finitoworld

Issue 2
October 2020

FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT, AND BEYOND

Bill Gates
Find the Cure

£5.99 ISSN 2732-5180
5 060778 770005

Protect What's Yours

Your Reputation, Your Assets, Your Rights

Carter-Ruck is one of the UK's best known law firms - leaders in the fields of reputation, media & privacy, litigation, international arbitration and dispute resolution.

Partner-led service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Bureau, 90 Fetter Lane
London EC4A 1EN
+44 20 7353 5005
www.carter-ruck.com

Carter-Ruck

finitoworld

Editor:
Claire Coe

Contributing Editors:
Liz Brewer, Fred Finn, Stephen James, Emily Prescott, Lord Ranger CBE, Christopher Jackson

Communities Editor:
Myles Stacey

Advisory Board:
John Griffin (Chairman), Dame Mary Richardson, Sir Anthony Seldon, Elizabeth Diaferia, Ty Goddard, Neil Carmichael

Management Team:
Ronel Lehmann (Founder & CEO), Colin Hudson, Derek Walker, Professor Robert Campbell

Business Mentors:
Andrew Inman, Chloe Garland, Alejandra Arteta, Angelina Giovani, Christopher Clark, Robin Rose, Sophia Petrides, Dana James-Edwards, Elizabeth Marmur, Iain Smith, Jeremy Cordrey, Martin Israel, Iandra Tchoudnowsky, Tim Levy, Peter Ibbetson, Claire Orlic, Judith Cocking, Sandra Hermitage, Isla Baliszewska, Claire Ashley, Dr Richard Davis, Sir David Lidington, Coco Stevenson, Angelina Giovani

Digital Director:
David Angell

Business Development:
Rara Plumptre

Public Relations:
Pedroza Communications

Advertisement Director:
James Ferrin

Advertisement Sales:
Virtual Campaign Management

Creative Director:
Andrew Charalambous

Designer:
Jonathan Stewart

Photography:
Sam Pearce

Print Production:
Tim Solway

Printed in the UK by:
Printlogic incorporating Solways Printers, Kent, DA17 6AH

Website Development:
Wordsmith Digital

Registered Address:
Finito Education Limited, 7/10 Chandos Street, London, United Kingdom W1G 9DQ

Founder's Letter

You know that brief moment before the shutter of your camera captures the orangutan in the shot? Well it was a bit like that making a call to another primate, Sir David Attenborough, not the King of the jungle in far off land, but closer to home, in his wild natural habitat of Richmond, London.

The last time we worked together was in 1992 when I acted for David Laing and Ronald Harris in their bid to build a world class aquarium at London Zoo. Being still an affable sort of junior primate even today, I thought it best to send a telegram to him explaining the purpose, before telephoning. It did seem a little ironic to be transmitting my request during the pandemic the day after the news broke that our zoos were once again allowed to re-open.

A week had passed, and I decided to place the receiver next to my ear. It had just passed 2.00pm on a Friday and I thought that it was a good time, just after lunch and before a nap. I thought for a moment of his Wyggeston Grammar School Leicester classmate, Gordon Taylor, my father-in-law who sadly died in March, and the many tales he regaled from their youth.

Sir David answered immediately, no Executive Assistant. He mentioned that it was only 48 hours after emerging from self-isolation and lockdown and that he regularly receives 40 to 50 items of correspondence a day. It was a brusque yet professional exchange, a quick moment for reminiscences and yet with purpose. He left an impression of being on top of his game, not suffering fools and perhaps preserving the strength of his dulcet tones for the next film excerpt.

He was happy to speak to readers of our magazine as his mission to save us encompasses early years to pupils, schools, colleges, universities, business, politics and nation states. The power of his voice never leaves us, and the discoveries and lessons reverberated long after our conversation ended.

I cannot express my gratitude more sincerely to Sir David, who has almost single-handedly changed the way we look at and appreciate our planet, teaches and inspires a generation of followers, and legions of youths, who are as much at home with him, as they are with the latest rock band, believing that our climate can be saved from destruction.

The second edition of *Finito World* tackles another legend, Bill Gates, and the search for a pandemic cure. If contacting Sir David was a challenge, I will not regale you with the full tale about engaging with another incredible force for good.

We pay tribute to Ian Taylor, a titan of business at Vitol, and chair of the Royal Opera House. Taylor famously rescued Harris Tweed from bankruptcy, and was also known for his incredible philanthropy and charitable support. He was an inspiration and from the recollections expressed by former Prime Ministers and other business leaders, it was an honour to have known him.

The professionalism demonstrated by our business mentors has been a source of considerable encouragement to all our students and career change mentoring candidates. I praise them for their fortitude when it has most been needed and for contributing to this publication.

There is currently a lot of anxiety for students, their parents and prospective employers. We are about to see the end of the furlough scheme, and people's patience in some cases has already been tested to the limit, and will likely be tested further as we lurch towards winter.

However, there are also incredible stories of young people demonstrably overcoming adversity. We focus our optimism on encouraging success through the lens of those who began with nothing and achieved greatness. I hope you will enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed preparing it during lockdown. Once you have completed reading, I hope you will get in touch and share your own stories. Our many loyal readers would like that. f

Ronel Lehmann

Is it Time for Generation Entrepreneur?

3 LLOYD'S AVENUE, LONDON, EC3N 3DS · WWW.FINITO.ORG.UK

The American novelist John Updike once wrote: 'When you're young you prepare yourself for a world which is gone by the time you get there.' The life we dreamed of growing up, turns out to be not so much unobtainable as irrelevant: the world is always moving too fast, and it's our job not to let it outmanoeuvre us.

Now and then, the world changes so markedly that a generation will enter the workplace amid a greater than usual sense of uncertainty. This year has seen two major changes – in addition to the usual welter of mini-crises, some real and others media-driven. The pandemic shrank the economy by a quarter, causing untold anxiety and confining us indoors. Meanwhile, the shocking murder of George Floyd on 25th May in Minneapolis sent many out onto the streets to protest racial inequality.

At times of societal upheaval, it is right that we look for attitudes and examples to console and instruct. It was Martin Luther King - in a line often quoted by former President Barack Obama - who referred to 'the fierce urgency of now'. In 2020, this is the only respectable form of ferocity. Young people now have an opportunity to learn things they would otherwise not have learned. They can also take the kinds of risks that would previously have been unthinkable, and do so in an environment that will be sympathetic to failure, and especially admiring of success.

The mood is clear. Well-known businesses – from British Airways to Prêt-à-Manger – are making swingeing cuts to staff. Training programmes at the traditional blue chip firms now seem to be in doubt, and where they are not in doubt it is sometimes difficult to imagine how they will be as fulfilling and as international as they once were. Why not use this as a moment to start out on your own?

This shift is already to some extent ratified by the Treasury. The Future Fund will see the government issue convertible loans between £125,000 and £5 million to innovative companies. It's true that the conditions won't make every young person a shoo-in for eligibility – especially the requirement to have raised £250,000 from third-party investors in the last five years – but this, together with the moves the government has made on the social mobility agenda, signals a change. This is a legislative environment that will increasingly benefit the entrepreneurial spirit. This optimistic can-do approach should also animate our education sector. The virus halted our schooling, yes, but it has sped up our thinking about virtual learning.

It has also made students, at home and abroad, question the value of university courses in ways that may ultimately help their careers – in addition to accelerating the national conversation around the curriculum, tutoring and apprenticeships.

And what about Black Lives Matter? There is no question that this has already made commercial and education institutions re-examine the story of minorities in this country. Corporations can no longer afford to be flat-footed on the issue. Soon after Floyd's murder, the head of the City of London School Alan Bird wrote to parents to express himself shocked: 'Events of the last two weeks have demanded that institutions... consider what they really mean.' Universities reacted similarly. Over at the University of Buckingham, Sir Anthony Seldon, the organisation's outgoing Vice-Chancellor, issued a comparable bulletin: 'We want to nurture an environment where every person has an opportunity to speak out about issues impacting them.'

In neither instance was this mere talk. Bird explained that the school was consulting with its pupil-led Afro-Caribbean Society. He added that he had established a Diversity Group within the staff bodies, and was promoting BAME authors in library displays. Seldon meanwhile announced the appointment of two new Equality and Inclusion Officers.

These examples show that the murder of Floyd has created in those in power a laudable desire to help. This is to the good, but does it sit uneasily alongside what employers are now saying they want? This, as is made clear from the findings of our inaugural employability survey on page 79, is resourcefulness, adaptability, flexibility and self-reliance. From those we surveyed there was little talk of diversity or the need for a more socially diverse workforce.

The next years will likely see a difficult dance between voices calling for equality and reform, and the weary complaints of cash-strapped business leaders who have less wiggle-room to assist than at any point since the Great Depression. It is this that has given an air of fantasy to the Johnson government's well-meaning talk of 'guaranteed apprenticeships'. Some businesses will feel that their priorities are geared not towards reform but survival.

We can talk forever about the delicate line between the offer of assistance to minorities and the creation of unjust quota systems. Or we can become mired all over again in the traditional right-left debate about the importance of character versus the importance of citizenship, when clearly both are essential.

Instead, the real divide in education and business – and it's a line found at the level of the employee and job-seeker too – is between the dynamic and the flat-footed. This raises two questions of equal importance. Firstly, how do we help young people prosper within this new Covid-19 environment? Secondly, how do we make sure these young people are a fair reflection of the diversity of upbringings people experience in this country? In truth, these questions should never have been separated out.

Interestingly, the ideas that seem particularly attractive don't fit easily into traditional political boxes. From one-to-one tutoring, to the apprenticeships question, the issue of broadening our curriculum to include better representation for financial education, the arts and gardening (see our campaign on page 37), and the sudden importance of digital poverty, it isn't clear where these ideas belong on the political spectrum.

That's normally the sign of a good idea. It's time to promote nuanced thinking since it is only this that promotes the resilience needed in young people to be of value to businesses. This call for nuance mustn't be a reason for delay; it must sit alongside urgency.

But starting a business is a route open to anyone with a good idea, and with the drive to implement it. That's why this will be generation entrepreneur. The most important lesson of the last months is that you don't need to sit at home waiting for the response to that 200th job application; you can start a business yourself, and watch the applications roll in to you.

The Friend of Prime Ministers

Envy can sometimes seem so rife in our society that we fail to root it out. The chair of the Vitol group Ian Taylor (see page 38), who died on 8th June 2020 after a battle with cancer, was admired by many. But it is fair to say that Taylor didn't always receive a fair press, either in life when he was forced to withdraw his name from consideration for a knighthood – or sadly in the obituaries published after his death.

In our exclusive tribute, we have sought to correct that imbalance. The oil industry is intricate and intellectually demanding: it requires knowledge of geopolitical trends, fierce energy and a rare hard-headedness.

Taylor had all these things. But partly because of the understandable need to rethink our energy mix, the industry has acquired a bad reputation. With regard to Taylor, the mainstream media sometimes turned a blind eye to his legendary philanthropy and kind personality, and sought to show instead a cliché: the friend of dictators. Why this rush to judgement? It was Gore Vidal who said: 'Every time someone else succeeds a little part of me dies.' It's a cathartic joke, because we feel this in ourselves. It's a rare person who looks on another's achievement without any trace of grudge.

But in Taylor's case it might also be to do with a desire to simplify. We know that the world needs to turn greener, so aren't all oil executives therefore evil? In making these judgements, we often fail to learn from those who have achieved great things. In our tribute, readers will learn, above all, the value of creating friendship as we go through our careers.

It's easy to forget that the rich and the powerful are, to use Nietzsche's phrase, 'human, all too human'. During his premiership, Sir John Major took every jibe thrown at him by Alastair Campbell personally, likewise, when Lyndon Baines Johnson resigned over the Vietnam protests, Norman Mailer remarked: 'Who would have thought that LBJ couldn't take it?' He couldn't – because no one can.

This doesn't mean that we should overdo it and overpraise the successful, or forget those who helped them on their way. But there is growing evidence that we too easily mock success without thinking how it came about. Think of how Theresa May, who contributes to our tribute, was mocked throughout her premiership.

Few who read our Ian Taylor tribute will finish it unmoved by the range of his interests, or the scope of his benevolence. We aim to draw a wider lesson. To be successful one must first dispense with envy regarding those who have already succeeded – and take the time to ask oneself what personal qualities led to that success, and whether they might be fostered in oneself. Now, more than ever, is the time to cheer success. Perhaps the part of us that dies when we do is the part we'd be better off without.

Towards a More Perfect Union

Finito World has no political allegiance, and it's precisely for this reason that the efforts of Edapt and former teacher Stephen James to promote a model of support and representation for teachers that isn't allied to any particular side of the political spectrum caught our eye.

These times are out of joint, and to mend ourselves we believe that the times demand not divisiveness but togetherness. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the unions have been repeatedly unhelpful both in the workplace and in the vital question of returning our children to school.

British Airways CEO Alex Cruz has stated that it took months of trying and 500 invitations to meetings before the unions agreed to negotiate. This is unacceptable at a time of crisis.

Meanwhile, Sir Keir Starmer – though a figure of promise – has so far indulged the unions in prioritising their own membership ahead of the welfare of children. At a time when he might have moved memorably – as he has done on anti-Semitism – to distinguish himself from the left of the Party, he has instead hedged.

The Labour leader may eventually pay a penalty at the ballot-box for this. The teaching unions' refusal to countenance even a phased return to school effects particularly the mental health of those children who come from impoverished backgrounds.

In truth, the return of schools should never have been a political question. All along, it was a moral one. One might also wonder – at a time when the unions are calling for an extension to the furlough scheme - whether the unions themselves are playing their part. One looks in vain for evidence of the unions freezing contributions from their members, or making return of contributions to those in severe financial hardship.

When we caught up with former education secretary Estelle Morris over the summer, she was blunt: 'The unions have got a role, but I don't think they're always their own best friends. I would call sometimes for a more conciliatory tone.'

Morris also agrees that unions create a bias towards 'non-entrepreneurial, statist types'. As an organisation committed to the dignity that comes with work, *Finito World* considers it a source of concern that the influence of the unions is creating a sense of torpor at the very heart of our education system. Who can measure the extent to which the presence of a 'statist' ethos might be impacting the values of teachers, and therefore the values passed onto children?

It is possible to have these misgivings while also – as Morris does – celebrating the likes of Sir Michael Barber (see page 7) who came up through the unions.

The relevance of this topic could hardly be stated enough as Sir Keir Starmer leads the Labour Party into the winter and beyond conference season. As shown by our feature on page 44, the left has an opportunity which must now be seized to reimagine its approach to education.

It was W.B. Yeats who wrote that 'The best lack all conviction/while the worst are full of passionate intensity'. But for Starmer, to be as good as he can be, he must discover conviction on this question – and he hasn't a moment to lose.

This Issue

"Before all this happened, people didn't think they needed an office in their home – the idea of having a study sounded so Victorian."
Thomas Heatherwick

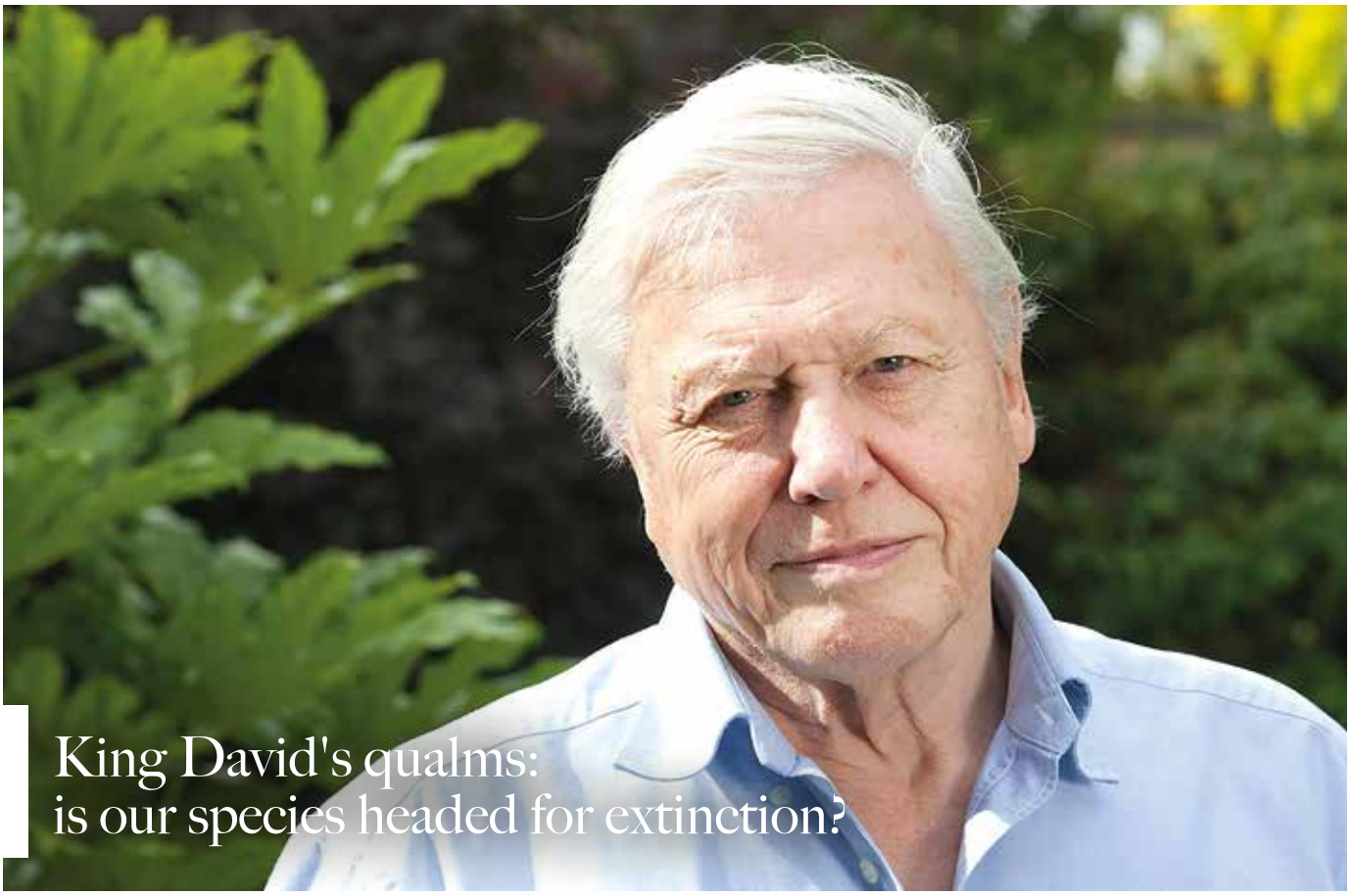
Columns


p14

Features


p44

Briefings



King David's qualms: is our species headed for extinction?

If you would like to contribute or be interviewed, please get in touch.

In unknown times, know your times.

Stay well informed every day on the nation's health, the economy, and all the stories that matter with unlimited digital access to The Times and The Sunday Times.

Subscribe now at thetimes.co.uk/finito

THE TIMES

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sir Michael Barber

THE GREAT EDUCATIONALIST ON BLAIR, THE NEW OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STUDENTS AND LESSONS LEARNED IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Secretary of State for the Department for Education Gavin Williamson recently asked me to chair a review on digital poverty. We'll publish in February and we'll look at what universities have been doing in this area and we'll make some recommendations both for the next academic year 2021-2 and for the long term.

A lot of people think that 'digital poverty' means 'I haven't got a laptop' but there's a lot more to it than that. It's also: 'Have you got the hardware? Have you got appropriate software? Have you got a teacher trained to teach online? Have you got connectivity and reliability and rapid repair if needed? If any one of them isn't functional, you'll be losing out digitally'.

When I was working with Tony Blair, he always used to say about education: 'This is much more important than anything, even than the Middle East.' Most prime ministers don't care enough about education and it was great to know when the spending review came round that the PM would want to increase the education budget. And to be fair to Gordon Brown he was also a big fan of education. It's not their fault but the new government has been completely overwhelmed by the coronavirus crisis.

"Most Prime Ministers don't care enough about education."

In my most recent role as head of the Office for Students, I'm always aware when I'm dealing with universities that these are institutions under immense strain because of the coronavirus situation. But because of what's been happening with Black Lives Matter, we've been very careful to make sure we hold their feet to the fire on making sure the numbers stack up on underprivileged children, especially those from minority backgrounds.

Pakistan is a country I've grown to love. I've been there 50-something times. It's a tough place to work and I've grown to love the people. Delivery Associates, the firm I chair, focused on primary elementary school and on getting kids into school and making sure they're learning. We made some significant progress. There are 100 million people including 13 million children, and we had a wide range of initiatives, including vouchers for lower income families getting their kids into school.

"It's not their fault but the new government has been completely overwhelmed by the coronavirus crisis."

Travelling around the world I've had the opportunity to work with some brilliant people. For instance, Barack Obama had a Secretary of State for Education called Arne Duncan. The US federal government is a relatively minor player in the US, as most is funded at local and state level. But Duncan got a big pot of money as a result of the legislation passed in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Another person might have just shared out the money by state according to population but he didn't do that. He did a Race to the Top competition whereby any state lifting the cap on the number of charter schools and introducing an individual student level data system could play. The traditional thing would have been for the education department in Washington to pick and choose among state proposals and be lobbied endlessly by senators from states. Duncan got panels of experts to interview state teams. They reported back to him and he placed the interviews between experts and state teams on YouTube. That worked well, as it was a wholly transparent process.

The turnover in our civil service is too high. When I was working in the Blair administration, I would typically say to the permanent secretary in the education department, on an important issue: 'This is an important priority of the prime minister. Would you please make sure this person is a) good at their job and b) likely to be in it for a while. Otherwise, I knew nothing would get done.'

There's another perhaps deeper issue, which is institutional memory over a long period. People forget the history. Nobody forgets the 70th anniversary of the NHS; in 2018 everyone celebrated. Now we have the 150th anniversary of state education in this country, as a result of the Education Reform Act passed in the first Gladstone administration, and no one knows about it. But in September, after some pressure from me, the Foundation for Education Development [FED] was persuaded put on an event.

Employability is a big issue universities need to look at. Too often the careers department is tucked away in some backwater of the university and nobody knows to go there. We need to take a leaf out of Exeter University's book where the careers department is this very visible building in the centre of campus.

I don't know truthfully what will happen as a result of coronavirus, but I hope some surprising and positive things will come out of it. One thing will be the use of digital techniques including not just lectures and individual tuition online - all of which happened very rapidly once lockdown occurred - but also things like virtual reality. For instance, if you're training to be a pilot, you're not in a plane most of the time; you're in a simulator. Things like that will be accelerated. f

READER Enquiries

In our pilot issue of *Finito World*, we shared with readers our first set of questions from students. Over the summer we sent these to experienced Finito mentors Andy Inman, Dana James-Edwards, Sophia Petrides, and Robin Rose, who have provided us with the answers.

I am holding graduate scheme offers from two top accountancy firms, beginning in September. One offer is dependent on my degree result; the other is not. I am worried that my final result awarded might not satisfy the conditional entry requirements and if that is not worrying enough, both firms are reviewing whether to simply postpone the scheme by a year. Which offer should I accept and, if they postpone, what should I do for the next 12 months?

Christopher, 24 Manchester

Sophia As they are both top accountancy firms, either company will give you the opportunity to develop yourself and gain the right experience to grow in your role. In life, we can't worry about things beyond our control. You have done your best with your exams and that's all you can do for now. If neither firm has given you a timeline when you need to sign the contract, wait until you get your exam results and then decide which company to go with. However, if the other company is putting pressure on you to sign the contract, as this role is not dependent on your grades, then go ahead and sign. In the meantime, I would continue searching for other job opportunities in order to have options available, in case they decide to postpone the scheme until 2021.

Dana Think back to when you were going through the interview process at both firms. Consider your experience, the people you met and the feelings you had throughout. Which firm could you see yourself fitting into and working at better? Then, think back to the day when you found out you had an offer. Was there an offer that made you more excited than the other? Ultimately, where would you prefer to work? Once you know the answer to that question, consider whether that place is worth waiting a year for.

I have been forced to return home from university and don't know whether I can return to continue my studies. Although I love my family, things are becoming intolerable. My studies keep getting interrupted by home life. I cannot concentrate, miss the peace of my library and worry about my future. Do you have any advice?

Mia, 21 Leeds

Robin It sounds like you need a family discussion about boundaries. They may be making demands on you but probably also want to do the best they can to support your studies. Try to get them to agree to a set number of hours a day when you are not available, as that is your study time. If you envisage this situation existing for the foreseeable future, maybe you should consider transferring your studies to the Open University. It may take you longer than you initially planned but an OU degree is well respected by the business world.

Andy As far as worrying about your future is concerned, it's true to say we are entering a period of economic uncertainty, however that means there will be opportunities for individuals who have drive and passion and are able to employ lateral thinking. I would work out the best way to find some peace and quiet while studying and then take one day at a time in a confident and determined manner.

My father has told me to forget about seeking a career in the professions and to re-align my sights on logistics. The sound of the role really puts me off, despite being an ASOS customer and buying all my shoes and cosmetics online. It fills me with horror, the thought of spending my next few years dealing with fashion brands online. What shall I do?

Ava, 23 Bath

Andy I'm sure your father has your best interests at heart. He is not wrong to point you towards a growing sector. However, there is no point in pursuing a career that does not excite you. Sir James M. Barrie is quoted as saying: "Nothing is really work unless you would rather be doing something else."

Sophia Start by carving some time out for future planning, which is something that we at Finito always encourage. Think about your key strengths and competencies alongside the things you would ideally like to be able to do in your future role and what is most important to you about the work you do. Then, research and brainstorm roles and career paths that don't fill you with horror, but allow you to maximise your skills and include elements that you would enjoy.

I have been attracted to a career focused on addressing the climate emergency. My parents find me very difficult and threatened to stop giving me financial support when they saw that I have been taking part in Extinction Rebellion demonstrations. Given that coronavirus has in one fell swoop changed the world immeasurably, will there be any roles for someone like me, now that the aircraft are grounded, pollution levels are falling and solar ice caps might stop melting?

Aarti, 19 Edinburgh

Sophia Don't lose your passion. With everything in life, open communication is vital, and we have to see things from everyone's perspective. I have no doubt that your parents respect your views: however, they worry about your well-being when involved with widespread activism. Have you considered sitting down with your parents, explaining the purpose of these events, and providing positive outcomes?

Dana You are right that Covid-19 has changed the world immeasurably, but we have no assurance that the beneficial changes in relation to climate change and the environment will be sustained into the future. The lockdown certainly hasn't proven that we can reduce emissions in the longer term, as we need to in order to promote real environmental change and prevent global warming from becoming worse. In fact, what the pandemic has shown us is that even in a crisis, there will always be people who decide against taking positive required action, even when those actions are in everyone's best interest. As a result, there is much work still to be done in the space you have chosen and the movement can surely benefit from an activist as passionate as you are.

I have always wanted to start a business. Now that the economy is going through an extended downturn, how am I going to raise the start-up funding to make a success of this project? My parents are yelling at me to get experience first. I am looking for opportunities but there are none. This is really frightening but I sense an opportunity.

Chloe, 22 Bristol

Robin Do not worry about the economy: that's the government's problem, and there is always room for someone like you with drive and conviction. The success of any start-up depends on three critical factors. You must ask yourself firstly, if you have a product or service for which there is a demand. Secondly, do you have sufficient resilience to overcome the numerous obstacles all start-ups have to face? Finally, are you able to provide – or can you partner with someone - who has the business skills you have yet to acquire? If you can answer "yes" to these questions, then there are numerous loans and grants available for people like you.

I am a creative soul. I like to touch, feel and appreciate the aesthetics of fabric. I have always seen myself working in a creative environment, maybe in the arts. My careers adviser at school tells me that there is no money in the arts, especially now. Where can I find some alternative inspiration so as to connect me with the beauty within and give me a chance to express myself in a meaningful career?

Olivia, 18 London

Robin If you have a passion for the touch and feel for fabric, I suggest you contact The Shirley Institute. Though they are possibly not currently recruiting, they are good people to know and will point you in the right direction. They are extremely well connected with fashion houses throughout the world. If this is what you want for your career, then take control and follow your heart. f

WE CHAMPION YOUR CLAIMS

www.flaxmanpartners.co.uk Tel: +44 (0)20 3972 6440

First Thoughts

P 23 – The Heatherwick Papers: How to be a designer under Covid-19

THE CHAIR

Robert Halfon

THE CHAIR OF THE EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE TELLS US ABOUT HIS LATEST FIGHT FOR GUARANTEED APPRENTICESHIPS AND WHY UNIVERSITIES NEED TO UP THEIR GAME TO SURVIVE

It doesn't matter how good policy is, unless there's genuine evangelisation it doesn't make any difference. When I die – which hopefully will be a long way away – I'd like it on my grave that I was a campaigner.

The big thing in politics is relentless repetition: it takes about ten years to get people to notice what you're saying. I liken it to pizza delivery. How many times do you get a Domino's leaflet through your letterbox? 99 times out of 100, you'll throw it away. But it's when you have no food, and you're knackered, and you have no food in the fridge, that you suddenly remember that pizza leaflet.

In politics it's the same. I push my ideas in every forum I can: in committees, in articles, speeches and interviews. I'll raise things in parliament in questions, debates, and Commons motions, and try and keep what I'm working on at the time in the prime minister's mind, and in the minds of his advisers.

This year, it looks like they've picked up my pizza leaflet. It's been an exciting time. In June, I met with Prime Minister Boris Johnson before the Liaison Committee, and I used the phrase 'apprenticeship guarantee'. A week later, he repeated the whole phrase in a speech. What that signifies is that policy-makers in 10 Downing Street are clearly looking at this, and I hope as Chair of the Education Select Committee, I can move the policy forward. It's the best offer we can make to young people.

My hope is that one day 50 percent of students will be doing apprenticeships. So, for instance, if you are doing English you should be working during your degree in a publishing house or alongside an editor – and that should be part of your degree. A history graduate should be working in a museum or alongside an archaeologist. I also think work experience should be compulsory, or at least be encouraged as much as possible by government.

I had the best time of my life at university. But I've always worked doing summer jobs – and that's the advantage of apprenticeships. You do your degree and get academic experience. You go to the student bars, but you also learn about office work and about teamwork. And of course, if you do a career apprenticeship you get paid, so there's no loan. It's a no-brainer to me and now's the time for the government to act...

"We look at the whole idea of an elite university the wrong way round: an elite university to me should embed work experience in the curriculum."

We're hopeful we won't have the usual battle with the Treasury on this. There's a £3 billion skills fund in the manifesto, which has now been confirmed by the Chancellor Rishi Sunak in his most recent budget. But I think at some stage, we'll need to consider skills credits for businesses. We might structure a policy whereby the more disadvantaged and younger people a business has taken on, the bigger their skills credit.

I'm sometimes asked how to stop the golf club mentality of people giving jobs to their friends – or more likely their friend's children. That's human nature. But businesses will have to change because the world has changed. We've got the 4th Industrial Revolution and jobs will be affected by it. That trend has only been exacerbated by coronavirus. We'll have lots of redundancies, but if people have the right skills and get good qualifications and on-the-job training, it will make a huge difference.

That's why I want government incentivising every company in the country to work with universities. I also think grants to universities should be conditional on whether they have a significant number of degree apprenticeships. It depresses me that Oxford has closed its doors to any kind of apprenticeship at all. I think they're snooty, and seem to think university is about research and nothing else. Meanwhile, Cambridge to their credit at least kept the door open.

Fortunately, there are amazing universities – Warwick especially springs to mind – doing wonderful work. We look at the whole idea of an elite university the wrong way round: an elite university to me should have a lot of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, brilliant graduate outcomes, and should embed work experience in the curriculum. Many universities are trading on their marketing.

It's a long road, but we have a PM who's a vision person. The doom-mongers will say it can't be done but one of my favourite quotations is from Sir Nicholas Winton: 'If it's not impossible, there must be a way to do it.' f

The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP for Harlow and political director of Conservative Friends of Israel.

MADAME SECRETARY

Estelle Morris

BARONESS MORRIS OF YARDLEY UNDER TONY BLAIR TALKS ABOUT HOW THE LESSONS OF 1997-2007 CAN BE APPLIED TO THE CURRENT MOMENT

These are difficult times for education. It didn't come up much in the election or the leadership campaign.

I'm not critical of Keir Starmer – he's done outstandingly well so far. But I'm not entirely happy with where the party is on education at the moment. It needs to get back to the top of our agenda.

Under Tony Blair, we used to say to teachers: 'If you want, you can teach when education isn't a priority of the government.' It's true that when education is a focus of government, there's a lot of pressure, and that perhaps goes away when education ceases to be the main talking point. No one will be on your back; the government won't be passing laws or monitoring you – but they won't be giving you money or leadership.

Under Blair, if teachers were under the cosh, so were ministers: he was monitoring every detail. He was a consummate politician – and human being. He would admit if he didn't know something. If we had a catch-up meeting and we raised something quite detailed – on literacy, for example – he would turn to Michael Barber (his chief education adviser) and say, 'Michael, what does that sound like to you?' And if we had a big initiative, he would make time. He never once said no.

That kind of leadership matters. It's sometimes not what the leader does; it's what the leader gives cause to do that counts. Everyone thinks: 'This is the bus to be on; this bus is going places.'

But I was never sure where his motivation on education came from. When I worked for David Blunkett you could see it was all to do with his background. But Tony's not got that. His socialism was all about social justice because he'd had those advantages. He knew the value of education.

It comes down to this: there really isn't an easy route out of poverty besides education. If you have a dictator, what do they do first? They go and fiddle with the education system. It's the institution by which we lay down our values regarding the society we are, and the sort of world we want to inhabit.

No one wants to say that the education system is a political tool, but it is. Whatever you dream your society to be, you need to see it worked out in school – otherwise you won't see that vision of society in the next generation either.

"Whatever you dream your society to be, you need to see it worked out in school."

It's been a period of great loss – certainly in education. It's not a bad thing that we've not had fumes going into the air; but it's definitely not a good thing not having kids in school. We need to get it right from here, but I wouldn't go through this again to learn the lessons we're learning now: they were learnable before. Once again we've been much too slow on the uptake.

If you go to the health service, you can see relationships changing. One example I've heard about involved a nurse on a Covid-19 ward. Senior consultants from outside that discipline were filling syringes for nurses. A huge amount of goodwill is generated by those sorts of things. But where is that spirit in education? There's been no sense of the government, the unions, and the local authorities sowing the seeds of a new relationship for the future.

So education hasn't had a good crisis. The government has done well to get the Whitehall machinery moving quickly and been imaginative in general, but it dismays me that we haven't come together more.

Universities have a responsibility on the quality of provision. If you are at a university or a school in this period of online learning, not all students have had the same high quality. That really bothers me.

When you have a child of five you're always trying to catch up on in-built disadvantage. It's not a party political point.

Each government has tried to make new initiatives on this, and that's the reason we've closed the gap. But now in the last few months, we've built a new gap in terms of social class and deprivation. I hope the virus will push us to do better.

In terms of Boris Johnson, I don't see anything in his background that will turn him onto education intellectually. What we don't want is another argument about academies, and we don't want 50 years arguing about whether a school should be an academy or local authority.

A good leader frees up something in society that's already there. Blair used to do a lot of speeches about sport. He didn't personally then go and teach sport. But if you were a PE teacher in that room, metaphorically you grew. It's the power of the office. f

Estelle Morris was Secretary of State for Education and Skills from 2001-2002. She discusses the idea of a National Education Service on p. 41

THE PROFESSOR

Lee Elliot Major

THE UK'S FIRST SOCIAL MOBILITY PROFESSOR SPOKE TO *FINITO WORLD* ON THE EVE OF SECURING VITAL PUBLIC MONIES FOR TUTORING

I am very careful to be apolitical with my views on social mobility as I think it's a cross party issue. This might be a naïve belief but my view is that you have to present evidence behind what you're proposing.

There are huge questions around why we have a social mobility problem, but what I've been trying to do is come up with pragmatic solutions to problems. When I was a trustee at the Education Endowment Foundation, we looked at what works in the classroom in terms of improving learning for disadvantaged pupils. What's hard is to find approaches that can be consistently scaled up. We've done hundreds of trials and reviewed literally thousands of studies on what we think are our best bets for learning. One thing that surfaced was classroom-teacher feedback, the core of all good schooling.

Alongside that, we found strong evidence of the effectiveness of one-to-one tutoring. I've always felt that that was something we could utilise more to help the disadvantaged learn. Tutoring is simple to scale up. The idea is that wherever people live they have access to tutoring support. We found the existence of this patchy; in some areas there are charities - as in some areas of London - but there are other areas where there's no support at all. Then, when we turned to the question of addressing inequalities during the Covid-19 crisis, we talked about establishing a National Tutoring Service. I began observing a boom in private tutoring – surely now was the time to level up the playing-field.

It feeds into something else I've noticed: there's a real volunteering spirit among the younger generation. These are people who like to give back and have a strong sense of social justice. It was fantastic when the Johnson administration gave money to the idea.

There's also, of course, huge inequality in the workplace. When you look at studies about who gets on in work, you often find that someone senior and experienced champions someone junior in the organisation. This tends to happen predominantly to people from privileged backgrounds: if you've gone to the same school, or if there's some sort of familial connection.

It could be possible to create a more formal mentoring programme that could be part of a national service, whereby senior people could champion people from disadvantaged backgrounds. At the moment, they feel lost in the culture of the industry. For instance, I know a lot of people around the creative industries. At the moment, it doesn't matter how talented you are, you're struggling to progress in the early career phase. The cultural assumptions can be quite alienating if you're not a part of that: if you're outside London, it can be hard to get into London.

"The problem is that this tends to happen predominantly to people from privileged backgrounds: if you've gone to the same school, or if there's some sort of familial connection."

But as ever you come up against the practicalities. The question is, how idealistic do we want to be about this? It would be difficult to deliver a national mentoring programme. Another critique would be that a mentoring service would assume that in-built cultures and inequalities in industries would remain. We can so easily get caught between ideologues on left and right. On the one hand, those who say: 'All we need is to make things equal.' And on the other, those who say: 'All we need is economic growth.'

One of the reasons government looks at education even though it's become a market-led sector, is that in this area you can at least try and do something: the taxpayer is paying a lot for that delivery. Once you look at labour and economy policy you're suddenly dealing with private companies and the levers that government have are less direct.

But what's interesting is that during the coronavirus crisis, that has changed. The government is now paying the salaries of a lot of people. So although this time is tragic, it's very exciting from the policy perspective. It's challenged the old stereotypes and preconceptions about what's left and what's right. This is the most interventionist government I can remember. And the question for someone like me is: 'Do some of these things remain in five years' time? Is it a permanent readjustment about profound social issues? Or do we slip back into the assumptions of neoliberal global politics?'

I hope it's the former. I think we can find a better balance and a fairer system. I think we were heading for a reckoning before this crisis. When society doesn't give people a fair go over several generations then at some point down the pecking order, people will think there's no way to change society other than by revolt. I don't know whether we're there yet, but I hope the government grabs this moment. It's time for a branded national tutoring service. f

Professor Lee Elliot Major's new book is What Do We Know and What Should We Do About Social Mobility?, *published by SAGE*

History shows us, companies which advertise through a crisis,
whilst their competitors cut back, will gain market share.
We seem to be the only advertising agency taking this advice.

This is an advert for **LONDON Advertising**

THE DOYENNE

Carol Leonard

LONDON'S TOP HEADHUNTER AND FORMER TIMES JOURNALIST TELLS *FINITO WORLD* ABOUT THE GENTLE ART OF CAREER LEAPFROGGING

I'd recommend a career in journalism to anyone but it's not a career many people get to retire in. You do it for a decade – maybe even for two or three – but then you do something else.

At *The Times*, when I was leaving in the 1980s, there was a retirement notice posted to the door of one of the longest-serving editors. I remember thinking that it was the first time I'd seen someone at the paper reach retirement age. Of course, there is a career path in journalism – from local newspaper to national newspaper, then on to columnist, or into broadcasting and editor. None of those appealed to me. I'd have paid to do my job, and that's the trouble with those sorts of jobs – as a consequence you tend not to be paid very much doing that kind of work.

But if you work in journalism, you acquire important skills, and then you can progress and earn something a bit more liveable-with. As *the Times* City diarist, I was my own boss. As a representative of an august organisation, I had a lot of access. I did about 150 profiles of captains of industry over three or four years. It was hugely demanding physically and emotionally; each was a kind of mini-novel. I started to wonder whether I had the energy to go around the block again.

I asked myself what I liked. I liked meeting people, and I knew how the business world interconnected. Then it happened. I had profiled a man in the headhunting world called Roddy Gow. Miles Broadbent – a competitor of his – was incensed that I'd portrayed Gow as being the top of the profession. Miles asked me to come meet him. Even then, I made the effort to meet with people face to face. It's important to look people in the whites of the eyes.

Three months after our first meeting, he rang me and said, 'Can you have lunch with me at the Savoy Grill?' In the 1980s, that was the power-broking dining room. When we sat down, he said rightaway: 'When are you going to become a headhunter?' I replied that it's not something I'd ever thought of. No-one grows up thinking of becoming a headhunter!

He said, 'Have a think about it. If I haven't heard from you in three months, I'll call and ask you again.' Afterwards, my then father-in-law said: "Why didn't you bite his hand off? This is the main chance. You only get two or three. Make the most of it."

"I asked myself what I liked. I liked meeting people, and I knew how the business world interconnected"

When I began headhunting, I found I'd picked up so many skills at *The Times*. I'd learned to become self-sufficient, and I'd long since stopped being nervous cold-calling people. When you ring up as a journalist, the person on the other end of the phone can panic; as a headhunter you're talking about a role and that makes it easier. The wider skillset is also similar to financial journalism. It's all based on long-term relationships, trust, listening to people, interviewing people, reading between the lines, note-taking – and recording data.

What fascinates me now in my work is the question of what makes people tick. There's usually something in childhood that gives the successful that extra piece of drive – an insecurity which makes people work harder than those who didn't have the kinks. Most people who do very well have sacrificed a lot both personally and health-wise. These people will get Alzheimer's when they're older – it all comes at a price.

Now, with Covid-19 the world has changed all over again. Video interviewing is pretty good actually – perhaps 90 percent as good as face-to-face. Obviously where you have a FTSE 100 CEO down to the final preferred candidate stage then you'll want to meet, and the offer is unlikely to be on anything other than a draft basis otherwise. But I've seen non-exec roles offered and accepted without the parties having met one another. This time is brutal for people out of work, but actually the businesses which do emerge will be stronger, leaner, fitter.

To young people looking for a job now I'd say that personal relationships are more important than ever. And I would remember always to be open to new experiences. When I think of my decision to leapfrog careers, I think it came from a confidence given to me by those teachers who believed in me.

There's something special in all of us, but you don't have to limit your career to that special quality: it can be a springboard to believing in yourself more generally, and then someone in a position of power will notice it. That can lead you to different spheres – it can make a headhunter out of a journalist. f

*Carol Leonard is the CEO of the Inzito Partnership, an ex-*Times *journalist and a visiting fellow of the Said Business School.*

THE HISTORIAN

Sir Anthony Seldon

TEN YEARS ON FROM A GENERAL ELECTION WHICH PITTED DAVID CAMERON AGAINST GORDON BROWN, SIR ANTHONY SELDON LOOKS BACK ON WHAT COALITION GOVERNMENT MEANT FOR EDUCATION

"A comparison of Brown and Starmer yields intriguing thoughts: both very bright people, and both have legalistic minds and a superb grasp of detail."

It's ten years since David Cameron and Nick Clegg stood in the Downing Street Rose Garden at the beginning of the Coalition.

But from the perspective of universities, and our wider education system, it was a man who wasn't at that press conference who would really go on to change our education system.

Michael Gove arrived in Great Smith Street with a strong agenda. Assisted by Dominic Cummings, he would have an extraordinary impact on how schools conducted themselves: his was a tenure ambitious for all students regardless of background. It's hard to point to many other education secretaries who have made such a significant difference – Tony Crossland perhaps, who served under Harold Wilson, and launched a campaign for comprehensive schools.

Whether he's at DEFRA or heading up the Cabinet Office as he does today, Gove's energy remains remarkable: any department that he comes into is very quickly overhauled. In any cabinet, Gove is always one of the most erudite. Peter Mandelson held a similar distinction during the Tony Blair years.

As education secretary, Gove accelerated free schools and continued with academisation, building on the Andrew Adonis years. Adonis and Gove are comparable: each had the same ambition for schools, and a similar desire to bring in external energy and remove schools from local authority control. But I would say Gove arguably had a clearer agenda around school standards.

Cameron deserves some of the credit for the achievements of those years. Margaret Thatcher was probably the last prime minister who didn't see education as a major part of her job. All prime ministers since Tony Blair have had a major interest in education, and Cameron was no different, though it's probably true to say he didn't involve himself greatly.

One thing Cameron did do was to invite the heads of independent schools into the Cabinet room, and seek to persuade them to start academies. It wasn't very successful, but he was always supportive of Michael Gove. He knew when to leave someone to it.

A decade later, there are remarkable continuities. In Keir Starmer, we have a leader with deep roots right down to his Christian name in the left movement, as Brown had. And it hardly needs saying that we have an old Etonian in Number 10.

A comparison of Brown and Starmer yields intriguing thoughts: both are very bright people, and both have legalistic minds and a superb grasp of detail. But their disparities may in the end prove crucial. Starmer is untested as a leader. Brown, when he came to become prime minister, had been for ten years the longest-serving Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had a formidable knowledge of how government operates. Whereas Starmer today is the younger man on the rise; Brown, in 2007-10 was arguably at the peak, or beyond the peak, of his energy.

As for David Cameron and Boris Johnson, they're very different. Cameron had a vast appetite for detail, but he was primarily interested in foreign policy, leaving economic and domestic policy to George Osborne. Johnson tends the other way: he's not interested in foreign policy, but in the domestic side. He has a far shorter attention span, not the same work ethic, and is still relatively new to Westminster politics.

How it plays out remains to be seen, but I certainly wouldn't give Labour high marks for their handling of coronavirus so far. Starmer didn't do enough to stand up to the unions, and the party gave the impression that it was far less interested in children – including the socially disadvantaged and those with mental health challenges – than in their own membership. Accordingly, they have lost moral authority, and shown intellectual weakness. They had an opportunity to seize the high ground but they blew it.

The quality of the opposition always matters but especially so now. The next years will see real difficulties for universities. I certainly don't subscribe to the belief some on the right hold, which is to let the poor universities and those that don't compete internationally go to the wall.

That position is about as intelligent as saying, 'Let schools that don't come top of the league tables collapse.' In reality, it's those in the middle and at the bottom that are adding most to the attainment of young people. It's simply that the quality of the raw material they proceed with is much less high academically. Besides, if you let the universities in the middle or bottom disappear, you will be stripping northern cities, as well as cathedral and rural cities of their economic dynamism and vitality, and doing irreparable damage to the social cohesion of the country.

So ten years on from the outset of the Coalition, some themes are recurring. But as Heraclitus knew, we never step into the same river twice. The success of this administration will be in identifying what a crucial moment this is and not just for universities but for our entire education system. f

Sir Anthony Seldon is a historian and biographer who recently stepped down as the vice-chancellor of the University of Buckingham

BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
JEWELLERS AND SILVERSMITHS
BENTLEY & SKINNER, LONDON

BY APPOINTMENT TO
H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES
JEWELLERS AND SILVERSMITHS
BENTLEY & SKINNER, LONDON

BENTLEY & SKINNER

Jewellers, Goldsmiths and Silversmiths

55 Picadilly London W1

FINE JEWELS AND BEAUTIFUL RINGS

In this changing world we look forward to serving you, just as we have served so many of your parents and grandparents in the years gone by.

TELEPHONE: 020 7629 0651

WWW.BENTLEY-SKINNER.CO.UK

A Question of Degree

With Sir David Lidington

The former de facto No. 2 in the May administration talks about how a history degree has helped him in his political career

Certain traits define an aptitude for elected politics, and I've tended to find they can be aided by a study of history. One useful aptitude would be fascination with human beings - what makes them tick, and how power is exercised. Secondly – regardless of whether you come from the left, right, or centre – almost everyone I've met in politics starts with a commitment to changing things for the better in their country. To do that, it helps to know what injustices have existed in the past.

There's a third thing, and I would say it also separates the natural politician from the civil servant: a certain zest for the theatre. Politics involves a willingness to take risk, and to be prepared to stand on the stage at the end, and not know whether you'll have a standing ovation or a bag of rotten tomatoes slung at you. The natural civil servants shy away from that but what's interesting is you sometimes see a politician who's really a civil servant – and then a mandarin who's really a politician. The thespian is striving to get out there.

The wonderful thing about history is that it trains the imagination: when you start to really delve into history – and read deeply as well as widely in a particular era – you find people in the past had various assumptions and moral codes that can be very different from how we operate today. For example, for people living in 1800 or 1850 the idea that there was going to be this industrial revolution, and transformative migration of people to cities, and a growth of urban conurbations – that's something which some might have predicted, but by no means everyone. Training of the imagination is important.

> "Politics involves a willingness to stand on the stage at the end, and not know whether you'll have a standing ovation or a bag or rotten tomatoes slung at you."

History also teaches you how to use and assess evidence. Particularly in postgraduate study, you have to go back to original source material and assess the reliability of it. You look at state papers, which by and large deal with high politics and the people at the top. But if you go to legal records, there you find out about yeomen and merchants – the people who went on Chaucer's pilgrimage to Canterbury all crop up as plaintiffs or defendants.

Another applicable aspect of history was borne in on me when I was Europe Minister. I visited about 40 countries from Russia and Turkey, to the South Caucasus and Iceland. If you want to understand today's political outlook you have to understand what happened in the past. What are the demons they still fear? What are the experiences that have shaped the outlook of a particular society today?

For instance, I have long felt that the tension that has always existed between the UK and the EU derived in large measure from contrasting experiences and lessons in the mid-20th century. For most of Europe this was a period of disaster when national institutions all failed in the face of tyranny, invasion and ethnic hatred. From the EU perspective, therefore you have to build up those institutions to stop anything happening again.

Another example would be China. I remember a few years ago, I met Xi Jinping's number two, and he started out with this recital about the Opium Wars and how China had been attacked in the 19th century because it was weak and the European powers had exploited her. Hearing that, I began to understand why they see the world as they do today. They feel a need to put right the century of humiliation and to restore China's place as a global power. One needn't necessarily agree with that – but you have to understand how the other side thinks.

