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# THE BIG ISSUE

JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 5, 2017 NO.1241  
A HAND UP NOT A HANDOUT

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BIG LOVE**  
Valentine  
specials  
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**Matthew  
McConaughey**

I'M IN!

ME TOO!

**Neil  
Gaiman**

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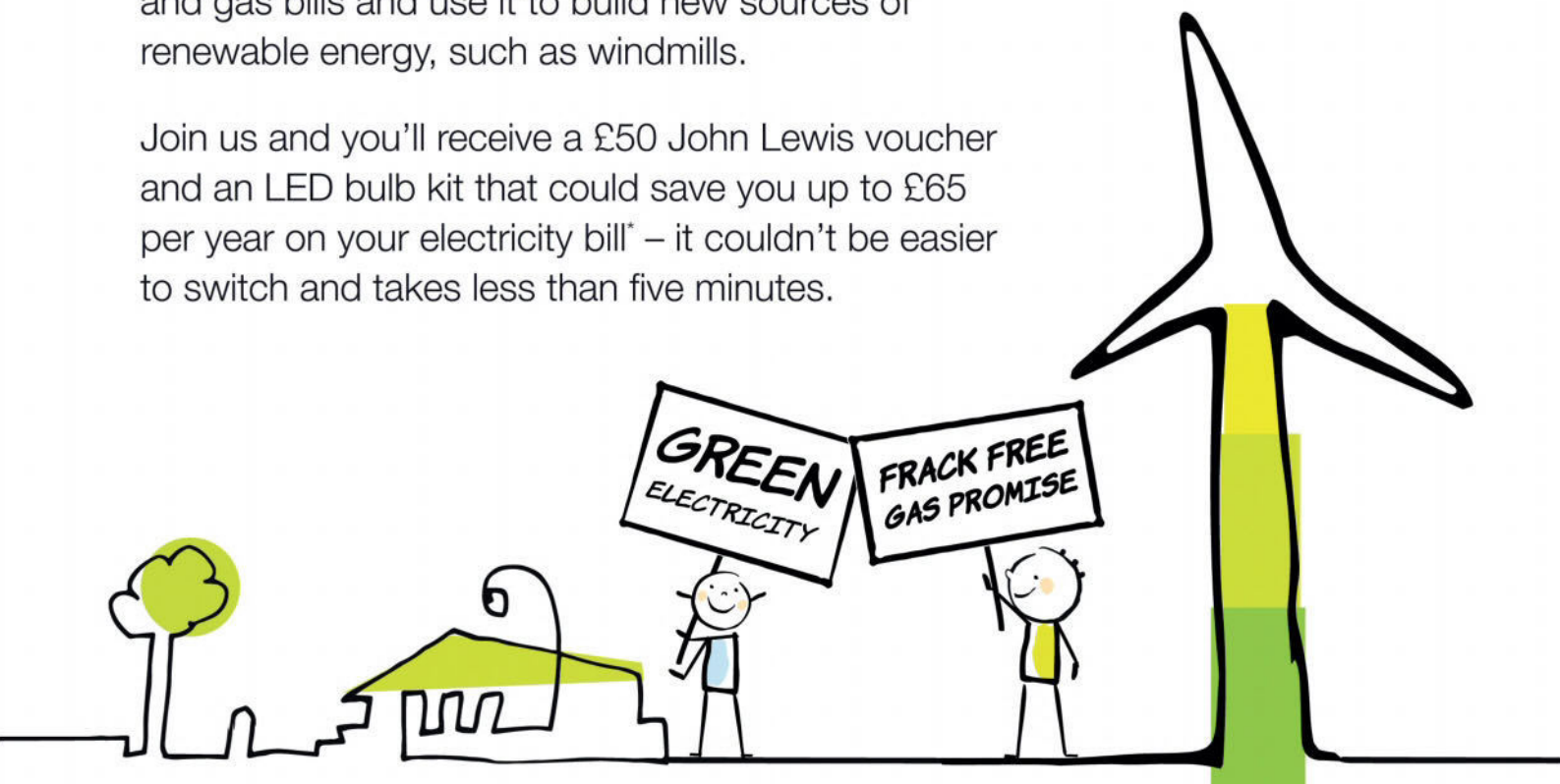
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EST. 1991



JAN 30–FEB 5 2017  
NO. 1241



## Hello, my name is Willie.

Selling The Big Issue gave me something positive to focus on when times were tough. It's been freezing cold here in Aberdeen this winter but I have a lot of great customers – I can't thank them enough for their support. I know every part of the city. I'm fond of walking around town or going down the esplanade. Read more of my story on page 46.



### THE BIG ISSUE MANIFESTO

#### **WE BELIEVE in a hand up, not a handout...**

Which is why our sellers BUY every copy of the magazine for £1.25 and sell it for £2.50.

#### **WE BELIEVE in trade, not aid...**

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

#### **WE BELIEVE poverty is indiscriminate...**

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

#### **WE BELIEVE in the right to citizenship...**

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

#### **WE BELIEVE in prevention...**

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

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# CORRESPONDENCE

Write to: The Big Issue, Second Floor, 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW  
Email: [letters@bigissue.com](mailto:letters@bigissue.com) Comment: [bigissue.com](https://bigissue.com)

 [facebook.com/bigissueUK](https://facebook.com/bigissueUK)

 [@bigissueuk](https://www.instagram.com/bigissueuk)

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## COMMENT OF THE WEEK



## Many happy returns!

It was my birthday in December and I requested from my friends, instead of buying me a birthday card or gift, to buy a Big Issue. I asked if they could take a selfie with the magazine and, if the vendor permitted, a selfie with the vendor and send me the picture. I was so chuffed with the response. I have put together a few collages [one of them pictured left] and raised £81 for the vendors/Big Issue. My friends all loved the idea and it made them feel good; the vendors were all happy to receive the custom and were good sports to take part, and I was more than happy, so it was a win-win!!!

*Gail Chamberlain, email*



**@crosscrosslet**

Learned from doing @BigIssue crossword that honey badgers are also called rats

## It's a numbers game

A kind request from a regular purchaser of the magazine. Please can you make next week's sudoku a tiny bit easier to crack. It says you should not have to guess... it lies! It is the source of great frustration, I have used up most of the expletives known in the dictionary. By the way, the magazine is fab. Great work.

*Sally Blatch, Rhos-on-Sea*

## Independent thought

I thought your readers would like to know that your answer number two in the festive edition of the QI quiz, saying the western half of New Guinea "belongs" to Indonesia, is highly contentious. *New Internationalist*, another great mag, says "the Indonesian state has subjected the indigenous population to a 'slow-motion genocide'" with nearly one-third of the population killed. I reckon we should support west Papua's struggle for independence.

*Mr Peace Handovsky, Bristol*

## Celebrating vendors

I don't know his name or badge number but there is often a young man of Romanian origin selling your magazine in our small town (Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire), usually towards the end of the week. He sounds cheerful as he advertises the magazine, despite wind, rain or even in the darkness of early winter evenings. I heard some young people imitate his call on December 23rd, and made a point of speaking to him and buying a magazine as it was late and few people were around. I wished the Big Issue vendor goodbye and a happy Christmas. It takes all sorts to make a world and I do hope people will try and keep buying your magazine to help those who want to help themselves.

*Hazel Wright, email*

## Streets ahead

Wow. Would just like to say how much I loved the poem [The Last Post] by Marc Carver in the Issue January 9-15. Keep up the good work Marc.

*Fiona, email*

## Bad press

Your editorial 'The knotty issues of the press' [January 16-22] makes points that need to be made. There are journalists of courage and integrity and there are also dreadful journalists. An example: I was helping some Romani Gypsies who were living on their land without planning permission.

All involved agreed that the Gypsies had moved onto the land in November. A national UK newspaper with a habit of appealing to prejudice reported that they had moved in over a bank holiday weekend. Even the worst journalists should know that there aren't any bank holidays in November.

*Tim Jones, Rugeley*



## CORR BLIMEY



**@RachLoxton**

That letter to my younger self from Julie Hesmondhalgh (Hayley from Corrie) is total class! She is sound as a pound

## Climate of fear

I agree with John Bird [January 16-22] that the vote for Brexit has opened up deep and ugly divisions in our society, while closing minds. But I cannot go along with his relative brushing aside of the issue of global warming, with the apparent suggestion that once the climate has changed we will be forced to act.

Radical action is needed now. Climate change cannot be reversed by a late change of mind. Public discourse needs to reflect the urgency of the situation if governments are to take the necessary decisions, and journalists need to play their part.

*Teresa Belton, Norwich*



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## THE EDITOR

# We're all free to take back control



One day last week my stars said I should buy lottery tickets and that exciting news was about to be delivered to the family.

There was no lottery luck (possibly because, unhelpfully, I didn't buy any ticket) and unless a curious plot turn in *Death in Paradise* was the kicker, the exciting news is yet to present itself.

I'm not usually a Mystic Meg follower but like you I'm increasingly desperate for some clarity about the post-Brexit future. And she's as insightful as anybody else.

That said, the lack of understanding, or refusal to understand, why the Brexit vote happened really needs to stop. We don't need a crystal ball or a soothsayer to divine the reason. Voters keep explaining it themselves.

Mostly, it's about a loss of control and wanting to wrestle that back. Whether you agree with this or not, it's a reality. Rather than an alternative truth.

Justifiable annoyance at the ridiculous confected outrage of some newspapers barking at judges as 'enemies of the state' – stoked by senior politicians who really should know better – does not change this reality.

And it's understandable. If you feel your life chances have been slowly closing because people who you believe speak less and less for you are making more and more decisions to your detriment, you're going to grab the opportunity to wrestle back some control.

Control is central to this. When we all see things unraveling on a global stage, fears grow because we feel helpless – we can't influence positive change.

Last week the rise in rough sleeping levels in Britain – up 16 per cent – led at first to

questions of why, and then something we hear at The Big Issue – what can we do?

The answer is, start here. Start with your vendor, chat to your vendor, learn about them, buy The Big Issue, be part of the solution. Then come back next week.

We can't solve the crisis. But we can, in little steps, work a way through it and start to find ways to prevent another generation falling.

Buying The Big Issue is a complex act. You come to us because you want to help. You want to have control over an ugly situation. You take the magazine, you like what you find – understandable – and you return. When you come back, you may well return for different reasons than you had in the first place (Spot the Ball). And on we go.

This idea of small steps and community action provides a route-map out of a lot of the murk. As many things that were operated until recently by public money shrink or decrease, so alternative funding models are needed. Local community groups take back control, set up social enterprises and build things that are frequently better than before. And The Big Issue, through Big Issue Invest, is part of this growing movement.

So don't feel overcome, take back control. Start here.

Incidentally, after I checked my stars I also checked Theresa May's. She's got a lot on.

"Protective Jupiter," said the celestial bodies, "ensures cheating charmers won't interest you."

Perhaps there's something in it after all...

BSME British editor of the Year 2016  
Paul.McNamee@bigissue.com  
@pauldmcnamee

## NEWS

# HIS RUNNING

Harry visits homeless charity, then runs



Sprints Harry: He pounded the pavement with Steven Olney (left) and Claude Umhure

People on the streets of north London looked twice last week as a familiar face came breezing past.

Prince Harry went jogging around Willesden with some young homeless people. He was taking part in a training session with The Running Charity, which helps young people who are homeless or in insecure housing via a fitness programme – providing assistance with achieving goals in education, employment and housing, alongside regular training sessions.

The prince was also following in his late mother's footsteps, as the training run was preceded by a tour of the Depaul Trust hostel where Princess Diana was a regular visitor, often arriving incognito to spend time talking with the young residents.

Harry was led on his training session by Claude Umhure (pictured in blue with Harry), who was lifted out of homelessness by the charity and now works there as a qualified instructor.



### FROM THE VAULT...

JAN 30-FEB 5 2006 NO.678

Gwyneth Paltrow, having spent two years off work bringing up daughter Apple, tells us she no longer feels obliged to keep making films. "I know at some point I'll feel I wanna go back to work but I've just been very happy being with Apple," she said.



# HIGHNESS!



“It was a great honour to train with Prince Harry today,” Claude said. “He took a real interest in everyone’s stories – and was a good runner as well!”

In addition to running alongside current members, Harry was joined by graduates of the fitness programme, including Roxanne, who was separated from her children and living in a night shelter after fleeing domestic abuse when she joined – but is now in full-time employment and reunited with her children.

Steven Oltay, who had been malnourished, sleeping rough and was down to around seven stone before he started running with the group, was another graduate pounding the pavements.

The Running Charity has seen 91 per cent of their graduates find long-term or suitable accommodation, as well as secure education, employment or training.

