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THE BIG ISSUE

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BAE SYSTEMS



Vendor photo: Jamie McFadyen

Hello, my name is Anabel

I've had a tough time since losing my home six years ago. I moved to Glasgow a couple of years ago for volunteering opportunities, maybe with an organisation like Amnesty, and because of my love of traditional and classical music. The people here have just been so generous and kind, they really look out for you. Selling the magazine has helped my confidence hugely, I'm proud to do it. I'm surrounded by love. Read more of my story on page 46.



A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT

This magazine was bought by your vendor for £1.25 and sold to you for £2.50. They are proudly working, not begging. Buy it, take it, spread the word.

If you can't get hold of a copy of the magazine on a regular basis, you can subscribe to receive The Big Issue every week: bigissue.com/subscribe

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Figures are down but scratch beneath the surface and it's a different story

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STAR TREK

How the sci-fi giant has predicted the darker aspects of our future

the big list.

What to do this week in England and beyond



01

Love reading on World Book Day

As an unwavering believer in the life-changing power of the written word, The Big Issue is always pleased to champion World Book Day's mission to celebrate storytellers and readers, and help give every child and young person a book of their own. Be a part of it by attending special events around the country, or by telling everyone what you're reading with #WorldBookDay.

March 5; worldbookday.com



04

Help raise the roof for Hull's homeless population

Having been forced by the council to move out of their old home last year, Hull drop-in centre and breakfast club for homeless people Raise the Roof is now settled into new premises at Beverley Road – and feeding up to 50 people every morning. But they need ongoing financial support to continue providing all from hot rolls to soup, tea, coffee, activities and simple everyday comfort and advice to those in need entirely for free. Donate to their crowdfunder if you can.

gofundme.com/f/raise-the-roof-hull-homeless-continued-support1

02

Listen to The Housing Podcast

As Christopher Pincher MP becomes the 10th housing minister in a decade, you couldn't be blamed for not really trusting the government when it comes to perspectives on Britain's housing crisis. Instead trust *Inside Housing* magazine's regular podcast, which gets to grips with the issues with input from industry experts. Recent episodes have looked at changes in the Housing Ombudsman Service, examined the findings of the Grenfell Inquiry phase one report and asked what Boris Johnson's housing policy may be (should he have one).

insidehousing.co.uk



03

Get on your feet for the Big London Night Walk

Founded in solidarity with rough sleepers, many of whom find it safer to stay mobile during the night rather than bed down, this Big Issue-organised event is a chance to see the capital in a whole new light through a 15-mile walk across London – and help raise cash in the process towards supporting The Big Issue Foundation's mission to end poverty and exclusion for Big Issue vendors.

March 6; bigissue.org.uk/walk



05 Get lost among the trees

Literally at the roots of the fightback against climate change, trees might be starting to get the respect they deserve. A major new exhibition featuring works by Robert Adam Anya Gallaccio and more shows the emergence of the modern environmental movement in the late-1960s through to the present day. Sculptures, paintings, installations, video and photographic works help celebrate our carbon-capturing leafy brethren. **Hayward Gallery, London, until May 17; southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/hayward-gallery-art/among-the-trees**



08

Say yamas to The Trip to Greece

Friend of The Big Issue Steve Coogan and his pal Rob Brydon hit the road for one last culinary sojourn, in the final series of Michael Winterbottom's gastronomic comedy that cleverly treads a fine line between truth and fiction. Greece is the word, as the awkward couple tour the home of democracy to take in divine-looking meals and landscape and do endless bad impressions. Television to laugh and salivate over in equal measure. **Sky One, March 3, 10pm**

09 Apply for a photography commission documenting London's homeless population

The British Journal of Photography and mental health charity CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) have collaborated on a special £10,000 commission which will give one photographer the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the lives of 10 homeless people over a 10-week period, documenting their experiences in an honest, intimate way. Find out more and enter at **1854.studio/calm-commission-in-collaboration-studio-1854**

06 Dance to beat street poverty

The DASP collective (DJs Against Street Poverty) are a group of London music lovers doing their bit to fight homelessness by donating a percentage of their earnings towards a soup kitchen, foodbank, shelter or charity whenever they do a gig. They also arrange their own nights, one of which they have upcoming at Brilliant Corners in London. All proceeds will go to the Praxis Community Projects charity for migrants and refugees. **Brilliant Corners, London, March 5; dasp.uk**



07 Discover iconic film locations

From Robin Hood thundering down the beach on horseback at Freshwater West to Mr Darcy wading through the lake at Lyme and Harry Potter exploring the cloisters at Lacock Abbey, National Trust properties have appeared on cinema screens countless times. A new book goes behind the scenes to reveal places where some of these iconic film and TV moments were shot – and where you find them. **National Trust on Screen is published on March 5**



10 Women of the world, take over

Taking place as it always does to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8, London's Women of the World festival celebrates its 10th instalment with its biggest, boldest programme yet. Special guests at talks, events and performances will include Deborah Frances-White (*The Guilty Feminist*), Shazia Mirza and more. **Southbank Centre, London, March 6-8; southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/women-of-the-world**



platform.

Your views on the big issues



Our founder John Bird's straight talking was a hit on *Question Time*



@michaeljswalker

Quite right to call out @nadhimzahawi for justifying illiterate and damaging economic policies in Britain by referencing Venezuela. Pathetic scaremongering from a Tory minister.



@morton_dill

John Bird's speech on the stain of homelessness and its direct root cause being austerity and mental health was #bbcqt moment of the night.



@Gumby1903

Never watch QT or any BBC news, but have a lot of respect for John Bird who has worked tirelessly for the good of the people and The Big Issue, his comments to Zahawi who pontificates the Tory mantra were spot on ...#notmygovernment



@BenJolly9

This one line perfectly describes the mood of so many who have been let down by governments over the last 40 years in this nation today – "If you haven't got a future, it doesn't matter what a Conservative minister says" #bbcqt



Kitted out
Pads 4 Dads give dads an important overview

RE: HEY GIRLS PULLOUT [FEBRUARY 17-23]

Period? No dramas!

Just read the articles regarding periods in the latest issue of The Big Issue [February 17-23]. Amazed only four per cent of dads talk about periods with their children?? I grew up with two sisters and was always being sent to the local shop to get emergency sanitary items (I used to wrap them in old newspapers). I have two daughters and never had a problem talking about periods or buying sanitary towels for them (the colour code has helped a lot, instead of having to look for flow etc.) If men had to go through this it would be a top topic down the pub. Hopefully more men will get over this phobia of talking about it. Great work with getting help to those who can't afford to buy these essential products.

Mike Seabright, email

I was very interested to read the insert on period products. I started using washable, reusable menstrual pads in 1995, after I joined the Women's Environmental Network, which is an environmental organisation concentrating on women's issues. Using washable pads had three benefits. One, I saved myself a shedload of money, two, I saved countless pads going into landfill and three, I stopped the greedy, evil organisations which are trying to destroy our planet from making a penny out of me. Unfortunately, nobody else I knew would do what I was doing and try reusables at that time.

Margaret Forbes, email

It is unbelievable that sanitary items are taxed, ie they are a luxury item! Razors btw are not taxed!

Katharine Meader, Facebook



✉ **letters@bigissue.com**

Read all about it

Public libraries [February 10-16] have lost £250m a year since 2010 when the cost of HS2 (stage 1) has gone from £38bn to £106bn. More people use and benefit from public libraries than any other public service (except refuse collection). To most people library and information centres (free computer access for the 20 per cent who don't own a computer) are the face of local government in every high street. They have served the public for over 150 years. Why are we, the fifth-richest country in the world, not able to afford them? There is only one answer. The government

chooses not to fund them adequately. In Birmingham we have a new £180m central library (built just before the bank crash) which is a hollow shell, with no librarians to drive a full-time service for all parts of our diverse community. The doors are kept open by security staff. Instead of being the heart of the community – an asset available to all, open at all times to accommodate all, libraries have become an add-on. HS2 (stage 1) would fund the national library and information service adequately for 50 years at least. Do we need to rethink priorities?

Martin Underwood, email

GET IN TOUCH



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letters@bigissue.com



**Editorial, 2nd Floor,
43 Bath St, Glasgow,
G2 1HW**

Sheen and heard

It gladdens the heart to read that someone with Michael Sheen's profile is actively supporting the teaching of Welsh history in our schools [February 17-23]. Cymru am Byth!

Ronnie Lewis, Crymych, Pembrokeshire

Lovely Liam

What an amazing person Liam Harmer is [My Pitch, February 17-23]. He has found the right way to deal with whatever life throws at him, and how splendid that he is now in touch with family. Good for him.

Juliet Chaplin, Cheam

Pitched just right

As a 70-year-old golfer I can say that golf has definitely improved my health [Fact/Fiction, February 17-23]. However unlike President Trump I walk the 18 holes rather than being driven around on a golf cart. As for golfers living longer, well that's probably true, but don't forget you have to be fairly fit and healthy to play golf in the first place.

Peter Holmes, Warwickshire

Clean and classy

Hearty congratulations to Diana Lampen for her warmth and thoughtfulness [Letters, February 17-23]. For over 35 years we have been running a touring caravan and camping park and know that pristine toilets and washroom facilities are absolutely key. For many of these years it has often fallen upon me to do the cleaning when cleaners are ill or don't arrive etc, etc – and I am very familiar with the indifference, sometimes outright rudeness shown towards cleaning staff, particularly by men when using the urinals. I was prompted on one occasion to ask a guy mid-flow if he would do that if I was a friend of his wife and he looked amazed that I could even speak let alone have a sense of humour. I know how much it means to my cleaners when they are congratulated on their work and thanked – so readers please remember what life would be like without these people!!

Teresa Cooper, The Inside Park, Blandford, Dorset

 @bigissue



@glenglenglen

Reading the latest @BigIssue on the train north. Steve Coogan may be the cover story [February 17-23], but @PeterAlanRoss' interview with Rory Stewart is worth the price of the magazine alone. A really great piece.



@katiew137

Libraries [February 10-16] are places I loved to read the written word and imagine new places like Narnia, Hogwarts, Middle Earth etc. Learning how to empower myself to do advocacy for people who have no rights in society.



@IAmInPrint

Passed a @BigIssue street seller greeting everyone with a "Hello, good morning, how are you?" His smile was infectious and commuters were breaking out of their own heads to SPEAK and SMILE! What a tremendous start to the day. Find YOUR amazing. Smile at a stranger. #kindness



@AndyWPhilosophy

I loved this by @johnbirdwords on why watching and enjoying *Emma* made him want to share a gruesome story with his daughter.

EDITORIAL

In a crisis, let's be there for those who need us



Being part of an international network of street papers – more than 100 magazines in 35 countries – gives immediate, first-hand insight into challenges facing people on the margins across the globe.

Homelessness is a pervasive presence everywhere, even if the reasons why people can find themselves without a home or stable income differ from place to place. But from Birmingham to Buenos Aires, Cardiff to Chicago or Perth, Scotland to Perth, Australia, vendors choose to sell a street paper like The Big Issue for the chance to support themselves.

A fresh crisis has been on everybody's lips (which you shouldn't be touching with unwashed hands) as street papers are encountering the coronavirus.

The Covid-19 virus is spreading so quickly and unpredictably that anything written about it risks being instantaneously outdated. But it has already affected street paper vendors, beginning with those based in South Korea, where the first outbreak outside of China occurred.

Early in February, staff noticed the streets of Seoul were quieter than usual. Five thousand face masks were sourced to distribute among vendors. They were donated by a music label, and worryingly described as "fashionable". Let's hope face mask fashion doesn't become this season's hottest trend.

But face masks themselves prove problematic for vendors. Mr Yamada, who sells The Big Issue Japan in Osaka, said: "It's a complicated matter. When you wear a mask, some people feel anxious and cautious, believing the vendor to be sick, despite the mask being there for protection in the first place."

Mr Yamada's colleague Mr Yoshitomi sells in the city's tourist district. "There are clearly not as many people around during the daytime and, generally, people are increasingly likely to avoid crowded areas," he said.

Last week the coronavirus established itself in Europe, starting – like many visitors to the continent – in northern Italy. Street paper *Scarp de'tenis* is based in Milan.

"So far, all *Scarp de'tenis* staff and vendors remain well," said staff member Marta Zanella. She explained however, that new pitches have had to be found for vendors. Most usually sell at churches but masses in the regions of Lombardy, Veneto and Piedmont have been suspended until further notice.

"We're discussing how to approach this, and to ensure they still have a chance to sell their street papers. We're increasing the number of their pitches located on streets and in supermarkets. Things seem to be changing rapidly though."

Reassuringly, Zanella added that sales have not been impacted so far as communities are rallying to support each other.

Should the outbreak develop into a pandemic and worsen in this country, hopefully we will similarly look out for others. Inevitably, in times of crisis, it is the most marginalised and vulnerable in society who are hit hardest.



Taking no chances
Korean vendors are wearing masks

Photo: INSP

@stevenmackenzie
Paul McNamee is away



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Library crusaders deliver demands to Downing Street

Literacy champion and Big Issue Changemaker Bobby Seagull has marched a petition demanding secure investment in public libraries to Downing Street.

The 7,000-signature document called on the government to commit to ending library austerity in the upcoming Budget.

It was backed by The Big Issue and library association CILIP after the joint report *Public Libraries: The Case for Support* showed that library funding had suffered a £234m real-terms cut in the past decade.

