The Lady

6-19 MARCH 2020

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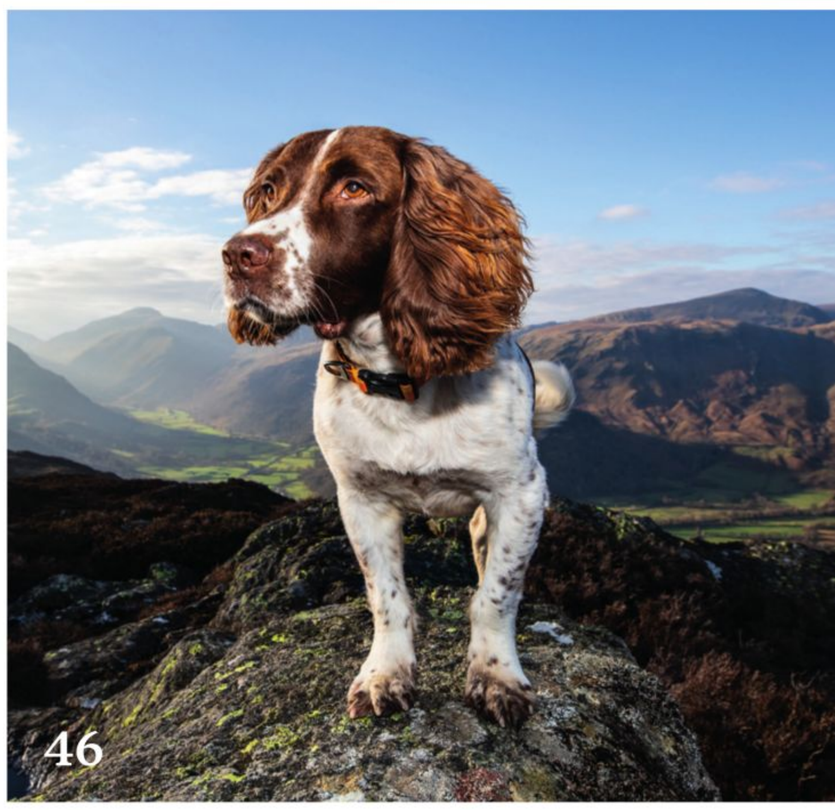
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Cover: Model Gretchen Harris, 1956



COVER: GETTY IMAGES



Dear Readers,

I love this time of year. In the Cambridgeshire village where I live we will soon spot hares bounding across the meadows and the first shoots of new crops can already be seen in the fields.

Spring officially begins on March 20 – always a hopeful time of year – and this issue features some inspirational stories. When Caroline White was told her newborn son had Down's syndrome, she feared for his future but refused to accept the doctor's bleak prognosis for him. Today he is thriving in a mainstream secondary school and is famous for featuring in a Marks & Spencer advertising campaign, thanks in part to his mum's determination to increase acceptance of people who are different.

Kerry Irving felt his life was over after suffering a devastating car accident, but saving a neglected dog prompted him to raise thousands of pounds for charity and to fight back against the depression that once threatened to overwhelm him.

Gardening guru Alan Titchmarsh talks to Ciar Byrne about how his love of nature inspired his new book of poetry, while Rebecca Wallersteiner reveals the fascinating social history behind the debutantes who 'did' the season.

On a lighter note, Liz Hodgkinson explains why the trend for marriage in later life is not one she approves of (she'd rather have a clean kitchen).

Here's to new beginnings.

Maxine

Maxine Frith, Editor

What's new on lady.co.uk

WIN



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THE LADY LOVES...

MARCH *hares*



With their speed and boisterous natures, hares have been a symbol of new life and good fortune for centuries



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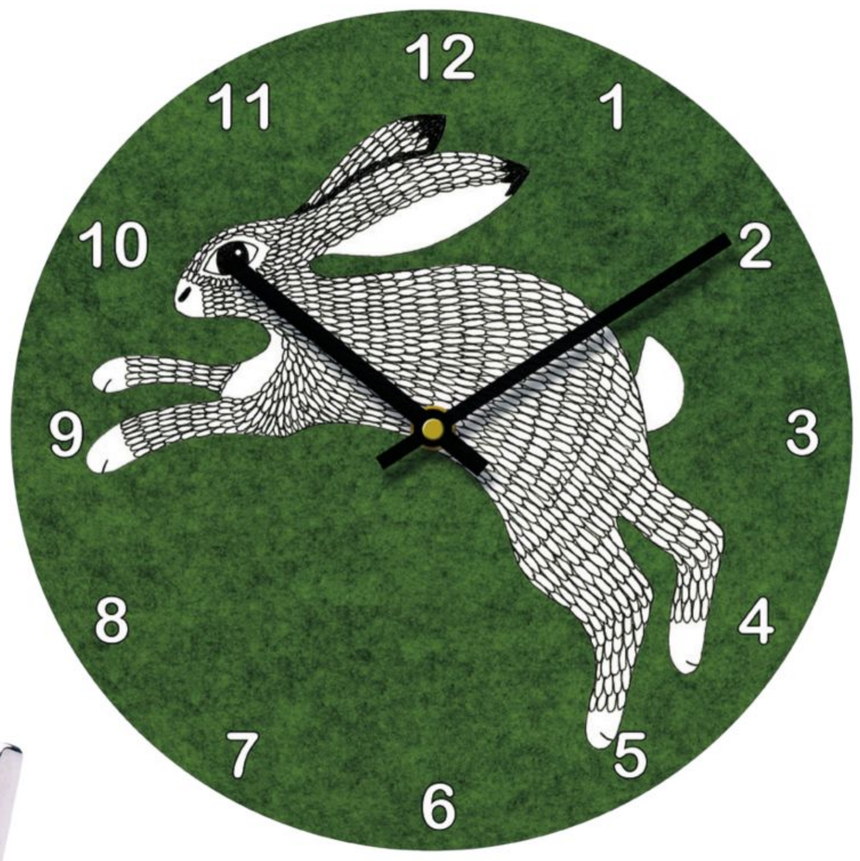


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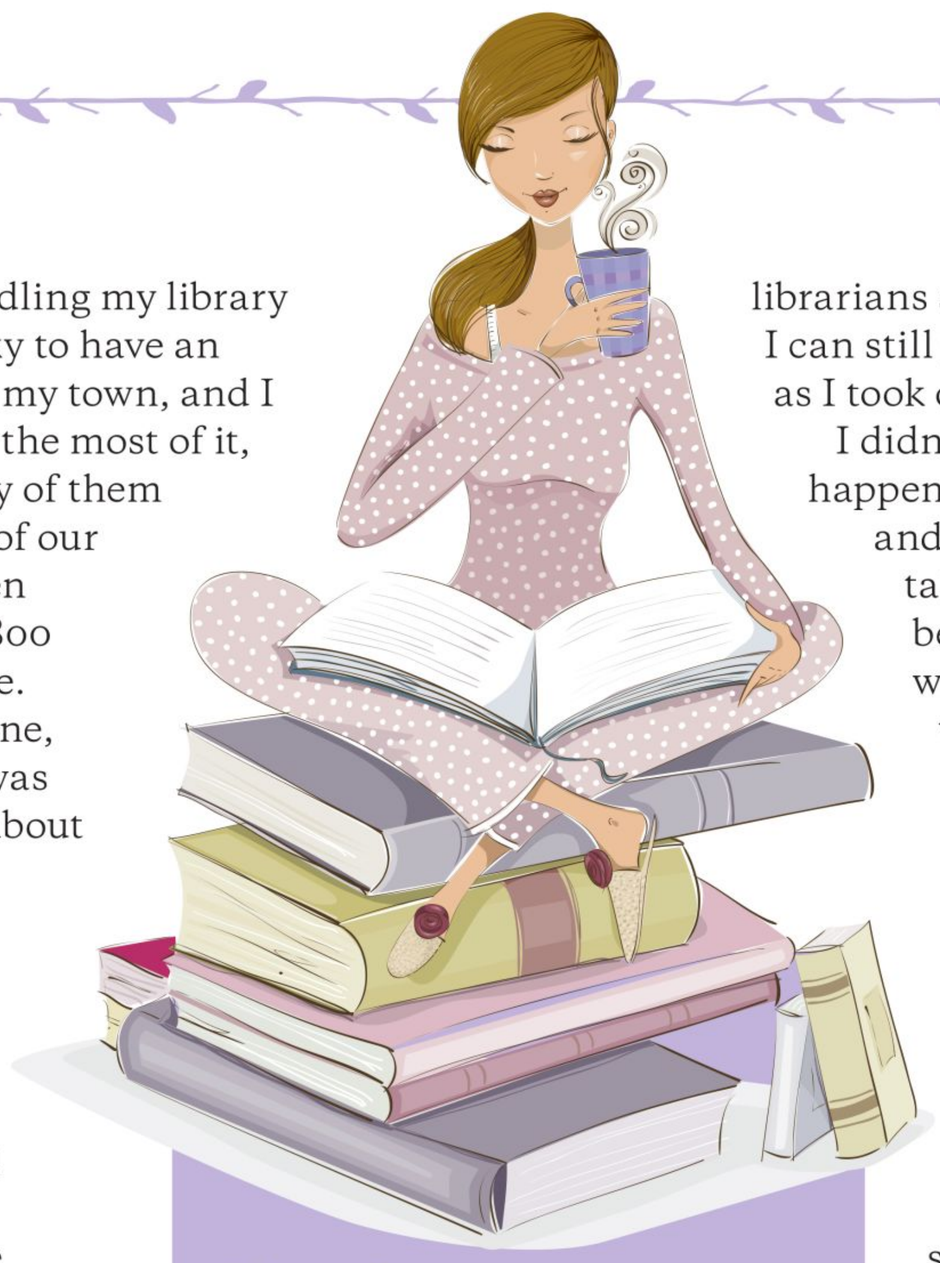
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Bookmarked

Maggie has fond memories of her local library in her childhood home town and is determined to make the most of the one where she lives now



I am actively rekindling my library habit. I feel so lucky to have an excellent library in my town, and I really want to make the most of it, especially as so many of them in the UK are closing. One fifth of our libraries have gone in the past ten years, which adds up to almost 800 closed doors. It's hard to imagine.

The library in the town of Stone, Staffordshire, where I grew up, was the centre of my universe from about the age of six onwards. It was a ritual in our family to visit it every other Saturday, or whenever the pile of finished books on the hall table was high enough to indicate we needed a refresh. I never missed a visit.

I knew every inch of the place, starting with the children's library and then progressing to the main one, which had excellent choices in both fiction and non-fiction. I would browse for as long as I could get away with before being told it was time to go and that I had to choose my books.

Then it was on to the desk and the absolute heaven of the plucking out and filing of the index card and then – my favourite bit – the clicking date stamp. It was all so efficient and proper, it gave me the same feeling a really good stationery shop does. The sense of things being done and being done right. I still long to own one of those stamps.

When I got older I would walk into town and go to the library on my own, browsing for as long as I liked, sometimes sitting on the floor to read. When I saw the film of Roald Dahl's book Matilda, with the section where she goes back and forth to the library with her red cart full of library books, I felt a deep kinship.

And just as the librarian in that story encouraged Matilda, the librarians at Stone Library were very nice to me. I can still picture their kind faces, smiling at me as I took out more and more challenging reads.

I didn't mean to stop using libraries, it just happened with growing up and going to work and finding it hard to find the time to take the books back. I always seemed to be paying fines and feeling guilty, so it was easier to stop going. Also, once I was earning my own money it was thrilling to be able to just go and buy a book to read and keep.

The other thing that put me off a little was someone suggesting to me that library books are filthy. You didn't know how often the other people who borrowed them washed their hands, they said.

Once I had that idea in my head, it put me off a bit and I must admit I still give my choices a little wipe over when I get them into the house.

But I've done a bit of online research on the subject and I'm happy to report that while all kinds of bacteria and viruses can get on to the surfaces of shared books, the dry environment in libraries is not conducive to bugs staying alive and being passed on.

So even in the current ultra-high virus alert state, I've moved on from that silliness. And, thinking about it, my father was a doctor and would never have facilitated us bringing dangerous contaminated objects into the house.

The other thing I have accepted is that the staff no longer use clicky clicky date stamps. Recently upgraded, Hastings Library is so digital it's like taking a book out on a spaceship, all laser scans and beeps.

You don't have to have any interaction with a librarian now to return books or take out new ones but I always make sure I do, even I have to make a question up for the sake of it. Some things must be preserved. ■

ISTOCK

I have been...

- **Investing in three new pairs of Merino wool knee socks from the German company Falke. They are pricey – £18 a pair, gulp – but they last years, keep your tootsies properly warm and don't garrote your legs. I tried to make do with cheapo socks but they were nasty, uncosy and fell apart. False economy.**

- **Helping a very dear friend peel, pulp and slice five kilos of lemons and Seville oranges for marmalade. Cutting the skin into neat uniform slivers was wonderfully meditative. It's boiling up today.**

- **Savagely cutting back shrubs in my garden. I felt so mean hacking the buddleia down to stumps, but I know it will leap forth and my tiny front patch will be filled with butterflies again in summer. And the RHS says the species is in 'pruning group 6', which requires this brutality, so I'm doing what I'm told.**

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LETTERS

TWINSET TRAUMA?

Liz Hodgkinson's feature on the misery of being a traditional 1950s housewife (see Star Letter) was overstated. Are we really to believe there was a whole generation of miserable women, suffering in silence, forced to submit to their husbands' sexual demands while wearing a twinset and pearls?



Men, too, were restricted by the conventions of the decade – having to be robotic providers not allowed to express their feelings. It wasn't necessarily easy for them either.

For me, being stuck in an office in front of a typewriter was another form of tyranny. At least at home you could structure your own day as you wished.

Mary Witham, Towcester, Northamptonshire

LICENSE IT

I have watched TV for many years (Should we scrap the BBC licence fee? The Debate, 7 February).

My recollection of the first time I watched television (in black and white) was the Queen's coronation on a neighbour's TV, crammed into a tiny room with over 20 people.

When I left home and moved to London I shared a room in a large flat, and the TV licence was part of the rent.

I soon realised that the BBC was the best for drama and documentaries.

Why? Because 90% of the productions were subcontracted, or outsourced to small companies, who hired the best directors. That is what the licence fee was paying for.

I have paid it for over 50 years. If I have to pay in future I will pay small amounts – every quarter, say. As they don't accept cash, they will have to come and get it.

I think they should keep the licence fee going – at least as long as David Attenborough makes his superb films on wildlife.

Jean McFarlane, Northwood, Middlesex

TRUE HAM

Recently, I listened to a discussion on Radio 4 about what constituted a real ham sandwich.

It cast my mind back to a sleepy Lune Valley village [in Cumbria] in the late 1970s when there was no variety of produce at our local supermarket or grocer's shelves. Only fruit that was in season was available.

At Christmas and Easter getting hold of quality food at its seasonal best was competitive, requiring planning and forethought but in no way impossible for a reasonable cook.

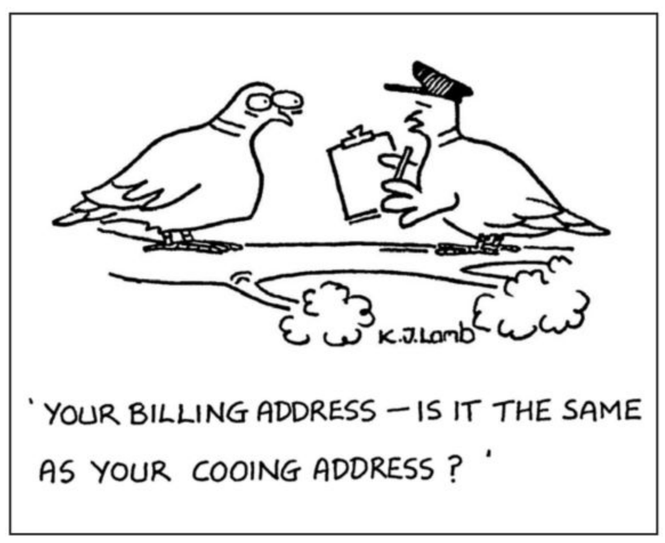
In those days farming ran with the seasons. We had less variety and fewer means of producing super-sized, super-coloured food. Only the local county show produced super-sized veg, after long and tender care and often from allotments. There is so much variety of food now and influences from overseas abound.

Isn't this a wonderful opportunity to eat healthily, seasonally and well again?

Joanne Shennan, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

WOODLAND WONDER

There was no need for Robin Page to be sarcastic



STAR LETTER

I LOVE MY PINNY!

After reading Liz Hodgkinson's article (Put away your pinnies and get a life!, 21 February) I found myself quite envious of those ladies of leisure from the 1950s.

I am a vintage-loving lady who at the age of 51 has had enough of being domineered by bosses or clients. Now I want to be my own boss at home and wear my Cath Kidston pinny (yes it is, really!) while my husband is at work.

At present I am a self-employed housekeeper and, although I like my job, I do feel tired and a mess with broken nails at the end of a working day.

As a housewife I could take longer tea breaks, go food shopping and have time to make my home look nice, tidy and clean instead of having to do it all for other women and then have to come home and start all over again.

Unequal pay would irk me though.

I have ordered the sociologist Hannah Gavron's book (The Captive Wife, mentioned in the article) because I want to see what really got her down. If I was to become a housewife, I'd probably be knitting or reading all day anyway.

Beki Hodgson, Haselor, Warwickshire



The writer of our Star Letter wins a beautifully glazed Maya Bird from Poole Pottery. The Maya collection is inspired by British landscapes. Handcrafted and hand painted, the Maya Bird is gift boxed. For more details please call 01773 740740 or visit www.poolepottery.co.uk

Dear readers,
Since we went twice monthly, some of our editions cover longer periods. So here's a helpful table of future dates to mark on your calendars. Happy reading!

The Lady publication dates for 2020

Month	Available from	to	Duration
March	06/03/2020	19/03/2020	2 weeks
	20/03/2020	02/04/2020	2 weeks
April	03/04/2020	16/04/2020	2 weeks
	17/04/2020	30/04/2020	2 weeks
May	01/05/2020	14/05/2020	2 weeks

If you have a comment on this issue or would like to share something or ask a question of our readers, please do write to **Letters, The Lady, The Kinetic Centre, Theobald Street, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, WD6 4PJ** or email **letters@lady.co.uk**

about the fact that the best new woodland he had seen is in Milton Keynes (Him on the Farm, 24 January).

Milton Keynes has numerous old woodland areas which have been kept and protected. There are also wonderful parks, open areas and countryside walks, some along rivers as well as the canal.

It is a shame that many people have an image in their head of Milton Keynes without ever visiting, exploring or getting to know the area.
Julie Hart, Tingewick, Buckinghamshire

FOR THE LOVE OF WILFRED

I loved Him on the Farm (7 February) about wolves and Robin Page's family wolfhound, Wilfred. What a wonderful photo of him with Robin's 10-year-old granddaughter (see right). They look like the best of friends. Wilfred may weigh 11 stone but it just shows you can't go by appearances.
Cathy Newton, Truro, Cornwall



BRAIN POWER

I enjoyed the article about the importance of keeping your brain fit just like you would your body (Brain candy, 21 February). The section on getting enough downtime really resonated with me.

I am a great believer in what your feature called 'quiescence' or quiet rest. This is where you just rest your brain and let your mind wander, idly looking at clouds perhaps, or the garden. Years ago they called it daydreaming – I often got told off at school about it, but as I've got older I'm convinced that it is how the brain processes all the stimulation it receives every day and I think we underestimate its importance. It's never held me back in life.
Susan Gresham, Manchester

TOP GRADE

The piece about confidence being as important as good school grades (Independent Schools Guide, 21 February) was inspiring.

I tell my grandchildren that what matters is that they have tried their best.
Dorothy Benson, Nottingham

THE LADY *reserves the right to edit letters as necessary. Please provide your full name, address and telephone number or email.*

THE LADY & I

When a reader gave her mother a copy of The Lady she had no idea of the years of letter-writing fun it would bring her

What can you buy a mother who is heading towards 80 and really doesn't want any more 'clutter'?

Back in 2010, wandering along the aisles in my local supermarket I spotted The Lady. I thought it would be perfect as part of her Christmas present.

Little did I realise what an impact it would have on our lives.

Mum absolutely loved it and promptly subscribed.

In August 2011 she plucked up the courage to send in a letter and had it printed to her (and our) delight. In the years to follow she wrote many more and had around 40 printed.



She would phone me and read them out to see what I thought before sending them in, and would then wait excitedly for Friday to see if her latest letter had been accepted. She kept going when sometimes her letters were not printed and she even won a few lovely prizes.

Last year my mum received a letter from an old acquaintance who had seen one of her letters. This lady was so encouraged to read something by a person she knew that it inspired her to write her own letter to the magazine, which was also published.

Sadly, my mother was becoming frailer and passed away last Christmas.

I am so glad I encouraged her to keep the copies of the magazine her letters were in. I have just spent a very happy day reading all her contributions and remembering the events and topics she describes. She had such pleasure reading the magazine and then contributing her own thoughts.

I am truly grateful to The Lady for providing Mum and I with such fun over the past few years and to have such a wonderful legacy of her personality.
Maria O'Brien, Sheffield, South Yorkshire

Star pet...



Name: Stevie
Breed: Wire-haired fox terrier
Age: 18 months
Owner: Wendy and Billy
Likes: Thai chilli crisps
Dislikes: Coming in from the garden

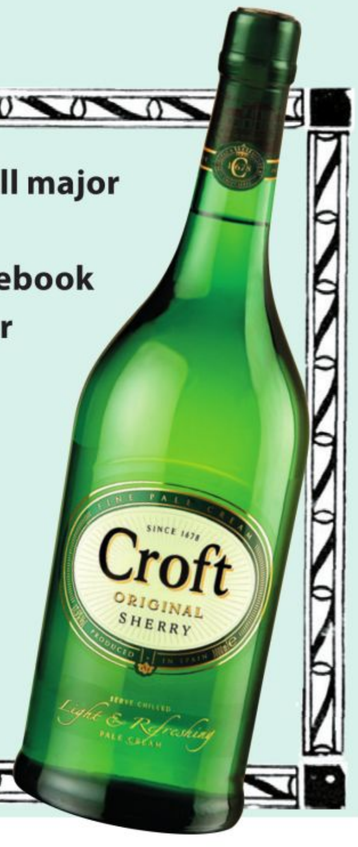
Do you have a special pet? Send a picture (and their name, age, likes and dislikes), along with your name, to the address or email printed above, and they could star here.

The writer of The Lady & I wins a set of three bottles of Croft Original sherry.

Whether you are reminiscing with loved ones, cooking the Sunday lunch or taking a quiet moment to relax, a chilled glass of light and refreshing Croft Original will hit the spot. Croft Original sherry is available from all major supermarkets.

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Send your stories, of 350 words, to the address above, marked The Lady & I.



IMOGEN STUBBS

‘I want to live well rather than exist to make money’

Actress Imogen Stubbs has enjoyed a long and successful career and endured a very public divorce. She tells Richard Barber about her new role and how she would increasingly rather travel the world than confine herself to the stage

Imogen Stubbs arrives at the west London café on a motor scooter and orders a large Americano. We’re here to discuss Clybourne Park at north London’s enterprising Park Theatre, the first production for a decade of Bruce Norris’s satirical social comedy which originally starred Martin Freeman and Sophie Thompson. Stubbs mock-groans.

‘When I was at the RSC and about to tackle a particular role, people would say: “Oh, Peggy was marvellous in that.” Or “Did you see Vanessa? She really made the part her own.” I love Sophie. She’s such a distinctive actress. Everyone tells me how brilliant she was in Clybourne. I didn’t see it, though, which is probably just as well.’

Stubbs is looking forward to working at the Park again. She was last there in 2018 in Honour, a play about marital infidelity. ‘Although I’m not intimidated by playing in large spaces, I do like the intimacy of a theatre like the Park. But it means there’s nowhere to hide.’ We are interrupted by the arrival of her coffee. ‘Goodness me!’ she exclaims. ‘That’s large. You could bathe a dog in it!’

For someone who has worked consistently on and off ever since she was cast as Sally Bowles in a Wolsey Theatre production of Cabaret in Ipswich in 1985, Stubbs is becoming increasingly choosy about what she will and won’t do. ‘I’m very keen on travel, both doing it and writing about it. So quite a large part of me would prefer to go and see the world instead of pretending to be someone else on a stage. I’m a real theatre animal but to be caught up in a play for a long time makes me claustrophobic. I also crave sunshine so being in a dark theatre just doesn’t do it for me.’

She doesn’t mind working in March and April, though. ‘But that’s because I’d be unlikely to swim outdoors – and swimming is my passion. Come June and July, though, and my whole life is centred on which sea or river I can swim in. I’ve become someone, I realise, whose life is dictated by the seasons.’

She’s also a bit choosy about appearing on high-definition television: ‘I’ve never had Botox or any sort of cosmetic surgery so I look the age I am’ – she’s 59 – ‘and now that everyone’s got TV screens the size of swimming pools it’s not very kind to an older actor… Not that I think I’ve quite reached the dowager stage yet.’

We’re back to seasons. ‘I’ve been through spring and summer and I’m now entering autumn, which is fine. But I don’t necessarily want to be reminded of ▷

REX SHUTTERSTOCK

that. Other people must do what they feel is right for them but you see surprisingly young people who have clearly had work done and it always makes me think of bandaged feet in old China. It's not natural.'

Stubbs's father was in the Navy and so they lived in Portsmouth when she was a toddler before the family bought a vintage barge on the Thames. 'My mother found a beaten-up wooden barge for sale for £600 and she bought it while my father was at sea. I imagine that was something of a surprise to him, but we moved on to it and lived there until I was 11, when it sank.'

The next barge was custom-built with a steel hull. 'Sadly, my father died before it was finished but we knew an amazing man called Michael Bennett who built the boat in his spare time and who I'm pretty sure never got paid for it. In the end it was bought by a lovely family who had it towed down to the Medway and turned it into a cream-tea café.'

Educated at Westminster and then Exeter College Oxford, she grew familiar being around boys from an early age. 'In other words, I understood how they worked.' It meant that she took no notice of predatory men, although she's full of praise for the #MeToo movement. 'Some male directors did try to bully me just because they could. I survived, though.'

In 1994 Stubbs married the distinguished theatre director Sir Trevor Nunn. They have two children: Ellie, 28, is an actress; Jesse, 23, flies helicopters. In 2011 they separated as it became public knowledge that Nunn was in a relationship with Italian/British lawyer Nancy Dell'Olio, best known until then as a former girlfriend of erstwhile England football manager Sven-Göran Eriksson.

Dell'Olio and Nunn's affair combusted after eight months. Stubbs was finally divorced in 2013. She has since regrouped and currently lives on a houseboat on the Thames with writer and actor Jonny Lewis. They share it with another couple and their child.

'The mother used to help look after my children so I know her extremely well. They have one part of the boat and we have the other. It's quite big, like two adjoining flats. When we're not there they can use the whole boat, and vice versa.'



Clockwise: Stubbs in the TV adaptation of D H Lawrence's The Rainbow with Martin Wenner; in Hamlet at The Old Vic in 2004 with Ben Whishaw; in 2009 in the play Alphabetical Order with her partner Jonny Lewis; with her former husband Sir Trevor Nunn

'Trevor is a wonderful director; it was a big treat working with him. And we were both very good at leaving work at work – we never discussed the play in the kitchen'

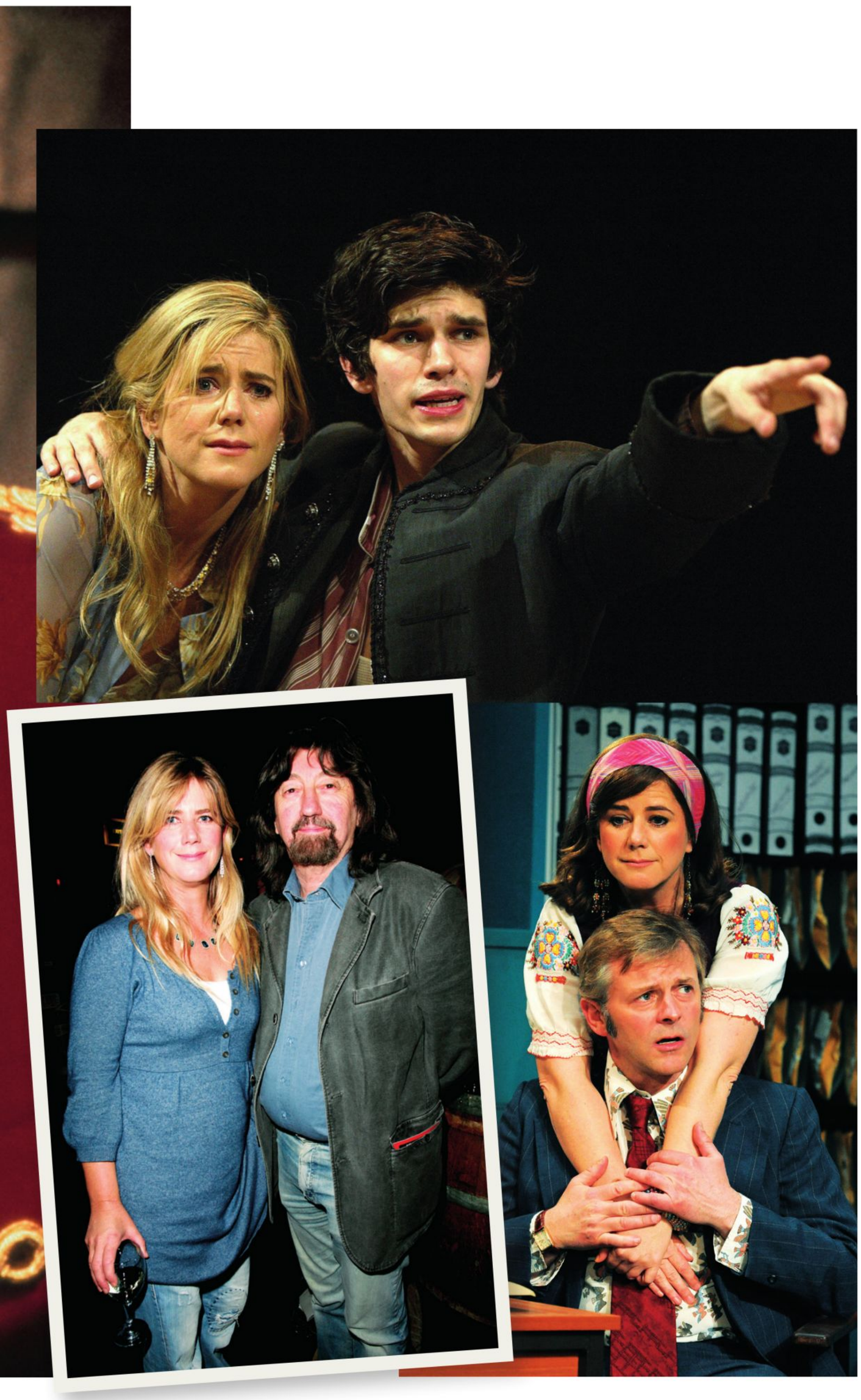
Stubbs has nothing but admiration for her daughter Ellie. 'She's just brilliant, and much braver than me. She did a solo show not long ago: Ellie Nunn Sings Sondheim. At Cambridge, she performed a one-woman show called Bombshells. That's something I could never do. She's got chutzpah. She's funny and self-deprecating, the sort of Fleabag of singing and performing.'

Although he went to the ArtsEd performing arts school because it was local, Jesse has always been mad on flying. 'I was allowed to take him out of school on Wednesdays to learn how to fly Cessna planes and then helicopters. I was a reluctant passenger, or sat in a café with my heart in my mouth watching him make solo flights aged 16. Terrifying.'

Stubbs has been an actress all her adult life. Ask her to nominate a clutch of professional milestones and she mentions playing Lucy Steele in the 1995 film version of Sense and Sensibility, for which she picked up a raft of glowing notices. In 1989 she was acclaimed as Desdemona to Willard White's Othello (Ian McKellen played Iago) at the Other Place.

'I got quite ill during the run. It turned out that one of the ribs in the tight corset I had to wear bruised an internal organ, which caused a minor haemorrhage. It was very painful. Eventually I remember being on a stretcher and passing Ralph Fiennes and Alan Rickman as I was carted off to hospital.'

The year before she had enjoyed doing the BBC mini-series of D H Lawrence's The Rainbow for the director Stuart Burge. 'He was such a lovely man who became a dear friend.' Years later, in 2004, she was a memorable and rather sexy Gertrude, overly fond of the bottle and her son Hamlet (a 23-year-old Ben



‘One of the advantages of growing older is that you get offered character parts. Professionally speaking, life has got more and more interesting’

Whishaw, more or less straight out of drama school) in a Trevor Nunn production at the Old Vic.

What was it like being directed by the man who was her husband? ‘He’s a wonderful director; it was a big treat. And we were both very good at leaving work at work. We never discussed the play in the kitchen when we got home.’

They haven’t worked together since their separation and subsequent divorce. ‘That was a big loss. He’s very compassionate, very funny.’ Can she ever imagine working with him again? ‘No, that’s not going to happen,’ she says, with some finality.

She’s also a performed playwright. We Happy Few is the tale of a troupe of female actors touring Shakespeare plays around Britian during the Second World War. ‘It’s based on a real-life touring group, the extraordinary, rather eccentric Osiris Players. I wrote it for am-dram companies and it gets performed frequently because it has a lot of parts for women. It’s a very good subject matter, although I can recognise the flaws in the writing. It was a bit of a learning curve.’

She has always enjoyed writing. ‘If I’d known when I was younger that you could have a career as a travel writer, for example, I might well have gone in that direction. That said, I do enjoy the whole business of inventing a character that’s very unlike me. Television is too often guilty of casting you as someone who looks and sounds just like you. That doesn’t feel like much of a challenge. One of the advantages of growing older is that you get offered character parts. Professionally speaking, life has got more and more interesting.’

Her grandmother, Esther McCracken, was an actress and playwright from the 1930s to the 1950s. ‘She was the sort of Victoria Wood of her day and terribly famous when I was young. It was a bit like being Katherine Hepburn’s grandchild.’

Stubbs’s first cousin is actor and TV presenter Alexander Armstrong. ‘And he’s exactly like my grandmother, who was his great aunt. Xander is so much the inheritor of that gene, that humour.’ As it happens, she was paired with Simon Callow when she appeared on Armstrong’s hit quiz show, Pointless.

‘We did dismally. Simon hadn’t the remotest idea what was going on. I remember he was asked to name an actor who’d been in a Steven Spielberg film. Although this will seem unreal, he’d never seen a Spielberg film in his life. So he just made up a name. And I was having trouble with my contact lenses. I’d got make-up in my eyes before the show and the board with all the questions on it was rather far away. The upshot was that my eyes were bright red and I couldn’t see anything. We were pitiful, dispatched within minutes.’

She and Callow next coincided on an episode of Death in Paradise in Guadeloupe. ‘Lit was lovely to be a guest, although I think if you were in it all the time it might get a bit much. It wasn’t too bad for me but Ardal O’Hanlon – he was the star when I was on it – got bitten the entire time.’

It’s been a richly rewarding life. Any remaining unfulfilled ambitions? ‘Well, I do love drawing and painting, although I’m deeply untalented. And I’m developing a hankering for pottery, a distant echo of being at primary school.’

Asked if she’s happy, she doesn’t hesitate. But then she qualifies it by saying that, increasingly, she’d rather live in another country. ‘I’ve always felt European. I’d like to be part of a society where the emphasis is on how to live rather than how to exist and make money. But now, post-Brexit, I’m not sure where I could go. Still, when the job is good, it’s such fun. Rather like being part of a netball team. So yes, I’m always happy to get involved in interesting work. It’s just that it has to be more tempting than the Aegean Sea in the summer.’ ■

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HER INDOORS *by Mary Killen*

The way twentysomethings arrange their love lives on smartphones has its own dangers

My 24-year-old assistant, Luciann, has looks, charm, kindness and competence – and no partner. But romantic life is so different for her generation than it was for mine – we all know why. As my nonagenarian aunt in Dublin has observed: 'Ah, de internet has spoiled everyt'ing.'

It's the tyranny of choice presented. It seems like every possible partner on a dating site could be slightly better... and so the search goes endlessly on. One promising-sounding suitor was dumped by Luciann simply because she realised he hadn't listened when she told him what degree she had studied at university. Another because he had used the word 'vehicle' instead of 'car'.

Then I could tell she had met someone she did like. There was a sparkle in her eyes and a spring in her step and a grin on her face as she stared into the screen of her iPhone. Six dates had taken place when Luciann went out one night to a club in London's Hoxton with some girlfriends. At first live jazz was played - good, but she didn't like the subsequent music - disco/Spice Girls. So she went outside alone to call for an Uber back to Fulham on her iPhone. 'First it was £25, so I thought I would leave it five minutes to see if the price went down. Next time I tried it was £30 and the third time I tried it was £40. So I looked on UberPool.' UberPool means you pay less as you share a car with people going in roughly the same direction. Luciann's screen invited her to walk to a wasteland-like area at the foot of a block of flats. While staring at her screen to track the car a child on a bicycle came towards her. 'Poor little boy,' she thought, 'out on his own at this time of night. He must be lost.' The roughly 12-year-old came closer and snatched her phone.

'In my day we knew suitors' phone numbers off by heart'

The consequences were more than gross inconvenience. She did not have the number of her new admirer – the one she now realised she admired herself. 'We just had talked on WhatsApp and I hadn't backed up the messages. He's not on social media. Now he'll think I am ghosting him and we will never meet again.' Having now left the dating site he could not be contacted via it.

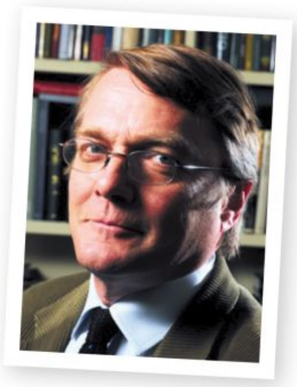
In my day we knew suitors' phone numbers off by heart, as well as their actual addresses. She and I were both agonised by the romantic tragedy for about two days. But the story has a happy ending. She emailed the college where he is a postgraduate student and they put him in touch.

