

Reader's digest

APRIL 2022

BARRY HUMPHRIES

*Dame Edna Dishes On
Life In The Spotlight*

Denzel Washington

*On His Mother, Macbeth
& Confronting Mortality*

3 Death-
Defying
Survival
Stories

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APRIL 2022 £3.99

Finally, I don't need a shopping list to remind me.



Veronica has always enjoyed living an independent life, being in control and making her own decisions. Enjoying a wide range of hobbies including knitting, crochet and painting, she began to notice that there were times she felt as if she was struggling to focus on the task in hand. 'Forgetting names, events and where I had put things,' was becoming more common place,' adds Veronica. She felt that at times she was living in a fog.

'I couldn't accept that there wasn't anything I could do to help myself. I had always had a good memory and a clear brain. I wanted to be able to carry on enjoying an active and busy life.

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'Then I saw an advert for Clear Brain™ in a magazine. I had nothing to lose, so I thought why not give it a try?'

I have taken two tablets every day since November 2018, I am happy to say that I certainly feel as if my mental performance is functioning as normal now.'

Veronica now finds that she is now able to carry on doing what she previously did, like going to the shop's without lists to remind her of what she needs and is confident that nutrients, including iodine and pantothenic acid (B5), in the formulation are contributing to her cognitive function and mental performance.

For Veronica, the biggest plus is that she is now able to enjoy all her hobbies once again, her knitting, crochet and painting are all keeping her busy, 'I am enjoying my independence feeling relaxed and alert. Thank you, Clear Brain™.'

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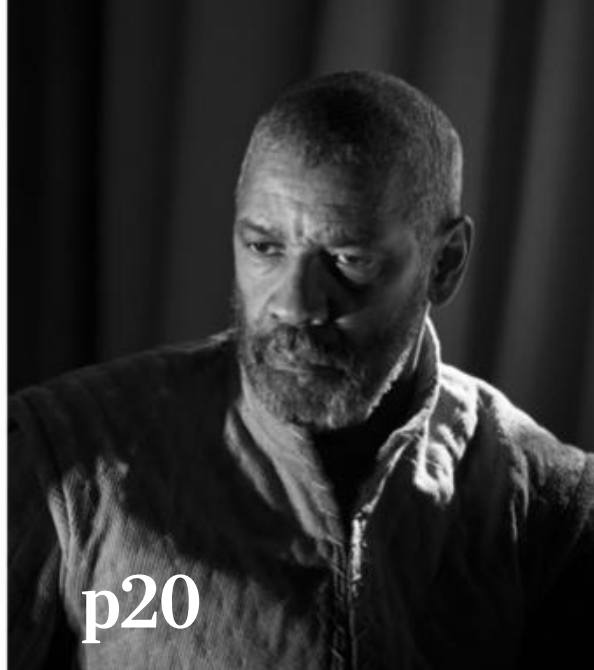
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autobiography

ever written

isn't Churchill's

It's yours

Why?

Because
it's yours

Your
early life

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career

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finest hours

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In This Issue...



Before the golden reign of *Ru Paul's Drag Race* brought the art of drag to mainstream audiences, there was the magic of Dame Edna

Everage. As a child I would watch, spellbound, any time Dame Edna appeared on my television screen, unable to fathom how a cisgender man could step so wholly into the shoes of a character a million miles away from his own identity. Later I would discover Lily Savage, the films of John Waters and the groundbreaking queens of 1990s New York in *Paris is Burning*, but Barry Humphries, in his horn-rimmed glasses and lilac wig was my first drag love. That's why I'm thrilled that on p28 the man behind the mask shares with us the highlights of his magnificent career and life, from his famous friendships, to his loves and losses.

Anna



For many of us, goals and aspirations give life structure and meaning. Yet, as any psychologist will tell you, centring our happiness and self-worth solely around the promise of success can lead to great emotional suffering. So how can we effectively manage the mental comedown that accompanies achieving major goals? On p54, we delve into the baffling phenomenon known as "arrival fallacy" and the practical tips on dealing with it, that include mindfulness and even advance planning.

Does the key to spiritual stability lie in making herbal liqueur? Learning about the mysterious Carthusian monks on p88, you might think so. This nearly 1000-year-old order has been making the sharp Chartreuse cordial for centuries, the production of which sustains their fascinating lifestyle.

Eva

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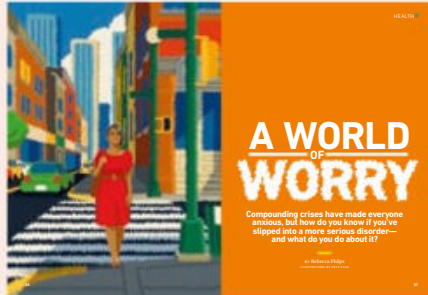
LETTERS ON THE *February* ISSUE

We pay **£50** for Letter of the Month and **£30** for all others

LETTER OF THE MONTH

What a relief it was to read “A World Of Worry”. Recent events have been incredibly challenging for everyone and I have noticed the impact on my own mental wellbeing.

Like Meredith Arthur, I too have never considered myself a worrier. But several of the tell-tale signs mentioned now sound familiar to me—feelings of uncertainty and fear, over thinking and an inability to relax have all recently manifested in my life. Immediately after my first COVID vaccination, while waiting for the obligatory ten minutes, I found



my hands shaking uncontrollably as I convinced myself I was likely to have a massive allergic reaction to the dose.

Lifestyle adjustments like exercise are a

great help, and I'll certainly take Dr Minden's advice to accept my anxieties. Perhaps the most reassuring point I'll remember is that I'm not alone, and many people encounter anxiety in some form or another. It may be ironic, but reading about how excessive worrying can cause debilitating effects has actually made me feel a lot less worried!

— RHIANNON LEWIS, *Abergavenny*

FOUNDING FATHER

What an interesting feature “Unforgettable DeWitt Wallace” was. I thoroughly enjoyed learning more about your magazine's creator. DeWitt Wallace's love of taking notes, absorbing

information from anything he found interesting in magazines, hinted at the revolution he would lead in journalism, aggregating articles to save readers time. *Reader's Digest*, back then, must have been way ahead of its time. And its

wide audience proved how much people took to his way of journalism. I've been an enthusiastic reader for many years and my father before me was too. Keep up the good work, *Reader's Digest*!

— JOSH LLOYD, *Elgin*

HIGH OPINIONS

How wonderfully fresh the opinions from Barbara Dickson's "If I Ruled The World" were. Especially the one about reducing the use of mobile phones in bars and restaurants. Let's get back to normal by actually talking to one another. It's a return of common sense to everyday living, through the reduction of competitive television shows, together with the setting of false horizons for people, rather than allowing people to be themselves, that truly is needed.

—DAVID HARVEY, *Wiltshire*



I agree with Barbara Dickson. I once signed a petition to ban the use of PVC window frames and doors. As well as the fairly well-documented dangers to public and private health involved in the production, use and disposal of PVC products generally, PVC window frames and doors have the added disadvantage of being very ugly, especially the doors. They are a blight on the British landscape. Not forgetting that the world should be cutting down on making anything with plastic.

—PJ MADDOCKS, *via email*



PUPPY LOVE

What a fabulous feature "In Dogs We Trust" was. Dogs really are amazing and can enrich our lives. After all, what does a happy bird look like? A sad lion? You don't know, but dogs talk to you. You know all their emotions and they can teach humans so much.

I've only ever owned one dog. She's ten now and she has taught me so much about life: to live in the moment, run and play daily, love unconditionally, to be loyal, always have time for cuddles, greet everyone with enthusiasm, not to hold grudges and to be myself. I think I became a better person when I got a dog.

Far from me training her, she's always training me.

—DEE COLWORTH, *Somersham*

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Include your full name, address, email and daytime phone number. We may edit letters and use them in all print and electronic media



PARTNERSHIP
PROMOTION

A Community like

mirthy →

This short article is an excerpt from a recent phone call with Dianne. She felt isolated due to the Covid pandemic which impacted her health both physically and mentally. Here, she explains how [Mirthy.co.uk](https://www.mirthy.co.uk) greatly improved her situation after she joined the community, and how she kept active by creating a routine based on which Mirthy events to join each week.

Before COVID I used to go swimming a lot. I'd also do yoga a couple of times a week, which I loved - but due to the situation, everything suddenly stopped. To be honest, I was kind of at a loss of what to do with myself. I did a lot of walking, which was glorious, but then it turned to winter and I had a couple of near misses, a few walking-related injuries.

For two years we've been starved of human contact. Not just meeting with

friends and family but meeting strangers in a shop or in the street and just nodding to them or exchanging words at a supermarket till.

So, I was really feeling fed up - then one day as I was going through Facebook and saw a Mirthy event, it was on the history of nursery rhymes. Being an ex-teacher, this seemed really interesting so I thought I'd give it a go!

I really enjoyed it. It was so professional and well delivered - it was great. After this event I had a bit more of a look around the website and saw they also do yoga classes. Immediately, I felt that the teacher, Elaine, was really sensitive and kind to the audience. It was absolutely perfect and I can't praise it enough. I just felt totally safe in her hands.

After one class I was absolutely hooked. Next was Pilates which was also brilliant. I really can't say enough about these fitness events because they've introduced me to a whole new world.

I've explored Mirthy quite a lot since first joining, I've been doing both the



live exercise classes and the live talks. You really feel like you are joining in with everybody else - the community is so lovely! When the event is just beginning you get people coming on and introducing themselves. They're all saying, 'hello everybody' and it's just a nice feeling to have a coffee and see everyone's faces.

After breaking the ice by discussing what we love about Mirthy, we then go on to talk about other things like whereabouts in the country you're from, asking each other 'what's it like there?', 'what did you do for a living before you retired?', that sort of thing.

We all know that mental stimulation, especially as you get older is key to good health. So, when COVID really took over and we were inside, I became very inactive and didn't care really about anything anymore. I had nothing to look forward to, and now with Mirthy I really do.

I love that Mirthy.co.uk now offers recordings of events too. Sometimes you just want to watch it back at a later date

- plus, some of the talks have so much interesting information that you really want to watch it more than once! Fascinating facts and interesting stuff that you can't sometimes take it all in one go.

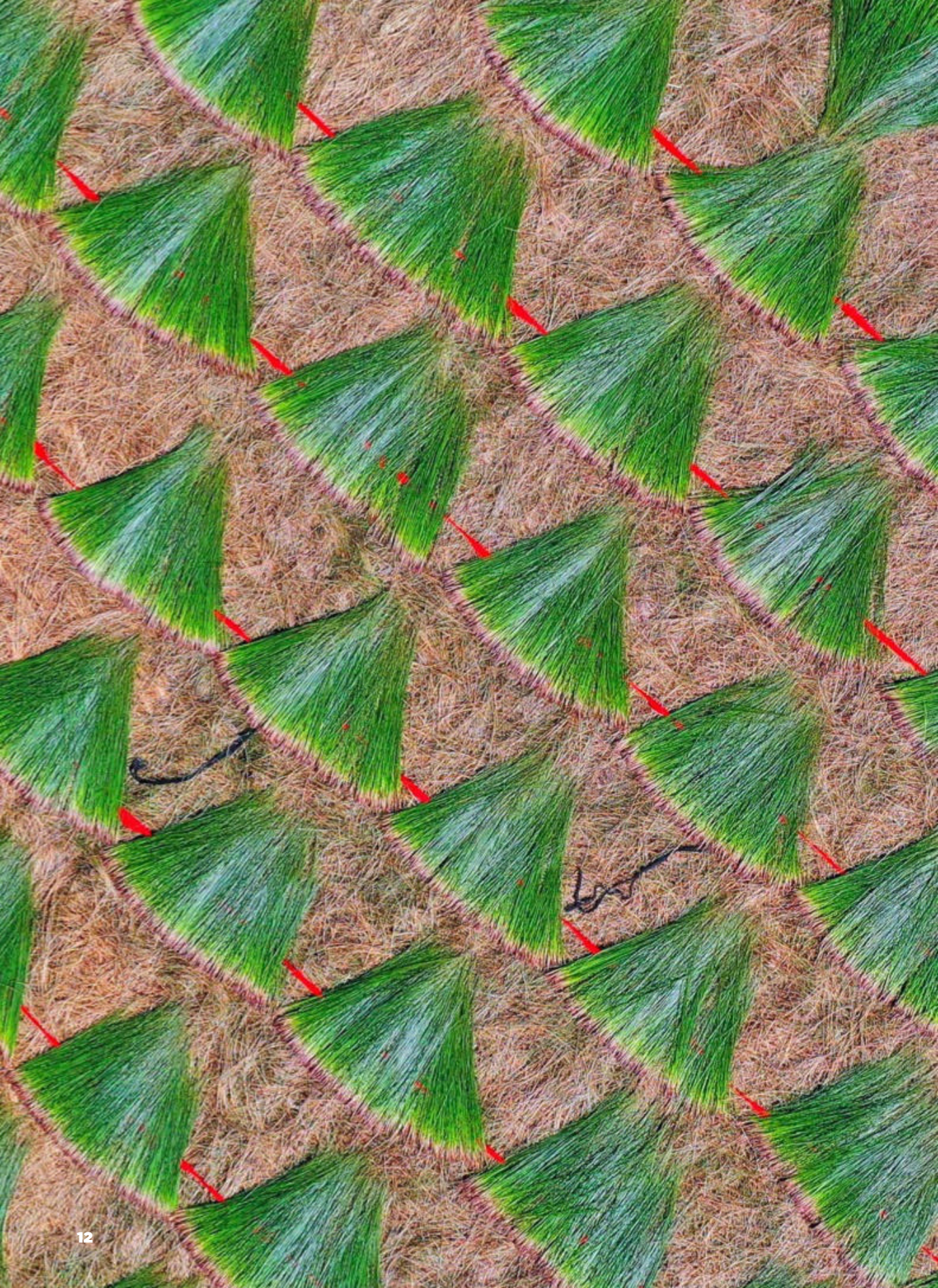
I've taught for 45 years, so I'm a great believer in lifelong learning. Mental stimulation as you get older is so important. Some people just go into retirement and think, 'oh, I can relax now' - but you need more. Something to keep you active and interested in the world.

I have recommended Mirthy to quite a few friends. Initially, they are usually cautious about Zoom and how it all works - I just tell them, 'give it a couple of weeks and just join the occasional event and you will love it'. And guess what? They're all now hooked!

It's a whole new extended family with a community feel to it - which is wonderful.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Join Mirthy's online community and try over 80 classes & events for free. Simply visit www.mirthy.co.uk



An aerial photograph of a field where numerous small, fan-shaped tufts of bright green grass are planted in a regular grid pattern. Each tuft is connected to the ground by a thin red string or marker. The background is a mix of brown and tan dry grass and soil. In the top right corner, there is a white rectangular box containing text.

SEE THE WORLD...
turn the page →

...DIFFERENTLY

Artfully arranged, freshly cut mat grass dries in Shuanggang village in eastern China's Zhejiang province. In July 2021, farmers enjoyed a rich harvest, cultivating about 133 hectares of land with the plants. The grass is dried, then villagers use it to make straw hats, baskets and traditional fans. They supplement their incomes by selling them.

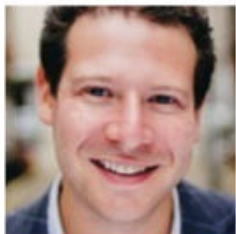




Model Behaviour

This month Olly Mann finds himself taken aback by his sons' niche interest...

ALL THROUGH THE long winter, one date in my diary promised the coming of spring more than any other. No, not March 27—when the clocks go forward. Nor March 20—the dawning of astrological spring. It was, of course, February 12—the annual re-opening of Bekonscot Model Village, Buckinghamshire. Have you never been? I would certainly recommend it; and not just because, as its website explains, it offers the thrill of "England as it used to be" (this promise, I would argue, could be extended to large swathes of Beaconsfield).

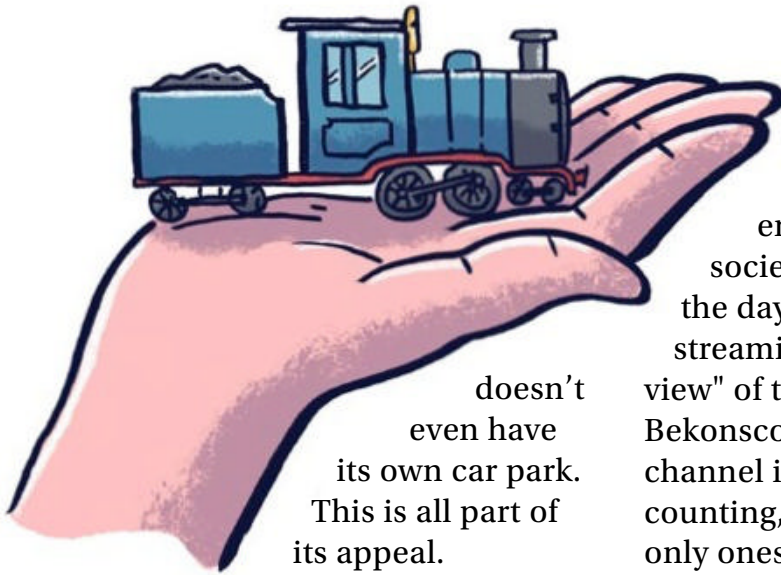


Olly Mann presents *Four Thought* for BBC Radio 4, and the podcasts *The Modern Mann*, *The Week Unwrapped* and *The Retrospectors*

In my view, the world's first model village is more relevant than ever: in our Instagram age, it serves up selfie opportunities by the ton ("Look! I'm as tall as a windmill!"); it's an implicitly socially distant, entirely outdoor experience; and its 1992 decision to model all its scale replica buildings in the style of the 1930s gives it a characteristic architectural charm that seems more relatable than, say, Legoland's impressive but brash plastic recreations of Big Ben and the Sydney Opera House.

It feels like what it is: the garden extension of an eccentric Englishman (Roland Callingham), that somehow became a landmark, frequented by royalty and celebrities, spawning many imitators, without itself having the acreage to expand beyond its original offer. Nestled in a suburban street, you could easily miss it. It





doesn't even have its own car park. This is all part of its appeal.

Oh, and the puns!

The wordplay is the best bit: Sam & Ella's Sweet Shop, Mac & Tosh the tailors, the infant school with its resident caretaker, B. Tidy... it's a linguist's dream day out.

Yet none of this explains why its annual re-opening matters. Left to my own devices, I would, like any sane person, be a "once a decade" visitor to this quirky attraction. The reason it matters is because—alongside the pleasingly recreated churches, fun fairs and cottages that dot Bekonscot's landscape—it has a model railway. An *enormous* model railway: 450 metres of track that criss-cross around you, passing under your feet or over the bridges at eye-level; some passenger, some cargo, all simultaneously darting around and about. And my boys (aged two and six) are obsessed with it.

To hardcore fans, it's known as the Gauge 1 Bekonscot Model Railway—BMR for short. During the 2021 lockdown, the BMR's

re-opening was the nirvana we assured our sons would signify the end of our segregation from society, and they counted down the days accordingly, by endlessly streaming the "driver's eye view" of the train track video that Bekonscot posted to their YouTube channel in 2009 (1.2m views and counting, so they're clearly not the only ones watching).

When actually on-site, our boys occupy *hours* following the passage of individual locomotives around the gardens. It's a slightly stressful experience for me: "You're not supposed to run around!", I keep having to bellow at them—too many elderly visitors, too many delicately-balanced ice cream cones—but it's also delightful to see such simple pleasures bring them such happiness, and on each visit I wonder if they'll be equally as excited the next time, when they're a few months older (they always are).

I've reconciled myself to the fact that we have a pair of Portillo-level train nerds living under our roof. This makes Christmas presents easy. If it ain't by Trackmaster or Brio, it ain't getting opened until Boxing Day, and it makes filling an hour of downtime pretty straightforward too ("Hey kids! Let's go to that park bench and watch the Thameslink!"). But, as they get older, it's putting strain on my brain.

You see, I'm *not* a train enthusiast, not remotely. I mean, I admire the view of Newcastle from the LNER as much as the next man, and occasionally catch myself humming songs from *Starlight Express*. But to keep up with my sons, I've had to swot up. Five years ago, I couldn't have told you whether the Underground was diesel or electric. Now? I could comfortably reel off the differences between a Streetcar and Funicular, give a rudimentary rundown of how a signal-box works, and explain why *The Flying Scotsman* was retired by British Rail. I never thought this would happen to me. I thought the whole point of having children was to indoctrinate them with MY weird interests: country music, theme parks, chopped salad. I didn't realise their inclinations would

be so strong, so dominant, that both sides of the parent-child nexus would require educating.

Admittedly, I struggle to suppress my instinct to rush to the gift shop when visiting a railway museum, and I always speed-read my way through the mechanical details of engines because the technical terms hurt my head... but still, I'm slowly matching my sons' awareness of pistons, pumps and plungers. The problem is, they keep learning more, too—which means I'm forever playing catch-up, and as I've already reached the peak of my curiosity... they will soon surpass my knowledge, forever.

It's a humbling thought, and one that (who knew?) is best dealt with by strolling around a bucolic model village. To Bekonscot! ■

Loopey For Looney Tunes

Bugs Bunny got his name by accident in 1940 when a model sheet was hand-labelled "Bugs' Bunny" to indicate it was for animator Ben "Bugsy" Hardaway to work on. The possessive apostrophe was dropped when staff thought that was the rabbit's actual name, and it stuck.

The cartoon character Taz the Tasmanian Devil was only in five original Looney Tunes shorts before unexpectedly gaining popularity in the 90s.

Actors Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee frequently went to cinemas to watch Looney Tunes cartoons together and were once kicked out for laughing too hard.

Mel Blanc (voice actor for Bugs Bunny, Tweety, Daffy Duck, Wile E Coyote and more) has "That's all folks" written on his tomb stone.

Denzel Washington

“I’ve Only Got So Much Time Left”

By Jonathan Dean

He’s the best actor of his generation and starring in *Macbeth*—so why is he calling up directors and asking for work?

“**N**OW, DON’T GET me excited here!’ Denzel Washington says with a laugh, as our conversation veers onto God and *Macbeth*. He’s a big fan of both. “So, I don’t know if *Macbeth* followed God at the start..” He pauses. “Shoot. Hang on.” He disappears to root around his home. “You’ve got me breaking out my script!” he says, beaming. “I don’t think I’ve ever done this before.”

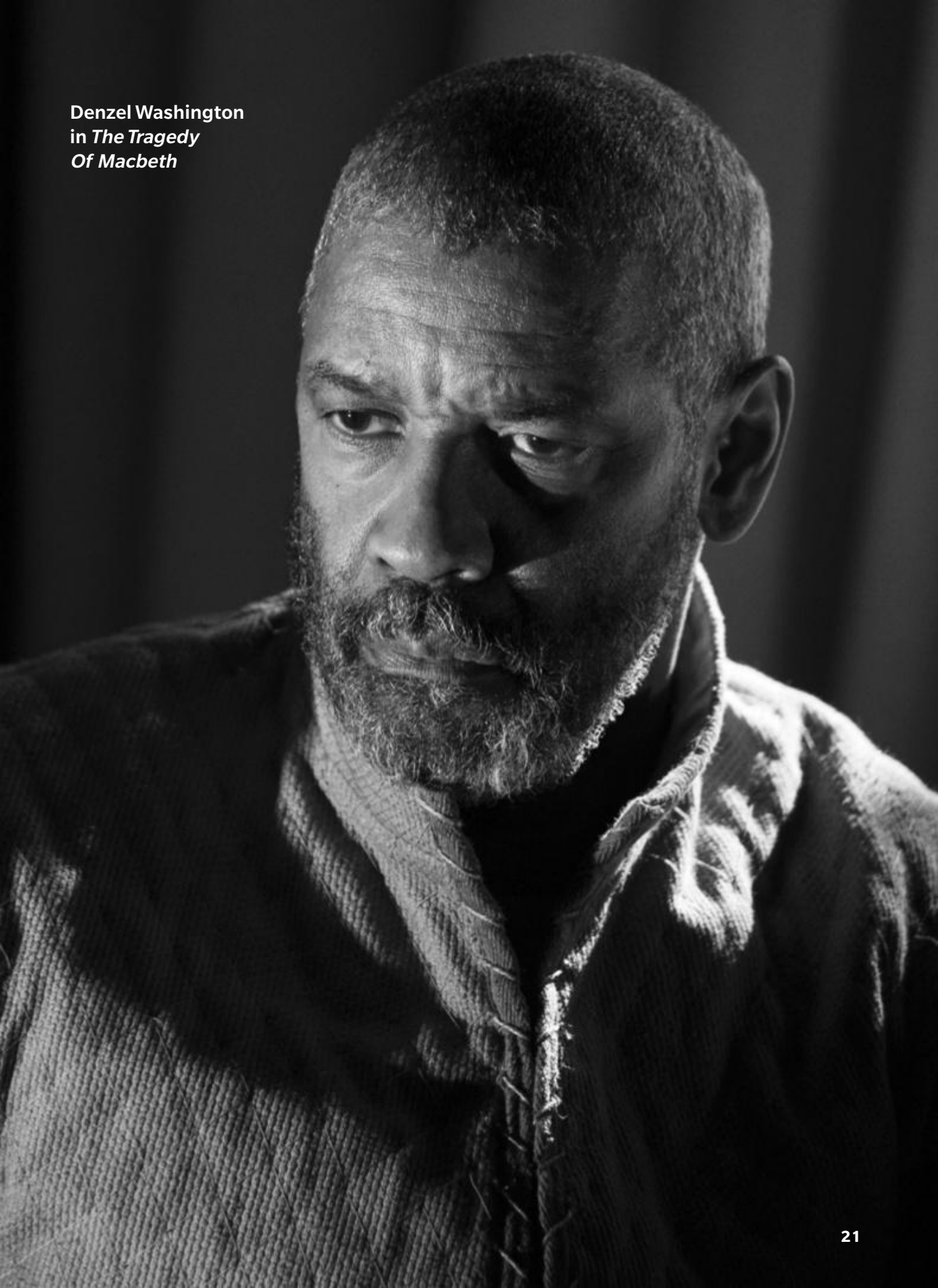
What follows is remarkable—and something I’ve not experienced in almost two decades of interviewing. For nearly ten minutes I’m treated to a personal performance from a man acclaimed as the greatest actor of his generation, and a master class in

how he played one of Shakespeare’s greatest roles.

