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mistress

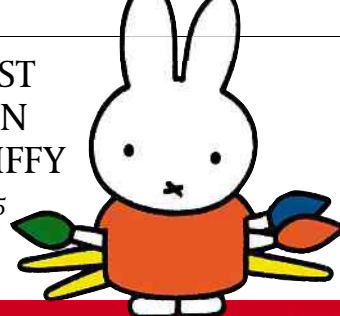
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# THE WEEK

11 MARCH 2017 | ISSUE 1115 | £3.30

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## What happened

## The “Russian shadow”

Donald Trump’s first address to Congress last week was overshadowed by a new storm of allegations about his administration’s ties to Russia. It emerged that his attorney general, Jeff Sessions, had twice talked to the Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak during last year’s election campaign – although he had told his Senate confirmation hearing that he “did not have communications with the Russians” during that period. Sessions ignored Democratic calls for his resignation, but said he’d step back from investigations into Moscow’s alleged interference in the campaign. Trump stoutly defended Sessions, and declared that the Democrats were engaging in a “total witch-hunt”.

On Saturday, the president launched an unprecedented attack on Barack Obama on Twitter, accusing him of a “Nixon/Watergate” plot to tap his communications: “Terrible! Just found out that Obama had my ‘wires tapped’ in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!” No evidence was provided, and Obama flatly denied the story. This week Trump also issued a revised version of his travel ban on the citizens of six Muslim-majority countries (*see page 10*).



Sessions: victim of a “witch-hunt”?

## What the editorials said

“It’s hard to decide what is more disturbing,” said The New York Times: “that so many officials in [Trump’s] campaign and administration were in contact with the Russian government... or that they keep neglecting to tell the truth.” Just a few weeks ago, the president fired his national security adviser, Michael Flynn, over contacts with ambassador Kislyak, which Flynn had likewise denied; Trump’s son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner also seems to have met Kislyak. As for Trump’s “childish Twitter rampage” against Obama, it marks a new low: one president “baselessly charging criminality by another”. This is a “dangerous moment” in US history.

Washington is going “nuts”, said The Wall Street Journal. Democratic leaders and the media “wildly overreacted” to the news about Sessions: a senator meeting an ambassador in “the not-so-secret lair of his Senate office” is an everyday occurrence. And though Trump’s accusations against Obama seem wild, there is evidence that intelligence material has been used to “smear” Trump’s team – the leaked details of Flynn’s contacts with Kislyak, for example. “What the country desperately needs are some grown-ups to intervene, discover the facts, and then lay them out to the American people.”

## What happened

## Storms over Stormont

In a shock election result, Ulster’s unionist parties last week lost their outright majority in the Northern Ireland Assembly for the first time in the province’s history. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) remained the largest single party in the Stormont parliament even after losing five seats; but Sinn Féin gained an extra four seats, giving the leading nationalist parties, Sinn Féin and the SDLP, a one-seat lead over their two main unionist rivals. The DUP and Sinn Féin now have three weeks to reach an agreement on a power-sharing deal. If they can’t, the province faces either fresh elections or a return to direct rule from Westminster.

The election – the second in a year – was called after the collapse of a previous power-sharing pact in January. Relations between the parties broke down when First Minister and DUP leader Arlene Foster refused to stand aside during investigations into the botched handling of a green energy scheme that cost taxpayers £500m.



Foster: refusing to go

## What the editorials said

The election result is a “political earthquake”, said The Belfast Telegraph. It’s not just that the unionists have lost their majority; it’s also that the more moderate parties in both communities – the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP – have both lost ground. Almost 20 years after the Good Friday Agreement, it seems that “Orange-Green tribalism is stronger than ever”. There’s certainly little reason for optimism, said The Irish Independent. As long as Arlene Foster refuses to quit as First Minister – a key demand of Sinn Féin – there’s almost no chance of the two parties forming a new power-sharing executive. In other nations, parties might be ready to sink their differences in the interests of good government. In Northern Ireland, such compromise is “an aspiration too far”.

The best hope is that the threat of a return to direct rule from London will persuade the parties to cooperate, said The Times. That prospect is something voters can’t abide – and “small wonder”. The last time Westminster took charge, between 2002 and 2007, Northern Ireland’s pressing everyday concerns went largely neglected.

## It wasn’t all bad

More than 1,000 previously unknown ancient oak trees have been identified in England. The 1,200 trees found by arborists over the past four years push the total number of ancient oaks in England to 3,400, more than in the whole of the rest of Europe. Most of the newly discovered trees are between 400 and 600 years old; some 12% date back 600 to 800 years, while a further 3% are as much as 1,000 years old. On the Continent, by contrast, there are just 2,000 ancient oaks.

**A production of *Sweeney Todd* that premiered in a pie and mash shop in south London has opened off Broadway to rave reviews. The Tooting Arts Club’s show had its debut at New York’s Barrow Street Theatre last week, with its composer Stephen Sondheim in the audience. The production**

**was originally staged around the tables at Harringtons, a 32-seat restaurant in Tooting. Following a sellout West End transfer, it moved to New York, where it has been hailed by *Time Out* as “bloody brilliant”. The set is a faithful recreation of Harringtons – and audience members can still partake of pie and mash.**



A small Yorkshire pub that was saved by the local community after it went bankrupt nine years ago has been named the best in the UK. The George & Dragon in Hudswell, which picked up the award from the Campaign for Real Ale, was praised for its “welcoming atmosphere and strong community ethos”. The pub closed in 2008 when its owners went bust, but within two years locals had banded together and raised £220,000 to buy it back. Owned by 205 shareholders, it has on-site allotments, and a library in its corridor.



## What the commentators said

Sessions is “the victim of the type of McCarthyite character assassination the Left used to condemn”, said Marc A. Thiessen in *The Washington Post*. The suggestion that he “was colluding with the Russians and tried to cover it up is preposterous”. He was asked at his confirmation hearing whether he was part of a “continuing exchange of information during the campaign between Trump surrogates and intermediaries for the Russian government”, and in that context, denied meeting any Russians. He, like many Democratic lawmakers, met the ambassador in his official capacity as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The attorney general will probably cling on to his job, said Edward Luce in the *FT*. He may have misled the Senate, but proving he intentionally lied will be very hard. Even so, Trump “is never likely to emerge from the Russian shadow”. Washington “will be progressively enveloped by multiple probes into the Trump campaign’s links to Russia”. Rightly so, said Dana Milbank in *The Washington Post*. Trump claims that he has “nothing to do with Russia”, while his son Donald Jr has said that “we see a lot of money pouring in from Russia”. There was supposedly “no communication” between Trump’s team and Moscow – except that involving “Trump’s future national security adviser, his future attorney general and his son-in-law and two others”.

So far, Trump has found “that he can say virtually anything, however false, without suffering any political consequences”, said John Cassidy in *The New Yorker*. He can “insult a political opponent’s wife, make bogus accusations of widespread voter fraud, say Obama founded Isis”, and his supporters only seem to like him more. But in his tweets last weekend, calling Obama a “bad (or sick) guy”, he may have gone too far. He seems to be referring to reports that a court order was granted in October to monitor links between two Russian banks and a Trump server, following intelligence that Kremlin money was going into his campaign. The existence of this order is as yet unconfirmed. And even if it is, it was not a wiretap, and Obama had nothing to do with it. Even for Trump, this could turn out to be a “conspiracy theory too far”.

## What next?

The White House has asked Congress to investigate Trump’s allegation of wire-tapping, says *The Guardian*. However, a former director of national intelligence, James Clapper, has categorically denied the existence of any such surveillance order.

The FBI and Congress are already investigating Russian interference in the election, and associated issues, says Reuters. Devin Nunes, the Republican head of the House Intelligence Committee, said he had seen no evidence of the wiretap, but added: “I think the bigger question that needs to be answered is whether or not Mr Trump or any of his associates were in fact targeted by any of the intelligence agencies or law enforcement authorities.”

## What the commentators said

Growing up in Belfast at the tail end of the Troubles, the idea of a United Ireland was never more than “hypothetical”, said Siobhan Fenton in *The Irish Independent*. “Simple mathematics meant it would never happen.” But that was then. After last week’s result, unification looks “credible – and perhaps inevitable”: Sinn Féin now has only one less seat in Stormont than the Democratic Unionists. One reason for the dramatic electoral shift to the hard-line strand of nationalism is the utter indifference shown by Tory politicians towards Northern Ireland. It was barely mentioned during the Brexit campaign, even though it’s the only part of the UK with a land border with an EU state. What appals many is the prospect of a “hard border” with the Irish Republic, said Tim Stanley in *The Daily Telegraph*. No one wants a return to the queues, frontier checks and “violent tensions” that made life so miserable in the Troubles. It was no surprise that 56% of voters in Northern Ireland opted for Remain in the referendum, or that about 70% of first-preference votes went to anti-Brexit parties in last week’s Stormont election.

At a deeper level, long-term changes in the “sectarian headcount” are working against unionism, said Jon Tonge in *The Belfast Telegraph*. Just a third of voters now identify as unionist – and a mere 20% of 18- to 24-year-olds. And it’s not as if unionists can depend on unqualified support from London, said Adam Boulton in *The Sunday Times*. Since the 1980s, Westminster has made plain that it has “no selfish, strategic or economic interest” in keeping the province inside the UK. Indeed, the 1998 Northern Ireland Act makes specific provision for a referendum if ever it seems likely a majority of voters want “to form part of a United Ireland”. Preoccupied with Scotland’s separatist ambitions (*see page 25*), the Government seems “barely aware” of what’s happening across the Irish Sea. Yet it could well be the “six counties of Ulster” that “jump the queue to be first out of the United Kingdom”.

## What next?

Talks are under way on forming a new power-sharing executive, but Sinn Féin has objected to them being chaired by Northern Ireland Secretary James Brokenshire. The party claims he cannot be impartial given the Government’s dependence on the support of the eight DUP MPs in the Westminster parliament.

Other sticking points in future negotiations are likely to include Sinn Féin’s backing for gay marriage and a relaxation of Northern Ireland’s abortion laws – both opposed by the DUP – and the wider use of Irish as an official language.

## THE WEEK

In his 6,000-word “manifesto” last month, Mark Zuckerberg suggested that Facebook was a force for good, because it helps bring people together to effect positive change in their communities.

No doubt it does – but we don’t need Facebook for that. Individuals have always managed to come together to do good. What may be new is the way in which Facebook and other sites make it so easy for people to coalesce around darker causes. Of course, Facebook has rules banning sexually explicit and violent content – but how well are they enforced? Users have complained about works of art being taken down because they show a naked breast; conversely, BBC investigators warned this week that Facebook moderators were allowing sexualised images of children to stay up, on pages set up by paedophiles. In any case, the very attempt to police the site opens an ethical can of worms.

Of recent concern has been instances of people live-streaming their own suicides on Facebook. Psychologists warned that though rare, this distressing phenomenon risked becoming a rash, and in response, Facebook has devised a range of extra suicide prevention tools, including algorithms that will monitor users’ posts for indicators of suicidal thoughts. Experts welcomed the initiative: it could save lives. But once these algorithms have been shown to be effective, what else could they monitor? Hundreds of millions of people play out their lives on Facebook; the site may not be a malign Big Brother, but it is getting better and better at watching us.

**Caroline Law**

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## Controversy of the week

## The Lords in revolt

"Hooray for the House of Lords." I never expected to hear those words coming from a notably left-wing friend of mine, said James Moore in *The Independent*. But I see his point. The Lords may be an absurd anachronism in the 21st century, an undemocratic, unelected chamber, but they've done something that MPs have signally failed to do: frustrate the Government's plan to act as if it had a blank cheque to push through its Article 50 Bill, which kicks off the two-year process of leaving the EU. Last week the Lords "struck a blow" for decency by sending the Bill back to the Commons with an amendment to protect the rights of the three million EU nationals living here. And this week, led by the Tory rebel Lord Heseltine, they returned another amendment which would give Parliament a "meaningful" vote on the outcome of negotiations with the European Union.

"With his streaming golden locks and his passionate, over-the-top speeches," Heseltine was once the darling of the Tory faithful, said Matt Reeder in *The Yorkshire Post*. But for inflicting this historic defeat, the Tory grandee has now been sacked by Theresa May from his job as government adviser; and the Thatcherites in the party, who've never forgiven him for engineering Thatcher's downfall, are rejoicing at his ousting. Not that the 83-year-old's "defenestration" was strictly necessary, said Paul Goodman on *ConservativeHome.com*: advisers aren't ministers. Then again, since the "one-time Lion King has lost most of his teeth", May ran few risks by expelling him and clearly felt that she had to put down a marker – that "as someone or other once put it, 'there is no alternative'". May will also do all she can to get the two amendments voted down in the Commons, said Dan Bloom in the *Daily Mirror*. So stand by for a long game of ping-pong between the two Houses, as the Lords keep sending amendments for the Commons to deal with. It's going to mean a lot of late nights for their lords and ladyships, which is why Lib Dem peers have just spent some £1,000 on Argos airbeds.

The Lords are now being pilloried in the anti-European press as "enemies of the people", said *The Guardian*. On the contrary, the amendment calling for MPs to have a meaningful vote is aimed at ensuring the Prime Minister is answerable to Parliament. It isn't even controversial: the Government has orally promised such a vote already. No it hasn't, said Liam Halligan in *The Spectator*. May has pledged that MPs will be entitled to reject any deal made between the UK and the EU: if they did, we would have to leave without a deal in place. The amendment introduces a quite new proposal: that if there's no agreement, the PM can only decide to quit the EU with Parliament's approval. This, as peers backing the amendment well know, gives the EU every incentive to offer "a stinker of a deal", hoping that a disillusioned electorate will then allow MPs scope to reverse Brexit entirely. Most parliamentarians probably do want to stay in the EU; but they should bear in mind that the majority of the electorate does not, which is why we had a referendum in the first place.



Heseltine: a toothless lion?

## Boring but important

## Hammond's first Budget

Philip Hammond announced an emergency £2bn for social care in England in this week's Budget. Acknowledging that the system is under pressure, the Chancellor said the extra money would be spent over the next three years; he also allocated £100m to put more GPs in A&E departments. Responding to anger over planned changes to business rates, Hammond unveiled a cap limiting rises in England to £50 a month for small businesses set to lose their rate relief; and 90% of pubs will qualify for a £1,000 discount on rates. Other announcements included a rise in National Insurance payments for the self-employed (see page 51).

The Chancellor confirmed that the Government is pressing ahead with its plans for more selection in secondary schools by funding 110 new free schools that can opt to be selective. Technical qualifications known as "T levels" will also be introduced as an alternative to A levels. He said Britain faced a "brighter future", and upgraded growth forecasts to 2% for this year (from 1.4%); borrowing is set to be £51.7bn for 2016-17, down from the previous forecast of £68.1bn. However, growth is forecast to slow to 1.6% next year.

## Spirit of the age

Takeaways have become so popular that even pubs are getting in on the act. Buoyed by partnering services such as Deliveroo, the number of deliveries of ready-to-eat food rose 10% last year, while restaurant visits were up only 1%. Pubs account for just 4% of the delivery market; however, they recorded 59% more orders last year than in 2015.

M&S has been criticised for selling school uniforms that promise to create "less work for mum" – with no mention of the effort many fathers put into looking after their children's clothes. The claim appears on trousers with "reinforced" hems. "It should say 'mums and dads'," said Matt O'Connor, the founder of the activist group Fathers4Justice. "It is like Mothercare – where is Fathercare?"

## Good week for:

**Paul Burrell**, the former royal butler, who announced that he is marrying his boyfriend, Graham Cooper, next month. Princess Diana's "rock" only recently divorced his wife, Maria, but they are believed to have been living apart for several years.

## Bad week for:

**Volkswagen**, with reports that its Polo supermini is among the worst polluters on the road. According to tests commissioned by Transport for London, the 1.4 turbo-diesel engine model emits about as much nitrogen oxide as a fully laden diesel truck.

**Jenni Murray**, the presenter of Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*, who was reprimanded by the BBC for writing an article in which she argued that transgender women were not "real women", because they had not had the shared experience of growing up female, but had been men, "with all the privilege that entails". She also claimed that many model themselves on a male view of what women should be like. The BBC said that its presenters had a duty to remain impartial on controversial issues.

**South Lakes Safari Zoo**, in Cumbria, which was denied a new licence. In the past four years, almost 500 animals have died at the zoo; the licensing committee was told that inspectors had found "obvious deficiencies" in welfare standards.

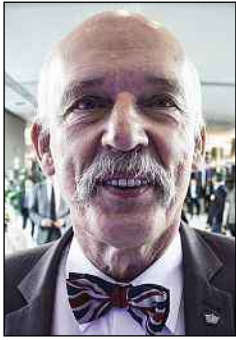
**Sir Rod Stewart**, who apologised for staging a mock execution in the desert near Abu Dhabi. The rock star said he'd only been "larking about", and claimed that the footage (posted by his wife on Instagram) had been misinterpreted: he was acting out a scene from *Game of Thrones*, he said – not an Isis beheading.

## Poll watch

**57%** of people think the NHS's ability to deliver care and services has deteriorated over the past six months; only **8%** believe it has improved. **57%** expect the NHS to get worse over the next few years. *Ipsos Mori/The Observer*

**37%** of Labour members disapprove of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the party – up from **17%** a year ago. **44%** think he should lead the party into the next election, and **31%** consider him likely to become prime minister. **68%** would back a second EU referendum. *YouGov/The Daily Telegraph*

When the Royal Society of Literature asked almost 2,000 people if they were able to name an author, **20%** said they couldn't think of one. **25%** had not read a book in the past six months.



## Brussels

### Women “weak and small”:

A far-right Polish MEP is being investigated for claiming during a debate in the European Parliament that women “must earn less than men because they are weaker, smaller and less intelligent”. Janusz Korwin-Mikke’s remarks may have breached parliamentary rules specifying that members must show mutual respect. The “libertarian” MEP (above) has caused controversy before. In 2015, he was fined and briefly suspended from the parliament for giving a Nazi salute while speaking against plans to standardise EU transport tickets. “*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Ticket*,” he said, a play on a Nazi-era slogan.

## Budapest

### Refugees to be held in containers:

Hungarian MPs have passed new laws to force asylum seekers into detention centres on the country’s southern border. The migrants will be housed in converted shipping containers while their applications are considered; they will be fingerprinted and photographed, and their cases will be heard by video link. The measures were denounced by the UN Refugee Agency and rights groups as a violation of international law. Nevertheless, MPs passed them by 138 votes to six, with 22 abstentions. The country’s right-wing prime minister, Viktor Orbán, had said the restrictions were necessary to save Europe, and that migration is a “Trojan horse for terrorism”. Under the laws, which come into force next week, migrants will be free to leave the centres – provided they drop their claims and cross into Croatia or Serbia, the countries through which most arrive.

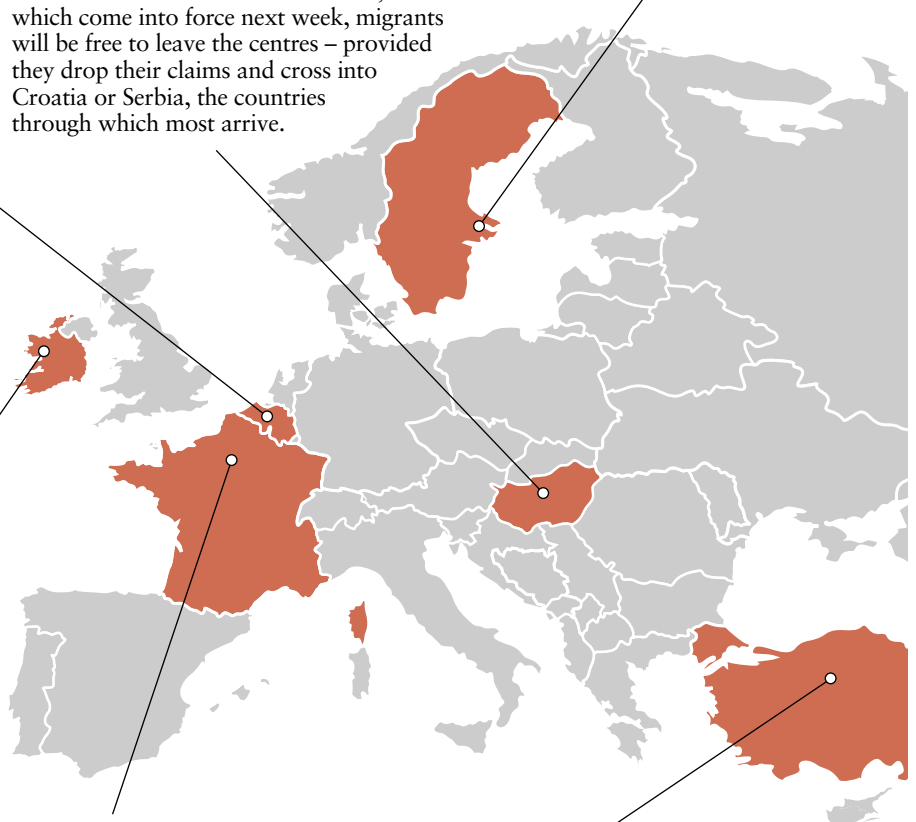
## Stockholm

### Conscription back:

Sweden has announced it is reintroducing military conscription. The armed services have struggled to find enough volunteer recruits since the draft was scrapped seven years ago – but Stockholm made it plain that the real motivation was the perceived threat from Russia. “The illegal annexation of Crimea, the conflict in Ukraine, and the increased military activity in our neighbourhood are some of the reasons,” said a spokeswoman. The first call-up will be of 4,000 men and women born in or after 1999. Sweden ramped up its defence spending by 11% last year; and in 2014, a poll found that 37% of Swedes were in favour of joining Nato – up from 17% in 2012.

## Tuam, Ireland

**Infants’ mass grave:** A mass grave containing the remains of possibly hundreds of babies and toddlers has been found at the site of a former Catholic home for unmarried mothers and orphans in County Galway. Ireland’s judge-led Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation announced last Friday that “significant” quantities of human remains had been found at the Bon Secours home in the town of Tuam: it was open from 1925 to 1961. Tests suggest that the infants’ age at the time of death ranged from 35 foetal weeks to three years. They were discovered in underground chambers believed to have been part of a sewer or a waste water system. Previous research had unearthed 796 death certificates for children at the home, but no mention of where they were buried. The certificates indicate that the children died of natural causes, and there is nothing – at this stage – to suggest otherwise.



## Paris

**Fillon defiant:** The beleaguered centre-right Republican candidate in France’s presidential election, François Fillon, appears to have seen off concerted efforts by party grandees to get him to stand down – making it increasingly likely (though far from certain) that the two candidates who make it through to the second-round run-off will be the centrist Emmanuel Macron (pictured), and Marine Le Pen of the far-right National Front. Fillon revealed last week that he is to be placed under formal investigation on 15 March on charges of embezzlement (see page 19). Last week investigators raided his home. However, he has so far steadfastly refused to succumb to what he calls his “political assassination”, although several campaign officials and allies have abandoned him.



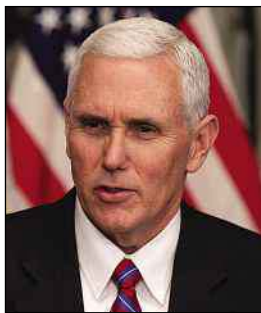
The party’s most plausible replacement, Alain Juppé – who came second in the primary – this week attacked Fillon’s “obstinacy”, but ruled himself out as a “Plan B” candidate, saying it was now too late for him to unify the country behind his campaign: the first round of voting is on 23 April. Opinion polls have suggested that Juppé (who was himself convicted of abusing public funds in 2004) would have progressed into the second round, on 7 May. Pollsters now predict that Le Pen and Macron will get through the first round, and that Macron will win the run-off.

## Ankara

**Erdogan “Nazi” jibe:** Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan launched a furious attack on Germany this week, after officials cancelled two of his campaign rallies there. Ankara had wanted to use the rallies, in Cologne and Gagganau, to persuade some of the 1.5 million Turkish citizens resident in Germany to grant the president sweeping new powers in a constitutional referendum in April. Federal officials said they were cancelling the rallies on safety and security grounds; in response, Erdogan accused the Germans of “fascist” practices “no different to those of the Nazi period”. Turkish-German relations were already strained owing to the arrest in Turkey of Deniz Yücel, a German-Turkish journalist for Die Welt; he is accused of spreading propaganda for a terrorist organisation and of inciting hatred. Public anger in Germany about his detention was cited as a reason for the security concerns.

**Indianapolis, Indiana**

**Pence's private email:** The US vice-president, Mike Pence, used a personal email account to discuss security issues when he was governor of Indiana – during which time the account was hacked by a scammer, it was reported last week. Public officials in Indiana are not prohibited from using personal accounts, so long as emails dealing with state business are retained; Pence (pictured) insists he complied with this rule. Even so, he has been accused of hypocrisy: during the presidential election campaign, he repeatedly attacked Hillary Clinton for using a private server when she was secretary of state, calling her “the most dishonest candidate” since Nixon.

**Little Rock, Arkansas**

**Execution spree:** The state of Arkansas, where no prisoners have been executed since 2005, is to put eight men to death in just ten days next month – a rate of executions unmatched in recent US history. Ordering the executions, state governor Asa Hutchinson said he regretted that so many were taking place at once, but that it was necessary owing to doubts about the future availability of the lethal injection drugs required to execute the men (all convicted murderers). Officials had previously revealed the state's supply of midazolam passes its expiry date in April. Opponents of capital punishment described the mass execution as “grotesque”.

**Oklahoma City, Oklahoma**

**Religious test:** An Oklahoma politician has come under fire for declining to meet three local Muslim students until they had filled out a questionnaire that included the question, “Do you beat your wife?”. The trio were taking part in an annual “Muslim Day” at the state capitol, an event designed to promote good

relations between legislators and Muslim citizens. Lawmaker John Bennett (pictured), a Republican, has previously called Islam a “cancer in our nation that needs to be cut out”.

