminder that members of the older generation are good at pontificating but not always so good at being true to their word. ®



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health & wellbeing

YOUR QUESTIONS/ THE POWER OF TOUCH/ KNEES



illustration
MICHAL BEDNARSKI



Ask Dr Mark

Our expert advises on identifying medication, coeliac disease and strength-improving exercises

Q My husband and I take ten different types of medication a day between us, and we have no idea what some are supposed to do. Judging by our friends and neighbours, I suspect we are not alone in this. Would our local pharmacist be able to explain what they are all for?

O' My heart sank when I read your email as this complaint is all too familiar. And it shouldn't be. One in ten people over the age of 65 in the UK now takes at least eight different medicines every day, rising to one in four in those over 85 and many of them, like you, have no idea what all their pills are for.

In an ideal world, everyone should have both the benefits and the risks (side effects) of

'One in ten people over the age of 65 takes at least eight different medicines'

any new medication explained to them before they start taking it. However, this is often rushed in busy GP surgeries and hospital outpatient clinics, meaning that too many people end up on treatments they don't fully understand.

You could ask your local pharmacist to run through your repeat medication list but he or she may not have all the information they need to know exactly why you are on every pill as some types are used to treat more than one condition.

I would raise your concerns at your next annual medication review with your GP, or clinical pharmacist if your practice has one. If you have never had an annual review, then please do book one.

If you are offered any new medication in the future, consider using the questions below to guide the discussion. The acronym **BRAN** will help you remember them:

- **What are the BENEFITS?** Why does the doctor want to start the new pill and how should it help me out?
- **What about RISKS?** The majority of medicines are generally well tolerated and most people won't know they are on them, but ask about side effects so you know what to look out for.



What are the ALTERNATIVES? For instance, is there anything you can do to help yourself, such as diet or lifestyle changes?

• **And what if we do NOTHING?** Is the treatment really needed? Do I need to start it now? Can I think about it for a while?

Q Can older people get coeliac disease? Over the past few months I've noticed that eating bread, pasta or cake seems to upset my stomach. I become bloated and need to go to the loo more often for a few days afterwards. I wondered whether it might be triggered by gluten, but a friend who has had coeliac disease most of her life says the condition develops in childhood, not when you are 72 like me. Is she right?

O'U. Coeliac disease is an autoimmune condition triggered by exposure to gluten - a protein in wheat, barley and rye - resulting in inflammation of the bowel (and sometimes also the skin), leading to poor absorption of nutrients and symptoms such as bloating and pain as well as loose bowels/diarrhoea.

It affects around one in 100 people in the UK and can develop at any age, so I am afraid your friend is wrong. Indeed, around a third of new cases are picked up in middle age and beyond, either because the diagnosis was missed or because the condition starts later in life.

Older people with coeliac disease tend to have fewer bowel symptoms than the young, and the diagnosis in someone your age often results from malabsorption causing nutritional deficiencies (such as vitamin B12, iron and folate) that cause anaemia detected on a blood test.

I can't say whether your symptoms are due to coeliac disease but you must report them to your own GP, please. Any prolonged change in bowel habit warrants investigation and this will typically include tests to look for, among other things, both anaemia and coeliac disease.

For more detailed information on coeliac disease, and how it is diagnosed and treated, visit coeliac.org.uk.

Ask DrMark

Email drmark@saga.co.uk or write to Dr Mark at the address on page 5. He can't reply individually, but will respond to questions on this page*

*Always talk to your own GP

O I attended a lecture you gave on a recent Saga cruise where you mentioned, in passing, that people start losing muscle as early as their thirties, and that exercise is essential to maintain strength as we get older. What sort of exercises do you recommend?

O'U. Given the feedback I received, I think I need to dedicate a whole lecture to this subject next time. It seems to have piqued a lot of people's interest. A typical person will lose as much as 5% of their muscle bulk every decade from their thirties onwards, increasing to closer to 10% per decade after the age of 60 - that's the equivalent of 2-3kg (4-7lbs) of muscle for an average-sized person. The only way to slow or reverse this is to do lots of strength-improving exercises, such as body weight-based programmes involving squats, lunges and press ups, and/or dumbbell and resistance band training.

The aim isn't to get 'big guns' or a 'six-pack' but simply to slow the ravages of time, and I am sorry to report that the older you are, the harder you have to train just to maintain what you have.

Some of my older patients baulk at the suggestion they have lost muscle, pointing to the fact they are the same weight now as they were in their thirties. This is a common trap. You may be the same weight but you will still have lost muscle (unless you do a lot of exercise). It has just been replaced by fat. Strength training can be hard work but the rewards are myriad and range from better posture, mobility and balance to fewer falls, strokes and heart attacks (sensible, regular strength training is good for your circulation and heart too).

Some gyms and health centres run special classes for older people. However, if you don't have access to local services like these you could consider paying for a one-off session with a private physio or personal trainer. Ask them to suggest a basic programme you can do at home without lots of specialist equipment and which is tailored to your needs and fitness level. Budget £40-£75 for the session, depending on who you consult and where you live.*

Step change

If you find the infamous 10,000-steps-a-day target too difficult to meet, take heart from research among US adults aged over 70 showing that health benefits begin at 3,000 steps - and that every 500 extra you can manage (about a quarter of a mile) reduces the chance of heart disease and stroke by 14%. Furthermore, those who do 4,500 steps a day have a 77% lower risk than those who walk fewer than 2,000. Rachel Carlyle



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Hug it out

A cuddle seems to cure everything - and now science backs up your granny's wisdom. Benefits range from fighting colds to reducing blood pressure. Haven't got anyone to hug? We explore ways to keep in touch

by RUTH TIERNEY

If you regularly hug your friends, cuddle your partner and kiss the cheeks of your grandchildren, you're one of the lucky few. More and more of us feel starved of daily physical affection. A global research project called The Touch Test involving 40,000 participants in 112 countries revealed that 54% of people felt they were getting too little touch. And that was in early 2020, before the pandemic made social isolation even more acute.

These stark figures were the reason why Professor Michael Banissy, lead researcher for The Touch Test, decided to write a book on the subject, *When We Touch* (Orion). He's the first to point out that people's need for touch is nuanced: some of us are natural huggers and some of us flinch at the prospect. Yet the sheer number of people in the study craving more contact - and the effect of this 'touch hunger' on physical and mental health - were problems he felt needed addressing.

Touch deprivation can hit older adults particularly hard. A study by Age UK found that half a million older people in the UK go at least five days a week without physical contact. 'Key transitions as we age lead to less touch, from ill health to retirement, which suddenly cuts off one of life's major sources of social contact,' says Professor Banissy, a psychologist at Goldsmiths, University of London. 'Then there's bereavement, especially of a partner. You miss the day-to-day affection, particularly if you've slept next to that person for years. The comforting hug at the end of each day has far-reaching benefits, not least giving you better-quality sleep.'

The effect of sensory experience on physical



illustration
JESS
HIBBERT

health is irrefutable. In 2021, daily hugging was found to be a predictor of lower levels of chronic inflammation markers by researchers at Sam Houston State University and the University of Arizona. Inflammation can contribute to everything from cardiovascular disease to cancer. In another US study, women who received more frequent hugs from partners were found to have lower blood pressure. More startling still was the experiment carried out by Carnegie Mellon University in 2015, where subjects recorded the number of hugs they received for 14 days before researchers quarantined them and exposed them to a cold virus. Those who'd had more hugs had more 'efficient nasal clearance' - in other words, their cold symptoms cleared up sooner.

It's not just cuddles that get results. Researchers from the University of Colorado, Denver, found that six 30-minute massages performed by licensed therapists on cancer patients reduced pain and improved mood. Why? The stress hormone cortisol falls following a massage, as does heart rate and blood pressure.

'Caring touch comes in many forms,' says Professor Banissy. 'Even simply laying a hand on another person can convey comforting emotions, while handholding can lower pain responses.' Indeed, a study by the University of South Korea found that patients whose hands were held by a researcher before a cataract operation had less self-reported anxiety.

The reasons behind the health-giving

properties of touch are two-fold. When we're touched, the 'happiness hormone' oxytocin is released. This supports the parasympathetic nervous system, which is active during times of rest, and calms our body. Levels of feelgood hormones dopamine and serotonin also soar, and there is a fall in the stress hormone cortisol. But that's not the whole story, explains Professor Banissy. 'In addition to the physical aspect of touch, there is the emotional meaning behind it. When that touch matches your desires, it conveys social support, that you have people looking out for you. Even touch in a medical setting implies that people care about you and want the best outcome.'

Optimal touch, known by scientists as affective touch, is a gentle skin stroking performed at a velocity of approximately 3cm per second. It activates nerve fibres in the skin called CT-fibers, which are most abundant in hair-covered skin. This kind of touch has been related to the release of the calming hormone oxytocin. 'It's done at the kind of speed at which you might stroke a baby, and appears to be intuitive in many

people,' says Professor Banissy. 'We show preferences for this kind of slow touch into the ninth decade of life, even when other aspects of tactile sensitivity decline.'

It's all very well extolling the virtues of a hug, but what if you live alone and hugs are hard to come by? There are ways to get the benefits of a cuddle without actually having one, says Professor Banissy. See his tips below. *

'When touch matches your desires, it conveys social support, that you have people looking out for you'

HEALING TOUCH

Lost contact? Here are eight easy ways to feel the benefits of hugging

* **Try self-hugging by criss-crossing your arms over your chest and squeezing your shoulder and waist. Researchers from Goethe University found a 20-second self-hug reduced levels of stress hormone cortisol.**

* **Stroke a pet as research shows people have reduced blood pressure and stress while doing so. Just ten minutes lowers cortisol.**

* **Have a tactile treatment like a massage, manicure or haircut.**

Massage has been shown to aid sleep, reduce pain and improve mental health.

* **Learn to dance - it can provide a social connection and a chance to experience shared touch as many dances involve human contact.**


* **Explore the feel of textures whether it's fabric, a warm stone, or an object that has meaning for you. By focusing on the feel, we are more mindful of our bodies - a technique often used in mindfulness meditation.**

* **Take a hot bath or go swimming as the sensations are a good way to get in touch with your skin, our largest sensory organ.**

* **Knead bread or model clay to get the tactile gratification and restorative power of working with natural materials. These have a long history of self-reported wellbeing benefits.**

* **Cuddle a cushion as it may spark a sensory cue to trigger previous states of feeling loved and secure.**

Weak at the knees



With waiting times for replacement surgery at an all-time high, can anything be done to stop joint pain dominating your life?

by KAREN EVENNETT

It may not be a killer, but having dodgy knees is no fun at all. And, unless you're extremely lucky, you can forget the NHS promise of a new knee in 18 weeks. Current waits vary hugely, but you could be languishing on a list for 26 weeks in Tunbridge Wells, 55 weeks in Yeovil, and five or six years in parts of Wales and Northern Ireland, according to the research charity Versus Arthritis.

'Covid hasn't helped, of course, nor have the ongoing problems with staff shortages across the NHS,' says Mr Andrew Pearse, a consultant orthopaedic surgeon in Worcestershire.

Private health insurance could shrink your wait to three or four weeks if you have it. But what if you don't? Few of us have pockets deep enough to find the £10,000 to £20,000 needed to pay for surgery. And even if you have funds there's the question of whether you really want an artificial knee. Most are not designed to bend as far as natural knees, and people typically report that their artificial joints feel only about 75% 'normal', says Versus Arthritis.

Surgery tends to be less effective in the early stages of osteoarthritis than later on, when the joint deterioration is so advanced that your knee hurts even when you're resting. 'Think of a knee replacement as the ultimate in pain relief, the last resort,' says Mr Pearse. 'It's important to explore all your other options first.'

So whether you're waiting for a new knee, or assessing if the operation is for you, what can you do in the meantime to minimise pain and maximise function?

Somewhat counterintuitively, taking regular exercise helps rather than hinders - as long as it doesn't aggravate pain or swelling. One US study last year of over-50s with knee osteoarthritis found that those who walked for exercise were 40% less likely to have new episodes of frequent pain, and it seemed to slow damage within the joint, too.

'Sticking to a healthy weight will prevent you from putting too much pressure on your joints - and any weight-loss programme should include regular low-impact exercise. Swimming and cycling are ideal,' says Mr Pearse. 'You'll be strengthening the supporting muscles around your knees, reducing the

Keep on moving

To strengthen your knees, it helps to work the Vastus Medialis Oblique thigh muscle, which stabilises the kneecap. Google VMO exercises for examples, which include straight leg raises (visit [southtees.nhs.uk/resources/straight-leg-raise/](https://www.southtees.nhs.uk/resources/straight-leg-raise/)) 'See how many you can do, then drop to 75 per cent,' says Anj Periyasamy.

'If you can manage ten, do seven in two sets. For example, seven squats followed by a short rest, then a second set of seven. Work up to three sets of seven. Then sets of 10 or 15. If you can't yet manage a sitting squat, start by standing from sitting - rising from your chair unaided in sets.'

Versus Arthritis's *Let's Move for Surgery* ([versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/lets-move-for-surgery-toolkit](https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/lets-move-for-surgery-toolkit))

also offers useful exercise videos.



'Think of a knee replacement as the ultimate in pain relief, the last resort. Explore all other options first'

risk of stiffness, and boosting the range of movement in the joints.

'As pain increases with progression of the disease, physiotherapy and simple painkillers can be introduced. But, as your joint deteriorates further, don't be surprised if your pain becomes less responsive to the drugs that once helped.'

The so-called 'analgesic ladder' - having

to take stronger painkillers to achieve the same effect - is a problem, but there are other therapies you can try, albeit with no guarantees. Judith Wood, 77, a retired nurse from Halstead, Essex, was waiting for a knee replacement and wondered if there was an alternative to her two daily ibuprofen tablets. 'I'd heard that frankincense could bring down the swelling of osteoarthritis and I found it in a

cream called Actimas B&C Joint Rub,' she says. 'At the point I started using it, I would have struggled to walk to the end of my road, but within weeks I could go about a mile without too much pain.'

Although loved by many, the cream is not available on prescription, although some GPs now recommend it based on anecdotal evidence from their patients.

Not so long ago, glucosamine and chondroitin supplements were frequently recommended. But NICE (the National

C)

C, Institute for Health and Care Excellence) now actively tells GPs not to offer these. A newer supplement - the galactolipid GOPO (an extract of rosehip) - is gaining in popularity. Taken regularly, some studies have found it can rapidly reduce joint pain, stiffness and swelling, and reduce the need for standard painkillers. However, you will not yet find GOPO recommended by NICE.