It took the possible shock of never seeing him again to make Luciann realise how much she liked him.

One good thing (possibly) about coronavirus is that it will free the young from the tyranny of choice: it will be too risky to indulge their perfectionising. Hence they will settle for one partner and know the joys of continuity.

HIM INDOORS *by Ivo Dawnay*

In a republic like America, reverence for the Stars and Stripes isn't that hard to fathom



One of the big mistakes I made when I last lived in America was to wonder why the people aren't more like us, or we like them. Returning, I realise that it is precisely because we are superficially similar that we are eternally surprised by the differences.

Instead of being irritated, I am determined to be amused by what always feels like the world's biggest island. I say an island because one forgets how many of the 327 million Americans have seen so little – if anything at all – of the rest of the world. Indeed, when I was last here in the late 1990s it was said that two thirds of members of the House of Representatives didn't even have passports.

It is for that reason, I suppose, that the revered Stars and Stripes flies everywhere – not just on government buildings but on millions upon millions of front lawns.

'Why do Americans need to constantly remind themselves that they are American,' I asked a New Yorker friend, pointing out that half their film and book titles seem to have the word American in them too?

'Ah,' she replied, having lived a large chunk of her life in Britain. 'We need to demonstrate out patriotism to ourselves even though there is no one else about to notice.'

Barbara had clearly been infected by the British cynicism bug. 'When I was a kid I hated having to say the pledge of allegiance to the flag, and all that nonsense about putting your hand on your heart – that is all a modern invention,' she added.

But the reality is that the flag is the US's equivalent of our own dear Queen – a revered emblem that is front-and-center (please note spelling) of the national anthem: 'Oh say, can you see...' etc.

'The flag is the US equivalent to our own dear Queen – a revered emblem'

Maybe it is because of the continental size of the country and its tides of immigration that this slightly unnatural glue is widely applied across all 50 states. Another is the national holiday of Thanksgiving – in effect the American Christmas or Chinese New Year, when families travel thousands of miles to reunite and eat turkey.

In theory this is a holiday in remembrance of the first Mayflower pilgrims, who celebrated their first year on the New World with a knees-up with local Indians. In fact, it was really promoted by President Abraham Lincoln at the height of the Civil War as an effort to unite the country around something non-political.

The eccentricity of the US is best witnessed on television, where the zillion-odd channels pump out advertisements that stretch the credulity so hard it makes one gasp. For example, as I write this very sentence, I am watching a 'news' item on Fox about a woman who is suing an airline for allowing the passenger behind her to repeatedly push her seat.

Litigation, of course, is another US tradition. ■

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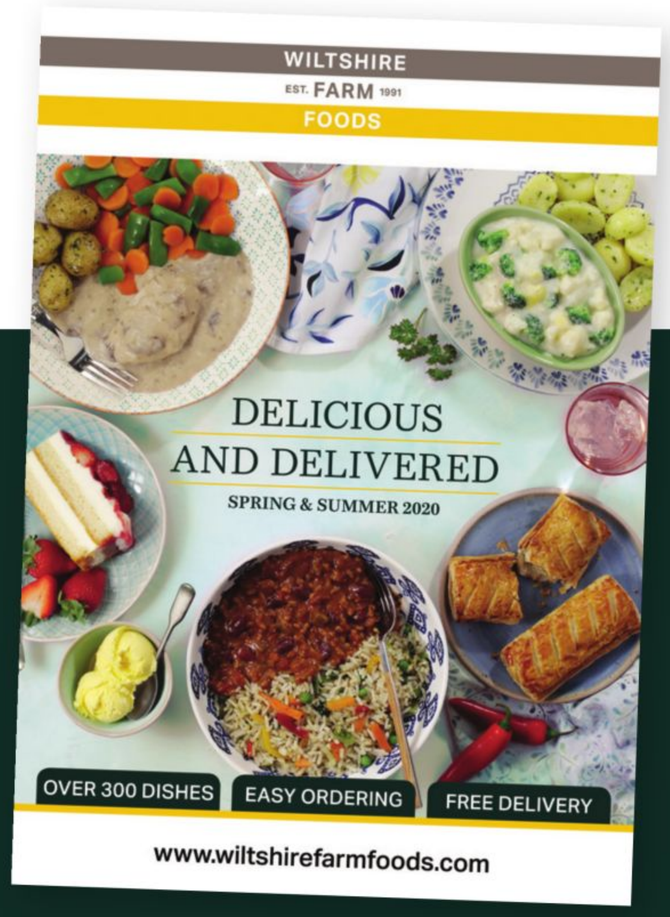


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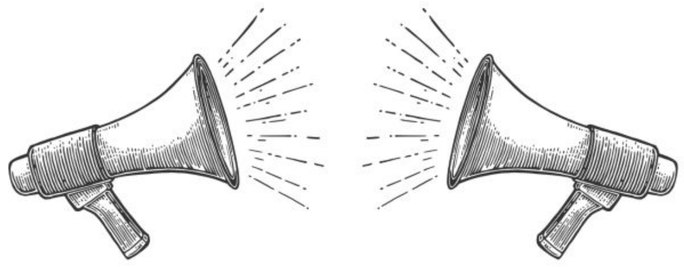
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Should we observe Lent?

Giving things up seems to have become fashionable for the non-religious



YES
Liz Hodgkinson

When I was a child, everybody automatically gave up something for Lent, the 40 days and nights that Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness.

Pancake Day, known as Shrove Tuesday, was also a religious day, where people would be 'shriven' of their sins before beginning the time of abstinence leading up to Easter. It was also seen as a last chance to eat up all the rich foods which were forbidden during Lent, such as meat, fish, eggs and dairy products, hence its other name of Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday.

Today, Pancake Day is seen as yet another excuse to over-indulge, and the true meaning of Lent has been more or less forgotten. How many children these days even know that it exists?

I am not religious, but I believe that a period of abstinence can do more than help us to lose a few extra pounds. All major religious traditions have set times for fasting, and for the same reason: to make us better people, and to enable us to stand back and become more conscious of how we are living our lives.

Going without treats and pleasures, at least for a while, is a useful discipline that sharpens perception and allows us to think deeply about the situation of others who may not be so fortunate. In the Christian calendar, Lent was traditionally a time not just for self-denial but also for charity, and almsgiving was seen as an important aspect of paying attention to the needs of others rather than just indulging ourselves.

So, instead of booking that lavish lunch or dinner during Lent, why not observe the tradition by donating the money to a homeless person?



NO
Maxine Frith

I am SO bored of people giving things up. In January we were all supposed to stop eating meat for 'veganuary'. In February I was inundated with messages about forgoing sugar for the month. Last summer was all about 'dry July' – not drinking for four weeks. Yes, some of these innovations are media-driven, and of course Lent is slightly different, given it has a religious meaning, but really – please stop telling me to stop. Full stop.

Three years ago the former prime minister Theresa May garnered headlines for 'revealing' that she was giving up crisps for Lent. Last year I went to an Ash Wednesday service at which someone explained the challenge he was facing in planning to abstain from social media for the duration. I'm not entirely sure this is what Jesus had in mind when he went into the desert to contemplate without food or drink.

Does abstinence really help focus the mind on anything other than oneself and what you are giving up? Increasingly it seems to be about telling everyone that you are doing without, rather than understanding how millions of people around the world have no choice about what they have and don't have.

Perhaps rather than giving up myriad things each month (or for 40 days) I believe we should just consume things in moderation all the time: less meat, not so much chocolate, fewer glasses of wine each week. So for Lent I am giving up on the giver-uppers. If you would like to donate to my cause, I would remind you that charity begins at home, so please send all chocolate, wine, sugar and crisps to me. I'll put in a good word for you when I expire from a surfeit of Bad Things.

◆ *What do you think? Join in the discussion at letters@lady.co.uk*



GRIZELDA





The ethos at Chantry Court focuses on residents retaining as much independence and life control as possible, with a network of support available should they require

We have one and two bedroom apartments available to rent or purchase. A resident may choose to purchase as they may have been a homeowner for many years and wish to continue to own their own property. The apartments are spacious and decorated to a high standard. They are carpeted throughout and have made to measure curtains in place. The fitted kitchen has an oven, hob and convector hood, an integral fridge with a small icebox or in the case of the larger apartments an integral fridge/freezer. All of the apartments are all spacious with a choice of different layouts, and some have outside space in the form of a small garden, patio area or a balcony.

One of the reasons a prospective resident may choose to live at Chantry Court is that they may have become more socially isolated in their own home, neighbours and friends may have moved on or passed away and health and well-being may have declined to the point where trips out have decreased or stopped altogether. Very often it is a family member who will divulge that their loved one may not see anybody for days at a time and as a result have become isolated and lonely perhaps due to the death of a spouse or beloved family pet. We have a pet policy in place and are happy to accept pets coming to live at Chantry Court as we would not dream of putting the resident through more stress by having to give their pet up, at a time when they are almost certainly experiencing some anxiety at the prospect of the move and everything entailed.

A move to any supported living facility is more often than not needs driven, and we feel it is important that prospective residents need to be aware that there are more choices, as to the type of support available. It could be that a person is no longer able to cope living at home but is certainly not ready to move to a residential home, so it is important that they are made aware of what we and other similar settings are about.

The research to date is very positive about Retirement villages and state that the fact that residents have their own apartment with a front door, but can have the peace of mind

that should they require support or assistance they can access this via our in house domiciliary service or via an external agency. In every apartment and communal area there is an emergency response unit linked to either a pendant or wristband. If the resident is in need of urgent assistance, he/she can activate the alarm and the response person on duty will attend within a few minutes.

The in-house domiciliary carers work exclusively for residents who live at Chantry court and need some form of support or assistance with personal care needs. The carers are all NVQ 3 qualified or are working towards the same. They attend mandatory and other training throughout the year to ensure they are competent to meet the needs of an individual. When compiling the individual resident's care plan the carer will be led by and encourage the resident to be fully involved with the process to identify areas where he/she are independent and do not require help so the care package can be tailored and mutually agreed with the resident to ensure that his/hers needs are identified accurately and met. The care staff will monitor the service provided to ensure that the resident is satisfied with the way the care package is going and that his/her needs Are being met in the best possible way, and once every 4 weeks will complete a form with the resident that will identify any parts of the package that need tweaking or changing altogether. The same form will be kept in the resident's care plan. The carers are aware that one of the aims is to ensure that the care provided is resident led, and that they involve the resident and seek his/her consent with any aspect of the service they provide.

The social side of living at Chantry court is very resident led. To date residents have arranged a book club, music appreciation club, and regular quiz evenings. In addition to this we have a cinema room where currently a film a week is shown, and we as a company on a once a month basis organises some form of entertainment, providing snacks and drinks, with only a small donation from the residents who attend. This has proved to be very popular with the residents who were given the opportunity to put forward their suggestions of the type of entertainment they would like. We do not put any pressure on our residents to attend any activities or

Aware of and can contact any of the same where they may have an interest or wish to undertake something new. It may be applicable for some residents to have contact with specialist organisations. An example of one being, Alzheimer's support, where a representative would visit the resident in their home to discuss how they may be of help and support. I.e. they may be able to organise a volunteer to visit on a once or twice a week basis and escort them to go shopping or to a place of interest. Other organisations that may be of help to specific residents are the society for Parkinson's, the Stroke club, the National Institute for the Blind and many more.

For information about the services we provide at Chantry Court you can go to our website at www.chantrycourt.com in additionto this you can look up the research carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Trust which speaks very positively about residents feeling glad about the decision to move to a retirement cillage and feel safe in the knowledge that they can live independently with support or assistance available should they need it.

Chantry Court



Modern manners



Thomas Blaikie tackles the vexed questions of re-gifting presents and what to do to help stop the spread of infectious diseases



Dear Thomas,
I wrapped a gift for a distant female friend. I wished her happy birthday by card and by telephone. She sent me a reply informing me that I had re-gifted her the present she gave me a year ago. Please tell me what is the best thing to do in this embarrassing situation? I don't have much money but she is wealthy. Please advise.
Rosemary Cornforth, Sevenoaks

Dear Rosemary,
Thank you for your timely letter. We should be thinking about presents. I'll explain why in a moment.

Oh dear – this is a bit of an own goal, but an honest mistake surely? I don't like the sound of your 'distant friend'. Did she have to be so blunt? It would have been kinder to say nothing, unless she is presuming a greater intimacy between you than actually exists. Perhaps she means to make a joke and imply that you know each other well enough for her to speak like this.

I once knew two ladies, one of whom was notorious for her awful presents. One Christmas her friend said to her: 'You gave me this charity-shop box of yellowing gentlemen's handkerchiefs with someone else's initials on them last year. I told you I didn't want them then.' They remained bosom buddies. So why not presume that this woman is gesturing at greater matey-ness and proceed accordingly?

More generally, there's nothing wrong with re-gifting. As I'm working round to saying, we should be thinking about the gifts we have received. So if you can't find any use for a gift yourself, why not give it to someone who can?

Ideally you should acknowledge you're re-gifting, unless, of course, you're gifting to a charity shop or food bank. But in extremis is re-gifting without admitting it so terrible if you think the person will really like it? You know in your heart if you simply can't be bothered, are being mean or just hate the giftee.

Now, as I've been hinting, March is the perfect time to take stock after Christmas. All too often we leave our gifts to rot in cupboards but they can make us think afresh about what we might enjoy eating, what gadgets we might find useful or what ornaments we might like. I do urge you to review your Christmas haul straightaway. Try to put as much as possible to good use in your home. As for the rest – why not re-gift? This is the age of recycling, after all.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT... CORONAVIRUS

Coronavirus is no laughing matter but I've been asked to advise as there is a troublesome more general dilemma of etiquette to consider. It never feels quite right to treat another person as a source of contagion. It's so personal and, in the case of the present outbreak, tangled up with racism. But equally we have to be responsible. We can't have infections spreading all over the place. So what to do?

It's astonishing that people think it's perfectly all right to sneeze all over anybody who might be nearby, or who cough without covering their mouths and, above all, who don't wash their hands anything like often enough. I always wash my hands on entering my house after work, not least because I don't want grubby marks everywhere. The dirt that comes off is terrifying. So really it's all right, especially now, to say to new arrivals in your home: 'If you want to wash your hands, it's this way' (slight emphasis). Then a mild grim face if they don't take up the offer.

Please write to Thomas at The Lady, Kinetic Centre, Theobald Street, Borehamwood, WD6 4PJ or email manners@lady.co.uk

SOCIAL MEDEA

K.J.Lamb





The Curmudgeon

Spring cleaning is a dirty word in our house

‘Spring has sprung, da grass is riz’, runs the age-old rhyme from New York – and the grass has certainly ‘riz’ in our back garden. Last autumn, due to a combinations of factors (laziness and sloth), I neglected to get it tidied before the rains came and the grass is now so long that The Poodle is often lost to sight when she takes her morning constitutional and I don’t dare cut it, just in case. At least that’s what I’ve been telling Mrs C, who has been dropping hints along the lines of ‘Get your arse out there and mow the lawn’.

It’s also the season of the spring clean, which is always a bore as a house only untidies itself again over the following 12 months. It turns out, according to a recent survey, that 85% of people said they thought spring cleaning would soon be a thing of the past, and 37% said they only do it once every few years. Which makes me feel a whole lot better – at least a third of the country feels the way I do.

Apparently, cleaning is one of those imported customs with its origins in the Middle East. The Iranians have a spring festival known as ‘shaking the house’, which is delightfully graphic (we’d get complaints about the clinking noise at Curmudgeon Towers), and in Israel it’s traditional to clean thoroughly to get rid of any crumbs of leavened bread before Passover.

In Scotland they do a New Year’s clean and rather cleverly schedule that for Hogmanay rather than the following morning – although someone presumably has to do the recycling (see clinking noise, above).

In England the custom apparently dates back to Victorian times, when all the soot of winter fires needed to be cleaned from the walls and urchins removed from chimneys.

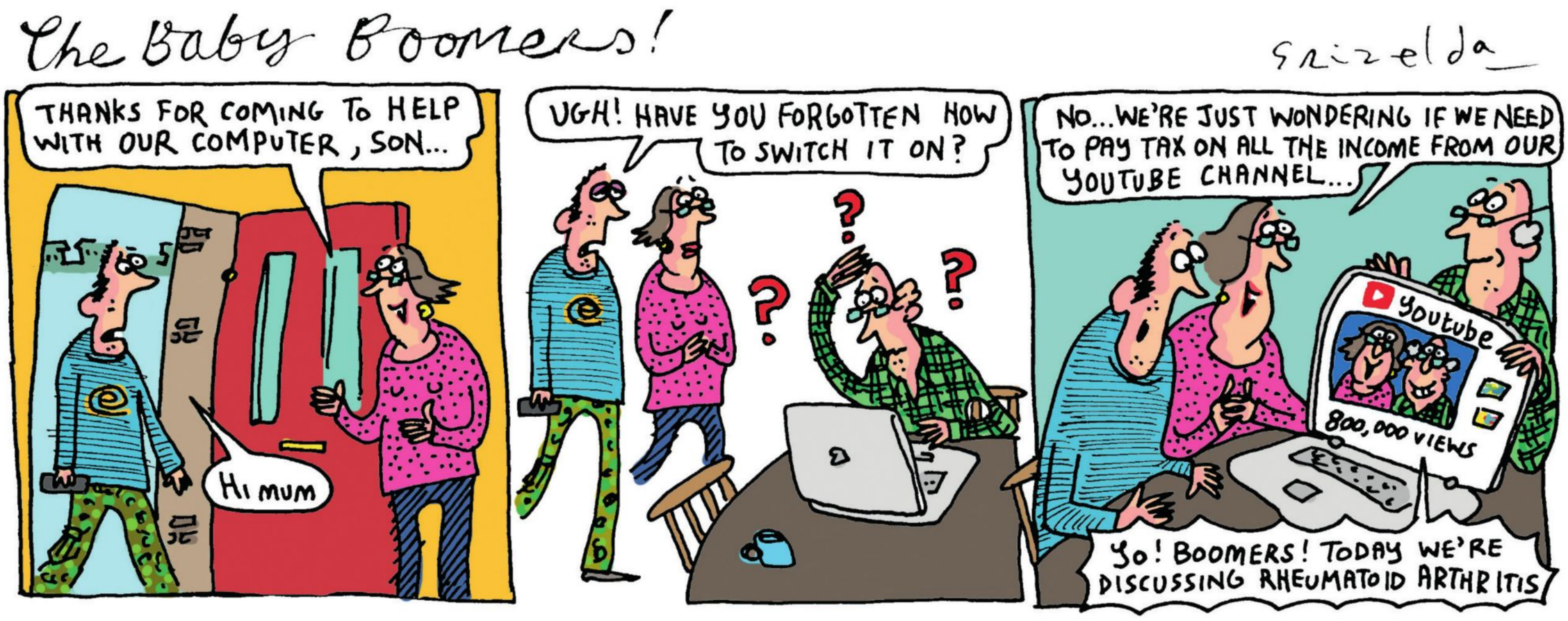
To prepare for our Big Clean, I’ve been doing a bit of research, which is a hell of a lot easier than getting out the vacuum. Sadly, it seems apparent that there are no easy ways out that don’t involve paying someone else. The first point appears to be: ‘don’t prevaricate – it won’t do itself’, which is ironic when you think about it. The second is ‘clean room by room’ for which, I’m told, I’ll need a checklist, although the day I can’t remember how many rooms we inhabit is the day I should be packed off to Dignitas.

‘It seems apparent that there are no easy ways out that don’t involve paying someone’

As for ‘get the family involved’, we’re into hollow laughter territory here, although the ominously bracketed coda ‘there are ways to deal with even the most reluctant helpers’ provided a bit of food for thought – involving, as it presumably does, rubber gloves and a plunger.

And then there are the things to avoid while cleaning, which is a sentence I never thought I’d type. Apparently it’s a no-no to wash your windows when it’s sunny and feather dusters are to be avoided at all costs – bizarrely, the one I found for sale on the internet was billed as being ideal for ‘theme parties’ and nary a mention of cobwebs.

Most puzzling of all was the exhortation ‘not to get lazy with the coffee pot’, which is something we do most Sunday mornings and I would have thought is the ideal thing to do while you look up the number of the people who do this sort of stuff for a living. Job done. ■



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Get some SPRING *in your step*

The first buds on your new season wardrobe – and it all starts with the right shoes. By Juanita Coulson



Mini hat-box bag in bright mustard
£495, Aspinal of London



Claudia kitten heels
£98, Boden



Limited-edition leopard-print dress
£239, Whistles

RISE TO THE OCCASION



Piaf block-print silk dress
£295, LK Bennett

Team painterly prints with jewel-toned accessories and a streamlined coat



Miri half-moon bag
£52, Whistles



Halcyon multicolour gemstone necklace
£115, Emily Mortimer Jewellery



Stone-effect resin earrings
£35, Whistles



'For the Love of Pockets' cotton dress in 'Fab' print
£249, Bombshell HQ



Dale maxi coat
£255, Jigsaw



Anastasia feature heel court shoes
£95, John Lewis

Still too chilly for sandals? Ankle boots and embellished trainers are the answer



Lincoln bloom print top
£110, Libby London



Stilla gold vermeil lapis lazuli locket necklace
£275, Astley Clarke



Embroidered yoke cotton blouse
£125, Brora



Embroidered scarf in coral
£34, Postcards Home



Wide-leg jeans
£55, AWARE by Vero Moda at John Lewis

OFF-DUTY BUT ON TREND



Cashmere pointelle cardigan in Pearl
£298, Brora



Cashmere cropped cardigan in watermelon
£105, Pure Collection



Printed leather low-tops
£109, Ted Baker at John Lewis

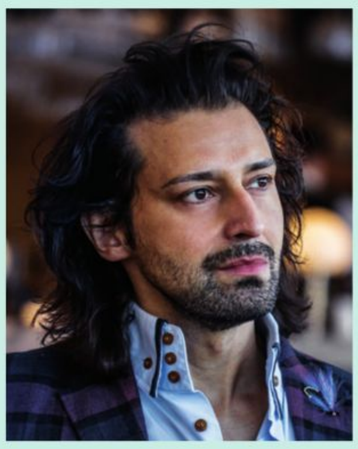


The Rockingham ankle boot in tan
£245, Fairfax & Favor



Classic trench
£160, Whistles

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Ask Armand

Make-up artist and beauty presenter Armand Beasley has the ultimate solutions to your knottiest problems

Q I'm always hearing about the importance of exfoliation but my skin is really dry, so I'm worried exfoliation will make it worse. Would you recommend that I should still try it and if so, what's the best way to go about it?

A Our skin naturally exfoliates itself in a process called cellular renewal, where surface skin cells are shed and replaced by new ones. As we get older this process can falter or slow down. SKN-RG Super Rich Exfoliant Treatment (£45, skn-rg.com) could be your answer. This multi-award-winning product contains jojoba oil, which gently sloughs off dead skin, while a cocktail of plant seed oils and reishi mushroom helps to soothe yet revitalise the skin. Also you may find that your moisturiser is more effective and your skin not as dry once you've exfoliated once a week.

Q How do I tone down the redness of my face? As an adolescent I suffered from acne and although that's long gone now, my facial skin has always had an unappealing reddish tinge.

A Sometimes, just avoiding spicy foods and making sure you only wash your face with cool water can help prevent flushing of the skin. Otherwise, you could try Smashbox Photo Finish Reduce Redness Primer (£15, smashbox.co.uk) has a green tone to counteract redness plus a blend of peptides and vitamins which when used under your favourite foundation will also help. But you can also investigate other skincare products and perhaps speak to a naturopathic nutritionist. Visit naturopathy-uk.com, where you can find a qualified practitioner near you. From a topical perspective, Marie Reynolds London's Restore Mask (£68, mariereynoldslondon.com) is a super-effective face mask that contains eight strains of live bacteria plus valuable phytonutrients to target inflammation as well as calm and rebalance delicate skin.



A good mask treatment can reduce redness



Marie Reynolds London Restore Mask, £68



Urban Decay Naked Honey Palette, £43



Smashbox Photo Finish Reduce Redness Primer, £15

Q What do you think about tattooing on the face? Lips or eyebrows, for example. I always use lip liner to enhance the shape of my lips, which are quite thin, but wonder if there's such a thing as a lip tattoo?

A Semi permanent liner on the lips has come a long way, but do shop around, as you can still get overly dark dramatic lines etched on to your face if you haven't done your research. These days a good cosmetic artist can give a subtle shaded-out natural 3D effect to the lip area – often referred to as 'lip blushing'. Email info@karenbetts.co.uk for further information about her award winning clinics in London, Yorkshire and Cheshire.

Q I've always had lots of lovely comments about the colour of my eyes and love making them up, but as I'm getting older the blue colour doesn't seem to be as bright and as I'm about to celebrate a big birthday I was wondering if you have any tips to get them sparkling again?

A Contrasting eyeshadow colours are a great way to make the colour of the iris really pop. Golds and copper tones can be effective, so why not try Urban Decay Naked Honey Eyeshadow Palette (urbandecay.co.uk, £43). This travel-friendly palette contains 12 gold-based neutral shades that really help to emphasise blue eyes. You can be subtle or dramatic with the colours, but try to keep darker tones just on the eyelid while focusing the lighter golden shades on the inner corner of the eye, then graduate the slightly darker tones to the outer edge. Pop on two coats of black mascara to add more drama. Green eyeshadow can also look fantastic next to blue eyes – and why not add a flick of liquid or gel liner along the top lashes too? ■

BOOSTING COLLAGEN

The Secret to Ageless Beauty

What is Marine Collagen?

Marine Collagen has become a beauty buzzword recently with some even calling it the next health superfood. Research suggests Marine Collagen health benefits range from weight and muscle maintenance, to bone and joint support, to promoting healthy tissue growth of the hair, skin and nails. Collagen is the most abundant protein in our bodies and it is estimated that we lose around 1.5% per year, beginning from around our mid-twenties. Although all collagen is composed of the same amino acids, Marine Collagen contains higher amounts of the amino acids Glycine and Proline. Glycine is an all-encompassing amino acid that promotes the building of lean muscle mass, has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, and may improve glucose tolerance to protect against diabetes. Proline is important for stimulating Collagen synthesis and can work as an antioxidant.

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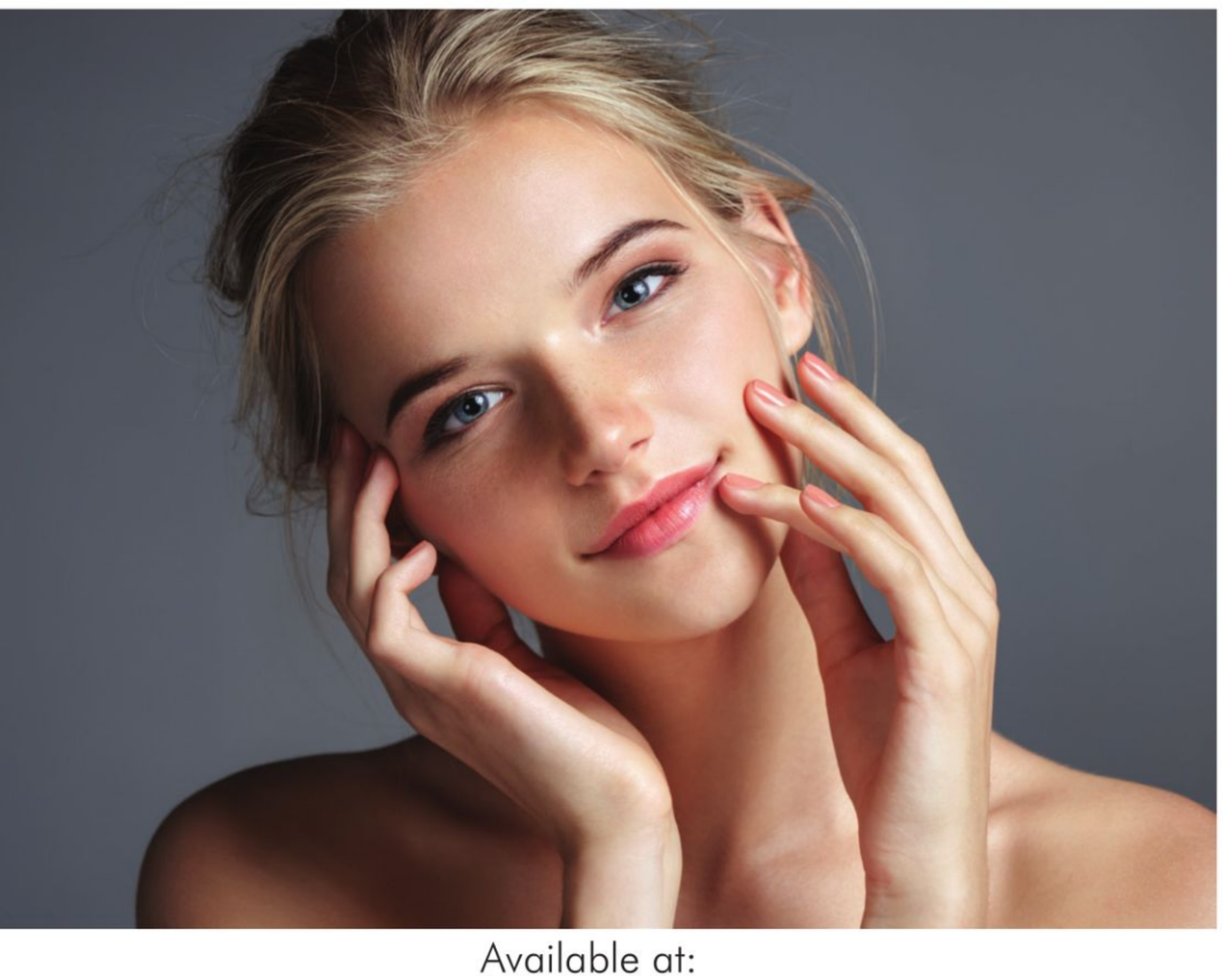
Studies have shown that oral supplementation with Collagen peptides may improve skin aging, such as elasticity and hydration. In one recent clinical study, skin properties including elasticity, sebum production, epidermal/dermal thickness and Collagen density were remarkably improved after 2 months of supplementation.

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*Biotin contributes to the maintenance of normal skin & hair.
**Selenium contributes to the maintenance of normal nails.







The DANCE goes on



Kristen Richardson comes from a long line of debutantes, but even though she declined to be one herself, she has written a fascinating history about the tradition. She talks to Rebecca Wallersteiner

When I was 17 a woman phoned my mother and asked her if I wanted to be a debutante,' says Kristen Richardson. 'I was home from boarding school and we were standing in the kitchen of our house in Connecticut. My mother asked me, and I laughed and curtsied and shook my head. My mother told the woman and we went on with our day. That I was invited so casually, might seem at odds with what people generally think about the debutante ritual, with its formality, but at our house we received a steady stream of phone calls from strangers bearing invitations.'

I am interviewing her over the phone ahead of the publication of The Season: A Social History of the Debutante, her entertaining and illuminating new book, and am immediately struck by her sensitivity and precision.

After deciding not to debut, Richardson did not give her decision much thought. She went to college and focused on her degree and making friends. 'Over the Christmas holidays, I attended some of my prep-school friends' coming-out parties in New York, but there was no fanfare at school. There remained an unarticulated sense that this was something to be endured but not discussed – a favour to one's family, a duty,' explains Richardson.

She stopped going to the parties but many of her friends stayed in the debutante scene, using their status to advance their own careers in fashion, publishing and business. 'It was the beginning of the George W. Bush presidency, with its resurgent conservatism, and lavish parties came back into style. The debutante scene, nearly rendered extinct, was booming once again in the new millennium. My southern cousins began to come out, one by one. What had felt arcane to me was relevant to them,' says Richardson.

Did she ever regret not becoming a debutante? 'There's no way I would have done it. Temperamentally, I was not suited. At 17 I was shy and had no interest in being on display, although I later learned that many debutantes are also shy. My friends who did make a





Clockwise from far left: Queen Charlotte's Ball in 1931, 2015, 1950, 1990 and 1984





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debut mostly did so to appease their mothers and grandmothers. I ended up having the best of both worlds, as I was able to attend debutante parties without having to cope with being the centre of attention.'

Did she consider herself a feminist at that time? 'I wouldn't have articulated it that way, but I had a keen sense of the injustices women have experienced. But in the milieu I grew up in, you would have needed a lot of courage to declare yourself a feminist, and I certainly didn't have much of that as a teenager,' says Richardson.

How did the debutante ritual start and why has it survived in an era of women making their own choices? 'By and large, it was family tradition. Most debutantes were presented by their mothers, who themselves had been presented. Many women in my family have been debutantes. One of them captivated a young George Washington, who sent her several admiring letters. My great-grandmother was presented at court in the 1890s and made her debut with her formidable cousin, Nancy Astor, the first woman to take a seat in parliament,' says Richardson.

Her curiosity drove her to research the tradition. Richardson, 44, who was born in Britain and now lives in Brooklyn with her son, learned that it began in England, about 500 years ago, when aristocratic fathers needed an efficient way to find suitable husbands for their daughters by presenting them at court.

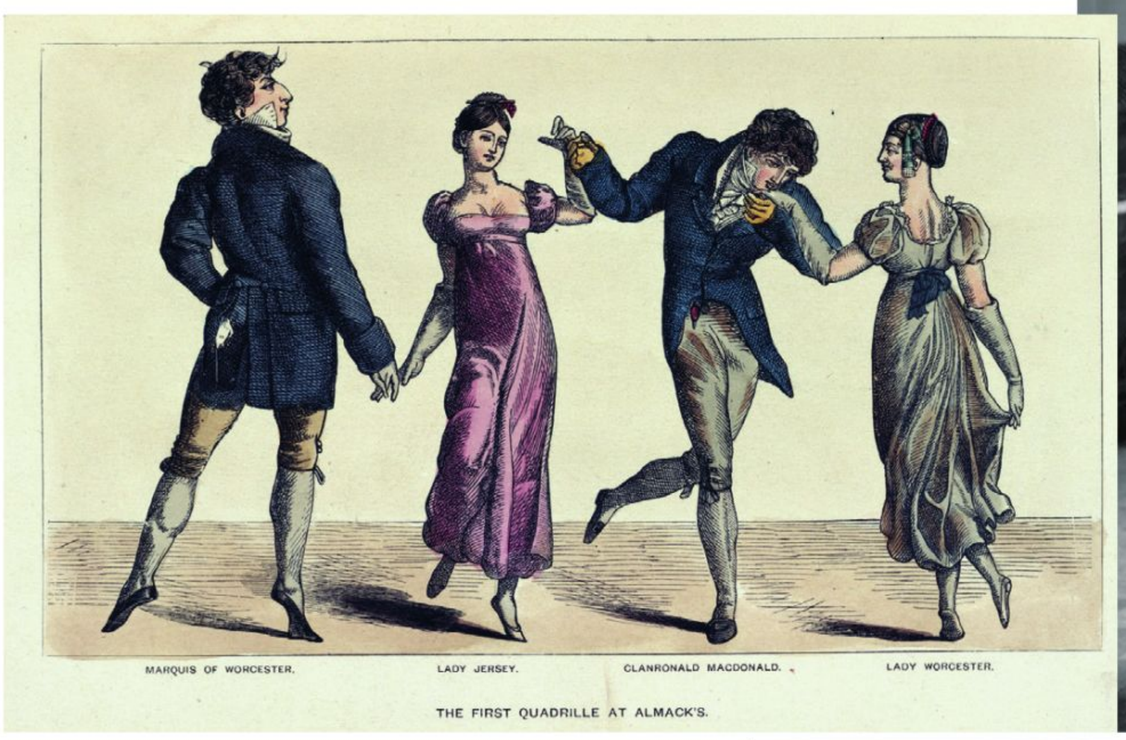
In the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries the system expanded, allowing parents to broker their daughters' marriages in a way that benefited them most. During these years, England became the dominant power in the West, and its culture spread outward from the fashionable capital of London to provincial cities and its far-flung colonies.

Through the 19th and early 20th centuries, debutante balls flourished. The girls would be instructed in all the latest dances, such as the quadrille, which became fashionable in the 19th century. Presentation was followed by the London 'season', in which potential suitors could assess the girls. It was all a means of meeting the 'right' people – a way to encourage the centralisation of wealth and power.

The debutante season created a whole industry as it supported hundreds of dressmakers, hairdressers, dancing masters, photographers, musicians and social secretaries, who were the forerunners of today's PR gatekeepers. It also created a market for women's magazines.

Richardson traces the social seasons of individual debs on both sides of the Atlantic, from Georgian England to colonial Philadelphia; from the languid South and Edith Wharton's New York back to England, where debutante daughters of ▷

Clockwise from below: a 19th-century print illustrating how to dance the quadrille; debutantes taking curtsey classes in 1952; the then Duchess of Argyll with her daughter Frances at her coming-out party in the 1950s







Gilded Age millionaires sought to marry British aristocrats. She shares their fascinating stories, often in their own words in diaries and letters.

Some women felt as Wharton did: she described her season as a 'long, cold agony of shyness'.

'Eleanor Roosevelt similarly hated her debut,' says Richardson. 'She made it at the White House alongside her more glamorous cousin Alice, daughter of the then-president Theodore Roosevelt. Eleanor then came out at a larger assembly ball in New York, an event she described similarly as Wharton did – as "utter agony". But in her memoirs, Eleanor also recalls how deeply important it had been to her mother Anna, who died when she was a child, that she also be a debutante.'

Other women who enjoyed themselves were happy to appear in the gossip columns and fashion magazines. Brenda Frazier, one of the most famous debutantes of the 20th century, whose face sold cars and perfumes, claimed her mother had forced her into the limelight at 17 and said: 'I was a fad that year, the way midget golf was once a fad.'

One of the most famous American debutantes was the beautiful heiress Consuelo Vanderbilt, born in 1877, who was worth around $20 million. She made her debut in Paris wearing a shimmering white dress made by Worth and a simple black ribbon around her long neck. She received five proposals of marriage within a week.

By contrast, dark-haired, comely Pauline Robinson made her debut aged 18 at the Winter Patriarch's Ball in New York in 1899, and wistfully kept six years of deb scrapbooks describing every dinner and dance she attended. Despite being the embodiment of what a New York deb should be – 'precise, compliant, predictable and demure' – she never married. Sadly, her family money had dried up by the start of the First World War after some bad investments, so she supported herself by teaching needlework until she died, almost penniless, 40 years later.