“Next time, maybe we’ll go and play pool,” joked a tired Harry as he left.

[therunningcharity.org](http://therunningcharity.org)

## WHAT’S ON BIGISSUE.COM

- **Irvine Welsh** on how The Big Issue helped create *T2 Trainspotting*
  - **Corrie legend Julie Hesmondhalgh** with a righteous, must-read Letter to my Younger Self
  - **Survivors of the Holocaust** reveal their incredible, moving stories of survival
  - **Don’t panic – Ben Ambridge** on rising above fake moral outrage
- And... see what’s new in **The Big Issue Shop** ([bigissueshop.com](http://bigissueshop.com))



## SUPPORT POURS IN FOR HEARTBROKEN VENDOR

**‘Best mate’ dog killed in road accident**

**Kind-hearted Big Issue readers** sent messages of condolence and support to a devastated Big Issue vendor last week, after his beloved dog was tragically killed in a road accident.

John Scowen, 45, who sells the magazine at The Strand in London, is a hugely popular vendor and his 12-year-old Jack Russell, Paws, was his constant companion.

“He was my best mate, he was always by my side. I’m absolutely devastated,” said John.

John’s concerned regular customers and friends got in

touch to share their condolences. “I am heartbroken for him – they truly were a formidable pair. I can’t imagine how difficult it is now for him to be out selling The Big Issue without his little shadow by his side. He is a truly lovely guy,” said Lou.

@PuzzlerT tweeted: “Utterly gutted for the @BigIssue seller on the Strand who’s lost his Jack Russell.”

John said: “That really means so much to hear. I am very grateful to everyone for their messages and kind words. I’m heartbroken but hearing that means a lot.”

## £5M BOOST FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

**Big Issue Invest, The Big Issue Group’s social investment arm**, has launched a brand new £5m lending scheme aimed at helping social enterprises and charities in England.

The Impact Loans England programme will make funding of between £20,000 and £150,000 available to organisations keen to expand – whether it’s buying equipment, hiring new talent or making

progress with business development plans.

The £5m programme is funded by Access: The Foundation for Social Investment, with finance being provided by its partners Big Lottery Fund and Big Society Capital. Big Issue Invest is expecting a lot of interest in the scheme and is planning to deliver one deal a week for the first six months.

[bigissueinvest.com](http://bigissueinvest.com)



## SHANTY FANS GO OVERBOARD FOR BIG ISSUE

**More than 150 gig-goers** packed into Cargo in London for rising stars Shanty’s gig in support of The Big Issue.

The dub-scenesters made entry to the gig exclusively for fans who had the magazine, and Big Issue vendors Steve and Keith were at the door.

Shanty encouraged fans to “support vendors... these guys are trying to make a legitimate income to overcome homelessness, poverty and find a place back in society”. [shantyband.com](http://shantyband.com)



# STREET ART

## BUY STREET ART!

You can buy prints of some artworks featured in Street Art through The Big Issue Shop. At least half of the profit from each sale goes to the artist.

Order at  
[shop.bigissue.com](http://shop.bigissue.com)



## OO-LA-LA

BY CARMEL WOODS

"I'm a lone wolf," says Carmel, who submits work via London homeless charity the 240 Project. "I've always enjoyed art but only started to do it when I attended 240 Project and got talking to the people painting and drawing. My work comes straight out of my head, it's happy and sad. At the end of the day, how you feel comes out on the paper, in the colours and the shapes."



## WHEEL

BY MONIQUE VAN AALST

Monique is in her 40s and originally from the Netherlands. She struggles with a chronic pain condition called fibromyalgia, and has experienced homelessness in her native country and in Scotland where she lives now. "I always try and make the best of a situation," she says. "I have a fascination with Native Americans and their culture," she explains of this drawing. "This wheel is a combination of doodling and using symbolism."

Street Art is created by people who are marginalised by issues like homelessness, disability and mental health conditions.  
Contact [streetlights@bigissue.com](mailto:streetlights@bigissue.com) to see your art here.





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This Elvis & Kresse card holder is made from genuine decommissioned fire-hose. £31



#### Quazi Circle Drop Earrings

Created for sustainable change and social impact in Africa by transforming waste magazines into original accessories. £10



#### The Soap Co - White Tea Gift Box Trio

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#### Quazi Pulp Ring in Blue

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#### Quazi Fabric Necklace Gold

Rolled paper beads some dipped in gold with African fabric fastening. 100% waste magazine paper. £25

## Spread The Love Even Further This Valentines Day With A Social Gift From The Big Issue Shop



#### Street Art-'Untitled'

This beautiful print by Samantha Maritza helps to raise awareness around the treatment of mental health conditions. £20 A4 and £35 A3



#### Elvis and Kresse Cufflinks

The Elvis & Kresse Torpedo Cufflinks come in a range of colours and are made from decommissioned fire hose. £31



#### Street Art- 'In Bloom'

Original art print by London based graffiti artist and photographer 'Mango'. £20 A4 and £35 A3



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Maria's store helps her support her five children



■ Raised: £265.00  
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Khoeurm's farm will provide jobs for her local community



■ Raised: £640.00  
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## How does it work?

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- 3 The entrepreneur's business begins to grow
- 4 Your loan is repaid back to you
- 5 You re-invest in another entrepreneur, you withdraw your money or donate it to CARE International



## Time for some new progressives to ride into the frame



**I**'ve finished my book. It awaits a professional eye. I wait for judgment, before it proceeds, or doesn't, to a publisher. The first part was praised, the second part may be or may not be.

When I started 9/11 had just happened. That was a major change in the world. I finished, yes, on the 20th of January, the day of the 45th's inauguration. That might well prove to be as big a shift as 9/11.

I've stuck in a bit about Brexit and Trump, but as a light scattering like sugar on a doughnut. I thought I ought to. But the major part of the work is as a history book.

The finest part of the book, or the most enjoyable part, was describing the winter of 1963. I was 17 and in an institution for delinquents. The snow was the worst for centuries. I was on the all-day snow gang for months. I could have gone off to another job. But I was convinced I wanted to be clearing what I was telling everyone was "God's Snow".

This was a kind of rite of passage moment. I became resolute and threw off a disdain for labour, which I had developed watching my father labour himself into the ground. There was no way I was going to do the same.

But here I was clearing the snow and watching it come in blizzards again as soon as the roads were clear. And the more the snow came the more 'real' I felt.

Interestingly, the same day I finished my book and the 45th was inaugurated, I jumped on my children's Segway for the first time. A 70-year-old man on a Segway for the first time might seem a courting of disaster. But after a few minutes of assistance I was off. And by the end of that fateful day in world history – as it may prove to be – I was Segwaying away.

And don't believe that standing on a Segway is a laze. You utilise parts of your feet, back, legs and buttocks that may get forgotten about in everyday life. And your balance! That is immediately improved.

But as well you know, the biggest bit of the 20th of January was not me sending my history book away to my agent or learning to Segway. It was Washington that held

us all. And the 45th being sworn in, and the world seeming to gasp in horror and fear; and rage. What does the strangest of incumbents of high office do with the future for us all?

When Nixon, the 37th, and Reagan, the 40th, came in there was similar fears. But on reflection they seem like social



Moving forward... we need leaders with independent thinking

progressives compared to the menu the 45th has promised the world.

Are there any indications that the 45th might morph into something more anodyne like the 'professionals' that previously offered themselves for the job? Or is this one really going to break the mould?

Bear in mind that the 'professionals' who have had the job mainly for decades,

**“By the end of that fateful day in world history – as it may prove to be – I was Segwaying away”**

soaked as they are in office and political ambition, do seem to bring multiple wars in their train; and the most recent 'progressive professionals' have seen the destruction of American communities with the exportation of US jobs.

When Tennessee lost its big denim factories, for instance, to the Far East, this was not because some casino-owning, hotel-owning dude had ordered it so. That was under the progressive Clinton administration, with its liberalising of world trade: globalisation.

We must hold our breath, admittedly, but we must also hope that different 'professional progressives' grow out of this situation. Not the usual suspects who seem as tied to Wall Street and international capital as supposed reactionaries who have held the highest office.

Could you imagine the 45th on a Segway? Does he have the balance and the knees and buttocks for it? He is, after all, exactly the same age as me. That White House is a pretty big place and a Segway would cut down walking time.

I will not though be Twittering the 45th that he gets on a Segway. He has a more serious task. He has to convince the world that all of those bestial promises were just to get into power. And that, like what progressives promise, it was and is only a load of election hot wind.

Let's hope therefore that he was lying about the wall, for instance; stopping Mexicans returning to the lands that they were evicted from in the 19th century. And that Islam will not be further vilified to keep with an idea of the hatred of 'the Other'. Let's hope that the 45th remembers what's it like to be an immigrant, what with his mum being Scottish and a grandfather German.

And let us hope that we keep our cool and learn to engage in politics that is not the usual jumble of satire, piss-taking and outraged resignation. This might be our opportunity to get real.

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

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## ANALYSIS

# SINCE 2010 ROUGH SLEEPER NUMBERS HAVE BEEN SPIRALLING. WHY?

Adam Forrest investigates the scale of the problem

**R**ough sleeping is on the rise. The latest stats bear out what anyone walking around major cities like Manchester, Glasgow and London early in the morning or late in the evening already know: a growing number of people are sleeping in Britain's doorways, bus stations, bin shelters, parks and underpasses.

New figures show 4,134 people are now sleeping rough in England on any given night – a 16 per cent increase compared to the previous year. This is the sixth successive year of rising numbers, an uninterrupted trend since 2010. The government snapshot figures may even be an underestimate of the problem. The Chain network of homelessness charities counted 8,096 rough sleepers in London alone during the last recorded year, 2015-16.

The idea of anyone having to sleep outdoors upsets people, especially during winter. But the outrage about the latest rise is accompanied by a growing sense of despair that the problem is getting steadily worse. St Mungo charity's chief executive Howard Sinclair describes the return of the epidemic not seen since the 1980s and early 1990s as "nothing short of a scandal".

So how did it get quite so bad? Why are so many people falling through the safety net we assume our society still provides?

Charities dealing with the sharp end of homelessness point to a reduction in funding to hostel and supported accommodation. Bed space numbers have fallen 16 per cent since 2010, and 41 per cent of these emergency providers have experienced funding cuts in the same period.

Labour's shadow housing minister John Healey has made the wider point about the welfare system, pointing to the coming of the coalition government in 2010 and the slew of benefit cuts introduced since then. Cuts to housing benefit and Employment and Support Allowance, the overall benefit cap, and real-term reductions in tax credits and child benefit have all made life harder for people who may have already struggled to keep roofs over their heads.

Others still point to changes in working life and business practice. There is the growth in insecure part-time jobs and zero-hour contracts, and the rise in online gambling and the fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs) found in high street bookies, sucking larger-than-ever sums of money out of already poor communities. The Campaign for Fairer Gambling states £470m is being lost to FOBTs each year in the country's 55 most deprived boroughs.

If all of this goes some way to explaining why many people are falling from poverty into destitution, it still doesn't get near explaining the scale of the nation's housing crisis. The awful truth is that rough sleeping is only the most visible symptom of the intense housing woes affecting tens of thousands of others. For every person you might pass in an empty high street doorway, there may well be dozens of people in flats above the shops struggling with squalid conditions, rent arrears and looming deadlines to pack up and leave.

The desperate lack of decent, affordable social housing is absolutely critical here. The long decline of council housing since the beginning of the Right to Buy has left local authorities with huge waiting lists.

Almost 60,000 individuals and families were accepted as homeless by councils in England and Wales last year, and a further 28,000 in Scotland, but there remains precious little councils can do for them, except send them off to stay on friends' sofas or place them in B&Bs and slum-end private lets.

Although local authority housing managers were once able to prioritise single mothers with children, the shortage in London has become so acute that many councils have been forced to place families into dire accommodation outside of the city, far from the places many of them grew up.

The latest figures show councils across the UK spent £3.5bn over the past five years on temporary accommodation for those with nowhere else to go – a 43 per cent increase over the period.

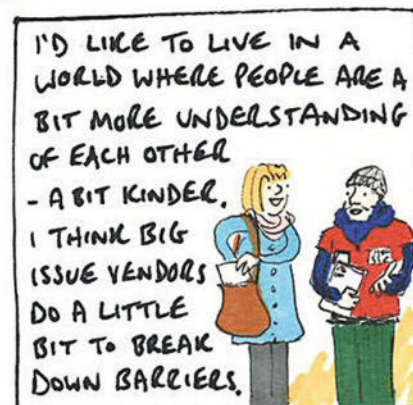
So rough sleeping, sadly, is only the tip of an iceberg. We mourn the fate of rough sleepers as if it were a strange and distinct problem, one to be addressed in isolation. But it is an issue connected to the deeper, wider state of housing in Britain today: the lack of options and insecurity faced by millions of people. **TBI**

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Readers often ask us what they can do to help those at the sharp end of Britain's housing crisis – the men and women who have no option but to sleep on the streets. By buying this magazine you are providing your vendor with a vital human connection – an interaction that allows them to lift themselves up and face the world with self-respect. Turn the page for some creative solutions...



# CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Kelvin Gregory's words illustrated by artist Richard Pettitt

**W**hat you are holding in your hands is not an ordinary magazine, it is a poverty-fighting machine. By buying The Big Issue you give our vendors a hand up, help them to earn their own money as well as self-respect.

You already knew that. But while the numbers of homeless and rough sleepers are still on the increase, this message is more important than ever. That is why we are delighted to hear about the wonderful ways that readers are helping to spread the word about how The Big Issue works, such as Gail Chamberlain's idea on our Correspondence page (p4) about having her friends buy the magazine instead of sending birthday cards.

Cartoonist Richard Pettitt was inspired

by reading about London vendor Kelvin Gregory, who featured in the magazine just before Christmas. With a few illustrations, the artist brought Kelvin's words to life.

"I've never met Kelvin but his story and his words touched a chord with me," says Pettitt. "I empathised with the fact he'd become homeless after a break-up, related to his love of dance music, and admired the positive way he talked about his new partner and his student customers."

The comic strip tells one vendor's story but it is also the story of hundreds of people like Kelvin up and down the country, selling the magazine and getting back on their feet.

**On the opposite page are** stills from a remarkable stop motion animated film created by two student animators, Catherine Prowse and Jade Evans from Kingston University. Asked to make a video

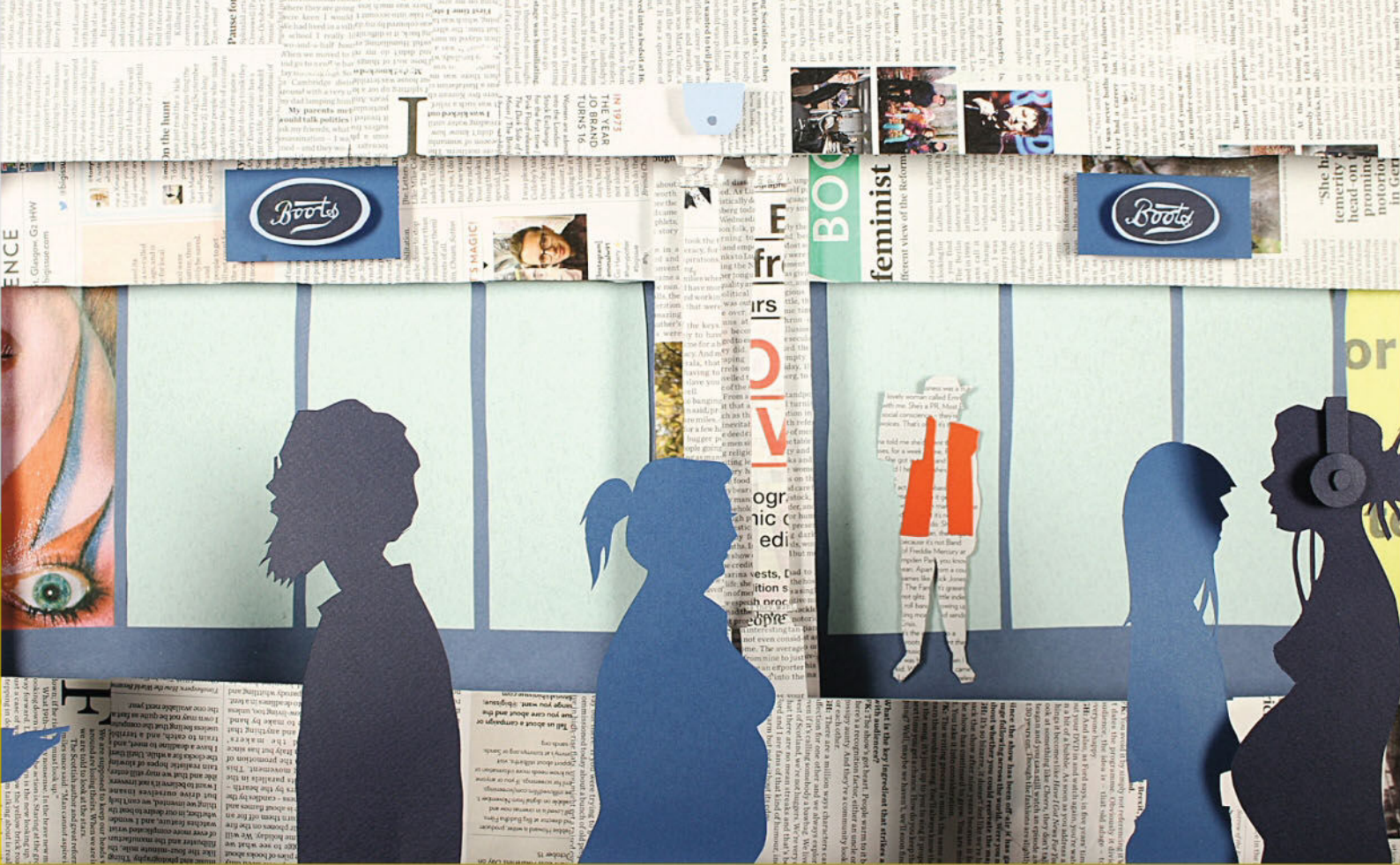
about a subject they cared deeply about, Prowse and Evans decided to tell the story of vendor Nicolas Lacatus.

The short film is made entirely from cut-out pages of Big Issue magazines and shows Nicolas working on a busy street and also recounts a time when he was assaulted in an unprovoked attack.

Prowse says: "We are both really concerned about the timely issues Nick's story raises – homelessness, social inequality, migration and xenophobia – but were also really intrigued by how positive he was about his job selling The Big Issue and about living in London."

To view the video visit [bigissue.com](http://bigissue.com), help spread the message by sharing on social media and let us know your brilliantly creative ideas to let more people know how The Big Issue helps people help themselves out of poverty. **TE**





Stills from a short stop-motion animation created by Kingston University students Catherine Prowse and Jade Evans



**WALK  
IN HER  
SHOES**  
**MAY 2017**



Girls like Celine walk for miles every day to fetch water.

## **WALK WITH US IN MAY 2017 CHANGE A GIRL'S LIFE**

**REGISTER AT [CAREINTERNATIONAL.ORG.UK/WALKINHERSHOES](http://CAREINTERNATIONAL.ORG.UK/WALKINHERSHOES)  
OR CALL 020 7091 6100**

© Photo CARE / Josh Estey



**WALK 10,000 STEPS A DAY FOR A WEEK IN MAY**



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WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE POOREST COMMUNITIES**



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Illustration: Mitch Blunt

JOHN BLAKEY

## How to learn the language of trust

In his inauguration speech, Donald Trump's use of the phrase "America first" may not be everyone's idea of good political policy. But in terms of the language of trust it scores very highly because it is short, emotive and focussed specifically on the cares and concerns of his followers.

He mastered the art of short, emotive, simple communication during the election campaign, in chants of "lock her up" and "drain the swamp". One voter said: "Donald Trump talks like we talk around our kitchen table. He is 'one of us', that's why I voted for him."

Whereas in the past we wanted leaders to be distant, cold bastions of authority, we now prefer them like us – simple, human and imperfect! We have given up believing in the all-powerful, all-knowing

heroic leader because, in a world where nothing can be hidden, we've seen far too many emperors with far too little clothing.

The Academy of Executive Coaching conducted a survey on the language of trust, with fascinating conclusions: 83 per cent were more likely to trust someone who used simple language than complicated wording, and 57 per cent were more likely to believe someone giving short, concise answers than those going into detail.

It identified 10 phrases that arouse suspicion, including "if I'm honest", "let me be clear", "the fact is", "in terms of" and "the real issue is". When spoken by leaders and politicians these

cause instant distrust. What people want is emotional openness, calm rationality and benevolence; aggression, competitiveness and outspokenness were likely to cause distrust.

The Brexit referendum provided interesting examples.

David Cameron prefaced many statements with "let me be clear", "let me be very clear" and "let me be absolutely clear", often followed by impenetrable economic jargon to justify the Remain argument. In contrast, in one TV

broadcast Boris Johnson squeezed in the phrase "take back control" seven times in 15 minutes; it was short, direct and emotive.

There are still leaders who

use complex, sophisticated language and appear to be trusted because this is consistent with their authentic selves. We don't think they have grafted an additional layer of polished, slick political spin on top of their real personalities.

Leaders need to be competent and have integrity if they are to be trusted. But recent research shows – with trust in government, business and media at record lows – people prefer leaders to be "blunt and outspoken" rather than "diplomatic and polite", "spontaneous" rather than "rehearsed" and to speak about "personal experience" rather than "data". In this sense, Donald Trump's language hits the mark. He is often blunt, outspoken, spontaneous and ignorant of key data, yet he is now President of the United States.

John Blakey is a sports and CEO executive coach, and author of *The Trusted Executive*; [johnblakey.co.uk](http://johnblakey.co.uk)

# LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

## Neil Gaiman

Comic book king

**A**t 16 it was 1977 and I was a punk. I talked three school friends into forming a band called XXX – I was the singer and songwriter. I was... blossoming is the wrong word but I was moving out of geeky. Many years later I went to a recording of a BBC Radio 4 comedy and I ran into Steve Punt afterwards. He said: “Oh, you’re Neil Gaiman!” So I waited for him to say, my kids loved *Coraline* and instead he said: “I was at your gig.” I saw this little moment of starry eyes. I wish I could go back and give that moment to the teenage Neil doing his first gig in the school hall. And I wish I could also tell the young Neil, who eventually gave up all fantasies of rock stardom, that there will be weird times in the future when he’ll be onstage in Tasmania reading his poetry to an audience with a backing band which includes David Byrne. Or that he’ll sell out Carnegie Hall for a gig which, after readings, he’ll sing the country song Psycho with a string quartet. So he’ll get to fulfil those rock star fantasies after all.

**It’s been really interesting talking to friends I’ve had since I was a teenager.** My friend recently drew a comic that shows all this monstrous chaos going on all around the young me and I’m just calmly walking down corridors reading *Stranger in a Strange Land* or *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Happy to be living in the land of books. I definitely didn’t feel I fitted in. I was awkward, uncomfortable, not terribly happy in the real world but incredibly happy in books. I used them as a survival guide and also as an escape. I dreamt of becoming a writer but it seemed complexly impossible, like dreaming of having invisibility or super-speed.

**If I really wanted to show off to teenage Neil I’d show him my five Hugo awards.** Those awards for science fiction would matter more to him than the Carnegie medal or any other award. The fact that I’ve collaborated with Harlan Ellison or had dinner with Lou Reed, that would be cool. But the idea that grown-up Neil has Hugo awards, the younger me would think, wow, yeah, I came through. And if I could tell the 12-year-old Neil one day he’ll write a *Doctor Who* episode... wow. Especially as the Doctor’s Wife came from an idea I had watching it when I was about eight.

**In 2009 my father died in the middle of a business meeting when I was on my way to New York to do a book signing.** I got a phone call from a sister when I was in the taxi, saying dad had a heart attack and died. I stopped, walked around a bit, then I went on to the signing. There were about 12,000 people there and I started signing at one o’clock and finished about nine at night. Then I went home. There was a message from my dad on the answer machine. It was a cheerful message saying: “It was your mother and my 50th wedding anniversary yesterday – beautiful weather and you know, it was a lovely sunny day 50 years ago too. Anyway, just calling to say hello. And you’re not there”. And that was the first time I cried. I just heard his voice and fell apart. If I’d known it was going to happen like that... there are so many things where I look back and think, I wish I’d asked you that, I wish I’d written that down, I wish I’d taped that conversation.



From the top: Neil Gaiman with his friend Douglas Adams (playing the guitar) in 1983, back when Gaiman was a 22-year-old journalist; Gaiman and his wife Amanda Palmer at the 2013 SXSW festival in Texas



### IN 1977 THE YEAR NEIL GAIMAN TURNS 16...

The first Apple computer goes on sale / Elvis Presley dies from a heart attack aged 42 / Fleetwood Mac release *Rumours*

**There are friends I thought would be around forever who just went.** Douglas Adams. I loved Douglas, he was big and complicated and irritating and wonderful in equal measure. So many people who were part of your life and your landscape – I wish I could go back and encourage myself to spend more time with those people, learn more from them. Whenever somebody dies I feel I’m kicked up the arse by the universe.