Seagull, one of the biggest brains on 2017's *University Challenge*, said: "Libraries are such a vital part of local communities, I'm shocked by the funding cuts they've seen in the last 10 years. It really is a testament to the amazing work of professional librarians that they have continued to be the lynch pin of our local communities in such trying circumstances. It's time for the government to step up and guarantee them secure funding, so they can continue their amazing work."

Libraries are hugely important community spaces with the power to change lives by providing unparalleled access to literacy and skills, especially for homeless and underprivileged people.

CILIP chief executive Nick Poole said: "I'm absolutely delighted by the outpouring of support the British public has shown for this petition."

"It really proves what we at CILIP have been saying all along, that great libraries and professional librarians build stronger communities. They are the heart of any high street."

The petition will stay open until March 11 when Chancellor Rishi Sunak delivers the Budget.

Starter for Ten
Seagull puts his success down to library access

Restore revenue funding for public libraries

Over 5,000 signatures and counting

CILIP

#FundMyLibrary

02-08 MARCH 2020



No wonder he's smiling
With help from the tooth fairy, Malachi started a revolution

10-year-old's fiver leads to housing for rough sleepers

Big Issue Changemaker Malachi Justin's dream of helping homeless people in Ilford was finally realised last week when the first residents moved into new flats named after the 10-year-old.

The Salvation Army's £5m Malachi Place complex offers 42 self-contained furnished flats with 24-hour on-site support for former rough-sleeping residents.

When his first milk tooth fell out five years ago, Malachi sent the £5 he received from the tooth fairy to The Salvation Army along with a letter asking the charity to spend it helping homeless people.

Malachi said: "I can't believe it has actually happened and we have built a home for homeless people! I'm really happy."

"I'm still only 10 but I know that homelessness is getting worse. This shows there is something we can all do to help."

After the charity received Malachi's fiver, they added £350,000 from local fundraising and charitable trusts, put in a further £2.5m to cover running costs for the next five years and received another £2.5m in funding for construction from Redbridge Council.

Each flat has a bed/sitting room with its own cooking facilities plus a private toilet and shower. There is also a bicycle workshop social enterprise on site which will open in May where residents can learn skills to help them find a job.

Captain Dr John Clifton, the Salvation Army's leader in Ilford, told The Big Issue that Malachi Place will have a big impact locally, where at least 15 people have died while street homeless in the past three years.

Frank Wrona, 40, moved into one of the flats after sleeping rough on and off for three years. Since taking control of his addictions, Frank has been desperate to find a place to live and get a permanent job. He said: "I just want to get settled and move on with my life, so getting a room at Malachi Place gets me one step closer to achieving that."



All mod cons
Another happy resident gets her keys

Does eating a fried breakfast help you lose weight?



Illustration: Miles Cole

HOW IT WAS TOLD

A fry-up to start the day and helping to shed pounds sounds too good to be true. We all would if we could get away with it, right? If only.

Headlines on February 19 were an encouraging sign of that hypothetical utopia coming to pass.

The stories all stemmed from a study at the University of Lübeck in Germany published in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*.

The Sun's report, like many stories, emphasised the size of the breakfast but used a pic of a fry-up rather than centring their headline on it. They opted for: "BREAK THE FAST: Eat a big breakfast to lose weight fast – you'll 'burn TWICE as many calories'".

Mail Online's effort was in a similar vein with: "Eating a big breakfast instead of a large dinner could help you burn DOUBLE the amount of calories 'because it boosts the metabolism more'". *Metro*, the *Daily Mirror* and Yahoo! also followed suit.

The *Daily Star's* version of the story, however, went in fully on the fry-up angle. They got stuck in with the headline: "German experts say eating full English breakfasts could lead to weight loss".

It's far from the first time the tabloids have examined the merits of the fry-up and, indeed, not the first time that we have covered the full English/Scottish/Welsh (delete as appropriate) breakfast. We ran the rule over reports that exercising after a fry-up was the secret to shedding pounds in October last year.

So do these stories make a better case for sausage, eggs, bacon and the rest to be a part of your diet?

FACTS. CHECKED

The report behind these stories makes no mention of a fried breakfast and is hardly an endorsement for Britain's much-loved fry-up.

Instead, the study adds more weight to the idea that eating a big meal at the end of the day when you have less time to burn it off is not the best approach to follow.

It is true that academics did find that eating a big breakfast did burn twice the calories. The study did not measure weight loss.

The University of Lübeck-led study centred on diet-induced thermogenesis (DIT), which is a measure of how well our metabolism is working and can differ depending on meal time.

Researchers conducted a three-day laboratory study of 16 "normal-weight" men who ate a low-calorie breakfast and high-calorie dinner then did the reverse for a second round. The small sample size and variety should set alarm bells ringing – if you're a woman reading these stories, there is little to relate to.

Nevertheless, they did find that DIT was 2.5 times higher in the morning than in the evening while the food-induced increase of blood sugar and insulin

concentrations diminished after breakfast compared with dinner. Eating a low-calorie breakfast also increased appetite for sweets. The report does not state what foods were included in the meal.

The study's author Dr Juliane Richter said: "Our results show that a meal eaten for breakfast, regardless of the amount of calories it contains, creates twice as high diet-induced thermogenesis as the same meal consumed for dinner."

"This finding is significant for all people as it underlines the value of eating enough at breakfast."

She added: "We recommend that patients with obesity as well as healthy people eat a large breakfast rather than a large dinner to reduce body weight and prevent metabolic diseases."

To be fair to the media outlets covering this story, the *Daily Star* is the main offender here. The rest do a good job of covering the report accurately on the whole, association with a fry-up aside.

The lesson here is to read coverage of scientific studies in more than one news outlet to avoid misleading takes like the *Daily Star's* and, sadly, not to dig into more fry-ups.

WORTH REPEATING



Half of the British population started the day with an English breakfast in its early-1950s pomp

15-20G
of saturated fat is typically found in the English breakfast

Men should have no more than 30g of saturated fat per day, for women the limit is 20g and kids should have even less

Stats: English Breakfast Society; NHS

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EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



JOHN BIRD



It's not rocket science, there's a cost to cuts

It snowed in the fields as my train took me north. I always feel I'm travelling historically when I go north. Not going back in history but going places where big things have happened. Yes, back into our industrial past that still throws up problems for our current times. As if we still haven't resolved where we come from. And the recent electoral sweep made by Mr Johnson's party is evidence that history is hard at work as always.

If you get what I mean.

I was in Middlesbrough last week for the BBC's *Question Time* and I found that all the cobwebs of doubt that might settle on you in Parliament can easily be blown away by meeting people in serious need looking for answers.

The vitality of the audience – and it showed – was enormous. I had never got that in TV before. But the subtleties of politics and delivery may well get left behind. It's easy to poke accusing fingers at the government in charge. And Middlesbrough, with its record of being left behind, will not be changed by new hotels – like the one I stayed in; or the hundreds of thinly clad, cold young people queueing for a club night.

New roads, new looks of prosperous development in the centre don't equal social justice to the many in need. Middlesbrough, like many of our ex-industrial towns, needs new education and skills chances, and new industries that tap into people's passions, to prosper.

As I said, it's easy to poke an accusing finger at governments because of the systematic neglect of much of the post-industrial UK. None of the political persuasions have provided the answers. Unfortunately it becomes a debate about defending the record. And that is a loser.

In some ways you have to look at the past as done. Now you are going to do what is measurable and logical.

As I said on *Question Time*, austerity is too expensive. The cost of cutting has destroyed a generational opportunity. Balancing the books in the short term means passing the debt on to future generations. And to the current generation, which is having to watch hope of a future go out the door.

Borrowing to save what we have means accepting the costs now. Cutting only makes accounting sense when you don't put a value on the deficit of social collapse.

The deficit of social collapse is greater than all the current budget-balancing savings. And Middlesbrough and the North East are a clear sign of what happens when you 'austerify' – if there's such a word – the society of its communities.

Destroy hope, and a sense of tomorrow being liveable disappears. Depression and mental illness go hand in hand with hopelessness. Hollowing out communities is never a cost-free option. 'Wise up', might

Cuts so deep

The effects of austerity led to fierce protests



Photo: Facundo Arrizabalaga/EPA/Shutterstock

be the advice you'd give this new administration. Throw away the defence of the status quo and get on with bringing that aspiration into people's eyes as they see opportunity rise through education, training and reskilling.

The above is all the breathless thinking of the moment, as I reflect early in the morning after my *Question Time* appearance. I reflect on missed opportunities. A very clear and cogent discussion on austerity and its ugly power to increase preventable deaths and damage mental wellbeing is a really important need. Yet fierce argument often precludes that.

We must hold these discussions in the cold light of day. And we must talk about whether there's a better way of using debt to help us through poor times. But also is there a clever way of stimulating education and skills training so you can help trade and invest out of these troubled economic times.

We have done it before, especially in times of conflict. But every peacetime government tends to shy away from borrowing to invest big time in ridding us of hopelessness, or what you might call wellbeing. Wellbeing, or feeling good, puts you streets ahead in coping with any reversal in your life. It also means you can make the most of opportunity when presented.

I worry that governments will never truly see, or understand, the negative power of destroying social support, as has been done since 2010. The mind becomes derelict of hope – and hope is the most precious balm you can apply to any reversal. A reason to get up in the morning is what drives us on. And that needs to be shared out among us all.

Public school children are often marinated in a sense of confidence and optimism. That's why Mr Johnson can go bouncing around the place saying everything is possible. But bounce, like opportunity, is unevenly distributed. Given the bucketloads of talent across these nations, governments need to tackle the uneven spread of opportunity. And make sure we support people into bouncing back and into opportune moments.

If we can spend big bucks during wartime – and take much of my lifetime to pay it off – can't we declare war on poverty and injustice?

Just a thought as I go south again. The snow has melted. Let's hope the hope lasts longer.

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue.
@johnbirdswords
linkedin.com/in/johnbirdswords
john.bird@bigissue.com

THIS WEEK JOHN WILL BE

READING: *A History of Britain Through Books: 1900-1964* by Christopher Tugendhat

WATCHING: *Uncut Gems*, with Adam Sandler, on Netflix

LISTENING TO: Bohemian Rhapsody by Queen

SPEAKING AT: A 'Wales leading the way in policy, planning and partnerships' event with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales



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The thinkers. The creators. The agitators

Helping kids make the news

The new generation of newshounds is being reared in Greater Manchester. Media whizzes Kirsty Day and Grace Dyke launched Media Cubs, a pioneering youth project that takes the demand for more diverse media and turns it into fun workshops for underprivileged seven to 11-year-olds. “You can’t be what you can’t see,” co-founder Day tells The Big Issue, on a mission to show working-class kids they can set the same ambitions as their privileged peers. Media Cubs is also an effort to improve literacy and confidence in schools feeling the effects of cuts and squeezed budgets.

Day, a journalist by trade, met Dyke while working at Alzheimer’s Society. After hitting it off the pair set up Yellow Jigsaw in 2014, a social change-focused PR agency. But by 2018, mum-of-two Day was itching to create something that married her passion for media and her concern that the school curriculum wasn’t offering the space to grow as a communicator that it once did. “It seemed like all the creativity was being sapped out of classrooms in terms of writing,” she says. “I thought, what’s wrong with being able to create a great story and letting everything else come after that?”

The co-founder knows all too well that working-class people are under-represented in many newsrooms and worried it was contributing to growing mistrust in the media. Keen to encourage children’s confidence and help them believe that they can make a difference no matter their background, Media Cubs was designed to transform any space into a newsroom and pop-up TV studio. It lets kids share their views and make the news, whether they want to be in front of the camera, taking photographs or writing news reports. “That’s all the serious stuff,” Day says. “On top of that, it’s just loads of fun.”

The children involved are encouraged to explore their interests, “which range from Pokémon to politics”, and create news stories, reviews and pieces to camera about them – there are even weather forecasts. The co-founders were surprised by how media-savvy the kids turned out to be, and have learned to embrace the likes of TikTok as a new platform children are familiar with and keen to get creative on. “They’re much better at things like spotting fake news

REPORTING SOME RELEVANT STATISTICS

- **A quarter of 10 and 11-year-olds** in England didn’t reach the expected attainment level in reading, while nearly as many struggled with grammar and spelling
- **UK TV journalists** are 76 per cent white, according to Ofcom data
- **43 per cent** of the UK’s most influential editors went to private school



**Kirsty Day
& Grace Dyke**
Media Cubs

Illustration: Matthew Brazier

as children than as adults,” Day says. “They don’t cease to amaze me with how media-literate they are.”

The project began as a couple of pilots in schools run alongside parent focus groups. What the Media Cubs team found was that while parents were excited about the literacy benefits that would come from the scheme, what they really wanted was even more simple – to see their children increase in confidence. It would go on to prove particularly valuable for kids who weren’t drawn to standard after-school activities put on by their school, Day says.

The response has been massively positive. Schools were immediately keen to get involved and parents have been blown away by the difference getting involved in a mini-newsroom has made to otherwise shy children – many of whom went from sitting quietly, determined to only write, to shining on camera.

The pilots were so successful that Day and Dyke knew they had to go for it and have worked with more than 150 schools and community groups since. Media Cubs have run ‘takeover days’ in some schools, when they helped classes set up their own YouTube channels or record their own podcasts about subjects that mattered to them. The project is in its infancy – the website only went live last week – but there has already been interest from journalists around the country who

want to sign up as licensees so they can go into schools and deliver sessions too.