**Langley, Virginia**

**CIA leak:** WikiLeaks has released a trove of apparently classified documents detailing the CIA's cyber surveillance techniques. The documents, which date from 2013 to 2016, suggest that the CIA has managed to bypass encryption measures on phone and messaging services including WhatsApp, Signal and Weibo; that it can penetrate Android and Apple phones; and that it has, in conjunction with MI5, developed spyware that turns Samsung smart TVs into covert listening devices. The CIA has refused to comment; however, if classified documents have been leaked from its HQ at Langley, it will be a major embarrassment. The revelation of its methods could undermine its operations; and may also lead to difficult questions about who the CIA is spying on.

**Washington DC**

**Bonfire of regulations:** The Republican-controlled US Congress, and federal agencies run by Trump appointees, have delayed, suspended or reversed more than 90 regulations – governing numerous different areas of business, health, safety and the environment – in the month and a half since President Trump's inauguration. The rules scrapped include a requirement that telecoms giants take “reasonable measures” to ensure that their customers' personal data and web browsing histories are not stolen or accidentally released; and a gun control measure, introduced in the final months of the Obama administration, that was designed to prevent people in receipt of social security, who have also been judged mentally incapable of managing their own affairs, from buying handguns. The National Rifle Association had called it a “back-door gun grab”.

**Washington DC**

**Revised travel ban:** President Trump has signed a new executive order blocking citizens of six Muslim-majority countries from entering the US for 90 days from 16 March, and suspending the US refugee programme for 120 days. The order revokes and replaces Trump's travel ban of 27 January, which led to chaos and was eventually largely struck down by federal judges. The new ban affects citizens of Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Libya – but not Iraq, where the US is engaged in the battle against Isis in Mosul. The order makes it clear that certain groups are exempted, including permanent residents, visa holders, people admitted as refugees, and dual passport holders; it removes a priority in the US resettlement programme for persecuted religious minorities (which was seen as anti-Muslim); and it replaces an indefinite ban on refugees from Syria with a 120-day freeze.

**Lima**

**“Dog” row:** Peru has recalled its ambassador to Venezuela following a bitter row over the two countries' relationship with the United States. During a recent trip to the US, the Peruvian president, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, argued that Washington did not invest much diplomatic effort in Latin America because – with the exception of Venezuela – the continent was like a “well-behaved dog on the carpet”: a remark taken to mean that it is relatively peaceful and untroubled by the conflicts scarring other parts of the world. This week Venezuela's combative foreign minister, Delcy Rodríguez, retorted that the “only dog” was the Peruvian president – always “wagging” his tail “for the American empire”. Rodríguez also called Kuczynski “crazy” and a “coward”.



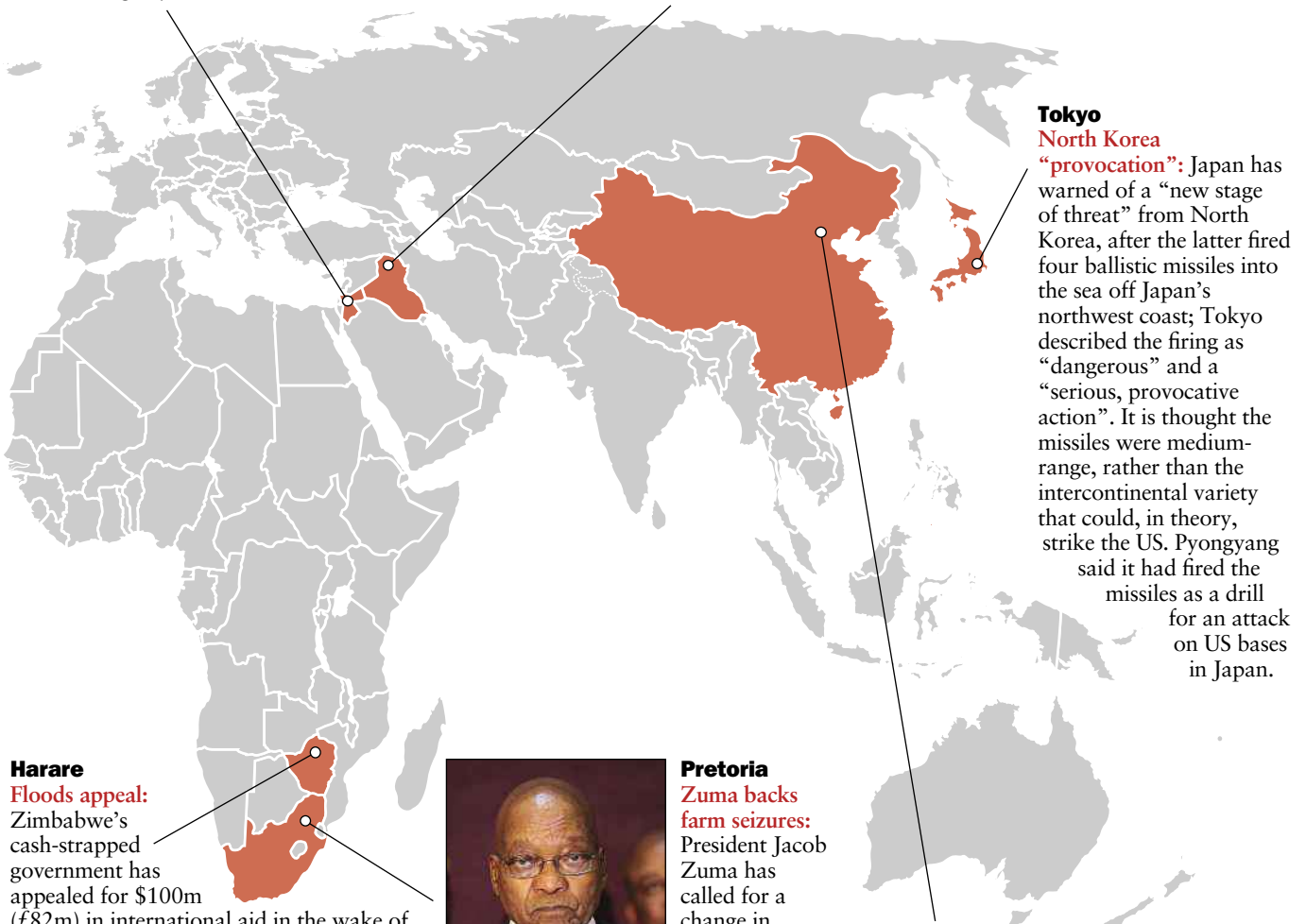
## Amman

**Mass executions:** Jordanian authorities put 15 prisoners to death last Saturday, in the largest mass execution in the country since the government ended an eight-year capital punishment moratorium in 2014: among those executed were ten terrorists convicted of attacks dating back as far as 2003. Amnesty International described the hangings – carried out at dawn at Swaqa Prison, south of Amman – as a “big step backwards”. A long-time ally of the West, Jordan has been relatively unscathed by the jihadist militancy that has swept across the Middle East since 2011. However, there have been a number of terrorist attacks in the country, and in 2015 the authorities intensified a crackdown on suspected extremists after Isis released a video of a captured Jordanian pilot being burned alive in a cage by militants.

## Mosul, Iraq

**Exodus as battle rages:** As many as 45,000 men, women and children fled Mosul in the space of a few days last week, as the Iraqi government’s US-backed battle to retake the whole of the city from Islamic State intensified. The latest exodus takes the number of people who have fled since the campaign began in October to more than 200,000. This week, Iraqi forces pushed on towards the Isis-held centre, and took several key buildings and a second bridge.

Isis leaders – including Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who declared the caliphate from Mosul’s al-Nuri Mosque in 2014 – are believed to have abandoned Mosul for towns and villages to the north and west, leaving its defence to a few thousand battle-hardened jihadists. In defence of the territory, the militants have used human shields, suicide bombers and chemical weapons; government forces are contending with a labyrinth of tunnels and fortifications prepared by Isis over the past two years, as well as multiple ambush points, house bombs and booby traps (see page 56). Separately, in neighbouring Syria, government and Russian forces last week recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra, two months after it fell to Isis for the second time in a year.



## Tokyo

**North Korea “provocation”:** Japan has warned of a “new stage of threat” from North Korea, after the latter fired four ballistic missiles into the sea off Japan’s northwest coast; Tokyo described the firing as “dangerous” and a “serious, provocative action”. It is thought the missiles were medium-range, rather than the intercontinental variety that could, in theory, strike the US. Pyongyang said it had fired the missiles as a drill for an attack on US bases in Japan.

## Harare

**Floods appeal:** Zimbabwe’s cash-strapped government has appealed for \$100m (£82m) in international aid in the wake of deadly floods which have killed more than 240 people in the south of the country since December, and left about 2,000 people homeless. The floods, caused by heavy rains, follow a crippling drought which left more than four million people in need of food aid. Government officials said that 70 dams had burst; 74 schools had been damaged, and five major road bridges swept away. President Mugabe, who was criticised last month for reportedly spending up to \$2m of government money on his 93rd birthday celebrations, has declared the floods a national disaster.



## Pretoria

**Zuma backs farm seizures:** President Jacob Zuma has called for a change in South Africa’s constitution to allow white-owned farmland to be seized without compensation. The proposal – which an Afrikaner farmers’ association said would amount to a “declaration of war” – has the backing of Julius Malema’s radical Economic Freedom Fighters, but is opposed by Zuma’s own ANC. The president (above) may be hoping the plan will shore up his rural support base in the wake of a string of corruption scandals.

## Beijing

**Defence spending steadies:** China has announced that it is increasing its military budget by about 7% this year. The rise is the smallest for seven years, and a sign – some analysts say – that China is scaling back its “ambitions” as its economic growth slows. China now spends around \$145bn a year on defence. Only the US spends more – but it spends far more. The US’s military spending was some \$600bn in 2016, and President Donald Trump has called for it to be increased by a further 10%, in part to counter the perceived threat from China.

**The nerd at the Oscars**

Col Needham doesn't look like a Hollywood hotshot. The 50-year-old Englishman has wonky teeth, dodgy glasses and a receding hairline. Yet he has the power to make or break an actor's career. In 1980, Needham – then a 12-year-old movie obsessive – began keeping a diary tracking the cast, crew and plot of every film he watched. Ten years later, at the dawn of the internet, he uploaded his diary online and christened it the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). It rapidly became Hollywood's bible, with its Starmeter function – which tracks how many clicks an actor's page gets – used by directors to gauge rising talent. In 1998, Needham sold the site to Amazon for an estimated £44m; but he still runs it from his office in Bristol, and his passion for cinema remains undimmed. "After my family, film is the love of my life," he told Laura Pullman in *The Sunday Times*. He has seen, at the last count, 10,262 movies – some of them several times. "I went through several years where I watched a Hitchcock film every Saturday. There are enough for one every week, so you can start again at the end of the year."

Five years ago, Needham was invited to the Oscars for the first time. He and his wife, Karen, stayed near the awards venue, and trundled there in a golf buggy. "None of this limo stuff. We're on-time people, and the thought of being stuck in a traffic jam..." To his joy,

he has been asked back every year since. "These people are my heroes. To hang out with them is such an honour," he says. "Every time we go, I say to Karen it will be the last time. I never take it for granted."

**Stoppard's big revelation**

The play that made Tom Stoppard famous is being revived at the place of its birth. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* opened at The Old Vic 50 years ago, to wild acclaim. For Stoppard, now 79, it was a transformative experience. "When I was starting off, the idea of having a play performed at The Old Vic was simply beyond one's dreams," he told Mick Brown in *The Daily Telegraph*. "And then when I found myself, a few years later, at the back of a theatre watching my play, looking around, it came to me as some form of revelation that that thing which I thought could only happen to truly extraordinary people – extraordinary writers and so on – it came to me that actually it happens to people like me. And it completely altered some perspective I had on who I was, in a rather healthy way. I didn't actually need to be some sort of freak to be good enough for this to happen to me; I could just be what I was." After a while, he realised that the same was true of almost everyone in public life. "What it comes down to," he laughs, "is that finding a good president is just as hard as finding a good plumber."



Rachel Dolezal can't get a job and is feeding her family on food stamps. Yet she has no regrets about the choices that led her here, says Decca Aitkenhead in *The Guardian*. The former civil rights activist – once a pillar of the black community in Spokane, Washington State – was vilified around the world when her parents revealed that she was, in fact, white. She had been using fake tan and hair weaves to make herself look mixed race. And she still does. "This is home to me," she says. "It really is who I am. It's not a choice." She has legally changed her name to Nkechi Amare Diallo, a Nigerian moniker meaning "gift of God", and ticks the box marked "black" on official forms – because that is how she feels. "I do think a more complex label would be helpful, but we don't really have that vocabulary. I feel like the idea of being trans-black would be much more accurate than 'I'm white'." Transgender activists are infuriated by the comparison, but Dolezal, or Diallo, insists that race, like gender, is fluid. "It's more so. Because it wasn't even biological to begin with. It was always a social construct... I feel that I was born with the essential essence of who I am, whether it matches my anatomy and complexion or not. I didn't choose to feel this way, or be this way, I just am. What other choice is there than to be exactly who we are?"

**Castaway of the week**

*This week's edition of Radio 4's Desert Island Discs featured comedian and television presenter Jimmy Carr*

- 1 *Stronger* by Kanye West, Thomas Bangalter, Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Edwin Birdsong, performed by Kanye West
- 2 *I Am the Resurrection* by Ian Brown and John Squire, performed by The Stone Roses
- 3 *The Obvious Child*, written and performed by Paul Simon
- 4 *U-Mass* by Black Francis, performed by Pixies
- 5\* *I Will Follow You Into The Dark* by Ben Gibbard, performed by Death Cab for Cutie
- 6 *When You Were Young*, written and performed by The Killers (Mark Stoermer, Ronnie Vannucci Jr, Brandon Flowers and Dave Keuning)
- 7 *The Boy With The Arab Strap* by Stevie Jackson, Stuart Murdoch, Richard Colburn, Chris Geddes, Michael Cooke, Isobel Campbell and Sarah Martin, performed by Belle and Sebastian
- 8 *Crazy In Love* by Beyoncé Knowles, Shawn Carter, Rich Harrison and Eugene Record, performed by Beyoncé featuring Jay Z

**Book:** the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations

**Luxury:** a coffee machine

\* Choice if allowed only one record

**Viewpoint:****Rebellious conformists**

"UKIP people don't hate the Establishment. They hate the fact that they aren't in it. You can see it with Nigel Farage in America. There he is, this man who failed seven times to even become an MP, going on talk shows and basking in the presumption that he's like, the Limey prime minister or something. At Trump's elbow, he gets to consider himself a statesman. Likewise Arron Banks, who was once so piqued when William Hague couldn't remember his name, he gave UKIP a million quid. This is why they keep fighting the referendum, even though it's won, because they bristle with resentment at the lack of recognition for having won it. This is also, I suppose, why Paul Nuttall wears tweed, even though it makes him look like a skinhead Rupert the Bear."

*Hugo Rifkind in The Spectator*

**Farewell**

**Group Captain Leonard Bartlett**, Battle of Britain Hurricane pilot, died 11 February, aged 100.

**Neil Fingleton**, basketball player-turned-*Game of Thrones* actor, and Britain's tallest man, at 7ft 7in, died 25 February, aged 36.

**John Hampshire**, the first England batsman to score a century on a Test debut at Lord's, died 1 March, aged 76.

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# The great British arms bazaar

*A court case brought by the group Campaign Against Arms Trade is throwing light on the murky world of the UK's defence exports*

## How big are the UK's arms exports?

The UK is the world's sixth-biggest arms exporting nation, according to the respected Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, which puts it behind the US, Russia, China, France and Germany. However, the Government's own figures from last year suggest that, in cash terms, only the US exported more weapons over the past decade. Britain's defence and security sector had a turnover of £33bn in 2015, and exports of about £12bn (total UK exports were around £500bn). That it has grown so big is partly because the Ministry of Defence is one of the world's big spenders on defence – behind only the US, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia. The ministry funnels a lot of its spending into the UK's defence industry, which in many respects is a world leader: companies range from giants such as BAE Systems, formerly British Aerospace, and Rolls-Royce (which makes engines for military aircraft), to small businesses scattered across the entire country.



*Buyers at the Defence and Security Equipment fair*

generating economies of scale for UK firms. The Government also argues that arms exports deepen Britain's relationships with allies, delivering "wider foreign policy objectives". "Responsible" exports "are essential for our security and prosperity", it claimed in its 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.

## What are "responsible" exports?

The Government describes its list of legal criteria for arms exports as "one of the most robust" in the world. Exports must not be made to nations that defy UN or EU embargoes, nor to those that support terrorism or organised crime, or which might re-export the arms to "undesirable destinations". The most important – and most contested – rule is that licences should not be granted if there is a clear risk that the exports might be used in "a serious violation of international humanitarian law", or for "internal repression".

## How do these export rules work in practice?

It's not entirely clear. Questioned over the issue of Saudi Arabia in November, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said the Government was "confident in its robust case-by-case assessment" of export licences. But documents released as part of CAAT's court case show that serious concerns have, in fact, been raised. In early 2016, the then business secretary Sajid Javid seriously considered suspending Yemen-related arms sales to Saudi – on the advice of the head of export controls. The Defence Ministry is now tracking "incidents of concern" involving civilian casualties in Yemen. However, establishing whether a given nation has violated rules "may be extremely difficult, and indeed possibly inappropriate", said the Government's lawyer in the case: not only is it hard for officials to audit "armed conflicts by friendly governments", it may also "affect diplomatic relations with that country".

## Are friendly nations ever denied export licences?

Yes, though they tend to be narrow exceptions, not blanket bans. After the Arab Spring, when it became clear that British weapons, ammunition and crowd control equipment had been used on civilian protesters in Bahrain and Egypt, the Government revoked 158 licences. However, the sale of unrelated military equipment continued. For the most part, action falls short even of that: after Israel's assault on Gaza in 2014, export licences for this significant arms customer and supplier were reviewed but left intact.

## Is there any hope of an ethical arms export industry?

Germany's Heckler & Koch has announced it will no longer deal with non-Nato countries, because it has become too difficult to get export approvals. But since both Russia and China are keen to grow their own arms exports, the industry is likely to become more, not less, cutthroat. As "competition gets fiercer", says Paul Rogers, professor of peace studies at Bradford University, "ethical dimensions, to put it politely, will diminish somewhat".

## And who do British firms sell arms to?

The US is a major market; and in recent years, British companies have agreed lucrative deals to sell military helicopters to Norway and South Korea, and fighter jets to India. But Britain also sells arms to almost all the nations listed by the Foreign Office as "countries of human rights concern", from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe and China. And about two-thirds of recent exports have gone to the Middle East. Indeed, Saudi Arabia accounts for more than half of all sales: between April 2015 and March 2016, it bought £3.3bn of weapons from UK firms. As export licences show, these included fighter jets (worth £1.7bn), missiles (£990m) and bombs (£62m) – and there's evidence that some have been used in Saudi's intervention in neighbouring Yemen's civil war, which has caused thousands of civilian casualties. The pressure group Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) has now launched a judicial review that aims to halt UK arms sales to Saudi.

## What is the Government's position?

The Government is very supportive of the arms trade. It even has a wing of the Department of International Trade, the Defence and Security Organisation (DSO), which is dedicated to providing "specialist export advice and practical assistance". With a staff of about 105 in London, and a network of advisers in embassies around the globe, the DSO also helps organise the world's largest arms fair, London's biennial Defence and Security Equipment International, which will be held in the Docklands this September.

## Why is the Government so helpful?

It's eager to promote manufacturing and exports in general. The arms industry directly sustains 218,000 jobs, nourishing high-tech skills. Exports boost not only the industry itself, but also linked sectors such as aerospace; and they drive down defence costs by

## Should we ban arms exports to all but reliable, democratic allies?

### YES

1. Britain sells arms to a wide range of unsavoury regimes; and these arms have been involved in a series of human rights abuses.
2. Such commercial relationships convey an unmerited message of international support, and make the UK complicit in war crimes.
3. The sector relies on government subsidies and patronage; we'd be far better off spending the money on more ethical industries.

### NO

1. Selling arms makes the UK richer: the defence sector employs hundreds of thousands of people, and shores up British industry.
2. The fast-growing defence sector is a rare export success story, which we in Britain are going to need more than ever after Brexit.
3. Developing close relationships with foreign military organisations allows Britain to influence them and temper excesses.



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## Trust in the facts, not in fairies

**Jonny Elledge**

*New Statesman*

I never expected *Peter Pan* to become a key political text for the 21st century, says Jonny Elledge. But what I call the “Tinkerbell Theory of Politics” is essential for understanding our times. J.M. Barrie wrote that whenever a child says they don’t believe in fairies, a fairy “falls right down dead”, and politicians now claim much the same if anyone queries their schemes: “because *we* don’t believe, *they* can’t achieve”. I first noticed this during the Scottish referendum, when those pointing out the costs of independence were accused of “talking down Scotland”. Today, “Tinkerbellism” is everywhere. For Brexiteers, it’s not the Government’s lack of a plan that matters, it’s the critics’ lack of faith: point out the difficulties, as John Major did, and you’re chided for being negative. For the Left, Jeremy Corbyn’s abysmal ratings are down to hostility from Labour MPs and the media. The appeal of this strategy is that the more your critics turn out to be right, “the more you have to blame them for”. But in politics, it is facts, not faith, that count in the end. Scotland’s oil will run out. Corbyn won’t start winning elections. There’s “no such thing as fairies”.

## Do Budgets really make a difference?

**Nicholas Macpherson**

*Financial Times*

Like the Grand National, the Budget is one of those great British events beloved of the media, says former permanent secretary to the Treasury Nicholas Macpherson. But what’s it for? Chancellors insist it’s a way of securing the revenue base, yet despite startling tax changes over the past 30 years – cutting the top rate of income tax from 60% to 45%, for example – “the tax take has remained completely static”. When I joined the Treasury, in 1985, it was 33.9%; this year it’s projected to be 33.7%. Chancellors also like to claim the Budget is designed to stimulate growth, yet Britain’s underlying growth rate “has remained stubbornly unchanged” at about 2.25%. Then there’s the conviction that the Budget is about controlling the level of demand and steering the economy, yet such is the bias in favour of deficit financing that in all but four of the past 40 years, the Government has run a deficit. No, the real purpose of the Budget is political theatre: the Chancellor sets out our leaders’ stall for the year ahead and, in doing so, ensures he is still seen “as the second most important person in the Government”.

## How the press has lost the plot

**Peter Preston**

*The Observer*

America’s press corps has taken great umbrage at its treatment by President Trump, says Peter Preston. He has attacked journalists as “the enemy of the people”, and banned The New York Times, CNN and other august titles from a briefing. But a press “that yelps when this president insults it face-to-face is a press that ought to calm down”. America’s reporters take pride in the First Amendment, but too often they’re cosseted by it. It “makes them part of the country’s democratic establishment – like judges, politicians and the rest”. It encourages them to “think they have rights” – to attend conferences, to have their questions answered, to be respected. Yet briefings – Westminster’s lobby correspondents, take heed – “are a way of managing news, not revealing it”. Being accorded special privileges is nothing to do with their basic job, which is to be “lone rangers hounding the powerful”. Trump has a point: the mainstream media isn’t widely trusted, not least because it feeds too much on anonymous sources and manufactured allegations. The press should heed the lesson: journalism “needs to do more of its business out in the open for all to see”.

## Do the right thing: follow Jeremy Corbyn

**Hugo Rifkind**

*The Times*

In an attempt at transparency, Jeremy Corbyn published his tax return this week. Inevitably, he “bodged” it, says Hugo Rifkind. “Comrade Calamity” appeared to have misplaced the £30k-odd he gets for being opposition leader, and was roundly mocked as a result. This is a sorry reward for “doing what all MPs should be doing, and won’t”. For a while last year, after the Panama Papers scandal, it seemed financial transparency might become de rigueur. David Cameron published six years of tax returns, including the awkward revelation that his late father had run an offshore fund; Boris Johnson and George Osborne published summaries of their taxes; Jacob Rees-Mogg predicted that soon all MPs would be doing it. Yet a year on, “all is forgotten”. Brexit has created the perfect distraction, allowing MPs quietly to drop the idea. They may come to regret it. MPs already have to disclose outside earnings on the Commons’ register of interests; failing to provide a full tax return just makes it look as if they’ve something to hide. The price of their privacy will be the corrosion of public trust.

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

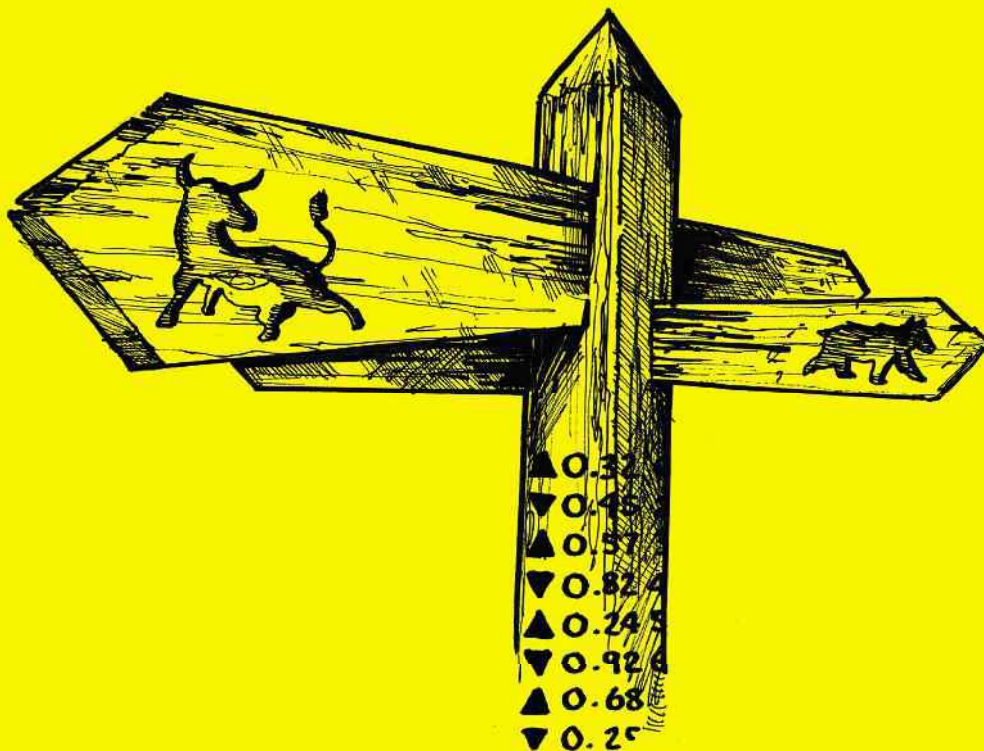
A Russian MP has proposed a novel solution to his nation’s problem with football hooliganism: turn such clashes into a spectator sport. The Russian fans are known to include a large hooligan element: in Marseilles last summer, they fought England supporters in the streets. Igor Lebedev says that rather than crack down on such fights, they should be formalised: two sides, each with 20 unarmed combatants, could meet in an arena at a set time. The brawls, he said, would channel “fans’ aggression in a peaceful direction” – and provide an example to England’s undisciplined louts. “Russia would be a pioneer in a new sport.”