**Time is a beef.** I wish I’d known how fast it goes. I wish I’d enjoyed it more. Stephen King – and again, I wish 16-year-old Neil had been able to be there, he’d have been in complete joy – he showed up at a book signing of mine in Boston in 1992 and afterwards we went to his hotel. He gave me the best bit of advice. He said, you know, you’ve got to enjoy this. This is magic. You do a signing and hundreds come. You’re one of the most beloved comics writers in the world. Enjoy it. But I never did. I just worried. I worried it would all go away. I worried I’d break it. And it wasn’t until I was 48 and met my wife [American artist Amanda Palmer] that I thought, oh, you run your life completely differently to mine. You fill it with doing the things you like, and meeting the people you like and eating the things you like. I suppose I could try that too.

**I still worry.** I suspect it’s how I’m built. The fear I can’t do it is probably the driving force that keeps me writing. That part of me is actually in my books too – I do really good ‘menace is just around the corner’. My novel, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*... it’s not actually autobiographical but that kid is me. I was going back to the seven-year-old me and giving myself a peculiar kind of love that I didn’t have. I was saying to him, it’s okay, everything’s going to be fine. I never feel the past is dead or young Neil isn’t around any more. He’s still there, hiding in a library somewhere, looking for a doorway that will lead him to somewhere safe where everything works.

**If I could live one day again, I’d take my 50th party in New Orleans.** In the morning my wife, who was still my fiancée then, inveigled me into a hat shop and bought me a top hat. Then she said she was off to find a tea shop and she’d text me when she found one. Ten minutes later I headed off to meet her and crossed a big square on the way – there was Amanda, dressed as a bride, posing as a human statue. And then a load of our friends stepped out of the crowd and my friend Jason performed a non-binding marriage ceremony between an author in a top hat and a human statue dressed as a bride. The whole thing was wonderful.

**Amanda is an amazing thing.** There was this point where I thought, I think I want to marry you because I’m never going to be bored again. She’s enough like me... well, we’re from the same planet. But she does these amazing, surprising, peculiar things that I would never think of doing. These Amanda things where you think... really? You’re really going to do that? Okay. I’ll stand here and hold your clothes and if you get arrested I’ll bail you out. I love you.

Neil Gaiman’s book *Norse Mythology* is out on February 7 (Bloomsbury, £20). TV series *American Gods*, adapted from Gaiman’s Hugo-winning novel, premieres in April. Interview: Jane Graham @Janeannie





**“There are friends I thought would be around forever. When somebody dies I feel I’m kicked by the universe”**



# A prescription for prevention

Last week John Bird outlined a new approach to health provision, from cure to prevention. We asked **Nigel Crisp**, the man who used to be in charge of the nation's health, how to fix the ailing system to build an NHS that's fighting fit for the next generation



## EXPERT VOICE

Lord Nigel Crisp is a crossbench member of the House of Lords. He was chief executive of the NHS and permanent secretary for the Department of Health from 2000-2006.

**W**e have all seen the television pictures of queuing ambulances and patients waiting in A&E, and listened to the interviews with hard-pressed staff. Some Big Issue readers, of course, will have been caught up in it – the NHS winter pressures – as patients or as health and care workers. The immediate response from many of us will be that the NHS and social services need more money, more people and more hospital beds. More money is needed but that's only part of the answer. The underlying problem is that we have health and care services that are too reliant on hospitals, and we don't have enough services in the community or in people's homes.

The diseases that we suffer from have changed over recent decades. There are, happily, far fewer accidents, fewer heart attacks and fewer acute illnesses that may strike people down suddenly. Instead, the British public have more long-term conditions like diabetes and dementia, and other problems associated with ageing. Thanks to improved treatments, most cancers now have become chronic diseases that we can live with for years.

The truth is that we have got the wrong model for service delivery. We need a big increase in services in communities and homes to look after people with long-term conditions, and we need to invest far more in helping people to be healthy and to live normal lives

Photos: Getty / PA



despite their illnesses. The pressure in the system always ends up in hospitals – the place of last resort. We will still need hospitals and emergency services, of course, but the health and care system needs to change, from being a largely hospital- and illness-based service to become a far more community- and health-based one. Advances in medicine, as well as IT and better communications systems, make it possible to do far more outside hospitals – monitoring people at home, offering advice and support remotely and even delivering quite complex treatments in health clinics and homes.

This change is very well understood within the health and care system, and there are brilliant examples around the country where it is already happening thanks to the efforts of far-sighted clinicians, social workers and organisations. However, in many parts of the country this change has gone into reverse. Cuts in community health and social care services have led to more people having to go into hospital because there wasn't an alternative – or because the service that helped them to keep healthy or head off an acute episode has disappeared.

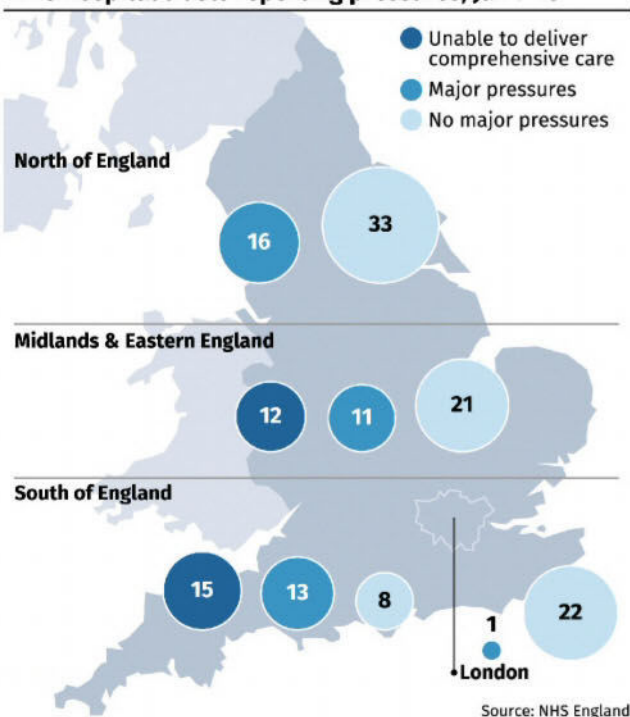
I saw this myself recently when I led a review of acute mental health services for adults on behalf of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. There are difficulties throughout the country in admitting patients who desperately need acute mental health care, with the result that some patients travel long distances for urgent admissions. The problem here is that about a quarter of mental health beds are occupied by people who would be better looked after in the community, if only there were services available.

### **Health is made at home, hospitals are for repairs.**

We need good community services if our hospitals are to function well. This is not the only problem. The NHS and social care can't do everything for us: we also need to do more to prevent disease and promote health. Part of this is in our own hands: we all have responsibility for our own health. All the joggers, cyclists, dieters and gym-users know this very well, and so do all of us still hanging on to our new year resolutions about smoking, drinking or sugar. However, responsibility doesn't just stop there.

Common sense tells us that schools and employers as well as food manufacturers and architects, designers and planners all affect our health. Interestingly, research is catching up and providing the evidence that this common sense view is right. Our life at work or our time being unemployed affect our health; our education is also important and so are our surroundings and our communities. Loneliness is a very sad feature of modern life where people often live miles from their families and become isolated as they grow older, and this in turn affects their health. Recent research tells us that loneliness has the equivalent health risk of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The NHS can't do anything about this but planners and architects can in how they

### **NHS hospital trusts reporting pressures, Jan 7-13**



design homes and communities – and so can those communities themselves.

A World Health Organisation report sums it up memorably in saying that “modern societies actively market unhealthy lifestyles”. Stress, poor diet, loneliness and lack of exercise are all part of modern life.

What would it be like if our society actively marketed healthy lifestyles? If schools, workplaces and the places we lived in all contributed to improving

health and not, as sometimes happens, damaged it? Everyone, and every sector of society, has a responsibility and a role to play in improving and maintaining mental and physical health.

There are some great examples around the country of businesses, schools and others working together to both prevent ill

health and to help create strong and healthy communities and individuals. Some are business-led like the City Mental Health Alliance, which “aims to create a culture of good mental health for City workers”.

The St Paul's Way Transformation Project, also in London, is an even wider partnership of businesses, schools, universities, faith organisations and local health services. The lessons learned there are being transferred to 10 towns and cities in the north of the country by Well North, a new partnership set up by Public Health England, Manchester University and Manchester Academic Health Sciences Centre.

What all these organisations are doing is creating the circumstances in which we as individuals can thrive. In my view this is not just about promoting health and wellness or preventing diseases but is about *creating* health, making us strong and capable. The New NHS Alliance sees its mission as >

**“THE NHS AND SOCIAL CARE CAN'T DO EVERYTHING FOR US: WE ALSO NEED TO DO MORE TO PREVENT DISEASE AND PROMOTE HEALTH. PART OF THIS IS IN OUR OWN HANDS”**

“to infect the health service with wellness” and help people to take control of their lives.

These developments remind me that there is a great African saying: “Health is made at home, hospitals are for repairs.” I want to add to it and say: “Health is made at home and in communities, schools and workplaces.”

The health and care services are not just a cost to society – they also make a big economic contribution. They support a healthy workforce and therefore help to improve the UK’s productivity and competitiveness in the world. A recent report by ERS Research and Consultancy brought together the evidence about how illness affects productivity, noting that, among other things, an average London firm of 250 employees loses an estimated £250,000 a year due to ill health, and the productivity loss to the UK from cardiovascular disease alone is £8bn per year.

Moreover, the NHS provides a platform for the extraordinary science, research and education that makes the UK a world leader in health. Already we have 4,800 bio-medical enterprises contributing £55bn to the economy and there is enormous potential for growth. It is encouraging to see that the new industrial strategy announced by the Prime Minister last week will promote these sectors.

#### THE RIGHT REMEDY

Last October a group of leading clinicians, scientists, social entrepreneurs – including Big Issue founder John Bird – published a manifesto in *The Lancet* that brought these ideas together. It set out four strategies for the future:

- The bio-medical and life sciences should be central to the country’s future industrial policy.
- The transition from a hospital and illness-based health service to a community and health-based one needs to be accelerated.



“THE PRESSURE IN THE SYSTEM ALWAYS ENDS UP IN HOSPITALS – THE PLACE OF LAST RESORT. THE SYSTEM NEEDS TO CHANGE FROM BEING A LARGELY HOSPITAL AND ILLNESS-BASED SERVICE TO A COMMUNITY AND HEALTH-BASED ONE”

## NHS FUNDING: WHAT IT ALL COSTS...

NHS funding when service was established in 1948

**£437 million**

(around £15bn today)

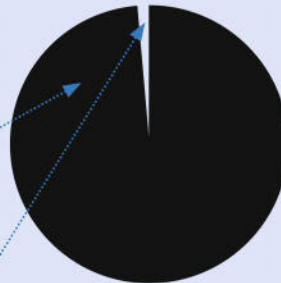
NHS funding today

**£116.4 billion**

#### Who pays?

**98.8%** of NHS funding comes from general taxation and National Insurance

**1.2%** of NHS funding comes from patient charges



**Health spending overall will rise by £4.7bn until 2020, even after adjusting for**

expected inflation. That’s made up of an increase of £9.6bn in spending on the NHS but a fall of £4.9bn in spending on other areas of health.



**50 million** (UK population 1948)



**65.3 million** (UK population today)

#### Life Expectancy

1948

2015

♂ **66**  
♀ **71**

♂ **79.4**  
♀ **83**







## HOW TO REBUILD THE **NHS**

# INVESTING IN A HEALTHIER BRITAIN

The NHS is at breaking point; social care budgets are being slashed. **Big Issue Invest**, the Big Issue Group's Social Investment arm, is helping organisations across the country fill the gap. Here are just a few...

### CASA

Originally a Sunderland-based home care association, it has grown to become one of the UK's biggest employee-owned providers of home and social care. It operates across north England and employs 750 people who provide a range of services, from 24-hour care to daily visits, which help older people live as independently as possible.

them live independently, from helping the elderly with bathing, dressing, eating and medication, to enabling people with disabilities to live independent, active lives.



### POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR YOU

A Community Interest Company in the North East that provides social care and support to help people with learning disabilities, mental ill health or autistic spectrum conditions, including some with a history of offending, live well within their communities.

### HIGHLAND HOME CARERS

Professionals provide at-home care for vulnerable people across the Highlands to help

- Every sector must contribute to a health-creating society.
- The health and science sectors with their emphasis on knowledge, openness, integrity and collaboration should make their own contribution towards building a better society.

