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# THE WEEK

22 APRIL 2017 | ISSUE 1121 | £3.30

THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

## Forward to victory? May's surprise election

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## What happened

## May goes to the country

Theresa May stunned even her own MPs this week by calling for a snap election on 8 June. Speaking at Downing Street after a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, she said: "We need a general election and we need one now." The Prime Minister reversed her earlier decision not to hold a vote before 2020 because, she said, Labour and the Liberal Democrats had opposed her plans for Brexit. "The country is coming together, but Westminster is not," she declared. "Division in Westminster will risk our ability to make a success of Brexit." The decision was kept so secret that most Cabinet ministers were not told of the plan until Tuesday morning.

The PM put a motion for an early election before the Commons on Wednesday. Under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act of 2011, a two-thirds majority is required to bring an election forward from its set date. However, the leaders of Labour and the Liberal Democrats stated that they would welcome a chance to fight an election. "The election gives the British people the chance to change direction," said Jeremy Corbyn. The vote passed by 522 to 13, with nine Labour MPs voting against, and the SNP abstaining.



Gambling on a certainty?

## What the editorials said

As U-turns go, it was "an absolute screecher", said The Guardian. Again and again, Theresa May had repeated the mantra that there should be no election until 2020. Yet now it is going to happen after all, "solely because Mrs May thinks this is a good time to crush Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party". This is "a premature election which the country does not need, the people do not want, and Mrs May does not require in order to do her job".

Nonsense, said the Daily Mail. This was a "brave" and necessary decision. May will be judged above all on how she handles the Brexit talks, said The Daily Telegraph. For that she needs "political stability", not opposition parties blocking and undermining her. The country needs strong leadership, and the polls suggest that she has the chance "to become as dominant a figure on the political stage as

Margaret Thatcher was 30 years ago". The PM's claim that the opposition is thwarting Brexit is "disingenuous", said the FT. In fact, resistance has been "lame". The real threat is her own Eurosceptic MPs. A strong mandate will allow her to take a "pragmatic" softer line on Brexit, and to pursue her own domestic agenda – without being held to ransom by Tory rebels. "These are good reasons to go to the country."

## What happened

## The threat of war

Fears of an impending nuclear conflict rose dramatically last week as North Korea and the US traded threats of military action. Pyongyang warned it would respond to any show of US aggression with a pre-emptive nuclear strike, while US Vice-President Mike Pence, on a visit to the region, said that "all options are on the table", and that Washington would respond to any attack with "overwhelming force". To reinforce its warning, the US sent a nuclear-armed carrier fleet towards the Korean Peninsula. But North Korea staged its own show of strength, displaying a range of ballistic missiles in a parade of military hardware in Pyongyang.

As tensions rose, President Kim Jong Un again defied UN resolutions by staging a ballistic missile test. The missile appeared to explode on launch, possibly as a result of a US cyberattack, but Pyongyang insisted it would continue to conduct tests on a "weekly, monthly and yearly basis".



"Kim Fatman the Third"

## What the editorials said

It's "terrifying", said the Daily Mail. The world is facing its "darkest and most dangerous" moment since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. Yet Donald Trump is adding fuel to fire by cranking up the rhetoric: he badly needs "a crash course in diplomacy, calmness and common sense". Trump is playing with fire, said The Independent. The man who pledged to pursue non-interventionist policies has overnight become a "trigger-happy" president ready to fight on three fronts simultaneously: in Afghanistan (see page 20), against Isis in Syria, and now, perhaps, in North Korea. The only good news is that he has dropped his threat of economic warfare against Beijing: maybe China will now be ready to use its leverage with North Korea to avert catastrophe.

Beijing is in a quandary, said The Times. It can't allow Kim's regime to collapse, because that would trigger a vast flood of refugees into China and, likely as not, the emergence of a US-friendly united Korea. Yet it might be tempted by a grand bargain: a trade deal with the US in return for tougher measures against Pyongyang. It's the best hope we have.

## It wasn't all bad

The remains of five former archbishops of Canterbury – dating back as far as the 17th century – have been unearthed in London. The discovery was made by builders refurbishing a deconsecrated church in Lambeth: when they accidentally cut a hole in its foundations, they found a vault containing 30 lead coffins. A gilded mitre was resting on top of the highest one, which was inscribed with the names of the archbishops. Among them was Richard Bancroft, who died in 1610.

**After months of anticipation, a giraffe who became an online celebrity finally gave birth last week, to a healthy male. April's due date was in February; since then, 30 million viewers had tuned into the live-stream from her enclosure at a zoo in upstate New York, in the hope of watching her calf being delivered. After a six-week wait, the 15-year-old went into labour last week, watched by the father from an adjacent pen, as well as more than a million fans online. A few hours later, her calf was safely delivered, and soon after that, she helped him stand on his legs for the first time.**



An ex-RAF sergeant has become the first double amputee to complete the "toughest race on Earth". Duncan Slater, 38, ran the 156-mile Marathon des Sables in the Sahara – the equivalent of six marathons in six days – on prosthetic legs last week, in temperatures of up to 50°C. He had to carry all his supplies for the race, including rationed water. Slater, from Norfolk, was serving in Afghanistan in 2009 when his vehicle was blown up; his legs were amputated the next year. His run has raised £23,000 for Walking with the Wounded.

## What the commentators said

Any early election is a gamble for a sitting government, said Jonathan Freedland in *The Guardian*. But as gambles go, May's is "about the surest bet any politician could ever place". Most polls show the Tories with a lead of around 20% over Labour (*see page 4*). Polls are often unreliable, and her lead could narrow over a 50-day campaign. But even if it shrinks to 10%, she will still greatly increase her majority of 17. The real gamble would have been to "sit it out until 2020". If she had, the election would have come the year after the completion of the Brexit deal, and after another long period of austerity – leaving her at the mercy of events.

The PM has won all her Brexit votes in the Commons easily, said Fraser Nelson in *The Daily Telegraph*. "But she has lost several battles against David Cameron's 2015 manifesto, and this is the enemy she wishes to slay." When she tried to increase National Insurance, the whips told her she'd lose the vote, because it contradicted the manifesto. "Expanding grammar schools, her signature reform, was unlikely to make it through Parliament for the same reason." Her own manifesto may prove "a bonfire of Cameronism", with the triple-lock pension and foreign aid pledges facing the axe.

Still, her chief reason for calling the election is simple, said Daniel Finkelstein in *The Times*: Labour. "The main opposition party is going to fight this election with a leader that even many of his own MPs believe should not be prime minister." And on the EU, the election's central issue, it has no credible policy at all. Do they think Britain should be in the single market? That it should allow free movement of labour? I genuinely don't know. In Downing Street, the Liberal Democrats are taken more seriously than Labour, said Rachel Sylvester in the same paper. The Lib Dems' support for Europe has given them a "distinctive identity". In Remain-supporting areas, such as university towns and London, they pose a real challenge to the Tories. After their "virtual annihilation" in 2015, "the only way is up".

## What next?

A number of MPs have revealed that they will not fight the next election, says BBC News online. Former Labour home secretary Alan Johnson will step down, while George Osborne said that he was leaving the Commons – "for now".

Parliament will break up on 3 May, to allow just over a month of "full-pelt" campaigning. Theresa May has said that she will not take part in any TV debates ahead of the election. She was criticised for the decision, but said that she preferred "to get out and about and meet voters".



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## What the commentators said

"Brinkmanship is back." The world is on the brink of a devastating war. So runs the message from world capitals, said Niall Ferguson in *The Sunday Times*. I beg to differ. Pyongyang may have made advances since it began nuclear tests in 2006; but all that means is that it now has a device roughly as potent as the "Fat Man" bomb dropped by the US on Nagasaki, in 1945. It's not close to getting an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of hitting the US mainland. And with the smallest arsenal and most accident-prone ballistic missiles of any nuclear power, it's in no position to launch a strike, agreed Richard Lloyd Parry in *The Times*. For Kim, with "20 wobbly nukes" against Trump's 6,900, it would be suicidal. Tell that to the residents of South Korea's capital, Seoul, said Ian Birrell in *The Mail on Sunday*. A "megacity" of 25 million, it lies in range of North Korea's artillery, not to mention its nerve agents and nukes. In 1994, Clinton dropped a tentative plan to conduct air strikes against Pyongyang after advisers warned that if it retaliated, casualties could top a million. With two "maverick" leaders now at the helm in both countries, "only a fool" would rule out the possibility of "Apocalypse Now".

The good news is, Beijing may at last be leaning on Pyongyang to rein in its nuclear ambitions, said John Pomfret in *The Washington Post*. Last week the *Global Times*, a paper Beijing often uses as a mouthpiece, warned that Chinese oil shipments to Pyongyang could now be "severely limited". That new toughness may reflect pressure from Washington, but it's also a response to public concerns. Ordinary Chinese are "fed up" with Kim: on the web he's referred to as "Kim Fatman the Third". But even Chinese sanctions are unlikely to deter him, said John Hemmings in *The Daily Telegraph*. He knows what happened to Colonel Gaddafi in Libya after he gave up his nukes. And the military, on whose support his dynasty depends for survival, will never countenance disarmament. Basically, Kim Jong Un needs his nukes in order to stay in power.

## What next?

Washington and South Korea agreed this week to speed up work on a defence system designed to shoot down North Korean missiles. The installation of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (Thaad) system began last month, despite Beijing's protests.

Presidential elections in South Korea next month offer some hope of a peaceful settlement, given the likely victory of liberal candidate Moon Jae-in, who favours a policy of conciliation. The reopening of the jointly run Kaesong industrial complex on the border is seen as a possible peace move.

## THE WEEK

On Sunday, Dan Hodges, the leading political columnist, confidently asserted that Theresa May would not be holding an early election, and that on the contrary, she rather hated being Prime Minister, her

health was suffering, and that she would deliver Brexit and then resign. It's tempting to imagine that May was so incensed by his presumption she decided, there and then, to go to the country. But the PM, unlike her Foreign Secretary (*see page 21*), is not the kind of politician that people accuse of making up policy on the hoof. She is considered a strategic thinker (which is perhaps why she gave Boris Johnson the Foreign Office job in the first place, so that he could struggle with intractable world events, while voters and MPs slowly forgot that he was once a well-loved London mayor).

Dan Hodges isn't the only one to have ruled out an early election on the PM's behalf. Last month, commentators were predicting that she'd delay any poll at least until after Labour's next party conference, in the hopes that its delegates would vote to give party members yet more control over Labour leadership elections – ensuring that an unelectable Corbynista leads the party indefinitely. Presumably, May took the view that to have a hopelessly weakened opposition was not in her interests (or Britain's). When the opposition is strong, MPs tend to rally behind their leader; when it is weak, they fight. May has been at Westminster for 20 years. She didn't get to the top just to do battle with her own side.

**Caroline Law**

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**THE WEEK** Ltd, a subsidiary of Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JD. Tel: 020-7907 6000.  
**Editorial:** The Week Ltd, 2nd Floor, 32 Queensway, London W2 3RX. Tel: 020-7907 6180.  
**email:** editorialadmin@theweek.co.uk



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## Controversy of the week

## Turkey's new sultan

Democracy, as Turkey's President Erdogan once famously remarked, "is like a train; once you reach your destination, you get off". And this Sunday, Erdogan got off the train, said Douglas Murray in *The Spectator*. His slender victory in the referendum means that the secular republic founded by Kemal Atatürk in 1923 "has been snuffed out". Turkey as we know it "is history", said Yavuz Baydar in *The Guardian*. Erdogan now has a mandate to amend the constitution. By 2019, the office of the prime minister will be abolished; the president (Erdogan) will have sole prerogative to appoint senior bureaucrats and 12 of the top court's 15 judges, to issue decrees with the force of law, and to exercise even more control of the armed forces. Turkey, said *The Independent*, has become an "elective dictatorship". It has seceded from the democratic world.



*Erdogan: did he steal the vote?*

It is a "catastrophe" for the West and for global stability, said Owen Matthews in the *Daily Mail*. Europe now has another authoritarian leader on its Eastern flank. And what hope for the rest of the Middle East region if Turkey, once seen as a model for Muslim nations to follow, can't sustain a functional democracy? The worst of it is that Erdogan stole the vote, said Patrick Cockburn in *The Independent*. His AKP party only won (with just 51.4% of the vote) thanks to blatant electoral fraud: opposition rallies were smothered; after many ballots had been cast, Turkey's election board decided to accept ones that didn't bear the official stamp required. All this, without even taking into account the jailing, after July's failed coup, of a dozen MPs and 80 journalists, and the closing of 158 media outlets. Let's not overdo the end of democracy stuff, said Gulnur Aybet in *The New York Times*. The truth is that democracy has never come easy for Turkey: its present constitution was written in 1982 by the generals who had carried out a military coup (the military has intervened in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997). They left Turkey with a system in which both president and PM were elected by popular vote, a recipe for "deadlock and political crisis" whenever a major dispute over policy arose.

That's why I don't share the anxiety over Turkey's "swaggering sultan", said Roger Boyes in *The Times*. A stronger Erdogan, no longer terrified that the deep state (of army officers, judges and intelligence officers) is out to get him, and confident enough not to dismiss all his critics as terrorists, may well provide the kind of stability the region needs. He may not be the kind of democrat beloved of metropolitan liberals, but he'll keep the country together. Don't be too sure, said Soner Cagaptay in *The Wall Street Journal*. Turkey is fatally polarised into two camps: an Islamist, conservative, right-wing coalition who believe the country "is a paradise"; and a loose group of leftists, secularists, liberal Muslims and Kurds "who think they live in hell". A majority in each of the three big cities – Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir – voted No in the referendum. Rural Anatolia voted "yes". The best that Turkey can hope for, under the newly empowered Erdogan, is a permanent state of crisis.

## Boring but important

## Grammar schools

England's new grammar schools must give priority to children from "ordinary working families", the Education Secretary has said. Justine Greening signalled that the new generation of academically selective schools will be obliged to educate pupils from ordinary households with modest incomes, which she defined as up to £33,000pa, depending on the size of the family. She refused to rule out introducing a quota system, to ensure that poorer children get places. Currently, 36% of places at grammar schools go to children who do not qualify for school meals but whose family have below-average incomes; 53% go to families with above-average incomes.

## Violent crime in London

Gun and knife crime has surged in London over the past year, according to Metropolitan Police figures. Gun crime offences between April 2016 and April 2017 were up 42% on the previous year; knife crime increased by 24%; while the total number of crimes rose by 4.6%. The sharp rise surprised police and politicians; however, the Met pointed out that crime rates were still much lower than they were five years ago.

## Spirit of the age

Students should be subjected to airport-style searches to stop them cheating in exams, MPs said last week. A growing number of students are being caught using smartphones, smartwatches and sophisticated "cheat tech" gadgets in exam halls. The last are easily bought online, and include computers designed to look like basic calculators, and earbuds so small they are all but invisible. "Cheat on tests with absolute discretion," says the marketing blurb for one such device.

Millennials have been rebranded Generation Hopeless, thanks to a new survey suggesting that a fifth of under-35s don't know how to change a light bulb, while more than a third struggle to read a map.

## Good week for:

**Older runners**, with new figures showing that in the 2016 London Marathon, competitors aged 55 to 64 ran just as fast as those aged 25 to 34. Both groups took, on average, just over four hours and four minutes to complete the course. The fastest group were the 35- to 44-year-olds (3:53:58), followed by the 45- to 54-year-olds (3:56:16), according to analysis of data from a running app worn by nearly 6,500 runners.

## Bad week for:

**Cheltenham**, which is up in arms over the opening of an 11th Costa Coffee outlet in the spa town. The new shop is only 350 yards from another Costa, and is right next to one of the town's four branches of the Soho Coffee Co. The town centre is also home to two Caffè Neros, a Starbucks and a Boston Tea Party.

**Aga owners**, who were warned that hackers could get into their ovens and switch off their boeuf bourguignon. IT expert Ken Munro says that when he upgraded his own Aga to a newer app-controlled model, he came across a security flaw that would make it relatively easy for a hacker to take control of it remotely.

**Tesco**, which issued an apology for promoting "great offers" on beer and cider with the slogan: "Good Friday just got better". Church leaders pointed out that Good Friday is when Christians commemorate Christ's crucifixion, and that many fast that day.

**Shoelaces**, after scientists concluded that sooner or later, they will always become untied. The researchers, in California, worked out that the knot, however tight it is, simply cannot withstand the double force of the leg swinging and the foot stomping.

## Poll watch

**55%** of voters back Theresa May's decision to hold an election, according to an ICM/*The Guardian* poll carried out since the PM's announcement. **46%** plan to vote for the Tories, **25%** for Labour. The Lib Dems are on **11%**, and UKIP **8%**.

Most recent polls carried out before the election was announced gave the Tories a huge lead: a ComRes poll for the *Independent* and a YouGov poll for *The Times* both put them **21 points** ahead of Labour. However, an *Opinion* poll for *The Observer* gave them a lead of just **nine points**.

Despite Labour's struggles in the polls, ComRes found support for the party's new policies: **71%** back the pledge to raise the minimum wage to £10 an hour, and **53%** support extending free school meals to all primary pupils.

## Paris

**Too close to call:** The first round of voting in France's rollercoaster election takes place on Sunday, with four candidates almost neck and neck in the polls, and one in three voters saying they're still undecided. The final fortnight of the campaign has seen



(L-R) Mélenchon, Macron, Fillon, Le Pen

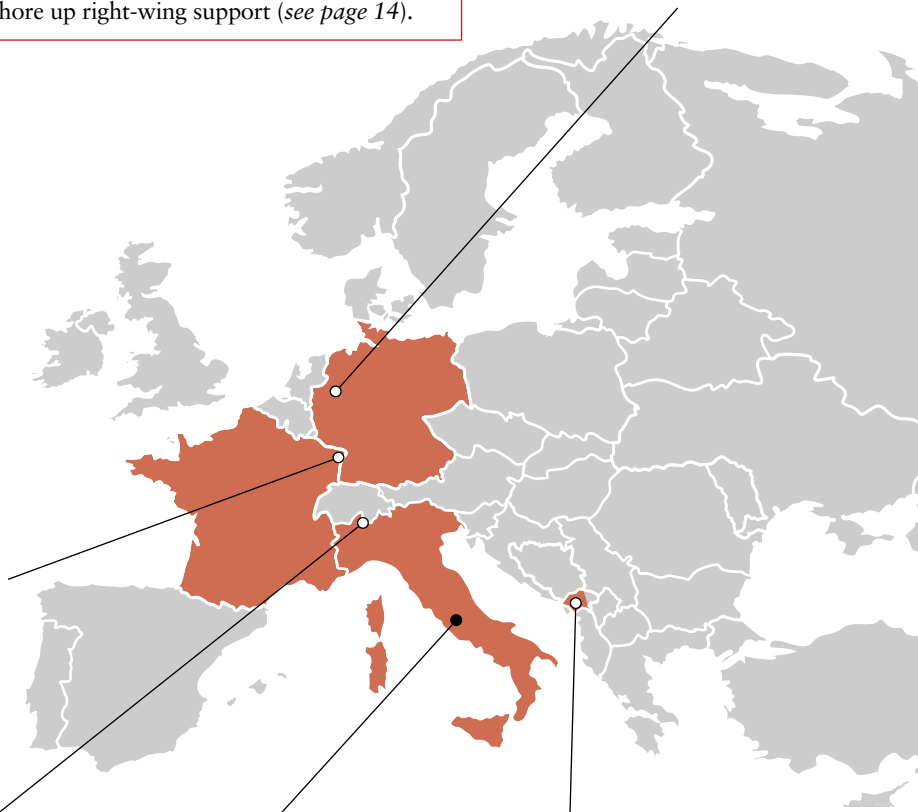
several twists: a surge in popularity for the hard-left firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon, following his dynamic performance in a TV debate; and support for the scandal-hit Republican François Fillon recovering slightly. Any two of the four now seem to have a realistic chance of making it into the second and decisive round of voting, on 7 May. In the first round, polls show the independent centrist Emmanuel Macron and the National Front's Marine Le Pen vying for first place, each on around 22%-23%, with Fillon and Mélenchon on around 19%-21%. Macron is the bookies' favourite to win the presidency. This week, Le Pen announced that she would suspend all immigration to France if elected, in a last-ditch bid to shore up right-wing support (see page 14).

## Dortmund, Germany

**Football bus bombed:** German police say that it remains unclear who carried out the bomb attack on a bus carrying the Borussia Dortmund football team to a Champions League home match against Monaco last week, and that they are investigating "in all directions". Three bombs hidden beside the road exploded near the bus, shattering the windows and injuring Spanish centre-back Marc Bartra. Letters found at the scene suggested the involvement of radical Islamists. But police experts have cast "significant doubts" over the letters' authenticity, and since then, both far-right and anti-fascist groups have claimed responsibility for the attack. The team's management had recently tried to distance itself from groups of far-right fans.

## Strasbourg, France

**Russia criticised over Beslan:** Russia has been severely criticised for its handling of the Beslan school siege in 2004 by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In a case brought by relatives of the victims, judges ruled that Moscow had failed in its duty to protect civilians, when – two days after Chechen terrorists had seized around 1,200 hostages at the school – it used overwhelming military force to retake the building; 330 people, more than half of them children, were killed. The court ruled that there were "serious failings" in the authorities' response, and ordered that the victims be paid €3m in compensation. The court said the Russians had received "specific information" that a hostage-taking attack was being planned in the area, yet had not acted on it, either by stopping the suspects from travelling, or by increasing security at the school. A Kremlin spokesman described the ruling as "absolutely unacceptable", and said it would appeal. The Court is run by the Council of Europe, a human rights organisation of which Russia is a member.



## Verbania, Italy

**Last survivor dies:** Emma Morano, the Italian woman who was the last remaining person known to have been born in the 19th century, has died aged 117 at her home in Verbania, on the shores of Lake

Maggiore in northern Italy. Morano (above) was born on 29 November 1899, and attributed her long life to good genes; to leaving an abusive marriage in 1938, shortly after the death of her only child at the age of six months; and to her unusual diet of two raw eggs a day. The world's oldest person is now believed to be another 117-year-old, Violet Brown from Jamaica, who was born in March 1900.

## Vatican City

**Conservative backlash:** The Pope is facing a brewing rebellion from conservatives within the Roman Catholic Church, who fear his emphasis on showing mercy towards sinners risks an unacceptable dilution of traditional Church teaching. In February, anonymous posters were put up around Rome attacking Pope Francis for his liberal attitudes. Now a group of Catholic intellectuals is demanding that he clarify his position on fundamental Catholic doctrine regarding divorce. They are especially concerned about a papal document issued last year, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), in which Francis implies that the Church's ban on remarried divorcees receiving Communion is wrong and needs reform. Francis's critics accuse him of seeking to overturn 2,000 years of unbroken teaching. Four cardinals have also asked the Pope for clarification on the issue, but have yet to receive a reply.

## Podgorica

**Coup charges:** A special prosecutor in Montenegro has charged 14 people – including two pro-Russian opposition MPs and two alleged Russian spies – with plotting to overthrow the government during a failed election day coup last October. The group is accused of planning a terrorist attack on the parliament building in order to destabilise the tiny Balkan state, seize power, and stop it joining Nato. One of the MPs arrested, Andrija Mandić, denounced the charges as a politically motivated charade; the Kremlin, fiercely opposed to Montenegro joining Nato, called them "absurd". But last week – a day after Donald Trump finally gave US backing to Montenegro's entry into Nato, and while US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was still at talks in Moscow – the White House pointedly noted it had seen "credible reports" that Moscow was involved in the coup attempt.

**Cleveland, Ohio**

**Facebook killer:** A man who became the subject of a massive manhunt after he filmed himself killing a stranger on a street in Cleveland, and then posted the footage on Facebook, was found dead in his car on Tuesday. Steve Stephens, 37, is believed to have shot himself after being chased by police responding to a tip-off in neighbouring Pennsylvania. Stevens (right) – who worked as a case worker in a children’s mental health facility – had approached 74-year-old Robert Godwin as he walked home from lunch on Easter Sunday. In the footage, he mentions a woman’s name, and says: “She’s the reason this is about to happen to you.” He then shoots the man dead. The video was on Facebook for more than two hours before being removed.

**Kenosha, Wisconsin**

**“America First” order:** President Trump returned to his America First agenda this week, promising “bold new steps” to protect American workers and American firms. “We’re going to do everything in our power to make sure more products are stamped with those wonderful words, ‘Made in the USA,’” he told staff at a factory in Kenosha. After his speech, he signed a new executive order that is aimed at limiting the number of foreign workers employed by American firms. Analysts say that Trump has been advised to head out on the road, to reassure his blue-collar supporters that he has not forgotten the promises he made to them on the campaign trail.