A French artist who spent a week living in a rock was freed last Wednesday. Abraham Poincheval had entombed himself in a body-shaped cavity carved in a limestone block, inside the Palais de Tokyo museum of contemporary art in Paris. For seven days he lived on stewed fruit and purées, and breathed through an air vent. He emerged saying he felt “dazed”, but happy. “There were very long moments of loss of self... you no longer know where you are, but you are there, and that is what was great [about it].”

An American took out an advertisement in *The Times* last week to give the Royal Family 30 days’ notice of his intention to claim the British throne. Allan V. Evans of Colorado, says that he is “a direct descendant of an unbroken primogeniture line legally documented since the third century” – but owing to his deep “respect” for Queen Elizabeth II, he won’t assume the throne in her lifetime.

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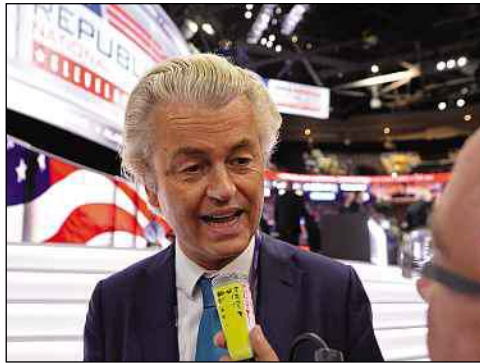
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**CITYINDEX**

## The rise of an extremist who's much more radical than Trump

Long before the Americans got theirs, the Dutch had their own “crazy blond” politician, said Dirk Schümer in *Die Welt* (Berlin). Geert Wilders, whose far-right Freedom Party (PVV) has for months been topping Dutch polls, has policies far more radical than Donald Trump's. He proposes to close the Netherlands' mosques and ban Muslim immigration – though he's yet to explain how this will work in a nation with almost a million Muslims, 6% of the population. There's no such thing as “moderate Islam”, he insists: it's a totalitarian ideology “like fascism” and he'll fight it “to the death”. But of late, he's widened his appeal: pledges to help boost social welfare and help small businesses attracted support from pensioners, the self-employed, civil servants and young people. Now, days before the election, on 15 March, the PVV is neck and neck with Mark Rutte's ruling liberals – though even if the PVV wins, the other main parties have vowed to unite to stop Wilders becoming PM.



Wilders: a free speech “martyr” feted in the US

Easter celebrations. Pure nonsense, of course, said Ad van Nieuwpoort in *Trouw* (Amsterdam), but it's worrying to see how Wilders' message is now penetrating the mainstream. Even priests have been offering excuses for his “angry white men” supporters, explaining that biblical prophets, too, often showed righteous anger. Clerics, of all people, should see it's grotesque for a politician to refer to mosques as “Nazi temples”, or to compare the Koran to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The Church should denounce every vote for the PVV as a vote for “destruction”.

As Wilders sees it, the Netherlands is in a state of siege, said Bas Heijne in *NRC Handelsblad* (Amsterdam), a claim buttressed by the fact he himself has been under 24-hour protection by Dutch security since 2004. He blames foreigners for trying to “take away everything we have”, even our Christmas and

Wilders also has strong support within Trump's administration, said Freke Vuijst in *Foreign Policy* (Washington DC). Long before Nigel Farage made overtures, Wilders was laying the groundwork for ties between the European far-right and the extremist fringe of the Republican Party. He's spoken at conferences attended by Jeff Sessions (now attorney general) and Stephen Miller (now White House senior policy adviser). And after being convicted of hate speech by a Dutch court following the release of his anti-Islam film *Fitna*, Wilders came to be seen in US anti-Islam circles as a kind of “martyr” for free speech. He's also had financial support from US backers. If the Dutch let him down, he can always count on friends in Washington.

### HUNGARY

## Orbán's Olympic folly is a blessing

*Transitions Online*  
(Prague)

Overtaking Viktor Orbán's one-party rule in Hungary long seemed an impossibility, says Martin Ehl. A new liberal-green party gained a few seats in 2014, only to crash and burn due to internal squabbles. But there's fresh hope: Orbán has just shot himself in the foot with a “megalomaniac” bid to stage the 2024 Summer Olympics. So great has been the opposition to the massive spending this would entail, fuelling corruption and diverting funds from schools and hospitals, that it gave birth to a grass-roots movement, Momentum, which collected 266,000 signatures demanding a referendum on this crazy plan. Orbán, spitting tacks at the movement for “murdering a dream”, has now thrown in the towel, leaving Paris to slug it out to the finish with Los Angeles. It's a rare PR disaster for his governing party, Fidesz, which had seen the bid as a propaganda opportunity ahead of next year's elections, and had spent vast sums plastering Budapest with gaudy “we can do it”-type posters. Momentum now plans to build on its success with a full policy manifesto. After almost seven years of authoritarian rule, how refreshing to see Hungarians at last taking steps to recover their democracy.

### GERMANY

## Our own nukes to deter Putin? No thanks

*Der Spiegel*  
(Hamburg)

I fear the madness of Cold War logic is starting to infect Germany once again, says Jakob Augstein. As well as a new Nato battalion led by Germany being stationed in Lithuania to defend the Baltic States from a possible Russian invasion, we're now also hearing talk in the German media of the EU arming itself with nuclear weapons to “deter” Vladimir Putin. Though vastly expensive, it could be funded by the huge hike in Germany's defence budget referenced by Angela Merkel in response to Donald Trump's arm-twisting. Yet the logic of deterrence by “mutually assured destruction” never made any sense for countries situated on the front line. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's contention that the then Federal Republic could only be defended “at the price of its total destruction” is as true today as it was in the 1970s: if it came to war with Russia, nuclear or conventional, Germans would be “wiped out”: it wasn't the nuclear deterrent that stopped the Soviets invading West Berlin – “they simply didn't want it”. It couldn't have been defended militarily then any more than the Baltic States can be now. Mercifully, the nation that “home of the Holocaust” never had its finger on the nuclear trigger. Do we really want to pour billions into “a project whose purpose is our suicide”?

### FRANCE

## The downfall of a “silken hypocrite”

*L'Obs*  
(Paris)

A political meltdown is a shocking spectacle, says Serge Raffy. Accused of lavishly paying his wife from public funds for a non-existent job, François Fillon, presidential candidate of the French Right, had vowed to quit if put under investigation by judges. He was cockily certain it would never come to that. He was wrong. When the court summons came last week, he welched, telling reporters that the cause of France is “greater than my mistakes”, and claiming the probe amounted to a “political assassination”. Alas, the crushed look on his face belied the bravado – on television that sort of thing is hard to hide. His eyes were red from lack of sleep; doubtless after he'd spent long nights resisting his colleagues' entreaties for him to “avoid catastrophe” by stepping down. Though they turned out in support at the press conference, their heads were hanging low; their embarrassment was plain to see. But it's their fault for not having dispatched this “silken hypocrite” when his wrongdoings came to light. Why on Earth have they let things drag on so long? Perhaps he convinced them it's too late to switch horses, and were the circumstances not so “apocalyptic” he'd be right. But they are. For his wretched Republican party, with the election just weeks away, “the Chinese torture has just begun”.



## America no longer the land of the free, lament Indians

There are hundreds of thousands of people from India working in America, said Abhishek Sikhwal on [DailyO.in](#) (New Delhi). About half of them are Hindus, and during the presidential race they embraced Donald Trump as a kindred spirit, in large part due to his anti-Islamic rhetoric. Some even identified with Trump's call to build a wall on the US-Mexico border – back home, Hindu nationalists had made similar proposals to build a wall along the India-Bangladesh border. It never occurred to them that their support for “a bigot who never hid his disdain for immigrants” would backfire on them.

Well, they know better now. Since Trump's victory, there has been an “alarming increase in racist attacks on minorities”, and it has affected Hindus as much as anyone. Only last month, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, a 32-year-old Indian software engineer, was shot dead in a Kansas bar by a man who allegedly yelled, “get out of my country”, before opening fire.

Indians have been “confused and disappointed” by the muted US response to Kuchibhotla's murder, said Barkha Dutt in [The Washington Post](#). The case has received a vast amount of coverage in India, but the US press gave it little attention, and Trump – who'd recently professed great sorrow at the killing of



Srinivas Kuchibhotla, with his wife

a young American by an undocumented migrant – simply ignored it. In another sign of his lack of concern, his administration plans to cut right back on H-1B temporary visas, which enable companies to bring skilled foreign staff, like Kuchibhotla, into the US. Indian tech workers use up a large proportion of such visas, so this will hit them particularly hard. Still, Indian IT workers will eventually find other places to ply their trade, said Anuvab Pal in [The Times of India](#) (Mumbai). What we Indians may find harder to change, however, is our psychological attitude to America. We must stop

craving America's unconditional love and just accept that it's indifferent to us.

“Growing up in India, we didn't question the brain drain of our best and brightest... to America,” said Sandip Roy in [The New York Times](#). “It was the natural order of things.” But the days when every middle-class parent dreamt of their child making it in the US are over. Now, they're wary of letting them go there. Trump's new vision for his country is forcing Indians to rethink their assumptions about the land of the free. “It's too late for Kuchibhotla, but somewhere out there young men like him are wondering if the American dream itself can be outsourced.”

### UNITED STATES

## Wasting billions on the Pentagon

[The Washington Post](#)

Donald Trump wants to boost the Pentagon's budget by \$54bn, so that, in his words, “nobody will dare question our military might again”. It's a lousy idea, says Fareed Zakaria. America's military supremacy is not remotely in doubt: the country's defence budget in 2015 was nine times the size of Russia's, and three times as big as China's. “None of the difficulties the US has faced over the past 25 years has been in any way because its military was too small or weak.” Rather, it's the lack of Foreign Service diplomatic staff, aid professionals and other non-military specialists that has let America down in its campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Trump is now proposing to offset his military budget increase through cuts to the State Department, foreign aid and other civilian agencies. Yet if any department needs trimming, it's the bloated Pentagon, which is the “world's largest bureaucracy”, employing almost three million people. A recent report concluded that the Pentagon could easily save \$125bn over five years by removing operational inefficiencies – enough to “fund the entire State Department, plus all foreign aid programmes” for two years. Trump has got his spending priorities precisely the wrong way around.

### SOUTH KOREA

## Our corrupt culture needs a shake-up

[Bloomberg.com](#)  
(New York)

South Korea has had more than its share of corruption scandals, says Michael Schuman, but none on the scale of the current one. Revelations of a “tangle of collusion between politics and big business” have led to the impeachment of the country's president, and generated “unprecedented public anger” towards the family-run conglomerates, or *chaebol*, that dominate South Korea's economy. Critics are hoping that the indictment of Lee Jae-yong – a member of the Samsung family – for alleged bribery will lead to a radical shake-up of the business culture. Don't count on it. The *chaebol* have proved remarkably resistant to reform: Lee's own father, Lee Kun-hee, resigned from Samsung after being indicted for tax evasion in 2008, only to be pardoned and reinstated as chairman. It's the “outsized influence” of *chaebol* in South Korea's economy that makes officials so wary of rocking the boat. Another big factor is Confucianism and its stress on loyalty to authority. Inside the *chaebol*, “reverence for the ‘emperor’ translates into obedience to company founders and their families, who are treated like royalty. In certain *chaebol*, employees are actively indoctrinated in the wonders of the company's founding clan.” As long as this culture endures, the *chaebol* will never get reformed.

### UNITED STATES

## Please, Chelsea, don't run for office

[New York Post](#)

“Say as little as possible, avoid unforced errors.” For decades, says Maureen Callahan, that was the strategy followed by Chelsea Clinton, the reticent, “opinion-free” daughter of Bill and Hillary. But lately she has presented a very different face. The 37-year-old has become a prolific tweeter, firing off critical messages about Donald Trump; she has started appearing at protest marches. She's also busy promoting her new, co-authored book, *Governing Global Health*, with a soft-focus interview in *The New York Times*. Though her spokesperson offered no comment, all the signs are that – God help us – she's positioning herself to run for public office. One can see why her relentlessly power-hungry parents might want this, and why some Democrats might, on paper, see Chelsea as “their next young star: hyper-educated, married mother of two, scandal-free, torchbearer for a Democratic dynasty”. But it's not a good idea. Leaving aside America's “exhaustion with dynastic politics”, the former first daughter – who lives in a \$10.5m apartment in New York and has drifted between “a series of vague, high-paying jobs” – lacks obvious voter appeal. Don't do it, Chelsea.

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A background image of a bowling lane with several pins. One pin is standing upright in the center, while others are scattered around it, some knocked over. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the pins.

# "One more thing..."

## ...before the end of the tax year

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## What the scientists are saying...

### Is back pain killing us?

Lower back pain – believed to be the world's leading cause of disability – may be an indicator of early death, a study has suggested. Researchers at Sydney University examined health data on 4,390 elderly Danish twins, and found that those who suffered from back pain were significantly more likely to die in any year than those without it. “Our study found that compared to those without [it], a person with spinal pain has a 13% higher chance of dying every year,” said team leader Dr Paulo Ferreira. “This is a significant finding as many people think that back pain is not life-threatening.” He does not think there is a direct causal link between back pain and premature death; rather that in some patients, living with pain precipitates a decline in overall health. “It’s a whole cascade of events,” he said. People with back pain “get more depressed, don’t socialise as much, don’t walk as much – these are all factors associated with mortality”. What the study shows, he added, is how vital it is that people with back pain remain active: as well as being a useful treatment for back pain, exercise helps people stay healthy.

### Clever teens and cannabis

Clever adolescents are less likely than their peers to smoke cigarettes during their teenage years – but more likely to drink alcohol and use cannabis, scientists have found. For the University College London study, 6,059 young people across England were ranked in three categories for intelligence, according to their performances in national tests at age 11. The researchers went on to track their levels of self-reported substance abuse in early (13-17), and then late (18-20), adolescence. While the brightest youths were the least likely to



*Too busy to dream?*

smoke at any point, they were – by late adolescence – more than twice as likely as those in the lowest group to drink “regularly and persistently”, and almost twice as likely to use cannabis. The researchers suspect the explanation for the varying smoking rates is simply that middle-class parents (whose children tend to perform better in academic tests) are more likely to warn their children about the dangers of smoking. However, when it comes to alcohol and cannabis, the researchers speculate that IQ level itself is a factor: they suggest that bright adolescents are more curious, and therefore more likely to experiment with drugs.

### Why elephants rarely snooze

Elephants are said never to forget. Now it seems they also rarely sleep: they need just two hours a night, on average, according to a small study – less than any other mammal. And when on the move, they

can go 48 hours without shut-eye (without compensating later with more sleep). In captivity, where they are under no pressure to find food or escape predators, elephants will sleep for up to seven hours a day. To test their sleep patterns in the wild, researchers fitted monitoring devices to the trunks of two females in Chobe National Park, Botswana, and tracked them for 35 days. If the animals’ trunks (the most active part of their body) were still for five minutes, they were presumed to be asleep, reports the New Scientist; they were also fitted with gyroscopes, to determine their sleep position. The pair were found to sleep in four or five short bursts, for a total of two hours a night; and they only lay down to sleep every three or four days – suggesting they don’t often go into REM (rapid eye movement) sleep – a dreaming sleep, at least in humans. Most mammals are thought to go into REM sleep daily. Smaller mammals tend to get more sleep than larger ones; even so, that elephants can survive on so little came as a surprise.

### Obesity linked to 11 cancers

Overweight people appear to be more susceptible to a range of cancers. A team analysed the results of 204 earlier reviews of studies looking at the link between body fat and 36 different cancers, and found “strong evidence” that 11 types of cancers are tied to obesity. The cancers, many of which are digestive or hormonal, include breast cancer and cancers of the kidney, bowel and colon. Though the study doesn’t prove excess fat leads to cancer, the team believe the relationship is causal. “We know that if you are overweight, it causes lots of disruption of hormonal and metabolic pathways,” Dr Marc Gunter, of the International Agency for Research on Cancer, told The Guardian.

## Gallons of urine in public pools

Scientists have devised a simple way to estimate the amount of urine in swimming pools – and it confirms our worst fears: a lot of people do pee in the water. Developed in Canada, the test works by measuring the concentration in water of acesulfame potassium (Ace K), an artificial sweetener used in many processed foods that passes through the body unaltered. The team, from the University of Alberta, tested 31 pools and hot tubs and found Ace K in every single one. In one 830,000-litre pool (a third the size of an Olympic pool), an estimated 75 litres of urine was released in a three-week period – enough to fill a dustbin. The highest concentration was found in a hotel hot tub.

Although urine is sterile, it may not be harmless in public pools, because compounds in pee can react with disinfectants to form by-products known as DBPs; and these, research has shown, can cause eye irritation and even (in cases of prolonged exposure) asthma. In one survey, nearly one in five adult swimmers admitted to having peed in a pool at least once. There is still no simple way to detect the presence of urine, however. Although children are often told that some pools contain a chemical that reacts with pee, turning it purple, this is a myth: there is no known means of producing this effect.



## A trip around the Moon

The US billionaire Elon Musk plans to send two paying passengers into space as early as next year, reports The Daily Telegraph. The unnamed pair will fly around the Moon and back aboard a Falcon Heavy rocket, in a six- to seven-day trip, according to Musk’s company, SpaceX. Space tourists have previously paid the Russian government an estimated \$20m each for trips to the International Space Station (ISS) – but if all goes to plan, the SpaceX duo will travel further. The ISS orbits the Earth at an altitude of 249 miles: SpaceX intends to travel up to 400,000 miles into space, further than any humans have gone (the Moon is about 238,900 miles from Earth). Having paid hefty deposits, they will start training this year, but many things could delay their trip: SpaceX has never flown people before; two of its test rockets have blown up in the past two years; and the Falcon Heavy remains untested.

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

**The Queen** has a secret code for escaping boring conversations, according to royal historian **Hugo Vickers**. Shifting her trusty Launer handbag from one hand to the other indicates to staff that she is ready to move on from a conversation. Twisting her wedding ring is the regal equivalent of an SOS, indicating that she wants to be moved along at speed. "It would be done very nicely," Vickers told *People* magazine. "Someone would come along and say [to you], 'Sir, the Archbishop of Canterbury would very much like to meet you.'"



**Martin Clunes** is challenging the taxman after being told he cannot offset the cost of plastic surgery against his income. The star of *Doc Martin* and *Men Behaving Badly* had tried to claim an unspecified cosmetic procedure against tax, on the grounds that it was essential "for the purposes of his acting trade". When HMRC refused, he lodged an appeal. He then asked the tax tribunal judge to grant him anonymity, lest he should "become the target of mockery and jokes", but his request has been refused.

**Joan Collins** has homes in New York, Hollywood, Saint-Tropez and London, and a personal fortune of around £24m – but don't ever accuse her of being rich. "What's rich?" she demanded during a frosty interview with **Michael Buerk**, published in the *Radio Times*. "I'm not exactly rich, no. Rich, as **Robert Wagner** said to me, is having f\*\*\* you money. I don't have that and I've a lifestyle to support."

## Uber: becoming "toxic"

"There are very few things that \$5bn can't buy," said Laurie Penny in *The Guardian*, "but one of them is manners." Last week, footage emerged of Uber's billionaire CEO and founder Travis Kalanick shouting at an Uber driver who'd dared to complain that sharp reductions in fares were driving him into bankruptcy. "Some people don't like to take responsibility for their own shit," sneered Kalanick, slamming the car door. (The driver gave him a one-star rating, and posted the incident – recorded on his dashcam – online.) We expect our "robber barons" to be brash, but to swear at one of your own low-paid "partners"? This is a "new class of bastard".



Kalanick: the trials of a buccaneer

Kalanick was quick to issue a grovelling apology, said Timothy B. Lee on *Vox.com* – but PR disasters are piling up for the buccaneering entrepreneur (a man notorious for joking that his firm should be called Boober, as it helps him attract so many women). Last month, a former Uber engineer wrote a scathing blog about the firm's sexist, bullying corporate culture (a verdict that was then publicly endorsed by two influential early Uber investors); and some 200,000 users deleted the app, after Uber broke a strike by cab drivers protesting against President Trump's Muslim travel ban. Uber is accused of

stealing self-driving technology from Google's Waymo division, and is fighting numerous regulatory clampdowns. In short, it has a lot of problems, and it has got into "the bad habit of trying to paper over [them] with money". It attracts, and keeps, staff by giving them potentially valuable stock options, but no opportunity to cash them in early. And it attracts customers (and so drivers) by setting artificially low fares: it's been estimated that Uber customers pay less than half the cost of their trip; the firm subsidises the rest.

The upshot is that Uber is losing astonishing sums – billions of dollars – every year, said Ed Conway in *The Times*, but investors keep funding it because they hope that, eventually, it will crack autonomous cars and clean up. Meanwhile, Uber's strategy is to drive all its rivals out of business to create a huge monopoly. But can it achieve its goals in time, wondered Lee. The likes of Apple and Google – which work hard to generate loyalty from staff and customers – have core businesses that can subsidise their driverless car divisions indefinitely. Uber is becoming toxic; its users and workers are turning against it – and at some point, its investors may lose heart, too. The revolution Uber started will carry on, but it may not last to reap the benefits.

## Sex ed: what do children need to know?

For a few years, as part of World Contraception Day, I spent some time talking to schoolchildren about sex, said Stuart Heritage in *The Guardian*. "The misinformation I encountered was catastrophic." I met teenagers who thought you couldn't get pregnant if you had sex standing up; and others who believed that a post-coital douche of Coca-Cola was an effective form of contraception. "One particularly bleak morning in Maidstone, I found myself arguing with a teenager who maintained that, in an emergency, a crisp packet would be a fine alternative to a condom." Teaching children about sex – as well as relationships, consent, privacy and safety – is more "vitally important" than ever in the internet age. So thank heavens for Justine Greening, the Education Secretary, who last week unveiled the biggest shake-up of sex education in two decades. From four years old, children will be given "age appropriate" lessons on online safety and healthy relationships. Sex education – covering everything from consent to sexting – will be compulsory in secondary schools.

This decision has been taken with "the best motives", said *The Daily Telegraph*, but questions remain. How will the subject be taught? Will there be any moral element to it, and if so, whose morality will prevail? On matters such as gender and sexuality, "opinions

that a few years ago would have been considered uncontentious are now seen as borderline criminal". Teachers know that "saying anything that fails to conform to the prevailing sexual orthodoxies (as determined by campaigners and activists) could result in the sack, or worse". There is a place for sex education in schools, certainly, "but the principal guides for children on this subject, and on relationships in general, should be parents".

On the contrary, said Janet Street-Porter in *The Independent*: most parents are hopeless at talking to their children about sex in an honest and dispassionate way. The result? An epidemic of self-harm, mental illness and abuse. By the age of 16, two-thirds of young people in the UK have watched porn online; and a recent study found that 41% of free online porn features violence against women. Digital technology has facilitated bullying, coercion and misogyny: 44% of 14-17-year-old girls have "sexted" a sexual image of themselves, and 42% of those had their image sent on to others without their consent. Teachers are the only people capable of halting these trends: "they spend far more time with children than most parents", and are trained in teaching appropriate behaviour. "Some things should never be entrusted to parents, and sex education is one of them."



## Sturgeon: could she win a second vote?

"Eight months after becoming Prime Minister, Theresa May is in a seemingly impregnable position" in domestic politics, said the FT. With the opposition in disarray, she is a staggering 18 points ahead in the polls; and her own Tories, so often riven over the EU, are largely behind her Brexit strategy. But there is a cloud on the horizon: "rumbling discontent" in Scotland that could complicate difficult Brexit negotiations. It's only two-and-a-half years since the Scots rejected independence in a poll that the SNP billed as a "once in a generation" opportunity; but that was before the Brexit referendum delivered a result a large majority of Scots opposed. They are now furious that they are being dragged out of the EU against their will, and Nicola Sturgeon has indicated that she will demand the right to hold a second independence referendum (indyref2) unless her Brexit terms – that Scotland stays in the single market and controls its own immigration policy – are met.



*A bespoke deal for Scotland?*

The idea of a bespoke deal for Scotland is beguiling, said Philip Aldrick in *The Times*. A hard Brexit threatens to hit Scotland, with its large manufacturing and agricultural sectors, harder than most regions: the Scots could pay heavily for something they rejected. But Sturgeon's proposal would create a logistical

nightmare; it is simply unworkable. So will she call for a new referendum? The timing is not propitious. North Sea oil revenues have collapsed: three years ago, the SNP predicted that Scotland's share would be £8bn by 2016; in fact, it was only £60m. Without its £9bn subsidy from Westminster, Scotland would be running a 9.5% deficit. And a divorce would threaten its access to its biggest export market: Scotland exports four times as much to the UK as it does to the rest of the EU. Independence spells "economic suicide" and years of austerity. Even so, Sturgeon may not be able to resist seizing this opportunity to demand a new vote – and May is unlikely to feel she has the democratic mandate to deny her.

In Whitehall, ministers think – when they think about Scotland at all – that Sturgeon can't win an indyref2 (and may not call one), said Alex Massie in *The Spectator*. The polls back this up: most Scots still favour remaining in the UK. But London's complacency is misplaced. Sturgeon's campaign would be based on the idea that it's worth enduring years of austerity to avoid being stuck in a Brexit, Tory-dominated UK. She'd be taking a big risk, but recent experience tells us that polls aren't reliable, and that voters don't always heed the warnings of economic experts. In these strange times, she might just pull it off.