So history is a real asset in politics because you learn how human beings interact with each other, how relationships and power is mediated through institutions, and what lies behind the motivation of countries and individuals. How a Tudor court operates is good for understanding all about access in No.10 Downing Street. Now you have your special advisers rather than Grooms of the Stole or royal pages. Think about Elizabeth I. Who was it who could actually get in to see the monarch and be sure you got your bit of paper in front of her? Likewise, today – who can get something in the prime minister's box? Patterns reproduce.

One of the most difficult things for government or for the man or woman who's prime minister is finding time to regenerate yourself and your government while in office. There are always things pressing in. For me the great prime minister of the 19th century was Robert Peel: he was prepared to change his mind when the facts had changed. If you look at how he moved on Catholic Emancipation and on the Corn Laws and trade you can see that he took decisions based on what he thought was right for the country even at the fatal cost to his own political fortunes. Disraeli was vastly entertaining, but Peel was the greater man and the greater prime minister. f

David Lidington was deputy prime minister under Theresa May and is now Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath


MALOX
HUNGARIAN WINE & SPIRITS
RESTAURANTS
BEST KEPT SECRET
TOP WINE BUYERS & SOMMELIERS LIST
“Take note of Hungary, a country that’s capable of becoming one of Europe’s most fruitful and rewarding wine areas.”
THE INDEPENDENT
www.hungarianwineandspirits.com
HUNGARIAN SPECIALIST Suppliers to the UKS’s Top Restaurants Including many of the Sunday Times Top 100
The UK's leading Hungarian Wine Importer award winning wines:
Decanter World Wine Competition, Internation Wine Challenge & IWSC, Sommelier Wine Awards, Spain Madrid Nuevo Vino, Best Kadarka Hungary, Prestige Wine Awards Hungary, Vin Agora Wine Competition Hungary, Monde Selection International Wine Competition, Hungarian Winemakers of the Year, Hungarian Winery of the Year, The Knights Cross of the Republic of Hungary. Pannon Wine Challenge, Finger Lakes International Wine Competition, Destillata

Relatively Speaking

Interview with chef Michel Roux Jr.

As part of our regular series examining the impact of family relationships on careers, we spoke to the La Gavroche chef about keeping the family flame.

If ever you're lucky enough to eat at Le Gavroche, your good fortune is likely to be compounded once you've had your food. It's Michel Roux Jr.'s habit to do the rounds after lunch, and perform a friendly tour of the room. Roux will pose for photographs and laugh genially as the complements accrue. 'I love being able to provide a total experience for our guests,' he tells us. 'I love meeting out guests, whether regulars or new.'

As a result of this tactile approach to the business, you'd think lockdown might have been difficult. Roux strikes a cheerful note. 'I've been incredibly busy during lockdown, not least with the arrival of our first grandchild, which is really wonderful.'

So another Roux enters the world, no doubt stocked with the genes of a masterchef. Roux has followed in the footsteps of not just one but two famous relatives. You might think that his father might have been Michel Roux Sr., who died in March of this year, but you'd be wrong: in fact, his father is Albert Roux, and Michel Jr. was named after his uncle. Le Gavroche – which opened in 1967 - was the first UK restaurant to obtain three Michelin stars, and Michel took it over in 1993. How did it feel to be following in the footsteps of famous relatives? Roux recalls: 'Of course, it was a massive responsibility when I took over the reins at Le Gavroche, nearly 30 years ago now. But if my father hadn't thought I was ready, he wouldn't have handed them to me. There is no question I feel a commitment to maintaining the Roux flame, whether in the restaurants or through our Roux Scholarship competition.'

One often feels for the children of famous parents: it must be hard to achieve anything in your own right. Martin Amis frequently complains about the Kingsley comparisons, and Euan Blair cannot discuss his own original (and unBlairite) views on education without having 'education, education, education' returned to him.

So did it take a while for Michel Jr. to arrive at his own identity as a chef? Roux explains that he's moved with the times: 'Over the years, the food at Le Gavroche has evolved to embrace the requirements of modern diners, so a meal at Le Gavroche will be a lighter one than when the restaurant first opened, but the essence of French classicism is very much there.'

It's a good point: we might sometimes strive to differentiate ourselves from our parents' achievements in the workplace, but usually time will do that for us anyway, and ensure that we inhabit a different moment in history. One example where that's proven the case with Michel Jr. is in his highly visible TV career.

So how does he think shooting will be in the post-lockdown era? 'I was lucky to be involved in the production of 'Hitched at Home, Our wedding in Lockdown' for Channel 4, which was definitely TV for lockdown. It was very different to the usual filming set-up.' How so? 'It's going to be incredibly difficult to make the same sorts of shows as before, even with one metre social distancing.' But Roux adds that he's 'seen a lot of creativity: talking heads, and getting family members to film over longer periods using professional equipment at home.'

Interestingly, the Roux tradition is already being continued in the next generation. Emily Roux and her husband Diego Ferrari have their own restaurant Caractère in Notting Hill. So what would Roux say to young people mulling a hospitality career? 'Front of house and in the kitchen, hospitality can offer an amazing career. You're always learning, you have the opportunity to experiment and be creative, and it's incredibly satisfying to provide good service. But it is hard work, and you need to put in the time to learn the craft.'

And how has lockdown been for Le Gavroche? 'The most important thing for me is to make sure our staff are doing as well as they can. It was frustrating waiting for the government to come up with their guidelines for the hospitality industry.'

Roux chose not to home deliver ('Le Gavroche is more than the food') and instead kept in touch with regulars through newsletters 'to keep everyone engaged.'

Despite his obvious love of his work, the question persists. One can't help but wonder whether the family name hampers people like Roux, and whether some other career might have been possible had there not been the need to keep it in the family.

But Roux doesn't feel this way. 'I never considered anything else. Food is in my DNA, and I love working in the industry.' *Parfait* and *bon appetit*. f

Interior, La Gavroche

Ten Thousand Hours

With designer Thomas Heatherwick

How do you get to be really good at something? In this first instalment of a regular series *Finito World* spoke to designer Thomas Heatherwick about his illustrious career

At the Heatherwick Studio, we're trying to be growers of more human place-making: what's crucial is the experience dimension of the person using the building. That might sound obvious, but I sensed even as a kid that we're too often led astray by other forces and not by the needs of the person using a structure.

Some big positives can come out of this strange and tragic situation we've all been living through. There's been a chance to think from new angles. That's partly because you need to, given the new context. But it's also welcome: I always thought it would be very hard for me to take a sabbatical, and I envied those around me who could do that. Of course, it was a partial envy – I'm so lucky to have the diverse rollercoaster of impressions I have. My studio is about embracing change and finding ways to adjust. That's what excites me. The most interesting thing has been reflecting on what the virus means – and how it's going to change our lives. Before the pandemic, there was more and more sharing – cars, workspaces and living spaces were becoming more efficient because people might live together in different ways. I was saddened at the outset of coronavirus: it felt like a kind of retreat into an understandable self-preservation and selfishness.

Before all this happened, people didn't think they needed an office in their home – the idea of having a study sounded so Victorian. Throughout lockdown, people have been cowering in their bedrooms and trying to pretend it's not their bedroom: so people will be making their homes better in advance of a possible second wave, and investing in any eventuality. Post-Covid homes will be better homes.

But public togetherness is what motivates me in the different projects we work on. Take our shopping centre Coal Drop's Yard for example. What motivates me isn't getting people to shop. What's exciting is that it's an excuse at a time when governments don't invest in public place-making to create an interesting space. I wish the government would do more: they had their fingers badly burned in the 1960s and 1970s by terrible architecture, and so they retreated and let the private sector come in.

I've always made very tactile buildings and though obviously Covid-19 will change the extent to which we touch things, I think you also touch things with your eyes. The way light falls off a computer screen, for instance, is very dead and simplistic. But light falling across more complex detail and texture is something that you absorb. If you're in the mountains you can't touch them, but you can still feel their form.

We've got 200 people here, and I'm thankful for being an older organisation. Many of us have worked together for a long time, and we can sustain that over digital communication. There are unexpected benefits. The world's been conspiring for the last two decades to get us to this point. The digital revolution has been setting us up to do this; it's astonishing how effective we've managed to be at home.

But I don't think in aggregate it's better. There's no real substitute for being in the studio. Our studio is full of models and memorabilia: it's our collective memory. It's important to see your failures, your test pieces, your experiments, and your thought-triggers. We all think we have a flawless memory – but we don't.

We're working with one new organisation, rethinking large amounts of workspace. I think people are aware this has long ramifications for everybody. It spreads across everything. We just finished a Maggie's cancer care centre in Leeds. It's a relatively small project but it's trying to engage with the issues someone with a cancer diagnosis might face. How do you support that health journey? If you look at hospitals today it's as if the emotional condition doesn't impact their physical journey.

Looking back at the Garden Bridge, it was a manifestation of this urge to try and make everything connect more to people. A bridge doesn't just need to be getting from one side to the other: the middle of a bridge is one of the most incredible places you can be. Maybe one day the politics will support our intention to create a new garden for Londoners. f

Thomas Heatherwick is the founder of the Heatherwick Studio. He discusses the future of office architecture on page 122

Exterior, Glasshouses for the Bombay Sapphire Distillery

Global Family Office Community is delighted that Finito is an approved partner for its community, helping the next generation of family members transition from education to employment.

GLOBAL FAMILY OFFICE *community*

A membership organisation for family offices and their Principals, Next-Gens and Executives.
www.globalfamilyofficecommunity.com

FAMILY OFFICE *recruitment*

The first place to visit for Family Office Careers, News & Directories.
www.familyofficerecruitment.com

Tomorrow's Leaders Are Busy Tonight

With Euan Blair

The tech entrepreneur on White Hat's new approach to getting young people into work

As a business looking to build an outstanding alternative to university and create a diverse group of future leaders, the coronavirus has made our offer front of mind for schools and companies. The pandemic has shown the need for digital skills accelerate by two to five years over the last few months. Meanwhile, universities have been in a crisis defined by lack of capability and lack of will: they've been unable to deal with this new reality. Some are doing remote courses that are not particularly great and with no social experience, which is one of the main reasons why people go to university.

Meanwhile, companies have massively growing digital skills needs and an acceptance that they need to get skills from other sources. Through the work of Black Lives Matter, diversity has become existential for them. What we have is an open discussion about racial inequality and structural barriers in society. CEOs are thinking: "Do I have the skills mix to succeed over the coming years? And how do I make sure I'm doing my part on diversity and inclusion and making my organisation accessible to people?" Perhaps the final piece in the puzzle is that employers are asking themselves how they keep employees engaged at home.

All this has made it clear how valuable our apprenticeships programme is. We aim to create a frictionless barrier for diverse talent. We've been growing really quickly over the past few months. We had to transition everything online almost overnight. There's a big difference between remote learning, which is taking something you deliver in person and lifting and shifting it online, and actual online learning, which is in a different cadence and requires a different style of instruction. We invested early in making sure our curriculum is suitable for online learning.

I appreciate the government's sentiment regarding the recent movement on apprenticeships guarantees. It's top of the agenda for government worldwide. The Singaporean government is subsidising 80 percent of apprenticeship wages. In the US, the federal government just announced they're going to ban the use of college degrees for the hiring process and instead hire people based on skills. This is a gradual global groundswell and there's a lot to be said for making apprenticeships a priority: it lays the gauntlet down to schools and parents to be seriously exploring these alternatives.

Having said that, you can't do this without employers. And the bigger piece is we need employers to think: "We don't need a graduate because although they might come with a degree, they don't come with any of the skills I need and I want someone who has the right mindset to learn." At White Hat, we also understand that over a 50-year career, a shot of learning at the start isn't going to be sufficient. You're going to need to keep learning.

Our programmes range across areas. For instance, we did the first ever apprenticeship in legal project management with Clifford Chance. We also do programmes with KPMG where we reskill members of their teams in data analytics; this is driven by their clients but also by their internal needs. At Google, they're training digital marketers and software engineers. We've also had a focus on military veterans working with Citi Group and returning to work mothers.

> "There are many individuals within organisations with amazing residual knowledge of that organisation and deep loyality to it... After doing the same job for 5-10 years, they want to do something different and take on a new challenge."

Reskilling is a major area. There are many individuals within organisations with amazing residual knowledge of that organisation and deep loyalty to it. They've worked somewhere for a significant period of time, but their role is changing. After doing the same job for five to ten years, they want to do something different and take on a new challenge. We're about giving those people a route.

Companies are very aware that Generation Z have a host of skills that they know they need to address. What they're increasingly realising is that there is very little difference between the skill level of a graduate and the skill level of someone they can hire as an apprentice. If you're relying on elite universities to fulfil your hiring needs, you're going to get very similar people.

With the virus, all this has become absolutely urgent and critical. As often happens when you have huge shocks to the economy, it brings into sharper focus a lot of things that people had already realised to some extent, but they didn't necessarily have a burning platform on which to act. Well, now they do. f

Euan Blair is CEO and co-founder of White Hat, a tech startup which seeks to democratise access to the best careers.

EST. 1782

sworders

FINE ART AUCTIONEERS

FORTHCOMING AUCTIONS

SEPTEMBER

Arts & Crafts & Art Deco
Tuesday 8 September

Fine Interiors
paintings | furniture | works of art | silver
Tuesday 22 & Wednesday 23

Jewellery
Tuesday 29

OCTOBER

Sporting Art, Wildlife & Dogs
Tuesday 6

20th Century Design
Tuesday 13

Modern British & 20th Century Art
Tuesday 20

Jewellery
Tuesday 27

NOVEMBER

Asian Art
Friday 6

Fine Jewellery & Watches
Tuesday 17

DECEMBER

Jewellery and Gifts
Tuesday 1

The London Sale
Wednesday 2

Fine Interiors
paintings | furniture | works of art | silver
Tuesday 8 & Wednesday 9

John Ward (b.1939)
a handbuilt black and white
stepped rim bowl, £8,000-12,000

For further information or to consign for future sales
alexanderhallett@sworder.co.uk | 01279 817778
www.sworder.co.uk

Stansted Mountfitchet
Essex | CM24 8GE

42 S Andrew Street
Hertford | SG14 1JA

15 Cecil Court
London | WC2N 4EZ

Those Are My Principles

With Sharon Hodgson

In the first in our series about the values we should bring to the workplace, The Shadow Minister for Veterans explains how a broader arts-based curriculum could transform our economy.

It was Jeremy Corbyn who first came up with the idea of an arts pupil premium that might be used to close the gap for disadvantaged children. Myself and Susan Coles – with whom I set up the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Education – were excited when we heard the announcement. It seemed the right thing to do: if you grow up in households where the arts are appreciated that just happens. Usually it's poorer households that don't get that cultural capacity.

School is meant to be a leveller and an equaliser. Lockdown has shown that when you take school out of the equation it really does lay bare not just the inequality in economics but cultural inequality. A whole generation of people are then going to be the best part of a year behind. Some will have had an amazing lockdown education, but overall the cultural gap will have widened.

You hear a lot from the Conservatives about character in education, but it's my belief that the arts are the best teacher of resilience and confidence: in the arts, you tend to try and fail before you get it right. That's definitely what you need in an employee when they get into a workplace, no matter what work is conducted in that place. If all you've got is someone filled with knowledge and the ability to pass exams, then they've got no capacity to think outside the box. They'll have no capacity for innovation or freedom of thought; they might only have been told what's right and what's wrong. They lack the creative freedom and too often seek instruction from their employer.

That's why the Chinese have started looking here for our creative education – and the same is true in Singapore and South Korea. Those countries have tended to churn out people who are good at passing exams. The irony is that just as they're looking to learn creativity off us, we're leaving creative learning behind in our state sector.

What's really required is a broad and balanced curriculum. In Wales from September 2020 there's been a new curriculum with arts and well-being taught as a mandatory part of the curriculum. The same is true in Scotland, where the arts are also valued. What we are aiming for is for the arts to be elevated to that extent in England.

"It's my belief that the arts are the best teacher of resilience and confidence: in the arts, you tend to try and fail before you get it right. That's definitely what you need in an employee when they get into a workplace, no matter what work is conducted in that place."

Some people have criticised the idea of the arts pupil premium as being all about ephemeral away days – trips to the theatre and museums, and so on. There's nothing wrong with away days, but it needn't be only that. Imaginative teachers could use it for a whole host of things. Under Corbyn, we imagined that if we did have an arts pupil premium we might give guidance to make sure teachers understood the range of things it might be used for: it could be used to buy fantastic art materials, to recruit amazing teacher specialists, or to bring artists into the school setting.

The argument is clear – and if anything, it's been brought into sharper focus by the pandemic. More and more children under lockdown are having troubles with their mental health – and we know that art is able to help with that. I'm not saying that Maths and English don't give joy, but our spare time as adults is usually spent around the arts but in school that seems to have been left to one side, by people like Nick Gibb especially.

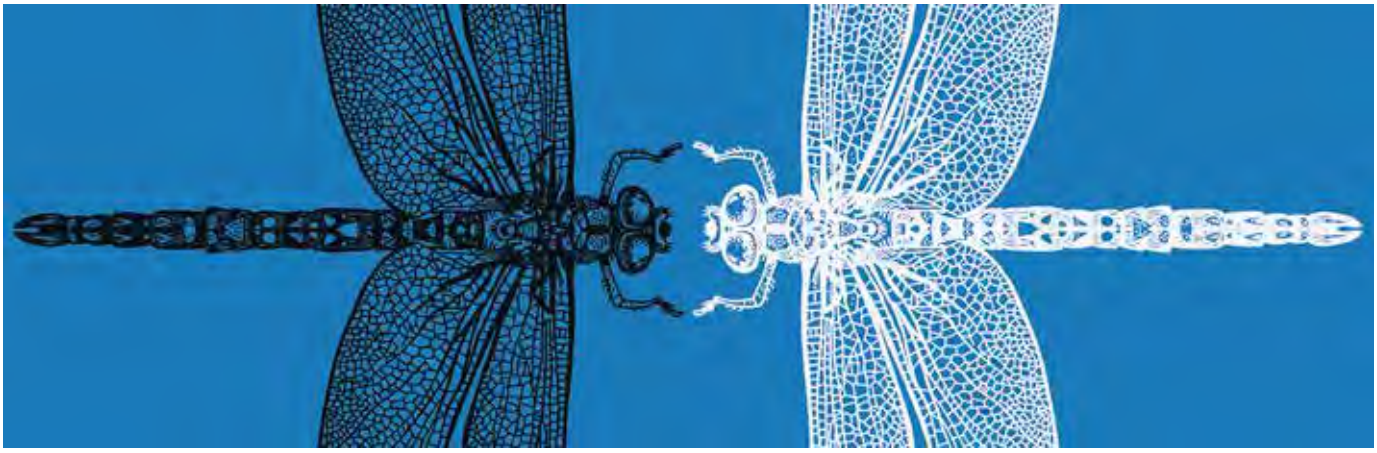
The irony is that the creative industries are valued by the Treasury but not so much by the Department of Education. There's no joined-up thinking across government. We've had five education secretaries in ten years, and unfortunately Nick Gibb has been around for a lot longer than I would have liked. I don't wish him ill – I just wish him into another job. He doesn't have a background in anything to do with arts and education. He has fully bought into Michael Gove's ideological stance.

It's because of Gove that our APPG was formed. The EBacc has been especially problematic in terms of its unintended consequences for the arts. Gibbs came to our APPG and we told him he needed to acknowledge the effects of the EBacc. We had 80 experts in the room and Gibbs simply stated that he had an 'alternative set of facts'.

The trouble with academies is that they create a system of 'postcode luck' with regards to whether you have access to the arts. Sometimes the free school system allows schools to be innovative but at others they detract from what should be a standard. We may have to look at governance again and consider getting schools back under local authority control. f

Waterfly

THE *WATERFLY* SEES THE REFLECTION IN THE WATER. IT TAKES NOTE AS THE WATER SHIFTS. HERE'S THE LATEST GOSSIP FROM THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY SECTOR



Priced Out

The former Tory special advisor who is set to become the first graduate president of the Oxford Union after he stood "for a laugh" tells us this placement is only his second most unlikely job. James Price says it is pipped to the post by the time he worked as Johnny Depp's bodyguard during his student days. "He came to speak at the Union and I was tasked with protecting him from swooning fans. He was beautiful, like a bruised flower, but he kept mumbling. He asked if everyone could hear him, they said no but he just kept mumbling. It was quite awkward." Price, who graduated in 2013, will start his reign over the debating society in January, alongside his full time role as a senior account director at Hanover. He tells us: "After two years working in the House of Lords, I think I'm the right person to try to help save the Union, a well-meaning if slightly tired institution, from itself". Although he ran as a joke, the 29-year-old is taking the role seriously and is organising an exciting line up of speakers, but tells us Johnny Depp is not on his hit list.

Vital Attraction

Former universities minister David Willetts is optimistic about the upcoming university year. 'I personally think we'll see an increase in people occupying university places,' he says. 'Overseas is the bigger risk,' he admits, but adds, 'eventually students in China and India will want some sort of experience in UK.' If you book them, they will come.

Halfon's High

Chair of the Education select committee Robert Halfon, who graduated from the University of Exeter with a BA in politics and MA in Russian and Eastern European politics, has some familiar advice for students: stay away from drugs. "I always hated exams so I used to take like half a tonne of pro plus caffeine tablets to keep myself awake so I could revise through the night. I certainly don't recommend it. But to be fair I kept the pro plus company going. I was always high as a kite well after my exams." He hastened to add: "On caffeine that is, by the way.

All Bar None

Wondering what it'll be like to study virtually? *Waterfly* doesn't want to put a downer on online courses, but before accepting that virtual place it's worth thinking on what you'll be missing.

When we caught up with Liam Williams, the stand-up comedian and author of debut novel *Homes and Experiences*, he recalled how at Cambridge he'd been nervous just attending a show at the famous Footlights theatre. 'It wouldn't take much more guts to go on stage, I remember thinking,' he told us. And, of course he did – and in that lies a lesson.

Dido's Woes

Students are always asked to come to interviews prepared but it's not always something achieved by our bosses. When *Waterfly* caught up with Jeremy Hunt at a Conservative Health event just before the pandemic hit these shores, we were struck by his confidence in the NHS as the virus loomed.

'There is no country on earth you'd rather be at a time like this,' he told a lunch at Westminster. Months later, it didn't seem that way when Baroness Dido Harding (pictured, above), the former TalkTalk CEO charged with implementing the NHS track-and-trace system, turned up before Hunt's Select Committee without data: 'Our frustration is that it is very hard for us to scrutinise what the government is doing if we're not given the data that allows us to do that,' said an irritated Hunt.

Waterfly had been hoping to speak with Harding the following week, but through an intermediary she asked to delay. 'I think she wants to keep her head down,' a source tells us. *Waterfly* understood. There's no shame in going back to the drawing-board – and perhaps Harding didn't want to make the same mistake twice.

The Sky is not the Limit

When *Finito World* founder Ronel Lehmann was interviewed on Sky News by Ian King, it was only fitting that our first cover, featuring Sir Martin Sorrell, oversaw the conversation. The image of Sorrell took us back to the S4 Capital founder's predictions regarding the economy: 'Q4 will be a recovery,' the ad mogul told us. When we tested that prediction with Peter Oppenheimer, chief global equity strategist at Goldman Sachs, he agreed: 'This is the strangest crisis in history because it's likely to be very short.'

Lord Anti-Microbe

People might not know that among Lord Jim O'Neill's (pictured, above right) numerous achievements, he chaired a review under David Cameron's administration into antimicrobial resistance. 'This pandemic has completely destroyed this false perception that health and finance are separate issues,' he tells *Waterfly*. 'I'm shocked by how well the international collaboration between biotech and pharmaceuticals has gone. It's not surprised me that the equity markets have recovered since February; they've been trading the infection curve.'
So what's next? 'There is a non-zero probability that we will get a vaccine some time before the year is over. Something which would have been impossible six months ago.'
Hope springs.

A Terminal Problem

Agatha Christie's Mousetrap at St. Martin's Theatre is set to become one of the first shows to welcome back audiences after Covid but its robustness has not always been good news for all. In his book *My Love Affair with a Theatre*, late director Derek Salberg details the pessimism surrounding the show when it started in 1952. He wrote: "One who thought it might succeed (but was not wildly enthusiastic about it) was my cousin Victor Saville, once one of England's top film producers with such films as 'Goodbye, Mr Chips'… He bought a half share of the film rights for £5,000; there was, however, a proviso in the contract, namely that the film could not be made until the play had terminated its London run." Victor died in 1979, aged 83, ah.

The Bottom Line

Father of the House Sir Peter Bottomley tells us he has been staying well during the pandemic. While Boris has been spotted showing off his fitness with press ups, the 76-year-old boasts: "I have taken from my shelves every book; I have read enough to know whether to keep it or to pass it to a person or to a charity. Each I keep is replaced. You can see that as vertical rather than horizontal press ups. When young, I did one arm horizontal ones. Now I have absorbed so much information and I am heavier." Fit in body and brain.

Interesting, actually

Sick of hearing about AI in general terms, *Waterfly* seeks specifics. As training contracts kick off in September – or in some cases, don't kick off – what sort of training can graduates expect from the big accountancy firms?

Chris French of PwC tells us that AI has seen the firm 'recruit several hundred fully-funded technology degree apprenticeships' adding that 'drones, blockchain, virtual and augmented reality, and the Internet of Things' are being looked at.

But if, as he says, the future is arriving fast, then that may not mean we are entering some dystopia where the robot rules. French also notes that 'VR-trained staff - when compared to classroom-trained staff - saw an increase in confidence, were more emotionally-connected to the content, were more focused, and completed their training four times faster.'

That sounds very 'Big Four' but it's worth noting it's also an aspect of the training of smaller firms like Moore Kingston Smith. An MKS spokesperson tells us: 'Our graduates are now overseeing digital processes including robotic process automation, optical character recognition and natural language processing.'

Accountancy used to be pegged as dull but MKS seeks to 'automate some of our more mundane and repetitive tasks such as data processing and bookkeeping.' And the money's good too – something to chew on. f

THE BIG CAT SANCTUARY MEMBERSHIP

Join The Big Cat Family

Your support will help our dedicated team to care for and protect our cats and their wild cousins by providing long term funding for our programmes

WELFARE BREEDING EDUCATION CONSERVATION

FOR JUST £6 A MONTH MEMBERS RECEIVE:

PIN BADGE

Your own Limited Edition, enamel Pin Badge. Featuring one of our amazing cats and identifying you as part of the family!

E-NEWSLETTER

Quarterly editions of Roar! with personal insights from Giles Clark & the Keeper team and exclusive footage of the lives of our Big Cats.

EVENTS

Priority Booking for Events at the Sanctuary. Get the chance to book tickets for our events including exclusive member events before anyone else.

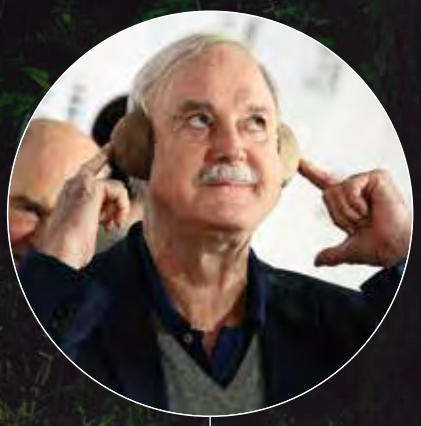
JOIN ONLINEAND QUOTE FINITO TO RECEIVE AN EXTRA WELCOME GIFT

www.thebigcatsanctuary.org/membership

THE BIG CAT SANCTUARY

Reg. Charity No. 1104420

Features



THE LION ROARS FROM HIS RICHMOND GARDEN

INTERVIEW BY ROBERT GOLDING

When *Finito World* cast around for a figure to endorse its second issue, it happened upon the great TV personality and ecologist.

'This is a man who answers his phone,' a mutual friend has told me, and Sir David Attenborough doesn't disappoint. He picks up after just one ring.

The voice at the other end of the phone is the one you know – but gravellier and without quite that voiceover theatricality it carries on *Blue Planet*. Those are performances; this is real life.

This is Attenborough on down time, conserving energy for the next programme. His work schedule might seem unexpected at his great age. But Attenborough, 94, exhibits more energy in his nineties than many of us do in our forties. 'I've been in lockdown, and it does mean I've been a bit behind on things. But I keep myself busy.'

To interview Attenborough is to come pre-armed with a range of pre-conceived images. Part-benevolent sage, part-prophet of doom, is this not the unimpeachable grandfather of the nation? Perhaps only Nelson Mandela towards the end of his life had comparable standing within his own country.

In 2016, when the Natural Environment Research Council ran a competition to name a research vessel, a very British fiasco ensued whereby the unfunny name Boaty McBoatFace topped the poll. This was plainly unacceptable, and so in time the competition reverted, with an almost wearisome inevitability, to the RRS David Attenborough.

Which is to say they played it safe and chose the most popular person in the country. One therefore has some trepidation in saying that these assumptions don't survive an encounter with the man. It is not that he is rude or unpleasant; it's just that he's not as one might have expected.

'Yes, this is David. What would you like to ask me?'

Perfectly Busy

Though he has agreed to talk to us, the tone is adversarial. It must immediately be stated that there are strong mitigating circumstances. This is a man who is aware of his mortality: our conversation has a not-a-moment-to-lose briskness to it. And if he could also be forgiven for sounding somewhat tired, then he can be especially forgiven for having long since grown weary of his National Treasuredom. Throughout our call, he will refer to the claims on his time, of which I am one of many. 'I get around 40 to 50 requests a day,' he explains, adding that he seeks to hand-write a response to each. 'I have been shielding during lockdown and am just coming out of that.'

But there's another reason he's busy: habit. The stratospherically successful enjoy a pre-established momentum, and continue to achieve just by keeping up with their commitments. So what has he been up to? 'I decided to take this as a moment to write a book on ecological matters and I continue to make television programmes,' he says, referring to *A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement*, but not in such a way that makes you think he wishes to elaborate on either. He refers to a 'stressful deadline' and when I ask for more information about the book, he shuts it down: 'Just ecological matters.' There is a hush down the phone where one might have hoped for elaboration.

Nevertheless, *Perfect Planet*, one of his upcoming programmes, is being filmed in his Richmond garden, and it has been reported that he is recording the show's voiceovers from a room he made soundproof by taping a duvet to the walls.

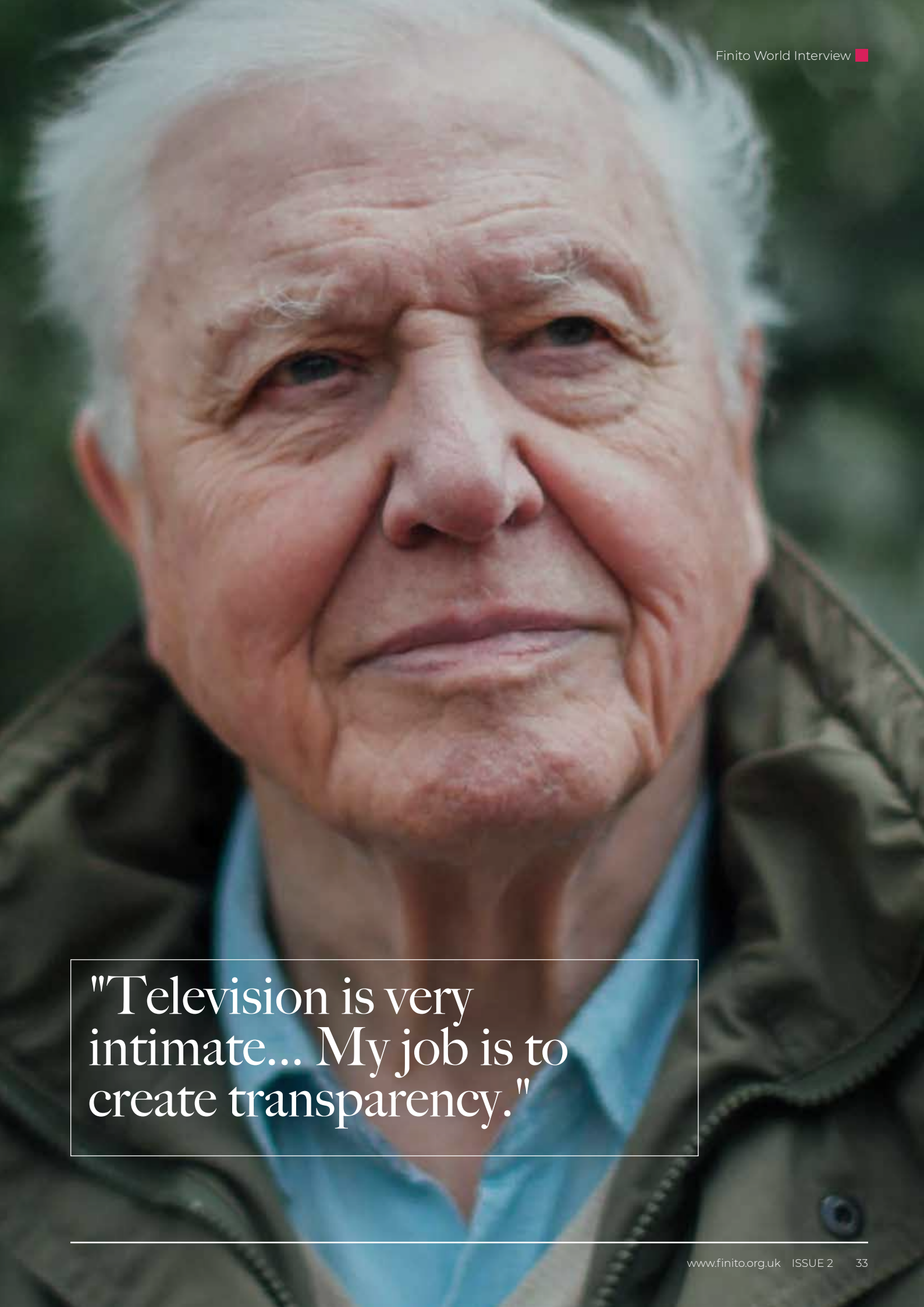
Generation Game

In his courteous but clipped tone, he asks about *Finito World* and I explain that it goes out to 100,000 students. 'I am often heartened when I meet the younger generation,' he volunteers. 'Their attitude to the climate crisis is very responsible.'

This is the paradox of Attenborough: a man of considerable years who has found himself aligned with the young. He's that rare thing: an elderly revolutionary.

Perhaps we underestimate the sheer importance of his presence within the landscape. He is the benevolent sage who it's bad form to disagree with, and he's single-handedly made it harder for anyone in power to pitch the climate change question as a quixotic obsession of the young.

But he's a revolutionary only in the face of drastic necessity, and refuses to be drawn on the question of our sometimes underwhelming political class. 'I wouldn't necessarily say that: we actually have some very good politicians.' He declines to mention who these might be – but it suggests that Attenborough doesn't want to ruffle unnecessary feathers. Instead, he wants progress.



"Television is very intimate... My job is to create transparency."

ATTENBOROUGH EDUCATION

1926 Born in 1926, Attenborough is raised in College House on the campus of the University College, Leicester, where his father, Frederick, is principal.

1936 Attends a lecture by Archibald Belaney at De Montfort Hall, Leicester, which turns him and his brother Richard onto conservation.

1938 - 45 Educated at Wyggeston Grammar School for Boys in Leicester.

1945 Wins scholarship to Clare College, Cambridge and studies geology and zoology. Obtains a degree in Natural Sciences.

1947 Attenborough is called up for national service in the Royal Navy and spends two years stationed in North Wales and the Firth of Forth.

1949 - Early 1960s After leaving the Navy, Attenborough takes a position editing children's science textbooks for a publishing company. He soon becomes disillusioned with the work and in 1950 applies for a job as a radio talk producer with the BBC. Although he is rejected for this job, his CV later attracts the interest of Mary Adams, head of the Talks (factual broadcasting) department of the BBC's fledgling television service. This is his foot in the door.

1920 1930 1940 1950 1960

A Transparent Medium

'The thing about David is he prefers animals to humans,' says another person who has worked with Attenborough for years. I ask him if the coronavirus situation will accelerate change. Again, he is careful: 'I don't know about that. On the one hand, I can see that our skies are emptier now and that's very welcome. I suppose the extent to which the aviation sector will return will depend on the price points the airlines come up with.'

I suspect that some of his reluctance to be drawn into detailed discussion is that he doesn't wish to claim undue expertise on areas outside his competence. There's an admirable discipline at work, alongside a refusal to please.

Bewilderingly honoured – Attenborough has a BAFTA fellowship, a knighthood, a Descartes Prize, among many others – he has learned that the only proper response to fame is self-discipline. At his level of celebrity – up there with prime ministers and presidents but with a greater dose of the public's love than is usually accorded to either – he is continually invited for comment, and has learned when to demur.

'I am sometimes asked about the well-known people I've come across in this life – the presidents and the royalty I've been lucky enough to meet,' he says. 'I say, "Look, if you saw my documentary with Barack Obama then you know him as well as I do." Television is very intimate like that. My job is to create transparency.'

So instead of what one half-hopes for – backstage anecdotes at the White House or Buckingham Palace – one returns time and again to the climate crisis. This is the prism through which everything is seen, and our failure to follow his example, he says, shall ultimately be to our shame.

> "At his level of celebrity — up there with prime ministers and presidents but with a greater dose of the public's love than is usually accorded to either — he is continually invited for comment, and has learned when to demur."

He will not be drawn into negative comment on Boris Johnson or Donald Trump. Instead, he says: 'Overall, I'm optimistic. All I can say is we have to encourage our political leaders to do something urgently about the climate situation. We have to all work hard to do something about this.'

> "Overall, I'm optimistic. All I can say is we have to to encourage our political leaders to do something urgently about the climate situation. We have to all work hard to do something about this."

The Fruits of Longevity

For Attenborough everything has been boiled down to raw essentials. And yet his career exhibits flexibility: his success must be attributed to open-mindedness about a young medium when others might have thought it beneath them. It would be too much to call him a visionary but he was in the vanguard of those who saw TV's possibilities. Fascinated by wildlife as a child, he rose to become controller at BBC Two and director of programming at the BBC in the 1960s and 70s. 'Television didn't exist when I was a young man, and I

TIMELINE

Early 1960s Attenborough resigns from the permanent staff of the BBC to study for a postgraduate degree in social anthropology at the London School of Economics, interweaving his study with further filming. Accepts an invitation to return to the BBC as controller of BBC Two before he can finish the degree.

1984 Receives honorary Doctor of Science award from University of Oxford. Other doctorates include Doctor of Science at the University of Oxford (1988), and Distinguished Honorary Fellow of the University of Leicester (2006).

2010 Attenborough is awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan and Nottingham Trent University.

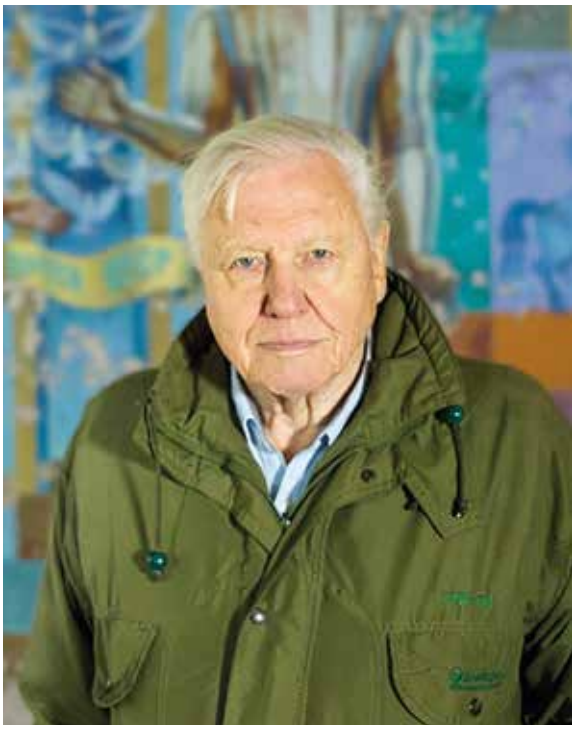
2020 It is announced after the outbreak of coronavirus that Attenborough will teach geography as part of a BBC education initiative.

1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

have spent my life in a medium I couldn't have imagined. It has been a wonderful experience,' he says.

The very successful glimpse the shape of the world to come, seize that possibility and enlarge it into something definite, which they then appropriate and live by. What advice does he have for the young starting out? 'My working life has taken place in television and I don't know how we will see that change over the coming years as a result of what's happened. Communication has proliferated into so many forms and it is very difficult to get the single mass audience, which I had something to do with creating, thirty or forty years ago.'

There is an element of well-deserved pride about this: Attenborough's original commissions at BBC2 – everything from *Match of the Day* to *Call My Bluff* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus* – were so wide-ranging that one can almost convince oneself that he was a BBC man first and an ecologist second: 'The world has become very divided in a way,' he continues. 'It's sometimes said that we prepare for a world when we're young that's gone by the time we arrive in it.



"We've all got to look to our consciences. Inevitably, some will do more than others."

To that I say, 'It depends what your life expectancy is!'

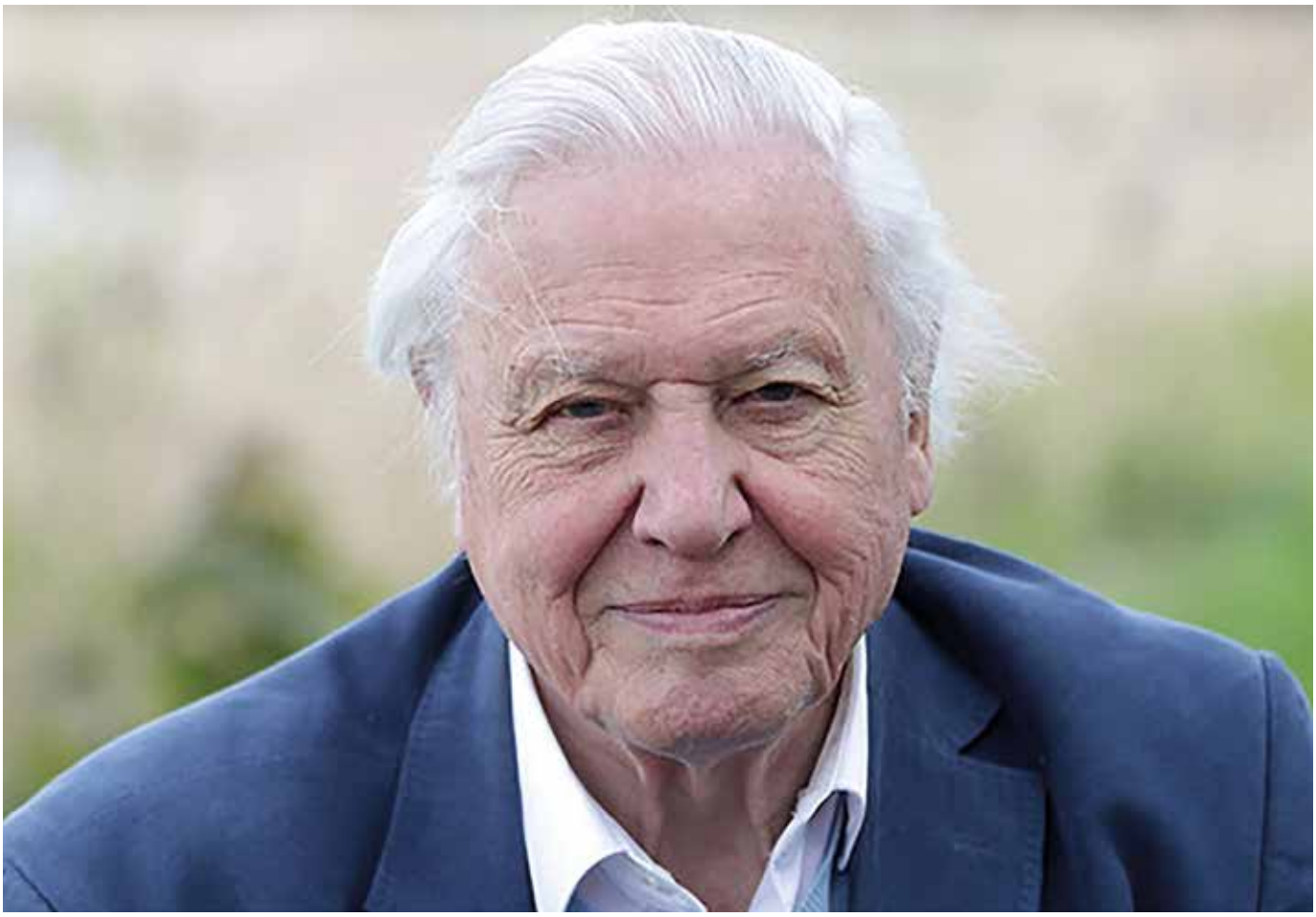
But all along it was nature that thrilled and animated him. Attenborough is one of those high achievers who compound success with longevity. His is a voice that speaks to us out of superior experience – he has seen more of the planet than any of us. He speaks with a rare authority at the very edge of doom – his own personal decline, as well as the planet's.

Urgent Warnings

He says: 'Whatever young people choose to do with their life they must remember that they're a part of life on this planet and we have a responsibility to those who will come after us to take care of it.'

I ask him what we should be doing to amend our lives and again he offers a simple thought: 'We've all got to look to our consciences. Inevitably, some will do more than others.'

He sounds at such times very close to washing his hands of the human race. But then everyone in their nineties is inevitably about to do just that.



David Attenborough as he prepares to release his landmark documentary *Extinction: The Facts*

What Attenborough has achieved seems so considerable that one wishes to ask him how he has managed it. 'I am sometimes asked about how I manage to do so much, but I don't particularly think of it like that. I just reply to the requests that come my way: you can accomplish a lot by just doing one thing after the other.'

Again, the simplicity of the answer has a certain bare poetry to it: Attenborough is reminding us that life is as simple as we want to make it. Interviewing him at this stage in his life is like reading a novel by Muriel Spark: no adjectives, no frills, just the plain truth.

In his curtness is a lesson: there is no time for him now for delay, but then nor should there be for us. We must do our bit – and not tomorrow, now.

He is interested in *Finito World* and very supportive of our new endeavour: 'This is a time when the circulations of magazines and newspapers appear to be falling. A lot of newspapers are aware of the climate emergency and the way in which we disseminate ideas has diversified.'

A thought occurs to me that stems from my lockdown time with my son, where we have been in our gardens like never before. Should gardening take its place on the national curriculum? 'It's obviously very important,' he says, although he also adds – as he does frequently during our conversation – that he knows little about the topic. (Opposite, we have looked into the matter for him.)

Hello, Goodbye

I will not forget this interview with a man whose voice will always be with us. Part of Attenborough's power is that he continues to warn us in spite of ourselves: he deems us sufficiently worthwhile to continually renew his energy on our behalf.

I mention that we watch his programmes with our four-year-old in preference to the usual cartoons on Netflix when possible.

At that point, perhaps due to the mention of my young son, he sounds warm: 'Thank you very much, sir. It does mean a lot when people say that.'

It's a mantra in journalism not to meet your heroes. Attenborough in extreme old age is brisk and sometimes even monosyllabic. This in itself tells you something: the world is full of the canonised but in reality saints are rare. Conversely, I have met those whose reputations could hardly have been lower, but who turned out to be generous beyond expectation. We should never be disappointed when the world isn't as it has been portrayed: it is an aspect of the richness of experience to meet continually with surprise.

But age will come to us all and if it finds me in half as fine fettle as David Attenborough I shall be lucky indeed. Furthermore, if it finds me on a habitable planet at all that shall also be something I shall owe in part to him. 'Good luck,' he says as he puts the phone down and though this isn't the man I expected to meet, I can just about persuade myself that he means it.

'David prefers animals to humans'. Afterwards, it occurs to me that I have been all along not so much an individual, but a dim representative of that foolish ape: man. I wonder if, while Attenborough has been acquiring hundreds of millions of viewers, what he really wanted – and urgently required – was listeners. f

Should Gardening be on the National Curriculum?

Never let a casual utterance from a great man go to waste. When Sir David Attenborough expressed an interest in the idea of gardening forming part of the national curriculum, *Finito World* looked into the matter in more detail

Sir David Attenborough is obviously a man used to uttering qualifiers. When we put it to him in our interview opposite that gardening ought to be on the national curriculum he expressed excited interest, but also stated that he wished to know more.

"In the past six months, people have started to want to develop their skills again, casting their minds back to retrieve nuggets of information once passed on by parents, grandparents, an enthusiastic teacher, an encouraging neighbour."

Obedient as always to the wishes of a great man, we conducted some research for him.

The idea chimed immediately within the gardening profession. Jo Thompson, a former teacher and four-time Gold medal-winner at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, said: 'In the past six months, people have started to want to develop their skills again, casting their minds back to retrieve nuggets of information once passed on by parents, grandparents, an enthusiastic teacher, an encouraging neighbour,' she told us.

So what good could gardening give children? 'Coming into contact with the soil makes us feel good,' Thompson replied. 'Tending plants makes us feel good. Success in growing plants makes us feel good, failures teach us to learn from others what went wrong and to try again. There is a huge resource, the natural world, which surrounds us, and it's now our absolute duty to teach others how to look after it.'

Soon others in the profession had expressed interest in our campaign, including the legendary Piet Oudolf, who designed the gardens at the High Line in New York. But we felt the need to stress-test the idea with someone from the political classes in order to ascertain how it would be perceived by Whitehall and Westminster. Who better to speak to than the former education secretary Nicky Morgan who held the role of Secretary of State to the Department for Education from 2014 to 2016?

Morgan replied immediately: 'Interesting point from David Attenborough,' before admitting: 'As education secretary, I started keeping a list of all the things people wanted schools to do – on top of teaching the curriculum – and if we'd said yes to all of them – and most were sensible – schools would have to stay open until midnight.'

Even so, Morgan was receptive to the idea and made the following suggestion: 'My take on it is that there should be time in the school week to have a period when young people do something other than academic work which develops their character and supports their mental health and that could well include gardening – but would include other activities such as volunteering, enterprise etc.'

It is noteworthy that gardening feeds into both the character agenda of the right, and ideas more usually associated with the left. The activity teaches us not only resilience and patience – attributes Morgan deems particularly important – but also a sense of citizenship and wisdom espoused by another former education secretary Estelle Morris on page 14.

And with more teaching going on outside, isn't this also inevitable? Green party peer Natalie Bennett concurs: 'I've been asking the government questions about taking more education outside and into the natural world. We need not just biological science but contact with nature.' For her, as for Morgan, it is part of a wider story where we need to teach children to explore 'their creative side'.

But isn't there a problem also whereby urban sites will be less able to teach gardening as, say, a typical private school in Surrey?

We put this objection to international plantsman Piet Oudolf. He had little time for that reasoning: 'It's true that most people in cities have no gardens, but I think even in cities you can learn by what's going on in your street and in your neighbourhood. Street gardens can stimulate children and be interesting.'