Other pain-relieving options that may work include insoles (orthotics) for your shoes. The podiatrist-designed brand Vionic, for example, offers a range of styles with built-in orthotics. These support the inside of your foot and actively alter the pressure on your knees.

'Nothing will stop the deterioration of a joint, but what matters is that you are able to be active and get on with life'

'The evidence for footwear is so far quite weak,' says Dr Benjamin Ellis, a consultant rheumatologist and senior clinical advisor to Versus Arthritis. However, one type is about to be recommended by NICE for people with osteoarthritis who are eligible for knee surgery.

Developed in Israel, AposHealth devices look like trainers and are adapted by a physiotherapist to meet your unique needs and shift the load off painful joints. 'They also correct and retrain the way you walk for ongoing knee comfort,' says physiotherapist Anj Periyasamy, at Sprint Physiotherapy in London. 'In one study of 365 participants with end-stage osteoarthritis, 84% were able to postpone their knee replacement surgery for at least two years. The point of Apos - or any other therapy you try - is to ease your pain and postpone or even avoid the need for surgery. Nothing will stop the deterioration of a joint, but what matters is that you are able to be active and get on with life.'

If, despite all your efforts, pain becomes severe and the usual painkillers have been exhausted, steroid injections can be effective in the short term, says Mr Pearse. 'But they're usually not recommended in the months leading up to a planned joint replacement, and repeated injections can actually harm the remaining healthy cartilage. In fact, recent studies show that multiple steroid injections



Knee hits
Clockwise from top: Actimas B&C Joint Rub; GOPO; and Vionic Active Orthotic Insoles may offer relief

can shorten the time to knee replacement rather than prolong it, which is somewhat counter-productive. Other options include hyaluronic acid injections - but not all formulations are equally effective.'

One of the newest injectables to the UK market is Arthrosamid - a hydrogel injected into the joint capsule that acts as cushioning. 'It's being closely evaluated by surgeons, but in my limited experience seems very effective,' says Mr Pearse. 'Its composition - 97.5% water and 2.5% polyacrylamide - has the potential to add years of life to the patient's knee.'

Anecdotally, some European patients are still pain-free eight years on from Arthrosamid treatment, but it is currently only available privately in the UK. It's expensive (£2,000 to £3,000) and also requires preventive antibiotics to reduce the risk of infection in the joint. However, Dr Ellis is unconvinced of its value: 'There's no good evidence for it, and you may want to think twice before spending money on unproven treatments,' he says.

His own best advice? 'Exercise remains the best way to reduce pain and improve your joint function, but listen to your body and don't try to push on through any activity that causes too much pain. Just do what you can. Moving little and often is ideal.' ®

In my experience...

Harley Street physician Dr Jack Edmonds, 69, has tried all kinds of treatments for his painful knees
'Decades of high-impact sports like hockey, and a job that keeps me on my feet, have taken their toll on my knees. I don't like taking a lot of painkillers, and I'm also keen to avoid surgery.'



'I'd hoped injections with hyaluronic acid would help, but they were completely ineffective. As an alternative, a colleague suggested Arthrosamid hydrogel injections to cushion and protect the joints. There was enough science behind it to persuade me - and the procedure was quick and relatively painless.'

'Did it help my knees? Yes. But is it a cure for osteoarthritis? No. For the first nine months I could do all my usual sports without pain. But, probably because of my level of activity and the ongoing impact on my knees, I am now having to take painkillers again.'

'My verdict as a doctor and a patient is that it certainly buys a period of pain relief and functional improvement, so I would definitely rate it as superior to other available injections.'



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

O After leaving home, my siblings and I always met regularly at my parents' house. But since my widowed mother's death last year, I feel like the heart has gone out of my family. Neither myself nor my two siblings has a big enough house to host a celebration, and I feel like I always do the running when we meet up. Do I have to accept that, sadly, our bond died with our parents?

OJ Given that your mother was so central to the happiness of your family, it should be no surprise to find that her death has left a huge hole in your lives. You say, 'the heart has gone out of my family' and I think that's a lovely way of putting it.

What I struggle to understand is why this loss should destroy the bond you have with your siblings. Your deceased parents wouldn't have wanted you to fall out over anything, least of all a celebration of their lives.

It's a nice idea, but if none of your houses are big enough, don't squabble over it. Either book a neutral venue (a hotel, village hall or

'The bond between you and your siblings may have loosened with the death of your parents but I doubt that it's been destroyed'

community centre, say) or ditch the plan altogether. As for you taking on the lion's share of the work, it's often the case that one person does most of the organising; it shouldn't be blown up out of proportion.

The bond that existed between you and your siblings may have loosened following the death of your parents but I doubt that

G
Ask Alan

Email experts@saga.co.uk or write to Alan at the address on page 5. He can't reply individually, but will respond to questions on this page

it's been destroyed. It's there in your genes, in your memories of growing up together, your shared experiences and, most of all, because you share the privilege of being the most important part of your parents' lives.

You all celebrate them in your hearts and in your minds and that's a bond that can never be broken.

O I haven't had a proper holiday for three years, so I'd love to go away somewhere hot with my wife. However, she remains too fearful of Covid to travel. We live quite rurally so are not used to being around big groups, and she says she now finds it actively unrelaxing to be away from home comforts, too. Can I convince her? Is it unfair to try?

OJ I don't think your problem is unusual. It was fairly common even before the added complication of Covid. Often, it's the dilemma of where to go - whether to stay at home or jet off abroad, be near the beach or in the countryside, in a hotel or self-catering property.

Plenty of couples are content never to go away at all. It only becomes a problem when one wants to and the other doesn't, as in your situation. Can you convince her? Possibly. Is it unfair to try? Of course not.

From your letter, I gather that you had 'proper holidays' regularly prior to Covid, so I presume they were once enjoyable events for you both. Furthermore, the way I read it, your wife *thinks* that resuming your happy holidays will be 'unrelaxing'. It's a prediction not an experience.

Try to entice her to go somewhere hot that's not too far away. (A long flight is probably one of the things she dreads most.) Perhaps consider taking a grandchild if you have any. They're always useful props to help settle family disputes.

Have a crack at persuading her but don't push it too far. Your happiness at home for 50 weeks of the year is more important than a fortnight away. And if you can't convince her now, there's always next year. *

Old age, young love

by HUNTER DAVIES

Almost six months since first meeting his new lady friend, our columnist has made a nifty discovery about her past



There is something else that I have now discovered about Matilda. And yet it is almost six months since we first met by chance at the Medina bookshop in Cowes. I do hope they have put up a plaque. Oh God, I called her Matilda instead of Amanda. No, hold on, that's not her name either. What an eejit.

My memory is not going, honestly. I never forget what I was going to say and I can find my way to the bathroom without needing to leave chalk marks on the floor. Well, most nights. But I have this strange blockage about her name. She is Miranda, of course she is Miranda. How could I ever forget? I have never met another Miranda, or a Matilda, so I don't know why I get confused. I did have a trick when I first started calling her by her wrong name. Carmen Miranda, I'd say to myself. Remember her? An exotic dancer and singer in the Fifties, when I were a lad. But then I started calling her Carmen, so that didn't help.

Miranda, yes that is her name. She does not think it at all amusing when I can't remember it. Very rude and insulting, I know. But I am old - ten years older than her.

Anyway, when I was staying over recently at her bijou, ever-so-artistic house, I saw a framed cutting on a wall from a Norfolk newspaper (the county from which she hails). I could see a half-naked, stunning young woman in a boatyard sawing away. The headline said a local couple were off on a 'dream voyage to the Caribbean' in a trimaran they had built themselves.

What? Built it by yourselves? Of course. And did you go to the Caribbean? Of course. Not only did they sail the Atlantic, spending 27 days without seeing another soul, but they went on to spend four years in the Caribbean, sailing round, doing charter work to make money. Gosh, what fun. I mean, how exciting and exotic. Oh God,

'She can build walls, paths, do all odd jobs. Very handy now that opening an envelope often defeats me'

I felt inadequate. Until I was in my early twenties, I had not been further south than Penrith - and that seemed pretty exotic at

the time. The biggest culture shock in my life came when I was 22 and started my first job in life - in Manchester. I was terrified. The size, the people, the traffic, the funny accents. OK, my Carlisle accent did seem pretty funny to them.

But young Miranda not only visited almost every Caribbean island but went to the USA as well. I got her to dig out an album of pictures taken in the Caribbean. In most of them, she appears to be naked. I had to look away. I'm at an impressionable age.

So what happened? Did you fall out? Run out of money? Get seasick? No, she fell pregnant. They came back to the Isle of Wight and settled down. She went on to have two sons, now grown up. Both are involved in designing and building yachts.

I had noticed, during these wonderful past six months, that she is awfully handy. She can build walls, paths, drag massive piles of driftwood from the beach, do all odd jobs. Very handy now I'm at that stage in life when opening an envelope often defeats me. As for opening a tin of tuna, if I am on my own, I have to call the fire brigade.

Her favourite Caribbean island is Bequia, in the Grenadines. Guess what? That happens to be my fave as well. I first went there 30 years ago with my wife and have been back most years. Play your cards right, pet, and I'll take you to Bequia. After you've done a bit of gardening for me, fixed that broken bench, cut down that dead pear tree and used the wood to build me a little harbour. *



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! ! ! ! !



Did you lock the door?

From a few simple security measures to high-tech surveillance systems, protect what matters to you

Castle, bungalow, mansion or cabin-in-the-woods, there really is no place like home and that's all the more reason to secure your property against potential break-ins and other threats to its security. Whatever the disruption, the resulting expense, as well as the psychological impact of burglary, should not be underestimated.

So, what's your default position on home security? Military drone? Electric fence? Beware of the dog sign? There are simple measures you can take to keep your home secure. Joining a Neighbourhood Watch group will help to strengthen your local community and guard against criminal activity. And, if

you're going away, make sure you cancel deliveries beforehand and talk to your friends and neighbours about keeping an eye on things for you.

Remember to stay vigilant, and never open your door to anyone you don't know without asking to see their official identity card. Don't leave keys or valuables in view of the windows or in your hallway - you can fit a letterbox cover if you don't already have one, so people can't see inside.

Now, you may not want to turn your house into an impregnable fortress but equally we all know that operating an open-door policy is not recommended. Luckily, there is a whole range of smart home

security devices to help deter thieves and prevent break-ins. Home security solutions are getting more sophisticated and can be discreetly placed so as not to spoil the approach to your property. It may sound a little excessive but a combination of intruder alarms, cameras, motion sensors, locks, signs and lighting can be most effective.

For tech-savvy types, fitting security cameras will help you to check for suspicious activity in and around your home and garden with the added benefit of video evidence of an intrusion at your fingertips should you need to produce it. Some DIY security systems require you to pay a monthly subscription service though, so check before you buy.

Installing a video intercom or smart doorbell can give you a live feed of visitors to your door, so you can screen for cold callers.

Or you could easily add a digital door lock to your multipoint locking system and open the door using your smartphone, a number pad, fob, key or fingerprint, so there's not much danger of getting stranded on the doorstep any time

soon. As well as protecting you from unwanted visitors or suspect vehicles, home surveillance systems let you monitor and control devices remotely. You can set lights to come on while you are away or turn off appliances when you're in another room.

You can also get your home system to track and control energy use or adjust the room temperature for comfort. Most importantly, your home security device can act as an early warning system for increases in heat, smoke fumes or carbon monoxide leaks or to alert services in a medical emergency.

The good news is that national statistics for theft decreased by more than 20 per cent between March 2020 and June 2022. This was largely due to lockdown as more people stayed at home for longer periods of time, deterring opportunistic thieves. However, since criminal activity tends to adapt to circumstances, we've seen a rise in scams particularly as the cost-of-living crisis takes hold. Criminals are using even more sophisticated techniques to gain entry to your home, or access to your personal details in order to commit fraud or identity theft.

The best way to protect your identity from potential thieves is

not to leave any bills or bank statements or any other official documents in your recycling bin. Invest in a paper shredder or tear them up to add to your home compost.

Also, make sure you put any passports and log-in details in a safe place and always keep your pin in a

separate place to your credit cards.

In the unfortunate event of a break-in at your home, Saga Home Insurance offers extra support and reassurance where you need it most. Our policies cover theft from the home for both property damage and stolen items up to the sum insured, including bicycles.

Saga's cover also includes theft from outbuildings and lock replacement. Check your documents to make sure that you have the right cover level in place.

As well as physical losses, theft can have a negative effect on family life, leaving your loved ones feeling vulnerable. If the worst should happen, our buildings and contents insurance policies come with trauma cover of up to £1,000 to cover professional counselling fees to help you get back on track following an invasion of your privacy.

Still, with any luck, taking these few preventative steps will leave you safe as houses. 0

'What's your default on home security? Military drone? Electric fence? Beware of the dog sign?'

DETECTING THE OPPORTUNIST

Home security doesn't have to be complicated. Here are five simple measures you can take to help you feel safer in your home.

0 Fit good-quality locks to all your doors and windows. Door chains and viewers mean you can check the identity of callers.

0 Keep doors and windows locked when not in use. This is especially important when you go out.

0 Leave a light on if you go out in the evening. You should also fit motion sensor lights around your property to help deter thieves.

C, Secure your garage, shed and other outbuildings when you are not using them. Lock away garden equipment and tools, especially ladders.

0 Discreetly dispose of the boxes for any expensive items you may have bought. This will ensure you don't draw attention to your valuables.

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PAUL LEWIS / MONEY NEWS



Paul Lewis

It may not be British to complain, but if you receive substandard goods, then complain is exactly what you should do. While it may seem tricky, the process is simple - and it really can pay off



by PAUL LEWIS

This month's piece was nearly called 'crossing the treacle field' because that is often how it feels when we try to complain. What is the email address? Where is the phone number? And when we find it, why does no one answer or reply? And if they do, why can't they solve our problem?

This month I reveal how to build a bridge over that treacle field and get your complaint acted on. But first, a very brief guide to the conventional way to complain.

In writing

If you have had a letter or email from the firm, that may give you the complaints procedure. Alternatively, you can Google the name of the firm along with the word 'complaint' - it may be quicker than weaving your way around an impenetrable website.