## Universities: are they too left-wing?

"British universities are largely staffed by the Left," said Charles Moore in *The Daily Telegraph*. Perhaps that's no surprise – an "is the Pope Catholic?" thesis. But what's new, according to a study published last week, is the question of degree. The report, published by the neoliberal Adam Smith Institute, reveals that in 1964, 35% of UK academics supported the Tory party. Today, only 11% do; while 46% support Labour, 22% the Greens, and 9% the Lib Dems. "The once mixed garden of academia has become almost a monoculture." Many disciplines, particularly the humanities and social sciences, have been heavily infiltrated by the Left, which, "having waited in vain for capitalism to collapse", branched out "into wider social and cultural issues – race, sexual politics, the use of language". Today these fields are dominated by "groupthink", which is "anti-intellectual", and "bad for universities and students".



*In thrall to groupthink?*

This report is pretty flimsy, said John Morgan in *Times Higher Education*. Its main evidence for the current political leanings of academics is a small online survey published by this magazine

prior to the 2015 election. Even so, "it may be true that academics are generally more slanted towards the Left than they were in previous decades". It wouldn't be surprising if one of the few sectors not dominated by the free market attracted "people who don't want to work in a marketised sector". It seems unfair to attack "one of the few sanctuaries of left-wing sentiment" remaining to us, said Tom Whyman on Vice.com. You seldom hear people complaining that banking, big business or management consultancy are monopolised by the Right.

But universities are a special case, said *The Times*. "Higher education has to enshrine the principle of challenge and inquiry. It cannot become a place of comfort zones, of knowledge bubbles inhabited by those who seek only to confirm their own prejudices." It has become all too obvious that, in recent years, the fear of causing upset or challenging liberal orthodoxies has stifled free speech. "Universities have been rightly careful to respect diversity of gender, class and race." They should also be "alert to the need for political diversity".

## Wit & Wisdom

"No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible."  
*Poet Stanisław Jerzy Lec, quoted in The New Yorker*

"If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."  
*Einstein, quoted in The Mail on Sunday*

"The only words that don't offend a single human being are words delivered without purpose."  
*Lena Dunham, quoted on Glamour.com*

"The man who says his wife can't take a joke forgets that she took him."  
*Oscar Wilde, quoted in the San Francisco Chronicle*

"The first casualty of war is not truth, it is room service."  
*Journalist Chris Buckland, quoted in The Daily Telegraph*

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will."  
*Frederick Douglass, quoted in The Guardian*

"Like a narcotic, rudeness offers a sensation of glorious release from jailers no one else can see."  
*Novelist Rachel Cusk in The New York Times*

"A man who works hard stinks only to the ones that have nothing to do but smell."  
*Laura Ingalls Wilder, quoted in The Independent*

### Statistic of the week

Home ownership in England has fallen to 62.9% – the lowest proportion for 30 years. 46.1% of people aged 25-34 are renting privately – up from 24.2% in 2005-06. The proportion of households who rent from private landlords has more than doubled since 1990 – when Margaret Thatcher left office – partly because of the sell-off of council housing.

**The Daily Telegraph**



## Cycling: the downfall of Team Sky

“When they began to race seven years ago, Team Sky were cast as an angelic voice crying out in the wilderness,” said Oliver Holt in *The Mail on Sunday*. At a time when cycling had been battered by scandal, they were meant to be a “wholesome British antidote” to Lance Armstrong and the rest of the dopers. And we cheered them on as their riders Bradley Wiggins and Chris Froome won four of the last five Tours de France. But it’s now clear that Team Sky’s ethos was, in fact, a “grand illusion”. If anyone still believed it, a devastating House of Commons hearing into doping last week put paid to such credulity. Nicole Sapstead, the head of UK Anti-Doping (Ukad), was scathing in her criticism; in the words of MP Damian Collins, it left Team Sky’s credibility “in tatters”.



*Brailsford: a “grand illusion”*

There’s no proof that Team Sky were doping, said David Walsh in *The Sunday Times*. The problem is, they’ve done a terrible job of proving they weren’t. Most troubling is an incident that took place in 2011, when a mysterious Jiffy bag was couriered to a race in France for Wiggins. Team Sky claim it contained Fluimucil, a harmless decongestant available over the counter. Why, then, did someone go to the trouble of personally delivering it from the UK? Ukad has spent five months trying to get to the bottom of what was in the bag – but Team Sky have given them little help. They say they have no records because their doctor, Richard Freeman, failed to upload them; and he can’t access them now, he says, because his laptop was stolen. The controversy is all the more damaging following last year’s revelations about Wiggins: that between 2011 and 2013, he received special permission to use Triamcinolone, a corticosteroid known

to have been used by dopers. It was, apparently, needed to treat his pollen allergies – but that’s akin to “cracking a nut with a sledgehammer”.

No one comes out of this well, said Rod Liddle in the same paper. Not Freeman, whose excuses are laughable. And not Wiggins, who was once considered a British sporting hero. But this goes deeper than that, said Matt Dickinson in *The Times*. Team Sky boss Dave Brailsford was the performance director of British Cycling, the sport’s governing body, until 2014. And the organisations are incredibly close, sharing a base and personnel; it was a British Cycling coach who delivered the mysterious package. It’s true that in the “scale of cycling controversies”, these failings are “relatively minor”. But after promising to do things “to the highest standards”, Team Sky must

be judged accordingly. None of their riders will escape suspicion now, said William Fotheringham in *The Guardian*. Froome will face questions, even though there’s “no evidence of anything untoward in his three Tour wins”. Brailsford can’t come back from this – he should do the decent thing and “fall on his sword”.

### Sporting headlines

**Athletics** Laura Muir won gold in the 1,500m and 3,000m at the European Athletics Indoor Championship. Britain won five gold medals overall, and ten medals in total.

**Football** Leicester’s caretaker boss Craig Shakespeare has been named manager until the end of the season.

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## Boxing: Haye loses the fight of the year

"Boxers rarely know when to stop," said Rick Broadbent in *The Times*. And David Haye is no exception. By the 11th round of his fight against Tony Bellew last Saturday, the British fighter was "utterly spent"; having ruptured his Achilles tendon in the sixth round, he could hardly move. But "ailing" though he was, he refused to give up, and was only spared from further damage when his trainer threw in the towel. Haye had to undergo surgery the next day – and Bellew, too, was in bad shape, nursing a broken right hand.



Haye (left): a punishing bout

at 36, he was rusty; he had fought just eight rounds of competitive boxing in the previous five years. And it showed, said Oliver Brown in *The Daily Telegraph*. Haye was expected to subject his opponent to "a world of pain". Yet Bellew capitalised on Haye's injury "spectacularly", braving all manner of "punishment".

The fight will go down as "one of the biggest shocks in recent British boxing history", said Oliver Holt in *The Mail* on Sunday. But it will also be remembered as the moment when Haye showed there was "nobility beyond his crass posturing". In the run-up to the bout, he had made some unacceptable comments – suggesting, for instance, that he would put Bellew in hospital. But by refusing to give up, he rescued his reputation. That makes it "as good a time as ever" for Haye to bow out, said Kevin Mitchell in *The Guardian*. Bellew is considering retirement, and Haye should do the same. After this fight, he can "depart with honour".

There was no title up for grabs, said Kevin Mitchell in *The Observer*. Yet it was, nevertheless, a "strong contender for fight of the year". In one corner was cruiserweight world champion Bellew, an old-school "family man" from Liverpool who enters the ring to the *Z Cars* theme tune. And in the other, weighing a stone more than his opponent, was Haye, a "playboy Londoner" who "saunters through his sport like a film star". He was a fearsome fighter in his prime but,

## Kane's scoring spree

Harry Kane is proving to be "the man for all seasons", said Henry Winter in *The Times*. In 2014-15, the Tottenham striker scored 21 Premier League goals. Last season he was the top scorer, with 25. And now he leads the race for the Golden Boot once again, with 19 goals so far this season; since the start of January, he has struck an extraordinary 14 in all competitions. On Sunday, in Tottenham's 3-2 win over Everton, the 23-year-old was the "match-winner", said Jason Burt in *The Daily Telegraph*. He netted twice, and the first goal – fired in from 30 yards – "summed up" his "brilliance": it was the kind of goal that great players score. Yet there is more to Kane than just "majestic goalscoring", said Barney Ronay in *The Guardian*. Unlike many strikers, he "works like a maniac" and leads from the front. If he keeps this up, he could be the next England captain.



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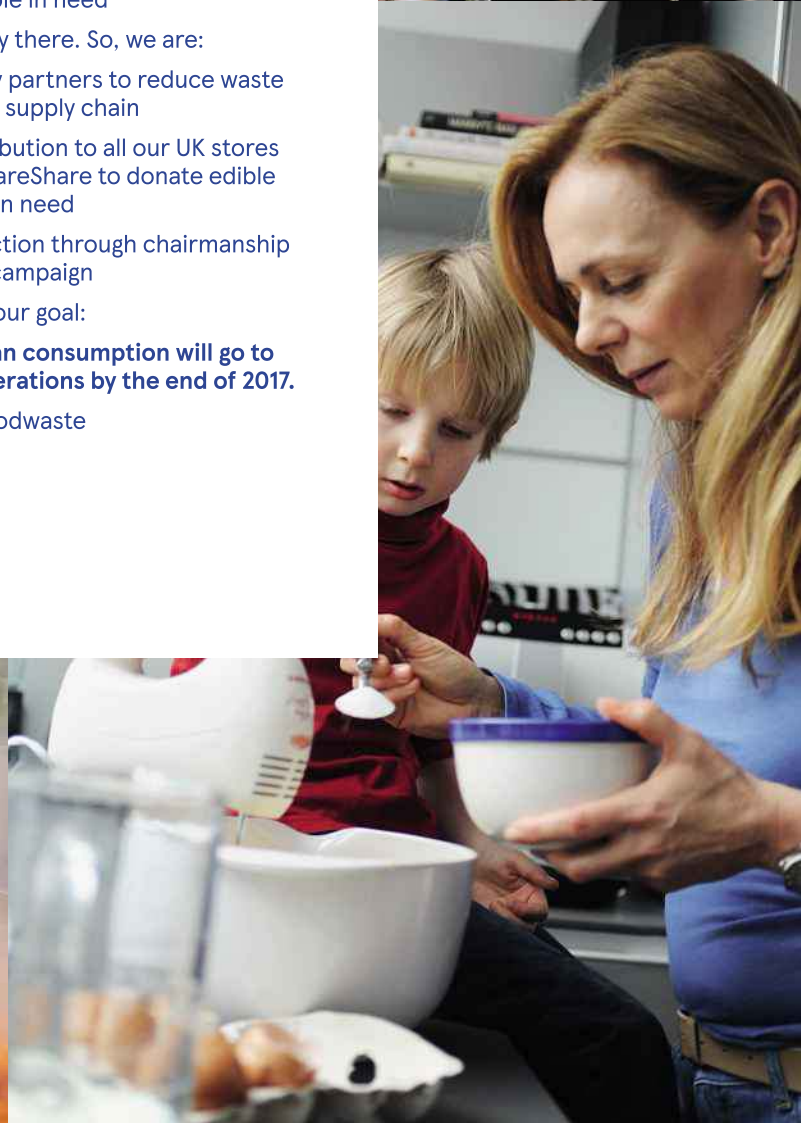
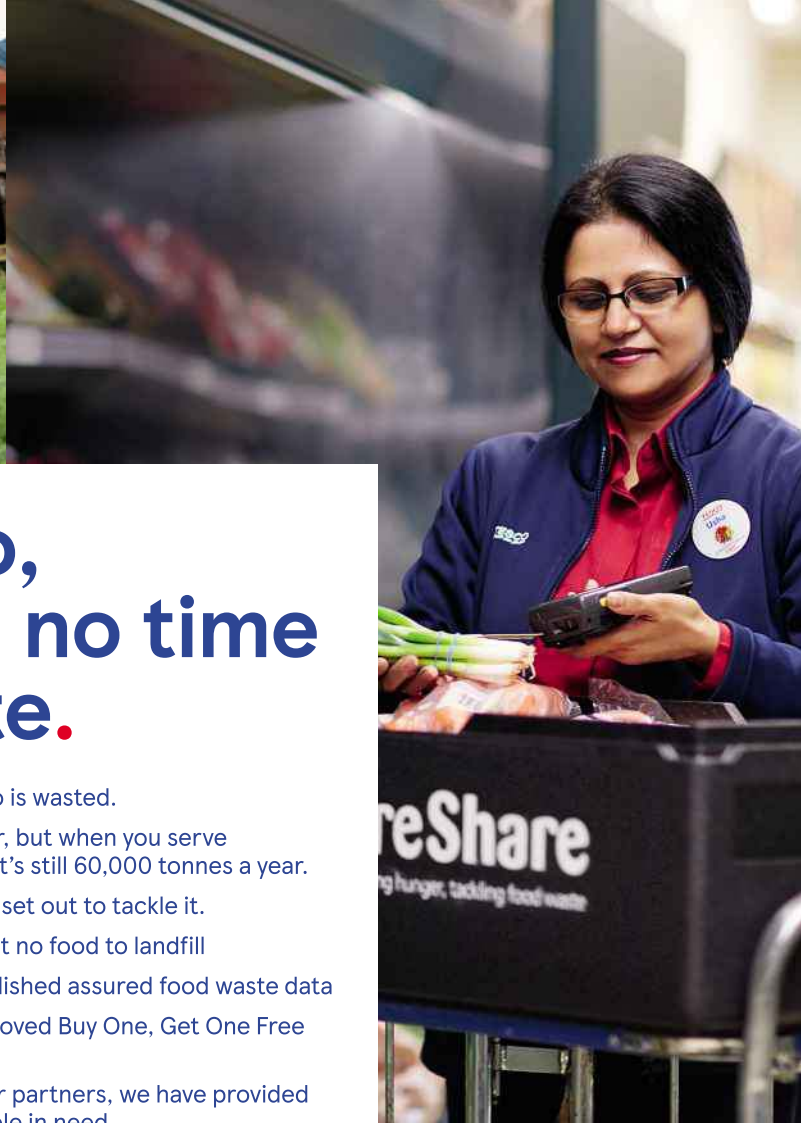
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# Pick of the week's correspondence

## The truth about tax

*To The Daily Telegraph*

If Philip Hammond, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, wants matters to be transparent, he should review the "small print" of HM Government's 30,000-page tax code. How many taxpayers realise that (once employee's and employer's National Insurance contributions are taken into account) the basic tax rate of 20% is the equivalent of 40%, and the higher rate of 40% is in fact 49%?

David Cameron claimed to have "taken millions of working people out of taxation altogether", yet they are paying 12% on earnings above £5,668 (the threshold for National Insurance), and the employer is paying a further 13.8%.

We have had to wait a long time for a Conservative government, and some of us would like a radical one while the going is good. The Conservatives should reform this smoke-and-mirrors system, instead of offering us more of the same.

*Matthew Sands, Horncastle, Lincolnshire*

## Getting Russia wrong

*To The Times*

The Foreign Office's shortage of competent Russian-language speakers affects its ability to interact not just with Russia but across a much wider region where Russian remains the lingua franca. A more serious related problem is the lack of knowledge of Russian political culture at mid and senior levels. The Foreign Office currently has no policymakers who have served in Russia.

Not surprisingly, this deficiency is impacting the UK's ability to read Russian intentions and respond to them. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office still has a handful of outstanding researchers who have studied Russia for decades. Sadly, there is no evidence that their insights are shaping policy. Labelling as "experts" officials who have worked on Russia for short periods, as the Foreign Office is currently doing, is no way to address the problem.

*John Lough, associate fellow, Russia & Eurasia Programme, Chatham House*

## Exchange of the week

### Being polite to robots

*To The Times*

At the risk of over-personalising digital assistants such as Amazon's Alexa even further, would it reduce the risk of children turning into "spoilt brats" if protocols were built in that required the use of "please" and "thank you", and other similar polite language, to activate instructions to any electronic device or robot?

*The Rev Dr Ian K. Duffield, Sheffield*

*To The Times*

Ian Duffield's suggestion that we say "please" to subhumans is both morally dangerous and theologically indefensible. It has, however, been tried. During the crucial acceptance firings of the Saturn IV-B moon rocket, the test conductor entered the "Fire" command. Hundreds of onlookers held their breath, but the silence was broken only by the automatic typewriter: "Say please." He tried again, with the same result. A third time he entered into the machine his humble request to fire, this time adding (without much hope) the word "please". "This is your programmer," the machine typed back, "wishing you good luck." With a roar, the rocket ignited, and within two years men were walking on the moon.

*Martin Kochanski, London*

## Dark age for doctors

*To The Daily Telegraph*

A letter from 436 doctors tells us that the NHS is facing its worst crisis ever.

Consider my situation as a newly qualified doctor working in a small but busy hospital in south London. All the beds in the ward are full, and patients are being kept in beds and on trolleys in the corridor. The Emergency Bed Service shunts sick patients round London in an attempt to find beds. I am working 100 hours a week. Out of hours, I am one of only two inexperienced doctors looking after the whole of the hospital. The only senior support is by phone from a hospital several miles away. I am tired and unable to cope, and I know patients are being put at great risk as a result.

When is this? 1972.  
*Dr Irving Wells, Yelverton, Devon*

## Corporate lunacy

*To The Daily Telegraph*

Reader Deirdre Lay writes about the money wasted on changing the position of the NHS logo on hospital stationery. I'm afraid it goes much deeper than that. As a hospital consultant in a large teaching hospital, I was once asked for comments on a 200-page document setting out the hospital's typographical

requirements for its corporate stationery. My comments went along the lines that the whole document was a flagrant misuse of taxpayers' money.

One of the managers was kind enough to explain to me that I clearly did not understand how vital it was for the hospital to develop its own corporate identity. He was quite right. I didn't understand it then and I don't understand it now.

*Dr Andy Dyson, Newark, Nottinghamshire*

## Rights of residence

*To The Times*

The Government's duty is to protect the rights of its citizens – it has no obligation to continue the residency rights of non-British EU citizens living in the UK. They are not British and a change to their rights is an inevitable, or at least foreseeable, result of the referendum vote. David Cameron gave his speech promising an in/out referendum in January 2013; there has been ample warning.

If residency rights are being considered, the focus should be on UK citizens resident in the EU outside the UK. Our position could

be protected on the basis of an offer of equivalence for non-British EU citizens in the UK, or something else. It's a matter for negotiation, but in any event, the House of Lords is worried about the wrong group.

*Matthew Hall, Brussels*

## Make landowners pay

*To The Guardian*

The debate on inheritance tax focuses on the wrong issue: the lower threshold for IHT. The real problem is the upper threshold – not a precise value set by Parliament, but we all know it exists. Above it are so many exemptions, trusts, loopholes, schemes, dodges and scams, that IHT becomes entirely voluntary.

Two-thirds of Britain's 60-million acres are owned by 0.4% of the population, and are largely exempt from IHT. As this land never comes to market, these grotesque perpetual fortunes distort life for the other 99.6% of us. If massive landowners had to pay 40% IHT, like anyone else, it would raise tens of billions per year; 92% of people never pay IHT. It's a tax you don't have to pay until you're dead; and land cannot be hidden or removed to a tax haven; what's not to like?

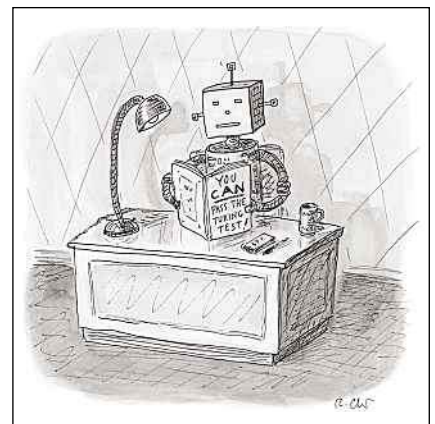
*Martin Lyster, Oxford*

## To vote, or not to vote?

*To The Daily Telegraph*

As it would be uncomfortable for the Prime Minister either to allow or deny a second Scottish independence referendum, why not call a referendum on whether the Scots actually want one?

*Cynthia Harrod-Eagles, Northwood, Middlesex*



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# Review of reviews: Books

## Book of the week

### Claretta: Mussolini's Last Lover

by R.J.B. Bosworth

Yale 320pp £18.99

The Week Bookshop £15.99

Claretta Petacci first met Benito Mussolini in 1932, when the dictator had been in power for ten years. He was 49 and she was 20, but she had long been a fervent admirer of Il Duce.

Motoring to the seaside resort of Ostia, Claretta, the daughter of Pope Pius XI's physician, spotted Mussolini in his Alfa Romeo, and ordered her chauffeur to follow him. Within days, she was visiting his headquarters and reading him her poems. The couple's affair – which lasted until their deaths in 1945 – was conducted with the full connivance of Claretta's parents, who were eager to exploit the benefits it conferred. Her mother, in particular, was a "ruthless and avid seeker" of preferment, said Caroline Moorehead in *Literary Review*. Just like her daughter, Signora Petacci went out of her way to accommodate Mussolini, even installing huge mirrors on the walls and ceiling of Claretta's bedroom. Based on Claretta's extensive diaries and letters, Bosworth's book is a "captivating" portrait of their affair.

Sex with the "Great Ejaculator" was "invariably rough, brutal



and short", said Gerard DeGroot in *The Times*. He was a "selfish lover" with "colossal" appetites, which meant that Claretta had to share him with a "vast collection" of other mistresses. (Mussolini fathered five legitimate children, and at least another nine illegitimately, by eight different women.) Yet none of this seems to have unduly bothered Claretta, for whom "sex and power were inextricably linked". Mussolini's braggadocio, in particular, worked "like an aphrodisiac", said Ian Thomson in *The Spectator*. While he

boasted about having the "most beautiful body in Italy", she described him as radiating "god-like potency" and "bull-like" magnetism. This is a detailed, "absorbing" book.

"Romeo and Juliet they were not, but there were happy times," said Miranda Seymour in *The Daily Telegraph*. Mussolini would serenade Claretta on his violin; they'd listen to Beethoven together ("a shame that he was a Jew," Mussolini would say). Sex grew problematic, but Claretta's father supplied Il Duce with a fore-runner of Viagra, Hormovin. After 1943, when Mussolini was installed as a puppet dictator in northern Italy, their meetings grew fewer. In April 1945, with the Allies closing in, they tried to escape together to Switzerland, but were captured, executed and strung up side by side in Milan. Claretta, who "never ceased to believe" in Mussolini, was "loyal to the degrading end".

### Being Wagner

by Simon Callow

William Collins 208pp £14.99

The Week Bookshop £12.99

"You might expect a book called *Being Wagner* to weigh in at a million pages or so," said Craig Brown in *The Mail on Sunday*. But Simon Callow's biography is "short and sweet": the perfect introduction for those, like me, who "sense that something profound is going on, and would like to know more". Wagner's music, Callow suggests, was the "intense expression of emotional and erotic desire". As for the man himself, he was not only "physically off-putting" – with a "huge head and bulging eyes" – but also "ungrateful, treacherous and pathologically offensive". In short, "one of the most impossible human beings ever to have lived".

Based on his "deranged" anti-Semitism, and the fact that Hitler loved his operas, Wagner has often been depicted as a "proto-Nazi", said Michael Gove in *The Times*. But this simply wasn't true; most of his beliefs were "wildly different" from Hitler's. Moreover, his personal monstrosity was inseparable from his genius: both were products of his "titanic self-belief". This is what "sustained him through every trial" and made him able to compose works of "staggering ambition". "Sparkily written", witty and learned, *Being Wagner* "brings the master vividly to life".

### Novel of the week

#### Lincoln in the Bardo

by George Saunders

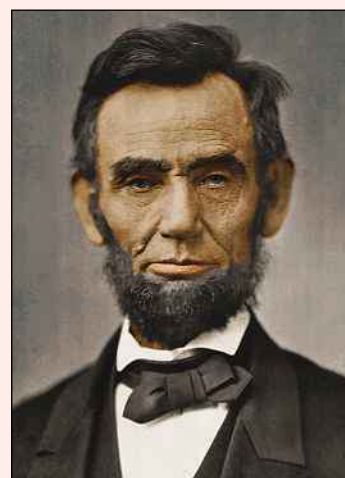
Bloomsbury 368pp £18.99

The Week Bookshop £15.99

On 20 February 1862, less than a year into the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's favourite child, Willie, died of typhoid fever, aged 11. Two nights later, the grief-stricken president paid a nocturnal visit to his tomb.

*Lincoln in the Bardo* – the first novel by acclaimed short story writer George Saunders – "takes over from there", said Tim Martin in *Literary Review*. It imagines the cemetery as a bardo (in Buddhism, a place of transition between death and rebirth) populated by "jabbering spirits", who relate their life stories in "little quoted blurbs". Interleaved with these scenes are chapters made up of extracts from historical documents (some real, some "stealthily fabricated") that build a picture of Lincoln's presidency and the Civil War. Saunders' afterlife – a "confusing and abstract realm" – is the perfect vehicle for his "distinctively surreal imagination"; this novel, at times, is "huge fun". Yet it is also a work of "genuine seriousness" whose "consolations, when they come, are profound".

This "prodigiously inventive" fiction could easily have toppled into "absurdity", said Peter Kemp in *The Sunday Times*. That it doesn't is down to Saunders' flair for pastiche, his ability to convey emotion, and his "narrative panache". *Lincoln in the Bardo* "may well be the most strange and brilliant book you'll read this year", said Alex Preston in the *Financial Times*. In its final pages, Saunders imagines the "noble, broken, moral" president setting out from the cemetery "with his sorrow". Given the "monstrous buffoon" who now holds his office, the image has "enormous power".