“Those are the next steps for us, expanding into the rest of the UK and being able to licence it to people,” Day says. “To parents too! Some told us they’d like to take this on as some part-time work at after-school clubs.”

The pair are running Media Cubs alongside their full-time day jobs, which has proved challenging – that and learning to adapt from school to school depending on their needs. But they’re keen not to be limited to schools, looking to do more evening and weekend sessions in community centres. Last year the organisation teamed up with the Manchester United Foundation to run a summer school in sports reporting, even giving some kids the opportunity to interview players and take part in a press conference.

In the near future there are plans for journalists to visit school classes and show them that people from backgrounds similar to theirs can make it in the media too. In the meantime, kids in England will cut their teeth on Media Cubs challenges that combine skill and fun – like rewriting fairy tales as news reports.

Interview: Hannah Westwater
@hannahjtw

FIND OUT MORE
mediacubs.co.uk

the big picture.

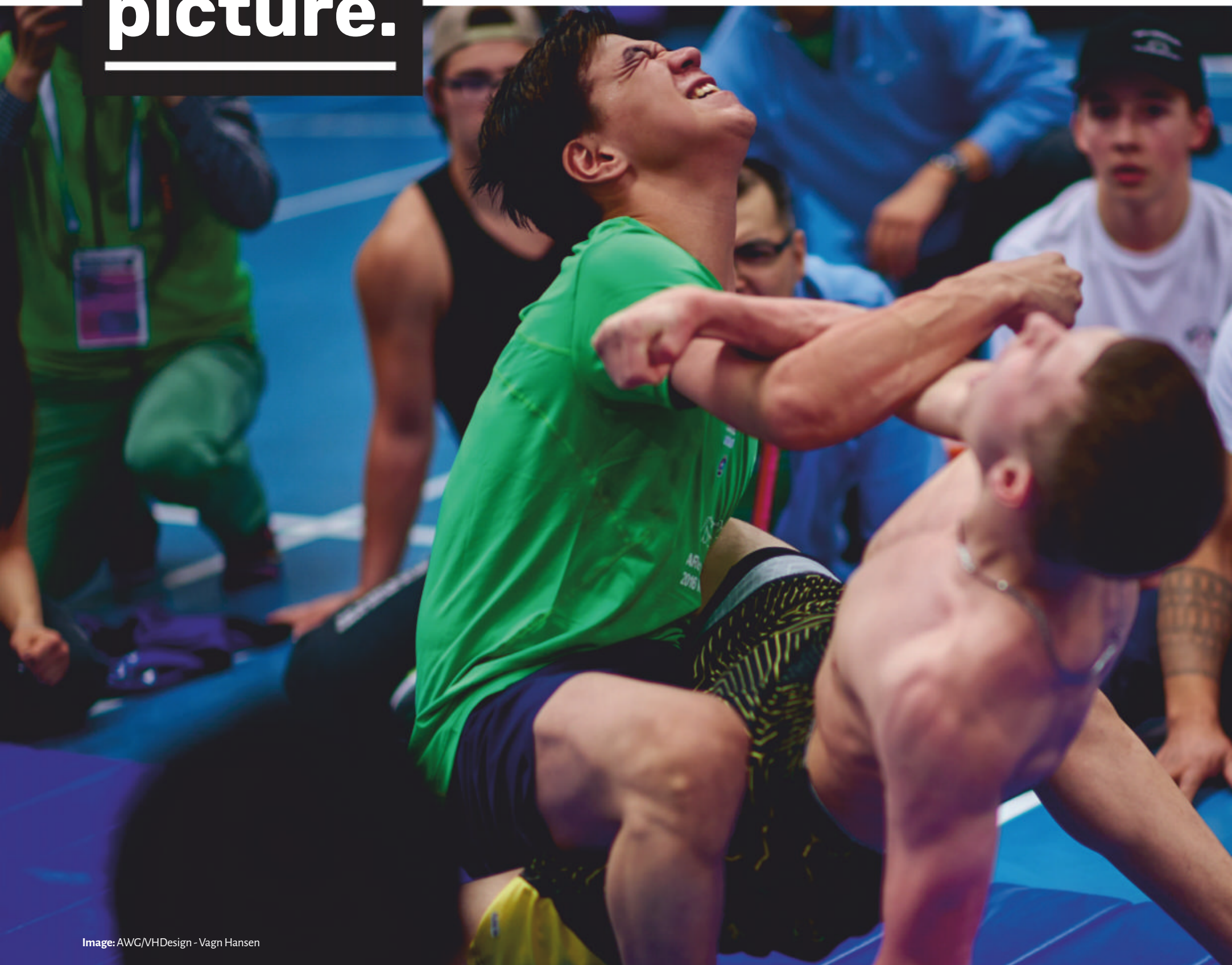


Image: AWG/VHDesign - Vagn Hansen



Image: AWG2016/Angunnguaq Sethsen

02



Image: andre@guttesen.in

03



Image: Julius Filemonsén



01



04

Image: Dida C. Heilmann

05



06

Image: © 2016 / Gustav Fischer



07

FUN AND GAMES

The Arctic Winter Games begin in the Yukon, Canada, this month and have a few events that would make great additions to the Olympics in Tokyo.

The biennial event brings together young people living in the Arctic to celebrate and exchange indigenous culture. Alongside common sports like badminton, table tennis and ice hockey are other contests that draw upon the participants' heritage and unique way of life. Here are just a few of them for you to try at home!

01) Arm Pull: Opponents sit and face each other, linking one arm and attempt to pull the other player over or force their hand to touch their chest.

02) Finger Pull: A test of strength and pain tolerance, based on the importance of strong fingers able to carry as many fish as possible via a finger hooked through gills.

03) Stick Pull: Try to get a greasy stick from your opponent. This game was created to practise grabbing slippery fish from the water.

04) Snow Snake: Instead of throwing a javelin in the air, this one is slid across the ice, reflecting the way that caribou are hunted when they're resting.

05) Two-Foot High Kick: There are various varieties of this sport using one leg or two, a running or standing start, to see who can kick highest.

06) Head Pull: Two players lie in a push-up position with a belt looped around their heads. The winner pulls their opponent over a line drawn between them.

07) Airplane: A brave participant is carried by three assistants, having to keep in this painful position for as long as possible.

■ The Arctic Winter Games take place from March 15-21; awg2020.org

letter to my younger self.

Craig Charles

Soap-starring, soul-loving smeghead



Photo: Keith Pannell/Mail On Sunday/Shutterstock

1991
Relaxing with a spot of guitar as his fame grows



Photo: Mepix Ltd/Shutterstock

2010
With wife Jackie at the Coronation Street 50th anniversary party



2020
Back once more with his Red Dwarf gang

When I was 16 I was studying English at college, but my real focus was on playing in loads of different bands. One of the main ones was a band called What For? – our manager was [pre-Ringo Beatles drummer] Pete Best. I used to write all the lyrics. I always found I had a surfeit of lyrics and a deficit of musicians, so I turned my lyrics into poems and started doing stand-up poetry. By the time I was 16 I was hiring out the Everyman Theatre [in Liverpool] on a Sunday night and putting on poetry recitals. This was the time when John Cooper Clarke was going strong, and Steven Wells and Attila the Stockbroker. I was into them but I was also reading WH Auden, EE Cummings, the Russian poet Mayakovsky.

I was very precocious, very young when I started. I kinda grew up in a place [in Liverpool] where there weren't many black people. All the black people lived in Toxteth. There were only a couple of black people in West Derby comp where I went, so I always stood out. My mum gave me a lot of my drive. Looking back I'm not sure if this is healthy or not, but she used to say to me, if you go for a job and you've got the same qualifications as the white guy who goes for the job, they'll give it to the white guy. You've gotta be better, faster, fitter, stronger. Like she was. She had four sons by the time she was 24, then she went back to college and became a teacher. My dad was a lorry driver, so I rarely saw him. He'd leave for work at five, six in the morning and when he came back we were in bed.

All of my brothers and me got married very young. Jimmy, my half-brother, who was five-and-a-half years older than me – he got special dispensation from the Pope to get married at 16 'cos his girlfriend was pregnant. So I was only 11 when he went off. My brother Dean and I were fairly close, we shared a bedroom. But he also got married young, at 18, and I got married at 19. It sounds like we couldn't wait to flee the nest, like we couldn't wait to get out. But it wasn't really like that. People just got married early then. Maybe we grew up faster in those days, but of course it wasn't a great idea to get married at 19. I've got a lovely son, Jack, from my first marriage [to actress Cathy Tyson] – he's 32 now and I'm proud of him – but getting married at 19, it's just stupid isn't it? You're not a fully formed human being, you're still a child in very many ways.

I'd tell my 16-year-old self not to be in such a hurry. I was famous when I was quite young. There was no preparation, no fame school where I came from. You're not taught how to handle it, this sudden influx of wealth and fame. And I handled it all very badly. I was unreliable. I was cocky. I was always late. I didn't prepare things. I used to wing it a lot. I mean, friends can come and go, but enemies, they last a lifetime. You make enemies when you're climbing the greasy pole and along with my immaturity and insecurity... I just didn't know how to handle it. Suddenly I was thrust into situations where I was doing things like *Loose Ends* on Radio 4, with people who came from completely different walks of life, like Emma Freud and Robert Elms, tremendously talented people from a completely different world. I think they liked what I was doing but I'm not sure they liked me as a person. I could have handled that an awful lot better but then again, it was an education. It wasn't a life I was really ready for – I was supposed to be a van driver!

Looking back, I was too ignorant and too inexperienced to actually enjoy what I was being shown sometimes. So I got cocky instead. I was part of a thing called the so what? school of journalism. I remember going to an art exhibition at the ICA, and the curator telling me how excited he was about this and that, and me saying, hmm, it's all a bit 'so what?' He was apoplectic. But that cockiness – it was probably a defence mechanism as well, to be honest. You know, sort of masking my ignorance by taking a 'stance'. I'm not like that any more. I like to soak up knowledge, new experiences, different things.



1980 THE YEAR CRAIG TURNS 16

- Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham is found dead aged 32
- Israel and Egypt establish diplomatic relations
- CNN, the first 24-hour news channel, is launched

I was actually quite a sensitive kid. You don't start writing poetry if you haven't got some sort of sensibility and something you want to say. I was one of the regular radical poets in the first days of *Saturday Live* with Ben Elton, Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. I was doing all the poems about the police and Thatcher and South Africa, which came across as fairly hard hitting. I did enjoy being recognised. At first. But if I could talk to my younger self I'd say, go for money, not for fame. I'd rather be rich and anonymous than have everyone know who I am. The shine wears off. My kid won't go shopping with me, they tell me just to stay at home. But you do enjoy it at first cause it's kind of validating your decisions, the early risks you took.

My younger self would be amazed he'd still be relevant at 55. A lot of people I started out with, they've disappeared from our screens. Who'd have thought 32 years later we'd still be doing *Red Dwarf*? That and *Robot Wars* were big hits for me. And *Coronation Street*! I have quite a wide demographic. My radio show on 6 Music has just had its highest ratings and it has the highest audience share on the entire network by a sizeable amount. When I was about 19 my agent said, we can either just rip this now, and you can have a short career and make a whole heap of money, or we can build a career. And I knew I wanted to build a career.

Being a dad... I'm not gonna write the whole review, you'd have to ask them. But I love it. I've got two daughters and they drive me crazy. Because I'm from all brothers, no sisters. And my mum died really young as well, when I was 24. And now I live in a house full of women; my wife, two daughters and quite often my wife's sister and her two daughters are around here as well. I'm the only bloke. My remote control is not my own, put it that way. I know far too much about the Kardashians. I need a good talking to.

If I could have one last conversation with anyone it would be my brother Dean. He tried to get hold of me just before I went into the jungle [to do ITV's *I'm a Celebrity* in 2014]. We'd not spoken for a few years – there was a family falling out. And I just thought, you know what, I'll leave it, go and do the jungle thing and I'll come out and we'll all be together for Christmas. And he died while I was over there. The production team came to me and asked me to go and see the psychiatrist and I just thought it was a health check, you know, to see how you're coping. But the doctor said, "I've got some terrible news to tell you, Craig. Your brother Dean has passed away." So I had to get on a plane straight away. He was so far away. And it took so long to get back. I'd have loved to have had a conversation with him. I'd have loved to have made up.

I'm very happy where I am now. I've made bad decisions and I've made good decisions and I've been unfortunate and I've been lucky. But now I'm at peace with who I am and what I've got. I love my wife and kids. I love my house. I love my job. I'm just really happy. I found growing up quite stressful in many ways. I couldn't wait to grow up. If I could I'd go back to my younger self and I'd tell him to slow down. But I couldn't wait to be big.

**The BBC Radio 6 Music Festival takes place March 6-8. Listen on 6 Music and BBC Sounds. Watch on BBC iPlayer, with highlights on BBC Four. *The Craig Charles House Party* is on BBC Radio 2 on Saturdays, 10pm-midnight. *The Craig Charles Funk and Soul Show* on is on BBC 6 Music on Saturdays, 6-9pm
Interview: Jane Graham @Janeannie
For more interviews see bigissue.com/letter-to-my-younger-self**

cover feature.

Under the ice, there is life

In this harsh Arctic landscape lie the seeds of humanity's salvation.

Words: Steven MacKenzie

Image: Global Seed Vault/ Riccardo Gangale



On the frozen archipelago of Svalbard, halfway between the north of mainland Norway and the North Pole, is the Global Seed Vault.