Always complain in writing, preferably by email, although a letter will do. If you do call, or the firm calls you, keep a note of the date and time and what is said, and at the end ask them to put it in writing. All calls will be recorded by the firm and you have a right to a copy. When you have found the right channel, be polite, C)

clear and concise. If you are asserting your rights, it helps if you know the law or rule you are relying on. For example, if an item is not what you ordered or breaks quickly - or fails to do what it should - you have a right to a full refund under the Consumer Rights Act 2015.

There is an excellent guide to your rights on the website thecomplainingcow.co.uk. You can also get help to pursue your complaint at a free website called resolver.co.uk. And there is useful information at citizensadvice.org.uk.

Goto the top

Those conventional routes can be annoying, frustrating and time-consuming - by design, I sometimes think - and often do not produce a result. So my alternative is to go straight to the top. There is an excellent website called ceoemail.com, which is free and lists the address, email and phone numbers for the bosses of just about every firm in the UK. Sometimes they can be a little out of date but you can check them at gov.uk and search 'companies house'. That lists every company and its current directors and their details. Never pay another firm for this information as it is free on the official site.

Prepare your complaint and put it in writing to the boss. Give them 14 days to reply. They may not read your email personally but sending it to them should ensure it is fast-tracked and taken seriously. Depending on what your complaint is, this might be enough to get a result.

Another technique is to use the social media site Twitter. If you do not have a Twitter account, it is quick and easy to set up one at twitter.com. My account is [@paullewismoney](https://twitter.com/paullewismoney). Most firms will have an account, so make your complaint public on there by using its Twitter name, which begins with @, to make sure they read it. On Twitter you have to keep it very brief - only 280 characters per tweet are allowed - so it is a good exercise in precis. The firm may respond by inviting you to Direct Message (DM) them. Better to keep the complaint public and only use DMs for personal or account details.

If neither of these techniques work, then consider a court claim. Don't worry, the chances of your case actually going to court are negligible. If a firm owes you money - for a refund or compensation for a delayed flight, say - the court is there to recover it for you.

We used to call it the 'small claims



Be firm

If you're owed money by a firm, remember it's your money, so make sure you don't let them keep it - complain.

court' but in England and Wales, these claims are handled centrally through the Courts & Tribunals Service website moneyclaim.gov.uk. In Scotland, it is called the Simple Procedure, which you can search at scotcourts.gov.uk. For Northern Ireland, go to nidirect.gov.uk and search the site for 'small claims process'.

Fill in the online form. It will ask for your name and address, the firm's address (get that from correspondence, its website or Companies House) and details of your claim. Be clear and succinct when you explain your reasons for the claim, which should include extra for your costs and expenses. At some point you will come to a page where you are asked to pay. Do not pay and do not proceed with the claim. Instead, take a screenshot of that page (Google that if you don't know how). Remember to save your claim, which you can then return to later if needed.

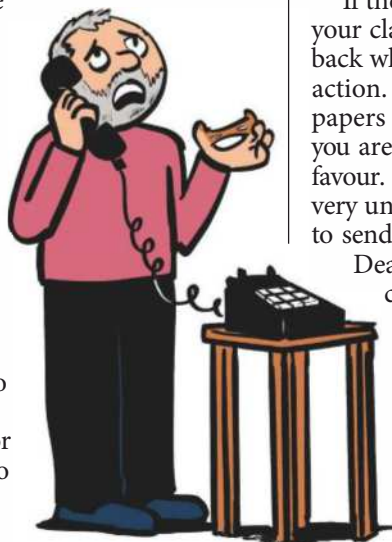
'Be clear and succinct when you explain your reasons for the claim, which should include extra for your costs and expenses'

Write an email to the boss explaining what you want and say if you don't get it you will go to court. Now the masterstroke: attach the screenshot of your court claim to the email. That proves your threat is not an empty one. Not only do you know how to do it but you are already halfway through the process. Give them 14 days to respond. In almost every case I have come across, the money is paid to the claimant within a few days.

If the firm does not pay up then go back to your claim, pay the fee (which the firm will pay back when you win) and proceed with the action. Always respond swiftly to any court papers you are sent. If you are suing for money you are owed, the court will find in your favour. If the firm still will not pay - this is very unusual - you may have to tell the court to send in the bailiffs.

Dealing with customers is expensive and companies hope that by making complaining difficult, most people will give up. And most of us usually do. But however small your claim, don't let them get away with it.

More details can be found on my blog, paullewismoney.blogspot.com. Search 'get that refund' - more than 30,000 people have used it. *





May 2023

Moneynews

by PAUL LEWIS

Energy bills help, filling National Insurance holes and why you should act now to use up old stamps. Plus, are your savings safe?

Save securely

After recent difficulties for some foreign banks, how safe are your savings? Amounts up to £85,000 in any bank regulated in the UK are now protected by the Government. The limit is personal so is double that for a joint account and applies to the individual's total in the bank or any subsidiaries or linked banks.

Amounts above that may be at risk in the unlikely event a UK bank fails. However, a temporary high balance up to £1 million is safe for six months if, say, it is proceeds of a house sale, compensation, insurance payout or divorce settlement. If you have more than £85,000, then spread your money across banks. Or put it in National Savings & Investments, where any amount is safe. See [fscs.org.uk](https://www.fscs.org.uk); search 'deposit protection' or 'temporary high balances'.

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Power payments

The £67 monthly payment towards everyone's electricity bills ended in March. It will not be replaced. However, people who receive pension credit and other means-tested benefits will get three cost of living payments totalling £900. The first £301 is being paid into bank accounts between 25 April and 17 May. The next £300 is due in the autumn and a third payment, for £299, next spring. A payment of £150 for people on some disability benefits is due in the summer.

In addition, all households where there is one or more individual over 66 should get £300 with their winter fuel payment in December, as they did last year. See [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk); search 'cost of living payment 2023'.

Do mind the gap
The deadline for filling any recent gaps in your National



Insurance record has been extended by the Government until 31 July. If you reached state pension age on 6 April 2016 or later, you can pay missing contributions back to 2006/07. After 31 July you can only go back to 2017/18.

It can be hard to work out if it is a good idea. If you have fewer than 30 years before 2016/17 it is probably worth doing. And if you have fewer than 35 years in total, or if you paid into a good final salary company pension before 2016, then it is probably worth filling any gaps from 2016/17. It is too late for people who reached pension age before April 2016 to fill any gaps.

More details can be found at paullewiswismoney.blogspot.com - search 'fill that gap'.

'People who receive pension credit will get three cost of living payments totalling £900'

Stamp it out

31 July

Try to use up any old postage stamps without barcodes, as they will not be accepted after 31 July. If you can't then you can swap them for new ones – get the form from a post office. Christmas stamps and other commemorative issues are not included and can still be used after that date. See [royalmail.com](https://www.royalmail.com) and search 'stamp swap out' for more details.



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going places

NORWAY / LETTER FROM AMERICA

Go with
the flow
Seven Sisters
waterfall on
Geirangerfjord

From *Mission: Impossible* to *Succession*, the stunning landscapes of western Norway have captured the hearts – and imaginations – of film and TV directors alike. And it's not hard to see why... ➔

FJORDS FOCUS

by ADAM JACOT DE BOINOD



Mountain glaciers, precipitous cliff edges... backdrops like these are a gift to film and TV directors. So it's little surprise that the spectacular scenery around the fjords and coast of western Norway is increasingly finding its way on to our screens - most recently in the series *Succession*, starring Brian Cox.

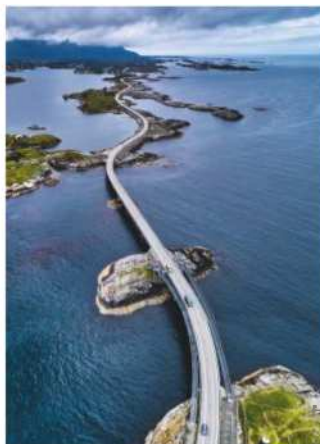
Filming for season 4 of the show, about a business mogul and his scheming offspring, took place around Storffjord and Romsdalsfjord, as well as on the Atlantic Ocean Road, which connects several islands off the west Norwegian coast. In particular, the modernist, forest-set Juvet Landscape Hotel - in the mass of land between the two fjords - was used as a location, as it was in the futuristic 2014 film *Ex Machina*.

Where those bodies of water extend far inland lie the town of Andalsnes and the village of Geiranger, the latter, with its UNESCO-protected fjord, being a particular draw for film crews. It was near here that Tom Cruise drove a motorbike off Helsetkopen mountain and then released a parachute to land successfully (of course!) for *Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One*, out this summer. And Geirangerfjord, considered Norway's most majestic fjord, also featured in 2022 reality series *Below Deck Adventure*. I love Geiranger, as do kayakers, hikers and cyclists, who base themselves here to take advantage of the scenery. Most come in spring or summer,

Screen scenes
The stunning
Geirangerfjord
(above) and
Great Atlantic
Road (below)

when the trees are aromatic and blossoming, and the waterfalls are roaring with meltwater.

One short climb from the village took me up to its cute, 19th-century octagonal church, where I stumbled across locals leaving a baptism in traditional dress. After a hot coffee at the village's Cafe Ole, I set off for the Storfossen waterfall. On the way I stopped to rest, to look back at the view, and appreciate the near-perfect silence. I heard the wind sigh among the pines and the surrounding waterfalls murmur. Tranquil and scenic in equal measure. The 327 steps to the waterfall took me past roaring and raging torrents and cascades. And as the sun came out so did a rainbow, as the sun's rays floated on a delicate gauze of spray, for a truly blessed moment.



Norway is a land of waterfalls. From the top of huge boulders they cascade like ribbons against steep mountains, acting as arteries, lifelines of energy tapped into and captured as electricity by the eco-conscious Norwegians. If only I could have bottled this display of spray and splendour.

Geirangerfjord's most famous waterfalls are the 'Seven Sisters', 'Suitor' and 'Bridal Veil', which plunge into the inlet. I sat on the aft of one boat - on the clean, teal water, as clouds caressed the tops

'I heard the wind sigh among the pines and the surrounding waterfalls murmur. Tranquil and scenic in equal measure'

of the surrounding mountains - and was taken to within touching distance of one of these cascades. All my senses were enlivened.

Northward up the coast, past Romsdalsfjord, where the Romsdalen gondola takes passengers up from Andalsnes to the top of the mountain Nesaksla for incredible views, lies the Great Atlantic Road. Not only has some of *Succession* been filmed here but also a car chase in the 2021 James Bond film *No Time to Die*. It's a unique stretch of road that takes you, with twists and turns, right out to the ocean's edge.

For more views, head southward to Bergen, the 'gateway to the fjords', and recently used as locations for Second World War-set *War Sailor* and the dystopian *The Fortress*, both on Netflix this year. The F10ibanen funicular goes to the top of Mount Fløyen overlooking the



city, from which I walked the one-hour descent back to Bergen through forests and across streams. There is a significant cultural side to Bergen too, from artworks by Edvard Munch in the Kade 3 gallery to the city's musical son - another Edvard, Grieg - honoured with his eponymous concert hall.

Bergen is pedestrian-friendly, its backstreets refreshingly smart. And with a natural harbour, it's no surprise what's on local menus - the prinsefisk at Bjerck Restaurant is recommended. For many reasons, this coast has rightly captured the imaginations of film and TV directors. I must return. And soon! ®



Bright and beautiful Houses in Bergen and (right) its city centre and harbour with the Flaibanen funicular and the forest of Mount Fløyen high above; Geiranger's octagonal church (left). Sail on Saga's Spirit of Adventure (be/ow)



TAKE ME THERE



Saga's A Norwegian Trilogy cruise (departing Dover, 7 May), North Cape and the Midnight Sun cruise (departing Dover, 19 June) and Norway's Cities and Fjords cruise (departing Dover, 21 and 30 July) all stop at Geiranger and offer an optional excursion to the octagonal church for a musical performance. The North Cape and the Midnight Sun cruise also docks at .Andalsnes, and from its stop at Kristiansund there is an optional excursion to the Atlantic Ocean Road. Saga Magazine's Dr Mark Porter will be on this cruise. All take in Bergen. The 30 July sailing is on Spirit of Discovery, the others are on Spirit of Adventure.

THE DETAILS

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Letter from America



by SIMON MARKS

I was not at my best when I landed in New York a few weeks ago after a 15-hour flight from southeast Asia. But it was dawn, my connecting train to Washington, DC was several hours away, and there's a lovely cafe not far from Newark Airport with great coffee, applewood smoked bacon and alluring stacks of pancakes soaked with maple syrup.

So I clambered into a taxi hoping for a quiet journey to my breakfast of choice. But the driver had other ideas. 'You from Ireland?' he asked. Normally I get pegged as an Australian, despite my best efforts to maintain my north London brogue. I briefly corrected him and hoped that was the end of the matter.

'Tell me,' he pressed, 'what's the biggest difference between life there and life here?'

I must confess that in the moment, I struggled to come up with an answer and muttered something about it being pretty glum right now on both sides of the Atlantic. But in the weeks since, long after recovering from jet lag, I'm still finding it difficult to pinpoint the correct answer.

When I arrived here 30 years ago, responses would have been aplenty: America's general sense of optimism and purpose, the brash self-confidence that defined the nation, the limitless choice in the supermarkets, the extraordinary level of customer service that then existed, the affordable coast-to-coast travel.

If you've ever seen the 'Waldorf Salad' episode of *Fawlty Towers* featuring a demanding Californian guest, you'll recall Sybil sighing wistfully when his wife says, 'Back home, fresh orange juice comes like running water'. 'Does it really?' asks Sybil. 'I'd love to go to California someday, it looks so exciting.'

In our globalised era, Basil's wife could today easily find fresh orange juice in Torquay. But other critical differences between our two nations are also narrowing.

Inflation, recession, and general economic

malaise dominate 2023 on both sides of the Atlantic. Seventy per cent of Americans tell pollsters the country 'is on the wrong track'. Meanwhile, another hallmark of difference - the compassionate nature of British society - is being eclipsed by threats to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda and the ongoing funding crisis in the NHS. It's pretty glum on both sides of the pond.

One element of life in America that remains undiminished is the tradition of summer music festivals that bring the world's greatest acts to US shores. This year, I'm looking forward to Washington appearances by Sting, the Brazilian singer Marisa Monte, and Eighties icons UB40 and Maxi Priest.

