Trump’s trade war
A looming crisis for Europe
Page 6
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What happened

Facing the Brexit facts

Theresa May spelled out some of what she called the “hard facts” of Brexit last week, conceding for the first time that the price of Britain regaining more sovereignty was that the UK and the EU would enjoy less access to each others’ markets. In her third major speech on Brexit, the PM played down the prospect of regulatory divergence and accepted that Britain had a responsibility to help find a solution to the Irish border issue. But she made it clear that the UK wouldn’t budge on ending free movement and being able to strike trade deals with other countries. The PM also denied that Britain’s desire for a deep and “ambitious” partnership with the bloc amounted to “cherry-picking”, pointing out that all free trade deals involve bespoke arrangements (see page 13).

Days before May’s speech, two former PMs, Tony Blair and John Major, sought to shift the terms of the Brexit debate. Blair called on EU leaders to try to avert Britain’s departure by offering concessions on immigration. Major demanded that MPs be given a free vote on the final deal, and raised the possibility of a second referendum.

What the editorials said

“At last, May has injected a dose of realism into the Government’s position on Brexit,” said the FT. She has accepted that leaving the EU will have a price; pledged to match EU rules on goods, trade, competition and state aid; and proposed that the UK remains part of EU agencies covering chemicals, medicine and aviation. “Vagueness” persists in some areas, but the speech was a step forward. Much of it sounded like “a paean to European integration”, said The Guardian. May talked of a partnership “covering more sectors and cooperating more fully than any free-trade agreement anywhere in the world today” – which could almost be a description of the single market. It raised the question of why we’re bothering to leave the EU at all.

Certainly, no one could accuse May of setting out a radical Brexit plan, said The Daily Telegraph. But her blueprint would still give the UK the freedom to deregulate its economy and control its borders. It would also, “crucially”, give it “the right to secure new trade deals with dynamic emerging economies”. It was a “solid, sensible, upbeat speech”, said The Times – albeit one that should have been made long ago. It’s now up to the EU to “reciprocate”.

What happened

Upheaval in Italy

Italian voters inflicted a crushing defeat on the mainstream parties in the election this week. No party won a clear majority, but anti-EU parties opposed to immigration took more than half the vote. Backing for the centre-left Democratic Party (PD), which has led the government since 2013, fell to 18.7% (from 25.4% in 2013): its leader, Matteo Renzi, has resigned. Forza Italia, the centre-right party of Silvio Berlusconi, took 14% of the vote. The Five Star Movement (5SM) founded by the comedian Beppe Grillo emerged as the single largest group, on 32.6%, having swept much of the south. But the far-right Northern League’s vote share climbed sharply to 17%.

Italy could face months of instability before a government is formed. The 5SM leader, former waiter Luigi Di Maio (who replaced Grillo last year) says he is open to talks with all parties, but the League has declared that it would be unwilling to join any coalition with him.

What the editorials said

This is a watershed moment for Italy, said La Stampa (Turin). For 70 years it has been ruled by parties rooted in Europe’s postwar settlement. But they closed their eyes to public anger at the arrival of 600,000 immigrants and soaring youth unemployment. So now Italy – the first country in Europe where anti-establishment parties have won a majority – has become a “laboratory” for a new kind of politics. That brings dangers, but it’s also an opportunity for social reform. Don’t expect that from 5SM, said The Times. Its policies – a guaranteed monthly income, for example – are all gimmicks. It’s not so much a serious political party as an anti-establishment crowd-pleaser.

Parties like 5SM and the League are also likely to scupper the revival of Italy’s economy, said the FT. Under the outgoing government, it had started to show “the first glimmers of life for years”: fears of a banking crisis receded; real progress was made in tackling the country’s vast debt. What Italy needs now is a period of stability to build on those achievements. As things stand, it just isn’t going to get it.

It wasn’t all bad

PG Tips has announced a switch to fully biodegradable teabags, in response to public anxiety about plastic pollution. While teabags are mainly made from paper, many also contain a polypropylene sealant. Some 230,000 people had signed a petition on the issue, started by gardener Michael Armitage after he noticed that teabags were leaving plastic “fluff” in his compost. With some 165 million bags used in Britain every day, he is calling on other manufacturers to follow suit.

A previously unknown “supercolony” of 1.5 million Adélie penguins has been discovered on the Danger Islands, at the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. Scientists launched an expedition to the islands in 2015 after satellite images picked up patches of penguin excrement. Now, they have used drone images to gauge the size of the colony and found that it holds 751,000 breeding pairs. Moreover, the population seems to be stable. Dr Tom Hart of the University of Oxford, who was on the trip, said it was “incredible that in this day and age something so big can go unseen”.

While stormy weather wrought havoc across the country this week, it also inspired many selfless acts. In Glasgow, for instance, an NHS surgeon trudged six miles through snow so that she could operate on her cancer patient. Other medical staff slept overnight in their wards rather than risk missing work the next morning. In Norfolk, farmers used their tractor to help deliver medicines to people in cut-off villages. In Cornwall, the owner of a b&b who’d once been homeless herself opened her doors to local rough sleepers.

THE WEEK 10 March 2018
The biggest cannabis legalisation experiment in history is underway in California. As of the start of this year, people in the state, the world’s sixth largest economy, have been able to buy the drug for recreational use – and the market is booming. You see people smoking weed all over the place, wrote LA resident Sanjiv Bhattacharya in The Times, mostly via flame-free vaping devices that convert cannabis products into vapour. You can buy cannabis drinks, sweets, tinctures and lotions; there are plans to set up licensed “vaping lounges” in hotels, where people can smoke pot rather than have an evening cocktail; new businesses are popping up to offer discerning consumers a vast range of cannabis products of differing flavour and potency, touting varieties on the basis that they offer a calmer, more effective high, free from paranoia, anxiety or lethargy.

Many Britons may recoil from the idea of this free-for-all, along with all the talk of “ganjapreneurs” and “budtenders”. But the UK is in no position to criticise. One of the results of our strict laws is that cannabis here, like alcohol in 1920s Chicago, comes in pretty much only one variety: super-strength. Research released last week found that no less than 94% of the marijuana seized by police in the US in 2016 was of the potent skunk variety that has been linked with a higher risk of dependence and psychosis. That’s up from 51% in 2005. Whatever you think of the situation in California, ours is hardly a good advert for prohibition.

Harry Nicolle

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THE WEEK
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Harry Nicolle
Controversy of the week

Trump versus the world

Last week, Donald Trump gave “one of the greatest displays of economic nonsense in presidential history”, said The Wall Street Journal. He declared that he would impose tariffs of 25% on all steel imports and of 10% on aluminium – in order to protect US heavy industry from its foreign competitors. The EU and Canada, both big exporters to the US, immediately threatened retaliatory penalties. Trump then doubled down, stating that he would respond by putting a tax on European cars. And that if this were to set off a trade war, so be it. “Trade wars are good, and easy to win,” he declared on Twitter. “This way madness lies,” said The Times. “Western prosperity is built on free trade.” We have seen what protectionism does: in the 1930s, it triggered trade wars and the Great Depression. “We’ve known tariffs are a bad idea since Adam Smith,” said Tom Mullen on CapX. They only damage the economies that they are designed to protect, as well as world trade in general.

I suspect that Trump is bluffing, said Tim Stanley in The Daily Telegraph – threatening tariffs “to frighten his global competitors” into offering better trade terms. Even so, the president is right to “fight back” on free trade. Since 1989, both Republicans and Democrats have supported it, even though it led to millions of jobs shifted overseas, devastating large parts of Middle America. And the world is not, as too many economists suppose, driven by “dispassionate market forces that seek to make everyone richer and freer”. China, for instance, is a communist state that “uses capitalism to advance nationalist goals”. It has no compunction about “cheating and dumping”. Where once the US led the world in steel production, now it has been far outpaced by China, said Michael Stumo on The Hill (Washington). Starting in 2004, Beijing began to funnel billions in subsidies to its steel mills; it has also artificially devalued its currency to lower the cost of exports. This has taken a terrible toll on American industry. “Since 2000, US steel employment has fallen by roughly 30,000 jobs.”

That’s missing the point entirely, said John Cassidy in The New Yorker. The US has long imposed punitive tariffs on cheap Chinese steel; today, only 2.4% of US steel imports come from China. Trump’s tariffs, by contrast, would apply to all imports. And its biggest steel suppliers – including Canada, Brazil, the EU and South Korea – are all allies who play by the rules. In themselves, these tariffs won’t cause vast amounts of damage, said Edward Luce in the FT. But the worry is that the Trump administration is only “just starting to rev its engines”. The “globalists” in the administration are being driven out: the top White House economic policy adviser Gary Cohn, an opponent of US steel employment, resigned this week, leaving Trump “freer to pursue his America First agenda”. As Roberto Azevêdo, the World Trade Organisation head, warned: “Once we go down this path it will be very difficult to reverse course. An eye for an eye will leave us all blind and the world deep in recession.”

Good week for:

Gary Oldman, who won an Oscar for his performance as Winston Churchill in Darkest Hour. Frances McDormand picked up the statuette for best actress, only for it to be stolen at an after-party hours later. Bizarrely, the suspected thief then posted pictures of himself holding the Oscar aloft on Facebook. Terry Bryant, a self-described “A-list entertainment journalist”, now faces up to three years in jail. Best film went to The Shape of Water. The Silent Child, a British-made film about a profoundly deaf four-year-old girl, won best live action short.

Bad week for:

Lego, which admitted that it had made too many bricks. Reporting its first drop in revenue since 2004, Lego blamed a major fall in sales in Europe and North America, its two biggest markets. Europcar, which was one of many of rental firms accused of ripping off customers by overcharging for minor repairs, and also charging customers for repairs that are never carried out. In one extreme case uncovered by Which?, a customer who’d rented a car through Europcar in France was billed £1,154 for a windscreen chip that could have been fixed for £35. Apple, following a spate of injuries at its gleaming new Norman Foster-designed HQ in California. Apparently, workers keep walking straight into Apple Park’s ultra-transparent glass walls. The BBG, after 170 producers emailed that they say prove that the corporation pressured them to create personal service companies so that they could be taken off the payroll. Many are now being pursed by HMRC over unpaid income tax.

Spirit of the age

Consumers still catching their breath after Christmas should brace themselves as Easter trees and baubles hit the stands. While 2017 brought us Easter crackers, this year’s trend is for festive branches or trees adorned with chicks, rabbits and sheep. Supermarkets Tesco and Lidl now stock the seasonal decorations, and sales of John Lewis’s Easter baubles are up 22% from last year.

A leading plastic surgeon has reported that young people are asking him for rhinoplasties, because their noses look big in selfies. Boris Paskhover, co-author of a study in an American medical journal, said patients are failing to realise that a smartphone selfie is a “funhouse mirror” that distorts their face, making their nose look 30% wider.

Double agent “poisoned”
A former Russian intelligence officer who worked as a double agent for MI6 was in a critical condition in a Wiltshire hospital this week, having apparently been poisoned, along with his daughter. Sergei Skripal, 66, and Yulia Skripal, 33, were found unconscious on Sunday on a bench outside a shopping centre in Salisbury. Both were taken into intensive care. A retired colonel, Skripal was jailed in Russia in 2006 for passing secrets to MI6, but was allowed to move to the UK in 2010 as part of the largest spy swap between Washington and Moscow since the Cold War. He settled in Salisbury the next year, where he lived quietly and told locals he was a retired official. His daughter is believed to have been visiting him from Moscow.

MI6 has linked the suspected poisoning to Moscow, and on Tuesday, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told MPs that the Government would respond “robustly” if evidence of state involvement was found; he described Russia as a “malign and disruptive force”, and suggested that UK officials and dignitaries might not attend the football World Cup in Russia in the summer. A meeting of the Cobra crisis committee was held on Wednesday. The case is being investigated by counterterrorism police, who will also look into the recent deaths of other members of Skripal’s family, including his wife and son. The Kremlin says it has no information relating to the incident, which has drawn comparisons with the 2006 poisoning of the ex-KGB agent Alexander Litvinenko. In 2016, an inquiry found that it was “probably” a state-sanctioned killing.
Berlin
Merkel secures coalition deal: Germany’s chancellor, Angela Merkel, secured a fourth term in office this week, after rank-and-file members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) voted convincingly to take their party into another left-right grand coalition with her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Despite opposition from within the SPD’s radical youth wing, a substantial majority – 66% – of SPD members approved the coalition, ending five-and-a-half months of political uncertainty in the EU’s biggest economy. Under the deal, the SPD takes six cabinet positions, including the key finance, foreign affairs and labour ministries. Merkel (pictured) is due to be officially sworn in on 14 March. The CDU and SPD have dominated the Federal Republic since its foundation in 1949. However, both endured their worst ever result in September’s inconclusive general election, winning just 32.9% and 20.5% of the vote respectively. Their coalition means that the far-right, anti-Muslim Alternative for Germany party, which took 12.6% (and has since drawn level with the SPD in some opinion polls) becomes the official parliamentary opposition in the Bundestag.

Paris
Le Pen charged: Marine Le Pen, the leader of France’s far-right National Front, has been charged with a criminal offence for tweeting graphic photographs of what appear to be Islamic State atrocities. Posted with the caption “Daesh is this!”, they included one photo showing the body of an man being burnt alive in a cage. She posted them in December 2015, a few weeks after the Paris attacks in which 130 people died, in response to a journalist who’d drawn parallels between the extremists and the French far-right. Foley’s parents were appalled and Le Pen swiftly deleted that image. The charges, of circulating “violent messages that incite terrorism or pornography or seriously harm human dignity”, were brought four months after the National Assembly voted to strip Le Pen of her parliamentary immunity over the photos. If the case goes to trial and she is convicted, she could be jailed for up to three years.

Barcelona
A new leader for Catalonia?: The speaker of the Catalan parliament has nominated a jailed MP, Jordi Sánchez, to be the next president of Catalonia, after the withdrawal of Carles Puigdemont last week to make way for him. The Spanish supreme court insists the new leader must be present in person to be sworn in, but Puigdemont is in Brussels and will be arrested on sedition charges if he returns to Spain. Sánchez (pictured) hopes to be released for his investiture, but it is far from certain that he will be. Catalan MPs will vote on his leadership next week; some separatists oppose it.

Vatican City
Nuns “treated as servants”: A Vatican magazine has accused senior male clergy of exploiting nuns by using them as a source of cheap domestic labour. In a remarkable intervention, Women, Church, World – a monthly magazine of the Vatican newspaper L’Osservatore Romano – claims that nuns are often treated as indentured servants by cardinals and bishops, for whom they cook and clean for next to no pay. It quotes one Sister Marie, who says that nuns frequently serve meals before being obliged to eat separately in the kitchen, and asks: “Is it normal for a consecrated man to be served in this manner by another consecrated person?” Another nun says that many of her sisters have college degrees, but are still consigned to housework. Sister Marie notes that some nuns are supporting families in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and feel “indebted... so they keep quiet”.

Edirne, Turkey
Greek border guards held: Turkey has ramped up tensions with its neighbour Greece – a fellow Nato member and, as such, an ally in theory – by arresting and refusing to release two Greek border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week. It is the first time in 50 years that Turkey has imprisoned border guards who strayed over the frontier in poor weather last week.

Moscow
Nuclear weapons: Vladimir Putin used his annual state of the nation address last week to claim that Russia has developed a host of advanced weapons capable of overcoming any nation’s defence system. These included a hypersonic air-launched missile and a nuclear-powered cruise missile. There was scepticism about some of the claims, and analysts said his speech to the Federal Assembly was mainly intended to reassure a domestic audience about Russia’s global power, and bolster his own strongman credentials ahead of next weekend’s presidential elections. However, they also warned that his message – that Russia will not lie down in the face of the perceived threat from the US and Nato – should not be taken lightly.
Executive arrested: A senior executive of a hydroelectric firm has been accused of orchestrating the murder of an environmental campaigner who led a decades-long fight against a dam project in Honduras. Police say Roberto David Castillo Mejía – then executive president at the energy firm Desarrollos Energéticos SA (Desa) – masterminded the killing of Berta Cáceres (pictured) in 2016. Held last week in San Pedro Sula, Castillo is the ninth person to be arrested in connection with the killing of Cáceres in 2016. The others include a Desa manager and former soldiers.

San Pedro Sula, Honduras

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Kirchner to face trial: Argentina’s former president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, has been ordered to stand trial on charges of abuse of power and cover-up, along with 11 other officials from her government. The federal judge’s ruling was released on Monday, but no trial date has yet been set. Kirchner is accused of helping, while president, to cover up Iran’s alleged involvement in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires, in which 85 people were killed and hundreds injured. It is alleged that the Kirchner government made a deal with Tehran to ensure that Iranian officials involved in the attack escaped prosecution in exchange for favourable trade terms. Tehran denies any involvement in the bombing.

Caracas

Opposition splits: Venezuela’s main opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), has expelled a former state governor who broke ranks last week by announcing that he will stand against Nicolás Maduro in the presidential election. The MUD has boycotted the vote on the grounds that to take part would lend legitimacy to a poll that is sure to be rigged, and that is in any case a “farce” because all credible opposition leaders have either been imprisoned or driven into exile. It said it rejected the “unilateral registration” of the former governor, Henri Falcón, a former bus driver who was an admirer of the late Hugo Chávez. Last week, the election authority, which is packed with Maduro supporters, pushed back the election by a month to 20 May under an agreement with smaller opposition parties.

Washington DC

Trump and the gun lobby: President Trump sowed confusion on gun control last week, by first talking about taking decisive action and then backing away from it. In a televised meeting with members of Congress, Trump said that legislators should not be afraid to defy the powerful pro-gun National Rifle Association by passing a comprehensive school safety package. He also mocked fellow Republicans by claiming they were afraid of the NRA, and suggested that police should have the power to confiscate firearms from potentially dangerous people without having a court’s approval (“take the gun first, go through due process second”). But the next day, he had a meeting with the NRA’s chief lobbyist, Chris W. Cox, who later tweeted that “POTUS & VPOTUS... don’t want gun control”. This claim was backed up by the president himself, who reported on Twitter that he’d had a “Good (Great) meeting in the Oval Office tonight with the NRA!”

Los Angeles, California

Stormy Daniels suit: The porn actress Stormy Daniels has filed a lawsuit against President Trump alleging that the non-disclosure agreement she signed shortly before the presidential election is invalid. The civil suit, filed in Los Angeles, states that her agreement not to disclose her “intimate” relationship with the billionaire is not binding, because although she and his lawyer, Michael Cohen, signed it, Trump did not. According to the lawsuit, Daniels (whose real name is Stephanie Clifford) had an affair with Trump that began in the summer of 2006 and carried on well into 2007. The suit also alleges that Cohen has sought to use the agreement to silence Daniels as recently as 27 February 2018.

Tecalitlán, Mexico

Police charged over missing Italians: Four Mexican police officers have been charged in relation to the disappearance of three Italian men five weeks ago. The officers are accused of arresting the Italians – who all come from Naples – in Tecalitlán, in the state of Jalisco, and handing them to a powerful local gang. Raffaele Russo, 60, his son Antonio, 25, and nephew Vincenzo Cimmino, 29, were last seen on 31 January. In their final message home, one wrote that they’d been approached by police officers in a van. It’s unclear what they were doing in Mexico. Local officials say they may have been selling cheap agricultural machinery and generators and passing them off as high-quality branded goods.

Key aide quits: Donald Trump’s communications director – and one of his most trusted aides – announced her resignation last week, a day after she admitted to the House Intelligence Committee that she had told white lies on the president’s behalf (but insisted she’d told none relating to the Russia investigation). Hope Hicks (right), 29, is the fourth White House communications director under Trump, and one of the last remaining members of his original inner circle of White House staff. Her exit comes amid a flurry of departures from Trump’s team and renewed controversy over the role of his son-in-law, Jared Kushner (see page 19).

The world at a glance
Cairo
Pop star sentenced: One of Egypt’s best-known pop stars, Sherine Abdel Wahab, has been sentenced to six months in jail for joking that people risk falling ill if they drink water from the River Nile. Sherine (pictured) made the throwaway remark at a concert in the UAE in 2016, and remains free pending an appeal. The conviction, for spreading false news and insulting Egypt, is being seen as part of a wider clampdown on free speech under President Sisi, who last week announced that to insult the army would henceforth be high treason.