This inhospitable but breathtaking landscape is home to the ultimate storage solution designed to safeguard the seeds of the world's most important crops.

Constructed in 2008 and run as a joint initiative between Norway's Ministry of Agriculture, the Crop Trust and the Nordic Genetic Resource Centre (NordGen), the Vault is used by gene banks, governments, universities and research facilities from every continent. If their own collections are compromised, if there is mass crop failure due to disease, if food supply chains are disrupted by conflict – or should there be any other doomsday scenario from zombie apocalypse to asteroid impact – the Global Seed Vault could be humanity's best hope for survival.

Stored 130 metres deep inside a mountain are more than a million frozen seeds, kept at a chilled -18C. They represent more than 5,000 plant species with many more varieties of each (for example 40,000 types of bean, 156,000 kinds of wheat).

Svalbard was chosen as the perfect location because its cold climate means that even if power fails, seeds should be kept frozen by the surrounding permafrost. Its remoteness also makes it especially secure. The complex is protected by the Norwegian government agency Statsbygg and any trespassers might also have to contend with Svalbard's population of polar bears, which outnumber human residents. Although they tend to keep far away from this part of Svalbard, pawprints have been found nearby in the past.

"You never know..." warns Åsmund Asdal.

If the Global Seed Vault is an ark to preserve life on Earth then Åsmund Asdal is its Noah.

Seed Vault Co-ordinator since 2015, Asdal is matter-of-fact in the way you'd want the potential saviour of the human race to be.

"It's like a black box," he says about the Seed Vault's role. "One of the things you should do if you have some valuable papers is have a copy. Gene banks have seed collections that are very valuable but vulnerable if they are only in one place. For security they keep copies in Svalbard."

New deposits are made up to six times annually, with around four to six new gene banks adding to the project each year.

"We are in touch with gene banks all over the world," Asdal explains. "We give them the information they need. We inform them about options for depositing seeds. We organise the agreements and formal procedures. We organise the shipment of seeds from the gene banks to Svalbard and when the seeds arrive we bring the seeds into the Seed Vault. I am responsible for all these operations."

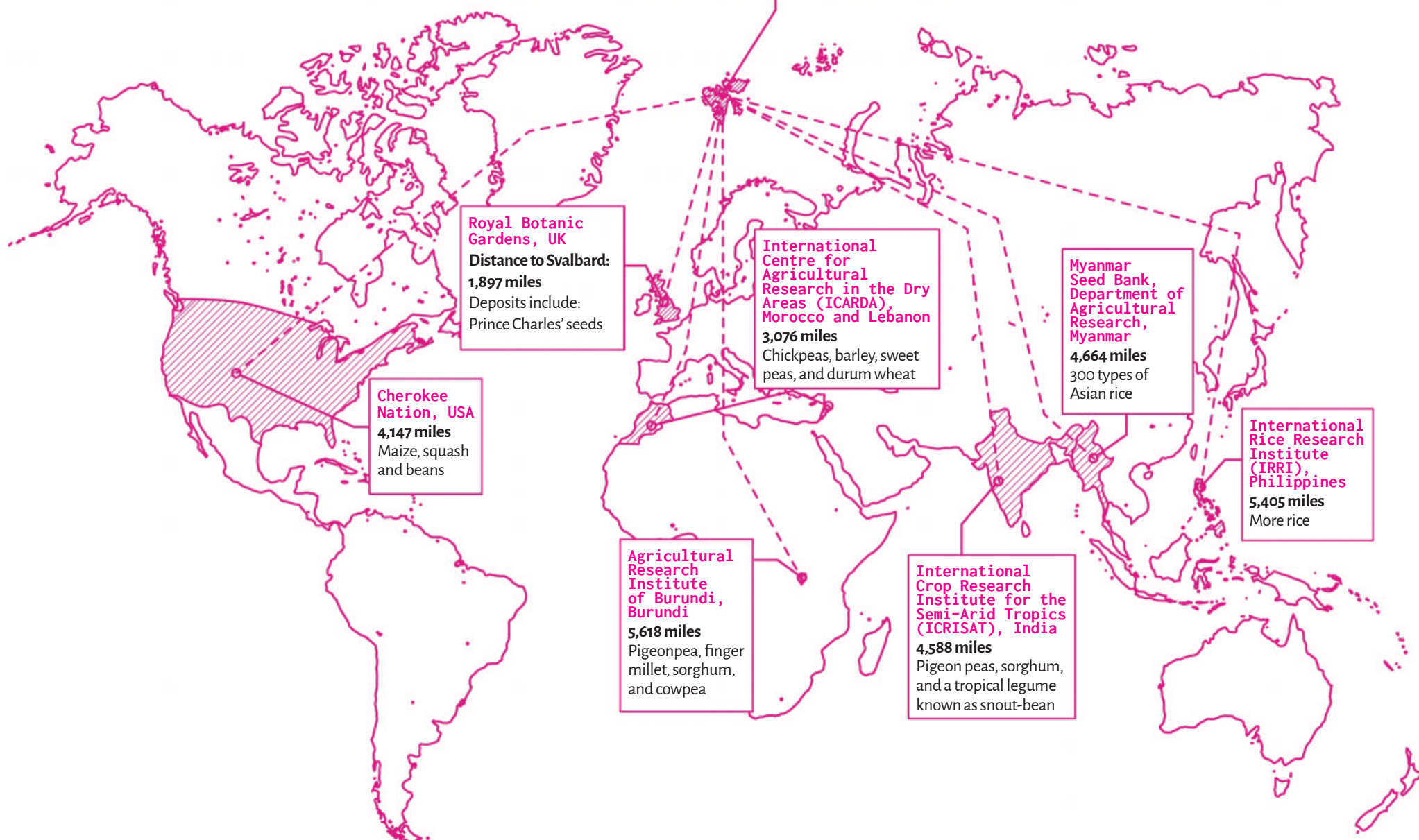
This period is the busiest for Asdal and his team. Today [Tuesday February 25], representatives from dozens of gene banks around the world have travelled to Svalbard to make the biggest mass deposit since the Seed Vault's opening.

Longyearbyen, three kilometres from the Vault, is the largest settlement on Svalbard, feeling like an outpost on the edge of the Earth. In the town's cultural centre, Kulturhuset, international experts very literally leading the field of crop diversity and food security have come together for a day of talks and networking at the Svalbard Seed Summit. The theme: 'Genetic diversity for more resilient food systems,' exploring what measures need to be taken to safeguard crops in the face of the climate crisis.

Asdal presents the findings of long-term experiments he is conducting.

"We have what we call the 100-year experiment. We put seeds of Nordic crops in there in 1986 and every fifth year we take some out and test germination.

"Seeds do not last forever. You have to replace old seeds with new seeds now and then. That is what gene banks do. Some





Precious cargo
More gene bank deposits make it through the sub-zero conditions

species can stay 50 years. Some species can stay 1,000 years. The knowledge about longevity is insufficient. That's why we are having this experiment."

After the summit, the delegation hop on to buses and drive along a windy road past dumpy reindeer on the slopes to the Vault, looming out of the darkness like a Bond villain's lair. The outside temperature has slipped close to the -18C level inside the Vault, but the effects of the climate crisis can clearly be felt in this land of extremes. Today it was an incredibly unseasonable high of 1C.

The Svalbard Seed Vault has just undergone an extensive £16.7m building programme. The entrance tunnel was flooded by rainfall and melting permafrost in early 2017 after Svalbard experienced temperatures seven degrees higher than normal that winter. Since

then they have made the tunnel watertight, as well as upgrading the cooling and security systems.

The need for renovations is a sign that climate change is happening faster than previously predicted, according to Erna Solberg, prime minister of Norway: "Now we have planned for worst-case scenarios in a better way," she says.

Outside the Seed Vault, Solberg greets the gene bank representatives and speaks proudly of the part Norway is playing.

"I believe that more and more countries are seeing that to safeguard their genetics, seeds and biodiversity of their country it's important that you store in different places," she says.

"Biodiversity is part of climate change. We have to make sure we are planning for changes in the climate to make sure we can feed the people of the world in the future."

The name of each gene bank is read out like nations entering the Olympic arena, Solberg presents certificates, and storage boxes full of seeds are symbolically carried over the threshold.

Every seed carries its own story too. The Cherokee Nation is becoming the first indigenous American tribe to make a deposit. Their samples centre on the 'three sisters' crops – maize, squash and beans – varieties of which all predate European settlement. The majority of Cherokee communities today are in Oklahoma, where the corn can grow as high as an elephant's eye, but the region is also prone to droughts, floods and tornadoes putting crops – and Cherokee heritage – at risk.

Many around the world are threatened by food insecurity, whether they live in areas affected by climate change or depend on a single, potentially vulnerable, crop.



Marginal grains
Rice from Thailand arrives at the Seed Vault last week

Image: Global Seed Vault/ Riccardo Gangale



©PeterCaton/CARE/2018



Gloria's stall helps her pay for her children's education



Raised: £265.00
Needed: £622.10

©PeterCaton/CARE/2015



Vor Thoun's farm will provide jobs for her local community



Raised: £640.00
Needed: £572.48

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Defending dignity.
Fighting poverty.

The president of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, an advocate of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, has also travelled to Svalbard. At the summit earlier in the day he spoke of the precarious position many nations find themselves in: "We know that climate change has a significant impact on agriculture around the world. In my own country, where we are getting recurrent droughts and floods, the threat to traditional agriculture is real."

Ghana is not an isolated case. Seventy per cent of Myanmar's population, 80 per cent of Mali's and 90 per cent of Burundi's depend on agriculture to make a living, so researchers from these countries are depositing varieties of their most resilient crops. More than half the world's population – around three billion people – rely on rice for 80 per cent of their dietary intake, so the International Rice Research Institute based in the Philippines has created test boxes of different varieties of rice that will be stored in Svalbard for between 10 and 40 years to test how well they'll germinate in the future. Gene banks from India and Morocco are focussing on seeds that could prove crucial in the increasingly dry tropics, home to two billion people, 664 million of them impoverished and relying on the land.

The Global Seed Vault might seem like excessive preparation against scenarios that might never come to pass, but its collections have already proved vital. The seed collection of the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) includes 80,000 samples stored in Svalbard, including many plants extinct in their natural habitats. Like other gene banks, the seeds in the Vault were simply a back-up. Unfortunately, ICARDA's own storage facility was located in Aleppo and lost during the Syrian conflict in 2012.

"The government army captured the ICARDA premises in Syria," Ahmed Amri of ICARDA says. "We do not know in which state the gene bank is now."

"The ICARDA gene bank in Aleppo held 141,052 accessions. In 2008, we started sending seed duplicates to Svalbard. Now, we have retrieved all duplicate seed samples stored and are regenerating about 30,000 of them each year."

In five years ICARDA has already managed to take around 81,000 seed samples from its new bases in Morocco and Lebanon and redeposit them back in Svalbard.

Dr Chris Cockel from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is one of the representatives from the UK. Kew has its own



Two by two
Asmund Asdal,
the Global Seed
Vault's very
own Noah

Image: Global Seed Vault/ Riccardo Gangale

storage facility, with even more seeds stored in the Millennium Seed Bank in Sussex than there are in Svalbard. But, as Cockel points out: "The important thing is not to put all your seeds in one basket."

Although it couldn't be revealed until the seeds were safely in Svalbard, the team from Kew branch has a special mission, here on his majesty's secret service.

"We're basically acting as the middle person between Svalbard and the Prince of Wales' estate," Cockel divulges.

Kew's package contains 27 wild plant species from meadows at the Royal Gardens at Highgrove. His royal horticulturist said in a statement: "I am delighted that seeds from the wildflower meadows at Highgrove are to be safely stored in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault... It's more urgent than ever that we act now to protect this diversity before it really is too late. Therefore the Seed Vault and seed banks around the world play a vital role in this critically important mission."

What Prince Charles said to the plants themselves we don't know.

Dr Chris Cockel leads a project at Kew studying how agriculture can adapt to climate change, drawing upon the wild relatives of 29 of the most critical food crops, from alfalfa to wheat.

"The material we're getting from the Prince of Wales is in line with that," Cockel says. "While they may not appear to be important for global food security, there are some species there, for instance wild carrot, that can be used in breeding programmes to make crops better at adapting to climate change and resist pests and diseases."

Instead of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault being an insurance policy against Armageddon, Cockel says it's more about preserving life and food as we know it. As well as storing seeds, gene banks around the world send samples to each other to further the research and ensure food security.

"The idea is to restore some of those important genetics that have been lost in the process of domestication. It's not producing anything that's genetically modified, it's just using breeding methods that people have used for thousands of years to improve their crops."

"Previously most of the effort was put into producing high-yielding varieties and feeding more people. But that process has actually resulted in some of the crops becoming more vulnerable to pests and diseases as their genetic make-up has become narrower and narrower."

"Their wild relatives have survived, overlooked and often thought of as weeds. We're not producing new super foods, but carrots that in 20 years' time will look the same as carrots we have now. They might just be better adapted to a drier climate."

So whether sudden global catastrophe or the worsening climate crisis comes to threaten all life on this planet, at least we know where to go to sow the seeds of recovery.