But the world's artists are facing uncertain times after the Eiden administration unveiled plans to raise the cost of performance visas from \$460 to \$1,615 per person. UK artists will be particularly hard hit, given that many are already reeling from the extra costs involved in touring Europe, now that Brexit has left them paying additional visa and customs fees.

Defenders of the government's move argue that most successful artists can easily afford the new prices. But what about the struggling ones, hoping to travel to the US in search of a big break?

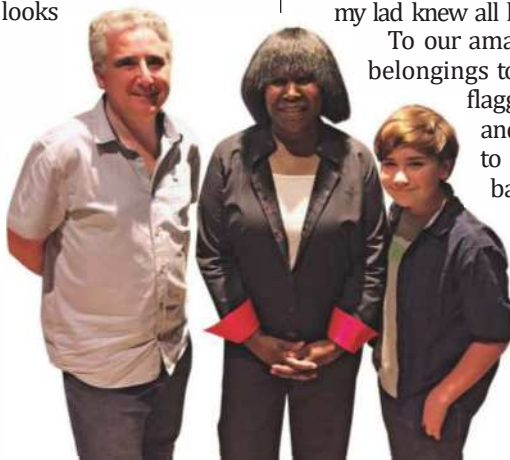
My finest hour in Washington was being invited backstage by Joan Armatrading after a 2018 gig at the now shuttered City Winery (another victim of the Covid-19 downturn).

My son Daniel, then 12, joined me in the front row for her set, and she kept looking in our direction, apparently smitten by the fact that my lad knew all her lyrics and was rocking out.

To our amazement, as we gathered our belongings to head home, we were flagged down by her assistant and told that Joan would like to meet us. We were escorted backstage and greeted with a chuckle and the words:

'What's all this about, then?'

What a lovely lady. I don't think Daniel has stopped smiling since. ®



Star turn
Simon and
son Daniel
with Joan
Armatrading

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what's on

THEATRE/ DANCE/ FILM/ EXHIBITIONS/
RADIO/ PODCAST / TV/ BOOKS



;Duped Down Under

After World War II, more than a million Brits were enticed to move to Australia for just £10. A new BBC drama, *Ten Pound Poms*, shows how many felt they were sold a lie. Its creator, Danny Brocklehurst, explains why

When a production company sent me a link to a documentary about the Ten Pound Poms scheme asking whether I thought there might be a drama in it, my interest was piqued. I had been wanting to write a period piece that wasn't all bonnets and frocks. I had been wanting to write about immigration. And the theme of escape and how no matter where we go we take our problems with us, **W**

is ever present in my work. In short, I was in.

The assisted migration scheme, designed to entice Britons away from the grey UK skies and start 'a new life in sunny Australia', was created in 1945. It became popular in the Fifties when post-war regeneration was slow, employment poor and fresh food was still restricted by rationing.

The premise was simple: for just £10 (around £335 today), applicants would get a luxury boat trip (taking around six weeks), accommodation on arrival, a visa and assistance with work, homes and schooling. In return, you had to surrender your passport for two years and integrate into Antipodean society. To discourage a speedy return, it stated anyone wishing to sail back to the UK would have to pay the full return fare of £120 - around £5,500 today.

Applicants were shown technicolor promo films - golden beaches, beautiful houses with picket fences and large gardens, attractive suntanned people water-skiing and playing volleyball. But in many cases those who migrated - who became known as 'ten pound porns' - arrived to gross disappointment.

The accommodation (hostels as they were known) was in old Second World War camps - stainless steel Nissen huts with outdoor showers, non-flush toilets and terrible food. Conditions were cramped, with many families - used to living in a house in the UK - forced to share one large room. Insects were rife, the heat was stifling, the walls paper thin.

The scheme was an attempt to populate post-war Australia - a large, beautiful country with a small workforce. They needed labour, skills and families. In short, they needed more Australians. The trouble was, like any migration, the inhabitants weren't as welcoming as their leaders hoped. Among many there was a sense of 'who are these porns, coming here, taking



Mystery traveller Michelle Keegan stars as Kate in the drama series

'They were sent to stainless steel huts with outdoor showers, non-flush toilets and terrible food'



A new life abroad Terry and Annie Roberts with their two children, Peter and Pattie, in Ten Pound Porns

our jobs?'. The phrase 'whinging porn' was invented as a pejorative term for any Brit with the temerity to complain about conditions or heat ('porn' being short for pomegranate, a reference to our ruddy complexions). Many felt they'd been sold a lie having left behind their homes, families, jobs,

schools and friends. They had travelled to the other side of the world for a sun-licked paradise, only to find they were unhoused and unwelcome.

I set about reading and watching as much as I could about those who had made the trip in the Fifties and Sixties. There were so many fascinating and heartbreaking stories. People talked of their successes and their horrendous failures. Lives that were changed forever.

Britain in the Fifties was a fairly grim place: poor housing, bomb-ravaged communities, and a lack of opportunities for young people.

So, when people saw the newspaper advert or cinema reel offering them 'a great place for families', many were tempted. It was this idea of contrasts that excited me. To travel from rain-soaked, smog-filled Manchester to the other side of the world, only to find all that glitters is not gold, seemed a dramatic gift. We researched details of the hostels, politics of the time and

the attitude to and treatment of the indigenous community. I then set about creating the series.

The characters I came up with each offered dramatic dilemmas that I felt would make interesting journeys. Terry and Annie Roberts (played by Warren Brown and Faye Marsay) are a loving couple with two children. But Terry is haunted by memories of what he saw in the war and blots it away with drink. Annie has always put herself second to the needs of her family, despite being bright and ambitious.

Then there's Kate (Michelle Keegan), who we meet in England at a port hotel with her fiance Henry. By the time she arrives in Sydney, she is a lone traveller. She tells the authorities her lover got 'cold feet' but there is a mystery to her relocation, an emotional motivation that runs much deeper than the hope of better days.

At the hostel we find Bill, Sheila and their twin girls - they have been there 18 months and are struggling to prosper. Deeply homesick and longing to return, Sheila has embarked upon a casual affair with the hostel manager, JJ Walker. The series is of course populated by Australians



'We wanted a period drama with dirt under its fingernails, a show that doesn't glamourise the past'

of all shades: the funny, the friendly, the abusive and the embracing. Our ambition for *Ten Pound Poms* was to make a period drama that felt like you were genuinely watching the Fifties. We went to great effort with costumes and set design to keep it feeling authentic, showing the world as it really was in 1956. We wanted a period drama with dirt under its fingernails, a show that doesn't glamourise the past.

We didn't impose 2023 morals or try to pretend the world was super liberal back then. Australia, like many other countries, had issues with racism, sexism and masculine culture. Women weren't allowed in pubs; indigenous Australians were sent to the back of the queue in shops, only to be served after all the white customers; and children were allowed to roam alone all day long, despite the very real dangers of snakes, spiders and dingoes. Australia was a country still finding itself, but there were no class hang-ups, women were encouraged to work and family time was prioritised along with exercise and getting down to the beach.

The scenery and landscape was like nothing many Britons had ever seen: stunning beaches, endless unpopulated stretches of road, red earth in the centre, bushland the size of cities.

While shining a light on a little-known piece of our history, *Ten Pound Poms* is unashamedly a character piece. It has thriller moments and emotional high stakes, but in a TV landscape awash with cops and crime, it's a drama about ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances. It's about hope, love and following your dreams, about throwing yourself into the unknown and finding out whether you sink or swim. And that is a theme that will remain forever timeless. *

False promises
An advert for the Ten Pound Poms scheme, promoting jobs and other benefits of emigrating

'NOT THE OPPORTUNITIES'

Between 1945 and 1972 more than a million Brits left for Australia under the Ten Pound Poms scheme. Among them were nurse Susan Asquith, then aged 28, her husband Bas, and their three children, Jane, seven, Joanne, five (both pictured below as children), and Steven, two, who in 1968 moved from their bungalow in West Yorkshire to Adelaide.

They spent a month on a ship, the *Fairstar*, which had a generous packing allowance - 'I even took my washing machine and a small fridge,' says Susan, now 82. In Melbourne, they continued their journey by rail. 'I thought we were going to this really modern country, but a rickety old train came up,' she recalls.

When they finally arrived they were housed in a Nissen hut with two rooms between them. 'The heat was like a hairdryer blowing,' says Susan. 'And we couldn't cool down the huts because of their corrugated tin roofs.'

For bathroom facilities, they had to trek to the toilet or shower block. Cleanliness was poor and illness was rife, but both Susan and daughter Jane, now 61, remember a strong and lively community. Susan began working in the hostel's canteen, while Bas travelled the country laying roads. After a year they could afford to buy a house in Salisbury East, a suburb of Adelaide full of English expats.

'I remember missing the cold winters,' says Jane. 'Coming home to a nice fire and drinking hot chocolate.' Otherwise, she thrived in an Australian school, preferring its curriculum.

Bas, however, was not so content. 'He was really struggling with homesickness,' says Jane. Susan adds, 'I thought it was going to be more of a land of opportunities. He didn't do so well and ended up mainly working in a bar.'

Three years in, Bas's homesickness became too much. Borrowing some money from his brother to fund the return fares, he moved the family - including a pregnant Susan - back to the UK. Susan and Jane

(below) remember their time in Australia as an adventure that ended too abruptly. In 1971, back in England, Susan gave birth to a girl. They named her Adelaide.



Ten Pound Poms is on BBC One in May

out and about



MUSICAL

Aspects of Love
Lyric Theatre, London
From 12 May
aspectsoflove.com

Theatre legend Michael Ball has been cast in this revival of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical, 34 years after starring in the original West End production. Having played the role of Alex back then, this time he appears as George. The musical follows three generations of the Dillingham family across 17 years and is based on the 1955 novel by David Garnett. Featuring the song *Love Changes Everything*, it first opened in the West End in 1989 and ran for 1,325 shows.



Grown back
See a host of floral displays at Chelsea Flower Show



DANCE

Strictly Come Dancing: The Professionals
On tour
2-31 May
strictlytheprofessionals.com

An ensemble of ten professional dancers from the hit BBC show will be foxtrotting across the country, showcasing world-class dance, compelling choreography and, of course, dazzling costumes. Included in the line-up for the month-long tour are 2018 finalist Dianne Buswell (who was partnered with YouTube star Joe Sugg in that series) and 2020 finalists Karen Hauer (who danced with *Made In Chelsea* star Jamie Laing) and Gorke Marquez (who was coupled with *EastEnders* actor Maisie Smith). Expect plenty of glitz and glamour.

Fancy footwork
The *Strictly* professionals take to the dance floor once again for a dazzling tour

EVENT

RHS Chelsea Flower Show
Royal Hospital Chelsea, London
23-27 May
rhs.org.uk/chelsea

Gardening inspiration will abound at this year's Chelsea Flower Show. The main theme will be the restorative power of gardens and gardening, focusing on how they can positively impact our health and wellbeing. Highlights include Horatio's Garden - a wheelchair-accessible plot for patients recovering from spinal injury - and The Savills Garden, which champions growing your own food for a healthy lifestyle. Another shares how a rewilding project in Korea helped save native plants from extinction. For the first time, a Children's Picnic will also take place, aiming to inspire a love of gardening.

MUSICAL

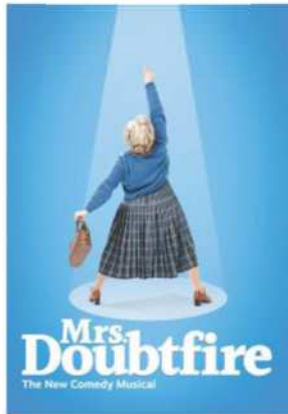
Mrs Doubtfire the Musical

Shaftesbury Theatre, London

From 12 May

mrsdoubtfiremusical.co.uk

Based on the iconic film starring Robin Williams and Sally Field - itself inspired by Anne Fine's best-selling novel - this new comedy musical arrives in the West End this month. Bringing fresh life to the famous tale about an unemployed father who disguises himself as a Scottish nanny to stay close to his kids after he loses custody, the stage adaptation made its UK premiere in Manchester last September. It premiered on Broadway in 2021.



EXHIBITION

Luxury and power: Persia to Greece

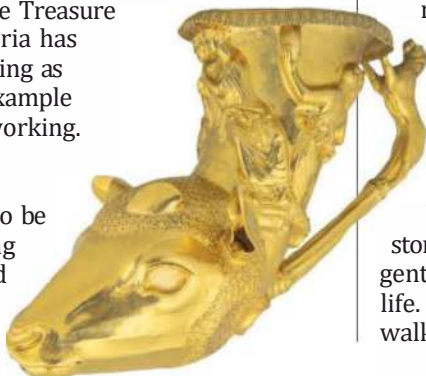
The British Museum, London

4 May-13 August

britishmuseum.org

The relationship between luxury and power in the Middle East and southeast Europe between 550-30 BC is the focus of this major exhibition. While luxury in the Persian empire was condemned by their Ancient Greek enemies as 'decadent', the exhibition reveals how precious objects were used as markers of authority across the empire from Egypt to India.

The Panagyurishte Treasure (right) from Bulgaria has been loaned, serving as an outstanding example of ancient metalworking. Objects from the British Museum collection will also be featured, including beautifully crafted artefacts of gold, silver and glass.



FILM



by ANNA SMITH

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry

Have you ever popped out of the house and ended up walking further than you meant to? This idea is taken to the extreme in this life-affirming adaptation of Rachel Joyce's best-selling novel. The loveable Jim Broadbent (above) stars as quiet, eccentric Harold, who goes out to post a letter to his terminally ill friend Queenie, who is in a hospice 450 miles away. Inspired by a conversation in a local shop, Harold decides to skip the post box and walk all the way from Kingsbridge to Berwick-upon-Tweed to 'save' Queenie.

But it turns out that Harold may need saving himself: sad details of his life are gradually revealed as he undertakes the long journey, much to the bemusement of his wife Maureen, played tenderly by last month's Saga Magazine interviewee Penelope Wilton. Moving flashbacks feature Earl Cave, son of musician Nick.

Directed by *Normal People's* Hettie Macdonald, it's a pleasant watch, whether Harold is stopping by Exeter Cathedral or marching between towns. But it's also a poignant one. This looks at ageing, grief, relationships, and communication - or lack of. One of the most touching themes is the kindness of strangers: Harold encounters friendly, caring people, from farmers to immigrants - he's even joined by a cute little dog for part of his journey.