Washington leafs through his script, muttering lines. “Weird sisters... Where was it? Scorched earth... ‘Oh full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!’” More leafing. It feels as though I’m taking part in an immersive theatre show. “Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown...” He reads out all that bit (he really is very good at acting). “And then *Macbeth* says, ‘Mine eternal jewel’—which is his soul.” Off he goes again.

“Anyway,” he says finally, “I found something in that line. He was willing to give his soul to the Devil. The Devil fooled him. The witches got him.” Suddenly it feels rather intense. “When the dark side came

Denzel Washington
in *The Tragedy
Of Macbeth*





into his life, they knew he was ready. That they could get him. Turn him. He was vulnerable.”

WASHINGTON IS A BLAST, filling the miles between us—he is in Los Angeles—with his deep, booming voice, like soft thunder, for Act I of our interview, the performance. For Act II he is solemn and philosophical, talking about God, family, time. His mother died last year and it changed him. It made him want to be even better.

Yet two years ago *The New York Times* called him the greatest actor of the 21st century. He lorded over Daniel Day-Lewis, with Tom Hanks gushing: “He is our Brando. Nicholson. Olivier!” He has a point.

From the brawny action films made with Tony Scott to the cerebral fare *Malcolm X* and the race drama *Fences*, Washington makes acting look easy.

Now for a challenging part—the lead in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. It’s directed by Joel Coen, with Coen’s wife, Frances McDormand, as Lady Macbeth, and was shot on a soundstage in Burbank, California. It is heavyweight Shakespeare, counting nine Oscars between director and stars. Washington plays Macbeth as tired and, with text stripped back, it is him and his lady in a great wild monochrome wrangling of the soul.

“It’s the stuff of movies,” Washington says, grinning. He would get to the set at 5am to run lines.



Denzel Washington,
Frances McDormand
and Joel Coen

“MACBETH AIN’T ADMITTING TO NOTHING. THE SOLUTION FOR HIM IS TO KILL THE NEXT GUY. KILL THEIR BABIES”

Then he would work with the troupe and panic: “Oh, he’s good—I’ve got to catch up!” His insecurity came from theatre, when he would do speeches thousands of times. No such luxury here, but Washington has previous experience with Shakespeare: *Othello*, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Coriolanus*.

“Well, in *Coriolanus* I did eight lines.” He recites them, of course. “Whatever they were.” It was in 1979. “Shakespeare’s how I cut my teeth.

My second play in college was *Othello* and I’m coming into the years where *King Lear* is on the horizon. I’d love a crack at that. Shakespeare lets you into so many places, man. I heard some people talk about our *Macbeth* in regards to our last president and I thought, *OK, if that’s what you think!*”

I phone Coen. What freshness can he bring to this much-trodden turf? “Age,” he says. Washington is 67, McDormand 64. Lady Macbeth’s fertility is no longer a concern, rather



*The Tragedy
Of Macbeth*

a historical issue. “Fran brought this to me and we are of a certain age, so it had to be about that,” he says. “And that brought interesting ways of looking at it. Most notably this idea it’s a couple plotting a murder and, in my opinion, they have a good marriage—built on time. Old ages cast new light on that.”

And how important is the casting of a Black man as Macbeth? “Not important.” Which suits Washington, a Black actor who, with a few obvious exceptions in his career, has lived by his old quote: “I’m very proud to be Black, but Black is not all I am.”

He was born in New York in 1954, middle child to an ordained minister

father, also Denzel, and a beauty parlour-owning mother called Lennis. They split when he was 14, but his own marriage has been long. He wed Pauletta in 1983. They have four children, including John David Washington, the actor who took the lead in Christopher Nolan’s *Tenet*. In 1995 the couple renewed their vows in South Africa—the late Desmond Tutu presided.

THE OLDER HE GETS, THE MORE RELIGIOUS WASHINGTON BECOMES.

“Don’t play with God,” the actor said recently, and all this faith chat led to that exhilarating moment when he went to get his script to find the



part where Macbeth gives up on his soul. Heaven, Hell and spiritual reckonings swirl in the play and, in life, the actor is concerned about a world full of temptations that lead people down a bad path. It is a fear that informs his roles.

“I heard a saying,” he states soberly. “The ‘enemy’ is the ‘inner me.’” That works for *Macbeth*. And for his alcoholic pilot Whip in the underrated *Flight*. Not to mention his corrupt cop in *Training Day*, a man so far gone that Washington plays him like a walking scream.

Still, even when he plays rotten apples, he needs to understand them. “I’ve got to,” he says. “Why

did he do this? What did he think he deserved? How far is he willing to go?”

Is this salvation? The idea anybody can be saved if you find out where they went wrong? “Well, I like to shine a light on things, yes. With *Flight* it was alcoholism. With *Roman J Israel*, idealism. But I’m not looking to lead the people with every role. There wasn’t much to lift up anybody in *Training Day*. I wrote on my script, ‘The wages of sin is death.’” (Romans 6:23) “The only way I could justify him living in the worst way was him dying in the worst way.”

He delivers every spoken line like the end of a soliloquy. Comparing *Flight* and *Macbeth*, he rolls out:



Flight

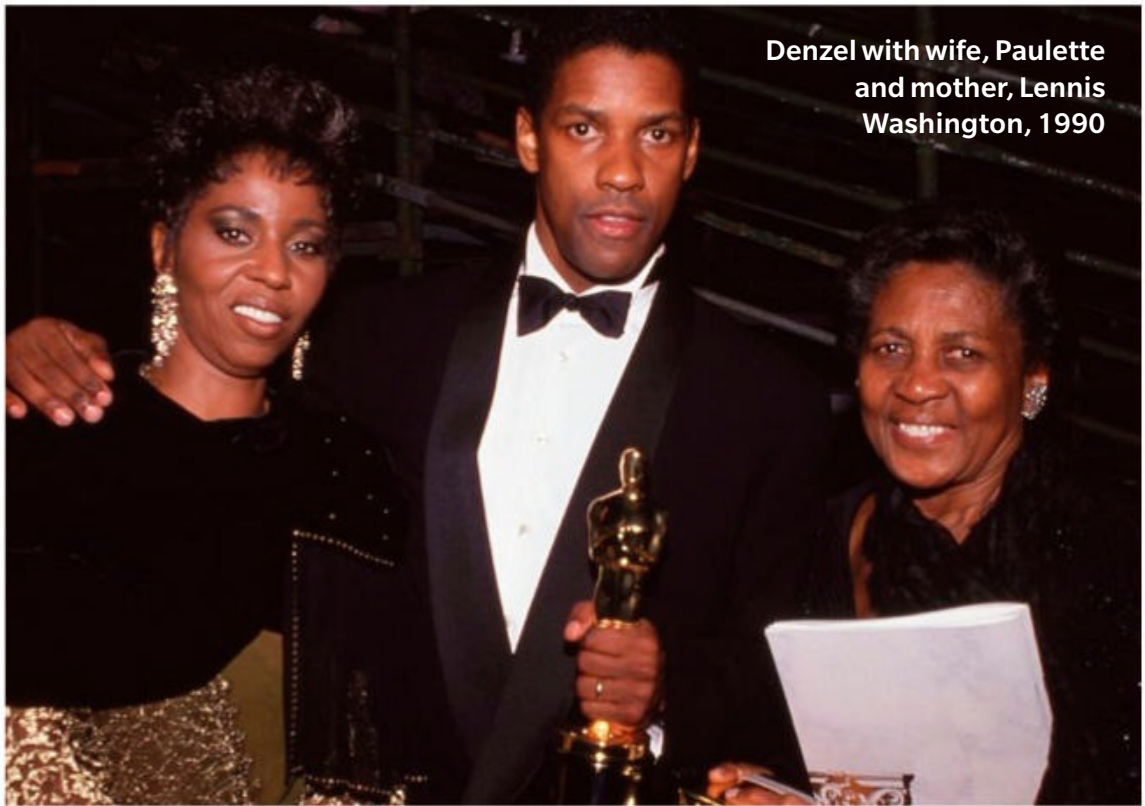
“Whip was just a drunk flying planes. Who had to admit to his issue. But *Macbeth* ain’t admitting to nothing. The solution for him is to kill the next guy. Kill their babies. In *Flight* it was spirits. In *Macbeth* it’s blood. His drink is blood.” He gets the script. “I mean, he’s all in!”

WHAT A WILD HOUR THIS WAS. It all means so much to him. Every role, he says, needs a purpose, and he admits that it is an overused word, but it suits him—he wants to know what his purpose is as a human being.

“And that’s become clearer for me recently,” he says. “It came to a head this year.” He pauses. “I buried

my mother,” he says, as quiet as he gets. Lennis died in June. “And then I started to understand that you’re only here for a time and then you’re out. I’ve only got so much time left.” His voice rises, back to his boom. “But I’m excited about the future and want to contribute. Not about lifting people up—I’m not heading down that road. I’m just an actor. I’m an ordinary guy, with an extraordinary job. But I like my job.”

And he wants to get better at it. Even better. Paul Thomas Anderson said last year that Washington was the actor he most wanted to work with. “Tell him to call me!” Washington bellows. He takes a beat. “Actually, I spent the day with Paul,”



Denzel with wife, Paulette
and mother, Lennis
Washington, 1990

“I BURIED MY MOTHER. AND THEN I STARTED TO UNDERSTAND THAT YOU’RE ONLY HERE FOR A TIME AND THEN YOU’RE OUT”

he admits. “I went to his house. You know, I thought about the top filmmakers, because I’m not going to do many more films. I know that. So I want to work with the best.”

First there was Coen, with McDormand, best actress at last year’s Oscars. He has also called Alfonso Cuarón and Steve McQueen. “I called Steve! I need them to push me. Steve seems lovely. We kicked around ideas. I want to work with the greats. I need that.”

So this new appreciation of the shortness of life has led to him calling up the best in town and offering his services? “Yes. It’s like Macbeth, man. I’m at that yellow-leaf stage.” He laughs. “He’s in the autumn of life and that’s where I’m at. If I’m lucky, that’s where I’m at. So I’ve got to get on with it.” ■

The Tragedy of Macbeth is available to stream via Apple TV+



I REMEMBER...

Barry Humphries

Creator of housewife megastar, Dame Edna Everage, and cultural attaché, Sir Les Patterson, Barry Humphries, 88, will soon embark on a nationwide one-man tour... as himself.

Here, he recalls a life crowded with a succession of eye-popping episodes



FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I'VE LOVED DRESSING UP... This is me in a sailor hat (above), aged five, in the garden of our home in Melbourne. I was a very happy small child, the eldest of four—I have a younger sister and two brothers—content to play on my own. My parents often referred to me as “Sunny Sam”. I was always cheerful and always indulged by a large number of aunties.

On Sunday afternoons, I had to perform a little cabaret. There was a camphor box—I still have it—in which I kept a diverse range of costumes. I'd appear and they'd all laugh and clap and then my mother would urge me to sing “Nymphs and Shepherds”. But I was too shy and had to go behind

the curtain. Then she would say, “Pretend to be the wireless.”

EDNA WAS NAMED AFTER A CHILDHOOD NANNY I ADORED.

But Mrs Everage's personality was more like my mother's and her friends'—intensely house-proud suburban wives. By 1958, when this photo (above) was taken, I'd begun to appear on Australian television.

Edna was very rudimentary in those days, dressed in a stretched twinset of my mother's, a discarded skirt and a conical hat she bought to go to the races but never wore. The hair, though, is my own! Gathered around this early evocation of Edna is the cast of the *TV Review*, broadcast live all over Australia.



THIS PHOTOGRAPH OF ME PAINTING ON AN AUSTRALIAN BEACH IS RATHER NAUGHTY. The elastic had gone in my swimming trunks, something captured by a wicked friend of mine. I've been a lifelong enthusiast and I like to paint in oils. I also draw in pen and ink in restaurants. I'm having an exhibition in London later this year of those drawings. I'm rather a good caricaturist but then I suppose the characters I create on stage also fall into that category.

IN 1959, I MADE MY FIRST JOURNEY TO THE UK. I sailed on an Italian boat from Melbourne to Venice from where I was meant to catch a train to England. But I stayed in Italy and

spent all the money I'd saved up so, by the time I finally reached London, I had precisely enough in my pocket to pay for a phone call to my more affluent sister, Barbara, who was living there and who lent me 20 quid. I'd brought Edna's costume with me in case I needed it and dug it out of my suitcase for a shipboard fancy dress competition.

I'D ADMIRERD THE POETRY OF SIR JOHN BETJEMAN (ABOVE) SINCE I WAS A SCHOOLBOY. He wrote about the suburbs very well, a subject that particularly interested me. He'd been to Australia where someone had given him a record of some of my early monologues about which he'd said nice things. So I wrote him a



letter asking if we could meet. He answered very swiftly and enthusiastically, asking me to join him for lunch at his little flat in Cloth Fair by Smithfield Market. When he subsequently said: “Call me John,” I felt I had a new mentor. We became good friends. Even when he was half-paralysed lying in bed in Chelsea towards the end of his life, I would go and read to him. He particularly liked schoolboy stories of derring-do and poetry of all kinds, most particularly those written by poets who had fallen from favour like John Masefield. He also encouraged Harold Wilson’s wife, Mary, to write poetry.

IN 1960, I WAS CAST AS MR SOWERBERRY, THE UNDERTAKER,

IN THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF *OLIVER!* Lionel Bart wrote a not very good song, “That’s Your Funeral,” for me. I was also understudy to Ron Moody as Fagin who was marvellous in the role but never missed a single performance. I finally got to play the part on Broadway in 1962 when an actor called Clive Revill was cast as Fagin because he was off a lot. In a local New York pub, I befriended a man who I only later discovered was the beat writer, Jack Kerouac. Four years later, I was a full-time Fagin in London with Phil Collins playing the Artful Dodger. I also took on the role in Cameron Mackintosh’s 1997 revival.

I’D LONG BEEN A FAN OF SALVADOR DALI (TOP LEFT) WHOM



I ALSO MET IN NEW YORK. I was in a bookshop one day and he came in to sign copies of his autobiography. He and I got talking and we later invented a language together. It was meant to be Australian Aboriginal but in reality it was nonsense which we both spoke fluently. His wife, Gala, was a predatory creature who took a fancy to me. She dragged me back to her hotel where she insisted on cutting my hair which she put in an envelope and gave to me. I still have it somewhere. They invited me to their house in Spain; we had quite a few adventures. Dali always had to be the centre of attention. He didn't have the smallest idea who I was.

I GOT TO KNOW LEO SAYER QUITE WELL IN HIS DAYS OF FAME. And I've recently reconnected with him in

Australia where he lives. He's a lovely fellow. Here we are (above left) being presented to the Queen after a concert at Windsor Castle in 1975. It was the first time I'd met her and I found her very pretty although rather shy. I think she was rather intimidated by this giantess of a woman. I've been presented to her on a number of occasions since and I'm a big fan. She's magnificent. I will hear not one word against her.

AT SOME TIME IN THE MID-SEVENTIES, I DID A DOCUMENTARY FOR THE BBC. This picture (above) was taken for that by a lovely photographer called John Timbers who photographed me a lot in the old days, as did Cecil Beaton. The



documentary featured Dieppe in France and its attraction to artists.

I found an old theatre there which was no longer used and I was immediately drawn to it. I love old theatres. Well, to tell the truth, I love all theatres: I'd go on any stage, if you asked me. This particular one had been a beautiful, now decayed, opera house, just 50 miles from England.

MY SILENT BRIDESMAID, MADGE ALLSOP (ABOVE), WAS PLAYED BY A COUPLE OF ACTRESSES. Then, in 1987, I found Emily Perry who became the definitive Madge in my TV series, *The Dame Edna Experience*. I'd auditioned a number of elderly actresses for what would be a recurring role. All of them tried too hard. Some were whimsical, some camp, but most were far too over-the-top to resemble an oppressed,

inarticulate Kiwi spinster whom life had passed by. I used to visit Emily at the end of her life in Brinsworth House, a retirement home in southwest London for entertainment professionals. She'd say to me: "Oh Barry, we had such wonderful times, didn't we? If only I could remember them." She died aged 100 in 2008, an example to us all.

FLATTERINGLY, A NUMBER OF HIGH-PROFILE PERFORMERS WERE KEEN TO BE ON MY TV SHOW.

Lauren Bacall, who became a good friend of mine, was one of them as was Tom Jones, a very popular guest.

It took some courage for those guests to appear alongside Edna who, by this stage, had lost all her inhibitions and was inclined to say exactly what was on her mind. She had a hot seat and, if she took



against someone, she'd press a button and they'd be tipped backwards, a device that has since been stolen by Graham Norton with no hint of an apology, still less a royalty.

LIZZIE SPENDER, DAUGHTER OF THE LATE POET, STEPHEN SPENDER, IS MY FOURTH WIFE.

We've been married for over 30 years now. I have to thank Wife No. Two for two daughters and Wife No. Three for two sons. Between them, they've produced ten grandchildren on whom I dote. But then I've become a lot smarter which is why this marriage has endured. For over ten years of my life, I had a serious alcoholic illness. I finally put the cork back in the bottle in my late thirties and haven't touched a drop from that day to this.

I TURNED 50 IN 1984 AND I SIMPLY COULD NOT ACCEPT THAT I HAD GROWN SO OLD.

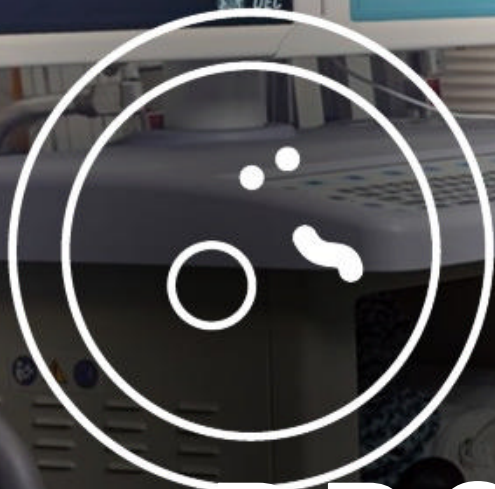
Everyone seemed so young in those days and I can't believe I'm still at it. I mean, who would tour the UK in their late 80s in a one-man show? But I like to think I have a young spirit, something I'm pleased not to have to draw people's attention to.

A lot of things give me a lot of pleasure which is why I intend to live forever. ■



As told to Richard Barber

For details of Barry Humphries' upcoming tour, visit manbehindtheface.co.uk

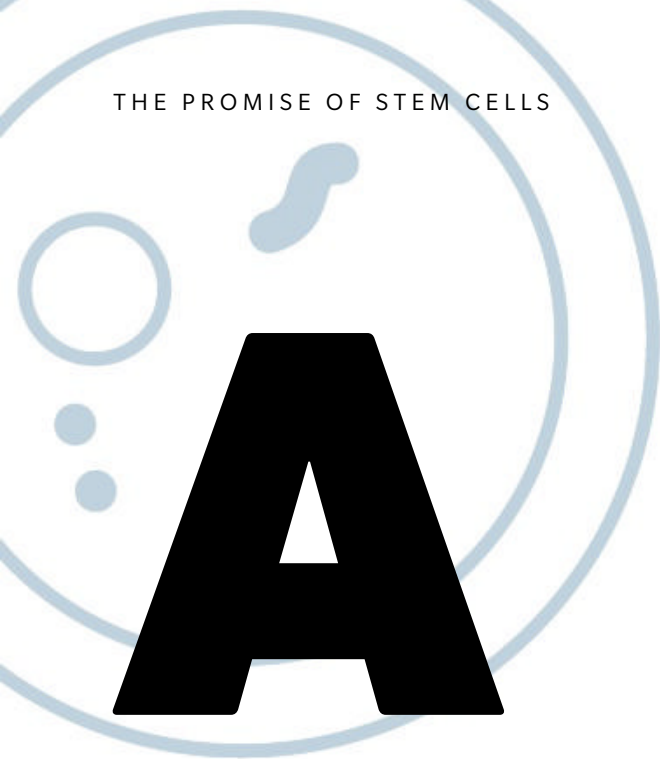


THE PROMISE OF STEM CELLS

BREAKTHROUGHS ARE POINTING TO
A REVOLUTION IN HEALTHCARE

BY *Patricia Pearson*



**A**

ANNISSA JOBB FIRST limped into the office of Dr Riam Shammaa, a sports medicine and pain specialist in Toronto, Canada, in 2017. The personal support worker in long-term care homes was desperate for help after a decade of back pain due to an undiagnosed herniated disc.

“It’s my CALLING in life, taking care of people,” says Jobb, now 54. But working with frail seniors involves a lot of lifting, bending, and pulling. It wasn’t an option to rest. So she gritted her teeth through the pain. “I had a drawer full of pain medication. None of it was working. I’d snap. My husband and I came close to getting divorced.” By November 2016, Jobb could scarcely walk 200 metres. “My family doctor finally said, ‘You will end up in a wheelchair if you don’t stop working there.’”

Jobb was referred to Dr Shammaa, who began by administering

nerve-block injections, similar to an epidural, every few weeks. They held the pain at bay for anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, but then it always returned.

Historically, the treatment of complex, chronic back pain has been less than ideal, sometimes resulting in patients becoming addicted to opioids, or involving major—often unsuccessful—spinal-fusion surgery, which is suitable for only about one in 20 patients. Aware of these limited options, Dr Shammaa had been reading about groundbreaking stem-cell therapy research in Europe, and began a study with 23 of his patients. Since Jobb fit his inclusion criteria, he asked if she wanted to participate, cautioning that there were no guarantees. The procedure would involve using her own bone-marrow cells, and had been proven safe. She agreed to try it.

The procedure, also being investigated at the University of Montpellier in France and the Mayo Clinic in the United States, involves extracting bone-marrow tissue from a patient and concentrating the marrow’s stem cells, known as mesenchymal stem cells, or MSCs. This concentrate (called bone marrow aspirate concentrate, or BMAC) is then injected into the patient’s herniated disc in the hopes that it will regenerate and heal damaged tissue.

An MRI showed two discs were causing Jobb’s problem. “Out of

five levels on the lumbar spine, one or two showing damage tells you that the spine hasn't deteriorated everywhere," says Dr Shammaa. "By contrast, when you have five levels of severe disc disease—in other words, if the spine is really messed up—there is not a lot you can do."

The procedure took three-and-a-half hours, beginning with an extraction of Jobb's bone marrow—the most painful step—which was immediately distilled and concentrated. Then, guided by a type of X-ray called fluoroscopy, Dr Shammaa inserted a needle through Jobb's spine to place the BMAC in the discs. Jobb was awake for the entire procedure to alert Dr Shammaa if he touched a nerve.

She recovered in bed for two weeks, then, slowly, began to walk. A month later she strode into the clinic, a moment Dr Shammaa recalls with delight. "She was in disbelief," he says. Whereas Jobb had previously described her pain as "beyond ten," she says that it's now a two.

When Dr Shammaa published his findings in the April 2021 issue of *Frontiers in Medicine*, he reported that 90 per cent of his patients gained two to three millimetres of height that had been lost due to disc

compression. Furthermore, 80 per cent of them stopped using opioids.

THE USE OF stem cells is part of a field called regenerative medicine that began emerging two decades ago. In regenerative medicine, a body's own cells and growth factors are deployed to repair tissues by restoring their lost function. Several cellular therapies and products have already been approved by regulators and are in use, including skin substitutes for treating burns, "scaffold" products for healing surgical incisions, and products derived from umbilical-cord blood for treating certain blood diseases and disorders.

The use of stem cells in regenerative medicine has the potential to revolutionise the treatment of many conditions over

A regenerative medicine scientist examines a stem-cell culture



the next decade (stem cells are the building-block cells found in embryos and in tissues in the adult body; they are self-renewing and can, uniquely, generate a new type of cell). As researchers report from stem-cell clinical trials being conducted all over the world, the hope that these cells can repair damaged bodies, long discussed and debated in scientific circles, appears to be well-founded.

“We’re looking at regenerative medicine as something that will one day be a medical specialty of its own,” says Dr Shane Shapiro, assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, “much like cardiology or neurology.”

Success stories abound. For instance, in a study treating congenital vision loss with retinal stem cells at the University of California, Irvine, one woman was able to see her family for the first time in years. A German child suffering from a sometimes-fatal skin disease called epidermolysis-bullosa recovered after receiving a transplant of genetically modified skin cells at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia in Italy. The American actor Selma Blair reported last August that she was in remission after participating in a stem-cell transplant trial for multiple sclerosis. And a study on treating



osteoarthritis underway in Ireland, France, and the Netherlands shows promising initial results from 18 patients.

