

# fnitoworld

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FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT, AND BEYOND



## The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

**BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT**

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# I Can See Clearly Now...

Times were good. A successful acting and musical career. Plaudits. Awards. Magazine covers, hanging out with royalty and A-listers and a regular seat on chat show sofas. It began when I was 18. A lucky break when a theatre role landed on my lap – I was an understudy, straight out of acting school. Film roles quickly followed and a music career also saw me top the album charts around the world. A day rarely went by without someone asking for an autograph but I started to feel like an imposter. Paparazzi would chase me around on motorbikes and it was as if I was becoming a prisoner in my own life, cornered and vulnerable. True, the champagne rarely stopped flowing and gala dinners and award ceremonies were weekly – sometimes nightly – occurrences. The money was cascading in but I began to grow bored with fame – and then it with me. The trappings of success were there – and it was increasingly difficult to resist the temptations. The pressure to look good became unbearable as younger actresses and singers took my place. The impossibility of holding down relationships due to punishing schedules and touring took its toll. I started to feel like a bird trapped in a glittering cage. How could I be so unhappy? Surely I had everything- that is the way it may have looked from the outside but, I can tell you, it certainly wasn't like that on

the inside. I wasn't taking care of myself and felt tortured. I was quickly becoming a washed-up diva trading on past glories. I was still hugely recognisable to the public and the press- but success was waning. The venues grew smaller and the bills – and my dress size – bigger. The pressures were increasingly hard to take and I needed to make a cry for help, more of a scream actually. I felt as if my name was going to be carved into history as another casualty of fame, a bright flame that burned out early, like so many in my business. I knew I had to face my demons – and having the courage to do so is the best thing I have ever done.

I feel a new person, as if I have been cleansed and re-sculpted. I only wish I had addressed these issues many years ago. I am finally at ease with myself and able to gracefully accept my age and look back on my career with pride and acceptance. Any bitterness has been washed from me. Speaking to wise people who are global experts in their field can change your world. I finally realised I wasn't alone and can now look in the mirror with a smile and a sense of achievement and pride. Thank you to those who helped me get to this much happier place.



K

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## Founder's Letter



An employability magazine for difficult times has been fortunate to be adorned by world leaders, politicians, columnists and business mentors.

There is much excitement amongst colleagues and our student candidates about members of the Royal Family appearing in the magazine. However, this is not about pageantry but an opportunity for them to discuss an important topic that is dear to both Their Royal Highnesses and all our hearts.

They are joined by many other voices in the fight for our nation's mental health, from The Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell, the writer Fiona Millar, the campaigner Gina Miller, the Chair of the Education Select Committee Robert Halfon MP, Lord Jonathan Oates, the London Mayor Sadiq Khan, Waterstones CEO James Daunt and many others. We are also championing those charities of which The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are Patrons and hope this issue will serve as a magnificent showcase for the work which they all do to address this important issue.

The wellbeing and mental health of our students requires great attention especially as we exit from a global pandemic. Many have found their studies interrupted, enduring long periods of isolation, dealing with the death of loved ones, the loss of interaction with friends and family and suffering the indignity of fresh challenges in their search to find meaningful employment.

However, during mentoring sessions every student has a story to share about the Royal Family, whether participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, raising funds for charity or meeting a Royal Patron.

Here is a small selection of mine.

The first time that I drove through the gates of Buckingham Palace, I remember the royal usher directing me to park on the right of the courtyard. As I got out of the car with due solemnity, I was turning the key to lock the car, as you did in those days, and the usher said with expert timing: "We do not have car thieves here, sir. There is no need to set your car alarm."

At an event with HM The Queen, Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Royal in aid of Save the Children, one of my guests, solicitor Jonathan Metliss, had the audacity to ask Her Majesty which football team she supported. Quick as a flash, she responded: "Queens Park Rangers", as she moved down the line.

I met Diana, Princess of Wales on numerous occasions, mostly in her capacity as Patron of The Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for Children.

However, the event that made headline news during the weekend that Nicholas Ridley passed away was her attendance at the International Congress for the Family in Brighton. Mother Theresa was supposed to be present but at the last minute cancelled due to ill health. As Her Royal Highness took to the podium, a number of activists decided to make a protest. Thankfully, I had insisted that the organisers retained the services of Bryn Williams as Master of Ceremonies – the calmest man in a crisis I can imagine.

Bryn did the dutiful and defused the situation from escalating as gun-wielding guards were about to pounce and firmly proclaimed: "Now that you have shared your views quietly and peacefully, we are obliged that you will leave the stage immediately." They did, but it didn't stop the media from blaming the organisers for endangering the life of their Royal patron.

During the compilation of this issue, the world lost the Duke of Edinburgh, and so I want to pay tribute to a charity of which he was the patron. The Outward Bound Trust taught me the two most important words: "I can." For my part, I will always be grateful to the charity for helping me to believe in myself and for the chance to inspire others. f

Ronel Lehmann



# The debate over the four-day week misses the point

**The Ancient Greek poetess Sappho isn't always considered an important voice in the realm of employability, but she has her moments. "Some say an army of horsemen, some of footsoldiers, some of ships, is the fairest thing on the black earth, but I say it is what one loves."**

At Finito, that's what we care about – not that candidates find their way into what they quite like, but into what they love. That journey is harder for some of us than others. Some degrees, such as medicine, law and architecture, are highly vocational, others less so. Students with degrees in the humanities often leave university as unsure at its end about what they want to do in life as they were in Fresher's week.

This all feels relevant to another question that reared its head during the pandemic. Back in May, Nicola Sturgeon promised a four-day working week for Scotland if the Scottish National Party was re-elected – as it was. The SNP manifesto stated that "Covid-19 changed the way we work almost overnight," and that the party wants "to do more to support people (to) achieve a healthy work-life balance."

But the argument typically meets the bifurcation so common in politics – with Conservatives understandably sceptical of the cost (in this case around £3 billion a year), especially at a time when borrowing has been so high, and productivity so low. Boris Johnson batted the matter away as a non-starter.

One recalls the old saw of the capitalist responding to the communist: "Your arguments are so old I've forgotten the answers to them." Many of our working structures are an inheritance from the Industrial Revolution. Up until the 1920s, workers would labour for 70 hours a week. Henry Ford is usually credited with reducing the working week to 40 hours, as it suited his factory timetable to do so. Just as we now inhabit a world moving away from Ford's cars, the argument runs, why keep to his schedule?

Then there's the occasional research pointing to increased productivity from a four-day week. A 2013 Stanford study found that productivity at a Chinese travel agency rose by 13 per cent when employees were allowed to work from home at least one day a week.

Another argument feeds into our anxieties surrounding global competitiveness. For instance, Spain recently became the latest country to trial the four-day working week. Companies taking part will operate on 32 hours a week and receive funding from the government to avoid lowering employees' wages. The country will spend about £44 million on the programme. Similarly, the SNP promises to "establish a £10 million fund to allow companies to pilot and explore the benefits of a four-day working week". It could be argued that this is a relatively small amount of money to carry out a relevant social experiment.

Of course, the shift towards a four-day working week differs from the "compressed" work schedule already

offered by some employers across the UK. Rather than decrease hours with no pay cut, a compressed schedule redistributes normal hours across fewer days. Criticisms of the compressed schedule include increased stress and rushed work.

The foundation of our working schedule has remained essentially stagnant for 100 years. As times change with automation, faster computing, and the ability to work from home, it might be that it's time to establish a new way of working that which will benefit both employer and employee.

But of course, whichever side of the argument one comes down on, this is only a small part of the problem. Productivity issues and stress are only a factor in jobs which we do not enjoy; similarly when it comes to the arguments surrounding international competition, Spain might indeed find itself more productive if its pilot scheme is successful – but if the entire population were mired in jobs they didn't enjoy the increase would fail to register.

As machines become more effective at doing the jobs we don't enjoy, that should free up human capital for more creative and fulfilling work, and at Finito we want our candidates to be a part of that narrative. Actually, if that happens, and you find something you love, you tend to work a seven-day week voluntarily – because you're happy. In other words, we need to think of work not as a burden but as a joy. 'Work is so much more fun than fun,' as Noel Coward put it. Sappho would have agreed. [f](#)

# Is it time to consider a fourth school term?

Many *Finito World* readers will now be recovering from another summer holiday of juggling parenting and working, but does it need to be this way? The indefatigable campaigner Gina Miller is now calling for a new commission to consider the present state of education in the UK more deeply. "We need to have a commission now to look at the whole system. When I look at where we are in the world, it's very disappointing. When I was growing up, the British education system was the gold standard everywhere in the Commonwealth," she tells us.

For Miller, our country was lagging behind before the pandemic, and has fallen still further behind of late. But now is not the time to let a crisis go to waste.

So what should this commission look at? For Miller, the long school holiday needs to be jettisoned, and a fourth term

seriously considered. She points out that the summer term is an inheritance of children being sent out into the fields to pick the harvest – and as such is outdated.

So how would it work? Well, this would be no brutally academic affair, but instead a term with a different flavour altogether. "It would have an academic element but mainly include things like the environment, gardening, cooking, community service, and sports," she says.

This rings true. Many parents, especially those who used to commute regularly into town, have been filled with admiration at the standard of teaching. When children did return to school after the third lockdown, many experienced a renewed sense of the central roles schools play in communities.

And the timing feels right. Many of those working from home, having ceased their

hamster-wheel commutes, now have a livelier sense of community than they did before the pandemic. This is now the time to consider the future, to recalibrate and think again about how we structure our society. Schools need to be at the centre of that.

And if at the same time we resolve some of the arguments surrounding the need to broaden the national curriculum, wouldn't that also be to the good? Finito World continues to side with those who would like to see gardening, the arts and sports have a wider place within our education system. We are therefore supporting the idea of this new commission. It should be cross-party and given a full mandate to make bold recommendations. As Miller says: "A school is not just for educating people, it's about our community." What could be more important? [f](#)

# A new Renaissance?

This issue of *Finito World* has been written in sunnier times than any of the previous. Though the so-called Delta variant continued to cause concern, hospitalisations and deaths remained low, and when The Prime Minister Boris Johnson lifted restrictions on 19th July it infused the country with a sense of new possibility.

But what does this optimism really entail? It was the excellent head of events firm The Department, Hamish Wilkinson, who predicted in our last issue that post-pandemic we would see 'a new roaring Twenties'. Finito World agrees, but hopes that even greater things, might be possible.

The Black Death, as is well known, ravaged medieval Britain, and did so in ways far worse than anything Covid-19 has visited on us today. But historians nowadays note that this created movement in society, which over time created an entrepreneurial middle class, and with it the great outpouring of achievement known as the Renaissance.

Might Covid-19 not do something similar? While many have had a terrible time, there is also the sense that the world has made secret leaps. For many, less travel time has meant more time for work; freedom from office structures has enabled people to think more deeply about life; and quiet skies

have made us more mindful of our connection to nature.

Human beings are ever adaptable, and our very relationship to work has shifted. Throughout this issue we meet those who have been undaunted by the pandemic and found reshaped purpose in their daily lives.

It was the quintessential Renaissance Man, Leon Battista Alberti, who said: "A man can do all things if he but wills them." It mightn't have occurred to him that so can a woman, but he was a man of his time. As autumn rolls round again, we need his optimism – and to realise that we've earned it. [f](#)



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## Eddie Izzard

ON PRONOUNS, WORKING WITH JUDI DENCH  
AND THE PLIGHT OF THE STREET PERFORMER

It all started when I went on Sky's Portrait Artist of the Year. They said: "What would you like? What pronouns?" So I was there, wearing a dress and makeup and I said: "Well, she/ her." It was a bit like: "Would you like a cup of tea? Coffee? Latte?" It wasn't set up in a big way. I wasn't there saying: "Look, it's in the contract, you've got to do this." So they decided to do that – and when it came out there was quite a firestorm. In Britain and America, in two days everything had changed. Now I'm very happy I've been promoted to "she": it's a great honour. Some people are grumpy about this but I have given 35 years' notice.

None of this formed any part of *Six Minutes to Midnight*, which I filmed with Judi Dench and released earlier this year. That was some time before the pronoun thing kicked off. I feel it's a tripping hurdle for us, for anyone who's trans. People get quite militant, maybe on my behalf, and I say: "Look, everyone should calm down. People call me 'he', people call me 'she'. It doesn't really matter because I am gender fluid." What's more important is to ask whether my comedy's good enough? Is my drama good enough? With my marathon running, am I raising enough money? Doing things in French and German, is that inspiring enough?

Judi Dench had a sweepstake on set about whether her wobbly tooth would fall out. I did the mathematics involved, but I never gamble because I know what the odds are! Judi doesn't do ceremony – she's just another person, chatting with the other girls. She said we treated her well, and it was a wonderful experience.

With the whole pronouns thing, at first I thought it might change my acting career. But I've just done something for a Netflix show up in Manchester, and there were no problems: some people were calling me 'he' on set, others 'she'. I think if I were a hunk or something like that, it would be a problem, but because I'm hopefully a more versatile, quirky actor I have to create my own area.

**“Now I'm very happy I've been promoted to “she”: it's a great honour.”**

Going forwards, I want to do as many films as I can. I want to set up my own films, as I did with *Six Minutes to Midnight*, and keep giving myself a good role, as Clint Eastwood did. I've got to pull more stories out of me and direct them as well. But if a by-election comes up that's a good fit for me – or, failing that, the next election – I would love to get chosen and win it.

London has made it very hard for street performers. I came from that – and it's the reason I can do what I do – and now play the Hollywood Bowl and Madison Square Gardens and the other big places. We set up the Street Performers Association in the mid-eighties in order to fight against the rules preventing people from performing. Sadly, organisations tend to look down on

street performers. I think they see us as riff-raff but street performers have been doing it for years, way back to Punch and Judy and the time of Samuel Pepys, and beyond that.

Westminster Council, in particular, is making it very tough. They did this thing where they said, 'Let's hear your views'. So we put forward our views and then they just ignored them all and carried on doing what they're doing.

It's also a question of language. Buskers tend to be musicians with a passing audience – and we're street performers who actually get an audience, do a show and then the audience dissipates, which is a slightly different thing. But really we're all working together. If something goes slightly wrong, the council seems to be saying: "Well, everyone's banned from playing here". Police often end up having to marshal street performers: it's just the wrong way of doing things.

What I find tricky with the Labour Party is when, as people who are like-minded and really on the same team, we all spend a lot of time arguing. It becomes very tiring because we keep going round the houses. Do I want to be prime minister? What I want to do is to get Keir Starmer to be prime minister, or help whoever is the leader of the Labour Party – and I am a good fighter. **f**

*Six Minutes to Midnight* starring Eddie Izzard, Judi Dench, Carla Juri, James D'Arcy and Jim Broadbent is out now.



# Reader Enquiries

OUR REGULAR ROUNDTABLE THIS MONTH INVOLVED QUESTIONS ABOUT POLITICS, SUCCESSION PLANNING AND A DISASTROUS PANDEMIC. FINITO MENTORS SOPHIA PETRIDES, PERVIN SHAKH, CAROLINE ROBERTS, ROBIN ROSE AND ANDY INMAN GAVE THEIR ADVICE



SOPHIA PETRIDES



ROBIN ROSE



ANDY IMMAN

**I've always wanted to go into politics. There are a number of good experience routes through the Civil Service, public affairs agencies, think tanks and working as a Parliamentary Assistant for an MP. How do I determine if I will be suited and where should I begin?**

Damien, 27 Exeter

**Robin** Damien, let's deal with the suitability part of your question first. It's encouraging that you're asking whether you would be good for politics, not if the role would be good for you. The best politicians are those who genuinely want to make a difference, if that is you then stick with your ambition.

**Caroline** Yes, you clearly have a strong interest in working in the political arena so that's half the battle won. The civil service and think tanks will have a strong focus on research skills and policy development. If you are in a position

to offer some time to an appropriate organisation voluntarily, then that may also be a good starting point.

**Robin** I agree with Caroline. You mention some of the traditional gateways into politics and these areas should not be overlooked. However, if this is seriously the sector that excites you, these suggested routes are slow and too dependent on chance. To really make things happen just get involved in causes you believe in. Join groups actively fighting to promote your chosen cause. Hone your human relations and public-speaking skills. Study negotiation and conflict resolution. Do all this and your political career will take off much faster.

**M**y parents don't want me to join the family paper business. They feel that I need to prove myself elsewhere before joining, which I understand but I'm

also proud of the family and want to continue the tradition, which goes back several generations. I am all for succession planning, but this is tearing me apart emotionally because there's really little else I want to do.

Harry, 20 Norwich

**Pervin** Harry, it's great to hear that you are very keen on being involved in the family business. Your parents' perspective is understandable too. It might be a wise idea to get some external experience first, maybe in a non-related business, so you can pick up new experiences, develop commercial knowledge, and formulate new thoughts and build a network. In the meantime, you can still be involved in the family business informally by looking for ways to improve the existing business, but try not to impose your ideas as an absolute rule, especially never at the dinner table!

**Sophia** Your parents should be very

proud of their son wanting to support the family business and continue the tradition. However, I agree with Pervin that it is important to broaden your horizons to other experiences in order to grow your business skills.

**Robin** A thriving business has to continuously evolve with the times. It has to be agile, adaptable and resilient. When you are in the thick of daily business life you don't get much time to try out new ideas or discover new approaches, so use this time to go out there and learn how you could take your family business to the next level for when you hand it over to your own kids. Look at the logistics chain, the suppliers, the customer service aspects, the customer journey and demand influencing factors. Try walking in your customers' shoes for a bit. You can only achieve this by experiencing many different challenges in your life that push you out of your comfort zone.

**Pervin** I'd add that maybe you could use your social and digital media skills to help improve the company's social media strategy and increase visibility and client engagement. This way, you'll gain your family's trust, build credibility, whilst proving that you have what it takes to be involved in an official capacity later on.

**Robin** Think of it like this. If you were to start straight away at your age you would immediately encounter difficulties from which your parents are trying to protect you. Other staff are unlikely to give you the respect you will eventually need to become a leader. You would be just thought of as the ignorant kid who is just there for nepotistic reasons. If you were to spend a couple of years elsewhere, think of the potential advantages that would result.

**M**y gap year was a disaster due to the pandemic. I don't feel ready to start a job nor do I want to study for a Masters. What options are there for someone like me?

Lucy, 22 Tunbridge Wells

**Caroline** Sorry you didn't enjoy your gap year but you are clearly ready to move on to the next step. First of all think about what you would like to do. What are the skills you have developed through university and any other activities you have been involved in? Is there an industry that particularly interests you and why? Once you have narrowed that down you can then start to think about how you get there. Many industries now have good apprenticeship schemes which will allow you to earn while you learn, offering a great blend of study and work. The National Apprenticeship Service will have all the details of what's on offer.

**Pervin** It's natural to feel disheartened, Lucy, especially as the pandemic has been incredibly challenging for those looking for work or trying to get good quality work experience. If you are unsure, don't rush into the next step. Instead, step back and think about what you'd like to do. Your interests, motivation, and aspirations may have changed because who you were 15 months ago is not who you are today, and not who you will be in the next 15 months. Be flexible with your plans and try different things and see what you like and dislike.

**Andy** 2021 has not gone to plan for many. The great thing is that you have so many options available to you. One

of those options could be to take a role in the care sector, earn some money to either fund a future gap year or help pay for further education, while developing your people skills and helping those less fortunate. If not that, then are you in a position to do some voluntary work and get similar benefits? Doing something positive will always be better than doing nothing, because it will develop you and reflect well on your CV. Those that come out of this pandemic ahead will be the ones who have acted in one way or another.

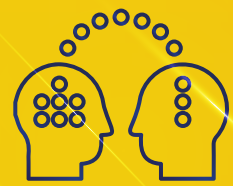
**Sophia** Andy's right. When life throws us a curveball – and it often does – the hardest thing is letting go of your previous plan and thinking up a new one that's a better fit for your current circumstances. This is also a great time to give something new a chance. Throw your own curveball back at life! Have you considered supporting your local community and giving a helping hand to those less fortunate? Are there any local charities where you can offer support? Volunteering can transform your CV as well as offer real, life-changing help to elderly people who live alone and have never felt lonelier. f





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## The Chair

# Robert Halfon

ON THE VITAL QUESTION OF POETRY AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

**I've been asked lately about the Department for Education's decision to make poetry optional on the national curriculum. I don't think poetry has as much prominence in parts of our education system as it should – in some ways that's understandable because of all that's gone on during Covid-19.**

I understand the government's concerns – that children are being left behind and not learning. I also understand those who worry about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the predictions that 28 per cent of jobs might be lost to young people by 2030. There's a natural recognition that the curriculum has to adapt and change.

But what the government doesn't understand is that poetry and literature are one and the same. In my view, you can't promote one subject over another: literature is actually just as much about learning poetry as reading books. I hope this is just a temporary thing – though it's undeniably becoming a more widespread assumption in our society that poetry isn't seen as important.

It's a good time then to remind ourselves of the value of poetry – sometimes it can almost be like a puzzle. You have to think more, and it trains your mind in a very different way. If this change suddenly became permanent, I think that would be very worrying.

And of course, culture – and I include poetry in this – has an absolutely important role, not just in the economy but in our society. It shapes our lives. It's not just good for our learning; it's good for our mental health, and expanding our horizons. We don't want a society where everyone is Mr Spock.

At the same time I do firmly believe that whatever degree or study people do they should do work experience alongside.

If you're a poet, why wouldn't you do a placement at the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum? There should be practical work experience alongside the process of expanding your intellect.

The reason I mention Robert Burns is because I remember learning him for a school competition. I have these bad legs and I didn't lean on anything at that time. I remember standing up and my knee cap would always shake up and down. But I remember learning the first two or three verses of A Red, Red Rose by Robert Burns – and my kneecaps just shaking in front of the whole school.

I'm sometimes asked if my reading has affected my career in politics. What I read goes into my subconscious. It helps me when I'm writing articles – I may think of things and quote things, or use metaphors. I wouldn't say it's necessarily directed me towards change of policy. It infuses my thoughts and permeates like a kind of beautiful stew in cooking for a long time – and it always tastes much nicer on the second or third day of eating it.

**“The danger is that a temporary measure becomes precedent”**

But mainly I read to relax – and I'm happy at the moment as I've just read some very early stuff from Tolkein – not just *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, but also *The Unfinished Tales* and *The Silmarillion*, which his son, Christopher Tolkein gathered together after his father's death. Tolkein was not just a great author but also a great poet:

if you read Beren and Luthien, you'll see what I mean.

**“There's an unwritten story: the importance of Conservatism in 20th century art”**

But if I'm honest I don't read enough poetry. I tend to read books more than verse. But when I do read it I like it. I particularly like poetry that tells stories and also poetry that rhymes – especially Philip Larkin, though I won't quote my favourite poem, This Be The Verse, since this is a family publication. He was a Conservative of course, as was my other hero, the painter LS Lowry. That's an unwritten story – the importance of conservatism in 20th century British art.

And again work was important. Lowry actually began doing pictures when he was collecting rents in Manchester. Thinking about it, Lowry and Larkin, working in the library in Hull, might almost be the embodiments of my apprenticeships agenda. f



Robert Halfon MP



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## The Archbishop Stephen Cottrell

THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK ARGUES THAT WE'RE OUT OF SYNC – AND CHARTS A BETTER WAY FORWARD

**I began my ministry during lockdown and compared with the sufferings of the world, having to move at that time is a small thing. Nevertheless, it's not the way anyone would choose to leave one job and start another.**

A little maxim that has helped sustain and guide me through my working life has been that good decisions arise out of good relationships. You want people to share your vision, and ask them to help you design it. Zoom has been very good for sustaining existing relationships – and even for transacting business – but it's not so good for making new relationships. Actually, if you think back to before the pandemic, it's the things that happen in the car park after the meeting, or over coffee, which are really valuable to oil the wheels. In that sense, it's been a challenge.

The Christian way of ordering the world has got terribly out of sync. We've become frantic and evermore busy. Although you know there's nothing good about Covid, it doesn't mean some good can't come out of it. Perhaps it will cause all of us to reflect on the very unhealthy ways in which we were living and working – and not just unhealthy for us, unhealthy for the planet. So my great hope is that as we emerge from this, we won't just go back to how we were, but we'll think about patterns of living and working which are much more life-giving.

Work is good – we are made for work. Work itself can be an offering to God. So we need to use our time purposefully and creatively, but we need to do it in a way that is healthy. That requires us to see that the first thing we should consider is time for refreshment and prayer. That should be our first consideration, not our last.

Some people ask what an archbishop

does, if I am perhaps the equivalent of a CEO of a business. Well, not really. The business of the Church is the business of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so an Archbishop is much more like a pastor than a CEO. The Church is fundamentally a community.

Of course, I have responsibilities for the leadership and oversight of that community because it's a large community that needs organisation. And there's all sorts of infrastructure organisation that goes with it. We employ a lot of people, but we have lay officers who help and support with that. So my day-to-day work is to care for the clergy and to be a voice – and sometimes a face – for the Christian faith, particularly in the Diocese of York, where I serve. As an archbishop, there's also a national responsibility to guide the vision and hold us to these values. So there are of course parallels with leaders of other organisations – but I don't see myself in that way.

Of course, there are hundreds and hundreds of clergy across my diocese, so I can't meet with them all regularly. On a normal Sunday morning, I will be joining in with the life of a parish or local church. Much of that, of course, in the past year has been online and the church has done amazing things in transferring its life online. But of course, we're now beginning to meet in person again. Yesterday morning, I was in a place called Loftus which is near Saltburn-on-Sea on the North-East coast with a local church, joining in their life. This evening I'm meeting with a whole group of clergy, and lay leaders, to discuss the life of the church.

For me the piece of scripture that has spoken to me most in the last year is the story of the woman with the haemorrhages who comes to Jesus. As readers will probably recall, she doesn't

touch him directly – and of course the reason she doesn't touch him is a kindness. In her understanding of the cleanliness laws, if she as an unclean person touches him a clean person, she makes him unclean. But nevertheless she believes that he has the power to heal. So she touches just the hem of Jesus' garment.

But we're told Jesus feels the power go out of him. He says to the disciples: "Who touched me?" They say, "You're having a laugh. You know the great crowd of people around you – everyone's touching you." But he notices.

The reason I found that story so helpful is because we have lived through a year without touch, and without embrace – and without the familiar things of the Church that usually sustain us.

Particularly in the Anglican tradition, without being able to receive Holy Communion, which has been the kind of staple diet of Christian worship. All those things have been taken away from us. Does that mean Jesus is not present with us? No, he's still just as absolutely present. I feel we've had a year of touching the hem of His garment. [f](#)



The Archbishop: Stephen Cottrell  
(Wikipedia)

## The Journalist Fiona Millar

ALISTAIR CAMPBELL'S WIFE DISCUSSES MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

**It's really hard living with someone with mental health issues. I remember days when I would sit at my desk and think: "I just can't do this." But looking back now, it's one of the things that made me resilient: I know that I can put one foot in front of the other no matter what.**

One of the things I've always thought about Alistair's mental health is that once he stopped drinking, he transferred his dependency, and his self-medication became work: he threw himself into that to stop himself addressing the deeper problems. He could perform at a very high level in the workplace – but then he'd come home and struggle and I would bear the brunt of that.

It was astonishing. We worked together at Downing Street during the Blair administration and I'd see him be amusing, engaging and charismatic with people – but then at home, he'd be good with the kids, but with me he'd crash. I've now started doing meetings with other people who live with those suffering mental health problems and it's very common: people live with fear of what their friends will say, or else they feel responsible, as if the problem originates with them.

In fact, 99.9 per cent of the time it's nothing to do with you at all. People who are mentally ill can be quite manipulative, and gaslighting is very common. Initially, I just thought Alistair was quite a difficult personality and it wasn't until he was formally diagnosed that I was really able to say he had mental health issues.

Of course, during lockdown people's working situations have been very unusual – and some people haven't had any work because they're self-employed in creative industries. But in general I'd say that people tend to use work as a way to take themselves

out of a situation, because if your partner has mental health problems, you have to find things for yourself, otherwise you can get consumed by the other person's illness. Work is quite a solace – although for the person actually suffering from mental health, often they can't cope with going to work.

**“We need to get people back to some physical relationship with the people we work with”**

Alistair was very lucky to be able to work 28 years, even though he was seriously ill, and Tony Blair was always very accommodating. Not all employers are, and there are some toxic workplaces out there. For employers who want to make the workplace a friendly environment, they need to ask themselves not only how they actually do it – but more, how do they do it on a consistent basis.

That has to begin in an organisation's leadership – to treat other people as you wish to be treated yourself. You've got to do more than talk the talk. If an employee comes to you with a family problem or a mental health concern you have to do all you can to accommodate it.

It's too early to say whether there's any mental health washing in companies, as mental health has only really been a hot topic during the pandemic. What's concerned me during Covid-19 is the way in which managers closed their offices as a cost-cutting device. That was fine in the beginning – people thought it was

fantastic to be working from home. But I've noticed of late that a lot of younger people aren't living in particularly convenient circumstances and the novelty has worn off. Working all day in your bedroom isn't great. It's not healthy to have a remote relationship with your employer who, after all, is meant to be responsible for your well-being: that means there's currently a lot of hidden mental health problems in the workplace.

I'm all in favour of flexible work – especially for families – but we need to get people back to some sort of physical relationship with the people they work with, otherwise we'll see casualties from this. People started off not wanting to come to the office and now they kind of want to come back. Managing that is going to be very important, and we're probably at the crunch point now.

But by creating this online support group, we've hit on a very simple model. There's no real cost involved, and we've got people coming from across the country to our group. At the moment, we've limited our numbers to ten or 12, and we'd like to expand it into local communities. This could be tacked onto existing organisations, and I'm hopeful we can do that. [f](#)

*To discuss mental health issues with Fiona Millar, @schooltruth.*



Fiona Millar



## The Mayor Sadiq Khan

THE LONDON MAYOR EXPLAINS WHAT HE PLANS  
TO DO NOW LONDON HAS VOTED HIM BACK IN

**Every night when I go to bed, I am always reflective on what could have gone better.**

Part of the difficulty of my job is that mayors across the country have far too little power compared to our global counterparts. For example, the Mayors of New York and Tokyo can spend 50 per cent and 70 per cent of tax raised in their cities compared with the seven percent I have as Mayor of London.

This pandemic should have been an opportunity for the government to see mayors across the country as its allies rather than adversaries, and use our exit from the European Union as an opportunity to distribute power from Whitehall to other parts of the country. 'Levelling up' shouldn't mean levelling down London.

Regardless, I am determined to use every lever in my power to continue standing up for London and build a better city after the pandemic. As well as investing in policing and youth services so we can be tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime and continuing to build record numbers of genuinely affordable homes, my focus is on jobs, jobs, jobs. I have a plan for supporting more than 170,000 well paid, future-proof jobs in the green economy as well as generating employment by supporting businesses, helping Londoners retrain and banging the drum for investment in our city from around the world.

While the running of schools doesn't fall under the Mayor's jurisdiction, I have been working hard to close the digital divide across schools in London, allocating £1.5million towards school children accessing the equipment they need to learn throughout the pandemic

and beyond. I have also invested to help attract high-quality teachers to the city through Teach London and supported current teachers to become the leaders and headteachers of the future.

I am determined to fight hard for the funding which schools and colleges need to succeed. I also oppose moves to reduce education expenditure in London and intend to argue for more control in London when it comes to skills for 16-19 year-olds. I will also stand up for children with special educational needs (SEND) so that provision matches demand and I'll lobby the Government to increase the overall funding for SEND Londoners.

Further, I have always been clear that education has an important role to play in providing a more complete picture of our history and a better understanding of the historic and institutional reasons for racial inequality in Britain.

That is why I have campaigned for Black history to be part of the national curriculum and partnered with the Black curriculum to help refresh elements of the London curriculum, which serves hundreds of primary and secondary schools across the capital. Now that I've been re-elected, I will continue to lobby the government to make these changes to the national curriculum and give schools the tools and support they need to empower a new generation of Londoners to strive towards a fairer and more equitable city.

I also back making relationships education for primary pupils and relationships and sex education for secondary pupils compulsory to promote learning about positive, healthy relationships of all shapes and sizes and counter unhealthy attitudes and behaviours that can, if left unchecked,

evolve into bigotry, discrimination and even violence.

I don't ever think I've had a perfect day. Sometimes you make mistakes and these can be quite small. For instance, on reflection, it may have been a mistake to borrow a journalist's racing bike to try and do a bunny hop on Hackney Marshes.

But a big regret I have is trusting the Prime Minister last March when he said he would follow the science in tackling Covid-19. It quite quickly became clear that this was not the case and unfortunately led to many avoidable deaths.

My focus now is on ensuring that London is an even better city to live in after the pandemic than it was before. I'll urgently tackle the increase in unemployment with a relentless focus on jobs, revive tourism in central London and support a safe recovery for our hospitality and creative sectors. I am pursuing a vision for a brighter future for London that will make our capital greener, fairer and safer for all, and I will always stand up for our city against the most anti-London government in living memory. [f](#)



Sadiq Khan  
(Wikipedia)

★★★★★  
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EXCEPTIONAL"

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★★★★★  
"MOST FORWARD  
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## The Campaigner Gina Miller

THE WEALTH MANAGER EXPLAINS THE  
NEED TO RETURN TO THE OFFICE

**The fact is that after Brexit, my family had been living in lockdown for about three or four years anyway because we'd stopped going out.' The attention generated by Miller I and Miller II had meant that life had become pretty restricted. Anyway, we carried on as normal and what changed is that the not so pleasant people we were busy dealing with had their own life and so they let us alone.**

However, it all popped up again with the anniversary of Brexit, and I had forgotten actually how horrible it is to be on the receiving end of this kind of abuse. It doesn't really get to me – but I had forgotten how nasty it can be.

But we've had a time of reflection, and society is now coming to a point where everybody's wondering what they're supposed to do with these supposed new freedoms. Family life has changed. Everybody had got to a place where home was almost an afterthought – even though it costs so much money. The challenge is going to be finding the balance as we move forwards.

What I find very interesting is that the UK is in a dilemma over remote working, whereas other countries have already decided their approach. For example, in New York, the authorities have said that if you can eat out, you can work out, and so they're encouraging people to go back to the office. That's happening across Europe and in Asia as well. It all comes down to productivity, and how you get that up, and working from home works better in some sectors than in others.

I work in wealth management, and I think for professional settings – and I include lawyers, accountants, and

bankers in this – there's so much that you learn by watching people and seeing how they make decisions. It's also a question of mentoring and asking ourselves how we bring on the juniors. Business-owners will realise that you can't do that remotely.

But the reality is that each profession – and each business – is going to have to make up their own minds and I don't think we'll see a holistic view of how we work for the future. But it also raises other issues, many of which people aren't thinking enough about. One of those is pay. For instance, if people are using more of their own energy and electricity and they're going to be at home, do we need compensation structures for that? Many companies had travel allowances before. Will we now have a home allowance? That needs to be resolved.

Then there's the question of human resources. How do you actually assess progress? The problem is that if progress is going to carry on being measured by outcomes then that could actually create all sorts of other discriminations, as you'll find output varying a lot according to home circumstances.

That opens up onto a topic I've become especially concerned about, which is presenteeism at work – that's to say, people showing up at work and being unable to be productive. For parents – and for women, in particular – it was fantastic during Covid-19 that you could be at home so much. But for professional women we're beginning to see data that they're already thinking of going part-time or giving up work.

That's because at home, they're still the mum and the wife, and they're having to do an awful lot more. Middle management women, or women in senior management roles, are working late into the night once they finish their domestic day. They're working until two or three o'clock in the morning, and we shouldn't be surprised if such people experience burnout.

So you have a concerning situation whereby presenteeism at the workplace is being replaced by presenteeism at home. It's disturbing to me that we've fought so long to get into the workplace, and to push the diversity agenda, and now we need to consider the unintended consequences here: if we're not careful, we might undo all that work very quickly.

We've got to look at this business of virtual mansplaining. Do we want a world where women are being left out of team meetings and pitches, and we have male workers go: "Well, we know she's really busy in the day, she can pick it up in the evening?" Of course not, and we've got to be mindful that that's happening in order to prevent it. [f](#)



Gina Miller



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# A Question of Degree



With Sir Alan Duncan

**I studied PPE at Oxford, and when I'm asked what my degree taught me I always think of Harold Macmillan. Macmillan was a former prime minister, who was once Chancellor of Oxford, and he said to our College, which was St. John's, that what freshers year taught you is when someone is talking rot. That's always been my lodestar for what a good education means: if you know when someone's talking rubbish, you know what's good sense and what is not.**

But political ambition predated my time at Oxford – I got the bug actually when I was about 12. Whether I regret that or not now is unclear, but everything I did at Oxford, and thereafter, was geared at getting into Parliament.

Politics and economics at Oxbridge is quite a well-trodden degree – but it's often pointed out to me that the current prime minister wields his English language skills and classical education, and that that gives him an advantage. Well there might be truth in that, but there was an element of history in my papers too. My history tutor – who I knew for years afterwards – told me something I've never forgotten: "No economist ever makes a good banker. If you want to be a good banker, you have to read history." I think

there's a lot in that, because it gives you a strategic perspective. It's not about the numbers, and it's not just about economic theory nationally. It's about the ups and downs of life and societal and economic forces – and historians understand those far better than economists.

So in terms of my degree, I feel I learned enough – and I also learned a lot from the practical politics of the Oxford Union. This was at a time when the then Labour government under Jim Callaghan was falling to bits, and Thatcher was on the rise. So the 1979 elections slightly ate into my revision for finals – God knows how I got a degree at all.

It's interesting to note that Theresa May studied geography, but I think in the end formal education isn't what it's all about. Whether you succeed in politics is more to do with your disposition and what you've done in life. The problem is I think a lot of people are going into Parliament now without any particular experience – and definitely too little international experience.

I was lucky to gain both in the oil industry. In that industry my best friend was Ian Taylor who died last year – and that friendship, together with the skill I'd acquired in the oil industry, did come in handy in particular when it came to getting rid of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya in 2011. Ian was buying and selling crude oil into Benghazi and we were able to go to the then prime minister David Cameron and explain that if he didn't follow our strategy, he'd lose the war. Gaddafi was oil, and our approach helped bring him down.

If young politicians ask my advice about appearing on television, I say it's the wrong question. The trouble is most politicians today don't think about Parliament first and media second. They have it absolutely the wrong way round.

What I think does matter about being a minister is time management. If you're not careful, and you don't administer your day, you can easily be organised by your private office: one of the golden rules of being a minister is always to make sure that you control the diary, rather than let the diary control you. So that means you need to look ahead, particularly for travel and set priorities – and make it clear to your private office that the priorities are as they are, that you will see some people but not others. You also need to explain that you want time to think – or time to call in one of the teams in the foreign office responsible for an area and get into an issue in more depth. So, planning, and not allowing yourself to be just told what to do as a process, is the way to do it.

The media doesn't help any of this. Believe it or not, I've never been on *The Andrew Marr Show*, but I think Andrew has completely lost his way. The questions have become so staid and obvious, and it's a programme whose time is up. It's junk because Andrew keeps asking questions to which there can be no clear answer, doesn't delve deeper and it's all about trying to trip up the politician. It's a dead programme.

I did use humour quite a lot in my career – on *Have I Got News For You* four times in fact. That was absolutely terrifying – they can't prepare you for that at Oxford! [f](#)



Sir Alan Duncan  
(Chris McAndrew)

# Relatively Speaking



With Lord Jonathan Oates

**I decided to write *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden* at the end of the Coalition. I went to Ethiopia in 2013 with Nick Clegg, who then was deputy prime minister. That trip brought back for me a lot of memories about running away from home when I was younger. I needed to get it out of my system.**

I'd decided that the issues around mental health were things that I'd like to share. Growing up, books were my lifeline: they were a way of realising that I wasn't a completely dysfunctional person. Right from when I was about six or seven, I just consumed stuff. I had a big Dickens phase, a Graham Greene phase, a Saul Bellow phase. Since my book was published, I've had lots of letters and emails from people. Readers say they like the cliff-hangers, and the sort of Dickensian way I have of leaving something hanging at the end of a chapter.

I've always loved language as well. The King James Bible was something I'd grown up with. My dad was modern in many respects, but when it came to language he saw the King James Bible, alongside Shakespeare, as the standard for beautiful language.

I've been asked whether my eclectic tastes and interest in language in any way contributed to my liberal political

philosophy. I think the more you understand, the more you can be prepared to put the boot on the other foot. That's why I find the Conservative Party difficult, because so few of them grew up with that depth of understanding.

My mum was a teacher and taught English at primary school level. She loved English, and loved language. She gave me a great gift once when she said: "There's no such thing as a bad book. It's a good book for you." That helped because there was a lot of snobbishness about Enid Blyton, and the sort of books I was reading when I was six or seven.

Later, I was in the same halls at Exeter University as Radiohead singer Thom Yorke. We clicked over a bottle of whiskey, perhaps because we were both quite intense. We ended up sharing a house. When I stood – unsuccessfully as it happens – for President of the Student Union, Thom offered to help me and said: "I'll be your artistic director." He was a student photographer and he did some moody images of me which was the best part of my campaign.

So my book is largely not about politics – it's about a journey, and running away from home aged 15. It's about finding that however hard you try, and however much you pray, you can't change the world on your own by pure force of will. You can change the world, however, by standing together with other people. That means persistently campaigning and fighting and doing lots of really boring stuff: knocking on doors, fundraising and putting leaflets through doors.