**Little Rock, Arkansas**

**Executions put on hold:** Plans by the state of Arkansas to execute eight prisoners in 11 days have been halted by a series of court rulings, including one by a federal judge who concluded that the proposed schedule violated the prisoners’ constitutional rights. No state has executed so many people in such a short space of time since the US restored the death penalty in 1976; the last execution in Arkansas was in 2005. Its rushed timetable – drawn up because the state’s supply of one of the drugs used in lethal injections is due to expire on 1 May – had provoked widespread condemnation from opponents of capital punishment. The court rulings saved one man, and granted reprieves to two others. The state is still planning to execute the other five, over eight days, starting this week.

**Panajachel, Guatemala**

**Mexican politician caught:** A fugitive former governor of the Mexican state of Veracruz, wanted on suspicion of embezzling millions of dollars of public money, was this week tracked down to Panajachel, a resort town in the highlands of Guatemala – ending a six-month manhunt that spanned three continents. Javier Duarte served as governor from 2010 until last October, when he abruptly stood down to fight the criminal allegations against him, then vanished. While on the run, he had become a symbol of malfeasance among Mexico’s politicians, and a huge embarrassment to the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). A second, allegedly corrupt, governor was arrested in Italy last week; a third remains at large, and may be in the US.

**Caracas**

**Maduro’s militias:** Venezuela’s embattled socialist president, Nicolás Maduro, has announced plans to massively expand the “Bolivarian militias” created by Hugo Chávez – a civilian force trained to defend the socialist revolution. Maduro (pictured)

wants to increase its membership from 100,000 to 500,000, and to equip every member with a gun. The announcement came as tension in the crisis-racked country continued to rise. At least five people have been killed, and many more injured, in the past three weeks in nationwide anti-Maduro street protests.

**Washington DC**

**Tax protests:** Thousands of protesters rallied in cities across the US last Saturday to demand that President Donald Trump release his tax returns. There is no obligation for the president to make his tax returns public, but for the past 40-plus years, all the main party candidates for the office have done so. During the presidential campaign, Trump said he would release them once an “audit” was complete, but he has reneged on that promise. The president dismissed the protests against him, demanding to know who had “paid” for them. Interest in Trump’s personal finances was piqued last week by an interview in Prospect magazine with the former head of MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, who commented: “What lingers for Trump may be what deals – on what terms – he did, after the financial crisis of 2008, to borrow Russian money when others in the West apparently would not lend to him.”

**Asunción**

**Cartes backs down:** The president of Paraguay, Horacio Cartes, has announced he will not after all seek re-election in 2018 when his term ends. Cartes, a former soft drink and tobacco magnate, had hoped to change the constitution to enable him to stand again; a plan that triggered violent protests in which the Congress building was set on fire. Cartes said his decision had been inspired by Pope Francis’s call for peace and dialogue in Paraguay. “I hope this gesture of renunciation will result in a deeper dialogue aimed at strengthening the republic,” he wrote in a letter to the Archbishop of Asunción, which was made public. Paraguayans toppled a brutal dictatorship in 1989, and many remain implacably opposed to allowing second terms.

### Sabha, Libya

**Slave markets:** Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa are being sold as slaves or hostages in Libya for as little as \$200, according to a new report from the International Organisation for Migration. There were already numerous reports of migrants trafficked through Libya en route to Europe being enslaved, tortured and raped. The latest evidence suggests the trade in human beings – centred on Sabha, a smuggling hub in southwest Libya – has become so great that they are now being bought and sold in public. The migrants, mostly from Nigeria, the Gambia and Ghana, are often tortured by their “buyers” until their families pay a ransom, or they die. But this has not stemmed the flow of migrants. Over Easter, more than 8,000 were rescued in the Mediterranean trying to reach Europe in unseaworthy boats.

### Aleppo, Syria

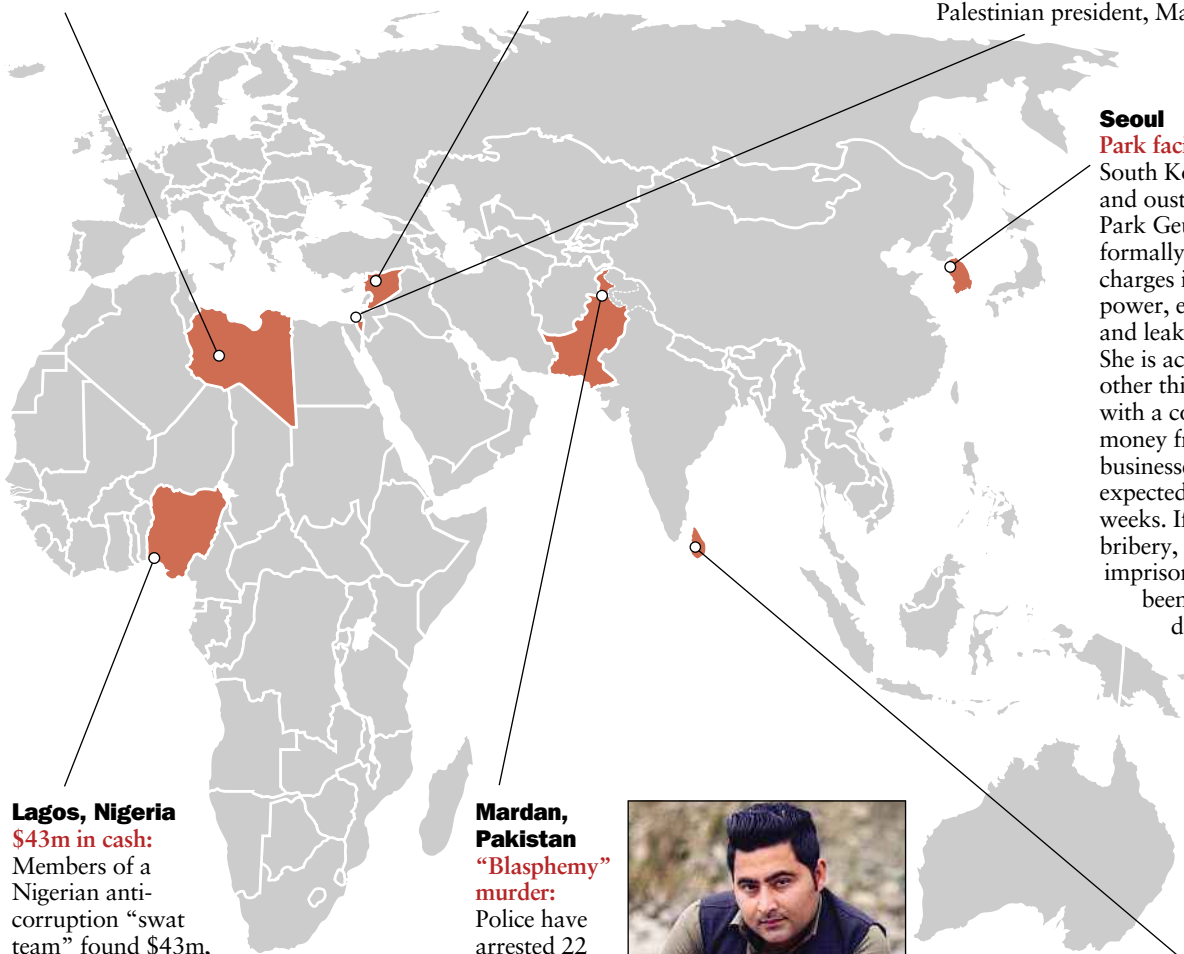
**Evacuees killed:** At least 126 people were killed last week when a suicide bomber drove a van into buses carrying evacuees from Fouaa and Kefraya, two towns in Idlib province which had, until recently, been under siege from rebel groups. The victims were Shia residents who were being evacuated as part of a deal between the government and the rebels. Rebels guarding the convoy and aid workers were also among the dead. It is not clear who was responsible for the blast, near Aleppo, which was condemned both by the regime and by rebel groups. Separately, Assad denied responsibility for the suspected sarin attack in Idlib earlier this month. “We gave up our arsenal three years ago,” he said. “Even if we have them, we wouldn’t use them. We have never used our chemical arsenal in our history.”



### Tel Aviv, Israel

**Mass hunger strike:** More than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails have gone on hunger strike in protest at the conditions of their detention. Family members from the occupied Palestinian

territories are often denied permits to visit their relatives in prison, and one of the key prisoner demands is improved visitation rights. The hunger strike is a long-planned protest led by Marwan Barghouti (above), who was convicted of murder in 2004. A key figure in the Fatah movement, he is seen as a potential successor to the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas.



### Seoul

**Park facing life sentence:** South Korea’s impeached and ousted president, Park Geun-hye, has been formally indicted on charges including abuse of power, extortion, bribery and leaking state secrets. She is accused, among other things, of colluding with a confidante to extort money from Korean businesses. Her trial is expected to start within weeks. If convicted of bribery, she could face life imprisonment. Park has been held in a detention centre near Seoul since her arrest last month.

### Lagos, Nigeria

**\$43m in cash:** Members of a Nigerian anti-corruption “swat team” found \$43m, in cash, in an unoccupied luxury apartment in Lagos last week. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission said it had been alerted by neighbours suspicious about a “haggard” woman they’d seen coming and going with large bags. The neighbours could now be in line for a \$2m payoff, thanks to a new scheme to reward whistle-blowers, introduced as part of President Muhammadu Buhari’s anti-corruption drive. It’s unclear where the cash came from. This week, Nigeria’s minister for transport, Rotimi Amaechi, threatened to sue a former aviation minister for wrongly naming him as the flat’s owner.

### Mardan, Pakistan

**“Blasphemy” murder:**

Police have arrested 22 people for the mob lynching last week of a student at a university in Mardan, northwestern Pakistan, who was deemed to have made “blasphemous” comments on social media. Mashal Khan (above), a journalism student known for his left-wing, secular views, was beaten to death by his fellow students. Mobile phone footage of the horrific crime has led to widespread condemnation. But it took two days for the country’s prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, to speak out.



### Colombo

**Dump collapse:** At least 28 people are believed to have been killed last week, when a 23-million-tonne waste dump collapsed in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. Residents of Meethotamulla, on the city’s outskirts, had for years been demanding the removal of the 90-metre-high dump, which created an unbearable stench, polluted water sources, and attracted swarms of mosquitos – to no avail. On Friday, weakened by recent floods and fires, it collapsed, destroying around 145 slum dwellings. Last month, a similar landslide in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, killed at least 113 people.

**Chris Packham's sadness**

Being autistic, Chris Packham struggles to form relationships with people. He has no friends and lives alone in the New Forest. He does have a girlfriend – a very understanding one: he didn't look her in the eye during their first six months together. But for companionship, he has relied on his dogs, and his bond with them is astonishing, says Michael Odell in *The Times*. Until recently, the *Springwatch* presenter had two: Itchy and Scratchy. When they turned 12, he realised he needed "a plan for dealing with the deaths of my loved ones". Last December, Itchy died, aged 14, and he started putting the plan into effect. Itchy is now in a freezer in Packham's barn, awaiting cremation. At some point, Scratchy will go the same way. After that, there will be a hiatus, until Packham himself dies (it may be a long one: he is only 55). Then their ashes will all be combined, and scattered in the woods. "I am a scientist... but I have a sense of the romantic," he explains. "I want us scattered in the environment we have shared and loved together so that we can fuse in some other life." In the meantime, Packham (below) is looking for a crematorium he can trust. "If I give you give my dog to burn, don't give me back some bits of old Labrador mixed in. It's got to be them. It's got to be us." But he knows that for all his planning, he still faces something terrible. "When Scratchy dies, no human will fill that vacuum," he says. "Each morning I try to imagine what it will be like without either of them. No one will reach me in that dark place I need to go."

**How Lee Child began**

Lee Child's thrillers are set in the US, and he lives in New York. But he is really from Birmingham – and his name is Jim Grant. So where does the pen name come from? "Family joke," he told Richard Barber in *The Daily Telegraph*. He once met a Texan on a train, who told him



that he had a European car. "It was a Renault 5, marketed back then as Le Car to give it a sort of Parisian chic. Except he pronounced it 'Lee Car'. As soon as I told my wife, 'Lee' became our stand-in definite article, so that when our daughter was born she became 'Lee Baby'. As she grew, she morphed into 'Lee Child'." When he began to write, the name seemed perfect: "warm, sentimental to me and easily memorable". Since then, he has sold more than 100 million of his thrillers about ex-US army veteran Jack Reacher; the aim, he says, has always been to give them narrative thrust, without alienating more sophisticated readers – and it's worked. "I used to say that, if I had a dollar for everyone who's told me they never normally read that sort of book... But, come to think of it, I do have a dollar for all those people."

**The oldest doctor**

At 105, William Frankland is probably the world's oldest working doctor. In his long and extraordinary career, he has counted Saddam Hussein among his patients (it was in 1979, and he probably saved his life, by persuading him to quit smoking), and worked with Sir Alexander Fleming. His own research, into allergies, has benefited millions worldwide (and formed the basis of the pollen count). But it wasn't people that got him into medicine. "People say you must have wanted to help

human beings, but it never came into my mind," he told David Wilkes in the *Daily Mail*. When he was a child, he and his siblings fell ill, and the doctor couldn't work out what was wrong. At that time, he was an avid reader of detective stories. He realised then that illness is also a mystery. "I think being a doctor is like being a detective: someone is sick and there is something you have to discover that's not obvious."



Life hasn't been easy for Jane Birkin recently, says Nina Myskow in *The Times*. Three years ago, her oldest daughter, Kate, died in a fall from a window of her Paris flat, aged 46. She was a photographer whose work had appeared in *Vogue*, but she was troubled. The coroner recorded an open verdict. At the same time, Birkin herself was battling leukaemia. Last year, there was a breakthrough: she no longer has to have thrice-weekly blood transfusions; but cortisone made her fat. "I looked vast," she says. "It gives you an enormous neck. I looked like a bulldog. I didn't like it, but at the same time I didn't care. And antidepressants make you eat." She grins ruefully. "Maybe one day I'll wear a bikini again, but it's been many years. You have to hide your tummy, and then there are the legs – the vast, vast bolster legs." She'd rather not look at herself any more. "I'm happier when I don't." Birkin doesn't expect to make any more films, and after Kate's death, she couldn't even bring herself to sing. "But eventually I realised I've been given a second chance." Now, she has a new album out, of songs written by Serge Gainsbourg, her long-term partner. They split up before he died, in 1991, but they remained very close – and he never stopped writing for her. "I'm grateful to him that he's found me a way out, a way to get back in the world. By going back to Serge, he is helping me move forward."

**Viewpoint:****Quizzes**

"Some people [were] upset that the final of *University Challenge* was between two all-male teams, on the grounds that this was 'sexist'. Really? I live with a man who not only answers more questions on *UC* every week than I do, he often answers more than most of the contestants combined. Does this make me feel like a dumb blonde? On the contrary, I find the systemising male brain a rich source of comedy. For what does it profit a man to recall the Treaty of Westphalia, yet lose the worming tablets for the cat? He also arranges his books in alphabetic order within chronological. And his proudest boast is that while on holiday in North Wales in 1974, he won a hubcap identification competition. Who could compete with that? Who would want to?" *Allison Pearson in The Daily Telegraph*

**Farewell**

**Aloysius "Lucky" Gordon**, jazz musician and hustler who became involved in the Profumo scandal, died 15 March, aged 85.

**Bruce Langhorne**, American folk musician and film composer, died 14 April, aged 78.

**Christopher Morahan**, stage and TV director, best known for *Granada's The Jewel in the Crown*, died 7 April, aged 87.



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# Silicon Valley's grand designs

*Apple, it was recently confirmed, is building a self-driving car. What else does America's tech industry have in store for us?*

## What's going on out West?

Over the past 20 years, the US high-tech industry, centred in Silicon Valley in northern California, has revolutionised the way that we buy goods and services, communicate, read newspapers, watch TV, listen to music, consume pornography, bank, and hail taxis. But recently, digital pioneers have tried to break out of established online businesses – partly to find new markets to “disrupt”, and partly out of frustrated idealism: in the words of one former Facebook engineer, “the best minds of my generation are thinking about how to make people click ads. That sucks.”

## Who is doing what?

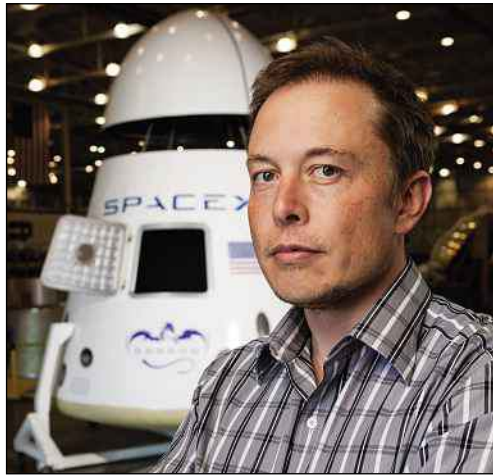
The classic example is Elon Musk, once CEO of PayPal, who has branched out into electric cars (Tesla), solar power systems (SolarCity), ultra-high-speed train travel (Hyperloop) and spacecraft (SpaceX). The latter aims to create “the technology needed to establish life on Mars”. Hardly less ambitious is Google’s “moonshots” division, X, led by the entrepreneur-scientist Astro Teller. It is developing Waymo, Google’s driverless car arm; Project Loon, which aims to create a global internet network using balloons in the stratosphere; and Project Wing, pioneering the use of self-flying vehicles to deliver goods. Google has also set up Calico, a company devoted to “life extension” – research into the biology of ageing. Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg, meanwhile, has pledged \$3bn towards preventing, curing or managing all diseases by 2100.

## Are any of these remotely practical?

Yes and no. Musk has ceased to be directly involved with the Hyperloop (see box), but Tesla is now the world’s second-biggest plug-in electric car manufacturer (after Renault-Nissan), and SpaceX won Nasa’s contract to resupply the International Space Station. At Google X, the picture is more mixed. Its most famous project, Google Glass – a pair of glasses with a tiny camera and a computer in the corner of one lens – flopped; it was slammed by tech critics, and criticised on privacy grounds. However, X claims to have covered its losses through the successful development of Google Brain, an artificial intelligence (AI) project which has since been “graduated” to the main company.

## Why is AI such a key area?

Breakthroughs in computerised perception and language processing – exemplified in the current crop of “intelligent personal assistants” such as Apple’s Siri and Amazon’s Alexa – have already made computers smarter and able to “learn” faster than ever. But this is just the start. Computers that can intelligently analyse vast databanks are likely to lead to breakthroughs in everything from medical diagnostics to climate science, and to underpin developments in driverless cars, robotics and other cutting-edge areas. Google’s Jeff Dean likens it to the point in evolution when animals grew eyes. “That’s going to change a lot of stuff. Computers used to not be able to see very well, and now they’re starting to open their eyes.”



Elon Musk: tackling cars, solar power and spacecraft

## What else will be the next big thing?

At present, nobody quite knows. The “internet of things” – the online networking of everyday devices: a fridge that tells you when you run out of milk, for example – has failed to take off in the way many thought it would, partly due to security concerns. In October, hackers suborned a vast number of smart devices – fridges, thermostats, toasters – and used them to mount a huge attack on popular websites such as Netflix and Twitter. So now, says one investor, “the tech world is at sea, dog-paddling and waiting for the next big wave”. Candidates include driverless cars (Apple, Google and Uber are all working in this area); chatbots (where Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft, Google and IBM vie for supremacy); robotics, including drones; and biotech.

## How are the driverless cars going?

Google has the most advanced technology: its driverless cars have driven more than two million miles and have had only 14 accidents, of which 13 were caused by other drivers. Yet Big Tech has had to accept limitations. Designing cars that can drive in complex situations – as opposed to, say, on a motorway – is painstaking. Tesla’s Autopilot system (designed to be used under human supervision) caused a fatal crash when it didn’t recognise a white trailer against a bright sky. Besides, the likes of Apple and Google don’t have the skills and supply chains to take on the big traditional carmakers. Recent predictions suggest Ford and General Motors are closest to producing a self-driving mass market car (probably by the early 2020s). For tech firms, pairings may be the future: Uber has teamed up with Volvo; Google with Fiat Chrysler.

## What about robotics?

Again, Silicon Valley has had to accept that software is far easier to develop than hardware. Beating a grandmaster at chess is one thing, but the real world is different. Robots are more difficult even than cars; preparing them to cope with random elements of even simple tasks, such as picking up items off the floor, takes years. Last year, Google announced that it plans to sell Boston Dynamics, a robotics group it had acquired with great fanfare in 2013. Amazon recently made its first UK delivery by drone, in Cambridge, but it concedes that rolling out the service “will take some time”.

## And biotech?

This is possibly the biggest prize of all. Marrying IT with biological data has great potential. Patient information systematically collected and analysed could provide crucial insights into diseases and treatments – a mass of data to complement clinical trials. In the long run, the ability to analyse and edit genes may allow huge medical steps forward. There are now 70 life science companies in South San Francisco. Counsyl, for instance, offers full genetic tests for a fraction of the price of existing firms. “Whoever wins in biology wins the 21st century,” says biotech investor Arvind Gupta.

## Hyperloop: a pipe dream?

In 2013, Elon Musk issued a 58-page manifesto for an entirely new mode of transport, in which passenger pods would be hurled through pressurised tubes at the speed of a jet plane – a cross, he said, between Concorde, a railgun and an air hockey table. His initial idea was that they should travel between Los Angeles and San Francisco – one of the busiest routes in the world – in about half an hour. The technology would be safe, relatively cheap and, because it would almost eliminate friction, ultra-energy efficient. Musk, a busy man, later announced that he would not develop the idea himself, but threw it open for others to explore.

In 2014, Hyperloop One was set up. With 260 staff and \$160m in investment, it has developed propulsion technology that it hopes will drive pods at 760mph.

The Los Angeles-San Francisco route has been shelved: the terminals would be on the outskirts of both cities, so overall time savings would be minimal. However, Hyperloop One is studying the feasibility of a Helsinki-Stockholm undersea route, among others.

Sceptics point out that the technology is entirely untried and vulnerable to terrorist attack or accident; one argued that travelling in a sealed tube at high speeds would make for a terrifying “barf ride”.

## Are you proud of the NHS? I'm not

**Kristian Niemietz**

*The Independent*

Roast beef. The Lake District. Proper pubs. I can see why, in a recent survey, these were among the 50 things that made Brits proud to be British. But the NHS at No. 1? That I do not understand, says Kristian Niemietz. One takes pride in the exceptional, yet there's nothing exceptional in a health system free at the point of use: every system in the developed world bar America's has that. Those other systems, though, can take pride in exceptional outcomes: the Swiss one "has the lowest rate of (healthcare-related) avoidable deaths" in Europe; the Dutch, exceptionally fast access to treatment; the Japanese, excellent survival rates for cancer. France's system is consistently good across the board. By contrast, the NHS is usually in the bottom third of league tables, often "on a par" with Slovenia: it's a system that "gave us Mid Staffordshire" and that now has another trust being investigated for its unusually high number of infant deaths. So why the pride? Unappealing as the jingoism of Little Englanders may be, "it's not nearly as cringeworthy as the NHS patriotism of the Left".

## Ministers are not playing by the rules

**Raphael Hogarth**

*The Times*

One ugly legacy of last year's referendum campaign, says Raphael Hogarth, has been the ripping up of the government rule book. Under the British system, Whitehall is meant to implement the Government's programme, not advance politicians' electoral interests: yet during the referendum, David Cameron shamelessly "commandeered" the civil service to help the Remain effort – to prepare briefings, speeches, even campaign materials. Civil servants are also meant to plan for outcomes the government hopes to avoid, yet Cameron proscribed any internal contingency planning for a Leave vote. These, you could say, were anomalous procedures for an anomalous time: trouble is, they've stuck. Brexit Secretary David Davis hasn't commissioned any work on the eventuality of not getting a deal in Brussels, a step any responsible government should take. And last week, ministers were under fire for instructing civil servants to peddle slogans used in Tory party political broadcasts. It's the road to perdition. The old Whitehall conventions weren't perfect, but they've persisted "for a reason".

## The shameless appeasement of Hungary's PM

**Timothy Garton Ash**

*The Guardian*

Shame on Angela Merkel, Spanish PM Mariano Rajoy, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, and Council President Donald Tusk, says Timothy Garton Ash. Their parties all belong to the EU's powerful centre-right grouping, the EPP (European People's Party). Yet they happily shelter in their political family the party of a leader who is "slicing away liberal democracy". Hungary's Viktor Orbán has sapped the freedom of his nation's press and judiciary, and, in violation of international law, is set to hold refugees in shipping containers. He's also forcing the closure of the Central European University, founded by George Soros, the Jewish billionaire he derides as a "liberal" and a "predator". But though Merkel and co. make reproving noises, they won't expel his party's 12 MEPs from the EPP, since that would see the EPP lose its majority in the European Parliament, and with it "first dibs on top jobs". A YouTube clip even shows Juncker welcoming Orbán at an EU summit with a big smile and a pat on the cheek: "Hello, dictator," he quips. Enough: Orbán stands for everything other EPP leaders stand against. "This appeasement has to stop."