The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry has a relatively sentimental approach to its story. But you might find you're inspired by its gentle optimism and soft-focus view of British life. Best bring tissues and, just in case, sturdy walking boots.

'Harold encounters friendly, caring people - he's even joined by a cute little dog for part of his journey'

C)

out and about

♫ MUSICAL

Groundhog Day
The Old Vic, London
20 May-12 August
oldvictheatre.com

The much-loved 1993 film starring Bill Murray was adapted into an Olivier Award-winning musical in 2016, with music and lyrics by Tim Minchin. Now, the famous story about a TV weatherman who gets stuck in a time loop is returning to the London stage. During its Broadway run in 2017, Bill Murray himself attended one of the performances - and loved it so much he returned the following night to see it again.



FESTIVAL

Hay Festival
Hay-on-Wye, Wales
25 May-4 June
hayfestival.com

Margaret Atwood, Helena Bonham Carter and Mary Berry are among the extensive line-up of stars at the Hay Festival this spring. They join a programme packed full of writers, comedians, politicians, artists and more, who will all contribute to the world's leading festival of ideas. Made up of over 500 in-person events across 11 days, rapper Stormzy and London mayor Sadiq Khan are also set to appear. This is the 36th spring edition of the Festival, which takes over Hay-on-Wye, known as 'the town of books', in Wales. As well as launching the best new fiction and non-fiction, it provides insight into global issues, inviting audiences to imagine a better world.

THEATRE

Dear Billy
On tour in Scotland
16 May-24 June
nationaltheatrescotland.com

The life of Sir Billy Connolly, 80, will be honoured in this unique production, touring across his homeland. Billed as 'a love letter to the Big Yin from the people of Scotland', the show will evolve as it travels, collecting stories from audience members. The Glaswegian is Scotland's best-loved comedian, with a career spanning more than 50 years. Awarded the BAFTA Fellowship for lifetime achievement last year, he retired from live shows in 2018, five years after a Parkinson's disease diagnosis. A seat will be saved for him at each show in case he drops by.



DECADE BUSTERS

compiled by
MITCHELL SYMONS

TURNING SO

Dermot O'Leary
TV presenter
Marcus Brigstocke
comedian
Natalie Appleton
singer (All Saints)
Noel Fielding
comedian, *right*



TURNING60

Andrea Leadsom
politician
David Schneider
actor and comedian
Helen Sharman
astronaut
Mary Nightingale
news presenter, *above right*



TURNING70

Graeme Souness
ex-football player and manager
Mike Oldfield
musician
Pierce Brosnan
Irish actor, *right*
Sir Tony Blair politician



TURNING BO

Dame Arlene Phillips
choreographer
Sir Michael Palin
comedy actor and writer, *right*
Sharon Gless
actor
Sir Vince Callie politician



TURNING90

Dame Joan Collins
actor, *left*
Dame Siân Phillips
actor



TURNING 100

Henry Kissinger
politician, *above*

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staying in

PODCAST by SARAH SHANNON

Im Not a Monster

Everyone knows Shamima Begum's story; the 15-year-old who left her home in east London and went to join Isis with her two friends. Four years later, she was discovered by a journalist in a Syrian refugee camp, the only one of the girls to emerge alive from the so-called caliphate.

But what else do we really know about her? *I'm Not a Monster* sees presenter Josh Baker retrace Shamima's footsteps to find out how she reached Syria and what she did there. Along the way he meets her Isis fighter husband, dodges criminal gangs, and interviews ordinary Syrians who suffered under Isis rule. The podcast is underpinned by interviews with Shamima herself. She sometimes presents a pitiful picture; a lonely young woman mourning the loss of three babies and renounced by her own country. On other occasions, she is infuriating as she refuses to answer important questions and shows little understanding of the impact of her actions. Monster or misguided girl? Listen on BBC Sounds and make up your own mind.



RADIO
Classic
FM

Saturday Night at The Movies with Jonathan Ross

Fifteen years after a prank call to actor Andrew Sachs saw him suspended from BBC Radio 2, Jonathan Ross is back on the radio. In his new role, he is presenting Classic FM's *Saturday Night at The Movies*, which shouldn't prove too controversial, although with Wossy in the hot seat you can never be sure. It's certainly a good fit for the presenter, who loves movie music as much as he loves the movies themselves. Appropriately enough, he launched his new radio show on the weekend of the Oscars.

His playlist included classics from Ennio Morricone and John Williams mixed with film music nominated for the next night's Oscars.

Movie music fits perfectly with Classic FM's USP. It's classical lite, populist and there are great tales behind the tunes, such as Steven Spielberg's horrified reaction when he first heard the *Jaws* theme music. As Ross himself would probably say, 'What's not to like?'



Fubar (NETFLIX)

Arnold Schwarzenegger, 75, has made his first TV series. He plays Luke Brunner, a CIA agent, in this eight-part comedy action epic that he says, 'Will kick your ass and make you laugh.' The series is on from 25 May.



ON
THE
BOX

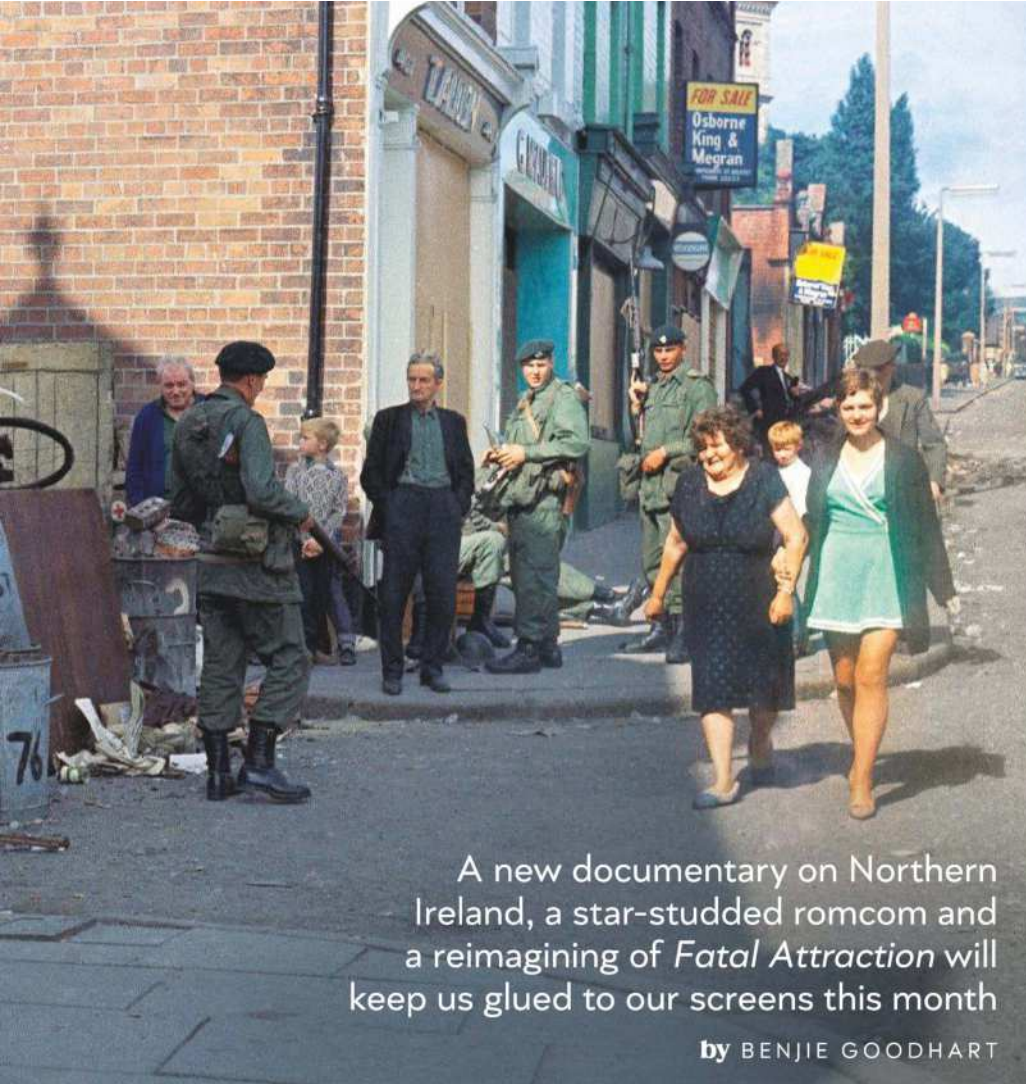
our pick ONCE UPON A TIME IN BELFAST

BBCTWO

Of all the documentaries about the Iraq War and its unspeakable aftermath, one stands out: 2020's *Once Upon a Time in Iraq* was a factual television masterpiece, a BAFTA-winning five-part series that heard history's harrowing truths not from politicians and analysts, but from those who were there – the soldiers, journalists, and Iraqi civilians who witnessed the horrors in the Gulf.

Now director James Bluemel turns his attention to another region that was for decades broken on the wheel of conflict - Northern Ireland. It's 25 years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement heralded a fragile

'This is a good fit for Ross, who loves movie music as much as he loves the movies themselves'



A new documentary on Northern Ireland, a star-studded romcom and a reimagining of *Fatal Attraction* will keep us glued to our screens this month

by BENJIE GOODHART



WE'RE LOVING...

Shrinking APPLE TV+

From the producers of the divine *Ted Lasso*, this touching comedy-drama examines what happens when a therapist starts telling his patients exactly what he thinks of them. Jason Segel plays said therapist Jimmy Laird, while Harrison Ford proves a superb comic foil as dryly acerbic senior therapist Dr Paul Rhodes.

Tom Jones ITVX

This four-part series is not a biopic of the Welsh baritone, but a star-studded 'reimagining' of Henry Fielding's classic 1749 novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. Rising star Solly McLeod plays Tom, abandoned as a baby and raised by the kindly Squire Allworthy (James Fleet). Australian Sophie Wilde portrays the object of Tom's ardour, Sophia Western, while the vengeful Lady Bellaston is played by Hannah Waddingham (*left*). Described as 'the mother of all romcoms', this upbeat tale promises to be a slice of escapism, with grand houses, posh frocks and scandalous liaisons all supplying a *Bridgerton*-esque glow of happiness.



Troubled past The Troubles (above) are brought into focus in *Once Upon a Time in Belfast*

peace, but many in the province are still haunted by its tragic past and concerned for its uncertain future.

As he did in Iraq, Bluemel speaks to ordinary people from all sides of the conflict, examining political and sectarian divisions through the prism of everyday human experience. As his Iraq series demonstrated, he is a master of finding the right interviewees, asking the right questions, and coaxing from them their powerfully evocative testimonies.

Combining those testimonies with a wealth of archive footage, this four-part series promises to bring a fresh perspective on the Troubles, throwing light on the reality of lives lived in a place where the past still casts a long shadow.



The Case Against Cosby

ITVX

Of all the myriad cases of sexual assaults by celebrities in the last decade, Bill Cosby's was perhaps the most surprising. Known as 'America's Dad' following his portrayal of a loving father in *The Cosby Show*, he was seen to embody gentle, kindly decency.

That was before no fewer than 63 women came forward to accuse him of sexual assault. This new two-part documentary follows the story of Andrea Constand, the only woman able to gain a conviction for her assault.

Woven through Constand's story are the first-person accounts of five other Cosby survivors, as well as testimony from Cosby's prosecutors, journalists and experts on predation, paedophilia and trauma. Not one for the faint-hearted, this is nevertheless an important record of boundless courage in the face of unspeakable crimes.

Ç Fatal Attraction

PARAMOUNT+

In 1987, Glenn Close terrified audiences of the film *Fatal Attraction* with her portrayal of Alex Forrest, a murderous, scorned woman, introducing the term 'bunny boiler' into the modern lexicon. This eight-part modern reimagining of the film stars Lizzy Caplan as Forrest, who becomes obsessed with her lover Dan Gallagher (Joshua Jackson) after a brief affair. Amanda Peet plays Dan's wife Beth, whose world is turned upside down when Dan's indiscretion threatens to destroy their family. While the original film focused on Alex's vengeful mania, this series takes a more nuanced, contemporary approach, examining Dan's callous mistreatment and 'ghosting' of a damaged woman he uses and dumps.

New attraction
Joshua Jackson and Lizzy Caplan (above) star in the modern reimagining of *Fatal Attraction*



20 YEARS AGO... the end of Blind Date

Blind Date paired its final couples on 31 May 2003, following host Cilla Black's announcement that the series would be her last. A Saturday night staple for 18 years, its blend of romance, innuendo and fun drew in audiences of

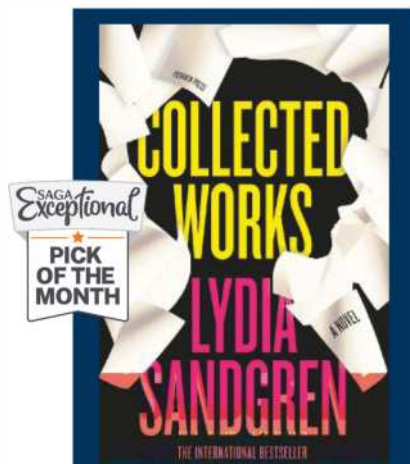
more than 18 million at its peak, following couples on dates everywhere from Bogner Regis to the Maldives. The show also gave us 'our Graham', a lorra lorra laffs, and three weddings. Cilla went to all three - with a new hat for each! ®

ITV/S&P/TT& 470 17 V4 40 011 03:17

Lost and found

A missing wife, missing memories, drama in Elizabethan London, a US adventure, and a tootle around Britain in search of charging points

by ROSE SHEPHERD



COLLECTED WORKS

Lydia Sandgren

Gothenburg publisher Martin Berg has raised his daughter, Rakel, and now-teenage son, Elis, alone since his wife, the beautiful and brilliant Cecilia, walked out and vanished, leaving questions unanswered. Always there has been his loyal friend Gustav Becker, a dissolute, talented artist, destined for greatness. When Martin asks Rakel to read a German novel in manuscript, she finds clues that propel her on a journey in search of her mother. Unfolding over more than 700 beautifully written pages, this is a slow-burn, intriguing debut, shot through with gentle wit, clear-eyed perception and enough booze to give you a hangover.