'New debutante events have sprung up all over the United States and in countries as far afield as China'

The wealth of many English aristocratic families also dwindled after the Great War and they struggled to launch their daughters into society. In the 1920s writer Nancy Mitford and her sisters were presented at great cost to their parents, who were barely holding on to their vast but ill-managed estates, reflecting how important the ritual still was to the British upper class.

The decline accelerated through the 1940s and 1950s, and 1958 saw the final presentation of debutantes to the Queen at Queen Charlotte's Ball, which was founded in 1780. The ball itself lingered on until 1976, but without the presence of royalty its status was much diminished. As the culture of deference declined in the 1960s the main events of the debutante season, such as Royal Ascot, the Henley Royal Regatta and Wimbledon, became much less exclusive.

But while the tradition in Britain was disappearing, the enthusiasm for debutante events was undimmed in other parts of Europe and the US. In Vienna, former capital of the Habsburg Empire, there are no fewer than 28 balls held annually between January and March.

Added to these, after the Second World War, the American socialite Beatrice Dinsmore Joyce founded the International Debutante Ball, perhaps the most exclusive event of its kind in the world. It is held every two years at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York and, as its name suggests, is open only to the daughters of the world's richest and most influential people.

Other debutante events have sprung up all over the US and in countries as far afield as China. Even Queen Charlotte's Ball was revived in the late 1990s, and has since been held annually in venues such as Leeds Castle and Kensington Palace. However, their focus nowadays is less on marrying off eligible daughters than on charitable fundraising and networking.

So, while Kristen Richardson once thought the tradition was on its deathbed, her fascinating book shows that these glamorous events, where privileged young women can meet 'suitable' men, are still in rude health. ■

◆ *The Season: A Social History of the Debutante, by Kristen Richardson, is published by W W Norton & Company, priced £18.99*

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‘My wife says I’ll have no frie



nds left!'



Alan Titchmarsh sits down with Ciar Byrne to talk about his love of plants, annoying gardeners and his new book of poems

Alan Titchmarsh was sitting on a train when the idea for the first poem in his new anthology came to him. 'I don't know where they come from. The first one I wrote on a train journey from my station into London and it took an hour and ten minutes. I think you brood for a long while and suddenly it sort of squirts out. I tend not to alter them much.'

That introductory poem, Why Does the Willow Weep? is a gentle reminder that we must take care of the world we hand down to our children and grandchildren. 'I've never liked giving my messages with a heavy hand, clubbing people, it's about making them smile and see what joy there is in nature,' he says.

Marigolds, Myrtle and Moles – A Gardener's Bedside Book includes poems about plants, from snowdrops to sweet peas and topiary to weeds, verse about the wildlife that inhabits gardens, from the swallow to the slug and the blackbird to British butterflies. 'I set myself the challenge of getting in all 58 of our native butterflies and to make it entertaining,' he says. There is even a rhyme about the propensity of cats to poo in next door's garden.

'There's a nice line in that one: "mood intense as Cumberbatch",' says Titchmarsh (referring to the aforesaid feline voiding its bowels). He adds: 'You shouldn't say you've written nice lines yourself, should you? I've always loved playing with words right from being a boy, overlapping a word at the end of a line to get a rhyme. I hope they amuse and inspire people with a love of gardens and the great outdoors.'

He started off by writing festive verse. 'We do a little Christmas entertainment in our barn at home every year. I also do Christmas concerts with symphony orchestras and I've found myself short of Christmas poems, so I thought I'd better write some.' One of them, A New Nativity, was read at the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, Cambridge a few years ago.

His new book is dedicated to the composer Debbie Wiseman. The composer suggested he write a series of poems about his favourite plants and she would write music go with each one. The album of their collaboration, The Glorious Garden, went straight to number one in the classical music chart, and all 12 of the poems are included in this new collection.

It is when he is writing about plants that Titchmarsh, who has long been an advocate for organic gardening, is at his most eloquent. 'They're my life and the life of the planet. ▷



While there's a lot to be said for protesting and raising awareness, there comes a point where the shouting has to turn into individual action. I feel we are all honour bound to do our own little bit. If that means not paving a front garden to park a car, it would help with the whole flooding problem. Gardening is the only form of interactive nature conservation on a personal scale.'

There are slightly ruder poems, including one about a woman who studies garden design in Chelsea and another who falls for a landscape gardener who ends up charging her a fortune. 'My wife said I'll have no friends left. It was a tongue-in-cheek jibe but you will have met the kind of lady I'm talking about.'

Titchmarsh was born in Ilkley, West Yorkshire in 1949, the son of a plumber. His childhood garden was about 20 feet by 40 feet, on the other side of a rough track which ran behind his terraced home. 'It was rather like that lovely line in Under Milk Wood: "Nothing grows in our garden, only washing. And babies",' he recalls. That changed when young Alan came along: 'Right from a young age I loved wildlife and nature. The nearest place nature came was the back garden, so I started sowing things and taking cuttings.' It was only years later, when he was training at Kew that his father told him both his grandfather and great-grandfather had been gardeners.

'Since I've stopped doing Gardeners' World some people say to me: "I don't suppose you bother with it now?" Don't bother? Gardening is the stuff of life'

He is now enjoying gardening with his own grandson. 'My seven-year-old grandson said to me last November, 'Grandpa can we grow vegetables?' In November! We made a list, we chose what we wanted to grow and in March we went and bought the packets of seeds. We sowed the seeds in April, they came up and when he ate his first radish I was in seventh heaven."

Inspiring children with a love of gardening is a cause close to his heart.

'Young children love being out there and that's the time to connect them. They'll go away in their teens, that's the way it is. No pun intended, that seed will have been sown. They will come back and they will know the love of it. I always quote the lady who said to me, "What do I do about my little boy eating soil?" I said, "Make sure he gets enough." We're all so used to antiseptic wipes that we catch anything going. I don't remember allergies when I was a boy."

He left school at 15 with one O-level in art and went to do an apprenticeship at a local nursery. Horticultural college in Hertfordshire followed, then three years studying at Kew. He stayed on to teach, before an opportunity came up to work in publishing as Percy Thrower's editor. 'Since he was my childhood hero, it was rather exciting. He was exactly what you saw on the box, had a wonderful voice, spoke as though he was broadcasting.'

Titchmarsh then went on to work for Amateur Gardening magazine, where he was occasionally asked to appear on the radio as a horticultural expert. 'Greenfly invaded Margate in 1979 and I did a piece for the Today programme about it. Someone from Nationwide heard me and said, "Will you come on TV?"' He loved the experience but it wasn't until they asked him back a year later that his broadcasting career took off. 'So, from 1980 I've been on TV. Forty years on the box. Gosh, it is this year isn't it?'

For six years, from 1996 to 2002, he presented Gardeners' World from the garden of his former home, Barleywood, on the outskirts of Alton in Hampshire. 'It was lovely to share it. It was quite a responsibility. Since I've stopped doing Gardeners' World some people say, "I don't suppose you bother with it now?" Don't bother? Gardening is the stuff of life,' he says.

At the same time he presented the garden makeover show Ground Force with Charlie Dimmock, whose famously bra-less boobs get a namecheck in one of his poems. Then in 2002, he left both shows.

'In 2002 we moved house and my mum died. It was a bit of an upheaval,' he admits, but, ever the optimist, continues, 'then it was on to other things which were exciting, other gardening programmes, two natural history series, a chat show for ITV and Love Your Garden. A litany isn't it?'

In his fifties Titchmarsh started writing fiction and now, aged 70, he has published 11 novels as well as three volumes of autobiography and an anthology of writings about Britain, England, Our England.

He writes in the loft of the barn in the grounds of his Georgian farmhouse in Hampshire, overlooking his pond. Two of the final poems in his new book are about legacy. Seeing into the Future... asks the question: 'Have you ever planted a tree?' while The Man on Earth begins: 'He leaves no mark, the man on earth... Unless that mark be growing still/ When he is laid 'neath yonder hill.' Titchmarsh has planted many trees but if he could choose just one which would it be?

"I always struggle between the English oak, which is sort of my birthright, and the Cedar of Lebanon, which is the most beautiful tree. If I could have just one, it would have to be the Cedar.' ■

◆ *Marigolds, Myrtle and Moles by Alan Titchmarsh is published in hardback by Hodder & Stoughton on 5 March, in time for Mother's Day.*

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◆ *www.woolovers.com*





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A HUSBAND? *I'd rather have a* TIDY HOUSE!

Middle-aged weddings are on the rise – but Liz Hodgkinson has no intention of walking down the aisle again



Oh, brilliant! It seemed I had a new admirer. About my age, Oxford-educated, he sounded intelligent and interesting. We met for a drink and after chatting for about an hour he asked whether I would like a husband.

I replied forcefully – perhaps too forcefully – that a husband was not an encumbrance I needed at my time of life. My date became mightily offended and we parted company. All his admiration for me vanished in an instant and I never saw or heard from him again. I had not appreciated that he was sussing me out as a potential new wife and had imagined he just wanted a friendly chat.

According to data from the Office for National Statistics, marriage rates for the over-65s increased by 56% among women and 44% among men between 2009 and 2014, with increasing longevity and fear of being alone cited as the main reasons. Perhaps it sounds lovey-dovey, older couples in new relationships walking into the sunset together, but there is no way that I am ever going to add to these numbers.

Why not? Wouldn't it be nice to have a loving companion to share my remaining years instead of an ever-empty house? Yes, in some ways, although there are many reasons why I would never want to tie the knot again after more than 30 years of being single.

First, I wouldn't want a sick old man to look after, which might well be the case in a very few years. I definitely would not be ecstatic at the prospect of taking on somebody with existing health problems such as obesity, arthritis, a heart condition, Parkinson's or hypertension, as these illnesses only get worse in time and I am not remotely of the nurse persuasion.

It is well known that, generally speaking, older women are far healthier and in much better shape than men of the same age. You can see this clearly at funerals, where the women have a spring in their step and the men are shuffling along on zimmer frames or supported by a couple of walking sticks.

Second, I would not want to cook meals for somebody, adapt myself to their routines or listen to their stories over and over again.

Another potential problem is that old love can be as fleeting as young love



and the man – or woman – who may have beguiled you over an intimate dinner might turn out to be a right bore when you are stuck with them.

I also fear that I have become far too intolerant and set in my ways to want to accommodate a permanent partner in my life. We become ever-less adaptable with age and I have daily routines that cannot now be altered. For instance, I could never share a bathroom.

There is also the question of levels of tidiness and neatness. I am fairly tidy, although not obsessive, but some men I know are monstrously slovenly while others are, not to put too fine a point on it, verging on OCD. I have one man friend who is always cleaning his windows and cannot stand the merest speck of dust. His house is as clean and shiny as a surgical ward. He argues that he is like this because he grew up in an untidy, cluttered house and this is his rebellion, but although I like him as a friend, we could never share a space.

And what about a pet-lover? I don't have pets so could I live with a cat or dog lover? No, not for a minute. I would not want to come second best to man's best friend.

These are all, to me at least, excellent reasons for not remarrying but the overwhelming one is the cold, hard reality that if you do, your legal situation will alter instantly. When you marry, or enter into a civil partnership, your status immediately changes. Any previous will becomes invalid and your pension and benefit rights may well be affected too.

This could easily mean that your new spouse will get everything when you die and your children or grandchildren, who you might have wanted to inherit, will receive nothing. There have already been many wills contested in court where this has happened, and I have several friends who have remarried in later life only to tie themselves up in legal knots trying to be fair to their former families. Lawyers, always touting for business of course, are now urging couples who want to marry when they have existing families to get advice on their legal situation beforehand. All too often, older couples in the first throes of a new relationship join forces and enthusiastically buy a house together without ever considering the consequences for their children.

Some older couples get round this by marrying and retaining their separate homes, so that all their accumulated individual memorabilia stays intact, and their families can visit without the new spouse always being there. Prue Leith, 80, and her second husband John Playfair live in separate homes but in my experience most older couples who have remarried live in their own homes for a bit and eventually buy a place together as the endless commuting between his and hers gets too much as they age.



'The more money you have, the more likely you are to be targeted by those on the lookout for a comfortable berth'

It is common also for grown-up children to take an instant dislike to your new partner, fearing that they want to get their hands on your money – and unmendable family rifts may result. A sentiment I have heard many times is: 'I cannot stand my mother's new husband.' Or father's new wife. My two sons, now in their early fifties, have many friends who have remarried and as a result become permanently estranged from the children of their first marriage.

The more money and assets you have as a single older person, the more likely you are to be targeted by those on the lookout for a comfortable berth with a rich widow, or widower. There are ever-more dating sites aimed at older people and the majority of those looking are men, very often men who have squandered all their earnings when younger. Women tend to be more frugal and careful and have often accumulated a nice little nest egg, which makes them a good catch even in their seventies and eighties. I may not want to be a nurse but I don't want to be a purse, either.

In any case, what's the point of remarrying in later life? I've enumerated the no-nos, but what are the advantages? There are none that I can see. If you do have a nice man friend or lady friend you can enjoy meals out, theatre, cinema or whatever your shared interests might be and retain your separate lives so that you just come together when you want to, not because you have nowhere else to go. I have had two such late-life relationships and they have worked out just fine.

In both cases we enjoyed doing some things together but not others. Both of these men friends, as it happened, were cricket obsessives, which may have made things difficult if we were sharing a home. As it was, they could go to cricket matches or watch them on TV without me having to be involved. Yet I would not have wanted to ruin the pleasure they took in the game.

One of these men said he was a theatre fidget, so I would go to see plays on my own or with a woman friend. I see so many older men being dragged by their wives to see plays or films in which they clearly have no interest.

A final good reason for not marrying when you are older is that the chance of your spouse dying before long is unfortunately much higher. And then your whole world may come tumbling down. Both of my late-life relationships ended with the death of my companions, one after 12 years and the other after four, but when that happened I was able to carry on without huge disruption.

So I would say to any new man who takes my fancy that yes, it will be good to meet from time to time but let's not take it any further than a close friendship. ■

‘I love being a matriach’

Michele Dotrice has starred in Shakespeare and sitcoms but she’s got a new role she loves most, she tells Maureen Paton

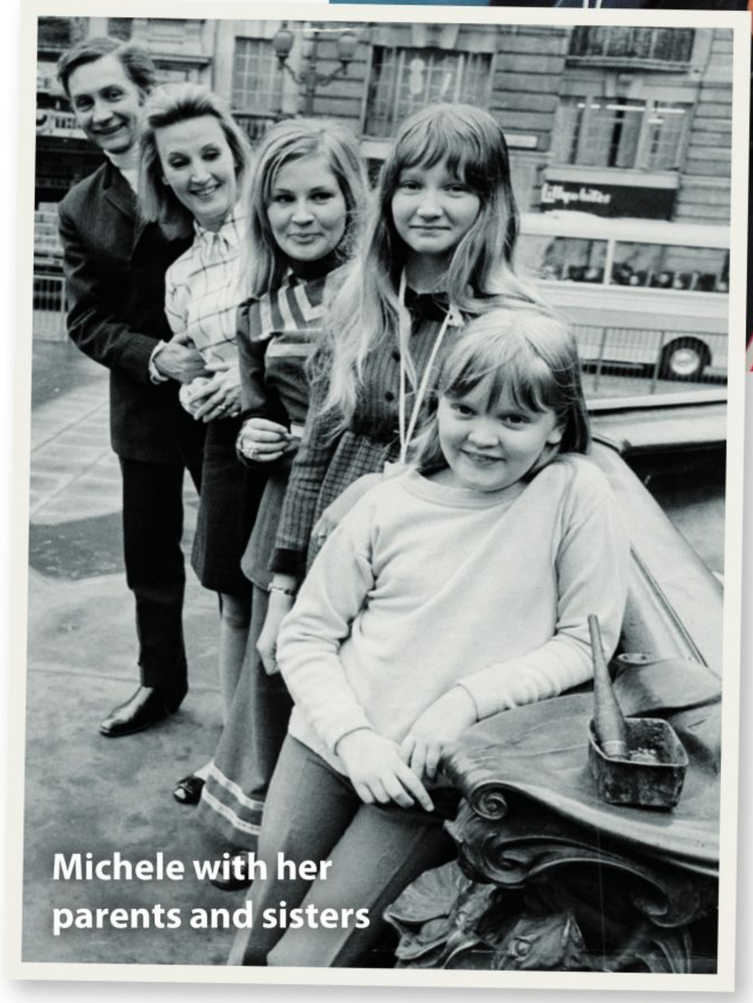


She was carried on stage by her mother when she was just three weeks old and by the time she was 11 she was performing professionally. As the eldest of the three actress daughters of thespian couple Roy and Kay Dotrice, Michele Dotrice has acting written through her like a stick of rock. After she lost her beloved husband, the Equalizer star Edward Woodward, in 2009 after 22 years together, that strong family tradition proved vital.

Her work, she admits, has been a great solace since Woodward, who was 18 years her senior, died at the age of 79. ‘I’m never happier than when working – it really helps,’ says Dotrice, pointing out that her widowed father Roy was still working (and fretting when he wasn’t) not long before he died aged 94 in 2017.

‘Just before Christmas, my sister Karen and I organised plaques for both Edward and our dad in the “Actors’ Church” (St Paul’s in Covent Garden),’ she says. ‘It’s given our family a real boost to have their memorials in a place where their fans can see them. They’re next to each other, both fighting for top billing,’ she adds jokily.

An experienced classical actress with an impressive range across stage and screen, Dotrice is best known, of course, as long-suffering wife Betty to Michael Crawford’s accident-prone Frank Spencer in the BBC’s cult 1970s



Michele with her parents and sisters

comedy Some Mothers Do ’Ave ’Em. The show is still such a hit on YouTube that in 2016 she and Crawford reprised their Betty and Frank roles for a one-off Sport Relief sketch on BBC One with Sir Paul McCartney and Boris Johnson as themselves, alongside a host of sports stars.

You would have to be pretty game to play Frank’s wife, especially with all the hair-raising stunts Crawford performed in the sitcom. So it came as no surprise that in 2017, at the age of 68, Dotrice took on her first nude role – as well as her first singing part – in West End musical The Girls, based on the 2003 film Calendar Girls, about a group of Women’s Institute members who made history (and started a trend) by posing naked for a charity calendar.

‘It still bewilders me that I was nominated for an Olivier Award for Best Actress in a Musical along with the other five ladies,’ she admits. ‘It could have been a nightmare with six females and egos – although men are probably worse! But we got on so well. We all supported each other, especially during the nude scene with the strategically placed kitchen utensils and big buns,’ she adds, laughing.

Now in her eighth decade, she’s delighted how her career will come full circle this May in a new film adaptation of Noël Coward’s Blithe Spirit, starring Dame Judi Dench as the eccentric medium Madame Arcati. Its director is Edward Hall, whose father Sir Peter first directed the young Dotrice at Stratford-upon-Avon back in 1960, alongside such greats as Peggy Ashcroft and Peter O’Toole.

As Edna the cook in the play Dotrice has to dodge kitchen knives thrown at her by the mischief-making poltergeist Elvira – Hall decided to incorporate her muttered, very



un-Coward-like ad-libs during filming into the dialogue. 'Coward won't like that – he's going to haunt me like Elvira,' says Dotrice, chuckling. 'It was great fun – and Judi was hilarious, getting the giggles in the middle of a big speech. She's as bad as I am.'

Yet despite a career that shows no signs of flagging, there's some serious competition for Dotrice's time now. She has always been close to Woodward's children from his first marriage – actors Sarah and Tim, and fight director Peter – and his seven grandchildren, whom she loves like her own. And now that her daughter by Woodward, Emily, has given her two grandsons, the open-hearted Dotrice's cup of happiness clearly runneth over.

'Since Emily had her two I have been turning work down, which angers her – she thinks I should keep busy. She says: "Please don't make the children an excuse, Mummy!" So I say: "No, no, I don't... but when are they coming over?" Woody is three and Barnaby is seven months – they are the loves of my life. With my two new bubbas I'm a very happy lady. It fills the gap, it really does.'

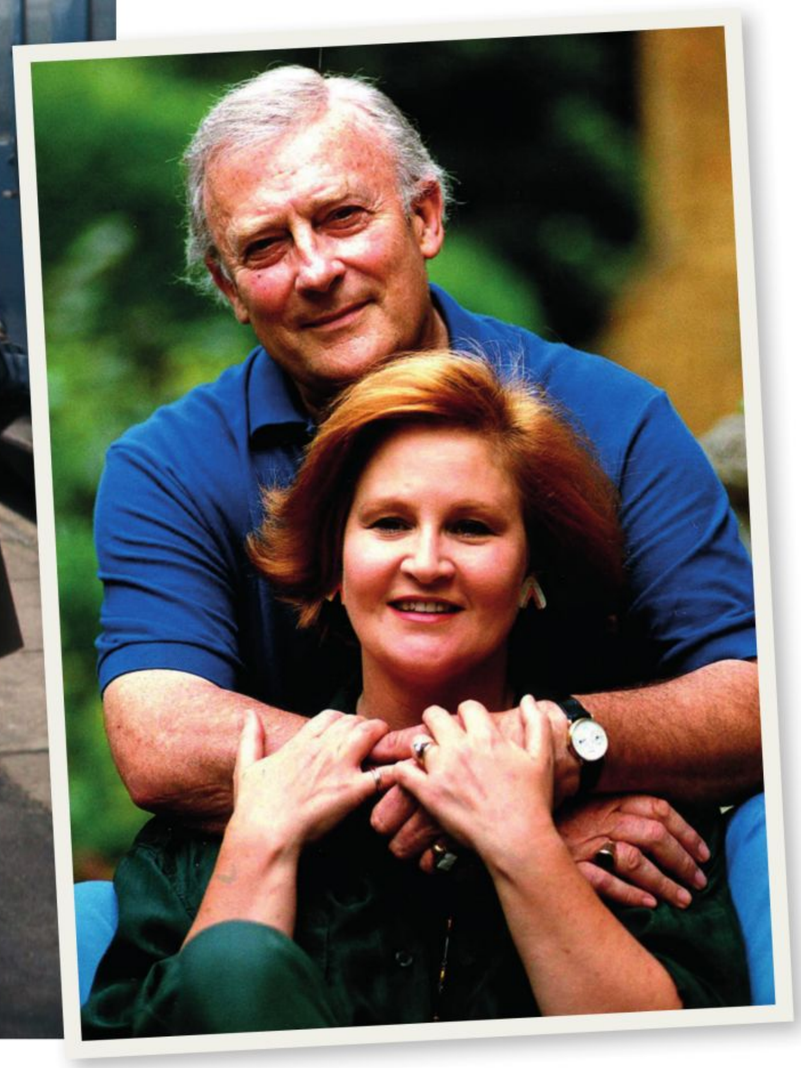
All of which means that her latest television role as a lonely widow whose family have decamped to Australia could hardly be further from Dotrice's own circumstances. It's quite a shock to see her on screen with that abundance of blonde hair scraped back to play the role of dowdy Mary, who works as a cleaner to fund her gambling habit in ITV's new murder-mystery, McDonald & Dodds.

A feature-length whodunnit set in Bath, the show stars the brilliantly watchable Jason Watkins as half of a chalk-and-cheese detective duo alongside Cold Feet actress Tala Gouveia. Mary is one of a group of addicts in a rehab centre where someone has committed suicide under mysterious circumstances – which is where the investigative partnership of McDonald and Dodds comes in.

'I wanted that scraped-back look for Mary – she has lost it all and the last thing she thinks about is her appearance,' explains Dotrice. 'So I didn't have to spend hours in make-up, which was an advantage since filming starts at 5.30 or 6am.'

Among her co-stars are Freddie Fox and Joanna Scanlan, with Dotrice, the oldest cast member – and also, I'm willing to bet, the earth mother who got them all bonding together on the shoot. 'We did a lot of group giggling,' she admits, 'which you tend to do when you're in an enclosed, tense situation.'





Left: Michele with Michael Crawford in the hit 1970s sitcom Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em. Below: with her late husband Edward Woodward

'Since Emily had her two I have been turning work down, which angers her – she thinks I should keep busy'

Refreshingly approachable, Dotrice seems to have a gift for friendship – especially with Michael Crawford who, of course, went on to become a major musical star on both sides of the Atlantic in shows such as Phantom of the Opera. 'He phones me regularly just to check up, and we'll be meeting up when he and his partner Tash (Natasha MacAller, an American celebrity chef) are back from New Zealand this month,' she says.

Crawford, who also has a home in Los Angeles, had moved to New Zealand to recuperate after contracting ME, or myalgic encephalomyelitis, for six years from 2005-2011. 'It was a tough old time for him,' reflects Dotrice. 'He came over here specially for Emily's wedding five years ago in order to do a reading in the church – it was so dear of him to do that.'

It's not surprising that someone as warm as Dotrice inspires such loyalty. We meet at the ITV offices in London, where she marvels at the way McDonald & Dodds has given her an opportunity to work with a female director at last – a first in a long career.

Still bonny at 71, Dotrice was a notable beauty at 18 as Fantine in an early BBC TV adaptation of Les Misérables, as well as a so-called 'scream queen' in Hammer Horror films in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet she thinks herself fortunate never to have experienced a #MeToo moment of sexual harassment. 'It could be because my father was a famous actor and we were very much a unit – I must have been protected,' she speculates.

Now she's a matriarch and enjoying the status it gives her. Still based in Cornwall, living in the old lifeboat house that she and Woodward converted – and which she says is brilliant for beach parties – she also keeps a flat in north London, near her extended family.

As to whether she will ever look for a new partner, she says: 'Of course I would love the companionship – that you do miss, the sharing of day-to-day stuff. But having been through the caring thing, it's tough – and I don't think I could go through that again.'

Besides, where would she ever find the time for romance now that she's juggling a thriving career and babysitting? As she gives me a big farewell hug, it's quite clear where the motherly Michele Dotrice's heart lies for now.■

◆ *Michele Dotrice is in episode two of McDonald & Dodds, ITV, 8 March at 9pm. The first episode is on the ITV Hub*

ALAMY; REX SHUTTERSTOCK

‘My SON taught me that

When Caroline White was told her first baby had Down’s syndrome she was devastated. But, she tells Lydia Bell, her son has inspired her in ways she never imagined







Seb on his bike and, left, with his mother. Below, Caroline with a friend after running a half-marathon

Caroline White, 46, is an ordinary woman with extraordinary passion. Caroline’s oldest child, Seb, was born with Down’s syndrome. Much of her life in the 12 years since he was born has been devoted to promoting inclusion of people with learning disabilities, alongside motherhood and her day job.

She is well known for public speaking and lobbying on the issue and has published a book for new parents of Down’s children. The Label: A Story for Families explores what happens when you let the label of learning disability drop and watch your child blossom untroubled by low expectations. And if that wasn’t enough, she is now training for the London Marathon, to raise money for the charity Mencap.

Like any other marathon-running mother of three holding down a job – in her case, philanthropic business mentoring for a design agency – training brings an element of escapism to her life. Three times a week with a friend she gets out of the house and pounds the pavements, forgetting her other responsibilities for a while. But the reason Caroline is running is not mere escapism, but to celebrate facing life’s challenges head on.

Although she had sworn she would never run a marathon, Caroline couldn’t resist signing up when Mencap was announced as sponsor. ‘Everyone can emotionally engage with most charities. We are all at risk of cancer or Alzheimer’s. But learning difficulties are more distant. So this is a great way to humanise people with disabilities.’

The moment of Seb’s birth was not a happy one, and Caroline has become known for describing that moment with searing truthfulness. ‘My honesty,’ she says, ‘is my only way of engaging with people who are like the person I was. I tell them: “I was like you. I thought I couldn’t cope. I was devastated”. We had our official diagnosis in small, stuffy room and the doctor was very awkward with us. He handed us depressing leaflets about health problems such as slanting eyes and poor muscle tone, and left us to it. Later, a midwife sat on the bed and cried with me. I cried, too, imagining a lifetime of feeling sad and excluded. From those leaflets and these messages I mapped out a future of misery. I realise now that I couldn’t have been more wrong.’

What do the parents of Down’s children want to change for the better? ‘For people with Down’s syndrome to be treated as equals through inclusion,’ she says. ‘Learning disabilities are last on every one’s agenda. Every other minority group has representation, whether that’s by race, gender or sexuality.’

First off, we need to talk about language, she says. ‘I hear people

ANYTHING *is possible*



constantly using phrases like "retard" and "a little bit special". If you call them out, they say, "I didn't mean it like that", and they detach. But remarks about learning disabilities are the same as making a racist or sexist remark.'

Second, she wants to make sure all children are valued as equals. 'Seb is his own biggest advocate in being seen, heard and included. If you don't know anyone with Down's syndrome, you just see Down's syndrome. If you do, you see the person. People with Down's might not always be able to advocate verbally but they can advocate by simply being included.'

Key to this for Caroline is access to mainstream education, although she acknowledges that society is divided about this, and it is a personal decision. Seb, now 12, is at a mainstream secondary school. Partly because his primary school fed into it and he had relatives there but also because it was important to Caroline that he grew up with children who are in his community.

'This is not a weird parental ambition or me being in denial,' she says, 'but rather the feeling I had of wanting him to be in the real world. I liked the idea that someone might see him on the bus in future years, or that his bank manager might have been a school friend. It was a huge decision, though. He takes differentiated lessons and homework and, the way we see it, as long as he is happy and the school is happy, we are happy. We take every day as it comes.'

Every child has a legal right to be educated, and the onus is on a school to prove it can't meet a child's needs. 'Sadly, though, they often don't want their league table results tarnished, so high-achieving schools will not comply,' Caroline says.

She wanted for him to be in 'as real a world as possible rather than in a protected environment. He is learning all the time about behaviour and all we have seen is lovely gestures and kindness from other children.'

It saddens her deeply that people with Down's syndrome are not valued by society. 'Recently, a video of a little Down's baby playing with spaghetti went viral on social media. The comments were along the lines of "You're so blessed!" But that doesn't bear out in a reality in which almost all Down's pregnancies are terminated. In Iceland there in one person left with Down's syndrome.'

This is Caroline's biggest frustration. 'You can have a full and rewarding life with Down's syndrome, so why is this the worst thing to have?' she asks. 'There are children without Down's having a much worse life than Seb. There are many teenagers suffering from mental health problems and low self-esteem, but luckily for Seb he lives in the moment and his mental health and self-esteem are really good. He's confident in sport and goes for it. The irony is, we have created this new, non-invasive neo-natal testing just as inclusion is improving. Maybe though, there will be fewer and fewer children around with Down's to include.'

Termination is a delicate and divisive subject, she acknowledges. 'I am pro-choice and I don't want to judge anyone. But you can abort a Down's syndrome child up to 39 weeks, and that is discrimination.'

For her it is not about closing off choices, but about the proper information being available. 'The leaflets you're handed are about everything that could go wrong. Which is why some parents started Positive About Down's Syndrome (PADS) so their lived experience can speak for itself.' Change is happening, though, thanks to lobbyists. 'The NHS website sections on Down's syndrome pregnancies were once a miserable list of negative attributes. Now they have rewritten it using different language, talking about the "chance" of Down's, for example, rather than the "risk".'

Mencap will use income raised from the partnership to fund All Move, a scheme that tackles stigma by bringing children both with and without a learning disability together through inclusive sport. Research shows that children with a learning disability are less accepted and have fewer friends than other children. This is a way of preventing stigma from becoming ingrained for the next generation. 'We were told our baby might not be any good at sport,' says Caroline. 'I really mourned not having a sporty boy. Now I realise how ludicrous that was.'

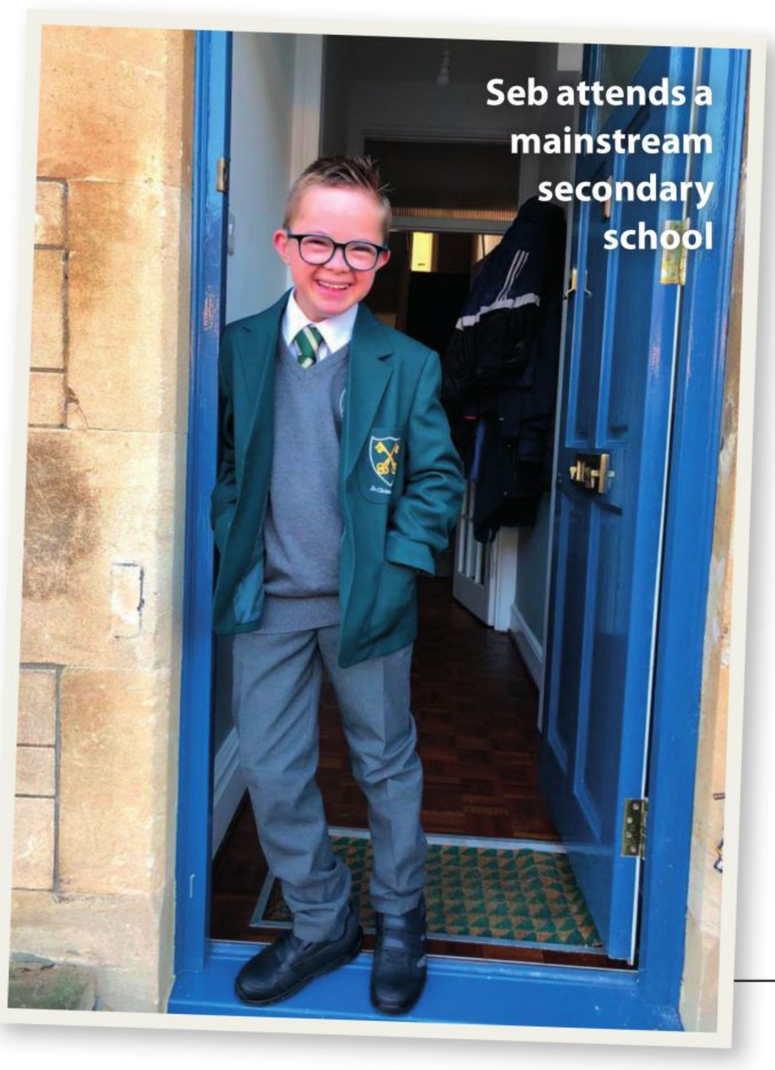
She is passionate about sport opportunity for many reasons. 'The physical side is a huge benefit, as traditionally kids with Down's syndrome were at risk of being overweight because they weren't taking part in sport. But there are also the benefits of being in a team and building self-esteem."

Inclusion in advertising is another focus. After Caroline petitioned Marks & Spencer to be inclusive of children with learning disabilities, in 2012 the company made Seb the first child with Down's syndrome to star in a major UK Christmas advertising campaign. 'Loads of parents got in touch to say, "I've just had a baby with Down's and I can't tell you how much this means to me",' she says.

Caroline says that Seb has made her a different mother to her other two children, too. Seb, who can melt the hearts of 'the hardest of people with his charm and sharp sense of humour and ability to laugh at himself', made her realise that, ultimately, 'it's all about happiness and fulfilment'.■

◆ *Mencap is the official charity of the Virgin Money London Marathon, which will take place on Sunday April 26. To make a donation visit mencap.org.uk*

'You can have a full and rewarding life with Down's syndrome, so why is it the worst thing to have?'

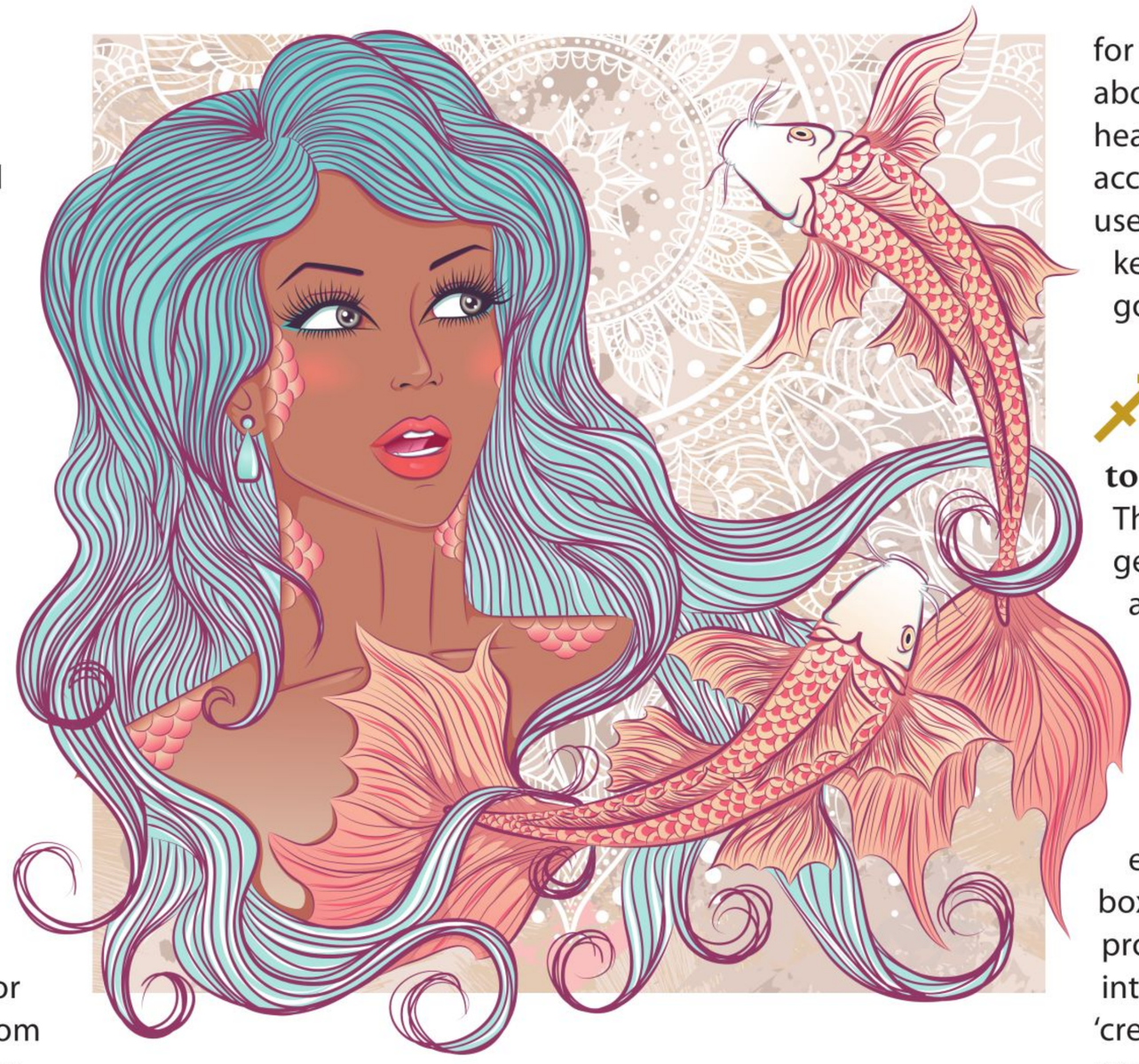


Seb attends a mainstream secondary school



HOROSCOPES

6-19 March 2020
by Victor Olliver



PISCES
20 February to 20 March

A secret is about to be spilled under the full moon and Mercury moving direct. Or you become aware that you're not in full possession of the facts. Or are you imagining things? When in doubt, trust your instincts – your psychic antennae are now sharp. Listen out for what's not said. A revelation enables you to move forward with a project.