## It's the tech kings who rule us now

**Andrew Marr**

*The Sunday Times*

A battle is raging for conservatism's soul that makes differences over Brexit look like "small beer", says Andrew Marr. It's a battle over the shape of the modern world: between those, such as David Cameron, who cheer global market disruption, and the provincial, community-oriented people such as Theresa May, who worry that the world is "out of control". And the forces responsible for that loss of control – the destruction of local shops, the undermining of the tax base, the airing of extreme views on the internet – are the huge technology companies. Last summer, for the first time, the five biggest companies in the world were all tech firms. (Facebook has more users than China has citizens.) And as their power lies in having access to a "global pool of talent", it's these "kings of Silicon Valley" who pose the real opposition to Donald Trump. It's they who funded the legal challenges to his migrant ban; they who are pushing him to have warm relations with China. The dilemma for conservatives who want to challenge the tech giants is that Westminster can't do it on its own. Our small nation has to work with others – EU members included. Isolation won't cut it.

### IT MUST BE TRUE... I read it in the tabloids

A three-month-old baby was summoned to the US Embassy in London, after his grandfather inadvertently identified him as a terrorist. Paul Kenyon, 62, was filling in an online visa waiver form for his daughter and her baby, Harvey, to travel to Orlando, when he accidentally ticked Yes to the question: "Do you seek to engage in or have you ever engaged in terrorist activities, espionage, sabotage or genocide?" As a result, Harvey's application was denied, and he was asked to present himself to US officials. He was eventually authorised to travel, but the permit arrived too late.



Some people get into hot water for erecting "home offices" in their back garden without planning consent. A millionaire accountant went a step further, and built a 10,000 sq ft leisure complex behind his house in the Gloucestershire village of Cinderford. The structure is big enough to house a 16-seat cinema, tennis and squash courts, a 25ft-high doll's house, a bar, gym, casino and bowling alley – yet Graham Wildin reckons it shouldn't need permission as it is partly submerged into the ground, and so does not obstruct neighbours' views. The council has given him three months to demolish it.

A woman was pulled over by police in Peterborough after being spotted driving along with her head wedged between the legs of a baby's high chair. Having already filled her boot, the unnamed driver had jammed the chair across the front seats, and squeezed herself in behind it. She was ordered to remove the chair before continuing.

## At war in the West Wing: the battle for Trump's ear

Is Steve Bannon “toast”? It’s certainly not looking good for the White House chief strategist, said Eugene Robinson in [The Washington Post](#). Until quite recently, the controversial “economic nationalist” – as he likes to style himself – was seen as Donald Trump’s most influential aide (some even dubbed him the “shadow president”). But he now seems to be on the losing side of a vicious bout of West Wing infighting with the president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, along with Kushner’s two key allies: his wife (and Trump’s daughter)



*Bannon and Kushner: a “thrilling” factional battle*

Ivanka Trump, and the increasingly influential economics adviser, former Goldman Sachs president Gary Cohn. Not only has Bannon been obliged to stand down from the National Security Council, he has also suffered a verbal demotion. In two separate interviews last week, Donald Trump – insisting he was his own strategist – spoke belittlingly of Bannon, describing him as “a guy who works for me”. And in private, the president has reportedly complained that Bannon is “not a team player”.

This factional battle has been “thrilling to watch”, said Jim Newell on [Slate](#). Kushner’s allies have accused Bannon of being a divisive, ineffective blowhard. Bannon’s allies, in turn, have accused them of being closet liberals (their mocking nickname for Cohn is apparently “Globalist Gary”). “I see some bad press in [Jared’s] future,” muttered one of them darkly the other day. All fun knockabout stuff, but it doesn’t really mean much. For, as we all know, the “only adviser that will ever truly have Trump’s ear is the host of whatever cable news show he happens to be watching”. On the contrary, said David A. Graham in [The Atlantic](#), Trump’s erratic decision-making means the stakes in these palace intrigues are that much higher. The president has a widely noted tendency to adopt the position “of the last person with whom he spoke on a given issue” – so whether that person is Bannon or, say, Cohn, they can have a

crucial impact on policy. It already has done, said Philip Rucker in [The Washington Post](#). Trump’s intervention in Syria, and his recent more emollient approach to China, betray the influence of his more moderate advisers. What really did for Bannon wasn’t so much his ideology as his failure to achieve results. It was he who pushed the botched ban on Middle Eastern immigrants that came so dramatically unstuck in the courts, and it was he who failed spectacularly to bully hard-line Republicans into passing Trump’s healthcare bill. That made him a “marked man” in the White House.

I’m not a fan of Bannon, said Rich Lowry on [Politico](#). But he does at least have “a considered world view and helps anchor Trump somewhere in the populist-conservative policy continuum”. If his influence disappears, everything – from Trump’s stances on immigration and climate change to abortion – could be “up for grabs”. We’d end up with an administration in the mould of Ivanka, Kushner and Cohn, whose political instincts aren’t just those of Democrats but of “ladies-who-lunch Democrats who have marinated for decades in the financial and social elite of Manhattan”. Cohn, especially, “would have been the totem of everything Trump was running against in 2016, when he made Goldman Sachs into a kind of swear word”. Cohn is as “toxic” as Bannon, agreed David Dayen in [The Nation](#). He’s “the guy who ran Goldman’s mortgage department, turning it into an enormous trading operation that fuelled the housing bubble”; the guy who “exported deceptive finance schemes to Greece”. Do we want him running the show? Whatever happens, Trump would be foolish to fire Bannon, said Rick Wilson on [The Daily Beast](#). The alt-right fringe that helped elect Trump is growing suspicious that he’s turning into a conventional Republican. If a vengeful Bannon rejoins the populist, internet-driven movement that he helped start, Trump “should prepare for war”.

## Mike Pence is a Christian, not a weirdo

**Jonah Goldberg**

*National Review*

Liberals can be guilty of the worst sort of “double standards”, says Jonah Goldberg. Look, for instance, at the way they responded to a recent newspaper profile of Mike Pence, which revealed that the vice-president never likes to dine alone with women, or to attend events where alcohol is served, if his wife doesn’t accompany him. This nugget of gossip prompted much hilarity and righteous indignation in liberal circles. “It’s an affront to working women! He’s a Christian weirdo! He thinks a meal with any woman will lead to sex!” Such mockery was most unfair. If Pence were a Democrat who’d been caught cheating on his wife, you can bet the liberal elites would now be claiming that the couple’s private life was none of our business, and insisting critics had no right to judge. But if, like many committed Christians, he takes steps to protect his marriage from the risk of infidelity, then it seems he’s a fair target for pillory. Of course, if the Pences were devout Muslims and followed similar rules, liberals wouldn’t dream of criticising them. No, no, no: they’d pride themselves on respecting different views, different choices. The views of orthodox Muslims, being “exotically ‘other’”, are “somehow courageous”. Those of orthodox Christians, by contrast, are just “embarrassing”.

## Let’s consign the filibuster to history

**Jamelle Bouie**

*Slate*

The Republicans “deployed the nuclear option” a couple of weeks ago, says Jamelle Bouie. Faced with an attempt by opponents to block Neil Gorsuch, President Trump’s nominee for the Supreme Court, they made good on their threat to rewrite the Senate rules. Their reform has lowered the number of votes needed to end a filibuster preventing the confirmation of a judge: instead of 60 votes, a simple majority of 51 now suffices. Having thus successfully neutered the judicial filibuster, will Republicans seek to kill off the legislative filibuster as well, to facilitate the passing of laws? GOP leaders insist they have no plans to do so – which, as I see it, is a very great pity. For whether or not you approve of the current Republican agenda, making it easier for parties to pass legislation will, in the long run, make for a more democratic Congress. The filibuster – a 19th century rule that has nothing to do with the Constitution – supposedly prevents the tyranny of the majority. But in today’s extremely polarised environment, it has become a tool of routine obstructionism, leading to Washington gridlock. That might suit small-state obsessives, but not those who want leaders actually to get things done. The party that wins an election should have the ability to deliver on its promises, so that voters can clearly judge its successes and failures. “Let the filibuster burn!”

## Egypt's Christians in peril after vicious crackdown

The bombing of two Egyptian churches on Palm Sunday was a massive security failure, said Aya Nader in *Al-Monitor* (Washington DC). Only a week before, a bomb had been found and defused in St George's Church in Tanta, yet an Isis suicide bomber was allowed to walk unimpeded into the very same church, where he killed at least 27 people and injured 71. Hours later, another bomber detonated a belt outside St Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria, killing another 17. Egypt's Coptic Christians feel badly let down by President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, and for good reason. They were the first to applaud in 2013 when the general ended the Muslim Brotherhood's chaotic rule and vowed to restore order; they thought he'd put an end to the murderous attacks on them by Salafist extremists. Yet the vicious crackdown that ensued has made them no safer. On the contrary, attacks by terror groups are spreading, and the "infidel" Copts are a prime target. Why is so little being done to protect them?

The main effect of Sisi's repression is a shocking breakdown of civil rights, said Amr Hamzawy on *AlJazeera.com* (Doha). Critical journalists are arrested as terrorists and subjected to sham trials. Protesting students and workers are attacked, fired or jailed. Businesses have assets confiscated if they decline to invest in the regime's mega-construction projects. And the rights



Sisi (right) meeting the Coptic Orthodox Pope

organisations that try to defend the victims are defamed as "forces of instability and chaos" funded by foreigners. Most of Egypt's Muslims loathe Isis, and some speak "glowingly" of close Christian friends, said Timothy E. Kaldas on *CNN.com*. But too often you hear people referred to as *maseehy bas kwayis* ("Christian, but good") as if it were an aberration. And too often local officials merely shrug when Christians are victimised. No one was brought to book when an elderly Christian woman was stripped and dragged through the streets after rumours her son was having a relationship with a Muslim. This climate of bigotry goes unrecognised yet it's what helps make the attacks on Christians possible.

It was jarring to hear President Trump declare, on Sisi's visit to the White House, that the general is doing a "fantastic job", said Zvi Bar'el in *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv). But if he is to change his ways, Sisi will need more than a "pat on the back". The \$1.5bn in aid Washington provides annually is positively insulting compared with what Egypt gets from Saudi Arabia, and far too little for Egypt's needs. To attract IMF loans, Sisi has been forced to slash subsidies, something Egypt's leaders always tremble over. Some prices have doubled: public anger is simmering. Sisi knows he has more to fear from ordinary Egyptians than from terrorists.

### FRANCE

## Le Pen falters with Holocaust gaffe

*La Croix*  
(Paris)

One reason the National Front's Marine Le Pen is now a front runner in the presidential campaign is that she turned her back on the crude anti-Semitism of the party's founder, her father Jean-Marie Le Pen. Notoriously, he referred to the Holocaust as a "detail of history". So why on Earth has she gone back on this, asks Guillaume Goubert. In a recent interview she let slip that she's sick of France being blamed for wartime atrocities, notably the 1942 "Vel' d'Hiv" roundup of some 13,000 Jews for deportation to concentration camps. This, she insisted, had nothing to do with the "real France", whose leaders were in exile in London. What's she trying to prove? National pride is all very well, but as Jacques Chirac acknowledged in 1995, when he officially recognised French complicity and condemned the roundup as "an insult to our past", it can't be built on a web of lies. Besides, is the truth really so bad? Yes, many French people collaborated with the Nazis. But many others fought back. As a result, 75% of French Jews survived the Holocaust, more than in most German-occupied countries. Le Pen has made her first major gaffe in an otherwise meticulously controlled campaign.

### IRAN

## The hardliner moderates fear the most

*Foreign Policy*  
(Washington DC)

Iran's presidential election in May is shaping up to be another "epic" fight between hardliners and moderates, says Alex Vatanka. The most eye-catching challenger to the moderate Hassan Rouhani, the incumbent, is his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has defied the wishes of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei by choosing to stand again. But a far greater threat to the moderates' cause is Ebrahim Raisi. A dullard who has risen to the top through family connections and a willingness to curry favour, Raisi has "feeble" theological credentials (he had to retract his claim to be an ayatollah), but, crucially, has Khamenei's backing. He's also the consensus candidate of the "Principlists", the array of small hard-line parties who would like to see Raisi take over as supreme leader when Khamenei goes. On paper, though, he doesn't stand a chance: Iranian voters tend to go for moderates, and Raisi's past as a cruel judge, responsible for mass executions of political prisoners, is a black mark against him. The worry in the moderate camp is that the hardliners plan to steal the election through vote rigging, to ensure Raisi gains the platform he needs if he is to become supreme leader. With the stakes so high, this election could prove the most contentious yet.

### CANADA

## We must rein in the cannabis industry

*The Globe and Mail*  
(Toronto)

In his rush to legalise cannabis for recreational use, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is taking a huge gamble with public health, says Michael DeVillier. Research shows that legal and regulated drugs – tobacco, alcohol, prescription medicines – cause more harm than illicit drugs, not least because the companies selling them ignore the regulations and block reforms. Look at the epidemic of opioid deaths sweeping North America, a direct result of aggressive marketing by pharmaceutical firms, and laissez-faire government oversight. All signs are it will be the same with the newly legalised cannabis industry. Big suppliers of medical marijuana have already been shown to violate advertising standards, collude with criminals, and knowingly use banned pesticides. Yet none has lost its licence. Now they're salivating in expectation of even greater profits. So is the government, which seems more keen to maximise its tax share than take measures to prevent harm to health. What's needed is a non-profit cannabis authority exclusively concerned with health issues, not with expanding the market. If we're going to change the law, let's not make matters worse than they already are.

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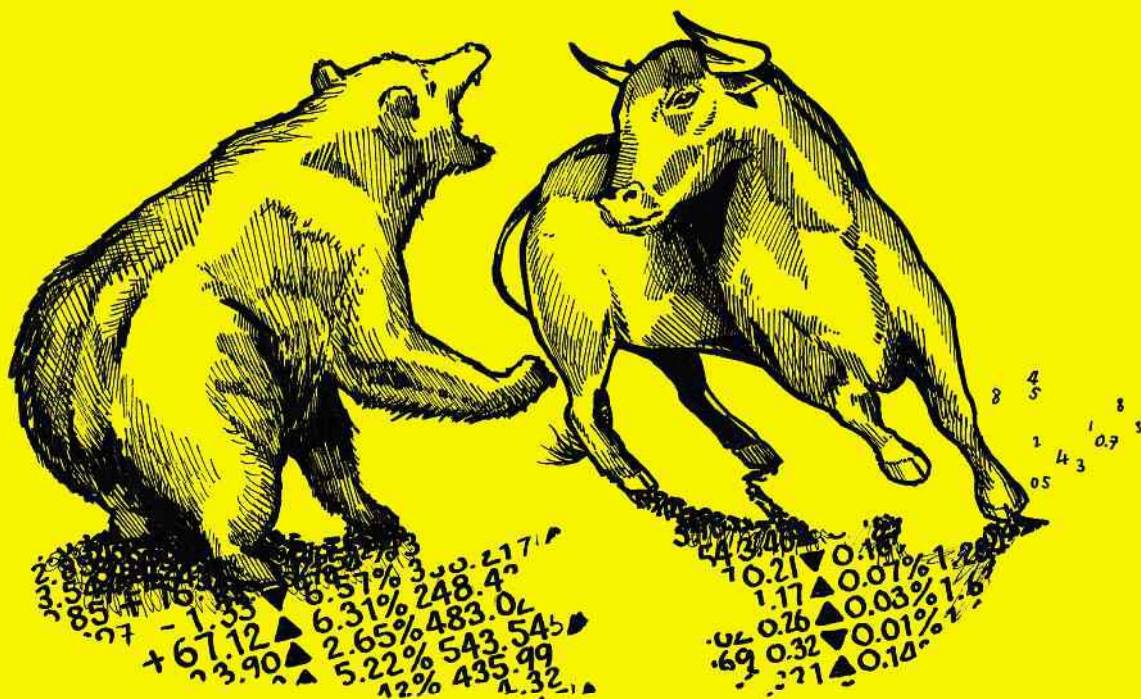
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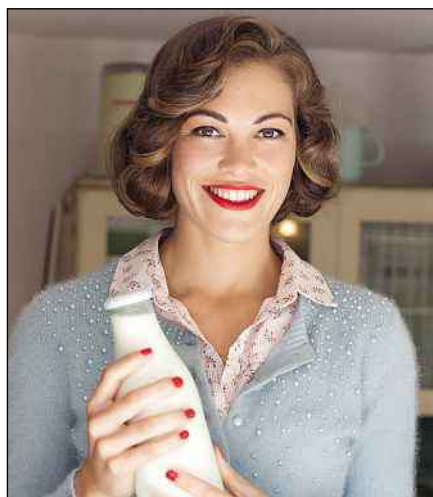
## What the scientists are saying...

### Radical treatment for depression

Ketamine could be used to alleviate the symptoms of depression in patients for whom “nothing has helped”, reports *The Independent*. For the past six years, an Oxford University team has been using ketamine – a licensed anaesthetic that is also used as a recreational drug – to treat 101 patients whose severe depression has proved resistant to drugs and therapies. They found that when the ketamine was given in small doses intravenously, followed by oral top-ups, 42 of the patients experienced a sustained improvement. One patient explained that the drug had slowed down the “constant, overwhelming bombardment of negative intrusive thoughts” and given her a chance to “fight back”. According to Dr Rupert McShane, who runs the programme, only electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) has better results – but many patients are unwilling to undergo ECT because of its associations with brutal treatments in the past. Depression, he explained, is “a disorder of overactivity. In people who are depressed, there is an excessive connectedness between the emotional regulation area and other areas of the brain.” Both ECT and ketamine appear to reduce this.

### “Clean eaters” risk osteoporosis

Young people shunning dairy as part of a so-called “clean-eating” diet could be risking osteoporosis in later life, a charity has warned. The National Osteoporosis Society (NOS) commissioned a survey of 18- to 24-year-olds, and found that four in ten people in that age group had tried such a diet, while one in five had significantly cut their intake of milk or cheese. The NOS says this may leave them calcium deficient, at a time when they need to be building bone strength – and leave them



*She's guarding against weakened bones*

with permanently weakened bones. The Food Standards Agency recently found that 46% of young adults believe they are either allergic or intolerant to cow's milk. However, research suggests only around 5% of the population are lactose intolerant.

### Brain forms double memories

When we experience an event, it seems our brains create two copies of the memory: one is formed in the hippocampus – where short-term memories are accessed – while the other is formed in the prefrontal cortex, for long-term storage. The finding surprised even the researchers who made it: previously, the assumption was that memories were formed in the hippocampus and then slowly transferred to the “memory bank” in the cortex. In the US-Japanese study, lab mice were given mild electric shocks when they went into particular chambers, and were then monitored to see how well they remembered them.

Meanwhile, light beams were used to switch memories in the two different parts of their brain on or off. The results suggest that episodic memories, of specific events, are formed in both places simultaneously, but that the memories in the cortex remain “silent” – inaccessible – until they reach maturity, after about two weeks. The memories in the hippocampus then slowly fall silent, but they do not disappear (the researchers could activate them artificially). “[The memories] are formed in parallel but then they go different ways from there. The prefrontal cortex becomes stronger and the hippocampus becomes weaker,” said Mark Morrissey, one of the authors of the study, published in the journal *Science*.

### Obesity is a killer after all

A new study has further undercut the “obesity paradox” – the notion, suggested by earlier research, that people who are overweight are actually less likely to die early than those of a “healthy” weight. The Harvard team gathered data on more than 225,000 people from three studies, and looked at the fluctuations in their body mass index over a 16-year period. They then looked at their death rates over the next 12 or so years, and found that the participants who had been overweight or obese at their peak BMI had an elevated risk of dying from any cause – as well as from specific causes such as heart disease. The highest risk of death was among participants who experienced significant drops in weight: however, the authors said this was probably because they had lost weight as a result of illness. They suggest that their study is more accurate than the ones that support the “obesity paradox”, because it looked at people's weight over time, rather than relying on measurements taken at a single point in time.

## Elephants are highly self-aware

Asian elephants are even more intelligent than we realised, reports *The Independent*. Self-awareness is regarded as a key indicator of intelligence, and it is usually gauged using the mirror test: do the subjects realise that what they are looking at is themselves? A handful of animals, including elephants, have passed this test; but it is increasingly thought to be imperfect. So researchers devised a further test, to see whether animals are sufficiently self-aware to realise when their bodies are getting in the way of a task – and work out how to solve the problem.



For the Cambridge University study, elephants had to walk onto a mat, pick up a stick and pass it to a human; the catch was, the stick was attached to the mat. The elephants had to work out that in order to pass the stick, they had to step off the mat. “This is a deceptively simple test, but its implications are quite profound,” says Dr Josh Plotnik, a visiting researcher at the university. “The elephants understood that their bodies were getting in the way, so they stepped aside to enable themselves to complete the task. In a similar test, this is something that young children are unable to understand until they are about two years old.”

### Hope for stroke victims

A “game-changing” stroke treatment is to become available to thousands more people, NHS England announced this week. Mechanical thrombectomies are used to remove blood clots in the brains of patients who have had acute ischaemic strokes. The procedure involves feeding a wire up through the body, usually from the groin area, where a wire mesh tube then catches the clot so that it can be dragged out, and blood flow is restored – limiting the damage to the brain. If used quickly enough, the procedure is more effective at unblocking arteries than blood-thinning drugs – and greatly improves patients' chances of making a full recovery. At the moment, thrombectomies are offered in only a handful of hospitals, but there are plans to expand their availability to 24 specialist centres, starting this year. Eventually, 8,000 stroke patients a year could be treated with thrombectomies.

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51.4 (5.5) - 74.3 (3.8), CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions 125 - 99g/km. These official EU test figures are to be used as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect all driving results.

### Pick of the week's *Gossip*

Donald Trump's plans for his state visit to London are creating problems for his security team. In particular, they – and the Met – are concerned about his reported insistence that he is conveyed to Buckingham Palace in one of the Queen's golden carriages. Normally, the US president travels as part of an armoured motorcade in a fast, bombproof car "designed to withstand a massive attack", said a security source. "If [Trump] is in a golden coach being dragged up The Mall by a couple of horses, the risk factor is dramatically increased. There may well be protections in that coach... but it would not be able to put up much resistance in the face of a rocket-propelled grenade... Armour-piercing rounds would make a very bad show of things."



The youngest of the Beckham children is only five years old – but her mother, Victoria (pictured with Harper), has already registered her name as a trademark. The move means that no one will be able to exploit Harper Beckham's name for their own commercial gain – but it also paves the way for Victoria to bring out a range of Harper-branded toys, clothes and beauty products at a later date. Harper's siblings have already begun lucrative careers: Brooklyn, 18, has been employed as a fashion photographer and recently signed a book deal (for a collection of his own photographs); Romeo, 14, is the face of Burberry; while Cruz, 12, released a charity single last year.

## United Airlines: a brutal eviction

As PR blunders go, this was a humdinger. United Airlines brands itself as the "friendly skies" carrier, but after last week's shocking events, when an elderly doctor was dragged screaming off one of its planes, it may need a rebranding, said Arwa Mahdawi in The Guardian. The

disaster began to unfold on the tarmac at Chicago's O'Hare airport after crew belatedly realised they needed four more seats for staff on a flight to Louisville. They offered passengers \$800 each to leave the plane – and when none volunteered, four were selected to be bumped off. Three meekly left their seats, but Dr David Dao, 69, refused. So cabin crew called the airport police, who forced him up, and pulled him along the aisle on his back – breaking his nose and knocking out two of his front teeth in the process. Passengers filmed the incident; the footage went viral, and almost \$1bn was (briefly) knocked off United's market value.

Dao's brutal ejection wasn't the most terrible thing to occur last week, said John Kass in the Chicago Tribune. Yet it provoked worldwide outrage. Partly this was because it was caught on video: to grab attention these days, you must have a video to tweet out. But more than that, it hit a nerve, said Jacob Silverman in The Washington Post. We're told that the consumer is king, but every so often we come up against



Dao: an unfriendly encounter

a corporate giant and find we're impotent in the face of their intransigence. To travel by plane was once a luxurious experience; now, it's an agony of petty humiliations, from the moment you buy your ticket – and they start gouging you for more cash, for everything from luggage to insurance – to the moment you shuffle into your cramped economy seat.

As an economy traveller, you may feel the airline doesn't care about you, said Ben Chu in The Independent. You'd be right. Airlines make most of their money from business class and above; profit margins from economy tickets are tiny. That's why low-cost carriers charge fat fees for snacks and the like: it's vital income. It's also why they sell more tickets than there are seats. They know there'll usually be a few passengers who don't turn up; the extra sales are pure profit. United's mistake wasn't in overbooking – that's standard – it was in not sorting it out in the terminal, and then failing to offer sufficient compensation to induce people to give up their seats voluntarily (other airlines routinely offer more). Its meanness has cost it dear. Still, I doubt any boycott will last long, said Martin Hemming in The Sunday Times. We may hate flying, but we're addicted to low-cost holidays. "If [United] is flying to where people want to go for the cheapest price, it'll sell tickets."