Despite these early successes, Dr Shammaa cautions that the science is so new that it is easily misunderstood and misapplied. “There are a lot of snake-oil salesmen out there,” he says, pointing to private stem-cell clinics that claim to cure such things as erectile dysfunction or dementia, without evidence and in defiance of regulatory bodies. “It’s important for patients to learn what is possible right now and what is still down the road.”

He adds, “Some patients are good candidates for simple procedures like a bone-marrow concentrate injection, but others have illness or injury that is too advanced or too complicated. We cannot give them false hope.”

So, what is the state of the art in this exciting new field?

A N EARLY BREAKTHROUGH occurred in 2006, when Shinya Yamanaka, a molecular biologist at Kyoto University in Japan, showed that stem-cell therapy could avoid the morally divisive use of embryonic stem cells. Instead, he discovered adult skin cells could be induced to develop into blood, bone, or liver cells, just as the stem cells of a human embryo evolve into the various parts of the body. Yamanaka, who went on to win the Nobel Prize

in 2012 for this work, called these “induced pluripotent stem cells,” or iPSCs. This discovery moved the stem-cell conversation past the sensitive subject of using fetal tissue for medical purposes, which is illegal in some countries.

Tokyo's Riken research institute performed the first-ever successful iPSC transplant in 2014, creating retinal cells generated from skin cells of a patient with age-related macular degeneration, a serious eye condition. Shortly afterwards, Dr Henry Klassen at the University of California, Irvine, oversaw a trial for treating retinitis pigmentosa, a group of rare genetic disorders causing gradual blindness, in which a donor's retinal progenitor cells were transplanted into the eyes of 28 study participants. One of them, 64-year-old Kristin Macdonald of Los Angeles, who had gone blind, regained what she describes as a burst of light. “I can navigate by light now, and see more contrasts and shapes,” she says. Macdonald has since become an outspoken patient advocate for stem cell trials.

Then, in 2018, neurosurgeon Richard Fessler of Rush University Medical Centre in Chicago oversaw a year-long trial with iPSC-derived motor neurons transplanted into six patients paralysed by spinal cord injuries. Fessler reported that all regained some upper-body movement and that a patient who was only able to shrug his shoulders

could now use his hands to eat, write, and do other tasks. This is the kind of breakthrough that the late actor Christopher Reeve, best known for playing Superman, was advocating for after suffering neck-down paralysis following a horseback-riding accident. At that time, governments around the world were making moves to restrict embryonic stem-cell research (in certain cases, embryonic stem cells are in medical use today; they're

THE KNEE INJECTION HELPED CORSINI. “I CAN DO ALMOST EVERYTHING I DID BEFORE”

derived from leftover blastocysts—the clustering of cells in a fertilised egg—that didn't implant during IVF treatment).

These are still early days, with much to investigate in terms of safety, dosing, and how to manufacture iPSCs for different conditions in a standardised and cost-effective way. But Yamanaka predicted in 2018 that several treatments using regenerative medicine and new drugs will be developed and authorised by 2030.

In the meantime, the first generation of stem-cell treatments that have regulatory approval in Europe, Canada, and the United



A doctor doing stem cell therapy on a patient's knee

States largely involve simple cell transplants—ones that move the patient's own cells from one part of their body to another, such as the procedure Dr Shammaa performed on Jobb. That said, stem-cell transplants for blood diseases like leukemia, which have been carried out for several years, are the

THE TREATMENTS CAN HELP TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE, BUT ARE NOT A CURE

one exception where cells from a matching donor are also allowed.

The most common procedure that has been used in clinical trials in

Europe, Canada, and the United States is the transfer of BMAC to the spine or the knee. While Jobb sought treatment for her back pain, 58-year-old Rodolfo Corsini was looking for relief for job-related knee pain when he visited the Hamanitis research hospital

in Milan, Italy, in 2020. The telecommunications technician had never heard of BMAC until it was suggested to him by a surgeon, Dr Elizaveta Kon, who didn't see enough damage to merit knee-replacement surgery. He agreed to the injection, and it was a success. "I can do almost everything that I did before," says Corsini. Dr Kon, along with some European colleagues, is now involved in a number of exploratory studies, including a comparison of treating patients with BMAC and another type of adult stem cell—called stromal vascular fraction (SVF)—which is extracted from a person's fat tissue.

Certainly the early research on BMAC provides hope, although with limitations. "We couch these treatments as something to help with a chronic, degenerative condition, something that in many cases can be

successful in managing the symptoms and improving quality of life, but in most cases aren't a cure," Dr Shapiro says. "The analogy should be diabetes or high cholesterol. We don't cure those things; we treat them. What we would like to see in future is a way to treat arthritis without metal and plastic, or to treat degenerative disc disease without a spinal fusion."

A consortium of ten European institutions is working toward that goal. Researchers are even working on a way to skip the painful bone marrow extraction that Annissa Jobb underwent. Instead, says research scientist Mary Murphy at the National University of Ireland, Galway, they hope to be able to create MSC cells in the laboratory in a standardised and high-volume way. Some members of the EU-funded group are focusing on how to generate that sustainable supply, while others are busy testing new therapies.

BECAUSE REGENERATIVE MEDICINE is still young, patients should be wary of fraudulent stem-cell products being sold by unscrupulous companies. They advertise cures for everything from hair loss to Lyme disease, sometimes offering stem cells in vials, as if they were magic potions. There is reckless administration of unapproved products by non-specialists in



disease, which has led to lawsuits and regulatory crackdowns.

In the US, for instance, federal regulators forced a California company to halt sales of its stem-cell products derived from umbilical-cord blood in 2019. Not only is there no approval for selling donated cord blood, this company—which marketed its product mainly as treatments for back, knee, and other joint problems—failed to screen donors adequately for communicable diseases and didn't follow correct cleaning and disinfecting procedures. There are many examples that have given the field of regenerative medicine a reputation for quackery.

To learn about your options, consult with a medical expert on your specific condition. "If it's knee arthritis, start with a specialist in orthopedic surgery or sports medicine," advises Dr Shapiro. "If it's degenerative disc disease of the lumbar spine, start with a spine specialist." Then, seek a referral to someone in that field who has expertise in regenerative medicine.

For many patients, stem-cell treatments are already making a lasting difference to their quality of life. "My husband and I went hiking last summer," Jobb says. "I was so excited. I thought, *Maybe I could start cross-country skiing! Why not?*" For some who endure chronic pain, that's liberating indeed. ■



Celebrate Your Siblings

What's the betting you fought like cat and dog when you were younger? But brothers and sisters can actually boost your physical and mental health. Here's how



Susannah Hickling is twice winner of the Guild of Health Writers Best Consumer Magazine Health Feature

Having a younger sibling might make you slimmer. A University of Michigan study found that children who were six or under when a new brother or sister arrived had a healthier BMI. Given that childhood weight issues can turn into adult weight problems, having a younger bro or sis might well be worth the aggro.

Sisters can protect you from depression. Sisters, whether younger or older, help prevent their adolescent siblings from feeling guilty, unloved, lonely, self-conscious and fearful, according to a study from Brigham Young University in the US. That can only be a bonus when you reach adulthood.

Having brothers and sisters makes you more charitable. The same

research, which looked at 395 families, found that having siblings made you twice as likely to do good deeds. Could it be that having a same-generation relative looking out for you prompts you to think about others?

...and more empathic. A study of more than 450 Canadian families found that if a sibling was warm and kind, the other sibling was likely to display the same qualities.

Brothers and sisters improve your chances of a happy marriage.

Research from Ohio State University found that the more siblings you had, the lower your chance of getting divorced. In fact, for each additional one, your risk of marital breakdown was three per cent less. Researchers speculated that having other kids in your family made you better at negotiating the tricky situations that occur in close relationships.

They're a morale booster in later life. Research has found that having a meaningful relationship with brothers and sisters when you're older can lead to greater life satisfaction, greater psychological wellbeing, higher morale and fewer depressive symptoms. That bond is vital as you enter old age.

Siblings can help you have a healthier lifestyle. A multinational survey of more than 15,000 people found that 43 per cent of people credited their family and friends for having the biggest impact on their health. Brothers and sisters are readily available fitness and healthy-eating buddies.

They help you live longer. In a study from the American Sociological Association, older adults who

described themselves as being "extremely close" to the family members they listed as their closest confidants had a six per cent chance of dying over the next five years, compared to a 14 per cent risk for the

people who reported not being very close to the family members listed.

Having good friends can bring many of the same benefits. We don't all have brothers and sisters, or you might be estranged from yours. Don't panic; research also shows that having close friends can boost your health, wellbeing and longevity. Make friends by signing up to groups or classes and finding people who enjoy the same things as you. ■

FAMILY BONDS ARE VITAL AS YOU ENTER OLD AGE

For more weekly health tips and stories, sign up to our newsletter at readersdigest.co.uk

5 Facts About Parkinson's



Fact 1: Parkinson's isn't just for the oldies. About 145,000 people in the UK live with Parkinson's and it's the fastest growing neurological disease in the world. While most people start to develop symptoms when they're over 50—Jeremy Paxman, 71, was recently diagnosed with the condition—about one in 20 people start showing symptoms when they're under 40. Actor Michael J Fox was 30 when he was diagnosed.

Fact 2: Smaller handwriting might be a symptom. The usual first clue that you might have this progressive disease, which causes problems in the brain when certain nerve cells die, is a tremor. This may affect your chin, lips, hand or even just your little finger, usually when you're relaxed. Slow movement and stiffness are other symptoms, but, surprisingly, having large handwriting that suddenly goes little and having trouble smelling can also point to Parkinson's.

Fact 3: Exercise can be as important as medication. It might seem hard to do anything physical when you feel you can barely move. But American research found that people with

Parkinson's who did 2.5 hours' exercise a week experienced a slower decline in quality of life related to their health.

Exercise can also help protect against falls and improve insomnia and constipation, which are sometimes a problem for people with the condition. A high-fibre diet and fewer processed foods also helps with constipation.

Fact 4: Treatments include physio and even surgery. There are a lot of different drug treatments which help with symptoms. Physiotherapy to improve movement and speech and language therapy if you have problems speaking out can be helpful. Deep brain stimulation allows some people to move better and control involuntary movement. A device like a heart pacemaker on your chest or stomach area generates a tiny electric pulse to your brain via wires inserted under the skin.

Fact 5: It could be worth joining a clinical trial. The goal is to find a cure. Areas of research include transplanting stem cells and giving a protein known as GDNF to restore damaged brain cells. Clinical trials are also looking at more effective treatments and people who take part sometimes do better than people on existing therapies. ■

Ask The Expert:

Dancing

Dr Deborah Lee is a qualified GP, medical writer and passionate ballroom and Latin dancer

How did you come to have a special interest in dance?

I was a GP for eight years and then went into sexual health. I started dancing regularly when I met my husband. It's nice because it's a shared interest and we've met new friends. I've also realised what a good form of exercise it is.

Why is dancing so good for you?

You exercise your cardiovascular system, your heart, lungs, muscles, joints, ligaments, and at the same time you're testing your balance, strength, coordination. You need to be able to remember your steps, so it's good for dementia and has been shown to reduce falls in people with Parkinson's. It's sociable and when you dance, there's a release of the happy hormone, serotonin.

What kind of dancing is best?

A big review of studies in 2021 on the health benefits of engaging in

different arts found the biggest improvements were seen with ballroom and social dance, aerobic dance and Zumba. The tango, where you concentrate on walking and changing rhythm, is helpful for older people.

How much dancing do you have to do to reap the benefits?

The recommendation is 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week, which includes dancing. But studies have found that regularly dancing for 30 to 60 minutes a week has health benefits.

You can do it in small chunks, for example, three sessions of ten minutes in the lounge with a Zumba video.

What can people do if their mobility is limited?

Sometimes people think if they have arthritis or obesity or something else that's affecting their joints, dancing will make it worse. That's not true. Dancing is good for circulation, helps reduce swelling and inflammation, and actually reduces pain. Contact the dance class to find the right one for you. Some classes are less energetic than others, for example, a waltz class. ■



Dr Deborah is a writer for Dr Fox Online Pharmacy, drfox.co.uk

Musical Theatre

Dr Max toys with the possibilities presented by a soundtrack to surgery

WHEN I WAS a junior doctor and worked in surgery, the consultant loved to tell us about a group of Swedish researchers who decided to look at variables that might improve outcomes in surgical patients. The story goes that, in true Scandinavian style, they decided to see if operating naked reduced the risk of wound infection. The rationale behind this was that friction from the surgical scrubs caused skin to be constantly shed during the operation and with it, bacteria. At this point the consultant would guffaw and tell us that indeed it had showed that the risk of infection was less in those patients who'd been operated on by naked teams. Thankfully the idea has never caught on, and if you'd seen some of

the surgeons I've worked for you'd understand my relief.

But it's not just what surgeons wear that might have an impact on patient outcomes. Researchers have found that the music that's played in operating theatres isn't just a way for the doctors and nurses to pass the time—it can actually have very positive benefits for the patients too. Apparently there's good evidence for its benefits in patients having surgery under both local and general anaesthetic.

Incredibly, one study has shown that playing certain types of music that had a rhythm that mimicked the heartbeat was as effective as midazolam—a relaxant given to patients undergoing a variety of procedures such as colonoscopy. Studies have also shown that music can help reduce post-operative pain to the extent that patients need less analgesia as well as staff reporting that it helps improving communication and reducing anxiety and increases efficiency among those working.

The operating theatre is a strange



Max is a hospital doctor, author and columnist. He currently works full time in mental health for the NHS. His new book, *The Marvellous Adventure of Being Human*, is out now



place, tightly governed by procedures, protocol and of course the rigid hierarchy that ensures that operations run smoothly. Amid all the rules and regulations though, I suppose the one thing that there is choice over is the type of music played, and tradition dictates that the most senior surgeon in the room gets to choose the tracks.

Although it tends to be classical music, it obviously opens up all sorts of possibilities of operation-appropriate songs that could be played. “Stayin’ Alive” by the Bee Gees is one I hope surgeons consider, for example. Cat Steven’s

MUSIC PLAYED IN OPERATING THEATRES CAN HAVE VERY POSITIVE BENEFITS FOR THE PATIENTS

“The First Cut Is The Deepest” is of course very apposite.

My mum is about to have her cataracts removed, so she should, I think, ask her surgeon to play “I Can See Clearly Now” by Johnny Nash.

But some should perhaps be avoided, for the sake of the patient. I think I’d rather have that midazolam when undergoing a colonoscopy, than listen to “Ring of Fire” by Johnny Cash, for example.

Equally, I doubt there are many men who’d like to drift off before their urological examination to Chuck Berry singing “My Ding-A-Ling”. I think I’ll stop now. ■

The Doctor Is In

Dr Max Pemberton

Q: I'm postmenopausal and my sex drive has evaporated! I used to love sex, but now I can't be bothered, and trying makes me feel a bit silly. It's particularly stressful because my partner is postmenopausal too but hasn't lost her drive! Is there anything medical we could do to get the spark back?

- Anon

A: The most important aspect of this is communication. It's not always easy talking about something sensitive like a loss of libido, but it's important that the subject is broached and discussed in an open, caring and non-judgemental way. The person who has had a drop in libido can feel under pressure to have sex which can lead to resentment and partners can take the change in sexual activity personally. Remind your partner that you love them and if sex is difficult to broach, consider the help of a counsellor.

The next thing to think about is why this has happened. Many NHS trusts now have psychosexual clinics that your GP can refer you to and can investigate that underlying cause of your low libido. You mention that you're both postmenopausal but that

this hasn't changed your partner's libido. Menopause affects people differently and while it's common for there to be a drop in libido, this certainly isn't always the case. You might want to consider speaking to a gynaecologist with a specialist interest in the menopause about your options. Some women find that HRT is helpful and, depending on other factors, this might be something to consider. HRT has had a bad press, mainly because of a 2002 study that appeared to link it to strokes, heart attacks and breast cancer. However, since that research was published, further research and analysis has shown the benefits of HRT in some women and that the risks for many women are low compared to the benefits. Many women on HRT find that this helps to improve their libido. There have been some clinical trials that have shown that low doses of testosterone can also increase sex drive. This isn't widely prescribed yet on the NHS but some private doctors with expertise in the area are prescribing this. ■



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Have The Best Memory In History!

Winning ways to learn important dates, from our memory expert Jonathan Hancock

I'M POPULAR ON pub quiz teams. I don't get everything right, but I'm interested in lots of things, and I've built up a pretty good bank of general knowledge over the years. However, what often gives me the edge is my ability to remember dates.

Here's how I do it. If I want to work out when a modern-day event happened, I use my autobiographical memory. I think about where I went on holiday when a particular song was Number One, or what job I was doing when a big story hit the news. Memories get stored within webs of connections, and one detail often reveals a range of evidence—all pointing to the missing year.

When I need to learn dates, on the other hand, I spot connections and clues in the numbers themselves. For example, when I saw that the Hindenburg Disaster happened in 1937, I noticed my house number in there too and imagined the tragedy playing out in my front garden.

But my best trick is something called the word-length system. All I do is find words with the "right"

number of letters for each digit, then put them together to make a memorable phrase.

For instance, Marie Curie was born in 1867. She was A FEARLESS POLISH CHEMIST. A has one letter, FEARLESS has eight, POLISH six, and CHEMIST seven. Together they make... 1867!

Here are some more useful dates to know, along with suggestions for memory-jogging phrases. For each example, try to create a mental picture to imprint the words on your mind.

- The first moon walk was in 1969: N ARMSTRONG: HEROIC ASTRONAUT
- Shakespeare was born in 1564: A GREAT WRITER: "WILL"!
- Victoria and Albert married in 1840: A MARRIAGE, TRUE LOVE (I used "love" for zero, like in tennis!)
- Pacemakers were invented in 1958: A PACEMAKER PUMPS STEADILY
- Colour TV first demonstrated in 1926: A BROADCAST IN COLOUR
- The first silicon chip, 1959: A COMPUTER'S INNER CIRCUITRY
- The Great Plague was at its worst in 1665: A PLAGUE CAUSED HAVOC

When you've learned some or all of these dates, wait a little while and then test yourself—because testing also helps new learning to stick.

And then, why not use this clever trick to master a few dates of your own? You'll be keeping your brain in great shape as you file away key facts and figures—ready to take your quiz team to a truly historic win! ■

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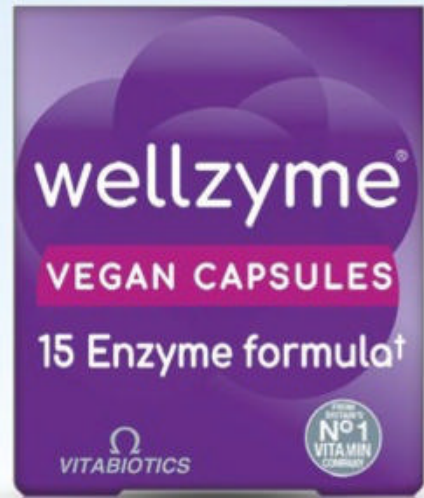
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Beware The Anti- Climax

*How to handle the unexpected downside
of achieving your goals*

BY *Victoria Stokes*



Picture the scene: you've spent years working towards a very specific goal. You've put in countless hours of work and made many sacrifices along the way, but now that you've got there it doesn't feel quite like you imagined. Instead of celebration, elation, and pride, you feel emptiness, confusion, and doubt.

Welcome to the anti-climax. The often-experienced but seldom-discussed downside of achieving life's biggest milestones. Many of us work tirelessly towards our goals. We may spend our lives dreaming of the day we get married, publish our first book or purchase our first home. However, oftentimes, when we achieve these things it doesn't feel quite as expected. In fact, the achievement of these goals feel anti-climatic, or a bit of a letdown.

So why do we often experience an anti-climax with big goals, even

though we're happy to achieve them?

"An anti-climax can be an unexpected by-product of a milestone achievement. Usually, the more significant the milestone, the greater the anti-climax may be," says Rachel Vora, psychotherapist and founder of CYP Wellbeing.

"The journey to achieving a milestone can be exciting and all-consuming in addition to giving us a robust sense of purpose and focus. Therefore, when this disappears overnight, we can often feel lost and confused, despite feeling proud of our achievement."

When this happens it can prompt a cocktail of complicated emotions.



**WE FALSELY
BELIEVE WE'LL FEEL
DRASTICALLY
DIFFERENT AFTER
AN ACHIEVEMENT,
OR THAT FEELINGS
OF LOW SELF-WORTH
WILL DISAPPEAR**

“Clients often present [to me] with an overwhelming sense of 'is this it?' and 'what now?,'” says Vora. “These feelings of confusion and disappointment, if left

unacknowledged, have the potential to cause clients to develop symptoms of depression and low mood.”

Vora points out that the intensity and nature of an anti-climax is often reliant on our preconceived ideas and expectations of what this achievement may mean for us. We often falsely believe that we'll feel drastically different afterwards or that our feelings of low self-worth will disappear, but this is rarely the case.

**YOU HAVE ARRIVED
AT YOUR DESTINATION**

In psychology, the belief that we'll be happier when we achieve our goals even has a fancy scientific name.



Psychologists call it "arrival fallacy" and it plays a big part in those feelings of emptiness that can follow achieving a goal.

"The term describes how fulfilling our goals and achieving our ambitions doesn't lead to a happily ever after," surmises psychologist Lee Chambers.

"We hold this vision and expectation that attaining the outcome we are chasing will grant us a lasting feeling of happiness, fulfilment and contentment. And when we do arrive at the destination, beyond the moment of celebration, there is often a void, a feeling of aimlessness, or a whole new longing

for something more," he explains.

It's a feeling that's all too familiar for Katie Ford, a veterinary surgeon who studied for nearly three years for an extra qualification, only to feel deflated, lost, and disillusioned when she passed.

"The path to this qualification meant two and a half years of study, alongside a busy job and on-call rota. It was also a significant financial investment," Ford recalls.

"Gaining this qualification felt like it should be an armoury, proof that I was indeed a good veterinary surgeon, but when the final result came through, I felt nothing. My expectations of confidence and

belonging were sadly absent. Rather than celebrating, my thoughts shifted to wondering what was wrong with me, and I felt short-changed and lost.”

Ford thinks the anti-climactic feeling was partly a result of failing to recognise her progress along the way. “I think the feeling of anti-climax for me came from never acknowledging how far I’d already come, discounting every achievement, and failing to see that I was indeed the person who’d legitimately walked this path. I had pinned an internal feeling on an external change.”

HOW TO HANDLE AN ANTI-CLIMAX

If you find yourself in a similar situation to Ford or are currently working toward something big that you suspect may feel like a bit of a letdown when you reach the finish line, there are steps you can take to manage and even prevent the feeling of anti-climax.

Enjoy the journey

It may feel like a bit of a cliché but appreciating the progress you’re making along the way instead of fixating on the end result can be freeing. It’s an approach Ford has adapted. “I now focus on the process much more than the outcome; I take time to celebrate and acknowledge the smaller steps and choose a kinder narrative,” she says.

I NOW FOCUS ON THE PROCESS MUCH MORE THAN THE OUTCOME; I TAKE TIME TO CELEBRATE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE SMALLER STEPS

“I get clear on my motivators and my ‘why’ and check in with myself as to how I’m feeling along the way, rather than being swept into a narrative of proving something to someone else. I feel I’m much more self-aware, and kinder in my self-talk.”

Chambers says enjoying the journey can be difficult in a world that has become increasingly outcome-obsessed, but assures there are many ways we can foster this approach in our lives.

“The first one requires slowing down a little and realising that joy comes from the doing, not the completing. So instead of rushing for it to be done, take a moment to enjoy the doing, and remember that lots of things in our lives are never truly done, but constantly evolve just like we do,” he muses.

Another vital step is acknowledging the small wins. “Have lots of stepping stones to a big goal to pause on,”

EXPECTING AND ANTICIPATING ANTI-CLIMAXES IN THE LEAD UP TO BIG MILESTONES CAN LESSEN THEIR IMPACT

Chambers advises. “Celebrate each new stone, look back and celebrate how far you’ve come from the first one, and look forward to the many stones in front.”

Anticipate the comedown

Vora believes expecting and anticipating anti-climaxes in the lead up to big milestones can lessen their impact.

“Anti-climaxes are just as common as post-holiday blues,” she points out. “If we normalise and plan for feeling this way, we can limit the impact on our mental health.”

If you are aware of a potential upcoming anti-climax, Vora recommends scheduling an activity to look forward to soon after the event has finished. Think planning some time with friends and family, attending a concert or even a cooking class. Vora says, “This can act as a reminder that other aspects of life can be just as fulfilling.”

Normalise the experience

Experiencing an anti-climax can be a pretty isolating time. Vora points out that there is an increased social pressure to hit social milestones. Our culture depicts these achievements as the be-all and end-all, and because of how these moments are portrayed by others, we expect to feel a certain way. When we don’t feel as we expected it can be confusing and feed into feelings of comparison.

Vora says the key is to “normalise feelings of low mood, confusion, and self-doubt around anti-climaxes.” They are something many people experience and connecting with others may be beneficial.

“It can help to engage with friends and influencers online who share similar experiences to feel less isolated with your own emotions,” Vora suggests.

Ford believes practising self-compassion can also be helpful at this time. “It’s important to be gentle with ourselves at this time, to try to avoid the comparison trap, and see where we can start to reflect on the small steps and victories that we might not have acknowledged along the way,” she says.

Focus on sustained progress

“We have to remember that from an evolutionary perspective, our brains are wired to keep us alive and evolving, not happy and content,”



Chambers points out. “For the majority of our existence, we were prey, and this means we are not always deliberate in celebrating even the biggest achievements.”