The other thing which I think is really important, particularly for people in their twenties who are suffering increasingly

with mental health problems, is that you are far more precious than you're probably willing to believe. Things can get better. Even when all the obstacles feel really insurmountable, stick with it and let people help you. One of the tendencies when people are suffering with depression or poor mental health is to push people away.

One time in my early twenties when I was really suffering badly, a friend of mine who I used to share a house with knew I was not in a good way. He also knew that it wasn't the moment to push me because I wasn't ready. In the morning when I was on my way to work, I was feeling so down and depressed, and I opened up my briefcase to find he'd put a note in there which said: "Please hold your head up, and be happy. You are a very precious person." That struck me hard. If he'd tried to tell me that to my face, I couldn't have dealt with it at that time. That's my message to people who know someone suffering mental health difficulties. When you feel you're being pushed away, just find unobtrusive ways to show you're there. [f](#)

*I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* is published by Biteback Publishing, priced £20.



Lord Jonathan Oates  
(Roger Harris)



# Ten Thousand Hours



With Emma Swift

**These past few years have taken everybody for a spin. In some ways my job's been easier because I don't have to try and tour and I've mainly done my record *Blonde on the Tracks*, a collection of Bob Dylan covers, online. I studied English literature at the outset, and then I became a journalist and also worked in a government department. But I quit all that and moved to Nashville, Tennessee to do music.**

I was always a bookish kid and then grew up into a bookish woman. One of my songs on the new album is a cover of Bob Dylan's 'I Contain Multitudes' – and I think I was responding to the references to Walt Whitman, and to Edgar Allen Poe. I can still recite 'Annabel Lee' – so my education gave me the foundation to what I do now.

I'm often asked about the direction of the music business. With *Blonde on the Tracks* I chose not to stream it at the beginning of the release, because we're

in a pandemic year. I play essentially Indie folk, and at my age in the 1960s, I would have been playing the folk clubs – and today for people like me the bulk of our income is made touring. But when touring stopped that has meant mass unemployment in my sector. So I decided to make this an online-only release.

What I would say to anybody interested in a career in the arts is just to be flexible and be open to change, because the music industry is always revolutionising itself. People will tell you that it's all streaming now – but it's not always going to be all streaming forever. It will pivot to something else. The music business does that constantly: 20 years ago the advice would have been that all vinyl is a total waste of time; nowadays vinyls are outselling CDs. The best thing to do as an artist is just to trust your instincts, and realise that you're essentially a small business. There's no right or wrong way to run your small business: there's a multitude of ways that you can operate as a creative person.

It's also good to be persistent as a creative person, but also good to be able to take a break if you're feeling burned out by your art – because it can be exhausting. Give yourself permission to take time off.

But perhaps the most important thing is just because you do work another job that doesn't make you any less of an artist. TS Eliot worked in a bank. A lot of people in the music business now have to have other gigs, because that's the best way to survive and that's okay.

Of course, people who are creative are not very good at administration – it can be challenging and deeply boring. I find it very difficult to switch gears and it's really hard for me to write if I'm also thinking about record distribution and invoices. But it definitely doesn't hurt to know a little bit about all that – and anyway you've got to do it. I'm capable of organisation and chaos – depending on the day of the week.

The other thing with music is that you have to be so present on social media. You have to really go out there and spend an hour at least, every day. For an artist at my level, had I not been ubiquitous on the internet, the record would have disappeared. The fact that it didn't is likely due to the fact I spent an enormous amount of time on Twitter.

I would also advise engaging with other people's music. If you're not buying CDs, why would anybody else? I do have some regrets about the latest album. If I did it again I would span a broader cross-section of Dylan's work. I skipped over the 80s and the 90s, but all of these Bob Dylan songs have made me a better songwriter.

That's not to say I'll be doing another album called 'More Blonde, More Tracks.' I now realise that what I've done is to put myself under an enormous amount of pressure to follow up a Bob Dylan with my own songs. When I look at that now, I think: "Gosh, that's insane. Why would anybody do that?". <sup>f</sup>

*Emma Swift's latest album is Blonde on the Tracks.*

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# Tomorrow's Leaders are Busy Tonight



With comedian Liam Williams

**Looking back at 2020 and early 2021, it's been an interesting time. I vaguely got into Buddhism and mindfulness in the last year, having been in a retreat at the beginning of lockdown. Then I started drinking and having loud arguments on Zoom about politics for a while, but that passed.**

The daily logistics of my life haven't changed all that much – and yet there is a change. What I suppose I liked about solitude previously – and that's true also of my recent lunges towards the appropriation of Eastern religion – is the idea that life might be going on without you elsewhere. You might be at home, but there's a world going on beyond you, where things are actually happening. So although not much has changed for me, the psychological backdrop has changed. Solitude is no longer a choice, and that renders your hermitage a bit meaningless.

I haven't really done stand-up for a few years. I managed to contain those tendencies, and now have a fairly conventional social life. There's a lot of pressure that comes with social life – FOMO, as it's popularly called. Lockdown has been good for making you realise what's important.

In terms of what motivates me, I guess there is a driving need I haven't made sense of. But driving needs are a bit like that – they're slightly inexplicable. It started for me at university – a desire for attention. There was a comedy scene at Cambridge, and I saw people going on stage, and getting

that connection with the audience. I liked spending my leisure time in drinking establishments and so I guess I wanted a professionalised version of that.

I was lucky too in that the first couple of times I went on stage, it went reasonably well – beginner's luck. It was a real rush – better than any drug. I think I was beginning to feel stirrings of the need to return to the live comedy scene before lockdown happened. A year and a half later it's still unclear what's going to happen on that front.

When I first got to Cambridge, I just carried on pursuing the same things – football and drinking, and trying to get women. Then I realised I might be able to put my time to better use. In the theatre there were pictures on the wall of those who'd performed there: Peter Cook, Monty Python, Mitchell and Webb, and there was this sketch group called Cowards with Tim Key in it. One of the many privileges the Footlights bestows is you see these ghosts and they have an evolutionary scale to them: it was the comedian equivalent of the hierarchy of a corporate institution.

I studied English, so read a lot too – really predictable names for a hipster like me. Sterne, Beckett, Joyce, Ballard, Eliot. All those writers have now become so culturally influential that you can't pastiche them, or take them off. You've got to find your own voice. When I came to do my first novel, *Homes and Experiences*, I realised that you need to experiment with people's styles to find your own. It's like learning guitar – you have to practise with other people's songs.

My novel came about because I had gone on a trip similar to the trip the character goes on in the story. I wrote a series of blog posts as a procrastination and put them on Twitter. My literary agent asked what I'd been up to. I told her, and she sent them round to some people. I thought it was a vanity project – good for a few retweets and nothing more.

Then just at that point, an editor at Hodder & Stoughton asked us in to go and talk about it, and to my surprise suggested I turn it into a novel, with the structural idea of a story made up of emails. Sometimes it is one simple structural or conceptual tweak that can break the impasse on a creative project.

I went on the trip that the material came from in 2017. I guess that was a deliberate post-referendum excursion. I'd never really done any travelling when I was the appropriate age to go round Europe, so it was an overdue thing for me to do. But I suddenly felt particularly romantic about Europe, and the novel deals with the question of gentrification in European cities.

So now it's out – added to the cacophony I suppose. Culture is overwhelming. If it comes to that, the world in general is overwhelming. You look at all the TV and the books and you're aware of the waste and the disappointment. As Eastern religion teaches us, we can't have any expectations for anything we do. We have to just put it out there – send it out with faith, love and passion, determination and sense of strident belief in what you're saying. That's all you can do. *f*

*Homes and Experiences is published by Hodder & Stoughton priced £13.99.*



Liam Williams

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# Those are My Principles



Rankin, with Iris Spark

**For anyone looking to be famous, one possible route seems to be to truncate your name into a snappy word: the strategy has worked for Beyoncé, Banksy, Madonna and plenty of others. Perhaps in a busy world we don't have time for multiple syllables anymore. Were Warhol alive today he might just be Andy.**

The photographer Rankin is shorthand for John Rankin Waddell: as the founder of Dazed and Confused, the globally distributed magazine, photographer of Kate Moss and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and with long ties to the music industry, the 54-year-old photographer is now at the summit of his profession.

So how did he get started? His early education looks at first inauspicious: Rankin studied accounting at Brighton Polytechnic, before dropping out in order to study photography at Barnfield College in Luton. He subsequently relocated to the London College of Printing. In time, his reputation as a fashion and music photographer grew.

But he really owes his start, he tells us, to Icelandic pop star Björk: 'Björk was brilliant. It was literally my first ever shoot for a record label. She's one of the

most era-defining musicians because aesthetically she's so unique and original, and she's very in control of her image."

What did he learn from her? "What I loved about her was that she just let me do my thing. I have to be honest; there was a moment in the shoot where I was trying to do something that was a bit derivative of another photographer, and she gave me the confidence to just not do it. She was like, 'You don't need that shot, stick to what you're doing.'"

So did that make a difference in terms of his subsequent career? "She kind of set me up in a way, because very few people have ever surpassed her collaborative approach." Collaboration is a leitmotif in Rankin's career. It was only upon meeting Jefferson Hack at London College of Printing that he felt able to launch Dazed and Confused in 1992.

Fast forward to 2021, and Rankin is still productive – and still collaborating. His latest book, *How to Die Well* is produced in partnership with Royal London, the UK's largest pensions company. So how does he think this book will help people in these death-conscious times? "Death scares people, and that discomfort is the main barrier to talking about it," he says. "The hardest part is getting started, but once you push through the fear – those conversations become a lot easier."

This tracks with my own encounters with those who've been around death a lot – from nurses and doctors to undertakers and funeral directors, who seem not to have the expected heaviness, but instead a certain lightness of being.

So has compiling the book helped Rankin face his own mortality, and the mortality of his loved ones? "Making this book has definitely helped me to deal with my own grief, as well as confront the idea of

dying," he admits. "And it's so important that we do, because having these kinds of discussions means that when the time comes, our loved ones are prepared."

It's been an extraordinary time. For over a year now, we look at our media and see the death toll writ large.

Have we become a morbid society? "I'm not sure the pandemic has made us, as a society, any better at having these conversations. The shock and size of the grief has been overwhelming," Rankin says. "I think it's going to take a long time for people to process what has happened. But it has certainly presented us with the undeniable reality of death."

And yet *How to Die Well* isn't a serious book by any stretch of the imagination – it's full of anecdotes, lightness of touch, and charm.

How did he go about compiling the book? "We interviewed a broad selection of people who shared their experiences of grief – and also told us what they'd like their funeral to look like. There were some absolute corkers. From unusual song choices, to outrageous outfits, to hilarious last words. Death is just like life: there are ups, downs, laughs, lots of crying – and more than a few funny bits." **f**



Rankin



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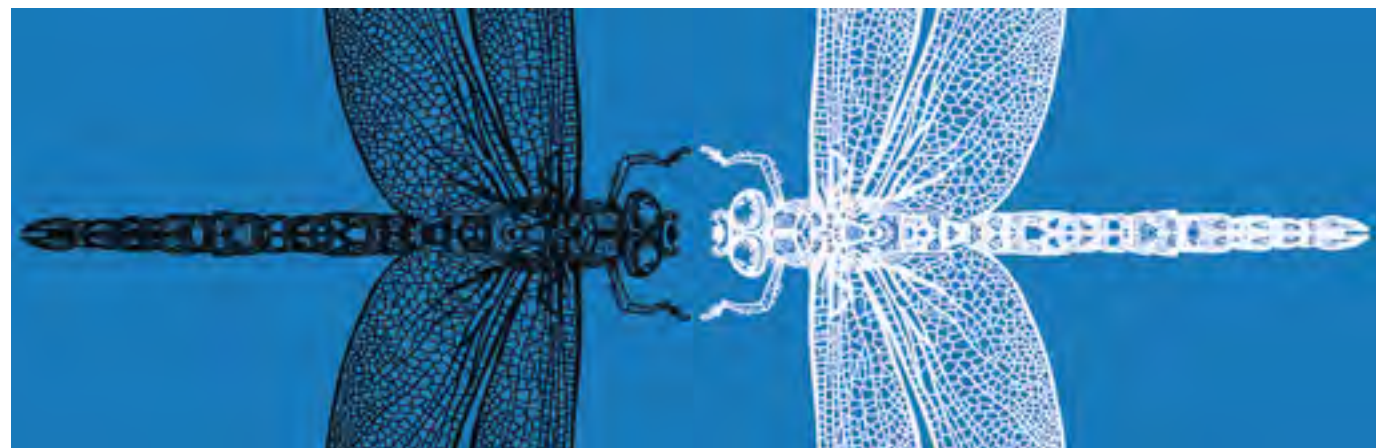


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# Waterfly

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 SECTORS



## Overflowing Amazon

Is there no area Amazon will not seek to dominate? Following on from the book market, food retailers, clothing stores and homeware shops – and umpteen other things – Jeff Bezos has now landed on something not even *Waterfly* had thought of: hairdressing.

The conglomerate recently announced the opening of its first salon in Spitalfields market in east London. At the 1,500 sq ft Amazon Salon, machine-learning will analyse what products customers would prefer, and augmented reality technology will allow them to

see what they would look like with different colours or hair styles before the cut. And, of course, during the cut, customers are offered entertainment provided by Amazon Fire tablets.

So how do people in the industry feel about it? *Waterfly* spoke with Ola Goldsmith, who runs her own salon and hair extension training academy Naked Weave: “It does feel like they are trying to take over,” she says. “The technology is really exciting and we all want the industry to develop, but it would be nice if it developed in a way that was accessible to independent businesses.” For Goldsmith the real “worry” would come if Amazon were to open a franchise and swamp smaller salons who can’t afford to get access to the kinds of technology they were adopting. Thank goodness then that Bezos has shown throughout his career no appetite for expansion...

## Jacob Risks It

The end of a pandemic can be a beautiful thing. *Waterfly* hears how its own publisher was given a lift home

in June by none other than Lord Rami Ranger, following an event in central London. As the pair drove along, they espied the vivid figure of Jacob Rees-Mogg walking down St James’s Street. Ronel Lehmann remarked that “we must pull over” and was first to jump out the car. “Jacob, I haven’t seen you for eighteen months.” Rees-Mogg, seeing that Lehmann intended on bumping elbows, was insistent: “No, no, this is a special occasion, let’s shake hands properly.” Lehmann happily agreed to do so, and as he turned to the car said, “I believe you know my driver.” Rees-Mogg recognised Ranger – and the three laughed. Together again at last.



## The name's Bright, Kate Bright

There’s a lot of talk of a female James Bond – as if she didn’t already exist. Kate Bright, CEO and founder of UMBRA International, spent the first 15 years of her career working for three international families, with varying security needs. Now she’s on a mission to make it clear to women that the security business might be for them: “We’re trying to make it accessible to all, to create clear pathways to not just protective services, but corporate security and all the different angles, particularly cybersecurity. I advise young women and people from non-military backgrounds that want to get into security to get onto a pathway like the government’s new initiative, the UK National Cyber Task Force. It would make me very proud for one of my young nieces and their friends to consider this as a legitimate career path in the future.” Daniel Craig beware.

## And the Nightingales Sang

*Waterfly* was walking through Berkeley Square in the weeks before 19th July’s Freedom Day and did a double-take at the sight of Michel de Carvalho seated in Prêt a Manger. *Waterfly* recalled bumping into him at a party many moons ago, just after Carvalho, who is married to the Heineken heiress, had moved from Citibank to a corner office at Capital Generation Partners, the multi-family office of the Said family. He had said then: “I love working on Berkeley Square. There’s a real community here.

I can sit in Prêt and do business on the street with the people walking past.” So there he was again, signalling that a pandemic is only really over, when the billionaires return to our coffee shops.

## The Stamp of Approval

Some people think of the stamp duty calculation on their homes as straightforward. They couldn’t be more wrong. As property lawyers and conveyancers scrambled to file their SDLT returns before the end of the Stamp Duty holiday, many calculated the amount owed incorrectly causing PI insurance claims to rocket by 30 per cent. Now a company has developed SDLT Compass, a new tool which aims to make the whole thing easier. “About 90 per cent of property completions in this country are standard. If it’s what we call a complex or high-risk case it gets referred to a member of our tax analyst team who will give specialist advice on an agreed-fee basis,” managing director Chris Ward tells *Waterfly*. So just when Rishi Sunak wants to reintroduce the stamp duty threshold, this happens. Who’d be the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

## Pulling Strings

The music industry conjures up images of spotlights, adoring fans, and late nights on the tour bus, but behind the scenes there is a world of technicians who keep the show running smoothly. John Armitage began repairing guitars in 1978. Since then, the job has taken him all over the world with groups such as Iron Maiden, King Crimson, and the Manic Street Preachers. Now he operates Guitar Hospital, which has workshops in London and Whitstable. It all began at 17 in New York when a guitar player requested a new nut – a piece of dense material that the strings rest on at the top of the neck. “I didn’t know what a nut was, but I headed down to Sam Ash (music shop) and said, ‘I need a nut for a Fender Strat’.” The man behind the counter asked him, “Do you want pre-cut, bone, carbon, brass, graphite,

what gauge do you want it cut to?” Thoroughly confused, Armitage told the guitarist that the store had run out of the part he needed. Today he tells us a luthier with a good group can earn £100,000 a year – and it sounds civilised too. “It’s just me, a cup of tea, a radio, and a pile of guitars that need attention.”

## Scent of Musk

Cryptocurrency is back in the news thanks to a recent jump in the price of Dogecoin – a currency that started as a joke, based on a widely circulated internet meme featuring a picture of a Shiba Inu dog. It is now worth \$34 billion (£24.6 billion).

Dogecoin owes much of its success to Elon Musk, who has called it his “favourite cryptocurrency”. Musk recently published a tweet that included a painting of a dog on a mountain at night with the caption “Doge barking at the moon”. In the hours following Musk’s tweet, the price of Dogecoin jumped over 100 per cent.

But if high-risk investing isn’t your cup of tea, there are other, more stable ways to make money off the crypto phenomenon. On Indeed, 230 jobs with the keyword “cryptocurrency” appear in London alone: among them Crypto Investment Analyst, Cryptocurrency Digital Marketing Lead, and Crypto Threat Analyst. According to Glassdoor, a junior blockchain developer earns £50,000 a year on average. With increased responsibility and seniority, this number can go much higher. A United States recruitment firm lists a salary of up to \$175,000 (£126,673). To the moon indeed. f





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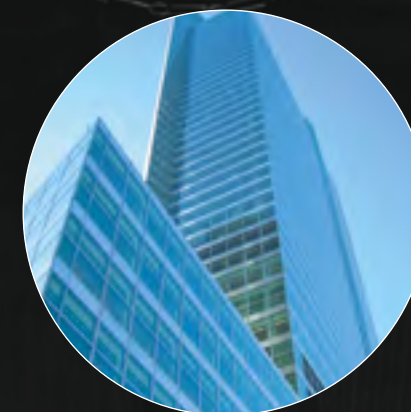


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# Exclusive: The Inside Story on how William and Kate transformed the mental health discussion

BY CHRISTOPHER JACKSON

**Consider this. The background at Kensington Palace looks no different to a luxury hotel. A fern behind Prince William's blue-blazered right shoulder cedes to another plant over his right. Between The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, there is a picture that might be Prince George although the photograph blurs slightly – a suggestion of the room's scale. Normally, in Zoom calls, in our smaller homes, you don't have this kind of receding perspective. In the distance a mirror reflects back the high window that must be sitting ahead of the couple: it is a room full of light.**

The Duke of Cambridge says: "Something I noticed from my brief spell flying the Air Ambulance is when you see so much death and so much bereavement – it does impact how you see the world. That is what worries me about the frontline staff at the moment – you're so under the cosh and seeing such high levels of trauma and death, that it impacts your own family life."

I have seen the two of them many times – as we all have. Their prominence in our lives makes them paradoxically difficult to comprehend. But I've never looked at them like I'm looking at them now.

The Duchess of Cambridge adds: "Mental health is so important. For people in the front line it's needed more than ever. Often you forget to take care and look after yourself."

To be seen and not to be looked at; to be considered morning, noon and night but never to be understood: this so far has been the fate of this couple.

For this cover story, Finito World engaged extensively with the mental health community. We spoke to those who have known the couple, to those who have worked with them, and – most importantly – those who have been involved in working on their central passion: mental health.

What emerges is, like all stories about the Royal Family, as much a tale about our collective identity as it is the story of these two people who everybody is meant to have some kind of opinion about.

On 23rd July 2020, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge announced that the Royal Foundation would give £1.8 million to various mental health charities as part of its Covid relief fund. The 10 named organisations were: Mind, Hospice UK, the Ambulance Staff Charity, Campaign Against Living Miserably, Best Beginnings, The Anna Freud Centre, Place2Be, Shout 85258, The Mix, and YoungMinds. Finito World approached each for comment for this article, and received a range of replies that inform this piece.

In order to understand what is being achieved now, it is worth going back to the formation of the Heads Together campaign that was embarked upon at a time when Harry and William were still working closely together.

## The Line of Duty

One former member of the Royal Household recalls that it was a 'small tight-knit household' that took the original decision to focus on mental health. Led by Miguel Head, the then private secretary to the Duke of Cambridge, who is now a senior partner at communications advisory firm Milltown Partners, the household reportedly worked in a "highly collaborative"

fashion. At that time, before the advent of Meghan Markle, the private secretary to the Duchess of Cambridge Rebecca Deacon (now Rebecca Priestley) and the private secretary to Prince Harry, Ed Lane Fox worked as a quartet, alongside the then Head of Communications Jason Knauf.

Another former member of the household recalls the sense of necessity that permeated Kensington Palace at that time. "The Royal Foundation was set up really with the wedding funds, the booty and the gifts that had come out of the wedding. What's interesting is you have to do something with it and we kicked ideas around. There was a sense of 'We've got this charitable vehicle – now what do we do with it?'"

The inner circle cast around for examples, and turned to William's father for inspiration. "Everyone was saying: 'The man on the street knows what Clarence House stands for. It's the environment basically, and sheep farming. But what do we stand for?'"

The answer came piecemeal but, once arrived at, would prove remarkably durable. "The first tranche was on wildlife conservation, and another was to do with sport and the community. And Harry had his inner city kids up in Nottingham. But it was a bit tentative – everybody was looking around for a good idea."

The Wedding Fund was administered by The Royal Foundation and distributed grants to a number of charities. These were selected by The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

The first major grants awarded by The Royal Foundation were to ARK (an education initiative) and Fields in Trust (protecting green spaces for young people to play). The first major initiatives of The Royal ▶

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at a drive-in cinema with NHS Charities Together at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh to watch a special screening of Disney's Cruella. PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo



Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry were Coach Core – (2012) launched at the time of the Olympics, Endeavour Fund (2011) and United for Wildlife (2013).

It was mental health that ended up joining up the dots. Another former member of the Household remembers: “Mental health was bubbling in the arena at that time. But I think it was William’s work with the air ambulances that made the crucial difference. It chimed also with Harry’s work with Invictus.”

Important insight came from the private secretaries. “It was Miguel Head who said, ‘Yes, we’ve got these communities like wounded servicemen who have mental health issues, but actually there’s a broader message here.’ One statistic I remember being trotted out was that the biggest cause of death in men under 30 was suicide.” It chimed with everyone: with William and Harry because of their experiences in the military, and with Miguel – or “Mig” as he was known – and Jason Knauf, who also took a keen interest in the issue.

But whatever the contribution of the staff, all are agreed that the Duchess of Cambridge played a critical role. The issue chimed with her.

In fact, it was The Duchess of Cambridge who proposed mental health as the common thread that united all their work. The Duchess had previously worked extensively on mental health through her work with patronages Place2Be, The Art Room, Anna Freud Centre, and in her work with Action on Addiction’s IMPACT Programme.

A naturally empathic individual, it was the Duchess who recognised the common theme running between each of Their Royal Highnesses’ work. She seized the initiative and today is rightly credited by all the principals as a vital driver of a campaign that has had remarkable success.

At the launch of Heads Together, William would give his wife appropriate credit: “It was Catherine who first realised that all three of us were working on mental health in our individual areas of focus. She

had seen that at the core of adult issues like addiction and family breakdown, unresolved childhood mental health issues were often part of the problem.”

Of course, contingency also played its part. When the opportunity presented itself through The Royal Foundation of being charity of the year for the London Marathon, it was time to act. Their Royal Highnesses instructed their Private Secretary Team to work on mental health. A campaign had been born.

#### Cause Célèbre

This time the room is non-descript and the pair seem to be staring down from an odd angle. They’re more casually dressed – Kate in a zebra-striped top, and William in a turquoise sweater and blue shirt.

William says in relation to the pandemic: “A lot of people won’t have thought about their mental health – maybe ever before. Suddenly this environment we’re in catches up quick. The most important thing is talking – it’s been underestimated how much that can do.”

It is the day of the pledge on mental health and it’s notable that one of the least palatial rooms in the palace has been chosen. With William, whenever he talks of trauma it is with real authenticity. We all know what he has suffered.

He continues: “Trauma comes in all shapes and forms and we can never know or be prepared for when it’s going to happen to us. People will be angry, confused and scared and those are all normal feelings, and unfortunately all part of the grieving process.”

When Kate is asked about how she handles childcare there is also an air of authenticity about her: “You don’t want to scare them or make it too overwhelming. I think it is appropriate to acknowledge it in simple and age-appropriate ways.”

Of course, the way in which we hear these straightforward remarks has been altered by media coverage, with some sections of the media taking a perverse pleasure in trying to twist their lives into a tale with greater jeopardy in it than it can likely bear.

That’s not to say everybody is completely sold on mental health – and some of those we spoke with raised legitimate questions around royal involvement in charitable causes. When I speak to Lord Stevenson, one of the leading thinkers in this area, who submitted the Thriving at Work report alongside Mind CEO Paul Farmer to the Theresa May administration, he initially laughs that he doesn’t like to get too involved in anything the royals are doing, feeling that it is a case of “good intentions.” He continues: “I remember Prince Harry giving money to charities involved with the army. Presumably it was based on the presumption that serving soldiers have worse than average mental health. Curiously enough, the evidence is that they don’t.”

And yet these misgivings are expressed lightly, and with a certain humour: they are not intended to cut very deep. They are instead a cheerful warning that might be levelled at anyone thinking about wading in to this area without deep understanding. Stevenson also explains in his exclusive essay in this issue that the area has benefited from some “strong royal patronage”.

Meanwhile, the journalist Toby Young argues that the mental health crisis is “complete balls” but will not say more than that because he considers it “a good stick with which to beat governments over lockdown”. But another lockdown sceptic, Emily Hill, who writes regularly for the Mail and whose novel *Love and Late Capitalism* publishes next year, says: “I can’t quite believe that Toby Young – of all people – thinks there is no mental health crisis due to Covid and lockdown. People are still so terrified they are wandering about in the open air wearing facemasks as if the virus exists in the air. If that isn’t evidence of a mental health crisis I don’t know what is.”

This shows that the couple has found a cause which resonates across every section of society. They have been successful in alighting on the cause célèbre of our time.

#### The Inner Circle

So what has been the reaction? It’s remarkable how popular and durable the



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge with runners representing the charity 'Heads Together' before officially starting the Virgin Money London Marathon in Blackheath. PA Images / Alamy

campaign has already proven, and across the political spectrum. Paul Farmer, the CEO of Mind, and co-author with Stevenson of *Thriving at Work* tells us that “The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge do an incredible amount of charity work, raising awareness for important social and health issues, and we are delighted that they have chosen mental health as an area to which to lend their considerable profile.”

Victoria Hornby, the founder of Mental Health Innovations, which powers Shout 85258, told us: “The support we have received from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge has been phenomenal. Not only are they both passionate advocates for mental health, their continued dedication to Shout has helped to raise awareness of the service as a vital lifeline for anyone in the UK who is struggling to cope.”

Tom Madders, Director of Communications at YoungMinds, wrote to us: “As a children and young people’s mental health charity, it is really important for their voices to be heard and the Duke

and Duchess have spent time with us as a charity to really understand the issues that young people and their families face. Stigma around mental health can prevent young people from getting support or recognising when they are struggling. The profile of the Duke and Duchess means we can reach more young people and parents and make a real difference.”

Alistair Campbell and Fiona Millar meanwhile, who worked on Heads Together, tell us: “The younger royals’ focus on mental health is a good thing. We were involved in Heads Together and know, from the reaction that we got, that it gave people a lot of confidence to speak out about their own mental health issues when they hear others in the public eye (royal or not) doing likewise. Mental health issues can touch people from all backgrounds.”

Millar continues: “I particularly respect the Duchess of Cambridge’s work on the early years as the impact early childhood has on later mental health is too often overlooked. I believe she got criticised by some for getting involved in an area where

there is already a lot of expertise, but if she can raise the profile of that vital phase, then we should only be pleased.”

Finally, there are those who have been in government who praise the royal commitment. Baroness Nicky Morgan, who has served as both Education and Culture Secretary, and now chairs the mental health charity The Wellbeing Café Project in Loughborough, tells us: “Their patronage, particularly of an issue like mental health which we really didn’t hear anyone talking about just a few years ago, is a real game changer and very welcome.”

#### Marlborough Light

Of course, in another sense, the campaign dates further back to the creation of two highly empathic individuals who might choose mental health as their chief charitable cause. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are the same as the rest of us: they cannot be separated from their past, that means that their story is impossible to divorce from their education.

This isn’t just the case because they met in an educational setting, but because both individuals were shaped in similar educational environments – William at Eton College and Catherine at Marlborough College.

There is, of course, a marked difference in their two educations. At Marlborough, which Kate Middleton attended in the mid-1990s, nobody who knew her then particularly thought to notice her, for the obvious reason that nobody imagined they were going to school with the future Duchess of Cambridge. Whereas from birth, William has never known anonymity – and he will not know it. As Miguel Head told The Harvard Gazette in 2019: “The princes took the view that they were going to be in the public eye from the moment they were born to the moment they died and with that level of interest in them, the only way of coping with that would be to detach themselves from much of what is said about them.”

But among the Old Marlburians we spoke to for this piece, some found it hard to ▶





Eton College, Provost's Garden. [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eton_College)

remember Kate at all – and you got the sense that they'd been racking their brains ever since. Those who did, remembered a kind and unshowy girl, who fitted what Marlborough was turning into more than what it had been.

Oliver Osgood, 41, now an entrepreneur, explains that when Kate Middleton attended the place it was in transition: “At that time, the school had moved away from its spiritual philosophy of fun, freedom of expression and individuality. It had begun its shift from a sex, drugs and rock-and-roll approach in the 1970s to a ‘we’ve-got-to-get-great-grades approach.’”

Rosemary Cochrane, 40, who is now successful in healthcare recruitment at Oyster Partnership, feels that the shift took a little longer to come about: “There was nothing about mental health in those days. It was still a very druggy school, and wasn’t particularly academic. It was about building an all-rounder.” And how did Middleton fit into this? “She was definitely in the sporty gang. She was perfectly nice, and pretty – as was her sister, Pippa, and it makes them perfect for what they do today. She was just a very nice girl who played lacrosse, and who you didn’t come across at nightclubs. She was very lovely. She was never going to be loud and never put herself out there too much and would never be too in your face, or too loud – and never drunk. She’s not outspoken; she just does everything subtly.”

Sport remains an important aspect of the couple’s bond. Middleton was well-known for her athleticism. One former colleague recalls long car journeys with William

where football was the predominant topic of discussion. “It wouldn’t occur to him to ask if you’re interested in the topic; his background makes him assume you are.”

Interestingly, sport plays an important part in any vision of a mentally healthier society. Mental expert Dr. Paul Hokemeyer, the author of *Fragile Power: Why Having Everything is Never Enough*, explains its relevance: “Leisure is critically important to our emotional and physical well-being. This is especially important for people who live in the intense heat of the public spotlight. Leisure, and sports in particular, provides us with an opportunity to get out of ourselves and to connect with a community of other human beings around a common interest and goal. This is because mental illnesses thrive in isolation, but retreat when we find meaningful relationships with other people and our natural environment.”

What most strikes you about the reminiscences of Old Marlburians is that even those who had little natural affinity with Kate do not talk ill of her. One, who asks not to be named, says she attended parties with Kate but “never got to know her”. It is a note of unknowability that might be deemed, along with her kindness, the leitmotif of her life.

An instructive simplicity comes across. Later on, people would paint her and her family as ruthless for falling in love with William – but it feels significant that they never do when they knew her beforehand. If she ever had peculiar plans of a royal marriage in those days, which meaner elements of the press would come to imagine, then she hid them very well at the time.

### Eton Mess

Over at Eton, William had a similar experience. Eton, despite its apparent pre-eminence, is an ecosystem interlinked with the other great public schools – particularly Charterhouse, Harrow, Repton and Marlborough. We might say that when the couple met they would share a set of common assumptions.

The unanimous view of contemporaries is that the school changed fundamentally once William arrived. Xavier Ballester, a contemporary of William’s, who now works in angel investment, recalls the shift: “He had about 28 bodyguards on different rotations – but in spite of that, he was integrated. He would be in the classes but there would be guards standing outside. They were always checking the bins, checking for bombs, and all this kind of stuff.”

Mike Lebus, who now works with Ballester at the Angel Investment Network, agrees: “It sounds strange saying it now, considering that he was obviously going to be our future king, but we genuinely did just see him as one of our housemates – another guy to chat with, watch TV and play sports with.”

Ned Cazalet also recalls the shift in the school. “We had prayers one evening, where the housemaster also reads notices out, and a kid had pulled out a water pistol while walking behind Prince William and almost got himself shot. And throughout the school at that time, there was police and CCTV. It was a big shift.”

But what kind of an effect did Eton have on William? “It had an effect on

him – it had an effect on everyone,” Ballester says. “It gave him confidence. He was a protected kid – and to make your way there you have to develop some confidence no matter how protected you are.”

What most emerges from all this is that in environments against which young people are inclined to rebel, neither William nor Kate did. In William’s case, one might initially think that there’s no mystery as to why he didn’t do so; he felt he couldn’t. But of course the example of Prince Harry – and before him, the examples of Princess Diana, Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother – makes one realise that it is perfectly possible for people to possess a privileged position and develop character traits that might not fit the expected pattern.

Cazalet also perceptively notes how the experience of public school is often impacted by who your housemaster is. In this, William was particularly lucky. Cazalet recalls William’s mentor, the author and historian Dr. Andrew Gailey. “I remember he was quietly spoken. He seemed to have affection for his students. Some of the housemasters were chaotic, others were drunk, or tired or bored, or had some chip on their shoulder. But he was one of the best ones.”

Another old Etonian describes Gailey: “He was an excellent housemaster, a wonderful man and someone who I will respect for the rest of my life. He ran the house with a fine balance of responsibility and accountability that allowed us boys to thrive. He gave us enough of a leash to develop ‘autonomy’ but if this was teetering out of control he was excellent at recognising this and reining in. He was supportive and passionate. Andrew also taught me history at A-Level, but it is the way he led us in Manor House that I will forever be grateful for. I am sure my experiences of Eton would have been very different had I been in another house.” William couldn’t have found a better mentor.

Today Marlborough College has become



Prince Harry (left), five, joins his brother Prince William, seven, on his first day at the Wetherby School in Notting Hill, West London. [PA Images / Alamy](https://www.painstagram.com/)

focused on mental health. There is a tab labelled ‘Pastoral’ on its website with a ‘mental health and well-being’ sub-heading in the dropdown. In this the text reads: “We...believe that the skills which young people learn in adolescence, in terms of sustaining good mental health AND in terms of taking appropriate action when things go wrong, are skills which can be taken forward into university and well beyond, into adult life.”

One notes the capitalised ‘and’ which perhaps conveys a certain desperation to be on the right side of an issue which nowadays – and partly due to the most famous Old Marlburian – you can’t afford to be on the wrong side of. In a sense the school today has been Middletonised.

One former pupil, who was asked to leave due to a drink and drugs problem, told us: “I definitely think if my case came round today they would have got me counselling, and sought to look at why I was behaving as I was, rather than punishing me.”

Similarly, many of the old Etonians we

spoke with continue to be shadowed by the bullying they saw, or experienced. One Etonian recalls: “You are in a very class-obsessed place where you have to tread carefully to not be exposed as a pleb and then derided for it. I was lucky in that I got a small scholarship and was in the top sets with others who had money off their fees too. I was also good at sport, which helped a lot, but some people were sent to Eton and got mercilessly tormented (a northern guy in my year springs to mind).”

Cazalet gets to the heart of the chilliness of the place: “Years later, when I decided to leave university early, my father said: ‘I hope you didn’t do anything to reflect badly on Eton’.” Another bemoans the presence of “casual, classist bullying” – although, all added that they were talking about the Eton of William’s time and that things might be better today.

We can see how sensitive young people like the future Duke and Duchess of Cambridge wouldn’t forget what was ▶



lacking in their schooling – even if that schooling was the best that money could buy at that time.

### Dog Days

On Catherine’s side, there are other possible areas of motivation. The Middleton family, though it has sometimes been unfairly portrayed as grasping, has a strong compassionate streak.

Emily Prescott has interviewed Kate’s brother James Middleton about his work as a mental health advocate and feels that having a brother with depression may be a source of Kate’s inspiration in tackling the issue. “It was very moving to talk to him,” she recalls. “I can imagine that having that passion for dogs [Middleton is an ambassador for the charity Pets as Therapy] across the family dinner table must have had an impact on her outlook.” Prescott remembers discussing a famous quote by Milan Kundera during their conversation: “Dogs are our link to Paradise. They don’t know evil or jealousy or discontent. To sit with a dog on a hillside on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing was not boring – it was peace.” Prescott adds: “He sounded almost in tears as he spoke about his dogs. He was a very sensitive person. Once I told him I wasn’t asking about Kate he seemed relieved.”

This sensitivity is also to be found in the Windsor family. One former member of the household who worked closely with William for many years, when asked what makes the royals special, tells us: “You’ll see the Duke and Duchess at a function, let’s say for families of those who have fallen in Afghanistan or Iraq. You can see them do the line-up, or circle the room, and you know that each person will have only 45 seconds with them as it’s a crowded gathering. And you’ll know that they all need something from that encounter. What’s amazing is that they always get that something. Everybody comes away feeling better, and lighter somehow. It’s a gift, and I think William and Harry both have it from Diana.”

We have to remember that Diana was there at the beginning of William’s

schooling – but tragically, not at its end. Lebus recalls: “I remember his first day at school when he moved into the house. My sister and I passed his mother on the staircase while she was carrying a plant up to his bedroom, and it was surprisingly (but refreshingly) normal. We just smiled at each other and said “Hi”, as you would with anyone else’s mum and dad.” It is a touching image, especially in light of what would happen subsequently.

### Hungry Gaze

Two media appearances by Kate Middleton stand out. In one she is standing on stage, and launching the Heads Together campaign. “We know mental health is an issue for us all, children and parents, young and old, men and women of all backgrounds and all circumstances. What we’ve seen first hand is that the simple fact of having a conversation – that breaking the silence – can make a real difference. But starting a conversation is just that, it’s a start.”

Starting a conversation. That is a difficult thing to do when everybody is gawping at you. In a famous – and much-misread – article, which also contained some discussion of Kate Middleton’s predicament – the novelist Hillary Mantel recalls seeing Queen Elizabeth at a function at Buckingham Palace: “... the queen passed close to me and I stared at her. I am ashamed now to say it but I passed my eyes over her as a cannibal views his dinner, my gaze sharp enough to pick the meat off her bones...and such was the hard power of my stare that Her Majesty turned and looked back at me...”

And how does Elizabeth look when she turns back to Mantel? Does she look regal? Does she look different to how we would look if we were being stared at? No, she looks human, or as Mantel says, “as if she had been jabbed in the shoulder; and for a split second her face expressed not anger but hurt bewilderment. She looked young: for a moment she had turned back from a figurehead into the young woman she was, before monarchy froze her and made her a thing, a thing which only had meaning when it was exposed, a thing

that existed only to be looked at. And I felt sorry then. I wanted to apologise. I wanted to say: it’s nothing personal, it’s monarchy I’m staring at.”

It is a novelist’s insight – that the paraphernalia of monarchy may in the end, whatever the tenor of our national discourse, amount to far less than we might imagine. And the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are in the same predicament.

After that speech by the Duchess, there was some criticism that she had mumbled – and yet on the YouTube video she speaks perfectly clearly. Whatever she says or does, there will be criticism from some quarter or other.

Miguel Head continued to the Harvard Law Review: “It was actually quite liberating, because it meant that we as a team could concentrate on what we wanted to say about them. In essence, what we were trying to do was focus the interest in them on particular aspects of their public life, of their work in their early twenties as they were beginning to find their feet and experimenting with different topics, different careers.”

And yet it cannot only be liberating. This experience must also be suffocating. Furthermore, we cannot absolve ourselves from that since, as Mantel implies, it is us who are doing the suffocating.

The second appearance is on the podcast Happy Mum, Happy Baby, which aired in February 2020. The presenter Giovanna Fletcher says she is nervous after her introduction and the Duchess says: “Don’t worry -I’m nervous too.” For the listener, as for Fletcher, a gap is closed, a common humanity noted.

Later in the interview, the Duchess continues: “I had a very happy childhood, I was very lucky. I have a strong family. My parents were very dedicated. They’d come to every sports match and would be on the sidelines shouting.”