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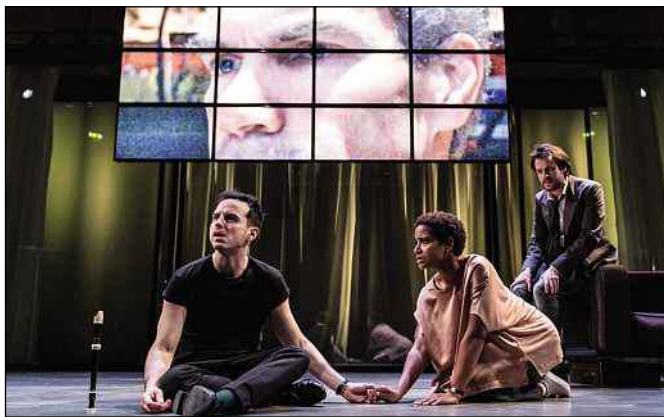


## Theatre: Hamlet

Almeida Theatre, London N1 (020-7359 4404). Until 15 April Running time: 3hrs 45mins (with intervals) ★★★

Irish actor Andrew Scott is best known for his “brilliantly malevolent” Moriarty in the BBC series *Sherlock*, said Christopher Hart in *The Sunday Times*. Now, he has returned to the theatre to take on the melancholic Prince of Denmark – a bold choice for his Shakespearean stage debut. He “certainly looks the part”: his Hamlet is “small, intense and mercurial, fidgety and tormented, one expression following another with volatile speed”. And he has “an exhilarating line in sarcastic eye-rolling”. Clad in black, at times barefoot, Scott’s hallmark is a “quivering, quavering emotionality”, said Dominic Cavendish in *The Daily Telegraph*. Still boyish at 40, his Hamlet has “coltish vulnerability”, and we believe he is racked with grief for his dead father. What he lacks, though, is “full-throttle passion”; his lyrical but low-key performance mirrors this “disappointingly subdued” modern-dress production, with its emphasis on spying and CCTV surveillance.

I found the production “masterly”, said David Benedict in *Variety*. Director Robert Icke’s casting of Angus Wright as Claudius, his demeanour exuding “decency”, was a typically cunning move. By presenting the new king as fine and upstanding, Icke “lends affecting doubt to Hamlet’s revenge plans”, turns Gertrude (Juliet Stevenson) into a far more interesting character,



Scott (left) in a career-defining performance

and helps create the mood of a “genuine Scandi-noir thriller”. Among the many clever touches, said Michael Billington in *The Guardian*, I especially loved the staging of *The Mousetrap*, the play within the play. It has the king sitting in the front row of the Almeida audience, as a TV news camera tracks reactions to the players’ recreation of his crime. Another nice touch was seeing Ophelia (Jessica Brown Findlay) playing the mad scene as a “hospitalised patient”.

Not all the modern touches work, said Henry Hitchings in the *London Evening Standard*.

The deliberately leisurely pace (there are two intervals) means that in some scenes the long evening loses “its grip”. But mostly, this *Hamlet* is “rich and beautiful – with Andrew Scott delivering a career-defining performance that’s charismatic and surprising”.

## The week’s other opening

**The Hypocrite** Hull Truck Theatre, Hull, until 25 March; then Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from 31 March-29 April Staged for Hull’s year as the UK City of Culture, Richard Bean’s *One Man, Two Guvnors*-style farce, set during the English Civil War, is a “raucously merry” take on local history, with enough “running gags to fill a theatrical marathon” (*Guardian*).

## CDs of the week: three new releases

**Laura Marling:**  
**Semper Femina**  
More Alarming  
Records  
£9.99



Having expressed dissatisfaction with her fifth album, the self-produced *Short Movie*, Laura Marling has turned to producer Blake Mills to oversee the recording of this, her sixth, said Andy Gill in *The Independent*. Mills, whose diverse work includes John Legend, Jim James, Alabama Shakes and Lana Del Rey, “specialises in the spaces and textures of sound”. Here, along with arranger Rob Moose, he has helped Marling create gripping, irresistible work which at times recalls the “darkly pastoral” music of Nick Drake, and at others the “shivering strings” and “scrawling vibrato lead guitar line” of Portishead.

Perhaps for the first time in Marling’s illustrious career as a singer-songwriter, our “attention is focused as much on the music as the lyrics”, said Mark Edwards in *The Sunday Times*. It seems that Mills has successfully broadened Marling’s music and “pushed her guitar-playing into new places”: the off-kilter opening track, *Soothing*, exemplifies the new sound, and “offers a career-best performance”.

**Sleaford Mods:**  
**English Tapas**  
Rough Trade  
£9.99



When the great and the good of the music industry tip their stars of tomorrow, none has ever mentioned “a truculent middle-aged man from Nottingham who rants like the guy at the bar nobody wants to be stuck next to, while his friend sets off a looped sample on a laptop and jiggles about”, said Will Hodgkinson in *The Times*. Yet Jason Williamson, a 46-year-old former benefits adviser, and Andrew Fearn, a former call-centre worker, have, since their 2012 debut as Sleaford Mods, become “the most vital and original band in Britain”. This latest collection is a “relentless listen”, with its savage songs of English working-class rage, yet it is also “engaging and impossible to ignore”.

Many assumed that Sleaford Mods would be a short-lived phenomenon, said Alexis Petridis in *The Guardian*. But this “great” album – potent, incisive, blackly funny and more melodious than previous offerings – never sounds remotely like a “band running out of steam. Quite the opposite.” More please.

**Les Arts Florissants:**  
**Monteverdi**  
**Madrigali Vol. 3,**  
**Venezia (cond.**  
**Paul Agnew)**  
Harmonia Mundi  
£12



After discs devoted to the madrigals that Monteverdi wrote in Cremona and Mantua, the final part of Les Arts Florissants’ anthology – a sublime celebration of the “joyous range and variety” of the composer’s madrigals as they evolved over six decades – presents pieces from the seventh and eighth books, said Andrew Clements in *The Guardian*. Published in Venice in 1619 and 1638 respectively, they were the last such collections to appear in the composer’s lifetime, and the 51 numbers include some of the greatest of all of Monteverdi’s music.

The standard five-part madrigal is a rarity here, said Hugh Canning in *The Sunday Times*; instead we chiefly get pieces for solo voice, two, three and six parts. Tenor Paul Agnew takes the role of narrator, and while his Italian isn’t as natural as a native’s, his “declamatory style and articulation are gripping”. He is also the lead in the *Lamento della Ninfa*, but he doesn’t outshine his two sopranos, whose voices clash with “exquisite dissonance” in *Chiome d’oro*.

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

## Logan

Dir: James Mangold  
2hrs 17mins (15)

*A serious  
superhero movie*

★★★

“What happens when superheroes get old?” That’s the question at the heart of *Logan*, a downbeat, extremely violent, but “surprisingly engaging” bit of Hollywood hokum, said Peter Bradshaw in The Guardian. Reprising the role of Wolverine, a man-beast with lethal claws and a supernatural ability to self-heal, Hugh Jackman is over the hill and drinking hard – in fact, with his ragged beard and wild eyes he looks a lot like Mel Gibson after a heavy night, said Brian Viner in the Daily Mail. Yet when his ailing mentor Professor Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) asks him to protect a young mutant (Dafne Keen) from a sinister scientist (Richard E. Grant) and his gang of heavies, our hero reluctantly agrees. Thanks to director James Mangold’s emphasis on character development over CGI excess, what follows is the “perfect antidote” for anyone sick of soulless superhero fare. It’s almost impossible to make a serious superhero movie, said David Sexton in the London Evening Standard. Yet *Logan* comes pretty close. And that’s largely thanks to the “superb” Jackman, who carries the movie from start to finish. “No matter how battered” he looks, you “root for him”.



## Viceroy’s House

Dir: Gurinder Chadha  
1hr 46mins (12A)

*Sprawling period drama  
with Gillian Anderson*

★★

This is a Merchant Ivory-style period drama that examines the last days of the Raj in India through the prism of a single household; albeit the house in question (that of British Viceroy Lord Mountbatten) is so vast it makes Buckingham Palace look like a shed, said Kate Muir in The Times. The film begins as a light comedy, with Hugh Bonneville in fine fettle as Mountbatten, and Gillian Anderson wielding a “hilariously posh English accent” as his brittle wife, Edwina. It’s in the transition to a weightier tone, as independence looms, that it loses its way, said Tim Robey in The Daily Telegraph. The British-Indian director Gurinder Chadha (*Bend It Like Beckham*) focuses on the romance between a Hindu servant (Manish Dayal) and the Muslim girl he hopes to marry (Huma Qureshi), and though both are charming, their story is “too cute for the context”. Cast members also struggle with occasionally clunky dialogue, said Geoffrey Macnab in The Independent. Freedom is “a fearful thing”, we’re told. Yet this “sprawling and vivid melodrama” still makes a spirited stab at a “massive subject”.



## Certain Women

Dir: Kelly Reichardt  
1hr 47mins (12A)

*A retort to  
modern cinema?*

★★★

This “low-key” movie – a triptych of stories set in the wide open spaces of Montana – is profoundly at odds with what we’ve come to expect from mainstream cinema, said Wendy Ide in The Observer. Instead of making an all-out assault on the senses, it draws us in “with its melancholy rhythms and lovely, textured performances”. A lawyer (Laura Dern) copes with a recalcitrant client (Jared Harris); the deep antagonism between a husband and wife (Michelle Williams and James Le Gros) is brought to the surface as they try to build a weekend retreat; a lonely horse trainer (Lily Gladstone) falls for an impoverished teacher (Kristen Stewart). The narrative arcs are “so gentle”, they barely qualify as plot, said Liz Beardsworth in Empire. Yet the performances are spot on, and writer-director Kelly Reichardt leavens the mix with flashes of wit and insight. Understatement is all very well, said Camilla Long in The Sunday Times, but Reichardt starves us of any themes or messages. The result, dare I say it, is a little dull.



## The gay allegories at the heart of Disney films

What is it about Disney’s new live-action film version of *Beauty and the Beast* that has been causing such consternation? Russia has rated it an adult-only 16+; a cinema in Alabama has banned it (“If I can’t sit through a movie with God or Jesus sitting by me,” the cinema’s owner explained, “then we have no business showing it”). They were appalled, said Stefan Kyriazis in the Sunday Express, by the way a minor character called LeFou is shown to have a homosexual crush on Beauty’s suitor, Gaston. As the film’s director, Bill Condon, told *Attitude* magazine: one day, LeFou wants “to be Gaston”; the next he wants to kiss him.

Don’t be misled into thinking this wacky character (his name means “The Madman”) is a sign of enlightened attitudes at Disney, said Ben Lawrence in The Daily Telegraph. He has probably been introduced as a “cynical” marketing ploy to attract gay viewers – though Disney’s animated films have always had a



LeFou with Gaston

strong gay following. It’s not hard to see why, said Guy Lodge in The Guardian, given how many are stories of sweet-natured but “different” outsiders on a quest for “acceptance or transcendence”. Think of Pinocchio and his dream of being a “real boy”; think of Dumbo, who learns how to fly.

But most of all, think of the 1991 Disney cartoon of *Beauty and the Beast*, said Adam White in The Daily Telegraph. Its songs were written by Oscar-winning lyricist Howard Ashman, who was dying of an Aids-related illness at the time. He saw in his own plight a parallel with the Beast’s: a noble creature cursed with a physical transformation, doomed to waste away unless saved by a miracle. (“We don’t like what we don’t understand,” sing the hostile villagers as they advance on the Beast’s castle.) The songwriter’s “musical vision” influenced the entire film. Ashman, not LeFou, deserves to be remembered as Disney’s “first gay hero”.



## Exhibition of the week **America after the Fall: Painting in the 1930s**

Royal Academy, London W1 ([www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)). Until 4 June

The 1930s was a “terrible decade” for America, said Laura Cumming in *The Observer*. The Great Depression plunged millions into poverty, and the ecological disaster known as the Dust Bowl forced scores of “poverty-stricken” farmers to flee their homes. Meanwhile, war loomed large on the horizon. Yet as a new show at the Royal Academy demonstrates, this tumultuous period was “evidently great” for American painting. The exhibition brings together 45 works by 32 artists created between the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and America’s entry into the Second World War, in 1941. Mixing household names including Georgia O’Keeffe, Jackson Pollock and Edward Hopper with overlooked artists, many of whom are unheard of outside the US, it illustrates the “terrific variety” of the American avant-garde of the period. This revelatory exhibition is “not to be missed by anyone with the slightest interest in painting”.

The star attraction here is Grant Wood’s “hugely famous” painting *American Gothic*, said Philip Hensher in *The Mail on Sunday*. The work, which has never previously left the US, has been “reproduced and parodied” countless times, but seeing this “haunting” painting up close is “quite a new experience”. Other



Edward Hopper's *Gas* (1940): a “masterpiece”

is Peter Blume’s *The Eternal City*, a “crass” depiction of Mussolini as a “glaring, green-faced jack-in-the-box”.

This is not “a show of great paintings”, said Michael Glover in *The Independent*. But it is full of “highly significant” works by many painters struggling to define the nature of a changing US during a “momentous decade”. It demonstrates how painters such as Pollock and Philip Guston, who later became famous as abstract expressionists, experimented restlessly with style. While an early work by Pollock is a great disappointment, Guston’s depiction of the bombing of Guernica in the Spanish Civil War as a “swirling tondo of stricken figures” is terrific. “Inconsistent” though it is, this exhibition is a bold attempt to explain how American art forged a distinct identity for itself in the 1930s.

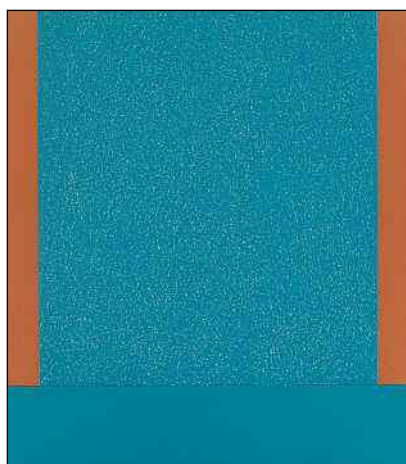
## Where to buy...

*The Week* reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

### Colour is

at Waddington Custot

You’d expect an exhibition featuring work by the likes of Anthony Caro, Josef Albers and Frank Stella to be worth a visit. And this one, which focuses on how abstract artists have approached colour from the 1950s to the present-day, does not disappoint. The aforementioned trio are represented by pieces of top quality – not least Stella’s hypnotic screen-print *Double Grey Scramble* (1973) – but the real highlights here come from less celebrated names. From David Annesley’s duckling yellow 1965 steel sculpture *Orinoco*, which resembles two ribbons of pasta stuck together, to Japanese artist Yuko Shiraishi’s minimal but transfixing 2016 painting *I See You See Me*, almost everything demands the visitor’s full attention. Most extraordinary of all is the intense



Peter Halley's *Blue Cell PHP 99-38s* (1999), 111.8cm x 101.6cm

orange glow of John Hoyland’s 1973 painting 29.8.73. As with all Hoyland’s best work, its saturated colour appears to blast off the canvas, creating a joyous effect as intense as Mark Rothko’s celebrated “colour fields”. Prices range from £28,000 to £755,000.

11 Cork Street, London W1 (020-7851 2200). Until 22 April.

## The West Banksy hotel

“A hotel, museum, protest and gallery all in one”, designed by the British street artist Banksy, has just opened in Bethlehem, says Emma Graham-Harrison in *The Guardian*. Nestled against the wall separating the Palestinian territories from Israel, The Walled Off Hotel boasts “the worst



view of any hotel in the world” – all rooms look out onto the controversial concrete wall and an illegal Israeli settlement beyond. The place has a “dystopian colonial theme”: in the reception area, a classical bust appears to be wreathed in clouds of tear gas; seascapes show beaches littered with life jackets. Seven of the bedrooms are also decorated with Banksy artworks, including a mural of an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian soldier thumping each other with pillows. A small museum explains the troubled history of the region, while a gallery shows work by Palestinian artists. In a statement, Banksy described the hotel as “a three-storey cure for fanaticism, with limited car parking”.





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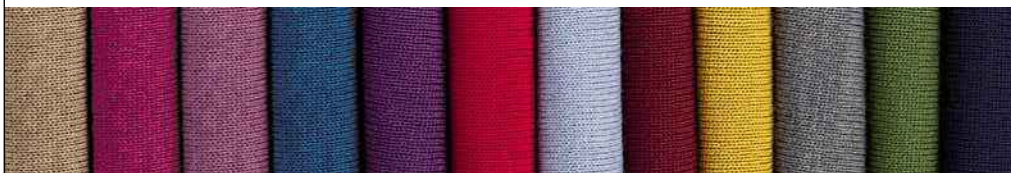
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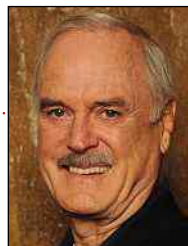


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## Best books... John Cleese

The comedian, writer, actor and Monty Python founder John Cleese picks six of his favourite books. His memoir, *So, Anyway...*, has recently been released as an audiobook by Random House at £21.99



**The Master and His Emissary** by Iain McGilchrist, 2009 (Yale £12.99). This is probably the most interesting and important book I've read. McGilchrist is an extraordinary man. After teaching at Oxford, he became a psychiatrist and worked on the neuroimaging of the brain. His book is about the brain's distinct hemispheres, which he believes have different ways of being in life, and that in our modern world they've fallen out of balance.

**Popper** by Bryan Magee, 1973 (Fontana £9.99). To me, Karl Popper is the best philosopher of science of the last century. This little book taught me more about the philosophy of science than any other.

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

**War and Peace** by Leo Tolstoy, 1869 (Vintage £9.99). It's been many years since I read this, but I still remember certain sequences: men riding into battle, and the way they try to distract themselves from the fact that they could be dead in an hour's time.

**The Bonfire of the Vanities** by Tom Wolfe, 1987 (Vintage £9.99). Wolfe's big novel about 1980s New York is superb. It delighted me, and told me so much about a certain part of American society.

**Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky** by Maurice Nicoll (six vols.), 1952 (Eureka £150).

Nicoll, a British psychiatrist, was a pupil of Armenian philosopher George Gurdjieff. His book contains brilliant advice on understanding one's own psychology as viewed through the Esoteric Christian tradition.

**Lucky Jim** by Kingsley Amis, 1954 (Penguin £8.99). I met Amis once and liked him very much. He was rather sour, but wrote beautifully and captured certain personalities spot on. Jim Dixon, a minor university lecturer, has wonderfully funny fantasies, and a sometime girlfriend called Margaret, who is one of the most awful human beings in fiction. I laughed so much reading this by a pool in Spain that I became a nuisance to the people around me.

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

### Last Chance

**Love's Labour's Lost** and **Much Ado About Nothing** at the Theatre Royal Haymarket, London SW1 (020-7930 8800). Christopher Luscombe's RSC double bill of Shakespeare's romantic comedies – here set on either side of the First World War – is “blissfully entertaining and emotionally involving” (Daily Telegraph). Ends 18 March.

### Book now

Kwame Kwei-Armah's new musical, **One Love**, charts the life of Bob Marley from rising reggae star to global icon. With Mitchell Brunings as Marley. Until 15 April, Birmingham Repertory Theatre (0121-236 4455).

David Tennant takes the lead in a revival of **Don Juan in Soho**, the Patrick Marber play that transports Molière's 1665 tragedy to modern-day London. 17 March-10 June, Wyndham's Theatre, London WC2 (0844-482 5120).

Hermione Lee, Deborah Levy, Colm Tóibín and Richard Ford are among the authors talking at the **Charleston Festival**, along with



The “blissfully entertaining” *Love's Labour's Lost*

politician Nick Clegg and the artist Maggi Hambling. 19-29 May, Firle, Lewes, East Sussex ([www.charleston.org.uk/festival](http://www.charleston.org.uk/festival)).

### Just out in paperback

**The Pier Falls** by Mark Haddon (Vintage £8.99). Haddon's collection of short stories show he is “an exquisite writer” – “a master of foreboding” whose prose is “limpid and darkly comic” (The Times).

## Television

### Programmes

**War Child** This moving documentary follows three Middle Eastern refugee children on their hazardous journey across Europe in search of sanctuary. Sun 12 March, C4 10.30pm (70mins).

**Murder in Italy** *Storyville* documentary following the investigation into the fate of schoolgirl Yara Gambirasio, who disappeared in northern Italy in 2010. It took four years and 20,000 DNA samples, and unlocked some deep family secrets. Mon 13 March, BBC4 10pm (85mins).

**The Last Kingdom** Second series of the acclaimed historical drama based on Bernard Cornwell's novels about pre-Norman England. Thur 16 March, BBC2 9pm (60mins).

**Wild Ireland: The Edge of the World** Colin Stafford-Johnson explores the ruins of the Skellig Rocks – a monastic outcrop off county Kerry. Fri 17 March, BBC2 9pm (60mins).

### Films

**Red Sorghum** (1987) Zhang Yimou directs this exotic fable of a young bride (Gong Li) who is escorted across 1920s China to meet her husband-to-be, a rich, leprosy winemaker. Tue 14 March, Film4 2.10am (110mins).

**Ida** (2013) A novice nun uncovers her family's secret past in Paweł Pawlikowski's outstanding black-and-white road movie. Wed 15 March, Film4 11.15pm (100mins).

**A Simple Plan** (1998) Bill Paxton, who died last month, stars in this gripping thriller about three men who find millions of dollars in the wreckage of a small plane, and decide to keep it. Fri 17 March, BBC2 1.05am (115mins).

### Coming up for auction

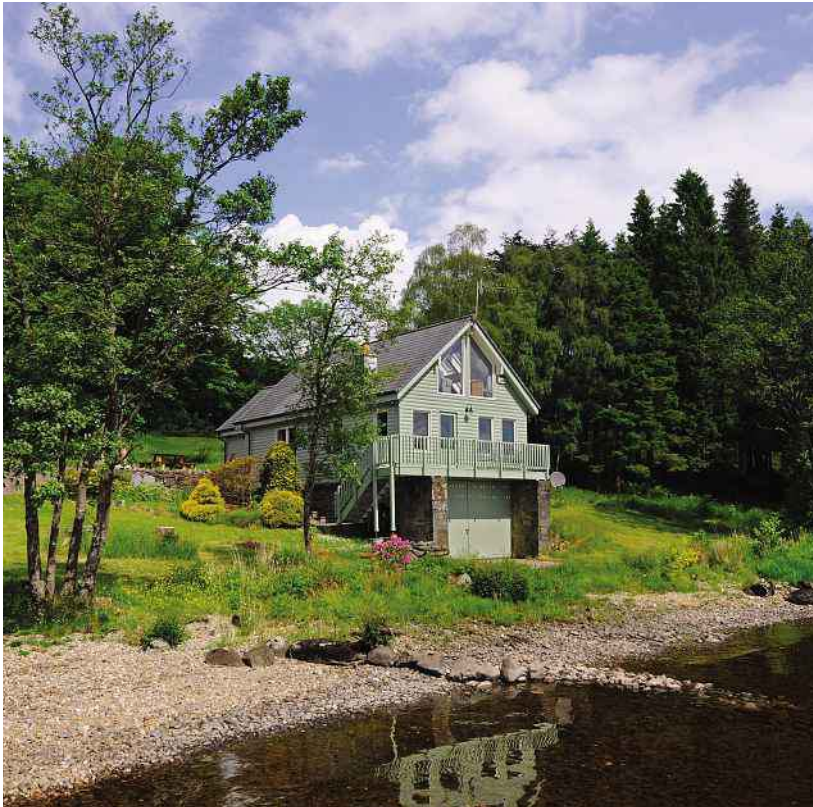
One of David Hockney's early works, *Fish and Chip Shop* (1954), is going under the hammer in Christie's **Prints & Multiples** sale. The lithograph, given by the teenage Hockney to the owners of his local chippy, is estimated at £6,000-£8,000. Some 30 other Hockney prints are on sale, as well as works by Ed Ruscha and Andy Warhol. Prices start at £3,000. 29 March, London SW1 (020-7839 9060).

## The Archers: what happened last week

Emma is worried about catering Jennifer's party, especially when she hears the mayor of Felpersham is invited. She asks Jim to interpret Jennifer's land theme, and is thrilled by his idea of Zeus and the horn of plenty, a symbol of fertile land. Lynda worries about Kirsty's overly bright enthusiasm on her first day back at work, and suggests she give herself time to grieve. Kirsty is adamant that she's fine. Jennifer tells Fallon she loves the horn of plenty idea. Fallon notes the mayor's broccoli allergy. Anisha agrees to join the cricket team after she and Rex do some nets practice. Brian points out that Lilian's absence from the party might get people talking – Jennifer agrees, reluctantly. Anisha gets a taxi and is surprised to find Rex driving it. Tom, who had decided to abandon his Nuffield scholarship following the miscarriage, is talked round by Ruth. Helen drives him to the airport for his trip to Brazil. At the party, Jim fetches more wine for the mayor, although he's alarmed by her intake. Justin helps Lilian with an earring that's fallen out, unaware Miranda is watching. Jennifer thanks Miranda for helping the mayor, who was feeling unwell. The mayor said she must have eaten some broccoli.



## Houses with fishing rights



▲ **Argyllshire:** Achnacarron Boathouse, Kilchrenan. A beautifully-designed retreat in a waterside location with uninterrupted loch views and riparian fishing rights. Permission has been granted for a large family home, extension and additional lodges. Master suite, 2 further beds, shower, open-plan kitchen/double recep, 1 further recep, utility, hall, store room, basement/boat store, double garage, various stores, garden and grounds, 5.5 acres. OIEO £650,000; Dawsons (01631-563901).



▲ **North Yorkshire:** Rake Farm, Glaisdale, near Whitby. A Grade II farmhouse with 0.75 of a mile of river frontage and fishing rights on the River Esk – which has high-quality fishing for salmon and sea trout – and views over the North York Moors National Park. Master bed, 3 further beds, family bath, kitchen/dining room, 2 further receps, pantry, cloakroom, utility, office, stores, workshops, barn, garage, granary, walled garden, 2 ponds, farm buildings, grazing land, woodland, 52 acres. OIEO £995,000; Jackson-Stops & Staff via OnTheMarket.com (01904-595672).



► **Hampshire:** Lower Mill, Old Basing, Basingstoke. A Grade II Georgian mill house with lovely gardens bordering the River Loddon, and single bank fishing rights. Master suite, guest suite, 3 further beds, family bath, breakfast/kitchen, 4 receps, study, boot room, conservatory, utility, cloakroom. Outbuildings include a barn, greenhouse and 4 temporary stables; mature gardens and pastureland, tennis court; around 7.3 acres. £1.995m; Strutt & Parker (020-7629 7282).