The solution, Chambers believes, is to cherish each moment. “Instead of downplaying what we have achieved or moving straight to the next item on the list, mindfully

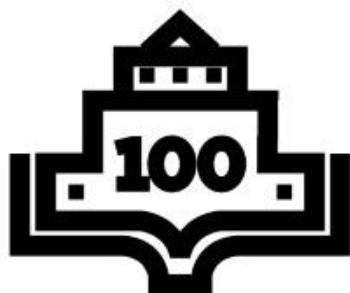
cherish the moment and properly reflect on the gain you've made,” he advises.

“Reward yourself in a positive way and recognise your progress. That way, you won't fall into the fallacy of having ‘made it.’ Instead, you’ll see that you are happily ‘making it’ along the journey that is an entire lifetime.” ■

Ready, Set...

The word with the most meanings in English is the verb "set", which has 430 senses listed in the Second Edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, published in 1989. The word commands the longest entry in the dictionary at 60,000 words, or 326,000 characters

Source: [guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/english-word-with-the-most-meanings](https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/english-word-with-the-most-meanings)



WORD-STORY COMPETITION

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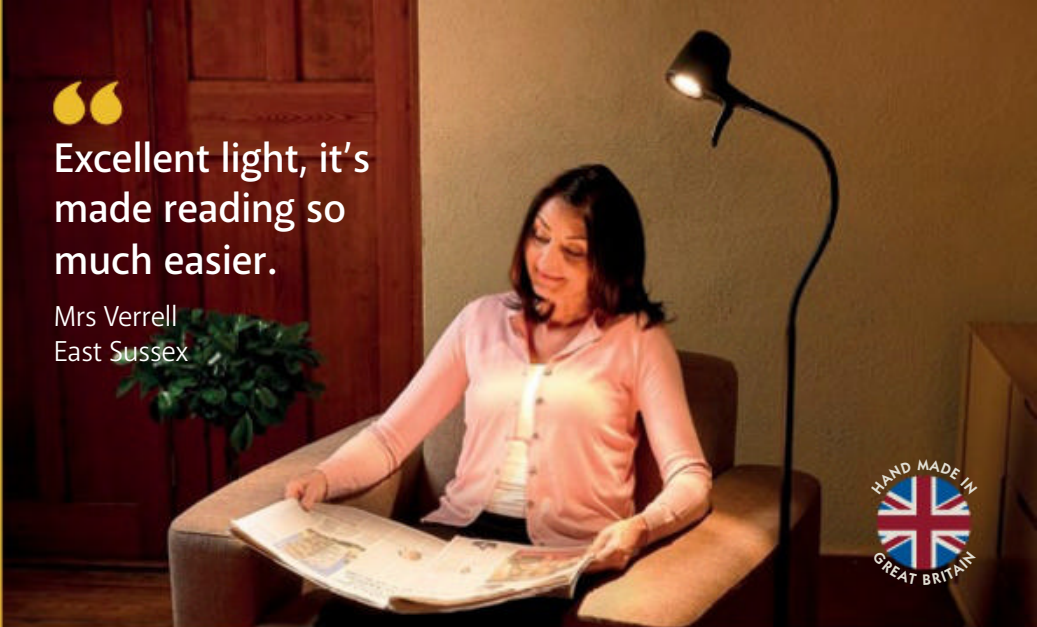
shorter or longer! Entries are now open. The editorial team will pick a shortlist of three in each category and post them online on June 1. You can vote for your favourite, and the one with the most votes will scoop the top prize. Voting will close on May 1 and winners will be published in our September issue.

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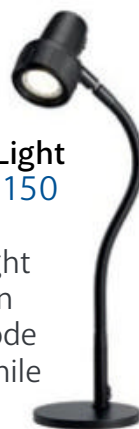
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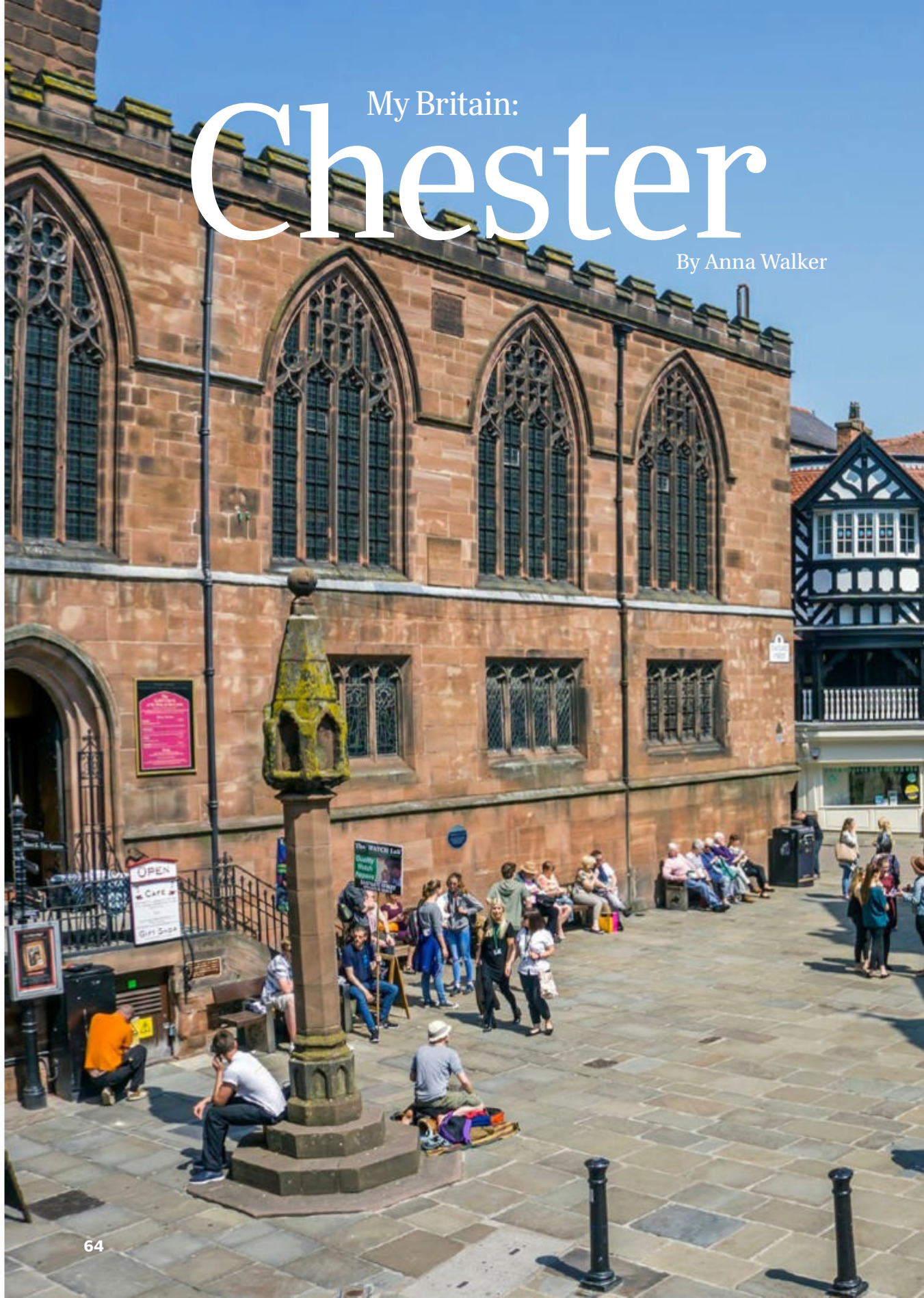


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My Britain: Chester

By Anna Walker





Close to the English/Welsh border, the walled cathedral city of Chester was founded as a Roman fort back in 79 AD. The city has a fascinating history—one of the last in Britain to fall to the Norman conquest, it's littered with buildings of historic note, including medieval architecture, and some of the best-preserved historic city walls in the country. The Industrial Revolution shaped Chester enormously, and visitors to the city today will see its traces in the railways, canals and impressive Victorian architecture from the period. For tourists planning a visit to Chester this year, there's plenty on offer, including Discover the Rows (visitcheshire.com/routes/discover-the-rows) a new, free, self-guided audio tour of the medieval Rows that line the city's four main streets. Chester's Rows are unique in the world. They are continuous half-timbered galleries, reached by steps, which form a second row of shops above those at street level. Nobody is quite sure why they were built this way, but the new tour offers an insight into their fascinating history and continuing role in shaping the identity of Chester.



Brian Clarke

Managing director of **ChesterBoat**, Brian, 63, has lived near Chester all his life

I was born in the small village of Mancot, six miles from Chester and once I moved, I have simply never wanted to leave the city.

I like Chester's close proximity to the coast, Liverpool and Manchester. The city itself has so much to offer but most of all I love the beautiful River Dee.

People in Chester are always so friendly, and after living and working in Chester all of my life, it is great to know so many people and have such nice friends here.

My favourite spot in Chester has to be the tree-lined banks of the River Dee along the Groves promenade. I walk into work at ChesterBoat every day and it's great to be able to walk through Grosvenor Park and come out at the suspension bridge [Queens Park Bridge]. I never tire of it.

ChesterBoat is the trading name of Bithell Boats Limited. That was the original name of the passenger boat business established in Chester over 100 years ago. I started with Bithell Boats back in 1979 as a boat driver and have had a wonderful life within the business and now owning it with my wife Raquel.





CITY OF CHESTER
QUEENS PARK BRIDGE
1923





Katrina Kerr

Katrina, 66, is the chair of **Chester Business Improvement District** and has lived in Chester for 24 years



I'm a Londoner but in 1998 my husband and I moved to Chester. It was the perfect location and as city folk, we really felt we had "escaped to the country".

There simply ain't nothing like Chester. It packs a lot in. It looks different from other cities—so many black and white buildings, Roman ruins, a complete city wall and Victorian gothic sandstone. It does things differently—the medieval Rows are a

two-level shopping experience and we have some crazy pagan festivals! And it has a great vibe. During the summer it is busy with tourists and race-goers, lots of al fresco eating, and in the winter, you can enjoy comedy clubs, jazz and folk bars, plus the programme at Storyhouse, our amazing performing arts centre. The city's food offer is great too—one restaurant has a green Michelin star and so many others are at the top of their game. It's a small city but with an increasingly big food scene.

As a resident, Chester is very



accessible—walking, cycling and scooters are all popular. It also feels very connected, being only two hours to London. Chester is right on the border with Wales so for centuries it has been a bit of a melting pot—a bit English, a bit Welsh. It has a reputation for relative affluence, and I would say up to a few years ago was getting a little sleepy. However, a new generation of can-do entrepreneurs have started businesses (several in travel, some in finance), made Chester their home and the city now feels young and buzzy.

My favourite thing to do in Chester is to walk into the city along the riverbank on a cold winter's night when the lamps light up the cobbles and it feels a tiny bit mysterious. I head to a wine bar like Covino or a top-notch pizza place like Stile Napoletano for a bite to eat and a glass of something rich and fruity, and then amble home past the Storyhouse and the cathedral which are lit up and welcoming. ■

To plan a future trip to Chester, head to [visitcheshire.com/chester](https://www.visitcheshire.com/chester)

If I Ruled The World

Roger Black

Roger Black MBE, 56, is a retired British Olympian who has dedicated his career both on and off the track to teamwork and helping others. As co-founder of BackleyBlack and owner/manager of RogerBlackFitness.com, Roger splits his time working in and on businesses of his own and inspiring others to do the same.

Children would detox from technology. As a parent myself, I am always conscious of the amount of time that my children are spending in front of screens. My first rule as leader of the world would be that children must detox from technology out in the open. If the coronavirus lockdowns taught us anything, it is that nature constantly surprises and delights us, throughout the seasons and in hidden nooks and crannies that we might not have discovered in a car.

Everyone would watch *The Princess Bride* at least once in their life. Yes, I know... a curve ball in at rule number two but what's not to love? I am obsessed with this film. So much so that I chose it as my specialist subject on *Celebrity Mastermind*. It has it all—pirates,



giants, miracles, rodents of unusual size, sword fights, revenge and, of course, true love.

People would be able to choose where to spend some of their taxes.

We never get to directly see or feel where our taxes are spent. Within my manifesto, I would edict that individuals have a choice when it comes to ten per cent of their tax and where it goes, on a local or national level.

I would encourage children to spend time with elderly people.

Nobody should feel lonely in old age, so I would launch a national buddy-up system for the elderly who live alone, connecting them with somebody younger from their local community.

I would keep Britain moving.

Every January many people decide to commit to a new “them” and a refreshed attitude towards fitness. Health and wellbeing should be a mantra every day of the year; keep moving rather than go over the top for one month of the year. Health is, literally, for life.

“Food-ed” classes would be launched in schools. Food unites us all, so I would ensure that every young person learned how to cook healthy, low-cost and easy meals, as part of the school curriculum.

Back in the day, these classes were called “Home Education” but were phased out. I would probably re-name them “Food-Ed” and encourage schools to grow-their-own as well, as part of the process.

Responsible dog ownership would be enforced. I love dogs and have two of my own, but I am conscious that not everyone is comfortable with or around our canine friends.

I would want dog owners to take more accountability for their pets, whether it be fouling the streets or being mindful of other people who might panic out on a walk, when they’re confronted by a particularly excitable dog.

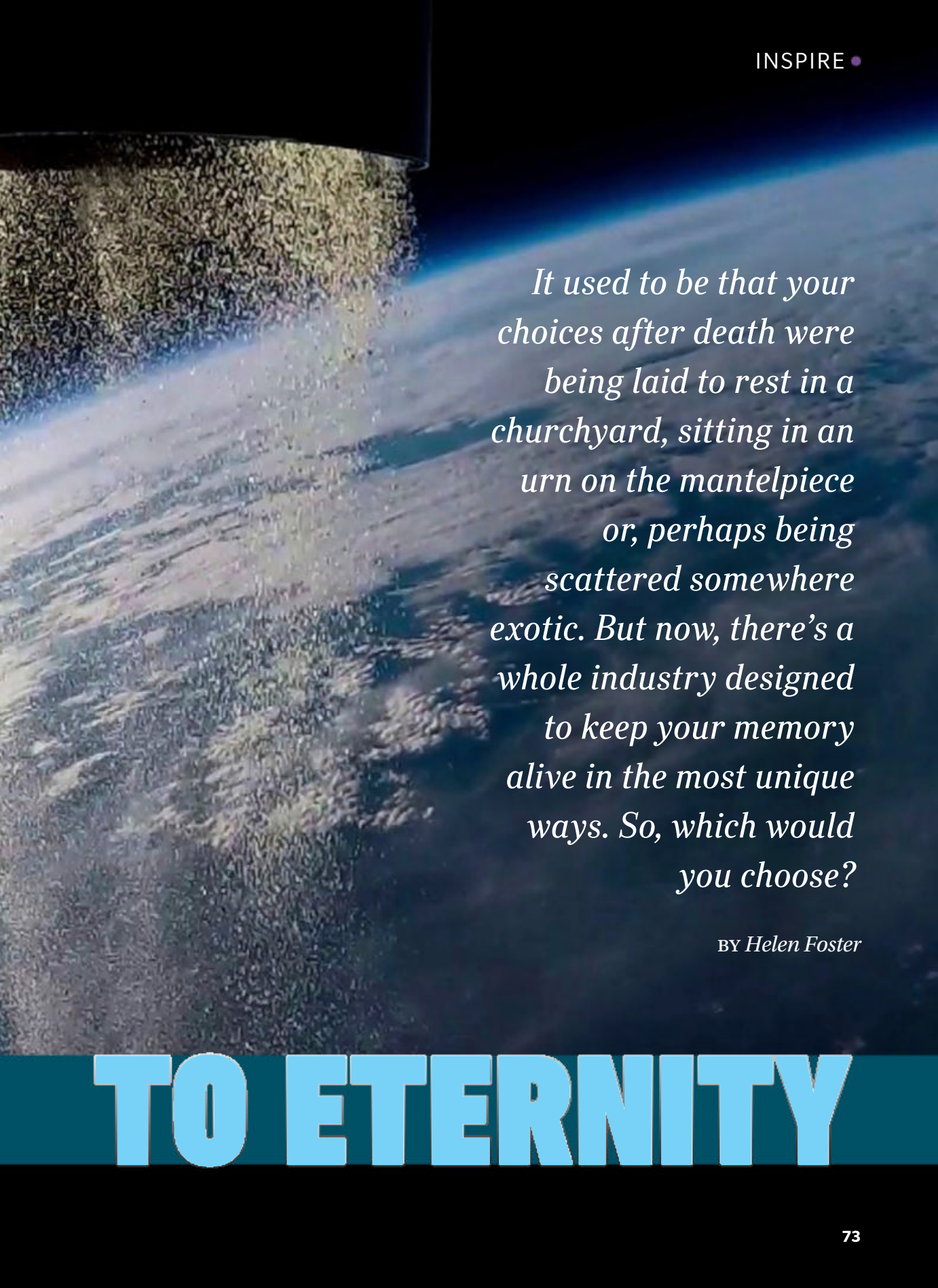
There would be far more patient involvement in clinical diagnosis.

I am a firm believer that no one knows our body like we do. In this respect, and mindful not to create a readership of “Google Doctors”, I would like to think that medical professionals might work in conjunction with patients more in the future. ■

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FROM HERE

An aerial photograph of a cemetery. The ground is covered with rows of small, dark, rectangular grave markers. On the left side of the image, there is a large, textured, golden-brown structure that appears to be a large, curved wall or a large, textured object. The sky is a deep blue, and the overall scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the cemetery.

It used to be that your choices after death were being laid to rest in a churchyard, sitting in an urn on the mantelpiece or, perhaps being scattered somewhere exotic. But now, there's a whole industry designed to keep your memory alive in the most unique ways. So, which would you choose?

BY *Helen Foster*

TO ETERNITY



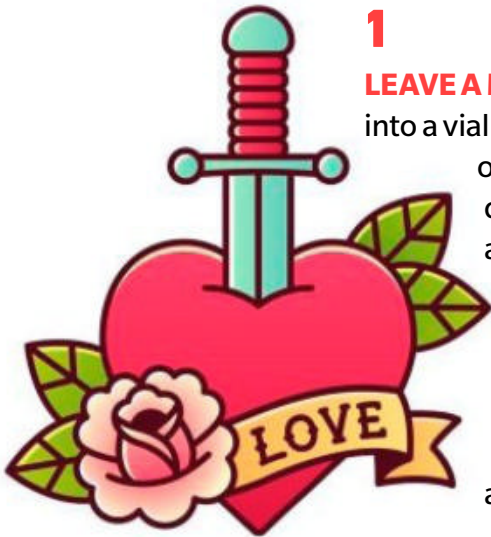
An intricate silver crucifix hangs around the neck of Stacey Glen, a 41-year-old entrepreneur from Solihull. Set in the middle, are the ashes of her father who passed away in April 2016. "I wasn't ready to let him go yet," Stacey explains. "Scattering felt like I was discarding him but interment meant choosing his final resting place and I'm not sure where that is yet. This felt like a way to keep him close without being obsessed by the grief of loss."

Closeness, helping fulfil ambitions the deceased didn't manage in life, or simply reflecting their personality are all common reasons why a person, or their family, might choose a non-traditional send-off. "It's now possible to have a death style that reflects your lifestyle," says Professor Douglas Davies, director of the Centre for Death-Life Studies at Durham University. "This not only creates more communication around death, but it also helps those left

behind with the grieving process. You can now do something for your mother, father or spouse that feels more positive."

Less traditional send-offs can also help tackle some practical concerns. "An ashes ceremony doesn't have a deadline, it takes the pressure off the decision-making," says Richard Martin, founder of memorial company Scattering Ashes. "Family and friends can take their time to organise something that suits their budget, time frames, and travel commitments. And if there is a disagreement then the ashes can be split so that everyone gets to do something meaningful in their own way."

However, Professor Davies does point out that this explosion of choice can come with a downside. "People can start to worry that they've done the wrong thing—put the ashes in the wrong place, or that they should have had a priest at the ceremony—which is why it's so important that you make your actual wishes known in your will." And with that in mind, here are 12 ideas you might want to consider...



1

LEAVE A MARK: It's possible to combine ashes into a vial of tattoo ink that can then be used as part of a loved one's tattoo design. This can't be done as a DIY service, as, not only must the ashes be sterilised; the molecule size of the ashes must be changed to ensure it will work within the tattoo process. Companies such as Cremation Ink (cremationink.com) can talk you through what's involved. One vial of ink costs around £120.

2

NATURAL BURIAL: Here, you're not buried in a churchyard, but a field, forest or another wild piece of land. If you have a coffin, it's likely to be made from cardboard, or another biodegradable material, or you can just be buried in a shroud. Some of the practical benefits include a lower cost (a natural burial costs around £1,150, a traditional one closer to £5,000) and it's also kinder to the environment.

"When you talk to people about this type of burial, a positive feeling comes through that we don't see with traditional burial," says Professor Davies. "People like that they will be surrounded by trees, birds and animals. It feels like ending up in a place full of life and activity rather than a cemetery which is as dry as dust." To find out more, visit

naturaldeath.org.uk





3

DONATE YOURSELF TO SCIENCE: Every year around 1,500 people enquire about this option, where your remains might be used in medical research or to teach future doctors or surgeons their craft. "Many donors state a desire to make a contribution to the advancement of medicine and to be useful after death," says a spokesperson from the Human Tissue Authority who regulate the process. "But if you want to choose this option it's essential that you give consent before your death—no-one else can give this permission." Discover more at hta.gov.uk

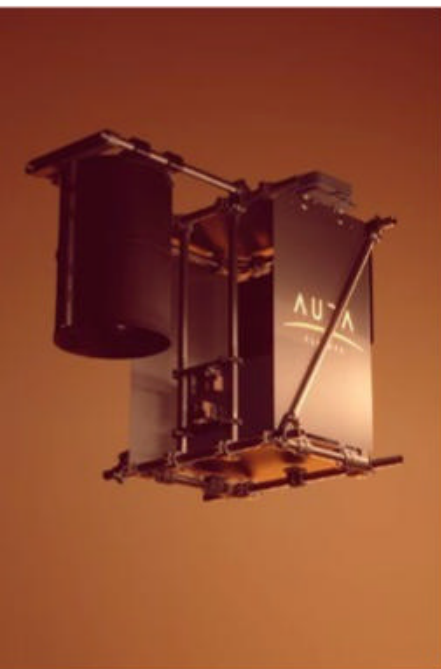
4

FLOAT OUT IN A VIKING BOAT: Add your ashes to the miniature replica of a wooden longboat, set it on fire and then send it out on water just as depicted in Viking legend. "There's something about fire and water that's very healing," says Richard Martin. "Our Viking boat urns have particularly helped some very hurt families cope with their loss of their children." The boats start from £350 at scattering-ashes.co.uk



5

GET SHOT INTO SPACE: Aura Flights started offering this service in 2017. Choose it and your ashes will soar 100,000 feet above the earth, then be released into the upper portions of the stratosphere. Carried around the globe by winds they eventually fall back to earth in rain or snow. "One launch which I personally found very affecting was a couple whose daughter passed away just weeks before starting a job at the European Space Agency. It was an honour to fulfil her dream of travelling into space," says Alex Keen from Aura Flights. "Originally we thought we'd mostly see interest from say, pilots, scientists, science fiction fans, but we also work with people who have travelled, or lived, in many places and so don't consider themselves citizens of any one country." See more at auraflights.com. The service starts from £495.