Some reminiscences ensue with Fletcher about her own childhood visits to Curry’s, and Kate interposes with a kind of agile



BBC

empathy, “How about you? What was your childhood like?” This leads to a brief discussion of the bullying Fletcher experienced as a child. It is a very simple thing, you might think, when you’re being interviewed to mind at all about the life of your interviewer. Except to say that, in the experience of this interviewer, very few do – and many of them have far less profile than Catherine does.

Whenever you speak to anyone who knew Kate or William growing up the tone is different. It is matter-of-fact – above all, it is sane. The respondent almost seems to pity you for wanting to know – because if you have known them, there is no mystery. But for those who haven’t known them, there is the mystery of our looking so much to so little purpose. What we are peering at is our own frustration. Like Mantel at Buckingham Palace, we are somehow unable to accept that we are



looking on human material, and that the answers to all the questions we might have about the couple do not lie outside us; they’re within, in our very need to know.

And the couple’s mental health campaigns seem to open up onto the idea that we could all do with a dose of sanity in our own lives, not just in relation to what we’re dealing with, our own strains and stresses – but in relation to them.

### A Scotland Romance

This sense is brought home for me when I begin to look at the couple’s time at St Andrew’s University. I speak with Stephanie Jones, now a successful brand manager, who attended St Andrew’s at the same time as William and Kate – and in taking art history, did the same course as both, though William subsequently changed to geography.

“It was all discreetly done,” Jones recalls. “I remember walking down the street and tripping and then looking up and seeing Prince William quite near and thinking that this wasn’t the impression I wanted to make! But he had no bodyguards around him. I remember seeing him in the pub too and if he had a security detail it was entirely made up of hopeful girls!”

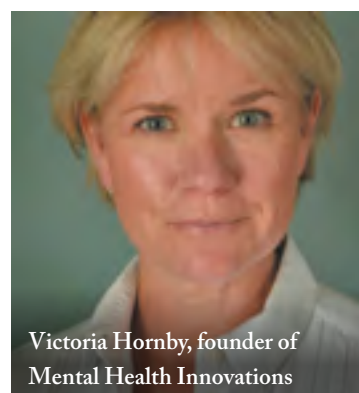
Of course, this isn’t the whole truth. If things seemed normal to contemporaries, they sometimes seemed to be spinning out of control. Around this time, once the relationship broke, Middleton became ‘Waity Katie’ in the media – a horrible moniker. And of course, there is nothing to make you think about the question of mental health quite like running into the reality of the tabloid press.

It is as if St Andrew’s, in its size and remoter location, were better able to accommodate William’s arrival than Eton had been. Jones says that the principal ►

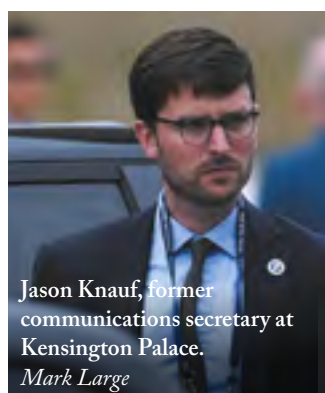




Mind Chief Executive, Paul Farmer with Prince William at the launch of Mental Health At Work.  
@Mindcharity Twitter page



Victoria Hornby, founder of  
Mental Health Innovations



Jason Knauf, former  
communications secretary at  
Kensington Palace.  
Mark Large



Stephen Fry  
wikipedia.org



Alastair Campbell  
wikipedia.org



Miguel Head, former press secretary for Prince William and Prince Harry.  
Stephanie Mitchell/Harvard Staff Photographer



Diana, Princess of Wales  
John Mathew Smith & www.celebrity-photos.  
com from Laurel Maryland

change she remembers with William's arrival at St Andrew's was that the year William joined, there was a marked increase of blonde American girls: "But whenever I saw him, he seemed normal. We all felt this responsibility to sort of let him get on with it, and enjoy the university and not feel hounded." Once again, we near the suspicion that William may not only be projecting normality – that he may actually be "normal".

#### The Diana Effect

But of course, there is one area in which William isn't normal and this is in the terrible fate that his mother met on 31st August 1997 in the Paris car accident.

Jones continues: "We were protective about what happened with Diana. I would walk past charity shops and see books about her in the window and think how tacky that was and how hard it must have been to walk past if you were William. His pain was being commercialised."

This is empathetic – and today, we still feel it. An observer of the palace who has known William for years says that it infuses coverage surrounding the boys. "They'll always on some level be the boys traipsing behind the coffin."

So grief enters the story – a wound so painful that we almost think it might be an impropriety to discuss it. But Dr. Paul Hokemeyer argues that we cannot avoid it when discussing William and Kate's mental health campaigns. "Prince William is a brilliant example of the healing power of two key psychological traits known as resilience and grit," he explains. "The first, resilience, refers to our capacity to make meaning out of tragic events and to move ourselves and the world around us in a reparative direction after the event."

This feels relevant as it is something like this "reparative direction" in which William now seeks to steer us all with his mental health campaigns.

And the second trait? Hokemeyer is clear: "Grit enables us to tolerate short term discomfort to attain a long term goal. As this relates to Prince William, he had to sit not just with the crushing pain of losing his mother, but with also being an obsession of the public; and he had to do this without devolving into a tragedy

himself. His capacity to do this with dignity and grace is exceptional. Not only has he navigated that terrain brilliantly, he's gone on to create a family that reflects the class, dignity and nobility of decades of British royalty."

Hokemeyer continues: "The trauma of losing a mother at an early age sets a child up for a journey down the path of meaning and repair (resilience and grit) or of wandering through the brambles of life, lost and emotionally alone. The individuals who travel on the first path have what is known as a robust 'internal locus of control'. They've internalised a healthy sense of self. As this relates to picking a life partner, people with a healthy internal locus of control pick mates who complement them in their journey of healing and providing hope to the world around them."

Another mental health expert, Dr. Jonathan Garabette, a private consultant psychiatrist and clinical director at the London Psychiatry Clinic is less sure about the whole question: "Our choice of partner is a complex and enigmatic area. I think it's important to consider that we are living in the internal world just as much as (or even more than) we are living in the external world and our internal worlds are populated by memories, relationships, people, infantile childhood, adolescent and different parts of us, and all of this exerts a much greater effect on our psychology and our choices than we may consciously be aware of."

And how may that have affected William? "Many people, especially after being affected by trauma, are searching for a relationship that provides meaning, and a sense of safety and connectedness and we will each find this in different ways in different aspects of others. It's also important to remember that what we see on the surface, particularly in public figures, is just that – it's a surface impression and we should remind ourselves that they and their partners are complex three-dimensional human beings and the connection that people may have between them may not be easily apparent to those on the outside."

So is there anything we can say about the choice of life partner someone might make

who has been through trauma? "When I speak to people, especially those who have been traumatised, about how they came to end up with their partner, it's often because that person has managed to touch upon a very deep and intimate part of that person that others might not even have had the opportunity to be aware of," says Garabette.

Trauma and grief make William an immensely plausible campaigner for mental health. It is possible to imagine him in his current role without the awful loss of his mother, but hard to imagine him being so effective in it. Garabette's remarks sensibly distance us from William and Kate, and indeed they remind us of the essentially unknowable nature of other people.

This fact, so simple and non-negotiable, is something about which contemporary commentators of the couple seem in denial: a typical Mail or Tatler article today is full of a bogus desire for an insider's light bulb moment that will suddenly open everything up – hand them to us on a platter. This cannot happen; and shouldn't happen.

But Garabette also reminds us that their internal worlds are similar to ours and that if we really want to know what they think, we need to know what we think. It isn't too much to suppose that this is one aspect of the conversation the couple wants to start with their campaigns. Again we return to the notion that a really wide-ranging national conversation surrounding mental health would also necessitate a fundamental restart of our relationship with them.

#### Action Figures

But as the couple has pointed out, it isn't just a conversation that needs to start; action has been pledged. The £1.8 million that the couple pledged to charities is already making a tangible difference to some of the charities under discussion. In the box on the next page we highlight some of the work that has already been done with the money pledged by the Royal Foundation.

But how does the allocation of funds work in practice? One former colleague, who attended numerous meetings at the beginning of the process, explained ▶



## WHAT DOES THE £1.8 MILLION FROM KENSINGTON PALACE MEAN?

- All emergency responders will be able to get individual grief trauma counselling. Currently, Hospice UK's bereavement service originally provided counsellors for NHS England and social care staff, but it will be extended to all UK emergency services front-line workers

- Mind's Blue Light programme - which ran from 2015 to 2019 and aimed to reduce stigma around mental health in ambulance, fire, police and search and rescue services - will be available to 250,000 emergency responders

- Double the number of ambulance staff who may be struggling will be able to get support such as counselling or bereavement training through the Ambulance Staff Charity

- Suicide prevention charity Campaign Against Living Miserably will increase capacity on its helplines, meaning they can respond to 2,300 more contacts each month

- Online training and resources to help mental health will be provided to schools through Place2Be and the Anna Freud Centre

- An extra 20,000 new mothers will be supported in a mental health training project led by Best Beginnings.

Source BBC

the ethos surrounding the mental health campaign: “The Duke and Duchess are very private necessarily, but absolutely committed and passionate about their work. Their initiatives take a long time to evolve as they don’t want to put their name to anything that will fizzle out. It has to be long-term and sustainable across a large swathe of society, so they can get their teeth into it.”

This feels, then, like a new approach to royal patronage? “It is a bit of a departure,” the former household member continues. “Look

at the Queen. She has 900 patronages, and it used to be that as long as you weren’t doing anything stupid you’d get a patronage. Now they’re careful about what they want to get behind: it’s there with you for life, and they’re very keen to make sure their causes are followed through on.”

So what happened? It’s important to note that in giving the monies, the Duke and Duchess haven’t become patrons of those charities. The £1.8 million was granted by the Royal Foundation through a bespoke fund set up as part of the organisation’s response to Covid-19: it included, but was not limited to, support for Heads Together partners. Decisions on allocation of funds were taken by The Royal Foundation, whose current CEO is Jason Knauf, in line with expectations of Their Royal Highnesses, donors and trustees.

The impression then is that this was a team effort, with Their Royal Highnesses demonstrating real leadership. Others Finito World spoke with also praised the wisdom of private secretaries past and present and the role of trusted people in the sector, such as Paul Farmer, now CEO of Mind, and Victoria Hornby, who runs Mental Health Innovations.

It has been an extremely fruitful and productive relationship: Hornby would be instrumental in establishing Shout 85258 in 2017 with the Royal Foundation’s largest ever grant of £3 million. Meanwhile Mental Health at Work was established in partnership with MIND. Other projects also came to fruition, most notably Mentally Healthy Schools in concert with The Anna Freud Centre, Place2Be and Young Minds. This is no casual dabbling in the sector, but a profound engagement with a societal problem.

All those we spoke with emphasised the personal commitment of the principals. Hornby explains that the Duke “went above and beyond when he became a Shout Volunteer. After undertaking rigorous training, he joined our army of 2,800 volunteers who provide anonymous, in the moment, mental health support to people in urgent need of support. Our volunteers were

absolutely thrilled when Prince William revealed, via a video call, that he was on the Shout platform with them.”

Farmer also spoke to Finito World extensively for this piece. We asked him what impact the Duke and Duchess’ campaigns had had: “Heads Together has sparked millions of important conversations about mental health” – again the importance of starting conversations – “and the Royal Foundation has raised money to support innovative projects to tackle the challenges we can all face in talking about, and seeking support for, our mental health in the workplace,” he explains.

But Farmer also highlights areas for improvement. In particular, he argues that the country needs to think fundamentally about the nature of the workplace: “All employers – including government – should be reflecting on how work can be undertaken moving forwards. Within many workplaces, the sources of poor mental health at work are often cited as including unrealistic demands, excessive workloads and problematic relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders.”

## “Many people with mental health problems have been left without access to the protections they need.”

And how has the pandemic altered these causes of stress? “They were prevalent even before the pandemic, but research suggests mental health among staff has worsened further. Data from 40,000 staff working across 114 organisations taking part in Mind’s Workplace Wellbeing Index (2020/21) found two in five (41 per cent) employees said their mental health

worsened during the pandemic.”

Farmer is also disappointed that, after the Theresa May administration welcomed the Thriving at Work report, its recommendations haven’t been properly implemented by the Johnson administration: “They have failed to improve protections from discrimination in the workplace in the Equality Act 2010 for people with mental health problems. Although they consulted on making improvements to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), including phased returns to work and expanding SSP to the lowest paid workers, last month the UK Government announced they would be making no changes to SSP.”

When we asked Farmer to describe the effect of this recalcitrance, he was blunt: “As a result, many people with mental health problems have been left without access to the protections they need, and risk being pushed out of the workplace. We believe that the UK Government can and should do more – in the case of SSP, this is a recommendation that, four years on, has still not been actioned.”

A spokesperson for the Department for Work and Pensions said: “The pandemic was not the right time to introduce changes to the rate of SSP or its eligibility criteria. This would have placed an immediate and direct cost on employers at a time where most were struggling and could have put more jobs at risk. We instead prioritised changes to the wider welfare system, which is the most efficient way of providing immediate financial support.”

The spokesperson added: “As part of our £500 million mental health recovery action plan we are also helping people with a variety of mental health conditions, including through the expansion of integrated primary and secondary care for adults with severe mental illness.”

Asked for positives, Farmer had this to say: “We’ve now seen over 1250 organisations – including most Government departments – sign the Mental Health at Work Commitment, demonstrating their commitment to better protecting,

supporting and promoting the mental health of their employees.” This is a tangible achievement and shows the impact of which Kensington Palace is capable.

But the failures of the Johnson administration on this front open up onto the thorny question of Kensington Palace and its relationship to government.

Nicky Morgan, a former member of Finito’s advisory board, who has deep experience of government, explains how she never worked with the Royals while in office – and this turns out to be the norm, even among senior experienced politicians. Asked what government could do to help on mental health, Morgan said: “As the founder and now Chair of Trustees at a small mental health charity and social enterprise in Loughborough, I can say that keeping on top of all the paperwork is quite a task and we have really had to make sure it doesn’t distract us from the mental health support work we do and the activities we provide.”

### The Turning of the Key

So is there a role for government in this area? “I definitely think it should be left to local communities and groups to identify where charitable support is needed and that this shouldn’t be coordinated by government,” Morgan continues. “The one area government could help in is encouraging the NHS to work in a more systemic way with local charities: too often at the moment it is purely down to whether local individuals happen to meet and can build good working relationships.”

Fiona Millar adds: “From my own time working in government, and subsequently as an activist, I would say that focusing on one specific issue and becoming “expert” in that issue is much more effective than dipping in and out of different causes.”

There is food for thought here. Dennis Stevenson tells me that “mental health doesn’t really need government at all anymore”. On the other hand, the likes of Farmer are clear that there is more to do.

The likelihood is that Kensington Palace will continue to work its own terrain. One



Prince William's first day at Eton. PA Alamy

former member of the Royal Household, who worked for the couple around the time of the London Olympics, recalls: “We might work with government a bit on the sport side of things, and have Hugh Robertson (the then Minister for Sport) to the Palace. But, in general, for big projects, if we wanted guidance on the NHS, say, in relation to mental health, we wouldn’t go to the Health Secretary but to the NHS itself. In general they prefer to keep politics out of it.”

Another source agrees with this and adds that this attitude is to do with “wariness about how the Prince of Wales was drawn over the coals for black spiders and so forth. Kensington Palace now wants to make it clear that what it’s doing is completely apolitical.” The source adds: “The role the Palace really plays is the power of convening. Everybody will take a meeting, and so they can get different people together in the room.” With their mental health campaigns, that’s exactly what the couple has done.

### Band of Brothers

Government turns out not to be a thorny issue at all compared to two things that have turned out to be particularly headachey. The ►



# WILLIAM'S EDUCATION TIMELINE:

• **1984-92** Attends a series of independent schools including Jane Mynors' nursery school, Wetherby, also attended by Hugh Grant and Julian Fellowes.



• **1992** Becomes a full-time boarder at Ludgrove School in Berkshire. Is privately tutored by future Conservative leadership candidate Rory Stewart. Shows an interest in football, swimming, basketball and clay pigeon shooting.



• **1995** Takes the entrance exam to Eton and is tutored by Dr. Andrew Gailey, considered the most likeable housemaster at Eton at that time. At Eton takes up water polo and captains the house football team.

• **2000** Takes a gap year visiting southern Chile, as part of the Raleigh International programme in Tortel.

• **2001** Enrols at the University of St Andrews, switching from Art History to Geography. Here he meets Kate Middleton.

• **2005** Graduates with upper second class honours having written a dissertation on the coral reefs of Rodrigues in the Indian Ocean.

• **2005** On graduation does internships in land management at Chatsworth House and shadows bankers at HSBC.

• **2006** Chooses to follow a military career and is admitted to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst.

• **2009** Transfers his commission to the RAF and is promoted to Flight Lieutenant.



• **2010** Is transferred to the Search and Rescue Training Unit at RAF Valley, Anglesey.

• **2014** Enrols in a vocational agricultural management course at Cambridge, organised by the Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership. In the same year, accepts a full-time role as a pilot with the East Anglian Air Ambulance based at Cambridge Airport.

• **2016** Launches Heads Together alongside the Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry.

• **2020** Pledges £1.8 million to mental health charities.



Prince William, Duke Of Cambridge; Prince Harry, Duke Of Sussex, By Nicky Philipps

first is Harry, and the second is the press. But the more you look at that problem, the more they come to seem one and the same thing.

In the first instance, I speak to Nicky Philipps, the brilliant society portrait painter whose picture of William and Harry hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. Philipps recalls painting the commission with great fondness, although she admits that the picture was painted under considerable pressure. "It was very nerve-wracking – until I met them," she tells me.

Again, the sense arises that these people we think about so much, turn out to be so much like ourselves up close. "Harry was so sweet. The person I knew is not the man in California whingeing about his setup. I don't know what's happened now. He was so lovely."

Philipps explains some of the complexities of organising a royal portrait: "The light is all wrong at Clarence House," she recalls. "I was determined to have proper north

light, but the sun was pouring through and changing the colour and causing havoc so I asked if they could come to my house."

**"They were just like everybody, very natural and fun together and they created their own pose."**

And what was that like? "They organised it and the police came." (Again, the police: harbingers of the royal presence). But when the principals arrived, everything changed. "They were just like everybody, very natural and fun together and they created their own pose. I didn't have much

to do – they arranged themselves."

Today Philipps, who has also painted the Queen on three occasions, looks back on that 2008 sitting and says she'd have liked more time. "They were in uniform so I had to take photographs of the uniform and the medals and couldn't get much down there. I had five sittings – which sounds a lot but it isn't when you've got to do two heads."

It's worth looking at this painting closely. Over time, the picture has changed – one thinks of Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, where a picture changes because the world around it cannot remain static. "What's quite weirdly prophetic," continues Philipps, "is that I couldn't find a way to arrange them with William in a doorway and still have Harry to be looking at him. There's this lintel going down the middle, and I have an awful feeling it's slightly off centre. Now I look at it and it's the Great Divide."

If you look at the picture, it's true – the

two princes are looking at each other fondly, but they are also irrevocably separated, each inhabiting separate fields of energy, as they sadly do today in real life.

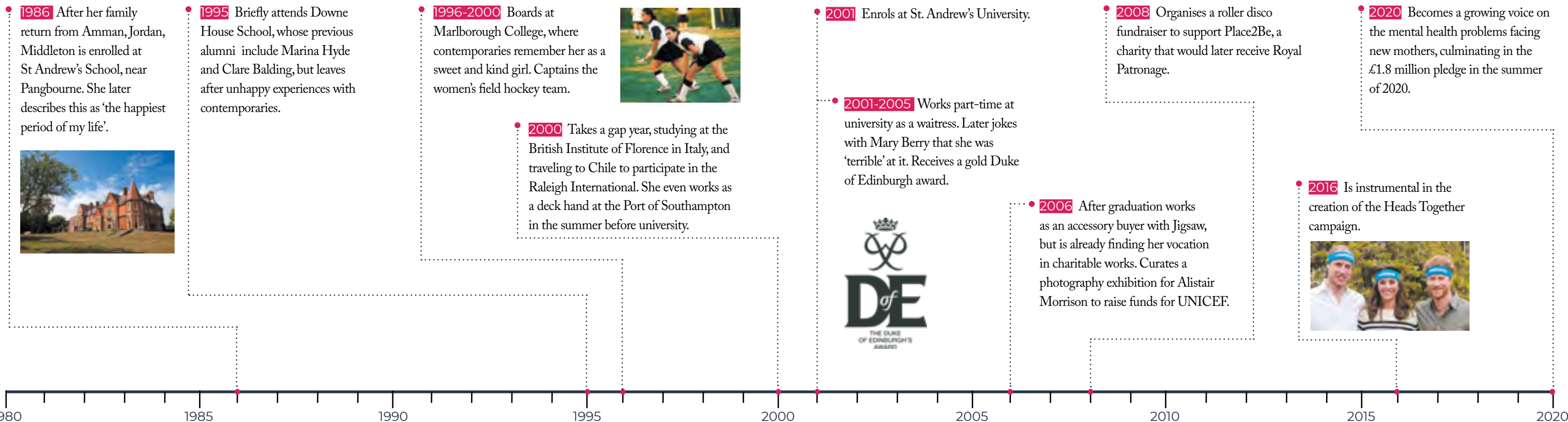
"Never in a million years would I have thought it would have ended like this," Philipps continues. "Harry was more casual, and William was more on it – but they were one. They were lifelong friends so far as I was concerned."

There seems little doubt that the press must bear some of the blame for the deterioration in their relationship. One person who used to work at Kensington Palace was worried at the time about the drip effect of negative stories about the princes: "They would definitely get hurt by what they read in the press about each other."

Philipps has also painted the Duchess: "Kate's absolutely sweet and extraordinarily graceful. I never met anyone who carries themselves so well and is so patient." ▶



# KATE'S EDUCATION TIMELINE:



Nicky Morgan is among those who understands the difficulty ranged against the couple when it comes to the media: "You have to learn to ignore much of the commentary directed at you, decide whose opinions really matter to you, and realise that social media is both a great way of communicating a message about your work but can also be a source of great abuse and distraction."

## Tattling Tales

None of this will be remotely news to William and Kate, who deal – and will deal forever – under a greater scrutiny than any Cabinet minister. But the dynamics are the same – and again they always work against narratives of simplicity and happiness, since it has been decided that such stories lack the ghoulish jeopardy that we apparently expect from our newspapers.

Once again, there is a simpler interpretation of their story. Philipps adds: "I think it's been a fantastic revelation to see how a middle class family can be so cohesive. Although the Royal Family is a very solid block in a way, I think to be taken under their wing would be a lovely thing to experience."

This brings us to the unpleasant story in Tatler which published earlier in the year under the headline 'Catherine the Great'. This story, run under the editorship of the Duchess' contemporary at St Andrew's Richard Dennen is an example of the kind

of journalism – full of insinuation and straightforward unkindness – which this publication opposes. Dennen appears to have befriended the Duchess of Cambridge while at St Andrew's, and is remembered by Old Carthusians as a shy boy, whose subsequent transformation into a society gadfly has always caused considerable perplexity.

The story posits a Duchess who is tired of the stress, when her work ethic according to those we spoke with is impressive. Meanwhile Carole Middleton appears as a snob, when the reality is different. A source said: "Nobody reading that Tatler article who knows the family would recognise the description of Carole which it contains. In reality she is a straightforward decent person. In my experience successful business people do not have time to be snobbish – they're too busy. And Carole is very successful and has been a great role model for the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. There was never any need to spin any of this negatively."

## The Throne of Reason

What should the Royal family do in relation to the media? Michael Cole, who formerly worked for the BBC as royal correspondent, tells us unequivocally: "The British media are not the enemy of the Royal Family. As I have said to more than one royal personage, the time for the Royal Family to worry about the media is when the media is no longer interested in the Royal Family, because that will mean the game is up. Then the great British public is no longer interested either."

**"Too often, people feel afraid to admit that they are struggling with their mental health."**

It will indeed be a sad day when a belief in good journalism departs Kensington Palace, although Miguel Head is among those who attests to Prince William's belief in the enduring importance of the Fourth Estate when it is doing its job properly.

But Cole's remarks also overlook the possibility that the onus may lie with us to look differently, as I suggested at the beginning of this article.

Covering William and Kate, one begins to sense that too often we overcomplicate life. Their story is simple just as their mental health campaigns are admirably straightforward. They were born into well-to-do families, and fell in love, and one of them was set to be the King of England – and in our system someone always will be monarch. In time, the pair found that if they were to do good it must come out of the gift each had, and which each had seen in the other: empathy.

And so it went. "Too often, people feel afraid to admit that they are struggling with their mental health," the Duchess of Cambridge has said. "This fear of judgment stops people from getting the help they need, which can destroy families and end lives. Heads Together wants to help everyone feel much more comfortable with their everyday mental wellbeing, and to have the practical tools to support their friends and family." It is a perfectly simple message, and we might call it bland – but equally we might call it true.

Perhaps in the last analysis, the couple's mental health campaigns ask us to correct our attitudes to class and to celebrity. If we were to do away with our obsession with the trivial, we might find we suddenly have room for what really matters: the creation of meaningful lives where we don't seek to tear one another down, but to look out for one another. **f**



## WHAT DOES MENTAL HEALTH REALLY MEAN?

by mental health advocate Lord Stevenson

**A**s part of our special on the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, we asked leading thinker Dennis Stevenson to give his view on what is really under discussion

Mental health has come into the open over the last 10 years aided among other forces by some strong royal support.

But what are we really talking about? If you get up from wherever you're reading this and stop the first person you meet in the street and say "How's your mental health?", 10-1 that person will think you're talking about an illness! If you say "how's your physical health" they will answer the question as it should be answered. All of which is to say that we all have mental health. It can go up and down – and, as with physical health, we need to work out ways of dealing with any problems.

It is not an exaggeration to say that I didn't realise properly that I along with every other member of the human race had mental health until I was in my fifties. It took me some time – and the injection of some mental ill health – to realise that it would be a good idea to learn how to manage my mental health for the better. And I'm still at it.

Unfortunately, by then my children had gone out in the world so they, poor things, were not brought up to believe they have mental health as well as physical health. But my grandchildren are being properly brought up. I very much hope and believe that every single one of them is aware that



Lord Dennis Stevenson

they have mental health and is learning tricks of the trade to deal with it.

**“I didn't realise properly that I, along with every other member of the human race, had mental health until I was in my fifties.”**

I was given a cruel awakening on this at around my 50th birthday, at a time when everything in my life was wonderful. I went away to our cottage in the country in the summer and woke up one morning

with what I can only describe as a “pain in my tummy”. That pain became something worse and without boring the reader with the detail I descended into something which would be described as clinical depression for which there was no obvious cause.

I came out of it after some months having – wrongly – rejected any help from pills and indeed any other source. I have been “hit” by it happily not very often but several times over the 25 years since, and on each occasion there has been no obvious reason for it. I believe I've learnt one or two tricks of the trade of how to deal with it.

That's my story. What else have I learnt apart from the fact that I have mental health and I need to pay attention to it?

First and foremost, the human race is at an early stage of understanding mental health. You might compare it with our understanding of cancer 50 years ago.

An eminent psychiatrist told me 20 or 30 years ago: “So, Mr Stevenson, you are somewhere on the bipolar spectrum”. The use of “spectrum” is widespread and in most cases a rather dodgy use of English!

As it happens I have discovered that I am almost certainly not on the bipolar spectrum whatever that is. I am an extrovert in-your-face sort of human being but not manic. I do, however, have what my excellent GP at the time described as “dips” in mood. Is that depression? I don't know – but then neither does anyone else.

Even so, I am very clear that we are getting nearer to being able to define depression, schizophrenia, ADHD, bipolar and all illnesses attributed to mental ill health. A professor at Cambridge, Ed Bullmore, wrote a book a few years ago arguing that depression is a physical illness and related to internal inflammation. The book is very compelling. We're getting closer to being able to define these illnesses. A lot of research is going on but we're still some way off.

How does one cope with mental ill health? The first thing that I have learnt is that, as with many illnesses, there are ways of dealing with depression that work and we don't need to understand why they work. Too many of us despair that nothing can be done and suffer needlessly. What is true of many physical illnesses is also true of mental illness: drugs and therapies have developed without a clear understanding of why they work – but if they work, they work. So never let anyone persuade you that antidepressants don't work. It's just not true.

It is, however, a good idea to be in the hands of a psychiatrist who has a deep knowledge of antidepressants since there are horses for courses, as in most things. In the same vein “talking therapies” have been one of the major breakthroughs over

the last 20 years. For every good therapist, there are several who are well-meaning but hopeless. However, it doesn't alter the fact that they work.

In this context, there's an absurd fault line in education in the UK. Psychiatrists who are medically trained tend to be sceptical of talking therapies – although less so than they used to be. Equally, psychologists and psychotherapists are inclined to be sceptical of drugs, and are not allowed to prescribe them.

This division is ridiculous. If you go to a cardiologist he or she might have a different diagnosis than another one but they will work from the same toolkit. So a word of advice: if you have mental health problems and you can find a physician who encompasses both medical and psychological approaches, that is the ideal. Happily, there seems to be an increasing number of them.

**“Never let anyone persuade you that antidepressants don't work.”**

The approach to “caring” is also important. If I walk out of my house today and break a leg, I will be in pain and be miserable. With a bit of luck my wife and children will want to make a fuss of me and soothe me! They won't diminish the pain but I will feel good about what they say.

But the terrible reality is that if I move into what I will call “depression”, their sympathy will mean nothing to me. This is a big subject hardly ever dealt with, but it's hugely important that carers understand this and are not demotivated by being rejected.

**“Do not be put off if they appear to reject you or take no notice.”**

The last time I had a major “depression”, the symptom was that I felt that my wife was only staying with me because she was a decent person but she didn't love me. I can remember being in bed and her saying “doesn't 40 years (our marriage) mean anything to you?” And then at another time saying: “You're like an extra arm on my body”. These are very wonderful things to say, but she got no reaction out of me at all – and I know it was horrid for her. Yet they have stuck with me.

If you're a carer for someone who is facing mental health challenges, please do not be put off if they appear to reject you or take no notice.

I've one other tip that works for me. Particularly if you are an over-achieving type as I am, a natural reaction to a mental health problem is to try to get on top of it, solve it and cure it. My wife said to me years ago: “You should be more accepting.” It took me about 10 years to realise what she meant: I must face up to the fact that as with many physical illnesses, it will never go away entirely but I must learn how to deal with it and expect it to return.

That is my current position. As it happens, my really bad “depression” has not reoccurred since 2007. I'm clear that it will reappear at some point before I meet my maker. I am equally clear that the fact that I've got a much more accepting relaxed attitude to it is a major reason why it does not reappear more often. **f**



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## How to be on TV

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON GIVES A PERSONAL VIEW ON HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE ULTIMATE TEST

**T**hree years ago, invitations began trickling into my inbox to appear on television. At that time, I was the author of one of the only books about the then Prime Minister Theresa May. The first time a request came in, I happened to be in Zanzibar, on holiday with family. The email came via my publisher from a researcher with a Sky News email address asking me to appear on All Out Politics, presented by Adam Boulton.

The memory transports me back to the mixture of emotions I felt at the time: flattery, excitement – and of course, fear. It was the television and restaurant critic AA Gill who recalled on the occasion of his first appearance on live television the makeup artist saying: ‘Just act normal!’ Gill recalled himself thinking: ‘But this is the least normal thing I’ve ever done.’

That remains true, of course. On the Zanzibar occasion, I had my excuses. If my plan was not to appear on television, I had positioned myself perfectly. Before the trip, I had intentionally not packed my laptop in a bid to switch off properly. Stone Town, the nearest outpost of civilisation to my hotel, wasn’t stocked with five-star hotels that might have wanted to set up a live video link for a tourist who had walked in off the street babbling about Adam Boulton and Theresa May.

So on that occasion I declined – but with a certain guilt, knowing that while it hadn’t actually been possible, part of me hadn’t wanted to do it anyway. Even so, a seed had been planted, and I began to suspect that if one person might invite me on TV then so might others – and I might not always have the protective shield of a holiday in Zanzibar to bat the problem away. There might come a time

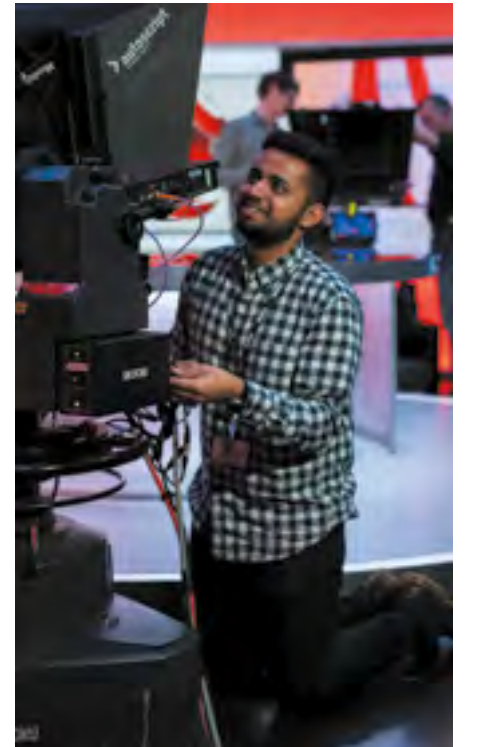
when I might have to say yes.

Whether to say yes or not is therefore the first question that is likely to affect you when the flattering but somewhat-to-be-dreaded call comes. Some will feel immediately inclined to say yes but others will be more doubtful.

When I speak with Lord Dennis Stevenson, the former chair of HBOS, he recalls a similar approach. ‘I happened to be very successful very young and – at risk of letting readers know how old I am – in those days there were only two television channels – and both wanted to do big documentaries on me.’ Stevenson faced a definite fork in the road, and turned to a valued mentor for advice, ‘I went to David Astor, who was the son of Nancy Astor the famous politician. David was one of my heroes. He said, ‘If you tell any of my journalists this, I will kill you, but if there’s ever a request for you to appear, don’t do it unless it will help promote a cause you believe in.’

**“If there’s ever a request for you to appear, don’t do it unless it will help promote a cause you believe in.”**

For Stevenson, the negatives outweighed the benefits: ‘David went on to say, ‘At the moment any programme you do will make your mother feel very proud, but it’s an unnatural thing to do. Besides there may come a time when things aren’t going so well and then you’ll be



much better dealt with on the way down if you’ve not been on television.”

In my own instance it would have been an unfairness on the publisher, who had shouldered the costs of the book, not to proceed. But others should be wary. Dominic Mohan, the founder of Dominic Mohan Media and former editor of The Sun, tells me: ‘I will deter a client from an appearance as a pundit or commentator if they are not entirely comfortable with the subject areas – I don’t want them to be outside their comfort zone.’

Of course, if you say yes, there is a confidence boost of a not necessarily trustworthy kind around the corner. In a television-dominated society, there’s a sense in which you’re not really successful unless you have appeared on television. Of course, there are some who buck this trend. In literature, there are successful recluses like JD Salinger or Thomas Pynchon whose myth is partly linked to their having ducked out of the public discussion of their works. ▶





Experienced presenter Iain Dale explains that it's important not to overprepare when it comes to TV interviews

There remain many successful businessmen like Stevenson, who spend a sizeable chunk of their income keeping out of the media. Most people are probably television agnostic – they deal with the matter when it comes up.

That means that many of us are caught unprepared. The following week I was asked again to appear on All Out Politics, and found myself saying yes. Beforehand, when I asked Zoe Brennan of Portland Communications for advice on going on television, she said, pointing at a blue and white striped shirt I'd just bought from Pink: 'Don't wear that shirt'.

Armed with the limited knowledge that a white shirt is best on television, and lacking PR representation of any kind, I found myself going up to Sky News' studios for my slot – which again, was with Adam Boulton.

I didn't view the occasion with unmitigated glee – and in this I suspect I was reasonably typical. Others relish these occasions, and if you can get yourself into that mentality, it will certainly do you good on camera. When I speak to celebrity lawyer, Nick Freeman – otherwise known as Mr Loophole – he radiates enthusiasm: "I love being on TV. The adrenaline flows. Yes, you're going to be nervous, but I've

done hundreds of interviews and I find the adrenaline helps you to perform. It's your chance to flourish."

So how does he manage to feel confident before the big occasion? Freeman is infectiously helpful. "You can't just say, 'I'm going to be fine' and leave it at that. Preparation is king. Knowledge is king. Know your subject." Freeman also compares the process of going on television to an actual job interview: "You wouldn't go to a job interview without having carefully researched the business – so don't go on TV without careful preparation."

**“Preparation is king. Knowledge is king. Know your subject.”**

There are limits to this, of course, because overpreparation can also be a danger. Mohan tells me: "I will obviously ensure I speak to the journalist or producer ahead of the interview to see what they're thinking and where the interview is likely to head. However, as a former interviewer myself, I am

conscious not to over-media train some clients as I want their true personality, views, language and style to come across."

Most media experts flag that the danger of deciding too carefully what you're going to say is that you don't listen to the other side. Iain Dale, the LBC broadcaster and author, points out that this is something to consider on the interviewer's side as well: "What I've found on the rare occasions when I have had producers give me a brief of the areas I'm meant to cover, and told me what the questions are, is that you're so busy concentrating which one of these you should do next that you're not listening to what the person is saying." This accounts, says Dale, for some odd moments you sometimes hear on the radio. "Whenever you think an interviewer asks what you think is a random question it's because they haven't been listening to the previous answer."

On the way up to Sky News, I doubt that Freeman's advice to know my subject would have been entirely helpful. As the biographer of Theresa May, my subject in theory encompassed not just the whole of Brexit, but the whole gamut of policy. That meant that, as hard as I'd worked on the book, it was wholly impossible to be the complete master of what I had been called on to discuss.

In the event of it, I turned up at Millbank on the back of a seven-mile run, a course of action I'd recommend to anyone about to endure the stresses of live television. I've often wondered in retrospect whether I was too physically tired to be particularly nervous.

Even so, the reality of walking into a television studio is very strange: one feels as though one must be trespassing. This sense of portentousness also seems at odds with the mundanity of a typical TV studio. Sky's Westminster studio, for instance, feels somewhat unloved – much as Parliament does once you're inside. There is the sense that this building must very recently have had some other purpose – either as a middling solicitor's office, or as the rundown domain of a recently deceased



The author in the studio with Adam Bolton

think tank. And yet in spite of this, you also know that this building is about to beam you to a million people.

That's where television gets its core strangeness from. Try imagining a million people and your imagination balks a bit – and obviously this will lead to some people freezing or panicking. But the sheer enormity of the occasion can also be a help: once the mind is stymied in trying to imagine such a large audience you end up putting it to one side, increasing your chances of a coherent performance.

Up in the Sky studio, there's a small reception desk, and a little side room for makeup. The people on before you all look as though they belong in the studio and if you're not careful you can worry that you alone among all the other fleeting guests lack some essential TV-readiness. It feels a bit like an awkward dinner-party. Rather oddly, waiting for a make-up chair to become vacant, I am directed to a kitchenette, overlooking the Thames, where I make myself a cup of instant coffee.

After make-up, I am ushered down a corridor. To your right as you walk, you can see Adam Boulton in his lair, handling what will turn out to be a forgettable roundtable discussion. It occurs to me that this is precisely the goal for most people of appearing on

television: to produce a segment of entirely forgettable television. In this era of YouTube sensations, the creation of memorable television is almost always not what you want.

There then follows a strange bit of small talk with an usher. I am asked to conduct small talk all the while aware that I am about to do something extraordinarily stressful. This brief moment beforehand will turn out to be the hardest part of the experience. Time bends a bit. You are conscious that you're hurtling towards a now unavoidable ordeal, but also that that ordeal seems to be taking a long time to come about.

In the event of it, the conversation goes well. Inherent in the nature of television is that questions rarely tend to any depth, and the presenters themselves are so busy that it's not to be expected that Adam Boulton, if he is interviewing you about your book, has actually read it; it's more likely that one of his researchers has skimmed it.

The conversation was divided into two segments of roughly five minutes each. In the ad break, Boulton smiled to himself and looking down at my book said with perhaps a certain pity: "So when did you write this, then?"

I told him and he smiled to himself as if at the enormity of my folly, and then

looked into a glass case at an iPad. This he began scrolling, retweeting a few articles, radiating the run of the mill nature of the occasion from his own perspective. Then it was back into the conversation, which unfurled without too many mishaps.

Afterwards, a car is there to take you where you need to go – the most VIP aspect of the whole occasion. News International has obviously decided to expend budget on getting its guests from A to B. As I weave through the crowds of Parliament Square towards a day of quotidian work, I see many people definitely not thinking about the fact that I've just been on Sky: television seems to occur in a secret bit of our collective mind.

Of course part of the fear of television these days is that it has become so much more polarised as a medium. Especially if you're on to talk about politics, part of the reason you're nervous is the uncertain emotion you suspect to be roiling in the country at large.



Douglas Murray warns against adversarial television where one side of the political divide is pitted against the other

When I speak to Douglas Murray, the author and commentator, he recalls the nature of the appearances he'd made in the past: "When The Madness of Crowds came out, I was in a radio discussion – actually a rather badly imagined programme – where you bring together two people from different sides of the political spectrum, and then negotiate some sort of agreement."