"After doing the same job for 5-10 years, they want to do something different and take on a new challenge."

Thompson agreed: 'Even if you haven't got a garden space, there's a chance you have a window sill or a front doorstep, and it's being shown how these spaces can be transformed, bringing not only joy to the person who's gardening but also to passers-by, engendering conversation and thus combatting loneliness and isolation.'

Having dispensed with the likely objections, we felt we were now armed with enough to take the matter to Robert Halfon MP, a legendary campaigner in his own right, who sits as Chair of the Education Select Committee. We wrote to him, explaining that the gardening agenda would assist him in his own fight for guaranteed apprenticeships, arguing that a change to the curriculum would 'create children unafraid of work, and able to understand that education must sit within the context of a sense of one's wider place in the world.'

Our next letter to the education secretary Gavin Williamson's special advisers makes our case fully, arguing that it is the right moment for the government to signal its understanding of the way in which the world has changed since Covid-19, and also urging the government to accept that gardening is an industry with jobs, at a time when we need to seek every employment avenue available.

Acknowledgements from Mr Halfon's office, and from the Department for Education were received before we went to press. Mr Halfon wrote: "I really believe that outdoor practical activities are so important. I'd be interested in how it would work in practice."

Encouraged by this, we will update readers on progress as and when it comes in. f

Ian Taylor

AN INDELIBLE MARK: IAN TAYLOR: 1956 — 2020

Every so often, the suddenness of a person's departure leaves its mark indelibly on his colleagues, business associates, friends and family. Ian Taylor was such a man. He will be missed as a giant of business and philanthropy. We learned from him and he taught so many, helping to advance the careers of protégés. His wise counsel, encouragement and interest in what Finito was doing to help young people obtain meaningful careers was infectious. We sat together at many events, including those which he hosted. In spite of the obvious difficulties, he never complained about his predicament. In fact, he was in my eyes even more inspirational for the fortitude which he displayed in trying to overcome adversity through funding pioneering medical research and proton beam therapies to help others suffering from the same condition. We all have something to thank him for, his supreme trust, dynamic energy, incredible kindness and humour. Ian Taylor will live forever in our hearts and never be forgotten. — Ronel Lehmann.

*

Ian Taylor is a name that may not necessarily be familiar to all *Finito World* readers, and he would not have minded that. A giant of business and philanthropy, he was nevertheless, for all his success, a quiet and even shy man. Born in Croydon, the son of an Imperial Chemical Industries executive, Taylor would grow up in Manchester. He spent some time as a boy in Tehran where his father conducted some business in Iran before the Ayatollah came to power. This episode of early relocation established one of the leitmotifs of his life: an ease with other cultures, that would put him in good stead in the oil industry.

Taylor's educational attainments were impressive. He was educated at King's School Macclesfield from 1968-74 before going on up to Merton College to study Politics, Philosophy and Economics. The politics aspect of his studies prefigured the interest he would take in The Conservative Party later in life; meanwhile, many would later note his philosophical nature.

But it was the economics background which would have an immediate bearing on his life. In 1978, he joined Shell and prospered immediately, exhibiting traits which would be evident throughout his career: an ability to swim within global companies; a tendency to be quietly popular, infectiously kind and accordingly, loved; and a talent for finding oxygen and commercial manoeuvre within vast organisations. All this went hand in hand with an interest in other cultures: this was the man who would later display an expertise in Libyan affairs which would be of help to his future friend David Cameron during his premiership.

Taylor's success at Shell – he held successful positions in both the Venezuelan and Singaporean arms of the business - was a precursor to his remarkable achievements at Vitol. Taylor was one of those who proceeds steadily into the stratosphere, almost unnoticed – and then doesn't mind it if he stays that way. In moving to Vitol in 1985, Taylor had happened upon his professional home for the next 33 years.

What followed was a story of continual achievement. Taylor spent seven years in London, but when the firm needed a man to be posted to Singapore as managing director of Vitol Asia, Taylor's previous experience in the region was decisive. But it was just the beginning: he would go onto set up numerous operations within the company. His rise was built on hard work, good manners, and extensive knowledge of the business.

By 1995, he had risen to become CEO, a position he would hold until 2018. Under his tenure, Vitol had become the world's biggest independent oil trading company with revenues in 2016 alone of some $152 billion.

But as impressive as was his core work for Vitol, the way in which he grew and sustained his outside interests was if anything more so. Taylor became a restauranteur, owning two small restaurants in Wimbledon, and famously shored up Harris Tweed from collapse in 2005. Years later, it is a thriving organisation.

One might have said that this gesture was a sign of the philanthropy to come – except that since 2002 Taylor had already been making notable charitable grants through Vitol. By 2006, the company had established the Vitol Foundation, which 'looks for initiatives with the potential to generate social returns in a sustainable way.' The effect of that work has been incalculable, with well over 2,000 projects supported – and counting - the charity supported 113 projects in 2019.

These were considerable achievements, but Taylor was only just beginning. In 2007, he established the Taylor Family Foundation, with a specific focus on promoting education and the arts. It is impossible to list the sheer number of projects the foundation has supported but the Royal Opera House, the Tate Foundation, Maggie's, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Noah's Ark Children's Hospice and tens of others would not be in the position they are today but for Taylor's generosity. Politics continued to be an interest for him, and he became a valued adviser to leaders in both the political and business spheres. He famously turned down a knighthood from David Cameron after the press delved into – and misunderstood – Vitol's operations in Iraq and Iran. Afterwards, with typical humour, he expressed himself relieved. He had become extraordinary, but the spotlight wasn't necessary for someone who took meaning from life in proportion to what he could do for others.

But not even the kind and the dedicated escape some form of ending up. Taylor's battle with cancer was a painful illness which his friends watched unfold with a sadness only mitigated by the fact that Taylor was never seen to complain. Indeed, as the ensuing reminiscences show, he only showed himself a more thoughtful colleague as the disease took hold. It only remains to be said that he is survived by his wife Tina and his four children, and that those we spoke to expressed the same admiration for them as they did for Ian.

Finito World asked a small selection of friends to recall the man they knew in their own words.

Ian Taylor attends the St Petersburg International Economic Forum

Lord Spencer, Founder, NEX Group

"Being Ian he didn't just say "Thank you it's helped me". He wanted others to benefit from it as well ."

Theresa May, former PM

To me Ian Taylor was primarily a gentleman and a philanthropist. Of course, he was a successful businessman and a political supporter, but what struck me from the first time I met Ian was his deep desire to help others and to improve their lives. He was a passionate believer in the importance of education. He knew that a good education gave young people the best start in life, and he wanted others to be able to be their best, achieve their goals and fulfil their dreams. But perhaps the best example of his concern for others was seen when he received ground-breaking cancer treatment in Switzerland. Being Ian he didn't just say, "Thank you it's helped me". He wanted others to benefit from it as well - hence the money he provided and the work he did to bring the treatment to the UK. He was good company, considerate of others and always a gentleman.

"Wise, loyal and discreet; Ian was one of my most valued advisers — and, over the years, we became firm friends."

David Cameron, former PM

I first met Ian when I was Conservative Party Leader. He was a brilliant businessman, but also greatly understood politics and political realities. Wise, loyal, discreet; Ian was one of my most valued advisers – and, over the years, we became firm friends. I came to respect Ian's counsel even more during my time as Prime Minister. Countless times – in particular during the Libyan conflict in 2011 – he acted in a way that helped his country, not his business. Of course, alongside Ian's business knowledge, was his philanthropy. Since it was set up in 2007, The Taylor Family Foundation has done truly amazing work – supporting vulnerable children and young people, and going a long way to improve Social Inclusion in this country.

"Of my contemporaries I hold him in a special place, I have the greatest respect and admiration for him. It may be a cliche but it's totally true about Ian."

Ian Taylor was one of my best friends - a man of humour and generosity and thoughtfulness. But he was far more than that. He was also an 'achiever'. A prodigious 'doer' of things - in business, with the spectacular success of Vitol, the oil trading group he built into a global titan, but also in art, culture and politics. He was a man of real presence who gave so much to his family and friends, his business associates and to politics. Of my contemporaries I hold him in a special place; I have had the greatest respect and admiration for him. It may be a cliché but it is totally true about Ian. He leaves the world a better place but with a great hole behind him. He will be much missed.

Dame Mary Richardson, Finito Advisory Board

"He wanted to learn from any expert advice and his uncomplicated single aim was to do good and improve lives wherever possible."

I came into contact with Ian Taylor about 16 years ago when he was setting up the Vitol Foundation. As I was Chief Executive of HSBC's new Foundation, I was approached informally for advice and was later invited onto his Foundation's Advisory Board.

I was immediately struck by Ian's kindness in welcoming me warmly and ensuring that I felt at ease. Throughout the many meetings I attended, which he chose not to chair, he was quiet, attentive, respectful of the views, which were sometimes conflicting, of the advisory board members. There was no dominance. He wanted to learn from any expert advice and his uncomplicated single aim was to do good and improve lives wherever possible, without recognition. His approach was flexible even if this meant funding new projects in challenging areas. Possible failure did not deter him if the need was great. He was brave in his approach in this area of his life as he was in his illness.

I eventually left the Vitol Foundation Advisory board after some years. Ian was already ill but typically he did not miss Foundation meetings. At my last meeting he was clearly unwell and in pain and I wondered if he would remember that I was leaving. It was typical of Ian that he not only remembered but had spent time considering how to thank me. He had arranged a valedictory charitable grant, a considerable sum of money to be donated to whichever charity I chose.

Like all great leaders, Ian enriched lives. He enriched mine.

Jeremy Isaacs CBE, Foumding Partner JRJ Group

I got to know Ian over the last six years. He had been unwell to varying degrees over that time which underlines both his physical strength and incredibly positive outlook. I had the privilege to develop what was for me an important relationship. I always learned something new after spending time with Ian. Although we did quite a lot of business together, we rarely spoke about work, our conversations were about life, politics and philanthropy. The combination of his high intellect, remarkable generosity and of course his many unbelievable experiences always left me feeling amazed, optimistic and genuinely happier. He will be greatly missed by me but very fondly remembered.

Lord Fink

A man of many talents, it simply isn't possible to say it all in a few lines. But if I had to sum Ian up in one word, it would be 'selfless'. That is how I will remember him. I had the pleasure of meeting Ian Taylor and subsequently Tina at a Conservative Party function when David Cameron was our Prime Minister and I was Party Treasurer. I knew Vitol, the large and successful trading company that Ian led, from my

"I never saw any case of him trying to use his really powerful status... to try to dominate debate or push any agenda for his company. I saw this remarkably humble guy talk passionately about his party and family and always ask about others."

former career at Man Group and knew how successful and large the company was, having had a few friends work there or do business with them. I was surprised when I met Ian, by his quiet unassuming manner, the thoughtful way he approached politics and his devotion to his family. Having headed a FTSE 100 company for quite a few years, I knew how hard it was to balance one's life between business (which could become all-consuming) and family. I had seen so many cases where a CEO chose business over family life or became rather self-obsessed and frankly a little arrogant. Yet in Ian I saw someone who saw material success as just being part of life that earned him freedoms and one of those freedoms was to support his family and show his intense patriotism for our country through loyal devotion to the Conservative party.

At all the meetings and functions he attended, I never saw any case of him trying to use his really powerful status, role and the wealth that goes with it to try to dominate debate or push any agenda for his company. I just saw this remarkably humble guy talk passionately about his party and family and always ask about others. I saw him deal with the early and ongoing setbacks in his long brave battle. My wife Barbara and I saw him attend functions usually with Tina, who was his rock. At a time when we all realised how awful it must have been to go through the pain, discomfort and partial disfigurement of his various treatments, he kept on attending and supporting the party. They would never let their lives be dictated by this cruel illness, nor did I ever see self-pity or bitterness that this gilded life he had built for his family and the colleagues that adored him had been undermined in his prime. He was always optimistic that the disease was being overcome. Then came coronavirus and lockdown. Most of us spent our time following Government instructions limiting our social lives. Our horizons narrowed to our immediate friends, family and neighbours, and so Barbara and I were so sad when we learned of Ian's passing. We were also saddened by the fact that we had never had the chance to show our respect, liking and affection for this lovely gentleman. Our thoughts are with Tina and the family. The world was a better place as he'd passed through it.

Andrew Law, CEO Caxton-Associates

"From the friend's perspective, he was the one making sure that we would be back home to sleep wherever we had been in Europe following the trials and tribulations of his beloved football team. He was the one offering wise life counsel to those younger than himself. Ian was simply the most rounded accomplished individual I have had the pleasure of knowing."

Ian was a role model to aspire to. Aside from all his documented huge success in business, and his philanthropy, he was very much a citizen of his country and communities. Supporting struggling historic businesses in line with his Scottish heritage, or being active in his London locality, this was all second nature to Ian. In addition, he had one very special gift above all that, personal generosity. By that I mean generous with his time, the greatest gift one so busy can give. Whether it was supporting Speakers for Schools with his personal appearances at state schools, celebrating friends' important occasions, or visiting great charitable causes, nothing was ever too much. He had an innate ability to multi-task and see opportunity in even the most basic of interests. As a lifelong supporter of Manchester City Football Club Ian saw the team's renaissance a decade ago as an opportunity for good. He founded the Blue Moon Rising group of London-based lifelong long-suffering City fans. Aside from interesting dinners with the club hierarchy and former players, it was designed to support and drive the initiatives of the club's charitable foundation - City in the Community. The group has had a tremendous impact around Manchester. Ian's ability to draw people into his circle and coalesce around common causes was legendary. The diverse group of fans who have participated includes a former World Cup-winning England rugby player, England cricketer, rock star, former head of the FSA and numerous others who all shared a common passion. Everyone aspired to be in his wonderful warm circle. In essence he made helping others fun. Accommodating the demands of work, hobbies, friends and so forth alongside his family must have been a constant struggle. From the friend's perspective, he was the one making sure that we would be back home to sleep wherever we had been in Europe following the trials and tribulations of his beloved football team. He was the one offering wise life counsel to those younger than himself. Ian was simply the most rounded accomplished individual I have had the pleasure of knowing.

Dominic Johnson, CEO, Somerset Capital

Ian Taylor was a very special man who cared deeply about his country and was a passionate Conservative. He built a hugely significant business in a very complex area where sheer determination and guts are the defining feature of those who are successful. He was always unfailingly polite and interested whenever you met him and retained a strong sense of humble optimism right up until the last time I saw him, only a few months before he died - coming out of his office having done another full day's work. In all seriousness I thought he was a genuinely great man and he will be missed by everyone who knew him, worked with him or who he supported through his incredible and understated generosity.

Sir Michael Hintze

"Closer to home he always spent the time to provide generous times, good counsel and excellent friendship. He gave selflessly to various charities and endeavours."

Ian Taylor was always a man of huge integrity. He also had a wealth of understanding of how to work in our very nuanced world. His depth of understanding of the politics in the emerging world, especially Cuba, made for fascinating and also entertaining insights.

Closer to home he always spent the time to provide good counsel and excellent friendship. He gave selflessly to various charities and endeavours. The Conservative party in times of good and bad were always close to his heart. I will sorely miss his friendship and his insight. The world is poorer for his passing.

Peter Cruddas, Founder and CEO, CMC Markets

Ian was a beacon of light, a great businessman and philanthropist. We both shared a similar passion for helping disadvantaged and disengaged youth. Nothing gave us more pleasure than helping young people to be able to get a better start in life. Ian was a magnificent example to the younger generation. f

AMATI
AUCTIONS

Instrument valuations

Meet our experts for a valuation

We specialise in violins, violas, cellos, & bows

consultation & advice

To book an appointment contact:

sarah@amati.com
020 7099 7114

Accepting consignments for our September and October auctions of Musical Instruments

Amati powered by snoofa

www.amati.com

THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF THE LEFT: IS IT TIME FOR A NATIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE?

WORDS: CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

As Sir Keir Starmer takes the reins of the Labour Party, how can the Party seize the narrative on education and finally connect it to employability?

As you walk through Camberwell, every other house has a rainbow, proclaiming not just that household's gratitude to the NHS, but the presence of home-schooled children within. Education is all around us in virus season: it is on our minds in a way it hasn't been for years.

But that can sometimes seem the limit of the good news. 'Education hasn't had a good crisis,' as former education secretary Estelle Morris tells us on page 14. Part of this is due to the peculiar nature of the crisis: for the many senior Labour figures we spoke to for this piece, coronavirus was a problem designed to exacerbate existing problems of inequality and, with children taken out of school, always destined to be a different moment than the front-lines camaraderie that has defined the experience of those working in the NHS.

Of those we spoke with, many lamented the lack of leadership from both the government and from the Labour front bench. During the composition of this piece, Rebecca Long-Bailey was demoted from her role as shadow education secretary due to a retweet of problematic remarks by actress Maxine Peake. She was replaced by Kate Green who at time of going to press was still finding her feet in the job.

With the schools not yet back, all this contributed to a moment of pause. Under the empty skies, it felt like an intellectual reckoning was possible. After a decade of Conservative-led rule where should the left be on education?

A Tale of Two Speeches

Two quotes from two speeches, both given by Labour leaders in Blackpool.

The first: 'Just think of it - Britain, the skills superpower of the world. Why not? Why can't we do it? Achievement, aspiration fulfilled for all our people.'

The second: 'Tomorrow's jobs are in green and high-tech industries. We need people to have the skills to take on those jobs, breathing new life into communities.'

On the face of it, it would be difficult to tell apart the words of Tony Blair in 1996 (the first quotation) and the words of Jeremy Corbyn in 2019 (the second). Both open up onto a cherished idea for the Labour Party: that a commitment to education is an integral part of the party's offer to the electorate.

But scratch the surface, and differences proliferate, which still matter and must be resolved by the still relatively new Labour leader Keir Starmer.

Blair spoke eloquently about investment, and with a can-do spirit about placing education first. But he would likely have seen Jeremy Corbyn's espousal during the 2019 General Election campaign of a 'National Education Service (NES)' which was, like the NHS, 'free at the point of use', as a return to the socialist ideas of the past.

As we all know, the Corbyn programme was soundly repudiated by the British electorate in December 2019. But looking back at that election, it is startling – and a little depressing – how little education was discussed.

As a result, it would be an exaggeration to say that the public rejected Labour's education policy. Furthermore, we now inhabit different times where the government – even a Conservative one – has entered our lives in ways which would have seemed fanciful six months ago.

So is the idea still relevant? And if it isn't, where should the Labour Party go instead?

"Scratch the surface, and differences proliferate, which still matter and must be resolved by the still relatively new Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer."

Sir Keir Starmer at the Labour Leader Hustings at the SEC (Scottish Event Campus)

"There is a degree of comedy here which will feel to some very redolent of Corbynism: the very people brought into produce an enquiry sceptical about its overarching aims. "

Meet the Commission

Among those who advised the government on its life-learning strategy – intended to form part of the NES offer - was the likeable Professor Ewart Keep, who holds a Chair at Oxford University in Education, Training and Skills.

Brought in to assist with the Party's Lifelong Learning Commission, Keep never felt particularly wedded to the NES idea: 'Part of the problem was there was a headline slogan that emerged very suddenly and then there was an attempt to put things underneath that heading. We tried to sketch out what adult lifelong learning would look like in the context of an as yet unspecified National Education Service,' he explains.

There is a degree of comedy here which will feel to some very redolent of Corbynism: the very people brought into produce an enquiry sceptical about its overarching aims.

Internal operatives tell me that things are far slicker under Starmer. Was this an attempt simply to evoke one of Labour's greatest hits – the NHS - and tether it to an unrelated area? Keep continues: 'They're very different activities – particularly when you consider that one of the weaknesses of the NHS is that it doesn't succeed in preventing illness: you're treating people who are sick. Education is trying to be a preventative medicine. It felt misleading and not particularly helpful.'

It is this sort of thing which Starmer will need to avoid in order to dodge amused disparagement from the education intelligentsia. When I speak to Phillip Blond, chair of Respublica, he announces cheerfully, 'I generally regard the left with absolute contempt so you better to talk to Mark.'

This turns out to be Mark Morrin, also of Respublica, who has seen the NES idea knocked about for years, 'and it's never particularly excited anyone.' He goes on to point out: 'On the one hand, you can understand it intuitively with the reference to the NHS and the idea it will kind of bring together all aspects of learning education and skills from cradle to grave - that's intuitively understood. But when you get past this you're left with a leftist, statist idea and a big monolithic entity like the NHS.'

For Morrin, who points to the poor health outcomes in the UK compared to countries like Germany who have a more localised system, the NHS is not only something the education system couldn't emulate, such emulation would also not be desirable.

If you talk to Sir Michael Barber (see page 7), Blair's former chief education advisor, he swiftly disowns himself of anything remotely connected to Corbynism: 'I would rather just have a conversation about new radical approaches for education.' For Barber too, the very language of the left opens up onto a grim vista of statism.

"For Morrin, who points to the poor health outcomes in the UK compared to countries like Germany who have a more localised system, the NHS is not only something the education system couldn't emulate, such emulation would also not be desirable. "

A meeting in St James' Park

When I contact Estelle Morris – now Baroness of Yardley – I am pleased, and a bit surprised, when she says she'd like to meet in person. I take myself up to the ghostly centre of town, to St James' Park on a drizzly July day. We walk along the lake on one of those tentative lockdown days we've all had when we're not sure if our favourite coffee shop will be open. It is, and we sip our coffees, grateful for this minor return to normalcy.

So what exactly is the NES? Like Morrin and Barber, Morris is a little baffled. 'That was my question as well. I thought it was a great idea but there was a real risk it became a slogan and a slogan only. It's a great concept and I don't think we filled it out. I'm stuck to have a ten-minute conversation about what we offered about it.'

So is the NES an immediate non-starter? That's where Morris differs slightly. For her, everything depends on Labour's commitment to detail. 'The NHS represented a radical change and revolution in healthcare. So don't claim the title unless you've done the work. The title doesn't come before the work.'

It is worth adding that when one reads the speech where Corbyn launched the NES idea, it is noticeably less detailed than a typical pre-power speech by Blair, where the party can sometimes seem to be governing even in opposition. This is a mistake unlikely to be repeated by the more details-oriented Starmer.

So what message does Morris have for Starmer? Now is the time, she says, to launch something truly radical. 'From 1988 until now, there's not been a lot of changes in education; the narrative has been the same: national curriculum, national assessment, external inspection, publication of results, parental choice and focus on standards.' The tale has been one of back-and-forth between the two major parties and tweaking around the edges. 'The narrative from 1988 until now has been the same. I don't think it was wrong to have let that narrative run for as long as we have done. Schools are better now and children get a better deal because of national curriculum accountability. But it's all come to a natural end.'

But if Morris espouses an end to all this 'fiddling', what comes next? 'We need a debate about the value of art, the value of sports and the value of community service.'

In part, what Morris is espousing is a move away from the so-called character agenda which, though espoused by many Education Secretaries, is now particularly associated with Nicky Morgan, who held the secretaryship at education from 2014 until 2016. Morris wants instead a system which teaches 'citizenship and wisdom'.

But surely every side of the political spectrum will have a different idea of that? For Boris Johnson, wisdom is

"In part, what Morris is espousing is a move away from the so-called character agenda which though espoused by many education secretaries is now particularly associated with Nicky Morgan, who held the secretaryship at education from 2014 until 2016. Morris wants instead a system which teaches 'citizenship and wisdom'. "

Professor Ewart Keep speaks at PRAXIS 2 in Scotland

Conservatism; for Starmer, it will be socialism. But Morris says this is a debate we urgently need to have. And wisdom she says is difficult to have without some appreciation of the arts.

Picture Imperfect

Perhaps we need to think more about how we promote things we know to be good. The force behind Lee Elliot Major's proposal of a National Tutoring Service (see page 15) stemmed from the demonstrable value of the one-to-one tutoring experience.

For Susan Coles, the former president of NSEAD who set up an APPG in Parliament to promote greater coverage of the arts in our education system, the benefits of an arts education are equally clear. She worries that character is talked about as a 'box you tick' when, in fact, 'the arts create resilience' enabling you to 'follow your own ideas without being wrong.'

For Coles, and for Sharon Hodgson MP who chairs her All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) (see page 27), what we have now is a 'production line of high-performing schools which is strangling the creative arts.' Coles puts her views with the kindly persuasiveness of the truly passionate: she is one of those campaigners who is herself an advert for the sort of change she wants to see. 'We're coerced into believing the knowledge-based curriculum is best, when in fact the arts enable us to make mistakes and experiment,' she explains.

> "This, too, is where the eternal argument regarding free schools comes in. The schools minister Nick Gibbs would remind Coles and Hodgson that art is on the curriculum, but Coles — and the likes of writer Michael Rosen — would retort that it ought to be a core subject."

This was one area where Corbyn wasn't entirely idle in putting forward the detail behind the NES, stating in his Blackpool speech: 'The best is every child being able to learn musical instruments, drama and dance – the things that bring us joy – through our Arts Pupil Premium.' For Hodgson and Coles this was an exciting moment, scotched only in December 2019 when Johnson was returned to power so thumpingly.

So should it be part of the NES? While Coles appreciates the idea, she worries it is too little: 'The only worry I have is there's no guarantee it will be in the curriculum.'

This, too, is where the eternal argument regarding free schools comes in. The schools minister Nick Gibbs would remind Coles and Hodgson that art is on the curriculum, but Coles – and the likes of writer Michael Rosen – would retort that it ought to be a core subject. Even if you resolve that part of the debate, you're still left with the fact that academies are not obliged to teach it, and since 80 percent of secondary schools are academies and so are a large number of primaries, that's a problem. Furthermore, there is the exclusion of the arts from the uber-Goveian and, to Labour, loathed 'EBacc.'

For Coles and Hodgson an opportunity is being missed, and for no decent reason. Coles continues: 'If you do a teaching qualification, you learn how to teach the arts for around 2-3 hours in a 3-year course. So we have a lot of inexperienced teachers who are struggling to teach the arts curriculum.'

The great irony in all this is that the arts appears to benefit the economy. 'They're valued by the Treasury but not by the

Rainbow cities: will a summer of homeschooling children advance the argument on education?

education department and DCMS,' says Hodgson.

The Bonfire of the Quangos

This opens up onto another perennial question: that of the structure of the entire system, and indeed the very nature of our civil service and the balance between national and local government.

"For Keep, the restitution of these would necessarily exist alongside some devolution of power and decision-making to the regions. The overall goal would be 'bottom up thinking' and a move away from a system where everything is 'controlled by the minister.'"

When I ask Professor Keep where he would begin in terms of fixing the English education system, he says. 'The problem in England is that it's very siloed.

Even different bits of DfE don't talk to one another. In education, central government controls so much. They have to deal with such a level of detail: it's difficult for them to grasp the big picture.'

So what needs to change? 'We've gradually abolished all the intermediary bodies, which means everything's an atomised marketplace. This isn't functional for those who have to run it, and deliver education. I'd want to create relatively independent organisations which can act as a bridge between government and providers and also as a bridge between government and employers.'

Keep is referring to the Learning and Skills Council (abolished in 2015-16) and the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, which was wound down in March 2017. For Keep, the restitution of these would necessarily exist alongside some devolution of power and decision-making to the regions. The overall goal would be 'bottom up thinking' and a move away from a system where everything is 'controlled by the minister.'

Mark Morrin partially agrees: 'We had the bonfire of the quangos under the Coalition. Some were well-deserving of that. The Commission for Employment and Skills was one of the most useless, and survived for a long time.'

Morrin argues that any National Education Service would need to be rebranded
along devolved lines: 'It can be packaged in a different way and be marketed in a different way, with devolution at the heart of how this is going to be funded,' he explains.

The civil service also needs a rethink, according to Keep. 'Most civil servants do 18 months tops within a role. Every time

"It's basically a tax on those who can afford to pay for it because they graduate and earn enough to trigger a repayment. The real issue is we're sending too many people to university, but to what purpose?"

I go to a meeting on higher education, it's a totally different room of people. The last lot have all bloody left.'
This is a view echoed by Sir Michael Barber on page seven of this publication. ▶

healthlottery.co.uk
in-store | mobile | online

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic which continues to adversely impact charities in Britain, we have increased our charitable contribution by over

25%

More than £115 million has been raised so far. Help continue this support by playing with us.

And for just £1 you could WIN

£100,000

Every Wednesday and Saturday in our draws.
Plus jackpots and thousands of prizes every Tue - Sat.

Play online at www.healthlottery.co.uk

TESCO Morrisons ASDA Sainsbury's Co-op Martin's McColl's WHSmith SPAR POST OFFICE one stop Londis Budgens Nisa Costcutter Premier

18+ BeGambleAware.org® Players must be 18 or over. Terms and conditions apply. Excludes NI. 25.5p of every £1 spent goes to good causes. Every £1 line for any Wednesday or Saturday main lottery draw will also automatically be entered into the appropriate £100,000 free prize draw which also take place on those days. All players matching 5 numbers in the free draw will qualify for a prize. The Health Lottery scheme manages 12 society lotteries that operate in rotation and each represents a different geographical region of Great Britain. For more details on which society lottery is running each month please visit www.healthlottery.co.uk or ask your Health Lottery retailer. The Health Lottery™ logo is a registered trademark of The Health Lottery Ltd.

“A plot full of twists and turns has resulted in one of the most explosive and provocative thrillers to come out in years!”

A BLIND EYE

Reporter, Jerimiah Stone is still struggling to come to terms with his wife’s death. Once a renowned overseas correspondent, his career is now reduced to writing a weekly column; exposing the corrupt and moral failings of the political and social elite.

His fortunes change when out of the blue the world’s most famous living artist, the reclusive Abraham Conty invites Stone to his private island to give his first and only interview.

Just as Stone prepares for the biggest story of his career, he is sent information that could uncover a terrible crime.

As stone sets off to investigate the lead a deadly net starts to close around him. The determined forces he threatens to expose are now on a manhunt. And they will stop at nothing to silence him.

The interview will change Stone’s life forever. What he uncovers will change the course of history.

★★★★★

“I really enjoyed this first novel. The pace was fast and kept the reader wanting to turn the pages. Well researched, a thoroughly good read I would certainly recommend this book. A cracking novel.”

★★★★★

“A truly great read! So many twists and turns it keeps you hooked from the first chapter!”

★★★★★

“I couldn’t put this book down! I mark it 6/5!!”

Available to buy on Kindle and in paperback on amazon

Howard E. Strickley

Universal problems

At the same time, we have a university system that increasingly seems unfit for purpose, and struggling to adapt to the new realities of online learning.

Keep explains: 'A lot of universities were in big financial trouble before Covid-19 arrived. After 2009, many went and splurged vast amounts of borrowed money on new nice halls of residence, new nice student bars, gymnasiums - and of course it's all borrowed from the banks. £8 billion of borrowing has to be repaid, and the interest rate racks up on that.' So how bad is it? 'There were strong rumours there were at least 20 universities in England that were likely to get into significant financial difficulties in the next year and you can increase that number very considerably now.'

Morrin adds: 'We've created something that is too big to fail. Our universities are in trouble. How do we bail them out? One bad decision has been compounding another. We argued in the report we put out an the end of last year that we needed to stop sending so many people to university.

Does Respublica have any specific proposals? 'We've argued that we need to get rid of tuition fees. It's a smoke and mirrors thing, it's just accounting practices: in effect, the government picks up the tab for those who can't afford it. It's basically a tax on those who can afford to pay for it because they graduate and earn enough to trigger a repayment. The real issue is we're sending too many people to university, but to what purpose?'

That's a view echoed also by Euan Blair, the tech entrepreneur with the famous father whose business White Hat, which he chairs, is unafraid to proclaim university a waste of time. Talking to Blair is a curious education in the Blair genetics and how they have played out in the next generation. It is as if the same incisiveness and ability to explain complex things in simple language which saw his father dominate British politics for a decade has been handed down a generation into a born tech entrepreneur.

For Blair, universities have failed to prepare children properly for an AI-dominated labour market. 'I think that there will always be and should always be a place for purely academic learning in a university environment,' he admits. 'The challenge is that the system has become this monopoly on early careers in a really negative way. That's made universities complacent and it's created this lack of equal access to opportunity, particularly around careers.'

Whether Labour chooses to proceed with a National Education Service or with some other label, the Starmer offer will need to address a creaking university system, as well as the question of digital poverty in an age of online learning, and the perennial question of lifelong learning. If this is done meticulously, perhaps something will emerge worthy of the NES brand name.

Mark Morrin, Principal Research Consultant at ResPublica

Will You Still Feed Me?

Stephen Evans, the CEO of the Learning and Work Institute, sat on the same commission as Keep in the runup to the 2019 general election. For him, if the National Education Service is to have any meaning then it needs to solve the problem of keeping adults learning throughout life.

He argues that lifelong learning can come in many forms from an apprenticeship to a change of career, or it can come in the form of informal community classes.

'We need to build a more coherent system,' he tells me over Zoom. 'For me the NES was about this idea that we need to do much more learning throughout life.' What kind of financial structures is he espousing? 'Clearly you don't need government to fund some lifelong learning. But for those people who missed out and struggled at school, they might need to be covered by a National Education Service. The question is: 'How do we create a culture of learning and get more people wanting to go back into learning?'

So it would be something of a patchwork quilt model? 'If you've already got a degree, you're more likely to get training at work. And if you've got no qualifications, I would say the government should have a role alongside trade unions and others to try and reverse some of those inequalities.'

Keep agrees: 'Lots of adults receive no training from their employers. A lot of the adult workforce leave school and college, and then don't get much training. If you're in a low paid job, the chances of getting trained are very limited. When you look at England and the UK as a whole, we're a long way behind many developed countries.' When does the problem date from? 'In 2010, funding for it got cut, and the adult education budget has declined by more than 45 percent and there's a lot less money from the government. Employers are doing less and less.'

The Shape of Things to Come

I begin to get a sense of what this might look like. A National Education Service would need to intelligently join up the dots.

It might involve an acceptance of how we are failing to promote the arts, but also make us think in a more joined-up way about the digital side, looking to tackle digital poverty (as outlined by Sir Michael Barber on page 7). It might also incorporate some of Lee Elliot Major's ideas on tutoring, and build on what has already been agreed to by the Johnson administration (see page 15); the NES could potentially expand them into some form of mentoring service. The project might also involve greater investment in apprenticeships (see Robert Halfon on page 13), and a lifelong learning approach, where the state intervenes strategically to satisfy existing gaps. All this might be capped by Estelle Morris' commitment to the promotion of wisdom and citizenship in place of – or perhaps in addition to – the Conservative years' emphasis on character-building.

All in all, Starmer's Labour has a complex inheritance on education. It has produced a reasonably compelling idea too soon, without, as Morris says, having done sufficient work. The spectre of Tony Blair cannot now be entirely dismissed after the 2019 general election defeat, but he remains a figure whose toxicity remains surprisingly persistent.

Alongside these internal developments, there is a lot of dissatisfaction with the system and developments under successive Conservative-led governments. If all these points could be joined up, they might make a compelling proposition.
A final complexity is the precise historical circumstances Starmer finds himself in – or 'events, dear boy, events' as Harold Macmillan had it. A coherent education policy must be enacted, and priorities established, at a time when the virus, Black Lives Matter (see our leader on page two), climate change, and the new realities of work in the furlough era must also be solved.

Keir's Choice

The fact remains that Starmer will need to unite the left and the right of his party on one of its core priorities. One way to do this might be to appropriate a slogan from the Corbyn era but put some more intricate and thoughtful policies underneath it. Another way would be to admit that the NES is tarnished, and find some new banner under which to build a new platform.

Much will naturally depend on Starmer himself. So what are the new leader's instincts on education?

There is surprisingly little in the public domain on this, and Labour operatives we spoke to talked of a tight-knit disciplined circle where there are few leaks as to what the leadership is thinking.

Lee Elliot Major recalls meeting the future Labour leader in their shared constituency during the Corbyn years: 'I met Keir for coffee. He was on top of all the education issues of that day. At that point we were in the world of Corbyn, and at that time you were thinking someone like Starmer wouldn't get in. Though education wasn't his brief, he grilled me. He's not ideologically obsessed: voters will vote for that, generally people like myself worry about extremes.'

As often with Starmer, this sounds promising. But it's early days, and, wherever the party ends up on this, work has to be done - and everybody who contributed to this piece agrees there's not a moment to lose.

A Black Lives Matter Protestor


DENTS
CAN'T READ
Y CAN'T BREATHE
#STUDENTSDESER

THAT HUMOROUS FEELING

The witty can sometimes prosper in the workplace, but take it too far and you may have a problem, writes Lana Woolf

Stephen Fry once said of the great Peter Cook that he was never unfunny, never 'off'. When *Finito World* caught up with the legendary comedian – and great friend of Cook – John Cleese earlier in the year, we asked him what he thought of Finito, and he showed us that he, too, never turns off the taps.

When we told him about our mentoring programmes, he was immediate: 'It's a very decent thing to do. I've heard of a finishing school – and I know Finito is Italian for finished because I eat a lot of Italian food – and I finish it all. But I've never heard of a finished school.'

While we were laughing he was continuing, 'I have heard of Finnish schools but they're something quite different.'

The *Monty Python* and *A Fish Called Wanda* star went on to share some advice as to how to forge a happy career. He quotes American comedian George Burns as saying: 'If you do something you love, then you don't have to do a day's work for the rest of your life.'

Wise advice, but our encounter with Cleese also had us thinking about an implied lesson that may be as important: what role does humour play in the workplace?

Well, success in life can sometimes be attributed to ability to get on with people, and that is always to do an appreciation of nuance, which usually goes hand in hand with an ability to navigate intricate situations. The amusing are often, though not always, empathetic.

Sometimes this proposition can have vivid illustrations. It was Jerry Seinfeld who observed that in US Presidential races it is an unwritten law of politics that the funnier candidate always wins. Obama was always funnier than Romney or John McCain; George Bush Jr. was funnier than Al Gore or John Kerry; Ronald Reagan was funnier than Jimmy Carter or Walter Mondale. Clinchingly for the theory, Donald Trump Jr. was demonstrably funnier than Hillary Rodham Clinton.

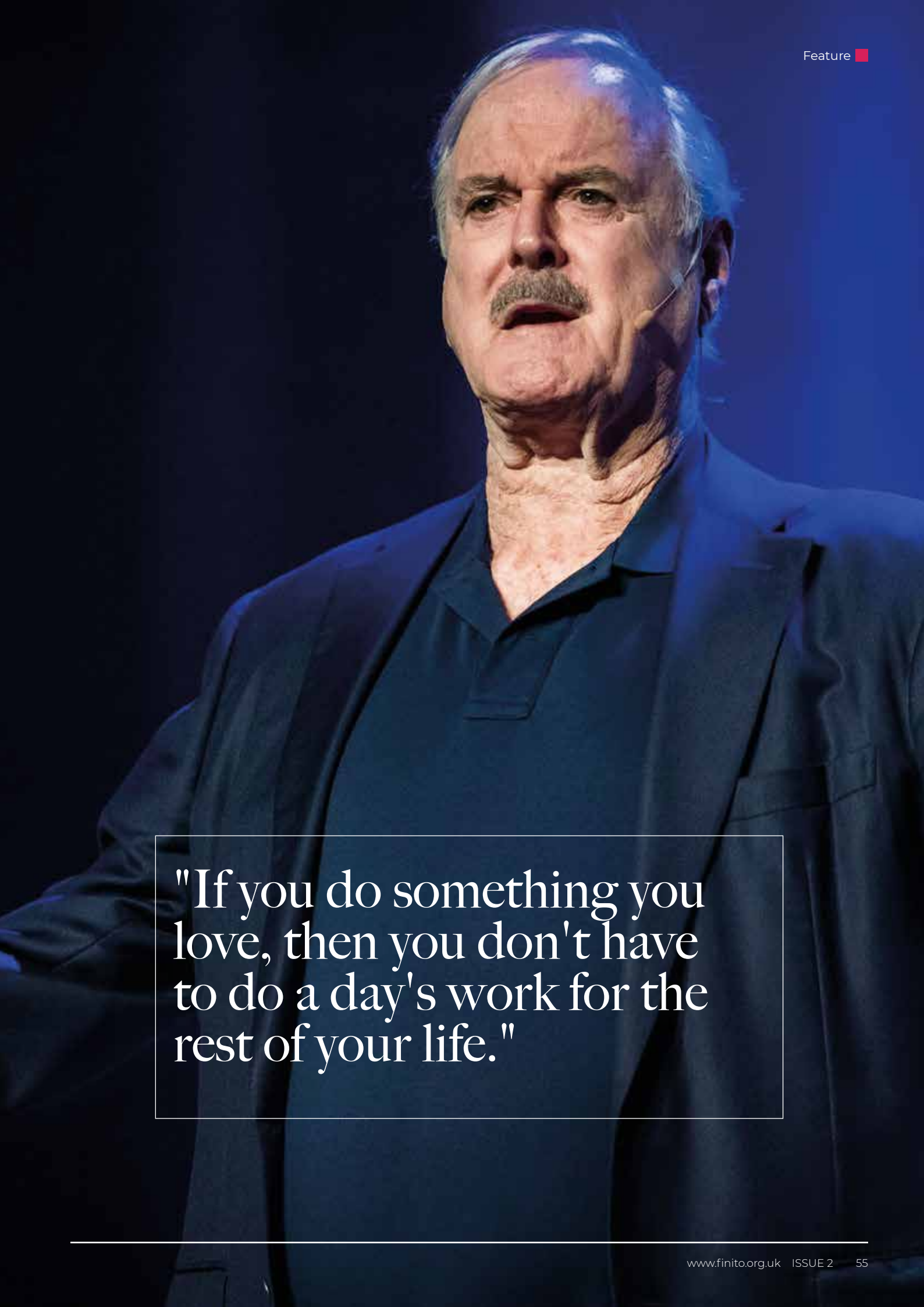
But does this translate in the same way in the workplace, which is a less performative space than electoral politics? Part of the force of a personality like, for instance, Sir Martin Sorrell derives from the sense that he might at any moment bark with delighted laughter even at a difficulty.

Pat Thompson is the founder and managing director of Thompson Dunn, a central London-based psychologists' firm. For 30 years Thompson has worked with CEOs on organisational culture and creativity in business: 'I used to deal with delinquent adolescents and then went onto work for Michael Page selecting senior executives. I was once asked: 'What's the difference between a delinquent adolescent and a CEO. I replied: "Pinstriped trousers".'

The jury is out on how funny this is, but Thompson is arguing that humour is a way of making a 'a difficult truth sayable'. It is a form of smoothing - of moving the dialogue forwards in a way that we might miss if we proceeded solely in an earnest register. When asked about humour's wider role, Thompson offers a two-word answer which dovetails with my own experience of office life: 'Stress release.'

A joke, said Nietzsche, is 'an epigram on a death of a feeling': the power of comedy is that it discharges feeling which had been accruing by admitting to that feeling and thereby ousting it.

However, Thompson has a cautionary word about taking things too far, warning against becoming an office prankster à la David Brent in *The Office*. She also explains that one's relationship to humour will depend on the tenor of the organisation you work for. This can be challenging for women, she explains, recalling how 'humour in the City was a darker shade of blue in a male-oriented environment. Women are often the butt of a joke and you have to cope with it. In financial services, you have to develop a thicker skin.'



"If you do something you love, then you don't have to do a day's work for the rest of your life."

Moving on up: can a sense of humour lead to swifter promotion?

Liam Williams is a professional comedian known for *Sheeps* and *Ladhood* and the now the author of a brilliant debut novel *Homes and Experiences*. So what led him towards his career? 'In the workplace, I've never known where the line is, and I was drawn to being a professional comedian because you are necessitated to go over that line.'

Did he enjoy: 'I found that having a laugh with my colleagues was the only thing that got me through the less fulfilling aspects of the job. Obviously, you don't want to be like David Brent in *The Office* and you need to find a happy medium between not being too buttoned-up and boring, and not being the idiot with the Homer Simpson tie.'

He notes that much humour comes from 'absurd corporate language. This twee idea of 'We're all a family" - of language that comes down from on high and doesn't mean anything to us. There's so much euphemism.'

Employers, then, must be careful not to alienate their employees with language that doesn't match their real experience. A recent podcast produced by Fair Acre Press called 'Word Bin' invited participants to choose their preferred word to bin. A huge number of the choices related to corporate culture: normalcy, incentivize, optimized, moving forward, thinking out of the box, reach out/ reaching out, cascading down, time urgent, upgrade, inputting and solutions.

Nadia Kingsley, the founder of the podcast, told us: 'I was surprised at how passionately people wanted to bin some corporate speak. Having never worked in an office myself it was a real eye-opener. Some of the binnings reveal something more than ridiculous management speak - but the old-fashioned hierarchy. For instance, the phrase 'cascading down', refers to minions who aren't good enough to actually go to the conference but are given a version of it by someone above us.'

"Humour is vitally important in private. In a tense meeting, a well-timed and well-phrased quip can defuse tension."

Former deputy prime minister David Lidington makes a useful distinction between humour in the public and private spaces. Recalling life as the de facto no.2 in Theresa May's 10 Downing Street, he explains: 'Humour is vitally important in private. In a tense meeting, a well-timed and well-phrased quip can defuse tension. In the same way, if you looked at both Betty Boothroyd and Lindsay Hoyle operate as Speaker of the House, a joke or an aside can ensure that those tensions which had been building up would suddenly lapse.'

Lidington also points to its impact in a speech: 'Humour changes the register but also helps the audience to concentrate. A successful joke will make the audience listen as they'll wonder whether there'll be another joke coming. And humour that's well received can get people on your side.'

But he also has a warning against humour used against a political opponent which may also apply to life in a more ordinary workplace. 'The risk is you get written off as a comic. You need to show you have the comic and the serious. In Shakespeare's tragedies – even in *Hamlet* – you have tragedy and serious side by side.'

Then Lidington laughs, recalling some of the inevitable ups and downs of government. 'The truth is it sometimes feels more like a black farce. And black humour can keep you going in the inner team.' This chimes with Thompson's remarks: 'Humour is an aspect of positive psychology. If you face difficulty in an organisation, then looking on the bright side includes humour.'

And if all that doesn't work, and you find yourself caught in a job you dislike at the age of 40? Then John Cleese has some advice: 'Don't just take the money. But if you do and you get to 40, you can always kill yourself, I suppose.' Black humour indeed. f

We're fans.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL
THE HOTEL GROUP

To find out why Barry Humphries and Dame Edna Everage are fans of M.O. visit mandarinoriental.com ABU DHABI • BANGKOK • BARCELONA • BEIJING • BODRUM • BOSTON • CANOUAN • DOHA • DUBAI • GENEVA • GUANGZHOU • HONG KONG
JAKARTA • KUALA LUMPUR • LAKE COMO • LONDON • MACAU • MARRAKECH • MIAMI • MILAN • MUNICH • NEW YORK • PARIS • PRAGUE • SANTIAGO • SANYA • SHANGHAI • SINGAPORE • TAIPEI • TOKYO • WASHINGTON D.C.

Your money. Your way. Your choice.

Hastee is an **award-winning** employee benefit that enables workers to receive a portion of their earned pay immediately, increasing choice and **financial wellbeing**.

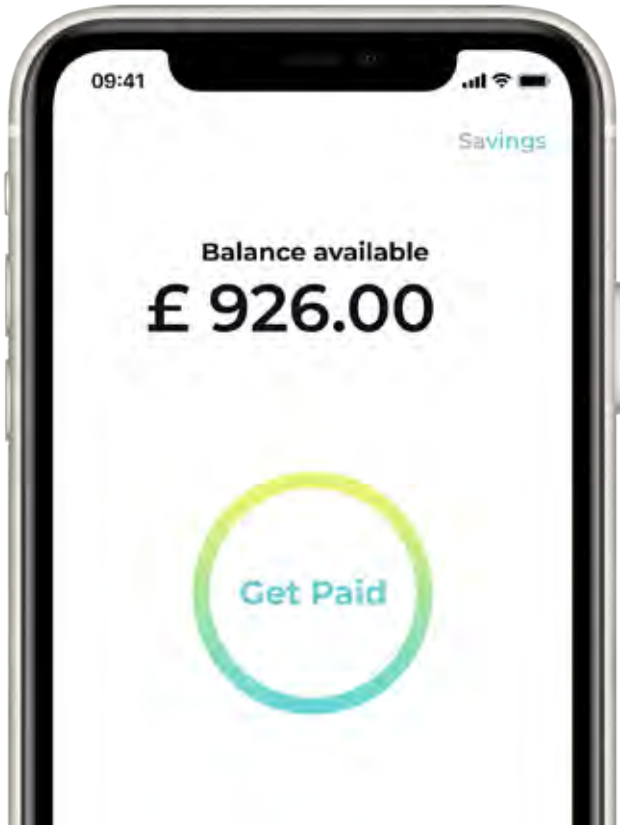
Hastee provides a smart and efficient way to manage finances – using money already earned, not borrowed.

The crucial difference.

Anonymously refer your employer today

hastee.com

hello@hastee.com



Tangled up in Blue

There's nothing quite like a global pandemic to make people across society rethink their priorities, writes George Achebe.

Simon Ferrar knows exactly where he'll be buried: he's ear-marked a plot worth £4,500 under some rather splendid blackberry bushes in Surrey Hills. 'As in life, it's location, location, location,' he jokes, looking at one of the premier positions in the cemetery.

Except this is no conventional cemetery, and Ferrar will also die knowing that he has been responsible for the burial circumstances of some 28,000 around him. He's the founder of Clandon Wood, a natural burial ground, and a part shareholder in it as well. 'I created a nature reserve because we were looking to encourage a huge diversity of wildlife here. We wanted to add another little corner of the natural landscape to the Surrey countryside,' he says.

The funeral business is, of course, recession-proof and has even been helped by the pandemic. Natural burial involves graves made from biodegradable materials; each plot is three-feet deep and involves no vertical memorial. Ferrar explains another difference: 'What's unique is that we set up a trust fund. Every single person who purchases a plot here pays a one-off fee of £250 which goes into the trust. By the time we've sold all 28,000 plots, that trust fund will be worth in excess of £7 million.'

We drive out in a golf cart into the plots. Some of the graves look like large scratches in the earth. In other instances, one's memorial is simply a tree, or some wild grass. He gestures at a plot. 'Over there, there are buried two twins. One killed himself jumping off a building, and the other couldn't live with it. Three years later his brother killed himself too.'

"Ours is an odd, almost sanitised plague, so unlike the Renaissance and medieval counterparts: when the deaths rack up, they do behind closed doors. We don't see them for ourselves. And this fact has created communal space with which to discuss another crisis: our mental health."

But the funeral, he says, was meaningful. 'The mother said they weren't meant to live long lives.' He adds: 'We care for the living here as well as the dead.'