▲ **Oxfordshire:** Chalmore Hole Ferry House, Wallingford. This former ferryman's cottage sits on the banks of the River Thames, with 57ft river frontage, mooring and fishing rights. 2/3 beds, family bath, kitchen, 3 receps, utility, gardens, jetty, 0.25 acres. £999,000; Sotheby's International (01932-860537).

◀ **Stirlingshire:** Duchray Castle, Aberfoyle. A fully refurbished 16th century castle with extensive grounds and 12 miles of migratory fishing on the Duchray Water. 4 en suite beds, kitchen, great hall, vaulted dining room, family room, study, utility, 2-bed annexe, 2-bed gate lodge, 4-bay garage, stores, stables, tennis court, outbuildings, Victorian gardens, forestry, grazing, 80 acres. £1.65m; Savills (0131-247 3700).



◀ **Wiltshire:** Figheldean House, Salisbury. A period house with a summerhouse on the banks of the River Avon, and single bank fishing rights. Master suite, 6 further beds, 2 further baths, breakfast/kitchen, 3 receps, hall, study, utility, larder, cloakroom, cellar, stores, courtyard, tennis court, established gardens, double garage, shed, 2.96 acres. £1.395m; Strutt & Parker (01722-344011).



▲ **Shropshire:** Plas Tanat Estate, near Oswestry. A country house set on the rivers Tanat and Rhaeadr, with double and single bank fishing and shooting rights. 5 beds, 3 baths (1 en suite), kitchen/dining room, 2 further receps, orangery, hall, utility, triple garage, barn with hayloft, manège, river gardens, vegetable gardens, orchard, arboretum. £695,000; Jackson Equestrian (01743-491979).



▲ **Lancashire:** Dinckley Hall, Dinckley, Blackburn. A Grade II hall house with walled gardens, and one mile of fishing rights on the River Ribble. 3 suites, breakfast/kitchen, great hall, 1 further recep, conservatory/day room, study, utility, carport/outbuilding, river views, 21 acres. £1m; Savills (01200-411046).



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### What the experts recommend

**The Jolly Sportsman** Chapel Lane, East Chilington, Lewes, East Sussex (01273-890400)

I visited this country pub on a weekday lunchtime in the miserable depths of January, says Kathryn Flett in *The Daily Telegraph*. “Me and the Bloke” made up half the Sportsman’s customers at the fag end of a service – yet our front-of-house welcome didn’t even remotely read as “You want lunch? Now? Really?” On the contrary, we were given the warmest of welcomes. I admire that in any restaurant, frankly, and “especially one effectively located in a field”. Chef-owner Bruce Wass’ cooking was great, too, without ever being remotely pretentious. I opted for the very affordable fixed-price menu: “what’s not to like about ‘organic pork and fennel sausage roll with buttered mash, Brussels tops, shallots and red wine’”? It was delicious, as was a “fine” plum pudding pie and custard. My chap’s squid, scallop and saffron risotto got the thumbs up, as did his warm gingerbread cake with sea salt butterscotch and clotted cream. And the service was excellent. *Lunch for two, £70.*

**Chop Chop Haymarket** 248 Morrison Street, Edinburgh (0131-221 1155)

Everyone loves dumplings, says Jay Rayner in *The Observer*. The Poles have their *pierogi*; the Japanese have *gyoza*. “The Italians, being the Italians, have at



*The private dining room at Jamavar*

least one for every former city state, from ravioli to agnolotti to tortellini and beyond”. And why not? Dumplings are a brilliant way to use up scraps; their “doughy packaging” makes them easy to cook; and they are “extremely comforting. While you are eating dumplings, nothing bad can happen.” In any event, dumplings are definitely the best reason for visiting Chop Chop, an Edinburgh institution that has been spreading happiness since 2006. The standout dish for us was the *jiao zi* (smaller, boiled dumpling), filled with the classic northern Chinese mix of lamb and cumin; they were so good, we ordered another bowlful. Almost as good were

chilli chicken *guo tie* (larger, denser dumplings with pleated edges, and fried). I know it’s a cliché to describe particular foods as addictive; and in truth, “I could probably kick my dumpling habit. I’m just not sure I want to.” *Meal for two, including drinks and service, £30-£50.*

**Jamavar** 8 Mount Street, London W1 (020-7499 1800)

There’s no doubting the quality of the cooking at Jamavar, a “high-end” new Indian restaurant in Mayfair, says Grace Dent in the *London Evening Standard*. This is “elegant” north and south Indian dining by a Michelin star-acquainted executive chef. Grilled *adraki* (ginger) lamb chops arrive “rare and gloriously rich with royal cumin”. The *sindhi gosht*, lamb simmered to soft richness in cinnamon and spinach, is “wholly satisfying”. Suffolk corn-fed butter chicken has a “soft, sweet, decadent loveliness”. Be careful, though, if ordering the small plates, as portions are not generous: a “glorious-tasting” Peshawari *kulcha* (stuffed naan), at £5 a throw, is “rather hilariously only as big as a child’s palm”. Still, the lack of bulk at Jamavar does mean that you may well have room for pudding: the chilli *chikki* lava chocolate fondant is “extraordinary”, while the “*chuski* [sorbet] flood with rose petal *kulfi* [ice cream]” haunts my “greedy dreams”. *Large meal for two, about £140.*

### Recipe of the week

You can use frozen baby broad beans to make this nourishing and healthy rice dish more quickly, says Emily Kydd. If using older beans, double pod them before cooking as the skins will be disagreeably tough

#### Chilli butter spring green pilaf

Serves 4 280g basmati rice 75g butter 2 leeks, thinly sliced 2 garlic cloves, crushed ½ tsp allspice 425ml hot vegetable or chicken stock salt and freshly ground black pepper 300g podded baby broad beans, defrosted if frozen 250g asparagus, sliced into 4cm pieces 50g pistachios, roughly chopped ½ small bunch dill, finely chopped To serve: Greek yoghurt 1½–2 tps chilli flakes

- Tip the rice into a bowl and cover with cold water.
- Meanwhile, heat 50g of the butter in a large pan over a medium heat. Once foaming, add the leeks and cook for about 8 minutes, until softened. Stir through the garlic and allspice.



- Drain the rice, add it to the pan and stir to coat in the butter. Pour over the stock, season and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to its lowest setting, cover and leave to simmer for

10 minutes. Add the broad beans and asparagus, recover, and cook for a further 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside to steam for 10 minutes.

- Toast the pistachios in a frying pan. Stir the dill and pistachios into the rice. Divide between plates then top each with a dollop of the yoghurt.

- Return the pan to the heat and add the remaining butter. Once foaming, sizzle the chilli flakes for a moment then pour a bit over each plate.

Taken from *Posh Rice* by Emily Kydd, published by Quadrille at £12.99. To buy from The Week Bookshop for £10.99, call 020-3176 3835 or visit [www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop).

### Tea expertise

Speciality leaf teas are as complex as wine, and for anyone trying to cut back on alcohol, they make a good alternative, says Fiona Beckett in *The Guardian*:

At London’s brilliant Postcard Teas store ([www.postcardteas.com](http://www.postcardteas.com)), they recommend as a pick-me-up **Master Xu’s Rou Gui (Dao Shui Keng) 2016**, a roasted *yancha* (rock tea) oolong of incredible richness and sweetness. At £23.95 for a 20g caddy, it feels a bit like the tea world’s equivalent of Château Lafite, though you can reinfuse each pot several times.

Less well-heeled oolong fans may prefer the wonderfully full-flavoured and fruity **Mrs Chen’s Dong Ding Oolong**, from Taiwan – Comins Tea in Bath ([www.comins-tea.com](http://www.comins-tea.com)) sells it at a more modest £9 for 50g.

If you’re short on time in the mornings, try the **Rare Tea Company’s Speedy Breakfast Tea** (£4.99 for 75g, Waitrose), which is cut smaller for a faster infusion, but still gives you a good, strong cuppa that puts the average teabag to shame. I’m also a fan of **M&S’ Earl Grey Green** teabags (£2 for 25): the citrusy flavour of bergamot comes through much more effectively than in many black teas.

## New cars: what the critics say



**Land Rover Discovery**  
from £43,495

**Autocar**

"The most important new car of 2017?" The fifth-generation Discovery is certainly one of them. More rugged than a Range Rover, this seven-seater SUV replaces its predecessor's separate chassis and body with an aluminium monocoque (in which the two are integrated). It's up to 480kg lighter than before, depending on your engine – but at upwards of 2,184kg, it's still hefty.

**The Daily Telegraph**

The Discovery has made a "remorseless move upmarket": the front of the car looks "sleek", in a corporate sort of way – though the rear is a bit of mess. The cabin is a big step up – there's genuine craft here, with "immaculate" trimming. The seats are big and benefit from handy one-touch folding, which expands the boot to 2,406 litres; minus just the third row, it's 1,137 litres.

**Auto Express**

On the road, the Discovery is more refined than ever: it feels "languid" and "unhurried", and offers light, responsive steering – though it can be a bit cumbersome. Off-road, it's "imperious", going over bumps with welcome composure. The 2.0-litre turbo-diesel engine isn't exactly fast, but it's still pleasingly smooth. This model takes the Discovery to new heights: it's "a very capable package indeed".

## The best... kit for business travellers

▼ **ShelfPack** This roller suitcase has four built-in shelves that you can simply pop up on arrival – so you won't have to bother unpacking, or worry about your clothes getting too creased (£346; [www.shelfpack.com](http://www.shelfpack.com)).

◀ **Cabeau Evolution Cool**

Made from sculpted memory foam, this neck pillow is firmer than bead-filled options, but softer than inflatable ones. It has air vents to keep you cool while you sleep – and can be folded to half its size when not in use (£58; [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)).

◀ **Tumi Patrol Puffer Jacket**

Available in green, navy or black, this lightweight, water-resistant puffer doubles up as a travel pillow; simply roll it up and stuff it into a small pouch hidden in the collar (£195; [www.tumi.com](http://www.tumi.com)).

▶ **Hunter QLS03 Humidifier**

If you feel dried out by the air conditioning in hotel rooms, this quiet humidifier could be the answer. You'll only need to pack the base; then add any size bottle of water up to 570ml (£32; [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)).

▶ **Samsonite Digital Luggage Scale**

This miniature scale will save you from unexpected excess baggage charges. You weigh suitcases by lifting them on its hook – and it has a handy built-in torch and tape measure, too (£25; [www.selfridges.com](http://www.selfridges.com)).



## Tips of the week... how to make the most of Gmail

- If you don't like the way Gmail bundles email exchanges into threads, you can make it list each email individually. In your web browser, click the cogwheel in the upper right of the Gmail interface and then go to Settings. Scroll down and tick the Conversation View Off box.
- It's much easier to find an old email if you use the Advanced Search feature. After you type into the search bar at the top of the inbox, click on the drop-down arrow to the right. This will list options for narrowing down your search – by date, say, or sender.
- If you've used your account on someone else's computer and forgotten to log out, scroll down to the tiny Details link at the bottom of your inbox. There's a button that lets you sign out from any other locations.
- Those who write emails in haste may benefit from the Undo Send option. It gives you a grace period – you can opt for up to 30 seconds – after you hit send, which you can use to edit, or abandon, your message. Tick the Enable Undo Send box in Settings.

SOURCE: THE OBSERVER

## And for those who have everything...



The Morgan EV3 Junior is an electric three-wheeler for youngsters, which can reach speeds of up to 10mph and travel ten miles off a single charge. Handmade from carbon fibre, leather and wood, it's suitable for children over the age of six.

**£7,995; [www.morgan-motor.co.uk](http://www.morgan-motor.co.uk)**

SOURCE: STUFF

## Where to find... spring exhibitions in Europe

**Vermeer** The Louvre is celebrating a rehang of its Dutch and Flemish galleries with a show dedicated to the 17th century artist and his peers. Twelve of his paintings – about a third of his surviving works – are on display. Until 22 May ([www.louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr)).

**Egon Schiele** Vienna's Albertina holds the world's most important collection of gouaches and drawings by the early-20th century Austrian artist – and it's showing them together for the first time in a decade. Until 18 June (from £6; [www.albertina.at](http://www.albertina.at)).

**Rodin** To mark the centenary of the French sculptor's death, the Grand Palais in Paris is hosting a blockbuster show. *The Thinker* and *The Kiss* will be on display, alongside works by artists who he inspired. From 22 March until 31 July ([www.grandpalais.fr](http://www.grandpalais.fr)).

**Picasso** The Reina Sofia in Madrid will chart Picasso's path to *Guernica*, exploring the work's origins through more than 150 sketches and paintings. 5 April–4 September ([www.museo.reinasofia.es](http://www.museo.reinasofia.es)).

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY TIMES



## This week's dream: camping by a volcano in Iceland

In Iceland, nothing “follows the rule book”, says Emma Thomson in *The Sunday Telegraph*. The weather is at best “fickle”, and the “vowel-tastic” language indecipherable. Descended directly from the Vikings, the Icelandic people have an aversion to being told what to do: they have a healthy (and growing) mistrust of their leaders, and they don't even have a word for “please”. As for the landscape, it is famously wild and untamable. Indeed, it was the eruption of an Icelandic volcano, Eyjafjallajökull, or Eyo, that brought international air travel to a standstill in 2010. Now, as part of a guided tour, visitors can “camp” in huts “in the shadow” of that very same volcano.

After a comfortable first night in a boutique b&cb 60 miles east of Reykjavík, it's time to hit the road in a “brute of a car” with wheels “as tall as my head”. It's the kind of vehicle that rolls “easily over rocks and riverbeds”, and comes with a “marine-grade GPS” for when bad weather leaves you driving blind. The



Iceland's famously wild and untamable landscape

huts are located in Húsadalur Valley, in the south of Iceland. If they are a bit spartan, it's not something you notice when you walk into the glowing warmth of their interior; later, lying in a bunk, listening to the “rain and wind clawing at the roof”, you're just happy not to be under canvas.

In nearby Thórsmörk Nature Reserve, there are gorges “carpeted with spongy moss” and slick black rocks, where slender waterfalls are often “lit by rainbows”. Valahnúkur is a popular hiking trail. The ground is “bejewelled with frost” as the path winds up to a crest, where “a staggering panorama” unfolds. A

circle of “snow-dusted calderas cut through by silvery skeins of rivers” glint in the sunlight. In the distance, a glacier creaks its way down a mountain. There's no sign of humanity anywhere: here, it's “just Mother Nature” and you. *Discover the World* ([www.discover-the-world.co.uk](http://www.discover-the-world.co.uk)) runs the 4-night *Iceland Wilderness* by SuperJeep tour, from £1,981pp, including flights.

### Hotel of the week



#### Sextantio Le Grotte Della Civita, Matera, Italy

The “photogenic” Italian city of Matera teeters “on the edge of a canyon” above a network of caves known as the Sassi, says James Palmer in *The Sunday Times*. They were once the humble dwellings of peasants and farmers; now, 18 have been turned into luxury accommodation for the “modern Stone Age family”, with Philippe Starck baths, underfloor heating, dark-wood furniture, and Wi-Fi. Matera is one of the world's oldest inhabited cities, and its stone buildings look almost “biblical”; you can see why Mel Gibson filmed *The Passion of the Christ* here. Doubles from £132 a night. +39 0835 332744; [legrottedella.civita.sextantio.it](http://legrottedella.civita.sextantio.it).

### Getting the flavour of...

#### Portugal's secret lake

It's a mystery that so few foreign tourists visit Alqueva, says Liz Connor in the *London Evening Standard*. Europe's biggest man-made lake is a “spectacularly beautiful stretch of water”, and it's only two hours' drive from Lisbon, yet it is “wonderfully remote”. Anyone keen on living on a boat can “pilot their own private vessel” around its shores, stopping off at “sleepy” towns and ancient villages. No prior experience is needed – cruising cabins have a top speed of 10mph, and come equipped with GPS, sonar and maps. You can swim, kayak, or just spend days pootling “blissfully” along. One essential port of call is the medieval town of Monsaraz, where the magnificent fort was once the scene of fierce “battles between invading Muslim forces and the Knights Templar”. *Amieira Marina* ([www.amieira-marina.com](http://www.amieira-marina.com)) has boats for up to ten people. A 7-night hire for four costs from £1,700.

#### Lazy days in Laos

To dodge the crowds on the backpacker trail in southern Laos, head to Si Phan Don (“4,000 Islands”), an archipelago at the widest point of the Mekong River. Most of the islands are tiny and uninhabited, says Holly Williams in *The Independent*; even the largest, Don Khong, is soporifically sedate. There's not much to do other than hire a bicycle and absorb island life, or “toast the

sunset with a Beerlao”, while swinging in a hammock. Upstream lies the Unesco cited Vat Phou, an “atmospheric” 11th century temple overlooked by mist-wreathed mountains. Semi-ruined, it's “like a mini Angkor Wat, minus the tourists”. *Lao Airlines* flies to Pakse from Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam from £210 return.

#### India's first official bike trail

Darjeeling's new bike route provides cyclists with “a welcome escape from India's diesel-belching vehicles and tooting horns”, says Sarah Marsh in *The Guardian*. Covering almost 12.5 miles from Darjeeling to Chatakpur, via the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, it is India's first official bike trail and a sign of the sport's growing popularity on the subcontinent. The route is hard going in places – “rugged” and scattered with rocks – and the altitude, here in the foothills of the Himalaya, doesn't make it any easier. But at Chatakpur, there's “warm hospitality and hot tea” for visitors, who can stay overnight in guest cottages or in a homestay. You might spot red pandas and clouded leopards, but the views are the real attraction: “thick pine forest”, clear blue skies and the peaks of the world's highest mountains in the distance. *Ashmita Trek & Tours* ([www.ashmitatrek.com](http://www.ashmitatrek.com)) has guides and bikes for about £25pp. Jet Airways flies to Bagdogra via Abu Dhabi for about £780 return.

### Last-minute offers from top travel companies

#### Cathedral city break

Explore Winchester Cathedral while staying at The Limes, just 15 minutes' walk from the city centre. A three-night stay costs £376. 01227-464958, [www.mulberrycottages.com](http://www.mulberrycottages.com). Arrive 24 March.

#### A weekend in Bruges

Discover the medieval city, and its superb chocolate shops, during a two-night stay at Hotel Heritage, from £430 b&cb, excluding flights. 020-3553 6833, [www.chicretreats.com](http://www.chicretreats.com). Arrive 5 May.

#### Family fun in Florida

Clarion Inn Lake Buena Vista, in Orlando, is offering a 14-night, room-only stay for a family of four, from £469pp, incl. Manchester flights. 0344-557 6965, [www.travelcitydirect.com](http://www.travelcitydirect.com). Depart 5 May.

#### Bangkok and Khao Lak

Enjoy 3 nights at Shanghai Mansion Bangkok, followed by 7 nights at Beyond Resort Khao Lak. From £999pp b&cb, incl. London flights. 01293-762456, [www.hayesandjarvis.co.uk](http://www.hayesandjarvis.co.uk). Depart 30 April.



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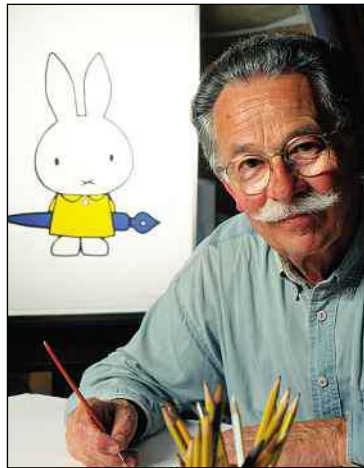


## The modest Dutch designer who made millions from Miffy

**Dick Bruna**  
1927-2017

Dick Bruna, who has died aged 89, created one of the most instantly recognisable characters in children's

literature, said The New York Times: the sparsely drawn white rabbit known in English as Miffy. Over half a century, Bruna wrote more than 120 children's books – small and square, ideal for little hands – which sold some 85 million copies; he became the most translated Dutch-language author after Anne Frank, while Miffy – adored not just by children, but by art critics and designers, too – was featured on everything from key rings to posters. In 2015, Bruna's work was the subject of an exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and in his home town of Utrecht, there is a Miffy museum.



*Insisted he was not a proper artist*

A chubby child, known to his family as Dikky (Fatty), Hendrik Magdalenus Bruna was born in 1927 into one of the Netherlands' most famous publishing families. From early on, he loved to draw, and after the War, he lived briefly in Paris, where – spending most of his time touring art galleries – he was struck by the works of Picasso, Léger, Matisse and Braque. For a time, he aspired to become a painter himself, but decided he wasn't good enough, and instead joined the family firm. He was ill-equipped to run the business, so his father set him to work producing covers for paperback books. His designs were cool and minimalist – his covers for Georges Simenon's Maigret books featured just a pipe in silhouette – and were admired by Picasso.

He wrote his first book, *The Apple*, in 1953. Two years later, on holiday with his young family by the seaside, Bruna was inspired by the sight of rabbits hopping around in the dunes. He drew a lifelike rabbit, then pared the image down until only its essentials remained, and thus Miffy (or Nijntje, as she is known in Dutch) was born. The books were not an immediate hit. Parents,

accustomed to traditional picture books, were put off by Bruna's unadorned style. "They said, 'Oh, that's too simple. The colours are too bright and I don't like blue and green together,'" he told The Guardian in 2006. "But I thought it was nice to make everything as simple as possible to give children lots of room for their own imagination."

His instinct turned out to be correct. Toddlers responded well to the first two books, and scores more followed, all with simple stories (Miffy goes to school, Miffy visits a zoo) and a barely varying design: plain line drawings, set against bright blocks of colour. "Even Miffy's face remains apparently constant, with black dots of eyes and a cross of a mouth, although occasionally there is an addition, such as a tear," said The Guardian. But, by very slightly tilting her head, or slightly shutting her eyes,

Bruna gave her "a full range of responses". For him, the almost Zen-like simplicity of his drawing was paramount. "Miffy is always Miffy and a house is always a house," he said. Yet he found drawing the little rabbit difficult and stressful. "With two dots and a little cross I have to make her happy, or just a little bit happy, a little bit cross or a little bit sad – and I do it over and over again," he said.

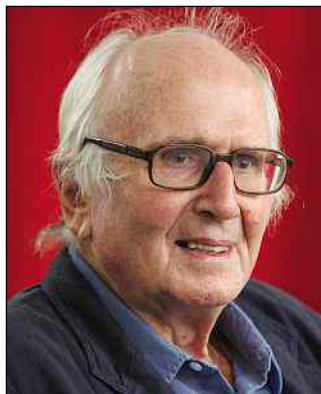
Miffy became popular all over the world – and especially in Japan. Bruna became head of a £150m empire, and won countless awards and honours. But a kindly, modest man, who insisted he was not a proper artist (I can't draw like "famous people do", he once said), he continued to live simply in Utrecht with his wife Irene, whom he had married in 1952, and their three children. Every morning, he'd draw Irene a picture of something related to her day, then pedal off to his studio. "I just see it as a very ordinary job," he once said. "There is nothing else I can do, apart from make little drawings and stories."

## Novelist who escaped the dark shadow of his fascist father

**Nicholas Mosley**  
1923-2017

Nicholas Mosley, who has died aged 93, was a well-regarded novelist – the author of some 25 books – and the eldest son

of the fascist leader Oswald Mosley. A stuttering, liberal intellectual, he had little in common with his "buccaneering" parent and, indeed, they fell out so badly at one point that they didn't speak for years, said The Daily Telegraph. Yet when Mosley Snr was close to death, in 1980, and looking for an official biographer, it was to Nicholas that he turned. The resulting volumes were praised for their honesty and insight.



*Awarded the MC in the War*

Nicholas Mosley was born in London in 1923, the son of Oswald Mosley and his first wife, Cynthia (Cimmie), the daughter of Lord Curzon. Both his parents were Labour MPs, and – even by the standards of the day – had little to do with him when he was growing up. By the age of seven, he had developed a severe stammer – a reaction, he thought, to the verbal aggression in his family. He was taken to Lionel Logue, the speech therapist who treated George VI, but he was not cured. His mother died of peritonitis when he was nine, a year after Mosley had formed the British Union of Fascists. After that, her sisters took care of him; one of them, Baba Metcalfe ("Baba Blackshirt") also took care of his father, becoming one of his mistresses. In 1936, Oswald secretly married Diana Guinness (née Mitford) at Joseph Goebbels' house.

At prep school, Nicholas was teasingly referred to as "Baby Blackshirt"; but by the time his father and stepmother were interned in 1940, he was safely at Eton, where he was relieved to find that no one "turned a hair". On leaving school, he joined the Rifle Brigade: "I knew after that there would have been no point people asking me if I was for or against Hitler," he explained. In 1944, he was awarded the MC. He then went up to Balliol College, Oxford, only to drop out after a year. The beneficiary of a large family trust, he had no need to work. Instead, he bought a smallholding in Wales, with the first of his two wives, and began to write. His early novels were, he conceded, "romantic and overwritten". Later works were more experimental and highbrow, with themes including the possibility of making good from evil. *Accident* (1965) was turned into a successful film; and *Hopeful Monsters* won the Whitbread Award in 1990.

In the late 1950s, he was horrified when his father returned to the political fray. "I faced him and said, 'You're not only being immoral, wicked and crazy, but self-destructive.'" The pair were estranged, and Oswald cut him out of his will. Yet he left him his archive, from which Nicholas produced a two-volume biography, depicting his father as a womaniser and an egotist addicted to his own rhetoric. Diana Mosley denounced him as a "second-rate son hating a brilliant father", and never spoke to him again.

# Nuclear and the politics of energy security

Most of the EU's nuclear fuel needs are met, directly or indirectly, by Russia

Nuclear appears to be back in vogue. Here at home, after a protracted debate, work is about to start on a new fleet of nuclear plants that could in the future provide as much as 35 per cent of the UK's electricity.

Huge construction programmes are already going on in the developing world. China is currently, in some form, planning no fewer than around 200 nuclear power plants, while India is busy going about ensuring 25 per cent of its energy is supplied via nuclear fission by 2050.

Alongside environmental concerns, a key consideration in relation to nuclear is political in nature and to do with energy security. But what do we mean by the term 'energy security' – and why is it so important in the nuclear debate?