## The mother of all bombs: dropped on Isis

When the blast came, at 7.32pm last Thursday, "a giant white flash" lit up the evening sky over Afghanistan's Spin Ghar mountains, said Sune Engel Rasmussen in The Guardian. It felt, said witnesses, "like an earthquake". Miles away, walls were cracked and windows were shattered. US forces had just dropped the largest non-nuclear bomb ever used in combat on a network of caves and tunnels used by Isis fighters in Nangarhar Province, near the Pakistan border. The GBU-43/B Moab – Massive Ordnance Air Blast, known as the "mother of all bombs" – has an explosive yield of 11 tonnes, and is so big that it has to be dropped from a cargo plane. It obliterated the tunnel network and left a crater nearly 1,000ft wide; Afghan forces, sent to mop up, said that 94 Isis fighters were killed. Despite the damage, local villagers seemed satisfied that the area had been cleared of militants.

During last year's campaign, Donald Trump promised to "bomb the shit" out of Isis. He seems to be making good on his pledge, said Rob Crilly in The Daily Telegraph. But tactically, the decision was questionable. Each



The Moab: costs some \$16m

Moab reportedly costs some \$16m. Why expend such a massive amount on a small number of jihadists? Isis in Afghanistan is a mere splinter group of the Taliban; they have limited power and are not linked except by name to Isis in Syria and Iraq. Was the bombing just a demonstration of "US might"?

President Trump has given his generals a new "freedom on the battlefield", said Rhys Blakely in The Times. A plan drafted by his defence secretary, James Mattis, calls for commanders fighting Isis to be given much greater latitude to launch raids and air strikes, so they can destroy the militants' strongholds without the "endless deliberation" of the Obama years. But the Moab attack is unlikely to change the course of the Afghan war, said Simon Tisdall in The Guardian. Such "shock and awe" tactics have rarely helped in the past; they have tended to turn local populations against the US. Isis has been making gains in Afghanistan. "The Taliban is also resurgent." Using the "mother of all bombs" merely emphasises the US's failure to win this "father all of wars" – a conflict begun by George W. Bush, and now in its 16th year.

## Boris: a diplomatic debacle?

Ever since Theresa May appointed the Three Brexiteers – David Davis, Boris Johnson, and Liam Fox – to her Cabinet, a group of Tory MPs has been running a sweepstake on who will be sacked first, said Simon Walters in *The Mail* on Sunday. Until last week, Fox was the favourite. But in the wake of Johnson’s bungled intervention at the G7 summit, the odds have shifted dramatically. The Foreign Secretary had already been accused of being America’s “poodle” for cancelling his trip to Moscow, hours before his flight was due to leave, so that US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson could deliver a “clear message” to the Kremlin about its support for the Assad regime. Then, two days later, he went to a G7 summit in Italy hoping to persuade foreign ministers to impose tougher sanctions on Russia – only to have his proposal roundly rebuffed. Even Tillerson gave it only lukewarm support, and there wasn’t so much as a mention of sanctions in the G7 communiqué. Johnson, it seems, had failed to heed the first rule of diplomacy: “never propose anything unless it has been stitched up in advance”.



Johnson: a gamble that failed

Poor old Boris, said John Bew on CapX. First, he was chided for stepping out of the spotlight for Tillerson – leading to the inevitable laments about Britain’s diminished standing on the

world stage. Then, he was chided for stepping back in again, with his push for new sanctions – triggering another familiar canard, that Britain must learn not to “punch above its weight”. Yes, Boris’s G7 gamble failed, but it is a “vast exaggeration” to suggest that this was “the moment at which the wheels fell off British diplomacy”.

Even so, it was a setback – and one that adds to the “unsettling impression” that Johnson is “making foreign policy up on the hoof”, without the full support of

the PM, said *The Times*. Which is regrettable, because his approach to sanctions is, in fact, the correct one. At the G7, Italy’s foreign minister cautioned against “pushing Russia into a corner”. Even if his resistance to sanctions wasn’t wholly principled – Italy, like other G7 nations, has valuable trade links with Russia that it is surely anxious to preserve – it is true that there is a value in constructive engagement with Moscow. But we need sticks as well as carrots: sanctions, or the threat of them, are one more way of ramping up the pressure on the Kremlin. If Vladimir Putin decides to withdraw his support for President Assad, it won’t be down to “any moral compunction at the barbarism of his client. It will be because he has been ‘pushed into a corner’.”

## Prince Harry: opening up about his grief

“What does someone who needs help with their mental health look like,” asked Felicity Morse in the *i* newspaper. They could look like a soldier returning from war. Or a mother struggling with a new baby. Or someone who has just lost their job. In truth, they could look like anyone: at least one in four people in the UK will have mental health problems during their lifetime. And, we learnt this week, they also look “like Prince Harry”. The Prince revealed to *The Daily Telegraph* that he had “come close to a complete breakdown on numerous occasions”, because he had bottled up his feelings about his mother’s death for so long. The result “was 20 years of not thinking about it, and two years of total chaos”. Only after his brother convinced him to seek help did he visit a “shrink”. “Once you start talking about it,” he said, “you realise that actually you’re part of quite a big club.”



“Two years of total chaos”

The sight of a 12-year-old Harry walking behind his mother’s coffin became the enduring image of Princess Diana’s funeral, said Hannah Furness in *The Daily Telegraph*. Now, 20 years on, he has revealed how his grief affected him: “My

way of dealing with it was sticking my head in the sand, refusing to ever think about my mum, because why would that help?” This approach, he said, had “a serious effect not only my personal life but my work as well”. He only addressed his problems when he was 28, and started suffering from anxiety at royal engagements. At one point, he felt that he was “on the verge of punching someone”.

“By giving this interview, Harry has done more to show people that it’s OK – normal – to struggle with your mental health than decades of charity campaigns could ever achieve,” said Max Pemberton in the *Daily Mail*. Like their mother, Harry and William have chosen to support difficult causes, and by championing this one they can “transform” our view of mental health. “Normalising” these problems “is necessary – but so too is funding”, said Suzanne Moore in *The Guardian*. Mental health services are in “a very poor state”. Many people in Harry’s position would not get counselling; they would be fobbed off with antidepressants. “Now it’s time to make the help and support that was available to a prince available to all.”

## Wit & Wisdom

“There’s many a bestseller that could have been prevented by a good teacher.”

*Flannery O’Connor, quoted on The Browser*

“By the time you swear you’re his, / Shivering and sighing, / And he vows his passion is / Infinite, undying / Lady, make a note of this: / One of you is lying.”

*Dorothy Parker, quoted in The Times*

“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.”

*Chinese proverb, quoted in The Irish Times*

“Truth is the daughter of time, not of authority.”

*Sir Francis Bacon, quoted on Forbes.com*

“I always thought Roger Moore was a New Year’s resolution.”

*Former home secretary Alan Johnson, quoted in The Times*

“Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions.”

*David Hume, quoted in The Guardian*

“Knowing when to blow the whistle is the easy job of refereeing. The secret is knowing when not to blow it.”

*Nigel Owens, quoted in The Times*

“The pen is mightier than the sword, but only in retrospect. At the time of combat, those with the swords generally win.”

*Margaret Atwood, quoted in The New Yorker*

### Statistics of the week

Tourists tossed €1.4m in small change into Rome’s Trevi Fountain last year. The coins are fished out daily, and given to Caritas, a Catholic charity which works with the city’s poor and needy.

*The Times*

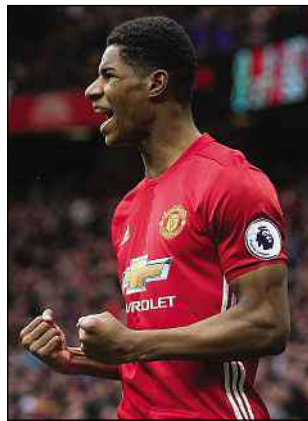
An average of 928 adult social care workers quit their jobs every day last year.

*The Daily Telegraph*

## Football: Chelsea's stumble opens up the title race

"Suddenly, there is that seed of doubt," said Jason Burt in *The Daily Telegraph*. For months, Chelsea's title challenge had looked like a cakewalk: as recently as 18 March, they were 13 points clear. But following Sunday's 2-0 away defeat to Manchester United, there are just four points separating them from Tottenham. It was a "performance of champions", all right – but by a United side that put in their best display yet under José Mourinho. Chelsea, by contrast, looked like "a front runner desperately straining for the finish line". It was the first time in almost a decade that they failed to hit a shot on target in a Premier League match; they haven't kept a clean sheet in any of their past ten games. The Blues should still prevail, but it is "no longer a procession".

Mourinho delivered a "tactical masterclass", said Daniel Taylor in *The Guardian*. His team sheet raised a few eyebrows – he left out talismanic striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, and opted for an unorthodox 3-1-4-1-1 formation. Yet the manager had "worked out everything to a T": his players "out-thought, out-ran and out-fought" the Blues, nullifying their best players and exploiting the weaknesses of their defence. Their performance made it all the more bewildering that they are "so far back in Chelsea's wing mirrors", 15 points off the top – particularly as they have not been beaten in 22 matches. The problem is that the



Rashford: relentless and skilful

Red Devils have drawn far too many games, said Paul Hayward in *The Daily Telegraph*. So often this season they have been a "blunt force": they have scored far fewer goals than any other team in the top seven. Like many of their players, Marcus Rashford has struggled to find the net; after a "sensational start" to his United career, he had "drifted into the mists". On Sunday, however, the 19-year-old profited from Ibrahimovic's absence, playing in his preferred position of centre forward – and he opened the scoring after just seven minutes. Making only his 25th league appearance, Rashford was "quick, relentless and skilful".

If one player epitomised United's "intensity and discipline", it was Ander Herrera, said Henry Winter in *The Times*. The Spanish midfielder scored one goal and set up Rashford's; his marking was so effective that he forced Eden Hazard into a "straitjacket". A "combination of brain and heart", he executed Mourinho's tactics with "sustained concentration". If only Diego Costa had that kind of focus, said Oliver Kay in the same paper. Instead, the Chelsea striker offered "little beyond histrionics". In the first half of the season, he carried the team – yet in his last five league matches he hasn't scored or created a chance. Chelsea must reinvigorate Costa, or "find a way to play without him". Otherwise, their wobble could turn into "a serious stumble".

## Formula 1: Hamilton defeated by Ferrari's "sharp call"

On Sunday, Lewis Hamilton pulled off a "minor miracle", said Jonathan McEvoy in the *Daily Mail*. He was fined for driving too slowly. The world's fastest man was "done for travelling at 35mph, a tardiness that cost him a shot at winning the Bahrain Grand Prix". As he was entering the pit lane, Hamilton slowed down dramatically, in the process impeding Red Bull driver Daniel Ricciardo. For this, he landed a five-second penalty, and went on to lose to Sebastian Vettel by just 6.6 seconds. But in the end, that wasn't the reason he lost, said Giles Richards in *The Guardian*. The race was decided by a "sharp call" made by Ferrari. On the 11th lap, they pulled Vettel in for an early pit stop. With fresh tyres, he "banged in some quick laps" – so that when the safety car was brought out soon after, prompting Hamilton and his Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas to pit, Vettel took the lead, which he held until the end of the race. The fact is that



Vettel: enjoys a quiet life

although Mercedes may have a faster car, Ferrari work their tyres better: so "a good pit call can make the difference".

It looks as if the years of Mercedes dominance are coming to an end, said Andrew Benson on BBC Sport online. And that will force them to make a tough decision. When the team faced little opposition, they could afford to let their drivers battle it out. Now, they have no such luxury – and that will require them to give priority to Hamilton, with Bottas "playing backup". A head-to-head between such different men as Hamilton and Vettel is an intriguing prospect, said McEvoy. Hamilton is a "playboy bachelor". Vettel enjoys a quiet life in the Swiss countryside: an *Only Fools and Horses* fan, the German driver talks to his mechanics in rhyming slang. Aside from their brilliance on the track, the two have "nothing in common".

## Team GB call in the youth

Between the "inquiries, allegations, leaks and Jiffy bags", British Cycling has been going through "crisis after crisis", said William Fotheringham in *The Guardian*. And at the Track Cycling World Championships, which ended on Sunday, it was clear that there are issues on the track, too. A haul of five medals in Hong Kong was enough for Team GB to finish in a "far from disastrous" fourth place, but all of those came in endurance events; there were no sprint medals, and just a single bronze for Britain's male cyclists. It was a far cry from last year's tournament, when the team topped the table, but a great deal has changed since then: Bradley Wiggins has retired; Jason Kenny is on an



The "hugely decorated" Barker

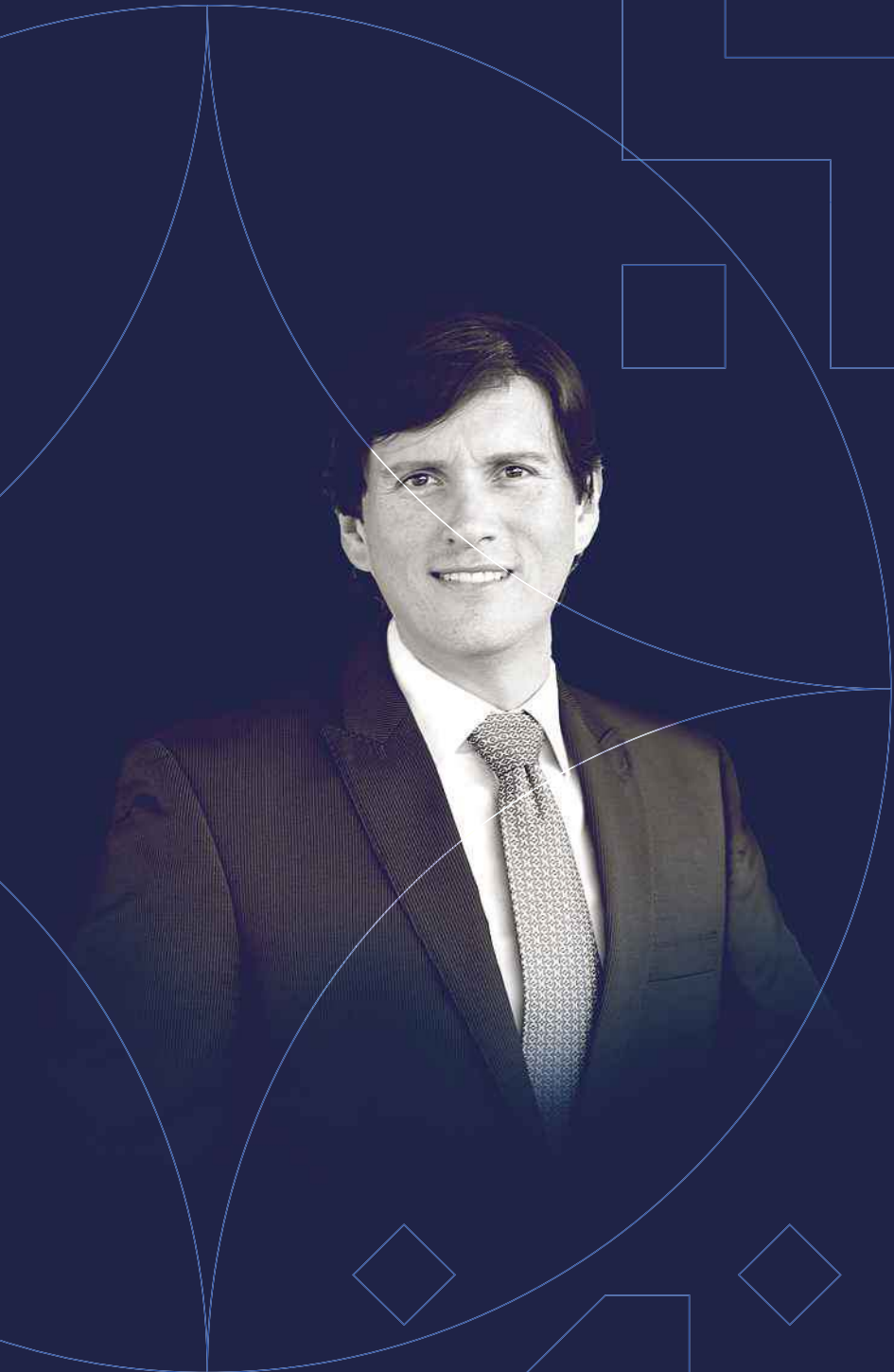
extended break, while his wife, Laura Kenny (née Trott) is pregnant with their first child. In their absence, the team in Hong Kong had "an obvious emphasis on youth". And it was Elinor Barker, a 22-year-old cyclist, who stole the show, said Tom Cary in *The Daily Telegraph*. She was already "hugely decorated", having won Olympic and world team pursuit titles. But her gold in the women's points race – to go with her silvers in the scratch and the Madison – was the first senior individual title of her career. It was a "powerful display of self-determination", full of "guts". After years of listening to other people's national anthems in the individual events, Barker ensured she was "no longer the bridesmaid".

## Sporting headlines

**Rugby union** In the Premiership, Saracens beat Northampton 27-25. Bristol were relegated following their 21-36 defeat to Wasps. Worcester beat Bath 25-19.

**Cricket** Alastair Cook made 110 in his first competitive match since standing down as England captain, leading Essex to an eight-wicket victory over Somerset.

**Football** Brighton were promoted to the Premier League. John Terry announced that he will leave Chelsea at the end of the season. Harry Redknapp was named Birmingham City manager.



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# Pick of the week's correspondence

## Exchange of the week

### Britain's military response to Syria

#### To The Times

The speed of response by the US president to the chemical weapons attack by Syrian forces throws the events of August 2013, when MPs voted against British involvement in military intervention in the Syrian conflict, into sharp relief. The Prime Minister now needs to know if she could take similar action, or if she is hidebound by the Commons vote against David Cameron, which he took as limiting him in future decisions. Swift response may not be an entire foreign policy strategy, but it is time we recognised it has a role to play.

As would have been the case in 2013, it could persuade the Syrian regime that military subjugation of its own people is not possible, so a swiftly negotiated end to conflict is wise. The Commons should seek the earliest possible opportunity to debate its role and the autonomy of the Prime Minister, confirming and clarifying her ability to act in an executive capacity in such circumstances.

*Rt Hon Alistair Burt, MP, minister for the Middle East 2010-13*

#### To The Times

Alistair Burt's regret that Parliament prevented his government attacking the Assad regime in 2013 shows a staggering failure to learn from recent foreign policy mistakes. Jihadists were praying fervently that Britain and America would join the Syrian civil war in 2013. Had we made war on Assad, with no plan for *jus post bellum*, the chief beneficiary would have been al-Qa'eda, whose forces were battling Assad at the time.

At the first Easter time, the founder of Christianity warned that "those who live by the sword will die by the sword". When will British policymakers learn that?

*Dr Nick Megoran, reader in political geography, Newcastle University*

#### To The Times

Nick Megoran has, with respect, missed the point that Alistair Burt was making. Theresa May needed the option of joining the US military response. However, due to the recent

convention that the Government cannot take military action without the consent of Parliament, that option was effectively never on the table.

This new convention emerged in 2003 when, for the first time in British history, the House of Commons voted to authorise Tony Blair to go to war against Iraq. The result is that Britain is now constrained from ever having the option to take immediate military action, however urgent and necessary such action may be.

Going to war is an executive action, not a legislative or consultative one. It is the duty of the Government to act as it deems necessary and immediately thereafter justify its actions to Parliament or face the consequence of a vote of no confidence.

That is how it worked for centuries and how it should continue. Otherwise, this country is militarily permanently paralysed.

*James Gray, MP, and Mark Lomas, QC, joint authors of Who Takes Britain to War?*

## Befriending Russia

### To The Guardian

For three years in the late 1990s, Sergey Lavrov was my Russian counterpart when we represented our countries on the UN Security Council in New York. Despite some obvious policy differences, Lavrov never played the UK false; he was a serious and creative negotiator, with a good sense of humour and a passion for the English language and its literature.

To decline Lavrov's invitation for our new foreign secretary to visit Moscow, just when new tensions show such contacts are most needed, seems ill-advised. Hard, too, to square with the windy rhetoric, since the Brexit referendum, that Britain will re-emerge as a world power rejuvenated.

*John Weston, Richmond, Surrey*

## Two-step peace plan

### To The Daily Telegraph

The problems in Syria will not be resolved without addressing two issues.

First, Russia wants to ensure that a fundamentalist Islamic state will not replace

the current regime, since it fears (more than sanctions from the West) the effect on predominantly Muslim states to the south of Russia.

Secondly, the Assad regime will not release the reins of power unless those who would be tried for the atrocities perpetrated so far in Syria are given legal immunity. Relinquishing power would mean death or long incarceration handed out by the courts. Address these issues, and a political resolution might have a chance.

*Ian Morgan, Solihull, West Midlands*

## Helping British GPs

### To The Times

Further to your report "Doctors who trained abroad 'far more likely to be incompetent'", British-trained doctors lose money twice: first when foreign-trained doctors come to the UK and suppress wages further, and second when they have to pay medical indemnity fees that cross-subsidise those who trained abroad. GPs are each paying up to £15,000 a year for their insurance: a partner in a practice typically pays £6,000-

£9,000, but a GP working in an urgent care centre or in A&E pays about £15,000, and a full-time partner working out of hours in addition pays up to £20,000.

A risk-adjusted premium that took into account the country in which a doctor trained would be fairer – and cut indemnity fees for British-trained doctors by about 60%. This might force the Government to cover the difference for those trained abroad.

*Dr Alexander Barber, Camberley, Surrey*

## A tip about knives

### To The Daily Telegraph

Reader Donald King argues that banning the points on kitchen knives would reduce stabbings. It is a historical fact that when prudent captains of square-rigged sailing ships signed on their crews, they had the ship's carpenter snap off the point of each sailor's knife in a vice, to prevent serious injury in any fight during the voyage. For splicing and rope-work, sailors traditionally used the Green River knife, which was designed for trapping

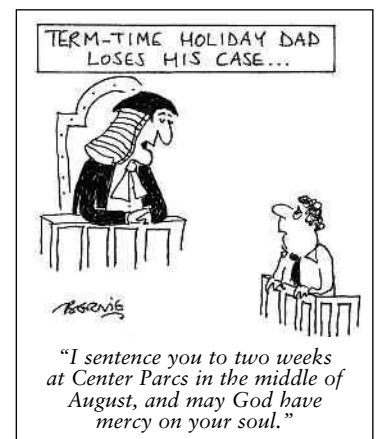
and needed a point to skin an animal. The later cobblers' knife was modelled on the sailors' blade (minus point), as it was shorter and easier to use in confined spaces.

*Peter J. Newton, Chellaston, Derbyshire*

## Spelling it out

### To The Guardian

I once phoned for some literature and attempted to clarify the spelling of our family name. The information arrived and was addressed to Mr H. Charlton-Withoutanar. *Harry Chalton, Newcastle upon Tyne*



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\*All in car features should be used by drivers only when it is safe for them to do so. Drivers must ensure they are in full control of the vehicle at all times.

## Review of reviews: Books

## Book of the week

**Stiff Upper Lip**

by Alex Renton

W&amp;N 416pp £16.99

The Week Bookshop £14.99

“There are some books you need to have a cleansing shower after reading,” said Ysenda Maxtone Graham in *The Times*. “This is one of them.” Its subject is “physical, emotional and sexual abuse” at boys’ boarding schools, “especially in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s”. Aged eight, Alex Renton was sent to East Sussex prep school Ashdown House, where he was bullied, beaten, and sexually molested by one of the teachers. When, decades later, he wrote an article about his experiences, it “brought forth an outpouring” from readers, with hundreds writing to share similar (or worse) stories of abuse. In *Stiff Upper Lip*, Renton weaves these testimonies into a broader portrait of the English boarding school system. And the result is “devastating”. By the end, “I felt I was cowering in the corner of some cane-wielding headmaster’s study, whimpering: ‘Please, sir, no more, I can’t take it.’”

“Renton’s position is a polemical one,” said Sam Leith in *The Guardian*. He thinks that sending young children away to board is, “knowingly or unknowingly, an act of psychological cruelty”.



Renton at Ashdown House

He marvels at how parents “who had themselves been deeply unhappy at school” could go on to inflict the same fate on their children. This he attributes to “normalisation” – the “psychological mechanism” that enables people to rationalise their pain by deciding that it must have done them good. I did “cavil” at some of Renton’s rhetoric: the “pseudo-clinical idea”, for example, of “boarding school syndrome”; or his talk of “boarding school survivors”. Yet there’s also a “great depth of reading and thinking here”, along with much “startling” detail. This is a “brave and necessary book”.