For more of this month's must-read titles, see the Saga Magazine app on tablet and smart phone

LOOKING GLASS SOUND (j)

Catriona Ward

With failing eyesight and a failing marriage, Wilder Harlow returns to a New England seaside cottage haunted by the ghosts of the past, a place of happy holidays and unimaginable horror. He plans to write a valedictory novel, a final act of literary revenge. But nothing is as it seems, as Ward weaves and spins a tricky story of love, loss and betrayal, by turns evocative, terrifying and tantalising.

TINY PIECES OF ENID

Tim Ewins

Thanks to well-meaning daughter Barb, Enid is safe in her dementia care home, and if words these days elude her, she still sees all that goes on. She knows that Olivia, a regular visitor, is in an abusive marriage, as Enid once was. And she knows she must break out, to join her loving husband, Roy, in a separate care home (thanks Barb!). An affectionate portrait of a fragmenting personality inspired by Ewins's own Nanny Enid.



THE GHOST THEATRE

Mat Osman

Oh, the roar of the greasepaint, the smell of the crowd! The Suede bassist Osman (who is the older brother of Richard} wafts us away to the filthy great bear pit of Elizabethan London, where hawk-trainer and fortune-teller Shay and child theatre star Nonesuch meet by chance on a roof and together found The Ghost Theatre troupe, courting danger and fame. This novel is wildly imaginative, atmospheric and original.

CHARGING AROUND

Clive Wilkinson

As he approaches 80 (years, not mph), Wilkinson takes to the road with his wife, Joan, in an electric car for a 1,900-mile journey from the Scottish Borders to the English south coast. Between plug-in points and cheap hotels, they meet all manner of people in marginalised, 'left-behind' regions, in a mix of travelogue, light-touch social commentary and quirky gems of history. A diverting exploration of life in the slow lane. ®

(i)
also available
in audio book

letters

THANKS FOR WRITING TO US, WE LOVE HEARING WHAT YOU THINK

Coronation memories

Royal 'wedding'
Here is a photo (*right*) of myself and my friend David, both aged two. We won the fancy dress competition at a street party in Harold Hill, Essex, in 1953 to celebrate the Queen's coronation.

We are photographed sucking large sweets because apparently I would not stop crying! Perhaps I felt a bit too young to be taking such a big step in my life! I wonder where David is now?

Pamela Templeton
Ayrshire

Bible and biscuits
I was nine years old and I watched the coronation in Greenock on our new TV set with my mum and dad, my two sisters and some of the neighbours. The set had been bought especially so that we could watch it.

Afterwards we had a party in the 'back green' behind the tenement across the street. I also have a New Testament Bible (*right*) that I was presented with as a member of the Sunday school of Greenock Gaelic Church - all Sunday school children received one.

In school we were given a tin of biscuits with the Queen depicted on the tin but I don't have that any more.

Fiona Campbell
Linlithgow, West Lothian



Packed to capacity
I was 11 years old and living in Weymouth, Dorset, where I was born. Only one person we knew had a TV set, so on coronation day, my mum and dad went to the pub, The Old Castle, opposite our house

Memory lane
Readers have sent in their memories and photos of the Queen's coronation

and I went to the top of our road to watch it on a 9in Echo TV set in their small front room, which was packed to capacity.

The photo (*below*) is of our street party - that's me at the end of the red line.

Pauline Fieldhouse (nee Newey)
St Austell, Cornwall

Colourful recollections
My father was a Scout leader and the Scouts were allocated tickets for seats in a stand on the coronation route. After a ballot, my father won two for Piccadilly.

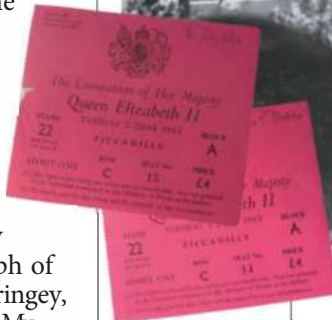
I was nine at the time and had only been to London once, so to go again and this time see the Queen on her coronation day was beyond my wildest dreams!

I remember leaving the house in the dark because we had to be in our seats by 7am! It was a wet and cold day and, looking back, it was very brave of my father to elect to look after a fidgety nine-year-old. I remember him having to take me out to the back of the stands to be sick at one point, such was the level of



my excitement! Loudspeakers kept us informed of what was happening and a huge cheer went up when the news of Hillary and Tenzing 'conquering' Everest came through!

The procession came by at about 3pm. I remember the colour of it all and Winston Churchill getting a loud cheer when he passed. Finally, seeing the Queen and Prince Phillip in the golden coach was completely magical - a treasured memory after all these years. Pauline Pearson Stratford-upon-Avon



Second time lucky May I share a photograph of our 'street' party in Haringey, north London (below)? My family is on the right side of the table, about half way down.

We three children - Frank, myself (age nine) and Chris (dark hair, leaning forward) are in front of our parents. My mother is holding our new baby sister, Gaynor.

Of course, the actual street party was abandoned due to rain. What you see is the second try a few days later. Just as well for me as mum told us to come straight home from school, but I did not so was sent to bed

Treasured pictures Pauline Pearson has shared images of her tickets for the coronation and of the procession passing her on Piccadilly. Se/ow: Marion Cross at her street party

while the others went to the party. Frank sneaked me a little bag of tiny, very sticky sweets. How did they manage all that food during rationing - not once but twice? Marion Cross, Lincoln

Nursing times At the time, I was a third year student nurse training to be a registered sick children's nurse at Victoria Hospital for Children in Chelsea.

On the morning of the coronation, a very small television was installed on our ward and we pushed beds and cots to enable the children to watch the events unfold.

It was a very exciting day and has remained a firm memory of mine for 70 years. I was 18 at the time! Jean Pelham (nee Pestle) Woking, Surrey

Sanatorium celebration I was in a sanatorium in Essex, some 60 miles away from my home in Norfolk, aged 22, with TB. My stay would last for more than



15 months. On coronation day, I was taken by wheelchair to watch this memorable event on TV and all of us 'girls' were so excited, not least to be able to leave our beds for a short time.

Unfortunately, the TV was small, I was positioned far away, the picture was poor, and the weather in London appeared to be so wet and awful! However, the memories of that special day have remained with me. Here I am (above) aged 22 celebrating Christmas in 1952 ... in bed! I will be 93 later this year. God rest the Queen. God save the King. Gwendoline Sutton Bungay, Suffolk

Crowning moment We lived in the lodge on a private estate that was owned by a retired army colonel. My dad was the head gardener.

On coronation day, the colonel invited all the family to go to the manor house to watch it on his television. I was five at the time and was overawed by it all, having never seen a television before. The colonel gave all us children - there were five of us - a commemorative crown, which I still have. Patricia Beeson Hertford

C)



Back in time
Thank you, Saga,
for your article,
Oh, my aching

back, from the August 1999 issue. It outlined exercises to help avoid lower back pain and I have been doing this simple regime every morning before getting out of bed ever since the article was printed.

I am almost 87 now and have severe osteoporosis but am still able to tend my large garden, do my housework and take longish walks.

I broke a vertebrae in my spine last autumn, which has now healed, and while attending a physiotherapist I was told that I am remarkably flexible for my age.

I am not totally pain free but able to do most things I need to, usually with aid of a couple of paracetamol, but no heavy drugs.

Thank you for printing that article all those years ago.
Ann Bennett
Sherborne, Dorset

Cut and paste
I belong to a wonderful art group called Aspire and we meet in a church hall once a week to be creative. It's very cold in the hall in the winter months so we look for inspiration elsewhere.

In January we went to an exhibition at the Pallant House Gallery in Chichester to see art relating to Sussex. It was excellent and one of the pictures we saw was a collage by John Piper, which gave us an idea to make our own. It was a good challenge, as none of us had ever made collages before.

My first attempt was inspired by Aysgarth Falls in the Yorkshire Dales. I also did a fish and a silver birch tree. All were made from images and type torn or cut



Words and pictures
**Reader
Maggie Bentley
created
a skyscraper
collage with
images and
type taken
from issues
of Saga
Magazine**

out of the December 2022 and January and February 2023 issues of Saga Magazine. I created the white water in the waterfall from some hair that was pictured, and the skyscraper scene (above) was mostly constructed from the puzzles pages. The moon in that collage was a picture of a disco ball relating to your feature on clubbing nights for over-50s.

It's great fun creating a picture in a couple of hours just with some glue and a Saga Magazine. I thought you'd like to see what happens to your lovely magazine before it gets recycled.
Maggie Bentley
Waterlooville, Hampshire

Baby came first
It was with relief and admiration that I read the letter from Mrs Chris Elmes in the March magazine about how there was no one else to blame but herself for her getting pregnant out of wedlock and having her baby adopted.

I was 16 when Chris gave birth to her son in 1966 aged 17, so we are of a similar age. At 17, I was working in a county council adoption agency as a clerk and know the choices unmarried mothers had then and how they were treated.

The birth mothers, often teenagers - some as young as 14 - were interviewed as

Mum's
the word
**The story
of Judith
Baker and
other women
who were
forced into
having babies
adopted has
had a huge
response
from readers**



MAGGIE BENTLEY'S STORY, G21VVV

soon as they had considered adoption. There was also a mother-and-baby home, which was run very efficiently and with great consideration for the wellbeing of the girls.

The adoption officers kept in touch with them for the remainder of their pregnancy and as soon as they had given birth they were visited in hospital and asked if they still wanted their child adopted.

The new mothers stayed in hospital for ten days following the birth. They would name the child and often that name would become a middle name in the one given by the adoptive parents. Up to three months, the birth mother could still change her mind and ask for the baby back.

Name and address supplied

Lasting shame

The mention of adoption stirs up strong feelings in me. When my mother fell pregnant with me, her parents disowned her, but she worked for a company that arranged for my birth to take place in a home for unmarried mothers.

The arrangement was that she gave me up for adoption and I was transferred to a children's home. However, a former work colleague of my mother's returned from the war and asked her to marry him and for them to adopt me.

I can't say it was a happy relationship but they stayed together for over 50 years. I was so excited to get a message from the Queen for their golden wedding, but they were upset, as they said people would realise I had been born out of wedlock. It saddens me so much that my mother felt guilt and a misfit after all those years.

I never met my birth father and my mother told me so

i you're all talking about...

PUBLIC TOILETS

Don't lose loos

Your excellent article on the decrease in public loos in the UK (*March*) really hit the nail on the head.

Public conveniences are an essential service. We have all used them at some time or other, and experiences of particularly good ones and bad ones - and ones that do not exist at all! - often linger in our memories for a long time.

How to increase footfall in our towns and cities is not rocket science.

Michael Bennett
Farndon, Cheshire

Less than the US

Thanks for your feature on the terrible public toilet situation. I spend quite a bit of time in the US and am always pleased that even in the smallest of establishments there is a public toilet. Shame on the UK for its lack of toilets for public use. What about young children, older people and the disabled?

Thank you for highlighting another British letdown.

Maureen Adams
Stanmore, Middlesex



Dogs go free

Public toilets are not only hard to find but we have to pay for them.

Yet dogs have a completely free (paid for by council tax) service that provides multiple bins - which are also emptied. And we also have to endure dogs' streams of urine anywhere and everywhere.

I think a dog licence or tax is well overdue.

Sarah Howden
South Hams, Devon

Spend more pennies

I am appalled by the lack of public loos and the state of the ones that do exist.

In our town there is one that has been closed for years and now has a homeless person living in the doorway, which is wrong on many levels. People need that little loo - it's at the bottom of a very steep hill. What does it say about our town, or any town, when visitors come?

I think the Government should allocate a set amount of money per loo to get them up and running.

P Callen
Falmouth, Cornwall

very little about that time in her life. However, I did some research and discovered I had three half-brothers - one being only four months younger than me!

I still feel my mother's stigma and have shared this with very few people.

Tricia Forsythe
Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Judge not ...

Not only are older people invisible to many (*Letters, March*), but they are also seen as brainless.

I have a credit card with a well-known store, and last year, it decided to change its bankers. During this procedure, my bank details were exposed. Fortunately, (C)

as yet, no money is involved.

The store and banks have taken no responsibility. It is me who is having to investigate. During this time, whenever I need to ring anyone concerned, I have to identify myself. When asked for my date of birth (1933), I can sense they are thinking, 'Oh, an old lady', and do not give any credence to what I am asking. They probably would not be interested to know I have worked in the Treasury and reconciled accounts worth millions.
Edwina Pogson
Mullion, Cornwall

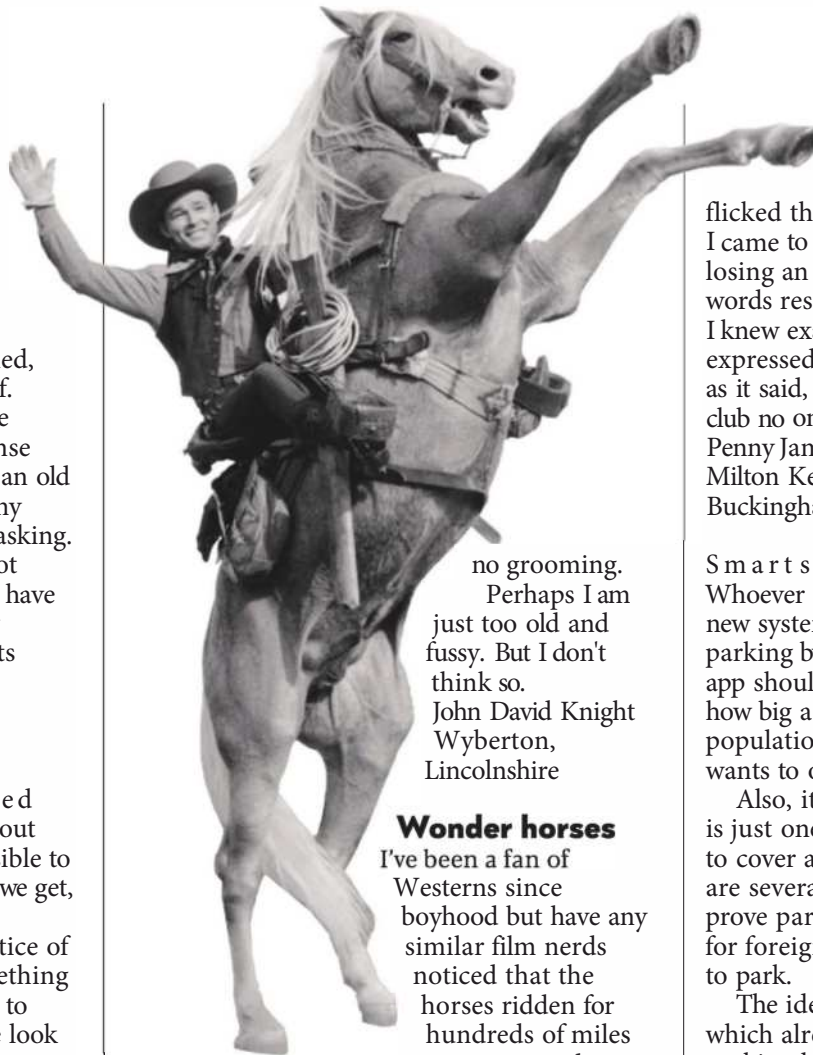
More respect needed
In reply to the letter about how we become less visible to other people the older we get, I agree absolutely.