It looks to me like a no-brainer. Let's get on with it. **TBI**

Tell us about your experiences and what you think should be done to rebuild the NHS.  
Email [Editorial@bigissue.com](mailto:Editorial@bigissue.com);  
tweet @bigissue; or Instagram @bigissueuk



NHS employees

**1.5 million**

NHS England employees

**1.2 million**

## CAN EU MONEY FILL THE HOLE?



Actual amount (after rebate and EU spending in poorer areas) Britain sends to Brussels per day

**£317.8m**

Actual amount we spend on NHS per day

In 2015/16, £11bn was spent by the NHS across the UK on **General Practice**, including reimbursing GPs for the drugs dispensed in their practices. Across the UK that broke down into:

**£9.5bn** in England

**£488m** in Wales

**£267m** in Northern Ireland

**£822m** in Scotland



UK as a whole, £141bn was spent on health in 2015/16, according to the Health Foundation. That's 7.4% of all spending in the UK that year.

**7.4%**

In 2015/16, **English NHS trusts spent just under £49bn on staffing**. Across the

UK as a whole, £141bn was spent on health in 2015/16, according to the Health Foundation. That's 7.4% of all spending in the UK that year.

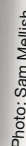
Sources [Fullfact.org](http://Fullfact.org) / [Nhs.uk](http://Nhs.uk) / [Kingsfund.org.uk](http://Kingsfund.org.uk)

# Will you make it past 47 this winter?

The cold fact is that being homeless beats the life out of you – so badly that, the average age of death of a homeless person is just 47.

**This winter, your gift to Crisis could save someone's life.**

At our centres across the UK, Crisis will be welcoming people in from the cold, and setting them on the path to a new future. It's work that changes lives, and saves them too.



**Please will you help homeless people with a gift of £28?**

Your gift will do amazing things to help them – paying for the crucial first few weeks of support, so we can:

- give someone a warm welcome, a cup of tea, and a needs assessment
- find out how we can help people to really tackle their problems
- offer support for the months ahead, to help people leave homelessness behind.

**Please make your gift to Crisis today at [www.crisis.org.uk/winter](http://www.crisis.org.uk/winter) or freephone 08000 38 48 38. Someone's life could depend on it.**

**Here's my gift to help Crisis help homeless people this winter.**

☐ £28.00    ☐ £56.00    ☐ £84.00    ☐ Other £ \_\_\_\_\_

## Payment details

I enclose a cheque/charity voucher/postal order payable to **Crisis** or please debit my card:

☐ Visa      ☐ MasterCard      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Card no.

Expiry date

Title \_\_\_\_\_ First name \_\_\_\_\_ Last name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

**Make every pound you give worth 25% more to Crisis by ticking this Gift Aid declaration.**

I am a UK taxpayer\* ☐ I am not a UK taxpayer ☐

I am a UK taxpayer and I would like Crisis to treat this donation and any donations I make in the future and have made in the past 4 years as Gift Aid donations, until I notify you otherwise. With this declaration, Crisis can reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

**Please remember we need your full name and home address to allow us to claim Gift Aid.**

giftaid it

**The Crisis Promise:** Your donation will help enable Crisis to provide year-round services for homeless people. Providing your address will help us keep you updated on our work and how you can help us end homelessness. If you would prefer not to be updated, please call 08000 38 48 38 or email [supporter.helpline@crisis.org.uk](mailto:supporter.helpline@crisis.org.uk)

WCPA/1617/DM-1001/C27

To make your donation visit [www.crisis.org.uk/winter](http://www.crisis.org.uk/winter), call free on 08000 38 48 38 or post to: Freepost RSYJ-HGEK-RGBX, Crisis, 126 Fairlie Road, SLOUGH, SL1 4PY.

# Crisis



# ‘Mental health – we are light years away’

**Former Downing Street spin doctor Alastair Campbell has been frank about his experience of mental illness. But provision of health care is still nowhere close to being treated as the priority it must become, he says**



## EXPERT VOICE

Alastair Campbell is an ambassador for Time to Change, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness and Alcohol Concern. He is also patron of the Maytree suicide sanctuary.

**I**t's all go on the mental health front. The royal family are doing their bit, with William, Kate and Harry combining to lead the Heads Together campaign, urging people to be more open about mental ill health. Theresa May has become the second successive Tory prime minister to utter the P word – P for Priority – to indicate mental health has lagged too low down the agenda. And more and more public figures – do we have to call them all celebrities? – are talking about their own mental health issues and campaigning for better services.

So all good? Well, up to a point. For one of the reasons all this campaigning is needed is because we have not reached the tipping point we need before we can truly claim to be moving towards parity between physical and mental health. When Mrs May made her mental health speech, she expressed her great pride that a Tory government had legislated for parity. She even appeared to be hoping for warm applause when she pledged that by 2021 no child would have to be treated away from their own area.

That merely underlined to me how far we have to go. Whether we look at attitudes, research or services, we are light years away from parity. Does it really have to take that long to ensure any young person with a serious mental illness can get treatment close to home?

Right now the worry I have is that the government sees the campaign against stigma and taboo as a

substitute for the services we need, not as the necessary accompaniment. In the week I attended a recent Heads Together event, at which the three royals all spoke with real conviction about this issue, I had an email from a young man who had heard me talking on the radio about the importance of being open about mental health.

He said it was a personal tipping-point moment that led to him finally admitting he had issues of depression and trouble with drink he needed to address. He went to his GP. The doctor said he would normally recommend he see the surgery's alcohol services counsellor – but he had been laid off without being replaced. As for the depression, the doctor felt cognitive behavioural therapy would help but it might take six months to get. So he prescribed him anti-depressants and said they might help. Many people do get terrific support and treatment. But it is patchy. For all the warm words of Mr Cameron and Mrs May we have seen an eight per cent cut in mental health funding in the austerity years. There are 6,000 fewer mental health nurses in England. The psychiatric bed per capita ratio is lower than comparable countries and the OECD average.

Mrs May is right when she says it isn't all about money. Of course it isn't. It is also about families and employers and charities and societal attitudes. We can all do our bit. But a lot of it is about the money. While the £15m pilots on mental health first aid in schools are welcome – as are the £10m to fund graduates going into mental health work as part of the Think Ahead programme, and the £67.7m for digital mental health services – by government standards these are tiny sums.

Indeed, as attitudes change and more people become open, demand for services will grow. That shouldn't scare politicians because with young people in particular, early intervention – if successful – will lead to savings in the future. How much more do we end up spending by picking up the costs of suicide, divorce, the courts and prisons, not to mention the additional burden on the NHS when a mental health problem for someone becomes a mental health crisis. Mrs May put the economic and social cost of mental illness at £105bn – not far off what we spend on the NHS itself.

One final point. In any town or city these days you will see people living on the streets. Many are clearly mentally ill. Most of the time, we walk by. Would we do the same if the streets were lined with people who were mid-stroke or mid-heart attack, had fallen and broken a hip or ankle, been beaten up or were gasping for breath in the face of a massive asthma attack? No. We would have the ambulance there in no time.

Until the mentally ill are viewed with the same empathy and urgency, can we really claim to have parity, let alone the shared-society sloganised by the prime minister? **TE**

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry support Heads Together, which is using the London Marathon in April to put mental health in the spotlight



Photos: Getty







# ‘MAN’S GOTTA WORK. NOTHING WORSE FOR MEN THAN IDLE TIME’

Matthew McConaughey has done his time out of the spotlight. He tells Eamonn Forde that outsider thinking is a welcome change – whether on Trump, Hollywood or a Big Issue-style hand up

**I**n the antechamber of a Claridge’s suite in London, a TV is booming out live coverage of Donald Trump’s inauguration as the 45th President of the USA. In the next room, Matthew McConaughey is pacing up and down with half a cup of coffee in his hand that he won’t drink.

McConaughey has that same mix of wild-eyed and teeth-flashing intensity, persuasive charm and explosive elocution that lands stresses on surprise syllables that Jack Nicholson first unleashed in *Easy Rider*. Dressed in black shirt, jeans and tan leather shoes – with a tumbleweed of beard and rakishly swept-back hair – he comes thundering out of the traps.

By way of introduction it’s explained to him how The Big Issue’s vendors operate, and he lurches forward. “That’s cool – way to go, man,” he drawls in an accent like Texan oil. “Man’s gotta work. *Got* to. We get in trouble when we don’t. Nothing worse for men than idle time.”

The devil, I say by way of allusion to his Methodist upbringing in Texas, makes work for idle hands. “Yeah, I’ve been there,” his voice creaking like a coffin lid. “I love to get a job, man. When I have something out there in front of me, I love to have something to wake up and look forward to on Monday.”

Pointing out that Donald Trump’s inauguration is happening at this precise point and that the very next day hundreds of thousands of protesters will congregate outside the US Embassy to march in solidarity against the new president, I ask if there will be anything to look forward to on Monday when he is back in LA.

“First off, man, I was not as surprised as so many people were,” he says, pacing to and fro. “I didn’t think it was going to happen – but I wasn’t as surprised [as everyone else]. What in America, and in most

capitalist societies, do we say is success? Money and fame. What do you have coming in? A lot of this was Americans going, ‘We’re not sure what politics is’. We have a businessman coming in – yes. Did he play to people’s fears? Did he prove that fears at this time were a little more measurable than hope, even? Yeah, I think so.”

I tell him he seems more sanguine than most of Hollywood about this, especially in the wake of Meryl Streep’s broadside at the Golden Globes earlier in the month that saw Trump exploding in a child’s tantrum on Twitter by calling her “one of the most overrated actresses in Hollywood” and “a Hillary flunky who lost big”. As a bubble of the liberal elitism that

Trumpism loathes, is he worried Trump will unleash a war on Hollywood, his place of employment, during his presidency?

“I don’t see the business as hanging in the balance,” he says. “He’s obviously not going to become the MPAA [Motion Picture Association of America] and be grading

our films and subject matters. Hollywood may go the other way; the reaction may be about going *further* left in response. There will definitely be some producers already developing scripts that feed to the further-right Christian Coalition.”

Are you expecting to fly back to a very different America now? “No – because I don’t think it’s going to be a different America when I return,” he says. “Our president has an immense amount of power – but at the same time he doesn’t have all-power. These protests now... it’s good that people can speak out. At the same time, the people who are in denial about it right now have got to get past that.”

How will they do that?

“They have to shake hands with the fact that he is now president,” he proposes. “What can they do, >

“I WIPED THE BOARD. FOR A YEAR AND A HALF I HAD NO WORK. I BECAME ANONYMOUS”



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## THE INTERVIEW: MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY

constructively, to help maintain what they are trying to preserve or get going with what they are [trying to change]? Today, a certain reality will set in for some of those in denial. It'll be time to get on with it."

If Trump's presidency is about the dark reimagining of the American dream, McConaughey's latest film is about the fading away of the purity of that original dream in the last century.

**In *Gold*, he plays Kenny Wells** – a character based on David Walsh, the Canadian founder of mining company Bre-X. Wells is a failing businessman who, together with a geologist, appears to have landed on the biggest goldmine of the 1980s in Indonesia. While ostensibly a crime thriller, it is also about the death of a certain idealism in America.

"The American dream, that faded away in the early 1980s, was that you get a job, you work your way up, you get a promotion," he says. "[Wells] is a guy – who like millions – doesn't have a ticket to the American dream. But they are going to hustle their way through the back door, down the chimney or in the side door – some way to make it happen their own way and, in doing so, stick it to The Man, prove everyone wrong and carry on a family lineage when the world says, 'No, you can't do it, it's not going to work.'"

He adds: "Guys like Kenny Wells have nine lives. In American football, you know what the Hail Mary is? [He mimes throwing a long forward pass] Kenny throws five Hail Marys – and he catches his own pass! How this guy comes out alive is amazing. Part of it is resilience, part of it is his extremism of where he puts his foot in his mouth when he thinks a deal is done is actually what got the deal done. He's a life force."

It is a film of extremes – extreme desire for greatness, the extreme pursuit of wealth, extreme living – and McConaughey had to gorge on pizza, cheeseburgers and beer for months to bulk up for the role. There is barely a scene in it where Wells doesn't have a drink in his hand or a cigarette on the go – more often than not simultaneously.

"It's hard-living across the board," he says of the film's central characters.

"Almost in a larger-than-life, insatiable appetite, underdog survivor sort of way. The Kenny Wells that I met growing up were guys who would wake up and have it [alcohol] with their coffee. It was an extension of their arm. Most of them didn't live past 60. There was always a cigarette in their hand. They were consumers of life – drink, food, smoke, life, fun."