It does have one significant weakness, said Dominic Sandbrook in *The Sunday*

*Times*: “there is no hint of another side to the story”. We now know that hardly any 20th century institutions, from churches and care homes to the BBC, “escaped the taint of abuse”. Boarding schools weren’t unique. And besides, by no means all were “cruel and uncaring”. At my own school, Malvern, “I was not beaten, bullied or abused. In fact, I loved it.” Yet none of this detracts from the “misery of Renton’s experience”, or the “lasting damage” that victims suffered. At one point, he interviews an ex-teacher and abuser named Maurice, who tells him that there’s a “positive side” to abuse, and that, as a society, “we’re going well over the top” in confronting it. “I defy anyone to read these words without a chill running down their spine.”

**The Day That Went Missing**

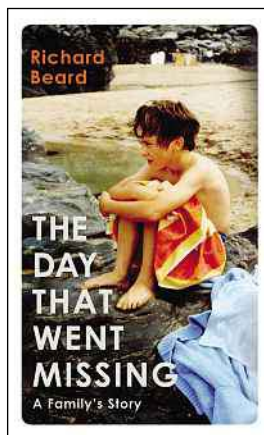
by Richard Beard

*Harvill Secker* 288pp £14.99

The Week Bookshop £12.99

One summer’s day in 1978, Richard Beard’s nine-year-old brother, Nicky (right), drowned while swimming on a Cornish beach. Beard, aged 11, was with him in the water, and came close to perishing as well. *The Day That Went Missing* is Beard’s account of the tragedy, and his attempt to understand his family’s odd reaction to it. “Some families mourn by talking, marking every anniversary,” said Caroline Moorehead in *The Guardian*. “The Beards chose silence.” Within days, the family had resumed their holiday; they even went to the same beach, and played cricket there. Nicky’s very existence was repressed; his name was barely ever mentioned. And Beard himself internalised these habits, burying his guilt at having “saved himself”, as well as his “anguish” and “sense of loss”. Only decades later, with his own life “floundering”, did Beard, now a respected novelist, decide to breach his “locked state of denial”. The result is a “touching, painful disquisition on memory and forgetting and the tendrils that tie us to the past”.

The confessional memoir has become a staple of modern literature, said Andrew Holgate in *The Sunday Times*. “It is a safe bet, though, that few of the memoirs currently lining bookshop shelves will be as cumulatively powerful, or as brutally honest, as Beard’s interrogation of his suppressed past.” It is, indeed, an “absorbing read”, said Cathy Rentzenbrink in *The Times*. But by its end, I was torn between wanting to “give the 11-year-old Richard a big cuddle”, and finding his “relentlessly forensic” inquest into his family’s tragedy a “bit wearying”. *The Day That Went Missing* isn’t so much an examination of grief as a “study in repression”. It wasn’t clear to me, however, “how much the author realises it”.



## Novel of the week

**Reservoir 13**

by Jon McGregor

*4th Estate* 336pp £14.99

The Week Bookshop £12.99

The opening pages of Jon McGregor’s haunting fourth novel describe the search for a 13-year-old girl who has gone missing from a Peak District village, said Peter Kemp in *The Sunday Times*. It’s an “unexpectedly thriller-like opening”: McGregor, best known for his 2002 debut *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*, has “previously favoured slow-burn narratives”. Yet it doesn’t take long for more “characteristic concerns” to surface. The body isn’t found, said Tessa Hadley in *The Guardian*. “Time passes and the police searches come to nothing.” McGregor subverts our expectations of the story: instead, the novel chronicles life in the village as it unfolds over the next 13 years, from a “remote omniscient distance”.

*Reservoir 13* easily surpasses anything McGregor has previously written, said Paraic O’Donnell in *The Irish Times*. The “sparing loveliness” of the prose feels “deeply true to its subject”. The novel is studded with moments of “miraculous grace”. A mark of great art is that its effects “are not easily accounted for”. That’s true of this “humane, tender masterpiece”.

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## Musical

## Carousel

*Composers:*  
Richard Rodgers and  
Oscar Hammerstein II  
*Director:* Lonny Price

English National Opera,  
London Coliseum,  
St Martin's Lane,  
London WC2  
(020-7845 9300)  
Until 13 May

*Running time:*  
2hrs 50mins  
(including interval)

★★★

What a great pleasure it is, said Michael Billington in *The Guardian*, to hear artists of the calibre of Katherine Jenkins and Alfie Boe sing the lead roles in a musical, and to “luxuriate” in a 42-piece orchestra bringing out the “rich colours” of a Richard Rodgers score. *Carousel* is the third “semi-staged” musical (one with limited staging, sets and costumes) that the ENO has put on in three years (the others being *Sweeney Todd* in 2015, and *Sunset Boulevard* – with Glenn Close – last year). And it’s “an almost total joy”. My main quibble is why ENO should have billed Lonny Price’s excellent revival as “semi-staged” in the first place: it looks “pretty complete” to me. James Noone’s designs, in which images of a New England fishing village are projected onto a set of curved sails, “have the subdued beauty of Andrew Wyeth’s paintings”. And Josh Rhodes’ choreography is a full-blooded affair, the dancers performing with “virile agility”. What a ride!

Musically, this *Carousel* may indeed leave you “giddy”, said Sarah Hemming in the FT. The orchestra’s handling of the score, under David Charles Abell, is “glorious – delicate, sweeping, witty”. Jenkins’ and Boe’s singing is “soaring and vivid”, too, and the ensemble’s is similarly “rich and uplifting”. But elsewhere this *Carousel* is “a stop-start affair, with some of the acting



Jenkins and Edwards: soaring

almost as stiff as a merry-go-round horse”. Boe as Billy Bigelow, the fairground barker who catches the eye of millworker Julie Jordan, is the chief culprit. His voice is towering, but his acting is “curiously rigid”. And though Jenkins is far more persuasive, there’s no chemistry between them – an insuperable handicap in a story that covers “passion, aggression and remorse”.

Jenkins is superb, said Paul Taylor in *The Independent* – and not just her “shiver-inducing” singing. She brings a “terrible dignity” to the way Julie copes with being unable to stop loving a violent man whose pain she feels. Brenda Edwards is also excellent as Nettie, said Dominic Maxwell in *The Times*, particularly when blasting out *You’ll Never Walk Alone*. And it is great to see a rare appearance from Nicholas Lyndhurst as the Star Keeper.

## The week’s other opening

**The Tenant of Wildfell Hall** York Theatre Royal (01904-623568). From 26 April to 6 May  
This outstanding stage adaptation of Anne Brontë’s novel, about a young mother who has fled a vicious marriage, is packed with great performances. Phoebe Pryce, in particular, is “magnificent” in the title role (*Observer*).

## Theatre

## The Mentor

*Playwright:*  
Daniel Kehlmann  
*Translator:*  
Christopher Hampton  
*Director:*  
Laurence Boswell

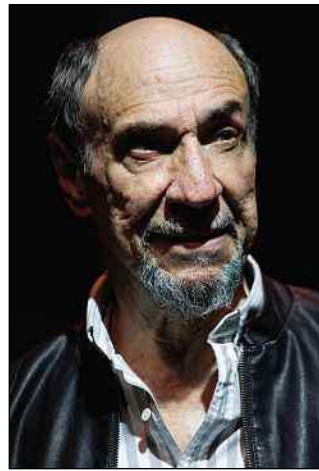
Ustinov Studio,  
Theatre Royal Bath  
Sawclose, Bath  
(01225-448844)  
Until 6 May

*Running time:*  
1hr 30mins

★★★

Like a child “with an unerring sense of where the Easter eggs have been hidden”, Laurence Boswell, the artistic director of the Ustinov Studio at the Theatre Royal Bath, has shown “a remarkable knack for unearthing European talent”, said Dominic Cavendish in *The Daily Telegraph*. It was the Ustinov that took a punt on *The Father* by France’s Florian Zeller, a brilliantly nuanced play about dementia which went on to take the West End and Broadway by storm. Now, again teaming up with translator Christopher Hampton, Boswell introduces us to Daniel Kehlmann, a novelist “so hot in his native Germany that he has even knocked J.K. Rowling off the bestseller lists”. His play, *The Mentor*, has such “ample merriment at the expense of artistic egos” that it has attracted the American actor F. Murray Abraham – an Oscar winner, as Salieri in *Amadeus* (1984) – to the British stage, his first theatrical appearance here in ten years.

The show certainly has the “aura of an event”, said Michael Billington in *The Guardian*. And even if the play’s arguments about “the subjectivity of art, and the uncertainty of experience, are familiar”, it is full of “prickly comedy and offers 90 minutes of civilised pleasure”. Abraham plays Benjamin, an



Abraham: fluid and assured

arrogant, truculent older playwright whose one great play he wrote decades ago, said Ian Shuttleworth in the FT. Since then, Benjamin has been living off former glories, and here we find him working, at the behest of some charitable foundation, as mentor to a bumptious younger playwright, Martin – well played by Daniel Weyman. But though Abraham gives a fluid and assured performance, the play itself is ultimately diverting rather than profound.

Both script and staging are “overemphatic”, said Matt Trueman on *WhatsOnStage.com*. *The Mentor* reveals too much of its meaning early on, and the setup plays out all too predictably. The pleasure, though, lies in seeing a great performer like Abraham “toy with it”; he is one of those actors who can make “moments momentous”.

## CD of the week

**Ray Davies: Americana** Sony Music £9.99  
The Kinks frontman, backed by The Jayhawks, has come up with a fine album, ranging from rock to gentler numbers, including the gorgeous ballad *Message from the Road* and the record’s “distinctive, almost Tom Waitsian highlight, *Change for Change*” (*Sunday Times*).

Stars reflect the overall quality of reviews and our own independent assessment (4 stars=don’t miss; 1 star=don’t bother)

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## The Handmaiden ★★★★★

Breathtakingly erotic Korean thriller Dir: Park Chan-wook 2hrs 24mins (18)

This “dazzlingly complex psychosexual thriller” from director Park Chan-wook has been heaped with praise, said Andrew Lowry in *Empire* – and justifiably so. Nominated for the Palme d’Or at Cannes, *The Handmaiden* is an “unapologetically kinky slice of erotica”, a “stirring” feminist fable of “women escaping from bastard men”, and a “milestone of LGBT cinema in conservative South Korea”. It is also probably the greatest achievement yet of the great Korean director; even more noteworthy than his sublime revenge drama *Oldboy*. And perhaps most importantly, it is a “damn good yarn”.



“Delicious cinematic sleight of hand”

Inspired by *Fingersmith*, Sarah Waters’ ingenious 2002 novel, *The Handmaiden* transposes the action from Victorian England to Japanese-occupied Korea in the 1930s, where an attractive young Korean pickpocket named Sook-Hee is recruited by “Count” Fujiwara, an elegant con man, to become maidservant to a Japanese heiress. Her task is to groom the heiress – under the nose of her creepy, pornography-addled uncle – to prepare the way for her seduction by the Count. But then a complication arises, said Mark Kermode in *The Observer*. Sook-Hee falls for her mistress, who isn’t nearly as naive as she has been portrayed as being, and soon finds her feelings reciprocated. But this is only the first twist in a devilish plot that constantly tricks the

audience with “delicious cinematic sleight of hand”. The film undoubtedly makes for “heady viewing”, said Geoffrey Macnab in *The Independent*. One moment, it plays like “an upmarket costume drama”; the next, it’s a graphically erotic film noir.

Yet viewers will probably be “sharply divided” over whether *The Handmaiden* is “liberatingly erotic or a male wet dream”, said Tim Robey in *The Daily Telegraph*. In a scene of “scissoring” (you may have to look up the term), for example, the actresses show admirable commitment to their roles, but it all feels

a bit “soft-porny”. Well, it worked for me, said Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian*. At one point, when the maid lovingly files her mistress’s serrated tooth, “I almost forgot to breathe”. There are times when you can’t help feeling the director is trying to have his cake and eat it, said Tom Huddleston in *Time Out*, adopting a fiercely anti-pornography stance, while serving up some sumptuously erotic visions. But there’s no denying the characters are beautiful sketched and performed, and the story is involving. For all the scenes of deceit and cruelty, “what resonates is the love story”, and the liberated ideals underpinning it. “The cinematic equivalent of drinking three glasses of champagne in the bath, *The Handmaiden* is a film to luxuriate in.”

## The Sense of an Ending ★★

Lukewarm adaptation of Julian Barnes’ novel Dir: Ritesh Batra 1hr 48mins (15)

An adaptation of a Booker Prize-winning novel, starring Jim Broadbent, Harriet Walter and Charlotte Rampling – sounds like a sure-fire recipe for success, doesn’t it, asked Deborah Ross in *The Spectator*. Yet I’m sorry to say that, despite its classy pedigree, this lacklustre adaptation of Julian Barnes’ novel is a definite disappointment.

Part of the problem lies in its unsympathetic protagonist, said Phil de Semlyen in *Empire*. Our hero, played by Broadbent, is a cranky divorcee who is forced to re-examine his emotional past after receiving an unexpected legacy. Yet far from making him more likeable, this merely makes him even more self-absorbed. Can he trust his own memories? Walter plays the long-suffering ex-wife



forced to listen to his maunderings, while Rampling brings her signature “icy reserve” to the role of his embittered ex-girlfriend. For a film whose plot turns on suicide and forbidden love, this is an oddly “passionless” work, said Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian*. The desired emotional payoff never comes, and despite its title, we wait in vain for a “satisfying sense of an ending”.

I blame the source material, said Brian Viner in *The Daily Mail*. Like Barnes’ book, which was stylishly written but ultimately “dreary”, this adaptation “cannot overcome what it fundamentally is: a monotonous trudge through the unfulfilled life of a self-absorbed, mildly unpleasant, rather drippy elderly man”.

## The Fate of the Furious (Fast & Furious 8) ★★

Bigger, faster and more furious? Dir: F. Gary Gray 2hrs 16mins (12A)

The silliness of this film begins with the number in its title, said Brian Viner in the *Daily Mail*. “Can you believe they’ve churned out eight of these films, each faster and more furious than the one before?” Yet what’s even more surprising about this mega-budget action movie is that, for all its absurdities, it has an “intoxicating sense of fun”.

As ever, the plot is just an excuse for car chases and explosions, said Gwilym Mumford in *The Guardian*. After reformed criminal Dom Toretto (Vin Diesel) is blackmailed into joining forces with a sinister cyberterrorist (Charlize Theron), who has plans for world domination, it’s up to his old friend, security agent Luke Hobbs



(Dwayne Johnson) – with the help of a former foe (Jason Statham) – to stop him. But don’t knock it: the formula has made this franchise one of the Hollywood success stories of recent years.

Oddly enough, the action sequences are actually the most unsatisfying aspect of this cumbersome blockbuster, said Robbie Collin in *The Daily Telegraph*. Indeed, I’d go so far as to say that the *Fast & Furious* franchise hasn’t produced a single comprehensibly shot and edited car chase in the last eight years. Overall, there’s just too much clutter and not enough “sense of peril”. But Helen Mirren, in an entertaining cameo as Statham’s foul-mouthed mother, does provide some consolation.

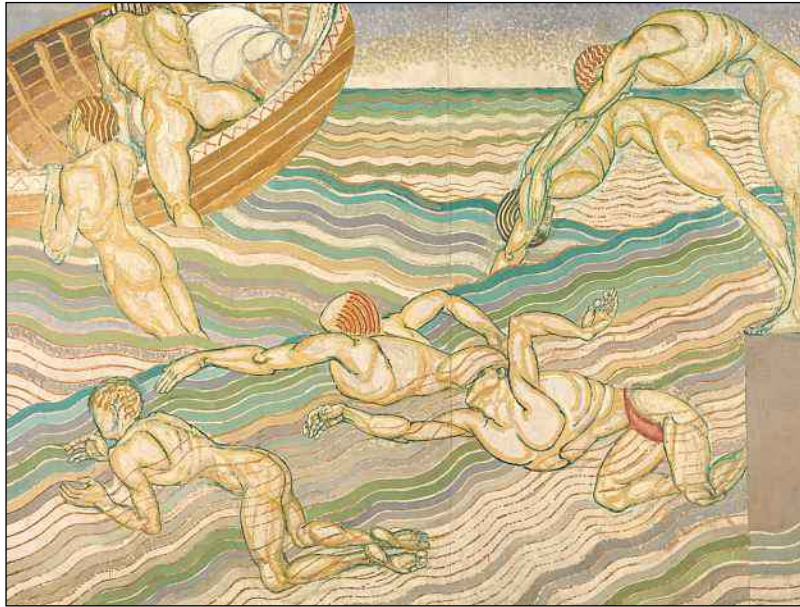
## Exhibition of the week **Queer British Art, 1861-1967**

*Tate Britain, London SW1 (020-7887 8888, [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)). Until 1 October*

Until fairly recently, an exhibition of homosexual art in a major London gallery would have been “unthinkable”, said Ella Cory-Wright on CultureWhisper.com. Now, though, Tate Britain has “taken the plunge” and mounted this long overdue survey of gay British art, bringing together paintings, drawings, films and archive material to show how artists expressed their sexuality in defiance of the law. The exhibition spans the period from 1861, when the death penalty for sodomy was lifted, to 1967, when homosexuality was at long last decriminalised.

In its course, we encounter everything from the mannered portraits of John Singer Sargent to Francis Bacon’s “copulating beefcakes”. Though some will undoubtedly dismiss the show as a “stunt”, the Tate must be commended for “righting wrongs” and giving queer art the “proper platform” it deserves. That, surely, is “a cause for celebration”.

The exhibition is “often silly, sexy and fun”, said Adrian Searle in *The Guardian*. For example, a photograph of the artists Denis Wirth-Miller and Richard Chopping is complemented by a biscuit tin they once owned, filled with more than 200 buttons taken from soldiers’ tunics. Each one is a “souvenir of a sexual liaison”



*Duncan Grant's Bathing (1911): part of a “mixed bag” of pieces*

the painter Edward Burra, said Mark Hudson in *The Daily Telegraph*. Though Burra rarely left his Sussex home town, and “in all probability, never had any sexual relations with a man”, works such as 1941’s *Soldiers at Rye* translate “repressed desire” into “something nightmarishly sinister”. On the whole, though, the show is a mixed bag. Paintings by the likes of the Bloomsbury Group artist Duncan Grant are of debatable artistic value, while objects of social historical interest, such as a set of library books lewdly defaced by the playwright Joe Orton and his lover (for which crime they were ultimately jailed), are “disappointing” when seen up close. For all the “radicalism” proposed by its title, this exhibition is a “rather numbing” experience.

with servicemen stationed near their home after the Second World War. But just as frequently, the show is “heart-wrenching and tragic”. We see a painting of Sappho embracing her lover Erinna by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Simeon Solomon, who was arrested for his homosexuality and spent the last 20 years of his life as an alcoholic labouring in a workhouse. Elsewhere, a full-length portrait of Oscar Wilde is accompanied by the door to the cell in which he was imprisoned in Reading jail.

The show’s “real revelation” is the work of

## Where to buy...

*The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery*

### **Michael Porter**

*at Purdy Hicks*

Even seen close up, Michael Porter’s astonishingly delicate still-life paintings pack in so much detail it can be hard to credit the fact that they are not photographs. With these new works, Porter is looking back to the artistic tradition of *vanitas*, an elaborate genre of still life loaded with morbid allusions to, and intimations of, life’s transience. Most of the works here depict natural detritus (broken twigs, matted feathers, leaves and cobwebs), often surrounding birds’ nests rendered in microscopic detail. In the distant background, an eerie glow casts a strange and somewhat ominous light over the scenes. Symbolism aside, Porter’s technical accomplishment is undeniable. As with *vanitas* painters of the past, he has designed his own intricate sets to work from, sometimes going so far as



*Vanitas 27.1.17, oil and acrylic on Arches paper, 25cm x 35cm (detail)*

to use chocolate Easter eggs to fill the nests he finds in his garden: apparently, their sugary surfaces reflect the studio lights wonderfully. Prices range from £1,500 to £2,750.

*25 Thurloe Street, London SW7 (020-7401 9229). Until 29 April.*

## Canaletto cleared of trickery

A few years after Canaletto’s death in 1768, the Venetian artist’s biographer suggested that he had used a camera



obscura – a pinhole projection device – to trace his grand views of Venice, says Hannah Furness in *The Daily Telegraph*. The claim has dogged him ever since, suggesting that he had somehow cheated, or that his paintings are very accurate but bland. “Today, thanks to infrared technology, Canaletto is officially in the clear.” The Royal Collection Trust, which owns the world’s largest collection of his drawings, has examined the original marks that he made on the paper; and the research has categorically proved that he did not use a camera obscura. Rather, Canaletto used a pencil and ruler to extensively “underdraw” his compositions – before copying over the pencil lines in ink, and adding birds, clouds and ripples freehand. The drawings, along with infrared images of his initial sketches, will go on show at The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, next month.

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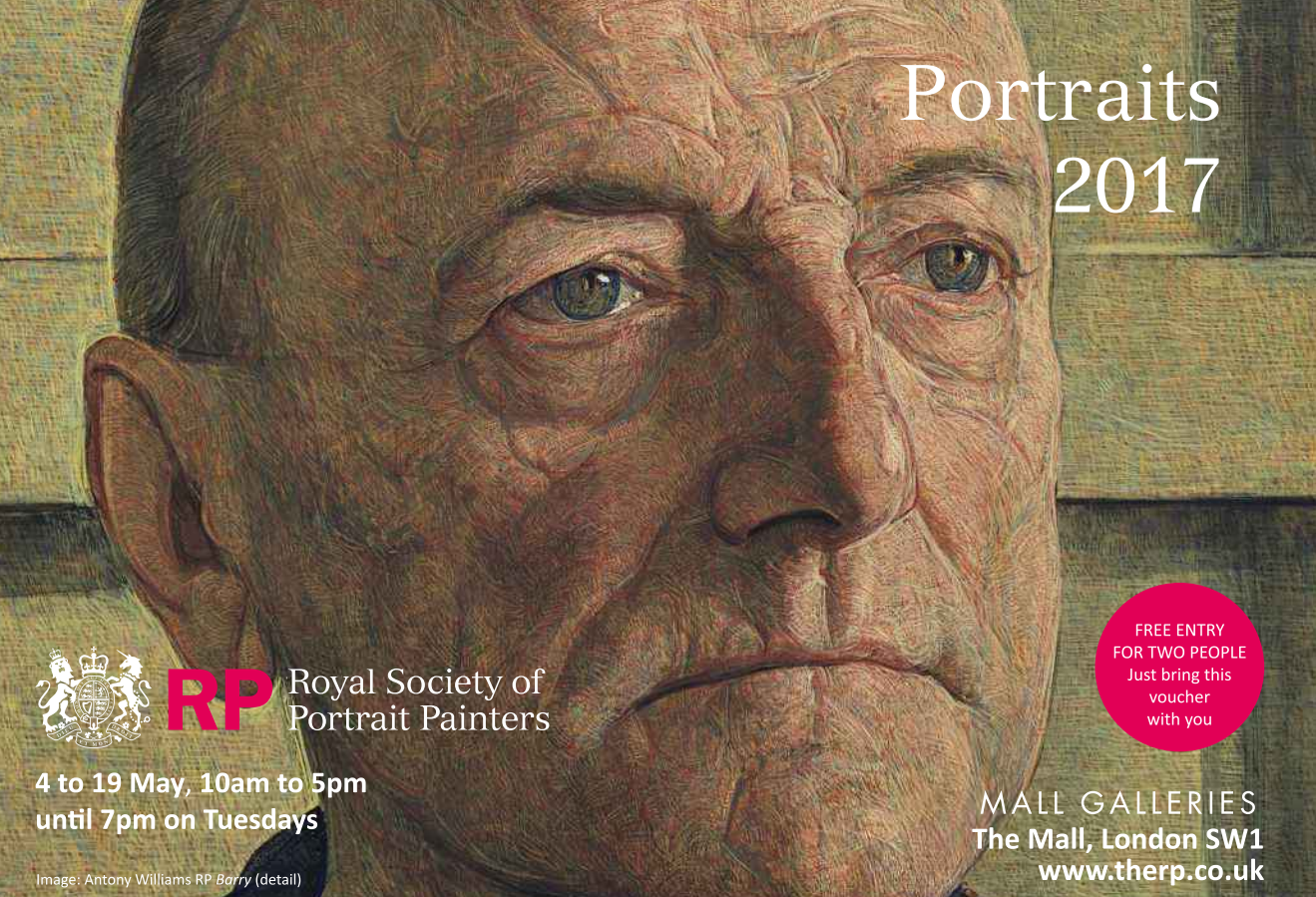
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## Best books... Nicholas Crane

Author Nicholas Crane picks six of his favourite books. On 29 April, he'll talk about his own book, *The Making of the British Landscape* (W&N £20) at the Stratford Literary Festival ([www.stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk](http://www.stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk)).