■ @stevenmackenzie



No, not Bond
The 130-metre
tunnel leads to
the storage facility
inside a mountain

Image: Global Seed Vault/ Riccardo Gangale

Rough sleeper numbers are down, the government says. But don't celebrate yet

Words: Liam Geraghty



No chance to rest
Despite the recent drop in rough sleeping, there is still a long way to go

Image: Prisma by Dukas/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

The UK government has hailed a small drop in the number of people sleeping rough in England for the second straight year. It's welcome news.

The nine per cent decrease means that officially there were 4,266 people counted by outreach workers, local charities and community workers on one autumn evening between October 1 and November 30.

The snapshot represents a small step in the right direction on the mammoth journey to ending rough sleeping "once and for all" by 2024. That was Boris Johnson's vow last week while unveiling £236m of extra funding towards Housing First-style accommodation and an urgent review from homelessness tsar Dame Louise Casey.

And they have a way to go – rough sleeping levels are still 141 per cent higher than when the Tories first took power a decade ago – meaning 2,498 extra people are living on the streets today.

Any reduction should be celebrated, says The Big Issue Foundation chief executive Stephen Robertson.

"Each time a number goes up from a previous one it is easy to worry and call for more action," he says. "When a number goes down it is encouraging but is it equally as good? Behind all this is the age-old question of whether we can even trust the numbers we are told."

That is the age-old question – the snapshot method of counting rough sleepers has long been queried.

We named actor and presenter Ross Kemp a Big Issue Changemaker this year after he exposed the snapshot's shortcomings in his *Living With* documentary last year.



Street fighting man
Ross Kemp's *Living With*
doc set out the reality of
UK homelessness

And in the wake of the official stats' release last week, youth homelessness charity Centrepoin's head of public affairs Paul Noblet insists that "it beggars belief" that two in five of the local authorities didn't go out to perform a count, relying on estimates instead. "Those experiencing homelessness deserve better than rough guesses," he concludes.

London homelessness charity Glass Door's chief operating officer Lucy Abraham reckons the count "grossly underestimate the true scale of homelessness". And Labour's shadow housing secretary John Healey has asked the UK Statistics Authority to investigate the data, calling it an "unreliable undercount". Healey's move came after the BBC released their own count a day earlier after sending Freedom of Information requests to local authorities in England. They found that more than 25,000 people slept rough at least once in the last year – more than five times the official figure.

Hilary Burkitt, senior researcher at charity Shelter, tells *The Big Issue* that while the BBC's headline figure did demonstrate the "full picture" of the scale of rough sleeping, it can't be compared to the official snapshot figure. "They're trying to measure different things and in terms of the snapshot it's a useful indicator of trends over time but it does not show the full picture of rough sleeping or homelessness, as those FOI figures show," she says. "If you're using the snapshot to say that there are 4,000 people who need help then that is completely absurd when there are tens of thousands of people who are experiencing rough sleeping who need help. The snapshot is just the tip of the iceberg."

The criticism is nothing new – rough sleeping is hard to count due to its hidden nature, after all.

What can we take from figures that we know don't scratch the surface?

The government championed the impact of their £112m Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) fund in their stats, reporting that across the 244 local authorities that receive RSI funding, rough sleeping is down 12 per cent. Launched in 2018, RSI offers targeted funding to tackle street homelessness.

Burkitt says: "If we can rely on these figures and resources invested in the Rough Sleeping Initiative, they show that investment can make a difference, but the scale of the problem is far more than is being addressed so far. We need to be championing a whole new generation of social housing if we want to get a grip on this problem."

If spending is making headway, the snapshot figures can be used as a rallying cry ahead of the forthcoming Budget to splash the cash. CEO of charity St Mungo's Howard Sinclair insists funding so far is "simply not enough and too short-term" citing the £1bn lost from frontline services.

Charities are calling for investment to end years of cuts to services and build the social housing required to take away the root causes of homelessness.

If the official statistics hold any weight, the government will answer those calls with desperately needed investment in the Budget. Only then can they end rough sleeping "once and for all".

@Lazergun_Nun
Additional reporting:
Hannah Westwater @hannahjtw



Meet Adam Holloway: Westminster's new man on rough sleeping

The MP tasked with sorting out rough sleeping said in Parliament just two years ago that street homelessness is "a lot more comfortable than going on exercise in the army".

Now Adam Holloway, the Tory member for Gravesham, has been appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick – a role created specifically to tackle the rough-sleeping crisis.

In 2018 Holloway slept rough, reported himself to outreach services and accepted a place in a shelter for a night. The 54-year-old said he wanted a first-hand look at homelessness for ITV's *Tonight* programme, and to compare experiences with when he did the same for *World in Action* in 1991.

The ex-army officer later debated fellow MPs on being in a soup kitchen where he "did not hear English being spoken by anyone" and that the number of rough sleepers was due to "very high levels of eastern European immigration". According to government data from the time, just 22 per cent of rough sleepers across Britain were EU nationals from outside the UK, and three per cent were non-EU nationals.

He argued that nothing would change if we continue to "feel sorry for everybody" instead of focusing on "the people in real need".

Holloway did not respond to a request for comment.

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**THE BIG
ISSUE
SHOP**

CULTURE

FILM
Hailing the amazing
life of an African-
American icon
Cath Clarke

BROADCAST
Bonkers, yes. But
Resonance FM has
something for everyone
Robin Ince

TECH
How *Star Trek* predicted
the dark side of the
digital age
Steven MacKenzie

STREET ART



MYLDN: A Street View of London Life

by Babycakes Romero

Renowned London street photographer Babycakes Romero presents a new book of his work, MYLDN. Fifty per cent of all the artist's royalties will be donated to youth homeless charity Centrepont.

"This book is a compilation of shots from a decade of London life originally posted on my ongoing blog of the same name," he explains. "I aimed to show this magnificent multicultural melting pot in all of its chaotic glory. During this time the city has transformed from 'The City of Possibilities' into 'The Impossible City' as excessive rents and living costs have forced out so many and in a lot of cases, on to the streets themselves.

"Homelessness has increased drastically and without even seeing the stats you can see it with your own eyes. When this many people are being made homeless it shows to me this city is failing to protect those who need it the most – and it is not their failure, it is our society's.

"I wanted to donate half my royalties to Centrepont as they provide a safety net to young people who have fallen through the cracks. They are able to help them when they are at their most vulnerable and to prevent them from spiralling further down into a life which is harder and harder to escape from the longer you are in it. This city must protect and provide for all of its citizens, not just for the few."

etsy.com/uk/shop/babycakesromero

The work on this page is created by people who are marginalised. Contact street.lights@bigissue.com to see your art here. To see more and buy prints: bigissueshop.com At least half of the profit goes to the artist.

AUTHOR FEATURE

Glum vision

Child refugee **Hashi Mohamed** is now a barrister. But he says that in modern Britain this is an increasingly unlikely scenario

What does it take to make it in modern Britain? Ask a politician, and they'll tell you it's hard work. Ask a millionaire, and they'll tell you it's talent. Ask a CEO and they'll tell you it's dedication. But what if none of those things is enough? What does it therefore mean to be socially mobile?

We live in a society where the single greatest indicator of what your job will be is the job of your parents. Where power and privilege are concentrated among the seven per cent of the population who were privately educated. Where, if your name sounds black or Asian, you'll need to send out twice as many job applications as your white neighbour. And if your health outcomes early on are poor and you're homeless, this makes matters even more dire.

I know something about social mobility. I am a barrister who was raised on benefits and attended some of the lowest-performing schools in the country, in the rough and deprived London borough of Brent.

In **People Like Us** I argue that far from being typical, my own story is an anomaly. Rather than something which could be emulated by others in Britain today, it is an exception which brings the rule into sharp focus.

The success I have achieved is far from easily attainable to the vast majority of people out there; and that's because such a success is usually determined by the parents to whom you're born and the circumstances which dictate your destiny.

At the age of nine, I arrived in the UK as an unaccompanied child refugee who had just buried his father. Not understanding anything about the new country I would call home, I barely spoke any English and was completely disoriented. I grew up moving from one squalid council accommodation to the next for most of my childhood.

At the age of 18 I found myself homeless and living in a Centrepont hostel in central London. I had to work steadily under difficult conditions, with no guidance as to what a real future would look like, and learning for myself first-hand the requisite cultural and social capital needed to succeed in Britain's top professions.



Illustration: Joseph Joyce

Ultimately, I am telling an individual's own personal journey; not necessarily one which is ready-made for those who wish to emulate my success. I am candid about what has worked for me and I implore individuals to think hard about what works for them; including, controversially, to change the way they speak if they feel it would help them get on.

I am convinced that it is in part luck that allowed me to realise, very young (and without being dispirited), both the limitations of the cards life had dealt me and the possibilities offered by them as well. It was my luck, again, to have had the intellectual capacity, the physical health and the absence of immediate pressure to ruthlessly focus on creating a better future for me and my family. I was lucky, also, to meet a series of mentors who guided me through the new worlds in which I found myself. To put it another way, if I genuinely believed that what I have achieved and overcome was possible for anyone, then I would have profoundly misunderstood the overarching lesson of my life. Therefore, if you, or someone you know, has succeeded against all the odds, please let go of the idea that all that's required is some hard work and determination for others to do the same.

The reality remains that for a young refugee boy, who buried his father at the

age of nine, arrived in Britain without his mother, and was brought up in poverty and among profound deprivation, the chances that you would be writing a book like *People Like Us* are minuscule. Not impossible, but highly improbable.

In that context, what politicians should really be saying is this: the chance of you succeeding in Britain today is down to many factors: the wealth and profession of your parents, the kind of school you attended, your mental and physical health and the quality of your early environment, in terms of stability and attention. You'll need to work harder than you ever imagined – and hope that whatever talents you have, given the fast-paced development of automation, are going to still be needed when you grow up. You'll need a lot of luck as you go; and let's hope that, along the way, someone explains the unwritten rules of the world you want to join. And you'll need to make it through all that with your belief in yourself – and your vision for the future – still intact. And then – maybe – you'll make it.

***People Like Us: What it Takes to Make it in Modern Britain* by Hashi Mohamed is out now (Profile Books, £16.99)**



Musical youth

Music journalist Pete Paphides' heartfelt and tune-heavy boyhood recollections have struck a chord with **Chris Deerin**



The cover image of Pete Paphides' boyhood memoir is perfectly chosen. It is an impossibly cute picture of the author at the age of five: curly mop-top, big brown eyes, chubby cheeks, grey school shorts and long socks. Most of us can locate a similar photo of ourselves, taken in that short period before life clamped its crocodile jaws around us and started shaking.

Appropriately, then, there is something of the everyman in **Broken Greek**. Many of the challenges faced by young Paphides – building and maintaining friendships, figuring out his sexuality, developing cultural tastes, trying to work out how to be cool and to avoid getting beaten up by the local toughs – are standard childhood fare. It is in the telling that the author elevates his story to something rather beautiful.

Paphides is a music writer and DJ (he is also married to the writer Caitlin Moran). I experienced the same feeling reading this book as I do when listening to his show on Soho Radio – you are in the happy, rewarding presence of an irrepressible enthusiast. He exudes a stubborn naivety, an insistence on locating the positive, that stands out in our era of social media snark and drive-by brutality.

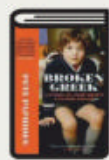
Growing up in Birmingham with Greek-Cypriot immigrant parents, Paphides is caught between two cultures. His parents have a relentlessly attritional existence running a chip shop, while trying and largely failing to assimilate to life in the UK. His father, in particular, an almost stereotypically repressed Mediterranean male, is desperate to return to Cyprus. Pete, feeling more British than Greek, desperately searches for an identity that accommodates both his own emerging, modern desires and those of his traditionalist parents.

Broken Greek is charming, funny and will be hugely relatable to anyone who grew up in the Seventies and Eighties. "That's a lot of pockets," says Pete's mum when his quiet friend Edward Osborne turns up on their doorstep in full Sid Vicious get-up. "They're bondage trousers, Mrs Paphides. I'm a punk now," says Edward respectfully. On Hogmanay 1979, Pete and his brother Aki watch Cliff Richard perform his hit Devil Woman, his "signature late Seventies/early Eighties 'dance' that of a man carefully emerging through a foggy clearing at night in a glade where a puma has been reportedly sighted".

The need to get the "right" schoolbag and trainers, avoiding the cheap knock-offs that will lead to the inevitable playground slagging, remains all too fresh in the memory. The book is full of these familiar touchstones. And throughout, you root for kind, uncertain, scared but spirited little Pete, knowing that his good-hearted enthusiasm will in time enable him to fix what is broken.

The reader also finds himself rooting, if in a less uncomplicated way, for Frank Brill, the central character in John Niven's **The F*ck-it List**. Set in the near future, where a two-term Donald Trump has been followed by President Ivanka, and US society reconstructed to suit NRA crazies and racists, Brill, discovering he has only a short period left to live, decides that before he goes he will settle some scores. He does so in spectacular Dirty Harry-style. As ever, Niven, one of our most consistently funny and uproarious authors, leaves it all on the pitch in this liberal revenge-fantasy.