When I ask Murray how he prepared for the occasion, he smiles: "I was on ►



with somebody from The Guardian, who'd had a book out some weeks previously. I'd gone to Waterstones of my own volition and bought it with my own money – I even got the staff to get it off the stock in the back of the shop, where I'm happy to say it was residing. My enemy had been remaindered. I read it and it wasn't good, although I found a review of it in The Guardian describing it as the work of a great historian and one of the titans of the age and so forth."

And when Murray got to the studio? "I realised immediately that not only had she not read my book, but she'd made no effort to read it, and had read none of my previous books either. At the end of the show the presenter asked if she'd learned anything, and she said: "Well, I know what Douglas thinks already." That's very telling of the intellectual divide in this country."

Of course that feels initially more of a problem for those of us who happen to comment on politics. Some people I speak with have their own private rules. Dennis Stevenson tells me: "I won't go on the Today programme as I've found them to be very irresponsible. Though I don't think much of the News International empire, I've found Sky to be infinitely more responsible."

Especially after Brexit and Covid-19, politics today appears to be so contentious that it can even affect a hotelier who happens to be on television. When I speak to Sir Rocco Forte he recalls for me an appearance on Question Time with David Dimbleby. "I think there was a rape case or something like that. I said: 'Of course, I was brought up to treat women with respect, as they are the weaker sex,' and one of the left wing panellists said: 'You should arm-wrestle my daughter'."

Sat in Browns, one of many hotels he owns, and with his confident, patrician voice, you initially imagine television would hold little anxiety for him. But he disagrees: "You always get nervous because you're worried about making a fool of yourself." So how did he cope? Forte echoes Freeman. "You have to have a clear idea of what you want to say and then it depends on the kind of



Fiona Bruce is the current chair of Question Time. (Andrew Campbell)

programme you're on. I was on Question Time on another occasion and I got an unexpected question on the Arab-Israeli situation, and I had to think about my Arab and Israeli clients as I was talking, and so I must admit I gave a very wishy-washy answer."

So would he advise our business readership to do TV? "Business people shouldn't do these things because they're always going to feel political and you're going to offend some element of your customer base. As it happens, because I have very personalised hotels, I think a large majority of my customers would probably agree with what I have to say."

My second appearance on television for Bloomberg occurred on an extraordinarily cold morning in December, very early in the dark. For this occasion, I was prepped by the excellent Malika Shermatova of Minerva PR, who was kindly up at the same ungodly hour – about 5am – to accompany me in the pitch black to College Green. I suspect we both had that strange form of tiredness you get when catching an early flight.

This occasion was a reminder that once you've said yes to television, you are in the channel's hands as to what happens next. On this occasion, it transpired that the news anchor, whose name I have

never been able to discover, was angry at not being in the warmth of a studio. An acolyte was charged with rushing between takes to place a blanket on her knee and she was visibly irritated throughout by her predicament. The presence of me on the chair opposite her didn't seem in any way to mitigate those emotions.

Again, it was clear that she hadn't read the book, and on this occasion I was asked some unexpected procedural questions about what was going on in parliament on that day. I found myself putting my finger and thumb together, as Tony Blair used to do, in a series of jabbing points designed to project confidence. This tactic, arrived at spontaneously, made me all at once sympathetic to politicians who do this on a daily basis.

When I catch up with Sir Alan Duncan who, though a Marmite figure, was always good on television, I ask him how he did it so well. "I wish," he sighs acerbically, "you had asked another question about what parliamentarians should do in Parliament!"

Retrospectively irritated, as often seems the case with Alan Duncan, that he was never prime minister, he continues: "The trouble is that the people there only think about the media and not parliament, which is their job."

I press him on the question a bit. "Well, the answer to your question is to forget the script and just be normal. Talk as if you're talking to a teddy bear on a chair five feet away – that's the sort of intimacy you should aim for."

**"Talk as if you're talking to a teddy bear on a chair five feet away."**

And what about the sheer unpredictability of the occasion, such as I encountered at Bloomberg? "Yes,

that's why you must stay relaxed – because they could cut you or make you a minute long, or also give you a difficult question, and if you don't stay relaxed it could get out of your control."

After a while, the interest in May increased to such an extent that I was being asked on television most weeks, and often by foreign media who were covering Brexit with increasing bemusement. These proved to be extremely enjoyable, because they were usually pre-records, which are far more in-depth and less stressful. I began to fit these in around other things, and even to make a few demands about when and where to speak.

**"I would advise anyone asked to appear on television to try and dictate terms, and see if a pre-record is an option."**

I would advise anyone asked to appear on television to try and dictate terms, and see if a pre-record is an option. There was a half hour chat with Clive Bull on LBC recorded on Christmas Eve, which was broadcast in full on New Year's Day. There was also a Polish TV interview conducted at work meaning I didn't have to travel anywhere. On another occasion, an on-camera interview next to the playground at Dulwich was filmed while my son played about fifty metres away. Perhaps most fondly, I recall a chat with the magnificent Kim Bildsoe-Lassen, Denmark's Andrew Marr, who once conducted a famously tough interview with George W. Bush, and who interviewed me in the Four Seasons and then insisted we have breakfast on another occasion afterwards.

The real Andrew Marr turns out to be very agreeable in person – though frailer than one might have imagined. I meet him at an exhibition of his paintings, and am able to tell him that I bought one of his pictures just before our encounter. "Oh, a book on Theresa May – you must send it to me," he says, before locking eyes with me reassuringly: "I will read it, you know."

But it seems fitting that most of our conversation isn't about TV at all, but about painting, which is his principal interest now. I've rarely seen a person's face light up as much as it does when Marr sees fellow painter and collaborator Adrian Hemming among the crowds. When he leaves at the end, he is relaxed about the work awaiting the following morning: "I must go – interviewing the PM in the morning."

Television and radio were never normal for me, as they are for Marr or for Boulton. If Marr ever read my Theresa May book he decided it didn't qualify me to review the newspapers on his show – and I must confess that I felt some relief about that, though I suspect I would have had to say yes if he had done. A part of me would still endorse Dennis Stevenson's verdict on television: "I don't like it. I don't like it at all."

Towards the end of the book promotion cycle I found myself saying no – especially to very early appearances in Sky's studio in Osterley. Today the problems of travelling to the studio have



Andrew Marr retains perspective on TV - what he's really interested in is art.



The author up very early preparing himself for an early morning Bloomberg interview.

receded somewhat due to the pandemic, but that opens up questions regarding your domestic setup.

Dominic Mohan recalls one unhappy experience: "Early on in my journalistic career and then a father of young children, I did a broadcast interview from home with Alan Brazil on TalkSport. I was alone with my three-year-old son who I thought was happily playing in the other room. As the chat began, he battered down the door of my office and began to grab my leg, weep and scream at me throughout it. Needless to say, the exchange was cut short and I was never asked back."

For my part, I remember my three-year-old biting my leg during a discussion on LBC, which itself seems to have curtailed my relationship with that organisation.

But overall, the experience isn't something I'd take back. It can be fortifying, and can lead to making new friends, and new connections. And David Astor is right that if you do find a cause in the future that you believe in, television is still among the best ways of promoting it. Your contacts may come in useful at some later point.

As for me, over time, new books will come out with my name on the spine and cover, and perhaps the whole rigmarole will begin again. I've sometimes vaguely asked myself how I'll feel about it. As soon as I do that, I feel that jolt of adrenalin which makes me know I'd say yes – but that, as AA Gill knew, it will never be normal. **f**



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## The Goldman Standard: Will firms go back to the office or not?

BY ALICE WRIGHT

**W**henver the CEO of Goldman Sachs David Solomon speaks, markets listen. In March 2021, the chief executive declared that working from home will not be the new normal, but instead an “aberration” in these strange times. By September 2021, we can see that the debate still isn’t resolved.

It’s one of those mysterious questions. Of all the successful businesses out there, why is the investment bank always deemed a yardstick when it comes to discussions around the workplace? In one sense, it’s because of the huge numbers of well-known former employees, including US Treasury Secretaries such as Steve Munchin and Henry Paulson, as well as figures of international importance such as former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and former President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi.

**“I would have thought virtually every major professional practices firm, whether they be finance or otherwise, is going to have some form of home-working.”**

But it’s also because the firm, in its commitment to long hours and hard work, embodies a way of doing business perceived to be under threat. The sense is that if Goldman isn’t going back to the office, then who will?



When I spoke with former chief economist at Goldman Sachs, Jim O’Neill, it was clear that he retains a fondness for the organisation of which he was once a partner. Even so, he expressed his doubts about whether Goldman would really return to the office in any meaningful sense: “I would have thought virtually every major professional practices firm, whether they be finance or otherwise, is going to have some form of home-working as a

result of what we’ve learned during the pandemic.”

And is that the case for Goldman Sachs too? “It might be harder to keep that culture so I can see why David said that,” says O’Neill, clearly chewing the matter over.

One could understand O’Neill’s hesitation. After Solomon’s remarks reports would emerge that young staffers at Goldman Sachs have ▶



warned that they might quit if work conditions don't improve.

Certain eye-opening statistics emerged as a result of an internal survey among an admittedly small data sample of 13 employees (Goldman employs over 38,000 people). Even so, an average working week of 95 hours, with a mere five hours of sleep per night, appears to be an increasingly unpopular status quo.



Former Goldman Sachs chief economist, Jim O'Neill

O'Neill continues: "Yes, although I can see why David said that, I cannot imagine Goldman will go back to the same arrangements as before. The idea that everybody has to be in the building for 15 hours a day, five days a week – I can't see that continuing in a million years."

**“The idea that everybody has to be in the building for 15 hours a day, five days a week – I can't see that continuing in a million years.”**

It's worth noting that Solomon's initial remarks were tethered to the question of the future of young people within

the firm: Mr Solomon described the atmosphere at Goldman Sachs an "innovative, collaborative, apprenticeship culture" when explaining why he viewed the bank as ill-suited to home-working.

High-profile reputation lawyer, Mark Stephens, whose clients include James Hewitt, Julian Assange and Mike Tyson, was unimpressed by the remarks, noting that Solomon had failed a crucial test of business leaders: he hadn't communicated clearly with his staff.

"Unfortunately, I think he was unclear," Stephens explains, "as it wasn't obvious what context he was talking in – presumably he was thinking particularly of the bearpit of traders that needs proximity and collaboration." Stephens added that it is likely that "other businesses are going to move away from old-fashioned working and will be more flexible."

**“Other businesses are going to move away from old-fashioned working and will be more flexible.”**



Mark Stephens criticised Solomon's remarks (Neil Gavin)

Others expressed themselves unsurprised by Solomon's remarks. David Dwek explained that according to a recent survey of 500 respondents carried out by his firm DC Dwek Corporate Finance in collaboration with BLAS and Klapa8, "over 70% of senior executives are suffering the effects of Zoom or isolation fatigue related to the current situation and to the working environment."

In addition, Gina Miller, who as well as being a campaigner on matters such as Brexit and education is also the co-founder of wealth management firm SCM Direct, agreed with Solomon's approach: "When it's professional settings such as lawyers, accountants – even in the City – there's so much to learn by watching people and seeing how they make decisions," she told us. "There's also this whole mentoring issue. The question of how we bring up the juniors is going to be a problem, because you can't actually just do that remotely."

It might well be that remote-working arrangements affect CEOs particularly. Marta Ra, CEO of Paracelsus Recovery, has seen an increase of referrals from stressed-out CEOs. "In situations like this, people are looking for fulfilment," she told us. "The typical CEO used to have his team of people. Hierarchy was the religion and now that's missing."

David Dawkins, staff writer at Forbes magazine, who has written extensively about the banking sector, was unsurprised by the comments. In his view, Solomon "understands just how valuable Goldman's culture is. It's part of a soft power that draws the best graduates and mid-career professionals towards it."

This was a reminder that Solomon's remarks – made at a Credit Suisse AG conference – were prompted more by a desire to return to the "culture" of banking rather than any serious practical impediment.

The company operated throughout 2020 with less than 10% of workers in the office. And the financial performance has hardly been worrying. In January 2021, the group reported net revenues of \$44.56 billion and net earnings of \$9.46 billion for the year ended December 31, 2020.

To put that in context, look at the bank's performance in 2019. Then the bank reported net revenues of \$36.55 billion and net earnings of \$8.47 billion for the year ended December 31, 2019. These figures would appear to suggest that the bank is well capable of functioning on a different basis.



In spite of the controversy Solomon has presided over an impressive period of growth for the firm (Lisa Ferdinando)

But if the bank didn't return to the old ways, something would be lost according to Dawkins: "The pedigree of its former staff, the quasi-masonic structure of its partner system, makes Goldmans an incredibly aspirational place to work. But how do they keep that culture going when staffers can't see and feel it all around them during 12-16 hours of a working day."

Not everyone has piled in on Solomon. One data analyst, who spoke to us on condition of anonymity, concurred with Solomon's remarks: "For me, working from home was a one-off venture. I enjoyed the journey but the office environment is a lot better. It's all about

communication; it's much easier to communicate with your colleagues in the office. At home, you can't catch your manager for two minutes to ask a quick but important question."

Solomon's move is also in direct opposition to many other sectors, such as the tech industry, whose major firms expect working from home to be a central component of work going forwards. Microsoft, for example, is offering its staff working from home options after the pandemic, so long as employees can secure managerial approval. Giants such as Twitter and Facebook have also decided to make remote-working a permanent option. Meanwhile, Sir Richard Branson recently told this publication: "Over the years we have always tried to give our people the freedom to be themselves and treated them like adults."

**“The typical CEO used to have his team of people. Hierarchy was the religion and now that's missing.”**

But Solomon's stance isn't just about a return for the sake of pure productivity, but in consideration of the incoming graduates, around 3,000 of whom he worries will not have received the face-to-face interactions and mentorship they require.

All of this is why Solomon has been one of the most vocal private sector leaders in urging the government to ease restrictions, to allow workers back into offices. He is not alone in the banking world either: Jamie Dimon, the chief executive of Morgan Stanley, has previously stated that working from

home has lowered productivity levels.

Working from home has been hailed as revolutionary by workers who gain time from dropping the commute. A PWC survey found that around 55% of employers said they expected staff to work at home flexibly in the future after the pandemic.

**“At home, you can't catch your manager for two minutes to ask a quick but important question.”**

Yet Goldman Sachs seems unlikely to partake in the revolution anytime soon – particularly, as Dawkins points out, since the firm recently built a new £1 billion headquarters that is "so obviously designed around keeping the staff within the GS bubble for as much of the day as possible." Dawkins imagines "thirsty Goldman Sachs staffers staring at one another – judging, aspiring, ranking themselves alongside their peers."

But for our insider data analyst the experience of returning to the office is a more benevolent one. He describes it as an educational process of "seeing the pressure" and adds that, being in that environment "puts you in the right mindset."

That level of animal competition is certainly hard to simulate over Zoom. But for Solomon to succeed in the post-pandemic new normal he'll need the support of those who work for him. **f**



# The Beautiful Game 2.0

A BULLETIN FROM THE FRONT LINES OF  
THE RAPIDLY GROWING GAMING INDUSTRY  
BY GEORGIA HENEAGE



**A**s the world of entertainment unfolds and venues across the globe resurrect, in a corner of Tokyo a fledgling new gym is opening its doors for the very first time.

On 19 May, a new Esports 'gym' will offer amateur and professional gamers the chance to up their skills via on-site coaches. Price of membership varies from £36.20 per month, which allows you to use the kit and get help from gaming staff, to £80, which gets you two lessons a month with a professional gamer.

It's a hugely lucrative and burgeoning industry: the market value of the gym is predicted to reach \$1.9 billion by 2022,

and across the globe the gaming world is worth a staggering \$154 billion, and in the UK alone £5.3 billion. During the pandemic, the online gaming industry witnessed a huge boom (for fairly self-evident reasons). According to the as well as UK industry body UKIE, the market reached a record £7 billion in 2020; the value of the sector soared by nearly 30 per cent and is expected to grow exponentially from here on.

In the UK, gaming houses have begun centralising the efforts of a growing number of professional gamers. The UK-based organisation Excel Esports opened a facility in Twickenham last year that offers expert gaming hardware, sports psychologists and even on-site

**“It’s a hugely lucrative and burgeoning industry: the market value of the gym is predicted to reach \$1.9 billion by 2022.”**

chefs to those training for the League of Legends gaming championships. Excel Esports MD Kieran Holmes-Darby said that by building the facility, the company wanted to provide a “clear separation in where the players live and where they work” to maximise the “mentality” of their players and their “well-being”.

It also signals the fast transition of the gaming world from a nascent hobby at the turn of the century, which existed on the internet’s fringes and played out in the dark depths of player bedrooms, into the fully-fledged, professionalised and competitive world of gaming that exists today.

**“The Olympics committee has even announced that it will begin incorporating online games in its repertoire.”**

Esports (electronic sports) have exploded in popularity: huge tournaments take place all over the world and attract tens of thousands of fans every year. The Olympics committee has even announced that it will begin incorporating online games in its repertoire. The Olympics Virtual Series will “mobilise virtual sports, esports and gaming enthusiasts all around the world in order to reach new Olympics audiences” in line with its new ‘agenda’.

A whole stream of incredibly skilled gamers are contracted every year and have made careers out of it. Sports clubs are beginning to sponsor esports players, and there’s now a worldwide organisation called World E-Sports Association, which runs a bit like Fifa.



One such organisation is London Esports which, according to CEO Alfie Wright, already has a number of professional players on its books who take part in competitions with “some of the best teams in the world”, the biggest of which is League of Legends, a kind of fantasy team-based game.

The industry, he says, is worth almost more than music, TV and film combined. It saw a boom during the pandemic, he explains, because it offered a very real social distraction. “There was no other way to go and speak to friends, and I think people are starting to see that that’s where gaming can be really helpful.”

And alongside the professionalisation of a bedroom hobby has come a piqued interest in gaming as a potential career choice for thousands across the UK. Wright says universities across the country are starting to introduce esports courses, and soon they might be an option at secondary school.

Roehampton University, for instance, offers a full esports scholarship from January this year – including a new Women in Esports scholarship, where students have full access to the university’s esports facilities and the chance to “learn new skills”. Even so, we have some catching up to do: in the US, you can choose from over 10 university courses in the area nationwide. The real challenge, says Wright, is ensuring that

there are enough experienced experts to teach, since it’s such a young industry.

Despite the positive social and educational implications, the rise in gaming as a digital trend has, of course, had its negatives: many experts believe that the rise in violent games, such as Call of Duty, has had a knock-on effect on violence in the real world, an extreme case being the 2019 mass shooting in New Zealand.

One article in Wired last year revealed the huge physical and mental toll gaming is taking on professionals, such as 20 year-old gamer Julia Wright – a wizard in the Overwatch League – who developed a serious wrist injury after 16-hour days spent tensely gripping her remote.

The mental and physical issues facing young competitors range from “hand, neck and back pain that sometimes requires surgery, to poor nutrition, bouts of insomnia and mental health issues including anxiety, depression and burnout.” According to some experts, there’s little information or guidance, given the fact that these are fledgling careers. The help that is available to professional gamers is spread thinly amongst the highest-ranked, and given that this is a career spent in relative solitude, it’s a difficult one to monitor closely.

Yet this is also a profession which, like ▶



other areas of entertainment, almost always begins with genuine passion. Most pro gamers started their journey with a love for a hobby, and turned that into a career. It's a utopian vision of work that most people strive for.

This is the feeling I got when I interviewed two pro "sim racing" drivers (virtual motor racing), whose deeply-felt and long-standing fervour for what they do is apparent even over the dark interface of the 'Discord' app we speak through (the most common centralised software to chat and game with other players). Both are part of the Zansho Simsport team, started and headed up by Ed Trevelyan-Johnson and co-managed by Mike Yau. The team has already won some £10,000 in prize money and has an ever-growing team of 50 players operating at a very high level.

**"Since the pandemic, the gap between the world of real racing and online racing is narrowing."**

Sim racing, says Trevelyan-Johnson, is still a pretty "niche" esports and not as developed as others. But it's taking shape rapidly, and since the pandemic, the gap between the world of real racing and online racing is narrowing. Though it is still a fledgling esports, Trevelyan-Johnson says sim racing is one of the most hyper-realistic simulations you can get in the world of games. "Unlike football, for instance, you are replicating pretty much everything you get with racing, except for the G force."

This is perhaps why so many Formula

1 pros are flocking to the trend: world-renowned racing car drivers used to use the software to practice ahead of big races, and since the pandemic more are getting a taste for it – including Jenson Button, who has been involved with the Zansho team. "There's a pretty symbiotic relationship between motor sports and sim racing. When Covid-19 hit they intersected even more because motor sports shut down and Formula 1 drivers bought cock pits for their homes and race organisers did virtual events."

At the same time, a host of amateurs have begun using the virtual form to build both a career and nurture a hobby – usually both. According to Trevelyan-Johnson, many players begin their virtual journeys taking part in motor sports in the 'real world', but find that it's not a financially viable option, or that they have a physical impediment to racing.

Devin Braune is one of the fastest sim drivers on certain cars in the world. He discovered he was too tall for motor sport (being 6'7) and so channeled the love he found for the sport at a young age into sim racing instead.

"When I was about three," says Braune, who grew up in Germany, "we got a PlayStation with a Formula 1 game. I loved playing it and eventually I wanted to do it in real life. My parents took me carting, which was quite dangerous at that age, but I got hooked immediately. I then joined a club and did real racing until 2017."

But Braune soon found that real racing was "incredibly expensive" and required "a lot of preparation", which meant that he wasn't able to get onto the tracks for months on end. "A couple of years after I started carting, I realised that games can simulate the real experience – so I started driving with some equipment I bought and I thought it was just as fun. I never looked back." He started doing full time competing, won event after event, and then got picked up by various sim racing teams.

"While it isn't technically my job, it's a way to get money. My main job is developing the software players use. On the weekdays I write code for rFactor 2 (a sim racing computer game) and on weekends I race. I'm in quite a unique position, I guess." Braune currently practices around two or three times a week – five hours at a time – and says that he effectively taught himself.

For Braune, the possibilities that sim racing opens up are almost endless. "It's not a replacement for real racing, but it's about as close to the real sport as any simulated sport can ever get. And if I decide I want to race, I'm on the track in five minutes."

Does he think that sim racing, and esports at large, will start to replace traditional sports? "I think they'll coexist. In the end going to the track and seeing people race has its charm, and I don't think that's ever going to disappear," he says.

Jarl Teien, a Norwegian professional driver for MB Racing Esport, spends up to six hours training every day. He says he doesn't like going over that limit because then you "can get easily distracted and don't get any effective training." Teien has been offered a contract and full yearly salary, and says he's in discussions about doubling it – which would take it to around £4000 per month. Part of his contract, says Teien, is taking part in lots of competitions worldwide, and even gearing up to potentially represent Norway in the virtual Olympics.

Does Teien, like Braune, learn from other professionals? It's a kind of process of osmosis, where he watches replays of other sim drivers from outside the game, or watches their "line" on Discord, and learns from that. But, for the most part, he teaches himself.

Before getting into sim racing, Teien played other esports competitively, like Counter Strike – a shooting game played ▶



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on a PC using a mouse. Though he was “borderline semi-pro”, he chose to devote all his time to sim racing because he absolutely loved it.

**“Sim racing is one of the most hyper-realistic simulations you can get in the world of games.”**

“I haven’t gotten a single point where I’ve burnt out, and I think that’s the important thing. I just love the idea of a ton of people spending a lot of time together online, and I love the idea of all those people trying to achieve the same goal, and only one can come on top.”

Teien says he’d love to drive in real life as well, and that the exhilaration of racing and of winning is the same. “At the sim racing center award, loads of professionals say they’re more nervous for a sim drive than their drive in real life. I would say once you get into the car, you feel the same pressure.”

Other than esports competitors, the

ever-evolving world of online gaming is building jobs in other areas, too. Charlie Hoare has built a writing career out of a passion for the virtual format. Alongside opinion pieces, he reviews some of the most popular games from best to worst, and is particularly interested in the artistry – the intricate stories and unique characterisations behind each game. His work is a definitive reminder that gaming is not just a competitive, sporting form – but also an artistic one. And the discussion around gaming, he says, has created a massive online culture quite apart from those who actually engage in the form.

“I think part of the reason why gaming is such a big industry is that people love to further the conversation,” says Hoare. “Because it’s not just the technology that’s getting better, but it’s also the opportunities to tell better stories.”

Hoare points out that, unlike other entertainment mediums, games can develop depending on what the consumer wants – so it’s forever evolving. And the connection between what consumers love and what game makers create is extremely close. “I think the best games are just made by people who make something that they know they would enjoy – it’s something personal to them.”

Like Braun and Teien, Hoare started his career as a “passion project” from his bedroom aged 17, making “YouTube videos” about games he was genuinely fascinated in. This hobby and “fun creative outlet” quickly turned into a proper job, which he absolutely loves.

And, like other professional esports players, Hoare’s career developed entirely off his own back. “It’s interesting because writing about games was something that I was passionate about, but also something I had no experience in. I was offered a position of writing for this website after somebody saw my video and liked the way I structured my reviews and opinion pieces.”

The world of gaming seems to offer a unique brand of employability: one which begins, almost exclusively, with a fledgling hobby and unadulterated love for a quickly-developing artistic form, and turns into a career – usually self-taught – with the possibility for huge growth.

If the past decade has seen a gradual institutionalisation of the trend, in the next we are likely to witness an even greater professionalisation of the industry – one which filters down to the level of school curriculum and right up to the top tier of the virtual Olympics. *f*

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# Racing Ahead: the equestrian industry emerges from lockdown

BY ALICE WRIGHT

**A**ccording to the British Horse Council's Manifesto for the Horse, the equestrian industry in the UK provides full-time employment to over 250,000 people and is the second largest rural employer after agriculture. It's also a growing industry, contributing around £8 billion a year to the economy. Employment opportunities stretch far beyond riding and caring for horses. For example, the industry incorporates marketing, betting, training, retail and veterinary sectors that offer myriad opportunities to work with and for horses.

For those acquainted with the equine world this may appear self-evident, but for those with a budding interest or considering a career change the BHS helpfully breaks the various sectors down as follows in their 'career pathways': Breeding & Stud; Business Management; Coaching; Tourism; Dental; Farriery; Journalism, PR & Photography; Mounted Forces; Nutritionist; Racing; Saddlery; Sales & Marketing; Trainer and Veterinary Medicine. I spoke to some of the various leaders of these sectors to find out more about the opportunities in their professions and where the industry is headed as restrictions are lifted.

A spokesperson for the British Horse Society (BHS) told me that "like with all industries affected by the pandemic, it will take time for the equine industry to get back to business as usual. With people having more spare time we saw an uptake in the number of individuals taking part in horse riding, prior to the second lockdown. This, along with people embracing the outdoors and

new hobbies, is a positive sign that the industry will continue to thrive."

Saqib Bhatti MBE MP is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Horses that, according to Bhatti, acts as "a voice for the horse riding industry in the United Kingdom" to "give a unified voice to ensure industry concerns are heard in Parliament." He tells me that recently their work has dealt with issues thrown up by the lockdown such as the operation of riding schools during restrictions and the classification of vets as key workers.

Indeed Bhatti's APPG is now largely focusing on the post-Covid landscape. "We face a myriad of economic challenges and ensuring employment opportunities are available in the equestrian industry will require cooperation between industry and government."



Saqib Bhatti MP chairs the APPG for Horses in Parliament

Indeed, aspects of the equestrian industry have been hit hard by the pandemic. Last March, the iconic

Cheltenham Festival was given the government green light to go ahead despite the escalating coronavirus crisis and has retrospectively been deemed a possible superspreading event. Race meets, sales and other large income generators all over the sector were closed down for months.

**"With people having more spare time we saw an uptake in the number of individuals taking part in horse riding, prior to the second lockdown."**

Yet, Bobby Jackson, marketing executive at Tattersalls in Newmarket, claims that bloodstock, sales and marketing has remained relatively stable. "As our side of the industry deals directly with racehorses, Covid-19 hasn't really affected the day-to-day care of them and therefore employment levels have remained fairly steady", he says, adding that "investment levels at the Tattersalls sales have been positive during the pandemic and would infer that employment levels should remain strong in the long term too."

Claire Williams, Executive Director of the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) agrees, telling me that "to be honest, the trade and retail has come out of Covid quite strong. Certainly my retailers and



manufacturers are coming out probably almost with higher turnovers than they had coming in [to the pandemic]. We've seen a real boom in equestrian sales over the last year." BETA is recognised as the official representative body for the trade sector of the equestrian industry, representing over 800 companies in retail, wholesale, manufacturing and other service agents.

**"Investment levels at the Tattersalls sales have been positive during the pandemic."**

Williams is keen to emphasise just how many opportunities there are across the industry, but particularly in the trade sector. "In terms of the trade side, you've got everything from saddlers, to photographers, or working

for a large manufacturer. You've got the range of nutritionists, assisting in the development of feed or acting as advisors to the customers." Equine nutrition is constantly responding to developing research so there are academic opportunities as well as client-facing roles.

"Then you've got business management type positions and companies, whether that be product development, market development, marketing and sales," Williams adds. She is also enthusiastic about the creative opportunities available, such as in product design for both horses and riders, from hat silks to winter rugs.

There are also "a lot of PR opportunities" both in-house with large companies and at dedicated specialist firms such as Mirror Me PR, as well as "opportunities for more science-oriented people." The scientific opportunity primarily relates to veterinary medicine and pharmaceuticals but Williams also mentions that there are a great deal of

research and development opportunities with companies, such as those creating supplements.

**"Working with horses will provide a strong foundation of skills and knowledge to support any career."**

Further to this there is the management and events aspect of the trade, which can be a fruitful career for the self-employed as well as those that want to work at events corporations. However, events businesses have been one of the hardest hit by lockdown and restrictions on gatherings.

BHS' spokesperson agrees with Williams about the abundance of employment options surrounding horses, saying that working with horses will ►





The winners' enclosure at Cheltenham. Is horse-racing an elitist sport? (Winners' enclosure; Carine 06)

provide “a strong foundation of skills and knowledge to support any career, or career change, in the industry. It will provide you with many transferable skills such as communication, assertiveness, organisation, time-keeping, resilience and confidence,” she says, adding that, “in any career connected to horses, from journalism and graphic design to saddlery or farriery, a foundation knowledge in complete horsemanship is recognised throughout the world as a huge advantage.”

Jackson too expresses the variety of opportunity within the marketing and sales sector of the equestrian industry. “In this side of the industry, if you want a hands-on job with horses you can do it, if you want an office job you can do it, or if you want a job combining outdoors and indoors then you can do that. There are roles for all talents.”

Jackson describes how the range of jobs within sales and bloodstock itself is huge. One can work on a stud farm and bring life into the world during the

foaling season, or alternatively work at an auction house like Tattersalls and help fulfil people’s dreams when they sell a horse for a life-changing amount of money. “This side of the sport will give you moments that you will never forget,” he tells me.

Yet despite the plethora of opportunities, the equine industry carries an unfortunate haze of elitism over it as a profession. It is associated with royalty and high-net worth investors, and while both hold essential roles in the sector, ►

**“In any career connected to horses, from journalism and graphic design to saddlery or farriery, a foundation knowledge in complete horsemanship is recognised throughout the world as a huge advantage.”**



The great AP McCoy riding Straw Bear to victory in 2006. Career opportunities are rife in PR, with dedicated firms such as Mirror Me PR (Citrus Zest)



Ronald Reagan and the Queen: Horse-racing has long been an element of Britain's soft power.



this perception can be an initial barrier to people considering a career in the sector.

The BHS told me that “there is an inaccurate perception that equestrianism is an expensive industry to get into. While it is true that owning a horse can be expensive, you do not have to own one to be able to start your career.” Jackson agrees: “The ‘sport of kings’ brings with it positive and negative connotations.” He tells me: “Some people think that you need to have family in horse-racing in order to get a job in it. Incorrect.” He also stresses that his own family background is not connected to racing.

Williams disagrees that the industry is elitist at all. “When we look at our market research, [those with] lower to medium income levels actually comprise over half of the riders in the marketplace. It may be perceived as elitist but really I don’t believe it is, otherwise we wouldn’t have 1.8 million regular riders.”

Jackson also explains that, “unlike most industries, travelling the world and doing multiple jobs in your early career in order to get as much experience as possible isn’t seen as a negative in horse racing. So, by working hard, getting your hands dirty and proving your talent, anybody can carve a successful career in our industry and absolutely love it.” This is a point of encouragement for those considering a career change or those yet to finalise their career choice after finishing studies.

Schools, colleges and further education institutions don’t tend to include opportunities to work with horses in the usual career days advertising medicine, the law and finance. Yet there are initiatives such as Racing to School, which aims to educate school children on the activities and business of running racecourses. Jackson argues that such initiatives could be broadened to the bloodstock and sales side of the industry.



An industry with pedigree: Tattersalls was founded in 1766

He adds that, at Tattersalls, children from Newmarket Academy make an annual visit to Book 1 of the October Yearling Sale and “it would be wonderful if other schools around the country were able to do similar at stud farms, for example.”

Bhatti tells me that he agrees that there are challenges to those starting out in the equestrian industry. “The APPG has found that several employers feel that students coming out of education and moving into the sector lack some practical skills or experience and it is important to encourage as much hands-on experience as possible.” One solution he suggests is “working with schools to ensure placements in riding schools and other industry-related institutions become available for students.” A large part of the APPG’s work is with educational organisations such as the BHS to make people aware of opportunities within the industry.

Williams adds that, “there are a lot of opportunities for young people, such as apprenticeships. For example, we’ve got gateway stages with Kickstarter at the moment. I’ve got something like 40 employers with positions they’re creating

specifically for young people.”

The equine industry seems to have remained relatively stable during restrictions, and even those elements such as racing and events that have been adversely affected are set to bounce back. Despite an air of exclusivity there is such a range of job opportunities within the industry and, as Williams says, “to work in the equestrian trade you don’t necessarily have to be horsey. You don’t have to have an equine degree to get a job in the equestrian trade at all. What we’re looking for is people showing that they’re capable, they can write well, they can analyse and they have the business skills that we need for business.”

The BHS spokesperson offers equal encouragement: “The great news is that you can pick this up at any age or stage in your life – you are never too old to fulfil your passion for horses.” Jackson concludes with enthusiasm, “What you will also find is that everyone is doing what they love – something I count myself very lucky to say – and this is a great leveller.” **f**



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## Is this the Sherlock Holmes of our age?

ALICE WRIGHT MEETS SIMON GIDDINS, THE MAN YOU GO TO  
IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM THE POLICE CAN'T FIX

**I**magine, someone has just destroyed your life in an instant, you've been scammed of your life savings, you're sat there looking at the computer screen with your bank statement. All you feel is that nausea, that shock, your skin is prickling with cold sweat, you don't know what to say. You phone the police, expecting a police car to come roaring down your driveway with blue lights and people with notebooks. But nobody is coming to help you.

Simon Giddins, a personable but mysterious figure, can only be described as having walked off the set of a TV adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes. However, Giddins sees himself more in J.B Priestley's Inspector Goole, who he says is "the bastion for those without hope, which very much goes to our core values. We see people from all levels of society and try to help – we provide solutions to situations, and as a company, fight their corner."

To meet him in person Giddins, who is the Managing Director of Blackstone Consultancy, a private intelligence and security consultancy, is an exciting mix of anecdotes and vaulted secrets. His clients number among the richest and most powerful people from around the world; a little black book no one will ever get their hands on. When I name a handful of famous figures from billionaires to well-known politicians he's prepared to play along a little. "Yeah, most of those," he smiles.

Giddins holds all the expected credentials, an illustrious career in the armed forces, a degree in Terrorism Studies and a former deputy directorship of special projects for Aegis Defence Services.



So how has business been since the world was swallowed by the pandemic? Business is booming, and Blackstone's agents were given licence to travel since their clients are "part of the critical national infrastructure." During the lockdown the company has professionally developed, now housing two Chartered Security professionals: there are only 160 such individuals in the world.

Even though official crime statistics stopped being published in March, Blackstone estimates that crime has gone up by 47% with cybercrime in particular having gone through the roof. "At the start of the lockdown we were seeing a lot of cybercrime using NHS messaging, asking people to buy tests or give personal data," says Tom Tahany, an operations manager at Blackstone, who joins us for the interview. Giddins adds that "there has been a lot of sexploitation."

"Economically," Giddins continues,

"we are about to hit a wall, especially when furlough ends". 'As always we are ambivalent on political matters, but when furlough ends we will see an influx of business. Especially with the police's attention diverted elsewhere in enforcing restrictions. Further to this, the more demonstrations we have – for example, anti-lockdown protests – police resources are diverted and crime then spikes.'

I'm interested to know what advice Giddins and Tahany would give to sixth formers or undergraduates that may be interested in a career that does not usually feature at the average university careers fair. Giddins emphasises that the perception is that they would want to recruit big guys with military credentials, but the reality is the needs of the industry and his clients are, "so vast" and "that's why organisations like ours look for extra curriculars alongside academic and ask how ▶



individuals are adapting those skills". Tahany, for example, is a qualified rugby referee, where he learnt to deal with big towering units of men in high intensity situations. While the company is interested in those with academic achievement, the particular field of study is unlikely to be the deciding factor on a candidate's recruitment.

Blackstone is also an advocate for diversity in the industry, particularly with regards to gender and background. Tahany, who joined as an analyst – but is now an operations manager – is from neither a police nor a military background. Giddins says: "For me as the business owner, I don't subscribe to only recruiting from ex-military or ex-police because then you only have those ex-military or ex-police views. 'The security industry is a bit monolithic,' he continues, "populated by fat, old white men who do have gender bias. We, however, don't gender classify."

Although this may not sound particularly progressive by the standards of some sectors, in this industry it's a revolutionary approach. "Attitudes towards women in society particularly concern me," continues Giddins. "One in three women are harassed or stalked in their life. They have unwanted attention or are placed in situations where they feel uncomfortable."

And when Giddins discusses diversity it's more than mere talk. The company is committed to young individuals seeing this as a viable career option. Giddins himself mentors two young people around the ages of 18-20 from underprivileged backgrounds each year.

Tahany, a popular figure from Channel 4's *Hunted*, has been at Blackstone for two and a half years. He credits his practical experience on the show as well as his educational background as having led him to such an exciting profession. Shortly after joining, he found himself running surveillance teams in the Baltic nations. He tells me being an analyst is varied

work, including conducting due diligence and background work on an individual globally, conducting data scrapes of an individual's online footprint and advising them about where they are over-exposed, or perhaps looking into the current risk situation of an individual travelling to Singapore or Hong Kong.

## “Recently we investigated the theft of a £780,000 car – it was recovered.”

So it's varied work? "We are involved in everything": Giddins agrees, "from finding very unique items that are taken, such as unique jewels, to cars. Recently we investigated the theft of a £780,000 car – it was recovered. We also help small businesses, entrepreneurs and family-run companies. With these, we're seeing a growth of 'insider' threats, theft from employers, lots of low-level fraud, even disgruntled household staff posting embarrassing images of client homes, causing reputational damage."

The insider threat has increased since the first lockdown, as people have been working from home. People working for large organisations in their remote offices are having their information stolen by competitors. "But it goes beyond this," Giddins warns, "to the national level: rogue nation states, the Russians, the Chinese. It's in their interest for them to sidle into organisations, and commit commercial espionage." This is happening in medical research, pharmaceutical organisations, universities and future tech companies. "It's really exposed out there at the minute, and we're very vulnerable. We have this view that the government will somehow protect us, but they won't."

Tahany agrees: " Everything you've ever said, everything you've ever done, is becoming more and more exposed," he says. The analysts, the more junior members of a team, will explain to second-generation multi-millionaires the risks they take with social media. Although he doesn't think it's credible to ask young people to not use social media, he advises that, "it's just about being sensible, about being mindful of what you're posting and where. From a retrospective reputation perspective, but also to protect yourself from malicious actors such as fixated individuals."

So should we be learning more future-facing skills like coding and data scraping rather than Pythagoras? Giddins isn't about to take a swipe at the education system, "I would be very reticent to comment on what people should teach because it's part of a very established syllabus." For Giddins it is about the act of learning itself, and how you apply knowledge. **f**

*Simon Giddins is the Managing Director of Blackstone Consultancy, a private intelligence and security consultancy. He read Terrorism Studies at the University of St Andrews, spent 15 years in the British Army and worked as deputy director of special projects for Aegis Defence Services, managing private and government clients internationally. He is a member and advocate of the Security Institute and was awarded the Freedom of the City of London in October 2015.*

*Tom Tahany studied Modern History at UAE before gaining his Masters in Intelligence and International Security from King's College London. He has a background in private intelligence and investigations as well as featuring on the Channel 4 programme 'Hunted'. Tom is also a qualified rugby referee, and continues to referee matches for England Rugby.*

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# Back to the Black Dog

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL'S REMARKABLE LIFE IS A YARDSTICK IN HOW WE DISCUSS MENTAL HEALTH, WRITES ROBERT GOLDING

**O**n 11th July 1911, Winston Churchill went to dinner with his cousin Ivor Guest and his wife Alice. Afterwards, he reported back to his wife Clementine: “Alice interested me a great deal in her talk about her doctor in Germany, who completely cured her depression. I think this man might be useful to me if my black dog returns.”