6

BE A FIREWORK: It's not quite as futuristic as a space mission, but it's a lot more fun. Tribute fireworks require around 200-400g of ashes that can be added into rockets and other whizz bangs and launched hundreds of feet into the sky before you explode in a cascade of colour. Prices start at £1,200 for a full display. See more, including rules about where displays can be held, at [scattering-ashes.co.uk/sky/firework-display](https://www.scattering-ashes.co.uk/sky/firework-display)



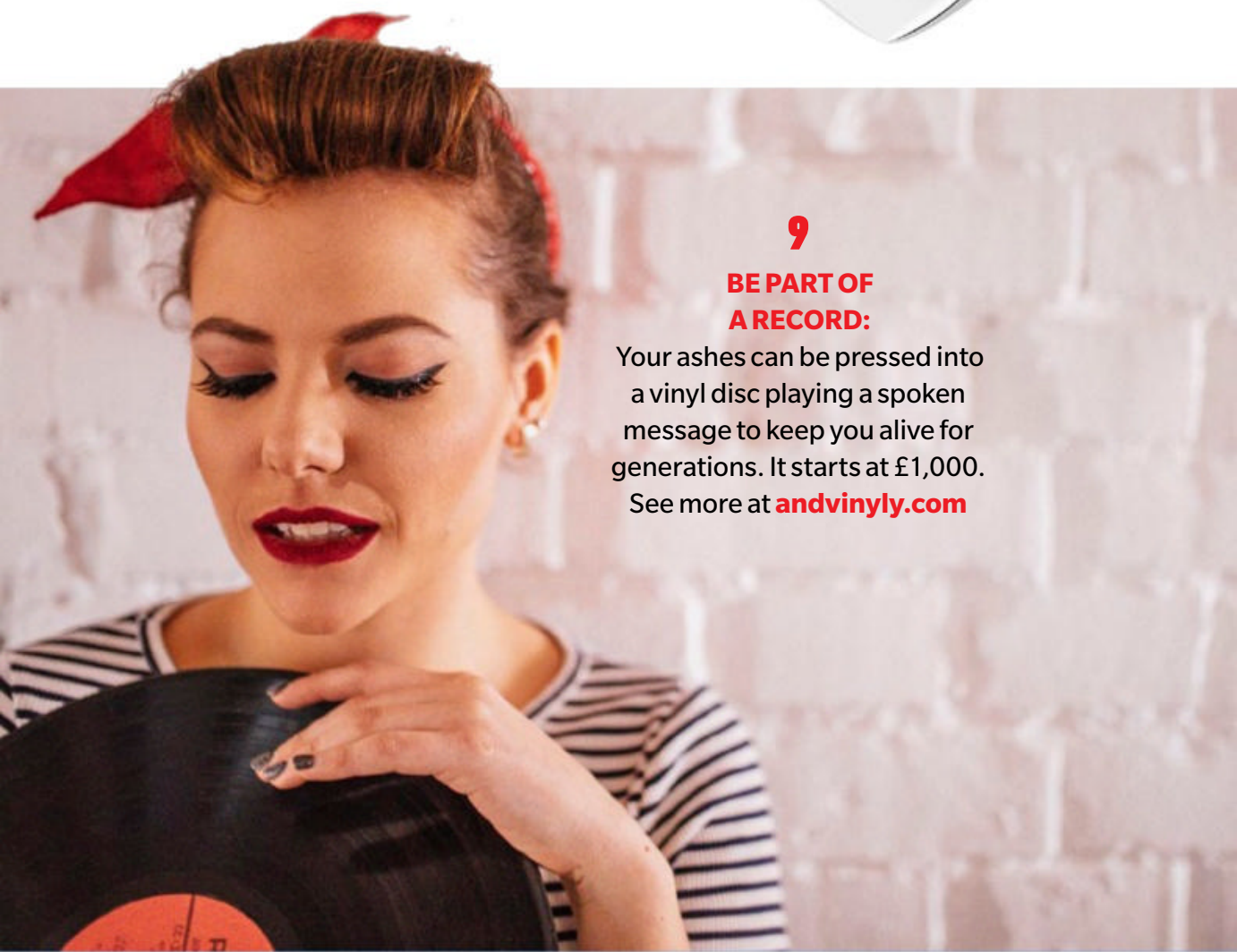
7

BECOME A CORAL REEF: The less Mafioso way of sleeping with the fishes, Eternal Reefs is a service where ashes are mixed with environmentally-friendly concrete and then sunk onto the ocean floor as an artificial reef. "Families receive the reef's coordinates and many choose to visit the reef later, boating and diving to see all the marine life thriving around their loved one," explains Becky Peterson from the company. Right now, the reefs themselves are only located in the US, but UK ashes can still be used. Contact eternalreefs.com for details of the service which costs from \$3,995.



8

GLITTER IN SOME JEWELLERY: Jewellery designer Ruth Mary made her first piece of memorial jewellery in 2017. It included the ashes of a baby girl. "I only need a pinch of ashes then I mix them with resin and hardener before setting it into the jewellery," she told us. "You can incorporate jewellery inherited from your loved one or come up with a unique design that reflects the deceased." See more at ruthmary.com



9

**BE PART OF
A RECORD:**

Your ashes can be pressed into a vinyl disc playing a spoken message to keep you alive for generations. It starts at £1,000. See more at andvinily.com



10

FLOAT OFF IN A BUBBLE: Paola Dyboski-Bryant was more used to creating bubbles for children's parties, but after combining her father-in-law's ashes into a bubble to float in Andorra—a place he'd always wanted to visit, she felt it was a send-off others might appreciate. "I always shed a tear when I get an order but one that really stood out was from a man who started the call with, 'My wife told me to ring you, she died yesterday.' She had asked him to buy four kits, one for each of the grandkids, to make bubbles, to spread her ashes.

That one got to me." Memorial Bubble kits cost £89.99 from drzigs.com

11

LIVE WITHIN A TREE: Companies like The Living Urn incorporate containers of ashes into the root system of a young sapling, so, once planted, you and the tree live as one forever. Right now, you can only plant the tree on your own land, but they're working to create memorial forests in the UK in the next few years. The urns cost £137 from thelivingurn.co.uk



12

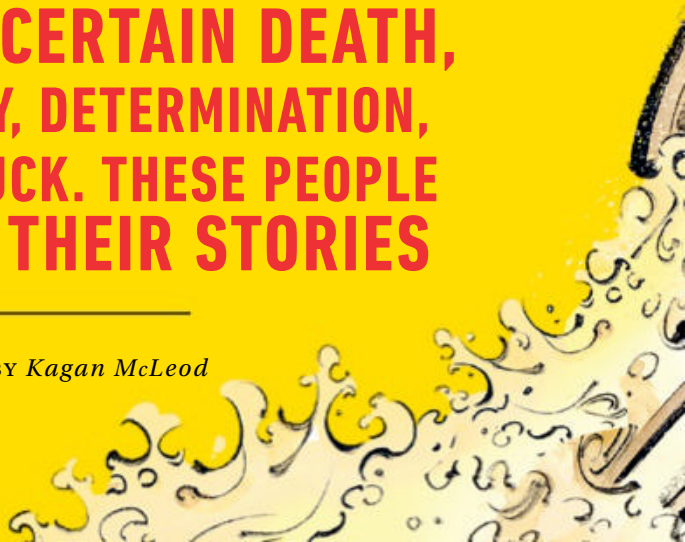
COMING SOON...WATER CREMATION. It's not yet legal here but Professor Davies says that's likely to change by next year. In the process water, heat and chemicals are used to break down the body in about four hours. This leaves just bones that can be powdered and treated like ashes; and fluid that can be poured back into the earth. With a cremation contributing the same amount of greenhouse gases as using two tanks of fuel in a car and burials using up land, it's the most planet-friendly solution so far. "And again, that's something many people feel positively about," says Professor Davies. "There's a real feeling of giving back to the earth."



I SURVIVED!

**WHEN FACED WITH CERTAIN DEATH,
IT TAKES BRAVERY, DETERMINATION,
AND PLENTY OF LUCK. THESE PEOPLE
LIVED TO TELL THEIR STORIES**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Kagan McLeod*





I SURVIVED A MUDSLIDE

SHERI NIEMEGEERS, 47,
AN INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATOR

It was a long weekend in May 2018 and my partner, Gabe Rosescu, and I were taking a road trip from my home in the city of Weyburn, in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, to visit friends in Nelson, British Columbia. We are both adventurous, and we couldn't wait to go hiking and exploring. It was our first trip together, after six months of dating.

At around 5:30pm on Thursday, May 17, we were driving about 11 miles west of Creston, on a steep mountain road known as the Crowsnest Highway. I was texting updates to my family and enjoying the view. We weren't aware there'd recently been flooding in the area. When I looked up from my phone, I saw a wave of mud and an enormous tree barrelling down the mountain, right in front of Gabe's car, a little Hyundai Elantra. He tried to brake, but it was too late.

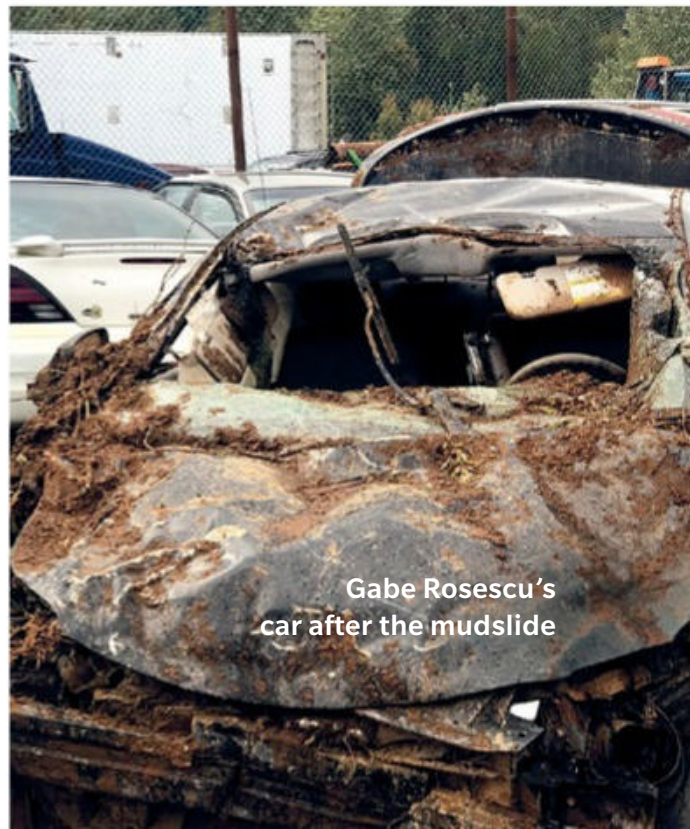
I looked at Gabe and we both said, "Oh, shoot"—understatement of the century. The mudslide sent our car plummeting nearly 300 metres down a rocky cliff. It landed on its side among some trees.

I don't know how long we were unconscious, but I woke up to the sound of Gabe moaning. He was slumped over the steering wheel, and there was blood everywhere. Outside

my passenger window there was a steep drop. Every time I moved, I was hit with excruciating chest pain. I had broken my sternum, and my right ankle was smashed and practically

**THE BODY IS AN
AMAZING THING—
SOMEHOW WE BOTH
CRAWLED OUT OF
THE WRECKAGE**

turned backward. Gabe had broken his orbital bone, and nasal and cheek bones. Parts of his skull were crushed and his vision was damaged. But the body is an amazing thing, and somehow we were both able to crawl out of that wreckage.



Gabe Rosescu's
car after the mudslide

I was so focused on our survival that I didn't register the wrecked state of the car or where we were. We had no phone signal, so all we could think to do was yell for help. But my chest hurt too much to even breathe. So Gabe started shouting as loud as he could.

We were shocked when, after just a few minutes, we heard someone call back. Four bystanders had spotted us and waded through waist-deep mud to our rescue. I couldn't walk, so the men took turns shimmying me up the rock face and helping Gabe make his way up to the road. Gabe was in shock, slipping in and out of consciousness, and I honestly didn't think he was going to make it. When the emergency medical technicians finally got to us, they let us kiss goodbye from our stretchers as they loaded us into separate ambulances. I was swearing a lot as they took us away—I didn't think I'd ever see my boyfriend again.

They took me to the closest hospital, in Trail, and Gabe was airlifted to the trauma hospital in Kelowna. All along the way, they kept shocking him to keep him awake. I was in the hospital for a week and a half, but they kept Gabe for six weeks. My surgeon had to reconnect the main artery in my foot, and Gabe's had to split open his scalp three ways to reattach everything. Even after surgery, I'll walk with a limp for the rest of my life, and Gabe permanently

lost the vision in his left eye. Before this all happened, we were happy-go-lucky people. We're even more positive now. We look at everything differently. Despite the injuries we sustained, we're grateful that we're still living a pretty good life. The experience also bonded us as a couple. We still go on road trips. A year after the accident, we drove back to the Crowsnest Highway and gave the finger to the mudslide.

As told to Emily Landau

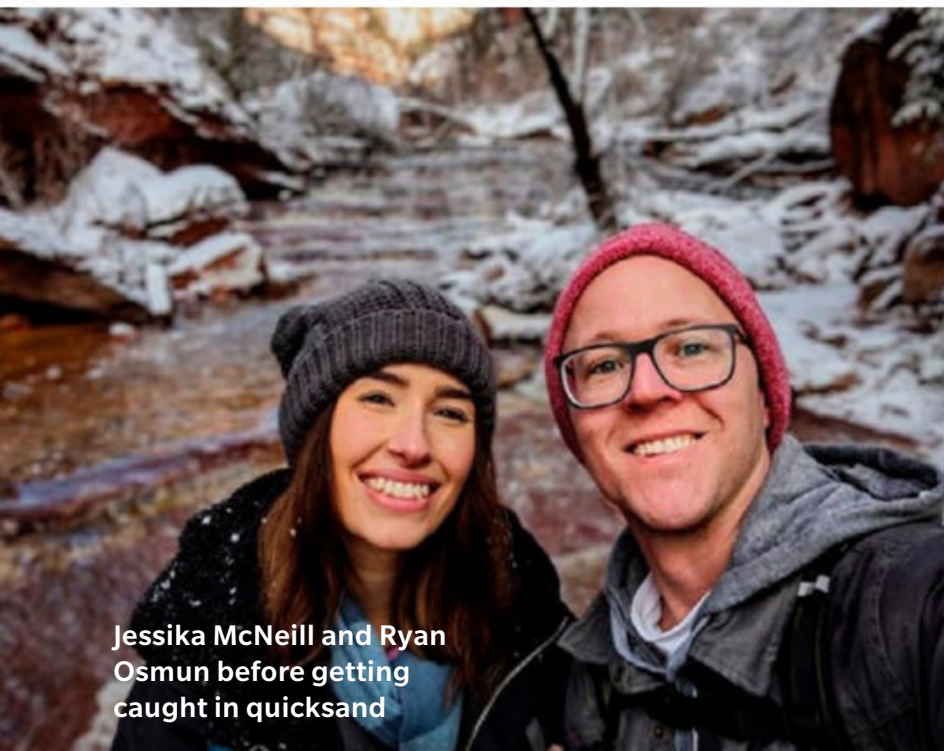
I SURVIVED QUICKSAND

RYAN OSMUN, 34, A PHOTOGRAPHER



The Subway is a trail in Zion National Park, in the US state of Utah, that's named for its tunnel-shaped canyon. On February 16, 2019, Ryan Osmun and his girlfriend, Jessika McNeill, both from Mesa, Arizona, had the trail to themselves. The National Park Service describes the hike as "very strenuous," requiring "route finding, creek crossing, and scrambling over boulders." Nowhere does it mention quicksand.

It was sunny when we set out from the trailhead at 8am. Halfway through our ten-mile hike, after we'd climbed boulders and forded streams, a light snow began to fall. Soon after, we entered the Subway and its swirling, rust-coloured walls. Standing in our way was a small pond. The trail



Jessika McNeill and Ryan Osmun before getting caught in quicksand

both hands, but it was refilling faster than she could pull it out. I told her to stop; she was wasting her energy. I was not getting out of the quicksand.

The only phone reception was back at the trailhead, five hours away over rough terrain. I told Jessika she had to hike back and call for help. She was scared—

continued on the other side, and, because it looked shallow, we began to wade through, with Jessika leading the way.

About 1.5 metres from the edge, her front foot sank into the sandy bottom. Then Jessika fell forward, and both legs started to sink. I lunged, grabbed her under the shoulders and pulled her out of the muck. She then scrambled back to shore. But now I was sinking. The muck came all the way up to my right thigh and my left calf. I freed my left leg but I couldn't move my right leg at all. Jess handed me a long stick we'd picked up earlier in the hike and I jammed it down the side of my leg and tried to wiggle and pull my leg out. Nothing.

Jessika started scooping sand with

she'd only ever hiked with me and was wary of being alone on such a difficult trail. But we were out of options.

Thirty minutes after she left, it started to snow heavily. I zipped up my jacket and pulled my head inside. At some point I nodded off to sleep. I don't know how long I was out, but I woke up as I was falling backward into the pond and the quicksand. I urgently planted my stick into the dry ground and pulled myself upright. I was exhausted. If I fell backward again, I'd never be able to get out. It had been about five hours since Jess left, and it was getting dark.

A few hours later, I saw a light through my jacket. I prayed it was a helicopter, but it was just the moonlight shining over the canyon

I COULDN'T WALK OR FEEL MY LEG AT ALL. WE'D HAVE TO STAY OUT OVERNIGHT



walls. At that point, I was soaking wet and knew I wasn't going to survive. I started to think about what I could do to die faster. But I didn't want to drown if I fell again. That would be the worst way to go.

An hour later, another light shone across my eyes. A torch! I yelled for help. A man shouted back as he ran to me. His name was Tim, and he said that Jessika had got through to rescuers. He had hiked up, and the rest of his crew was an hour behind.

When the three others arrived, they set up a pulley system to yank me out. Two of the rescuers held me under each shoulder as Tim wrapped a strap around my kneecap. An anchor strap was tied around a boulder. A fourth rescuer worked the pulley. With each ratchet, it felt like my leg was being ripped off. Tim dug into the sand and got a hand around my ankle and started pulling up. It was agonising, but I could feel my leg moving. "Keep going!" I screamed.

Three more ratchets and my leg was freed. My rescuers dragged me to the side of the canyon because I couldn't

walk. I couldn't feel my leg at all. It was too dark and snowy for a helicopter, so they got me into a sleeping bag, gave me pain medication, and we settled in for the night. When I woke up at 6am the next day, snow covered the top of my sleeping bag, and it was still coming down. Around noon, the weather lifted, and the rescue team called in a helicopter.

My entire leg had swollen to the size of my thigh, but when I got to the hospital in the nearby city of St George, X-rays revealed no fractures or breaks. I had sat in the quicksand for 12 hours and believed I would die. But I didn't.

© 2020, BY JASON DALEY. FROM *OUTSIDE* (APRIL 6, 2020), OUTSIDEONLINE.COM

I SURVIVED GETTING SWALLOWED BY A WHALE

JULIE McSORLEY, 56, A PHYSICAL THERAPIST



I live with my husband, Tyrone, in San Luis Obispo, California, about four miles from the beach. Every few years, the humpback whales come into the bay for a few days while they're migrating. In November 2020, the whales were around, so we took out our yellow double kayak to watch the wildlife. We paddled out the length of the pier and saw a huge number of seals and dolphins, and about 20 whales feeding on silverfish. It was incredible. They breached and



Inset: Julie McSorley, left, and Liz Cottriel, right. A passerby captured the moment the whale swallowed the women



sprayed through their blowholes, and were so graceful and majestic. Each one is huge, about 15 metres long, and sometimes they turned their side fins so it looked like they were waving at us. That was really cute.

At the time, my friend Liz Cottriel was staying with us. We had met 28 years earlier, when she worked as a receptionist for my dad's dental office. The morning after Tyrone and I saw the whales, I asked Liz if she wanted to go out on the water to check them out. It had been such a magnificent experience, and I wanted to share it with her.

"No way," she said. She's scared of whales and sharks, and was terrified the kayak would overturn while we

were in it. I told her there was nothing to worry about, promising that the craft was super stable and that we could turn back any time. After some cajoling, I finally got her to agree to join me.

We got out on the water at about 8:30 the next morning, and there were already about 15 other kayakers and paddleboarders in the bay. It was warm for November, about 18 degrees Celsius, so we wore T-shirts and leggings. For the first half-hour, we didn't see anything. Then I spotted two pairs of whales right past the pier, swimming toward us. We were in awe: it's an amazing feeling to be so close to a creature that size.

When whales go down after

breaching, they leave what looks like an oil slick on the water. I figured if we paddled toward that spot, we'd be safe from the whales, since they'd just left. We followed them at a distance—or what I thought was a distance. I later found out that it's recommended to keep 90 metres away, or about the length of a football field. We were probably more like 18 metres away.

I CAME SO CLOSE TO BEING INJURED OR KILLED. I AM MUCH MORE APPRECIATIVE OF LIFE NOW

All of a sudden, a tightly packed swarm of fish, known as a bait ball, started jumping out of the water into our kayak. Their movement sounded like crackling glass around us. At that moment, I knew we were too close. I was terrified. Then I felt the kayak lift out of the water—about two metres, we later learned—and tip back into the ocean. I figured the whale was going to drag us down somehow, and I had no idea how deep we'd be sucked underwater.

What I didn't realise at the time was that Liz and I were in the whale's mouth. It had engulfed my entire body except for my right arm and paddle. Liz, meanwhile, was looking up directly into the whale's jaw—it was

like a big white wall. She told me later she thought she was going to die. I was still worried about being sucked down by the vacuum, so I just kept thinking, *I've got to get up. I've got to fight this. I've got to breathe.*

Whales have enormous mouths but tiny throats. Anything they can't swallow, they spit out. We were wearing life jackets, and soon we both popped up out of the water about a metre apart. The entire ordeal lasted only ten seconds, but to me it felt like an eternity.

A few people were nearby, and someone shot a video of the entire incident. Three or four people paddled over, including a retired firefighter who asked us if we were OK, and if we had all of our limbs. "You were in the whale's mouth!" he told us. "We thought you were dead." A few days later, I studied the video and saw how close I'd come to being injured or killed. I became so much more appreciative of life after that day.

There's no way I'm getting that close to whales again. I want to respect their space. I'm now very aware of the power of nature and the ocean. And I believe that I would have died if it was my time to die. Lucky for me, it wasn't.

That afternoon, when we finally got back to shore, Liz removed her T-shirt to dry it off—and five or six fish flopped out.

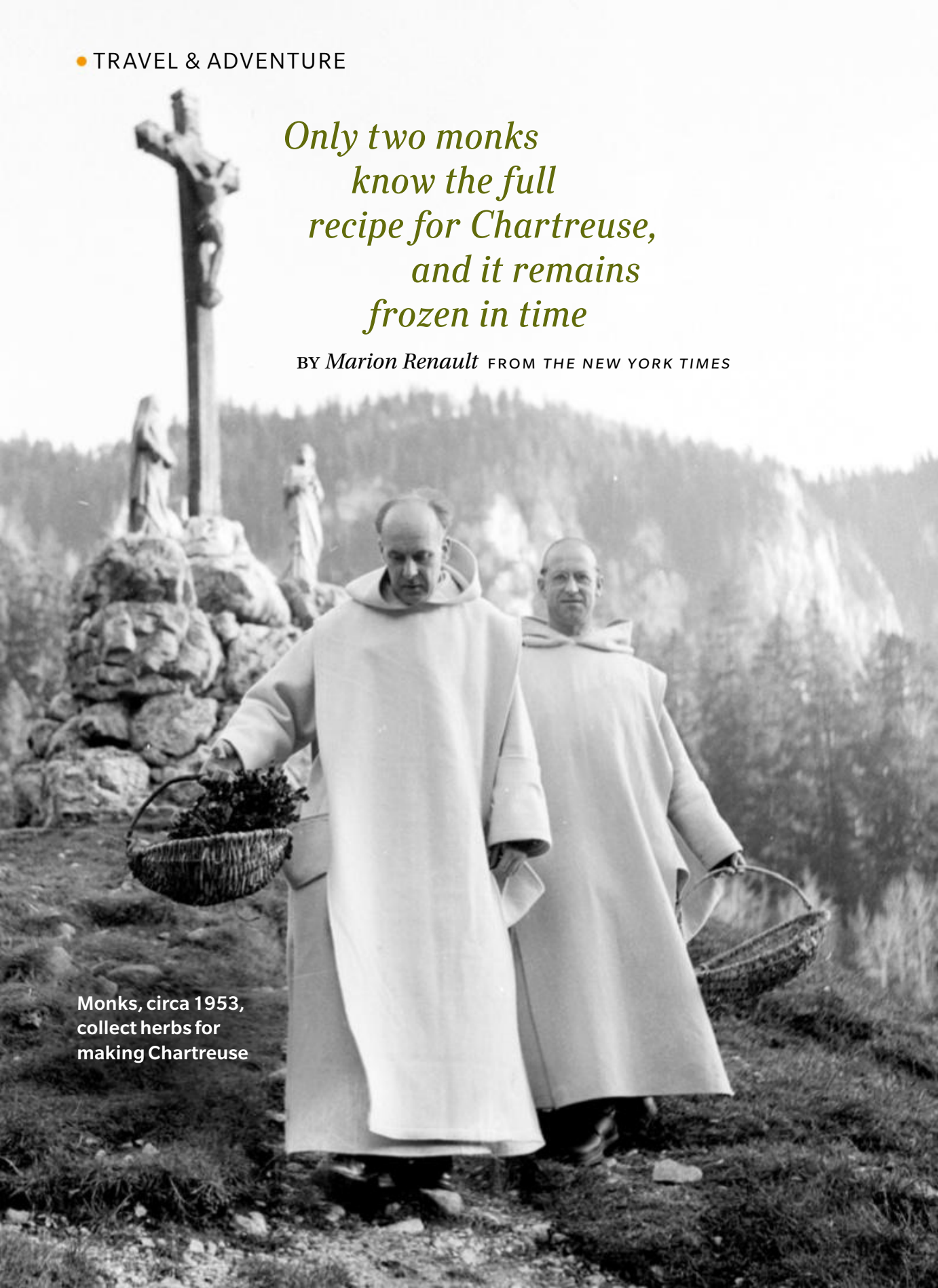
As told to Emily Landau ■

● TRAVEL & ADVENTURE

*Only two monks
know the full
recipe for Chartreuse,
and it remains
frozen in time*

BY *Marion Renault* FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

Monks, circa 1953,
collect herbs for
making Chartreuse



A close-up photograph of a glass filled with a vibrant green liquid, likely an elixir. The glass is set on a wooden surface, and the background is softly blurred. The text 'An Ancient Elixir' is overlaid in white on the glass.

An Ancient Elixir

PHOTOS: (LEFT) ©GETTY IMAGES. (RIGHT) ALAMY IMAGES

W

HEN THE WORLD went into lockdown, for the monks of Chartreuse it was simply another tick on their 938-year record of self-imposed isolation.

The Chartreux brothers, also known as Carthusians, embrace a deeply ascetic existence near Grenoble in the western French Alps, observing customs that have barely changed since their Christian order was founded. The monks pass the days alone, praying for humanity and listening for God in the silence that surrounds them. Frugal meals of bread, cheese, eggs, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and fish arrive through a cubbyhole in their individual quarters. With few exceptions, the monks do not enter one another's quarters, and they rarely interact—save for midnight and daytime church services, where no musical instruments are allowed. Once a



week, they stroll in pairs through the forests that fortify the monastery.