**Over the Moon** by Imtiaz Dharker, 2014 (Bloodaxe Books £12). Set mainly in London, these poems can be as exuberant and as dark as the capital itself, and one of them includes the best line ever written about this uneasy, riparian foundation on the Thames.

**The Hidden Landscape: A Journey into the Geological Past** by Richard Fortey, 1993 (Bodley Head £20). My battered paperback has travelled to countless film shoots on Britain's coasts. No other modern writer has managed so deftly to span the aeons between geology and our living landscapes.

**Britain Begins** by Barry Cunliffe, 2012 (OUP £25). From tundra to town, this is the complex, indivisible, 11,000-year story shared by the inhabitants of Europe's largest island. An extraordinary feat of synthesis, packed with maps, diagrams and photographs.

**Hidden Histories: A Spotter's Guide to the British Landscape** by Mary-Ann Ochota, 2016 (Frances Lincoln £20). This new field guide is just the job for exploring Britain's landscapes, both rural and urban. Next time I gaze in wonder at a drystone wall, I'll know a smoot from a lunky hole.

**Athelstan** by Tom Holland, 2016 (Allen Lane £12.99). As exquisite as the Alfred Jewel, this pocket story describes the emergence of "Englalande" from the shrieks and ashes of Viking onslaught.

**Paul Smith's Cycling Scrapbook** edited by Richard Williams, 2016 (Thames and Hudson £29.95). My new favourite cycling book is this treasure trove of memories and archive photos from one of Britain's most creative minds. I find it impossible to turn the pages without thinking of that Louis MacNeice line about grasping the summer in "the heat of the handlebars". Look, ride and smile.

Titles in print are available from The Week Bookshop on 020-3176 3835. For out-of-print books visit [www.biblio.co.uk](http://www.biblio.co.uk)

## The Week's guide to what's worth seeing and reading

### Showing now

**Consent** at the National Theatre, London SE1 (020-7452 3000). Ben Chaplin stars in Nina Raine's "hideously enjoyable" new tragicomedy about highly intelligent but ultimately heartless lawyers (Sunday Times). Ends 17 May.

**Disobedient Bodies** at The Hepworth Wakefield (01924-247360). This intriguing look at the relationship between fashion and modernist sculpture consists of work by an "amazing" array of talents, from Henry Moore to Helmut Lang (Vanity Fair). Ends 18 June.

**Giacomo Balla: Designing the Future** at the Estorick Collection, London N1 (020-7704 9522). Devoted to one of the enfants terribles of Italian futurism, this "eye-opening" exhibition includes paintings, furniture and fashion designs (Daily Telegraph). Ends 25 June.

### Book now

In his one-man show **Shakespeare, Tolkien, Others & You**, Sir Ian McKellen will be talking about his 50-year career, and reprising some of his best-loved roles, from Gandalf to Richard III.



Moore's *Reclining Figure* (1936) at Hepworth

3-9 July, Park Theatre, London N4 (020-7870 6876). Tickets are currently sold out but more are due to be released on 15 May.

### Just out in paperback

**The Essex Serpent** by Sarah Perry (Serpent's Tail £8.99). Perry's second novel is the story of a 19th century Essex village haunted by a fabled flying serpent. From this premise, Perry spins a gothic fable of "exquisite Victoriana" (Daily Telegraph).

## Television

### Programmes

**The Rack Pack** Droll comedy-drama based on the rivalry in the snooker world between the immaculate Steve Davis and the maverick Alex "Hurricane" Higgins. With Luke Treadaway. Sun 23 April, BBC2 10pm (90mins).

### Nature's Weirdest Events

Chris Packham explains some of the natural world's most intriguing phenomena, including blood-red rain and a bird that "sings" with its wings. Mon 24 April, BBC2 8pm (60mins).

### Little Boy Blue

Compelling true-life drama about the murder of 11-year-old schoolboy Rhys Jones in Liverpool in 2007. Stephen Graham plays the detective on the killer's trail. Mon 24 April, ITV1 9pm (60mins).

### Anthony Joshua: The Road to Klitschko

The makers of this gripping documentary followed the British boxer Anthony Joshua for two years, as he prepared to challenge Wladimir Klitschko for the world heavyweight title. Tue 25 April, BBC1 10.45pm (60mins).

### Violent Child, Desperate Parents

Engrossing documentary about some of the UK's most aggressive children and how they terrorise their parents. Wed 26 April, C5 11.05pm (60mins).

### Films

**Airplane!** (1980) This classic send-up of disaster movies is relentlessly funny. Sat 22 April, Film4 7.20pm (110mins).

**Blackthorn** (2011) Elegiac western with Sam Shepard as the ageing Butch Cassidy, still on the run from Steven Rea's Pinkerton detective. Sun 23 April, BBC2 2.35am (100mins).

### Coming up for sale

**The London Original Print Fair** provides a golden opportunity to buy original prints, spanning five centuries, from top international dealers and galleries. Highlights include Brian Eno's *Sunburnt*, 2016 (£1,625), and Jasper Johns's *Cicada*, 1981 (£40,000). 4 May-7 May, Royal Academy, Burlington House, London W1 (020-7439 2000).

## The Archers: what happened last week

Matt is back on the scene in Ambridge. He insists to Lilian the only reason he's there is to catch up with some old racing contacts, since he's involved in a project to build a racecourse in Costa Rica. David is wrestling with the question of his responsibility for the infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) outbreak at Brookfield and neighbouring farms. His money worries are compounded by the breakdown of a tractor, which will cost thousands to repair. Ed is tricky with Emma about her late shifts at the factory, but later agrees the extra hours are worth it for the money. Matt gloatingly tells Lilian that he's heard she rejected Justin's proposal of marriage. Furious, she tears up the cheque he gave her and tells him she doesn't need him or his money. She rushes off to find Justin and asks him to marry her. He's thrilled. Tom confronts David, saying Brookfield should pay compensation for the IBR outbreak. Later, Pip finally feels forced to own up to David: the cows got out through a broken fence she forgot to repair and then mixed with the cattle at Bridge Farm.

## Scenic hideaways under £500,000



◀ **Wiltshire:** Lanthorn Cottage, Collingbourne Ducis, Marlborough. A quintessential Grade II, end-of-terrace thatched cottage, with a beautiful traditional garden, in a picturesque setting. 2 beds, family bath, kitchen/dining room, dual-aspect sitting room with inglenook fireplace, well-stocked garden with vegetable patch, cutting garden and mature trees, plus two garden sheds. £315,000; Humberts (01672-519222).



▲ **Scottish Borders:** Ladhope Steading, Yarrow Valley. This steading conversion is set on the south bank of the Yarrow Water, in a pretty hamlet within commuting distance of Edinburgh. Master suite, 3 further beds, family bath, kitchen/family room, 3 receps, utility, WC, hall with galleried landing, garden, courtyard. £295,000; CKD Galbraith (01573-224244).



◀ **Northumberland:** Sunnyside, Coalcleugh, Hexham. Set at the head of the West Allen Valleys in the Northern Pennines – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – this house offers off-grid living, with its own wind turbine and battery bank. 3 beds, family bath, kitchen/dining room, 1 further recep, family room, study, utility, boot room, cloakroom/WC, garage, former powder house, garden. £495,000; Finest Properties (01434-622234).





▲ **Wiltshire:** West Overton, Marlborough. A semi-detached period cottage in this rural village in the Kennet Valley, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, with wonderful views across the surrounding countryside. 3 beds, family bath, kitchen, 2 receps, cloakroom, garage, front and rear gardens, garden shed, off-road parking. £405,000; Humberts (01672-519222).

◀ **Denbighshire:** Nant y Ne Cottage, Llanbedr-Dyffryn-Clwyd, Ruthin. A cottage with fine views in a remote spot on the southwest of Moel Famau. 2 suites, shower, kitchen/dining room, 1 recep, garden room, porch, separate eco studio with shower and office; garden store, shed, gardens, paddock, 2.52 acres. £450,000; Jackson-Stops & Staff (01244-328361).



◀ **Cornwall:** Chapel Rock Studio, Chapel Steps, Polperro, near Looe. A modernised cottage forming the upper two floors of this harbourside building, with fantastic views. The house is just yards from the inner harbour, coastal path, beach and a range of restaurants. Large main bed, 1 further bed, shower room, kitchen/double recep, 1 further recep, hall, store/utility, small courtyard. £350,000; Lillicrap Chilcott (01872-273473).



◀ **Somerset:** Lynch Cottage, Behind Berry, Somerton. This well-presented period cottage is tucked away, with its own private driveway, yet is within walking distance of Somerton town centre. Master suite, 2 further suites, kitchen, 2 receps, detached double garage, parking, front and rear gardens. £475,000; Palmer Snell (01458-272989).



◀ **Wiltshire:** 14-15 Stockton, Stockton, near Warminster. Situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Wylve Valley, this Grade II, 17th century cottage sits in the heart of the popular village of Stockton. Master bed, 2 further beds, family bath, kitchen, breakfast room, 2 receps, brick outbuilding (used as a studio; could be converted into a holiday cottage), summerhouse, garden, 0.15 acres. OIEO £475,000; Fox Grant (01722-782727).



▲ **London:** Janna, Terrace Gardens Boatyard, Hampton, Richmond, TW12. This 22-metre Luxemotor Dutch Barge was built in 1925, and now sits on a leisure mooring overlooking Taggs Island. Master cabin, single cabin, 1 bath, kitchen/diner, 1 further recep. Mooring and maintenance costs £8,100 per year. £185,000; River Homes (020-8977 4500).

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### What the experts recommend

**The Con Club** 48 Greenwood Street, Altrincham, Cheshire (0161-696 6870)

Altrincham is rapidly becoming something of a “foodie enclave”, says Marina O’Loughlin in *The Guardian*. And this latest addition to its crop of fine restaurants is a “bobby-dazzler”. The former Conservative Working Men’s Club, dating from 1887, has been reinvented as a light, airy, “bustling canteen hung with dramatic lampshades in copper or a kind of beetle-wing iridescent ceramic”. The food is not going to set the blogosphere alight with shows of “tortured, tweezered” refinement. But every dish that comes across the pass is impressive: arancini made with fine, al dente Arborio rice, and packed with woody, aromatic mushrooms; plump and perky mussels in cream, herbs and wine; a fine chunk of sirloin with just-right hand-cut chips and peppercorn sauce. And best of all, crisp-skinned yet “tender and rosy” duck breast on a bed of boozy lentils. *About £30 a head for three courses.*

**Farang** 72 Highbury Park, London N5 (020-7226 1609)

Seb Holmes, the chef at this buzzy Thai pop-up in Highbury, has already cooked at some “wildly-fêted-by-me Thai and Thai-ish places”, such as Smoking Goat and Som Saa, says Giles Coren in *The Times*. So I knew the food at Farang would be great: “fiery, colourful,



*Le Cinq: left the reviewer “scarred for life”*

distinctive, lavishly seasoned, modern, bright, fun, filling, rare and unusual”. And so it proved. Prawn and pomegranate bites were like “piles of sea jewels” on shimmering emerald leaves. Giant crispy wontons, hot and dry, split open to ooze sticky yellow bean and Asian vegetable curry. A “staggering”, bright red “jungle curry of fresh Cornish dayboat fish” mixed “glorious, fruity monkfish chunks with slices of salmon, pre-smoked by Seb”. Sounds weird; tastes “awesome”. This is the kind of heavenly nosh you can normally only get by “queueing outside, then sitting at a bar with loud music, being jostled by randy millennials”. Here

you can have it in a grown-up, bookable restaurant. “Bullseye!” *About £45 a head.*

**Le Cinq** Four Seasons Hotel George V, 31 Avenue George V, Paris (0033 (1) 49 52 70 00)

When I decided to splash out on a meal at the Michelin three-star restaurant at the George V hotel in Paris, says Jay Rayner in *The Observer*, I had assumed chef Christian Le Squer’s food would be “whimsical, and perhaps outrageous. Never did I think the shamefully terrible cooking would slacken my jaw from the rest of my head.” In terms of value for money and expectation, Le Cinq supplied “by far the worst restaurant experience” of my 18 years as a critic, and some of the dishes – priced from €70 (£60) to €140 (£120) – were, frankly, “the stuff of therapy”. A small gel globe popped in the mouth to release ginger-tinged stale air – “like eating a condom that’s been left lying about in a dusty greengrocer’s”. A dish of gratinated onions was “black like nightmares, and sticky like the floor at a teenager’s party”. A dessert of frozen chocolate cigars was fine except for the flap of milk skin “draped over it, like something that’s fallen off a burns victim”. The “older gentlemen with their nieces” on the few other occupied tables didn’t seem to care about all this. I, by contrast, suspect I may be scarred for life. *Meal for two with “modest” wine, €600 (£510).*

### Recipe of the week

I once cooked this classic French dish for that giant of French cuisine Michel Roux Snr, at his home near Saint-Tropez, says James Martin. No pressure then...

#### Crêpes Suzette

*Serves 2 For the crêpes: 250g plain flour 2 eggs 2 tps melted butter, plus extra for cooking 600ml milk For the sauce: 50g butter 3 oranges, 1 zested and all juiced 1 lemon, zested and juiced 3 tbsps caster sugar 2 tbsps Grand Marnier 2 tbsps cognac*

- To make the crêpes, whisk all the ingredients together in a bowl to form a smooth batter. Set aside for at least an hour in a cool place.

- Place a small frying pan over a medium heat. Add a little butter and a ladleful of batter and then swirl to coat the bottom of the pan.

- Cook for 1-2 minutes until just set, then flip and cook for a further minute, until the underside is lightly browned.

- Remove the cooked crêpe from the pan and repeat until all of the batter



has been used – you should end up with four crêpes. Place layers of baking parchment between the cooked crêpes to stop them sticking together.

- For the sauce, place all the ingredients in a large frying pan and bring to the boil, gently shaking the pan to ignite the alcohol.

- When the flame dies down, fold the crêpes into quarters and nestle them into the pan of sauce. Let them warm through for a few minutes and then serve immediately.

*Taken from James Martin’s French Adventure, published by Quadrille at £20. To buy from The Week Bookshop for £17, call 020-3176 3835 or visit [www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop).*

### Wine choice



If I had to take a punt on what white wine we’re going to be talking about this year, I’d put my money on furmint from Hungary, says Fiona Beckett in *The Guardian*. Unoaked furmints are generally less spicy than Austrian grüner veltliner, and are akin to a good Soave or Chablis, while oaked ones are reminiscent of a more southerly white Burgundy. Both kinds go extremely well with food.

An ideal introduction to the variety is **Royal Tokaji’s Dry Furmint 2015** (£9.99, or £8.99 on the Mix Six deal, Majestic), a lush wine that should appeal if you’re a sauvignon fan.

Oremus’s richly textured **Mandolás Dry Furmint 2014** (£15.59, [www.thedrinkshop.com](http://www.thedrinkshop.com)) is a terrific match for beetroot-cured salmon with horseradish, while Disznóko’s elegant **Tokaji Dry Furmint 2015** (£12.95, [www.leaandsandeman.co.uk](http://www.leaandsandeman.co.uk)) has the piercing intensity of a young premier cru Chablis.

In a different register is the musky, slightly spicy **Patricius Tokaji Dry Furmint 2015** (£12.50, [www.greatwesternwine.co.uk](http://www.greatwesternwine.co.uk)) – delicious with smoked or salted fish dishes.

For our latest offers, visit [theweekwines.co.uk](http://theweekwines.co.uk)

## New cars: what the critics say



**Kia Picanto**  
from £9,000 (est.)

### Car magazine

Start totting up the Picanto's competitors and "you'd be forgiven for feeling overwhelmed". There's the Renault Twingo, Volkswagen up! and Skoda Citigo, to name just a few. So this third-generation model "has a fight on its hands" if it's to make a splash in the super-mini market. To help the new Picanto stand out, Kia has given it a redesign: the car is lighter and roomier than its predecessors.

### Auto Express

"First impressions are good." The Picanto is still Kia's dinkiest car, but it's now more eye-catching, with a bold grille and sharp detailing. The interior boasts "relatively plush" materials – and on high-end models, an attractive 7in touchscreen. Space inside is "impressive", allowing adults to sit comfortably in the back and, at 255 litres, the boot outdoes those of its main rivals.

### What Car?

The turbo-charged engine won't arrive until later in the year, so for now there are two, rather mediocre, options: the 1.0-litre engine, which is good for "bumbling through town"; and the 1.2-litre, which is better in hilly areas. Comfortable and quiet to drive, the car benefits from quick, precise steering. This Picanto is a vast improvement – it's good enough "to worry its best city car peers".

## The best... torches

▼ **Fenix PD32** Impressively bright (900 lumens) for a torch at this price, the PD32 can project its beam up to 240 metres. It has lots of brightness settings, which are easy to change using the side switch; and it will automatically revert to the mode you used last time it was on (£57; [www.fenixtorch.co.uk](http://www.fenixtorch.co.uk)).



► **Clip Strip Pocket Light** Instead of a single LED, this miniature torch has a strip of light along its edge which produces a larger surface area than a standard torch. There are three levels of brightness, but you can't adjust the focus (£25, plus £35 p&p; [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)).



▼ **Klarus XT12GT** An excellent all-rounder for those with a bigger budget, the waterproof XT12GT has a maximum output of 1,600 lumens, with a maximum projection distance of 603 metres. At its lowest setting, the battery lasts for up to 200 hours (£110; [www.tactical-kit.co.uk](http://www.tactical-kit.co.uk)).



► **Olight S1 Baton** Just 6cm long, weighing 30g without its CR123A battery, this torch strikes a good balance between size and brightness: it offers 500 lumens, projecting up to 110 metres. It shines for a very impressive 600 hours on its lowest setting (£42; [www.torchdirect.co.uk](http://www.torchdirect.co.uk)).



### ◀ Sidiou Group SDO-K1

Weighing just 59g without the required AA battery, this tiny LED torch clips easily onto your belt. It's simple to adjust, and produces a relatively bright 300 lumens on its most powerful setting (£6; [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)).



## Tips... how to protect your phone from hackers

- Be sure to install software updates – to apps and your operating system – as soon as they become available.
- When you install a new app, think carefully about what permissions you grant it – whether you're letting it read your files, say, or access your microphone. Android users should take extra care, as Google isn't always that strict about vetting apps.
- It's worth taking a couple of minutes to check you still need all your apps – some of them may have become more invasive with recent updates. On an iPhone, you can find relevant information by going into the Privacy section of Settings.
- Make sure your phone is locked when you're not using it. Avoid "smart unlock" features, which can automatically unlock your phone when you're at home.
- Don't leave yourself logged into websites when you're not using them. Otherwise, anyone who opens your browser can get access to all your online accounts.

SOURCE: THE OBSERVER

THE WEEK 22 April 2017

## And for those who have everything...



The Pet Door Connect goes one better than other microchip cat and dog flaps: it connects to an app, so you can control it remotely on your phone and set curfews to keep your pet indoors at certain times. Available from this summer, it also lets you monitor your pet's comings and goings. **£160; [www.sureflap.com](http://www.sureflap.com)**

SOURCE: T3

## Where to find... dog-friendly hotels in Britain

**Linthwaite House**, a relaxed country house hotel in the Lake District, offers superb views of Lake Windermere. The staff will provide pet treats, blankets and a list of dog-friendly pubs in the area (doubles from £134 a night, dogs are an extra £10 each; [www.linthwaitehouse.com](http://www.linthwaitehouse.com)).

**The Lion Inn**, outside Cheltenham, has "charmingly restored" country-chic bedrooms. Dogs get their own bed, towels and treats (from £110, dogs £15; [www.thelionwinchcombe.co.uk](http://www.thelionwinchcombe.co.uk)).

**The Ship Inn**, a 16th century smugglers' warehouse in Rye, is "full of cosy nooks". The extensive breakfast options include sausages for canine guests (from £110, dogs £10; [www.theshipinnrye.co.uk](http://www.theshipinnrye.co.uk)).

**The Traddock**, a small Georgian hotel in Austwick, is perfectly located for "spectacular" walks in the Yorkshire Dales. Dogs can roam about on the lawns and enjoy a wash in the gardens (from £95, dogs £5; [www.thetraddock.co.uk](http://www.thetraddock.co.uk)).

SOURCE: THE TIMES

## This week's dream: a volcanic adventure in Nicaragua

Built around nine active volcanoes, and battered – in living memory – by earthquakes, revolution and civil war, Nicaragua is not ideal for nervous travellers, says David Rennie in *The Economist's* 1843 magazine. But this small Central American country is markedly safer than “troubled” Honduras or Guatemala; and, with its “lush jungles, near-empty beaches and mansion-filled colonial towns”, it sees far fewer visitors than it deserves. It also offers plenty of activities – from kayaking along jungle rivers, to “ash surfing” down volcanoes – at cheaper rates than established destinations nearby, such as Costa Rica. Indeed, it is so well suited to an adventurous family holiday that a tourism boom in the near future seems almost inevitable. “The greatest risk might be waiting too long to visit.”

The country's two finest historic cities, Granada and León, rival those of Mexico or Cuba. Both have lovely and affordable hotels converted from old Spanish mansions, with courtyard



Concepción – one of the two volcanoes of Ometepe

gardens, swimming pools and often “outstanding” breakfasts. And León offers a unique treat – the chance to walk on the roof of its 18th century cathedral, the largest in Central America. Exploring this vast white space, with its views across to a horizon filled with volcanoes, you feel as though you're in “an avant-garde film about the afterlife”. Equally extraordinary are the volcanoes themselves. Nearby Masaya is so “seethingly active” that visitors are only permitted to spend five minutes at the crater, gazing down at the molten lava “roaring” far below. Or climb Cerro Negro, the region's youngest volcano, and you can surf back down on hired boards. The beaches of the Pacific coast are great for surfing of the conventional kind, too. But most beautiful of all is Ometepe, a “languid” lake island dominated by two forested volcanoes. *Audley Travel* (01993-838613, [www.audleytravel.com](http://www.audleytravel.com)) has a 10-day trip from £2,300pp, including flights.

### B&b of the week



#### The Malabar, Sedbergh, Cumbria

Opened last year in a Grade II listed barn conversion, this “gorgeous” b&b sits in fine walking country between the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, says Grainne McBride in *Condé Nast Traveller*. The interiors – “splashed with the vibrant pinks, reds and oranges of India” – feel “wonderfully welcoming”, and are filled with antiques and art from the Keralan tea estate where Graham Lappin (who runs the show with wife Fiona) grew up. The six bedrooms are all individually furnished, with deep stand-alone tubs in the bathrooms. The breakfasts and afternoon teas are superb.

Doubles from £160 b&b. 01539-620200, [www.themalabar.co.uk](http://www.themalabar.co.uk).

### Getting the flavour of...

#### Getting serious on safari

From animal tracking to astronomy and radio drills, you'll learn an array of “bush skills” on one of EcoTraining's African safari guide courses. You'll also enjoy a more “immersive” experience of the wild than on a traditional safari – and at a fraction of the price, says Richard Madden in *The Daily Telegraph*. The company, which has been training professional guides for more than 20 years, offers courses ranging from seven to 28 days to tourists of all ages, at camps in Botswana, South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe. There are daily lectures, with game drives and walks led by participants. Courses climax in a night bivouacking under the stars, listening out for the “gut-vibrating” snarls of lions. *Courses cost from £935 for seven days, excluding international flights* (+27 13 752 2532, [www.ecotraining.co.za](http://www.ecotraining.co.za)).

#### Hiking Spain's Coast of Death

Its “dastardly seas” have claimed scores of boats over the centuries – but as a hiker, Spain's Costa da Morte (Coast of Death) is likely to thrill you, not kill you, says Richard Mellor in *The Times*. In Galicia, at the country's northwestern tip, it is wild and varied, a “rambling reverie” of empty beaches, vast dunes, wetlands and desolate rockscapes. A single 91-mile path traverses most of its length – the Camiño dos Faros, or Lighthouse Way. It is a tough, lonely, six-day

walk, with some “lung-busting” climbs and few reliable waymarks – but well worth it for the sights en route, including megalithic tombs, a cemetery for shipwrecked English sailors, and the beautiful sandy resorts of Laxe and Muxia. *Camino Ways* (020-3468 1516, [www.caminoways.com](http://www.caminoways.com)) has a 7-night self-guided trip from £630pp, excluding flights.

#### Surfing in style in Morocco

Formerly a “ramshackle” hippy outpost once visited by Jimi Hendrix, the Moroccan village of Taghazout is now a well-known surfing destination. It still has a scruffy charm, says Carole Cadwalladr in the FT, and it's a good place to learn the sport – just a three-hour flight from London, with great breaks, beautiful beaches, and a fine new boutique hotel that hosts courses for beginners. Built by British surfing enthusiasts Ollie Boswell and Ben O'Hara, the Amouage is a “modernist, light-filled” dream decked out in Berber rugs and modern art, with big rooms and a garden with an infinity pool and plenty of hammocks. Guests eat well, at communal meals, and can enjoy sunrise and sunset yoga classes on the roof – great for easing aches induced by the daily surf classes with the excellent Berber instructors. *Surf Maroc* (01794-322 709, [www.surfmaroc.com](http://www.surfmaroc.com)) has a week's course at the Amouage from £574, half-board, excluding flights.