ARIES
21 March to 20 April

With a number of 'instabilities' in your chart, this is not the greatest time for risk-taking or swanning off from a responsibility, be this in your career or some other role or duty. There's a need to focus now on who's on your side in a place of distrust. Once you have a 'team' of support there's little to stop you.

TAURUS
21 April to 21 May

Judge Judy has a useful motto: 'If a story doesn't make sense, it's probably not true.' Someone in the outside world is sending you mixed messages – either they are confused or dishonest. But whichever it is, treat whatever's said with a pinch of salt. Focus your mind on an ambitious target and martial your own thoughts for success. A career muddle can be ended.

GEMINI
22 May to 21 June

Be especially aware that more people are listening to (or reading) you than perhaps you realise – so watch what you write on Twitter or Facebook or say to friends. It's all too easy to give the wrong impression. This is a wonderful time to get across a personal vision or creative idea. Don't ruin it with a load of boring details.

CANCER
22 June to 23 July

A few sparks fly as your inner restlessness catches the edges of some difficult people in your midst. Just remember that you don't have to love everybody to gain co-operation. There is, however, tremendous social activity in your chart, which promises excitement and stimulation – and a new circle of friends or acquaintances will help you view the world through fresh perspectives.

LEO
24 July to 23 August

Do pay greater attention to a financial matter. If you think you have only half the picture do not fear demanding more details. Volatile cosmic energies may leave you wondering if some people are trying it on. The end of Mercury retrograde enables you to identify those who would have you believe what they want you to believe. Poor them!

VIRGO
24 August to 23 September

This self-expressive phase remains very active, which is excellent for persuading or entertaining people in your circle or the public. If you have a book, show or event to promote, victory awaits. But the onus is on you to do the thinking and strategising as certain colleagues will be found to be muddle-headed and frankly up there with the larks.

LIBRA
24 September to 23 October

A partnership issue hits a brief bumpy time, possibly over finances or emotional withholding. If you're single, then be ready for unexpected news from a bank or distant relative. The best policy is to keep your mind open to a change of direction and bend somewhat to someone else's wishes. Soon enough you can regain control.

SCORPIO
24 October to 22 November

People may find this hard to believe but your emotional intelligence is very high – it's just that you don't always report what you sense about others. It becomes information for future use. While others about you may have lost their heads somewhat, you are accumulating a lot of very useful insights about certain key allies. And your memory is good, too.

SAGITTARIUS
23 November to 21 December

The challenge now is not to get dogmatic, especially over a home or family question. This is hard because Sagittarians can think they know it all. You don't. The full moon's proximity to imaginative Neptune enables you to think outside boxes and even to consider proposals which seem counter-intuitive. An answer lies in a 'creative response', not in precedent or habit.

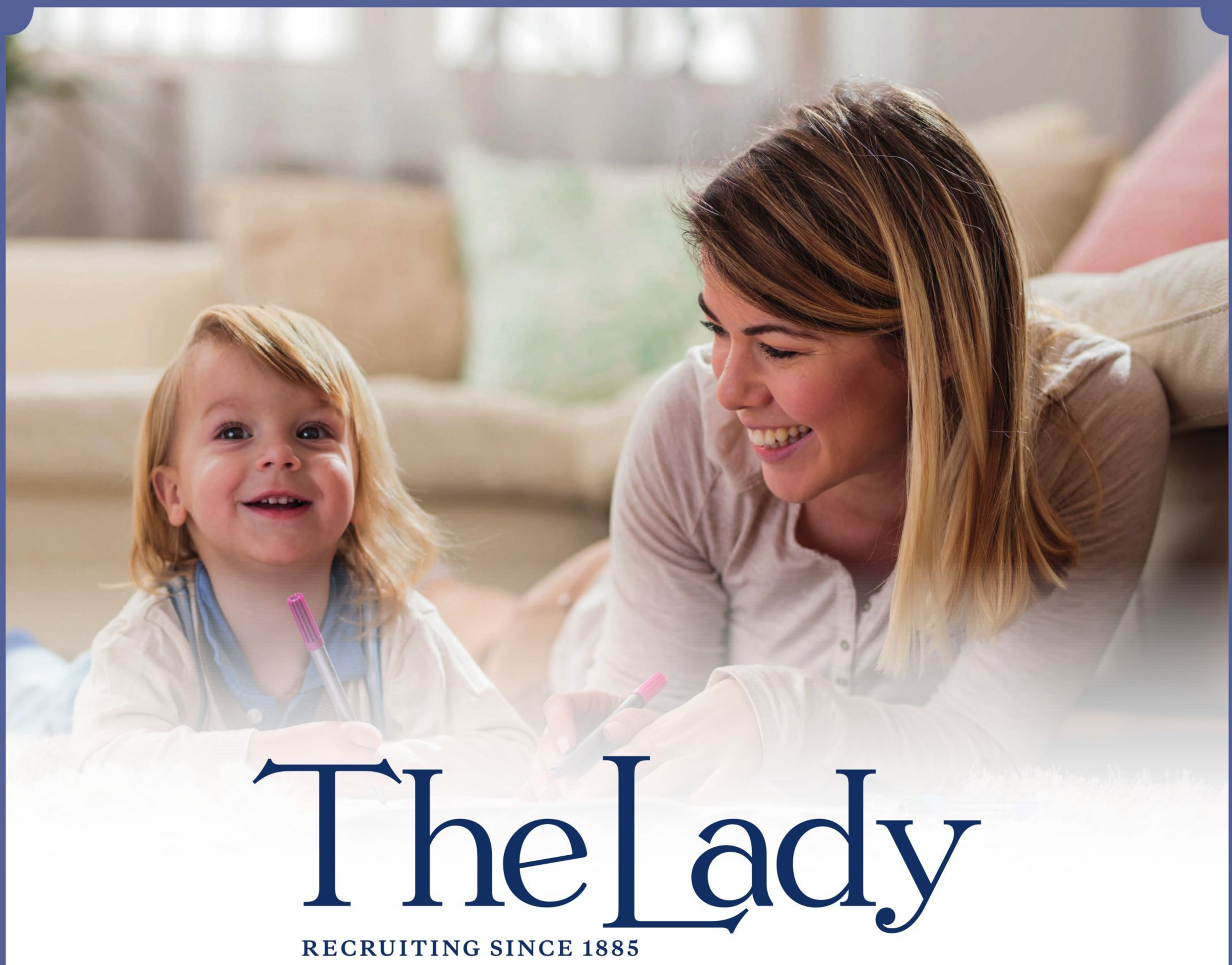
CAPRICORN
22 December to 20 January

A chance to go a bit wild (whatever that means to you) should be embraced. Part of you may be appalled by this exhibition of irresponsibility, yet we all need to let our hair down – especially as life has been 'heavy' for you in recent months. In this escapist mood, do not neglect anything requiring a close reading that perhaps has been put off.

AQUARIUS
21 January to 19 February

Do all that you can to delay making any decision that affects income, asset value, investments, bonds or a relationship with a benefactor or gift-giver. The problem is sentiment and an absence of reasoned logic in you right now. This phase won't last long. Under mind-planet Mercury moving into chart house of money, you'll find a sensible resolution later in March. ■

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MAX
the miracle dog

After successful executive Kerry Irving suffered a devastating accident he was left housebound and suicidal, but a chance encounter with a neglected dog changed both their lives forever. Regular walks turned into formal ownership, helping Max the spaniel to become a life-saving therapy pet and Kerry to rekindle his marriage and health. Along the way they became an internet sensation and raised more than £100,000 for mental health charities. In this exclusive extract from his moving memoir, Kerry reveals how they also now have the royal seal of approval.

'Ange,' I called up to my wife one morning, having just picked up the post. I held a letter in my hand with an impressive coat of arms and an invitation that left me stunned, 'we've been invited to Buckingham Palace!'

I showed her the letter from the Office of the Lord Lieutenant, summoning Angela and me to the Royal Garden Party in recognition of our fundraising efforts.

'I'm thrilled,' I said as she read it for herself. 'But there's no mention that the dogs are invited.'

'It's not Crufts, Kerry.'

Already, I could feel myself getting separation anxiety. Max had been with me every day since I had officially become his owner.

'I'm not sure I want to go,' I confessed. 'Not without Max. If it wasn't for him, we'd never have raised a penny.'

Angela studied the invite.

'Well, it doesn't say he can't come with us,' she said.

I decided to call the office that had sent out the invitation. Over the phone, I spoke to a very nice lady with a cut-glass accent who listened politely when I asked if I could bring my dog.

'Is he a working dog?' she asked. 'With a uniform?'

I told her Max was a qualified



therapy dog and did indeed own a smart red jacket for the role.

'Does that count?' I asked hopefully and was delighted when she confirmed that it did. After making some enquiries, she called me back and all of a sudden, our invitation effectively had a plus one.

That left me, Angela and Max to drive to Penrith and catch a train down to London. I had it all planned out, with plenty of time built into the schedule so we didn't have to stress.

'There are no spaces,' I said to Angela as we cruised around the long-stay car park by the railway station. My knuckles had turned white where I gripped the steering wheel, having spent the best part of an hour longer than anticipated in traffic.

'Stay calm,' she said. 'We can easily park across town and then get a taxi.'

Half an hour later, as we sat in the back of a stationary cab while the driver tried in vain to release a malfunctioning automatic handbrake, I had all but given up hope. As Angela dialled for another taxi, I looked at Max. He was sitting patiently beside me, showing no sign that he shared our stress. Yet again, his calming presence helped me to stay grounded. If we failed to make it, I thought to myself, we could have a nice long walk instead.

We caught the train with minutes to spare.

There's nothing like a dog to break the ice on a journey and Max loved every minute. On the journey down, I read out messages of support on the Facebook page. Having shared the news we were off to the palace, the responses went off the scale. There was just so much love for my little dog.

By now, Angela and I were both beginning to feel quite nervous. We had dressed up in our room and Max was sporting his bright red jacket. It had been a long time since I wore a tie. I didn't feel comfortable at all and wished I could carry myself as elegantly as Angela. She looked lovely in her polka-dot dress.

When the palace swung into view, and we climbed out at the gate for garden party visitors, I hadn't ▷

PHOTOGRAPHY: [illegible]



Max at home in the Lake District



Max and his brothers, Harry and Paddy; left, Kerry, Angela and the dogs meeting the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

realised we would be in such illustrious company. There were thousands of people, all in their finery, each invited for their contribution to society. It was humbling to be amongst them, but once again, Max proved to be the presence that sparked chatter and conversation. We met lots of people, some of whom were familiar with the Facebook page, and that included the Mounted Police. Max had his photo taken beside some handsome-looking horses and their riders. It was such a proud moment, but one cut short when I felt something give in the sole of my foot.

'What's wrong?' asked Angela as I muttered to myself and made a meal of standing up again.

'It's my shoe,' I whispered. I'm used to wearing sturdy walking boots, not dress shoes. I'd kept an old pair from my executive days, but can only think they had deteriorated over time. I wiggled my foot for Angela once again. The sole of the shoe had come away at the toes, and now yawned and flapped like a loose jaw.

Shortly afterwards, we began to file in through the security checks, I had seen the funny side by the time we stepped out into the sunshine again.

The royal garden was magnificent. I felt like I had walked into an oasis in the heart of the city and took a moment just looking around at the exquisite landscaping and the sprawling lake, where swans sailed serenely.

'Can you believe this?' I said to Angela as we mingled beneath a beating sun. 'I feel like we're trespassing.'

My wife reached down and patted Max on his flank. He looked so handsome in his jacket and a far cry from the lonely yard dog I had chanced upon so long ago.

'He deserves to be here,' she said. 'You both do.'

I caught the eye of a Chelsea Pensioner.

'Make way,' he said, stepping out into the crowd to help me. 'Can we create some space for this gentleman and his dog.'

I accepted his help with thanks and grasped Max's leash tightly.

With just minutes to go before the royals were due to emerge, a lady with a clipboard approached Angela and me. I



'It's Prince William and Catherine,' I told Max, as if that might bring him to his feet. 'Moo, wake up!'

assumed she was going to request that we move. Instead, she registered Max with a glance and then ticked something off a list.

'You're to be presented,' she told me. 'Follow me.'

Lost for words, but aware that we were the only people there with a dog and so there could have been no mistake, Angela and I did as we were told. It was then, standing apart from the rest of the invited guests, alongside just a handful selected to meet our royal hosts, that I began to feel panicky. I was so used to being in my own little world up in the Lakes, and now here I was set to meet royalty.

I was clasping Max's lead so tightly, and just then it felt like I couldn't function without him. The fact that he had settled at my feet, hiding my shoe malfunction, and appeared to have nodded off made no difference to me. He was still here as a source of strength.

I glanced at Angela – she looked just as out of her depth. Then all eyes turned to a small party that emerged from the palace just then. At the centre were two figures in their finery and Angela's face lit up.

'It's Prince William and Catherine,' I told Max under my breath, as if that might bring him to his feet. 'Moo, wake up!'

When Max had first poked his nose through the yard railings to get my attention, I'd had no idea that we were about to embark on a journey that would take us here. Had I known, I would've been as shell-shocked as I felt after the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge moved on from us. The lady with the clipboard had told me we could expect to be in conversation for no more than a minute. I'm told our chat lasted four times that length.

In that time, to great interest and compassion from the royal couple, I explained how Max had effectively saved me from the grip of depression and had gone on to help others with mental-health issues. The fact that he remained conked out in the sun as we talked was quite fitting, I thought. Even Prince William observed that he was the most laid-back spaniel he had ever met.

The exchange was wonderful. It also left me feeling emotionally wrung out. In fact, moments after the royal couple moved on, I burst into tears. All of a sudden I found myself surrounded by concerned guests, from military personnel to charity workers, who had no clue that I could cry at a change in the weather.

The next morning, after a long sleep at the hotel to recover from the emotion of the day, Angela, Max and I climbed into a black cab for the station. The cab driver didn't seem thrilled to have a dog on board, and asked me to make sure he stayed on the floor in front of the seat. It wasn't a long journey, but the traffic was bad and before too long we started talking. The driver had a few things to say about a news item on the radio, and then mentioned that he'd read a story in the paper that morning about a dog attending a garden party at Buckingham Palace.

'It was a Springer, I think,' he chuckled. 'Like yours.'

'This is the dog.' I exchanged a glance with Angela. 'Say hello to Max.' ■

◆ *Extracted from Max the Miracle Dog, published by HarperElement, price £12.99. © Kerry Irving 2020*

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Listen (and cook) with mother

Pop singer Jessie Ware and her mum Lennie's hilarious podcasts about preparing meals together have been turned into a new cookbook. Here they share three of their favourite recipes



Turkey meatballs in tomatoe sauce

Turkey meatballs in tomato sauce

Jessie: 'These are light as a feather and seem to invite a confession, like when my dear friend, the singer/songwriter Sam Smith, explained he thought Mexico was in Spain while we fed these beauties to him.'

Serves 4-6

FOR THE MEATBALLS

- 50g fresh white breadcrumbs
- 75ml whole milk
- 500g minced turkey thighs
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed or finely grated
- finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 egg, beaten
- 40g pecorino or Parmesan cheese, finely grated, plus extra to serve
- 2 tsp finely chopped fresh oregano, or 1 tsp dried oregano
- about ¼ nutmeg, freshly grated
- 1 tsp fine salt
- freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE TOMATO SAUCE

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely diced 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 heaped tbsp tomato purée 1 tsp paprika (mild or hot)
- 2 × 400g tins chopped tomatoes
- 1 large handful of basil leaves
- ½-1 tsp caster sugar (optional)
- salt and pepper

1 First, make the tomato sauce. Heat the oil in a large sauté pan or shallow casserole over a medium heat. Add the onion and a good pinch of salt and gently fry for 5-10 minutes until softened. Add the garlic and fry for 2 minutes, then stir in the tomato purée and paprika and cook for another 2 minutes.

2 Tip in the tomatoes and chopped basil, then gently simmer for 20 minutes. Taste to check the seasoning, ▷

'Triple Threat'
chocolate brownies



Pasta with smoked salmon, vodka and caviar

adding salt, pepper and a little sugar to balance the acidity of the tomatoes if needed.

3 Meanwhile, make the meatballs. Place the breadcrumbs in a mixing bowl and pour over the milk. Add the turkey, garlic, lemon zest, egg, cheese, oregano, nutmeg, salt and a good grind of black pepper. Using your hands, gently combine, taking care not to overmix. With wet hands, gently shape the mixture into about 20 meatballs (about the size of golf balls – roughly 40g each).

4 Gently drop the meatballs into the simmering sauce, cover with a lid and simmer for 20 minutes, turning them after about 10 minutes and giving the pan a shake from time to time.

5 Remove the lid and simmer for another 5 minutes. Serve the meatballs with the basil leaves and a grating of pecorino or Parmesan.

'Triple Threat' chocolate brownies

Jessie: 'Loads of people requested this recipe after hearing about it in the Ed Sheeran episode of the podcast. It's a triple shot of chocolatey goodness, in my opinion though my brother Alex, who is a doctor, says that it's more like a triple threat to your cholesterol levels, but don't let that stop you from making them.'

Makes 9-18

- 200g unsalted butter, cubed
- 200g dark chocolate, chopped
- 3 large eggs
- 275g caster sugar
- 90g plain flour
- 50g cocoa powder
- 250g-300g ingredients of your choice to add to the mix (white, dark or milk chocolate, biscuits, your favourite chocolate bar), chopped

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5. Line a 23cm square baking tin with baking parchment.

2 Put the butter and chocolate into a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water and leave until they start to melt. Stir regularly, taking care not to burn the chocolate. Once completely melted, remove from the heat and leave to cool a little.

3 In a large bowl, using an electric whisk on high power, beat the eggs and sugar together until pale and almost doubled in volume. Add the cooled chocolate and butter mix and gently combine, using a figure-of-eight motion to fold the mixtures into one another.

4 Sift the flour and cocoa powder together and then fold into the chocolate and egg mixture. Again, fold gently using a figure-of-eight motion until it is all combined. It will appear dusty at first, but be patient and it will come together. Take care not to overdo the mixing: as soon as you cannot see any dusty flour mix, you are there.

5 Now add your extra ingredients and gently fold in, reserving a few to scatter over the top if you like. Transfer the mixture to the lined baking tin, level it out and press any reserved ingredients into the top of the mixture. Bake for around 35 minutes. The top should be just firm but the middle should be slightly undercooked and gooey: it will continue to cook in the tin once removed from the oven. Leave the tin on a wire rack to cool before cutting into squares.

TIP These brownies are best if slightly undercooked, so they still retain their gooeyness. What you want is a brownie that gets stuck to your teeth when eating it.

Pasta with smoked salmon, vodka and caviar

Lennie: 'A rather decadent and luxurious pasta dish that requires little effort. Rather than actual caviar, we use the lookalike black lumpfsh roe you can find in most supermarkets.'

Serves 4

- 400g linguine, farfalle or penne
- 200g crème fraîche
- 200g sliced smoked salmon, cut into strips
- 2 tbsp vodka
- grated zest of 1 large lemon
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh dill
- freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tsp lumpfsh caviar, to serve

METHOD

1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil and put the pasta in to cook for 10 minutes until al dente.

2 Drain the pasta and return to the pan. Add all the remaining ingredients except the caviar and stir well until everything is warmed through.

3 Serve in bowls, grind over some black pepper and add half a teaspoon of caviar to each bowl. Alternatively, pile it all into a large serving bowl for your guests to serve themselves, dotting the caviar over the top.■

◆ *Table Manners: The Cookbook is published by Ebury Press, price £22*



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TRAINEE WINO

by Ivo Dawnay

The martini is among the world's most popular cocktails, but if you want one with a touch of class don't make it like James Bond

Being in Manhattan, it is the ideal time to talk about cocktails. The golden age of the shaker is, of course, over. It was really in the 1920s – before prohibition (and during) – that the cocktail conquered all. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald were among the beneficiaries.

Yet today, in London as well as New York, the cocktail is making a comeback. Those White Ladies, Whiskey Sours, and Singapore Slings are once again emptying minds and wallets with gay abandon. But of all the vast range of mixed drinks available one and only one reigns supreme: the martini.

So lets deal with a few myths right away. First, James Bond was not remotely cool when he issued his instructions for 'a vodka martini, shaken not stirred'. Why? Well because for true snobs this is wrong on so many grounds that it is hard to know where to begin. It is a bit like saying smoking Consulate menthol cigarettes was sophisticated. It just wasn't.

To set out Bond's errors in more detail: vodka is not really a martini ingredient, it should always be gin, and preferably a strong one at that. I recommend Tanqueray, but Bombay Sapphire is a good modern brand.

Though it must be ice-cold, the gin should be in touch with the ice for as short a time as possible to avoid the danger of water dilution. So first, chill the glasses *and* the gin bottle.

Second, swill a frozen glass with vermouth and tip it out, leaving just a trace. Pour the gin slowly into the cocktail shaker with the ice but do not shake it, then pour it straight into the glass. Add a twist of lemon or an olive or two – not both. And voila!

My only concession to modern thinking is a penchant for the 'Dirty Martini'. This takes half a thimbleful of the olive infused liquid from a jar of green olives and adds it to the mix. A subtle and delicious bonus.

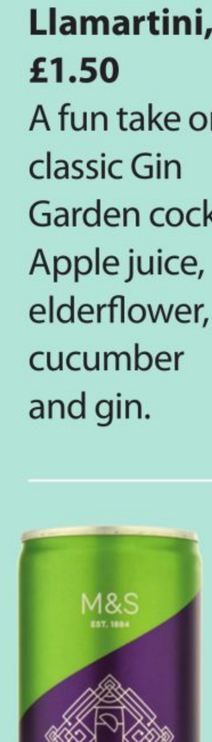
All this makes Ian Fleming's obvious error with Bond's order all the more interesting. As the author was almost as much of a snob as I am, I can only assume he was deliberately sending the message that Bond was not entirely a gentleman. In fact, 007 connoisseurs claim there are a number of similar incidents in the books which detract from Bond's supposed sophistication.

The biggest of all is the agent's initial choice of weapon – a Beretta 418 pistol, which he uses in the first five novels. A retired major, Geoffrey Boothroyd, wrote to Fleming saying that while he admired the books he took issue with Bond's choice of weapon. He described the Beretta as 'a lady's gun', with little stopping power, and said no self-respecting killer would use one. Fleming thanked the major for his advice and in the next book, Dr No, he is resupplied by 'Q' with a Walther PPK – a much more powerful weapon (this is the one he uses in the films).

Meanwhile, how many martinis is the correct number to drink? The New York answer is: "One is too few, two too many, and three about right." ■

'To set out Bond's errors in more detail: vodka is not really a martini ingredient, it should always be gin, and a strong one at that. I recommend Tanqueray'

IVO'S TOP THREE COCKTAILS



WAITROSE Goslings Dark 'n' Stormy, £2.20
Bermuda's national cocktail – rum and ginger beer – the perfect balance of spicy bite with sweetness.



TESCO All Shook Up Llamartini, £1.50
A fun take on a classic Gin Garden cocktail. Apple juice, elderflower, cucumber and gin.



M&S Blackberry Gin Bramble, £2
A classic of sharp lemon with sweet, ripe blackberries and gin. Serve over ice, no shaking required.

HIM ON THE FARM *by Robin Page*



We've had some bad weather this year, but by no means the worst

I'm afraid I am moaning – about the weather. Well not actually about the weather itself but about the reaction of people to the weather. The reason is simple: we live on an island and so automatically and regularly get great changes in our weather which are not necessarily anything to do with climate change.

The greatest changes in our weather are caused by our maritime situation and also what is happening on the sun – in talking about weather patterns most 'experts' seem to forget the influence of the sun – and what is happening on its surface has far more influence on our weather and climate than planting a few trees on a mountain in Wales or Scotland to mitigate 'climate change'.

But this does not make me a 'climate change denier'. The climate has always changed and will continue to do so but the streams of commuter traffic every day across the whole of Britain are far more important in causing it than a few cows passing wind.

People have recently raised the passage of Storm Dennis and Storm Ciara as signs of climate change. But in 1947 the road bridge over our little brook was swept away when the stream had become a raging torrent. Do you remember the winter of 1962-63? What a freeze-up that was. It seemed to last for ever and it was devastating for wildlife. In the next decade, 1976 was 'drought year': for the first time anybody could remember we finished harvest in July – and we have never finished harvest in July since. The heat was unrelenting and almost the only thing that made it rain was when the government appointed a minister for drought.

And what about October 1987 and the 'Great Storm', which blew down an estimated 15 million trees and killed 18 people. Both Storm Dennis and Storm Ciara were chickenfeed compared with that.

So we are an island, at times a very blowy island, so we must expect changes not only in the weather but also in its patterns. It is one of my biggest regrets that I haven't kept a record of daily temperatures, rainfall and wind speed. That would make fascinating reading and would let me see the changing weather patterns.

'Storms Dennis and Ciara were chickenfeed compared with the Great Storm of 1987'

In my lifetime we have had wet winters, like this one, and dry ones, when I could go all the way round my small farm – most of it on heavy clay – wearing only my trainers. In fact, this year is the wettest winter I can remember and we are awash with mud.

So even though the weather changes and the wind blows or is calm, I still believe in much of the old weather lore. One of my father's favourite sayings was: 'Be it dry or be it wet, the weather will always pay its debt'. We had a very dry summer and early autumn last year. With the amount of rain we have had since it has certainly paid its debt.

In 1977 I had my own weather book published. Weather Forecasting the Country Way is remarkably still in print (Penguin, £9.99). Climate change or weather-change – I believe that the old weather-lore still holds true. ■

ISTOCK

The strangest HOUSE *in London*



Dennis Severs' House is a 'museum' in the East End that has reinvented the way visitors experience history. By Donatella Montrone

Four generations of silk weavers haunt the rooms of 18 Folgate Street, a Georgian townhouse on a cobblestoned street in London's Spitalfields. The Jervis family story is fantastical, and their presence palpable immediately on stepping through the threshold.

It begins at the end of the 17th century with the arrival in London of Isaac Jervis, a Huguenot who fled persecution in France and made his fortune in the silk trade. Passed down from father to son, the business slowly diminished in fortune, as successive generations didn't share Isaac's work ethic and squandered more and more of their forefather's inheritance.

William Jervis, the last to have inherited the family fortune gambled what little wealth remained and eventually hanged himself in the top floor of the house.

The story of the Jervis family, which ends at the dawn of the 20th century with the suicide of William, is just that – a story. It's an elaborate tale of a family of weavers that only ever existed inside the wildly inventive mind of the man who created them, Dennis Severs, an American from Escondido in California, and the owner of the house in which the enthralling spectre of the Jervis family still lingers.

To understand the magic of Dennis Severs' House, one needs to understand Severs himself. He was raised in a blue-collar family. His father owned a petrol station and hoped that Dennis might one day take over the family business. But he became an anglophile at a young age, feasting on British TV costume dramas. He became enraptured with the English gentry – men in breeches and waistcoats, and women in silk gowns puffed up by petticoats. He felt he'd been born in the wrong time in the wrong country.

In the 1960s, with a small family inheritance on which to survive, he moved to Spitalfields and decidedly turned his back on America and, importantly, the 20th century.

He lived his life as that of an 18th-century gentleman. He dressed the part, bought a genuine 1840 Landau horse-drawn carriage, and travelled around the East End in it with his horseman, Hayden, dressed in full uniform. It wasn't long before the pair started taking passengers on paid tours around Spitalfields. In 1979 he bought the dilapidated, Grade II-listed townhouse at 18 Folgate Street for £18,000 and, rather than modernise its interior with contemporary comforts, he set about bringing the past to life. The townhouse would be his escape from the trappings of modernity.

He read by candlelight and cooked over a wood-burning stove. He began embellishing the house with makeshift Baroque features, such as plaster busts and an elaborate ceiling rose which he made from plastic fruit coated in plaster. He filled the house with objets d'art, chintz furnishings and curios – each room becoming a representation of how the Jervis family lived. 'I live here with a fictitious family,' said Severs, who featured in a BBC documentary made by the architectural historian Dan Cruickshank in 1985. 'They are not spectacular people, they are middle-class people. Silk weavers, Huguenots – and they conform completely to the spirit of their age. The footman works for them and I live in proxy for them. Everything I do, from the time I get up in the morning to a quick use of the chamber pot at midnight, is all done for them.'

Severs started hosting candlelight punch parties for his neighbours, and gentleman's assemblies in the Smoking Room, a room whose furnishings replicate the scene in the reproduction of A Midnight Modern Conversation by William Hogarth that hangs above the mantelpiece.

He opened his home to the public, taking visitors from room to room, himself as much an attraction as the house in which he lived. He would usher paying visitors into the cellar and close the door, leaving them in darkness for some 10 minutes before letting them out. To Severs it was a game, and anyone who crossed the threshold had to play by his rules. So unique was the experience, that he soon attracted the attention of art historians and artists such as David Hockney, who said of the house: 'It's a stunning, fantastic experience... a bit of theatre. I don't think I've had an experience like that since.'









The interiors of Dennis Severs' House are intended to evoke what it would have been like to live there at various periods during the 18th and 19th centuries

Severs created a world where he could live out his fantasies, and many purists were cynical of it at first. It wasn't historically correct, they said. But unlike other museum houses, such as that of the architect Sir John Soane, or even Winston Churchill's family home Chartwell, Severs' house was never meant to be a museum.

Signs of life are everywhere, and each floor reflects the dwindling financial health of successive generations of the fictitious Jervis family. Visitors can feel their presence in each of the 10 rooms: pomegranates freshly halved, their seeds glistening by candlelight; a tower of Turkish delight in a silver dish; a prayer book open to the last-read verse; the warmth of a fire still burning – they all give the sense that the inhabitants have only just left the room.

There are little domestic details too – a just-used chamber pot with a sprig of lavender laid across the top; a dishevelled bed, as if its occupant has only just awoken. It's a house that rejects the confines of historical representation, for it's not meant to be an authoritative history of the 18th and 19th centuries – it's an illusion, a 'still life drama', in the words of Severs.

While numerous historians were dismissive of the house as a folly, Tim Knox, the former head curator of the National Trust, admitted in Cruickshank's documentary that Dennis Severs' House 'gets the atmospherics absolutely right – the smells, the sounds – exploiting every available means to give visitors an experience that envelopes and warms and pleases'.

The story of the Jervis family comes to a climax on the top floor, where they had taken in a family of lodgers to avoid destitution. It's cold and damp and smells of soot and mould. A breeze brushes the top of your head as you duck underneath a clothesline on to the landing and are assaulted by a vision of Dickensian squalor, standing underneath the beam from which William Jervis hanged himself.

Severs died of cancer the day after Boxing Day in 1999. He was 51. Prior to his death he'd apparently offered the house to the National Trust but they had declined.

It was bought instead by the Spitalfields Trust and is now curated by David Milne. His job is to maintain the house in keeping with the vision of its former owner, who leaves behind what can only be described as an 'operatic experience'.■

◆ *Dennis Severs' House is open to the public by appointment. For more information visit dennisseversh ouse.co.uk. To enquire about visits call 020 7247 4013 or email info@dennisseversh ouse.co.uk*

ROELOF BAKKER/DENNIS SEVERS' HOUSE



The picture-postcard riverside in Ghent

Flawless FLANDERS

Mary Novakovich explores two of the historic cities of north Belgium

For many visitors to Flanders, all roads lead to Bruges. That's understandable – the perfectly preserved medieval town really is exquisite. But as hordes of tourists threaten to overwhelm it, this was a good time to take the less trodden path to Bruges' Flemish neighbours, Antwerp and Ghent.

It didn't take long to discover Antwerp's appeal – a blend of high culture and haute couture. It was home to the great Baroque painter Rubens in the 17th century and in recent times to the Antwerp Six – the 1980s trailblazing group of fashion designers including Dries Van Noten and Ann Demeulemeester.

Grote Markt, in the heart of the old town, is just as enchanting as you'd expect, its 16th-century guildhalls, with their crenelated rooftops, are matched only by the grand façade of the city hall. There's the distinctive Brabo Fountain in the centre and, looking up, I could see the marvellous gilded figures adorning the rooftops.

Around the corner in Handschoenmarkt, the Cathedral of Our Lady made its flamboyant, Gothic presence felt. I was easily lured inside by the works of Rubens, including the triptych of The Descent from the Cross. Just as arresting was the 2015 bronze sculpture by contemporary artist Jan Fabre, The Man Who Bears the Cross, which brings a graceful simplicity to the cathedral's ornate interior.

These whet the appetite for a slow wander through Rubens House, the palatial home of the artist, which was transformed into a museum in 1946. Rubens bore no resemblance to the Romantic image of the starving artist; hence, lavish interiors liberally sprinkled with his own works and those of other artists, including Anthony van Dyck and Jan Brueghel the Elder.

Disappointed to see that the fashion museum, MoMu, was closed for renovation, I discovered more than ample consolation in the unlikely interior of the Plantin-Moretus Museum. 'You have to visit this place,' all my Antwerp-loving friends told me.

The only museum on Unesco's World Heritage list, it's the 16th-century home of the Plantin-Moretus printing dynasty and houses the oldest presses in the world. Even if you're not a typography fanatic, it's hard not to be entranced by them and the 20,000 original lead letters that are beautifully laid out. The whole house, with its leather-clad walls and collection of books and illuminated manuscripts, evokes the rise of the power of the printed word at a time when scholarship and learning were spreading across Europe.

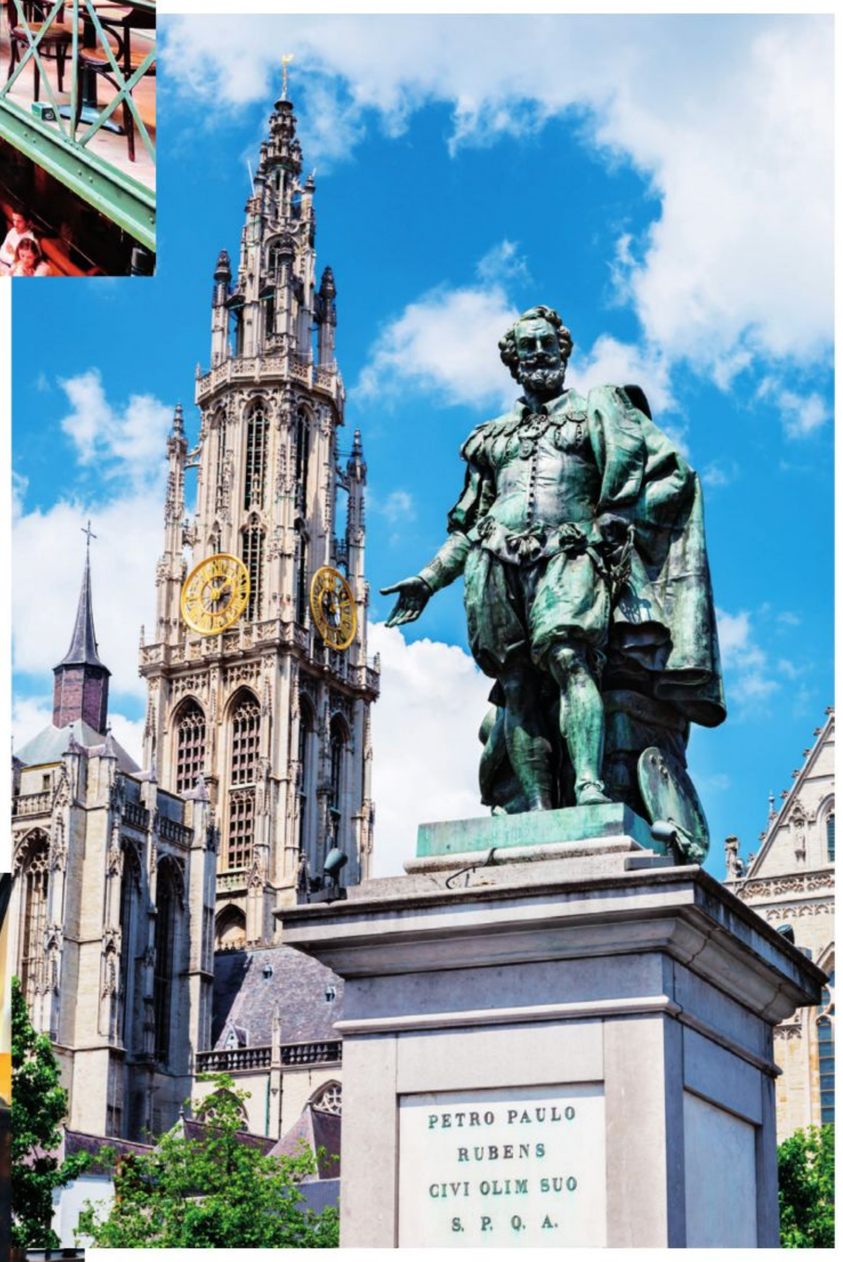
A quick tram ride to the revamped docks brought me to an intriguing mixture of Antwerp's past and future. Marooned in the middle of the marina is the Museum aan de Stroom (known as MAS). Opened in 2011, MAS is Antwerp's biggest museum, with seven galleries exploring the city's past, present and future. But if you're not in the mood to trawl around the exhibits, you can take a series of escalators to the rooftop and enjoy sweeping views of the city for free.