Eastern Ghouta, Syria
Battles rage: Syrian regime warplanes were continuing their intensive bombardment of Eastern Ghouta, a rebel-held area outside Damascus, this week, despite a unanimous UN Security Council resolution urging a 30-day humanitarian ceasefire. Many hundreds of civilians, perhaps more than a thousand, have been killed in the region in recent weeks. Western powers say there is clear evidence that Russia has also been involved in the deadly onslaught in support of the Assad regime; Moscow denies this. Separately, Turkey is continuing its intensive bombardment of the Kurdish-controlled Afrin region in northwest Syria. At least 59 Turkish soldiers have been killed there in recent weeks, as have hundreds of Turkey-aligned Syrian fighters and (on the other side) hundreds of Kurdish fighters.

Beijing
Absolute power: Premier Li Keqiang opened this year’s session of the National People’s Congress by lavishing praise on President Xi Jinping. “Entering a new era... we must resolutely uphold the core position of Xi Jinping”, Li told the 2,970 delegates gathered in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The Congress is due to rubber-stamp Xi’s highly controversial move to abolish term limits, thereby allowing him to rule indefinitely. Meanwhile, the government has issued a directive urging couples to pay homage to the Communist Party as part of their wedding ceremonies, and to lay flowers at cemeteries honouring “revolutionary martyrs”. The directive is part of Xi’s “patriotic education” initiative, the aim of which is to revive revolutionary traditions and thus strengthen the party’s rule.

Pyongyang
Detente dinner: North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong Un, met five senior South Korean officials – including Seoul’s spy chief and national security chief – over dinner in the North Korean capital Pyongyang this week. The first such meeting since Kim came to power in 2011, it resulted in the two sides agreeing that Kim should meet his counterpart, South Korean President Moon Jae-in, at a summit meeting in April. On denuclearisation, a South Korean spokesman said that Kim had also expressed willingness to talk to the US.

Cape Town
Land seizures: South Africa’s MPs have backed a proposal to seize land from white farmers without compensation. Carried by 241 votes to 83, the motion was introduced by the Economic Freedom Fighters, the radical left-wing party led by Julius Malema, and backed by the ruling ANC – which has long promised to address racial disparities in land ownership. Expropriation without compensation is banned under section 25 of the constitution. A special committee will review the section and report back to parliament by 30 August. Two weeks ago, President Ramaphosa promised to speed up the transfer of land, but – no doubt mindful of the disastrous consequences of land seizures in Zimbabwe – stressed that food production must be preserved.

Tehran
Female fans detained: Iranian authorities detained 35 women last week for trying to sneak into a football match being attended by Iran’s sports minister and the Fifa president, Gianni Infantino. Women in Iran are banned from attending men’s sporting events, and Iran’s Isna news agency reported its interior ministry as saying police had transferred them to a “proper place”. However, Infantino met with Iran’s President Rouhani (pictured together) and said that he had been “promised” that women “will have access to football stadiums soon”.

Kabul
Peace offer to Taliban: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has made a last-ditch gamble to “save the country”, by offering to hold peace talks with the Taliban “without preconditions” and, if they’re prepared to join him in seeking a non-violent way forward, to recognise the Islamist militants as a political party. Taliban and Isis fighters have stepped up their campaign of terrorist attacks on Kabul in recent weeks, killing hundreds, while US forces have kept up a massive bombing campaign on Taliban positions. The Taliban has called for peace talks with the US, but says it won’t negotiate with Kabul until foreign troops leave.
10 NEWS

Cruz's new fairy tales
Penelope Cruz may not have experienced sexual abuse in Hollywood, but she is fed up with its sexism. “Since the age of 25, [journalists] have been asking me if I’m afraid of ageing,” she says. “It’s a crazy thing to ask, and I’ve always refused to answer. They would never ask a man such a question.” It’s a drip-drip effect she wants her children (a boy and a girl) neither to experience nor perpetuate.

“Fairy tales matter because these are the first stories that you hear from your parents,” she told Mark Smith in Porter. “So, when I read fairy tales to my kids, I’m always changing the endings – always, always, always.” These stories, she says, are full of “machismo” that “can have an effect on the way that kids see the world. If you’re not careful, they start thinking: ‘Oh, so the men get to decide everything.’” Thus, in her Cinderella, “when the prince says, ‘Do you wanna marry?’ Cinderella says, ‘No, thanks, because I don’t want to be a princess. I want to be an astronaut or a chef.’”

My taxi driver father
As the frontman of Suede, Brett Anderson is often credited with starting Britpop, says Miranda Sawyer in The Observer. Now, some 30 years on, he’s written a memoir, but it stops just as his stellar career gets going.

“I thought it anti-feminist. The process of converting took years ago, he moved with his family to Jerusalem. “I live an everyday black. Yet he feels they are being accepted, as is his music. Jews of European ancestry, he, his wife and their four children are they stand out: whereas their neighbours are almost all Ashkenazi

Viewpoint:
The wrong kind of snow
“Back in 1991, the then head of operations for British Rail blamed service disruptions on a ‘type of snow, which is rare in the UK’, instantly turning the phrase ‘the wrong kind of snow’ into a national shorthand for a sorry excuse. This year, a new snow-fail champion emerged from an unexpected quarter. A ski centre in Kent closed because of excessive snow. Its car park became inaccessible and staff could not get to work. This offers not just a delicious irony, but a prize example of Britons’ habitual pessimism: a business that was shut down because of failure to prepare for ideal trading conditions.”

Robert Armstrong in the FT

Castaway of the week
This week’s edition of Radio 4’s Desert Island Discs featured actor Matt Smith

1 Roll with It by Noel Gallagher, performed by Oasis
2* The Great Gig in the Sky by Richard Wright and Clare Torry, performed by Pink Floyd
3 Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology) written and performed by Marvin Gaye
4 For An Angel Vs Lover, written and performed by Paul van Dyk and Rachel McFarlane
5 Keep the Car Running, written and performed by Arcade Fire
6 Juicy by Christopher Wallace, Hunter McIntosh, Sean Combs, Pete Rock, Jean-Claude Olivier, Samuel Barnes and James Mtume, performed by The Notorious B.I.G.
7 Nessun dorma by Giacomo Puccini, performed by Kurt Herbert Adler with Luciano Pavarotti and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
8 All My Friends by Pat Mahoney, James Murphy and Tyler Pope, performed by LCD Soundsystem

Book: Birthday Letters by Ted Hughes
Luxury: English breakfast tea

* Choice if allowed only one record

Farewell
Barbara Ann Alston, founding member of The Crystals, died 16 February, aged 74.
Trevor Baylis, stunter who invented the wind-up radio, died 5 March, aged 80.
Lewis Gilbert, versatile director of Alfie and Educating Rita, died 23 February, aged 97.
Michael Green, comic writer behind The Art of Coarse... books, died 25 February, aged 91.
Penny Vincenz, bestselling author, died 25 February, aged 78.
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Keeping the borders open

The question of whether Britain should remain in the EU customs union has emerged as one of the central quandaries of Brexit

What constitutes a customs union?
It’s an agreement between a group of countries to abolish customs controls and tariffs (import taxes) on goods crossing each of their shared borders, in order to facilitate trade. The first known example is the Zollverein, which ended tariffs between German states in the 1830s. The EU (or EEC as it then was) set up its own version in 1968. Such agreements require a high level of coordination: participating states have to agree similar customs controls and a common trade policy, including uniform tariffs for imports into the union so goods can circulate freely inside it. The EU, for instance, has a common external tariff of 10% on cars, and of 54% on dairy products, to protect its own producers and to raise revenue.

What would be the advantage of staying in?
The Labour Party, which last month stated its support for staying in a customs union with the EU, said that it was “the only way” for the UK to get tariff-free access to the EU’s single market – a central objective for British business – while avoiding the need for border controls. And it could achieve this without committing Britain to all the rules of the single market, such as allowing the free movement of people and requiring large payments to the EU budget. Turkey, for instance, while not a member state, is in a customs union with the EU covering manufactured goods (but not agricultural produce). As a result, the diesel engines made in Dagenham by Ford can travel across the EU into Turkey, where they are fitted into Transit vans in the town of Gölcük, and can then travel back to the EU to be sold – without paying any tariffs.

What are the disadvantages of a customs union?
Customs unions require all members to commit to common external tariffs, so staying in the EU’s customs union would lose Britain one of the main benefits of Brexit: the opportunity to make trade deals with other countries and to set our own tariffs on imports (enabling us, for example, to benefit from cheaper food prices on world markets). That’s why the Government is opposed to it. Furthermore, if Britain were no longer an EU member it would probably have no say in setting these tariffs. Turkey is required to “align itself” not just with tariffs, but also with customs union product rules on safety and quality. Yet it has no role in deciding how such rules are set. In addition, while Turkey has to open up its markets to countries with which the EU has trade deals, it does not automatically get access to those countries’ markets for its own goods, because it isn’t an EU member. With a view to making trade smoother, Labour wants to stay in a customs union, but still be able to strike trade deals “jointly” with the EU, although it seems rather unlikely that Brussels would agree to this.

Would it make trade smoother?
Not necessarily. The main crossings from Turkey to the EU are far from frictionless. At the border with Bulgaria there are queues of trucks kilometres long. Every driver needs a number of documents: an export declaration; invoices for the products they are hauling; transport permits for EU nations they wish to drive through. There are also spot checks to prevent migrant and drug smuggling. According to a 2015 study, some €3bn is lost to delays and bureaucracy. The EU has agreed open-access road transport deals with Switzerland and Norway (which aren’t in the customs union), but they are premised on acceptance of single market rules, including free movement of people.

Is there a better option?
The Government’s policy is to leave the customs union and negotiate a free-trade agreement with the EU – with the aim of agreeing zero or near-zero tariffs on goods moving between the UK and EU. Yet even if the EU did agree to this, it would still require additional customs controls. Imagine that after Brexit, Britain decided to allow cheap Chinese steel into the UK tariff-free. The EU, which taxes it at up to 28.5%, would want to stop us re-exporting that steel to Ireland or France, thereby undercutting local producers. Complex “rules of origin” arrangements would be needed to prove that exported goods using steel components were indeed made in Britain – and to slap tariffs on Chinese steel and on British products partly manufactured with it.

So how will the Government avoid a hard border?
To secure “the freest and most frictionless trade possible in goods between the UK and the EU”, it has proposed two options. The first is a “highly streamlined customs arrangement”: number plate-recognition cameras would be used to avoid long queues at ports such as Dover, while customs declarations of goods crossing borders would be done online in advance. Such arrangements work well on the US-Canada border (see box).

Lessons from the Canadian border
Last year, Brexit Secretary David Davis visited the border crossing between Detroit and Windsor, Canada’s southernmost city. Canada has no customs union with its largest trading partner to the south, but has a free trade deal that keeps tariffs low. The four-lane Detroit-Windsor bridge is North America’s busiest trade crossing, with 10,000 trucks moving over it every day, carrying 25% of all goods traded between the two nations. It mostly takes between five and 15 minutes to clear customs. Advanced technology is the key. Customs forms can be submitted electronically as little as 30 minutes before arrival. Radiation scanners are used to check trucks for stowaways. Drivers registered as “trusted” carry a barcode that takes a mere 30 seconds to be scanned and approved at the border. Searches are few, but fines for those who are shown to have broken the rules are punitive.

The ease of crossing has allowed manufacturers in the car industry to set up hubs on both sides. Some small car parts cross the border seven times before the final product is complete. Yet to facilitate this close integration, Canadian industry has had to adopt US regulation wholesale – because the US economy is so much bigger. A lesson, perhaps, for Brexit Britain.

What is the EU’s position?
EU officials say the first option is a “fantasy” and the second will create too many loopholes. As so often with Brussels, though, the line between what is technically impossible and what is politically distasteful isn’t always clear. We’ll have to wait and see whether any ground is given as negotiations proceed. The acid test is the Irish border: December’s UK-EU agreement states that, unless satisfactory arrangements are made to ensure that no hard border is imposed between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the latter will remain in “full alignment” with the customs union and single market. Yet the Government has also promised that Northern Ireland won’t be subject to different rules from the UK. This circle will be hard to square, and the fallback position gives the EU the upper hand.
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Social credit: a new form of tyranny

John Harris
The Guardian

It will “allow the trustworthy to roam everywhere under heaven while making it hard for the discredited to take a single step”. That’s how the authorities in Beijing describe their sinister new “social credit” system, says John Harris. Under the plan, due to come into effect by 2020, everyone will be rated on the basis of data about their real-life and online behaviour. Failing to care sufficiently for parents; conspiring with the wrong people online: such transgressions will restrict access to jobs, travel visas and the like. Some Chinese firms have already taken to scoring people on the perceived quality of their friends, marking down those who buy video games, and allowing top-scorers to rent a car without a deposit. But don’t think the West is immune to this “tyranny of algorithms”. Insurers here already offer deals to those willing to have tracking devices fitted to their cars or to submit data from fitness trackers. As surveillance-based insurance becomes standard, who knows where the trend will lead. Personal data and its endless reproductive techniques can serve a range of purposes beyond the “social credit” system. It is “celebrity feminism ready to engage with wider issues than mere appearance”, says John Harris. Some Chinese firms have already taken to scoring people on such transgressions will restrict access to jobs, travel visas and the like. In the West, the idea has gained traction recently with the introduction of “personal data and its endless reproductive techniques”.

How times change, says Jenny McCartney. Just five years ago, the host of the Oscars ceremony, Seth MacFarlane, got away with singing an “excruciating” ditty called We Saw Your Boobs in which he listed actresses who’d appeared topless on screen. Back then, female stars were reluctant to call themselves feminists lest they be seen as angry man-haters. “I’m not a feminist, I’m a humanist,” insisted Sarah Jessica Parker. Today, by contrast, they proudly embrace the label. It’s a welcome change as far as it goes, but “celebrity feminism ready to engage with wider issues than a vague agreement that some men behave badly towards women at work and should stop?”. Watching the stars at this year’s event – impeccably made up in designer dresses – one longed for the days Diane Keaton could collect an Oscar in a baggy skirt and scarf. Millions of teenage girls suffer from depression “because celebrity culture bombards them” with unattainable images of perfection. “Are Hollywood feminists willing to shake that up, too, and all the profits that go with it?”

I may be a sore Remainder, says Tim Harford, but that isn’t why I applaud the Dutch for their recent decision to dump advisory referendums. It’s because referendums are a bad idea. Not that I think voters are stupid; just that they have neither the time nor the inclination to engage with the complexity of a given issue, so end up voting along knee-jerk, tribal lines instead. By contrast, representative democracy “provides a line of defence against voter ignorance”: in effect, we choose a “brand”, then entrust the brand’s MPs, aided by civil service expertise, to make considered choices on our behalf. The MPs, in turn, feel some obligation to stand by their promises so as to protect the long-term value of their brand. But the “short-lived campaigns that coalesce to fight referendums have no such constraints”. They need only win some popular support but once, leaving voters with no one to hold to account should things go wrong. If things turn sour after Brexit, for example, who can voters blame? Not their MPs, 75% of whom were for Remain. Thus do referendums “magnify the vulnerabilities of our democracies and diminish their defences”.

Britain has a “long, inglorious history” of giving away its best inventions, says Philip Aldrick. It was Sir Frank Whittle who patented the jet engine in 1930, but it was Hitler who built the first jet planes. It was Sir Tim Berners-Lee who invented the World Wide Web, but it’s Google, Amazon and Facebook who “share the spoils”. And so it is with the databank of our NHS – 70 years’ worth of patient records forming the world’s most “valuable reserve of medical information”. It lets researchers follow a person’s health from birth to death, and measure the success of different treatments. Last week’s finding that there may be five types of diabetes (not two, as previously thought) would have been impossible without this “anonimised” data. In sum, it’s a potential goldmine. Yet recently the NHS has been releasing vast quantities of this data and getting barely a penny in return, even as US firms make huge profits by crunching such information and selling it to “drug companies, insurers and governments”. True, such generosity has a noble purpose, but a vital funding stream for the NHS should not be sacrificed “on the altar of ethics”.

A state school in Tokyo that was rash enough to introduce Armani-branded uniforms has had to hire security guards, after several of its students were harassed in the street. “Is this Armani?”, one passing adult demanded to know as he grabbed a child’s uniform. Taimei primary school, in the wealthy Ginzan district, has faced heavy public criticism after its decision to adopt the designer uniforms, which cost ¥80,000 (£550).

A father and son were in Darlington County Court last week, having fallen out over a £100,000 collection of vintage tractors. Thomas Lowther, 88, and Thomas Lowther Jr, 51, known as Royston, previously shared a rumour that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the love child of Fidel Castro, whom he is said to closely resemble. Trudeau’s mother, Margaret, was 22 when she married his father, Pierre, also Canada’s prime minister, who was then 51; she had affairs with Ted Kennedy and Jack Nicholson, and once danced the night away with The Rolling Stones. The couple did make a much-publicised visit to Cuba, but not until 1976 (pictured), several years after Justin was born.

A man in Royston, previously shared the word: “Never.”

Best articles: Britain

IT MUST BE TRUE…
I read it in the tabloids

A state school in Tokyo that was rash enough to introduce Armani-branded uniforms has had to hire security guards, after several of its students were harassed in the street. “Is this Armani?”, one passing adult demanded to know as he grabbed a child’s uniform. Taimei primary school, in the wealthy Ginzan district, has faced heavy public criticism after its decision to adopt the designer uniforms, which cost ¥80,000 (£550).
Did the murdered Slovak journalist uncover a “mafia state”?

Journalists being murdered is something only meant to happen in police states, said Ivo Mijnssen in Neue Zürcher Zeitung. But now it’s happening in Europe. Last October, the anti-corruption activist Daphne Caruana Galizia was blown up in a car bomb in Malta. And last month, Slovak investigative reporter Ján Kuciak was gunned down with his fiancée at their home. Kuciak had been investigating tax fraud and the embezzlement of EU funds. A few months ago he’d allegedly been threatened by a businessman whom he’d accused of engaging in a complex property sale that enabled the fraudulent pocketing of €8m in VAT refunds.

But the hit is more likely to be linked with Kuciak’s research into a 30-year-old former topless model, said SME (Bratislava). He’d wanted to know why Slovakia’s prime minister, Robert Fico, had hired this woman, apparently lacking political experience, as a top adviser and then refused to divulge what her job was or whether she’d had security clearance. A little digging showed she had links with a shady Italian businessman wanted by the Italian police for possible involvement with the country’s ‘Ndrangheta crime syndicate. Kuciak’s research exposed how the ‘Ndrangheta has used Slovak businesses for money laundering and how politicians linked to them have turned a blind eye. It confirms a growing impression that Slovakia has become “a mafia state”, said Arpád Soltész in Noviny (Bratislava). Journalists here have been roughed up often enough, but never killed. Few believe politicians are directly involved, but they do bear moral responsibility for creating a climate of hatred towards the media.

In 2016, Fico lashed out when a former staffer of the foreign ministry suggested the ministry had helped itself to European funds during Slovakia’s EU Council presidency. Journalists are “dirty, anti-Slovak prostitutes”, said Fico. Such behaviour sends a signal that reporters can be targeted with impunity.

There’s only one way to get to the bottom of this, and that’s for Brussels to get involved, said Ivo Mijnssen. If the ‘Ndrangheta is implicated, that has international aspects that are far beyond the capabilities of the Slovak police to investigate. The example of Malta isn’t encouraging. Almost five months later, police are still in the dark about Caruana Galizia’s killing and, after the initial outcry, the story has disappeared from the headlines. Violence against the media is an unwelcome new headache for the EU, and one it needs urgently to get to grips with.

My conscience is bugging me, says Jonas Mosskin. Like most Swedes eager to escape our nation’s dark winters, I spend much of my six weeks of annual holiday abroad, often in sunny Spain or Thailand. And I fly to get there. In any given year, 2% of the population, some 200,000 Swedes, take a Thai vacation. But a trip to Thailand generates about two tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions – as much as an average passenger car spews in a year. Wealthy Stockholmers who shun plastic and insist on vegetarian food at their children’s kindergartens barely give a thought to the impact air travel has on climate change. They should. The number of foreign flights taken each year by the average Swede has more than doubled since the early 1990s, not least thanks to cheap air travel (to go from Stockholm to London by train now costs up to five times as much as by plane). By 2040, our foreign-flight emissions will surpass all of our other carbon emissions combined. We are in collective denial. We can’t continue to “cry about that viral clip of a polar bear starving on an ice sheet, and the next minute search for hotels for our summer vacation”. We must make “better moral choices”.