@chrisdeerin



Broken Greek: A Story of Chip Shops and Pop Songs, by Pete Paphides is released on March 5 (Quercus, £20)



The F*ck-it List by John Niven is released on March 26 (William Heinemann, £16.99)

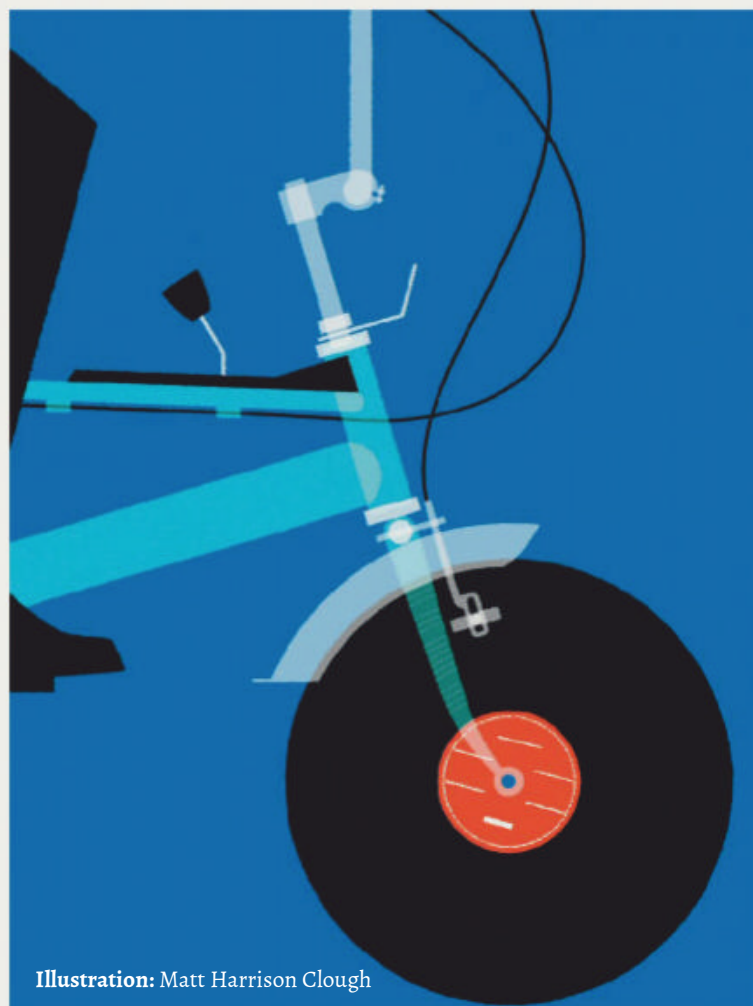
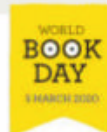


Illustration: Matt Harrison Clough



Greg James
& Chris Smith



Top 5 books for adults to share with kids

01 **Kid Normal** by Greg James and Chris Smith, illustrated by Erica Salcedo

OK, OK, we know it's our own book. But hear us out! We really wanted to celebrate reading together so there are several moments in the book specifically designed to be read out loud and shared, including one point where you have to shout out of the window. You have been warned!

02 **You're a Bad Man, Mr Gum!** by Andy Stanton, illustrated by David Tazzyman

This is our favourite book to read out loud because it basically turns you into an incredible comedian. It's the funniest book you'll ever read, apart from our books, obvs.

03 **A Squash and a Squeeze** by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler

All Donaldson and Scheffler's books are sublime, but if you enjoy putting on a 'little old lady' voice as much as we do then this is a clear winner.

04 **His Dark Materials** by Philip Pullman

You don't have to stop sharing books just because the kids got a bit older and like Fortnite. These stories are amazing to share and discover together with your tween/teen.

05 **You Choose** by Pippa Goodheart and Nick Sharratt

Sometimes it's not just the words in the book, it's the conversations you have around them. This will spark hours of bedtime chat, it's a total classic.

Kid Normal and the Loudest Library by Greg James and Chris Smith, illustrated by Erica Salcedo (Bloomsbury) is a 2020 £1 World Book Day title. This World Book Day (Thursday March 5), we want everyone to join the reading revolution and share a million stories during World Book Day month (until March 29) worldbookday.com/share-a-million-stories



REVIEW

Saying it loud

The uncompromising Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison gets the tribute she so richly deserves, says **Cath Clarke**



In the 1960s, before she was a Nobel Prize-winning novelist, Toni Morrison was a single mother raising two small boys with a demanding job as a book editor in New York. She'd set her alarm for 4am every day, waking up before sunrise to work on the novel that became *The Bluest Eye*. She kept a notepad in the car to jot a line or two down at traffic jams. One day she wrote a to-do list that filled an entire sheet of paper then crossed out everything that wasn't essential to her life, leaving two tasks: "mothering and novels".

Interviewed for this smart, insightful documentary before her death last summer aged 88, Morrison is extraordinary in **The Pieces I Am** – she practically glows with the wisdom and unfakeable warmth of a woman with nothing left to prove, who has sussed out what's important in life. Growing up in Ohio, her neighbourhood was mixed, but Morrison's dad, who'd witnessed two men being lynched as a boy, never let a white person in the house. With *The Bluest Eye* she wrote the book that she wanted to read – no one was writing about

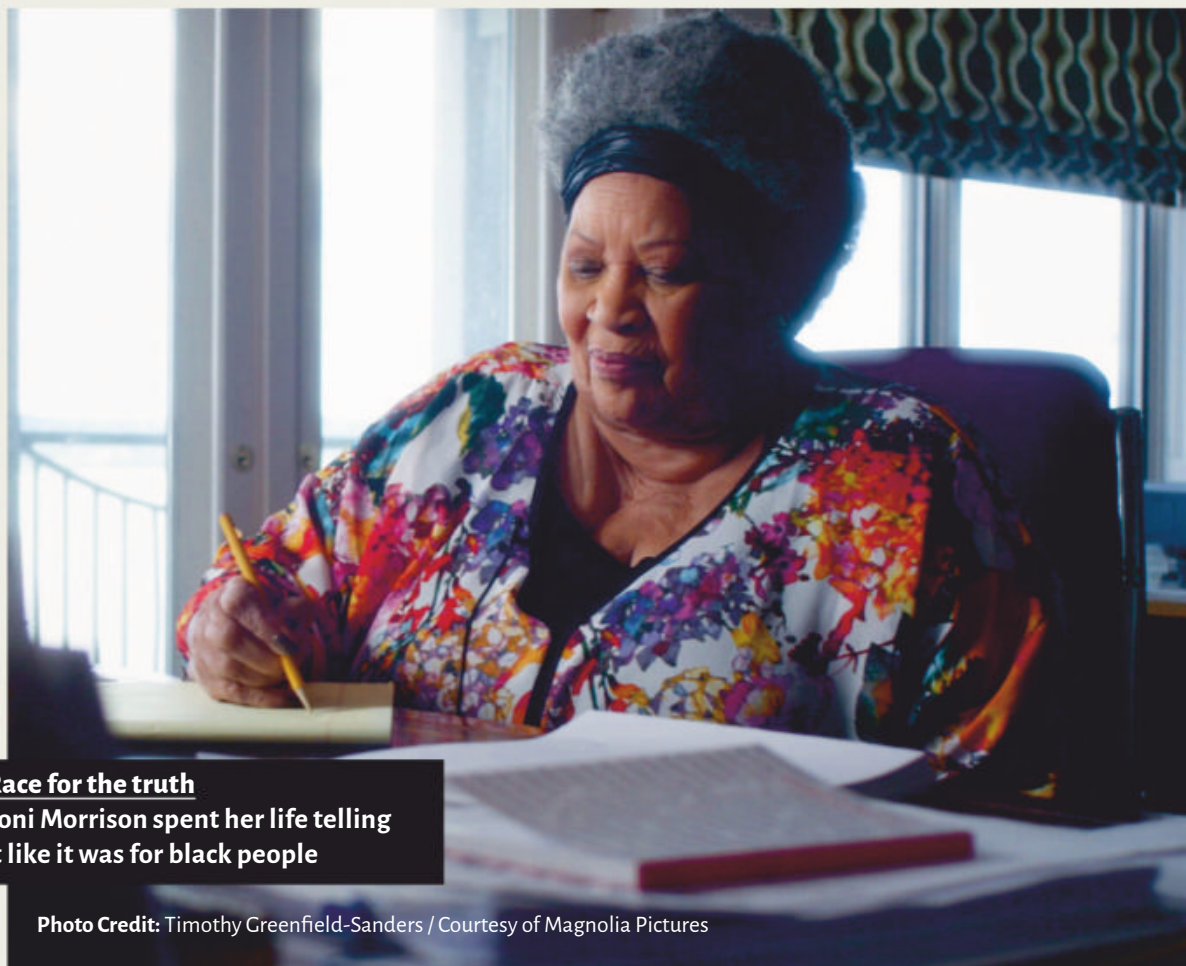


BASE INSTINCT

Here's a feelgood Brit flick with a familiar formula and moments that might have been lifted from a dozen films you've already seen – including director Peter Cattaneo's own *The Full Monty*. **Military Wives** tells the true story of a group of women on a military base who formed a choir when their other halves were away in Afghanistan and ended up at number one at Christmas in 2011. Kristin Scott Thomas and *Catastrophe*'s Sharon Horgan are terrific as warring WAGs.

★★★★☆

Military Wives is in cinemas from March 6



Race for the truth

Toni Morrison spent her life telling it like it was for black people

Photo Credit: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders / Courtesy of Magnolia Pictures

black girls. They were "jokes or props" in literature. The title came from a childhood memory of internalised racism and self-loathing – a friend who told her "I've been praying for two years for blue eyes." There is a gorgeous musical quality to Morrison's voice as she tells all this. Archive video footage of her reading extracts from her novels made the hairs on the back of my neck prickle.

Early reviews were positive but often clueless. One concluded: "She's too talented to just write about black people." The lack of exposition for white people in her novels rattled the critics. Morrison speaks of "the white gaze" and the assumption by reviewers that her reader was white. In archive TV footage an interviewer asks her if she gets sick and tired of being called a "black woman writer". She smiles. "I like it. I am all those things."

In telling the story of her life and novels, this fascinating documentary sketches out a history of African-Americans from slavery onwards too, illustrated with stunning pictures by African-American artists. Morrison wrote 11 novels including *Sula*, *Song of Solomon* and the Pulitzer-winning *Beloved*, inspired by the true story of Margaret Garner, a runaway slave who slit her two-year-old daughter's throat rather than watch her be returned to a slave owner. Director Timothy Greenfield-Sanders gets insightful interviews from academics and writers, though perhaps lets the running time drift a little (the film is a bit long at two hours). One commentator points out that until Morrison came along the slave story

She wasn't interested in navigating the world of white men

was the story of men. Walter Mosley speaks beautifully. "You don't want to be a character in a Toni Morrison novel. She is writing scorched earth," he says. "Her characters take on all the suffering which has created us, which has made us so beautiful."

In her early years as a novelist Morrison continued to work in publishing, bringing other African-American writers to the table. She persuaded Black Panther activist Angela Davis to write an autobiography and edited a book by Muhammad Ali.

She wasn't interested in navigating the world of white men. "I was more interesting than them," she says laughing. Once, after hearing that the men at work got a bigger bonus, she marched into her boss's office saying: "I'm the head of the household, just like you." She got her raise. What a woman.

★★★★☆

Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am is in cinemas from March 6
@CathxClarke

INTERVIEW

It's been 30 years since **Deacon Blue** headlined Scotland's biggest gig. Frontman Ricky Ross got angry onstage that day, and tells **Paul English** that now he's more comfortable with the personal than the political

Their best-loved song tells of a man who finds meaning in his life by pushing a council dustcart through the streets, driven by the dream of saving his money to buy a dinghy, which he'll sail up the west coast of Scotland, through villages and towns.

Since its release in 1987, Deacon Blue's anthem for the working man, Dignity, has become public property, a shared metaphor of hope. Yet as the Dundonian who wrote the song sits down with his wife and bandmate over morning coffee to talk

about their group's new record 33 years later – and six weeks after Scotland returned 48 SNP MPs to Westminster – we're considering the political prescience of another of his band's hit singles. "The line that still really resonates is the line 'first we speak for ourselves now'," says songwriter and frontman Ricky Ross of their 1992 hit Your Town, a howl of anger and optimism in response to Margaret Thatcher's 11-year premiership (which had finally ended two years earlier) and the burgeoning sense of Scotland wanting to take greater control of its own affairs.

"That's something that has actually happened, that has become the truth. And we do it in 'pictures and songs and words'."

"It's a song which still seems alive to me," agrees wife Lorraine McIntosh, Ross's co-singer in the multimillion-selling band. "Every time we do it live, I never feel I have to dig down too deep."

Deacon Blue formed in 1985, a year when, thanks to Live Aid, millions were alive to the notion of music's transformational power. Their early political leanings were as hard to miss as McIntosh's sirening vocals on their 1988 breakthrough hit Real Gone Kid.

By the time Glasgow had been anointed as Britain's first European City of Culture in 1990, they'd played gigs at CND rallies and Aids fundraisers, and would soon be at the centre of a collective of cultural players, including literary titans William McIlvanney, Edwin Morgan and Alasdair Gray, in the pressure group Artists for Scottish Independence. Both Ross and McIntosh have remained high-profile supporters of the cause ever since.

At the centrepiece of the city's cultural celebrations that year was the largest free music concert ever held in Scotland. The Big Day on June 3 pulled a crowd of 250,000 people and Deacon Blue headlined.



Growing older with dignity
Deacon Blue are still gracefully
fighting the good fight

It's remembered for Michael Stipe playing on the Broomielaw, Sheena Easton being booed and bottled off on Glasgow Green and Ricky Ross angrily accusing the Labour Party of being ineffectual in Scotland at a time when Tories were cutting off the country's manufacturing lifeblood and using Scotland as a test ground for the Community Charge (more commonly known as the Poll Tax). Broadcast around the country live on Channel 4, it sounded a political and cultural klaxon from the banks of the Clyde to the rest of the UK.