A few minutes' walk north and I arrived at another of my friends' must-sees. The Red Star Line Museum recalls the days when Antwerp – the second-largest port in Europe after Rotterdam – was the embarkation point for millions of Europeans who set off in search of a new life in the United States and Canada between 1872 and 1934. Their stories, describing everything from quarantine to the perils of the voyage itself, are poignantly told.

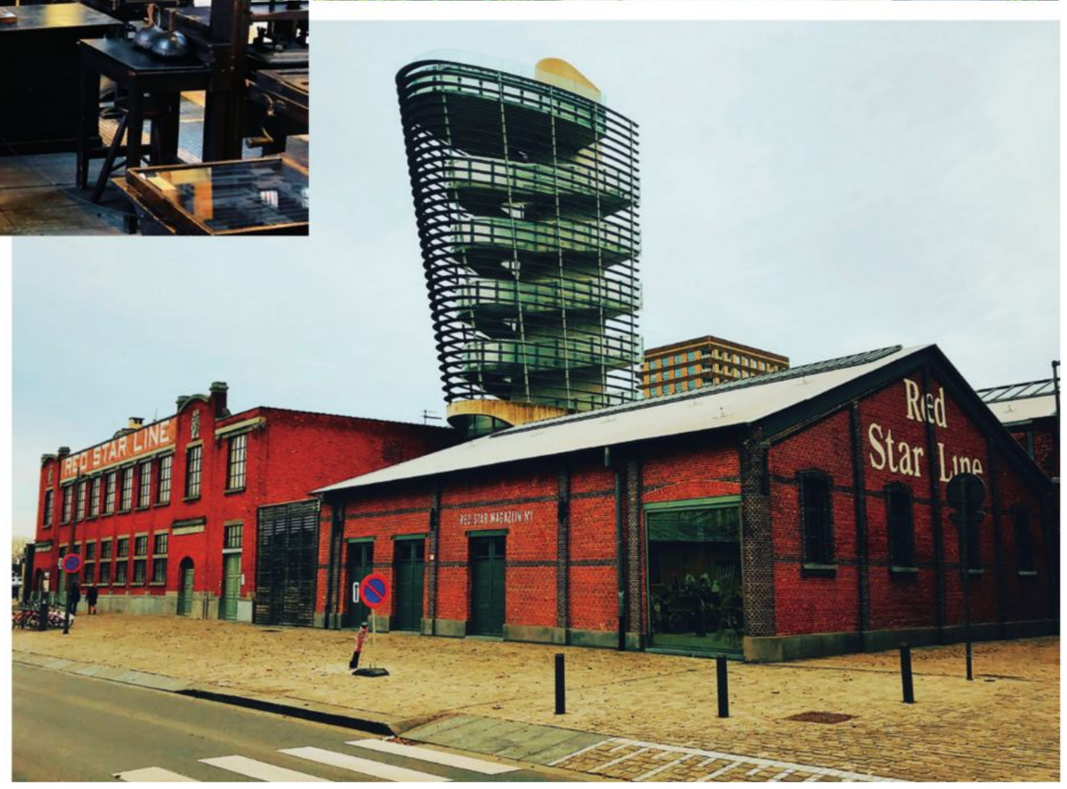
Antwerp's elegance and style were thoroughly drawing me in. My hotel, the Franq, epitomised this: a subtly











Clockwise from top: Pakhuis restaurant, Ghent; the statue of Rubens in front of the cathedral in Antwerp; the Red Star Line Museum and the Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp; croquettes, a favourite local delicacy

luxurious Relais & Châteaux hotel set in a former bank, whose old vault is now the wine cellar supplying its smart Michelin-starred restaurant.

I wasn't surprised to discover that the city has seven major shopping districts. Dries van Noten's flagship store is on Nationalestraat in the Fashion District. Then there are the jewels, which you can't escape in the diamond capital of Europe – although the enormous trade here is geared towards the wholesale market.

The Sunday market outside the Stadsschouwburg arts theatre near Oudevaartplaats was the place to linger over Belgian street food. Here, among the stalls selling fresh produce, cheeses, exotic birds, live chickens and ducks, I was able to indulge in one of Antwerp's street-food specialities: croquettes. Filled with prawns or ham and cheese, these moreish nuggets went down very well with a glass of cava from a neighbouring stall.

Antwerp's invigorating mix of culture, couture and croquettes was a superb curtain-raiser for Ghent, which turned out to have all the charm of Bruges but a fraction of the crowds. The spell was cast as soon as I arrived at my hotel, 1898 The Post – a fabulously ornate concoction set in a 19th-century former post office beside St Michael's Bridge which overlooks both the Leie river and the landmark church of St Nicholas.

For all Ghent's attributes as a fairytale town – cobblestoned squares, crenelated guild houses, attractive waterways, even a riverside castle – there's always been a rebellious streak to the city during its long history. And a large student population adds a lively buzz that prevents Ghent from turning into an open-air museum.

It has a few stylish quirks as well, many of them bundled into one handy place – the Design Museum. Inside this handsome 18th-century building is a beguiling collection of outlandish furnishings and interiors created by Belgian designers over the past 200 years.

Along with most of the other cultural institutions in Ghent, the museum will be joining a year-long celebration of Jan van Eyck, whose Ghent Altarpiece in St Bavo's Cathedral is one of the artistic wonders of the city – and the western world.

Just as Antwerp captivated me, Ghent did the same as I wandered around Vrijdagmarkt (Friday Market) and then past the guild houses of the Graslei and Korenlei quaysides on the river. I took a lift that conveniently goes up the Unesco-listed Belfry tower to take in panoramic views of the city, and then went down to sea level on an entertaining boat trip along the river – one that, for once, didn't feel like a cheesy touristy thing to do.

A hearty lunch of stoemp met worst – essentially a rustic Flemish version of sausage and mash – in the friendly family-run Mémé Gusta was an excellent winter warmer on a chilly day. Dinner of North Sea crab and steak tartare at Pakhuis, set in a cavernous renovated warehouse, was a bit more sophisticated and just as enjoyable.

After a few days of having mind, body and soul so well fed, these tantalising tastes of Flanders made me want to go back for seconds. ■

◆ **Eurotunnel: from Calais, it's a two-hour drive to Ghent, and a further hour to Antwerp.**
◆ **Eurostar: direct trains to Brussels take two hours and 20 minutes. From Brussels, it's 34 minutes by train to Ghent and 45 minutes to Antwerp.**

◆ **Hotel Franq, Antwerp: doubles start at €161 (£134) a night, hotelfranq.com**
◆ **1898 The Post, Ghent: doubles start at €176 (£146) a night, zannierhotels.com/1898thepost**

◆ **For more information go to visitflanders.com, visitantwerp.com, visitgent.com**

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Weekending

SOMERSET LEVELS

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St Michael's Tower on Glastonbury Tor

Visit

LANGPORT

Langport is an attractive small town with many independent shops, cafés and restaurants. The town's most famous resident was Walter Bagehot, the influential editor of The Economist in the mid-19th-century. The area is rich in wildlife and the town is an ideal starting place for a walk across the levels along the River Parrett or, if you're feeling adventurous, you can rent a paddleboard. At the top of the hill in Langport is the Grade 1-listed Hanging Chapel, perched on top of a 13th-century archway.

MUCHELNEY

Often cut off from the world by floods, Muchelney is a pretty village of blue lias stone houses. Visit the ruins of the abbey, the church ceiling has Jacobean paintings of bare-breasted angels (at the time these signified purity). Opposite the church is the Priest's House, now owned by the National Trust. John Leach is a third generation potter who works in the Muchelney Pottery – he is the grandson of renowned potter Bernard Leach. There is a gallery next to the pottery with rotating exhibitions showcasing local artists.

◆ *johnleachpottery.co.uk*

BURROW HILL

Just south of Muchelney is Burrow Hill, home of Burrow Hill cider and the Somerset Cider Brandy Company. Julian Temperley has been distilling cider brandy for the past 30 years, having been granted the first ever cider distilling licence. After visiting the farm and buying your brandy, cross the road and walk 50 yards west to walk up Burrow Hill, with its sole tree, and enjoy great views over the levels.

◆ *somersetciderbrandy.com/*

GLASTONBURY TOR AND ABBEY

Climbing the 518 feet of Glastonbury Tor to see St Michael's Tower is a must-do – there are spectacular views in all directions, and you can take in nearly all of Somerset. At its foot is the ancient ruined abbey.

CLARKS VILLAGE

Built on the site of the old Clarks shoe factory in Street there are over 90 outlets in this shopping village with brands to suit all tastes – and up to 60% off. Well worth an hour's browsing for a bargain.

◆ *clarksvillage.co.uk*

LYTES CARY MANOR

Charming and intimate, rather than imposing, Lytes Cary, near Somerton, is the type of house that you can almost imagine yourself living in. It's a mish-mash built from the 14th to 20th centuries, but overall is quite lovely, as is the arts and crafts garden surrounding it. There are two rows of manicured yew trees, known as the apostles, flanking the path to the front door.

◆ *nationaltrust.org.uk/lytes-cary-manor*

MARTOCK

Just north of Yeovil you will find the honeyed yellow hamstone buildings of Martock. Its winding main street seems to go on forever and are pretty enough to rival any Cotswold village. Drive through or stop and have a potter.

WILLOWS AND WETLANDS

The Coate family have been growing willows on the Somerset Levels for over 200 years. Get a glimpse into the fascinating willow industry from the Withy Beds to the final baskets. There are nature walks taking you though the willow beds, and a shop stocked with baskets, furniture and sculptures made from the trees they grow – or you can take a class and learn how to weave your own basket.

◆ *coatesenglishwillow.co.uk*



Locally-sourced dishes at 28 Market Place



The Langford, Fivehead





The Drayton Crown

Eat

BROWN AND FORREST

Brown and Forrest smoke eels, the quintessential fish of the levels, as well as salmon, trout and a whole range of other delicious foods. As well as the shop, there's also an on-site fully licensed restaurant open from breakfast to tea-time, Monday to Saturday.

◆ *brownandforrest.co.uk/*

THE FIREHOUSE, CURRY RIVEL

The restored Firehouse offers top-notch pub grub, with an emphasis on local produce, as well as wood-fired pizzas and local beers. The pub also offers accommodation in the nearby Lodge on the Green.

◆ *thefirehousesomerset.co.uk*

28 MARKET PLACE

New in Somerton, many of this restaurant's suppliers are located within just two miles of the restaurant. Adjoining is a bakery and wine shop.

◆ *28marketplace.co.uk/*

ISTOCK

Stay

THE LANGFORD, FIVEHEAD

The Langford is a 15th-century boutique hotel near Taunton with six rooms and a relaxed country house ambiance. Enjoy fine dining or eat at the kitchen table to chat to owner and chef Olly Jackson as he cooks.

◆ *langfordfivehead.net/*

WHITE HART, SOMERTON

Situated on Somerton's market square, the 16th-century White Hart has eight individually decorated rooms with views of the square or the church behind.

◆ *whitehartsomerton.com/*

THE DRAYTON CROWN, LANGPORT

Standing opposite the church in the small and sleepy village of Drayton, the Grade-II-listed Crown has been recently refurbished. It has modern, bright rooms above the pub's skittle alley.

◆ *thedraytoncrown.co.uk*

Compiled by Helen Best-Shaw

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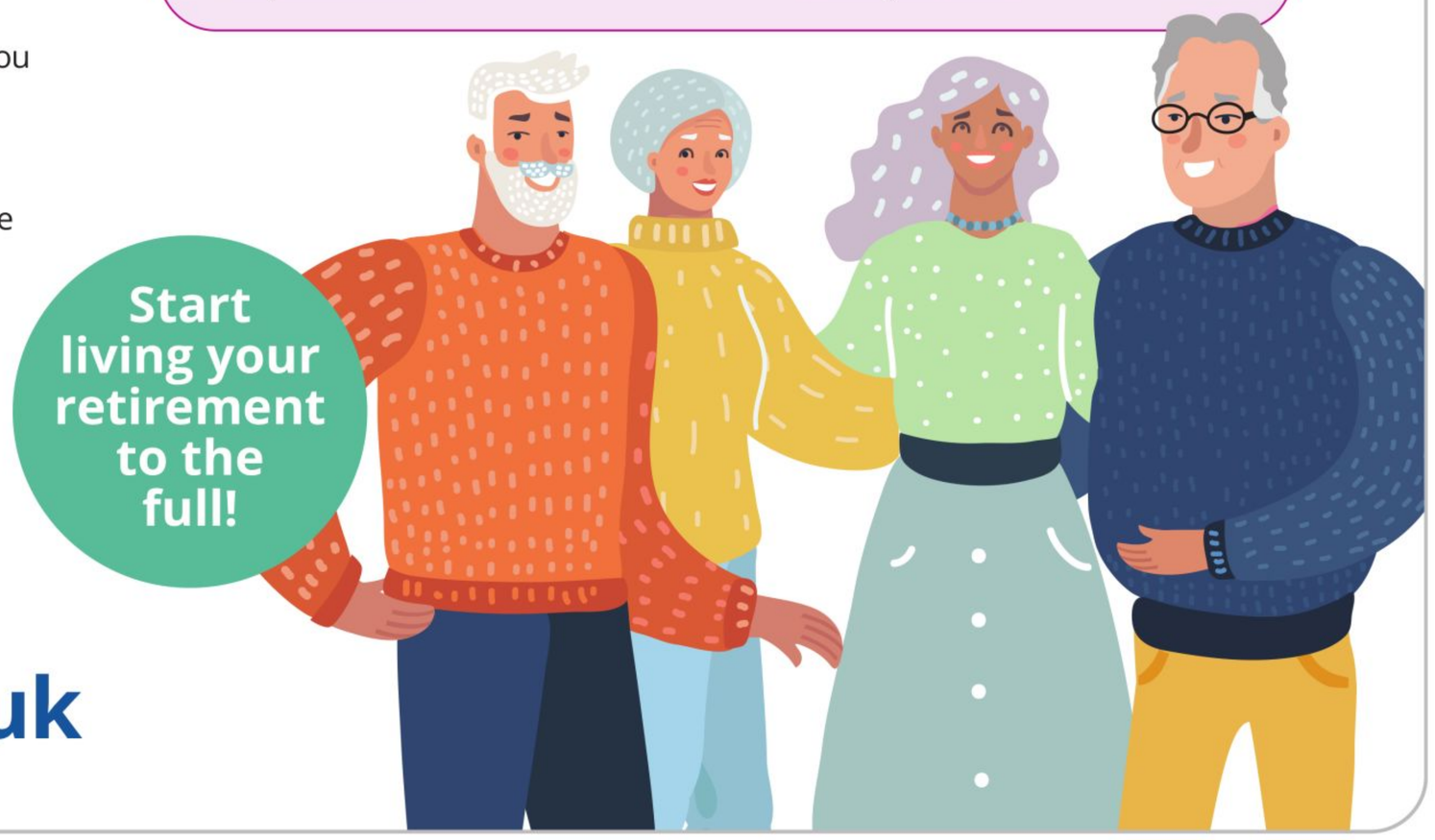
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FITNESS & WELLBEING *with Diana Moran*

Texting on your phone can be a literal pain in the neck, but you can fight it

I wonder how many of you reading this will have experienced frequent pain or discomfort in your neck area. Maybe at the end of the day you get a nagging ache, or general shoulder pain and tightness? Well, I most certainly do, and recently came to realise it's because of my increasing use of my mobile phone and laptop computer.

'Tech neck' or 'text neck', as the condition is now being called by health professionals, is an overuse syndrome, or a repetitive strain injury, caused when we hold our heads forward and downward for long periods of time. In this position a lot of tension is created in the muscles of the neck and across our shoulders, causing both acute and chronic pain, and for some people cervicogenic headaches. The condition is increasingly prevalent as people of all ages now spend hours in front of devices for both work and recreation.

Text neck feels more uncomfortable when your neck is flexed forward, such as when looking down and texting. The pain usually affects the neck, upper back and/or the shoulders, with most people experiencing tightness and reduced mobility.

Spending hours with our heads bent forward and shoulders rounded makes it impossible to maintain good posture (with the ears directly over the shoulders). The pain may feel intense, could be a stabbing pain in one spot or may present as a general achiness and soreness over a broader area.

'Look at your screen and concentrate for 20 minutes and then look away from the screen for the same time'

If you spend hours in front of your screen, as I am doing right now writing this article, you may also increase the risk of eyestrain and headaches. So do yourself a favour: remember the 20/20 rule and give yourself a break.

Look at your screen and concentrate on work for 20 minutes and then look away from the screen for 20 minutes. Maybe do other desk jobs, or get up and walk around, make a coffee or take a rest – it will keep your body fresh and healthy. If you don't help yourself, the muscles at the base of your neck could go into spasm, and if the pain refers upwards it can cause bad headaches.

Be aware of your posture because tech neck could lead to inflamed neck ligaments, nerve irritation, rounded shoulders and possible curvature of the upper spine. Adjust your seating, sit upright, close to your keyboard, with both feet flat on the floor. Keep your head elevated with chin up, even if you need to cast your eyes down to the screen.

A poking chin may also be a problem if you sit too low with screen set too high and this can cause neck pain and a hunched back. It's important for you to improve your posture and correct sitting habits, especially if your chest muscles are tight, your upper back is weak and your shoulders increasingly rounded. ■

ROBIN SIDER

TECH NECK EXERCISES



1 Forward neck stretch

To release neck tension sit or stand upright. Carefully bend your head forward, lengthen your neck and tuck in your chin until you feel a stretch at the back of your neck. Hold for five seconds and relax. Repeat five times.



2 Side neck turns

To release neck tension sit or stand as before, looking straight ahead. Turn your head and look around to the right as far as possible. Feel the stretch and hold for five seconds. Bring your head back to the centre then around to the left and hold for five seconds. Repeat on both sides five times.



3 Shoulder and chest stretch

To stretch out tight chest muscles sit or stand, place your hands behind your back on your bottom. Carefully pull your neck in and back, pull your shoulder blades together and back and stretch out the front of your chest. Hold for five seconds and relax. Repeat five times.



4 Shoulder Shrugs

To mobilise your shoulders and release tension, sit or stand and simply shrug both shoulders towards your ears. Now relax and simply drop your shoulders pushing down with your arms. Repeat 10 times.

The GOOD SENSE *guide to health*



We look at why your five senses are vital to your wellbeing – and how to keep seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling your best

SIGHT

More than a million people in the UK are living with avoidable sight loss that affects everyday activities such as driving, according to the charity Eye Health UK.

Regular eye checks are important of course, but there are other things you can to do to protect your eyesight.

Good diet and regular exercise can also help prevent macular degeneration. Vitamins A, C and E help to maintain healthy cells and tissues in the eye so eating well is essential; oranges, tomatoes and green leafy vegetables are all great sources of the vital vitamins, as well as nuts, seeds and dairy products.

Recent research has also focused on an antioxidant called lutein. It gives yellow and red vegetables such as peppers and sweetcorn their colour and appears to boost macular pigment levels and prevent eye diseases.

Your eyes can also give clues to other health problems. Bulging eyes may be a sign of thyroid problems, while sudden blurred vision could indicate issues with blood sugar levels. A ring around the edge of your cornea can be common in older age, but in middle age may be caused by high cholesterol levels, so get it checked.

SMELL

Taste and smell are so interlinked, but we often underestimate the importance of smell when it comes to our health. A temporary loss of smell may simply be linked to a cold or respiratory virus, but longer-term problems may indicate something more serious.

The Fifth Sense charity was set up to support those who have lost their sense of smell and provide advice for people with this often-overlooked condition.

Anosmia – a partial or total loss of smell – is relatively rare, but may affect up to 5% of the population. However, up to half of people over 65 may find that their sense of smell has diminished over time. We start with 10 million olfactory cells in the nose and 60% of these are lost as we grow older.





TOUCH

New research shows just how important touch is to our physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. The basic act of touching another person can help to reduce blood pressure, lower the heart rate and shorten the recovery time from illnesses and surgery.

And yet we Brits are among the most touch-deprived in the world. A recent study found that English people meeting a friend did not touch each other once during a conversation, whereas French people made physical contact 110 times during the same duration and Puerto Ricans an incredible 180 times!

Psychologist Miriam Akhtar says: 'Touch soothes: it is the language of compassion, helping us bond and connect with other humans. It activates the orbitofrontal cortex in the brain, which is linked to feelings of reward and empathy, making us more optimistic and less cynical or suspicious of others.

'Behavioural experts and anthropologists think this is partly why humans have developed ways of acknowledging each other physically on meeting. From handshakes and hugs to cheek kissing or fist bumps, we demonstrate and create comfort with each other. Tactile stimulation can trigger oxytocin, the "love hormone". It also lowers cortisol levels, reducing anxiety and stress,' she says.

Touch has also been shown to counter depression, improve immune function, reduce pain and increase concentration. In the current era of the coronavirus, this may not be so easy, but touch is still important to health.

Our sense of touch may often become less sensitive as we get older, but numbness can be a sign of other problems, including stroke, heart attack and other serious diseases. If it comes on suddenly, seek medical advice.



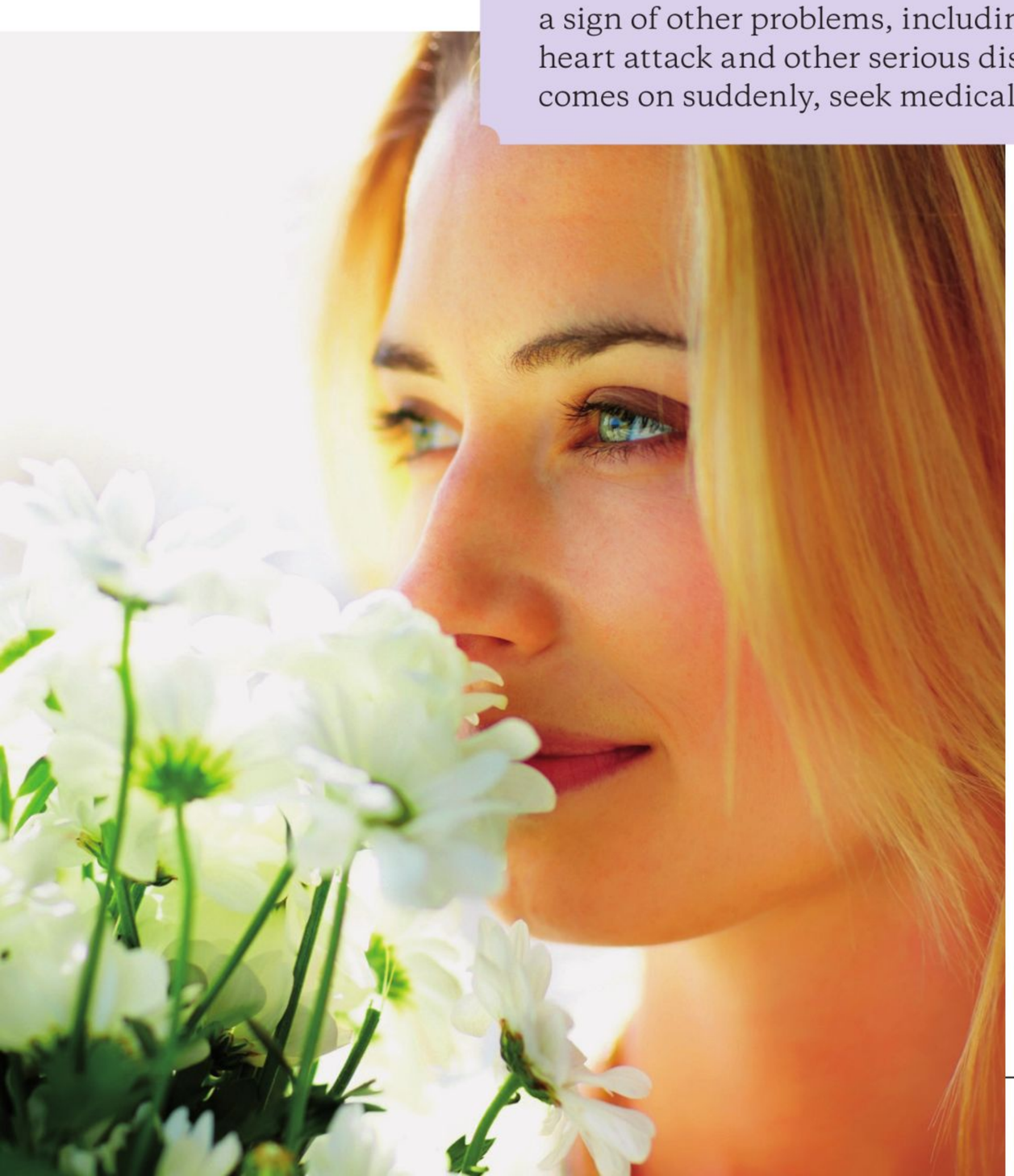
TASTE

We are born with 10,000 taste buds, but after the age of 50 the number begins to gradually decrease, which is perhaps why our food and diet choices change as we get older.

Doctors admit they are not sure why this happens, although it may also be linked to a reduced sense of smell. Another reason may be that as your sense of taste diminishes you produce less saliva, so your mouth is drier, making it harder to swallow, and food becomes less enjoyable.

This in itself can cause problems, say the experts. Of all our taste sensations, sweet and salty are the first to go, meaning that we begin to over-salt our food or rely on sweeter concoctions, which can lead to poor dietary choices and an increased risk of diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Loss of taste can mean that we also start to eat and drink food that has gone bad or contains harmful ingredients. Researchers in the USA found that as people age they are less likely to detect chemicals in their drinking water, putting them at risk of increased exposure to iron and copper, seen as a possible risk factor in Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.



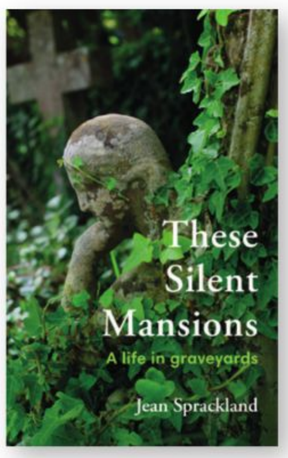
HEARING

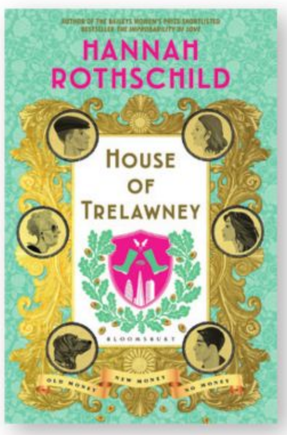
More than 11 million people in the UK suffer from hearing loss, and the effect can be debilitating, not just in terms of physical but also mental health.

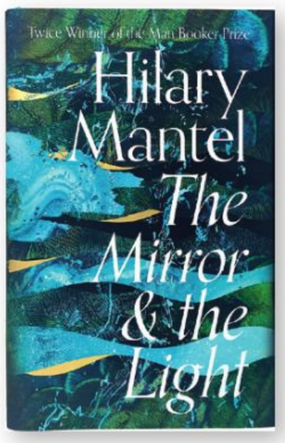
What can you do to protect this vital sense? Diet can be important; potassium regulates the amount and composition of fluids in your blood and tissues. Your inner ear, which translates noises into electrical impulses that the brain then interprets as sound, is dependent on a rich supply of potassium. Potatoes, bananas, spinach and milk are all high in potassium and studies have shown they can help to prevent hearing loss. Recent research has also found that zinc and magnesium are beneficial in protecting your hearing. A good diet and vitamin supplements mean that you don't have to do the 'Sorry?' or 'Pardon?' script all day.

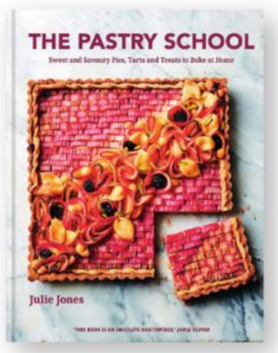
Sudden hearing loss can be a sign of something more serious. One of these is Menière's disease – with symptoms including dizziness, tinnitus, nausea or vomiting. It normally only affects one ear but can spread to both. There is no cure at the moment, but the problems can be treated if you seek medical advice. ■

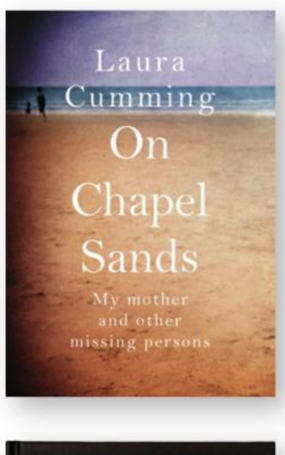
REVIEWS

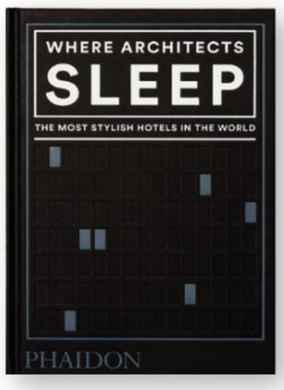












Books

OUT NOW

THESE SILENT MANSIONS: A LIFE ON GRAVEYARDS by Jean Sprackland (Jonathan Cape, £16.99)

★★★★★

This gentle journey around England's graveyards is anything but morbid. Jean Sprackland, who is also an award-winning poet, is less interested in death than in the stories that the departed have left behind: the lives and deeds remembered in stone and the way that churchyards help us situate ourselves in time and space.

Her odyssey begins in Stoke Newington with the tale of one Elizabeth Pickett, who died in 1781 when her clothes caught fire – a tragic fate that the sensationalist press pounced upon gleefully. In Ilfracombe a local historian tells Sprackland how the wreck of a slave ship in 1796 still inspires controversy. And in Norwich she finds the monument of John Barker, steam circus proprietor, who died in 1897 but whose amusements continue to tour the country.

Naturally, Sprackland reflects on her own mortality, but even when surrounded by death she is drawn to life. She is a keen observer of yew trees; the holly blue butterflies that favour graveyards, and 'nostoc', an algae that resurrects itself after rain. One of the best chapters is devoted to lichen: 'This one like candlewax thrown across a table by a draft, this one like spilt engine oil on a garage forecourt.'

Wise, compassionate and involving. *Stephanie Cross*

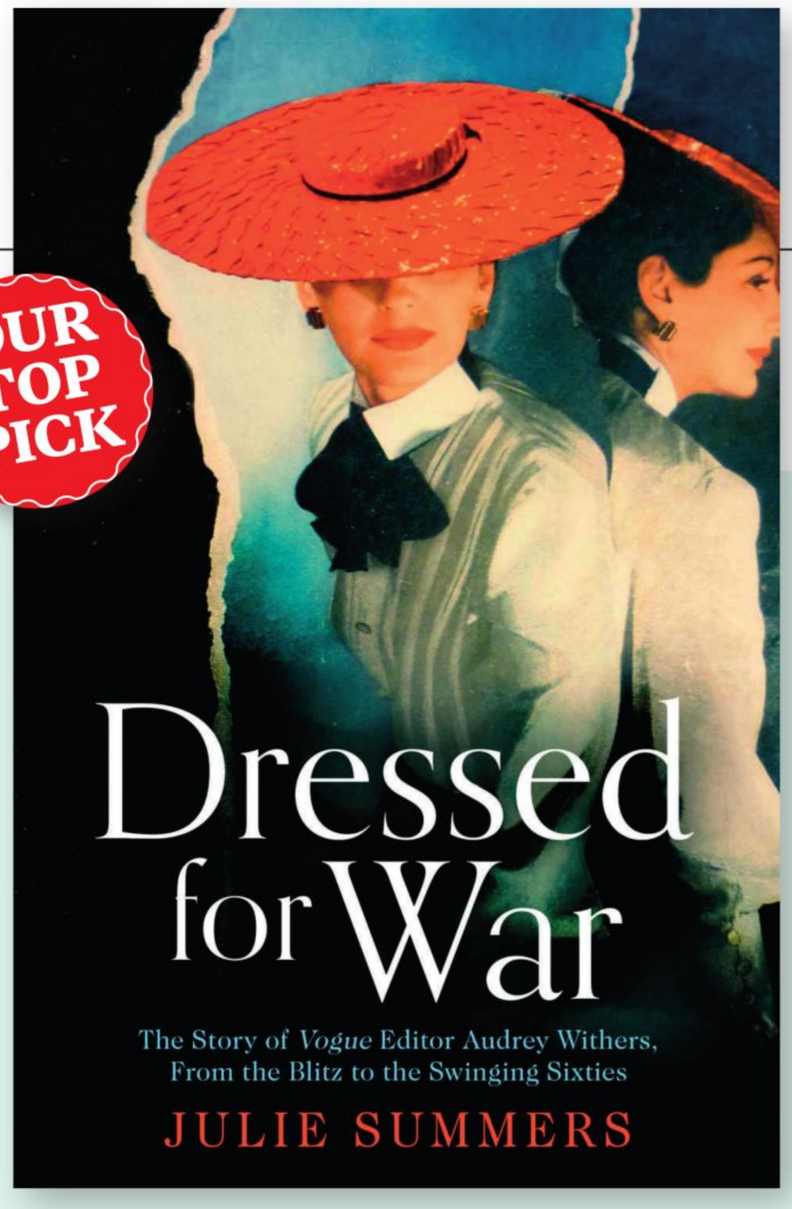
HOUSE OF TRELAWNEY by Hannah Rothschild (Bloomsbury, £16.99)

★★★★☆

With echoes of Evelyn Waugh and Nancy Mitford, although not as crisp, this is a highly entertaining, lively and mildly satirical family saga of the impoverished aristocratic Trelawney family as they struggle to survive the financial crash of 2008 and shore up their crumbling 800-year-old castle in South Cornwall, which 'has a room for every day of the year', 'miles of freezing corridors' and 'bad plumbing.'

The narrative moves between the hypnotically beautiful Cornish coast and the skyscraper soullessness of the City of London.

At the heart of the story is the relationship between three women: dependable dogsbody Jane, the 24th Earl's daughter-in-law, battling to keep the castle's roof from falling



Deadlines and doodlebugs

DRESSED FOR WAR: THE STORY OF VOGUE EDITOR AUDREY WITHERS, FROM THE BLITZ TO THE SWINGING SIXTIES by Julie Summers (Simon & Schuster, £20)

Lay aside your preconceptions about fashion magazine editors: this is a story of graft and grit, of flair in the face of austerity, and one woman's incredible balancing act, juggling conflicting personalities, air raids and paper shortages to produce a magazine with its finger on the pulse. Then, as now, Vogue was about so much more than frocks: this compelling biography shows how, under Wither's tenure, it became a powerful emblem of British resilience.

After Oxford and a stint at a bookseller, Withers landed a job at Vogue and rose to become a defining influence in shaping British Vogue (or Brogue, as it was knowns), as distinct from the American mothership. She had the dream job, but also built a dream team: photographers Lee Miller and Cecil Beaton were regular contributors, with Miller also writing groundbreaking articles from the front line. During the Blitz staff would scuttle to the cellar when the building came under attack.

With her understated suits in navy or grey, her quietly assertive managerial style and knack for nurturing talent, Withers was a far cry from the exhuberances of today's front row and The Devil Wears Prada (no withering put-downs from Withers). She is aptly likened to the conductor of an orchestra, drawing together disparate elements (read big talents with egos to match) into a perfect, sublime harmony.

Julie Summers paints an evocative picture of wartime London and occupied France, highlighting the role of women's magazines in maintaining morale and disseminating government's messages. Like her subject, she marshalls a vast array of voices, characters and stories into a harmonious, coherent whole. Essential reading for anyone with an interest in the history of magazine publishing, but with a much wider appeal, too. *Juanita Coulson*

COFFEE TABLE BOOK

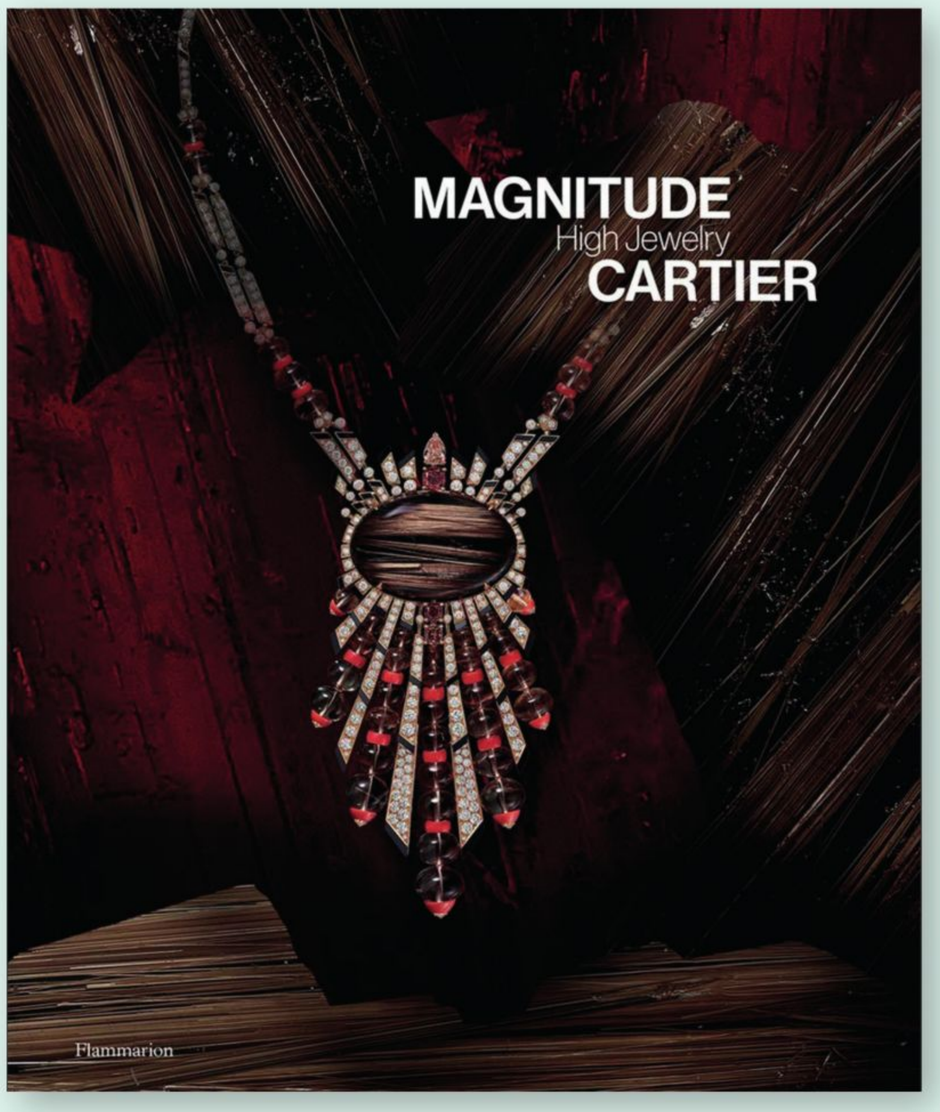
MAGNITUDE: CARTIER HIGH JEWELLERY by Francois Chaille and Capucine Juncker (Flammarion, £80)

★★★★☆

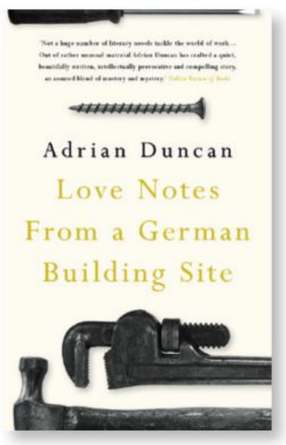
Founded in Paris in 1847, Cartier is regarded as one of the most prestigious jewellers in the world, lauded for its intricate craftsmanship and designs. Dedicated to its new collection, this book is a fine showcase for the brand.