More than 100,000 German citizens, fearful of the racism of their neighbours and colleagues, may be hiding their Romany heritage, says Heike Klovert. The Sinti, the term for Roma who migrated from India to western Europe hundreds of years ago, are often indistinguishable from other Germans, having long ago acquired Germanic-sounding surnames. Some speak Romany at home–but never in public. “I’m actually proud to be a Sinto, but at work it’s a downside,” said one accountant, who didn’t want his name used: the stereotype of the “thieving gypsy” is still too prevalent, and some of his darker-skinned relatives had been insulted at school. In fact, Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency statistics show that Sinti and Roma are the most reviled minority here. Germans would rather live next door to “Muslims, blacks, Italians, Jews and asylum seekers” than Roma. Some Sinti say they hide their identity because they don’t want to be confused with the more recent Romany immigrants from eastern Europe, who have been subject to racist attacks. But Sinti activists such as Julie George say that’s a mistake. “We must show our faces,” she says, because combating prejudice against one subgroup will help them all. Only by doing so will the antiquated stereotypes be dispelled.

One expects jihadists to sermonise about children becoming martyrs for their cause, but it’s disgusting to see supposedly civilised political leaders doing the same, says Pantelis Boulakas. Images of smiling infants have often been used in campaign posters for Turkey’s AK Party, but now President Erdogan is using infants to promote his wars. Since he launched a military incursion against Syria’s Kurds in January, his public appearances have often been attended by young children dressed in commando gear and reading linguistic poems. At a recent party rally, he spotted a six-year-old girl wearing military uniform, and enthusiastically pulled her onto the stage. Overcome with emotion she started to sob. “Those who wear maroon berets [Turkey’s special forces] do not cry,” chided Erdogan. “Her Turkish flag is in her pocket,” he added, “if she becomes a martyr, God willing, she will be wrapped with it.” Erdogan’s “theatre of chauvinistic self-confidence” drew cheers from the crowd, but got an appalled reaction elsewhere. It is the state’s duty to protect children, as many pointed out on Twitter, not to predict a glorious death for them in combat. Erdogan’s propaganda may play well with his nationalist supporters, but for his many critics it marks a new low.
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Trump’s gilded son-in-law gets downgraded

“Hear that?” That’s the sound of America’s intelligence community “breathing a loud sigh of relief”, said Rick Wilson on The Daily Beast (New York). The reason these people are so relieved is that Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser, no longer has access to highly classified intelligence. Last week, his interim security clearance was downgraded from top secret to secret, a level held by up to three million Americans. The Washington Post subsequently reported that intercepted intelligence had revealed that foreign officials in at least four countries – China, UAE, Israel and Mexico – had discussed using the Kushner family’s vast real estate debt and Kushner’s lack of foreign policy expertise as leverage against him. However, it’s unclear whether those foreign officials ever acted on the discussions: Kushner’s lawyer has dismissed the report as “second-hand hearsay”.

Kushner certainly looks ripe for exploitation, said Marcy Wheeler in The New York Times. His family firm, from which he has partially divested himself, is over $1bn in debt thanks to his ill-fated decision in 2007, just before the recession, to buy 666 Fifth Avenue, a New York skyscraper, for a record price. Kushner has also been “tardy” in fully disclosing his business interests and ties to foreigners. The reason he’s still operating under interim clearance is that his application for permanent clearance has been held up for a year by his constant amendments to the list of contacts. With his finances now on the radar of Robert Mueller, the man leading the investigation into Russia’s interference in the US election, Kushner “may be in real trouble”.

One thing’s for sure, said the Los Angeles Times: Kushner can’t go on serving as a point man for Arab-Israeli negotiations and carrying out his many other duties now that he’s out of the security loop. He was never qualified in the first place. He and his wife, Ivanka Trump, “should pack up and return to New York”. I expect they will, said Margaret Carlson on The Daily Beast. The couple, dubbed “Javanka”, came to Washington seeking power and glamour, but things haven’t quite worked out that way. There have been “few glittery evenings”, no White House dinners with movie stars. Instead, “Dad eats cheese-burgers in front of the TV”; a big night is going to a Trump Hotel steakhouse with other staffers. FDR reportedly said that one of the worst things in the world was being the child of a president. “If only Trump read history, he might have saved his daughter and son-in-law from finding that out for themselves.”

INDIA

Trudeau’s gaffe-filled “vacation”

Prime ministers looking for an example of how not to conduct a foreign tour could profit from a study of Justin Trudeau’s recent visit to India, says John Ibbitson. A “slow-moving train wreck”, one observer called it. A key goal of the Canadian premier’s eight-day visit was to allay the suspicions of India’s political leaders that Canada is soft on Sikh separatism. (The armed insurgency for a separate Sikh homeland of Khalistan has had big support in Canada.) Yet the Canadian delegation somehow managed to invite Jaspal Atwal – a Sikh militant convicted for a failed assassination attempt on an Indian minister in British Columbia in 1986 – to a dinner reception. As if that weren’t bad enough, the Trudeau made “a spectacle of themselves” by endlessly dressing up in elaborate Indian garb over the course of what seemed more like a “taxpayer-funded family vacation” than a serious, trade-boosting trip. The local press dubbed the Trudeau’s gear “too Indian even for an Indian”. Canada is perfectly placed to cultivate cultural and trading ties with this fast-growing nation: it’s home to a huge Indo-Canadian diaspora of 1.4 million (4% of Canada’s population). But Trudeau squandered the opportunity, and left himself looking “fake and foolish” to boot.

UNITED STATES

How we left the door open for autocrats

It’s “springtime for strongmen” these days, says Thomas L. Friedman. “Just being ‘president’ or ‘prime minister’ is so passé now, so 1990s.” Everyone wants more. Look at Xi Jinping of China. He’s planning to abolish the country’s term limit, effectively turning himself into an emperor. His counterparts in many other countries have launched similar power grabs. “Vladimir Putin wants to be tsar, not president. Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to be caliph, not emperor. His counterparts in many other countries have launched similar power grabs. “Vladimir Putin wants to be tsar, not president. Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan wants to be caliph, not emperor. Egypt’s Abdul Fattah al-Sisi wants to be pharaoh, not president. Hungary’s Viktor Orbán wants to be king, not prime minister.” It’s tempting to blame all of this on Donald Trump, and it’s true that with his undisguised admiration of foreign strongmen, he has helped fuel the trend. But the phenomenon has more to do with America’s general exhaustion with “democracy promotion” – which predates Trump. It’s also about people in other countries looking for strong leaders at a time of disconcerting social change and instability. Despots have proved adept at playing on popular fears of anarchy. With luck, this lurch towards authoritarianism will pass, but only if we champion democracy values in the US. But “who’d look at our democracy today as a model for emulation”?

RWANDA

The Hollywood film that has inspired Africa

The new Marvel film Black Panther has been a box office hit everywhere, says Gatete Nyiringabo Ruhumuliza, but in Africa it has been a major cultural phenomenon, breaking records across the continent. People have lined up around the block to watch the movie about the king of the fictional African nation of Wakanda, a country that was never colonised and is far more technologically advanced than the rest of the world. African audiences have never seen a Western blockbuster like it. We’re used to seeing our continent depicted as a miserable, hellish place of poverty and suffering, and black men cast as street thugs, drug dealers or tyrants. Yet here comes Black Panther, with a proud black superhero and African characters speaking English with lilting African accents. African women, brilliant and courageous, are key to the king’s ultimate victory. No wonder Africans have flocked to the cinemas, many dressing up for the occasion in traditional clothes. They have soaked up the vision of Wakanda, “a mighty extended society, living in the normality of abundance, cohesion and power”. It’s just a movie, of course, but what an impact it will have on our children.
**The big-nosed monkey**

For Borneo’s proboscis monkeys, size matters. Males of the endangered species, besides weighing twice as much as the females, sport distinctive, abnormally large noses – a trait that has long puzzled evolutionary biologists. Now an international team of researchers has found that the size of a male’s conk is closely correlated to his overall prowess. Not only are big-nosed males bulkier than their smaller-nosed rivals, they also tend to have bigger testes – and larger female harems. (By contrast, males with smaller noses often live in bachelor groups.) Additionally, the size of a male’s nose affects the quality of his call – perhaps so that females can assess his attractiveness even from a distance. In the journal Science Advances, the researchers conclude that the monkey’s abnormally large nose serves to alert male rivals to his strength and to signal his suitability as a mate to females.

**Lab-grown tumours**

Scientists have grown replica mini-tumours in a lab – a breakthrough that could lead to more personalised cancer care. The team, at the Institute of Cancer Research and the Royal Marsden in London, took biopsy samples from 71 patients with bowel, stomach and bile-duct cancer, who had already tried a range of drug treatments, and used cells from these samples to grow replica tumours. When they tested drug – on the lab-grown tumours, these responded almost exactly as the patients’ actual tumours had. This suggests that replica tumours, grown from the patients’ own, could be used as a quick and effective trial ground for treatments. “Once a cancer has spread round the body and stopped responding to standard treatments, we face a race against time to find patients a drug that might slow the cancer’s progression,” said Dr Nicola Valeri, the study leader. The new technique has the potential to simplify this process, pending the findings being confirmed by larger trials.

**Tear test for Parkinson’s**

People’s tears could be tested to determine whether they have Parkinson’s – long before symptoms start to appear. When researchers from the University of Southern California compared the tears of adults with and without the condition, they found that the tears of people with the disease contained far higher levels of oligomeric alpha-synuclein – a protein that forms toxic clumps and helps cause the nerve damage associated with Parkinson’s. This raises the possibility of developing a cheap, reliable and non-invasive screening test for the disease. “Because the Parkinson’s process can begin years or decades before symptoms appear, a biological marker like this could be useful in diagnosing, or even treating, the disease earlier,” said study author Dr Mark Lew.

**Ancient tattoos found on mummies**

There’s nothing new about the trend for tattoos. The discovery of body art on two mummies at the British Museum confirms that the practice dates back at least 5,000 years. Archaeologists used infrared scanning to analyse faint black smudges on the bodies of a man and a woman who lived in predynastic Egypt. Those on Gebelein Man A were revealed to depict a bull and a sheep. The “S”-shaped motifs on Gebelein Woman are thought to denote high status. The tattoos are the earliest known examples in Africa. Tattooing was already known to have been practised in Europe at that time; the 5,300-year-old Alpine man known as Otzi, found preserved in ice near the Italian-Austrian border in 1991, had about 60 tattoos, probably made by rubbing charcoal into skin perforations.

**Cave paintings in Spain have been dated back to a period well before modern humans are believed to have migrated to the continent about 40,000 years ago – providing the strongest evidence yet that Neanderthals had artistic skills of their own and did not merely copy Homo sapiens. Experts said the pigment markings, which include a striking ladder-like design (depicted right), also suggest that Neanderthals were capable of symbolic thought.**

**The Beakers: colonisers or trendsetters?**

A wave of immigration by the mysterious Beaker people largely replaced Britain’s pre-existing population some 4,500 years ago, a new study has found. At about that time, distinctive bell-shaped pots began appearing in the archaeological record. These vessels, which were probably used for drinking, were found in grave sites across Europe. The study’s authors say there are at least two possibilities: that a people from central Europe, the so-called Beaker people, spread across the continent at this time – or, more simply, that their pot art spread as a result of the exchange of ideas.

Now scientists have shed light on this “pot versus people” debate by undertaking the largest analysis of ancient DNA yet. Hundreds of researchers analysed more than 400 prehistoric skeletons from both before and after the Beaker period, and concluded that both theories are correct. In Iberia, skeletons found at Beaker burials were not genetically close to those found in similar burials in central Europe, indicating that there was no mass movement of population. However, in Britain, they shared genetic ties. The researchers conclude that over hundreds of years, Beaker immigrants almost completely replaced the Neolithic population responsible for monuments such as Stonehenge and, in so doing, imported their genetic traits for lighter hair and blue eyes.

“The people who built Stonehenge probably didn’t contribute any ancestry to later people,” said Pontus Skoglund of Harvard Medical School, who was not involved in the study. “To me, that’s definitely surprising.”
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Talking points

Max Mosley: the far-right past of a millionaire activist

"It is rare for a dusty old document, fished out of a provincial archive, to become national news," said David Olusoga in The Observer. But that is what happened last week, when the Daily Mail produced the results of its lengthy investigation into the dark past of the former FIA president Max Mosley. As part of an exposé that ran across more than 20 pages over consecutive days, the paper described how, as a young man, Max Mosley was closely involved with the Union Movement (UM), a far-right party founded after the War by his father, the fascist "Blackshirt" leader, Sir Oswald Mosley. Among other things, the UM was "hysterically opposed" to the immigration of black and brown people from the Commonwealth, and for a by-election in Manchester's Moss Side in 1961, it produced a campaign leaflet promising to stop immigration, claiming that "coloured immigrants" spread disease. "Inconveniently", this highly racist leaflet – unearthed in a Manchester archive by Daily Mail hacks – names as its publisher one Max Mosley.

Why is all this important? Well, for one thing, said Sarah Baxter in The Sunday Times, Mosley claimed under oath, in a privacy case against the News of the World in 2008, that he knew nothing about this leaflet (which lawyers for the now-defunct tabloid had seen reference to, but had not been able to find). Faced with a possible perjury suit, he says that he has no recollection of it. He insists he has never been a racist and says that, in any case, he has a right to change his views over 60 years. Yet in an interview last week, he told The Guardian that the leaflet’s inflammatory claims might be “true”, and that it was “perfectly legitimate to stop immigration, claiming that “coloured immigrants” spread disease. “Inconveniently”,

Youthful indiscretions, committed by the son of a domineering father? Possibly, said the Daily Mail. But Mosley was not a child. By 1962, he had graduated from Oxford, where he’d outraged the UM president Max Mosley. As part of an exposé – just before the second part of Leveson was scrapped – “unsettling”

Pick of the week’s

Keith Richards has apologised to his bandmate Mick Jagger for suggesting that it was time the 74-year-old Rolling Stone got a vasectomy.

"Mick’s a randy old bastard," Richards told The Wall Street Journal, referring to Jagger becoming a father again in 2016, aged 73. "It’s time for the snip – you can’t be a father at that age. Those poor kids!" Jagger’s eighth child – a boy called Deveraux – is younger than the rock legend’s great-granddaughter, born in 2014.

Barbra Streisand was so devoted to her dog (pictured together), she decided to clone it – twice. Shortly before the Coton de Tulear, Samantha, died last May aged 14, cells were taken from its stomach and mouth, and sent to a lab in Texas. The result was two new puppies, Miss Violet and Miss Scarlett. They are estimated to have cost Streisand $50,000 to $100,000. It’s not yet clear, however, whether the dogs will turn out exactly like Samantha (“the daughter I never had”). “You can clone the look of a dog, but you can’t clone the soul,” the performer explained in a New York Times essay last week. “Still, every time I look at their faces, I think of my Samantha... and smile.”

Theresa May had an awkward moment while canvassing before the last election. “I was at the open door of a caravan and there was clearly some activity within, so I duly knocked,” she told lobby correspondents last week. “No answer, but the activity persisted... I knocked again and put my head around the door. There was someone lying down. In fact, two people were lying down. It wasn’t a good time to ask them if they were going to vote Conservative.”

“Some find the timing of the Mail’s exposé – just before the second part of Leveson was scrapped – ‘unsettling’

Moreover, after going into motor racing, he made vast sums of money by doing business in apartheid-era South Africa, while other sporting organisations were boycotting the regime. But Mosley is not just a multimillionaire businessman. He is a trained lawyer, with a long-standing interest in politics, who knows that money buys influence. He has given £540,000 to his friend Tom Watson, deputy leader of the Labour Party (money Watson has refused to return, although his party has said it won’t accept any further donations from Mosley). A bitter critic of the media, Watson has vowed tighter press regulation if Labour comes to power (but in 2012, he used parliamentary privilege to air unsubstantiated claims about a VIP paedophile ring at Westminster). Mosley also funds – indirectly, via a trust – the “press-hating” press regulator Impress.

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"It is fair to say that Max Mosley and the Daily Mail are not the best of chums," said Will Gore in The Independent. Mosley has a “deep-seated” antagonism towards sections of the British press. He brought his successful privacy suit against The News of the World after it reported that he had taken part in a sadomasochistic orgy. Since then, his family trust has given nearly £4m to Impress (see page 29); more recently, his lawyers have been trying to force newspapers to remove from their archives stories about the orgy, and to stop any new reports about it.

So it is easy to see Mosley as the victim of a politically motivated attack by powerful newspapers, desperate to discredit him and so undermine Impress (the only regulator to have been state-sanctioned as independent by the Press Recognition Panel, which has the potential to make it quite powerful). But that does not necessarily invalidate the Mail’s reporting: the revelations about Mosley’s past are deeply concerning. Nor should only right-wingers worry about the idea of the press being regulated by a body that is linked to the state.

Still, some find the timing of the Mail’s exposé – just before the second part of the Leveson Inquiry – “unsettling”, said Jamie Doward in The Observer. The Government claims the “world” has so changed that the Inquiry, into the relations between journalists and the press, is no longer necessary. Others see it as a sign of a weak government’s desperation to keep the press onside. The world may have changed, but the balance of power seems the same.

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The housing crisis: taking on the builders

“Housing is the Government’s most pressing domestic issue,” said Liam Halligan in The Daily Telegraph. “Relentless” demand and inadequate supply have caused prices to spiral. Average house prices across the UK are now eight times the average wage – “a historically high multiple”. “Millions of hard-working people, who should be natural Tory voters” are unable to buy their own homes. This week, Theresa May gave “the first indication that she might be serious about solving this national emergency”. The planning system is partly to blame, as she conceded in her speech on housing on Monday. But, as she pointed out, it is the private sector that has really failed to deliver. Since the 2008 financial crisis, an average of 150,000 houses per year have been built, well short of the 250,000 needed. The big house-builders are clearly sitting on their land, waiting for values to rise: this year in England and Wales, planning permission has been granted for some 423,000 homes that have not been built.

“Not before time, the Government has decided on a plan of action,” said The Times. Developers will be forced to build when granted planning permission or risk losing it. Their past performance in completing projects will be taken into account when assessing new applications. And they will no longer be able to wriggle out of promises to include affordable housing in new schemes (these are often watered down at a later stage on grounds of “viability”, to protect profit margins). Councils, for their part, will be required to plan and permit enough homes to meet local demand – or they will lose the power to decide where construction takes place. “These measures are all welcome.” But they are “still not bold enough to end the fundamental mismatch of supply and demand”.

If May really wants to increase housing supply, there are better ways, said The Independent. She could allow local councils to build new social housing again, as they did in the past, or to compulsorily purchase land at its current value and sell it on with planning permission to developers, using the profits to fund new public services. May’s aims are self-contradictory, said Simon Jenkins in The Guardian. To the young people who can’t buy homes, she is promising a massive increase in housebuilding. To the Tory nimby, she’s promising no real change: the green belt will be protected and the countryside defended against “sprawl”. How this all fits together is anybody’s guess, particularly when the Government is also planning to build a chain of “garden towns” in the “corridor” stretching from Oxford to Cambridge. The Prime Minister “is becoming the maestro of contradiction”.

Wit & Wisdom

“Home is where you come to when you’ve got nothing better to do.”
Margaret Thatcher, quoted in The Oldie

“Everyone thinks forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive.”
C.S. Lewis, quoted on The Browser

“Dickens’s A Tale of Two Cities was first serialised in two local newspapers. It was the Bicester Times, it was the Worcester Times.”
Richard Osman tweet, quoted in The Mail on Sunday

“Nobody does self-deprecating humour better than I do.”
Donald Trump, quoted in The Independent

“The chains of love are never so binding as when their links are made of gold.”
US jurist Royall Tyler, quoted in Forbes

“I suppose true sexual equality will come when a general called Anthea is found having an unwise lunch with a young unreliable male model from Spain.”
John Mortimer, quoted in The Times

“The Brits are calling it the Beast from the East. The Finns are calling it Wednesday.”
Twitter user Gertrjan Filarski, quoted in The Mail on Sunday

“Sometimes a scream is better than a thesis.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in The Independent

Snow-bound Britain: the lessons of the Beast

Schools closed all over the country. Drivers forced to spend the night in their cars. Widespread flooding. There were few of us who weren’t affected by the blizzards that swept across Britain last week, said Eve Livingston in The Guardian. And while it’s unfair to demand “military levels of preparedness” for such a rare weather event, our Government does bear some responsibility. Owing to austerity, cash-strapped councils are no longer able to properly maintain roads or to prepare a proper response to emergencies. As a measure of how our society cares for people, “snow is a hot political issue”.