My black dog. In time, this phrase would become an aspect of the Churchill myth – even though, as Churchill’s biographer Andrew Roberts points out, it was a term he himself only used on this one occasion. It gives us the Churchill we think we know, who is in turn an aspect of our national story. In this telling, the former prime minister becomes not just a great leader, but one who triumphed against mental difficulty.

In the Covid-19 age, where mental health is an increasing concern – indeed, almost a buzz word – Churchill feels like an illuminating yardstick. His is a tale, the story runs, of heroic self-medication. He drank and he painted – above all, he worked.

The relevance of Churchill’s predicament continues today. When I talk to Fiona Millar, the wife of Alistair Campbell, she displays a profound understanding of the relationship between power and mental strife. Campbell, who for many years was Tony Blair’s right hand, suffered from depression; Millar now runs a support group for those co-habiting with those with mental illness.

When I mention Churchill, she states that there are more mental health problems in top-flight politics than we might think. “If you look at our current politicians, you’ve got to feel

that there’s something going on in their backgrounds which makes them want to do it,” she says.

This might remind us that Churchill is not the only drinker to make it to 10 Downing Street. Alistair Campbell’s old boss Tony Blair admitted in his memoirs to drinking wine during stressful periods in office. And everybody remembers the argument and associated wine spillage in the Boris Johnson household just before the current Prime Minister assumed power.

What does Millar think engenders pressure for the likes of Churchill, Blair and Johnson? “I think it’s just very high-pressured. It’s very competitive and it’s quite lonely. Almost certainly, there are more problems than we know about; I have Labour MP friends who have had serious problems.”

Do we talk about it enough? “I think we’re beginning to – but Estelle Morris was a long time ago.” Estelle just said: “I can’t do it and it’s not for me.” But Millar also points to double standards, mentioning the recent case of James Brokenshire MP, who left Cabinet on account of his cancer having spread. “That’s interesting, isn’t it?” says Millar. “That it’s okay to say that – but to say you’re giving up because you’re not functioning well mentally is deemed less acceptable.”

Of course, Churchill lurks in the background here – the bulldog expression, the look of the fighter. Inwoven in his image is that you can fight back against depression. I mention to Millar Johnson’s regular referencing of Churchill. Millar replies: “I expect he [Johnson] probably thinks it [mental health] is all a big girls’ game – or



Sir Winston Churchill, *Interior at Breccles*, Date uncertain

however he likes to phrase it.”

But Churchill was living at a time where work stress was to be handled with private stoicism. Today, we are beginning to understand the enormity of the problem.

Dr. Konrad Hitz is a medical director at The Kusnacht Practice in Switzerland. He thinks that the pressures Churchill faced are relevant in all leadership roles. “CEOs and business leaders have many similar pressures to those in political power,” he tells me. “Making big decisions that affect many people’s lives can present an individual with huge challenges and stresses – and, I think that has been magnified during the pandemic with many business closures and job losses.”

Hitz also points to a recent study by the National Institute of Mental Health, which found that 72 per cent of executives and entrepreneurs are directly or indirectly affected by mental health ►







Chartwell in Kent, where Churchill would often retreat to paint his 'daubs'

issues compared to just 48 per cent of non-entrepreneurs. “A psychological pandemic has been unleashed by the virus,” he argues.

## “72 per cent of executives and entrepreneurs are directly or indirectly affected by mental health issues.”

So what can we learn from Churchill about tackling this pandemic? In the first place, his biography displays strategies of coping that might seem to us less sensible than they did to his contemporaries.

One of these was drinking, and everybody knows about the obligatory Pol Roger and the bottles of wine at breakfast. Sometimes, we glimpse that this took its toll on his leadership. For instance, on the 6th July 1944, Churchill got very drunk before a Defence Committee meeting. You can feel that Anthony Eden, the then foreign secretary and future prime minister, was

underplaying the affair somewhat when he recalled that ‘really ghastly Defence Committee meeting nominally on Far Eastern strategy. Winston hadn’t read the paper and was perhaps rather tight. Altogether a deplorable evening.’

Hitz thinks this is one area where we need to eschew Churchill’s example: “Individuals are now better educated about the dangers associated with heavy drinking than they were 80 years ago.” But in Hitz’s opinion we’re not out of the woods yet. “Clearly there are still challenges around alcohol,” he continues. “A recent survey in the US indicated that alcohol abuse has risen during the pandemic, with approximately 17 million over-18-year-olds now having an alcohol use disorder, with 10 per cent of children living in a home with a parent who has a drinking problem.”

Even so, historians are now beginning to argue that Churchill’s alcoholism may have been exaggerated – not least by him. Everybody knows the famous gag that he had always taken more out of alcohol than it had taken out of him. Andrew Roberts’ verdict feels like a corrective of the myth: “The overwhelming evidence is that Churchill loved alcohol, drank steadily by sipping, had a hardy constitution and was only rarely affected by it.”

Either way, drink wasn’t Churchill’s only way of coping. Today, there is mounting appreciation for Churchill’s achievement as an artist, and there can be little doubt that his ‘daubs’, as he modestly called them, represented a profound alleviation of stress.

Susan M. Coles is an arts educator, who has long been arguing through the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Art, Craft and Design in Education which she runs with Labour MP Sharon Hodgson, that the arts should have broader representation on the national curriculum. She emphasises the good that painting did the wartime leader: “For Churchill it was also an escape,” she says. “Making art is where we step off life’s conveyor belt and have contemplative moments. We use our hands as well as our mind and it’s invaluable to busy people.” This, she argues was the case for Churchill too. “His role was so pivotal in politics that the escape hatch was making art, and as he mainly worked with landscapes, he re-engaged with nature, which is also empowering in lifting the human spirit.”

Over at The Kusnacht Practice, Hitz agrees with Coles’ assessment, although he also points to the many other options, less applicable to Churchill, available at the clinic: “At The Kusnacht Practice, we encourage many patients to be creative and to explore a hobby or pastime that helps them to relax, slow down and remove stresses from their lives. Exercise, reading, cookery, music and art therapy activities such as painting and sculpture can be highly beneficial when employed alongside other therapies. If a patient can find a passion point like painting, that can be a useful tool in recovery.”

But through all this, the impression remains that Churchill’s principal remedy was work. Whatever else he crammed into his 90 years, a back-breaking schedule was the dominant fact of his life. Even in the 1930s, which we think of as his period in the wilderness,

his work rate was phenomenal. Roberts reports: “In 1930 he gave 61 major speeches, then 48 in 1931, 28 in 1932, 41 in 1933, 39 in 1934, 54 in 1935, 23 in 1936, 55 in 1937, 39 in 1938, and 36 in 1939, not including hundreds of lesser interventions in Westminster and scores of articles.” Reading this, it’s possible to see how Churchill steamrolled his way to the premiership by sheer force of will.

## “Making art is where we step off life's conveyor belt and have contemplative moments.”

For Alastair Campbell, work was also an escape. Millar tells me that she was always amazed at how charming and amusing her husband could be at work, reserving his low moods for her in the domestic setting. Before taking up his Downing Street role, Campbell informed Blair of his condition. “He said to Blair, ‘You just need to be aware that this has happened,’” Millar recalls.



An early self-portrait by Churchill, thought to have been painted when he was still depressed after the failure of the Dardanelles expedition. By Source, Fair use, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=66326956>

“And Blair said, ‘That’s fine, I’m totally aware of it’.” Millar continues: “For Alistair, work was the way he dealt with his mental health and he did work phenomenally hard – and was very, very productive. It was a positive in that sense for the government, who were his employers, but it was never good for his family.”

All of which makes one recall that it was Clementine Churchill all along who bore the burden of Churchill’s exceptional life. When I speak with another high-achieving sufferer Lord Dennis Stevenson, the former chair of HBOS, and co-author of a report ‘Thriving at Work’ that was warmly welcomed by the Theresa May’s administration, he states that he had a similar approach to Campbell: “There are some people who can cope. In my case, I’ve run large companies, and major not-for-profit things, and no one was the wiser. But it’s like walking through glue.”

Hitz is familiar with the condition of the workaholic: “We see a number of workaholic cases at The Kusnacht Practice, many of them entwined with other behaviours and dependencies. During the pandemic, work-life balances have been challenged and, with our leadership treatment programmes, we try to reset this balance, encouraging routines and defining clear lines between work and free time.”

The conversation around Churchill, feels like a measure of how far we have come in the question of mental health. Roberts makes it clear that the the image of Churchill as a depressive has been exaggerated. It might be that this in itself should guard us against inaccurate labelling in this field where definitions are still in their infancy.

Even so, he undoubtedly had his low moments. And to study Churchill is to encounter someone highly resourceful, intelligent and gifted who needed to discover his own path forward whenever the black dog struck.



Sir Winston Churchill, Distant View of the Pyramids, 1921

So what conclusions can we draw about Churchill’s life? Hitz quotes Churchill himself: “Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the courage to continue that counts. If you’re going through hell, keep going.” Hitz adds that this mantra, “is equally applicable now as we start to come out of this generation’s global crisis.” Millar, meanwhile, argues strongly for the need to create networks of support in communities, in line with her own online group which helps the partners of those suffering with poor mental health. Stevenson agrees, saying that mental health “doesn’t need the politicians anymore”, pointing to the momentum already established on the question.

But he also has some sound advice: “At first I was very bad at externalising issues and problems – and not just mental health problems. But as I got older, I got better at articulating it.”

Stevenson’s words remind me of an early scene in Macbeth, when the hero first meets the witches in the Scottish wilderness. He asks them what they are up to, and they reply: “A thing without a name.”

It occurs to me that this power of naming is very strong, and that Churchill, the greatest wordsmith ever to assume the prime ministership, showed to a high degree the importance of that when he spoke of his black dog. Now that we too are embarked on that same project to address this issue, there’s much we can learn from his struggles. f



## Special Report

# Are the universities doing enough to help students into work?

BY PATRICK CROWDER

**I**f you ask almost any student why they go to university, they'll tell you: "To get a job after I graduate" or, "To help my career". It amounts to a longstanding contract between the university system and its clientele – parents and students. But after the 2007 financial crisis struck, and still more after the advent of the pandemic, there have been doubts as to whether the young are really getting a good deal out of the university system.

Are universities doing enough to help students achieve their goals? Over the summer, Finito World took a special look at university careers services across the UK to see what works, what doesn't, and what can be done to improve them.

The first issue is the value of a degree as a whole. Given the sheer numbers of people now achieving graduate and postgraduate degrees, employers are looking outside of academic excellence for attributes that make a particular applicant stand out. This can be an internship or work placement, independent work completed outside of university, the imaginative force of a candidate's application – and any number of other factors depending on an applicant's chosen field.

Euan Blair, son of the former UK prime minister Tony Blair, is an entrepreneur who runs an education start-up called Multiverse. The company, which made headlines this year on account of its valuation at £147 million, helps young people find apprenticeships as an alternative to university altogether. He



Euan Blair, son of former UK prime minister Tony Blair.

believes that the culture of universities must change to focus more on employment after graduation.

"There are a lot of people in the university system who fervently believe that they should not be equipping people for jobs and that it should be learning for learning's sake and people should do what they enjoy to learn," Blair tells Finito World. "And that's all well and good – until it isn't. Actually people have to make trade-offs, and that's the case particularly when universities have allowed there to be this assumption that if you go and get a degree, you'll be able to get a job."

Not everyone comes to university with a clear idea of their career ahead. It's certainly true that students will

sometimes attend university with a "learning for learning's sake" mindset, particularly in the arts and humanities. This mindset is noble in many ways, but it has its drawbacks. For instance, students may find that the degree they've completed out of a love for the subject matter does not result in any clear path to the world of work.

Antonia Clark is a careers consultant at City University of London with over 25 years of experience. She often sees the struggles students face when trying to figure a way to make a living from their passions.

"Many of them are studying subjects that they're interested in, but they just can't relate it to a career," Clark explains. "Then they get to the point ►



Cambridge University (Vadim Sherbakov)





Antonia Clark, careers consultant at City University of London

where they postpone [finding a career], because everything they think they see is banking or finance, and they don't want it."

In her role, Clark has seen up close the clash between academia and employability described by Blair. "There's this huge divide between people like me and academics - some of whom say 'we don't want to do that stuff, we focus on the research'. If students want careers advice we employ a careers service or a placement team and that's where they should go," she continues. "But actually it's wrong to think young people are that motivated. Many of them feel daunted by the task and an overwhelming sense of competition perpetuated by the media. I think it's about the guarantee of these skills being built in to the degree."

One of the ways that university careers services try to help students is to get them thinking about employment early in their university careers - typically during the first year. However, careers services typically have low engagement with the student population. "Only a small proportion of students use the careers service, and that's pretty much the case nationally. For us (at City) it's about 11 per cent or 12 per cent of the student body," Clark concedes.

Even the act of finding people to speak with for this feature proved Antonia's point - the general attitudes of the students contacted were those of apathy, lack of confidence, and ignorance of their universities' careers services. To combat this lack of engagement, some universities, including City, are introducing mandatory employment-focused modules.

"This coming year, all City degrees will have some sort of professional experience built into them. First-year business students all take part in an employability module. Science, maths, and engineering have one in year one as well, which is just a small element of their course, but it's there," Clark explains. "We're piloting a sociology course that will work with a local charity as well. It's that stuff that really focuses a student in terms of competing at the end and giving them valuable experience."

If the value of a degree in terms of employability comes from apprenticeships and work experience, students may wonder what the point of the academic side of university is in the first place. Aside from the fact that many jobs require a university qualification, data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that graduates were less likely to be unemployed during the pandemic.

In a study focused on graduate outcomes during the pandemic, the ONS found that graduate unemployment "has been consistently lower than the total" unemployment rate. This doesn't mean that graduates haven't been hard hit by the pandemic - in fact, the same study shows that unemployment rates for recent graduates were much higher than usual, reaching a worrying 12 per cent in the third quarter of 2020.

Even so, it's still far better to be a graduate than not. The ONS chalks up graduates' lower rates of unemployment compared to other groups to their higher level of skills as well as their

higher levels of "occupational and geographic mobility". However, just because a graduate is employed, they are not necessarily in a professional career appropriate to their skill level, and - worryingly again - the skill-to-work mismatch turns out to be higher amongst graduates.

The problems with the current system are clear. A greater focus on apprenticeships while attending university is just one of many possible solutions. Robert Halfon MP, who chairs the Education Select Committee, has frequently spoken and written about the ways that universities need to evolve in order to survive as an effective, sensible path to employment.

"If I was in government, I'd be incentivising every company in the country to work with universities and give grants to universities conditional on whether they have a significant number of degree apprenticeships. Every university should do it. It depresses me that Oxford has closed its doors to any kind of apprenticeship at all," Halfon tells us.

While there is movement towards greater integration between universities and the working world, traditional institutions have often not joined in that shift.

"We look at elite universities the wrong way in our country," Halfon continues. "An elite university should have a lot of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, brilliant graduate outcomes, embedded work experience and training in the curriculum - and, most of all, significant degree apprenticeships."

Euan Blair adds that he is wary of giving universities advice, but that there are clearly issues with the current system: "I think that there will always be and should always be a place for purely academic learning in a university environment," he says. "The challenge is, it sort of became this monopoly on early careers in a really negative way.



Robert Halfon MP, who chairs the Education Select Committee

That's made universities complacent and it's created this lack of equal access to opportunity - particularly around careers."

University is an expensive undertaking, both in terms of time and money, yet it is now almost universally expected of Britain's middle class young people. Attending university for the sake of pure academia is considered acceptable, even honourable, provided the funds are there - but students who attend university with the idea that they will get a job more easily after graduation may be in for a shock.

The great difficulty in writing about the universities is that the stories of apathy in the sector meet the problem that apathy tends not to be particularly responsive. Nevertheless, below we have compiled profiles of the most prominent careers services in the UK, based on extensive research and interviews with members of staff. Insodoing we have come up with our inaugural Finito World rankings of the top universities.

In order to do this, we took criteria including technological offering, presence of noteworthy guest speakers, visibility on campus, social media content, size of team, navigability of website, and engagement levels

of students to produce our exclusive Top Ten of the best careers services in the country. We also factored in a university's place on the QS Graduate Employability Rankings of 2020, which focused on outcomes for students after leaving university. By examining these factors and assigning ratings for each category based on our own research, we were able to produce overall scores for each university.

So what are the findings? Firstly, while we saw much that was promising among universities, the student engagement is almost always too low and the services in question insufficiently hands-on. There remains much to be done to make sure that students get a fair shake in a highly competitive global economy.

Some areas for improvement turned up time and again. Extensive early engagement with the careers service did happen at some universities, but it was certainly not the norm. Many of the universities are rightly proud of the one-to-one counselling aspect of their programmes, but unfortunately they are only seeing a small percentage of students on that basis. Lack of engagement with the careers service can also stem from the fact that students may not be thinking about their future careers during their first or second year. It should be a university's job to ensure that students are aware of the services offered, and to remind them that it is best to begin thinking about careers early in their university lives. Some universities did achieve this through engagement during fresher's week, careers fairs, and careers-based modules, but by no means all and that approach should be universal. In addition, if engagement among the Russell Group universities isn't high careers services within UK raises serious questions for other universities, where student employability outcomes are far lower -

and in some cases worryingly so.

Secondly, it is clear that there is a considerable gap in the national fabric where a profound mentoring service ought to be. It is clear that this needs to be enacted by the private sector, as this magazine's parent company has shown. However, it may be that the private sector needs to partner with our existing university institutions at a far deeper level, and Finito World will be exploring these ideas in subsequent issues. Put simply, many of the universities lacked a personal touch in their careers guidance and would benefit from taking a more one-to-one approach. Careers counselling should take the form of mentorship, not one-off meetings. By keeping the same counsellor/mentor, a student can build a relationship with them, allowing the student to open up about their true dreams and aspirations. We know there is a lot of anxiety around asking for help, so it is much better for a student to speak with someone they already know and trust than to walk into an office for the first time not knowing what to expect.

However, there were many silver linings too, and these were to be found when we were able to conduct in-depth conversations with careers officers.

We have tended to find members of staff at these universities to be both qualified and motivated to help their students. The apathy we have referenced surrounding careers centres has not been displayed by any of the university staff profiled in this feature. In some cases, they have also been disappointed in lack of engagement with their services, especially when the services they offer would be beneficial to students if they took advantage of them. ►



# The Exclusive Finito University Rankings

## 1. Cambridge University

Finito Score: 93/100

Sometimes considered the top careers centre in the UK, this offering is run by Director Jenny Blakesley. In 2020, Cambridge careers centre made the switch from its old system to Handshake – an app that allows students to network with employers, contact the careers centre and schedule meetings, check the status of their applications, and see new job listings tailored to their profiles – it has achieved positive reviews on the App Store. The careers service also provides advice and support for current students at all levels of study as well as alumni. Alumni benefit from the Alumni Careers Connect programme, which connects graduates with mentors who have successfully transitioned to the world of work. This is all very good, but there have been occasional bumps in the road in terms of delivery. In 2019, the careers centre sent out an email entitled, “Disappointing results? Our top advice,” which many students found patronising and alarming. To their credit, the service subsequently issued an apology.

### Director Jenny Blakesley

When she took over the Director of Careers role at Cambridge in 2019, Jenny Blakesley already had 15 years’ experience in the field. She led the careers services at the London School of Economics and King’s College London after working in careers at Queen Mary, the University of London, and more.



Oxford University (Ben Seymour)

## 2. Oxford University

Finito Score: 91/100

She was instrumental in the switch to Handshake. Blakesley studied at the University of Bath, where she received a BSc in Pharmacology.

The Oxford Careers Service is housed in an appropriately aged and ornate building located next to Wycliffe Hall. The service offers online resources that help with CVs, networking, and interviews, as well as traditional in-person guidance. The careers service publishes “*The Oxford Guide to Careers*” annually, which contains industry information, tips from employers, and help with planning for the future. Students and alumni can find job listings, book meetings, and see upcoming careers events through the online CareerConnect portal. Their website is good, but visually uninteresting. Extensive advice is available for students on the website, however it is presented mainly as text with little video content. Despite this, they are still providing a good service with few issues.



### Director Jonathan Black

Jonathan Black has led the careers service at Oxford for 13 years. He studied and pursued a career in engineering before moving into finance. Now, he helps students by creating new careers programmes, delivering advice seminars, and coaching students individually. He wrote the book “*Where am I going and can I have a map?*” in 2017, which Emma Jacobs of the Financial Times described as a “wise, calming, and pragmatic” careers guide.

## 3. University College London

Finito Score: 85/100

UCL Careers offers an employment newsletter, an annual careers guide, alumni mentoring, and tailored one-on-one advice. UCL students can book three different types of appointment with the careers centre, depending on their needs. Meetings for applications advice, interview coaching, and short, general guidance are available with UCL careers consultants. Their website could be easier to navigate, and video content is not prominently displayed. The careers service would benefit from an overhaul of its website, because they do offer good services and information which is easily locatable.



### Director Karen Barnard

Karen Barnard has been the Director of the UCL careers service for 17 years, following two years as head of careers at St. Mary’s University. Her experience allows her to help students with motivation, interview skills, and finding the right fit for them after university. She focuses on work experience, which

has become difficult to manage during the pandemic.

“We’ve been promoting as much virtual work experience and that sort of thing as we can, which is as good as you can get in that situation, but it’s still really difficult for the students,” Barnard explains.

Without in-office work experience, students miss out on the ‘try before you buy’ aspect of finding a career. This could lead to students not finding the right job to fit their skills and interests, but Barnard says that many graduates are concerned about finding any job in the wake of Covid-19.

“There are the concerns that a student will have, not least of which is living through a global pandemic, which is one thing, but also the recession, their future and what it looks like, and obviously the backlog of graduates we’ll see from 2020 and 2021. Their confidence in the jobs market is low, coupled with the fact that the work experience stuff has not been there either.”

To allow students to gain work experience during the pandemic, Barnard and her team have begun to focus on work-related learning, which takes place in the classroom.

“One thing we’re doing to raise the standard is work-related learning. Not internships or learning in the workplace, but work-related learning. For example, we have job taster sessions and scenario activities where employers will bring real-life problems onto campus, and students solve them in groups. They’re working on real-life problems under the pressure of time and they get a feel for it,” Barnard explains. “You can do that reasonably en masse. Rather than one person having an internship, we can

have a class of 30-50 in small groups all taking part. I think that’s a way to do things at scale, particularly when there are fewer external experiences available.”

We have established that work experience is becoming increasingly valuable in terms of graduate employment, which brings us back to our previous question; where does the value of a degree actually come from? Karen believes it’s not about any one part, but the experience as a whole.

“The value of a degree in today’s marketplace is about the whole package of being a university student. The research skills and study skills you get from having done a degree are definitely important, but I think the whole package is equally important. Co-curricular offerings from universities include work experience and placements, but they’re also about contact with employers, clubs and societies, volunteering work, ambassadorial roles for the university... that whole package is valuable,” Barnard says. “We know that employers look at experience from students in the broadest sense, rather than just saying ‘Great, you’ve got a 2.1.’” Barnard also warns students on the job search to really consider the roles they apply for, rather than simply ‘ticking boxes’.

“The approach that we encourage students to take is ‘don’t do a job because you can do it, do a job because you want to do it’. They should think about themselves first – what their primary motivators are, what their values are, then rank all of those things. Have that list, look at the job description, and then see if it applies to you.”▶



## OPINION

# Deeper Questions Should be Asked About University Education Following Covid

BY GARRETT WITHINGTON

Throughout the pandemic most university students have had no need to go and see their educational stomping ground let alone occupy the buildings for educational purposes. What's interesting is that many have graduated and passed their studies regardless. This begs the question: "Are the current practices of universities antiquated and only kept to provide a veneer of prestige?"

Education has remained a hot topic throughout the pandemic. There have been questions throughout as to whether it is right for pupils to return to school and how to carry out assessment. But from the perspective of university students there's really been one question. Should we pay full tuition? The answer more often than not is: Why should we?

Actually, it isn't just a pandemic-specific question. The fact that we're asking this speaks to fundamental concerns about our current educational structures.

As a recent graduate in the humanities from a 'Russell Group' university, an epithet itself which is meant to garner prestige, my experience may vary greatly from others who studied in engineering or medicine, and may obscure interpretations of what is considered 'value' for a degree.

Regardless, for those in the humanities like myself, there has been little value to justify the cost. There have been inaccessible facilities. Lectures have been reduced to the equivalence of a YouTube

video or podcast. Meanwhile, in-person seminars have been replaced by Zoom meetings where you are greeted with a panel of awkward stares of disinterested students who want nothing more than to go for a beer.

None of that's to the good, but is it really that much worse than what we had before the pandemic? Then we had sprawling lecture theatres in which you listened to the drowned sounds of a person reading off a powerpoint (though for full disclosure, I did benefit from a few inspiring lecturers). Crammed seminar rooms discussing theories whose application to the real world was always questionable. Most students waited nervously to be picked from the line-up to answer a question, and hoped for it all to end - again, so that they could go for a beer.

## “FOMO - Fear of Missing Out - shouldn't be a reason for pursuing higher education.”

Try to think of another industry in which people would be willing to pay so much for so little. Half of the depressingly low 'contact hours' are made up of lectures, an inherently non-interactive exercise. So why shouldn't there be an option to just view a pre-recorded video so as to provide students a greater flexibility in the structure of their learning and pursue more extracurriculars or internships? The Open University has already demonstrated that more resources can be moved online, yet established campus universities remain reluctant to do so outside of their libraries.

The internet's endless number of resources has democratised learning, further chipping away at the validity of a closed university learning experience. Their red brick buildings instead act as monuments to times gone by. What's more, the main value of universities is their clubs, which are more often than not run and financed by students themselves. Value at university, then, is to be found in the opportunities provided by third parties who use universities as a platform to network.

Unsurprisingly, a report by the House of Commons Petitions Committee argued against the need to reimburse students for their tuition during Covid: it felt like an attempt to quell future arguments of tuition. What we really need is to ask a more existential question about university as a whole, and why there are such low expectations all round. Students often complained about the re-use of lecture slides during the pandemic -though in truth this was commonplace well before Covid.

It might be that I am an outlier. For instance, over 80 per cent of students are said to be happy with the quality of their course according to the National Student Survey 2020. If these statistics are accurate, then I would ask many students to reflect on their time at university and ask themselves what true 'skills' they developed in three years that are applicable to the real world. Social life has become a common argument as to why many go to university, but FOMO - Fear of Missing Out - shouldn't be a reason for pursuing higher education. Many universities do not even include first-year grades to the overall degree award.

The reality has dawned on many that they are able to recreate the learning experiences from the comfort of their

own bedroom. There are now 1.8 million undergraduates in the UK, and with the Blair era's insistence on 50 per cent of secondary students going to university - a policy kept by the Conservatives - the degree itself has been devalued. Soon it will be the Masters that becomes the standard-bearer with universities effectively bribing students to sign up to Masters courses in return for slashing third year tuition fees - all before receiving their final grade.

## “Covid has not proved to be a unique year in ‘value’ of education but instead exposed the systemic failings of universities.”

Education is vital to individuals and society, making it all the more important that it be regularly scrutinised. Covid has not proved to be a unique year in 'value' of education but instead exposed the systemic failings of universities. Covid provided the perfect opportunity to widen the debate surrounding universities beyond tuition fees but it appears that this will not happen. Instead students will continue to be used as cash cows and placated by endless supplies of alcohol. Will they ever ask the question: Was it all worth it? To paraphrase, Boris Johnson when he announced lifting Covid restrictions: If not now, when?

## 4. Imperial College London

Finito Score: **83/100**

The ICL Careers Service provides all you would expect from a top-level organisation: alumni support, one-on-one counselling, networking events, and online careers resources. What makes it stand out is its focus on students' wellbeing. The front page of the careers service website features frequently asked questions about the careers service and the job market during Covid-19, as well as a section dedicated to diversity and inclusion. The service also has a section called "You said... we did", which explains how the university is addressing issues with the service that have been flagged up by students. ICL could be higher on the list if their careers office was more centrally located. A larger emphasis on employability during fresher's week would also improve its score.

Director Jason Yarrow

Jason Yarrow has worked in careers advice for 17 years, becoming Director of the Careers Service at ICL in 2017. He holds degrees in Careers Guidance, Management, and an MA in Geography and European Studies.

## 5. University of Manchester

Finito Score: **78/100**

The Manchester Careers Service is designed to help students not only find a job but decide what job will suit them best. One of the first things you see on its website is a downloadable guide with the name "I don't know what I want to do". This guide assures students that being unsure about their future is perfectly fine and offers strategies to find a career that will fit a student's passions

and abilities. The service has a webchat feature for quick advice, and traditional meetings can be booked as well. One issue is the lack of transparency in regards to staff. While there are contact details available for the careers office, it is not clear who you will be talking to. This issue is such that we were unable to profile the director of the careers service, as the information is not available. The service does emphasise work experience early in their students' careers, with internship opportunities for first and second years displayed prominently on the front page. The location of the careers office is central and easily accessible, and the resources on the website look sound. This careers service would be much higher on the list if they made their staff more available for contact, and had more video resources on the website.

## 6. Bristol University

Finito Score: **78/100**

Over 60 members of staff work at the Bristol University Careers Service, under Director Stuart Johnston. An online portal offers links to events, CV help, job listings, and a live chat if students need help. The website is clean but unimaginative, and can be tiring to navigate when looking for specific information. Their Tyndall Avenue office is near the main campus, sporting colourful signage right next to the student's union lettings building. The careers service should be more prominent during fresher's week, but the university does have a wide variety of events and a careers week.

Director Stuart Johnson

Stuart Johnson has led the careers team at Bristol since 2014. We asked him how his team helps students work towards employment after graduation. ►





“I don’t think there’s any kind of magic bullet for this. There are a few tricks you can do to try and turn things around quickly, but that doesn’t mean it would be sustainable,” Johnson explains. “We need to work with students’ ambitions and dreams – it’s not about crowbarring students into opportunities to make the numbers look better.”

Motivation to succeed is always a hurdle that must be overcome in university, but Stuart has seen the way that Covid-19 has compounded the issue.

“It’s clearly hit the younger generation disproportionately,” Johnson continues, “They’re facing a tough job market and whether students have stayed in their university accommodation or returned to their families, they’re living in less-than-ideal situations. A lot of them haven’t had the vaccine yet, they’re faced with bad news about the labour market, and some of them can just give up.”

Johnson believes that motivation and opportunity both work hand-in-hand to help students get on track. He says that a major part of his work is “about raising ambitions and helping (students) see the breadth of opportunities available to them”. Many students come to university motivated, with a clear plan for their futures.

I ask Johnson how he helps students

who aren’t quite there yet.

“One of the things we pride ourselves in is the support we offer to such students,” Johnson replies. “That could be because they come from a disadvantaged background, they could lack the social capital, or they could have just been slow off the mark to think of these things – so as a general principle we try to engage students very early in their university careers.”

According to Johnson, motivating and preparing students for the world of work is only half of the job: “At least as important is creating the pull from the other side with employers who are interested in our students,” he explains. “That’s partly the big-name employers, which is why we’re so targeted by The Times’ Top 100, but importantly also with local small to medium sized enterprises. We play an important role in the civic infrastructure of the city and growing the local economy.”

The job market is complex and intimidating, especially now, so Johnson is trying to teach students to understand it and remain flexible in their ambitions.

“We help students understand where the jobs are, because if they think that there aren’t any, that’s where they can quickly give up hope.” And where are those jobs to be found? “They might need to look in a different place or sector than they were originally thinking, but it’s much better to do that than to wait around for the ‘perfect opportunity’.”

Johnson understands the issues that students are currently facing, and he’s worked in the careers service for seven and a half years. In closing, we asked him to give some general advice to a

student or fresh graduate reading this now. “Use your networks if you have them and focus your applications,” Johnson says. “I’m always nervous of people saying they’ve applied for 100 jobs and not got them – it’s usually better to apply for five really well.”

## 7. University of Nottingham

Finito Score:  
**77/100**

The Nottingham Careers Service office is located near the central student service centre, offering one-on-one guidance and resources to its students. The careers service is currently operating online, and the website prominently features a section called “Graduating in 2021”. This link takes students to a list of statements that may apply to them, such as “I’m worried about the job market” or “I’d like to gain work experience”, alongside relevant advice for each situation. They also offer Magpie, which is an online learning engine specifically tailored to each student based on level, career aspirations, and learning style. We have been unable to find evidence that students engage with the careers service during fresher’s week, but they do hold a careers fair and a wide variety of events. The website could also be slightly easier to navigate, though it holds a significant amount of information in video format.

### Senior Careers Advisor Joanne Workman

Joanne Workman has worked in careers at Nottingham since 2019 and was promoted to Senior Careers Advisor in March 2021. She holds an MA in Career Development from Nottingham Trent University, which she achieved in 2019. ▶

Nottingham University (Snebil Jonathan)







The Centre Building at LSE

## HEADLINE FACTS AND FIGURES - 2020

### Graduate Employment Rate

**86.4%**

Decrease of 1.1 percentage points from 2019

### Graduate High-skilled Employment Rate

**66.0%**

Increase of 0.4 percentage points from 2019

### Median Salary for Graduates (to the nearest £500)

**£35,000**

Increase of £1,000 from 2019

### Median Salary Premium for Graduates over Non-graduates

**£9,500**

Increase of £500 from 2019

**Graduates and postgraduates continue to have higher employment rates than non-graduates.** However, employment rates for working-age graduates, postgraduates and non-graduates alike were slightly lower in 2020 compared to 2019.

**In 2020, the employment rate for working-age graduates – those aged 16 to 64 – was 86.4%,** down 1.1 percentage points from 2019 (87.5%). **For working-age postgraduates the employment rate was 88.2%, for non-graduates it was 71.3%;** these data represent falls of 0.5 and 0.7 percentage points from 2019, respectively.

**66% of working-age graduates were in high-skilled employment, compared with 78.4% of postgraduates and 24.5% of non-graduates.** The graduate rate increased 0.4 percentage points in 2019. The rate for non-graduates was 0.6 percentage points lower than in 2019 while for postgraduates it was 0.5 percentage points down on the previous year.

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/graduate-labour-markets>



(Mohammad Shabbosseini)

## 8. London School of Economics

Finito Score: **75/100**

The LSE careers service offers advice tailored to its focus as a university. The service offers advice on the usual things, such as CVs, interviews, and further study, but it also provides specific job market information and help navigating the psychometric assessments that are common in corporate job applications. You can find their staff, but it is not as easy as some other universities with a prominent “meet the staff” page. Their video resources are also not very well developed, but the service does offer many text-based resources. The department also offers career planning advice broken down for each year of study, outlining the events, internships, and networking opportunities available throughout a student’s time at LSE.

### Director Elizabeth Darlington

Elizabeth Darlington has worked in the careers office at LSE since 2012, taking the role of director in 2019. Prior to joining the team, she gained experience as a careers advisor at both Oxford and Cambridge, as well as working in graduate recruitment at Barclay’s and L’Oreal. She achieved Honours in her BA History degree at Manchester University.

## 9. University of Leeds

Finito Score: **75/100**

Leeds Careers Centre is located near the refectory and student union. Its staff can offer same-day advice as well as mock interviews, application support, and help choosing a career for those who are still exploring. Its colourful website is neatly laid out with highlighted sections including appointment bookings, disability support, and judgement-free advice for changing or leaving a course. Its score would be improved if it had a more tangible focus on early engagement with the careers service, and if it were to graduate from a basic booking system to a more dedicated app or web service.

### Mary Cawley

Mary Cawley has been Work Placement Project Officer at Leeds for three years, focusing on securing internship opportunities for her students. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and Theology from the University of Birmingham, and has past experience in both admissions and recruitment.

## 10. University of Edinburgh

Finito Score: **68/100**

The Edinburgh Careers Service is clear and easy to navigate. The department also has solid engagement on social media, which is updated frequently. The service’s website features an “ask a student” live chat function, as well as quick links to resources available on the front page for students in a hurry. The office is located in the main library. However it doesn’t have an app or programme for the careers service – at least not one that can be seen by the public – but their fairly simple appointment booking portal should suffice. The department arguably needs to expand its video resources, and while the service does have a careers week and engagement during fresher’s week, more contact with students would help their ranking.

### Director Shelagh Green

Shelagh Green has been Director of Careers and Employability at Edinburgh for 12 years, and she has worked in careers at Edinburgh since 2000. She is a higher education careers professional who states that her role is to “enable students to make successful transitions to life beyond university”. ▶



## OPINION

# The biggest challenge: the biggest opportunity

BY STUART THOMSON:

There is no doubt that most people's time at university goes past in a flash. It is a heady time of friendships, socialising, expanded horizons and, of course, learning. But the realisation soon dawns that attention has to be turned to getting a job. That's when things start to get really difficult.

Universities must sell themselves to prospective students. Most place an emphasis on the learning and wider life experiences that a student can look forward to when they study there. There may even be a nod to how successful students are in finding jobs when they leave. But such numbers are quite blunt and frankly don't really reveal much about a students' real job prospects. What students really need are activist careers services that offer support from day one. Careers services are one of the most undervalued parts of university life but ever increasing in importance.

There is no doubt that governments recognise the value of education. They are constantly looking to help support students at schools and in further education. They set standards and make demands of institutions, not least for careers support. For a large part higher education is no different but it is when it comes to careers services. They are left to the devices of the universities

themselves. Whilst higher education institutions are not actually required to provide careers advice, they clearly must because students expect it.

There is help and support available, so each university does not have to find its own way. There is also help and support available to students. The Office for Students has issued a "Graduate Employment and Skills Guide" and has offered a local graduates competition to help graduates into local employment opportunities.

**"The reality is that a student that is ready for the job market has a CV that allows them to stand out."**

The government has put additional investment into the National Careers Service. The Department for Education in Westminster is working with Universities UK, the (AGCAS) the Institute of Student Employers, the Office for Students, and others to understand what else they can do to support graduates entering the labour market.

The Higher Education Careers Services Unit supports the work of careers and employability professionals and their institutions and AGCAS is a membership organisation for higher education student career development and graduate employment professionals.

But the reality is that the picture remains a mixed one. When political

enquiries are undertaken into the careers support available then the picture that comes back is often mixed to say the least.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility issued a report in 2017, "The Class Ceiling: Increasing Access to the Leading Professions", which suggested that: "Universities should ensure careers services are a core part of the university support system and, in particular, target proven interventions at disadvantaged students to improve their awareness of career opportunities."

This highlighted the varied quality of careers advice but also suggested that employers needed to be more proactive in working with universities as well.

There are often arguments about the balance between equipping students for the workplace and seeing education as a widening of horizons. In other words, it shouldn't just be about getting a better job. But the reality, especially given the levels of debt that students come out of university with, is that there is an expectation that the institutions need to help students equip themselves from the world of work.

Universities must challenge themselves as to the types of job markets, they are looking at – local, national, global? And that will vary between courses as well. Thoughts are often focused on the inputs – the courses, the variety of learning, quality of teaching, the research base – but there needs to be an emphasis on the outputs for graduates as well.

The reality is that as universities come under the glare of government for how they have dealt with teaching during Covid, the money they pay their

leadership teams etc, that makes more aspects of their operations open to government diktat. This government isn't averse to intervention so there is no reason to believe that the university sector should be exempt.

So, careers services certainly need to empower individuals, offer mentoring, provide online skills for LinkedIn but also help improve personal productivity.

Universities also have to help students appreciate the importance of their careers service offer as well. Most students only start thinking about these issues towards the end of their time at university. The help and support from universities only comes in towards the end as well. Instead, the careers advice should be built in from the very start.

The reality is that a student that is ready for the job market has a CV that allows them to stand out. That means giving it attention throughout university life, not simply looking at it towards the end of their study.

It is another pensions problem. One of those issues that we only start thinking about when, in reality, it is already too late.

Universities need to protect and enhance their careers offer. They need to ensure that at a time of tight finances, especially post Covid, careers services are not cut.

Built and financed properly, engaging with businesses, helping to challenge social mobility, a university's career service can help to attract students looking to build a career and ensure a return on their investment. [f](#)

*By Stuart Thomson 'Head of Public Affairs at BDB Pitmans'*

(Albert Vincent Wu)







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Mark Semmence

## The headmaster of Repton School discusses mental health among young people

**I**t's broadly agreed that the future will be one in which creativity and teamwork will be more important than ever: it will not require one kind of individual, but a team of varied individuals. Furthermore, we're all now conscious of the growing incidence of mental issues among young people, with anxiety and peer pressure adding to their mental load. To arrive at a better society, we require balance, both in the team and in the individual: all must know who they are and play their part.

To withstand the challenges of the future, our young people will need to have experienced a balanced education in their formative years. As well as supporting individuals we must also arm young people with the resilience to confront challenges effectively. We should aim to instil a sense of proportion – of grounded reality and balance. Balance and health will always go together and incorporates not only physical and mental health but also academic, cultural, and societal health. If this can be done, the result is stability.

So how do we achieve this? The answer is we must change our binary approach to education. To begin with, we need to recognise that examinations are only one representation of a person's capabilities.

The Children's Society Annual Good Childhood Report recently found that more than a third of UK 15-year-olds scored low on life satisfaction with 'fear of failure' cited as a key factor. Perhaps this is why we score so poorly compared to our European counterparts when

asking our children to assess their own happiness. Only 64 per cent of UK children experienced high life satisfaction – the lowest figure of 24 countries surveyed by the OECD.