No one takes any notice of us, unless there is something in particular they want to talk to us about. People look through us. We deserve more respect for our experience.
Jane Luft, Salisbury

Sharp-dressed women
Jenni Murray (*April*) said there is nothing more attractive than a well-dressed man. Well, to me, there is nothing more attractive than an immaculately dressed woman.

Also, nothing compares to a lady wearing uniform, and with the uniform usually comes excellent grooming.

But how many times have I been stunned by ladies wearing uniforms, only to be let down later when seeing them 'out of hours' in their own shabby, ill-fitting, nondescript clothes, with hair all over the place. No dress sense, no style, and



Horses for courses
In Westerns, horses never seem to tire and cowboys are always clean shaven, says reader Walter J Bourne

have any food or water? The cowboys, too, despite being 'out on the range' for days on end, never seem to have a shave yet have faces clean as whistles.

Walter J Bourne
Milton Keynes,
Buckinghamshire

Helping my loss
I had some devastating news a few weeks ago. My 57-year-old pilot son suddenly died while stopping overnight in Cairo. He leaves a wife and three children, aged 15, 17 and 20. The whole family is shattered and distraught.

On the day I heard the news, the March edition of *Saga Magazine* was delivered. Later, while

numb with shock, I picked up the magazine and idly flicked through it until I came to the article about losing an adult child. The words resonated with me; I knew exactly the emotions expressed in the article. And as it said, I now belong to a club no one wants to belong to.
Penny Jamieson,
Milton Keynes,
Buckinghamshire

Smart statement
Whoever is promoting this new system of paying for parking by a smartphone app should remember just how big a proportion of our population neither has nor wants to own a smartphone.

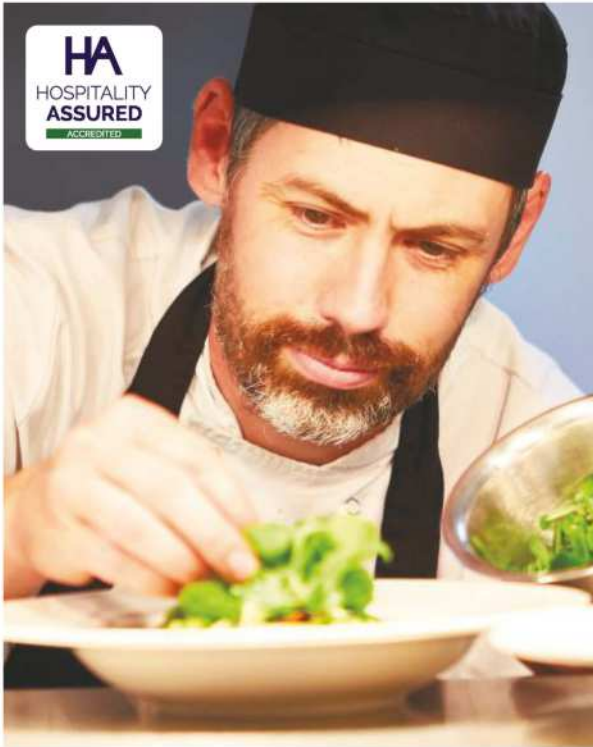
Also, it's not as if there is just one universal app to cover all councils, there are several. This system must prove particularly difficult for foreign visitors wanting to park.

The ideal choice, surely, which already exists in many parking locations, is the use of bank or credit cards, which is quite straightforward.

I read some time ago an article on modern high-tech systems in which the writer strongly recommended avoiding anything with the word 'smart' in front of it, for example smart meters and smart motorways. Sounds very good sense!

Bob Kingsland
Brownshill, Gloucestershire *





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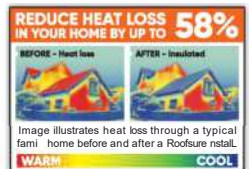


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 E: legacies@soldierscharity.org
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grey matters

PRIZE CROSSWORD / CRYPTIC CROSSWORD / SUDOKU /
CODEBREAKER / FUTOSHIKI / WORD WHEEL /
ADD A LETTER / PATHFINDER / PUB QUIZ / ANSWERS

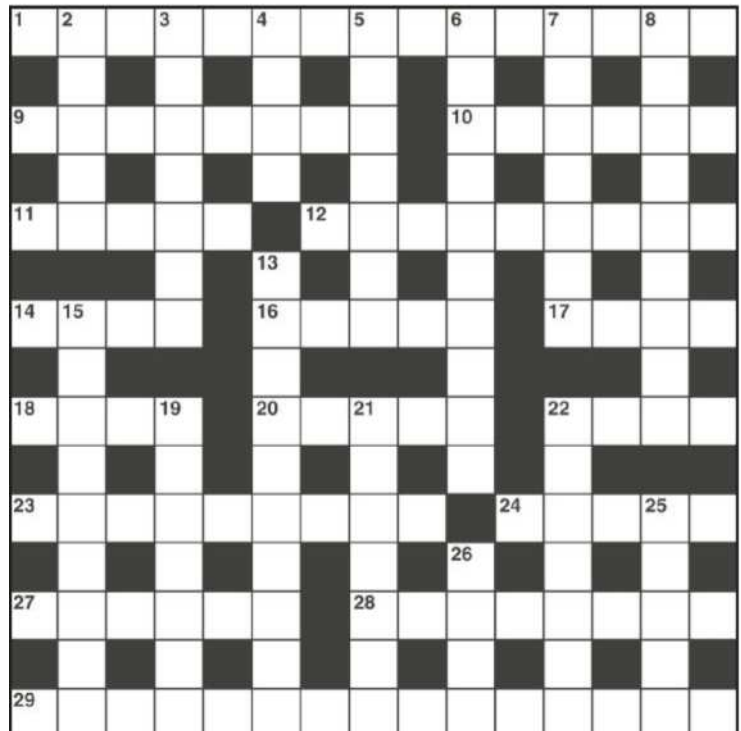
PRIZE CROSSWORD



A. CROSS

- 1 Mansion in mid-Cornwall owned by the National Trust since 1953 (10,5)
- 9 English writer whose romance novel *Gone to Earth* was filmed in 1950 (4,4)
- 10 Punk band that had a hit with *The Eton Rifles* in 1979 (3,3)
- 11 Capital city of Liechtenstein (5)
- 12 Cornish town 3 miles south-west of the Eden Project (2,7)
- 14 River on which Leeds stands (4)
- 16 Evergreen tree that yields a bean used as a chocolate substitute (5)
- 17 Wife of the Hindu deity Rama (4)
- 18 Rock band led by Michael Hutchence from 1977 until his death in 1997 (4)
- 20 Nepal's currency unit (5)
- 22 Principal chamber of the Republic of Ireland parliament (4)
- 23 Star of the 1972 comedy film *Ooh... You Are Awful* (4,5)
- 24 First name of Pirandello, the early 20th century Italian playwright (5)
- 27 Wheat substance that coeliacs find intolerable (6)
- 28 City with ancient ruins situated near present-day Tunis (8)

- 29 1924 EM Forster novel in which Dr Aziz is wrongfully arrested (1,7,2,5)
- ### DOWN
- 2 Jordan's only coastal city (5)
 - 3 First single recorded by The Beatles on the Apple label, 1968 (3,4)
 - 4 Squirrel's tree home (4)
 - 5 Space shuttle vehicle designed not to land (7)
 - 6 Nell Trent's friend in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (3,7)
 - 7 Brother of Electra in Greek mythology (7)
 - 8 Surname of Italian Baroque composers Alessandro and Domenico (9)
 - 13 Christopher Lee's role in the Bond film *The Man with the Golden Gun* (10)
 - 15 Journalist who became editor of *Private Eye* in 1986 (3,6)
 - 19 Caribbean island which has Basseterre as its largest town (2,5)
 - 21 Designer of the revolutionary 1934 Volkswagen (7)
 - 22 Title given to the eldest son of the king of France (7)
 - 25 Famous Italian tenor who died in Rome on 30 November 1957 (5)
 - 26 Mythical ship in which Jason sailed to retrieve the Golden Fleece (4)

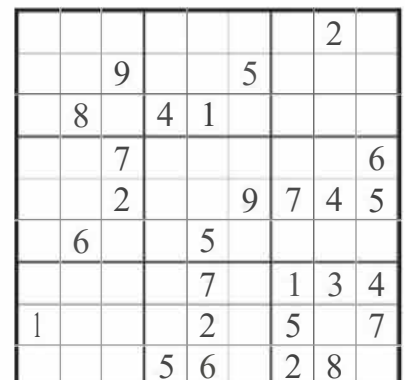


To enter

Email a scan or a good photo of your entry, using General Knowledge Crossword (May) in the subject line and send it, with your name and address, to crosswords@saga.co.uk. Or cut out the crossword (no photocopies) and post it with your name and address attached to: General Knowledge Crossword (May), Saga Magazine, Enbrook Park, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3SE. *Closing date: 26 May 2023*

SUDOKU

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



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Modern mobile phones - smartphones as they're called - can do so much more than just make phone calls.

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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*.

Plain English... and that's not all! They explain how to use the phone, in plain simple language with pictures of the screen showing you exactly where to tap or slide your fingers. No jargon!

What's covered?

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.



These helpful books mean there's nothing to fear about using smartphones - from sending a quick email to video calling your family and friends.

- Video phone calls - a great way to keep up with family who live a long way away
- And obviously, you can make phone calls and send and receive text messages. ("Voicemail" is covered, too)

All explained nice and simply. (Find out more in the free information pack - read on...)

What one reader had to say:

"Thanks for a fantastic smart phone book. Very pleasant staff as usual.

I think this book should be sold with every smartphone. I have learnt so much from it, the info you get with the phone is non-existent.

Smart phones are quite complex, and your books speak in plain English."

Only half the story

That's only half the story but we don't have room to explain here. We've put together full information on the books - who they're for, what they cover and so on.

What's more the books also come with a free gift - no room to explain that here either.

Don't buy now, do this instead

The books aren't available in the shops or on Amazon - only direct from the publisher. Send off now to get a completely free, no-obligation information pack. It'll explain what the books cover, who they're suitable for and so on - showing you just how it could help you.

Even if you don't know what type of smartphone you have, the information pack will show you how to tell.

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FUTOSHIKI

Fill the blank squares so that each row and column contains all the numbers 1-5. Use any given numbers and the symbols that tell you if the number in the square is larger (>) or smaller(<) than the number next to it.

□	3	>	□	□	□
				v	
□	□	□	□	□	
□	□	□	D	>	D
			v		v
□	4	□	□	□	□
				^	
□	>	□	□	>	□

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.

- DEEP **CJ** Tempo
- NEAR **CJ** Sports stadium
- LAKE **CJ** Leg and foot joint
- PALE **CJ** Ride a bicycle
- MAIN **CJ** Craze, obsession
- FAIR **CJ** Physically weak

Codebreaker

Each number in the grid represents a different letter. We've given you two letters to start you off, which show that 13=O and 19=5. 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.

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

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
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

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: 9
- EXCELLENT: 12
- BRILLIANT: 14
- GREAT SCORE FOR KIDS: 9

The pub Quiz 18



The Simpsons, a 'snotty' town, Star Wars, and a swimmer all feature in this month's teasers

by MARCUS BERKMANN

1 In the northeastern region of which country would you almost certainly live if your native tongue were Catalan?

0

2 Which modern European city has previously been known as Lygos, Byzantium, Augusta Antonina (for a brief period in the third century), New Rome and Constantinople?

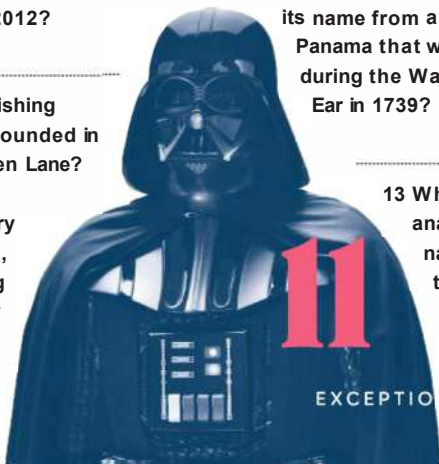
3 'Je reviens en trois jours; ne te laves pas!' - translated as 'I will return in three days; don't wash!' - were words famously written by who to whom in a letter in the early 19th century?

4 Which public holiday was introduced to England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1974?

5 The Woolsack is the seat of the presiding officer in the House of Lords, now the Lord Speaker, and has been since the 14th century. What colour is it?

6 Which Olympic swimmer won two golds in 2008 and two bronzes in 2012?

7 Which publishing house was founded in 1935 by Allen Lane? His idea, revolutionary for the time, was to bring high-quality paperback



11

fiction and non-fiction to the mass market.

8 An English city, whose prosperity was founded on the textile industry, has a name derived from the Anglo-Saxon meaning 'the homestead of Snot's people'. What is it known as today?

9 How was Oflag IV-C better known during the Second World War?

10 Which French composer died in 1875 aged 36, three months after his most famous opera had its premiere? The opera was only moderately received at the time.

11 In the Star Wars films, what was Darth Vader's name before he donned the costume and went over to the Dark Side?

12 Which London thoroughfare - and street market - takes its name from a town in Panama that was captured during the War of Jenkin's Ear in 1739?

13 What is the anatomical name for the thigh bone?



15



20



17

14 Which soft, silver white metal, atomic number 3, is the lightest of the metals and least dense solid element of them all?