It wasn’t snow that paralysed Britain, said Peter Hitchens in The Mail on Sunday. It was lawyers. A manageable situation was turned into a crisis by officialdom’s “terrible fear of being sued”. Major stations were closed because of fears that passengers might slip on patches of ice. One head teacher was so worried about snow-related injuries, he banned pupils from even touching the stuff. This is what happens when a society is overtaken by a craven health-and-safety despotism. But we shouldn’t just blame lawyers, said Philip Johnston in The Daily Telegraph. Journalists also contributed to the paralysis, by using apocalyptic terms like “the Beast from the East” and warning people not to venture out. Then there are the train companies, who had an incentive to cancel services: Network Rail compensates them for disruption and often they end up with more than they have to pay out to disgruntled passengers.

Now that the snow has melted, it has revealed a more crucial danger – Britain’s energy policy, said The Daily Telegraph. During the blizzard, the national grid warned that the UK might not have enough gas to meet demand: the closure of coal-fuelled power stations has left us perilously dependent on foreign suppliers. Look on the bright side, said The Scotsman. If we now recognise the need for more domestic sources of energy, so much the better. Some of those forced to work from home may have found a better way to live. And the many stories of people who went out of their way to help others in the snow remind us that we remain, by and large, kind and decent people. In a world dominated by bleak headlines, that is a heartening lesson.

Statistics of the week

There were 239,020 marriages between opposite-sex couples in England and Wales in 2015 (the latest year for which figures are available), a drop of more than 9,300 on the year before. Netflix has 118 million subscribers. Last year, it spent $6.3bn on original and acquired programming.

10 March 2018 THE WEEK
Cycling: the shame of Bradley Wiggins

Bradley Wiggins was supposed to be different, said David Jones in the Daily Mail. When he became the first British cyclist to win the Tour de France, in 2012, we thought he had triumphed through “hard graft and God-given talent”. After all, as the star rider for “the oh-so virtuous Team Sky”, he had “spearheaded the crusade to clean up cycling”. We were wrong, said Tom Cary in The Daily Telegraph. The publication of a damning report this week has left the reputations of both Wiggins and Sky “hanging by a thread”. Chief among the “stunning claims” made by the Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee is that the cyclist used the drug triamcinolone to improve his chances of winning – and not for medical reasons, as previously claimed. In the process, the report says, Wiggins and Sky did “cross the ethical line”.

Triamcinolone is a “powerful” corticosteroid, said Daniel Martin and Matt Lawton in the Daily Mail. It allows cyclists to lose weight while “maintaining power” and can improve their pain threshold. David Millar, a cyclist banned in 2004 for taking performance-enhancing drugs, described it as the most potent substance he ever used – so potent, in fact, that it would be risky to take it more than once a year. That’s why athletes are banned from using it in competition, unless they have been granted a therapeutic-use exemption (TUE) on medical grounds. That’s what Wiggins had: Team Sky claimed he needed the drug to treat his asthma. But the Committee suggested he was treated with triamcinolone with staggering frequency – as many as nine times in four years, including in the run-up to his Tour de France victory. This went beyond “medical need”, the report concluded; it was about Wiggins “improving his power-to-weight ratio”.

Thanks to Wiggins’s TUE, that wasn’t necessarily illegal, said Martyn Ziegler in The Times. But it depends on when he took the drug. It was about Wiggins “improving his power-to-weight ratio”.

“In 2011, a mysterious Jiffy bag was delivered to the cyclist Martyn Ziegler in The Times. But it depends on when he took the drug. It was about Wiggins “improving his power-to-weight ratio”.

That may just be the tip of the iceberg for Sky, said William Fotheringham in The Guardian. Between 2010 and 2013, they ordered an extraordinary 55 doses of triamcinolone. Can it really be true, then, that Wiggins was their only cyclist taking the drug? Not according to one “well-placed source”, who said that a number of riders were possibly using corticosteroids. Sky have “rejected any suggestion of widespread triamcinolone use” by their cyclists, said Martha Kelner in the same paper. But it’s hard to take the team seriously, because they don’t have the evidence to back up their claims. They didn’t keep thorough medical records; Wiggins’s records were apparently lost when a team doctor’s laptop was stolen.

This was cheating, pure and simple, said Martin Samuel in the Daily Mail. If an athlete obtains a TUE that is “performance-enhancing, but not born of physical need, that is cheating”. TUEs were not introduced so “smart athletes, ethically loose medics or ambitious team directors” could beat the testing system. They were meant to address “genuine health problems” – to make the sport fairer. Abusing the process is “corruption as blatant as any attempted” by Lance Armstrong. And it’s all the more disappointing because Team Sky seemed to stand for “trust and credibility”, said Matt Dickinson in The Times. Even as their general manager, Dave Brailsford, was talking a good game about “clean sport”, they were “cynically bending the rules to breaking point”. Even now, Brailsford insists he was “unaware of what was going on”. But after these revelations, “how can we believe anything that he says”? For all his achievements at Team Sky, and as the former performance director of British Cycling, he oversaw decisions that undermined “the good work” of so many cyclists. It’s time he finally took responsibility and resigned.

The four-minute mile: “a sporting Rubicon”

“Even now, 64 years on, 3:59.4 is a number recognisable to every sports fan,” said Sean Ingle in The Guardian. By becoming the first person to run a mile in under four minutes, Roger Bannister – who died last Saturday (see page 47) – achieved a “record for the ages”. Yet Bannister wasn’t the first person to be credited with a sub-four-minute mile, said Duncan Mackay in the same paper.

In 1770, almost two centuries before Bannister’s “epoch-making performance”, the feat was attributed to James Parrott, a London costermonger who had accepted a 15-guinea wager that he couldn’t run a mile in under four-and-a-half minutes. The story of Parrott’s run was soon dismissed as a fable, because for a long time no one believed a four-minute mile was physically possible, said Oliver Brown in The Daily Telegraph. It came to be seen as a “sporting Rubicon”. Walter George set a time of 4:12.75 in 1886, which stood for a remarkable three decades; Jules Ladoumègue, in 1931, “left track and field’s most tantalising target” a mere nine seconds away. The record kept getting trimmed by “tiny increments” – and by the time of Bannister’s attempt, in 1954, it stood at 4:01.4. Even then, many considered a four-minute mile “beyond the limits of what the human heart and lungs could tolerate”. But Bannister’s record was left in the dust a lifetime ago: the current record, set by Moroccan runner Hicham El Guerrouj in 1999, is 3:43.13.

Bannister crossing the tape

“reliable evidence” to back up that claim; to make matters worse, his former coach Shane Sutton suggested that the bag contained triamcinolone. That’s potentially very grave indeed: Wiggins’s exemption didn’t come into effect for another two weeks, so if he did take the drug at that point he would be guilty of doping.

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Sporting headlines

Athletics Team GB won seven medals at the World Indoor Championships in Athletics. Katarina Johnson-Thompson took gold in the women’s pentathlon; Andrew Pozzi took gold in the men’s 60-metre hurdles.

Tennis Kyle Edmund rose to No. 24 in the world rankings, overtaking Andy Murray to become the British No. 1.

Rugby union Exeter extended their lead at the top of the Premiership table to seven points with a 24-12 victory over Saracens.

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Letters

Pick of the week’s correspondence

The need to Impress
To The Observer
Nick Cohen is right (“We need a special court for free speech, delivering justice to all”) to call for an inexpensive court, but if he looks at the inquiry report he will see that is precisely what Leveson has proposed.

A newspaper, said Leveson, did not have to belong to a recognised regulator, and thus an inexpensive arbitration scheme, but if it didn’t, and insisted on using the courts, it could be ordered to pay the costs of both sides if this were “just and equitable in all the circumstances of the case”.

Is that not fair? If you and I are going on a journey together and I can only afford the bus, surely you should pay if you insist that we both travel in a Rolls-Royce?

A large part of the national press hated this. The last thing they want is to eliminate the financial barrier that prevents most people challenging them. So they decided to ignore the Royal Charter and set up a virtual copy of their old, wholly discredited Press Complaints Commission, but with a slightly more credible chairman.

In response, a small group led by Jonathan Heawood set up a Royal Charter-compliant regulator, Impress, with the intention of securing recognition. But Impress had a financial problem. With the help of lawyers, a structure was set up to enable money from our family charitable trust to reach Impress in a way that gave me no influence or control. This was challenged by the major newspapers. Eventually, it reached the High Court where two judges said there was “nothing” to the newspapers’ claim that Impress was not fully independent.

Max Mosley, London

Getting over the border
To The Independent
What may solve the Northern Ireland border question could be an added fourth ingredient to the mutually incoherent three ambitions of the UK Government – to avoid a hard border, to leave the customs union and to ensure there are no barriers or checks on goods moving between Britain and Northern Ireland – and a bit of applied intellectual heat.

With agreement from the British and Irish governments, and the Northern Ireland Executive, the whole of Northern Ireland could be declared a joint (UK/Ireland) special economic zone. The EU allows for these and there are many in existence. It could be administered by the North South Ministerial Council.

Geoff Naylor, Winchester, Hampshire

Meals and wheels
To The Daily Telegraph
I was dining at a hotel in Germany when I saw that, as at Wetherspoon, the calorific value of each course was printed on the menu. I ate a modest three-course dinner and, out of interest, totalled up the calories consumed. Later that evening I found my way to the hotel gym and used an exercise bike calibrated to calculate calorie expenditure. A quick calculation showed that I would have to continue pedalling at a brisk pace until dawn if I was to offset my dinner.

Exercise, although good in itself, is not the answer to obesity. Just eat less.

Tim Wadsworth, Malmsbury, Wiltshire

Exchange of the week
EU regulations: curse or boon?
To The Independent
Theresa May is full of good intentions, but has no understanding of Europe. It is a large, homogeneous trading bloc that has set out to protect its citizens by establishing a level playing field with high standards for product safety and employee rights. It will happily enter into an agreement with the UK that maintains that playing field. Any agreement will have to be enforced by a judicial system that accepts those standards. The EU is not being difficult when it insists on this.

The US is different: it is a trading bloc that protects its businesses. Any agreement with the US will have to give US businesses the right to do things their way.

Where the UK political parties have failed is in not recognising that Europe is protective of its citizens; and by large, its standards are the ones we should aspire to, not object to merely because we are only a bit player in developing them.

Jon Hawksley

To The Guardian
Margaret Davis, London

Making one’s name
To The Guardian
When asked what difference his sudden fame had made, Roger Bannister replied: “When I went on training runs there was a little boy who used to call after me: ‘Who do you think you are? Sydney Wooderson?’ After the four-minute mile, he used to call: ‘Who do you think you are? Roger Bannister?’”

Huw Kyffin, Canterbury

Blast from past
To The Guardian
As a 70-year-old baby boomer I read and learnt from Philip Innan’s article. As usual, though, there is no comparison made between the life circumstances experienced during the youthful years of baby boomers and those of today’s young people.

Most of us grew up without central heating; icy bathrooms, phoning from the only phone in a freezing hall, doing homework next to a single bar electric fire. Holiday accommodation – rarely, if ever, abroad – consisted of youth hostels or tents. Car ownership tended to be limited to enthusiasts with car maintenance skills.

The purchase of clothing was a treat and TV was a four-channel affair without remote control. Sex was difficult to come by as getting together under parents’ roofs was out of the question. The age of majority was 21, so even the lucky 2-3% who went to university were in gender-separated halls or digs where landladies were in loco parentis. Late buses took us home from evening social events. Birthday celebrations would be held at home to the record player. I was lucky to own a bicycle, but no helmet. Deaths on the roads were horrifyingly high as seatbelts were unknown. Cancer meant automatic death.

Do our relatively deprived youths give us any rights to a moderately comfortable old age?

Roger Bannister?

To The Independent

The CET also punishes countries outside the tariff wall, since the price of their products is raised as soon as they reach Europe. And yet the best way we can help the development of countries outside the EU, some of them the poorest in the world, is by opening up to trade with them. This is better than all our overseas aid, which usually has no good effect on the productive capacity of the countries being targeted.

Professor Arthur Morris, Helenburgh, Dunbartonshire

“What’s News” VK.COM/WSNWS

Pick of the week’s correspondence

RELIZ ПОДГОТОВИЛА ГРУППА “What’s News” VK.COM/WSNWS

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10 March 2018 THE WEEK
Sanity is returning to the world of wine

For three decades, Robert Parker was the most influential wine critic in the world. No other expert had such a monopoly of power. Leading Bordeaux wine makers would refrain from releasing their prices until they’d seen Parker’s score for their wines, and worse: some producers even tried to craft their wines to appeal to his taste in high alcohol “fruit bombs”. A Parker score of 100 points could treble the price overnight, and inevitably this style influenced the industry; wines of high extraction and 14% alcohol or more became commonplace.

Thankfully, Private Cellar were never amongst the cheerleaders of Parker style wines – instead, they search for wines that express their individual character and location. Parker’s influence has waned recently and the new crop of wine critics have announced that the 2015 Bordeaux vintage is returning to a style of less fruit extraction and more elegance and balance.

This month my chosen wines from Private Cellar are from traditional wine producing countries. They show how much diversity there is in the contemporary “Old World” wine scene, and there’s a superb example of a great value Bordeaux 2015: a welcome sign that sanity is returning to the wine world.

Bruce Palling
Wine Editor – The Week Wines

Château Haut Gay, Bordeaux Supérieur 2015 (83%) This is a perfect example of why Bordeaux remains the single most important wine region on earth. While the world’s plutocrats pay thousands for Pétrus or Lafite, producers such as Domaines des Comtes de Tastes offer these incredible value wines for single figure sums. Château Haut Gay delivers a superb ready to drink wine with all of the balance and blackcurrant fruit we expect from classically produced Bordeaux, 40% merlot and cabernet franc with the remaining 20% cabernet sauvignon. It also helps that the 2015 vintage is an outstanding one.

Beaujolais Villages Elegance, Laurent Savoye 2015 (83%) Laurent Savoye is an old-fashioned Beaujolais vigneron with just over 20 acres of 55 year-old Gamay grapes, from which he makes his superb Fleurie and Beaujolais Villages wines. Forget the earlier reputation of Beaujolais Nouveau as a joke wine – these days the Beaujolais region produces some of the greatest value for any reds in France. There is brightness in his wine with red fruit and soft tannins that make it impossible to stop drinking. A perfect aperitif or with white meats.

Albariño Robalito, Señorio de Rubíos, Orixe Rías Baixas 2016 (82.5%) I’m a huge fan of Albariño wines from the Galician area of North West Spain. Señorio de Rubíos produces rich wines with hints of pear, mingled with tropical notes but ending with a refreshingly citric aftertaste. Part of the secret is that the Albariño grape has a thick skin to withstand the damp climate, contributing to the complexity of the flavours. It has immediate drinkability, but if you’re able to resist, then it will actually improve with age.

Château de Fesles Vielles Vignes Anjou Blanc 2014 (83.5%) While most wine lovers consider sauvignon blanc as the dominant expression of white Loire wines, they overlook the joys of the chenin blanc grape, especially as it’s grown in the Anjou region. High in the Loire valley overlooking the River Layon, Château de Fesles is an exciting example of this versatile grape variety. Virtually bone dry, it has that distinctive chenin blanc scent of honey and damp straw with a hint of elderberry. Perfect with any fish dish.

S’Elemè, Vermentino di Gallura, DOCG Sardegna DOC 2016 (84%) Vermentino is the most widely planted white grape variety in Sardinia, with the highest quality to be found in the Gallura hills. Perhaps it’s the granite soils and maritime influences that contribute to their richness and intensity. The S’Elemè has a glorious spiciness with mineral overttones that is refreshing, despite being full-bodied and aromatic. This is one of the most interesting high quality whites to emerge from Italy in recent years.

Marmora, Cannonau di Sardegna DOC 2016 (83.5%) The sister wine of the Vermentino above, a fascinating example of what can be done with Southern Rhône’s Grenache grape (Cannonau) in Sardinia. This is the leading red grape varietal grown in Sardinia. Unlike its French counterpart, with its dense, inky flavours, this version is light on its feet with a lovely mid taste of hot tar and pine notes. This would be ideal with white meats rather than robust dishes.

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ARTS
Review of reviews: Books

**Book of the week**

**Berlin 1936**
by Oliver Hilmes
Bodley Head 320pp £16.99
The Week Bookshop £14.99

The opening ceremony of the 1936 Olympics was an eye-catching affair involving 20,000 doves, 3,000 singers and a giant zeppelin, said Nikolaus Wachsmann in The Guardian. After it had finished, Józef Lipski, the Polish ambassador to Germany, turned to Henri de Baillet-Latour, the Belgian president of the International Olympic Committee, and remarked: “We have to be on guard against a people with such a talent for organisation. They could mobilise their entire nation just as smoothly for war.” Oliver Hilmes’s “lively” history of the 1936 Olympics is made up of many such revealing anecdotes. For Hitler, the games were a chance to “show the new Germany to the world”, and no cost was spared in making them spectacular: organisers pioneered the torch relay that is still used today and Nazi bigwigs vied to hold the most “lavish reception”.

The games were designed to persuade the watching world of the Nazis’ friendliness, said Simon Kuper in The Spectator. It’s “a vivid collage of vignettes” which, as they dance between the ironic and the sinister, present a picture of a “darkening Germany”. At the end of the games, Joseph Goebbels hosted a party on his private island, culminating in a fireworks display that turned the heavens “blood red”. It was an ominous finale. As Hitler’s chief propagandist wrote in his diary: “After the Olympics, we’ll get ruthless. Then there will be some shooting.”

Times. Just a few months earlier, the Wehrmacht had marched into the demilitarised Rhineland. Meanwhile, political prisoners were building Sachsenhausen concentration camp, north of Berlin, which “over the coming years would house 200,000”. Even during the games themselves, some locals used graffiti and leaflets critical of the regime to try and educate foreigners. Hilmes’s book is a “vivid collage of vignettes” which, as they dance between “the ironic and the sinister”, present a picture of a “darkening Germany”. The end of the games, Joseph Goebbels hosted a party on his private island, culminating in a fireworks display that turned the heavens “blood red”. It was an ominous finale. As Hitler’s chief propagandist wrote in his diary: “After the Olympics, we’ll get ruthless. Then there will be some shooting.”

**Hired**
by James Bloodworth
Atlantic Books 288pp £12.99
The Week Bookshop £11.99

In 2016, James Bloodworth, a young political commentator, “went in search of low-wage Britain”, said Robert Colls in the Literary Review. He applied for a number of unpleasant jobs and ended up doing stints as an order picker at an Amazon fulfilment centre (see page 56), as a care worker in Blackpool and as a call centre operator in Swansea. The experience immersed him in a world of “long and inconvenient hours, personal searches, surveillance tables and electronic tracking”. As a care worker, he travelled from home to home (having to provide his own fuel and vehicle), and “had 20 minutes to wake, clean, shower, dress, feed and counsel each ‘customer’ before moving on to the next”. In the time allotted, this was “impossible”. His fellow workers, often earning as little as £12,740 per annum, lived in crowded shared accommodation and survived on takeaways.

The Britain Bloodworth explores in this often revelatory book is one where “call centres and online delivery vans have taken the place of the coal mines and cotton mills”, said Julian Glover in the London Evening Standard. It’s a “dystopian place” that the well-off would prefer not to think about. Yet Bloodworth forces them to confront the “awkward truth” about the poorly-paid drudgery that makes their lifestyles possible. Bloodworth’s reportage is excellent, said Rod Liddle in The Sunday Times. But his “bien-pensant” views prevent him from drawing the right conclusions from it. For instance, he declares himself “relaxed” about immigration – yet he ignores the fact that a “hideously exploited underclass of cheap foreign labour” has pushed down wages for indigenous Brits, thus creating the conditions he describes. Nevertheless, you will find this a “discomforting book, no matter what your politics might be”.

**Novel of the week**

**Asymmetry**
by Lisa Halliday
Granta 288pp £14.99
The Week Bookshop £13.99

Lisa Halliday’s debut novel is the latest addition to the “burgeoning corpus of first-hand accounts of what it’s like to have sex with Philip Roth”, said James Marriott in The Times. In her 20s, Halliday was involved with the literary titan, then in his 60s. And in the first section of Asymmetry – a novel divided into three very different parts – she offers a fictionalised account of their affair, replete with the “difficulties of having sex on an orthopaedic mattress”.