### Last-minute offers from top travel companies

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#### Vienna and Budapest

Enjoy 3 nights at Vienna's Hotel Prinz Eugen and 3 nights at Budapest's Three Corners Hotel Bristol, from £329pp, including flights. 020-8588 9943, [www.travelinteractions.co.uk](http://www.travelinteractions.co.uk). Travel June-August.

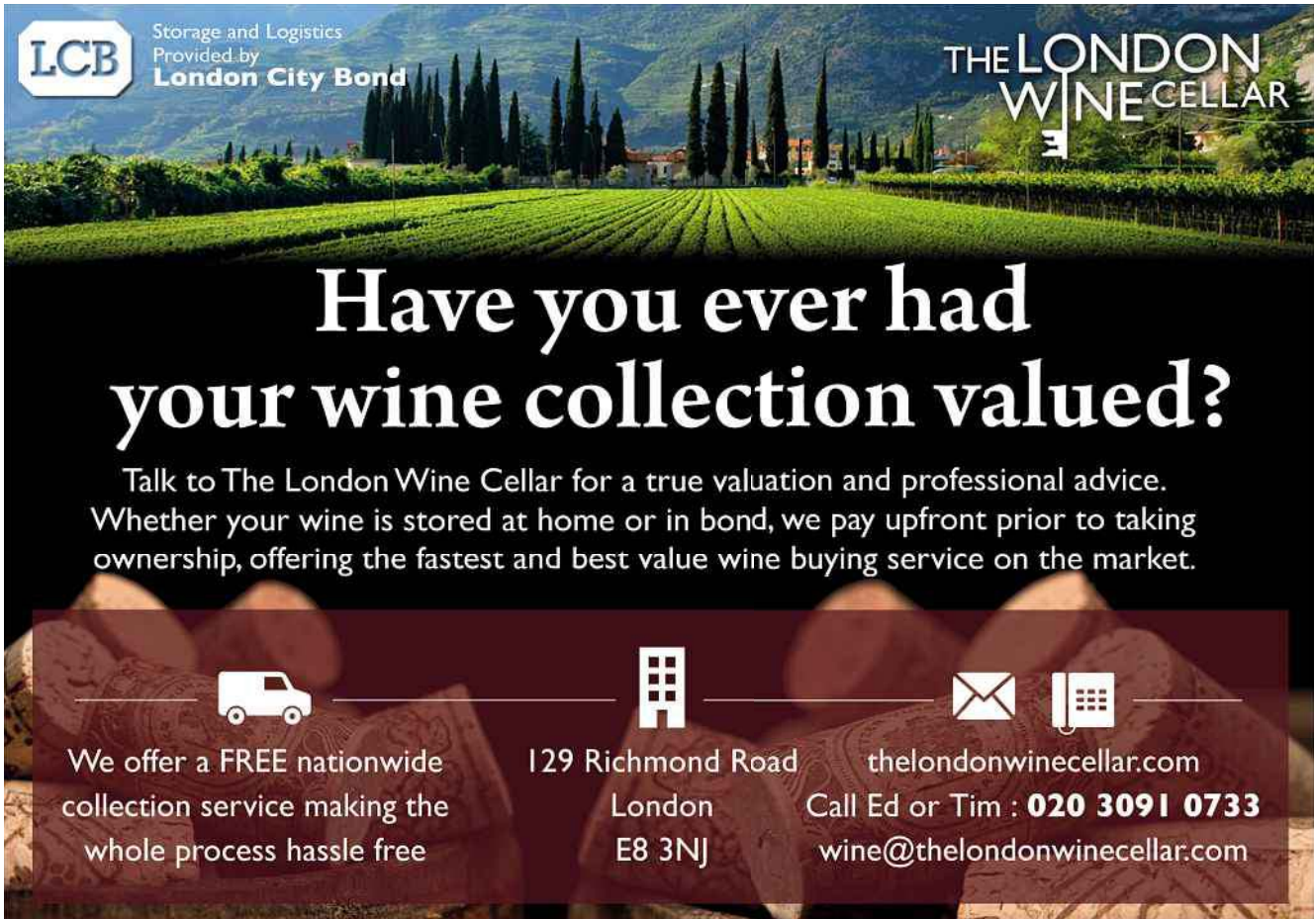
#### French Riviera retreat

Three nights at Les Restanques du Golfe de Saint-Tropez holiday village, Grimaud, costs from £266 for a self-catering studio (sleeps 5). 0870-026 7145, [www.pierreetvacances.com](http://www.pierreetvacances.com). Arriving 26 May.

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Relax with a 7-night, all-inclusive stay at The Holiday Inn Resort, from £1,200pp (based on 2 sharing), incl. Gatwick flights. 020-3368 6221, [www.broadwaytravel.com](http://www.broadwaytravel.com). Depart 26 September.





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## Jovial writer whose books evoked a vanished literary world

**Jeremy Lewis**  
1942-2017

Jeremy Lewis, who has died aged 75, was a writer, editor, publisher and memoirist – and “one of the best-loved figures in the London literary world”, said The Daily Telegraph. A “Grub Street irregular”, was how he described himself. Bear-like, bespectacled and amiable, he was almost pathologically self-effacing. But his “silly ass act” – in the words of his cousin Roger Lewis – was a carapace that concealed his gifts as a writer: a perceptive observer, he wrote several acclaimed biographies, and “three splendidly funny volumes of autobiography”.

In the preface to the first, *Playing for Time*, Lewis acknowledged that it was absurd that a “nonentity” such as himself, who had lived a life “short on incident”, should be writing an autobiography; he said that he hoped its existence would be justified by its being “entertaining, evocative of place and a particular way of life”, and by capturing some of life’s absurdity and sadness. And indeed, “he made non-achievement fascinating”. His memoirs were witty, insightful and moving, beautifully conjuring a vanished postwar world of distant parents, chilly boarding schools, and congenial publishing offices peopled by corduroy-clad eccentrics, where work started late, lunches were long, and editors were unconstrained by commercial targets.

Born in 1942, Jeremy Morley Lewis was the elder child of George, a urologist, and his wife, Janet. His mother was a “life force”, said The Times – the daughter of a farmer, “with the demeanour of a dowager Duchess”. A fearsome woman, she once unapologetically hoovered up his entire litter of baby hamsters, having mistaken them for cornflakes. His father, a former Cambridge rowing blue, had been present at the liberation of Belsen. Jeremy believed that he never recovered from this trauma, and that it precipitated his



“Made non-achievement fascinating”

withdrawal from family life, and descent into chain-smoking alcoholism. Jeremy loved his father, but he was a very different sort of parent to his own children, Jemima and Hattie. “I have deluged my daughters with affection and encouragement, and embarrassing emanations of paternal pride,” he said.

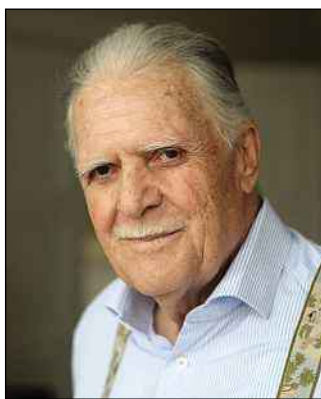
Burly but maladroit, Lewis had inherited none of his father’s sporting prowess. At Malvern College he did his best to avoid games, but nor did he excel as a scholar, which further dented his confidence. He was happier, if not much more successful, at Trinity College Dublin. Cripplingly shy, he recalled approaching girls at parties with all “the speed and dash of a glacier”. But later, in London, he met an attractive fellow Trinity graduate named Petra Freston, “with black eyes (like those of an Outer Mongolian)”. They married in 1968.

In the late 1960s, he drifted into a job at William Collins, then joined AP Watt as a literary agent. It wasn’t a success: he was terrible at negotiating deals and hopeless in a crisis, “rushing about, lamenting loudly”. He was dismissed after six years and went to OUP, and thence, in 1979, to Chatto & Windus. But by then, the industry was becoming commercialised, and Lewis – with his fondness for publishing books that were “brilliant but unsellable” – began to feel at sea. He “did not mourn when Carmen Callil sacked him in 1989”. After that, he decided – supported by Petra, who worked at a literary agency – to embark on a new life as a freelance writer. Auberon Waugh described his *Cyril Connolly: A Life* (1997) as “one of the funniest biographies I have ever read”. Lewis’s other subjects included Tobias Smollett and David Astor. In 1996, he took a part-time editing job at The Oldie, where he shared a ramshackle office with its editor, Richard Ingrams; he also wrote a monthly column for the magazine, which he kept up until his death, from cancer.

## Pioneering cameraman who worked with Martin Scorsese

**Michael Ballhaus**  
1935-2017

Michael Ballhaus, who has died in Berlin, at the age of 81, was one of the great cinematographers, known in particular for his collaborations with the German director Rainer Werner Fassbinder (with whom he made 16 films) and Martin Scorsese (seven). He garnered three Oscar nominations – the most recent, for Scorsese’s *Gangs of New York* (2002) – and pioneered a much-imitated camera technique, said The Guardian: the 360-degree pan. In Fassbinder’s TV melodrama *Martha* (1974), the camera circles the two lead actors as they, too, rotate. “The result is a spectacularly disorienting high-speed update of the 360-degree kissing shot in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*.” It became Ballhaus’s signature shot, used most famously in *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (1989).



“For him, nothing was impossible”

“Working with Fassbinder was hard, both mentally and physically,” he once said. “He used to emotionally abuse me... I never understood his behaviour, but I learned so much from him. Most of all, I learned how to be agile and ready for anything.” Scorsese tested him too, in other ways. Ballhaus deplored violence, and found his work on Scorsese’s mob drama *Goodfellas* (1990) almost unbearable. “I wouldn’t have done this movie with another director,” he said. “These discussions – whether there is enough brain in the blood – are so absurd that

you almost want to throw up.” But Scorsese relied on him hugely to create the visual dynamism he aspired to, often with the use of fast zooms (where the camera runs right up to a face, or object). “It was Michael who really gave me back my sense of excitement in making movies,” Scorsese said. “For him, nothing was impossible.” On *Goodfellas*, Ballhaus oversaw the famous “Copa shot”, when Henry Hill leads his future wife into New York’s Copacabana nightclub via its labyrinthine kitchen, in one brilliantly choreographed tracking shot. He had come up with the idea when the crew were denied permission to shoot at the entrance.

Born in Berlin in 1935, Ballhaus was the son of two stage actors who also ran a small theatre.

His aunt was married to the director Max Ophüls, and it was while visiting the set of one of his films, and seeing the director of photography at work, that he decided on his future career. He started out in television and made his first film with Fassbinder in 1971; their collaboration would endure until Fassbinder’s death, in 1982, aged 37. Ballhaus then accepted an invitation to Hollywood, to work on a film with John Sayles. Scorsese first employed him on *After Hours*, in 1984. The film was shot at breakneck speed, on a tight budget – but after Fassbinder’s demands, nothing could faze Ballhaus. His last film with Scorsese was *The Departed* (2006), which won a best picture Oscar.

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# Companies in the news ...and how they were assessed



## Seven days in the Square Mile

The announcement of a **general election** in June saw the pound rally, but wiped more than £45bn off the value of the UK's biggest companies. The **FTSE 100** tumbled by 2.5% on Tuesday, its worst day since the EU referendum, largely erasing the gains of the year. Stock markets globally struggled to maintain their bullish momentum, dampened by a lacklustre US first-quarter earnings season. But Asian investors were cheered by reports of faster economic growth in **China**, where the economy grew by 6.9% in Q1, according to official figures, marking the fastest pace of growth since 2015.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond, admitted that **Royal Bank of Scotland**, which is still 72% owned by the taxpayer, may be sold at a loss. The Treasury spent £45bn rescuing the bank during the financial crisis, at 502p per share; shares are now trading at less than half that price. Hammond said he hoped to achieve "fair value" in a sale.

**Barclaycard** reported that Easter brought some relief to the high street, thanks to the milder weather: in-store sales rose by 14% year-on-year. The boss of **Next**, Lord Wolfson, had his pay package slashed by 55%, to £1.8m, after a profit fall. **Tesco** posted its first UK growth for seven years, and a 30% rise in operating profit, but shares fell because of anxiety about the impact of inflation. The US electronic payments company **MoneyGram** accepted a \$1.2bn takeover deal by the Chinese firm Ant.

## Netflix: crowning glory?

When the Netflix royal drama *The Crown* came out in November, "my husband and I abandoned our usual weekend plans", said Janice Turner in *The Times*. Watching endless TV "was once the mark of the saddo", but since launching its on-demand streaming service, "Netflix has achieved something quite strange: it has made couch potatoes cool". That much is evident from the \$63bn company's latest quarterly figures, which show that it is close to notching up 100 million members globally, said Jennifer Saba on Reuters Breakingviews. Still, the slowing pace of subscriber growth worries some investors, given the company's lavish spending on new productions: "Netflix will blow through at least \$6bn this year on creating TV series and films." Meanwhile, the competition from deep-pocketed rivals such as AT&T, Google and Amazon has proliferated "and will only intensify". Netflix, which was founded in 1997, has "a good head start" and remains the most widely used video service in the US. But even if all goes "perfectly to plan", the share price, which is reapproaching the \$148 all-time high achieved in March, are looking pricey. CEO Reed Hastings hasn't disappointed up to now, "but he knows all too well how easily the plots of good stories can twist unexpectedly".

## Jaeger: fashion victim

It is not yet two weeks since the British fashion house Jaeger crashed into administration, with the threatened loss of 700 jobs, said Ashley Armstrong in *The Daily Telegraph*. But the recriminations have already begun. The chain's former owner, fashion entrepreneur Harold Tillman, "has reignited his bitter row" with the turnaround firm Better Capital, which took over in 2012, accusing it of running the chain into the ground. "They didn't have anyone with a fashion background running it, they didn't understand [the] product," he said. Founded in 1884 as "Dr Jaeger's Sanitary Woollen System Co Ltd", Jaeger flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, but "sales have withered as its customer base has grown older", said *The Economist*. Age isn't the only problem, said Kate Burgess in *The Financial Times*. "Jaeger's crepe skirts and tweed trews hark back to a time when adults wore plimsolls to play tennis, and only schoolkids wore gym kits." Today's grannies, by contrast, "wear trackies and yoga pants, just like their grandkids". The juxtaposition of Jaeger's collapse and the 82% rise in pre-tax profits reported by JD Sports "says a lot about what has happened to the high street over recent decades".

## UK wine growers: "Grape Britain"

Britain's wine revolution continues apace, says Rebecca Smithers in *The Guardian*. Over the past ten years, the number of acres planted with grapevines in England and Wales has grown by 135%, according to trade body English Wine Producers. A "record" million more vines will be planted this year, "allowing growers to produce two million more bottles". Among those planting new rootstocks are two big French champagne houses, Taittinger and Vranken-Pommery Monopole, which have announced new projects in Kent and Hampshire. Sales of domestically-grown wine have been on an upswing since 2000, but momentum is now being driven internationally. The French have finally admitted "they like our wines", and New York has decided that "English bubbles are the next big cool wine 'thing'", noted expert Oz Clarke. "We are bubbling with confidence."

## Weetabix: China couldn't stomach it. Can the Americans do better?

When the Chinese conglomerate Bright Food bought a majority stake in Weetabix in 2012, the aim was to "crack" the lucrative Asian breakfast market, said Josie Cox in *The Independent*. It wasn't to be. Weetabix, whose other brands include Alpen, Weetos and Oatibix, has certainly made inroads – China is now its third-largest market. But most Chinese punters remained wedded to their own hot, rice-based breakfast, congee. So Bright Food began casting around for a buyer. This week, the US group Post Holdings gobbled up the Northamptonshire firm for \$1.76bn.



From Chinese to US ownership

Weetabix should feel right at home, said the FT. St. Louis-based Post is the third-largest cereal firm in the US and already owns brands including Fruity Pebbles, Golden Crisp and Grape-Nuts. This deal is its latest attempt to consolidate the market. CEO Rob Vitale was full of praise for "a truly iconic brand" (founded in

1932, Weetabix carries a royal warrant). The plan, he said, was to ensure Weetabix continues to perform strongly at home, while "acting as a platform" for Post's other products in Britain.

Some of the world's biggest names in food – including Associated British Foods – had been named as possible suitors for Weetabix, said BBC News online. But, as analyst George Salmon of Hargreaves Lansdown points out, "it is no surprise" to see the brand remaining in foreign ownership, because of the weakness of sterling. "Any domestic buyer would have had to overcome the headwind of the pound's reduced buying power. In contrast, the dollar's recent strength has helped the successful bidder." Weetabix has become part of a pronounced trend. Figures from Thomson Reuters show that "UK-targeted" takeover deals are at the second-highest level in eight years, thanks to a fall in valuations and the weaker pound.

## Issue of the week: the election and the City

*Investors are calculating that a win for Theresa May may mean a “softer” Brexit. They shouldn’t count on it*

Theresa May has rubbished the idea of a snap election so many times, said Kate Allen and Roger Blitz in the FT, “that investors were left with no choice but to assume that the UK and the pound were heading for a long period of Brexit uncertainty”. All that changed on Tuesday, when the PM “took financial markets and Westminster off guard” with her announcement of a 8 June poll. In the words of Deutsche Bank’s George Saravelos – hitherto “one of the most bearish sterling strategists” – the move was “a game changer” for sterling. The pound promptly jumped to a five-month high, breaking out of the \$1.20-\$1.27 range it has been anchored to since mid-October. The FTSE 100 headed in the opposite direction, suffering its worst one-day loss since last year’s referendum.



*May in for a nasty surprise?*

Much of the 180-point fall in the FTSE 100 can be explained by the stronger pound, “which depresses the value of many big-dollar earners in the index”, said Nils Pratley in The Guardian. The real question is why sterling reacted so strongly. “It was because investors calculated – counter-intuitively at first glance – that a bigger Tory majority, if that’s what follows, will mean a softer form of Brexit.” As Deutsche Bank points out, it would set May free from the unrealistic timetable set by the hard Brexiters in her own party, and “dilute their influence” – enabling the

Government “to compromise over transitional agreements”, and reducing the “crash risk” of Brexit negotiations. Still, May’s move isn’t without risk, said Alistair Osborne in The Times. For one thing, she’ll have to produce a manifesto “spelling out her Brexit stance on immigration and trade” and other tricky matters. What will she say, for example, on the potentially vote-losing issues of triple-lock pensions and tax rises? No doubt she’d like to do away with former chancellor George Osborne’s daft “tax lock” pledge, which got his successor into such trouble in the Budget. “Not everyone will like that, maybe even a certain part-time newspaper editor.”

In economic terms, the PM couldn’t have chosen a better moment to call an election, said Alex Brummer in the Daily Mail. “By happy coincidence”, the IMF has again upgraded its forecast for UK GDP this year to 2%, keeping Britain “top of the class with the US” in the G7 growth stakes. True, “studies have found a strong correlation between GDP growth and voting behaviour”, said The Economist. “But things are changing.” New analysis suggests that, post the financial crisis, voters in Europe have grown “deeply hostile towards governing parties”, regardless of the state of the economy. If May believes “money in voters’ pockets” alone will keep her in power, she could be in for “a nasty surprise”.

## French markets: what the experts think

### ● Pfft!

“On Sunday, the French people go to the polls and might just unleash the biggest shake-up in the country – indeed across Europe – for 60 years,” said Patrick Hosking in The Times. “Neither the business community nor the international money markets quite know how to respond.” For them, the “protectionist, anti-big business, fiscally incontinent” National Front leader, Marine Le Pen, is “bad enough”. But the sudden surge in the polls of the far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon has created even more uncertainty. His “eye-catching” policies include a 100% tax on earnings above €400,000, capital controls, widespread nationalisation, and a 16% hike in the minimum wage. The “nightmare scenario” for French business is that Le Pen and Mélenchon top the initial poll, leaving voters with no moderate voice to choose in the 7 May run-off. But markets have “gazed into the abyss” and muttered an indifferent “pfft”.



*Pomp at the Élysée Palace*

only imagine the “carnage”, said John Stepek on MoneyWeek.com. Yet the CAC 40 stock index – up by around 18% in the past year – is currently only slightly shy of its all-time high. One reason for that, said Tara Cunningham in The Daily Telegraph, is the flood of investment

cash heading into recovering-Europe from the US, where the Trump market rally has “hit a speed bump”. Last month, investors snapped up stocks on the Continent “at the fastest rate since October 2015”.

### ● Bond trouble

French stocks may still be riding high, said the FT, but the strain of uncertainty is showing up elsewhere – particularly in the bond markets, where volatility has been picking up. Yields on French government bonds have generally been close to those of Germany, reflecting their status as “safe” debt. But, as David Owen of Jefferies points out, this relationship has begun to break down. Late last month, the spread between French and German ten-year bonds touched a three-year low. In other words, “French sovereign bonds have begun to perform more like those of peripheral eurozone economies such as Italy”. That should ring warning bells.

### ● The shift to Europe

If France is offered a choice between “unreconstructed communism and unrestrained fascism”, as one broker somewhat overexcitedly put it, one can

## Tech mega HQs

“Want to know when to sell? Look at the HQ,” wrote hedge-funder Andy Kessler in The Wall Street Journal recently, reflecting the old adage that blowing cash on lavish premises is a form of corporate hubris that often precedes a fall. And if that is the case, said Danny Fortson in The Sunday Times, Silicon Valley is in trouble. Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Google parent Alphabet are all in various stages of developing “mega-buildings” – vying with each other “for the most off-the-wall” approach.

Facebook’s new office, designed by Frank Gehry, “is topped by one of the world’s largest roof gardens”. Amazon has gone one better by building “a virtual colony” consisting of “three orb-shaped biodomes” that will eventually cover ten blocks and offer space for 50,000 people. The idea is that “workers will be able to hold meetings in tree canopies built to resemble birds’ nests”. But outdoing them all is Apple’s “spaceship”, a new \$5bn “shrine to the iPhone”, designed by Norman Foster. When Steve Jobs pitched the design to planners in 2011, he said simply: “Apple is growing like a weed. It’s clear we need to build a new campus.” It must have been one of the rare moments when Jobs undersold his big idea. Since then, Apple’s stock value has trebled to \$740bn, making it the world’s most valuable company. Not much sign of a downfall there – yet.

## A bad City deal is worse than none

**Jonathan Ford**

*Financial Times*

Since the referendum, City firms have been “lobbying tirelessly” to preserve some version of the EU’s “passporting regime”, which permits them to operate across the bloc, says Jonathan Ford. The “Brussels nanny” might be “tiresome”, but “bankers instinctively like keeping systems that are familiar, and from which they know how to make money”. Rather than accept the unwelcome results of a botched deal, however, the City should simply cut loose. Not doing so would raise the risk of being saddled with the EU’s rule book, without having any say in its contents, and of conceding valuable markets as the “political price” of a deal. In any case, “there’s no ravening lion round the corner should they give up the passport”. Don’t forget, the Square Mile’s powerful position was built on clients coming to London to make deals. So rather than tangle itself in red tape “to preserve a portion of the 20% of its business that is EU-facing”, the City should “slip nanny’s hand, maximise the legal and linguistic advantages that allow it to be competitive, and thus continue to grow its global trade”.

## Good riddance to the high-street bank

**Matthew Lynn**

*The Daily Telegraph*

Traditional high-street bank branches are closing so rapidly that shadow chancellor John McDonnell “is proposing a law that would force banks to keep branches open”, says Matthew Lynn. It’s a “barking mad” idea. Bank branches are technologically redundant; they push up costs, forcing banks to overcharge us; they use up valuable real estate. “The sooner the last one shuts down the better.” In fairness, it’s not just Labour that worries about the ongoing shuttering of Britain’s bank branches. Pressure groups have also joined the fray, arguing that the closures will make our declining, “boarded up” high streets even more “dismal”. Yet it hardly helps the cause to preserve businesses with “no useful function”. And it’s patronising to suggest that older citizens haven’t got to grips with online banking: “76% of fifty-somethings already bank on the internet”. One might consider it “progress of sorts” that “Labour has moved on from keeping uneconomic coal mines open to keeping uneconomic bank branches open”. But thriving economies have “to change, adapt and innovate”. Britain’s high streets aren’t exempt from that rule.