## What is energy security?

In essence, this refers to the ability for a country to power itself – to keep the lights on. It goes beyond this, however, and also relates to how a country keeps its grid powered and the inherent political risks that need to be considered.

For example, if a nation that is, in principle, at loggerheads with the UK has a big role in facilitating the country's power generation, there is a risk that that supply of energy could become a political bargaining chip in the future.

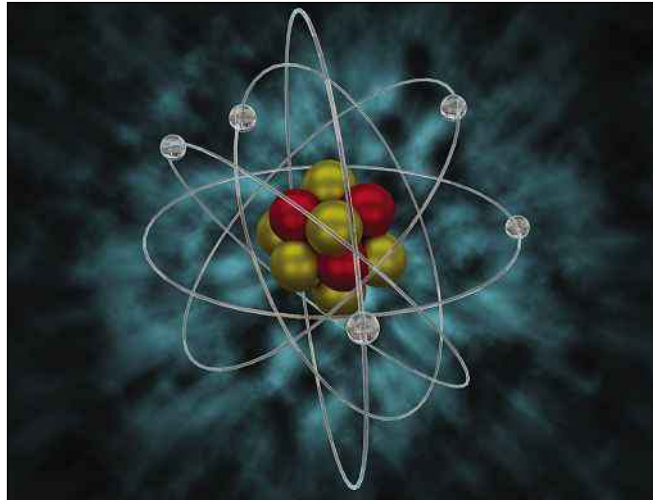
The risk is there. Russia, for example, accounts for huge volumes of various fuels used extensively for electricity generation, such as gas and coal. In 2014 a *New Statesman* article pointed out that the UK imports around 40 per cent of its coal for power generation from Russia.

The story for nuclear is similar: countries with unreliable administrations, or poor human rights records, dominate the supply of the uranium used in most nuclear fission. The EU currently imports 60 per cent of its annual requirement of uranium to power its 130 reactors from Kazakhstan, Russia and Niger.

## How important is nuclear?

It is already very important – and it is getting more so all the time. Currently the European Commission estimates that 30 per cent of electricity produced in the European Union is accounted for by nuclear.

Most developed countries are targeting 10–20 per cent of their power from nuclear in the next couple of decades, with some going much further. There are currently 65 reactors under construction around the world.



## Where is new nuclear being built?

According to the World Nuclear Association there are currently 65 plants under construction in 14 countries around the world. A lot of these plants are being built in China, Russia and India, but there are also projects under way in the US, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Slovakia, France, Finland, Romania, Brazil, Argentina, South Korea and Taiwan.

In the UK there are three major nuclear projects in the pipeline, with the first, at Hinkley Point in Somerset, now formally approved and due to come online in 2025.

Those UK plants are among 160 reactors that are planned – and there are said to be a further 300 proposed. In addition, existing plants are having capacity expanded in places such as Switzerland, the US, Spain, Finland and Sweden.

At the moment there are 440 nuclear power reactors operating in 32 countries. In 2014 these provided 2,411 billion kilowatt/hours of electricity, or over 11 per cent of the world's electricity. If all of the plants that are being planned or considered are approved, it is likely that this proportion would increase to around 25 per cent by 2050.

No country has decarbonised without nuclear. It is one of the energy sources that emits the least carbon as a by-product through its entire end-to-end process, so it is a key weapon in the fight against catastrophic climate change.

It has always had its opponents, of course – and debates over safety and the radioactive waste that is generated roll on. But there is a strong feeling that it is going to be a big part of the world finding a way to meet its commitment to cap the global post-industrialisation temperature rise to less than two degrees, as agreed at the Paris UN Climate Change Conference in September, 2015.

## What about renewables?

Renewable energy is definitely a key area of focus; and as it relies only on the wind, sun or waves that are freely available, it is carbon-free and addresses the energy supply question directly.

There are still problems with renewables – mostly related to the intermittent nature of the source materials and the inadequacy of much battery storage solutions at the moment. Nuclear, by comparison, is ultra-reliable and very scalable.

## But what about those supply concerns?

That is certainly a factor to consider with nuclear. There are large uranium deposits in

places like Australia, the US and Canada, but by far the biggest producer in the world is Kazakhstan – and Vladimir Putin's Russia still has too big a role for many experts, including in processing much of the uranium produced from Kazakhstan.

There is some light at the end of the tunnel in Europe, where currently the only new uranium mine in the world is being constructed, at Salamanca in Spain, by Berkeley Energia.

When it starts producing at the end of 2018, the mine will start working towards a goal to powering 10 per cent of Europe's nuclear energy needs – and producing enough uranium to power the UK alone for four-and-a-half-years.



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

## Standard Life/Aberdeen: "Staberdeen"

Scotland's recent record in the finance industry isn't much to write home about, said Alex Brummer in the Daily Mail. This week saw a new "bid for glory". Two tartan titans, Standard Life and Aberdeen Asset Management, have announced a surprise £11bn mega-merger that will create the biggest active investment manager in Britain, and the second-largest in Europe. "The idea of a new Scottish £660bn financial powerhouse to erase bad memories of both Royal Bank of Scotland and Bank of Scotland... should be as welcome as a Burns Night feast." Even if it's "a case of two whisky-soaked Scottish drunks holding each other up in stressful times", it's still "far better than letting them fall into a ditch". The bosses behind the move – Aberdeen's Martin Gilbert and Standard Life's Keith Skeoch – talk about creating a "powerhouse", said Christopher Williams in The Daily Telegraph. But "no amount of bluster" can disguise the fact that this is a defensive deal, probably triggered by the companies' recent share-price falls. At least the fit, in terms of their respective portfolio strengths, looks good. Gilbert and Skeoch plan to run "Staberdeen" as co-CEOs – an "unusual approach", said Patrick Hosking in The Times. The pair know each other well: they are fishing chums in private life. But some analysts reckon the arrangement is nonetheless a recipe for "friction and turf wars".

## Sports Direct/Agent Provocateur: dirty knickers?

The high-end lingerie chain Agent Provocateur entered administration last week – and was immediately snapped up by Mike Ashley, owner of the discount retailer Sports Direct, said Josie Cox in The Independent. But the deal is already causing a stink. Founded in 1994 by Vivienne Westwood's son, Joe Corré, Agent Provocateur quickly grew into a global brand, but of late it has hit trouble. In November, its owner, the private equity group 3i, wrote down the value of its 80% stake by £39m. Ashley's investment vehicle, Four Holdings, is believed to have paid £31m for the company in a pre-pack administration deal. But his "foray into frilly knickers" has been slammed as a "phenomenal stitch-up" by Corré, said City AM. Corré claims there was "a higher bidder" at the table: Quadro Capital had reportedly offered £35m for the business, and wanted to save both the majority of jobs and "the international presence of the brand". Ashley, by contrast, will close the international business down; he will keep just a few stores in the UK running. The Agent Provocateur brand has been "dropped like a pair of dirty knickers", charges Corré, who predicts "a phenomenal swathe of litigation actions".

## Foxtons/G4S: Budget tactics

The ability of the "accident-prone" security group G4S to turn its work into "total farce" has "wowed the Square Mile for years", said Simon Goodley in The Observer. Who could forget the prisoner who tricked his G4S guards into tagging his (detachable) prosthetic leg, "thereby allowing him to skip his curfew"? So when the firm deployed that "tired" old tactic of "burying" its results on Budget Day, analysts feared the worst. Wrongly, as it turned out, said Reuters: shares hit a 20-month high on Wednesday after G4S posted a 13.9% hike in annual profits. But Foxtons, the London estate agent, which also filed that day, had every reason to hide, said City AM. London's "cooling market" had cut profits from £41m in 2015 to £18.8m in 2016, and shares duly "took a dive".

## Seven days in the Square Mile

In his **Spring Budget**, the Chancellor, Philip Hammond, praised the resilience of the UK economy since the EU referendum, and pledged to make Britain "the best place to do business". Markets were largely unmoved by the Chancellor's measures: the pound didn't budge from its existing trading range for the day; the **FTSE 100** fell by a fraction, and the more domestically-focused FTSE 250 gained just 0.1%. After last week's surge, which saw the **Dow Jones Industrial Average** index close above 21,000, little more than a month after it had breached 20,000, stock markets globally drew breath.

**China** reported its first monthly trade deficit in three years, after imports surged as exports unexpectedly fell by 1.3% in February. Higher commodity prices and domestic demand were credited with pushing imports up by 38.1% on a year earlier.

**SoftBank**, the giant Japanese firm which bought the UK tech champion **ARM Holdings** in September last year, was reported to have sold off a large chunk of the company to a technology fund it is creating with Saudi Arabia – casting further doubt on Prime Minister Theresa May's assertion that the original sale of the chipmaker was in Britain's interests. **Charlotte Hogg** came under renewed pressure to resign as deputy governor of the Bank of England after failing to declare her brother's senior role at Barclays.

## UK cars: opportunity knocks as Vauxhall falls to the French

What a day for hard Brexit fans, said Alistair Osborne in The Times. According to Peugeot boss Carlos Tavares – who has just pulled off a bargain €2.2bn deal to buy Vauxhall and Opel from General Motors – it's an "opportunity". "Brexit is interesting because nobody knows how it will unfold," he said this week, in a message of reassurance to thousands of workers at Vauxhall plants in Luton and Ellesmere Port. A hard Brexit could mean even more investment in Britain's car industry if a "pound cost structure" prompts a resurgence of the local supply chain. What a "seductive line" for the PM, Theresa May. Should she fall for it?



Carlos "the Conquistador" Tavares

There are good reasons to consider Tavares' "appeal for the UK government to fund a rearming of the UK supplier base", said Nils Pratley in The Guardian. At present, Ellesmere Port imports 75% of its parts – there's "an attractive opening there for UK

firms" were the ratio to change. Still, caution is required. "Politics is never far away in the car business", and embracing Tavares' strategy "may require the Government to push the market harder and faster than it would move on its own". In a timely reminder this week, the Institute of Directors warned of the "bad outcomes" we've seen in the past when governments have favoured certain industries with special treatment.

Tavares has a reputation to maintain, said Lex in the FT. According to one fan, his turnaround of Peugeot proves "he can split the atom while mapping the genome and walking on the Moon". Production of the Astra and Vivaro in the UK are guaranteed until 2021 and 2025 respectively, but Tavares hopes to return Vauxhall to profit through efficiency measures. Can he really succeed where General Motors failed? To pull it off, "Carlos the Conquistador" is going to need "plenty of grit".

# The (new) commitments: investing in the prime of life

When you're in your salad days, some of the best advice you can get is to start saving, build an emergency fund and start a pension. But what about the next step?



By the time your 30s have got into their stride, things are probably looking more serious. True, your earning power has probably increased, but so too have your commitments. You may have a house and mortgage payments to keep up; maybe your new responsibilities include a growing family; maybe you're still paying off debts from your 20s. You're also probably aware of a nagging urge to start setting more aside for your future security. Whatever your situation, you need to adopt a more sophisticated approach to making your cash work. Our experts at Moneyfarm can help.

## Future thinking

The first step is to determine your priorities. With so many competing demands on your bank account, you won't be able to plough your money into every project that takes your fancy, so make a list of your most important life goals – including your targeted retirement age – and then start thinking about the steps you need to take to bring these to fruition.

If you outline your aims from the outset, it makes it easier to structure your savings and investments. As well as asking yourself: "What am I saving for?", you need to think about time frames. Do you need the money in the next couple of years – say, to finance a house deposit or a dream holiday – or not for the next few decades?

The situation is more complicated if you have a young family – you need to be thinking about their future too. As well as deciding what proportion of your income you can afford to

stash away for your young ones, you have to decide how it's invested and, indeed, what it's being invested for. Are you saving for their education or are your goals more long-term?

## Revise your portfolio

One of the most common money missteps that can derail your long-term plans is being overly conservative about how you save money. That's particularly true right now when inflation expectations are rising while interest rates remain super-low. So if you haven't yet started investing, there's never been a better time to decide to take the plunge.

If, on the other hand, you already have investments, you're at an age when you may need to revise your portfolio. Time is on your side, so generally you can afford to opt for a more pacy mix of investments than, say, someone approaching retirement. History suggests that stocks and shares provide a higher return than other investments in the long run – though obviously the asset allocation model you choose will depend on personal factors including (some would argue most especially) your risk tolerance.

At Moneyfarm we can help you design a portfolio that takes into account factors such as whether your assets are sufficiently diverse to help hedge against market losses, by using different types of investments and asset classes. We can also advise on whether and how often your portfolio needs to be re-balanced. What worked for you a year ago might not be practical now. You also need to think about tax planning. Unless your



investments are contained within a tax-free wrapper like an ISA you will have to pay tax on any gains you make above the annual capital gains allowance when you come to realise them. The same is true when you come to realise other investments like property (unless it's your primary residence).

If you haven't opened an ISA yet, you should consider making it a priority. From April 2017, you can put £20,000 a year in and enjoy all the returns tax-free. It's also worthwhile taking a look at the different kinds of ISAs available. For instance, if you're scrabbling to get on the housing ladder and saving for a deposit, you might make the Help to Buy ISA a priority – not least because the government adds a 25% bonus to your savings (up to maximum of £3,000) when you use the cash to buy your first home. This April also sees the launch of the new Lifetime ISA, which is specifically aimed at the under-40s. This allows you to save/invest up to £4,000 a year and receive a government bonus of 25% on your savings (that is, up to £1,000 in free cash) each year until you are 50. And you can run it alongside an existing stocks and shares or cash ISA.

Another consideration when tweaking your portfolio is investment fees. There is no point scrimping to save if your hard-earned cash is then swallowed up by pricey investment platforms and other charges. That's why at Moneyfarm we aim to keep our costs as low as possible: there are no additional hidden charges beyond basic management and fund fees.

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**“BY THE TIME YOU’RE IN YOUR 30s, YOUR EARNING POWER HAS PROBABLY INCREASED, BUT SO TOO HAVE YOUR COMMITMENTS: A MORTGAGE, A GROWING FAMILY... BUT, WHATEVER YOUR SITUATION, YOU NEED TO ADOPT A MORE SOPHISTICATED APPROACH TO MAKING YOUR CASH WORK”**

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### Tactics for saving without stress

• **Drip, drip, drip.** While generally the best-performing place to put your cash, it is the nature of markets to move up and down and that can certainly be stressful at times – in fact, the first lesson of investment is that past performance is never a guarantee of future success. That's why when it comes to building a comfy nest egg, slow and steady is the route to take. The easiest and – as it turns out – most effective way to invest is to set aside money every month and channel it straight into your fund by direct debit. Not only does this reduce the risk that you'll blow the cash on something else, but it's also the best way of smoothing your returns and protecting yourself for the long term when markets turn downwards. If you drip-feed your cash into the market regularly, you benefit from a process known as 'pound cost averaging'. It means you automatically end up buying more shares when prices are low (generally agreed to be the most effective way of making money long-term) and fewer of them when prices are high. Being 'greedy when others are fearful' is a well-known investment adage, but it can take guts and self-discipline to take that contrarian line. The drip-feed approach means it happens naturally.

• **Invest your pay rises.** If you're fortunate enough to get a pay rise and are living within your means, divert the excess to your savings immediately.

### Safeguarding your loved ones

If you have children, the best way to give them a strong financial start in life is to save on their behalf. One thing no parent can say these days is that there aren't enough vehicles to help. Another thing to consider is insurance. We all like to



think we're invincible in our 30s and 40s – sadly, that's not always the case. So an important decision you need to make, when allocating your investment cash, is whether you also need a life insurance policy. And while on that subject, if you haven't yet made a will, make it a priority. Without one, you will have little say on how you split up your estate because it becomes subject to intestacy rules, which may mean your spouse or civil partner doesn't receive as much as you intended them to. Unmarried partners may not receive anything from your estate unless you have made a will in their favour. Making a will also enables you to make specific financial arrangements on your children's behalf.

### A financial safety net

This is a pivotal time of life. The financial decisions you make in your 30s and early 40s will largely determine the shape of the rest of your life. By investing for growth and creating a financial safety net, you can avoid some of the worst financial minefields.

Visit [moneyfarm.com/switch](https://moneyfarm.com/switch) to find out more or call one of our Investment Consultants on 0800 433 4574.

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# PICKING STOCKS WITH PRECISION.

**Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust** plays a 'long game' with a focused list of around 80 stocks. Our aim is to meticulously seek out truly innovative organisations (the obvious and the unexpected) and stick with them over the long-term. We believe this strategy gives us a strong competitive advantage in identifying companies with real potential for significant sales growth – often as a result of their intelligent deployment of transformational technology.

But don't just take our word for it. Over the last five years **Scottish Mortgage**, managed by Baillie Gifford, has delivered a total return of 191.3%\* compared to 103.4%\* for the index. And **Scottish Mortgage** is low-cost with an ongoing charges figure of just 0.45%†

Standardised past performance to 31 December\*:

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Scottish Mortgage	30.1%	39.8%	21.4%	13.3%	16.5%
FTSE All-World Index	12.0%	21.0%	11.3%	4.0%	29.6%

**Money**  
Observer  
**Trust Awards**  
**2016**

Best Global Trust  
Investment Trust Awards  
**Scottish Mortgage**

Past performance is not a guide to future returns.

Please remember that changing stock market conditions and currency exchange rates will affect the value of your investment in the fund and any income from it. You may not get back the amount invested.

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or visit **[www.scottishmortgageit.com](http://www.scottishmortgageit.com)**



*Long-term investment partners*

\*Source: Morningstar, share price, total return as at 31.12.16. †Ongoing charges as at 31.03.16. Your call may be recorded for training or monitoring purposes. Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust PLC is available through the Baillie Gifford Investment Trust Share Plan and the Investment Trust ISA, which are managed by Baillie Gifford Savings Management Limited (BGSM). BGSM is an affiliate of Baillie Gifford & Co Limited, which is the manager and secretary of Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust PLC.



## Issue of the week: Snap judgement

*Does the float of the company behind the “disappearing app” mark the high point of the latest tech boom?*

It was “the biggest technology float for years”, and it didn’t disappoint, said James Titcomb in *The Daily Telegraph*. Snapchat’s parent company, Snap Inc, was valued at nearly \$30bn last week as investors “set aside fears” about the firm’s heavy losses to send shares soaring by 44%. Snap’s big debut shows that Wall Street’s appetite for money-burning tech companies remains undiminished. It has also made a very rich man of the company’s 26-year-old CEO, Evan Spiegel, who co-founded the photo-messaging app just six years ago, and is now worth around \$5bn. This float will hearten other leaders of the app economy who are “among potential IPO candidates in coming months”.



*Snap’s Spiegel (centre): worth around \$5bn*

who sits on his hands, slack-jawed at the ludicrous multiple, there are more who will opt in – the risk of “missing out” on a potential bonanza is too great. With US stock markets at all-time highs, Snap’s timing was perfect. “Cautious investors can tut-tut all they like. For now, the only reckless behaviour would be if the other dubious yet highly priced tech unicorns” – companies such as WeWork, Palantir and Dropbox – “are not typing up their own prospectuses”.

“Snapchat has two defining features,” said Farhad Manjoo in *The New York Times*: “pictures and ephemerality”. The latter is particularly prized by Spiegel,

The worry is that Snap’s new investors may be as fleeting as the messages that users share on the app, said Reuters Breakingviews. Shares tumbled 11% on Tuesday as short sellers, betting that a big price fall is on the cards, “moved in”. The immediate share gyrations are “next to meaningless”, said Lex in the *FT*. Facebook was also “oversubscribed” when it floated in 2012, and then went on to lose half its value in its first weeks of trading. But shares have since risen by more than 600%. Twitter, by contrast, now languishes 40% below its offer price. Which is Snap? “It’s impossible to say at this stage.” But for “every portfolio manager

who describes the way that rivals such as Facebook collect users’ details, and follow them around the internet, as “creepy”. But the focus on pictures is important too. A bet on Snap is a bet on the “cultural supremacy of the camera” in the years ahead: Snap wants “to make it at least as important to our daily lives as the keyboard”. Companies from YouTube and Instagram to Flickr have majored on pictures, but Snapchat showed that we could use them not only to document the world, but also to communicate. Plenty of other companies are “nibbling” at this “megatrend”, but “no company is enabling and benefiting from the rise of visual communication as thoroughly as Snap”. In a world where image is getting to be “everything”, it’s “not a bad bet”.

## Self-employment: what the pundits say

### ● Hammond’s hammer

As expected, the Chancellor went after Britain’s growing army of self-employed workers in this week’s Budget, closing “loopholes” that mean they pay less tax than their salaried counterparts, said *The Guardian*. The self-employed will see their Class 4 National Insurance contributions increase by 1p in the pound to 10% from April 2018, with a further 1% increase in 2019. Upping the tax take from freelancers is increasingly important to the Treasury: 45% of the growth in jobs since 2008 has been in self-employment. And much of that has been in “traditionally high-paid sectors such as advertising and banking”. The Treasury is “concerned” that this surge isn’t just “being driven by entrepreneurialism in the ‘gig economy’, but by tax avoidance”.



*Hammond: under pressure*

with the previous year. This might not be the end of it: studies show that self-employed workers have an average tax advantage of £1,240; freelancers who set up companies to cut their tax bills “can make even bigger savings”. There’s a wider point too. As Colin Ben-Nathan of KPMG points out: Hammond needs to take a “strategic approach to how work is taxed to better reflect the changing economy”.

### ● Whacked!

“There are benefits to being your own boss,” said Ian Birrell in *The Times*. “But there are also definite disadvantages”: from “the rollercoaster nature of work”, to the loss of entitlements such as holiday pay and employer pension contributions. “Now the Treasury wants to get its claws on our cash.” Government spin doctors “peddle stories of fat-cat consultants ripping off the Exchequer”. Yet who are the self-employed really? “Many are women, fitting in work around families, or older workers padding out inadequate pensions.” One in five relies on tax credits to top up incomes. Britain’s self-employed workers are “fuelled by a sense of individualism and a spirit of entrepreneurialism”. Where is the sense in “whacking” that?

### ● Political gamble

The “political fallout” could be high,” said Vanessa Houlder in the *FT*: some 4.8 million people, or one in seven workers, are now self-employed. But Hammond was “under pressure to address the issue”, because of the increasing cost of their tax advantages, which rose 59% to £5.1bn in the year to April 2017 compared

## Getting creative

*One sector that “Spreadsheet Phil” can rely upon to fill the coffers is Britain’s “creative economy”, says The Observer. The UK film, TV and music industries boomed in the second half of 2016, growing almost 11% compared with the previous six months. Here’s a breakdown of the performance...*

**Film** The industry has flourished over the past decade, following the introduction of a 25% tax break for co-productions with foreign film-makers. Last year, £1.6bn was spent on film production; box-office sales hit a “near-record” £1.3bn. “In December alone, the film sector accounted for half of all growth in the key services sector”, which, in turn, “accounts for 80% of the British economy”.

**TV** The arrival of Netflix and Amazon has driven “a golden age of investment”, with money being poured into shows such as the £100m series *The Crown*. The industry is also undergoing “an export boom”: *Downton Abbey*, *Victoria*, *Sherlock* and *Come Dine With Me* are still topping the popularity charts with international broadcasters.

**Music** After years of declining CD sales, and the threat of piracy, the music industry is “back in fine health”, growing by 4.6% to be worth £1.1bn last year. Most of that growth was driven by streaming, which is finally beginning to compensate for the decline of physical formats.

## Good news for Hammond on global growth

**Phillip Inman**

*The Observer*

At least there's some good news for the Chancellor this week, says Phillip Inman: global growth appears to be going great guns. The "magnitude of this turnaround" could "save" the Government from "the inevitable cuts or extra borrowing that would follow a stagnating economy". Even better, it looks to be sustained. This isn't just "a Trump-inspired dash for growth, although the US president is part of the story". Survey figures showing "the largest improvement in worldwide manufacturing business conditions" for more than five years augur a year of high employment and solid wage growth across the globe. All indicators suggest that "company bosses are upbeat about the year ahead". Of course, "the doomsayers may yet have their day". A hard Brexit could cause chaos; there's the threat of "destabilising" political rows with Russia; and "China remains a wild card". But for the moment, it's full steam ahead. "Britain's economy is slowing, and it may slow further. But slowing is all it will do. There will be no recession. The global economy will see to that."

## An end to the era of foreign takeovers?

**Schumpeter**

*The Economist*

Britain used to be "the world's entrepôt for buying and selling companies", says Schumpeter. According to Dealogic, UK firms have been involved in a quarter of cross-border M&A activity since 1997, either as buyers or as targets – quite a statistic given that they make up just 5% of global market capitalisation. "Now Blighty is getting cold feet": Kraft Heinz retreated from its £115bn bid to buy Unilever in part because the Government "frowned" on the deal. Why? Brexiteers claim the UK is on the verge of a "new, golden age" of global commerce. "But many of its captains of industry fret that its past wide-open policy on takeovers means that it now has too few big firms to hold its own." In 1997, the UK had 11 firms big enough to be among the world's largest 100 companies by market value; today, there are only five. "One possible response to all this is indifference." Yet having a cohort of global firms here "cements London's role as a business hub", and big companies take time to form. A further tightening of the rules is now likely. "Britain's 30-year experiment with a free market for takeovers is quietly coming to an end."

## Buffett's "hideous sexist joke"

**Lucy Kellaway**

*Financial Times*

When Warren Buffett was interviewed on CNBC last week, he told what he thought was a funny joke, says Lucy Kellaway. "If a lady says no, she means maybe," he said. "And if she says maybe, she means yes. And if she says yes, she's no lady!" Five years ago, when the president of Chile made the same joke, "all hell broke loose". Yet Buffett got away with it. Maybe the "bar for unacceptable tastelessness in the US" is lower in the age of Trump; and maybe we should forgive the Sage of Omaha because he is 86. But that excuse won't do. "Age is only a defence for oldies in their dotage" – and Buffett controls an "unconscionable" \$450bn through his Berkshire Hathaway fund. "If he is out of touch with modern ways, it matters very much indeed." I suspect the reason we forgive Buffett is just that he has been worshipped for so long that he can do no wrong. "We are all so invested in his cuddly, homespun persona, and so revere his judgement", that when he makes "hideous sexist jokes", we "pretend we have not heard".