Fast forward 30 years and the post-Brexit political dissonance between north and south once again provides stark parallels.

"I think it's OK to be angry now and again," Ross says, recalling the mood of that day in 1990. "But I would definitely have expressed it differently.

"I think a lot of people think, undoubtedly, that we are in a horrible position politically at the moment, because we have a Tory government in control. Even people who don't believe in independence as an idea seem to think of it as the direction of travel now.

"There's a lot of stuff to learn before you get to that point. There's hope, definitely, but you have to reflect and change, adapt to the circumstances. You have to deal with the government that's there, because they're there for five years, maybe 10. You can't just go on a constant 'anti' stance."

The enduring appeal of their music is in no doubt – the new album's title track *City of Love* was on the Radio 2 A-list for four weeks over Christmas – but, in Brexit Britain, political presumption is less predictable, as they discovered on tour in 2016.

McIntosh says: "When you start off you have nothing to lose. You can be who you want and say what you want. Ricky would talk about politics all the time, we'd go to towns in the north and he'd be campaigning for Labour, talking about Margaret Thatcher, and you felt that these people were all with us.

"But things have become much more complicated. A few years ago, Ricky talked about refugees washing up on the shores of places like Italy, and one night on the tour someone shouted, 'Send them home.' That really depressed us. It reminds you that things aren't black and white, left and right."

Many of the songs on their 10th studio album, their fourth LP in eight years, deal more in the intimate and the personal, than the ostensibly political.

In *Our Room* peeks through the window on the early days of the couple's relationship (their marriage is Ross's second, and they now have three grown-up children), sleeping on mattresses on floors of tenement flats with stains on the ceiling. *Intervals* is the lightest of pre-fledgling parental reassurances to a young adult; *Weight of The World* a shimmering eulogy and last act of remembrance for a lost soul.

Yet it's the album's finale, *On Love*, which most catches the breath. Delivered partly in spoken word by Ross, it's a seven-minute sepia-toned daydream of autobiographical reveries on lost love.

"It's a series of events from childhood to my early life, which are ostensibly all disconnected," explains Ross. "But it's why I consider this to be the album of my life – it's allowed me to tell the stories I've held back from Deacon Blue before."

@PaulEnglishhack

Deacon Blue's new album *City of Love* is out on March 6. Their European and UK tour begins in Berlin on October 25, ending on December 4 at Glasgow's SSE Hydro



Rebellious jukebox
Avant-garde music show
Bad Punk is an heavy treat

RADIO

Photo: Twitter

Good vibrations

Long-time disciple **Robin Ince** pays warm tribute to Resonance FM, a station fond of making a thrillingly unpredictable racket



I sheltered from the rain a few weeks ago by popping into a small studio near London Bridge to talk comic books. With steam rising from my knees, we discussed *The Beezer*, *2000AD* and the work of Alan Moore for Alex Fitch's *Panel Borders* – a regular broadcast on **Resonance FM**.

I remain perturbed by the number of people who are unaware of this idiosyncratic adventure in a multitude of sounds. In the last week, I've listed to dark synth, extreme metal and Clive Dunn and John Le Mesurier duetting on a song about how you can't get much for a pound nowadays.

The musical choices veer from and around the sounds similar to The Velvet Underground, John Cage and some metal bins filled with wooden clogs being thrown down a lengthy spiral fire escape, which I think is a good thing (the variety of sounds, not dustbin hooliganism).

A Duck in a Tree, curated by :zoviet*france, a collective of musicians who have been creating work for 40 years, describes its output as "genre-refusing recordings" and that is true of many of Resonance's programmes, most of which are easily available on Mixcloud.

If you miss hearing your elders declaring, "What is that awful racket you're listening to?", this is the place to come to incite them anew. You will also find your elders here on *Calling All Pensioners*, the creation of the Deptford Action Group for the Elderly, a show that promises to bring you happiness and create tears of joy. The most recent show combined a discussion on keeping an eye on Boris Johnson's election promise to maintain the free TV licence for the over-75s with some jaunty dance tunes of the 1950s. Those who are unable to physically drop in to their daily "house of joy" centre in Deptford (10am-1pm), can still enjoy their company from home. Most of the music shows have limited DJ intervention, like Flora Pitrolo on *A Colder Consciousness*, it is the hushed voice of a covert accomplice.

Those who admire Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds' *Ghosteen*, a mesmerising work that approaches shamanism in the power of the spell it casts on you, will find that much of the music highlighted by Resonance has a similar quality of engagement. Then, just when you think you are lost in the dreamwork, you can slap yourself around the chops with some extreme metal from the *Drones of Hell* show. My own musical peccadilloes are usually best served by The Band of Holy Joy's show *Bad Punk*. They recently gave their hour to a session from [London experimental group] Rutger Hauser. Sure, there's a reason for verse, chorus and middle eight, but sometimes it is good to listen to something increasingly unpredictable. Occasionally I am unsure if my laptop is short-circuiting or if all has turned to silence, and so I am drawn in, and as my ear reaches the speaker I will find a hint of percussion and hastily draw back. Resonance has its unlit firework moments, and you can't be sure when the music will explode.

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United stand
Demonstrators stage a 'Thank EU for the Music' concert outside the Royal Albert Hall before the Last Night of the Proms last year

Why Brexit is bad for Britain's orchestras

With carbon emissions to consider too, touring in large groups will be far more complex, says **Mark Pemberton**



The UK's orchestras are a global success. But that success comes at a price. It's an expensive and risky business putting on classical concerts, involving the movement of upwards of 100 people plus support staff. And after a decade of cuts in public funding, which has led to our orchestras chasing more work abroad, particularly in Europe, Brexit poses the biggest risk of all.

First off, we need access to the best in global talent. Musicians cross borders every day, either as soloists or looking for permanent work in an orchestra. Freedom of movement has made this easy, but with the UK planning to impose immigration controls, and EU countries doing the same to us, it's all going to get a lot more difficult after the end of December.

Our members will from then on need to navigate different work permit and social security systems in each of the EU27 nations, all of which will add costs and bureaucracy. And for EU musicians wanting to live and work in the UK, this will also get a lot harder, now we know that from January 1 2021 they will be treated no differently to migrants from outside the EU and will be subject to the UK's visa rules.

Orchestras also need to shift the musical instruments across the border, and once we have left the Customs Union we can expect customs checks, which will add costs and delays. We are used to having to get carnets for tours to the USA or China, which guarantees that the goods shipped out will be the same as those brought back in, so know just how much

extra work will be involved once we have to ramp up the number of carnets needed for European tours.

And getting the musical instruments and the musicians to the venue is time-critical. If the concert is billed to start at 7.30pm, and the musicians or instruments haven't arrived, it will be in breach of contract. It's this and many other Brexit-related issues which are causing our hard-pressed orchestra managers sleepless nights.

But touring raises issues beyond Brexit. Climate change was a key topic at the recent Association of British Orchestras conference, which under its theme of 2020 Vision looked at the landscape for orchestras over the next decade. We know that cultural exchange is a social good, and our great music festivals, such as the BBC Proms, need to present a full range of UK and foreign orchestras. But questions have to be asked about the sustainability of moving orchestras thousands of miles, with all the carbon emissions that entails. We may just have to start being more local and less global.

And there are other issues that our conference needed to explore. Public funding is increasingly being linked to 'relevance', and key to being relevant is being diverse and inclusive. We know that orchestras have a diversity problem, but finding a solution is challenging. Our members are dependent on a talent pipeline, and it takes years and dedication to learn an instrument to the high standard needed to get work in an orchestra. And something is happening

to that pipeline which means that the supply of musicians is not as diverse as we all want. Clearly we need the government to be committed to universal access to music education, backed up by substantial public investment, but there are interventions our members can also do that could make a difference. We need to inspire the current generation of young musicians, regardless of their economic or social background to see how rewarding a career in an orchestra can be.

But it's not all bad news. We were delighted to launch at the conference our latest sector statistics, which show continued growth in concerts, reaching audiences of over four million, and engagement with 700,000 children and young people every year. Allied to the highest-ever combined listener figures for BBC Radio 3, Classic FM and Scala Radio, this all goes to show that the tired prejudice that classical music is elitist and dying is far from the truth. In fact it's thriving and reaching more people than ever.

Let's just hope that Brexit and the other challenges our members face doesn't bring this British success story to a grinding halt.

Mark Pemberton is director of the Association of British Orchestras, the UK's representative body for professional orchestras and youth ensembles. @aborchestras

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INTERVIEW

Resistance is futile

Star Trek has predicted the scariest elements of our digital age. Actress **Jeri Ryan**, who plays one of the prescient evil drones, sees the eerie parallels

Star Trek has long been celebrated for its technological foresight. In the Sixties, Captain Kirk and crew chatted to each other on communicators that look and act much like mobile phones (both losing signal at the most crucial moments). Any question could be spoken aloud and answered by the robotic female voice of the Enterprise's computer, just as we question smart speakers in our homes about the weather. Video conferencing, tablets, GPS, instant translators were all part of the *Star Trek* universe before becoming part of our everyday reality.

But *Star Trek's* most prescient prediction is embodied by their most menacing nemesis. The Borg are evil drones driven by a relentless quest to conquer. They assimilate other lifeforms and take their technology. Resistance, as their constant refrain asserts, is futile.

They are so ruthlessly relentless because they share a single consciousness. If you're unlucky enough to bump into them, you'll be injected with nanoprobes, fused with technology (mechanical arms and intimidating lasers), turn a pallid shade of grey and join the Collective.

In other words, not far from where we are today with people having mobile devices permanently stuck to their hands or faces. All aspects of our life are increasingly inter-connected. Just like hapless Borg victims, we are being assimilated into an inescapable new culture.

If there is a spokesperson for the Borg it would have to be Jeri Ryan, who played Seven of Nine in *Star Trek: Voyager*, and has returned in the new *Picard* series with Sir Patrick Stewart – so who better to ask about parallels between Borg and human being?

"We are all completely connected now. That is very hive mind-ish," she says. "Certainly the assimilation aspect, where you have the loss of individuality, feels pretty poignant. The scariest thing that makes them so ominous is that complete loss of who you are. That's terrifying for us."

The Borg became the biggest baddies of the 24th century and similarly, our inter-connectedness has created an enemy within. Instead of breeding unity it makes it easier for us to attack each other. In that respect, Ryan says, the Borg actually have a more progressive outlook than many of the attitudes plain to see on social media.

"I think if there's any sort of positive aspect it's that the Borg actually appreciate and value other species differences. They want to assimilate to make themselves more perfect because perfection is their ultimate goal. And they at least understand that the more differences you can bring together, the more perfect society becomes. They go about it in a really wonky way but that part of them I can appreciate."

First contact with the Borg (putting aside events in the 1996 movie *First Contact*) came in season two, episode 16 of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, broadcast in May 1989. Jestering deity Q propels the Enterprise thousands of



Well connected
Jeri Ryan's Seven of Nine Borg is a forward thinker

light years across the galaxy to warn (and taunt) the crew about a dangerous new threat.

At this far point they encounter the first Borg cube with the potential to destroy all civilisations in the Federation. Q: "You can't outrun them, you can't destroy them... They regenerate and keep coming. Eventually you will weaken. Your reserves will be gone. They are relentless!"

This description from over 30 years ago will feel desperately familiar to anyone who has fallen victim to online trolls.

The Borg became frequent foes but by the time Seven of Nine was introduced to *Voyager*, the Borg had adapted. She was disconnected from the Collective then adopted the archetype role established by Spock and Data in previous series, the character that allows us to see ourselves as others see us.

"It's a very fine *Star Trek* tradition," Ryan says. "Each incarnation of the show has had the character that is on the outside and objectively commenting on humanity."

"I think humanity at large probably proved a bit of a disappointment to her," Ryan adds.

Star Trek: Picard is exploring the big issues that unite the worst of both today's and tomorrow's worlds where we see a massive refugee crisis and worries about artificial intelligence.

"It's definitely very true to [creator] Gene Roddenberry's original vision for *Star Trek*, holding up a mirror to society, and showing us where we're screwing up, and how we could be better. There is a very positive message, ultimately. It's about hope. That's what *Star Trek* has always been about."

"We've never just developed and gotten better and better," Ryan continues. "I mean, it's mindblowing that the Holocaust, the civil rights battle, these things are so recent. Two steps forward one step back – that's the way society that has always been."

One of the appeals of *Star Trek* was that it celebrated good people trying to do the right thing. Our future could and would be brighter. But *Picard* shows that a stable, civilised society is too fanciful a notion even for a science fiction show.

"It's never going to be utopia – there's always a bad egg, there's always a mistake, it can't be absolute perfection and it's always going to be a crooked path to get there," Ryan says.

So are we closer to becoming the Borg than a utopian federation?

"I don't disagree with that."

Star Trek: Picard is streaming on Amazon Prime, with new episodes on Fridays

Words: Steven MacKenzie @stevenmackenzie

YMCA

Just 16, with nowhere to sleep tonight

Who would choose to sleep rough in winter? Shockingly, many young teenagers – like Grace – have no choice. Grace left home at 16 to escape her stepfather. But after losing her job, she couldn't afford her rented room, and found herself homeless. She spent six freezing weeks sleeping in an abandoned car – until the bitter cold took its toll and she fell seriously ill. Thankfully, once she left hospital, YMCA provided Grace with a room, and support to build a more stable future. But since 2010 there has been an 165% rise in the number of people rough sleeping in the UK, and as temperatures drop, the dangers increase. So please will you help provide someone like Grace with a safe, warm room at a YMCA?