This lifestyle has survived centuries of external turmoil—avalanches, landslides, terrible fires, religious wars, pillaging, evictions and exile, military occupation, the French Revolution, and, yes, plagues. Through times of earthly chaos, the Chartreux thrive in accordance with their Middle Ages-era motto: *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis* (“The cross is steady while the world turns”).



The monastery is in the Chartreuse Mountains in south-eastern France

“This order has lasted because they know how to live beyond time, and they know how to live, also, in the present,” said Nadège Druzkowski, an artist and journalist who spent almost five years putting together a documentary project on the monastery and its surrounding landscapes. “It’s humbling.”

In 2020, the Chartreux philosophy worked in reverse: as COVID-19 ground the rest of the world to a sudden halt, the Carthusian way of life went on, unchanged.

THE CARTHUSIANS SUSTAIN this isolated lifestyle largely through the production and sale of Chartreuse, a liqueur the monks developed centuries ago. Like its mountainous namesake and the hue named after it, Chartreuse is sharp, bright, profoundly herbal. In Evelyn Waugh’s novel *Brideshead Revisited*, Anthony Blanche compares it to ingesting the rainbow, “like swallowing a spectrum.” Brendan Finnerty, a bar owner and Chartreuse superfan in the US city of Baltimore, says it

tastes “like Christmas in a glass,” or “grassy Jägermeister.” To me, it has the colour and flavour of summer sunlight striking a canopy of leaves—impossibly vibrant, sparkling with life, green beyond belief.

When France went into periods of pandemic confinement, little changed at the Chartreuse production site—even as the country’s winemakers and producers of other liquors, such as Cognac and Cointreau, struggled. Shutdowns in France and beyond did, however,



close the bars and restaurants that usually function as the secular conduit for the monastic liqueur. Chartreuse sales dropped to two-thirds their usual level, according to a press officer for the distilling company Chartreuse Diffusion.

“That world sank in a dramatic way,” said Philippe Rochez, the

brand’s export director, “so we turned to what was open.” The enterprise pivoted from the service industry to wine merchants and liquor stores, hoping to place Chartreuse in household cabinets and bar carts.

Throughout the pandemic the company also upheld its founding mission of good will and benevolence, donating a portion of sales to a support programme for the US hospitality industry and gifting 10,000 litres of pure alcohol to a Grenoble hospital for much-needed hand sanitiser. The monks also sacrificed their weekly social walks, in solidarity with the outside world.

“We were separated from all, but participated through our prayer,” said Michael Holleran, a Catholic priest in New York City and a former Carthusian; he was at the order’s head monastery, Grande Chartreuse, for almost five years. And, the liqueur company followed the path of its founders and remained patient. “We have had to learn to live with the virus,” Rochez said, and that will take time. At Chartreuse, luckily, there’s nothing but time.

“The Carthusians have a wonderful perspective,” Father Holleran said. “The days pass very quickly when you’re immersed in the shadow of eternity.”



Emmanuel Delafon (left), Chartreuse Diffusion CEO, with Father Dom Benoît. Benoît was one of the monks over-seeing production until he recently stepped down

A Millennium Ago

THE YEAR WAS 1084, and seven men in search of isolation and solitude took refuge in southeastern France's Chartreuse Mountains—"the emerald of the Alps," as the French writer known as Stendhal called them. According to legend, centuries later, in 1605, the order's monastery near Paris received an alchemist's ancient manuscript for a perfectly concocted medicinal tonic of about 130 herbs and plants: the "Elixir of Long Life."

The monks studied and slowly refined the recipe until by 1764 they had a potent (69 per cent alcohol) Elixir Végétal, which a lone monk,

Frère Charles, delivered by mule to nearby towns and villages. In 1840, the monks formulated a milder version, Green Chartreuse (55 per cent alcohol), and a sweeter Yellow Chartreuse (43 per cent). Both have become popular cocktail ingredients, while the Elixir continues to be sold medicinally for ailments such as indigestion, sore throat, and nausea.

Today, the order sells about 1.5 million bottles of its three hallmark products annually, with the yellow and green liqueurs going for about £45, and cask-aged versions for £133 or more. About half its production run is sold in France, with the United States the largest export market.

Royalties go back to 370-some Carthusian monks and nuns residing in 24 charter houses spread across the globe, including Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Remarkably, among them, only two monks know the full 130-ingredient recipe.

“The secret of Chartreuse has long

“NO ONE HAS BEEN ABLE TO DUPLICATE THE CHARTREUSE, OR EVER COULD”

been the despair of distillers, just as the natural blue of forget-me-nots has been the despair of painters,” reads an 1886 document referred to in a recent history of the company and order. Father Holleran spent almost five years overseeing the distillation process, ordering ingredients and planning its production schedules. When he departed the site in 1990, he became the only living outsider to know the liqueur’s ancient formula.

“It’s safe with me,” he said. “Oddly enough, they didn’t make me sign anything when I left.” But the formula is extremely complicated, he adds, and involves lived expertise passed on through generations. “No one has ever been able to duplicate the Chartreuse, or could ever do so.”

This trade secret is both a marketing coup and a potential catastrophe. “I am very scared always,” a Chartreuse Diffusion president told *The New Yorker* in 1984. “Only three of the brothers know how to make it—nobody else knows the recipe. And each morning they drive together to the distillery. And they drive a very old car. And they drive it very badly.” He added, “I really have no idea what it is I sell.”

Beyond the two monks who now protect the recipe, Brother Jean-Jacques and Brother Raphaël Marie, all the others—Carthusian or not—involved in the production of Chartreuse know only fragments of it.

Old-Fashioned Quality Control

INSIDE THE GRANDE Chartreuse, skilled monks receive, measure, and sort 130 unlabelled plants and herbs into giant sacks. Then, at the distillery, five non-Carthusian employees work alongside two white-robed monks to macerate, distill, blend, and age the liqueur. A computerised system allows them to monitor the distilling from the monastery. Along its five-week distilling process, and throughout the subsequent years of ageing, those two monks are also the ones who taste the product and decide when it is ready to be bottled and sold.

“They are the quality control,” said Emmanuel Delafon, the current CEO of Chartreuse Diffusion. The order owns the company almost exclusively,

and works with the business's secular employees, who carry out the tasks too foreign to the monks' hermetic vocation. "It's their product, and we're at their service," Delafon said. "They need it to maintain their financial independence. They trust us to make the link between monastic life and everything else."

In 1935, the city of Voiron became the liqueur's main manufacturing site. But in 2011, Delafon said, regional officials tightened distilling regulations, mostly aimed at the hazards of making such high-proof alcohol—fires and vapour-fuelled explosions, notably. After all, the Elixir barely escapes the International Air Transport Organisation's threshold for dangerous goods. Officials deemed the Chartreuse distillery dangerously close to schools and homes.

So, looking for a new production home, Chartreuse settled on a plot of land previously owned and farmed by the Carthusians starting in the 17th century. By 2020 the entire process, from distillation to bottling, had moved to its new £15 million facility in rural Aiguenoire. It's a 15-minute drive from Chartreuse's mountainside headquarters and two miles from

the source of water used to make the liqueur. "The Carthusians came home," Delafon said.

With the growing concerns over the health effects of sugar and alcohol, two major ingredients in liqueur, the company is exploring other plant-based products that could be more in line, morally, with the monastery's values: herbal medicine, aromatherapy, balms, and ointments, for example. It would not be the first time the Carthusians reinvent themselves. Over their nearly 1,000-year history, the order has recovered from natural disasters, government expulsions, pestilence, and poverty. "Every time, they have lifted themselves up, recovered, and redefined themselves," said Nadège Druzkowski, the documentary maker.

That willingness to transform while remaining loyal to the order's legacy is both a luxury and a safeguard during times of turmoil, according to Delafon. "When you have roots this deep," he said, "it allows you to forget the short term and project your vision far into the future." ■

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES (DECEMBER 17, 2020), COPYRIGHT © 2020 BY THE NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY.

The Dogfather

All Golden Retrievers descend from a single mating pair—a Flat-Coated Retriever named Nous and a Tweed Water Spaniel named Belle. The pair were mated back in 1868 and their first litter of four golden pups were named Primrose, Ada, Cowslip and Crocus

SOURCE: DOGS THE ULTIMATE DICTIONARY OF OVER 1,000 DOG BREEDS BY DESMOND MORRIS

My Great Escape:

Pretty Plymouth

Our reader Caroline Brazier reflects on a Devon adventure

LAST YEAR MY FAMILY AND I decided to staycation. We wanted to travel as far away as possible from our home in London to a place we had not been before and decided, mainly because of its beaches, on the port city of Plymouth in South Devon.

After a long drive we arrived and headed straight to Mount Batten beach. From the car park to the beach was about a five minute walk down a lovely pathway. Walking down we had great views of the beach and the ocean with picturesque green hills all around. Mount Batten is a rocky, shingle, and coarse sand beach with many rocky pools. There were some swimmers and surfers in the sea and many people on the beach. We stayed here till late in the evening, enjoying a bonfire that some other beach goers had lit on the beach.

The following day we were excited



to see more of Plymouth and headed straight to beautiful West Hoe Park. West Hoe Park is a beautiful green park with a large children's play area and beautiful views overlooking the



ocean. There is a miniature railway, crazy golf course, trampolines, merry-go-rounds, bouncy castles, and go-carts. Lots of fun activities for the kids who had a wonderful time and did not want to leave the park when us parents decided it was eventually time to move on.

We walked on along Hoe Promenade to Hoe Park. It was a beautiful sunny day and despite the many tourists, we had a lovely peaceful stroll around the park and visited the iconic lighthouse, Smeaton's Tower.

The last day of our trip was the highlight of our entire visit. It was spent on what we considered to be the most beautiful beach of Plymouth.

Our journey to this beach took us up a narrow and very steep road and then along the beautiful countryside where some donkeys were grazing in the fields. The journey was well worth it because we discovered Bovisand Beach. Bovisand Beach is a lovely sandy beach with rocky pools and beautiful scenic green hills all around. Access from the cliffside parking lot to the beach is approximately a five-minute walk down a steep step path.

The kids loved it in Plymouth. They made some great friends on the beach and had so much fun swimming and playing in the ocean. ■



Tell us about your favourite holiday (send a photo too) and if we print it, we'll pay £50. Email excerpts@readersdigest.co.uk

MILK & HONEY

Tel Aviv

HIDDEN
GEMS

Tel Aviv's creative, cosmopolitan vibe is established by fashion boutiques and rooftop bars dotted with daybeds. By its clubbing scene, contemporary-art galleries and liberal white-sand beaches. By an ever-trendier restaurant scene. And, least expectedly, by Israel's first whisky distillery.

Occupying an ex-bakery among workshops and warehouses in ancient Jaffa, the city's original Mediterranean port, Milk & Honey was established in 2014. Under the watch of late master-distiller Dr. Jim Swan—aka the “Einstein of whisky”—it produced premium single malts within a year.

Standard one-hour English tours walk the maze-like facility past 2,000-barrel storage rooms before returning to a small bar and shop. Alternatives factoring in cheese or chocolate-accompanied tastings are also available, as are blending workshops. During all, you'll also learn about ageing processes conducted elsewhere.

Despite its small size, Israel boasts five climate zones, and Milk & Honey utilises this by taking its barrels to each for results visibly distinct in colour and taste. Particularly noteworthy is Apex, a single malt aged in the Dead Sea, the lowest place on Earth, where 50°C temperatures conspire to create an intense tipple.

Named after the Old Testament's description of Israel as “a land flowing with milk and honey”, the distillery further experiments by utilising atypical casts alongside traditional ex-bourbon models. Some have previously housed local pomegranate wine.

Also producing two gins using botanicals from spice-lined Levinsky Market, Milk & Honey is owned by the GKI Group—a company also known for its robotic cocktail-mixing barmaid, Sicily. Innovation, it seems, runs deep here. ■

By Richard Mellor



THE MILK & HONEY
DISTILLERY
2017
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DISTILLERY
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0338
TEL: 01753 852222

Savings You Can Phone In

Costs are going up and money is tight, so any ways to save money are going to be more than welcome.

One area it's common to overspend is your mobile phone. You really shouldn't be paying more than £8 or £10 a month, so if you're currently charged £20, that's at least £120 saved a year. And if your bill is even higher, the savings will be even bigger.

So how do you do this? Here are my quick and simple ways to reduce your bills.



Ditch your existing network

Though there seem to be dozens of different mobile networks, there are actually only four different signals. These are provided by the big four of EE, O2, Three and Vodafone. All the others “piggyback” on one of those, meaning you can find the same signal and coverage (though 5G might not be included—we’ll come back to that).

So there’s no need to be scared that changing provider will mean you lose reception. This opens up a raft of (usually) cheaper alternatives. Though third party comparison sites might still offer decent deals with the larger ones and you can always haggle with your existing network based on the prices you’ve found elsewhere.

You’ll also be able to easily bring your existing phone number with you. You simply text PAC to your old network on 65075. You’ll then be sent a code which you give to your new network, who will move your digits across.

Drop your data limit

Many of us use our phones as mini computers rather than for making calls. As a result networks tend to give you unlimited texts and minutes in your contract, and focus instead on upselling you on data. It’s common to see new tariffs default at 40GB or 50GB and go up

to unlimited usage. But Ofgem research found that the average usage was just 2.3GB a month in 2021, much lower than most allowances. More than half didn’t even use 500MB, so there’s a good chance you’re in this group.

And that means you are overpaying massively. Dropping down to a smaller allowance will mean smaller bills, so it’s worth checking your actual consumption. You should be able to do this in your mobile account or the networks app.

You can find SIMs offering around 7GB or 8GB for under £8 a month. Cheap and more than enough data.

**THERE’S NO NEED
TO BE SCARED THAT
CHANGING PROVIDER
WILL MEAN
YOU LOSE
RECEPTION**



Andy Webb is a personal finance journalist and runs the award-winning money blog, *Be Clever With Your Cash*

Do you need 5G?

The fastest speeds come with 5G coverage, and it's tempting to choose a network that offers this. But to take advantage you need two things. A 5G capable phone and for 5G to be set up in your area. If you don't have both of these, then it's worth shopping around for a cheaper 4G SIM.

Don't update your handset

Going SIM-only is a sure fire way to cut costs. By keeping your existing phone for another year or two, you'll reduce your monthly payments to just the calls, data and texts allowance. Just make sure that if you do stay with your network that the price changes to reflect this.

If you do need or want to upgrade, then try to buy it outright. Yes, this could prove costly, but using savings or 0% finance will help you avoid a hidden surcharge many networks add via contracts.

Turn off data abroad

As a result of leaving the EU, some of

the networks have ditched free mobile roaming in Europe. This could lead to very expensive extra charges for using your phone on holiday, so make sure you check the costs levied by your provider when abroad. Some have introduced daily caps, but they're not always valid outside Europe.

And even if you don't actively use your phone when

away, many apps are still using data in the background. One easy way to avoid these extras is to turn off data roaming before you leave the country.

You should also find out whether you'll be charged to receive voicemail messages. If so, turn that off too before you depart.

Check you're out of contract

These savings will come when you don't have a contract. That

allows you to change your plan or even your network. But if you are still in the midst of a contract that lasts 12, 18, 24 or more months, you'll need to wait or face early cancellation charges. Put the date in the diary, and come back to this article to start cutting your bill. ■



On The Money

Andy Webb

Q: When you do full bank switch what happens with the other accounts you might have with the bank other than the current account? Things such as ISAs, mortgages or credit cards?

-Colin



I'm a big fan of bank switching. It can provide free cash, often worth up to £150, or a better banking experience. The Current Account Switch Service makes it a painless experience, with all your payments in and out moved over to your new bank for you. But the downside (for some) is that your old current account will be closed down.

So you're right to check about other products you have with the old bank. There's no one answer here as it all

depends on each extra account.

There will be some which are only available to customers who also have a current account. A frequent one here is a regular savings account. In this instance, those additional accounts will be closed at the same time.

Another example could be where a fee is waived for a credit card or there's a boosted interest rate on savings. If you lose the current account that provides these extras, you'll also lose those benefits.

But on the whole, most additional products provided by a bank don't require you to have a current account.

So they'll just carry on as they were. If you're not sure what the case is for those you hold, then it's best to check directly with the bank.



Spring Wreathing

Embrace the season with a beautiful wreath

SPRING HAS SPRUNG—and with it, an excuse to update my home décor! To reflect the changing seasons, I've been busy brightening up my home with bursts of greenery and soft pastels. I found some really good artificial plants, which I've turned into an evergreen wreath; the perfect DIY touch of springtime.

I used faux plants to make my wreath, as I plan to hang it on the outside of my front door (so it needs to be waterproof). If you're going to do the same, be sure to use waterproof tape in the first step, and waterproof glue in order to hold the plants in place.

Alternatively, you could opt for dried plants and flowers. These can be extremely long-lasting, so you



can still display your wreath every springtime for years to come.

What to do

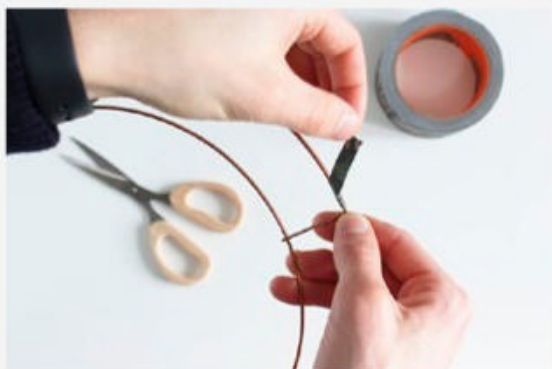
1 First, cover your metal wreath frame with green tape, to help prevent any shiny metal showing through the finished piece. Cut lots of strips of tape, and wind them around the metal until it's completely covered.

2 Next, cut some long, individual stems of your faux greenery. Loosely weave these stems around the metal wreath, one at a time. Wind them all in the same direction, for a more natural feel. Keep adding more stems until you have a good base coverage, with no big gaps. This step can be a little tricky and time consuming—but it's worth persevering until you get a good result.

3 Use strong, waterproof glue to permanently adhere the greenery to

You will need

- Strong super glue
- Green or camo print tape
- Metal wreath frame
- Artificial or dried plants
- Scissors



the frame. Add a few drops to every point that the core stems touch the metal frame, then leave to dry according to the glue instructions.

4 If there are any parts sticking out too far from your frame, simply tuck them into the middle and use some glue to keep them in place (or you can trim them off).

5 If required, glue on some smaller pieces of greenery to fill in any gaps.

6 Finally, add some flowers or buds to the wreath for a pop of colour. I used off-white faux flowers, to add a subtle springtime feel—but you could be more adventurous with brights, pastels or anything else!



This spring wreath is now hanging happily on my front door—it's a nice “welcome home” every time I get back from a long day out. And I love the subtle nod to the changing season... after all, who said wreaths are just for Christmas! ■



Mike Aspinall runs one of the UK's most popular craft blogs, *The Crafty Gentleman*, where he shares free DIY tutorials

Could Made-To-Order Be The Future Of Fashion?

Could a return to made-to-order business models be the answer to the fashion industry's overproduction and overconsumption problems?

IT SHOULDN'T COME as news to anyone that the planet is hurtling towards a climate emergency. And the fashion industry certainly plays its part in this.

While exact figures are the topic of much debate, in 2020, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) calculated that the industry produces ten per cent of annual global carbon dioxide emissions and is estimated to use around 1.5 trillion litres of water every year. The industry's environmental impact is greatly exacerbated by fast fashion. These brands, which release hundreds of new styles every week, have caused trends cycles to speed up exponentially, leading to a gross level of overproduction and overconsumption. British shoppers are buying twice as much as we did a decade ago and quicker trend

turnarounds mean both brands and consumers are disposing of “unfashionable” clothing more often—over £300,000 of it ends up in landfill every year. If this rate of consumption continues, it's estimated that by 2050, fashion will account for more than a quarter of our total impact on climate change. But how do we solve this issue? One answer lies in the new generation of made-to-order brands making their way into the mainstream.

These brands do exactly what they say on the tin—making clothes only as and when they're ordered. It's a far more sustainable approach, and because there's no overproduction, less unwanted stock ends up in landfills. It also promotes a slower fashion model, with pieces taking between three weeks and three months to arrive once purchased. Its focus is on creating special, well-made pieces for consumers to treasure for years to come.

Made-to-order fashion is nothing new. Until the mid-20th century, it was the norm. Western consumers either made their own clothes or

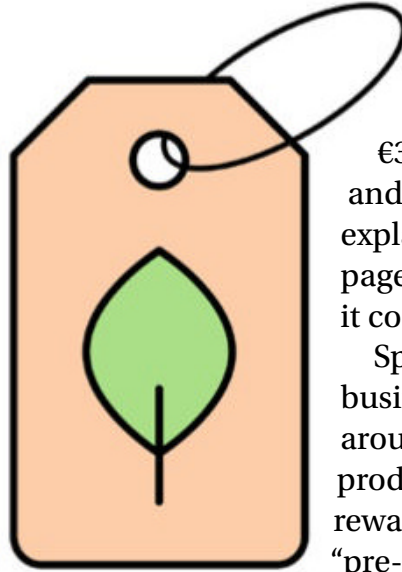


Bec Oakes is a Lancashire-based freelance journalist with particular passions for fashion and culture writing

purchased items made specifically for them. However, the 1960s brought about the dawn of fast fashion and a shift in our relationship with our clothes. The value once placed on craftsmanship and quality was replaced by the desire for low cost and volume, starting a vicious cycle of cut-cost manufacturing (bad quality and bad ethics) and the attitude that clothing should be cheap and disposable.

Of course, made-to-order fashion has continued to exist alongside this, but research by the likes of the IPCC clearly shows that fast fashion reigns supreme. Cue a new age of made-to-order brands bringing bespoke back to the mainstream. **MaisonCléo** is a French clothing company founded by mother-and-daughter duo Nathalie and Marie. The brand's vintage-inspired pieces are made exclusively from dead stock fabrics and can be ordered in either standard sizing or tailor-made. They take limited orders each week which are then handmade and delivered in approximately three weeks.

Alongside a slow business model and responsibly sourced fabrics, **MaisonCléo** also advocates for fair and transparent pricing. While their pieces cost considerably more than



fast fashion's offering—prices range between €30 and €450—the prices and profit margins are explained on every product page to normalise how much it costs to produce ethically.

Spanish brand **Alohas'** business model revolves around an on-demand production process that rewards consumers for “pre-planned responsible shopping.” Every week, they launch a new drop, available to pre-order for a discounted rate for a limited time. From pre-order, Alohas determines how popular each new item is and calculates how many units should be produced to fulfil both pre-orders and future full-price orders, therefore reducing the overproduction of stock.

Buying from such brands certainly demands patience. Nonetheless, they attract loyal customer bases with their social and environmental responsibility, impeccable craftsmanship and evergreen styles.

With made-to-order brands rapidly growing in popularity, it begs the question—could this be the dawn of a new, environmentally responsible era? I certainly hope so. With overproduction and overconsumption fuelling a real climate crisis, a return to the bespoke clothing of yesteryear could be the future of fashion our planet sorely needs. ■

Spicing Things Up



Jenessa Williams extols the benefits of ginger for the mind, body and most specifically, scalp

What is it?

Belonging to the same family as turmeric and cardamom, ginger is a flowering plant, originating in Southeast Asia. Its root is most commonly used as a spice for food flavouring or alternative medicine, but it has also become a key ingredient in many beauty formulas.

What are the supposed benefits?

Ginger contains valuable natural oils such as gingerol, which has powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. Studies show that consuming or applying ginger can improve skin's healing, overall appearance and texture, reducing fine lines and fading acne scars. A powerful antiseptic, ginger is particularly useful as an anti-dandruff ingredient, rejuvenating the scalp while also promoting elasticity and hair growth. Adding ginger to your diet might also help to promote holistic body benefits, with knock-on effects for how you look and

feel. Though studies and depth of research vary, ginger has been thought to treat everything from morning sickness and menstrual pain to weight loss and indigestion, while also lowering blood sugars and reducing the strain of osteoarthritis. All in all, it's a special ingredient indeed.

Does it actually work?

By working to maintain levels of natural yeast and helpful bacteria, flaky scalp sufferers will most likely see swift results from ginger shampoo. You might feel a small tingle at first, but this is just the product going to work, and is actually quite refreshing once you get used to the sensation. If you'd rather keep things simple, buy ginger root and prepare at home. Remove the skin with a peeler and finely chop or grate depending on your intended use. The options are plentiful; steep into a tea, bake into a cake or add to a homemade hair or face mask, rinsing well when done. If properly wrapped, unpeeled roots can be kept for up to six months in the freezer, ensuring you always have a good stash when an ailment calls. ■

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A TASTE OF
HOME



Asma Khan

Ma's Prawns

Ma was a formidable person. She came to help my grandmother look after my mother when she was born. When my mother got married, Ma moved to my parents' flat and was an integral part of our family. We always called her Ma, or "mother", which may have seemed strange to outsiders who probably saw her as a regular *ayah* or *bua* (a traditional nursemaid in some Indian households). This is the prawn dish she always made for me whenever I returned home from England. It's a simple, heart-warming, no-fuss dish, that I like to serve with plain boiled rice.