I suggest that it's like overblown 1980s soap opera *Dallas* but several social classes down – the hungry wildcatter desperate for the endless wealth one lucky strike can bring, the frantic optimism foaming in their mouth. "They usually don't make films about the Kenny Wells of the world," he says. "He's the sidekick or the sidekick's sidekick. But there are *millions* like him that get out of bed every day saying, 'Today's going to be the day!'. And it's not. They get up tomorrow and say, 'Today's going to be the day!'. And it's not."

The balding, corpulent Kenny Wells is the polar opposite of the buff, tanned, paparazzi-pursued and often shirtless version of McConaughey that defined him in his first flush of mega-fame in the early 2000s, when he was the go-to lead for all manner of makeweight rom-coms. It was a career ladder that ultimately inverted and led into an oubliette for him.

In response, he says he "consciously unbranded"



Clockwise from top left: McConaughey in *True Detective* with Woody Harrelson; his Oscar-winning performance as Ron Woodruff in *Dallas Buyers Club*; as Kenny Wells in *Gold*; with Kate Hudson in rom-com *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*

and effectively disappeared from the public eye. A run of critical successes in *The Lincoln Lawyer*, *Magic Mike*, *True Detective*, *The Paperboy* and, most significantly, *Dallas Buyers Club* saw his career rehabilitated and recalibrated. Given that F Scott Fitzgerald once darkly pronounced "there are no second acts in American lives", was McConaughey worried that he was killing one highly profitable career path without any solid footing for the next path?

"It's not like I, all of a sudden, got serious," he says. "It wasn't like I, all of a sudden, got to work on other things. What I meant by 'unbrand' is this: when I said I was going to say no to the kinds of scripts I was getting offered – which were mostly romantic comedies and action comedies – I didn't immediately go to the work I am doing. I had nothing for a year and a half. I had a son born so that helped me bide my time but I had no work. It was dry."

Did it feel like he was treating his career as a palimpsest, erasing the past and scrawling a new future in its place?

"I didn't immediately wipe the board and immediately write on it," he says, his pacing intensifying and his finger jabbing to stress the point he wants to make. "I just wiped the board. I got some anonymity. I was no longer showing up in the kind of films I had been doing. When that didn't show up for a year and a half as well, it was like, where is he? What's he doing? That's a good question to have asked about you as an actor and you get some anonymity."

As one of the highest-paid actors in American films today, anonymity is a chimera – but he has managed that rare trick of breaking free of typecasting and into the types of films that veer towards the arthouse and yet still do serious box office business. Unlike the balding gully he has now paced into Claridge's carpets, his bold second act in Hollywood is still not surrendering its lustre. **TEB**

*Gold* is in cinemas from February 3. *Sing*, in which Matthew McConaughey voices Buster Moon, is out now

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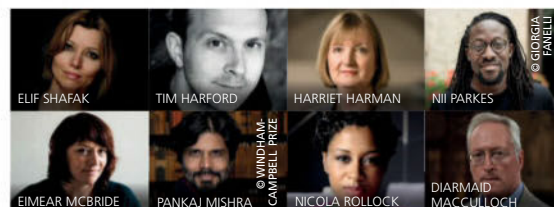
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# THE ENLIGHTENMENT

BOOKS/FILM/TV/MUSIC

## ACTION MAN

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You could get vertigo just looking at this image. It shows pro-kayaker Rafa Ortiz plummeting down the Cascadas de Agua Azul waterfall in Mexico, before travelling to Canada to fulfil his ambition of paddling down Niagara Falls. New film *Chasing Niagara* records his breathtaking journey as the jumps – and the stakes – get higher, and examines the value of testing your limits.

► *Chasing Niagara* screens at Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival, February 4 & 5; [emff.co.uk](http://emff.co.uk)



# BOOKS

## Paradise lost

Witnessing the inequality and corruption in Brazil drove Joe Thomas to write his debut novel

**S**ão Paulo – what a city: rich in culture, dripping with cash, undermined by political corruption, marked by a rich/poor disparity which fuels desperation and a life-is-cheap criminal ethos. The idea for my novel **Paradise City** was born over a weekend in 2006. It was the love child of organised crime, the construction industry and Cazuza, the counter-culture musician and poet. I'd been in São Paulo three years and it was the first time I thought, ah, okay, I get it. This is Brazil.

The PCC gang runs São Paulo crime – mainly drugs. The men who run the PCC run it from prison. These men want to watch the 2006 World Cup on large, flat, wide-screen TV sets. The PCC is like a corporation – none of the flip-flop/assault rifle shtick of the Rio gangs. They are very organised. And they generally get what they want.

So the PCC leaders ask for large, flat, wide-screen TV sets. They pitch for more frequent conjugal visits. These requests are nixed. In response, the PCC leaders tell the authorities that they will “cause some chaos”.

For three days, São Paulo experiences some righteous, PCC-brand chaos. Gangbangers attack the police. They hijack buses. They evacuate them. They set them on fire and leave them burning on major highways. There are rumours of raids on public buildings, that schools and hospitals are next. More than 150 people are killed – police, gangsters, and the inevitable, unfortunate bystanders. The stray bullets: the *bala perdidas*. The city goes into lockdown. The authorities throw in the towel. The PCC get their TVs and, I believe, their conjugal visits.

On the Monday, at the British school where I teach history and English, I speak to the headmaster. The chief of police's son studies with us, and his father dropped him off that morning. The officers who had been shot at over the weekend are receiving danger money. Trauma and whatnot, the chief of police tells the headmaster. Thing is, hearing this, a number of officers have shot at their own police stations. The bullet holes can be used as proof they've been attacked. They too, the chief of police said, are claiming danger money.

That weekend, the gap between the have-nots and the elite seemed to close a little. The peculiarity of the crime, the brazenness of the requests and the response, and the implied police behaviour, seemed distinctly Brazilian to me.

*Paradise City* opens with a favela and a stray bullet. In the novel, the city's construction industry is the connecting backdrop. I lived in Morumbi, close to Paraisópolis (Paradise City in English), the favela. Paradise City is set low, in a sort of crater, like a settlement built in the hole of a great explosion, an apocalyptic concrete and brick village, the rough houses pillboxes like machine gun posts.

Morumbi is representative of the new São Paulo suburbs. It can feel dangerous outside the condominium gates. As we drive past

Paraisópolis, I clock the harried faces, the slouch of rubbish and mess, the half-naked children and the condensed, improvised houses, like an approximation of a home, at least in our narrow conception of one.

From my balcony, I can see an impressive tower block with helipad and gardens. At night, only a couple of the apartments are lit up. My friend Mario laughs when I put it to him that they must be prohibitively expensive. “Expensive?” he says. “Mate, they're knocking them out, cut-price. There's a swimming pool on every balcony. Thing is,” Mario goes on, “they forgot to factor in the extra weight of the water. When they filled them all up, the supporting pillars cracked.”

It turns out only a few people will invest more than one million reais in a dodgy structure. Still. A few do.

One of the epigraphs to *Paradise City* is from a Cazuza song, *O Tempo Não Para* – time doesn't stop. Cazuza remains the poet of the disaffected. His work is discursive and profane, preaching inclusivity and tolerance. The political protests of the last few years recalled one of his songs, Brasil:

*Brasil, mostra tua cara, quero ver quem paga para a gente ficar assim /*  
Brazil, show your face, I want to know who pays for us to end up like this.

Many Brazilians have had enough of the endemic corruption, the widening inequality: general passivity in the face of societal injustice. There's a recurring slogan: *O gigante acordou*. The giant awoke. The country stirred.

Cazuza's lyrics find an echo in *Paradise City*. One couplet was a refrain:

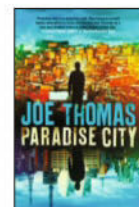
*Transformam o país inteiro num puteiro / Pois assim se ganha mais dinheiro /*  
They turn a whole country into a whorehouse / Because that way it makes more money.



Police were forced to submit to PCC demands amid the violence of 2006

**“The PCC gang runs São Paulo crime from prison. And generally they get what they want”**

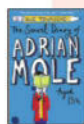
Joe Thomas is a visiting lecturer in English and Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London. Prior to this, he lived and taught in São Paulo for 10 years. *Paradise City* is his first novel, out in hardback on February 9 (Arcadia Books, £14.99)





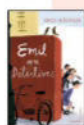


## 5 BOOKS TO READ BEFORE YOU'RE 12 CHRISTIAN O'CONNELL



### 1. THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE Sue Townsend

The book I loved when I was a kid. It just makes you feel a bit less lonely in those turbulent times. When it came out it felt so edgy and real, there hadn't been a book like it.



### 2. EMIL AND THE DETECTIVES Erich Kastner

A masterpiece. A detective adventure for kids... what's not to like? I found it so exciting. After reading it, I would scout my estate where I lived looking for a crime to solve. Sadly, all I saw was an out-of-date tax disc.



### 3. GEEK GIRL Holly Smale

My daughters told me to put these in. I guess it's their *Adrian Mole*. They're huge books, and there's nothing better than enjoying a book and knowing it's going to take ages to read.



### 4. ASTERIX AND OBELIX René Goscinny

If I had a time machine I'd go back to being a kid and how much fun it was reading these first time around. I used to believe you could take a magic strength potion to make you powerful. I now know this is beer.



### 5. MAD MAGAZINE

There was this really cool magazine shop where I grew up and they imported *Mad* magazine. It was so funny and subversive, cracking groansome jokes about pop culture – it was bang on the money. And the pull-out fold-ins... I have a wonderful collection of these now.

Christian O'Connell's book *Radio Boy* is out now in paperback (HarperCollins, £6.99)



# REVIEWS

MIRROR, SHOULDER, SIGNAL / THE ANIMATORS

## The dark side of hygge

An unflinching eye makes the new queen of Danish literature stand out

With the international publication in 2014 of short story collection *Karate Chop*, her first work to be translated into English, the popular Danish writer Dorthe Nors gathered a legion of fanatical new readers with the frenzy of a pretty British rock star collecting schoolgirls as he darts through downtown Tokyo. Who knew that Denmark, officially one of the happiest societies on the planet, was hiding a writer so intent on pulling the rug from under her naïve, idealistic protagonists and exposing them to the dark sadness of inevitable loss, cruelty and betrayal?

I refer to Denmark's cheerful identity not to make a cheap, sarcastic joke (though I do enjoy them). In fact, key to Nors' writing is what she sees as the Danish façade. "Nobody dares to say they're not happy any more," she told a British newspaper recently. "Where does all the heartache go?"

This doesn't just make her the Wizardess of Oz, opening her characters' eyes to the imperfect reality that might explain the hum of melancholy in their lives. It also dictates the style in which she does it, neatly summed up by Nors herself as "minimalism that is under attack from within. There's always something bursting out of this very tight structure."

Nors has admitted she uses her fiction to tackle her own demons, and it's hard not to draw parallels between her and Sonja, the yearning protagonist of *Mirror, Shoulder, Signal*. Nors spoke recently of a great love affair which didn't work out, and 40-something Sonja is an intelligent, single woman, stuck in a stubborn, lonely groove. She is increasingly estranged from her busy married sister, chastised by her spiritual-enforcer masseuse for being an emotional, as well as physical, 'tight-ass', and oppressed by a

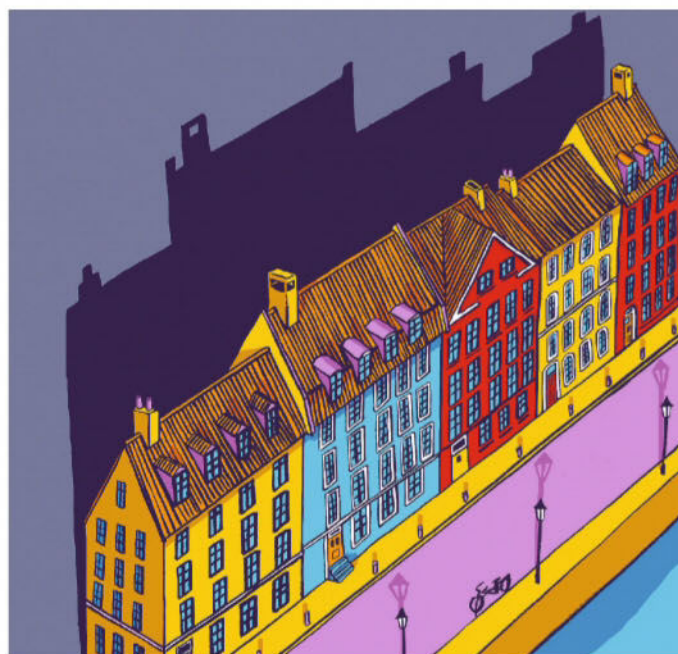


Illustration: Dom McKenzie

manic driving instructor who fills their lessons with detailed monologues on her personal problems rather than helpful advice. As a result, six months on, Sonja still can't change gear.