The UK's approach to exams makes us an international outlier. Former Education Secretary Lord Kenneth Baker notes that the UK is the only major economy in the world that imposes difficult exams on young people at the age of 16. Baker argues that we should replace them with a system that focuses on coursework and teacher assessments. A school 'leaving certificate' at 16 is, after all, a relic.

Life skills like communication, problem-solving, and adaptability are essential tools in managing mental health. These skills are in demand by employers, yet we still refer to them as 'soft skills', demeaning their value to the category of merely 'optional'. Boarding schools have more hours in the day and more opportunities to hone such skills. For instance, in-house dining three times a day is a defining part of the Repton experience, enabling pupils to fine-tune their emotional intelligence.

Meanwhile, the EdTech revolution invites all young people to the party. Technology can be leveraged to offer a more potent delivery of the curriculum and create collaborative opportunities which more efficiently prepare pupils for their contribution to 21st century society. Subjects like sport, music, art, and drama need to be profoundly integrated into studies. I am not talking about writing a song or rap about the periodic table

(though that was done very effectively by Tom Lehrer!) but inventive connections drawn between those creative subjects and the 'traditionally academic'. Engineers are, after all, some of our finest creative thinkers; some might even call them daydreamers.

Let's take another example. Design and Technology pupils should be putting mathematics to good use solving real-world design problems and take what they've learnt into a maths and a DT exam. Or another. Literature pupils should be able to see the artistic production of an era in the broader context of its music and art: they should be able to take the styles and techniques of those ages and bring them into the modern world. If Stormzy and Ed Sheeran can use traditional styles as the basis for 21st Century hits, then why should our young people not be taught the connection between history and heritage – topics which they might otherwise feel to be too 'dry'.

This is not 'cool teacher' speak. In fact, it's a necessary shift when you consider the scale and complexity of modern challenges. A sense of confidence within oneself is fundamental to good mental health, and to feeling oneself part of society. If the only focus of a school is on exams then we create imbalanced people who are not as productive as they might be and will struggle to find a place in the world. Not only that but we render the skills developed for the exams more or less useless since they have never been seen in the context of anything other than exams. There is a better – a more balanced – way. [f](#)



# Melissa Nobile on treating young people during Covid-19

THE PSYCHOLOGIST AT THE KUSNACHT PRACTICE, DISCUSSES HER EXPERIENCES OF OFFERING CARE TO YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THE PANDEMIC

**M**ental health has become such a ubiquitous phrase in our society that it is almost verging on cliché – all the more reason, then, to explore in detail what we really mean when we discuss it. The best way to do that is to talk with someone who really understands it, and deals with these issues on a daily basis.

Accordingly, I Zoom with Melissa Nobile, a psychologist at The Kusnacht Practice in Switzerland. Nobile's academic background is at the University of Geneva and the University of California in Los Angeles; she subsequently acquired additional training and clinical experience in Thailand and Europe.

Nobile's role at The Kusnacht Practice is particularly relevant for Finito World readers. Nobile is especially engaged in the practice's Youth Programme, with most of her work conducted with patients between the ages of 13 and 25.

For parents, this has been an anxious time. It is difficult to unpick pandemic-specific behavioural changes from developments that would probably have been scheduled to happen anyway, with or without Covid-19. Does Nobile have any advice on that score? "As a parent, it's okay to see just a little change in your child – signs might include a bit more frustration," Nobile explains. "But if you're getting to the point where there's a really concerning change, then you should seek help."

So how do problems tend to manifest themselves? "We look for areas where day-to-day functioning has altered," Nobile continues. "It could be that the child is suddenly really scared of going to school. At the beginning of the pandemic particularly, children were scared of losing a parent."

More generally, the pandemic has been an onslaught on our sense of pleasure in the world – that's true for young people too. The death tolls reported daily on our news sources chip away at our ability to be joyful. Is there a danger that we've become a morbid society?

**"As a parent, it's okay to see just a little change in your child."**

Nobile says that the impact of that is especially significant on those who were already vulnerable: "In those who are predisposed to struggle with anxiety that's obviously a problem. But it hasn't been confined to those people: it's also something we've seen in CEOs and high achievers." That's partly due to the uncertain time scales which are at the centre of what's been so challenging about the pandemic: "It's stressful for everybody. Nobody likes uncertainty for too long, as we have a sense of



loss of control if we're unable to plan for the future. A lot of people end up turning off the TV as they can't take that morbidity."

The danger, of course, is that a stressed-out CEO, however wealthy, is not going to be stressed out in a bubble – in the family unit, that stress is likely to be catching and affect younger members of the family. The Kusnacht Practice is careful to see the wider picture of what may be causing strain in a young person. "We're very focussed on the stresses that CEOs are under. It's the difficulty of having it all on your shoulders. We have to make sure that what the parents are feeling doesn't spread into the life of the teenager."

The Kusnacht Practice is a pioneer in the field of 'individualised treatment': "Our approach is tailor-made to each young person coming in," Nobile explains. "In group settings, the patient

comes in and has to adapt to the programme and the setting. It doesn't work for a lot of people. What we do is listen to the person coming in, and examine their specific problems – whether it be a specific symptom, or pandemic struggles, or something else altogether."

Crucially, this individualised approach is matched by an equally individualised family programme. "We'll get as many people as possible on site whenever possible – siblings, parents, grandparents, even nannies. They're going to go back home, and back into the family system, so changing someone without changing the rest of that family system usually doesn't work."

Nobile reports an increase in cases where she's needed to orchestrate a family therapy approach. "I'm doing more and more sessions where I do parental coaching around a situation. This will sound simple in theory but in truth, it's quite complicated. In some families it's about going back to really good communication. Uncertainty will give room for people to imagine the worst. What we need is for parents to explain as much as possible – and in words adapted to a child – what is going on. If you don't do that, a child may construct more catastrophic scenarios than is actually the case."

Nobile exhibits a profound understanding of her clients: "Children or teens are antennas," she says. "Given that, it's important for parents to say: 'Listen, this is a difficult time but we're going to be okay'."

So what can we all do to improve our domestic lives? Nobile advises focusing on specific family rituals so that no member of the family in question is isolated. "It's important to have that time where you still cook or go for a walk together. That will always be beneficial. I've had a lot of teenagers lately where they've found experiences in the pandemic that are very enriching.

Some have come out thinking, 'Even when things seem terrible, I'm able to cope with it and I can talk to someone'. Some have built that vital resilience."

**"We have to make sure that what the parents are feeling doesn't spread into the life of the teenager."**

Even so, the long-term picture remains uncertain, and that creates another layer of problems. "There'll be a minority group for whom difficulties will persevere," Nobile says. "There's the young student who maybe acquired a gaming addiction in lockdown – that will take time to treat. Or else there's those young people whose parents have lost their jobs at this time. In those instances, we're discussing a more long-term impact."

Career issues arise again and again, according to Nobile. "During the pandemic, we had a lot of time on our hands. That creates a lot of existential questioning, perhaps among young people who were already predisposed to that anyhow."

Fortunately, The Kusnacht Practice has a remarkable range of resources at its disposal. Business coaches and mentors and psychotherapists are on site, and Nobile makes sure her clients are able to explore their interests with a view to shaping their future.

Given The Kusnacht Practice's rarefied level of treatment, a lot of the young people Nobile sees are dealing with issues related to having successful parents. "If you have a successful parent, what does that mean for you? That's not always easy to figure out. You might

have a lot of resources, and accordingly, a huge number of choices. Paradoxically, that can make you petrified. For every door you're able to open, you're going to have to close so many others. That can freeze you in place."

So how does Nobile manage that? "That's what psychotherapy is all about, figuring it out in the context of each person's life story."

One might think that returning to the family unit after treatment would be difficult. But Nobile gives a nuanced reply. "It's a minority of the youth we receive who come to us because they want to. Most of the time the parents in question have been very concerned for a while. But by accepting the need to come here, they're sending a signal: 'Yes, I have a problem'. And admitting the need for help is incompatible with the normal developmental process of youth who strive for independence. After a few days they however usually realise that this is quite a nice place! They can set goals, work out problems they are facing and learn new skills – and find their voice."

And returning to the family – is that fraught with danger? Nobile doesn't see it that way. "We like to see it as an opportunity. Ultimately, life is not with us – it has to be back home. But once clients leave us, we provide daily support with virtual sessions with the main therapist and they can always come back for 'recharge weeks'."

It has been a difficult year for many, but it creates optimism to find people like Nobile working on the front lines, committed to the healing that all of us may feel we need after the tribulations of 2020 and 2021. <sup>f</sup>

*Nobile was talking to Christopher Jackson. Go to <https://kusnachtpractice.com>*



## Edtech interview Plum Innovations founder Ji Li

CHRISTOPHER JACKSON INTERVIEWS THE FOUNDER OF IMPRESSIVE START-UP PLUM INNOVATIONS, A COMPANY WITH THE WIND IN ITS SAILS

**The young Edtech company Plum Innovations is one of the success stories of the pandemic. When you talk to its founder Ji Li, you soon feel pleased for him: there's always room in the world for unassuming and competent leaders.**

Plum's business is to assist its client base – which consists of a range of 14 schools – with their Edtech delivery.

Li comes from Shanghai, China and has seen the business that he founded as a sole trader in 2014 grow by word of mouth: “I was working for a school and the head teacher recommended me by word of mouth.” He had soon incorporated Plum Innovations and has now grown the business to four people.

So how does the business work? Li works with schools to set up their Google systems and make sure that the teachers are confident with Google Classroom, a system which, Li argues, has many benefits: “It's really powerful, but it's also cloud-based, and it's secure,” he tells me. “In addition, it's free and teachers can access their files remotely regardless of where they are.”

Li points out that his business is especially helpful to teachers now that there has been an expansion in multi-academy trusts, which means that teachers have to work in different schools. “That definitely gave a push and means that people realise what benefits they can derive from a cloud-based platform,” Li explains

Clients were helped through the

pandemic by Li and his team. “My wife and kids flew to China in January 2020. Then Chinese schools switched to remote-learning in February”, Li recalls. “The government announced that schools were moving to remote-learning. So I was able to provide my clients with warning and the right infrastructure to cope.”

Li has a scrupulously polite and efficient manner, but beneath the unassuming demeanour there is a fierce advocate for making sure teachers are empowered by technology. You get the impression he really wants schools to function better – and knows that Plum Innovations is able to make that happen.

“That's the difference between us and other tech companies,” Li says. “We want to give teachers the power and the ability to use technology themselves.” Li doesn't want anyone to walk away from these sessions without a greater sense of excitement not just about technology but about teaching generally. “We work closely with computing leaders so teachers can be trained with necessary digital skills as much as possible. In return, we have learned a lot from our teachers too.”

Li is also animated by a keen social conscience. During our conversation, he repeatedly expresses his concern that those with disadvantaged backgrounds lack access to technology: “Parents don't have enough knowledge about how to work, and so we have been helping schools deal with parents as well.”

Plum Innovations remains a small



company – Li even calls it a ‘micro company’, and the firm has no grand sales operation, even though it has won several awards. “We basically just try to do a good job, and then grow organically.”

When discussing the overall impact of the pandemic, he says: “Remote-learning cannot replace class-learning at all – you need to have in-person interaction from the teacher. We need to move towards blended learning, where you use the time at home to memorise or understand theories – then put them into practice in the classroom.”

Once you've finished talking to him, you realise that Plum's success isn't just to do with technical knowledge and smart delivery systems: it's to do with the fact that Li has a passion for education. [f](#)

## How eBay can be more than just a side-hustle

BY PATRICK CROWDER

**Many people have started selling items on eBay during the pandemic, offering everything from hand-made crafts to vintage clothing. Statistics from eBay show that the number of self-made millionaires on the platform has risen by 35% over the last year alone.**

For most, eBay is a part time job. For Sam Clifford, it has been his full-time career for five years.

Clifford began his eBay business when he was 15, selling CDs of tips and tricks for the video game FIFA at £2 each.

“I had always done this as a side-hustle, which is the reputation the job has,” Clifford explains. “When I was 23, I got kicked out of my other job and said, ‘Right, I'm going to do this full-time’.”

From that point on, Clifford dedicated his full attention to his online business. He mainly sells smaller wholesale items and bases his product selection on current trends and market research.

“Ages ago a video of a woman laughing in a carpark wearing a Chewbacca mask went viral. It was just her wearing this kid's mask, but I knew straight after that everyone would jump on eBay to get that mask,” Clifford continues. “As stupid as it was, I knew there would be a significant, instant demand for it.”

Clifford fluctuates his prices based on demand the same way that airlines change ticket prices. He checks the prices of sold items on eBay to get a basis of what items are selling and what they are selling for. He warns against basing prices on current listings.



(Cristiano Tomás)

“One mistake people make a lot is they'll go on eBay and see things listed for higher prices than they're worth,” Clifford says. “I could list my sock on eBay for £30, but that doesn't mean it's worth that.”

When items are listed on eBay, an algorithm decides which listings will appear first in a search based on the rating of the seller. Clifford says that speed is the key to keeping that rating as close to five stars as possible: “You've got to be hot on it. When I first started I was delaying, doing it here and there, and that reflects badly on your account.”

He also recommends posting items and answering enquiries within a day, as well as offering free first-class postage with every sale.

Increased demand during the pandemic led to such a surge in new listings that many had to be removed to ensure security and disallow price gouging. Clifford has witnessed these effects of Covid-19 on the market first-hand, but he is not discouraged by the new competition. “The market has gotten a lot bigger, but there are a lot more buyers as well. People are

sitting at home bored with nothing to do. There is more competition, but I think there are at least three times more buyers.”

Making a full-time career through eBay is an attractive prospect, but Clifford warns that the dedication it requires is not a good fit for everyone.

“It's freelance work. If you haven't got the drive and motivation to do it, it'll end up fading out in about six months,” Clifford says. “I'm big on mindset and mentality – the mind controls the body, so if your mind and your heart are in this job then you'll succeed.”

Clifford's success came as a surprise to many people in his life, and he initially faced pushback. He believes that anyone with the right amount of self-motivation and passion can succeed in the job and encourages people to follow their passions.

“People who get joy out of negativity will put you down and say it's not a real job, but I'd rather fall on my own sword than anyone else's,” Clifford says. “People have this stigma that what you enjoy can't be your career, but that couldn't be further from the truth.” [f](#)



# US Relocating to London During Covid-19

JOHANNA MITCHELL

**The global pandemic has sparked an increase in our cousins from over the pond relocating to London. Why? To access in-person schooling for their children. In the US, in both 2020 and to date in 2021, education provision has been in flux. When UK schools were re-opening in September of 2020, US schools remained firmly closed, with most operating some form of online learning.**

With the advent of Covid-19, it dawned on every parent and employer how much their livelihood and sanity depended on institutions placed too often in the background: the nation's schools.

For individuals with flexible workplaces, deep pockets, or those able to open an arm of their existing US-based company in the UK, relocation to London for their offspring's schooling was a no-brainer. For some families, this will be a short sojourn of a year or so, until their US schools are fully open again. Others will stay longer. As in the UK, US parents found it tough to juggle home-schooling with the demands of work and career. Families buckled under the strain that online learning had placed on the mental health of their children, and themselves, and a move to London schools was a welcome relief.

US families value London's broad offering of schools and curricula. Although the American School in London (ASL) in St John's Wood is the holy grail for many US families, lots are opting for British schools or English/ French bilingual schools. This is particularly true of

families with younger children, who are less concerned about changing curriculum and whose children are not close to exam years. International schools offering the International Baccalaureate (IB) are sought-after, not least because the IB has become the go-to curriculum for students on the scholarship route to US universities. All US colleges, including Ivy League, value the IB's emphasis on research and its multidisciplinary focus. Some US colleges are offering top IB students a fast-track option to skip a year of their course, a huge draw for parents hoping to save a year of prohibitive college fees.

As we have a shared language, it is often assumed that the UK and US education systems are similar. This is not the case. The UK has more nationally-assessed exams and the early years approaches are different. For children from aged four upwards, the US system is more play-based, whereas the mainstream UK system is focused on learning to read and write at a young age. To guard against culture shock, we recently placed the five-year-old daughter of a family relocating from Los Angeles in a Montessori school in Hampstead. The gentler Montessori approach was more aligned with her early years' US education experience.

As I write, the expectation is that all US schools will be opened for the autumn of 2021. This current academic year has been inconsistent. Some schools opened, others operated a hybrid model (part in-person teaching, part online), some only offered remote learning. Generally speaking, the more "conservative" states, such as Texas, have been focused on maintaining, or even

mandating, in-person instruction, whilst the more "progressive" states have offered hybrid options and made in-person learning optional. For example, on Long Island, most schools returned to some form of in-person instruction, but it was rarely mandatory and often hybrid with some online component.

A year later, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed education in America in lasting ways. Although most US families expect a return to the uniform, in-person teaching model for the coming academic year 2021/2022, some US school districts are developing permanent virtual options in the expectation that, post pandemic, families will plump for remote learning, even for their younger elementary/primary school offspring.

Relocation to London to access British schools has been the preserve of an elite, well-heeled tranche of US society. But we cannot ignore the reality that Covid-19 has been a tragedy for many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Stories of kids who have melted away from education, dropped out of college, or gone hungry abound equally in the UK and US. We have been forced to question the efficacy and relevance of our existing education systems. The pandemic has unleashed a wave of accelerated change in education. This wave will continue to ripple out and to have a permanent and transformative effect on education systems in both the US and the UK. <sup>f</sup>

*The writer is the Director of Lumos Education in London.*

# Entrepreneur Henry White on building the "Netflix of finance"

BY GEORGIA HENEAGE

**When Henry White – now a fully-fledged FinTech founder – first entered the thorny world of money as an eager young intern in London, he found the industry to be like a 'black box': opaque and inaccessible.**

Overcoming these barriers was for White a case of 'learning on the job'. White began working his way up the London finance ladder with no experience or training. Soon he was working as a successful hedge fund analyst, his job taking him from Greece to New York and Canada.

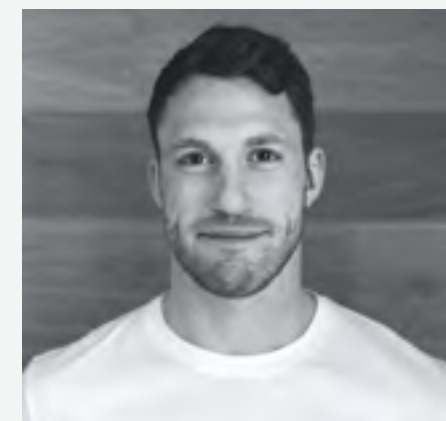
But this method of scaling the industry via trial-and-error seemed to be the privilege of a few, and his company Finance Unlocked – a digital educational platform for those in the finance world which completed its second fund raise in January at £1.75 million – was born out of a recognition that for many young people in finance, the tools available are few and far between.

The idea was conceived in part when co-founder Robert Ellison's position

on his firm's learning and development committee opened his eyes to the limited scope of educational resources available. "We realised that either traditional incumbents were producing classroom-based learning- which wasn't scalable and was expensive – or there were generic massive online course providers like LinkedIn Learning."

Ellison and White identified a gap in educational resources that taught the fundamental skills of finance. "We felt like ultimately the whole learning experience was broken," says White. "It became commonplace in the workplace that you would have bad training, and people strangely accepted it."

During development, Ellison and White's customer research revealed that people "wanted to be more knowledgeable" and wanted to be "the best possible versions of themselves", but that "the tools didn't match up with the demand". Their research also surfaced a common theme: that people wanted an educational platform that could coincide with their leisure time. "That was a kind of 'aha' moment for us", says White.



"We wanted to build a brand that people could emotionally connect with and care about: we wanted it to be as beautiful and tactile as Netflix." White says that digital content – particularly video – has grown in popularity during the pandemic. And because their audience demanded a premium product, they decided early on to create the content themselves, rather than outsource.

As well as attempting to "redefine learning for finance professionals", Finance Unlocked aims to democratise the world of financial learning for young people. They opened up their platform free to universities during the pandemic: "The feedback was phenomenal", says White. "96% of the student learners felt more confident applying for a career in finance having had access to this content, and it really improved their employability".

And what of the future of FinTech? White says: "The FinTech industry is moving at a lightning pace. Its role as an enabler is obvious when it comes to making frictionless payments, exchanging currencies efficiently or democratising the investment space. But the impacts are much broader than that – and that broad impact now includes financial education." <sup>f</sup>



*CEO of Finance Unlocked speaks to Georgia Heneage on his career journey, the world of money and the future of FinTech*



# The Mentor: Derek Walker on how to ace a job interview

**Despite developments in technology over the last two decades, interviews remain a critical part of almost all selection processes for graduate-level jobs. The pandemic has accelerated the trend away from in-person interviewing with the result that in some cases all stages of the selection process are held virtually.**

Since 2008, I've provided guidance to hundreds of students on preparing for interviews with leading graduate employers. In this article, I wish to share insights and conclusions from this experience, which I hope will help students prepare for any interview, whether in-person or virtual.

There are many different types of interview, but essentially all selection processes will combine three elements, which combine like the three legs of a stool. In the first place, employers want to know whether the candidate has the required level of technical experience, knowledge or aptitude required to do the job. Secondly, employers need to be sure candidates have the right level of motivation. They need to understand why the candidate wants to do this job and why they wish to work for this particular employer. Finally there's the question of whether the candidate will be a good "fit". Will the candidate be able to work effectively within the organisation, and be an amenable colleague who existing employees enjoy working with?

In my experience, if the employer has any doubts about any of the three legs of this stool, then it can't stand and a job offer won't be made.

So how can candidates prepare? In my view, the easiest way to structure any interview preparation is the same way as for a major exam. That said, students generally have far more time to prepare for exams – frequently they receive less than a

week's notice for interviews.

So, even before a candidate submits an application, they need to think about what the interview process involves in order to ensure they have time to prepare. In my opinion, many candidates fail because they leave the preparation too late, meaning they don't perform to their potential, even though they might have been a great candidate with sufficient preparation. The irony is that most students put in weeks of work for an exam, which, if they fail, they can usually resit. For an interview, which has a binary outcome (and no resit!), many candidates prepare for a few hours at most, often leading to under-performance and failure, which has arguably a much greater impact on the student's future career.

So early preparation is key. When preparing for an exam, students frequently seek out previous exam papers to ensure they can answer sufficient questions to the required standard. They spend weeks revising their course material and refining their exam responses. The same approach to interviews is also likely to lead to success. Students cannot assume that they know their CV better than anyone and that they can blag their way through an interview without preparation.

So, how to prepare? Think of 10-15 questions you're likely to be asked. Why this job/firm? How are you qualified? What are the likely developments in our industry in the next five years? And so on.. Use websites such as Glassdoor and Wikijob, as well as classmates and university careers services to build up an understanding of the typical interview questions and other parts of the selection process. Begin by jotting down the key points you'd wish to make to respond in the interview. Ensure you read quality relevant business press – The Financial Times, The Economist, Marketing Week, any relevant trade journals, and websites.



Derek Walker is the Course Director at Finito

After this, practice delivering your responses out loud. Record yourself on your phone and watch it back – you will find this excruciating at first but you will get a great impression of how you look and sound. Don't try to memorise long responses – you will sound stilted and mechanical. Work with friends to help each other – you will gain confidence as well as tips that you can use. Most importantly, find seasoned professionals to provide mock interview practice – these can be university careers professionals, or practitioners from your target industry. Above all, make sure the first time you try to answer an interview question isn't in the real interview – it's almost inevitable that you'll fail. However, if you've practised responding to 15-20 different questions confidently, you're more likely to be able to produce a good response if an interviewer asks you something you haven't specifically prepared for.

Virtuoso musicians and elite sportsmen practise daily for several hours for something at which they are already a world leader. They wouldn't dream of walking onto the stage at the Royal Albert Hall or Centre Court at Wimbledon without hours of preparation, including some on the day. The same approach usually pays dividends for most interview candidates. <sup>f</sup>

# Zavfit founder Anna Freeman on money and mental health

BY PATRICK CROWDER

**Zavfit is a new tool that is designed to help you spend your money in more productive ways. Unlike other money-saving apps, Zavfit is designed not only to discourage excess spending, but to encourage you to reinvest that money in other more beneficial areas.**

The full version of the app securely connects to your bank with view-only permission in order to monitor spending. Then, the app will ask you to rate your happiness with each purchase on a sliding scale of satisfaction. This data is used to track your wellbeing as well as to set spending and saving targets based on areas that need improvement.

It's all the brainchild of founder and CEO Anna Freeman. Through her background in finance, tech, and sport, Freeman found strong links between financial stability and mental and physical wellbeing.

"I grew up competing in sport, so I've always had a passion for health, wellbeing, and fitness that has only grown over the years," Freeman says. "What I hadn't realised when I was in the tech and finance industry was that worrying about money is the leading cause of mental health issues."

As mental health awareness increases, largely due to the pandemic, the finance industry has begun to take financial wellbeing into consideration. While this is an improvement, Freeman believes that it needs to go a step further.

"Most of the solutions in place are

focused on the wellbeing of your finances, as opposed to actually addressing that stress and anxiety that people feel with their money," Freeman continues. "I knew that we needed to create a health tool."

Zavfit offers a free "MoneyFitness" quiz, which asks the user how happy they are with various aspects of their day-to-day spending. This includes questions about post-purchase regret, satisfaction in work, social spending, charity, and physical fitness. I took the quiz myself and despite my mediocre score, the questions got me thinking about how I prioritise different aspects of my spending and how to reinvest that money on better things.

"The stereotype of being good with money is 'saving is good and spending is bad', but 'save, save, save' doesn't really recognise the present and taking care of yourself," Freeman adds.

In my case, I found that I am probably spending a bit too much on nights out and not paying good enough attention to my physical health. Rather than simply staying in and saving cash, the philosophy behind Zavfit would suggest that I invest the money saved on a fitness class.

Freeman believes that focusing spending on healthy, fulfilling hobbies and interests can have a big impact on both financial and mental wellbeing. Freeman's outlets are singing and sport, so she decided to put her resources into those areas.

"I remember walking down the road



in the sunshine one day and thinking, 'I have stopped spending on anything else',” Anna said, “and that’s because I had found those things that really took me out of my head and lifted me up.”

The pandemic has given many people a chance to think about their wellbeing and break the cycle of habit. Freeman sees this as an opportunity to step back and make important changes moving forward. “There’s been a massive reset on everything, particularly on spending. There’s an opportunity here to think about things differently and to think ‘Okay, I’ve set out what’s important to me, I’m aware of my mental health and that it needs looking after’.”

As the link between health and finance continues to be explored, new ideas like ZavFit can help push the conversation forward to find fresh approaches to the age-old problems of money stress and non-beneficial spending. Breaking bad habits is never easy, but ZavFit proves that this is both achievable and essential to personal wellbeing. <sup>f</sup>



# Letter from Lebanon: Dr. Pamela Chrabieh

**Lebanon has been going through a multiform crisis following the so-called end of the 1970s-1980s wars: social, political, environmental, sanitary, and beyond. The Beirut port blast on August 4, 2020, was the first straw that broke the camel's back, and the ongoing acute economic crisis the second straw. As poverty is rising – more than 60 per cent of the local population lives now under the extreme poverty line – people are increasingly desperate.**

Many (those who were able to do so) left the country, others (those who are staying) are trying to survive the financial meltdown, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the political deadlock.

The current situation is the consequence of decades of corruption, physical and psychological wars, state paralysis, nepotism, sectarianism, and foreign interferences. But even to someone like me who observed the war, the deterioration of the country is unprecedented. During the 1980s, we were able to escape bombs and snipers and take refuge in a different city or village. We were still able to find food and work. We had hope. Today, most of us are hanging by a thread.

The fact is that Lebanon is enduring an acute economic depression, inflation reaching triple digits, and the exchange rate losing value. This is still affecting the population, especially the poor and middle class. I agree with the World Bank statement: “The social impact, which is already dire, could become catastrophic”. I honestly don't know how long the local population will be able to survive with one of the lowest minimum wages in the world, and when the

country's food prices have become the highest in Southwestern Asia and North Africa. People can't even find needed medicine or pay a hospital bill. They haven't been able to access their money in banks since late 2019.

As a result of all this, Lebanese youth are facing a lack of work opportunities, rising costs of living and unemployment rates – and the absence of any state support. Many are growing disillusioned and desperate, and we are not even at the end of our crises. We should expect worse to come and it's going to be tougher for young people to pursue their higher studies, find a job, or even secure an entry visa elsewhere.

Most students of mine and other universities, along with countless academics, activists, and artists who have been part of the October 17 'revolutionary movements', have vehemently criticised sectarianism in all its forms and offered alternative paths, ranging from a complete separation between religion and politics to mediatory approaches. This is not a new phenomenon, as many individuals and organisations have stood against sectarianism in the last decades, but we are witnessing change within student bodies, especially with secular groups winning elections in some of the most prestigious universities versus traditional sectarian groups.

So it's still too soon to assess the October 17 revolutionary movements. I wrote a while ago that there are many ways of approaching the study of revolution in the contemporary world. According to a narrow definition, “revolution is a forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system”. In that perspective,

revolutionary dynamics in Lebanon appear to several observers as “minor disturbances”. According to these 'experts', as long as the socio-political and economic systems are “unchanged”, the so-called “hirak” (movement) is not worthy to be called “revolution”, and “will soon end” or it just “ended”.

However, by a different definition of “revolution”, the October 17 revolutionary movements are only a step towards overturning existing conditions and generating alternative socio-political and economic orders. As I see it, revolution in Lebanon isn't a static object that can either be a “success” or a “failure”. It consists of several current dimensions and historical layers simultaneously. When it is not roaring in public spaces, it is boiling in our minds.

As for me, I wear several hats: scholar, university professor, visual artist, activist, consultant, programme manager, wife, daughter, and mother. I haven't learned about resistance and resilience in books, but through my art, and through the many struggles I have been going through, as well as the struggles of others around me.

As long as there are inequalities and social injustice, I do not think that revolutionary movements will end. However, I remain optimistic. So long as there are no limitations imposed on our will, imagination, resilience, patience and freedom, we will rise again from the rubble. <sup>f</sup>

*Dr. Pamela Chrabieh is a Lebanese-Canadian scholar, university professor, visual artist, activist, writer and consultant, who has been named as one of the 100 most influential women in Lebanon.*

# Letter from Hong Kong: Jenny McGowan

**Three years ago I moved to Hong Kong to work as an education consultant and during this time the city has changed in a subtle way on a day-to-day basis, and in a momentous way when you contemplate its future. In my role I have unique insight into the long-term plans of families as we discuss their children's education and have noticed several trends with regards to the attractiveness of the UK, which has traditionally been the destination of choice for schools and universities.**

The political change in Hong Kong has had a limited impact on schools for now, but parents do seem concerned about how this might change over time. International schools have greater autonomy than local schools in terms of the curriculum but the unpredictability is unsettling and has unnerved parents who had not previously planned to move away from Hong Kong.

Hong Kong nationals born before the 1997 handover were always eligible for BNO passports that gave visa-free UK visiting but not the right to live and work there. In response to the recent law changes, the UK government upgraded the BNO status allowing Hong Kongers to apply for a visa that provides a route to UK citizenship.

Crucially, this visa also provides the dependents of BNO passport holders the right to attend state schools for free and for whole families to relocate together. Before this, the only option for families without the right to live in the UK would be boarding school which provides students themselves with a study visa. But with costs of around £40,000 a year this was unattainable

for most. It also meant being separated from their children, which, pre-Covid, was manageable. But during Covid this has been very stressful for families. This was highlighted recently when flights from the UK were suddenly banned on July 1st, leaving many students separated from their parents for the summer.

Using their BNO status to relocate the whole family to the UK has become a popular option. Only time will tell how many of these enquiries translate into actual moves; the UK government predicts 300,000 over five years. That said, the grass isn't always greener and the cultural and language barriers may prove challenging for some when it comes to finding jobs and settling in a UK town. In Hong Kong you can get to most places within 30 minutes, taxis are dirt cheap and many families have a live-in maid for around £500 a month. When faced with the realities of an across - London commute and the cost of childcare many discover that life in the UK isn't quite what they expected.

Before the BNO visa was an option, when I asked families about their reasons for considering educating their children in the UK, the answer often centred around universities and the tradition and prestige that is acknowledged worldwide and therefore translated into good employment opportunities. In 2020, there were over 7,000 applicants to UK universities from applicants in Hong Kong – a 50 per cent increase from 2010. With the increased competition, families started to consider boarding school in the UK at younger ages to try and maximise the chances of a successful university application.

Great social and political pressure is

being placed on Oxford and Cambridge to reduce the percentage of successful applicants that attend private schools, which may change the perspective of parents trying to maximise their children's Oxbridge chances. A parent who selected a school such as Winchester College for their son six or seven years ago may now be disappointed with the Oxbridge results, which will have decreased considerably during this time. Arguably, this will not affect students applying from Hong Kong as they are classified as international students and therefore do not contribute to the private school stats. There are several schools in Hong Kong that can boast better Oxbridge numbers than many UK schools and so savvy parents may re-think their UK plans.

University rankings are often referenced by parents in my conversations with them, with future employment correlated with the university reputation and ranking. While this is historically true, it will be interesting to see how this changes over time with many big companies using blind recruitment processes to mask an applicant's background and placing greater importance on the skills rather than name of institution.

A lot has changed in Hong Kong, and for now the UK is still a very popular destination for both schools and universities. With the rapid social and political change in both places it will be interesting to see how this evolves in the next few years. <sup>f</sup>

*Jenny McGowan is the Director for Keystone Tutors in Asia*



# Suzanne Rab: how Law Students Coped in the Pandemic



**I**n 2021, I embarked on a study of the perceptions, experiences and viewpoints of UK law students in the time of Covid-19, and would like to share my findings with Finito World readers. Some of the results of the study are not unsurprising and echo findings in other education contexts. The findings are grim in places, and include the impact on student mental health; the perception of 2020/21 being a 'lost year' for undergraduates studying at the height of the pandemic; and student dissatisfaction with the reduced socialisation. The role of

**technology in facilitating learning, brought many benefits but was not without its challenges.**

Unsurprisingly, students expressed fears about the infection and its impact on their studies. The fear of illness was interesting as it centred much more on the negative impact of being stuck in a tiny room in isolation than fear of the disease itself, which was logical given the age and risk profile of those students studying at undergraduate level.

No student discounted the significance of the health crisis or said that they did

not adhere to the imposed lockdown and social distancing regulations. The impact of the pandemic on mental health was recounted by all students. This is not surprising and consistent with other studies, such as those conducted by Al-Rabiaah in 2020, and Khalid in 2016, which link epidemics with fear and high levels of psychological distress. This pandemic was especially stressful in that it has occurred suddenly and under circumstances where the participants have little control. Here then are some of my findings, with some anonymised

quotations from the students themselves, detailing for readers relevant experience.

The study was conducted in March–May 2021 and developed as a pilot to inform more detailed qualitative research, based on 'free form' responses to a questionnaire. The questions included: (1) what were students' expectations of studying before Covid-19; (2) what were students' experiences of studying through Covid-19; (3) what were students' concerns about studying through Covid-19; (4) what was students' use of technology; (5) what were students' perceptions on the impact on employment and career progression, (6) what were students' perspectives on how higher education institutions can best support students studying remotely. Participants in the study were students studying for a qualification in law (or a subject with a law-related module component) at four higher education institutions in the UK. The institutions reflected a range of organisational formats including traditional campus-based and one which offers exclusively online tuition as well as mixed online and face-to-face courses.

## Students have shown admirable resilience

Pandemics tends to present a risk of students withdrawing from their studies altogether. The good news is that there was no overwhelming evidence among the small sample reviewed that students were disengaged with their studies and students showed resilience in dealing with the situation. One student did however note that they had decided to defer – though in this instance, had done so optimistically.

The results also indicate that students were divided on the highs and lows of studying in the pandemic. Accepting the sombre context of the study, students were able to appreciate some positive elements. Some were grateful

for their universities providing agile online support, compensatory tuition or additional social activities. Others illustrated an ability to focus on other dimensions of university life, particularly peer collegiality, and they focused on fostering a sense of community during a difficult time. Some reflected on greater contact with family; efficiencies from remote studying; and an affirmation that studying in the pandemic was an achievement in itself.

## The in-person experience is missed

On the other hand, there were some real lows – most regretted the lack of a full university experience. This was especially acute where students were told by others who had studied in more normalised times that they were missing out. This in turn seemed to occur along two lines – the lack of freshers' experiences that students had been looking forward to, and the imperfect experience of remote learning. Many of course experienced both of these anxieties simultaneously.

**“Online teams meetings work well but there is no substitute for meeting a tutor in person and having a lively discussion.”**

“I was expecting / hoping to meet more students and tutors face to face in tutorials and be able to have discussions with them in tutorials and outside of tutorials. The pandemic resulted in all contact being either audio only (or in some students' cases, text only) with no use of the video facility.”

## Many students put community before self

Throughout my research, the students' own value and belief systems were apparent. Many told me that they had engaged in pro bono activities, as part of a recognition of the need to put others before self. I often found myself impressed by their courage.

## Remote-learning was largely viewed positively, but not universally and the digital divide is a problem

Technology as a learning tool was largely viewed positively. Students recounted their investments in technology to deal with the pandemic as well as online support from their institutions. This issue in turn raises a question of the digital divide where some students may not have adequate financial resources to access technology. While online learning has developed in ways that may have been scarcely credible pre-pandemic, some students expressed preference for in-person examinations. The role of technology outside the curriculum was also significant as a partial substitute for student-led initiatives to achieve a sense of community and maintain their social networks.

“While studying through Covid-19 I have been concerned about my mental health, and dealing with the mental fatigue of having to work and study from the same space for long periods of time with limited outdoor access.”

## Many students are concerned for their futures

In spite of the point above, many students voiced concerns about the impact of the pandemic on achievement in examinations linked to the online environment. Even so there was a repeatedly expressed silver lining here: many students saw the experience as fostering skills that would be transferable to the workplace. Some felt it would develop resilience, others that it engendered new skills or interests. ▶



Many students are worried about the availability of suitable work experience and opportunities

A recurrent theme was the impact on work experience opportunities caused by limited access to networking opportunities, the reduced benefits of online internships and more general limitations of interacting online. Of course, this was also linked to the impact on students of difficulties in the global economy, leading to a smaller pool of jobs than has been typical. Even so, the experience of post-graduate students was largely neutral on career progression for the simple reason that such students tend to embark on study more for the intellectual content of the course than for purely employability reasons. In such instances, the qualification was an end in itself.

“Further, if this had been my undergraduate degree, when the “experience” was more important to me, I would have been disappointed to have been part of the generation that attended university during the pandemic.”

The quality of institutional response was mixed

Opinions were divided as to how well institutions supported students through the pandemic. Prompt interventions in providing online support and continuity were applauded and students praised their tutors in dealing with the situation and adapting their delivery and materials. Where criticism was voiced, it was more targeted at the faculty or institutional level. This manifested variously as a need for greater sensitivity to mental health concerns and complaints about a lack of effective communication.

Value for money is a primary concern

While most students demonstrated a philosophical approach to the situation one respondent highlighted a concern with the level of university fees.

Although this was not addressed directly in the written responses I observe that the issue of paying for rent for unused accommodation has been very galling for many students. There is a belief that students didn’t receive value for money and this imbalance will affect those who are least able to pay:

**“While studying through Covid-19 I have been concerned about my mental health, dealing with the mental fatigue of having to work and study from the same space.”**

“While understanding that the costs of running the university largely virtually are high, it is nonetheless frustrating that university fees remain the same/are rising when students are unable to make full use of the facilities and may not even be on campus for much of the time. This will also be the harshest on those who are already suffering more from the pandemic itself.”

There’s a lot we can do to improve the system

As far as I am aware this is the first qualitative study in the time of Covid-19 that has been undertaken involving law students. Throughout the study it became clear to me that while lawyers tend to develop throughout their careers to a remarkable extent, a lot of this resilience is developed in higher education environments. This raises the stakes and makes me surer than ever of

what we need to do to protect students and ensure the future health of the next generation of lawyers and our profession, now and for the longer term.

I would like to hope that this modest study may serve as a catalyst to inform research that can contribute to the design of student support strategies and provide a more effective learning environment during and after a time of crisis. To facilitate better understanding to inform evolving strategies, it is important to have a comprehensive insight into students’ dynamic perceptions, feelings and experiences in a crisis. This study could also be an incentive to education institutions and the academic community to undertake further research in this area in the UK and elsewhere.

A series of recommendations, emerging from students’ own responses, are outlined in the box opposite.

If you want to know more about these summary findings, and further research projects in the area, as well as upcoming publications, contact Suzanne Rab (E. [srab@serlecourt.co.uk](mailto:srab@serlecourt.co.uk); M. +44(0) 7557 046522). [f](#)

*Professor Suzanne Rab is a barrister at Serle Court Chambers specialising in regulatory and education law. She is Professor of Commercial Law at Brunel University London, a law lecturer at the University of Oxford, and Visiting Professor at Imperial College London. She is an expert panel member of the UK Regulators Network, a member of Council of the Regulatory Policy Institute and a non-executive director of the Legal Aid Agency.*

## Survey recommendations on areas for improvement

After extensive qualitative research, Suzanne Rab presents recommendations on how to improve legal education. Each recommendation includes a quote from a surveyed student

### 1. Provide effective online support

“Replicate what [institution] is doing, especially with [online] library access.”

“I think it's best to make sure everything required is online.”

### 2. Institutional flexibility in assessment methods

“I think [institution] was very supportive in providing [assignment] extensions. I never used one but it gave me confidence that it is there if needed.”