A Morbid Culture

When the pandemic struck, it found a morbid culture. Ours is an odd, almost sanitised plague, so unlike the Renaissance and medieval counterparts: when the deaths rack up, they do so behind closed doors. We don't see them for ourselves. And this fact has created communal space with which to discuss another crisis: our mental health.

Ferrar views his business as a 'throwback to a couple of centuries ago where families can take the coffin on a handcart. We've been burying people on this island for about 30,000 years. It's only in the last few hundred years, we've got used to the kind of Victorian funerals, the moralization and the grimness of that.'

At a time when our former structures have been removed, and we experience uncertainty as to whether our life shall return to anything like 'normal', Ferrar's project can teach us perspective. As the world quietens, many have found that they had become disconnected from the real cycle of nature.

The £65K Club

It isn't difficult to understand why some who have lost their jobs, or who have had their weddings placed on hold, or found themselves subject to domestic abuse, might be struggling at the present time.

It's harder to explain why mental health has become such a problem for FTSE250 CEOs and the superrich. But according to Marta Ra, the founder of Switzerland-based clinic Paracelsus, which also has a UK branch and charges £65,000 a week, that's exactly what has happened. 'There's this unconscious bias that the very wealthy are always happy. But actually, they're often sadder than people with less financial strain,' she says.

For some this will be a dubious sob story – and yet it tells us something too about who we are.

'All individuals have their own private fears and problems,' Ra explains. 'Perhaps they worry for their employees, or the fate of their companies. And so they start turning to substance abuse. Or maybe they only did social drinking before, but now they start to drink heavily. And locked down with their spouse and children, they're just as likely as anyone to think: "Who have I married? I can't handle this."'

It would seem that at a certain point the noise of life became so great – and what the Victorians called 'the Battle of Life' (the title of a Charles Dickens novella) became more intense. Sometimes one senses that the virus has been specifically

The view of the lake from a Paracelsus Recovery Apartment

I found myself in a dense forest: another kind of bathing

designed to make us look again at who we are – at where we're going.

Ra explains: 'People who are stuck at home have to face themselves for the first time, and really face themselves.' She adds: 'Our society wasn't functioning to be in the present.'

The depths of the forest

But what about those people who are trying to help us with our mental health? Before the crisis, buzz words like 'mindfulness' and 'wellness' had become ubiquitous, and when I meet Ferrar, I am struck by his laid-back intelligence. His is the sort of spiritual calm which the frenetic Londoners among us tend to envy.

Across from Clandon Wood, tucked away behind postcard-idyllic Shere, is the Forest Bathing Institute [FBI]. In May 2019 Dame Judi Dench became a patron of the organisation, but it's been more broadly on the rise.

I ask Gary Evans, CEO of FBI to explain its origins: '"Forest bathing" is actually a translation from the Japanese *shinrin-yoku*.' he explains. 'In Japan in the 1980s, the Japanese government decided they wanted to get people out of big towns and into nature.' But this wasn't some hippie whim: it was driven by hard science. '

They were researching the health benefits of nature and woodland. When they looked at blood, they found improvements in the immune system. A prolonged exposure to nature caused blood pressure to come down in people who had high pressure, and caused those with low pressure to experience a normalisation.'

> "Over the course of a few hours, I am asked to focus on the shapes on the trees, to explore its smells, to play with leaf litter, to share my thoughts of the forest, and to listen closely to the breeze playing in the upper canopies. The session finishes with a meditation."

Intrigued, I head to Surrey to meet with Kate Robinson who takes me into the woods near Newlands Corner.

Over the course of a few hours, I am asked to focus on the shapes of the trees, to explore the smells, to play with leaf litter, to share my thoughts of the forest, and to listen closely to the breeze playing in the upper canopies. The session finishes with a meditation. For a few days afterwards, I find that the wood seems to exist alongside me, in a way which it wouldn't if I had taken a long walk.

I recall the words of Marta Ra: 'You can be a billionaire at 23 and still feel fear and loneliness - and the uncertainty of the virus only adds to that fear.'

And perhaps there is something especially apt about all this. Coronavirus, after all, took us by surprise out of the wet markets in Wuhan, where to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the unspeakable went into pursuit of the uneatable – and duly ate them. As Green peer, and former Green Party leader, Natalie Bennett recently told me: 'The economy is a subset of an environment. There are no jobs on a dead planet.' Perhaps part of our duty now is to think again about what surrounds us. And it might after all be that the right job revelation lies just as much on a long walk, as it does on LinkedIn.

Drawing Together

And yet, for some, that will seem too

Esharelife is a charity foundation set up to aid some of the most disadvantaged areas of the world.

The sole purpose of Esharelife is to raise money to help projects of other charities that have demonstrated their value.

Get involved with Esharelife Foundation today and become a Patron or Ambassador for the charity.

esharelife

www.esharelife.org

A lakeside funeral at Clandon Wood

solitary. Others have sought their own reckoning by looking in new and exciting ways at community.

Sally Shaw at First Site gallery in Colchester had been busy in the run-up to Covid-19 with, among other things, a landmark exhibition with Anthony Gormley (see page 115). Once the virus struck, she realised she had to do something to benefit the local community. 'The NHS approached me during lockdown. They said: "We're worried about the virus, yes, but the next thing we're worried about is the mental health fallout for our staff and also those directly affected by Covid-19".'

But that assessment proved to be the tip of the iceberg. Shaw lists the challenges: 'Of course, they were also worried about the stress the pandemic will cause through mass unemployment, emotional pressure and not being able to grieve properly.'

Shaw thought of a way to help. The gallery is part of the Arts Council collection, which consists of 7,000 works collected over 75 years; it's been built up with the national legacy in mind. Shaw continues: 'We thought what we might do is invite people to interact with that collection and pick works which represent their experiences and, with a light touch, introduce talking therapies to people's worlds.'

The gallery introduced a private part of the website where NHS staff in the region and care home workers can submit their stories to the portal. Shaw now plans to find ten distinct stories which will comprise a spectrum of experiences to 'enable us to create a narrative around the different types of effects on people's lives.' The goal, she says, is to create a 'creative conversation which may be an exhibition at some point.'

"We talk of possession, but the land is only ever held in trust."

That sense of community is also evident at Clandon Wood where Ferrar regularly hosts theatrical performances. 'We have things like Music in the Meadows where I invite local musicians down, and people bring a picnic. We had four Alan Bennett plays last year, and we had Shakespeare in the Meadow too. Then we have meditation mornings plus all the other events that we have to support grieving families.'

The Forest Bathing Institute too is looking at children's days, in part designed to help take the burden off local parents, and give children experiences valuable to them going forwards.

It is an image of another life – one that would have felt impossible six months ago. We inhabit for the time being a world slower, quieter and in some ways smaller – but also one with the potential to be richer and deeper than what we had before. It's a world where time and nature feel like more precious commodities than ever before. It's also a period when money might matter less because our mortality has been vividly illustrated to us: we all lose our possessions in the end. Ferrar explains to me that a team of archaeologists found evidence of Bronze Age occupation at Clandon Wood. 'We talk of possession, but the land is only ever held in trust,' he says, as we pass another unmarked grave.

The curious thing is that this fact, which might make us despair, turns out to be a beginning of happiness. Mental health begins in being rooted in the facts. The virus, awful though it has been, has reminded us how transient we are, but in doing so thrust us back on ourselves, and forced us to renew. f

FRANSES

BOURNEMOUTH

BLOSSOM

FINE WHITE AND PINK DIAMOND PENDANT
DESIGNED AND CREATED BY JAMES FRANSES

FRANSES

23 WESTOVER ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH BH1 2BZ

Tel: 01202 558928

www.franses.co.uk

CLOSED WEDNESDAYS

The Truth About These Strange Times

By Sam Pearce

When lockdown came along photographer Sam Pearce went out into the world to capture the bizarre tenor of the times.

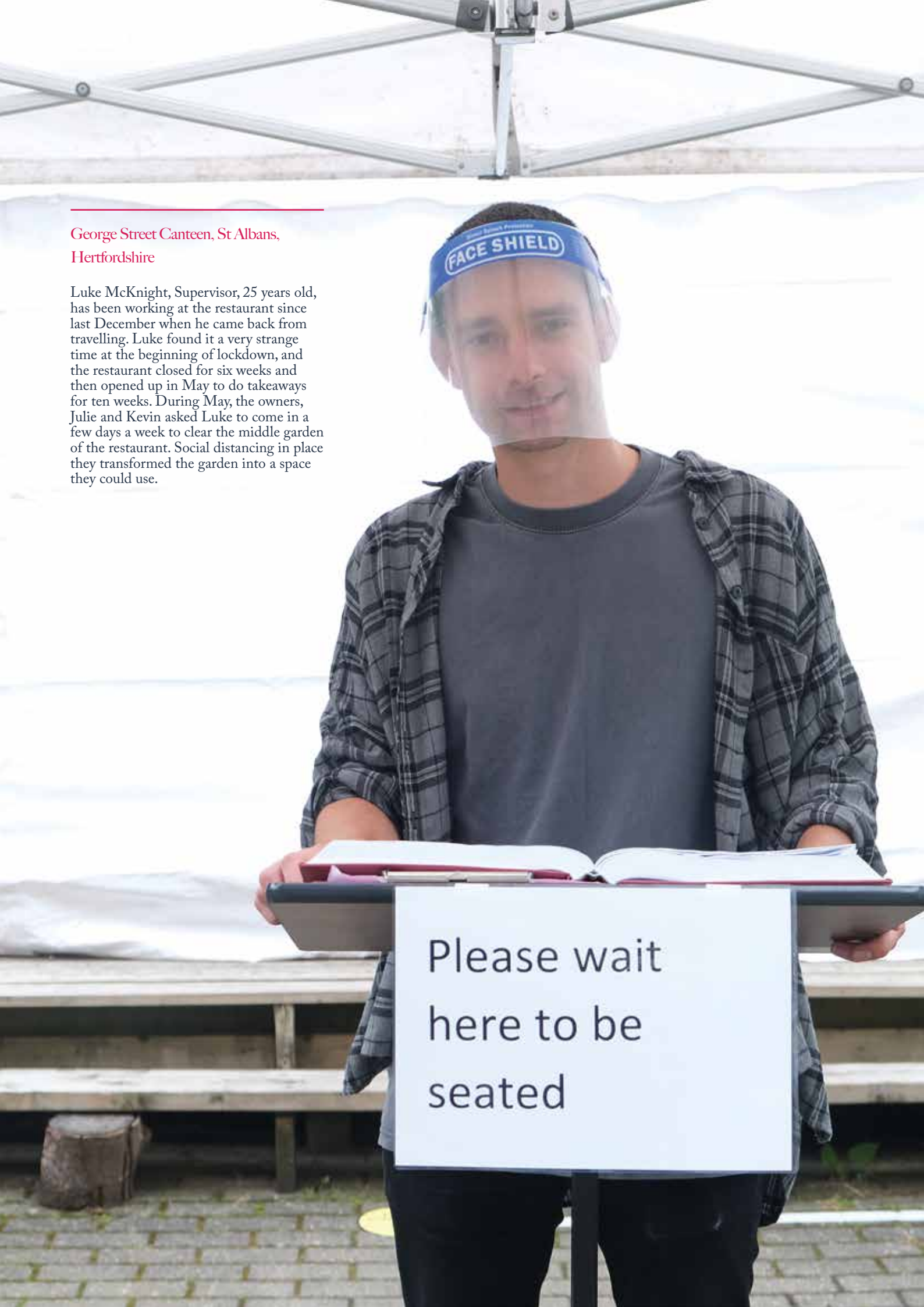
During lockdown there have been times when you think that an alien visitor looking at our world might not know that all had changed – and in Yeats' phrase changed utterly. But the fact is that we have; it's just that this change has taken place on the inside.
The challenge for a photographer is to show what's going on in the interior - that's particularly hard when you consider that the camera is often stubborn in wanting to show surfaces and mere appearances. The other difficulty with photographing today's world is that we've all seen lockdown photographed so much; I wanted to show *Finito World* readers things they'd not seen before in the nationals or on the BBC website. I remember David Hockney saying in respect of his wonderful late landscapes that a sunset is a cliché in art, but that it's never a cliché in nature – and that's the challenge. We already have our lockdown clichés: the empty workspace, the masked queues – but head out into the real world and it's always different, always surprising. I wanted to look beyond what we think we know, and find other subjects. I discovered a world full of quiet hope, and subtle creativity. There has always been something so very private about the English, and it is heart-breaking to think how much stoic exhaustion and hardship there is out there. This comes through in the pictures too. What follows is a snapshot of a society and a collective workplace in shock, but reacting, pivoting – finding new ways to be, and new ways to work. I hadn't thought of this before Covid-19, but we're such a hard-working society. And I think if consolation is to be had anywhere it's in that.

Duke of London Drive-in Cinema, The Brentford Project, London

Georgia Peck and Merlin McCormack started up the drive-in cinema at the end of July 2020. There have been five films to date and all were sold out. Before lockdown they held Classics and Cake on a Sunday morning, an event for classic car owners. It brought the car community together in London. So when the cinema opened, there was a huge amount of interest. People come in a variety of cars from rare exceptional cars like a Blower Bentley or grandpa's old Triumph or MG Midget that have been in the garage for years. If you don't have access to a supercar you can hire a classic car for the day. You pick it up at midday, drive it round all afternoon, pick up your date and come to the drive-in cinema for a movie, pizza and beer. It's a place of conviviality, and it was a pleasure to capture their high spirits on film.

George Street Canteen, St Albans, Hertfordshire

Luke McKnight, Supervisor, 25 years old, has been working at the restaurant since last December when he came back from travelling. Luke found it a very strange time at the beginning of lockdown, and the restaurant closed for six weeks and then opened up in May to do takeaways for ten weeks. During May, the owners, Julie and Kevin asked Luke to come in a few days a week to clear the middle garden of the restaurant. Social distancing in place they transformed the garden into a space they could use.



Highgate Ballet School

Owner Julie Cronshaw was planning on opening up her ballet classes again when the government suddenly changed tack and she was faced with continuing to teach her online zoom classes. The accumulation of hours of online teaching made Julie feel unwell and her assistant Ros suggested teaching the ballet classes outside. Ros called Julie and said "everybody is doing activities in the open air so why don't we organise ballet classes in your garden?" The parents of students were grateful for the live classes: for most of the children it was the first time they had any live classes in months and socialised.

St Albans Cathedral - A Last Supper by Lorna May Wadsworth.

"Following the killing of George Floyd and the reaction of Black Lives Matter, St Albans Cathedral installed a prayer station using a copy of Lorna May Wadsworth's painting, 'A Last Supper', which depicts Jesus as a Jamaican.

There have been some angry reactions, mainly focused on the colour of Jesus. How could we be so stupid as not to know Jesus was not black, but a Jew?

The fact is that from ancient times Christians in different parts of the world have depicted Jesus with their own racial features. This painting stands in a long and orthodox tradition.

The Christians who painted the images of course knew Jesus was a Jew. The point is not historical but theological: in Christ God is united with people of all kinds and races. What matters is that we are all made in God's image, and God loves and values us equally, of whatever race we are.

In England Jesus has often been depicted as white, with no objections raised. But England is now home to many races, and it is hardly inappropriate to depict Jesus as also belonging to one of them.

An elderly gentleman visited the Cathedral shortly after the installation appeared. He wept at seeing the painting. He had come from Jamaica on the Windrush, and though he was born and raised an Anglican, he said it was the first time he felt welcome in the C of E.

His reaction puts the angry ones in perspective - and makes me very glad we installed the painting."

— Jeffrey John, Dean of St Albans

Carly Samuels - Hair Colourist

Carly was working right up until the lockdown on March 23rd and then didn't work again until the lockdown was eased for her business on July 4th.

She found herself home schooling her daughter aged 8 yrs while her husband worked from home. The government guidelines only gave her three weeks notice to open up her business. Carly ordered PPE, visor, masks, hand sanitisers and disinfectant. Although some of her clients were a little dubious and decided to wait a while before coming in, most of them were desperate to have their hair painted and she saw almost all of her clients in the first three weeks of opening up her business.

Carly is now working from home as well as visiting clients in their homes. She doesn't have too many people in at once. The clients' appointments are spaced out with enough time to disinfect the seating areas and wash basins in between clients. They are greeted at the door by Carly with hand santiser, a mask and she takes everyone's temperature.

Clients are less likely to read magazines but instead prefer to bring in their iPads to play scrabble or games.

'It's really business as usual with PPE, an eye smile and a cup of coffee or tea,' she says.

Sarah-Jane Janackovic - Mildred & Me

Sarah-Jane Janackovic, an artist, works from home in her spare room. During lockdown she started making scrubs bags for nurses at her local hospital, Birmingham Heartlands Hospital. She made 160 bags for NHS workers on a purely voluntary basis.

Eventually she needed to start covering the costs of making the scrubs bags so on 4th June started painting glasses to sell online. To date she has made 600 and the numbers are growing each week. It has been extremely popular. Her business is expanding and now she paints face masks and hand sanitisers.

Wembley Sailing Club

A few weeks before lockdown Wembley Sailing Club held the Merlin Open. There were no government guidelines at this time and the club felt there wasn't a significant risk. It's one of the main events of the year at the club and people were looking forward to it.

Weeks later lockdown came and the club was physically closed and a newsletter was sent out informing the members that they couldn't come to the club to sail or socialise.

Eventually there was talk of easing the lockdown, it was difficult to interpret the government guidelines and what it meant for sailing plus the RYA quite rightly took a conservative approach.

After several online committee meetings, the club decided to open up for social sailing only, no racing. This meant that the clubhouse was still shut but people could come and sail single hander boats. Double handers weren't allowed unless they were from the same family.

There were social distancing signs put up and hand sanitisers at the gate entrance.

There was a brilliant atmosphere and a lot of the crews bought themselves lasers so they could continue to sail.

From mid August, racing has started up again, the clubhouse has opened to use the changing rooms although not the showers and the RYA training courses for adults and children have been fully booked.

At a time where everyone seems very stressed and concerned, sailing has been a big release for people and very good for mental health. It is one of the few sports that you can do all year round and Wembley is hoping they can continue to sail throughout the winter. f

Bishop Group

Corporate and IP Investigations

Bishop Group, is an international corporate and intellectual property investigations business that has been operating from the UK since 1990. The Group includes two operating companies: **Bishop International Ltd** and **Bishop IP Investigations Ltd**.

Our clients include some of the most prominent brands in financial services, defence, energy, construction, retail and consumer products as well as major law firms.

Bishop Group's personnel come from a diverse range of backgrounds, including law, media, science, technology, law enforcement and financial services. Our staff includes linguists who are fluent in a range of European and Asian languages, including native Russian and Chinese.

Whether you are looking to minimise risks or to capitalise on new opportunities, Bishop Group has the talent and experience to give you confidence in your decisions.

Bishop International

- Fraud Investigation
- Litigation Support
- Asset Training
- Due Diligence
- Competitor Intelligence
- Mergers & Acquisitions

Jeff Katz
CEO, Bishop Group

Bishop International Limited
14 Waterloo Place
London SW1Y 4AR
T: +44 (0)20 7321 6355
E: research@bishop-group.com

Bishop IP Investigations

- Trade Mark Enquiries
- Patent Infringements
- Domain Name Investigations
- Anti-Counterfeiting
- IP Asset Acquisitions
- Grey Market Trading

Graham Robinson
MD, Bishop IP Investigations

Bishop IP Investigations Limited
Sovereign House, 53 Broadwater Street West
Worthing, West Sussex BN14 9BY
T: +44 (0)1903 820 802
E: ip@bishop-group.com

www.bishop-group.com

Chartered Accountants
Part of the Simmons Gainsford Group

We strive to ensure that our clients benefit from the personal attention and expert service that has become our hallmark.

We are Chartered Accountants, Business Advisors, Taxation Advisors and Management Consultants specialising in:

› Accounts and Audit › Strategic and Financial Planning › Tax Mitigation and Planning
› Assurance and Compliance › Corporate, Financial and Business Consultancy
› Inward and Outward Investment › Payroll and Business Outsourcing

Our people are what make us great.

Be part of the journey with paid work experience here at Simmons Gainsford LLP.

We would love to hear from if you are keen to explore a paid work experience opportunity with SG LLP.

Please email **recruitment@sgllp.co.uk** with the subject line **"Work Experience"** and let us know when you would like to undertake the work experience in 2021, stating your preferred business area and why.

Don't forget to tell us a little bit about yourself and remember to provide your contact telephone number!

Call 020 7447 9000 **www.sgllp.co.uk**

Stick or Twist

HOLDING OUT FOR THE DREAM JOB

Written by Emily Prescott

Wondering whether to shoot for the ideal career or to settle for something you weren't expecting to do? Emily Prescott has some advice

Despite living in a small Wiltshire village, my four-year-old best friend had rather lofty and exotic ambitions. There was no doubt about it: she was going to be a lion tamer.

This exciting notion was encouraged by our teacher Mrs Turner. Reminiscent of Miss Honey in Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, Mrs Turner would never tell children that no amount of autotune would fix their singing or that their SATS scores hardly screamed astronaut or that aspiring to be a lion tamer was frankly ludicrous. She was endlessly encouraging.

Even so, optimism can come at a cost, and indulgence of this kind can have cruel consequences. A concerning report this year revealed that there is a major disconnect between young people's career aspirations and jobs in the UK. Martin Rogers, who co-authored the report, told *Finito World*: "It's striking that the sectors to which young people aspire are basically not where the jobs are now and in the future."

"It's striking that the sectors to which young people aspire are basically not where the jobs are now and in the future."

The study of more than 7,000 participants found that five times as many 17 and 18-year-olds wanted to work in art, culture, entertainment and sport as there were jobs available. These concerning findings have prompted the report's authors to call for a significant improvement to career-related learning.

It is positive that young people are aspirational but if they are not being taught the realities of the job market, it is no wonder so many graduates leave university feeling disheartened.

We spoke to a number of students about their careers experiences; they replied on the condition we didn't use their surnames.

Liam, who studied architecture at the University of Edinburgh, explains: "I wanted to be an architect, before I came to uni, it was my dream. Then studying it, discovering the reality of what working in architecture would be like, put me off." That has created real anxiety. "I do feel slightly lost as I don't know what I want to do anymore. I'm unsure how to use my degree - if I can at all. It's strange hunting for jobs now."

While Kate, who recently graduated with a shiny English degree from the University of Exeter, also said she was feeling lost and let down. "We are not typically set up to succeed," she explains. "Teachers help us follow our vague interests or whatever subject we might be good at, with no clear career path to follow. Coddling comes to mind." Is there anything schools should be doing to improve ultimate student outcomes? "A lot of people do a degree as that is the expected next step in the life of a young person. I think the process of choosing A-levels should have been supplemented with advice on which jobs are attainable with which degrees (if indeed a degree is even needed)."

"I do feel slightly lost as I don't know what I want to do anymore. I'm unsure how to use my degree — if I can at all. It's strange hunting for jobs now."

This feeling of disappointment is likely going to be exacerbated by Covid-19. A report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies predicts that those who graduate in 2020 will suffer a decade of economic scarring as a consequence of the pandemic.

Top jobs to which young people aspired included professional gamer and a sportsperson, according to the Disconnected report. No one can predict exactly what Covid-19 will do to the job market but it is unlikely to create an enormous demand for footballers.

Alarming as that all sounds, there is no need to lock up your dreams and throw away the key just yet. Improvements may be needed to career education in schools and universities but by setting themselves deadlines and educating themselves young people can also take steps to ensure they are not destined for disappointment.

Whatever you think of her politics, Esther McVey MP, who ran for the Conservative leadership in 2019, is an example of someone who has achieved success in multiple careers despite adversity. Although she grew up in Liverpool in the 1980s amid high levels of unemployment, McVey became the first person in her family to attend university, she became a television presenter and then rose through the ranks to Cabinet level as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions under Theresa May.

She explained to *Finito World* that adversity had spurred her on and she achieved success by ensuring her dreams were always founded in reality: "I was growing up to the music of UB40, with the lyric I am the One in Ten, or to the Specials who sang: 'This town is coming like a ghost town'. I had that in the back of my mind and I guess I used that as a fuel or as an energy. All I knew is these are the statistics and then I don't want to be a statistic - a reminder of a world that doesn't care."

While McVey was paying her way through a law degree by working as a waitress in Covent Garden, she decided she wanted to go into the media.

"No one can predict exactly what Covid-19 will do to the job market, but it is unlikely to create an enormous demand for footballers."

McVey shares the best advice she was given by her father, who thought success would be achieved by – perhaps counterintuitively - limiting dreams. 'My dad said: "Well, if you want to go into the media, you better put a time limit on it. Don't be a wannabe or a could be. If you're going to do it, you'd better give it 100 percent and put a time limit on because then you need to go back to law

Esther McVey, Member of Parliament for Tatton since 2017

And then working as a waitress for three or four years I kind of thought: "Oh no, I've enjoyed it but this isn't an outlet for me."

if these doors or this opportunity doesn't open up.' McVey adds: 'The clock is ticking and there are other things you can do. I think it's just as important to close an avenue down that isn't for you," she added.

Putting a deadline on dreams also proved successful for David Nicholls. He decided he wanted to be an actor despite the fact that, by his own humble admission, he could "barely act".

"As well as putting a time limit on dreams, it is wise to do as much research as possible on what the dream actually involves."

When we contacted Nicholls, he told us he's wary of giving advice and that his advice generally "stinks". But his story is worth considering.

He spent around five years being an understudy and playing bit parts. "I don't think I ever spoke more than four lines in a play. I gave myself a deadline which was 29 and if I wasn't playing slightly larger roles, not huge roles then I would give up," he told Elizabeth Day's How to Fail podcast.

He did give up and he has since written five novels and adapted each for the screen, including *One Day*, starring Oscar-winning actor Anne Hathaway.

As well as putting a time limit on dreams, it is wise to do as much research as possible on what the dream actually involves: Can you get work experience? Will it be worth the low pay? Is it really for you?

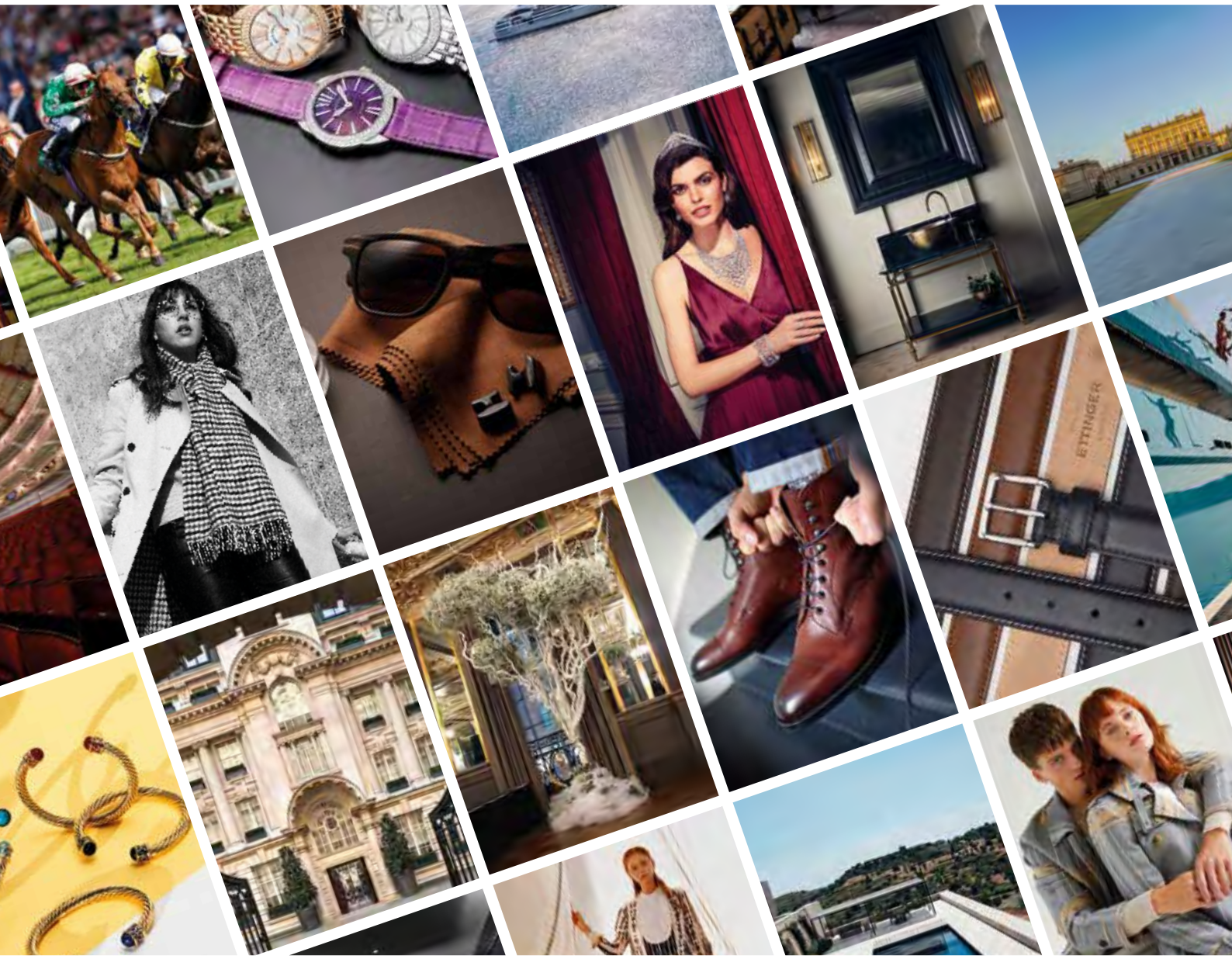
Esther McVey said: "I always thought: "Ah, would I want to own my own restaurant chain? And then working as a waitress for three or four years I kind of thought: "Oh no, I've enjoyed it but this isn't an outlet for me."

She adds: "Opening up your life is important and now you can do that on the internet, you can do that through research."

It may seem like uninspiring advice but giving up on dreams can mean finding career satisfaction in reality. My best friend didn't become a lion tamer but she has just been offered a job as a farm vet. She says she's more like a pig tamer. It's not quite as glamorous but it will pay her bills and she is delighted. Vets are also listed on the Government's occupation shortage - a good place to go for career advice.

And I think Mrs Turner would be pleased too. f

THE GAME-CHANGING APP



CONNECTING LUXURY BRANDS WITH DISCERNING CUSTOMERS

ISO Luxury, is a Member's Lifestyle and Concierge Club encompassing over 140 predominantly British heritage and world-renowned luxury brands and services. App users benefit from unrivalled promotions in-store and online. Receive invites to private dinners, fashion shows and high-end events, enjoy meet and greets with brand CEO's and factory visits, book boutique VIP appointments and more. You can also revel in exhilarating cultural and sporting experiences, as well as a concierge service that harnesses expertise in tracking down rare and hard-to-find luxury items.
Discover a world of hidden privileges and join us at membership@isoluxury.com

ISOLUXURY.COM
INSTAGRAM: ISO_LUXURY

CARRICK

ISO

LUXURY


IoD ACADEMY
WHERE DIRECTORS ARE MADE
Launching IoD Virtual Courses
Internationally recognised qualifications and bite-size CPD sessions delivered online
iod.com/virtual

Shakespeare and the Plague

RUNAWAYS FLEEING FROM THE PLAGUE

The life of William Shakespeare has lessons for how to make the best of your talents during a time of pandemic, writes Robert Golding

In January 1593, the Privy Council of Elizabeth I issued the following order: 'Forasmuch as by the certificate of the last week it appeareth the infection doth increase…we think it fit that all manner of concourse and public meetings of the people at plays, bear-baitings, bowlings and other like assemblies for sports be forbidden.'

This was bad news for many, but perhaps especially so for a young playwright who was beginning to come out of the shadow of Christopher Marlowe and forge a place at the forefront of the city's theatre. At the time of the plague's outbreak, a certain William Shakespeare had begun to find his voice.

Though plague was a fact of Elizabethan life, it must have come as a setback. His life up until that point had not been without gamble. William – Will, as he appears to have been known to friends – had left his wife and family behind in Stratford-upon-Avon and embarked on a career in the slightly louche world of the contemporary theatre.

The language of the edict with its courtly leisure – 'it appeareth the infection doth increase' – shouldn't blind us to the cataclysmic impact on Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Shakespeare's contemporary John Stow – responsible for so much of our knowledge of Elizabethan London – recorded that 11,000 out of 200,000 died between December 1592 and December 1593.

The Elizabethan plague was, of course, far worse than anything we have experienced in 2020. People died in the street, rendering death an ever-present aspect of daily experience. We might miss, for example, the force of the famous insult in *Romeo and Juliet*: 'A plague on both your houses'. What is being wished here is something far more awful than we, even as we live out this unsettling year, can imagine.

"We might miss, for example, the force of the famous insult in Romeo and Juliet: 'A plague on both your houses.'

What is being wished here is something far more awful than we, even as we live out this unsettling year, can imagine."

It ought to be a certain comfort to us now, to realise that Shakespeare's life – among the most marvellous that history records – was beset by plague at every turn. And those of us who fear even a vaccine won't put an end to our woes might remind themselves that plague was both a constant and a mutating reality for Elizabethans.

"And those of us who fear even a vaccine won't put an end to our woes, might remind themselves that plague was both a constant and a mutating reality for Elizabethans."

There was a serious bout of plague in Warwickshire the year of Shakespeare's birth; the young Will would not have been expected to survive. Whatever talk may have swirled about 'a merrie meeting' having precipitated the playwright's death in 1616 at the age of 52, there is nothing to say it wasn't the proximate cause of his death. We worry about a second wave of coronavirus – our finest poet existed within an unabating wave of mortality.

Yet he continued – and not only that, time and again reinvented himself. The plays and poems which follow on from the big plague years are evidence of a profound pooling of resources and a taking stock. *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* follow on from the plague year of 1593. They exhibit a richness, and even an urgency, difficult to discern in the ghoulish *Titus Andronicus* or the bombastic *Henry VI* trilogy, written the year before the plague struck.

But William Baker points out in his book

William Shakespeare, that between 1603 and 1613, London's theatreland was closed for 78 months. Though the poet inhabited a society without any social safety net, let alone the largesse of today's furlough scheme, there are lessons here for today's young people starting out on their careers.

In 1593, Shakespeare was swift to manoeuvre when the severity of that particular bout of plague became evident. Faced with an income gap due to a sudden pestilence, he was in no different a position to an airline pilot or live events manager today.

So what did he do? He launched himself immediately as a courtly poet. For a country boy, it was an act of tremendous gumption, under the patronage of the Earl of Southampton. We therefore have two epic poems - *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece* – which might be termed plague poems. Each breathes freshness, health and life; they must have been cathartic to those reading them, and indeed these long poems were hits among the student population at the Inns of Court.

For some times, the theory has circulated – and been brilliantly argued on the website The Shakespeare Code – that Shakespeare was using existing connections to forge his career: it is argued that Shakespeare had in fact taught and conducted secretarial work in Titchfield, where the Earls of Southampton lived, prior to the plague. This might have particular resonance for those casting around for contacts during the time of coronavirus: open that contact book. It also shows the willingness of our greatest mind to undertake menial tasks if it meant getting in close proximity to someone with the power to make a difference to his life.

What is clear is that Shakespeare was flexible and imaginative; at the critical point, he was willing to imagine another version of his life. He also remained true to his gifts. There is a strong hint in Sonnet 111 that Shakespeare found playwrighting a drudgery: 'my nature is subsumed/ to what it works in like the dyer's hand'. He seems to lament his low birth. But when the moment came, he didn't attempt the impossible. There is a strong pragmatic streak about Will; he might seem in the stratosphere now but this was no dreamer.

What also might chime with today's young is that he remained patient and took the long view. He might have been forgiven for thinking in 1593 that the long-term prospects for life in the theatre weren't good. What was there to stop plague returning and scotching year after year of possible revenue? But he appears to have kept his options open, and retained connections within theatreland even while branching out into poetry.

There is a strong hint throughout his career that Shakespeare had a quiet talent both for friendship – contemporaries would refer to him as 'sweet' and 'honey-tongued' – but also for business relationships. In his last will, he would bequeath memorial rings to

William Shakespeare: the Chandos portrait

the actors John Heminges and Henry Condell; they would repay his memory by editing the First Folio in 1623, seven years after the poet's death.

This was networking, as it were, from beyond the grave. The hard realities of inhabiting a plague-riddled society appear to have made Shakespeare not just a better poet but a better businessman. This has sometimes been an inconvenient fact to those who would have preferred the Bard to be more Keatsian – more head-in-the-clouds, and klutzy with money. The record shows he was anything but.

Instead, Shakespeare continually found ways to expand not only his poetic capacity and his knowledge of human nature, but also to develop what we now call his career. In 1594, he bought a one-eighth share in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the company which upon the death of Elizabeth I and the ascension

"We therefore have two epic poems...Each breathes freshness, health and life; they must have been cathartic to those reading them."

of James I would become the King's Men: Shakespeare saw the main chance and took it. Again, there is a hint – but no real proof – that he was utilising his connections. It has long been rumoured that it was the Earl of Southampton who loaned Shakespeare the capital. If so, we might wonder whether he wisely used his time in lockdown to deepen existing connections.

There is an onwards pressure to Shakespeare's life which suggests a refusal to become down-hearted from which we might learn. The years show him steadily more active both as a property owner in London and Stratford, as a shareholder in his theatre company, and as someone with small businesses on the side in malt dealing, in lending, even going so far as to turn a property he owned in Henley Street into a pub.

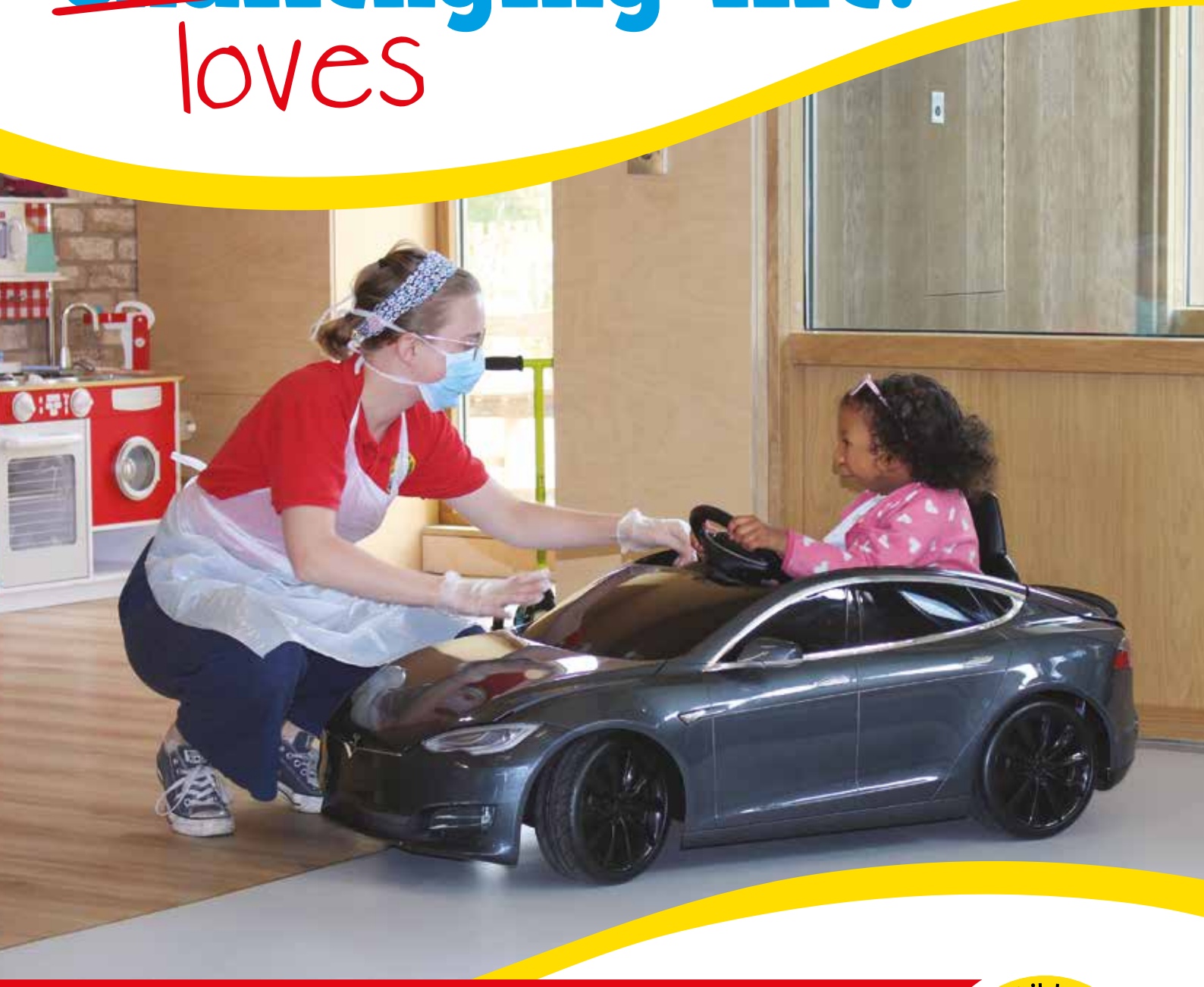
As for the plays, it's true that they don't always exist within a milieu of work which we recognise, unless that milieu is the court. But once you look past that you find a good deal is implied about loyalty and about the dignity of work, and indeed a certain amount about the kind of adaptability which we can vaguely detect in Shakespeare's own life.

It has been said that the characters Shakespeare most admires are Horatio in *Hamlet*, Kent in *King Lear*, Cassio in *Othello*, and Enobarbus in *Anthony and Cleopatra*. These are the characters still standing at the end in the tragedies; those who will be charged with rebuilding the state. This a recurring type: the hard-working, flexible, loyal aide who becomes clearer in his moral purpose as difficulty mounts.

These are plays written by a man thrown back continually on his own resources, and who time again rose to that situation. William Shakespeare found new things within himself – new forms of language, yes, but also new forms of life. His relevance ought not be surprising. Every period of history has found in Shakespeare a friend and teacher – but it's fascinating during these unsettling times to see how much his life, and not just his poetry, has to teach us. f

A plague upon it: Shakespeare never let the plague stifle his creativity.

Freya is a ~~patient~~ child. She ~~has a challenging~~ loves life.



Making every precious moment count,
through coronavirus and beyond.
Please donate at **noahsarkhospice.org.uk/donate**

noah's ark children's hospice

THE INAUGURAL FINITO EMPLOYABILITY SPECIAL REPORT

FINITO WORLD PRESENTS THE FINDINGS OF ITS FIRST EMPLOYABILITY SURVEY, AND THERE ARE SILVER LININGS AMID THE CLOUDS

It's almost a commonplace to say that this year represents an inflection point in world history.

If someone only with experience of life pre-Covid-19 were plucked somehow out of the slipstream of time and deposited in our virus-stricken era they might not immediately notice that the world had changed utterly.

But changed it has – it's just that the scale change hasn't yet filtered through to our collective sense of ourselves. This matters when seeking a job; how do we know how to present ourselves unless we know what employers are looking for? It also matters when running a business: amid the helter-skelter of familiarising ourselves with the furlough scheme, we might miss the wider strategic picture.

The enormity of the ructions creates difficulty for government. The tendency – surely a correct one – is to respond to immediate crises and tensions, but the necessity of doing so will inevitably leave others to simmer.

Happily, help is on the way. As we compiled our second issue, *Finito World* asked its respondents to pause and consider some questions about the state of play as Britain heads into the autumn. The response was exceptional – and fascinating.

It is said in economics that one of the best ways to tell a downturn is by looking at the private aviation sector. When the superrich start selling private jets, you know the economy is heading south, as your private plane is usually the first asset to get rid of.

The *Finito World* employability survey seeks to do something similar: we spoke to the crème de la crème - those charged with making decisions - with the goal of providing students, job-seekers and business-owners an early indicator as to what trends we're seeing in the world of employment. In the future we shall look at issues such as productivity, salary expectations, hiring processes, AI trends, and crisis response mechanisms in granular detail, though we have also provided initial reaction in these pages from industry experts and well-informed insiders on some of these key topics.

It is worth noting the rarefied nature of the recipients of the questionnaire: our respondents included former Cabinet ministers – from both parties – as well as FTSE 100 CEOs, and people at the summit of their professions, from banking to law, from marketing to IT and sports administration.

What follows is an image of a shell-shocked society – one which has been groping for answers in these last months. It is a world where the young do not know what to expect from their careers – and where employers do not yet know what they will be able to provide.

Everything is in flux: the question of business travel continues to play on people's minds; new technologies are being grappled with and tested; and office life has been replaced by the necessity of working from home (see also our office architecture features on page 122).

All this has created a different set of requirements for employers, and this in turn has seismic ramifications for students who will need to think differently in order to prosper in this new world.

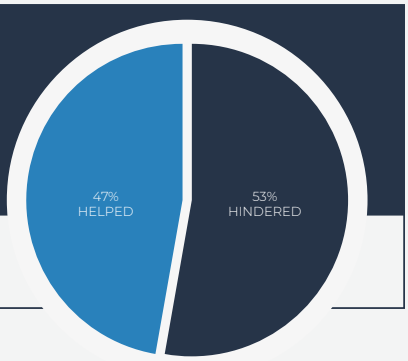
Finally, when we caught up with David Attenborough earlier (see our exclusive interview on page 32) in the summer he couldn't have been clearer about the need for urgent action on the climate problem. It only felt right that our first survey should recognise that this crisis, as dramatic as it has been, takes place in the shadow of another.

Throughout this report, we have asked industry insiders to comment on our findings, and would like to register our gratitude to those who took part. ▶

QUESTION ONE

DID YOU FIND THAT THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC HELPED OR HINDERED YOUR OWN PRODUCTIVITY?

KEY FINDING: OVER HALF OF WORKERS FEEL LESS PRODUCTIVE THAN THEY DID BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.



The Chancellor Rishi Sunak can be forgiven for spending most of his time since the virus struck protecting those industries which are vulnerable. But our findings point to an alarming problem simmering underneath, relating to those who have been fortunate enough to remain in work.

Put simply, even if you have retained your job – as all our respondents had – how do you continue to be successful within it? The results are bleak. 53 percent of those we surveyed said they were less productive in their current roles as a result of the pandemic. If replicated across the economy, the financial implications – though difficult to calculate – would be seismic.

The Treasury may take heart from the fact that while many felt their productivity had been hindered, there were also those – 47 percent - who actually felt it had been helped.

But what were the drivers behind these findings? For those who felt they had been hindered, the presence of young children or teenagers in the house was a perennial problem: 'A task that would normally have taken a few hours can now take several days as my wife and I juggle childcare,' a publisher told us. There was also a worrying gender dynamic at play. One woman – a successful marketing professional – said she felt she had 'returned to the 1950s'.

And so if one were to ask what recommendations might improve the situation, it was a no-brainer for some: as we dug beneath the data we lost track of the number of respondents who advocated the return of schools.

Fortunately for those parents who are working from home – and in most cases, failing to work satisfactorily from home – at time of press this continues to track with the government's priorities.

We asked some leading thinkers in this area to offer their recommendations as to how to improve productivity. Mark Morrin, Principal Research Consultant at Respublica, weighed in on the results: 'Long before the pandemic hit, the UK was struggling to address its productivity problem. We know we have a regional problem that needs levelling up and a long tail of unproductive businesses, many of which will have been hit hard. It seems very likely the impact of Covid-19 will be felt most strongly in those sectors and regions that were already lagging behind and therefore exacerbating, to an even greater extent, some of these spatial differences. Recent evidence from OECD suggests that teleworking could increase productivity, although not all sectors are able to function in this way. What we do know is that all businesses will be challenged in finding their own innovation frontier, not only to recover from the current economic shock but to adapt to the new ways in which we may have to do business in the future.'

Morrin was also asked to comment on the psychology of the situation. He replied: 'CEOs are probably experiencing low level depression. There is something in the psychological profile of CEOs in large organisations which means remoteness and isolation does not work well for them. It's to do with not having people around that they can turn to, on hand; it's not easy to delegate in a virtual environment.'

And in terms of practical proposals, Morrin responded: 'This may suggest greater levels of business support, including practical advice and guidance, as well as a greater level of cooperation and knowledge-sharing between businesses in related sectors and across supply chains.'

> "A task that would normally have taken a few hours can now take several days as my wife and I juggle childcare."

Here *Finito World* took matters into its own hands, and spoke to those businesses which have cropped up to facilitate productivity. This sector has found itself accelerating rapidly – especially those with a technological bent which can be easily delivered remotely during the virus. Timothy Jackson, Principal Consultant at Radtac, is one of the world's leading experts in Agile, an advanced management system which enables companies to navigate complexity and change. Welcoming the survey, Jackson said: 'We've seen a great divide over the past couple of months in productivity. For many, working remotely has caused people to run back-to-back calls and time to focus on completing work is at a premium which explains why many people are seeing a reduction in productivity.' We also spoke with Robert Peake, a senior associate of Next Action Associates, and critically-acclaimed poet, who provides us with his own recommendations about productivity (*see opposite*)

Robert Peake

PRODUCTIVITY IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

"I must create a system, or be enslav'd by another man's."

— William Blake

In my work as an effectiveness coach, I have had the pleasure of working with some of the brightest and busiest people throughout the UK.

Whether they are senior leaders of global companies, cutting-edge academic researchers, top surgeons or hit record producers, I have found that successful people all have one thing in common: they have their own systems to help keep them focused and on track.

The combination of new remote working practices, huge shifts in marketplace demand, and global economic uncertainty means that focus has never been a more precious commodity than in the Covid-19 era. That is, whether you are just entering the workforce or building the A-list teams of tomorrow, you must be able to navigate change without losing sight of what matters most.

One of the most popular systems for maintaining focus, and the one that I teach, is called Getting Things Done® or simply "GTD®". It was invented by David Allen, whose book on the topic has sold more than two million copies and been translated into thirty languages. The methodology is comprehensive to one's work and life, and I have been practicing it for more than two decades.

Yet certain elements of GTD can be implemented right away to great effect. According to a recent survey, 86 percent of people already practising some aspect of GTD feel that it enables them to be more productive in the current environment despite an explosion of virtual meetings, conflicting priorities, and other challenges to maintaining work-life balance. [https://www.next-action.co.uk/new-world-of-work-survey/]

The fundamental principle is simple: you need a good system, and your brain isn't one. Trying to keep and prioritise all of your commitments in your head is both ineffective and stressful. The proof is already in front of you in the form of your calendar. However, while most people acknowledge that they need an external system to manage their appointments, surprisingly few people have equally effective systems to orientate themselves in between meetings.