Yet this opening isn’t the most interesting thing about this “clever and provocative” book, said Edmund Gordon in The Sunday Times. In fact, it “slightly drags”. Much stronger is the “brilliant” middle section, which “abruptly cuts” to a US citizen of Iraqi descent “who has been detained at Heathrow while travelling to Baghdad”. Equally “thrilling” is the final section, which consists of a “ridiculously convincing” transcript of a Desert Island Discs interview with the Philip Roth character, said Justine Jordan in The Guardian. “That Halliday can write part of her book in the voice of Kirsty Young, and pull it off, is one of the many surprises here.”

To order these titles or any other book in print, visit www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop or speak to a bookseller on 020-3176 3835

Opening times: Mon to Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm and Sun 10am-2pm

10 March 2018 THE WEEK
Theatre

Fanny & Alexander

Adapted by Stephen Beresford, from the film by Ingmar Bergman
Director: Max Webster

The Old Vic, The Cut, London SE1
(0844-871 7628)
Until 14 April

Running time:
3hrs 30mins
(including intervals)

★★★

This “leisurely and expansive” adaptation of Ingmar Bergman’s sprawling autobiographical masterpiece is set among a family of actors in the Swedish city of Uppsal, in the early 20th century. “Actors acting, actors about theatre – for three-and-a-half hours, including two brief intervals. You have been warned,” said Christopher Hart in The Sunday Times. Those willing to commit, however, are in for a proper treat. What unfolds is a “lovable portrait of a warm-hearted and squabbling tribe of extrovert, extravagant misfits”, the Ekdahls, and a memoir of childhood that is by turns “thrilling and moving”. Beautiful to look at and brilliantly acted by a crack cast – led by Penelope Wilton on “majestic form” as the thespian materfamilias – this is a “richly colourful and assured recreation, and a brave, unquestionable triumph for the Old Vic". In my view this is a fine achievement, without quite making a convincing case for the transition from screen to stage, said Sam Marlowe in The Stage. This show doesn’t achieve the “rich strangeness of the original”, nor is it sufficiently adventurous in creating a dramatic language to take the place of Bergman’s cinematic vision. What you get in the film, said Dominic Cavendish in The Daily Telegraph, is an unquestionable triumph for the Old Vic”.

Penelope Wilton: “majestic”

“intense quality of lingering observation”, particularly of the younger characters, that “lends the entire enterprise a quality of mystery and childlike wonder. To compare the beauty of the original with the visuals here is like comparing a rainbow with an iridescent soap bubble.” The best section, in this three-act show, is the middle one, where Fanny and Alexander’s widowed mother marries the puritanical bishop, Edvard Vergerus, and the mood turns wintry, said Michael Billington in The Guardian. Kevin Doyle is excellent as the bishop. Lolita Chakrabarti as his “venomous” sister, Jonathan Slinger as a lecherous restaurateur and Michael Pennington as an aged antiques dealer are also superb. This is certainly a long show, said Quentin Letts in the Daily Mail, but it’s so life-affirming and staged with such “panache”, it’s well worth it.

The week’s other opening

Frost/Nixon Crucible Theatre, Sheffield
(0114-249 6000). Until 17 March

Peter Morgan’s “riveting” 2006 play about the famous TV duel has aged well, and Kate Hewitt’s revival “absolutely smashes it”, with superb performances from Jonathan Hyde as Nixon and Daniel Rigby as Frost (Times).

The centre of English Touring Opera’s spring is a lively new Marriage of Figaro that opened last month at the Hackney Empire, and is now on a mammoth 21-venue tour. Its principal strength is the clarity it brings to a narrative that “can be confusing even for the work’s most ardent” fans, said Tim Ashley in The Guardian. The downside is that it’s “occasionally short on humour and sadness”; it doesn’t quite capture the opera’s “full emotional range”.

I thoroughly disliked aspects of Blanche McIntyre’s staging, said Mark Valencia on What’s Stage. This show doesn’t achieve the “rich strangeness of the original”, nor is it sufficiently adventurous in creating a dramatic language to take the place of Bergman’s cinematic vision. What you get in the film, said Dominic Cavendish in The Daily Telegraph, is an

CD of the week

Joan Baez: Whistle Down the Wind
(Proper £9.99)

Baez has reached the age when anything she does is going to be applauded. The good news is that her first studio set in years “really is special. If her voice no longer soars, there’s a grittier intensity to every syllable" (Times).

“For the good of your ears, go”

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A BBC blockbuster: has civilisation taken a turn for the worse?

The key to understanding the BBC’s new series on the high points of human culture lies in the last letter of its title, said Carol Midgley in The Times. Civilisations is a “remake” of Civilisation, Kenneth Clark’s seminal 1969 documentary series on European art. But the additional “s” proclaims the change of focus – it’s BBC code for: “We’re taking this global.” Where Clark took 13 episodes to do the West in detail, Civilisations does the whole world in nine. Where Civilisation had just one lordly presenter, Civilisations has a more democratic three: the historians Simon Schama and David Olusoga and the classicist Mary Beard. And where Clark kicked off his series standing stiffly in front of Notre-Dame, this begins with an agitated Schama in the Middle East inveighing against the cultural vandalism of Islamic State. “We are the art-making animal,” he booms, “and this is what we have made.”

It’s Schama at his finest, said Euan Ferguson in The Observer. He takes us seamlessly from “Picasso back to bison cave paintings and Mayan cartoon narratives” – a triumphal way to start this big, ambitious series, with its constant reminder that “whitewash didn’t, after all, invent all of art and culture”. Of course not, said Ed West in The Spectator: but I still take issue with its premise that all cultures “are somehow equal”. Call me a “stick in the mud”, but I don’t accept that the historical west is “an arts documentary, it’s a Mastercard ad”. There’s no denying its “frantic restlessness” gets wearying, said Rachel Cooke in the New Statesman. But equally, there’s no denying the sincerity and enthusiasm of its writer-presenters. Schama in particular has a wonderful ability “to concertina time, contracting and expanding it at will, the way the authorities. Schama in particular has a wonderful ability “to concertina time, contracting and expanding it at will, the way the

A Fantastic Woman ★★★★★

And the foreign language Oscar goes to... Dir: Sebastián Lelio 1hr 44mins (15)

“Most Hollywood films are about ordinary people in extraordinary situations,” said Tom Shone in The Sunday Times. This Chilean art-house drama, which has won the Oscar for best foreign language film, is “about the opposite”. A Fantastic Woman tells the story of a 27-year-old woman named Marina (Daniela Vega), who loses her much older boyfriend, Orlando (Francisco Reyes), when he dies suddenly of an aneurysm. It would be devastating, said Peter Bradshaw in The Guardian. Yet for all its faults, Vega, who is Chile’s first transgender actress, displays tremendous passion (Aline Küppenheim), and the suspicion of the authorities. Orlando struck me as “hoary” device, said Phil de Semlyen in Time Out. Yet the overall impact of this “chastening” drama is “quietly devastating”. It is “a film for our times”.

Red Sparrow ★★

Spy movies tend to be either bleak, John le Carré-style procedurals or glamorous James Bond fantasies, said Geoffrey Macnab in The Independent. Red Sparrow veers disconcertingly between the two. This “bizarre” thriller stars Jennifer Lawrence as a newly recruited Russian spy who is taught to seduce enemy agents so as to discover their secrets. Her sadistic teacher (Charlotte Rampling) strides around barking things like, “The West has gone weak, drunk on shopping and social media!” before ordering her pupils to have sex with a passing garrison. If this all sounds ludicrous, “that’s because it is”, said Robbie Collin in The Daily Telegraph. Unfortunately, this film takes itself terribly seriously, throwing in scenes of graphic sex and torture to prevent anyone tittering.

Matters aren’t helped by the “lack of chemistry” between Lawrence and her co-star Joel Edgerton, who plays the American agent she is ordered to lure into a honeypot, said Ben Kenzer in The Guardian. Yet for all its faults, Red Sparrow is “far from a disaster”. Lawrence is as “fascinating” a screen presence as ever and, speaking for myself, I find it “refreshing” to see a mainstream movie with so many “quasily perverse elements”.

10 March 2018 THE WEEK
Exhibition of the week **All Too Human**


“Stop the presses: Tate Britain has just mounted an exhibition of figurative oil painting from the past 100 years,” said Hettie Judah in the *Independent*. It’s shocking: a whole gallery given over to “actual paintings of recognisable things” – an art form regularly pronounced dead by the experts. **All Too Human: Bacon, Freud and a Century of Painting Life** takes us from Walter Sickert’s scenes of London nightlife in the early 20th century, to Lynette Yiadom-Boakye’s “evocative, dreamlike” contemporary paintings, by way of great artists such as Stanley Spencer, Paula Rego, Frank Auerbach and standout individual works, such as Euan Uglow’s “meticulous” *Georgia* (1973). At its heart is an impressive selection of work by the so-called School of London, a loose group of postwar painters whose number included Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud and R.B. Kitaj. This is a “dazzling” show, packed with the “true heroes of modern British art”, said Jonathan Jones in The Guardian. Here are “works of art that truly matter, in their humanity, courage, feeling, truth”.

At first glance, **All Too Human** looks very promising, said Rachel Campbell-Johnston in The Times. The show opens with a marvellous gallery featuring “darkly brooding” Sickerts, “excoriatingly honest” Spencers and a pair of “lulessly painted” works by Chaim Soutine. Yet despite the quality of many of the paintings on show, it sinks rapidly “downhill” thereafter. That’s putting it mildly, said Waldemar Januszczak in The Sunday Times. This is a “confusing display of boneheaded curation” that can’t even decide on a coherent theme. Worse, far too much space is devoted to the likes of the “stiff and mannered” Indian modernist F.N. Souza and the “hugely influential” but rather dry William Coldstream. Rarely have I been so “disappointed” by a blockbuster exhibition.

There are some brilliant works here, said Jackie Wullschlager in the Financial Times. Of “outstanding interest” are a number of rarely seen pieces by Bacon. *Study for a Portrait of P.L.* (1962) is “an unsparring depiction of the artist’s lover” Peter Lacy, while *Study for Portrait of Lucian Freud* (1964) presents his friend as a vision of “existential anxiety”. Freud himself is also well represented with, for instance, a “tense” picture of his first wife, Kitty Garman, posing with a bull terrier. Nevertheless, there are some baffling omissions – where is David Hockney? – and pointless detours into “gender politics”: the contemporary section is women-only. This should have been a “landmark” exhibition and, “unmissable” though it is, it feels like a “squandered opportunity”.

**Where to buy…**

*The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery*

**René Magritte**

*at Luxembourg & Dayan*

It goes without saying that René Magritte was an unusual artist, but it’s hard to overstate just how peculiar his paintings really are. Looking at his work here, in an exhibition called *The Rule of Metaphor* (1962), which covers his paintings from 1927 to 1930, one gets the sense that while his French surrealist counterparts were mere “disappointed” by a agnostic expressionists and absurdist Dada, the real deal: a bona fide oddball with total conviction in his bizarre vision. Today, Magritte’s style has been referenced to records should give some guidance. It’s hard to overstate quite how peculiar Magritte was an unusual artist, but it’s hard to overstate just how peculiar his paintings really are. Looking at his work here, in an exhibition called *The Rule of Metaphor* (1962), which covers his paintings from 1927 to 1930, one gets the sense that while his French surrealist counterparts were mere “disappointed” by a agnostic expressionists and absurdist Dada, the real deal: a bona fide oddball with total conviction in his bizarre vision. Today, Magritte’s style has been referenced to

**The African Mona Lisa**

*A long-lost portrait of a Nigerian princess described as the “African Mona Lisa” sold at a London auction last week for £1.2m, said The Guardian. Ben Enwonwu is seen as the father of Nigerian modernism, and his painting of the Ife princess Adetutu Ademiluyi – affectionately known as Tutu – is regarded as a national icon in his home country. In the wake of the Biafran conflict of the late 1960s, Enwonwu painted a trio of portraits of Tutu in 1973 and 1974 as a symbol of national reconciliation. Reproductions of the works hang on walls all over Nigeria, but all three originals went missing for many years, and were thought lost – until one turned up recently in a flat in London. “It has been a legendary painting for 40 years,” said the Nigerian novelist Ben Okri. “Everybody keeps talking about Tutu, saying: where is Tutu?” The work was expected to fetch £300,000, but the £1.2m paid by an anonymous buyer at Bonhams sets a new record for Enwonwu.

Les amants (1928), oil on canvas, 54cm x 73cm
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Best books... Jill Dawson


A Quiet Life by Beryl Bainbridge, 1976 (Virago £8.99). An autobiographical tale about a young girl stuck in a bleak home and her affair with a German POW. There is no one like Beryl Bainbridge. Hard-drinking and smoking, darkly humorous; in her novels she relished the absurd, the inexplicable, the candid and the violent.

Cat's Eye by Margaret Atwood, 1988 (Virago £9.99). I'm a big Atwood fan and can't easily pick a favourite. But in Cat's Eye she nails the cruelty of girls' friendships. I read it with a shock of recognition.

The Plague by Albert Camus, 1947 (Penguin £6.99). I did French at A level and this is one of the few novels I've read in French. The idea that Camus was writing about one thing (German occupation) in the guise of another (a plague), thrilled me as a 16-year-old reader. This is the novel that made me want to be a writer.

Sula by Toni Morrison, 1973 (Vintage £8.99). Sula is about two black girls: clever and poor, wishbone thin and pretty. They grow up in small-town America until Sula breaks free. Morrison's writing about friendship, bereavement and especially sex in this novel is stunning. She can convey the pain of heartbreak in just a few lines; everything Morrison does is brilliant.

Love's Executioner and Other Tales of Psychotherapy by Irvin Yalom, 1989 (Penguin £9.99). This is an account of ten cases treated by the psychotherapist and novelist Irvin Yalom. The title story concerns a therapist addressing a 70-year-old patient's delusions of love. I've read everything by Yalom.


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

Last chance

John Piper at Tate Liverpool (0151-702 7400). An exhibition of work by the "gentleman modernist" charting his path from representation to abstraction. Of note are his views of bomb-damaged churches and derelict country houses (Daily Telegraph). Ends 18 March.

Book now

A three-day creative retreat at Porth-en-Alls House, on an unspoilt coastal estate in Cornwall. Guests can choose one of two courses: Wallpaper and Fabric Design with Adam Calkin or Multi Craft with Ros Badger and Christina Wilson. £650pp, including accommodation, food and wine. 27-30 April, Prussia Cove, Cornwall. Email: pothrenalls@prussiacove.co.uk or call 01736-762014.

Broadway legend Patti LuPone stars in this gender-reversed revival of Stephen Sondheim's musical Company. From 26 September, Gielgud Theatre, London W1 (0844-482 5130). Fans of the TV show Fleabag, should enjoy the one-woman play by Phoebe Waller-Bridge that spawned it. Maddie Rice stars. 26 April-5 May, Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff; then touring until 9 June. Full details at sohotheatre.com.

John Piper's Harbour Scene, Newhaven (1936-1937) just out in paperback

A Natural by Ross Raisin (Vintage £8.99). Raisin's "exceptional novel" follows a promising, introverted teen footballer through both professional struggles and the slow acceptance of his homosexuality. A "subtle portrait of a soul in torment" (Guardian).

Television

Programmes

Below the Surface Eight-part thriller from the producers of The Killing and Borgen. The hijacking of a Copenhagen subway train sends shock waves through Denmark. Sat 10 Mar, BBC2 21:00 (90mins).

Being Blacker The renowned documentary filmmaker Molly Dineen returns after a ten-year break with this intimate yet revealing film about Blacker Dread, a music producer and pillar of the south London Afro-Caribbean community, whom she first met 40 years ago. Mon 12 Mar, BBC2 21:45 (100mins).

Imagine: Ingrid Bergman – In Her Own Words A look at the life of the great Swedish actress, using her own home movies and letters, and featuring interviews with her children. Mon 12 Mar, BBC1 22:45 (100mins).

The Ruth Ellis Files: A Very British Crime Story Three-part series re-examining the circumstances that led to the hanging of Ruth Ellis – the last woman to be hanged in Britain. Tue 13 Mar, BBC4 21:00 (60mins).

Four Days That Shook Britain There were four major terror attacks in Britain in 2017. This film describes them from the perspectives of those affected. Thur 15 Mar, ITV1 21:00 (90mins).

Films

A War (2015) Gripping war film set in Afghanistan. Pilou Asbaek plays a Danish army officer who makes a call that comes back to haunt him. Tue 13 Mar, BBC4 23:00 (105mins).

The Artist (2011) Beguiling black and white love story set during the rise of the talkies, with Jean Dujardin. Wed 14 Mar, BBC1 23:45 (95mins).

Comming up for auction

Books and items belonging to Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes are coming under the hammer in Bonhams' Fine Books and Manuscripts auction. Among the highlights are Plath's own copy of The Bell jar (est. £60,000) and Hughes's first book of poetry, The Hawk in the Rain, with his inscription to Plath (est. £10,000).

The List

Titles in print are available from The Week Bookshop on 020-3176 3835. For out-of-print books visit www.biblio.co.uk
Riverside properties

**Cambridgeshire:** The Water Mill, West Deeping, Peterborough. A Grade II watermill with its original workings and wheel, in a riverside setting with 6.5 acres of water gardens and meadow. Master bed with balcony, 1 suite, 6 further beds, 4 further bath/showers, breakfast/kitchen, 4 receps, hall, sun room, games room, dovecote, outdoor pool, landscaped gardens. £1.395m; Savills (01780-484696).

**Devon:** Little Ravenswell, Kingswear. Set over four floors, this south-facing house has direct water access, a running mooring, and views out to sea and up the Dart Estuary. Master suite with dressing room, 3 further beds, family bath, shower, breakfast/kitchen, 2 receps, garage, river room and bar, integral 1-bed annex, terrace and level lawn, private steps down to public slipway, freehold foreshore. £1.65m; Knight Frank (01392-423111).

**Surrey:** Le Bateau Maman, Chertsey Road, Shepperton. Designed and built in 2010, this 1,246 sq ft steel houseboat is moored on a private residential mooring on the River Thames in Shepperton. Master suite with separate dressing room and a door leading to a deck/balcony, 1 further double bed with balcony, shower, open-plan kitchen/double recep, large roof garden with views over Chertsey Meads. £450,000; RiverHomes (020-8977 4500).
Oxfordshire: Chalmore Hole Ferry House, Chalmore Gardens, Wallingford. A former ferryman’s cottage, dating from 1913, in an idyllic location with 57ft of river frontage, a mooring and timber jetty, and fishing rights. Master suite, 1/2 further beds, family bath, 3 receps, garden, terrace. £950,000; Knight Frank (01491-844900).

Lincolnshire: Tattershall Bridge Cottage, Tattershall Bridge. A refurbished Grade II early 18th century cottage overlooking the River Witham, with many original features. Master suite with dressing room, 2 further suites, 1 ground-floor bed and shower, breakfast/kitchen, 2 receps, garden room, hall, office, gardens leading down to the river, summerhouse, workshop. £380,000; Robert Bell & Company (01526-353333).

Devon: The Watch House, Salcombe. A well-presented, Grade II waterfront home in the heart of Salcombe, with direct access to the water via a landing platform, steps to the foreshore and a running mooring. Master suite, 3 further beds (1 with private balcony), family shower, breakfast/kitchen, 2 receps, entrance hall, storeroom. £1.5m; Knight Frank (01392-423111).

Buckinghamshire: Riverside, Riversdale, Bourne End. A new property overlooking Cookham Reach on the Thames. Master suite with balcony, 3 further beds (2 en suite), 3 further baths, kitchen/diner, 2 further receps, study/bed with en suite, utility, WC, 1-bed boathouse, 1-bed garage, gardens, 50ft mooring, terraces. £4.495m; Knight Frank (01491-844900).

London: Magnolia House, Strand-On-The-Green, Chiswick. A Grade II Georgian house on the banks of the Thames with views across the river. Master suite, 2 further beds, family bath, 3 receps, breakfast/kitchen, WC, utility, 1-bed annex, garage, garden, terrace. £3.495m; Savills (020-8987 5550), RiverHomes (020-8996 0600).

Lincolnshire: Tattershall Bridge Cottage, Tattershall Bridge. A refurbished Grade II early 18th century cottage overlooking the River Witham, with many original features. Master suite with dressing room, 2 further suites, 1 ground-floor bed and shower, breakfast/kitchen, 2 receps, garden room, hall, office, gardens leading down to the river, summerhouse, workshop. £380,000; Robert Bell & Company (01526-353333).
How to turn deal breakers into deal makers.