METHOD:

1. Put the onions in a food processor and blitz to a paste (Ma would have used a stone grinder).
2. Heat the oil in a heavy-based pan over a medium–high heat. Add half of the onion paste and cook until it turns light brown. Add the remaining onion paste, ginger, garlic, turmeric, chilli powder, cumin, ground coriander, green chillies, salt and 4 tablespoons of water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Remove the lid, increase the heat and cook the paste until you can see the oil coming to the surface. Add the prawns and cook, uncovered, over medium heat for 10–15 minutes until the prawns have changed colour and are cooked through.
4. Serve immediately, garnished with coriander.

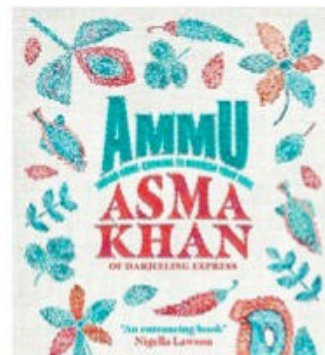
INGREDIENTS:

Serves: 6

- 3 onions
- 150ml mustard oil (if you can't find it, use vegetable oil)
- 1 tsp ginger paste
- 1/2 tsp garlic paste
- 1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 1/2 tsp chilli powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground coriander
- 2 green chillies, slit in half
- 1 tsp salt
- 1.25kg raw peeled prawns, de-veined
- fresh coriander, to garnish

Note

If you are using mustard oil, you need to heat it to smoking point to reduce the pungency of the oil. Please ensure your kitchen is well ventilated so the oil does not set off the smoke alarm. Leave the oil to cool slightly before starting the recipe.



Extracted from *Ammu* by Asma Khan (Ebury Press, £26), photography by Laura Edwards

World Kitchen

Taiwan:

Beef noodle soup





Spicy beef noodle soup is the ultimate Taiwanese comfort food, which you'll find everywhere across this beautiful island country: restaurants, night markets and food courts. It's a symphony of spicy, savoury, fresh and salty notes that really hits the mark when you want to impress your dinner guests with something intricate and unusual, or when you're just in the mood for spending some time in the kitchen and putting your knives and chopping boards to good use.

Method:

1. Fill a large pot with water and add the beef shank, half of the spring onions, half of the ginger slices, and half of the anise pods. Cover, bring to a boil over high heat, and cook for 5 minutes.
2. Remove the meat from the pot and cut into thick, 1-inch slices. Discard the cooking liquid.
3. In a wok or large pan over medium-high heat, pour in the vegetable oil and add the remaining spring onions, ginger slices, the garlic, red chillies, remaining star anise pods, the onion and bean paste. Cook until the onions start to become translucent.
4. Add the sliced beef.
5. Add the soy sauce, stir, then add the rice wine.
6. Add the tomatoes. Stir-fry for 10 minutes.
7. Fill a large pot about a quarter of the way with water and heat over medium-high heat. Add the stir-fried meat, vegetables, and cooking liquid.
8. Add enough water so that the meat is covered, then add the pepper, salt, and bay leaves. Cover and reduce the heat to low and simmer for at least 2 hours, until the meat becomes tender. Remove the bay leaves and star anise before serving.
9. Bring a large pot of water to boil over high heat and cook the flour noodles according to the package instructions. Remove the noodles from the water.
10. Add the bok choy to the boiling water. Cook for 4 minutes, then remove.
11. To assemble the soup, place a generous amount of noodles in the bottom of a bowl. Then, add bok choy, meat, and broth. Garnish with chopped coriander.

Ingredients:

- **900g beef shank**
- **6 spring onions**, halved crosswise
- **8 slices fresh ginger**
- **6 pods star anise**
- **120g vegetable oil**
- **6 garlic cloves**
- **2 red chillies**, halved lengthwise
- **1 medium white onion**, sliced
- **3 tbsp bean paste**
- **120ml soy sauce**
- **120ml rice wine**
- **2 medium tomatoes**, quartered
- **1 tsp pepper**
- **1 tsp salt**
- **5 bay leaves**
- **2 bundles of flour noodles**
- **3 bok choy**

For garnish

- **fresh coriander**, chopped



State Of The Art: **Danielle Dean**

Multi-disciplinary artist Danielle Dean on her latest project, “Amazon”

How would you describe your art?

My practice is about culture, media, advertising and film—how those material histories have an influence on the ways we behave and how we talk to each other. I’m interested in the idea that there’s nothing pure about our way of being, and that it comes from a history of stuff that we generate, that we consume, and that we repeat.

You work across many different mediums—painting, installation, performance, video—do you have a personal favourite?

My favorite is video, because when it works, it’s so exciting. And it feels like it makes the most sense for some of the ways that I work, because I often work with real people. For “Amazon”, I worked with workers who use the crowd-sourcing platform, Amazon Mechanical Turk. Working with video meant that I could connect with them and find ways to collaborate with them in the project. The video becomes a thing that we’re collaborating together to make, and something that we can all use, or share and be proud of afterwards. But video is also super expensive, and it takes a long time, and it’s exhausting. So after making a



video, sometimes, I think, *Oh, let me just go back to the studio and paint.*

Your work questions how we're shaped by commercial narratives. When did your interest in that begin?

I think that it was sparked when I was living in London after my fine art degree, when I spent a couple of years working in an advertising firm. That was so revealing to me, because we watch adverts on TV and take it for granted—you don't necessarily understand how they are put together, or for what reason. When I did my MFA at CalArts, I started looking at the history of advertising, archives going back to the first print ad in a black and white newspaper.

Do you recall any adverts that made a particular impression on you? I used to love the Cadbury ads. Nowadays you can get away with not seeing ads the way that you used to, because we all stream television. You're still bombarded by it, but not in the same way—it's getting harder and harder to disentangle ourselves. If I have one look at an advert, Instagram seems to know that and then millions of that same ad for say, face cream, bombard you. It's a bit more psychologically damaging than it would be just watching television ads. It feels way more targeted and personal. ■

"ART NOW: Danielle Dean" is on show at the Tate Britain until May 28



★★★★☆

THE WORST PERSON IN THE WORLD

If you see one melancholic Norwegian indie this year, then you better make it Joachim Trier's *The Worst Person in the World*.

This film has already won its star Renate Reinsve the Best Actress prize in Cannes. Now it's up for a host of awards including two Oscars, accolades this life-affirming tale of love, death and indecision richly deserves. Reinsve plays Julie, a medical student in Oslo who quits to pursue psychology. Still unsatisfied, she then considers photography, almost on a whim, as she scrolls through her phone looking at her pictures. Brilliantly embodied by Reinsve, who makes her feel so relatable and real, Julie's a character we've all met before. Approaching her 30th birthday at the outset, her occupation isn't the only thing troubling her. Is she ready for kids, love, commitment? Even when she

meets Aksel (Anders Danielsen Lie), a successful, provocative comic book artist some 15 years her senior, she is left teetering on the brink of the rest of her life, feeling there might be something else out there for her.

Told in chapters, the film gradually builds towards something profound. Life is precious and fleeting and Trier offers no sentimental Hollywood ending here. Instead, he evocatively explores Julie's inner psyche—notably in the visually arresting scene where she runs through the city streets with cars, pedestrians, and cyclists all frozen in time.

Filled too with poignant exchanges—Lie's speech about his world gradually disappearing hits a nerve—this is a remarkably textured work that you won't forget in a hurry.

By James Mottram

The Worst Person in the World is Norway's official submission for the Best International Feature Film award at this year's Oscars. But make sure you don't miss these other exceptional contenders from around the world...



THE HAND OF GOD, Italy

Visionary director Paolo Sorrentino returns with another vivid, beautifully aching piece of cinema, this time set in his hometown of Naples. Said to be his most personal film to date, *The Hand of God* stars his ever-charismatic, long-time collaborator, Toni Servillo.



FLEE, Denmark

Continuously lauded by critics since day one, *Flee* is a striking animation film about love, self-discovery and the refugee experience. It is also the first film to be simultaneously eligible for consideration in the Oscar categories for Animated Feature, Documentary Feature, and International Feature Film.



LAMB, Iceland

This dark little gem of a film won the Prize of Originality at the 2021 Cannes film festival, and deservedly so. It's an unnerving, genre-defying story about a couple on a remote farm in rural Iceland, who find their quiet existence shaken by the discovery of a mysterious newborn among their sheep.



HIVE, Albania

A powerful, unsparing drama about an Albanian widow, mother and entrepreneur in post-war Kosovo, anchored by outstanding performances and a no-nonsense approach to its difficult subject matter. *Hive* became the first film to win all three main awards at the Sundance film festival.

• TELEVISION

Ideas cross borders ever faster in the digital age. The mega hit Scandie crime drama **The Bridge** inspired two variants: the Anglo-French **The Tunnel** (similar crimes, under the English Channel) and the altogether Teutonic **Der Pass** (NOW TV), which finds mismatched German and Austrian detectives counting corpses in the Bavarian Alps. Its second series demonstrates a desire to pursue a more distinctive, densely atmospheric path, its damaged, compromised leads compelling even as the plot cracks like ice beneath their feet. There's nothing drastically new under its low winter sun, but it grips nevertheless.

Larkier is **Murderville** (Netflix), an appreciably slick US upscale of the BBC's *Murder in Successville*. It has a unique pitch: in each episode, a hard-bitten cop (Will Arnett, returning to *Arrested Development* form) breaks in a new sidekick played by an actual celebrity. Twist: the celebs must improvise their responses, a wrinkle



that keeps even the most humdrum of the show's whodunnits fresh, while foregrounding the potential for mischief in making TV. The best episodes are saved for last:

Sharon Stone reminds us she's an absolute star, while Ken Jeong can barely survive a scene without infectious giggling.

Looking beyond the myriad *Masked Singers* and *Iron Chefs*, **Last One Laughing: Canada** (Prime Video) forms the latest, starriest incarnation of a Japanese format that's basically *Big Brother* with comedians. Spring also promises **Ten Per Cent** (also Prime), a British adaptation of French fave *Call My Agent!* overseen by WIA's John Morton. After that come Hindi, Tamil and Telugu variations on Prime's **Modern Love**, the romantic portmanteau drawn from columns in *The New York Times*. Can we still moan about repeats when the shows are broadcast in another tongue?

by Mike McCahill



Retro Pick:

The Office: An American Workplace
S1-9 (Netflix)

This century's most successful transatlantic transfer: fonder than the Gervais-Merchant original, but with increasingly sharp characters and gags.

*Album Of The Month:****My Life in Music***

by Ruth Slenczynska



to evoke a rainbow of emotions.

Some of the most affecting works in this collection include the knowingly ambiguous “Nocturne” by Samuel Barber, played here with poise and appreciation of its

bountiful, if puzzling, emotional landscape; Chopin’s larger than life Etude Op. 10 No. 3—a luminous tone poem, interpreted by Slenczynska with subtlety and elegance; and another taste of Barber’s fiery musical temperament by means of the staggering *Fresh from West Chester* and its irresistible uneasiness bubbling underneath the unpredictable harmonies.

It would be a crude generalisation to state that the Slenczynska’s age and near-unparalleled wealth of experience lends her an upper hand when interpreting these pieces, and yet, learning more about her career, one can’t help but imagine that the course her life took plays a special role in the way she elevates and brings this music to life. See, Rachmaninoff was one of her early piano teachers, Barber became her friend and mentor when she was just five, while Chopin speaks powerfully to her Polish roots. Now that’s what you call a life lived in music.

This new album from Polish-American pianist Ruth Slenczynska marks a remarkable comeback: at the age of 96, she returns to Decca after a 65-year-long break, having done her first session with the label in 1956. It was these Fifties’ recordings that became her biggest claim to fame, paving the way for a lengthy and luminous career in classical music.

Listening to the limber, delicate notes cascading down the pianist’s fingertips, there’s not a single thing to suggest that even a iota of Slenczynski’s dexterity or skill has faded with time. The record is a virtuosic, astute and emotionally satiating collection of some of the most beloved—and the musician’s favourite—piano pieces by composers like Chopin, Barber and Rachmaninoff, thoughtfully curated

by Eva Mackevic

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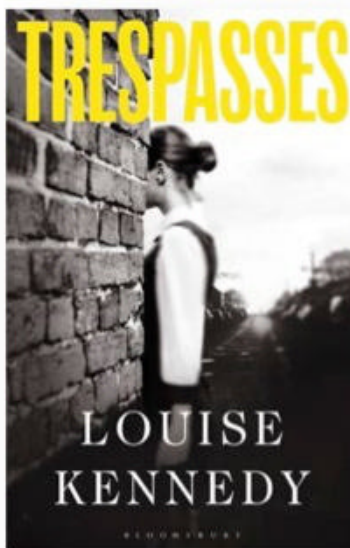
Trespases

by **Louise Kennedy**

(Bloomsbury, £14.99)

Near the beginning of Louise Kennedy's blistering debut novel, 24-year-old Cushla starts chatting in a pub to a promising-looking man called Michael. When she tells him she's a teacher, he asks what school she works at—which in most contexts would merely be small talk. But not in the Northern Ireland of the 1970s, where the book is set. Here, it means only one thing: he wants to know whether she's Catholic or Protestant.

And from there the all-encompassing sectarianism never lets up, as Kennedy plunges us deep into a time and place where the coily named "Troubles"



dominate every aspect of life, from the bedroom to the classroom (even Cushla's seven-year-old pupils are depressingly fluent in the language of petrol bombs, rubber bullets and gelignite).

If this makes *Trespases* sound like a rather dark and intense read, that certainly wouldn't be inaccurate—especially given that Cushla has an alcoholic widowed mother to deal with as well. Yet it's also a thrillingly readable one, bursting with both anger and a touching compassion for (most of) the people caught up in a situation they're powerless to change.

Meanwhile, Cushla being Catholic and Michael Protestant doesn't stop



James Walton is a book reviewer and broadcaster, and has written and presented 17 series of the BBC Radio 4 literary quiz *The Write Stuff*

them from embarking on a relationship. Nor does the fact that he's twice her age and married. He's considerably posher too—allowing Kennedy to demonstrate a sharp eye for such signifiers of middle-class Seventies sophistication as aubergines, taramasalata and wine in raffia bottles.

It is, however, no coincidence that the writer Cushla most relates to is Thomas Hardy—because her experiences here are not unlike those of the characters unfortunate enough to feature in his novels. So it is that she's overwhelmed by a tragedy—or series of tragedies—brought about by a combination of sheer bad luck, her own massively over-punished mistakes and the cruelty of the world in which she finds herself.

Trespases, then, is not a book for those who fancy a comfort read. Nonetheless, as one terrible incident after another piles up with irresistible, gut-wrenching power, it's clear that in Louise Kennedy (a latecomer to writing after 30 years as a chef) we have a new literary star.

Name the character

Can you guess the fictional character from these clues (and, of course, the fewer you need the better)?

1. She goes to Crunchem Hall school.
2. Her surname is Wormwood.
3. Her teachers include Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull.

Answer on p126

Paperbacks

My Farming Life

by **Emma Gray** (Sphere, £9.99).

The Northumbrian shepherdess, as seen on BBC TV, with a warm and revealing account of remote country living (cows, horses and dogs also featured).

The Island Home

by **Libby Page** (Orion, £7.99).

If you *do* fancy a comfort read (see review opposite), this lovely, uplifting tale of a woman returning to the Scottish island of her childhood should hit the spot nicely.

Where Did I Go Right?

by **Geoff Norcott** (Monoray, £9.99).

Norcott, who grew up in a working-class, solidly Labour family, explains what turned him into one of the few Tory-voting stand-up comedians.

Silverview

by **John le Carré** (Penguin, £8.99).

The last complete novel by the much-missed le Carré. Shows he was in pretty much top form to the end.

The Little Book of Wales

by **Mark Lawson-Jones** (The History Press, £9.99). Lively and fact-packed guide to all things Welsh.

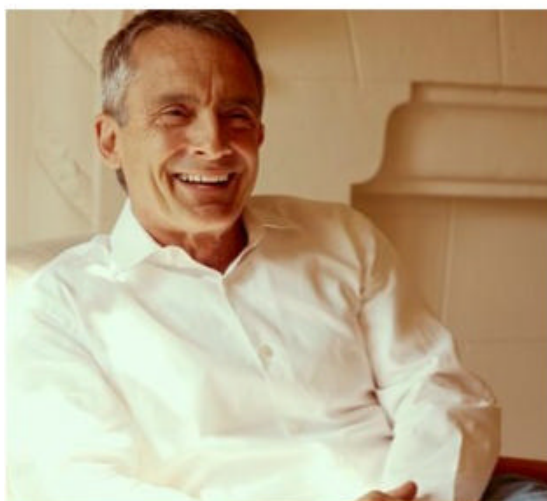
READER'S DIGEST RECOMMENDED READ:

Unbridled Passion

Playwright Laurence Olivier's first tumultuous marriage to Jill Esmond is the subject of a riveting biography

“**R**EAL PASSION—I’ve only seen it that once,” Laurence Olivier’s first wife Jill Esmond told their son Tarquin. “If you are ever hit by it, God help you.” The passion she referred to was the one that destroyed her marriage. In 1937, Olivier left her and 11-month-old Tarquin and eloped with Vivien Leigh, who crept away from her sleeping husband and toddler in the middle of the night to join him. Olivier, known to everyone as Larry, apparently felt guilty for the rest of his life. Nonetheless both he and Vivien genuinely seem to have felt that the depth of their “real passion” gave them no choice.

Not that they lived happily ever after—as Stephen Galloway makes jaw-droppingly, yet sympathetically clear. *Truly Madly* provides a rich, often nicely gossipy guide to their acting careers (Galloway is particularly good on the behind-the-scenes ructions during the filming



of *Gone with the Wind*, where Leigh famously played Scarlett O’Hara). Nonetheless, it’s their increasingly lurid relationship that occupies centre-stage, as Vivien’s mental illness deepens and her behaviour becomes wildly erratic.

Somehow their continuing love—which the book makes clear too—kept them together for 20 years, until Olivier finally went off with Joan Plowright. Even so, a friend found him towards the end of his life, frail and ill, watching old Vivien Leigh

movies alone with tears in his eyes. "This, this was love," he murmured. "This was the real thing."

The real thing, mind you, didn't prevent either of them from having several affairs. One of Vivien's was with Peter Finch—and in 1953, while Olivier was in Europe, the two were filming together in LA when Finch's wife Tamara came to visit...

“ Arriving in California, Tamara was shocked to discover that her husband was sharing a house with Vivien, each theoretically living in a separate wing of the mansion, which Paramount had rented. Tamara began to unpack while the two stars were at the studio. Hours later, 'Peter, followed by Vivien, rushed in and embraced me warmly,' recalled Tamara.

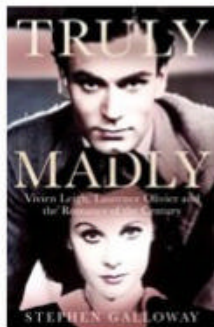
She was startled when Vivien told her to hurry up and get ready, because guests would be there 'in half an hour.' Guests? Only now did she learn that Vivien had arranged a welcome party and invited 70 famous friends, including David Niven and Stewart

Granger: the sort of VIPs designed to intimidate this inexperienced young woman. But when the partygoers arrived, Vivien was nowhere to be found. Then, as the evening wore on, 'shouts and loud sobs pierced the conversation, and all heads turned towards the portico. Peter's panic-stricken running steps reverberated in the stunned silence. He shouted to David Niven to come up, he needed some help. "Can I do anything?" I asked. No, I was to sit down with my guests. After a while Stewart Granger's help was requested.'

Minutes later, 'Vivien began to rush down the stairs screaming, crying and fighting, restrained by Niven and Granger, then forcibly taken upstairs again, shouting "Larry, Larry. I want Larry!'. The waiters calmly started to clear the tables, pretending to be deaf and dumb. Although they were used to Hollywood dramas, this one was on a major scale. Finally, the noise appeared to stop.'

Tamara collapsed into bed, her limbs entwined with Finch's, when 'our bedroom door flew open and a demented-looking Vivien, her light robe open and disclosing her naked body, rushed to our bed and with tremendous energy and screaming obscenities tore off the bedclothes. On discovering us naked, she threw herself on Peter in great passionate embraces. He pushed her away and she collapsed at the foot of the bed sobbing, shouting, "You haven't told

***Truly Madly:
Vivien Leigh,
Laurence Olivier
and the Romance
of the Century*** by
Stephen Galloway
is published by
Sphere at £25



her! How could you be sleeping with her, you monster? You're my lover!"

The news came like a 'thunderbolt,' remembered Tamara. 'I was stunned. Peter, who had quickly grabbed a robe, was shaking with anger. He tried to get Vivien to her feet, but she was clinging to his legs. He got her up, but she clung to his head and pressed her lips to his. He unfastened himself, pushed her back, pinned her arms against the wall and shouted, "We'd agreed to keep Larry and Tamara out of this, last night—we'd agreed to keep it secret, not to hurt anyone, and to finish it all."

When he released Vivien, she 'menacingly, forcefully, pushed him and started fighting, calling him every dirty word, forcing him to make a choice between us. He shouted that it had been agreed that they both would remain married. He yelled at her, overpowered her again, dragged her to her part of the house, then, leaving her there sobbing, shut all the doors between her and us.' ”

Answer to Name the Character:

Matilda—in the book by Roald Dahl.

Published in 1988, it was one of his last works, and became his fastest selling, with half a million paperbacks sold in Britain in six months.



Stephen Galloway's Favourite ShowBiz Biographies

***Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah.**

This bestseller about growing up in Apartheid South Africa is one of the funniest/saddest stories you'll ever read.

***By Myself* by Lauren Bacall.**

Bogie and Bacall remain the quintessential movie couple. But it was only after Bogie's tragic death that Bacall came into her own.

***My Autobiography* by Charles Chaplin.** The film industry has never produced a genius like Chaplin. He grew up in Dickensian poverty—and created some of the greatest movies ever made.

***The Kid Stays in the Picture* by Robert Evans.** No Hollywood huckster had the razzle-dazzle of Bob Evans. Don't just read about his rise from salesman to *Godfather* executive: get the audio version and be seduced by his slippery charm.

***The Name above the Title* by Frank Capra.** Capra came to America as a desperately poor child and became one of its major directors. His story grabbed me at age 12 in Maidenhead library and it's never let me go.

Books

THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Magical realism writer Menna van Praag is the author of five fantasy novels all set in Cambridge. Her latest, *Night of Demons and Saints*, (Bantam Press, £14.99) is available now



The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

My adoration of Oscar Wilde was a gift from my father who introduced me to the novels and plays. The original film of *The Importance of Being Earnest* was a firm favourite and, when I was 16, my father took me to a stage production with Dame Maggie Smith as Lady Bracknell. When, rather than attempting to outdo Edith Evans, Smith chose to cover her mouth and leave the “a handbag!” line unexpressed, she brought the house down. It remains one of the best theatre-going experiences of my life. My love for Oscar came full circle when I named my son in his honour.



Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

Another book read at my father's knee and one that ignited my imagination and shaped my writing life. My desire to fall down a rabbit

hole that might take me to Wonderland surpassed my other childhood wish to step through a wardrobe into Narnia. Wonderland with its Cheshire Cat and never-ending tea parties—reflected in a life-long love of cats and cakes—suited me much better. I own more editions of *Alice in Wonderland* than I'd care to admit and have a slightly embarrassing but nevertheless unquenchable thirst for Alice paraphernalia.

The House of the Spirits by Isabel Allende

I read this as a teenager, also recommended by my father, and it was the novel that set me on the path to being a writer of magical realism. I was absolutely entranced by the plethora of characters and their strange, but unquestioned, quirks. Until then I hadn't realised that authors for adults (Tolkien being banned in our house) were allowed to make such literary leaps and thus, for better or worse, Allende tilted the slant of my pen towards the fantastical. When I later discovered Angela Carter, my destiny was set.



Can Tech Finally Make Me Healthy?

James O'Malley on the benefits of turning exercise into a video game

BACK IN JANUARY, like everyone else in Britain, my partner and I resolved to get fit and take exercise seriously. Again. The problem is that to actually do this, instead of just posting our good intentions on Facebook, we actually needed to put the effort in. This would mean spending hours every week grunting, stretching and sweating our way to better health, which is something that is particularly difficult when you glance at the weather outside and see ominous clouds on the horizon.

“Looks like it is about to rain, I guess I’ll go for a run tomorrow instead,” I would lie to myself. But then just as we were on the verge of giving up again, we discovered a brilliant new way to make exercise better: by turning it into a video-game.

Zwift is essentially a cycling game

that you control by pedalling your real bike, mounted into a device called a turbo-trainer. This replaces the rear wheel and makes it stationary, like an exercise bike. As you pedal, the trainer sends signals back to your computer, tablet or Apple TV box, to control the character on screen. And smartly, the game sends back instructions to the trainer to apply different levels of resistance, so that as you’re cycling up a hill in the game, you can actually feel it on the bike.

So one small garage renovation later and after signing up for a £12/month subscription, we had our TV, bike and all-important cooling fan ready to go.

Once you’re set up, you can participate in virtual cycle rides in 3D-recreations of real places, like London and New York, or in fantastical fictional locations invented by the game designers. And importantly, you’re not alone. As you cycle along The Mall towards Buckingham Palace, or pedal around the perimeter of Central Park, other real human cyclists appear alongside you, sharing the journey.

And the strange thing is, though it is obviously only a game, just seeing the character move is surprisingly motivating, even if in reality, you’re not trekking through the wilderness, and are actually just surrounded by old paint cans and your lawnmower.