Yet figuring out what to focus on when it is just you and your laptop alone in a room is actually one of the most important parts of your job.

The modern workplace is one wherein success must be defined and redefined in relation to constant change. Furthermore, many of the traditional company-wide approaches to keeping focus such as open-plan offices and face-to-face meetings have been upended by Covid-19 restrictions. Having a system of your own is therefore key to being able to trust that you are making the right choices — for yourself and for the company — without anyone looking over your shoulder. So how do you get started?

The first major mindset shift that successful people make is to start capturing their commitments in as few places as possible. For example, anytime they agree to do something, they write it down. I have never met a highly successful person who didn't take notes in meetings (or have notes taken for them), which they later review not just for content, but to understand who agreed to do what by when.

Likewise, out of the barrage of emails, texts, chat messages, and Zoom calls that await you at the start of each working day, you must identify what is actionable for you, get it "captured" as quickly as possible, and make sure it ends up in places that you will regularly review (out-of-sight, out-of-mind in a "notes" app on your phone, for example, doesn't count).

These basic notes and lists, however, are not enough on their own. Most "to-do" lists, while better than nothing, are incomplete and poorly stated by the standards of the GTD methodology. This is because when you consult them to decide what to do, you have to re-think what the next step is, and what will be true when it is fully done. The same goes for email, where the subject lines almost never read: "Here is your next step and here is what 'job done' looks like for you."

Instead, those two key elements — what's next, and what the finish line looks like — are your job to figure out. Once you have done so, GTD suggests that you write it down in a way that won't require re-thinking when you come back to read it later on. Whether that is done on a paper list or in a sophisticated digital tool is up to you. It is the thinking (and not having to re-think) that matters most.

More than anything, what I notice about high-performing people is that they are internally motivated, and that they care about doing what they said they would do. This, in fact, is an excellent definition of integrity, one of those character traits that goes hand-in-hand with leadership. By contrast, those who rely on external motivators alone —such as looming deadlines and reminders from the boss — and especially those who think it unavoidable to let things "slip through the cracks"— are often left wondering why they never seem to get ahead.

Sifting out the "signal" of your commitments from the "noise" of information overload is entirely practical. Yet as a practice, it can take time. Likewise, we are not trained in traditional schooling to define successful outcomes and clear next steps when a problem comes our way. We are often told to think about problems, but rarely told how.

The best way I have found is to simply

think of problems as projects yet to be defined and done. That is, for every difficult situation there is an outcome on the other side of it that you want to be true. Identifying that outcome, and then taking a next step, is a key to bouncing back from most setbacks.

Companies are looking for "self-starters" to hire, and managers are looking for "can-do" people to promote. Beyond attitude, though, the reality is that you need tools that work for you to get things defined, organised, and ultimately done. The GTD book is an easy read and, to my mind, a complete manual for staying effective in the Covid-19 age.

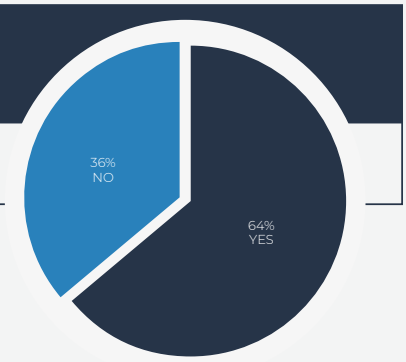
Many people are recognising that how they work needs to fundamentally change in order to thrive in the present climate. They need to work on how they work rather than just working longer and harder. As a result, I have never been busier.

My hope is that we will all emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic stronger and more capable. What I know for sure is that those who create good systems have the best possible chance of doing just that.

For practical tips on how to work smarter and live better, and further information on GTD seminars and coaching, visit: next-action.co.uk/working-from-home

QUESTION TWO
WILL YOU BE KEEPING YOUR OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE THROUGHOUT 2021?

KEY FINDING: THE OFFICE ISN'T DEAD YET



"We are seeing a lot around remote-working, productivity, performance and organisational culture."

Just as we were all thinking we might get used to a new work-from-home norm, our findings showed a world that is – for the time being at least – keeping to its office arrangements.

Even so, when you think that 36 percent of respondents have definitely decided not to do so that still marks a major shift. What this means is that the balance of power, as Olly Olsen, CEO of the Office Group, tells us in our feature beginning on page 122, has moved 'towards the employee'.

The findings are perhaps more alarming for the property development sector when you consider that of those 64 percent, many are also wondering which way to go beyond 2021. A senior figure in cricket administration puts it: 'We haven't made any changes as property and employment commitments take time to unwind.'

But Olsen is clear that as a society we're unlikely to revert to a full time work-from-home environment. 'Although I've enjoyed the sabbatical I never thought I'd have…not for one moment do I think this is something I want to carry on with,' he tells us. 'It only works, when everyone else is at home in their gardens. When you're the only one; your kids are at school; your wife's walking the dog; and your work colleagues are in the office, you're at home because you're working hard or taking it easy. And everyone's been taking it easy.'

Perhaps then the productivity problem might be related to home-working. Mark Morrin of Respublica says: 'We are seeing a lot around remote-working, productivity, performance and organisational culture. This seems to have accelerated during Covid-19. The broad story is that organisations that can work from home have adapted well in the first phase, utilising technology. But we are now in the 'sophomore slump' where social capital is drained, and workers are feeling less visible. There is lots of evidence about the relationship of visibility to productivity. So the solution points towards opening up the workplace as soon as possible.' For more on this issue turn to page 122 for our deep dive into office architecture.

QUESTION THREE

MUCH HAS CHANGED FUNDAMENTALLY IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS. WHAT CHARACTER TRAITS DO YOU NOW CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST USEFUL IN AN EMPLOYEE?

More often than not, the last six months have seen companies think more about how to furlough or retain their staff than about how to hire new ones.

It has been a time of consolidation rather than expansion. But the world's momentum is remorseless, and this year saw the graduation of around 600,000 students, released into a labour market which will be as tough as any in living memory.

"No virus can alter overnight the realities of what is desirable in an employee."

So if and when the economy begins to return to normal, what traits will these business leaders be looking for in a future employee?

In one sense, excellence is perennial, and the world never changes quite as much as we think it does. No virus can alter overnight the realities of what is desirable in an employee. One CEO in the financial services space told us: 'A lot of the character traits we had previously considered to be the most useful and important remain the same.'

But that respondent continues: 'Even so, the current situation has highlighted the following in particular: willingness and ability to adapt to changes in the workplace environment; flexibility; compassion for others (including team members and clients); as well as reliability and honesty.'

This respondent spoke for many. As readers will see from our word cloud (*see overleaf*), the words most often used in the responses to our survey were 'adaptability' and 'flexibility'. With Covid-19, the world has shown us how subject it is to change, and now businesses require staff who understand this, and can prosper within these conditions. One respondent put it succinctly: 'Colleagues who respond to change positively and creatively will be an asset at a time when we expect volatility and uncertainty to affect business as usual.'

So what exactly do those we surveyed mean by adaptability? Often, the context of the reply was illuminating. One spoke of the need for 'adaptability, creativity, honesty and resourcefulness' – suggesting that being flexible is in itself a kind of creativity and integrity.

"With Covid-19, the world has shown us how subject it is to change, and now businesses require staff who understand this, and can prosper within these conditions."

Another respondent, a senior figure in digital marketing, elaborated on the idea: 'Rather than purely training, we now value the ability to "jump in the deep end and try swimming".' This chimes with the words of a senior figure in organisational politics who defined adaptability as 'a can-do attitude, and a willingness to fit in with whatever is needed to get the job done.'

Flexibility appears throughout these responses as an aspect of resilience. The former education secretary Nicky Morgan explained to us that she views resilience as an 'unchanged' factor while seeing flexibility and adaptability as having become 'more important'. She added that IT skills would now become more important under the new normal.

So how might we display resilience? Here answers varied from 'self-confidence in our new virtual meeting/greeting environment' to 'self-motivation to ensure continued taking of the initiative.' Another respondent spoke of the need for 'the ability to cope with very different working arrangements.' For another, 'making deadlines' under the new arrangements was important.

Other individuals we surveyed pointed to the importance of a more rounded character at this time. A business-owner in the legal space explained that: 'A sense of humour is also very important and the ability to work as part of a team and under pressure.' This answer resurfaced on a few occasions and we have explored the topic in more detail in our feature beginning on page 54.

So the results of our survey show what is desirable to employers – and that's all very well if you happen to already be in employment. But what if you've just graduated, or you're shifting careers, and you need to get your foot in the door?

We spoke to our mentors to get their view on how to weave our findings into your online profile and your job search. Meanwhile, our word cloud offers job-seekers a comprehensive image of our findings. (*See overleaf.*)

KEY FINDING: CHARACTER IS ALL

Sophia Petrides

How to show empathy and compassion

Empathy and compassion are vital attributes that contribute towards cohesiveness and camaraderie in an organisation, in particular during times of crisis.

Students can demonstrate empathy and compassion by providing examples where they have contributed towards their community and in particular supporting those less fortunate than themselves. Have they volunteered to support a charity? During their university years, did they go over and above their own course work and reached out to any struggling students to support with their exam preparation or thesis? By answering this question, employers can also see their level of emotional intelligence.

Bear in mind how you communicate

Generation Z are known for not being timely communicators as they are constantly distracted by social media. In a working environment they need to understand the implications if they do not communicate in a timely manner. If they are searching for a job, timely communication is vital, especially as we live in such a fast competitive world and in particular during Covid-19, where we have seen a huge influx of job losses, if students do not communicate timely with a future employer relating to a job role/offer it is a case of "you snooze you lose".

During the interview process, students need to demonstrate how confident they are asking for support and also having the ability to offer support to demonstrate they are a team player. Employers do not want to hire people who do not have the courage to ask for help. In particular now where employees are working from home, it is imperative that students act quickly and seek support, otherwise, it will put a lot of pressure on their team to take on their work if a project is not completed accurately and timely.

Make sure you demonstrate adaptability and agility

Only those organisations which are savvy at restructuring their business effectively, during times of crisis, will be able to thrive and grow their business. They will be able to achieve this by fully utilising their employee skills and instead of working regionally it is all about cross-regional and cross-sector collaboration. During times of adversity, organisations always look to reduce their workforce, therefore they need employees who are adaptable to change, who go over and above their roles to support others and have the agility to work, at a moment's notice, with colleagues across regions and other departments and sectors.

Students should be able to demonstrate they take ownership and accountability of a project and complete this in timely fashion, no matter how many hours it takes. Generation Z struggle with long hours, however, if they want to succeed, in particular during times of crisis, they need to be able to get the job done, even if they have to work with different time zones.

An example to showcase their adaptability and agility is how they coped leaving home at a young age to attend university in another city or country, without having their family and friends close to them.

Another example for those students who play in group sports e.g. football, they could showcase their adaptability and agility by being able to play from different positions and still achieve great results for their team.

Make sure you're solutions-driven

Most organisations have a reactive approach to their business and as the world is moving fast year-on-year and in particular during times of adversity, leaders do not have the luxury to implement a long-term business plan, instead they are under constant pressure from the board and shareholders to provide fast results. Therefore, organisations are looking for employees who can demonstrate they are able to think on their feet.

An example where students can demonstrate this could be during their summer placement/internship where they provided support to a team and could use an example how they took their own initiative to research for a solution and successfully presented this.

Dana James-Edwards

The recent graduates who are about to enter the current job market have already in many ways showed that they possess the traits business leaders identified as being required for success in the new landscape. They have been adaptable, flexible and resilient across the period. They have stepped up to successfully complete their degrees virtually from home and adjusted to being assessed using artificial intelligence via video interviews, and to virtual interviews during lockdown. All of the graduates I have encountered over the period have remained positive and determined despite the recession, rapidly changing industries, moving goalposts and start dates and for some the disappointments of retracted job offers. In my opinion they are ready to work and be assets to the organisations lucky enough to have them.

If you're a jobseeker reading this article

you already have a leg up on others in the job market as you've been given some great insight into what employers are looking for. My advice would be to start preparing for interview by pulling together clear examples showcasing when you have exhibited the attitudes, skills and behaviours outlined in the interviews above. It's also not too early to start practising sharing those examples out loud, making sure that you express yourself clearly and concisely in a way that truly highlights the way you can provide what employers are looking for. As it's likely that many interviews will continue to take place in the virtual world, my best advice would be to get prepared for that by video recording yourself as you practise. Review the recordings to assess how you come across on camera and take steps for improvement where necessary to ensure that when things start moving again you're ahead of the game.

Robin Rose

Employers with positions to fill, post Covid-19, can be exceptionally demanding when it comes to selecting new staff. Pre Covid-19, job descriptions traditionally contained two lists of requirements.

These were defined as, "Essentials" and "Desirables" - or alternatively, "Must-haves" and "Nice-to-haves". In 2019, typical desirables might have been, "fluent in French" or "good with Excel". The new norm has empowered employers to promote these to the "essential" category, meaning these definitions have become somewhat blurred.

What does it mean for candidates? It means there's little point in completing application forms or sending CVs where they can't evidence the relevant qualifications, skills or experience advertised.

But if you get the opportunity to be interviewed, where do character traits fit in? Sometimes, these increasingly essential character traits are referred to as "soft skills". An employer might advertise for someone 'adaptable, flexible, positive, compassionate, reliable, creative' and so forth. But that's more a statement of what they'd like. It is difficult to evidence such characteristics on paper. Such activity is about as useful as seeking a fit through a Tinder profile.

But the fact is that, given the chance, most employers would trade off the desirable - and even some of the essential skills - for good evidence of the soft skill characteristics. What then should candidates do to improve their prospects in the new?

Frankly most success comes from the oldest process. In many ways the cliché "It's who you know not what you know that counts" has gained more relevance in the post Covid-19 employment market.

Employers instinctively know that a candidate introduced to them by someone they know and trust is more likely to possess the characteristics they want. This is why employees are frequently encouraged to introduce a friend. Valued employees will be aware of corporate culture and would not be likely to introduce inappropriate candidates. It is not unusual for employers to also network to try and fill vacancies with candidates that possess relevant characteristics. If employers are networking, so should candidates.

All of which means students seeking employment need to consider adopting a strategy of focused networking. At Finito, candidates are encouraged to study potential employers. Who are their suppliers? Who works there? What are their LinkedIn connections? Who are their competition? Their trade connections?

It's about seeking out potential connections and enhancing interpersonal skills.

That's not easy, and a good friend or trained mentor can make a serious difference here. Candidates need to know how to exhibit industry-valued characteristics at casual meetings whether actual or virtual. But it all comes to networking – and if you want to know how to do that, see my tips below.

Finito World's Guide to Networking

1

To be considered interesting you must be interested in others

2

It's always a good idea to think about what you can do for them as well as what they could do for you

3

People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care

4

Do not look for pity, better talk about the opportunities for changing direction that circumstances have given you

5

Be careful with enthusiasm; over enthusiasm is just as off-putting as a lack of it

6

Avoid complaining even if others are. Misery seeks company. Better seek the company of winners.

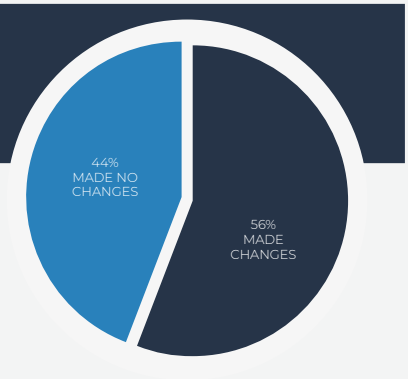
7

The only real way an employer knows you have the right character is if you are introduced by someone they know and trust.

QUESTION FOUR

HAS THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS MADE YOU PLAN DIFFERENTLY FOR A POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS?

KEY FINDING: AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-HELPFUL VIRUS



It has been observed that coronavirus unfolded under empty skies. Throughout there has been a palpable sense of a profound shift in our lifestyle that goes far beyond the impact of the virus.

Finito World therefore asked respondents whether this virus – in telling us what a crisis looks like – has made people plan ahead any differently for a possible environmental crisis. The initial findings were striking with 56 percent of respondents saying that they had instituted a shift in their business practices, leaving 44 percent unchanged.

Green Peer Natalie Bennett responded warmly to our results: 'That finding reflects what I'm experiencing and what I'm hearing. It's that recognition that things can change very, very fast. We've been saying you have to move with great urgency to net zero by 2030, and people have been saying that the world doesn't change that fast and that we have to be patient, and it takes time for business models to turn around.'

And what did she have to say to the 44 percent who had made no change? Perhaps surprisingly, Bennett refused to be overly critical: 'First of all, of course people tend to find change threatening. There have been a lot of emotions in this year, and people have been through a difficult time. It's comforting to think things can go back to normal – that's an understandable and human response.'

She added pointedly: 'The 56 percent will be successful and will lead and will be adapted for the new circumstance.

We wanted to dig beneath the surface of our results and asked what kind of changes people were making.

The responses varied, with one respondent saying that she aimed to initiate 'more work away from static offices' adding that she recognised office life as 'essential albeit in a less expensive and less travel-demanding mode'.

> "It's that recognition that things can change very, very fast. We've been saying you have to move with great urgency to net zero by 2030, and people have been saying that the world doesn't change that fast."

One senior individual in financial services explained how a rounded climate strategy might look: 'We have appreciated the clean air, quiet roads, technology and the ability to work remotely. We will be concentrating on contributing to the betterment of the environment by limiting the numbers of our staff travelling into our office. This will be by rotating commuters and shielding those more vulnerable. We also plan to reduce our operating space thereby cutting overheads. In light of the current pandemic, social distancing will be of paramount importance until this particular virus is completely eradicated or a working vaccine is readily available.

Person-to-person meetings will require sanctioning by our human resources department. Proposed meetings will be graded based on the necessity with criteria yet to be finalised.'

This went hand in hand with the 'move towards an online business model' in the words of one other person we surveyed. Another explained how less travel and a greater move towards the digital side are two aspects of the same coin. 'We accept that the "new normal" for the foreseeable future will involve less face-to-face meetings and more virtual meetings.

We will ensure that the content on our website and communications with contacts and clients is both very topical, interesting and helpful.' This desire to remain 'compelling' was also echoed by others we spoke to.

The question of travel surfaced time and again and that also might have been what people referred to when they spoke of structural shift. Another respondent spoke of the need for an 'intelligent storage of necessities'. Some firms were also thinking in terms of home and office recycling; and there were others too who were looking to 'target a more local client base'.

But while there seemed to be a growing consensus about the need to adapt and change in advance of a possible climate crisis, *Finito World* decided to take things a stage further and asked Mark Campanile, the founder and executive chairman of the Carbon Tracker Initiative to provide his reaction to the survey and he came back with a specific recommendation as to what carbon-footprint-minded businesses can do next. As before we have also provided a word cloud of our results. (*see overleaf*).

Mark Campanale

COVID-19, CLIMATE AND PENSIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic has upended the global economy and shaken public faith in the ability of governments to act decisively in the interests of citizens during a crisis.

Yet the unprecedented, disruptive policy actions taken to lockdown economies and reduce Covid-19 transmission have exposed the unwillingness of politicians to seriously intervene in another looming crisis, from which it is not possible for us to self-isolate. Climate change.

In the absence of swift policy action by national governments to deliver on the promise of the 2015 Paris Agreement, many business leaders – as shown by the results of the *Finito World* survey - are now asking themselves what they can do to prepare their firms and staff for a future increasingly disrupted by climate change.

One of the most powerful levers we have at our disposal to fight global warming is finance. Where we invest today shapes our future tomorrow – yet most of us currently have little visibility or control over where financial assets like our pension funds are invested. This needs to change.

Some 79 percent of people polled for *Good Money Week 2019* agree that we are responsible as individuals to take action to combat climate change, yet 76.5 percent of us remain unaware that our pension has an impact on the environment at all.

The disconnect between public attitudes on climate and financial sector investment practice means consumer pressure is not being applied to decarbonise our pension funds.

An analysis by *Telegraph Money* of the ten biggest pension providers' default funds found that pension fund money had been sleepwalking into stocks that were negatively affecting the climate, with only one of the top-10 funds, Nest, having no fossil-fuel producing firms among its largest investments.

This is one area where business managers can take an active leadership role, creating space for conversations on pension fund investment choices and ensuring fossil fuel free alternative investment options are made available for staff.

Where company pensions are invested is a top 10 issue workers would like to discuss with their boss - with *Good Money Week* polling finding 12.6 percent of workers wanted to discuss issues such as pension investments in arms, tobacco and fossil fuels and potential alternatives.

Research by Royal London has found 40 percent of people want to be offered fossil-fuel free investments 'as standard', but with a strong age gradient – 54 percent of under 35s support this proposition compared with only 34 percent of over 55s.

In July 2020, it was announced the Nest pension fund with nine million UK members would begin divesting from fossil fuels to ensure alignment with the government Net Zero strategy.

Reducing fossil fuel investments is no longer viewed as an ethical or moral imperative alone. With the energy sector the worst performing sector over the past decade, money managers have a fiduciary duty to manage the investment risk posed by fossil fuel investment in a rapidly changing world, where energy transition continues apace and future demand for oil, gas and coal is no longer assured. f

Liz Brewer

THE *FINITO WORLD* GUIDE: HOW TO ZOOM

How do you get the most out of the new technology? *Finito World* spoke to business leaders and society etiquette expert Liz Brewer to find out

If you want to know the essence of an era, look at its new word-coinages. This year, which has been so seismic in every way, saw a wealth of new words enter the vocabulary. These include, of course: Covid-19, corona, lockdown, social distancing and flatten the curve.

But the word 'Zoom' is perhaps the most commonly used of these. Like Covid-19, it is ubiquitous and liable to be used many times a day, as all our meetings accrue. But like social distancing it can be used both as a noun and as a verb: we are 'on Zoom' but we also 'Zoom'.

Perhaps of all the words in the language it most resembles 'Google' in the way a company name has so suddenly entered proverbial usage – and with gratifying results for founder Eric Yuan who has seen his company's value skyrocket to near the $50 billion mark.

Zoom call with Sajid Javid and Jim O'Neill

This new technology isn't going anywhere. So here in seven easy steps we explain how to make it work for you:

Get the lighting right

Liz Brewer is a world-renowned events organiser and expert in social etiquette who has thought long and hard about how to present herself in a call. 'This is a visual medium so check how you appear on screen and adjust height,' she says. 'Position yourself so you're seen not sitting too close, too far, high or low, with a suitable background.' This rings true: we've all misjudged the lighting once in a while and found ourselves sitting in shadow like James Bond villains – but that's not a good look for an important meeting or a job interview.

> "This new technology isn't going anywhere."

Don't be vain or distracted

Brewer also argues that it's 'best to turn off self-view'. Vanity exists in most of us and it's easy to spend an entire call sneaking views of yourself rather than engaging with the person in front of you. It is best not to give yourself the option of assessing the calamity of your Covid-19 haircut, or that special lockdown exhaustion etched on your features. In the same way, Brewer advocates turning off everything else on your computer: 'You are on screen and will be observed so it's important to close or minimise all other distractions, screen windows and silence mobiles,' she says.

Embrace the possibilities of the medium...

Many of us have now seen the interiors of one another's homes, and thus have a sense of how people live. 'I enjoy the informality,' says the MP Robert Halfon, and even encourages the presence of children on a call. For some that can create a sense of camaraderie that can progress an understanding of the person you're talking with. For many the informality is to be embraced and might even create deeper relationships.

But realise its limitations...

When we catch up with the architect Thomas Heatherwick, he argues that the medium is unhelpful in at least one respect: 'Video conferencing doesn't create new relationships. You can sustain a connection, but you don't grow a deep connection.' And so while it's important to embrace Zoom now, we should all have an eye to those we connected with during lockdown: make sure you meet face to face with people you felt you had a connection with once it's safe to do so.

If you're a CEO, check in on your team separately

'We're all so tired with Zoom call after Zoom call,' says Carol Leonard of the Inzito Partnership, and argues that we need to think beyond Zoom. 'Think who might be vulnerable in your team. At Inzito, we have little informal social programmes to check in with people, and we do mindfulness virtually twice a week.' Thomas Heatherwick agrees: 'It's amazing how stressful these calls are.' So don't think all the company's HR needs have been taken care of by that one collective Zoom.

Remember the emotions of your co-Zoomer

Thomas Heatherwick realised after a while that he was tired of what he calls 'flat half people'. He adds: 'If we met people face to face I would never sit facing that person: it would be too confrontational. Instead I'd sit at a slight angle. Even before we'd begun talking, we'd have a sense of each other and the peripheral vision can see how confident a candidate is when they walk in.' So though it feels like your talking to an avatar, always remember the humanity of the encounter.

Remember to laugh

'Collective behaviour doesn't quite happen on Zoom,' Heatherwick observes. 'it's ping pong. You press a button and you're next in the conversation. You don't chuckle together or cringe together.' Brewer says that it is up to the host to make sure this gap is closed. But she also recommends other things like running 'speed tests to avoid freezing moments' and 'bluetooth headphones' to ensure that the sound quality facilitates the conversation.

And if all else fails...

'Well then you can always excuse yourself,' says Brewer. And for many of us that's the best part of any Zoom call. f

Clair Marr

OUR ONLINE EXPERT ON PREPARING YOUR DIGITAL PRESENCE IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

When I was asked to write about this subject back in April, no one had any idea just how big an impact the pandemic would have on our lives.

Businesses are already looking to redefine digital ways of working as staff continue to work from home. Graduates are naturally concerned that the current circumstances will severely impact career opportunities leading to greater competition in the job market*. How can we help to boost confidence amongst graduates impacted by the loss of opportunity, internships and work placements?

Effective online reputation management for those starting out on their career path is about building and maintaining trust between you and your potential employer.

Rachel Botsman, in her Ted talk, explores how the model of trust has changed historically. We began by trusting those in our local communities and that trust could be damaged or built based on our actions and reputation. As settlements grew larger, this model of trust could not scale up; living in a city, it was no longer possible to interact with every single person and our trust evolved into an institution-based model, placing our collective faith in law, government, banks and insurance.

We now live in a digital age where our lives and decisions are played out online. Institutionalised trust models have become as irrelevant today as local trust models once were. Trust is now atomised, managed and distributed by individuals to a global audience. Wherever we go, we

"Effective online reputation management for those starting out on their career path is about building and maintaining trust between you and your potential employer."

bring our digital presence with us. For some individuals this can be a real asset, while for others it's a hindrance.

Covid-19 has given us time to reflect and think about how we can present a trustworthy online profile of ourselves to potential employers. For graduates, this can be an exciting opportunity to develop new online strategies to help ensure that future stakeholders are engaged, impressed and inspired.

"Covid-19 has given us time to reflect and think about how we can present a trustworthy online profile of ourselves to potential employers."

Google Yourself

The first step is to Google your name. Are you happy with the results that appear on page one? Is there enough information about you? If you have little or no Google presence, you can be vulnerable to commentary from other sources. Google bases its opinion of you from the information fed to it. It is your right to change that perception.

Put Yourself Out There

Holding digital assets in the major ranking positions on Google page one improves the likelihood of your personal brand acting as an antidote to any negative commentary. The more positions you hold, the more you consolidate Google's perception of you.

Google the names of prominent thought leaders in the industry that you would like to work in. Take a look at what is held in each position; A quick glance at Richard Branson's Google page one results shows Wikipedia, Virgin website, social media accounts as well as Forbes contributor page. What could you learn from the positioning of a thought leader? Is there an industry publication that you could contribute to? There are many online blogs, websites, magazines and journals that are hungry for content. Boost your visibility by asking them how you can contribute. Build an association with a particular topic area. This indicates to Google the type of information that is relevant about you. Creating content offers you a solid digital footprint and gives you highly relevant or topical information to promote or share on your social media.

How do I find out what content publishers are looking for?

When we talk about 'ranking' in SEO (search engine optimisation), we refer to the relative position of a website or other web pages in the search engine results pages. For example, a natural rank in position one in Google is most desirable as users are statistically more likely to click on this. Publishers are hungry for content and keen to become the de facto resource for any subject area as high-quality, niche and high-volume output brings consistent traffic to their website. Trending topic areas can help convert new visitors to click on a website which can help to drive revenue for a publisher.

Keywords and key-phrases refer to the actual words or phrases that you input into Google search. They're really important as

"Covid-19 has given us time to reflect and think about how we can present a trustworthy online profile of ourselves to potential employers."

they help Google understand what that content is about. If what it sees is deemed highly relevant and trustworthy then Google will rank it well and often. These keywords should therefore be embedded into the structure of any content you create. Visit the MOZ blog for the beginners guide to SEO. This shows how to integrate these words and phrases into article content to help boost the visibility and relevancy.

Beware!

Pay attention to what you feed Google. If this information is not relevant, or shows several student nights out with friends, it can paint a picture of you that does not accurately represent your character. Audit your digital profile and ask those close to you to form a picture of you based on what information they find about you.

Online only: LinkedIn is now worth $26.2 billion

"When you think about shaping your narrative, consider whether the information already out there about you is positive, neutral and negative."

When you think about shaping your narrative, consider whether the information already out there about you is positive, neutral or negative. By developing those positive and neutral points that already exist, Google feels that it is being fed information naturally and organically and will rank those pages favourably. Highlight charity work, host a Just Giving page, create a Facebook event, blog about your volunteering work in the local community. Ensure that there is a clear link between you (this could be for example your name or a link to your LinkedIn profile) and these projects and that it is clearly visible to Google. Tweet or post on LinkedIn, write an article about what you learned from these projects. Show that you have many different facets to your personality.

Remember, the process of change is a gradual one and authenticity reigns supreme.

It takes both sustainable effort and time to make an impact. Google can take three months to adequately index content so be patient and build your profile in a natural way. If you are unsure about something you have posted, delete!

Adopt a joined-up approach across social media and websites. Try not to be everything to everyone. Focus on growing content across multiple related topics and link to each other. Opinions can change quickly on social media so regularly audit your social media presence and remove any content that you do not feel comfortable with. If the information is publicly available, revise content that needs an update in line with evolving conversations.

Life, as we are now all too well aware, can be unpredictable; make sure that your online profile is as adaptable and flexible as you are. f

*Milkaround and Digin 20 April 2020

Andy Inman

ANDY INMAN TELLS THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN WHO WAS TRANSFORMED BY MENTORING

The issue with a lifetime is that it can pass at such a gentle rate that we often fail to notice it is passing. But it's the one certainty in life and pass it surely does!

Retiring from a 30-year career in the military I had been well trained in making good use of time! From the very early days at Sandhurst getting out of bed at 04.30 hrs to make my bed, to more recent needs to rapidly come up with a workable plan on live operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, I knew that time can work for you as easily as it can work against you.

Now that I own a small company that delivers military training to overseas customers, I have been able to take a huge amount of the skills acquired in that career and use them in a new and closely aligned environment. But having benefited enormously from mentoring help before I started my career and knowing what a huge difference it made for my life, I was delighted to learn of the work done by Finito. It resonated with me, and I realised that my hard-earned skills could be beneficial to an entirely different set of people.

Having already mentored a number of the Finito students, the Covid-19 lockdown period came with its own challenges! One of my students, let's call him Simon, having been furloughed from his job, had altered his daily routine to such an extent that he was getting up in the early afternoon to play games online, message mates and eventually get to sleep at around 05.00 hrs, having achieved little. He would repeat the routine daily, to the extent that he had lost track of the days and was growing despondent with "life going nowhere" and achieving little of substance each day.

I had already discussed with a number of my students a technique taught by the military to deal with isolation and imprisonment and let's face it Covid-19 lockdown was that for many. By building structure to a day and including four simple elements we can ensure we feed the mind, body and soul and use the time that is forced upon us usefully. Simon and I discussed a way to bring his body clock more in line with the outside world. By sleeping through the morning he was experiencing disturbed sleep because of the noise going on outside, and so over the next several days via short WhatsApp discussions we were able to get Simon to a point where he was getting up at 08.30 and going to bed at 11.00 pm, a significant improvement on where he had been!

With the first step working we went on to build the four elements of his routine that would help him add value to each passing day. We came to an agreement that Simon would spend at least 45 minutes per day doing each of the following;

Skill building

By finding something that Simon was interested in learning he could exercise his brain. He eventually went for an app that taught him French, a subject he had learnt at school but hadn't worked on for years. As with all of the elements it was vital that this was not a chore but something he would enjoy and saw the point in doing. Plans to holiday in France were all the reason he needed to make it work.

Creativity

An element of each day that gets the creative juices flowing exercises a different part of the brain, and while we aren't all budding poets or painters there are countless ways in which creativity can be expressed. Simon was like me, in that attempts at anything we would call art didn't sit easily with him, he was not keen to display his writing skills either, so we settled on cookery. While not the first thing that would spring to mind when looking for a way to express creativity, by coming up with recipes and cooking some meals he was able to complete this element of the routine as well as help his parents by taking on the chore of feeding the family in the evening. He did admit that some of his creations were less successful than others, but using a variety of resources he became quite adept at creating dinner for the three of them.

Physical activity

With both sides of the brain busy with the above two tasks, the third element was to exercise the body. This could have ranged from daily yoga to a brisk stroll, but Simon opted for taking the dog for a run, again ticking off a household task while completing the activity.

Productivity

The final piece of the daily routine was to "achieve" something, not necessarily completing it in a day, but at least spending the allotted time working towards the completion of a project, before moving onto a new one. Once again the breadth and range of possibilities in this element were huge, Simon started off with reorganising his wardrobe and eventually went on to painting a wall and digging a new vegetable bed in his parent's garden. This created valuable self-esteem, and a sense of accomplishment.

Simon with his delightful candour and open honesty would report via short WhatsApp chats every other day between our regular mentoring chats on how he was doing. Initially he was only able to weave a couple of the elements into each day, but over the following fortnight he got used to ticking off all four, with the weekends being days where he could drop the routine entirely if he wished.

Remember this is a young man who a couple of weeks before had not been getting out of bed until after lunchtime. I worked for a few weeks more before moving Simon onto another Finito Mentor who had significant experience in the industry where he wanted to work. f

How to Job Hunt in a Recession

GUY FOWLES FOUND THE RUG SWEPT FROM BENEATH HIS FEET WHEN COVID-19 HIT. HERE'S HOW HE TURNED IT AROUND

In February this year I was in the fortunate position of weighing up four job offers, all with reputable companies, all in different industries.

The job market was buoyant, particularly within the performance marketing vertical I specialise in, but despite the many opportunities it had still been a long, arduous journey to get to the point of receiving an offer.

There were countless applications, many initial phone calls, multiple face-to-face interviews and a number of psychometric tests and presentations over the course of a few months, not to mention the research, prep, travel, logistics and thought process that goes into each and every interaction with a potential new employer. It was exhausting and stressful, particularly as a new parent.

For one role with an exciting start-up, I'd been through five stages and spent around 40 hours in total preparing, interviewing and presenting to them, only to learn they'd gone for the other candidate after the final stage. I didn't mind the drawn-out process to decide on the right person, but the lack of constructive feedback afterwards was extremely disappointing given the time I'd invested.

For another final-round interview I was asked to drive to the north-west to the company's UK headquarters, a 10-hour round trip, for a 60-minute interview, only to be told over a short phone call a few days later that I'd been unsuccessful. There was no offer to cover any travel costs.

My experience within the job market earlier this year equipped me for what happened next.

Within two months of starting a great role at a global events company, who bring people together to create unforgettable experiences, the company made 50 percent of its global workforce redundant, centralising resources back to their HQ in San Francisco. Frustratingly, it was time to climb back into the search saddle.

This time though, things were different. There were still roles available, but already, in May, the number of applicants for jobs advertised on LinkedIn had gone up from around 100 per role to over 250. During a number of conversations I was then told the positions I'd applied for were suddenly put on hold due to Covid-19.

The process itself also changed – initial phone calls turned into Zoom video calls, which I think is a positive step, and subsequent interviews obviously had to be done by video too, which, whilst you lose that physical interaction that meeting in person affords, saved on travel time, which made a big difference when also trying to look after a baby.

"The process itself also changed — initial phone calls turned into Zoom video calls, which I think is a positive step."

Covid-19 changed the location of the jobs I went for. Given the shifting nature of working remotely within a number of industries, I was able to expand my search to outside the confines of the M25. This can only be a good thing for both employers and employees as it enables companies to attract the highest quality workers, unrestricted by geography, and then offer them rewarding benefits such as the ability to work from home or flexible working.

In June I was lucky to come across my dream role heading up the Marketing and Communications team for the National Literacy Trust. The Trust works to improve the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in the communities that need support, where one in three people have literacy problems.

The interview process was clear and concise, held on three consecutive Fridays to allow both sides time to prepare for the next stage. I researched the role, my interviewers and the Trust itself thoroughly, and as I did so I became more and more impassioned about the job and joining the team. I met a cross section of employees over Zoom, and an external partner, and after a presentation and one final meeting I was absolutely thrilled to be offered the position. All in all it had taken about a month from start to finish.

Searching for a job can be a draining, demoralising process. However, it can also be exhilarating, stimulating and ultimately hugely rewarding. It is most definitely a journey that will propel you through twists and turns, highs and lows, dead ends and suddenly, the right path for you. Treat every conversation as you taking one more step on that journey.

With this in mind be prepared to put yourself out there, tailor your cover letter for each role, put in the time to look into your interviewers, prepare engaging questions that demonstrate you've really thought about the role, show your willingness to learn, develop and grow and, once in the role, prove that you will be a valued member of the team through your actions.

The National Literacy Trust helps to transform lives through literacy. Whilst my previous role was cut short due to Covid-19, I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing than trying to make a difference to the lives of children, young people and families that need it most. I've now been in the role for two months and I couldn't be happier – it's a fantastic team to be a part of. f

If you have any questions about my job search, or would like advice about your own, please drop me a line at linkedin.com/in/guyfowles

For more on the National Literacy Trust see our deep dive into the charities sector on page 98.

Ty Goddard

THE EDTECH-50 FOUNDER ON THE VANGUARD OF TECH

It was Charles Dickens who said of the time of the French revolution that 'it was the best of times, and the worst of times.' The same might be said of Covid-19 in the education space.

On the one hand, there was much to celebrate. Some institutions already experienced with digital learning become 'virtual schools' within days; others too, prepared for remote learning with mere hours of staff training.

But throughout there was a sense that our educators responded to the learning needs of their pupils during the pandemic with what was available in their schools and colleges and what they felt able to use. The pandemic also laid bare the fact that you can't afford to neglect infrastructure, teacher training and the provision of devices for our young people. Too many of our schools did not have the platforms, infrastructure and devices for pupils to maximise their use of remote learning.

It was good to see that many schools limited the learning loss as they grew in digital confidence. But on the whole the devolved nations did better than England: Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all had an array of content at their disposal as the virus broke.

In England, we had taken too long to publish and get to work on an Edtech strategy – it was only in 2019 due to the determination of Damian Hinds MP when he was serving as Secretary of State for Education, that DfE began to articulate the 'Edtech Dividend' for our system.

The point is that education technology doesn't replace teachers: it supports them. Technology can consolidate knowledge and maximise learning opportunities for pupils. The introduction of the computing curriculum may have developed some specialised skills in some but has it been at the expense of broader digital skills for many?

In my view, it is not a failure for expensive reforms to be corrected before they properly flourish. In 2020, we can't afford to be ambivalent about digital skills, confidence and digital literacy for our young people. The essential Digital Skills Framework for adults also shows us how much of a national challenge we have.

And as Covid-19 unfolded, these areas of neglect became clearer. I hope this will accelerate the use of Edtech across our education system. I want our government to be a 'stubborn organiser' of modern technology infrastructure for our schools, and promote the positives of digital learning. Nor should they shy away from leadership that liberates the talents of and the entrepreneurial flair of our Edtech company founders.

This is a sector deserving of more than an afterthought on an overlong list of ministerial responsibilities. Education technology is not a 'mobile phones in school' scare story or a 'social media end of days' nightmare but an imaginative set of tools to support and access learning. For many, it's easier to lump all technology together in some dystopian playbook.

But this a sector that creates jobs, grows our exports for UK plc and attracts much-needed investment. Our Edtech sector is vibrant (see panel opposite for some recommendations from the Edtech 50), growing and plays its full part in our 'New Start' Industrial Strategy. So what do we need to do? For me there are six easy steps.

Firstly, we need to build on the success of the rural broadband introduction with a staged approach to rolling out access to super-fast broadband to our schools.

Secondly, it's vital that we become more ambitious about devices for pupils. Digital poverty is corrosive and can be ended. Let's build national delivery of devices for young people – Year 8 is too late.

In the third place, now is the time for more professional development for teachers. I would argue that peer to peer support like the successful Edtech Demonstrator Programme is a model for national action.

Fourthly, we need to see the immediate changes to initial teacher education with training in education technology. This is another long overdue addition.

Fifthly, I believe we need to see priority for Edtech in the Ofsted Inspection Framework. There's much to share about effective use of technology and much to learn from Wales and Scotland in their approach.

As a final point, we have to learn to appreciate the complexities of organisational change across our school estate. We need to focus on technology support but also 'system' support to introduce and embed changes.

If we can do all these things then I believe we can have a truly 21st century education system. f

Finito World in partnership with Edtech 50 recommends the following platforms:

Little Bridge

An online platform for learning English that has been used globally for over a decade.

SpyQuest

This unique Scottish interactive gaming concept inspires and supports young readers to read.

Mindful Education

Learning platform of media rich professional courses and apprenticeships.

Wakelet

Helps curate visual and other content to support student assignments.

GoBubble

A child safe social media platform with inspirational digital citizenship classroom ideas with safe online communication.

Akosua Bonsu

THE DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AT REGENT GROUP ON CHARACTER

The trouble with education is that it's full of buzzwords, and too rarely do we pause to think about practical implications.

In the Blair years, citizenship education was a prominent preoccupation of schools and colleges in England and Wales – but the term sometimes lacked definition, and in any case, wasn't citizenship an implication of the Cameron government's Big Society agenda? Definitions tend to blur.

With the coalition government - and latterly the single party conservative governments - we have seen a shift in preoccupation, away from citizenship education and towards character education. So how do we avoid falling into generality and

"Character seeks to cultivate resilience, courage, and personal responsibility. It also has intellectual pedigree, dating all the way back to Aristotle."

making the same mistakes again?

Fostering character sounds well and good – who could seriously object to it - but what does it mean? Simply, character seeks to cultivate resilience, courage, and personal responsibility. It also has intellectual pedigree, dating all the way back to Aristotle. In his Nicomachean Ethics

"These individual traits — resilience, grit, courage and so on — do not exist in isolation. They exist together: you cannot be courageous without being resilient, for example."

the philosopher argues that character education creates virtuous individuals who live a good and meaningful life, a life full of happiness, purpose and achievement: this he called Eudemonia.

What's interesting is that in character education these individual traits – resilience, grit, courage and so on – do not exist in isolation. They exist together: you cannot be courageous without being resilient, for example. What we seek to do at Regent College is to develop these psychological states so that students learn to better act, overcome obstacles and embrace challenges.

For Aristotle a person of good character has practical wisdom - phronesis: the ability to act in the right way, with courage, with resilience etc., because they have developed the correct habits. Furthermore, a good character can only be developed by choosing right actions over and over again until that right action becomes a habit. The goal is to repeat certain behaviours associated with the development of a good character, initially under guidance and instruction, until they become embedded as habits.

So does it work? At Regent College, we have founded a framework for character education to be delivered alongside our core curriculum. The project began in May 2019, and we have called it Thinking Into Character.

The programme is designed by Dr. Selva Pankaj and aims to give students a solid foundation in character education. Topics covered by the programme include goal setting, habit formation and the principles of personal leadership. Each lesson is designed to encourage students to take responsibility for their results and to develop the confidence to believe that they can achieve dream goals. Among some of the values and attitudes developed by the programme are personal responsibility, a positive mind-set, resilience, grit and self-confidence.

It has had startling results. One example was Abdi Raman Fara, a bus-driver who wants to be a transport manager with his company. He felt he'd been with the company a long time and wasn't progressing. Under our instruction, he spoke to his manager, who agreed to be his mentor. As a result a career action plan was implemented and he decided to start his own business. 'My entire life has to be geared towards goals that I am happy to pursue. It's about achieving your life goals, and not just in the short or medium term,' he says.

"The programme aims to give students a solid foundation in character education."

Another case study was Amelia Giurgiu who had been too nervous to start turning her photography in Provence into painting. She was facing what we would call 'the terror barrier'. For her character education enabled her to 'take action and to show courage in the face of previously acknowledged fears'.

Meanwhile, Ahasan Habib, the founder and CEO of H&K Associates, found that an immersion in the programme 'helped my business by showing me where I lacked discipline and holding me responsible for all my results.'

So the effectiveness of this character development programme is measured both objectively and subjectively. The subjective benefits are there for all to see in testimonials like those above. Objectively, we are looking at data such as grade attendance and assignment submission rates as well as external ventures that students have set up following their engagement with the programme. These ventures could be study groups, entrepreneurial businesses or engagement in voluntary programmes.

We still have a way to go and are at the data compilation phase, but the signs are very encouraging. And we hope that our programme will give others the impetus to think hard about the language we use in education theory, and to turn the theoretical into pragmatic and meaningful steps. Aristotle would be proud. f

BEHIND THE RED WALL

Our Woman in China

GIVES US HER TAKE ON THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN EDUCATION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

This is going to be quite a year in China. There's going to be about eight and a half million graduates in China – and that's a figure which dwarfs any figure you can imagine in the UK. They'll be graduating into the toughest job market in living memory.

It's worth considering the history. Before 1990, China's was essentially a planned economy and everybody had roles given by the state. Since then, the economy has grown by around ten percent a year. Unemployment has been incredibly low. Now lots of factors are happening at once. With Covid-19, there's speculation that you have 100 million unemployed people in China right now.

"In the 1980s and 90s, if you went abroad and studied, let's say engineering, and you came back to China, it's quite likely you're a millionaire at this point, or senior in the government."

Concurrently, you have automation which is happening dramatically in China, with every company becoming leaner. So all these graduates are going to be piling in to this very problematic situation. And there is such faith in education in China. In the 1980s and 90s, if you went abroad and studied, let's say engineering, and you came back to China, it's quite likely you're a millionaire at this point, or senior in the government. Why? Because you brought back information that was incredibly valuable and gave you a massive strategic advantage. Because of that, you now have a generation of parents who believe education is a fast track to employment. That's heart-breaking as the young today are ill-equipped for the modern world in terms of creative-thinking and communication skills.

It's an incredibly depressing situation. I speak to a lot of students doing undergraduate degrees and they're looking at the realities of the economy and thinking, 'Should I go and get a Masters?' But even that doesn't guarantee a job now – when for their parents' generation, it did.

That means there's a major problem for Chinese students studying in the UK: they're not getting their return on investment. In China, these young people are called 'sea turtles': even after

having studied in a good, solid university in the UK, they're unable to get jobs. All this will be detrimental to the higher education system in the UK. There are 900,000 graduates from UK universities in China, and there could be a big shift where Chinese students start to wonder whether it's worth studying abroad if you don't get a job at the end of it.

I don't think the effects will be felt immediately. Xi Jinping sent his daughter to Harvard. These wealthy people will have better connections, and so they'll end up with jobs and power, and will end up running the country and the biggest companies. That's a powerful example; it might take 20 or 30 years for these trends to be felt.

Working against all this is the fact that China is going to go global at some point. So if a young person understands the UK, they are going to be a natural person to go and work in that London office at some point. The historical trends are clear. In the 50s and 60s, China was all about manufacturing; suddenly in the 70s and 80s, we had Sony and all these other companies booming around the world. But global China is in the future. This year's graduates will fall through the cracks because none of this will have kicked in yet.

As someone who has been here for 15 years, I would say the UK doesn't understand that China is absolutely zero sum. China doesn't want its students to go to the UK and spend lots of money. It wants to learn as much as it can from the UK, the US and Australia and then it wants to export its own education. You only need to read the state media to understand the undertones of what they're really thinking and what they're really plotting right now. The longer-term goal is that they don't want to send anyone to the UK. That's not explicit, but I would guarantee you it's the case if you speak to the highest levels of government in China. Why would they want to give money to the UK?

I've probably become a bit more patriotic since I've been here: if I had to back a team, I'd like to back the UK. The UK education system is filled with people for whom education is a vocation. They believe in the system. They're autonomous, and opinionated: it's filled with brilliant people. In China, nobody has any autonomy; it is control-based. I don't want that system to win. China's version of history is that there is only one version of history. Our discipline of history is that you have analysis and the past is open to interpretation. It's not a good thing when education is used as a weapon to control a population or to politicise everything. I would love to see the UK compete, but I fear that a lot of UK universities are very slow, siloed and very complacent. China is moving incredibly quickly. f

LETTER FROM AN AMERICAN

Jeffrey Katz

JEFFREY KATZ ARGUES THAT PROTEST FORMS THE BACKGROUND OF ALL OUR CAREERS. BUT WHAT HAS HE LEARNED AFTER WATCHING HISTORY UNFOLD OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY?

Protest is nothing new. In the US, there were protests against segregation in the 1950s and 60s, protests against the Vietnam War in the 70s, protests against environmental damage in the 80s and 90s and now there are protests against the racism that murdered a black man in Minnesota and against all that the murder represents.

In the UK there were protests against nuclear weapons in the 60s, protests against the racist regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia in the 70s and in the same decade protests against the murder of Irishmen during the troubles in the north. There were particularly violent protests against the British poll tax in the 80s and protests against the war in Iraq in 90s.

What is different now is that, whereas most, if not all, the previous protest movements were in some way parochial, today's protests are not. While we know that every country in the world has some form of ethnic discrimination to its shame, the pretence that it is historical rather than current is a fiction that can no longer be ignored.

In the course of my lifetime I have watched white Americans shouting at black children because they were trying to enter a school that had been for whites only. I have seen signs in the windows of English boarding houses that read "No blacks no Irish." And after 70 years of peace in Western Europe, the British people voted by a narrow majority to leave the organisation that united them with the rest of the Continent.

I have heard Orthodox Jews say that Palestinians don't belong in Israel because they believe the Bible says the land belongs to the Jews. I have been told by an Iranian in Canada that it is right that women should be jailed for refusing to wear a headscarf. In the great liberal city of New York there have been recent debates about whether there should be a quota for Asian students in specialist schools because too many of them do well on entrance exams.

Underlying all those examples is ignorance and the fear it breeds. To be clear, there will be people who strongly disagree with my views who are not ignorant. There are people in America, Britain and elsewhere who honestly believe that social welfare mechanisms are wrong because they somehow inhibit personal liberty. Equally, there are people everywhere who believe that, in a civilised 21st century, a universal health care system should be considered a human right.