The prospect of a buyer finding a problem with a property can induce sleepless nights for house sellers. But with expert advice there are ways of overcoming most issues and, in many instances, avoiding them completely.

Exclusive research from Strutt & Parker reveals the key reasons why buyers decide to pull out of a property purchase. The top deal breakers (shown right), range from the relatively trivial, such as bad smells, to the more significant, including structural problems.

An experienced estate agent can help a home owner anticipate these issues and advise the best course of action. The good news is that no problem is so great it cannot be addressed.

“Sellers should take action against low-level problems before a property is marketed, rather than only doing the work when the issue is cited by a potential buyer,” says Jonathan Inglis, Head of Strutt & Parker’s Chelsea office. “For example, if there is noise from a road, it’s worth considering fitting acoustic glass.”

However, some problems are beyond the control of sellers and should be factored into the asking price. Issues such as noise from neighbouring flats and a lack of parking can particularly affect London properties.

“These concerns should never deter a seller,” says Jonathan. “Many buyers understand they are aspects of urban life. If there are unusual problems, they should be expressed openly and can be taken account of in the price.”

Taking a straightforward approach also applies to selling homes outside of London. Edward Church, Head of Strutt & Parker’s Canterbury office, is keen to reassure the owner of even the most challenging property that there is a buyer waiting for it.

“Some of the houses that sell most rapidly are those marketed as requiring attention,” he explains. “Don’t underestimate the number of people wanting ‘a project’ and who are undeterred by having to renovate from top to bottom.”

However, there are some issues that will need to be reflected in the asking price. “There’s no point denying to yourself or buyers if your property is affected by motorway noise,” he says. “The simplest way forward is for the property to be offered at the right price.”

Even then, good timing can help to minimise any impact on a home’s value. For example, in a buyers’ market, a property with a weakness – such as being located under a flightpath – may have to settle for 30% less than a comparable home elsewhere. But in a sellers’ market, when there is less choice for purchasers, the impact could only be 5%. In these instances, it is essential to get guidance from an agent about the current market.

“It’s important to remember that whatever its condition, your home will sell,” says Edward. “Every home has a buyer, so long as the price is right. Get the best agent and expert advice, and you will succeed.”

### Top 10 deal breakers

1. Damp patches, stained walls/ceilings 80%
2. Bad smells/odour 77%
3. High local crime figures 76%
4. Noises from adjoining property 71%
5. Serious structural problems 69%
6. Local flooding issues 68%
7. No parking 67%
8. Lack of privacy 67%
9. On a busy road 67%
10. Poor state of repair (interior) 66%

OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK respondents planning to buy a home in the next five years. Research carried out between 29 January 2018 and 7 February 2018.

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To find out more about current market trends, visit struttandparker.com/the-residential, or to view a range of properties across the UK, visit struttandparker.com
**LEISURE**

**Food & Drink**

**What the experts recommend**

**The Blackbird** Bagnor, Newbury, Berkshire (01635-40005)

Some great chefs like to do their thing in out-of-the-way places, says Marina O’Loughlin in The Sunday Times. There’s Magnus Nilsson at Fäviken, in rural Sweden, many miles away from any city, and Francis Mallmann on his Patagonian island. Now Dom Robinson, a “beardy young gun” who used to be Tom Aikens’s head chef, has chosen to “squirrel himself away” in a tiny Berkshire hamlet. He is a long way from the bright lights, but like the others, he produces food that is worth travelling for. Smoked haddock and cheddar croquettes are “gourmand”; a wheaten loaf of bread made with treacle and buttermilk is “insanely good”. There’s a “magnificent” wild boar and apple rigatoni with fennel seeds, golden raisins and marjoram. Roast cauliflower with “a kind of dazed pleasure”. There’s a wonderful risotto with a port reduction and truffles – both roast and poached, with sauternes, tartare of beef fillet, and adish of foie gras is “absolute luxury”. There’s a wonderful tartare of beef fillet, and a dish of foie gras – both roast and poached, with sauternes, white beans and Alsace bacon – which I consume with “a kind of dazed pleasure”. Robinson has built it; I hope they’ll come. About £80 for two, including wine.

**Wood** Jack Rosenthal Street, Manchester (0161-236 5211)

This ambitious, recently opened restaurant is the “new baby” of 2015 MasterChef winner Simon Wood, says Grace Dent in The Guardian. It’s a large but buzzy space with an open kitchen. Service is “bright and adorable”, and the menu is comprised of “high-end but not off-puttingly pretentious” British dishes such as belly pork with sage, pigeon with fig, and venison with parsnip and ginger. My companion’s starter of “huge, plump, beautifully coloured scallops” served on a “bold pulp” of herby gremolata and sardines was “devoured in moments and talked about for weeks”. My own, an “enormo-raviolo” stuffed with porcini, shiitake and oyster, was “joyous”. Overall, then, Wood “seems to have taken flight beautifully” – though there were a couple of glitches. My main of cauliflower and romesco with Lancashire cheese looked stunning, but needed to be hotter. And a cod dish was a bit bland, and came with “enough al dente leek to satisfy a donkey”. Still, “there’s a lot to love at Wood, and I’ll definitely go back”. About £50 a head, excluding drinks.

**Darwin** 189 St John’s Hill, London SW11 (020-7738 0735)

I was nervous about going to Darwin, says Michael Deacon in The Daily Telegraph. On its website, diners are cautioned that an evening here is a time “to forget your phone and actually spend time with the person you’re with”. I’m all for that – but it’s not easy if you’re a reviewer who types his notes into his phone. Thankfully, the restaurant turns out to be a “friendly, unassuming little place, entirely without frostiness or pretension”. The chef (who double as waiters) couldn’t have been nicer, and no one tittered when I took out my phone. As for the food, excellent rosemary bread and creamy butter kicked things off superbly. A starter of salmon, braised leeks and squid-ink mayonnaise was “dreamy” and light. Venison was “rich and lustily intense”; monkfish as “fluffy as a cloud”. I wasn’t as keen on my friend’s pigeon with blackberry and cavolo nero, but “I’m not into pigeon”, so not the person to review it. Darwin is an “undiscovered gem” (for now). Three courses for two, about £75.

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**Recipe of the week**

I love fennel, says Maria Elia. Its aniseed flavour is a perfect accompaniment to coconut in this spicy, hearty, warming winter soup.

**Fennel, cardamom and coconut soup**

Serves 4

2 tbspspapedeseed oil 3 shallots, finely chopped 30g fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped 1 garlic clove, finely chopped 2 green chillies, finely chopped 2 tbspspendi seeds 15 cardamom pods, crushed and husks removed 2 fennel bulbs (weighing about 500g), quartered and finely sliced 50ml Pernod (optional) 2 x 400ml cans of coconut milk 2 tbspssoy sauce 1 tspground ginger, peeled and finely chopped 1 tbspspaprika 1 tbspspale ale 1 tbspstruvet 1 tbspsparsnip juice 1 tbspsparsnip 1 tbspsparsnip tartar 2 tbspsparsnip vinegar 2 tbspsparsnip asparaguss

Add the fennel to coconut in this spicy, hearty, warming winter soup.

1. Heat the sesame oil in a large pan. Once the oil is hot, add the shallots, ginger, garlic, chillies, fennel seeds and cardamom pods. Cook over a medium heat for 3 minutes.
2. Add the fennel and Pernod (if you are using it) and cook for 2 minutes, or until most of the Pernod has evaporated.
3. Add the coconut milk and 200ml of water. Bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 10-15 minutes until the fennel is tender.
4. Add the soy sauce, lime juice and sweet chilli. If the mixture is a bit too thick, add a dash of water. Serve piping hot, garnished with a few coriander leaves.

Taken from *The Modern Vegetarian* by Maria Elia, published by Kyle Books at £18.99. To buy from *The Week* Bookshop for £15.99, call 020-3176 3835 or visit www.theweek.co.uk/bookshop.

**Wine choice**

Owing to the smallest French grape harvest since 1945 – and Brexit-related price rises – Francophiles on a budget need to start exploring alternative regions and countries, says Jane MacQuitty in The Times.

For instance, if the “bone-dry twang of Chablis” is your thing, why not try Muscadet, which “shares some of Chablis’ high acidity and dry, tangy, lemon-twist oomph for half the price”? The 2016 Domaine Gadais, Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, France (£8.50; M&S) is “mouth-watering”, with lots of “Chablis-like, minerally, lemon-flavoured zing”.

Well-priced substitutes for creamy, oak-influenced white Côte d’Or burgundies such as Meursault and Puligny are easier to find. Try the smoky, buttery 2015 Chos du Bois North Coast Chardonnay, California (£16.99; Majestic). Or the “ripe, toasted hazelnut” of a 2016 Taste the Difference Limoux Chardonnay (£3; Sainsbury’s). Or if it’s a Loire Sancerre alternative you are after, you could turn to Slovenia, with Krasno’s “elegant” 2016 Sauvignon Blanc Ribolla (£8.99; Majestic).

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**New cars: what the critics say**

**Audi RS4 Avant** from £62,175

**Evo**
When the RS4 was launched in the 1990s, it was the first “Germanic super estate”. Combining power and four-wheel drive with “estate body practicality”, it had more in common with a hot hatch than with your typical estate. The latest generation has a smaller engine – a twin-turbo 2.9-litre V6 replaces the old V8 – but it’s faster than ever, sprinting from 0 to 62mph in 4.1 seconds.

**Car magazine**
In the flesh, the RS4 has “far more presence” than it does in pictures: the “widescreen” wheel arches are especially striking. Inside, the finish is “hard to fault”: this is one of the nicest cabins around. Audi’s Virtual Cockpit instrumental panel sits behind the wheel, while a “genuinely useful” display is beamed onto the windscreen. And, as you’d expect in an estate, there’s a decent 505-litre boot.

**Auto Express**
The new RS4 has a distinct character trait: “searing” pace. Even in Comfort drive mode, the car “picks up the pace without breaking a sweat” – and ride quality remains “supple” at speed. In other ways, though, the car is less exciting – the steering feels safe, while the engine can’t compete with the sound of a V8. But this is still “the hugely capable cross-country machine you’d hope it to be”.

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**The best... budget gadgets**

▲ **Juice Long Weekender** This portable charger can fully charge an iPhone or Android device up to four times. At 13cm long and 2cm thick it’s small, and is capable of powering up to two phones at the same time (£30; www.pcworld.co.uk).

▲ **JBL Flip 3** This portable Bluetooth speaker has a rich, punchy sound, with lots of bass. Just 16.8cm long, it’s splashproof – and it can be connected to another Flip 3 if you want to boost the sound (£65; www.currys.co.uk).

▲ **Lindy NC-60** For a third of the price of Bose’s cheapest noise-cancelling headphones, you can get this comfortable Lindy pair. They do a good job, blocking out external noise while producing a detailed sound (£60; www.lindy.co.uk).

▲ **Nikon Coolpix W100** Available in a range of colours, this Nikon camera is waterproof, shockproof and dust-proof – and it can withstand temperatures as low as -10°C. It takes 13.2 megapixel photos and shoots video at up to 1080p (£139; www.johnlewis.com).

▲ **Motorola Moto G5** Motorola’s G series has long offered excellent smartphones at low prices. The latest model runs quickly and boasts a superb 1080p display (£150; www.argos.co.uk).

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**Tips of the week... how to make a Bloody Mary**

- The most important ingredient in a Bloody Mary is the tomato juice. The more expensive brands have a better flavour and thicker texture, so it’s worth splashing out.
- What type of vodka you use, by contrast, doesn’t make that much difference. But given the choice, you’d do well to opt for a flavoursome eastern European vodka, such as Wyborowa, Belvedere or Vestal.
- Aim for one part vodka and four parts tomato juice.
- To bring out the flavour of the tomato, add ingredients that are rich in umami flavours. Dry sherry, Worcester sauce and celery salt all work well. A squeeze of lemon will also add some fresh acidity.
- Don’t shake a Bloody Mary with ice or serve it on the rocks, as it will only go watery. Instead, chill the mixture using a technique known as “rolling”: put it in a shaker full of ice and gently tip it back and forth a few times, then strain it into glasses that have been kept in the freezer.

**And for those who have everything...**

Perfect for off-grid travellers (or those who cannot bear being out of touch, even for a moment), the Garmin inReach uses a global satellite network, which means it can send text messages from anywhere in the world. It has a dedicated SOS button, too.

**Source:** FT

**Where to find... beer subscriptions**

**Honest Brew**’s Honesty Box features beers from many of the world’s “most exciting breweries”. Subscribers’ boxes are customised according to their preferences and feedback (12 beers for £35.90 a month; honestbrew.co.uk).

**Beer Merchants Club** has a “more global offering” than most subscriptions. Each box is based on a theme – a country, say, or a type of beer (ten beers from £28 a month; beer-merchants-club.myshopify.com).

**BelgBeer** sends out “top-quality booze” from a different Belgian brewery every month. You’ll also get a glass from the brewery and a copy of BelgBeer’s Golden Hops magazine (eight beers for £24.90 a month; belgbeer.com).

**Hop Burns & Black Sub Club** is one for beer nerds who want to taste “the most eagerly sought-out” brews. The number of subscriptions is limited, “so get on board while you can” (ten to 12 beers from £48 a month; www.hopburnsblack.co.uk).

**Source:** The Independent
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This week’s dream: Germany’s extraordinary “forgotten islands”

The Halligen are often described as Germany’s “forgotten islands”, says Dixie Wills in The Guardian. And it’s true that few people have heard of them. Sprinkled off the northwestern coast close to the Danish border, they are “extremely low-lying”, so much so that they are inundated each winter when high tides – known as land unter – flood the “pancake-flat salt marsh”. The islanders are prepared for this annual event: each house is “built on a warft, a man-made mound that (usually) keeps it safely above the waterline”.

When the flood comes, each mound “becomes its own island, a tiny outpost in the foaming brine.” With vast horizons in every direction, “huge bird-filled skies and odd little hillocks–each amlet, an-made mound that (usually) keeps it safely above the waterline”. The Halligen are prepared for this “huge bird-filled skies and odd little hillocks–each amlet, an-made mound that (usually) keeps it safely above the waterline”.

The Halligen Islands: “blissfully unburdened”

Getting the flavour of…

A spring trek in Andalusia

Even a “lazy” walker wouldn’t be daunted by the uninspiringly named GR 141, says Stephen Venables in the Financial Times. This “very attractive” new six-stage waymarked trail runs through the glorious mountains of Spain’s Andalusia region. A “grand circuit” that begins and ends in “elegant and historic” Ronda, the route winds gently “through meadows and forests”; rocky summits are your backdrop, “not compulsory goals”. In spring, when the hills are festooned with flowers, it’s “pure sylvan delight”. Each evening there’s a new restaurant, a tapas plate or two and a comfy b&b. Highlights along the route include a “spectacular” limestone gorge carved by the churning Rio Guadiaro. For a map, visit www.gransendademalaga.es. Hotels and b&bs along the route are easy to find by searching online.

Polar bears in Manitoba

Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge must be “the best wildlife base” outside Africa, says Justine Gosling in The Sunday Times. It’s located in Canada’s Hudson Bay, an area more than five times the size of Britain, where a tenth of the world’s wild polar bears live. In summer, temperatures reach a balmy 5°C and guided trips can be taken in all-terrain buggies to a “landscape of golden colour”, where black bears roam and grey wolf cubs roll around “like playful balls of fluff”. The guides have even perfected the call of a female moose, in order to draw “towering” males from the forest. Polar bear sightings are the big draw, but you never know what you’ll see – “the only guarantee is that it won’t be human”.

The rebirth of Saint Petersburg

Saint Petersburg is a “Cinderella city”, says Jonathan Bastable in Conde Nast Traveller. Long “eclipsed by its ugly sister Moscow”, it has survived 20th century incarnations as Petrograd and Leningrad, “wartime devastation and postwar neglect”. Now, that period long over, it gives off “the clean, cool vibe” of a Scandi town, which is perhaps “what Peter the Great had in mind” when he built it “and modestly named it after himself”. Climb up to St Isaac’s cathedral tower for a proper view of the cityscape: the “gleaming stiletto spire of the Admiralty”, the rotunda of the Mariinsky Theatre, and the Winter Palace, “painted the colour of sea ice”. Everywhere you look, golden domes gleam “like costly trinkets” spilled from a jewel box. From here, “you see the city for what it is: one enormous work of art”. Steppes Travel (www.steppestravel.com) has four- and five-day safaris from £5,995pp, including internal flights from Winnipeg.

Hotel of the week

Hôtel de Crillon, Paris

Recently refurbished, the Hôtel de Crillon has adapted its “baroque grandeur” to suit “sleek modern tastes”, says Harriet Walker in The Times. Nevertheless, it still stands for “luxurious excess”: two of the apartments were designed by Karl Lagerfeld, and his “maggie eye for luxury” is evident, from the silk damask to the veined marble fountain, commandeered from Versailles for use as a wetbasin, and two-tonne Carrara stone bath. In the public areas, the “convivial” bar is “sumptuous”, the 20-seat restaurant, at apas plate or two and a comfy b&b. Highlights along the route include a “spectacular” limestone gorge carved by the churning Rio Guadiaro. For a map, visit www.gransendademalaga.es. Hotels and b&bs along the route are easy to find by searching online.

Travel

LEISURE 45

Last-minute offers from top travel companies

Scenic Norfolk Broads


Copenhagen in spring

Three nights at the 4-star Ascot Hotel & Spa, located near the City Hall Square, cost from £427pp b&b, including London flights. 020-3368 6221, www.broadwaytravel.com. Depart 13 May.

All-inclusive Croatia

The beachside Sagitta Holiday Village, which is surrounded by pine forest, offers a 7-night stay from £435pp, including Bristol flights. 020-3598 4716, www.supercapes.co.uk. Depart 8 September.

Tropical getaway

Escape to sunny Mauritius with a 6-night, all-inclusive stay at the Merville Beach hotel. From £1,552pp, including Birmingham flights. 01204-824812, www.destinology.co.uk. Depart 5 May.

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“It’s like having a brand new pair of eyes!”
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The brilliant doctor who broke the four-minute mile

Sir Roger Bannister always said that he was prouder of his long career in medicine than of anything he achieved as an athlete in his youth. But to the rest of the world, he will be remembered as the man who broke the four-minute mile. A sportsman in the true amateur tradition, Bannister, who has died aged 88, was at that point a junior doctor at St Mary’s Hospital in London, working long hours. On 6 May 1954, he got on a train to Oxford, for a 6pm race at Iffley Road running track. It was a cold, wet day and the wind was blowing hard, said The Times. Even at 5:30pm, he was thinking he might withdraw. Then, with his pacemakers – Chris Brasher and Chris Chataway – wanting a decision, he looked at a nearby church tower and saw its flag had drooped. “Right, we’ll go for it,” he said.

Around 3,000 spectators had gathered to watch the race; Harold Abrahams – the 1924 gold-winning Olympian – was there, commentating live for the BBC. After a false start, the gun fired a second time and the men were off, with Brasher setting the pace. At the halfway stage, their time was 1:38, and Chataway took over. They ran the third lap in 59 seconds. With 62 seconds, giving Bannister only 56 seconds to complete the last quarter mile. Three hundred yards from the line, he sped ahead of Chataway. “I felt at that moment that it was my chance to do one thing supremely well,” he recalled. Driving himself forward, he leapt through the tape – and collapsed, almost unconscious, into waiting arms. “It was only then that real pain overtook me...I felt like an exploded flashbulb.” The result was announced by Norris McWhirter. “First, Number 41, R.G. Bannister, Amateur Athletic Association and formerly of Exeter and Merton Colleges, in a time which, subject to ratification, is a new track record, British native record, all-comers record, European, British Empire and world record – three minutes...” The rest was drowned out by the roar of the crowd. Bannister had run the mile in three minutes and 59.4 seconds. That evening, the three friends climbed Harrow Hill together. London was spread out beneath them, and as Brasher later remembered: “We didn’t have anything to say to each other. We all knew that the world was at our feet and that we could do anything we wanted in life.”