Mesmerising in its scale and scope, the Birth of the Universe collection is a dazzling triumph. The book's pages are studded with exotic creations: a matrix opal weighing 77.27 carats; pendants of all shapes, sizes and colours; lapis lazuli, diamonds, rubies and emeralds. The tools and techniques used to create these masterpieces are also explored, giving the reader an in-depth insight into the iconic jewellery house. This is Cartier up close and personal.

Elizabeth Fitzherbert



ALSO ON THE SHELF



LOVE NOTES FROM A GERMAN BUILDING SITE by Adrian Duncan (Head of Zeus, £16.99)

★★★★☆

A man follows his girlfriend to Berlin and works on a building site; he keeps a notebook and has intense feelings about life. Duncan – Irish writer, artist and structural engineer – could not express himself more eloquently or masterfully in this stunning debut novel.

Elizabeth Fitzherbert

in and feeding her family on cheap mince; Blaze, the brilliant but loveless financier; and vivacious Anastasia, former university friend of Jane and Blaze, who disappeared to marry an Indian maharaja 20 years before.

Now dying of dengue fever, Anastasia entrusts her only child, to the care of her two friends. Their lives will never be the same again. To add to the mayhem, eccentric great-aunt Tuffy, a leading entomologist, 'moves into the butler's apartment bringing plastic bags full of live hopping fleas'.

Deliciously dark and wickedly funny, with unconventional, sympathetically-drawn, mainly broke upper class characters, in beautiful settings. I laughed aloud.

Rebecca Wallersteiner

MOTHER'S DAY PICKS *Gift ideas for book-loving mothers*

THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT by Hilary Mantel (Fourth Estate, £25)

The much-anticipated final instalment of the Wolf Hall trilogy opens with Anne Boleyn's beheading – and its determined protagonist, Thomas Cromwell, heading nonchalantly for breakfast.

This is historical fiction at its finest: a follow-up to two Booker Prize winners, Wolf Hall and Bring Up the Bodies. Impeccably researched but also vivid and immersive, with intriguing psychological close-ups.

THE PASTRY SCHOOL by Julie Jones (Kyle Books, £25)

No one is suggesting that all mothers should be domestic goddesses (mine never went near a kitchen, and I've survived), but if yours is a determined foodie, this new baking bible will go down a treat.

It's a guide to delicate, elegant sweet and savoury bakes that can actually be made by a real human being in a home kitchen. It is full of accessible, unfussy recipes that will have the maximum impact.

ON CHAPEL SANDS: MY MOTHER AND OTHER MISSING PERSONS by Laura Cumming (Chatto & Windus, £16.99)

Delving into a strange and hushed episode from her mother's childhood, when she went missing for five days, Laura Cumming explores the secrets and lies of a Lincolnshire seaside community in the 1930s, her family history and its legacy, and her own search for origins and answers. An atmospheric and acutely observed blend of mystery and memoir.

WHERE ARCHITECTS SLEEP: THE MOST STYLISH HOTELS IN THE WORLD by Sarah Miller (Phaidon, £16.95)

Who better than the founding editor-in-chief of Condé Nast Traveller UK to pick out truly exceptional hotels? Here she draws on architects' feedback on their favourite places to stay, from all-out luxury to eco-conscious boltholes and stylish stays on a budget. Perfect for chic globe-trotting mothers: go one better and book her a stay to go with it.

Theatre

AYE, THE PLAY'S THE THING

Ben Elton has brilliantly managed to transfer his TV sitcom to the West End stage



Richard Barber



David Mitchell as the put-upon Will Shakespeare

THE UPSTART CROW

★★★★☆

It could so easily have been the play that went wrong. Ben Elton had a hit on television with Upstart Crow, a scatological sitcom charting the fortunes of William Shakespeare. It lasted three series on BBC Two from 2016 but was then cancelled for who knows what reason.

Now Elton has taken the risky step of turning it into a full-length play (with the definite article inserted) and nor is it a stitching together of scenarios already seen. For the most part this is new material. And it's a hoot.

Poor Will has had a couple of clunkers (his word) and is suffering a bad case of writer's block. He can't think of a plot that will appeal to a contemporary audience. But as Kate, his landlord's daughter, keeps pointing out, there's no shortage of material under his very nose.

So it is that a couple of identical twins turn up on his doorstep; a copy of something called King Lire is left in the smallest room, and a bear has escaped from captivity. The seeds are thus sown for Twelfth Night, King Lear and The Winter's Tale respectively.

Elton doesn't miss a trick playing with words and nor does Sean Foley's breakneck direction overlook any available sight gags. I laughed out loud at the tiny masks which protect everyone's true identity (and yes, that includes the bear) and the conceit that two people can hide behind the smallest tree in a garden without detection. Alice Power's deliberately old-fashioned set, with painted, flapping backcloths, only adds to the pantomime atmosphere.

But might the very funny David Mitchell, so good in the TV original and a boon to any passing panel show, falter on the West End stage? Not a bit of it. Indeed, he takes to it like a duck to the wet stuff, delivering Shakespearean lines and silly jokes with aplomb. 'I'm not going bald,' he protests at one point. 'My hair's just shy.'

The TV version took liberties with history by making Robert Greene, Elizabeth I's theatre censor, active long after the presumed date of his death – Upstart Crow is set in 1604, so Shakespeare's patron would be King James I and Greene's appearance would stretch your credulity even further. So the moral conscience of the proceedings is now in the manic hands of Mark Heap, who plays Dr John Hall, a physician who suspects the dramatic arts, and one dramatist in particular, of treachery and obscenity.

He's a riot as a puritan who regards all theatre as a corrupting influence while being obliged to wear, Malvolio-style, a preposterous and unfeasibly large codpiece. Will's two daughters (Helen Monks and Danielle Phillips) are gloriously saddled with Brummie accents so thick you could cut them with a blunt knife. And Gemma Whelan, precisely because she refuses to acknowledge the encircling mayhem, gives a glorious turn as the guileless Kate.

Although some of the contemporary PC brigade may find the humour too broad for their taste, the mix of bawdy and scholarly references is authentically Shakespearean. Elton's own stock-in-trade, assisted by the advantage of four intervening centuries, is then-and-now ironies. The Stratford-London stagecoach, for example, spookily anticipates modern railway issues, including glibly alliterative anti-terrorism announcements. 'See it! Say it! Slaughter it!' I only wish Liza Tarbuck had been around to reprise her role as Anne Hathaway.

◆ *The Upstart Crow is at the Gielgud Theatre until April 25. Box office: 0844 482 5130 or UpstartCrowTheComedy.com*



Gemma Whelan as Kate



Mark Heap as Dr John Hall

JOHAN PERSSON



WAY TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL

This exuberant musical about a teenage misfit will appeal to the young at heart







Clockwise from above: the cast in full flight; The Squip (Stewart Clarke); Jeremy (Scott Folan) and Jenna (Renée Lamb); Jeremy and Michael (Blake Patrick Anderson)

BE MORE CHILL

★★★★☆

We've already seen Heathers, Loserville, Eugenius! and, most recently, Dear Evan Hansen on stage. All of them explored, and ultimately, lauded, high-school nerds. Now comes Be More Chill, the story of a misfit called Jeremy who is unable to run with the pack, still less kiss the girl. And yet, everything somehow comes right in the end. The geek, it seems, shall inherit the earth.

Taken from Ned Vizzini's young-adult novel, this musical import from off-Broadway lands in London with an English cast (although you'd never know it from their authentic-sounding American accents), a pretty good score, some genuinely witty lyrics and action that moves at a clip under Stewart Brackett's pacy direction – although the story could probably have been told without interruption in 90 minutes rather than two hours with an interval.

The action, against Beowulf Boritt's graphic back-projections turns on the Squip, a pill which, when ingested, embeds itself in the brain and generates instructions on how to be more cool. It also takes the form of a frock-coated human of the same name (Stewart Clarke) who quite quickly proves to Jeremy that if something seems too good to be true, there'll be a pretty good reason for that.

Scott Folan, giving a convincing impression of a long drink of water, is well cast as our anti-hero and, despite a frame that looks as if it would snap in two if he bent down to tie his shoelaces, has a fine pair of lungs on him. He's well matched by the likeable Blake Patrick Anderson as his best friend Michael, who has the strongest number with Michael in the Bathroom.

As Christine, Jeremy's unrequited love interest, Miracle Chance has a distinctive stage presence to match her name. And there are a couple of Henry VIII's former wives from the show Six – Millie O'Connell and Renée Lamb – to brighten up proceedings by making his life as miserable as possible.

In truth, this show probably isn't for you. But it would certainly appeal to the youngsters in your life. Girls wouldn't take much persuading to go but then groups of women, no matter their age, are habitual theatregoers.

But what's with the male of the species? When did you last see a party of men enjoying a night at the theatre? And yet, if ever a production was beamed at teenage boys, Be More Chill is it. So do encourage the young men in your life to sample it for themselves. Who knows? It just might be the start of a lifelong pleasure.

◆ *Be More Chill is at The Other Palace until May 3. Box office: 020 7087 7900 or bemorechillmusical.com*

MATTHEW CROCKETT



The Sea Triumph of Charles II (1674) by Antonio Verrio

BAROQUE STARS

It's mostly associated with 17th-century Italy, but the flamboyant style flourished across Europe. A new exhibition at Tate Britain shows how it it became established here and influenced English artists and architects



Perspective with a Boy Catching a Bird (1662-6) by Samuel van Hoogstraten



Queen Anne, when Princess of Denmark (*c.*1685) by Willem Wissing



Elizabeth Hamilton, Countess of Gramont (*c.*1663) by Sir Peter Lely

NATIONAL GALLERIES SCOTLAND; TATE; THE ROYAL COLLECTION

BRITISH BAROQUE: POWER AND ILLUSION

Roderick Conway Morris

★★★★☆

The Baroque was born in Rome after the Reformation had deprived the papacy of the hegemony it once enjoyed in the West. Subsequently, as the temporal power of the popes got weaker and weaker, thanks to brilliant artists and architects such as Gianlorenzo Bernini, Pietro da Cortona and Francesco Borromini, the Eternal City became more and more magnificent.

The Counter-Reformation guaranteed the spread of this art-and-architecture-as-propaganda throughout Catholic Europe. And, paradoxically, the style proved so appealing and adaptable that it was adopted even in Protestant states.

Baroque's arrival in this country was largely the result of the Restoration in 1660. Despite the ecstatic welcome that was given by crowds in London to Charles II, his position was far from secure. He needed to project an image of grandeur, and the Baroque – the style of the moment among the ancien régimes of Europe and with which he was familiar from his years of exile on the continent – clearly presented itself as eminently suitable for revived monarchical rule in Britain.

The flowering of this international style and its legacy in England during the years from the Restoration until the death of Queen Anne in 1714 is now the subject of the first exhibition of its kind, British Baroque: Power and Illusion, curated by Tabitha Barber, David Taylor and Tim Batchelor, at Tate Britain.

Initially at least, in order to import the style, Charles had to import the artists to create it, as the opening sections of the exhibition demonstrate. Within a month of his official entry into London in May 1660, he appointed the Dutch portraitist Peter Lely as the King's Limner and Picture Drawer. Lely quickly set about establishing Charles's image through portraits, prints and medals that could be distributed throughout the land and displayed in the audience chambers of his ambassadors abroad.

Lely was joined at court in the mid-1670s by the Neapolitan Antonio Verrio, who was to become the leading painter of murals, although his first ▷

task was an enormous oil painting teeming with allegorical figures, The Sea Triumph of Charles II, which opens the exhibition.

The glamour of the Restoration court, a welcome relief after the dismal and dispiriting years of parliamentary rule during the Interregnum (does this ring a bell?), was captured by Lely and other imported artists in sumptuous portraits. A key figure was Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, first wife of Charles's younger brother (and the future James II). Her father had Lely paint her in around 1661. Anne went on to commission her own group of court portraits, now known as the Windsor Beauties, setting an influential trend. Anne was the mother of both Queen Mary and William and Mary's successor, Queen Anne, and 25 years later Mary commissioned her own series, the Hampton Court Beauties, which appears later in the show.

The Windsor Beauties here record some of the most colourful members of Charles's court. They include Elizabeth Hamilton, Countess of Gramont, as St Catherine, and the king's French mistress, Louise de Kéroualle, as a shepherdess. The most arresting picture is of Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, the king's principal mistress in the 1660s, who bore him at least five children. Lely depicts her with one of them, probably Charles Fitzroy, as the Virgin and Child. She also appears to be pregnant.

Both Charles II's wife, the Portuguese Catherine of Braganza, whose dowry included such useful assets as Bombay and Tangier, and his brother the Duke of York's second wife, the Italian Mary of Modena, were Catholics. They had their own chapels, decorated with Catholic Baroque works by Dutch and Italian artists – a number of which are displayed in a section devoted to the Religious Interior. But the most imposing of these chapels was that of James II at the Palace of Whitehall. Its altarpiece was adorned with an Annunciation by Benedetto Gennari, set in a carved frame 12 metres high by 10 metres wide. The painting (on loan from the State Art Museum in Florida) is on show in this country for the first time since the accession of William and Mary, who had the chapel dismantled after the defeat and exile of James.

Fostered both by the grand illusionistic paintings and the growth of scientific inquiry promoted by the Royal Society, founded in 1662, playful perspective and trompe l'oeil painting became fashionable during this period. Samuel van Hoogstraten described 'a perfect painting' as one 'which deceives in an acceptable, amusing and praiseworthy fashion'. He is represented here by two large perspective canvases and A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House. Also Dutch-born was Edward Collier, who made trompe l'oeil works such as letter racks (one of which here he signs with an illusionistic folded missive addressed to 'Mr E Collier, Painter at London'). A piece by the artist delighted Samuel Pepys, who recorded in his diary in 1667: 'Even after I knew that it was not a board, but only the picture of a board, I could not remove my fancy.' No less marvellously convincing is Violin and Bow Hanging on a Door, by Jan van der Vaart, in which only the brass peg, door knob and escutcheon are real, from Chatsworth.

While foreign artists dominated in the field of painting, this was a golden age of native-born architects (most notably Wren, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor), the focus of one of the most absorbing sections of the show. Wren was fully alive to the fact that London lagged behind some of the great cities of Europe in his field and shrewdly observed: 'Architecture has its political Use; publick Buildings being the Ornament of a Country; it establishes a Nation, draws People and Commerce; makes People love their native Country.'

Wren's St Paul's Cathedral, built between 1675 and 1710, was the largest



Anne Hyde, Duchess of York (*c.*1661) by Sir Peter Lely

'Queen Anne bankrolled Blenheim Palace to the tune of £220,000 – at least £30 million today – from her privy purse as a gift from a grateful nation'

NATIONAL GALLERIES SCOTLAND; NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY;







Clockwise from far left: John Churchill, Ist Duke of Marlborough (*c.*1706) by Sir Godfrey Kneller; the west elevation of St Paul's (*c.*1702) by Sir Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor; Barbara Palmer, Duchess of Cleveland, with her Son (*c.*1664) by Sir Peter Lely; portrait bust of Charles II (1684) by Honoré Pelle



THE WARDEN AND FELLOWS OF ALL SOULS COLLEGE, OXFORD; V&A

state enterprise of the age. Other major projects were never, or only partially, realised, such as those for the Whitehall and Hampton Court Palaces – fortunately in the latter case, as it would have led to the demolition of the old Tudor palace. Beautiful country houses, such as Easton Neston, Castle Howard and Chatsworth, were successfully completed by private patrons.

Queen Anne bankrolled Blenheim Palace to the tune of £220,000 (at least £30 million today) from her privy purse as a gift from a grateful nation to the Duke of Marlborough for his military victories. And her 'fixt intention for magnificence' brought to glorious fruition the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, on a site granted by William and Mary. The project also provided the chance for James Thornhill, our only great native-born Baroque mural painter, to create his masterpiece, the Painted Hall.

Nothing has done more to rekindle appreciation of the Baroque than the revival over the past half century of the music of that epoch, including the works of Purcell, frequently performed on period instruments in historic settings. So, it is baffling that there is nothing in this otherwise most revealing and pleasurable exhibition about Restoration drama, music or even opera – that most quintessentially Baroque phenomenon – which Dr Johnson wittily defined in his 18th-century dictionary as 'an exotic and irrational entertainment'. ■

◆ *Until 19 April at Tate Britain, London; 020 7887 8888, tate.org.uk*



Marie Curie (Rosamund Pike) and her husband Pierre (Sam Riley)

Film



JASON SOLOMONS

ROSAMUND IS TRULY RADIANT

The actress positively glows as Marie Curie, the pioneering scientist who discovered radium

RADIOACTIVE

★★★★☆

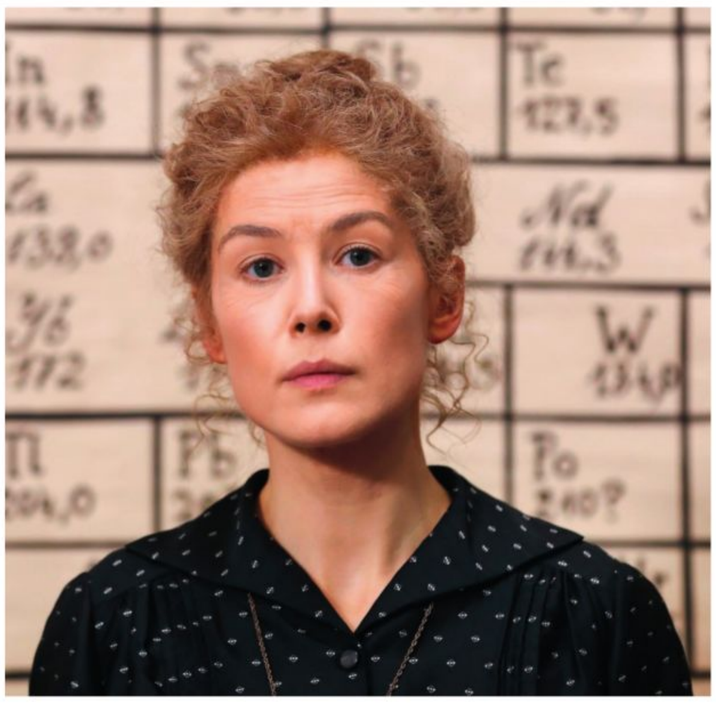
'I will find my own way,' scowls Rosamund Pike, who plays the scientist Marie Curie in this curiously fascinating film about her life and the discovery of radium.

Radioactive is a well-chosen title, because director Marjane Satrapi's film focuses on various elements and chemical reactions, both in the hearts of Marie and her husband Pierre Curie, and in the life and future uses of radioactive elements, from curing cancer to creating the atomic bomb and the Chernobyl disaster.

Working from a script by the prolific Jack Thorne (Harry Potter and the Cursed Child, His Dark Materials and This is England), Satrapi takes a fantasy-like journey through what could have been a plodding biopic, imbuing the discovery of radium with mystery and magic. A phial of it glimmers quietly throughout, by Marie's bedside or clasped in her deteriorating hands.

Of course, their discovery brings them the 1903 Nobel Prize (Marie also won another by herself in 1911, and is still the only person to have been awarded a Nobel in two different categories) and a treatment for cancer – it was called "curiethérapie" in French.

Pike is perfect in the role, another chance for the intelligence of this fine actress to shine through. She gives Marie the necessary steel to survive in the bewhiskered world of doubting French scientists, yet her eyes glow like the element she will discover, with tenderness for her husband and children, as well as with curiosity, desire and suspicion.



Pike is an actress who can convey several sentences with one glance. For her Marie Curie, the old expression about women sweating certainly holds true: this isn't a performance of perspiration, but it gently glows, quite literally.

As Pierre, actor Sam Riley lends a calm generosity, never trying to steal the show. The Curies' romance is only half the story here, as Satrapi flashes forward in detailed sequences about what becomes of their discovery and carries the action into the First World War, where Marie's X-ray machines saved countless amputations and lives.

Satrapi is the director who gained fame with her fabulous animation Persepolis, about an angry girl growing up in Iran during the fall of the Shah, and much of that iconoclasm and freshness of style is applied here. In later events, about which I had no idea, Curie had to face xenophobia, scandal and media frenzy amid a rising tide of French nationalism, which gives the period trappings a startling relevance, as does the use of modern electronic music.

Although beginning in the 19th century, this film fizzes with modern ideas and invention, about modernity and feminism, about faith and fact and about a person's responsibility to his or her own powers. ■

◆ *Radioactive is on general release*

Television

STILL TASTY

The perennial cooking contest hasn't lost its bite

Jonty Este



Presenters John Torode, left, and Gregg Wallace

MASTERCHEF
BBC One, 9pm, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

When John Torode says: 'That's an interesting combination and one I've not seen before,' you know the dish about to be presented by one of the MasterChef hopefuls is going to be rubbish. It would be a bit like Mozart declaring: 'I've heard all of those notes before, but never in that order.'

According to the MasterChef PR machine, the 2020 edition features a retail manager, a paralegal, a hairdresser, an events manager, a recruitment consultant, a PhD student, a personal assistant and a cattle farmer, all vying for the title of the best amateur chef in Britain. Already (and I'm writing this after the first episode) we've heard one contestant, 'Teddy the Toff', refer to himself as 'good-looking', which has bitterly divided fans on social media, one of whom described him as looking like 'someone put Prince Harry through a laminator'.

But on the whole, a great thing about MasterChef is that the contestants' personalities are subordinate to the food they produce. Unlike in the versions made in Australia and the US we don't have bitchy rivalries between contestants. We hear the minimum about their lives outside the kitchen and there are rarely any tears. It's all about the cooking.

OK, so maybe not all about the cooking. There are, of course, the clichés and camp double entendres that Torode and co-presenter Gregg Wallace deploy throughout the show. I know of some people who play a sort of bingo with these. If a contestant says: 'I've put myself on a plate', take one sip of wine. If Wallace says that a dish has given him a 'great rich chocolatey snog', take another. By the time John inevitably says 'the heat really is on' and Gregg has noted that something is 'summery, it's fruity... I'd stick my whole face in it', you're really quite squiffy.

And there are all those little MasterChef conventions that have built up over the years. It seems weird that after 15 years, some contestants don't get that ignoring Torode's warning not to 'put so many things on the plate' is not mere advice, it's shorthand for 'ignore me at your peril'. We've heard so many times that 'the road to MasterChef glory is littered with failed chocolate fondants' that it's a wonder anyone now attempts them. Ditto undercooked racks of lamb.

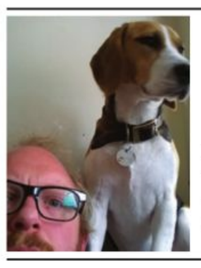
But still they come. And some of them turn out to be fantastic cooks. Over the years, MasterChef has reflected and stimulated Britain's food culture while supplying the English language with a rich vein of culinary clichés – that's public service broadcasting for you. ■

Radio

PAYING THE PRICE

A Radio 4 series shows the stark social divisions in an English town





Louis Barfe

BBC

A few years ago in their BBC TV series, Harry Enfield and Paul Whitehouse had a running joke about Radio 4 documentary-makers. They nailed every cliché effortlessly. Last summer, when I was making my own documentary for Radio 4, I had Harry and Paul at the back of my mind, informing every last word and telling me what not to do.

Conversations on a Bench, which returned last week, succumbs to so many of the traits highlighted by Enfield and Whitehouse, not least the breathy, earnest voiceover by Anna Scott-Brown, which seems to be based on a romantic ideal of a 1956 Shipping Forecast. However, as much as it made me gag, it also provoked thought. We were in Falmouth, in Cornwall, where one woman talked of the struggles her mother had there as a single parent.

The town is where superyacht-building meets grinding poverty. Incomers turn up in 4x4s and drive the house prices out of reach of locals. Liners dock there, and, as one voice said, cruising is 'one of the most unsustainable forms of leisure behaviour on the planet'. And yet the town is dependent on this business.

This was a story of have-nots servicing the haves. Like much else in life, I suppose. ■

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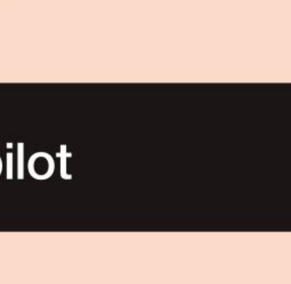
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Michael and Carol, Key customers



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ISTOCK

Enjoy later life with PEOPLE LIKE YOU





Michael Voges, executive director of Associated Retirement Community Operators, explains the exciting new options for you and your loved ones

In New Zealand and Australia they are called retirement villages. Over here they have been called all sorts of different names – retirement living, later living, independent living and extra care amongst them. But the term most commonly used to describe them is retirement communities.

Retirement communities are housing options for older people which are designed to deliver a great lifestyle while also offering peace of mind, security and stability. They do this by having operators who provide outstanding services and support, including 24-hour staffing (and care services for those who may need them). Another important aspect is the extensive on-site facilities, including restaurants and/or cafés, gyms, swimming pools, allotments, libraries, craft rooms, bars and cinemas, and a range of clubs.

So in short, retirement communities have moved on from the traditional retirement flats or sheltered housing. They are explicitly designed not just for older people as they are now – but to support them as they age, without the need to have to move again and with a much smaller likelihood of them having to move to a care home.

As a relatively new option in the UK, retirement communities are not very well known. This is very different in New Zealand and Australia where, per head of population, there are ten times as many people living in them.

People often move in because they know that care and support is available if they need it. However, this is just the safety net. What is most important is the significantly higher quality of life that people enjoy there compared to where they lived previously. Research has shown that people who move to a retirement community see friends and family more, are involved in more activities, are less likely to be lonely and generally feel healthier and happier than they did two years before.

It is not hard to see why. One retirement community I visited recently had more than 100 clubs and societies. This was in addition to having the best restaurant in the local area and a very well stocked bar. The bar and restaurant, along with the gym and gardens, were also open for the wider local community to use, and as the community grew it increasingly became the new heart of a town which had lost many of its traditional social hubs.

Speaking to the people who lived there, they were proud to be able to invite friends and relatives into "their" restaurant or café,.

The biggest problem with retirement communities is that we just don't have enough of them. However, this is starting to change and hundreds more are scheduled to open over the coming years.

Each operator will be a bit different in its approach, largely in response to what its residents want and the character of the local area where nearly all the residents will come from.

As more retirement communities open their doors the choices available are set to increase – and they will become a fantastic option for hundreds of thousands more people.■

'The biggest problem with retirement communities is that we just don't have enough of them'

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LIVE LIFE *to the full*



Here are our 25 top tips for making the most of retirement

1 Travel – whenever you want.
2 Spend more time with family and friends.
3 Enjoy your bus pass!
4 Some people choose to downsize or move to retirement villages as they get older – and that's the perfect opportunity to have a good de-clutter. Offer the things you don't want to friends and family; the rest can be donated to charity or sold, making you a bit of extra cash.
5 Check out other benefits such as cheap cinema tickets.
6 Time to take up a hobby.
7 Wave goodbye to the daily horror of commuting.
8 You can now become a lady (or chap) who lunches.
9 Turn off your alarm – wake up when you want.
10 Get a part-time job doing something you really enjoy. Love plants? Maybe help out in a garden centre a few days a week.
11 You could start your own business. Does everyone tell you how great your jam is? Start selling it!

12 Go back to school. If you've always been fascinated by the Romans or the history of art, take some classes and finally tick it off of your wish list.

13 Local charity shops are always looking for people to help out.
14 Stayingg active gets even more important as you get older. Fewer than a third of UK adults over 65 do the recommended minimum weekly exercise, so take up a new activity. It could be something simple like getting together with friends for a walk, or a round of golf.
15 Do you and your friends love reading? You could start a book club.
16 Use your new spare time to get your head around the new technology.
If you move to a retirement home that's further away from friends and family, being able to stay connected is important.
17 Get a pet. Never had time for a cat or dog because you were always at work? Now's the ideal time to fit a fluffy, four-legged friend into your life.
18 Make new friends. With spare time for hobbies and sports, it's the perfect opportunity to meet like-minded folk.



21 Research your family tree. Finding out about your ancestors can take up a lot of time, so it's the perfect thing to do when you retire – and your children and friends will be fascinated by the results.

19 Redecorate, or spruce up your garden.
20 Become a member of the National Trust or English Heritage – they both offer discounted membership to seniors.
22 Get to grips with your finances. Three months before you reach state pension age you should receive a letter from the pensions office letting you know how much you will be entitled to. Work out all of your income and outgoings so you know exactly how much you have to live on.
23 Make a list of all the things you want to do – and get cracking with it!
23 Write a book or memoir you can pass on to your family.
25 Experiment with your look. Always wanted pink hair – just go for it!
just relax. ■

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Less is MORE

Downsizing to a smaller property in later life can save you money and time but is it right for you, asks Alexander Albany



Why downsize?

When you finally retire you may think that moving to a smaller home would be more economical. This is almost certainly the case but it can benefit you in more ways than just reducing your day-to-day costs. By downsizing you can release some of the capital tied up in your house, which could use to either supplement your pension or give yourself a treat.

Many couples buy as large a home as possible when they start a family and find that as they get older and their children leave home, they no longer need such a large space with all the associated upkeep, so selling up is an attractive option.

Fond memories

Leaving your family home with all its memories can be an emotional wrench and will require a period of adjustment, but it can also be a positive experience. Moving to a smaller and more modern property will mean you have to de-clutter, which can give you a new lease of life.

Newer homes require much less maintenance than older properties and are much more energy efficient, which will save on bills. New-build properties built with retirees in mind, are built to have enough space for any mobility aids you may require in the future. On top of these advantages there is one other attractive benefit of moving to a smaller home: less housework!

Moving on

If you have always dreamed of moving to a different part of the country, or to an area near where you currently live, downsizing can offer the perfect excuse to do so. By swapping a big house for a smaller one in a more desirable area, you can maximise your enjoyment of your later years and rest easy in the knowledge that you won't leave behind a huge home full of possessions for your heirs to sort through.

Is it right for you?

Before you downsize there are a few things to consider. How easily will you be able to access local services from your new property, including transport links and shops. How will a move affect your social life? As we age we become more at risk of isolation, especially in an unfamiliar community.

Are there any tax implications to selling your home and what council tax will be payable on the new one? Will a move affect your pension.

You should draw up your own checklist with the help of your partner and family and thoroughly weigh up the pros and cons of any move.

The challenges of downsizing

Any life-changing move will present challenges, which can range from minor inconveniences to large problems, but all of them should be considered before you think about starting your new life.

Do not overlook the emotional impact that downsizing and moving from your old home might have. It is important to talk through your decision with your loved ones to make sure everyone is comfortable with the change.

As with anything to do with property, it is vital that the paperwork and legal and financial side of any move are overseen by a trusted solicitor.

Perhaps the largest challenge of downsizing is having to part with some of your treasured possessions – the thought of doing so can be overpowering but there is help available. Charities such as Age UK can help you de-clutter. It will contact auctioneers, house clearance companies and recycling centres, and help you select any items you want to donate to charity. You can help others as you start a new chapter. ■

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ADVERTISING FEATURE

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Embrace your ME-TIME!



Your mental wellbeing is just as important as your physical health when it comes to enjoying your retirement, says Josephine Brown

Loneliness and social isolation can happen to anyone, but older people are more vulnerable for a number of reasons. No longer being in work and having the interaction that comes with being in a workplace, the death of a spouse or friends, or a disability or illness that makes it difficult to get out of the house can all lead to someone being left feeling lonely. According to research, chronic loneliness can damage your health and it has been linked to conditions such as heart problems and strokes.

Over a million older people report feeling lonely but there are things we can do to help ourselves.



Self-help

Joining a club or a class is the perfect way to meet new people and make friends. Find out what groups there are local to you: whether it's a Women's Institute branch, craft club or reading circle, there's likely to be something that will appeal to you. If you have access to the internet, look online, or you can pop into your local library, which will likely have plenty of information about local groups and classes.

Volunteering is also a great way to get out of the house and interact with new people. Your local charity shop may want someone to help for a few hours a week, for example, which would give you the opportunity to see lots of new faces.

A number of charities, including The Silver Line and Age UK, offer a 'friendship call' service, which is ideal for those who find it hard to get out of the house or aren't quite ready to go to a group or join a club. The service is usually available 24 hours a day.

When we get stuck in a rut it can seem daunting to try to break out of it. So whatever you do to help yourself, remember that it takes time and to make changes at your own pace.

Helping others

It's always a good idea to check on an elderly neighbour: they may feel embarrassed to ask for help. You could offer to do a food shop for them, invite them round for a cup of tea or just ensure that when you see them you smile and talk. A 'hello' and a friendly face can go a long way towards making someone feel less lonely. If you have the time, you could consider becoming a friendship caller yourself. ■

ISTOCK

Loneliness in numbers

- 2.5 million older people say that going to the supermarket gives them a reason to get out of the house, with nearly 600,000 revealing that otherwise they would have nobody to talk to. More than a million over-60s visit a supermarket daily; a further 5.3 million go two or three times a week.
- **Three in 10 of those aged 80 and over report being lonely.**
- 17 per cent of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week, and 11 per cent are in contact less than once a month.
- **A higher percentage of women than men report feeling lonely.**
- Nearly half of older people say that the television or their pets are their main form of company.
- **Three in four family doctors say that between one and five elderly patients a day visit them due to loneliness.**



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Challenge *yourself!*



No more daily grind but how do you fill your new-found free time? Here are five top tips

Many retirees find that with the responsibilities of a career behind them they have the free time to take up any number of new pursuits. You can find a new lease of life in your golden years and make new friends by taking up a group activity, or hone a once-thought-lost skill. Whatever your interest, there is a way to pursue it in retirement.





Gardening

It may be a cliché, but many older people take to gardening not only to create a beautiful space for them to admire but as a form of relaxation. Gardening is popular among retirees mainly because for many it is the first time that they've had the opportunity to cultivate their own plot.

Horticulture is both an art and a science, and growing the best flowers and vegetables takes time and skill. There are also health benefits from gardening: it keeps you physically active and can have a calming effect while getting you out in the fresh air. There are often gardening clubs if you live in a residential home or assisted-living facility, and if you live in a flat then a beautifully tended window box can be your pride and joy.

Painting

Art is another pursuit that can be calming and reduce stress. Having a creative outlet to express your feelings can be hugely beneficial to your overall mental health – and of course, you'll be left with a collection of beautiful works of art.

'Have you got a novel in you? Most of us feel we do, and in retirement you may have time to put pen to paper'

Writing

Have you got a novel in you? Most of us feel we do, and in retirement you may find you finally have time to sit down and put pen to paper – or fingers to computer. Many successful novels were written as their authors reached retirement age and this shows that as one calling ends, another can begin. You may want to try by yourself or take a creative writing class and meet other would-be authors.

Sport

As we get older exercising becomes a primary concern for many, and regular exercise can help stave off almost all the conditions associated with age. While our bodies are not always capable of partaking in really strenuous forms of sport, there are plenty of activities that will improve fitness or strength at any age, such as swimming, tennis or even golf. Exercise releases endorphins and endorphins make us happy – so exercise is good not just for the body.

Dancing

Do you remember the hit dances of your youth and want to strut your stuff once more on the dancefloor? Or do you want to learn some new moves? Dancing is another great form of exercise which can help you stay active in an enjoyable way. Not only will it help your physical health but by participating in couples' dances or a class you can expand your social circle and meet new friends. ■

ISTOCK

Mulberry Live In Care

care straight from the heart

The Care Industry has had its fair share of criticism over the years with many vulnerable people needing help but not knowing where to turn, families want to help out more but are unable to do so because of work commitments and everyday life, because of this they encourage their loved ones to go into a home or respite. The staff in homes do the most amazing job but for some residents it simply is not the place for them because home is where their heart really is.

I run an agency that allows people to live in their own homes so they can be around their cherished possessions, memories and have someone with them to ensure they are safe, eating and drinking and are taking their medication and attending appointments.

The feedback that I get from numerous clients when I visit them for their first initial assessment is how much cheaper Live In Care is compared to Domiciliary Care or Night Care and what value you get for your money as someone is there to support 24 hours a day as opposed to half an hour or hour visit 2 to 3 times per day, giving families complete peace of mind knowing that someone is with their loved ones at all times, and seeing to their every need.

I have experienced carers who work tirelessly to provide good care and companionship, they all have their different strengths, some carers like to provide companionship only where as others like more challenging Live In Assignments like End of life care, Dementia and Parkinson's. We will tailor make a package that suits all involved and we will provide a compatible Carer to meet all of their needs.