“Answer emails quicker, as I missed many assignments and an [examined assessment] due to being overlooked at one of the worst points of my life.”

### 3. Support students’ mental health

“Higher education institutions can make it known to students what kind of support is available so that students are aware of the support while they are in difficulty rather than when they are in crisis.”

### 4. Greater sensitivity to special needs including disabilities and carer responsibilities

“The only thing I feel is a shame is that the [final examinations] were cancelled. I felt there was no need to do that as we had plenty of time to complete them. I was working from home, trying to home school three

children, one of whom has special needs and none of whom has English as there first language.”

### 5. Assistance with tuition fees that targets genuine need and a long-term view of investment in learning and development

“If possible, financial support for those who require it.”

### 6. Greater preventative measures including planning, response strategies and preparedness in relation to health crises

“The uncertainty experienced by students would be well remedied by having events to look forward to: I think the lack of structure and non-academic events to look forward to has been one of the failures of universities generally.”

### 7. Consideration of the needs of international students with remote-learning better reflecting disparities caused by time-zones

“Prominent examples [of lows] would be having to return home instead of staying at university accommodation due to governmental regulations.”

### 8. Greater opportunities for face-to-face contact where permitted by public health regulations

“Have as much face-to-face time as possible and perhaps once a week drop in sessions where students can talk about things that they need help with rather than having to wait for emails.”

### 9. Greater coordination of centralised and decentralised institutional communications

“The best way universities can support remote study is good communication.”

“Communication from 'the top' has been poor. It would have been better for those at the top to have held a meeting earlier on with students in order to set out their views and thereby help to steer the ship in the right direction, including by preventing any misinformation from spreading.”

### 10. Student engagement in decision-making that affects them

“It is important for HE institutions to regularly check in with students as for many institutions this form of working is new and it is more useful to catch any gaps in their approach early, but it also allows students to feel more in control of their experience as they have a say in next steps.”



# SPECIAL REPORT:

## James Daunt: Covid-19 has brought about a 'permanent elevation' in the importance of reading

**Publishing continues to be an alluring route for young people with humanities degrees. But it is a fast-changing world. Here voices on the front line describe their experiences of the industry in the hope of educating candidates about the industry they will face upon graduation.**

**Despite the number of obstacles that stand in the way of high street bookshops thriving, bookselling giant and CEO of Waterstones James Daunt is infectiously optimistic. His passion for the paperback and belief in the physical experience of standing in a bookstore is compelling, even over Zoom.**

High street retail was stuck in a mire long before the mass closure of shops over the past year. The pandemic has, of course, been the final nail in the coffin for many shops across the country – apart from those like M&S, John Lewis and Next all of which, Daunt points out, have had the resources to pivot online and create “more modern and dynamic” systems. This response has placed further pressure on other businesses reliant on the footfall: “It’s a kind of self-perpetuating domino effect,” Daunt says.

Bookshops, one might think, have not escaped this vicious cycle. Daunt, 57, points out that they’ve also suffered from



Waterstones CEO talks to Georgia Heneage about the threat of Amazon, the pandemic and the future of the high street bookshop

the government’s “perverse definition” of what constitutes an ‘essential’ shop, and been in direct competition with those that have been able to stay open and sell books, like WHSmith and supermarkets. Like the majority of other shops, Daunt warned back in January of this year that Waterstones faced closures due to continuously high rent rates.

But bookshops have also bucked the trend to some extent, both during the pandemic and pre-pandemic in what was sometimes called the slow death of the high street. Daunt has been praised for leading Waterstones during what have been dark days for bookshops. And if the brief periods of reopening in the past year are anything to go by – and Daunt says they’ve been “very busy” during those times – bookstores have a better future than has often been predicted.

Other kinds of retailers, though, he’s far less optimistic about. “It’s a savage environment,” he says, ever the fierce competitor. “If you’re not on top of your game, then you disappear.”

Daunt is keen to point out that this is the unique nature of bookselling. “I think the problem is that other retailers don’t have the same benefits as bookshops. At the end of the day, it’s actually not that much fun to go into a shoe shop or clothes shop. The great thing about a bookshop is that everybody likes being in it, whereas most other shops appeal to a narrow demographic.”

Despite the looming threat of Amazon on the book world, Waterstones has been “able to prosper” over the past 10 years and sales have been gradually increasing. This, says Daunt, is mostly

down to the experience created in-store, which remains the main point of differentiation between Waterstones and Amazon, with the latter providing neither customer-facing relations nor a warm “social” environment.

“Bookshops are nice places,” Daunt continues, “where you can find a book by recommendation or have the serendipity of picking up a book and thinking ‘Oh, I’ll read this’.” And the book you buy is “just better”. “I truly believe that there’s pleasure in walking out of a bookshop with a bag and feeling the weight of the book. You feel kind of virtuous – like you’ve almost read it.”

If Daunt had to point out the singular most important ingredient of bookshops, it would be the people. If at the start of the 21st century everything was about “cutting costs and getting rid of staff”, the past decade has been marked by reinvesting in the people of the industry. “The personality of your shop is, at the end of the day, embedded in your staff. If you invest in knowledgeable people who care about what they do, you’ll run a much better bookshop: this is what underpins the strength of Waterstones.”

And of course, this is another differentiator with Amazon, which has, in the past, been criticised for bad customer relations.

Waterstones dominates a quarter of the book market, and has been able to thrive in recent years. But what of smaller independents, who collectively hold a mere 3 per cent share of the market? “The good ones are actually in a better position than chains like Waterstones,” Daunt says, pointing to the backing such shops receive from their local communities. And again, it’s “survival of the fittest”: “If you’re good enough, and you genuinely create a nice environment, you’ll be fine. The rise of Amazon actually weeded out all the weak ones, and it’s the good ones that remain,” Daunt argues.

The other tech-oriented threat facing

paperbacks is, of course, Ebooks. But if they surged in popularity around 2014, their retreat back into the shadows is testament to the difficulty of actually replicating the feel and texture of a book.

“I can’t see how that’s ever going to be replicated in a way that also gives you all the other tangential pleasures that come with owning a book, or having a bookshelf – they are almost a diary of your life,” says Daunt.

**“I truly believe that there’s pleasure in walking out of a bookshop with a bag and feeling the weight of the book.”**

The really powerful new trend permeating the book world is audiobooks, which have boomed in popularity – especially amongst older readers, with downloads increasing by 42.5 per cent in the first half of 2020 alone. Daunt is now also CEO of Barnes & Noble, which Elliott Advisers bought in 2019 for a reported \$683 million, and the firm has started to set its horizons on the medium, with the launch of its Nook 10 HD tablet.

Even so, Daunt doubts whether Waterstones will be able to follow suit. “The market share is tiny, because at the end of the day Amazon will always undercut. They invest much more, and they’ll always have the advantage of having created the market in the first place. Everybody else is just playing catch up.” He says that unless he can work out some way of “piggy-backing on the Barnes & Noble capability

which, with different publishers and associated rights, will be complicated, Waterstones won’t be able to launch an audio subscription service.”

Despite all this, Daunt remains ever-positive regarding the prospects of the book world. “There’s still, the majority of people will prefer reading physical books. I think you just leave Mr Bezos to make all his money, and the rest of us can just prosper at what we do.”

And if book-sale figures during the pandemic are anything to go by, appetite for reading is as voracious as it has been – if not more so. Daunt sees this as a pivotal moment for reading – a bit like the inception of the Harry Potter books, which changed many people’s book habits irrevocably and led to a “permanent elevation” of reading. “It may not stay at this level, but I’m optimistic it won’t fall back to the old level. I think there will be a permanent shift upwards.”

That the majority of soaring book sales during the pandemic were non-fiction titles points to the fact that people are thirsty to learn about the world around them – a world increasingly beset with existential issues and polarised political debate. People are “energised”, says Daunt, “and books play a massive part in that.”

Though for many the biggest single threat the world faces is climate change, Daunt says racial issues brought to the fore by the Black Lives Matter protests will be what people will remember of this year. How does he know this? “Our bestsellers last year were books essentially about race and inequality. And our market share as a bookseller was dramatically higher (up to 60%) on those issue-led books. People wanted to come into a bookshop and find out what works.”

Reading – and if we take Daunt for his optimistic word – bookshops, too – are a reflection of the interests, passions and problems of an entire society. Daunt puts it simply and exactly: “Books sit at the heart of what matters.” [f](#)



# Douglas Murray:

## The big publishers are becoming ‘weird NGOs’

**When it comes to publishing, the problem these days is getting your foot through the door in the first place. You can publish Jordan Peterson now despite the controversy surrounding him because he's already broken through. That's the obvious example. The thing I worry about here is: “How are young people at the very of beginning of their career allowed to say what they think?”**

I remember when *The Strange Death of Europe* came out, I was face to face with a very nice lady at a drinks party who said she was in the publishing industry and working for one of the major publishers. She said she'd said to her boss: “Have you seen how well Douglas Murray's books are selling?” And he said: “Yes.” She said: “Didn't I tell you we ought to do something in that area?” The area, I suppose, would have been immigration. And apparently her boss said to her: “We wouldn't want those readers.” So I said: “You must tell him at his next shareholders meeting that they are not a for-profit organisation, but rather a sort of weird NGO of some kind.”

So the publishing industry – like every industry – is susceptible to this same strange problem of wokeness. I was with an academic recently, who was gay, and had got into terrible trouble because he'd been pro-Brexit. I found myself saying at one point: “Why is it such a terrible sin to be in agreement with the majority of the public?” I don't want academics to be pro- or anti-

Brexit; I just don't particularly want this kind of conformity that a vociferous minority seems to want.

One thing we have to think about seriously as a nation in the years ahead is where the talented people go. I spent a certain amount of time in Silicon Valley in recent years researching *The Madness of Crowds* so this has been on my mind a lot. Would a smart person today go into politics? Would they seek to be an MP? Would they seek to be an academic? Probably not – and that accounts for the impoverished nature of this moment in both politics and education.

My friend Christopher Hitchens used to say that he couldn't write fiction, and he knew why. He knew people who could – like Martin Amis and Salman Rushdie – it was because they were always interested in music. Well, I enjoy music, and I play the piano every day. Sometimes people try to get me to do fiction. First of all, I don't think you should force it on anyone. Secondly, my view is that for the last 20 years we live in an age of reflection and that has made fiction feel secondary – it's rather like trying to write the book of the age in heroic couplets. For example, if you wanted to read about the Vietnam War, for instance, would you do better reading a novel about it or a great book like *Nothing and So Be It* by Orianna Falacci. I would suggest the latter. There's this feeling that fiction is not where the action is. But it does feel to me that poetry, on the other hand,



Douglas Murray, the author of *The Madness of Crowds*

always has such a small audience that somehow it never becomes irrelevant.

When prose-writing is exceptionally bad, as with for instance Judith Butler, it can be for one of two reasons. One possibility is that that person simply has nothing to say. But the second thing is rather more alarming – that they know that what they're writing simply isn't true. And there's a lot more of the latter kind of literature around than you might think.

What happens in academia is that impenetrable language is used as a screen. You're meant to think that if it's unreadable there must be wisdom there somewhere. That's why you can't just critique these books, you also have to offer an alternative reading list. In that sense everything begins with Plato – and also with the Judaeo-Christian tradition. [f](#)

# Chloe Ward:

## The publishing sector is now the preserve of a ‘privileged few’

**The publishing industry is crucial to society. It gives us new perspectives, encouraging much-needed understanding of the world around us.**

The content being published has the power to change perspectives and narratives in real life.

However, what the industry publishes is a reflection on who is purchasing that content.

Currently, the core audience for publishers in the UK is white and middle-class. The whole industry is essentially set up to cater to this one particular audience.

Being mixed-raced means subjects or content in contemporary publishing that relate to my own lived experience feel few and far between.

I have always loved books and stories, finding it easy to be whisked away by dragons or follow heroes into battle. However, it has always felt to me like someone else's adventure, someone else's journey. To this day the content I consume, though wonderful, has very little to do with me or the cultures I am familiar with.

When I started studying publishing at university, it was originally because I wanted to be the one to discover stories like those I'd loved before first-hand. However, throughout my studies, it became clear that this lack of diversity in both industry staffing and output was an issue – and not just

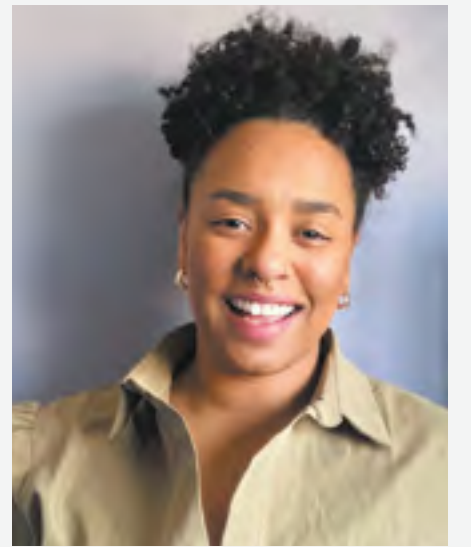
my issue, but an issue for publishing as a whole. How much of an audience is this current industry reaching? I knew I wanted to make a change for others like me.

When I handed in my dissertation and final major project back in May 2020, despite the global pandemic raging on, I entered the real world with a sense of naivete about how easy finding a job would be.

At any given time, it is difficult to get a toe in the door of the publishing industry due to its competitiveness. One role at a Big Five publisher can have over 1,000 applicants. But what made it worse was that during the uncertainty of the pandemic no one was hiring.

I became frantic, spending hours writing and re-writing my CV. Cover letter after cover letter. Adhering to the advice of tutors to just keep on trying... and trying. Tailoring everything for each new role. Endless optimism...only to find hundreds of job rejections in my email.

It is evident that publishing companies have put some useful initiatives in place for potential graduates, however if the industry wants to transform and diversify, it needs to make far greater and more fundamental changes. Putting more support in place for potential graduate employees is a must. Having a BAME internship available is all well and good, but when only 13%



Chloe Ward, The writer is a graduate, seeking her first job in publishing

of the workforce identifies as minority ethnic, this leaves a lot to be desired. The goal should be recruiting in a balanced way from all backgrounds, reflecting the demographics of real-life, to prevent gatekeeping of our published output becoming the preserve of a privileged few.

More needs to be done by the industry once the pandemic is over to ensure that minority groups have a chance to gain employment and in turn make the change needed for a more diverse workforce. It is our job as the young voice driving the next generation to find these solutions and drive for them to be implemented; I have so many ideas and such a thirst to get going – what a difference we can make for our future. I'm excited to see the view from the other side. [f](#)



# Dr. Todd Swift's advice to young people on a career in publishing

Todd Swift has spent a lifetime on the front line of literature as a publisher, poet, and writer of film scripts. Here he discusses the future of publishing

**I**f we have learned one thing from the pandemic, it's that people seek comfort in stories. That these stories are often nowadays told in video games, or on streaming TV services, or in Tweets and other brief image-based social networks, does not change a fundamental truth – stories arise from story-tellers, and most of those are writers. To extend that logic, most writers ultimately want to see their words published in books. Books, as we know, now evolve into many forms of adapted species, from electronic, to audio, and on to game, film, TV series, meme – and, yes, Halloween costume. JK Rowling may have her detractors, but she still launches a thousand Potters on October 31st.

All these stories, when gathered, and published, one way or the other, are the responsibility of publishers – and publishers need people to work with, and for, them. Apprenticeships, mentorships, and other programmes, are available online and in person, and in the post-vaccine days of the hopefully sunlit uplands to come, the young people of today could well be on the road to a job in publishing in a more socially pleasant future.

This article is meant to be a hopeful, if practical, and very brief guide to what they may face, should expect, and need to do, in order to best prepare for the interview and the potential jobs ahead, from editor, to typesetter, to book designer, to marketing or PR person; and concomitantly, what publishing faces when meeting them.

The only preparation for working in publishing is to read. A recent story in the news about a rock star in his fifties who had never read a book until lockdown, then read dozens, shows it is never too late to acquire the gift of ravenous literacy. But for a young person wanting to work in the book trade, an earlier relationship with them is essential. This may have once sounded elitist; it may well still sound so. But the good news is that libraries and online word hoards like Project Gutenberg make it less difficult for any person to find the great works they need to dive into.

A second skill – and it arises from the art and joy of reading – is writing. No one working in publishing can expect to get far without some ability with grammar and spelling. If you are the sort of GCHQ person who corrects books with a nibbled pencil stub when you read them, you will do well. Again, though, we have moved on from the old days. Enlightened pedagogy means that even people with dyslexia now work in publishing, even in proofreading.

The educational profile for younger



Todd Swift is the director of the Black Spring publishing group

people working in publishing has been an issue in the press and wider world of discussion of late. It is probably accurate to say that there was a time when you'd find the Bright Young Things of Bloomsbury beautifully dressed and cleverly down from Oxbridge with a First in Classics.

While this sort of clubbable coterie is ever-present, the truth is that almost all universities in the UK and beyond offer Publishing and Creative Writing degrees, from BAs to PhDs. The best-known course may be UEA in the fens of Norwich, where Ian McEwan famously studied, but it is no longer unique. Further, in the age of LGBTQ, Biden-Harris, BLM and MeToo, publishing houses are in dire need of being yanked, pushed and thrown into the 21st century. While many of the smaller independent presses (like ours) are able to be more flexible, the larger

companies, replete with the pale and stale males still wearing their spattered ties from that long Soho lunch with Ian Hamilton in Soho from the 70s, have been less nimble, more oil tankerish. But even they have recently taken on board the calls to arms and hastened to appear desirably open to all.

It may be unfair to characterise young people as being hip to the latest trends, but youth, by definition, can never be late to the party. It should be said that the direction in publishing can only benefit those who have an awareness of TikTok binary identities, ambiguous pronouns, James Baldwin's resurgence, and Billie Eilish.

On the other hand, we could also do with learning a little wisdom and restraint in publishing. This was seen recently, when junior sub-sub-editors and many up the chain of command refused to work on books by famous actors and writers whose alleged behaviour or opinions differ from their own. To a man in his mid-50s, like myself, freedom of speech means publishing Morrissey, Larkin and Peterson, warts and all, as well as Das Kapital and Mein Kampf. It means having a broad and morally demanding list, capable of accommodating both Richard Dawkins and the latest Archbishop with a laptop and some spare time. Not so for the young of today, the 'milkshakes' as I call them. For them, only the just and right-on should be free to speak; the ones who profited from injustice for eons should now step aside.

There is, of course, another curious incident of moral and philosophical disconnection between the generations. That's the understanding of how capitalism works with regards to

literary and commercial enterprises. Since many young people in publishing are left-leaning, their sympathies are not with owners or directors, seeking to maximise profit, though by law, companies in the UK must not intentionally lose money or avoid profit.

The ideal view is that books should be as free from the taint of money as possible – yet the industry they enter is enmeshed in a centuries-old cutthroat market system. Agents and writers seeking sales and royalties complicate the story, for you may often encounter a mild-mannered Marxist poet, or writer's union official, whose work challenges the structure of Western industry at every stage, yet who demands top dollar for their writing, and wants their books to sell in bookshops and online without discount. Poets, especially, seem torn between wanting readers (and the cheaper the edition, the more readers one gets) versus wanting money.

The fact is the old ways of publishing are being swept away. This is one reason why, despite most bookshops being closed for many months in 2020 and 2021, my smallish press did not collapse at once. Like every other publishing house we have begun already to diversify, and even before the pandemic, were somewhat insulated from the worst of social distancing. Now audiobooks and eBooks represent far more of the sales; print on demand allows for a back list to be digitally available globally without large overhead; and new distribution channels arise to try to compete with Amazon.

It can be tempting to be overly bullish at a time of great depression. False bravado cannot mask the poverty of our

cultural moment. As the book becomes a delivery system for preconceived comforting images and tropes, the danger of The Book has been somewhat forgotten. My company supports free speech in the traditional broad church sense. Our motto is: No book is better being burnt than being placed in a library for posterity. Judgement is never really ours; it is temporal. We are dust after we are dancers.

Working at a smaller, independent press has both the disadvantages of working freelance or part-time but also the freedoms and flexibilities that come with it. A quick glance on the internet will show that even in London the media salary for a junior editor at a large well-known publishing house is often under £22k, and even experienced editors take years to reach above £30k. The financial rewards of a career in publishing are not therefore likely to be magnificent. To work part-time for a small indie press, therefore, means being able to seek other rewards and even study (or train), but it may be nail-biting. But then is not all the world nail-biting, now?

Books have endings. I always advise writers to end their books with an echo of the first sentences of the first chapter. Seamus Heaney would, following Robert Frost, always remove the final poem in a collection, and keep it to start his next. As I write this article, the world is in ferment, but it is potentially transforming itself. Publishing, perhaps, can become enriched by new thinking, new technologies, and new politics. As in so many walks of life, the old will step aside, as the young run past, to see if the bookshop doors are open again, come the end of this pandemic. [f](#)



# Robert Golding: The Changing Profession of the Literary Agent

**W**henver someone finds out that you are a writer, one of the first questions you'll be asked is whether you have an agent. I remember when I first started out asking the historian D.R. Thorpe, who combined his writing with teaching at Charterhouse, what his advice was and he said without missing a beat: "Get an agent."

For writers, this advice is still regularly proffered though it might be that the business has moved on quicker than people realise. Many publishers I know prefer agentless writers – who are less hassle to deal with – and there are also many writers who prefer to deal directly with publishers themselves.

At the outset of my career, I thought it would be a good idea to do some work experience in a literary agency – I imagined myself a sort of mole, checking out the lay of the land for when my own books landed on their desks. In those days – as today – the focal point of the office was the dreaded slush pile that all writers dread – a pile of manuscripts about a mile high, where soon-to-be-rejected writers queue up to be read.

I was directed to that pile on the first day, and did indeed reject several novels, always trying to offer advice, and always with a heavy heart. It was a strangely moving experience, and testament to the sheer amount of creativity out there.

Of course, to would-be writers the literary agent is invested with the almost awesome power of getting you published or not. But the reality of a typical agency brings you very swiftly down to earth, for this is a profession that is struggling and should only be entered into with care. The business model of taking a cut of authors plainly only works in those small handful of writers – JK Rowling springs to mind – when sales are considerable. But nowadays,

with enough space in the public consciousness for a handful of hit books per year, the take home pay isn't likely to do much more than keep the wolf from the door, and sometimes not even that.

The business has also suffered reputational damage. A few years back, The Times conducted a sting, when it sent out the opening lines of Nobel-winner VS Naipaul's *In A Free State* with the character names changed to most of the leading literary agencies and received numerous rejections, with only one of them noticing what had been submitted.

These worries pertain today. The novelist Jayne Watson whose brilliant novel *The Anarchist's Exchange* is published by Northside Press in 2022, experienced numerous frustrating knockbacks for her novel: "I've got so used to agents' praise of the writing, the characters..... BUT (fill in as required from the usual responses re 'didn't fall IN LOVE with it'/'not wasn't PASSIONATE enough about it to offer representation' and, slightly oddly: 'I don't have the right brain for it.')" You can feel her frustration hasn't been entirely alleviated by the fact of being published.

That's partly because there's a suspicion that the rejection process isn't particularly rigorous or fair, and can simply be vaulted by 'knowing someone'. The literary agent accordingly is a profession that appears to have lost some of its glamour – beyond the more general glamour of being a part of the literary scene, which in any case is increasingly depleted as people read less and less.

One sign of the times is the number of side-hustles that have grown up with the clear purpose of making sure the agencies, even the bigger ones, remaining solvent. There are the writing courses conducted by Curtis Brown, for

instance, where the model is take money off would-be writers, usually on the back of advertising (limited) exposure to big name writers on the agency's list.

Similarly, an agency like Northbank Talent has pursued a hybrid model and is now as much a speaker's agency as it is a literary agent. This business, invested in by Luke Johnson and run by Diane Banks, has attracted Sir Anthony Seldon and Iain Dale, both friends of this magazine, to its books.

But most of all you just have to visit the offices of these places to feel that it's not exactly an industry with the wind in its sails. Curtis Brown, for instance, though it has a certain power within the industry, feels like a rundown solicitor's office. Its star agent, Jonny Geller, who represents the likes of William Boyd and the late John Le Carré, can sometimes give the impression that he, and not Boyd and Le Carré, wrote their respective oeuvres.

The problem we appear to face is that our literary culture is antithetical to the creation of serious literature. This has made the main commercial houses extremely vulnerable to the rise of independents such as Fitzcarraldo Editions, Black Spring Publishing, Galley Beggar and many others. Part of the strength of these lists is that they've lost faith in the literary agents' handling of the slush pile and have sought to cut them out.

And writers are beginning to catch on. The American novelist John Updike famously got by without an agent and there are many writers today who wonder aloud whether the 20% on everything sold is really earned. So while the profession has its attractive aspects – not least the possibility of reading a lot, and spending time with some interesting people – it's now a profession to be entered into with the utmost caution. [f](#)

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# It's a Kind of Magic: the plight of magicians during Covid-19

GEORGIA HENEAGE

**B**illy Reid, a professional magician from Glasgow, says magic is “not taken seriously enough” as a career: “you say ‘magician’ and people think of rabbits, top hats and balloons. We’re still striving to be taken seriously as an art form.”

For this reason, Reid was self-taught: “I used to go to Blackpool with my mum and grandparents and visit this magic shop. I’d just spend hours there watching tricks and learning. My brother would even fall asleep on the floor.”

After practising day-in-day-out, Reid went pro. But he says he’d still have welcomed a more formally-structured course and the chance to champion “a known certificate to prove your talent”, aside from being a part of the Magic Circle.

Richard Parsons, a Gloucestershire-based magician who has been practising for over 10 years and is a member of the Magic Circle, also got into magic via unorthodox means.

Parsons already had a business as a therapist, and at one of his annual conferences, a friend (who was also a therapist) did some magic tricks for him. “I was instantly hooked, even though I wasn’t really into it as a kid,” says Parsons.

His friend didn’t tell him how the tricks were done, but sent a deck of cards and a book of tricks and said to show him next time they met. “Over the next couple of years,” says Parsons, “I did my job and magic as a hobby. I did tricks for people

at parties, then started to get booked up for weddings and corporate events.”

One thing led to another and Parsons made the “business decision” to become a full-time magician. The volume of work built and, “because it’s one of those industries where the more you work the more work you get”. Parsons quickly climbed the ladder and he was soon auditioning for the elite Magic Circle.

It’s a lengthy and thorough application process: according to Parsons, you have to be nominated by two existing members, have an interview and an audition where you perform eight minutes of magic in front of three professionals. Once in, cards must be kept excruciatingly close to the chest. You can be reported to the ‘council for the magic circle’ and risk ‘expulsion’ if you break the magic code. “We have to sign a bit of paper saying we’re not going to reveal the tricks to Muggles. I don’t even tell my wife how this stuff is done,” he says.

Because of this Chinese-whispers process, which Parsons says is the very essence of learning magic, he is reticent that a magic degree would be a good idea. “I think it would have to be very carefully run and you’d have to know a bit of magic beforehand.”

It would also need to encompass the myriad elements of the magic profession. “You’ve got to have negotiation skills and be really good with people. You’ve also got to know how to perform and learn things like stage presence, controlling the audience, microphone technique,

speaking skills and scripting skills.”

In fact, if Parsons has a golden nugget of advice for budding young magicians, it’s to just do it. “I get emails from teenagers all the time asking how to get into magic. I always say it’s great doing TikTok and YouTube in your bedroom, but if you want to do this job you need to learn how to interact with people, and the only way of doing that is to get out there and actually do it.”

But Parsons is also a huge advocate for taking the leap. Magic, as we’ve seen, is not always viewed with enough respect as a profession. “My main advice to young people entering careers is: if you’ve got a passion outside the norm, go for it. It’s possible to do something that you absolutely love.”

## The changes: women and the virtual space

Romany Romany attributes her success as a magician to “persistence”.

The rise in formal training courses for magic is not the only way in which the industry is changing; for profession seemingly reliant on the face-to-face contact (the coin behind the ear, the rabbit out of a hat), the pandemic has had a massive effect on magicians’ craft.

Richard Parsons says that if performing magic shows over Zoom was at first strange, he and others soon adapted to the virtual medium, realising that it even broadened the scope of the tricks ►



(Julius Drost)





Romany Romany

available to them. “You can do a lot over Zoom and get away with things that you wouldn’t be able to do in real life,” he says. “The pandemic’s enabled us to develop some new material.”

Another significant change is the introduction of women to the profession: the Magic Circle only allowed female members in the 1980s, and the industry has always been a male-dominated one. Now women are stepping out of the shadows and from the limiting role as the magician’s beautiful sidekick, and into the limelight: more and more are trying their hand at the dark craft, though like many industries we still have a fairly long way to go before the industry is weighted equally between the genders.

Like many others, Romany Romany became a magician through sheer love of a hobby. She was working for British Telecom at the same time as attending

evening magic classes, and decided one day to give up her well-paid corporate job to follow her dream.

Through 17 years of sheer “persistence” (a quality I’m told yet again is crucial to success), Romany went to Las Vegas to learn magic, married a German juggler and was soon touring the world with her shows including the prestigious Penn & Teller show in America. She was the only British woman to win the world magic award in Las Vegas and the Magic Circle Magician of the Year.

She says that though more young female magicians are rising to prominence, it’s still important to work hard to differentiate yourself from the string of male magicians. “There are so many hurdles to achieving as a woman that you have to be different. I think that’s true for almost every industry: if you want to succeed, you always have to be better.”

When Romany first became a performer, for instance, she copied the male costume – black suit, top hat – the lot. When she was a stilt walker she copied the pin-striped trousers and waistcoat. “But then I thought: actually, I want to be different.” So Romany began wearing jazzy colourful dresses in the manner of a show-girl which, she says, gave her more “creative opportunity” and marked her out from her black-clad male associates.

Yet challenges still appear in mysterious forms: when Romany began learning tricks from a book she realised that many were based around male clothing. ‘Ten ways to produce an egg out of nowhere’ was based on producing an egg from a (male) breast-pocket of a jacket. “And that same special magic pocket is even “tax deductible”. But this, says Romany, forced her to think of alternative methods.

## Magic connects us

Richard Jones began his magic career by entertaining associates in the army.

Richard Jones is the only magician to have ever won *Britain’s Got Talent* and his journey, like so many others, began in an unusual setting.

He joined the army, and in the first few years was travelling all over the world, with lots of time to either “sit and read”, or “learn something new.” His army associates, he says, were the “perfect audience” for him to try new tricks on, because they were honest and quick at catching him out. If he did something that didn’t impress they would come right out and say it.

“I just got more and more fascinated by the art of deception and illusion,” says Jones, “so I started getting better and better and agreeing to do bigger shows,

even though I didn’t have any formal training. But I think that’s why I’m where I am today: I learned the hard way from always being under pressure.”

The pandemic has been something of a spanner in the magic works for Jones – as for most. But, like Richard Parsons, he did what magicians do best: adapted. He invested in a big tech set-up in his house with cameras and lighting and a sound desk and started virtual shows, which have been immensely popular.

“And actually, I love it. Originally, I didn’t think there’d be much value in it or that people would feel very involved. But I realised it’s the opposite.”

And Jones says that the pandemic has, in some ways, been the perfect context to bring people to magic. “What I love about magic is that you are witnessing something impossible, and it takes our attention away from anything else going

on in our lives. You can’t watch a magic show without smiling.”

## “Magic is a great way of connecting us all”

It’s also a great connector: “Before the lockdown I was used to seeing and meeting lots of people. So I definitely felt the effects and felt a bit isolated.” Doing virtual shows was, for Jones, an integral part of staying tethered to others.

“Magic is a great way of connecting us all,” says Jones. “What I learned from lockdown was that our generation needed to know what to prioritise in life. The pandemic highlighted that what we value most is the connection that we have with people.”<sup>f</sup>



Richard Jones



# — “Get Up and Work Immediately” —

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF DAVID HOCKNEY



Lana Woolf

**T**here is a story that David Hockney tells often about being a young film enthusiast in Yorkshire, watching black and white Laurel and Hardy movies. Seeing the long shadows, he realised that Los Angeles, where they were filmed, must experience a lot of sunshine. Accordingly, he resolved to go there.

Today, Hockney is still enthralled by light – as you can see in the tree house picture with which this article is illustrated. Here is something like that same light that attracted the young Hockney, still attracting him at the age

of 83. But this isn't Californian light – it's the light of Normandy, at the house called La Grande Cour, where he has lived in isolation since 2018 with his lucky assistants Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima, known as J-P, and Jonathan Wilkinson, together with his dog Ruby.

And, of course, unlike the images of California – such as 1967's A Bigger Splash, for which he is still most famous – Hockney's new works are not essays in paint but drawn on the free Brushes app on his iPad. The layered nature of paint has been replaced by marks which bear – perhaps a little too obviously – a digital mark: the dots, the pixelly sky.

**“Ratified by time and the art market, David Hockney has never been one to mind what people say about him.”**

To move forward but to stay the same – as with his hero Picasso, Hockney's way of seeing is always his, no matter how much his method might be bound up in



Hockney's new work has been much derided on the internet (GLA)

new technologies, and advances in his own understanding of what makes art.

The eye always remains forensic and supremely confident – ratified by time and the art market, David Hockney has never been one to mind what others say about him. Right now that's probably a

good thing as the art world has rounded on him for his Piccadilly Circus tube sign, drawn with a whimsical humour that looked to struggling artists like cosy facetiousness – the 's' in 'Circus' dropped off the end, the gag somewhat too easy, like someone used to having his jokes

laughed at by acolytes.

The Royal Academy exhibition The Arrival of Spring, which finishes in a few weeks' time, hasn't been particularly well-received either. It's doubtful that the criticism will affect the supremely confident Yorkshireman. A contrarian spirit seems to replicate itself in many successful people. This is so with Hockney, whose love of life appears to begin in a healthy contempt for all that do not share it, and who prefer to conform. 'Boring old England,' was his famous reasoning for leaving his home country for LA in the 1960s.

To study Hockney's life and his art is to get to know the benefits of particular kind of bluff decisiveness. The octogenarian has always known his next move – or found it materialise before him as a thing to be straightaway acted upon.

In Paris in the 1970s, he realised too many people were visiting him and ►



David Hockney “No. 118”, 16th March 2020 iPad painting® David Hockney



that he wasn't getting enough work done – keenly alive to the danger to his productivity, he straightaway upped and left. When he stayed on in England after Christmas in 2002, he realised that he had been missing the seasons of his native Yorkshire, and rearranged his life to take advantage of it.

**“I began to see that that was something you miss in California because you don't really get spring there.”**

Here he is describing the move in 2013's *A Bigger Message*: “I began to see that that was something you miss in California because you don't really get

spring there. If you know the flowers well, you notice them coming out – but it's not like northern Europe, where the transition from winter and *the arrival of spring* is this big dramatic event.”

Then just before lockdown, came another example of the Hockney decisiveness: during a brief visit to Paris, he realised that Normandy attracted him sufficiently to be worth moving to. Here he is telling the story to Martin Gayford in the pair's excellent collaboration *Spring Cannot Be Cancelled*: “It happened like this. We travelled to Normandy after the stained-glass window at Westminster Abbey was opened. We went through the Eurotunnel, via Calais. We stayed in this lovely hotel at Honfleur, where we saw this sunset.” In time, J-P was dispatched to an estate agents: “When we came in and saw the higgledy-piggledy building and that it had a tree house in the grounds, I said, ‘Yes, OK – let's buy it’.”

**“This house is for David Hockney and he wants to paint the arrival of spring in 2020, not in 2021!”**

Fame had come for Le Grand Cour – destined no doubt to be a tourist attraction to rival Monet's lily pond at Giverny. Of course, this freedom is partly the freedom of the immensely successful.

In Gayford's telling of the house purchase, the sense of Hockney's importance is evident when J-P is quoted as saying impatiently to delaying builders: “This house is for David Hockney and he wants to paint the arrival of spring in 2020, not in 2021!” One senses that he has surrounded



David Hockney “No. 259”, 24th April 2020 iPad painting © David Hockney



David Hockney “No. 316”, 30th April 2020 iPad painting © David Hockney

himself with the right people; Hockney has the gift for friendship and loyalty. This hasn't necessarily always been to the good: there are signs in *The Arrival of Spring* that a certain cosiness may finally have seeped into his work to its detriment.

Certainly the current exhibition which has been widely panned in the media, except by his friend-reviewers such as Jonathan Jones of *The Guardian* and Martin Gayford at *The Spectator*.

So are the negative reviews fair? Undoubtedly some of them are written with the pantomimic disdain which journalists sometimes level at people who have become more famous than them. One example would be the overdone headline in *City AM*: “I hate these paintings in my bones.” If we look at a painting this way, what emotion do we have leftover for atrocities of war?

Besides, in among the sameiness, there are magnificent images here. I was taken particularly by a sequence of

images of the sun rising over the slopes that surround Hockney's new home. Hockney has rightly objected to the idea that you can't paint a sunrise or a sunset by pointing out that such things ‘are never clichés in nature’. Here we see the old cliché of the yellow orb with tentacles of yellow seeping out of it rejuvenated to some extent: there is a lovely passage where the tree in the foreground takes the red of the sun, and becomes aflame with red, like something Moses might have seen.

There are other such moments – especially where Hockney reminds us that the iPad is especially good at handling complexity of space. One such example is No. 340 (see over) which directly recalls – and in recalling, competes with – Monet.

It's worth restating that Hockney is an intensely competitive artist – his career is a reminder that there is nothing wrong with that. Once we have decided what to do, we may as well attempt to

do it as well as anyone has ever done it before. The attempt may fall short, but will likely provide us with the energy we need to do our best.

An exhibition I attended at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2014 called David Hockney, Printmaker, showed him wholly able to assimilate Japanese pictures – Hokusai is another hero of his – and he remains an essentially competitive artist: the 2012 exhibition *A Bigger Picture*, also at the Royal Academy, was a direct challenge across the centuries to Paul Cézanne.

Besides, in this instance, Hockney doesn't fall short. The entire picture is sumptuous, an act of deep and respectful noticing – to hate this in one's bones would be in the regrettable position of hating life to one's bones. Especially good are the dots in the bottom left, where three or four kinds of reflection are rendered alongside water and things that might be bobbing on the surface. This is done all at once with great joy and even bravery. ▶





David Hockney "No. 370", 2nd May 2020 iPad painting © David Hockney

**“Nobody with any sense would claim that Hockney can’t draw a face...it’s just that here he’s chosen not to.”**

There are other virtues to this exhibition. The iPad – as Hockney has pointed out – is very good for immediacy. There is no need to set up materials, instead you can simply get drawing – as in No. 370 above. This picture has its literary antecedent in Philip Larkin’s poem ‘Sad Steps’:

*Groping back to bed after a piss  
I part thick curtains, and am startled by  
The rapid clouds, the moon’s cleanliness.*

Here Hockney, doing the same, is equally startled – and again, what’s good

is the journey of the moonlight through the clouds onto the edges of the bushes. We are told here that moonlight on a dark bush isn’t moon-coloured – it’s actually a kind of turquoise. We are also shown how moonlight doesn’t quite get in between all the way into the bushes; the image is a precise assessment of moonlight’s force and power. Even the most radiant nights have numerous hiding-places.

But there are problems with the exhibition too, which one’s admiration for a lifetime of extraordinary achievement cannot quite oust. Samuel Johnson once wrote that a book that’s fun to write cannot be fun to read. When considering what might be wrong with *The Arrival of Spring*, Johnson’s remark is a useful place to start.

‘I think I am in a paradise,’ says Hockney to Gayford in *Spring Cannot be Cancelled*. While these images have rightly been praised for their exuberance, they remind you a little too much that Hockney is happy. The

compositions are too often simplistic, and I am a little confused, having loved the accompanying book, that there isn’t greater diversity of subject matter. In the book, we see images of the artist’s foot, and of his iPad’ which would have made for a less repetitive exhibition.

**“Falsity in art can sneak in with terrible proclivity.”**

Furthermore, the image contains not a single face. This isn’t because Hockney can’t do it – nobody with any sense would claim that Hockney can’t draw a face; in fact he’s probably the best draughtsman alive. It’s just that here he’s chosen not to. It might be that he has decided that spring is his subject – but if so, he needn’t have excluded the rest of life around him. We experience spring in relation to other people – as we’re almost tired of learning, in our little locked down bubbles.



Van Gogh's Landscape from Saint-Remy (1889)

Perhaps the timing of their composition might also have made them age more. They were no doubt begun in a more contrarian spirit during the beginning of lockdown than we can now recall, full of a defiant desire to show the world that there are worse things than being circumscribed to just one place.

But falsity in art can sneak in with terrible proclivity. As an example, Larkin’s poem ‘Sad Steps’ spins to a false conclusion, about how youth cannot come again but is ‘for others undiminished somewhere’. It is a crystalline poem of marvellous technical brilliance reaching the wrong idea – because if youth is indeed irreversible then it is diminished for everyone everywhere all the time. The poet isolates himself in a bogus despair.

Hockney may perhaps be making the opposite mistake – readers of his *History of Pictures* (also produced with Gayford), may finish the book still in the dark as to why he makes them, besides the pleasure of being good at making them. Certainly, these images sometimes feel ultimately untethered from meaning, or perhaps insufficiently urgent in their pursuit of truth. Look at No. 259, for example, and then look at any Van Gogh – whom Hockney is also ostensibly competing with here.