And while that metaphor is a little pat, the experience in reading about Sonja's heroic struggle to get out of a crummy rut is very moving. Perhaps because Nors' watchful eye, as well as often seeing the humour in regular situations, creates characters so believable in their small, everyday battles that we can't help but care. Even more important, though, is the tenderness of her writing; the feeling she is giving much of herself away, wincing with Sonja's every little slight, warming with every moment of unexpected

affection. It's from that generous spirit of self-sacrifice that this novel gets its heart.

There's something exciting about *The Animators*, the impressive debut by Kentucky writer Kayla Rae Whitaker. The bold rainbow cover and collection of raves from the likes of Emma Donoghue ensure a bit of a fanfare but it's the confidence of this pacey, passionate novel which really makes you feel you might be witnessing the dawn of a brilliant career.

Mel and Sharon are just 18 when they meet in art class and become best friends, bonding over their shared love of old-school cartoons. What follows is the story of their shifting relationship, as it adapts to an early, harrowing shock, then a series of tests, doubts, epiphanies and victories. Sharon, the agitated, vulnerable narrator, is more convincing than Mel, the swearsy lesbian who is sometimes overwritten to be shocking and 'real'. But there is real insight in Whitaker's portrayal of that endlessly complex thing, the simultaneously intense and fragile female friendship.



### Mirror, Shoulder, Signal

Dorthe Nors, translated by Misha Hoekstra, out February 23, Pushkin Press, £10.99

### The Animators

Kayla Rae Whitaker, out January 31 in hardback, Scribe UK, £14.99

Words: Jane Graham @Janeannie

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TONI ERDMANN

## Daddy issues

Searingly funny German take on a father-daughter relationship

**T**oni Erdmann, a glorious comedy-drama from German writer-director Maren Ade, is a film plotted with about-turns and abrupt shifts in mood likely to leave you spinning. Too many, in fact, for me to catalogue here – besides, the film is best approached without that much advance knowledge of its unfolding richness.

But it's not giving much away to say a standout scene is a bravura performance by its two lead characters of that old Whitney Houston standard, The Greatest Love of All. Justly celebrated since the film's debut in Cannes, the scene is a knockout expression of Ade's balancing of gutsy humour and fragile poignancy.

At once frivolous and profound – a description that may apply to this captivating film as a whole – the sequence got a spontaneous round of applause at its press screening in Cannes. That's a tough crowd to please, believe me. But this big-hearted, wise and very funny film is hard to resist.

The performers of the song are father and daughter Winfried and Ines, and their audience is an apartment full of middle-class Romanians in present-day Bucharest. Exactly how they end up entertaining these

bemused Romanians is a convoluted delight I won't ruin by explaining but it's business not pleasure that's taken Ines to Bucharest.

Hailing from provincial Germany, Ines is working in Romania as a management consultant. A brittle mix of neurosis and ambition, brilliantly played by Sandra Hüller, she's pitching for a contract with a big multinational on a project analysing the operation of an oil plant in Romania. What this precisely involves is often wrapped up in business-speak euphemism but it soon becomes clear that Ines is proposing to make a lot of local workers redundant.



Not so polished: Matthew McConaughey in *Gold*

Into Ines' corporate world walks her dad, Winfried, a jovial divorced music teacher (played with a blundering bonhomie by Peter Simonischek). Winfried is freed from obligations back in Germany when his dog dies, so he books a ticket to Bucharest and waits in the lobby of Ines' company office to surprise her.

Except he's not quite himself. After donning an ill-fitting wig and even more ill-fitting false teeth, he is soon introducing himself to the horrified Ines and her unsuspecting colleagues as Toni Erdmann. Winfried, we realise, is an inveterate, even compulsive, prankster and Erdmann is his adopted comic persona.

It's a long-standing in-joke to his daughter, except one that, focused on winning that contract, she is no mood to laugh at.

With its farce-like plot, hinging on the continued fake identity of Winfried and the multiplying misunderstandings of Ines' workmates, what follows is in some ways a pointed satire of corporate culture. Ines' world is one of sterile apartments and anonymous hotels, purgatory reimagined as a business-class lounge in an upscale airport. Ade skewers its absurd extremes, while never letting us forget the real-world consequences of Ines' jargon-heavy PowerPoint presentations, notably in a sobering scene involving the workers who are about to lose their jobs as a result of Ines and her colleagues' consultancy report.

But this is also a searing account of a father-daughter relationship. Charting Winfried's extended and mostly unwelcome stay with Ines and the trouble that Toni lands them both in, the film is a moving exploration of complex family dynamics.

Running at 162 minutes, this is a long film but it flies past: there are outrageously funny set-pieces like Ines' naked birthday party and small, delicate, often quite melancholy moments of family drama that cut through the laughs. No joke, *Toni Erdmann* is an extraordinary piece of cinema.

***Toni Erdmann* is in cinemas from February 3**

### FINAL REEL...

Matthew McConaughey is bald and beer-bellied as a mineral prospector in 1980s Indonesia in the true-life action-drama *Gold*, also out this week. It's watchable enough but falls short of the glistening promise of its title.

Words: Edward Lawrenson @EdwardLawrenson



## APPLE TREE YARD

## I know I should read more but TV is just better

There's a great *Curb Your Enthusiasm* where Larry smokes weed with his dad, gets all paranoid and winds up in the bathroom berating himself in the mirror about all of his deepest flaws and insecurities. "TV, TV, TV! IS THAT ALL YOU CAN DO?" he snarls at his own reflection. "HOW ABOUT YOU READ A BOOK ONCE IN A WHILE?!"

I don't need to be high on chronic to know that I should read more books. I am well aware that they stimulate the mind, nourish the soul and make you look cool in front of girls. The problem is, so many of them are so boring. Even the good ones take a lot of effort to stick with.

TV, on the other hand, is so easy to just absorb on the sofa without any exertion at all. Even the shit stuff like *Emmerdale* or *The One Show* is considerably less difficult to consume than, say, *Middlemarch* or *The Bible*.

A couple of years ago I did manage to get through a fantastic book called *Apple Tree Yard*. I loved it and so decided to watch the TV adaptation that started on BBC One last week. It stars Emily Watson and Ben Chaplin as a middle-aged couple having an affair. It starts sexy, gets scary and ends in confusion and despair.

I usually have a rule of avoiding all BBC dramas on account of them being

uniformly shit. But I was intrigued as to how they might bring the story to the screen so I declared a temporary amnesty for Auntie Beeb. The show took the bones of the story I have summarised above and elevated it into a deeply thought-provoking examination of perspective, delusion and truth. The story was told through the eyes of the female lead, a protagonist you trusted for much of the book before it became clear that her version of the story was inherently subjective and unreliable. In other words, it was a very good thriller elevated to so much more by the way in which it played with notions of reality.

**"Books are great, yes. But has one ever been written that compares to *Play Your Cards Right* in Brucie's heyday?"**

I'm not sure if that makes sense so I'll put it a simpler way: books can add an extra layer to a story by explaining what people are thinking and feeling. The only way a TV show can do that is by encouraging the actors to raise their eyebrows enigmatically once in a while to demonstrate what's going on inside.

Look, you don't need this lecture from a borderline illiterate like me. You know all this already. Books are great, yes. But has one ever been written that compares to an episode of *Play Your Cards Right* in Brucie's heyday? Of course not. Don't kill your television just yet.

***Apple Tree Yard*, Sundays, 9pm, BBC One**

Words: Sam Delaney @DelaneyMan



## SEND IN THE CLOWNS

If you love clowns you've come to the right place; if they strike the fear of God in you, skip this event. The annual **Grimaldi Service** (February 5, Haggerston, London) to honour Joseph Grimaldi (who died in 1837), hailed as "the king of the clowns", is at the Holy Trinity Church (AKA the Clowns' Church). Some 60 clowns in full costume and make-up will lead the church service, which has happened each year since 1946. Bonus fact: you can go to Grimaldi's grave in Islington where you are encouraged to, literally, dance on his grave.

You can't trust Clowns' nosebags won't squirt you with water but you'll be on safe (and dry) ground at **Snowdrop Days** (until February 3,

Chelsea, London; [chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk](http://chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk)) where you can see the titular flowers in the beautiful botanical gardens. A calming space amid the west London bustle where talks and painting workshops punctuate the day.



Carrying on the art theme, the exhibition **Steve Evans** (until February 12, Walsall; [thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk](http://thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk)) sees the artist display his work (like the piece above, *Inside the Box*), which hinges on architectural detail, geometry and space. His art has the feel of CAD (computer-aided design) but closer inspection reveal the tiny inconsistencies.

**The Place is Here** (February 4–April 30, Nottingham;



# MUSIC

SAMPHA / ELBOW

## Art and soul



nottingham contemporary.org) collects 100 pieces created during the 1980s from 30 different black artists working across a multitude of disciplines. Amid huge upheavals in British politics and identity during the decade, these artists both reflected and questioned the times in which they were working. In these post-Brexit days, these issues remain as pertinent and stirring now as they were in the Thatcher era that forged them.

through traditional Chinese music from the Shaanxi Broadcasting Chinese Orchestra and the Zhejiang Traditional Orchestra.



The **Vault Festival** (until March 5, Waterloo, London; thevaultfestival.com) comes to the end of the run, now in its second year and quickly establishing itself as a key arts event in the capital. It's crassly referred to as "London's answer to the Edinburgh Fringe", which does a massive disservice to the range and quality of attractions on offer here across drama, theatre, film and comedy.



Just over a week after the Chinese calendar changed, the **Grand Chinese New Year Concert** (February 7, Barbican, London; barbican.org.uk) marks its 20th anniversary and will see in the Year of the Rooster

Eamonn Forde

**H**ow does someone manage to earn featured artist credits on records by Drake, Kanye West, Frank Ocean and Solange without becoming even just a bit famous? For the last several years, it feels like south London singer-songwriter-producer Sampha Sisay, who goes by the mononymous stage moniker **Sampha**, has been putting off his big breakout much as the rest of us might prevaricate about opening letters from the Student Loans Company.

The cat's finally about to be let out of the bag with the long-awaited release of his pristine debut album *Process*. Consider that Sampha first made his mark with a sumptuous duet, Valentine, with Jessie Ware way back in 2011, and long-awaited really is the truth. Personal tragedy – Sampha's mother died last year after a long battle with cancer, the same illness that claimed his father when he was still young – as well as evidently a lot of painstaking honing of his sensitive electro soul-boy craft go a long way to explaining the delay.

Obvious comparisons spring straight to mind – with James Blake's wobbly-voiced post-dubstep R&B, and the kind of downtempo, bubbling, brooding electronica espoused by Mount Kimbie, Nao and SBTRKT among many others (Sampha has made a name for himself in clubland by singing on tracks by SBTRKT). But the likes of Blood On Me (shades of Massive Attack) and the darting Kora Sings (shades of Jamie xx) are charged with an energy and emotion that's all his own. Not to mention, are sung in a trembling, crackling, quivering voice that could give shivers to your shivers.

Plastic 100°C is a tense ballad that references finding a lump in his throat and his fear of getting it checked out – a frightening experience by any measure but particularly considering Sampha's family history. "No one knows me like the piano in my mother's home," he sings in the delicately spare and lonely sounding (No One Knows



It's been a long process but Sampha looks ready to breakout

Me) Like The Piano, and you can practically hear the tears dripping on the ivories: "You will show me I have something, some people call it soul," he goes on. Call it what you like, Sampha, there's no hiding it now.

A comfy, careworn part of the furniture in British arena rock these days, **Elbow** sound like they've been drawn closer together on their seventh album *Little Fictions* by something that could quite easily have caused them to start coming unstitched – the departure of drummer Richard Jupp, the first tear in the band's original line-up since forming in Bury in 1997. Guitarist Mark Potter, possibly a little dewy-eyed, calls it "the sound of four people who love what they do and each other",

and you can feel the warmth in sky-arc-ing opener Magnificent (She Says).

There's only so much to get excited about between All Disco, with its Velvet Underground-y drone-chiming guitar riff, and all eight minutes of the melody-averse title track – but then that would be to miss the point of an Elbow album altogether. It's another work of unrushed aggregate magnificence, shaped with a proggy disregard for obvious pop song form (now to the beat of electronic drum loops in Jupp's absence). Basically, if you're an Elbow fan you'll be sharing the love too.