"On the surface those are irreconcilable positions. Except things change. What changes them are people and events."

On the surface those are irreconcilable positions. Except things change. What changes them are people and events. Sometimes those people are leaders and sometimes they are ordinary citizens—or even victims. Sometimes they are a Franklin Roosevelt who was considered a traitor to his class for introducing what he called a New Deal, subsidising great infrastructure projects and other government programmes to help Americans through the Great Depression of the 1930s. Or a Nelson Mandela who spent half his life in prison until the power structure of South Africa recognised that it could no longer subjugate its black population.

But here's the interesting thing: sometimes changes evolve because of an Adolf Hitler who lies and murders his way into office and starts a war that assassinates six million Jews, kills 20 million Russians and destroys much of Western Europe. No sane person who could change history would bring Hitler back. But Hitler created an almost universal consciousness of what horrors the human race can inflict on itself.

Of course, it hasn't stopped. Since the Second World War atrocities have been committed in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Syria. Because of television and the internet we have become more aware of the crimes that are perpetrated in the name of whatever power struggle or prejudice is useful to certain people at a particular time and place.

But every generation has the opportunity to make things better. Trump exploits social and ethnic divisions rather than addressing them constructively. In the course of his presidency he has demonstrated a contempt for others that has unleashed simmering prejudices. They are now the focus of the anger on the streets. There has never been a greater awareness among young people of our need to get up off the necks of the disadvantaged, to create safety in the world so that everyone can make the best of their lives.

Maybe we need Trump. Maybe he is the catalyst. Not just for Americans, but for Europeans, Africans, Asians—the whole world. I don't believe that any of us deserve him, not even the people who voted for him. But we have him. We can debate forever how and why that happened. But as one angry black protester in America recently pointed out, it's more important to decide where we go from here. f

Jeffrey Katz is Chief Executive of Bishop Group, a London-based corporate investigations business.

DEEP DIVE: CHARITY
THE SECTOR WHICH STEPPED UP

IN ITS FIRST SECTOR DEEP-DIVE, *FINITO WORLD* LOOKS AT THE QUESTION OF CELEBRITY PATRONAGE, AND ASKS HOW CHARITIES HAVE FARED DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

If you happened to be in Essex on a summer's day in 1995, watching Maldon Cricket Club's ten wicket win against Bury St Edmunds, you could be forgiven for thinking that you were watching not one but two future England cricket captains opening the batting for Maldon.

These were Alastair Cook (known to friends as Ali) and David Randall (known as Arkle).

Both were gifted batsmen; each possessed musical ability (Ali on clarinet; Arkle as a future founder member of Maldon band Soul Attraction) and Cook would later recall of his friend: 'I will never be embarrassed to say he was the better player.'

But in reality you would have been right about only one of them. Sir Alastair Cook, as the world knows, would go on to captain England, and score more runs (12,472) than any other England player.
Arkle developed cancer and died in July 2012 at the age of 27.

His death wasn't the end of his story. Throughout his illness he never complained and continued to do the things he loved. Sue Randall, David's inspirational mother, picks up the story of David's last week: 'David's big wish was to go to Wimbledon. All the MacMillan Nurses and District Nurses kept telling us that it would not be safe for David to go here and there. But the lovely Willow Foundation had got him tickets.'

How did Sue react? 'That was the only time I got angry with anyone. When David was out with his girlfriend, I phoned the nurses and told them that if David did not go to Wimbledon, he would die disappointed and I thought that we should do everything possible to get him there. Worst-case scenario was he died on the way, but at least he would have known he had tried to get there. By that time, he only had weeks to live at best. It was a saga! But he got to Wimbledon, taken by his brother. He went on the Tuesday, was admitted to the hospice on Wed and died on the Friday.'

It's a story which takes us to the heart of life's cruelty. Yet at its centre is something that seems to work against all hardship: David's optimism, and intense love of life.

Sue remembered the lesson her boy had taught her, and started the David Randall Foundation which aims to keep his spirit alive. The charity organises Great Days for those with life-limiting conditions. Sir Alastair is its patron. This is a charity with a message for our times that will resonate: as the world seems always to become more morbid, we need the spirit of David Randall like never before.

An Uncharitable Virus

We also need the charity sector like never before. Young people might perhaps wonder whether it's a vulnerable sector, and even whether it's as worth going into as it was pre-Covid. While it's true that many charities find themselves financially vulnerable, and have been hastily furloughing like everyone else, in researching this piece we also had a sense of a sector determined to be upbeat where possible.

Many, of course, were feeling acute financial pressures and it was not uncommon to find confessions that the person who would usually handle our query had just been furloughed. But for those who were still active, *Finito World* witnessed in some instances an admirable heightening of purpose.

Variety – the Children's Charity works predominantly with children with special education needs and disabilities by supplying medical equipment ranging from diabetes monitors to wheelchairs and specialist car seats.

Dave King, the charity's CEO, admits that events in early 2020 caught him by surprise: 'By the time we became aware of the level of impact it would have, the virus was escalating quickly. This left us little time to get things in place before lockdown began. It was a period of confusion.' Uncertainty is often a greater strain on a business than definitely dire circumstances. 'Once the school closure had been announced,' King continues, 'we found ourselves in a better position. We were able to become more effective in our response once we had clear direction from government about the impact on children's lives.'

Variety began refashioning its processes. 'One of our programmes involves grant-giving for specialist

equipment for schools, and equipment for children,' explains King. 'We've managed to keep that running in spite of supply chains closing down and being temporarily suspended.'

This is a major achievement especially as it was delivered at a time when the organisation's income generation fell dramatically, primarily due to the loss of events revenue. 'You can't have a gala dinner with just a few people in the room. The atmosphere will be flat and it won't be worth the outlay,' King says.

In sustaining itself, the charity was helped by its active golf society and golf memberships. These benefitted from that sport's ability to be carried on while social distancing. 'We're looking at how we can maximise the use of our golf team and our society to generate income.'

As difficult as these times are for generating revenue, there is something that can still pull in the money even over Zoom: stardom.

Stars in their Eyes

Variety has been fortunate in its celebrity ambassadors, with Len Goodman and Mark Ramprakash singled out by King for lending particular support to the charity.

This opens up onto the wider question of celebrity involvement in charities. Dan Corry, the CEO of Think NPC – a charity which supports other charities – argues that while having a well-known patron doesn't always make a difference 'it can definitely help. Anything you can do to put yourself in the limelight, and get people to open that email, or look at that tweet.'

Within the sector, there's some debate over whether celebrity involvement increases the amount of money going to charities as a whole. Cory asks: 'Does having a good celebrity or fundraising campaign raise money for your charity instead of one they would have given to? Does it just spread the money differently?' A relevant example here would be Captain Tom Moore, who walked around his garden for NHS Charities Together. Cory says: 'Some in the sector felt that people who would have given to a medical health charity gave to that. In aggregate, it's hard to tell. Is it the right charity just because there's a star celeb? It might be a rubbish charity.'

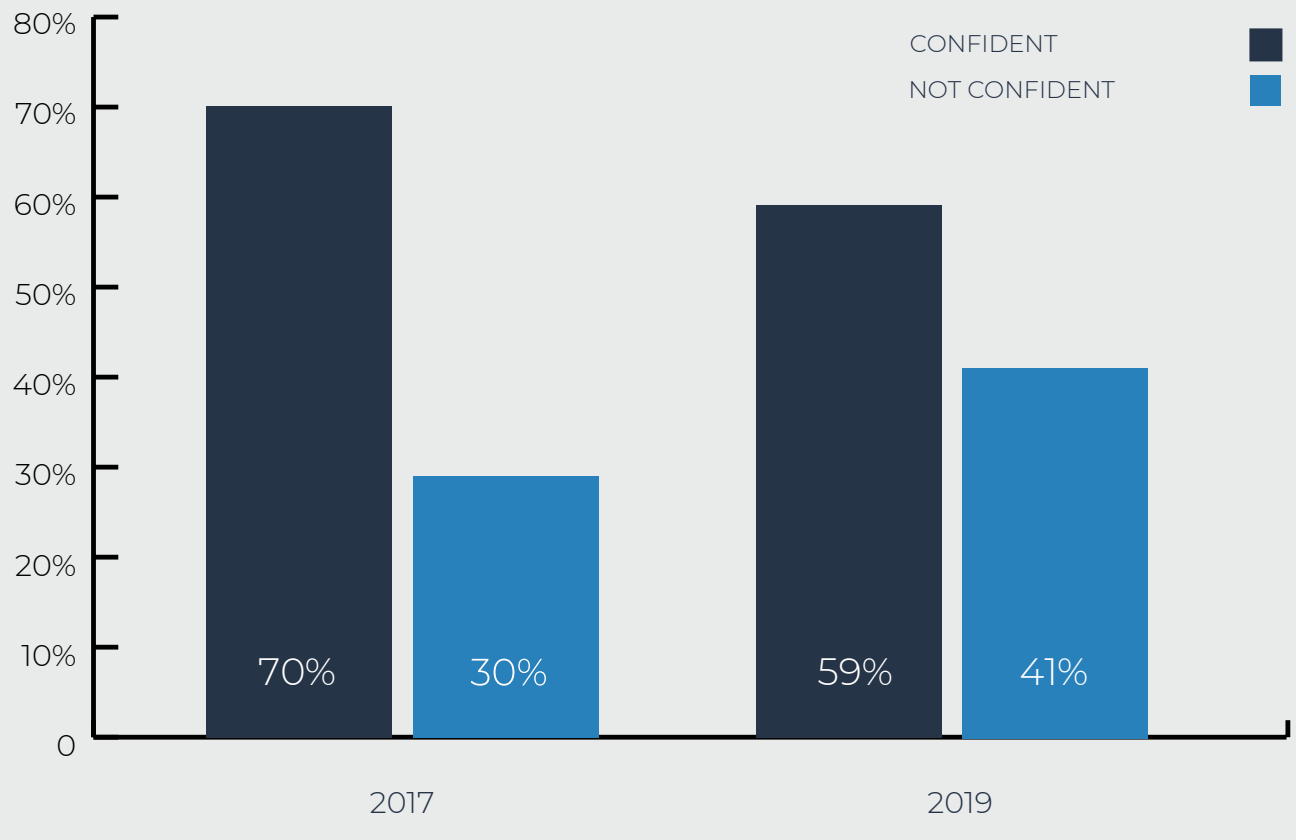
Even so, the charities *Finito World* spoke with are deeply grateful for the assistance well-known names have given to their charities.

Sue Randall says that Alastair Cook always comes through with 'two tickets for the best seats' at Lord's for Great Dayers, adding that he 'has never let us down.' She adds: 'Andy Murray also came up trumps for us last year. We had got a lady with cancer, some tickets for Wimbledon and on the day she was too ill to go. One of our ambassadors got in touch with Sir Andy and he sent her a personal note saying how sad he was she hadn't been well enough to go, alongside a signed shirt. So he is now a hero to me!'

Meanwhile, Ed Holloway, Executive ▶

CHARITIES' CONFIDENCE THAT THEY ARE MAKING THE BEST USE OF DIGITAL

Credit: Think NPC



"Variety has been fortunate in its celebrity ambassadors, with Len Goodman and Mark Ramprakash singled out by King for lending particular support to the charity."

Director of Digital and Services at the MS Society, recalls how the charity was able to pivot quickly during coronavirus thanks to celebrity generosity: 'One of the first virtual fundraisers we did [after the virus hit] was the MS Society Pub Quiz, with the support of our ambassador and *BBC Radio 1* DJ Scott Mills, who hosted a virtual pub quiz every Wednesday night, live from his living room. It was an incredible way to bring the community together at what was a very difficult time. Not only did we have thousands of people all playing along for a great cause, we had a lot of fun doing it. Together, we managed to raise an incredible £55,000.'

In July, I zoom with *Gruffalo* and *Zog* illustrator Axel Scheffler who has had longstanding involvement with the National Literacy Trust (NLT), an independent charity committed to improving literacy among disadvantaged groups. When the pandemic came along, he was happy to help.

He talks to me in his studio, with books ranged behind him, which themselves cede to a bright skylight. Softly spoken and matter-of-fact, it is clear that his charitable work is conducted out of a quiet and laudable sense of duty. 'I have said yes to almost 95 percent of what I've been asked to do,' he says, in his careful German accent. 'There was one job where a big airline company wanted me to design some airline masks and I said no to that one. Overall, it's a difficult situation and we do what we can. I can afford to do it, and so I do it.'

Early on in the pandemic, Scheffler was asked by the NLT to provide illustrations to an online book *Coronavirus* intended to educate 5-11 year-olds about the new disease. Published by Nosy Crow, and narrated online by Hugh Bonneville, it was publisher Kate Wilson who persuaded Scheffler to make time for a breakneck production schedule. 'Her argument was that many children are familiar with my style and work, and that was why I said, "Yes, I'll do it." Nosy Crow completed the project from start to finish in ten days: it was really, really fast.'

Scheffler explains his motivation: 'I've supported the NLT for a long time, and it's brilliant what they're doing. I think it's sad that a nation like Britain has to have a charity to deal with these matters. It should really be up to schools to get children reading and it's sad the government is failing the education of children in so many ways.' It's hard to disagree but it's also surely this which makes the charitable sector so exciting.

'Nobody's poor relation'

The CEO of the NLT Jonathan Douglas argues that there's never been a better time to go into the charitable sector: 'Its vibrancy and its entrepreneurial ability comes from the fact that its funding base is always tenuous.'

Paradoxically, Douglas explains, it's been a good time for the sector, in spite of the challenges: 'The most heartening thing without a doubt has been the organisations that have come through to support shielded people, support children to continue learning, and to support the victims of domestic abuse. All those social needs have been met by the charity sector. I don't think the charity sector could ever have been written off as inconsequential - but after the way it has stepped up in the past three months it's proved its mettle. We're no longer anyone's poor relations.'

Over at the MS Society, Ed Holloway continues to feel the sector is attractive: 'Like many charities we are relatively small and we ask a lot of our employees, but this gives them a chance to take on responsibility early in their careers, which stands them in good stead for the rest of their working lives. In return for their hard work and commitment, we work hard to provide a stimulating workplace where everyone can engage with our mission, know their voices are heard, and know they are making a difference to people living with MS.'

Even so, that doesn't mean that life is always easy. King says: 'Most charities are operating on the frontline. The more we've got in the bank the less we're helping kids.'

Government Response

On April 8th 2020, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a £750 billion package 'to ensure [charities] can continue their vital work during the coronavirus outbreak'. Figure A shows where the money went. Unfortunately, in many cases it didn't go far enough.

The picture is complicated by the fact that it is often difficult to tell what sums charities may have received from independent grant-making foundations such as the Esmée Fairburn Foundation and the Lloyds Bank Foundation. In some cases, there will have been overlap, although that can be difficult to unpick. Cory says: 'When this crisis is over,

CHARITIES' THREE POTS

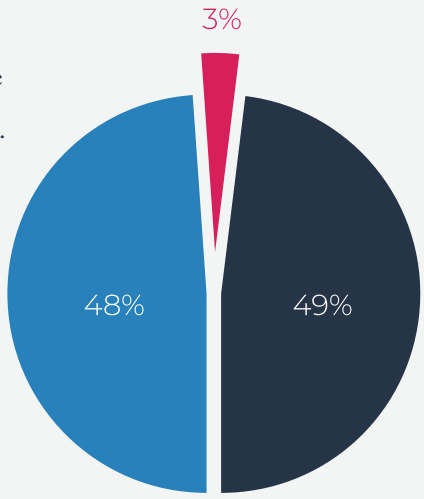
The £750m was described as being split into two main pots, with a third much smaller pot being a government pledge to 'match fund' the BBC's Big Night In fundraiser. We break them into the following classifications:

Pot A, worth £360m, is for 'charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people.' It comes 'direct from government departments.'

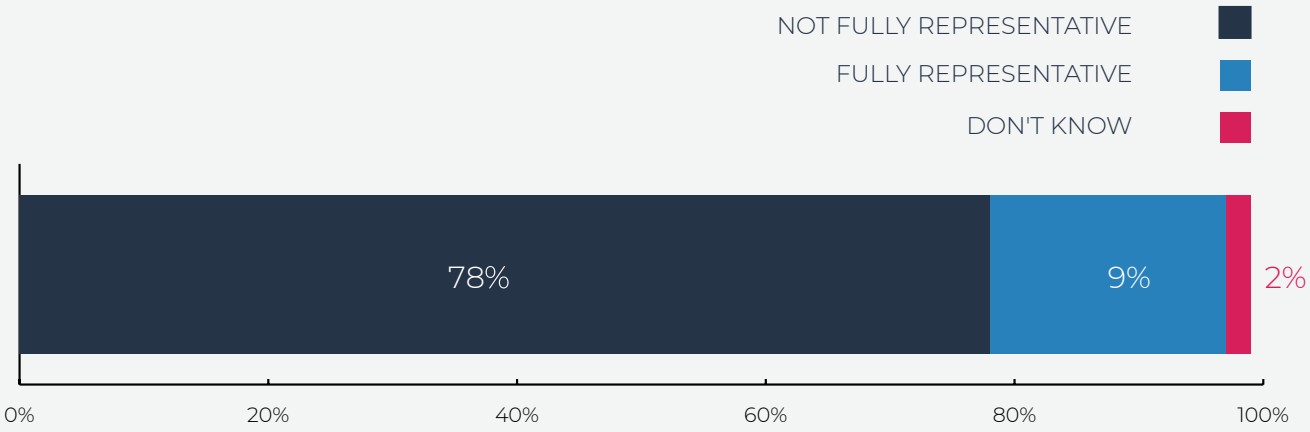
Pot B, worth £370m, is for 'smaller charities.' This is distributed, at least in part, by the National Lottery Community Fund.

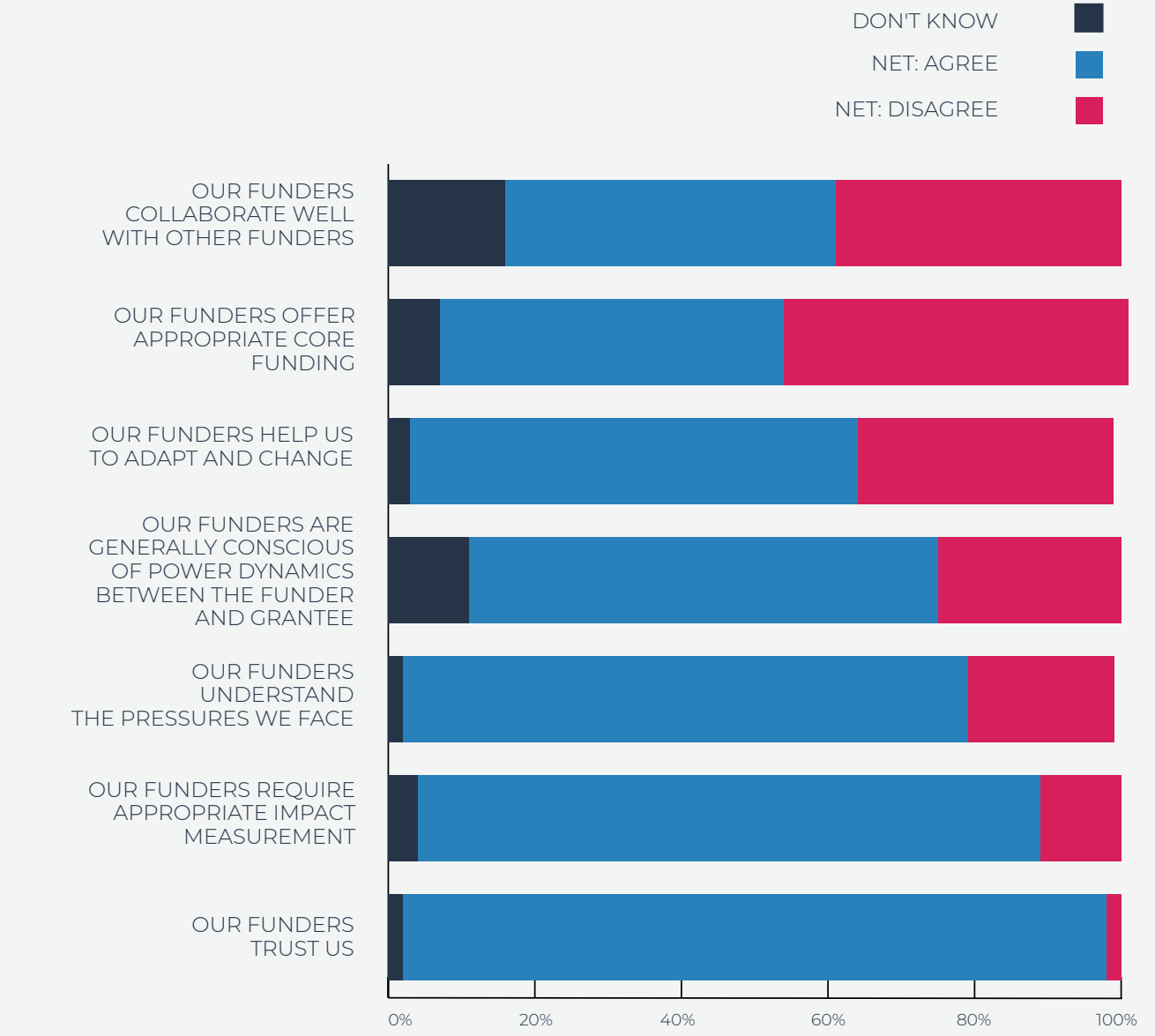
Finally, the government committed to match funding at least £20m of the funds raised by the BBC's Big Night In. Despite being much smaller than the other pots, it is distinct and so we are calling this Pot C.

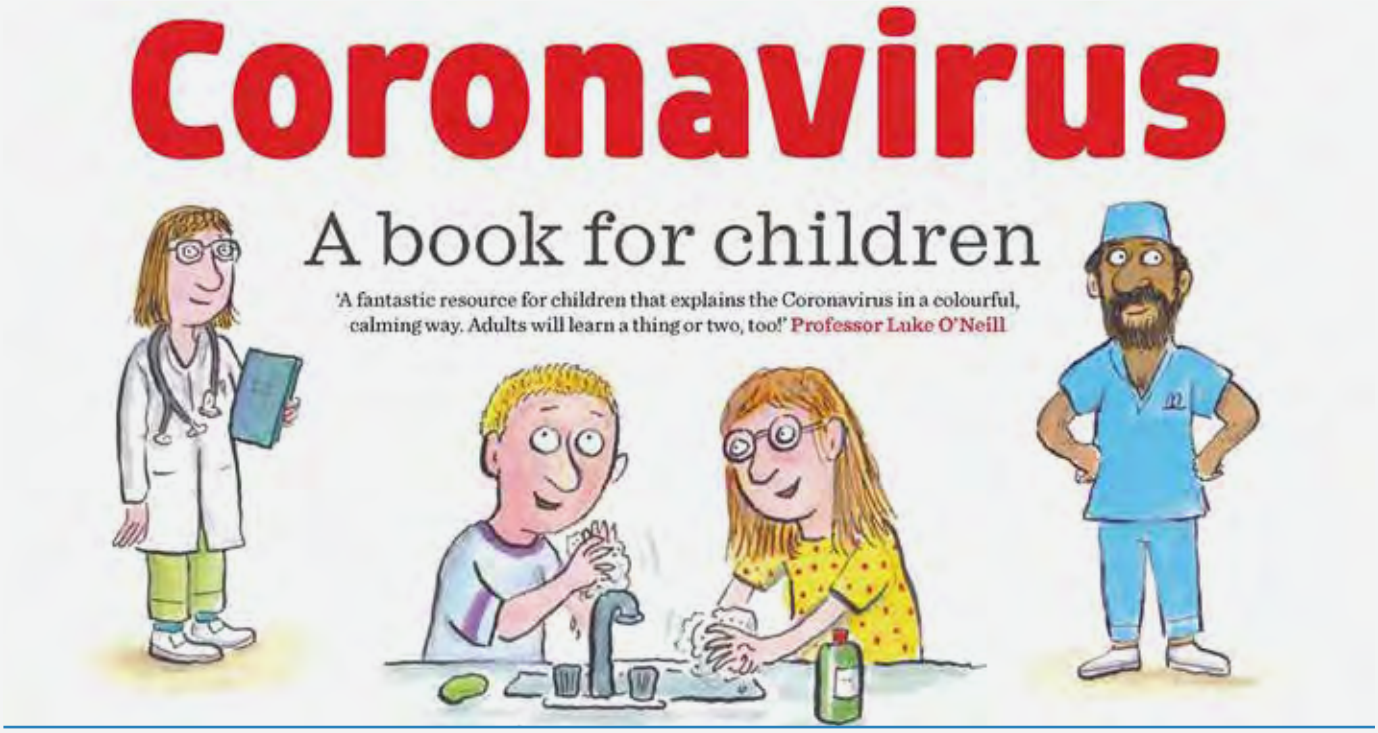
- POT A: £360M
- POT B: £370M
- POT C: £20M



CHARITIES' PERCEPTIONS OF HOW REPRESENTATIVE THEY ARE OF THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE







Axel Scheffler's free book aims to inform and reassure primary age school children

I hope we realise that we need more data in this sector.'

King argues that government announcements were 'targeted at organisations already delivering government services,' adding, 'we don't receive any help whatsoever.' A few weeks after speaking with King, *Finito World* heard that he too had been furloughed.

Large charities like the Family Fund received large injections of cash; other smaller organisations did not. But even at the top end, there is pain. As Dan Cory says: 'For the big charities, a lot of funding came from big events like the London marathon. Almost all of that has been kyboshed.' With furlough now about to wind down, many charities including the National Trust and Cancer Research UK have already talked about redundancies. In some cases, charities that relied on gift shop income have suffered, Cory explains: 'They have no income. People aren't rushing to the shops. They're usually the kind of shops we like rummaging in, but now you're not meant to touch product.'

ThinkNPC also argues that the Treasury's monies – though 'pretty generous', according to Cory – even at the high end [of generous]' A recent report by the organisation found that 27 of the largest service-delivery charities in the UK faced a '£500 million shortfall'. The report also found that 'charities fulfilling contracts for local and national government are better insulated, whereas charities who rely on public fundraising and charity shop trading are far more exposed to more significant losses.'

Ed Holloway told us about the gravity of the situation regarding MS: 'The MS Society faces losing nearly a third of our income this year due to Covid-19, and yet we haven't received any support from the Treasury's £750 million funding package for charities.'

What matters here is the centrality of the society's role in the fight against an awful disease: 'The MS Society is the UK's leading not-for-profit funder of MS research, and every year we invest millions in new projects – so sadly MS research is one area that has been affected by this shortfall. With researchers redeployed and labs closed due to social distancing, the pandemic had already affected many of the vital projects we fund. Right now, we're doing everything we can to keep these going, but this significant loss to our income means planned research must be postponed, and we are unable to fund promising new work that is desperately needed.'

When we wrote to the Department for Culture, Digital Services, Media and Sport to ask whether some smaller charities were falling through the cracks, we received no reply. Cory says: 'My guess is medium-sized charities – in the £1-5 million bracket - have been suffering a lot. For the smaller ones, it's difficult anyway. Typically, at a small charity you have two and half people with volunteers. Quite a lot aren't going to survive this but it's always like this down that end of the scale.'

As grim as this is for many, if one were minded to be optimistic about anything at the moment, it would be about those who work in this difficult but noble sector: Variety, which continues to send vital equipment to children; the NLT, which is more committed than ever before to literacy in areas that need it; the MS Society, which is still a beacon of hope for those suffering from an inexplicable disease; and the David Randall Foundation, which remains committed to making people's last months and weeks memorable.

In my most recent email from Sue Randall, she tells me: 'Things are still very slow with DRF. Understandably the people we organise days out for are vulnerable and nervous about going out, but requests have started to trickle in. The trouble is you just start to think it's okay to go out and then the government starts bringing in more restrictions, so I am not surprised at people's reticence.'

This is a view in miniature of the sector as a whole: a sense of duty overriding anxiety; a sector which has been knocked, which remains determined to rebound; and above all an industry with an ethos which values doing things not because they are intrinsically commercial, but because they are inherently important.

Will it all come back? Cory is cautiously optimistic: 'Not in the same configuration. But people's will to do good and get involved in charities to work for them or volunteer is pretty undiminished.' In these times, we must take the positives where we find them. f

BILL GATES FIND THE CURE

Heroes only truly reveal themselves when faced with a villain. The world is up against a mighty enemy, Covid-19, and many people have revealed themselves as everyday heroes; from Janet next door making sourdough bread for her shielding neighbour to all the key workers who kept the country running during lockdown. Bill Gates has squared up to coronavirus with huge financial donations. As he has invested more than $350 million to fight COVID-19 will history hail the Microsoft founder as a key heroic figure in the pandemic or is his philanthropy just another sign of a world gone wrong?

Jeremy Hunt, the former secretary of state for Health, says philanthropy should not be met with cynicism: "Philanthropists should be welcomed with open arms and praised to the rafters. I really don't understand those who criticise the generosity of others."

While Nick Dearden, director of Global Justice Now, is more sceptical about wealthy individuals being involved in the race for a cure as vaccines should be public goods. "The answer to massive economic, healthcare or environmental problems cannot be left to some of the richest people in the world, as if we were living in the Victorian Age when social harms were seen as matters of charity and benevolence."

With a net worth of around $120 billion, Gates is only the second richest man in the world. With an estimated net worth of $200 billion, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos comes in at number one. In contrast to Gates, and although he has pledged to invest billions into Covid initiatives, Bezos has been positioned as a coronavirus villain - Super Spreader - after hundreds of Amazon staff took strike action to protest issues around the company's response to the pandemic, including limited sick pay

In the 1990s, few people would have elevated Gates above Bezos. Gates was fighting a series of legal battles around the monopolistic business practices of Microsoft. Former Microsoft employees described the office as a confrontational environment, with Gates being "demanding". According to James Wallace's Hard Drive, more than one "unlucky programmer received an email at 2:00am that began, 'This is the stupidest piece of code ever written.'"

Then, towards the end of the decade Gates turned his attention to philanthropy. Alongside his wife Melinda, the self-proclaimed "impatient optimists" formed the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It seems he turned over a new leaf but some regard the Foundation as a fig leaf, barely disguising the injustice of Gates earning more in a day than most will earn in a lifetime.

Since its inception the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has given more than $50 billion to charities. Its raison d'être is to "reduce inequality" but Gates admitted in an Ask Me Anything Reddit session that he often uses a private jet when reducing inequality. "It does help me do my Foundation work but again it is a very privileged thing to have," he conceded. But aside from the occasional uncomfortable bit of irony, his philanthropy also gives him an extraordinary amount of power. Put bluntly, Bill Gates chooses who lives and who dies. He influences the success or failure of a vaccine just because people bought his computers.

But Hunt dismissed the idea that positioning philanthropists as heroes risks creating a plutocracy, saying: "A democratic society like ours has sufficient checks and balances to stop undue influence but if someone wants to pledge a fortune or a fiver to make the world a better place they should be thanked and encouraged. I spent a lot of time trying to boost philanthropy to the arts when I was Culture Secretary and was always struck by the difference in attitude between the UK and the US.

"Philanthropists in the US are seen as heroes but here in the UK our first thoughts can be negative. That's changing but we should do more to embrace the good work that many very generous and inspirational people do."

Philanthropist and the founder of Addison Lee, John Griffin, shares this sentiment. *Finito World* can exclusively reveal that Griffin has invested £12 million into building a new wing at Northwick Park hospital to help speed up the race for a cure.

Griffin has praise for Bill Gates and his commitment to finding a vaccine. "He's a good man and he's the right man to have in charge, he really is, I think that people who manage to achieve success should not ignore that, it's a gift," Griffin says.

Indeed, within a few weeks of committing their first $100 million to the fight against Covid-19, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a $50 million commitment to fund the new 'Therapeutics Accelerator'. Alongside MasterCard and the Wellcome Trust they have invested in a variety of treatments, including the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca vaccine which is one of the seven vaccines in the final stage of trials.

Professor Arpana Verma who is a clinical professor of Public Health and Epidemiology at University of Manchester said funding from the Gates Foundation is "key" to finding a vaccine and ensuring it is accessible.

She regards philanthropy as a necessary component in successful public health initiatives. "Public health through the centuries has been based on philanthropists. When we got the industrial revolution, we got the core epidemiologists coming in. In Greater Manchester we had Edwin Chadwick, and in Liverpool we had William Varr, and in London we had John Snow. This was the crux of things happening fast.

"Philanthropy works at its best when

"He's a good man and he's the right man to have in charge, he really is."

Griffin endowed The Griffin Institute with his £12 million gift to Northwick Park Hospital

it gets things moving. Whilst governments and even NGOs might have more of the administrative to get through, philanthropists might not have that burden.

"A lot of philanthropists are well up on the evidence so they know what things to do and can get ahead and do it," she adds.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been focused on combating disease for years and it has made polio eradication one of its top priorities. One of the Foundation's first big investments was to an organisation called Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Since 2000, Gavi and partners have immunised more than 760 million children, saving over 13 million lives.

This knowledge of disease has made Gates a coronavirus Cassandra. In a 2015 Ted Talk he warned: "If anything kills over ten million people in the next few decades, it's likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war. We need preparedness," he demanded. Clearly, Gates' value in the fight against Covid is not exclusively due to the amount of money he is throwing into the cause but due to his deep understanding of disease.

He has inspired other entrepreneurs in the healthcare profession. Gabi Hakim who is the founder of a new VacTrack app which collates vaccine histories and sends reminders for follow up boosters, cites Bill Gates as an influence. "Bill Gates has always stood out as the standard to which we should all aspire. In particular, his work in both biotech and digital health through his Foundation has emphasised the fact that tackling health crises requires intervention at population scale, which aligns with our own mission of accessibility for the masses. I think personally, it's seeing his ability persist through the bureaucracy and complexities associated with healthcare today that has motivated us."

WIRED's editor at large, Steven Levy, who has been conducting interviews with Gates since 1983, points out that Gates has also made a positive impact through his cajoling of other wealthy people.

He says: "I've met a lot of billionaires, the field I cover produces billionaires, basically he's made it a point to stand up and argue for other very wealthy people to devote a huge portion, you know, half or more, of their fortunes to addressing issues like public health. He really is the person who speaks most of it. He's sort of like a born-again philanthropist."

Gates may be a born-again philanthropist but he approaches his giving with pragmatic, almost heartless logic. In the documentary, Inside Bill's Brain: Decoding Bill Gates, Gates recalls the moment he showed his daughter a polio video. "The video ends with the girl who's got the paralysis limping down the road with a crummy wood crutch. My daughter said to me, 'well what did you do?' I said well we're going to eradicate it. She said, 'no no, what did you do for her?'"

With a business analogy, he goes on to explain that this emotional attitude is not productive and that he believes in "optimisation". "The emotional connection is always retail, even though, if you want to make a dent in this thing you better think wholesale, ten to the six, ten to the seven type magnitudes," he says.

Levy believes that Gates is primarily motivated by the intellectual challenge. "It isn't 'I'm doing good for the world', 'I've got to do good' it's like 'these are fascinating challenges that engage me intellectually and I've got something to offer there'. I think he finds a lot of satisfaction in pursuing it and learning about the science and speaking to scientists and adding his brain power to solving this." In the power, money, knowledge triad, it seems for Gates, knowledge always comes out on top.

In many ways he is the archetypal nerd. He takes 'think weeks' where he goes off alone to a cabin in the woods and reads. When he is fascinated about a subject he reads as much as he can about it. His interest in the environment compelled him to read the rather esoteric Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impact by Vaclav Smil, for instance.

Levy explains that it was Melinda who forced him to channel his intellectual brilliance into philanthropy. "Really, the big impetus for him getting into philanthropy at that point in his life when he did was his wife. I do feel it was her influence that led him to step back from Microsoft maybe sooner than he thought." Melinda's influence has been profound and since the beginning she has inspired Bill to be better and think differently.

Melinda joined Microsoft after graduating with a degree in computer science and economics from Duke University and a master's in business administration from the Fuqua School

BILL GATES' PHILANTHROPY

Mary Maxwell Gates

Gates' philanthropic spirit may be in part credited to his late mother, Mary Maxwell Gates. Throughout his life his mother, a businesswoman and teacher, encouraged him to get his head out of books and interact with people. According to a 2009 Wall Street Journal article, it was Mary who urged him to give some of his wealth away.

Bill Maxwell Gates

Bill Gates' late father, a lawyer and co chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has always been passionate about fairness and wealth. In 2010, Gates Sr. helped lead the campaign for Initiative 1098, a ballot measure to create a state income tax for Washington. In an interview with GeekWire, Gates explained: "My dad has a well-developed sense of justice. He decided there should be an income tax. Based on the voters, not that many people agreed with him. But he had a firm conviction about that."

Warren Buffett

Warren Buffett, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway and friend of Bill Gates, gifted ten million shares of Berkshire Hathaway stock to the Gates Foundation in June 2006, according to the Foundation's site, which is paid in annual instalments. In a Facebook status in honour of Buffett's 89th birthday, Melinda Gates wrote: "... Warren believes in the true role of philanthropy: To take risks where governments can't and to be a true catalyst for change. Warren, you are that catalyst for Bill and me. You are our lift." In a 2016 blog post celebrating 25 years of friendship Bill Gates wrote: "Warren has helped us do two things that are impossible to overdo in one lifetime: learn more and laugh more."

Melinda Gates

Gates married Melinda, who is co-founder pf the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in 1994. In the early years of the Foundation, Bill was very focused on his work at Microsoft and Melinda therefore shaped the direction of the Foundation.

Giving Pledge

Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett created the Giving Pledge in 2010. It is an open invitation for billionaires, or those who would be if not for their giving, to publicly commit to giving the majority of their wealth to philanthropy.

Mark Zuckerberg

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the philanthropic organisation that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan launched in 2015, is contributing $25 million to Bill Gates' accelerator for developing therapies and medicine to treat Covid-19.

Boris Johnson

The Prime Minister spoke to Bill and Melinda Gates in May to discuss the UK's contribution to helping countries around the world tackle coronavirus and the work of the Gates Foundation in this area. They met again at the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit on June 4th.

Donald Trump

Bill Gates has been vocal in his criticism of Donald Trump's handling of the pandemic, particularly President Trump's decision to halt funding for World Health Organisation in April.

of Business. One evening after work, Bill asked her if she wanted to go out for dinner, in two weeks time. She declined telling him she wanted spontaneity and an hour or so later she received a phone call from him asking "is this spontaneous enough for you?"

If Bill is deserving of a hero status, Melinda is too, perhaps even more so. It was Melinda who inspired the Foundation to focus on combating disease when as a new mother she read an article that described how children were still dying from diarrhoea. Now she is using her influence to protect women from the devastation of Covid-19.

But no matter whether Gates' philanthropy is driven by Melinda or by pure intellectual curiosity, it does not make his actions any less valuable. As Batman says, "It's not who I am underneath, but what I do that defines me." Heroes are also defined by their enemies.

Last month, during the week polio was eradicated from Africa, 10,000 conspiracy theorists gathered in Trafalgar Square to protest against lockdowns, masks and vaccinations. In speeches they rallied against Bill Gates.

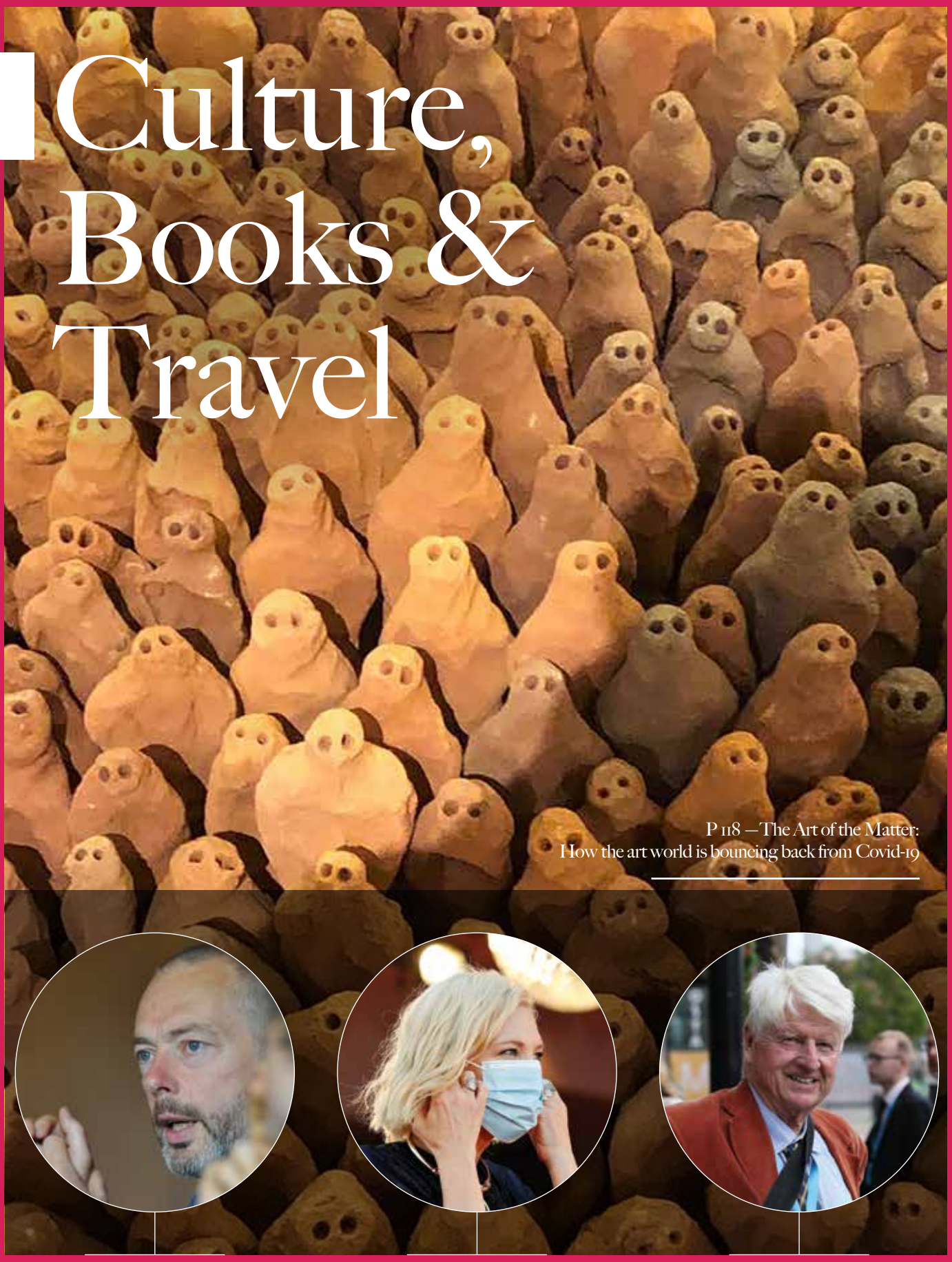
Of course, unthinking reverence of philanthropists could lead to abuses of power, but as it stands the Foundation is contributing to developing a vaccine that could save the world and we need all the heroes we can get. f

Gabi Hakim, founder of VacTrack app

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Covid-19 response

- The Foundation has committed more than $350 million to support the global response to Covid-19. This includes:
- $250 million to improve detection, isolation, and treatment efforts; protect at-risk populations in Africa and South Asia; accelerate the development of vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics; and minimise the social and economic impacts of the pandemic. The Foundation announced $100 million to the global response in February, and then increased this commitment by an additional $150 million in April.
- $5 million to support the Covid-19 response in the Greater Seattle Area. This funding supported local public health efforts in Seattle & King County as well as six regional response funds that aim to meet the needs of those disproportionately impacted by Covid-19.
- $100 million to Gavi's new Covid-19 Vaccine Advance Market Commitment, to support its future efforts to deliver Covid-19 vaccines to lower-income countries.
- In addition to the more than $350 million committed, the Foundation will also leverage a portion of its Strategic Investment Fund, which addresses market failures and helps make it attractive for private enterprise to develop affordable and accessible health products. For example, the Foundation is collaborating with Gavi and the Serum Institute of India to accelerate the manufacture and delivery of up to 100 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines for low- and middle-income countries. $150 million came from their Strategic Investment Fund.

Culture, Books & Travel



Emily Prescott

HOW WILL FILM SURVIVE THE PANDEMIC?

And... inaction! Movies have been severely hit by Covid-19

It's a not uncommon thought during these times: "Is this reality or some awful dream?" As we queue in masked silence, told to keep two metres apart over the tannoys, our lives now feel post-apocalyptic, as if a dystopia fit for the silver screen had migrated somehow into our actual lives.

But if the pandemic is the stuff of movies, how is it impacting the way films are made and consumed? *Finito World* has identified the four key hurdles filmmakers are facing over the next few months. Strap yourself into your home cinema seats: it's going to be a bumpy ride.

"Just keep swimming": Keeping the momentum

Although filming has started again, many productions are still reeling from the psychological and logistical consequences of lockdown.

Finito World spoke to James Kent whose directing credits include Testament of Youth, starring Kit Harrington, and The Aftermath, starring Keira Knightley. " If you're in the middle of a project and it has to be stopped, it's a pain to remount it,' he explains. 'It's very complicated to get your actors back as many of them will be booked on to other jobs. It's definitely a bit of a logistical nightmare."

But in some ways making movies is always a precarious business, he adds: "Filming is all about momentum. There's a famous saying in the industry: You're never sure it's happening until you've got your bacon butty. The bacon butty guarantees the fact that you're filming and until that moment comes, a film cannot happen."

But perhaps it's not all doom and gloom. Rebecca Johnson, who has directed an array of shows including Call the Midwife as well as her own critically acclaimed feature film, Honeytrap, says viewers might see a rise in indie films since they aren't so vulnerable to the loss of momentum. "What's good about indie films is they are usually shot over a short period of time. Usually about four weeks so potentially there will be a rise in these sorts of films. Cost is going to be an issue but if people really did isolate and it was just like a hermetically sealed unit that is fairly safe and easy to maintain."

"Houston, we have a problem": Keeping the crew healthy

Keeping cast and crew Covid-free presents an ongoing challenge. It was hard not to cringe while watching films in lockdown and noticing how recklessly the characters shake hands and spread their germs all over the set. So, should we expect the latest films to be sanitised and devoid of intimacy?

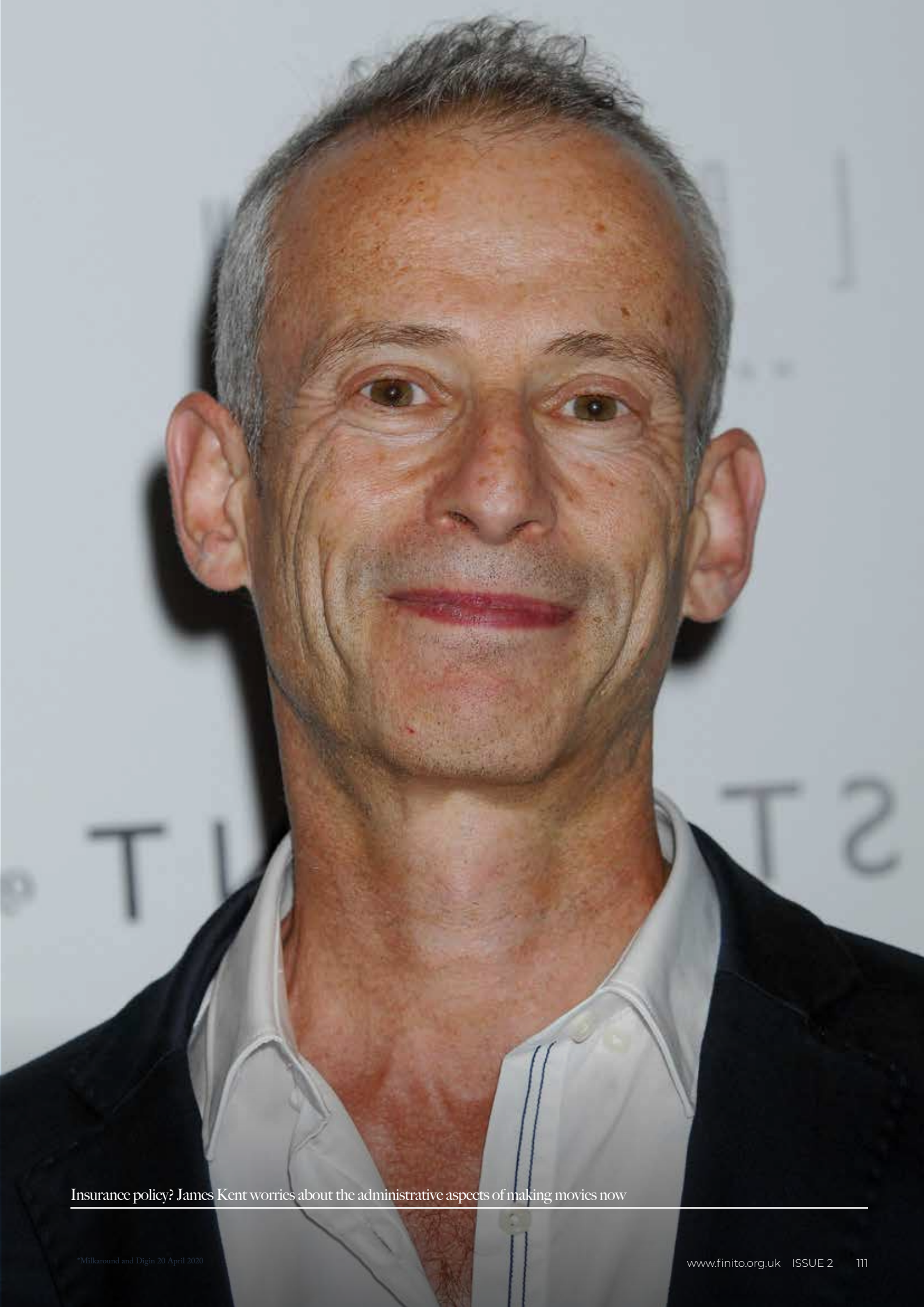
Rebecca Johnson says: "For me the most concerning thing is keeping actors apart. I just don't see how you can do that. It's too creatively inhibiting. There's just too much content that you wouldn't be able to make while keeping actors at a distance."

James Kent worries about the costs associated with keeping people safe. He said: "If there's an outbreak on set then your whole crew is off, there's a whole issue about insurance and how that's being covered. If Chris Pratt gets coronavirus when acting in Jurassic Park they won't be able to shoot."

> "Filming is all about momentum. There's a famous saying in the industry: You're never sure it's happening until you've got your bacon butty. The bacon butty guarantees the fact that you're filming and until that moment comes, a film cannot happen."