In the Van Gogh you’ll find that things are never quite the colour to Van Gogh as they are to you – and your sense of the world is accordingly changed utterly. In Hockney, except for the few passages of painting I have isolated, they are almost always the colour you expected them to be. They look very very green. Hockney is as exuberant as Van Gogh, but Van Gogh is more alert to what the world actually looks and feels like, and so is the greater artist, and sometimes by a long distance.

This brings me to a hunch – namely, that there’s a slight sense that Hockney may not have avoided the dangers of sycophancy in those around him. He has always been very good at self-editing but I wonder if this business of sending

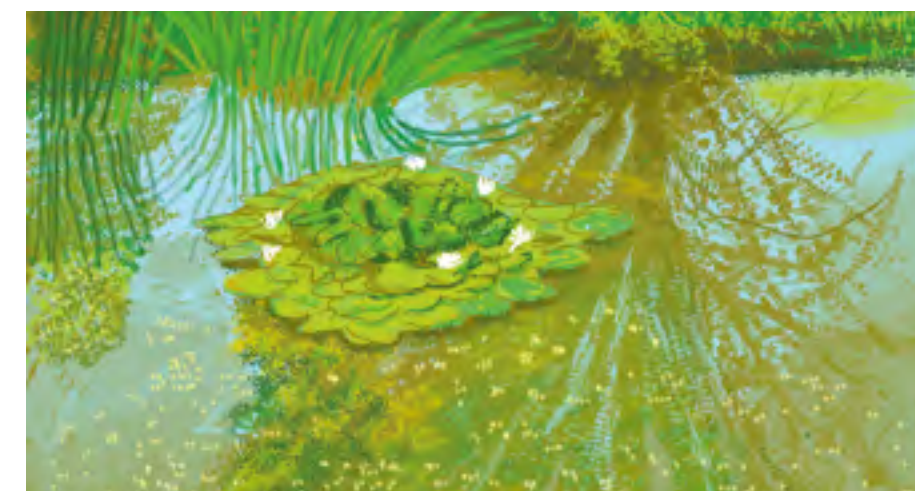
his drawings out to his friends – among them Martin Kemp, Gayford and Jones – has led to the creation of an echo chamber and a slight diminishing in standard. Gayford is a brilliant critic and writer, but every page he writes with Hockney breathes his excitement at being in the great man’s company. Such people do not tend to tell you when your game has dipped.

Exuberance, in short, isn’t enough in itself. You have to have setback, difficulty, and vexation. We might distinguish between intense and casual exuberance, with Van Gogh in the former category, and Hockney – at least in *The Arrival of Spring* – all too often in the latter.

And yet this exhibition is still worthwhile in that it shows a worthy intention – to show the spring and to capture its beauty. Hockney’s career is a reminder to all of us as to what can be achieved if we find what we love, and work hard. Back in the 1960s, Hockney had a note next to his bed which read: ‘GET UP AND WORK IMMEDIATELY.’ If nothing else, this exhibition is a reminder of the tremendous grace of hard toil. And if you wish he’d sometimes worked harder to challenge himself then that only reinforces the lesson. <sup>f</sup>

David Hockney’s *The Arrival of Spring* is at The Royal Academy from 23rd May until 26th September

*Spring Cannot be Cancelled* by David Hockney and Martin Gayford is published by Thames & Hudson priced £25.



David Hockney "No. 340", 21st May 2020 iPad painting © David Hockney



# The Spirit of Cricket: what we can learn from a changing sport

BY ROBERT GOLDING

**I**n the post-war period, my grandfather used to go to Lord's and the Oval every year without fail. In his later years – he died in 2013 – he'd tell me about the time he watched the last innings of the great Australian batsman Don Bradman.

As the story goes, Bradman needed to score four runs to finish his Test match career with an average of over 100. He received a guard of honour and the most sentimental version of the story claims that he was still wiping the tears from his eyes when his second delivery by Eric Hollies bowled him. He would finish with the famous average 99.94.

The story is well-known. But what I particularly remember is the civility of cricket as my grandfather recalled it. In those days, if you suspected you had trapped a batsman leg before wicket, you would witness the delivery, mull the possibility of an appeal, and then, on the way back to bowl, politely enquire of the umpire: "How was that?"

In little details like this, we realise how fast the world is changing. Today, a typical appeal will involve frenetic shouting of Howzat!, and an utterly theatrical despair if the appeal is turned down. The way the sport is played today reflects a society that wants it all – and, to paraphrase that well known cricket fan Queen guitarist Brian May – wants it now.

Our cricket, then, speaks to the society we've become. Alongside these developments, cricket has grown exponentially as a professional sport – as

every other sport has also done. Many of these activities – including billion-dollar industries like football, tennis and golf – were invented to supply activity to the Victorian gentleman liberated from drudgery by the Industrial Revolution.

Suddenly everyone had a weekend to fill. The growth of village cricket and other pastimes might also be put down to something more mundane: the invention by Edwin Budding of the lawnmower in 1832. This, the year that Goethe and Sir Walter Scott died, feels like one of those hinge years when a whole way of life cedes to another. Without Budding's invention, the English summer with its sound of leather on willow, its players in cricket whites moving towards the batsman 'like ghosts' as the poet Douglas Dunn observed, and its sense of the day unfolding with relaxed culinary predictability – sandwiches for lunch and cake for tea – would have been impossible.



WG Grace is usually credited with being the first professional cricketer.

**“Today, if you type the phrase ‘cricket jobs’ into Google, you’ll discover a bewildering array of options.”**

The year feels like just such another moment, and it finds cricket also at a crossroads. Today, if you type the phrase 'cricket jobs' into Google, you'll discover a bewildering array of options – although applying for many of them appears to contain the implicit stipulation that the applicant be extraordinarily good at cricket. At time of writing, jobs are already being advertised for player coaches and coaching and talent specialists for the coming season in Australia. Although many of the ads require the applicant to have played at a high level of cricket, most also require significant administrative ability.

In addition, as cricket has become more complex, the number of roles of a purely administrative nature has also increased: ads for operations officers, and brand managers abound. In addition, there's even an ad for an umpire manager posted by Queensland cricket. The job description explains to applicants that they will need to 'develop and implement strategies designed to attract and recruit potential umpires across the state' while also 'building and overseeing a network of appropriately skilled people



Expansion and growth in the sport has been driven in recent years by the Indian obsession with the sport. *By Jms1241*

who can provide umpire training and assessment”.

The ads in Australia are a reminder of the international nature of cricket, but they also point to the great hinterland of people who are talented at cricket, but no longer able to consider playing professionally. Or perhaps they never were never in the running.

As cricket has resumed, I've had a sense that this is a sport peculiarly suited to post-pandemic life. Yes, it's always been international, which rather goes against the grain of our travel-restricted lives this past year. But it's also one of the remaining sports that are really to do with stasis and patience – qualities we have been forced to learn during the pandemic.

That's not all. It was John Arlott who in his great book on Jack Hobbs asked himself



Jonathan Agnew is a reminder that many careers exist today beyond the traditional playing routes. *(Binguyen)*

what made Hobbs great and decided it was his “infallible sympathy with the bowled ball”. When I mentioned this to Jonathan Agnew recently, he looked delighted at the remark, and nodded vigorously: “Yes, yes, I like that. That's what cricket's all about – and it's also why I don't like football.”

This opens up onto the essential civility of cricket. It is what makes it, beyond other sports, relevant to our wider lives – including our careers. We wouldn't speak of the spirit of football, or tennis, or golf: but we can and do talk of the spirit of cricket.

**“As cricket has resumed, I've had a sense that this is a sport peculiarly suited to post-pandemic life.”**

It is, in fact, an essentially democratic sport. For instance, the phrase 'good cricket' refers to a passage of play where typically, a good delivery has been bowled, a fine shot made, engendering in return a skilled piece of fielding and wicket-keeping. Usually in such moments, the actual score hasn't been advanced but something has been achieved by both teams together.

It's this civility, and undercurrent of decency, which creates a sense of hiatus from the stress of the world, and therefore makes the sport an ideal way to switch off. Sir David Lidington recalls how the sport sustained John Major in his time in office. “To John, cricket remains a great solace, a place where he can switch off, and cares fall aside for a time,” he tells us. Most famously, Major, having lost the 1997 general election to Tony Blair, declared he was off to watch the cricket: one could feel his delight.



Former prime minister John Major enjoying his retirement at a cricket match

For many of us, cricket has been a dimension almost beyond capitalism, and certainly beyond the cut and thrust of politics. It is this notion of cricket as a protected zone of our lives that accounts for the indignation at the rapid commercialisation of the sport, especially by the Indian Premier League and The Hundred.

But perhaps we should be careful about saddling cricket with a Victorian flavour forever. Major himself was no classist as Lidington points out: “What was true about John was his absolute commitment to social mobility and loathing of snobbery.” One cannot imagine Major ever minding, say, Ben Stokes' tattoos; instead he would simply delight in his talent.

So now cricket enters a new phase, where an international test championship hopefully heralds the beginning of a new purpose for cricket. It may also be that we've been reminded of the importance of the slow. I've no doubt my grandfather would have heartily approved. **f**



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## Book Reviews

### **Vaxxers: The Inside Story of the Oxford AstraZeneca Vaccine and the Race Against the Virus**

BY CATHERINE GREEN  
AND SARAH GILBERT.  
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,  
£20.00

**D**r Catherine Green was queueing for pizza during her holiday in Snowdonia when she overheard a woman saying the people behind the Covid jabs couldn't be trusted. Dr Green couldn't let this slide so she introduced herself to the sceptic: "My name is Cath Green and I might not look like it in my bare feet and this dress - I might not sound like it either, believe me I know - but I am "them". You couldn't have known this, but I'm the best person in the world to tell you what's in the vaccine. I work with the people who invented it. It's me and my team, in my lab, who physically made it."

Overhearing this vaccine scepticism was the catalyst for the book. Professor Sarah Gilbert and Dr Catherine Green felt it was their duty to come out of their labs and put the truth into print. "I would like people to know how we really got here and what happens next," Green writes.

This is the most extraordinary story,

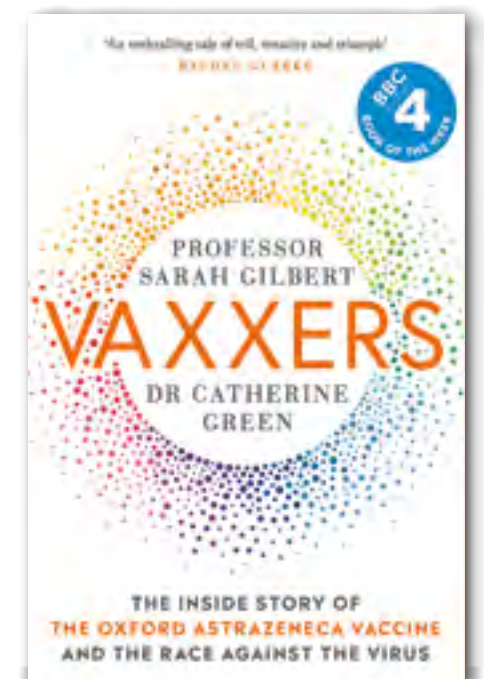
which focuses on the often surprisingly ordinary lives of the women behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine. Although it was ghost-written, the chapters alternate between being authored by Professor Sarah Gilbert and Dr Catherine Green.

It's hard to work out how these women found the time for this book. Not only are they working parents - Professor Gilbert is a mum of triplets - they are having to deal with issues such as not being able to buy toilet roll and worrying about vulnerable family members and, of course, they are also busy saving the future of humanity. At one point Green seems to lean into the working mum stereotype as she employs a baking analogy to explain how the vaccine works. She says making a vaccine for a new disease is a bit like making a specialist birthday cake. You can get everything ready and then when the order arrives you just add the icing with the message or, indeed, the spike protein.

Green in particular talks about the pressure of getting the messaging and explanations right and making sure the public understands what is going on. "I woke up feeling really nervous. Not because it was the day we were going to put the first shot of our vaccine into the arm of our first volunteer in our first trial: I had every confidence that would go smoothly, but because I was due to do a radio interview with LBC's James O'Brien... I didn't want to let anyone down by saying anything wrong."

At the beginning of the book is a quote from an anonymous source: "Better to light a candle than curse the darkness". This epitomises their message, and this book is their solution to the anti-vaxxer movement. So forget your comic books, if you're looking for superheroes you'll find them standing among us, perhaps even in the queue of a takeaway.

**"This is the most extraordinary story, which focuses on the often surprisingly ordinary lives of the women behind the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine."**





## Am I Loved? The Most Asked Question of All Time

JOHN D. BIEBER, UMBRIA PRESS. £17.99

**A**m I Loved is a peculiar book. I was intrigued to find the answer to “the most asked question of all time,” but as is so often the case with love, my high expectations led to disappointment. As the author John D Bieber is a divorce lawyer I was hoping for intriguing anecdotes and insights into lost love. Instead, I found myself feeling frustrated by sweeping statements about relationships and suffocated by confident assertions about God’s love.

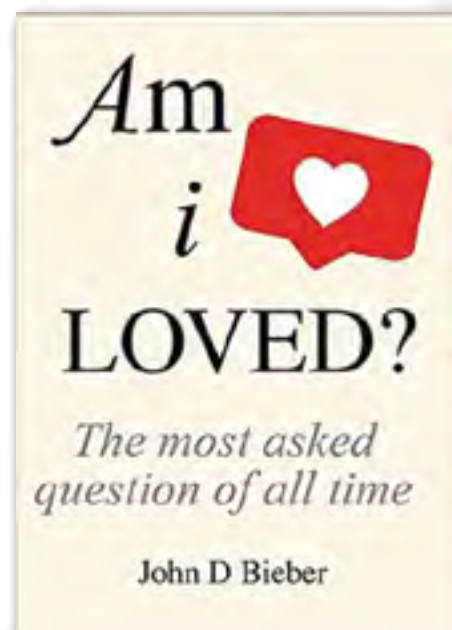
Bieber describes this book as a “study of the human condition” but it is lacking in the key component of a study: quantifiable facts. Instead, the book attempts to rectify the fact humans share “ignorance of our true condition” with philosophical statements that seem to brook little opposition. “We were not provided with a manual when we came into this world but it is hoped that this book will be the next best thing. For this book explains the human condition. This is how it is,” Bieber says, grandly.

Rather than relying on facts Bieber evokes imagined scenarios. On kissing for instance he says: “We all want to be kissed. We enjoy it very much. With Nature wanting us to survive, kissing is a sign of caring and protection. With Nature wanting us to procreate, a kiss is the first step to intimacy.” He then proceeds to describe the imagined first kiss of cavemen. In another instance he writes up a script between an ‘unborn child’ and an ‘author’.

The problem with writing about love is it’s hard to be original. But a triumph of this book is that in its oddness it does, for the most part, avoid clichés. Recognising that a lot of love-based wisdom has been shared before, he elegantly weaves in quotes of wisdom from the likes of Chico Marx who said: “I wasn’t kissing her, I was whispering in her mouth”; and Edmund Burke: “Never, no, never did Nature say one thing and Wisdom another.”

At times, I enjoyed the poetic lilt of the book. But, similarly to the book itself, the sentences often try to do too much. Take the opening line for instance: “Once upon a time, so long ago that it may have been upon the very first time, some 600,000 years or so before India collided with Asia to form the Himalayas and the long tapered fingers of North and South America finally managed to touch, before there were any such things as heartbreak, sadness or disappointment, when ambition had yet to be invented and insecurity, anxiety and self-pity did not exist, where not a single being suspected the existence of a Creator nor had the slightest anticipation of a tomorrow, a branch in a shrinking, drought-ridden frost in Africa suddenly snapped and crashed to the ground, causing a large and hapless ape to fall out of the tree.” As a sentence it’s simply too long. Proust used to write sentences longer than this, he was on a search for lost time and Bieber thinks he already knows all the answers.

I did not find this book a convincing study of the human condition. My agnosticism and the unsubstantiated certainty of the assertions in this book did not make for happy bedfellows. But it is not a bad book and I’m sure there are lovers who would happily take this book to bed and appreciate its poetic turn of phrase and optimism about humanity.



## Post-lockdown Opera Rehearsal Holland Park

**S**ummer will not sing more beautifully than this. Verdi, I would guess, epiphanic and sudden, grows out of the open-air rehearsal marquee superimposing tone on neutrality: the boy’s football match finds its drama, an elderly couple, their inveterate hands linked, becomes first courtship, perhaps beside the Arno, when a music like this went off in their minds. The eventual concert, tense with the burden of money, will intervene between listener and music with the distractions of formality, but now, the soprano gilds the pigeons with sun, the drinks in the café are all ambrosial, and we are taller, that much stronger, for this music.

*Sebastian Richter*

## Letters From Lockdown: Famous faces, frontline workers and stay-at-home heroes reflect on the year everything changed.

BY NATASHA KAPLINSKY. HACHETTE CHILDREN'S GROUP, £8.99

**T**his book features letters from celebrities such as singers Sir Paul McCartney and Ed Sheeran, the man keeping the nation fit, Joe Wicks, as well as some regular Covid heroes. They answer the familiar yet rather extraordinary question: What was lockdown like for you? Although the book was conceived of by children, Natasha Kaplinsky’s, Arlo and Kika, and written for children, it is an uplifting read for all ages.



There are plenty of sad notes. Dr. Jenny Messenger, for instance, writes: “I am sorry to say that in this country it is not uncommon to see our patients die alone, without any family or friends to hold their hands. During this pandemic this was so much worse.” But there are warmer moments too. Comic Matt Lucas reveals how one of his best friends has had their first baby during the pandemic. “Nearly a year ago and I still haven’t met her. I think when I finally do, I will probably burst into tears. I’m a soppy sausage at times.” Children and the future of humanity are at the heart of this book and, fittingly, the publisher is going to donate all profits to the children’s charity, Barnardo’s.

## Working Hard, Hardly Working: How to achieve more, stress less and feel fulfilled

BY GRAVE BEVERLEY. HUTCHINSON. £16.99

**G**race Beverley reflects on the conflicting pressures young people feel when they enter the world of work. There’s a pressure to work as hard as possible but, simultaneously, young people are told to relax and focus on self care. In this book Beverley suggests the choice doesn’t have to be between success or sanity. The entrepreneur and ‘lazy workaholic’ offers ideas on how to create a balance, be more productive and feel fulfilled. The book encourages people to engage in effective self-care and find a productive routine. Although the suggestions aren’t particularly unique, the book does provide a succinct guide that may improve the lives of our young workforce.



## GO BIG: How To Fix Our World

BY ED MILIBAND. BODLEY HEAD. £18.99

**I**n this book, Labour’s Ed Miliband interviews people who are successfully tackling problems on the planet, from transforming communities to creating environmental strategies. He looks at various initiatives, organisers and campaigns, from the UK’s largest walking and cycling network in Greater Manchester as well to the campaign for the first halal Nando’s in Cardiff. The challenges are vast but Miliband provides an optimistic look at the possibility of change.



## The English Teacher

There is always one latent in your life, who will shape you to your own advantage. Mine was Balkwill. Chaucer-fat. Quotation-rife. Flushed with good booze, and dying in a rage.

Rushing to complete his time, he came in for the lesson, ranted in despair about his death. The next day he swept through, played Beethoven – the Ninth – from start to finish. Nodded – left.

In those days, it meant little. How could we see past youth to bear witness to him dying in such glory? We told ourselves it was how the world was framed: to the wise came decay; to the brilliant, shame.

Yet to suspect all this – the passion he held in that last summer of his, though dissolving in his palm, was to long to join him in whatever he loved, and do it ongoingly. This is how we all link arms:

When he died we knew that we’d been chosen. In his each and every fantastic literary whim – Hardy, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Wilde, Owen – he’d lived. We would too – and if we could, live like him.

*Diego Murillo*



# The Beautiful South

IRIS SPARK HEADS TO THE SOUTH COAST WITH HER FAMILY  
AND FINDS MUCH TO ENJOY AT THE HOTEL HARBOUR CHAIN



**T**he novelist John Updike once described his project as a novelist as being: "To give the mundane its beautiful due". He was saying that it takes a certain skill to see what's directly in front of you.

In that sense Covid-19 has made us all novelists. For the Londoner, a trip to Brighton used to be seen as a day affair. You don't need to be in Brighton long to realise that for many people it still is. The crowds still pour down remorselessly from the station towards the seafront throughout the day, adding an air of

excitement – though sometimes of threat – to the town. Graeme Greene opens his novel Brighton Rock with the famous line: "Hale knew, before he had been in Brighton three hours, that they meant to murder him." London here appears as a kind of bacillus that the rest of the country is subject to.

But once you've been in Brighton for longer, recentred around the necessity of a longer stay, London feels a distant memory. For Brighton residents, of course, London is both a destination – pre-Covid about 25 per cent of its residents

commuted to London – and something intentionally escaped. People here have made a decision for a different kind of life.

That means that something else is on the rise: Brighton's uniqueness. That's told partly in politics: Caroline Lucas has been the Member of Parliament here for 11 years. At the time she looked like the first of many MPs from the Green Party. As the years have worn on – even as the issue has deepened in importance – there has been no tsunami to speak of in the wider electorate. This has only served to remind everyone of the quiddity of Brighton.



**“Brighton is also home to a greater concentration of homeworkers than any other UK city. In that sense it was always pandemic-ready.”**

Often Lucas gains the credit, but she's also the beneficiary of an open-minded electorate, not to mention an enviable on-the-ground operation that continues to bewilder the local Labour Party.

Brighton's apartness is also told in the city's startup culture: there were 2,100 business start-ups here in 2015, and

according to a report by Regeneris, Brighton is also home to a greater concentration of homeworkers than any other UK city. In that sense it was always pandemic-ready.

We check into the Harbour Hotel, a restored Regency building, one of the oldest on the promenade, and are given a sea-view room on the fourth floor. With young children in tow, the lack of a balcony is welcome and the triple-aspect panoramic superb. We gaze at it a while: seen before but never quite like this. There's the pier to the east, whose night lights are beginning to flash in the gloaming; the distant wind farms look like something Don Quixote might madly tilt towards; and the west pier, burnt to a sculptural cinder after arson in 2003, has a sad romantic air.

We ask ourselves what colour the sea is as the evening weaves in – and note a band of white tightens around the horizon, like a tourniquet, and then lapses. Then the dark comes in, and we deposit ourselves in our Egyptian cotton sheets.

The following morning, I'm given a tour of the hotel. There is a fine entertaining space here that can host up to 160 guests, and opens up onto the seafront – a useful destination to know about for both Brighton and London business owners.

The spa is in the basement of the hotel, and has specific hours for children's swimming. There's a warm pool in the first room, which you might just about do lengths in; it neighbours another a room with a hot tub. You expect that to be it, but down some stairs, more rooms unfold: another room of hot tubs, a steam room and sauna, and various areas for relaxation.

Ahead of you is the frame of an old door, which turns out to be a door to the past: the waterfront used to be lower, and my guide tells me that once-upon-a-time these burrows were used for smuggling.

This is a clue to the real character of Brighton – in fact, to the whole of the southern coast. Seaside places tend to have bohemian characters. It was Robert Hughes who observed in relation to ▶





Madrid in his Goya biography that tyrants don't love ports because they are too susceptible to outside influence. The longer you stay in Brighton, the more you realise that the city belongs as much to the expansive dreamy views of the sea as to the land: there is something fantastical about it.

If you want evidence of this, you need only visit Brighton Pavilion, that wonderfully weird palace, built by George IV, and much loathed by that sober monarch Queen Victoria. It shows a man of unlimited wealth indulging a quixotic imagination, and reminds us that Brighton has known, at least for a time, what it is to seem – however illicitly – at the centre of the world. I say 'illicitly' because it was here, away from the prying eyes of London, that he could enjoy his liaison with Maria Fitzherbert.

The design of the Pavilion itself, by John Nash – who also designed Buckingham Palace and Regent Street – is bizarre, incorporating Indian and Chinese motifs.

It is enough in itself to make Brighton feel odd, its centrepiece an escapist extravagance. A few streets away the rambling Steine House has a plaque to Fitzherbert: in its slightly ramschackle appearance it hints at the unhappy end of their affair.

A day by the sea at Brighton on a hot day is an intense and crowded experience. George IV came here hoping it would cure his gout, but in the era of Covid-19 one is more likely to be here to combat boredom. Philip Larkin once wrote of the "miniature gaiety of seashores" – but Brighton has been bequeathed a sort of scale by the virus. Visitors shout in the shallows, amazed to be in such proximity to a coastline that they used to take for granted.

The sea remains the great sight of Brighton. Its slumbering strength is always there as a distraction, or a point of reference, throughout your time there: forever changing and always the same. You begin to feel that you could get

used to this – especially at the Harbour Hotel with its white walls and excellent restaurant.

In fact, the Harbour hotel chain is one of the success stories of the pandemic. With properties in Chichester, Guildford, and Bristol – and two in Cornwall that must especially be the envy of international hoteliers – it has done a good trade throughout 2021 as people have decided against the absurdity of amber lists and 14-day quarantines, and shrugged off the idea of going to Greece if it's really to be such a faff. Each staff member tells me an optimistic tale of wages topped up after furlough.

The group happens to be owned by Nicholas Roach, the son of Dennis Roach, who was regarded as the first-ever football agent, having negotiated the first £1 million transfer. Roach Jr. founded the holding company Nicholas James Group in 2000 and keeps a low profile.

This is in some contrast to his hotel in Southampton, the chain's flagship

property that dominates the skyline of the relatively new built Ocean Village marina. The property itself resembles a ship and our balcony suite turns out to be at the ship's prow, opening up onto a view of the skyline.

(Incidentally, the Harbour in Southampton should undoubtedly be better known than it is as a conference room option for London businesses. The events space – also in the prow of the ship – swells dramatically towards the marina.)

The clientele here is drawn by the hotel's excellent spa offering. Just after breakfast on a sunny day white-towelling-robed guests are lined up on loungers overlooking the marina. The hotel also regularly hosts famous sportspeople. Cricketers – including the Indian team – have been known to stay here, taking advantage of its close proximity to the Rose Bowl, as have household name footballers. Hugh Grant is also known to be a regular guest. If he's coming for the food then he's a wise man, as the restaurant on the top floor is consistently high quality.

**“Southampton's economy is larger than you might think – worth around £7.7 billion by most estimates, with some 8,310 businesses active as of March 2020.”**

Overall Southampton's economy is larger than you might think – worth around £7.7 billion by most estimates, with some 8,310 businesses active as of March 2020. Most business growth is driven by small



businesses, usually in the retail sector. The nearby port provides 8,000 jobs and the scale of activity is something you vaguely sense at the Harbour: a gigantic car park opposite is filled every two days with cars intended for Amsterdam, and reminds you of the extent of the export market.

Of course, being coastal has sometimes meant not trade but war, and the more time you spend on the south coast – at Portsmouth and Dunkirk too – you're conscious of the ships or planes that descended on this island from hostile nations. The sea hasn't only bought spices and craftspeople – but bows and arrows, and worse.

Nearby Arundel remains a highlight: the Collector Earl's Garden, which used to be a car park, has since 2008 been one of the most beautiful gardens in England.

Interestingly, it's in Chichester cathedral that you find the famous statue about which Philip Larkin wrote his famous poem 'An Arundel Tomb' with the famous, oft-quoted ending: 'What will survive of us is love'. That cathedral also has a glorious window by Marc Chagall. Meanwhile in Portsmouth, the Mary Rose museum remains one of the finest in the land. The New Forest, and the beaches around Dorset, complete the picture.

You could spend two weeks here and not run out of things to do – a testament to our rich coastal history. It reminds you all over again what it means not to be landlocked. We returned home, refreshed, aware that once you give the mundane its beautiful due, it's no longer mundane at all. **f**





# A Call to Arms

GEORGE ACHEBE VISITS THE UNIVERSITY ARMS IN CAMBRIDGE  
AND FINDS A HOTEL READY TO THRIVE POST-PANDEMIC

**W**henver I go to Cambridge, I feel as those who didn't go there tend to do – that I should have done so. The missed privileges amass about 10 minutes from the station: here, Watson and Crick cracked DNA; here's where Milton might have sat, or Marlowe got into a brawl, or Wordsworth had a thought or two; here are the streets where, in his twilight years, Stephen Hawking used to be seen, motoring in his wheelchair, a symbol of what's possible for the human mind.

It's a city of ghosts in other words – but clever and consequential ones. The initial impression is that whatever else might be going on the world, Cambridge will continue on its intellectual way, helping us understand the world better. And it does all that while being beautiful.

**“It's a city of ghosts in other words – but clever and consequential ones.”**

The University Arms has a good claim to be the best hotel in town – a stone's throw from the Tudor and medieval architecture, and a short walk from the Cam too, where students still punt the summer afternoons away, as if this were an Evelyn Waugh novel. King's College, with its marvellous ceiling of perpendicular Gothic, would be worth coming here for, even if there was nothing else to see at all.

The hotel has a grand but not oppressive feel. The rooms on the top floor are



spacious with relevant books by past luminaries. The views over Parker's Piece show a wedge of grass where students mill and loll, and look reluctant – especially on a gorgeous summer's day – ever to let any day end. When I return from dinner, I find many hanging on in the dark, peeling away only when the very last light has departed.

Work-wise, Cambridge is already far more than the satellite of London it used to be; in fact it's regularly found to be the UK's fastest growing economy, and benefits from industrial parks that house global leaders in wireless technology, display technology, and mobile telecommunications.

And the city knows it. I attend an interesting dinner and find myself sat next to BBC Cambridge presenter

Chris Mann, whose every syllable of talk breathes a love of the area. "Everybody here is on TV – a lot of the TV executives either went to the colleges or else they come here in honorary positions of academia," he explains.

A case in point is Tristan Welch, who heads the offering at Parker's Tavern, and who cooks us a mean spaghetti bolognese – he is now the beneficiary of various TV deals, although he gives no indication



The staff at Parker's Tavern



The ballroom at The University Arms, now a venue for literary lunches

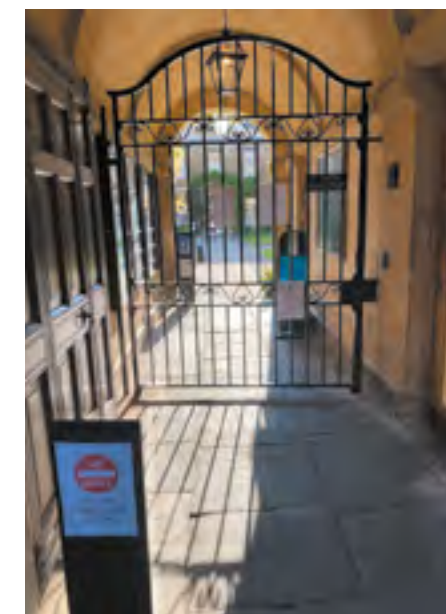
of its having gone to his head. "He's quite famous now, but he'll be a lot more famous soon when Cooking with the Stars airs," Mann explains.

This trend for celebrity continues beyond the walls of the University Arms. When I mention the need to bring home a gift to my family, Mann directs me to Fitzbillies in Cambridge, world famous for its Chelsea buns. Its owners Tim Hayward and Alison Wright are also television personalities. Fitzbillies, founded around 100 years ago, was nearing closure a few years back, when this predicament was tweeted into submission by Stephen Fry, that other Cambridge alumnus. The place stayed open. Today, the buns, soaked in maple syrup, are indeed memorably delicious.

But Cambridge isn't only about the university. The longer you spend there, the more you sense another life – perhaps a truer one – weaving in and out of the streets. It might be an intellectual city and one that is experiencing its own tech boom, but there's also poverty here, and not a single Conservative councillor on the City council. As a visitor, there's the sense that you're not seeing the whole story.

Sometimes in Cambridge the visitor has a sense of being barred from the action.

While the university is there, as an energy to be drawn from, it is also continually



Sometimes in Cambridge the visitor has a sense of being barred from the action

shutting you out. There is, for instance, an increased number of Do Not Enter signs barring you from the culture of the place; it used to be easier to walk in and see the splendid gardens behind King's, or Pembroke, always one of the loveliest colleges.

But as a visitor it all feels so forgivable – a feeling which in itself probably perpetuates the inequality. But what Florence is to Italy, Cambridge is to the UK – a place where nostalgia is permitted free rein, and where the mood is aspirational in the highest sense: it makes you want to be a world-historical figure immediately.

It has an astonishing amount for a little town. The art collections at the Fitzwilliam

Museum are richer than one expects one has a right to, even here. There's a renovation taking place in one of the impressionist rooms but still there's a superb selection of Renoir, Monet, Degas and Cezanne. The Renaissance rooms house Titian, Brueghel and others.

Meanwhile, Kettle's Yard, the house of Jim Ede, always one of the best art experiences in the world, has renovated itself recently – bringing more jobs with it.

So yes, although the visitor will likely think they should have gone to Cambridge for their degree, there's considerable solace to be found in the next best thing: going there at all. **f**



Cambridge has made a supreme contribution to world history – and done so while remaining beautiful.



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# Costeau

AS THE LITERARY LUNCH RETURNS, COSTEAU CELEBRATES  
A GREAT INSTITUTION



**T**he words ‘literary lunch’ have a certain allure that may not be entirely due to alliteration. As the pandemic continues to retire itself from view, Costeau has seen the invites begin to trickle back – not with the traditional thud on the doormat, but with the ping in the inbox.

First up was Sir Alan Duncan, whose gossip diaries have made a stir of late – particularly on account of his late night venting against colleagues when a minister.

Costeau turned up at the function to find something like the pre-Covid literary world restored. In fact it was somewhat of a hybrid event: books were on sale, and there was an air of excitement about ‘meeting the author’.

Costeau recalled all those lunches, pre-pandemic. One such occasion involved those nominated for the TS Eliot Prize, who had been dutifully lined up signing their books, trying not to register queue envy if a fellow author had attracted more fandom. Costeau saw that the line for the late Dannie Abse was a bit shorter than the others and duly deposited himself in front of him. Our conversation was underwhelmingly emblematic of these occasions: “How do you know my work?” Abse said, wearily. “I read some of your poems in the London magazine.” “Oh.” Abse shrugged his shoulders with palpable exhaustion. The poet died soon after, and Costeau has ever afterwards hoped that the event wasn’t the last straw.

Duncan went at the occasion with considerably more vim – his manner throughout positively thespian. That’s the thing about the literary lunch: it actually best suits a certain kind of Conservative politician. At a similar recent occasion Costeau saw Lord Ed Vaizey, though promoting no book, speak without notes for an hour at the Mark’s Club. He gave the impression that Michael Gove also gives on such occasions, that there is no topic on earth for which he doesn’t have a 20,000 word speech readily to mind.

The paradox is that the collision of real writers with the public can sometimes be a stilted affair. Costeau recalls the late Christopher Hitchens speaking at a lunch in Oxford University. Having stayed overnight, the polemicist moaned about the quality of the beds: ‘They can’t stop you doing it, but they can certainly make it less fun.’ Throughout his talk, he smoked the cigarettes and drank the whisky, which together would kill him, as if they were a lifeline from the tedium of the occasion.

On the other hand, mere readings – as opposed to lunches – plainly have their limitations. Attending such occasions can be dispiriting, and the experience is brilliantly satirised by Sam Riviere in his recent debut novel *Dead Souls*. In that book, everyone in the room offers up dutiful ‘words of praise’ – and this absence of risk kills the occasion without anyone even knowing it.

Duncan wasn’t exactly on edge at his lunch. He spoke to the assembled literati

with a cheerful eloquence, even taking a moment to lambast a reviewer in *The Guardian* who had picked the book apart the weekend before. But he knew his audience would be favourable – it’s in the nature of the literary lunch.

In literary circles there’s a lot of talk about how readings don’t sell books, because they keep reader and writer at too much of a distance. In Costeau’s experience, literary lunches, with their more intimate arrangements, do sell books as there’s a sense of greater connection, and therefore obligation between the relevant parties. Duncan himself wisely circulated the room offering to sign copies, thus engendering a minor guilt among those who hadn’t taken the plunge.

The literary lunch shall return, if only because there’s a perennial fascination about writers among people who don’t write. It is, after all, a very unusual and counterintuitive thing to set aside years of one’s life – really one’s whole life – to making marks on paper. The desire to meet and observe these unfortunate creatures is understandable.

The phrase itself retains a certain allure, conjuring associations of a Wildean and witty lunch where, because other people sparkle, we sparkle as well. It’s essentially an aspirational thing – to do with bettering ourselves. That’s why the comeback, if it happens, shall be welcomed by Costeau: if ever there was a time to sparkle and really enjoy the possibilities of life, it’s now. **f**



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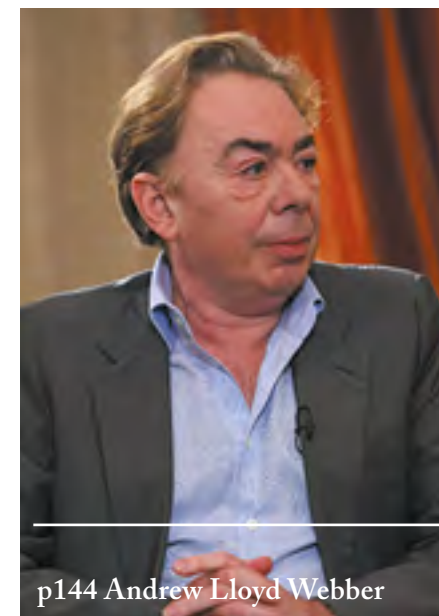
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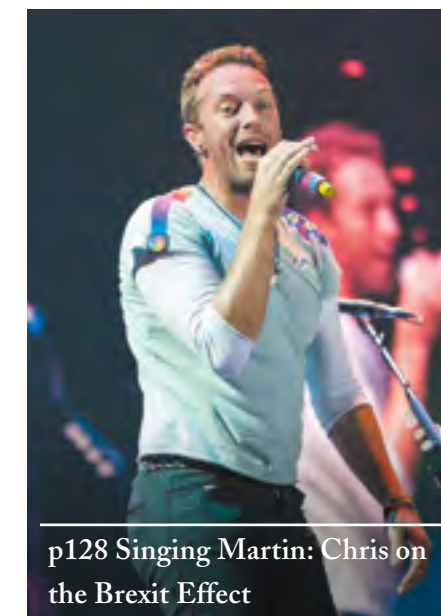
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If you would like to contribute or be interviewed, please get in touch.



# CLASS DISMISSED Bear Grylls

PATRICK CROWDER TALKS TO THE ADVENTURER AND TV PERSONALITY ABOUT HIS DARKEST HOUR, WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH BE MILITARY FIT

**You'd done a lot in your life. What is the biggest challenge you have faced and what did it teach you?**

When I was serving with the military I fractured T8 T10 & T12 vertebrae in a freefall parachuting accident in Southern Africa. The chute opened but ripped and I smashed in very hard. I was so lucky not to be paralysed and a year in and out of military rehabilitation saved me. You only get it wrong once and you have to be smart.

**So did that make you see the rest of your life differently?**

I vowed if I ever recovered I would live life with arms open and with gratitude. It also made me ever more determined to fulfil my childhood dream of climbing Everest. I stumbled a lot on that journey of recovery for sure and had many dark days but also, I now can see how I never took my eyes off that goal and Everest gave me that driving force to get strong again and go out and grab life boldly.

**How can young people find the 'right fit' when choosing between higher education, military service and vocational training?**

It's so important for young people to have a sense of purpose. My advice would be that whatever the career path chosen, create your big goal and vision for success.

**Any mantra that's helped you in life?**

Be prepared to fail and by getting up with renewed vigour, you will get closer to that goal.

**Of all the things you've done, it's fascinating to see you so involved with Be Military Fit. Tell us about it.**

Well, I have a long connection with BMF. I used to love training there before I joined the military as a young



guy nervous of the road ahead. I remember being especially inspired by the instructors, as well as being pushed by my fellow members in a way that just doesn't happen through training in isolation or at a gym. When the opportunity to become a co-owner of BMF arose, I was pleased to get closer to the business, to help preserve its legacy and modernise its operation.

**Many BMF franchisees are veterans. How does their experience help them to teach others?**

BMF veteran franchisees have all the experience of staying fit, focussed and motivated in some of the most restrictive and inhospitable locations on the globe. They know how to improvise, motivate others and to maximise the positive impact on their member fitness levels.

**So we all have an inner businessman in us waiting to get out?**

For our veterans, the greatest challenge will always be building their businesses, which means retaining loyal members and attracting new recruits. I am proud of the fact that more than 80

per cent of BMF members continued to pay membership fees over the entire lockdown period. This reflects the unprecedented loyalty and high level of satisfaction in what our BMF family does.

**How have you struck a healthy work-life balance?**

I know all too well the difficult tussles of juggling work and family and being away a lot, especially as a dad. It's not easy, but it is about trying to make sure you know your reasons why and then really protecting the time at home when you are back.

**Some people have found family tough during Covid-19. Others have found it more important than ever before. How's that side of life been for you?**

I have always tried to have clear priorities of family first. Trying to maintain a balance is key - we all have to earn a living but at the same time too much time spent away can harm everyone, and our children are only young once. It's a dance that I don't think is easy to master but my family know that when I am home I am all theirs. **F**



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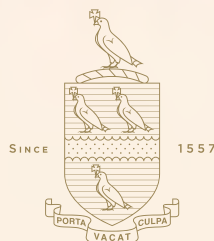
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