## An MBA won’t make up for a tin ear

**Alex Brummer**

*Daily Mail*

“Few self-respecting business people rise to the top” these days without a master’s degree in business administration, says Alex Brummer. But if MBA courses are “terrific at telling people how to make money”, they’re clearly failing when it comes to creating a “better” kind of capitalism, alert to social issues and ethics. In the past few weeks, all manner of corporate ineptitude has come to light, notably the horrific scene of a passenger dragged bleeding and screaming from a United Airlines flight. Suffice it to say that the firm’s tin-eared boss, Oscar Munoz, has both a business degree and an MBA. For all Munoz’s talent in squeezing costs at United, the fall in shares, reputational damage, and the millions in compensation this incident has occasioned will probably make his position untenable. A key lesson from such fiascos is that unless the executive gets on top of the situation in the first 24 hours, they’re doomed. Another, which Munoz may now learn at his leisure, is that the simple phrase “the customer is always right” would have served him far better than any business qualification.

## Lyft picks up an “Angel of Death”

**Thornton McEnergy**

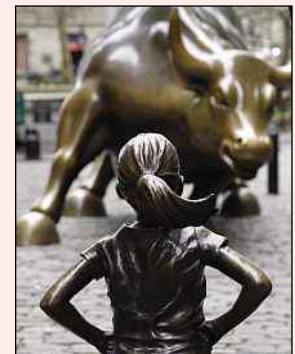
*Dealbreaker.com*

“Just a few short weeks ago, Uber was a true Alpha”, and the mere notion of a close competitor to the \$70bn tech juggernaut was “laughable”, says Thornton McEnergy. Amazing what “rampant allegations of a toxic misogynistic corporate culture”, a short-fused CEO, and analyst anxieties about a “Ponzi scheme of ambition” can do. Uber’s most famous rival, Lyft, “clearly smelling blood in the water”, recently boosted its war chest with a \$600m financing round valuing it at \$7.5bn. “Those numbers are nice”, but what’s really important is who’s doing the backing. Lyft has partnered with KKR, the private equity firm co-founded by Henry Kravis, which was famed in the 1980s for its “Barbarians at the Gate” raids on big firms. “And don’t nobody kill off rivals like Henry f\*\*\*ing Kravis.” Lyft has made mileage out of Uber’s troubles by stressing its credentials as a decent, ethical alternative “in the great ride-sharing start-up wars”. That it has managed to retain the “moral high ground” while taking investment from Wall Street’s “Angel of Death” is “truly astounding” – and a telling measure of Uber’s own reputational mismanagement.

## City profiles

### Fearless Girl

“The statue of the girl with her hands defiantly on her hips has become a tourist sensation” since it was planted opposite Wall Street’s “Charging Bull” sculpture on International Women’s Day last month, say Aaron Smith on CNN Money. But now a fierce controversy is raging over whether she should be removed. The veteran Italian sculptor Arturo Di Modica, who installed the snorting bull in front of the New York Stock Exchange in 1989, reckons she changes the positive message of his sculpture, which is “a better America and a better world”. The girl’s presence, according to his lawyer, makes the bull “representational of male dominance and Wall Street” instead. The Di Modica camp is now threatening to sue her sponsor, State Street Global Advisors, for copyright infringement, claiming it has profited from ads featuring both sculptures.



“Men who don’t like women taking up space are exactly why we need the Fearless Girl,” tweeted NYC mayor Bill De Blasio. But “rarely do the cultural politics of late capitalism offer us such a lose-lose conflict,” said Owen Davis on DealBreaker.com. The girl, after all, is central to State Street’s efforts to promote one of its financial products – the Gender Diversity Index ETF, which invests in companies “with a decent share of X chromosomes”. That raises a troubling question: “Do we side with a cynical marketing ploy whose social politics, though muddled, are basically noble?” Or “a celebrated work”, inspired by the 1987 stock market crash, that “now carries the full symbolic weight of tedious male fragility”?

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## Who's tipping what

### The week's best buys

#### De La Rue

*The Times*

The market hasn't fully appreciated the banknote printer's purchase of anti-counterfeit hologram provider DuPont Authentication. Operating profits are "some way ahead" of expectations. Buy. 663p.

#### Empiric Student Property

*The Times*

This student accommodation specialist's attractive 5.6% yield should soon be covered by earnings. Net asset value is set to move ahead as the group reaches its target of 10,000 beds, and shares should rise. Buy. 110.5p.

#### JD Sports Fashion

*The Daily Telegraph*

JD's stores are "modern and full of technology", which keeps key suppliers, such as Nike and Adidas, keen. Lines such as women's "athleisure" are fuelling expansion. Cash-generative, with rising sales and profits. Buy. 440.1p.

#### Middlefield Canadian Income

*The Daily Telegraph*

This investment trust taps into a high and diversified yield from the US and Canada. The portfolio managers have a record of outperformance, picking sustainable income stocks. Yields 5%. Buy. 103p.

#### M.P. Evans

*Investors Chronicle*

This palm oil producer has been unlocking value – disposing of minority-owned ventures, and bringing more plantations under its own control. Profits have doubled following a peak in the commodity's price. Buy. 740p.

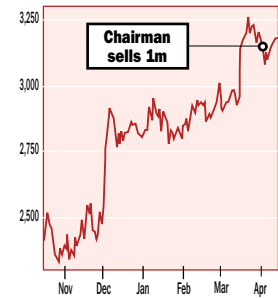
#### Segro

*Investors Chronicle*

E-commerce is driving growth at property investor Segro, which is enjoying rising demand for distribution hubs and warehouses. The group now owns nearly all of Heathrow's cargo facilities. Yields 3.8%. Buy. 462.1p.

### Directors' dealings

#### Berkeley Group



Berkeley has grown into one of the UK's largest housebuilders and is on track to deliver a £3bn pre-tax profit by 2021. Chairman Tony Pidgley, who founded the group in 1976, has cashed in £31.1m of shares, but retains £171m worth.

SOURCE: INVESTORS CHRONICLE

### ...and some to sell

#### BT Group

*The Sunday Times*

The multiple risks facing BT Group may be too much for even the experienced hands of incoming chairman Jan du Plessis. The group has a yawning £11bn pensions deficit and some £12.5bn in debt. One to avoid. Sell. 313p.

#### Hunting

*The Times*

Hunting, which provides services to the energy industry, has halved its workforce, cut capital spending, wiped out debt, and is benefiting from an upsurge in the US shale market. But the recovery is priced in. Take profits. Sell. 609.5p.

#### Mediclinic International

*The Times*

Mediclinic's "hotchpotch of hospitals and clinics" stretch from Switzerland to South Africa. There are concerns about its struggling Middle East business and taxation issues in Zurich. Debt, at £1.62bn, is high. Sell. 739p.

#### Mothercare

*Shares*

Mothercare has raised hopes of a viable turnaround, with Q4 progress driven by online sales growth. But it still has too many stores (152 in the UK) and faces tough competition against a weakening consumer backdrop. Sell. 122p.

#### Scapa Group

*The Times*

This "bonding solutions" specialist has an exciting healthcare division, which makes dressings for wounds, and sticky tape for medical wearables. It's a "great company", but the shares are very dear. Take profits. Sell. 387p.

#### WH Smith

*The Times*

WH Smith has been expanding the travel side of the business, and returning cash to investors. Shares could have further to go, but take profits on an 18% rise this year. Sell. £17.88.

### Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

#### Best tip

**Centamin**  
*The Times*  
up 31.83% to 185.48

#### Worst tip

**Devro**  
*The Daily Telegraph*  
down 4.53% to 179p

### Market view

"Investors will be once bitten, twice shy... following the Brexit vote."

**Laith Khalaf of Hargreaves Lansdown's advice is to "keep politics out of portfolios" after last year's upset. Quoted in the FT**

## Market summary

### Key numbers for investors

	18 Apr 2017	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	7147.50	7348.94	-2.74%
FTSE All-share UK	3924.93	4011.82	-2.17%
Dow Jones	20479.87	20666.86	-0.90%
NASDAQ	5833.94	5877.78	-0.75%
Nikkei 225	18418.59	18797.88	-2.02%
Hang Seng	23924.54	24262.18	-1.39%
Gold	1284.15	1250.05	2.73%
Brent Crude Oil	54.82	55.75	-1.67%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	3.77%	3.67%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	1.12	1.15	
US 10-year Treasuries	2.23	2.35	
UK ECONOMIC DATA			
Latest CPI (yoy)	2.3% (Mar)	2.3% (Feb)	
Latest RPI (yoy)	3.1% (Mar)	3.2% (Feb)	
Halifax house price (yoy)	+3.8% (Mar)	+5.1% (Feb)	

£1 STERLING \$1.282 €1.196 ¥139.642

### Best and worst performing shares

#### WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS

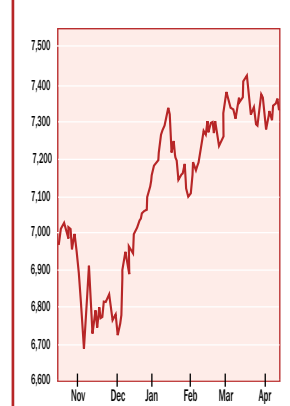
RISES	Price	% change
Associated Brit. Foods	2718.00	+4.98
Marks & Spencer Gp.	353.50	+2.32
Mediclinic Internat.	739.00	+2.14
Barratt Developments	580.00	+2.11
Convatec Group	289.70	+1.86
FALLS		
Tesco	176.20	-9.92
Glencore	291.80	-8.93
Anglo American	1110.00	-8.90
BHP Billiton	1198.00	-8.86
Rio Tinto	3003.00	-8.32

#### BEST AND WORST UK STOCKS OVERALL

Pipehawk	7.12	+159.09
Sherborne Investors	71.50	-55.31

Source: Datastream (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 18 Apr (pm)

### Following the Footsie



6-month movement in the FTSE 100 index



# “Guaranteed to meet the grade you order, or you get your money back”

*A growing number of undergraduates are cheating by commissioning people to write essays for them. Simon Usborne investigates the websites that offer these services, selling everything from GCSE coursework to doctoral theses*

It takes about three minutes to order a final dissertation for an English literature degree at the UK Essays website. I pick my country, subject and required grade. I go for a 2:1, choose a length – let’s say 5,000 words – a seven-day deadline, and watch the price calculator hit £687 (or £1,236 for a two-day turnaround). Click “next step” and I can enter my topic before being matched with a suitable writer, who will produce an essay “personalised to my requirements”. It comes with a series of promises. “The work we produce is guaranteed to meet the grade you order, or you get your money back.” It will also be “100% free from plagiarism” – and on time.

All of this would be totally legal and, the owners of UK Essays insist, ethical, too – because what its customers are definitely not supposed to do is submit the work as their own. “Our essays... are the best, most useful study aid in the world,” says Daniel Dennehy, chief operating officer at All Answers, the Nottinghamshire company that owns UK Essays. “They increase any student’s understanding of a topic, which subsequently improves their ability to write an excellent, unique answer of their own.”

UK Essays says it sold 16,000 assignments last year, up from 10,000 five years earlier, written by a network of 3,500 researchers. The company’s “fair use policy”, which requires a click away from the order page, spells out the rules. “Even if you did make minor alterations to the researcher’s work, this would still be considered plagiarism,” it warns. But, Dennehy accepts, “I have worked here for nine years and I am not naive enough to think that all our clients use the work correctly”. He declines to estimate what proportion of his customers are cheats.

The growth of these sites, which are known as essay mills, is now troubling the higher levels of government. Jo Johnson, the Universities Minister, has appealed to student bodies and universities to help tackle so-called “contract plagiarism”, which he sees as a growing threat to academic integrity. New guidelines, to be published in time for the next academic year, are expected to recommend a new sector-wide policy, and the Government has not ruled out beefing up the law.

The Government believes there are more than 100 mills in operation, churning out anything from B-grade GCSE coursework (£106 on UK Essays) to a 100,000-word PhD in criminal law (£82,238). “But our research suggests it’s more like 1,000 sites,” says Professor Phil Newton, the director of



*Before they were removed: OKessay adverts on the London Underground*

learning and teaching at Swansea University, and an expert in academic plagiarism. Previous estimates suggest that more than 20,000 students a year in the UK are paying for essays to get degrees. The true figure may be much higher.

“This is a very fast-moving problem, which the sector and legislation has been slow to address,” Newton adds. “When I started researching it in 2009, I couldn’t believe what was available and how little research had been done. On some sites, you can even enter your course code and the name of

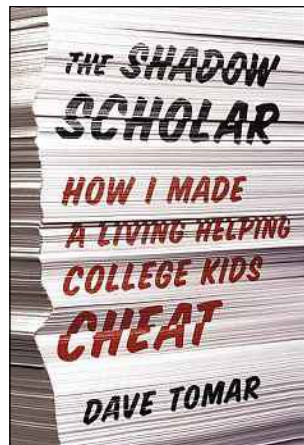
your lecturer, and the writer will tailor an essay to that. To the man on the street,” he adds, “it’s very odd that this sort of thing is legal.”

Universities are equipped to detect old-fashioned, cut-and-paste plagiarism. Software such as Turnitin, which claims 97% of UK universities as customers, flags up passages it identifies in existing sources. But it cannot detect an original essay written by someone else. Even when lecturers suspect foul play, it can be hard to know how to act. “I had one instance recently when a student received a much higher mark than expected,” says a senior lecturer at a London university, who asked not to be named. “His work had a level of fluency and sophistication of thought that hadn’t been seen. But I wasn’t 100% sure, because I think he wrote parts of the essay in his own style to throw me off, so I left it. It’s a minefield.”

There is also concern that contract plagiarism, while obviously wrong, is a symptom of what critics describe as the commodification of higher education. International students in the UK now pay between around £15,000 and £40,000 a year in tuition fees. Those from outside the EU paid £4.2bn in fees in 2014-15, almost 30% of universities’ income from fees – and almost 13% of their total income. Universities depend on foreign students with deep pockets, which is why they are fighting government plans to bring numbers down. Dave Tomar, a former mill writer in the US, says this means universities too often sell places to ill-equipped students, many of whom arrive with limited written English or awareness of British academic norms. “The vast majority of students who cheat aren’t lazy, but struggling,” he says. “They have invested so much that they don’t want to blow it by failing.”

Tomar, 37, says that over ten years, he wrote about 4,000 assignments for customers, including hundreds in Britain. Before he quit, in 2013, he says he earned \$60,000 (almost £50,000) a year; writers generally get about half the essay fee.

“Whatever their motivations, this is a symptom, not the illness,” he adds from his home in Philadelphia, where he writes about education reform following the success of his book about his former life, *The Shadow Scholar*. “We need a broader conversation about how educational systems are failing these students such that they end up in college way over their heads.”



Dave Tomar: more than 4,000 essay assignments

While studying a language at Cambridge University, Claire (not her real name) wrote mill essays during her first year, and also understood that most of her customers were not British. “You have a UK system reliant on foreign students while, through the back door, companies are devaluing the very degree certificates that attract all that foreign money in the first place,” she says in an email, describing the result as “a wonderful downward spiral of devaluation”.

Newton accepts that, in some places, students arrive without sufficient skills to complete good written work. But he says students know when they are crossing a line, and that penalties for plagiarism are generally tough already (cheats at Swansea are expelled). What has changed, he adds, is the increasing accessibility and slick presentation of many of the sites, which appeal to students who might not otherwise resort to cheating. “The easier it is, the more likely it is to happen,” he says.

Not all essay mills, which began to proliferate over a decade ago, do much to put off would-be cheats. OKessay, which last year removed adverts from London Underground stations near universities after complaints, claims on its website’s home page to have more than 10,000 customers. “Looking for experts to ‘Write my essay for me’? Choose us and we won’t disappoint you!” Deep in the terms and conditions, the mill says it will not be liable “for the outcome or consequences of submission [of] the paper to any academic institution”. Nowhere does it explicitly advise against it.

Posing as a struggling history student, I call the customer support line for clarification. “If I want to use the essay as my own work, is that possible,” I ask. “I’m not able to tell you whether it’s possible or not. We just write the paper for you and you can use it for what you want,” the agent says. The company says it is based in Sheffield, but there is no address on the website, which hides its domain registration details. The terms and conditions say the site is owned by Elabama Inc, a company registered in Panama. “So it would be at my own risk,” I ask. “You can just use it at your own risk – it’s what our disclaimer says on our website. It’s meant to serve as an example... You can get it, read it, shake it and if you like it you can use it, if you don’t like it you can fix it to [be] like you want it and use it.” When I call back as a journalist, I am given an email address but none of my questions are answered, and there is no response to the suggestion that the company appears to condone cheating.

Claire wrote for Oxbridge Essays, a prominent site with offices in London. “It was

clear to everyone involved what was going on,” she recalls. Yet she found the work stimulating after quitting a “soul-destroying” temp job. “I didn’t worry too much about the ethics at first, because I felt bitter about the fact this was the only way I could find work that was interesting and rewarding,” she says. “I got paid £200 for the first one. I was 19 and that was a lot of money.”

In 2013, the Advertising Standards Authority ruled that Oxbridge Essays had breached its code by guaranteeing “that you will receive at least the grade you order”. The implication of the promise contradicted the company’s terms, which prohibit the submission of its essays, the authority found. Philip Malamatinas, who launched the site in 2006, declines to answer questions. Nor does he respond to Claire’s claim that the company knew what was going on. “We work with thousands of students who come to us having been let down by a system designed to penalise those for whom English is a second language, and who typically pay three or four times as much as UK students in tuition fees,” he writes in a statement. “Sadly, our universities are simply too stretched to provide the same level of support to all, and as a result, students are turning to private enterprises to subsidise their educational needs.”

Mill bosses are not the only people making a case for model answers, as a way of showing students how it should be done. “I think they’re incredibly valuable, especially for international students,” says Alexander Proudfoot, chief executive of Independent Higher Education (formerly Study UK), which represents more than 130 private institutions. “We’d be happy for there to be a national database of essays. If you made them accessible then the argument for essay mills goes out the window.”

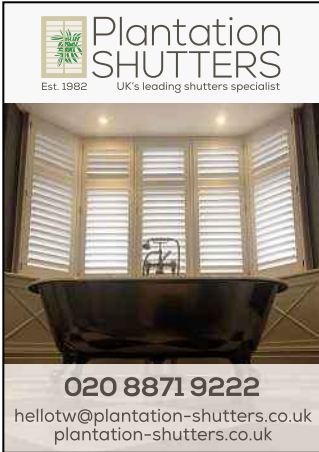
Professor Newton is not convinced, preferring “to show students how things are structured and what it looks like to write an essay”. Either way, he adds: “When you can give a precise title and specify the grade and the referencing and sources, that’s something very different.” No essay site I approach will explain why, if their work is only intended to be used as a model, they are so keen to guarantee originality, sometimes two days before a deadline, if not to help students elude plagiarism detection software.

Newton believes part of the solution must be a requirement for more face-to-face and practical assessment. Proudfoot says institutions should find resources for essay-writing and critical-thinking classes, as well as tutorial support for students who “find themselves backed into a corner”. Claire agrees. She gave up when the demands of her own studies left her too busy to write for other students. “My dad also told me, ‘You might not be thinking about the wider repercussions of this now, but think about later,’ and I thought – you know, you might be right.”

*“On some sites, you can even enter your course code and the name of your lecturer, and the writer will tailor an essay to that”*



*A longer version of this article first appeared in The Guardian © Guardian News and Media Limited 2017.*



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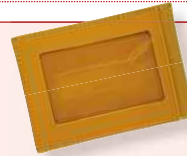
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## THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1052

An **Ettinger Bridle Hide travel pass holder** and **two Connell Guides** will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Friday 28 April. Send it to: The Week Crossword 1052, 2nd floor, 32 Queensway, London W2 3RX, or email the answers to [crossword@theweek.co.uk](mailto:crossword@theweek.co.uk). **Tim Moorey** ([www.timmoorey.info](http://www.timmoorey.info))



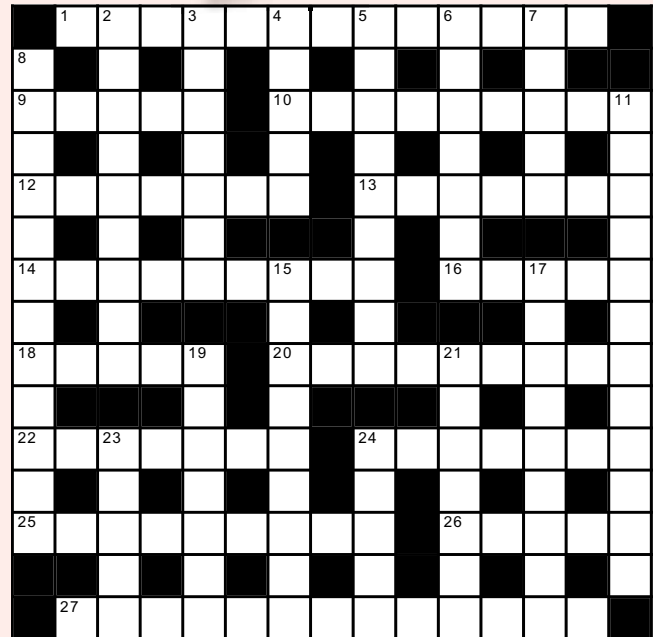
This week's crossword winner will receive an Ettinger ([www.ettinger.co.uk](http://www.ettinger.co.uk)) Bridle Hide single-sided travel pass holder in London tan, which retails at £100, and two Connell Guides ([www.connellguides.com](http://www.connellguides.com)).

### ACROSS

- 1 Presbyterians fancy her? (7,6)
- 9 How to address fast-running mammal in US airport! (1'4)
- 10 Go too far across a stretch of river (9)
- 12 Urgent information during leave (7)
- 13 After complaint, leaves a nourishing drink (4,3)
- 14 One takes something out of old farm vehicle? (9)
- 16 Short message time and time again about leak (5)
- 18 English course for one who's not English (5)
- 20 Exaggerate deliveries made by gallery (9)
- 22 Dollar's doing well bringing cheers (5,2)
- 24 Passengers about to get left in street (7)
- 25 Rogue in favour of cutting discount (9)
- 26 Couple with American writer (5)
- 27 Old English writer's to be blessed for this creation (6,7)

### DOWN

- 2 Article is about keeping feet on the ground (9)
- 3 May that place start to satisfy one (7)
- 4 Ship belonging to dotcom company? (1-4)
- 5 School nobs here? About right (9)
- 6 Very serious attention given to home (7)
- 7 Respond on a court (2-3)
- 8 Novel that's reportedly never read on the road (7,5)
- 11 Lady's conclusion about painting is distressing (5-7)
- 15 Happened to agree with class (4,5)
- 17 Complex lecture supporting European party (9)
- 19 Try a short drink, then beer (4,3)
- 21 Brownies and pastries cooked with no end of cocoa (7)
- 23 Manage to keep second lot of trees (5)
- 24 Religious setting Catholic has to perform again (5)



Name .....

Address .....

.....Tel no.....

Clue of the week answer: .....

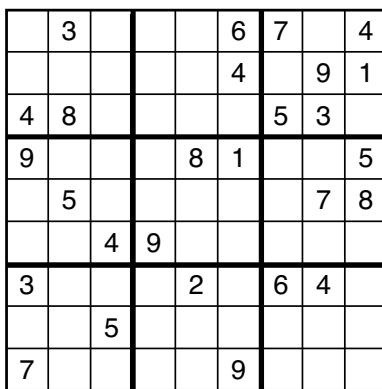
**Clue of the week:** If you're on them you should get off!  
(8,5 first letters S & P) *The Guardian, Nutmeg*

### Solution to Crossword 1050

**ACROSS:** 1 Lack of interest 10 Prial 11 Incarnate 12 Rampart 14 Ridotto 15 Nattering 17 Mason 19 Inept 21 Small beer 23 Eyeball 25 Chapest 26 Headdress 27 Outed 29 Present perfect  
**DOWN:** 2 Ami 3 Kildare 4 Faint 5 Nicaragua 6 Earldom 7 Exact 8 The countryside 9 Apprenticeship 13 Matte 16 Insolvent 18 Siege 20 Twaddle 22 Lead off 24 Erase 25 Caste 28 Tec  
**Clue of the Week:** First of Basil's instructions to the employees: "Don't mention it to the Germans!" (5)  
**Solution:** BITTE

**The winner of 1050 is Roland Hall from York**

The Week is available on CD and via the e-text service from **National Talking Newspapers** on 01435-866102; [www.tnauk.org.uk](http://www.tnauk.org.uk)



### Sudoku 596 (very difficult)

Fill in all the squares so that each row, column and each of the 3x3 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9

#### Solution to Sudoku 595

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

Puzzle supplied by PUZZLE

## Charity of the week



We offer help to those most affected by poverty in Britain today. We are a small group who operate anonymously online, keeping an eye out for people in desperate

need of help who have fallen through the net. Many of our 50+ plus volunteers have themselves experienced the demoralising effect of poverty. Our small, one-off cash donations with no strings attached give folk a lift when they need it most, without humiliating them or making them wait in line.

This is what we do. We love it. We believe in giving people just a tiny bit of hope to help restore their faith in humanity. Our admin expenses are zero. Everything goes directly to help someone in desperate need.  
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For more information, please visit [www.biscuitfund.org](http://www.biscuitfund.org).

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