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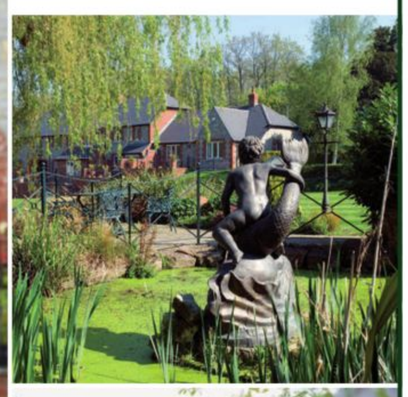
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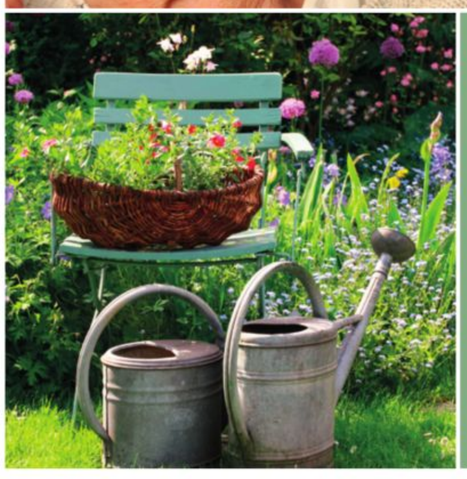
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PET *perfect*



Your cat or dog could help others – and give you a new lease of life

As a nation of animal lovers we are more than aware of the joy of owning a pet. Happily, there are a number of charities that enable those in hospitals, hospices, nursing and care homes who may be away from their own pets to be able to spend time with an animal – be it a dog, cat or even a donkey. Animals that become so-called therapy pets bring an immense amount of comfort, joy and happiness to those in need.

What are the benefits?

Pets that are taken into care and retirement homes give so much back to residents. Studies have shown that getting the chance to interact with animals can help with both physical and mental health issues, as well as help to decrease levels of stress hormones in humans, which can help lower blood pressure and improve overall cardiovascular health.

Thanks to the 'feelgood' hormones that are released when we are in contact with animals, they can help boost our mood and improve our overall mental wellbeing. Depending on the type of contact allowed at the home, walking with a dog or a donkey is a great way to increase activity and boost energy levels.

Animals are also a fantastic conversation-starter so, for example, if you've recently moved into residential living they offer a great way to break the ice, start up a conversation and make new friends.



ISTOCK

'Thanks to the "feelgood" hormones that are released when we are in contact with animals, they can help boost our mood'

What kinds of animals can be therapy pets?

Animals used as therapy pets include cats, dogs and donkeys but also guinea pigs, chickens and goats... all manner of creatures great and small. As long as they can deal with being stroked by lots of different people and are unfazed by new smells and surroundings, they can qualify.

How to volunteer your pet

Each charity has its own criteria when it comes to taking on therapy pets, so in the first instance, get in touch with you preferred organisation and ask about the process. Two of the biggest are Pets as Therapy (petsastherapy.org) and Therapy Dogs Nationwide (tdn.org.uk). Some things you may be required to provide are proof of full inoculation and parasite prevention, a veterinary or professional reference to confirm the animal's temperament, and you may have to apply for a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

You may also have had to own the animal for a set amount of time – so you can be sure of its temperament and be happy and confident that it can fulfil the role.

Therapy animal traits

Animals that become therapy pets must...

- Be tolerant of being handled by strangers
- Be very obedient
- Not pull if they are walked on a lead
- Be tolerant of unusual smells, places and objects such as wheelchairs and medical devices
- Have a calm disposition and be exceptionally well-behaved

Benefits for pets

Animals that become therapy pets get enjoyment out of their visits, too. Many animals love the sensation of being stroked and petted, so as well as bringing joy into the lives of the people they visit, they also leave feeling contented.

Living in

Care homes are increasingly allowing residents to move in with their own pets, having noted how rewarding the relationships can be. Some homes actually go as far as having their own animals living on the premises. ■



There's no place like HOME

Catherine Hellary, founder, shares the perfect alternative to a care home.

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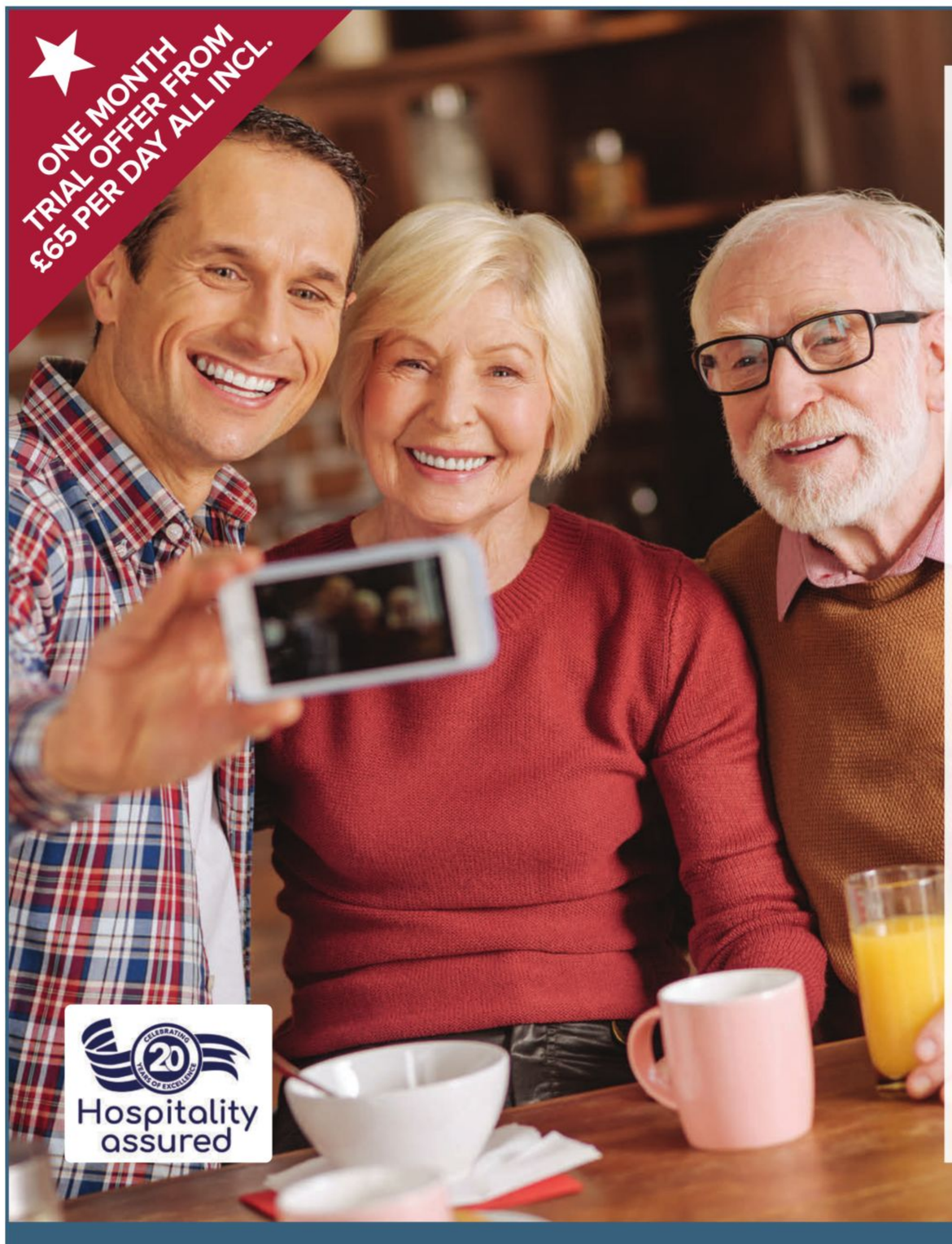
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ISTOCK

HOME *comforts*

You may want help to continue living independently. Here's a guide to some of the kit you might need



Personal alarms
If you have an accident you can quickly call for help. Pressing a button on a wristband or pendant alerts the company that supplied it, which will then contact your next of kin or the emergency services.

Stairlifts and lifts
Put an end to troublesome stairs: talk to a manufacturer to find the best option and model for your needs.

Rise recliners
Armchairs that help you out of the seat by slowly inclining forward.

Adjustable beds
Have all the functions of a hospital bed but look at home in a bedroom.

Handles and grab rails
There are two types: some have suction cup so you can move them as and when you need to. Others are securely attached to the wall using screws.

Bath lifts
Lower you into and help you out of the bath at the push of a button using various designs.

Walk-in baths or showers
Enable you to get in and out without assistance. If you prefer a shower, a non-slip shower tray is a great option. A shower seat can also be wall-fixed.

Wet rooms
A completely tiled room that's essentially a big shower. Ideal for wheelchair users. Walk-in showers are another option as they have no steps.

Toilet aids
These help you use the toilet independently and include things like toilet cushions, wheeled and folding commodes, bedpans, portable urinals and rise-recline toilet frames.

Kitchen aids
Adjustable cabinets can be lowered or raised manually or electronically, making them an ideal height. Extended handles and reaching equipment can eliminate any painful or difficult reaching up or bending down. Kettle-tippers are ideal for those who have a weak grip. For the blind, there are gadgets such as talking scales, microwaves and liquid-level indicators for drinks.

Ramps
These can be fixed in place – portable options are also available.

Ceiling hoists
Ceiling-mounted hoists take up no floor space, leaving room for any other equipment you may need. Operated via remote control, a hoist can be moved independently. Tracking for hoists can remain in one room or be designed so someone can be moved from room to room.

Mobility scooters
More than 330,000 people use mobility scooters in the UK. They come in three classes, from one to three, with power, speed, comfort and where you're allowed to use them differing depending on each class. Insurance is not compulsory for scooters but is advised. ■

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Timing
An advertisement received on Monday morning will normally appear in the Friday issue.
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Unless contrary instructions are given, advertisements arriving late will be put in the next available issue.

When it is necessary to indicate in an advertisement that a home will be unoccupied for any period, we advise using a Box Number only.

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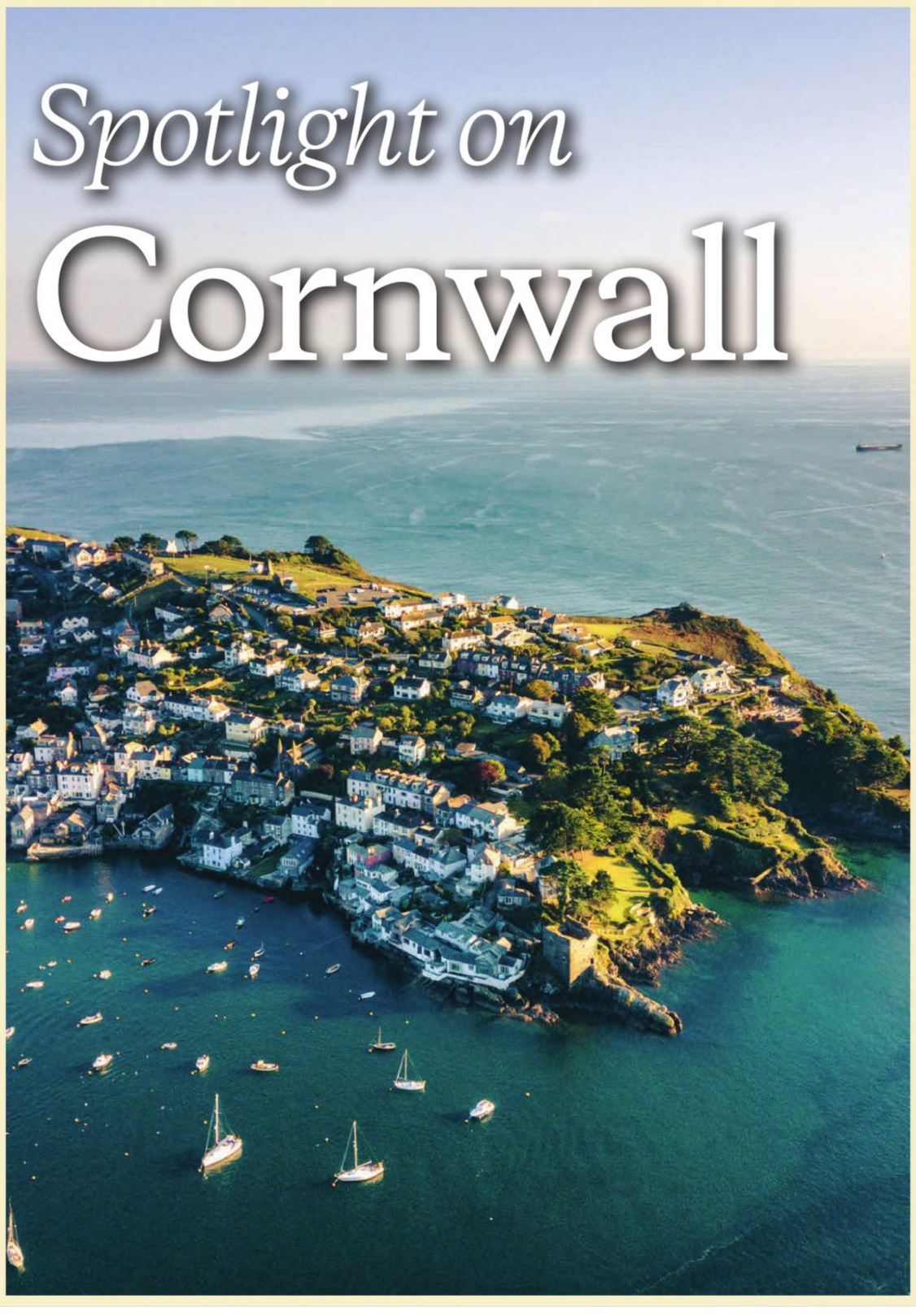
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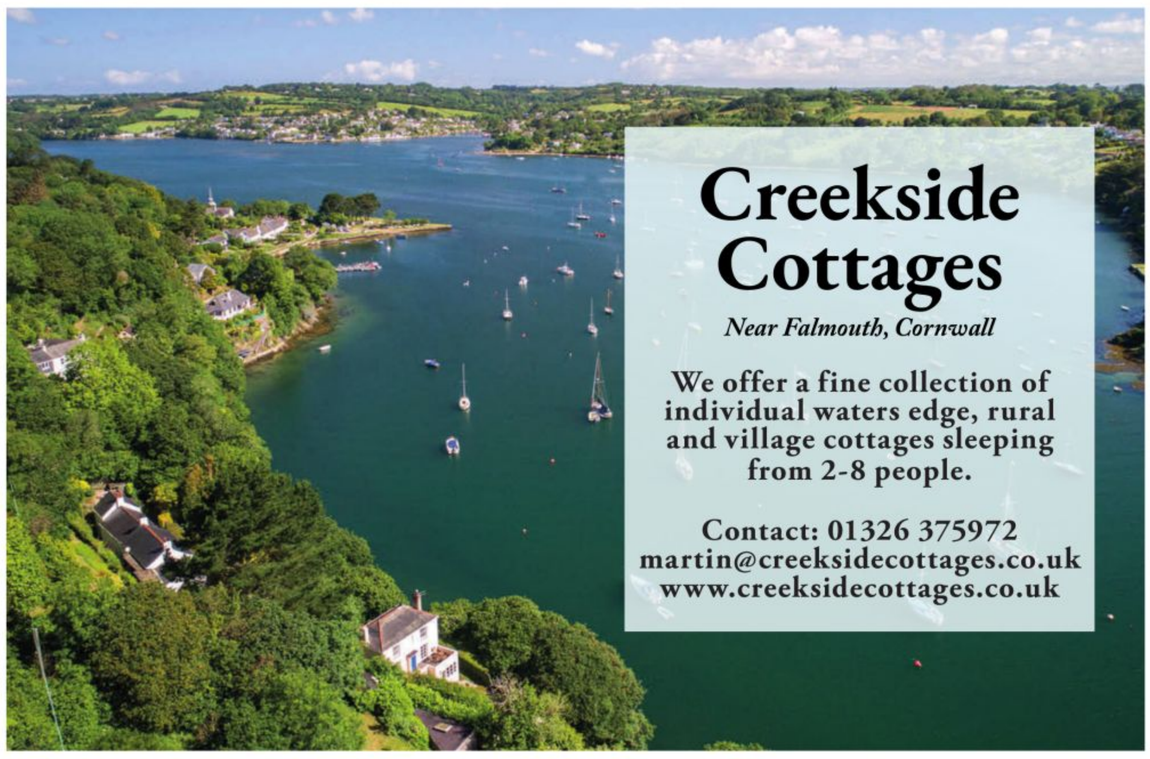
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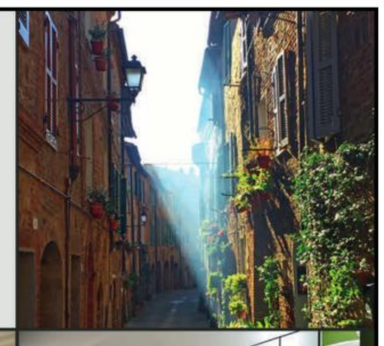
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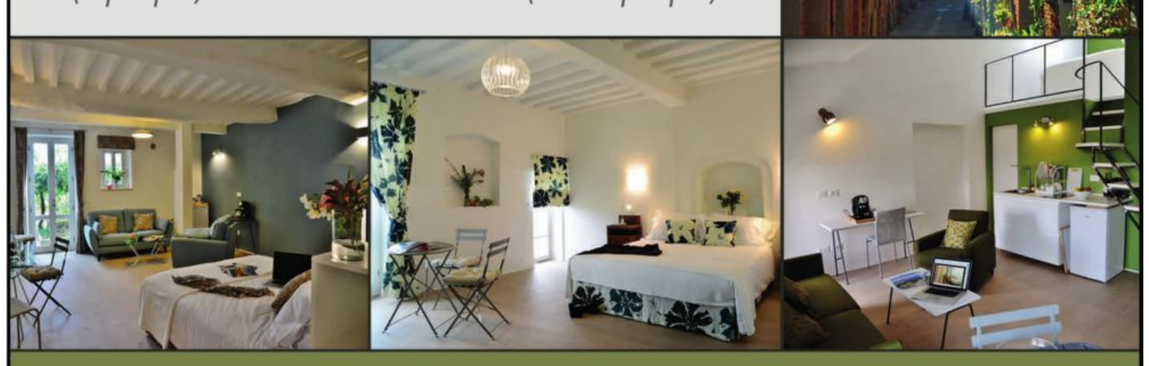
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HNW PROFESSIONAL female seeks live-in housekeeper/pet sitter, full time. Duties to include cleaning, laundry, pet sitting and house guardianship, flower arranging and wardrobe management. Role is split between the countryside and London, so you will be required to travel with the employer between two homes when necessary. Must be a natural pet lover (dogs and cats) and have worked with animals before. Excellent role for someone looking to find the right long-term position with opportunity to grow. Immediate start, references, CV and DBS required. Drivers licence and own car preferred if you are requested to do local shopping. 5 day week 50-60 hours depending. Salary 40k gross, 5 weeks holiday, statutory pension and private healthcare. Please apply with CV to Box 28507

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This family needs a person or people to manage their house in Buckinghamshire.
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Experienced, full-time cook/ housekeeper required for historic family home in the Cotswolds. Healthy cooking and household management skills, working in a team of 3 including most weekends when the lady owner is in residence. Occasional guest and family meals to be provided. Friendly, considerate and flexible individual with excellent references. Dog friendly. Clean driving licence with own transport required. Remuneration depending on experience. Holidays and pension scheme included. This job could also be suitable for a couple as further work is available in skilled house maintenance and security. Small 2 bed cottage on estate could be provided depending on application.
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LIVE-IN HOUSEKEEPING Couple, London. Our clients, a professional family of four, are looking for a housekeeping Couple to run their large home in North London. The principals work in London and overseas and are looking for a complete provision of care for the property and cars as well as provide security. As well as undertaking the housekeeping and maintenance of the house you will be required to provide some cooking. This is a role that will require some flexibility for weekends. The successful candidates will be pro-active with a positive work attitude looking for a long term position. Accommodation available within the house, not suitable for dependents or pets. Up to date DBS required for both candidates as well full clean driving licence and excellent references. Salary £60,000 + Start date ASAP. (AGY.) Please contact Box 28513

HOUSE/DOG SITTER- Near Shrewsbury, with free Cottage. For a lovely small 1 bedroom cottage you will be required to look after 3 small dogs on a regular basis in addition to 5 hours of cleaning per week. [2x 2.5 hours]. Would be suitable for 1 person who is either retired or works part time. A dog lover is essential. Car driver / owner essential as located in the country, 25 mins from any town. Please contact Box 28514

LIVE-IN HOUSEKEEPER - Sussex. £26,000 (depending on experience) + excellent benefits & accommodation. Homemaker needed to assist elderly mobile lady. Must have good sense of humour, be positive, flexible and experienced in all homemaking duties. Experience in cooking, cleaning and laundry is key to this role + ad hoc duties. Needs loving attitude to children and animals. Country lover, car owner. 40 hours per week including most weekends, with 2 days off each week. Refurbished house in stunning location. Access to local art, music, theatre, motorsport and horseracing. Please apply with CV to Box 28515

PART-TIME Housekeeper/Cleaner, London. Motivated individual whom enjoys maintaining a home. Preference given to home cleaning organisation and deep cleaning rotation experience. Small amounts of ironing. Reliable. Honest. Dependable. Good English communication required. Must understand issues of upscale, well-appointed home. Cooking or prep cooking experience a PLUS, not required. 1500 square foot flat. Tuesdays and Fridays. Minimum of 6 hours a week, divided. If skillset allows, potentially 9-10 hours a week total with Tuesdays extended. Rate depends upon experience, training, skillset, and circumstances. Knowledge of clothes maintenance and delicate fabrics a plus. £9 to £18/hour depending upon skillset. Please contact Box 28523

LIVE-IN MANAGEMENT Housekeeping Couple, Osea Island. Our client is looking for a dynamic and professional Couple with experience in hospitality or seasonal work within the travel industry. The role is to manage the housekeeping for a private island which is let commercially for holiday rentals and events. There is a maintenance team on the island so this is a sole housekeeping and management role where the successful candidates will be required to ensure the highest standards of cleaning and presentation for paying guests. In addition to being hands on you will be required to manage a team of housekeepers (some of which are temporary during events), cleaning sundries and the laundry. You must have a can do attitude along a with a positive outlook and sense of adventure. Full clean driving licences, up to date DBS and excellent recent references. Two bedroomed apartment available. Start date April 2020. Salary £50,000 +. (AGY.) Please contact Box 28518

AU PAIR COUPLE/Housekeeper & General Maintenance Couple. Couple sought for general light housework/laundry & outdoor gardening/maintenance and pet care. Own accommodation, separate one bed flat with kitchen and bathroom & living room. Mid week sole charge of main property. Beautiful New Forest setting. Start 1st April. Own car provided. Could suit adaptable single! Please contact Box 28522

LIVE-IN HEAD GARDENER, Winchester. We are looking for an experienced and qualified Head Gardener to manage a team of assistant gardeners and 45 acres of land. The family Grade II listed property sits in formal gardens and parklands including expansive lawns, a large kitchen garden, mixed beds/borders, ornamental shrubberies and woodland walks along with other notable areas. Applicants for this position should be academically qualified to at least Level 2 and have 5 years head gardener experience. Spray certificates (PA1/PA6) and chainsaw competence certification are required along with a full clean driving licence. This is a genuinely rare and exciting opportunity for a suitably qualified and experienced Head Gardener to join a historically significant estate working with a motivated hard-working team and for friendly and interested employers. Start date ASAP. (AGY.) Please contact Box 28524

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COOK/HOUSEKEEPER, Notting Hill, London. Part-time permanent position. Experienced and confident individual. Daily cooking and shopping, housekeeping duties including laundry for professional couple supported by daily cleaner. Hours 09.30- 15.30 Monday to Friday. Salary £11 - £20 range per hour. Must have relevant working papers. References essential. Previous cook/housekeeper retired after 20 years. Please apply with CV. Contact Box 28536

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HOUSEKEEPING ASSISTANT, Gloucestershire. We are seeking a full-time live-in Assistant Housekeeper for a country house in Gloucestershire. Preferably someone who has had experience in a similar role. The job is varied including general housekeeping, cleaning, laundry and working with other team members at the occasional dinner party, covering holidays and days off. The ideal person needs to be flexible, reliable, self-motivated and happy to look after pets as there are 3 dogs and a cat. Driver is essential due to rural location. Car provided for work purposes. Work is based on a 42-hour week, working weekends and two days off during the week. The accommodation is a comfortable, fully-furnished flat provided on site, separate from the main house, all utilities included. References and DBS check required. Salary is negotiable depending upon experience. (AGY.) Please contact Box 28528

LIVE-IN ADMIN ASSISTANT/ Housekeeper. Part-time position. Mainly secretarial work 3 mornings a week, light household duties and house/ dog-sitting as necessary. Other help employed. Comfortable furnished flat in lovely large country house near Alresford, Hampshire. Must be computer literate, n/s, dog lover and driver. Would suit active mature single person. References essential. Present P.A. recommends. Please apply with CV to Box 28535

LIVE-IN HOUSEKEEPER and part time General Factotum, Cambridgeshire. Our clients are looking for an experienced and capable Housekeeper for their large grade II listed home near Huntingdon. This full time role is mainly weekdays only but the family do have shooting parties and open gardens occasionally over the weekends where your assistance will also be required. The part-time role for the Housekeeper's partner will be on an ad hoc basis, mainly at weekends, enabling a full time job to be taken on during the week. The house sits within stunning formal and informal gardens, the full time Gardener also lives in. You should be able to provide home cooked food as well as the full range of housekeeping duties including flower arranging. Must love dogs. Accommodation and car for work duties provided. DBS, references and clean driving licence required. Start date: no later than May 2020. (AGY.) Please contact Box 28531

DELIGHTFUL HOME in Essex offered free for companion/helper. A truly lovely 4 bedroom home in Essex near all transport is offered at no cost for Companion/Helper, own large room and sitting room. Minimal duties to include a few hours companionship to 60 year old gentleman who will also need assistance with evening meals. This is a lovely opportunity that would suit perhaps someone retired with own income or someone who works part time. For further details please apply to Box 28527

CARER JOB VACANCIES

MATURE LIVE-IN Carer sought to help couple in beautiful country area, Tenbury Wells. General PA duties, shopping, errands, cooking, companionship. Must be responsible, cheerful, experienced in dementia care, confident driver and animal lover. Non-smoker, current DBS, CV and references. Clear verbal and written skills. Flexible hours/good salary. Own bedroom, sitting room/kitchenette and bathroom.
Please apply with CV to Box 28508

LIVE IN HOME CARE ASSISTANT EXETER

We are looking for passionate and caring individuals to provide care and assistance to a young Male Adult, who will assist with all his needs, create plenty of opportunities for him to have fun! If you think you could make a difference to this young man's life, we'd love to hear from you!Full training for the role. Gastrostomy Peg feeding. Manual Handling if required.Wages @ £1100.00 per week (two weeks on, two weeks off). Mon to Sunday 6 days a week (will include breaks through the day) Saturday 08:00-21:00 Sunday 08:00-10:00 & 18:00-22:00.

Please contact Box 28512

EXPERIENCED Live-In Male Carer/ Companion, London. For formal private household, Monday-Friday, London. To care for an elegant & erudite elderly gentleman with mild dementia. Must be a clear English speaker as need to be able to read aloud plus engage and stimulate him with conversation as well as light exercise. Personal care is required and a sense of humour is important. Start ASAP - must have current DBS certificate, clean driving licence, excellent references & be able to travel occasionally. Self-contained weekday accommodation provided. Salary up to £50,000 p.a. (AGY.)
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LIVE-IN COOK and carer required for elderly couple living on a private estate near Cirencester. The role will suit a loyal, mature, English-speaking, kind and caring person with high standards of cleanliness and a full, clean driving licence. Must have a caring nature and be helpful and patient, especially to the Lady of the house. Flexibility and adaptability are essential. Main responsibilities: cook and serve lunch and dinner for two, and when required lunch and dinner parties. Clean the house, do all food shopping and carry out general domestic duties, including laundry. These responsibilities will be extended when required to include visiting guests and family. Weekend work required. Driving the lady of the house when required. Another staff member lives on the premises, and has been with the family for over 10 years. Accommodation is a 3-bedroomed attached cottage with separate entrance. The estate is well-run with dogs, horses and other families living in a happy and friendly environment. This role will suit someone who is flexible, friendly and companionable. References are essential and will be taken up verbally.
Please contact Box 28526

LIVE-IN CARER/Companion, Marlborough. Kind and patient Carer required to look after a gentle lady, mid-eighties whose memory is fading, needs constant companionship/guidance. Still active, in good health, sleeps well, has a small dog, enjoys her garden but needs help on activities, trips to shops and outings organised. Carer/Companion will be responsible for household budget, organising, cooking, overseeing medicines, assistance with bathing/dressing, washing and light household tasks. Accommodation in elegant flat on first floor of main house, Marlborough, Wiltshire. Applicant ideally has a clean driving licence, a non-smoker and experience of Alzheimers. We have one Carer doing two months on one month off - so we are looking for someone to cover every third month ideally starting mid March.
Please apply for further information to Box 28530

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Or to: john@johnrowell.co.uk

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All candidates are required to complete an application form.

Closing date: Thursday 19 March 2020



Bradfield College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and applicants must be willing to undergo child protection screening as part of their application. This includes submitting an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate prior to employment, registration of the DBS Update Service and checks with past employers.

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

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MATURE LIVE-IN female available, all work considered, excellent references. Tel. 07947 487785
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EXPERIENCED CLEANER seeks post. North Norfolk, no holiday lets, 3-4 hours weekly. £10 per hour, £6 travel. Tel. 07521 042732
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THE LADY PUZZLE PAGES

THE LADYGRAM ONE *compiled by Bert Baker*

1. Quickly framing first of watercolours – faint (5)	91	47	113	36	154								
2. Some bread left out for lout (3)	33	78	178										
3. Stop cad changing radio show that's not on the radio (7)	120	163	111	2	143	35	100						
4. Passes crew (5)	94	54	83	112	97								
5. Came into the diner, I fancy (9)	63	105	73	17	117	179	150	80	5				
6. The girl in Paris keeping large one around is entitled (8)	181	32	124	59	155	176	165	104					
7. Notice lack of resistance (11)	89	140	145	12	26	85	133	72	15	46	67		
8. Cruise entertainment? Get out! (7,4)	3	130	40	152	8	49	136	144	132	27	53		
9. Boy returns hospital food (4)	79	151	172	157									
10. Friendly fellow interrupting a story (7)	99	162	29	153	18	175	39						
11. Roll over, concealing deep affection (4)	65	23	16	70									
12. Going out with American lawyer, can start to gloat (6)	68	7	28	173	115	156							
13. Point to fish and rock (5)	92	57	169	167	135								
14. Doctor celibate on job? That's offensive (13)	121	62	128	101	75	51	166	6	13	116	159	10	96
15. Sensational rubbish about journalist and husband (3-3)	31	19	86	108	129	11							
16. Vicar getting better after intro, imparting useful information (9)	41	95	139	168	84	126	131	45	103				
17. Cry, retiring without chicken (6)	38	74	110	76	148	50							
18. Naive twit moving first model shows common sense (6,3)	141	88	98	1	134	177	114	82	158				
19. Remaining excellent (11)	30	9	56	42	93	102	25	147	107	4	170		
20. Actor essentially loathes pianist (8)	71	48	127	119	142	24	90	122					
21. Individual, 45? (6)	61	43	21	14	69	138							
22. Honours head of engineering – that's huge (5)	52	125	146	161	171								
23. Viper's new eternal task (11)	81	66	137	34	174	118	123	180	60	44	20		
24. Stalk Oliver, perhaps (4)	164	77	58	22									
25. Boy with flu awfully juvenile (8)	55	109	160	106	87	37	149	64					

A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84
85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112
113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126
127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154
155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168
169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	

B

The LADYGRAM is solved by placing the answers to the clues in Box A. Each letter of an answer in **Box A** is readily transferred into the corresponding numbered space in **Box B**, which, as you progress, will become identifiable as a quotation.

The initial letters of the answers in Box A will spell out the name of the author, plus the book from which the quotation was taken.

NB: On Ladygram Challenge One some of the numbers in Grid B may appear more than once in Grid A. This is not the case with Ladygram Challenge Two.

SOLUTION and WINNER: NEXT ISSUE, 20 March

WIN A BEAUTY GIFT SET
See opposite

WINNER OF THE LADYGRAM CHALLENGE 21 FEBRUARY-5 MARCH 2020

Congratulations to Mrs Jane Holmes of Shaldon, Devon, who wins a Perkins & Morley cushion

Ladygram Crossword Bridge Spot the Difference Sudoku

THE LADYGRAM TWO *compiled by Bert Baker*

1. Exploit a menial, put out (10)	91	177	182	131	156	170	55	98	102	147
2. Joined junior diplomat and leader of delegation (8)	84	114	12	174	120	46	62	111		
3. Somehow learn top pet is a bad influence (6,5)	74	181	87	173	162	48	19	144	129	51	28
4. Former PM who wouldn't support a straw ban? (8)	155	105	50	23	178	17	160	93			
5. Visible understanding (7)	15	112	140	180	49	153	53				
6. Destroy this country, collecting points? On the contrary! (4)	148	32	13	118							
7. Mixed, as arranged (8)	25	83	163	134	96	33	136	94			
8. Spokesperson's opening bit (10)	43	145	78	67	172	122	109	7	63	116	
9. Doctor fed the tiny tit. It's a crime! (8,5)	73	176	158	132	167	106	76	143	59	138	29	38	9
10. Embarrassed the woman with head of engineering? Nonsense! (8)	107	88	56	70	124	150	41	127					
11. Rubbery stuff delayed ten (5)	165	65	45	35	119								
12. Break agreement on work with the left (11)	39	61	31	68	126	90	92	5	85	18	115		
13. Celebrity's reason for eating off a tray? (7)	22	169	152	72	57	66	4						
14. Runs pub game (5)	86	11	40	117	133								
15. Firstly, observe fight over dry dish (8)	113	135	125	166	121	146	141	95					
16. Player who never does a day's work? (13)	110	58	137	10	16	97	164	54	159	34	108	154	175
17. Foreign bod's strange apprehension (10)	71	42	36	14	81	101	8	52	104	171			
18. Occupy in the guise of a nun? (7)	64	30	1	151	69	47	179						
19. Proved it's traditional (11)	82	130	123	89	27	20	75	3	24	44	161		
20. Communication from landlord? (6)	142	2	80	149	21	157							
21. Vicious about the man's courses (6)	26	103	99	168	37	79							
22. Strong man backing mummy's boy (6)	6	128	77	60	139	100							

A

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84
85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112
113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126
127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140
141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154
155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168
169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182

B

THE LADYGRAM CHALLENGE PRIZE



Successfully solve both Ladygrams and you could win a beautiful gift set of vintage-inspired skincare products from Yorkshire artisan crafter The Pretty Little Treat Company (prettylittletreats.co.uk and @prettylittletreatco on Facebook).

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BRIDGE ONE *by Gus Calderwood*



ALL-AMERICAN ENCOUNTER

The United States was represented by two teams in the 2019 World Open Teams Championship and they met in the sixth round. Here is an interesting deal from that match.

Dealer South. Neither side vulnerable

	♠ J ♥ A J 6 5 3 ♦ A K 10 3 ♣ Q J 9	
♠ A ♥ K Q 10 7 ♦ 4 ♣ K 10 8 7 6 4 2	N W E S	♠ Q 9 8 7 5 4 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ 9 6 ♣ A 5
	♠ K 10 6 3 2 ♥ 9 ♦ Q J 8 7 5 2 ♣ 3	

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
Pass	1♣	1♥	2♥
Pass	2♠	Dbl	Pass
4♦	Pass	5♦	All Pass

Opening lead: ♥K

With Bobby Levin and Steve Weinstein sitting North and South respectively, the bidding went as shown. West opened One Club, North overcalled One Heart, and East bid Two Hearts, which was a transfer bid, showing at least six spades. When West bid Two Spades, North doubled for takeout and South made an invitational jump to Four Diamonds with his distributional hand. North then raised to game.

West chose the king of hearts as his opening lead and declarer won with dummy's ace. At trick two, Weinstein led the jack of spades from dummy and played low from his hand when East followed with the four. West won with the ace and returned his singleton trump. Weinstein played low from dummy and won in his hand. He ruffed a spade in dummy, West discarding a club, and returned to his hand with a heart ruff. He proceeded to ruff his remaining two spade losers in dummy, returning to his hand with heart ruffs, and drew the outstanding trump. He then cashed the king of spades and claimed his game, conceding one club trick to the defenders.

At the other table Eric Rodwell, sitting West, opened Two Clubs, showing 11-15 points with at least six clubs. North overcalled Two Hearts and Jeff Meckstroth bid Two Spades on the East hand. South passed and West bid Three Clubs, which became the final contract.

North led the king of diamonds, South following with the queen, and switched to the queen of clubs. Rodwell won with the ace, played a club to the king, South discarding a diamond, and exited with a club. North won with the jack and led the three of diamonds to his partner's jack. Rodwell ruffed and played the king of hearts from his hand, North winning with the ace and South following with the nine. Rodwell then claimed his contract, conceding one more trick to North's jack of hearts, so his team gained 11 imps on the board.

PROBLEM ONE

WEST	EAST
♠ K 7 4	♠ 6 5 3
♥ A K 8 3	♥ 9 2
♦ K 5 2	♦ A J 10 9 4
♣ A J 3	♣ K Q 5

West plays in 3NT after North overcalled One Spade. North leads the ♠Q and South plays the eight. Plan the play.

SOLUTION ON PAGE 113

BRIDGE TWO *by Gus Calderwood*

PRE-EMPTIVE PROFIT

Poland gained a substantial swing on the deal below from a match against Australia in the 2019 World Open Teams Championship.

Dealer East. North-South vulnerable

	♠ A 7 5 3 2 ♥ Q ♦ 7 6 3 ♣ K 8 5 4	
♠ J 10 9 8 ♥ 8 2 ♦ Q 9 8 5 ♣ 10 6 3	N W E S	♠ Q 4 ♥ A J 9 7 6 5 3 ♦ A 4 ♣ 9 7
	♠ K 6 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ K J 10 2 ♣ A Q J 2	

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
-	-	-	1♥
1NT	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: ♥8

Krzysztof Buras and Grzegorz Narkiewicz sat South and North respectively for Poland. East bid One Heart, promising at least five hearts, and South overcalled 1NT, showing a balanced hand with 15-18 points. North made a transfer response of Two Hearts, showing at least five spades, and South bid Two Spades as requested. North then jumped to 3NT and South passed with his doubleton spade.