Roger Bannister was born in Harrow in 1929. His father, Ralph, was a former mill worker from Lancashire who’d got a clerical job. Roger broke the cross-country record at City of Bath Boys’ School. Returning to London, he ran like the wind at University College School too – but he said he had no desire for runs in Kensington Gardens – but he said he had no desire for anything he achieved as an athlete in his youth. But to the rest of the world, he will be remembered as the man who broke the four-minute mile. A sportsman in the true amateur tradition, Bannister, who has died aged 88, was at that point a junior doctor at St Mary’s Hospital in London, working long hours. On 6 May 1954, he got on a train to Oxford, for a 6pm race at Iffley Road running track. It was a cold, wet day and the wind was blowing hard, said The Times. Even at 5:30pm, he was thinking he might withdraw. Then, with his pacemakers – Chris Brasher and Chris Chataway – wanting a decision, he looked at a nearby church tower and saw its flag had drooped. “Right, we’ll go for it,” he said.

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Bannister: “I felt like an exploded flashbulb”

“‘No manager, no trainer, no masseur, no friends! He’s nuts or he’s good,’ wrote one US paper of the willowy Briton”

At the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, he was a favourite for the “metric mile” (the 1,500 metres) – but by then, he’d started his clinical training at St Mary’s and barely had any time to train. He’d hoped he’d done enough (although some days it was no more than 35 minutes), but he hadn’t counted on the heats being on consecutive days. His stamina simply wasn’t up to it, and he finished fourth in the final. It was, he said, a “shattering blow” and the press gave him a mailing. Yet this failure sealed his destiny, said The Times: had he won gold, he’d have retired. Instead, he set his sights on a new goal: the four-minute mile. It had, he said, become “rather like an Everest – a challenge to the human spirit”.

He stepped up his training, and in 1953 ran a mile in 4:02.0. But the Australian runner John Landy was closing in, and only 46 days after Bannister ran the four-minute mile, Landy beat his record. In the scheme of things, it did not matter. As Bannister said of himself and his pacemakers, “we shared a place where no man had yet ventured, secure for all time, however fast men might run miles in the future”. Nevertheless, he felt compelled to meet Landy for a showdown at the Commonwealth Games in Vancouver in August 1954 – the “Miracle Mile”, watched by 40 million people on TV. Landy was in the lead, but made a critical error; just before the finish, he turned to look for his opponent. Emboldened in that moment, Bannister raced ahead and won. Less than a month later, Bannister won the 1,500 metres at the European Championships at Bern – then retired. He was 25.

It was not the end of his career in sport: he was the first chairman of the Sports Council, from 1971 to 1974, and president of the International Council of Sport and Physical Education, from 1976 to 1983.

But from then on, medicine was his life – and he applied himself to it with such devotion there were several years in which his family barely saw him. (He’d married Moyra Jacobsson, an artist, in 1953, and had four children.) In 1963, after a spell at Harvard, he became a consultant neurologist at St Mary’s, and at London’s National Hospital. With a particular interest in the autonomic nervous system, he conducted extensive research into various neurological conditions. He edited the standard neurological textbook, founded the Autonomic Research Society and lectured widely. Knighted in 1975, he served on many committees and in 1985 was made master of Pembroke College, Oxford, a job he loved. In 2005, he became the first recipient of the American Academy of Neurology’s lifetime achievement award.

When his children were small, he’d take them for daily morning runs in Kensington Gardens – but he said he had no desire for them to become “elite athletes”. In an interview years later, he said he thought too narrow a focus on sport was “boring”. His athletic achievements, he said, were the “shadow of my being, not the substance”. At other times, he said that his marriage was “the most important thing I did”. Nevertheless, it came as a blow when he had to give up running after a car accident in 1975. In 2012, he returned to Iffley Road to walk the Olympic torch along the track he had once sped around. Two years later, he revealed he had Parkinson’s. It seemed cruel, but having spent years treating such diseases, he was not surprised. “It’s in the nature of things,” he said. “There’s a gentle irony to it.”

10 March 2018 THE WEEK
SOME OPPORTUNITIES ARE MORE EXCLUSIVE THAN OTHERS.

A company’s ability to exhibit exponential growth lies at the heart of the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust, managed by Baillie Gifford.

Our portfolio consists of around 80 of what we believe are the most exciting companies in the world today. Our vision is long term and we invest with no limits on geographical or sector exposure.

Baillie Gifford’s track record as long-term, supportive shareholders makes us attractive to a new breed of capital-light businesses. And our committed approach means we can enjoy a better quality of dialogue with management teams at transformational organisations such as Alibaba, Dropbox and Airbnb. So it is a case of who you know as well as what you know. Over the last five years the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust has delivered a total return of 216.0% compared to 123.2% for the sector**.

Standardised past performance to 31 December**:

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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 the investment in the fund and any income from it. Investors may not get back the amount invested.

The Trust’s risk could be increased by its investment in unlisted investments. These assets may be more difficult to buy or sell, so changes in their prices may be greater.

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

**GKN/Melrose: gruesome meddling**

What frightens the biggest company bosses, asked Sean Farrell in The Observer. Parliamentary committees. This week there was further evidence of the willingness of MPs to get stuck in to blue-chip companies, as they hauled in big cheeses from GKN and Melrose for a grilling about a highly politically charged takeover battle. Melrose, a turnaround expert, “admits its £7bn bid for GKN is hostile”, said Matthew Vincent in the Financial Times, “but some politicians now deem it positively gruesome”. In a cross-party letter to the Business Secretary, Greg Clark, 16 MPs have called for the deal to be blocked to prevent the aerospace and automotive engineer from being “dismembered”. Never mind that some politicians now deem it positively gruesome”. In a cross-party letter to the

**Spotify: float on**

The Swedish digital jukebox “has already won over the music industry and listeners worldwide”, said Ben Sisario in The New York Times. “Now it is ready to test its business model on Wall Street.” Spotify has confirmed it is preparing for one of the most hotly “anticipated” tech flotations in years. It’s also one of the most punchy. The outfit, co-founded by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon in 2006, has been valued as highly as $23bn in the private market – even though losses have been mounting in tandem with its growth, drifting up to $1.5bn last year. Spotify is also taking a risk on how it goes public. The decision to go for a rare “direct listing” (in which no new stock is issued) instead of a traditional IPO cuts out Wall Street banks, meaning “the listing could face a rockier reception in markets”. Spotify has 71 million paying subscribers (up 46% year over year) and 140 million monthly active users. Spotify may be an underdog “surrounded by tech’s titans”, but it has made itself indispensable to the music biz. “This jukebox sounds worth your dime.”

**Beaufort Securities: McMafia-esque?**

The collapse of the failed City broker Beaufort Securities, amid fraud and money-laundering allegations, threatens some 14,000 retail investors, said the Daily Mail. But could the collapse have been avoided? According to The Times, the Financial Conduct Authority was warned last summer that Beaufort was not acting in the best interests of clients. Last week, it finally called time on the “insolvent” brokerage, freezing some £800m in assets – even as prosecutors in New York charged two individuals at the firm. Beaufort was regulated to the same standards as the rest of the financial system. The Bank of England’s governor, Mark Carney, called for a crackdown on the cryptocurrency “mania”, arguing it was time that “the crypto-asset ecosystem” was regulated to the same standards as the rest of the financial system. The Irish packaging giant Smurfit Kappa dismissed an £8.6bn takeover approach by US rival International Paper as “fundamentally opportunistic.” Shares in Beaufort Securities: McMafia-esque?

**WPP: fugly figures**

“2017 for us was not a pretty year,” noted Sir Martin Sorrell, as he delivered advertising giant WPP’s results last week. Too right, said Daniel Grote on Citywire. Shares in the group slumped 14% as it dished up its “worst annual performance since the financial crisis” and warned of “flat growth” this year. “The intriguing part, however, was Sorrell’s explanation,” said Nils Pratley in The Guardian. He blamed cost-cutting by big multinational clients, rather than attempts by Google and Facebook “to cut out agencies by luring advertisers directly to their doors”. Belt-tightening is certainly part of the story, but Sir Martin looks in denial. He seems to think the tech titans regard advertising agencies as partners. “Good luck” with that.

**Seven days in the Square Mile**

Stock markets, already unsettled by the implications of President Trump’s decision to impose tariffs on aluminium and steel, were further rattled by the resignation of his chief economic adviser, Gary Cohn, who was thought to have a restraining influence on the president. Having hit a 14-month low last week, the FTSE 100 fell further and a wave of selling swept through Asia Pacific markets. The mood in the City wasn’t lifted by the latest developments in the Brexit negotiations. The EU rebuffed Theresa May’s vision for trade after Brexit, which had been welcomed by UK business groups, ruling out preserving single market access. There was no mention at all of financial services. The Bank of England’s governor, Mark Carney, called for a crackdown on the cryptocurrency “mania”，arguing it was time that “the crypto-asset ecosystem” was regulated to the same standards as the rest of the financial system. BlackRock, the world’s largest asset manager, said it would offer customers options for switching out of investments that include stocks of gunmakers. Shares in Rolls-Royce, Britain’s flagship engine, rose 13% after an improvement in profits, suggesting it is on the road to recovery. The Irish packaging giant Smurfit Kappa dismissed an £8.6bn take-over approach by US rival International Paper as “fundamentally opportunistic.” Shares in Beaufort Securities: McMafia-esque? Seven days in the Square Mile

**Sick name**

Fresh from grabbing Richard Desmond’s Express and Star newspapers, Trinity Mirror boss Simon Fox has decided on a name change for the combined group, which will henceforth be known as Reach. Fox sounds pleased as punch with the move. “We wanted a simple name, a Roseal name – ‘it does what it says on the tin’ – that simply describes what we do,” he said. And that, of course, is reaching out to readers across all titles and platforms. “With a bit of innovation”, said Alistair Osborne in The Times, “What a day for Trinity Mirror” – but careful now, the new company is just “one typo away from Retch”.

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10 March 2018 THE WEEK
The benefits of multi-asset funds

Investing can seem like a daunting task – but it doesn’t have to be. You can invest your money in a diverse portfolio of assets in a single fund.

What is a multi-asset fund?
When you invest in a fund, the team managing that fund usually splits your money across a bundle of investments where all (or most) of them belong to a single type of asset.

For example, most retail funds are equity funds, meaning they hold a selection of shares in a range of different companies. Similarly, a bond fund will put almost all your money into corporate and/or government bonds.

A fund has to obey its mandate in terms of what it can invest in, or “hold”. The fund’s mandate will usually state how much of the holding should be within a certain region, the margin of discretion the fund manager has, the amount of cash held at any one time, and so on.

A multi-asset fund, such as those offered by Charles Stanley’s Personal Portfolio Service, is a little bit different. It allows a fund manager to hold several different types of assets within the fund.

For example, a fund might be split between shares, corporate bonds, and UK government bonds or “gilts”.

What are their benefits?
Some people claim that the asset mix in your investment portfolio is the greatest determining factor in the returns that you make. But deciding how to balance your investments between shares and bonds - or any other type of asset can be extremely difficult.

With multi-asset funds, that responsibility is taken out of your hands and put in those of professionals, who will manage the asset balance of your fund to meet a specific risk target, or manage several funds with different balances and different levels of risk.

A multi-asset fund could provide you with all the diversification you require from an investment portfolio.

How can they mitigate risk?
One of the core principles in building an investment portfolio is diversification. To use an extreme example, if you put all your money into a single company and it goes bust, or its share price takes a dive, you are totally exposed to that downturn.

If you hold different companies that are all in the same business, such as oil production, or property development, your portfolio will be slightly more diversified, but you still have a huge amount of exposure to market risk, and the risk that the market the companies operate in could collapse or decline.

So, you should ideally try to hold many different shares across many companies, sectors and geographical regions. However, sifting through and picking a number of shares in unfamiliar markets takes a huge amount of work. You might decide instead to invest in a professionally managed fund, where a team of researchers led by a fund manager do the legwork for you, and let you invest in the companies they find, for a fee.

But even then, if you are invested 100% in shares, that still exposes you to fluctuations in the stock market. To diversify even further, you might want to hold several different types of assets; shares, corporate bonds, gilts, property, and possibly some cash to round things out.

A multi-asset fund seeks to diversify away volatility by investing in several different types of asset class.

What tax-efficient savings can multi-asset funds make?
The great thing about putting money into a stocks and shares Isa, is the potential to make money without having to pay taxes on it. You won’t have to pay any capital gains tax when you sell shares that are inside an Isa, and you won’t have to pay tax on any of the dividend income you make from shares, or coupon payments on bonds, or interest rates on cash – or any other source of investment income.

That means that instead of paying tax on income, you can take the money you would have handed to the government, and invest it right back into your pot. This adds a significant potential boost to your returns. Indeed, the combination of compound interest and reinvesting dividends is one of the most powerful forces in growing an investment pot.

So if you want to put money into a stocks and shares Isa but aren’t sure how to invest it, a multi-asset fund could be an easy and efficient way to get the job done.

Find out more: Charles-stanley.co.uk

The value of investments can go down as well as up and investors may not get back the amount they originally invested.

**Issue of the week: restaurants feel the heat**

A spate of closures in the sector is keeping accountants busy, but there’s a silver lining for some

There used to be an adage in the restaurant business that “you can always make dough from selling pizza”. No longer, said Caroline Davies in The Guardian. Times are tough in Britain’s “casual dining” sector – one in three of the country’s top 100 restaurant groups are now loss-making, according to a study published this week. The latest to feel the heat is Carluccio’s, co-founded by the late chef Antonio Carluccio, which has called in accountants KPMG to “assess its options”. There seems to be a pattern here. Several other mid-market Italian chains, including Jamie’s Italian, Prezzo and Strada, have also recently announced closures. It seems that the market is facing serious “over-saturation” – particularly when it comes to Italian restaurants.

Mid-market restaurant chains are facing a perfect storm of adverse conditions, said Naomi Rovnick in the FT. “The fall of sterling since Britain voted to leave the EU in 2016 has pushed up prices of imported food, while the Government has increased minimum wages and business rates.” Meanwhile, consumers are “tightening their belts” and changing dining habits. When in doubt, blame the millennials, said Julia Faurschou in Investors Chronicle. They’re “a fickle bunch” especially when it comes to food. They seem to want more natural and healthy options.

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**Investing your Isa: what the experts think**

- **Isafication**
  The clock is ticking down to 5 April, the deadline to invest this year’s bumper new £20,000 tax-free individual savings allowance, said Anne Ashworth in The Times. Thanks to the “Isafication mania” that has gripped the Treasury recently, “shortage of choice will not be an issue”. There is “a scheme for every taste”: including the Innovative Isa for the adventurous and the Lifetime Isa for millennials. The most popular, to the “casual dining” sector – one in three of the country’s top 100 restaurant groups are now loss-making, according to a study published this week. The latest to feel the heat is Carluccio’s, co-founded by the late chef Antonio Carluccio, which has called in accountants KPMG to “assess its options”. There seems to be a pattern here. Several other mid-market Italian chains, including Jamie’s Italian, Prezzo and Strada, have also recently announced closures. It seems that the market is facing serious “over-saturation” – particularly when it comes to Italian restaurants.

- **Avoiding fads**
  For some punters, “stock-picking is the fun part of investing”, said James Norrington in Investors Chronicle. But for “the long-term wealth builder”, the “least glamorous process of asset allocation” is the most important: finding the right mix of investments to both deliver growth and protect you from the worst market squalls. “Many investors take an ad hoc approach to their Isa each year and end up with a random collection of funds,” Jason Hollands of the Tilney Group told the FT. The key is to decide on a suitable model – a ratio of UK and foreign equities, property and so on that matches your risk appetite – and then stick with it. It means you’ll end up with a deliberately structured portfolio within your Isa wrapper, rather than a handful of fad funds.

**Global picks**

The stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown has revealed the most popular shares and funds held by its growing legion of “Isa millionaires”, said Michelle McGagh on Citywire. The list’s strong “UK focus” is striking at a time when fund managers globally are so bearish about British prospects. According to the latest Bank of America Merrill Lynch survey, the UK stock market is “the most unpopular asset class in the world among big international investors, with confidence languishing at its lowest levels since the financial crisis”, said the FT. That might prove catnip to contrarians, but the consensus thinking is that the strongest share returns this year will come from Europe, Asia and emerging markets.

The best-performing global equity fund of the decade is Baillie Gifford Global Discovery, which has returned 333.4% to investors over ten years. It’s big on disruptive technology and innovative biotechnology – “themes likely to dominate markets in 2018”, said the FT. For those worried about volatility, Adrian Lowcock of Architas suggests JPM Global Macro Opportunities. As a “targeted return fund”, it aims to deliver a specific return above cash via “a basket of stocks and other assets”, and has delivered a total return of 56.3% over five years. A slightly rarer option for stock purists is the T Rowe Price Global Focus Equity Fund, which invests in companies with above-average earnings growth.
Markets have tended to be rather “phlegmatic about disorder in Washington”, says Christopher Beddar. “That can no longer be taken for granted.” The exit this week of President Trump’s top economic adviser, Gary Cohn, “turns White House chaos into the markets’ problem”. Cohn, a former Goldman Sachs banker, “stood as a buffer” against anti-trade voices in the administration. His departure, just as the protectionist talk ramps up, “threatens to accelerate the White House’s zero-sum trade agenda”. No wonder stock futures and the Mexican peso plunged on the news. Given the crucial decisions on trade ahead – from Nafta talks to the ongoing investigation into China’s intellectual-property practices – investors are right to worry. Much depends on the US Federal Reserve and its new chief, Jerome Powell. Investors will be looking to him “to provide a steady hand” – by, say, slowing the pace of rate hikes if trade tariffs hurt American jobs. “The US economy is bigger than any one person, including the president himself, but it’s hard to overstate the value of a friendly face.”

The antics of Paul Flowers, the Co-operative Bank’s “crystal Methodist”, feel like such “ancient history” that it’s a surprise to learn that the Financial Conduct Authority is still looking into “past disasters at the ‘ethical’ bank”, says Nils Pratley. Four years after beginning its inquiry into the bank’s near-collapse, the City watchdog has finally banned Flowers, the bank’s ex-chairman, from working in financial services. The former minister, the inquiry found, rang premium-rate chat lines on his work phone and used his work email to send “sexually explicit” messages and to discuss illegal drugs; this, the FCA noted solemnly, showed a “disregard for standards”. The more pressing question is why it took the watchdog so long? A four-year investigation that ends up banning one individual, “who is retired and unemployable for practical purposes”, feels like a waste of time – particularly since it has delayed a separate review of whether “regulators were asleep at the wheel” as the Co-op descended into its £1.5bn black hole. “Investigatory wheels, it’s probably true, must turn in the correct order. But why can’t they turn more quickly?”

The relentless focus on producing shareholder value distracts companies from their real work of investment, innovation and caring for “this wonderful planet”. That’s what Unilever boss Paul Polman told a conference organised by the CECP; the CEO Force For Good. That name alone, with or without Polman’s fluffy words, will have the same effect on some market watchers “as an ice-cold Magnum Double Caramel on a sensitive tooth”, says Michael Skapinker. “Why, they ask, can’t Unilever’s boss get on with the job, rather than his endless round of do-goodery?” Yet he’s not alone. heavyweight converts to the cause include Larry Fink, boss of fund manager BlackRock, and Airbus chief Brian Chesky, who thinks public distrust of big corporations is rooted in their overriding allegiance to shareholders. If you don’t like the model, get out of the stock market, opponents retort. But they fail to see how the public mood has turned angry. People think the system works for “financial engineers and manipulators, but not for them. We need to think harder about alternatives.”

Back when businesspeople were the main passengers on private jets, no one much cared that terminals were often little more than “a Portakabin filled with stained sofas”, says The Economist. They were just in a hurry to get through. But now that private-jet use has become mainly the domain of wealthy individuals, all that has changed. Passengers now have “time and money to be pampered at airports” as they would be at a hotel – and private jet terminals (or, in the jargon, “fixed-based operators” – FBO) are responding. Leading the charge is the fast-growing chain Jetex, which recently opened a facility in Dubai crammed with luxurious services and gimmicks that customers can enjoy, “before being whisked away to their planes in limousines”. But this looks such a promising market that competition is getting tight, with “luxury brands that currently have little to do with aviation muscling in”. Harrods has recently opened FBOs at both Luton and Stansted airports, and hotel chains such as the Hilton Group are getting stuck in too. “The luxury FBO upstarts could be disrupted by the very firms they are seeking to emulate.”

Markets have tended to be rather “phlegmatic about disorder in Washington”, says Christopher Beddar. “That can no longer be taken for granted.” The exit this week of President Trump’s top economic adviser, Gary Cohn, “turns White House chaos into the markets’ problem”. Cohn, a former Goldman Sachs banker, “stood as a buffer” against anti-trade voices in the administration. His departure, just as the protectionist talk ramps up, “threatens to accelerate the White House’s zero-sum trade agenda”. No wonder stock futures and the Mexican peso plunged on the news. Given the crucial decisions on trade ahead – from Nafta talks to the ongoing investigation into China’s intellectual-property practices – investors are right to worry. Much depends on the US Federal Reserve and its new chief, Jerome Powell. Investors will be looking to him “to provide a steady hand” – by, say, slowing the pace of rate hikes if trade tariffs hurt American jobs. “The US economy is bigger than any one person, including the president himself, but it’s hard to overstate the value of a friendly face.”