And it looks like productions won't be getting any financial assistance if coronavirus strikes on set. Kris Barnfather from the creative insurance broker Eggar Forrester Creative is blunt: "Without meaning to sound all doom and gloom, realistically there's just not a way forward. Insurers are explicitly writing coronavirus cover out of contracts.

The reality does indeed sound grim. "Some people are worried about being



Insurance policy? James Kent worries about the administrative aspects of making movies now

*Milkaround and Digin 20 April 2020

Cate Blanchett touches elbows with festival director Alberto Barbera at the Venice Film Festival

sued if someone catches Covid-19 on set,' Barnfather continues, 'so we are suggesting everyone does a coronavirus risk assessment and that they make sure people understand the risks and sign documents to mark this understanding if necessary."

Production companies are having to be especially careful. Actor Tyler Perry who owns studios in Atlanta was one of the first people to outline, in great detail, how to start filming amid the Covid-19 outbreak. His 30-page plan titled "Camp Quarantine" reveals the steps individuals should take. It says all luggage has to be disinfected, cast and crew should isolate before filming and they will also be required to take nasal swabs.

"Well, nobody's perfect": Keeping the cast looking good

Nasal swabs hardly scream movie industry glitz and glamour. Indeed, during lockdown, viewers watched TV presenters' faces droop from lack of botox and saw their blonde fade to grey. So will coronavirus mark an end of polished stars?

James Kent explains: "Makeup is a real issue, particularly for period dramas. You can get away with it in a modern drama because you've got your own hair but with wigs or anything that involves prosthetics, it's impossible."

Sandra Exelby, who has done makeup on the sets of *Doctor Who*, *Dad's Army*, and *Bugsy Malone* and now chairs the National Association of Screen Make-up Artists and Hairdressers, has been coming up with solutions to keep the stars looking good.

She explained: "We are advising all of our artists to wear appropriate PPE. This includes aprons and a visor as well as a mask. Of course, we are saying hand-washing must be regular. We are also suggesting that makeup brushes are left overnight in a UV cabinet."

But hairdryers are getting the cut. She explains: "Hairdryers move air around and so they increase the likelihood of infection spreading and therefore we are saying no to hairdryers."

"Makeup artists cannot adhere to social distancing. They are essential on set and with the right precautions risk can be minimised," she says.

"I'll be back": Keeping people in the cinema

We've highlighted the hurdles and shown, for the most part, there are ways to minimise risk. So the shows will go on. But the question is, who will dare to venture to the cinema to watch them?

Cinemas in the UK have reopened again albeit without singalong screenings and pick'n'mix. Nonetheless, the industry is on track for its worst year since 1996, with box office and advertising revenue set to be down almost £900 million.

Rebecca Johnson admits: "I'm not sure I'm going to go to the cinema in a hurry, to be honest. Going to the cinema feels like an unnecessary risk. I'm not that scared of getting it but I will avoid it if I can."

James Kent is also pessimistic: "The real problem is with film: how does anyone make any money when you can only put half the amount of people in the cinema?"

"Oscar winning films are generally skewed towards an older demographic and they are going to be the ones least wanting to go back into the cinema. Anybody over 55 is not going to be rushing back to the movie theatre."

Which all sounds a bit bleak. So where's the uplifting riding-off-into-the-sunset ending? Well, University of Exeter film professor James Lyons points out that coronavirus could encourage the film industry to consider its impact on the climate.

He said: "The film industry is a very resource-intensive enterprise in many respects, and it needs to come to terms much more seriously and urgently with its contribution to climate change." Looking ahead, Kent is intent on identifying the positives: "This moment is one for us to all reflect on what we have taken for granted, and adapting in the months and years to come must surely involve thinking of more sustainable ways to live and work. The film industry is no exception."

So hopefully in the future we will view post-apocalyptic scenes exclusively on the screen. f

NO TIME LIKE THE FUTURE

At Young Enterprise we believe that no young person should be left behind. Your employees' knowledge, passion and experience will support the next generation of young people to unleash their potential. Whether in person or virtually, we have a range of skills-based volunteering opportunities that will both challenge and inspire your teams and help our young people to learn the vital skills and the enterprising mindset needed to earn and look after their money.

By 2023, YE aims to create **1 million** opportunities – but we can't do it without the **40,000** volunteers, teachers, and alumni across our network and a **£16 million** investment.

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

Find out more and support us to change the lives of more young people
www.young-enterprise.org.uk/NTLTF

YOUNG enterprise
A Member of JA Worldwide

YOUNG money
Part of Young Enterprise

Still Life by Lorna May Wadsworth, 2020

The Tale of the Artless Summer

ROBERT GOLDING LOOKS BACK ON A TOUGH YEAR FOR THE ARTS AND HERITAGE SECTOR BUT DISCOVERS HOPE AHEAD

Anthony Gormley stands before a sea of small clay figurines at the First Site gallery in Colchester and poses for photographs. 'I'm very, very thrilled,' he says. 'It's never been more relevant than now.' He is referring to his thought-provoking sculpture Field for the British Isles: a sea of faces, all open-mouthed looking eerily back at the viewer. First produced in 1993, it won him the Turner Prize in 1994.

Gormley never looked back, and the work too has shifted, as good art does, with the times. 'I'm proud to see it here,' he says. 'Colchester has a long, proud history of immigration.' Then pointing to the inspired installation, where the faces amass until they reach a corner and then disappear off unseen, Gormley exhibits a boyish thrill: 'It's never been shown 'on the angle' as it were, where the first bit of orthogonal architecture promises to dispense with orthogonality.'

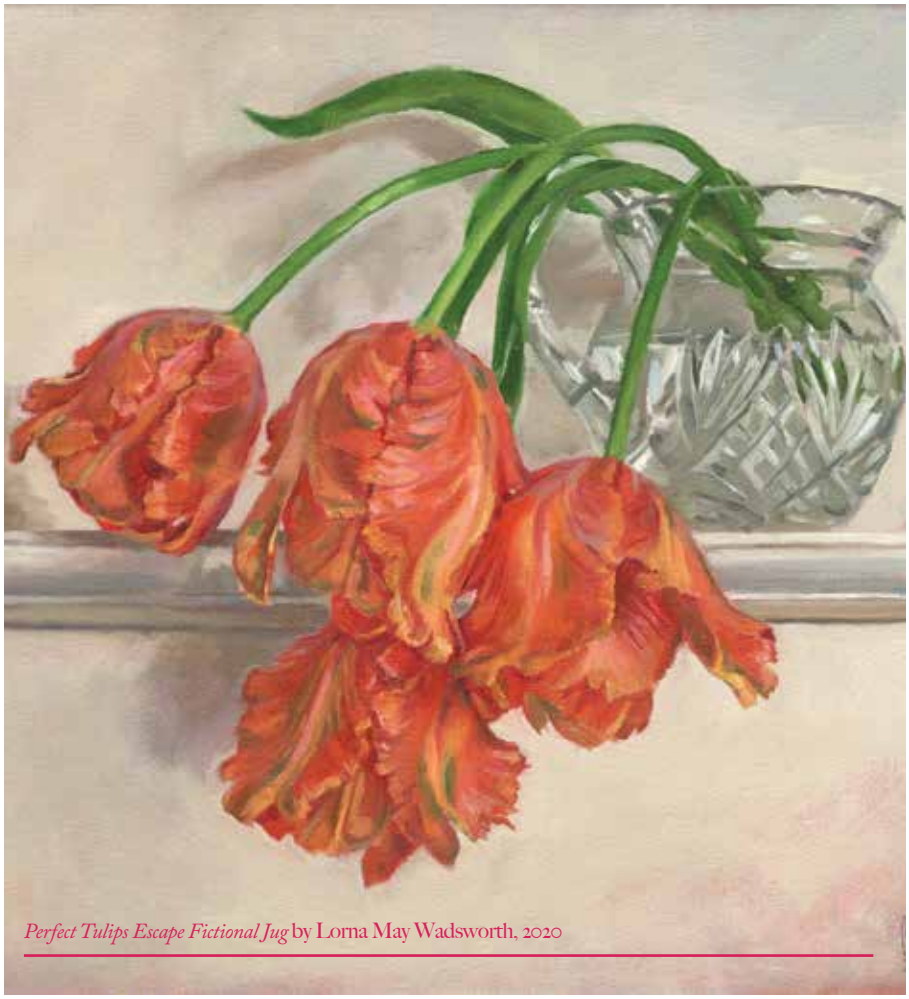
All of which would ordinarily be perfectly normal – a famous artist using the word 'orthogonality' while journalists and gallery directors nod sagely, enjoying their proximity to greatness, and concealing their bafflement. In the ordinary scheme of things, one might also relate all that the sculptor went on to say about Brexit; how generous he was with his time; and how marvellous it is when an artist plainly enjoys elaborating on their work.

Except that this is not the ordinary scheme of things, as Gormley was speaking on the eve of the coronavirus. The world, without anyone being aware of it, was primed for change.

The Ides of March

2020 was set to be another year of treats: Titian at the National Gallery, Van Eyck at MSK Gent, Cranach at Compton Verney. As the virus proliferated, anxious gallery directors had suddenly to cope with dramatically suspended footfall. They examined not just their balance sheets, but in many cases their raison d'être. Curators turned themselves overnight into online TV presenters, as galleries pivoted to virtual exhibitions, with mixed results.

As with the wider economic story of coronavirus, there was a terrible randomness about 2020: the arbitrariness of the virus ruled all. Survival depended on one's cashflow going into the crisis, yes, but also on the layout of a site. Did your gallery have monetisable outside space like Hampton Court? If so, you could at least reopen your gardens. But what if your gallery was urban, like, say, the Handel House off New Bond Street, a space where social distancing was impossible? For such sites, a long road lay ahead.



Perfect Tulips Escape Fictional Jug by Lorna May Wadsworth, 2020

"2020 was set to be another year of treats: Titian at the National Gallery, Van Eyck at MSK Gent, Cranach at Compton Verey."

Maev Kennedy, the former arts editor at *The Guardian* and BBC Radio 4 presenter, had been due to travel to Ghent for the Van Eyck exhibition, but had to cancel. Naturally ebullient, with a warm Irish voice, she seems an unlikely messenger of pessimism, but pessimistic she undoubtedly is. She tells me that the urban sites face 'a gigantic problem'. The example she gives is Turner's House, known as Sandycombe Lodge in Twickenham. 'It's the only surviving property Turner designed himself. It has a handful of small rooms and one winding staircase. You might be talking admitting five visitors at a time, so how do you make the numbers stack up?' she asks.

Kennedy is also worried for the National Trust, which announced

Compton Verney from the Adam Bridge

1200 job losses in late July. 'It has a huge advantage of the enormous and incredibly loyal friends base, but the problem will be a demographic one. The volunteer base are overwhelmingly over 60s and that might be being polite.'

Kennedy speaks with great authority, and her pessimism is especially convincing since it plainly comes from a place of longstanding love. Even in September, as many galleries and museums embark on reopening strategies, her voice remains with me, urging caution.

The Pivot to Digital

Not every gallery we spoke to was caught off guard by the pandemic. Compton Verney's director Julie Finch was well-prepared for the virus thanks to a journey she took to the Far East at the start of the year.

'I travelled in February through Singapore and so I saw it coming,' she tells us. 'As soon as I got back, I set up a Covid-19 team. I was insisting at the end of February that people not sit close together in meetings and everyone thought I was bonkers.' Finch now realises she was fortunate to be a step ahead: 'We prepared for a staged closure and had a social distancing policy before lockdown. It was only for a week but people carried on visiting and the feedback was that everyone felt safe. But we ended up locking down the house, and closing the grounds on 20th March.'

So although Finch soon realised that she'd 'lost a year of income' - the shortfall stemmed particularly from reorganised weddings - she also realised she had to seek 'the good will to rebook.' Finch had also proved to herself and others that she could make the Compton Verney experience viable going forwards.

> "I travelled in February through Singapore and so I saw it coming. As soon as I got back, I set up a Covid-19 team."

The great anxiety for the heritage sector is that the cost of opening can sometimes exceed the cost of staying closed. Finch explains: 'We generate about £1.6 million a year through commercial activity but just to house the collection at Compton Verney costs £300,000 a year. You're talking security, air-handling units, management processes, conservation.' A museum cannot just sit tight in a way some businesses can.

Galleries were therefore thrown back on their digital smarts - an area which many institutions subsequently realised they'd not been paying sufficient attention to prior to the pandemic. 'We invented a digital strategy overnight and went live with the Cranach exhibition,' Finch explains. But this was no silver bullet: 'The question is: "How can you monetise digital and reach a wider audience going forwards?" In its first week we had 22,000 views and we would never have received that normally. But we had no pay wall.'

Ay, there's the rub. Finch notes that the virus creates an opportunity to 'nurture the virtual community,' but there does seem a lack of detail as to how this will ever make up the shortfalls in revenue.

Maev Kennedy is unconvinced about the proliferation of online content: 'I don't think they're doing much more than reminding people they exist.'

Even so, what would this virtual community entail? According to Finch, you could make exhibitions 'more of a festival of ideas around our creative content and collections. You can Zoom

One of Quentin Blake's 'portable rainbows',

someone in from America to take part, and create new perspectives and intellect.' But Finch also concedes that 'you can't beat the real thing for a minute.'

From Portraits to Still Lives

But art's perennial strength is its adaptability, and it might be consoling for young people considering careers in the arts to hear that there are signs that artists are beginning to look afresh at the world. Some have even found lockdown enriching, and challenged themselves to find new ways of working, and to discover fresh forms of expression.

Lorna May Wadsworth is a portrait painter, especially noted for her famous Last Supper with a black Christ (a print of which now hangs in St Alban's cathedral), and for her magnificent portraits of Margaret Thatcher, who sat for Wadsworth five times towards the end of her life when Wadsworth herself was in her 20s. But her portrait work necessarily dried up at the outset of the virus and she found herself doing still lives in her flat.

Wadsworth is infectious and kind, and you can detect the steel of ambition beneath her warmth: 'In many ways, for artists themselves the virus is not that big a jump. I spent the whole of last year on lockdown preparing for my retrospective at Sheffield's Graves Gallery. It was odd to see the world react in horror to your life basically!' And how has the work been? 'Lots of artists have said they've not been able to work because of the stress and the worry. My reaction was to go gung-ho on these still lives.'

These turn out to be a leap forward for her artistically: Wadsworth has turned her gaze away from people and found a sort of personality in these objects. 'The tea pots are talking to each other or dancing. They project the need for connection,' she says. The move towards online has had hopeful ramifications for her: she has sold pictures on Instagram. Even so, there is a limit to her embrace of the digital sphere: 'We're so sick of being online,' she says. 'I hold a belief: a good painting never reproduces as good in real life, a mediocre painting will reproduce better.' So caveat emptor.

But there was also good to be done. Wadsworth signed the Artists Support Pledge, meaning that she will buy £200 of art for every £1,000 she sells. She also helped launch the Bourlet Young Masters Art Prize which aimed to get children busy during lockdown while raising money for the Cavell Nurses' Trust.

"In many ways, for artists themselves the virus is not that big a jump. I spent the whole of last year on lockdown preparing for my retrospective at Sheffield's Graves Gallery. It was odd to see the world react in horror to your life basically!"

This marvellous initiative – as Stephen Fry put it, 'from the fridge to national recognition' – chimes with the sense of community which Finch has also tried to promote at Compton Verney. 'The profession has been massively supportive of one another which is brilliant,' she says. 'We've been thinking about how Compton Verney can help the local area. One of those is health and well-being and use of the grounds. We have a local pass and have put in a cheap ticket for people to come as many times as they want over a five-week period. We also have special price-ticketing for NHS staff.'

This noble approach was also evident in the delightful series of free rainbow e-cards (see left), produced by Quentin Blake for the House of Illustration which are, he says, 'for people to send to loved ones they cannot currently see due to the coronavirus lockdown, to show they are thinking of them at this difficult time.'

The generosity seems to connect back to a comment Anthony Gormley made to me regarding Field for the British Isles: "The idea that my name is on this is rubbish. It is a collective work made by the collective hands of a collective people.'

So one's best version of coronavirus in the arts world would entail precisely this: an arrival at not only new ways of seeing, but a new sense of community. Perhaps it might not be too much to argue that we have moved more quickly

Here we are Dahl-ing: Quentin Blake's rainbows were designed to be sent to loved ones in lockdown

than we might otherwise have done towards a kind of collective seeing.

The Outlook for the Young

But is the arts world still worth going into? Julie Finch is optimistic: 'The sector has to modernise now. Compton Verney will need to prioritise digital audience development, and give the lead for being a more diverse organisation. Since Covid-19 things have moved on exponentially. I think there will be roles coming up, so I wouldn't discourage people from going down that route.'

Maev Kennedy remains concerned: 'There's going to be a flood of good people all released out into a shrunken market at the same time. For younger people, the consequences of this are going to be felt for a very long time.'

Despite this, the contemporary art market has remained vibrant throughout the crisis: the wealthy locked-down have been staring at that blank patch of wall, and wondering what to fill it with.

A well-known London art dealer lists for me the sheer range of opportunities in the arts worlds, from framing to the legal side, to forgery and counterfeiting and academia. She sees a predominantly optimistic landscape: 'It's been a difficult time but the world hasn't stopped.

The US stock market is back to where it was a year ago. We've sent things to Australia.' Then she rattles off other professions which she expects will be resilient: 'There's insurance and transportation of art - and then there's the massive multi-layered business of buying and selling artists, representing artists, not to mention the buying and auction house routes. A lot of this has been hit, but it hasn't been death blows.'

She adds: 'What we've learned in all sectors is to use digital communication. We're helped by the fact that the private buyer is now prepared to make more decisions from a screen than they were before.'

Maev Kennedy agrees, but emphasises that it's just one segment of the art market: 'Once you go upwards it's going to be okay. That whole business of bringing in a Russian oligarch to see a Titian with a glass of champagne: that won't be affected at all.'

But for Kennedy this is cold comfort when we look at the sheer enormity of the ructions for museums and galleries more generally.

A Modest Reopening

All of which sounded grim over the summer, and sounds grim now. But as we moved into July and August, galleries did begin opening again. Dr. Gabriele Finaldi, the director of the National Gallery, had been sending out bulletins about his favourite pictures during lockdown. ('He seemed a bit like a Renaissance prince alone in his castle, it rather suited him,' jokes Kennedy).

Lucas Cranach, Lot and His Daughters

Covid-proof routes had been designed. It was a cathartic moment for the nation's oldest institution to be leading the way. But it was still a sign of how much things had changed: a place you used to walk in from off the street was now operating on a still-free but competitive ticket-booking system. This seemed to spell the suspension of the impromptu 20-minute gallery visit at lunchtime.

A few weeks later the Tate Britain opened and felt a fairly eerie experience. The Clore Galleries where the famous collection of J. M. W. Turners' hang was closed, cordoning off visitor access to the William Blakes' without explanation. And the gallery was structured according to two routes: the British Art from 1560-1930 route and the contemporary route. It was good to be back but impossible to ignore that the galleries felt somehow sad. I began to find myself

"For younger people, the consequences of this are going to be felt for a very long time."

in the Kennedy school of pessimism.

This pessimism was to some extent improved by a day in Twickenham in August where I attended Strawberry Hill House, and Turner's House. In both instances, I book ahead and become part of a small group of three in structured socially distanced tours of small spaces (both houses are structures round vertical staircases where it would be impossible to socially distance).

On the plus side, the new tour group approach makes for a sense of camaraderie among gallery-goers; on each occasion I find I enjoy the company of those I am with. But for me, the experience of museum-going is all to do with entering a state of private meditation and communion in a public setting. This has always made me sceptical about audio guides and guided tours. If the world has moved more towards face-to-face interaction while we look at our heritage then that might not always find me in the right mood.

Back to the Future

Whenever I think back on that day in Colchester with Anthony Gormley it is impossible not to feel grief at what we were so suddenly deprived of in March. In an attempt to correct this, I sometimes find myself groping a bit too obviously after positives.

When I speak to Sally Shaw, the director of First Site and a friend of the sculptor, she says, 'I'm currently sitting in an empty gallery which is odd.' It is another sad image.

But she tells me of an optimistic project she embarked upon during lockdown. It occurred to Shaw to start a series of Artist Activity Packs, and the first person she thought to contact was Gormley. 'We thought it would be brilliant to get people to do something in their homes. I always remember colouring-in as a kid. We'd just done Field for the British Isles with Anthony and so I held my breath and wrote an email and asked him if he wanted to partner with us. Within ten minutes, I got a reply and we were doing it.'

The resulting project, in Shaw's words, 'went bonkers. We've done three

Sea of Troubles: Anthony Gormley has helped First Site Gallery react to the Covid-19 crisis

packs and they've been distributed to 65,000 households. People were desperate to do something.'

There is something here which is more than just pie-in-the-sky consolation. During this time, the art world has shown tremendous resourcefulness, and an absolute commitment to the transformative power of art at this time.

When I was with Gormley before Field for the British Isles, I asked him how that piece would change if Scotland were to leave the Union. It was a question about the way in which art itself changes, as the world mutates.

On that occasion, Gormley dodged the question, answering that that would be the 'next chapter in a long national story of unfolding madness.'

But a few months later, the B word has been replaced by the C-word, but looking over my transcripts I realise that not as much changes as we think it does.

At one point, Gormley says in his inimitably digressive way: 'We've got to achieve social justice in a time when goods have absolute free passage globally, and yet somehow people do not. Why are we going backwards in time when we've been given all of the tools of the collective mind? The internet is the realisation of the idea of the biosphere circled by mind.'

'A biosphere circled by mind'. It would be hard to think of a more apt or prescient description of the times we live in. It took an artist to say it, and it would take an artist to show it.

In Twickenham, it occurs to me that history is full of intended restorations and easy romanticisms which were thwarted in the end by the irreversible nature of time. For Gormley, Brexit was just the most recent of these. In reality we never restore past eras – and we shall not restore the world to March 17th 2020.

What hope might be placed in opposition to this? I find it in Turner's House. Upstairs, where only three of us are allowed at a time, there's a telescope which seeks to show the visitor what the view out of the artist's bedroom would have been in his day. It is an image of an Arcadian landscape unimpinged-upon by the rows of samey semi-detached houses which we experience today. Marble House, occluded now, seemed right before the artist then. The river could be seen, and though you can't see it now, the museum has rescued for us as an ingenious act of rescuing.

It strikes me that this project to understand the past shall continue, and in doing form our future. This endeavour shall include understanding better the past six months. To do that, you could do a lot worse than start with Lorna May Wadsworth's exciting and original still lives. And it is a hopeful fact that at Turner's House, though there is a bottle of hand sanitiser on the table next to it, visitors are still encouraged to touch that telescope. f

Turning the corner: The telescope at the artist's house in Sydenham

Not Doubting Thomas

WILL WE EVER RETURN TO OUR OFFICES? AND WHAT WILL THEY LOOK LIKE IF WE DO? GEORGE ACHEBE TALKS TO THOMAS HEATHERWICK

Journalists I speak to lately have begun to notice a new presence within their recordings of interviews and Zoom call presentations: birdsong. Lockdown coincided with marvellous weather; our offices became our gardens.

And the sky on our road in Islington reverberates with the sound of spanner on metal; our friends over in Muswell Hill have replanted their garden since they spend so much time looking at it; my conveyancing lawyer tells me he may, or may not, return to the office. If so, he says, it will be used primarily as a storage space.

There is, in other words, a unanimity about lockdown: you can be sure that your own experience can be extrapolated into the general. And yet if you ever leave your cosy home and venture to the centre of town, you'll discover the flipside of all this neighbourliness and quiet domestic improvement.

Soho strikes me as especially melancholy. There's the sandwich bar I used to frequent now boarded up; a new kind of silence, not so much contemplative as eerily touristless; and with around one in ten businesses open, you have a sense that this place has insufficient residential activity to last in its current form beyond the end of furlough.

Will these businesses return? It is dependent on what decision we make about our office arrangements. This varies from business to business of course. For a more in-depth analysis of the landscape see our exclusive employability survey which begins on page 79. But what are the implications for architects?

Thomas Heatherwick, the famous founder of the Heatherwick Studio, explains that he has seen some positives come out of the coronavirus period: 'The most interesting thing has been reflecting on what this means and how it's going to change our lives. I'm wrestling with the sense that [pre-Covid 19] there was more and more sharing – of cars, workspaces and living spaces. The world was becoming more efficient because people were learning to live together in different ways.'

In Heatherwick's eyes, the pandemic represented a 'retreat' into the private space – a world of Victorian studies, and

"The most interesting thing has been reflecting on what this means and how's it going to change our lives."

Nanyang City, Heatherwick Studio: 2015

stockpiled toilet roll. But Heatherwick, who in person is infectiously optimistic and free-wheeling, is already solving the problem the world has set him: 'The positive side is that people will be spending more time on their homes, and thinking on how their homes work for any situation.' In the meantime, he says, business-owners have decisions to make about whether to redesign their office space.

We are all aware that this is a sort of drawn-out inflection point, where the human behaviour that will dictate what solution we end up with is latent, and yet to be revealed. Furthermore, it will likely differ from country to country; sector to sector; and CEO to CEO.

When I talk to Alan S – the CEO of a leading boutique creative agency, who also has the sound of birds in his garden – he speaks only on the condition that he remains anonymous. This is because he isn't quite sure where his business will land and he doesn't want to give any misleading or worrying information to his workforce.

'As a small business we have always worked from a fixed office in central London and although we have let employees work from home when required we have never all worked remotely at the same time,' he explains. 'We did a trial run before lockdown was announced in order to iron out any issues that might possibly arise, so when lockdown happened we were as ready as possible.' So how did it pan out? 'The overriding response was that everyone found it productive, but missed the typical office interactions and camaraderie when seeing each other.' This will no doubt be a familiar experience for many. What changes has that made to Alan's view of his existing central London office space? 'It suddenly became a burden and we were realising that the more we worked from home, the benefits this gave to everyone [would accrue].' And what are these? 'Everyone would save on travel expenses and commuting time could be spent with partners and families.' The perennial bugbear or exorbitant business rates has also been front of mind for the business. 'The rent, rates and insurance saved by surrendering a central London office will enable us to invest in people, equipment and technology to increase our efficiency and service our clients.'

So Alan S has to some extent made up his mind, and there are plenty of him.

> "I'm wrestling with the sense that [pre-Covid19] there was more and more sharing — of cars, workspaces and living spaces."

But it is by no means a unanimous view. In fact you'll find some who argue that an imminent vaccine, most likely arriving in 2021, and distributed towards the end of that year or in 2022, will see a return to a world reminiscent of pre-Covid 19 office-centric life.

Olly Olsen, the CEO of the Office Group, which has over 40 flexible workspaces across the UK, is one of these, although he admits it may be a way off. 'I spoke to Network Rail, with whom I have a joint venture, and in a number of stations, footfall is down 88 percent. That's catastrophic,' he concedes.

In addition, Olsen, whose livelihood is bound up in office life, also makes some admissions about the benefits of working from home. For him, they're linked to wellness. 'In the afternoon, I get tired with too much coffee and a big lunch and so I'll lie down on the sofa for half an hour which is almost socially unacceptable to do in the office.' Olsen sees it as a positive future driver of business that we're now finding ourselves more attuned to what he calls 'wellness fluctuations' in each other. Workers with children are another example. 'It used to be that if someone said "Can I make that meeting 11 instead of 10?', you'd say: "Deal with your kids another time." Now when a member of staff says, "I'm not feeling myself", I say, "Have a rest, there's no problem. Speak to you later, speak to you next week".

All this is an indicator of how power has moved rapidly away from the employer towards the employee. For Olsen, it's not that the office model needs to go; it's that it needs to change and be adapted to reflect our new reality.

What ramifications will this have for the buildings around us? Thomas Heatherwick agrees with Olsen, but he sees it from an architect's perspective. For him, there has simply been too much 'lazy place-making', and the pre-Covid office was a case of 'Stockholm syndrome where someone falls in love with their captor. Your employer effectively had

Olly Olsen, CEO of the Office Group

you in a headlock.' The new office space will have to 'engender real loyalty' and become a 'temple of the real values and ethical thrust of an organisation.'

For Heatherwick, the pre-Covid workspace 'prioritised how [businesses] communicate to the outside world. So if you go to Canary Wharf' – an example perhaps of Heatherwick's 'lazy place-making' – 'there's a grand lobby; huge marble floors; pieces of art looking spectacular; a reception desk with great flowers, and lovely-looking people sitting looking great. But if you go inside the elevator you go up to just an ordinary place of work. The show was for the outside.'

All this has to change now that power has moved in the direction of the employee. 'You need to have them coming in and thinking, "Yes. I need to be here." So the workspace will become less about being a show for the outside world. It's about finding your voice as an organisation. The employer has to up their game which the brilliant people were starting to do anyway.'

So how will this look? Heatherwick is a prescient artist who, it could be said, was already beginning to answer some of these questions in his pre-virus work. His magnificent shopping centre Coal Drop's Yard in King's Cross was all about creating a space which people who could internet shop in their bedrooms would still wish to visit.

'Public togetherness is something which motivates me,' he says with infectious enthusiasm. Heatherwick has always been alive to the fact that change must be built on the back of existing infrastructure: as always, the future will be built on the back of past structures. 'We've got this legacy of Victorian and Georgian warehouses, which are very robust and changeable. Think how many people are living in older industrial buildings. That was the ethos which drove the Google buildings that we've worked on.' Covid-19 might seem to open up onto the future, but it will also be anchored, Heatherwick argues, to what we have already.

The first project the studio worked on for Google was the company's offices in California. 'Next-door to the sites we were working on there was this airship hangar - a NASA airbase,' he recalls. 'These are amazing spaces which are super-flexible so you can do anything you want. So our proposal to Google suggested we make really flexible space since we're not sure whether in a decade people sitting at desks will be what we need. We'll be manufacturing instead.'

So in a sense the post-coronavirus requirement of flexibility might be met by the sorts of structures already around us: there shall be that element of continuity even as we change.

Google HQ, Kings Cross, Heatherwick Studio, under construction

But this isn't to say Heatherwick lacks a vision of just how extraordinary the shift in architecture shall be. Round the corner from his studio in King's Cross, Heatherwick is working on Google's new London base: 'It's the biggest use of timber in a central London building. All the façades are wood.'

What is the ethos of that building? 'One thing we've spent time talking about on that is community,' says the 50-year-old. 'The idea that here is just a mercenary organisation doing their thing, and the employees come in eat all their food and drink their drinks, sit at their computers, and get well-paid...'

Heatherwick trails off, then refinds his thread. 'Given what we're saying about really getting a deeper engagement with an organisation and it's team: How does that really contribute to the community around? On the ground floor, you don't just want another shop that sells ties.'

So what would a new community-oriented architecture entail? 'Close by King's Cross there's Somers Town, where there's great deprivation and low life possibilities in terms of housing and education.' For Heatherwick the lively pedestrianised ground floor is a way of energising the whole area.

So while our conversation began with fears of a new individualism, perhaps we might after all find a new communitarianism emerge? Heatherwick agrees: 'If you're going into work two days a week you may not need to be based in London.

Out of this may come some strong community-making away from conventional urban settings. Energy had seeped away from villages but now you could get super-villages. It's okay to spend two hours on a train journey if you're only doing that twice a week. I just hope we will use brownfield sites rather than consuming greenfield sites.'

But again this seems to spell trouble for the City and, though few may lament the fact, the property development sector. Olsen admits: 'If you ask people where they most prefer working, it's on their own – it's at home where it's quiet. Not an office which is openplan with people talking, and which is smelly and so on.'

So what's the purpose of going to an office? Olsen is clear: 'We're built to connect. I can't have guests and clients to my house and I can't bring a team together to my home. If I do that business will fall - as it's falling now from lack of human interactions.'

So what kind of spaces will we see? In answering this, Olsen sounds a lot like Heatherwick: 'It's difficult to forecast what will happen next but I think where you choose to work will be driven by who you are and what you believe. Our places of work will become more of an extension of our social lives.'

The overwhelming impression is that we're in a hiatus – a period of hedging, where people are living in tentative expectation of a vaccine. Olsen agrees ('we just don't know) but he has clarity on another point: 'Before this happened, I would have said that all my buildings were clear, tidy, safe and healthy. Well, they'll have to be clearer, tidier, safer, and healthier now.'

So it seems likely we'll be hearing the birds in the garden for a while yet. And when we get back to them, perhaps we'll hear them in our offices too. f

The new Google HQ under construction

THE ROYAL WARRANT HOLDERS ASSOCIATION
QEST
Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust
CHARITY

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN BRITISH CRAFTSMANSHIP

WWW.QEST.ORG.UK

Photograph by
Julian Calder for *A Celebration of British Craftsmanship*

Registered Charity Number 1152032

Mark Padmore

WILL OPERA HOUSES AND LARGE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS, CONCERT HALLS AND INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVALS SURVIVE?

Interview by Fiona Sampson

In July 2020 the government announced £1.5bn funding to help the arts and entertainment sector recover from the Covid pandemic. This means that the books, films, music, TV streaming and gaming we relied on during lockdown will still get made. And we'll be able to enjoy live performance – theatre, musicals, bands, festivals, concerts – in the years ahead.

Lockdown underlined just how much we rely on these things. We need the distraction, glamour and excitement – even, sometimes, the consolation – they offer. What isn't necessarily so obvious is that the arts and entertainment are an industry, one which in Britain alone employs around 364,000 people and is worth £10.8bn annually to the economy. Indeed, it's economically vital, every year generating a further knock-on £23bn and contributing £2.8bn to the Treasury. All of which means there are thousands of jobs in hundreds of different roles in the sector, and you don't have to be either well-connected, or wildly lucky, to break in: as our inspiring interview guest shows. The world-leading tenor Mark Padmore is a musical 'star', used to touring internationally all year round. But, as he reveals here, he's risen to the summit of his profession without elitist hothousing – although helped by public education structures that aren't currently in place.

So what does his career look like? Mark Padmore collaborates with the world's leading musicians and directors, opera houses and orchestras to worldwide acclaim. He performs across genres, creates new roles in key contemporary work, and directs the St Endellion Summer Festival. A list of highlights includes his Artist in Residency at the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra 2017-18; his extensive discography has received numerous awards, including Gramophone magazine's Vocal Award, the Edison Klassiek Award (Nederlands), and the ECHO/Klassik 2013 award (Germany). Voted 2016 Vocalist of the Year by Musical America, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Kent in 2014 and appointed CBE in 2019. We asked him to talk us through life as a contemporary performer right now.

Mark Padmore, opera singer

Can you tell us how you got interested in music?

I received a recorder from Santa Claus when I was four and immediately took to the excitement of learning to play. From there I was given the opportunity to learn another instrument and chose the clarinet. My parents weren't particularly musical nor well off but they understood that I had a particular passion for music.

Fortunately the Kent County Music Service was very strong and offered opportunities to children who showed some talent. From the age of 12 I was supported by the Kent Junior Music School and each Saturday morning was enabled to travel to Maidstone, the county town, for intensive lessons. I also joined the Kent County Youth Orchestra and each school holiday attended week-long courses. These provisions have long been reduced and had I been starting out now I may well not have become a musician.

When did you first know you wanted to be a musician – and did you always plan to be a singer?

Singing was always something I enjoyed but there was no opportunity to attend a choir school. Playing the clarinet and then the piano had developed my sight-reading skills and it was through this that the possibilities of singing opened up. I had decided that I didn't want to be a professional clarinet player - the competition was very tough and I was not really good enough - but someone in the Youth Orchestra suggested I try for a choral scholarship to Cambridge. Getting in to King's College choir was the first step to realising that I could become a professional singer.

That's a lot of commitment from an early age. Has music ever become a chore for you?

There are definitely moments when perseverance is necessary - courage and determination are vital. Even now there are times when I can be daunted by the task ahead and need to grit my teeth to make progress.

What did you feel was your first big professional success?

My Chinese horoscope sign is the ox, and I have always been a plodder. Fortunately I have plodded on and on and have caught up with a hare and even a tortoise or two! I have really tried to do my best at each stage and although there have been moments of satisfaction they are fleeting. I guess my first real experience of success was being asked to appear in Charpentier's Medée with Les Arts Florissants at the Opéra Comique in Paris playing Jason to Lorraine Hunt's Medée. Being on stage with Lorraine was thrilling.

You do extraordinary work across a whole range of fields: opera, oratorio, lieder & chamber music. Could you share some favourite experiences with us?

I have always felt an urge to escape pigeon-holes. I love moving between genres and exploring new territory. My favourite opera experiences have been Billy Budd at Glyndebourne and Death in Venice at Covent Garden along with creating roles in Tansy Davies' Cave and Harrison Birtwistle's Corridor and The Cure. I also loved being in two Katie Mitchell productions - Handel's Jephtha at WNO and Bach's Matthew Passion at Glyndebourne.

The Bach Passions with Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic in stagings by Peter Sellars were some of the most profound and thought-provoking experiences I have had. In lieder and chamber music it is the collaborations with great musicians that have given the most pleasure.

Can you talk about the advantages and disadvantages of such an international career?

We live in a culture of celebrity and sometimes the performer is disproportionally the focus of attention. I have had wonderful experiences travelling as an 'international' soloist but I am beginning to question the desirability and viability of this way of life. I have, along with my colleagues, used up an unsustainable number of air miles and whilst I understand the huge benefits of cultural exchange I also believe that we need to engage more deeply and meaningfully with our local communities. Days away vary each year and I have tried to avoid being away for longer than about two weeks at a time.

As one of the world's leading tenors, you're at the forefront of international music-making, and its disruption by the pandemic. What does it mean for performers themselves?

Covid-19 is causing a reassessment of how we access music. Having done just two concerts in the last four months - both to empty halls for streaming services - I miss the buzz of looking out at an attentive audience.

Music-making is essentially a communal activity that needs interaction between performer(s) and audience. This period is full of uncertainty but also full of possibility - both reassessment of what performance has been in the past and what it can be in the future. As the cancellations came in, my first instinct was to take the opportunity to reflect on what it is I do and why and to explore thoughts of how I might do things differently. Creatively, I have been liberated from the need to prepare a large repertoire - I normally have between 70 and 80 performances a season. This has meant I can take time to practice in my studio and go back to basics with pieces that I have known well for many years without the urgency of having them available for immediate performance. Financially, I have had to extend my mortgage and face the possibility of no significant income for many months and a realisation that I will probably have to accept that my income will remain at a much lower level than before. Emotionally, it has been up and down. The adrenalin of performing has been sorely missed.

On what platforms do you listen to music, when it's not live?

Any recorded performance is in some ways mediated and therefore more distant. I find myself less engaged when listening to a performance I can interrupt at anytime to take a phone call or make a cup of tea. Music is 'heard' rather than 'listened to' - a distinction similar to John Berger's notion of the difference between 'seeing' and 'looking at'. I use all the methods above but none comes close to the experience of being in amongst an audience.

How much does a musician get paid for a performance downloaded on a digital platform such as Spotify?

I have received no money direct or through a record company for Spotify even though at least one track has had more than 3 million plays. I also get paid less for recording than I did in the 1980s. If musicians are to survive in a new digital era this will have to be addressed urgently.

What does this shift away from paying for the music we listen to mean for musicians working in Britain?

State subsidy in the UK has diminished greatly over the last ten years and all arts organisations are expected to generate something like 80 percent of their income from ticket sales or sponsorship. Without a paying public this model is unsustainable. Other countries, particularly in Europe, are much more generous. I fear for the viability of the arts unless the UK government has a change of approach. Music-making is essentially collaborative, and the better the conversation between performers and composers/writers the better the resulting work. This will be true also for innovative ways of producing performance in the future. Discussions are already happening about how best to film 'concerts' so as to deliver the best possible experience for audiences. One thing we have been able to do during lockdown is talk to one another and I am excited by some of the ideas that are beginning to emerge.

What are your hopes and fears for the future of international music-making?

Many of the models for international music-making are teetering on the brink of collapse. Will opera houses and large symphony orchestras, concert halls and international music festivals survive? These were the main producers of classical music. They initiated most of the engagements and artist agents acted as intermediaries. I think we may be looking at a very changed world in the next few years. The positive side may be a much greater investment in community and nurturing a local and loyal audience. Climate change and travel restrictions will also make the jet-set lifestyle much less attractive. What I hope will not be lost is the passionate engagement of performers and audiences with the wonders of the classical music repertoire. f

Fiona Sampson is a leading British writer, whose latest book Come Down *is published by Corsair. www.fionasampson.co.uk*

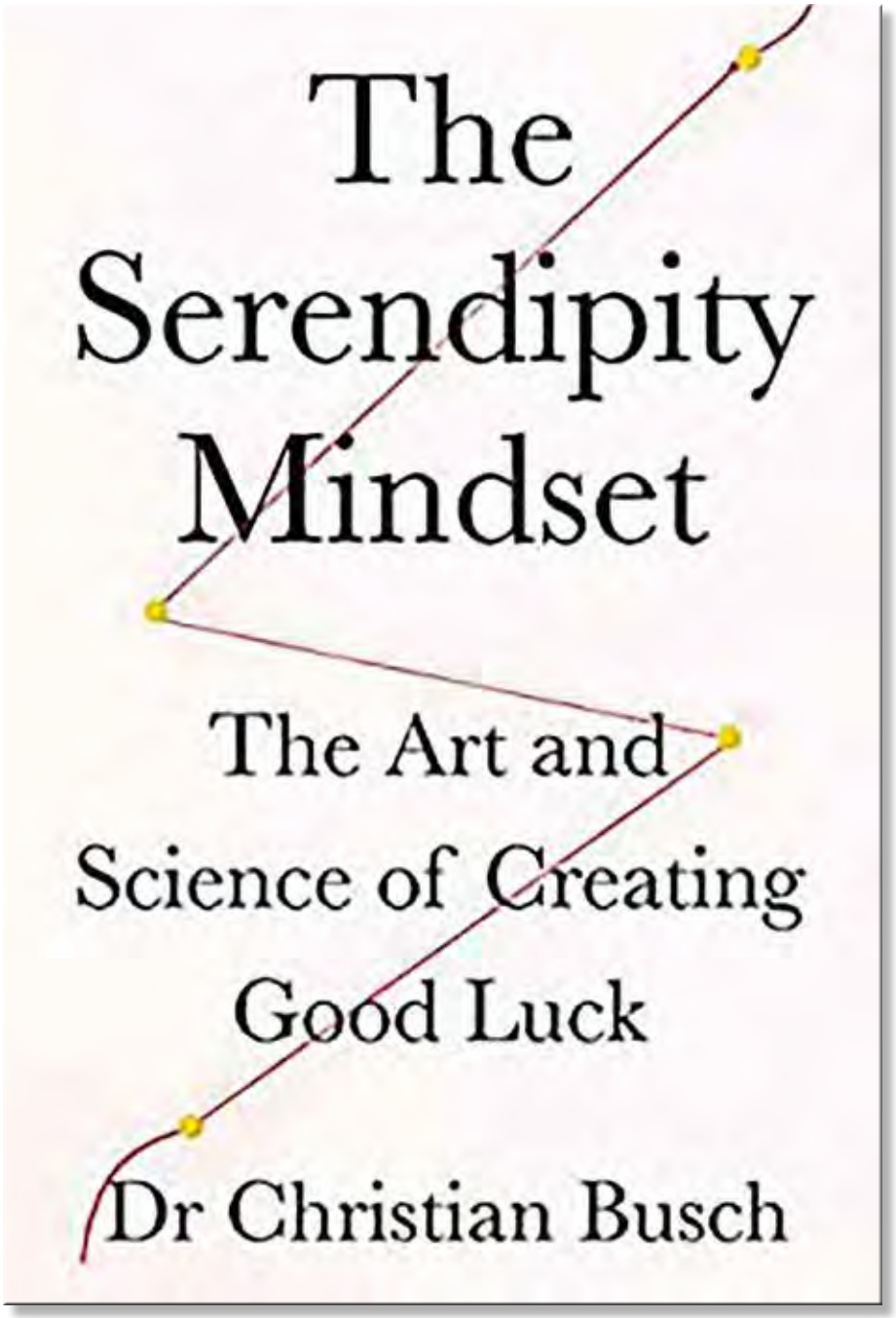
You can read more about Mark Padmore at www.markpadmore.com

Padmore's Blues: the pandemic has been difficult for live performance

Uplifting Books for Troubling Times

The Serendipity Mindset: The Art and Science of Creating Good Luck

DR CHRISTIAN BUSCH



Dr Christian Busch makes a rather lofty promise at the beginning of his book: he will reveal how to navigate "the hidden force in the world," he says. The force is serendipity, which he defines as "unexpected good luck resulting from unplanned moments in which proactive decisions lead to positive outcomes," phew. Busch says he hopes to "start a journey and, hopefully a movement". As part of his thought revolution he has created a glossary of terms such as "serendipitor," which is someone who "cultivates serendipity" and "FOMS," which stands for "fear of missing serendipity". The reader can even calculate their serendipity score by answering questions such as "I tend to get what I want from life."

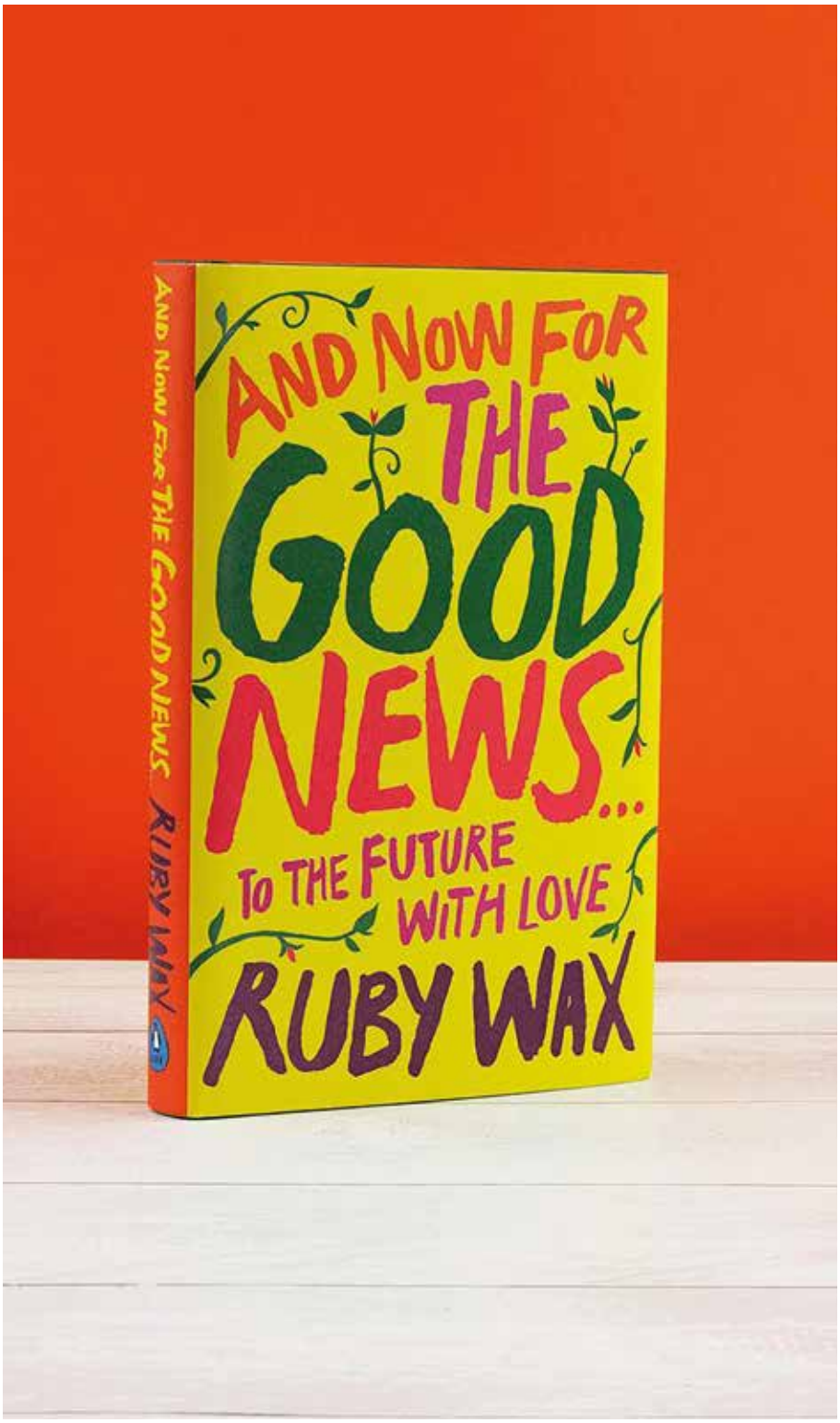
The premise of the book is rather ambitious but Busch, who teaches at New York University and the London School of Economics, grounds his suggestions in academic research. For instance, he references the statistical phenomenon, the birthday paradox - the counterintuitive fact that you only need 23 people in a room for it to be likely that someone shares a birthday - to show "we often underestimate the unexpected because we think linearly - often 'according to plan' - rather than exponentially (or in contingencies)".

In order to demonstrate how people can manifest their own luck, Busch references a study in which two participants, "lucky Martin and unlucky Brenda," were asked to buy a cup of coffee and sit down. The researchers placed a five-pound note on the pavement outside the entrance. Martin noticed the five-pound note, picked it up and sat down next to a businessman, started a conversation and made friends with him while Brenda did neither of these things and described her trip as "uneventful".

Busch also employs plenty of amusing anecdotes to argue his points. To show how people can create serendipity by "connecting the dots," for instance, he references the drug Sildenafil which was supposed to help cure angina. Researchers discovered that it had a surprising impact on male patients: it caused erections. While some would see this as an "embarrassing side effect" it was ultimately marketed as the very successful drug, viagra.

While Busch occasionally slips into verbose language, the book portrays a clear and helpful message: opportunities are everywhere, seize them. I wrote this review in a coffee shop. I am a typical Londoner and strive to avoid eye contact but I thought of "lucky Martin" when I overheard a man talking about a triathlon club - something I've been meaning to do for ages - I spoke to the stranger. With encouragement and advice from the former stranger, I have signed up for my first triathlon and I think that is testament to Dr Busch. f

The Serendipity Mindset: Penguin Life, £14.99



And Now for the Good News... To the Future With Love

RUBY WAX

Comedian Ruby Wax gives a new meaning to the saying that bad news travels fast while good news takes the scenic route in her rambling look at the positive side of life. In her typically sardonic tone, Wax bemoans the depressing state of business, technology and the media but at the end of each chapter she reassures her readers that good news still exists. " I had to really hunt for positive sound bites even though they should be on the front cover of every newspaper every day of the week to replace the usual photo of a beautiful woman who is either at her film premiere or dead," she says. While her bluntness means she can talk about the bad news very convincingly, sometimes I was left wishing she would take a quicker route to the good news.