## BT's "own goal" on football rights

**Alex Brummer**

*Daily Mail*

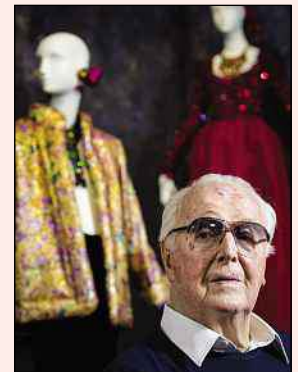
"BT's grandiose ambition to become a leading player in British sports broadcasting and entertainment seems to know no bounds," says Alex Brummer. The company has just paid a whopping £1.2bn to "dominate" the broadcasting of the European Champions League and the second-tier Europa League, using the "huge cash resources" garnered from its stranglehold on Britain's telecoms and broadband market. The public might be "more forgiving of BT's football dreams" if its broadband system and customer service were up to scratch. They're not. Indeed, "the folly of BT's business strategy takes some beating". Skyrocketing prices for football rights have had "a grotesque impact on the national game in terms of grossly inflated salaries, indefensible transfer fees, and overseas takeovers of historic clubs". Worse, from the perspective of shareholders, this obsession with sport looks like an "own goal": we may have already reached "peak football". The British TV audience for the recent Champions League game between Leicester City and the Spanish side Sevilla measured in the tens of thousands – "hardly the mass audience for which BT is paying so lavishly".

## City profiles

### Bruno Iksil

The former JP Morgan Chase trader known as the "London Whale" for the \$6.2bn trading losses he inflicted on the bank in 2012 is longing for his day in court. "I have to retrieve my reputation, my intellectual property and, simply, my life," Bruno Iksil told Financial News. The Frenchman claims that his managers at JP Morgan "repeatedly" instructed him to put on the trades. In 2012, he reached a deal with the US authorities to testify against his former colleagues, but no charges have been tabled. And since, under US law, proceedings must start within five years of the alleged wrongdoing, time is running out. Worried friends have told Iksil to move on. He says that is "impossible". Everyone "wanted to behead me or destroy me or smash me... The truth has to be told."

### Hubert de Givenchy



The 90-year-old couturier is "a survivor of the golden age of haute couture", says the FT. Hubert de Givenchy – a dashing aristocrat nicknamed the "Tarzan of Fashion", because of his towering frame – "clothed the most beautiful women of an elegant time", including, famously, Audrey Hepburn. Soon after founding his fashion house, in 1952, at the age of just 25, the newspaper L'Express said that he "was to haute couture what Françoise Sagan was to literature". When Givenchy sold his business to LVMH in 1988, "he was richer and more famous" than many of his customers. He's outlived most of his contemporaries: this week, Christie's Paris sold works by Diego and Alberto Giacometti from his collection; he saw the sale as a way of celebrating the oeuvre of departed friends.



**ALWAYS WANTED  
TO BE AHEAD  
OF THE CURVE?**

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**LET'S TALK HOW.**



## FIDELITY SPECIAL VALUES PLC

When Alex Wright, manager of Fidelity Special Values was a boy, he liked looking to the future. Luckily, this is now what he and the team of analysts who support him do on a daily basis.

They invest in companies having spotted their potential for a positive change – often through a company or industry-related trigger. Alex calls these investments ‘individual change stories’. The thinking is that, should the change happen, the potential investment upside is greater than any downside if it does not.

This approach has worked well – since Alex took over in September 2012, the trust has returned 103.0% compared to the FTSE All-Share Index's 50.7%.

So, if like Alex and his team, you see a future in investing in companies with unrecognised potential, follow your instincts. Stay ahead of the curve with Fidelity Special Values.

The value of investments can go down as well as up, and you may not get back the amount you originally invest. Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future results.

As the trust can also invest overseas, investments are subject to currency fluctuations. This investment trust may invest more heavily than others in smaller companies, which can carry a higher risk because their share prices may be more volatile than those of larger companies.

**Go to [fidelity.co.uk/aheadofcurve](http://fidelity.co.uk/aheadofcurve) to find out more, or speak to an adviser.**



### PAST PERFORMANCE

	Jan 12 – Jan 13	Jan 13 – Jan 14	Jan 14 – Jan 15	Jan 15 – Jan 16	Jan 16 – Jan 17
<b>Net Asset Value</b>	<b>29.2%</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>21.5%</b>
<b>Share Price</b>	<b>37.0%</b>	<b>43.7%</b>	<b>-5.8%</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>
<b>FTSE All-Share Index</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>10.1%</b>	<b>7.1%</b>	<b>-4.6%</b>	<b>20.0%</b>
<b>IA UK All Companies</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>-2.9%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>

Source of performance: Fidelity and Morningstar as at 31 January 2017 on a bid-to-bid basis with income reinvested. Copyright ©2017 Morningstar Inc. All Rights Reserved. The comparative index of the investment trust is FTSE All-Share Index. Manager tenure start date is 05.09.2012.





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If your portfolio's looking a little flat, maybe a pinch of SALT could add a little extra to savour. SALT – Short And Long Trading – brings the potential of active trading to a carefully measured proportion of a conventional equity portfolio. SALT gives you access to trading expertise but via a friendly, personal service based in Truro, Cornwall. So find out more about a new investment service that could add a little missing something to your portfolio.

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# SALT

Invest at the speed of life



## Who's tipping what

### The week's best buys

#### IG Design Group

*The Daily Telegraph*

This greetings card and gift wrap outfit is building international sales thanks to investment in new machinery, which gives greater flexibility, and some acquisitions. "Very efficient", with net margins of 7%. Buy. 265p.

#### Meggitt

*The Sunday Times*

The global engineering group has undergone a strategic review: cost-cutting, disposals of non-core divisions and management change are driving up shares, and sales are growing. Ripe for a sale. Buy. 458.3p.

#### Merlin Entertainments

*The Times*

The theme park operator is expected to return to normal growth. A dramatic investment in rooms will increase the profitability of attractions, and four new Legolands are planned. Buy. 482p.

#### Sotheby's

*The Times*

Shares in the auction house soared 15% on the back of recent sales including the Bowie art collection, which raised £32.9m, and major paintings by Willem de Kooning and Gerhard Richter. Not cheap, but set to capitalise on any upturn. Buy. \$45.64.

#### Unite Group

*Investors Chronicle*

Unite provides purpose-built student accommodation, and demand now heavily outweighs supply. Occupancy averages 98%, and rent is growing by about 3.5% annually. Yields more than 4%. Buy. 632.5p.

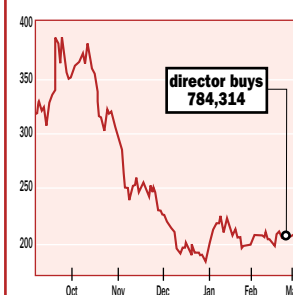
#### Vertu Motors

*The Times*

Vertu, which owns 125 UK car dealerships (and the properties they occupy), is taking a cautious view on new car sales. But 70% of the group's profits come from used cars and after-sales service, and results are "comfortably ahead". Buy. 49.5p.

### Directors' dealings

#### Atlas Mara



Bob Diamond has provided "succour" to the African banking group, with the purchase of £1.2m worth of shares. Atlas has suffered the sudden exit of its CEO, profits almost halved last year, and the share price has dwindled.

SOURCE: INVESTORS CHRONICLE

### ...and some to sell

#### Debenhams

*Sharecast*

Berenberg has downgraded Debenhams, fearing the retailer faces fierce competition – and is "severely structurally challenged" by long leases, which are restricting a big move online. Target price 46p. Sell. 52.78p.

#### Intu Properties

*Shares*

The UK's biggest shopping centre owner, Intu, has raised its dividend. But this show of faith is at odds with consumer uncertainty and rising business rates. Jefferies rates it "underperform", reiterating its 229p target. Sell. 290p.

#### Melrose Industries

*The Times*

Melrose buys, improves and sells firms, and has an excellent record. Big successes with metering firm Elster and security business Nortek bode well. Shares have soared: a good time to take some profits. Sell. 241.5p.

#### Pearson

*Investors Chronicle*

The educational publisher has suffered a major profit warning and "woeful" results. Squeezed demand in the US amid the rise in digital education has hammered sales, along with regulatory changes in the US and UK. Sell. 687p.

#### Standard Chartered

*Shares*

The emerging markets-focused bank has crept back into profit after suffering its first loss in more than 25 years in 2015. But the \$1.1bn profits were below expectations, and the private equity unit is proving troublesome. Too many uncertainties. Sell. 725p.

#### Virgin Money

*The Times*

The bank is grabbing credit card market share with enticing interest-free periods for borrowers: lending grew by 55% to £2.4bn last year. But "breakneck lending sprees can end in tears". Sell. 327p.

### Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

#### Best tip

**Crest Nicholson**

*The Daily Telegraph*  
up 27.51% to 554.68p

#### Worst tip

**Ryanair**

*The Times*  
down 0.43% to €14.03

### Market view

"There could well be a period ahead when the avoidance of risk is as high a priority as the pursuit of gain."

**Lord Rothschild warns that attacks on trade rules could jeopardise 70 years of prosperity. Quoted on Citywire.**

## Market summary

### Key numbers for investors

	7 Mar 2017	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	7338.99	7263.44	1.04%
FTSE All-share UK	3992.39	3953.42	0.99%
Dow Jones	20928.55	20833.78	0.45%
NASDAQ	5843.06	5841.52	0.03%
Nikkei 225	19344.15	19118.99	1.18%
Hang Seng	23681.07	23740.73	-0.25%
Gold	1216.65	1255.60	-3.10%
Brent Crude Oil	56.03	55.64	0.70%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	3.62%	3.69%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	1.12	1.08	
US 10-year Treasuries	2.51	2.35	
UK ECONOMIC DATA			
Latest CPI (yoy)	1.8% (Jan)	1.6% (Dec)	
Latest RPI (yoy)	2.6% (Jan)	2.5% (Dec)	
Halifax house price (yoy)	+5.1% (Feb)	+5.7% (Jan)	
£1 STERLING	\$1.216 €1.153 ¥138.756		

### Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS		
RISES	Price	% change
Convatec Group	257.70	+9.19
Intertek Group	3765.00	+6.75
CRH	2888.00	+6.18
Standard Life	384.90	+4.39
Old Mutual	227.20	+4.17
FALLS		
WPP	1723.00	-9.17
Capita	518.00	-8.07
Fresnillo	1370.00	-7.81
Paddy Power Betfair	8270.00	-6.29
Randgold Resources	7165.00	-4.59
BEST AND WORST UK STOCKS OVERALL		
Independent Resource	0.37	+499.98
Plutus Powergen	1.07	-54.26

Source: Datastream (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 7 Mar (pm)

### Following the Footsie



# “His only crime was coming home”

*As Western-backed forces push Islamic State out of Mosul, its militants are laying minefields in their wake – aimed not at soldiers but at ordinary people who have come back to rebuild their lives. Colin Freeman went on a tour of Iraq’s new killing fields*

All it took for Muqdad Ghalib Hamid to die was to turn on his TV. Last October, after two years in exile, he returned to his home village of Barima, a farming hamlet on the plains outside the Iraqi city of Mosul. The Isis fighters who had seized it in 2014 had just been driven out after a battle with Kurdish troops and, from a distance, most of it seemed as if it was in ruins. Yet, as he picked his way down streets razed by air strikes, he was delighted to find the family home still intact. Inside, he picked up the TV remote, wondering if the satellite dish still had a signal. A huge explosion followed, killing the father of two and leaving his brother badly injured.

The bomb that ripped Hamid apart was one of hundreds of Isis booby traps scattered around Barima, and was probably triggered by the remote’s infrared “on” switch. There is little doubt who it was intended for. The fighters who planted it would have known that the soldiers pursuing them would not have time to sit and watch TV. Their target was ordinary Iraqi civilians like Hamid, whose only crime was wanting to come home. Others have died opening booby-trapped fridges, freezers, cupboards and chicken coops, turning on lights, or simply pushing open their front door. Similar tales can now be heard all over the Mosul region, as the Western-backed push to retake Isis’ Iraqi capital gains ground.

It was here, in June 2014, that the black-masked militants first swept through from Syria, routing the Iraqi army and emptying Mosul’s central bank vaults of \$400m (£326m). It was Isis’ coming-of-age moment, turning it from just another faction in Syria’s civil war into the world’s richest and most feared terrorist group. But after three months of intense fighting, a huge force of Western-backed Kurdish and Iraqi troops has now retaken most of Mosul’s eastern half, as well as villages such as Barima. It is now only a matter of time before they reach Mosul’s symbolic grand mosque, where Isis’ leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, once grandly declared a new “caliphate”. Yet as the “caliphate” has shrunk, Isis’ foot soldiers have ensured that every inch of their former turf remains a killing field. In their wake, they have laid hundreds of thousands of booby traps and homemade landmines, planting them on a scale seldom seen in modern warfare.

“This is one of the toughest challenges we’ve faced in decades, and this whole region is just one huge minefield,” says Sean Sutton, the international spokesman for the Mines Advisory Group (Mag), a British charity specialising in mine clearance, as he takes me on a careful tour through Barima and other former front-line villages. On either side of us, sticking out amid the half-destroyed shops and homes, are yellow poles where mines



*Clearing explosives in Bashiqa*

have already been removed, and taped-off areas where others still lie. They stretch as far as the eye can see. Further towards the front lines, there is a “barrier minefield” 16 miles long. And at the entrance to the nearby town of Bashiqa, we slalom along a road pockmarked with mine craters. “We pulled 1.5 tons of explosive from this 100-metre stretch of road alone,” Sutton says. “It shows you what we’re up against.”

Formed in 1989 by Rae McGrath, a former British Army engineer, Mag was set up in response to the problem of landmines left after the Russian withdrawal

from Afghanistan. Along with the Halo Trust, another British charity, it is responsible for more than half of the world’s humanitarian demining work, tidying up the mess left behind in the dirtiest conflict zones, from Somalia and the Balkans through to Lebanon and postwar Cambodia.

When it comes to using landmines to target civilians, Isis has outdone even murderous death cults such as the Khmer Rouge. Rather than using conventional anti-personnel devices, designed simply to maim, Isis goes all out to kill. A standard anti-personnel mine might have 100g (3.5oz)

of explosive, enough to remove a victim’s foot but still leave them alive – the smallest Isis mine, by contrast, has 6kg (13lbs) of homemade explosive, roughly equal to 3kg of TNT. That’s enough to cripple a tank. Just around the corner from Hamid’s house, we see the effects of such a mine close-up. Smear across a wall is a 4ft splash of dried blood. It came from the remains of a Kurdish colonel, who was flung against it by the blast from a booby trap he was defusing 46 metres away. “He was on the other side of that mosque over there when it went off,” says a Kurdish official escorting us, pointing to a white minaret. “It threw him right over the top.”

In such a hazard-strewn environment, one might expect to find every village declared a no-go area for civilians until further notice. This, however, is Iraq, where local security forces still have a war with Isis to finish off. A few Kurdish forces are posted to guard each village, but there is limited capacity to stop civilians from returning. “Many are living in rented houses or UN camps, and they’re desperate to get back to their own homes,” Sutton says. Sure enough, in Bashiqa, we hear children’s laughter. A family of eight, including two smiling toddlers, have just arrived back, and are unpacking their belongings in their front yard, where Isis graffiti still declares “Respect God”. “We do discourage families from coming back but, in practice, there is not much we can do,” says Sutton, as two Iraqi Mag workers give the family a mine-awareness crash course. “The security forces did basic mine clearance here when they pushed Isis out, but that is

*“He was on the other side of that mosque over there when the mine went off. It threw him right over the top”*



only to military standard, which means clearing key routes. None of the houses or surrounding areas have been cleared. We don't have the manpower to do it quickly enough, and in the meantime, people are getting killed."

The male householder, Jamal Mustapha, seems grateful for the warnings, and promises he will not let his children wander outside again. However, it is not unusual for local Mag workers to have to plead with householders not to enter houses which are known to be booby-trapped. Many locals try to defuse the mines themselves, with one man recently putting 60 devices on a bonfire outside his home. "He put petrol on them and drove away," says Sutton. "When they blew up, his entire house was destroyed and 14 neighbours' houses damaged too. It's fair to say he's not popular right now."

For most, the message only gets through the hard way. In the village of Wardak, a freshly dug grave holds the mangled remains of Ghazwan Salin, a 14-year-old shepherd boy killed by a landmine last month. His father, Saadla, 52, stifles tears as he describes the huge bang that echoed through the village just after lunchtime. "My son had been dancing with his younger sister here in the lounge, then he went out with the sheep," Saadla says. "We'd been back here for four months and had never had any accidents. Then we heard the explosion, and I ran barefoot in the direction of the sound. The only part of my son's body that wasn't burnt was his head."

In the nearby village of Tullaban the slaughter has been far worse, with ten dead and a further five injured in the first month that residents returned. The casualties stopped after the arrival of Salaam Muhammed, a veteran Iraqi Mag field expert. His team has now removed 1,000

landmines and booby traps from Tullaban alone. "Normally we only deploy a couple of teams per village, but here we've had to have five because of the extreme contamination," says

Muhammed, who speaks with Mancunian-inflected English picked up from his British Mag mentors. Now 47, Muhammed has dedicated his life to mine clearance. A farmer's son himself, he grew up during both the Iran-Iraq war and Saddam Hussein's genocidal campaign against the Kurds – two conflicts that saw landmines scattered in abundance. As a young man, he witnessed someone lose his leg to one, and when Mag set up a mission in Kurdish northern Iraq after the 1990-91 Gulf war, he joined up straight away. "It's not a normal job, but I believe in what I'm doing," he says. "The situation here reminds me of my youth, with people fleeing their homes then coming back and facing even more tragedy." But nothing could prepare him for what he found near Tullaban's school building. "The mines buried round the school were different to the other ones in the village: they required much less weight to activate them," he says, pointing at the yellow sticks besieging the squat single-storey building. "The only reason I can think of is to deliberately target school pupils."

Despite Isis' worst intentions, most of the devices they lay are relatively easily dealt with. In the fields around Tullaban, Mag has an armoured tractor that can plough across fields to check they are safe. The booby traps, though, are more complicated. Mag does not disclose its defusing techniques, but says Isis constantly changes its methods and often uses anti-tamper devices. Particularly dangerous are houses containing the bodies of dead Isis fighters, many of whom wear suicide vests. Designed so that even a badly injured fighter can blow himself up as his dying act,



Saadla Salin by the grave of his son, Ghazwan

they often have multiple switches designed to be easily detonated.

Yet the real challenge around Mosul is the sheer scale of Isis' bomb production operation. Laid out before us in a trench that once served as the Kurdish front line are a dozen ten-gallon containers packed with explosive, plus hundreds of homemade rockets and mortars. "Here, taste that, you'll see it's very salty," says "Chris", an ex-military Mag expert who asks to be identified by a pseudonym for security reasons. He takes a small scoop of white powder from one of the containers, which is packed with ammonium nitrate fertiliser. It tastes like a petroleum-tinged version of the rock salt popular in London delis. But mixed with other ingredients easily found on any industrial estate, it turns into explosive. The haul – three tons in all – is the result of just two weeks' clearance work.

Equally chilling is the quality of the rockets and mortars, which look as if they have come from a munitions-factory production line. In fact, Chris says, there is no such factory in Mosul. Most of this stuff is forged in ordinary machine-tool workshops in Mosul – most likely using slave labour. "They are churning it out on an industrial scale," he says. "And what we are seeing may be nothing compared to what lies ahead." There are hundreds of settlements like this just in Mosul's hinterland, and in the coming months, hundreds of thousands more civilians are expected to return. The clear-up job, Sutton says, is "a race against time".

Mag, which has about 60 demining staff around Mosul already, could almost double its capacity if it had an extra \$10m on top of its existing \$15m Iraq budget. One might expect that this would be simply a case of the government writing a cheque –

\$10m, after all, is peanuts for a government already struggling to spend its £11bn annual aid budget. Yet aid politics are never straightforward, and Britain funds mine-clearance operations through the UN's wider

humanitarian assistance pool, which has other urgent priorities. Sutton declines to be drawn on whether a direct government lifeline would help, but does argue that Mag's work "meets both Britain's political interests and humanitarian ones". After all, the sooner life can return to normal here, the sooner may end the discontent that saw Isis welcomed by some Iraqis in the first place.

On a ridge at Bashiqa, a cup of sugary tea at Sheikh Moussa Zakaria's olive farm offers a glimpse of how pleasant that normality can be. The veranda of his villa overlooks his groves of olives, for which Bashiqa is famed throughout the Middle East. Were it not for air-strike plumes on the horizon, we could be in Tuscany. Zakaria stayed here during Isis' reign to look after his crops, only for its secret police to arrest him. He was accused of allowing people fleeing Isis to escape across his farmland. After six weeks of torture, they released him, but planted mines next to his land to make any other escapees think twice. "One mine killed three members of a family who were fleeing Mosul," he says. "Isis refused to even let us bury them, so the dogs ate their bodies." With that, he pours more tea, as yet another coalition air strike rattles the windows. Commanders claim it is only a matter of months now before Isis is driven from Mosul altogether. But it may take many years – and many more deaths – before the soil here once again holds nothing more dangerous than olives.

A longer version of this article first appeared in the Telegraph magazine © Colin Freeman/Telegraph Media Group Ltd 2017.



This week's crossword winner will receive an Ettinger (www.ettinger.co.uk) Croco four-hook key case, which retails at £94, and two Connell Guides (www.connellguides.com).

## THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1046

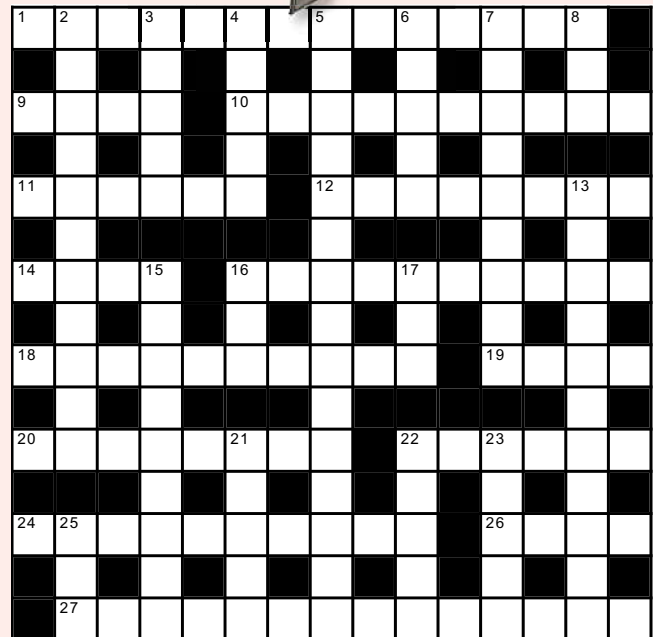
An Ettinger Croco ebony key case and two Connell Guides will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Monday 20 March. Send it to: The Week Crossword 1046, 2nd floor, 32 Queensway, London W2 3RX, or email the answers to crossword@theweek.co.uk. Set by Tim Moorey (www.timmoorey.info)

### ACROSS

- 1 Canned music producers? (6,3,5)  
 9 Boss in bed the wrong way round (4)  
 10 Mint coin with Queen on it (10)  
 11 Soccer team from one of the UK's capitals (6)  
 12 Sources of crude paintings keeping in good health (3-5)  
 14 Containers all right for beer in Wales (4)  
 16 Barking business chiefs? (3,7)  
 18 Matter of law for solicitor's children? (5,5)  
 19 Bard's theatre not good place for a stud (4)  
 20 Go to Hollywood to see celebs or watch Sky (8)  
 22 Stands calm with legs, for example out of sight (6)  
 24 Backing rubbish strike around bistro is criminal (10)  
 26 Wild type runs this in a mess, one's heard (4)  
 27 Smooth talking like many UK plumbers (6-8)

### DOWN

- 2 Broad intent correct but failed financially (3,4,4)  
 3 Routine hard? A little (5)  
 4 Agreeable sum initially paid out (5)  
 5 Out to lunch in old Rome? (3,6,6)  
 6 True ally upset about nothing (5)  
 7 Single week in stable block (9)  
 8 Drink with a sympathetic companion (3)  
 13 First dance with nothing on may go down like this! (4,7)  
 15 As mentioned, look hard and thoroughly for where flight may be found (9)  
 16 Almost understand an African dialect (3)  
 17 Alternatively heard as military partner to shock (3)  
 21 Sort of apple one checks (5)  
 22 Look around outskirts of Rimini for a top spot (5)  
 23 Fire screens last for term in fishing vessel (5)  
 25 Something put in Christmas pudding is poisonous (3)



Name .....  
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 Clue of the week answer: .....

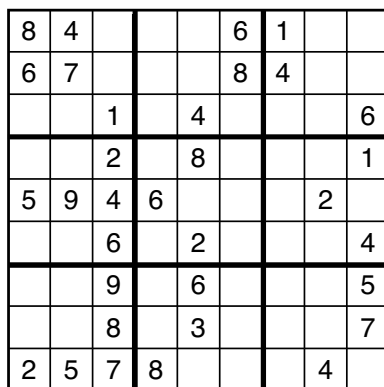
Clue of the week: Sad record playing at an ungodly hour? (12, first letter D) *The Times*

### Solution to Crossword 1044

**ACROSS:** 1 Barnsley 5 Prised 10 Metal 11 Redactors 12 About-turn 13 Palma 14 Magnus 15 Shifted 18 Step-ins 20 Singer 22 Assai 24 Persevere 25 Inanimate 26 Trots 27 Sweden 28 St Helena  
**DOWN:** 1 Bombay 2 Rationale 3 Split infinitive 4 Earfuls 6 Reception centre 7 Seoul 8 Dastards 9 Adonis 16 Therefore 17 Ascarids 19 Sepias 20 Serpent 21 Geisha 23 Stake  
**Clue of the Week:** Trouble brewing over missing murder suspect (6)  
**Solution:** BUTLER (trouble anagram less o = over)

The winner of 1044 is Sid Field from Stockton-on-Tees

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### Sudoku 590 (very difficult)

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

#### Solution to Sudoku 589

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

Puzzle supplied by **PUZZLE**

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Index : FTSE World Europe ex UK	£1,244	£1,219	£1,310	£1,455	£1,799	£1,737
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