The antics of Paul Flowers, the Co-operative Bank’s “crystal Methodist”, feel like such “ancient history” that it’s a surprise to learn that the Financial Conduct Authority is still looking into “past disasters at the ‘ethical’ bank”, says Nils Pratley. Four years after beginning its inquiry into the bank’s near-collapse, the City watchdog has finally banned Flowers, the bank’s ex-chairman, from working in financial services. The former minister, the inquiry found, rang premium-rate chat lines on his work phone and used his work email to send “sexually explicit” messages and to discuss illegal drugs; this, the FCA noted solemnly, showed a “disregard for standards”. The more pressing question is why it took the watchdog so long? A four-year investigation that ends up banning one individual, “who is retired and unemployable for practical purposes”, feels like a waste of time – particularly since it has delayed a separate review of whether “regulators were asleep at the wheel” as the Co-op descended into its £1.5bn black hole. “Investigatory wheels, it’s probably true, must turn in the correct order. But why can’t they turn more quickly?”

The relentless focus on producing shareholder value distracts companies from their real work of investment, innovation and caring for “this wonderful planet”. That’s what Unilever boss Paul Polman told a conference organised by the CECP; the CEO Force For Good. That name alone, with or without Polman’s fluffy words, will have the same effect on some market watchers “as an ice-cold Magnum Double Caramel on a sensitive tooth”, says The Economist. “Why, they ask, can’t Unilever’s boss get on with the job, rather than his endless round of do-goodery?” Yet he’s not alone. heavyweight converts to the cause include Larry Fink, boss of fund manager BlackRock, and Airbus chief Brian Chesky, who thinks public distrust of big corporations is rooted in their overriding allegiance to shareholders. If you don’t like the model, get out of the stock market, opponents retort. But they fail to see how the public mood has turned angry. People think the system works for “financial engineers and manipulators, but not for them. We need to think harder about alternatives.”

Back when businesspeople were the main passengers on private jets, no one much cared that terminals were often little more than “a Portakabin filled with stained sofas”, says The Economist. They were just in a hurry to get through. But now that private-jet use has become mainly the domain of wealthy individuals, all that has changed. Passengers now have “time and money to be pampered at airports” as they would be at a hotel – and private jet terminals (or, in the jargon, “fixed-based operators” – FBO) are responding. Leading the charge is the fast-growing chain Jetex, which recently opened a facility in Dubai crammed with luxurious services and gimmicks that customers can enjoy, “before being whisked away to their planes in limousines”. But this looks such a promising market that competition is getting tight, with “luxury brands that currently have little to do with aviation muscling in”. Harrods has recently opened FBOs at both Luton and Stansted airports, and hotel chains such as the Hilton Group are getting stuck in too. “The luxury FBO upstarts could be disrupted by the very firms they are seeking to emulate.”
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Do you want to work with us at our big nature reserve in South Africa?

We are holding interviews in Brighton on Friday 16th March 2018. For details, see “Interviews” page at www.wildlifeforall.org
**Shares**

**Who’s tipping what**

**The week’s best buys**

**Conviviality**
The Daily Telegraph
Shares in the drinks distributor are sharply down after disappointing results, but falls have been overdone. The group is well managed and “clearly profitable”, with a decent 4% yield; directors have been buying. Buy. £2.88p.

**Croda International**
The Times
The speciality chemicals maker has produced record results, with profits up 6.5% and sales up 4.6%. Its main divisions – life sciences and personal care – are growing, and there’s scope for further returns. Buy. £4.55p.

**Fresnillo**
The Times
The precious metal miner’s revenues have climbed due to record silver production, but the move to increase gold production has divided opinion. Gold’s traditionally poor performance at times of rising interest rates is worrying. Hold. £11.97.

**Metro Bank**
Investors Chronicle
The challenger bank has turned its first profit, with customer deposits up by almost a half. But with building delays and behind-expectation branch targets, shares are pricey and targets optimistic. Sell. £39.46.

**Pearson**
Investors Chronicle
Recent disposals have left the educational publisher in a stronger financial shape. But this doesn’t offset the “plethora of challenges” it faces on its slow digital migration, or the dismal market outlook. Revenues and profits are falling. Sell. 702p.

**St James’s Place**
The Times
The wealth manager’s profits are up and it yields 3.7% with strong growth prospects. But shares do “terribly” in bear markets, as revenues depend on the value of assets. Now is not the time to chase. Hold. £11.54.

**...and some to hold, avoid or sell**

**Centrica**
Investors Chronicle
The energy group is losing UK customers as political and competitive pressures continue to weigh. Warmer weather (until last week) and increased competition have hit profits in its business supply division. Sell. 138p.

**Foxtons Group**
The Mail on Sunday
The London-focused estate agent is struggling with a slowing property market, recently reporting a 26% fall in sales and 11% dip in revenues. Peel Hunt expects the challenging conditions to persist. Sell. 73.8p.

**Scapa Group**
The Daily Telegraph
With the acquisition of three healthcare firms, Scapa has transformed itself into a provider of specialised high-value products such as wound dressings. Cash-generative, with “enviable returns” on capital, and high margins. Buy. 475.8p.

**Weir Group**
The Times
The engineering group, which makes pumps and pipes, has been boosted by strong oil and gas conditions, and rising revenues from new products. Bullish analysts have a target price of £24. Buy. £20.36.

**Market view**
“Market participants are growing increasingly nervous of where the Trump administration is going.”
Jasper Lawler of London Capital Group. Quoted in The Guardian

**Key numbers for investors**

| FTSE 100 | 7146.75 | 7282.45 | -1.86% |
| FTSE All-share UK | 3945.73 | 4011.52 | -1.64% |
| Dow Jones | 24779.01 | 25631.43 | -3.33% |
| NASDAQ | 7347.92 | 7367.14 | -0.26% |
| Nikkei 225 | 2147.76 | 22389.86 | -4.34% |
| Hang Seng | 30510.73 | 31288.66 | -2.42% |
| Gold | 1331.40 | 1325.75 | 0.43% |
| Brent Crude Oil | 66.53 | 66.51 | -1.47% |
| DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100) | 4.08% | 3.89% |
| UK 10-year gilt yield | 1.51 | 1.53 |
| US 10-year Treasuries | 2.90 | 2.88 |

**Dividend yield (FTSE 100)**

| Latest CPI (oy) | 3.0% (Jan) | 3.0% (Dec) |
| Latest RPI (oy) | 4.0% (Jan) | 4.1% (Dec) |
| Halifax house price (oy) | +1.8% (Feb) | +2.2% (Jan) |

| £1 Sterling | $1.386 | 1.115 | Y146.319 |

**Best and worst performing shares**

| WEEK’S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS |
| RISES | Price | % change |
| Smurfit Kappa Gp. | 3042.00 | +20.33 |
| Burberry Group | 1647.00 | +7.09 |
| Smith (DS) | 505.80 | +4.72 |
| Entegic | 5092.00 | +3.39 |
| FALLS | Price | % change |
| Just Eat | 744.80 | -14.88 |
| Rentokil Initial | 258.70 | -11.73 |
| ITV | 153.60 | -11.32 |
| WPP | 1917.50 | -9.04 |
| Best and worst UK stocks overall |
| Laird | 200.60 | +69.00 |
| Eqtec | 1.00 | -41.18 |

**Following the Footsie**

6-month movement in the FTSE 100 Index
A month undercover in an Amazon warehouse

James Bloodworth reports on life in the online retailer’s “fulfilment centre” in Staffordshire

It was quarter past six in the evening and the siren had just sounded for lunch: a loud noise pumped through loudspeakers into every corner of the cold and drab warehouse. While I stood in the queue, hands in pockets, waiting to get out, a well-built security guard made a signal for me to put my arms in the air. “Move forward, mate, I haven’t got all afternoon,” he said in a broad West Midlands accent. There was a commotion at the front of the line: a quarrel had erupted between a security guard and a young Romanian man over the presence of a mobile phone. Security guard: “For the umpteenth time, I’ll tell you again. No... mobile... phones... in... here! Do you understand me? Now, I’ll have to tell your manager.”

The place had the atmosphere of what I imagined a prison would feel like. Most of the rules were concerned with petty theft. It could take 15 minutes to pass through huge metal scanners. You were never paid for the time you spent waiting to have your pockets checked. Hooded tops were banned in the warehouse and so were sunglasses. “We might need to see your eyes in case you’ve had too much to drink the night before,” a large, red-faced woman had warned us ominously on the first day. “Your eyes give you away.”

This was life at Amazon, one of the world’s largest retailers. I was an order picker in one of its distribution centres – the size of ten football pitches – in the small Staffordshire town of Rugeley. The warehouse employed around 1,200 people. The majority of my co-workers were from eastern Europe and most were from Romania. The Romanians were dumbfounded as to why any English person would want to degrade themselves doing such lowly work. “Excuse me if this sounds offensive, but are you English? Born here?” Yes, I am English. “Then why are you working?” asked a chubby red-haired girl on my second day.

Lunch – we still called it lunch despite it being dished out at six o’clock in the evening – marked the halfway point in a ten-and-a-half-hour shift. Eastern European languages filled the air of the shiny-floored dining hall, which was brightly lit like an operating theatre and always smelt of disinfectant. One of the perks of the job was the relatively cheap food and the free teas and coffees available from the vending machines. Mince meat, potatoes or chips plus a can of drink and a Mars bar for £4.10. The challenge was finding sufficient time to eat and drink. We were allocated half an hour for lunch but, by the time you made it to the canteen and elbowed your way through a throng of workers, you had 15 minutes before you started the long walk back to the warehouse. Two or three English managers would invariably be waiting for you back at the work station, pointing at imaginary watches and bellowing at anyone who returned 30 seconds late. “Extended lunch break today, is it? We don’t pay you to sit around jabbering.”

One week in, a girl grabbed me by the arm, shook me violently and told me she wanted to pack her bags and return home to Romania as soon as possible. “I hate it; I hate it here,” she hissed through chipped teeth, “I hate the people, I hate the dirt and I hate the work... I don’t like this country... Too many Indian people. Indian people everywhere!”

Amazon’s vast warehouse sat on waste ground between the canal and the power station. The massive, shoebox-like structure contained four floors, and the workforce was similarly split up into four main groups. There were those who checked and unpacked the incoming orders; those who stowed the items on shelves; another group – which I was part of – that picked the orders; and the workers who packed the products ready for delivery. It was the picker’s job to march up the aisles selecting items from the 2 metre-high shelves before putting them in big yellow plastic boxes, or “totes”, as they were called. These totes were wheeled around on blue metal trolleys before being sent down seemingly never-ending conveyor belts that followed the length of the building. On an average day you would expect to send around 40 totes down the conveyors, each one filled with books, DVDs and assorted miscellaneous.

Each of us carried a handheld device that tracked our every move. For every dozen or so workers, somewhere in the warehouse a line manager would be huddled over a desk tapping orders into a computer screen. These instructions would filter through to our devices: “Please report to the pick desk immediately,” or, “Your rates are down this hour. Please speed up.” We were ranked from highest to lowest in terms of the speed at which we collected our items from the shelves; another group – which I was part of – that picked the orders; and the workers who packed the products ready for delivery. For every dozen or so workers, somewhere in the warehouse a line manager would be huddled over a desk tapping orders into a computer screen. These instructions would filter through to our devices: “Please report to the pick desk immediately,” or, “Your rates are down this hour. Please speed up.” We were ranked from highest to lowest in terms of the speed at which we collected our items from the shelves; another group – which I was part of – that picked the orders; and the workers who packed the products ready for delivery. For every dozen or so workers, somewhere in the warehouse a line manager would be huddled over a desk tapping orders into a computer screen. These instructions would filter through to our devices: “Please report to the pick desk immediately,” or, “Your rates are down this hour. Please speed up.” We were ranked from highest to lowest in terms of the speed at which we collected our items from the shelves; another group – which I was part of – that picked the orders; and the workers who packed the products ready for delivery.
having a wonderful time. Almost everything that
had a name was given a euphemism. Even calling
the place a warehouse was a minor transgression.
You were informed on the first day that the
building would henceforth be known as a
“fulfilment centre” – or FC for short. You were
not fired or sacked; instead you were “released”.
The potentially antagonistic categories of Boss
and Worker had also been abolished. You were
all “Associates” – both high and lowly alike.

I landed the job at Amazon through an agency,
Transline. Every contract that we pickers were
on was zero hours and temporary. After nine
months, Amazon would either take you on
permanently or cast you aside. In practice,
you were lucky to make it to nine months. We
were informed on our first day that if we were
“outstanding”, Amazon might conceivably retain
us. However, we were also told that we should be “under no
illusions that this is a temporary job”.

I lived in a rented house where we all worked at Amazon. In
week two, I started to get sick. Because being ill was a punishable
offence, I was about to earn myself a “point” and lose a day’s
pay. According to the pedometer I wore on my wrist, I was
walking around ten miles a day. The greatest distance I travelled
was 14 miles and the shortest was seven miles. My feet began to
semble two ragged clods of wax gone over with a cheese grater.
Traipsing around for ten miles when your feet are soft and
you’ve eaten well and slept soundly is one thing. Doing it for
four consecutive days (and that’s before any overtime is factored
in), with very little let-up and on a diet of ready meals, is another
thing altogether. When they start, cordial, bright-eyed young
Romanian men and women are so busy running around that they
don’t even have time to wipe the sweat from their faces. Just a few
days later they’ll be curled over their trolleys, trying to snatch a
morsel of sleep out of sight of the supervisors.

The top floor on which I worked was a gloomy place, with the
only natural light coming in through small rectangular windows
located far above on the high ceiling. During the course of the
night – as soon as we clocked off at 11.30pm, another group
of workers were bussed in to
start their shifts – many of the
motion-sensitive lights would
malfuncton, meaning that a
dzen or so workers would be
left scuttling around in the dark
on the top floor of a warehouse
at three o’clock in the morning. Who, when they purchase an
iPhone charger or an Adele album with a click on Amazon’s
website, imagines anything like this?

You discover almost as soon as you begin the job that the
admonishment “never run” was not meant literally. Rather, it
was an illusory prohibition of something that was a necessary
requirement if you were to avoid the sack. Rules were laid
down that it was impossible not to flout. Dashing around was
obligatory if you were to meet the exacting targets set for every
worker. Similarly, water breaks were permitted, but to go off in
search of a water dispenser was to run the risk of “idling”,
another transgression you were often warned about. There were
around 12 water machines on each floor, yet in a labyrinth of
aisles spread over 700,000sq ft, it was nearly always impossible to
locate one nearby when you needed it.

Prizes would be offered for the best-performing pickers – although
I never did see anyone win anything – and a manager would run
through all the mistakes your shift had made on the previous day.
These would include things like not stowing boxes properly after
picking an item and taking too much idle time. Most of what was
disparagingly called “idle time” involved things like going to the

Bloodworth: “sheer misery”

The sheer misery of the work left you craving

The last word

for the day

rules at all at Amazon. A good example of what

Rules, as I have already stated, were not really

For me at least, life soon settled into a routine. I spent each
morning before my shift eating a hideous ready meal in my
room. Sausage and mash from the Co-op. Beef lasagne. Macaroni
cheese. I stopped buying milk and bread because they went off
before I had the chance to use them. It is easy to slip into an
unhealthy regime like this. You get up each morning at 11, you
have breakfast, shower and prepare your feet for the day
ahead – several sticking plasters, two pairs of socks – and then you drag yourself out of the door
by 12.30. You return home at midnight and you are usually in
bed by 1am. Wash, rinse, repeat.

Managing on the salary paid by Amazon was theoretically
feasible in a town like Rugeley. My salary worked out at £245
per week for 35 hours before tax (at £7 per hour). It was tough,
but it was possible to keep your head above water; in Rugeley
I paid £300 for a functional box room, which included all bills.
But it is worth asking what living on a paltry income does to
a person’s long-term health. When I started at Amazon, I was
a slim 12½ stone. Despite walking around ten miles a day, by the
end of the month I had put on a stone. I was smoking again, too.

You can, if you like, punch your credit-card details into
Amazon’s website without ever having to see what goes on in
this little corner of Staffordshire. You can sit, feet up and kettle
on, turn on the computer and order something to arrive the
next day with a mere click of the mouse. Our standard of living has
come to depend on it.

Extracted from Hired: Six Months Undercover in Low-Wage

10 March 2018 THE WEEK
THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1095
An Ettinger passport 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 19 March. Send it to: The Week Crossword 1097, 2nd floor, 32 Queensway, London W2 3RX, or email the answers to crossword@theweek.co.uk. Tim Moorey (www.timmoorey.info)

ACROSS
6 Thomas, perhaps left mushroom (5)
7 Big cat you can’t trust by the sound of it (7)
9 American coaches racing dogs (10)
10 Like a bit of peace right away (4)
11 Simple soldier initially in corps facing intense dislike (6)
13 Georgia’s feeble illumination (8)
15 Goods train crashing in Med (13)
16 Heartless sheikh behind removal clothing (4)
17 Notice small vessel (4)
18 Gentlemen outside look in for some meat (8)
19 Thomas, perhaps left clothing (4)
20 Items distributed around back of city block (6)
21 Dog following one has trouble when lead taken off (4)
22 Excellent start at school? (5-5)
25 Top army officer’s blanket (7)
26 Ox a Cockney may use for cooking? (5)

DOWN
1 Host out to lunch rejecting waiter (4)
2 Loaves from a flower show? (8)
3 Examine briefly though short of time (4)
4 Against poetry, we hear (8)
5 Composer very into railways (6)
6 Where to find corporates not strong (6)
7 Match made on the under-ground – it’s experimental (4,4)
8 Enchanted spring after a short period of time (10)
9 What’s green, even for an idiot? (5)
10 Strong (6)
11 Notice small vessel (4)
12 Where to find corporates not strong (6)
13 Small stream in Welsh resort, Avatar (6)
14 Heartless sheikh behind removal clothing (4)
15 Goods train crashing in Med (13)
16 Arrogate

The winner of 1095 is Edward Wills from London

Solution to Crossword 1095
ACROSS: 8 Tart up Abalones 10 Mary 11 Administrator 12 Menace 13 Arrogate 15 Matt 16 Trips 18 Eras 20 Abingdon 23 Avatar 24 Half inches
27 Ike 28 Hear hear 29 Odette
DOWN: 1 Pasadera 2 Statuation 3 Apparent 4 Maim 5 Wagner 6 Oops 7 Behest 13 Alien 14 Grenadines 17 Scansion 19 Amaretto 21 Braced 22 Denier 25 Faro 26 Hire

Solution to Sudoku 640
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 2
4 5 6 7 8 9 1 2 3
5 6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4
6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5
7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6
8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Solution to Sudoku 228
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 1 2
4 5 6 7 8 9 1 2 3
5 6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4
6 7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5
7 8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6
8 9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Sudoku 641 (very difficult)

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Crossword

Charity of the week

Likkle Swimmers was founded in memory of the journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young son from the sea. In the little coastal village in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young journalist Decca Aitkenhead’s partner, who died in Jamaica in 2014 while rescuing their young

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Gerry would never use just one word when he could fire eighteen at you. “Yes,” I replied, a master of brevity. The pint of Theakston’s Old Peculier duly arrived. “I really don’t know what all the faff about craft beers is,” said Gerry, “I mean, just look at this pint. Have you ever seen a better example of the brewer’s craft?” “No,” I answered. Ever loquacious, Gerry wasn’t stopping there. “Do you know those boys in Masham have been brewing this beer since 1827?” I nodded. “I mean, they’ve been honing their craft for over 188 years. This Old Peculier is a magnificent blend of the finest roasted barley and three different kinds of hops creating a fantastic fusion of flavours, deep and dark with a hint of sweetness. Makes you wonder why these new fangled craft Johnnies even bother getting out of bed.” Gerry really could shoot for Britain. “You know,” he continued, “I think the only time you ever open your mouth is to take another drink of Theakston’s.” Without a word I opened my mouth and...

“Fancy a pint of that craft beer that was a craft beer before there were any craft beers?”

The Talk of The Pub.
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