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News from the Intrepid Shepherdess

Really?

In the admirable spirit of not wanting to waste food, a well-meaning and dear friend donated to me (for my dogs) some packets of fresh pasta that were surplus to requirements. Great. But as I was about to prepare this meal for Cal and Max, I noticed what it said on the packaging: Low carb, high protein pasta. Really? As I read the food label, my stomach turned.

This stuff that looks exactly like fresh fettucine is made up of 43% fish! Really? And of course the package says the contents are certified sustainable fishing – Pacific hake and Alaskan pollack caught by trawlers in the Pacific Ocean. Like that makes things ok then! I don't think so. And so I read further. This stuff also contains egg white, sugar, modified starches, soya, flavourings and colourings. It's produced in Spain and packaged in a totally non-recyclable single use container. I cut open the plastic container and encountered an artificial and unpleasant aroma. The "pasta" appeared to be floating in a strange milky liquid. I put the packet on the kitchen counter and went into the lounge for a little, but much-needed, sit down while I tried to get my head around all this.

So let me get this straight. Fish caught in the Pacific, sent to Spain by a Belgium company for marketing in the UK for people who don't want to eat carbs but want to pretend they are eating pasta and who don't give a second's thought to plastic pollution. Really? What on earth is wrong with people? And what is to become of us?

Why can't people eat in moderation everything natural, unprocessed and locally sourced?

After my little sit down, I felt torn. This "pasta" is indeed disgusting and disgraceful on many levels but I am also waging a war on waste. So I gingerly prepped a packet of this stuff and offered it to Cal and Max. Bless my dogs. They both sniffed their dinner and looked up at me with that special canine expression that says REALLY? Note the attached picture includes dustbinaka rejected meal depository.



Jessica





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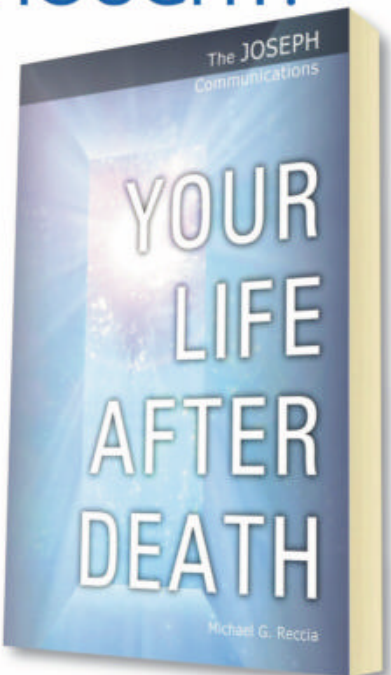
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AWARDS

PPA Scotland consumer magazine
of the year, 2019, 2017

Paul McNamee

PPA Scotland editor of the year 2019,

BSME British editor of the year 2016

Ross Lesley-Bayne

PPA Scotland designer of the year 2019

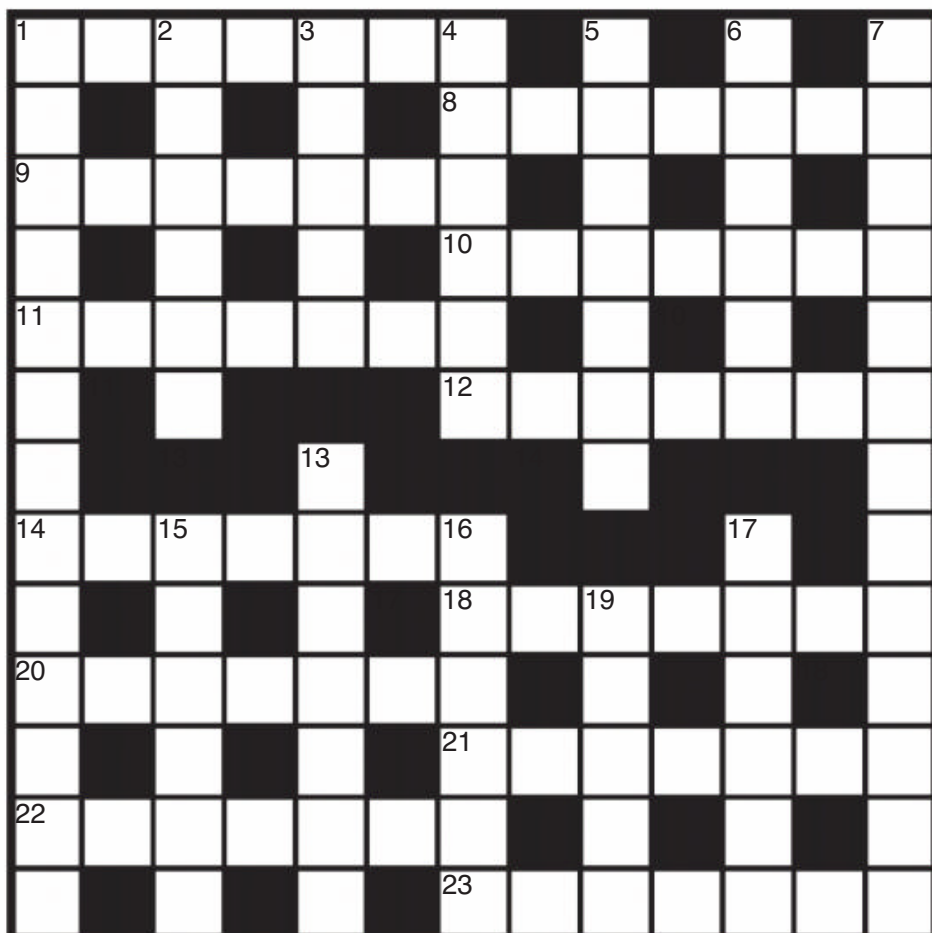
Jane Graham

PPA Scotland writer of the year 2018

BSME cover of the year 2017



CROSSWORD



QUICK CLUES

Across

1. Tight-fisted (7)
8. Imaginary line round earth (7)
9. African country (7)
10. Gestapo (anag.) (7)
11. In no place (7)
12. Game using a top (7)
14. Purified (7)
18. Reincarnation (7)
20. Piece of mosaic (7)
21. Advertised (7)
22. Supervise (7)
23. Theft (7)

Down

1. Failed to comprehend (13)
2. Brawny (6)
3. Scoundrel (5)
4. Cried out sharply (6)
5. ----- roulette (7)
6. Port in Brittany (2,4)
7. Prevailing custom or fashion (5,2,3,3)
13. Upside down (7)
15. Bring up (6)
16. Cloth dealer (6)
17. Capital of Czech Republic (6)
19. Description on book jacket (5)

CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1. Turn hut round, it's said to be false (7)
8. Refrain from finding tar mark (7)
9. Creature is alone in trouble (7)
10. Rouse for practice (5,2)
11. Cameron's rocky love affair (7)
12. Stocktaker from Ulster by right (7)
14. One who has a job at last (7)
18. Comparatively near the beginning of time (7)
20. Joining confederate in Greek capital (7)
21. Sailor held by a Buddhist state (7)
22. Hunter going from side to side? (7)
23. Justify having severed parts (7)

Down

1. Like a faulty racket presumably – it's useless (13)
2. Emotional shock at a rum cocktail (6)
3. Ten appeared to be taken in by another nun in federation (5)
4. Yearn to see part of leviathan Kerry hid! (6)
5. Adopt a little telepathy on the river (7)
6. Two names for the beast (6)
7. Not suitable to take at home (13)
13. Dexterity of the French within one's vision (7)
15. Bell tower on the golf course? (6)
16. Look on when red rag is waved (6)
17. Another maid with endless anger a long way up (6)
19. Wanders round said city on Sunday (5)

To win a **Chambers English Dictionary**, send completed crosswords to:
The Big Issue Crossword, second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by March 10.
Include name, address, phone and issue number.

SUDOKU

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

Issue #1398 answers

CRYPTIC: Across – 1 Stoa; 4 Hectare; 8 Daily service; 9 All at sea; 10 Wing; 12 Cleave; 14 Justin; 16 Arum; 17 Birthday; 20 Madding crowd; 21 Dirtier; 22 Dirk.

Down – 2 Trawl; 3 Ablative; 4 Haslet; 5 Cure; 6 Animist; 7 Emergency; 9 Acclaimed; 11 Ruptured; 13 Ecuador; 15 Finger; 18 Dower; 19 Fiji.

QUICK: Across – 1 Abet; 4 Seduced; 8 Praiseworthy; 9 Quagmire; 10 Calf; 12 Accent;

14 Buckle; 16 Runt; 17 Contempt; 20 Preponderant; 21 Ditched; 22 Dock.

Down – 2 Burma; 3 Trimming; 4 Sherry; 5 Drop; 6 Catwalk; 7 Day of rest; 9 Quadruped;

11 Cultured; 13 Convent; 15 Sordid; 18 Manic; 19 Posh.

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

MY PITCH

ANABEL, 65



House of Fraser,
Buchanan Street,
Glasgow
Most days, times vary

The kindness here has helped me put the pain of my past behind me

I've been selling **The Big Issue** for three months and I'm so glad to tell my story for **International Women's Day on Sunday**. I don't think I could find a better way to thank the people of Glasgow for their generosity and solidarity. I really love people – I'm shy, but sociable. It's a difficult combination but my wish to say thank you has made me overcome my fear of publicity. The constant kindness here has helped me put the pain of the last six years since I originally lost my home behind me.

In December I was given five free Big Issues to go out and sell. Those Big Issues have kept me safe and well for three months. It's a continual process but it's transformed my way of seeing myself. I do have some regular customers now, and they worry about me if I'm not there. There's something in Glasgow. The ability to put yourself in someone else's place runs very deep here. I'm from the New Forest but I feel so excited for my future in the city. The women's support group at the Glasgow City Mission is the best morning of my week.

Selling **The Big Issue** means I can live in a very pleasant hostel on the outskirts of the city. Because I have employment now, they keep rolling forward my place a month at a time, even though I'm not always able to pay the full amount. They give me leeway and it got me out of a very dangerous situation. I've never spent a night on the streets, I think I would be much too frightened to do that.

During my two years of being homeless in Scotland, I've visited several places to offer my skills as a gardener. I've never gardened professionally but it's the only skill I was really born with. It means a lot to be able to offer something completely from

the heart. There's one garden I've spotted that I hope to be able to give my loving attention to as soon as warmer weather comes. When I look to the future I do see myself selling **The Big Issue** but now that I'm in less of an emergency hopefully I'll also find my way into other work. Maybe in a bookshop or in tourism where I can share my love of Scotland.

I'm volunteering at Glasgow's Women's Library and they've been so supportive of me. I'm also learning Gaelic at the National Piping Centre because the course tutor there gave me the opportunity to do his classes for free. I started four weeks ago and I'm loving it. It's more than just a language for me now. It has no verb 'to own' and for someone like me, who lost all her belongings, that has opened new doors.

Finding myself alone in the world has its issues but I have a daughter and a granddaughter, both of whom I'm really proud of. They're in England and I was able to see them for the first time in two years recently. My granddaughter is nearly 12 and she had changed so much, but it was so reassuring to feel that we can continue to grow in closeness.

The Big Issue is like a miracle for me as an older woman with no skills or professional confidence. It's huge for me to be independent, earning my living for the first time since the distant past. I feel completely surrounded by love, so anything that had happened to me doesn't matter any more. Every magazine I sell is the free choice of the person who buys it, and that's why I'm so proud to do it.

Interview: Sarah Reid
Photo: Jamie McFadyen



THE BIG ISSUE MANIFESTO



A hand up, not a handout...

Our sellers **BUY** the magazine for £1.25 and sell it for £2.50.

Trade, not aid...

Which is why we ask you to **ALWAYS** take your copy of the magazine. Our sellers are working and need your custom.



Poverty is indiscriminate...

That is why we provide **ANYONE** whose life is blighted by poverty with the opportunity to earn a **LEGITIMATE** income.

The right to citizenship...

The Big Issue Foundation, our charitable arm, helps sellers tackle social and financial exclusion.

Prevention...

Big Issue Invest offers backing and investments to social enterprises, charities and businesses which deliver social value to communities.



If you've ever walked
past a homeless
person but wished you
knew how to help

PLEASE READ THIS

Today, there is something simple you can do to help
homeless people off the streets.

We've probably all walked away from homeless people because we didn't know what we could do to help. Is it wise to give them money? Would it be better to buy them food or a hot drink? Will they be offended if we do? In the end, even the

most compassionate of people may feel it's simpler just to walk on by.

But by making a donation to Emmaus today, you can help to get homeless people off the streets, for good.

Your gift means we can welcome more homeless people into an Emmaus community. There they'll have a safe place to live and meaningful work to do in our social enterprises, recycling and selling donated furniture and other goods.

Emmaus also provides the personal support and training that people need to overcome homelessness and move on with their lives.



Emmaus helps people learn new skills



"Emmaus helps you get back on the right path... we need an Emmaus community in every town and city in the country."
Bruce



Please help Emmaus to give more homeless people work, purpose and a fresh start.

Please fill in your full name and address so that we can reclaim the tax on your gift.

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YES, I will help Emmaus to change lives

**Here is my gift of £20 ☐ OR
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