I think the genius is that it has

used lots of the tricks of traditional video-games to keep pushing you that little bit further and harder: go a little faster, and you'll be rewarded with a little achievement marker, and if you pedal harder, you might win a race against another real player. It's essentially triggering the same sort of dopamine hits as reaching the next level or unlocking a new item in a

regular video game, that grimly grinding along on a traditional exercise bike simply can't match.

I'm not the only person who has noticed this—the rest of the tech industry has too. Today there are many other companies chasing the same audience, and they all offer their own unique twists on the formula. ■

Teenage triathletes training on an indoor cycling turbo trainer and the online racing platform Zwift during the coronavirus lockdown



GARY CALTON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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SANDWICH

What five-letter word belongs between the word on the left and the word on the right, so that the first and second word, and the second and third word, each form a common compound word or phrase?

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JULIA SCHLEISING, *Flintshire*

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I noticed my neighbour was pregnant again and, out shopping one day, I met her and her small son. I asked her young son whether he wanted his mummy's baby to be a boy or a girl.

He looked at me very intently and retorted, "I want the baby to be Batman!".

JOANNE AITCHISON, *Wirral*

Several years ago, just having moved up to the north of England from Buckinghamshire, I managed to get a night job in a petrol station. The accents, and a few of the wordings for things were a bit different than what I was used to. However my biggest mistake was on this particular night.

"A packet of tobacco, and a packet of skins please", asked the young man peering at the serving window. I took a guess at what the latter was, as I didn't have a clue what he meant. I returned with the tobacco

as requested, and a packet of Durex. Finally, when he recovered from laughing he told me "skins" meant "cigarette papers".

I never made that mistake again! I found out the true meaning for sure, and no doubt he spread the story to give his friends a laugh, as did I.

SUSAN KING, *Bolton*

Once, a famous entertainer was visiting the care home where I worked and got chatting to an elderly resident. After a while he asked her, "Do you know who I am?"

"No, dear, I'm sorry, I don't," replied the old lady. "But don't worry about it. We all get a bit forgetful now and then. Go and ask that lady over there in the red dress. She's the matron. She'll be able to tell you."

VALERIE CROSSLEY, *Sussex*

I was in the park when a lady called out, "Anyone who wants an ice cream, come over here".

I went over with several others, she handed out the ice creams to them and asked me, "Who are you?"

I then realised that the rest of the people were her family who were having a day out.

I still cringe about it to this day.

GLORIA WILDING, *Merseyside*



"IT WAS YOUR EASTER EGG!"

My mother moved towns and went for her first visit to her new doctor's surgery. The doctor looked through her extensive medical notes on the computer containing her health history and then looked at my mother again.

He commented, "I am pleased to say, with utmost certainty, that you look a whole lot better in person than you do online".

MICHA BRYN, *Liverpool*

My six-month-pregnant niece came to visit and she let my daughter, Simone, stroke her tummy.

Simone asked her, "How are you going to get the baby out?" and my niece told her the doctor would help.

Simone looked really surprised: "There's a doctor in there as well?"

EMMA SMITH, *Flintshire*

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

Word Power

We put language to serious use every day, but words can also be fun. This month, lighten up and see how well you know the sillier-sounding side of English.

BY CRYSTAL BELIVEAU

1. snollygoster—

A: unethical and wily person.
B: rag doll.
C: mountain dragon.

2. hootenanny—

A: sweet bread roll.
B: temporary shelter.
C: celebration.

3. canoodle—

A: covering over a bed.
B: kiss and cuddle.
C: gentle gallop.

4. gunkhole—

A: oil well.
B: rural septic system.
C: shallow, remote cove.

5. panjandrum—

A: powerful, self-important person.
B: Korean spice.
C: instrumental tuba.

6. kerfuffle—

A: two-masted

sailing boat.

B: commotion.
C: seasoned sausage.

7. kibosh—

A: in good working order.
B: hoisting bucket used in mines.
C: stop something.

8. yawp—

A: to talk coarsely.
B: to deviate course.
C: fungous.

9. rigmarole—

A: game played with stick and rubber ring.
B: overly complicated process.
C: long, loose garment.

10. woebegone—

A: winning or attractive.
B: shrivelled with age.
C: sorrowful.

11. moose pasture—

A: worthless land.
B: syrupy pastry.
C: backbenches in Parliament.

12. hemidemi-semiquaver—

A: worm-like marine creature.
B: typeface.
C: $\frac{1}{64}$ of a whole note.

13. gewgaw—

A: showy trifle.
B: colourless gelatin.
C: mantra.

14. gobsmacked—

A: consumed hurriedly.
B: collided face-first into a wall.
C: to be utterly astonished.

15. gonzo—

A: bizarre, far-out.
B: hooked-nosed.
C: loud and emphatic.

Answers

1. snollygoster—[A] unethical and wily person. Andrew suspected his neighbour was too much of a *snollygoster* to trust with his spare key.

2. hootenanny—[C] celebration. For his birthday, my dad's folk friends set up a *hootenanny*.

3. canoodle—[B] kiss and cuddle. In some businesses, employees who *canoodle* can be sacked.

4. gunkhole—[C] shallow, remote cove. Bored of the busy cruising grounds, we nose our small boats into a nearby *gunkhole* for privacy.

5. panjandrum—[A] powerful, self-important person. Know-it-all Maria has become the *panjandrum* of our social committee.

6. kerfuffle—[B] commotion. The debate over the podcast *Serial* started quite a *kerfuffle* at our family dinner.

7. kibosh—[C] stop something. Failing the exam put the *kibosh* on her dreams of being a lawyer.

8. yawp—[A] talk coarsely. "Don't *yawp* like that," Panesh whispered to his friend.

9. rigmarole—[B] overly complicated process. To reset my

password, I had to answer a dozen questions. What a *rigmarole!*

10. woebegone—[C] sorrowful. I'm *woebegone* at the thought of not seeing Jamie for the next six months.

11. moose pasture—[A] worthless land. I considered investing in an iron mine up north, but I was afraid it would turn out to be a *moose pasture*.

12. hemidemisemiquaver—[C] $\frac{1}{64}$ of a whole note. The conductor was frustrated by how I was pausing a *hemidemisemiquaver* at the beginning of each bar.

13. gewgaw—[A] showy trifle. As a parent, you learn that kids appreciate your attention as much as getting some *gewgaw* from the toy shop.

14. gobsmacked—[C] utterly astonished. The waiter's aggressive reaction when I told him the chicken was undercooked left me *gobsmacked*.

15. gonzo—[A] bizarre, far-out; as, Andy's got talent, but his writing is too *gonzo* for my taste.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

7-10: fair

11-12: good

13-15: excellent



PARTNERSHIP
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Don't be an April fool get the facts about equity release

Many of us have big dreams for our years beyond the age of 55, such as clearing an existing mortgage, making home improvements, helping children onto the property ladder, or boosting disposable income

Whatever they may be, you may be figuring out how to fund your goals and it's important to consider all the options available to you and get the facts from somebody you can trust.

That's why we have created our new free guide to equity release. Reader's Digest guides have always helped people get the best out of life, and now we want to help you consider how you can get the best out of your retirement too.

The guide tells you how, at Reader's Digest Equity Release, we specialise in an equity release product known as a Lifetime Mortgage. With this, you can borrow a tax-free sum of cash from the value of your home without being required to make any payments.

Instead, the loan plus added interest is settled when the last homeowner has passed away or moved into permanent long-term care and the home is sold.

Taking from your estate now will reduce its future value and could affect your entitlement to means-tested benefits. Therefore, it's essential to seek professional advice when releasing equity.

So, once you've taken your time to digest all the facts and figures, we can arrange for you to have a free and no-obligation appointment with a fully qualified adviser.

To find out more and get your copy of the Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Equity Release, visit the webpage below or call us and speak to a member of the friendly Information Team.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Readersdigest.co.uk/er2 Call **0800 029 1233**

Reader's Digest Equity Release is a trading style of Responsible Life Limited. Only if you choose to proceed and your case completes will Responsible Life Limited charge an advice fee, currently not exceeding £1,690.

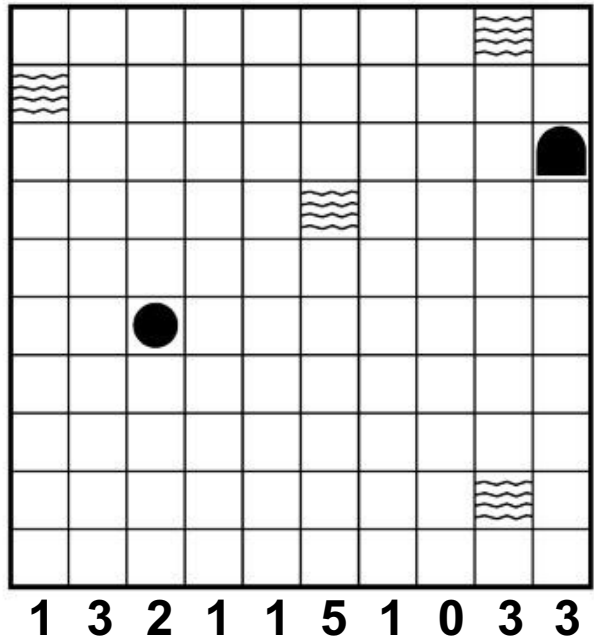
BRAIN TEASERS

Ships

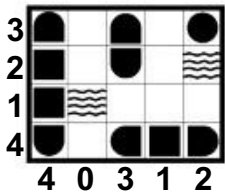
HOW TO PLAY:

Determine the position of the ten ships listed. A square with wavy lines indicates water and will not contain a ship. The numbers indicate how many squares in that row or column contain parts of ships. No two ships touch each other, not even diagonally.

- 2
- 4
- 1
- 2
- ◐ 2
- ◐ 1
- ◐ 1
- ◐ 4
- ◐ 1
- ◐ 2



EXAMPLE:

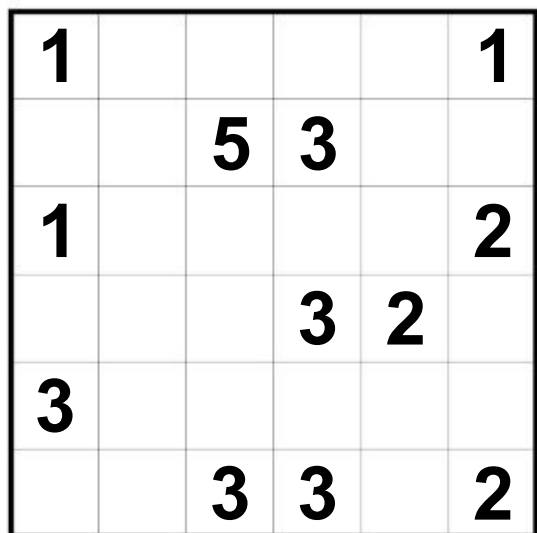
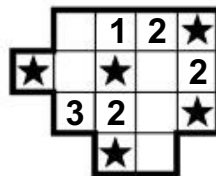


Star Search

HOW TO PLAY:

Find the stars that are hidden in some of the blank squares. The numbered squares indicate how many stars are hidden in squares adjacent to it (including diagonally).

EXAMPLE:



SIXY SUDOKU

1

		4		1	3
6					
	1			2	
	6				
			1	4	5
1					

HOW TO PLAY:
Insert the numbers 1 to 6 just once in each a) row, b) column, c) bold outlined area and d) white or grey rectangle.

2

			5		
	2				
3		1			
				3	
				2	
6	4				

3

	3		2		1
4				5	
6					2

EXAMPLE:

1	2	6	5	3	4
3	5	4	1	2	6
6	4	2	3	5	1
5	1	3	6	4	2
2	3	1	4	6	5
4	6	5	2	1	3

4

				1	
2					4
	3				
					3
	5			4	

5

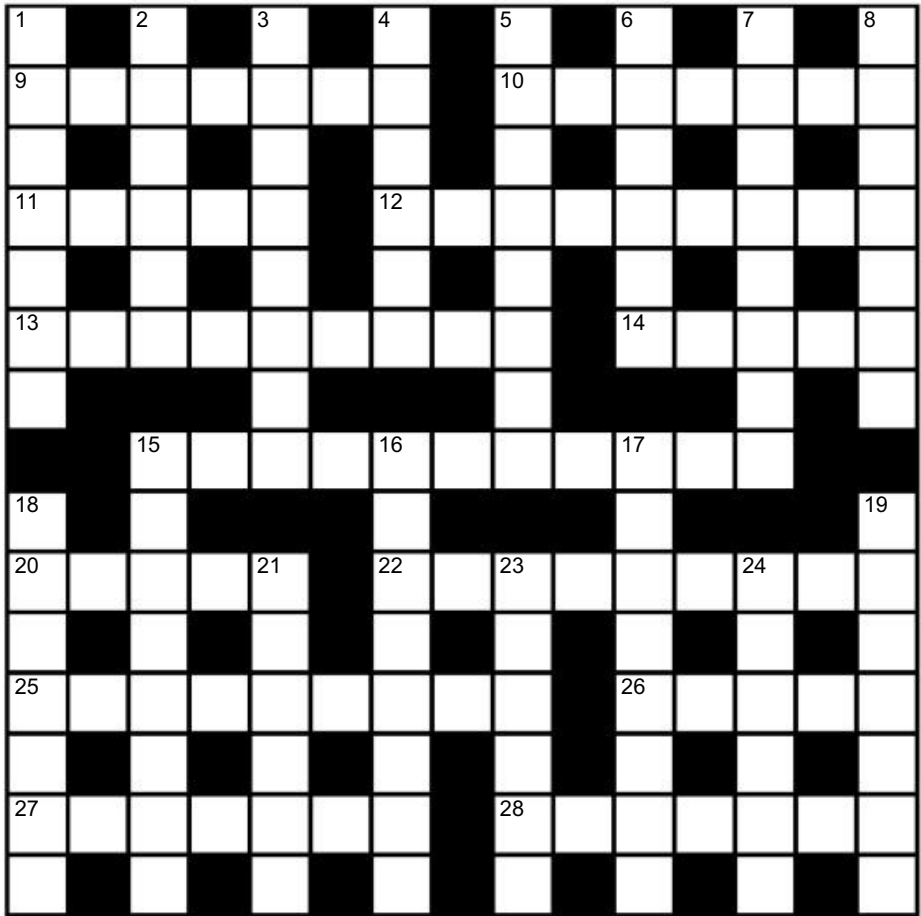
					1
			5		2
3					
4					

BEWARE!
The bold outlined areas are no longer 2x3!

6

				1	
	5				
			6		3
	3				
2					

BRAINTEASERS



CROSSWISE

Test your general knowledge. Answers on p142

ACROSS

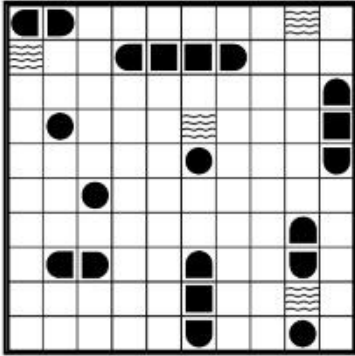
- 9 Roman sea-god (7)
- 10 Exhausted (3,4)
- 11 Mature (5)
- 12 Cheap book edition (9)
- 13 Inflammation of the lungs (9)
- 14 Snares (5)
- 15 Witches (11)
- 20 Have a cow (5)
- 22 Peculiar (9)
- 25 Lack of knowledge (9)
- 26 Greeting (5)
- 27 Fragment (7)
- 28 Loss of memory (7)

DOWN

- 1 Sad (7)
- 2 Natty (6)
- 3 Patron (8)
- 4 Make more intense (6)
- 5 Military aircraft (8)
- 6 Red Bordeaux (6)
- 7 Today (8)
- 8 Most feeble (7)
- 15 Magnificent (8)
- 16 Infinite time (8)
- 17 Fine weather (8)
- 18 Make dim by comparison (7)
- 19 Performer of gymnastic feats (7)
- 21 2nd smallest continent (6)
- 23 Roman general (6)
- 24 Condiment (6)

BRAIN TEASERS ANSWERS

Ships



Star Search

1	★	★	★		1
		5	3		★
1	★	★			2
			3	2	★
3	★	★		★	
★	★	3	3	★	2

SIXY SUDOKU ANSWERS

1

2	5	4	6	1	3
6	3	1	2	5	4
4	1	3	5	2	6
5	6	2	4	3	1
3	2	6	1	4	5
1	4	5	3	6	2

2

4	1	3	5	6	2
5	2	6	4	1	3
3	6	1	2	4	5
2	5	4	1	3	6
1	3	5	6	2	4
6	4	2	3	5	1

3

5	3	6	2	4	1
2	4	1	3	6	5
1	6	5	4	2	3
4	2	3	1	5	6
3	5	2	6	1	4
6	1	4	5	3	2

4

3	4	5	6	1	2
2	6	1	3	5	4
5	1	2	4	3	6
4	3	6	1	2	5
1	2	4	5	6	3
6	5	3	2	4	1

5

5	2	3	4	6	1
6	4	1	5	3	2
1	6	4	3	2	5
3	5	2	6	1	4
2	3	5	1	4	6
4	1	6	2	5	3

6

3	6	2	4	1	5
4	5	1	3	6	2
1	2	5	6	4	3
6	3	4	5	2	1
5	1	6	2	3	4
2	4	3	1	5	6

Laugh!

WIN £30
for every reader's joke we publish!

Go to readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us
or facebook.com/readersdigestuk

Julie Andrews' Daily Schedule:

1. Impersonate Homer Simpson.
2. Read about bush craft.
3. Watch ludicrously silly play.
4. Replace button on blouse.
5. Prepare coffee flavoured bread.

D'oh, Ray Mears, Farce, Sew,
Latte Dough.

@THEREALFLUPS, *via Twitter*

Me: Sorry, I'm looking for a
landscape gardener.

JOHN DARBY, *Via Twitter*

My rule is that if I wasn't invited

to someone's wedding, then they're
not invited to mine, and I don't care
if that upsets my parents.

Comedian GLEN MOORE

G
a
r
d
e
n
e

r: What can I do for you?

Me and my girlfriend of three weeks

have just bought a house together on
a raised pavement.

I know... it's a big step.

Comedian ALF

One of the original *Thunderbirds*

puppets has been seriously damaged

How can you find
the Easter Bunny?
EGGS MARKS
THE SPOT!

Seen on Reddit



in an arson attack. Police are holding
a candlelit Virgil.

Comedian OLAF FALAFEL

**In my school days I used to bury my
head** in the sand. Eventually he
expelled me.

@MRNICKHARVEY, via Twitter

**The HMS Beagle was notoriously
slow.** That's because it could only do
doggy paddle.

Comedian, MOOSE ALLEN

**I wish somebody would do something
about my lack of initiative.**

Seen on Twitter

**I'm concerned by the news of Steps
reforming.** These things can really
escalate. *@ROBINFLAVELL, via Twitter*

**It was the funeral of the inventor
of the dishwasher today.** The coffin
was lowered into the ground only



Not-So-Fancy Dress

DESIGNER TARYN DE VERE
HAS BEEN ENTERTAINING HER
FOLLOWERS BY DRESSING AS
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

via boredpanda.com



to be taken out by their partner and put back in properly.

Submitted via email

I used to get teased quite a lot at school because I bore a slight resemblance to a bowl of custard.

Luckily I had quite a thick skin.

Comedian, OLAF FALAFEL

There's no known cure for head lice, but I'm sure that if we all put our heads together...

Comedian, PHIL PAGETT

I just read a press release from Heinz saying

“We will never, ever make a Bolognese version of Alphabetti Spaghetti.” I thought, *Blimey, they don't mince their words.*

Submitted via Twitter

Operator: Hello, Police.

Me: I need to speak to an officer please. I've been accused of chucking something at someone, but it was only a bit of my dessert!

Operator: Just pudding you threw.

Me: Thank you.

PAUL EGGLESTON, via Twitter

My cleaner walked out the other day. I really miss her.

She's left a vacuum.

Seen on Twitter

School Of Laughs

Twitter users share stories of their funny teachers

@For_elise93: My school band director used to direct our jazz band while eating his lunch. He always conducted us with a breadstick that got shorter and shorter as rehearsal went on.

@i_8_ur_cat: All of my siblings had the same teacher at secondary school. On the last day of my final year he looked at me and said, “Please tell me you're the last one?”

@RyanGuard: On one of my final days at school our form tutor, a sweet little old lady, pulled me aside and said, “I just want you to know... that you're the reason I am retiring early.”

@jhopjsh: At my Catholic school, a nun taught me math. When telling us about an upcoming test she said, “I'm the tester and you're the testes.”

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Across: 9 Neptune, 10 All gone, 11 Adult, 12 Paperback, 13 Pneumonia, 14 Traps, 15 Sorceresses, 20 Calve, 22 Eccentric, 25 Ignorance, 26 Hello, 27 Snippet, 28 Amnesia.

Down: 1 Unhappy, 2 Spruce, 3 Customer, 4 Deepen, 5 Warplane, 6 Claret, 7 Nowadays, 8 Weakest, 15 Splendid, 16 Eternity, 17 Sunshine, 18 Eclipse, 19 Acrobat, 21 Europe, 23 Caesar, 24 Relish.

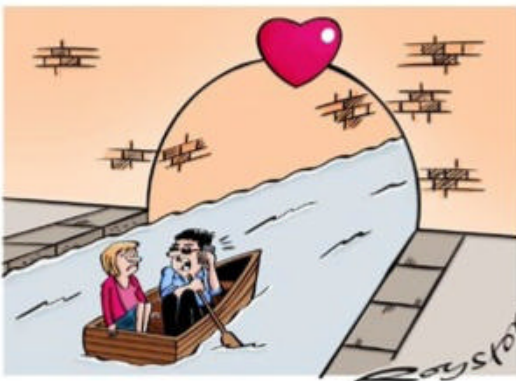
Beat the Cartoonist!



Think of a witty caption for this cartoon—the three best suggestions, along with the cartoonist's original, will be posted on our website in mid-May. If your entry gets the most votes, you'll win **£50**.

Submit to captions@readersdigest.co.uk by May 7. We'll announce the winner in our June issue.

FEBRUARY WINNER



Our cartoonist's caption, **"Can I call you back? I'm going into a tunnel"** failed to beat our witty reader Shagun Chaudry this month, who won the vote with, **"Not quite the 'Row-mance' I had hoped for this Valentine's Day!"**

Congratulations Shagun!

IN THE MAY ISSUE



People Power

The inspiring story of three villages who joined forces to save their community spaces



I REMEMBER...

John Lydon

Music legend Johnny Rotten looks back on his incredible career, and life as lead singer of the Sex Pistols



PHANTOM PAIN

Exploring the fascinating medical phenomenon

A Century Of Change

As we continue our centenary celebrations, we look at how the life of the phone has changed in the last 100 years...

WERE YOU JUST scrolling through TikTok and double-tapping Instagram photos on your iPhone 13? While even many grandparents today would raise their hand in response, it's a question that would make absolutely no sense to the average person two decades back, let alone a century ago.

Widely recognised as the inventor of the telephone, Scottish-born Alexander Graham Bell died aged 75 in August 1922, a time when telephone communications were becoming widely available.

In 1922, when *Reader's Digest* was launched, telephones were connected via hard wires to operators who would then forward you to the desired recipient of your call. These telephones typically had a separate mouthpiece for speaking and a receiver used to hear the call.

By the start of the 1930s it had become more common to see rotary phones in people's homes. These are widely seen as the first "modern" telephone as you could call numbers directly using the dial. It took until the 1980s for cordless handheld phones to come into fruition, and the world's

first so-called smartphone was launched in 1994 by technology giant IBM.

A world away from the sleek and powerful phones of today, it featured a touch screen as well as the ability to send and receive emails and faxes, which meant its makers proudly deemed it a smartphone.

But were there any hints of a mobile phone revolution to come in the films and literature of the early 1920s? Yes, in fact. A British Pathé silent short film from 1922 went viral on YouTube for allegedly showing the world's first mobile phone in action.

Eve's Wireless shows two women using what is actually a crystal radio to speak to each other. Before using the radio device they are shown connecting it to a fire hydrant in order to "earth" it, a practice that was necessary for radios to work at the time. So, while not a mobile phone in any sense, it shows that the idea of a mobile phone was already being conceived and thought of as a tangible prospect a century ago. ■

BY MARCO MARCELLINE



With a gift in your Will, you can be a lifesaver for families devastated by dementia.



Over the next thirty years, the pressures of dementia will push hundreds of thousands of families to breaking point.

A gift in your Will to Dementia UK will help fund more specialist dementia nurses - called Admiral Nurses - so no family ever has to cope with dementia alone. After family and friends have been taken care of, any gift, however small or large, will help families facing dementia long into the future.

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Visit: **dementiauk.org/GIW**

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Victory in Europe Day

Battle of the River
Plata

The Battle of Arraham

Battle of Berlin

Second Battle of
El Alamein

The sinking of
the Bismarck

Atomic Bombings
of Hiroshima

Battle of Britain

Battle of France

Battle of Iwo Jima

Battle of Stalingrad

Battle of the Bulge

Dunkirk Evacuation

Liberation of Paris

Operation Chastise

Operation Franklin

Battle of Midway

Attack on Pearl
Harbor

Victory over Japan Day

Battle of the Atlantic

Guadalcanal Campaign

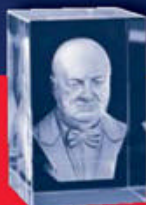
Italian Campaign

Operation Torch

Operation Overlord

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End of WWII

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