The opening lead was the eight of hearts, declarer playing the singleton queen from dummy and East following with the three of hearts, the partnership agreement being to play a low card to encourage. At trick two, Buras led a diamond from dummy and crucially went up with the king when East played the four, playing East for the ace in view of his opening bid. When the king held, he cashed the ace and queen of clubs and played a club to the king, East discarding a heart on the third round. He now led another diamond from dummy, East winning with the ace. East saw that continuing hearts would give declarer an additional trick in the suit, so he switched to the queen of spades. Buras played low from his hand, won with dummy's ace, and led a diamond to the jack, East discarding a heart and West winning with the queen. A spade return would have held declarer to nine tricks, but West returned a heart, so Buras claimed ten tricks.

At the other table Jacek Kalita, sitting East for Poland, opened with a pre-emptive bid of Four Hearts. A double by South would have been for takeout, so South passed and Four Hearts became the final contract. South led the jack of diamonds and declarer covered with dummy's queen. When this held, Kalita played a heart to the ace and continued with a second heart. South won with the ten and Kalita conceded five more tricks to the defenders to go three down, but Poland gained 10 imps on the board.

PROBLEM TWO

WEST	EAST
♠ A K J 10 7	♠ Q 9 8 6 2
♥ 8 5	♥ K 4
♦ 5 4 2	♦ A Q 10 3
♣ A K 4	♣ 7 6

West plays in Four Spades and North leads the ♥Q. Plan the play.

SOLUTION ON PAGE 113

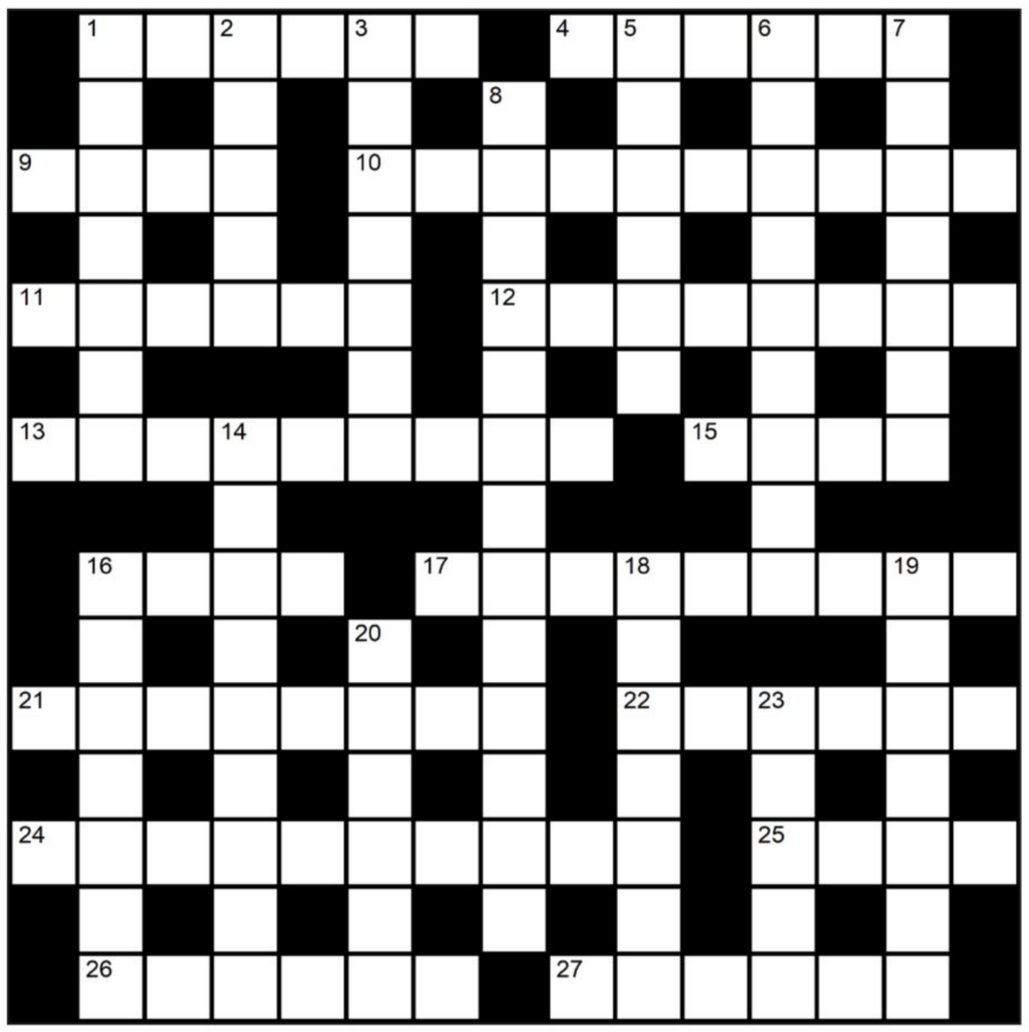
CRYPTIC CROSSWORD *No. 2045 compiled by Bert Baker*

ACROSS

1. Amount that's obtained at university (6)
4. Kermit's losing Rowlf's introduction – maybe it's fate (6)
9. Hero's big cat (4)
10. Trade stuff. It's a hold-up! (7,3)
11. Scattered about between good man and vacant woman (6)
12. Ah, mutiny changed all of us (8)
13. Academic to claim gold (9)
15. Swine is a nuisance, by the sound of it (4)
16. Old Vauxhall going over river in the South West (4)
17. Bring down six balls and cast (9)
21. Splendid joke by one wearing raincoat (8)
22. Live without awful short woman's garment (6)
24. Pity Kent or build something that could hurt him? (10)
25. Follow story on the radio (4)
26. Spirit heard handbanging music (6)
27. For starters, claims young tennis player is part man, part machine (6)

DOWN

1. Bum crack entertaining the German? On the contrary! (7)
2. We hear girl's magical servant (5)
3. Former partner finishes, assuming time stretches (7)
5. Shame if many involved (6)
6. Chief keeping note on rubbish computer (9)
7. One who eats first concealing love for small appliance (7)
8. New chinos fit Mia and – at first – Veronica, a slave to the latest styles (7,6)
14. Twerp and fool designed container for plants (9)
16. A gran and Ma produced this type of clue? (7)
18. Stealing from boy, retired Confederate soldier and youth leader (7)
19. Getting rid of medieval sport, ignoring knave (7)
20. Turn of holy man with small loaf of bread (6)
23. Not in party? That's best (5)



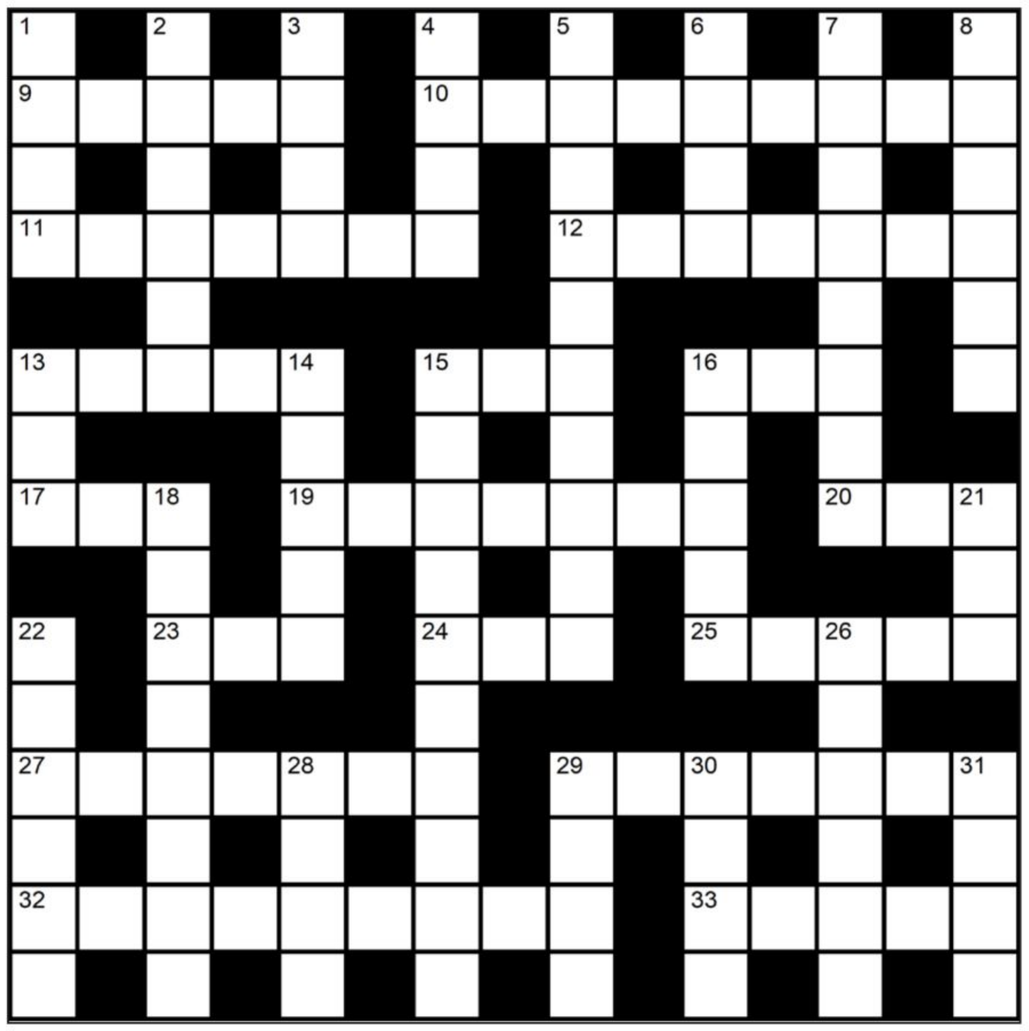
CRYPTIC CROSSWORD *No. 2046 compiled by Bert Baker*

ACROSS

9. Round off part of a tooth (5)
10. All the people with the First Lady upset by Dory (9)
11. Nothing yellow, primarily, or blue (7)
12. Saviour has semi remodelled (7)
13. WWII general starts to thank you on day (5)
15. A number of contentions (3)
16. Told to watch the drink (3)
17. Lad is flipping hooligan! (3)
19. High-ranking officer and prince on planet (7)
20. Before some surrendered (3)
23. Be in charge of race (3)
24. Suffer setback and go on (3)
25. Grant beginning to attack – charge! (5)
27. A very old rascal gets nothing for fruit (7)
29. Splendid individual, very quiet, entering circle (7)
32. Then demon could be getting better (2,3,4)
33. Sphere found in cereal, mysteriously (5)

DOWN

1. Poles about to enter study (4)
2. Officer with UN welcoming magazine's first article (6)
3. Move slowly and don't start to steal (4)
4. Extremely precise (4)
5. Tar's cool. That's what Capt. Aubrey has learned (10)
6. Looks at those voting in favour, reportedly (4)
7. Control motorway? Give over! (8)
8. Large snake and wild pony devouring short article (6)
13. Crowd from asylum, obviously (3)
14. The old soldiers in country (5)
15. Fix torn jersey for Welsh actor, writer and comedian (5,5)
16. Dip or dance (5)
18. Boy holding branch in seaside town (8)
21. Aim to finish (3)
22. Boy supporting soldiers and a cause (6)
26. In Japan, I'm a lovely creature (6)
28. Mimics chimpanzees, maybe (4)
29. Ill-mannered head of department found in street in Paris (4)
30. King supporting retired agent reveals benefit (4)
31. Birds perhaps up for it (4)



SOLUTION TO BOTH CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS, 20 MARCH

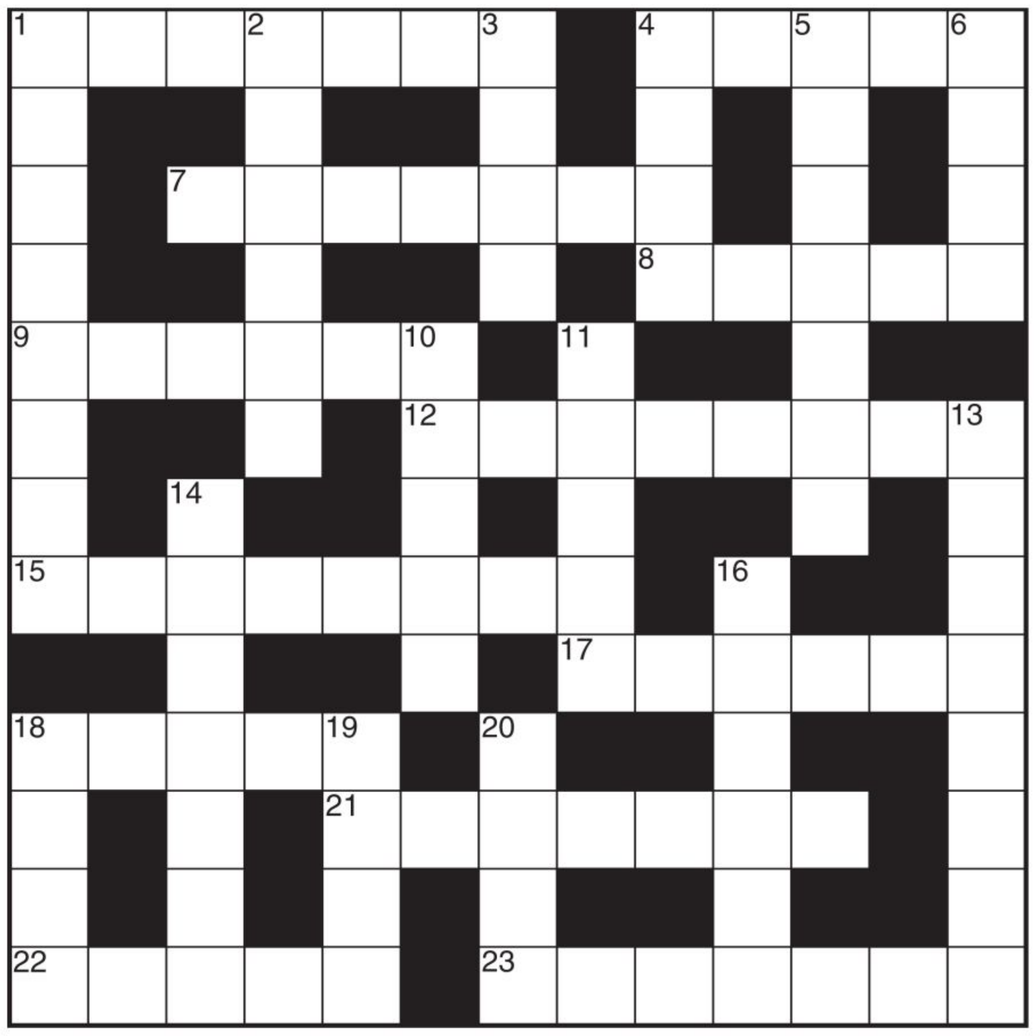
QUICK CROSSWORD *No. 2047 by Teddy*

ACROSS

1. Amazon river carnivore (7)
4. Pleasant atmosphere, good ... (5)
7. Journalists' credits (2-5)
8. Older person (5)
9. Numbskulls (6)
12. Conferred holy orders on (8)
15. Traffic violence (4,4)
17. E African country (6)
18. Potency (5)
21. Venetian or Neapolitan (7)
22. Gnat (5)
23. Overdue (7)

DOWN

1. Breadwinner (8)
2. In any case (6)
3. Uncle's wife (4)
4. Flower jug (4)
5. Making offer (7)
6. Shadow-box (4)
10. Echo location device (5)
11. French farewell (5)
13. Demented (8)
14. Tavern wench (7)
16. World's largest desert (6)
18. Egg cell (4)
19. Hole up (4)
20. Curved hook (4)



SOLUTION ON PAGE 112

NOTES



LADY ARCHIVE

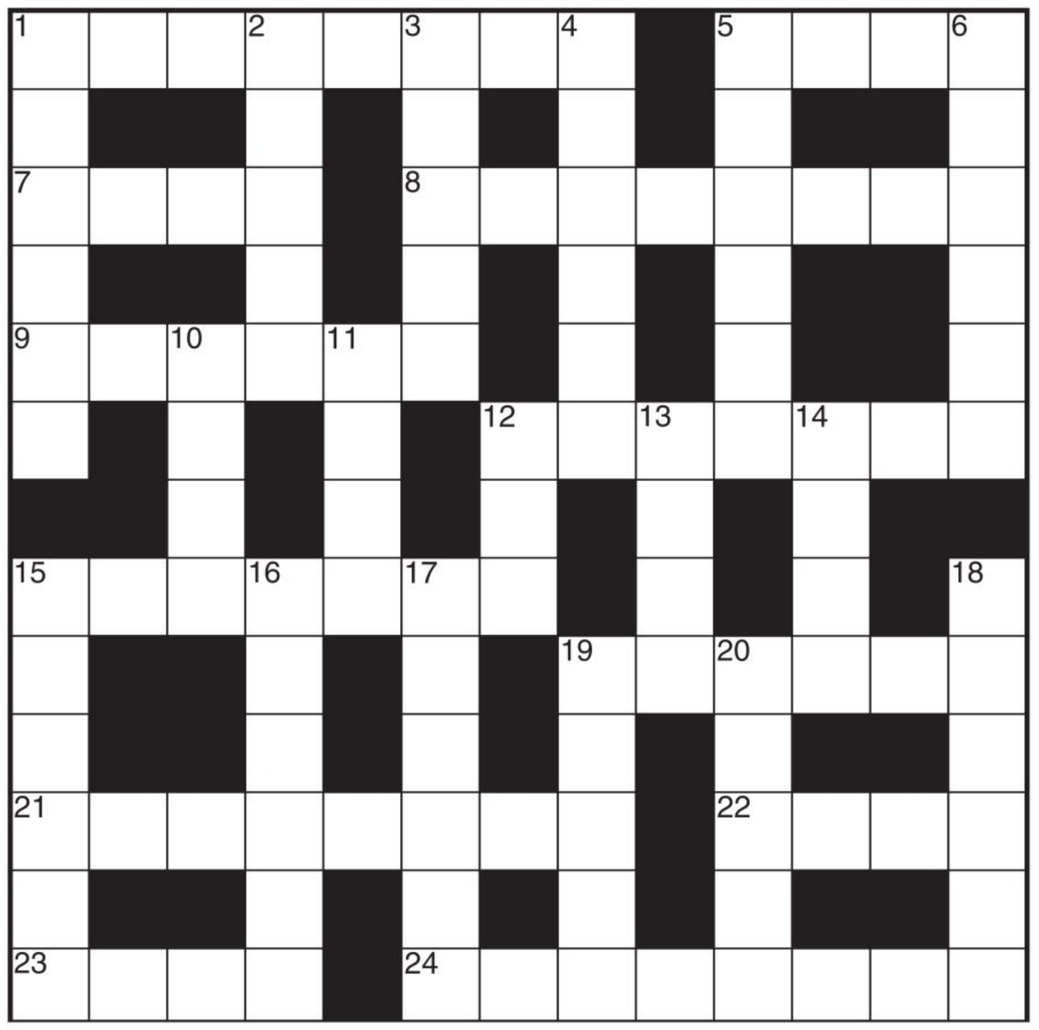
QUICK CROSSWORD *No. 2048 by Teddy*

ACROSS

1. Hosted (TV show) (8)
5. Cocktail, ... colada (4)
7. Small pool (4)
8. Storms (8)
9. Is that so? (6)
12. Boss (4,3)
15. Torrent (7)
19. Paris' ... Tower (6)
21. Speaking unclearly (8)
22. Masterpiece, ... Lisa (4)
23. Length unit (4)
24. Hogwash (8)

DOWN

1. Pickled buds (6)
2. Cycle (bike) (5)
3. Shabby (5)
4. Reduce in rank (6)
5. Irritated (6)
6. Allocate (6)
10. Intends (4)
11. Tibet's Dalai ... (4)
12. Fuss, ... & cry (3)
13. Italian sparkling wine (4)
14. Bungle (4)
15. Placidly (6)
16. Searched every inch of (6)
17. Pattern (6)
18. Gratify (6)
19. Encourage (3,2)
20. Charmer, ... fatale (5)



SOLUTION ON PAGE 112

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

The two images below have 12 differences – see if you can spot them...

SOLUTION 20 MARCH





WORD SEARCH

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

Hidden in the grid are a number of words related to the theme of keeping fish. Find all the words listed hidden in the grid of letters. They can be found in straight lines up, down, forwards, backwards or even diagonally.

AIRSTONES
ANEMONES
ANGELFISH
BOWL
BUTTERFLYFISH
CLEAN
CLOWNFISH
CORYDORAS
CUBE
EELGRASS
EELS
GOLDFISH
GRAVEL
GUPPY
HEATER
HEXAGONAL
LOACH
MINNOW
ORNAMENTS
OSCAR
PUFFERFISH
PUMP
ROCKS
SEAWEED
SKIMMER
SNAILS
TANK
TETRA
THERMOSTAT

SOLUTION ON PAGE 113

CODEBREAKER *by Matilda*

6	8	19	19	7	3	■	8	15	8	11	7	14
20	■	20	■	10	■	3	■	20	■	7	■	11
16	8	10	2	8	■	20	■	20	18	8	11	7
22	■	7	■	15	19	20	8	11	■	14	■	7
20	13	18	■	19	■	16	■	7	■	7	18	18
14	■	■	17	7	11	■	22	7	8	■	■	7
7	5	7	18	■	4	20	7	■	19	20	18	3
■	8	■	8	11	7	■	7	7	19	■	2	■
12	18	20	16	■	12	2	18	■	20	3	3	14
2	■	■	14	8	11	■	14	8	5	■	■	21
11	8	22	■	6	■	8	■	13	■	9	2	16
11	■	19	■	6	2	11	7	3	■	20	■	22
7	19	8	11	7	■	20	■	2	3	2	20	11
14	■	1	■	22	■	22	■	11	■	6	■	20
11	18	8	2	11	14	■	7	14	11	7	7	16

Each number represents a different letter of the alphabet. Work out which number stands for which letter to complete the crossword. We've given you two letters to start. All words are from a dictionary and no proper nouns are used. **Four letters of the alphabet have not been used which accounts for the shaded boxes below**. When you have cracked the code fill in the answer in the boxes below.

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

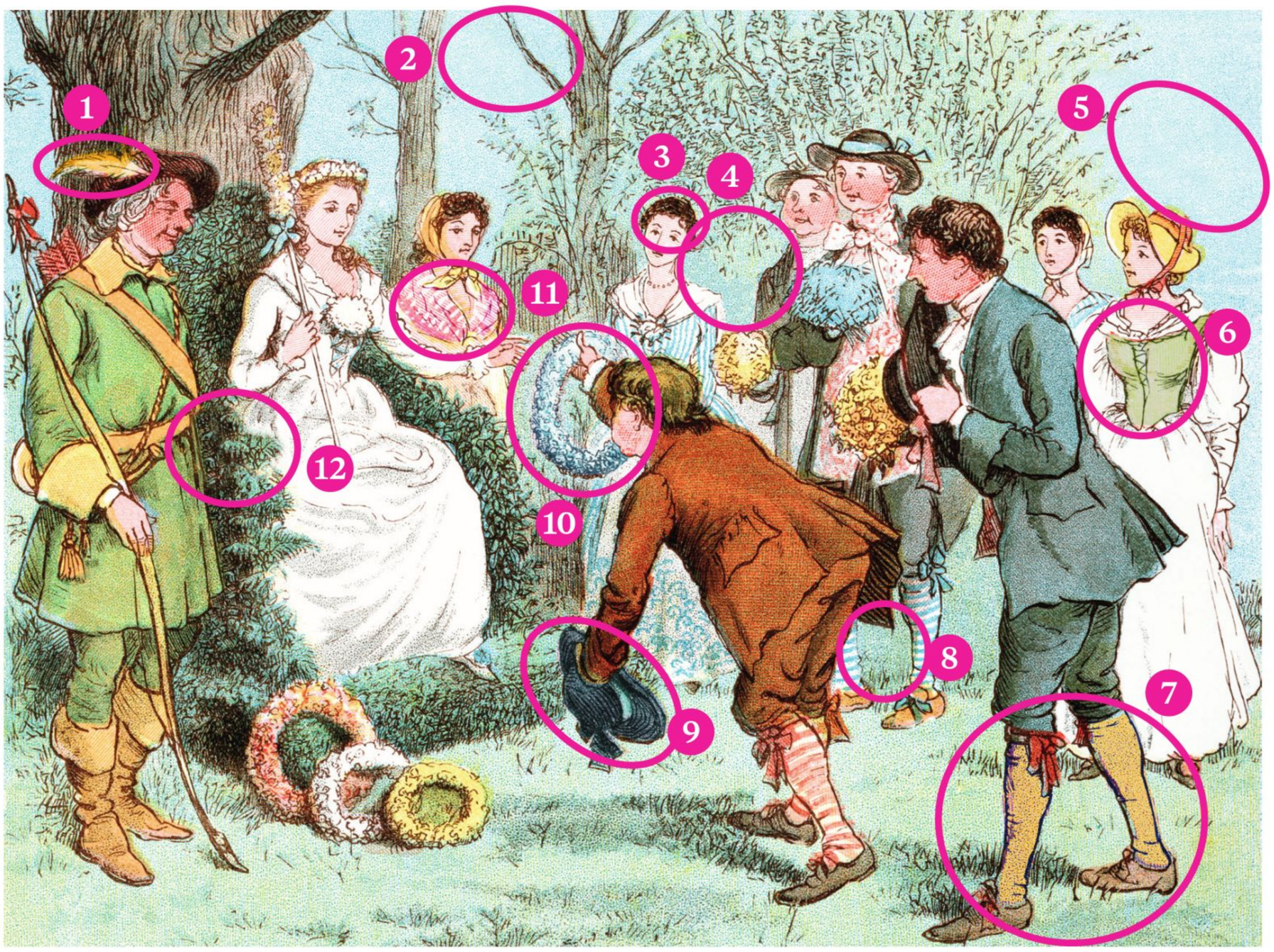
CODE WORD ANSWER

22	8	22	7	18

SOLUTION ON PAGE 113

SOLUTIONS

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE SOLUTION 21/02/20



DIFFERENCES: **1** Feather colour has chanded **2** Garland missing **3** Hat missing **4** Man is missinge **5** Arm is missing **6** Waistcoat colour changed **7** Sock colour has changed **8** Leg and foot is missing **9** Hat colour has changed **10** Garland colour has changed **11** Shawl colour has changed **12** Hand and arm missing

QUICK CROSSWORD 2047 SOLUTION
PAGE 109

ACROSS
1. Piranha
4. Vibes
7. By-lines
8. Elder
9. Idiots
12. Ordained
15. Road rage
17. Uganda
18. Oomph
21. Italian
22. Midge
23. Belated

DOWN
1. Provider
2. Anyhow
3. Aunt
4. Vase
5. Bidding
6. Spar
10. Sonar
11. Adieu
13. Deranged
14. Barmaid
16. Sahara
18. Ovum
19. Hide
20. Barb

THE LADYGRAM ONE SOLUTION 21/02/20

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

1. **P**ALINDROME
2. **E**NOUGH
3. **T**OT
4. **E**LECTROCUTE
5. **R**OOST
6. **A**NTHEM
7. **C**HINOS
8. **K**EY SIGNATURE
9. **R**IOT
10. **O**VEN
11. **Y**OUTH HOSTEL
12. **D**IVISION
13. **T**WITCH
14. **H**ISS
15. **E**URYTHMICS
16. **P**IVOT
17. **L**IFT OFF
18. **A**NCIENT
19. **T**ABLE MANNERS
20. **O**FFICE
21. **P**HEW
22. **A**RCHIVED
23. **P**OST
24. **E**ASTER SUNDAY
25. **R**IGHT
26. **S**OON

PETER ACKROYD, The Plato Papers

THE LADYGRAM TWO SOLUTION 21/02/20

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

1. **N**EBULOUS
2. **A**FTERTHOUGHT
3. **O**CTAVE
4. **M**ISCELLANEOUS
5. **I**NJURIOUS
6. **A**NYHOW
7. **L**AYS OFF
8. **D**YSTOPIA
9. **E**YESIGHT
10. **R**OSEBUD
11. **M**ATRIARCHY
12. **A**WKWARDLY
13. **N**OTEBOOK
14. **T**HE WHITE HOUSE
15. **H**OUSEWORK
16. **E**LECTRIC
17. **P**ULLEY
18. **O**UTSPOKEN
19. **W**ORTHLESS
20. **E**NJOYMENT
21. **R**EVENGE

NAOMI ALDERMAN, The Power

QUICK CROSSWORD 2048 SOLUTION
PAGE 109

ACROSS
1. Compered
5. Pina
7. Pond
8. Tempests
9. Really
12. Head man
15. Cascade
19. Eiffel
21. Mumbling
22. Mona
23. Yard
24. Nonsense

DOWN
1. Capers
2. Pedal
3. Ratty
4. Demote
5. Peeved
6. Assign
10. Aims
11. Lama
12. Hue
13. Asti
14. Muff
15. Calmly
16. Combed
17. Design
18. Please
19. Egg on
20. Femme

SUDOKU ONE NO. 732 EASY

Fill the grid with the numbers 1 to 9 so that each row, column and 3x3 block contains the numbers 1 to 9

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

SUDOKU TWO NO. 733 HARD

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

SOLUTION TO BOTH SUDOKU PUZZLES, 20 MARCH ▲

SOLUTIONS

BRIDGE ONE SOLUTION
FROM PAGE 107

Play low from your hand at trick one. If North switches to another suit, enter dummy in clubs and lead the ♦J for a finesse, running the ♦10 next if the jack wins. If North continues spades at trick two, win with the king, cash the ♦K, and take a diamond finesse.

BRIDGE TWO SOLUTION
FROM PAGE 107

Play low from dummy on the heart lead. If North switches to a diamond, win with the ace, draw trumps, cash the ♣AK, ruff a club, and exit with the ♥K. If North continues with a heart to his partner's ace at trick two, win the likely club return and draw two rounds of trumps. Now eliminate clubs, cross to your hand with a trump, and lead a diamond, covering North's card.

WORDSEARCH SOLUTION
FROM PAGE 111

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

EASY SUDOKU SOLUTION 21/02/20 (730)

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

HARD SUDOKU SOLUTION 21/02/20 (731)

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

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21/02/2020 (2041)

ACROSS 1. Liberty **5.** Recital **9.** Titan **10.** Underhand **11.** Eel **12.** Plato **13.** Umami **14.** Spasm **16.** Dark horse **19.** Cleopatra **20.** Relic **22.** Belle **24.** Quite **26.** Arm **27.** Negligent **29.** Adieu 3**0.** Totally **31.** Cologne

DOWN 1. Letters **2.** Battleaxe **3.** Run-up **4.** You said it **5.** Radio **6.** Car **7.** Tiara **8.** Luddite **13.** Usher **15.** Maple **17.** Realistic **18.** Releasing **19.** Cabinet **21.** Commute **23.** Light **24.** Query **25.** Email **28.** Ill

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21/02/2020 (2042)

ACROSS 8. Gold **9.** Eventually **10.** Venice **11.** Egyptian **12.** Emit **13.** Team player **17.** Bond **18.** Igloo **19.** Trap **20.** Reasonable **22.** Riot **23.** Builders **27.** Lethal **28.** Daisy chain **29.** Leek

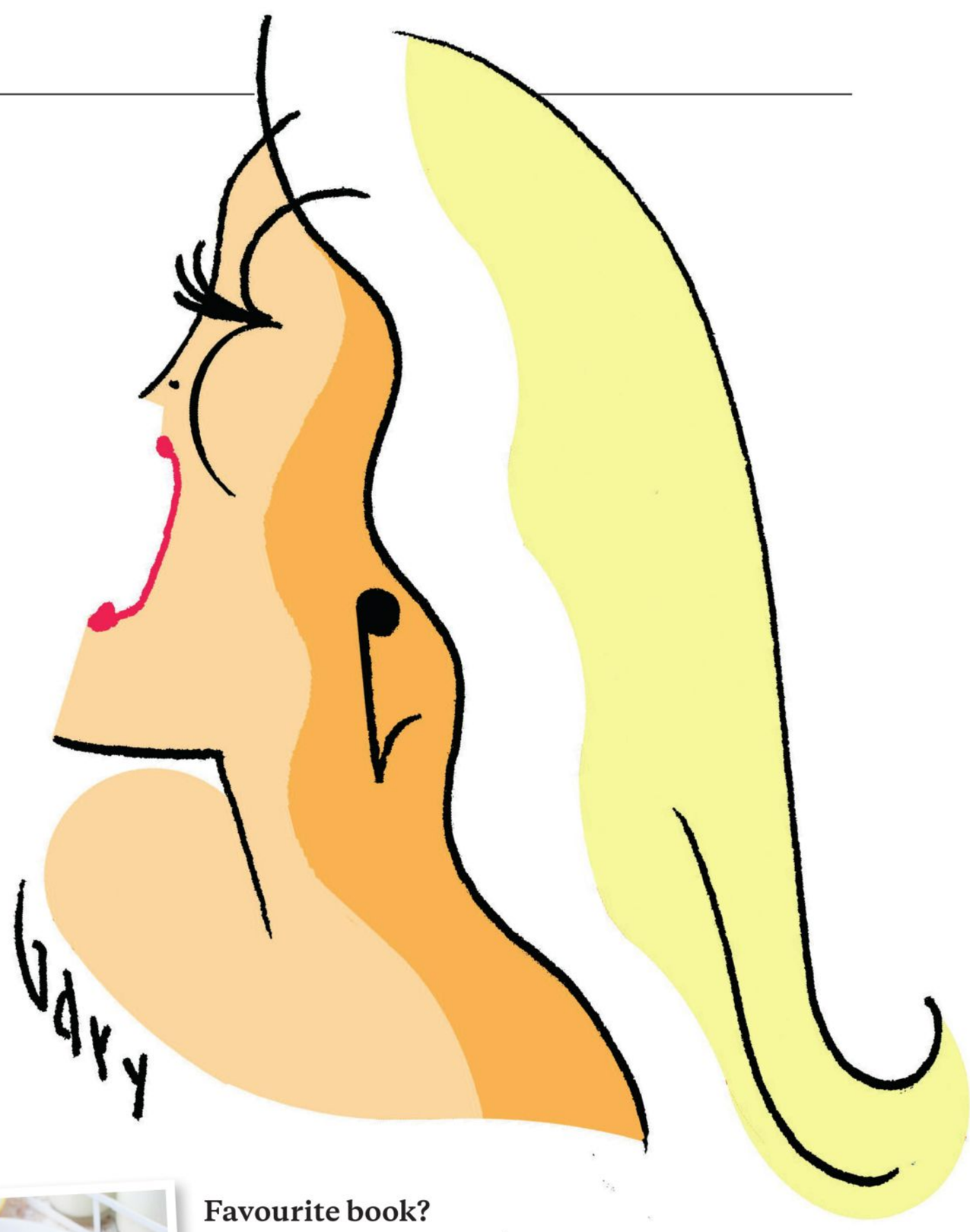
DOWN 1. Roger Moore **2.** Admitted **3.** Pedestrian **4.** Cede **5.** Stay **6.** Mantra **7.** Flea **14.** Ad lib **15.** Propelling **16.** Elaborated **19.** Throttle **21.** Splash**24.** Utah **25.** Each **26.** Spat

CODEBREAKER SOLUTION PAGE 111

A=8, B=15, C=6, D=3, E=7, F=12, G=17, H=4, I=2, L=19, M=16, N=10, O=20, P=22, R=18, S=14, T=11, U=13, V=9, W=5, Y=21, Z=1
Unused Letters: J K Q X

Codeword: PAPER

'I am happiest when I'm on stage. I live and breathe for music'



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

FRIEDERIKE KRUM....

...is an award-winning German mezzo-soprano. Acclaimed for her vocal versatility, she has sung opera, jazz, show tunes and crossover songs. She was the first ambassador for the Chelsea Pensioners and has sung for the British and German armed forces. She is twice divorced and lives in London with her two children.

What are you working on at the moment?
I'm promoting my debut album of Gershwin songs, Somebody Loves Me, which I recorded with the artistic director and house pianist at Ronnie Scott's jazz club, James Pearson. I've also got lots of live shows coming up, a guest appearance at the Royal Albert Hall in March and Cheltenham Jazz Festival in the summer.

When are you at your happiest?
When my children are happy and when I am on stage. I live and breathe for music. I also love being near the water – walking along shores, rivers and even in the rain!

What's your greatest fear?
Like any parent, I share the ultimate fear that something might happen to my children.

Who was your greatest influence?
Musically, Dame Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who I trained with. Personally, my parents, as they made me feel like there was nothing I couldn't do if I put my mind to it.

What is your most treasured possession?
An autograph of Plácido Domingo, which he gave to me while I was still a student. I got to work with him years later in 1996.

What trait do you most deplore in others?
Being disrespectful and unkind towards others, as well as arrogance.

Do you have any pets?
My children and I have an adorable ginger cat called Toffee.



Friederike's favourite things: lemon risotto; performing at the Royal Albert Hall, and her cat





Favourite book?
I love historical and crime novels.

Favourite film?
Avanti! starring Jack Lemmon.

Favourite piece of music?
Rachmaninoff's Vocalise, and the opera Hansel and Gretel.

Favourite meal?
Lemon risotto cooked by my daughter.

Who would you most like to come to dinner?
It would have to be Stephen Fry.

What is your secret vice?
Handbags and shoes of course – you can never have too many!

Do you write thank you notes?
For important things, of course.

Which phrase do you most overuse?
'All roads lead to Rome'.

What would improve the quality of your life?
Mobile phone-free weekends.

Tell me one thing people don't know about you?
I fell in love with ballroom dancing at the age of 15 and still do it regularly.

What would you like your epitaph to say?
A woman who lived for her children and her music. However busy her life got, she always made time to help others and be a great friend.

◆ *Friederike Krum's new album Somebody Loves Me – The Songs of Gershwin – is available now*

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