Elbow room: the band without drummer Jupp

Words: Malcolm Jack @MBJack

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Human Writes is a long-established, structured organisation founded for the purpose of befriending prisoners on Death Row through letter-writing. Based in the UK, we have members from many countries and our organisation is well known and internationally respected.

In the words of a prisoner "My penfriend, his wife and family have been a blessing for many years. I thank them for walking this journey with me."

If you would like to know more about joining our organisation or becoming a penfriend, please send an SAE to

### Human Writes,

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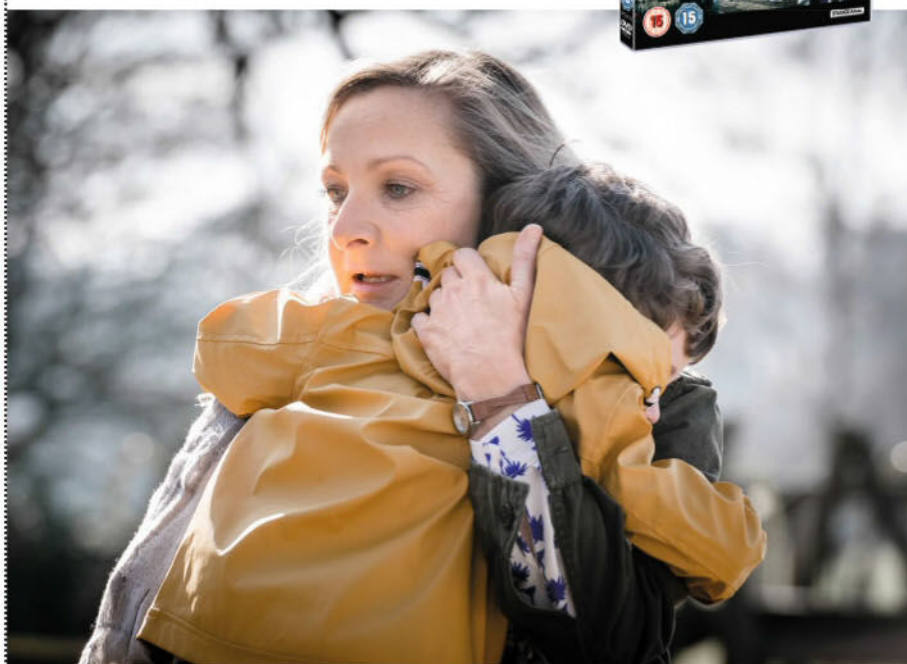
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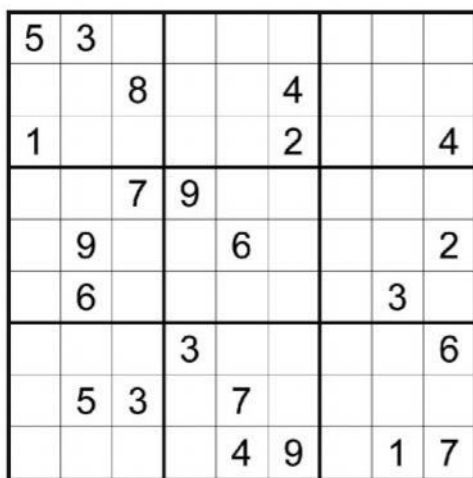


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# GAMES & PUZZLES

## SUDOKU

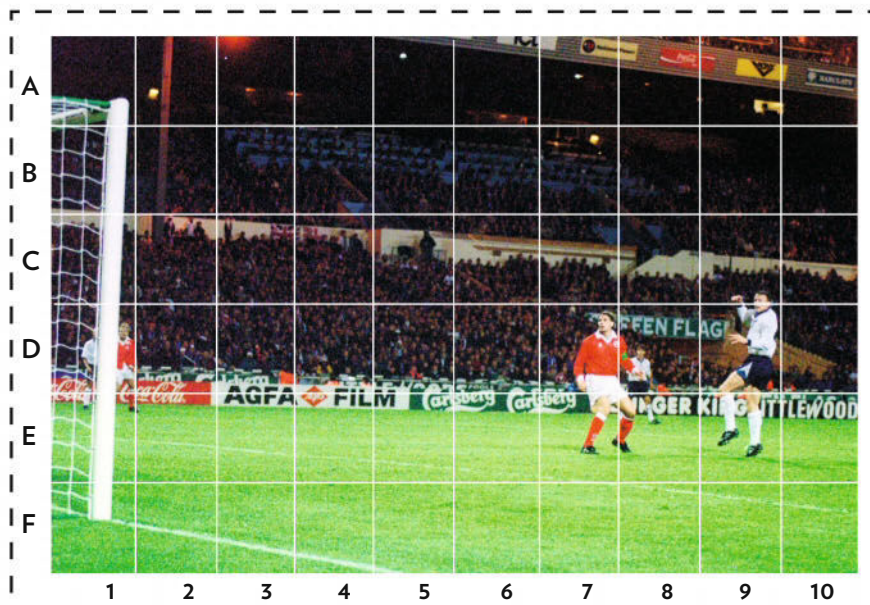


There is just one simple rule in sudoku: each row, column and 3 x 3 box must contain the numbers one to nine. This is a logic puzzle and you should not need to guess. The solution will be revealed next week.

ISSUE 1240 SOLUTION

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

## SPOT THE BALL



Photos: Action Images

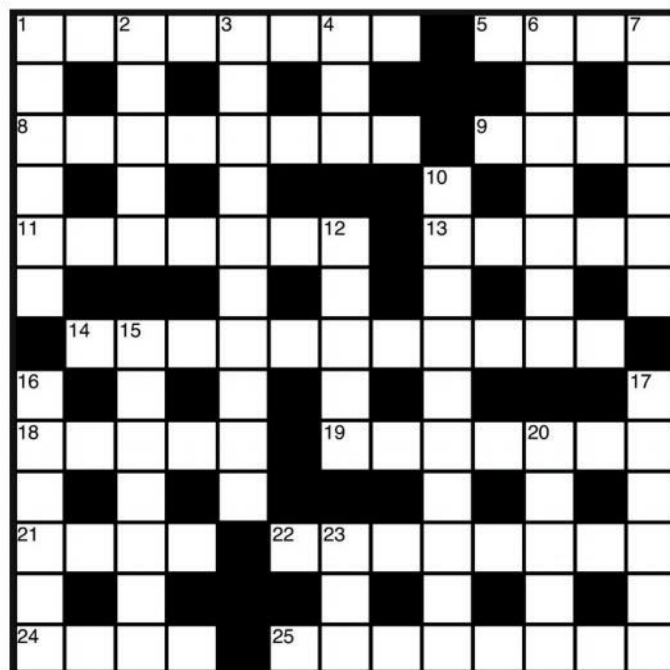


To win Al Murray's *Let's Re-Great Britain*, mark where you think the ball is, cut out and send to: Spot the Ball (1241), second floor, 43 Bath St, Glasgow, G2 1HW, by February 7. Include your name, address and phone number. Enter by email: send grid position (e.g. A1) to competitions@bigissue.com.

(Last week's Spot the Ball revealed: PSV v Benfica, 1988)



## PRIZE CROSSWORD



### CRYPTIC CLUES

#### Across

- Officer has it by the end of the day, the greater part (8)
- Many go to the centre for fish (4)
- Civic leader made certain that it was condemned (8)
- Spoken by some of the moralists (4)
- Greek character to bend over for the German (7)
- Mia or another girl (5)
- Suffering dreadfully presumably under a corrupt government (2,1,3,5)
- Say goodbye to a Parisian (5)
- It is essential to see it has only one pupil (7)
- The French lady at home was in a horizontal position (4)
- Walking a short way before going on a bicycle (8)
- Daughter ran off with stitch (4)
- Bit of a break (8)

#### Down

- Back without a degree in the distance to make a great quantity of old (6)
- Small ruling group troubled aunt after first of June (5)
- Near the island in the road (10)
- Knot piece of clothing (3)
- Plucky instrumentalist? (7)
- Biblical character found Welsh lake before morning (6)
- Very little stuff to make a song about (10)
- Composed dirge on the hilltop (5)
- I snore, I became louder (7)
- Dogged like a dog (6)
- Plant disease left in bay (6)
- A farmer endlessly nimble (5)
- Hill to the right (3)

### QUICK CLUES

#### Across

- Ascertain (4,4)
- Epidermis (4)
- Freed (8)
- Bloodsucker (4)
- Exulted over (7)
- Large animal (5)
- Partly coinciding (11)
- Conductor's stick (5)
- Raised (7)
- Three feet (4)
- Immaculate (8)
- Sandhill (4)
- Light musical drama (8)

#### Down

- Optical illusion (6)
- Town in southern Scotland (5)
- Breaking into pieces (10)
- Fish eggs (3)
- Key individual (7)
- Idea (6)
- Store thief (10)
- Demise (5)
- Old soldier (7)
- Complied (6)
- Ukrainian port (6)
- Midlands river (5)
- Burst (3)

To win a Chambers Dictionary, send completed crosswords (either cryptic or quick) to: The Big Issue Crossword (1241), second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by February 7. Include your name, address and phone number. **Issue 1239 winner is RE Glasscock from Cambridgeshire.**

Issue 1240 solution

**CRYPTIC:** Across - 1 Suffolk punch; 9 Insoluble; 10 Sou; 11 Halberd; 12 Inane; 13 Ernest; 15 Rescue; 18 Mop up; 20 Chirrup; 22 Tip; 23 Adulation; 24 Herd instinct. Down - 2 Upsilon; 3 False; 4 Libido; 5 Preside; 6 Nesta; 7 Housekeeping; 8 Lighted match; 14 Soprani; 16 Cardiac; 17 Scouts; 19 Piper; 21 Iraqi.

**QUICK:** Across - 1 Upright piano; 9 Requiring; 10 Roc; 11 Exalted; 12 Khaki; 13 Outcry; 15 Enigma; 18 Moses; 20 Faddish; 22 Ran; 23 Overspill; 24 Think through.

Down - 2 Piquant; 3 Idiot; 4 Hairdo; 5 Pigskin; 6 Aorta; 7 Once in a while; 8 Order of merit; 14 Restock; 16 Guiding; 17 Afresh; 19 Sunni; 21 Disco.

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# MY PITCH



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### FACTS ABOUT ME...

#### MY FAVOURITE TEAM

Aberdeen FC. It's hard to choose one favourite player – the three best were probably Gordon Strachan, Willie Miller and Alex McLeish.

#### THE ONE PLACE I'D LOVE TO VISIT

Amsterdam. Everyone raves about it – it sounds to me like it would be a great place for a holiday, with chilled-out people and warmer weather.

#### ON MY PITCH...

I'm at M&S, Union Street, Aberdeen, 9am-3pm

**I**t's been really freezing cold here in Aberdeen this winter but I have a really good pitch and a lot of great customers who keep me going. I can't thank them enough for all their support. I broke my arm not too long ago – it happened after a gang of teenagers chased me, and I tripped and fell. When I had my arm in plaster everyone was asking for me and were all very kind.

I've been selling the magazine for a few years now. Before that, my addiction problems were getting the better of me and I was on the street. I slept in the shelter that the churches organise here. You would get a hot drink and a spot to lay down but I didn't want to keep doing that.

Selling The Big Issue gave me structure back and gave me something positive to focus on

when times were really tough. I have somewhere to stay now, and I've a lot of support from The Big Issue staff, so I've been slowly piecing my life together.

I grew up in Aberdeen – my whole world is here. What with it being an oil city, and what with the industry going through some tough times at the moment, you can see people are struggling. Some of the shops in the city centre are boarded up for the first time in years. What happens offshore seems to affect everyone in the city, one way or another.

I know every part of the city. I'm fond of walking around town, or going down along the esplanade, along the coast. During the summer it's very nice indeed to wander along the beach and watch the tide come in. Other than that, I might go and visit my sister's

grave. She died back in 1995, so I sometimes go and have a wee chat with her at the graveside, to let her know how I'm doing.

I'm also a big football guy and a big Aberdeen FC fan. When I was a young boy my dad took me to all the home games at Pittodrie Stadium. I got to see the great team of the mid-'80s, when Sir Alex Ferguson was the manager and they had great players. That team would be worth about £300m these days, wouldn't they?

I've certainly had my low moments over the years but I'm just happy to be on top of my problems and I'm still hoping for better times ahead. I suppose I just want a bit of peace and quiet – a simple life.

Words: Adam Forrest

Photo: Richard Frew



# THE PENNINGHAME PROCESS

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*Jane, Freelance Journalist – 2016*



## COURSE DATES 2017

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Sat 16 Sept – Fri 22 Sept

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