Her chapter on business takes a while to get to the good news as the first few pages contain generalisations and personal anecdotes despite the fact she begins by saying, "I've never understood business". Although her takes are comically hyperbolic, they would be better if propped up with specific examples.

She states "Corporations run the politicians, who obey their beck and call. If an oil company wants more oil, the government will declare a war to get more," without referencing any real world events, for instance. The good news, when it eventually arrives, is uplifting and she focusses on the outdoor clothing brand, Patagonia. For this she describes a meeting she had with the co-founder Vincent Stanley but doesn't include any quotes from him.

Throughout the book, there is a frustrating lack of evidence. Due to a lack of specific examples, Wax relies on cliches. When talking about social media she says, "Let's all agree that the happier people look on Instagram photos, the more miserable they probably are inside."

Or, when talking about the lack of actual human connection that blights twenty first century living, she relies on anecdotal evidence: "In the old days, if you needed a plumber, a babysitter or a shoulder to cry on, there was usually someone in your building who had those skills or at least could advise someone they knew to help. Now, we have to call agencies to get someone over and then pay through the nose for their services." Each chapter contains a 'My Story' section but really there need not be discreet sections as the autobiographical style dominates throughout the book.

And now for the good news: Wax is as funny in print as she is in real life and her final chapter on positive initiatives lifts the book. Wax herself set up the frazzled cafe, which provides a talking place where people who are feeling frazzled can meet (on zoom) to share their feelings.

Her references to initiatives such as Samos refugee camp and The Kindness Offensive are particularly insightful. While the book is unfortunately timed, "I don't mention Covid-19 and that's because I finished this book around the time it broke; so mea culpa," she laments, the book concludes with a positive message about our times: "Look how quickly we can transform ourselves, almost overnight," "compassion also spreads like a virus," she soothes. f

And Now For The Good News: Penguin Life, £14.99

Why can't we all just get along... shout less. Listen more.

IAIN DALE

By reflecting on Brexit, Trump and Twitter spats, Iain Dale examines why public discourse has become so angry and unproductive. Dale builds a gloriously optimistic road map to a kinder world, centred around the fundamental decencies of human nature. He even provides a simple bullet point list of suggestions from "Never post a picture of your food. No one is interested. Not even your mother" to "Whatever you do, don't swear." By his own admission, this is not an intellectual book and at times, like so many journalists, he spends too much time writing about Twitter storms. The richest and most illuminating anecdotes, however, come from his experiences interviewing prime ministers and, surprisingly, his relationship with his parents. This is a book about disagreements, but mostly it's a book about hope.

Why Can't We All Just Get Along: HarperCollins Publishers, £12.99

Tomorrow Will Be A Good Day: My Autobiography

CAPTAIN SIR THOMAS MOORE

Reading Captain Tom's autobiography feels a bit like watching one of those really good X Factor auditions, you know it is a bit staged and quite formulaic but it still makes you feel warm and fuzzy. The book has a wonderfully satisfying narrative arch following the extraordinary life of a seemingly ordinary man who suffers some tragedies but finishes triumphant. Although the tone is mostly gentle, Moore is surprisingly frank in its detailing of some of the sadnesses in his romantic relationships, from descriptions of the "loveless bed" in his first marriage to the death of his wife, Pamela, "to watch someone you love decline through dementia is a slow kind of torture," he says. It also portrays Moore's warmth and humour, for instance, on his knighthood he writes: "I joked that I hoped the Queen wasn't too heavy-handed with the sword." It is this collision between the ordinary and extraordinary that captured the nation's hearts when the 100-year-old walked around his garden to raise money for the NHS and this shines through in the autobiography.

Tomorrow Will Be A Good Day: , £20.00

The Power of Learning from Dad

DR SELVA PANKAJ

While many people planned on writing a book during lockdown Dr Selva Pankaj actually did and the lessons he shares may inspire other people to achieve his level of motivation and success. The Regent Group founder reflects on the wisdom he received from his father while growing up in war-torn Sri Lanka such as "Dad said that plant springs from one seed, so every act of man or woman springs from thought" or "Dad used to say to me, 'if you get up in the morning and find a wonderful day, be grateful for that'" or "Dad used to say in different words that you should willingly give, and sometimes giving needs to be spontaneous." While the book bears some of the hallmarks of a self-published memoir, it can be commended for attempting to portray inspiring messages.

Power of Learning from Dad: Regent Publishing, £10.00

Round-Up

The Crisis of the Meritocracy: Britain's Transition to Mass Education since the Second World War by Peter Mandler

This timely tome offers an apolitical overview of the education system and considers why so many people are attending university and the implications of this. Mandler focusses on deconstructing the legacy of the Butler Act - a piece of legislation which aimed to remove inequality from education and saw the proportion of free places at grammar schools increase by almost a third. This study is essential reading for those who want to thoroughly understand why we are still not living in a true meritocracy.

Crisis of Meritocracy: Oxford University Press, £25.00

What Do We Know and What Should We Do About Social Mobility? By Lee Elliot Major and Stephen Machin

Low social mobility in Britain is an increasingly pressing issue and Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter Lee Elliot Major and LSE Professor of Economics Stephen Machin consider what can be done to reverse this trend. This book documents the history of mobility since WWII and considers how family traits affect intergenerational mobility. The authors call for a shift in debates around this topic in order to establish a more just society.

Social Mobility: SAGE Publishing, £9.99

Is Assessment Fair? By Isabel Nisbet and Stuart Shaw

Following the exam results debacle, fairness in educational assessment has become a major talking point. In this book Lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Isabel Nisbet and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors, Stuart Shaw consider what fairness means in practice and how it can be evaluated. Drawing on international examples from the UK, US, Australia and South East Asia, this book offers a thorough commentary on fairness.

Is Assessment fair: SAGE Publishing, £24.99

Educating for a Characterful Society Responsibility and the Public Good By James Arthur, Julia Cleverdon, Nicky Morgan, James O'Shaughnessy, Anthony Seldon

What is character and how can educators develop virtues such as honesty and a sense of duty? In this book, five leading figures in government and education examine the 'character' of the public service workers on the frontline during the pandemic and consider how the National Curriculum can develop a sense of social justice and harness the passion of young people in order to work towards a stronger society.

Educating For a Characterful Society: Routledge, £12.99

THE TIMES

1GM Wednesday September 23 2020 | THE TIMES

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

28

Letters to the Editor

Blame game over the latest Covid restrictions

...is Johnson appears to hold the ...sibility for the rise in ...is largely a result ...adhere to ...le some ...ve been ...that wholly unprepared. The thread running through the government's handling of the pandemic is that whatever goes wrong is never its fault. Early on Michael Gove excused lack of testing by claiming a lack of test reagents; Matt Hancock blamed the shortage of PPE equipment on its inappropriate use by health workers. He later said that testing failures were due to an increased public demand for tests, all the while hailing the testing programme as an important contribution to eradication of the virus. The government's failure to acknowledge its shortcomings during the pandemic is the only thing that has been "world-beating".

...k Benfield
...bourn, Cambs

Sir Patrick Vallance, the chief ...ntific adviser, claimed on Monday ...t he thought the epidemic was ...bling roughly every seven days. ...e figures from the government's ...n website suggest that positive ...sts are doubling closer to every 14 ...ays. Either this is further evidence of a shambolic testing system or maybe we are not just following the data.

Anthony Cohn
Consultant paediatrician, London NW4

Sir, It is vital to keep schools open but could pupils not take a packed lunch? I am speechless when I see hordes of non-socially-distancing children throng the local shops and pavements at break and lunchtime, buying snacks or takeaway food. Is this really necessary? One local shop has decided to close during school break and lunch times.

Virginia Braid
Glasgow

Sir, Surely forcing pubs and restaurants to close at 10pm will only compress the number of people visiting these places into a shorter time frame, resulting in more crowding and less social distancing than before.

Robin Pearson
Harpenden, Herts

Sir, With the proposed closure of pubs and restaurants at 10pm may I suggest that customers donate the money they had intended to spend between 2200 and 0200 hours to the proprietor in order to ease the misery of the impact of the latest Covid-19 restrictions on their business.

Michael Akeroyd
Leeds

Trust's colonial sins

Sir, It is entirely right that shameful pasts should be exposed and understood, as the National Trust has just done with properties in its care ("Trust flags colonial sins of its stately homes", News, Sep 22). But this should not lead to closures, boycotts or name changes.

If, by comparison, Jews today challenged the legitimacy of every public figure or historical site on the basis of their association with antisemitism in previous centuries, few would escape unscathed. Yet we do not demand their removal or renaming. Instead, we acknowledge, move on, and concentrate on whether today's relationships and policies are free of discrimination. It is too easy to edit the past, but ignore the here and now. Present behaviour should be our prime focus.

Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain
Maidenhead Synagogue

Mandarin on menu

Sir, May I console Jessica Geheran ("Nursery war is raging over Mandarin and organic menu," Sep 19), who was shocked to discover that her one-year-old twins were being taught Mandarin during their cookery classes. The best way to teach a foreign language is via a practical activity that entertains the pupils as they absorb visual and verbal clues to the meaning of the words they are learning. This system worked extremely well when I taught teenage boys French during their weekly cookery lessons in a pupil referral unit in Doncaster, especially as they could eat the results of their hard work as a reward.

Annemarie McGuinness
Tyn-y-Groes, Conwy

Stone's throw away

Sir, Good luck to Robert Crampton when he returns to search for his lost ring (Times Magazine, Sep 19, and letter, Sep 21). I hope he is as lucky as I was when, in a Hollywood nightclub with friends watching a raucous revue of *La Cage aux Folles*, I realised that my pear-shaped diamond had flown off my ring, no doubt because of overenthusiastic clapping. We all scrabbled around under the tables with a torch, raising peeved eyebrows on stage, but had to give up. Only when my friend took a gulp of wine, then spat something out, did we find it. Even the cast joined in the applause.

Lesley Thompson
Lavenham, Suffolk

Essential studying

Sir, Like many *Times* readers (letters, Sep 19 & 21) we had an emotional moment dropping off our daughter at King's College London on Sunday. Within a couple of hours apps for Youngs pubs and Slug & Lettuce pubs popped up on my iPhone, which is still synced with hers as she uses my account, so I knew she was getting her priorities right and settling in well. That's my girl…

Rob Naylor
Cheltenham

Glut remover

Sir, I sympathise with Andrew Fritchie (letter, Sep 22) concerning a surplus of tasty fruit lying rotting on the ground. The solution is simple: he should get a pig. Mutual serendipity!

Jeremy Lewis
Hailey, Oxon

Savings rates fall

Sir, The news that National Savings and Investments is cutting interest rates from November is both disappointing and unimaginative ("Big Bonds holders", Sep 22). It was encouraging for savers and the state when the Treasury initially kept the rates in place earlier in the year. By keeping those rates reasonable the Treasury was both supporting ordinary savers and ensuring a flow of investment to the government. It was a form of national support given by 25 million savers. To end this at a time of fiscal crisis is shortsighted. I hope NS&I is encouraged to think again.

Mike Gibbons
Cartmel, Cumbria

Corrections and clarifications

IPSO Regulated

The *Times* takes complaints about editorial content seriously. We are committed to abiding by the Independent Press Standards Organisation ("IPSO") rules and regulations and the Editors' Code of Practice that IPSO enforces. Requests for corrections or clarifications should be sent by email to feedback@thetimes.co.uk or by post to Feedback, The Times, 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

...ote

...ct all Scots in ...ence vote", Sep ... goes to the ...ith the ...ion debate ...ritish ...d. It

for it as the alternative choice.

Professor Ben Thomson
Author, *Scottish Home Rule: the Answer to Scotland's Constitutional Question*

SNP and Starmer

Sir, I agree with Rachel Sylvester (Sep 22) that Sir Keir Starmer's chance of becoming PM requires support from the SNP. This might force him to accept the concept of an independence referendum. However, Scottish independence would be bad for his future chances of ever again forming a coalition government unless under a system of proportional representation. Hence I foresee Labour's support for ...h a referendum being conditional ...h the introduction of PR.

...n Porter
...onsfield, Bucks

...qual pensions

...the letter (Sep 21) from ...akes on her teacher's ... interest as I experienced ...ilar with the NHS. My ...nd was an NHS dentist. ...tal degree takes six years he was not able to start paying into a pension after the normal three years, so he bought those "added" pension but when I received half his pension stopped. This would have been the same if I had co-habited. I consider that the government stole 30 years of my husband's pension contributions.

Eileen Nicholls
Epsom, Surrey

Hydrogen's merits

Sir, Malcolm Hayes is not comparing like with like (Sep 22). In our post-carbon world the cost of natural gas-derived hydrogen is irrelevant: we must compare the cost of production, storage and transport of hydrogen made using wind and solar with the whole cost of electricity generated from the same source. Electricity is also very expensive to store and to transmit long distances. Hydrogen offers a competitive and versatile store of energy. And it will enable third world states to get rich by selling their sunshine via hydrogen manufacture (as the Middle East did its oil).

Rob Tooze
Darlington, Co Durham

DUBLIN RAID MYSTERY HOTEL GUEST KILLED

FROM THE TIMES SEPTEMBER 23, 1920

An official report issued this evening throws some light on a mysterious crime in an hotel in Dublin. Earlier reports stated that a party of men, wearing military uniform, entered the Exchange Hotel in Parliament Street at 3am, and, going up to one of the bedrooms, killed one of the guests. The following account is given by guests and staff: Mr John Lynch, of Kilmallock, a member of Limerick County Council, arrived in Dublin on September 16 and put up at the Exchange Hotel. Shortly after 3 o'clock, when all the guests and the staff had retired, with the exception of the night porter, William Barrett, the front-door bell rang. Opening the lattice, Barrett saw a group of men. He asked if they wanted rooms, replied, "We don't want rooms. We are military, and demand instant admission." 12 men entered. They wore military caps and long black Burberry coats. One of the men, who appeared to be an officer, demanded the hotel register, and when it was produced, he pointed to an entry and exclaimed, "Here it is." The porter was ordered to face the wall, and one man, putting a revolver to his back, told him to stay quiet. The others went upstairs. After five or 10 minutes they came down and left. Having heard no noises while they were above, he went on with his duties in the basement. Twenty minutes later another knock was heard, and two constables of the Dublin Metropolitan Police entered. They told the porter that they had come to take charge of the body of the man who had been shot. Barrett was amazed and asked, "What man? How do you know a man has been shot?" The reply was, "The military told us." He accompanied the police to Mr Lynch's bedroom, but was not allowed to enter it. From the door, however, he saw a body on the bed. This official statement was issued by the military authorities: In the early hours a military party, guided by members of the RIC, went to the Exchange Hotel for the purpose of arresting a man named Jack Lynch. When the officers entered his room Lynch fired at them with a revolver. The fire was returned by a number of the party, and Lynch was shot through the head. A six-chambered revolver with five chambers loaded and one discharged was found beside the left hand of the dead man.

THETIMES.CO.UK/ARCHIVE

A Piet of History

Oudolf the sharp-eyed gardener

Interview by Iris Spark

Piet Oudolf is without question the most famous landscape architect in the world. Iris Spark caught up with the plantsman.

In every area of life, many people do very well for a period of time. A few reach the top and stay there. But there is only one area I can think of where one person has been so far above the rest for so long. That happens to be gardening. If you ask anyone in the profession who is the best they won't have to stop and think: Piet Oudolf.

'A rock star,' says Andy Sturgeon who, with books and television behind him, has himself done passably well. And if you raise his name with anyone in the profession you'll hear an awed silence, as if they're turning over with amazement the famous name, and all that it means.

Oudolf's importance – his supremacy even – is partly attributable to the fact that his name is synonymous with a particular movement – the so-called New Perennials – which promoted a new sustainable aesthetic in gardening during the 1970s and 80s. But he's also a global phenomenon, and sui generis in that respect. He has made public spaces the world over – most notably the High Line and Battery Park in New York, the Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park, and Potters Fields in London. His famous home Hummelo, which was open to the public for years until it closed in October 2018, would alone be enough to rank him as a great artist.

So how did it all begin? The great careers can sometimes seem strangely unpromising at their outset. Oudolf recalls: 'A long time ago in the 1970s, I turned away from my earlier job in my parents' restaurant. I was married and didn't want to do that for the rest of my life. I was looking for jobs and eventually came to work in a garden centre at Christmastime in the perennials department. That made me aware of plants.'

"He has made public spaces the world over – most notably the High Line and Battery Park in New York, the Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park, and Potters Fields in London."

It is a vivid image of the alert drifter, who is waiting for life to come to him – and when it does, seizes life all the more quickly for having waited. 'I started to buy books and look at plants – that's how it all started.'

There were still some practical steps to be taken: 'I went back to school to get an elementary licence to start a contract company. It was 1975 and we started small with a nursery. We began to sell perennial plants.' Oudolf owes his stratospheric success in part to having done the hard yards in the less glamorous business of selling plants, but all along there was a radical vision: of a garden that would look good all the year round.

He had his share of luck. Gardening was about to take off – and particularly in the UK. 'In 1980 we travelled to England where gardening was very fashionable with many magazines at that time. And we had the ideal plants so they soon discovered us.'

Oudolf's aesthetic represented a radical move away from the twee decorative garden fashionable at the time. By 2000, the publication of his book Dream Plants for the Garden, showed how far Oudolf had come, not just as a nurseryman but as a thinker. 'It was translated into Swedish and we had lots of conferences at Kew and elsewhere. We became a close community.'

To what does Oudolf attribute his success? He tells me it was necessity. 'We had no choice. We had no money.' So Oudolf's relentless work ethic stems from financial need. Even now, soon to turn 76, Oudolf prefers to work in the morning in his studio, finding that late-night work will interrupt his sleep.

In 2000 also, Oudolf won the coveted Best in Show gold medal at the Chelsea Flower Show. But even by that point, people didn't always understand what he was doing. 'When I travelled to England, they always called me the nursery man who made gardens, when in fact I was a designer who had a nursery. Some believed in me totally; but other didn't trust me. It was out of their spectrum.'

So what sustained him? Oudolf had a vision of a more durable and sustainable

"To what does Oudolf attribute his success? He tells me it was necessity. 'We had no choice. We had no money.'"

High Line, New York, 2009

Pensthorpe, 2000

"I keep working because it's my life. Every day I do something, I love to go to the office and work. It feels like I'm pensioned but I'm still at work."

kind of garden: he was, in his understated way an evangelical for the ideas he was putting forward. But he also enjoyed the encouragement of a small circle. 'It was always encouraging when I did something people liked in my circle,' he says. 'And people were really taking over my ideas. That was because I was one of the few people that specialised in public spaces so millions of people could see my ideas, which was very stimulating.'

In fact, when I ask him for his regrets, that turns out to be the only one: he regrets any private work he has done as he knows it hasn't reached the requisite audience.

Another turning-point came in 2004, when he was phoned up by James Corner Field Operations who had won the competition to redesign the lower west side of Manhattan: the project that would become known as the High Line. 'I don't think even they knew what they would do with it,' recalls Oudolf. 'Looking back, it's great I said 'yes' as I was already working on the Battery Conservancy in New York so I thought, 'I'll take a look". Before Covid-19 struck it was attracting eight million people a year. Oudolf is philosophical about its success: 'These projects start so small that when you look back you could have said no easily with the same feeling, yes and no were on an equal balance.'

Does he feel pressure? Quite the opposite. Instead Oudolf uses the question for a remarkable rhapsody about the effects on the soul of gardening: 'Gardening stimulates the brain: it makes you feel happy. Gardening is a metaphor for so many things. You can find respect in it; or you can play in it. You can find yourself in it, walk into it, discover it. Every day can be different, seasons have a different but continuous journey where the garden changes as you yourself change.'

Then he pauses, before delivering a kind of punchline: 'But don't forget: it's just fun.'

So what advice would he give to those starting out in landscape architecture? 'You can't do anything without knowing plants – or at least you need someone who knows them. You can't try and find it out from a book in your office. If you keep on working on that, you'll create benefits for later.'

No magic then, just hard work. Today Oudolf has built a recession and virus-proof business. 'The work has changed but I get commissioned now from a distance,' he explains. 'I have done two projects at a distance in America, as people know me well now. My plants are quite accurate. If I were ever to slow down it would be my own decision; people want to work with me.'

Oudolf's is predominantly a tale of passion and hard work. 'I keep working because it's my life. Every day I do something, I love to go to the office and work. It feels like I'm pensioned but I'm still at work. The clients I work for are specially aware of the time we live in and I think that's why my planting schemes work so well because they remind you of the wildness people dream on.'

That wildness has come back to haunt us now, but Oudolf isn't surprised by 2020. In fact he's taken it in his stride: it's what he was telling us about all along. f

Abroad Thoughts From Home

THE TRAVEL SECTOR CHANGED OUT OF ALL RECOGNITION IN MARCH. LANA WOOLF REPORTS FROM THE FRONT LINES

There is a phenomenon called Stendhalismo named after the French novelist Stendhal, which refers to the act of travelling abroad and then swooning before objects of great beauty. It was in Florence where Stendhal – born Marie-Henri Beyle - first experienced an almost hallucinatory sense of awe at the Italian experience: 'I was in a sort of ecstasy, from the idea of being in Florence,' he wrote, 'close to the great men whose tombs I had seen. Absorbed in the contemplation of sublime beauty.'

Two hundred years later, we have a new version of this phenomenon – but altered to reflect our new pandemic reality. It might be too flippant to call it Covidismo, but it can entail pausing in our UK homes and suddenly having a flashback as to all the travelling we did, which we now doubt we'll ever do to the same extent. For those of us who were lucky enough to travel widely, a rhythm we hardly knew we had established has been suddenly suspended. Never again will the airport be quite so routine; nor shall we return home to find ourselves gearing up for the next trip with quite the same regularity.

Time is now marked in a different way. What else to do then, but sit at home and dream – of Florence, of New York, of Kyoto, of all the places that we have been to and loved. In our best moments we can feel grateful we had what we had; but it is also possible to swoon Stendhal-style in our kitchens and feel bereft at what have been so arbitrarily deprived of.

Balearic Blues

But what if travel is your livelihood? Like a career in aviation it would have seemed at the start of the year the safest of all sectors – and perhaps few countries would be safer to work in than that perennial favourite Mallorca.

Sometimes during Covid-19 I have thought back to this island of peace and lemony light, where Robert Graves lived out his years, and where Chopin and George Sand visited. It was surreal to imagine a touristless summer there.

> "In our best moments we can feel grateful we had what we had; but it is also possible to swoon Stendhal-style in our kitchens and feel bereft at what we have been so arbitrarily deprived of."

San Francesc, Mallorca

University Arms, Cambridge

Miguel Feliz is the general manager of Sant Francesc, a five-star hotel in the centre of Parma. 'It's been a tough and challenging year for all of us, especially those in the hospitality industry,' he explains. 'We are extremely lucky that Sant Francesc is a well-established, year-round property and Palma is a popular destination even in the cooler months,' he explains, adding that he 'remains optimistic that we will begin to see some normality from September onwards, which is just in time for my favourite month in Mallorca.'

If the guests return – and at time of writing the government's much-criticised quarantine policy has made travel an anxious business – then guests will find a subtly altered hotel. 'We have put extensive new measures in place by following the recommendations and directives from the Spanish National Health Services, as well as the World Health Organisation, in order to ensure the wellbeing of our guests and team members,' Feliz tells me. 'These include everything from twice-daily temperature checks for all staff as well as guests on arrival, to mandatory use of masks for our team - and masks and hand sanitizer being readily available to guests at all times. Extensive new cleaning programmes have been put in place for guest rooms and all public areas and social distancing will be encouraged wherever possible.'

As workable as that sounds, it was also a tough time for the company in another sense when the owners had to address

"Travel journalism, when, like travel itself, it returns to the masses, will continue to become more thoughtful."

the question of the expected opening of a sister property Can Ferrerata in Santanyí. 'We decided to postpone until March 2021 and take our time, in order to give it the opening it deserves.'

This hiatus has been painful – and of course Sant Francesc is just one story among thousands globally where hotels have had to pause, pivot, or just take the financial hit. The effect on the hotel industry has been seismic, as any brief walk through central London immediately attests: one thinks of the empty forecourt of Buckingham Palace, or the now-unphotographed lions of Trafalgar Square.

But travel is a vast industry with numerous professions attached to it, which have experienced the knock-on effects of the virus. From aviation, hotel events, to travel PR, and travel journalism, it's a sector full of economically significant subsets.

I catch up with Cathy Adams, who is the travel editor at the *Independent*. She's on maternity leave at the moment, and says she's grateful to have a break from breast-feeding to share her thoughts with me. For her, travel journalism was already in a state of ruction pre-Covid. 'Even before coronavirus swept the globe, travel journalism was changing fast,' she tells me. 'We were working to promote underserved destinations rather than those afflicted by overtourism; and the climate crisis had made us rethink how we spoke about travel and holidays to promote more responsible tourism. Then came coronavirus, which in many ways has accelerated the issues many travel journalists have been grappling with in recent years.'

So is travel journalism still a career you can go into? The answer is yes, but with caveats. 'Travel journalism, when, like travel itself, it returns to the masses, will continue to become more thoughtful: expect more coverage of British holiday spots as travel restrictions drag on and we want to inject more money into our domestic tourism market. Plus, the coronavirus has highlighted just how risky travel can be - in terms of spreading the virus, and how quickly border closures can stop travel; the world will no longer be seen as a free-for-all, and journalism will take this into account when deciding which destinations to talk about.'

And will hotels still feel able to host significant numbers of journalists in order to make sure they get their copy? Adams explains that 'editorial will remain an important part of a destination's marketing plans, but I imagine with the focus on fewer trips and a smaller tourism market generally, they won't be quite the all-out affairs they once were.'

How PR went into ER

Every one of these hotels has its marketing budget and there are many PR firms around the world earning their crust by promoting them. One of the best of these is Perowne International run by the redoubtable Julia Perowne.

Perowne recalls for me the bizarre events of February 2020: 'I realised in February that the situation was getting more serious and that its impact would spread outside China. In many ways the hospitality industry was one of the first sectors impacted and sadly will likely be the last.' It was a fast-moving situation, she says. 'We have clients all over the world and several beautiful hotels in Italy which was impacted first in Europe. We were shocked by the speed and severity of its development there and could see quickly that this would not be contained to one country. In early March we started to analyse the situation in more detail and prior to lockdown actually went to our clients and offered them significant fee reductions to help them through this tough time.'

Overnight, the nature of the job changed: 'The most significant thing has been the emotional support the clients have needed rather than just the practical,' explains Perowne. 'This has been a devastating time for the industry – businesses that have worked so hard have been hit badly and there's definitely been a need to help people emotionally get through this. In addition, we have needed to look

ahead to the future and ensure that when we come through this, the clients are looking as desirable and as relevant as ever. The consumer's values have changed over the last few months and we need to ensure that we are prepared for that.'

Perowne was forced to take advantage of the furlough scheme (we're hopefully in the process of reinstating them'), though she would have liked to have seen a different scheme in place. 'It would have been great if the government could have subsidised salaries and allowed people to still work if they could as they did in Ireland,' she argues. 'We desperately needed all-hands-on-deck but simply weren't getting the fees from the clients so we had to utilise the scheme.'

Echoing Adams' observations about journalism, Perowne says that Covid-19 'will simply accelerate the changes that were happening,' adding that 'we have to be compelling storytellers.'

Tricky Calculus

Perowne praises the agility of her clients. One of these is the Cambridge University Arms, where Ian James, the general manager, approached the crisis in a highly community-minded way. Although he closed the hotel on 22nd March 'with heavy heart', he explains that 'it was also important to us to help alleviate the strain on our NHS.'

As the city's oldest continually operating hotel, the team was minded to take the long view. 'The property has truly stood the test of time – living through two world wars, the fight for woman's rights and in 1665, the University Arms temporary closed its doors due to the Bubonic Plague,' James explains. 'Isaac Newton had to work from home and he used this time to develop Calculus and the theory of Gravity. Therefore, we remain positive that we will soon put this latest travail behind us. As Solomon said, "This too shall pass".

It's also a hotel which has been caring toward its staff and the people in the immediate locality. 'As the hotel closed and we were heading into lock down, our main concern was the wellbeing of our team,' he explains. 'Our Chef Director Tristan Welch and his team coordinated care packages to keep everyone going during the difficult times of self-isolation. Our 'Most Wanted' packages were filled with essentials including many items that were proving difficult to come by in the supermarkets at the time. These included everything from pasta, flour and toilet paper, to oats, sugar, cereals, stock cubes, tinned goods as well as fresh fruit. In addition to this, the property has donated some key items locally to those in need. These included disposable aprons and gloves to the Papworth Trust as well as eggs, yogurt, vegetables and other food items to Cambridge Cyrenians.'

This is a sector which has experienced the severest setbacks of any. And yet it's a hopeful sector. James is cautiously optimistic: 'The desire people have to travel will always prevail and the industry will always need fresh talent.'

Miguel Feliz echoes those sentiments: 'The hospitality industry is so versatile and offers the unique opportunity to travel the world and learn about different cultures, so there is always an appetite for travel. Nothing will take that away from us.' Perowne adds in respect of a career path in travel PR: 'for those who really want to go for it, the opportunities are endless.'

So in a sense the buoyancy of the sector comes back to Stendhalismo: a French writer broke out into a cold sweat because of the treasures of Florence, and there will always be a part of us that will long to do the same. Far-flung parts and new experiences are things we'll always be susceptible to, and a virus will not decrease our need for adventure – indeed, in the long run it may only increase it. f

CHEZ DRAX

A day-trip to an architectural jewel south of Paris might be just the thing now.

You might not have seen Moonraker recently – not least because the James Bond films seem to have an uncomfortable relationship with the world's streaming services. But in it, James Bond attends the lair of Hugo Drax, played by Michael Lonsdale.

The film was shot at Chateau de Vaux-le-Vicomte – a place which has its own remarkable story to tell. And now, in these times of sudden quarantine imposition and the need to self-isolate it might be the right time to take a day trip on the Eurostar to see it.

Located in Maincy a 34 mile drive out of Paris, if you rise early enough it's possible to see one of France's forgotten treasures at lunchtime and be back that night. Welcome to the era of Covid travel: strategic day trips.

A certain tragicomedy attaches to the place. Nicolas Fouquet had risen to prominence in the court of Louis XIV, and put everything into the place: it's a collaboration between the garden design of André Le Nôtre (best known for his work on Versailles, which this anticipates), Charles Le Brun who produced ceilings, and architect Louis Le Vau. It was a masterpiece but the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry. When Louis XIV came to stay he found the place impressive, but threateningly so. Fouquet was arrested shortly afterwards.

As Voltaire put it, with typical pithiness bordering on flippancy: 'On 17th August at six in the evening, Fouquet was the King of France; at two in the morning he was a nobody.'

It stands then as a marvellous warning to ambition and knowing your place. Today the place has been lovingly restored by Patrice de Vogüé. Alexandre says he is driven by a desire, to 'as we say in French, break the neck of the myth' surrounding Fouquet, who he feels has been unfairly treated by history.

But the real story is the art inside. Moliere visited here and performed. 'I had an English actress visit and she lay down and kissed the floor in homage,' says Alexandre. 'My staff had to tell me afterwards that it was Helen Mirren.' The Le Brun ceilings represent the height of his achievement, and so the summit of the rococo.

This is a family business which is committed to adaptation. And its central story of a man who thought he had it all, but who was on the cusp of losing it, has special resonance for our times. It doesn't take much to draw parallels with our own sudden change of fortunes this year. But the superb vision he had is still standing; and so is our society. *Hautement recommandé*. f

CABLES FOR A MOVING WORLD




An independent British cable innovator dedicated to bringing the best and greenest advanced technologies to world leaders in transport, power, defence, construction, aviation, communications, ports and marine industries.

THE QUEEN'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE: INNOVATION 2019

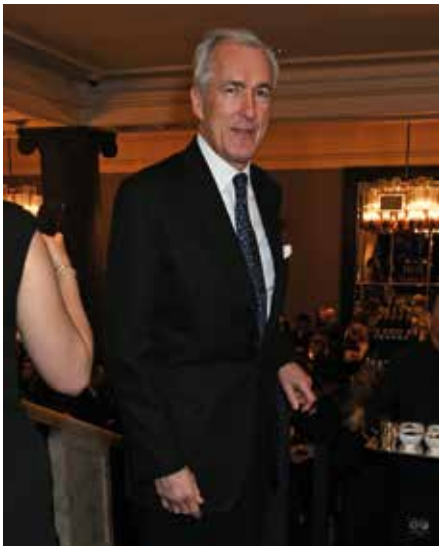
Crown Commercial Service *Supplier*

TRATOS®

www.tratosgroup.com

Jeremy King

ADVICE TO A YOUNG RESTAURANTEUR



"With my generation, it was difficult to know what to do. You might have been ignorant but it was easy to find a job. This younger generation know what they want to do but it's harder to get a job."

The funny thing is, I always thought 2020 might be a bit of a shakeout in the hospitality business. 2019 had been a year of the beginning of the collapse of the casual dining market and seen some very significant casualties – but of course I had no idea in what form it would come and had no anticipation about the damage perpetrated by Covid-19.

But we were already up against it. I remain angry that we didn't remain in the EU: I'm always immensely grateful to everybody who over the last 50 or 60 years has come to these shores and shown us how the business could be done. So many people associate restaurants with hot kitchens, swearing chefs, long hours, and not very good remuneration.

Certainly, even as late as 1990, if you were in the restaurant profession you normally didn't have a mortgage, you rented, didn't fill in your tax returns, had no life insurance, and no pension. It was a transitory experience and not considered a career. There used to be shame and ignominy in being in the restaurant business. Now it's as good as any there is - and in many ways even better.

When it comes to employees, attitude is the main thing. There is no job anybody should do or will succeed at unless they have that. It's what you make of it. If you start to think: 'Who are these people coming in? What is the history of the building? Why do people know each other?' that takes it all to another level. And then there's the food, how it's reared and grown, and the fantastic alchemy there is in cooking. By the same token, wine is an extraordinary subject. There's a great joy in this profession – contrary to the Home Secretary's opinion.

And let's not forget that it's fun. I was always struck when Graham Norton was talking about how he had first come to London and worked in Covent Garden. He said, "I don't think there should be National Service. Instead, everyone should be compelled to work in a restaurant. You learn about social skills interaction, disputes, reconciliation, any number of things." He was right. For a generation which has become disconnected by the advances in technology, it really is something very special.

People will return to restaurants. They will have missed the conviviality of community. Too many people are becoming almost entombed in their homes with the working-from-home phenomenon. And it's interesting, having spoken to a lot of my staff over the last months, how much they yearn to return to work.

It's also interesting how many friends of my children – I have three all in their later twenties – have decided they don't want to be in merchant banking or advertising. They've been setting up things and finding such happiness in working in restaurants to an extent that I've never seen before. With my generation, it was difficult to know what to do. You might have been ignorant but it was easy to find a job. This younger generation know what they want to do but it's harder to get a job.

I was someone who never quite knew what I wanted to do with my life. Did I want to create? Did I want to do languages? Did I want to be an architect? Thanks to the restaurant business, I've been able to do them all.

Review: Great Scott's

There was a sense of palpable relief on a summer's day when we returned to Scott's. An alien visitor to George Street might not have known that the world had been through the most bizarre pandemic in its history.

We were met front of house by a buoyant maître d'. When we asked how his virus had been, he cheerily said that furlough had been a bit of a nuisance but that he was glad to be back. When we asked to deposit our bags he regretfully declined explaining that it was a necessary safety measure.

The great difficulty for restaurants now is to create the right atmosphere, and Scott's has it just right. Outside, Wodehousian folk look out onto the quiet of George Street. The foyer area has been cunningly set aside as the only point in the customer experience where you pay any homage to the virus. There's a screen which checks your temperature. This gave me the green light, but my companion, having sat in a hot Saab to make a phone call beforehand, took a while to cool down and gain the right to admittance.

Owned by Caprice Holdings, which also owns the Ivy, 34 Mayfair and the J. Sheekey restaurants, Scott's nevertheless has retained its own identity. Inside, you wouldn't have been able to tell the difference between its current incarnation and the pre-corona state of affairs. There is no protective equipment among the staff and the table arrangements feel remarkably similar to what was in place before.

That's partly because the venue is lucky with its spaciousness, but it's also a testament to the personality of the place. The food remains stellar – the crab special to start was especially welcome, and the cod with sides retains its supremacy. True, these are sobre times – and we acknowledged that by sticking to water – but Scott's is showing every sign it will adapt and prosper, as the culinary antidote to unsettling times. f

Costeau

IS THIS THE END OF THE BOOZY LUNCH?

Our eyes on the restaurant industry wonders whether Covid-19 has put an end to a great institution

Costeau was recently talking to a grand dame of the publishing industry, publicist to a host of well-known names in the publishing world including Julian Barnes and John Banville. She recalled her first week at work in a major publishing house in the 1980s. As she told us, her start seemed to go well, but at the end of it she was summoned to her boss' office: 'Yes, you've had a good week, but there's one problem,' he said. 'You don't appear to be having enough boozy lunches with your authors. This week I want you to take yourself down to the Wolseley.'

As much as one appreciates any efforts the publishing industry is making to rekindle that spirit, it hardly needs stating that you'd be unlikely to hear this complaint today. And the part-owner of the Wolseley, Jeremy King, acknowledges precisely a hard truth: post-2020 may well be the era when the sozzled lunch is finally put to bed.

He told Costeau that the trend had been part-driven by America: 'It had been eroded for a long time. I remember in LA ordering wine at lunchtime and being looked at as if I were a psychopath.' To some extent he says, the shift was caused by an increase of women in the workplace. 'It was always the men who would booze the most and do the least. The women were much straighter and to the point: avoid the booze, and reduce the amount of time in a restaurant.'

This decline in wine-addled prandials was caused also by the rise of breakfast. King continues: 'A while back, we witnessed the growth of the breakfast which was really all about avoiding the boozy lunch. It's accepted it's going to be 45 minutes to an hour; it's a much more efficient way of working. And in some ways it clears space for people who do want to have a social lunch. I think there will be less business lunches in terms of Covid-19, but more boozy social lunches because people will have missed the conviviality.'

And yet when we caught up with Sir Martin Sorrell earlier in the year, he was radiant with the thought that he didn't need to begin his day in a meeting which he plainly views as time-wasting. 'I actually find I'm doing more work, as there are no interruptions,' he explains. 'No breakfasts; no dinners; no surplus travelling. So, on balance I'm more effective and certainly learning more.'

Of course, your future alcohol intake will depend to some extent on which industry you find yourself in. One friend who runs a recruitment business is dismayed at the thought of forgoing his champagne-fuelled lunches in Bob Bob Ricard. 'We're still going to do it – we're doing it now!' he says. But there is a sense that such spirited folk represent the last bastions of the boozy lunch.

Journalism, of course, is famous for having a few too many, and yet even here there have been some notable setbacks. The death of that great advocate of the alcoholic meal Christopher Hitchens at 61 to throat cancer in 2011 is set to be recalled in a melancholy memoir-cum-novel Inside Story by his friend Martin Amis, who recently in interview said he stared in the mirror and thought: 'I look finished.' AA Gill was another who turned away from booze – but later wished as cancer also claimed him that he had turned away sooner.

That's the trouble with the boozy lunch: it takes its toll, and the young, who haven't grown up dreaming of being rock and roll stars, but of designing tech apps, are cannier about their health than their parents' were.

So is this a morbid culture? Jeremy King thinks so: 'I think it is a morbid culture, and that's potentially drained the fun, but I still think we'll return to an approximation of what we had before.'

It is probably a danger in any case to glamorise the whole thing. When Costeau last saw his publicist friend, the wine did indeed flow. 'Well, this was just like the 1980s!' she said at the end, by way of slightly slurred summary. It was, and her saying so expressed surprise as much as pleasure.

I also think it expressed foreboding: and indeed the headache the next day made you wonder even before Covid-19 whether this old institution might after all deserve its place on the scrapheap of history. f

A further 10% discount on holidays booked in 2020!

LUXURIOUS LANZAROTE SUPERVILLA WITH STUNNING VIEWS

Villa Paraiso Macher, Lanzarote. The exclusive 10 bedroom, 10 bathroom *"Super Villa"* Villa Paraiso in Lanzarote, set in 2000m2 of sub-tropical gardens can cater for up to 21 people with plenty of space for extra infants!

- "Alfresco" luxury dining areas
- Large sunken BBQ area
- 2x pool tables (one indoor, one outdoor)
- 25m heated pool
- Large luxury hot tub
- Full-size table tennis
- 6-hole putting green
- Fully equipped exercise room
- New fully fitted kitchen
- A mix of master, twin, triple and single en-suite bedrooms
- High speed Wi-Fi throughout
- Full package satellite TV
- Great for Shared Holidays

3x families of 4 people / 12 people - £5055 per week

Just £1685 per family of 4

We can also organise events for birthdays and weddings.

★★★★★ **Amazing...**

Absolutely loved this holiday. Beautiful villa and beautiful views, couldn't have asked for more. Nicholas T.

★★★★★ **Perfect!**

Everything we were hoping for & more. Great villa, great location, great owners. Alan W.

villaparaisolanzarote.com | 0034 616911618

Find out why 47 MILLION MyPillow customers are sleeping soundly...

47 Million American & Canadian consumers have found the answer to a good night's sleep and it is called *MyPillow,* which is now available here in the UK.

It was invented by Mike Lindell from Minnesota. After years of not getting enough sleep, tossing and turning all night and waking up with a sore arm and painful neck, Mike started researching alternative pillows.

He couldn't find anything on the market, so he decided to invent his own and even obtained a US patent on the filling.

Mike tried 94 different designs over a 2 year period before he found the perfect formula for the best night's sleep. The secret is in the unique fill that adjusts to your exact individual needs regardless of your sleep position. The results are outstanding, it's everything you would ever want in a pillow.

Millions of Americans and Canadians are sleeping soundly, isn't it time the UK woke up feeling refreshed? Well, the good news is, ***MyPillow is now available in the UK, manufactured at our factory in Coventry.***

> "I personally guarantee MyPillow will be the most comfortable pillow you'll ever own or your money back."

MIKE LINDELL
Inventor & CEO of MyPillow.

They say, nothing in life is guaranteed, but with MyPillow you can be safe in the knowledge that there's a ***60 day Money Back Guarantee*** and it comes with ***a 10 year warranty.***

What our UK customers say...

Phil B. - Southampton - wrote:
"I am so happy with the MyPillow I ordered. I am in my 50s can honestly say we have had the best night sleeps since we got them. They are comfy, mould to your movements and don't get hot during the night. I wish I had them years ago! I overslept for the first time, I was so comfy. I have had so many different pillows before, some costing more, MyPillow is well worth it".

The Benefits of using MyPillow

- ✔ Adjusts to your sleeping position
- ✔ Won't go flat during the night
- ✔ Helps you stay cool all night
- ✔ Washable & dryable - STAYS HEALTHY

Call 0800 096 2186 or visit: www.MyPillow.co.uk for more info.

Next Issue

> "Despite what's happened in the last few months, and the very real problems we do face, the world is an infinitely better place than it was fifty years ago."
>
> **Jeremy Hunt**

Columns

Features

Briefings

Richard IV: The Virgin King

CLASS DISMISSED
Stanley Johnson

The novelist and environmentalist on his Covid-19 novel, how to save the environment, and life as Boris' father.

We really enjoyed The Virus. We gather it forms the first part in a trilogy?

Yes, Black Spring Press is kindly reissuing three of my books: after *The Virus* will come two environmental thrillers called *The Warming* and *The Anomaly*. We're calling these a thrillogy.

You wrote the book in 1980 and it seems incredibly prescient.

When it first came out in 1980 I called it *The Marburg Virus*. That was about a real-life incident where everyone who got the disease died. Towards the end of the 1970s, I was working in Brussels. I went to Marburg – a small town in Germany not far from Frankfurt, and discovered the outbreak had been hushed up at the time. I was able to dig out the fact that it had involved a number of students from the university medical school.

So this is a deeply researched novel?

Yes, I went to the Centre of Disease Control which is the key international institution in the fight against pandemics and my hero Lowell Kaplan is an epidemiologist. He's the one who leads the fight in finding the vaccine.

How do you think the Covid-19 pandemic started?

We don't know the original source but it's not inconceivable it escaped from a weapons laboratory. You can't totally rule out the possibility that this was no accidental leak. In Wuhan, there is an Institute of Virology. There are still people out there interested in chemical and biological warfare: it can't be discounted.

With the 'wet market' theory we're faced with the possibility that the environmental crisis and the virus crisis are two sides of the same coin?

Absolutely. I go back to work done by Compassion in World Farming which has produced a really intriguing study as to how animals reared in close proximity can create infections. We have to look at intensive farming.

Has the PM read your book?

I happen to know he has reread it recently as I sent him a copy.

Do you think the government's response has been a success?

Frankly, if you look at the government's core objective it was to stop the health facilities being overwhelmed and they succeeded in that. We have come through this first wave, but we haven't come through unscathed, though you're not going to find me being critical.

What's the way forward?

Well, this crisis has involved huge public spending financed by huge public borrowing. It might be that the mechanisms you need to pay off some of this borrowing have terrific relevance for the strategy needed to bring down climate change. You could have a carbon tax which applies at the border. Obviously if you died of coronavirus it would be cold comfort but it could be a fantastic opportunity.

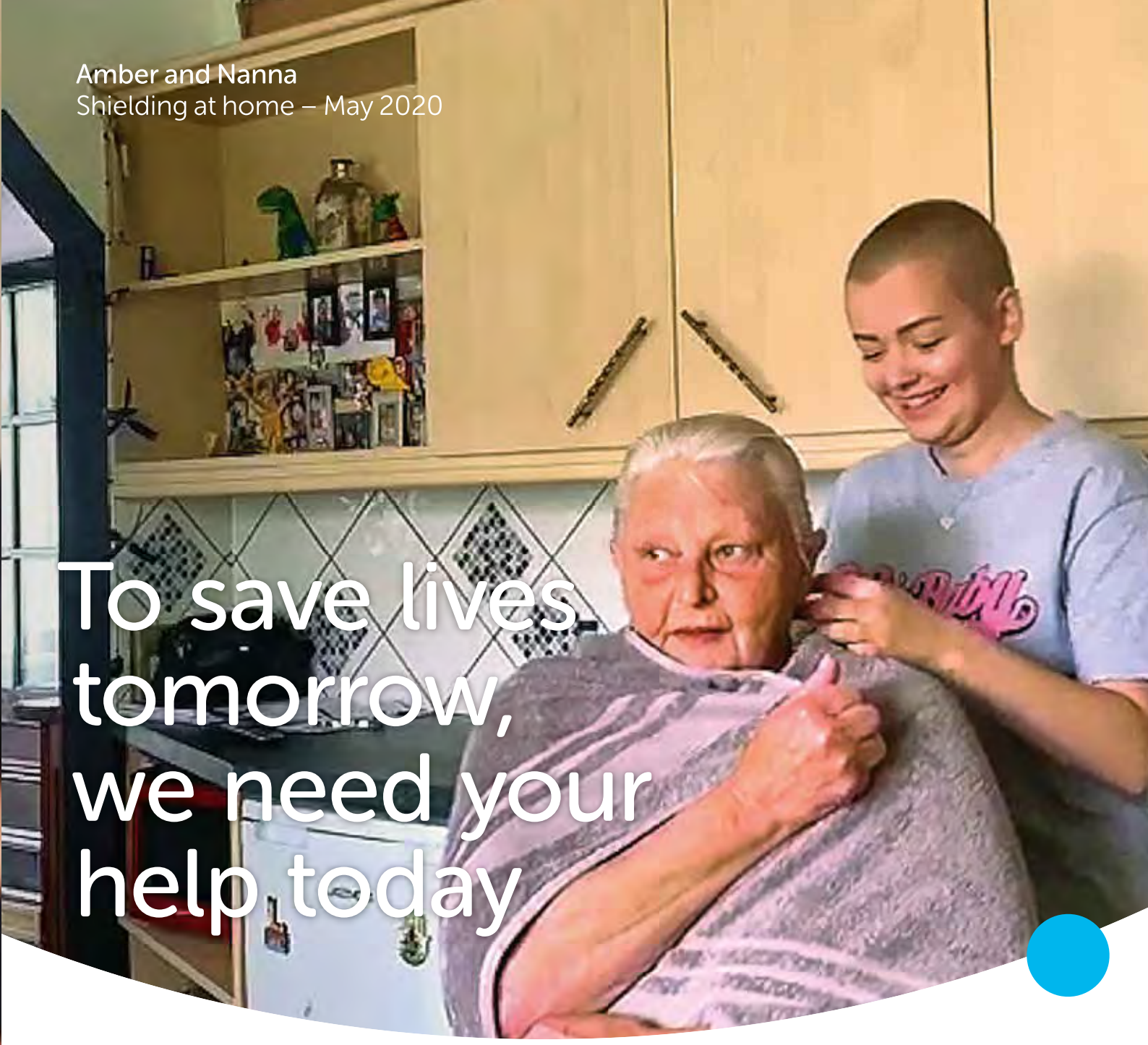
What would you say to young people wanting to write?

Well for me it's been three-pronged. I've published 25 books and also been a fairly persistent journalist. But for me that has gone hand in hand with an environmental career, so I'd say, 'Don't put all your eggs in one basket.' For me it's paid off tremendously. I've been lucky enough to visit far-off places. But you hope that when you travel to Australia what you write about it pays off in environmental terms.

I was interested to see you began as a poet and even won the Newdigate Prize. That's something you've obviously passed onto Boris. Do you think he's the most literate PM we've had in a while?

Well, I've rested on my poetry laurels a bit since then! I saw Mary Beard wasn't polite about Boris – one classicist attracting another classicist I suppose. Harold Wilson's wife, Mary, was keen on poetry. I'm not ready to say other prime ministers haven't been interested in literature: people hide their lights! f

The Virus is out now from Black Spring Press for £9.99



Amber and Nanna
Shielding at home – May 2020

To save lives tomorrow, we need your help today

COVID-19 has slowed us down,
but we will never stop.

We need your donations now more than ever,
to help continue our life-saving research.

Please donate at cruk.org/give

Together we will still beat cancer

CANCER RESEARCH UK

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

By Appointment to
HRH The Prince of Wales
Goldsmiths & Silversmiths
Grant Macdonald Silversmiths Ltd
London

Grant Macdonald

London

Celebrating British craftsmanship using ancient techniques alongside the latest technology, Grant Macdonald produces unique silver and gold pieces that transcend time.

www.grantmacdonald.com

+44 207 633 0278