15 Woody Allen wanted to call it *Anhedonia*, a psychological term for the inability to experience pleasure, and in heated discussions, co-writer Marshall Brickman suggested *A Rollercoaster Named Desire*, *Me And My Goy* and *It Had To Be Jew*. What was the film finally called on release in 1977?

16 A legend surrounding which 11th-century woman gave rise to the term 'Peeping Tom'?

17 In *The Simpsons*, whose initials can be seen in Homer's right ear and the small residue of hair that rests just above it?

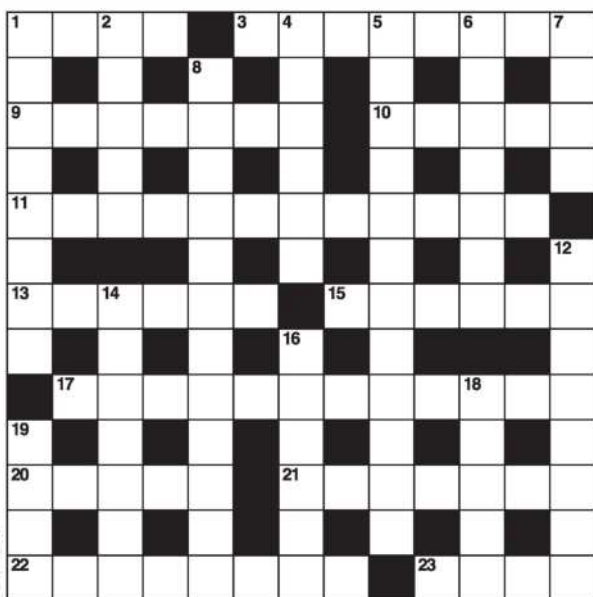
18 Do bees have blood?

19 Every country at the Olympics has a three-letter abbreviation - for instance, the British team is GBR. Which country has the abbreviation CIV?

20 ...and which associated territory of New Zealand has the slightly more unfortunate three-letter abbreviation COK?

Answers on p135

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



BY FELIX



ACROSS

- 1 Such-and-such departs for southern hemisphere (4)
- 3 Insects brought back edible root with wings (8)
- 9 Scots high steward's second dram was regularly taken with other ranks (7)
- 10 Proportion of speech, discounting start and end (5)
- 11 A whole planet destroyed in film (6,6)
- 13 Rock enthusiast at front of entourage (6)
- 15 Substance in crustaceans, it's found in projecting part (6)
- 17 Apparent fiend, king wearing uniform (12)
- 20 Imitative wood cut by Greek character (5)
- 21 Asian rhino keeper, maybe, good with it (7)
- 22 Discover comedians, but not all best (8)
- 23 Is Parisian shunned by joyful figure? (4)

DOWN

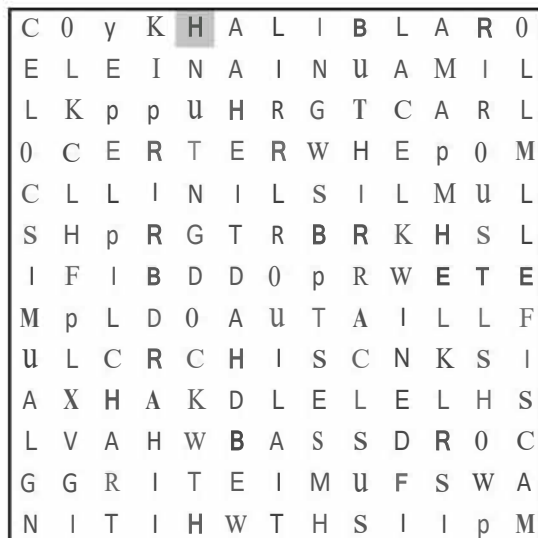
- 1 Place having rubbish fish and stodgy food (8)
- 2 Goodness me! Fritz stripped (5)
- 4 Top veg pointers (6)
- 5 At hotel in workshop group meeting (12)
- 6 In spell of jogging taking in one anthem (7)
- 7 Guess weight of athlete (4)
- 8 Whip, a leather implement - this is awful (12)
- 12 Redeployed lieutenants leaving in a fluster (8)
- 14 Article on response to Facebook post and similar things (3,4)
- 16 Sheep seen below a quiet hermitage (6)
- 18 Felix claims that container is upside-down (4,1)
- 19 A milk supplier cycled somewhere in America (4)

To enter

Email a scan or a good photo of your entry, using Cryptic Crossword (May) in the subject line and send it, with your name and address, to crosswords@saga.co.uk. Or cut out the crossword (no photocopies) and post it with your name and address attached to: Cryptic Crossword (May), Saga Magazine, Enbrook Park, Folkestone, Kent CT20 3SE. **Closing date: 26 May 2023**

PATHFINDER

Trace a continuous path, horizontally and vertically but not diagonally, starting from the highlighted letter, to find all the seafood words listed below.



- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| BRILL | HERRING | SILO |
| BRISLING | KIPPER | SWORDFISH |
| CALAMARI | LUMPFISH | TROUT |
| CARP | MULLET | TUNA |
| COCKLE | MUSSEL | WHELK |
| COLEY | PILCHARD | WHITEBAIT |
| GRAVLAX | ROLLMOP | WHITING |
| HADDOCK | SCAMPI | WINKLE |
| HALIBUT | SHELLFISH | |



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Solutions

MARCH



March Cryptic C)
Crossword:
£100 winner:
Glen Plant,
Walsall



C, March General
Knowledge Prize
Crossword:
£250 winner:
Mike Wood,
Staplecross

THIS MONTH'S ANSWERS

Word wheel

4-letter words

coal, coil, coin, icon, lino, lion,
loan, loin, nova, oval, viol

5-letter words

anvil, civil, ionic, viola, vocal

6-letter words

oilcan, violin

9-letter word

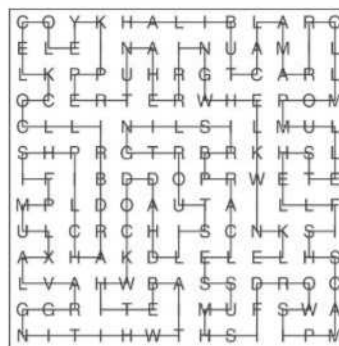
CONVIVIAL

Codebreaker



RTVIPZQKYHUBO
NDWCESJAMXGFL

Pathfinder



saga pub quiz

- 1 Spain
- 2 Istanbul
- 3 Napoleon Bonaparte to Josephine
- 4 New Year's Day
- 5 Red
- 6 Rebecca Adlington
- 7 Penguin
- 8 Nottingham
- 9 Colditz
- 10 Georges Bizet
- 11 Anakin Skywalker
- 12 Portobello Road
- 13 Thefemur
- 14 Lithium
- 15 Annie Hall
- 16 Lady Godiva
- 17 Matt Groening (he created the show)
- 18 Yes (it's pale straw-coloured rather than red)
- 19 Cote d'Ivoire
- 20 The Cook Islands

Add a letter

Speed
Arena
Ankle
Pedal
Mania
Frail

SANDAL



More puzzles!
There are many more puzzles on the Saga Magazine app. Download from the app store

Sudoku

5	3	1	7	9	16	4	2	8
2	4	9	8	3	15	6	7	1
7	8	6	4	1	2	9	5	3
9	5	17	2	4	13	8	1	6
3	1	2	6	8	19	7	4	5
8	6	4	1	5	7	3	9	*
2	9	*	1	*				
1	9	8	3	2	4	5	6	7
4	7	3	5	6	1	2	8	9

Futoshiki

[]	@	>	[g]	@	[f]
[g]	[f]	@	[]	@	
@	[g]	[]	[f]	>	@
@	@	[f]	[g]	[]	A
[f]	>	[]	@	>	[g]



SWEDISH DESIGN



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The world according to... Dame Maureen Lipman



The actor, who turns 77 this month, on her love of royalty, grieving for her soulmates and a sartorial disaster at her investiture

King Charles has been ahead of the curve all the way, so I have lots of time for him. He is the one who told us that organic was good and that climate change was a big problem. He's had a lot to put up with from Harry, but has come out with flying colours.

When he presented me with my damehood in 2021, he said, 'I don't know how you people do it, being a different character eight times a week.' I replied, 'With respect, sir, when you got up this morning did you think, "Yummy, an investiture?" That's how we do it. We turn up and do the job.'

My son Adam came with me to the investiture. He had bought an Armani suit on eBay that was too tight and the fly split as we walked into Windsor Castle. He appeared with my heart-shaped red patent bag over his crotch on the 6.30pm news, which has been a source of amusement ever since.

Fit for a queen

I was very chuffed to have met the Queen in 2021 when she came to *Coronation Street*. I told her that my late husband, Jack Rosenthal, had written 130 episodes of *Corrie* in the early days and here we were about to film episode 10,448. Jack would love my character Evelyn Plummer. She is a cross between a pit bull and a rottweiler in the dog world but there is a tiny spaniel in there somewhere. When they had a love interest for her, I said, 'Come on, Evelyn is not going to take her vest off!' I don't want her to become a lovely person as it won't be as much fun to play.

There's nothing like a Dame

I recently got together with an array of dazzling Dames, including Judi Dench, Joanna Lumley, and Twiggy, to celebrate my friend Gyles Brandreth's 75th birthday at the London Palladium and raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital. Sheila Hancock, who had just

come out of hospital with pneumonia, was there too and Eileen Atkins did a tap dance. I read a poem and got the audience singing *My Old Man Said Follow the Van*. The piece de resistance was Joan Collins reciting the words from *Imagine*.

I'm a survivor

I've taken four weeks away from *Corrie* to return to the stage in the one-woman play *Rose*. It's the best part I have ever had. *Rose* is in my blood. Martin Sherman's play traces the story of *Rose*, a feisty Jewish woman, who looks back on her life from the devastation of war-torn Europe to conquering the American dream. Her life began in a tiny Ukrainian village, taking her to Warsaw's ghettos, and she reflects on what it means to be a survivor.

The part was written with me in mind 25 years ago. I was in my early fifties and appearing as Beattie in the BT adverts - there isn't a day goes by when someone doesn't ask me if I have an 'ology'. *Rose* was 80, so I turned it down. But more recently I've played her. And when I got the chance again, I had to take it. I'm not saying it's easy,

because it is me sitting on a bench for two hours and it frightens the life out of me every night.

Love and loss

I have lost two soulmates. My husband Jack, in 2004, and my partner of 13 years Guido [Castro, an Egyptian businessman], in 2021. I mourn Jack every day and I see my kids, Amy, 49, and Adam, 47, who are both writers, turning into him. And Guido was a sweetie pie. I learned so much from him. He is buried in the same place as Jack.

I'm a working grandmother and love both jobs. I'm in awe of my grandchildren, Ava, ten, and Sacha, eight. They regard me in the same way the cast of *Corrie* regard Evelyn: as a grumpy old bat!

Am I open to falling in love again? I'm moderately fit, I've got my marbles and I'm a good laugh. It could happen. If love came and knocked me on the head again what I am going to say? No? I'd just be a bit more circumspect about getting my vest off... like Evelyn.*

'Am I open to falling in love again? I'm moderately fit, I've got my marbles and I'm a good laugh'

Rose is at Ambassadors Theatre from 23 May. See roseonstage.co.uk for more details. Coronation Street is on ITV on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

Word to the wise

by SUSIE DENT

This month, *Countdown's* lexicographer considers the shift in language the Carolean age will bring

It's taken me a while to get used to talking about the King. We forget how much we give a nod to our monarch in the language we use. No more 'Queen and Country' or 'Queen's English'; no 'QCs' in court, only 'KCs'; and no sending 'her victorious' in our national anthem.

It seemed strange even hearing about 'The King's Speech' at Christmas, given it didn't involve Colin Firth. Plus, we have a newly resurrected adjective with which to refer to our times, for we have now entered the Carolean age.

As the Coronation beckons, I've found myself pondering the language of royalty. This includes, of course, the English spoken by the royals themselves, because however steeped in tradition it might be, even this has shifted with the times. The language that King Charles now represents sounds significantly different to the one his mother spoke on her own coronation day 70 years ago.

A few years ago, researchers made a detailed acoustic analysis of royal Christmas broadcasts, charting changes in vocabulary and accent. The results suggest the Queen's way of speaking changed very noticeably in the intervening years. Above all, it became less distinctively upper class. If in 1953 the royal complaint was, 'I've lorst that bleck het', by the end of her reign, the Queen's o's and a's were more rounded. In the same way, 'orf' was left behind and 'off' ushered in, 'veddy' became 'very', and a 'y' sound no longer followed the 's' in such words as 'super'. This was the Queen's English that even the Queen no longer spoke. English always has been a democracy, even for the monarch.

But however it's delivered, the English the new King will preside over will be as gloriously rich as it

has always been. The regalia of the coronation has a lexicon dating back to ancient times, from the golden orb (from the Latin *orbis*, 'ring') to the throne (from the Greek for an 'elevated seat'). And for all their history, even these words have moved with the times. While 'coronation' itself began with the Latin *corona*, 'crown', for the ancient Romans and Greeks this was something rather different. Instead of the embellished, bejewelled crown King Charles will wear, this was a garland or wreath of

flowers, draped around the head of a victor or official. '*Corona*' is from a Greek word meaning 'something bent'.

Royal 'accolades' were far from formal, too. This word for a ceremonial honour is a relative of 'collar', because it was once all about necks.

Nothing to do with

beheading, everything to do with a royal hug, given to those receiving a knighthood. Far more cuddly than a tap on the shoulder with a blade.

Even 'kings' occupied a far less lofty

position than they do today. In fact, they were once our 'kin' - the heads of small family tribes among the Angles and the Saxons, who went on to establish their own small states.

There's something levelling about learning 'king' and 'kindred' are brothers-in-arms.

Charles III will be fully enrobed for his investiture. That word 'investiture', and indeed 'invest' itself, has always made me smile, for it once meant 'putting on a vest' (albeit the official kind). In fact, clothing is a useful metaphor for the language we use. We each have a unique *wardrobe* that includes fashions from years ago, as well as others that are far more on trend. This Coronation is equally designed to include both tradition and innovation, and its language will reflect both. The King's English, like that of his mother before him, will belong to all of us. And, excitingly, we will be witnesses to its changes. @



'It seemed strange even hearing about "The King's Speech" at Christmas, given it didn't involve Colin Firth'

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